

INVERKEITHING CONSERVATION AREA DESIGN GUIDE



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

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CONTENTS

Foreward	3
Introduction	4
General maintenance	5
Energy efficiency and retrofit	6
Roofs	7
Walls	9
Windows and doors	11
Boundaries	14
Street surfaces and public realm	14
Trees and green character	15
Archaeology	15
Shopfronts	16
Signs and advertisements	21
New buildings, extensions, and outbuildings	22
Further information	23



Inverkeithing Parish Church

FOREWARD

Since 2019, the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration project has been investing in the town's historic built environment.

With the project ending in 2024, the Inverkeithing Conservation Area Design Guide will continue the work of safeguarding the distinctive character of this historic townscape by providing a consistent set of design principles to guide future development and decision-making.

The advice covers different aspects of Inverkeithing's buildings and cultural heritage, outlining the ways in which good design and materials can help enhance this heritage for the future. It will be a useful tool for anyone with proposals

to alter or extend buildings in the conservation area, as well as decision-makers and others wishing to comment on applications.

I hope this document will be an informative and practical guide to good practice in caring for the buildings of this historic burgh.

Councillor David Barratt

Convenor of the South and West Area Committee

INTRODUCTION

This document is to inform anyone intending alterations, repairs, or new development in Inverkeithing about how to preserve the character and appearance of Inverkeithing Conservation Area.

Caring for the conservation area helps draw attention to and celebrate what makes Inverkeithing distinctive. This guide has been written as part of The Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration scheme to help people in Inverkeithing look after their heritage for years to come.

The Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration scheme (2019-2024) has been funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (via its Townscape Heritage programme), Historic Environment Scotland (via its Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme), and Fife Council. Over £3.6 million has been invested in Inverkeithing's heritage during the five-year programme. This document should be read together with the [Inverkeithing Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan](#) which explains the special character of the conservation area.

You should contact Fife Council Planning Services as early as possible for advice on the need for planning consents. Complex development may benefit from using the Council's [pre-application service](#) to guide proposals towards a formal application.

What permissions are needed?

- ◆ In the conservation area, **Planning Permission** is required for most external works to buildings and **Conservation Area Consent** is required to demolish unlisted structures. More information and advice can be found [here](#).
- ◆ **Listed Building Consent** is required by law for all works affecting the character of a listed building. This includes the demolition, alteration, and extension of existing buildings. [Fife Council](#) and [Historic Environment Scotland](#) (HES) provide guidance on listed buildings.
- ◆ Applications are now assessed using the policies of [National Planning Framework 4](#) (adopted February 2023).



Inverkeithing Town House

Listed Buildings

Remember that all parts of the building are listed unless explicitly excluded in the HES listing description, including the interiors and any features deemed to be within its curtilage (often including things like boundary walls or outbuildings).

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

The most cost-effective method of conservation is to keep your historic building in good repair through regular maintenance. This will help avoid the need for larger and more expensive repairs. Protection from water and water ingress is especially important and first attention should be given to the condition of roofs, gutters and downpipes.

Carry out the following tasks regularly:

- ◆ Clear leaves and plant growth from downpipes and hoppers, gutters, gullies, and drain grilles;
- ◆ Remove/control plants like ivy and buddleia which can rapidly accelerate decay to mortar and cause structural damage (and increase repair costs);
- ◆ Remove bird droppings which contain damaging salts. (Larger deposits should be removed by specialists due to health and safety concerns.)
- ◆ Check ventilation, clear grilles to floor spaces, and look for signs of insect and fungal decay.



Roof-level maintenance issues



Plant growth to an external wall

To improve the lifespan of structural and/or decorative features, regular minor repairs can also help keep the building in good condition, such as:

- ◆ Repainting of external joinery, especially traditional shopfronts, windows, and doors;
- ◆ Maintenance of external finishes, such as the repairing and repainting of cracked renders and the limewashing of external stonework and lime harling;
- ◆ Replacement of failed pointing in a suitable repair mortar.

Regular maintenance reduces the need for major repairs, but some building elements will eventually need replacement.

A **"like-for-like" approach** to conservation will help preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. This means that repair works should replicate the materials and detailing that they replace (as far as possible) so as not to affect the character of the building and its technical performance.

To assist those engaged in repairs in Inverkeithing, the Scottish Lime Centre Trust has produced a [Building Stone Survey](#) for the town centre. This provides general guidance on stone types in the area and on working with lime mortars and stonework.

For guidance on arranging maintenance for properties in multiple ownership, contact Fife Council's Environmental Health (Water, Caravans and Private Housing Standards) Team at ehprivatehousing@fife.gov.uk or visit [Under One Roof](#).



ENERGY EFFICIENCY & RETROFIT

Retrofitting historic buildings is the process of applying measures to improve their energy efficiency and environmental performance.

In buildings of traditional construction, an evidence-based approach should be taken to retrofit. Some "off-the-shelf" technical solutions may not be suitable and can make problems worse rather than solving them. Replacing unsympathetic alterations (such as failing cement render) with traditional alternatives may make a big difference to the sustainability of a historic building.

Where a retrofit measure affects the exterior of a property, it should be designed, located and specified to minimise visual impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

[Advice and guidance](#) on retrofitting your home is provided by Historic Environment Scotland.

ROOFS

Grey stone slate is the most common traditional roofing material in Inverkeithing, most likely of Scottish origin. Some buildings have clay pantile roofs which were once much more common.

Slate or **pantile** should be the materials used for repairs, replacement, or re-roofing, and should match the originals as far as possible. Sound slates and tiles should be salvaged and reused wherever possible to reduce costs and wastage. Proposed roof replacements in synthetic slate or concrete tiles would be out of character and are unlikely to be permitted.

Historic roof leadwork should be retained or replaced "like-for-like". **Leadwork** (properly designed and of a suitable code thickness) is preferred for new flashings and gullies over synthetic alternatives.

For additional information on roofing materials and their repair in Inverkeithing see the [Building Stone Survey](#), especially pp.72-78 and Appendices K and L.



Chimneystacks (with historic thackstones) and dormer windows on a traditional stone slate roof



Chimney with historical pots

Chimneys and pots

The variety of original chimneys and pots adds to the historic character of Inverkeithing. Repairs to historic chimneys should preserve original pots where possible and replicate the detailing and materials of the original. New flues should be located within existing chimneystacks, where possible. The removal or lowering of chimneystacks is unlikely to be permitted.

Rainwater goods

Replacement gutters, downpipes, and hoppers should be of painted or powder coated metal (cast-iron is preferred). They should match originals in profile, style and fixings, especially on public-facing elevations. Parapet gutters and internal downpipes are also fairly common. Their repair or replacement must ensure careful specification of leadwork and plumbing to avoid internal water damage.

Flues and vents

New flues and vents, such as for boilers, should be located to rear elevations and rear roof slopes to reduce visual impact. They should be finished in black to give the appearance of cast-iron.

Roof masonry

Many buildings in Inverkeithing have roof-level stonework features like skewes, skewputts, thackstones, and crowsteps. These should be repaired or replaced using suitable traditional materials.



Rendered chimney and pantile roof



Poorly detailed roof maintenance – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice

WALLS

Buildings in Inverkeithing have many external wall finishes including ashlar and dressed stonework, harling, ruled-and-lined render, and painted stonework. The stone types are principally **sandstone** and **whinstone**. Chapter 3 of the [Building Stone Survey](#) provides details of the characteristics of the stone types used in the conservation area and their distribution. The survey also offers some technical guidance, such as on specifying mortars and working with building limes.

Stonework repairs should be done in a matching natural stone, with reference to the [Building Stone Survey](#) to ensure compatibility. Where stonework is badly decayed it should be cut back to a sound surface and indented with new stone to the same finish. Mortar mixes for the repair or replacement of pointing should be evidence-based and specified by a contractor with suitable conservation experience.

In general, walls should be repaired to match the existing materials. However,

where unsympathetic and/or failed later alterations to walls (such as impermeable cement renders or paints) are negatively impacting the technical performance of the building, their replacement with evidence-based appropriate lime finishes is encouraged.

Distinctive architectural wall features should be preserved and repaired. This includes things like door and window surrounds, pediments, cornices, string courses, heraldic panels and date stones.

Colour schemes

Colour schemes in the conservation area should maintain the local character and avoid bright modern colours. Unpainted ashlar walls should not be painted. Paint applied to stonework should be porous to avoid trapping moisture and causing deterioration. An appropriately coloured limewash, lime render, or lime harl may be an alternative to painting stonework (after the removal of any existing paintwork).



Ladder pinning at the Town House



Unsympathetic use of cement harling around historic masonry quoins (corner stones) – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice



Lime harled walling with decorative stonework



Fine quality whinstone walling with sandstone quoins



Failing impermeable paint on a masonry wall



The Town House (following repairs and repointing)

Public services, burglar alarms and satellite dishes

- ◆ **Piping, ducting, and electrical wiring** should be routed internally as far as possible, or located to the rear of the property if necessary.
- ◆ **TV Aerials** should be located in roof spaces, rather than on the chimneystack to avoid clutter to the roofscape of the conservation area.
- ◆ **Meter boxes** and **satellite dishes** should be located to the rear of the property.
- ◆ **Burglar alarm boxes** should be of a design and position which will not detract from the colour scheme or architectural features of the building.

Any disused or obsolete apparatus such as old TV aerials and satellite dishes should be promptly and carefully removed. Leaving them in place, particularly when in a poor condition can risk causing damage to the building.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

The design and detail of traditional windows and doors can be fundamental to the character of an individual historic property and the wider conservation area. The proportions, pane configuration, glazing bars, and historic glass used in traditional timber sash and case windows are all often important indicators of a building's age and historical interest.

The repair or replacement of historic windows and doors should be informed by an equal understanding of their repair condition and of their special interest, ideally through assessment by a professional with suitable conservation experience. Works should not damage ornamental door and window surrounds.

Repairs

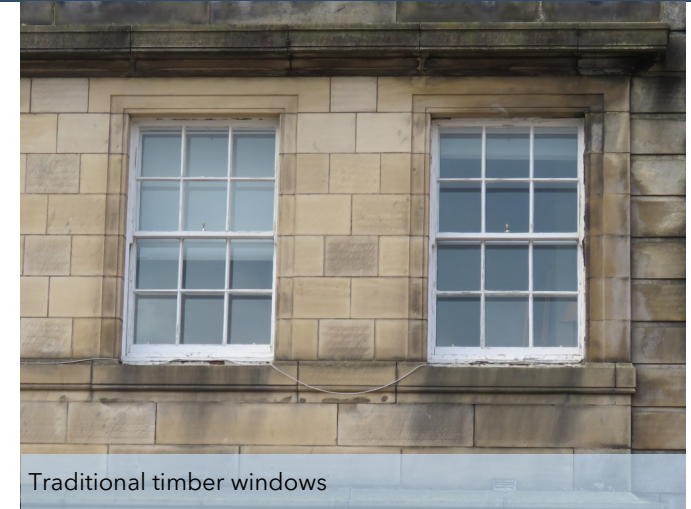
Many original timber windows and doors survive across Inverkeithing Conservation Area and these should be retained and repaired where possible. Owners and occupiers should be attentive to regular basic maintenance, such as repainting with



Historic door and masonry surround



Decorative pediment and door surround



Traditional timber windows



Canted bay front with timber sash windows

suitable paints, to prolong the life expectancy of timber windows and doors. While historic windows in Inverkeithing are principally timber sash and case units, other types (such as leaded lights and stained glass) should also be retained and repaired.

Where the repair, refurbishment, and upgrading of timber windows and doors is necessary, interventions are often possible at a fraction of the cost of full replacement which can help to achieve modern performance standards or to ensure that dilapidated windows run, fit, and close properly again. Replacement of individual elements by a suitably experienced joiner can address the deterioration of timber in sash windows, which occurs most often in the sill and lower sash. Similar selective repairs can also be the most sustainable and cost-effective option for repairing historic timber doors.

Measures for overhauling the performance of windows and doors (such as draught-proofing, secondary glazing and retrofit double-glazing or vacuum glazing) should respect and preserve the detailing of original features like period glazing bars, door mouldings and panelling.

Replacements

A “like-for-like” approach should be used in replacing historic windows. The use of modern materials like UPVC and plastic-coated aluminium to replace original timber windows and doors diminishes the special character and appearance of Inverkeithing's conservation area. These materials are out of keeping with the age, style, and character of most properties in the conservation area and cannot authentically replicate the appearance and detailing of traditional timber doors and windows. UPVC is sometimes incorrectly considered to be a cheaper alternative to timber. However, timber windows can last for 200 years, while UPVC can fail in under 20 years and is an environmentally damaging material.



Traditional timber door and masonry doorcase



Traditional pitched timber dormer



Unsympathetic replacement UPVC windows – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice

Instead, windows and doors should be replaced, when necessary, in timber and in a style and configuration appropriate to the age and character of the building.

- ◆ Replacement windows and doors should be “like-for-like”, including materials, metalwork and opening method of the original unit;
- ◆ Glazing bars of double-glazed sash and case windows should authentically reproduce those of the original windows. Stuck-on glazing bars do not achieve this and are often quick to fail;
- ◆ Listed building consent will be required for replacement of windows on listed buildings. LBC should be supported by a report showing the condition of the windows.



UPVC dormer and oriel window – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice

Rooflights

Rooflights will generally only be considered in the conservation area where they replace existing rooflights. They should be slender in frame profile, of a sympathetic sizing, and should be countersunk to fit flush with the roofing material and so minimise visibility.



Traditional dormer and rooflight (not flush – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice)

Dormers

New dormers should be in keeping with the character, proportions, and window alignment of the building. Generally, they should have a hipped or pitched roof matching the roofing material of the main roof slopes. Windows should be timber sash and case, and smaller than the main windows on the frontage below.



Traditional flat-roofed timber dormers



Pitched dormers with UPVC units – would not meet current standards of good conservation practice

BOUNDARIES

Although most properties around the High Street front directly onto the street, there are several historic boundary features which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

These include a mixture of historic rubble and ashlar sandstone boundary walls and ornamental cast-iron gates and railings. Historic boundary features should be retained and repaired using suitable matching materials.



Wall made of stone setts

STREET SURFACES AND PUBLIC REALM

Public realm enhancements (including street lighting, planters, benches, bins, and paving works) should make use of high-quality, durable materials and be of a high-quality traditional design to enhance the historic character of the conservation area.

Proposals affecting street surfacing in the conservation area should preserve historic surfaces where they survive, such as historic kerbs and setts. The Scottish Lime Centre Trust's [Building Stone Survey](#) should be used to inform proposals for replacement surfacing and the reintroduction of traditional stone surfaces is encouraged.



Boundary and railings to former Primary School



Inverkeithing Mercat Cross



Historic walling on Port Street

TREES AND GREEN CHARACTER

Trees and greenery contribute to the character and quality of the conservation area and individual trees may be of historic or cultural significance.

Public green spaces around the Parish Church and War Memorial and around the Hospitium of the Grey Friars (the Friary), and Civic Centre should be preserved and enhanced with appropriate planting and maintenance. Works in private rear gardens should aim to preserve green character and should retain historic garden and boundary features, especially any relating to medieval riggs.

Trees in a conservation area are protected through the [Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#) and works to them require owners to notify Fife Council. For advice and information on protected trees see [here](#).



War Memorial Gardens



Lower Friary Gardens

ARCHAEOLOGY

All areas within the medieval burgh have the potential to contain important buried archaeological deposits, and all older buildings have the potential to contain important historic architectural features within their fabric.

To manage this vulnerable archaeological resource, the entire footprint of the medieval burgh of Inverkeithing is zoned as an Area of Regional Archaeological Importance. Archaeological advice should be sought from the Council's Planning Service for all proposals that involve significant sub-surface ground disturbance, or significant change to any older building.



Upper Friary Gardens

SHOPFRONTS

Historic shopfronts have the potential to make a major contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. They help to maintain the commercial character of the High Street and make it an attractive place to visit, encouraging activity and footfall.

General design principles

- ◆ Proposals to retain traditional shopfronts will be preferred over their replacement.
- ◆ When a frontage is being renewed, the opportunity should be taken to restore its original proportions and features where these can be established.
- ◆ New shopfronts or alterations to frontages should be individually designed according to the age and style of the building in which they are located. Original features should be sympathetically incorporated.
- ◆ The proportions, colour and materials of new frontages should complement

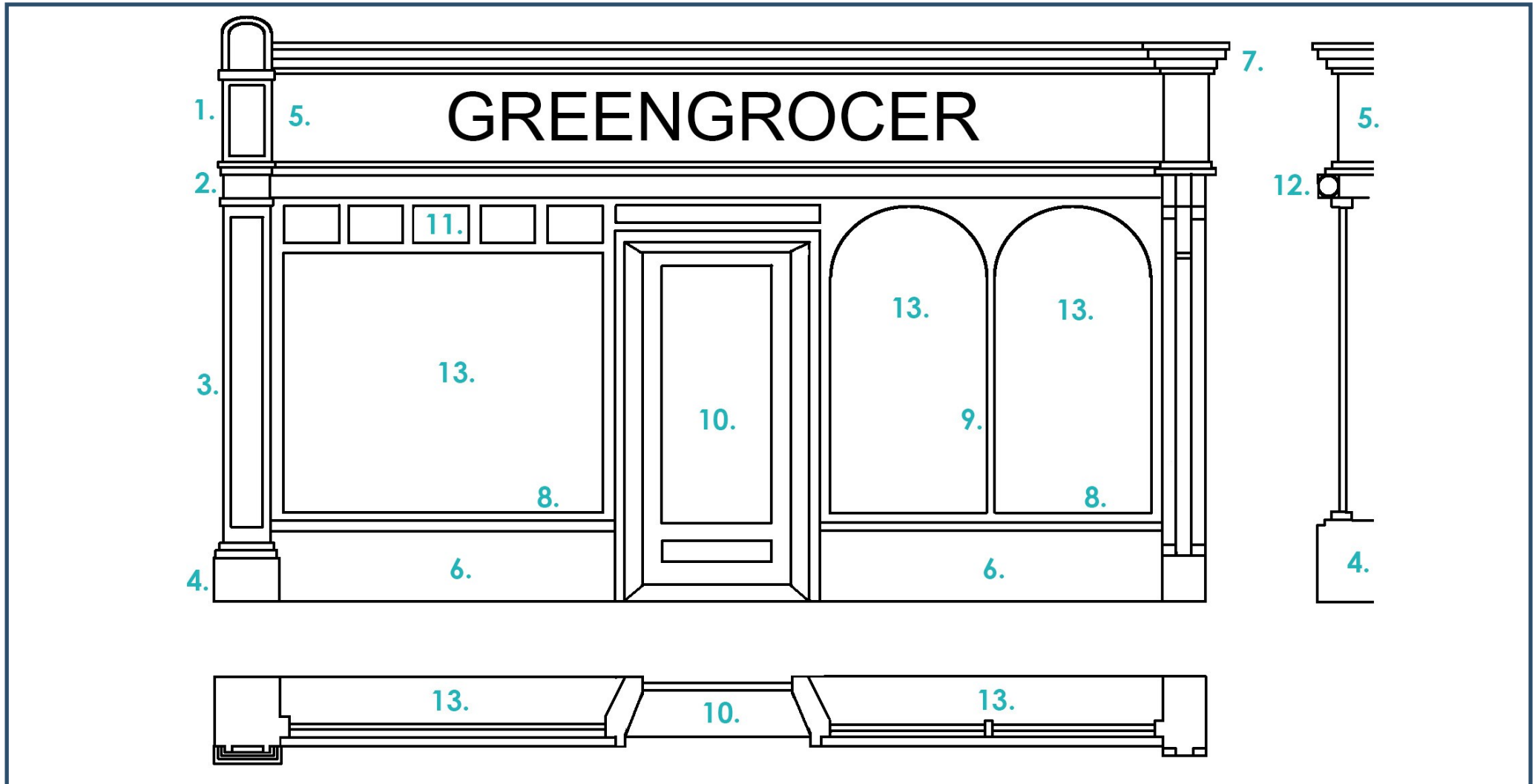
the characteristics of the building, the street elevation and any local design traditions. Traditional colours and materials should be used over garish, fluorescent colours. The use of plastic features should be avoided.

- ◆ Any modern additions such as security features or alarm boxes should be incorporated at the start of the design process and should be located as unobtrusively as possible.
- ◆ For further advice consult Fife Council's Built Heritage Officers at development.central@fife.gov.uk



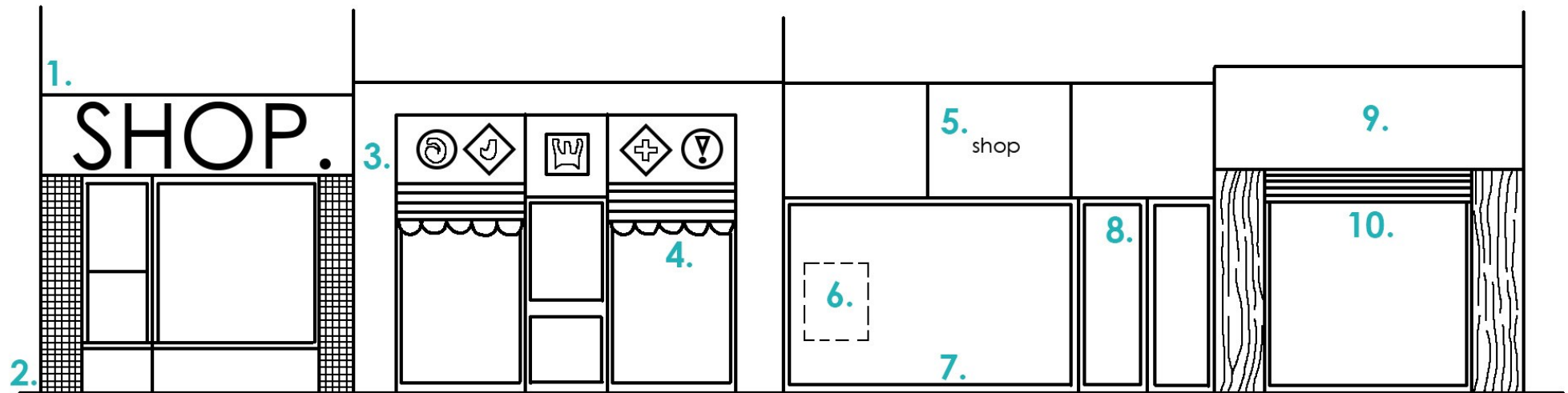
Examples of Inverkeithing shopfronts with a mixture of traditional features and proportions

Components of a traditional shopfront



- Key:**
1. Console 2. Capital 3. Pilaster 4. Plinth/base 5. Fascia/Frieze 6. Stallriser 7. Cornice 8. Cill 9. Mullion
 10. Inset doorway 11. Transom window 12. Canopy box 13. Display window

Examples of bad practice in shopfront design



Key:

1. Oversized lettering 2. Inappropriate pilasters and materials 3. Generic house-style logos 4. Obtrusive canopy housing
 5. Undersized lettering 6. Window-mounted signage 7. No stallrisers 8. Off-centre door 9. Oversized, blank fascia
 10. External roller shutter

Fascias/Frieze

Modern fascias are often too deep and do not relate to the shopfront design or to adjacent buildings.

It may be preferable to remove the modern fascia during alteration works and restore the original level and depth. The original timber fascia might be concealed behind modern fascias, giving the opportunity for

their restoration and enhancement to the Conservation Area.

The maximum fascia depth should not exceed 20% of the total ground floor shopfront height. The fascia should be located directly below the cornice on a traditional shopfront and never extend above it.

Console brackets

Traditional shopfronts often have elaborately carved console brackets situated at the ends of the fascia boards. These start under the cornice and finish below the fascia board. Although purely decorative they can add character to an otherwise plain shopfront and should be retained or reinstated if appropriate.

Colour and materials

Traditional materials should be used for shopfronts and relate sympathetically to the external materials of the building. Wherever possible, timber shopfronts should be reinstated.

Shopfronts should be finished in one main material and colour, keeping others to a minimum.

Shopfronts should preferably be finished in a dark glossy paint of traditional colour, rather than a stained finish. Bright colours and modern materials should be avoided.



Console brackets

Windows and doors

Window and door proportions should be appropriate to those of the building and adjoining premises.

Large displays should be divided by vertical glazing bars or mullions to provide interest and variety.

Doors should be recessed to provide visual interest and shelter.

Proposals should avoid blocking up of windows where this will create a dead frontage.



Traditional shopfront

Stallrisers

A stallriser is the base of the shopfront from the window to the pavement. It protects the display windows from street level damage.

Stallrisers should be in proportion to the shopfront as a whole. They should be finished in durable materials suitable to their location, such as stone, glazed tiles, panelled timber or smooth render.

Ventilation

Alterations should ensure adequate air circulation to shopfront displays such as by maintaining existing ventilation grilles.



Surviving Inverkeithing shopfront with ventilated stallrisers, inset doorway, and closed canopy



Surviving Inverkeithing shopfront with fascia, dentilled cornice, and console brackets

Canopies and awnings

- ◆ Traditional retractable awnings or sun-blinds will be acceptable on traditional shopfronts provided the housing for the awning can be recessed flush within the frontage (curved Dutch canopies are not traditional).
- ◆ They should not obscure architectural features or extend across the pilasters.
- ◆ Awnings should be located below the fascia and be made from a traditional canvas.
- ◆ Traditional retractable awnings and sun blinds often survive behind modern alterations and fascias, giving the opportunity for restoring and enhancing the conservation area.

Alarm boxes and emergency power switches

These should not obscure any architectural features and should be as unobtrusive as possible - ideally on the door return or within the depth of the fascia.

Security features

- ◆ Solid roller shutters and projecting roller shutter boxes are unacceptable and have a negative impact on the whole street, especially when closed.
- ◆ To preserve the character of properties within the conservation area, the following may be acceptable, subject to permissions and consents:
 - Demountable mesh grilles (manually placed over windows and doors and padlocked into position);
 - Laminated glass;
 - Internally mounted non-solid (lattice/brick bond/open weave) shutters placed between the display and the window.
- ◆ Shutter boxes should be recessed behind the frontage and fitted directly below the lintel or structural steelwork.

SIGNS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

Signs and advertisements are integral to the commercial character of the High Street. However, many different signs together can have a negative impact. Advertising signs must be in keeping with the character and size of the property where they displayed. Advertisement consent may be required, Fife Council's guidance can be found [here](#).

General design principles

The design, size and positioning of signs should be appropriate to the individual building and the overall street and should not dominate either of these.

Multiple signs on a property will have a cumulative cluttering impact and should be avoided.

Projecting signs

- ◆ Only one projecting or hanging sign per shop will normally be permitted to avoid visual clutter.
- ◆ Projecting or hanging signs should be non-illuminated or trough-lit from above, and of traditional materials.

- ◆ They should not exceed 0.5m² in area nor project more than 1m from the building.

Fascia Signage

- ◆ Signage should be confined to the original fascia, not the sub-fascia, pilasters, nor cover the glazing.
- ◆ Lettering should be hand-painted or illuminated individual letters on a fascia of timber, or stone. Use of non-traditional materials is discouraged and is unlikely to be permitted.
- ◆ The size of lettering should be proportionate to the fascia size and be in a style appropriate to the shopfront.
- ◆ Signage should fill the fascia space within the pilasters and not extend over two or more properties.
- ◆ Internal illumination is only acceptable in the case of individually illuminated letters, not full fascias. External lighting should be provided by full-length trough lights rather than more obtrusive spotlights.



Hanging signage with trough light



Fascia signage with trough light and lamps



Fascia signage (mixture of individual lettering and hand-painted) with hanging sign

NEW BUILDINGS, EXTENSIONS, AND OUTBUILDINGS

Where there is scope for development within the conservation area, all new buildings, extensions, and outbuildings should respect the overall density and scale of buildings and plots. The open green character of gardens, riggs, and their boundaries should be retained where they survive.

Materials and detailing, including for proposals in a contemporary style, should complement the architectural character of the conservation area in terms of colours and textures.

Extensions should be located on the rear elevation of properties. They should not be greater in height than the existing building and should not exceed half the width of the main property. Roofs should either be pitched, hipped or lean-to. Flat roofs should be avoided.

Any new outbuildings, such as garages, should respect the character of surrounding properties and use similar materials and roof styles.



Extensions to the rear of High Street – largely not in keeping with local character – would mostly not meet current standards of good conservation practice

FURTHER INFORMATION

- ◆ Fife Council–Advertisement Guidance
https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/162297/Advertising_Signs_for_Businesses-1.pdf
- ◆ Fife Council–Conservation Areas
<https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/planning-and-building2/built-and-natural-heritage/conservation-areas>
- ◆ Fife Council Listed–Buildings
<https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/planning-and-building2/built-and-natural-heritage/listed-buildings>
- ◆ Fife Council Pre-Application Service
https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/162420/Pre-Application-Service.pdf
- ◆ Fife Council–Protected Trees
<https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/planning-and-building2/built-and-natural-heritage/trees>
- ◆ Fife Historic Buildings Trust–Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration
<https://fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk/project/inverkeithing/>
- ◆ Historic Environment Scotland–Guide to Energy Retrofit of Traditional Buildings
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=47c9f2eb-1ade-4a76-a775-add0008972f3>
- ◆ Historic Environment Scotland–Listed Buildings
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/>
- ◆ Inverkeithing Stone and Slate Survey (2020)
<https://fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk/project/inverkeithing/#inverkeithing-stone-and-slate-survey>
- ◆ Under One Roof
<https://underoneroof.scot/>

