

Muirhouses

conservation area
appraisal



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Falkirk Council
Development Services



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Muirhouses Conservation Area

1.1.1 This small settlement, dominated by the former estate worker houses, schoolhouse and library, is located to the south east of Bo'ness.

Muirhouses Conservation Area was designated by Falkirk District Council in September 1975. Map 1 attached shows the existing boundary.

1.2 Conservation Areas

1.2.1 Since 1967 local authorities have been able to designate conservation areas i.e. "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The current legislation is laid down in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

1.2.2 The immediate effect of designation is to confer powers on the local authority requiring that planning permission be sought for the demolition of any building and the removal of, or works to, any tree within the area and certain external works which are considered to affect the character or appearance of the conservation area i.e. painting/cladding, utility storage, telecommunication apparatus, hard standing and built extensions beyond certain limits.

1.2.3 Supplementary legislation under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, Article 4 Direction (Appendix A) ensures, where necessary, that planning permission will also be required for other minor works normally considered "permitted development", e.g. window and door replacements and fence heights.

1.3 Reasons for Appraisal

1.3.1 Planning authorities are required by the Act to review their conservation areas from time to time and to consider also proposals for their preservation and enhancement to complement the statutory planning controls.

1.3.2 In addition, Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71 Conservation Area Management (Scottish Government best practice guidance) advises that conservation areas be appraised from time to time in order to:

- confirm the current status and value of the conservation area,
- establish an appropriate area boundary,
- clarify planning controls and guidance to ensure that future, developments are sympathetic to the character of the area,
- identify opportunities for physical enhancement,
- engage with stakeholders through public consultation.

1.3.3 The finalised draft of the Falkirk Council Local Plan (April 2007) endorses this in Policy EQ12 Conservation Areas which states that: "The Council will prepare Character Appraisals of individual Conservation Areas"



2.0 APPRAISAL of CHARACTER and APPEARANCE

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The core elements of the conservation area, the former schoolhouse and library and the 12 semi-detached former estate houses, were built between 1864 and 1874 by Admiral Sir John Hope of Carriden House (now a category A listed building and the focal point of the extensive Carriden Estate which lies to the east and includes a number of individual buildings i.e. the lodge, icehouse, steading and ruined church).

2.1.2 Admiral and Lady Hope were ardent teetotalers and the provision of substantial gardens for pig rearing, in addition to the library, may have been an attempt to provide constructive alternatives to the public house.

2.1.3 The original conservation area boundary was drawn to take in the curtilage of the former estate buildings (all listed), and the associated gardens, extending westward to enclose the listed Grangewells and the unlisted semi-detached Alystra and Eden cottages. In the 35 years since designation the garden enclosures and grounds of Grangewells have been substantially developed with new houses.

2.1.4 Maps 2, 3, and 4 attached show historical development of the area.

2.2 Setting

Area Configuration

2.2.1 The country estate of Carriden, to the east, with its 5 listed buildings and structures, has a clear locational and physical relationship with the former estate workers village at Muirhouses. The modest but characterful estate of Little Carriden adjoins to the south. The site of a Roman Camp, now a scheduled Ancient Monument lies immediately to the west.

2.2.2 The current Muirhouses Conservation Area is predominantly set around a small crossroads at the southern end of Carriden Brae and extends westward along Acre Road giving an overall area of 2.5 hectares. The small group of houses, old and new, at the far end of Acre Road are excluded.

Main Spaces, Edges and Views and New Development

2.2.3 The most striking space is at the crossroads which is fronted all round by the stunningly picturesque former schoolhouse and three L-shaped semi-detached cottages, all category B-listed.

2.2.4 The southern edge looks across open land to the main A993 from which the conservation area offers an attractive frontage, the semi-detached listed Hope Cottages.

2.2.5 The walled enclosure to Carriden Brae forms an eastern boundary to the site and is also a listed feature.

2.2.6 The north west boundary is defined by a dense swathe of tree planting enclosing the grounds of Grangewells. The track approaching from the west allows initial impressions of the attractive houses on this edge of the conservation area.

2.2.7 The north east and south west boundaries adjoin the rear gardens of properties lying outwith the conservation area. The track serving Hope Cottages continues around the corner to the east, forming the edge to the conservation area alongside the fenced and hedged boundary.

2.0 APPRAISAL of CHARACTER and APPEARANCE

2.3 Building Groups

Estate Worker Group

2.3.1 This group consists of the following listed buildings. Listing includes boundary walls and ancillary structures where these exist.

The Library House (1870)
category B

Old School House (1866)
category B

18 & 19 Carriden Brae (1873)
category B

20 Carriden Braes and Carriden Cottage (1864)
category C/S

1 and 2 Hope Cottages (1870)
category C/S

3 and 4 Hope Cottages (1874)
category C/S

5 and 6 Hope Cottages (1874)
category C/S

7 and 8 Hope Cottages/Cleveland (1874)
category B

The buildings have a separate category B listing for their group value.

Historic Phasing

2.3.2 From the above the progress of development can be seen. The first house, an L-shape semi-unit was constructed at the crossroads in 1864, followed closely by the schoolhouse across the road in 1866. The library/house was built in 1870 along with the first semi-terrace unit along the southern boundary. In 1873 another L-shape unit was erected at the crossroads, with the remaining buildings following in 1874.

2.4 Architectural Detail

2.4.1 A unifying architectural style, "cottage orné", is applied to the design of the separate buildings and sub-groupings i.e. the more prominent schoolhouse, the library and the L-shaped and straight semi-cottage units. The main architectural components of this original style are summarised below:

Wall Surfaces:

Sandstone, snecked and tooled, chamfered openings.

Windows:

Casement mechanism, single glazed lozenge pattern leaded lattice (exception - diagonal "brick bond" pattern for Old Schoolhouse). Painted white.

Doors:

Plain timber boarded and painted.

Roofs:

Graded grey Scottish slate/overhanging purlined eaves.

Chimneys:

Sandstone stacks and copes, fireclay pots/cans.

Rainwater Goods:

Black painted cast-iron gutters and downpipes.

Front Garden Enclosure:

Low sandstone rubble walls (all listed) to the more important road edges with supplementary hedges.

2.0 APPRAISAL of CHARACTER and APPEARANCE

2.5 Other Buildings

Grangewells, 1911
(Category. B listed)

- 2.5.1 This important Art Nouveau house by eminent local architect Mathew Steele remains essentially intact within a diminished curtilage.

Alystra and Eden Cottages

- 2.5.2 The conservation area boundary includes this late 19th century 1½ storey sandstone semi-cottage due to its simple charm and symmetry.

New Housing

- 2.5.3 Six large modern houses in individual plots occupy a significant area of former garden ground between the estate worker group and Grangewells on Acre Road.

2.6 Conservation Merit

- 2.6.1 The listed buildings at the heart of the village i.e. the estate cottages, schoolhouse and library, already have the special historic and architectural interest which merits the Category B listing for group value. The extensive stone walled garden enclosures and the picturesque Art Nouveau house known as Grangewells complement this grouping, extending the conservation area to the west. Alystra and Eden Cottages, although unlisted, form a classic stone semi-cottage justifying their inclusion.

- 2.6.2 The main change to the conservation area since designation has been the development of housing within the walled garden grounds between the former Carriden House workers' estate buildings and the prominent Art Nouveau Grangewells.



2.0 APPRAISAL of CHARACTER and APPEARANCE

2.7 Character Erosion

Alterations to Listed Buildings

2.7.1 Whereas the distinctive character of the listed former estate buildings has remained substantially intact the cumulative effect of certain minor yet unsympathetic alterations to the architectural detail, and simple neglect, is noted as follows:

Walls:

Essentially intact except for Schoolhouse: painting of window reveals and east frontage/north, overgrown ivy.

Windows:

Original lozenge pattern windows now only found at the Carriden Brae schoolhouse and 19 Carriden Brae (including unique surviving original blind lattice), 7-8 Hope Cottages (except low west recessed wing). Replaced elsewhere. Window divisions altered at 20 Carriden Brae and Library gable.

Doors:

Modern replacements at 18, 20 Carriden Brae and Schoolhouse only one door original in 1-5 Hope Cottages.

Roofs/Chimneys/Rainwater goods: Slate roofs all intact/ loss of chimney pot from 20 Carriden Brae/ mixed colour finishes to gutters etc. Schoolhouse ridge: chimney stack added/timber decorative finials to gable ends missing.

Front garden Enclosure:

Original sandstone rubble walling exists piecemeal - timber fence over low plinth at Library/18-19 Carriden Brae, high hedging round Schoolhouse, 7-8 Hope Cottages, and 1-6 Hope Cottages frontage mixed hedges.

Dormers:

Dominant modern double dormer to 4 Hope Cottages and single dormer to 6 Hope Cottages on Carriden Brae.

Grangewells

2.7.2 Whilst the building remains superbly intact the garden ground setting has been much reduced by the development of housing within the grounds which is sealed off by high fencing.

New Housing Area

2.7.3 This has undoubtedly affected the spatial character of the area and the designs for the new houses have not added to the conservation area. The development of houses on the site formerly belonging to Grangewells does, however, show more elegance and harmony. It is worth noting, however, that the character of the conservation area could be damaged by further infill development especially if this involved the loss of hedges, walls, fences and mature trees.

Alystra and Eden Cottages

2.7.4 The tidy and matching frontage refurbishment to this attractive semi-detached cottage is acknowledged although the use of wooden windows would have enhanced its conservation value.



2.0 APPRAISAL of CHARACTER and APPEARANCE

2.8 Conservation Area Boundary

- 2.8.1 Although the core buildings benefit from the strongest form of planning control through their listed status, there is continuing merit in retaining them in a conservation area in respect of their whole group value.
- 2.8.2 In respect to the remaining part of the conservation area it is proposed that the boundary should be extended westward to the countryside edge to include Shapinsay, West End and Holland cottages and the Arches, Murray House, Lorelei and Carmaphyl. This should afford greater protection of the setting of the main listed group and better rationalize the boundary alignment. The boundary is also moved to include the stone wall along the east side of Carriden Brae.



3.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSALS

3.1 Planning Permission and Design Advice

3.1.1 It is an offence to carry out certain works without planning permission in a conservation area i.e. any demolition; alterations to the outside of buildings - including painting, replacement of roof coverings, rainwater goods, windows and doors, erection of a satellite dishes, or; alterations or enclosures of outside ground areas, including work to trees.

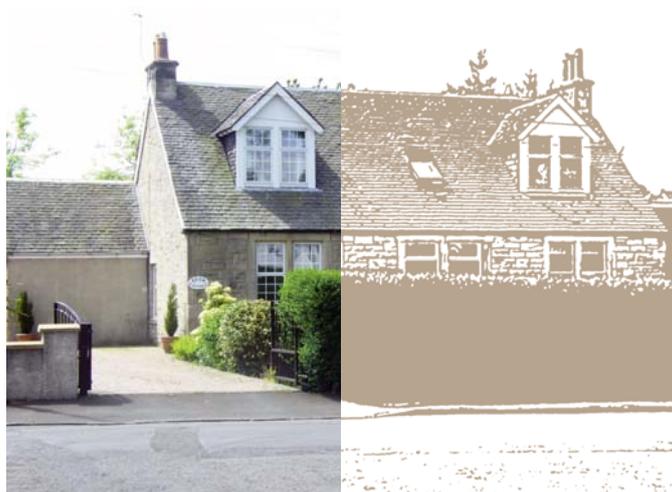
3.1.2 In general like-for-like alteration or replacement of the above elements is favoured. In this respect the advice of Historic Scotland is noted i.e. that planning authorities should seek to preserve the architectural integrity of a building or conservation area, and where some integrity has been lost, encourage its restoration.

3.1.3 In the case of the newer houses every case will be treated on its own merit with a more concessionary approach being taken where proposed alterations are concealed from any street/public area to the rear.

3.2 Enhancement Opportunities

3.2.1 Improvement works to enhance the conservation area, addressing the erosion of character, may be possible to complement the legislative controls. These would, in the first instance, concentrate on the former estate workers building group. The following are some possible opportunities:

- Boundary wall/hedging restoration.
- Window and door matching designs.
- Chimney replacement.
- Modifications to modern dormers.
- Appropriate new street lighting.
- Cable undergrounding.
- Bus shelter triangle improvements.
- Main road traffic calming.
- Removal of ivy from building facades.



4.0 SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 This appraisal has examined the historical, architectural and urban design factors relating to Muirhouses Conservation Area. Its special character is evident in the architectural quality and integrity of this attractive village, set within a pleasant rural environment.
- 4.2 In terms of the 7 houses which now occupy the centre of the conservation area it is acknowledged that the impact of infill development has diminished the spatial character of the area. Nevertheless, the recommendation is to expand the conservation area west to the countryside edge to include the remaining 5 properties accessing Acre Road and east to take in the boundary wall adjoining Little Carriden.
- 4.3 With regards to the most important former estate worker building group some gradual erosion of quality and character has been noted i.e. inauthentic window and door replacements and ad hoc front garden enclosures.
- 4.4 To address these factors this document confirms the works to buildings and associated garden ground which will require planning permission. Guidance on appropriate design solutions is also offered to facilitate such permissions. Lastly, a summary of opportunities is tabled for the preservation and enhancement of the former estate worker group, and the Conservation Area as a whole. Project funding could eventually be sought for these.
- 4.5 Where planning permission is required for alterations to the newer houses a more concessionary approach will be taken where proposals are concealed to the rear.
- 4.6 The information on planning permission, design standards and enhancement opportunities will form the basis of a Conservation Area Management Plan in due course.



Appendix A - ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

The Article 4 Direction for Muirhouses Conservation Area removes “permitted development” rights from certain classes of development additional to the automatic powers granted by conservation area designation.

These classes from the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Scotland) Order 1975 are as follows:

- Class 1 development within the curtilage of a Dwellinghouse
- Class 11 sundry minor operations
- Class X1 development by Local Authorities

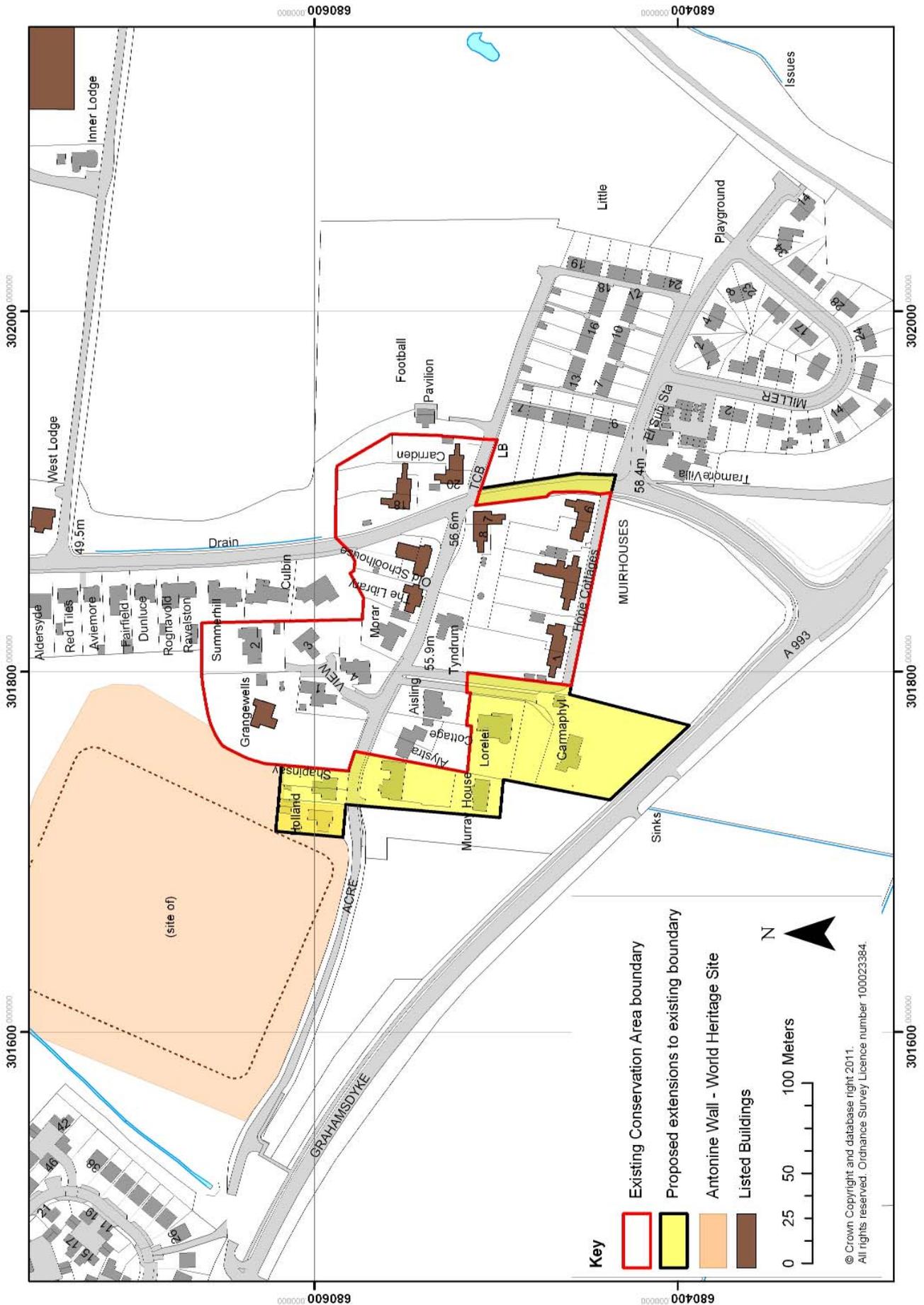
Under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 these classes are re-numbered as follows:

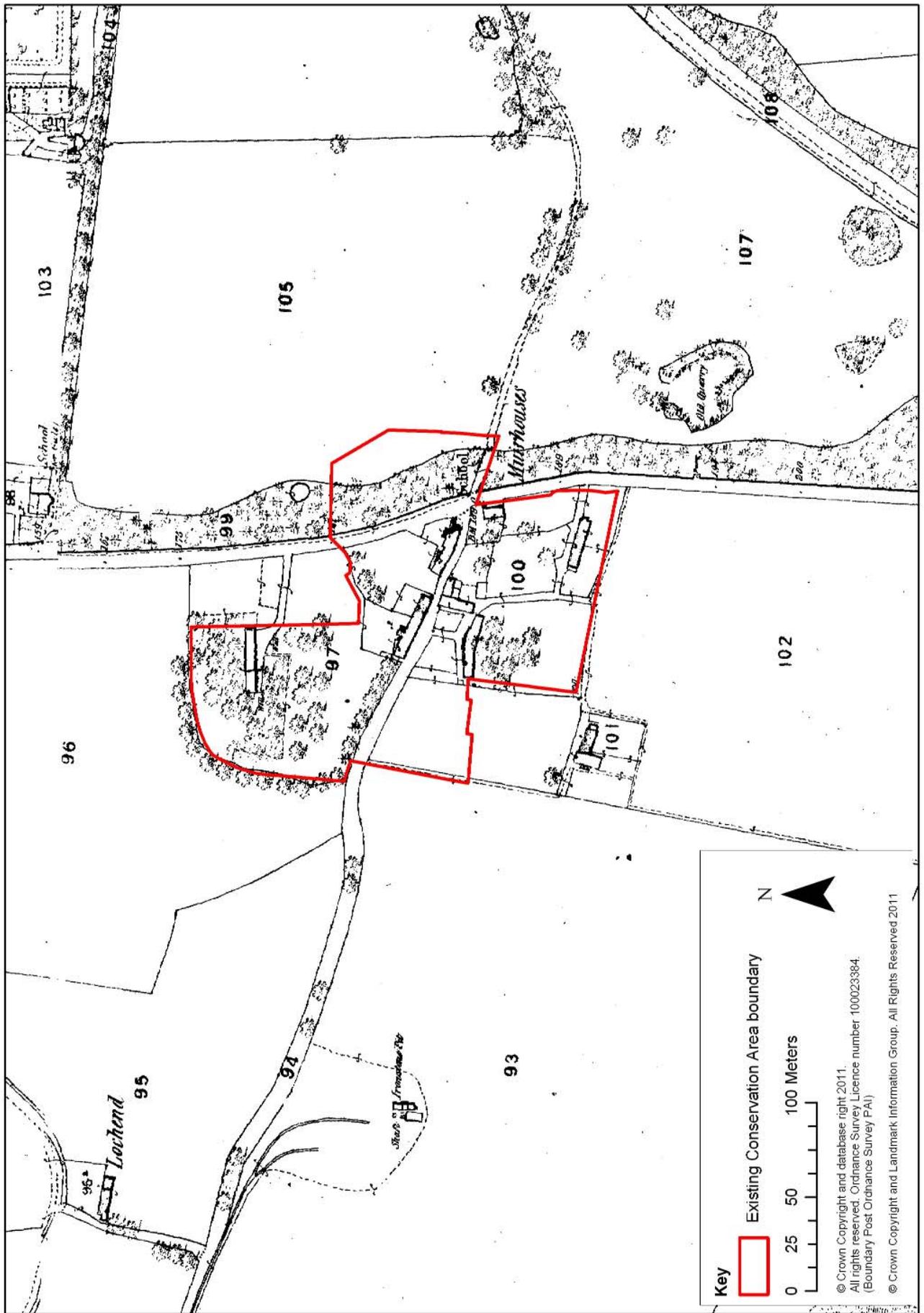
- Class 1-6 development within the curtilage of a Dwellinghouse
- Class 7-9 sundry minor operations i.e. the height of a gate, fence, wall etc.
- Class 30 - 33 development by Local Authorities

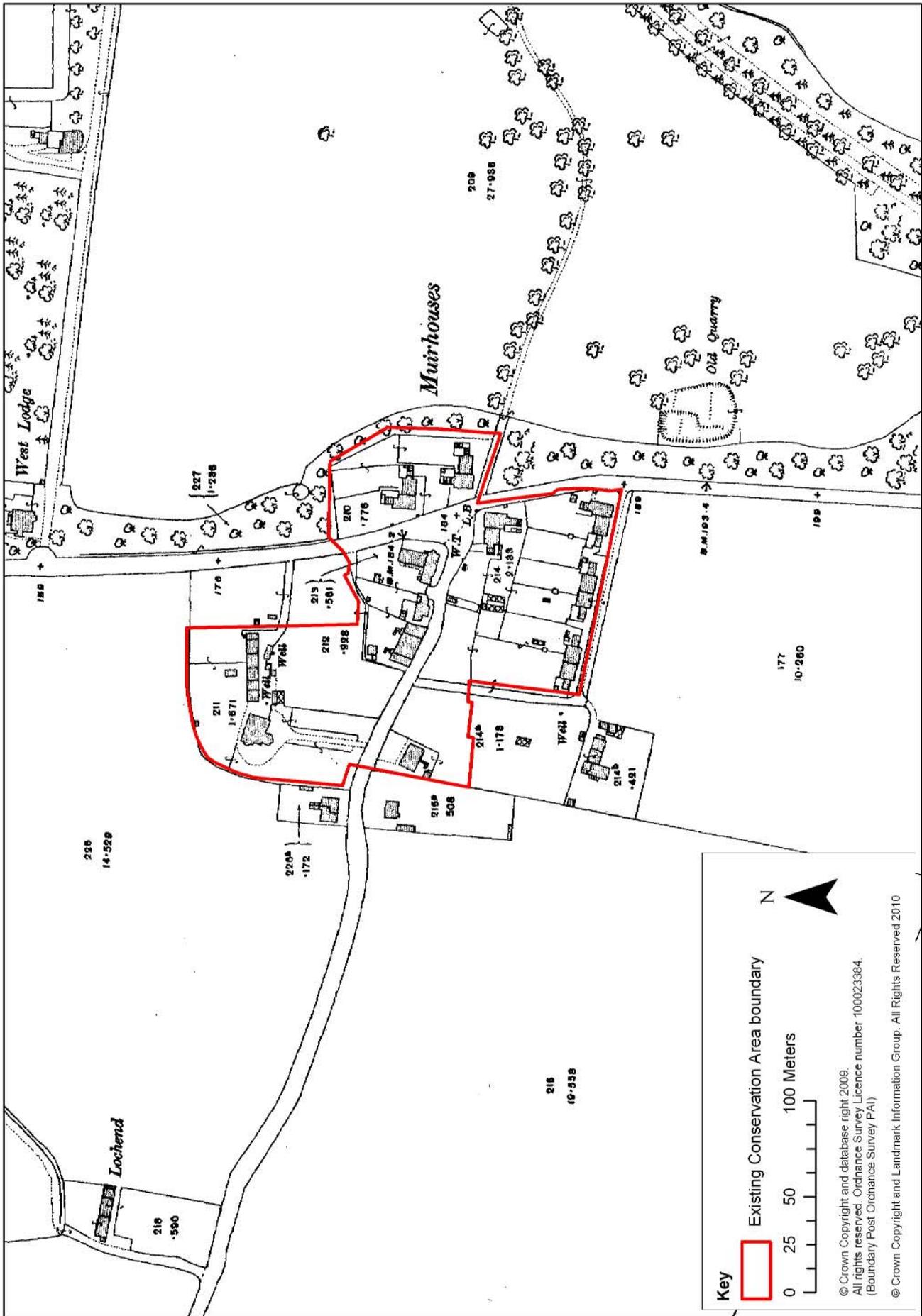
It is not proposed to change these Classes in bringing the Article 4 Direction up to date with the new legislation.

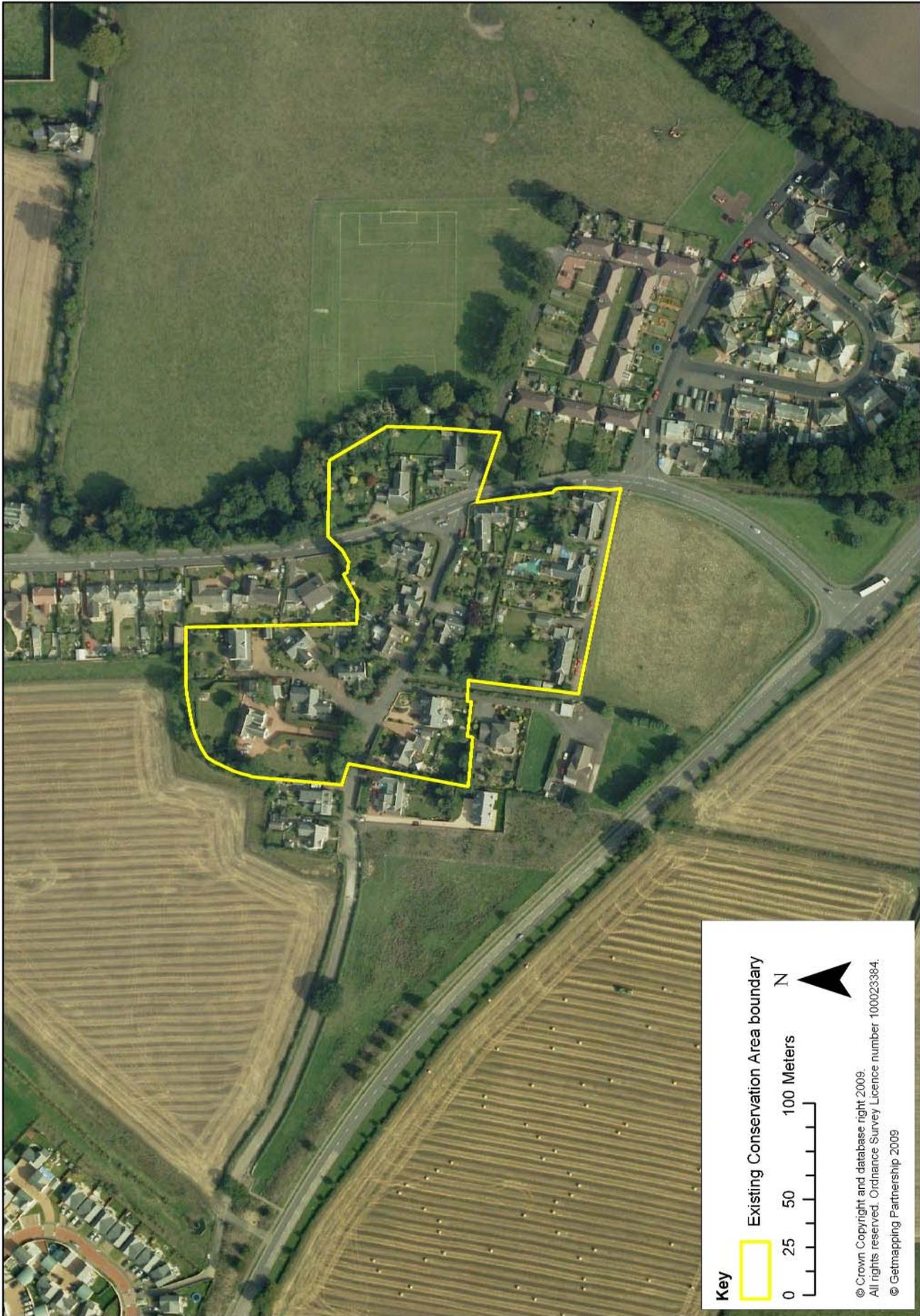


Map 1 Muirhouses Conservation Area : Existing and Proposed Boundary 2010











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