

Development Management Guideline: Villa Areas and the Grounds of Villas

Planning Committee
7 August 2008

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present a draft revised Development Management Guideline on Villa Areas and the Grounds of Villas for consultation purposes.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The Villa Areas and the Grounds of Villas Guideline has been identified as requiring revision, needing clarifying in relation to its policy on development in the grounds of corner properties and updating in relation to local policy. Its aim continues to be the conservation and enhancement of the particular character of villa areas in relation to new dwellings or extensions in the grounds of villas.

3 Main report

Background

- 3.1 The current guideline on Villa Areas and the Grounds of Villas was published in 1999. It applies city-wide to development proposals affecting, or within the grounds of villas, where a villa is defined as "a detached or semi-detached house, usually of two or more storeys, of a traditional and usually stone built character". The majority of villas are located within conservation areas.
- 3.2 The policy is ambiguous in relation to design and coverage requirements for five particular types of site where a more sensitive approach may be required:
- Undeveloped Feus;
 - Sites larger than half a hectare;
 - Sites within the setting of listed buildings;
 - Sites with Tree Preservation Orders, historic gardens and/or mature landscape settings;
 - Gap and corner sites.

The intention of the policy is to provide greater protection for these cases, and it states that guidance should be sought from the Head of Planning on site-specific design and appropriate coverage requirements. However, it also states that “the detailed policy guidance set out in this guideline does not apply” and this wording is such that the intended meaning of the policy is not sufficiently clear.

- 3.3 This ambiguity has been particularly apparent in relation to corner sites. Corner sites tend to be visually prominent, having larger garden grounds than adjacent feus and thereby making a significant contribution to the open character of the villa areas. In order to maintain this character, the acceptable levels of site coverage on corner sites are likely to be lower than the maximum levels for standard villa sites set out in the guidance. However, the wording of the guidance can be read to give the erroneous impression that there is no maximum level of site coverage in this situation, and that even higher densities would be acceptable.

Revised Guideline

- 3.4 The draft revised Guideline (see Appendix 1) clarifies the policy in relation to sensitive sites, with particular reference to corner sites, advising that acceptable site coverage levels will generally be lower than the maximum permitted levels specified in the guideline, and that applicants will need to demonstrate that a proposed development does not harm the open character of the site and villa area.
- 3.5 It further clarifies that while in the sensitive cases detailed the revised coverage requirements generated by the characteristics of a particular site will supersede those sections of the villa policy, the remainder of the villa policy will still apply.
- 3.6 The local plan context has been updated to reflect planning policy in the Finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan 2007.
- 3.7 A public consultation will be undertaken on the draft Guideline and the comments received will help form a finalised version. The finalised version of the Guideline will be reported back to the Planning Committee for approval.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this draft guideline.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The revised Guideline clarifies policy in relation to new development and extensions affecting or within the grounds of villas, to ensure development is in keeping with the character of the area in which it is located.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Committee approves the draft Guideline on Villa Areas and Grounds of Villas for consultation purposes.



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Appendices	Appendix 1: Villa Areas and Grounds of Villas Development Management Handbook Draft Revised Guidelines
Contact/tel	Alison Martin 529 6235 alison.martin@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	All
Background Papers	Villa Areas and Grounds of Villas 1999

APPENDIX 1

CITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING & STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

VILLA AREAS AND THE GROUNDS OF VILLAS

Approved: 22 July 1999

Revision: July 2008

OBJECTIVE

To provide guidance on proposals for new dwellings or house extensions in the grounds of villas, in order to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the particular character of villa areas in which they are located. Specific guidance has been formulated to assist in the retention of character, the appropriate location and form of development, areas of garden ground and the maintenance of low densities. The principal aim is to achieve development in keeping with the character of the area in which it is located. The coverage criteria are subsidiary considerations which should be used as a check rather than as the generator of building form.

POLICY CONTEXT

Local Plan policies protect traditional villa areas from loss of character and amenity by unsympathetic infill development. Policy Des 3 of the Finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan 2007 states:

“Where the built environment is of high quality and has a settled townscape character, new development proposals will be expected to have similar characteristics of scale, height, layout and massing to the surrounding buildings. This will be important in the city’s tenement areas and its villa areas. The Council has published strict design requirements in supplementary guidance for the historic villa areas relating to site coverage issues and acceptable forms of development”.

Policy CD16 of the adopted Central Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“New development in the garden grounds of detached or semi-detached houses of a traditional and usually stone-built character (villas) if acceptable in principle will be required to conform to approved guidelines which seek to regulate its form and layout. The essential requirements are that:

- the area of new building, whether as an extension to the original villa or a new detached block, should not exceed one and a half times the site area covered by the original building;
- notwithstanding the above, the final building coverage must not amount to more than 20% of total site area with an additional 20% for hard landscaping, parking and driveways leaving a minimum of 60% as green garden ground;
- minimum distances of 25 metres between main elevations (ie 12.5 metres to a boundary) should be maintained (a main frontage being one which contains windows of habitable rooms);
- the eaves and ridge heights of new buildings should be no higher than those of the original property on the site; and

- new buildings should not protrude further forward than the building line established by the buildings on either side.”
- where villas are statutorily listed buildings and/or are in Conservation areas reference should also be made to Historic Scotland’s “Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas” (1998).

SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guideline applies city-wide to development proposals affecting, or within the grounds of, pre-1914 villas, the majority of which are located within conservation areas. In addition many of the main approach roads and arterial routes into the city are characterised by villa development of all periods. The guideline also applies to villa areas along such routes including:

- Lanark Road / Lanark Road West
- Corstorphine Road / St. John’s Road
- Queensferry Road
- Colinton Road
- Craigmillar Park

The guideline does not apply to bungalow areas.

In the context of this guidance, a villa is defined as “a detached or semi-detached house, usually of two or more storeys, of a traditional and usually stone built character”. The guideline applies to villas in any use.

The following cases are deemed sensitive and will generally require a greater degree of protection. Additional guidance must be sought from the Head of Planning, particularly with reference to site coverage. Such guidance will supersede the detailed policy guidance on site coverage set out in this guideline, all other guidance will still apply.

- Undeveloped Feus;
- Sites larger than half a hectare;
- Sites within the setting of listed buildings;
- Sites with Tree Preservation Orders, historic gardens and/or mature landscape settings;
- Gap and corner sites.

In all cases the form of any redevelopment will be required to draw on the urban structure of the surrounding villa area. In particularly sensitive cases the Head of Planning may require the preparation of a planning brief for prior approval by the Planning Committee.

Note that corner sites in general are visually prominent, have larger garden grounds than adjacent feus and make a significant contribution to the open character of the villa areas. In order therefore to maintain the general low density of built form and retain the high percentage of garden area, acceptable site coverage on corner locations will generally be significantly lower than the maximum permitted levels specified in this guideline, and applicants will need to demonstrate that a proposed development does not harm the open character of the site and villa area. Each application will be assessed on its merits in relation to the characteristics of the site and its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

STATUTORY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Planning permission will be required for new buildings, and for new extensions, depending on the location and type of building and the size and height of extension. Demolition within conservation areas may require conservation area consent. In the case of a listed villa, listed building consent will also be required where alterations affecting its character are involved.

Early consultation prior to application is encouraged particularly in those cases listed above where guidance must be sought from the Head of Planning.

The Council may require the following additional information to be submitted in support of a planning application for development in villa areas and the grounds of villas:

- Contextual character analysis statement;
- Location plan, demonstrating the area's spatial character;
- Street elevation drawings;
- Landscape plan and tree survey;
- Coverage calculations;
- Site levels;
- Eaves and ridge heights of neighbouring villas;
- Photomontages (required views to be the subject of consultation).

POLICY GUIDANCE

1. TO ENHANCE THE PREDOMINANTLY STONE BUILT CHARACTER OF VILLA AREAS

- a) There will be a presumption against demolition or removal of original design, built or natural features which are important to the villa area - for example stone built houses and boundary walls should be retained. Outhouses should also be retained where of architectural or townscape interest.
- b) Existing villas should remain substantially unaltered externally. The main frontage and any other facade facing a public road or public open space must remain intact and all visually prominent elevations should remain wholly unaltered where they are of quality. Architectural features on other elevations must be retained or relocated.
- c) In exceptional circumstances when the demolition of an existing villa is agreed the appropriate scale of replacement development shall be considered by reference to the original building. Good quality materials or features from such demolitions should be re-used on site wherever possible. Demolition or reduction in the height of garden walls will not be allowed. New boundary walls will require to be built in natural stone to match previous or adjacent forms.
- d) Consideration of the effect upon character or appearance is a statutory requirement when assessing applications for development within conservation areas. (See section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997). Applications for significant new development within conservation areas should be adequately supported by information to show that the proposals take

account of the essential character of the conservation area identified in the relevant Character Appraisal.

2. TO RESPECT SPATIAL CHARACTER AND SETTING AND TO LOCATE BUILDINGS APPROPRIATELY ON SITES

- a) Proposals within villa areas should respect the prevailing spatial character and pattern created by street layout and grid, feu divisions, public spaces, buildings, gardens and tree planting.
- b) Proposals must protect the settings of individual villas. Detached and semi-detached villas are often of generous scale in generous feus. Spacious garden settings and open space between villas to the street frontage must be retained to maintain their independent character and avoid the creation of a terrace effect.
- c) The size, spacing and frontage widths of any new building should be in character with that of surrounding villas and should echo the rhythm of the street. There will be a general presumption against backland development unless physically connected to the main building (and/or in the form of a low coach yard) and complying with other requirements of this guideline.
- d) Building lines shall be taken from the existing villa or if adjacent original villas are set further back on site, from their building line. Any new building must not obscure any front section of an older building from any angle, (outbuildings, lodges and adjacent new build will not be used to determine building lines). Breaches of the building line may be allowed for bays and towers if in character with the area.
- e) The building line may also be breached for small lodge like developments of a single house near the main road where precedents exist on the street. If acceptable in principle, these need not necessarily have to face the main street but should be limited to one storey with the use of dormer windows to create any attic storey.

3. TO ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE BUILDING FORMS, THEIR QUALITY AND DESIGN

- a) Extensions and new buildings must demonstrate that the relationship of new development to adjacent properties is appropriate for the area in respect of the overall resulting footprint, between the footprint and the plot size and between the footprint, frontage width and height. (An approach in new building that couples the widest frontage with the highest eaves/ridge heights will not be considered appropriate).
- b) The proposed design approach should reflect the character of the particular area and be of villa form, not of a flatted or tenemental form. A standardised approach applied to villa areas of differing character is not acceptable.
- c) Proposals should relate to the prevailing traditional villa scale, style and proportions as demonstrated by storey heights, void/solid ratios, window/door proportions etc. Proposals should avoid the appearance of miniaturisation e.g. the effect of smaller modern storey heights leading to reduced window proportions. Where development is in the grounds of an existing villa it should be subservient to the

main villa and of simpler detail to avoid competing with it. Modern approaches should respect the criteria in this guideline and be of a level of quality that they clearly demonstrate that an innovative approach is acceptable.

- d) The eaves of an extension should be lower than the existing eaves and the ridge should be lower than the existing ridge. This does not restrict the placing of architectural features such as towers and turrets if appropriate to the area provided these comprise a small proportion of the total building and are harmonious with the surrounding built forms.
- e) Any articulation of the design should reflect elements that prevail in the area, for example entrances, bay windows, oriel windows, dormers, roof pitches, tower/turret features. Mansard and flat roofs will not be acceptable unless matching original forms nearby.
- f) Materials are a very important unifying element and they must be in character with the surrounding area. Where existing villas are in conservation areas and are predominantly in natural stone then this material should be used. Roof materials will normally be required to be natural slate. Render should be traditional wet dash. Brick will not normally be acceptable unless it is a traditional component of the surrounding area.
- g) Proposals should retain or provide spacious gardens to allow or give opportunity for woodland trees landscape features and characteristic boundary treatments and enclosures.
- h) Unless a necessity for new breaches is demonstrated existing openings should be utilised. New breaches in walls should be limited to a maximum of one pedestrian and one vehicular where possible. Pedestrian access should have a maximum of 1.5 metre width and preferably have a stone lintel over if height permits. Breaches for vehicular traffic should be a maximum of 3.5 metres or the width of an existing opening, whichever is the greater, to avoid large breaks in boundary walls. If existing openings have pillars or gates of architectural merit or visual interest these should be replicated in the new openings. All new openings should have gates where appropriate.
- i) Parking should be provided in courtyards, which should avoid the use of large areas of tarmacadam or in-situ concrete, and should use those traditional materials of the area. Open parking should be screened from view from outwith the site. Garaging, where acceptable in principle, may generally have either pitched slated roofs or flat roofs with parapets and decorative pediments and the same walling so that they match other buildings in the area..
- j) All car parking shall fully meet the Council's approved parking standards. If parking cannot meet these standards without exceeding the coverage figures set out in this guidance the proposal shall be deemed as being over-development.

4. TO MAINTAIN THE GENERAL LOW DENSITY OF BUILT FORM AND RETAIN THE HIGH PERCENTAGE OF GARDEN AREA ON SITES

Note: The site coverage guidelines set out in the following section are maximum

permitted levels. They are in all cases subservient to the overriding considerations of protecting or enhancing the character of the villa area (or conservation area where appropriate) and of protecting the amenity of neighbouring properties.

- a) The total land coverage of new and existing buildings shall not be greater than one and a half times that of the original villa* (including the footprint of the original villa if it remains). (For example, an original villa of 500 square metres would permit 250 square metres of new building, assuming the retention of the original villa. If an original villa of 500 square metres was demolished, then up to 750 square metres of new building would be permitted). Notwithstanding this limitation, in order to allow the landscape to remain dominant, the total ground coverage of new and existing buildings over single storey** shall not exceed 20% of the total site area. This condition shall apply to both sites containing existing villas and newly created sites.

*(For the purposes of this guidance, all buildings in existence on 1 July 1948, whether habitable or not, constitute the original villa).

** (The form envisaged for single storey construction would allow a pitched roof to a maximum of 45°. Accommodation may be considered within the volume of the roof where no overlooking or privacy problems arise. Modest dormers may be allowed within these constraints although the building must present a single storey appearance and not be overscaled).

- b) In those cases defined above where additional guidance is required from the Head of Planning, such guidance will include site specific requirements on design parameters and coverage limits. At the discretion of the Head of Planning these requirements may be set out in a planning brief. It should be noted that where a large villa, for example, is set on one half of a double feu or on a large corner plot, its size and setting requirements to maintain the character of the area may preclude further development.
- c) Sub-divided sites may be impossible to develop but, where it is agreed that at least one owner has development potential, coverage shall be in proportion to their share of developable land. Sub-division of existing villas will only be acceptable if:
- (i) the character of the villa area is protected or enhanced;
 - (ii) the car parking requirements can be met in such a way as to preserve or enhance the character of the street and conservation area if applicable; and
 - (iii) existing garden space can be satisfactorily allocated to the sub-divided units.
- d) In order to maintain a reasonable privacy zone in villa areas the normal minimum distance between apartment windows shall generally be 25 metres (12.5 metres to boundaries). Gable to gable situations, where they are in character with the existing pattern of development, may be acceptable exceptions subject to approval by the Planning Committee. Larger villas may be independent in their setting with habitable rooms to their side elevations. Windows to habitable rooms in proposals on adjacent properties will require to be a minimum 12.5m to the boundary.

- e) The 'green' aspects of a garden should not fall below 60% of the total site area. Thus, housing, garages, car parking and access roads together should not amount to more than 40% of the site area.
- f) Single storey construction to the rear and sides of villas may be developed within the 40% allowance as long as character, spacing, parking and access requirements are met within that allowance and the overall site coverage guidelines are not exceeded.
- g) The retention of mature trees and significant landscape features is considered of particular importance and will override other site coverage constraints within this guidance. Measures should be taken to ensure that there is no damage to mature trees while construction work is in progress. Particular attention should be given to the retention of healthy mature trees and curtilage landscaping; new planting will be required where any loss of trees is permitted, such planting will be capable of achieving a similar character and stature to the 'original' trees.
- h) Accurate plans of all existing landscape features including tree surveys should be submitted with all applications.

REASONED JUSTIFICATION

Villa areas make a significant contribution to the character of the City. There is likely to be continuing pressure for the demolition of villas and redevelopment of grounds for houses or purpose built flats, and the development of flats in garden grounds or undeveloped feus. Changes in the size and nature of dwelling units may reflect changing demands by society. The planning concern relates to the impact of such proposals upon the established character of villa areas, resulting in particular from the scale, massing and design of new developments. The overall mass of a typical development has generally been larger than the original dwellings and the floor to ceiling heights have been condensed all with the effect of achieving a larger number of units. The consequence of this type of development is a gradual erosion of the character and spatial pattern of villa areas, with the introduction of higher densities than those prevailing bringing an intensification of traffic and loss of garden ground.

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