

Airth Conservation Area Management Plan

Guidance on the Responsibilities
of Property Owners, Occupiers and Agents

Falkirk Council • Updated 2012

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Preface

Falkirk Council believes that the unique character of Airth Conservation Area is worthy of protection and enhancement and that in the long term this will be in the best interests of local people and the district as a whole.

It is intended that this management plan should provide practical and readily accessible guidance to occupiers of Airth Conservation Area who may be considering alterations to their homes or businesses. The guidance contains general and specific advice on a wide range of developments from minor external alterations to window replacement and new build.

The guidance was first approved by Falkirk District Council in 1992 and revised by Falkirk Council in 2000 adding options for window refurbishment and replacement.

Should any further advice or assistance be required, please do not hesitate to contact Falkirk Council Development Services, tel. 01324 504715 or email planenv@falkirk.gov.uk

1. The Requirement for Planning Permission in Conservation Areas

1.1 The designation of a conservation area gives any planning authority additional powers to control changes in the appearance of buildings and land in areas of architectural and historic importance where planning permission would not normally be required. In effect planning permission will be required for any demolition, alteration to the outside of buildings including painting, replacement of roof coverings, rainwater goods, windows and doors, erection of a satellite dish, the alteration to fencing or other means of enclosure and work to trees. **It is important always to check with the Council whether consent is required prior to carrying out any work.**

2. Historical Background to Airth Conservation Area

2.1 The original site of the medieval burgh of Airth was situated in the grounds of Airth Castle and the movement of the village downhill to its present site took place at the beginning of the 18th Century when Airth began to develop rapidly as a seaport. The Mercat Cross was erected in 1697 and is the earliest reliably dated structure of the present village. The link between the old and new settlements was finally severed when in 1820 the North Church replaced the Old Parish Church (the ruins remain next to Airth Castle Hotel). The remaining building elements from the 18th and early 19th Century village are located around the Mercat Cross and along Shore Road. The Mercat Cross itself is now a Scheduled Monument and a Category A Listed Building. The other listed buildings from the original village are:

- 18th Century/ Category B: View Villa at the Cross, Nos. 16 - 18 Shore Road and the Captain's House at the corner with Paul Drive; and
- early 19th Century/ Category B: Schoolhouse (Rosebank) on the Brae, west of the cross; Category C(s): Elphinstone Inn, at the Cross, and Rothesay Villa, a detached house on Shore Road.

These buildings are shown on Appendix 1: Map of the Conservation Area.

2.2 The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 required planning authorities to designate areas of special architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas. It was becoming clear by the time of this legislation that the special protection afforded through the listing of a few buildings was not in itself sufficient to prevent continued erosion of the 18th / early 19th Century village of Airth. Accordingly, a Conservation Area was designated in 1974 by Stirling County Council. This area consisted of the Mercat Cross, Shore Road and The Wilderness.

2.3 Along the edges of the 1974 Conservation Area boundary were small groups of council houses (some now privately owned) built mainly in the late 1950's and designed specifically to harmonise with and provide a setting for the 18th century houses which form the core of the village. Traditional features include steeply pitched and pantiled roofs and vertically proportioned openings with sash and case timber windows sub-divided into smaller panes by astragals.

2.4 A report by the Director of Planning of September 1984 expressed concern that some occupiers of these houses were carrying out unsympathetic external alterations, which if continued would erode visual amenity and have an adverse effect on the setting of the older Conservation Area. An example of this was given as "sash windows being replaced by aluminium double glazed units". The recommendation was that the Conservation Area boundary be extended to include these houses so as to prevent intrusive external changes from occurring. This was approved by Falkirk District Council.

2.5 In more recent times Falkirk Council has approved two further extensions following consultation with the public to include the following:

- 2000: behind the Mercat Cross to the north along Main Street to include North Church and the Schoolhouse (Rosebank), both listed buildings; and
- 2006: the west side of High Street continuing south.

2.6 Appendix 1 shows the current boundary to Airth Conservation Area.



3. Purpose of this Design Guide

3.1 All the key heritage bodies are agreed about the unique character of the older parts of Airth and also the importance of the later Council housing groups in reinforcing the Conservation Area. Furthermore such heritage areas are often sought after as places to live and so have an economic as well as an architectural and historic value. It is therefore hoped that the residents of the Conservation Area will themselves wish to have their local environment protected from unsympathetic external alterations, most particularly to windows and doors. The design advice afforded here has been prepared to achieve this aim.



4. General Design Guidance

4.1 Historical Building Groupings

General design guidance concerned with external building alterations and repairs is dealt with separately for each component part of the Conservation Area representing the 3 distinct periods of development i.e.

- the 18th Century village;
- the 19th Century and later buildings; and
- the 1950's housing groups.

4.2 The 18th/Early 19th Century Village

Listed Buildings predominate in this central part of the village. Exact like-for-like repair and replacement is therefore required both in terms of appearance and of function. Such changes may also require Listed Building Consent. It is important to seek advice from the Council before carrying out any works.

Windows: These are the traditional weighted and corded sash and case type sliding window in painted timber. Whilst repair and restoration should be the primary aim, where replacement is deemed essential, this should accurately match the original in the following respects:

- the sliding units visible, with the fixed frame concealed behind the wall jamb;
- the meeting rail in the original position i.e. creating an upper sash/main pane slightly less in height than the lower one; and
- the profile and dimensions of the sliding frames and the astragals/ glazing bars (with "horns" extending below the meeting rail).

Modern "slim profile" double glazing will be permitted but not applied leaded patterns, e.g. lattice or diamond shapes. In this context consideration should be given to the retention of any original period glazing.

Encouragement will be given to restore original window openings subsequently bricked up. Central stone or masonry mullions should not be removed.

Front Doors: These should also be in timber traditionally framed and lined (also known as ledged and braced).

NB For more detailed advice on Windows and Doors see paras. 5.3-5.5

External Wall Finishes: Repointing of the stonework should be neat along the joint using an appropriate lime mortar to match the original. A wet dash render or harling over random rubble may only be considered where:

- there is a historic precedent for this;
- the poor condition of the stone makes further protection an absolute necessity;
- carried out to a single isolated building or comprehensively to a group in a single colour; and
- the stonework, corner quoins and stone window surrounds remain as exposed stone.

Stonework should not be painted or clad in artificial stone or brick.

Roof Coverings: Re-roofing will generally require the re-use of the existing clay pantiles and natural slates and any replacements should closely match the originals.

Chimneys: The external finish to any rebuilt chimney should match the walling (see External Wall Finishes above) Chimneys should include terracotta clay pots.

Gutters and Downpipes: These should be cast-iron.

Front Garden Enclosure: The earliest buildings, adjacent to Mercat Cross, sit directly onto the street with no front gardens and this arrangement should continue. However detached villas, including those further along Shore Road, are set back behind a shallow front

garden enclosed by a hedge or formal cast iron railing on a stone plinth. Any replacement should be like-for-like. High stone walls should be retained with any new openings carefully inserted to maintain a consistent appearance. Repointing should be as for External Wall Finishes above.

Satellite Dishes and Radio Antennae: These should be completely concealed from a public road or area i.e. discreetly located at the rear of the house.

External Colour: Window frames should be painted white, gutters and downpipes black and front doors should be an approved heritage colour.

4.3 The Later 19th/20th Century Buildings

This grouping includes the houses along The Wilderness, the care home and Airth Primary School on Paul Drive and Miller Place as well as the new detached houses and commercial premises on Main Street. Exact like-for-like repair and replacement is anticipated but, in the case of these unlisted buildings, accurate copies of building profiles and finishes may be given consideration subject to planning permission. The newer houses will be treated on their own merits.

Windows: Traditional timber sash and case windows are the dominant style. Whilst repair and restoration of the original window should be the primary aim, any replacement agreed should achieve the external appearance of a sash and case window when closed i.e. in terms of profile and dimensions (see para. 4.2 Windows). The retention of any original period glazing should be given consideration. Stone or masonry mullions should not be removed.

Front Doors: These should be modest four panelled traditional timber doors. Framed and lined doors may be used for cottages.

NB For more detailed advice on Windows and Doors see paras. 5.3-5.5

External wall finishes, chimneys, gutters, downpipes, and external colour: The guidance in para. 4.2 should be followed especially in relation to the older classical houses within this grouping.

Roof Covering: Re-roofing will generally require the re-use of the existing clay pantiles and natural slates and any replacements should closely match the originals.

Front Garden Enclosure: This grouping demonstrates a variety of front garden enclosures i.e. railings above a stone plinth (sandstone villas), hedges, metal railings, high stone and harled walls. Like-for-like repair and replacement is generally advised and any new openings in stone walls should be carefully inserted to maintain a consistent appearance.

Repointing Stonework: This should be as for External Wall Finishes above

Satellite Dishes and Radio Antennae: These should be completely concealed from a public road or area. i.e. discreetly located at the rear of the house.

4.4 The 1950's Housing Areas

These house groupings are carefully designed to harmonise with the older village and with each other. This allows for some variation in wall colour and gable edge treatments as well as to window configurations i.e. to margins, wall head projections and general elevational composition, which give charm to the area whilst being subject to the overall unity of pattern. This may allow, subject to planning permission, for the insertion of further window openings or new elements which satisfactorily marry with the existing elevational pattern. Typical original elevations are shown in Appendix 2a. Whilst unacceptable external alterations are shown in Appendix 2b.

Front Doors: These timber doors should consist of 4 panels below an opening divided into 6 or 12 panes by astragal divisions. General details of glazing bars should be the same as for the windows. See Appendix 3a.

Windows: Traditional timber sash and case windows are the dominant style and any variation from this should achieve the external appearance of a sash and case window when closed i.e. in terms of profile and dimensions (see para. 4.2 Windows). For the 1950s windows it should be noted that the meeting rail creates equal sized sashes/main panes top and bottom, in turn subdivided into 6 equal smaller panes each. Stone or masonry mullions should not be removed. See Appendix 3b.

NB For more detailed advice on Windows and Doors see paras. 5.3-5.5

External Wall Finishes: The standard finish is wet dash render/harling with natural dressed stone around windows, below the damp proof course and at the corners. It should be repaired and replaced as such and no facing brick or other external cladding will be permitted. Any upgrading should preferably be applied comprehensively across semi-detached or terraced houses to avoid unsightly visual breaks.

Roof Coverings: Re-roofing will require the re-use of the existing pantiles or replacement with an approved matching clay product (see External Wall Finishes above). Consideration should always be given to the work being carried out to an entire semi-detached or terraced unit to ensure uniformity.

Chimneys: The external finish to any rebuilt chimney should match the wet dash render walling. Chimneys should include terracotta clay pots.

Gutters and Downpipes: These should be cast-iron.

Front Garden Enclosure: Where enclosure is required the preferred convention is a hedge which should be privet or similar. In order to allow a hedge to grow sufficiently a temporary planning application for a low fence may be sought for a clearly defined period. Walls around front gardens, or inappropriate planting such as fast growing conifers, will not be permitted.

Where a comprehensive enhancement project is proposed for a complete terrace or semi detached block the following traditional means of low enclosure may be considered, which returns between the properties:

- metal estate fencing; or
- picket fencing.

These low fencing conventions should also be used where the end house abuts a public footpath. In the rare circumstance where a high fence encloses a public area, e.g. a footpath, road, open space, a high quality design will be required with additional softening by landscaping where appropriate. Parking within front garden areas is prohibited. In certain locations where there is sufficient space between buildings access to rear parking may be acceptable, concealed from public view.

Satellite Dishes and Radio Antennae: These should be completely concealed from a public road or area. i.e. discreetly located at the rear of the house.

External Colour: Window frames should be painted white, gutters and downpipes black and front doors should be an approved heritage colour. External wall and roof colours should exactly copy the existing unless a comprehensive treatment including an entire semi-detached or terrace group is proposed (see External Wall Finishes above). Fencing should preferably be painted. Bright stains are to be avoided.



5. Supplementary Advice

5.1 New Buildings/ Infill

Within the Conservation Area as a whole there may be opportunities for new buildings in the form of infill development. Although these are likely to be limited the following should be noted:

Windows:

Openings should be vertically proportioned with traditional painted timber sash and case windows preferred. Any new build within the 1950's housing areas will require small paned windows. Appendix 3b.

Front Doors:

Storm and inner doors should be panelled or lined as appropriate. A fanlight above the outer door is an appropriate feature; an integral window panel is not. Appendix 4a & b.

External Wall Finishes:

Sandstone and wet dash render/harling are the preferred finishes to the external walls and door and window surrounds. Certain modern renders and smooth architectural masonry (with narrow joints) may be acceptable in particular situations. Facing brick and/ or roughcast are not permitted, even as a base course.

Roofs:

Either natural slates or clay pantiles should be used dependent on the location within the Conservation Area. Roof pitches should be no less than 40 degrees in pitch. Dormer extensions should be essentially glazed units, visually lighter than and in proportion with the ground floor window arrangements. All new houses should include a chimney with terracotta clay pots on the ridge line preferably at a gable end.

Gutters and Downpipes:

These should be cast iron.

External Colour:

This should relate to the buildings adjacent but windows, doors and guttering should be coloured as standard i.e. respectively white, an approved heritage colour and black.

Front Garden Enclosure:

This should reflect the prevailing arrangement adjacent and the advice provided in paras 4.2 - 4.4.

Satellite Dishes and Radio Antennae:

These should be completely concealed from a public road or area. i.e. discreetly located at the rear of the house.

General Massing, Scale and Proportion:

New development should generally reflect the existing pattern of building spacing and elevational treatment. In the case of larger, self contained, sites it may be possible to develop a simpler contemporary style which nevertheless respects the scale, proportions and elevational patterning evident in the Conservation Area. The overall aim would be to provide a seamless "fit" into the village or, alternatively, to provide visual interest sufficient to create a landmark at an appropriate focal point.

5.2 Extensions

Generally speaking, no new extensions will be permitted to the front of the existing buildings either at ground level as porches or as roof dormers. Extensions to the side and rear will require to match as close as possible the external materials and detailing of the existing building. Roofs should be pitched, hipped or lean-to rather than flat. Tidy junctions between old and new are essential to good design.

5.3 Sash and Case Windows

Conservation Characteristics: The traditional weighted sash and case window is probably the single most important architectural feature within the Conservation Area whilst at the same time it serves to reinforce the visual unity, especially within the Council house areas. The special appearance results from an elegant profile (the upper part set forward from the lower) simple slender frames, moulded side horns and astragal divisions which create small picturesque panes. Appendix 3b.

Practical Benefits: The aim of these guidelines to protect the sash and case windows may, however, appear to conflict with householder aspirations for improved standards of domestic comfort and convenience i.e. for heat and noise insulation, ease of opening and cleaning windows, the daylighting of internal rooms and improved views. In this regard householders are reminded of the inherent merits of the sash and case window.

- The degree of ventilation can be controlled more precisely in the sash and case than in pivot or casement windows. Air gaps in timber windows are also less for sash and case than for casements (although pivot windows are the best in this respect).

- Sash and case windows do not project from the building, thus avoiding intrusion over garden or adjoining pavements which may cause accidents and adverse noise reflection problems, a particular nuisance in flats.

Daylighting: Overlarge expanses of glazing adjacent to a public street can create their own problems of privacy which may subsequently require to be addressed by net curtains blinds etc. The opening size and subdivision of the existing windows strike a reasonable balance between daylight and privacy. The option, within the 1950s housing areas, to add new single openings which respect the proportion and elevational groupings is noted in para. 4.4.

Refurbishment: The repair and restoration of sash and case windows can significantly improve their performance and are clearly a more cost effective option than outright replacement. Standard draught stripping and sound absorbing linings achieve better thermal insulation and reduce air leakage and rattling as well as the impact of external noise. Additional heat and noise insulation can be achieved with secondary glazing, i.e. an independent internal window, shutters. Clearly when daylight fades, shutters, thermal blinds and simple curtains can assist.

In the older buildings any original glazing should be investigated for its historic importance with a view to retention e.g. "cylinder" glass (rippled surface), used until the mid 18th century and "crown" glass (curved surface), used into the 20th century. Where the single glazing is deemed to have no special heritage merit it may be possible to insert modern "slim profile" double glazing ("Slimlite" or a similar) into the existing with minimal effect on the profile of original frames and astragals. Most of the sash and case windows within the 1950s housing areas have double glazing subsequently installed by the Council. The standard depth of the double glazed sheet is acceptable when replacing these windows.





The installation of modern ironmongery i.e. "Simplex" hinges or similar, can simplify the process of opening the window to clean the sash and case window from the inside.

NB. The names of specialist firms which carry out the repair and restoration of sash and case windows can be obtained from Falkirk Council Development Services

Replacement: Notwithstanding the merits of repairing and restoring it will be necessary in certain circumstances for a sash and case window to be replaced outright and the following advice is offered for this:

Listed Buildings: The window replacement should exactly match the original i.e. traditional painted timber frames with a sash cord opening mechanism. Almost all of the listed buildings are located within the 18th/early 19th century Village. Double glazing of the slim profile type (see Refurbishment above) is preferred and may be required.

Unlisted Buildings: Similar like-for-like replacements are considered the most appropriate. However, subject to achieving the external appearance of a sash and case window when closed the following may be permitted subject to receiving planning consent:

- **Timber:** This is always the preferred frame material (see Conservation Characteristics above), and is also more easily worked and repaired than UPVC or other synthetic materials and therefore more sustainable in the long term. To complement this, modern microporous paints are available which have a significantly longer life than traditional paints whilst also protecting the timber by allowing it to breathe. Nevertheless, subject to the relevant dimensional/profile standards following, the sliding "spiral balance" and hinged "double swing" window types may be considered as alternatives to the standard sliding /corded originals.

- **UPVC:** This, and any other synthetic materials capable of matching the original profile, is permitted although less preferred. It is unlikely that a UPVC window will achieve the necessary like-for-like standards other than in a vertically sliding form.

For new windows in unlisted buildings there is no restriction on the type and depth of double glazing.

However the external appearance of a sash and case window when closed will be assessed by the following criteria:

- Any outer fixed frame should be set into the side jamb so that no more than 20mm remains visible at the top and sides.
- The top section should be fully forward of the bottom sash at the meeting rail.
- The outer sliding frames should be exposed i.e. not concealed by a continuous plastic strip forward of the line of the upper frame
- The upper side frames should terminate below the meeting rail with a decorative "horn" detail where this is the original detail (e.g. the 1950's Housing Areas).
- The bottom rail of the lower sash should be at least 75 mm high.
- The glass should be recessed by at least 10mm from the front face of the sash.
- Astragal (glazing bar subdivision) framing should support and fix the glazing rather than simply adhering to it.
- Applied diamond lead patterns or similar "non-period" additions should be avoided
- The standard colour should be white.

5.4 Doors

Replacement doors should accurately replicate the original timber profiles and be generally painted in white or in an approved heritage colour in particular situations. Appropriate alternatives to timber will be difficult to source and would not be generally acceptable. Unlike windows, which can be readily made up from separately cut components, UPVC doors are more commonly a mass produced standardised design often with a quite inauthentic wide secondary frame around the outside edge. Doors are also available in GRP (glass reinforced plastic) which can be painted. However, although the material can be formed to any pattern it tends to involve a mass production process which makes a single bespoke door a more expensive item. Appendices: 3a, 4a & b.



5.5 Rear Elevations

Where building facades are entirely concealed from the public road there will be greater flexibility as to what changes can be made, although a clear overall design must be demonstrated which retains the visual integrity of the buildings. In general, window openings and central masonry divisions should be retained with no restriction on window design except for the white finish subject to planning permission. Certain rear elevations are, however, visible from the public road e.g. at nos. 6-16 High Street, 1-8 Kirkway and 1-5 The Path. In these more concealed locations window replacements must, in addition, replicate the original window pane sub-divisions.

The design of doors to the rear will be treated on their own merits, again subject to planning permission.



Appendix 1

Map of Conservation Area



Key

- Conservation Area
- 18th/early 19th Century Village

Listed Buildings	Category
1 Mercat Cross	A
2 North Church	B
3 Schoolhouse, Rosebank	B
4 View Villa	B
5 Elphinstone Inn	C (s)
6 16 - 18 Shore Road	B
7 Rothesay Villa	C (s)
8 Captain's House	B

- Later 19th/20th Century Buildings
- 1950's Housing Areas

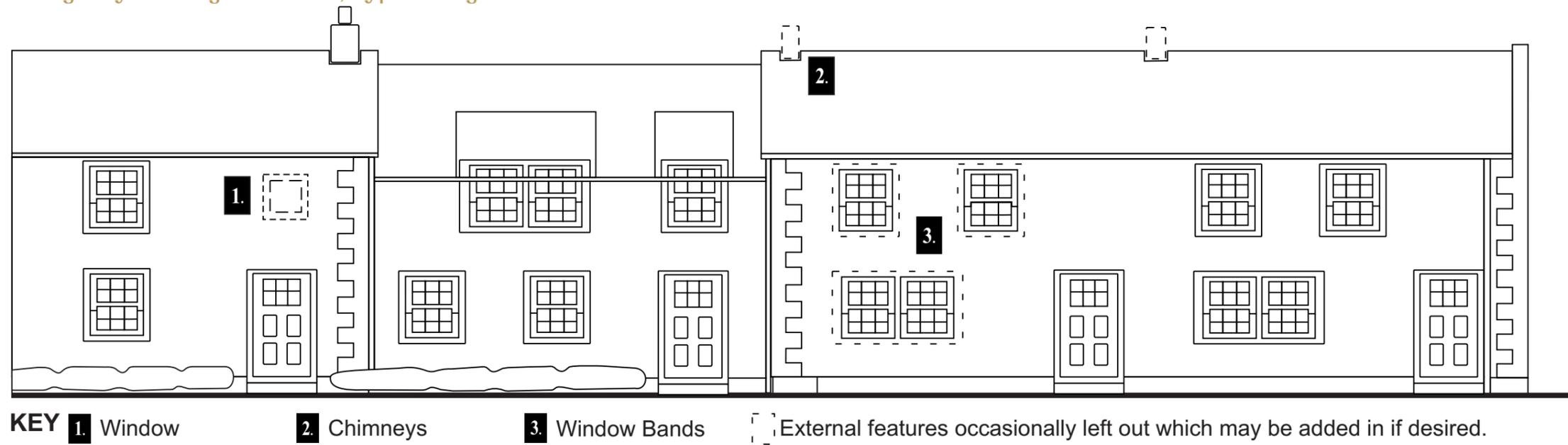
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Appendix 2

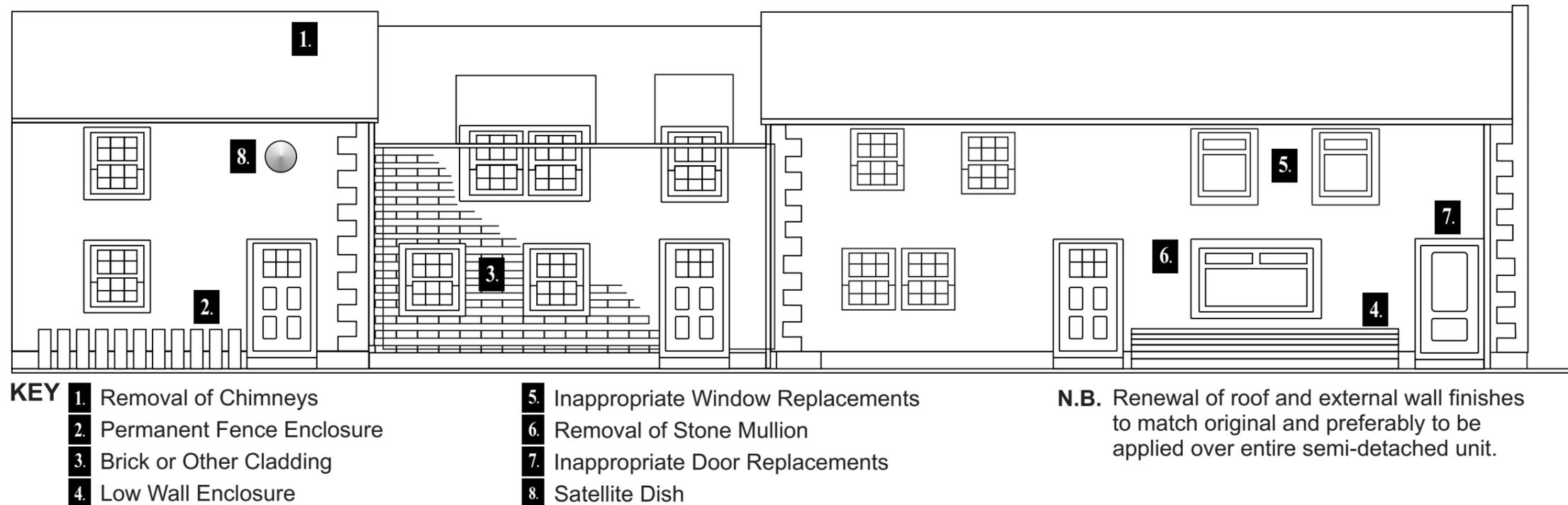
a.

1950's Housing: Key to Design Guidance, Typical Original Elevations



b.

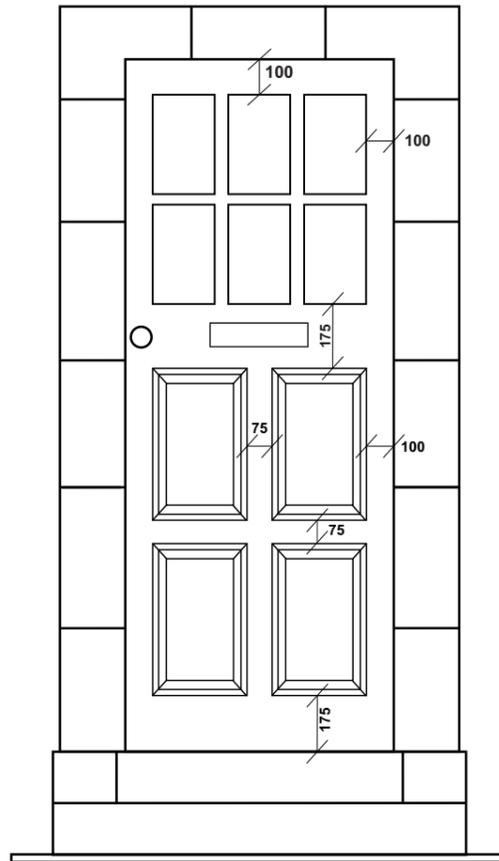
1950's Housing: Key to Design Guidance, Prohibited External Alterations



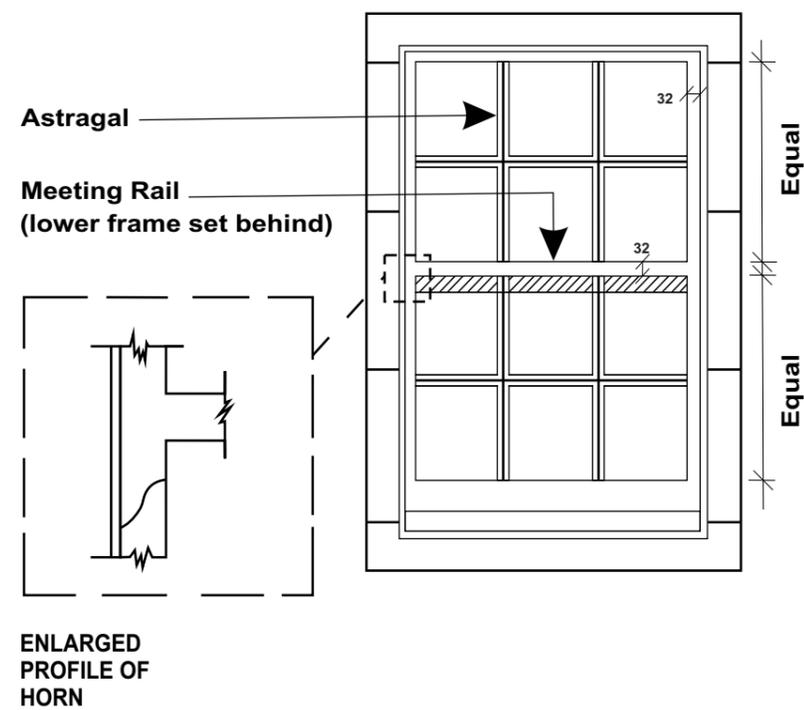
Appendix 3

1950's Housing:
Standard Door and Window Required

a.



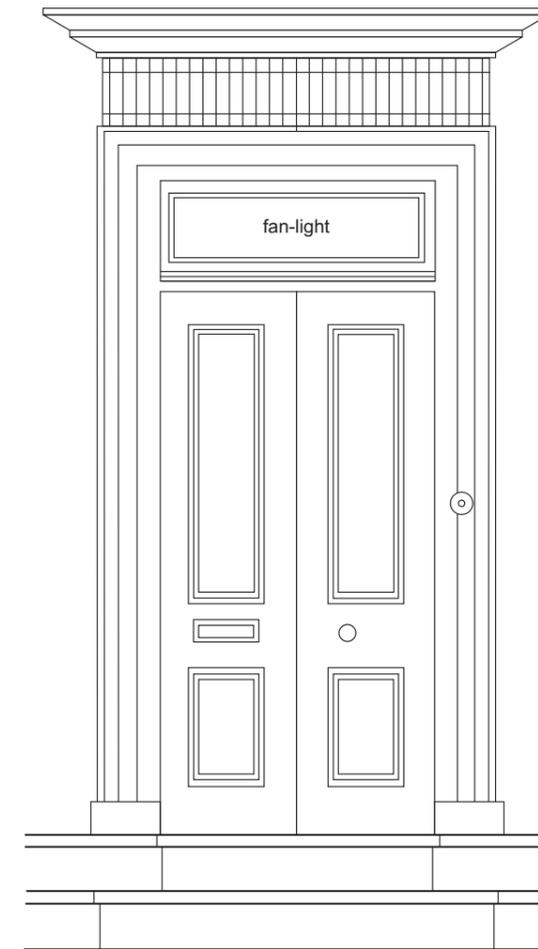
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Appendix 4

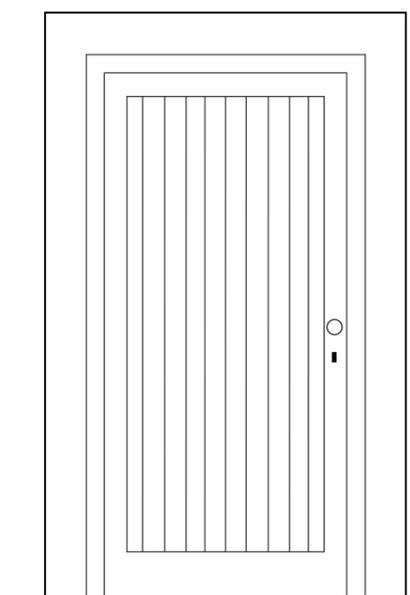
18th/19th Century Buildings: Typical Doors

a.



PANELLED

b.



FRAMED and LINED



Falkirk Council