



Gwaenysgor Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



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Part 1: Conservation area Appraisal

1 Introduction

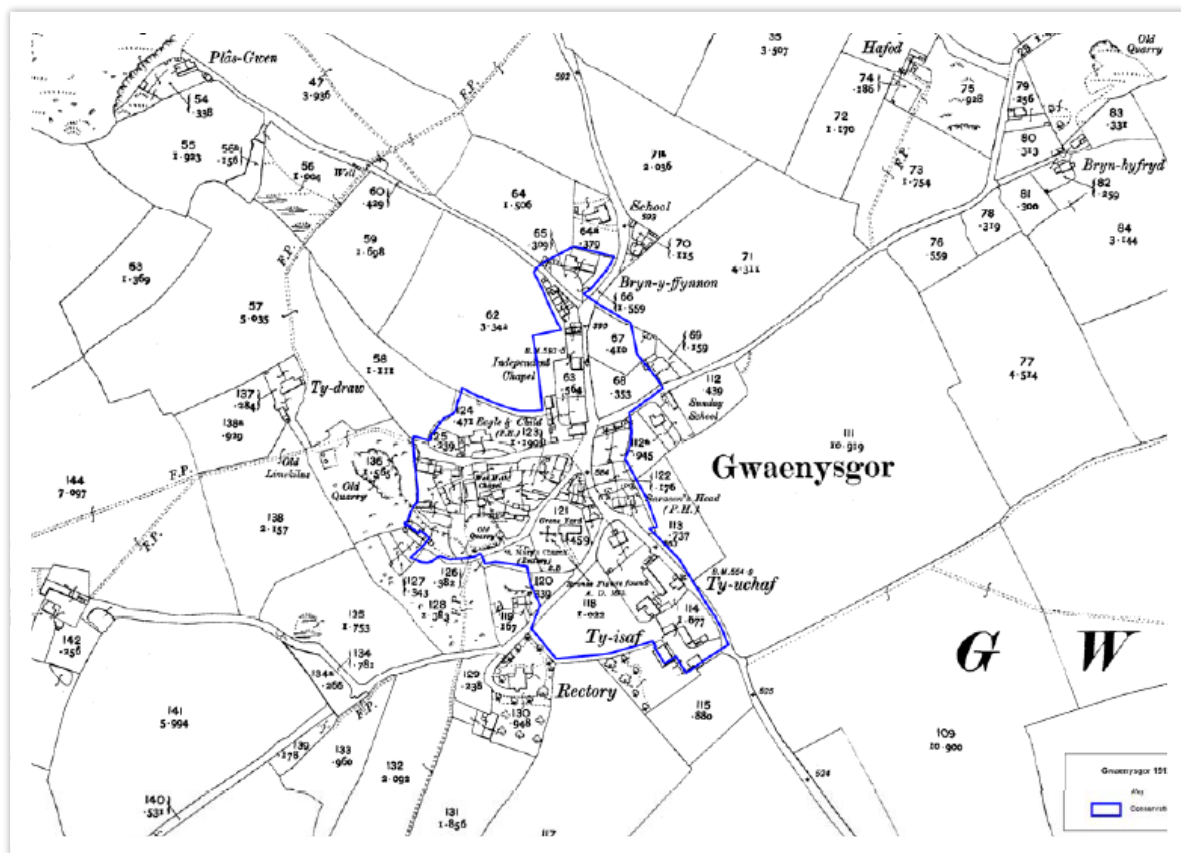
- 1.1** The planning authority is required by law to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of each conservation area under its jurisdiction. It is a duty of that authority to formulate and publish guidance as to what that character is and to make recommendations on how it can be preserved or enhanced (1). This guidance was drawn up with the help and assistance of the local village community. It is intended to assist in:
- Formulating and assessing development proposals
 - Protecting important heritage assets such as historic buildings and walls
 - Promoting beneficial change to enhance the special character.
- 1.2** Gwaenysgor conservation area was designated in 1970 and includes most of the village centre but omits the newer developments to the north and east as well as some historic buildings and spaces. Within conservation areas there is substantial control over the demolition of houses and on the removal of features such as chimneys. (2) Proposals for removal of trees must be submitted to the planning authority.
- 1.3** The law requires that local planning authorities pay special attention in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This means that they must take account of this in the adoption of planning and council policies, development management decisions, enforcement, controls relating to trees, advertisements, properties in need of maintenance and in exercising their highway powers. The Act also places a continuing duty on the local authority to consider whether they should designate new conservation areas or extend existing ones.
- 1.4** The appraisal is supported by a management plan whose purpose is to identify actions and policies that can protect and in some cases strengthen the special local character of the village and protect it for many years to come.



» The rear elevation of Gwaenysgor National School (now the Village Hall) C1915 (courtesy of Flintshire Record Office)

2. Description of the Conservation Area

2.1 Origins and development



» 1912 OS map showing original conservation area boundary

2.1.1 Gwaenysgor Conservation Area provides an example of a traditional upland settlement which served as a local centre for the surrounding farming community and has predominantly retained its traditional rural character and scale. The village is located on a high ridge spur within half a mile of the steep scarp down to the coastal plain at Prestatyn on gradually sloping land that falls gently to the south east. It is the focus for many lanes and paths that fan out to nearby farms and hamlets. The main vehicular access runs roughly north to south through the village, connecting Prestatyn with Trelawnyd.

2.1.2 Little is known of the early history and development of Gwaenysgor. The name suggests some form of early defensive area, if it is indeed a combination of gwaun (meadow) and ysgor (rampart), and it would be well located if it were, with its views over the surrounding countryside. The area known as the 'Bowling green'; a raised and level plateau 400 metres to the west of the village, is confirmed as having been the site of a significant Neolithic settlement. The Domesday Book noted that a derelict church was located at 'Wenescol' in 1086, when four householders are also recorded. The name 'Gwenscor' was first used in 1284.

The Church provided a basis for the historic development of Gwaenysgor and the consequent village structure has been focussed around the meeting point of seven paths which join close to the central crossroads. The presence of a still more or less circular churchyard and an old (preaching) cross suggest that the Llan coincided with the establishment of Christianity in the village. The present church, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, contains some Norman fabric but is mainly a structure of the late medieval period. It is situated near the junction of the Prestatyn and Gronant lanes. The church has the oldest surviving registers in Wales.

- 2.1.3** There are a few buildings of great age in the village. St Mary's Church is a single chambered medieval structure with traces of Norman fabric. It has a 13th Century sepulchral slab and Perpendicular windows, and was probably extended in the 15th century. There are several older houses. Ty Isaf has a date-stone of 1651 in an arched doorway, though there have been significant later alterations. Ty Uchaf nearby is of seventeenth century date. Both are situated down slope from the church, to the south-east. Bryn y Ffynnon, situated in the crook of the Prestatyn road and Ffordd Ffynnon (Well Road) to the north of the church, has a date-stone of 1680.
- 2.1.4** In the 18th century the area around the village developed into a lead mining centre and some of the converging tracks and footpaths became established as lanes. By the end of the century there were 30 or more dwellings, an inn, a church, two chapels and a school. Quarries on the edge of the settlement were the source of stone for building and one site remains as an open space to the south of the Chapel Reheboth. There were two lime kilns in the field near Ty Draw.
- 2.1.5** In previous centuries, the men of the village who were mainly agricultural workers and later miners would have left the village on foot for the nearby fields and quarries, leaving Y Marian largely as the preserve of women and children during the day time. It would have been a busy space, with two village shops and one of the pubs. There was a bread oven, a pigsty and a stray animal pound on what is now the village green, as well as a midden.
- 2.1.6** The area defined by the church and the pub and by falling ground to the west forms an unusual and attractive unplanned settlement in which dwellings, chapels and other buildings have been erected in a compact and defined area but with little apparent thought for any regularity or order. It seems to be an organic development of the nineteenth century and may represent a miners' squatter settlement on a piece of common land from when the lead mines at Meliden and Dyserth were revived. This area includes the (functioning) Methodist Capel Rehobeth, built in 1896, a good example of a small Victorian Welsh chapel. There is evidence that there were small-scale diggings actually within this area in the nineteenth century, probably for building stone and other building materials. The house-name Tyn Rodyn (ty'n yr olyn, house in the kiln), suggests that there was a limekiln here also. The village pub, the Eagle and Child, a substantial building of early nineteenth century construction, to judge from the distinctive heavy and large Arfon slates on the roof, is situated west of Y Marian.

2.1.7 It is likely that other buildings in the earlier years were scattered between these sites and around the church. The oldest were sited about the main crossroads with the buildings sited directly onto the roadside.



» Air photo of Gwaenysgor showing original conservation area boundary

2.1.8 Twentieth century developments include the village hall built in 1908 on the main Prestatyn Road at the northern end of the village. This is an attractive arts and crafts inspired building as a replacement non denominational school. In 1927 a triangular-plan development of early council houses was built on the opposite site of the main road. It is understood that the occupants of the terrace of three cottages on what is now the Village Green moved into this development, leaving the cottages derelict and empty until their demolition in the 1950's. Other developments included a row of bungalows on Ffordd Fynnon. Improvements in essential services particularly a piped water supply in the 1960's combined with the close proximity of the coast and Prestatyn by car, resulted in increased demand for housing in the second half of the 20th Century. Significant residential infill has occurred between the traditional dwellings including a cluster of four bungalows on the main road immediately north of Y Marian.

2.1.9 In summary, the historical development of the village can be summarised as follows:

- The church was located at a natural meeting point of rural paths;
- Early farms were located at a short distance from the church;
- The oldest buildings are clustered on the roadside around the crossroads and church;
- A few significant community buildings were later located on the approaching lanes, including the Rectory, the school and a Chapel;
- There followed a gradual infill of sites within the village from the late 19th century which continued with the increased demand for social housing and later commuter homes throughout the 20th century.

- In the early twentieth century a small group of houses was demolished at the centre of the village to create the space now known as the village Green

2.2 Historic Building Typology



» St Mary Magdalene
Parish Church

2.2.1 The pre-20th century buildings within the Conservation Area display a homogeneity of building materials and simple form which, with the informal village structure and tight knit clustering of dwellings, creates much of the character and attraction of the settlement

2.2.2 The village is located in a limestone area and local supplies of this material have been used for most traditional buildings and walls. Although some of the more centrally located houses remain as fine examples of dressed stone, the majority of traditional stone built dwellings throughout the village are rendered in traditional lime based render and painted white or lime-washed.

2.2.3 The 18th century and older buildings are generally long, narrow and low in form and have a relatively small area of glazing and long sections of solid rubble stone walling punctuated with small windows. This true vernacular style reflects the need to build in a simple way using easily available local materials such as short spans of timber for the rafters and trusses, and using a minimum of imported materials such as glazing. Canol y Marion on the eastern side of Y Marian, is typical of older country dwellings in exposed locations, being low with one long elevation having few and small windows.



» Ty Isaf the listed mid C17th farmhouse at the southern end of the village

2.2.4 The late 18th and the 19th century buildings have adopted styles found more commonly throughout the rest of the country and have dressed stone walls and larger and more elegant windows arranged symmetrically around a prominent entrance. These houses are generally taller and deeper in plan and display a vertical orientation in the shape and arrangement of windows. This typology is found in the chapel and most of the houses around Y Marian as well as the rectory.



» **Siop Ucha an example of a C19th building**

2.2.5 The following buildings within the conservation area are listed, and so are recognised as being of national significance as fine examples of Welsh historic building character:

- The Church of St. Mary. Grade 2. A medieval structure extended in the 15th century.
- The sundial in the churchyard of the Church of St Mary. Grade 2
- Ty-isaf farmhouse. Grade 2. 1651.
- K6 type telephone call box in the design of Giles Gilbert Scott outside Siop Ucha. Grade 2.

2.2.6 Most of the modern infill houses within the conservation area use both the local stone and white painted render and are mainly sited in a random manner to respect the informal close knit pattern of the village, but the building forms and fenestration are usually out of keeping with the traditional dwellings. The new bungalow development to the north east of the crossroads respects neither the use of heritage materials nor informal close spacing and imposes a significant change of character on a key site within the Conservation area. Some more recent development in the area to the north of Y Marian has used traditional natural limestone for the outer skin of the walls. This preserves the general impression of local character, but at close range the stone has the appearance of cladding rather than being coursed to appear integral to the structure.

2.3 Archaeological significance

- 2.3.1** A historic core of the village has been defined as having unknown archaeological potential and appropriate consultations should be conducted to establish the impact of any development proposals.
- 2.3.2** Particular areas identified as having special interest in the 1994 survey and shown on Plan 2 (page 12) are:
- A wide area around the church including the front gardens of surrounding properties;
 - And the northern and part of the southern sides of the road past the Eagle and Child Inn.
- 2.3.3** A large round barrow, 3.5 meters high and up to 50 meters in diameter, was believed to be located just to the north east of the crossroads and within the Conservation area, but this area was cleared and replaced by modern bungalows.

2.4 Significant Spaces

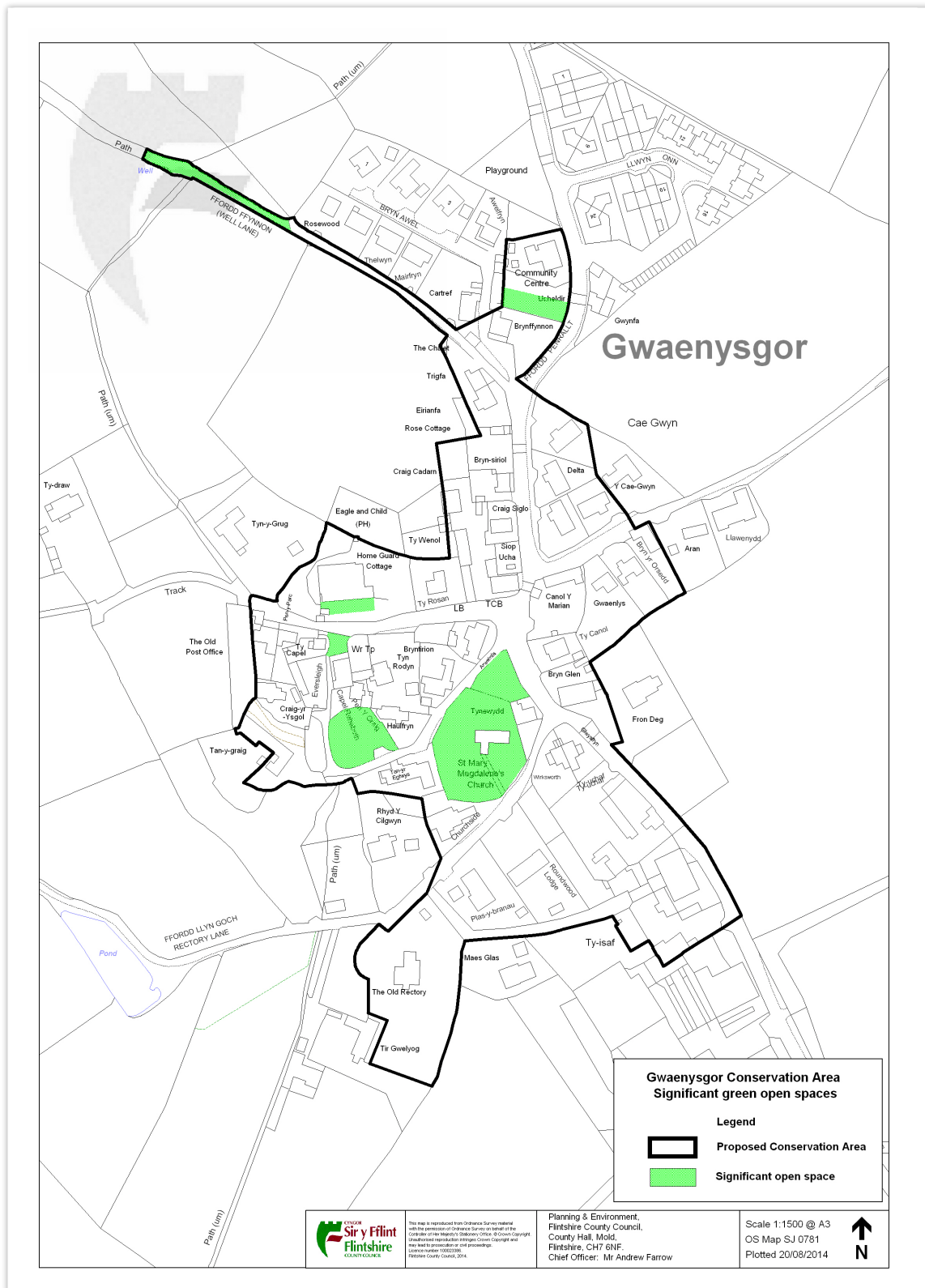
- 2.4.1** The two significant spaces whose edges are defined by surrounding buildings are:
- Y Marian, which includes all the public realm both grassed and roadway which forms the central space of the village. and
 - The small space at the convergence of a lane and walled path opposite the Eagle and Child Inn.
- 2.4.2** The other significant spaces are:
- The church yard adjacent to the Village Green,
 - The site of a former quarry, known as Chapel Green
 - The partially wooded grounds around the Village Hall
 - The small gathering space with walls around the former village well.

These spaces are for public use and provide important visual interest and variety within the structure of the village. In addition, the area in front of the Eagle and Child pub is well used albeit in private hands.

2.5 Landscape

- 2.5.1** Landscape features that are significant within the context of the village are:
- The row of trees on the east side of the church yard that screens the church from the Village Green;
 - The large tree at the entrance to the village from the south, opposite Ty-uchaf barns and just outside the Conservation Area boundary, that creates a 'gateway' to the village;
 - The grass verges between many stone walls and the road surfaces.
 - Views of open countryside looking out of the village, particularly as framed by

- buildings and walls, such as looking south towards Gop Hill from Y Marian
Views towards the village, such as those from the Trelawnydd to Llanasa Road



» Plan 1 - Significant open space

3. Assessment of Conservation Area Character

3.1 The special character of Gwaenysgor conservation area

The positive character is the sum of the following features:

- The quality of the spaces shaped by the traditional road and building pattern
- The relationship of the traditional buildings clustering around these routes
- The predominant building style and materials
- Long views into and out of this elevated village
- The rural character of the traditional street scene

These characteristics will be discussed in more detail below.

3.1.1 Building and spaces

The central space of Y Marian is special because it is so well enclosed. Each of the approaches in every direction along the five converging lanes and the main road bends a short distance back from its junction at or near to Y Marian and each is closely flanked by houses and boundary walls. At each junction with Y Marian, the building arrangement opens out to reveal the central open space. When viewed from Y Marian, the long view down each of the lanes and the main road is partly or completely framed and often partly obscured by buildings. Taken as a whole, Y Marian is well enclosed on all sides and the effect is to create the sense of an outdoor room with many entrances, at the centre of the community. The character is very different here compared even with other very old villages in Flintshire. For example at the centre of Caerwys the rectilinear streets diverge in straight lines away into the distance from the central cross roads, and at Nannerch, roads enter the village at many different points along a linear main street.

3.1.2 Buildings overlooking Y Marian and other spaces seem to be in dialogue with each other. The relationship of buildings with each other and to the central space is akin to a family around a dining table. This arrangement appears to have come about by the actions of individuals rather than by planning: the building frontages are not squared up with each other but none the less acknowledge each others presence very strongly. This overlooking of the space adds to the sense of its importance in the village.



» **Plan 3 - Converging routes and views. Note: difference in scale of modernised roads with pavements in the north east of conservation area**

3.1.3 Built Form

The 'familial' character is greatly strengthened by the use of common building materials and building form. The built form is characterised by:

- Simple long and narrow rectilinear shape without complex additions such as dormers, or large porches;
- Steep roof form with chimney stacks centrally placed above the gables;
- Extensions which are built on to the existing building in a simple economical manner, typically as a lean to or cat slide roof or else built in parallel to the run of the roof;
- Building close to the back edge of the road or pavement with the ridgeline either running parallel to the road or with the gable facing the road;
- Windows typically either casements or horizontal sliding sashes or more recently vertical sliding sashes, all generally having a vertical orientation to their shape or the arrangement of their glazing bars;
- Simple arrangement of windows either relatively small in size and number relative to the area of wall (older properties) or spaced in vertical alignment and often symmetrical about a central entrance door or porch (Late C18th onward);
- Deep reveals (setting back) of the windows and entrances into solid stone walls;
- Traditional locally sourced building materials, namely limestone, sometimes rendered and lime-washed, under a Welsh slate roof, with painted window frames;
- Stone boundary walls running close to the road adding to the sense of enclosure of the public space and lending a slightly defensive character to the building curtilages;
- Stone stiles set into the boundary walls.

3.1.4 Street scene

The street scene still has a rural simplicity in its character, recently greatly enhanced by the work of the Gwaenysgor Conservation Group whose members negotiated the removal of many overhead wires from the conservation area. There are few pavements and so the roads generally have the appearance of country lanes, flanked and enclosed by stone walls. Highway signage is limited to certain places, principally on the main road through the village. The lanes are of variable width but generally narrow and winding, and confer a sense that the pedestrian has an equal right with the motorist.

3.1.5 Views



- » **The view south from y Marian towards Gop Hill is attractively framed by historic buildings**

The prominent and exposed position of the village clustered on top of a high ridge creates some dramatic contrasts between the sense of enclosure by surrounding buildings and long views out from the village towards attractive hilly countryside. These views are almost always closely framed by buildings walls or hedges to create a very pleasing sense of deep perspective. A fine view framed by traditional houses, can be had from the centre of Y Marian looking south towards Gop Hill. Views from the lanes on the west side of the village take in the Vale of Clwyd with Snowdonia rising majestically beyond. Fine views across the landscape towards the village can be seen from nearby lanes and roads, for example from just west of the crossroads on the Llanasa to Dyserth Road, or from the 'Bowling Green' (See front cover photo).



2.2

- » **A lane approaching from the east tightly enclosed by a traditional gable**



- » **Older buildings close to the edge of the road create a sense of enclosure towards the centre of the village**

The negative Characteristics of the conservation area

3.2.1 Those aspects which detract from the special character are:

- The ubiquitous styles, form and detailing of newer buildings, even where traditional materials are used
- The introduction of modern window frames, doors and finishes on heritage buildings
- The impact of increased vehicular use and introduction of signs and road markings
- The loss of some views towards or over the village which have been obscured by overgrown hedges
- The oddly low key presence of the church despite it being the former focal point of village life
- The management of part of the churchyard as a nature reserve is considered by some to be unsightly and disrespectful of its role as a burial ground
- The loss of open space and a possible archaeological site to new development.

These characteristics will be discussed in more detail below.

3.2.2 The styles, form and detailing of newer buildings and spaces

The ubiquitous style of new buildings has had a significant impact on the character of the village. A new house on the east side of Y Marian has a complex massing with dormers and a front extension which detracts from the arcadian simplicity of the local vernacular style of building. Further north on the same side, a small development of bungalows has been built in a style and layout which could have been used almost anywhere in the UK. Unlike the clusters of buildings on traditional streets and lanes, these homes are set well back from the edge of the public realm and often sit behind low walls. Hedging species typically used are non native conifers. The resulting form lacks both the familial resemblances and the sense of interdependence that arises from the enclosure and overlooking of the form of older parts of the village.



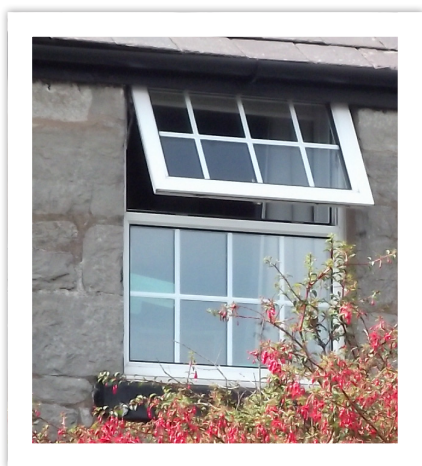
- » These bungalows are perfectly pleasant but could be found anywhere across the UK. The wide pavement and deep gardens create an openness in contrast with the strong sense of enclosure formed by building lines of many older houses in the village which are closer to the edge of the road.



- » This house has a complex form in contrast to the simplicity of the design of older buildings in the village

3.2.3 Loss of original domestic features

This is almost universal. Nearly all of the older unlisted properties have had their original windows removed and replaced with modern plastic or stained timber framed variants. Many residents have attempted to match the original designs but almost none have reinstated the correct proportions of the glazing bars and many have introduced top hung windows instead of sliding sashes. The result has been the rapid erosion of an important characteristic which is the simple repetitive pattern of traditional window openings, subdivided into smaller, vertically orientated units of glazing. Other changes include the introduction of barge boards on roofs and porches; cladding of new houses with un-coursed stone; re-pointing in hard cement rather than lime mortar; roof-lights which project above the plane of the roof to give a boxy appearance; and the addition in some places of windowless garages in prominent locations close to the edge of the plot.



» modern plastic framed windows are found throughout the village



» Although much altered, the Old Vicarage still has sliding sash windows of the type many houses in the village from the late Georgian and Victorian period would have had.

3.2.4 The street scene

This has been eroded by the impact of increased vehicular use and introduction of signs and road markings; breaks in stone walls to create vehicular access ways; painting of white lines and red speed hump indicators on road surfaces; multiple road signs at the Village Green; use of fast growing conifers as hedging, and overgrowth of hedges and vegetation along public footpaths and around the well site.

3.2.5 Views over the village have become overgrown in places and some lanes which once afforded sweeping views have become unduly enclosed. This is particularly apparent on the green lane which passes the plantation to the north east of the village.

3.2.6 The Church of St Mary is largely obscured in summer by the line of trees on the eastern side of the churchyard and seems oddly remote from the centre of the village.

Part 2 - Gwaenysgor Conservation Area Management Plan

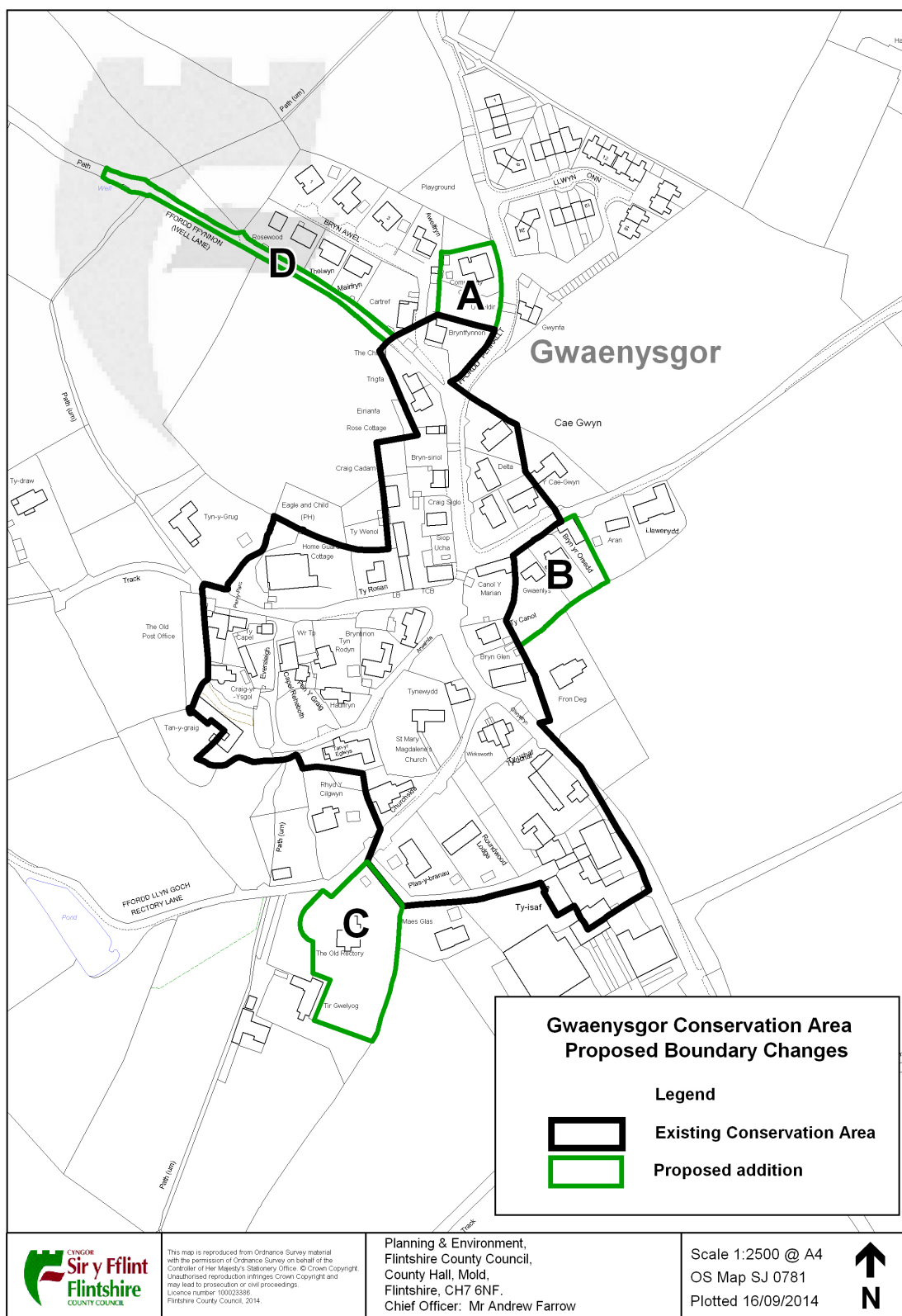
1.0 Introduction

Welsh Government planning policy has made it clear that conservation areas are not necessarily preservation areas. Change is an inevitable facet of modern life and the challenge is to manage change in a manner that does not lose sight of the special architectural and historic qualities of a place. The clear understanding of the aspects which make up the special character and those which detract from it as given in the foregoing appraisal, will help guide decision making in the development management process.

- 1.1** Although the administration of conservation areas is largely a planning function, there are many other actions that can impact on character and appearance, for instance highways, the maintenance of trees within the public realm or the management of public buildings. It is important, therefore, that conservation aims are coordinated across all relevant local services.
- 1.2** The focus of many comments and issues emerging from community meetings in 2008 and 2013 was the Council's own approach to the management of the Conservation Area, largely in terms of perceptions related to:
- Concerns over the loss of the Village character as a result of the scale and design of infill development and the extension and alteration of existing properties and
 - A standardised approach by the highway authority to road marking, traffic issues and signage, diminishing the special character of the Village;
- 1.3** This section proposes some expansion of the conservation area boundaries and sets out guidance on new development and on the protection and reinstatement of historic details for existing older buildings. Finally some specific proposals are made for 'quick wins' which can be achieved by taking positive action, encouraged and supported by the local community.
- 1.4** The erosion of character caused by loss of details can only be fully addressed if additional controls on development are introduced in the conservation area and part 5 proposes the introduction of these powers. The Authority also has a duty to consider the character of the area as now documented in its exercise of all of its statutory powers including in its role as highways authority. Part 5 sets out guidelines for the public realm over which the Authority has a great influence. Finally, section 6 sets out some specific projects which can be undertaken by a combination of the local authority, individual owners and through community action.

2. Proposed Extension to the Conservation Area

2.1 Plan 4 shows the existing and revised boundaries of the conservation area. The suggested additions are numbered and this section sets out the reasons for these additions.



» **Plan 4 - Proposed extension to the conservation area**

- 2.2** Area A is the Village Hall and its grounds. This building was opened as the non denominational or council school in 1908, but due to falling school roles was closed and became the village community centre in 1969. Although its design is influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement which was popular at the time, its simple symmetrical steep roofed form reflects the character of local older buildings and it has an important place in the history of the village. The site contains a number of trees which are maturing and now add to the character of the conservation area.
- 2.3** Area B is the location of Yr Hen Ysgol (the old school) and an old single storey cottage built gable on to the road. The close relationship of the cottage gable to the road creates a minor landmark into the village which is lacking a response on the opposite side of this road where the new bungalows have been built.
- 2.4** Area C is the Old Rectory for the parish church. This has been much altered in recent years but fortunately the fine south facing frontage retains the formal arrangement of original windows typical of an important Georgian manse. The nearby earlier manse which was first converted into a tythe barn has been altered too much in its subsequent conversion to residential use to warrant inclusion in the conservation area.
- 2.5** Area D is the lane leading towards the former village well which also has an important place in community history as until 1932, it was the only source of clean drinking water for the village. The well is currently unprotected as it is not a listed building and its inclusion will give some protection against demolition. The lane, with it's enclosing walls and hedges, is a good example of its type and is typical of the green lanes that still connect the village with nearby villages, farms and the former quarries.
- 2.6** Following consultation in the community it is not now proposed to de-designate any part of the conservation area.

3. Guidelines for New Building Design

- 3.1** Although respectful contemporary design is normally welcome in most Conservation Areas, this small village core has already been extensively altered by the introduction of non traditional buildings with little or no local resonance. The general guidance is therefore to uphold traditional building form and styles rather than further dilute this fragile character. However more flexibility in the appearance of elevations may be appropriate on less visible elevations to the sides and rear. In order to protect and reinforce local character, new development in or within the nearby setting of the Conservation Area must adopt the distinctive characteristics of the locality. A recent nationwide survey of estate agents shows that home owners, buyers and sellers value Conservation Areas thanks to their special character and appearance. The survey revealed that 75 per cent of estate agents believe that a well maintained Conservation area adds to the value of the properties within it, and that

buyers are prepared to pay higher prices for properties in well-kept Conservation Areas. 82 per cent of estate agents feel that original period features tend to add financial value to properties, with 78 per cent stating that original features can help a property sell more quickly. A quarter of estate agents believe that residential property values could increase by more than 15 per cent with original features intact.(3). The following design criteria have been developed from observation of the special character of the local vernacular building form.

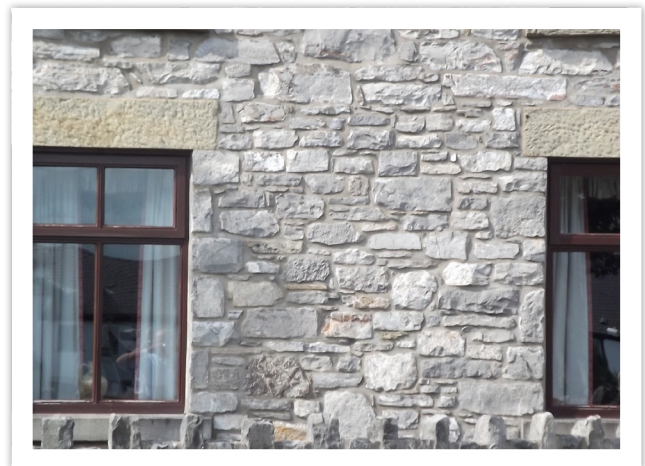
3.2 New development should be designed in accordance with the following criteria:

1. New buildings should generally be positioned close to the road facing edge of the plot with the ridge line of the roof running either in parallel or at right angles to the road. Large open plan gardens must be avoided. The intention must be to help enclose public spaces and help to frame views using building elements such as entrances or chimneys as minor focal points.
2. Buildings should be between 1 and 2 and a half storeys in height; simple, narrow and rectilinear in form below a steep slated roof with gabled ends. The provision of working chimneys is strongly encouraged and these should be located with stacks rising centrally above the gables.
3. Extensions should be subordinate lean-to or 'cat-slide' structures, or built onto the gable to continue the run of the existing roof form at a lower level.
4. Dormers, where acceptable, should occupy no more than 30% of any roof plane and be simple flat roofed or gabled projections.
5. On road facing elevations, windows should generally be arranged in a simple and symmetrical form about entrances, one above another, and shall be rectangular and vertical in orientation. The shape of windows and the proportions created through their sub division by glazing bars shall follow approximately the dimensions of the Golden ratio, i.e. 1.6 high by 1 unit wide. Greater freedom in design will generally be more appropriate to the rear of properties.
6. All exposed timber should be painted in a colour of paint which contrasts well with the colour of the walls.
7. All windows and entrances shall be set deep within the reveals to give the impression of structural solidity
8. Materials for walls should be a mix of limestone and white or off-white, painted or lime-washed render. The stone sections should follow logical patterns and boundaries such as the whole of the front elevation of a building or the quoins, and should emphasise structure rather than be placed randomly in panels. Traditionally, the gables would have been the areas most likely to have been rendered.

9. All roofs should be in Welsh slate and have a minimum pitch of 30 degrees
10. Garage doors are large elements which are likely to be out of scale with the character of the street and these buildings should ideally be located so as to avoid doors opening or overlooking directly onto the street or lane.
11. New stone work and maintenance on all traditionally constructed solid wall buildings and walls shall be properly coursed and shall be pointed in hydraulic lime mortar typically using 1 part hydraulic lime to three parts pale sand mixed with a little coarse grained material such as Mersey river grit. Portland cement must not be used on traditional walls and the use of red sand in the mix must be avoided. Any re-painting of walls of traditionally constructed buildings must be undertaken using lime wash or other breathable mineral based paint.



» **Modern construction uses stone only as a cladding material and it can appear to lack strength or purpose**



» **Structural stone walling is coursed to ensure it will hold up on its own. Stone lintels support the structure over the doors and windows**

4 Buildings which make a special contribution to the character

- 4.1 There are a number of buildings and features within the conservation area, which do not meet the criteria for national statutory listing, but which are considered important to the history, appearance, character and cultural value of Gwaenysgor, as illustrated on the accompanying plan 5. These deserve special consideration in decision making to ensure their positive contribution to the overall interest of the area is taken sufficient account of.



5 Landscape

- 5.1** The following criteria should be observed when making decisions about future development within the village as well as agricultural or other development in the area surrounding the village:
1. The Council will use its powers to seek the retention of trees and replanting in appropriate locations.
 2. The Council will use its development control powers to preserve key views and vistas both within and beyond the conservation area.
 3. New openings into existing stone walls must be kept to a minimum in width and finished at either side with stone gate posts
 4. All original stone stiles and other features such as the seating around the well must be retained. Where possible stone stiles which have been removed should be reinstated. If improvements to access are required, kissing gates should be introduced adjacent to the stiles.
 5. New development should incorporate stone boundary walls built in rubble stone, properly coursed and completed with Cock and Hen copings. Walls should generally be no lower than one metre and no greater than 1.5 metres in height. Boundary enclosures which are not prominent in views from the public realm may be constructed in different materials.
 6. Garden landscaping should use native species of tree and shrub wherever possible and should avoid use of non native fast growing evergreen trees such as Leylandii.



» **Traditional walls along Well Lane**

6. Strengthening of Planning Controls through an Article 4 (2) Direction and consideration for further statutory listing of buildings

- 6.1 The survey carried out for this appraisal identified serious erosion of the character of the area resulting from development which is normally permitted without the need for planning permission. It is considered important to exercise control over the replacement of windows and doors in order to reinstate the lost architectural character. An Article 4 (2) Direction can be introduced through the planning process to put slightly tighter restrictions on the usual householder permitted development rights in order to control such small-scale changes. However, during the public consultation period some residents expressed concern at the high cost of installing replacement timber windows compared with that of plastic framed windows.
- 6.2 Officers will seek approval in principle to draw up an Article 4 (2) Direction for this conservation area when seeking elected member approval of this document. Any such direction will be subject to a separate report to the County Planning Committee. However, following the public consultation in Gwaenysgor, it will be proposed to introduce only 'light touch' restrictions to householder rights covering the following changes:
- Replacement or alteration of windows on the principal elevation facing a road
 - Removal or alteration of parts of boundary walls facing the highway
- 6.3 Where permitted development rights are removed by an Article 4 (2) Direction, planning permission will be required for the work. That means the local planning authority will be able to make sure that alterations are made in a way that is in keeping with the character of the conservation area. The planning authority will require genuine vertical sliding sash and case windows which are traditionally proportioned where the Article 4 (2) applies. However, the Article 4 (2) will be restricted to the principal elevation of each building only rather than all road facing sides. This elevation is normally the one containing the front door. There is no fee for the planning application if the work would ordinarily have been permitted development.

6.4 Applications for listed building status.

Flintshire Conservation and Design Officer will apply to CADW for the listing of the following buildings:

- Village well
- Village Hall



» The Village Well



» Village Hall

7.0 Planning Enforcement

- 7.1** The Local Authority Enforcement Service will investigate instances where open countryside appears to have been absorbed into private garden ground and will take action to return this land to open countryside. In rare cases where a small area of former agricultural land is enclosed separately from any garden and it can be verified that public recreational access to this land is encouraged and maintained no such action will be taken.
- 7.2** The enforcement team will investigate reports of any open areas on local farms being used for open storage of materials or scrap machinery and will take action where necessary to ensure that this does not become a nuisance once again.
- 7.3** The enforcement team will investigate reports of any traditional walling being removed without any necessary planning permission or listed building consent and will take action to ensure that such consent is obtained or that these areas are reinstated.

8. Street scene

- 8.1 The characteristic of shared use has been lost in 20th century development. The generous road widths and sight lines of new or widened roads gives clear priority to the car, allowing vehicles to travel too fast for the safety of pedestrians. Recently the Welsh Government has adopted the 'Manual for Streets' approach to road design (4), which strongly encourages highway authorities to reintroduce the informal means to slow down traffic that are found naturally in villages such as Gwaenysgor.



» **Bibury village subtle traffic calming.**

Examples of other sensitive traffic calming schemes in small villages can be found at:

<http://www.blackheathsurrey.co.uk/notices/traffic1picsImage8.jpg>

<http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/staff/fomdir/images/p030.jpg>

- 8.2 There is a need for a consistent and historically and architecturally sensitive approach to be adopted by all utilities and stakeholders in the public realm, especially with regard to highways signage, way marking, lighting columns, road markings and carriageway surfacing in responding appropriately to local character. Flintshire County Council as Highways Authority will work with other statutory undertakers to realise improvements in the character and ambience of the street scene within and approaching the village.

The following actions shall be given active consideration:

1. Explore means of reducing the attractiveness of the village as a cut through to the coast. This could include creating village 'gateways' on the main approaches to the village: one near the pond to the north and the other near to the Llanasa Trelawnyd cross roads on the southern approach. The gateways could take the form of a restriction in width of a small section of road in order to actively deter large vehicles using the route. Such restrictions would need to be in keeping with the rural character of the road.
2. Adopt the Welsh Government Manual for Streets Approach to traffic calming in the

village by making it appear as a shared space in which pedestrians and cyclists are accorded a higher priority than traditional highway designs confer. Measures which could be considered include the following:



» **The current street scene with a fast two lane road with traffic calming markings**



» **Sketch illustrating an alternative traffic calming concept recommended in the Welsh Government Guidance 'Manual for Streets'. Traffic is slowed down by minor constrictions such as gate posts and tree planting. The road is free of markings just as it is elsewhere on this country lane**

- Provision of a feature in the form of a statue or a tree to be located immediately adjacent to the carriageway at Y Marian.
- Installation of chicanes marked by field fences on the approaches to the centre of the village to replace the red markings on the carriageway
- Removal of all road markings including the white centre lines in the main road through the village.
- Adoption of a 20 mile per hour speed restriction through the village.

3. Consider requiring buses to use Llwyn Onn for turning around as they used to do
4. Undertake an audit of streetscape signage, and litter and grit bins within the conservation area and consider whether it is necessary and appropriate
5. Consult locally on switching off or reducing the luminance of street lighting within the village between the hours of midnight and 6.00 a.m. in order to allow better appreciation of the night sky.
6. Retain and manage grass verges along radiating lanes, possibly in line with the wildflower approach adopted for the Churchyard
7. Conserve and further enhance the remaining historic public realm features including the two parish pumps and the K6 telephone box

9. Specific Minor Proposals

- 9.1 The following 'quick win' actions can be undertaken quickly and inexpensively, sometimes with the assistance of volunteers from the local community.

9.2 Building proposals

- A representative group of local people will undertake a short course in the use of lime for repairs to local stone buildings in order to disseminate best practice and to enable monitoring of building works in future
- The Community Council will continue to support the reinstatement of dry stone walls and stone styles around the village.

9.3 Street scene proposals

- The Highways Authority shall urgently consider the removal of the deeply unpopular white diagonal lines from the paved surfaces of Y Marian.
- The cluster of signs at the north eastern corner of the grassed area of the village Green shall be consolidated onto one pole
- The Highways Authority shall consider improving the signage at the cross roads to the south of the village, to convey a more welcoming and positive sentiment to visitors on this approach
- The Community Council shall consider the possibility of taking over the listed telephone box on the Village Green. Little used phone boxes have been taken over elsewhere as book swap libraries.
- The Community Council shall consider installation of one or more additional interpretive boards to highlight aspects of the village character both past and present.



» **A book exchange library could be managed by the Local Authority**

9.4 Landscape proposals

- Consideration could be given to provision of an additional public bench to be located in the area of Y Marian.
- The Community Council will encourage households to plant native species of plants in front gardens and remove or reduce the height of tall hedges.
- The Community Council will encourage local farmers to maintain and lay hedges, reducing their current height in places along the green lanes running out of the village in order to open up attractive views of the village from the surrounding area.
- The Gwaenysgor Conservation Group will continue to clear the vegetation around the well on an ongoing basis and maintain it in good condition.
- The Conservation Group could continue to work with BT to remove high level wires from the conservation area, particularly within the view towards Gop Hill from the village core of Y Marian.
- The Community Council shall liaise with church and conservation interests with a view to increasing the area of mown paths around the churchyard, to allow better access to graves and the listed sundial.
- The branch spread of the line of trees which runs along the eastern boundary of the church yard shall be reduced to enable a clear view of the church from Y Marian.



» A view of the Parish Church of Saint Mary Magdelene could be opened up following some crown lifting of the trees behind the wall memorial at the Village Green.

References

1. The Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990 England and Wales
2. Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) section 211 - Trees in Conservation Areas
3. Estate Agency Survey BRDC Marketing for English Heritage Estate Agents Research 'Conservation Areas at Risk' Campaign 2009
4. Manual for Streets UK Government Department for Transport HMSO 2007 (now adopted as official guidance by the Welsh Government)
5. Walking with history Roger Hadley with Ken Davies Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor Community Council 2000
6. On Common Ground Roger Hadley 2003

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