

## Speaking for Scotland's Buildings



*This comment was submitted by the AHSS Highlands & Islands Cases Panel via an online planning portal*

**Council:** Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

**Application reference:** 21/00130/PPD

**Address:** 33 Bayhead, Stornoway

**Date AHSS comment submitted:** 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Thank you for your consultation on this planning application. The AHSS Highlands & Islands Cases Panel is concerned that the proposals may detract from the conservation area in the design of the proposed doors and windows, and objects to the loss of the present storm doors.

The application site consists of two separate shop properties to the north of the Stornoway Conservation Area, on the main road north from the town centre. With their neighbouring shop to the north, there is a consistency to the window and door design which should be retained in any development. While the flats are modest in size, we do not object to the basic principle of residential conversion proposed in this location. 37 Bayhead, for example, although originally built as a house spent much of its life as a shop, as evidenced by its compromised bay window and historic photographs, and a historic painting of Bayhead suggests that number 33 may have originally been residential to the ground floor, or at least not had window ledges as low as now.

However the fundamental character of this historic row of shops needs to be preserved. At present, the storm door openings provide this consistency, as the southern shop door matches the central access to the upper flats. The central shop appears (via Streetview, from 2009) to have a replacement door not shown on the Existing Elevation drawings, and the restoration of storm doors here would help preserve the consistency of design.

Although the twin-leaf doors are shown on the existing plan as being single-leaf, this may be an error and if not they could readily be converted to permit this. The existing storm doors could then be retained and restored, able to be fixed open or closed as the residents wishes, with a second glazed door set further within the door recess to permit interior access and improve insulation.

The window design proposed is not traditional and does not enhance the conservation area. It is not clear whether the proposed top light opens out or in, but neither are traditional and top lights opening outward directly onto a pavement pose a safety concern. Traditional practice locally appears to have had large two-over-two sash windows in this style of opening, and unless specific evidence suggests otherwise (we have been unable to find historic photographs of this property), a two-over-two sash-style window should be fitted in the openings here as this has the advantage of being both the likely original form for these openings and of being suitable for residential use. Ideally these would also be in traditional materials.

We hope that these comments are useful.