

Victorian Frontage Restoration, Aboyne
for
Scottish Enterprise
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Prepared by

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Introduction

Scottish Enterprise have identified Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms as a key tourism location in Scotland. As a result of thorough market research, it has been estimated that there is potential for growing the value of tourism in this area by as much as 66%.

One of the key factors in attracting guests and visitors to spend time in and around Aboyne includes enhancing the visual impact of its unique and authentic Victorian character.

DWR Architecture have been commissioned to provide professional architectural design services associated with the enhancement and restoration of the Victorian shop frontages located in Aboyne town centre

The purpose of this report & Architectural design proposals, is in part to provide a basis from which Scottish Enterprise may work in collaboration with selected commercial property owners to enhance and restore their building facades.

Implementation of the physical works will be the responsibility of the individual businesses, however Scottish Enterprise intends to facilitate the process of securing funding to match private sector contributions to physical works.

Executive Summary

The goal of this exercise is to reinforce the unique Victorian identity and image of Aboyne as a destination or place for tourists to visit, stay, explore and shop, as part of the Royal Deeside Tourism product.

Consistency of architectural character is an essential part of enhancing the image of Aboyne. Over 70% of the existing buildings in the centre of Aboyne are of Victorian origin. Relatively minor alterations can be made to other buildings in tandem with restoration work to the Victorian buildings which would harmonise the overall image of Aboyne as an identifiable whole.

The most significant or key building frontages (i.e. prominent in location, size or of Architectural significance) assessed by DWR Architecture are identified in the Key Plan (see Appendix A). Frontages were surveyed visually, measured, photographed and recorded in electronic drawing format.

The opinions and ideas suggested by the owners and occupiers of the properties were taken under consideration in the development of the frontage enhancement design proposals. From the information gathered above, drawings, specifications and budget construction estimates were developed and are appended to this report.

Assessment Method, Limitations and Expected Outcomes

In March 2010, DWR Architecture identified commercial properties with Shop Fronts within the central Aboyne area (see Appendix A). The Owners and Occupiers of the respective properties were identified and contacted by Duncan Robson of DWR Architecture. An overview of this Architectural Project was presented and discussed with the various owners' representatives and verbal consent agreed for the building frontages to be measured and photographed in order to facilitate development of Enhancement proposals.

Measurement & photographic surveys were carried out using Leica digital Laser Measuring Device, 2m measuring rod and photographed using a digital camera. Assessment of existing conditions and materials were limited to visual (non-destructive) observations of the exterior building frontage materials and accessories only. The structural integrity of the building facades were not assessed in any way and are specifically outwith the scope of this project.

Basic dilapidations were noted, and key detail features (i.e. façade proportions, signage, door & window styles, canopies, door handles etc.) compared with historical archive material, Victorian & Conservation Shop Front Design principles.

Illustrations showing appropriate improvement proposals to façades of significance have been produced (see Appendix C) resulting from the detail survey & observations (see Appendix A & B).

Restoration parameters in this exercise were limited to the extent of each of the business façades or shop front. Residential properties above or adjacent to the facades are not included in this report.

The scope of improvement works were focused primarily on improving façade proportions, Windows, Doors & Canopies materials, details & colours and more specifically, Signage.

Victorian Frontage Design Guide

Shop Front Evolution

The recognisable shopfront originated in the 18th century, following the architectural fashions of the day, the Classical style. In the 18th century glass was still blown and spun into sheets of limited size (crown glass), with the bulls eye of these sheets actually being the waste or lowest grade of glass. As only small panes were possible this resulted in windows being divided up by glazing bars, into what is commonly known as the 'Georgian' style. The shopfront was based on the Classical principle typified by a temple front: the plinth being the stall riser, the outer columns as pilasters, the frieze above became the fascia and the architrave and cornice acted to throw rainwater clear. The earliest forms of shopfronts were simply windows larger than domestic proportions with an emphasised surround - usually incorporating pilasters and a cornice. This was then added to the doorway to emphasise that also, and later the two were brought under one fascia and cornice with pilasters flanking the openings. The amount of elaboration obviously depended on the location, with more elaborate shopfronts being prevalent in established or affluent towns, and also on the occupant, with manual craftsmen generally occupying simpler premises.

19th Century Shop Fronts

Shopfront design evolved as architectural fashions changed and with technological advances. The recessed doorway became almost a standard feature from the late 18th century onwards, allowing shelter for customers and providing a greater window display area. The delicate Classical features of the Georgian period were overtaken by more elaborate designs of the early Victorian. From the 1820s cylinder glass became available, allowing larger panes, usually divided with vertical glazing bars with the moulding on the outside. Where large panes were not available, panes were simply butted together.

High Victorian

Availability of plate glass from the mid 19th century eliminated the need for timber mullions, although their use continued, and the upper part of the window was frequently divided off by horizontal transoms, with coloured glass or more decorative joinery above.

The fascia, previously vertical, now in some instances became angled downwards to allow for greater visibility. The pilasters at the outer edges of the front developed, either forming part of the masonry or in applied timber panels, often fluted or more elaborately decorated. These were capped by either a Classically derived capital, or a timber console bracket 'supporting' the fascia.



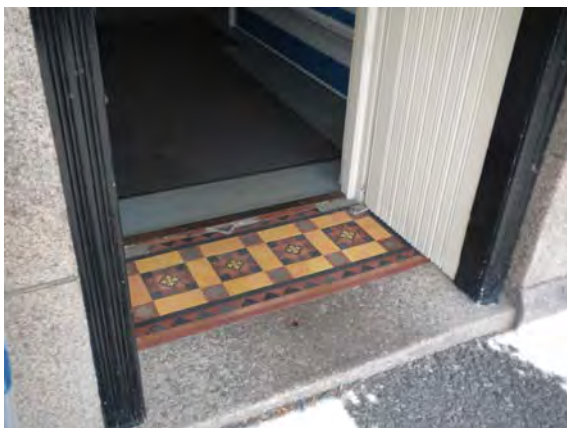
Later in the Victorian period these developed to provide a stop to the horizontal fascia. The console bracket became an opportunity for the joiner or shopfitter to display his skill, with scrolls, foliage, fruit or beasts with these sometimes denoting the trade of the occupant.

The role of blinds developed from them being located within the shop and obscuring goods, to being utilised as a canopy blind. A canvas roll often displaying the shop name, which was housed in a timber box either as part of the shopfront or added above the fascia. These became more commonplace in later Victorian times as advertising the business became more prevalent. In addition to the fascia and window dressing, it was also commonplace for lettering to be applied to the upper walls, gables, or additional timber signs.

The use of icons as adverts was common - the 3 gold globes of the pawnbroker, painted wooden fish for the fishmonger, a large pair of scissors for the barber or a pestle and mortar for the chemist. These originated in medieval times when many people were unable to read.



Street displays were not uncommon, particularly by ironmongers. Butchers and fishmongers were typified by a full width vertical sliding sash which could be opened to enable the wares to be displayed to the street. Above the window and door would be a fret cut timber or cast iron grille to allow ventilation. The butchers and gamekeepers invariably also had a metal rail above the window from which to hang produce before the days of traffic pollution and hygiene concerns.

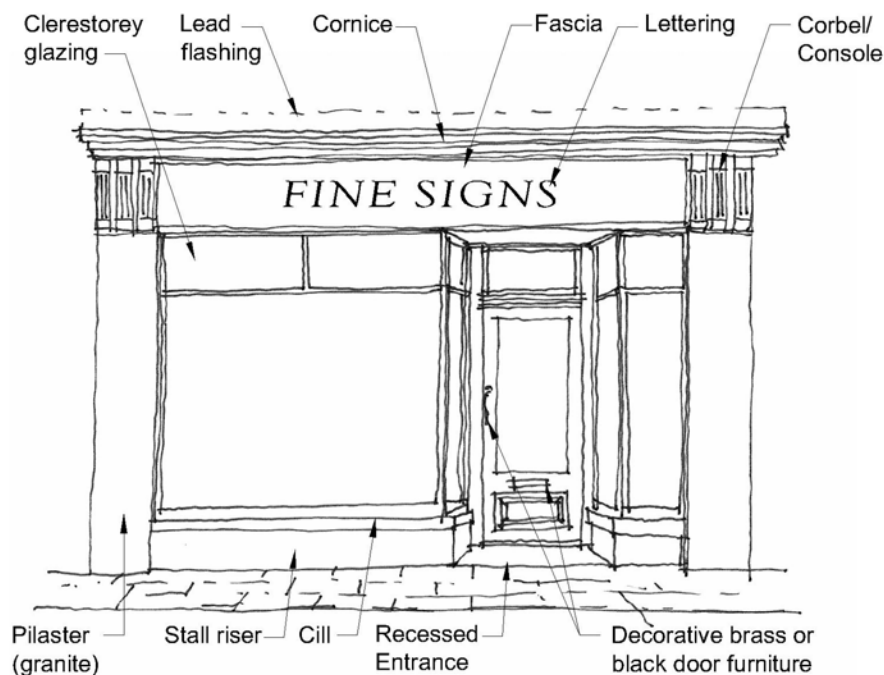


Tiles and glazed faience became popular for both internal and external use, with decorative scenes in tiles common in butchers or fishmongers, and also on the stallriser. The use of tiles or mosaic for thresholds within which the business name was inlaid was frequent. Victorian tiles are usually highly patterned. Many original floors still exist today but very good reproduction tiles are also available.

Shop Front Elements

Pilasters - These frame and define the width and vertical strength of the shopfront and separate it from its neighbour. They also visually support the fascia and are often integral to it.

Consoles - These crown the pilasters and define the width of the fascia. They are a key element in maintaining the predominant vertical rhythm of a traditional streetscape.



Stallrisers - These provide protection at ground level and give a solid visual base to the shopfront. Where stallrisers have been removed, their re-instatement is encouraged. Stallrisers should normally be at least 500mm high, be panelled, rendered, or finished in stone and provide a cill for glazing.

Windows - Large expanses of glass should be avoided as they are usually out of scale with the building: they are also expensive to replace. The size and proportions of windows will need to relate positively to the design of the building as a whole. Large areas of advertisement posters applied directly onto display windows should be avoided.

Doors/Access - These should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront. They can be flush or recessed. Recessed shopfronts are preferred as they introduce visual interest and act as an invitation to the customer. If the doors are recessed, their returns should match the stallriser and normally be recessed by at least 800mm.

Shop Front Materials - Examples of materials predominantly used in Aboyne traditional shopfronts include granite, and painted timber. Timber was the standard shopfront material, it can be worked to any profile, it is durable and can be

repainted at minimum cost if one wants to change or freshen up its appearance. The use of traditional materials such as painted timber is encouraged wherever appropriate. The use of acrylic sheeting, perspex, plastic, standard natural finish aluminium and unpainted softwoods should be avoided. Colours should be traditional and appropriate to the building and streetscene. Garish or luminous or very bright colours should be avoided.

Colour Schemes - The Victorian colour palette was quite limited because chemical processes were still developing. Rich dark colours such as ruby reds and forest greens are typical. Purple and blue came in by the middle of the century. Most of the leading paint companies now produce good heritage ranges.



Example of period paint colours currently available

Fascia Signs - Signs should be considered as an integral element of the design of a shopfront and not added as an afterthought. A well designed shop sign can provide individuality and identity without being discordant in the surroundings.

The traditional fascia would normally have a projecting moulded cornice above it. This is both decorative and functional, as it crowns the shopfront and gives weather protection by throwing water clear of the shopfront and preventing rot. In appropriate circumstances, traditional roller blinds can be incorporated within the cornice. The projecting cornice should be weathered with a properly detailed lead sheeting.

Fascias should not override or dominate the upper facade, obscure windows, ignore party wall divisions or architectural changes of wall plane. They should be in proportion to the whole shopfront and not encroach on to the upper floor (above the level of the window cill), or extend uninterrupted across a number of buildings. The fascia is a space for displaying the name of the shop and should not normally exceed 400mm in depth. The preferred method of advertising the name of the shop

is by painted lettering on a timber fascia. A matt-finish plastic or pressed metal fascia board may also be acceptable with individual cut-out letters applied to this. Fascia signs may be illuminated externally by means of a trough down-lighter or spotlights, except where the light fittings would interfere with architectural features of the building.

Lettering - The choice of lettering and illustration can reflect the use and character of the shop. Considerable artistic effect can be created if a competent signwriter is employed. Colours are important, gilding or strong tones on a dark background reflect light, and are clearly visible at night. Rich effects can be achieved by shading and blacking of letters.

The height of lettering on a sign would typically be no more than 300mm high.

Where the sign consists of lower case lettering preceded by a capital, the capital may be 350mm high.

Where there is no fascia individual letters may be attached directly to the building, simple solid shapes will normally be suitable and the traditional gilded lettering with a half-round section is can be appropriate for pubs and hotels.

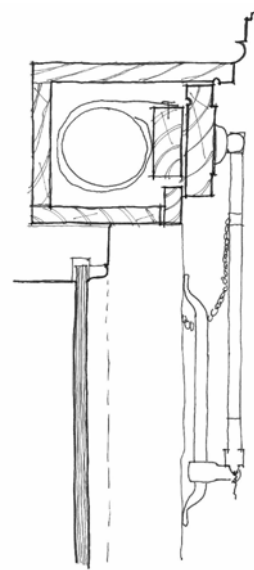
Projecting Signs - Traditional signs hung from a decorative wrought iron bracket fixed to the building facade at high level can enhance the character and overall appearance of the building. The design of traditional hanging signs is often highly evocative and of great decorative interest. Hanging symbols denoting the trade carried on in the premises may be considered as an alternative to a hanging board. Projecting illuminated box signs and signs forming a projecting part of a fascia will not be acceptable in Conservation Areas. Separate planning procedures apply to obtaining consent to display Advertisements.

Supply Cables - Generally lighting cables should be concealed within the building. Cables may be acceptable on the surface of buildings if they can be made inconspicuous by running them in to angles formed by projecting features such as string-courses. Any external cable should be grey in colour to blend in with the granite walling. New illuminated advertisements should also consider any proposed external cable runs.

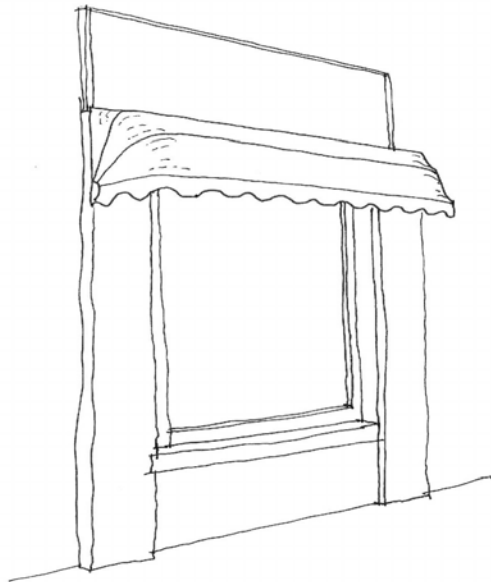
Canopies/Awnings and Blinds - The original purpose of blinds was to protect goods from deterioration by sunlight. They helped to keep the interior of the shop cool, and to protect customers and window shoppers from the rain. The traditional canvas roller blind came into use in the late 18th century, the roller box usually mounted on top of the cornice. In the mid-19th century the boxes became integrated into the shopfront. In Aboyne they were typically integrated above the display window but below the sign. Usually striped, the shop proprietor may also be identified in lettering, forming an attractive and integral part of traditional shopfronts, but can be retracted when not required leaving the shopfront fully visible.



Traditional Awning Style



Traditional Awning
Section Detail



Inappropriate "Dutch" Awning Style

More recently, from the 1960s, rigid or folding Dutch canopies have become common. The material, usually plastic is stretched over a metal frame in a curved form. These are usually fixed in place, obscuring part of the shopfront. They look especially discordant on historic buildings due to materials and shape.

Access For The Disabled - New shopfronts should accommodate the needs of disabled people. As a general principle, steps should be avoided and doors should be capable of being opened by people in wheelchairs. The clear opening width of the shop door should be at least 850mm. With listed buildings and very sensitive historic areas, the needs of the disabled people should be taken into account as far as possible, commensurate with the need to preserve the special character of the building or area.

Security Measures For Shopfronts - Attractive, vibrant and varied retail areas are vital to creating a desirable environment in which to live and to encourage further investment. It is also important that shopping areas remain attractive outside normal shopping hours, to create a positive image to visitors and to encourage custom through window shopping. Increasing levels of vandalism and crime have led many retailers to consider security measures, including the installation of security shutters to protect properties. Unfortunately, the attachment to a shop front of external grilles and shutters, together with their associated guide-rails and boxes, can spoil its appearance and adversely affect the street scene. Moreover, a concentration of external roller shutters, in prominent locations, can result in a bleak, depressing frontage which magnifies the problem. Where such a situation arises, shoppers are unlikely to "window shop", which not only reduces the amount of natural surveillance in the evenings and weekends, but also ultimately reduces trade to the individual retailer and other traders in the locality. Internal shutters of the lattice, trellis or brick bond type, located between the window display and the glass do not require planning permission. The suitability for listed buildings should be confirmed prior to installation. In all cases, when shutters are in place, the illumination of window displays creates a less hostile appearance.

General security improvements appropriate for conservation areas might include:

- a) Installation of five lever deadlocks to British Standards to all doors. Electrical Alarm Systems can also be fitted.
- b) A number of different types of strengthened glass are now available, with laminated glass having the most potential. It is much harder to penetrate than conventional glass as on impact the glass breaks, but pieces remain adhered to a plastic membrane. Laminated glass is slightly dearer but has the advantage of absorbing a high proportion of ultra-violet rays, which can damage goods on display.
- c) Reducing the size of the glazed panels can also have a positive effect. Adding glazing bars gives the glass additional strength, presents less of an attraction to the vandal, and if damage is sustained, is cheaper and easier to repair.
- d) Installation of internally illuminated display windows and doorways. This can be achieved with little initial and running costs, but can deter theft and vandalism. Moreover, illuminating a display can attract window shoppers and so increase trade and natural surveillance.
- e) Grilles can be fitted inside windows behind the glass, which allow a window display to be maintained. The rollerbox is concealed behind the fascia above the window level, so nothing is visible when the grille is retracted. Internal grilles combined with internal illumination allow window shopping after trading hours, and help maintain a lively street scene.
- f) Individual CCTV installations either within premises or discretely installed on the exterior of the premises may assist security.

Consents Required - The replacement or alteration of shopfronts is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Signs and advertisements are controlled by this Act and the Control of Advertisements (Scotland) Regulations 1984. Where a shop is part of a listed building, any alteration which affects the character of the building will need listed building consent. As a result of this legislation, almost any material change to a shopfront in the City Centre will require consent. The centre of Aboyne in particular is within a designated Conservation Area. Anyone considering carrying out such work should ascertain from Planning & Infrastructure which consents are necessary in any particular case and submit the appropriate applications.

Various permissions which may be required for a shopfront alteration or replacement may include (but may not be limited to):

Planning Permission Where a proposal is considered to affect the character or external appearance of the shopfront and enclosing building (will include awnings, canopies, roller shutters and other fixtures, e.g. alarms).

Advertisement Consent For the replacement of signs and adverts on a property located within an Area of Special Advertisement Control and within a Conservation Area.

Listed Building Consent In addition to Planning Permission and Advertisement Consent where the Shopfront forms part of a Listed Building (internal and external works).

Building Warrant For most building works to ensure that they conform to the Building Regulations in terms of structural stability, heat insulation, fire protection, daylighting etc. A building warrant is no guarantee that planning permission will be granted.

Further advice on the above may be obtained by calling the local Aberdeenshire Council Planning & Technical Officers on 01569 768300 or 013398 87373, or by contacting a local Architect.