



Planning Services
Development Planning & Environment



PLANNING GUIDANCE (PG)

Shopfronts and Advertisements in Conservation Areas: *Broxburn and Uphall, Linlithgow (Palace and High Street), Kirknewton, Livingston Village and Torphichen*

Adopted 27 May 2020

1. Introduction

Planning Guidance (PG) : Shopfronts and Advertisements in Conservation Areas : *Broxburn and Uphall, Linlithgow (Palace and High Street), Kirknewton, Livingston Village and Torphichen*

This Planning Guidance (PG) is intended to help retailers, commercial operators and their agents improve the quality of design when altering or replacing shopfronts and associated advertising within Broxburn and Uphall, Linlithgow (Palace and High Street), Kirknewton, Mid Calder, Livingston Village and Torphichen Conservation Areas. Appendix 1 provides details of the boundaries of these conservation areas and their identified retail core.

By following this guidance, applicants should be able to achieve shopfront solutions appropriate to their historic context. Its purpose is not to require precise ways of designing alterations, or to discourage imaginative or innovative new design, but to provide guidance for the alteration, replacement and restoration of shopfronts. Well-designed shopfronts not only preserve and enhance the character and appearance of buildings and town and village centres, they also contribute to their commercial success.

The council recognises that the retail industry requires adaptability and flexibility in shopfront design in order to respond to the rapidly changing market and consumer pressures. However, the visual quality of historic townscapes and village centres and the architectural integrity of individual buildings and groups of buildings, especially within designated conservation areas, can be lessened by poor shopfront design. For example, an overly dominant large plastic fascia may be inappropriate in terms of size and location and may cover traditional architectural features.

It is recognised that standard shopfronts used by some national retailers may present a recognised 'house style'. However, this is not always appropriate in sensitive locations such as on listed buildings within conservation areas. Whilst the desire for corporate image is appreciated, in some cases standard designs will need to be modified in order to fit sympathetically with the period and architectural style of the building. It is important, therefore, that alterations, restoration and replacement are carried out sympathetically in order to protect the character of an area.

Size, scale, design and detailing, the use of correct materials and colour schemes are all important in enabling shopfronts to make a positive contribution to an area.

2. Planning Permission

The alteration and replacement of shopfronts generally requires planning permission. Routine maintenance works, such as re-decoration in the same colour or straightforward repairs, are 'permitted development' and do not require planning permission, unless the shop is part of a listed building or within a conservation area, in which case any application of a different colour, needs permission. However, "like for like" repair / maintenance is acceptable and supported and does not require planning permission or conservation area consent. You are advised to discuss any such repairs in advance with the planning authority.

3. Listed Building Consent

Alterations to a shopfront that is part of a listed building will normally need listed building consent as well as planning permission. Such alterations should be consistent with the appearance of the building. Unauthorised works to a listed building constitute a criminal offence. The council will take a positive view of applications to remove non-original shopfronts and replace them with shopfronts more appropriate to the building and conservation area.

4. Advertisement Consent

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984 (as amended) define an advertisement as *“...any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device, or representation whether illuminated or not, in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purpose of, advertisement, announcement or direction”*.

In 1977, additional powers were granted by the then Secretary of State for Scotland giving the council full control over most adverts within the conservation areas covered by this planning guidance. This means that all advertisements, including those displayed inside a building and within one metre of a window or door, can require the submission of an advertisement consent application. Advertisements and signs proposed for display on, or within, a listed building may require a separate application for listed building consent. The Advertisement Regulations are complex and it is always advisable to check the position with the council's Development Management Team prior to displaying an advert or making an application.

Applications for advertisements are assessed only in relation to public safety and amenity. Public safety includes road safety and the reading of road signs; amenity focuses on the suitability of the site for the advert proposed and can take account of features such as listed buildings and conservation areas, but can disregard other advertisements in the locality.

The assessment of applications for advertisements also focuses on the visual amenity of not only the property itself, but also the amenity of neighbouring properties and the surrounding area. Any consent granted for advertisements is limited to a maximum of five years. Advertisements can, however, continue to be displayed after this period expires unless the planning authority requires their removal.

5. Conservation Areas

In considering applications for development within conservation areas, the council is obliged to have special regard for the character of the area. Development proposals should preserve or enhance a conservation area and shopfronts play an important part in this issue. The council's policy for controlling advertisements within conservation areas is therefore formulated to ensure that a satisfactory balance is achieved between the need to preserve the character of the conservation areas and the requirement for commercial premises to display advertisements.

In order to protect the character and appearance of conservation areas, the conservation areas covered by this planning guidance are covered by an 'Article 4 Direction'. This means that what would normally be considered as 'permitted development' elsewhere, is restricted and planning permission is required for many types of work within conservation areas.

If you have any questions about development in a conservation area, you should contact Development Management on 01506-280000 or e-mail planning@westlothian.gov.uk

6. Determining shopfront applications

When determining proposals for new or replacement shopfronts the council will, amongst other things, apply the following principles:

- the wholesale removal of a shopfront which is important to the character and appearance of an area or building will not normally be supported, unless the shopfront which it is proposed to be removed is not original and it is proposed to replace it with a more traditional design of shopfront;
- materials should be appropriate for the character of the rest of the building and surrounding area – in particular, the use of plastics or acrylic for shop signs and fascia boards will not be supported;
- the number of materials should be kept to a minimum – ideally, fascia signs should be timber with painted wording;
- the scale, proportion and profile of window frames, astragals and door locations should be derived from the characteristics of the street and the architectural style of the upper floors;
- horizontal elements such as stall risers, cills and door panels should line up with one another; and
- vertical emphasis should be achieved by using horizontal or vertical elements to divide windows into vertically proportioned sections.

7. Traditional shopfronts

The term shopfront refers to the area of a commercial building which fronts the street. A shopfront could, therefore, relate to an office, shop, cafe or restaurant. It is a screen or panel that fills the space defined by the architectural framework. The shopfront provides the greatest opportunity for expression and adaptation.

The architectural framework establishes the basic design principles for the ground floor of a shopping street through vertical and horizontal elements, scale and proportions. This is often formed by pilasters with architectural details such as capital and plinth (the base of a pilaster or column), a corbel or a console bracket and an entablature (the area below a pilaster or column) with a frieze or fascia and is terminated by a cornice. This is, however, subject to variation and may not be appropriate for every shopfront. New build developments should establish an architectural framework which respects the ground floor 'rhythm' and proportions of the area.

The architectural framework should:

- relate to the building or group of buildings on which it is fitted;
- frame the shopfront and give visual support to the upper floors;
- separate shop units visually within the streetscape, creating a strong vertical emphasis and;
- respect the proportions of upper floors and adjacent units.

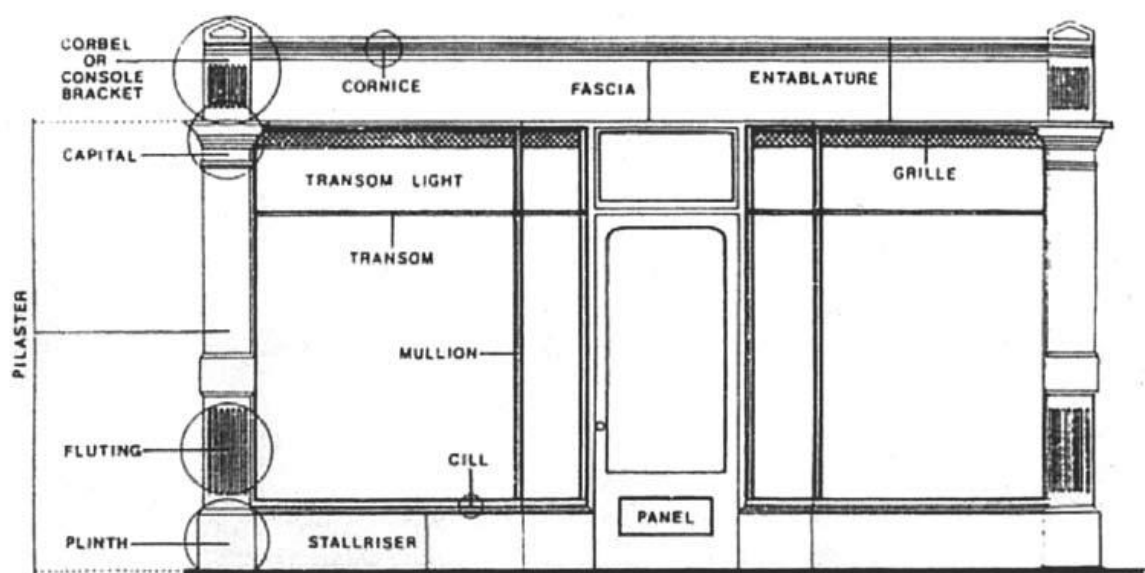
A traditional shopfront is made up of a number of elements forming a frame for the shop entrance and shop window. There is, however, local variation (see Diagram below).

8. Architectural elements

This section sets out some fundamental principles. It lists and describes the elements of the architectural framework and the shopfront. It sets out the general design principles for each. These principles apply to existing buildings where shopfronts may be replaced or altered and to new developments containing ground floor commercial units.

It is a fundamental principle for buildings in a historical context that original or traditional architectural frameworks, shopfronts, or elements should be retained and repaired as necessary. The re-establishment of traditional materials and shopfront patterns, where photographic evidence or nearby original fabric exists, will be supported. The removal of good quality original or early fabric, such as glass, will be resisted.

The council's Local History Library may be able to supply earlier photographs of the premises under consideration. They can be contacted at Dalyell House, High Street, Linlithgow, EH49 7EZ.



The main components of a traditional shopfront are:

fascia: the fascia provides the space within which the name and business of the shop can be displayed;

stall riser: provides protection at ground level and provides a solid base to the shopfront;

pilasters: flat, column like elements which separate each shop from its neighbours and define the width of the shopfront;

corbel: pilaster heads which often project to form a bracket or corbel;

cornice: the cornice defines the top of the shopfront and gives protection from the weather;

mullion: a vertical element dividing a window into two or more panes: and

transom: a horizontal element dividing the window.

Fascias

The fascia was traditionally a flat board on which to display the name of the business and was sited between the corbels at the top of the pilasters. Many shops in conservation areas do not have fascia boards. Where fascias are not present on shops, the introduction of a new one will not normally be supported. Where a fascia board is not acceptable, it may be appropriate to display a company name by means of individual letters painted or fixed directly onto the face of the building after obtaining the relevant consent. Where individual letters are proposed, these should be affixed using non-ferrous fixings to avoid rust streaks staining the face of the building.

However, where fascias are appropriate, they provide the opportunity to create a distinctive and individual element of the shopfront. The following principles should apply:

- Cornices should be retained or reinstated as the terminating element of the fascia. They should be weather-proofed using lead flashing or a similar material.
- The width of the fascia should be restricted within the pilasters and corbels, or line up with the window frame below where corbels are not present. Fascia boards should not be larger than 450mm in height and should not exceed 20% of the total shopfront frame height, although each case will be treated on its own merits. In addition, they should be kept well below the cills of first floor windows. Fascias should be proportionate to the overall shop front.
- The preferred option for signs within the conservation areas is signwriting on the fascia board (where fitted), or individual letters in metal or wood applied directly to the building by means of spacers. Light-coloured lettering on a dark background is particularly effective.
- Lettering should be contained within the fascia - a ratio of 60% fascia height for lettering, with 20% spacing above and below is a guide. The signage should not be greater than 75% of the fascia length.

The sketch below shows acceptable proportions and design elements of a traditional shopfront:



- A fascia should not project from the building elevation in a box-like fashion;
- Existing fascia's which are 'over-deep' (i.e. which cover part of the window), should be reduced to a more appropriate size when a new fascia sign is produced or shopfront replaced;
- The fascia and other signage should contain the name and/or trade of the premises, together with the street number of the premises, a telephone number and, if necessary, a web address;
- The colour scheme should complement the shop window and door frames;
- Internally illuminated, flashing, or moving displays, will not be supported; and
- Where illumination of the fascia is considered appropriate, this should be done by means of concealed top light tubes painted to match the background. Internal illumination, large spot lights or 'swan neck' style lights are unacceptable. Shiny, highly reflective and fluorescent colours and materials are not acceptable.

The sketch below details some unacceptable changes to a traditional shopfront.



Stall risers

Stall risers are the solid panels below the windows of shops. They can create horizontal unity in the streetscape and can also provide a visual base to the shopfront, bringing displays of goods closer to the shopper. The materials for stall risers should respect the main building and shopfront. Acceptable materials include, according to circumstances, timber, stonework, painted smooth render and ceramic tiles. Since stall risers are located adjacent to the pavement, they are susceptible to becoming dirty and stained. The appearance can be improved by ensuring that dark colours are used.

In historic buildings, traditional stall risers will normally be required in all ground floor premises. The height of the stall riser will be determined by the base of the pilasters or existing traditional stall risers in adjacent units. The general design and details of mouldings and cills should respect the architectural period of the property.

Pilasters

Pilasters are not always present but, where they are, they contribute to the vertical emphasis of a building and provide visual support for the shopfront and upper floors. The pilaster projects only slightly from the wall and has a base, a shaft and a capital. Pilasters should:

- be modelled and project beyond the plane of the shopfront and the upper floors;
- not be clad or treated separately from the adjoining property, or cluttered with fixtures such as projecting signs, or alarm boxes and;
- be treated in a manner sympathetic to the architectural style and age of the building.

Window frame, doors and architraves

Through the use of colour, interesting shapes and proportions, high quality materials and lively window displays; windows and doors can add visual interest to the streetscape and produce a distinctive individual shop unit. However, these must be appropriate to the streetscape and historic fabric of the building. All buildings containing shops or providing public services are required to be accessible by people with disabilities. Inclusive design enables this to be achieved to the greatest effect and should be employed in the installation of new doors and access arrangements in shop units.

At all times, the materials and detailed design of the size, shape and profile of window frames, astragals and doors should respect the architectural style and period of the premises. Painted timber is the preferred material for a shopfront since it can be easily modelled, adapted and repaired. Correctly sourced timber is also a sustainable material. Anodised or basic milled silver aluminium and uPVC or similar materials, produce an unsatisfactory appearance, which is not acceptable.

The plane of shop windows should be slightly recessed from the pilasters to provide depth and shadow and a variation in the plane. Deeply recessed windows or completely open frontages are generally unacceptable.

Glazing should always be transparent, even in non-retail units. Opaque, frosted, reflective, mirrored or tinted glass is normally unacceptable, unless it has a functional use in small, selective areas. The replacement of historic glass is not encouraged and will be approved only in exceptional circumstances. Windows should be kept free of mechanical ventilation units.

Solid or partly infilled frontages are not acceptable, even on non-retail uses such as restaurants, banks and office uses. ATM machines may, however, be acceptable where they can be integrated satisfactorily into the shopfront as a whole.

Although shops should be accessible to all, applications for ramps outwith shops will be resisted. Thresholds at entrances should, however, be low level. Changes in level should be accommodated within the shop unit by ramps no steeper than 1:12 and consideration should be given to the space provision required to achieve a level landing area at the top and bottom of the ramp.

9. Colour

Planning permission is required for the painting of shop frontages in conservation areas. In addition, Listed Building Consent is also required for the painting of a listed building.

Original frontage surrounds built in stone and forming an integral part of the building should not be painted. Where already painted, it is desirable that the paint be removed by an appropriate method which does not cause damage to the stone.

The choice of colour that a shop front is painted has a major impact on its appearance in the streetscape. A well detailed and traditionally styled shop front can be spoiled by a poor choice of colour. The cumulative impact of inappropriate colours can be detrimental to the character and appearance of an area.





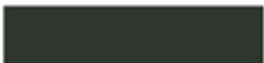















The colour palette should reflect the context of the area. Where shopfronts and signs are within a historic street, a 'traditional' colour palette and finish should be used. Rich, dark colours with a matt finish often look very good, leaving window displays and lettering to provide accents.

Whatever the context, colour schemes should be subtle and blend harmoniously with the surrounding built environment. Where the upper storeys of a building are painted, the shop frontage should be painted to match that colour in order to give the building a unified frontage. This means that corporate organisations should not assume that their corporate colour scheme will be acceptable and variations may be required.

















In order to guide those owners / occupiers wishing to paint their shop front of commercial premises, a palate of suggested colours is set out below.

An indication of the types of colours that are considered appropriate in Conservation Areas is provided below.

BS4800 colours

			
02 C 39	02 C 40	04 C 39	04 D 45
			
08 B 29	08 B 39	10 C 39	12 B 21
			
12 B 25	12 B 29	12 C 39	14 C 39
			
14 C 40	18 B 25	18 C 35	18 C 39
			
18 D 43	18 E 53	20 C 40	20 D 45

RAL palette references

			
3003	3004	3007	3011
			
5000	5003	5012	5024
			
6003	6007	6012	6021
			
7001	7012	8011	8016

10. Materials

Materials used in shopfront construction should be of good quality, durable and in keeping with a building's existing character. In general, the number and type of materials and colours used should be kept to a minimum.

Good quality modern materials for lettering may be permitted, but fascia's made of acrylic or vinyl sheeting, Perspex, aluminium or plastic will not generally be permitted.

Timber is the most versatile and traditional shopfront material. Painted timber is preferred to stained hardwood. The use of tropical hardwoods is discouraged on grounds of environmental sustainability.

Sustainability should be considered in shopfront design and refurbishment proposals. Materials should be chosen carefully with energy efficiency, durability, security and maintenance requirements in mind. Natural materials like timber products are usually a more sustainable option than uPVC and aluminium which need a lot of energy to be produced and may harm the environment when disposed of. When undertaking refurbishment works, materials matching the existing ones should be used.

11. Suspended ceilings

Modern retailing methods often result in the installation of a false or suspended ceiling within a shop to reduce the internal height of the shop. This can result in unbalanced proportions to the shopfront and a loss of the horizontal lines in the streetscape. As such the installation of suspended ceilings should not result in an extension of the fascia, or any other detrimental effect on the frontage.

12. Signage and other advertisements

Fascia signs

Guidance on fascia signs is set out in the 'architectural elements' section above.

Projecting and traditional signs

A projecting sign will always require Advertisement Consent and, if attached to a listed building, it will also require Listed Building Consent.

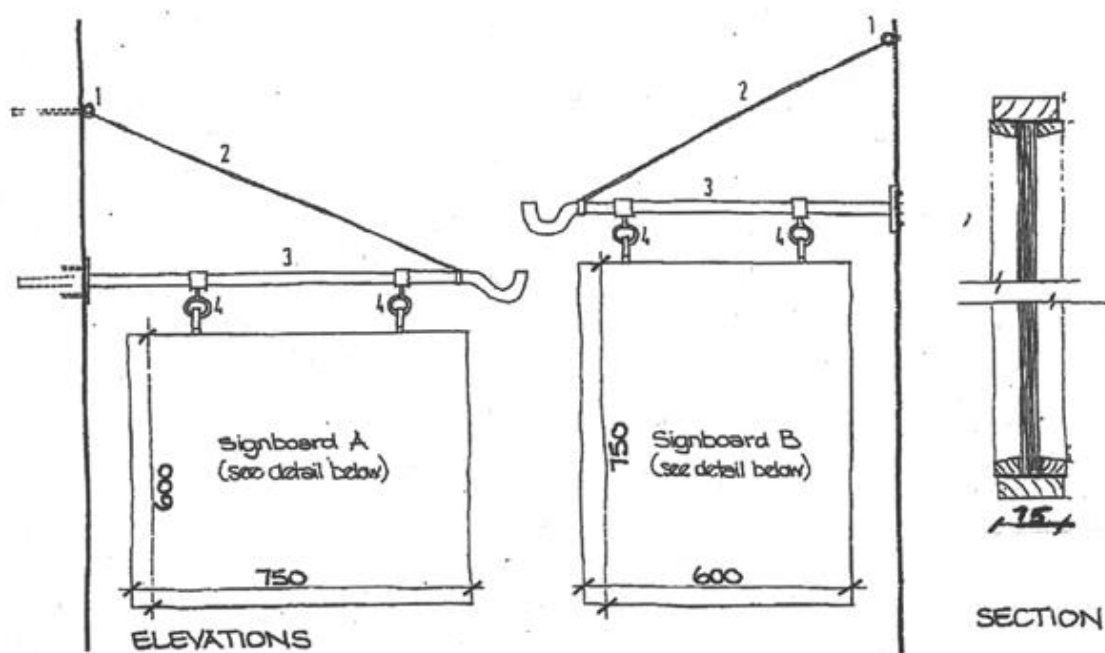
Applications for new projecting signs are less likely to be supported in instances where a property already displays a fascia sign, a fascia sign could be appropriately displayed on the building, or where the visibility of the property frontage is unrestricted.

Whilst it is recognised that these can provide a useful form of advertising, if every commercial property displayed a projecting sign, there would be a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Where consent is granted, the size of a projecting sign and any frame or support should be restricted to maximum dimensions of 600x750x75mm for public houses and 400x500x50mm for other premises.

Signs should generally be made from timber and be supported on a simple metal bracket and suspension rod and be located below first floor level. They should be affixed to the mortar joints of the building using non-ferrous fixings. Preference will be given to projecting signs which are hand painted

and made from traditional materials. Where consent is granted, there should be no more than one projecting sign on any frontage. Where appropriate, the use of traditional symbols such as a chemist's mortar and pestle will be supported. These should also be made from traditional materials.



Applications for internally illuminated signs in the conservation areas, or on listed buildings, will not be supported. Large spot lights or 'swan neck' style lights will not be acceptable.

Upper floor signage

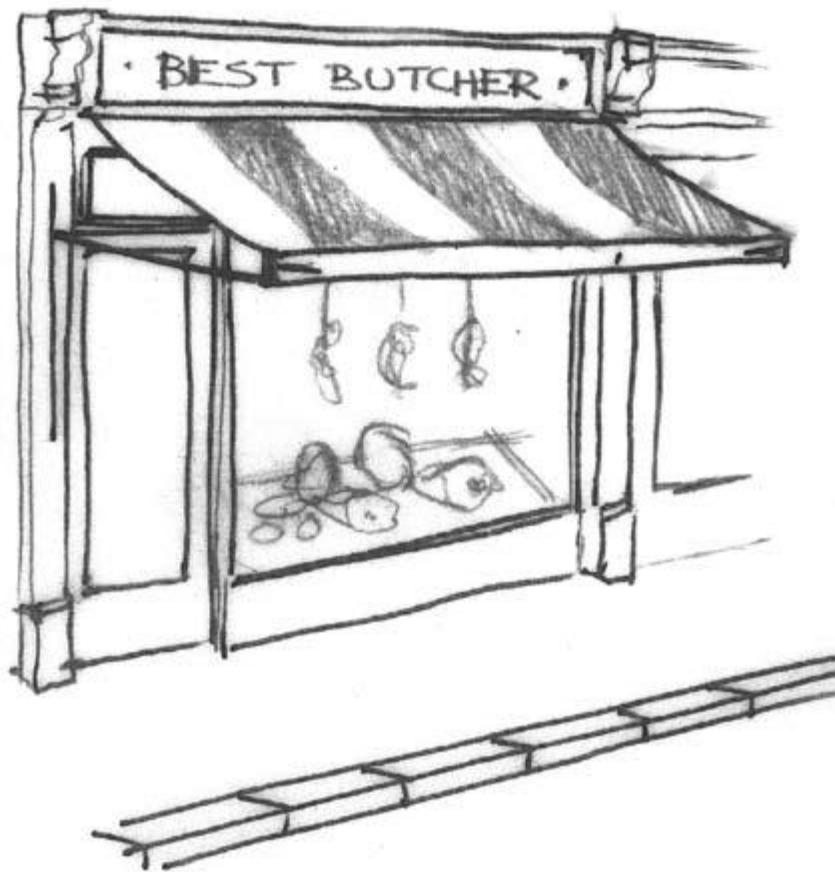
Signage for upper floor premises is likely to be constrained by a lack of a dedicated fascia and should be contained within the window openings and behind window glass. Signage should be applied or etched directly on to the glass or printed onto internal window blinds. Small traditional plaque signage may also be permitted at the ground floor entrance to commercial premises.

Blinds and canopies

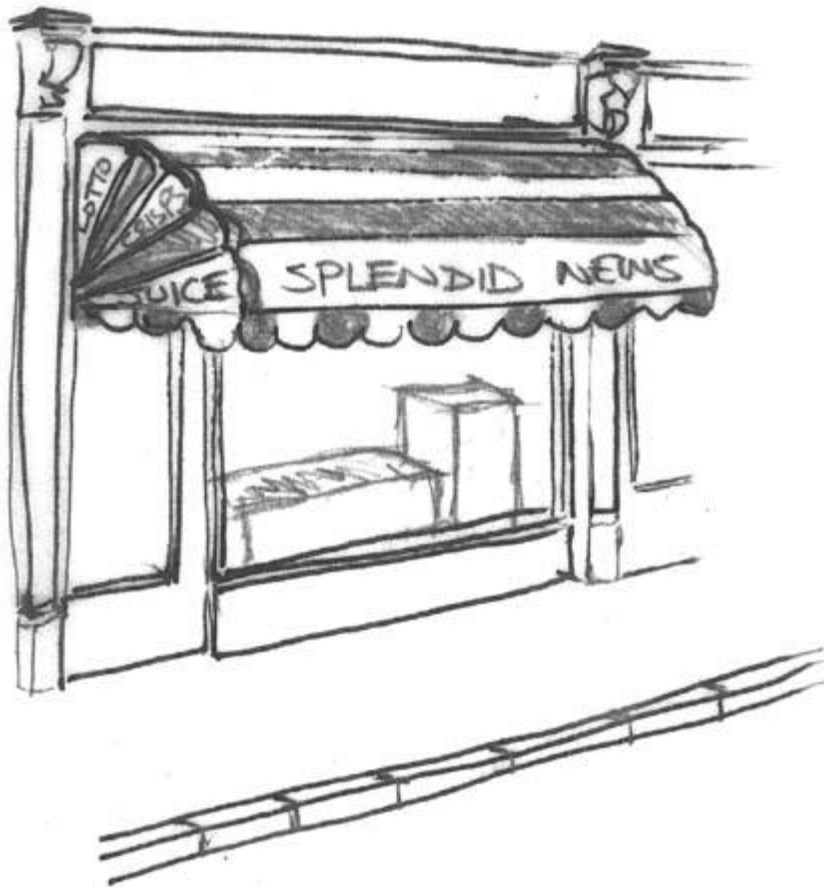
There is a good historical precedent for the installation of blinds, or canopies on certain shop units and it may be acceptable to re-instate these. The style, colour, material, location and number of canopies installed can affect the character of a streetscape.

Projecting blinds will require planning permission and where appropriate, listed building consent. Traditionally, blinds were used by shops selling perishable goods and which were exposed to sunlight at certain times of day. For example, a blind may be appropriate for a fishmonger on the north side of a street, but there is little need for one on a public house on the south side of a street. Where they are acceptable, blinds should not be seen as an opportunity for permanent advertising.

The traditional blind is a flat projection from the ground floor of a shop front in hard-wearing canvas and always fully retractable into a recessed box forming an integral part of the shop front. These blinds are extended only as and when needed and should be retracted when not required. Canopies should not display lettering. Express consent will be required if any lettering is proposed on the canopy. As a general guide, such lettering should be a maximum of 150mm in height. It may also be necessary to obtain listed building consent.



Existing original or traditional canvas blinds and blind boxes should be retained and refurbished. New canopies will generally be discouraged. Modern buildings in conservation areas should use an internally fitted blind. 'Dutch' or fixed canopies obscure parts of the shopfront and introduce discordant forms into the streetscape. They are, therefore, unacceptable.



Advance / remote signs

Advance or remote signs are those which are located at a distance from the business property. Any type of advance sign, other than an official brown tourist sign, is unlikely to gain support. This includes A-boards.

Many commercial premises display advertisements in the form of A-board signs or similar on pavement adverts. This form of advertisement may obstruct the pavement creating a hazard for pedestrians, particularly for people with disabilities.

It can also lead to street clutter and is detrimental to the visual quality, appearance and character of the town and may not be acceptable to the council's Roads & Transportation Service.

The display of A-boards requires express consent. The planning authority has powers to require the removal of unauthorised A-boards; however, this form of advertising can also be controlled under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, which gives the council the authority to remove the sign without warning or discussion.

Flags and banners

Advertisements in the form of flags, banners or tethered balloons also require consent. This type of advertisement will not be permitted on listed buildings or railings which are attached to the buildings.

Exceptions may be considered for community or charity events. The following are not considered to be advertisements and are exempt: national flags; heraldic banners; institutional flags.

Consent will, nonetheless, be required to attach a flagpole to a building and these should not be sited below 1st floor level.

Hoardings

Applications for advertisement hoardings in the conservation areas are unlikely to be supported.

Advertising will not generally be supported on items of street furniture.

Signs within properties

Signs which are displayed inside a shop, or office window for the purposes of advertisement, may require advertisement consent. For example, it is not uncommon for certain businesses to attach numerous large sales posters or semi-permanent adhesive 'vinyls' to the inside of their windows – these require consent if they cover more than 10% of the display area. The council has powers to take enforcement action against existing signs without consent which infringe the regulations in order to have them removed. Internally illuminated signs within windows will not be granted consent.

Scaffolding

Where a building is under construction or restoration, adverts on scaffolding will be acceptable providing they form part of a netting on the building including a 1:1 image of the completed building. This is subject to the following criteria:

- The advertising space should cover no more than 10% or 50m² of the elevation, whichever is greater. Only a single advert will be acceptable and then only on the principal elevation. It must also be incorporated sensitively into the design of the netting.
- The scaffolding must cover an entire elevation of the building, must be erected only for the purposes of active repair and construction work and be removed as soon as the work is completed. Adverts proposed for scaffolding around empty or vacant buildings are not acceptable. The advertisement should be displayed no longer than the building programme or one year (after which it may be renewed), whichever is the shorter.
- The fabric used for the image should be of a consistently high quality to ensure a sharpness of image and the colours should closely reflect the building being covered. All shop, contractor and other signage must be appropriately incorporated onto the overall image, to avoid separate signage.
- Where a building is under construction or repair in a conservation area, the use of 1:1 netting images of the building without advertising will be encouraged for the duration of the works.
- The netting and advertisement should not be illuminated.

- The netting should be removed if it is damaged during construction or by weather and it becomes unsightly.

13. Security measures

Shutters

Solid metal shutters are detrimental to the character and amenity of town's outwith shopping hours by generating a feeling of neglect, attracting graffiti and reducing safety and security for the public.

Night lighting of the interior of shop window displays encourages pedestrian use of the street out of hours, thereby providing passive surveillance. As such, the use of external solid metal roller shutters is unacceptable. In order to reduce power usage, lighting should be low voltage.

Any security device should have a minimum effect on the external appearance and architectural features of a building or the character of the streetscape. Alternative security options include the following:

- Laminated or toughened glass, which is shatterproof;
- Unobtrusively positioned intruder alarms;
- Lattice shutters placed inside the shop window, providing they do not affect the external appearance of the property, although these will be seen as the least preferable option and proposals should be fully justified. Such proposals will require careful consideration by the council and may not be acceptable; and
- Shutter boxes which project in front of the shopfront will not be permitted. Shutters should be powder coated to match the shopfront colour. Bare metal shutters are not acceptable.

Intruder and fire alarms

These items are often necessary, but insensitive siting can be visually detrimental to a building. Sometimes it is preferable to install alarms either near ground level or on upper storeys, where they are less visually intrusive. Ideally, they should be incorporated into the design of a shopfront. For traditional shops to accommodate such a fitting it may be possible to modify a small part of the shopfront, such as one panel of the stall riser.

CCTV cameras

Within conservation areas, planning permission and, if necessary, listed building consent will be required for the installation of CCTV cameras. The design of cameras should be such that there is no detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the building or area.

14. Building Standards

A building warrant may be required depending on the work that you intend to carry out.

This is to ensure that the works do not pose a risk to the health and safety of people in or around the building. If you intend to carry out any works to your shop or structural works within the building, you are advised to contact West Lothian Council Building Standards. The council encourages early discussion of proposals.

Further advice and guidance can be obtained from the council's [Building Standards Service](#) Tel: 01506-280000

15. Further information

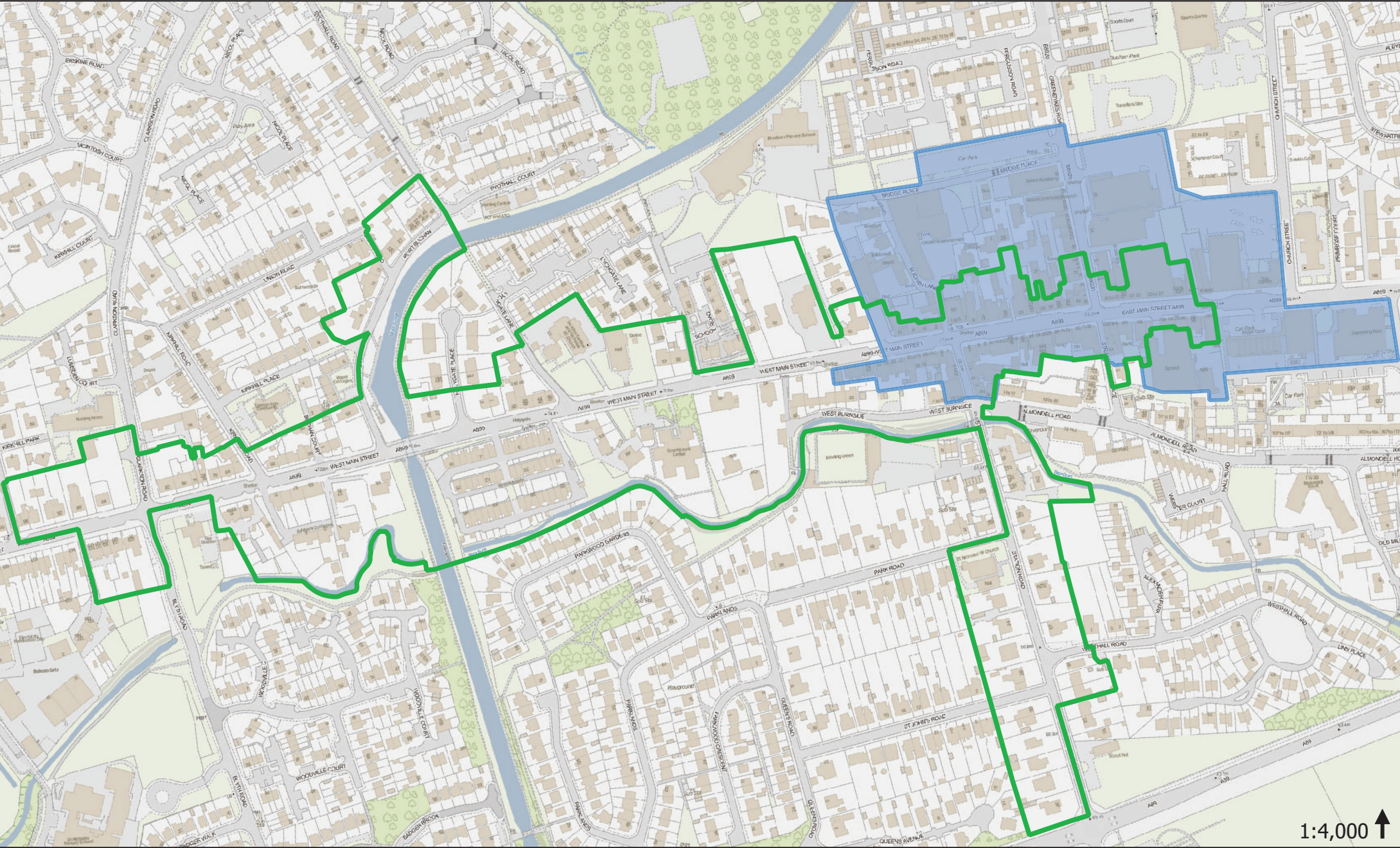
Details of listed buildings can be obtained from the council's website and also from [Historic Environment Scotland](#) Tel: General Enquiries on 0131-668-8600

Should you require further advice as to whether planning permission and/or listed building consent is required please contact the [Development Management team](#).

Applicants can also make use of the council's [pre-application enquiry service](#) which can be accessed on the council's website. *Please note however that this is a chargeable service.*

Broxburn Conservation Area

- Conservation Area Boundary
- LDP retail centre



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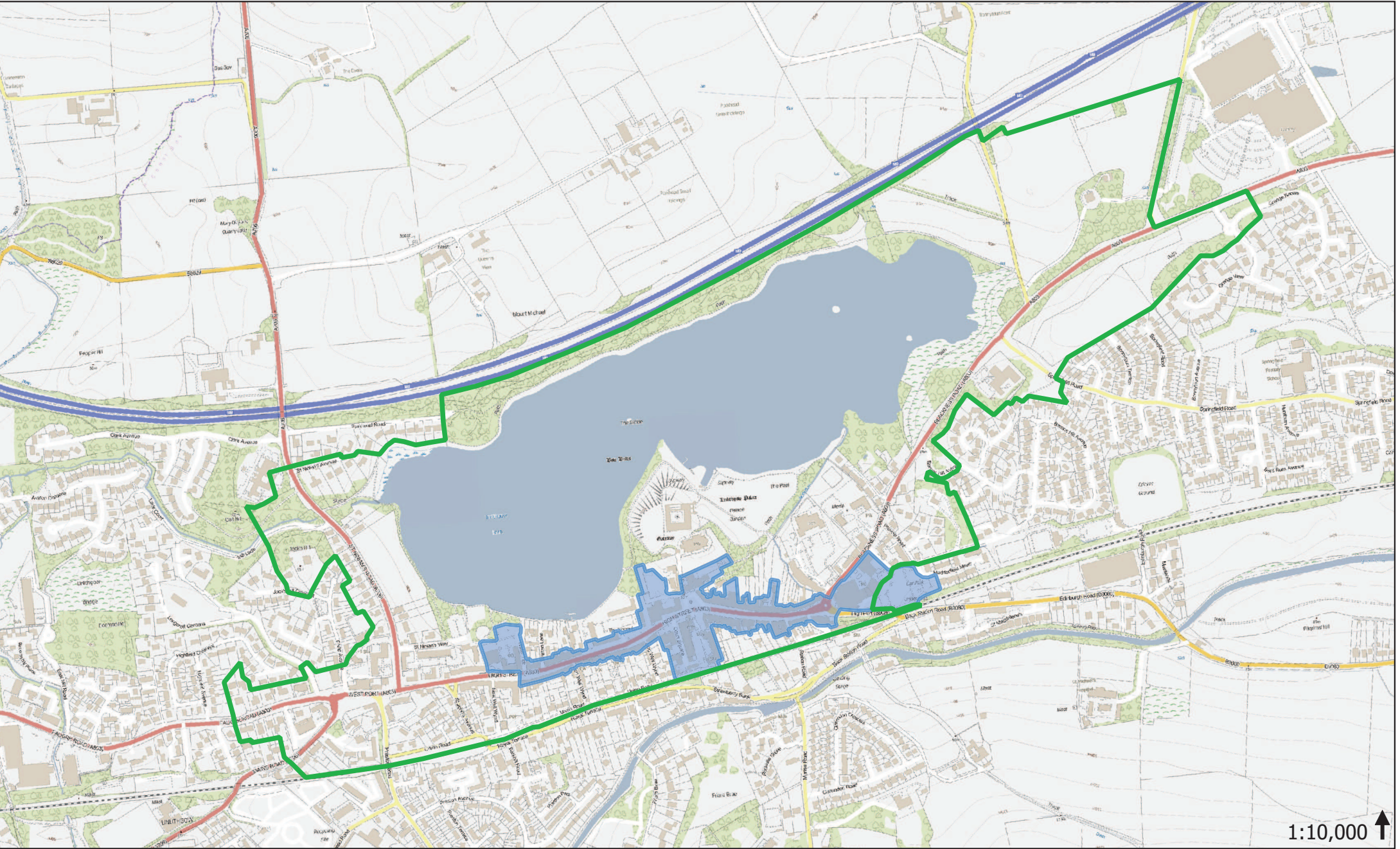
Kirknewton Conservation Area

Conservation Area Boundary



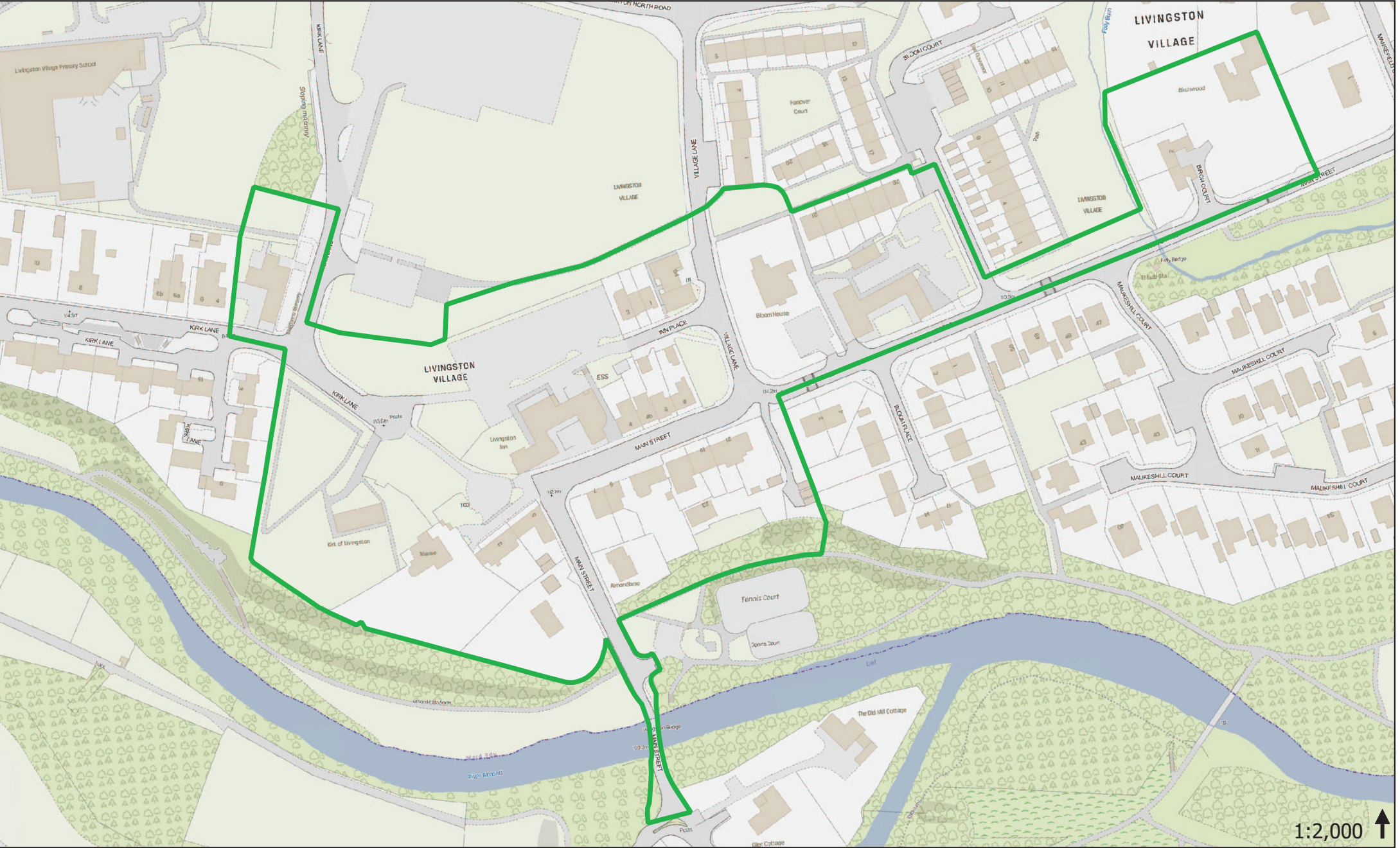
Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area

- Conservation Area Boundary
- LDP Retail centre



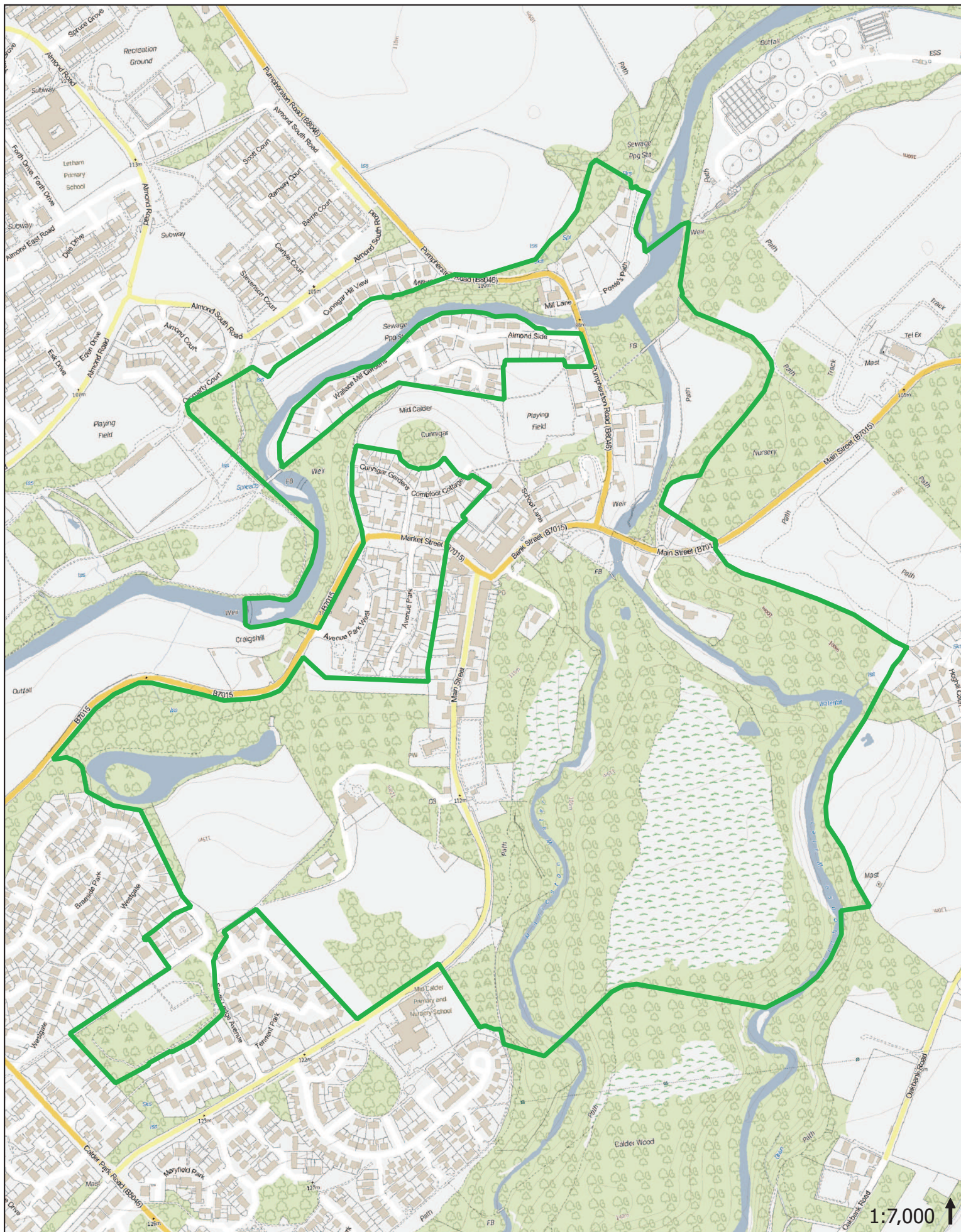
Livingston Village Conservation Area

 Conservation Area Boundary



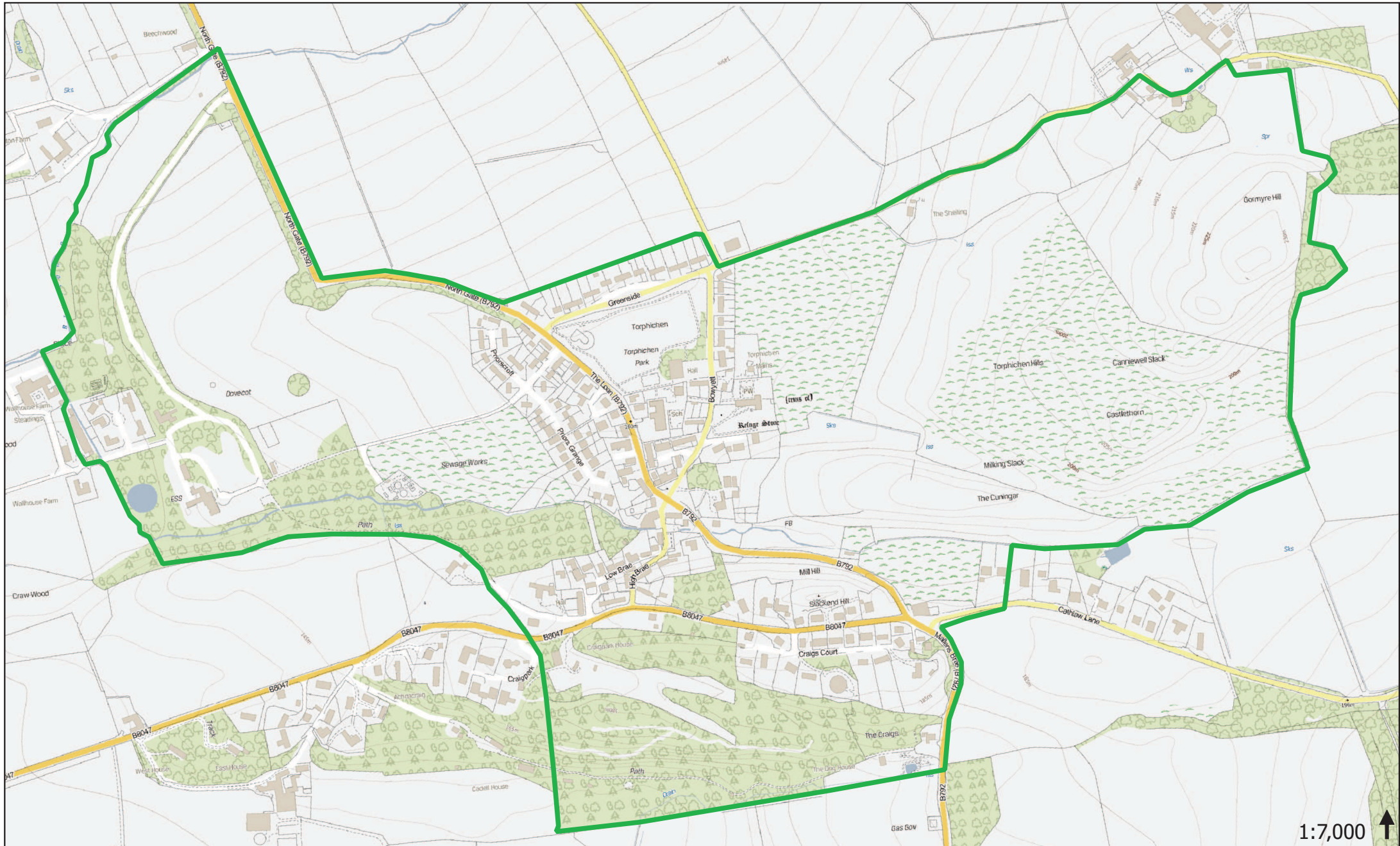
Mid Calder Conservation Area

 Conservation Area Boundary



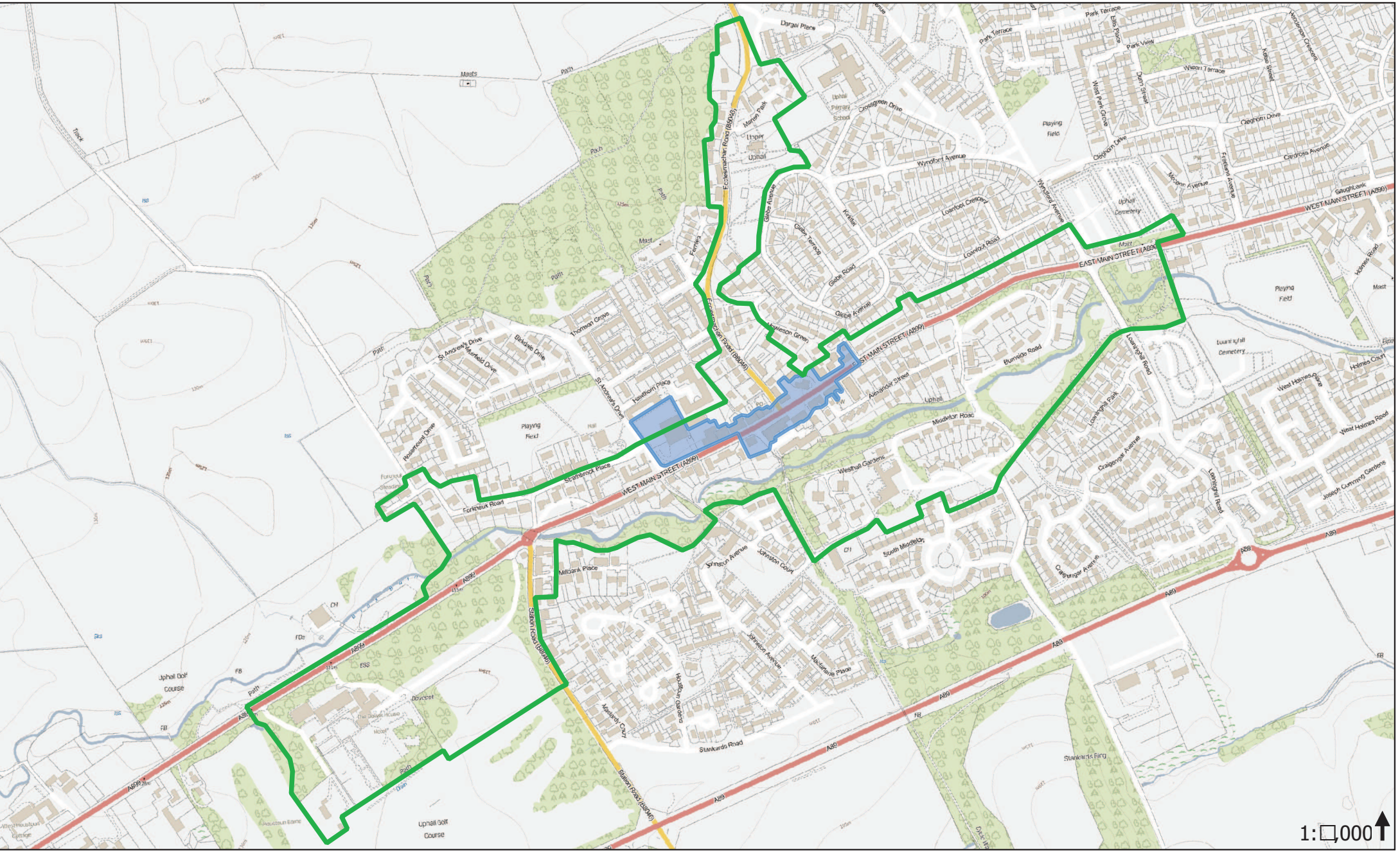
Torphichen Conservation Area

 Conservation Area Boundary



Uphall Conservation Area

- Conservation Area Boundary
- LDP Retail centre



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(Palace and High Street), Kirknewton, Livingston Village and Torphichen**

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