



WMUD final report july 2006



keith

urban design framework

the moray council
hie moray
keith strathisla regeneration partnership



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July 2006

WMUD
yellow book
MRC McLean Hazel
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Keith Urban Design Framework



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introduction

Mid Street - the retail core of Keith



The **Keith Urban Design Framework** was commissioned in May 2006 by The Moray Council on behalf of a Steering group consisting of representatives from The Moray Council, HIE Moray and the Keith Strathisla Regeneration Partnership (KSRP).

The consultant team appointed to carry out the study was:

- Willie Miller Urban Design (WMUD) – urban design, project management, production
- yellow book – strategic context, economic development, theming
- MRC McLean Hazel – traffic and movement
- David Campbell Associates – cost assessment

The objective of the study was to produce an Urban Design Framework for the town which would provide a costed and prioritised list of capital works which would be used to apply for funding with which to take the projects forward. Keith Strathisla Regeneration Partnership identified the main issues that the study was to address and indeed it was the Partnership's idea to commission this study.

The brief for the study identified particular issues to be addressed including:

- the 'concealed' main shopping street which is lacking identity, activity and vitality
- the inability to attract people off the A96(T)
- parts of the town are dominated by road infrastructure



(particularly the A96 (T) and the town squares)

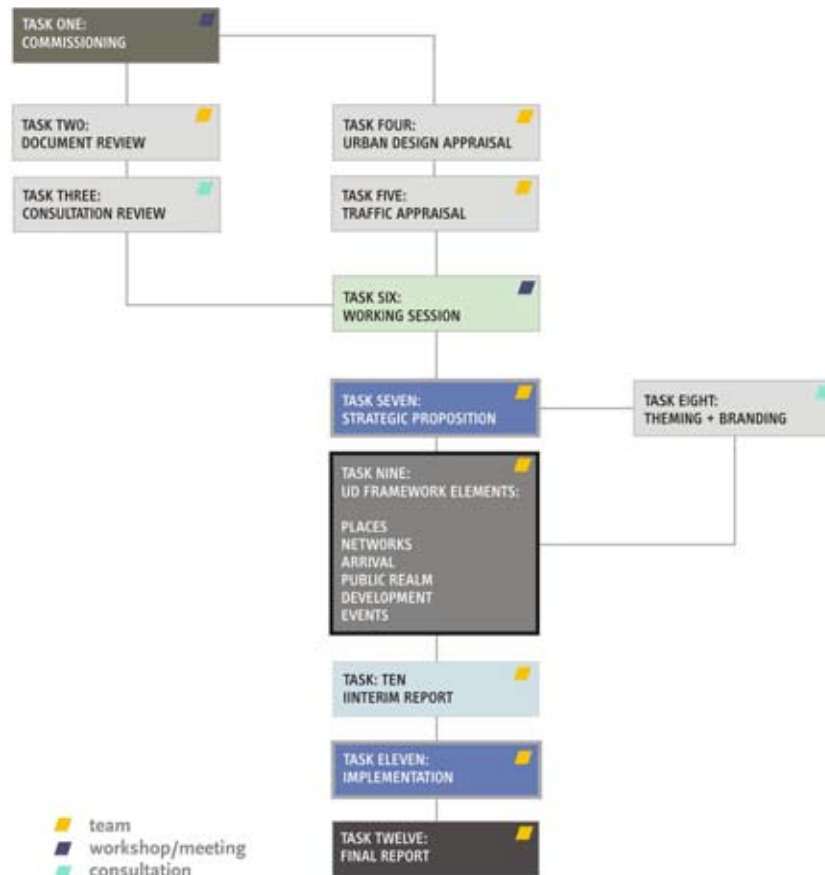
- the negative image of the town and lack of visual appeal
- the relatively underdeveloped tourism industry
- possibility of a 'theme' with which to promote the town
- restricted retail offer

These issues had been raised by many local people and organisations and detailed in a range of documents and reports. The KSRP has taken steps to address some of these issues but considers these steps to be minor and disparate. The KSRP considered that a holistic approach was required, hence the commissioning of this Urban Design Framework.

The Framework report is in eight sections namely:

- 1 introduction
- 2 background – strategic context
- 3 consultation review – a summary of consultation carried out
- 4 urban design analysis – our findings about the town
- 5 traffic appraisal – a brief summary of pertinent issues
- 6 theming the town
- 7 urban design proposals
- 8 implementation and costs

This closely follows the methodology that was set out in the original proposal document for the study and is shown in fig 1.1 .





background

town centre based coach hire business



Keith's policy and strategic context have been examined by yellow book. The draft Keith and Strathisla Regeneration Action Plan 2003-2007, prepared by Keith and Strathisla Regeneration (KSR), sets out a vision for the town based on the creation of improved economic conditions to help develop a more attractive environment and a vibrant community.

The draft action plan highlights 6 key tasks, underpinned by a long list of proposed actions:

Tasks	Priority actions
1. Provide more local employment	1.1 Inward investment
	1.2 Serviced land and premises
	1.3 Business support services
	1.4 Skills/training needs analysis
2. Enhance visual appearance and image	2.1 Regent Square
	2.2 Reidhaven Square
	2.3 A96 landscaping/planting
	2.4 Screening unsightly areas
	2.5 Property facelift scheme
	2.6 Floral displays scheme
	2.7 Street furniture/civic space
	2.8 Remove gum/graffiti
	2.9 Banners and flags
	2.10 Litter bins
	2.11 Toilet blocks



Isla Bank Mills business units



3. Promote growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Allocation of land for business/housing 3.2 Review town centre retail policies 3.3 By-pass proposals 3.4 Provide industrial/commercial premises 3.5 Servicing investment/development enquiries
4. Increase the benefits of tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Image and appearance (A96) 4.2 Attractive parking areas 4.3 Heritage trails/interpretation 4.4 Upgrade town station site 4.5 Improve service quality 4.6 Promote local attractions/activities 4.7 Town events 4.8 Themed days 4.9 Marketing material 4.10 Tourist information
5. Develop the retail sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Mid Street enhancement 5.2 Shop fronts/window boxes 5.3 Retail training 5.4 Loyalty card scheme 5.5 Themed days/events 5.6 Farmers market 5.7 CCTV 5.8 Signage 5.9 Survey empty shops 5.10 Re-use of empty shops as galleries 5.11 Marketing Keith shopping
6. Improve transport infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Confirm status of by-pass 6.2 Consider change of Mid Street traffic flow 6.3 Review parking 6.4 Pedestrian and cycle routes 6.5 Community transport schemes

The draft plan lists 46 separate actions. Even allowing for some duplication, this is a very long list which clearly requires editing and prioritisation to close the gap between aspirations and resources.

The document identifies a number of cross-cutting themes for the action plan including:

- whisky
- tartan/textiles
- railways
- traditional music

The draft plan recommends the creation of a development trust to act as the focal point for economic, social and environmental development in Keith and Strathisla.

In December 2005, Moray Council and HIE Moray published Moray 2020, a strategy for the diversification of the local economy following restructuring at RAF Kinloss and RAF Lossiemouth. The themes of the strategy include:

- infrastructure
- key sectors
- small businesses and entrepreneurship
- a place for learning
- young people: our future

- sustainable development
- inclusive, tolerant, outward looking
- quality of life

KEITH: PERFORMANCE AND PROSPECTS

yellow book recently carried out comparative research on 67 small towns in the east of Scotland¹ for the East of Scotland European Partnership (ESEP), using 2001 Census data.

11 key measures were used to assess Keith's performance relative to small towns in the east of Scotland:

- Keith was in the worst performing quartile for 8 measures:
 - population change 1991-2001
 - unemployment rate
 - retirement age population
 - people working in elementary and process occupations
 - people working in managerial, professional and technical occupations
 - people working in manufacturing industry
 - people educated to degree level or equivalent
 - people with no qualifications

- Keith was below average on 2 other measures
 - economic activity rate

Chivas Regal premises



- employment rate

- ...and above average on only one measure
 - self employment

The 2004 Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) showed that there were about 2,700 employee jobs in Keith. Employment is dominated by the public sector (29%) and retail, hotels and restaurants (29%); an unusually high proportion of jobs (15%) are still in manufacturing. The growing business and financial services sectors are under-represented (7%).

The findings of the yellow book study are broadly consistent with the 2003 report by Brian Burns Associates, Keith Town Initiative: Benchmarking of Comparable Towns in North East Scotland, although that report – based on comparisons with four other towns – concludes that Keith is performing “reasonably well”. Our view, by contrast, is that Keith is not in crisis, but the town is under-performing. We share KSRP’s view that Keith has many assets and attractive attributes and that “there is no need to be gloomy” about its prospects, but there is no room for complacency.

Our conclusions, which were presented and endorsed at the recent workshop, are:

- Keith is a special and distinctive place with a remarkable history, an unmistakable urban form and character

¹ Towns with a population between 3,000 and 15,000 in the 14 local authorities in the East of Scotland.



- ...but it has lost its sense of purpose with the decline of land-based industries, market town functions and traditional industries
- the town has stagnated: it is performing poorly compared with the wider region and it has a declining and ageing population; the skills base is relatively low and unemployment is above average
- it has been exposed to powerful driving forces which are shaping the fortunes of all small towns in rural areas, resulting from social, technological, economic and environmental change
- ...and it has struggled to come to terms with change: the most successful small towns have responded to these changes by identifying new roles and opportunities, but Keith has struggled to come to terms with change.

- the town centre is potentially attractive, but it lacks vitality, the quality of the retail and service offer is indifferent (although it may be viewed as good in a local context), and the environment needs an uplift and greater permeability
- Keith has a distinctive and attractive environment, but the quality of the Keith experience is compromised by the impact of traffic and by the number of gaps sites and buildings in poor repair
- Keith does not have major tourist attractions (although the Strathisla Distillery and the Keith and Dufftown Heritage Railway are valuable assets), but it has the potential to offer an attractive package for day visitors and tourists by improving the food and accommodation offer and investing in events and activities.

There is also a pressing need to address the challenges presented by the proposed new Tesco store on a site close to the town centre. In particular:

- how can shoppers be encouraged to make linked trips to Tesco and Mid Street?
- how can the Mid Street experience (shopping, services, food and drink, public realm, events) be upgraded to offer an attractive and complementary alternative to Tesco?

We propose a strategy based on the concept of rediscovering a sense of purpose, and creating reasons why people (the community, new residents, investors and visitors) should choose Keith:

- a place to live
- a place to work
- a place to start a business
- a place for shopping and leisure
- a place to visit

In framing the strategy we have asked: what will successful 21st century rural towns be like? They will be:

- distinctive and different
- hives of enterprise
- attractive to talented people and discerning visitors
- proud, enterprising and self-sufficient.

External funding (for example for infrastructure projects) may have an important role to play, but the answer must come from the skills, energy and creativity of the Keith community.

TOWARDS THE STRATEGY

The case for action can be summarised as follows:

- there is a need to create more economic vitality by encouraging the growth of existing SMEs and micro-businesses, attracting inward investment and stimulating new firm formation



consultation summary

the first working session - 9 June 2006



The brief for the study made it clear that significant public engagement had already been carried out in previous work on Keith and that apart from contact with statutory agencies and the main stakeholders, the public engagement should be limited to two days. In fact we carried out two working sessions and one-and-a-half-day drop-in session:

- 25 – 26 May 2006 – drop in sessions
- 9 June 2006 – working session in the Ugie House Hotel
- 10 July 2006 – working session at the Balloch Trust offices

Drop-in Sessions:

These were very successful events and solicited a wide range of views about Keith, its current problems and future prospects. A total of 21 people were interviewed over the two days and the main issues were:

General issues

- the town needs to grow bigger – needs more people
- Keith has a reluctance to change – too rooted in tradition
- Keith is sleepy – needs to wake up
- needs an identity
- demand for new housing not being met
- impression of being a forgotten area
- under-investment in things like libraries
- Keith has slipped behind other towns – doesn't have an identity or USP
- lack of self belief, lack of self confidence in the town



- stagnant in comparison to other places
- needs more/new people
- nice place to stay – quite central – 50 miles to Aberdeen/ Inverness/Aviemore
- desirable housing is super-expensive
- good things are the countryside
- needs new housing
- needs land for housing and industry
- keen on links between town and countryside – economic as well as physical

Business environment

- good place to be for small businesses – overheads less than elsewhere
- labour pool – available but poor
- friendly
- being on the road to Aberdeen is positive
- needs more starter units
- need new ideas and new blood – businesses need help with change
- needs better signage to industrial units
- train timetables are very bad for commuting
- HIE developing 2,500sq ft units near Reidhaven Square

The town environment

- not particularly attractive centre
- empty buildings

first working session feedback



- the toilets are important – shouldn't be demolished
- too many signs to everywhere
- Moss Street / Tesco – loss of historic part of planned settlement
- strong need for more housing in Keith
- toilet block should be demolished
- dereliction
- vacant buildings
- empty boarded up shops
- toilet block should be demolished

Shopping

- lots of good shops and excellent customer service in Keith
- Tesco is great idea
- local holidays and closing times are 19th century
- shopping street healthier than 9 years ago
- trading problems – delivery vehicles, speed bumps, no signs to town centre, few signs to Keith on A96
- would like to see pedestrianisation
- problem with town not being looked after
- two good shops – the rest are rubbish
- shop front signage is poor
- local shops are Spar, Mace and Petrol Filling Stations (2 east and west)
- Mid Street is too narrow
- shops in Mid Street are a problem
- access to Tesco will be a problem
- outstanding local shops providing excellent service

Traffic

- speed bumps in shopping street – bad
- needs a stopping place and more parking
- problems with sun dazzling on Mid Street in winter
- flow of traffic is bad
- traffic lights needed in Moss Street
- lollipop lady on Church Street - good
- Union Street very unsafe
- Tesco – no problem as long as the traffic is right
- Keith should have a big bypass out east connecting the schools, community centre, Tesco and some nice new housing
- road safety should be top of the agenda

Special things and tourism

- only kilt school in the world
- tourism promotion money available
- things like Keith Show, Folk Festival very important
- genealogy courses would be a good thing
- vandalism issues at the station
- historic railway want to make connection to main track so that they can invite steam operators to their facility
- Keith Show is becoming more commercial and tourism orientated
- good walks – good local environment

Social and Community Issues

- lack of social infrastructure
- poor childcare

break-out group



- too many part time contractors/employers like Baxter's and Walkers
- needs more community involvement in projects
- good place for youngsters, bad for teenagers
- needs passion, direction and social enterprise
- problems with youths with social problems at the Loft
- should look at Keith Community Action Plan
- facilities are Keith Community Centre, The Loft, Seafield Park (for carry-outs), Mid Street pubs
- drink issues
- a dumping ground for housing problems
- potential for community events
- 52 active community organisations
- medical practice is excellent
- local tennis club is very successful
- involving young people important
- needs CCTV to counter anti-social behaviour

This represents a wide range of interesting and mostly constructive views although there are conflicting opinions about certain issues – the toilets in the squares (should they stay or go?) and the merits or otherwise of the shopping environment of Mid Street.

There was a general consensus on the general issue of the lack of progress / growth / change in the town and a feeling that it had stagnated over the years, losing pace with other towns in the area.



Also there was relatively little comment – positive or negative – about the physical characteristics of the town. Most people were more concerned with how the town worked.

1st Working Session

This session took place at lunchtime in the Ugie House Hotel on 9 June. The consultant team presented their baseline analysis and the participants discussed the findings in two groups. The results were remarkable similar to the drop-in session results with concerns about:

- the stagnating town and its future role
- the traffic on Mid Street – should it be one way in the opposite direction?
- pedestrianisation
- the impact of the proposed Tesco store
- traffic impact of the A96 (T)
- the future of the two squares and the toilets

2nd Working Session

This session took place in the evening of 10 July – the session had two parts namely a) a presentation of proposals for the town and b) a discussion on theming for Keith as a means of promoting the town.

The proposals were presented to the meeting and generally speaking they were greeted with enthusiasm although inevitably there was negativity about whether or not they could be achieved. Participants

were invited to submit further comments or ideas by email after the meeting.

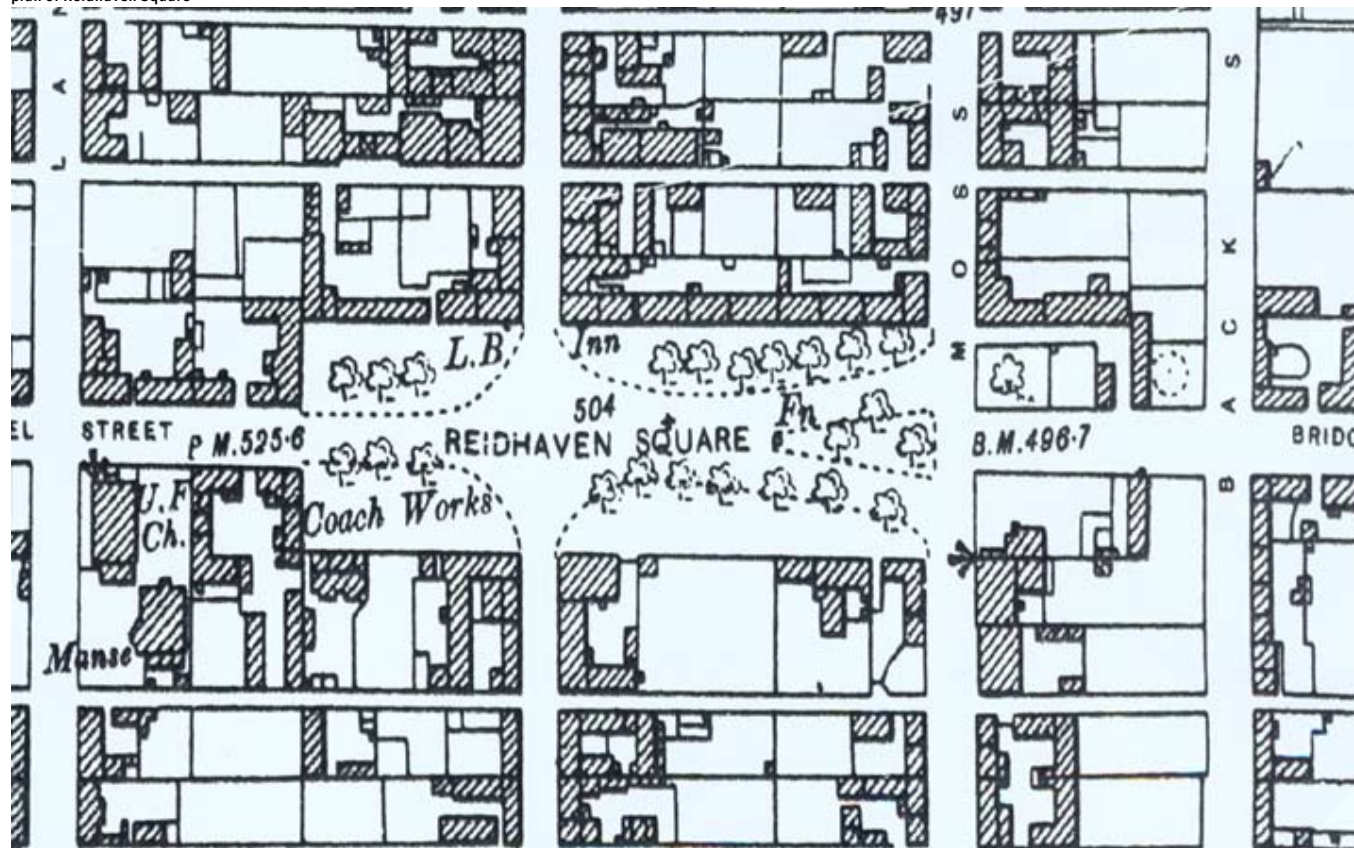
The discussion on theming is written up as part of section 5.





urban design appraisal

plan of Reidhaven Square



Evolution: The original settlement of Keith dates from the late 12th century but the 18th and 19th centuries saw the phased building of the planned village which is such a strong and distinctive part of the town today. The town straddles the valley of the River Isla with strong large scale orthogonal grids focusing on two squares – Reidhaven Square in the east and Regent Square in Fife Keith to the west. The evolution of the town is shown overleaf.

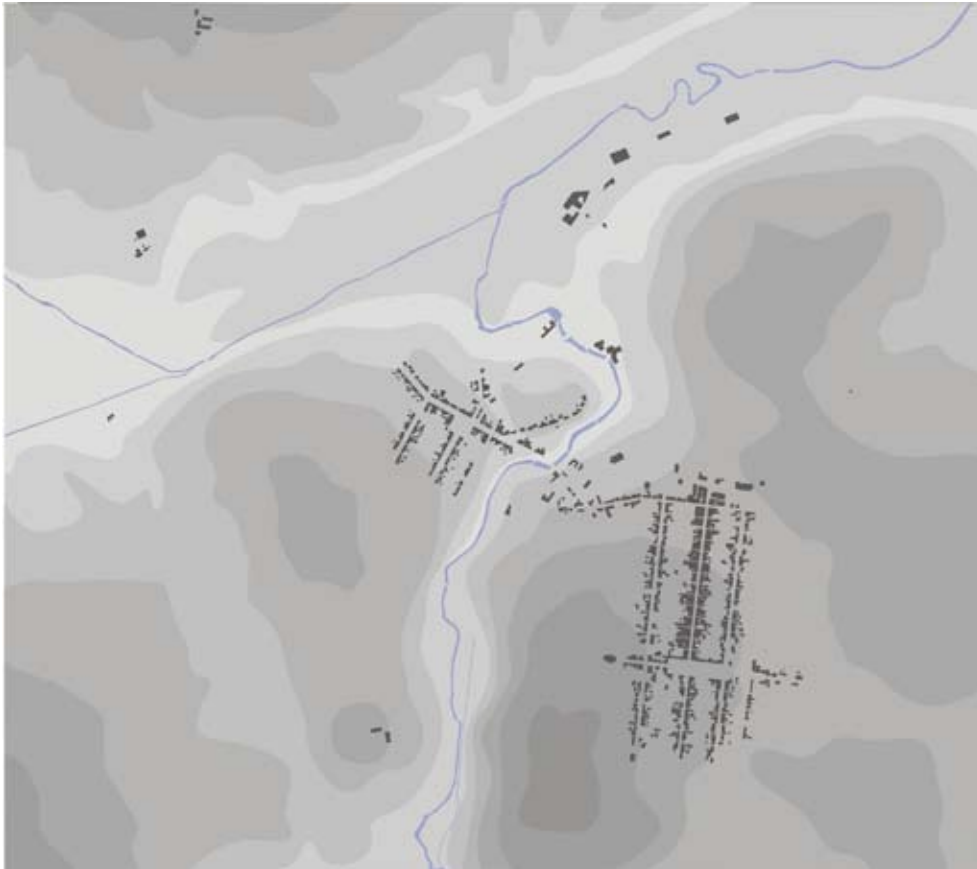
Townscape: In general terms, the character of the townscape is bold and robust with traditionally solid looking buildings in warm stonework with slate roofs. The townscape is also quite straightforward with simple architecture, traditional street patterns, urban spaces, parks and landmarks in logical places. The town's colour palette is very consistent with widespread gold granite/buff sandstone and grey/white/buff render or harling. The architecture is quite plain with occasional flourishes of cast ironwork.

ELEMENTS

Arrival: The sense of arrival and the elements that define it are important features for any town. In the case of Keith, the strong distinctive landscape provides a positive setting for the town. This rolling agricultural landscape in which the town sits is attractive and special. For the most part, there is a comfortable relationship between urban and rural but there are areas where both the town and its landscape could benefit from major structural landscape initiatives. These are in the east and north east of the town. The



The evolution of the town - 1874



1903



2006



2006 - with streets





historical views of Reidhaven Square



historical views of Mid Street



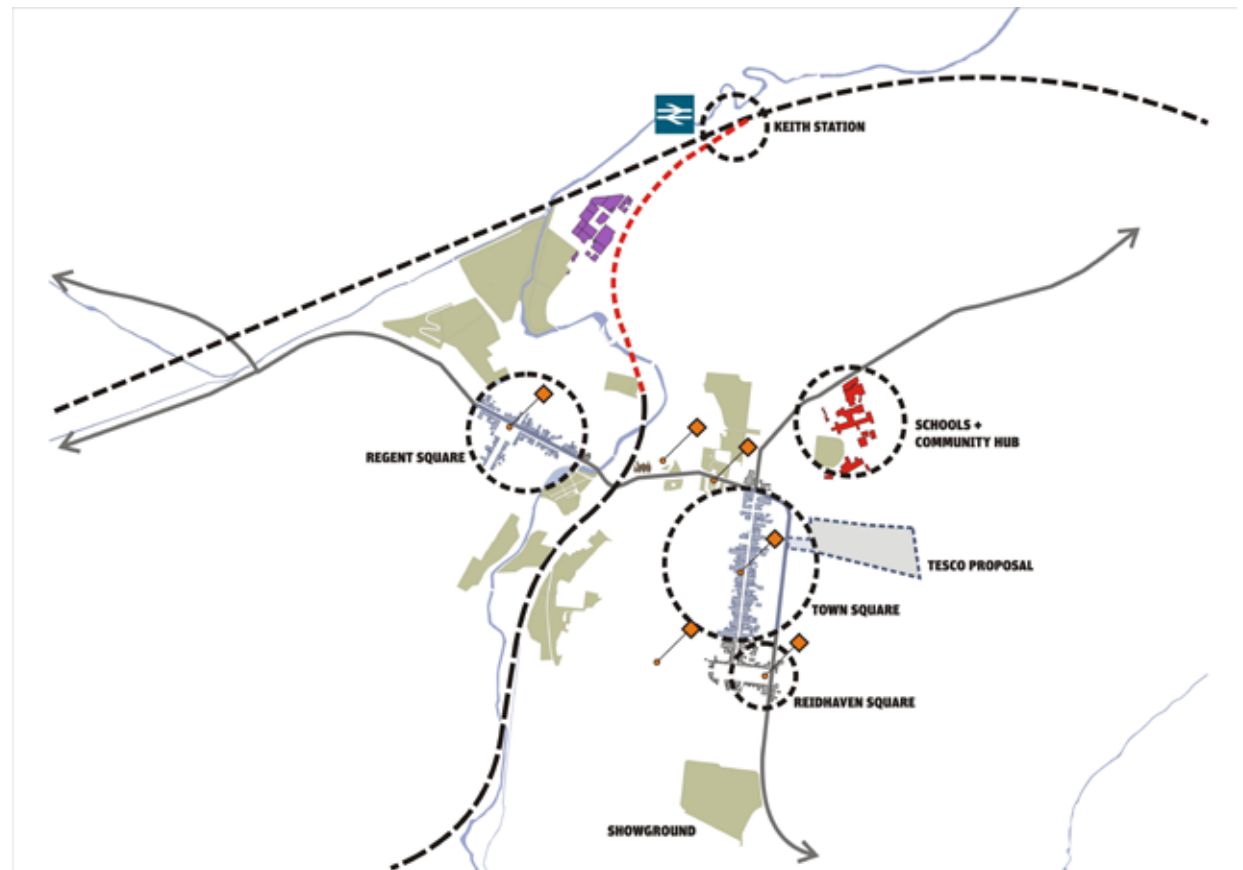


Consultative Draft Local Plan acknowledges this, especially in relation to the need to reduce the impact of proposed new housing sites by carrying out advanced structural planting. There is clearly a desire on the part of many Keith residents to provide larger signs but we do not think this is a very positive idea. The sense of arrival is generally very positive

Travelling through: travelling through the town is also quite a positive experience. Views have been expressed about the numbers of vacant or derelict buildings but currently there seems to be few of these. The A96 (T) and its accompanying signs and road markings tends to dominate the immediate roads environment but generally the townscape and green spaces of the town create an overall positive experience.

The Squares: Reidhaven and Regent Square are the most obvious urban design and townscape features of Keith. They are both wonderful central features of the planned settlement but in the 21st century, they have almost entirely lost their identity as public spaces; they are simply bits of the road system and somewhere to locate public toilets, bottle-banks or other paraphernalia. They are not dreadful, just uninteresting and characterless - which is a particular contrast to many of the green spaces in the town. The attempts at improvement such as introducing street trees and organising the parking have been done incrementally and in a very tentative way. There is now a random collection of different types of benches, tree grilles, signs, paving materials and so on. The street lights are

Keith - significant places



too tall and out of scale, the trees are inappropriate (eg birch in Regent Square) or have not survived, and the indifferent streetscape undermines the quality of the surrounding architecture, and the spaces themselves. It is appreciated that the street lights were updated in 2005 and so the Council is unlikely to support their early replacement.

Mid Street: Mid Street is an attractive area of good architecture and landmark buildings. It is the town's principal shopping street but is effectively bypassed by Moss Street which takes all of the A96 (T) traffic through Keith. Many towns have deliberately created relatively traffic free environments for shoppers but in the case of Keith, this is not universally seen as beneficial. The 'invisible street' is a common remark. Mid Street is a long street with a very short prime pitch (near the north end of the street). It is not a particularly pleasant space for the pedestrian due to narrow pavements and lack of activity, especially after trading hours.

The Lanes: The lanes running off Mid Street absorb a lot of parking in a very discreet way; they are also invaluable east-west links. Certain lanes will become very important as links between Mid Street and the new supermarket, but the A96 is a substantial barrier. There is potential to visually play down the A96 and play up the lanes to slow through traffic and ease pedestrian movement between the Mid Street and the proposed Tesco. There is potential for small parking areas to be provided in the lanes between Mid Street and the A96 so that parking is equidistant between the two shopping areas rather

than being 'over the road' at Tesco. The lanes could also be used for events such as Farmers Markets or an Art in the Lanes event, possibly associated with the Keith Show or the Music Festival or simply as a standalone occasion. It is appreciated that the lanes are through routes and there will inevitably be issues to resolve with traffic. We consider that it is more important to try to stage events rather than thinking of reasons why things should not happen.

Landmarks: Keith has some striking landmarks which act as waymarkers. Inevitably, churches are the predominant landmarks but others include the tower of the former Council building in Mid Street and the Chivas Regal buildings. A more recent landmark is the iconic new community centre building on the Banff Road.

Greenspace: There is a strong sense of civic pride and stewardship in the immaculate memorial gardens, very well looked after green spaces and tidy gardens. There seems to be an emphasis on trees, lawns and ornamental shrubs as opposed to bedding plants and this suits the town well. There is luxurious greenery in places with a significant coverage of large mature trees especially between the east and west parts of the town in the valley of the River Isla.

Streetscape: Much of Keith has a plethora of different ages and fashions of street furniture especially signage, litter bins, tree grills and benches. Some features are worth retaining – such as one of the steel bench designs – but most are recent catalogue which do not do the town any favours. When most cities, towns and villages

throughout the country now have the same limited sources of supply for street furniture, retaining any sense of distinctiveness and appropriateness is difficult. Keith should try to do something special in this area.

Places: In terms of places, the most important are:

- Mid Street
- Reidhaven and Regent Squares
- Keith Town Station area
- the community hub around the schools and community centre on the Banff Road

In terms of the structure of the town, Mid Street is not very visible although it is the retail and commercial core of Keith. Reidhaven and Regent Squares have a high profile and are the centrepieces of the planned settlement. They are the first significant visual features of the town on the A96 (T). The Keith Town Station area has enormous potential yet is spoiled by derelict land, under-investment in the historic railway environment and in the near future, affected by Tesco's move to another site. We suggest that these areas should be the target for future investment.



elements - arrival



elements - travelling trough





elements - the squares



elements - Mid Street





elements - lanes



elements - landmarks





elements - green space



elements - streetscape





elements - detail





traffic appraisal

The A96 (T) through the town at Church Street / Banff Road



MRC McLean Hazel has undertaken an assessment of roads and traffic conditions in Keith and its approaches.

As well as visiting the town, consultation with Transport Scotland, Moray Council (Roads) and BEAR has taken place to ascertain matters of history as well as proposals for change.

POLICY CONTEXT

National transport policy emphasises sustainability, integration and promoting economic well-being but this requires to be interpreted regionally and locally. The characteristics of sustainable transport are not readily applicable to a predominately rural area with infrequent public transport and relatively long distances between population centres and facilities. In Moray there is high car dependency, above the Scottish average and Keith is situated at almost the mid-point between Inverness and Aberdeen, being the nearest cities. Moray is acknowledged to be peripheral in Scotland and Europe therefore any measures to improve connectivity would be beneficial.

However, having noted this context, it is acknowledged that this study is aimed primarily at Keith rather than externally.

CONSULTATION

The main road through Keith is the A96 which is a trunk road between Aberdeen and Inverness. The A95 also crosses Keith. It is trunk



road to the west to Aviemore but not to the east to Banff. It was considered appropriate to consult the bodies that have an interest or responsibility for roads in the Keith area, to assist understanding of conditions on the road network. Consultation in June 2006 was by telephone and covered some history of how the present conditions have evolved, comment on existing conditions and identification of current or pending works related to roads and traffic. The persons consulted in June were:

- Brian Sheerins of Transport Scotland, who noted that the appropriate person was Gordon Sinclair who was on holiday but he undertook to make enquiries about the questions raised and also referred the writer to BEAR.
- David Stewart of BEAR
- Gordon Holland of Moray Council

Feedback from the draft report suggested that the roads authorities considered the consultation to have been rather superficial consequently a further round of telephone discussion has been undertaken in October 2006. This has included:

- Gordon Sinclair of Transport Scotland
- Ralph Newlands and Mel Edwards of BEAR
- Elaine Penny of Moray Council

A composite list of issues arising in discussion with these bodies is as follows:

speed bumps on Mid Street



- There are no plans for major alteration to the trunk road through Keith such as realignment or bypass. A proposed bypass route around the west and south of Keith is not on Transport Scotland's programme. However the council has chosen to safeguard the route.
- Feasibility studies for junction improvement at the A96/A95 to the west of Keith are in hand by BEAR.
- Reconstruction of the trunk road carriageway through the town is being designed. This is partly to address the unconventional arrangement of footways and carriageway in Moss Street.
- Tesco relocation (consented but not implemented) will involve road improvement. Works to accommodate the development have not been finalised but these are expected to include a new signal controlled junction on the trunk road. This will include pedestrian crossing facilities. Some improvement to pedestrian linkage from Mid Street to the new Tesco store is expected.
- The one-way operation of Mid Street was introduced after consultation in the 1990's. It substantially reduced the historic accident rate which had a high pedestrian involvement.
- The authorities are aware of some pressure to reverse the direction of the one-way traffic in Mid Street but they are not persuaded that this would bring any benefits.
- Traffic levels are not at a level to cause concern. There is no

significant congestion.

- A Route Action Plan (RAP) for the built-up sections of the A96 (excluding Elgin and Nairn) has just been completed by BEAR, principally for road accident remedial measures. Although not yet in the public domain it is understood that there are no 'black-spots' in Keith and that proposed measures will address: traffic speed on approaches to the town; 'Gateway' signing; and, consistency of all road signs. Specific concerns about pedestrian facilities are to be reviewed once the Tesco proposals are finalised.
- The proposals envisage surface treatment of the main squares extending over the trunk road. Consultees noted that this may give rise to difficulties with regard to such things as signing, maintenance, or driver interpretation. Other than this matter the discussions did not address views on the proposals of which not all consultees were aware.

Finally, with reference to the proposal to provide a shared surface in Mid Street, Elaine Penny, Engineer for Moray Council, has expressed no objection in principle but notes that careful design would be required to ensure a good scheme that satisfies all users and technical requirements. In particular, reference should be made to the requirements of blind or partially sighted pedestrians. This is the subject of recent and continuing research by the 'Guide Dogs for the Blind' organisation in association with CABI in England.

A95 (T)



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Infrastructure.

Keith is relatively unusual among small towns because of its planned grid layout. The majority of communities grow organically in a less formal fashion. This grid pattern occupies much of the centre of Keith each side of Moss Street and is also seen in Fife Keith at Regent Square and each side of Fife Street. Outwith the grid-pattern areas

the built-up form is generally dictated by topography, for example occupying rising ground and avoiding the river valley.

The River Isla is a natural divide between Keith and Fife Keith. The Keith/Dufftown private railway also follows this valley. The river is bridged by the A96 where the two halves of the community meet.

The grid pattern around Mid Street has the through routes running roughly north/south joined by lanes running east/west at approximately 30 metre centres. The lanes are approximately 3.3m wide. Mid Street is one-way northbound from Reidhaven Square and has flat topped road humps at intervals to maintain low speeds.

Parking is permitted on one side of Mid Street for 30 minute periods. The other longitudinal grid streets have two-way traffic flow. Vehicular traffic uses the lanes for connecting movements but mostly for mid-block access to houses, garages, yards and car parks. To a driver on the A96 the lanes are inconspicuous and will be used very little by non-local drivers. A few have one-way regulations but this is not uniform.

The principal access to this part of the town from the A96 is at the junction of Moss Street and Reidhaven Square. Reidhaven Square was undergoing resurfacing work at the time visited but it can be seen to be a node point for access. It has a roundabout controlling movements to Mid Street and most of the rest of the square is occupied by car parking. There is a bus stance and public toilets.



Signing indicating the town centre and other visitor attractions is provided on Moss Street but it is not consistent for both directions. Signs facing northbound traffic are larger than those for southbound traffic.

Where the A96 bends westwards at the north end of Moss Street it joins Church Road and thence to Regent Street. These have close-spaced junctions, some with right turn reserves, local direction signs, signing to places of interest, school crossing patrols and further complications arising from gradients and bends. In this respect it is a “busy” area. Not in terms of traffic volume but in terms of road user information and frequency for decision making.

Continuing into Regent Street, this is different to Church Road. These are still close-spaced junctions and frequent signing but the wider road space has been rationalised by construction of footway extensions creating parking and loading bays and pedestrian crossing points. Regent Square follows the same plan form as Reidhaven Square but it is larger, hence traffic is more easily separated by parking areas. It has more commercial activity than Reidhaven Square. It also has different road surface colours to distinguish between parking area and traffic routes. South of Regent Street, Fife Street has a very broad (c.12m) carriageway fronted by older properties before reducing in width where there are more modern houses on the south west edge of the town.

Traffic

No specific traffic data is to hand but trunk road flows have been requested from Transport Scotland. General opinion by observation and consultation is that the local network is not overloaded.

Snapshot observations at evening and morning peak periods reveal no congestion but show short term flurries of activity. In particular the A96 Church Street and the A95 Banff Road are busy with interaction between vehicles and pedestrians where the school crossing patrols operate.

From a pedestrian viewpoint large vehicles are conspicuous particularly when they are close at hand for example on Moss Street. They mainly seem to be generated by the whisky and forestry industries. Mention should be made of the unconventional construction of footways in Moss Street. The footways and carriageway are frequently at the same level with only an upstanding kerb to separate them.

Elsewhere in the town traffic flow was unremarkable. The low speed traffic in Mid Street brought about by road humps (which are in poor condition) contrasts with higher speed movement on the parallel routes that are also wider.

A first impression of parking activity is that supply exceeds demand.



a theme for Keith

“The Friendly Town” signs at the east entrance to Keith



The Action Plan Discussion Paper states that Keith should not be afraid to “think out of the box”, and raises the possibility (echoed in the brief) of theming or branding the town. This is now a well-established concept: there have been some notable successes (and some failures) but there is clearly a risk of diminishing returns as the number of themed towns grows.

Generally we would recommend that themes should be authentic, and based on the skills and traditions of the community. For example, Keith’s long history of woollen weaving might provide a basis for attracting a new generation of contemporary textile designers and craft makers to work in the town. Similarly, Kirkcudbright’s decision to adopt the Artists’ Town brand draws on the town’s long – and continuing – history as an artists’ colony.

However, experience shows that there are no hard and fast rules. For example, Hay-on-Wye is famous as a book town, and Padstow as a food town, but in both cases the businesses came before the brand. Entrepreneurship was the driving force in these towns, and local partnerships have been formed to maximise the benefits.

In some other cases, local partners generated the idea and took the first steps. In Dumfries and Galloway, the successful Wigtown Book Town project was essentially a regeneration initiative in a very depressed rural community – a very similar initiative was undertaken in Blaenau Ffestiniog; subsequent efforts to brand Castle Douglas as a food town have reportedly been less successful. Ulverston was one



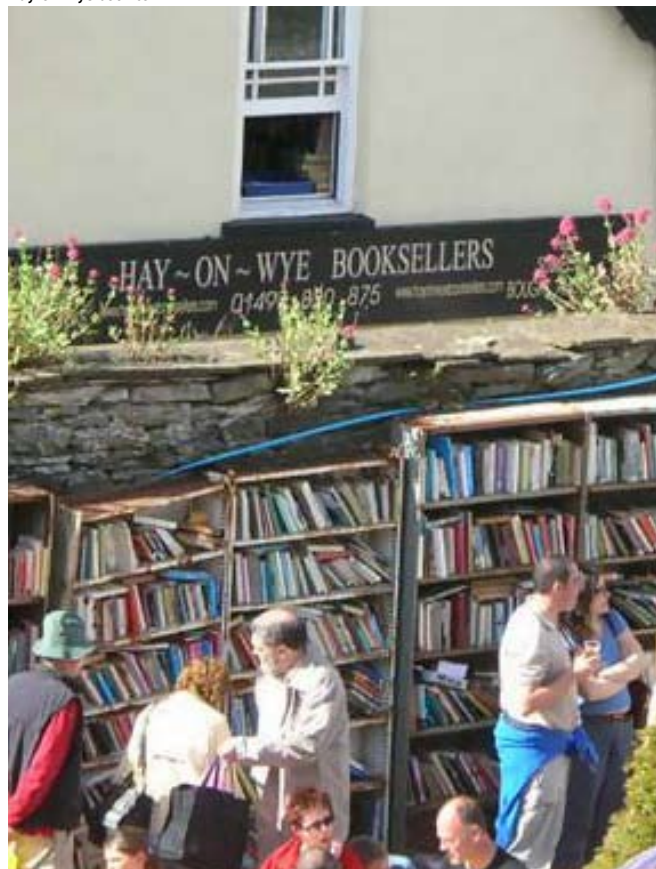
of the less visited towns on the southern edge of the Lake District, but it has created a very popular and successful year-programme and now markets itself as a festival town. Knighton in Powys stands at the intersection of Offa's Dyke and another long distance footpath: it has made walking a key theme of its tourism strategy.

Town brands emerge in a variety of ways, but there is one absolute requirement for success: the presence of an entrepreneurial champion to drive the project forward. This could be a business person, but we are also aware of some highly effective social entrepreneurs and public sector champions.

The second workshop included a discussion on the potential benefits of "theming" Keith. A number of towns in Scotland have adopted this approach, notably in Dumfries & Galloway where:

- Wigtown was selected to be Scotland's Book Town: this successful initiative has had a dramatic impact on a remote town which was in deep decline; there are about 25 booksellers in Wigtown, and the town hosts a major annual book festival as well as several other events during the year; this has stimulated an increase in visitors to other local attractions, and investment in the food and accommodation sectors
- Castle Douglas has been branded as a Food Town, building on the presence of high quality independent food shops and celebrating and promoting local products; markets and other

Hay-on-Wye book town



events are held throughout the year; Castle Douglas promotes its traditional food offer as an alternative to "clone towns" elsewhere

- Kirkcudbright has a long history as an artists' colony, and is now branded as the Artists' Town; the town's galleries, bookshops and residential schools for artists and craft workers are promoted, and a series of successful summer exhibitions – collaborations with the National Galleries of Scotland and Kelvingrove - have attracted large numbers of visitors since 2000
- Moffat is promoted as a Spa Town, reflecting its history as a health resort; however, this theme has had little impact on the market, largely because there is little or no evidence of the spa town tradition for visitors to see or experience

All these are examples of themes or brands adopted in order to attract visitors, although Castle Douglas in particular also focuses on attracting year-round business from the local catchment area; the Kirkcudbright summer shows have been well supported by local residents. Elsewhere in the UK, a number of small towns have set out to attract new residents, especially creatives and entrepreneurs. Notable examples include Stroud in Gloucestershire, a former textile town which has attracted a large number of artists and craft workers; Settle in North Yorkshire aims to attract mobile entrepreneurs – especially in the knowledge-based industries – by promoting its

quality of life and accessibility to major regional cities.

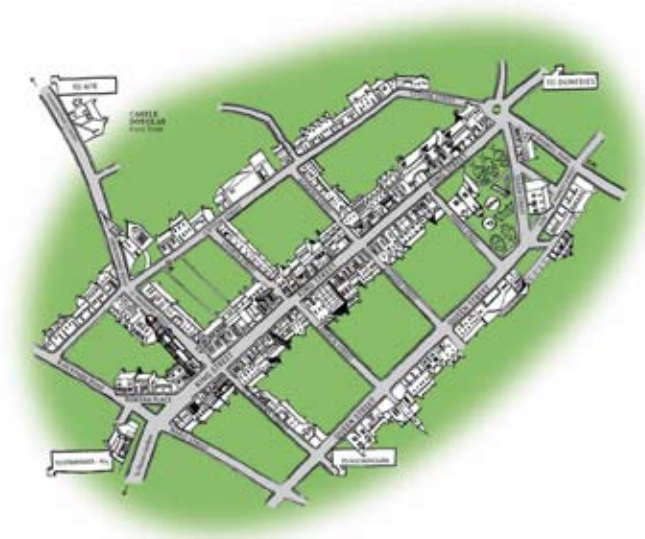
A key message is that successful branding/theming initiatives are strategy-driven. Towns need to have a clear sense of direction so that they can decide how adopting a theme might contribute towards achieving their goals. In Keith's case we have suggested that the challenge is to rediscover a sense of purpose in a town whose traditional activities and industries have been undermined by long-term structural change. Keith needs to reinvent itself as a 21st century rural town, which will:

- be distinctive and different
- attract talented new residents, including entrepreneurs
- attract discerning, high-spending visitors
- be a hive of enterprise
- be proud, enterprising and self-sufficient.

Delivering this vision means focusing on a number of target audiences:

- tourists and day visitors
- potential new residents, especially skilled people of working age

Castle Douglas food town map



- mobile entrepreneurs who are seeking a new place to live and work
- businesses, investors and developers.

Adopting the right theme could help Keith to communicate more effectively with these audiences by, for example:

- raising the town's profile and brand recognition in competitive markets
- articulating what makes the town distinctive and special
- building on existing strengths and traditions
- communicating Keith's qualities, values and aspirations.

By definition, theming a town is a tool for outward communication and getting messages to external markets. However, it is important that the theme is also "owned" by the community (residents and businesses). It must reflect their self-image, values and/or aspirations.

Equally, it is no good inventing a theme: the experience must match the claims you are making. For example, from a visitor perspective, Wigtown and Kirkcudbright do exactly what it says on the tin. By contrast, Castle Douglas's claim to be a food town is only partially justified, while there is little or no evidence of Moffat's spa town heritage. Similarly, if – like Stroud and Settle – a town is aiming to attract creative individuals and entrepreneurs, there needs to be tangible evidence in the form of studios, workspace, incentives and support mechanisms, as well as a community of like-minded people already in residence.



WORKSHOP

At the workshop, a number of possible themes for Keith were identified. The town already advertises itself as the friendly town, but this is a very broad claim that many other places might make, and some (like Forres) already do. Audiences are likely to take the view that “they would say that, wouldn’t they?” unless friendliness can be translated into a unique selling point. For example:

- a customer service initiative that would guarantee shoppers and visitors a warm welcome in every shop, bar, café and visitor attraction in town
- treating visitors as welcome guests by using seasonal volunteers to meet and greet people arriving in the squares
- making Keith the most business-friendly small town in the region by offering an individualised package of support for every new business, for firms seeking to expand and every prospective investor.

Other generic, values-based themes could be considered, for example: the green town, the creative town or the enterprising town. All of these could be legitimate aspirations for Keith, but there is very little at present to justify such claims, and no evidence that, for example, Keith is making special efforts to become a green town.

It was suggested that, in line with the urban design strategy, Keith’s very distinctive urban form might be a useful theme: for example, the planned town, or the town with the squares. This might be a useful way of marketing and celebrating a programme of investment in the public realm, and especially the restoration of the squares; it could also be linked to design guidance for new development, designed to extend the quality of the heart of the town into the residential districts.

There was strong support for themes reflecting the history and heritage of the town, for example:

- textiles, especially tartan
- farming/cattle
- whisky
- railways

Generally, these themes are more likely to be attractive to visitors than to the other markets we have identified here, although the tartan town concept is of interest because Keith has its unique Kilt School, and there is a community of practising kilt makers in the area. However, the Tartan Centre has not been able to attract significant visitor numbers and will close in 2006. It is noted however that it was only intended to be a temporary display with the tartan being loaned by another museum.

Keith is still a whisky-making town and the Strathisla Distillery is the

area’s most important visitor attraction, but a whisky town brand might only work as a part of a wider association with the international reputation of Speyside. The Keith & Dufftown Railway is another valuable tourist attraction, and there is the potential to re-open the rail link to the Network Rail station, but this is not enough to sustain a credible railway town proposition. Farming is a thread running through the history of Keith, but there is little tangible evidence of that tradition in the town apart from the annual Keith Show. The show is easily the biggest event in the Keith calendar, and there may be opportunities to invest in the Keith Show brand by organising smaller scale related events in the town throughout the year.

Our conclusion is that adopting a theme for Keith at this stage would be premature. Theming, if useful and appropriate, should flow from the town strategy rather than precede it. This leaves open the possibility that – as in Wigtown - new business ideas or community initiatives may create branding/theming opportunities in the future. At its best, theming can be a powerful tool for change and regeneration, but it is not a short-cut to success.



urban design framework

This section contains the core details of the urban design framework for Keith. It focuses on how the town works rather than with cosmetic treatments. Of course there are some suggestions about visual improvements but the central philosophy is to improve the way in which the town works.

Developing the Town

One of our impressions of Keith is that there seems to be an apparent lack of interest in developing land allocated for residential use in the Moray Local Plan Review Consultative Draft. A number of people have expressed their desire for the town to grow and indeed it would be an indication of improvement in the economy of the town if the population were to rise.

At the same time, Keith has to value its history. What is noticeable in the town is the legacy of previous generations not only in the planned layout of core areas of the town but also in the very high quality buildings, parks and gardens of the town. This is in marked contrast to much of what has been added in the last fifty years or so, which has been of a much poorer quality and doesn't add to the legacy; arguably many of these additions have actually detracted from it.

It seems inevitable that in the absence of strict guidance, briefs or design codes, volume housebuilders or individuals seeking to develop plots of land will water down the strength of character and distinctiveness of Keith. This is also an opportunity. The continuation of the planned village concept into the 21st century could provide a

prime marketing tool for the town. The existing allocated sites could provide the basis for this new initiative and there may be a need to concentrate effort on ways of translating development pressure and intention into results on the ground. There are new projects in the pipeline and our proposal is that Keith should actively promote these development sites in and around the town as model planned interventions that will set new standards for development in the area.

The Landscape Setting

We described earlier in this report, how the rolling agricultural landscape in which the town sits is attractive and special. For the most part, there is a comfortable relationship between urban and rural but there are areas where both the town and its landscape could benefit from major structural landscape initiatives. These are in the east and north east of the town. The Consultative Draft Local Plan acknowledges this, especially in relation to the need to reduce the impact of proposed new housing sites by carrying out advanced structural planting.

We propose that efforts should be made to carry out these structural planting schemes under the Urban Design Framework

Points of Arrival – an Approaches Strategy

The station and its surroundings

The wider approaches to the station - by rail and by road - are generally positive. The open rolling, well-kept agricultural land to the

north is distinctive and beautiful. The lush mature woodland along the river valley gives an equally effective first impression on the approach to the station by road. It is the immediate surroundings of the station that perhaps undermine these positive impressions.

It is recommended that the fragmented pieces of underused land around the station and by the entrance to the Isla Bank Mills should be the focus of improvement. This should incorporate some of the powerful landscape elements found further south on Station Road and Seafield Avenue - substantial tree planting, close mown grass verges and stone walling. These elements should be extended north and east. The entrance to the industrial estate should be designed to employ the qualities found in the foreground to the Chivas Regal premises on Seafield Avenue with a well-defined entrance-way with stone paving, grass verges and substantial stone piers defining the opening in the enclosing stone wall. A simple but effective contemporary sign installed outside the entrance can be used to advertise the businesses within.

The effect of this treatment will be to create a quality edge of town environment for visitors arriving or passing through by train or driving to the Isla Bank Mills. This will complement the rural environment to the north and east.

Road Approaches

The A96 (T)

The east and west approaches to Keith are the most high profile. The



A96 (T) is the busy link between Aberdeen and Inverness and carries substantial numbers of vehicles. It has frequently been said that the signposting for Keith is very poor yet it seems likely that most people know the town exists or will come upon it anyway.

It is our view that towns should merge naturally with their surrounding landscape (and vice versa) rather than being marked by special gateway features, elaborate signage or domestic scale flower displays or kitsch artefacts. The 'Welcome to Keith – the Friendly Town' incorporating the 30 mph speed limit signs run rather close to unnecessary and make the pre-1967 era informational black and white town and village signs seem restrained and highly desirable. However there is strong local feeling that there should be gateway features although we recognise that there are differing opinions on this. The A96 (T) approaches are generally of a good standard but concentration on the larger landscape structure and maintenance rather than concern for the small details will be beneficial.

The A95 – Structural Landscape Improvements

The A95 connects Banff and Grantown on Spey through Keith. The western approach to the town is through open rolling agricultural land and is attractive. The edge of town is marked by the robust Chivas Regal sheds and warehouses. The road merges with the A96 (T) at the edge of town.

The north eastern approach from Banff is less satisfactory. We have already mentioned the need for landscape improvements in the north

landscape improvements for the north east edge of town



east of the town and this road approach is marked by the somewhat barren nature of the edge of town environment, the outlines of large individual buildings on the brow of the hill and the lack of tree cover. We propose a major structural landscape improvement here.

The B9014

The B9014 approaches the town from Dufftown in the south. This is a very pleasant approach to the town and needs no urgent work.

The Town itself – a Place Strategy

Overview

Keith has strong and memorable qualities. First impressions are very positive and particular characteristics of the townscape include:

In terms of places, the most important are:

- Mid Street
- Reidhaven and Regent Squares
- Keith Town Station area
- the community hub around the schools and community centre on the Banff Road

In terms of the structure of the town, Mid Street is not very visible although it is the retail and commercial core of Keith. Reidhaven and Regent Squares have a high profile and are the centrepieces of the planned settlement. They are the first significant visual features of

the town on the A96 (T). The Keith Town Station area has enormous potential yet is spoiled by derelict land, under-investment in the historic railway environment and in the near future, affected by Tesco's move to another site.

Mid Street – the shop window of the town

The objectives for Mid Street are to:

- improve the pedestrian experience
 - provide more small parking areas
 - make better use of the lanes
 - increase the size of the prime pitch
 - attract more visitors into the street
- Improving the pedestrian experience:** there are a number of potential options here ranging from pedestrianisation to changing the direction of the one way system. Our recommendation is for a shared surface which would create a single uninterrupted surface from wall to wall. A great deal of consultation on all aspects of this proposal would have to take place prior to implementation
 - Provide more small parking areas:** there is potential for increasing the amount of parking adjacent to Mid Street in the lanes and to the rear of properties. It is not suggested that this should be a major proposal but it seems to us that there are benefits in making the street slightly more accessible. The lanes

exemplar - shared surface in Keswick town centre, Cumbria





exemplar - shared surface in Keswick town centre, Cumbria



running off Mid Street absorb a lot of parking in a discreet way; they are also invaluable east-west links which will become more important if the Tesco development goes ahead - perhaps more small parking areas could be provided in the lanes between Mid Street and the A96 (T) so that parking is equidistant between the shopping areas rather than being 'over the road' at Tesco.

- c) **Making better use of the lanes:** this partly relates to b) above but also to the potential for certain lanes to become very important as links between Mid Street and the new supermarket, but the A96 (T) is a substantial barrier - there is potential to visually play down the A96 (T) and play up the lanes to slow through traffic and ease pedestrian movement between Mid Street and Tesco – see **Making a New Place** below.
- d) **Increasing the prime pitch:** to create a more vibrant and dynamic retail core it would be necessary to draw the existing tight retail prime pitch both north and south on Mid Street. We are making two proposals which could help to achieve this – the first is the creation of a town arrival zone in Reidhaven Square (see **Specific Proposal** below) and the second is the creation of a new place at the north end of Mid Street (see **Making a New Place** below).
- e) **Attracting more visitors into the street:** this is a combination of all of the above but would include an arts event led strategy for the lanes – Art in the Lanes. The proposal here is that instead of commissioning artists to create static works, it would be more constructive to run an art festival, possibly in conjunction with one of the other Keith Festivals that used the lanes as hanging space.

Regent Square - proposal



Reidhaven and Regent Squares – the front doors of the town

General approach: the objective should be to create public open spaces that are more than elaborate road junctions, based instead on highlighting the very special qualities of the set-piece squares and creating genuinely social, animated, memorable urban places.

Firstly, it is recommended that the extraneous painted lines, kerbs and planters used to define traffic movements are removed to restore the sense of a cohesive space. The original uniform treatment should be reinstated across the surface of the space with a generous stone paved 'footway' around the edge of the square. The main surface can be asphalt in the tradition of the area, with a heavily textured granite chip surface that matches the colour of adjacent buildings. The paving treatment of both squares should be extended across the main road (Moss Street/Regent Street) to enlarge the squares to their natural full extent – in effect, the A96 (T) should pass through the squares. This will help signal the squares to people passing along the A96 (T), as would other signals such as uplighting landmarks such as the magnificent tree at the junction of Moss Street/Bridge Street.

In the squares (and in the town generally) the architectural character lends itself to a simple, robust streetscape treatment but the quality of materials is of fundamental importance. Simple honest materials like stone and tarmac (and perhaps even plain concrete slabs) would all be appropriate treatments whereas fake or reproduction products such as concrete setts and fake riven sandstone slabs are not.



Reidhaven Square - proposal



Reinstating a strong matrix of street trees is also necessary but it is important that appropriately striking and robust tree forms are selected and that large specimens with a consistent growing habit are used. The very best nursery and planting techniques should be used to ensure a quick and bold effect. The tree grille arrangements do not need to be ornamental (detracting from the tree itself) but should be as minimal as possible with the focus on ensuring the best possible growing conditions for the trees.

The existing street lights in the squares are out of scale. The lighting of the squares should focus on lighting the space rather than the highway. This may include uplighting the trees, wash lighting key elevations or spot lighting important features. The objective is to accentuate the scale and character of the space and make it an atmospheric place to be, even beyond the core daylight hours.

Specific Proposal: the provision of facilities such as toilets, information point or cafes may help draw people off the A96 (T) and into the squares. Public activities around the edges of the squares should be encouraged to spill out into the squares to bring as much life as possible to the space. The sight of people browsing shop displays or sitting eating, drinking and socialising will be more effective in drawing people into the spaces than any number of signs or public art.

Much has been said to us about Reidhaven Square, access to it and the public toilet block in particular and this is a promising location

exemplar images of small kiosks, retail outlets and cafes



for a sensitive but memorable architectural ‘gem’ - a distinctive small building providing useful facilities in an eye catching structure. This could create a focal point in the space, provide useful facilities for visitors and add an enticing contemporary flavour to the town’s brand. It could also help to draw people into Mid Street.

Of course there is an alternative view that an existing building could be used for these new facilities. This may be an attractive proposal for a range of economic and sustainability reasons but it would not have the impact and magnetism of a new structure and might therefore fail in its prime purpose of attracting people into the town centre. The combination of uses in the building will also be important.

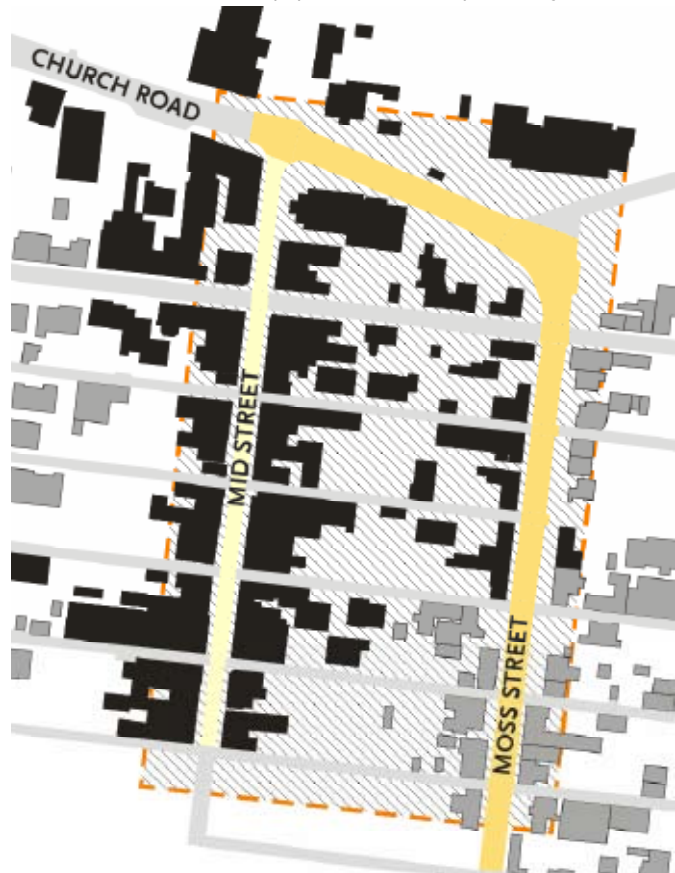
Making a New Place

It is important for Keith to try to derive some benefit from the proposed Tesco development. At the initial workshop in June, we presented a sketch idea for a new square that would link the Tesco car park to Mid Street – this was not a particularly popular idea but we think that the idea of working on the link between Tesco and Mid Street is potentially beneficial. We have therefore worked up a second idea which creates a new place around the north end of Mid Street, Moss Street, Church Road and Union Street. This will counteract the gradual fading away effect at the north end of the Mid Street.

Our recommendation is that the A road should be visually ‘downgraded’ to integrate better with the surrounding townscape and give greater priority to pedestrians trying to move across the



location of Mid Street shared surface proposals and Moss Street place-making ideas



road. This could mean, for example, taking out the sweeping curve at the Drum Road junction and substituting a signalled junction so that vehicles are travelling more slowly and pedestrians are given a chance to cross. It may also mean emphasising the lane links between Mid Street and the Tesco site by taking the line of the lanes across Moss Street or otherwise signalling the east-west movement. As with the proposals for the two squares, we are proposing that this area should be marked by surface changes that help to create a new identity for the area. We also propose that Moss Street is the subject of a street tree project to emphasise its new environmental status.

Keith Town Station Area

This is an important area of town. It is historically important, is a worthy tourist attraction and is a bridge point between the original east and west sides of the planned settlement. The environment of this area is poor quality requiring:

- increased investment and quality in the historic railway environment
- a determined push to develop the adjacent site for an appropriate use and to a high standard of design
- clarifying the future of the existing Tesco development and the effect that change may have on adjacent historic environments

Community hub at the schools and community centre on the Banff Rd

This is another important and well used area of town. It already benefits from substantial numbers of people through drop-offs at the schools and attendance at the striking new community facility. Yet the general environment is bleak and windswept. In association with our earlier proposals for major structural landscaping in the area it is proposed that a comprehensive environmental improvement and restructuring scheme be devised. This area is scheduled to have work carried out on it as part of a developer agreement and this will include landscaping.

Public Realm Strategy: benefiting from restraint

The Keith seat

The quality and variety of street furniture is an issue in Keith as over time, an ad hoc collection of different styles of benches, tree grilles, signs and paving materials have appeared. It is also noticeable that the more recent introductions are often less distinctive and of a lower quality than older versions. It would be preferable therefore to identify a single, high quality and distinctive version of each street furniture item which would become the 'default' choice throughout the town.

It is proposed that an early initiative should include bringing the traditional – distinctive, attractive and comfortable - wrought iron 'Keith seat' back into manufacture. This would help to counter the relentless merging of identity between towns through the ubiquitous

use of catalogue furniture and could be extended in future to include the traditional post and bar railings found in the town (eg around the memorial gardens) and other distinctive local features. It is noted that some Councillors expressed the view that the wrought iron seat was uncomfortable but agreed that there should be a high quality Keith seat.

Visitor information

The story of Keith is worth telling in a dynamic and compelling way. An initiative could be established to communicate information in an innovative way rather than relying on static information panels that have a tendency to go out of date or to add clutter to the street.

Two key approaches have potential to provide information in a more flexible and creative way:

The provision of leaflets allows information to be easily and frequently changed and if distributed through local shops encourages local people to meet and chat with visitors, potentially giving a much more personal and memorable experience than receiving information through a static sign. It is also easy to incorporate up to date information on local people, events and facilities and project a sense of the dynamism of the community.

A more recent innovation is the self-guided tour, using handheld computers that can be hired from a local shop. These can 'talk' visitors through a walking tour (for example), provide graphic or

spoken information about the town, oral history, traditional music, local stories and the like. This also has the advantage of encouraging some contact between residents and visitors at the pick up point, but is also extremely versatile, potentially providing a wide spectrum of information 'themes' tailored to different interests and age groups. It is also easily modified and freshened up over time. It is noted that the Keith Heritage group already have self guide tapes and we suggest that the scheme be expanded.





implementation and costs

The preceding sections describe in general terms the direction of proposals for the urban design framework. Some of these proposals do not have capital cost implications for the moment. For example, we have not attempted to put a cost on encouraging development and take-up of housing sites.

GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

The main part of our proposals is a range of place-making ideas around the two squares and the centre of town. We think that these proposals are necessary and some are urgent – for example some of the proposals for Reidhaven Square and for Mid Street and Moss Street. At the same time, we realise that these may be difficult to implement and costly. They will require much negotiation with BEAR, Moray Council Roads and with the Scottish Executive. Also we are aware of highly negative local views which don't help – although these are very much minority opinions.

Turning to the question of costs, the scale of the streets and squares involved in our proposals means that any comprehensive streetscape scheme of the right quality could be extremely expensive. We have already mentioned the high quality of the legacy of previous generations in the buildings, parks and gardens of the town, unlike much of what has been added in the last 50 years. Now would be a good time to ensure that we add to that legacy rather than detract from it. A gradual but significant improvement in quality – as a legacy to match the best of what has gone before – would be a

constructive way forward. The philosophy would be to do the very best with each tranche of money that becomes available, even if it means only doing a small area. The proposals would always be of the highest quality – stone, cast iron etc – rather than concrete setts or plastic benches.

It might be possible to start with kerbs for example, introducing generous stone kerbs when and where we can. The roads in Keith are nice textured tarmac so that can happily live alongside stone kerbs. Then it would be possible to gradually upgrade the pavements and other special places to stone in a logical progression – for example in Reidhaven Square, it would be reasonable to concentrate the new stone paving around the new kiosk / toilet block, then around the retail premises and along the trunk road frontage.

THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The range of proposals described in this brief report suggests that a number of organisations will most likely be involved in the implementation of the Urban Design Framework. We suggest that these should include:

- The Moray Council
- HIE Moray
- Keith Strathisla Regeneration
- REAP
- The organisers of the Keith Show and the Traditional Music Festival

- Keith Dufftown Railway Association
- Local businesses
- Interested local individuals

Our meetings with a wide range of parties in Keith highlighted the extent of local enthusiasm for the town and genuine interest in its future. This should find a constructive outlet. We mention the above list of organisations not simply because they happen to be responsible in some way for the town but because they represent different skills and knowledge sets. For example, the running of a new café in Reidhaven Square might utilise local skills such as those of the owner of Boogie Woogie or a social enterprise approach using the knowledge and experience of REAP although in practice, procuring the cafe and its operation would require an open public competitive process. This will need to be worked out in detail – all we can suggest at this stage is that an effort should be made to tap into as much local interest and expertise as possible.

OUTLINE COSTS

- Reidhaven Square – comprehensive improvements - £1,026,480.00
- Regent Square – comprehensive improvements - £571,262.00
- Mid Street - shared surface - £352,672.00
- Moss Street place-making - £199,989.00



Regent Square				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	3,800.00	3,800.00
service covers and alterations	sum	1	2,500.00	2,500.00
surface water drainage	sum	1	3,000.00	3,000.00
paving preparation	sqm	1310	18.00	23,580.00
caithness paving on type 1 base	sqm	1310	105.00	137,550.00
paving edges	m	240	45.00	10,800.00
asphalt overlay	sqm	2510	16.50	41,415.00
trees: semi-mature	no	19	2,250.00	42,750.00
seats	no	6	800.00	4,800.00
lighting column	no	12	2,750.00	33,000.00
small uplighter	no	38	400.00	15,200.00
floodlight	no	4	750.00	3,000.00
ducting/electrics	sum	1	5,400.00	5,400.00
café building/toilets	sqm	39	3,800.00	146,300.00
preliminaries	sum	1	70,964.25	70,964.25
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	27,202.96	27,202.96
				total 571,262.21

Reidhaven Square				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	7,800.00	7,800.00
service covers and alterations	sum	1	5,000.00	5,000.00
surface water drainage	sum	1	5,000.00	5,000.00
paving preparation	sqm	2408	18.00	43,344.00
caithness paving on type 1 base	sqm	2408	105.00	252,840.00
paving edges	m	506	45.00	22,756.50
asphalt overlay	sqm	5421	16.50	89,446.50
trees: semi-mature	no	28	2,250.00	63,000.00
seats	no	6	800.00	4,800.00
lighting column	no	16	2,750.00	44,000.00
small uplighter	no	56	400.00	22,400.00
floodlight	no	6	750.00	4,500.00
ducting/electrics	sum	1	7,800.00	7,800.00
café building/toilets	sqm	73	3,800.00	277,400.00
preliminaries	sum	1	127,513.05	127,513.05
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	48,880.00	48,880.00
				total 1,026,480.05

Mid Street Shared Surface				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	2,000.00	2,000.00
service covers and alterations	sum	1	4,000.00	4,000.00
paving preparation	sqm	2007	18.00	36,126.00
caithness paving on type 1 base	sqm	2007	105.00	210,735.00
paving edges	m	74	45.00	3,307.50
lighting columns	no	10	2,750.00	27,500.00
ducting/electrics	sum	1	8,400.00	8,400.00
preliminaries	sum	1	43,810.28	43,810.28
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	16,793.94	16,793.94
				total 352,672.71

Moss Street Traffic Calming				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	3,800.00	3,800.00
service covers and alterations	sum	1	1,500.00	1,500.00
asphalt overlay	sqm	3262	16.50	53,823.00
trees	no	24	2,250.00	54,000.00
small uplighter	no	48	400.00	19,200.00
lighting column	no	10	2,750.00	27,500.00
ducting/electrics	sum	1	5,800.00	5,800.00
preliminaries	sum	1	24,843.45	24,843.45
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	9,523.32	9,523.32
				total 199,989.77

Keith Station / Isla Mills Landscaping				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	2,500.00	2,500.00
ground preparation	sqm	603	12.00	7,236.00
grass and soiling	sqm	274	4.40	1,205.60
sett paving	sqm	329	101.50	33,393.50
woodland planting and soiling	sqm	3643	9.50	34,608.50
fencing	m	257	9.00	2,313.00
preliminaries	sum	1	8,125.66	8,125.66
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	4,469.11	4,469.11
				total 93,851.37

Banff Road Structural Landscaping				
item	unit	no	unit cost	total
site clearance	sum	1	5,400.00	5,400.00
ploughing zone 1	hectares	3	1,500.00	4,410.00
planting zone 1	hectares	3	9,500.00	27,930.00
fencing zone 1	m	2300	9.00	20,700.00
ploughing zone 2	hectares	11	1,500.00	15,960.00
planting zone 2	hectares	11	9,500.00	101,080.00
fencing zone 2	m	3140	9.00	28,260.00
preliminaries	sum	1	20,374.00	20,374.00
contingencies (nominal 5%)	sum	1	10,935.70	10,935.70
				total 235,049.70

			grand total	2,479,305.82
Professional Fees at 12%				297,516.70
Add VAT				485,943.94
			grand total	£3,262,766.46

NE Landscape Structural Improvements - £235,049.00
 Isla Mills and Keith Station – environmental works - £93,851.00
PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AND PHASING

It is important to distinguish between urban design as a force for improving how towns work, and urban design as a purely cosmetic activity. Throughout this short study we have always favoured the former and shunned the latter. It is certainly the case that this collection of projects features some proposals that are meant to improve the appearance of Keith but these are intended to be complementary.

Our purpose in stating this is that urban design, urban designers and

their clients and the communities they serve are often let down by piecemeal implementation of proposals, cherry picking of projects and apparently intractable funding and administrative issues that produce the wrong bits of projects at the wrong time. The most common issue is that landscaping and cosmetic treatments are generally easier to implement than genuine functional improvements, economic initiatives or social change. It would be disappointing if this became the case with the Keith Urban Design Framework.

In developing the priorities for action we have concentrated on the actual need for change which the study has identified. These are in order of priority:

- a) the need to get more people to visit Keith and/or interrupt their journey on the A96 - revitalising the squares
- b) the need to bring about change in Mid Street especially the need to benefit from the proposed Tesco development - Mid Street shared surface
- c) the need to link Tesco to the existing retail core - Moss Street place-making and traffic calming
- d) improvements to entrances - station and NE landscaping

Our proposal is that the work should be carried out in five phases to meet the budget requirements of the client and their funding agencies. Our preference is to concentrate firstly on Reidhaven Square, then Mid

Street, then Moss Street, Regent Square then the arrival landscaping projects. At the same time we appreciate that measures will not be in place to develop the building proposal for the square within the budget timescale. In the circumstances, we recommend that tree planting, lighting and paving around commercial premises should make up the first phase of work.

Phase	1	Reidhaven Square	£400,000.00
Phase	2	Reidhaven Square and Mid Street	£715,691.60
Phase	3	Mid Street Moss Street and Regent Square	£715,691.60
Phase	4	Moss Street and Regent Square	£715,691.60
Phase	5	Regent Square and Landscaping	£715,691.60

At this stage we can only make recommendations on the general priority area for each phase and these are shown above. All of the physical proposals will require more detailed development and actual costings will be a better means of determining programming and the distribution of funding between different projects. The size of the phasing sums suggests that there will be considerable overlap of projects and phases. There may also be extra costs involved in programming the works in this way but we have not costed for that.

We are happy to prepare more detailed proposals if required.

WMUD
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