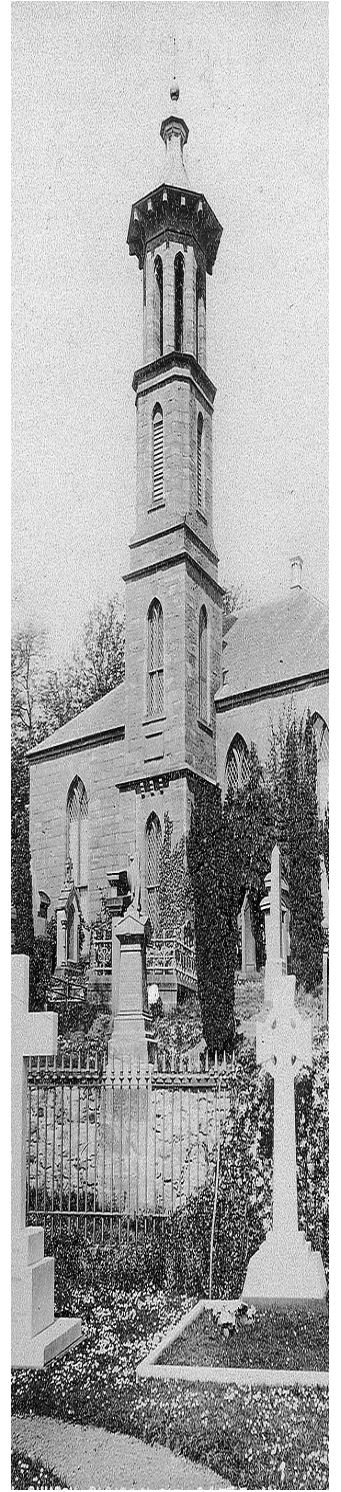


Blairgowrie Conservation Area Appraisal



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INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

1.1 Conservation areas are crucial to the conservation of our built environment. There are over 600 conservation areas in Scotland. They contain groups of buildings extending over areas of a village or town and can also include public parks, woods and historic land. To safeguard them for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations any new development should preserve or enhance their varied character. The local planning authority is required to determine which parts of its area are of special architectural and/or historic interest. It may propose and designate these as conservation areas. The public will be consulted on any proposal to designate conservation areas or change their boundaries.

1.2 Conservation areas must be safeguarded and enhanced. This is defined through:

- Defining the character that merits protection, including the space between buildings;
- Use of appropriate controls over development, demolition and advertising;
- Financial assistance, where appropriate, for works of repair and restoration;
- Protection of trees;
- Interpretation schemes, through leaflets or exhibitions;
- The implementation of enhancement schemes based upon a conservation area appraisal.

1.3 Designation as a conservation area does not place a ban upon all new development within its boundaries. However, new development will normally only be granted planning permission if it can be demonstrated that it will not harm the character or visual quality of the area. New development should also positively enhance the area through good design rather than just create a neutral effect.

Reason for Conservation Area designation

2.1 Blairgowrie was proposed for designation as a conservation area in the Eastern Area Draft Local Plan of July 2005 in recognition of the architectural quality of the townscape and its historical significance, covering various distinct periods of urban development and design. The proposed scope of the conservation area includes the town centre of Blairgowrie, the old village core around the Hill Church and parts of New Rattray adjacent to the river Ericht. The Council seeks to protect the character and appearance of the conservation area and draw up proposals for its enhancement.

2.2 Blairgowrie's townscape is of a high quality and represents an important economic asset as well as having visual and amenity benefits for residents. The economic value of the heritage asset is significant and the quality of the asset must not be eroded.

Purpose of the Conservation Area Appraisal

2.3 A Conservation area appraisal is a management tool which helps to identify the special interest and changing needs of an area. It serves as supplementary planning guidance to the Local Plan. The appraisal provides the basis for the development of a programme of action that is compatible with the sensitivities of the historic area and can enable the local authority to fulfil its statutory duties to protect and enhance that particular area.

2.4 Appraisals also assist development control and management. They provide the opportunity to inform residents about the special needs and characteristics of the area and help developers identify and formulate development proposals. If a conservation area's special interest has been clearly defined and published in an appraisal then this definition may help those about to or thinking to invest in the area and can be used to influence the form and content of new development.

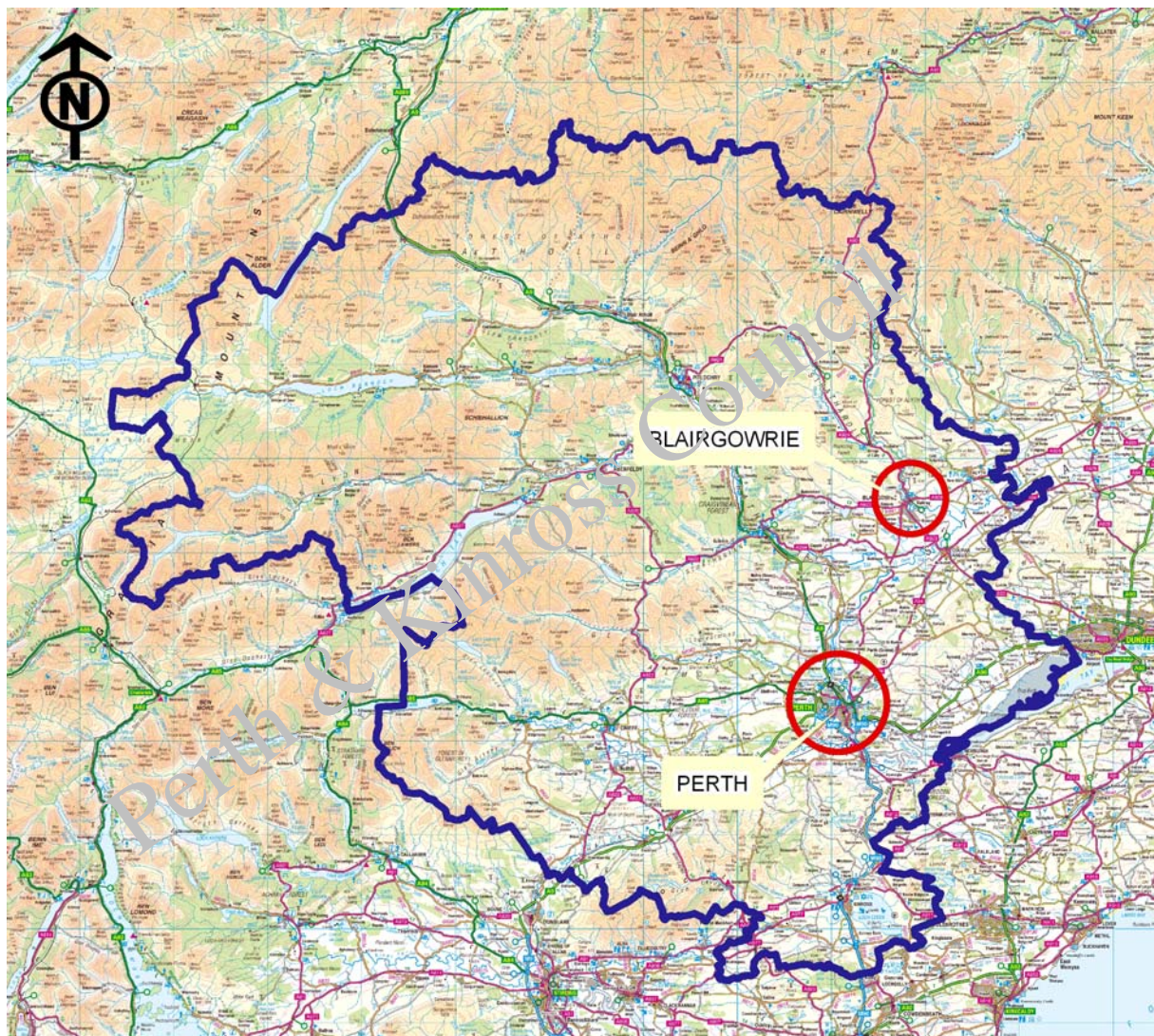
NB: No appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and omission of any particular building, space or feature does not imply any comment on its merits.

CONTEXT AND SURVEY

Regional and local context

3.1 Blairgowrie is located towards the eastern edge of Perth and Kinross, to the north of and approximately equidistant from Perth and Dundee. The town lies on the river Ericht at the southern entry to Glenshee.

Map 1: Location of Blairgowrie within Perth and Kinross

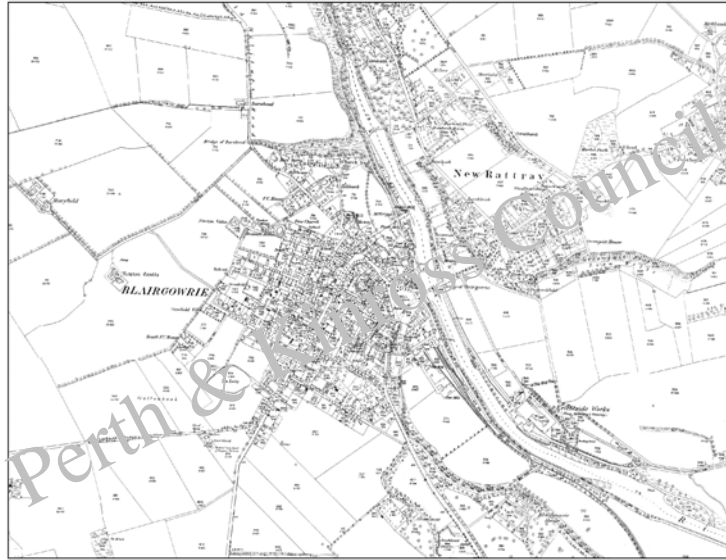


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3.2 Properly known as the Burgh of Blairgowrie and Rattray, the two formerly independent settlements, situated on the west and east banks of the Ericht respectively, were united in 1929. The nucleated centre of Old Rattray, around 1km to the east of the Ericht bridge, has a distinctive character of its own. This appraisal will focus on Blairgowrie and the nineteenth century areas of New Rattray which relate most closely to the river.

3.3 The parish of Blairgowrie sits on the Highland Boundary fault, the geological dividing line between highland and lowland Scotland. The geology to the south of the fault is based on conglomerates and sandstones of the Lower Old Red Sandstone groups. The coarse red stone is a key element helping to form the character of Blairgowrie's built environment.

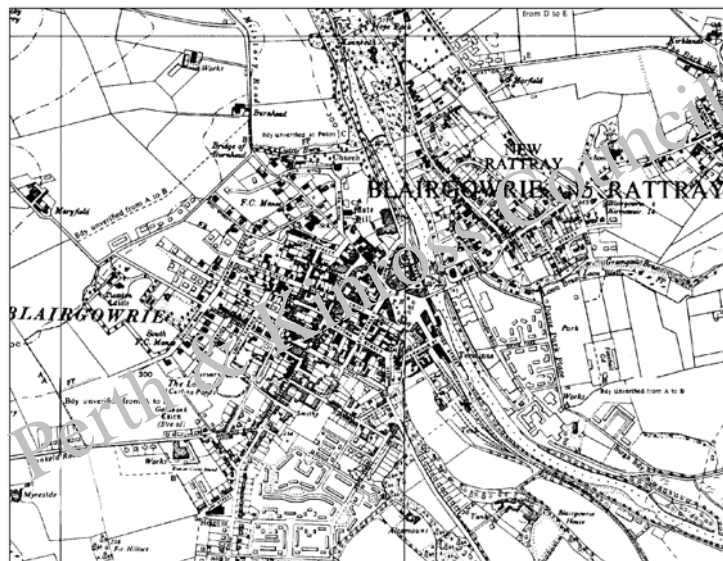
Town Development



Map 2: c.1859



Map 3: c.1901



Map 4: c.1959

3.4 The old village of Blairgowrie clusters around the former parish kirk on the Hill of Blair. Prior to the Reformation the parish kirk belonged to the Abbey of Scone. The town was created a Burgh in 1634, allowing it to become a market town.

3.5 Modern Blairgowrie is centred on the gridiron plan laid out to the south of the old village core in the later Georgian period. The Wellmeadow forms the principal public open space, created in the triangular space between the main routes northward and across the Ericht. The area was rich in springs and the name Wellmeadow is often cited to originate from St Ninian's Well, the supposed location of baptisms by the missionary in the fourth century. The Wellmeadow later became a stopping place for drovers en route to market in Crieff and Falkirk, and a mart continued to be held on the Wellmeadow until 1904 when a new mart was built in Rattray. The Wellmeadow was also the site of regular fairs (the Fair O' Blair).

3.6 Blairgowrie's road network derives in part from the routes of drove- and military roads, one of the most important routes being that of the military road of c.1755 from Coupar Angus to Fort George. Traffic crossing the Ericht at Blairgowrie used a ford and ferry until the first bridge was constructed by subscription in 1777. This was damaged in floods in 1847 and its current appearance is the result of expansions through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

3.7 The railway arrived in 1855, linking Blairgowrie with the main line through Coupar Angus. The first station was located in Welton Road but was replaced as demand grew with a new station on Terminus Street in 1894. Freight was the principal source of revenue for the railway, with coal being the main import and fruit the main export of the area. Rail traffic gradually declined from the 1930s. Passenger service ceased in 1955 and the line closed altogether in 1965. Today there is little surviving physical evidence of Blairgowrie station, the site having been finally cleared for a supermarket in 2004.

3.8 Blairgowrie was already a centre of the hand-spinning industry before the arrival of several mechanised jute and flax mills powered by the Ericht and the Lornty Burn from the late eighteenth century. This rapidly-expanding sector attracted migrant workers and initiated extensive expansion of the burgh. Between the 1790s and 1845 the Statistical Accounts record Blairgowrie's population rising from 1651 to 3472 and Rattray's from 500 to 1375. By 1870 some 2500 were said to be employed in the textile trade. However the industry fell into decline after the 1880s and between 1929 and 1933 only one mill remained in operation. Wartime and post-war demand saw a brief renaissance for the mills, some diversifying into artificial fibres and using electrical power. However by 1979 the last mill had closed down.

3.9 Blairgowrie and Rattray's location also led to its growth as the 'soft fruit capital of Scotland', boosted particularly by the introduction of raspberry cultivation to the area in the late nineteenth century. Pulping, jam-making, freezing and canning plants appeared as related industries. Soft fruit cultivation remains a significant land use in the area but employment has fallen significantly due to increased mechanisation and the loss of added-value processing.

3.10 Tourism is an important element of Blairgowrie's economy, based principally on access to outdoor activities in Glenshee. Current initiatives are promoting the area as a hub for walking. The area's industrial heritage has been a tourist attraction although the visitor facilities housed in the Keathbank Mill ceased to operate in 2004, and the mill has been converted to housing.

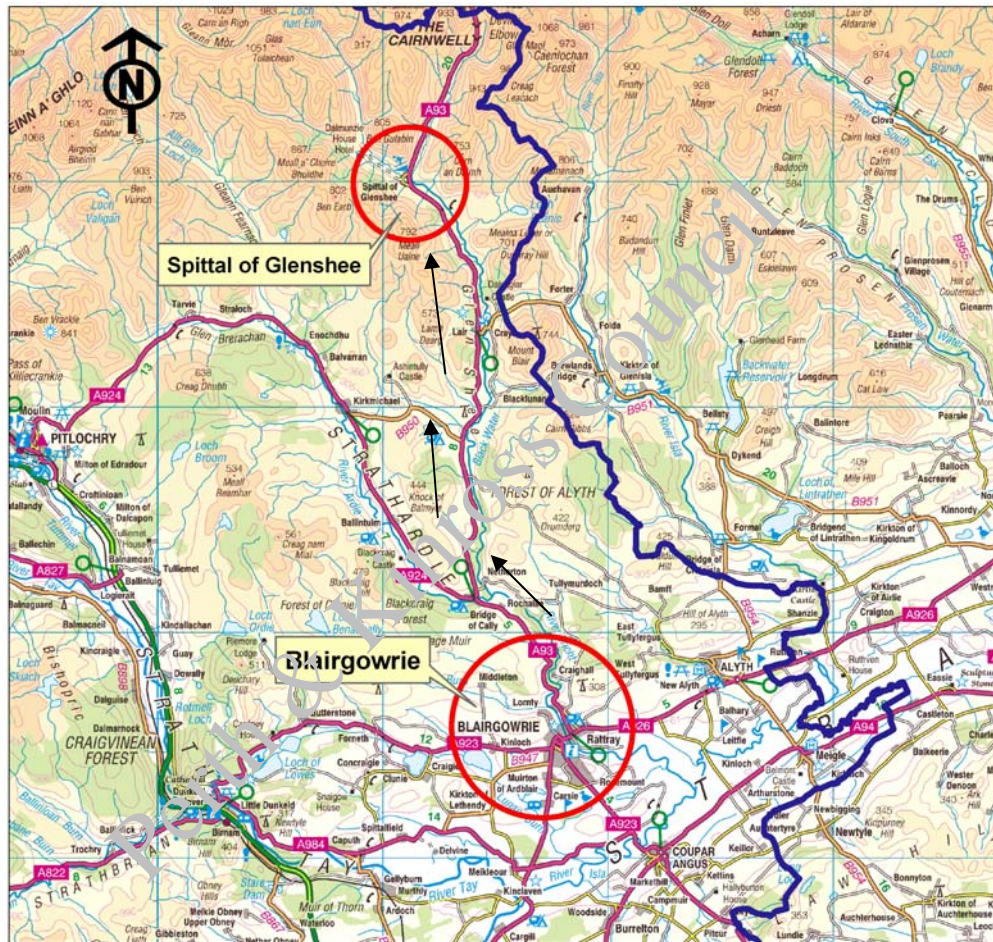
TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

Setting

4.1 Blairgowrie's immediate setting is formed by the contrast between its southern and northern approaches. To the south, undulating arable land stretches between Blairgowrie and the river Isla, with a system of glacial lochs along the Lunan Burn to the south-west of the town. From the Hill O'Blair northwards the topography becomes significantly steeper and more rugged with moorland and some forestry following the Erich into Glenshee and Strathardle.

Activity and Movement

Map 5: Map indicates entry into Glenshee from Blairgowrie



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4.2 The main routes from Perth and Dundee, the A93 and A923 respectively, converge in Blairgowrie and form two of the principal commercial streets, Perth Road/High Street and Bankhead/Gas Brae/Boat Brae. The A923 follows the route of the military road as far as Blairgowrie. The A93, the National Tourist Route to Braemar, branches off in Rattray to head northwards into Glenshee.

4.3 Traffic through the town centre can cause congestion at peak times and in high season. However this has probably protected the viability of the town centre and avoided the development of out-of-town shopping. Recent traffic management works have addressed congestion issues but these now need to be integrated with enhancement measures which work with and strengthen the town's local distinctiveness.

4.4 The network of streets centred on the Wellmeadow, Allan Street and High Street forms the commercial centre of the town, with a range of retail, business and food and drink uses providing for local and visitor trade.

Economic profile

4.5 The Eastern area within which Blairgowrie sits is the most economically fragile within Perth and Kinross, and as a result is identified as a priority for action. The unemployment rate for Blairgowrie & Rattray as a whole ranks higher than the average for Perth and Kinross. The area retains a high emphasis on employment in the agricultural, construction and manufacturing sectors. Blairgowrie and Rattray is envisaged to remain the dominant driver in the local economy and is likely to account for over 50% of its housing growth.

4.6 Although tourism is important to Blairgowrie's economy, employment in this sector remains below average for Perth and Kinross. Blairgowrie is used principally as a gateway to attractions outwith the Authority boundary, such as skiing in Glenshee, and to some degree lacks its own attractions. Walking is becoming more important with the development of the Cateran Trail and other path initiatives.

Street Pattern and Topography

4.7 Blairgowrie's site slopes upwards roughly from south to north with the original village centre at the upper end of the town. With the arrival of mechanised mills around the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the town experienced a major expansion. A distinctive built phase is evident in the gridded street plan laid out on the southern slopes in 1809, which contains the bulk of Blairgowrie's civic and commercial functions. As the town grew in size and prosperity through the early to middle nineteenth century areas of residential villa development appeared around the western and southern approaches to the town.

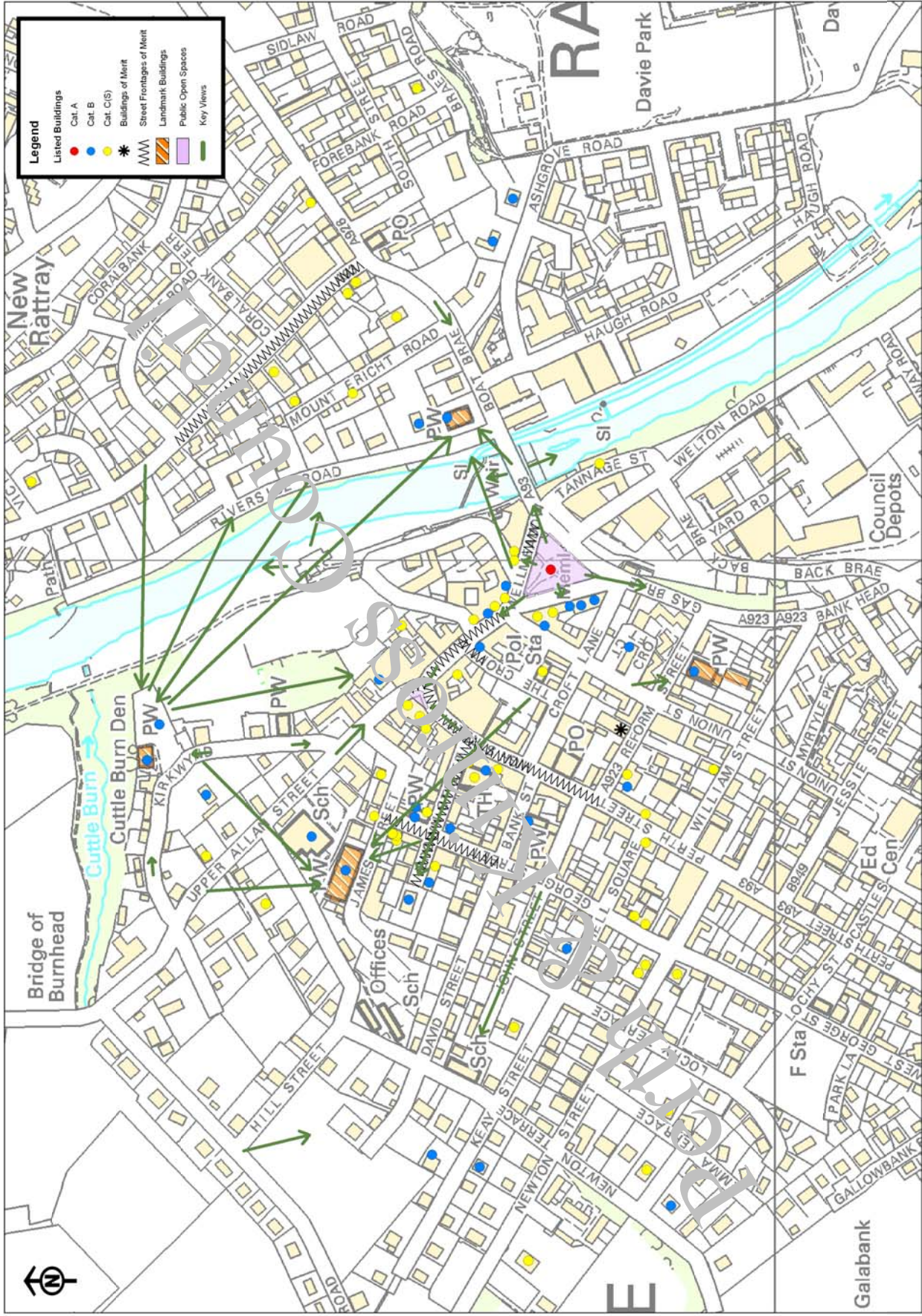
4.8 The arrival of the railway and gas-lighting led to the development of the area next to the Ericht in the south eastern corner of Blairgowrie with the creation of Gas Brae and Terminus Street. Commercial Street was cut to improve access to the station in 1882. Since the closure of the railway redevelopment of this formerly industrial hinterland, with large spaces between buildings, has produced a sharp discontinuity in Blairgowrie's townscape south of the Wellmeadow.

Buildings and Townscape

4.9 As industrial structures such as mills and gas works have disappeared from the central townscape, churches have remained the primary landmarks. The Hill Church, Blairgowrie Parish Church (St Andrews), St Mary's South Church and Riverside Methodist Church, Boat Brae make the most dramatic visual contribution to the town owing to their siting and prominent towers or spires. However there are a number of more modest church buildings for a variety of congregations which make an important contribution to the streetscape, notably St Stephen's Roman Catholic Church and Halls, John Street; St Catharine's Episcopal Church, George Street and St Mary's South Church, Reform Street.

4.10 The mills which were so formative in Blairgowrie's history make surprisingly little visual contribution to the current town centre. Meikle Mill was the first flax spinning mill to be built, in 1798, and its walls survive in the picnic area near Blairgowrie Bridge. Fifteen further mills appeared from 1814 onwards. Areas further north along both sides of the Ericht retain the more complete survivals, but are outwith the scope of the conservation area. The mills' industrial archaeology however is critical to the character of the riverside areas particularly along Lower Mill Street, Tannage Street and in the surviving lades and sluices along the New Rattray side of the Ericht.

Map 6: Townscape Analysis





New Rattray from West Bank

4.11 The Wellmeadow is the traditional public space and core of the town. Blairgowrie has no ensemble of public buildings but a more scattered pattern producing points of interest across a wider area of the town centre. St Stephen's Roman Catholic School has a particularly important role, closing the vista northwards along John Street and creating one of the more formal, set-piece townscape views in the central area. The Old Bank House performs a similar role in relation to Brown Street. Interestingly, several important public buildings such as the council offices and library, town hall and police station are located with their main frontages away from the principal streets, giving them a curiously self-effacing character. This phenomenon allows moments of discovery as architectural highlights appear suddenly from narrow, intimate viewpoints. In turn this has allowed the commercial architecture of banks, hotels and shops to have a stronger role in the formation of the character of the main streets, especially High Street, Perth Street, Leslie Street, Allan Street and the Wellmeadow.

4.12 Inns and hotels have a strong presence in Blairgowrie, mostly clustered around the Wellmeadow and providing evidence of its role as a market town. The most significant are the Royal Hotel at the Cross; the Cartwheel, Allan Street (former Commercial Inn); Victoria Hotel, Lower Mill Street; the Ericht Ale House, Wellmeadow; the Angus (former Railway) Hotel, Wellmeadow and the Crown Hotel, Wellmeadow. Most of the hotels date from the earlier to mid-nineteenth century and are characterised by their formal, often ashlar frontages with classical detailing, many with porches/porticoes. The inns are often more modest, one or two storey buildings in vernacular tradition. Almost all have been extended in one or more phases, sometimes with less than sympathetic design and massing.

4.13 The remaining townscape of central Blairgowrie consists of mainly two and three storey terraces in ashlar or rendered, slate roofed and with shop units at ground floor. Plots appear to have been developed separately with few runs of consistent design. However the common language of height and form, materials and detailing gives the centre a fairly uniform character with gentle variations on a few themes. Stylistically most are typical nineteenth century townscape buildings in a simple, robust, classically-derived style with a few more academically-correct designs in a variety of revivalist styles such as the Old Bank House.

4.14 The terrace forming the south-west side of the Wellmeadow contains the most prestigious architectural ensemble, with finely-detailed classical terraces of three to four storeys. Most premises in the town centre have had their original shopfronts replaced but several good examples of nineteenth and early twentieth century design survive, such as the Dome Café, Leslie Street; H.W. Irvine, Perth Street and Crockart & Son, Allan Street.

Traditional Shop Fronts:



H.W.Irvine



J.A.S Crockart & Son

4.15 Outwith the immediate centre longer runs of one to two storey cottages or terraces along George Street or John Street give way to less densely-built villas in their own grounds to the north and west. There are several notable examples of local variations on the Arts and Crafts style, clustered around Keay Street. A similar pattern operates in New Rattray between the more densely developed frontage to Balmoral Road and the villas running down to the Ericht.

Spaces

4.16 The Wellmeadow is the principal formal public open space in what is otherwise a fairly densely developed built core. It is triangular in plan and laid out as formal gardens with the war memorial as the central focus. The experience of arriving in this space from Allan Street, Leslie Street or Mill Street is enhanced by the contrast of these relatively narrow streets with dense urban form on either side. There is a secondary public space at the top of Allan Street on the north side of the junction with High Street. This is a small paved area opposite the attractive frontage of the Royal Hotel, offering an important view of the Wellmeadow.



Well meadow Gardens from East

4.17 In the central area of the town development is characterised by being built hard up to the edge of the footway without front areas or gardens. The principal thoroughfares are interspersed with narrow lanes and few visible rear gardens or gap sites, although a few open backland areas

exist, now often taken over for car parking.

4.18 The grid laid out over a sloping site allows glimpses of the town's wooded setting along the banks of the Ericht. The Ericht and its banks form a major space within the town, with areas formerly occupied by mills and associated structures now opened out to accommodate footpaths, recreation areas, car parking etc. On the New Rattray side the gardens of large villas further enrich this picturesque setting by the river.

Map 7: Density of buildings within the grid iron street layout



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4.19 The Hill Church yard and Kirk Wynd are good vantage points for views over the town centre and the river. Many of the older gravestones and the graveyard paths generally are in a poor state of repair and in need of attention. The church has an attractive backdrop of woodland although this is not particularly accessible due to steep gradients and no defined pedestrian route.

Trees and Landscaping

Map 8: Green Areas in Blairgowrie





View over river to Rattray from Hill Church Graveyard

Trees and Landscaping

4.20 The wooded banks of the Ericht make an important contribution to the setting of Blairgowrie and Rattray. Much of the northern and eastern edges of the conservation area are framed by dense oak and beech woodland, including both sides of the river. This woodland backdrop is a key feature in views out of and into the town and has significant recreational and biodiversity value. The Catevan trail begins on the west bank and forms a route through an uninterrupted wildlife corridor of woodland all the way to Glenshee.

4.21 Boundary treatments including hedges, walls and railings are an important element in the character and appearance of Blairgowrie. Blairgowrie is remarkable for the extent of survival of its original ironwork in boundary railings; apparently owing to the stubborn refusal of the Provost to allow their removal during the Second World War. The areas of villa development around the old village core and expanding to the north-west are characterised by extensive gardens with sturdy rubble boundary walls, railings, mature hedges and trees. Balmoral Road also retains substantial examples of original railings. Significant species of mature trees are copper beech, lime and yew.



From left to right:- View into Conservation Area from Ericht Bridge, Stone boundary walls at Kirk Wynd, Example of ornamental iron railings

4.22 The Wellmeadow is framed on its north-east side by evenly spaced medium sized trees and there are a few similar sized trees on its south-east side. There may be a case for planting more small trees on the south-eastern edge. There are substantial tree belts along the eastern edge of Gas Brae/Bankhead and further along the Coupar Angus road and these provide attractive views out of the conservation area and a visual screen to the industrial estate area directly south from the Wellmeadow.

4.23 On the New Rattray side of the river there are attractive tree groups in large gardens on both sides of Boat Brae, forming a gateway feature into the conservation area as you approach on the main roads from the east and north.

4.24 Any proposals to fell or lop trees within the conservation area will be subject to certain planning controls under the Town & Country Planning Act. These controls are explained further in the Appendices.

4.25 There are four Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in Blairgowrie, at Linn Keith and Keathbank Mill on the Rattray side of the river and at Altamount Hotel and Broomfield House to the south of the town centre. The trees at Linn Keith/Keathbank can be seen clearly from Kirk Wynd and the Hill of Blair, the oldest part of town.

4.26 There may be a case for more TPOs to be formulated for tree groups around the edge of town which are outwith the conservation area but which make a positive contribution to its immediate setting:

- a) area south of Boat Brae, New Rattray: large garden plots around Ericht Lane and north side of Ashgrove Road, continuing onto the north side of Davie Park;
- b) tree belts along Back Brae and the Coupar Angus road: continuing on from Altamount, these trees provide the frame to the conservation area and the screening of the industrial area as you approach from the south;
- c) Drumcairn, Hill O' Blair: mature gardens and adjacent green space to the south;
- d) west side of Newton Terrace:- several mature gardens;
- e) Lochy Terrace, south of Newton Street: substantial tree groups in gardens on west side of street.



From left to right: View out of Conservation Area on Gas Brae; Boat Brae looking into New Rattray; Top of Gas Brae

Negative Factors

5.1 Townscape to the south-east of the Wellmeadow: since the disappearance of the railway terminus this area has been partially redeveloped in a piecemeal fashion. Existing buildings do not relate to each other visually and there are some wide gaps between them. The buildings often display little attention to context and tend to have rather bland expanses of façade. A large expanse of area for vehicular traffic has emerged, which is essentially a triple width of road. There is little definition or edge to this area and this has a negative effect on the setting and views out of the Wellmeadow, Blairgowrie's most important public open space.



Immediately South of the Wellmeadow



Looking from Mill Street into Lower Mill Street

5.2 Mill Street/Lower Mill Street: this is a key route from the Wellmeadow to the banks of the Erich and associated woodland. Both sides of the street suffer visually from high blank walls and fences at the rear of commercial properties and vacant backland spaces.

5.3 Upper Allan Street, parking area to the side of the Royal Hotel: this urban space is an ill defined area of tarmac and unfortunately highlights the corrugated fire escape structure, three storeys high, on the north side of the hotel.

5.4 Various alterations and extensions in unsympathetic materials and designs, such as dormers, extensions, replacement windows, shopfronts, cladding and render. Future alterations of this kind will be guided by the design advice to accompany this appraisal. Some of these works can be addressed through control of permitted development, which will be covered in more detail in the 'Effects of Permitted Development' section (16.3 - 16.6).

5.5 Priorities and proposals for action to address these sites are identified in the 'Opportunities for Enhancement' section (17 and 18).

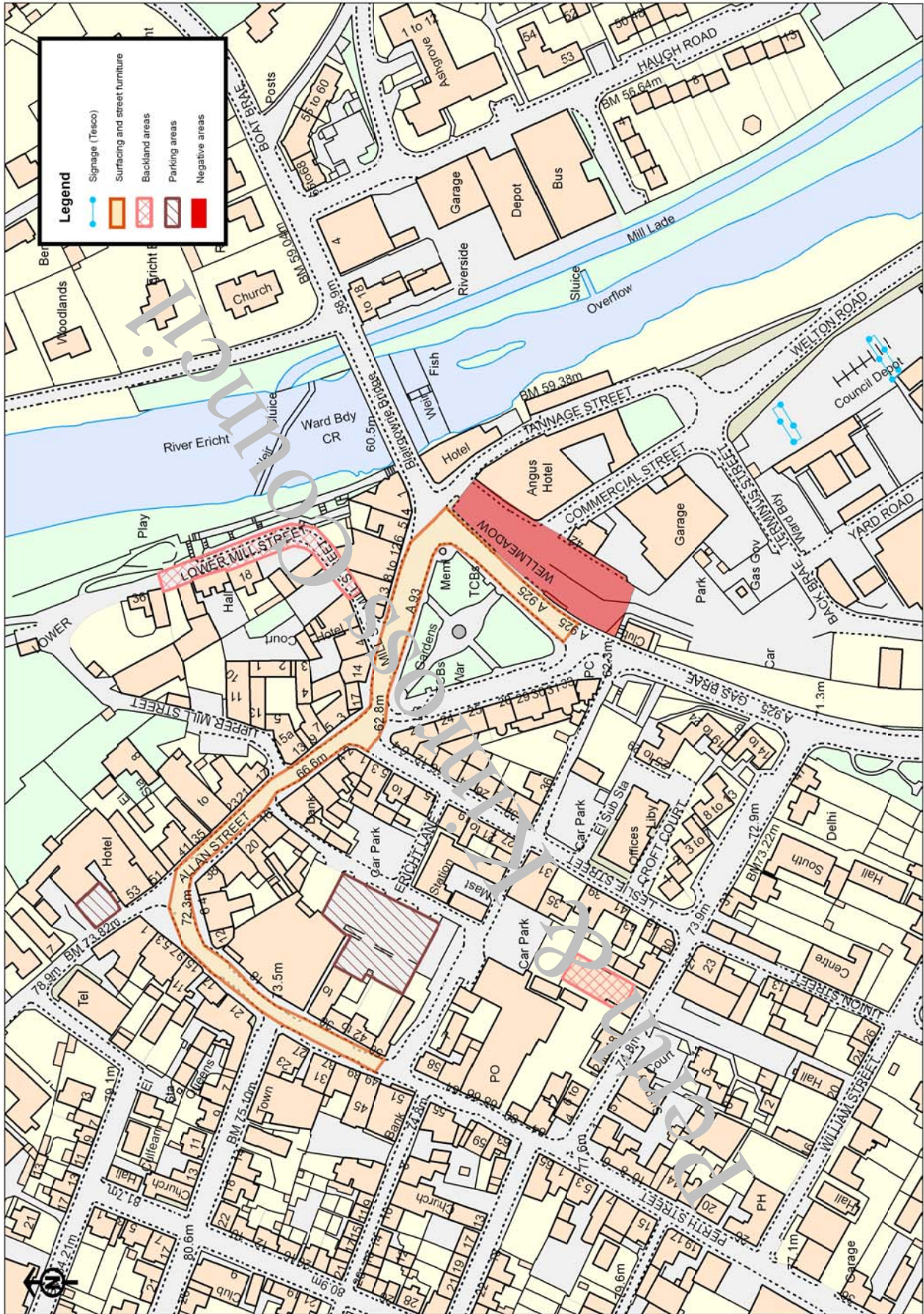


Unsympathetic rear extension



Poor dormer design

Map 9: Negative Factors



Building by Building Analysis

6.1 A photographic survey of all buildings in the Conservation Area has been carried out and will be added as an appendix to the appraisal document. This will record architectural details, condition and alterations at this particular point in time, which will provide a valuable monitoring indicator and aid decision making.

6.2 A full list of listed buildings and unlisted buildings of merit is provided in the Appendices.

Buildings at Risk Survey

7.1 Buildings listed on the Scottish Civic Trust register for investigation:

Lornty Mill and Arnbank House of Brooklinn Mill, Blairgowrie and Keathbank Mill, Rattray are highlighted for their importance to the town's industrial past. Oakbank Mill was also included but is now indicated as being in the process of restoration. Although these buildings are outwith the Conservation Area they are relevant to the setting of the Area and to the development and growth of the town.

Quinn's Picture House (former), Reform St. The condition of this unlisted building is poor. It has been available for sale since 2000.

7.2 The state of buildings in the area will be monitored and the Buildings At risk register updated at regular intervals.

Public Realm Audit

8.1 Street furniture in public open spaces is generally of standard, 'off-the-shelf' design, such as benches and litter bins. Pedestrian finger posts are of a Victorian style design.

8.2 There is only one example of public art in the form of a metal sculpture in Mill Street. This is a unique and positive contribution to the townscape. More public art of this quality should be encouraged.

8.3 There is some road traffic signage, particularly around the Wellmeadow and at the junction of Allan Street with High Street, which creates a degree of visual clutter. The commercial signage of the new Tesco store is particularly disturbing in terms of visual impact, both from the Wellmeadow and from the top of Allan Street. There are also some shop fascia and hanging signs around the Wellmeadow which are poor in design quality.

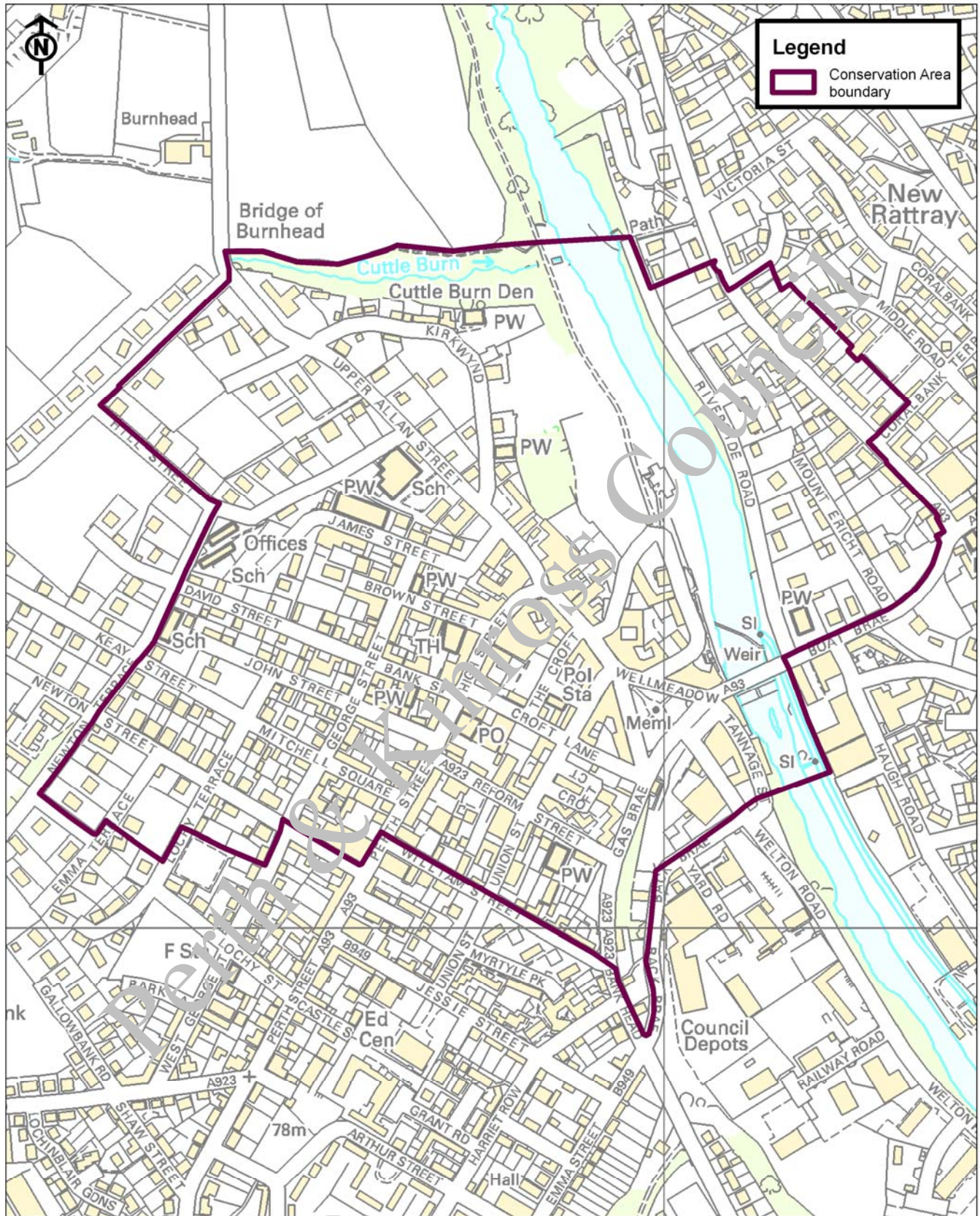


Tesco Signage from Allan Street



Over use of shop signs/advertisements

Map 10: Conservation Area boundary



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Surveys of Specific Issues

9.1 All conservation areas contain streetscapes, building types, architectural details, materials or other features which are unique to that area and a result of their historical development. These features contribute to an area's local distinctiveness, the characteristics that lend it a unique sense of place. Some of these characteristics are general or intangible, but others can be quite closely defined.

9.2 The following is not an exhaustive list and will be augmented in the future. It identifies the most important types of features and elements of the townscape which help to shape its identity, but which may be most at risk of incremental erosion. A full survey of each category will be undertaken as part of the building analysis survey. This will provide example images which may be referred to when new development, alterations and extensions are proposed in the area.

Windows & doors



Roofscapes



Boundary treatments



Shopfronts



Decoration & detail



Materials



Sensitivity Analysis

Archaeology

10.1 Within the old village of Blairgowrie there are areas of archaeological sensitivity. Near the site of a former church manse, to the west of Manse Court at the bottom of Kirk Wynd, is a piece of ground described as Mote Hill on old maps from the nineteenth century. This area was surveyed in 1796 and the possible remains of a prehistoric burial cairn were recorded. The Hill Church and the land around it is also sensitive due to the possibility of a mediaeval burial ground. Other churches and their curtilages are indicated as historic monuments in the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust Historic Environment Record (HER) for Blairgowrie.

Development issues

10.2 A major challenge for the town centre is too little, rather than an excess of, development pressure, particularly with the relocation of major retailers to the edge of the town centre leaving vacant buildings. The lack of strong market opportunity is a threat to the long-term viability of the town centre and must be addressed through broader economic initiatives. However the strong character and identity of Blairgowrie identified in this appraisal can be used to support these broader aims.

10.3 Competition for larger and brighter advertisements on buildings, posts or lamp columns needs to be managed in the interests of visual amenity, taking into account vehicular flows and traffic management measures.

10.4 A major pressure in the future could be on the setting of villas, garden space and boundary treatments and the loss of mature trees through extensions to property or the erection of new developments within villa grounds.

Character Areas

11.1 The conservation area falls into four main areas of distinct character which broadly relate to different phases of the town's development:

- 1) The old village core on the Hill of Blair, characterised by its winding street pattern and the prominent landmark of the Hill Church.
- 2) The area of the Georgian grid, the current commercial heart of Blairgowrie.
- 3) The areas of Victorian expansion to the west of the first two character areas, typified by relatively high-status villas in extensive gardens.
- 4) Related to phase 3 is the riverside area of New Rattray. This consists of a relatively modest principal thoroughfare, Balmoral Road, from which extensive gardens ran down to the Ericht in order for villa development here to take advantage of the picturesque setting. Many of these long gardens have been subdivided with twentieth century development appearing between the original villas and Riverside Road.

Assessment of Significance

12.1 The traditional townscape of Blairgowrie and New Rattray is relatively unaltered and the conservation area includes the architectural styles and urban design associated with a series of historical periods. There is the oldest part of Blairgowrie with its mediaeval street layout on steep gradients, the Georgian grid-iron street pattern of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century market town and then the later, lower density development of Victorian villas with large gardens to the west and on the New Rattray side of the Ericht. The river and its wooded banks contribute significantly to the townscape experience. There are also substantial woodland areas and mature gardens framing the town to the north and west. The Wellmeadow, the traditional focus of the town for markets and fairs, is a distinctive and special public space in terms of history and urban design. The setting of the town has contrast between the fertile arable farmland to the south and the forests and hill moorland to the north with the mountain scenery of Glenshee beyond.

CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Using the Conservation Area Appraisal

13.1 The conservation area appraisal (CAA) provides a sound basis for development management and for initiatives to promote environmental and economic improvements. The key issues and features that contribute to the character of Blairgowrie are addressed and proposals prepared for enhancing the character of the area. This will be done through local consultation with amenity groups, businesses and other community organisations. Public meetings and exhibitions will also be arranged.

13.2 Based on the findings of the appraisal, the conservation area boundary has been drawn to include those areas of the town centre which are a focus of architectural and historic character and quality, reflecting the various important phases of the town's evolution. Areas have been excluded which, in the Council's opinion, fall short of the necessary standard owing to the dispersed nature of any buildings of architectural merit or their irreversible erosion through unsympathetic alteration. However the boundary will be kept under review as policies change or as research highlights previously undervalued areas.

13.3 The CAA provides a framework for on-going management of the conservation area in the medium term as well as the near future. The key objectives are:

- To ensure maintenance of the integrity of the conservation area;
- To prevent erosion of character through small-scale change;
- To enable future evolution and change as long as it is appropriately controlled.

13.4 Implementing these objectives will depend on a number of factors:

- Development proposals must be in accordance with development plan policies relating to conservation area status and special character of the historic building fabric, open spaces and tree groups. Design, materials and detailing will require to be in accordance with design guidelines prepared by the local planning authority;
- Development proposals should demonstrate a sustainable approach, including use of materials and sustainability of use;
- Adaptive re-use of buildings and mixed use projects to ensure a reverse in physical, visual or economic decline will be positively considered subject to compatibility with neighbouring property and uses;
- The potential for economic regeneration will be considered as positive factors, subject to compatibility with neighbours.

13.5 While current planning policies provide a framework for protection of the conservation area, it is important to ensure implementation and enforcement where necessary. A combination of guidance, information and planning tools will be used in this management role, as indicated below:

- Conservation Area guidance: design advice will be provided for owners and occupiers of residential and commercial property with regard to building alterations and improvements, and there will also be advice for any new build site infill;
- Grant aid: the local planning authority will provide information regarding what grant schemes may be available from partnership agencies and other organisations for certain types of repair or enhancement works;
- Enforcement action: the planning authority has produced an enforcement charter which will identify unauthorised works within and adjacent to conservation areas as priorities for action;
- Article 4 Directions: the planning authority is committed to establishing this additional planning tool within all conservation areas in order to bring certain classes of permitted development under planning control;

- Repairs Notices: the planning authority will seek to work with owners of listed buildings but will take action in terms of undertaking urgent works or requiring repairs where owners allow buildings to fall into disrepair;
- Compulsory Purchase orders: the planning authority will exercise its rights to acquire buildings in disrepair to assist their repair and conversion in partnership with other agencies;
- Education and training: the planning authority is in the process of establishing links with Historic Scotland and Scottish Enterprise to facilitate conservation training programmes for building contractors and other interested parties or private individuals. PKHT has recently secured resources from the Heritage Lottery fund to develop an interpretive and outreach education programme in conjunction with other agencies to promote understanding and enjoyment of conservation areas.

13.6 There is a firm commitment from the planning authority to ensure the protection and enhancement of Blairgowrie Conservation Area and to use statutory planning powers when these are required. The importance of public consultation with local civic amenity and community groups and local businesses is fully understood and this will continue after the conservation area has been designated and established.

Monitoring and Review

The Conservation Area will be monitored through:

14.1 Photographic surveys: a detailed survey of all buildings and open spaces within the conservation area has been undertaken as part of the appraisal and will form the basis for monitoring further change;

14.2 Observation: officers from the planning authority will visit the conservation area and check on the progress of any restoration and enhancement schemes and also observe any other works occurring which may be unauthorised;

14.3 Liaison: officers will liaise with local amenity groups, the public and other interested parties as necessary;

14.5 Review: the conservation area appraisal will be monitored and reviewed from time to time depending upon budget constraints and other priorities.

PROPOSALS

Opportunities for Development

15.1 Ericht Mills sites: the former mills along the Ericht have been identified as potential opportunities for employment-generating uses. It is recognised that a flexible approach to mixed uses and enabling development may be necessary in order to provide the additional investment required to support the retention and protection of historic fabric.



Hill Primary School, Upper Allan Street

15.2 The Council is committed to providing a new community school campus to replace Hill Primary School by 2009. The site offers the opportunity to convert this category B listed building combined with sympathetic construction of new build elements. As well as housing a mixture of uses may be acceptable. There is also the separate Hill Primary Annex site proposed for high density private housing. A development brief would assist sympathetic adaptation of this site.

15.3 St Stephen's RC Primary School: similar situation to the above. A Category B listed building.

15.4 Quinn's Picture House, Reform Street: this vacant building has been on the Scottish Civic Trust's buildings at risk database since 2000. Imaginative alteration and conversion to housing or mixed use will be encouraged.

15.5 It is important that any development at these sites is in sympathy with the essential character of the conservation area and the opportunity should be taken to positively enhance that character. Demolition and redevelopment should be seen as the last resort once all other reasonable options have been exhausted, in accordance with the Historic Scotland Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, paragraphs 2.10 - 2.14.

Opportunities for Planning Action

Conservation Area boundary refinement

16.1 A draft boundary was identified in the draft Eastern Area Local Plan 2005. This boundary has been refined and extended as part of the appraisal process.

The area containing negative factors immediately to the south-east of the Wellmeadow has been included in order to provide a buffer zone to this key public space and to enable the possibilities of funding for an enhancement scheme to improve this area.

16.2 A further area to the west of George Street, incorporating more of John Street and Bank Street, is also included, as this part of town is a key part of the Georgian grid iron pattern of streets and has interesting groups of or individual buildings, including St Stephen's primary school.

Effects of permitted development

16.3 There are examples in the town of development which would not have required planning permission (under the General Permitted Development Order 1992), called 'permitted development', but which are not conducive to the traditional character of the townscape. Alterations to listed buildings are covered by listed building legislation and the need to obtain listed building consent, but unlisted buildings, are not covered by this legislation. Small scale developments or alterations to unlisted buildings or open spaces may not be significant individually but cumulatively they can erode the visual fabric of the townscape and there is the potential, without development management, for more of such developments to appear.



From left to right: Rear extension; Brick boundary wall; poor window replacement

16.4 Classes of development which are usually 'permitted' include small extensions or some types of alterations to the exterior of houses, including replacement windows; small buildings or alterations within the curtilage of houses; some satellite dishes; construction or alteration of walls, fences or gates; repairs to private streets; caravan sites; some forms of telecommunications development; some types of development by statutory undertakers (water, gas, electricity, road transport, post office and sewerage) and, certain types of development by local authorities, including lamp standards and street furniture. In Blairgowrie the townscape is particularly vulnerable to some if not all of these 'permitted development' classes. For example, the alteration or replacement of stone boundary walls or iron railings; developments within the curtilage of mature gardens and possible loss of trees or hedges; visual clutter of telecommunications and electricity apparatus on or near buildings, and alterations to roads and parking areas.

16.5 Under Article 4 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the local planning authority can seek the approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict permitted development rights. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals. In order to maximise the benefit of a conservation area designation it is considered that an 'Article 4 Direction' should be drafted for Scottish Ministers approval.

16.6 Unlisted buildings, although often humble, have their own important role to play within a conservation area, forming sympathetic and complementary groupings with their listed counterparts. Any erosion in standards permitted for work to unlisted properties will in the long

term seriously affect the architectural quality of the conservation area. One of the aims of conservation area designation is to promote enhancement projects and attract funding for building repair schemes. There is little point however in grant aiding a shopfront enhancement or repair of timber sash and case windows in one building in the absence of development management to prevent unsuitable modern windows being inserted in the next building. In instances where the importance of controlling alterations and extensions to unlisted buildings within a conservation area is thought to be appropriate and an Article 4 Direction has been approved, the local planning authority must make every effort to ensure that the standards required for work to listed buildings within the conservation area also apply as far as possible to their unlisted neighbours.



From left to right:- Early 19th century building in Wellmeadow, original window and inappropriate window replacement within the same block

Advertisement control

16.7 There is some rather obtrusive and standardised shop signage in Blairgowrie's town centre. The shop front enhancement scheme has been taken up by some proprietors and has had a positive effect on many buildings. Unfortunately however, as a voluntary scheme, its impact may be diluted by unsympathetic signage remaining on non-participating premises. Further measures to manage standards of advertising are therefore proposed.



Before façade scheme



After façade scheme

16.8 Certain types of advertisements, such as some shop signs, do not require advertisement consent under the Town & Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984. It is possible for a local planning authority to propose an Area of Special Advertisement Control (SAC). SAC status would be a useful development management tool and would cover the majority of significant shop or business signage. A draft SAC direction will be drafted for consultation and Scottish Ministers' approval. Special Advertisement Control status is explained further in the Appendices.

Need for building repair or urgent works

16.9 The former Quinn's Cinema will be monitored.

Trees

16.10 There are tree groups outwith the conservation area boundary which are important to the setting of the conservation area. Local Plan policy indicates that groups of trees which are considered important will be protected by the use of Tree Preservation Orders, particularly where they are considered to be in danger. The following areas will be considered for the Tree Preservation Orders: South of Boat Brae, New Rattray, Back Brae and the Coupar Angus Road; Hill O' Blair; West side of Newton Terrace and Lochy Terrace, South of Newton Street (These areas are indicated on Map 8).

Opportunities for Enhancement

Note: Read in conjunction with map overleaf

17.1 The area around the Wellmeadow, particularly the 'apron' of open space to the south-east side, would benefit from enhancement focusing on streetscape, direction and sense of enclosure. This will be progressed in conjunction with possible enhancements to public transport provision. Ultimately the lower-density areas to the south east would benefit from development which reinforced, rather than diluted, the town's special character.



South East of Wellmeadow



Allan Street; pavement area

17.2 The wider area of pavement at the top of Allan Street could benefit from a more defined edge and/or surfacing and the removal of some particularly unattractive bollards.

17.3 Hill Church yard: the Hill Church is now used only for storage purposes and is in a poor condition. The building needs to be used again on a regular basis, preferably in some form of community or recreational use. The church yard needs urgent attention as many of the gravestones, some very old, are fallen or broken. Soft landscaping enhancement and repair work could also be considered with a defined pedestrian route which would respect the sensitivity of the place, link with a path network in the area of woodland and interpret the biodiversity.

17.4 Mill Street/Lower Mill Street/waterside area: this area would benefit from quality infill development, better definition of the street edges and a mix of hard and soft landscaping. More or improved seating areas could also be considered.

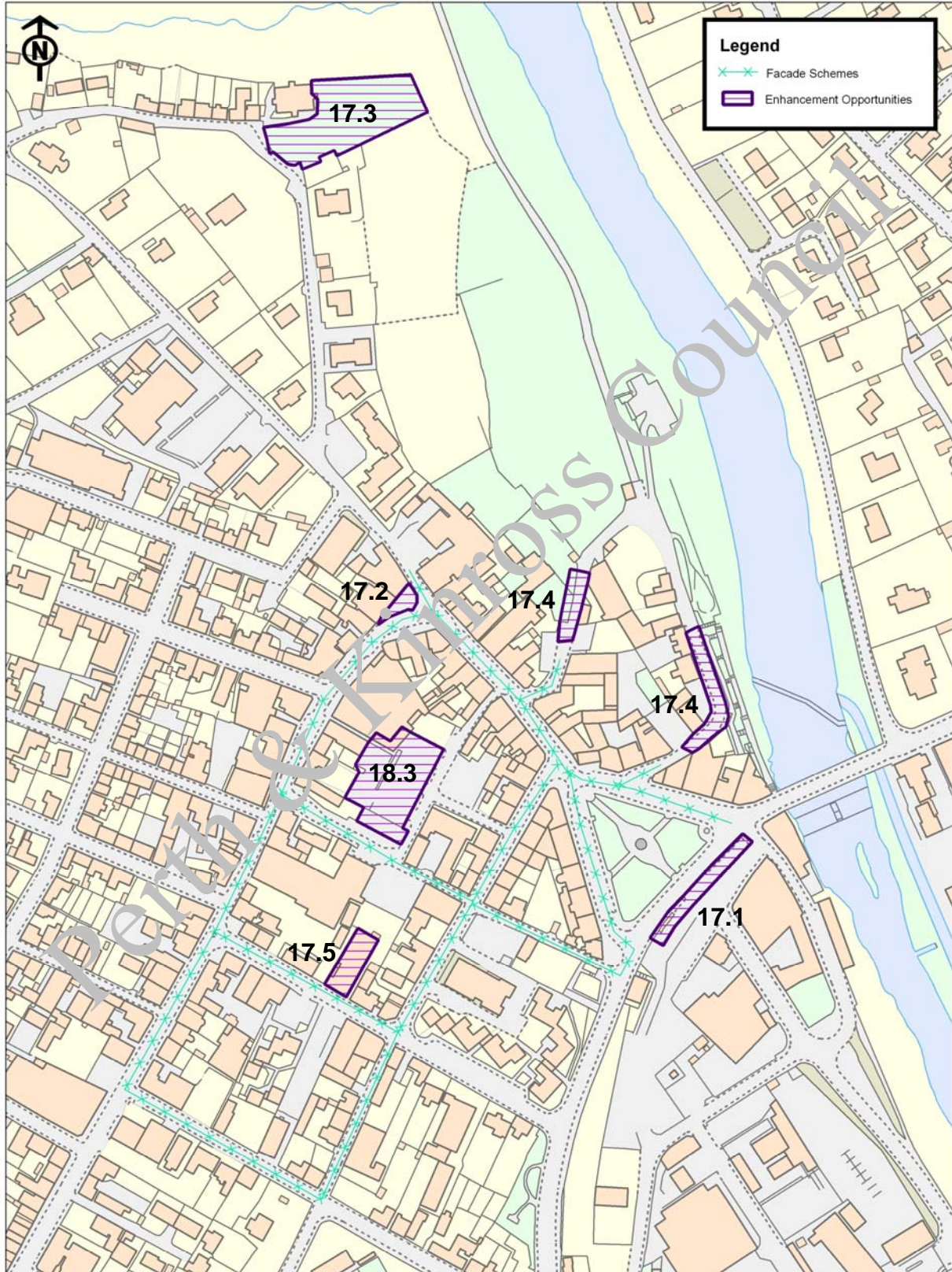
17.5 Quinn's Cinema and its backlands: a new use for this disused site is required. The façade of the cinema is of architectural interest. The backlands of the cinema are in an untidy condition and have a derelict appearance.

17.6 This appraisal seeks to support the aim to establish a major new tourist attraction utilising an historic building in the town centre.

17.7 Blairgowrie is the subject of a shopfront façade improvement scheme funded and run by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust. Positive results through grant aid can already be seen and hopefully this will inspire other businesses to follow suit.

Opportunities for Enhancement

Map 11: Enhancement Opportunities



18.1 Enhancement of the conservation area will be achieved through a variety of agencies and routes: through schemes promoted by the local authority, in partnership with local or national agencies; through private business enterprise and development or via conditions or agreements attached to planning permissions. Similarly funding may be available from a variety of sources including the local authority, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, Historic Scotland or the Heritage Lottery Fund, depending upon these organisations' priorities and resources at the time.

18.2 The local authority will recommend that the Shopfront Façade Improvement Scheme and historic buildings grant assistance is prioritised to the buildings most in need or where enhancement will have the most positive effects.

18.3 Other negative features identified in the appraisal will be prioritised for attention via development proposals; for example - the area south-east of the Wellmeadow; Mill Street/ Lower Mill Street and the parking areas in Upper Allan Street and Croft Lane. Appropriate proposals will be encouraged with planning briefs or design statements. The owners of individual buildings and sites wishing to improve their appearance will be given advice and assistance to achieve their aims where consistent with the findings of this appraisal.

APPENDICES

1) Trees within Conservation Area

All trees within the conservation area will be covered by the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Under this Act the local planning authority must be given six weeks notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. The planning authority then has the opportunity to discuss suitable management of the tree(s) with the owners, such as thinning rather than lopping. The planning authority would also have the option to propose TPO protection. Failure to give notice will render the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a TPO, which could involve a fine not exceeding £20,000 per tree.

2) Areas of Special Advertisement Control

A Special Control status means that any advertisement with lettering height of more than 0.3 of a metre (rather than 0.75 of a metre without Special Control) requires advertisement consent. Also any sign on business premises which is above 3.6 metres from ground level (ie. above the normal shop fascia level of between ground floor ceiling height and first floor) requires advertisement consent.

3) Listed Buildings

Listed buildings by street, category of listing (A/B/C(S)) indicated

Blairgowrie

Allan Street

1, 3 and 5 C(S);
7, 9 and 11, Old Brewery B;
13, 15 and 15A C(S);
53, Royal Hotel B;
14A, B, C and D, Royal Bank of Scotland B;
28-32 even C(S);

Brown Street

13, St Catherine's House C(S);
20 and 22 B;
26 C(S);
28 B;

Old Bank House B;

Town Hall C(S);

Ericht Lane

Police Station C(S);

George Street

1 C(S);
5 C(S);
7 and 17 Brown Street B;
St Catharine's Episcopal Church (B);

High Street

1 C(S);
3-9 odd C(S);
11-15 odd C(S);
21 and 1-7 (odd) Brown Street B;
23-27 odd C(S);
31-37 odd, former Institute and Library B;
39-43 odd C(S);

James Street

13A and 15 C(S);
Blairgowrie Church of Scotland Parish Church B;
James Street House C(S);

John Street

St Stephen's Roman Catholic Church B;
St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School B;

Keay Street

The Shieling B;

Kirk Wynd

Hill Church B;
Hill Church Graveyard B;

Leslie Street

14-20 even, The Dome Restaurant B;
46, Council Offices B;

Lochy Terrace

Greenfield C(S);

Lower Mill Street

Riverside Granary C(S);

Perth Street

17 and 19, Irvine's Butchers and Knock Ma Har C(S);
14-18 even C(S);

Reform Street

7, Blairgowrie Printers B;
9, Scotcrest C(S);
St Mary's South Church inc. Church Hall B;

Tannage Street

Tulach B;
Warehouse C(S);

Upper Allan Street

Gorsehill C(S);
Hill Primary School B;

Upper Mill Street

Millbank House C(S);

Wellmeadow

13, Ericht Ale House C(S);
13A C(S);
14 B;
17, Cartwheel Inn C(S);
21, 22 and 23 C(S);
24 and 25 C(S);
26, 27 and 28 B;
29 and 30, Bank Buildings B;
31, 32 and 33 B;

Wellmeadow Gardens

War Memorial A;

William Street

YWCA C(S)

New Rattray**Balmoral Road**

Balmoral Hotel C(S);

Mount Ericht C(S);

Mount Ericht Lodge C(S);

Parish Church Hall C(S);

Boat Brae

Riverside Methodist Church B;

Riverside Road

Ericht Bank B.

4) Unlisted Buildings of Merit

Quinn's Picture House (in the SCT's Buildings at Risk database as a building for investigation). and will be featured soon on the SCT website)

Streetscape buildings indicated in townscape analysis map.

5) Buildings at risk (outwith the Conservation Area)

SCT official list:

Arnbank House, Brooklinn Mill (unlisted);

Keathbank Mill, Westfield of Rattray (cat. A) – conversion to 20 units + 2 new build houses;

Lornty Mill (cat. B);

Oakbank Mill, Oakbank Road (cat. B).

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