Abstract: A Character Appraisal of Brechin Road, Kirriemuir has been undertaken as the preliminary stage in assessing whether the area merits Conservation Area status. It is proposed to undertake consultation on the Character Appraisal and report the findings back to the next available meeting of this Committee.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director of Planning and Transport be remitted to undertake public consultation on the desirability of designating part of Brechin Road, Kirriemuir as a Conservation Area under the meaning of Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and to report the findings back to this Committee.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 All planning authorities are required from time to time to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as Conservation Areas. (Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997). Designation of a Conservation Area affects a wide range of buildings. Accordingly, the Scottish Ministers consider it important that before designation all planning authorities should give the public ample opportunity to comment through a convenient consultation process. This is important because development in Conservation Areas has to be of a high standard. Under Section 64 of the 1997 Act, development has to “preserve or enhance” the “character or appearance” of the Conservation Area. Character Appraisals are used to test whether development proposals preserve “character or appearance”.

2.2 There is provision for designating Conservation Areas in the Development Plan. Policy ENV 35 of the Angus Local Plan, “Conservation Areas Boundary Review”, states:-

“Angus Council will review the boundaries of all the existing Conservation Areas and consider designating new Conservation Areas to protect and enhance the character and appearance of such areas.”
2.3 The re-designation of the Arbroath and Montrose Conservation Areas within the last few years included week long public exhibitions which were manned for most of the time. This proved to be a useful way of receiving feedback from local people on the proposals and provides a model for the proposed consultation on this appraisal.

3 CRITERIA FOR CONSERVATION AREAS

3.1 There is no standard specification for Conservation Areas. The statutory definition is “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

3.2 As part of the process in determining whether an area has sufficient merit to warrant designation, the following broad criteria apply:-

· whether the area has special architectural and/or historic importance;
· whether it has a distinct character;
· what its value is within the wider context of the village or the town in which the area is situated;
· what is its present condition.

3.3 As a result of the assessment criteria, Conservation Areas may be large or small and may vary in size from whole town centres to single squares and small groups of buildings. Whilst Conservation Areas will normally be centred on listed buildings this need not always be the case.

3.4 An appraisal of Brechin Road, Kirriemuir, has now been carried out and it forms Appendix 1 to this report. The appraisal will form the basis of the public exhibition and copies of the document will be made available to those members of the public who wish to take it away for further consideration. The exhibition will also contain maps and photographs.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 It is anticipated that the cost of a small exhibition in the town will cost approximately £300. This sum can be drawn from the 2004-05 Conservation Grants (Revenue) Budget.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Executive and the Directors of Finance and Law & Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The 1997 Act places a duty on local planning authorities to consider designation of Conservation Areas. There is also provision for the designation of additional Conservation Areas in the Angus Local Plan.
7.2 In the event that Conservation Area status is conferred, the Development Control workload is unlikely to increase substantially. There is only a total of around 30 buildings in the area that may become a Conservation Area.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/PM/KW
8 April 2004

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport
ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

Brechin Road, Kirriemuir

Draft Character Appraisal
CONTENTS:

Character Appraisal of Brechin Road, Kirriemuir

Appendix 1: Map of Study Area

Appendix 2: Important Townscape Features

Appendix 3: Important Architectural Features

Appendix 4: Photographs
CHARACTER APPRAISAL: BRECHIN ROAD, KIRRIEMUIR

Conservation Areas

Under the terms of section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act, “all planning authorities are required from time to time to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as Conservation Areas”. This document is an appraisal of the area shown in Appendix 1 and is an analysis of its character and appearance. The document is a draft and will form the basis of public consultation on whether or not to designate Brechin Road, Kirriemuir as a Conservation Area.

Structure of Appraisal

The first section is a broad overview of the area, including details of how far it extends. An outline of its historical development follows, including reference to the area’s origins and how it has developed up to the present day.

The next section covers land use and those activities that may be regarded as part of the overall “character” of the place.

The main section of the appraisal covers visual matters. It describes the street pattern and its contribution to the character and the appearance of the area, and analyses the various elements of the townscape. That includes the role played by individual buildings and also groups of buildings. Other features that are analysed include how the whole area reads and the identification of different character zones.

There are features that are essential components of the area’s character. Sometimes the land use in any given area will impart a certain quality that is worth preserving; reference has already been made to how inappropriate land uses can adversely impact upon character. In the townscape context, there will be other, physical features that are important because of their contribution to the overall, character and appearance of the study area. An example is the enclosure of space created by boundary walls. The presumption is in favour of preserving those features that contribute significantly to the character or appearance of the area. These features are listed in Appendix 2, “Important townscape features”.

At a more detailed level, there are small-scale details that contribute to character and appearance. These comprise architectural elements such as gate piers, enrichments such as iron brattishing and the use of particular materials such as harl, sandstone and slate. Appendix 3, lists some of the more important architectural features but, as with Appendix 2, it should not be regarded as an exhaustive inventory.

Appendix 4 contains photographs of the study area.

Overview of the Area

There is already a Conservation Area in Kirriemuir that covers the medieval, burgh core. This appraisal covers the eastward, suburban expansion of Kirriemuir from the middle of the, 19th century to the 1990’s, along Brechin Road.
The area covered by the appraisal runs east, from the junction of Elm Street to where Brechin Road ends at the eastern end of the town. The area selected only includes all the properties that adjoin Brechin Road and it is approximately 300 metres in length, as measured east to west.

The junction between Elm Street and Brechin Road marks the western boundary of the study area. This seems logical because the larger villas are all to the east of the junction of the two roads and the area to the west is different in character.

The entry to the burgh from the eastern end of Brechin Road is another, logical choice for a boundary. This section of Brechin Road has a unified character, typified by medium, to large, villas and semi-detached villas, sandstone boundary walls and mature trees and gardens. There is a continuous vista from the eastern end of Brechin Road, towards the constriction in the road at the bowling green some 220 metres to the west. The whole area can be seen at once and it has a homogeneous character when viewed from either end of the study area. The line of mature Beech trees to the east of Quarry Park is an important edge detail. It has been included in the study area for that reason.

Appendix 1 shows the boundary of the study area on a plan at scale of 1:2500.

**Historical Development**

Brechin Road probably developed as a result of the boom in manufacturing after the opening of the first power loom factory in 1868, which was then extended in 1889. Kirriemuir was considerably smaller before then and it is reasonable to infer that the burgh only expanded from the medieval core surrounding the Parish Church after the middle of the 19th century. There is a suggestion that the burgh was relatively poor before that period, the evidence for that inference being drawn from reports of poor street surfacing in the 1830's and the fact that the Parish Church of 1787 was the first building in Kirriemuir to be roofed in blue, Scots slate. Most of the other Angus burghs contain Scots slated buildings from much earlier periods.

There are three, large villas, on the south side of Brechin Road: Lisden Ardmore and Platten. They were built by James Watson, Wellbank, Kirriemuir (1809-1903). James Watson also built Balintore Castle (1859) near Lintrathen, Kinnordy and 20 bridges in the surrounding countryside. Lisden is by far the largest of the three villas in Brechin Road and it has the largest garden area, at approximately twice the area of both Ardmore and Platten. There are other sizeable villas, notably Nos. 49-55 and 42-52 but none have anything like as large a garden of any of the “big three”.

The south side of Brechin Road was probably developed first because of the views, south over the Vale of Strathmore. Lisden, built in 1872, is the earliest building in the area yet it was built at the eastern extremity of the road, some time before the other villas of Ardmore and Platten. That suggests a deliberate choice on the part of the owner, an individual with sufficient means to occupy the prime site, a site that would have been situated away from any other development in the middle of the 19th century.

The building of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century influenced the layout of the area. The reason for building the line seems to have been the growing population. The Ordnance Survey map of 1861 indicates that Elm Street did not exist at that date. The map shows the reason why. There was no development in the area now occupied by Nos. 49-55 Brechin
Road; even the first development on the Brechin Road, namely Lisden, was not built until 1872. Consequently, there would have been little need for a direct route between the station and the Brechin Road in 1861.

A route was subsequently opened from the station to Brechin Road along what is now Elm Street. Nos. 2-8 Elm Street date from 1898 and that might be the year that the road was formed. It is possible that the housing on either side of the street was laid out as a single development.

The title deeds for No. 8 Elm Street reveal that it was built for an employee of the railway operator. The main reason for opening the road, however, was probably to avoid the circuitous route up Marywell Brae and then back along Brechin Road. By the late 19th century, therefore, Brechin Road was clearly a desirable area to live and there was a need for a direct route from the station.

The bowling green between Nos. 32 and 36-38 was formed around 1900. Its formation may be the reason for the narrowness of this section of Brechin Road; the site had to accommodate both the bowling green and an associated pavilion. Documentary evidence in the form of a map could not be obtained but it is a reasonable inference to draw.

The Arts and Crafts-influenced semis at Nos. 40-42 date to 1901 and were built for the Wilkie brothers. These houses must have been highly fashionable in their time and they are a marked departure from their familiar, red sandstone neighbours.

The Arts and Crafts theme is continued in other houses of the Edwardian period, namely Nos. 44 and 48, albeit in a very discreet manner. Both buildings have Arts and Crafts echoes and are possibly by the same architect.

Little development took place immediately after the Edwardian period. Quite possibly, this is a corollary to the development of other, residential suburbs for the professional and business classes during this period. The main example is the area along Glengate, and isolated villas such as the Langlands-style Glenhill, in Kinnordy Road. Other parts of the burgh were developed in this period too but the houses these are more modest affairs for the most part. Brechin Road seems to have been the location of choice for Kirriemuir’s wealthier residents.

Apart from isolated single houses, for example No. 69, the next development of new housing took place in the 1970’s. The three houses at Nos. 54-58 are interesting examples of the period and they sit comfortably in their surroundings because of their disposition within large, mature gardens, set back from the road.

The most recent development is the large group of bungalows at Quarry Park, housing development in the southern part of the garden ground of Lisden and a residential home immediately west of the latter. This development took place from the late 1980’s to the mid 1990’s.

The Contribution of Land Use to Character

Brechin Road is exclusively residential in character. There are no flatted properties, the main exception being the nursing homes at Lisden. The vast majority of the houses are detached villas, or bungalows, the main exceptions being Nos. 36-38 and 40-42, both of which are semi-detached. Lisden began life as a private house. It is now a residential home and there
is a separate, new build, residential home to the west of Lisden that dates from the mid 1990’s.

The residential character is of two types. The villas on the southern side of the road withdraw from the street, hidden behind sandstone walls. This is mainly a feature of Platten, Ardmore and Lisden, but it is also a characteristic of Nos. 49-55.

On the northern side of the road, the disposition of the houses changes. The aspect is much more open and the houses interface more strongly with the road. Whereas the villas on the southern side withdraw discreetly behind their boundary walls, those on the northern side are a strong part of the townscape and can be viewed from Brechin Road much more readily.

Street Pattern and Townscape Analysis

Brechin Road is a long, linear thoroughfare. Entering from the eastern end the vista is channeled westwards towards the constriction at the bowling green. The entry from the east is clearly defined; there is a definite transition from an open, rural landscape at the eastern boundary of the burgh. This sudden transition from rural to urban is extremely important. The line of mature Beech trees east of Quarry Park reinforces the boundary between urban and rural.

Two features create the linear character of Brechin Road. The first is the gently sloping topography that naturally leads the eye down towards the constriction point at the bowling green. The carriageway surface is very much part of the vista when travelling east along Brechin Road, until the topography starts to flatten out towards the area around Lisden and Quarry Park and the space opens out into the adjacent countryside. This gentle east to west slope makes the carriageway surface a prominent element in the townscape.

The second element in the linear character of Brechin Road, is the important sense of enclosure imparted by the high boundary walls and mature trees, particularly on the southern side of the road. There are fewer, high boundary walls and trees on the northern side but the tighter grouping of the buildings, their stronger relationship to the road and the slightly elevated position of those east of Cemetery Road add to the sense of enclosure. The long, straight vista, together with the height to width ratio between the road and the walls on either side, makes Brechin Road a “dynamic”, or “linear”, space. That linearity remains constant from the east up to the area outside Nos. 49-55 and 36-42.

The group of buildings running from Nos. 36-38 to No 52 comprise a homogeneous group, an effect that derives from close grouping, regular plot sizes and similarity of scale. The regular rhythm they create, and the fact that they are all seen as a group when viewed from the west, reinforces the sense of enclosure.

The small building group formed by Nos. 36-42 on the northern side of the road and Nos. 53-55 to the south marks a change in the townscape. Whereas the area to the east is linear in character the townscape in this area changes subtly. The space is almost “static” and reads as a “vestibule”, or “ante room”, at the entrance to the section of Brechin Road of the junction with Elm Street.

The final section of the study area, namely the area between the junctions with Bowling Green Road and Elm Street, is slightly different in character to the main section of Brechin
Road, and the small “vestibule” immediately to the east. There is an absence of buildings that front onto the road. That, together with the cliff effect of the hedging on the north side of the road, creates a separate character zone. The space is a transitional area between the main section of Brechin Road and the densely built up town centre. It reads as a “corridor” and marks the end of the study area.

Four side streets lead off the northern side of Brechin Road. Three of these do not become visually prominent until the viewer is very near to where these roads form a junction with Brechin Road. These roads: Bowling Green Road, Cemetery Road and the culs-de-sac between Nos. 46 and 48, all have narrow entrances.

As with the side streets leading off the northern side of the road, the entrance drives to the villas on the south side of the road do not become apparent until the viewer is very near. The exception is the access to Lisden that has been widened to service new development within the grounds.

The plot widths are important elements in creating the character of the different sections of the study area. The plot width at No. 32 is approximately 11 yards; Tillyloss is almost certainly a very old route and it was probably in existence before the building of No. 32. Consequently, the plot for No. 32 probably used the eastern side of Tillyloss as a boundary. The distance from the eastern boundary of No. 32 and the eastern side of Bowling Green Road is 33 yards, or three times the plot width of No. 32. The bowling green and Bowling Green Road may, therefore, occupy three plot widths, or feus.

Nos. 36-40 all have seven-yard plot widths. The slightly narrower plot at No. 42 is due to the fact that Cemetery Road encroaches on the front garden.

The formation of Cemetery Road and the culs-de-sac between Nos. 46 and 48 may have also had an effect on the original plot widths of Nos. 44-48. The plots may have been around 17 yards in width originally. However, there is a hint that Nos. 46 and 48 are contemporary with the culs-de-sac; both are positioned at the western and eastern sides of their plots respectively.

The plots at Nos. 50 and 52 are both 13 yards in width and this signals the end of the regularity of plot widths on the northern side of the road. The new housing to the east of Nos. 50 and 52 is a much more recent development. The line of the western boundary of No. 54 continues northward into Quarry Park, along a former field boundary.

The plot sizes at Quarry Park are smaller than those associated with earlier houses in Brechin Road, although the plots at Nos. 1 and 2 Quarry Park are larger than the others in this development. That has been of some benefit in maintaining the historic pattern of medium to large houses at a low density.

Regularity of plot width is less evident on the south side of Brechin Road. The widths at Nos. 49 to 55 all vary, with No 49 having by far the largest frontage at around 25 yards; it also has the largest garden of the four houses in this area. However, the variation is not immediately apparent on the ground, due to the set back of the houses and the continuity across plots created by continuous boundary walls.

This same phenomenon is evident across the “big three” of Ardmore, Platten and Lisden. Whilst all three occupy very large areas of ground, neither the large plot widths, nor the large gardens, are clearly visible from Brechin Road. Continuous boundary walls, and the setting
back of the houses away from the road, disguises the fact that the “big three” have different plot widths.

**Architecture**

At first glance the buildings appear fairly traditional, mainly because of the widespread use of local, red sandstone and conventional massing, scale and fenestration patterns. A closer examination reveals that some of those who moved here in the later 19th and the early 20th centuries favoured modernity. Some of the later Victorian and Edwardian buildings, in particular, suggest that some of the original inhabitants had a taste for the prevailing architectural fashions of the day.

The benchmark is Lisden built in 1872. Solid and baronial, Lisden incorporates motifs drawn from earlier periods of Scottish architecture. Later in the 19th century, the same solidity and tradition, even a slight architectural conservatism, prevailed. Nos. 36-38 and 49-55 are competent essays in sensibility and solidity.

At the turn of the century there were hints of a departure from the conventional wisdom. Mock half-timbering in the gables of Nos. 46 and 48 impart a mildly Arts and Crafts character to both, but the Arts and Crafts detailing is just an acknowledgement of the current fashion. Conventional massing, blue slates and the familiar, local sandstone create a decidedly traditional character and the mock half-timbering is only a passing reference.

Platten, together with the Voyseyesque Nos. 40-42 of 1901, are absolutely modern for their date. Platten’s harled walls still echo Scottish tradition but the red roof tiles, and the “motor home”, at the front must have appeared startlingly new at the time. Nos. 40-42 must have been similarly new in 1901. The white walls, red, Rosemary roof tiles and the curvilinear door openings in the Arts and Crafts style are a marked departure from what had gone before.

This architectural evolution, and the driving force of the newly wealthy that underpinned it, are important aspects of both the character and the appearance of Brechin Road. The area attracted the emerging professional and business classes of the period and their aspirations are clear for all to see. Some of the early inhabitants seem to have favoured new architecture; it is likely that all wanted privacy, away from the hustle and bustle of the burgh centre.

The building typology that resulted from the desires of the early inhabitants is varied. The variations are not capricious but a reflection of wealth commissioning the very latest architecture as a social statement. Brechin Road is, therefore, an important physical reminder of how Kirriemuir fared from the middle of the Victorian era until the earlier part of the 20th century. This social phenomenon, and its physical manifestations in the form of the buildings that it created, may be regarded as an important aspect of the “character”, as opposed to the “appearance, of the area.

Moreover, the break with architectural tradition, towards the prevailing styles of the times, should inform the design of new buildings in the area. Platten, together with Nos. 40-42, may be radical departures from the conventional wisdom of the time but they have an architectural rigour that suggests new buildings of the future should be similarly well thought through.
Details

Red sandstone and blue Welsh slate predominate as external finishes. However, the introduction of harling and red, tiled roof coverings has done no harm to the overall character of the area. On the contrary, these latter materials are actually important aspects of its character. In any case, the essential character of Brechin Road derives from the scale of the houses, medium to large plot sizes, low density, sense of enclosure, good period architecture and other, large-scale features. Nevertheless, the smaller details do add to the overall feel of the study area.

There are too many small-scale features to list them all. Good examples include the iron brattishing at No 52, the mock, half-timbering at Nos. 44 and 48 and the doorcases to Nos. 40-42. Appendix 3 lists the main features that are visible from the road.

Several of the houses still have their original windows and doors. Assuming that the houses remain in use as single, dwelling houses, replacing these items would not require planning permission even if Brechin Road becomes a Conservation Area, unless an Article 4 Direction is subsequently sought from the Scottish Ministers.

Conclusion: The Essential Character

The essential character of Brechin Road is firmly grounded in large-scale elements such as the strong, linear character of the road, medium to large villas at a low density, varied architecture that is well thought through, sense of enclosure created by the boundary walls and the softening effect of tree cover and mature gardens. It is these qualities that are essential components in the character of the area. The "details" mentioned in the last section also contribute to its overall qualities, where those details are visible from Brechin Road.

Small-scale details are less important to the overall character of the area so it is not intended to say much about them here, nor is it recommended that the replacement of items such as windows and doors be brought under planning control by means of an Article 4 Direction, if Brechin Road is designated as a Conservation Area. Nevertheless, the more important, and prominent, architectural features are worthy of protection where they contribute to the overall character of Brechin Road. Appendix 3 lists the main architectural features. Townscape features, such as long views and enclosing elements, are listed in Appendix 2.
Appendix 2: Important Townscape Features

Transitional areas

- Definite change from urban to rural at eastern end of Brechin Road
- Area in front of Nos. 36 to 42 reads as a minor node
- Constriction at bowling green defines western end of character zone

Vistas:

- Uninterrupted east-west vista along Brechin Road between the eastern and western boundaries of the proposed conservation area
- Vista from the junction of Brechin Road and Cemetery Road looking due north

Vista stops

- End of small culs-de-sac between Nos. 46 and 48 Brechin Road
- Narrowing of Brechin Road around the bowling green as seen from the east

Enclosing elements

- The line of boundary walls along the whole of the south side of Brechin Road
- Retaining walls at the front of Nos. 44 to 56 Brechin Road inclusive
- Narrow access points into driveways add to sense of enclosure

Contribution of buildings/building groups to character

- Rhythm of roofline and gables between Nos 36 to 52 inclusive
- Deep set-back of houses on south side of road
- Difference in building typology and plot density between north and south sides of Brechin Road
Appendix 3: Important Architectural Features

Note: All the following features are visible from the road.

No. 32: Moulded gables, advanced bay and stylised Latin cross finial on south elevation. Unusual (original) window types

Nos. 36-38: Piend-roof dormers with hidden lead soakers, wrought iron finials, canted bays, exposed rafter ends, ogee rhones and canted bays.

Nos. 40-42: Rosemary tiles, white harl, Arts and Crafts-influenced rainwater goods, effect created by repetition of gables on all elevations, margin light, swept-head doors (original), canted bays and highly mannered "keystones" over door entrances.

Cemetery Road: Gate piers at junction with Brechin Road

No 44: Gate piers, unusual windows (may be original, Arts and Crafts-influenced), lead-covered finials, uninterrupted roof plane on south elevation (apart from small, cast iron skylight), moulded rhones, shouldered wall-head chimneystacks, contrasting sandstone used for window and door openings and for quoins

Nos. 46 and 48: Arts and Crafts gable infill, asymmetrical bays, small entrance porch formed by carrying bay roof over door, wall-head dormers, canted bays, exposed rafter ends, wall-head chimneystacks and terra cotta ridge cresting and uninterrupted roof plane on south elevation

No. 52: Parapet with stepped central section, die at either end and wrought/cast iron brattishing, moulded string course under parapet, canted bays and stepped, wall-head chimneystacks

No. 49: Traditional timber conservatory on west elevation and uninterrupted roof plane on north elevation

No. 55: Gate piers

Platten: Early example of a “motor home”

Ardmore: Scalloped bargeboards, octagonal chimney cans and single gable window in separate residential accommodation abutting road; gate piers and timber gates to main entrance

Lisden: Muscular roofline and substantial chimneystacks
Appendix 4: Photographs