

Conservation Area



Crescents Conservation Area Appraisal

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1.0 Introduction

The Crescents Conservation Area nestles on the steep slopes of Dundee Law. It is situated on a south facing slope with excellent views towards the River Tay. It comprises the two elliptical crescents of Constitution Terrace/Union Terrace and Prospect Place/Laurel Bank, and Dudhope Place, leading off Constitution Road.

This document will analyse the character and appearance of the Crescents Conservation Area and aim to provide a means of guidance towards the preservation of the Conservation Area. It will also highlight any opportunities for planning action and address measures for enhancement.

1.1 Definition of a Conservation Area



Traditional property within the Crescents Conservation Area

A Conservation Area is defined by the Scottish Government, within Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 as; "An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

The 1997 Act makes provision for planning authorities to determine which parts of their locale merits Conservation Area status. Dundee currently has 17 Conservation Areas, all of which have individual and distinguishing characters which the Council aim to preserve or enhance.

"An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"

1.2 The Meaning of Conservation Area Status



Boundary walls and trees help to define distinct character

A Conservation Area is an area that holds special architectural or historic interest that are considered worthy of protection. It is the buildings and the spaces between them that are of architectural or historic interest to the individual character of the area.

A conservation area status is not intended to inhibit development, but to rather facilitate and support development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the area. Conservation Area designations limit permitted development rights in order to further protect the character and appearance of the area.

“In a Conservation Area it is the buildings and the spaces between them that are of architectural or historic relevance”

1.3 The Purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal



Traditional gate piers and gates



Architectural detailing adds to the character of the Crescents Conservation Area

A Conservation Area is dynamic and constantly evolving and therefore it is essential to review and analyse its character. The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define what is important about the areas' character and appearance in order to identify its important characteristics and special features.

Part of the function of this appraisal is to assist the City Council when carrying out its statutory planning function. It will act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and help guide the development of Design Guides and Development Briefs within the conservation area.

This appraisal sets out a number of proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area; a role highlighted and supported by National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) in regards to the historic environment.

NPF4 states that, 'Development proposals in or affecting conservation areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced. Relevant considerations include the:

- i. architectural and historic character of the area;
- ii. existing density, built form and layout; and
- iii. context and siting, quality of design and suitable materials.

Development proposals in conservation areas will ensure that existing natural and built features which contribute to the character of the conservation area and its setting, including structures, boundary walls, railings, trees and hedges, are retained.

The guidance from the Scottish Government, contained within PAN 71 Conservation Area Management, highlights that 'conservation area designation alone will not secure the protection and enhancement of conservation areas. Active management is vital to ensure that change can be accommodated for the better.'

The overarching aim of this appraisal is to draw out the elements that contribute to the 'character' of the conservation area and provide a means of guidance towards its overall protection and enhancement.

"A Conservation Area is dynamic and constantly evolving and therefore it is essential to review and analyse its character"

2.0 Conservation Area Context



Only glimpses can be seen of some of the large properties



Elevated levels of urban greenery creates privacy and also adds character

Located on the steep slopes of Dundee Law to the immediate north of the City Centre, the Crescents is one of Dundee's smaller Conservation Areas. It comprises the two elliptical crescents of Constitution Terrace/Union Terrace and Prospect Place/Laurel Bank, and Dudhope Place, leading off Constitution Road. The houses are a mixture of large detached villas and semi detached villas, with attractive mature gardens, set in the terraces formed by the Crescents. They are complemented by original boundary walls, railings, the odd early street sign, and several gas lamp brackets over gateways. A number of the properties have been subdivided into flatted properties.

"Located on the steep slopes of Dundee Law to the immediate north of the City Centre, the Crescents is one of Dundee's smaller Conservation Areas"

2.1 Current Boundary and Designation

The Crescents Conservation Area was firstly designated on the 10th October 1983. The conservation area has been designated as 'Outstanding' by Historic Environment Scotland.

See Fig.1 which shows the current boundary of the Crescents Conservation Area.

At present the perimeter of the Conservation Area is fitting and appropriate to purpose. There are no amendments to the boundary identified at this time.

Figure 1 – Conservation Area Boundary



"The conservation area has been designated as 'Outstanding' by Historic Environment Scotland"

3.0 History and Development of Crescents



Dudhope Castle

The Crescents Conservation Area is situated on a south facing slope with excellent views towards the River Tay.

The Crescents Conservation Area was developed around the Victorian era. This area of the city, then town, was originally part of the Dudhope estate, however was subsequently sold off to become 'Townland'. It remained Townland until 1833 when David MacKenzie drew up a plan for the development of the steep slope of the law between Dudhope Castle and the Hilltown. Work began in 1833 during a boom in the city's jute industry. The Crescents were laid-out by the town's architect, William Scott and take on the form of horseshoe shaped terraces, providing residences with impressive views over the city.

David MacKenzie and James McLaren designed many of the villas. They were all built individually which gives each property a distinct character presence, and reflects the wealth of those who originally built and lived in them. William Scott the town's architect is known to have lived in number 8 Laurel Bank and the Gilroy 'jute barons' of Tay works owned No 2 Union Terrace until the building of Castleroy in Broughty Ferry in 1867. James Chalmers inventor of the postage stamp is also reputed to have lived in the Crescents.

The Crescents became known as Dundee's second suburb and takes its name from the distinctive pattern formed by its two main streets. The growth in the number of suburbs was mainly due to the movement of the wealthier middle-class away from the medieval core of Dundee in the early part of the 19th century where the city experienced overcrowding and fear of disease. Unlike many other Scottish cities, this movement did not take the form of a new town, but instead stayed within the confines of the town as suburbs.

"The Crescents became known as Dundee's second suburb and takes its name from the distinctive pattern formed by its two main streets"

Dundee experienced rapid industrialisation. The building of the stone wall which runs the length of Rose Lane and into Hedge Road linking Constitution Street with Dudhope Street was an attempt to screen the Crescents from the Jute works which lay beyond. Once the new suburb had been completed however, the rate at which the city was expanding meant that they were already surrounded by new housing and industrial development. The Crescents remain an important feature of the growth and development of Dundee during this period.

Many of the houses have since been extended and sub-divided into flats but the essential character of this early Victorian residential suburb of the city is worthy of being preserved, enhanced and protected.

Figure 2 - 1902 Historic Map



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4.0 Character and Appearance



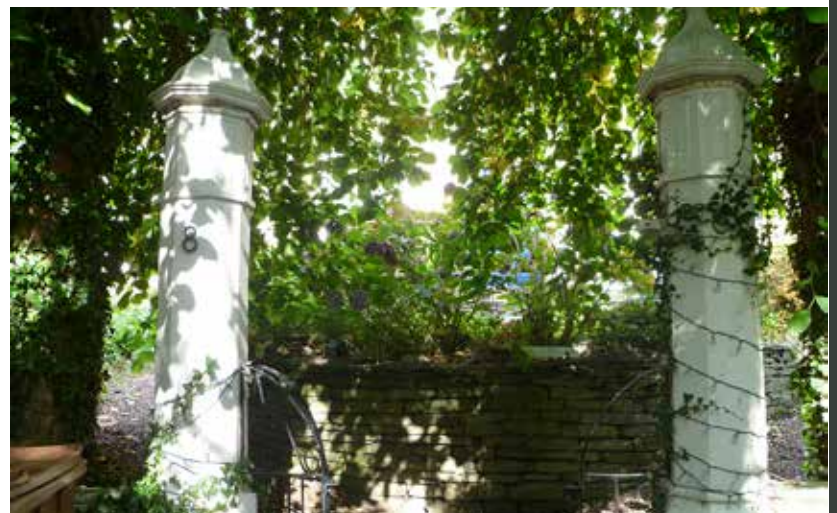
Winding narrow roads are the result of the elliptical crescent shaped street layout



Boundary walls are an important feature of the area



Large garden grounds to the front and rear of properties



Columns at entrances and screened by greenery

The character and appearance are both key elements to be considered when appraising a Conservation Area. Crescents Conservation Area has been identified as having particular aspects of historic or architectural interest which are important to the area's character, and are important to preserve and enhance. This section shall analyse the main elements that contribute to the character and appearance of the Crescents Conservation Area whilst establishing its value within the wider context of Dundee.

The Crescents Conservation Area is characterised by its large impressive villas situated within defined horse-shoe shaped crescents. The properties are enclosed by high stone boundary walls or lower walls supported by tall hedges. The roads within the Conservation Area are narrow and are bounded by these walls therefore emphasising a sense of enclosure. The boundary walls of the Crescents Conservation Area remain one of its most important assets adding value and character to the area overall.

“The Crescents Conservation Area is characterised by its large impressive villas situated within defined horse-shoe shaped crescents”



Villas in substantial grounds with high level of urban greenery



Presence of semi-detached properties as well as large villas



Architectural detailing adds to the character of the overall area

The land use of the Conservation Area is mainly residential; however there are a number of commercial uses located along Dudhope Place where these are generally office based. The impact of this change of use has been minimal in terms of the effect on the building's exterior.

The plot size and density of the buildings within the area is mainly very low. The collections of detached and semi-detached villas are generous in proportion and are set out in fairly substantial grounds. The properties are characterised by their high stone boundary walls and mature greenery where some of the villas can only be seen through gaps in their boundaries. The gardens of the properties in the Conservation Area are generally quite large. The buildings have been set out centrally in large plots, which afford them a large garden area to the front and rear of the property.

The properties occupy elevated positions upon the Law giving them a sense of grandeur whilst also adding character to the area. The storey height of the buildings rarely rises above two storeys and only a few of the buildings are three storeys. A main characteristic of the area is the way the villas are terraced upon the hill where narrow winding roads provide access. The views overlooking the city centre and towards the Tay and further to Fife are a unique feature of the area as well as having great access to the Law Hill.

“The properties occupy elevated positions upon the Law giving them a sense of grandeur whilst also adding character to the area”



Original street sign for Constitution Terrace



Roads bounded on either side by high boundary walls and greenery

The predominately residential buildings are characterised with traditional slate roofs, boundary walls and mature trees. Within the Conservation Area there are many unique villas where the properties are characterised by their entrances detailed with columns, capitals, iron balustrades and quoins.

The properties within the Conservation Area have many familiar characteristics which are found throughout, such as, sash and case windows, cast-iron rainwater goods and balustrades. Many of the buildings possess fine neo-classical detailing around openings and at roof level. In terms of building frontage colour and texture, the general appearance and colour palette of the area ranges from a brown to grey, some with painted quoins and columns, a distinguishing feature of the overall area.

There are a number of examples of original gas lamp fixtures located within the Conservation Area, some of which are in a poor state of disrepair. There are also examples of historic street signs. The conservation area contains a post-box recessed into the wall of number 77 Constitution Road. There is a historic red phone box located on Dudhope Place, which is also a listed structure.



Some properties are barely visible through screens of greenery

“In terms of building frontage colour and texture, the general appearance and colour palette of the area ranges from a brown to grey”

Another representative feature of the Conservation Area is the high level of urban greenery. The mature greenery within the Crescents Conservation Area is wholly situated within private garden space, either visible through gaps in property boundaries or in instances where the greenery either forms part of or overhangs the periphery.

Most of the traditional stone kerbing has been retained throughout the Conservation Area where there is also evidence of stone setts. This adds distinct character to the streetscape. The historic layout with the existence of narrow horse-shoe shaped crescents, sharp corners and traditional surfaces again adds character to the area.

4.1 Topography and Street Pattern

The street pattern of the Crescents Conservation Area is dominated by the 'horseshoe' layout of its streets which create distinct character. The winding nature of the roads allow the properties to take advantage of the views over Dundee and the Tay, in doing so working with the steep topography of the Law Hill.



Narrow steep roads wind up the Law providing great views of Dundee, the Tay and further over to Fife

“The winding nature of the roads allow the properties to take advantage of the views over Dundee and the Tay”

4.2 Listed Buildings



The majority of villas within the conservation area are listed by Historic Environment Scotland

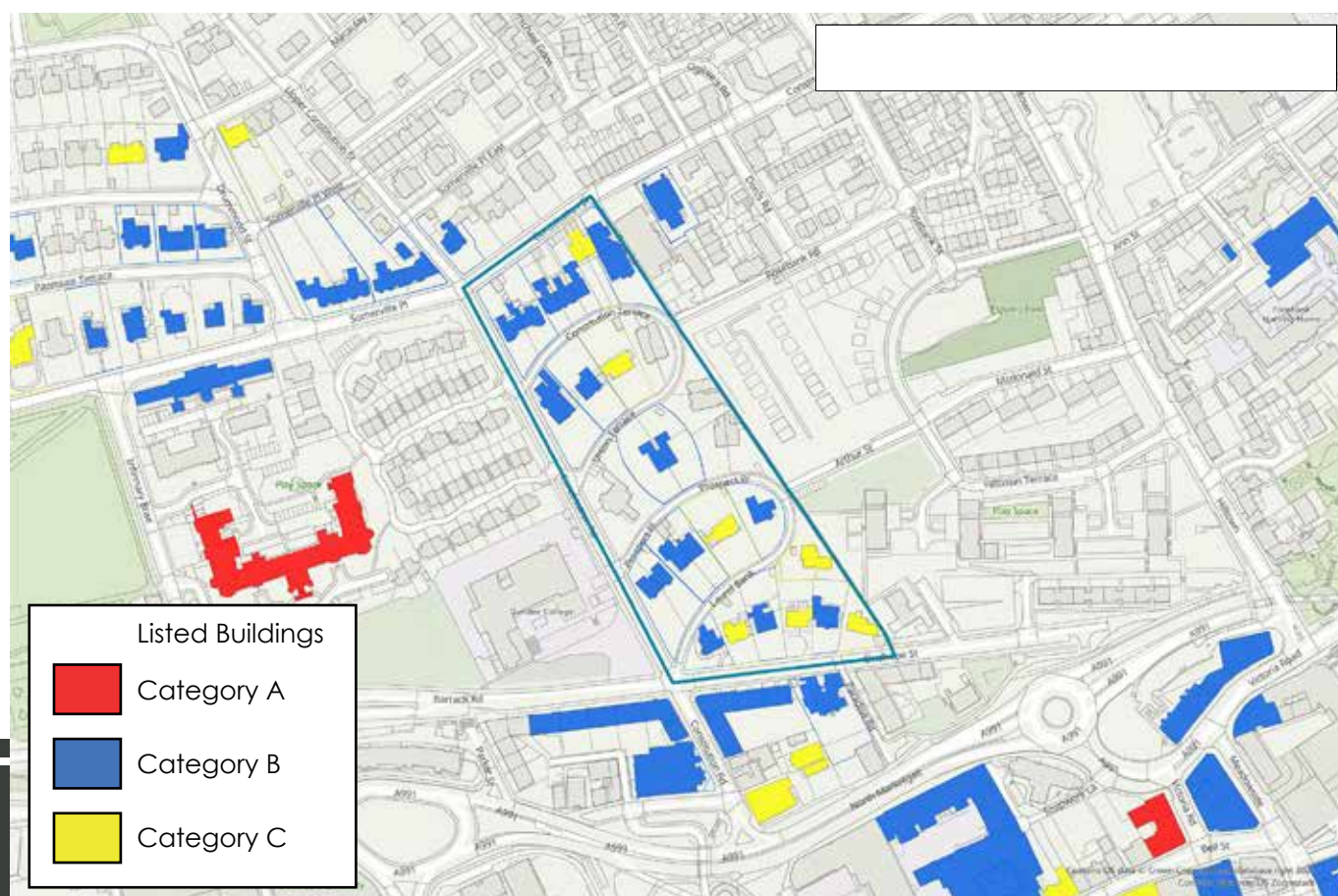
Crescents Conservation Area contains a number of buildings which are listed by Historic Environment Scotland for their special architectural or historic interest.

A building's listing covers its interior, exterior and 'any object or structure fixed to a building' or which falls within the curtilage of such a building, forming part of the land since before 1 July 1948. The alteration or removal of any feature or fixtures requires listed building consent.

Buildings are listed by Historic Environment Scotland in 3 categories- A, B and C. Category A listed buildings are of a national or international importance. Category B listed buildings are of a regional importance. Category C buildings are of local importance.

See Figure 3 which indicates the location of Listed Buildings within the Crescents Conservation Area.

Figure 3 - Listed Buildings



4.3 Movement and Activity



The narrow streets of the conservation area are controlled via a one way system

The vehicular traffic in the conservation area is managed in a variety of ways. The traffic which accesses Constitution Road is controlled using a one way system allowing vehicular movement from north to south. The two horse-shoe shaped crescents, Constitution Terrace/ Union Terrace and Prospect Place/ Laurel Bank, as well as Dudhope Place are also controlled using a one way system. Parking provision is an issue within the Conservation Area due to its close proximity to Dundee city centre and to the Constitution Road former campus of Dundee College. Along Dudhope Street parking is managed using a pay and display system, however on other streets double yellow lines seem to be ineffective in discouraging parking.

Figure 4 - Movement & Activity



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4.4 Views and Vistas



Impressive view towards the Tay by looking down Constitution Road

The layout of the buildings in the Conservation Area maximise views from the individual buildings over Dundee City, the River Tay and further to Fife. The dominant views from within the Conservation Area are of mature trees and stone boundary walls which provide distinct character to the area. The street pattern also contributes to the area's character as the narrow curved streets restrict views out of the conservation area.

"The street pattern also contributes to the area's character as the narrow curved streets restrict views out of the conservation area"

5.0 Opportunities for Planning Action

The principle focus of planning action within the Crescents Conservation Area is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Applications for inappropriate developments or alterations that will negatively impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area shall be recommended for refusal. Best practice guidance by Historic Environment Scotland and other bodies shall be taken into consideration as part of the preservation of the character of the Crescents Conservation Area.

With the aid of planning action the Conservation Area has adapted relatively well to change where this can be seen through the sympathetic restoration and upgrading of most buildings and the considerate design and detailing of new developments.

5.1 Street Pattern and Alterations to Existing Buildings

The street pattern of the Crescents Conservation Area is a key contributor to its overall character. It is therefore essential that any development which involves any alteration to this layout is strongly discouraged to help retain the original streetscape.

The look of each street should be protected and alterations to properties should not detract from the aesthetics of the area. Extensions to properties should be sympathetic towards the conservation area and not be detrimental to the character of each individual property. Before works commence, guidance should be sought from Dundee City Council's Development Management section to seek advice on whether the works would require planning permission.

“The principle focus of planning action within the Crescents Conservation Area is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area”

5.2 Surface Materials

The street surfaces, at present, are in relatively good condition and their replacement is not expected soon. Evidence of original stone kerbing and some examples of stone setts can be seen throughout the Conservation Area. Where possible, reinstatement of historic materials would be encouraged within the conservation area and removal of any historic materials would be deemed unacceptable.

5.3 Utilities and Amenities

Works carried out by amenity companies and by statutory bodies must have regard for the character of the conservation area. Cables and pipes which run over the outside of walls detract from both the appearance of the wall and overall conservation area. The installation of pipes and cables should be hidden from view, and in accordance with guidance set by Historic Environment Scotland.

The location of television aerials and satellite dishes should be placed discretely to minimise their impact on the building and character of the conservation area. Detailed advice on best practice on the location of satellite dishes can be obtained from Dundee City Council's City Development Department. The advice set out for satellite dishes can be applied equally to television aerials.

“Evidence of original stone kerbing and some examples of stone setts can be seen throughout the Conservation Area”

5.4 Trees



Hedges form part of boundary walls as well as the presence of mature trees



Mature trees create a sense of privacy and enclosure

Trees make up a key component of the character of the Crescents Conservation Area where mature trees collectively make a significant contribution to the overall look of the area.

It is an offense for any person to cut, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy any tree, unless six weeks notice has been given to the Council's City Development Department. The owner of the tree must submit a Tree Work Notice Application and await written consent from the Council prior to undertaking such works. Application forms are available to complete online from the Council's website, or alternatively requests can be made in writing to the Director of City Development. This gives the Council time to consider making a Tree Preservation Order. These exist for individual or groups of trees which are seen as giving amenity value to the community. The felling or lopping of trees which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order also requires consent from the City Development Department.

'Trees: A Guide to Planning Legislation and Best Practice' is available to view online at www.dundeecity.gov.uk

"Trees make up a key component of the character of the Crescents Conservation Area where mature trees collectively make a significant contribution to the overall look of the area"

5.5 Stone Boundary Walls



Insensitive wall repair

Crescents Conservation Area retains a private feel, characterised by its stone boundary walls and mature trees. Many of the properties remain partially hidden from public view. Boundary walls are a very important feature of the Conservation Area; however there is evidence of poor repair work. The repointing of boundary walls must be carried out using an appropriate lime based mortar which shall closely match the characteristics of the original. Alterations shall be required to be in accordance with the guidance established by Historic Environment Scotland and Dundee City Council's '[BREACHES IN BOUNDARY WALLS](#)' Policy and Guidance for Dundee's Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.'



Partial loss of boundary walls for garages and parking causes detrimental effects on the area's character

"Crescents Conservation Area retains a private feel, characterised by its stone boundary walls and mature trees"

5.6 Maintenance of Properties

Walls

The use of inappropriate material poses a long term threat to the integrity and condition of the buildings, and to the character of the conservation area as a whole.

The repointing of walls must be carried out using an appropriate lime based mortar which shall closely match the characteristics of the original. Where new stone work needs to be indented, it will match as closely as possible the original stone. Stone cleaning is not desirable due to the damaging effects that it can have on stonework and will be actively discouraged.

There has been partial loss of boundary walls within the area mainly due to the creation of new access points being created. This has facilitated the erection of garages and/or parking spaces in some instances.

Any removal of boundary walls for provision of parking spaces or any other use will not be acceptable. According to Dundee City Council's Policy Guidance on breaches in boundary walls, openings will not be permitted which adversely affect the amenity or character of a conservation area.

Roofs

The majority of the buildings in the conservation area retain their original slates. There has been a lot of work carried out to many of the roofs however this action has mainly related to the repair and replacement of lead work.

Any repair or replacement should be carried out in original materials, such as Scottish slate and lead, in order to preserve the contribution that these materials make to the character of the conservation area.

“Any repair or replacement should be carried out in original materials, such as Scottish slate and lead”



Iron work has been removed in some cases



Some iron work has been replaced with timber fencing. This is taking away character from the area

Chimneys

The area has seen many of its chimney pots replaced. This has led to many different examples of modern chimney pots within the area. This means that all works carried out within a conservation area requires consent where this also applies to chimney pots. Chimneys are a prominent feature on a building and within the Crescents Conservation Area overall. As such a uniformed approach will be taken to their repair and replacement.

Ironwork

There are many good examples of historic ironwork within the conservation area, namely ironwork associated with its properties, however it is noted that some ironwork has been removed and in some cases unsuitably replaced with timber fencing. Preservation of existing ironwork will be favoured where it is vital to the overall character and appearance of the area. Any removal of historic ironwork will be actively discouraged.

Rainwater Goods

There has been a high degree of replacement of traditional rainwater goods. This includes gutters, down-pipes and hoppers. These replacements have resulted in new modern materials being used such as PVC.

There will be a presumption that the traditional historic rainwater goods be retained and repaired before the principle of replacement is acceptable. There is also a presumption that any replacement rainwater goods should be in a traditional material and this should match the design of the original detailing and colour scheme of the relevant property.

“Preservation of existing ironwork will be favoured where it is vital to the overall character and appearance of the area”

5.7 Building Frontages

The character and appearance of conservation areas are made up of the individual buildings and the spaces between them. A building's frontage is made up from a number of components e.g. construction materials, architectural style, individual detailing, windows and doors.

Alterations to the building frontages within the Conservation Area shall require careful consideration towards character, where minor changes to windows and doors can have a detrimental impact on its appearance.

It is of particular importance that any traditional sash and case windows be repaired rather than replaced in order to retain the original character of the building frontage. If replacement is the only option then it is favourable that a like for like window replaces the damaged window. This principle can also be applied when repairing or replacing doors.

Where there is an apparent state of neglect or disrepair to any element of a building's frontage, sympathetic treatment to restore the original character of the building is to be encouraged.

“It is of particular importance that any traditional sash and case windows be repaired rather than replaced in order to retain the original character of the building frontage”

6.0 Measures to Protect and Enhance Essential Character

In order to maintain the quality of the Crescents Conservation Area it is important to outline necessary measures that will protect and enhance its essential character. Maintenance of the historic fabric and character of the Conservation Area is a primary concern of the council and any proposed developments will need to follow the policies and guidelines set out by Historic Environment Scotland and Dundee City Council.

6.1 Dundee Historic Environment Trust (DHET)

DHET is an organisation which is set up to encourage the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic architecture and the physical environment within Dundee. The Historic Environment Grant Scheme aims to financially support the repair of historic buildings within Conservation Areas. For further information contact:

THE DIRECTOR
DUNDEE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TRUST
29 EXCHANGE STREET
DUNDEE
DD1 3DJ
TEL: 01382 902244 | 07540 724444
EMAIL: INFO@DHET.ORG

6.2 Windows and Doors

Some buildings within the area have had replacement window units fitted. These modern additions are detrimental to the character and appearance of the individual buildings and the conservation area as a whole.

“Preservation of the Crescents Conservation Area is essential in ensuring its character and appearance is protected”

The conservation area also contains many fine examples of traditional windows which make a significant contribution to the character of the area. However, there has been a tendency to remove the glazing bars of some of the windows. This can have a negative impact on the proportions of the building whilst also detracting from its character.

Replacement of windows within a Conservation Area will require compliance with the Council's policy on replacement windows and doors, and also the advice and guidance set by Historic Environment Scotland. Applications for inappropriate replacement windows and doors shall be recommended for refusal.

When the opportunity arises it would be in the interest of the Conservation Area to have the reinstatement of a more appropriate design and style of window and door which fits the character of the property. This shall help to further enhance the character and appearance of the area.

6.3 Maintenance

Preservation of the Crescents Conservation Area is essential in ensuring its character and appearance is protected. The repair and reuse of traditional fabric and features of the Conservation Area is a role strongly supported by Dundee Council. This work could include the preservation or enhancement of walls, windows, doors, structure, roof, guttering and systems such as ventilation, gas or water. Such building necessities should be kept in good condition for the property to continue to be productive in its functioning. The character and appearance of the area can be dramatically impacted upon as a result of building disrepair. For information on methods of upkeep and repair which can affect the character or fabric of a building's exterior within Conservation Areas, consult the Conservation Officer of Dundee City Council.

“Maintenance of this historic fabric and character is a primary concern of the council”

7.0 Conservation Strategy

The Conservation Strategy of the City Council is to ensure that new development or alterations to existing buildings will not have a negative impact on the existing character of the area.

The City Council will use the Conservation Area status as a management tool to help produce a high design quality to ensure the preservation or enhancement of the special character and appearance of the area. Maintenance of this historic fabric and character is a primary concern of the council and any proposed developments will need to follow the policies and guidelines set out by Historic Environment Scotland and Dundee City Council.

The City Council takes the view that this does not mean that new developments or alterations are unacceptable but that rehabilitation, restoration, new build or contemporary architecture is of a suitably high standard.

8.0 Monitoring and Review

This Conservation Area Appraisal will be reviewed approximately every five years, to ensure that it remains effective and responds adequately to the requirements of the Conservation Area.

For further information concerning the contents of this document, contributions for its improvement, or any matters concerning conservation areas or listed buildings, contact the Dundee City Council via the Planning Duty Officer at planning@dundeecity.gov.uk.

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