

# Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

## Measadh agus plana stiùiridh sgìre glèidhteachais Srath Pheofhair

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**Adopted**











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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION | 1.0 RO-RÀDH

### 1.1 CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

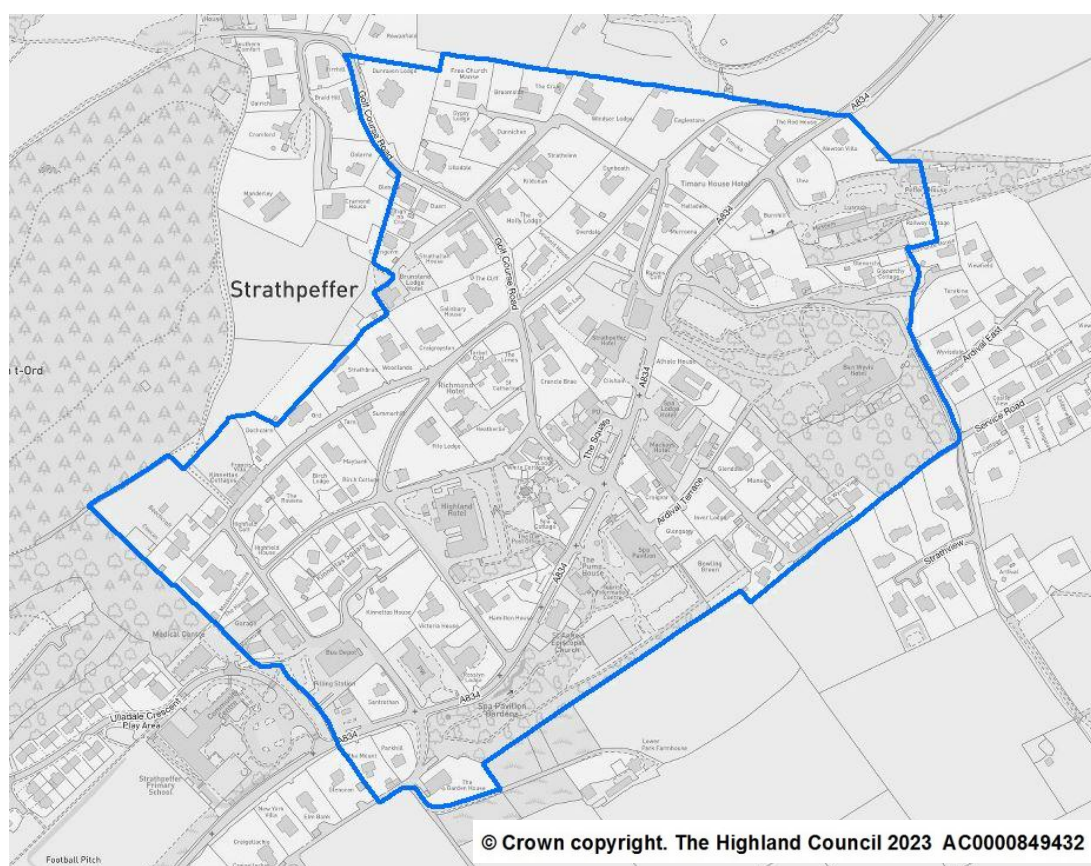
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas “...are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

Conservation area status brings the following works under planning control:

- Demolition of unlisted buildings or structures;
- Removal of, or work to trees;
- Development including, for example, small house alterations and extensions, the installation of satellite dishes, roof alterations, stone cleaning, or painting of the exterior.

The successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support of and input from stakeholders, and in particular local residents and property owners. The Council is drafting conservation area development guidance, which will be published on the Council’s website in the near future. Through partnership working with Inverness City Heritage Trust, the Council has created a traditional building maintenance guide to help inform property owners, which is available via [www.highland.gov.uk/maintenanceguide](http://www.highland.gov.uk/maintenanceguide).





Map 1: Strathpeffer Conservation Area at original designation, 1972

## 1.2 WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

### 1.2.1 Conservation Area Designation

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas “...are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

The Planning Authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, development proposals that may affect a conservation area are considered more carefully, and in more detail than proposals located elsewhere. The appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within and in the vicinity of the Conservation Area can be assessed.

Highland currently has 30 Conservation Areas varying in character from city and town centres, rural villages and a battlefield.



### 1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THIS APPRAISAL

The purpose of this appraisal is to identify and assess the special architectural and historic interest of Strathpeffer, along with those key elements that contribute to its character and appearance. This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Conservation Area;
- Identify any issues which threaten the special qualities of the Conservation Area;
- Assess the current designation along with adjacent areas and identify potential boundary alterations.

The appraisal follows Scottish Government guidance as set out in *Planning Advice Note 71: Conservation Area Management* (2004). Planning authorities have a duty to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. The appraisal provides a basis upon which programmes, e.g., funding proposals, can be developed by, and in association with, the Council to protect and enhance the Conservation Area.

Conservation area designation should be regarded as the first positive step towards an area's protection and enhancement. Planning authorities and the Scottish Government are required by law to protect conservation areas from development which would be detrimental to their character. It is necessary therefore for planning authorities, residents and property owners to be aware of the key features which together create the area's special character and appearance.

The purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal is to define and evaluate the character and appearance of the study area; identify its important characteristics and ensure that there is a full understanding of what is worthy of preservation. The area's special features and changing needs have been assessed through a process which included researching its historical development, a detailed townscape analysis was carried out and a character assessment has been prepared. It also identified opportunities and priorities for enhancement.

The appraisal provides an opportunity to reassess current boundaries, to make certain that they accurately reflect what is of special interest and ensure that they are logically drawn.

This document also provides a framework for the controlled and positive management of change in the proposed Conservation Area and forms a basis upon which planning decisions in the area are made. It identifies opportunities and priorities for enhancement and sets out the policy framework for the determination of development proposals. This appraisal should however be regarded as supplementary to the policies set out in Highland Wide Local Development Plan.

It is recognised that the successful management of Conservation Areas can only be achieved with the support and input from stakeholders, and in particular local residents and property owners.

## **1.4 WHAT DOES CONSERVATION AREA STATUS MEAN?**

In a conservation area, it is both the buildings and the spaces between them that are of architectural or historic interest. Planning control is therefore directed at maintaining the integrity of the entire area and enhancing its special character. Conservation area status does not mean that new development is unacceptable, but care must be taken to ensure that the new development will not harm the character or appearance of the area.

Historically, Article 4 Directions have been used as a further way of ensuring that a conservation area maintains its character and appearance. The effect of a Direction is to control minor works which, over time, could erode the character and appearance of a conservation area. In February 2012 however, the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 came in to force, which in effect removed all householder Permitted Development Rights within conservation areas.

Conservation area designation now automatically brings the following works under planning control:

- Demolition of buildings;
- Development involving house extensions, roof alterations, windows, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior, satellite dishes, provision of hard surfaces, the erection or alteration of gates, fences and walls and;
- Additional control over ancillary buildings (such as sheds/garages) and raised decking/platforms.

Where a development would, in the opinion of the planning authority, affect the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, the application for planning permission will be advertised in the local press providing an opportunity for public comment. Views expressed are taken into account by the planning authority when making a decision on the application.

Trees, in recognition of their contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area, are also subject to additional controls. It is a requirement that six weeks' notice is given to the Council for any works (including lopping or felling) to any tree within the Conservation Area. Exemptions apply, as explained under Section 74 of Planning Circulation 1 2011 Tree Preservation Orders.



Local residents and property owners also have a major role to play in protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by ensuring that properties are regularly maintained and original features retained.

## **1.5 METHOD**

The appraisal has been undertaken by The Highland Council with historical and background information researched and collated from both primary and secondary sources including maps and photographs. Site surveys and visits were undertaken during 2021/22 in order to establish the special qualities of the Conservation Area, resulting in a character assessment that considers buildings, trees and landscaping, historic townscape, street pattern and urban grain, spatial relationships, setting, views, activity and movement, and positive, neutral and negative factors. The methodology used is well developed across Scottish local authorities and the Scottish Civic Trust, and is in line with guidance published by Historic Environment Scotland.

## **1.6 BACKGROUND**

Strathpeffer was designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 and has not been subject to subsequent amendments.

The discovery of sulphurous wells and springs in the 19th century set in motion the rapid development of the existing agricultural settlement to exploit the healing properties of the waters and to cater for the demand of Victorian health tourism. Over the next century Strathpeffer grew to include numerous hotels and guest houses, pump rooms and spas, villas and commercial and recreational facilities, including pleasure gardens. Today, the wells and springs have fallen out of use but, by virtue of its superlative built heritage and abundant green spaces, Strathpeffer remains a popular place to live and destination for visitors who come to admire its rich Victorian heritage.

Strathpeffer Conservation Area encompasses the Victorian Spa Town, including the Spa Pavilion Gardens. It was designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 as outlined in Map 1. There are no Article 4 directions in force, and prior to this assessment no Conservation Area Appraisal or Management Plan had been produced.

Strathpeffer Conservation Area incorporates over 200 buildings, of which 26 are Listed Buildings, one Scheduled Monument and one Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.

Strathpeffer has a population of around 1,110 (2011 census data), and is home to a number of small businesses, ranging from a bicycle shop and a coach company, to the hospitality industries. Tourism is, however, the principal economic driver for the town and a number of dedicated facilities exist to cater for this demand.

## 2.0 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE | 2.0 SUIDHEACHADH AGUS CRUTH-TÌE

### 2.1 LOCATION

Strathpeffer Conservation Area forms part of the town of Strathpeffer in the county of Ross and Cromarty, in The Highland Council's local authority area. Strathpeffer is five miles west of Dingwall by road and just over 21 miles north-west of the nearest city at Inverness.

### 2.2 TOPOGRAPHY



Fig. 1 View across Strathpeffer towards Knockfarrel

Strathpeffer is situated within a complex and undulating topographic landscape. To the south of the A834, which bisects the town, the ground drops before rising again towards Cnoc Mor, the Cat's Back and the Iron Age hill fort at Knockfarrel, as per fig. 1. To the north of the A834 the ground rises some 40 metres to the north and west boundary of the Conservation Area and onwards towards An t-Ord and Creag Ulladail.

The undulating and at times steep hills and climbs within the Conservation Area contribute significantly to its character and offer a wide range of views and vistas from where to appreciate the town and the hills beyond. The topographic form of the wider landscape is also a key element. Views from the Conservation Area towards Knockfarrel, for example, are key to the setting and appreciation of the town.

### 2.3 GEOLOGY

Knockfarrel is of Cnoc Fyrish conglomerate, which was deposited during the Mid Devonian Epoch some 400 million years ago. Around Strathpeffer, Lower Old Red Sandstone and Middle Old Red Sandstone beds are present, and it therefore seems likely that the characteristic stone that makes up many of Strathpeffer's buildings would have been quarried locally. Strathpeffer is built around four sulphur and one chalybeate (mineral) springs, on what was once a glacial plain.



## 3.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT | 3.0 LEASACHADH EACHDRAIDHEIL

### 3.1 EARLY HISTORY

The wider area around Strathpeffer has a rich prehistoric past which has been demonstrated by pre-Iron Age finds, most notably evidenced by the Iron Age vitrified hill fort at Knockfarrel which is visible from various locations within the town. Elsewhere, to the north, well preserved prehistoric settlement and burial remains are known at the Heights of Fodderty and Strath Sgitheach beyond, with a crannog—the largest recorded in Ross-shire—located in Loch Kinellan to the west. This shows that the Strath was important from at least the Neolithic period onwards.

Pictish activity is represented with the early Pictish symbol stone Clach an Tiompain, or the Eagle Stone.

The area's Norse heritage survives in its placenames, for example Dingwall (from Old Norse 'Thing-vollr' meaning place of the court of justice) and Ulladale.

### 3.2 STRATHPEFFER IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Strathpeffer post-dates Roy's military survey of the Highlands (1747-55) which depicts a small settlement (Achlille) where Strathpeffer now stands. See map 2.

During the latter half of the 18th century the area, which was little more than a small collection of farmsteads (including Ardvall, Park Farm and Kinettas) and cottages centred upon the cemetery, came under the ownership of Cromartie Estate.

The discovery of the sulphurous mineral springs in the 1770s were to plant the early seeds that would, 40 years later, lead to the formation of Strathpeffer as a spa town. In 1772 the value of the "Castle Leod waters", as the springs were then known, was recounted to the Royal Society in London. In 1777 the factor of Cromartie Estate suggested to the Board of Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates the value in building a house nearby to attract visitors, although no action was taken for over 40 years.



Map 2: Roy's Military Survey 1755, courtesy of National Library of Scotland

### 3.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATHPEFFER: BUILDING IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

At the beginning of the 19th century the sulphurous springs began to reach the attention of wider society. In 1819 the first wooden pump room was built over one of the wells. The work was supervised by Dr Morrison who moved to Strathpeffer from Aberdeenshire after being cured of chronic rheumatism by the sulphurous waters (Fortescue-Fox, 1896). Thereafter, the reputation of the spa grew. Dr Morrison recommended a six week stay with a morning and afternoon intake of three to four tumblerfuls of spa water. This was to be supplemented by gentle exercise.

The Cromartie Estate saw an opportunity to capitalise on the popularity of the waters and in 1850 embarked upon the construction of a Poor House, a stone house over the Upper Well, wooden bridges over the burn and gravelled walks through the nearby plantations.



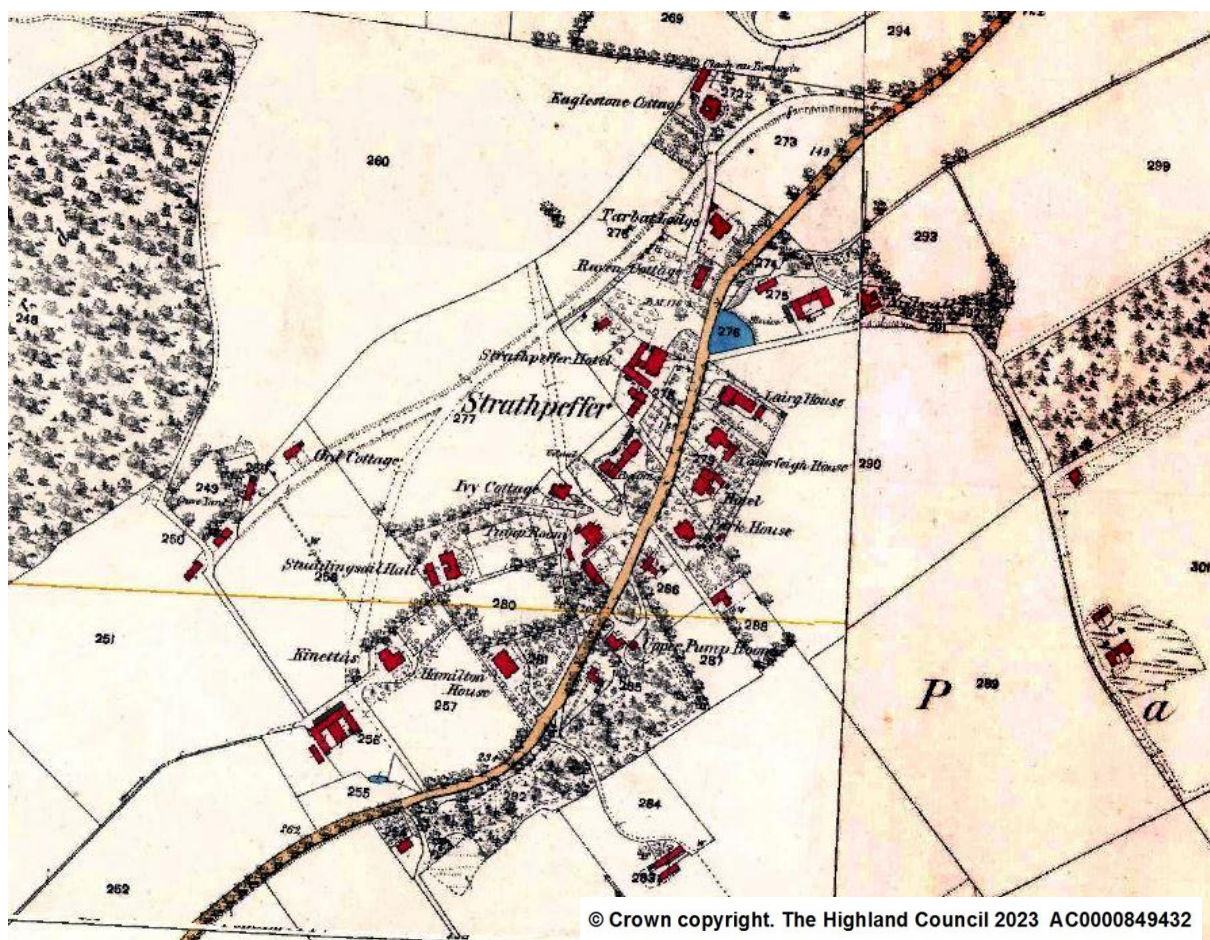


Fig. 2 Strathpeffer Pump Room; Valentine's Postcard c1890s, courtesy of Am Baile

It was not until the 1860's, however, that the spa was to truly act as the catalyst for the development of Strathpeffer. In 1861 the 3rd Duke of Sutherland provided capital to replace the original wooden pump room with a new pump room and build a bath house, a well-keeper's house, shops, post office and postmaster's house, as depicted in Fig. 2. Strathpeffer's popularity was further enhanced as accessibility improved with the opening of the Dingwall-Strome Ferry railway line in 1869.

Ever since Dr Morrison had publicised the healing powers of the waters at the beginning of the 19th century, the importance of gentle exercise as complimentary therapy was considered an integral part of the town's offering. To this end, the establishment of the Spa Gardens pleasure grounds ran parallel to the development of the Strathpeffer's buildings.

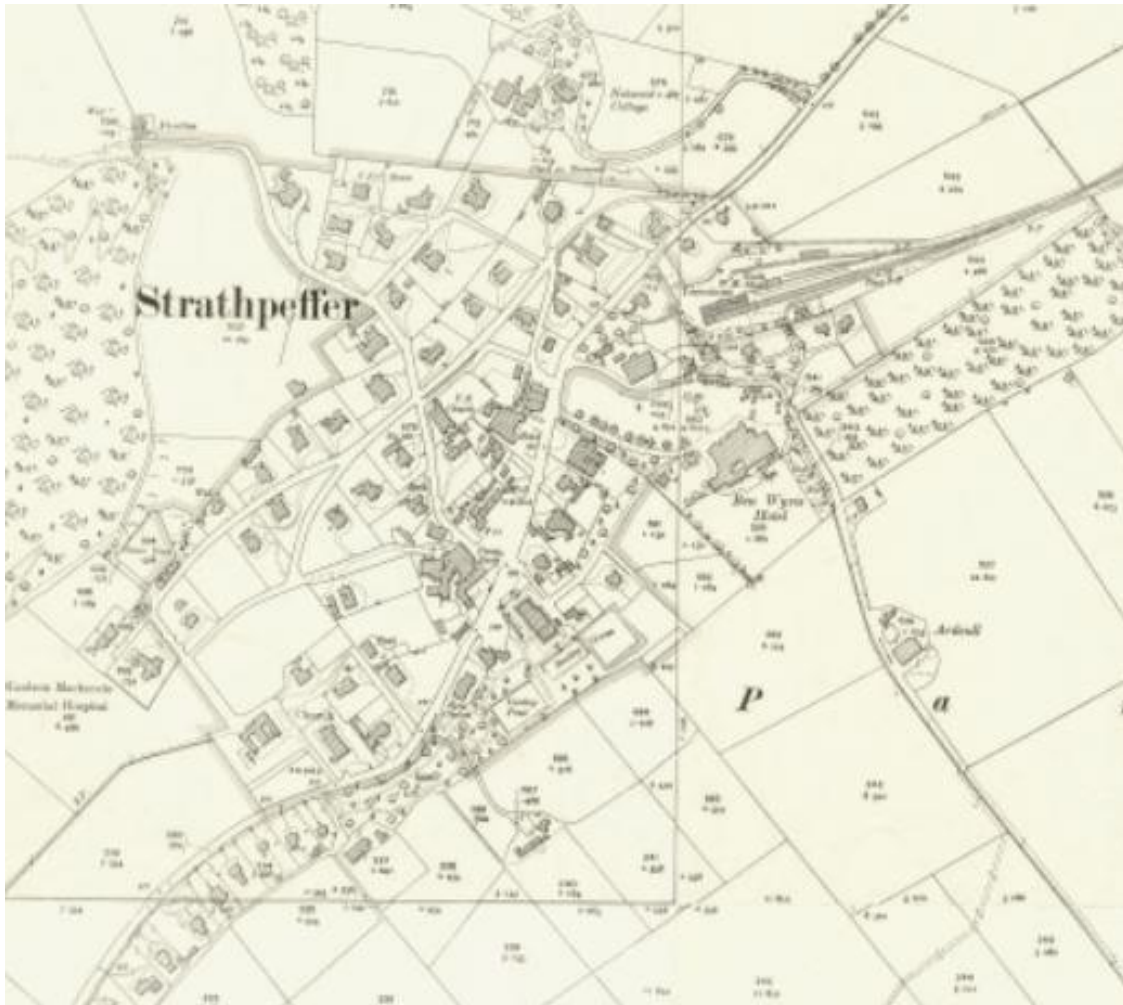
From 1864 extensive planting and woodland improvement took place, including hedging, avenues and the creation of footpaths, walks and pleasure drives. By 1876 Strathpeffer boasted five large hotels, along with a number of large Victorian villas; see Map 3. The last two decades of the 19th century saw continued expansion and growth of activities and facilities. The Dingwall-Strathpeffer branch line opened in 1885 which opened up more opportunities for the transportation of passengers and goods. In the same year, new ladies' baths were built and new wells discovered and exploited. Strathpeffer Spa Pavilion, designed by William Joass in 1879-81 became the social focus of the spa with a tearoom, billiard and games room and concert hall. Furthermore, tennis and croquet were catered for behind the pavilion and a curling pond installed in 1890.



Map 3: 1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey map c.1876, courtesy of National Library of Scotland



### 3.4 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



Map 4: 2nd Edition 25" OS map c.1905, Courtesy of National Library of Scotland

Up until the outbreak of the First World War, Strathpeffer continued to develop – as depicted in Map 4. In 1908 a more commercial approach was taken to the Spa with rights to the well acquired by Spa Syndicate Limited. This resulted in the enclosure of the gardens and an entrance fee was imposed. In 1909 the 1870s pump room was replaced with the Upper Pump Room, which remains to this day.

During the First World War, the United States Navy requisitioned many buildings in Strathpeffer, including the Pavilion, Highland Hotel, Ben Wyvis Hotel, Mackenzie Nicolson Hospital.

During the Second World War, a similar number of buildings were requisitioned by the British Army for training. In October 1940 a goods storage siding was built at the station, however the station closed to passengers in February 1946 and latterly to goods trains in August 1951. Fig. 3 shows Strathpeffer's development at this time.

In 1949 the Spa Gardens were sold to the owner of the Ben Wyvis hotel. Several buildings, including the Spa manager's house, were demolished and in 1970 the

management of the gardens was abandoned due to costs. In 1950 the pump room, built in 1876 and located at the heart of the town was demolished.

The spa, now largely defunct, saw Strathpeffer continue to develop slowly throughout the 1960's with small scale infill development within the core town, and slow expansion outwith the traditional town boundary. The most significant level of modern development within the historic core took place between the late 1960's and early 1990's at south-west end of town centered upon Kinnettas House and the former Nicolson Mackenzie Memorial Hospital. In the 1990's and 2000's the town expanded to the north towards the golf course at Ulladale and to the south-east around Ardival (Strathview and Ardival East). Whilst the development over the last two decades of a housing estate and primary school, centered around Kinellan Farm and a former (now demolished) Spa Hotel, to the south-west has enlarged the town, the historic core remains a distinct and clearly defined entity.

Recent development within the historic core has been limited to the occasional house within the garden ground of a larger property and notably, the development of four flats and four bungalows at Ardival Court, which represents the most significant development in the centre of Strathpeffer in a number of decades.



Fig. 3 RAF Aerial Photograph, 1947



## 4.0 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE | 4.0 CARACTAR AGUS COLTAS

### 4.1 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

#### 4.1.1 Views

As a consequence of the varied topography, Strathpeffer contains many long views into, through, across and beyond the area.

The topography and street layout also result in multiple restricted and secluded views that are integral to the overall character and sense of place of the Conservation Area. When in amongst the Victorian villas on the higher ground to the west of the town, views back across Strathpeffer give tantalising glimpses of villas and hotels, towers and finials, spires and slate roofs in between banks of lush planting, trees and hedging. Views over the town and to the hills on the opposite side of the Strath are also key. It is, however, the restricted glimpses of hills, buildings and trees as one travels through the town that add significantly to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

#### 4.1.2 Gateways

There are two principal gateways into Strathpeffer and these follow the established road network. These gateways are outlined on Map 6.

From the north-east, along the A834, Newton Villa on the left and the striking Red House on the right create an entrance and an edge to Strathpeffer, as per Fig. 4.



Fig. 4 View into Strathpeffer from north-east



Fig. 5 View into Strathpeffer from south-west

From the south-west, along the A834, the gateway is defined by the Church of Scotland on the left, and the southern boundary of the Spa Pavilion Gardens on the right. However, this ignores a row of Victorian and Edwardian housing located further to the west on a steep rise on the south side of the A834, as shown in Fig.

5. It is here that the character of the Conservation Area becomes apparent and this will be considered in more detail in Section 5.

### 4.1.3 Street Pattern

The original street pattern remains intact. It is dominated by the principal spine of the A834, the main historic route between Dingwall and Contin. The A834 gives access to many of Strathpeffer's commercial, leisure and ecclesiastical buildings, as well as The Square, the area's main commercial hub.

To the west of the A834 the street pattern developed through the formalisation and in some cases expansion, of a number of rough tracks and roadways which connected the pre-Spa farmsteads and their related buildings. Branching at right angles from the A834 and dividing The Square is Strathpeffer's secondary street 'Golf Course Road'. The road, which cuts up the hill, is the principal artery through Strathpeffer to the west of the A834, winding to the north and west before terminating at Strathpeffer Spa Golf Club's club house. Golf Course Road gives access to commercial facilities at The Square, as well as a number of hotels and Free Church. Four roads lead from Golf Course Road at right angles to broadly follow the prevailing contours of the hill, off which are many of the Victorian villas and further hotels and guesthouses constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The growth of Strathpeffer as it ascends up the hill has produced a very distinctive pattern of terracing and layering of buildings. Viewpoints within the Conservation Area are shown in Map 6.

To the east of the A834 the street pattern was established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The opening of the railway and Strathpeffer Station on 3 June 1885 required new access, as did the Ben Wyvis Hotel. The hotel re-aligned a track which previously served the adjacent farm and necessitated a further access point to Ardvall, subsequently used as access for modern housing at Strathview and Ardival East.

Both the Ben Wyvis Hotel and the station dictated the street pattern to the east of Strathpeffer, both during the 1900s and its growth in the present day.

Strathpeffer's street pattern gives the impression of organic growth and informality, with little apparent thought given to planning or formal layout. The street pattern has, however, been heavily influenced by the formalisation of an existing network of tracks which once served the original farming communities of the Strath, and by the steep sloping hills on either side of the A834.

### 4.1.4 Plot Pattern

The study area contains a range of plot patterns, the size of which has partly been influenced by the age and function of the building. The surviving pre-Spa buildings, such as Kinnettas Cottages, are generally terraced or semi-detached buildings of modest size with correspondingly modest sized plots.

With the Victorian expansion, large, detached villas set within large plots became the norm. Whilst plot sizes are large, they tend to be irregular, being determined by both road layout and topography. It is notable that many of these villas have retained their original plot. A number of villas have been subdivided to form flats or semi-detached

houses and the plots divided accordingly, although within the Conservation Area this is difficult to perceive. Only a small number of plots have had been subdivided to facilitate new housing development and where this has occurred it is conspicuous.

Later residential development, principally from the 1950-60s (i.e., Ardival Terrace and Kinnettass Square) adopted characteristically smaller plots. Ardival Court, a relatively recent development of four bungalows and four flats, completed in 2012 demonstrates the difficulties in developing infill opportunities in Strathpeffer that differ from the established plot size and form; it is uncharacteristic in terms of plot pattern and size, jarring with the grain and rhythm of the adjacent Victorian-era plots.

Non-residential buildings introduce a varied pattern in terms of scale and proportion. The hotels and leisure facilities, like the residential plots, are generally located within generous, irregular plots commensurate with the size of the building. The commercial buildings in The Square, by contrast, form a line of terraced shop units given uniformity through a shared design, materiality and finish.

#### 4.1.5 Public Spaces

##### Strathpeffer Spa Gardens

The main recreational green space is Strathpeffer Spa Gardens, as of 2003 was included in the national Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The Spa Gardens, originally a Victorian pleasure garden, were laid out as part of the 19th century health resort and illustrate a contemporary acknowledgement of the important curative role of landscape and gentle recreation. They are an important aspect of the historical development of the town as a premier health resort and are also a visually prominent and important feature that makes a significant contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area – see Fig. 6.



Fig. 6 Strathpeffer Spa Gardens



Fig. 7 Tennis Courts at Spa Gardens

The gardens, which cover some five acres of ground, were originally equipped with bowling greens, croquet lawns, tennis courts and a curling pond as well as winding woodland paths. The woodland paths remain, as do the bowling greens although the curling pond has now been replaced by tennis courts (see Fig. 7). The space remains a popular – and now accessible to all – green feature of the town. The gardens provide an



elegant setting for the Listed Buildings of St Anne's Church, the Upper Pump Room and Spa Pavilion, as well as acting as an important gateway feature when entering the Conservation Area from Contin. The gardens set the tone for Strathpeffer's abundant leafy credentials and the green tree-lined edge from the gateway to St Anne's Church enhances the approach to the centre of the town.



Fig. 8 *Rhododendron ponticum*, Spa Gardens

The gardens, however, have suffered in recent years through a lack of proactive management. This is especially apparent at the western woodland end which has become overgrown with the network of paths requiring maintenance. At the eastern end, although the more formal elements continue to be maintained, much of the structural planting has been lost or is now less well defined, with invasive species, such as *Rhododendron ponticum* starting to dominate many of the beds, as shown in Fig.

8. Over the last five years it has also been required to fell a number of large prominent trees, which have left gaps in the garden's planting rhythm.

The ownership of Strathpeffer Spa Gardens was transferred from The Highland Council to Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust in 2020 under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The Trust intends to restore the gardens and a funding application to Historic Environment Scotland's Heritage and Place Programme is currently under development.

### The Square

Strathpeffer's principal commercial space is The Square – see Fig. 9. The Square is divided by Golf Course Road with the historic core located to the north with a more recent addition (created on the site of the former pump room, and latterly the grounds of the Highland Hotel) to the south-west. Historically, The Square was an area of landscaped ground to the front of the shops and former pump room in which people could gather and meet. Postcards dating to the early 1900s show an open area and a people – or pedestrian – friendly environment.



Fig. 9 Retail units, The Square

Today, The Square is still notable for its space although it is now also a focus for car parking. The Square is predominantly hard landscaping in brick, stone and tarmac, which is interspersed with areas of planting. Complimentary to the design of The Pavilion's bandstand, is a newly installed gazebo and outdoor seating, both of which make welcome and positive additions to The Square.



Fig. 10 Pond and fountain

To the south-west are two hexagonal shop units, a matching public convenience and a recently restored pond with a working fountain, as depicted in Fig. 10. The Highland Hotel rising to the rear makes an impressive backdrop to this space. The shop units, which were added in the 1980s are constructed of timber framed glazed windows and hipped slate roofs topped with a lead-coated dome, are an interesting addition to The Square and they have bedded in well with the overall aesthetic of the Conservation Area.

### The Old Station

Commercial space is also available at the Old Station building which is set in a secluded area away from the main centre and facilities of the town. The Old Station houses a selection of shops, cafés and a small museum and was renovated in the 1980s to a high standard. Linkages to the station buildings are well signposted from the Square.



Fig. 11 The Old Station

The former railway sidings are located to the south of the Old Station. The platform is accessed by a small wooden bridge and a number of picnic tables are set out for public use. The Old Station buildings and surrounding mature trees and shrubs make this a pleasant, sheltered and atmospheric spot, as shown in Fig. 11. The Old Station is the start/end point of The Peffery Way to Dingwall, with side routes to Knockfarrel, Fodderty and Knockbain. It is intended that this will be an all-abilities path, which follows the old railway line. Although not yet complete, the route is a proposed core path, yet to be confirmed by Scottish Ministers (as of March 2023).



### Kinnettass Graveyard

Kinnettass graveyard, accessed via a track between 2 and 3 Kinnettass Cottages, is located to the rear of 3 and 4 Kinnettass Cottages and Francis Villa. The track leads out of the study area to provide walking access to An t-Ord. The graveyard, bounded by a drystone wall, has a mix of gravestones and grave markers which



Fig. 12 Kinnettass Graveyard

collectively represent a long period of use. Whilst it has gone out of common use, the graveyard does still see the occasional burial in existing family plots. The graveyard is the only burial ground in Strathpeffer and it adds a layer of interest beyond the dominant Victorian heritage; see Fig. 12. The grave markers have recently been recorded, with information available from [Highland Family History Society](#). There was originally a parish of Kinnettass (later merged with Fodderty), and there may have been a parish church at this site, although no record is known of this church before the Reformation period, nor when parish was united to Fodderty, which is presumably when it was abandoned, but ruins were said to have existed towards end of C18th.

### The Eagle Stone



Fig. 13 The Eagle Stone

Clach an Tiompain (or the Eagle Stone) provided another attraction for Victorian visitors to the town – and adds another dimension to the town's wider interest – in much the same way as it does today; see Fig. 13. The second edition Ordnance Survey map shows a path, accessed from a narrow road to the north of the Red House, winding through the field to link up with the main access to Nutwood Cottage; the Eagle Stone would have provided an interesting stop en route. Given the Victorian appetite for antiquities it is inconceivable that the stone would not have been on the itineraries of many of its visitors.



Today, the access point leading to the footpath remains as it was in the 19th century, although the path now runs hard up against the boundary wall to the south. Nonetheless, it still provides access to an attractive, albeit short, walk with an interesting goal – as shown in Fig. 14. The Eagle Stone is currently located outwith the Conservation Area boundary but following the boundary review (see Section 5) it is considered logical that it should be included in recognition of the importance of the stone and its relationship to Strathpeffer.



Fig. 14 The Eagle Stone in setting

#### 4.1.6 Trees and Soft Landscaping

Trees play an important role in the Conservation Area and contribute immeasurably to its sense of place. Strathpeffer boasts a wide variety of native and exotic trees, as depicted in figs. 15 and 16. Map 5 details noteworthy and mature trees within the proposed Conservation Area boundary (as a result of a survey carried out by Peter Walling).

Whilst all trees within the Conservation Area are given additional protection and add value to the area, a number are of particular importance, either due to species, prominence or age. Examples include Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), beech (*Fagus*), oak (*Quercus*) and notably, monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*) as shown in fig. 17. The monkey puzzle trees have flourished in number, due to Strathpeffer's unique and varied topography which aids their pollination, due to the density and proximity of male and female trees. A resulting benefit from the number of monkey puzzle trees and their seeds, is that a population of red squirrels is to be found in the area, as the seeds are an important and nutritious food source.



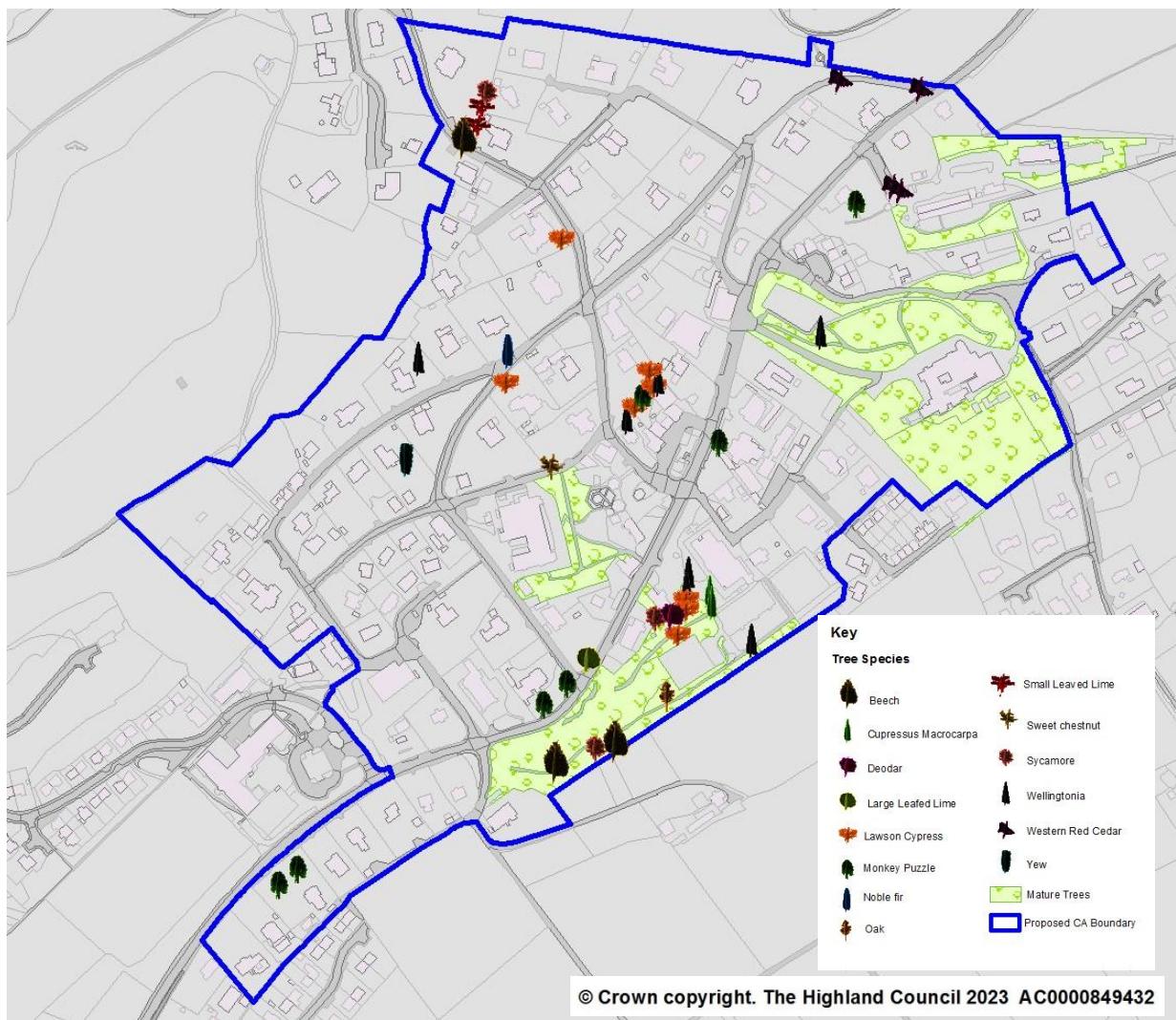
Fig. 15 Prunus blossom, Golf Course Road



Fig. 16 Wellingtonia trees, Spa Gardens



Fig. 17 Monkey puzzle tree



Map 5: Noteworthy and Mature Trees, courtesy of Peter Walling



#### 4.1.7 Garden Ground

The study area is exceptionally green and leafy, and the range and extent of mature planting makes a significant contribution to the Conservation Area's special sense of place and supports a wide range of biodiversity. The large plot sizes result in generous swathes of private and semi-private open space, housing extensive and mature gardens resplendent with sweeping lawns, mature shrubs and plants and a wide variety of deciduous and evergreen natives and exotics, a number of which are fine specimen trees; see Figs 18 and 19. Many of the plots are bounded by a mixture of hedging, shrubs and trees, some with low coped stone walls and/or iron railings.



Fig. 18 Garden setting, Crancil Brae



Fig. 19 Garden and boundary at Strathbran

#### 4.1.8 Gap Sites

There is one gap site within the Conservation Area, at land sited at 55m south east of Redwood, adjoining the former steading building which is in use by the Spa Coach Company. A proposal for this site would need to be high-quality design and materials, which relate, respond and respect the Conservation Area. The building would also need to be one or one-and-a-half storeys.

Additionally, the former steadings and the adjoining former petrol station on the south-western gateway to the Conservation Area on the A834 provide opportunities for enhancement. These are discussed further in sections 7.2.6 and 7.2.7.

#### 4.1.9 Activities and Uses

Strathpeffer has a small number of shops and comparative to its size, a large number of hotels and guesthouses. These are supplemented by a variety of cafes and restaurants. Since its restoration, the Spa Pavilion has become an important part of Strathpeffer, hosting a variety of events. Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust hope to upgrade and run the Upper Pump Room in a similar manner to the Pavilion, so that it will become home to a business or other venture yet to be identified.

The Old Station hosts a number of small businesses, as well as the Museum of Childhood.



There are a number of churches within the town, two of which remain in ecclesiastical use. Strathpeffer Free Church has recently been sold, (July 2022) having been taken out of religious use. Strathpeffer currently has three redundant shopping units; two units at Cromartie Buildings (see Fig. 20) and The Shieling. The Shieling has planning permission for an extension and change of use to form a public bar; although work has not progressed, the building remains advertised for lease. The two units at Cromartie Buildings are not currently marketed and their commercial occupation would be beneficial.



Fig. 20 Cromartie Buildings

## 4.2 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE

### 4.2.1 Building Types

There are several different types of building in Strathpeffer, each with their own distinct form. Building types can be established through both period and function.

#### Early 19th Century (Georgian) Vernacular



Fig. 21 Kinettas Cottages

A small number of traditional dwellings pre-dating Strathpeffer's heyday survive within the town. These are principally related to former farmsteads and estate cottages. They tend to be small, and are often semi-detached or short runs of terraced housing and are mainly clustered close to the cemetery, as shown in Fig. 21.

#### Victorian Villas and Commercial Hotels

The form, fabric and detailing of Strathpeffer's Victorian heritage survives in superlative condition and exhibits a high degree of authenticity. The town is principally characterised by its Victorian architecture. Victorian buildings tend to be ornate, flamboyant and express the technological advances of the age. The period revived, adapted and amalgamated a variety of architectural styles and in Strathpeffer Gothic, Classical and Tudor influences are readily apparent – see examples in Figs. 22 and 23.



Fig. 22 Woodlands



Fig. 23 Old Free Church Manse

## Ecclesiastical Buildings

There are a variety of church buildings in Strathpeffer, built for different church denominations. All churches survive, although only St Anne's Episcopal Church (Fig. 24) and the Church of Scotland (Fig. 25) remain in active use. Strathpeffer Free Church has recently been sold (July 2022). One former church (now Glendale) underwent a radical set of alterations, including demolition of its spire and the majority of its nave, in the mid-20th century for residential conversion.



Fig. 24 St. Anne's Episcopal Church



Fig. 25 Church of Scotland

## Public Buildings

### Spa Pavilion and Upper Pump Room

The two most important and prominent surviving Victorian public buildings are the Spa Pavilion (Fig. 26) and the adjacent Upper Pump Room (Fig. 27). Both buildings are important legacies of Strathpeffer's past. Both have been restored to a high standard.





Fig. 26 Spa Pavilion



Fig. 27 Upper Pump Room

## The Old Station

Although no longer functioning as such, the Old Station is a fine example of its type. The glazed canopy with ornate fret work and cast-iron columns are features of particular note, as per Fig. 28. It was renovated in the 1980s to a high standard and now houses a variety of shops and cafes.



Fig. 28 The Old Station

## Shops and Commercial Buildings



Fig. 29 Victorian shops, The Square

The white-washed early Victorian shops present a unified façade which dominates The Square, as shown in Fig. 29. Architecturally distinct from other areas of Strathpeffer, these shops form an important focus for the town. Opposite are two further shopping units, which despite their relatively recent date, positively contribute to the Conservation Area by virtue of their shape and complimentary materials. Occupying an adjacent site to the Victorian shops is the former Sheiling Building, which was built to a

Swiss chalet design. Cromartie Buildings provide an additional three shop units, although two of these are not occupied. Liking Chinese Takeaway and Restaurant is located on a prominent site, opposite the Pavilion on the main A834.



## Modern Buildings



Fig. 30 Cromarty House

Whilst few in number, there are a variety of styles of modern building within the Conservation Area, ranging from 1960s bungalows to modern semi-detached housing, as depicted in Fig. 30. How successful modern development integrates within the Conservation Area ranges from excellent to poor and demonstrates the importance of understanding and respecting, reflecting and responding to the established grain, rhythm, materials and design of Strathpeffer.

### 4.2.2 Notable Buildings and Heritage Designations

Landmark buildings, as per the example in Fig. 31, are buildings or structures that, due to their size, prominence or location, act as a key focal point within a conservation area and make a particularly important contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Landmark buildings and views to and from them can be particularly sensitive to change. These buildings are highlighted in Map 5.



Fig. 31 Red House

Many of the buildings along the A834 are set back from the road's edge, within mature gardens and partially screened by trees. The key landmark buildings along the A834 are Red House, Cromartie Buildings, The Spa Pavilion, St Anne's Church and the Church of Scotland. To the west of A834, and along Golf Course Road, key landmark buildings include The Highland Hotel, prominently sat on a rise dominating The Square, White Lodge (for its conspicuous bulk and mass) and the former Free Church, the spire of which can be seen from multiple locations across the Conservation Area – see Fig 32.



Fig. 32 Former Free Church

Away from A834 to the east and north, there are few landmark buildings.

### Listed Buildings

The Conservation Area contains 26 Listed Buildings: 8 Category C and 18 Category B. Each Listing may cover more than one building or address (refer to Appendix 1 and map 6). The earliest Listing in the Conservation Area occurred in 1971, with 24 Listings in 1983 and one further addition in 1992.

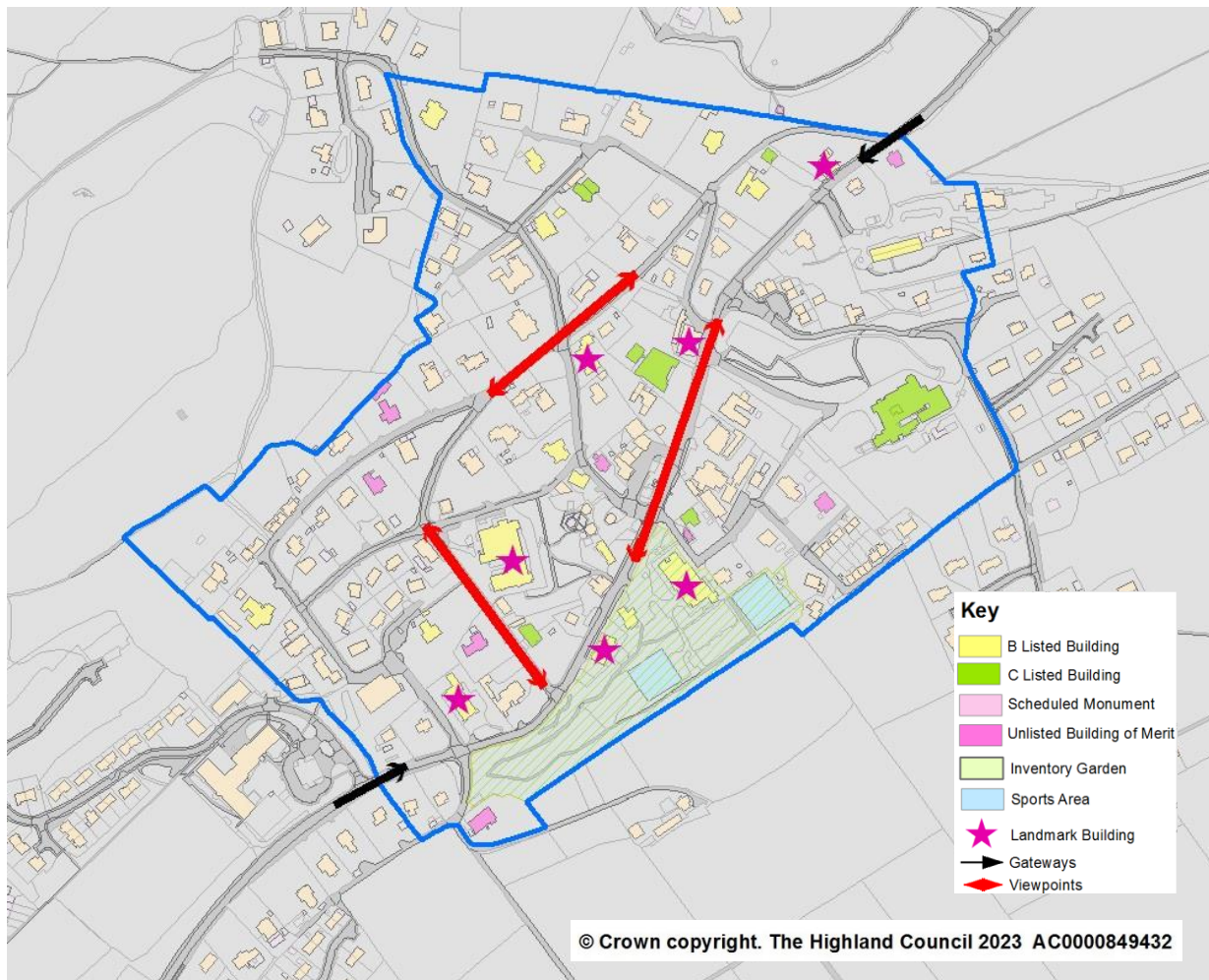
### Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled monuments are archaeological sites and features that have been designated as of national importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Both the monument and its setting are protected under the Act. In the proposed revision to Strathpeffer's Conservation Area boundary, one scheduled monument (the Eagle Stone) would be included.

### Gardens and Designed Landscapes

The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes is a growing and evolving record of nationally important gardens and designed landscapes across Scotland. The Inventory is compiled and maintained by Historic Environment Scotland. Strathpeffer Spa Gardens were added to the inventory in 2003 due to their high levels of artistic, historical, horticultural, architectural and scenic interests.

More information on buildings, scheduled monuments, and gardens and designed landscapes can be obtained via [The Highland Council's Historic Environment Record](#) (HER). The HER site contains over 100,000 records detailing the heritage of the Highlands from the earliest human activity to the Cold War. Historic Environment Scotland's [Researching Historic Buildings](#) contains further guidance on how to initiate research.



Map 6: Existing Conservation Area's Key Features

#### 4.2.11 Key Unlisted Buildings

There are a number of buildings which, although not Listed, make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and its townscape. They may be notable due to the survival of fabric and detail, architectural style, use of ornamentation, prominence within the town or history.

##### Newton Villa

Later 19th century, as per Fig. 33. Asymmetrical 3-bay 1 ½ storey house. Bullfaced rubble with contrasting ashlar margins. The prominence of the left-hand bay is accentuated by the use of slightly wider openings; the ground floor having tripartite windows (bipartite to the right), and the first floor having bipartite windows (and single on the right). The left-hand bay also has a wider and taller gable-ended dormer.



Fig. 33 Newton Villa



For the scale of the building, there is a considerable level of detail. Moulded mullions and arches, ornate decorative bargeboards to the dormers, somewhat oversized hipped-roof porch with finial and decorative timber supports, over-hanging eaves and chamfered corniced stacks all add to the charm and character of the building. Located at the gateway to Strathpeffer when approaching from Dingwall.

### Strathbran



Fig. 34 Strathbran

Built c.1882, as shown in Figs. 34 and 35. Two-storey villa with a four-storey square tower. Squared rubble with contrasting pink sandstone ashlar margins. Hipped slate roof with coped end stacks, probably with original cans. There is a mixture of single and bipartite openings (all with original 1x1 timber sash and case windows) and an original double-leaf timber door.

The uniformity of openings on the main building is replicated in the tower, although the top storey has tripartite windows on all four sides. The tower is topped with a hipped slate roof and weather vane.



Fig. 35 Strathbran

To the rear of the building is a contemporary outbuilding (former stables). The grounds are bounded by a low coped stone wall.

### Former United Free Church Manse

Later 19th century as per Fig. 36. Allied with the United Free Church (W C Joass) on Golf Course Road to the south; Joass may have also been responsible for the manse.

Two storeys with squared rubble walls with contrasting pink sandstone ashlar margins. Front elevation is of 3-bays with central bay, housing arched doorway, set back and the northern bay with a bay window at both ground and 1st floor height stepped forward. Tripartite windows to ground floor with Venetian windows to 1st, the arch of the central window breaking the wall head which, with the



Fig. 36 Former United Free Church Manse

hipped slate roof, adds interest to the building. The side elevation has single arched window to centre. Coped stacks and decorative cans. Original timber sash and case windows, cast iron rainwater goods etc.

#### [The Cottage, The Square](#)

Small, late 19th century single storey 3-bay cottage located on The Square. Slate roof with decorative ridge tiles. East bay has Venetian-esq tripartite casement windows with multipane glazing to upper windows and stained glass detailing to lower casement. West bay is canted with multipane stained glass windows. Contemporary hexagonal building to rear, formerly detached although is now linked to the main cottage via a flat roofed extension. Modern flat roof porch to front.

#### [Park House Studio, Strathpeffer Pavilion](#)

Charming building in use as a bank until the early 1990s. Timber post and harling. Hipped slate roof with overhanging eaves, central stack, multi-pane windows. Canted bay and adjacent doorway on north-west elevation.

#### [The Garden House](#)

1 1/2 storey villa, harled with ashlar window and door reveals. Decorative bargeboards, slate roof. Single storey 3-bay wing to east. Timber 6x6 sash and case windows throughout. Practically, the principal elevation is the north-facing gable-end which includes the main entrance; the west-facing symmetrical 3-bay elevation, which was presumably once the main elevation, is now secondary.

#### [Victoria House and Maybank](#)

Traditional asymmetrical 3-bay late 19th century Victorian villas. Stone with ashlar margins, slate roof with coped end stacks. and timber sash windows. Decorative bargeboards to gables and dormers.

It should be noted that the Council's [Historic Environment Record](#) (HER) includes information on undesignated historic environment assets, including unlisted buildings of local/regional importance, with information added on a case-by-case basis. Assets recorded in the HER are addressed in accordance with Policy 57 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

#### [4.2.12 Negative Buildings/Features](#)

A small number of buildings and features detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Where they exist, many have the potential for significant enhancement. These issues are outlined in Section 7.2 Specific Challenges and definitions for positive, neutral and negative buildings are outlined in Appendix Two.

Issues may include:

- Significant loss of building's historic fabric;
- Significant inappropriate alterations and extensions; which have compromised its character;
- Disrepair or neglect, or the building has been subject to poor quality alterations and extensions that have compromised its character;
- Dereliction and long-term vacancy;
- Insensitive and inappropriate shop signage ;
- Poor interventions to the public realm that lack uniformity and cohesiveness, which do not reflect the traditional character of the built heritage;
- Poorly conceived, designed and sited modern development.

#### 4.2.13 Buildings at Risk

The Sheiling was added to the Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) in 2014 and updated in 2018, noting a deterioration in the condition of the building's fabric. Rosslyn Lodge is proposed for addition to the BARR register (May 2023), following the severe fire damage sustained in December 2022.

#### 4.2.14 Roads, Street Surfaces and Public Realm

No historic surfacing, and with the notable exception of the bandstand adjacent to the Spa Pavilion, no original street furniture survives. The pavement, where it exists, is composed principally of tarmacadam (some of which is in a poor condition) and decorative brickwork. Street furniture (street lighting, bollards, bins etc.) is generally well conceived to compliment the overall aesthetic of the town, although there are areas that could be improved. Signage is generally not excessive; the majority is in keeping with a heritage setting and does not dominate the public realm.

There are few dedicated pedestrian footpaths in the Conservation Area. The footpaths which lead to the Eagle Stone and Kinettas Vennel are narrow but functional and well maintained. The footpath between Windsor Lodge and Strathview is currently challenging and would benefit from signage and maintenance. Strathpeffer contains a number of links to Core Paths, such as those at Ardival, Ord Wood East, Ord Terrace and a link to the proposed Core Path along the Peffrey Way. More information can be found via The Highland Council's [Outdoor Access webpages](#).

#### 4.2.15 Public Art and Lighting

Public art—principally in the form of large-scale, locally made wooden sculptures—have been installed in Strathpeffer Spa Gardens and also in the former station. They contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area. The streetlighting in the Conservation Area is sympathetic to its heritage context, although the paintwork would benefit from maintenance.



## 4.3 ARCHITECTURAL FORM

Despite the unique and at times bold architectural style, Strathpeffer exhibits a uniform sense of place established by the broad conformity, contemporaneousness and continuity of architectural style and character, scale, grain and rhythm. The use of trees, shrubs and other vegetation throughout the Conservation Area also aids in its cohesive appearance.

### 4.3.1 Roofs

There are a range of roof types in Strathpeffer with traditional gable-ended, hipped and mansard all represented. Towers, spires and turrets add further interest, giving the roofscape and varied and undulating height – see examples in Figs. 37 and 38.

The overall impression is the ubiquitous use of natural slate. However, the occasional use of more unusual roof coverings, including terracotta slates, and decorative slate patterns, including fish-scale, adds interest and variety to the roofscape.



Fig. 37 Turret detailing



Fig. 38 Fish-scale and diamond slate tiling detail

### 4.3.2 Walls

Many of Strathpeffer's buildings are finished in exposed stonework with the masonry demonstrating a range of different colours and finishes, from coursed and uncoursed rubble to ashlar and other decorative finishes. In many cases the finish is ornate, with sandstone and contrasting buff or red sandstone ashlar quoins, margins and other detailing. Examples can be seen in Figs. 39 – 41.

Brick is not readily apparent, although the gable of the rear range of Balmoral Lodge is a notable exception.

Smooth render and wet-dash harl are common finishes in the Conservation Area. Originally renders and harls were lime based and often finished with a lime wash to allow the buildings to breathe — it is unclear how many original lime harls or renders survive. Modern finishes, such as dry-dash (or pebble dash) is not prevalent and will not be supported.



Fig. 39 Blonde and red sandstone detailing



Fig. 40 Smooth render finish



Fig. 41 Ladder pinning detail, lime mortar

### 4.3.3 Windows and Doors

Most traditional buildings in Strathpeffer utilise timber sliding sash and case windows of a variety of differing glazing patterns; Georgian buildings tend to utilise twelve-pane glazing, whilst Victorian buildings favour two or four-pane glazing. There are, however, also a considerable number of less common windows (including casement windows) and those that utilise less-common forms of glazing, including lying-pane and stained glass. Doors are typically timber and usually frame and panel construction. Examples of original doors and windows are show in Figs. 42 – 47.



Fig. 42 Ornate cast iron dormer window



Fig. 43 Full pane sash windows



Fig. 44 8 over 8-pane sash and case window



Fig. 45 Single leaf, double panel door with sign-written top light

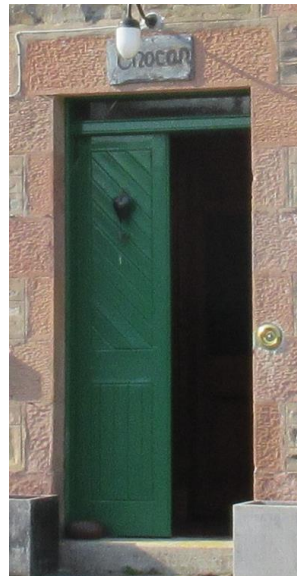


Fig. 46 Double leaf, plank and batten timber door with top light



Fig. 47 Double leaf, half-glazed and moulded panel door with multi-pane top light

#### 4.3.4 Architectural Detail

Strathpeffer's built heritage embodies the very best of Victorian architecture with a confident and enthusiastic use of detail, motifs, features and components. Each building exhibits a unique combination of elements which collectively form a series of highly individual buildings. This is further emphasized by the absence of a prescribed uniform colour palette; each building exhibits a unique colour scheme with a wide range of dark and/or muted traditional paint colours evident throughout the Conservation Area on windows, doors, rainwater goods, fascias and bargeboards.

There are, however, a variety of architectural details that can be found throughout the area which ensure cohesiveness and contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. These include:

- Decorative bargeboards – see Fig 51;



- Decorative ironwork ;
- Cast iron pillars and arcades;
- Decorative chimney cans – see Fig. 48;
- Cast iron railings – see Fig. 49;
- Finials;
- Towers and turrets – see Fig. 50;
- A broad range of traditional paint colours.



Fig. 48 Decorative chimney cans



Fig. 49 Cast iron railings



Fig. 50 Turret and finial detailing



Fig. 51 Decorative bargeboards and finials

#### 4.3.5 Shopfronts

Strathpeffer has a small number of historic shopfronts – see Fig. 52. Most, which although inappropriately altered in some areas, retain many original details and materials and contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area. Unfortunately, the shopfronts in Cromartie Buildings have been significantly altered and the majority of shopfronts in the Conservation Area have inappropriate signage.



Fig. 52 Retail units, The Square

#### 4.3.6 Boundary Walls

There are a variety of boundary treatments present within the Conservation Area. The original boundary walls—low coped stone walls, cast iron railings and hedging — are a major component of the Conservation Area’s character and contribute positively to the sense of place, as depicted in Fig. 53.

More modern boundaries, such as timber fencing, are also present and their successful integration depends heavily on design. Short picket-style fencing, for example, tends to integrate well, whilst in the majority of cases horizontal timber boarding or high vertical timber fencing tends to appear incongruous to the overall aesthetic and detracts from the area’s character and appearance.



Fig. 53 Mature hedging



Fig. 54 Blockwork walls

Elsewhere, blockwork boundary walls have been erected which do not add positively to the character of the Conservation Area, as per fig. 54.

Post and wire fences, especially when combined with planting, generally have a neutral impact.



#### 4.3.7 Condition

Within Strathpeffer the majority of properties appear well maintained and in good condition. There are a small number of buildings—principally those that have been converted to flats — that exhibit piecemeal maintenance and non-uniform alterations. In other cases, there is a need for general building maintenance, including painting and vegetation clearance from gutters and downpipes, as depicted in Fig. 55.

A number of boundaries would benefit from attention, as do some road surfaces.



Fig. 55 Vegetation growing in chimney pots

### 4.4 BUILDING MATERIALS

#### 4.4.1 Traditional Materials

In Strathpeffer historic buildings make use of a fairly limited palette of traditional materials. These are principally derived from natural sources and are less resource intensive to produce than modern alternatives. Traditional materials are an essential component of Strathpeffer's special character; in the relatively few cases where they have been eroded the impact is acutely felt.

Traditional materials commonly found in Strathpeffer include:

- Grey sandstone;
- Red and yellow sandstone dressings;
- Render;
- Timber;
- Cast iron;
- Corrugated iron;
- Slate;
- Red and terracotta tile;
- Brick (although rarely used, red brick is apparent in a small number of cases).

#### 4.4.2 Modern Materials

Within Strathpeffer modern materials are most often found on modern development. There are, however, a number of cases where modern—and inappropriate—materials have been used to alter traditional, historic buildings. In Strathpeffer these occurrences are relatively few. Whilst unsympathetic or inappropriate changes may not appear significant when considered individually, inappropriate small-scale incremental change across the Conservation Area can, over time, result in a significantly detrimental impact on the area's character and appearance.

Modern surfacing is also an issue that, in some areas, has a significant impact on the



Strathpeffer's townscape. For example, a number of the larger hotels now have large areas of hard surfacing, mainly tarmac, to the front to accommodate parking. Additionally, there are instances of garden ground/soft landscaping, which has been replaced with large areas of gravel/hard landscaping.

Examples of modern materials include:

- Profiled sheet roofs;
- Concrete tile;
- uPVC;
- Cement;
- Concrete block;
- Aluminium;
- Plastic gutters and downpipes;
- Tarmac and other modern surfacing.

## 5.0 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY | 5.0 CRÌOCH NA SGÌRE GLÈIDHTEACHAIS

### 5.1 BACKGROUND

Strathpeffer was designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 and has not been subject to subsequent amendments. The 1972 Conservation Area boundary predominantly encompassed the extent of Strathpeffer as present at the end of the 19th century. Consequently, it incorporated a number of mid-20th century developments. In some cases, such as the houses in Kinettas Square, later development has integrated successfully with the historic town, but in others it has added little to the special architectural interest of the area.

An important part of the appraisal is to ensure that the Conservation Area boundary accurately and appropriately reflects what is of architectural and historical importance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 outlines three themes that may assist planning authorities in defining conservation areas and these have been used in the re-assessment:

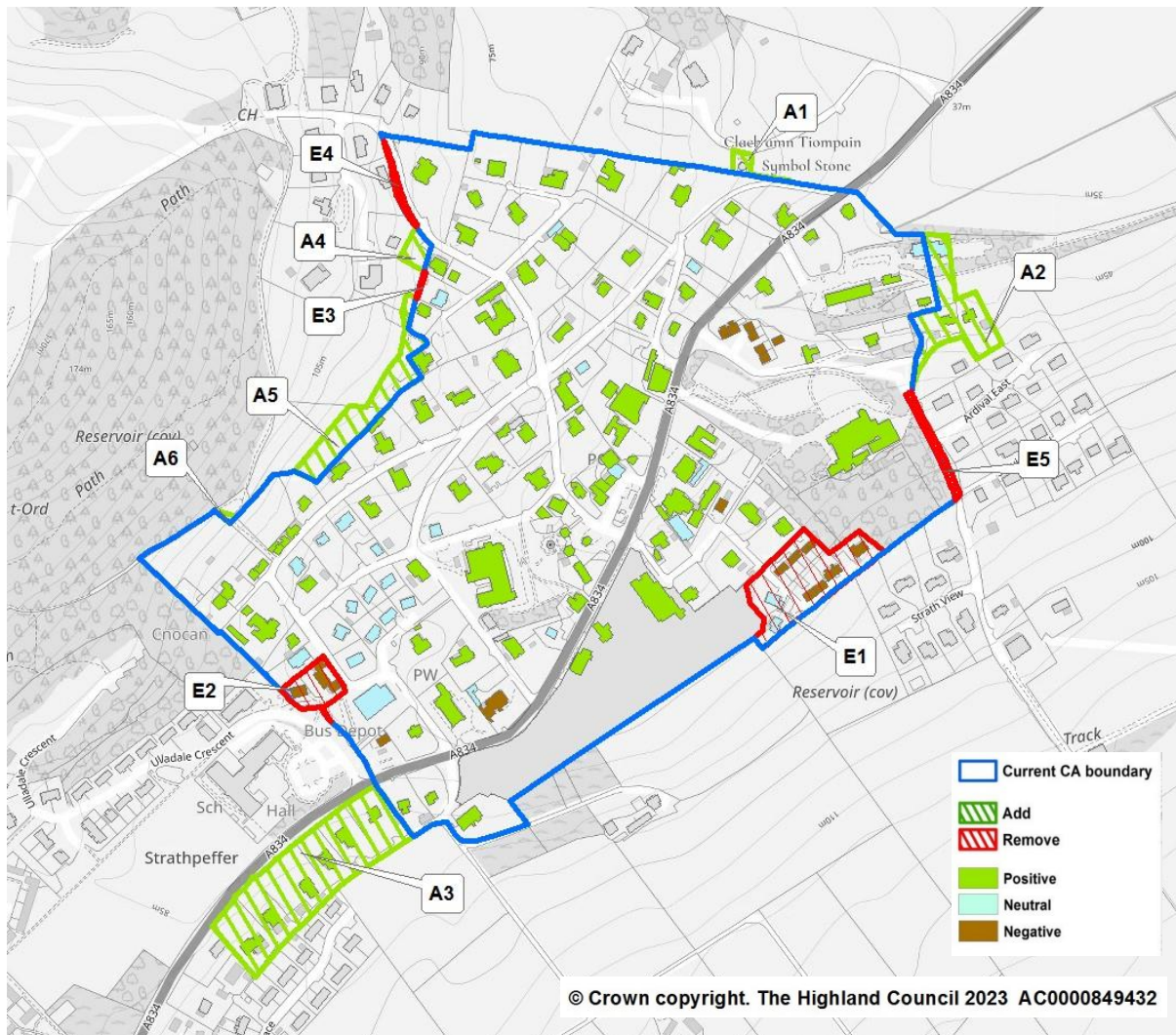
- (a) Historical interest.
- (b) Architectural interest including Character and Appearance.
- (c) Setting and Physical Context.

To inform any required boundary revisions, the buildings within the Conservation Area have been assessed according to their architectural and historic quality and the contribution they make to the townscape. Buildings have been scored as positive, neutral and negative.

The assessment reflects the contribution the building makes at the time of the survey. In many cases buildings that have been assessed as neutral or negative will be capable of enhancement and conversely buildings assessed as positive have the potential to become neutral or negative contributors if not carefully managed positive contributions to the Conservation Area.

### 5.2 BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS

It is important to avoid ambiguity as to whether features are within or outwith the Conservation Area, that the Conservation Area follows logical and definable boundaries that can be clearly mapped. The proposed amended boundary includes a number of minor amendments to align the boundary with Ordnance Survey mapping, as show in Map 7.



Map 7: Positive, neutral and negative buildings

### 5.2.1 Proposed exclusions from the Conservation Area

The assessment has found that there are two areas included in the 1972 boundary that do not contribute to the special interest of the Conservation Area. It is, therefore, recommended that these areas are excluded. These are marked on Map 7 as E1 and E2. The areas marked E3, E4 and E5 are minor amendments to align the boundary to Ordnance Survey Maps.

#### *E1 Ardival Terrace*

Ardival Terrace is on the periphery of the Conservation Area and includes 15 buildings built as social housing dating from the 1930/40s to 1960s. Although good quality buildings in their own right, and mostly well maintained, they do not contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area.

#### *E2 Nicolson Court and Redwood*

This area consists of modern flats, constructed in 1999 and a modern house. Neither building contributes positively to the special architectural or historic interest of the



Conservation Area.

### 5.2.2 Proposed additions to the Conservation Area

Three additions to the Conservation Area — A1, A2 and A3 — are proposed, as well as rationalisation of the currently poorly defined Conservation Area boundary in the north-west corner, indicated as A4, A5 and A6 between Dunraven Lodge and Kinettas Graveyard.

#### *A1 The Eagle Stone*



Fig. 56 Detail of A1; The Eagle Stone

A1 comprises a small extension to the north of the Conservation Area to incorporate the Eagle Stone as shown in Fig. 56. The stone would have been a destination for Victorian visitors taking gentle exercise around the town and it is still an important component of modern-day Strathpeffer. The Eagle Stone is a Pictish stone dating to around the seventh century. It is a Scheduled Monument and is of significant historic and architectural interest to the town.

#### *A2 Old Police House/Viewfield and Peffrey House*

The 1972 boundary bisected the curtilage ground of Railway Cottage and did not follow a physical boundary readily observable on the ground. The boundary has been amended to encompass the entirety of the curtilage of Railway Cottage and Peffrey House. It has been further extended to include two additional buildings, the Old



Fig. 57 Old Police House (LH building, to rear) and Railway Cottages (RH buildings, foreground)

Police House and Viewfield, the latter of which is notable for its superlative retention of original detailing and fabric – see Fig. 57. Both buildings are contemporary with Strathpeffer's rise as a prime health resort in the late 19th century and share the architectural style and character that defines the adjoining Conservation Area. The buildings and associated garden ground contribute positively to the wider townscape when viewed from the former station and create a backdrop to Railway Cottage and enhance the public realm. The buildings collectively define the eastern periphery of the Victorian town as it becomes more rural in nature, forming a gateway to the Peffrey Way.

It is unclear why these buildings were omitted from the original boundary, and it is both

justifiable and logical to bring both properties into the Conservation Area. Both the Old Police House and Viewfield are considered to be part of the town's special architectural and historic interest.

The 1972 Conservation Area boundary divided land upon which Peffrey House was built in 1997 and the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan recommended that this area was removed. However, as a result of feedback, the post-consultation draft has been amended to extend the boundary to include the curtilage of Peffrey House. Although the building has been scored as neutral, it is considered that retaining this area, in conjunction with the inclusion of the Old Police House and Viewfield, will give protection for any future development plans, create a coherent and logical boundary and protect views into and across the Conservation Area.

### *A3 Garden House Brae.*

To the south-west of the existing conservation area, A3 consists of seven, fine Victorian villas including Glen Oran, Elm Bank, New York Villa, Craigellachie, Craigellachie Cottage, Ravenscroft and Corrie Vanie. The buildings sit prominently upon a natural bank that rises above the A834 overlooking the town and marking the beginning of the historic settlement. Two adjoining properties (Parkhill and The Mount) are included in the existing Conservation Area and the proposed additions mark the timeline and continuation of Strathpeffer's development up until 1900. Collectively, the buildings share a common architectural language, with a similarity of scale, mass, bulk and a regular grain and rhythm. All are set within generous plots bounded by traditional walls, fencing and hedges. The intervening bank is populated by a number of fine large mature trees that both individually and collectively make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. These seven villas would provide a robust and attractive edge to the Conservation Area that aligns with the late Victorian boundary of the town.

It is not clear why they were not included in the original Conservation Area boundary. These buildings are integral to and contemporary with Strathpeffer's unique architectural and historic heritage, and contextually and materially share the same characteristics of the adjacent Conservation Area. Images of these buildings and setting can be seen via Figs. 58 - 65





Fig. 58 Glen Oran



Fig. 59 Elm Bank



Fig. 60 New York Villa



Fig. 61 Craigellachie



Fig. 62 Craigellachie Cottage

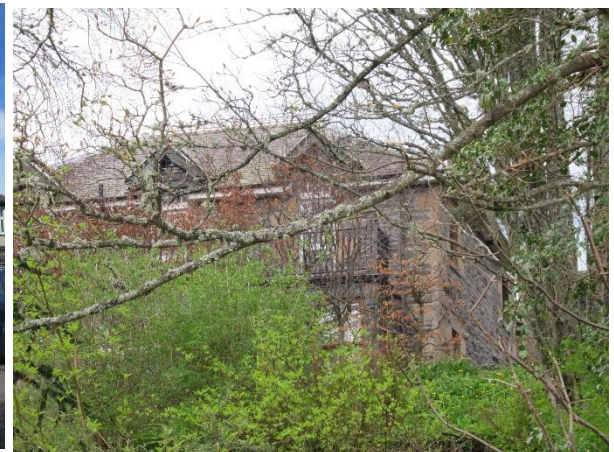


Fig. 63 Ravenscroft





Fig. 64 Corrievanie



Fig. 65 Bank of mature, specimen trees

*North West Perimeter of Conservation Area:*



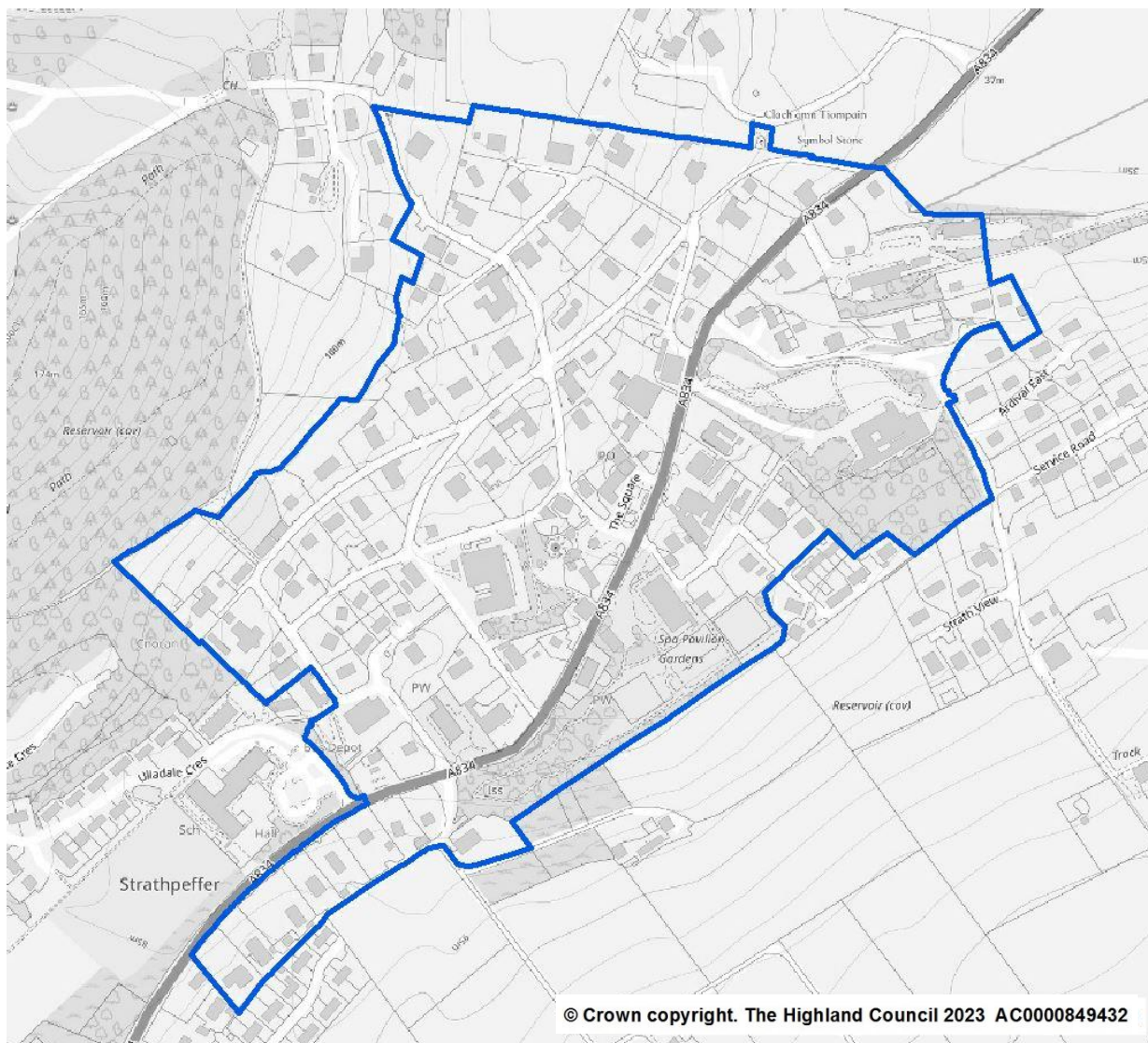
Fig. 66 Detail of Areas A4, A5 and A6

*Areas A4, A5 and A6*

Areas A4, A5 and A6 are proposed for inclusion, to create a robust, definable and attractive edge to the Conservation Area, to align with modern day Ordnance Survey maps, as shown in Fig. 66. The three areas will offer a positive contribution to the area which bounds the traditional buildings within the Conservation Area.

### *Addendum November 2023:*

Further to public consultation of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, all of the above areas were recommended for adoption within the boundary of a revised Strathpeffer Conservation Area, at the Wester Ross, Skye and Strathpeffer Area Committee in June 2023, as per Map 8. Members at Economic and Infrastructure Committee approved the adoption of this plan at their August 2023 meeting.



Map 8: Adopted Conservation Area boundary

## 6.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN | 6.0 PLANA RIAGHLADH

### 6.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Management Plan is to address the findings of the Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and further consider its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This Management Plan should be used in conjunction with the Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and reference is made to relevant sections of the appraisal throughout.

The plan provides strategy and guidance on the management of change and development in the Conservation Area, in order to preserve and enhance its special qualities, and its character and appearance as identified in the appraisal.

Paragraph 4.172 of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP, 2015) covers policy on conservation areas. Paragraph 4.173 states that the Council will undertake a Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan for Strathpeffer Conservation Area and outlines the issues to be included:

- Identify the appropriate scale, massing and location for new development;
- Identify appropriate types of materials to be used for such development and in the alteration, extension and refurbishment of traditional buildings throughout Strathpeffer Conservation Area;
- Opportunities for planning action;
- Opportunities for development;
- Opportunities for enhancement;
- Conservation strategy and guidance on key aspects;
- Monitoring and review.

This document will inform the Council's planning practice and policies for the area and assist stakeholders. The successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support of and input from stakeholders, and in particular local residents and property owners.

### 6.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Strathpeffer is a purpose-built spa town that incorporates a mix of both residential and visitor accommodation, with an extensive network of public and private green space.

#### 6.2.1 General Underlying Qualities

The character of the Strathpeffer Conservation Area is derived from a number of unique qualities and elements which make it a distinct and important area.



Broader features that are important to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area include:

- Wider area vistas, views and panoramas experienced within the Conservation Area, looking out, and from outwith looking in;
- The combined effect of streets, spaces, buildings, varied rooflines and their architectural form, scale, rhythm and massing and their interrelationship with topography;
- Generous plot size, plot boundaries, divisions and open grain;
- The repetition of distinctive architectural detail and motifs and the positive cumulative effect of these on the appearance of the wider townscape;
- The quality, diversity, eclectic Victorian character and authenticity of Strathpeffer's historic buildings, distinctive timberwork and a consistent palette of traditional materials and finishes;
- The contribution made by trees and soft landscaping both in their own right and as contributors to the setting of buildings, streets and spaces.

### 6.2.2 The Significance of Spaces

Open spaces, both private and public, are vital contributing factors to the character of the Conservation Area. Their retention and sensitive management are crucial to maintaining this special character.

#### Public Spaces

Public spaces and vistas that must be considered as part of any development proposal which might affect them include:

- Strathpeffer Spa Gardens;
- Kinnettas Graveyard;
- The Eagle Stone;
- The Square.

#### Private Spaces

Private open spaces, including garden ground, make an immeasurable contribution throughout the Conservation Area. It is important to the Conservation Area that, wherever garden ground contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area, that its retention is secured.

### 6.2.3 The Significance of Buildings

A selection of the more significant buildings is outlined in section 4.2, although the majority of historic buildings in the Conservation Area are notable both individually and as part of a group. Nonetheless, there are buildings and building groups within the Conservation Area that are particularly sensitive to change; any proposal that may affect them or their setting will need to carefully be justified. These buildings and groups include:

- The setting and views of The Highland Hotel from The Square and A834;
- The setting of and impact on ecclesiastical buildings, such as the Parish Church, St Anne's Episcopal Church and the Free Church;
- The Square, its setting and views to and from;
- The setting and views of the Strathpeffer Pavilion and Upper Pump Room;
- The intricate rooflines and roofscape, which is punctuated by ornate chimney stacks and cans, spires, turrets and towers, as show in Fig. 67.



Fig. 67 Roofline along Golf Course Road

## 7.0 CHALLENGES AND THREATS | 7.0 DÙBHLAIN AGUS BREATAICHEAN

### 7.1 WIDER CHALLENGES

#### 7.1.1 Lack of Repair and Maintenance

Strathpeffer's buildings and open spaces are generally well maintained and in good condition. However, there are isolated examples of long-standing vegetation growth in guttering and poorly maintained rainwater goods; inappropriate cement render repairs; and a lack of maintenance to windows, doors, chimneys, roofs and ironwork.

The Council, working in partnership with Inverness City Heritage Trust, has produced a [maintenance guide](#) to help property owners.

#### 7.1.2 Loss of Original Architectural Detail and Original Features

Original architectural detail makes a defining contribution to Strathpeffer's character and appearance. It is, therefore, important that detail and its importance is recognised, preserved and enhanced. The incremental removal and loss of traditional features—including windows and doors, roof coverings, metalwork etc.—contributes to the erosion of the special character of the Conservation Area.

Likewise, erosion of Strathpeffer's architectural detail can result from the introduction of new and inappropriate architectural forms and materials. For example, flat roofs, modern conservatories and poorly conceived extensions and the introduction of manmade materials can, in many cases, erode surviving historic architectural and historic detail.

#### 7.1.3 Use of Inappropriate Materials

Materials are an important element of a conservation area, and the use of traditional materials provides a unifying feature across an area. Modern materials tend to have a uniform surface, profile and patina, often weather comparatively poorly and stand out from traditional materials. Common examples include:

- Modern plastic windows. These lack the profile, subtle detailing and variety of character of timber sash and case windows;
- uPVC, aluminium or glass doors lack the patina, colour and detailing of timber panel doors;
- Plastic rainwater goods lack the character, variety of finish and texture of cast iron.

Some of these challenges are apparent in Strathpeffer's dwellings that have been converted to flats. Often, these buildings have been subject to piecemeal alterations using a variety of non-traditional materials to a variety of designs, particularly the alteration of windows. This can result in a loss of uniformity, symmetry and cohesion



and can have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area – see Figs. 68 and 69.

It is important that inappropriate materials are not permitted on both traditional properties and new buildings in the Conservation Area. Since 2012, planning permission has been required to carry out most external alterations to buildings in a conservation area and inappropriate modern materials should not be proposed or permitted moving forward. Further information can be obtained via The Council's supplementary guidance on specific matters such as [Historic Windows and Doors](#) and also from Historic Environment Scotland's [Managing Change in Windows](#) for both property owners and professional practitioners.



Fig. 68 Inappropriate replacement door and window



Fig. 69 Inappropriate replacement windows

#### 7.1.4 Inappropriate and unsympathetic alterations and extensions

Strathpeffer is generally well-cared for and incidents of inappropriate development or the introduction of new and unsympathetic forms are comparatively uncommon. There are, however, a number of historic buildings that have been subject to poorly conceived and/or out-of-scale extensions, including extensive flat roof additions, that respect neither scale nor character. Poorly designed and sited conservatory extensions utilising modern materials, although not ubiquitous, are increasingly a cause for concern, as depicted in Fig. 70. Box dormers, whilst present in only a small number of cases, can significantly damage historic roofscapes and are unlikely to be acceptable in many cases.



Fig. 70 Inappropriate conservatory extension

Alterations and extensions must be carefully conceived and must reflect the character and scale of the building and not seek to replicate badly considered extensions and

alterations present elsewhere in the Conservation Area.

### 7.1.5 Adaptation for Climate Resilience and Energy Efficiency

Adaptation of the Conservation Area's building stock to adapt to a changing climate and improve energy efficiency are important considerations in securing a sustainable future for the Conservation Area. It is, however, important that external adaptations are carefully considered, are sensitive and appropriate to the character, appearance and performance of building and its wider heritage context. In some cases, it will be necessary to find acceptable compromises to ensure a balance between the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and adaptation.

### 7.1.6 Installation of Micro-renewables

There are examples of solar panels in the Conservation Area and a small number of air source heat pumps. In many cases it will be possible to incorporate at least some micro-renewable technologies without detriment to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, in some cases, where micro-renewables are clearly visible from the public realm, are visible on principle elevations or in important views other options may need to be considered. Information on climate-change mitigation measures which are supported in the Conservation Area can be seen in Section 9.2.

### 7.1.7 Subdivision of plots

Strathpeffer does not have many obvious gap sites or redevelopment opportunities, and this has resulted in a trend to subdivide existing plots. The importance of plot size and layout results in limited opportunities for further sub-division of plots. Where proposed, rigorous justification and assessment will be required.

### 7.1.8 Loss of Traditional Boundaries

Boundary walls are a significant component of Strathpeffer's character. Where traditional boundaries have been replaced these can have a significantly detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This is most acutely apparent where timber panel and/or horizontal or vertical board fencing has been used, as per Fig. 71. Likewise, modern materials such as chain-link fences and concrete block walls, often finished with harl and lacking the width or finish of traditional stone walls,



Fig. 71 Inappropriate timber fencing

detract from the character of the area. Such options are poor substitutes for traditional boundary treatments such as hedging, stone walls and cast-iron railings. The Council will not support the loss of traditional boundary treatments and will encourage the replacement of inappropriate boundary treatments with traditional finishes. New boundaries will be of a form and finish appropriate to the Conservation Area.

### 7.1.9 Loss of Private Green Space

The plot sizes of many of the Conservation Area's properties are generous and the grounds are generally complimented by well-maintained, mature gardens and this contributes significantly to Strathpeffer's character and appearance. It is important that, wherever hard landscaping is required, that it is unobtrusive and integrates successfully alongside soft landscaping, with trees, planting, hedging and lawns continuing to dominate. There are a small number of instances where all soft landscaping has been cleared and replaced with hard landscaping to facilitate off-



Fig. 72 Hard landscaping, Strathpeffer Hotel

road parking. In all cases this has had a significantly detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Given the number of hotels and buildings catering to visitors it is inevitable that significant areas will be allocated to parking space. In some areas this has had the unfortunate consequence of dominating the hotel buildings, their garden ground and the immediate streetscape, as shown in Fig. 72.

### 7.1.10 Service and Telecommunication Equipment

On a smaller scale, but no less significant with regard to incremental erosion of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, are poorly sited services such as satellite dishes, cabling, flues, security equipment and pipework.

### 7.1.11 New Development

Opportunities for new development within the Conservation Area are very few. The Inner Moray Firth Local Plan has not identified any opportunities for development within the Conservation Area boundary. However, should new development be proposed within the Conservation Area, it must be carefully conceived and designed with the specific qualities of Strathpeffer to the fore. Ardival Court, (see Fig. 73) a development of four flats and four bungalows in 2012, is a prime example of new development that ticks many of the 'traditional' boxes (slate roof, timber windows, 45-degree roof pitch etc.) yet has not integrated with the wider area as successfully as it might.



Fig. 73 Ardival Court

Successful new development within the Conservation Area will need to be of high-quality design and utilise high quality materials. It must also respect the historic grain, massing, rhythm and scale of Strathpeffer and views into and out of the Conservation Area must be carefully considered.



### 7.1.12 New Development Outwith the Conservation Area



Fig. 74 Strathview development



Fig. 75 Strathview development

New development outwith the Conservation Area which can be seen from inside the Conservation Area, or which affects the extended streetscape of streets in the Conservation Area will be carefully assessed. Given Strathpeffer's location and varied topography, development outwith the Conservation Area has the potential to impact upon its setting and its character and appearance.

This has already occurred at Strathview and Ardival East, two modern developments which are highly visible, especially to the west of the Conservation Area when viewed from higher ground, as per Fig. 74 and 75. Even when viewed from a distance, this development detracts from the traditional and intricate roofscape that characterises Strathpeffer. It is important that the assessment of new development takes into account wider views from within the Conservation Area.

### 7.1.13 Public Realm

The quality and upkeep of the public realm is of importance to the interests of commercial business and residents and presents an image of the town to visitors. Principal areas of concern include quality of paving; damage to street surfaces by utility companies; maintenance of public and amenity spaces; street furniture; street clutter (excessive traffic management infrastructure; wheelie bins; A-frames etc.) and inappropriate sighted and/or designed advertising and signage. Footpaths throughout the town need to be regularly maintained to ensure ease of access for residents and visitors.

## 7.2 SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Some of the wider challenges set out above are highlighted by specific cases where, for

example, a poorly maintained building is blighting its immediate surroundings, or inappropriate interventions have significantly impacted the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, the single biggest threat facing Strathpeffer is one of vacancy and redundant buildings.

Any enhancement schemes should seek to prioritise the cases below and overleaf to reduce their negative impact. However, most are in private ownership and liaison, detailed discussion and support from public bodies may be necessary to encourage change. The [Planning Authority](#) can be contacted for advice on change of use and further information can be obtained from [Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change Guidance](#).

### 7.2.1 Cromartie Buildings

Cromartie Buildings dates to the late 19th century and is located in a prominent position within Strathpeffer's townscape, as per Fig. 76. The ground floor operates with one separate shop unit and the two former retail units may be in use as residential units. The upper floors have been converted into flats, all with individual owners.



Fig. 76 Cromartie Buildings

Piecemeal alterations, most notably to windows, has resulted in a variety of styles and a range of materials being introduced into the building resulting in an un-unified appearance and lack of coherence. The overall impact is detrimental to the character and appearance of both the building and its immediate environs. Only one flat retains traditional windows. In this case, when planning applications are received to replace existing inappropriate windows, the Council will insist upon a single colour palette for all units and the reinstatement of traditional sash and case windows in line with those that still survive and have been documented by the Council.

### 7.2.2 The Sheiling



Fig. 77 The Sheiling Building

The Sheiling building (Fig. 77) is characterful and occupies a central and prominent position in the town, adjacent to The Square and The Strathpeffer Hotel. It has been vacant for some time, despite plans to bring it back into use, and its condition is deteriorating. Securing a new use for the unit should be considered a priority.

### 7.2.3 Mackay's Hotel



Fig. 78 MacKay's Hotel

MacKay's Hotel holds a prominent position on the A834. The building, as shown in fig. 78, has been unoccupied for a number of years and is now starting to suffer from a lack of routine maintenance. It is, however, understood that the property has recently been sold (June 2022) and its long-term future may now be more secure. The Council is supportive of high-quality regeneration.

### 7.2.4 Rosslyn Lodge

This large late 19th century villa, as shown in Fig. 79, was previously in use as a boarding house (circa 1910) and in latter years was used for staff accommodation. However, the building has regrettably been severely damaged by fire (December 2022). The Council is supportive of a high-quality restoration.



Fig. 79 Rosslyn Lodge

### 7.2.5 Spa Coach Company Building



Fig. 80 Former steadings

The former steadings of Kinettas Farm are in commercial use by the Spa Coach Company, as depicted in Fig. 80. As one of the oldest buildings in Strathpeffer, the Council would support sympathetic renovations to preserve this building for future generations and to make the area more visually appealing.

### 7.2.6 Former Petrol Station

Adjacent to the Spa Coach building is the site of the former petrol station, as per Fig. 81, which is understood to be owned by the same company. This is a gateway site to the Conservation Area and has the potential for enhancement or redevelopment, e.g., an active business use, or a residential development. Proposals should respect, relate and respond to the Conservation Area and be set back from the road edge to maintain the existing road line. Any new building should be one or one-and-a-half storey in height and of high-quality materials and design.



Fig. 81 Former petrol station



## 8.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT | 8.0 COTHROMAN AIRSON NEARTACHADH

### 8.1 BACKGROUND

Strathpeffer has fewer significant management issues than many conservation areas in Highland. Nonetheless, there are opportunities to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area which should be seized wherever practicable. A fundamental principle when considering the management of the Conservation Area is that it should be both proactive and heritage led.

#### 8.1.2 Increased Maintenance

The best means of preserving the character and appearance of any area is through the routine maintenance of buildings, green infrastructure such as trees, open spaces and the public realm. Responsibility for maintenance and repair lies with individual property owners and for most routine works, planning permission is not required. Roofs, chimneys, windows, doors, rainwater goods, stonework, paintwork, wall finishes, entrance steps, gardens and boundary treatments, both front and rear, all need regular attention to prolong their life, secure the future of the building and enhance its setting. Regular, coordinated maintenance inspection and programmes can help reduce costs in the long term. Similar considerations apply to the management and upkeep of private gardens and other private and public open spaces. Historic Environment Scotland's free [INFORM Guide](#) series provides useful information on maintenance issues for various elements of historic buildings. The Council has published a maintenance guide which is available on the Council's [website](#).

#### 8.1.2 Reinstatement of Traditional Features

Where traditional features have been lost, the Council will support their replacement. For example, replace inappropriate modern windows and doors with historically appropriate units; replace modern boundary treatments with appropriate traditional boundaries; reinstatement of traditional detailing and traditional signwriting on shopfronts etc.

#### 8.1.3 Promotion of Sensitive Alterations

The Council encourages the sensitive alteration and extension of Listed Buildings, where this will not harm their special interest, and of unlisted buildings where the proposals preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

Where work appears to be unauthorised, the Council has statutory powers to investigate alleged breaches of planning control (including Listed Building consent) and any attached conditions. Powers under the Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011 allow for stop notices and temporary stop notices in respect of specific works

and fixed penalty notices for breaches of enforcement notices. The Council may take formal action where a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved by negotiation, and it is in the public interest to do so. For further information on enforcement of planning controls, please see the [Council's website](#).

#### 8.1.4 Promotion of Sympathetic, High Quality New Development

There are limited opportunities for development and redevelopment within the Conservation Area, especially given the recognition and protection of public and private green space. However, where opportunities do arise for new development, proposals will make use of sympathetic contemporary forms, taking particular account of local context, views, townscape, setting, scale, massing, materials and detail. Design, materials and landscaping must all be of a high quality which reflect, relate and respond positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

#### 8.1.5 Advertising and Signage

Cumulatively, a proliferation of advertising boards and signs located in the public realm can result in clutter and detract from the character of the Conservation Area. It can also impact on the setting of Listed Buildings and amenity space. The Conservation Area would benefit from better control of advertising, especially where it is located on major roads and gateways, and of design/size that is inappropriate to the Conservation Area.

Advertising and signage within the Conservation Area will in general, comply with the following principles and will accord with the Council's Shopfront Design Guidance:

- The scale and location of signage should be appropriate to the size and scale of the building and the Conservation Area in general;
- Signage and advertising will make use of traditional materials and be of an appropriate design;
- Timber painted signs utilising a traditional colour palette appropriate to the age of the building are preferred; vinyl and banner signs and/or signs with internal illumination will not be supported;
- A proliferation of temporary signage/A-boards will be avoided. This not only adds to street clutter but creates obstacles for the visually impaired and restricts circulation, which can have a negative impact on the character of the area.

#### 8.1.6 Protection of Green Space, Trees and the Green Network

Green infrastructure is important in terms of townscape and local amenity and can have visual, ecological and biodiversity value. Private and public garden ground and open space—and the plants, trees and built structures that help form them—make an important contribution to local landscape character and form part of the area's cultural heritage. In this case, there is a presumption to retain existing open space, whether public or private, which contributes positively to the historic character of the area. Likewise, features that define and are integral to an area of open space (i.e., trees,

hedging, boundary walls, landscaping features etc.) that contribute positively to the historic character of the area should be retained.



Fig. 82 Traditional Hedge Laying, Old Station car park

When opportunities arise to restore, add or enhance existing greenspaces, trees or green networks, these should be explored. For example, a traditional hedge-laying training programme recently focussed on the Old Station's car park boundary hedge, further adding to the heritage appeal of this area, as shown in Fig. 82.

The quiet, attractive, winding streets which lend themselves perfectly to pedestrian access are a significant attraction of

Strathpeffer. Strathpeffer has a number of small footpaths which would benefit from better maintenance and promotion. The use of gentle exercise links in with the origins of Strathpeffer as a spa resort and promotion of these networks could be used, in partnership with the promotion of the town's heritage, such as Archaeology for Communities in the Highland's (ARCH) [Walk around Strathpeffer](#).

### 8.1.7 Programme of Tree Renewal

Today, Strathpeffer has an abundance of specimen trees as detailed in Map 5. It is important to recognise that many of these are broadly contemporary with the flourishing of Strathpeffer in the 19th - early 20th century and there is a risk that a significant number will reach maturity and decline at a similar time. There is, however, an opportunity to secure replacement planting in advance of this decline. Opportunities to link in with funding applications made by the local community or other funding sources can be investigated to procure a professional tree condition survey, supplemented with a specimen tree planting plan, which will ensure that the extent and diversity of tree cover exists to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area for the enjoyment of future generations.

## 8.2 PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

### 8.2.1 Street furniture

Strathpeffer has a variety of styles and designs of street furniture, which vary in quality. While variety can add to the diversity of character in the Conservation Area, there is a danger of visual clutter in important civic and street spaces where competing styles of furniture such as bins, seating, pedestrian barriers, planters etc. coexist.

Future consideration of street furniture and waste storage should ensure that, as well as being functional and cost-effective, it is complementary to the character of the Conservation Area in design quality and that its location does not perpetuate clutter.



### 8.2.2 Roads and street surfaces

Some of the hotels adjacent to The Square include large areas of tarmac and hard landscaping to accommodate parking. Originally these areas would have been garden ground, but are now largely bland and featureless, offering little of visual interest. There would be considerable benefit to both the appearance of the hotels and character of the Conservation Area in softening the appearance of the hard landscaping and car park areas by improving the quality and variety of materials and with the addition of soft landscaping and planters, especially where the grounds intersect with the public realm. Areas that have significant potential and scope for enhancement include Strathpeffer Hotel, MacKay's Spa Lodge Hotel and MacKay's Hotel.

### 8.2.3 Improved Access, Interpretation, Education and Community Engagement

Opportunities exist to improve and upgrade access and path networks within the Conservation Area. It is also important to consider ways in which interpretation and educational benefits of the Conservation Area can be maximised as a learning, teaching and participation resource for all sections of the community. Engagement with the local community is essential in fostering a sense of local ownership and responsibility for the historic environment. The Council will encourage local involvement through liaison with local and community groups, amenity/ heritage groups, such as [Archaeology for Communities in Highland](#) (ARCH) and [The Highland Museum of Childhood](#), and stakeholders with issues affecting the historic environment. There are opportunities to develop collaborative working between Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust, accommodation providers, tourism bodies and volunteering groups within the town to promote the cultural and natural heritage of Strathpeffer, and to further enhance resident's and visitor's experience. There are several way-finding finger posts within the town, to signpost visitors to local attractions and these can be further explored. Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust could consider repurposing the Upper Pump Room, as the building is in a good central location to host interpretation, education and community engagement and form a central visitor point.

### 8.2.4 Telecommunications and Utilities

Redevelopment works and repeated excavations by statutory undertakers have resulted in the gradual degradation of existing road and pavement surfaces. The Council will work to ensure that statutory undertakers reinstate ground surfaces in an appropriate manner and will consider the use of Article 4 directions to control such operations should the need arise.

### 8.2.5 Public Art

New public art is encouraged and the installation of distinctive pieces of street furniture and art-work could reinforce a local sense of place.

### 8.2.6 The Square

As a prime focus of Strathpeffer, The Square is one of the most important and prominent

public spaces in the town. The Square has benefitted from a recent programme of renewal and enhancement with the installation of a new gazebo, refurbishment of the water fountain, new street furniture including benches, bollards and signage, together with improvements to the retail unit's facades. The Council is supportive of future development of the retail units, which should be sympathetic to the original facades. The Highland Council's [shopfront design guide](#) provides further information.

#### 8.2.7 Strathpeffer Spa Gardens

Ownership of Strathpeffer Spa Gardens was transferred from The Highland Council to Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust in 2020. The gardens are included in the national Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland. Both national and local planning policy supports the positive management of Inventory Gardens, and the Council is required to protect and enhance sites included in the Inventory.

Strathpeffer Spa Gardens are undoubtedly a significant asset with historic, architectural and horticultural interest. It is, therefore, unfortunate that over the last few years – including through the Covid-19 period – the gardens have not been maintained at the desired level or standard. It is hoped that under Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust's stewardship the gardens can be managed proactively, and it is noted that the Trust are currently applying to Historic Environment Scotland for funding to restore the gardens (May 2023). The plans include repairing the pond and installing a fountain, repairing infrastructure and the installation of a sensory garden, in collaboration with the neighbouring garden at St Anne's Church. Successional planting of trees will ensure continuation of the rich arboreal content. The Trust's regeneration of the gardens is currently supported by a team of volunteers; however, the garden's redevelopment has the aspiration to offer placement opportunities with landscape design students at University of the Highlands and Islands.

The Council will support proposals that seek to enhance the gardens whilst preserving or enhancing their significant contribution to the wider Conservation Area.

## 9.0 PLANNING POLICIES | 9.0 POILEASIDHEAN DEALBHAI DH

One of the greatest threats to any conservation area can be the accumulative effect of small, incremental changes which together have a significant negative impact on its authenticity and character and appearance. This can include for example, changes to traditional window designs, removing chimneys or skew copes during roofing works, and loss of original timber doors. As well as smaller alterations like box dormers or even fitting satellite dishes and pipework without consideration of the historic building and its environment. The [Planning Authority](#) provides a pre-application service and building owners/occupiers are encouraged to engage with this value-added service, ahead of submitting planning applications.

### 9.1 NEW DEVELOPMENT

- I. All proposals for new development (including garages and ancillary buildings etc.) will demonstrate the use of high quality (including, where appropriate contemporary) design, materials and finishes and include detail of landscaping and boundary treatments. All proposals will take particular account of local context, views, townscape, setting, scale, massing, materials and detail;
- II. All new development proposals will adhere to the existing street pattern and present strong and coherent frontages where the development faces onto the street;
- III. All new development proposals will be supported by a detailed design statement that clearly demonstrates how the proposal will either preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### 9.2 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

- The Council will support the retention of historic features, fabric and detailing and the sensitive repair and maintenance of all buildings and built features;
- Where traditional finishes and features have been replaced with modern, inappropriate and/or unsympathetic alternatives, the Council will insist upon the reinstatement of traditional finishes and features;
- Where traditional finishes and features are proven to be beyond viable repair, the Council will support their replacement on a like-for-like basis. Non-traditional replacements, alternatives, materials and finishes will not be supported;
- The Council will support the sensitive alteration and extension of Listed Buildings, where there is justification to do so and where this will not harm their special interest, and of unlisted buildings where the proposals preserve and enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.



- Boundary treatments will respect the historical character of the area. In the majority of cases stone walls, railings and natural hedging (or a combination thereof) will be supported. High timber fences (with vertical or horizontal boards) and metal fences are unlikely to be supported where they front a public road or footpath.

### 9.3 DEMOLITION

The Council is committed to the sustainable use and management of the historic environment, as outlined in the Highland Historic Environment Strategy. This means meeting the needs of today without compromising the opportunity for future generations to understand, appreciate and benefit from the historic environment. Listed Building Consent is always required for the demolition of a Listed Building and conservation area consent is required for the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area. Consent is also required for structures and other elements such as gates and enclosures. Partial demolition also requires consent – for more information, please see Historic Environment Scotland [\*Managing Change Demolition of Listed Buildings \(2019\)\*](#).

### 9.4 SPACES AND TREES

Greenspaces, both private and public, are vital contributing factors to the character of the Conservation Area. Their retention and sensitive management are crucial to maintaining this special character and for the protection of biodiversity. Green infrastructure is important in terms of local amenity and can have many benefits, including health and wellbeing and a sense of place. There is a presumption to retain existing greenspace, whether public or private, which contributes positively to the character of the area. Likewise, features that define and are integral to greenspace, i.e., trees, hedging, boundary walls and other landscaping features, should be retained, enhanced and protected. In some cases, the introduction of new stone boundaries or hedges may be encouraged to enhance the streetscape and define the original planned town lots.

Trees in conservation areas are protected through the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Before carrying out any work on a tree in a conservation area owners must give six weeks' notice to the Planning Authority of any intention to cut, lop, top, uproot, damage or destroy a tree. This is separate to any other permissions or consents that may be required. Planning proposals should protect any trees on the site unless relevant notification procedures to the Planning Authority have been made and completed.

## 9.5 PUBLIC REALM

- The Council will support appropriate advertising in line with the general principles set out in this document. Inappropriately sited and/or designed advertising will not be supported;
- The Council will support the maintenance and promotion of footpaths, access and interpretation in and around the Conservation Area.

## 9.6 ADAPTATION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

In order to make buildings more energy efficient and resilient to climate change, for example more extreme weather events, heavier rainfall etc., appropriate changes to buildings will be supported. Traditional buildings were often constructed of materials that are breathable and require a degree of ventilation. The installation of some energy efficiency measures can affect the fabric of a traditional building in terms of airtightness, breathability, ventilation and condensation. This should be considered when identifying the most appropriate solutions. The energy efficiency of the building and performance of any interventions will be affected by the external building fabric condition, therefore buildings should be in good repair prior to any such changes.

Measures which would affect the appearance of any building in the Conservation Area, for example the introduction of external insulating render or changes to windows and doors, will require Planning Permission. Listed Buildings will require Listed Building Consent for both interior and exterior changes. Further advice can be provided by the [Planning Authority](#).

### 9.6.1 Adaptation of traditional buildings

The impact on the building of changes to the exterior, for example the introduction of external insulating render or changes to windows and doors, must be considered carefully. External insulation can alter the overall character of a traditional building (obscure architectural detailing, original finishes and fabric, alter the profile of window and door openings) and effect its technical performance e.g., how rainwater goods and weathering details perform. It is unlikely that external wall insulation will be supported on most traditional buildings in the Conservation Area for these reasons. However, proposals for external insulation to be applied to modern extensions to historic buildings will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In most cases double glazing is fully supported and encouraged where it will not adversely impact the character of the window. Planning Permission is not required where double glazing is retrofitted into existing historic frames. Likewise, Planning Permission is not required for replacement windows that incorporate double glazing but are otherwise identical in all other respects (including material, opening method, design, profile, detailing, colour and fenestration pattern). More detailed information can be

found in the Council's Historic Windows and Doors in Listed Buildings and Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas Planning Guidance.

Historic Environment Scotland has useful guidance on improving climate resilience and energy efficiency in traditional and Listed Buildings:

[Guide to Energy Retrofit of Traditional Buildings](#)

[Short Guide 1: Fabric Improvement for Energy Efficiency](#)

[Short Guide 11 – Climate Change Adaption for Traditional Buildings](#)

Various Historic Environment Scotland cases studies and technical research papers are also available online.

#### 9.6.2 Adaptation of modern buildings

Buildings constructed after 1948 may be capable of other proportionate energy efficiency measures and these will be considered by the [Planning Authority](#) on a case by case basis.

### 9.7 INSTALLATION OF MICRO-RENEWABLES

Micro-renewables are small-scale non-commercial systems including solar, wind, thermal (ground/water/air source) and biomass which use zero- or low-carbon energy technologies. The use of renewable energy technology in the historic environment supports the transition to net zero and ensures assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change. The historic environment is valued and enhanced where the character of the historic building and Conservation Area can be protected through careful siting and design. The circumstances of each case will require individual assessment.

Points for consideration when installing micro-renewables include:

- Renewables may have a visual impact beyond the building or plot; carefully assess the impact on the neighbouring buildings and Conservation Area setting;
- Always look to minimise any physical intervention on a traditional building and ensure that equipment can be removed at the end of its life without detriment to the original building;
- It is important to consider archaeological resources if ground disturbance is necessary, for example ground-source heat pumps.

Before considering micro-renewables, the energy efficiency of the building should be addressed through building maintenance and repair; equipment upgrades; and any appropriate improvements to the fabric of the building.



The type or combination of renewable systems should be carefully considered to respect the building's historic character and significance. The physical installation may vary from equipment applied to the exterior of the building, such as solar panels and air source heat pumps, to those with less visual impact such as ground source. However other structures, flues and/or outbuildings may be required for equipment and the siting and design of these will also need to be considered in the context of the building and Conservation Area. New or altered access may be necessary for fuel delivery, repair and maintenance of systems and should be considered in the context of the Conservation Area.

The Council will support the use of micro-renewables where these do not adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area. When considering micro-renewables, cognisance should be given to the following points:

- Solar Panels: As with any change to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, there is a balance to be struck between the nature and extent of the change, and ensuring that the character, integrity and quality of the Conservation Area is not adversely impacted. The installation of solar panels will be considered favourably where they are installed on hidden roof slopes (i.e., flat roofs or in valleys), on secondary or rear, non-public-facing elevations, on outbuildings or mounted on the ground. Installation of solar panels on side elevations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In order to preserve the character and appearance of key streets, frontages, views and heritage buildings, there is a general presumption against the installation of solar panels on a principal elevation (i.e., front roof slope, or side roof slope that fronts the public realm). However, cases will be considered on their merits;
- Air-source heat pumps (ASHP) require large external units that do not fit easily into a heritage context. They therefore need to be located as unobtrusively as possible. Unless the building is Listed, ASHPs can be installed on the ground floor of the rear elevation without Planning Permission. ASHPs located on a side elevation will require Permission but are likely to be supportable where appropriate screening is included where necessary;
- The location of new chimneys/flues should be unobtrusive and avoid visual impacts;
- External insulation is never acceptable on traditional buildings within the Conservation Area due to its poor finish and poor detailing, and impact it has on the traditional finish and architectural detailing of the building. It will be considered on a case-by-case basis for buildings constructed after 1948 and on rear extensions of traditional buildings which are not visible from the public realm;

- Biomass boilers will be supported where the infrastructure can be accommodated without detrimentally impacted the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Some types of installation will require Planning Permission and/or Listed Building Consent. Refer to section 6.1 General Permitted Development and contact the Planning Authority for further advice.

## **9.8 GENERAL**

The Council will ensure permitted works have been executed properly and that any unauthorised works are investigated and dealt with appropriately. Regular surveys of the Conservation Area will be undertaken to monitor the conditions of the area, note unauthorised works, and provide evidence for enforcement action.

## 10.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW | 10.0 SGRÙDADH AGUS SGRÙDADH

This document will be reviewed periodically by the Council and it will be assessed with reference to current Council policy for the historic environment, local development plans, and government policy and guidance on the historic environment. A review will include the following:

- A survey of the Conservation Area, including a photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the recommendations detailed in both the appraisal and the management plan have been acted upon, and how successful they have been, particularly in relation to the conservation issues identified:
  1. Quality of traditional repairs and necessary replacement.
  2. Maintenance and condition of the Conservation Area.
  3. Buildings at Risk, disused buildings and gap sites.
  4. Quality of new developments and building alterations.
  5. Quality and condition of the public realm.
  6. Management of setting, open and green spaces.
  7. Protection of the heritage.

The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further protection or enhancements.

The review will be carried out in consultation with the local community.



## 11.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | 11.0 FIOSRACHADH A BHARRACHD

The following offer further information on the topics covered in this Appraisal and Management Plan:

**The Highland Council:** [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)

Planning Service Advice

Highland-wide Local Development Plan

Highland Historic Environment Strategy

Historic Windows and Doors: Planning Guidance for Listed Buildings and Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

Shopfront Design Guide

Maintenance Guide

Trees Woodlands and Development, Supplementary Guidance

Highland Nature – Biodiversity Action Plan

Highland Historic Environment Record (HER): <https://her.highland.gov.uk/>

**Historic Environment Scotland:** <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/>

Managing Change Guidance Notes

INFORM Guides (individual subjects)

Short Guide series

Technical conservation advice is available via [www.engineshed.org](http://www.engineshed.org)

### Other Advice

The Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland: <https://buildingsatrisk.org.uk/>

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: [www.spab.co.uk](http://www.spab.co.uk)

Under One Roof: <https://underoneroof.scot/>

Traditional Buildings Health Check: <https://traditionalbuildingshealthcheck.org/>

Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) walk around Strathpeffer:

<http://www.archhighland.org.uk/userfiles/file%5CRemembering%20the%20Strathpeffer%20Area%5CStrathpeffer%20Trail%20leaflet%20-%20web%20version.pdf>

### History

Am Baile: [www.ambaile.org.uk](http://www.ambaile.org.uk)

Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands:

<http://www.archhighland.org.uk/rememembering-strathpeffer.asp>

Highland Museum of Childhood: <https://highlandmuseumofchildhood.org.uk/>

Canmore: <https://canmore.org.uk/>

## APPENDIX 1: DESIGNATED FEATURES: LISTED BUILDINGS AND INVENTORY GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

### **Ben Wyvis Hotel and Gate Piers** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7864>

### **Craigivar** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16224>

### **Dunichen** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16249>

### **Dunraven Lodge** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16277>

### **Eaglestone House** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16305>

### **Free Church of Scotland** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16337>

### **Hamilton House** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16358>

### **Heatherlie** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16372>

### **Highland Hotel** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16401>

### **Kildonan** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16455>

### **Kinnettas House** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16416>

### **Holly Lodge** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16410>

### **Nicolson Mackenzie Memorial Hospital** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7883>

### **Spa Cottage** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG6293>

### **St Anne's Episcopal Church** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7889>

### **Strathpeffer Hotel** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16449>

### **Strathpeffer Parish Church** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16425>

### **Strathpeffer Railway Station** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG6292>

### **Strathpeffer Spa Pavilion** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7887>

### **Timaru** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7886>

**Timuka** (Category C)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG7865>

**The Red House** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16470>

**Upper Pump Room** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16431>

**White Lodge** (Category B)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Monument/MHG16481>

**Strathpeffer Spa Gardens** (Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes)

Web Link: <https://her.highland.gov.uk/Designation/DHG5674>



## **APPENDIX TWO: DEFINITION OF POSITIVE, NEUTRAL AND NEGATIVE BUILDINGS:**

### **Positive Buildings**

Historic buildings that are assessed as positive exhibit a significant degree of authenticity. The building may have been altered and some of the original features, fabric, materials and detailing may have been lost or replaced. However, in general terms the building survives largely intact and in excellent condition. Positive buildings will make a significant contribution to the wider street and townscape and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The erosion of any one of these factors can have an adverse impact on the building's authenticity and by extension, the character of an area. Modern buildings that demonstrate high quality design and materiality, integrate successfully with immediate and wider streetscape and enhance the character of the Conservation Area may also be assessed as positive.

### **Neutral Buildings**

Historic buildings that are assessed as neutral may, for example, retain the majority of their original form, but authenticity in terms of materials and detailing have been compromised. A neutral building may incorporate one or more inappropriate or insensitive alterations, such as poorly conceived dormer windows or badly designed extensions. Nonetheless, they make an important contribution to the Conservation Area in both an immediate and wider context. Many conservation areas include recent development, much of which will not be of notable architectural or historic merit, but it has nonetheless integrated successfully into a historic settlement. In such cases modern buildings may be classed as neutral if their siting, scale, massing, design and materials continue to preserve the wider townscape.

### **Negative Buildings**

Historic buildings may be assessed as negative where they have been significantly and inappropriately altered with a substantial loss of form, fabric and detailing resulting in an adverse impact on the character of the conservation area. Derelict, ruinous or vacant historic buildings, even where such are otherwise high quality, may also be assessed as negative. Modern buildings that have been poorly designed and/or do not respect, relate and respond to the character, grain or form of the Conservation area, and therefore have an overall adverse impact on the street or townscape may be classed as negative.

A negative scoring will not be taken into consideration as a justification for demolition.

