

ANGUS COUNCIL**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE
ROADS COMMITTEE****23 JANUARY 1997
23 JANUARY 1997****SUBJECT: MONTROSE TOWN CENTRE - STREETScape CONCEPT DESIGN****JOINT REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND THE DIRECTOR OF ROADS**

Abstract: Earlier this year, Scottish Enterprise Tayside commissioned the consultants, Gillespies, to develop a Streetscape Concept Design for Montrose Town Centre together with Public Art and Signing/Interpretation Strategies for the town. This report outlines the main elements of the Concept Design and the Strategies.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee approves in principle the Streetscape Concept Design for Montrose Town Centre and the Public Art and Signing/Interpretation Strategies and agrees to public consultation on these being undertaken with a view to the outcome being reported back in due course.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The "Montrose Economic and Environmental Prospects" study identified specific projects which could be undertaken as part of an overall improvements programme for the town. The High Street, described as a "key architectural asset" was promoted as a pre-eminent improvement project following the implementation of the Inner Relief Road. As a first step, Scottish Enterprise Tayside commissioned Gillespies to develop a Streetscape Concept Design for the town centre based on the design objectives set out in the study document.
- 2.2 The study also highlighted the need for a comprehensive review of the current signing in Montrose and recommended that a strategy be prepared covering directions, locations of visitor facilities, local interpretation and graphics. Other projects identified were the towns' approaches and the enhancement of the Inner Relief Road. It was felt that a Public Art Strategy would not only contribute to and enhance town approaches, improving the Inner Relief Road environment but also provide an overall vision of how public art opportunities within Montrose could be co-ordinated. Scottish Enterprise Tayside agreed that the preparation of the strategies should form part of this commission.
- 2.3 The Streetscape Concept Design and the Strategies for Public Art and Signing/Interpretation are now presented for consideration.

3 STREETScape CONCEPT DESIGN

- 3.1 Montrose High Street has contrasting and interesting urban environments and a townscape coherence despite architectural diversity. However, it is a vehicle dominated thoroughfare with a wide carriageway and narrow footways particularly on the west side of the street. There are particular difficulties in pedestrian desire line crossings e.g. from Hume Street and pedestrian hazards when crossing caused by commercial vehicles servicing shops.
- 3.2 A plan of the Streetscape Concept Design is attached and a larger scale version will be available for the Committee meeting.
- 3.3 A key element of the Concept Design is a general widening of the footways to increase the areas given over to pedestrians and a reduction in the carriageway width to 7.3 metres. This would necessitate the removal of the central reservation but equally the reduced carriageway width and reduced traffic flows obviate the need for pedestrian refuge islands. The difference in levels between the carriageway and the footway on the west side would be retained and a two metre wide footway provided at the upper (carriageway) level.
- 3.4 Car parking bays would be provided at various points along the length of the High Street and car parking in front (north) of the Town House retained. The layout of the latter would be such that part or all of it could be closed off to vehicles for events, market stalls, etc. Disabled spaces would be carefully selected. With the removal of car park charges, the car parks are now very busy and additional off-street parking may have to be considered.
- 3.5 Most of the High Street shops are front serviced and designated spaces for servicing (in addition to the availability of on-street car parking spaces) would therefore be provided. Bus bays to accommodate two buses each would occupy similar locations to the existing bays. Waiting areas on the west footway would be much improved by the provision of the raised footway. It is proposed that the taxi stance remain in Hume Street.
- 3.6 The light controlled pedestrian crossings at the Town House and at the Murray Street end of the High Street would be retained and incorporated within raised speed tables. These not only create safer crossing points but also calm traffic speeds. The arrangement of the parking and service bays would be such that further pedestrian crossings and/or traffic calming measures could be installed if necessary. This would necessitate a slight reduction in the overall level of on-street parking (currently 82 spaces) but is felt to be justified when set against the benefits of creating a safer more pleasant environment.
- 3.7 The junction of High Street, George Street and Castle Place would be remodelled to form a roundabout with the statue of Sir Robert Peel in the centre (this can be achieved with the statue in its present position). This configuration not only aids traffic circulation but, more importantly, reduces traffic speeds and signals the start of the High Street from the south.

- 3.8 The statue of the Montrose M.P., Hume, would be relocated slightly to the south to terminate the Hume Street axis as the Peel statue does at the end of the High Street. New works would be commissioned for the west footway of the High Street to terminate New Wynd and John Street (see section on public art). Other artefacts including the two granite fountains would have adjusted locations to allow them to contribute in a smaller way to the same theme.
- 3.9 The provision of the roundabout at Castle Place has the added advantage that the section of High Street from there northwards to Hume Street could be closed off to traffic for events etc. As stated earlier, the parking area in front of the Town House could also be closed off to traffic in part or in whole.
- 3.10 The quality of the High Street environment is such that the case for as much use of natural materials as possible could be sustained. A study is underway (S.E.T. funded) to investigate the potential for extracting the local Carmyllie stone which has been the traditional paving surface in Angus towns and survives in several of the private closes. The study would reveal if it is feasible (financially and technically) to consider using this stone for the footways. Whether Carmyllie or not, these widened pavements would be surfaced in large format natural stone flags. Cost would almost certainly preclude the surfacing of the carriageway in anything other than asphalt. The on-street car parking, bus and service bays would be surfaced in a natural material e.g. setts if costs ultimately permit. Alternatively, they could be surfaced in a suitable man-made material.
- 3.11 It is envisaged that improvements to a number of the public closes would be carried out although the nature and extent of these improvements will be dependent on the overall cost of the project. The resurfacing of Churchyard Walk in a natural material e.g. stone flags and its promotion as the main link with the Mid Links etc. is seen as highly desirable

4 PUBLIC ART STRATEGY

- 4.1 In preparing the Public Art Strategy, the consultants have viewed Montrose as a linear experience and have identified a series of points along its length where public art would be appropriate. The first of these is the outer thresholds or approaches to the town i.e. the railway viaduct and Ferryden roundabout to the south and the outer approaches from the north and west. Secondly is the inner thresholds or entrances; namely the road and rail bridges over the South Esk in the south and the Brechin Road junction with the former distillery site and the octagonal Water Tower in the north. At these thresholds, public art would be used to heighten the visitors first impressions of the town.
- 4.2 Next in the sequence is the various junctions off the Inner Relief Road. It is at these points that users of the road select their route and where public art can be used to enhance the image of Montrose. Finally, is the town centre, the place where people will be encouraged to spend time and which should be invested with appropriate pieces.

- 4.3 As stated earlier new figurative civic sculptures are proposed to terminate the axis of John Street and New Wynd. It is recommended that these figures should be specific to Montrose and be from the present century particularly considering the advent of the Millennium. The two subjects that are suggested for the sites come from the fields of literature and art and have local associations close to the identified sites which may help to support the cultural profile and visitor experience of Montrose. The location of the New Wynd axis could be the site of Hugh MacDairmid, Montrose Councillor, Justice of the Peace and Chief Editor of the Montrose Review, when it occupied the site in Review Court. The equivalent on the John Street axis could be occupied by William Lamb, celebrated Royal Scottish Academician and Montrose Sculptor whose work can be seen around the town. His studio gallery is accessed off John Street or Trades Close at the northern end of the High Street.
- 4.4 A broad paved area exists (and will be enlarged) outside the Old Kirk. The importance of this landmark should be recognised in the floorscape setting of the building. The incorporation of art work into the paving immediately in front of the steeple would be an obvious and interesting opportunity.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the five junctions on the new road system are given a co-ordinating and a memorable identity that is specific to the location of Montrose. The selection of the name "Basin View" for the main stretch of the Relief Road underlines the proximity of the new road to the outstanding natural feature of Montrose Basin. It is therefore proposed that an ornithological theme be adopted for these sites.
- 4.6 Discussions regarding the treatment of the inner and outer thresholds are ongoing. One possibility for the Southesk River (southern) approach is feature lighting of both bridges (road and rail) which could dramatically enhance the entrance and exit to the town.

5 SIGNING/INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

- 5.1 New tourism signing (white on brown with the "Scotland the Brand" symbol) will be erected at the various junctions along the Inner Relief Road. These signs pick up the various attractions in the town e.g. the beach, golf courses, caravan park, tourist information etc. and will be continued outwith the Inner Relief Road. It is also intended that new town entrance signs and Tourist Information Boards be erected in Montrose as part of the Angus wide integrated tourism signposting network. The proposed strategy builds on these and attempts to ensure that the signing is carried out in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner. The broad groupings of sign types which make up the strategy are town entrance signs, tourist information boards, vehicular signs, pedestrian signs, heritage signs and street names.
- 5.2 Approaching the town centre from the A92 north and the A935, vehicle signs would direct visitors to the car park at Lowerhall Street which would be indicated on and visible from the Inner Relief Road (Basin View). For visitors approaching from the south on the A92 and who turn off onto Bridge Street at the Basin View junction, the car park in Baltic Street would be signed from Castle Place. Both car parks would incorporate the Montrose version of the Angus Tourist Information Board. These would be located at a central position within the car park or where visitors would

pass the board when exiting on foot. The proposed pedestrian sign system would then direct visitors from the two arrival car parks to the High Street.

- 5.3 The objective of the pedestrian signing would be to bring people to the High Street as the Primary Destination and to the Town House as the Key Orientation Point. At this location visitors would find a panel display containing map and descriptive information on Montrose with local facilities identified. Being directed towards destinations from the Key Orientation Point, pedestrian signs would be located at changes in direction only. Consideration would be given to the siting of each sign which would, where possible, be wall mounted. Otherwise, signs would be pole mounted using an existing vertical or as a stand alone item.
- 5.4 Two sites would be developed as Secondary Destinations with map and descriptive information specific to their locality. These are the Mid Links, in a position opposite the museum and the Beachfront.
- 5.5 The Town Trail would continue to be identified from a leaflet available at a number of outlets throughout the town. To complement the leaflet, each of the destinations on the Trail would be identified with a small sign, that would not be obtrusive when located on the buildings. The design of the signs would be related to that of the pedestrian sign system, the Trail name would be identified, the number of the destination on the Trail and possibly a co-ordinating Montrose Town Trail logo. At two of the Trail destinations, interpretative information would be incorporated - these are Medicine Well in the westend park and the William Lamb Studio in Market Street.
- 5.6 The street name signs, particularly within the town centre are an important layer of information for the visitors. The central area would greatly benefit from a renewal of the street name signs as part of the signing implementation programme. The design of the name plates could lend a sense of quality and distinctiveness to the Montrose town centre.

6 PROGRESS

- 6.1 Assuming that the Streetscape Concept Design and the Public Art and Signing/Interpretation Strategies outlined above are acceptable in principle, the next stage would be to undertake public consultation. It is suggested that this could entail a presentation of the Concept Design and the Strategies to local community groups i.e. the Community Council, the Business Association and the Montrose Society. The Montrose Area Forum may also be an appropriate means of stimulating public interest and debate, in the proposals. Certainly, an exhibition could be mounted for a time in the library and members of the public invited to make comment. This process would be undertaken without delay and the outcome reported back to Committee in early spring.
- 6.2 As the construction of the Inner Relief Road is nearing completion, it is important that the art work for the five junctions referred to above is progressed without delay. Subject to agreement in principle of the Public Art Strategy, Scottish Enterprise Tayside is willing to commission David Annand, a well known and respected artist who has delivered prestigious sculptural projects in the past within a controlled budget and programme. The consultants would prepare a brief for agreement by the

Project Partners. Particular issues that impact upon each of the sites would be identified in the brief. Four of the five locations are roundabouts which is indicative of the vehicle dominant nature of the sites. It is important that the scale and treatment of the works are such that they can be effective within the context for vehicle users while not encouraging closer inspection by pedestrians at roundabout locations.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is not possible to establish a firm project budget at this stage although the consultants have indicated that an outline estimate in the order of £2 million would not be unrealistic. This high cost reflects the use of high quality materials where possible and the sheer scale of Montrose High Street.
- 7.2 As with other projects of this nature, it will be necessary to put together a funding package principally in conjunction with Scottish Enterprise Tayside. It is anticipated that Angus Council's contribution would be made up of a combination of funding from Planning, Roads and Recreation Services Budgets, possibly spread over a four year period although the actual levels of contribution cannot be determined until more detailed costs are available and further discussions held with Scottish Enterprise Tayside and other possible partners. Allowances have however been made in both the Planning and Roads Provisional Capital Budgets for the 1997/98 for works to Montrose Town Centre. Further, the overall project (including Public Art and Signing/Interpretation) has been included in the joint Angus Council/Aberdeenshire Council bid to the Central Challenge Fund which was submitted to the Scottish Office earlier in the month.
- 7.3 Scottish Enterprise Tayside has already approved in principle contributions towards elements of the improvement works, public art and signing, but these have not been finalised pending completion of the Concept Design and Strategy. Scottish Enterprise Tayside have indicated a willingness to secure further substantial investment in Montrose as part of the funding package.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law and Administration, Director of Recreation Services and Director of Cultural Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The "Montrose Economic and Environmental Prospects" study concluded that the undoubted superlative setting of Montrose, its history and townscape all contribute fundamentally to the quality of life of its inhabitants and has potential to be a major factor in attracting tourists. However, it also revealed a number of weaknesses including the gradual erosion of the quality of the townscape, a lack of identifiable image and inadequate information and interpretation about the town.

- 9.2 The Streetscape Concept Design and Public Art and Signing/Interpretation Strategies prepared by Gillespies attempt to tackle these weaknesses in a manner which is highly appropriate to the town and achievable within a realistic timescale.

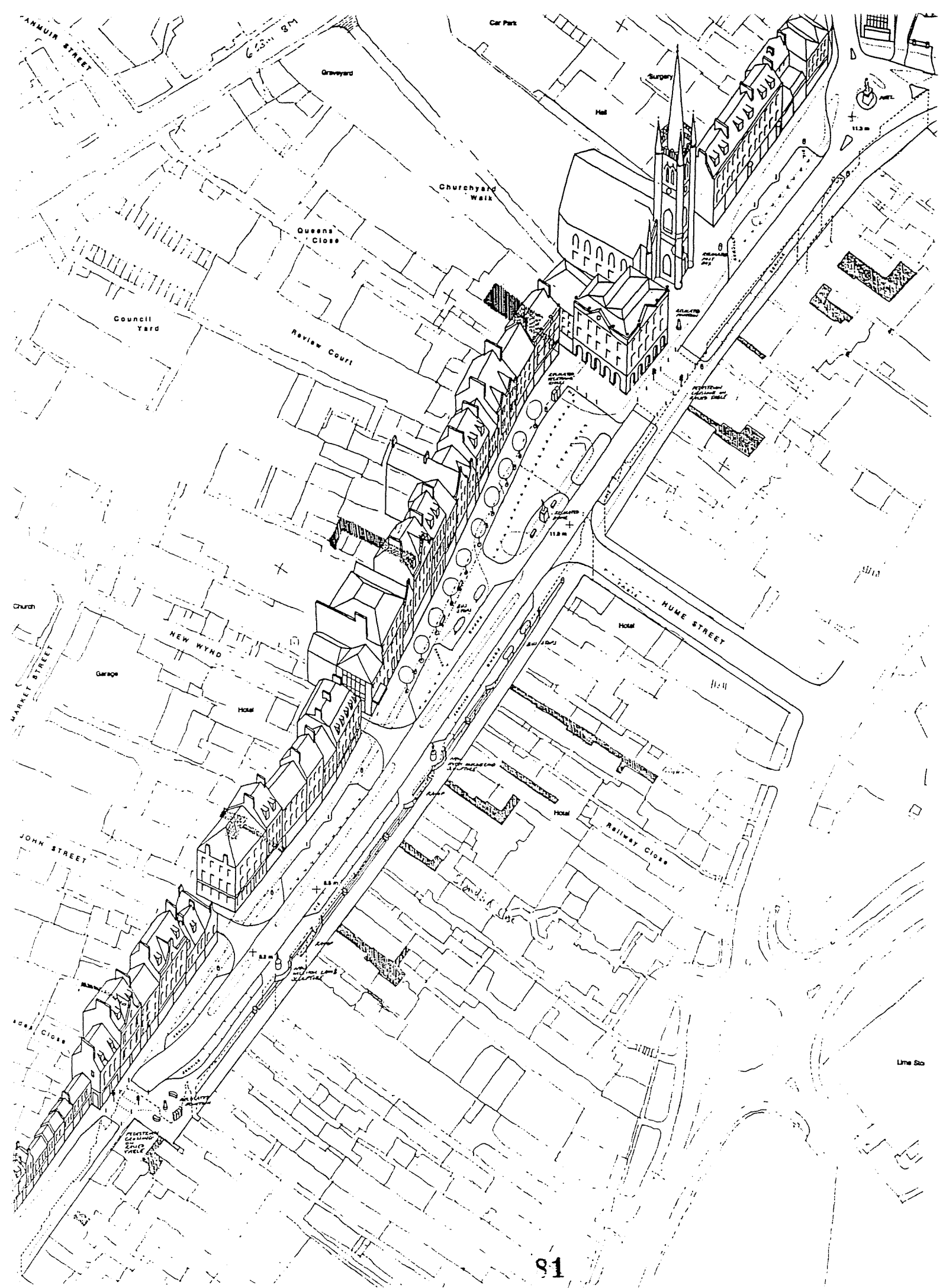
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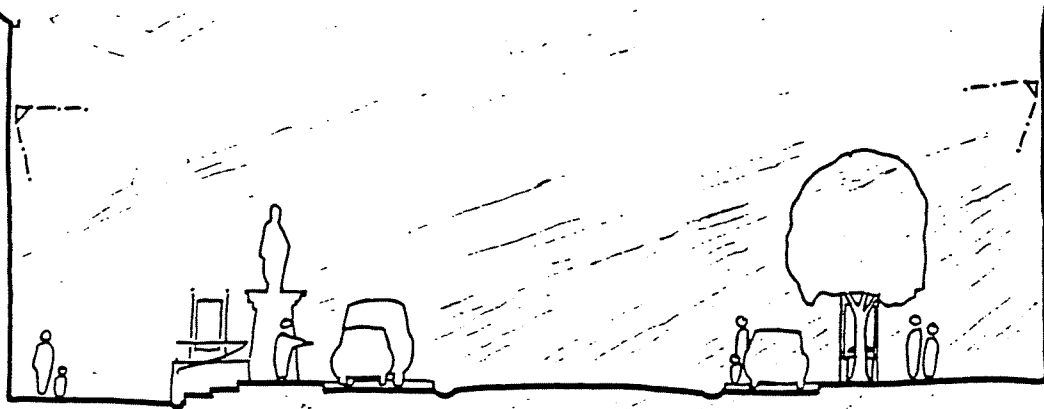
No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/RM/KW
9 January 1997

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STEPS
 RAMP
 BINS
 SIGNS
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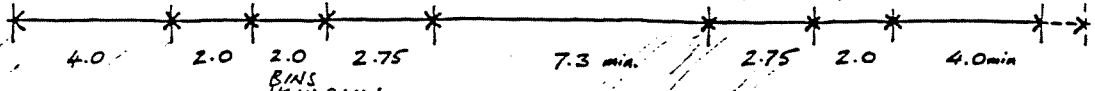
PARKING

BENCHES
 BINS
 SIGNS
 TREES

FOOTWAY

CARRIAGEWAY

FOOTWAY



BINS
 HANDRAILS
 SIGNS

