

# FOOTDEE Conservation Area 6 Design Guide



Fitte, taken from the Ordnance Survey map of 1869

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this design guide is to prevent further architectural erosion of the listed buildings, to ensure that future developments and alterations will enhance the area, and to indicate standards of design which will minimise the possibility of listed building consent being refused.

The following pages show examples of both acceptable and unacceptable forms of design. They should not be considered exhaustive nor are they intended to preclude innovation and flexibility. Listed building consent/planning consent will be required in most cases and building warrant approval is normally necessary.

The Footdee Conservation Area Report was first produced in 1991 and some of the information is now outdated. However the document remains valid, the analysis of the area and the guidance derived from this still informs the City Council's decisions on development in Footdee. The new Local Plan calls for Appraisals to be produced for all of the Aberdeen's conservation areas. As part of this process the Footdee Conservation Area Report will be reviewed and updated. References to the council's Conservation Fund are no longer current.

Therefore any queries concerning the text of the Footdee Conservation Area Report should be directed to Planning and Sustainable Development for possible clarification.

The illustration quality is not up to the usual standard as the original artwork no longer exists. Therefore scans from a print copy of the 1991 document have been used.



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**Footdee**, known to most of the residents as Fittie, was developed, at the beginning of the 19th century, as a planned village with its characteristic north and south squares - Middle Row and Pilot's Square being added later. When the original village was built around the open squares, the houses were uniform in width, height and depth with similar doors and windows; the only features which distinguished one house from another may have been the colour of the painted door or its individual number, the sheds or wash houses. The St. Clement Free Church School grew up with the village.

The first major change to the small-scale intimate character of these single storey dwelling houses occurred after 1880 when the Town Council sold off their ownership interests - the Council are still superiors - and this enabled, in some cases, the new owners to increase in height their properties to 2 or 3 storeys or attic tenements, for example 29 and 30 North Square. Fortunately, 100 years ago building materials being restricted, the new extensions were constructed with granite walls and windows thereby retaining the architectural character of Fittie.

Recognising the importance of this fishing village in its contribution to Scotland's heritage, in 1965 the Secretary of State included all the buildings in the squares (except 21 South Square which had been inappropriately altered) and 1-5 New Pier Road in the list of buildings of architectural or historic interest.

These buildings are listed category B which means that they are primarily of local interest, being good examples of early 19th century, North East of Scotland fisher's cottages. This puts the buildings in Fittie in the same category as the majority of buildings in Union Street and

it means that any alterations, improvements or extensions to properties require listed building consent from the First Minister/Aberdeen City council. Three years after the buildings were listed the Council designated Footdee as a conservation area in order to protect the river and sea front of the village. At the same time as the historic and architectural interest of Footdee was recognised by this level of statutory protection it was also recognised that most of the houses were small and often lacked basic amenities and therefore over the years the Council has actively encouraged the upgrading of household amenities through a policy of approving extensions and other alterations. Unfortunately the availability of an ever wider variety of building materials and components, particularly in window and door replacements with the introduction of aluminum and upvc, has produced a deterioration in some of the character of individual listed buildings and the conservation area generally.

With the increasing number of applications from residents who prefer to extend or improve their houses rather than move out of the area the council has approved the terms of a design guide which is intended to act as a springboard for careful design, using traditional materials to enhance and improve the character and therefore increase the value of properties. The alternative of poor design can, by itself, cause an unsatisfactory precedent resulting in loss of amenity. The purpose of the controls in the guide is not to prevent change, but to assist applicants in the design of extensions, alterations and improvements to buildings, including the sheds, to reduce complications and delays for applicants, and to reverse the trend of degeneration in some parts of this conservation area.

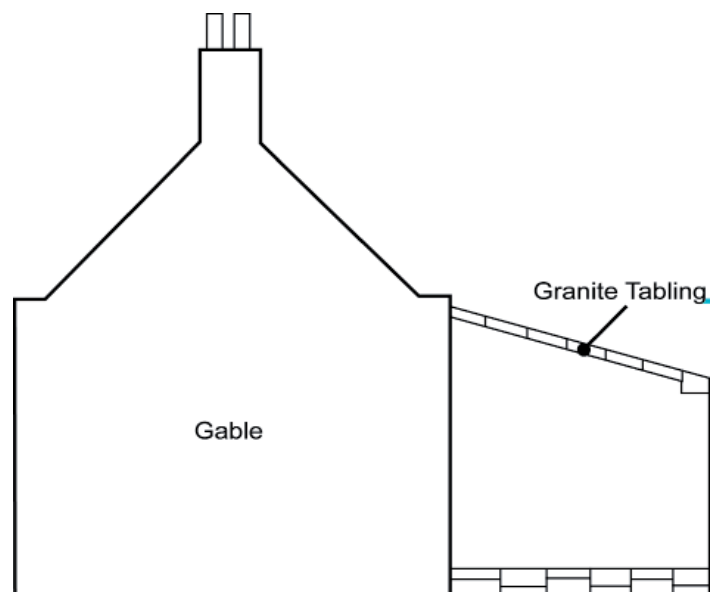
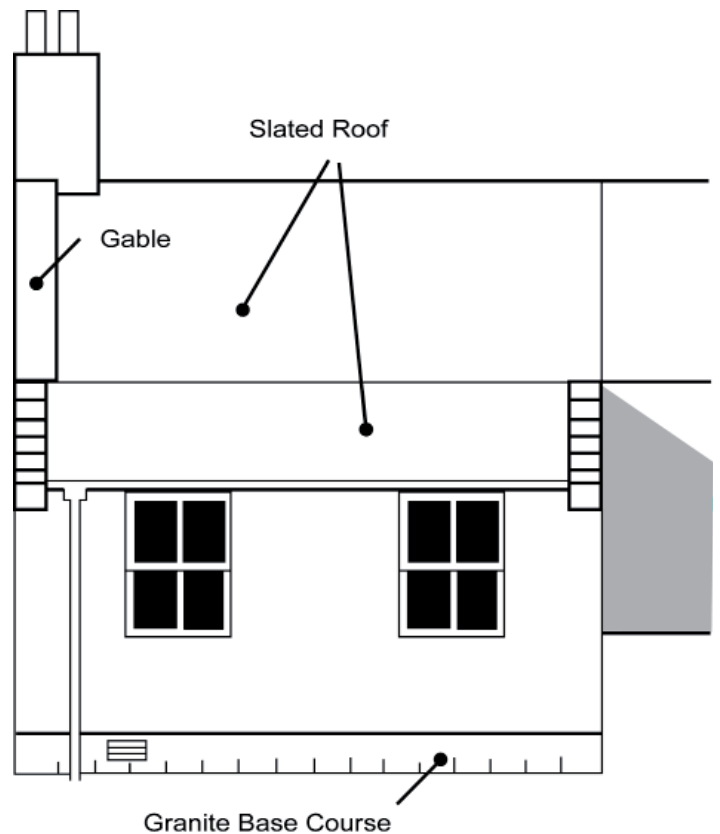
In short, the council, in recognising and respecting the rights of the residents to upgrade their standard of accommodation, is seeking the co-operation of the householders in Fittie to ensure that a degree of restraint and judgement is exercised. It recommends that before any plans for improvement or alterations are finalised or application is made for listed building consent or building warrant the residents should read these guidelines and preferably consult, at an early stage, with an architect or Planning and Sustainable Development staff..



## EXTENSIONS TO PROPERTIES

Prior to the approval of the council in November 1988, of the basic principles of the design guide a visual survey was carried out on all properties within the Footdee Conservation Area with a view to ascertaining:

- where existing properties have been extended and where further extensions, outward or upwards would constitute overdevelopment and therefore be contrary to the character and scale of the area; or
- where existing properties have been not been extended and were capable of outward or upward extensions within the physical limitations of the area and without endangering the environment.
- **Walls -**  
Granite or Harled with Granite Base Course
- **Roof -**  
Slated to match existing, with granite tabling on gables (if applicable)
- **No Flat Roofs**
- **Windows -**  
Sash and Case
- **Rainwater and Drainage Goods -**  
Cast Iron



## MATERIALS AND ELEMENTS

### Masonry Walls

As the Granite City, Aberdeen has many fine examples of buildings in this locally quarried stone. In Fittie, granite walling can be either coursed rubble and a variation often referred to as 'Aberdeen bond'. Where house extensions are permitted upwards the upper floor extension should match the granite construction of the ground floor. The council has a supply of second hand granite which could be suitable.

### Pointing

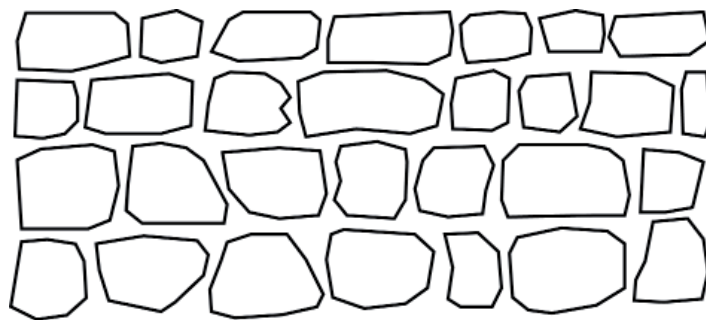
This is the finishing mortar applied to the joints between the granite stones or block/brickwork. The mortar should always be weaker than the surrounding stones (to allow the wall to breathe) usually of lime mortar and never hard grey cement. For visual effect it should generally be lighter in colour than the stonework.

### Rendered Concrete Block Walls

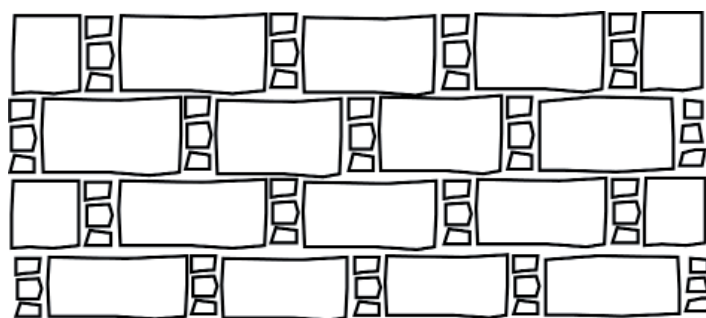
Some extensions may be built in concrete blocks and rendered externally with a lime based harling which is a wet based application. 'Dry dash' is more traditionally an 'English' finish and is not recommended.

### Damp Proofing

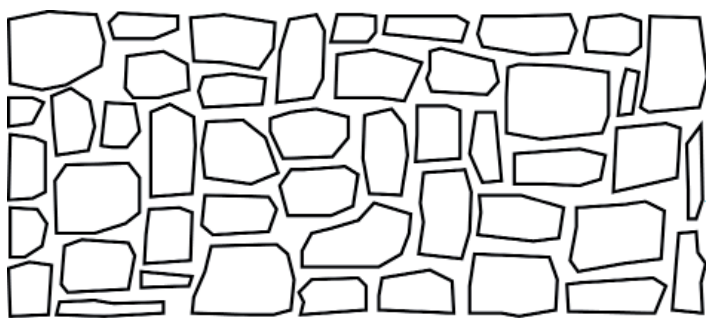
Some of the older houses may not have a Damp Proof Course (D.P.C.) in the walls e.g. an impervious membrane of bituminous felt to prevent damp rising from the foundations to the upper part of the walls. It should be noted that chemical damp proofing should be the subject of listed building consent because of possible irregular discolouration of the walls.



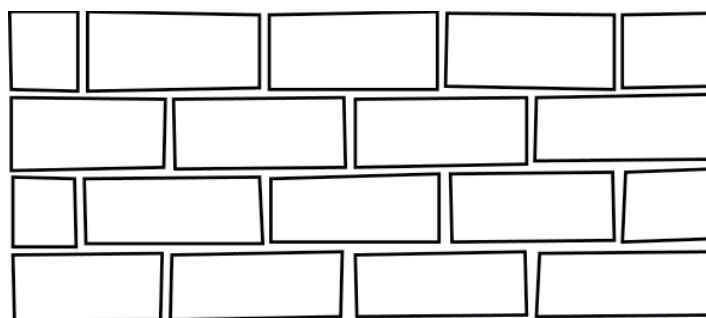
Coursed Rubble



'Aberdeen Bond'



Random Rubble



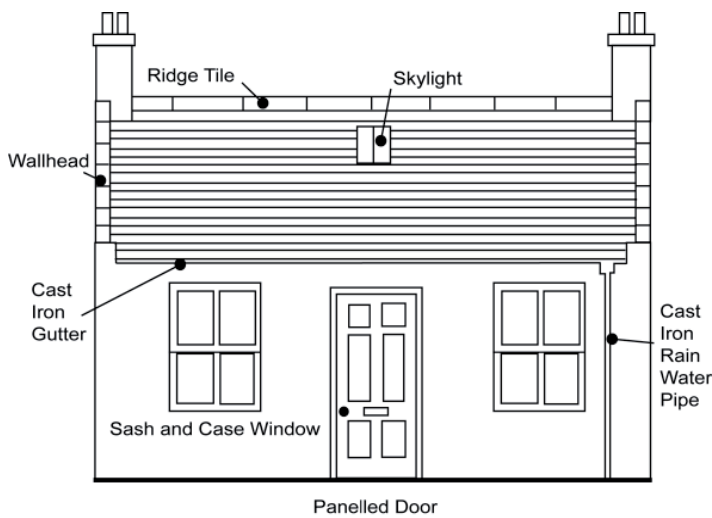
Ashlar

## ROOFS AND CHIMNEYS

### General

Traditionally roofs in Scottish houses are fairly steeply pitched to prevent snow from lying on the surface. In Fittie there is a variety of pitches from 34 to 45 degrees. The character of the roof profiles and silhouettes are enhanced with the different heights of chimney heads and chimney pots.

Roofs are slated with ridge tiles or a lead or zinc ridge. Skylights are also found to provide light and air within the roofspace for the drying of nets. Often they are small to prevent heat loss in winter but provide sufficient ventilation in the summer.

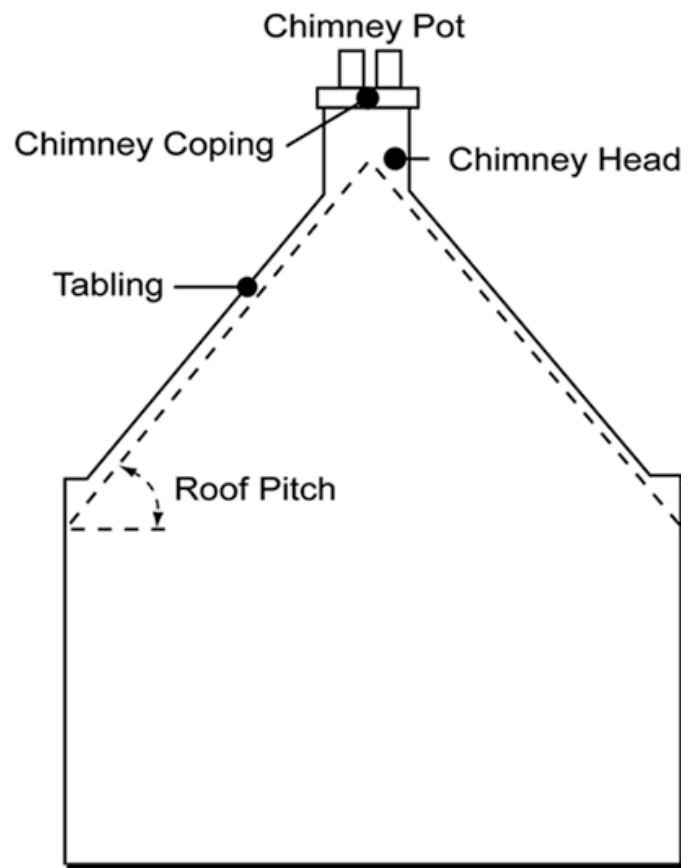


### Roofs

They should retain their original pitch or slope. Applications to alter the roof shape in the form of a mansard are not encouraged and where the council have indicated that dwelling units can be extended upwards the existing roof pitch and features should be retained.

Where existing slated roofs are in need of maintenance the slates, if practicable, should be salvaged and re-used. The council may be able to advise on sources of second-hand slates. Replacement of slates by other roofing materials is not recommended and unlikely to receive listed building consent.

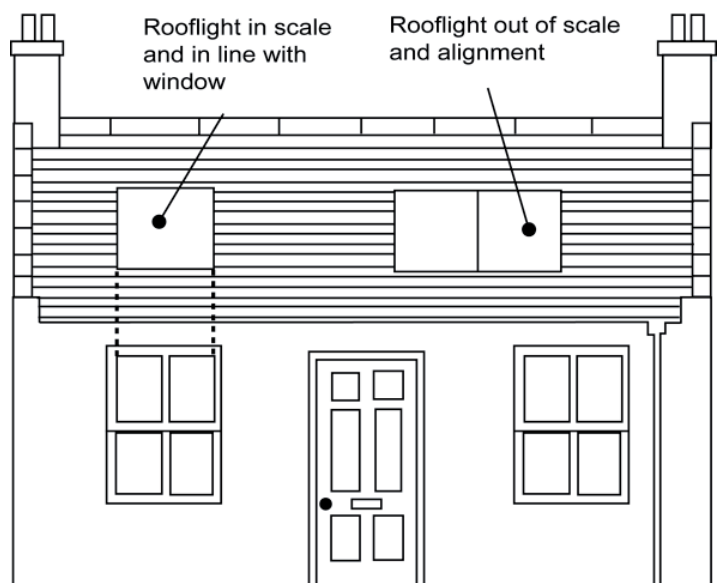
Chimney heads are essential features in the roof profile and encouragement will be given to residents to retain or rebuild chimneys in matching and complementary materials. Gable chimneys, in particular, should be retained or rebuilt to their original width and height.



### Chimney Pots

Chimney heads should have chimney pots/cans and it is noted that in sea ports, chimney pots with serated brims are sometimes a feature to discourage sea gulls from perching and there by causing down draughts. The Council has a limited supply of second-hand chimney pots but traditional designs can still be obtained from builder's merchants.

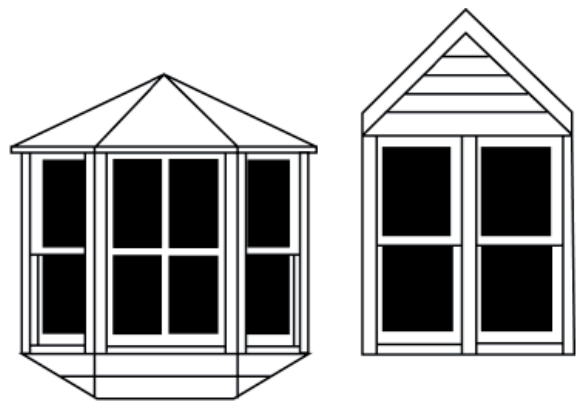
### Attics, dormers, skylights and rooflights



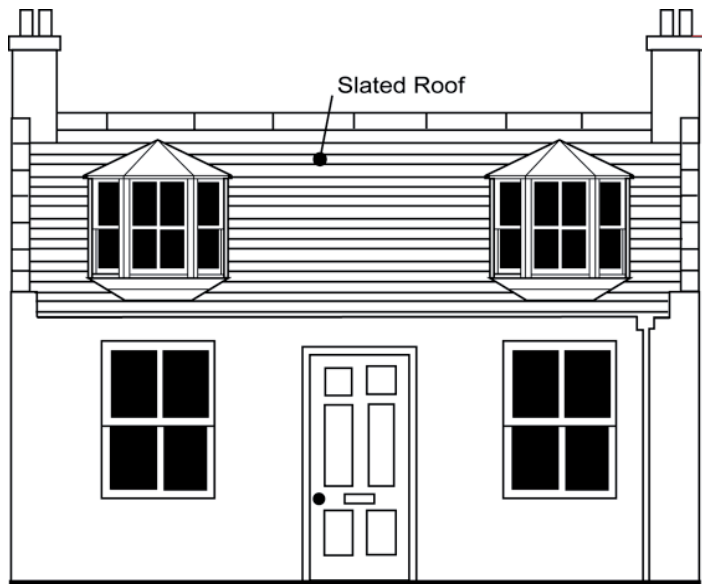
In general, existing attic spaces are used for storage and they may have limited headroom. In some cases it may be possible to utilise the

roofspace with the erection of dormer windows. Such proposals require careful consideration if the additional spaces provided has to comply with the Building Regulations as well as listed building consent. In Fittie, in a frontal elevation the dominant feature of the composition should be the walls and not a dormer or mansard roof which overpowers the lower part of the building.

Encouragement will be given to owners who conserve original features such as existing dormer windows and proposals to renew or replace them with large modern 'box' dormer windows will be resisted. Linking panels between dormers are not traditional features of Scottish domestic architecture and are therefore considered to be an erosion of the character of these listed buildings.



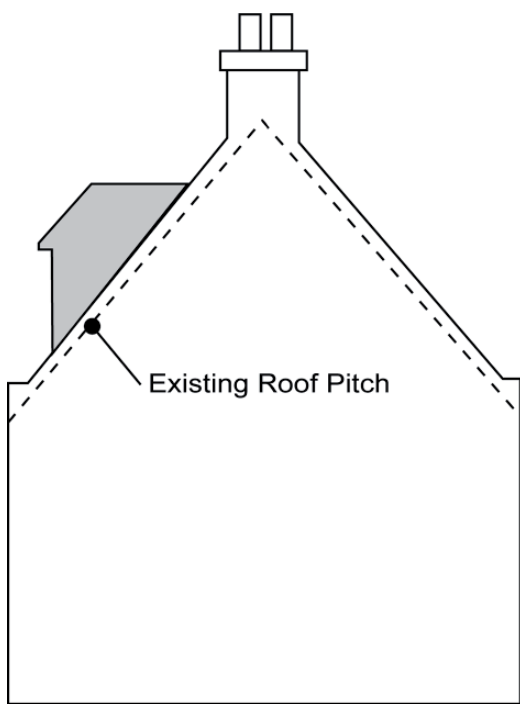
Recommended



Recommended

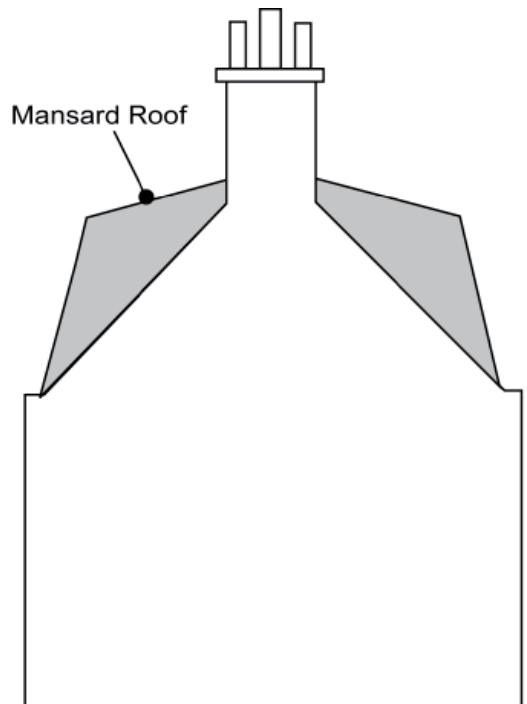


Not Recommended



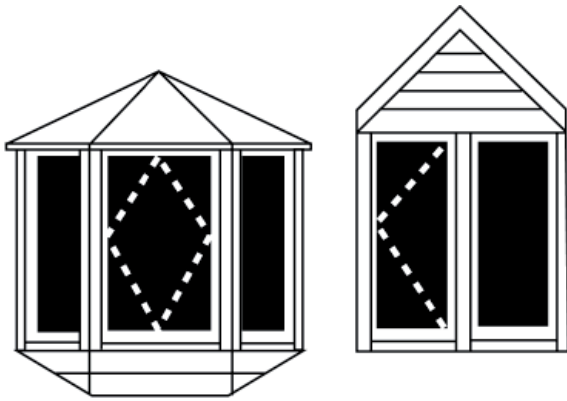
Existing Roof Pitch

Recommended

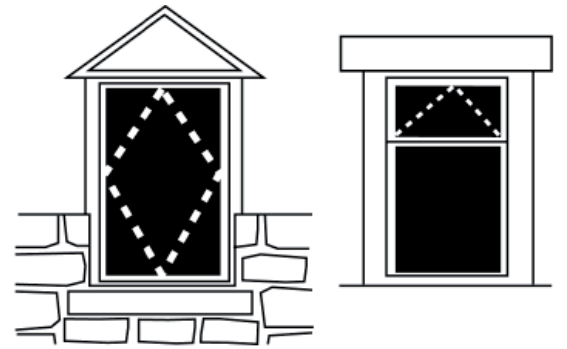


Mansard Roof

Not Recommended



Not Recommended



Not Recommended

### Skylights

Existing skylights can be replaced with modern rooflights but this too requires careful handling and consultation is recommended prior to making any application for approval.

### Satellite dishes

They are not permitted where they are obtrusive and likely to damage the amenity of this conservation area.

### Pipes and rainwater gutters

Traditionally these should be in cast iron painted dark grey or black. Replacements in cast iron should match the original sections e.g. gutters, soil pipes, waste pipes and rainwater pipes. On most rear elevations plastic pipes and gutters in dark grey or black are acceptable but because some rear elevations back onto e.g. New Pier Road it is recommended that discussions take place with the council prior to the finalisation of proposals.

### General

As has earlier been stated the worst of features and modern materials, from a listed building/conservation area point of view, are unfortunately very much in evidence in Footdee. From the sketches and photographs it is evident that the wall openings for doors and windows fall within

a limited range of width to height ratios and this should be retained.

The proportions of the sub-divisions of the windows themselves within these openings (see sketches) are also very important and contribute to the character of the building.

### Windows

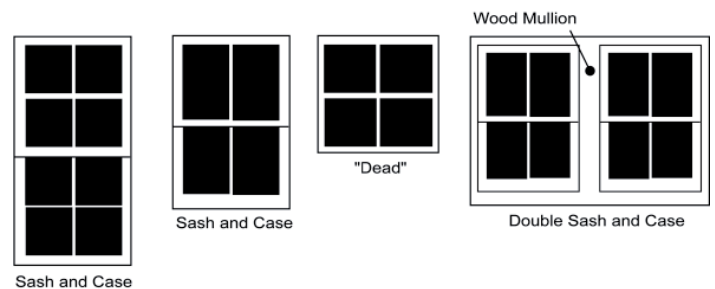
The original type of windows are timber sash and case with 2 panes of glass in each sash separated by a wooden astragal. When the houses were built nearly 200 years ago the panes of glass would have probably been smaller with possibly 6 panes of glass in each sash. A sash and case window is where the top and bottom halves can slide past each other and the fact that the upper sash, projects over the lower sash, is an important feature on the frontage of these fishers' cottages.

Replacement windows to properties fronting onto the squares should be timber sash and case.

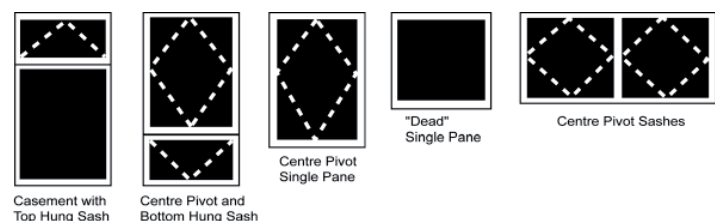
Casement type windows of similar proportions to traditional openings have been permitted in rear extensions but these will not be permitted within the original buildings.

### Note:

Each application is considered on its merits but there are many suppliers of windows in modern materials which have different proportions, different methods of opening etc. and these may be considered to be contrary to Listed Building and Conservation Area designation.



Recommended



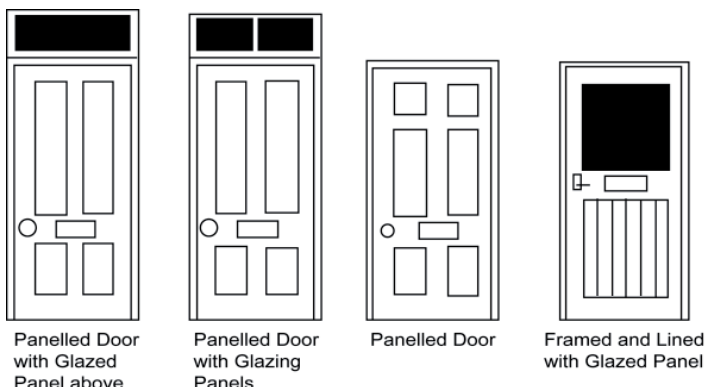
Not Recommended

## Doors

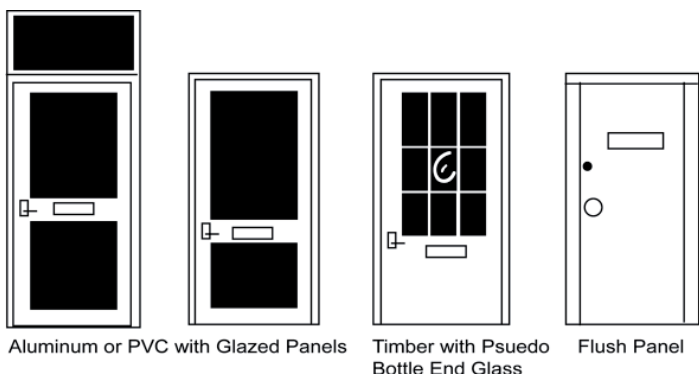
Original woodwork should be retained where possible or replaced to match the original. Applications to replace existing wooden doors with e.g. double-glazed aluminum, u.p.v.c, flush panelled, modern “off the shelf” doors will not receive sympathetic consideration because these features will further erode the traditional character of Fittie.

### Door Furniture

It is recommended that some thought is given to choosing door furniture i.e. door knobs, handles, locks etc., which should be simple and appropriate for the design of the door.



Recommended



Not Recommended

## Painting

The council would wish to see maintained the now established convention whereby windows are painted white and the colour of the door left to the choice of the owner.

Painting of stone facades is not permitted. Although this is indigenous on the Moray Firth it is not a characteristic in Aberdeen.

## SHEDS, WALLS, FENCES, GATES AND ENCLOSURES

### General

Much of the charm and atmosphere of Fittie is contributed by the variety of sheds, fences etc. in the Squares manifesting the freedom of expression of the individual owners. However, because they are effectively within the curtilage (the area attached to a dwellinghouse) of listed buildings, and are also within a conservation area, the council reminds residents/owners that approval is required before any works are undertaken, and consultation is again recommended with Planning and Sustainable Development.

### Sheds, Walls and Fences

Approved materials are granite, concrete block, pointed or rendered - in some cases painted; timber (tarred or painted); corrugated iron; black felt on timber boarding.

### Roofs

In general these are double pitched similar to the dwellinghouses. Replicas of existing shapes, pitches will in general be allowed but the introduction of a flat roof is considered to be a departure from the council's objectives for the area. Finishes should be in slate, corrugated iron, tarred timber or black felt (not green) and again modern materials such as aluminum, u.p.v.c., glass, reinforced plastic or features from the local garden centre could be out of character.

### GRANT SOURCING

The council is aware that additional costs can arise in maintaining and enhancing the architectural character and amenity of buildings in a conservation area. Planning and Sustainable Development staff can advise on the sourcing of such grants.

### UNAUTHORISED WORKS

The recommendations of the design guide came into effect on the 1st of January 1991 and unauthorised works carried out after this date may be referred to the 1st Minister of Scotland and/or Aberdeen City Council.

## CONSERVATION AREA POLICY

The following is the council's general policy for conservation areas approved by the Planning and Building Standards Committee.

### GENERAL

Powers are available to Local Authorities in respect of listed buildings, conservation areas, and trees under the Town and Country Planning Acts and associated regulations. The council will use these powers, wherever appropriate, to ensure the preservation of listed buildings to achieve environmental improvements in conservation areas, and to ensure the retention or replacement of trees and further landscaping within conservation areas. In terms of the controls in the City's conservation areas, developments of a minor nature which normally constitute a permitted development (e.g. fenestrations, doorways, front garden layout, and walling, etc.) are controlled.

The council will endeavour to preserve and enhance the conservation areas by policy of positive creative planning.

The council's aim will be to achieve the highest possible standard of environment in each conservation area consistent with the circumstances.

Proposals for new development in a conservation area will require to conform with the character of the area in regard to scale, height, materials used and general appearance of the buildings; the treatment of open spaces and surfaces, landscaping and tree planting.

Applications for Planning Permission for any development which, in the council's opinion would affect the character of a conservation area will be advertised in the local newspapers and an opportunity given to the public for inspection of the plan and other documents. After a period of 21 days the council may determine the application after taking into account any representation made.

The council may consult with any person or body of persons who are experienced in the field of preservation and conservation in regard to any matter affecting a conservation area.

The council will encourage and assist the formation of associations or bodies of persons willing to undertake co-ordinated improvements

of streets or areas and may themselves undertake such schemes in co-operation with owners, occupiers and interested bodies, and will assist Community Councils in matters relating to conservation.

The council will take steps to awaken and sustain the interest of citizens in their heritage and in particular the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas by such publicity measures as may be appropriate.

### LISTED BUILDINGS

Listed buildings in local authority ownership will be preserved wherever possible and owners of other listed buildings will be encouraged to keep their properties in good order.

Alterations and additions to existing buildings in a conservation area will be permitted only if carried out in a manner and with such materials as will not detract from the character of the area. Changes of use which in the Council's opinion will be detrimental to the area will not be permitted.

The council in pursuing these objectives are prepared to consider assisting owners of listed buildings, or certain buildings in conservation areas, by assisting in resource sourcing towards appropriate conservation measures; each case however, being treated on its merits, within the resources available. Buildings of particular architectural or historic interest which are not listed but which are nevertheless worthy of preservation owing to their presence in an important group of buildings, or because of their contribution to the character of a conservation area, may be made the subject of a Building Preservation Notice.

### TRANSPORTATION

The council will pay particular attention to the design, siting and appearance of street furniture in conservation areas. Particular attention will be paid to the need to provide areas free from vehicular traffic for the use of pedestrians and the support of residents will be sought in the implementation of any such scheme.

The council may consult with residents in regard to parking arrangements within conservation areas in order to minimise the disturbing effect of parked motor vehicles and parking restriction signs or equipment on visual amenity.

## **ADVERTISEMENTS**

Advertisements which in the Council's opinion would be likely to detract from the character of a conservation area will not be permitted. They should, if possible, be designed so as to make a positive contribution to the visual character of the street or area in which they are situated.

The council may seek authority to define any conservation area, or part of a conservation area, as an "Area of Special Advertising Control" in order to control such advertisements as would otherwise be exempted.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Planning and Sustainable Development has prepared leaflets giving additional information on the appropriate specification and detailing of sash and case windows, mortar and harling mixes and methods of pointing. These should be carefully consulted and contractors quotations scrutinised to ensure they comply with the guidelines in these documents.

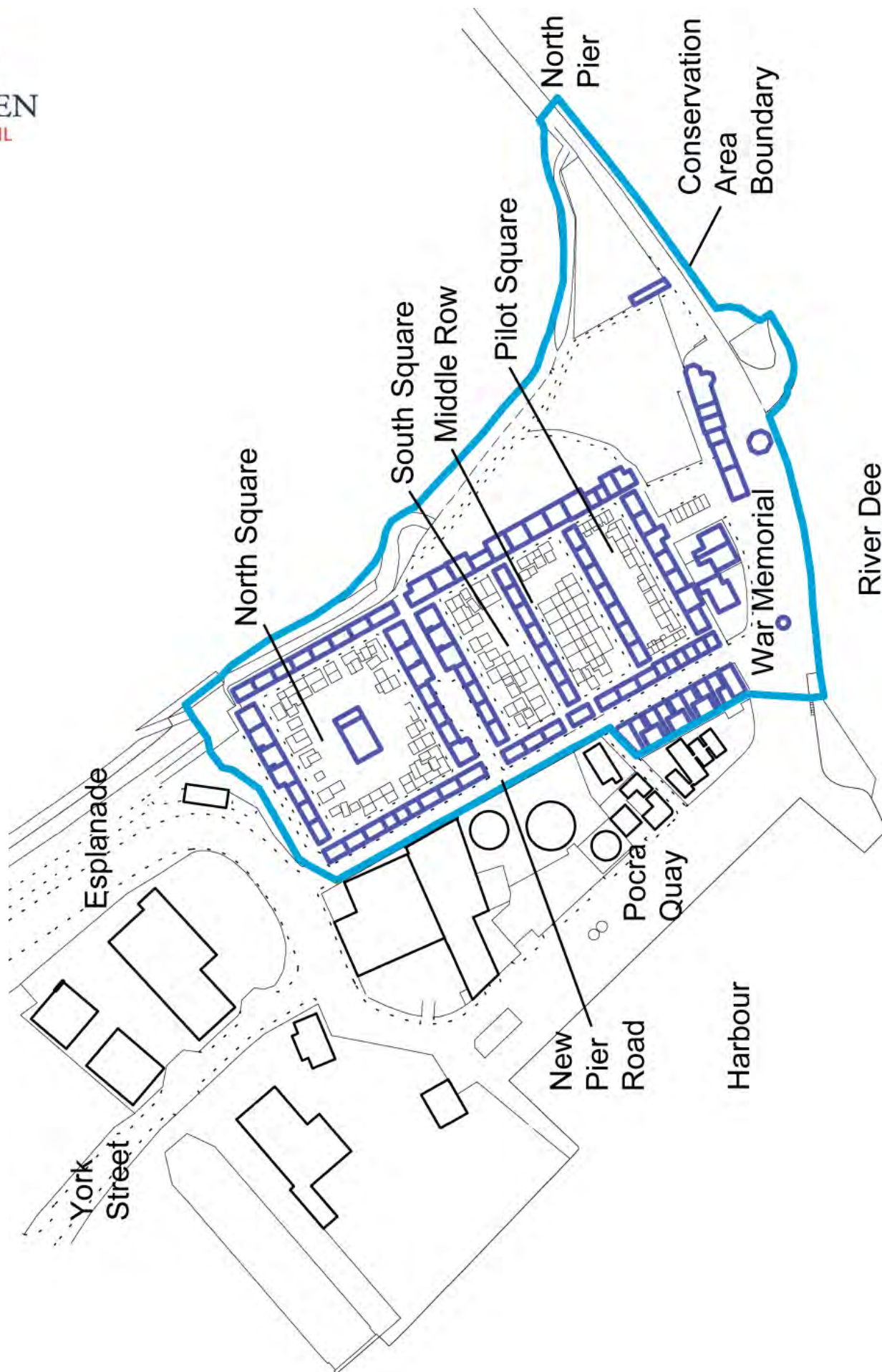
For further information, please contact:

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Business Hub 4  
Marischal College  
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