

ROTHESAY TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN



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Post card view of Victoria Street – Argyll and Bute Archives

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ROTHESAY TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER AREA

The Rothesay Town Centre Character Area is one of nine Character Areas forming the expansive Rothesay Conservation Area which runs along the east coast of the Isle of Bute from Port Bannatyne to Ascog. It was designated in 1971, extended in 1980, again in 1984, and given outstanding status in 1985.

1.2 CONSERVATION AREAS

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas are defined as

‘Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Conservation area status does not mean that new development is unacceptable. It does mean that any proposed change will require careful management with the aim of maintaining the integrity of the area and enhancing its special character.

The Rothesay Conservation Area: Town Centre Character Area Appraisal was adopted as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance on 3rd August 2010.

The purpose of the appraisal is to define and evaluate the character and appearance of the conservation area. It identifies key characteristics and ensures that there is an understanding of what is desirable to protect. It also identifies any detracting negative factors.

The special character and appearance of the Rothesay Town Centre Character Area is summarised in the Statement of Significance (Section 2.)

1.3 MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

The Rothesay Town Centre Character Area Management Plan was adopted as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance by Argyll and Bute Council on 3rd October 2010.

This document represents an updated Management Plan based on an overarching review

of the 2010 plan. This follows a requirement for regular monitoring of the character area to assess the progress of the Management Plan and its impact on the character area. The review presents an opportunity to refresh management priorities and to identify new opportunities for enhancement.

This updated Management Plan should be read in conjunction with the Rothesay Conservation Area: Town Centre Character Appraisal.

1.4 ROTHESAY TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE

A Townscape Heritage (TH) scheme for Rothesay is being developed by Argyll and Bute Council. Funded principally by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Council, the grant programme, if Stage 2 funding is secured, will see a TH scheme run 2018 to 2023. The TH will build upon the successful Rothesay Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) that concluded in 2016, serving as a second phase of heritage led regeneration within the town centre.

This new management plan will serve to support and direct the developing TH scheme, setting out the long-term vision for the character area and ensuring that the benefits of such a scheme are managed and maintained.

1.5 PURPOSE OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

This Management Plan will define how change is managed within the conservation area, identifying specific opportunities for positive enhancement and how this will be put into practice. The plan will also support the important policy framework for the determination of development proposals.

‘Designation of a conservation area should not be regarded principally as a means of increasing control but rather as a commitment to take positive action to safeguard and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.’ 1.

‘When effectively managed, conservation areas can anchor thriving communities, sustain cultural heritage, generate wealth and prosperity and add to quality of life.’ 2.

1. & 2. PAN 71 Conservation Area Management.

The Town Centre Character Area Appraisal provides the basis for the ongoing review of the management strategy. It also provides the framework to consider negative factors and threats to the special conservation value of Rothesay Town Centre.

Good conservation can be described as the management of change. This recognises the ongoing need for conservation areas to adapt physically, socially and economically to meet the needs of living and working communities.

1.6 KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives for the ongoing active management of the town centre character area are:

- To promote enhancement and positive change to enable sustainable growth and economic regeneration.
- To protect and reinforce the integrity of the character area.
- To consider the negative factors and threats to the special conservation value of Rothesay Town Centre.
- To prevent erosion of character through further inappropriate small scale change.
- To ensure that any new development enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area, with an emphasis on high quality design.

Management of the conservation area will be of particular relevance to the planning authority. The Council will seek to achieve these key objectives through the Development Management process. However, effective management requires support and input from other stakeholders. The main purpose of a Conservation Area Management Plan is to ensure that all stakeholders are working within a mutually agreed framework and common set of aims, objectives and priorities.

1.7 CONSULTATION

A draft of the updated Rothesay Town Centre Management Plan was subject to public consultation over a four week period from 6th Feb to 3rd March 2017. This provided an opportunity to

take in to account the views of stakeholders, community organisations, local residents and property owners.

1.8 STATUS OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

The approved updated Rothesay Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan will be adopted by Argyll and Bute Council as a Technical Note to be used to support Supplementary Guidance documents and inform future planning decisions and planning policy.

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following Statement of Significance summaries the conservation value of the Character Area. Further detailed description and analysis of the character area can be found in the Rothesay Conservation Area: Town Centre Character Appraisal.

Rothesay's town centre character area is significant for three reasons:

1. Medieval Castle and Royal Burgh: a unique 13th century castle, generator of the medieval Royal Burgh of Rothesay.
2. Commercial Centre: late 18th and early 19th century growth forming a compact and uniform town centre; later Victoria embellishments and early 20th century growth.
3. Seaside Resort: 19th century and early 20th century expansion creating one of Scotland's most important seaside resorts.

2.1 Medieval Castle and Royal Burgh

Rothesay Castle (c1230) is associated with the royal family of Stewart (later Stuart), kings of Scotland (1371 to 1714), and hereditary keepers of the castle. Its circular form is unique in Scotland and was the focus of an early settlement, granted Royal Burgh status in 1401. The organic street pattern of the medieval burgh and the magnificent castle setting forms the historic town quarter. The former Stuarts' Townhouse on the High Street is a rare example of 17th century domestic architecture in Argyll.

2.2 Commercial Centre

Social and economic growth encouraged the progressive reclamation of the shoreline north of Rothesay Castle during the later 18th century. The principle shopping street (Montague Street) and surrounding area demonstrates the prosperity of the late Georgian period, characterised by simple but robust buildings with Classical refinements such as splayed corners and articulated stonework. Their cohesive form gives a strength and sophistication to the town character, unusual for a small island. A significant amount of historic shops remain in the commercial core representing periods of expansion in the late 19th century and the 1930's.

2.3 Seaside Resort

Development of Rothesay as a holiday option commenced in the early 19th century and rapidly expanded when Glasgow's growing working class were able to take ships 'doon the watter'. The seafront streets, the Esplanade Gardens and its harbours provide an exemplar of the Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort. The Georgian classicism was embellished with more elaborate individual buildings such as Duncan's Halls and the Winter Gardens, and Glasgow-style tenements were built cheek to jowl amongst earlier terraced cottages creating a vibrant townscape.

3. THE NEED FOR ACTION

3.1 NEGATIVE FACTORS

A number of negative factors are identified in the 2010 Character Area Appraisal that detract from the special significance of the town centre.

Buildings at risk: buildings which have significant threats to their survival. The Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland currently records a number of properties with the Character Area.

The Register is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland, and provides information on properties of architectural or historic merit throughout the country that are considered to be at risk.

Gap sites: building loss through demolition; lack of redevelopment.

Dereliction: severely neglected buildings incapable of use or adaptive reuse in their current condition.

Vacancy and Under-use: Capable of reuse but lying empty or partly used.

Need for repair: through poor maintenance; life expiry of building fabric; prolonged lack of investment; low property values.

Lack of maintenance: difficulties due to multiple ownership; safe access to repair high level areas; high cost; low use of factoring arrangements.

Inappropriate repair: non-traditional materials or techniques; poorly executed repairs.

Damaging small changes: loss of architectural character through incremental changes to building elements – windows, doors, roofs, chimneys, dormers, shopfronts.

Inappropriate changes in scale: modern redevelopment which does not respond sympathetically to its townscape context.

Connectivity: where the ease of pedestrian movement through an area is impaired.

Public realm: issues relating to the design and management of public spaces.

Street furniture: issues affecting to the detail of the public realm.

The historic legacy and individuality of Rothesay Town Centre is a finite resource and these negative factors continue to threaten its special character and appearance.

3.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The overarching socio-economic factors which contribute to the need for continued action in the Town Centre Character Area are as follows:

3.2.1 Decline in Seaside Resorts and Town Centres

Rothesay is a traditional seaside resort and the main shopping centre for the Isle of Bute. Many seaside resorts and town centres throughout the

UK have experienced considerable social and economic challenges during the latter half of the 20th century. As an island location, Rothesay has suffered particularly from its demise as a significant holiday destination, with associated depopulation and lack of investment. Nevertheless, Rothesay's special qualities and distinctive identity rely heavily on its role as a seaside resort: a retail centre: and a historic attraction, which in turn make it a pleasant place to live, work and visit.

3.2.2 Neglect and Deterioration

The built environment of Rothesay Town Centre is vulnerable due to a number of factors, often correlated. Significant levels of long-term under investment, combined with a predominantly 19th Century building stock and a depressed economic setting has led to high levels of deteriorating fabric, under use and vacancy. Over a relatively short period of time these factors will lead to further progressive decline. Ultimately, if not reversed, this will lead to dereliction, with the real threat of demolition and the creation of further gap sites.

The poor condition of the building fabric is a result of a lack of regular maintenance and repair. This is exacerbated and underpinned by a number of local and specific issues:

- The severely exposed maritime location (accelerating decay and increased effects of climate change).
- Multiple ownership with limited factoring agreements (complicating implementation of repair works).
- No planned maintenance or inspection regimes.
- Accessibility for basic maintenance / repair operations (access to rear elevations).
- Economic factors (high cost of repairs relative to low property values; changing demographic profiles).

Once a building descends into disrepair it can become increasingly complex and expensive to rectify. In some instances poor quality, partial or inappropriate repairs have been made. In other instances buildings have been vacated and left to

lay derelict, threatening the building's ability for reuse and repair.

3.2.3 Incremental damaging changes

Small, incremental inappropriate changes, can damage the quality and appearance of historic buildings and spaces that contribute to the character of the conservation area. Significant levels of damaging change are evident in the Rothesay Town Centre including:

Loss of original timber sash and case windows and inappropriate replacement in a variety of configurations, opening methods and materials (uPVC, aluminium).

Unsympathetic modern shopfronts or inappropriate interventions (fascias, signage, entrance doors, colours).

Loss of visual character of roofscapes (chimneys, dormer windows, decorative ironwork, rain water goods) and the use of non-traditional materials.

3.3 PLACE MANAGEMENT

In the built environment, a significant role is played by the public realm: open space and landscaping: traffic management and parking: street furniture and signage. A number of challenges and opportunities remain:

- The need for improved wayfinding signage to encourage footfall into and throughout the town centre.
- Improved connectivity between the ferry terminal to the Bute Discovery Centre and connection to Montague Street.
- Need for improved connectivity where Montague Street meets Guildford Square and the route across the square to Albert Place.
- Need for improvement to the public realm to Guildford Square.
- Need for improvement to the to the pedestrian un-friendly Bishop Street / East Princes Street junction.

3.4 RESPONDING TO THE ISSUES

3.4.1 Rothesay Townscape Heritage Initiative

The impact of Rothesay Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in addressing these negative factors and enhancing the character area has been hugely significant.

Centralised to a small core target area encompassing Guildford Square and East Princess Street, the partnership project (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Argyll & Bute Council, LEADER) represents a total public / private investment in the town centre of approximately £4.2 million. The THI has spanned over a five year period from 2011 to 2016.

The outcomes of the THI can be summarised as follows:

4 tenements have been comprehensively repaired and the threat of dereliction alleviated:

- 21-27 Montague Street
- 11-13 Montague Street
- Duncans Halls. 19-25 East Princess Street
- Guildford Court. 1-5 Watergate and 13 Albert Place

8 smaller scale building repair projects have brought buildings back into a good state of repair.

- MacQueens Butchers. 1-3 Bishop Street – comprehensive fabric repairs
- Tenement at 4 Bishop Street – roof and masonry repairs
- Black Bull PH – leadwork repairs to flat roof
- 5-9 Montague St – grant towards roof re-slating and window repairs
- 10-14 West Princes St – roof repairs
- 11 Albert Pl – rainwater good repairs
- 7 Castle St – leadwork and doorway restoration
- 4-7 East Princes St – roof repairs

12 shop fronts have been repaired or restored.

The prominent gap site to Guildford Square has been redeveloped.

All grant assisted properties in multiple ownership now have constituted Owner's Associations. Individual management and maintenance plans

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have been drafted (with implementation as a condition of grant).

As a result of the THI programme of building repair the character of Guildford Square and the East Princes Street area has been protected and immeasurably enhanced. The threat of progressive decline to important key buildings has been halted.



Guildford Court - 1-5 Watergate and 13 Albert Place

local contractors in traditional repair techniques and materials. The training and events programme (June 2011 – March 2016) can be viewed via the following link:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/overview_training_eventsprogramme.pdf



MacQueens of Rothesay Butchers. 1-3 Bishop Street



Duncans Halls - 19-25 East Princess Street



Completed shopfronts – East Princess Street

A programme of activities has also been delivered to run alongside the construction work in order to improve building conservation skills, encourage regular building maintenance and to promote and celebrate the unique character of Rothesay and the wider Island. A clear outcome is the up skilling of

It can therefore be demonstrated that Rothesay THI has delivered on the key objectives of the Management Plan however, the socio – economic conditions remain fragile and the identified negative issues still pertain to the wider town centre area out with the scope of the THI scheme.

There is therefore a definitive need for a second phase of regeneration that builds upon achievements to date and continues momentum.



Guildford Square – 15-19 & 21-27 Montague Street

3.4.2 The Royal Hotel

The Royal Hotel has been the subject of various emergency temporary repair works carried out between 2013 and 2015, by Argyll and Bute Council under statutory urgent works notice (Under section 49 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997).



The Royal Hotel – Post emergency stabilisation works 2014

As a conclusion of this intervention the Royal has been saved from certain demolition. The building

shell is now in secure condition awaiting the implementation of a comprehensive scheme of repair.

3.4.3 The Former Stuarts' Townhouse

The former Stuarts' Townhouse (Category A Listed) is of exceptional significance. It is the only surviving 17th century building in Argyll and Bute. It has recently undergone a comprehensive fabric repair programme of works, completed by Mount Stuart Trust in 2016.



The Former Stuarts' Townhouse

4. MANAGEMENT POLICIES

A key objective of Argyll and Bute Council's Historic Environment Strategy 2015 – 2020 is to promote positive development management and intervention for Argyll and Bute's Historic Environment.

In order to meet the core objective of preservation and enhancement of the historic character and appearance of the Character Area the Council will uphold the use of Local Development Plan Policies, Supplementary Guidance as well as apply policies and guidance defined at a national level.

4.1 LEGISLATION and NATIONAL POLICY

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, provides the legislative framework to listed buildings and conservation areas, setting regulatory measures covering

development and statutory designations. Scheduled monuments are given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

A national policy framework includes, Scottish Planning Policy 2014, Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement 2016, Scheduled Monument Consent Procedures 2015 and Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance note series.

4.2 LOCAL POLICY

4.2.1 Argyll and Bute Local development Plan March 2015

Policy LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment.

'A Development proposal will not be supported when it does not protect, conserve or where possible enhance the established character of the built environment in terms of its location, scale, form and design.'

4.2.2 Local development Plan – Supplementary Guidance.

Development proposals are also expected to be consistent with Supplementary Guidance in particular the following :

SG LDP ENV 16(a) Development Impact on Listed Buildings

SG LDP ENV 16(b) Demolition of Listed Buildings

SG LDP ENV 17 Development in Conservation Areas and Special Built Environment Areas

SG LDP ENV 18 Demolition in Conservation Areas

SG LDP ENV 19 Development Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monuments

SG LDP ENV 21 Protection and Enhancement of Buildings

SG LDP ADV 1 Advertisements

SG LDP Shop front - Shop front / Advertising Design Principles

SG LDP RET 2 Change of Use to and from Use Class 1 (Shops) in the Core Shopping Areas of the Main Town Centre.

4.3 ADVICE on PROCEDURES

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment 2012 introduced changes to the regulations governing planning permission in Scotland. Under the terms of the Amendment, permitted development rights for householders have been removed from conservation areas.

Conservation area designation means that planning permission from Argyll and Bute Council will be required for most works including the following :

- New development including, property extensions, enlargements, improvements or other alterations including roof, window or door replacements.
- Works within the curtilage of a dwelling house.
- Minor operations e.g. repainting, or works to masonry such as painting and stone cleaning.
- Changes of use or temporary buildings.
- Hard surfacing within the curtilage of a dwelling house.
- Changes to any part of a boundary wall, railings, gates or other enclosure.
- Demolition.
- Removal of or works to trees.
- Works which materially affect the character of a building.
- Advertisements.

Listed Building Consent will be required for works to all Categories of Listed Buildings.

When considering the need for planning and or Listed Building Consent contact should be made with the Council's Local Development Management Team prior to any works starting on site.

Further information is available at Argyll and Bute Council's Historic Environment web page on Listed Buildings:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/listed-buildings>

4.4 APPLICATIONS for DEVELOPMENT

Applicants for new or re-development on sites within the conservation area will be required to submit a Design Statement to explain the principles on which the development is based and to illustrate the philosophy behind the proposed design solution. A conservation statement should be included that takes account of the Town Centre Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The conservation statement should include the following information:

- How the development reflects the objectives of this management plan.
- How the proposal secures the repair and retention of features of historical value and detail.
- How the proposal reflects and responds to the area's special townscape, architectural and visual qualities as set out within the Rothesay Conservation Area: Town Centre Character Area Appraisal.
- How the new development or alteration provides for positive enhancement to the character and appearance of the Character Area.

For guidance on the content and structure of Design Statements refer to PAN 68 – Design Statements published by the Scottish Executive.

For further guidance on the above matters applicants are advised to contact the local Development Management team. Application forms and guidance for making an application are also available from Argyll and Bute Council's web site - <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/make-planning-application>

4.5 PROTECTING AGAINST INAPPROPRIATE SMALL SCALE CHANGE

Original architectural detail and the use of traditional materials makes a defining contribution

to the character and appearance of the town centre. A focus on retention and appropriate repair is an important criteria in the context of preservation and enhancement. Inappropriate change such as, windows, doors, shopfronts and the loss of building elements such as chimney stacks has eroded, to some extent, the appearance of the area. Such change on a singular basis may be seen as small but incrementally will lead to a detrimental loss of character.

The continued reversal of the trend is therefore important.

Outlined below are the most significant contributing factors in cumulative loss of character.

4.5.1 Windows



51-53 High Street. A good example of traditional timber sash and case windows and a demonstration of their importance to the overall character of the building. 6 over 6 glazing pattern formed with astragals.

The prevailing original window type within the character area is timber sash and case. It is important to acknowledge that considerable character is gained from the window fenestration for the majority of late Georgian / early Victorian tenement buildings within the town centre. Unfortunately the appearance of many buildings has been compromised by the inappropriate use of PVC windows or by the loss of glazing patterns (astragals).

Continued positive action is required to ensure that window repair and replacement is carried out to safeguard and enhance the character of the building.

Existing sash and case windows should be repaired whenever possible. Repairs should be on a like for like basis and can include effective draught proofing measures. Re-glazing with slim profile double glazing units, manufactured specifically for sash and case windows, can in many cases be successfully incorporated into existing frames. Such overhaul, carried out by experienced contractors can extend serviceable life for modest cost.

Replacement of historic windows will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that they have deteriorated beyond practical repair. In such cases the replacement windows should replicate the historic design, in terms of proportion, section sizes, astragal arrangement and profile and material. Details such as the presence of horns and the method of glazing fixing (putty), paint coatings and colour should be considered. The use of externally visible proprietary trickle vents and dry glazing beads should be avoided.

Where previously inappropriately replaced or altered the reinstatement of windows in keeping with the character of the building will be encouraged and supported.

For detailed information on policy reference should be made to Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Windows.

Further detailed information is also available within Rothesay Town Centre Character Area – THI Window Advice Note.

4.5.2 Roofs

Roofs and associated features such as chimneys, dormer windows, rainwater goods and detailing are a key constituent of the character of the town centre. Roofs can be essential to the character of buildings on an individual basis or collectively when viewed as a grouping. This is especially prevalent with regards to the traditional collective roofscape

of the town centre and the ability to view from higher vantage points. The dominant roofing type within the proposed conservation area is traditional pitched roofs in Scottish slate.



Rothesay Town Centre Roofscape



Re-slatted roof using traditional Scottish slate in diminishing courses and random widths at MacQueens of Rothesay Butchers 1-3 Bishop Street.

To safeguard and enhance positive action is required to ensure that the repair of historic roofs is carried out using appropriate traditional materials and detailing. It is important to note that with regular maintenance traditional materials such as slate, lead and cast iron can be extremely durable.

Existing slate should be re-used whenever possible with any new slate required to make up any shortfall sourced to provide a good match in terms of size, thickness and colour and laid in the same coursing pattern – particularly important are graded lengths (diminishing courses) and random widths. Poor quality or synthetic slate or concrete tiles should be avoided. The use of concrete tiles is particularly visually intrusive, they raise the finished surface of the roof disrupting relationships with skews and chimneys and surcharge additional weight onto the roof structure.

Roof fixtures such as aërials, satellite dishes, vents should be carefully sited to ensure that they are not visible from ground level or break the profile of the roof at ridges and chimney stacks.

Where a roof has been previously altered the reinstatement of traditional materials and form will be encouraged and supported.

Chimneys make an important contribution to the character of a roof and should be retained. Where repair is required this should be on a like for like basis using traditional materials with particular attention to details such as cornices, copes and chimney pots. Where major intervention is required due to structural issues there will be a presumption that chimneys should be reconstructed on a like for like basis.

For detailed information on policy reference should be made to Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Roofs.

For information on roof mounted renewable energy systems such as photovoltaic panels refer to Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Micro Renewables.

5. OPPORTUNITIES for DEVELOPMENT

There is a presumption against new development within the conservation area which would harm its character or appearance, however, it is important to define that proposals that only deliver a neutral effect will not be sufficient. Local plan policy and supplementary guidance promotes positive

intervention with an emphasis on high quality design with the core objective of enhancement and contribution to a sense of place.

There are a number key sites within the Town Centre Character Area:

5.1 The Royal Hotel

The former Royal Hotel is a key Rothesay building.



The Royal Hotel – Elevation to Albert Place.

Situated to the corner of Albert Place and Bishop Street, the Category B Listed building occupies a highly prominent and central corner position on the sea-front, directly opposite the ferry terminal. It is characteristic of the development of Rothesay as an important resort location from the early 19th Century and exhibits a civic style which is more common in a larger urban setting. The classical detailing is prevalent in number of Rothesay late Georgian and early Victorian buildings.

The Royal is therefore significant in terms of local townscape, aesthetic, architectural and historical value.

In its present condition, while secure, the building is a negative factor impacting on the water front setting to Albert Place. Such is the prominence of the Royal it currently detracts from special character of the town centre on approach and arrival by sea.

The fabric repair of the Royal would significantly enhance the grouping of the Bishop Street/Albert Place/Watergate/West Princes Street urban block (The group listing of the block is Category B) and would consolidate the investment made in the repair of Guildford Court (the opposite bookend block).

The redevelopment of the building is of vital importance in terms of economic regeneration of the town centre

The current vacant units at ground level, the former Anchor Bar, and the large corner unit (formerly a bookmaker) would present significant opportunity to provide activation at street level at an important node point. The critical requirement now is to secure an economically sustainable new use or uses in order that a full programme of works to ensure a long term future for the building can be realised.

An evidence based options appraisal, to assess viable, deliverable and sustainable end use(s), would be of intrinsic value at this key stage. Such a study could also develop a phasing strategy and identify potential funding streams.

5.2 Tenement at 72-74 Montague Street.



72-74 Montague Street

This early 19th Century tenement (Category C Listed) is an important building located to the centre of Montague Street. It is essential to the

Georgian character of Rothesay's principle shopping street. The upper two floors are derelict and have been fully vacant since 1996. Only one of the two ground floor commercial units (The Grapes Bar) is in use.

The tenement is listed in the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.

Returning the building to full use either through residential redevelopment of the upper floors, or possibly through adaptive new uses, together with comprehensive external fabric repair works would significantly enhance the character and economic profile of Montague Street. Although much smaller in scale than the Royal Hotel an evidence based option appraisal would be of similar intrinsic value.

5.3 Gap sites

There are a number of key gap sites remaining within the Town Centre.

Most prominent is the large gap site to Montague Street (adjacent to the tenement at 72-74 Victoria Street) and the small site to Watergate at the south east corner of Guildford Square.



Watergate gap site

The gap site at the corner of Castle Street and Watergate is also significant.

The various sites all erode the perimeter condition of urban block in which they are located and break the continuity of building line and frontage. They

also allow the once fully enclosed back court areas to be viewed from the surrounding streets. Collectively the gap sites detract from the special character of the Town Centre and are very visible examples of the vulnerable socio – economic conditions.



Montague Street gap site. Note how the once fully enclosed back court areas can now be viewed from the principal street.



Gap site at the corner of Castle Street and Watergate

A long-term objective would be to realise the development opportunity that each site represents, with new build infill schemes actively supported.

Appropriate high quality design responses based on an understanding of the significance of each site

and analysis of setting, context, character, historical development, sense of place and context should be encouraged.

5.4 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

New Design in Historic Settings published by Historic Scotland and Architecture + Design Scotland sets out broad principles on how good design in historic settings can be achieved.

Argyll and Bute Council – Sustainable Design Guidance 3 – Working with Argyll and Bute’s Built Heritage is also relevant.

6. OPPORTUNITIES for ENHANCEMENT

The following represent initial suggestions for opportunities to enhance the proposed conservation area over the duration of potential short, medium and long term timescales.

6.1 SHOPFRONTS

‘Shops are a crucial part of the economic, aesthetic and historic element of any town. They make a significant contribution to the townscape and economically are vital for tourism. The appearance of shops, modern and traditional, matters to the vitality and viability of a place.’ 1.

1. Rothesay Historic Shop Appraisal. Lindsay Lennie 2010.

Shopfronts are intrinsic to the character and vitality of Rothesay’s street scape.

Montague Street remains the Town Centre’s principle shopping street. The commercial core also encompasses Victoria Street, Tower Street, East Princes Street and West Princes Street.

The continuation and furtherance of vibrant retail operation and bringing vacant shop units back into use is of vital economic importance.

Many of the Town Centre’s historic shopfronts are completely intact, some have been partially altered or replaced. Unsurprisingly there has been loss of some architectural detail to shopfronts particularly in relation to inappropriate colour, signage and shopfront design. The key historic retailing character is, however, very much apparent.

Conserving and enhancing the historic features of shopfronts not only enhances shopping streets but can bring economic benefits by encouraging tourism and increased footfall.

The improvement of shopfronts through repair and reinstatement of traditional detail, to consolidate the shopfront work carried out under Rothesay THI, would be an ideal enhancement opportunity.



Original tradition shopfronts to 75 / 77 Victoria Street

The drafting of a Rothesay Shopfront Improvement and Maintenance Guide to offer practical guidance and advice on how to improve and maintain traditional shopfronts would be of real benefit. Such a guide would aim to help traders and owners care for and enhance their shopfronts in a positive and appropriate way.

For detailed policy information reference should be made to:

Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Charge in the Historic Environment – Shopfronts and their Short Guide series - Traditional Shopfronts - A short guide for shop owners

Argyll and Bute Council Supplementary Guidance SG LDP Shop Fronts and Advertising Design Principles.



Victoria Street Shopfront study – shopfronts as existing. Inappropriate design and colour



Victoria Street Shopfront study – shopfronts as proposed to restore original character

6.2 THE WINTER GARDENS

The Winter Gardens (Category A Listed) are of great significance. Located in the most prominent of positions within the Esplanade Gardens it remains as an example of extravagant seaside architecture. It is a unique Rothesay landmark building. It is also one of the most important pieces of work from the renowned Saracen Foundry (Walter MacFarlane & Co) that still survives in Scotland.



The Winter Gardens – main entrance elevation

The prefabricated structure is in a deteriorating condition with active corrosion evident in numerous external locations.

A comprehensive understanding of the condition of the structure, its repair needs and the level of necessary intervention is now required as a first step. This will necessitate the input of specialist conservators that have detailed knowledge and experience of cast iron prefabricated structures. Such a study will support and inform Visit Scotland in defining a repair strategy and provide a clear plan of action with regards to prioritisation of the works.

As the Isle of Bute Discovery and Visit Scotland Information Centre the building functions as a key first stop destination for tourist visitors to the island. Its proximity to the ferry terminal and setting within the Esplanade Gardens are ideally placed. There are, however, opportunities to enhance pedestrian connectivity and accessibility. In tandem with the condition appraisal, a study to potentially look at enhancement of the building's east and north faces and in particular, how the eastern edge could open to the esplanade gardens would be worthy consideration.

6.3 INAPPROPRIATE MODERN DEVELOPMENT

There are several late 20th century buildings that detract from the special character of the Town Centre. They generally have a poor contextual

relationship with their setting and are of a scale, form and materiality that do not respond well with neighbouring buildings.



Rothesay Library – Stuart Street



Telephone Exchange and Office Building

It is, however, important to reinforce contemporary buildings can enhance a conservation area and that good quality contemporary design will be supported.

Although there is a presumption against demolition within the conservation area, where the building is of poor design and detracts from its immediate context, its replacement with a high quality design that is carefully considered to make

a positive contribution to the visual character of the area should be supported.

Clearly, a long-term strategy needs to be adopted, however, such buildings often have a limited serviceable life before major investment to ensure fit for purpose use is required. In each case a development brief would be an appropriate first step in any re-development.

6.4 BUILDING MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

6.4.1 Maintenance

Crucial to the preservation and enhancement of character and appearance is regular maintenance. Significant and costly repairs can be avoided by systematic annual inspections and dealing with small issues quickly. Early action “stitch in time” repair is far more beneficial in the long term.

Argyll and Bute Council’s Historic Environment web page on Maintaining a Historic Building provides a resource of information:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/maintaining-historic-building>

Rothesay tenement maintenance guide published by Rothesay THI provides clear guidance on issues relating to the maintenance of typical Rothesay tenement properties:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/RothesayTenementMaintenanceGuide.pdf>

The on-line resource Under One Roof provides impartial advice on repairs and maintenance for flat owners in Scotland:

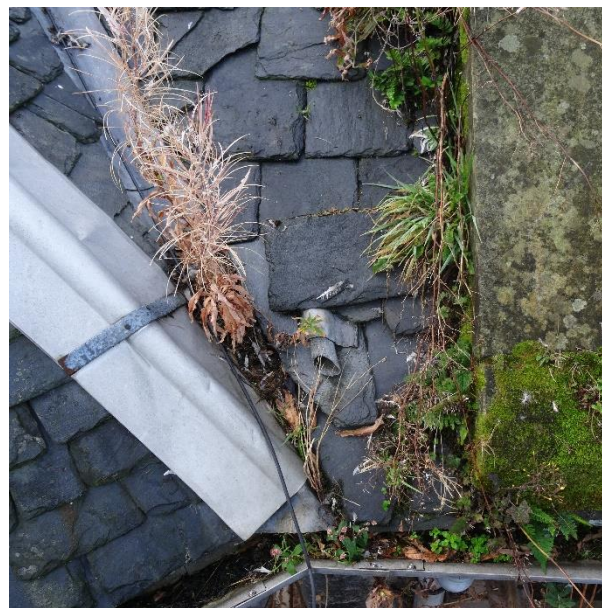
<http://www.underoneroof.scot>

There are key local issues that require consideration:

Maritime location:

The maintenance requirement of buildings is very much dictated by Rothesay’s coastal location. Building fabric is continually exposed to severe weather conditions, however, the extent of avian activity at roof level necessitates a higher frequency of maintenance work. Roofs are

continually affected by the accumulation of bird guano. This means that gutters very quickly become fully choked. If not attended to the discharge of rainwater at wall head level can quickly lead to significant problems (timber decay and fabric deterioration through moisture ingress). Bird nests, particularly gulls can cause blockages and choke outlets and is a yearly problem during the bird nesting season.



Typical tenement roof – heavy vegetation growth to valley and skew. Cutters completely blocked. Slater work in poor condition

Rear elevations:

The urban block pattern in many circumstances does not permit vehicular access to the rear of buildings.

This inhibits the use of a Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWP) to carry out inspection and maintenance work. Access is further restricted to the blocks that have a commercial ground floor, prevalent to the main shopping streets, where single storey extensions to provide increased retail space have utilized the majority or in some cases all of the external back court space. This means that the erection of scaffold to the rear of buildings can be prohibitively expensive (due of complexity of design and requirement for structural support).

Much of buildings within the town centre have been repointed to the rear with a heavy cement based mix. While the locally sourced igneous and metamorphic rubble is not affected, the imported

pink sandstone dressings – consistently used for window cills, lintels and rybats (possibly imported from quarries located in North Ayrshire and West Renfrewshire) are particularly susceptible to accelerated decay. The extent of the associated repair works can be significant.



The rear of various buildings to Victoria Street – numerous single story extensions at ground level preventing simple access to upper floors



Typical rear rubble stonework – cement pointing and decay of window surround stonework

The difficulties with access is a major inhibitor to routine maintenance and the effects of inappropriate cement repointing can be significantly damaging. The fabric condition of many rear facing roofs and elevations of buildings within the town centre is as a result very poor.

In response, a range of home owner focused activities could be developed that:

- Assist and support collaborative working to develop constituted owners' associations to allow owners to become proactive in managing their properties.
- Continue to target homeowners with activities and support to enable a better understanding of maintenance requirements, common building problems and appropriate traditional repair methods and materials.
- Assess the viability for a locally based property factoring business model. This would specifically focus on providing owners with a cost effective and accessible service that would facilitate basic maintenance (roof inspections, gutter cleaning) on a routine cyclical basis. Such a factoring service would consider the most cost effective methodologies for rear elevation access. Specific training in steeplejack/roped access techniques should be considered.
- Guidance on bird control methods.

6.4.2 Building Repair

Rothsay's building stock continues to suffer from a widespread and prolonged lack of investment. This is evident through the poor condition of many historic buildings within the town centre. As stated in section 3.3.1 the 2011 / 2015 THI scheme, through a programme of building repair, has protected and immeasurably enhanced the character of Guildford Square and the East Princess Street. The immediate water front view of Rothsay on arrival by ferry has, as a result, been significantly improved. However, due to the similar age and circumstance of the majority of buildings there is a need for continued large scale repair.

In terms of priority and greatest need, the repair of the listed buildings to Victoria Street would consolidate the improvements to the water front in a westerly direction. Enhancement of the backdrop to the esplanade gardens and immediate

setting of the Winter Gardens would also be achieved.

Comprehensive repair of both corner buildings forming the junction to Tower Street would enhance connectivity and footfall to Montague Street.



Tower Street at the junction with Victoria Street leading to Montague Street. View from the Winter Gardens

6.5 PUBLIC REALM

There are several public realm / open space related enhancements that can be considered:

6.5.1 Wayfinding and signage.

There is an opportunity to enhance signage to enable better pedestrian connectivity from the ferry terminal to strategic locations within the town centre. This would encompass:

- Enhanced pedestrian connection from ferry disembarkation to the Discovery Centre via the esplanade gardens.
- Connectivity between the Discovery Centre and Tower Street to direct and encourage footfall to Montague Street.

A new signage strategy would present an opportunity to consider an appropriate design narrative, simplification of existing signage and an overall visual continuity.



Poor linkage between ferry terminal and esplanade gardens with the Winter Gardens in the background.



Directional signage and Cal Mac signboard at corner of West Pier and Guildford Square

6.5.2 Guildford Square.

The public realm to Guildford Square could be improved. The raised stepped flood defences act as a barrier to pedestrian flow and the amalgamation of surface finishes, street furniture car parking and balustrades could be visually better integrated in response to the square's civic function.

A public realm strategy to enhance Guildford Square including the enclosing streets should be a long-term aim.



Guildford Square when viewed from West Pier

6.5.3 Bishop Street / Albert Place / East Princes Street.

The existing junction at Bishop Street / Albert Place / East Princes Street could be significantly enhanced. The existing roundabout, car parking, traffic barriers and surface treatments visually detract from the character of this important node point and do not respond well to the quality of setting created by the surrounding buildings.



East Princes Street / Bishop Street / Albert Place road junction and car park. The Royal Hotel to the foreground

The relationship of the immediate public realm to a redeveloped Royal Hotel will also be an important consideration.

6.5.4 Esplanade Gardens.

Prepare a landscape CMP and 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan for the gardens and esplanade.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

The Area Property Action Group (APAG), providing a collaborative Council-wide approach should continue to liaise on matters relating to the management of the Town Centre Character Area. The group allows department the opportunity to share information on the services, landowner details, financial assistance and statutory powers they use. The group comprises of representatives from planning, building standards, environmental health, Council Tax and housing improvement officers.

The use of statutory powers, including enforcement will be considered and used as appropriate.

Public awareness of the Town Centre Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be strengthened to ensure understanding of the importance of the town centre's built heritage.

The Management Plan to be made accessible on the Council's web site to encourage public 'ownership' of the document with more likelihood of action and engagement.

Implementation will also rely on the continued involvement of key stakeholders such as Bute Community Council, Isle of Bute Trust and Alliance for Action.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The conservation area will be monitored and reviewed through the following processes:

Photographic surveys: A detailed photographic survey of all buildings and open spaces within the proposed conservation area has been carried out as part of this review of the Management Plan. This 2017 record will form the basis for monitoring further change.

Observation: Officers from the Local Development Management Team will visit the conservation area on a regular basis.

Monitoring indicators: The implementation and impact of the management strategy will be reviewed against the following indicators :

- Progress in the prevention of inappropriate small scale change and progression to good maintenance and adoption of traditional repair techniques.
- Progression and implementation of the proposed enhancement opportunities.
- The design quality of new development.

The Town Centre Character Area Management Plan will be reviewed cyclically with appropriate updating and revision as required.

9. FURTHER GUIDANCE and USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

9.1 FOR GUIDANCE ON PREPARING AND SUBMITTING A PLANNING APPLICATION

Contact :

Argyll and Bute Council

Milton House, Milton Avenue, Dunoon PA23 7DU

Tel: 01546 605518

Argyll and Bute Council – Make a Planning Application

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/make-planning-application>

Argyll and Bute Council – Planning Application Guidance

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-application-guidance>

9.2 FOR GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Argyll and Bute Council

Our Historic Environment

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/our-historic-environment>

Conservation Areas

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/conservation-areas>

Buildings at Risk

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/buildings-risk>

Policy and Guidance

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/policy-and-guidance>

Historic Environment Strategy

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/hist_env_strat_combined.pdf

Local Development Plan

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/written_statement_0.pdf

Supplementary Guidance

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/supplementary_guidance_adopted_march_2016_b.pdf

Sustainable Design Guides

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/design-guides>

Listed Buildings

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/listed-buildings>

9.3 FOR INFORMATION ON CONSERVATION, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Historic Environment Scotland

Inform Guides – A series of guides providing detailed advice on conservation, repair and maintenance of traditional building elements and materials

https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/?publication_type=36

Short Guide 9: Maintaining Your Home - A Guide for Homeowners

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9b3ca2e8-afcc-42ba-92c3-a59100fde12b>

Sash and Case Windows: a Short Guide for Homeowners

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9ea41caf-aa32-4827-ba08-a59100fea1a3>

Technical Conservation Knowledge Base

<http://conservation.historic-scotland.gov.uk/>

9.4 FOR INFORMATION ON FUNDING

Argyll and Bute Council - Funding

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/funding-and-links>

Historic Environment Scotland - Grants and Funding

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/grants-and-funding/>

9.5 FOR GUIDANCE ON MANAGING CHANGE IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Historic Environment Scotland

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Guidance Notes

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/managing-change-in-the-historic-environment-guidance-notes/>



ROTHESAY TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN - June 2017