

## Princes Street Heritage Framework

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Planning Committee  
15 May 2008

### 1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report presents the results of the consultation on the Prince Street Heritage Framework.

### 2 Summary

- 2.1 The draft Princes Street Heritage Framework has been circulated for consultation. This report presents the results of the consultation.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Heritage Framework is to better understand the features, details and planned form which give the area its historic character and identity, in order to provide a context to deliver a regeneration project that enhances Princes Street and the World Heritage Site, while respecting its Outstanding Universal Values.

### 3 Main report

- 3.1 Planning Committee on 6 December 2007 agreed the Princes Street Heritage Framework as a draft for consultation. This followed approval by the Planning Committee on 4 October 2007 of the City Centre Princes Street Development Framework. The draft Heritage Framework has been circulated to 300 individuals, businesses, groups, institutions and agencies. Appendix 1 summarises comments received and includes responses on the comments submitted. The comments received have resulted in minor amendments to the Heritage Framework (these are detailed in bold red font on page 12 of the document).
- 3.2 The Princes Street Heritage Framework study area comprises a long, section of the city centre extending along the full length of Princes Street, over a single city block and bounded by Rose Street to the north. It also includes the north

block on Shandwick Place at the West End. The site lies within the New Town Conservation Area and the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. The New Town gardens are also included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The site contains a substantial number of buildings included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest. (14 Category A, 79 Category B, and 11 Category C).

- 3.3 The purpose of the Heritage Framework is to better understand the features, details and planned form which give the area its historic character and identity, and to provide a context for its preservation, development and management. The study establishes the historic significance of the surviving James Craig plan, the individual historic structures and the townscape, providing a basis for the regeneration of the Princes Street area through enhancement, adaptation and redevelopment.
- 3.4 The study will ensure that the historic environment is considered as a key aspect of the development process whilst offering opportunities for regeneration and investment in this part of the World Heritage Site. It will be a key tool for development management and project implementation, and will influence how the area is protected and regenerated. It should encourage those involved in the site to think about the plan and built fabric in a structured way, to assess how and why it is significant, and how it should be managed in order to conserve its cultural significance. The intention is to deliver a regeneration project that enhances Princes Street and the World Heritage Site, whilst preserving its Outstanding Universal Values.
- 3.5 The objectives of the Heritage Framework are:
- To identify the cultural significance of the First New Town plan and the essential elements which define the area's character.
  - To provide a tool which can guide the management of change appropriately whilst protecting and enhancing the built heritage.

The study takes the form of:

- (i) Overview: Review of the conception and development of the First New Town, and the identification of the essential elements of Craig's original plan.
  - (ii) Block reports: A detailed overview of the development and historic fabric of each block fronting Princes Street.
  - (iii) Database: Detailed information on the historic fabric of every building in the study area.
- 3.6 The study is based on an analysis of information from the Statutory List of Building of Historic or Architectural Interest, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), and the Edinburgh Room of the Central Library. The historic and architectural importance of the building fabric and interiors were assessed by the detailed survey of individual buildings. Buildings which contribute to the character of the area, but are not

included on the Statutory List, have also been assessed. However, the Framework is not exhaustive - other historic/ architecturally important elements may be uncovered during the development process, and these should be considered in any proposals.

- 3.7 The Heritage Framework provides an overview of the cultural significance of the area. It does not remove the requirement to obtain planning permission and listed building consent for work to the buildings involved. The Heritage Framework also complements the City Centre Princes Street Development Framework (approved by the Planning Committee in October 2007), and will inform the preparation of development briefs and conservation plans for individual buildings on Princes Street.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 This report does not result in any financial implications for the Council.

#### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Heritage Framework provides an overview of the cultural significance of the area and will inform the preparation of development briefs and conservation plans for individual buildings on Princes Street. The comments received following the consultation have resulted in minor amendments to the Heritage Framework (these are detailed in bold italics in the document).
- 5.2 The Framework ensures that the historic environment will be considered as a key aspect of the development process whilst offering opportunities for regeneration and involvement in this part of the World Heritage Site. It will help deliver a regeneration project that will enhance Princes Street and the World Heritage Site, whilst preserving its Outstanding Universal Values.
- 5.3 The Heritage Framework will influence how the area is protected and regenerated – encouraging those involved in investing in the city centre to think about the built fabric in a structured way, to assess why it is significant and how it should be managed.

#### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the Princes Street Heritage Framework.



**Dave Anderson**  
Director of City Development

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<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1: Summary of Comments and Responses on the draft Princes Street Heritage Framework  Appendix 2: The Finalised Princes Street Heritage Framework
<b>Contact/tel</b>	Jack Gillon (469 3634)
<b>Wards affected</b>	City Centre
<b>Background Papers</b>	Report to the Planning Committee: Draft Princes Street Heritage Framework, 6 December 2007.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Summary of Comments and Responses on the draft Princes Street Heritage Framework**

#### **Catriona Davies, Access Assistant, Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society**

Notes that there are no Rights of Way recorded in the area described in the Framework.

#### *Response*

*These comments are noted.*

#### **Dawn Jeffs, Capital Project Liaison Officer, Corporate Property & Contingency Planning**

Notes that the Framework outlines in detail the implementation of the James Craig New Town plan with a very detailed chronological development of the built fabric. However, is concerned that the information does address one of the key objectives of the City Centre Princes Street Development Framework - "To pinpoint existing developments which diminish or erode the quality of the area and which would be the focus of redevelopment proposals". The document is an excellent resource illustrating the historical development of Princes Street; unfortunately it does not provide a framework for the development, management and project implementation for the area. In order to provide guidance for redevelopment proposals, further information is required for each block recommending certain criteria or restrictions for the future development.

The current boundary of the Heritage Framework seems restrictive and a full overview would be created if the boundary was extended to incorporate the whole of Rose Street and George Street, as per the City Centre Princes Street Development Framework. The extension of the information to include George Street would fully illustrate the historical context, potential linkages and improved permeability between Princes Street, Rose Street and George Street. The increased boundary would also include the Assembly Rooms and as this building is within CEC ownership it could provide the catalyst for development in this area when refurbishment work is carried out in the building.

#### *Response*

*The Heritage Framework has concentrated attention on the historic and architectural development of the area and existing heritage assets. This will be followed by development briefs which will consider change, including potential re-development, in more detail.*

*The boundary of the study area was established on the basis of the area's potential for change. The area north of Rose Street is established to a greater degree, and is less subject to development pressures.*

## **The Cockburn Association**

The Cockburn Association notes that they have a longstanding interest in the protection and future treatment of the Capital's architectural and landscape heritage and in matters pertaining to local planning activity and civic amenity. They seek to support guidance and policy which strikes an appropriate balance between preservation and modern development.

In 2001, the Association recognised the pressing need for a vision for Edinburgh's City Centre and undertook a survey of the existing buildings. The aim was to understand and demonstrate what was achievable and desirable. In 2003, the Princes Street Regeneration Framework was produced by the Association in partnership with Malcolm Fraser, Architect.

It is clear that the Draft Princes Street Heritage Framework has been prepared with considerable care and attention to detail and we would like to congratulate the author. The Framework is a well-balanced summary of the relationship of Princes Street to the rest of Craig's New Town. However, there are a number of concerns which stem from the purpose of the Heritage Framework, and its relationship to the adopted Princes Street Development Framework, rather than the well researched and articulated factual content.

They are of the opinion that the draft Framework fails to draw some necessary and relevant conclusions as to how the relationship between Princes Street and the rest of Craig's New Town should influence future development and management. The overview correctly emphasises that it was George Street, not Princes Street, which was planned as the principal thoroughfare and that commercial development was specifically excluded. What are the implications of this in the future management of Princes Street and George Street given that Craig's New Town has long since ceased to be merely a residential suburb of Edinburgh?

### *Response*

*The change from predominantly residential to commercial uses on Princes Street and the First New Town is historic. The original residential use does not have a significant bearing on future development.*

They are also of the view that the serial stages of Princes Street's commercial transformation are not clearly demonstrated in this report. A series of photographs could usefully demonstrate how the original townhouses expanded and adapted outwards over front and back areas and upwards in their succession to the present day. What implications does this pattern of growth have for future development and particularly for the incremental creep of building heights?

*Response*

*It is considered that the development and change of the original townhouses is clearly demonstrated in the Framework in the form of text, and historic photographs prints and maps.*

Great emphasis is correctly placed in the historical overview of the importance of Craig's use of symmetry in his grid planning and on the implications of this in future building. Missing from the summary is an expressed understanding that this same emphasis on symmetry should extend to the treatment and future of the two grid enclosed gardens of St Andrew and Charlotte Squares.

*Response*

*The Framework specifically refers to the importance of symmetry in terms of the New Town plan.*

Finally, the overview quotes perceptively Robert Grieve's comment of 1878 on Princes Street. If this is to be a justification for further diversity then we believe that there should be a strong presumption that sandstone, and an equivalent match for the Craighleith sandstone, should be used as the dominant facing finish to the frontages of Princes Street. The absence of this finish in the recently completed buildings 33 – 41 Princes Street and 113 – 117 Princes Street is regrettable.

*Response*

*Traditional materials are considered as the first option for development in the New Town. However, every case is considered on its merits, and there will be examples where alternative materials are more compatible with the form of the building.*

**Historic Scotland**

Welcome the preparation of the Framework and note that it will inform the preparation of development briefs and conservation plans for the individual blocks on Princes Street. As strong pressure for development exists in Princes Street, there will be applications for the demolition and redevelopment of individual buildings in the street. The Framework should be a useful tool in analysing the importance of individual buildings within the evolution of Princes Street.

Historic Scotland will continue to judge individual applications for the alteration, extension and demolition of listed buildings, alongside the demolition of unlisted buildings under the Memorandum of Guidance criteria. Their role in the planning process would thus be usefully added to the Framework. The New Town Conservation Area Appraisal could also be added. National guidance including NPPG18 and the *Memorandum of Guidance on listed buildings and conservation areas (1998)* could also be usefully mentioned.

*Response*

*Noted and the Framework has been amended to include these points.*

They consider that the draft framework gives a most useful analysis of the historical and socio-political background to the formation of the New Town and the development of Princes Street itself. They also consider that Craig's original surviving plan should be recognised as an essential element in its own right. They would welcome more analysis on the surviving original Georgian buildings on the street, their quality, numbers, degree of alteration and their importance to the wider first new town. Analysis of the quality and importance of this later work would be useful, and it may be also be appropriate, in the manner of a conservation plan to suggest repair and possible restoration measures eg. shop front improvements, removal of later accretions etc. This assessment of the historical and architectural importance of the buildings could also be extended to later Victorian, Edwardian and C20th development, concentrating on the quality of the work and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

*Response*

*The Framework represents an overview of the heritage assets in the area. A more detailed analysis will be included in the briefs for individual blocks.*

They consider that Craig's plan itself is one of the essential elements of the first New Town, rather than just the symmetrical grid layout mentioned. Although currently the rear lanes off Rose Street present a poor environment, with careful planning, and a reorganisation of servicing they have the potential for successful mixed use development, for example a specialist shopping street or restaurant sector adjacent to the main retail streets.

*Response*

*The development and importance of Craig's plan is detailed in the Framework. It is agreed that rear lanes require improvement and this will be considered in the Development Briefs.*

They consider that a separate section outlining the importance of surviving streetscape and materials, together with pointers to the creation of new public realm may also be useful.

*Response*

*A study of original paving and principles for new paving in the New Town is currently being undertaken. A Materials Plan for the city centre is also proposed. These initiatives along with the Standards for Streets will provide comprehensive information on streetscape.*

They consider that it is important to say that the unification of the street is now neither possible nor indeed desirable. The surviving three-storey Georgian stock eg. either side of Frederick Street, are important, as is Jenners, a late nineteenth century department store of wildly different scale. The difference in scale between the

building stock, much of which is listed, is now part of Princes Street's essential character.

#### *Response*

*It is not intended that the Framework should include details on the potential future development of Princes Street. However, the Framework does identify the variation in scale and form of existing buildings.*

### **Edinburgh World Heritage Trust**

Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) consider that the Framework will be an important tool to inform the briefs that will take forward the approved City Centre Development Framework. They note that the planned First New Town is in direct contrast to the pattern of development and growth in the Old Town, and is an inherent element of the outstanding universal values for which Edinburgh was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The First New Town demonstrated the vision and ambition of the City, and what is on the ground today, although altered, allows this to be read.

The Framework establishes the significance of the James Craig plan and the survival of this plan into the present day. It recognizes the primacy of George Street and the social hierarchy inherent in the way each lane, street and square was planned, laid out and constructed using to advantage views and vistas. The Framework Study shows that although the plan and hierarchy are still there, the majority of the buildings are not preserved in their original 18<sup>th</sup> Century form. EWH would be concerned at schemes for large scale replacement as the Framework shows that there is a real option for heritage based regeneration – particularly at the west end of Princes St where most of original buildings are located. EWH would be sceptical of a project which is directed at large scale replacement and this study does not clearly set out that loss of listed buildings is an exceptional circumstance in current planning legislation and guidance.

They note that the study describes how the New Town, and Princes Street in particular, were physically changed by commercial pressures, and although the story of how the street has changed and developed over two centuries is useful and interesting, they do not consider that it is analyzed to show the way forward, and the way in which this study may then inform the development briefs is not made clear. In deed the wording would seem to indicate that Princes Street has changed so much over the past two centuries that this is a pattern that should be followed. Given the very significant number of listed buildings along the street, this does present the possibility of conflict in future policy and decision making.

The theme seems to be that Princes Street has changed and adapted throughout its life and should continue to do so, EWH are happy with this as long as this is not used as the justification for the demolition or substantial adaptation of listed buildings without further analysis. They consider that a more thorough assessment of the buildings is really required to inform options for the future. Unused or underused

upper floors should be appraised and options for separate access or improved internal access explored. This is certainly the starting point, along with refurbishment and appropriate adaptations for the future regeneration of Princes Street.

### *Response*

*The Heritage Framework was intended to provide an overview of heritage assets in the area. The Development Briefs will include further analysis of these issues. Proposals for demolition and substantial alteration will be subject to the standard test specified in the Listed Building Regulations and the Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The emphasis will be on the informed management of change, a key to which is a clear understanding of the historic importance of the heritage asset.*