

FRANSCHHOEK

Franschhoek was established in 1845, on farmland that had been occupied for considerably longer. The character is underpinned by the positions of the original farms granted to the Huguenots in the 1690's; the location of a chapel and a Pastorie in a central position abutting the traversing stream (where *Nagmaal* had been celebrated previously); a burial ground; the wagon routes in existence prior to the establishment of the town; the extensive *Uitspan* to the east of the central religious nucleus (significantly reduced in extent with the passage of time); and the most significant of the series of dated urban area expansions which were served by a simple evolving grid of streets.

As discussed in the 1988 study, "In addition to the spectacular setting, much of the character of Franschhoek is derived from small agglomerations of features, many of which are not, in themselves, particularly significant, but which collectively produce a whole which is far more than the sum of the parts".⁷ The chief of these include:

- The relationship between the town and the surrounding mountain wilderness and agricultural land (where Cabriere, La Motte, and in particular the elevated slopes of La Cotte were present);
- The natural features associated with the river valley that bisects the town;
- The remains of the extensive historic Outspan that lay adjacent to the central religious site;
- The spaces associated with the three religious sites along Dirkie Uys Street;
- The varied densities yet coherent typologies of historic housing;
- The adherence to similar patterns of relationships between buildings and streets;
- The commonages.

As a consequence of the foregoing, the currently defined HPOZ is supported, although there are two main concerns relative to heritage. Firstly, some erosion of the very significant agriculture/urban interface has occurred, and must be prevented in the future. Secondly, increasing commercialisation and newer developments (and the increased traffic and parking) along the main commercial and tourist spine of Huguenot Street has had a negative impact, and should be better managed.

Special Streets, Places and Buildings within the Townscape Character Unit

Increasingly, besides the inventoried specific sites of heritage significance, it is the following streetscapes that exemplify worthy character in Franschhoek: Dirkie Uys Street to the north, and Wilhemina Street and parts of Van Wyk and Cabriere Streets.

Dirkie Uys Street contains some of the best preserved buildings, and is abutted by three church sites, as well as the graveyard (an important monument). It is abutted by the La Cotte farmland to the east. The street contains architecture representative of all of Franschhoek's history and extensions.

Wilhelmina Street and Van Wyk Street do not have the range of Dirkie Uys Street, but retain several fine and many good historical buildings, with a distinct streetscape character.

Cabriere Street has a number of houses of historic interest, as well as some very old cottages in good condition.

Please refer to Todeschini and Japha's "Franschhoek: guidelines for conservation and development" report for Franschhoek and Groendal. (Todeschini and Japha Associated Architects and Town Planners, The Franschhoek Trust, 1989).

MAIN AIM: ENHANCE (MANAGE) - The main aim of the proposed Special Area for Franschhoek is not to protect each and every structure (aside from those that have been identified as having intrinsic heritage significance) but rather to preserve those character-giving elements that extend beyond each individual property, are largely common to the Special Area, and are deemed to be conservation-worthy townscapes. The intention is to improve land parcels in the area by strengthening or reinforcing these characteristic elements and features, most

⁷ Todeschini and Japha (1988), *Franschhoek: Guidelines for conservation and development for the town and valley*. Oakville Press: Cape Town.

importantly the treelined avenues and positive, garden interfaces between building and street edge. This goes hand-in-hand with the protection of structures of historic significance, but the guidelines also look to ensure that new development within these significant townscape areas remains in character with the Special Area as a whole.

MAIN VALUE: SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL – The appropriate use, renewal and interpretation of heritage features in this townscape unit is critical for their preservation. Any development that will result in the loss of the avenues of trees, low-density residential environment, corner shops and institutions (schools and churches) or compromise the characteristic interface between structures and the street, will threaten the heritage value of this townscape unit.

DEVIATED LAND USE/USES THAT WILL LIKELY ERODE TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER: Over-scaled private dwellings, cluttered properties, gated residential estates, large-scale industrial structures, large parking lot, business park, isolated shopping centres and their associated parking lots. Suburban “creep”, and the development of blocks of flats, would erode the townscape character.

A ECOLOGICAL

Significance: *Franschhoek is structured around a stream course, and set against the mountain.*

COMPONENTS: Stream corridor, mountainous backdrop.

Development Criteria:

- Mountain slopes have been used for traditional practices for many years, and care should be taken that any significant cultural sites, such as burials and veldkos/medicinal plant resources, or historic recreational places are not destroyed. Make sure the required provision for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the slopes used for traditional and recreational purposes is in place.
- The high mountains in the study area are landforms vital to its overall landscape character. They enclose the valleys and settlements of heritage significance. Prevent development on visually sensitive mountain slopes and ridgelines in order to preserve the continuity of the mountains as a backdrop.
- Maintain ecological support areas (here associated with central stream).

B AESTHETIC

Significance: *The place-making elements present in the neighbourhood give this area its character. These include elements such as the gridded pattern of streets and subdivisions, the long, tree-lined avenues, and the presence of front gardens (often with mature trees) located between the street edge and the houses themselves. Historic public buildings address the street more directly, and mature trees are often located adjacent to these structures.*

COMPONENTS: Public Spaces and Social Foci, Grain (Consolidation, Subdivision, Density and Coverage), Street Grid, Tree-lined Avenues, Interface between Streets and Buildings:

Verges/Pavements, Boundary Treatments, Gardens, Stoeps, Parking, Setbacks, Heights, Roof Pitch, Materials, Colour and Architectural Detail, Security and Modern Fixes, Street Elements.

Public Spaces and Social Foci:

- Work on public spaces and buildings of historic significance should only be undertaken by professionals who are sufficiently trained and experienced. Urban design expertise should be sought to formulate design framework plans and to enhance public spaces, and consideration should be given to appropriate and positive uses of spaces.
- Negative impacts on visual-spatial relationships (including the broader setting) of historic public buildings of architectural and historical significance must be avoided. These buildings must be retained and restored.

Grain (Consolidation, Subdivision, Density and Coverage):

- The early pattern of subdivision of Franschhoek still underpins the area, and is still highly evident in the lower section of the settlement. The consolidation or subdivision of land units may impact the “grain” of the Special Area. Therefore the potential impact on the character of the neighbourhood must be carefully considered before consolidation or subdivision is approved.
- Densification should only be contemplated where it respects the historical patterns of subdivision. Subdivision that occurs within the depth of the plot (leaving the street-

facing edge intact), and sharing a carriage-way-crossing and driveway between subdivided portions, would have lesser impact on the character of the neighbourhood.

Street Grid:

- The rectilinear street grid that goes hand-in-hand with the original pattern of subdivision is characteristic of Franschoek. It should be retained and reinforced. Therefore, the use of traffic circles and other traffic elements that depart from the gridded structure is inappropriate in this environment.
- The scale of roads (especially those that align with the historic wagon routes) should be the minimum possible. Insensitive, over-engineered, hard elements can compromise the character of a townscape as a whole.

Tree-lined Avenues:

- Traditional planting patterns should be protected by ensuring that existing tree alignments are not needlessly destroyed, but reinforced or replaced, thereby enhancing traditional patterns with appropriate species.
- Significant avenues should be protected as a heritage component. There is evidence of avenue planting along the roads making up the Special Area.
- The felling of mature exotic or indigenous trees should be avoided. Instead, continuous tree canopies should be encouraged.
- Many of the strongest planting patterns that contribute to the historic character of townscape units, are within road reserves and on public land. A maintenance and re-planting plan should be developed. Trees must be regularly maintained.
- In some cases, remnant planting patterns (even single trees – in particularly mature oaks alongside historic houses) uphold the historic character of an area. Preservation of these landscape features as historic remnants should occur.
- No tree within the Special Area should be cut down without permission.

Interface between Streets and Buildings:

- The interface between streets and buildings is a key character-giving component of the Special Area. Pattern of interface should be followed/interpreted in new developments, and reinforced when re-developing existing properties.
- Where historical fabric and elements make up a street interface, they must be conserved.
- Ensure that new buildings within the Special Area are generally in sympathy with the scale, massing, layout and idiom of the surrounding buildings.
 - **Verges/Pavements:** The verge areas within Franschoek are largely grassed, hard-packed soil, or planted (often with mature trees). This is important to the character of the area and should be preserved. Only the pavements along the main streets have hard surfacing. Brickwork and laterite surfacing should be preferred to tarmac.
 - **Boundary Treatments:** Don't remove historic boundary walls and hedges. While a range of boundary treatments are evident within Franschoek, high and solid walls that obscure views to the building should not be permitted, as well as pre-cast concrete fencing, exposed blockwork, and facebrick walling. Historic boundary elements must be preserved as far as possible. No boundary wall to a building in the Special Area should be higher than 1m.
 - **Gardens:** Front gardens in front of houses are characteristic of the Special Area, and should be retained. New residential development should reinforce the pattern of front gardens in this area.
 - **Stoeps:** Stoeps are a common feature of many late 19th and early 20th century houses within the Special Area. Existing stoeps should be retained and restored: repair old cast iron, timber fretwork or concrete columns on the stoep. Repairs should match the existing as far as possible. Similarly, bays and bay windows must be retained and restored.
 - **Parking:** Off-street parking should not be located in front of historical structures, but should rather be located alongside or behind the structure. Parking areas and structures should preferably be screened with planting. Garage doors should not be left unpainted – a wooden or varnished garage door is out of character with the Special Area. The Municipality should not unreasonably

- withhold relief for on-site parking departures where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the character of the Special Area.
- **Setbacks:** The prevailing setback of residential building from street is largely consistent within the Special Area. New buildings should be set back the same distance as the existing historical buildings to either side (and within the streetscape as a whole), and the Municipality should not unreasonably withhold relief for setback departures, or may impose measures more restrictive than those that may typically apply within the applicable zoning category, where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the pattern and character of the Special Area. An extension to the side of an historic building should be set back slightly from the original façade. It should be noted that shops and civic buildings (churches and schools) depart from this pattern, and often abut the street edge directly.
 - **Heights:** Buildings within the Special Area are seldom higher than a single storey. New buildings should look to adhere to the same heights as the existing historical buildings to either side (and within the streetscape as a whole). Greater height may be acceptable towards the rear of the site, when not visible from the street edge. The Municipality should not unreasonably withhold relief for height departures, or may impose measures more restrictive than those that may typically apply within the applicable zoning category, where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the pattern and character of the Special Area.
 - **Roof Pitch:** Do not change the pitch of the roof on historic structures that retain original roof structure. Historic elements such as finials, ridge trim, gable trim and dormer windows should not be removed. Prefer Victorian profile corrugated iron as a roofing material (aside from where there is evidence that the building was originally thatched). Use gutters with profiles as similar as possible to those found in historic buildings. Aluminium “ogee” type gutters are appropriate; half-round PVC gutters, box-section gutters and fibre cement gutters are not.
 - **Materials, Colour and Architectural Detail:** Building materials should be compatible with traditional materials in terms of scale, colour and texture. Historical architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible, and alterations that seek to copy an earlier style should be avoided. Rather, the underpinning principle should be that new additions and new buildings must be sympathetic to the architectural character of the Special Area, but should also be of their own time.
 - Within the Special Areas, structures should be painted white, or a muted colour.
 - Joinery and woodwork should be painted, preferably using shades of grey, green, blue or brown, in combination with white (for the window casements or sashes).
 - Corrugated roofs should be painted red oxide, black, or various shades of grey.
 - Stoep roofs can be painted in green, grey, white, or red and white stripes (1 colour per corrugated sheet).
 - Repair and match broken colour glass in doors and stoep windows.
 - Unsuitable materials in Special Areas include: decorative thatching, cement tiles, clay tiles, fibre cement roof sheets, IBR sheeting, face brick of any kind, unplastered concrete blocks, gum poles, natural or artificial stone of any kind (aside from along plinths), slate, aluminium windows or doors on elevations visible from the street, unpainted wooden windows, precast concrete fences, exposed concrete of any kind.
 - **Security and Modern Fixes:** The use of unobtrusive security systems on historic buildings is encouraged: beams and shutters are preferable to burglar bars, trellidoors and security gates. If gates and bars are unavoidable, they should be painted the same colour as the element they enclose. Satellite dishes, airconditioning condensers, water storage tanks, roof windows and solar panels should preferably be installed where they are not visible from the street. Solar panels should be mounted flush with the roof, rather than having their own framing element. Electric fencing must necessarily be installed on the street-facing edge, and where this is unavoidable, a recessive colour for the

fittings must be selected. Barbed wire, spikes (except where part of the fencing) and similar are not permitted along the street frontage within the Special Area.

- **Street Elements:** Street lighting and street furniture (benches, bins, bollards and so on) should be understated, modern (they should not be pseudo-historical) and neutral in colour and form. Street kerbs, raised zebra-crossings, speed bumps, street signs and so on should be the minimum possible to meet safety requirements, and should again be neutral.

C HISTORIC/ARCHITECTURAL

Significance: *The Special Area has many buildings of historical significance.*

Development opportunities in Franschoek fall into 4 categories: (1) Opportunities for conservation of historic buildings and elements of heritage significance; (2) Opportunities for alterations and additions to historical buildings and elements of heritage significance; (3) Opportunities for new structures within environments of historical significance; and (4) Opportunities to redevelop intrusive buildings, elements and sites in order to better reflect the character-giving elements of Franschoek.

Development Criteria:

Opportunities for conservation of historic buildings and elements of heritage significance:

- Work on historic buildings and elements of historic significance should only be undertaken by professionals and builders/tradesmen who are sufficiently trained and experienced. Heritage expertise should be sought: it is in the interest of the property owners to have their plans prepared by advisors who have recognised experience and standing in their field of heritage conservation.
- Do not try to convert a historic building into something it never was, by “borrowing” elements from an older architectural style.
- Where the historic function or use of a building is still intact, the function has heritage value and should be protected. Where a new use is sought, every effort should be made to find a use that is compatible with the heritage significance of the element/site, and will require the minimum extent of alteration to historic fabric.
- Distinguishing original features (interior and exterior), examples of craftsmanship and so on should not be falsified, destroyed or removed. These elements should be repaired rather than replaced as far as is possible.
- Where repair necessitates replacement, the replacement should be the minimum necessary, and the new material should match that being replaced in composition, design, colour, texture and other visual qualities, but its newness should be apparent on close inspection (its age should not be faked). Traditional materials should be used in repair work.
- Do not remove old doors, windows and joinery elements where you can repair them, and if replacement must occur, do not damage old plaster window surround when replacement is necessary.

Opportunities for alterations and additions to historical buildings and elements of heritage significance:

- The basic plan of the historic core of the building should always be retained. Where internal walls are removed, the extent of removal should be the minimum necessary and nibs should be retained to reflect the historic layout of spaces.
- Any intervention should be the minimum necessary to meet the new requirements, reversible when possible, and designed not to prejudice future interventions and/or restoration. For instance, if the addition or alteration were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic structure would remain intact.
- Historical layering should be respected and protected – historic additions may have heritage significance in their own right. The removal of later fabric should only occur in instances where it has minimal significance or detracts from significance. Restoration should only be contemplated where archival evidence is available, and where valuable additions will not be destroyed in the process.
- Alterations and additions to conservation-worthy structures and elements should be sympathetic to their architectural character and period detailing, including their layout, scale, proportion, massing, alignments, access, landscaping and setting. Inappropriate ‘modernisation’ of conservation-worthy structures and elements should be prevented. Similarly, detailed elements such as windows and doors should respond to the historic elements in composition, proportion, colour, material and other visual

qualities, but it should not be a pseudo-historical replica of the older elements. New additions should also be a true reflection to their own time, and as far as possible should be located where they will not be visible from the street. Heritage expertise should be sought.

- Distinguish old from new but ensure visual harmony between historical fabric and new interventions in terms of appropriate scale, massing, form and architectural treatment, without directly copying these details.
- Unsympathetic changes to historic buildings includes: use of an unsuitable new roofing material, removal of a bay or bay window, removal of a stoep, removal of gable trim details and finials, unsuitable new front door installed, unsuitable horizontally-proportioned steel, timber or aluminium window or "patio door" installed in elevations visible from the street, unsuitable new roofing covering old corrugated iron sheeting, and carried continuously over the stoep, thereby losing the gutter line, ventilators and (sometimes) change in pitch, unsuitable precast concrete wall on the street or boundary walling that is too solid and high, prominent new garage with unsuitable garage door(s), the loss of trees or hedges and other planting.

Opportunities for new structures within environments of historical significance:

- New structures should respect and respond to traditional settlement patterns and siting by considering the entire Special Area as the component of significance. This includes its spatial structure, layout, scale, massing, hierarchy, alignments, access, and landscaping setting. Any development that departs from the inherent character of the Special Area should be discouraged.
- Designers of new structures must have an understanding of the context, traditional patterns of place-making and historical architectural elements that are characteristic of the Special Area. New elements must respond to and interpret these character-giving aspects of the neighbourhood.
- Do not use roof pitches less than 30 degrees, except for lean-to roofs.
- Do not use the following material in new buildings within the Special Area: decorative thatching, cement tiles, clay tiles, fibre cement roof sheets, IBR sheeting, face brick of any kind, unplastered concrete blocks, gum poles, natural or artificial stone of any kind (aside from along plinths), slate, aluminium windows or doors on elevations visible from the street, unpainted wooden windows, precast concrete fences, exposed concrete of any kind.
- Scale the new structure to its surroundings: if a new house is taller than two storeys, or wider than 7.5m (under a single roof), there is a danger that it will be out of scale with its surroundings. Consider breaking up the mass of the structure into appropriately-scaled wings.
- Contemporary designs for infill buildings should not be discouraged, provided they do not destroy significant fabric and are compatible with the size, scale, material and architectural character of the property and Special Area.
- New development must retain all established trees, boundary features and landscape features on the site, as far as possible.

Opportunities to redevelop intrusive buildings, elements and sites in order to better reflect the character-giving elements of Franschhoek:

- Wherever possible, existing buildings that are intrusive because their scale, style, materials or siting departs from the strong character-giving patterns of the Special Area should be redeveloped in order to minimize their disruptive effect. This can be done gradually as part of general maintenance – for instance repainting in more sympathetic colours, or replacing mid-20th Century roof tiles with corrugated sheeting or "finer" roof tiles, or replacing an insensitive stoep structure with one more in keeping with the historic stoeps seen along the street.
- Encourage mitigation measures (for instance use of vegetation) to "embed" existing intrusive elements and structures within the townscape.

D SOCIAL

Significance: *Access to the surrounding mountain ranges and stream course.*

Development Criteria:

- Ensure physical permeability to communal resources such as rivers and mountains for the enjoyment of all members of the public. Existing footpaths and routes for walking, hiking, running and cycling should be reinforced and extended where possible.

- Proposed development should recognise and take into account the relationship of communities to the Special Area and its communal facilities.

E ECONOMIC

Significance: *Franschhoek comprises a desirable residential are, with high development pressure. It has high touristic value.*

Development Criteria:

- Promote sensitive urban densification to protect the rural landscape as the main communal asset.
- Prevent gentrification from threatening the distinctiveness of this unique settlement within the Stellenbosch winelands.
- Prevent over-engineered and insensitive infrastructural upgrades within historical settlements.
- Encourage integrated planning for extensions and densification adjacent to historic village settlements, allowing new typologies that reinterpret historic settlement patterns. Inappropriate suburban and affordable housing, that does not follow the massing and integrity of the settlement pattern as a whole, should be discouraged. Much of the fabric to the south and north of the Special Area is inappropriate, and should be mitigated where possible.