

Planning Committee

10am, Thursday 4 December 2014

Southfield Estate Proposed Conservation Area – Final Report

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Executive	Executive
Wards	Drum Brae/Gyle

Executive summary

This report advises Committee of the outcome of the consultation exercise on the potential designation of the Southfield Conservation Area. It provides details of the consultation responses and recommends that the Southfield Estate is not taken forward for designation as a conservation area.

Links

Coalition pledges	P40
Council outcomes	CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

Southfield Estate Proposed Conservation Area – Final Report

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee does not proceed with the designation of the Southfield Estate as a conservation area.

Background

- 2.1 On 15 May 2014, the Planning Committee approved an appraisal of the historic and architectural interest of the Southfield Estate. This considered its potential for designation as a conservation area and provided the basis for consultation.
- 2.2 Historic Scotland had requested that Southfield Estate be considered for designation as a conservation area. There was also support for the designation from the Saltire Society, the Cockburn Association, the Architectural History Society of Scotland, and Docomomo (The Working Party for the Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement).
- 2.3 The appraisal of the historic and architectural interest of the area (Appendix 1) indicated Southfield was of interest for its innovative layout, architectural and urban form, social ambitions, form of tenure and its central communal garden. It stood out from similar projects of the time in Scotland and was worthy of further consideration for designation as a conservation area.
- 2.4 In the context of the appraisal, the consultation process was of particular significance. It was important to gauge the level of support from the local community for conservation area designation.
- 2.5 This report provides details of the consultation and considers the proposed designation in the light of the responses received.

Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation with the wider community took the form of an exhibition, which was displayed in Drumbrae Library Hub, between 30 June and 11 July 2014. Open Days were held at the library on 2 and 9 July 2014 which provided an opportunity for visitors to discuss the proposals with Council officers. The exhibition and Open Days were promoted on the Council Twitter account.
- 3.2 Consultation with the households directly affected by the proposals was carried out via a letter, survey sheet and freepost return envelope sent to all 111 households in the Southfield Estate. This informed residents of the implications of conservation area status and the consultation process. The survey sheet included three questions which are included below with the results (41 of the 111 households responded):

Survey question	yes	no	don't know
Do you think the character appraisal accurately describes the qualities of the area?	19	20	2
Do you support the proposal to designate Southfield as a conservation area?	5	36	0
If Southfield becomes a conservation area there will be some additional controls over extensions and alterations. Do you support this?	5	36	0

- 3.3 The same questions were included in an online survey. The online survey was promoted as part of the exhibition. There were 47 responses to the survey although not everyone answered all the questions. Approximately 50% of online respondents lived in the area so it is likely there was some duplication between the household and online surveys. The results of the online survey are below.

Online survey question	yes	no	don't know
Do you think the character appraisal accurately describes the qualities of the area?	16	16	4
Do you support the proposal to designate Southfield as a conservation area?	14	32	0
If Southfield becomes a conservation area there will be some additional controls over extensions and alterations. Do you support this?	15	32	0

- 3.4 The consultation period was extended at the request of the Southfield Residents' Association to allow time for a Special General Meeting to consider the proposed designation. This was held at Craigmount High School on Wednesday 20 August. The Residents' Association was provided with information on the implications of designation for circulation to residents prior to the Special General Meeting. The 62 residents that attended the meeting voted on the question: *Do you support the proposal to designate Southfield as a conservation area?* The result was YES (10) and NO (52). Following the meeting, the Residents' Association submitted a letter with the results of the ballot and noting that the Association *formally reject the City of Edinburgh's proposal to designate Southfield as a conservation area.*
- 3.5 The Cockburn Association has indicated that it continues to strongly support the designation of Southfield as a Conservation Area.
- 3.6 It is clear from the results of the surveys and the Southfield Residents' Association meeting that there is little local support for the proposed designation. Comments on the survey forms and letters of objection received relate to:
- there being no need for additional control and bureaucracy, and that existing planning controls are sufficient;
 - the additional cost of complying with conservation requirements; and
 - buildings not being of high enough quality to merit conservation area status.

- 3.7 Comments from written representations are included in Appendix 1. These were submitted with the household survey.

Criteria for Designation of a Conservation Area

- 3.8 The statutory definition of a conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy specifies that it is the character or historic interest of an area created by individual buildings and open spaces and their relationship one with the other which the legislation covering conservation areas seeks to preserve.
- 3.9 The principles of selection for designation as a conservation area are broadly as follows:
- areas of significant architectural or historic interest in terms of specific listed buildings and/or ancient monuments;
 - areas of significant architectural or historic interest in terms of building groupings, which may or may not include listed buildings and/or ancient monuments, and open spaces which they abut;
 - areas with features of architectural or historic interest such as street pattern, planned towns and villages and historic gardens and designed landscapes; and
 - other areas of distinctive architectural or historic character.
- 3.10 In designating a conservation area, consideration also has to be given to the reasons why it is felt that it should be protected. These may include:
- its special architectural and historic importance;
 - its distinct character;
 - its value as a good example of local or regional style;
 - its value within the wider context of the village or town; and
 - its present condition and the scope for significant improvement and enhancement.

Assessment

- 3.11 The Appraisal of the Historic and Architectural Interest is included at Appendix 2. Southfield has elements which meet a number of the criteria specified in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy for designation of a conservation area in terms of building groupings, street pattern and distinctiveness. However, some elements of the architectural character have been lost due to the installation of non-original features and deterioration of the fabric.

- 3.12 Despite the support that has been given to the designation of Southfield by amenity groups and academics, it is essential that there is local community support for conservation area status. The day-to-day care and maintenance of the special characteristics of a conservation area require the support and buy-in of the residents. In this instance, the results of the consultation indicate that there is only very limited support for the proposed conservation area and the additional planning requirements that would follow from designation. The majority of respondents object to the proposed designation. This is significant in terms of the potential for enhancement and improvement of the area. Without the support of local residents, enhancement and improvement in the area is unlikely to be successful.
- 3.13 The designation of Southfield would have made it the only 1960s housing estate in Edinburgh with conservation area status. Notwithstanding the qualities of the area, the proposal was contentious. It is concluded that without the support of local residents it is not appropriate to progress the designation at this time.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The report recommends no change to the existing status of Southfield and there is no relevant measure of success.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The report recommends no change to the existing status of Southfield and there will be no financial impact.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The report recommends no change to the existing status of Southfield and the impact on risk, policy, compliance and governance is neutral.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The report recommends no change to the existing status of Southfield and the impact on equalities is neutral.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The report recommends no change to the existing status of Southfield and the impact on sustainability is neutral.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 A consultation was carried out with the local community.
- 9.2 An exhibition was displayed in Drumbrae Library Hub between 30 June and 11 July 2014. Open Days were held at the library on the 2 and 9 July 2014 which provided an opportunity for visitors to discuss the

proposals with Council officers. The exhibition and Open Days were promoted on the Council Twitter account. A letter, survey sheet and freepost return envelope was sent to every household in the Southfield Estate to inform residents of the implications of conservation area status and the consultation process. The exhibition included details of the online survey.

Background reading / external references

Report to Planning Committee 15 May 2014 - Southfield Estate Proposed Conservation Area Character Appraisal

John Bury

Acting Director of Services for Communities

Contact; Will Garrett, Team Manager

Email will.garrett@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3636

Links

Coalition pledges	P40
Council outcomes	CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4
Appendices	Appendix 1: Southfield Representations
*	Appendix 2: Southfield – Appraisal of Historic and Architectural Interest

APPENDIX 1 – SOUTHFIELD REPRESENTATIONS FROM HOUSEHOLDERS

Resident, Craigmount Avenue North	The character appraisal is inaccurate and does not reflect what Southfield actually looks like. I feel that it is biased and does not present the negative elements of the estate.
Resident, Craigmount Avenue North	The houses on the estate could not be considered attractive and the key attributes of the estate that make it such a pleasant place to live are the layout and communal spaces, neither of which would be afforded any additional protection by conservation area status.
Resident, Bantongate Terrace	Conservation area status would place a heavy burden on householders and could actually have a detrimental effect on both the future price and saleability of our properties.
Resident, Bantongate Drive	It is my strongly held opinion that the case for Conservation Area status is flawed, misrepresents the true nature of the estate, would create an unwelcome financial burden on home owners and has been pursued without any significant consultation with the residents.
Resident, Bantongate Drive	I fail to see any benefit for any of the residents should Southfield become a conservation area. Surely any building regulations that are in place are adequate for the future preservation of any characteristics that are deemed worthy of conservation.
Resident, Bantongate Terrace	Please stop this conservation area proposal going ahead this will cost households more money and

	possibly create difficulties for homeowners to carry out home upgrades to their choice which we all work hard for.
Resident	I have reviewed the information pack that the Council have sent through and I see no benefit or requirement for the conservation area status. We have come this far without the conservation area and the houses all look pretty much the same as they did when they were built.
Resident, Craigmount Avenue North	I feel that why mend something that isn't broken. We live here happily and there are sufficient planning processes in place to ensure that the area isn't ruined through inappropriate building works / alterations. I simply cannot understand why this area is being considered for conservation area designation in the first place.

APPENDIX 2: THE SOUTHFIELD ESTATE – APPRAISAL OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

Location

The Southfield Estate is located on the north-western edge of Edinburgh about four miles from the city centre. It lies to the west of the northern end of Drumbrae North. Access to the site is from Drumbrae North and thence via Craigmount Avenue North or Barntongate Avenue. The boundary includes properties on Craigmount Avenue North, Barntongate Drive and Barntongate Terrace.



Historic Interest

In late 1963, the Adam Housing Society was offered a 9 acre (3.6 hectare) north-sloping site on which to create a co-ownership housing scheme to be financed under Section 11 of the 1962 Housing (Scotland) Act. The Act established a £3 million pound fund from which loans could be made to approved housing associations to provide homes on a co-ownership basis.

The brief for the Southfield site required high quality houses, at least to Parker Morris Standards (Note 1), incorporating a wide variety of size and type with an emphasis on the needs of the larger family. Since this would be the first

and largest co-ownership scheme in Scotland special efforts were to be made to explore its potentialities, such as communal open space, district heating, resident caretaker gardener, communal TV aerial, common room/clubhouse.

Roland Wedgwood was appointed as project architect just as he was about to leave the Housing Research Unit at Edinburgh University and set up in private practice. Roland Wedgwood had been the first appointee to the Housing Research Unit which was established in 1958 by Robert Matthew, ex chief architect for London County Council.

During the five years that Wedgwood spent at the Housing Research Unit there was considerable debate about the merits of Radburn planning for housing areas, but little research on how it worked in practice. Radburn planning is a housing layout designed to segregate motor vehicle and pedestrian movements first developed in 1929 in Radburn, a satellite town of New York. Houses were grouped around culs-de-sac with service court access to one side. The other side had communal gardens and pedestrian walkways leading to a central park.

Wedgwood decided to investigate the pros and cons of Radburn and was accepted as a PhD student researching the problem of motor vehicles in housing areas. Southfield embodies some of the results of this research and demonstrates his conclusion that *'inside every car lurks a pedestrian waiting to get out.'*

Wedgwood visited all the early Radburn schemes in the US and many inspired by them in Britain, such as those in Cumbernauld New Town. He concluded that the Radburn layout had a number of shortcomings, particularly in relation to access for service vehicles and a failure to provide safe places where young people could play.

His research led to new principles on the separation of vehicles which were included in the Southfield Estate layout. The aim was to keep the mixing of pedestrians and vehicles relatively safe by reducing vehicle traffic volumes and speeds, designing out situations where pedestrians could suddenly appear in the path of vehicles, enabling all vehicles to turn in forward turning circles and providing safe play areas for children.

Wedgwood also studied and visited Scandinavian Housing Association schemes to gain first-hand experience of designing and building joint ownership or co-operative housing as an alternative to private and local authority ownership. This resulted in the establishment of the Adam Housing Society to offer co-ownership housing opportunities.

Co-ownership housing schemes were financed by a government loan (through the Scottish Development Department) at a fixed interest rate for 60 years. Houses could only be let to members of a housing society, and an application for membership required a minimum share of £5 in the society. Successful applicants deposited 5% of the cost of the dwelling and then paid

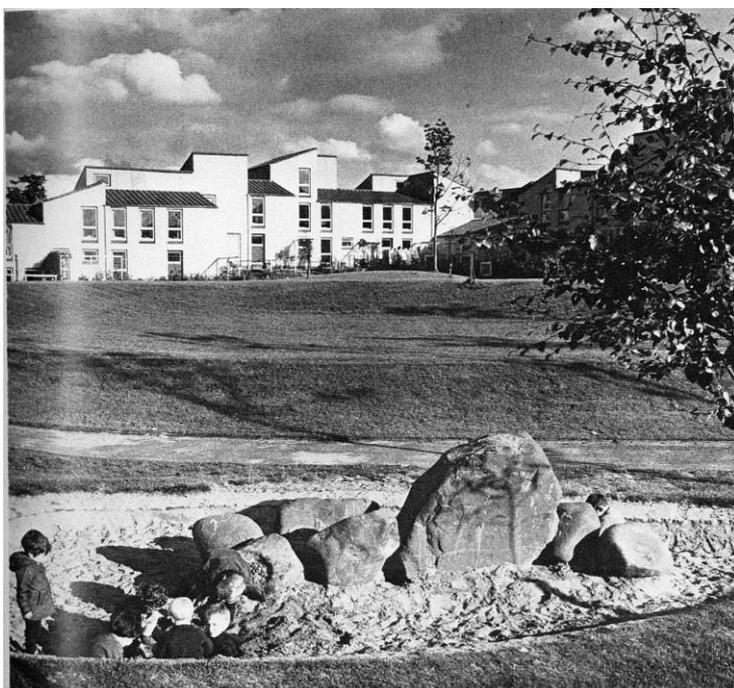
an annual rent of between £250 and £460 for maintenance, insurance, gardening and other services. When a co-owner vacated a property they received their 5% deposit and a sixtieth of the capital cost of the house for each year of occupancy. The scheme was described as: ‘ a little bit of renting and a little bit of owning – with the benefits of both.’

The original client for Southfield, the Adam Housing Society Ltd, established a new client body – Southfield Housing Society Ltd – in 1963, to develop and manage the project. The Society worked with the design team in the initial stages and was tied to negotiating a contract for the construction with Weir Housing Corporation which had sold the site to the Housing Society.

Southfield was officially opened by Lord Hughes, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Lord Hughes noted the potential importance of this form of tenure which could make a significant contribution towards solving the Scottish housing problem and achieving a better balance in the types of new housing. He also considered that it would meet the need for attractive houses at reasonable cost for managers, scientists and technicians who were coming to Scotland as a result of changes in the industrial structure.

On its completion Southfield was the first and largest co-ownership scheme in Scotland. The Estate was run in co-ownership for fourteen years, then in 1982 with the occupants' consent, all houses were transferred to private owner-occupation. The shared amenities, including the central gardens, continue to be managed and maintained by an annually elected Residents' Association. The shift towards individual owners has diluted some of the original aims, but the Residents' Association, which publishes a newsletter, is still strong and is the social focus of the Southfield Estate.

The development won the Saltire Society's Award for New Housing in 1967. The judges said: ‘This is a fine scheme whose size allowed the designer to establish a consistent language through a whole environment.’



A study of the estate in 1970 by the Architectural Research Unit, intended to find out who chose to live at Southfield and what they thought about the quality of housing, environment and investment, showed that the principal residents were mainly young, under thirty, families with pre-school

children. Nearly two thirds were professional and over a quarter were architects or planners. The reason for the interest by architects and planners was based on the concepts incorporated into the design of Southfield.

Architectural Interest

The Southfield Estate was designed in 1963–65 by Roland Wedgwood Associates and was completed in 1968. It illustrates the major principles which underline Wedgwood's work.

The houses are laid out as a continuous wall along the perimeter of the site, enclosing two large communal gardens. In 1969, Edwin Johnston, the architecture critic of the Scotsman newspaper, provided the following description of the development:

'The Southfield Estate is a new housing development which breaks away from the conventions of suburbia. In the tradition of any good Roman wall, Wedgwood's terrace straddles its way across the contours, relentlessly following the boundary of the site by cranking to and fro through a military sequence of right angle turns. Within the staggered form of the perimeter wall, communal, traffic free, landscaped gardens fulfil a similar function to the urban gardens of Georgian Edinburgh.'



The scheme provided 110 dwellings on a 3.6ha site at a density of 5 bed-spaces per acre (23 beds per hectare). There were ninety-eight one, two and three-storey maindoor houses of three to six rooms each with a small private garden and twelve four-storey one and two bedroom flats. Seventy-one dwellings have integral garages and the rest share forty-one grouped lock-ups. The intention was that co-owners could move from one house to another as circumstances changed and, as a result, the mix of accommodation needed to be varied.

The houses were designed on a strict 10ft 6inch (3.2m) square grid, setting the proportion of all rooms - two squares make a living room and set the overall depth of the terrace. There were seven basic house types, but the adoption of the controlling grid rationalised the components to only one common joist length, one internal door type, one ceiling joist, one stair component and only two window types. Construction was by traditional means, although the use of the modular grid would have facilitated prefabrication.



From the outside, Southfield is a meandering wall of deliberately protective appearance. The development pre-dates the listed Byker Wall in Newcastle which is also characterised by an inhabited perimeter wall. The design is intended to emphasise the concept of the larger inclusive group rather than the any single unit – the community over the individual.

The wall of houses encloses extensive communal gardens, designed by the landscape architect, Dr John Byrom, which create a pleasant space to be in and to look out on. There are very few entrances to the shared gardens, most

access is through the houses, but upper flats have access through lockable gates for which only residents have keys.

The scale of the gardens was large enough to accommodate forest trees. This has allowed the design to develop into a deciduous native woodland of ash, whitebeam and birch, which has the effect of screening summer heat gains, maximising winter daylight and reducing wind.

The grassed common areas were mounded with spoil from the house excavations and shaped with slopes of not more than 1 in 4 to allow convenient close cutting during the growing season and to discourage ball games. Beech hedges which edge the private gardens were intended to create the same effect as stone garden walls providing strong overall unity, but allowing wind shelter and privacy to suit individual needs by adjusting the cutting height. Floor-length windows in key rooms strengthen the relationship between outside and inside.

The central communal gardens were one reason why so many young families initially moved into the estate. The ability to leave children unattended in a car-free safe haven, yet in view of someone's window was seen as an extremely positive feature. The gardens remain the social and visual focus for the housing with the residents coming together to celebrate special events throughout the year. It is rare in a housing development to see such an emphasis on the contribution of landscape and shared ground.

Cars and garages are pushed to the extremities of the site where there are spacious landscaped turning circles or into garages set at ground level around the perimeter of the housing.

Much low rise social housing in the early 1960s was a reaction against contemporary high-rise solutions, and generally sought to explore ideals of community within low-rise developments. Southfield adopted this anti high-rise stance, expressed through the forms and materials – dry dashed greyish walls and staggered mono-pitch rooflines, concrete tiles, alleys, pends and carefully composed irregular windows. These features, along with the grouping and stepping of the buildings, deliberately reference the Scottish burgh vernacular.

There is a deliberately limited palette of materials – walls are used to enclose and support, openings are simply defined and timber is chunky and stained rather than painted. These features are demonstrable links with Scandinavian architecture and Wedgwood acknowledged the strong influence on his design of various housing association schemes in Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

The concept of a continuous 'wall' of housing and joint ownership were means of co-ordinating the wide range of dwellings and providing the right conditions for the use of an oil-fired district heating system with a central boilerhouse serving all dwellings in the original scheme. This was abandoned in the 1980s, due to the increasingly expensive cost of oil, and gas heating

with individual boilers was installed. A new dwelling was formed in the original boiler room which enabled the original caretaker's post to be dispensed with.

The layout of the Estate makes use of the steep north-facing hillside on which it is located. Specific views are generated by the architectural form - glimpses through pends offer distant views, and the exterior form folds along the hillside to keep the scale intimate along the paths that hug the external edge of the housing.

The Southfield Estate is an example of Modernist vernacular architecture which stands out from similar projects of the time in Scotland because of its innovative layout, the social ambitions of the project, and the way in which the architecture was developed to support these aims. It is notable for its architectural and urban form, social ambitions, form of tenure and its central communal garden.

Authenticity

Many residents have replaced the original doors, which were very simple close-boarded timber, with insulated panelled doors which jar with the simplicity of the original design. Replacement windows seem to have been more carefully selected and are, in most cases, true to the original proportions, even if in uPVC.

Wedgwood's concept was that there would be no lampposts, with all lights being wall-mounted to reduce clutter on the streets. These have since been removed and replaced with freestanding lampposts.

Extensions, in general, conform to the original design. Enlargements of the units had not been an issue under co-ownership when tenants could move within the scheme to a larger house.

The legal title deeds to each dwelling following 'privatisation' contained a Deed of Conditions which set out a series of obligations more onerous than normally associate with a private dwelling. The Residents' Association relied on these conditions to remind residents to cut hedges, maintain their property or to stop extensions which were not considered sympathetic. Some extensions were halted by the Residents Association by invoking the following section of the Deed of Conditions,: *'totally in keeping with the rest of the estate and not taking away too much garden space. Single level extensions need not have sloping roofs but multi-storey ones should have them. The extension should match existing features.'* The restrictions placed on residents through the Southfield Deed of Conditions no longer apply, following the end of feudal superiority.

Notes

1. The Parker Morris Committee drew up an influential 1961 report on housing space standards in public housing in the United Kingdom titled *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*. The report concluded that the quality of social housing needed to be improved to match the rise in living standards and made a number of recommendations. Out of the report came the Parker Morris Standards, set out in the Ministry of Housing's "Design Bulletin 6 – Space in the Home". This provided typical requirements for facilities (flushing toilets, storage, heating) and dimensions for the typical items of furniture for which the designer should allow space.

References

1. The Architects' Journal (Building Study), 25 November 1970.
2. Buildings of Scotland, Edinburgh (1980) p.592-3.
3. C McKean & D Walker. Edinburgh: An Illustrated Guide, 1982, p.104.
4. F McLachlan "Inside out: Social Housing at Southfield" Design ARQ, Vol. 7 No. 1, 2003 p.33.