

Conservation Area Appraisal Bethesda



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



Bethesda looking south-east with Gerlan top left and Coetmor church in the foreground. This shows the scattered nature of the settlement, and how it is made up of a series of smaller villages.

Conservation Area Appraisal Bethesda

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Contents

1 Introduction	6
1.2 Acknowledgments	
2 Background history	10
2.2 History of the village	
3 The character of the town	11
3.1 Location	
3.2 Character	
3.3 Designations	
4 Description of the Conservation Areas	11
4.1 Braichmelyn	
4.2 Lon y Graig	
4.3 Rhes Gordon and Rhes Elfed	
5 Recommended improvements	19
6 Recommended changes to the Conservation Area	20
7 Sources	26

1. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

This report contains the results of an appraisal of four Conservation Areas within Bethesda. They have been undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd Council.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty upon all local planning authorities to determine areas which it is desirable to preserve and enhance to designate them as conservation areas. The Act also states that local authorities should review their past activities in this area and to add more conservation where appropriate.

The appraisal evaluates the existing conservation areas, providing an overview of their history, architecture and condition and suggests appropriate recommendations.

1.2 Acknowledgements

Eryl Williams and Hannah Joyce, Cyngor Gwynedd, instigated the project, and generously provided help and information to aid its progress. Dr John Llywellyn Williams kindly gave help and advice during the course of the project.

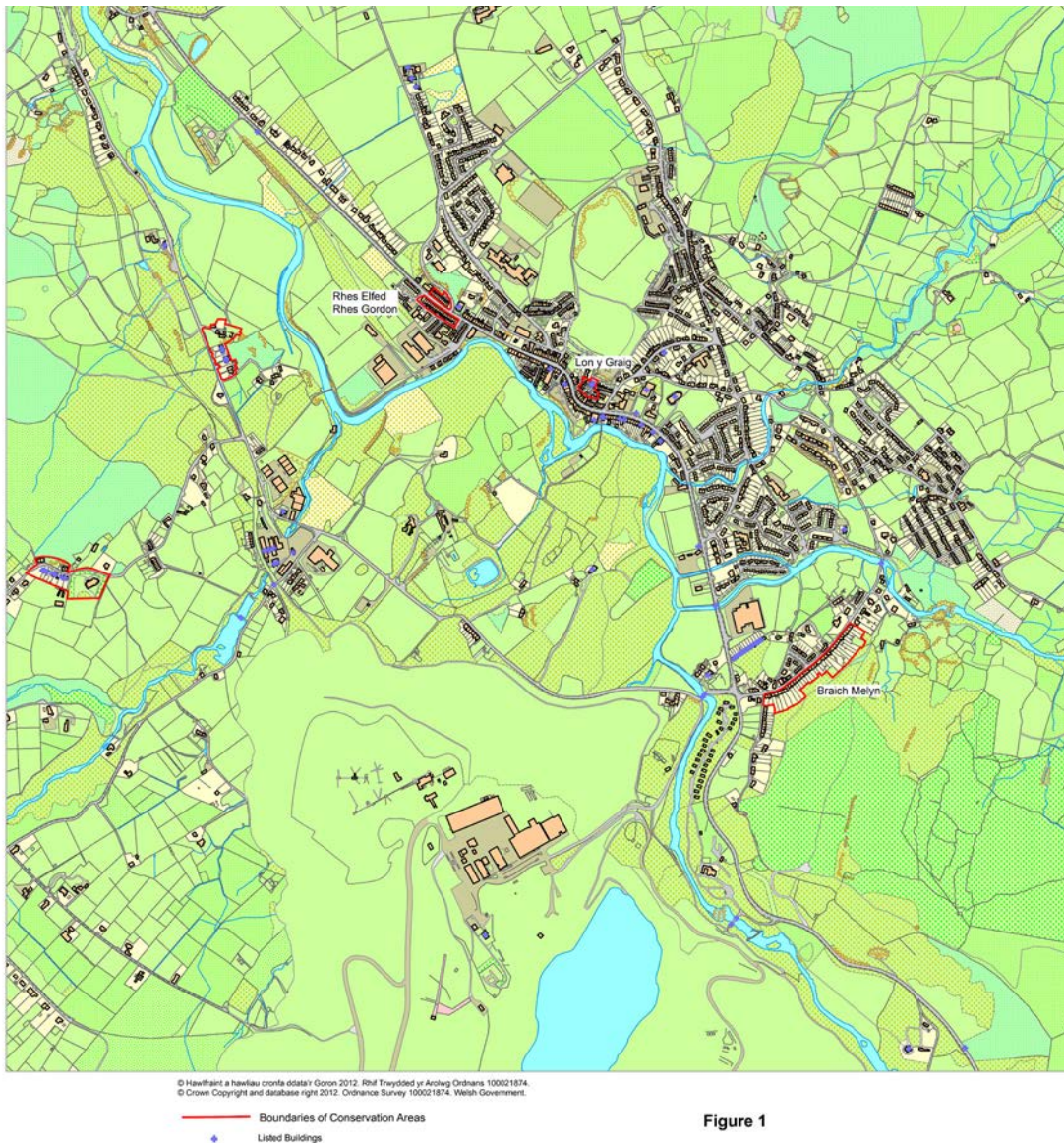
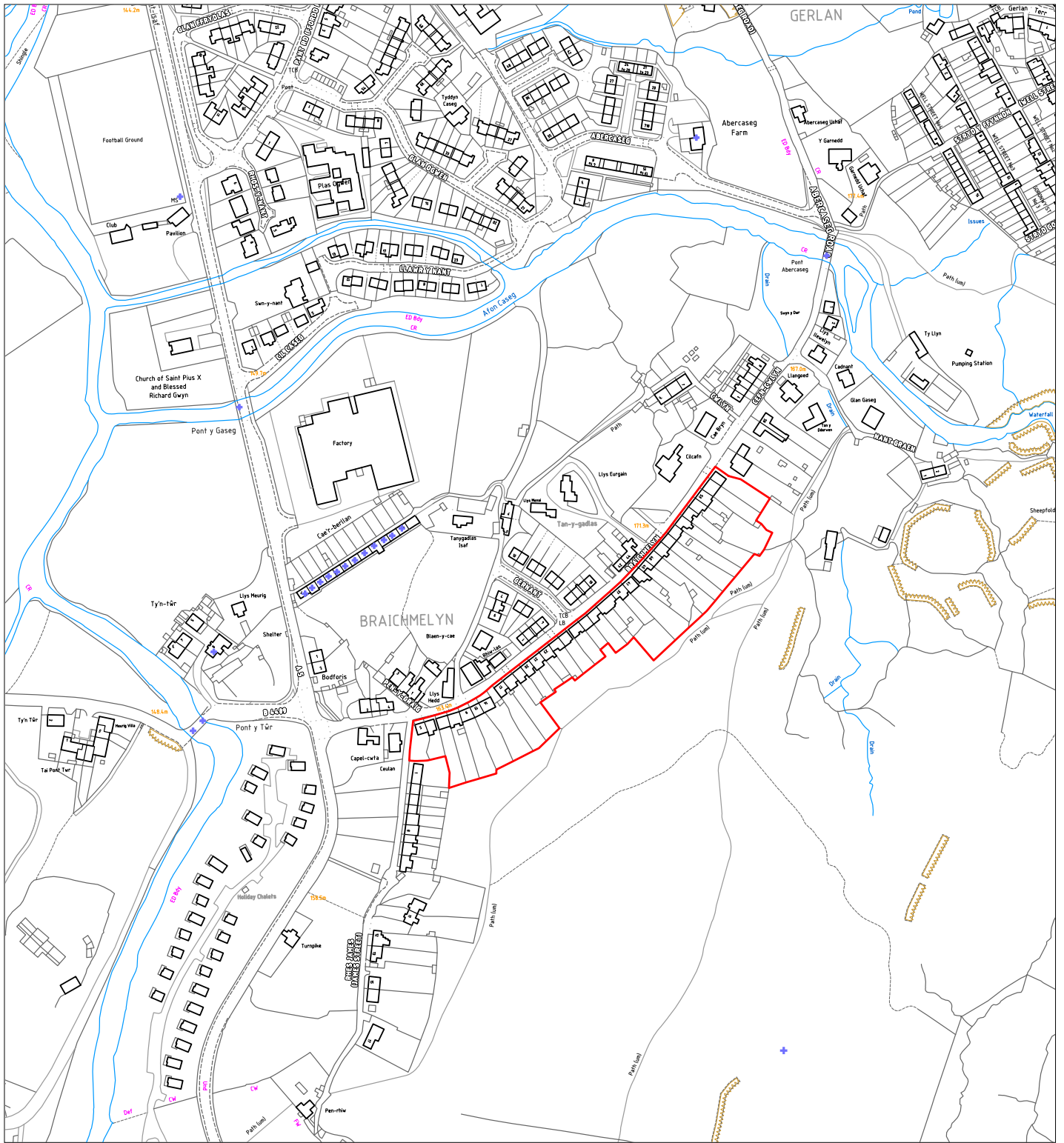


Figure 1
Conservation Areas within Bethesda

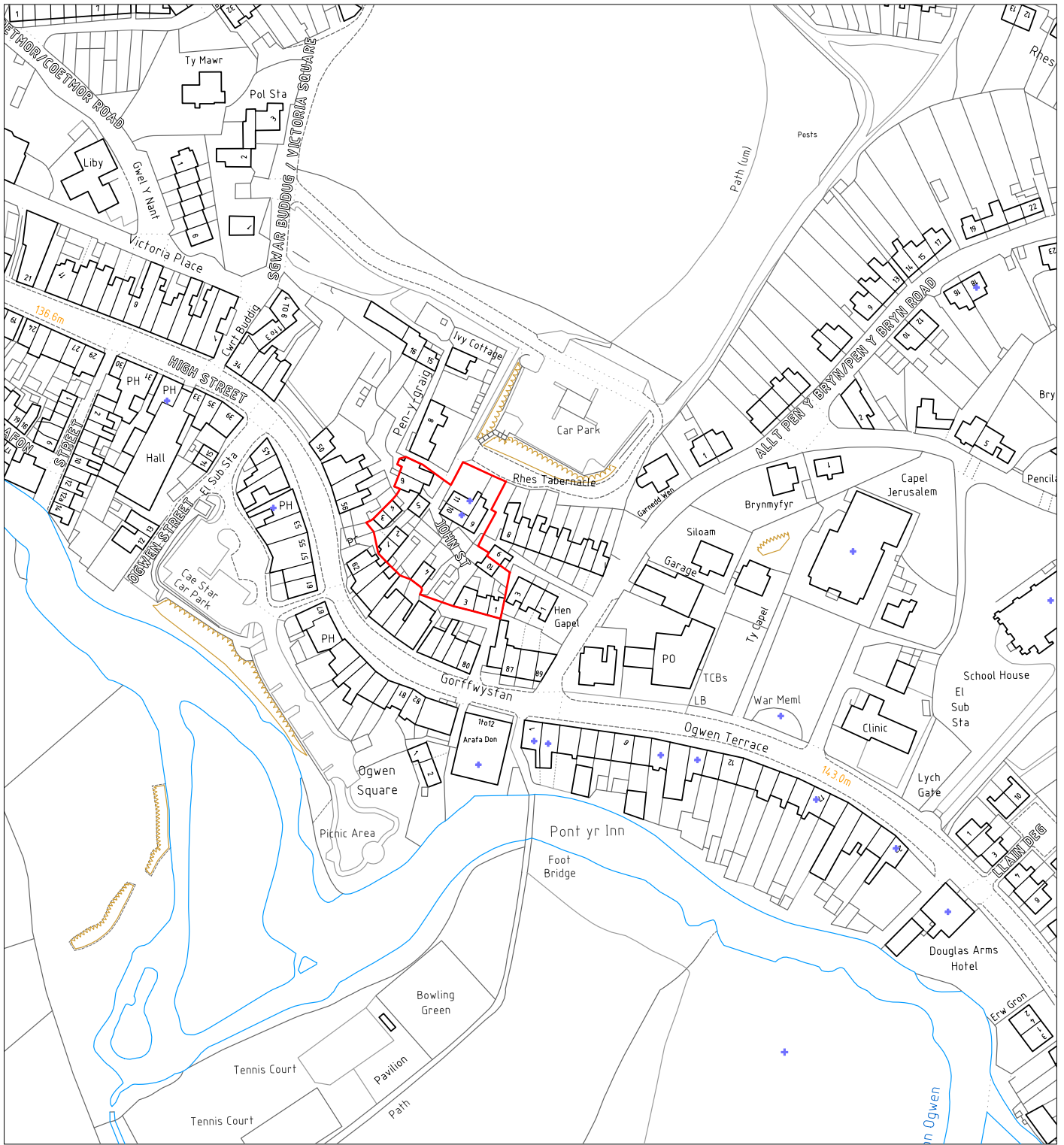
01
Conservation
areas in
Bethesda



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- - - Boundary of proposed additional Area
- Boundary of proposed Area
- Existing Conservation Area
- + Listed building

Figure 2
Braichmelyn Conservation Area



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- - - Boundary of proposed additional Area
- Boundary of proposed Area
- Existing Conservation Area
- + Listed building

Figure 3
Lon y Graig Conservation Area

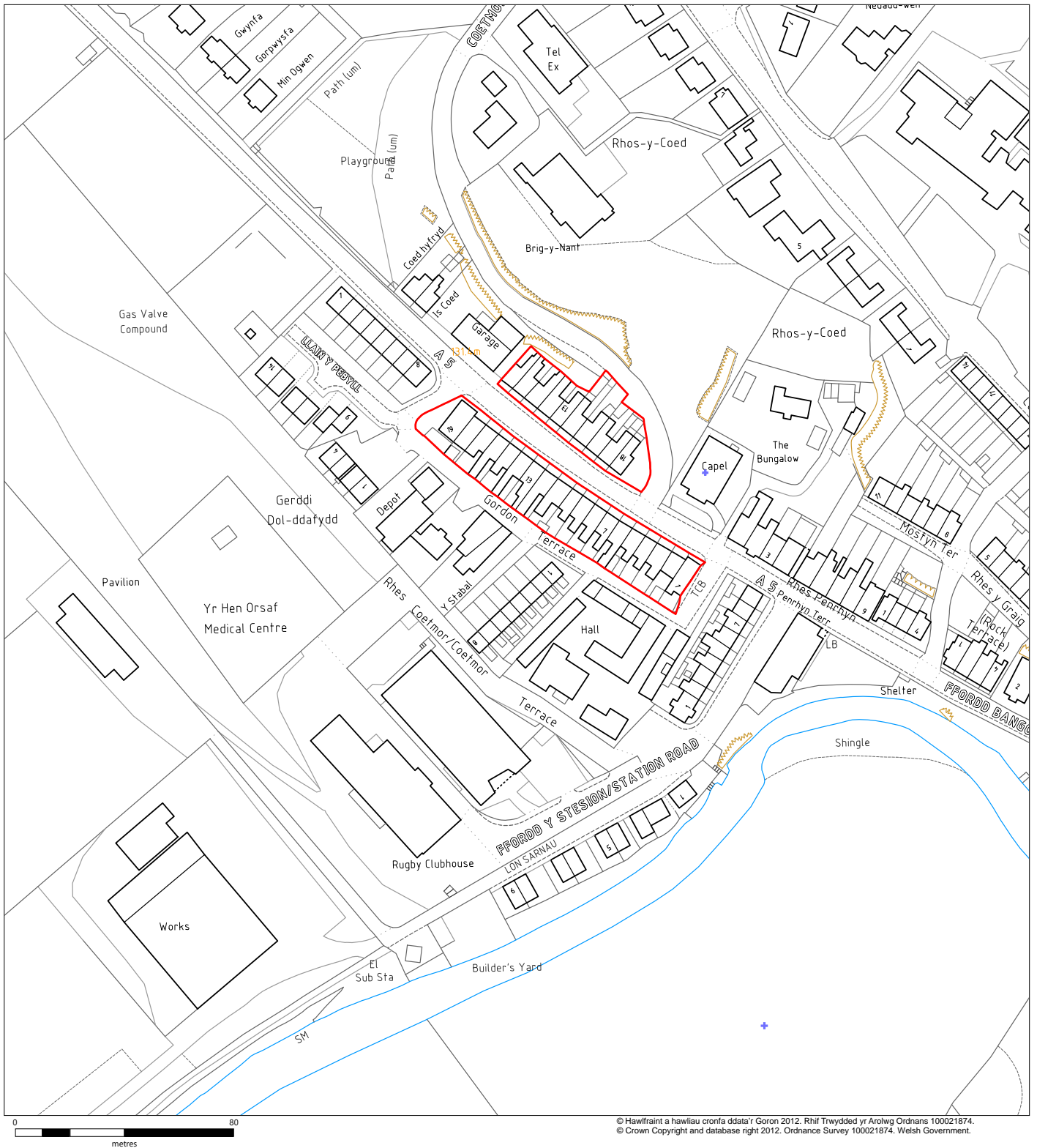


Figure 4
Rhes Gordon and Rhes Elfed Conservation Areas

- Boundary of proposed additional Area
- Boundary of proposed Area
- Existing Conservation Area
- + Listed building

2. Background history

Bethesda lies in the northern foothills of Snowdonia, in the Ogwen Valley. The town occupies the eastern bank of the River Ogwen, making use of the limited flatter land of the river plain and extending up the steep hillsides to the east. The Penrhyn slate quarry, to which the town owes its existence, is across the river to the west. A second smaller quarry, Pantddreiniog operated from a now landscaped area within the town environs, and north of the centre.

The area occupied by the town expanded in the C19th to encompass the smaller settlements of Braichmelyn, Gerlan and Carneddi.

Prehistoric evidence of settlement around Bethesda is widespread. Overlooking the town, on the slopes of Moel Faban, Cwm Ffrydlas, Gern Wigau and Cwm Caseg are relics of early farming, the remains of Bronze Age funerary monuments and prehistoric burnt mounds. There are several well preserved late prehistoric round house settlements with associated field systems. These were succeeded by later medieval rectangular huts and platform houses. Later still are the large multi-cellular sheepfolds. This farming based economy was augmented from medieval times by small-scale slate working, carried by ponies to Aberogwen. A network of roads connected the farms, often having to ford or bridge the many rivers which flowed down the mountainside. The River Ogwen was crossed at Pont Twr.

The town expanded in response to the growth of the Quarry from the 1760's onwards. It started from small beginnings where a few cottages were scattered along the western bank of the Ogwen, and grew during a period of rapid and significant expansion in population by the 1890's. Infrastructure in the area was greatly improved by the building of the A5 (1815- 20) along the eastern bank of the Ogwen creating an obvious focus for the development of the town and further enhanced by the Bethesda branch line opening for passengers in 1884. This replaced the narrow-gauge railroad built in 1801.

Quarrying on a major scale began under the first Baron Penrhyn (1737-1808), with

the Penrhyn Slate Company expanding rapidly to become one of the largest and most influential quarries in North Wales. By 1898 the quarry employed 2809 workers, all requiring housing.

During the 1820's the combined settlement of Bethesda was recognized, named after its Independent roadside chapel. Land from the Cefn Faes estate alongside the new road was made available for building and was bought by speculative builders, publicans, shopkeepers and artisans. The superior houses of Ogwen Terrace were laid out in 1853 responding to the need for houses for the professional classes. Quarry workers were pushed further out, leaving the high street to commerce, into areas including John Street and the surrounding maze of tiny lanes. On Penrhyn Estate land, ribbon development of single storey terraces along Braich Melyn and Cae'r Berllan were constructed by 1840. In 1854 the Bethesda Improvement act ensured that new houses were built with adequate drainage and water supplies. Many of the terraces of small two storied houses were built between this date and the 1890's. The new Gerlan estate on the former Gerlan Farm, built from 1864 was regular and well laid out. Local building societies established by the 1860's enabled workers to gain a stake in the buying and constructing of their cottages.

One of the last flourishes of development before the contraction of the quarries in 1900 were the terraces of Rhes Gordon and Rhes Elfed. These mark the northern extent of the High Street and were built following the opening of the passenger railway in 1884, and consist of substantial middle-class houses.

Development in Bethesda ground to a halt in 1900. The Penrhyn Quarry was closed between 1900 and 1903 due to the long running dispute concerning unionization and was much diminished after reopening. Pantdreiniog Quarry closed in 1911 and the population declined as people moved away to find work.

Other industries have created certain employment during the C20th and new council house estates were constructed from the 1930's onwards. The flat farmland south of the town centre has gradually been developed in a less vernacular style.

3. The Character of the Town

Two surviving Georgian farmhouses, Abercaseg and Pant-Ffrydlas give contrast to the later industrial housing. These are both two storey, double fronted houses with sash windows.

The quarrymen's cottages from the earlier phase of industrial development were generally single storey, built from quarried stone and constructed singly, in pairs or, as in Braichmelyn, as a conjoined line. The listed row at Caerberllan consists of single storey, two roomed cottages with a canopy over the door consisting of a single slate slab, supported on wooden brackets. Doors here are wooden ledged and braced, some of which are stable doors. Internally the cottage would have had two rooms and a crogloft. Caerberllan is accessed from a path crossing in front of the houses, with gardens and stone sheds across the path. Windows had rough slate or quarried stone lintels and a slate cill, often with pairs of opening three pane casements. Roofs were always slate.

Later quarrymen's cottages were more likely to be two storied, two up, two down, often with a garden big enough to grow vegetables. However, in the intensively settled area of Brynteg, built in the 1860's, the plots are much smaller. There are a variety of porches evident throughout the town, many using slate and some showing artistic touches.

Quarried stone is the major material used for houses, with fieldstone for walls and rougher structures and some earlier buildings. Slate, being plentiful, is the almost exclusive roofing material, slabs are used for door canopies, larger riven slabs for fences, paths and steps. Sawn slate was used for constructed porches, gateposts and windowsills. Brick is more prevalent in the later buildings at the northern end of the high street, Capel Bethania is particularly striking, with its bright Ruabon brick and sandstone facings, Although most cottages were originally finished with exposed stone the same does not apply to schools, commercial buildings and chapels. Render or roughcast was often used and during the second half of the C20th

pebbledash became the standard finish.

One of the most obvious changes to the character of an area is the change of use or demolition of schools and chapels. The chapels of Tabernacle and Siloam in the town centre, Salem on Carneddi Road, Treflys and Gerlan have all been demolished as has the National School which faced the high street. Spectacular chapels such as Bethesda, Capel Bethania and Capel Jerusalem remain, but with falling congregations and the rising cost of repairs their future is uncertain. These are listed buildings as is Christ Church designed by T H Wyatt for Lord Penrhyn in 1855-6 and although none are within a Conservation Area, they are protected from development but not from decay.

4.0 Conservation Areas

Bethesda has four conservation areas, all created in 1985. These span developments dating from much of the C19th, the earliest being Braichmelyn to the north-east followed by the central area of Lon y Graig with the later Rhes Elfed and Rhes Gordon to the north-west.

4.1 Braichymelyn

This settlement lies on the old road to Llanllechyd on land which was owned by the Penrhyn estate. Building had started by 1840 and the early single storey cottages form the character of this area.

The cottages are set in short terraces, on the eastern side and parallel to the road, following its winding course. The basic construction is two rooms with a crogloft, but most have been altered and extended. The standard cottage pattern consists of a door with a single slab porch roof, supported on wooden brackets. This was flanked by two windows, many symmetrical but some offset. Most windows have been replaced, or at least lost internal glazing bars. Where the original window form remains, it has often been simplified to two single pane casements, this appears to be the most successful compromise, keeping the shape and original dimensions. In some cases, the replacements are plastic, which is intrusive when white, slightly less so when coloured, however, painted wooden replacements are more in keeping. The most characteristic door on the road is of simple ledged and

braced construction with one rectangular light. Later replacements include over-elaborate glazing and many are plastic.

Roofs are slate and the chimneys are brick with two pots. The walls are quarried stone, originally exposed, and although there are still examples of this, many have been rendered, pebble dashed, or limewashed.

The houses are set back from the road allowing for very narrow front yards with a stone wall boundary. These front gardens vary in depth due to the bends in the road and some cases include steps up to the doors. It is thought that the walls are later than the cottages. Substantial garden plots run up the slope behind the cottages, to the edge of the woodland, with a well-used footpath along this boundary.

Many cottages have been altered in some way, but the street retains a coherence, the large quantity of slate door canopies and two light windows helps maintain this quality. On the whole, extensions are hidden from the road and chimneys have been retained.

There is a cohesion and vibrancy to the road, although it is much altered and slightly chaotic, in part due to the quantity of parked cars on such a narrow winding road. It suffers from the visual curse of many conservation areas, that is too many recycling bins which are forced to remain in front gardens.

The conservation area starts on the junction with James Street with a handsome pair of large cottages constructed from dressed stone with a shared central two storey gable. The look is slightly spoiled by one having brown windows and the other white. The brown gable window has been reduced from four panes to two, with a thick surround. *Image 5*
The terrace begins with a conjoined group of four cottages, No's 7, 9, 11 and 13 with



a level roofline. All have door canopies consisting of a single slab of slate and two light windows. These first cottages are situated on a curve in the road and the front gardens are elevated, with from No 11 slate block garden walls. This grouping shows most of the characteristics of the street and all are well maintained. The different window and door colours give a liveliness to the streetscape. *Image 6*

The roofline drops to No 14, the last of this row and there is a gap, which is



used for bins and parking. The garden wall has recently been rebuilt, removing the corner to allow for easier parking, losing a large section of the front garden. However, it has been rebuilt using the original materials. *Image 7*

The roof level steps down to No's 18 and 17 and the next cottages are detached and set



back further from the road with much larger front gardens. The gap between the two is a gravelled car parking and bin space. Across the gap the next house has been poorly modernized with badly proportioned lattice windows and most unfortunately the front garden has been removed and paved for car parking. Sharing this stretch of roofline is No18, with a garden wall topped with concrete trellis blocks. *Image 8*

5
Cottages on
James Street.

6
No. 11 James St

7
No. 14 with rebuilt
garden wall.

8
The front garden has been converted into parking, and new uncharacteristic windows inserted.

9
No. 20 has a porch extension which detracts from the original symmetry of the building.

10
No's 35-36 with porch and appropriate windows.

11
Although the left window retains a plaster surround, the remainder has been covered over with inappropriate extensions.

The roof level rises to No 19 which may



be semi derelict. The garden wall is partially demolished. No 20 has a front porch extension with a side door and front window. This protrudes forward to the road. Both this property and No 21 have raised rear extensions. *Image 9*

This gives an unwanted zigzag quality



to the roofline. No 21 is pebble dashed and No 23 retains the window shape, exposed stonework and door canopy.

The terrace steps up again to No 25 which has a double height rear extension, made more visible by the change in roof level. No 27 has newly fitted four pane windows, small roof lights and currently part of the garden wall has been demolished.

A small access path lies between No's 27 and 29. No 29 is one of the few properties to lose its end chimney. The door canopy has been recently put back but with small, scalloped slates instead of the single slab. The roofline rises quickly at this stage as the hill becomes steeper. From No 31 onwards to No 36, the character is maintained with good quality windows, doors, canopies and very narrow walled front gardens. No's 35 and 36 have been combined into one

house, as may have the next pair. *Image 10*

The door to No 36 has been replaced by a



window. The roofline changes between Nos 37 and 39 and the frontage is obscured by overgrown shrubs. The steepest rise comes after No 41, another poised between repair and dereliction. This cottage is built tucked in against the gable of the higher house so there are two chimneys at this point. The windows and doors have been recently replaced with acceptable wooden units, but the timber porch is extremely rickety; the garden wall has been demolished leaving a rough raised terrace with a large storage bin.

No 43 has been subjected to the most unsuitable treatment in recent months. A large, glazed porch with side entrance, half stone half-timber, has been attached to the front with a green timber shed covering the right-hand front window. The remaining window retains the black painted plaster surround, a typical early embellishment for many of these cottages further up the street. *Image 11*

No 45 has recently been painted



terracotta with white painted wood windows and door. It retains the door hood. This is possibly the only non-white painted façade but is not out of place due to the attention to detail. *Image 12*

No 46 has enlarged window open-



ings and an unsuitable pattern of window. Unfortunately however, half the garden wall has been removed to accommodate recycling bins.

No 47 has blue painted plaster window surrounds and an interesting slate porch but poor plastic windows. The porch is mirrored by one recently constructed next door at No 48, however this is pebble dashed. *Image 12*

The road begins to descend at this point with the majority of the cottages retaining the window pattern and door canopy but often with a pebbledash finish.

No 51 has an interesting construction of large slate panels fronting the garden with an early iron gate. The render has been painted white. *Image 13*

No 53 has a double storey back extension



extending well above the roofline, with Velux windows. The windows are unsuitable plastic, a large porch has been added in front and the whole building pebble-dashed.

The last two houses in the conservation area were up until recently outstanding examples and No 55 still is, with exposed stonework, well maintained wooden door and windows, an original gate, and an unaltered garden wall. However, No 54 has very recently ripped out the door canopy and replaced it with a very heavy stone gabled porch. *Image 14*
There has been a suggestion that the



conservation area should be extended to include James Street, which starts with a row of similar date one storey cottages on the left. However, these cottages have been extended greatly, leaving only three with original features. The houses then change to later two storied examples and then higher status houses set back from the road.

At the far end of the Conservation Area the pair of cottages No's 55 and 56 are not included, they are set back from the road with a considerable gap between them and the terrace proper and have been extended at both the sides and



rear. Two of three chimneys have been removed, Velux windows added, and the windows altered. However, they both have slate porches and adding the pair to the conservation area might afford this well-preserved pair of porches some protection.

A more appropriate extension to the area would be to include the Gernan estate on the northern side of Braich Melyn. This small estate, built in the 1930's, consists of two blocks of four on Braich Melyn, three blocks of two on Gernan Street and an elevated block of three overlooking open land to the north-west. The original wall finish has been altered to pebble-dash in most cases, but the Art Deco smooth plaster doorways remain, the large central one

12
No. 45 painted terracotta

13
No. 47 with surviving plaster window surrounds, now painted blue, which does not look inappropriate

14
Large slate panels front the garden of No. 51

15
The stone gabled porch is out of character with the remainder of the terrace

16
No's 16-19 Braichmelyn with original doorways

17
Corner of Braichmelyn and Gernant St

18
Gernan Street with central chimney

19
No's 7-9 with end houses projecting forward

on the two Braichmelyn blocks, including two doors and a through corridor. A wide horizontal, two stage plaster banding divided the walls originally, rendered above, with exposed brickwork below. This original finish is still in place on the end houses of the eastern Braichmelyn block. *Images 16, 17*

The roofs on all blocks are hipped. On Gernan St the blocks are simpler, with a central chimney, a hipped roof, bay

window and door detailing. *Image 18*

The north westerly block is subtly different containing three houses, with both end houses projecting forward. *Image 19*

There are no post-C19th houses contained within the Bethesda Conservation areas and this small, contained group would be a worthy addition.



4.2 Lon y Graig

Also known as Penyraig.

The essential character of this Conservation Area is the irregular and winding nature of the lanes and paths. John Street is the central through-way, not accessible to traffic and now paved. It contains a mixture of one and two storey houses. *Image 20*



Most of the buildings are much altered but a two-storey pair of houses, No 10 and 11 John Street was possibly part of a cluster system of housing where four houses were built together as a back to back square. These retain their original sash windows, one house is colour-washed and the other whitewashed. Both are listed. No 10, Bryn Salem was used in the 1840's as a Mormon chapel. *Images 21,22*



A large stone building on the west side of John street and at the junction with Grisiau Mawr, the flight of steps descending to the High Street, is windowless on the southern and western aspects. The stonework is exposed and suggests an industrial origin for the building. *Image 23*



It has been suggested that this area be extended to take in an area of the High street which retains some handsome Victorian windows and shop fronts. If this was considered then a separate High Street area may be more suitable. Early C20th improvements have passed Bethesda High Street by, due to lack of investment. However, with the current downturn in high street trading, this may not be the right time.

The area of Tabernacle Terrace was also suggested as an extension of the existing Conservation Area. This is a raised terrace to the north-east of John Street and

20
Mixed styles within
Lon y Graig

21
No's 10 and 11 John
St.

22
No's 10 and 11 John
St.

23
Building at junction
of John St with
Grisiau Mawr.

24
Tabernacle Terrace
with the site of the
former chapel now
occupied by the
houses on the left.

separated from it by a group of new houses built on the site of the Tabernacle Chapel. It has an irregularly descending roofline, with a raised path in front of small garden plots. The ground below has been dug out to provide a flat platform for the new houses. There are few surviving original features apart from the boundary walls and ironwork fences of the most easterly property. To the north the back plots have been, in some cases, truncated by the landscaping of the Pantdreiniog tips. The lack of original features, and both visual and physical links between the terrace and John Street, suggests that this is not a strong candidate for inclusion. *Image 24*

4.3.1 Rhes Gordon

Rhes Gordon is a terrace of houses distinguished by a continuous veranda supported by cast iron posts and decorated spandrel brackets. At each end is a larger block consisting of two houses, with a projecting wing containing two forward facing sash windows, the northerly of these has a porch added under the veranda, probably in the early C20th, and has a basement. The terrace is constructed from rubble stone set in a crazy paving pattern with red brick facings. The houses are set back from the road by narrow rectangular front gardens



4.3 Rhes Gordon and Rhes Elfed

These two Conservation Areas, terraces on opposite sides of the A5, provide a final flourish to the western end of the high street. They consist of the terrace of Rhes Gordon to the south west of the A5, dating from 1885 and that of Rhes Elfed to the north east, built in 1898. These upmarket terraces aimed at the increasing number of middle-class residents, were built after the opening of the railway station in 1884 and were well placed to take advantage of the new passenger service.

separated from each other by a mixture of brick walls and iron railings. The front walls are built of roughly coursed stone, topped with well-constructed iron railings with matching gates. *Images 25, 26, 27*

Each house possesses a bay window to right, and a door to left, with two four-pane sash windows on the first floor, the one above the door being slightly narrower. The slate roof is continuous at an even level with a regular pattern of one chimney for each property. The character of the whole is relatively well preserved, but two properties now have white UPVC windows. Unfortunately, the northern end pair have been considerably



25

25
Rhes Gordon looking south-east.



26

26
Rhes Gordon looking north-west.



27

27
No. 19 Rhes Gordon with relaced larger window.

altered. The brick lintels over the windows on the projecting wing have been replaced and the openings widened. The window itself has been replaced with an unsympathetic UPVC unit set too far forward in the reveal and this property is one of six that have painted the brick facings white. Doors have been replaced and although all are different the black colouring has been retained

4.3.2 Rhes Elfed

This terrace to the north west of the A5 was built in 1898 and consists of plain two storey houses with a back wing shared between two properties. The walls, now pebble-dashed, were probably rough cast originally, with a central horizontal plaster string

course. There is a plaque in the centre of the terrace citing the name and date in a shaped plaster surround, which matches the string course in style and dimensions. Apart from this restrained detailing the terrace is quite plain. Windows would originally have been four pane sash widows, all of which have been replaced. Each house has a narrow front yard with a low slate topped, pebble-dashed wall with decorative railings set into the slate. A short path and slate steps led up to the front door. A transom light above the door is still evident in most of the houses although all doors have been replaced with modern UPVC ones. Back gardens are modest in size. *Images 28, 29*

28
Rhes Elfed looking
south-east with
Capel Bethania
beyond.

29
Rhes Elfed.



5.0 Recommended improvements

Many residents in conservation areas are entirely unaware that they live within one. There seems to have been little or no correspondence with residents since the areas were established and early correspondence has often not been passed on to later owners. This may have contributed to a proliferation of unfortunate extensions, inappropriate windows and doors and lack of understanding of the essential character of the area. A Conservation Area will work most effectively if residents are kept informed about its existence and their responsibilities. During the writing of this report changes have taken place which are out of character with the area.

Community involvement is crucial to the success of a conservation area and this appears to be lacking at present. Owners should be made aware of the guidelines which provide clear guidance on what is acceptable within a conservation area, particularly for doors and windows. In most cases the windows were altered before the area was designated but since then many of these windows have been replaced, often several times. This is an opportunity to inform property owners of a more acceptable alternative. Most windows are now plastic but the coloured versions are less obtrusive than the white and those using the size and arrangement of the original windows are relatively acceptable, but most owners are unaware of the significance of their choices.

With the small size of front gardens, especially in Braichmelyn, the streetscape has, in recent years, become dominated by the colour, size and quantity of recycling bins. A system of centralized bins should be possible, this would improve the streetscape, save money, and use less plastic. Garden walls should be safeguarded and their removal for parking and bins should ideally be monitored.

Parking, bins, electricity, and telephone infrastructure all have a bearing on the area but without strong planning guidance and communication the whole scheme cannot fulfill its intentions.

A review of guidance and how it can be disseminated and encouraged would be, perhaps, timely.

6.0 Recommended changes to the Conservation Areas

6.1 Penybryn

Penybryn has several characteristics which make it particularly suitable to designate as a conservation area. It is a planned estate, an ambitious project by the first Baron Penrhyn, built as an early form of garden village, raising the quality of Bethesda housing, and providing accommodation for the semi-professional classes. It provides a contrast to the cramped terraces built around the Pantddreiniog quarry and its overbearing spoil tips. The estate begins above Tabernacle Terrace, extends up Penybryn Road to the junction with Ffordd Ffrydlas, extending to a less defined extent down Cefnfaes Street. Penybryn Place, including the school, Ysgol Pen y Bryn is integral and diminishes to a pleasant path exiting on Pant Glas.

The carefully designed houses ascending Pen y Bryn Road on both sides of the road in a mixture of terraces and further up, blocks of two, are constructed from large blocks of dressed rubble stone, the majority of which have not been pebble dashed. Porches on some houses are

mono-pitch with an open wooden structure, others have hipped roofs. *Image 30*

These may be an original feature, but many houses were built without porches. The houses are well spaced with large gardens behind. A slate walled footpath, Entry Jacob Parry cuts through from the lane that skirts the Pantddreiniog quarry and passes through a slate roofed passage to



emerge on Pen y Bryn Road. *Image 31*

The substantial gardens behind are extremely important to the original vision of the estate, they are very visible from the elevated path that forms the southern end of Cefnfaes Street and between houses when walking up the hill. They should be protected from development as should the designed gaps between houses. *Image 32*

No 18 -16 are listed. 18 is described as having a five-panel door with overlight with an original slate front wall with four piers, topped by low iron railings with an iron gate. However, this door and the windows appear



30
No's 4 to 6 Penybryn with porches and slate lintels to the ground floor windows.

31
Passage between No's 13 and 14 Penybryn.

32
Gardens at Pen y Bryn

to have been replaced with UPVC and the walls have been repointed in an overly raised and thickened fashion. *Image 33*

33
No's 16 to 18 Pen y Bryn Road

Further up the hill, on the left is Llwyn Onn, a larger detached house in the same style. This now bears a plaque to the author Caradog Pritchard who spent his childhood in this house. *Image 34*

34
Llwyn Onn where Caradog Pritchard spent his childhood



35
No's 27 and 28 are set at right angles to Pen y Bryn Place

Towards the top of the hill and accessed from Penybryn Place is a pair of houses at right angles and at a lower level than the hill. The change in direction gives character to the streetscape as these houses are briefly glimpsed from above,



through mature gardens. *Image 35*

Pen y Bryn Road above the roundabout, on both sides of the road, is the heart of the development. *Image 36*



Below the roundabout is a mixture of some older properties relating to the Pen y Bryn estate on the northern side and later C20th infill.

Encircling the roundabout are several buildings of interest, particularly the well-presented Victorian villa Ivy House, which still has sash windows, an original porch, and railings. *Image 37*



The estate continues in a more open pattern up the northern side of Pant Glas. Including this would then suggest encompassing one of the town's largest chapels Capel Jerusalem, built in 1842 by T Evans of Bangor and remodelled 1872-5 by Richard Davies. The chapel grounds are bounded by Pant Glas to the north, the main entrance being from the high street. The chapel sits back from the road behind the war memorial, in an attractive small park. The schoolroom to the side of the chapel is approached down a small attractive cul de sac. *Image 38, 39*

Next to this is Christ Church, built in 1855-6 and designed by T H Wyatt for Lord Penrhyn. A substantial church in the Early Decorated style, it has a large tower with spire. The churchyard is extensive and currently rather over-grown, but it is one of the most important open spaces in the

centre of the town, bounded to the north by a continuous row of yew trees and extending down to the high street. This entrance is marked by fine shaped and curved stone walls with gateposts and original ironwork leading through an avenue of trees.

There are two proposals for creating a Penybryn Conservation Area. The minimal area would be Penybryn Road above the roundabout including both sides of the road. The more expansive plan would include Pant Glas, the Church and Jerusalem Chapel, Penybryn Place including the school and

Cefnfaes. This has the advantage of including the large open space and could lead to it being managed in a more constructive way, for the benefit of the community.



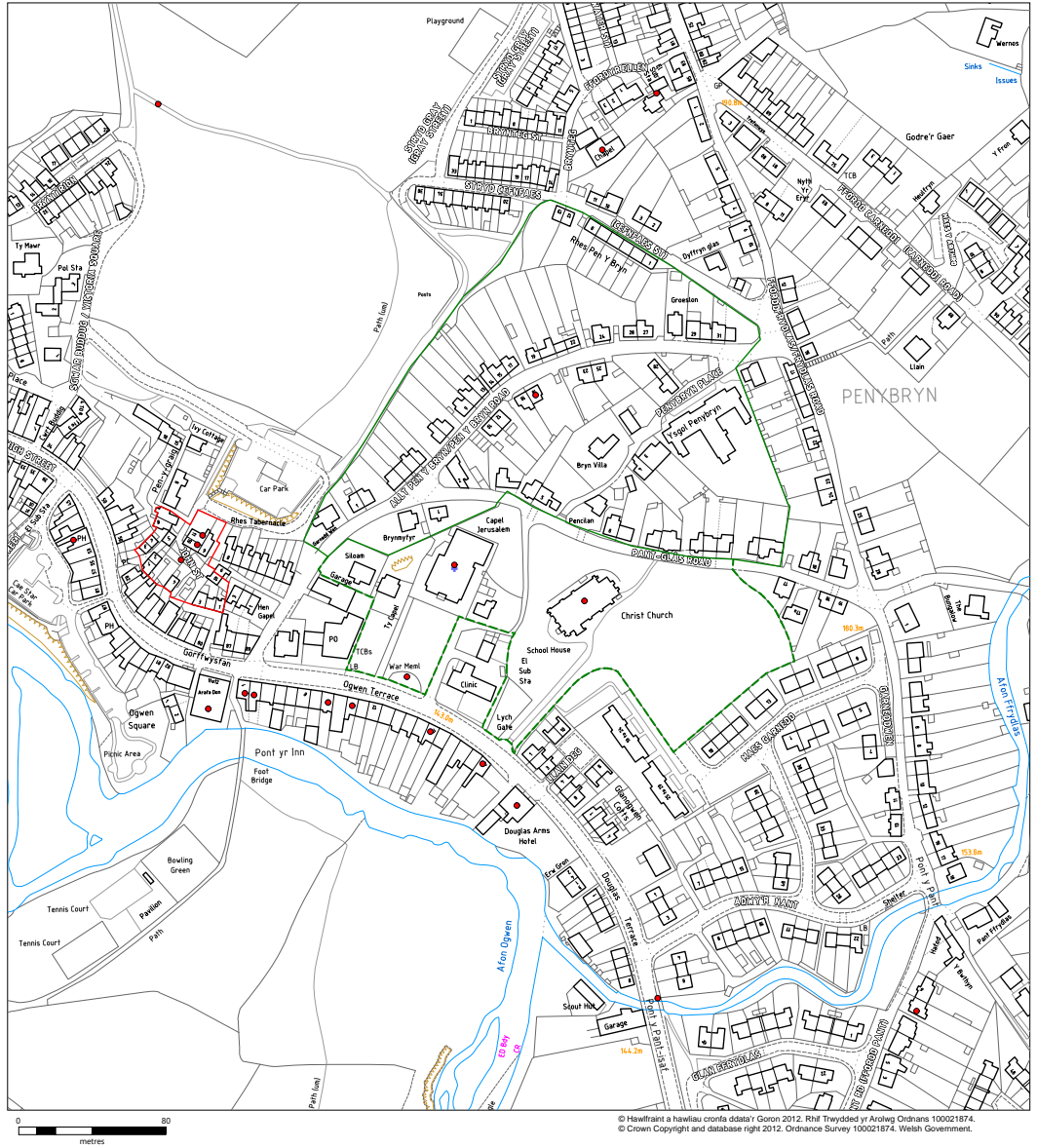
36 Pen y Bryn north of the roundabout junction with Pant-Glas Road

37 Ivy House, Pen y Bryn

38 Pant Glas Road at west end looking east. Capel Jerusalem on right

39 Pant Glas Road with churchyard on right





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Figure 40

Proposed Conservation Area at Penybryn

42
Gerlan Farm
gatepost

43
Former well on Gerlan Road south-east of Goronwy Street

44
Two slate porches on adjacent houses and original garden gate

6.2 Gerlan

The area of Gerlan is another good candidate for a conservation area, it has been described as a model village and its construction followed the Bethesda Improvement Bill of 1854. It was built in a coherent and recognizable pattern, to a high standard of construction and this pattern survives virtually intact. This confident well-built village consisted of a series of terraces of two storied houses at right angles to two central roads, Well Street and Goronwy Street, which descend sharply downhill. The gradient determined the layout with access paths levelled into the slope in most cases above the houses but sometimes, as in the case of the eastern section of Goronwy St 2, in front of the terraces with a small path cut into the hillside behind. Below this access path are coal houses built into the slope with the roofs slightly above the path. The sharply sloping, thin garden plots have often been subdivided into level terraces.

It was developed from 1865 on the holdings known as Kiltreflys and Cae Ronw and included the old Gerlan Farm. A large stone gatepost relating to this earlier farm still exists on Gerlan Road. *Image 42*

Local building societies established by the 1860's enabled workers to gain a stake in the buying and constructing of their cottages.

In 1890 the village was a compact largely self-sufficient settlement with a large number of shops and trades and one of the few pubs not on Bethesda High Street. There were also two chapels and a school.

The main changes in the village in recent years has been the demolition of the chapels and the conversion of the school to a residential building. The playground at the top of Goronwy Street marks the position of the Treflys chapel. Much of the access to terraces has been blurred by the construction of extensions with only Goronwy Street no 2 retaining the lower access in its southern section. Most other terraces are now entirely accessed from the north.

The population has changed, many of the residents are young, a mixture of local families with some ex-Bangor University students, living in a combination of starter homes and rentals and creating

a different but a no less vibrant culture. Unfortunately, this social structure is in danger of being undermined by the relative cheapness of the houses which makes them attractive to second homeowners.

Original architectural features have largely disappeared, with windows and doors replaced and most houses extended. However, some original features have survived. A stone-built well survives south-east of Goronwy Street. Two slate porches and an elaborate gate remain on Goronwy Street 2. *Image 43, 44*



7.0 References

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<https://hanedyffrynogwen.wordpress.com/>

At the bottom of Goronwy Street are a series of footpaths through open land, with slate fences at the bottom where the path joins Fford Abercaseg. The land is privately owned but used by the community in part to gain access to the popular swimming ponds on the River Caseg. The paths have recently been heavily tarmacked and slate fences towards Gwernydd at the south eastern edge of the open ground have been removed and damaged. *Image 45*

The area of the proposed conservation area could be bounded by Gerlan Road to the north and north east, up to the crossroads with Pen y Clwt where the boundary could follow the small dead-end road to the west. The rest of the boundary is unfenced, uncultivated land which could be included up to the Caseg river to the south, while skirting the houses to the west. The remaining area to the north and north west is less defined, giving way to a large expanse of open ground bordered by Fford Abercaseg and the end of Treflys Street. This could be included in its entirety, alternatively a line could be drawn round the ends of each of the numbered Well Streets.

