

# Planning Committee

10.00, Thursday, 8 December 2016

## New Town Conservation Area - Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Draft for Consultation

Item number	10.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	City Centre

### Executive Summary

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This report seeks approval of the revised New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in draft, for consultation. This has been developed in the new style of appraisal. This includes a section detailing key elements of the Conservation Area and management section. The content has been updated to reflect changing issues in the area, and the community's views and concerns.

The consultation will consist of information presented on-line with a feedback form, and an exhibition and information events in the local libraries, with officers on hand to discuss and explain the appraisal.

### Links

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Coalition Pledges	<a href="#">P40</a>
Council Priorities	<a href="#">CP9, CP12</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO4</a>

## **New Town Conservation Area - Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Draft for Consultation**

### **1. Recommendations**

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the attached revised New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in draft, for consultation

### **2. Background**

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- 2.1 Conservation area character appraisals are intended to help manage change. They provide an agreed basis of understanding of what makes an area special. This understanding informs and provides the context in which decisions can be made on proposals which may affect the character of a conservation area.
- 2.2 On 3 October 2013, the Planning Committee approved a programme of review of Edinburgh's conservation areas. Six priority conservation areas were identified - Portobello, Grange, Inverleith, Queensferry, Morningside, and Merchiston & Greenhill. Revised character appraisals for Grange, Inverleith, Queensferry and Portobello have since been completed. The appraisals for Morningside and Merchiston & Greenhill will be progressed following the revision of the Old Town and New Town Character Appraisals. The latter two revisions have been prioritised to support the review of the Edinburgh Old and New Towns World Heritage Site Management Plan.

### **3. Main report**

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- 3.1 The revised Conservation Area Character Appraisal is intended to reflect changes, including the impact of new development, that have occurred in the New Town since the previous Appraisal was published in 2005. It aims to focus more on the analysis of character and townscape, and guide decisions more clearly.
- 3.2 Early engagement with the community to inform the draft Appraisal consisted of an on-line survey relating to new developments in the Conservation Area within the timeframe of the existing character appraisal. The consultation ran from 31 May to 27 June 2016 and generated 66 responses. This provided useful information on the community's priorities and current concerns regarding the nature of change and recent development in the area. The results indicated that the majority of developments had a high approval rating.

- 3.3 The draft New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal, attached at Appendix 1, reflects the feedback received during this initial engagement process. To reflect better the active role of the Appraisal in guiding decisions, a management section has been introduced which summarises the controls and policies which apply in the area and identifies a series of pressures and sensitivities, with recommendations made to address each type. Opportunities for enhancement are also identified.
- 3.4 The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been examined through the appraisal process. No comments have been received from interested parties. No amendments to the existing boundary at this stage are, therefore, recommended (see Appendix 2).
- 3.5 The Appraisal will be finalised in interactive format following public consultation. The consultation will consist of information presented on-line with a feedback form. An exhibition will be displayed at the Central Library, with a Planning Officer on hand for two Open Days to discuss and explain the Appraisal.
- 3.6 The consultation draft of the revised New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal will be published on the Council's website and advertised via the web and social media, local community events, publications, posters and local groups' email networks. Key local interest groups will be consulted directly.

#### **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 Success will be measured through the completion of a programme of public consultation on the draft appraisal, the incorporation of public feedback and production of the finalised New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

#### **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 The work will be undertaken with existing staff resources. There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

#### **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 There are no risks associated with the recommendations contained within this report. . The report relates to Policy Env 6 of the Local Development Plan - Development within Conservation Areas.

## **7. Equalities impact**

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- 7.1 The aim of conservation area status is to preserve and enhance the quality of the area. This has the potential to improve the quality of life and support sustainable communities. Consultation processes and venues will ensure accessibility. The review of the format of character appraisals provides an opportunity to make the documents more accessible than at present. There are no predicted negative impacts on equalities.

## **8. Sustainability impact**

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- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report will reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the conservation of resources and energy embodied in existing buildings, rather than demolition and reconstruction, major generators of carbon emissions.
- 8.3 The need to build resilience to climate change impacts is not relevant to the proposals in this report because conservation of the built environment is not considered to be significantly affected, positively or negatively, in this regard.
- 8.4 The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because the conservation and management of the historic environment contributes directly to sustainability in a number of ways. These include the energy and materials invested in a building, the scope for adaptation and reuse, and the unique quality of historic environments which provide a sense of identity and continuity.

## **9. Consultation and engagement**

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- 9.1 An online survey relating to the quality of recent development in the Conservation Area has been carried out to inform the content and emphasis of the draft revised appraisal.
- 9.2 Once approved, the draft revised appraisal will be the subject of a formal consultation. This will consist of information presented on-line with a feedback form, an exhibition and information events in the Central Library, with officers on hand to discuss and explain the appraisal. The consultation information, and related events, will be promoted in the local area, on Twitter and online. Local and city wide amenity groups, and local councillors, will also be notified.

## 10. Background reading/external references

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- 10.1 Report to Planning Committee of 3 October 2013: Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

### Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Daniel Lodge, Planning Officer

E-mail: [daniel.lodge@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.lodge@edinburgh.gov.uk) Tel: 0131 529 3901

Contact: Jack Gillon, Senior Planning Officer

E-mail: [jack.gillon@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:jack.gillon@edinburgh.gov.uk) Tel: 0131 469 3634

## 11. Links

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<b>Coalition Pledges</b>	P40 Work with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and other stakeholders to conserve the city's built heritage.
<b>Council Priorities</b>	CP9 – An attractive city CP12 – A built environment to match our ambition
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO4 Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
<b>Appendices</b>	1 New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal - Draft for Consultation 2 New Town Conservation Area Plan

## Appendix 1

### NEW TOWN DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

#### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Conservation Area forms the northern section of the city centre of Edinburgh and its inner suburbs. It is 322ha (825 acres) in area, and approximately 3.7 kilometre (3 miles) wide west to east and 2 kilometres (1.25miles) north to south.

#### DATES OF DESIGNATION/AMENDMENTS

The Conservation Area was originally designated in October 1977. An amendment in March 1980 transferred Waverley Station to the Old Town Conservation Area. A further amendment was made in 1995 to include Atholl Crescent and Rutland Square, which were previously included in the West End Conservation Area.

#### WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

All but the northern fringe of the Conservation Area is included in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site, which was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage Site list in 1995. This was in recognition of the outstanding architectural, historical and cultural importance of the Old and New Towns.

In terms of UNESCO's criteria, the conservation and protection of the World Heritage Site are paramount issues. The conservation of the World Heritage Site is defined as those steps necessary for its protection, conservation and restoration as well as its controlled development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life. Inscription commits all those involved with the development and management of the Site to ensure measures are taken to protect and enhance the area for future generations. Since 2014, Historic Environment Scotland has a statutory duty to consider the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site when assessing the impact of development proposals.

Edinburgh World Heritage was established in 1999 by a merger of the Old Town Renewal Trust and the New Town Conservation Committee. The World Heritage Site is managed, protected and promoted through a partnership comprising Edinburgh World Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council. This Character Appraisal should be read in conjunction with the Management Plan for the World Heritage Site.

[Link to Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan.](#)

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The New Town, constructed between 1767 and 1890 on the glacial plain to the north of the Old Town, contains an outstanding concentration of planned ensembles of ashlar-faced, world-class, neo-classical buildings, associated with renowned architects, including John and Robert Adam, Sir William Chambers, and William Playfair. Contained and integrated with the townscape are gardens, designed to take full advantage of the topography, while forming an extensive system of private and public open spaces. It covers a very large area, is consistent to an unrivalled degree, survives virtually intact and constitutes the most extensive surviving example of neo-classical town planning in the world.

The Conservation Area ranks as one of the most important in the United Kingdom, in terms of both its architectural, urban planning and historic interest. Its significance is reflected in the extensive number of Statutory Listed Buildings, the number of tourists that visit the area, and its international recognition as part of the UNESCO designated Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

## **PURPOSE OF CHARACTER APPRAISALS**

Conservation area character appraisals are intended to help manage change. They provide an agreed basis of understanding of what makes an area special. This understanding informs and provides the context in which decisions can be made on proposals which may affect that character. An enhanced level of understanding, combined with appropriate management tools, ensures that change and development sustains and respects the qualities and special characteristics of the area.

Planning Advice Note PAN 71: Conservation Area Management specifies that:

‘When effectively managed, conservation areas can anchor thriving communities, sustain cultural heritage, generate wealth and prosperity and add to quality of life. To realise this potential many of them need to continue to adapt and develop in response to the modern-day needs and aspirations of living and working communities. This means accommodating physical, social and economic change for the better.

Physical change in conservation areas does not necessarily need to replicate its surroundings. The challenge is to ensure that all new development respects, enhances and has a positive impact on the area. Physical and land use change in conservation areas should always be founded on a detailed understanding of the historic and urban design context.’

## **HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT**

The analysis of New Town’s character and appearance focuses on the features which make the area special and distinctive. This is divided into two sections:

- Structure, which describes and draws conclusions regarding the overall organisation and macro-scale features of the area; and
- Key Elements, which examines the smaller-scale features and details which fit within the structure.

This document is not intended to give prescriptive instructions on what designs or styles will be acceptable in the area. Instead, it can be used to ensure that the design of an alteration or addition is based on an informed interpretation of context. This context should be considered in conjunction with the relevant Local Development Plan policies and planning guidance. The management section outlines the policy and legislation relevant to decision-making in the area.

## **HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT**

During the 1600s and early 1700s, the population of Edinburgh grew considerably within the old walls of the city, producing conditions of severe overcrowding. The late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century were difficult periods for Scotland. The country's economy was relatively small, its range of exports limited, and the country was in a weak political position in relation to the great powers of Europe, including neighbouring England, and their overseas empires. Famine and depopulation in the 1690s, the Union of Parliament in 1707, severe financial losses following the failure of the Darien Colony in Panama, and instability resulting from the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 (in which Edinburgh was taken by the Jacobites) were significant impediments to development. It was not until the more settled political and economic climate of the 1750s that the city could contemplate an ambitious potential expansion.

Before the building of the First New Town, the land to the north was characterised by open ground with a few scattered villages such as Broughton, Stockbridge, Canonmills, Dean, Picardy and Calton. All these villages were difficult to access from the Old Town which was severely constrained by its topography – with expansion to the north impeded by the Nor' Loch.

The gradual growth of economic prosperity by the mid-eighteenth century was accompanied, after 1745, by political stability. In the 1750s, Edinburgh was, therefore, ripe for expansion. Its more prosperous citizens wanted better housing than was available in the cramped and dark closes of the Old Town. The building of Argyll Square, Adam Square, Brown Square and George Square to the south met some of this demand on a relatively small scale.

In 1751, a pamphlet was published entitled 'Proposals for carrying on certain public works in the city of Edinburgh'. This document, strongly supported by the Lord Provost, George Drummond, proposed a New Town connected to the Old Town by a bridge.

The draining of the Nor' Loch began in 1759, and the Council also took steps to purchase sections of land immediately across the valley to enable development.

### **The First New Town**

In March 1766, the Council announced a competition to produce an overall plan for the new development. The objectives were to create an elite residential suburb,

based on 'order and regularity' with 'streets of a proper breadth'. The winning entry was that prepared by the 23 year old James Craig.

The final version, approved by the Council in July 1767. It is a strikingly simple, self-contained grid, with a broad main street along the top of the ridge connected to two squares. Parallel to this street are two more streets, looking north and south out over the Forth and over the Nor' Loch valley. Three equally spaced cross-streets bisect the grid. Along the long axis of each block is a smaller road, with mews lanes opening off it on each side.

The approved plan incorporated a layout of generous proportions and spaciousness. The central street is 100ft wide; the outer streets and cross streets 80ft wide; and the mews 30ft wide. The spatial layout incorporates a lateral social segregation, reflecting the hierarchy of eighteenth century society in which each class was given its due place. At the top of the hierarchy is the central, widest street (George Street) and the two grand squares. These formed the most prestigious addresses and would host the grandest individual town houses for the aristocracy and gentry. Next came the two outer streets and the cross streets. The subsidiary streets were intended to house shopkeepers and tradesmen, and the mews lanes the stables and outbuildings serviced the rear of the grand houses. In practice, the open views from the one-sided flanking streets meant that Queen Street attracted the most affluent residents.

This hierarchy provided a striking contrast to the relative social equality of the Old Town, where all classes were piled on top of one-another, occupying different levels of the same tenement. In creating the plan, Craig and the Town Council were 'importing to Scotland, for the first time, the built class distinctions of the new North Britain (Charles McKean, James Craig and Edinburgh's New Town).

The original feuing plan of the New Town shows the blocks broken up into regular plots, with gardens behind the houses and access from the mews lanes. However, development on the ground varied significantly from this plan.

Construction began around 1770 with buildings at the east end of Queen Street and Thistle Street, and the northern and eastern sides of St Andrew Square. By early in the 1780s, construction was underway in the eastern extremes of George Street, Princes Street and Rose Street, from where it spread gradually towards the west end.

All development was subject to conditions imposed by the feu superiors, in this case the Council. Control over the appearance of the buildings was initially very relaxed - the only condition imposed was that Craig's plan should be followed, with continuous terraces set back from the pavement by a basement area. Despite the regular plots shown on the feuing plan, feus were sold in a variety of sizes, and built both as town houses and tenement blocks of different sizes and designs, and the development was soon criticised for its irregularity which conflicted with the order required by contemporary taste.

Following concerns about the disparate overall appearance of the initial buildings, the conditions of sale of the land became increasingly prescriptive, and the Town

Council passed a series of Acts in the 1780s to control issues such as building height and dormers. In 1781, the Council stipulated that every house on a main street was to be of three storeys with a sunken basement and not more than 14.4m (48'-0") high from the basement area to the top of the wall. In 1791, the Council commissioned Robert Adam to complete detailed plans and elevations for Charlotte Square to act as a detailed design guide. This resulted in the first New Town development to use a coherent palace block design to articulate an architectural unity across a number of individual properties, all controlled by Adam's feuing plan.

As the success of the First New Town became clear, adjacent land owners began to consider similar ventures. This resulted in a series of developments spreading north, west and east of the First New Town which today form the New Town Conservation Area.

### **Post -War Planning**

The highly regarded town planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, produced detailed reports with proposals for the redevelopment of a number of British cities including Edinburgh, following the urban destruction and dramatic changes brought about by the Second World War. In 1949, Abercrombie presented his Civic Survey and Plan to Edinburgh Corporation. The plan recommended major changes to the city centre, including the remodelling of Princes Street in its entirety to regain the unity, which had been lost. These radical proposals were adopted by the Princes Street Panel in the 1950s, which devised a standard section for Princes Street. This segregated pedestrians from vehicular traffic, with a walkway at first floor level. Buildings using this approach are still evident. The demolition of St James Square and the insertion of a new road network through the Central Area were also recommended.

By the late 1960s, concerns about threats to the Georgian New Town were widespread. These focused on the condition of the buildings and the loss of clarity and coherence of the Georgian ensemble. Confronted with these multiple threats, the various authorities and interests organized a conference on the conservation of Georgian Edinburgh in 1970. The conference confirmed the international importance of the New Town and resulted in the establishment of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee (ENTCC) in 1972. The ENTCC provided a single focus within one agency for all activities related to the study, condition, conservation, and development of the New Town.

From this point, a much greater emphasis was placed on conservation rather than redevelopment. Traffic proposals for the city centre proposed by Buchanan in the mid 1970s, which were a progression of Abercrombie's proposals were abandoned. However, this did not prevent the demolition of Picardy Place and St James Square - the former for road proposals and the latter for the St James Centre.

The New Town was designated as a conservation area in 1977. The inscription of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 1995 provided additional recognition of the city's unique heritage.

In 1996, the consultants EDAW were commissioned to produce 'A Strategy for the First New Town', considering, amongst other things, this issue of perceived conflict

between the desire to maintain commercial vitality and the need to protect the historic and architectural character of the area. The recommendations of the EDAW Study were adopted by the Planning Committee in November 1997.

The Edinburgh World Heritage Trust (EWH) was created in 1999 by the amalgamation of the Old Town Renewal Trust and the New Town Conservation Committee. The aim of EWH is to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the site's special architectural or historic interest. EWH seeks to co-ordinate activities necessary for the protection of the heritage value of the site through its controlled development and its harmonious adaptation to contemporary life. The World Heritage Site Management Plan identifies what is significant about the World Heritage Site, recognises challenges and threats, and sets out policies to preserve and enhance the Site.

## **STRUCTURE**

### **Topography**

The formal designs of the New Town were laid out without substantially altering the existing landform and the topography, therefore, has a significant impact on the form of the Conservation Area. The majority of the area sits on a north facing slope. Calton Hill is the most prominent natural landmark within the area and forms a dramatic punctuation to the east. From George Street, the ground falls dramatically south down to Princes Street Gardens, overlooked by the Castle and the Old Town. Only the Western New Town is laid out on flat ground. Linked grid layouts make use of the topography to achieve a cohesive, uniform urban whole.

### **Development Pattern**

The development of the New Town has resulted in a building stock of extraordinary quality which has proved to be both durable and capable of adaptation, both to the needs of changing residential standards and to different uses. Parts of the New Town can be characterised as restrained or even austere, relying on proportion, regularity and repetitive design for their architectural quality.

The Conservation Area is typified by formal plan layouts, spacious stone built terraces, broad streets and an overall classical elegance. The majority of buildings are of a standard type that expresses Georgian ideals of urban living. The standard building form is three main storeys over a sunken basement, normally three bays wide and three storeys high, including steps from street to basement and cellars under the pavement with a slate covered pitched roof. The width of the basement area was standardised at 2.4 m (8'0") in the First New Town, though it is sometimes wider in subsequent developments - for example, nearly 4.0m in Heriot Row. The street elevations of each property typically follow a standard form of evenly spaced vertically proportioned sash windows, with a door at street level. There is usually a high proportion of masonry to window opening on both the front and rear elevations. The facades reflect the internal planning of the buildings with larger balconies and lengthened windows to the drawing rooms at first floor level.

Apart from a very few of the very earliest properties, which are of rubblework stuccoed to represent ashlar, the street elevations of the majority of buildings were built of finely dressed squared ashlar of the durable local Craigleith sandstone. From the 1860s, builders took advantage of improved transport to import significant quantities of cheaper and softer stone from further afield. Rear elevations were usually constructed of rubblework masonry,

Driven by the grid plan of Craig's New Town as a precedent and the topographical characteristics of the area, each subsequent development adopted the basic principles of a grid layout. These grid layouts, defined by perimeter blocks, were designed with a concern both for buildings and the public realm and the relationship between built form, streets and open spaces. The layouts are framed by the use of perimeter blocks, which are rectangular in the earlier schemes, but become curved and rounded to meet the grid requirements of later schemes.

The First and Northern New Towns generally have the same hollow square perimeter block shape and size, while the later schemes have smaller hollow squares. The backlands to these hollow squares form large areas of open space within the Conservation Area and are significant features. The encroachment of commerce and retail in the New Town has resulted in the infill of the perimeter blocks; particularly along Princes Street, George Street and Shandwick Place.

The planned formal gardens throughout the Conservation Area introduce punctuation, emphasise views and provide amenity space within the discipline of the grid layouts.

From the 1840s onward, the local authority relaxed its restriction on the allowable heights of buildings, which quickly led to the construction of an additional floor on a large number of buildings.

The Victorians changed the nature of Princes Street and George Street with the introduction of commercial buildings. However, when developing residential areas in the New Town they invariably followed the grid plan precedent set by Craig.

In the post-war period there has been a significant amount of redevelopment within the area, particularly during the 1960s. Some of the buildings of this period tend to have ignored a number of the historic townscape rules in terms of proportion, scale, materials and form.

## **Setting and Edges**

North Bridge and the Mound, original links between the Old and New Towns, provide principal routes to the south and the Borders. The access over North Bridge reveals the topography and character differences between the Old and New Towns. It also provides panoramic views to the east towards Arthur's Seat and the coast in the distance. The end of the bridge is terminated by Robert Adam's palace fronted Register House. The former GPO and Balmoral Hotel frame the bridge at Princes Street.

The Mound, a causeway built up of spoil from the construction of the New Town between 1780 and 1830, divides Princes Street gardens into two sections. Playfair's Galleries are classical temples against the backdrop of the Old Town ridge.

London Road, the principal route from the south reaches the Conservation Area through Playfair's Calton Scheme, giving an immediate introduction to the classical formality of the New Town.

The principal south western approach enters the New Town via Lothian Road with the Caledonian Hotel on the western junction with Princes Street. The Churches of St John and St Cuthbert terminate West Princes Street Gardens.

Leith Walk, connecting the City with its sea port, enters the Conservation Area at Haddington Place, which leads on to Playfair's Elm Row and Gayfield Square. London Road also provides a set piece entrance to the Conservation Area, linking through to Leith Walk.

The road to Glasgow skirts the Victorian development of the Western New Town before swinging north-east onto Haymarket Terrace and passing through the Georgian elegance of Coates and Atholl Crescents, to arrive via Shandwick Place at Princes Street. Queensferry Road, another western approach, takes advantage of Telford's high level bridge of 1830 to avoid the original route, which wound down a steep valley to cross the Water of Leith.

## **Vistas and Views**

Views and vistas were an important element in eighteenth century design and town planning, and the area has a variety of notable views. The New Town exploits the topography and the value of views both within and out from it to maximum effect. The historic plan forms allied to the dramatic topography results in important terminated and long vistas and landmark features that respond to the changes in level. This is particularly true of southern views from the First New Town across Princes Street Gardens to the Old Town Ridge. Views from the northern slopes provide stepped panoramas towards and across the Firth of Forth.

In addition to these distant views Craig's plan deliberately promoted axial views along its main routes. Of particular note is the view south from George Street along Hanover Street towards the Royal Scottish Academy and Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland. The views along George Street, east along Princes Street and out of practically all the cross streets are also outstanding.

To the west, the view of the spires of St Mary's cathedral is visible from many positions and is juxtaposed to the east with the prominence of Calton Hill. Playfair's scheme for Calton follows the contours of the hill and provides a terrace of exceptional length and great elegance that exploits spectacular views both to the north, south, and west along Princes Street.

Within the grid layouts, terminated vistas have been planned, using churches, monuments, buildings and civic statuary, resulting in an abundance of landmark buildings. The generally uniform heights of the New Town ensure that the skyline is distinct and punctuated only by church spires, steeples and monuments. The uniformity of building heights, allied to the wide use of formal gardens within the grid layouts, provides a background against which important features stand out and allows views across the city to be appreciated.

## **Townscape**

The Conservation Area is characterised by Georgian and early Victorian rectilinear development of grand formal streets lined by fine terraced building expressing neo-classical order, regularity, symmetry, rigid geometry, and a hierarchical arrangement of buildings and spaces. They create a regular pattern of stately streets, squares and crescents, interspersed by formal gardens, and containing a series of major classical buildings by architects of the stature of Robert Adam.

While there are a considerable number of prominent buildings and focal points in the area, the sloping topography means that punctuation above the skyline is limited. The features that are prominent and can be seen from many parts of the area are the Old Town Ridge, Calton Hill with its monuments, and St Mary's Cathedral. Sitting alongside Calton Hill, the concrete development of the St James Centre forms an obtrusive element that can be seen from many points.

Princes Street gardens, with its Castle ridge backcloth, provides an open natural setting for a number of landmark buildings directly associated with Edinburgh. The magnificent Greek revival pavilion art galleries by Playfair at the foot of the Mound give credence to Edinburgh as the 'Athens of the North'. Further to the east is the Gothic steeple of the Scott Monument. The Balmoral Hotel (formerly the North British) completed in 1902 is a large quadrangular building, with a domed clock tower overlooking Waverley Station.

These features apart, the New Town is made up of a mix of town houses and tenement buildings, usually following a sloping topography, and adopting a generally uniform height with only church spires projecting above them. Within the grid layouts, there are individual set pieces and important buildings that do not disturb the skyline. The New Town can also be viewed from above at locations such as the Castle and Calton Hill, which makes the roofscape and skyline sensitive to any modern additions.

To understand the character of the Conservation Area, it is as appropriate to break it down into the smaller parts, which make up the whole. However, there is a strong sense of these parts 'fitting together' to form a unique and special place.

### ***First New Town***

The completed development of the First New Town was characterised by:

- A general consistency of overall building form, of three main storeys over a sunken basement with slate-clad pitched roofs, contributing to the appearance of a unified whole;
- An almost exclusive use of finely dressed squared ashlar of the durable local Craigleith sandstone (a pale, buff sandstone that weathers to a dark grey), creating a visual homogeneity;
- Visual homogeneity was also created by the use of a limited range of supporting materials: natural slate on roofs; cast and wrought iron for railings, balconies and street lamps; fine joinery and glazing at doors and windows; and stone for footpath paving, kerbs and roadway setts; and
- Richer, grander designs, such as Charlotte Square, were introduced as building work moved to the west and the development became economically secure.

The First New Town was planned to be essentially residential - a neighbourhood for elegant living. The majority of buildings were originally residential, non-residential buildings were confined to ancillary uses such as churches and the Assembly Rooms. Shops were planned in Rose Street, Hill Street and Thistle Street.

The new environment was ideal for the development of retail trade and over the years Princes Street has been extensively redeveloped as Edinburgh's prime shopping street. This has resulted in the majority of the buildings now being in retail use, though office, leisure and hotel uses are also present on upper floors.

Moving north from Princes Street retail use decreases. Rose Street and George Street have considerable shop frontages, particularly in their central and western ends but retail use has not achieved the saturation level of Princes Street. Further north, Thistle Street and Queen Street only house a very modest amount of retail use. The cross streets in the area also reflect these changes.

Throughout the area property has often been rebuilt or extended or converted for office or institutional use. Residential use only remains significant in the western and northern fringes of the First New Town.

### ***The Northern New Town***

In 1799, the Heriot Trust, which owned much of the land to the north of the First New Town, feued York Place, an extension eastwards of Queen Street. David Stewart, a former Provost, set the pattern for later large-scale development. Initially feuing some thirteen acres to the north of Queen Street from the Heriot Trust, he subsequently came to them with plans for a much larger development. His plans involved laying out a large square and circus linked by a grand central boulevard crossed by a continuation of Hanover Street running down the slope below Queen Street.

Stewart went bankrupt in 1800, but a variation of his plan by William Sibbald and Robert Reid, was finally adopted. Following the successful precedent of Charlotte Square, elevations for the façades were provided by Reid, with each of the blocks treated as a single composition.

Building started in 1803 but proceeded slowly until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, by which time only Heriot Row and part of Northumberland Street had been completed. Subsequently construction speeded up while the plan underwent further modification as building proceeded. The square was given a rounded end, to form Drummond Place and in 1823 William Playfair redesigned the circus to incorporate a road up the slope from Stockbridge.

Great King Street, intended as the most prestigious, and, therefore, the most expensive, address was slow to feu, as Heriot Row, which faced the private gardens north of Queen Street, was the preferred location. These gardens, that became a feature of the later New Town developments, allowed occupiers exclusive access. Despite delays the development was essentially complete by 1823, although small sections of Fettes Row in the north-east, and of Bellevue Crescent in the north-west were not completed until much later.

The basic architectural form of the area continued the precedent of the First New Town, with fine quality ashlar residential blocks of three storeys over a sunken basement arranged in straight formal terraces.

### ***The Moray Estate***

By the early 1820s, the first New Town was virtually complete, and the Northern and Western New Towns and the Raeburn Estates were well under way. The estate of the Earl of Moray to the west of the Northern New Town remained open country. In 1822, with the demand for housing at its height, the Earl of Moray employed James Gillespie Graham to draw up a master plan. In order to ensure that the scheme was fully realised, the Earl imposed feuing conditions specifying the buildings that could be erected in great detail.

The estate, which occupied a relatively narrow strip of land sloping down to the Water of Leith was not the easiest on which to fit a classical layout. However, Gillespie Graham designed a self-contained enclave of exceptional quality which cleverly linked the First, Northern and Western New Towns. Development proceeded briskly, although the pace later slowed, with some houses not being built until 1855.

In response to the unusually shaped site and the rigid regularity of the earlier New Towns, the Moray Estate abandoned a rectilinear street layout in favour of a chain of three geometric shaped spaces linked by axial connecting streets. Each of the formal main spaces contains private gardens at their centres.

The first or most south-westerly of these spaces is Randolph Crescent, a semi-circular space with central gardens fronting Queensferry Street. Perpendicular to Queensferry Street, Great Stuart Street leads from Randolph Crescent to the elliptical Ainslie Place continuing on to the circular Moray Place.

The townscape of the Moray Estate is on a grand scale. This is expressed by the greater spaces between the blocks and the buildings, although they retain the three storey and basement form. The buildings around Moray Place itself are particularly

impressive, taking the form of twelve Roman Doric palace fronted elevations, six of which have imposing columned centrepieces.

To the north, running down the slopes of the river gorge, is a mutual communal pleasure ground which was an important element of the scheme.

### ***Western New Town***

Early in the nineteenth century development began to the west of the First New Town. Shandwick Place, an extension to Princes Street westwards flanked by two wide crescents, was the first street to commence and was completed by 1825. This street has attracted considerable retail use leading to considerable redevelopment, although Atholl Crescent and Coates Crescent have remained much as they were built.

The area north of Shandwick Place and west of Queensferry Road belonged for the most part to Patrick Walker with the Trustees of Lord Alva owning a small section in the south-east corner. They jointly commissioned a plan from Robert Brown in 1813, based on the now well-established grid plan, but with only one, diagonally set square, Melville Crescent, in the centre.

Although development started briskly on Lord Alva's quarter and in the main east-west boulevard, Melville Street, it later slowed. The grander corner properties proved particularly hard to feu, perhaps because the more prosperous buyers preferred the greener outlooks available on the Moray Estate and Calton Hill. In 1855, the designs for some of these were simplified and scaled down, in order to complete the development.

Despite these setbacks, the Walkers made a substantial income and from 1873 Patrick Walker's three daughters funded the building of the three-spired St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral that provides a prominent terminus to the main axis of the development.

In 1830, John Learmonth feued a small area of land between Shandwick Place and Lothian Road. He used an adaptation of an 1817 plan by Thomas Elliot, drawn up for the previous owner, to form a short street and Rutland Square, a neat rectangle of porticoed houses.

The spread of the city westward prompted the Heriot's Trust, which owned the land still further west, to develop it from 1860. Recognising the desirability of a green outlook, the designs by John Lessels, Peddie and Kinnear, John Chesser and others included a good proportion of narrow ellipses and crescents. The style of architecture gradually changed from neo-classical to a rich Victorian Renaissance in the later developments. The most westerly developments Magdala Place and Douglas Crescent, have, uniquely in the area, mansard roofs.

Development also extended to the north of the Walker developments with the Drumsheugh area completed by 1890, though building slowed further to the west and Rothesay Terrace was only completed in the 1900s.

The Western New Town was planned around the grand central axis of Melville Street, with Shandwick Place and Chester Street/Drumsheugh Place as flanking streets. Melville Street is closed by St Mary's Cathedral at one end and the back of West Register House at the other and lined by grand buildings. The formality of the design is, however, compromised by the asymmetrical crossing of Queensferry Street. The formality of the plan was maintained in Shandwick Place, where the street is flanked by the crescents and gardens of Coates and Atholl Crescents.

The cross streets of Stafford Street, Manor Place and Walker Street continue the rectilinear street layout, which is completed by William Street with Alva Street to the south, and Chester Street, Drumsheugh Gardens and Rothesay Place to the north.

The extreme western part of the area stands beyond the north/south line of Palmerston Place. From the 1860s, this area was laid out around the saucer shaped gardens formed by Eglinton Crescent/Glencairn Crescent and Grosvenor Crescent/Landsdowne Crescent. It represents some of the latest development within the Conservation Area.

This area has been subject to increasing pressure from commercial uses. Shandwick Place has become a significant retail location with purpose built properties replacing the original Georgian houses. Less intensive retail use has also colonised Alva Street and William Street behind Shandwick Place, and the cross streets of Stafford Street and Queensferry Street. Adjacent to these retail areas, many of the original Georgian buildings are used for offices. In Rutland Square, Melville Street, Coates and Atholl Crescent the majority of buildings are now in office use. Office use remains a significant function throughout the area to the west of Palmerston Place, although the original residential use becomes more predominant further north and west.

### ***Gayfield***

The Gayfield Estate, owned by James Jolie, lay beyond the eastern boundary of the Northern New Town between East London Street and Leith Walk, the main thoroughfare to Leith. Jolie, a solicitor, began feuing part of the area in 1785. From around 1807, Hugh Cairncross, a former assistant of Robert Adam, designed a layout for the Gayfield Estate which was less formal than the earlier New Town developments. Gayfield Square, a large rectangle opening onto Leith Walk, contained tenement blocks, villas and a row of smaller houses. Broughton Place was lined with two-storey palace blocks similar to Heriot Row but on a smaller scale. Forth Street and Hart Street, by Robert Burn, on Heriot Trust land, are similar in scale.

The western section of Gayfield, between Union Street and Broughton Street, consists of roughly regular rectilinear streets fronted by late Georgian terraces of tenements. Towards the east, the formal grid of streets is based around the development of Gayfield Square which structures the area and is surrounded by a fringe of less regular development which contains significant pockets of piecemeal redevelopment.

Gayfield has a substantial residential population amongst other uses. This variety has been extended by redevelopment and by the conversion of residential property to office use. Shop units occupy the street level accommodation along Leith Walk and Broughton Street and occasional shop uses are present in Union Street and other locations.

### **Calton**

The decision in 1814 to site a felons' prison next to the Bridewell prompted the Council to improve access to Calton Hill by building a bridge over the Calton Valley. Work began in 1815 with Robert Stevenson appointed as engineer and Archibald Elliot as architect. A single developer built all the buildings along Waterloo Place, ensuring that Elliot's conception of a grand entrance to the city was consistently executed.

Improved access to the Calton Hill prompted the Town Council to conduct a competition for a design to develop the hill and its northern flank. Although the competition was inconclusive, the Council accepted the guiding advice of their architect William Stark for a picturesque improvement following a plan and report of 1819 produced by his pupil William Henry Playfair.

Playfair's plan retained the hilltop as public open space with development of the Hill limited to its mid-level, served by an extended Princes Street. A tree flanked, grand lower London Road was also proposed to link up with Leith Walk.

The sides of the Hill were to be planted informally with a canopy of deciduous woodland. The street layout was set to converge on the Hill to provide framed views of the woodland and hilltop skyline. Within this large composition Playfair created sweeping panoramas and important point vistas at differing heights up the hill.

The blocks to the immediate north, beyond London Road, were built to Playfair's design intermittently between 1820 and the 1880s. Feuing of the mid-level stances was not complete until the 1880s. The lower levels were never fully taken up and were given over to railway and other developments.

On the south side of the Hill, Thomas Hamilton in 1825 designed a new building for the Royal High School in a pure Greek Revival style. The summit of the Hill attracted a collection of monuments: to Nelson by Robert Burn (1807), Robert Burns by Hamilton (1830), Dugald Stewart by Playfair (1831), and most conspicuously, the National Monument, an incomplete replica of the Parthenon, erected in 1829 to a design by Cockerell and executed by Playfair, who had already topped the hill with his diminutive Greek observatory (1818). The Calton skyline, embellished with this distinguished ensemble of monuments, enhanced Edinburgh's identity as the Athens of the North.

In 1936, the prisons on Regent Road were replaced by the monumental St Andrews House.

The hill is surrounded by a triangle of roads; Waterloo/Regent Road to the south, London Road/Royal Terrace to the north-east and Leith Street to the north-west.

Waterloo Place forms an eastern extension of Princes Street, its entrance marked by the western elevation of the first buildings in the street - designed as a matching pair with their ionic pilastered porticos forming a gateway to Waterloo Place. The north and south elevations of the first part of the street are closely lined by late Georgian buildings built in the classical style. These are followed by Stevenson's Bridge over the Calton ravine, with the Old Calton burial ground and St Andrew's House to the south. Beyond St Andrew's House the road skirts the slopes of Calton Hill and opens up views across the eastern part of the Old Town to Salisbury Crags, with the Old Royal High School to the north.

Royal and Regent Terrace exploit the topography of the site and consist of two long outward facing terraces linked at an acute angle. Royal Terrace facing to the north, with views out to the Forth, is an imposing street, consisting of a 360 metre row of forty terraced houses with Corinthian and Ionic colonnades. These buildings are of a conception and scale unmatched anywhere else in Edinburgh. To the south, is the only slightly less grand 300 metre stretch of Regent Terrace, linked to Royal Terrace by Calton Terrace. It is built along a natural contour line, maximising long views and the picturesque qualities of the site. To the north of Royal Terrace are the rectilinear city blocks of Leopold Place, Hillside Crescent and Eglinton Crescent, radiating back from London Road.

Although retaining substantial residential use, this area has also attracted prestigious offices such as consulates, while a significant portion of Royal Terrace is in hotel use, often involving merging adjacent properties.

### ***The Dean Estate***

John Learmonth bought the Dean Estate in 1825, an area separated from the growing New Town by the Water of Leith in its steep sided valley. At the time Learmonth was Lord Provost and was promoting a bridge across the Water of Leith to improve communication between the city and the north, by avoiding the steep descent into Dean Village. He obtained the support of the Trustees of the Cramond Turnpike, owners of the road, by agreeing to appoint their preferred architect, the eminent civil engineer Thomas Telford, and the bridge was built in 1831, largely at Learmonth's expense.

An innovative and elegant design that has stood the test of time, Telford's Dean Bridge was an asset to the city, encouraging the siting of institutions such as the Dean Orphanage and Daniel Stewart's School beyond the river.

It was not until the 1850s that the Heriot Trust, which had bought the land, commissioned John Tait to lay out Oxford Terrace, Eton Terrace, Lennox Street and Clarendon Crescent north-east of Queensferry Road, taking advantage of the views afforded by the valley location. This was followed in 1860 by Belgrave Terrace by John Chesser, set back behind a garden along the other side of Queensferry Road which featured bay windows for the first time in the area. Belgrave Crescent, overlooking the valley, followed in 1874 and Belgrave Place in 1880. Mirroring Belgrave Terrace on the other side of the road, Learmonth's descendants began Learmonth Terrace to designs by Chesser in 1873.

The Dean Estate stands each side of the Queensferry Road beyond Telford's Dean Bridge. The earliest development is on the left beyond the old Holy Trinity Church, formed by two main streets, Buckingham Terrace and Belgrave Crescent, running roughly parallel to Queensferry Road. Each street is single sided looking out over public open space.

The Heriot Trust development immediately to the north of Dean Bridge, and on the right of Queensferry Road, is based on a polygon of roads all outward facing terraces except Lennox Street, the road farthest from Queensferry Road.

### ***Stockbridge and the Raeburn Estate***

At the turn of the eighteenth century Stockbridge was a successful milling community standing astride the Water of Leith by a new stone bridge, completed in the late 1700s, replacing the original ford across the river. In addition to the industrial buildings, the village had a community of workers' cottages and out of town villas of the more affluent.

From around 1813 the expansion of the New Town impacted on Stockbridge. The growing prosperity of the area and additional traffic along the toll road increased the demand for property, leading to the incremental replacement and development of Stockbridge's commercial centre. By the late 1800s, Stockbridge had been engulfed by Edinburgh's suburbs, becoming a neighbourhood centre that continues to support a thriving retail sector.

Stockbridge is an ancient rural and milling village situated by the Water of Leith and has less formal character than the New Town making it distinct from the rest of the Conservation Area. The area forms a neighbourhood shopping centre primarily based around small shop units in Raeburn Place.

Stockbridge was laid out around a single through route; now called Kerr Street to the south east of the Water of Leith and Deanhaugh Street, Raeburn Place, Comely Bank Road successively on the other bank. Dean Street and Leslie Place join Raeburn Place from the higher ground to the south-west. These streets are lined with Georgian and Victorian terraces of tenements or three storey houses. Beyond these streets are the older and grander terraces of the Raeburn Estate. The oldest of these, Ann Street, has some particularly fine buildings including palace fronted terraces with substantial individual front gardens. St Bernard's Crescent, two crescents facing each other to form a saucer shaped space, is also a superior example of late Georgian townscape.

The majority of property remains in residential use - in particular the Raeburn Estate has been subject to little redevelopment and remains an attractive and architecturally outstanding residential area.

In 1789, the painter Henry Raeburn, acquired the estate of Deanhaugh, through his marriage to Ann, the widow of James Leslie of Deanhaugh. The estate to the

northwest of the New Town was still somewhat out of town and accessible only by the bridge at Stockbridge. Construction began in 1813 to the west of Stockbridge under the direction of the architect James Milne. The first street built, named Ann Street after Raeburn's wife, consisted of relatively modest three storey houses with extensive front gardens. Despite its location, the development was successful - later sections were more conventionally urban in style, as it was engulfed by the city. St Bernard's Crescent, a grand fully urban composition with giant Doric columns was completed in 1824.

### ***Canonmills and Claremont***

Canonmills was originally a milling community the property of the monks from Holyrood, hence its name. All of the schemes in this area which began in the 1820s were never completed and only fragments were produced. It was left to the Victorians to complete the development.

This area consists of a series of modest-sized Georgian developments, none of which were completed and which lack the formal layout of other parts of the New Town. The western section of the area is bisected and structured by the east-west route of Henderson Row.

### **Spaces**

The Conservation Area contains a series of gardens, squares and walks which make an important contribution to the character of the area and contrast with the controlled architecture of the surrounding buildings. They also reflect the area's neo-classical town planning and picturesque tradition of landscape improvement. They were designed to take advantage of Edinburgh's topography and townscape. They range in size from West Princes Street Gardens (12.8ha) and Regent Gardens (4.8ha) to the smaller squares and strips of Rothesay Terrace (0.12ha) and Saxe-Coburg Place (0.24ha). The gardens are of international significance and are designated in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

There are many shared garden enclosures within the New Town. They occupy about 13% of the New Town area and contribute a value to the character of the conservation area far in excess of their area.

There are also important graveyards associated with St John's, St Cuthbert's and Calton.

### ***St Andrew and Charlotte Square***

St Andrew Square was laid out in 1770 and Charlotte Square was completed in 1808. They were laid out as formal geometric pleasure gardens providing a retreat for the surrounding owners.

### ***Princes Street Gardens***

Princes Street Gardens lie in the valley separating the Old and New Towns. Situated at a lower level than the surrounding streets there are good views into the gardens

from Princes Street, the Mound, and the Castle; but views out from the gardens are limited, and are dominated principally by the Mound and views of the Old Town, which overlook the gardens to the south.

In 1776, the Town Council became responsible for the area of land that was to become East Princes Street Gardens. It was not until 1829 that permanent ground works were carried out and an ornamental terrace along the Princes Street side built. In 1844 the construction of Waverley Station and the railway cutting through the garden required a redesign of the gardens to accommodate these changes, the gardens were officially reopened on 15 August 1851.

A memorable feature of the gardens is the floral clock which was installed in 1903 and was the first in Britain. Its popularity and success led to the widespread adoption of floral clocks as a prominent fashion in civic bedding displays during the early twentieth century

West Princes Street Gardens were formed at the insistence of residents of Princes Street who leased land that had been the Nor' Loch from the Council. Alternative plans for the design of the gardens were put forward, but it was not until 1820 that James Skene's plans were adopted and implemented by Alexander Henderson, whose firm, Eagle and Henderson, was involved with many of the New Town pleasure gardens. After many difficulties the gardens were opened in 1821 to those residents willing to pay the annual fee of four guineas.

Between 1845 and 1847, the Edinburgh-Glasgow Railway Company took its line through the bottom of the gardens which affected the layout. In 1862 the owners added the spectacular Ross Fountain by A Durenne of Paris.

By the 1870s, there were still about 400 private individuals who subscribed to use the garden although properties in Princes Street had become almost entirely commercial. This caused public pressure for the Council to adopt the gardens, which they did in 1876. The Council instigated several changes, such as the creation of the terrace just below Princes Street in 1879, with small paths running downhill from it and the erection of a bandstand in 1880 - the bandstand was superseded by the Ross Theatre in 1935.

### ***Queen Street Gardens***

Craig's plan for the First New Town included a wide band of formal parkland to the north of Queen Street, however, land acquisition problems delayed the construction of these works.

East Queen Street Gardens, which commenced in 1814, was the first of the three communal pleasure garden to be laid out along Queen Street. The original layout of paths radiating from the centre of the gardens was changed to the present arrangement between 1817 and 1840. In the early 1860s, the garden was opened-up to make vistas and space by thinning the trees around its periphery. In 1868, the existing terrace that extends along the Queen Street side of the garden was constructed, to give generous views down into the garden.

Central Queen Street Gardens were laid out in the mid-1820s on land formerly the steading of a Mr Wood whose farm pond was reformed with a small rocky island in the middle to make a central feature in the garden which was otherwise open. Unlike East and West Queen Street Gardens, Central Queen Street Gardens are very enclosed. There are no views into the garden due to a thick perimeter planting of deciduous trees and evergreens.

West Queen Street Gardens were originally a flat area with no natural features to incorporate into the design apart from some old trees. The design adopted, included a mounded central area intersected with walks. As in East and Central Queen Street Gardens, a terrace was built on the Queen Street side to allow good views, especially down India Street. The garden is open to the surrounding streets, with simple perimeter planting.

### ***Calton Hill***

Calton Hill is visible from a wide range of locations. Its monuments give it emphasis and a characteristic form. Panoramic views are obtained from Calton Hill and Regent Gardens to the Scott Monument and over the city and the Firth of Forth. The Calton Hill Conservation Plan which was adopted by the Council in 2001 informs all decisions on the management and future of the public open space and monuments on the Hill.

Calton Hill is designated as a composite SSSI 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' which includes Arthur's Seat and the Castle Rock, notified for geological and biological interests.

### ***Regent Gardens***

Regent Gardens were formed between 1830 and 1832, under a feu charter of 1829. The gardens, the largest of the New Town gardens still in private ownership, are roughly triangular with the gardens of Regent Terrace and Royal Terrace backing on to the two long sides. The structure of the gardens remains very much as originally planned.

A central lawn on sloping ground is planted with mature parkland trees. A mixture of lime, beech, and sycamore shelters the surrounding walks. The various footpaths lead to a terrace planted with limes, set above a ha-ha at the top of the gardens, just inside the boundary wall with Calton Hill. The ha-ha is in two parts, connected by a rustic bridge below which is a walk lined on one side by a holly hedge and on the other by Irish yews.

### ***Dean Gardens***

In the 1860s, the area surrounding Dean Bridge was undergoing rapid development by Colonel Learmonth, son of Lord Provost Learmonth (who was instrumental in building the Dean Bridge). Local residents were anxious to protect open space and banded together to petition for the provision of a garden and to purchase the land.

The layout of the gardens consists of two terraces connected by paths and steps which allowed various picturesque views to St Bernard's Well a classical temple, designed by Alexander Nasmyth in 1789 and built on the site of a mineral spring.

### ***Water of Leith***

In addition to the formal gardens delineated by the various stages of development the Water of Leith Walkway runs through the Area. It is an important landscape feature and a key wildlife resource forming the principal wildlife corridor between the uplands of the Pentland Hills and lower Water of Leith Valley. It is designated as an Urban Wildlife Site.

The character of the river valley alters from a steep, wooded gorge in Dean Gardens to a flatter more urban river from Deanhaugh Street reflecting sharp changes in earlier sea levels. The Walkway along the Water of Leith is one of Edinburgh's major recreational resources and, as it passes through the enclosed, natural gorge, it provides a distinct feature area within the Conservation Area.

## **KEY ELEMENTS**

### **Vistas and Views**

Terminated vista within the grid layouts and the long distance views across and out of the Conservation Area are important features. The grid layout follows the topography throughout the area providing a formal hierarchy of streets with controlled vistas and planned views both inward and outward and particularly northwards over the estuary. The cohesive, historic skyline makes an important contribution to the Conservation Area and it is particularly crucial to control building heights, particularly along skyline ridges.

### **Building Forms**

The overwhelming retention of buildings in their original design form, allied to the standard format of residential buildings, contributes significantly to the character of the area. The principal building form throughout the New Town is the hollow square, residential, tenement block consisting of a sunken basement area with three to four storeys above.

### **Streetscape**

Streets and pavements are usually consistent in their width comprising a central parallel-sided carriageway defined by granite or whin drainage channels and stepped kerbs. Pavement and road widths are determined by the street hierarchy and have a consistent ratio based on where the street lies within the hierarchy. The relationship of stone buildings, pavements and setted streets provide a disciplined unity and cohesion.

Within the conservation area, the historic street pattern is largely intact. Initially pavements were flagged, probably with Hailes or Craigleith sandstone paving slabs, while carriageways were setted. Streets are bounded on either side by pavements

running back in an unbroken surface from the kerb to the building line, or stone base of railings guarding an open basement area.

The extensive retention of original historic street surfaces, particularly roads surfaced in whin or granite setts and some high quality stone paving add an important texture to the character of the area. They should be rigorously protected and used as guiding references in new works. Many items of historic street furniture such as railing mounted lighting, police boxes, telephone boxes also remain.

### **Street Lighting**

There has been street lighting in the area since 1785, when one hundred and sixteen lamps burning whale oil were installed. From the 1820s, gas lamps were installed. In 1955, the local authority began a ten-year programme to replace all surviving gas lighting with electric lights throughout the city. At this time the majority of the surviving gas standards were replaced with concrete or steel poles - some with 'Georgian-style' lanterns. Railing-mounted lamps were also installed or reinstalled in a few streets - the railing standards along the Mound and the south side of Princes Street are examples. These were copies of the privately erected wrought iron oil lamps in Charlotte Square that were erected in c. 1800. Many owners augmented the original street lighting by adding lamps to the front railings of properties.

The vast majority of lamp standards erected prior to the 1940s were cast iron. Contemporary with other cast iron elements, such as railings, these were often of considerable design merit. The retention of these items is important where they still exist.

### **Street Furniture**

Edinburgh has a tradition of robust and well designed street furniture: for instance the cast iron police boxes and road lamps designed by the City Architect, E J MacRae, in the 1930s to complement Edinburgh's classical architecture. Where these items occur, they make an important contribution to the quality of the area. They can also provide a pattern for new furniture.

### **Statues and Monuments**

The extensive collection of statues, monuments, historic graveyards and national memorials in the Conservation Area make a significant contribution to the historic and architectural character of the area. They also provide a focus and punctuation points for many views. St John's, St Cuthbert's and Calton graveyards contain important collections of funerary monuments.

### **Mews and Lanes**

Craig's New Town contained lanes that were composed of artisans' dwellings, but as the expansions of the New Town took place, the original purpose of the lanes transferred to the provision of mews. These provided accommodation for stabling and coaches, usually associated with the town houses on the streets that they lay behind. They are usually one and a half stories high, with a carriage entrance and

sometimes a hayloft, both on the lane side. They were usually built with a formal high quality design facing the house and an informal rubble elevation facing the lane of the mews.

## **Materials**

There is a standard palette of traditional building materials including blonde sandstone, timber windows and pitched slated roofs.

## **Stonework**

Apart from a few of the very earliest properties, which are of rubblework stuccoed to represent ashlar, the street elevations of all buildings were in finely dressed squared ashlar of the durable local Craigleith sandstone. By the 1860s, improved transport led to the import of significant quantities of cheaper and often softer stone.

There are a variety of masonry treatments on front and rear elevations, none of which were originally painted: polished ashlar (smooth); broached ashlar (horizontally tooled); droved ashlar (with fine banded tooling); stugged ashlar (lightly tooled with a masons' punch or point); channelled V-jointed ashlar; rock faced; vermiculated (as if eaten by worms); random rubble and squared rubble.

## **Roofs**

Most roofs in the First New Town are steeply pitched, with a high central ridge. Roofs in later developments were more likely to have two parallel ridges making a double-pitched 'M' profile roof with a central leaded platform. A few roofs have an original mansard behind a balustrade, as seen at Henderson Row, Royal Terrace and Douglas Crescent - these were only popular towards the end of the nineteenth century. Chimneys and chimney pots occur on party and gable walls, and cupolas are virtually universal over internal stairs. Roofs are generally covered with graded slate with lead flashings to parapet or valley gutters. Rainwater goods are generally cast iron.

## **Windows**

Timber sash windows are typical throughout the Conservation Area, usually consisting of a pair of glazed sashes often subdivided by astragals, that slide vertically in a case or frame with a pair of weights contained within the case balancing each sash.

In conjunction with internal timber shutters, sash and case windows are an efficient design well suited to combat Edinburgh's climate and the majority of windows have withstood the test of time remarkably well. Where there are no inherent defects in their traditional construction such windows should have no problems that regular maintenance cannot cure.

Most early windows were glazed with either Crown or cylinder glass rather than the more modern cast or sheet glass. The high surface gloss, slight imperfections and

convex planes create interesting reflections and give depth to the façade. Where it exists original glass should, therefore, be retained wherever possible. Since Crown glass and cylinder glass could only be made in small sheets the size of the panes was strictly limited, so large windows demanded sub-division by rebated glazing bars, or astragals, to carry the smaller section of glass.

Most early astragals are extremely fine. After 1845 when the weight tax on glass was abolished, larger sheets of heavier drawn glass came into use and astragals became thicker to support the extra weight. Soon afterwards even larger sizes of panes became available and astragals were no longer required because a complete sash could be glazed without the need for sub-division. Many of the later New Town houses had plate glass on the front elevation but retained the cheaper Crown or cylinder glass with astragals at the rear.

The size and number of panes and the arrangement of astragals vary widely depending on the date and position of the window, the relative importance of individual rooms, the improvements in glass manufacture and subsequent changes in fashion. For example, in the 1820s it became fashionable to have floor-to-ceiling windows in drawing rooms on the first floor and the cills were lowered accordingly, examples can be seen in Northumberland Street and Heriot Row.

There has been longstanding Council guidance which requires windows to be painted white to maintain the unity of architectural schemes.

## **Doors**

Doors are a distinctive feature of the area. They are normally a simple four or six panel design constructed in Baltic pine and painted. The configuration of panels and mouldings varied considerably, displaying the full range of Georgian joinery skills.

Much of the excellent original ironmongery has survived on front doors within the area. Usually manufactured of brass with a relatively high zinc content. Typical items include door handles, letter plates, bell pulls, numerals and often a door knocker. Brass name plates with incised Roman characters filled with wax or paint are another common feature.

## **Fanlights**

The term fanlight, derived from the semi-circular fan shape, tends to be applied to any glazed opening above a door, but it may be more precise to refer to the rectangular openings as 'overdoor lights'. In either case, they were generally placed above solid unglazed doors to admit light into hallways. A wide variety of patterns are found in the Conservation Area reflecting the tastes of the original builders or owners. Most were ornate - featuring curved, circular, rectangular or fan shaped geometric patterns of astragals.

## **Entrance Platts**

Front doors are usually accessed from the street by one or more stone steps leading to a stone slab or platt bridging the open basement area. This arrangement also

reinforces the importance of the entrance whilst bridging the difference in level between the street and the entrance. The drop from the pavement to the area and the edge of the entrance steps and platt are protected by cast iron railings, a feature which became increasingly ornate over time particularly on more prestigious buildings

### **Cast Iron work**

Cast iron railings are an important and characteristic feature throughout the Conservation Area, serving as safety barriers around sunken basement areas. The abundance of cast iron work in Edinburgh was a result of the expansion of the city at a time when cast iron was relatively cheap. During the Second World War, when many ornamental railings around communal gardens were removed for re-use for munitions, but never actually used for that purpose, the sunken basement still had to be protected, and consequently much of the original ironwork has survived. Cast iron balconies at first floor level are also found in many places, and add significant interest and rhythm to the facades.

In many streets, entrances were emphasised by the incorporation of lamps adjacent to the footpath and on either side of the entrance. These lamps, many of which survive, were mounted on wrought or cast iron standards integral to railings or stood separately on the stone plinth.

There is long standing Council guidance which requires the painting of all iron work in black to maintain architectural unity.

### **Shop Fronts**

The form and appearance of shop fronts make an important contribution to the appearance and character of certain parts of the area.

Streets of shops were included from the beginning of the New Town. Many of these shops have survived on the fringes of the central area, such as Stockbridge and William Street. Within the central area, however, these early shop fronts have largely disappeared. Victorian and early twentieth century shop fronts incorporated fine and elaborate joinery, becoming more elegant and maximising display space. In the post-war period, the availability of a wide range of new materials and changing architectural philosophy resulted in a change in shop front design.

### **Boundary Treatments**

Boundaries are important in maintaining the character and quality of the spaces in the New Town. They provide enclosure, define many pedestrian links and restrict views out of the spaces. Stone is the predominant material.

## **MANAGEMENT**

### **Legislation, policies and guidance**

## Conservation Areas

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that Conservation Areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Conservation area status brings a number of special controls:

- The demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation Area consent;
- Some permitted development rights, which allow improvements or alterations to the external appearance of dwellinghouses and flatted dwellings, are removed; and
- Works to trees are controlled (see Trees for more detail).

The removal of buildings which make a positive contribution to an area is only permitted in exceptional circumstances, and where the proposals meet certain criteria relating to condition, conservation deficit, adequacy of efforts to retain the building and the relative public benefit of replacement proposals. Conservation area character appraisals are a material consideration when considering applications for development within conservation areas.

Alterations to windows are also controlled in conservation areas in terms of the Council's guidelines.

## Listed buildings

A significant number of buildings within the New Town Conservation Area are listed for their special architectural or historic interest and are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Listed building consent is required for the demolition of a listed building, or its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its special character.

## World Heritage Site

Since 2014, Historic Environment Scotland has a statutory duty to consider the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site when assessing the impact of development proposals.

## Planning guidance

More detailed, subject-specific guidance is set out in Planning Guidance documents. Those particularly relevant to the New Town Conservation Area are:

- *The World Heritage Site Management Plan*
- *Guidance for Householders*
- *Guidance for Businesses*

- *Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*
- *Developer contributions and affordable housing*
- *Edinburgh Design guidance*
- *Communications Infrastructure*
- *Street Design Guidance*

In addition, a number of statutory tools are available to assist development management within the Conservation Area.

#### Article 4 Direction Orders

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, amended 2012, (abbreviated to GPDO), restricts the types of development which can be carried out in a Conservation Area without the need for planning permission. These include most alterations to the external appearance of dwellinghouses and flats. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals.

Under Article 4 of the GPDO the planning authority can seek the approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict development rights further. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor developments in Conservation Areas which can cumulatively lead to the erosion of character and appearance. The New Town Conservation Area has Article 4 Directions covering the following classes of development:

Class 7 - the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure.

Class 38 - water undertakings.

Class 39 - development by public gas supplier.

Class 40 - development by electricity statutory undertaker.

Class 41- development required for the purposes of the carrying on of any tramway or road transport undertaking.

#### Trees

Trees within Conservation Areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning (etc) Act 2006. This Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of a tree having a diameter exceeding 75mm at a point 1.5m above ground level. The planning authority must be given six weeks' notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. Failure to give notice will render the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Tree Preservation Orders are made under planning legislation to protect individual and groups of trees considered important for amenity or because of their cultural or historic interest. When assessing amenity, the importance of trees as wildlife habitats will be taken into consideration. There is a strong presumption against any form of development or change of use of land which is likely to damage or prejudice the future

long term existence of trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The removal of trees for arboricultural reasons will not imply that the space created by their removal can be used for development.

*Trees in the City* contains a set of policies with an action plan used to guide the management of the Council's trees and woodlands.

### **Assessing Development within the New Town Conservation Area**

The richness of the New Town's built heritage is considerable. It is this complexity and diversity which make it attractive, yet make these qualities hard to define. It also has a fragility and human scale which often does not sit easily with the demands of present day development requirements. These are qualities and conflicts that must be resolved if the character of the New Town is to be sensitively interpreted and enhanced.

#### **General Criteria**

General issues to be taken into account in assessing development proposals in the Conservation Area include the appropriateness of the overall massing of development, its scale (the expression of size indicated by the windows, doors, floor heights, and other identifiable units), its proportions and its relationship with its context i.e. whether it sits comfortably. Development should be in harmony with, or complimentary to, its neighbours having regard to the adjoining architectural styles. The use of materials generally matching those which are historically dominant in the area is important, as is the need for the development not to have a visually disruptive impact on the existing townscape. It should also, as far as possible, fit into the "grain" of the Conservation Area, for example, by respecting historic layout, street patterns or existing land form. It is also important where new uses are proposed that these respect the unique character and general ambience of the Conservation Area, for example certain developments may adversely affect the character of a Conservation Area through noise, nuisance and general disturbance. Proposals outside the boundaries of the Conservation Area should not erode the character and appearance of the New Town or intrude into views of the Castle.

#### **New Buildings**

New development should be of good contemporary design that is sympathetic to the spatial pattern, scale and massing, proportions, building line and design of traditional buildings in the area. Any development within or adjacent to the Conservation Area should restrict itself in scale and mass to the traditionally four/five storey form. New development should also reflect the proportion and scale of the traditional window pattern. The quality of alterations to shop fronts, extensions, dormers and other minor alterations should also be of an appropriately high standard.

The development of new buildings in the Conservation Area should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. What is important is not that new buildings should directly imitate earlier styles, rather that they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole

which has a well-established character and appearance of its own. Therefore, while development of a gap site in a traditional terrace may require a very sensitive design approach to maintain the overall integrity of the area; in other cases modern designs sympathetic and complimentary to the existing character of the area may be acceptable.

### Alterations and Extensions

Proposals for the alteration or extension of properties in the Conservation Area will normally be acceptable where they are sensitive to the existing building, in keeping with the character and appearance of the particular area and do not prejudice the amenities of adjacent properties. Extensions should be subservient to the building, of an appropriate scale, use appropriate materials and should normally be located on the rear elevations of a property. Very careful consideration will be required for alterations and extensions affecting the roof of a property, as these may be particularly detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### Definition of 'Character' and 'Appearance'

Conservation areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The character of an area is the combination of features and qualities which contribute to the intrinsic worth of an area and make it distinctive. Special character does not derive only from the quality of buildings. Elements such as the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries, paving materials, urban grain and more intangible features, such as smells and noises which are unique to the area, may all contribute to the local scene. Conservation area designation is the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and of ensuring that planning decisions address these qualities.

Appearance is more limited and relates to the way individual features within the conservation area look.

Care and attention should be paid in distinguishing between the impact of proposed developments on both the character and appearance of the conservation area.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Development opportunities for infill or replacement may arise within the area, and will be considered in terms of the relevant guidance. The Edinburgh Design Guidance, Guidance for Householders and Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas explain the Council's approach to design in historic contexts.

No sites within the Conservation Area are identified for significant housing or other development through local development plans.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNING ACTION**

### **Conservation Area Boundaries**

The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been examined through the appraisal process. No proposals for boundary changes are proposed.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT**

The character appraisal emphasises the more positive aspects of character in order that the future can build on what is best within the Conservation Area. The quality of urban and architectural design needs to be continuously improved if the character of the Conservation Area is to be enhanced. The retention of good quality buildings (as well as listed buildings) and the sensitive interpretation of traditional spaces in development are of particular importance.

### ***Streetscape***

Careful consideration needs to be given to floorscape which is an essential part of the overall appreciation of the New Town's rich townscape heritage. Repair and renewal work to street surfaces should be carefully detailed and carried out to the highest standards using quality natural materials.

### ***Shop Fronts***

Whilst there are many fine shop fronts in the Conservation Area, there are also a number which are unsatisfactory and ignore the architectural form of the buildings of which they form part. Encouragement should be given to improving the quality of the shop fronts in the area, particularly that minority of shop fronts which are particularly poorly or inappropriately designed or badly maintained.

### ***Natural Heritage***

Measures to further protect and enhance the river valley of the Water of Leith should be pursued, whilst complementing its designation as an Urban Wildlife Site in accordance with the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, NPPG 14 and its historic character.

Opportunities should also be taken to increase the biodiversity potential of appropriate open spaces through a variety of management practices. This may include the introduction of replacement native shrub planting and diversity of grass cutting regimes.

### ***High Buildings***

The New Town has very consistent heights and a cohesive skyline and is particularly susceptible to buildings that break the prevailing roof and eaves height and impinge on the many important views. It is also important to protect the character of the conservation area from the potentially damaging impact of high buildings outside the conservation area.

## **REFERENCES**

- Perspectives of the Scottish City – ed George Gordon.
- Georgian Edinburgh – Ian G Lindsay.
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- The Care and Conservation of Georgian Houses – Davey, Heath, Hodges, Ketchin, Milne.
- The Making of Classical Edinburgh – A.J.Youngson.
- RIAS Illustrated Architectural Guide – Charles McKean James Craig 1744 – 1795 - eds. Kitty Cruft and Andrew Fraser.

# New Town Conservation Area

