

### **3. DEVELOPMENT QUALITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Local Plan Objectives**

- To ensure that development proposals maintain environmental quality and accord with sustainable development principles by taking a wide ranging and long term view of their environmental impact.
- To promote the creation of safe, healthy, accessible, well designed and biologically rich environments, taking account of the needs of all sectors of the population.
- To ensure that new development reinforces and complements Edinburgh's established character and identity.
- To conserve and enhance buildings and areas of special historical or architectural character and interest.

#### **Background**

- 3.1 The importance of achieving high standards of quality in new developments is being increasingly recognised by planning authorities. At the same time, planning authorities are taking a wider view of what constitutes a high quality development proposal. This view embraces environmental and social considerations, complementing traditional concerns of encouraging high architectural standards, respecting the character of surrounding areas and protecting the amenity of neighbouring properties, which remain important planning objectives.
- 3.2 Sustainable development at its simplest requires a move towards forms of development, transport and waste management which achieve better balance between the man-made and natural environments and which answer the needs of economic development and growth without damaging the environment or compromising its ability to meet the needs of future generations. Sustainable development recognises the necessity of continued economic development and social progress, but requires that this takes place within identified environmental thresholds and limits. At a global scale, the uncontrolled depletion of finite resources, such as fossil fuels and minerals, and the over-exploitation of renewable resources, threatens the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Reducing energy consumption and waste production can help to address these concerns – for example by promoting sustainable building design, encouraging renewable energy production and designing developments to support and accommodate more energy efficient use of transport. At a local level there are concerns of environmental degradation, the loss of habitats and species and the threats to human health and welfare arising from poor air quality, toxic chemicals, flooding and other hazards. It is important that new development proposals do not add to these threats and, where appropriate, that they play a part in achieving environmental improvements – for example by remedying land contamination or creating new wildlife habitats.
- 3.3 The social impact of development proposals – their effect upon people – is a key element of development quality. Developments should be easily accessible to all sectors of the population, recognising the particular needs of children, the elderly and people with mobility difficulties. Design of new development should address community safety concerns, ensuring that the potential for crime and vandalism is minimised. The need for satisfactory long term maintenance of landscaping and communal spaces should be considered at an early stage in development proposals.
- 3.4 This Local Plan sets a strong framework for the protection and enhancement of the built environment of West Edinburgh. The Local Plan area is generally suburban in

character, having been developed for the most part in the interwar and postwar periods. An older and more interesting character survives in several areas: examples include historic villages (such as Colinton, Cramond, Corstorphine and Davidson's Mains) that have subsequently become incorporated within the urban area and former industrial areas (such as Granton and parts of the Water of Leith valley) where buildings of historic interest and character remain. Environmental quality in many housing areas is good, although problems exist in some of the large local authority housing schemes where there is considerable potential for environmental improvement. Several such areas (notably Wester Hailes and Pilton) are currently benefiting from redevelopment and improvement programmes.

## **Policy Context**

- 3.6 The Lothian Structure Plan 1994 provides a strategy for development and economic growth consistent with protecting and enhancing Lothian's urban environment and historic resources. The Structure Plan encourages urban regeneration and environmental renewal, placing an emphasis upon the redevelopment of infill and brownfield land, while recognising that such development should not be at the expense of environmental quality or give rise to excessive infrastructure commitment.
- 3.7 Government guidance issued since the Structure Plan's approval has updated the policy context in relation to the issues covered in this chapter. Relevant national guidance is referred to in the appropriate sections of this chapter. The new NPPG 1 "The Planning System" promotes sustainable development and places a particular emphasis upon achieving high design standards. NPPG 18 "Planning and the Historic Environment" (1999) outlines national policy with regard to the historic environment and describes how conservation of the historic environment can contribute to the wider policy objective of achieving sustainable development. Historic Scotland's Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas offers more detailed policy advice.

## **Policies and Proposals**

### **Environmental Impact and Sustainable Development**

- 3.8 Sustainable development principles will be applied as widely as necessary to all development proposals within the local plan area. Prospective developers will be required to provide the information necessary for the impacts of their proposals to be assessed. Planning decisions will be based upon the best information as regards environmental impact and a consideration of the full costs and benefits of allowing a development to proceed. The submission of a comprehensive site assessment is strongly recommended. In relation to a limited number of development proposals likely to have significant environmental effects, a formal Environmental Impact Assessment will be necessary. In other cases, specific environmental impacts will require to be addressed – for example flooding, land contamination, noise and other forms of pollution. Detailed guidance on these issues can be found in relevant national policy guidance – in particular: NPPG 7 "Planning and Flooding", NPPG 10 "Planning and Waste Management", PAN 33 "Contaminated Land" and PAN 51 "Planning and Environmental Protection". Further details of possible impacts on nature conservation, biodiversity and the landscape can be found in chapter 4. In all cases, the developer should meet the costs of mitigating adverse environmental impacts in line with the "polluter pays" principle. However, planning permission may be refused for developments where an unacceptable environmental impact cannot be avoided.

- 3.9 The application of sustainable development principles has particular implications for the detailed design of new developments, in particular to ensure that land is used economically, that alternatives to private car use are encouraged and that high standards of energy efficiency are achieved. There is a role for higher density or mixed use developments in certain locations, although this should not be at the expense of residential amenity and character or open space provision – avoiding “town cramming”. The opportunity to create favourable micro-climates should be explored – maximising shelter by use of landform, landscaping and building layout. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be promoted in appropriate cases; these aim to retain water within the site to slow down the rate of runoff, hence reducing flood risk and allowing the natural filtration of pollutants. SUDS features (such as ponds and reedbeds) can also provide wildlife and landscape benefits. The SUDS Design Manual for Scotland and Northern Ireland (CIRIA, 2000) provides more detail. The re-use of buildings is also encouraged – with new buildings constructed with future flexibility for re-use in mind. Shared use of facilities (for example car parking) can assist in a more economical use of land. More detailed guidance on many of these issues can be found in the supplementary planning guideline “Site Planning for Sustainable Development”.
- 3.10 The Council recognises the benefits of renewable energy developments in support of sustainable development objectives. The Structure Plan sets out detailed criteria for such developments in areas of special environmental significance, which require that the objectives underlying the relevant designations are not adversely affected. West Edinburgh is not considered to have opportunities for large scale renewable energy developments. Small scale renewable energy projects, such as the energy recovery of landfill gas, may be acceptable subject to environmental and other criteria. Recycling waste materials can contribute to reducing demand for finite mineral and energy resources, as well as reducing the production of waste. Accordingly, proposals which will result in the reduction, reuse or recovery of waste will generally be supported in locations which minimise their potential for damaging environmental impact.
- 3.11 Waste disposal operations, including landfilling and land raising, give rise to additional concerns in view of their potential landscape impact. Given sensitive treatment, landfill can make a positive contribution to the environment, for example in quarry restoration. Land raising is only likely to be acceptable in the Green Belt or other areas of wildlife or landscape sensitivity where it would lead to the improvement or restoration of a previously degraded landscape or habitat. Notwithstanding the increased use of waste reduction and recycling initiatives, there is likely to be a continued demand for waste disposal capacity within the city as a whole during the Plan period.
- 3.12 The area covered by this Local Plan contains a number of installations (including pipelines) handling hazardous substances. Whilst these installations are subject to controls under health and safety legislation, it is considered prudent to control the types of development permitted in their vicinity. For this reason, the Council has been advised by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) of consultation distances for each of these installations. In determining whether or not to grant planning permission for a development within these distances the Council will consult with the HSE about risks to the proposed development in accordance with Circular 5/1993.

#### **Policy DQ1 – Environmental Impact Assessment**

**The Council will take full account of all aspects of environmental impact when assessing development proposals. When a proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the Council will require an environmental impact assessment to be provided as part of the planning application.**

#### **Policy DQ2 – Environmental Impact**

**The Council will not permit new development proposals which:**

- a) are likely to cause unacceptable harm to air, soil or water quality or biodiversity;**
- b) are likely to give rise to an unmanageable flood risk either on or off the site or would require additional public finance for flood protection works;**
- c) do not deal adequately with any contamination present on the site;**
- d) are likely to cause an unacceptable noise impact.**

#### **Policy DQ3 – Sustainable Development**

**The following principles of sustainability in particular will be applied when relevant to a development proposal:**

- a) larger developments should include a well integrated mixture of land uses at densities which will promote alternatives to private car use;**
- b) development design and landscaping should combine to create a sheltered microclimate, minimise heat loss and promote solar gain;**
- c) layout and development design should make provision for the on-site treatment and conservation of surface water as far as practical, in line with best practice and guidance for sustainable drainage;**
- d) buildings should be of durable construction, incorporating flexibility and adaptability in their detailed design;**
- e) the re-use of existing buildings and the shared use of facilities will be encouraged.**

#### **Policy DQ4 – Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy**

**Proposals for energy conservation and environmentally acceptable forms of energy production and waste management will be encouraged, subject to other policies in this Local Plan, including:**

- a) combined heat and power/district heating;**
- b) solar panels;**
- c) waste recycling and materials recovery facilities in appropriate locations.**

#### **Policy DQ5 – Development in the vicinity of Hazardous Installations**

**Careful control will be exercised over development proposals in the vicinity of hazardous installations, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, in order to ensure that unacceptable risks to health, safety or amenity do not arise.**

### **New Development Design**

- 3.13 The intention of the Council is to seek and whenever possible insist upon development of the highest quality as regards building and layout design. In stable areas of generally acceptable environmental quality, then emphasis will be on harmony and avoiding abrupt changes of scale, character and pattern. In areas of extensive and fundamental change and regeneration it is accepted that a complete transformation may be appropriate, taking the opportunity to create new environments, and create a greater sense of place than has been associated with much private suburban housing development. New development will be required to respect its existing urban context, being relatively closely disciplined by its surroundings as regards height, orientation and alignment and to some extent the appropriate design approach and materials. It is important to avoid standardised layouts and house types, with form dictated by needs of the car, and to create more identifiable, memorable neighbourhoods. Retaining trees, taking advantage of views, making satisfactory connections with surroundings, ensuring that buildings address public spaces, and providing high quality landscaping will help to enhance the sense of place achievable on any particular site. Design of new development must address function as well as appearance: achieving a design solution that safe and accessible for all sectors of the population is a planning objective – for example by providing life and vitality at street level and by addressing the special

requirements of people with mobility difficulties. Supplementary planning guidelines set out detailed requirements to address these issues.

- 3.14 To assist in achieving its objectives the Council may prepare a design brief for development sites where the planning issues are significantly complex. Developers may also be requested to prepare a statement assessing the impact of a development proposals on the character of its surroundings. If a phased development is proposed for a site, then any outline application must be sufficiently detailed to show site layout arrangements, arrangements for movement (including provision for walking, cycling and access to public transport), the size and location of proposed open space and any other matters as required. More details are set out in chapter 9 of this Local Plan.
- 3.15 Where development has the potential to make a significant impact on the image of different localities, and the city as a whole, it will be subject to particularly careful scrutiny. West Edinburgh contains many of the most important approaches into the city, with views and landmarks of city-wide significance. New development will not be allowed to intrude into or mar views and vistas and high design standards will be required on major thoroughfares and approach routes.

#### **Policy DQ6 – Design of New Development**

**New development should make a positive contribution to the quality, accessibility and safety of the environment, having regard to the character, opportunities and constraints of the site and its surroundings and the basic character of the city. In particular, new development will be expected, if relevant, to:**

- a) create or contribute to a sense of place and local distinctiveness;**
- b) promote community safety and minimise the opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour;**
- c) afford ease of movement for all, having regard to the needs of different population groups, including the elderly, the very young and the mobility impaired;**
- d) minimise the potential for pedestrian/cyclist/traffic conflict and accidents;**
- e) connect visually and functionally with its surroundings.**

#### **Policy DQ7 – Trees and Landscaping**

**New development should include proposals for new tree planting and robust landscaping whenever this is appropriate, to achieve a suitable visual setting for new buildings and enhance open spaces, roadsides and boundaries. It should be designed to minimise its impact on any trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order and other healthy trees worthy of retention.**

#### **Policy DQ8 – Prominent Sites**

**Development proposals for visually prominent sites, sites on major transport corridors or in gateway locations (on the city's urban edge) will be expected to demonstrate a particularly creative design solution, specific to the site in question.**

#### **Policy DQ9 – Protection of Key Views**

**Development which would by reason of its height or bulk be viewed as intrusive from important view points or would otherwise detract from the quality of the townscape and the setting of the city will not be permitted.**

#### **Policy DQ10 – Large Scale Development Proposals**

**Proposals for large scale or phased development should include sufficient information to allow the quality and impact of the development as a whole to be considered at the outset, including how a satisfactory relationship with its surroundings and between different phases is to be established. Where a planning brief has already been approved for a site, this will be a material consideration guiding the site's development.**

## **Alterations and Extensions**

- 3.16 Alterations and extensions raise similar design issues to those of new development. The Council seeks to ensure that the impact of a proposal on the appearance and character of the existing building and street scene generally is satisfactory and that there will be no unreasonable loss of amenity and privacy for immediate neighbours through overlooking and overshadowing. The Council has prepared detailed non-statutory guidelines on a range of development topics, and has regard to these in determining applications.
- 3.17 Advertisements are, by their nature, designed to create high visual impact, which can often be inappropriate in sensitive environments. While some level of advertisement display is necessary, adverts will be controlled particularly carefully in areas where other forms of development are restricted. If acceptable in principle, the design and location of advertisements in the Green Belt, close to listed buildings or within conservation areas should respect the sensitive nature of these areas. In such cases only a minimal level of essential advertising, with minor visual impact, may be supported. The quality of the environment along the main approaches to the City is important and will be safeguarded; a proliferation of signage will be resisted.
- 3.18 The erection of telecommunications masts is an increasingly significant form of development which the Council will support within limits intended to minimise its visual impact. Where the Council has control over such developments, it will resist proposals that would detrimentally affect the environmental or heritage interest of any designated areas. In all cases, telecommunications developments should seek to minimise visual impact – particularly relating to residential properties. The Scottish Executive has announced that changes to planning legislation in respect of telecommunications are forthcoming, and the Council's policies for telecommunications developments may be subject to future review.

### **Policy DQ11 - Alterations and Extensions**

**Alterations and extensions to existing buildings, where acceptable in principle, should be subservient and relate carefully to the original building. They should be of a suitable scale to the existing building and the space around it and should have an acceptable impact upon its surroundings and neighbourhood.**

### **Policy DQ12 - Advertising and Shopfronts**

**Proposals for the display of advertisements will be controlled to ensure that they do not detract from the character of listed buildings, the Green Belt, conservation areas and the main approaches to the City. Illuminated signs will generally be restricted to shop fronts. Advertisements will be carefully controlled in their form, dimensions and means of illumination to minimise their impact on the street scene. Other forms of advertising will generally be restricted to that necessary to discreetly identify the commercial occupier. High level signage and advance, directional signage will not normally be permitted.**

### **Policy DQ13 – Telecommunications**

**Telecommunications development will not be allowed in locations where it would detrimentally affect any identified area of environmental or heritage significance, or where it would be detrimental to residential character.**

## Historic Environment

### Listed Buildings

- 3.19 Historic buildings are vital parts of local character, visible links with the past and important resources for the future in helping to create a distinctive, memorable environment, attractive to live and work in and to visit.
- 3.20 Buildings of special architectural and historic interest are listed by central government and given statutory protection. Proposals to demolish a listed building, or to alter or extend it in any manner which would affect its character, must have the approval of either the planning authority or the Scottish Ministers in the form of a listed building consent. In considering applications for listed building consent or for planning permission, the Council must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, including any features of special interest that it possesses.
- 3.21 The Local Plan area contains a significant number of listed buildings, reflecting its diversity of past and present land uses. Houses predominate, but other listed buildings in West Edinburgh include farm and stable buildings, dovecotes, churches, mill buildings, port and industrial structures. There are several category A listed buildings (buildings of international or national significance) in the Local Plan area including: Lauriston Castle, Caroline Park, Old Craig House, Cramond Brig and Granton Harbour (Mid Pier).
- 3.22 The future survival of historic buildings depends on viable uses, effective maintenance and repair, and minimising the impact of adaptation and modernisation on historic fabric. The Council will be directed by Historic Scotland on what changes to a building's character are acceptable. Change of use proposals will be considered for the physical changes they are likely to give rise to. Generally, new uses giving rise to the least impact on historic fabric will be encouraged. It is usually in the best interests of an historic building if it can be retained or returned to the use for which it was designed, but this is not always appropriate or practical.
- 3.23 Proposals to alter or extend a building will similarly be considered, both for the need for the development and their effect on a building's detailing and interest, both internally and externally. Important considerations could include the reversibility of a proposal without affecting any significant features, the architectural or historical correctness or appropriateness of the proposal and whether the developer's aspirations can be met in a different way. The effect on a building's setting is no less important, and this may raise the issue of how a building was designed to be viewed, whether for example as a detached villa in a garden setting or as part of a group in a street frontage. Applications should be fully detailed to show precisely the effect of a proposal on a building's character. Further details are provided in the relevant supplementary planning guidelines.

#### **Policy DQ14 – Listed Buildings – Character and Setting**

**The Council will seek to safeguard the character and setting of listed buildings and will support and encourage:**

- **their retention in viable uses,**
- **the preservation and repair of historic fabric and of internal and external features which contribute to their interest,**
- **the restoration of missing architectural features and detail which would enhance their character and the removal of any inappropriate additions,**
- **the use of high quality materials, sympathetic design and skilled workmanship when acceptable alterations are proposed, and**

- **proposals, including landscaping, which would enhance the setting of a listed building.**

#### **Policy DQ15 – Listed Buildings – Control of Development**

**The Council will not permit:**

- a) the demolition of a listed building, unless this is necessary and unavoidable, every effort has been made to preserve the building in an acceptable use and acceptable proposals for its replacement have been secured;**
- b) alterations or extensions which would result in the loss of historic fabric or important architectural features, or would damage the architectural integrity of a building;**
- c) change of use proposals, including subdivision of dwelling houses, if any consequent alterations would adversely affect the architectural character of a building;**
- d) development adjoining a listed building or within its grounds which would diminish its setting.**

#### **Policy DQ16 – Listed Buildings – Uses**

**There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of a listed building in its original use unless this is clearly inappropriate, in which case an alternative use which accords with the policies of this plan will be considered.**

### **Conservation Areas**

- 3.24 Eight conservation areas lie wholly or predominantly within this Local Plan area (Barnton Avenue, Colinton, Craiglockhart Hills, Corstorphine, Cramond, Juniper Green, Morton Mains and Swanston) – see Appendix B for further details. In addition, small parts of Inverleith and West Murrayfield Conservation Areas lie within this local plan area. Conservation areas are designated by the planning authority and are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which should be preserved or enhanced. The Council seeks to focus public support and encourage investment and improvement towards that end. It seeks to ensure that new development is of a high quality in terms of design, materials and execution and is in harmony with the established character of the area, but this does not necessarily preclude buildings of a modern design. Applicants are expected to provide sufficient information about the proposed development and its immediate setting to enable the Council to assess the likely effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area. This should include a contextual analysis that demonstrates how proposals take account of the essential character of the conservation area as set out in the relevant Character Appraisal. Outline applications are not normally acceptable. The Council has added powers to resist the demolition, including partial demolition, of unlisted buildings and in order to prevent the appearance of unsightly gaps will require to be satisfied as regards a suitable replacement before approving any demolition proposals.
- 3.25 The Council has approved Character Appraisals for the Conservation Areas at Colinton, Craiglockhart Hills and Morton Mains (see Appendix B), which draw attention to features of special interest and identify where improvement is needed. Boundary changes are also proposed and the revised boundaries are shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map; however these will only come into effect when the Council gives separate notice of them. Further Appraisals have been prepared in draft for the remaining conservation areas in this Local Plan area. This approach is encouraged by NPPG 18 “Planning and the Historic Environment”, and the Appraisals will be a consideration for development control purposes. The Appraisals will also set out the Council’s intention to extend its planning control over various classes of development which are classed as ‘permitted’ and do not normally need to be the subject of planning applications. Details of progress with the Appraisals is set out in Appendix B.

**Policy DQ17 – Conservation Areas – Design of Development**

**The Council will give special attention to the design of development proposals within or adjoining a conservation area. The Council will:**

- a) resist the loss of buildings, trees, boundary walls, railings, paving or other features which contribute to the area’s special interest;
- b) permit new development or redevelopment only where the proposal is of a high design standard, is in harmony with the traditional pattern and materials of buildings, streets and spaces and would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

**Policy DQ18 – Conservation Areas - Demolition**

**The demolition of buildings which are considered to be detrimental to the character or appearance of the conservation area will be allowed, but applications must be supported by acceptable proposals for the redevelopment or treatment of the cleared site.**

**Policy DQ19 – Conservation Areas – Article 4 Directions & Boundary Amendments**

- (a) To assist preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, the Council will bring under its direct control the following classes of development permitted by the General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 as indicated in Appendix B.
- (b) The Council will proceed to amend the boundaries of the Colinton Conservation Area, as indicated in Appendix B, and may progress boundary amendments in other Conservation Areas following completion of Character Appraisals.

**Ancient Monuments and Archaeology**

3.26 Scheduled ancient monuments are mainly archaeological remains or ruins of national importance. Works to these require the prior consent of the Scottish Ministers. The Council will ensure through its general planning powers that neighbouring development does not adversely affect the setting of a scheduled monument or important views of it. Twelve scheduled ancient monuments lie within the local plan area: these are identified on the Proposals Map. These include the Union Canal, together with its aqueducts at Redhall Park and Slateford, and the Roman fort at Cramond. In addition to those included in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments there may be other remains present and the Council will seek to protect any additional remains of importance.

3.27 Archaeological remains are fragile and irreplaceable, and evaluation should be undertaken sensitively to determine the interest and importance of the remains. Such remains are particularly vulnerable to modern building techniques. The Council seeks to ensure that there is a sound basis for the value of any remains to be assessed, including the likely impact of development upon them. Where possible, the Council will seek to have remains preserved on site. If this cannot be achieved, developers may be required to conduct an archaeological investigation before development takes place, and appropriate steps taken to remove, record or interpret the archaeological remains.

**Policy DQ20 – Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

**Development which would adversely affect a scheduled Ancient Monument or its setting, or any other site of known archaeological importance will not be permitted.**

**Policy DQ21 – Sites of Archaeological Importance**

**Planning applications affecting sites of known or suspected archaeological importance must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation, to enable the Council to determine whether and under what conditions a development should proceed, including whether a more detailed investigation should be carried out prior to development and what measures to protect the archaeological interest would be warranted.**

**Designed Landscapes**

3.28 Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage maintain an Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes of outstanding historic, architectural or landscape significance. The desired aim is that the interest and character of such landscapes and gardens are maintained and restored in any new or replacement planting. Lauriston Castle, where Victorian parkland provides a setting for an extended 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house, is the only confirmed Designed Landscape within this local plan area.

**Policy DQ22 - Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes**

**The Council, in consultation with Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, will seek to secure restoration of the Designed Landscape of the Lauriston Castle. Proposed development which would affect this landscape or its setting will only be permitted where it assists restoration, does not adversely affect the landscape character and interest and complies with other planning policies.**