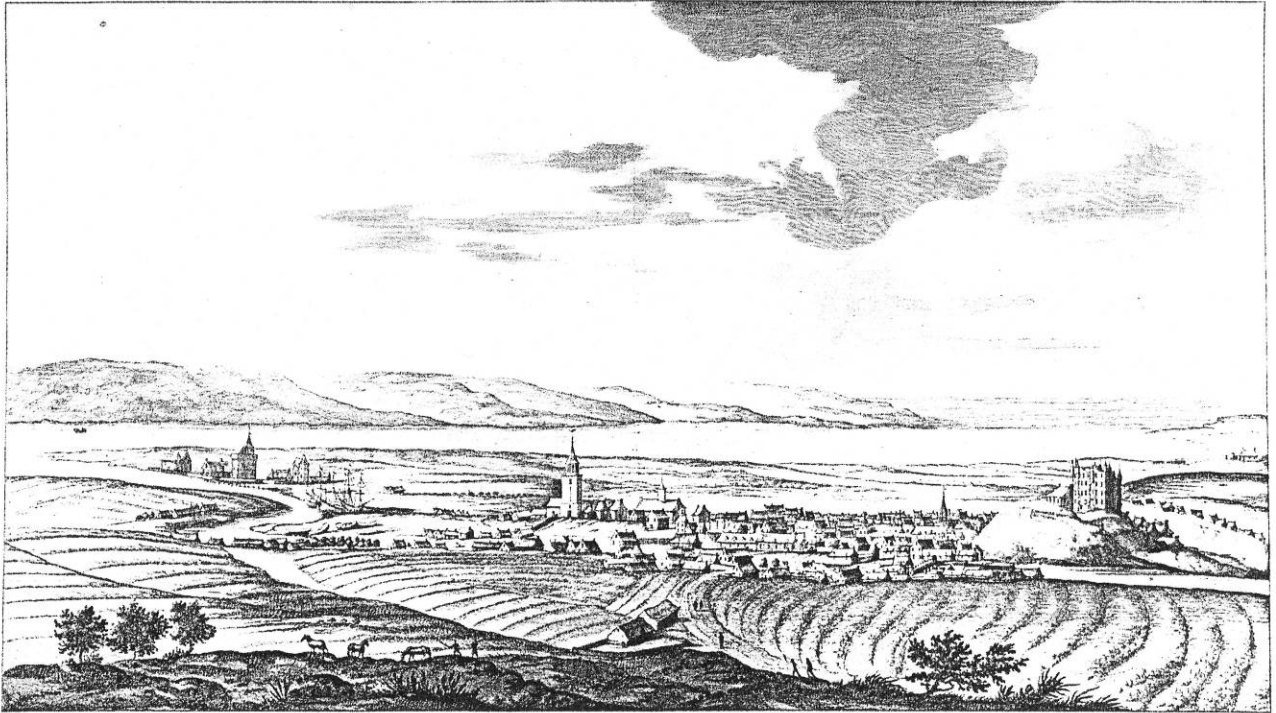


INVERNESS - OLD TOWN

CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN



*Prospectus Civitatis INNERNESS. The prospect of y<sup>e</sup> Town of INNERNESS,*

34

The Highland Council  
Glenurquhart Road  
Inverness  
IV3 5NX

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*Chartered Architect/  
Conservation Accredited Architect*

**Alan Marshall**

Invereshie House, Kincaig, Kingussie  
Inverness-shire, PH21 1NF

t: 01540 651332 or 07702 752 574 e: alan@gray-marshall.co.uk

*Chartered Architect*

**Jacqueline Mulcair**

10 Glendevon Terrace  
Edinburgh EH12 5UP.

t: 0131 261 4387 or 0791 046 5652  
e: mulcairj@gmail.com

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ***What is a Conservation Area Management Plan?***

A conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Inverness Old Town is a character area within Inverness Conservation Area, designated in 1970. Local authorities and Scottish Ministers have a duty to protect and where possible enhance the conservation area.

This document is a Management Plan for the Old Town Character Area within the Conservation Area and should be read in conjunction with the Conservation Area Appraisal. It aims to provide guidance to everyone involved in the management, ownership and use of the Old Town's buildings and spaces.

A conservation area is not about preventing change. However, development and change in a conservation area should preserve or enhance the historic and architectural character as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

- ***Why is a Conservation Area Management Plan needed in Inverness Old Town?***

Inverness Old Town has historic, architectural, townscape and archaeological significance. Despite some efforts in recent years the future of this heritage is under threat from lack of investment in building repair, inappropriate development, poor shopfronts, vacant buildings, neglected spaces, over dominance of vehicles and general lack of awareness of heritage values.

- ***What are the legal means of protecting Inverness Conservation Area?***

Listed buildings: All changes to listed buildings (except like-for-like repairs) must have Listed Building Consent from The Highland Council.

Demolition: Any demolition in the conservation area must have consent from The Highland Council.

New buildings: Any development (new building), including extensions, porches, canopies, etc must have planning permission.

Scheduled monument: Any work impacting on the scheduled monument in Inverness (Friary St. graveyard) requires the consent of Scottish Ministers.

Signs: Advertisements, signs, billboards etc need advertisement consent.

Trees: Work on trees (eg. lopping) or felling of trees in the conservation area requires permission from The Highland Council.

The enhancement of the conservation area and realisation of its potential social, cultural and economic benefits is embedded in several Highland Council policies, notably policy 57 of the Local Plan and Inverness City Centre Development Brief.

- ***What should be done in practical terms?***

### Historic Buildings and Spaces

1. Repair and maintain the historic buildings in Inverness Old Town.
2. Run regular campaigns and targeted information sessions for owners about maintenance and repair.
3. Organise group schemes to assist with maintenance in the city centre, eg. shared hire of a cherry picker.
4. Recommend that owners carrying out repairs on historic properties seek advice from a professional with a qualification in conservation.

5. Aim to keep historic buildings occupied and in use. Encourage early intervention where problems are noticed.
6. Ensure that where a historic building is being altered, extended or demolished, it is recorded appropriately.
7. Use statutory powers where necessary when a building falls into serious disrepair.

### **Development**

8. Prepare detailed conservation management guidance for Station Square, including the listed buildings/structures. Integrate this guidance into the forthcoming update of the Inverness City Centre Development Brief.
9. Use the Inverness City Centre Development brief to inform future development proposals for Station Square.
10. Prepare Conservation Management guidance for Castle Hill.
11. Use the Conservation Management guidance for Castle Hill to inform any proposals for Castle Street car park or re-development of the museum.
12. Use the updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief to provide detailed site specific guidance for future developments in the Old Town, including appropriate conservation management requirements.
13. Include a requirement in the Inverness City Centre Development Brief for the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for any proposal that affects buildings and structures and spaces of heritage significance.
14. Require developers to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for any major alteration of a listed structure.
15. Manage the archaeology of the Old Town in relation to development.

### **Specific Issues**

#### **Shopfronts generally:**

16. Set up an ongoing Old Town shopfront improvements and repair scheme, with grants if possible and annual awards.
17. Set up a traditional signwriting programme.
18. Make a concerted effort to tackle the worst of the existing shopfronts by contacting the owners and establishing a way forward.

#### **Victorian Market:**

19. Consider and prepare conservation led management options for the Victorian Market.
20. Use any identified conservation led management options to inform any proposals for change.

#### **Signage, advertising and miscellaneous fixtures:**

21. Strongly encourage businesses to invest in high quality signage. Do not permit poor quality signage.
22. Minimise visual clutter and where possible locate fixtures out of sight.

### **Public Realm and Civic Spaces**

23. Incorporate improvements to public realm and civic spaces into forthcoming update of the

Inverness City Centre Development Brief, taking into account outputs from current place-making study for the area surrounding Academy Street.

#### **Green Space and Trees**

24. Prepare conservation focussed **Landscape Management Guidance** for Castle Hill.
25. Prepare conservation focussed Landscape Management Guidance for the banks of the river Ness
26. Prepare a Conservation Management strategy for Chapel Street Burial Ground.

#### **Guidance, training and future learning**

27. Provide ongoing training for The Highland Council officers in relation to building conservation.
28. Provide Councillors with regular update/information sessions on issues related to conservation areas.
29. Promote availability and use of the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Conservation Area Management Plan.
30. Promote community-wide knowledge and understanding of the Old Town conservation area, **by liaising with heritage partners.**
31. Support liaison and collaboration between The Highland Council and ICHT on matters relating to improvements in the conservation area.

#### **Implementation and review**

32. Review the Conservation Management Plan on a regular basis, perhaps five-yearly. Act on the recommendations of the review.

## 2.0 INVERNESS OLD TOWN CHARACTER AREA

### 2.1 DESCRIPTION OF INVERNESS OLD TOWN AND ITS VALUE



Red hatching shows the Old Town character area.

Inverness Old Town is an area within Inverness Riverside Conservation Area. It is defined by the river Ness on the west, the Castle Hill to the south, Academy Street to the east and the edge of the A82 to the north. The northern boundary is the southern edge of the A82, including the Chapel Street cemetery. The eastern boundary is at the rear of properties along Academy Street and includes Falcon Square, Hamilton Street (edge only on the east side), Eastgate (edge only on the north side), Stephen's Brae, the rear of properties on High Street, including Market Brae and the rear of properties on Castle Street. The southern tip includes 1-2 View Place (the Castle Tavern).

The value of the Old Town can be summarised as follows:

- **historic significance**

*The King's burgh of Inverness was founded by David I between 1163 and 1165. A defensive ditch was built on the east side, now Academy Street, and the first Inverness castle probably dates from this period. The street pattern of the medieval burgh is intact. Over several centuries the town and port of Inverness had importance in terms of trade, administration and military presence. As most buildings in today's Old Town are Victorian or later, the few earlier buildings are all the more important.*

- **townscape significance**

*The city's sense of identity derives from the relationship of land and the river Ness. The interplay of the main streets, parallel to the river, the connecting streets leading towards the river and the significant buildings and views along them give the city its unique sense of place.*

*Townscape value is also evident in the views into the Old Town, especially from Grieg Street bridge and the west bank of the river.*

*Many unlisted buildings have townscape merit:*

- *forming an appropriate setting or complementary backdrop to listed buildings*
- *as buildings that maintain the historic street pattern and whose boundaries respect the historic burgh plots.*



- **architectural significance**

*The Old Town includes 8 category A listed buildings, 84 category B and 12 category C listed structures. These include the city's main civic, ecclesiastical and commercial buildings, two statues and the market cross. For further information refer to the statutory list descriptions. These structures and their surroundings (curtilage) are of significance individually but also as an ensemble in the city centre.*

- **archaeological significance**

*The Inverness area has been populated since prehistory. Excavations in the Old Town, eg. at Castle Street, have documented evidence from c.7000 years ago as well as from the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries and various later phases. There is potential throughout the Old Town for further buried archaeological features, which could contribute significantly to knowledge and understanding of the growth of Inverness.*

For further description of the significance of Inverness Old Town refer to the Conservation Area Appraisal.

It is recognised and acknowledged that Inverness Old Town has significance as a vital part of the commercial centre of Inverness. Many of the significant historic environment assets are privately owned and it is essential that private business is supported and encouraged within the conservation area. Successful management of the historic environment must acknowledge the interdependent relationship between economic vitality and viability and a high quality, well maintained town and city scape. As such the needs of both the historic environment and business must be carefully managed to ensure the preservation of the former and the continued growth of the latter.

## 2.2 THREATS TO THE FABRIC OF THE OLD TOWN

### 2.2.1 The Expansion of Inverness

The City Centre developed from its medieval origins significantly during the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many fine buildings date from this period and give character to the town. The city centre also experienced periods of dramatic change during the 1960s and 1970s at a time when its heritage was less valued and the pressure for bold new forms was uppermost. Unfortunately several of the developments of that period paid little regard to the scale and form of the historic fabric and/or were constructed of poor quality materials that have not lasted well.

In recent decades Inverness has grown significantly, developing its position as a commercial, infrastructure and tourist hub for the Highlands and achieving city status in 2000. While the prosperity that has accompanied this growth is of benefit to Inverness, the Old Town has experienced several issues as a result of the development of out of centre retail and commercial hubs, peripheral housing and other expansion. Coupled with the recent recession the negative issues include:

- increased retail competition outside the city centre



- a loss of city centre office and commercial jobs
- a reduction in long term housing provision
- vacant upper floors
- a lack of investment in city centre properties
- poorly presented shopfronts
- pressure from increased traffic volumes
- conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

At the same time changing lifestyles have led to greater use of the Old Town for leisure and entertainment and tourism growth has brought increasing numbers of visitors to the City, with many arriving at the train and bus stations.

### **2.2.2 Responding to the issues**

The Highland Council has recognised the issues facing the City centre. A conservation area appraisal was carried out in 2004 resulting in a better definition of the heritage areas within the whole Riverside Conservation Area, the designation of the Crown Conservation Area and a recognition that the Old Town forms a distinct Character Area within the larger conservation area.

The City Vision and City Centre Development Brief focus on the Old Town. A BID (Business Improvement District) has been set up to focus on business development and improvement and other placemaking studies are ongoing.

Streetscape works have been carried out in Church Street, Union Street and Queensgate within the past ten years and in 2013 a successful application for a Townscape Heritage project was made, focussing on Academy Street.

The best form of conservation is to ensure that the City centre is a successful place with thriving businesses serving the local and regional population as well as visitors from elsewhere. Commercial success leads to business owners being able to invest in their properties and ensure that they have a sustainable future. Successful business, civic interests and conservation are closely related. In pursuing commercial success heritage value must be kept uppermost. The heritage of the City centre is one of its assets and must be understood and looked after - a well conserved historic city is attractive to all.

## **2.3 THREATS TO THE CITY CENTRE - IN DETAIL**

The threats arising from increased retail competition outside the city centre, a loss of city centre office and commercial jobs and a reduction in long term housing provision result in a lack of investment in the historic fabric. Evidence of this is as follows:

### **2.3.1 Deterioration of historic buildings (a lack of investment in city centre properties)**

All buildings need maintenance and repair. Even from ground level it is clear that building maintenance in the city centre of Inverness generally, has been neglected for a considerable time. ICHT have been active in awarding grants to owners to repair and restore buildings. A number of good examples can be seen, but, sadly, serve to highlight the poor state of many other buildings.

Issues that are easily spotted include failed rainwater goods, stone decay, cement mortar, unpainted timber (vulnerable to decay), cracked render, peeling paint. Crucially, many roofs (flashings, copes, chimneys, structural timbers and slates) are also in need of repair. Some of this disrepair gives cause for concern on safety grounds (eg falling masonry).



### 2.3.2 Poor shopfronts



The shops of Inverness Old Town, being at eye level, are what forms the first impression of the area. The quality and condition of many shopfronts is very poor indeed. This includes businesses in historic and listed buildings as well as those in recent buildings.

Negative factors:

- the frontage shows no awareness or sensitivity to the elevation above, eg. very large, asymmetrical windows/doors with an upper storey that has small, symmetrical openings.
- The frontage uses blatantly modern materials and finishes even though the rest of the elevation is historic, usually stone eg. Brushed aluminium or plastic against unpainted ashlar stone.
- The shop fascia is too large, overly deep and covers part of the shopfront.
- Sign boards clutter up the shopfront.
- Alarm boxes, cables and obsolete fixtures clutter the shopfront.





### 2.2.3 Vacant premises



Vacant shop premises is a serious issue in the city centre. Premises that are vacant for a significant period are at high risk of falling into disrepair. This is even more the case when vacancy is at the upper levels eg. repair issues such as water ingress may not be noticed until serious damage has occurred. Vacancy at upper levels appears to be less of an issue in Inverness than shop vacancy (based on observation from the street). Other issues associated with vacant premises include weeds growing in the masonry, broken gutters, debris gathering in doorways, broken signage. Vacant shops have a knock-on deadening effect on the nearby shops and the streetscape generally. When the vacancy is in a historic listed building the effect is all the more negative.



### 2.2.4 Poor quality buildings



Good quality buildings from all periods enhance a conservation area. Unfortunately, Inverness Old Town has quite a number of very low quality late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, built as infill of gap sites. These generally are monolithic, may be of excessive scale and height, with a form and massing that jars with neighbouring buildings, constructed across several historic plots, constructed of materials that have not aged well and are poorly detailed. Such buildings are eyesores, not only within the street elevation, but also when viewed from afar, especially from the west bank of the Ness.



### 2.2.5 Neglected spaces



Neglected spaces are of two types - a space where there has been demolition, that remain under-used and semi-derelict and spaces that have intrinsic value but are neglected.

The first detracts from the conservation area in that the space is a leftover 'gap', perhaps a temporary car park, that can easily become an eyesore. It breaks up the surrounding streets and has a knock-on detrimental effect on neighbouring properties. The Glebe Street (former swimming pool) site is in this category.

The second type are partly forgotten, undervalued spaces whose potential is unrealised. The chief example of this is Chapel Street cemetery, a large green space that buffers a hard urban edge and has potential to answer several needs on the north of the conservation area. Appreciation and use of the Friary graveyard, tucked behind the Telephone Exchange, could also be improved.



### 2.2.6 Poor pedestrian/cycling environment

Despite successful improvements in recent years (for example, Church Street and Inglis Street) some parts of the Old Town remain unpleasant and difficult for pedestrians and cyclists with pressure from increased traffic volumes. The worst points are near the dual carriageways and roundabout where vehicles drive with some speed and determination. Although Glebe Street is a 20mph zone the impression is of a wide road



dominated by vehicles. Due to traffic flow, volume and speed the Academy Street/Millburn Road and Queensgate/Academy Street corners depend heavily on traffic lights to allow pedestrians to cross.



Station Square is also difficult and dangerous, due to vehicles entering and leaving the square. At periods of high volume, the pavements are crowded, with people moving in several opposing directions and vehicles moving through the crowds. Pedestrians are often not given right of way at the crossing, to continue walking on Academy Street and the volume of people means vehicles push their way through. Those walking into and out of the station must negotiate parked and moving vehicles.

There is relatively little provision for safe or pleasant cycling in the city centre. The environmental and health benefits of cycling are well known, as are the economic benefits of cycle tourism. Cycling for commuters, local shoppers, students and schoolchildren should not be forgotten. Improvements to benefit pedestrians and active travel are part of Theme 2 of Inverness City Centre Development Brief and should be followed through.

### 2.2.7 Fragile edges



The edge of the Old Town is particularly fragile on the north and east. The Shore Street roundabout and Longman Road, a busy dual carriageway, are a hostile environment from which to view or approach the conservation area. East of Academy Street the mixture of warehouses, windowless stores, the very large shopping centre, several car parks and the hotch potch of the bus station area combine to have a negative effect on the character of the Old Town. The side entrances of the railway station are in this area but hidden. The urban grain - the pattern of open spaces and building - is very fragmented. Large monolithic blocks, generally with few doors or windows, sit awkwardly in narrow historic streets. The view from the front of category A listed library through the bus stances provides little clue that it is a conservation area.



### 2.2.8 Lack of awareness of heritage

General lack of awareness of the value of Inverness conservation area and the Old Town in particular means that lack of maintenance and investment, loss of historic buildings through demolition and inappropriate development have been tolerated. This has been ongoing for several decades but there are worrying signs of it continuing. (Two category B buildings on Academy Street were demolished, with permission, in late 2014.) The cumulative effect of the loss and destruction of historic buildings is clear to see in parts of the Old Town. If further losses are to be prevented the heritage of Inverness needs to be thought of as an asset not a nuisance. 'Bottom-up' awareness is likely to be much more effective as public opinion should be reflected in the necessary political decisions.

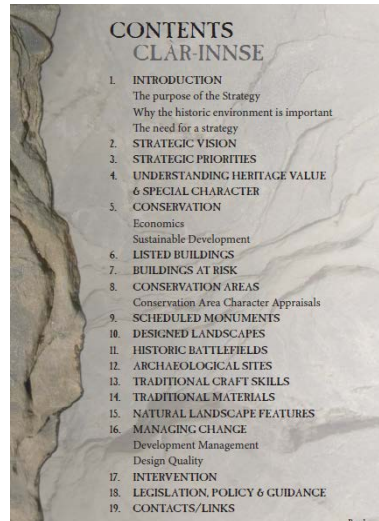
### 3 POLICY AND CONSENTS

#### 3.1 NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The primary legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 covers scheduled monuments (one in Inverness Old Town). The Historic Environment Amendment Act 2011 amended both of the earlier acts and gave planning authorities new regulatory powers.

Government policy on scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the *Scottish Historic Environment Policy* (SHEP). Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71 *Conservation Area Management* and PAN 68 *Design Statements* provide advice on good practice. *Our Place in Time - The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland* is a high level framework setting out a 10-year vision for the historic environment. It aims to ensure that the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of Scotland’s historic environment is realised in terms of wellbeing for all.

Under the General Permitted Development Order (2011) householder and non-domestic permitted development rights no longer apply in conservation areas ie.planning permission, and listed building consent if necessary, will usually be required for changes, additions or alterations to buildings or the spaces around them. If in any doubt owners should seek clarification from the local authority.



#### 3.2 LOCAL POLICY AND PLANNING MEASURES

Local policies affecting conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments, as well as traditional skills and materials and heritage management are found in The Highland Council Historic Environment Strategy (Supplementary Guidance). The HES “*considers the historic environment to be an asset and not a barrier to development*” and is a material consideration in the assessment of development proposals.

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan, Policy 57 on Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage requires that *“future developments take account of the historic environment and that they are of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment bringing both economic and social benefits”* and intends *“a proactive, consistent approach to the protection of the historic environment.”*

The aims of the CAMP also accord with the five themes of Inverness City Centre Development Brief: Built and Natural Environment, Movement and Transport, Tourism, Economy, Living in the City Centre. Protecting and enhancing the conservation area is not just about the first of these themes but is bound up with positive change that will improve the economy, benefit tourism, encourage city centre living and facilitate better quality movement and sustainable transport.

Policy 1 of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan aims to protect the viability of city and town centres and requires developers to consider Inverness City Centre as the first option. It also encourages residential use on the upper floors of existing buildings.

Guidance on Shopfronts, on Windows and Doors and general guidance on the Conservation Area is currently being prepared by The Highland Council.

### 3.3 CONSENTS

Any work that will affect the character of a building in the conservation area, such as alterations or an extension, will require planning permission. Repairs on a like-for-like basis do not usually require consent, but owners are advised to check. Re-instatement of historic materials usually requires consent, for example, when replacing plastic rainwater goods with cast iron.

Conservation Area consent is required for any demolition of buildings in the conservation area and for work to all trees, such as lopping and felling.

Listed Building Consent is required for all proposals to demolish, alter or extend a listed building. This includes internal work as well as external work such as window replacement. Repairs on a like-for-like basis do not usually require consent, but owners are advised to check. As noted above, planning permission may be needed in addition to listed building consent.

Alterations to a scheduled monument requires the consent of Scottish Ministers, through Historic Scotland. In Inverness this applies to the Friary graveyard, Friar's Street.

Advertisement consent is required for all signage, awnings, billboards, flags and similar alterations and replacements.

In addition, alterations, extension and new buildings will usually require a building warrant, issued through the Building Control section of the Council.

#### 4.0 PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGEMENT

The overriding principle is to aim to *preserve* and *enhance* the character of the area's buildings and their setting. This includes both listed and unlisted buildings and also includes monuments, eg. statues. This principle does not exclude change and development. However, development must be of the highest quality so that it really does enhance the conservation area. Change that is likely to have a negative effect should be resisted. Ambitions for the conservation and renewal of Inverness Old Town should be set high, inspired by examples of best practice from elsewhere.

Positive carefully managed change should allow for and support economic growth within the city centre. Inappropriate change will inevitably stifle economic growth and have a detrimental impact on the conservation area. As such there is a strong link between the needs of business in the conservation area and appropriate management of change.

Refer to Historic Scotland's Managing Change guidance notes:  
<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/policy/managingchange>

#### 4.1 GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS & SPACES

##### 4.1.1 Maintain and retain as much as historic fabric as possible

There should be a presumption in favour of retaining historic fabric insofar as possible, for the following reasons:

- authenticity: the materials of a building form its tangible history
- architectural quality: detailing and craftsmanship are expressed in the materials, essential to the architectural value of the building
- local identity: historic building materials were often locally sourced and of high quality, usually impossible to replicate nowadays.
- sustainability: existing buildings contain embodied energy and store carbon, whereas demolition, disposal of materials, bringing new materials to site and construction requires a very large input of energy.
- economic benefit: a regularly maintained historic building can continue in use indefinitely, generating income/benefit for all.

The importance of regular maintenance cannot be overemphasised. Owners should expect to carry out maintenance and probably some repair every year, for example clearing gutters and fixing slipped slates. Regular maintenance and repair is the best way to avoid serious and expensive problems later.

##### 4.1.2 Repair appropriately

Owners and custodians of buildings should expect to carry out repairs, on a regular basis. The earlier a problem is tackled the more likely it is to be solved and expensive and invasive treatments avoided. It is essential that repairs are correctly specified as inappropriate repairs can cause even worse damage - for example using cement mortar where lime mortar is required.

Where the condition of a building or an area in Inverness conservation area is seen to be deteriorating, The Highland Council should work with the owners to secure its repair. Support could include: alerting owners to minor defects; contact with Inverness City Heritage Trust who may be able to offer a grant. Where appropriate, The Highland Council should use statutory powers to undertake work where owners are unwilling,



and in some instances use powers to acquire the building.

Large-scale repairs should be very carefully considered and appropriate professionals employed. Repairs should be carried out in a way that is 'reversible', that is, they can be undone if necessary, perhaps as part of future alterations.

Statues and gravestones also require repair from time to time. This usually needs to be done by specialists as carvings and mouldings are likely to have become fragile with time and over-zealous cleaning or repair could result in these being destroyed.

Stone cleaning of buildings, once popular, is not normally recommended or thought necessary nowadays. Stone tends to self-clean, especially as air pollution decreases. In the past cleaning chemicals and abrasive methods have caused irreversible damage to the face of stone, leaving it vulnerable to moisture and frost action.

A good general principle is to aim to do 'as little as possible but as much as necessary'.

#### **4.1.3 Record the building/structure/area**

Buildings change over time, through decay as well as alterations. For future benefit owners should be encouraged to make a record of the building with a thorough set of photographs and possibly drawings, collated and dated. Any further alterations should be added. The record should be handed over to subsequent owners.

Recording a building is an essential exercise for students of architecture, construction skills and surveying. Building owners and college/university staff should be supported in collaborating on this, for mutual benefit.

#### **4.1.4 Aim to keep buildings/spaces in use**

The best way to ensure the conservation of buildings is to keep them in appropriate use. It is in the interest of everyone that viable uses are supported and that buildings are maintained and adapted as necessary. Some adaptations are relatively minor but occasionally more major changes are needed, which will affect the character of the building and the conservation area. These should be carefully thought out and appropriately qualified professionals involved at an early stage. Plan for appropriate change but not the type of change that irreversibly alters a building. Over time, many buildings, especially shops and commercial buildings, change owners and what seems highly desirable now may be entirely unsuitable for the next occupant.

A historic use of a large building can sometimes seem 'old fashioned' but in the long term, through adaptation, may be more sustainable and lasting than conversion for a more glamorous use. Use of large public buildings should be monitored - for listed buildings this should be part of a conservation plan.

Where it becomes known that a tenant/occupant is soon to move out of a building positive steps should be taken to seek another occupant. Buildings should not be left to lie empty for significant periods if at all possible. The Highland Council should work proactively with owners to find alternative uses for historic buildings in the conservation area.

#### **4.1.5 Be pro-active**

Those who have the means and/or power to do so should not wait for a crisis to arise, such as a derelict building, but should look ahead and anticipate need and opportunity. Convincing others to take on a project and raising funds can take time so this should be factored in. Those with

vision need to work with those who have experience. Both need to work with the owner who may have neither. A project to repair, conserve and renew the use of a historic building or neglected space can be a catalyst for regeneration and can anchor new development in its context.

#### 4.1.6 Monitor structures at risk

Every effort should be made in order that buildings and structures are not allowed to fall into serious disrepair. This includes all parts of buildings in the conservation area, not just frontages. If a building is seriously neglected, The Highland Council has statutory powers to issue the owners with a dangerous buildings notice, a repairs notice and ultimately to carry out a compulsory purchase. Early intervention and discussion with owners is essential.

Where a building is vacant with no identified new use, or is suffering from structural problems, or fire damaged, or unsecured and open to the elements or threatened with demolition, it should be placed on the Building At Risk Register, to help identify a way forward that will save the building.

#### 4.1.7 Assess change carefully

It is very important to consider what part of the building or space can be most easily changed. Aim to cause the least disruption to the most historically valuable parts. Changes on the exterior should generally be minimised, though this needs consideration in the context of the building and its surrounds.

For larger buildings or groups of buildings or historic spaces such as burial grounds in the conservation area, preparation of a **conservation statement** or a **conservation management plan** is recommended. Such a document should assess the various elements of the building or space and is a very useful tool to plan for maintenance, repairs, alterations and extensions. Where the building is very large or significant and major changes are proposed, The Highland Council may require a heritage impact assessment.

#### 4.1.8 What about demolition?

The strong presumption in Inverness conservation area should be *against* demolition of historic structures.

Partial demolition may be thought necessary to facilitate adaptation of a building. Demolition of an entire structure, especially a listed building, should be avoided if at all possible. Such loss is permanent, so future generations will not have the opportunity to benefit from the building or its contribution to the townscape.

The option of temporary 'mothballing' - securing the building and maintaining basic wind/watertightness - might be an appropriate alternative to demolition, in some cases, while new uses are sought. Advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity eg. from The Highland Council or Historic Scotland.

All proposals for demolition in Inverness conservation area require consent. An application for demolition must set out the justification and provide evidence of efforts made to retain the building, as set out in the *Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)*. This must be submitted in conjunction with a full planning application for a replacement development. *The key principle is that the character and appearance of the area should be preserved or enhanced.* Any replacement structures should be of a higher quality than those being demolished and should have a positive impact on the historic townscape.

Demolition should not take place until the building contract has been let, either for the new development or for appropriate long term treatment as open space where this is judged appropriate. Gap sites generally detract from the character of the area if allowed to lie undeveloped for a significant time.

Where listed building consent or conservation area consent for demolition has been granted it is a statutory requirement that the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) must be given an opportunity to make a record of all buildings affected. In most cases the applicant will be required to notify RCAHMS at least 3 months before the start of works.

## 4.2 GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 4.2.1 Possible development - existing buildings and sites

It is useful to think of four types of development:

- significant change and/or re-use of existing heritage assets
- a large site that covers all or part of a block in the city centre
- a site where a poor quality or inappropriate building exists
- a gap site

### 4.2.2 Significant Change and/or Re-Use of Existing Heritage Assets

- **The Castle and Castle Hill**

The 'Castle' is a significant building of architectural value in the most prominent site in the Old Town and is a major element in defining the character of Inverness. It may disappoint some visitors that it is not, in fact, an ancient Castle but a 19<sup>th</sup> century building housing law courts, although the site has a long and colourful history. Alternative uses may be appropriate. However, should a change of use of these buildings or an increase in their use to serve tourism be considered, a number of principles should be adopted to ensure the future of the heritage asset:

- **Conservation Management guidance** should be prepared for the buildings and their site, analysing the historic and architectural value and establishing parameters for dealing with the A-listed structures.
- **Separate Landscape Conservation Management guidance** should be prepared to ensure that the landscape is understood fully, that archaeological issues are taken into account and that hard and soft landscaping and tree planting in particular are carefully thought out to maintain and enhance the setting including fully understanding the views to and from the hill and surroundings of the listed building.
- The above plans may need to take into account possible future changes to the Castle Street car park and area behind the Townhouse, including possible redevelopment of the museum and gallery. Conversely, redevelopment of these sites should not be undertaken without taking into account fully the Conservation Management Plans for the Castle and Castle Hill.

- **The Victorian Market**

The Victorian Market is widely recognised as a major heritage asset within the Old Town. Much of its original structure is intact and appears to be in good order and there are many fine original, or near original shopfronts. However, the main market hall has been filled in relatively recently with additional shop units which detract

from the volume of the space. The floor surface is not original and several shopfronts have suffered from unsympathetic alteration. Safeguarding the future of the Victorian Market must be a priority for the City and this would be best understood by developing a detailed **Conservation led Management options** to inform any future plans for the building. This should include a detailed examination of the entrances - the impressive Academy Street entrance enhances the street; however the other entrances, although recently fitted with enhanced signage and entrance features, lead to the market through passages of varying quality. See also 4.3.2 below, for more specific details on shopfronts.

- **The Station**

The 1960s frontage is of poor quality. At the time of writing proposals for redeveloping the station are under consideration. This should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the listed buildings flanking Station Square and improve the quality of Station Square itself. There is historic evidence to show the nature of the square and buildings before the more recent alterations; however the proposals would be better served if they included **Conservation Management guidance** for the listed structures and their setting.

- **Other Buildings**

In a vibrant City Centre it is always possible that other listed buildings of merit may be considered for new uses. Civic and religious buildings in particular can be vulnerable to change. Should proposals arise for any such significant historic buildings then it is recommended that **Conservation Management Plans** should be called for as a preliminary to preparing proposals.

#### 4.2.3 A Large Site that Covers all or Part of a Block in the City Centre

Development guidance should be prepared for potential sites in the Old Town. These should set out the constraints, opportunities, site-specific issues and the potential suitable uses and should be included in the updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief. These include:



- Castle/Castle Street/Bridge Street district - some ideas and an indicative diagram are included in the current Inverness City Centre Development Brief (left) but further analysis and the preparation of development parameters/criteria would be beneficial. The area is sensitive, situated between two category A listed buildings, on a historic street pattern. The routes and connections within the block and in relation to the east side of Castle Street, Bridge Street and the river/bridge must be very carefully considered (see also 4.2.1 above).

- Glebe Street - this large site (former swimming pool) remains empty. Development guidance should be prepared referring to scale, height, massing, the context of the prominent site on the riverside, key views, materials, site permeability. The proposal should make a distinctive and positive contribution at the north of the conservation area, while respecting the hierarchy of key buildings/structures in the Inverness city centre. Large masses of uniform height (as built during the later 20th century in the vicinity of Bridge Street) should be avoided. Some vertical features or emphasis could contribute to the townscape; however, the small scale of the riverside buildings in Douglas Row and on the opposite bank of the Ness at Huntly Street and Friars' Place should be respected. A proposal on this site should

have a strength of presence, of the highest design quality and should enhance the relationship of the site to the river, including fully recognising the importance of the riverside pedestrian route leading to Riverside Street, north of Friars' Bridge. General guidance on scale, massing etc is included in Appendix B.

In addition, the north-east side of the Old Town would be impacted by development in or around Farraline Park - outside the conservation area, but adjacent to the boundary and forming the setting for the category A listed library. In this area encourage mixed development to replace some of the poorly designed buildings and other structures. The proposed should respect the urban grain of the Old Town. Building heights could vary to avoid uniformity but should be reduced close to the library and the historic buildings along Academy Street. The complex set of spaces and desire lines for vehicles and pedestrians require careful consideration as part of the placemaking study and this should extend to ideas for building forms and massing.

#### 4.2.4 A Site Where a Poor Quality or Inappropriate Building Exists



The telephone exchange dominates the skyline at this part of the Old Town



Although there is a presumption against demolition in the conservation area, where the building or the space around it is of poor design or otherwise inappropriate, its replacement with a high quality building that makes a positive contribution to the visual character of the area should be supported. Demolition consent will be required.

A number of later 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings were inserted into the old town with, in most cases, little regard to the scale of their neighbours, the street frontage lines and the urban grain of the Old Town. It may be some time before these buildings can be replaced, but in each case a development brief would be an essential first step in any redevelopment. Ideally these buildings should be replaced with something much sympathetic to the scale and quality of the Old Town. Examples:

- Large modern buildings on Bridge Street/Bank Street dominate this part of the town at an important location beneath the Castle
- 57 Academy Street - infill out of scale with its neighbours
- 63 Academy Street is unsympathetic in every way
- 84 Academy Street, a block of unsympathetic scale and character
- 12-14 Bank Street
- 25-41 Church Street (hotel)
- The City Centre development brief mentions the telephone exchange as a prime development site 'should it become available'. This site would need very careful study, as it includes a scheduled monument in the care of Scottish Ministers, through Historic Scotland. If alterations, conversion or demolition are proposed, removal of the link is recommended. Historic Scotland should be involved in preliminary discussions.



This under-sized infill building at 57 Academy Street means the space still feels like a gap



84 Academy Street



25-41 Church Street



12-14 Bank Street

#### 4.2.5 Gap Sites



79 - 85 Academy Street

- A gap site exists between 78 and 84 Academy Street. The two-storey shop building at no. 78 is attractive Art Deco but the rear block and the gap leading to a car park with large blank walls have a negative effect.
- Another gap site exists between 79 and 85 Academy Street
- Gaps on the river frontage at Bank Street (hotel car park). Visually the street would benefit from the wide gap being filled, with development of appropriate scale.

#### 4.2.6 Development briefs & Feasibility Studies

Development briefs, mentioned above, should take into account the special architectural, historic and townscape merits of the Old Town. Guidance on elements that should be covered is given in Appendix B. Where a site includes or impinges on a listed building, a scheduled monument or other heritage structure a Conservation Management Plan should be included as part of the development brief.

#### 4.2.7 Archaeology

As a general rule archaeological conditions will be attached to any development within the Old Town that requires significant groundworks - archaeological potential throughout the area is considered to be high, and where remains do survive they tend to be highly significant. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### 4.3 ISSUES SPECIFIC TO THE OLD TOWN

#### 4.3.1 Shopfronts generally



The shop on the left retains its traditional shopfront, while that on the

Many of the historic shopfronts of Inverness Old Town, including those on listed buildings, even category A, have suffered drastic loss and replacement with a wholly inappropriate design. This seriously detracts from several of Inverness' finest buildings and streets. A concerted effort must be made to undo this and to install more fitting and attractive shopfronts. These should be based on evidence, from photographs if possible, or informed conjecture, such as description in a historic document or comparison with similar shops nearby. Failing that, an appropriate, sensitive design should be worked up by a competent

right is more recent but very unsuitable. The one on the left could serve as a model for re-instatement at the shop on the right.



The statutory list description, written in 1981, mentions the Victorian shopfront of this category B listed building. Photographic evidence should be sought for its re-instatement.



This attractive shopfront in Baron Taylor Street retains its historic form.



43 Church Street, category B listed. Note the proportions of the shopfront, the glazed door and fanlight, the curved glass to the lobby.



The two shops on the ground floor of this building on Chapel Street are very well detailed, retaining their original features, such as the timber storm doors.

professional. This will avoid pastiche as well as generic 'house' styles for a particular brand. High quality materials should be specified and attention given to the proportions and rhythm of the elevation as a whole and the streetscape generally. Where a shop has spread across several frontages the shopfront design should convey this and should mark where the divisions occur. Colour schemes are to be worked out with the local conservation officer.

It is crucial to retain the historic shopfronts that do survive. Appropriate repairs will be needed from time to time to elements such as the stallrisers, pilasters, fascia, doors, windows, fanlights, tiles and ironmongery. Originals should be retained insofar as possible and new elements pieced in to match.

In some cases the historic shopfront, or part of it, still exists but it is covered with modern items. This should be exposed and brought back in use. As well as repairs, some elements may need to be re-instated - this should be done with care and on the basis of evidence. Off the shelf 'Victorian' items will not be acceptable as they are most unlikely to match or look authentic.

Stonework on the front of a shop should not be painted, unless there is evidence of earlier decoration, in which case historic colours should be examined and a suitable match established, in consultation with the local conservation officer at The Highland Council. Where paint has been inappropriately applied to stone, it is likely to cause damage in the long run. Therefore its removal, by a suitable method, is encouraged.

External roller shutters and dense mesh grilles are particularly inappropriate in a conservation area. Alternatives should be provided where windows/doors need to be protected. Removable metal grilles may be appropriate. These should sit within the window or door if possible. A lobby could have a timber gate. If roller shutters are unavoidable, then they should be internal and use a less dense weave, so that there is some visual connection between the street and shop.

Shop windows deliberately made 'blind', ie. covered with opaque film, or advertisements, or that have dark glazing, to prevent views in/out, will not be permitted in the conservation area. Where these exist, they should be removed and hangings or blinds used instead. Shop windows should not be double glazed without careful thought, as this will result in double reflections, not conducive to viewing items in the window.

Ventilation of premises such as food shops, hair salons, beauty shops, needs consideration. Where possible ventilation should be through the fanlight over the door, or clerestory glazing. Mechanical extractors must be located on the rear elevation. There are few examples remaining in the city of traditional external awnings. However these are still available and could provide very effective shade, for example on the north side of Eastgate/High Street.

Inverness has a few notable examples of successful conversion of historic buildings for retail use - Leakey's Bookshop and Highland Print Studio (20 Bank Street). These could serve as good examples for any future conversions.

A Traditional Shopfronts design guide is currently being prepared by The Highland Council. Refer also to Historic Scotland's "Traditional Shopfronts, A short guide for shop owners" available free at: [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shopfronts.pdf](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shopfronts.pdf)

#### 4.3.2 Victorian Market

The city centre's best historic shopfronts are found in the Victorian Market. This ensemble of shops should be studied, to establish and evaluate what elements are historic, where alterations were made and assess how changes and upgrade could be best carried out. Some traditional shopfronts remain, which could inform re-instatement and improvement to others.



This run of shops retains the historic form, which could inform re-instatement in other shops (other shop fronts have over-large signs, some extending across bays).

Note that not all the shopfronts are to the same design. Issues include over-large fascias, some with internally illuminated signs, fascias stretching across several bays, insensitive to the rhythm of the arcade, external roller shutters.

Several shops give an impression of clutter round or on their frontage, with numerous hangings, display stands, advertisements and signs. While a hard and fast rule is not practical, shopkeepers should be sensitive to this. The municipal external litter bins are inappropriate. An alternative should be sought, within the context of an overall study and improvements plan for the Market. Consideration should be given to a suitable range of colours for decoration within Market. Contrast is good but garish shades should be avoided.



The florist's retains a historic shopfront, with slender colonettes, and attractive clerestory leaded glazing.

The Market currently appears to have numerous security cameras, several pointing in the same direction. CCTV provision should be rationalised and obsolete fixtures removed. Lighting of some of the fascias is by a random range of lights. Consideration should be given to whether these are necessary or if a uniform suite could be used.

The various Market entrances need attention in the context of a study. The decorative fixtures on Queensgate are somewhat dated. The aluminium entrance door does not convey the historic or architectural value of the Market.

#### 4.3.3 Signage, advertising and miscellaneous fixtures



The upper floor of this eighteenth century building, category B listed, is dominated by projecting signs and their fixings

Quality of signage sets the tone for the shop, indeed for the street. The fascia, usually timber, on which the signage is painted, or applied, should be in proportion to the overall shopfront. A very high fascia, that covers part of the shop window or a lot of the building, is not suitable. The shop sign should be of suitable scale and, ideally, be handpainted by a skilled craftsman. Metal or acrylic lettering may also be applied to the fascia. Individual letters should not be fixed into stone, but should be fixed onto a frame or bracket which can then be carefully fixed into the stone. Plastic signs will not be acceptable. Pastiche designs are not encouraged or necessary.

Projecting signs animate a street but too many give an appearance of clutter. They should not be so large or numerous that they dominate the elevation. They should be located to one side of the fascia, not in the



middle, fixed so as to cause least damage to stonework, eg. into a joint using stainless steel fixings.

Alarm boxes should be located to the side of the shopfront, as inconspicuously as possible. A white box is recommended.

Satellite dishes and telecommunications equipment should be placed on the rear roof or behind a chimney stack. Ventilation ducts should be taken through to the rear elevation or the rear roof.

#### 4.4 Investment in the public realm, including appropriate civic spaces

The public realm - pavements, kerbs, roads, kerbs, lighting, traffic signals and controls, signage, street furniture, planting, public art - makes a crucial contribution to the character of the Old Town. Quality should be as high as budgets allow.

Longevity of materials is a key consideration - a cheap scheme may look tatty in only ten years, so is ultimately not good value. Use of natural materials, at least in key areas, is strongly recommended. Well-laid stone paving will last for decades and will weather graciously, adding character to the city centre. High quality contemporary ranges should be used for street furniture and lighting. Imitation historic styles for new features should be avoided as they will not be authentic.

Civic spaces should encourage gathering and social life. The various types of seating provision, litter bins, special features, banners, signs and the like should not detract from the space - a cluttered feel should be avoided.

In recent years much work had been carried out to improve the public realm in the High Street and around Church Street, Union Street and Queensgate. The flood protection works along both sides of the Ness include high quality paving and stonework. Currently Highland Council is engaged in studies to improve the public realm, particularly in and around Academy Street including the train and bus stations. Consideration should be given to examining traffic and movement across the whole of the Old Town, ensuring that this work relates closely to the City Vision and City Centre Development Brief.

At the same time the growth in traffic and conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists has become a major concern within the Old Town. Issue are concentrated in and around Academy Street while in other streets, such as Bridge Street, Castle Street and Bank Street vehicular traffic appears to dominate.

#### 4.5 Green Space and Trees

Although predominantly a built-up urban environment, the Old Town does have some significant green spaces:



- Castle Hill - noted above in section 4.2.1 which recommends that a separate **Landscape Conservation Management Plan** should be carried out.
- The riverbank - although a narrow strip of green on each side of the Ness, the grass covered banks with their formal tree planting form an important landscape element, framing the river and providing a



Trees lining the Ness need to be maintained carefully. Gaps should be filled with new trees.

green buffer along the banks of the river. Recent flood protection works have been carried out, with care taken to protect trees. However, some gaps exist. A Landscape Management Plan should be prepared, covering tree maintenance, planting and management.



Trees are an important riverside element (photograph was taken before the flood protection works)



The Old High Kirkyard is an important landscape element in the Old Town

- Old High Church Kirkyard - a historically significant green space at the north west end of the Old Town.
- Chapel Street Burial Ground - the graveyard element is now somewhat hidden behind walls and vegetation but the space forms an important green buffer between the A82 and the Old Town. In fact it extends to over an hectare and forms the second biggest single land use plot in the Old Town after the Castle Hill (1.3ha). It contains gravestones and monuments from at least the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The boundary walls are in poor condition with a section missing near the entrance. Several memorials are built into the rear (north east wall) and family plots and enclosures exist along the south east wall and in the east corner. As with the gravestones, many are eroded and in poor condition. The landscape is maintained but to a relatively basic standard. The burial ground is category C listed and is significant in historical, architectural, landscape and townscape terms. It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan is prepared for the Burial Ground.



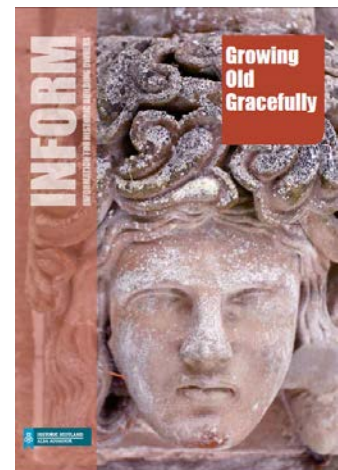
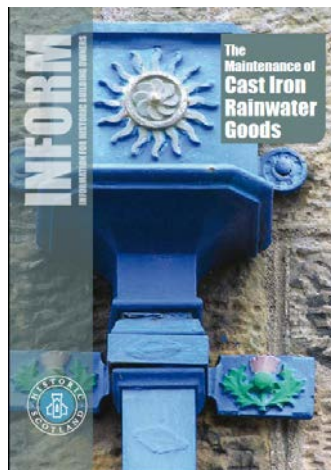
Chapel Street burial ground

## 5.0 GUIDANCE, TRAINING & FUTURE LEARNING

### 5.1 Sources for guidance and advice

Guidance on historic building repairs and upgrade is available, free, from Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT). Repairs may be partly grant-eligible under the Trust's Building Repairs Grant Scheme. The Trust works with businesses, local organisations and homeowners, including multiple owners to achieve practical improvements in the conservation area. Typical works include stone repairs, leadwork and rainwater goods, window and door repair.

Excellent guidance on maintaining and repairing shopfronts and historic buildings is also available, free, from Historic Scotland. The Inform Guides cover traditional external and internal materials as well as topics such as boundary walls, steps and railings. The Short Guides series includes a very useful guide on traditional shopfronts as well as one on improving energy efficiency in historic buildings. All can be viewed and downloaded online, or paper copies can be sent on request.



Stirling City Heritage Trust is currently running a trial called Traditional Buildings Health Check, inviting property owners to sign up to a membership based scheme that provides assistance with understanding the condition of the building and planning for repairs and future maintenance. It is recommended that The Highland Council and ICHT watch the outcome of the trial, to see if a similar scheme would be appropriate in Inverness.

### 5.2 Training and Learning

Learning in connection with shopfront improvement in Inverness Old Town should be prioritised. Business owners and shop tenants should be targeted, perhaps through the BID (Business Improvement District) scheme and/or ICHT. Contractors and shopfitters should also be encouraged to attend. Shopfront improvements should be presented as a positive step, with the aim of supporting business and encouraging city centre retail. Put simply, shops that look better attract more shoppers. Training should include learning about good practice, examples, evaluation of existing shopfronts, repairs, guidance on design and

quality, including form, materials, signage and advertising, colours, lighting, security grilles, ventilation. The training should be run in tandem with an actual shopfront improvement scheme, with grants available if possible. It is recommended that shops be improved in groups, for maximum benefit. An awards scheme could be devised for the most successfully improved premises. The local press should be invited to report on the initiative, to raise public awareness. ICHT and/or Historic Scotland will be able to advise on the setting up and delivery of a shopfront improvement scheme.

In order that the a workforce with the necessary skills is available locally, training in traditional building skills should be promoted and supported, in liaison with local colleges. This is covered in Strategic Aims 20-24 of The Highland Council Historic Environment Strategy. Since 2009 Inverness City Heritage Trust have run a series of conservation masterclasses in conjunction with Inverness College (UHI) and Historic Scotland (Fort George). These were video linked to UHI campus colleges across the Highlands and Islands and were aimed at professionals including contractors. ICHT also runs occasional one-day conferences, hands-on workshops and information days for homeowners. As well as meeting strategic goals these activities aim to meet the learning and training needs of various groups and should be supported in the future. Other partners in the provision of training include Inverness Business Improvement District (BID), Business Gateway and CITB.

Training and continuing professional development for those who work in development management at The Highland Council should not be neglected. It is essential that the officers who assess and advise on development, especially in relation to listed buildings, are trained in conservation management and ideally, in the fundamentals of building design.

Learning opportunities and information sessions about the conservation area should be offered to local Councillors. The benefits of enhancing the Old Town in terms of regeneration and boosting business should be emphasised.

### 5.3 Heritage Awareness

Although Inverness is a busy tourist hub in season, local awareness of the historic significance of the city should not be taken for granted and should be promoted by a variety of means, on a rolling basis. This is stated as Strategic Aim 10 of The Highland Council's Historic Environment Strategy. ICHT has as its vision that the conservation area should be more widely understood, better maintained and viewed as a catalyst for regeneration, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. Heritage awareness fits with Themes 1 and 3 of the Inverness City Development Brief - Built and Natural Heritage and Tourism. The Highland Council and ICHT should therefore continue to collaborate on this. Visit Scotland also have a role in promoting the city and every opportunity should be taken to ensure that the heritage value of the conservation area is a focus.

Learning opportunities that appeal to a range of ages and groups should be sought. Ideas could include storytelling events, recording of oral history, a variety of city trails, walking tours, social media initiatives,

visual arts programmes and talks. The historic photographs held by the Highland Photographic Archive, part of Inverness Museum & Art Gallery, are a rich source to be exploited. Special interest groups and activities already exist, for example Inverness Local History Forum, Inverness Field Club and Inverness Civic Trust. Ways should be sought to support these and to make their expertise available for the wider community. Greater awareness of the heritage value of the Old Town will benefit retail, business and in turn will help support the long-term viability of the city centre.

## 6 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION	Rationale
<b>6.1 Historic buildings and spaces:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and repair historic fabric. Owners should carry out an annual inspection of their building and from this address the issues that need work.</li> </ul>	<p>With regular maintenance and repair historic buildings can continue in use. Addressing problems early is much easier and less expensive than waiting years.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target education and information for owners regarding maintenance and repair.</li> </ul>	<p>Owners may not be aware of the help, guidance and support that is available.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider group schemes for assisting with maintenance in the city centre, eg. shared hire of a cherry picker to clear out high level gutters.</li> </ul>	<p>A shared approach can be helpful, as the task is less daunting and expensive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly encourage owners carrying out repairs on historic properties to appoint an architect, preferably one accredited in conservation, or to seek advice from a conservation accredited surveyor or other suitable professional eg. IHBC registered. Repairs should be appropriate to the building.</li> </ul>	<p>A suitably qualified professional will advise on appropriate repairs. Inappropriate repairs, on the basis of bad advice, can cause serious damage to a building. A professional will also prepare a repair specification for pricing by a contractor, which will allow fair comparison of estimates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If major alterations are being made the historic building or space should be recorded. Drawings and photos of the existing, prepared by a competent professional, should be kept as part of the building's documentation.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important to record changes, to help future understanding of the building and to inform repairs. Once alterations are made the previous arrangement may not be easily seen or remembered.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aim to keep historic buildings in use. If a use is looking non-viable, owners should be pro-active in seeking a more viable use. Help and advice is available, eg. from Inverness City Heritage Trust, The Highland Council. Make every effort to avoid a situation where a demolition is proposed because of serious disrepair.</li> </ul>	<p>A building in good use is much more likely to remain in good repair. Again, it is very important to act early, to avoid a building becoming derelict. Demolition, especially of a listed structure, is a drastic last resort. A building once lost cannot be put back.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Highland Council should intervene where buildings appear to be in serious disrepair. Make use of statutory powers. Buildings of concern include 47-51 Castle Street and 36-40 Eastgate.</li> </ul>	<p>Derelict buildings are an eyesore and detract from the area as a whole. When matters have reached a critical point intervention is required.</p>
<b>6.2 Development:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and promote city centre living generally.</li> </ul>	<p>Occupied buildings are less likely to fall into disrepair. A mix of uses in the Old Town helps the economy generally and ensures a more vibrant city in the evenings.</p>

- **Prepare conservation management guidance** for Castle Hill, covering the buildings and the site
- Use the Castle Hill conservation management guidance to inform any proposals for the Castle Hill buildings and site, Castle Street car park or re-development of the museum.
- Prepare detailed conservation management guidance for Station Square, including the listed buildings/structures. Integrate this guidance into the forthcoming update of the Inverness City Centre Development Brief.
- Use the Inverness City Development brief to inform future development proposals for Station Square
- Require the preparation of a conservation management plan for any major alterations of a listed structure.
- Incorporate guidance for potential sites in the Old Town, setting out the constraints, opportunities, site-specific issues and the potential suitable uses into the updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief.
- Require the inclusion of a conservation management plan in development proposals for buildings, structures and spaces (eg. burial grounds) of heritage significance.
- Manage the archaeology of the Old Town in relation to development.

It is essential that the historic and architectural value of the whole site is understood and parameters established for dealing with the A-listed structures so that any development, upgrade or alterations are appropriate.

It is essential that the historic and architectural value of the square and its buildings is understood so that these can be protected and enhanced according as upgrade or alterations take place.

A conservation management plan will be a good tool to guide appropriate development/alteration.

Development briefs are a tool to inform and shape proposals at an early stage, so that developers/owners are aware of the issues when making major decisions.

Heritage assets should be properly understood so that they can be protected when change and development is proposed.

The Old Town has potential archaeology of high significance, which must be managed as opportunity arises.

### 6.3 Shopfronts generally:

- Set up a shopfront improvements and repair scheme, to include training and awareness-raising, maintenance and design guidance, looking at best practice, implementation, evaluation. Include grants if possible. An annual awards scheme would motivate interest. **Involve the local media. Seek support and advice from Historic Scotland.**
- Set up a traditional shop signwriting scheme, to run over a particular period, eg. 6 weeks in summer, in liaison with heritage awareness and

The many run-down and very poor shopfronts are a blight in the conservation area and have a negative effect overall. Highlighting already existing good shopfronts and encouraging improvements will stimulate business and make the area more attractive for everyone.

The activity of traditional signwriting in itself attracts people's notice. The result should have an immediate positive effect on the shopfront and the street.

training programmes. Seek support and advice from Historic Scotland.

- Tackle the worst of the existing shopfronts, in a specific way, contacting owners, to encourage improvements. Use enforcement where details are unacceptable.

Poor shopfronts seriously detract from the quality of Inverness city centre. The longer these last the worse their effect. Once improvements start, other shop owners should feel encouraged to follow.

#### 6.4 Victorian Market

- Prepare Conservation-led management options for the Victorian Market, including its entrances.
- Use the Conservation Management options to inform any proposals for change.

The Victorian Market is the best group of shops in the city centre and is itself a very attractive space, of historic, architectural and social significance. It deserves attention. Any development of its potential should enhance, not damage, its character.

It is crucial that the historic and architectural value of the Market is examined and well understood, as the basis for proposing changes.

#### 6.5 Signage, advertising and miscellaneous fixtures:

- Aim for high quality shop signage, eg. handpainted fascias and projecting signs, appropriate materials, scale and colours. Resist inappropriate signage where possible and take action against unauthorised inappropriate signage where necessary and appropriate.
- In general seek to minimise visual clutter and locate fixtures out of sight of the main streets of the conservation area, insofar as possible. Fix satellite dishes and telecommunications equipment on the rear roof or behind a chimney stack. Locate security alarms discreetly, even on a shopfront, eg. to the side, or within a lobby. Take ducts through to the rear elevation or the rear roof if at all possible. Fix into masonry joints, not into the stone. Use stainless steel to prevent corrosion damage.

Good signage raises the tone and character of the whole street. It benefits the business and has a positive effect on the area.

Fixtures such as satellite dishes, CCTV, cables, and ducts can create unsightly clutter on the principal elevations and the roofscape. With a little effort alternative, more discreet solutions are usually possible. Repeated fixing into stone, especially ashlar, causes unnecessary damage to this long-life expensive material.

#### 6.6 Public Realm and Civic Spaces:

- Incorporate improvements to public realm and civic spaces into forthcoming update of the Inverness City Centre Development Brief, taking into account outputs from current place-making study for the area

A more pleasant public realm and appropriate civic spaces will create a more attractive city centre. This will encourage locals as well as visitors to spend more time there, boosting the local economy and raising local pride and identity.



surrounding Academy Street.

### 6.7 Green Space and Trees:

- Prepare conservation focussed **Landscape Management Guidance** for Castle Hill.  
Views towards and from Castle Hill are key to Inverness Old Town. The hill is the setting for listed structures and a significant historic and amenity space. Trees and landscape are important for the hill, so planning and management is required.
- Prepare conservation focussed **Landscape Management Guidance** for the banks of the river Ness  
The river banks and its trees are a crucial part of the visual character of the Old Town. Views to and from the Old Town and its key buildings are prevented, framed or enhanced depending on trees or their absence. Trees also make an important environmental contribution to the Old Town.
- Prepare a Conservation Management Strategy for the Chapel Street Burial Ground.  
As well as being a green space with historic significance (category C listed), the burial ground has potential to provide good pedestrian links and mark an entry point to the north of the Old Town. Improvement and increased use would greatly contribute to the character of area.

### 6.8 Guidance, training and future learning:

- Advertise/promote the availability of guidance and free advice on repairs, maintenance and historic buildings.  
A lot of help is now available, on a national basis but also locally, for example through Inverness City Heritage Trust. Owners may not be aware of this.
- Promote learning for the wider community in relation to historic shops and shopfronts.  
The history of shops in the city centre is an important part of social history and is likely to interest people of all ages. As a result people will become more aware of the heritage remaining.
- Support schemes for training contractors and other professionals in traditional buildings skills, in liaison with relevant partners such as Inverness City Heritage Trust.  
Ongoing training is crucial if workers with the required skills are to be available. Support is available as this has been recognised at a national level.
- Ensure ongoing training for Council officers in relation to conservation.  
Officers must be equipped to make robust decisions/recommendations and give clear advice and guidance that will preserve the character of the Old Town.
- Offer information and update sessions on the conservation area for Councillors on a regular basis.  
Local representatives need to be kept up-to-date on best practice, pressing issues and possible solutions, so that this can feed into future policy and planning decisions.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the Old Town conservation area, using the conservation area appraisal  
Conservation of the city centre and appreciation of its heritage by future generations depends on everyone playing a

and conservation area management plan as a tool.

- Promote community based learning about the conservation area, in liaison with relevant partners.

Encourage and promote best practice in conservation through an award scheme in partnership with key organisations within the City Centre.

role. Local people should be invited and encouraged to find out about the Old Town.

As well as being a physical asset, heritage is a cultural and social asset, so wide engagement is beneficial to everyone.

Key organisations and stakeholder groups within the Old Town should have an active role in the management of the conservation area.

## 6.9 Implementation and Review

- The Highland Council and ICHT to continue to liaise on matters relating to improvements in the conservation area.

It is a great advantage that a city heritage trust already exists and Inverness City Heritage Trust should be supported and encouraged to work with the Council on the implementation of the CAMP. If the conservation area is to be maintained and improved in the future property owners also need to play their part, by attending to repairs and maintenance of buildings in their care.

- Make the CAMP available on the Council website.

This is important in terms of getting public 'ownership' of the document, which will lead to more likelihood of action and engagement.

- Review the Conservation Management Plan on a regular basis, perhaps five-yearly. This should be led by the Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee, in liaison with the Planning Review Body. Set up a conservation area monitoring group to give feedback to these committees. Act upon any recommendations that result from the review.

The conservation area is not static. The appraisal and management document need to be kept updated if they are to be of use.

**APPENDIX A : PLANS:**

**INVERNESS RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION AREA**

**OLD TOWN CHARACTER AREA**

## APPENDIX B : DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS & FEASIBILITY STUDIES

### B1 Encourage the appointment of a suitable professional team.

The team should have proven expertise in design for historic settings. Relevant experience includes urban design and conservation. For major developments a competition may be suitable. The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland will be able to advise.

### B2 Promote the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Conservation Area Management Plan

In order that preserving and enhancing the character of the Old Town is included from the earliest stages, designers/developers/owners should be strongly encouraged to make use of Inverness CAA and CAMP. These documents should inform the design brief and the proposals.

### B3 Encourage submission of thorough design statements

Developers, designers and agents should be strongly encouraged to submit a good design statement with their proposals, both small scale and large scale - guidance is available in Planning Advice Note (PAN) 68. The statement gives the designer an opportunity to set out the rationale for the design, the options that were explored, why the final choices were made etc. This clarity and justification can work in favour of the design and can ease the task of the planner. Design is a 'material consideration' in planning terms and an application can be refused solely on grounds of the design. The site appraisal part of the design statement should make reference to the historic character and indicate how the proposal is responding to this. Reference to historic maps is encouraged - the 1867 Town Plan of Inverness is particularly useful.

### B4 Choose high quality design:

- Context sensitive

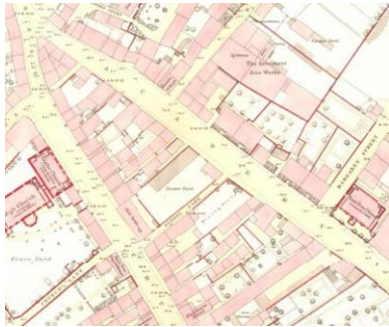
*How does the proposal demonstrate a response to the site and the Old Town generally? Is it a stand-alone building on a large open site or an infill building on a gap site?*

As stated above the new structure should have a positive effect on the character of the area. Aside from the positive effects linked to the uses of the building, it should contribute visually and spatially to the Old Town. The design should therefore arise from the context and respond appropriately to the site. This does not mean that new buildings should copy historic details or styles, even on an infill site. New buildings should usually be designed in a contemporary idiom and be clearly of their time, while also responding to the rhythm, proportions, geometry and form of nearby buildings.

Generic design, including generic shopfronts, should be avoided, as this produces buildings and streets that could be anywhere. The intention should be to strengthen the historic identity of Inverness. A new building or structure, if it is the best of what can be done today, is an opportunity to add a layer of history. There are many good examples of new buildings in conservation areas - such as the Pier Arts Centre Stromness, the Scottish Poetry Library Edinburgh.

- **Appropriate scale and orientation**

*What is the scale of the proposal - in plan and in elevation, compared to buildings in the area? How does the proposal relate to the historic site layout and plot size?*



This extract from the 1867 OS town plan of Academy Street/Church Street, shows a mixture of mostly narrow plots, pends, wynds, rear buildings. (National Library of Scotland)

Historic towns and cities usually have a mix of buildings, from many periods, in a variety of styles, without a uniform scale or material. However, in the best examples, the scales of the various buildings relate to one another, within a range. There is a sense of composition of the street elevation, however organic it may be. There is usually a building line (the inside edge of the street), which most buildings meet. If a building is set back it is usually for a particular reason, which, being the exception, adds interest.

The sense of scale is affected by the street proportions. A narrow street lined with high buildings feels different compared to a wide street lined with buildings of the same height. The orientation, where deep shadow occurs and what buildings receive full sunlight also affects how the street is perceived.

The streets and building plots of Inverness Old Town are medieval in origin. Most of the plots are relatively narrow, at right angles to the street, for example on High Street and Castle Street. It is very important that these plots are respected as they are the basis of the historic core - the warp and weft of its fabric, as it were. Very large floor plates are difficult to design appropriately in a historic context and the result tends to be hangar-like. However medium-sized commercial floorplans are possible, as evidenced by a building such as 96-104 Academy Street, formerly Rose Street Foundry.

Occasionally a case is made for an 'iconic' building, which sits alone on a site and deliberately sets itself to be very distinctive within its surroundings. Such buildings are often controversial and are now considered by some to be part of a fad that has passed. That said, Inverness' key historic buildings - Castle, the Town House and the Town Steeple - are iconic, in the best sense.

- **Relationship to the river and to key buildings**

*How does the building relate to the river Ness? How will the building affect views of the river and routes to Bank Street and the bridges?*

*How does the proposed building relate to key buildings in the Old Town? Are views of key points enhanced, framed, enlarged etc?*

The river is central to the identity of the city and to its visual character. Any proposals should take this into account. New buildings must not detract from the views to or from the river, the river bank or the bridges. Rather they should allow the river to be an even stronger presence, by drawing in views where possible.

The Castle, the Town House, the Town Steeple and the various church spires are among the key buildings on the Inverness skyline. New buildings should not detract from their distinctiveness.

- **Appropriate roofline, street elevation**

*What sort of roofline(s) does the proposal have? How does it compare with those adjacent? Are they similar or related? How will the new*

*roofline look in silhouette?*

*Where is the eaves line? What are the storey heights in relation to nearby buildings?*

*How does the elevation relate to adjacent buildings? Will the elevation be seen straight on, or will be seen mostly at an oblique angle?*

It is not the case that all buildings on a street must have the same roofline, eaves line or storey heights but the new proposal should be presented in its context, with a drawing of the street elevation showing several adjacent buildings so that an informed decision can be made. The roofline relates to the form and massing and should respect the hierarchy of buildings on the street. Some streets in Inverness present a fairly consistent eaves height - see Church Street between Union Street and Queensgate. Other parts are inconsistent. A judgement has to be made whether this is positive, part of a historic rich variety, or whether it has a negative effect and needs to be stitched together as opportunities arise. Many buildings have a varied and rich roofline, especially at corners, punctuated by stone carving, dormers, stone balustrades and cast iron brattishing.

The principal elevation needs to be carefully designed in response to existing buildings. The other elevations should be also be considered carefully as it is likely that they will be at least partly visible from other streets in the conservation area. Those that relate to wynds and side streets need special care. Anything that might have a deadening effect on secondary spaces should be avoided. Examples include large areas of blank walls, blind windows, dense treatment of boundaries. Significant public buildings, often those with a civic/cultural use, usually have a slightly higher or more elaborate roofline and a more elaborate principal elevation. Commercial buildings, especially shops, could also be expected to show ambition and quality.

Balancing the hierarchy of a street requires that some buildings form the 'background', so that others can be more prominent. Background buildings are not less important than the others and require equal care in design. Prominence in elevations may be established through articulation and modelling of the facade, choice and use of materials, contrast of colour, variation at key points in the elevation.



- **Appropriate volume and massing**

*Is the volume of the proposal appropriate for the Old Town? How is the massing and geometry expressed?*

A building may read from the street as several connected small or medium volumes or it may read as one very large volume. The latter is unlikely to be appropriate in the setting of the Old Town, though large spaces can be cleverly accommodated inside buildings that appear less large from the street. For example, cinemas, theatres and churches traditionally had large spaces stretching back into the site, even though the street elevation was relatively narrow.

- **Consideration of entrances and boundaries**

*Where will the main entrance(s) be? How do they relate to the site boundaries and routes in and around the site? Do the routes contribute to the permeability and accessibility of the Old Town?*

Entrances and doorways are part of the street as well as part of a building. Boundaries, and how these are marked, effect the feel of the street. Each proposal will have a unique set of circumstances but the overall effect on the surroundings should be positive. 'Permeability relates to the directness of links and the density of connections...Maximising accessibility and the flow of movement to, from and within areas of the City Centre is crucial.' (Inverness City Centre development brief, page 9).

- **Windows and glazing**

*How is glazing handled in the design? How do the windows (location, type of glass, type of window openings) relate to the street? What message do they give?*

The buildings of today often have larger window openings than older buildings. These needs to be carefully thought through in the context of the conservation area, so as to maintain and enhance the existing rhythms and textures. Note that a glass window may not be completely transparent, as double glazed units have a double refraction. Shop windows need to be sized for display purposes, but other considerations include overheating and glare. The reflectance and texture of a large glazed facade will have a particular effect on a street elevation. Glass facades usually reflect some light and images from the street and the effect on the streetscape can be negative. In general large areas of glazing are unlikely to be appropriate on certain streets of the Old Town.

- **High quality appropriate materials and detailing**

*Are the materials used in a way that is appropriate for a historic setting? Are they bottom of the range/off the shelf or high quality? What is their lifespan?  
How do the materials fit together? Will fixings be visible? If so, how will they look?*

A very wide range of materials, including innovative technical materials, is available to the designer of a building, particularly for cladding. Even within a particular type of material, for example brick, a huge variety can be available. Choices to be made include treatment, finish and texture, initial colour, colour when placed on the building, colour over time (weathering). It is important that the choices take into account the

other materials in the area and how comfortably the old and new will sit together. A well designed contrast may be appropriate, or the contrast may jar - this is a matter for careful judgement.

Traditional materials, such as dressed stone and timber, continue to be appropriate, with care taken over specification, detailing and execution. The expected lifespan of the material should also influence the choice. Materials that are likely to degrade quickly are not appropriate in a conservation area.

The success or failure of a material usually depends on how it is finished, detailed and actually built. Detailing includes how the material is fixed to the structure and how parts of the material are fitted together. Flashings, gaps, drip details, fixings and joints are specialist topics, but they subconsciously affect how a building is perceived. A lack of details such as drip edges on an elevation can mean water running down the facade, with resultant staining. Gaps and ledges normally accumulate dust and debris but the design should encourage this to blow away, not build up or get trapped.

Materials such as stone, brick and slate requires skilled workers. The specifier should bear this in mind and think ahead to the likelihood of finding suitable contractors. Craft input, say hand finishing of stone, adds greatly to the appearance. Although construction is normally on a tight budget, any allowance for craftwork and/or input from an artist is to be encouraged and welcomed as it usually adds value not only to the building but to the area as a whole.

- **Overall character**

*Is the proposal in character with the street/area?*

Within the Old Town each area has a particular visual and architectural character. This can change along one street. The south end of Academy Street comprises predominantly three storey commercial buildings with large floor to ceiling heights. From around Post Office Avenue the street begins to change to smaller scale two storey + dormers, with shops at ground floor and residential use above. A new building, simply by being new, will bring new visual character to the street. However it should aim to respect and complement the existing character.

## **B5 Encourage mixed uses, including city centre living**

Mixed uses in a city centre result in more diverse activities, greater use of the area in the evenings and generally a livelier feel. This helps the economy and has a knock-on positive effect on investment in the historic core. Encouraging city centre living is Theme 5 of the Inverness City Centre Development Brief.