

Cupar Charretteplus® Volunteer Briefing (Date 19.01.2016)

Social and Economic Profile

Overview

Cupar is located in northeast Fife, approximately 12 miles west of St Andrews and 15 miles south of Dundee. It lies on the River Eden, in an area known as the Howe of Fife. It is a traditional market town and until 1975 was the county town, the administrative centre, of Fife. The cattle market ceased in 1993. It now functions as the main service, employment, education and public transport centre for a large rural hinterland. It has become a significant commuter town, with residents travelling to work elsewhere in Fife and further afield, e.g. Dundee, Perth and Edinburgh. Some local industry remains, largely located to the east of the town at the Prestonhall Business Park. Notable companies include Fishers, a hotel laundry specialist with a large regional customer base, and Quaker Oats, which operates a major processing facility to the west of the town Cupar.

Cupar town centre mainly comprises the area surrounding St Catherine Street, Bonnygate and Crossgate, plus adjacent streets. As well as being the commercial heart of the town, the town centre boundary includes a large number of residential properties.

Cupar in the TAYplan Strategic Development Plan (2012)

TAYplan identifies Cupar as a 'Tier 2 settlement', those which have *'the potential to make a major contribution to the regional economy but will accommodate a smaller share of the region's additional development'*.

In its 'Hierarchy of Comparison Retail Centres', TAYplan lists Cupar town centre as a 'Larger Town Centre' on a par with Arbroath, Forfar, Montrose and St Andrews.

Land to the north of Cupar is allocated for the Cupar North Strategic Development Area, described as a site which *'will make a major contribution to the housing offer and competitiveness of the region with employment land integrated'*. The allocation is for 1,400 homes and 10ha of employment land and bulky goods retailing.

These designations are carried over into the Proposed TAYplan SDP (2015).

Cupar in the St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan (2012)

The Local Plan's Strategy for Cupar is *'to consolidate the town's role as the principal centre for services and facilities, serving the wider rural hinterland, involving the development of 1,400 houses, community facilities and infrastructure, enhanced education facilities and business and commercial land over a 20-year period'*.

It is anticipated that *'In tandem with the revitalisation of the town centre through environmental or streetscape improvements...the Cupar North development will help to attract commercial investment whilst supporting improvements to services, employment, infrastructure and public transport'*.

The Cupar North extension is planned to include 1,480 residential units; commercial units, including bulk goods retailing; a primary school; a Green Network and associated open space/recreational land/sports pitches; and a relief road.

Site allocations

Site allocations in Cupar in the 2012 Local Plan are as follows:

CUP 01, comprising:

- Cupar North Strategic Land Allocation. 110.0ha. Classes 1 (specialising in bulky goods), 4 (business), 5 (general industrial), housing (390 houses), leisure/hotel facility, care home, community facilities, and
- Gilliesfaulds West Strategic Land Allocation. 6ha housing (168 houses), 3ha employment. This is currently in the PAN process - 15/03813/PAN, developer A.J. Stephen Ltd.

CUP 02 - Ferrymuir Farm. 3.4ha. Housing (8 houses).

CUP 03 - St Columba's. 0.4ha. Housing (15 houses).

CUP 04 - Prestonhall East. 5.8ha up to 2018, 2.4ha post-2018. Employment Classes 5 (general industrial), 6 (storage and distribution).

CUP 05 - Ceres Rd. 0.8ha Brownfield site. *This was subsequently developed with the construction of an Aldi supermarket.*

CUP 06 - Former Snooker Hall, North Burnside. 0.2ha. Brownfield site, preferably housing (10 houses).

CUP 07 - Kirk Wynd. 0.1ha. Brownfield Site, preferably housing (5 houses).

CUP 08 - Provost Wynd, former Leuchars Removals. 0.2ha. Brownfield site, preferably high-density flatted residential (10 houses).

CUP 09 - Bell Baxter, West Port. 0.7ha. Mixed use, including 21 houses.

CUP 10 - Granary Site (Watts), Coal Road/Station Road. 0.4ha. Mixed use.

CUP 11 - South Road. 1.5ha. Mixed use. *Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new Tesco supermarket but this project has been cancelled and the site sold to new owners, who have produced alternative proposals for five retail units totalling 41,500 sq ft, the details of which have still to be finalised.*

CUP 12 – Station Road. Pedestrian/Cycle Bridge over River Eden. Subject of a Section 75 Agreement attached to the approval for the now-aborted Tesco development.

CUP 13 - Town centre traffic management, environmental improvements. Crossgate-St Catherine Street-East Bridge corridor improvements to improve traffic flow and create a better quality public space. *This work has been carried out and required compulsory purchase and demolition of the former ATS depot, see below proposed site allocation from 2015.*

CUP 14 – Cemetery extension. 0.7ha.

The following are site allocations in the Proposed Fife Local Development Plan (2015). A number are allocations made in the 2012 Local Plan which remain undeveloped.

CUP 001 - Cupar North Strategic Development Area. 113.7 ha.

CUP 002 - St Columba's. 0.4ha. Housing (15 houses).

CUP 003 - Kirk Wynd. 0.1ha. Brownfield Site, preferably housing (5 houses).

CUP 004 - Provost Wynd, Former Leuchars Removals. 0.2ha. Brownfield site, preferably high-density flatted residential (10 houses).

CUP 005 – Former Granary Site, Coal Road/Station Road. 0.2ha. Commercial and/or residential use.

CUP 006 – Former ATS depot, St Catherine Street/East Bridge. 0.1ha. Commercial and/or residential use. *The depot was compulsorily purchased and demolished as part of the town centre traffic improvements associated with allocation CUP 13 (above). Part of the site was used for the realignment of the road, while the rest remains undeveloped.*

CUP 007 - Moathill Site. 0.2ha. Commercial and/or residential use

CUP 008 – Bonnygate gap site, Bonnygate. 0.1ha. Infill with retail at ground level and offices/residential above. *A prominent gap site on one of the main town centre streets.*

CUP 009 - Prestonhall East. 8.4ha. Employment Classes 4, 5 (general industrial), 6 (storage and distribution).

CUP 010 – Ceres Road. 0.6ha. Cemetery extension.

Fife/Cupar and the Town Centres Planning Pilots Programme

Proposed Fife LDP (2015)

The Town Centres Planning Pilots Programme links a number of planning authorities in testing simplified planning processes in town centres. This is to support the Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan and its 'Town Centre First Principle'. Fife Council has piloted incentivising development in towns and getting prominent sites reused by removing the need to provide developer contributions, or 'reducing Planning Obligations to attract town centre investment'. This emerged from discussions related to the proposed LDP Main Issues Report process, and led to Fife Council introducing a Town Centres First policy and removing obligations on developers which could '*undermine the objective of regenerating Fife's town centres*'. This is in contrast to the current Local Plan (2012) policies, which referred to town centre regeneration and sought contributions from developers to contribute to town and village centre improvements to mitigate impact on local services and facilities. It is argued that the combination of the Town Centre First policy and the removal of Planning Obligations will Development Plan policies will together provide '*a positive and enabling planning framework to encourage new investment in Fife's town centres*'.

The new guidance sets thresholds for contributions through planning obligations for various defined development types, but there is now a clear statement that strategic obligations will not be sought for: town centre redevelopment; construction of individual sites of fewer than 10 houses (except as part of a multi-phase development); listed building conversions, brownfield sites, or changes of use; special needs housing including sheltered housing inclusive of bespoke design and management features; or student or holiday accommodation.

Stich in Time Programme

The 'Stich in Time' Project aimed to address the deteriorating condition of town centre buildings and main thoroughfares, raise awareness of repair and maintenance liabilities across all tenures, and encourage collaboration between owners of commercial and domestic properties to address those issues. The associated Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 established that 88.6% in Cupar town centres exhibited some level of disrepair. Cupar town centre was therefore used as a pilot for the Stich in Time project in 2011.

The work involved minor repairs, which proved to be time-consuming. A charge of £50 per individual property was levied to recoup some of the costs involved in carrying out the work. A written report on the condition of each property was planned, but the resources required to implement this were not available to the Council, owners were then advised the Council would only contact them if there were serious disrepair issues. The Building Standards and Public Safety Duty Officer would be called in if there were any aspects to a building that would present an immediate danger to the public and implement their dangerous building powers to carry out required works to remove that danger.

Some property owners were reluctant to pay the £50, the collection of which involved a disproportionate amount of time and effort, and further discussion was required to evaluate the costs in relation to the human and financial resources used in the operation of the Project and the proposed continuation of similar work across Fife. It was subsequently agreed that as the payments collected equated to less than 20% of overall costs, to carry out the works free of charge, remove debris and other potentially dangerous items, and only carry out repairs when absolutely necessary. This approach allows a sizeable reduction in costs; charges do not have to be pursued, and all buildings are inspected unless owners did not wish to participate.

The project was subsequently rolled out to 14 other town centres, and the work was completed more quickly and at far less cost than the pilot.

Cupar background information

Population and demographics

The population of Cupar at the time of the 2011 census was 9,339. Breaking this down by age band:

- 16.8% of the Cupar population aged 0-15 (versus a figure for Scotland of 17.4%)
- 11% aged 16-24 (Scotland 11.9%)
- 50.8% aged 25-64 (Scotland 53.7%)
- 21.7% aged 65+ (Scotland 17%)

Overall, Cupar is broadly similar to the national average, though with more 65+ residents.

Data from 2001 indicated that Cupar has a higher than national average proportion of pensioners and lower than national average proportion of working families.

Deprivation

Data from 2012 shows that for Cupar as a whole, 9.3% were income deprived, and 8.8% were employment deprived. This compares to national figures of 13.4% and 12.8%, respectively.

Within Cupar, the figures vary considerably. Income deprivation ranges from 16.6% in Cupar West to 6.8% in Cupar East. Employment deprivation varies from 13.2% in Cupar South West to 5.7% in Cupar East.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation figures from 2012 place Cupar Central within the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland, the only part of Cupar in this category. However, three of the other Cupar datazones (West, North and East) worsened in the period 2006-2012, while Cupar South West improved in the rankings.

Detailed figures are found below. The lower the number, the more deprived the area:

Datzone	SIMD Rank	Income domain rank	Employment domain rank	Health domain rank	Education, Skills and Training domain rank	Housing domain rank	Geographic Access domain rank	SIMD Crime rank
Cupar South West	2,817	2,732	2,666	2,721	2,450	3,787	5,531	1,024
Cupar West	2,636	2,172	2,737	2,694	2,847	3,959	5,262	746
Cupar North	4,107	3,257	3,648	4,147	3,374	5,098	4,685	3,157
Cupar East	4,898	4,523	4,959	4,960	2,978	5,915	3,427	4,307
Cupar Central	886	824	790	2,367	537	2,435	3,084	929

Notable are the poor figures for crime in Cupar West, Central and South West, and the relative affluence of Cupar North and East.

There has been an increase in Cupar over the past 10 years of both benefits claimants and Job Seekers Allowance claimants, but the rate is lower than those for Fife and Scotland.

Education

Cupar has two primary schools, Castlehill and St Columba's RC, and Bell Baxter High School. It is also home to Kilmarn School for special needs children.

In the field of higher education, the former Elmwood College is used for the Cupar campuses of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Fife College, although the latter is due to leave Cupar in June 2016, and there are questions about the long-term future of the former. Cupar is well-located for students attending the universities of St Andrews, Dundee and Abertay.

Attainment levels and the number of pupils staying on to 6th year at Bell Baxter are higher than those for pupils in Fife and Scotland. Furthermore, a higher proportion of pupils go onto higher education and a lower proportion are unemployed on leaving school than those for Fife and Scotland.

Figures from 2001 show that the proportion of people in Cupar who have no qualifications is lower than that of Fife and Scotland, and that there is a higher proportion of people with the highest level of qualifications in Cupar than in Fife and Scotland.

Local economy

Employment

Employment data from 2001 for Cupar as a whole compared to national figures was as follows:

- 41.9% working full time (Scotland 40.3%)
- 12.3% working part time (Scotland 11.1%)
- 6.7% unemployed (Scotland 6.6%)
- 2.9% full-time student (Scotland 3%)
- 3% unemployed (Scotland 4%)
- 17.2% retired (Scotland 13.9%)
- 4.4% permanently sick (Scotland 7.4%)
- 11.6% 'Other economically inactive' (Scotland 13.7%)

The data also shows variation in employment status within Cupar:

- % working full time ranges from 47% in Cupar West to 40.7% in Cupar South West.
- % working part time ranges from 12.8% in Cupar South West to 10.6% in Cupar West.
- % self-employed ranges from 8.6% in Cupar North to 5% in Cupar South West.
- % full-time student ranges from 3.8% in Cupar West to 1.8% in Cupar East.
- % unemployed ranges from 4.5% in Cupar South West to 2.2% in Cupar East.
- % retired ranges from 23.3% in Cupar East to 10.8% in Cupar North.
- % permanently sick ranges from 7.3% in Cupar South West to 3.3% in Cupar East
- % 'other economically inactive' ranges from 11.5% in Cupar North to 10.3% in Cupar East.

Data from 2001 showed that the most important employment sectors in Cupar were public administration, education and health/social work, at 38% of the total, significantly higher than the Scottish figure of 27.3% at the Scottish level. In contrast, there were proportionally fewer people employed in skilled trades (Cupar 10.9%, Scotland 12.6%) and in process/plant operative jobs (Cupar 7.2%, Scotland 10%).

Town centre economic activity

Cupar town centre offers a range of shops and other businesses. In food retailing, there are Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and Co-operative supermarkets, as well as smaller convenience stores. National chains present included W H Smiths, Argos, Poundstretcher, Greggs and Boots. There are numerous independent shops, including bakers, grocers, art and book shops. As a professional services centre, it offers assorted banks, estate agents, solicitors, accountants, hairdressers, cafes, restaurants, bars, takeaways, chemists, and a library. A number of Fife Council functions continue to be based in the town. On the periphery of the town centre are a number of private trades businesses, such as electricians, joiners, plumbers and small builders. In addition to permanent shops, a monthly farmers market is held on the Crossgate.

Cupar has in recent years suffered the closure of some high street shops, such as Woolworths, as well as local independent shops of various kinds. The closure of Cupar Sheriff Court in 2014 has impacted related businesses such as solicitors, with firms merging and some redundancies. While not vacant, a number of units are currently occupied by low-end businesses.

A town centre survey was undertaken by GVA on behalf of Aldi in September 2013. It found that of the 188 units within the town centre boundary, 40.43% were occupied by Class 1 (shops), 19.15% by Class 2 (financial, professional and other services), only 3.19% by Class 3 (food and drink), 6.91% by Class 4 (business, e.g. offices, R&D), 20.74% by 'other uses', and 9.57% were vacant. However, Experian data showed a vacancy rate in April 2013 that was a much more considerable 15.9%. Whatever the exact level, vacant units varied in terms of both size and location within the town centre.

A study by the University of Stirling found that in 2013, of the units in Cupar town centre, 26.1% were occupied by comparison retailing, 12.8% by convenience retailing and 30.3% by services. The vacancy rate was 10-15%. An impressive 60% of retailers were independent shops.

Tesco operates a supermarket to the south of the railway station, just outside the town centre on South Road. Aldi is located nearby. They received planning permission to build a new 50,000 sq ft store on South Road, but the company has subsequently decided not to proceed and instead extend and refurbish the existing store, also on South Road. The new owners of the development site announced in December 2015 their intention to build five retail units totalling 41,500 sq. ft.

Local economy in the Local Plan

The St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan (2012) seeks to promote Cupar '*as a location for business investment and growth and consolidating its role as the service centre for East Fife*'.

The Plan identifies the need to protect and enhance Cupar town centre's role as a local shopping centre and encourage further retail development in it, along with attracting commercial investment to the town as a whole. It also seeks to enhance the service centre

role of Cupar by encouraging Class 4 business opportunities, i.e. office-based businesses, professional services etc., within and on the edge of the town centre through the creation of a better quality environment.

As well as these aspirations for the town centre, the Cupar North Development Framework includes a Class 4 business park, a maximum 6,500 sqm. Class 1 retail park (restricted to bulky goods to avoid competing with goods available in the town centre) and safeguarded land for the development of a hotel. Additionally, small neighbourhood shops are encouraged within housing developments, *'in order to serve local needs and reduce unnecessary travel for everyday items'*.

Industry is supported with further employment land allocation at Prestonhall East, for classes 5 and 6.

Leisure, sport and tourism

Cupar has an active civic life, with bodies such as the Community Council, Cupar in Bloom, Sustainable Cupar, the Rotary Club, the Royal British Legion, Cupar Heritage and the Cupar & North Fife Preservation Society. There are annual events such as the Gala, Highland Games and Cupar Arts Festival. The Corn Exchange and YMCA buildings are popular venues for events, concerts etc., with the latter used extensively by youth groups, notably for a Youth Cafe.

The town has two golf courses, and a popular rugby club, Howe of Fife RFC. They are currently constructing new facilities at its pitches in Duffus Park, which is adjacent to the town's sports centre and swimming pool.

Tourism is a significant sector in North East Fife as a whole, but this is largely related to St Andrews and the East Neuk. While it is located near a number of attractions, Cupar itself has less tourist activity, exemplified by limited tourist accommodation and the lack of a hotel. A safeguarded hotel site forms part of the Cupar North allocation.

Housing

Cupar has for some time been a popular choice for house buyers and this resulted in rapid price increases. Pre-economic downturn, this ensured it had become one of the least affordable towns in Scotland. Current house price data indicates that while average prices are lower in Cupar than Scotland as a whole, they are higher than average for Fife.

Tenure

Housing tenure data from 2012 shows the following situation for Cupar, compared to Fife as a whole:

- 72.8% of households are owner-occupied (Fife 69%)
- 14.1% of households are council rented (Fife 17.7%)
- 2.9% of households other social rented (Fife 5.1%)
- 7.6% of households private rented (Fife 6%)

Within Cupar, there are significant variations in tenure:

- % of households which are owner-occupied ranges from 89.6% in Cupar East to 52.6% in Cupar South West.
- % of households which are council rented ranges from 25.1% in Cupar South West to 3.7% in Cupar East.
- % of households which are other social rented ranges from 9.2% in Cupar North to 0% in Cupar East.
- % of households which are private rented ranges from 16.2% in Cupar West to 5.5% in Cupar East.

Notably, Cupar East has the highest rate of owner-occupier and the lowest of the other tenure types, while Cupar South West has the lowest owner-occupier rate and the highest council rented rate.

As regards council tax bands, Cupar West and South West have high rates of properties in the lowest tax bands, while Cupar East has high rates of the upper middle and highest bands.

Quality of housing

Surveys conducted in 2009 and 2010 revealed significant rates of disrepair in properties in Cupar town centre, with around 80% of private residential properties in need of some repair and around 20% falling below acceptable standards. This in part reflects the age of the overwhelming majority of town centre building stock. The 2009 Scottish Housing Quality Standard survey, based on a combination of tolerable standard, serious disrepair, energy efficiency, modern facilities and health, safety and security ratings, concluded that 76% of private housing stock in Cupar town centre was below standard, compared to 63.3% across Fife. Fife Council has subsequently conducted some repairs but issues with building maintenance continue.

In 2001, 4.8% of households in Cupar were overcrowded, less than the 6.4% figure for Fife and 8.8% figure for Scotland. However, there were marked variations within Cupar, with 8.5% overcrowding in Cupar South West and 8% in Cupar West, compared to 3% in Cupar East.

Similarly, 2.7% of all Cupar households in 2001 didn't have central heating, but within the town the rates varied from 6.3% in Cupar West to just 0.6% in Cupar East.

Housing in the Local Plan

Housing issues identified by the St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan (2012) include the need to provide mixed-tenure housing development. The Cupar North Strategic Development Area includes a total of 1,400 houses, but the Local Plan acknowledges that *'the current economic conditions and the complex nature of the site mean that [Cupar North] is likely to deliver houses later and at a slower rate than originally envisaged'*. While this means that there is not a minimum five-year supply of effective housing land for the area, the need to safeguard Cupar North has meant that no other housing allocations have been made.

Recent Fife Council responses to the Fife Local Development Plan examination indicate a completion rate of 110 units per annum for the Cupar and North West Fife Housing Market Area. Completions between 2010/11 and 2014/15 in the Cupar and North West Fife area were 169, compared to 581 in the St Andrews Housing Market Area.

The required increase in build rates to meet plans in the Housing Land Audit 2015 is 480% for the Cupar and North West Fife Housing Market Area, versus 233% for the St Andrews Housing Market Area. Overall, private house building in the Cupar area has stalled.

The Local Plan states that the developers of any housing within Cupar but outwith Cupar North *'will be required to make financial contributions to the revitalisation of the town centre, local infrastructure and amenities'*.

The Local Plan sets a level of 20% affordable housing development in the Cupar housing market area. Two proposals have been made recently for affordable housing developments on sites in the Tarvit neighbourhood on the southern edge of the town. One application by Kingdom Housing Association has planning permission in principle and is seeking full consent. The other, by Fife Council's housing service, has been postponed for a year. Both proposals have attracted local protest.

Transport

Being in the heart of a rural area, and home to many who work elsewhere in Fife and beyond, there is considerable car-based travel by residents. Cupar lies on the main A91 road, which passes through the town centre along Bonnygate and St Catherine Street. There have been congestion issues in the past, which resulted in Fife Council spending £1.6m on a traffic flow improvement scheme. This included the re-location of the Mercat Cross and demolition of some buildings in St Catherine Street to allow for road realignment. The town centre offers various car parking options, including on-street spaces on Bonnygate, and car parks on East Bridge Road, Waterend Road and off Bonnygate.

Various bus services are available, connecting Cupar to other towns in Fife and more widely to Dundee, Perth and Edinburgh. Frequency and travel times vary between routes and days. St. Andrews can be reached in 20 minutes, Perth in under an hour. Services run through the town centre and there are a number of bus stops.

Cupar is on the Edinburgh to Aberdeen Line, an extension of the East Coast Main Line, and the train station is located just off the town centre, with a variety of services available. Dundee can be reached in 20 minutes, Edinburgh in around an hour.

There is no dedicated provision for cycling and little cycling occurs on the existing roads.

Transport in the Local Plan

The St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan (2012) identified traffic management in Cupar as an ongoing issue, with a need to improve links between the town centre and the railway station, and construct a new relief road.

Local Plan allocation CUP 13 was for the purposes of the traffic flow improvement scheme described above. This entailed the compulsory purchase and demolition of the former ATS depot on St Catherine Street, and the realignment of the road using part of the site. The remainder of the site is still undeveloped, and forms allocation CUP 006 in the proposed Fife Local Development Plan (2015).

Relief road

The St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan (2012) argues that a northern relief road for Cupar. would *'resolve many of the congestion and environmental issues which impact on the town centre. It will also provide development options for employment land (including a business*

park), housing, bulky-goods retailing, community facilities, infrastructure, and public transport connections.

Construction of the relief road is to be funded by the development of the Cupar North SDA. The Local Plan states that *'Binding legal agreements will ensure that the road is built early in the construction phase of associated housing developments'*.

Other roads

The Local Plan states that *'Construction of the relief road will allow for further traffic calming measures and associated environmental improvements to be introduced in the town centre guided by a Town Centre Improvement Framework.'*

Paths and greenspace

Pavements in Cupar town centre are generally narrow but there are a reasonable number of crossings. There is a footpath along the River Eden but this is poorly signposted and underused. There is little or no greenspace in the town centre, although Haugh Park is located just outside at the end of St Catherine Street. There have been issues with the collapse of a Victorian culvert beneath the park.

The Local Plan states that *'These measures are seen as part of a package to safeguard the viability and function of central Cupar as the town is extended to the north. They will include environmental and public path improvements which should make a significant contribution to improving environmental quality within the town'*. It continues *'In Cupar...greenspace will be promoted through linking existing open spaces and seeking to identify opportunities to create new links through the towns and to the countryside. The Fife Core Path Plan, the primary policy document for access and path proposals, identifies further land use proposals which will require planning policy support'*.

Healthcare

Cupar is home to Adamson Hospital, a small community hospital and health centre which was redeveloped between 2009 and 2012. The health centre contains two GP practices, and a dentist is located nearby. There are other dentists and opticians located in the town centre. Stratheden Hospital, a mental health and psychiatric hospital, is located on the outskirts of the town.

Heritage

Cupar is an important example of a Scottish trading town, whose medieval history is visible in the street plan and in landmarks such as the Mercat Cross. The Cupar conservation area covers much of the town centre, primarily the three oldest main roads – Bonnygate, Crossgate and Kirkgate – their associated closes, and the 18th and 19th century extensions to the town. The buildings are a mix of the vernacular styles, with large numbers of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the town centre illustrating the town's importance over several centuries.

However, given the high rate of disrepair of town centre properties noted in the Housing section above, and the overwhelmingly historic nature of the town centre building stock, much of the historic fabric of Cupar requires investment. Cupar Old and St. Michael of Tarvit Parish Church and St. John's Church have both been subject to conservation projects in

recent years, but there are currently nine Cupar buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register, including the prominent former Burgh Chambers located at the junction of the three main streets.

Fife Council has in the past few years worked on proposals for the improvement of the streetscape/public realm in Cupar, in particular the historic closes.

Fife Council, in partnership with Fife Historic Buildings Trust, is investing over £7million in the historic properties and streets of Cupar, using grants totalling £1.5 million from Historic Environment Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund, to establish the Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)/Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

The overall Cupar CARS/THI programme includes refurbishment of the west wing of the County Buildings, a Building Repair Grants Scheme, works to Cupar's streets and closes, training and apprenticeships, and the Bonnygate Gap Site Development. A key building for the five-year programme is the Burgh Chambers which requires significant refurbishment.

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