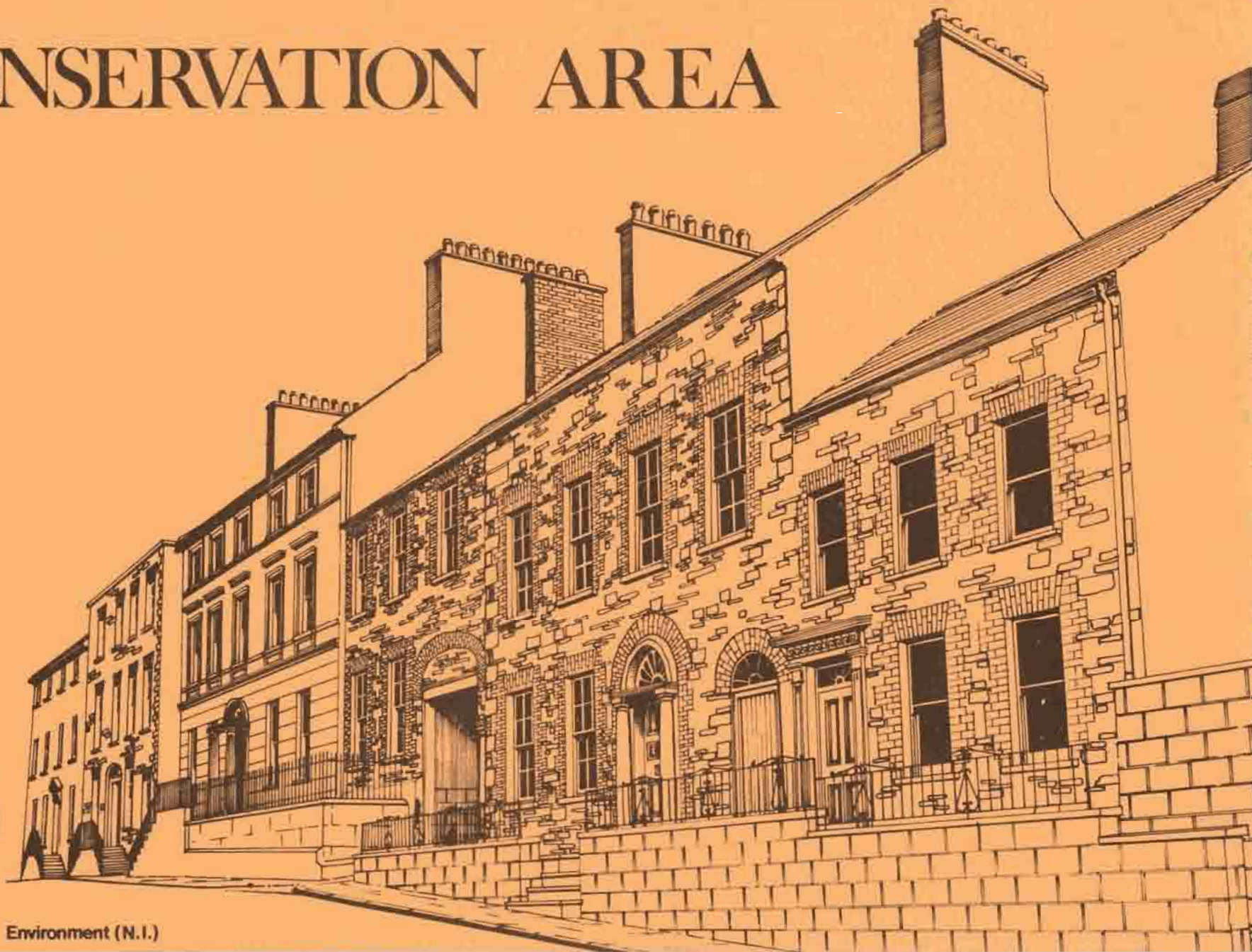


DOWNPATRICK CONSERVATION AREA



Department of the Environment (N.I.)

CONTENTS

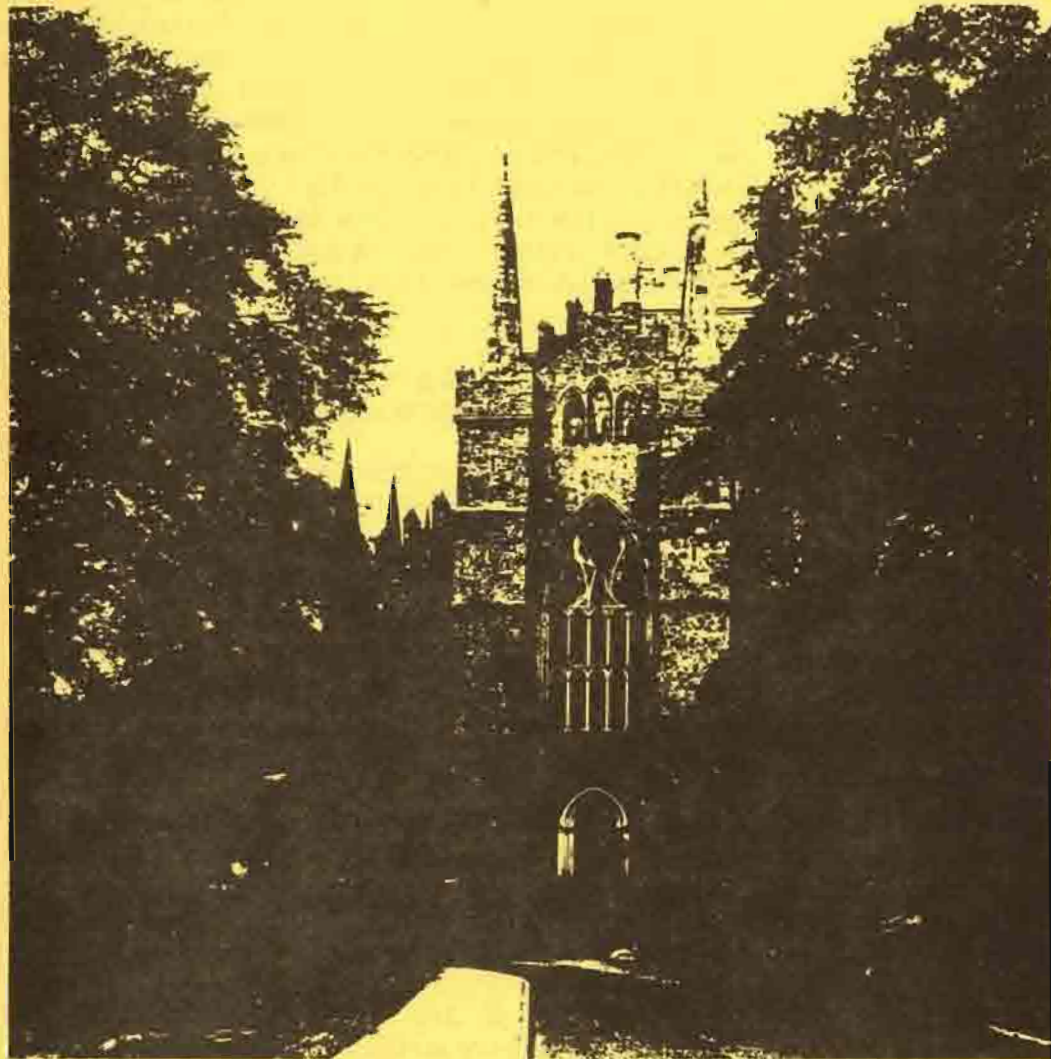
- Part 1 Historical Note
 - The Existing Town
 - The Designation
 - Bibliography
 - Map of the Conservation Area
- Part 2 Developers' Brief
- Part 3 Legislative Background to Conservation
 - Appendix One

The aims and policies set out in this booklet are for the guidance of District Councils, public bodies, local residents, landlords and tenants, intending developers and amenity and other groups. The booklet should be regarded as but a first step in securing the special architectural and historic interest of the designated area. It is anticipated that local initiative and discussion will give rise to proposals for repair and restorative works and developments which will not only preserve but will positively enhance the Area's special character. Designation will be of little practical value without this local support.

March 1985

Front Cover

Nos 110–116 Irish Street and Nos 2–4 Stream Street



Part 1

1.0 HISTORICAL NOTE

1.1 Downpatrick can claim to be one of the very earliest settlements in Ulster. The Roman geographer Ptolemy included Downpatrick when he mapped the towns of Ireland in the 2nd Century AD. However, it is the town's close association with St Patrick which has brought its greatest historical fame. Traditionally the first church built by him in Ireland was on the site of the present Cathedral, following his landing in the neighbouring parish of Saul, where he was given a barn in which to worship (Sabhal – a barn). From the earliest establishment of Christianity, Downpatrick flourished as a religious centre. So great was its prestige that it not only claimed the burial place of Patrick, but also of two other saints of Ireland, Brigid and Colmcille. As the couplet goes –

“In Down three saints one grave do fill,
Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille.”

It is tempting to think of the Quoile and its flood plain as defences from attack, but for the Norsemen the water was a highway, and Viking attacks are recorded in 824, 941 and 988. The town also suffered accidental fires, caused by lightning, for example, in 1111. The town received its first recorded attack in 819 and raids continued until the last in 1111.

1.2 In 1177, eleven years after the landing of the Normans in south-east Ireland, the adventuring John de Courcy marched north with a small band of soldiers to conquer lands for himself. He captured Downpatrick, the capital of the Dal Fiatach kingdom in east Down, and defeated its Lord, Mac Dunleavy. Mac Dunleavy's base may have been the enclosure in the Quoile marshes, where John de Courcy later built a castle mound, or motte, the present English Mount or Mound of Down. From this base he laid the foundation of an Anglo-Norman presence in Ulster. The Anglo-Norman influence fluctuated in succeeding centuries, but always the town of Down emerged as the focus of the county to which it gave its name. De Courcy exploited the religious prestige of the town,

associating himself with St Patrick on his coinage and renaming the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity after the saints. Some long existing religious houses were refounded (such as Saul) and some new houses established with Anglo-Norman recruits. Close to the town the Cistercian ruins at Inch are some of the most impressive anywhere in Ireland.

1.3 The long-established occupation of Downpatrick, centred on the Cathedral Hill with the ramparts of the fort or “dun” still faintly visible, and the religious and political significance of the place for so long make it an area of the utmost archaeological and historical importance. In time, and as the opportunity arises, careful excavation and recording will surely yield up more knowledge of these early times.

1.4 The desecration in 1539 of the holy sites by Lord Deputy Edward Gray – a crime counted amongst those that brought him finally to the axe – could be taken as the closing of one age of history and the opening of a new.

1.5 Even today Downpatrick's early beginnings can be traced in the pattern of its streets but it was the more settled times following the upheavals of the 17th Century that saw the beginnings of the town as we know it today. The Southwell family, inheritors of the Cromwell estates at the beginning of the 18th Century were responsible more than any others for the growing prosperity and importance of the City of Downe. Gates and levees were constructed to control the waters of the Quoile opening up many new acres for development. The River Quoile was developed for marine trade with a substantial quay and Customs House. Of the many fine buildings dating from this period of wealth, the most notable survival is the Southwell Charity building of 1733 on the Mall in English Street.

1.6 Towards the end of the Century, the Hill family grew in influence within the county as a whole. Through Downshire initiatives there came the scheme to create a new cathedral from the ecclesiastical ruins. At the same time, it was decided to remove the

venerable remains of the early Christian round tower because it was said to be dangerous.

- 1.7 Prosperity in the town was based on local arable farming, in particular, grain. During the second quarter of the 19th Century the value of this trade began to decline. In 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed and the shipments of grain reduced to a trickle. The growth of road transport in the 19th Century necessitated the construction of new streets – 1838 Church Street, 1840 Strangford Road and in 1846 Market Street. A regular passenger coach link with Belfast operated from as early as 1809 and in 1859 the railway was opened. However, local industry was in a decline from which it has never recovered.
- 1.8 In modern times the town has become a regional centre for administration, education and transport. Except to the north-west because of the marshes, new housing suburbs have grown around the historic centre, much of which is now in sad decay.
- 1.9 Downpatrick is famed for its associations with figures of national importance, amongst them Duns Scotus, Dean Delany and Thomas Russell. Russell was the “Man from God Knows Where” executed at the County Gaol in 1804 for attempting to re-organise the United Irishmen within the county.
- 1.10 A local interest in history is well established with the town and its environs currently supporting two lively societies – The Downe Society and The Lecale Historical Society. Recently the District Council has begun to restore the 18th Century County Gaol buildings in the Mall, and the first phase was completed in 1984 as the St Patrick’s Heritage Centre.

2.0 THE EXISTING TOWN

Character

- 2.1 Downpatrick is a historic town whose unique siting gives it a

distinctive character. The town centre, set between two hills with steep, narrow streets curving up and around the hills, has a very complete sense of enclosure. Although its early history must have influenced its shape and development, the town as it now stands dates mainly from the 18th and 19th Centuries. A number of buildings, including Down Cathedral and the Southwell Charity are of special architectural interest, while the many fine town houses, in themselves good examples of Georgian domestic architecture, are an important ingredient of the townscape and provide an essential foil to several imposing public buildings. Downpatrick is an important service and shopping centre for the surrounding area. Residential and small scale commercial uses exist side by side throughout the town while English Street, although mainly residential, has a significant number of public buildings and offices.

Scale and Form

- 2.2 The texture of Downpatrick comes from the small individual scale and variety of its buildings and of its streets. The town is composed mainly of two and three storey terraced houses of simple rectangular form with pitched roofs and gabled ends. Narrow, curving streets with small scale terraced buildings stepping up and down the hills are characteristic of the town.

Materials

- 2.3 A limited range of traditional materials used in Downpatrick makes a significant contribution to the architectural unity of the town. Facing bricks, ashlar masonry, coursed rubble masonry, snecked rubble and random rubble often with smooth rendered finishes are the traditional walling materials. Most buildings in the Conservation Area are constructed of locally quarried Silurian shales and rendered. Facing bricks and ashlar masonry have been used for some of the more important public buildings; the main elevations of the Southwell Charity are of red brick and sandstone cornice and the New Gaol gatehouse is of granite ashlar construction. Roofs are generally of slate. In recent years new walling and roofing materials, some of which do not harmonise

with the traditional materials have been used in the town. Rough-cast, pebble-dash and glazed tile finishes have been applied to some existing walls and a number of buildings have lost their original character.

Details

- 2.4 Well designed Georgian and Victorian doorways are amongst the most attractive features of Downpatrick. Doors and doorcases exhibit good period mouldings. Changes of level have resulted in a broken roof line as buildings climb the hills and this together with the tall chimneys and faceted chimney pots gives an interesting skyline which is punctuated by several fine towers and spires and the curving street lines bring emphasis to each building in turn. There are some good examples of wrought ironwork and areas of excellent cobbled paving.
- 2.5 The established format for windows is the typical vertical-sliding sash of the 18th and 19th centuries. Windows are generally Georgian type multi-paned. In some instances inappropriate casement windows have been substituted for the original sash.
- 2.6 A number of early shopfronts have survived. Detailing is simple but effective with narrow fasciae and mullions dividing the glazed area into smaller units which are more compatible with the townscape than very large plate glass windows.

Colours

- 2.7 Rendered wall surfaces generally painted in strong, subtly blending colours in the traditional local fashion, are an attractive feature of the Conservation Area. Brightly painted doors and shop fasciae with good quality hand-painted lettering are important components in the commercial area. The railings and other wrought iron detailing which appear through the Conservation Area are usually painted black or white.

Landscape

- 2.8 The varying landscape around Downpatrick, together with numerous mature trees, provides an attractive setting for the town. Cathedral Hill crowned with the Cathedral tower which rises high above the surrounding trees, is one of the most significant local landmarks. This historic site has a quiet, almost rural, setting to the west of the town and the Cathedral is surrounded by mature planting on the steep slopes of the hill. Elsewhere in the Conservation Area trees growing along lower English Street, Upper Irish Street and around St Patrick's Church and the First Presbyterian Church are a visual asset.

3.0 THE DESIGNATION

- 3.1 Notice is hereby given that the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) in pursuance of the powers conferred upon it by Article 37 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 has designated the area outlined on the attached map as a Conservation Area being an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- 3.2 A map of the designated area has been deposited at the District Council Office, Development Office and the Divisional Planning Office at the addresses indicated below:—

Down District Council	24 Strangford Road DOWNPATRICK (Telephone Downpatrick 4331)
Development Office	Medway Building Mount Crescent DOWNPATRICK (Telephone Downpatrick 3821)
Divisional Planning Office	Rathdune House New Bridge Street DOWNPATRICK (Telephone Downpatrick 3721)

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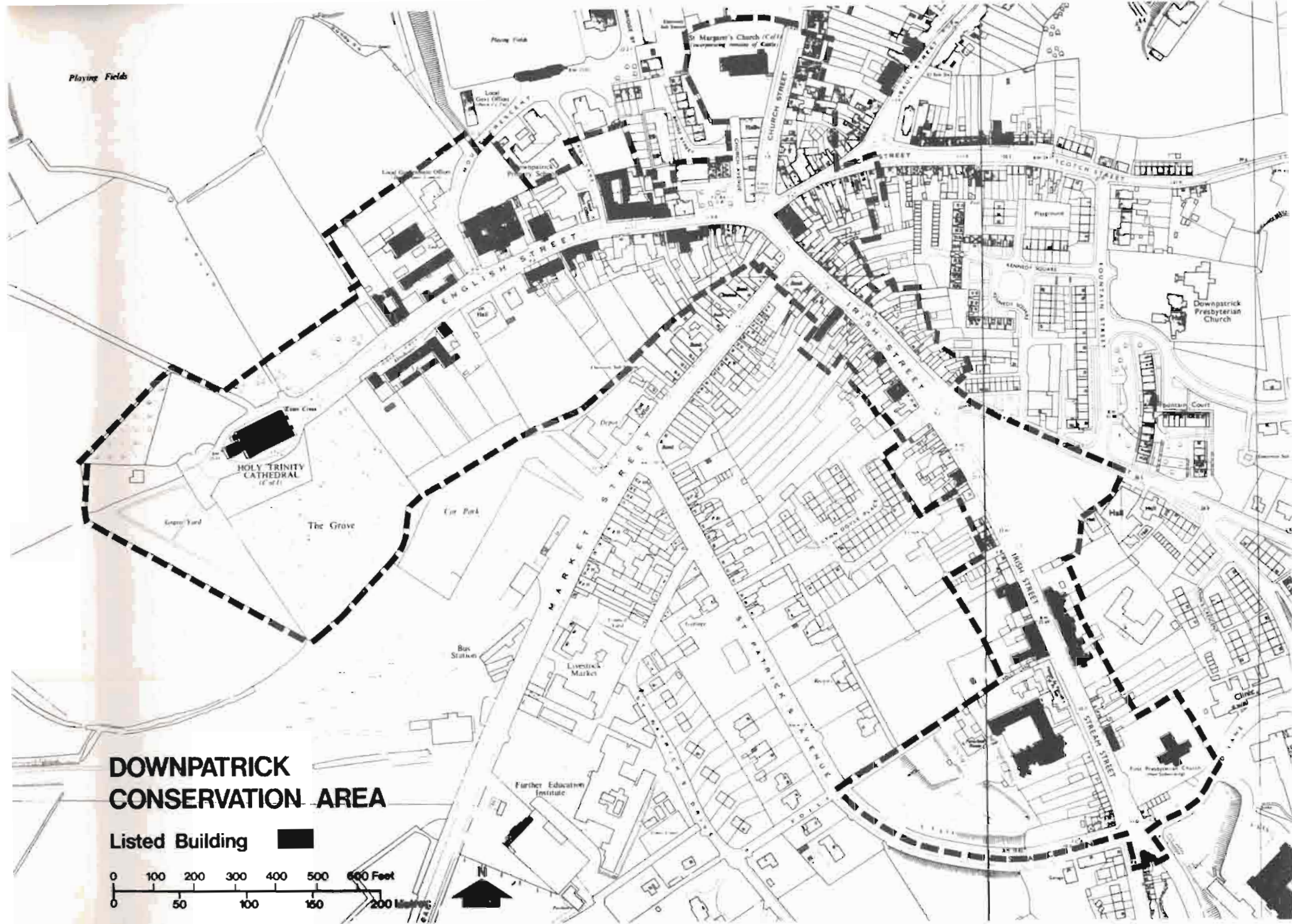
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Playing Fields

Floury Field

St. Margaret's Church (Cath)
(rebuilding ruins of Castle)

Local Gas Office

Local Gas Office

English Street

Church Street

Market Street

Scottish Street

Kennedy Square

Downpatrick
Presbyterian Church

HOLY TRINITY
CATHEDRAL
(1871)

The Grove

Car Park

Market Street

Livestock
Market

Bus
Station

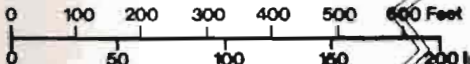
Further Education
Institute

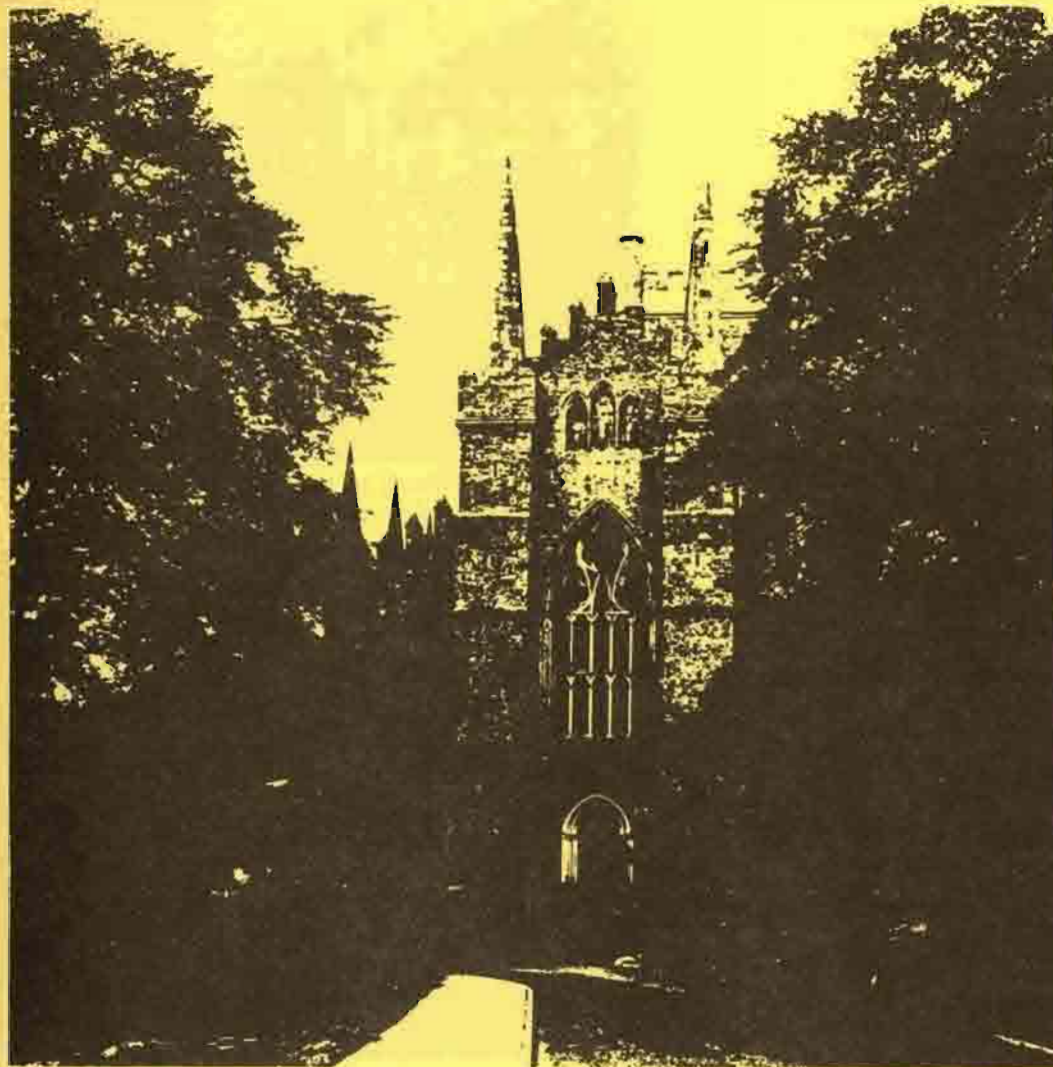
St. Patrick's Avenue

First Presbyterian Church
(1840)

DOWNPATRICK CONSERVATION AREA

Listed Building





Part 2



Two and three storey buildings of simple rectangular form with pitched roofs and gabled ends are appropriate.



The existing street frontages provide a sense of enclosure which is vital to the overall character of the Conservation Area.

5.0 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The purpose of designating a Conservation Area in Downpatrick is to ensure that the architectural style and character of the most historic parts of the town are maintained and enhanced by sympathetic control of development. Within the historic urban core appropriate renovation and improvement rather than demolition and replacement are desirable. Where demolition is unavoidable or where infilling is needed between buildings, it is essential that new development should reflect the distinctive character of the town. It is considered that no significant change will occur to the existing mixture of residential and small scale commercial uses, while the predominance of office uses would continue to function in the English Street area.

Design Scale

- 5.2 New development in the Conservation Area should be designed to reflect the domestic scale of the existing structure. Two and three storey buildings of simple rectangular form with pitched roofs and gabled ends are appropriate. Narrow and medium frontage terraced buildings are acceptable but large developments with long horizontally emphasised frontages would be out of character. New buildings in existing streets should maintain the existing street line in order to avoid gaps in the frontage, resulting in a loss of enclosure. New extensions to the rear of existing buildings should generally have matching external finishes and should have a pitched roof of similar pitch to the existing roof.



The range of finishes common to the Conservation Area is evident in this typical terrace.



The balance of fenestration and vertical window proportions essential to the character of the Conservation Area are illustrated in this Georgian terrace house.

Materials

- 5.3 External materials are among the most important elements which determine the character of buildings. The materials to be used should relate in character to those already in use in the area. In improvement works to stone faced buildings, the stonework should be retained and where necessary repaired with the use of careful pointing in the existing style. Facing brick and smooth render, which are common throughout the Conservation Area, should be retained.
- 5.4 Traditional roofing materials such as natural Welsh slate, either new or second hand, should continue to be used in new and replacement work, while the retention or replacement of cast iron gutters and downpipes in preference to PVC is essential.

Windows

- 5.5 Designs for new development and alterations to existing frontages should reflect the traditional proportions found in the many Georgian buildings in the Conservation Area. A balanced fenestration with the mass of wall predominating over that of window is essential, while window proportions should have a vertical emphasis. Where wider openings are required, the vertical emphasis should be retained with the use of a broad mullion or mullions. In renovation work the traditional sliding sash window should be retained; in new buildings they need not be sliding sash but should reflect traditional proportions and style. Examples of traditional window proportions are included at the rear of the booklet.
- 5.6 Where existing houses are to be converted to shops, the shop front should reflect the traditional style of others in the Conservation Area and large plate glass display windows should be avoided. Examples of suitable shop fronts are illustrated at the rear of the booklet.



Doors

- 5.7 There are many examples of fine panelled doors in the Conservation Area. New doors should be framed, either boarded or panelled. If daylight is required this can be achieved by a glazed panel in a sheeted or panelled door, by a fanlight over the door or by the inclusion of a vestibule with an internal glazed door.



Examples of the fine Georgian doorcases to be found in the Conservation Area.



Details

- 5.8 The detailing of all parts is important. The tall chimneys with their decorative chimney pots should be retained and repaired where necessary. The stylish doorcases, window surrounds, quoin stones and other mouldings which give the Conservation Area much of its character should be retained in all improvement works and new buildings should be designed with sympathetic detailing. The presence of wrought iron work is evident in the Conservation Area in the form of railings and other decorative details, and their retention and maintenance is vital to the overall concept. The Department will resist the introduction of fake period details such as fibre glass porches, bow windows or elaborately panelled doors.



Examples of fine detail within the Conservation Area.



The importance of good signs is illustrated in these two shopfronts. Compare them also with examples of shopfronts at the rear of the booklet.

Signs

- 5.9 Signs form a significant part of the overall appearance of the street frontage and, if ill considered, they can be visually disruptive. The principal factors to be taken into consideration in the design of signs are the scale, the relationship with the design of the building, the style of the sign, the materials and the colour. Internally illuminated signs will generally not be acceptable, nor will box signs or projecting signs in coloured plastic. Preferred types include hand painted signs on fascia boards or directly on to the wall, profiled lettering of traditional style, painted lettering on glass and plaques beside doorways. The use of spot or wash lighting to highlight signs is also acceptable.

Colour

- 5.10 Sympathetic painting of the many good but neglected eighteenth and nineteenth century facades would greatly enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area. Large wall areas should generally be painted in pastel shades, while doors, windows, fasciae and other features may be painted in stronger colours, white or black. Gutters and downpipes should be painted the same colour as the wall. Railings and other wrought iron work should generally be painted white or black.



Existing landscaping has an important function in softening the visual impact.



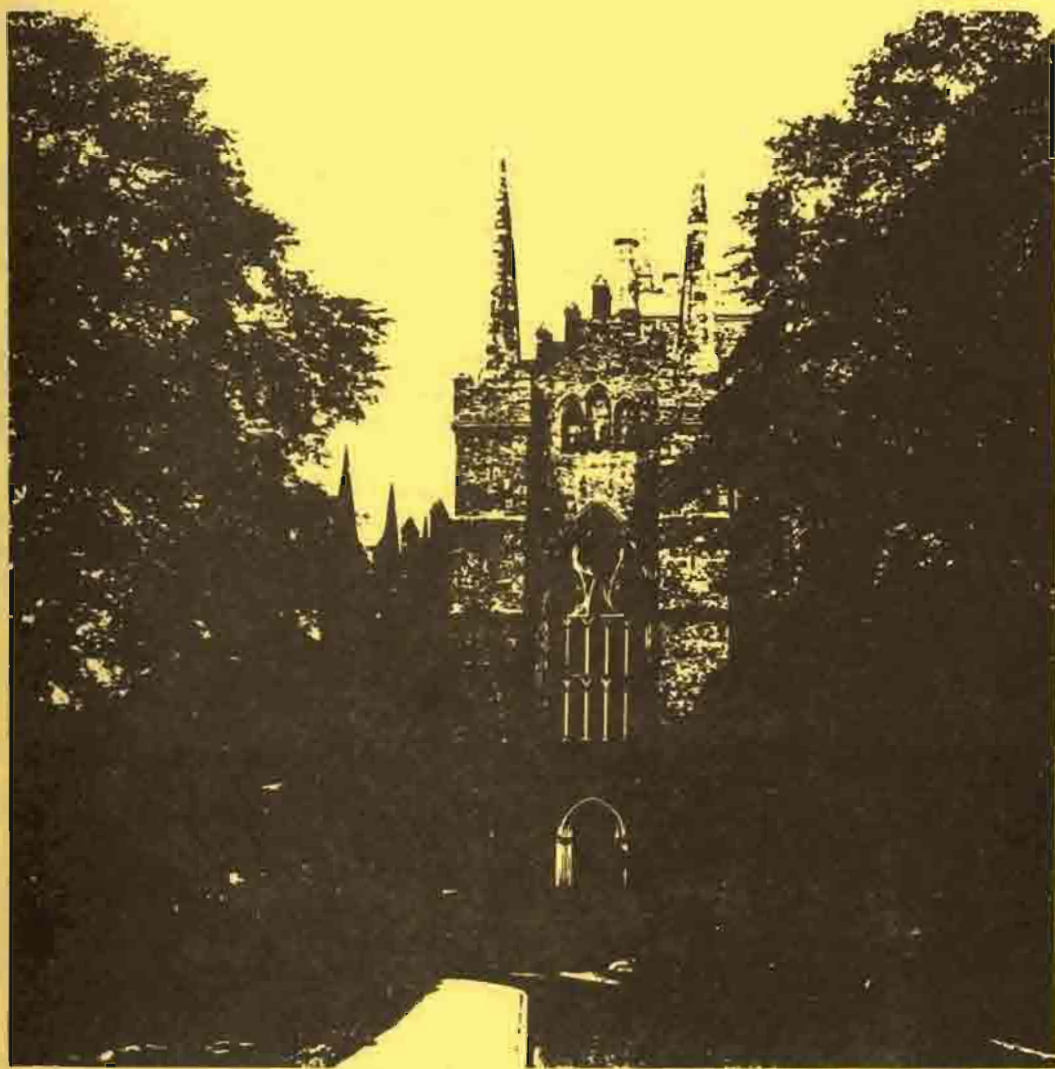
This area of cobbled paving in English Street helps to relate the buildings to their surroundings.

Landscape

- 5.11 The existing landscaping within the Conservation Area has an important function in softening the visual impact, and the retention of existing trees is vital. New planting of similar species to supplement the existing will be encouraged, and may be a condition of planning approvals.
- 5.12 Other fittings and furniture should fit into the townscape in performing their individual functions. It is thus important that well designed seats, lamps and lighting, litter bins, bollards, signs and lettering are used in the Conservation Area. Undergrounding of obtrusive electricity and telephone wires is recommended where possible.
- 5.13 Hard paving can be regarded as an extension of buildings and should be chosen to match the surroundings. Good cobbled paving which relates buildings to their surroundings and to each other should be retained and extended where possible, while the retention of granite kerbstones in place of concrete replacements should be ensured.

Advice

- 5.14 Further advice on Conservation Areas generally and Downpatrick in particular is available from the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the Department of the Environment (NI), 1 Connsbrook Avenue, Belfast, BT4 1EH (telephone Belfast 653251).



Part 3

6.0 INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 The Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 provides legislation for the protection of the Province's heritage of buildings of special architectural or historic importance. In addition it also provides for the designation of whole areas of special architectural or historic interest where it is considered that they merit preservation or enhancement.
- 6.2 Conservation is much more than just the maintenance of historically important and attractive buildings and their environments as records of the past. It also involves consideration of these matters in the context of present day life, functions and requirements.
- 6.3 Conservation in Northern Ireland is the concern of everyone. One of the aims of this booklet is to inform people about Downpatrick Conservation Area, its purpose and function.
- 6.4 Whilst responsibility for the statutory listing of historic buildings and for the designation of conservation areas lies with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, the task of conserving the Province's heritage cannot be left solely to Government Departments, a sprinkling of voluntary bodies and a band of responsible conservationists. The public at large as well as developers in the public and private sectors and those owning or occupying premises within or adjacent to conservation areas all have important roles to play.

Development Control

- 6.5 Development within the conservation area will be controlled with the primary aim of ensuring the retention and enhancement of the area's character. Every possible effort will be made to preserve the individual buildings and groups of buildings on which that character depends.
- 6.6 Where permission is sought to demolish or alter a building which

has been listed under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 as being of special architectural or historic interest, or to demolish any other building, it will be necessary to demonstrate that such works would in themselves be an enhancement or that they are required for overriding and exceptional reasons relating to the development of the area.

- 6.7 The design of new buildings must take account of buildings in the immediate area. Their mass, outline and detailing must be in sympathy with their setting.
- 6.8 Building materials must be sympathetic in texture, colour and quality and where appropriate reflect traditional local usage.
- 6.9 Changes of use necessitating a planning application which are likely to have an adverse effect on land or buildings which contribute significantly to the character of the Conservation Area will not normally be permitted.
- 6.10 The siting of new open spaces will be carefully considered to ensure that they make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and that proper provision is made for their maintenance.
- 6.11 Those wishing to make alterations to buildings or to carry out development within the Conservation Area are advised to consult informally with the Divisional Planning Office, Rathdune House, New Bridge Street, Downpatrick, (telephone Downpatrick 3721) before preparing detailed plans. This will avoid unnecessary expense arising from the need to amend detailed proposals which may not adequately respect the special circumstances which exist in the Conservation Area.
- 6.12 Development near, but not inside the Conservation Area, and visually related to it should be sited and designed in size, form and materials to be in harmony with the buildings and general appearance of the Conservation Area
- 6.13 Under the Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1973, certain types of development were identified which

do not require specific planning permission. However, the Department has power to direct that in any particular area these types of development should require planning permission. Such directions could be applied in this Conservation Area.

Positive Action

- 6.14 The Department seeks to encourage the initiation of schemes to improve the appearance of buildings and sites within the Conservation Area. Down District Council has a leading role to play in the initiation of such schemes which can include the repainting of neglected buildings, the removal or replacement of rusted and broken fences and the clearing away of rubbish. Appropriate steps should be taken by those responsible to tidy up, improve and enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area by the control of street furniture, overhead transmission lines of all kinds and to ensure the removal of undesirable examples of the latter wherever possible.
- 6.15 Existing advertisements and signs of all types displayed in the area will be the subject of special consideration and it is hoped that with the co-operation of local businessmen, the number of advertisements displayed within the Conservation Area can be reduced to a discreet level.
- 6.16 Preservation Orders can be made to protect any trees or groups of trees which form an essential feature in the character of the Conservation Area. The general appearance of many of these green areas will be further enhanced by selective planting of additional trees and sowing of grass.
- 6.17 The Department will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the needs of pedestrian and vehicular traffic are balanced against those of the Conservation Area. The location of on-street parking spaces and off-street car parks is determined with a view to minimising their effect on the character of the area.
- 6.18 Floodlighting has been used to good effect in highlighting some of

the more important buildings, for example, the Cathedral and St Patrick's Church. Increased use of floodlighting for this purpose will be encouraged where appropriate.

Financial Assistance

- 6.19 Finance is an important element in the realisation of schemes to improve the Conservation Area. The potential for self-financing operations is an important consideration. Other useful non-Governmental sources include voluntary contributions, gifts, income from sales and leases, etc (see under "other grants" below). The Governmental sources are set out in paragraphs 6.20 to 6.23 below.

Sources of Grants

6.20 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

(1) Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch

The Department may give financial assistance towards the cost of repairs or maintenance of buildings which have been listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. There is no fixed rate of grant and each case is considered on its merits. Grants are made on the recommendations of the Historic Buildings Council for Northern Ireland. Churches in use for ecclesiastical purposes are not eligible for grant aid.

The Department may also on the recommendation of the Historic Buildings Council consider grant aided expenditure in connection with the preservation or enhancement of the Conservation Area. Such expenditure should normally be related to a co-ordinated scheme.

Details can be obtained from the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, 1 Connsbrook Avenue, Belfast, BT4 1EH (telephone Belfast 653251).

(2) Conservation Branch

The acquisition of lands for public open spaces may be grant aided by the Department. Grants of up to 75% may be made under Section 16 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Details can be obtained from Conservation Branch, Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, Hut 6, Castle Grounds, Stormont, Belfast 4 (telephone Belfast 768716).

6.21 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The District Council has a duty to secure adequate recreational, social, physical and cultural facilities for Down District, and the approved expenses for such purposes may be grant aided under the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1973.

6.22 Details can be obtained from the Sport and Recreation Branch, Department of Education, Londonderry House, Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4JJ (telephone Belfast 232253).

6.23 NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE

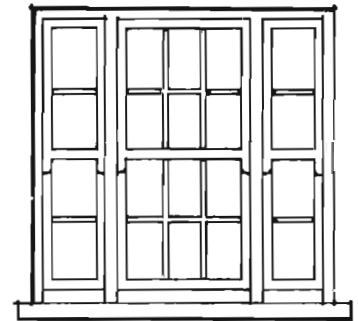
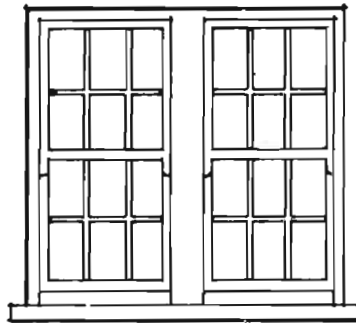
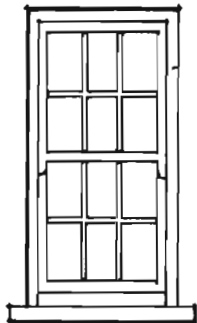
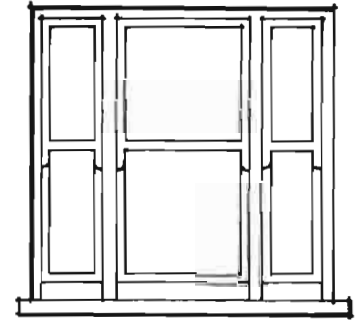
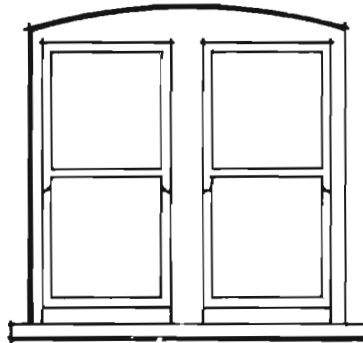
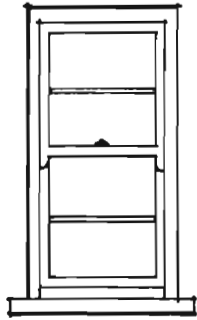
The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 enables the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to pay grants towards the cost of improvement, conversion and repair. All grants are subject to certain conditions and full details may be obtained at any office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Headquarters address is 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB (telephone Belfast 240588). The local address is 51 John Street, Downpatrick, BT30 9EG (telephone Downpatrick 3551).

6.24 OTHER GRANTS

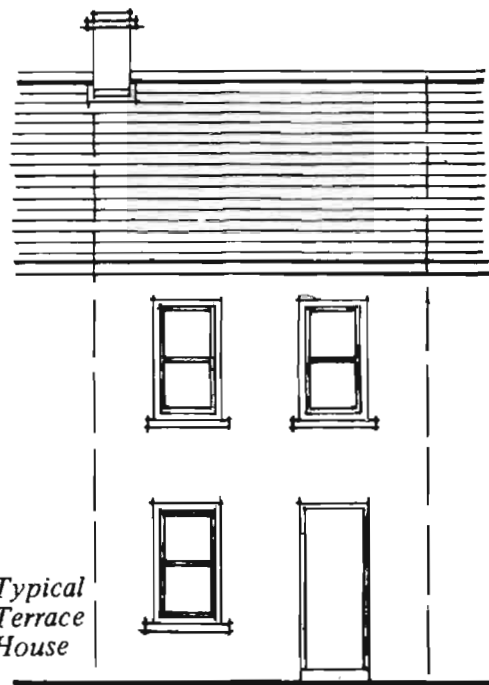
Charitable Trusts are sometimes willing to help with the conservation of buildings in charitable or other non-profit making ownerships. The Pilgrim Trust may be prepared to give grants of this sort. The Landmark Trust is interested in purchasing properties of historical or architectural interest which can be converted into lettable holiday houses. They particularly favour buildings of individual character. The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust makes grants to support countryside projects of various kinds. These include schemes for practical conservation but not for the preservation of buildings. Details can be obtained from:—

- (1) Pilgrim Trust, Fielden House, Little College Street, London, SW1P 3SH
- (2) Landmark Trust, Shottesbrooke, White Waltham, Berkshire.
- (3) Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, Cornely Park House, Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland.

6.25 For details of other grant giving bodies, reference may be made to "The Directory of Grant Making Trusts", published by the National Council of Social Sciences.



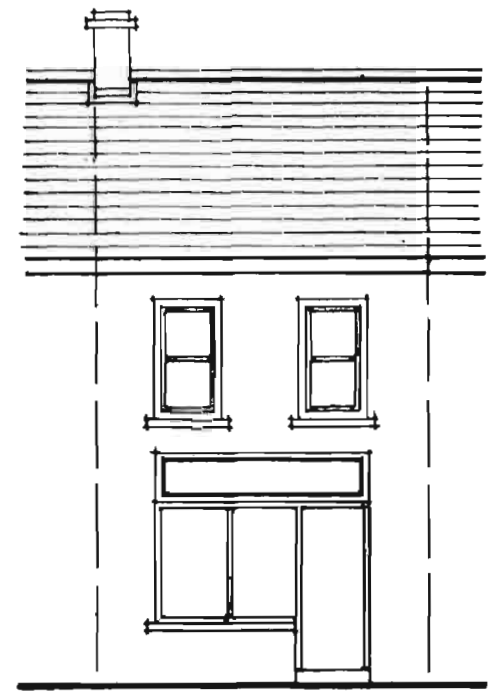
Examples of Traditional Window Proportions



*Typical
Terrace
House*



*Conversion
of Two
into One*



Examples of Shopfronts

APPENDIX ONE

Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area

Holy Trinity Cathedral, English Street
Southwell Charity School and Almshouses, English Street
Nos 25 and 27 English Street
Old Gaol, English Street
Old Gaol Entrance and Enclosing Wall, English Street
Cell Block, Old Gaol, English Street
Courthouse, English Street
County Rooms, English Street
Clergy Widows' Houses, Nos 34–40 English Street
No 32 English Street
No 30 English Street
No 28 English Street
Denvir's Hotel, Nos 14–18 English Street
Nos 11a and 13 English Street
No 11 English Street
No 9 English Street
St Margaret's Church, Church Street
Town Hall, Irish Street
No 21 Irish Street
No 39 Irish Street
RUC Station, Irish Street
Nos 69 and 71 Irish Street
No 95 Irish Street
Nos 97 and 99 Irish Street
No 110 Irish Street
No 112 Irish Street
No 114 Irish Street
No 116 Irish Street
No 2 Stream Street
No 4 Stream Street
No 16 Stream Street
Nos 18–22 Stream Street
First Presbyterian Church, Stream Street
No 28 Stream Street
St Patrick's RC Church, St Patrick's Avenue
Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, St Patrick's Avenue.

