

DORNOCH CONSERVATION AREA - DESIGN BRIEF

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design Brief is intended to give advice and guidance on repair, alteration or new development within the Conservation Area, and to assist in establishing standards for evaluating development proposals. It seeks to ensure that proposals will harmonise with the existing character and scale of the Area, by avoiding designs which are unrelated and unsympathetic, both to each other and to the overall historic fabric of the town, while, at the same time, refusing to recognise the need for change and variety. It is recommended that, when new developments, additions or alterations are being considered, professional architectural advice is obtained to ensure that an individual's requirements are met within the policies and guidelines which follow.

2.0 ANALYSIS

The centre of Dornoch was designated as a Conservation Area in 1974. As a consequence of this designation, the Highland Regional Council has a duty to protect and enhance the character of the area through sensitive control of developments and positive improvement schemes. There are a variety of ways of exercising this latter duty, such as, the implementation of appropriate traffic management schemes, the standardisation of directional signs, the removal of overhead wires and other eyesores, the selection of street furniture of good design, the retention of mature trees and the planting of new which will complement the built environment. It is hoped that such initiative by the Local Authority will encourage voluntary action on a wider basis. Consideration is currently being given to a minor extension to the Conservation Area, and simultaneously to its classification as one of outstanding architectural or historic interest.

Commencing at a point at the junction of the B9168 and the A949 by the War Memorial, the boundary of the present Conservation Area extends in an easterly direction along the southern edge of Cnoc-An-Lobht, and continues eastwards and northwards coincident with the boundary of Burghfield House Hotel, sweeping northwards by 70 m and returning along the east side of Station Road, to include the properties fronting onto Bridge Street and the Square but extending around the site of the proposed police station and a belt of mature trees on Golf Road. From Church Street the southern boundary then generally follows the boundary of the Castle Street properties to include the Old County Prison, the County Buildings and the Dornoch Castle Hotel. It continues westwards to include the Cathedral Hall at the junction of Sutherland Road and the A949, and finally, to the point of commencement.

Certain buildings within the Conservation Area are included in the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. These are Dornoch Cathedral, the Mercat Cross, Dornoch Castle Hotel, the County Buildings, and the Old County Prison/Old Drill Hall. The majority of the remaining buildings range from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ storeys in height. The most immediately apparent feature of these traditional houses is their symmetry of design, the natural stonework and the steeply pitched roofs in grey slate with a mixture of gabled and hipped dormers.

The Conservation Area is effectively bisected by the A949 from which several streets, closes and lanes lead off to serve adjoining properties. As the town and immediate area are focal points for tourists, traffic and parking problems are experienced. The situation is compounded by the lack in definition of the roadway through Dornoch Square, and the need for a car and coach park on the edge of the Area.

The centre of Dornoch is also the shopping core of the town, and as such generates shopping traffic and service vehicles both requiring parking and loading/unloading areas. Many of the properties along High Street and Castle Street which accommodate shop premises on the ground floor, have retained much of their original character and scale through the use of sympathetically designed fascias and advertising.

On entering the Conservation Area from almost any direction one is immediately aware of the intensity of mature tree planting in and around the edge of the Area. Of particular importance are the mature broadleaved trees around the Cathedral and to the south side of the Square.

3.0 GENERAL POLICY

It will be the general policy of the Highland Regional Council to protect and enhance, by development control, by example, and where appropriate by financial incentives, buildings, open spaces, trees, views and other features of the environment which contribute to the character, scale and appearance of the Conservation Area.

4.0 POLICIES ARISING FROM STATUTORY POWERS

Under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 as amended by the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974, the Highland Regional Council has statutory powers to ensure the maintenance of the character of the Conservation Area.

Listed Building Consent/Planning Approval

Powers are available for the control of the demolition and the alteration of listed buildings within the Conservation Area. Proposals for works which materially affect the appearance and character of

character of these buildings must be the subject of an application for planning approval and listed building consent to the Regional Council. There are also powers for the control of the demolition of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area. As with listed buildings, these cannot be demolished without, first of all, obtaining listed building consent in addition to the normal planning approval from the Regional Council.

Restriction of Permitted Development

The Regional Council consider that there is a need to bring under control classes of development within the Conservation Area, which would otherwise be "permitted" development, and will apply to the Secretary of State for Scotland for a Direction under the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Scotland) Order 1975 requiring these classes to be the subject of a planning application (see Local Plan).

Advertisements

Under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1961, the Regional Council will seek to define the Conservation Area as an Area of Special Advertisement Control. This will have the effect of strengthening the controls over advertisement that may otherwise detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It should be noted that all advertisements on Listed Buildings require Listed Building Consent.

Tree Preservation Order

Control of tree felling, lopping etc. is effected by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 and by the subsequent Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 1975. Consequently, no tree may be felled, topped, lopped or trimmed without six weeks notification of intent to the

to the Regional Council. Pollarding of trees will be strictly controlled.

5.0 OTHER POLICIES

There are other policies in addition to those based on statutory powers, which are considered to be of importance in the maintenance and enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area. These relate to traffic management, redevelopment and environmental improvements and are set out in the Local Plan. There are other considerations relating to street furniture, street lighting, overhead lines and tree planting as follows.

Street Furniture

Consideration will be given to the rationalisation of directional signs and their resiting/redesign where appropriate, to the use of traditional street nameplates, to the treatment of paved surfaces and to the introduction of seating, litterbins etc which blend with the general character of the area.

Street Lighting/Overhead Wires

Overhead wires are an intrusive street feature which detract from the overall amenity of the Area, and discussions will take place with the appropriate Statutory Bodies concerning the possibility of undergrounding wires. New overhead lines will not be permitted. Consideration will be given, where appropriate, to the placing of street lights on the face of buildings where agreement can be reached with property owners.

Tree Planting

A programme of supplementary tree planting will be considered in the Conservation Area, particularly in the Square/

Square as part of the general improvements associated with the traffic management scheme. New planting of an appropriate nature, elsewhere, will be encouraged.

6.0 DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will apply generally throughout the Conservation Area. Any new development will require careful consideration and each will be considered on its merits. It is essential that the character of the Dornoch Conservation Area should be maintained and enhanced by the proper layout and design of new buildings and extensions. Plans should be drawn up by an architect and in all cases, advice may be sought from the **Director of Planning**. Where a site is considered to be of significant importance, the Regional Council will produce a site brief setting out the form of development considered suitable for the site.

Roofs

These should preferably be pitched back from the street within the limits of 35° - 55° and should be covered with natural slates. In exceptional circumstances, the occasional projection of a gable on the street frontage will be permitted. All existing chimney stacks and pots should be retained and maintained in a good state of repair. Wires, aerials and vent pipes should not be allowed to clutter the roofline

Dormer windows will be required to reflect the traditional styles and should be slated to match the rest of the roof. They should not dominate the roof but be of a scale appropriate to the building. It is also desirable that dormers are below the ridge of the roof and that they collectively do not occupy more than 50% of the roof elevation. Continuous dormers are unacceptable.

Walls

Existing stone walls should be retained. Where new walls are required in extensions, they should be constructed if possible, of natural stonework, to match the existing or adjoining property. It is recognised, however, that it may not be possible to undertake larger developments using traditional construction methods and materials and, the use of synthetic stone will be permitted if used sympathetically and limited to one colour, or, at the most, to two close tones, matching that of the natural stone. The use of roughcast, render or external paint will not be permitted as they are not characteristic of the Area. Similarly, multicoloured artificial stone, cedar or other timber and P.V.C. facing materials are unacceptable and should not be used.

Windows

Existing windows should not be enlarged. All proposed wall openings should be vertical in emphasis, with the ratio of solid to void being in favour of the solid. Traditional sash and case windows with a minimum reveal of 150 mm are preferred. Doors should be of traditional design.

Outbuildings

Such structures should complement the main building, and adopt the same roof pitch, external wall finish, and roof slates. Attempts should be made to minimise the effect of horizontality of garage doors if these appear prominent. Greenhouses and garden sheds should be sited unobtrusively.

Shop Fronts

While recognising the needs of the commercial sector, the Regional Council would wish to see shop fronts designed in /

- in sympathy with their historic and architectural street setting. Shop fronts should be designed so as to relate to the building of which it is part, rather than to achieve uniformity of design with adjoining shops. **Large** expanses of undivided glass should be avoided as they are uncharacteristic of traditional shop front design. Display windows can be designed in more traditional proportions to achieve harmony with existing first floor openings. Signs and sign boards should not dominate a facade but should be in scale with the building and with signs on adjoining properties. They should also be designed as an integral part of the individual shop. The use of internally illuminated signs and signs with coloured plastic backing and lettering will be discouraged as they detract from the architectural quality of the Area. The use of discrete spotlighting may be considered on premises which are open to the public during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses.

Scale of Development

The scale of development in the Conservation Area is largely determined by plot width. So that new development will respect this, an interval of approximately 10-12 metres maximum measured horizontally should be expressed in elevation.