



Wadebridge Conservation Area Management Plan

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1 Introduction

This Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) is intended to stand alongside the Character Appraisal. The structure relates directly to that document for easy cross-reference. There is general guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the key elements that contribute to the quality of the townscape. At the end of key sections is a list of best practice bullet points to aid retention of historic character and architectural quality.

It is hoped that the document will act as a reference for all who make decisions which may impact on the special character of Wadebridge – property owners, planners, developers, designers, local authorities and statutory undertakers. It will be available via the internet and in print form through the library, parish council, etc.

Special character is derived from the overall effect of many components and is dependent for its survival on a great number of individuals making informed choices about the management of their own piece of the jigsaw. Some control may be applied by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) through Article 4(2) directions – these bring certain types of permitted development, such as replacement of windows or roofs, under Council jurisdiction.

It is of fundamental importance that owners and contractors recognise that their actions can and do have a significant impact on the quality of Wadebridge. Good decisions and sympathetic works take more thought and can sometimes cost more; but the rewards are great and will be appreciated in decades to come by future generations. There is also the benefit of properties having a higher market value.

Article 4(2) Directions

Under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, a local authority may bring certain permitted development rights under their control – usually by what is known as an Article 4(2) Direction.

There are a range of works that may need to be the subject of an application under an Article 4(2) direction – the most usual are alterations to windows, doors, roofs, chimneys and the like. Controlling the removal of enclosure that may otherwise be vulnerable to alteration, or the painting of certain buildings, are other examples which may be relevant in Wadebridge.

It is beyond the scope of this document actually to specify exact buildings and areas that need to be covered, but the Appraisal goes some way to identifying issues and locations where an Article 4(2) could be usefully employed to protect the special character of Wadebridge.

An alternative approach, and one which is likely to be increasingly used, is to look at Neighbourhood Development Orders or Local Development Orders (both created by the Localism Act), which can achieve the same ends as Article 4 Directions. They do this by specifying works that can be taken out of the Planning system as long as they are tightly controlled by specifying the exact details and agreed design guidance, rather than by introducing further controls.

2 General guidance

Archaeology

The history and nature of Wadebridge means that there is archaeological potential virtually everywhere. Consequently any works that involve excavation may reveal interesting finds.

The National Planning Policy Framework and prior to this Planning Policy Statement 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment has brought into focus the vital importance of understanding the archaeological potential of a settlement, site or building. Desktop study research, Written Schemes of Investigation and, where required and proportionate to the proposed scheme, field evaluation by trenching or remote sensing, should accompany pre-application enquiries and Planning/Listed Building Applications.

If private owners are carrying out work they should be alert to pieces of artefacts, wall footings and changes in the colour of the earth. If such finds are made they should contact the Council for advice. Significant finds ought to be recorded to add to our understanding of historic Wadebridge.

Statutory undertakers carrying out trench work ought to seek advice before starting and agree a watching brief where appropriate – for example if cable undergrounding is carried out.

Where there are conditions attached to any Planning, Listed Building or Conservation Area approval or any other relevant approval requiring archaeological investigation and recording then this work shall be funded by the applicant.

Roofs

The topography and development pattern of Wadebridge are such that the roofscape is of tremendous importance to the overall character of the place. There are so many sensitive views that they cannot all be identified, but the Appraisal highlights some of the principal ones.

Roofscape character is based on the quality and patina of the materials, the form, pitch and orientation of the roofs themselves. Sometimes there is order but most of the attractive roofscapes are more jumbled and dynamic – changing depending on the vantage point. Chimneys break up the roofscape and other quality details, in the form of rainwater goods, etc., add richness on closer inspection.

Slate

Slate is the prevailing roofing material and a good deal of locally sourced historic roofing slate is in evidence. There are fine examples of rag slate roofs and others using smaller slates but also in random widths and diminishing courses.

Today there are a much wider variety of products available. Artificial slates should always be avoided as they inevitably cause serious harm to the quality of the roofscape and often have a shorter life. With natural slate being imported from Spain, South America and China, great care is needed when specifying real slate. Some of these are suitable replacements on non-prominent buildings or new-build, but they are never a satisfactory replacement for historic slate roofing, particularly as north Cornwall has a rich history of providing quality natural roof slates which last for hundreds of years. New slate ought to be fixed using nails – clips are usually specified to compensate for poor slate that splits when holed. Using a correct lap will prevent windlift.

Owners of buildings with rag slate must be aware that the slate will actually have a lot of life left in it but may be suffering from nail rot. Opportunistic contractors will often offer such owners an amazingly cheap price to re-roof in artificial or imported slate, knowing that the rag or random slate they reclaim can be sold on or re-used on much more lucrative work elsewhere.

Chimneys

Loss of chimneys is nearly always detrimental to the character of the roofscape. It is seldom necessary and ought to be resisted. Repair or reconstruction must be the first aim unless there are extenuating circumstances such as serious structural concerns.

Alterations can rob chimneys of their distinctive character by the application of smooth, crisp render that hides stonework or flattens a pleasingly uneven substrate. Removal of drip slates and historic pots also detracts from the character.

Rainwater goods

Most of the historic rainwater goods in the town are cast iron. Traditional gutter profiles – mostly half round or ogee – add to the appearance of individual buildings and collectively enrich whole street scenes. With proper maintenance these items can offer good service for well over one hundred years. When replacement is needed there are plenty of suppliers of historic profiles – many are available factory finished and some in cast aluminium. Plastic is an inferior product which often warps or becomes brittle, it will not last as well or look as good – especially if it has a modern box profile. It does not take paint well but unpainted it soon develops a coating of algae. Like other plastic building products, when it is replaced it has to go to landfill where it will not break down for centuries, so the environmental costs deserve consideration.

Ridges, hips, eaves and verges

Traditional ways of edging roofs are easily lost when roofing work is undertaken. Clay ridge tiles may be replaced by concrete, mitred slate or mortar fillet hips covered by tiles, box soffits replace open eaves or moulded fascias and slated or mortared verges can be lost to boards. All of these apparently slight changes have a cumulative impact that is far greater than each individual act would suggest.

Lead details such as hips ought to be retained and where lead flashings have never existed they should only be added if that can be executed with subtlety. All new leadwork must be treated with patination oil to prevent oxidisation and leaching. Mitred hips should where possible be retained.

Dormers and rooflights

In order to preserve Wadebridge's admirable and highly visible roofscape, the insertion of dormer windows should only be agreed where they are well justified and on roof slopes where the visual impact will be minimal and appear subservient within the overall roof. They must always be based on traditional proportions and designs. Large box-like roof extensions inevitably harm the appearance of the roofscape and should be avoided.

Rooflights can allow the use of valuable roofspace and there are good modern interpretations of low profile metal units available. Where they can be inserted with little impact to townscape views, especially on screened or rear roof slopes, this may be acceptable. The smallest unit needed should be used, rectangular in proportion with their short running horizontal across the roof. Such units should be a quality metal unit with a slender frame. Care should be taken in choosing such units as there are some units on the market purporting to be conservation based models which are not. In

groups or terraces neighbours should try to use rooflights that are complementary in their size, type and location.

Solar Panels

Whilst the Council clearly would wish to promote sound, sustainable energy systems, the choice of such systems can seriously erode the historic integrity of listed and unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas. Therefore careful consideration should be given to their positioning to avoid compromising the character of the historic environment. Very often there are alternative locations away from the historic building where solar panels can be fitted. This may indeed result in such equipment being fixed to less sensitive buildings or ground mounted units which are part of the curtilage. The benefit of fixing such equipment on the ground is that they can be easily maintained.

Alternatively there are less obtrusive solutions available such as ground source heat pumps. Although solar panels can be reversible they can be most damaging to historic roofscapes.

English Heritage has published guidance on this and other renewable energy issues which can be found at:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/climate-change/>

Cornwall Council's own specialist guidance is at:

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=18046>

Roofing: A summary

- Note and record detailing before starting works to enable reinstatement.
- If traditional details are missing look to similar buildings for inspiration.
- Repair local historic rag and scantle slate roofs or re-use in situ.
- Maintain or recreate authentic details to ridges, hips, eaves and verges.
- Repair chimneys and retain historic pot or cowl details.
- Repair or reinstate metal rainwater goods in traditional profiles.
- Avoid dormers unless there is strong justification.
- Only use rooflights sensitively and consider impact on views.

Walls

The palette of materials used to construct and finish the buildings of Wadebridge is varied and they combine to form interesting elevations and street scenes. The choice of materials and how they are used is usually indicative of the age of construction and the status of the building.

Great care and understanding is needed in the repair of all traditional materials in order to prolong their useful life and protect them from decay. Careful appraisal of prevalent materials in a particular locality ought to inform and inspire the designers of new buildings so that contemporary additions enrich the area.

Choice of colour is a matter of taste, but it is worth remembering that plain limewash was almost ubiquitous in the past and only natural pigments were available. Bolder colours like blues and greens were beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest; consequently these colours often seem unsuitable on humbler dwellings.

Stonework

The unifying factor of most buildings in Wadebridge is the use of local slate stone or shillet in construction. A number of buildings, mainly those used for non-domestic purposes, have never been rendered or painted. Although the stone used on these buildings is durable, they are still vulnerable to damage if poorly treated. All stonework must be pointed using lime mortar that flexes with the walls and allows them to breathe. Pointing should also be flush or slightly recessed, especially on wider joints, and should never project in front of the faces. It is a rare skill to lay a quality new stone wall with tight mortar joints. Often stonework is laid with wide joints and stone not laid in its natural bedding plane. This results in an inferior outcome which contrasts to the character of quality traditional work. A well-graded sand free of 'soft' (or fine clayey) particles is best for most work.

Render

Render covers many of the domestic and commercial rubble stone buildings in Wadebridge. Traditionally this render was always lime based and that remains the only sensible choice as cement based renders are incompatible with these building types.

Generally speaking the finish of render is a reflection of the status of the building and/or its function. So functional buildings, humble cottages and the rear elevations of some higher status dwellings have roughcast or float finished render that follows the unevenness of the wall beneath. These renders were hand-thrown to achieve a better key and texture is derived from the coarse aggregate; modern 'tyrolean' type finishes take their texture from cementitious droplets and have a fundamentally different character. Grander and more aspirational buildings have smooth render, sometimes fine stucco; these renders may be lined in imitation of ashlar stonework below. Considerable skill is needed to achieve this type of finish.

The coating of lime renders with modern masonry paint will trap moisture over time and can cause failure of the render. This is often interpreted as the failure of an inferior old fashioned product, but it is in fact the result of conflicting technologies. Where possible historic renders ought to be repaired and retained, with masonry paint removed using specialist stripping products. Limewash remains by far the best and most effective surface coating on old buildings, but it is pointless applying it over paint.

Slate hanging

Slate hanging does occur on a number of buildings in the town often in exposed locations where penetrating damp has been a problem or on elevated side elevations of attached buildings where access is difficult and a durable, low maintenance solution was essential.

Brickwork

There are no historic buildings in Wadebridge entirely constructed from brick, although some of the houses along Fernleigh Road have brick façades. Brick chimneys are, however, found throughout the town and brick is used extensively on later buildings in the form of lintels, decorative window surrounds and quoins. The use of lime mortars for repair is equally important for brickwork.

Walls: A summary

- Traditional finishes should be repaired whenever possible, not replaced.
- Compatible materials and finishes are essential on historic walls.
- Authentic finishes should not be removed or covered.

- Where traditional finishes have been lost, sympathetic reinstatement is desirable.
- Limewash allows old walls to breathe; masonry paint traps moisture.

Joinery

Authentic joinery adds to the historic character and visual quality of the Conservation Area. Wadebridge has a good survival of original joinery, but also a certain amount of replacement, some sensitive but some that is poorly detailed.

At present the replacement of windows and doors is not controlled on unlisted buildings. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) will consider Article 4(2) directions to prevent harmful alterations in the future. It is always preferable, however, for owners to recognise that sensitive maintenance adds value to their own property and contributes to the sense of place.

Historic joinery ought to be seen as antique furniture that changes hands as part of a larger deal and can easily be overlooked. It only takes one owner to destroy the historic appearance of a building by misunderstood, if well-meaning, renovation; with property changing hands as frequently as it does today there is a steady stream of buildings whose luck has run out. There are few people who would throw a two hundred year old chair or table in a skip – their potential value is usually appreciated – yet it happens to windows and doors regularly. These artefacts are a finite resource that embodies the craftsmanship of earlier generations and records the materials and techniques they used.

Unless badly neglected over a long period of time, traditional joinery is rarely beyond repair. In many cases the timber used was so well sourced and seasoned that it is far more durable than any modern alternative. Detail may have been lost by years of painting - great care needs to be taken when stripping paint though as historic paints contained lead. If repair is not possible, replica replacement is the next best thing; though replacement requires the use of primary resources and energy that makes it a less sustainable option. The use of imported hardwood from unsustainable sources ought to be avoided and PVCu has significant issues of sustainability and ecological impact in production and disposal.

There is no product that is maintenance free. Timber needs painting every few years, but each time the result looks fresh and new. After a hundred years or more sash cords or hinges may need renewal; this is quite easily done and gives the unit a new lease of life. When modern opening mechanisms or double glazed units breakdown the answer is replacement of the whole unit – hence the piles of PVCu windows accumulating at recycling centres in the absence of satisfactory means of disposal. The visual inferiority of PVCu windows and doors can easily be seen with their thick frames, smooth textured finish and a bright sheen together with crudely detailed glazing bars and opening mechanisms all adding up to units which have little in common with the detailing and finesse of traditional timber joinery.

Windows

The size, type and design of the windows in an historic building reveal much about its age or development, its use and the status of its occupants in the past. Humbler buildings often have casement windows that vary in design according to age, use and local custom. Sash windows also vary in size and detail according to age and use. The enduring popularity of sash windows reflects their versatility in providing controlled ventilation.

The intrinsic value of the view through an historic window is appreciated by many sympathetic owners. They enjoy the elegance of the glazing bars and enthuse about the distortion and play of light in imperfect historic glass. With care, old glass can be

salvaged and re-used; where it has been lost, modern equivalents can be sourced from specialist suppliers.

When new windows are needed there are a number of issues to consider:

- Proportion and subdivision – The glazing pattern of the original windows ought to be retained, (or restored if lost), as that is a critical part of the whole building. It indicates the size of glass available or affordable at the time of construction.
- Mode of opening – The introduction of top hung or tilt-and-turn opening lights is nearly always visually jarring and harmful to historic character. Overlapping 'storm-seal' type details are an entirely modern introduction and are unnecessary if flush units are properly made. Spring loaded sashes are an inferior replacement mechanism compared with properly weighted double-hung sashes.
- Glazing – Traditional glazing bar profiles, properly jointed and glazed with putty, (or glazing compound), rather than beading, will give a genuine appearance.
- Thermal insulation – Double glazing can rarely be achieved within traditional multiple pane designs without bars being either much too thick or fake. Beading is nearly always added which further detracts from the appearance. Attempting to introduce double glazing into a traditional design usually means a small air gap that hugely reduces the insulation properties anyway. However, there are increasingly ranges of products that are designed to circumvent these issues this and may be appropriate in exceptional cases. Advice and examples can be found on the council website at <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=18046>. The use of shutters and/or insulated curtains can greatly reduce heat loss without the need for window replacement.
- Draught-proofing – The most significant heat loss through old windows is due to poor fitting and lack of draught-stripping. There are proprietary systems that retro-fit draught excluders and greatly reduce the amount of air changes and so heat loss.
- Sound insulation – In noisy locations people often replace windows with modern double glazed units to reduce the problem. In fact secondary glazing is more effective than double glazing and allows retention of traditional windows.
- Sills – Traditional sills should be retained unless beyond repair.

Doors

Doors are just as vulnerable to insensitive replacement as windows. The conservation principles summarised above can be applied equally to doors. Most traditional door types allow for individual expression by painting and attractive ironmongery, etc.

Shopfronts

The survival of historic shopfronts around the town is a reminder of how economic activity, shopping and employment patterns have changed over the years. Although some are now redundant the memory of these local shops needs to be retained – adaptation may not always be easy but it is seldom impossible.

Regarding the surviving shops still in use there are a number of issues that can have a profound impact on the character of the place:

- Retention of features – There are many historic shopfronts in Wadebridge that have had original features removed or obscured. Reinstatement or restoration of these can make a frontage more attractive to customers and boost business as well as allowing the building to be seen at its best.

- Signage – There was a time when the emphasis was on quality, legibility and illustration of function. Over-large, over-fussy, inappropriately gaudy fascias draw attention in the wrong way and detract from neighbouring businesses.
- Design – New shopfronts and signage require planning permission and the LPA will expect these elements to be competently designed to suit their context.

Joinery: A summary

- Historic joinery items add character and quality to the town and ought to be retained and repaired if at all possible.
- When replacement is necessary, this ought to be in exact replica.
- Where joinery has been lost in the past and reinstatement is desirable, look at similar properties in the vicinity for inspiration.
- Design, mode of opening and colour of finish are the most important considerations on unlisted buildings.

Enclosure and open spaces

In the past enclosure was about demarcation and also keeping out passing animals. The spaces generated by enclosure can be of considerable historic interest in their own right, especially where they have a strong association with a particular use e.g. school playgrounds, yards, allotments, etc. Although the planning system rightly encourages the use of brownfield land and infill sites, there are gaps and spaces which deserve protection from development. Sometimes this may be due to specific historic associations with religious groups and the like; in other cases it may simply be the contribution a green space or garden makes to the street scene and the setting of significant buildings. The potential significance of any space must be fully considered if development proposals are made. The desirability of preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area is the fundamental judgement that must be applied; in many cases this will mean that a space is integral to the special character of the place and there should be a strong presumption in favour of protection.

Historic enclosure is threatened with change by the desire for greater privacy – leading to the addition of timber fence panels to old walls for example. Alternatively it may be removed to provide parking. Walls or other means of enclosure more than 1m high fronting a highway (and 2m elsewhere) cannot be demolished without Conservation Area Consent. New walls of those dimensions cannot be erected without Planning Permission.

The tendency towards close-boarded fencing is one that is having a very tangible visual impact. Apart from being a characteristically modern approach, these fences are quite expensive, require regular maintenance over the years and make it difficult to establish planting due to overshadowing and wind damage. Timber fences also tend to be stained in eye-catching colours that are often unsympathetic to an historic setting.

Garden structures can also be jarring elements if poorly located, badly designed or brightly coloured.

Walls

Stone walls are the most common means of enclosure in the town. Appearance varies with age and function but the consistency of material gives a unity to the townscape that can be easily taken for granted. Mortared rubble stone walls are most common and usually have simple copings of slatestone, slate, brick or spar.

For new enclosure in much of the town, stone walling is likely to be the most suitable option, provided the height and style relates to any established local trend.

There are few historic brick walls in Wadebridge and brick should not be used on new work.

There are a few rendered walls but these should not be seen as justification for rendered block walls.

Railings

Whilst not abundant there is clear evidence that cast or wrought iron railings were historically a more significant element of the townscape than today. Like so many places, a lot of ironwork was removed during wartime.

There are some buildings and locations which would benefit considerably from the re-introduction of railings. As well as being attractive items in their own right they also offer definition to the street scene and can be a real enhancement to some types of property. The most common application is on properties with a minimal front garden or yard; in these locations they offer demarcation without visual weight and avoid shading windows or planting.

Hedges

In the more rural parts of the town and where property adjoins farmland, hedges are characteristic. A mixed deciduous planting of hawthorn, field maple, hazel, holly, beech and other indigenous species is most traditional. Within a few years such a hedge can be laid to form a dense and effective boundary that is a wildlife resource that can draw insects, birds and small mammals into gardens.

Single species plantings of beech, yew, laurel or box may be appropriate in some circumstances but are not a practical solution for most places and they demand more maintenance than a rustic mixed hedge.

Modern coniferous hedges support little wildlife and can often be unattractive and not very neighbourly.

Garden structures

The siting of sheds, summerhouses, decking, gazebos or other structures should be sensitively located. If visible locations are unavoidable, good design and naturally painted materials should be used to make the structures less jarring.

Garden structures nearly always need planning permission within the curtilage of a Listed Building. There are also size restrictions for permitted development within the Conservation Area so it is wise to consult the LPA when considering such works.

Enclosure and open spaces: A summary

- Spaces, gardens and yards add to the special character of Wadebridge and ought to be retained if development would mean the loss of an historic and/or attractive element of the townscape.
- Retain historic enclosure and walls/hedges/fences wherever possible.
- If enclosure has been lost, consider the locality and use an appropriate replacement wall, hedge or fence.

Townscape features

In addition to the buildings and walls that give Wadebridge its special character there are other items that make a significant contribution to the overall appearance. There are attractive items that need to be cherished and retained; others are in need of repair or enhancement.

Floorscape

Throughout the town paving is mainly tarmac with concrete kerbs and the carriageways are generally blacktop. If funds were available in the future it would enhance the conservation area if the concrete kerbs could be replaced by granite ones. As regards the blacktop carriageways, in general it is better to use this honest and established surfacing rather than introduce manufactured pavements or similar.

Throughout the town there are small charming survivals of historic paving detailed in the Conservation Area Appraisal - these include areas of cobbles and slate. Existing areas of historic paving should be preserved and repaired when necessary. New paving should never be designed down to a fixed budget; it is better to do a small area to a high standard than to compromise over a larger area. Historic areas which have remained unpaved should continue to be so in order to preserve their informal, semi-rural character.

Seating

There are some thoughtfully located seats around the town where the pedestrian can stop a while and enjoy the place. These seats should be maintained and renewed where necessary.

Signage

In order to avoid clutter and a down-at-heel atmosphere thought should always be given to the placing of signs and the use of good quality materials and design.

Planting

Trees and hedges are an important element of many significant views and their retention is often of considerable importance. Work to trees in Conservation Areas is controlled and owners or contractors must contact the LPA for advice before embarking on felling, topping or lopping works.

Decorative planting has its place in the public realm, but needs to be well planned and maintained to be a positive feature. On private land owners can enhance their little bit of the town with suitable planting – it can often be the finishing touch that makes a location really special.