

## Conversions

Conversion work requires sensitive and skilful design, an understanding of traditional structures, and the imagination to make the fullest and most exciting use of the space available. It is therefore advisable to seek the services of an architect or other professionally qualified agent with specialist knowledge, experience of, and flair for this particular type of work.

Many buildings including farm steadings, school houses and mill buildings, display direct links with estate architecture which is historically associated with the Moray area. Where this is the case a more sophisticated design approach may be required as these buildings are probably architect designed. They may contain elaborate features such as finials, clock towers, weather vanes, doocots, leaded windows, string courses, dressed stone, Gothic or Georgian windows, corbelling, crow steps and voussoirs. In some circumstances the buildings will be listed but even where this is not the case, care and sensitivity should be evident in all proposals to alter these buildings.

### Agricultural Conversions

(Steadings, Outbuildings, Barns, etc.)

The prime objective is to retain the external character of the building. A farm steading is a strong and unfussy structure; any conversion should make use of existing openings wherever possible so that new windows and doors are kept to a minimum. All windows and doors should be simple and sturdily built (see page 28), and existing cart shed openings, ventilator slots, distinctive detailing and any important ancillary structures such as horse engine rooms should be retained. Avoid the addition of barge boards, gutterboards or any other unnecessary external features, and modern tiles should not replace slate.



*Top:*

*An impressive and stylish conversion of a farm steading at Carestown, Lintmill near Cullen, by Douglas Forrest. Note how the gap between the original steading buildings has been bridged to introduce a conservatory as the centre piece within the main structure of the building. The character of the original steading has been retained and a successful conversion achieved.*

*Right:*

*The west elevation of Carestown steading showing the converted arcade frontage and the neighbouring cart-shed. Original designs for the conversion by owner Rora Paglieri with the recent completion of the cartshed under the direction of Elaine Brown, Architect, Cullen.*





*A farm steading conversion at Rafford by Saunders Mc Naughton*

Keep structural alterations to the very minimum - they are expensive; use of existing openings for windows and doors will also reduce costs. A purpose made window is cheaper than cutting out and rebuilding a thick stone wall to house a standard window.

Extensions or new build should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the existing steading by, for example, infilling inappropriate gaps in a group or rounding off a group. Projections above the existing roof ridgeline, raising ridges or eaves should be avoided and introducing porches and new dormers are only appropriate where the applicant has demonstrated that such changes are sympathetically designed and that no

reasonable alternative exists to achieve the conversion. Bay or oriel windows along with conservatories are difficult to successfully integrate because they have no previous association with agricultural buildings. These should be planned with great care.

Open courtyards should not be subdivided by fences or other structures but should be held in common as one space, with simple details and material finishes appropriate to steading courts. Traditional courtyard finishes such as cobbles, sets and central walled or sunken areas are best retained and repaired where possible.

## Church Conversions

Whereas farm steadings, school houses and mills can be of a scale and form which can readily be converted to domestic use, churches are not. Church architecture is, by nature, a completely separate design discipline not always suited to domestic conversion. Nonetheless successful conversions have been achieved where the utmost respect is demonstrated for the architectural integrity of the building and its external appearance. As with steadings external alterations to the building should be avoided and all new development restricted to within the existing shell of the building. Generally there should be sufficient space within the church to allow for extensive accommodation and an opportunity exists to use specific architectural features (gothic windows and doors, stained glass, vaulted ceilings etc.), to dramatic effect. New windows and doors should not be added as these may disrupt the historical character of the building, and existing openings should only be adapted to domestic needs with extreme sensitivity. If a new floor has to be added internally this should not be at the expense of disrupting the vertical emphasis of the windows.



*Crude agricultural conversions such as this one near Dyke, can have a destructive effect on the simple elegance of Church buildings*

Existing access points should remain unaltered and ancillary buildings such as garages and outhouses will only be appropriate where they are discreetly located away from the main building. Where the church occupies a prominent position, or where a graveyard is located nearby, new garages and outhouses are likely to disrupt the character and setting of the church and its surroundings and therefore should be avoided.

### School Conversions

There is a substantial number of schoolhouses throughout rural Moray which could be converted to domestic use with minimum alteration. Again the integrity of the original architectural design is the most important consideration. Many rural schools are of a domestic scale and their conversion should not pose major structural problems. Window proportions and style should be retained and external alterations kept to a minimum.

### Industrial Conversions

(Mills, Granaries, etc.)

Mill buildings, granaries and other such industrial buildings in the countryside, may represent a significant design challenge to adapt to domestic use and may require expert advice on structural alterations. As with farm steadings the historical use of the building should be identified by the retention of specific features such as lades, water wheels, louvred windows, cart shed openings, etc. wherever possible.

### Other Miscellaneous Conversions

(Shops, Post Offices, Halls, etc.)

It is impossible to give guidance for every type of building likely to be considered suitable for conversion in the countryside. The points raised under the above categories are generally relevant to all buildings, as the underlying principle remains the retention of the character, integrity and external appearance of the original building and its grounds.

#### Basic Rules for Conversions :

- The prime objective is to retain the original character of the building.
- Keep structural alterations to a minimum.
- Extensions or new-build should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the building.
- All new doors and windows should be sensitively added and unnecessary projections avoided.
- Special care should be taken with buildings of obvious architectural distinction eg. churches, estate steadings and listed buildings etc.

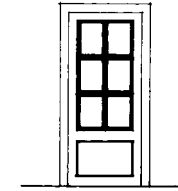
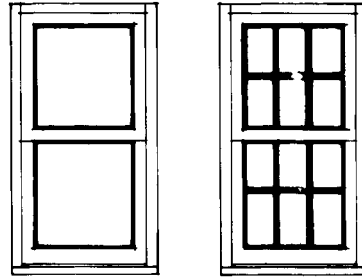


*Pittendreich Mill, near Elgin. A conversion by Sam Russell, of the Law Dunbar Nasmith Partnership, Forres, which maintains the character of the original building.*

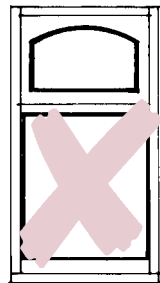
## Windows and Doors for Converted or Renovated Rural Buildings



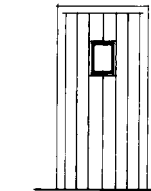
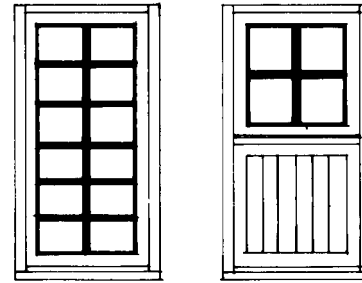
Modern windows should maintain simple design standards and good proportions.



In all instances windows and doors should be simple designs preferably constructed in timber.



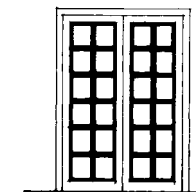
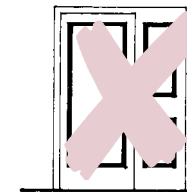
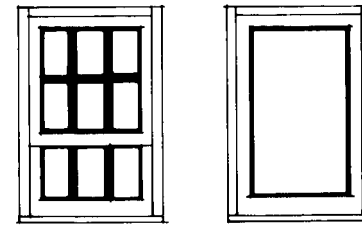
Designs should reflect the shape of the opening. Arches should only be employed if the opening itself is curved.



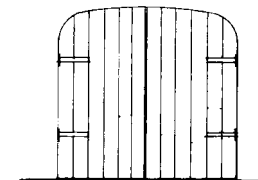
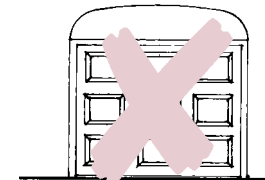
Avoid the use of elaborate designs either on the door or the glass itself.



Avoid asymmetrical designs in both the horizontal and vertical planes.



Avoid asymmetrical designs.



Doors should fully reflect the shape of the opening.

**New openings are generally discouraged in converted or renovated buildings, but if they must be used they should be of the same size and proportions as the existing openings.**

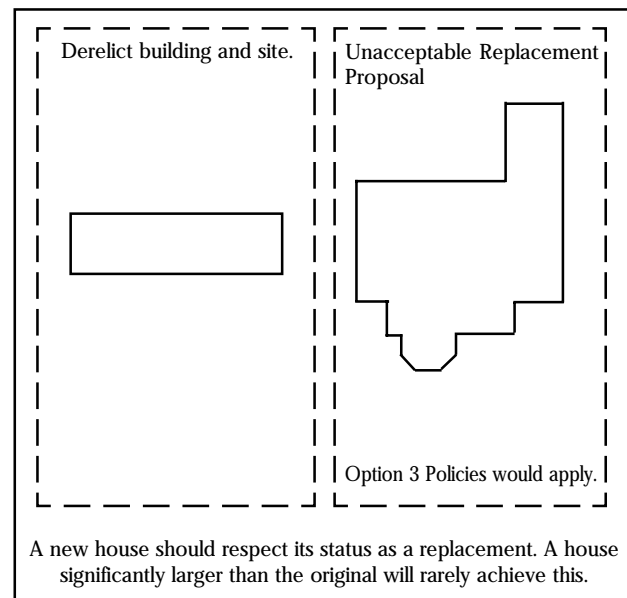
## Replacements:

Where an existing building has deteriorated to such a level that it is incapable of renovation or conversion, the Council may agree to its replacement with a new dwelling (see policy L/HC2). Where a derelict site qualifies for replacement under the terms of L/HC2, it is implicit that the new dwelling respects its status as a replacement and is of the form and scale of the original building. It is also presumed that the site itself is capable of providing a suitable amount of enclosure for what, after all, will amount to a new house in the countryside. The design advice under Option 3 is appropriate.

It should not be assumed that a dwelling of a size significantly in excess of the one it is replacing, or at a location significantly removed from the position of the original building, will be acceptable as a 'replacement'. Such proposals will be interpreted simply as a new house in the open countryside and judged accordingly under L/HC3 policies.



There are many derelict sites throughout rural Moray which could accommodate a replacement dwelling. This site at Upper Cabrach offers substantial evidence of the original dwelling with its boundaries intact.



Make full use of existing site features; original site boundaries and access points should be retained or reinstated, and all mature trees and shrubs safeguarded from construction damage. Seek the re-use of derelict building materials such as natural stone for incorporation in the new dwelling, ancillary buildings (garages, outbuildings, etc.), or for the reinstatement of boundary walls.

### Basic rules for replacements:

- The replacement dwelling should be of the form, and scale of the original.
- The replacement should not be of an excessive size in comparison to the original building, or be located a significant distance away from its original position.
- Make maximum use of existing site features and retain existing boundaries and access points.
- Re-use derelict building materials, particularly natural stone, wherever possible.

