Gilmerton Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Gilmerton 地区文物保护-地区特色的鉴定

Gilmerton (Gilmerton)의 보호를 위한 구역

Gilmerton 禁區

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
The Gilmerston Conservation Area Character Appraisal was approved by the Planning Committee on 24 July 2000

ISBN 1 85191 073 5
CONTENTS

Boundary Of Gilmerton Conservation Area ................................................................. 2

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 3
Conservation Areas .............................................................................................. 3
Character Appraisals ........................................................................................... 3

GILMERTON CONSERVATION AREA ............................................................. 4

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT ......................................................................... 5
Origins ................................................................................................................... 5
Growth of the Village ............................................................................................. 5

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER .................................................................................. 8
Spatial Pattern and Built Form ........................................................................... 8
Townscape ........................................................................................................... 10
Architectural Character ....................................................................................... 12
Activities and Uses ............................................................................................. 15

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT ......................................................... 16

GENERAL INFORMATION ............................................................................... 20
Statutory Policies relating to Gilmerton .............................................................. 20
Supplementary Guidance ................................................................................... 21
Implications of Conservation Area Status ......................................................... 21

REFERENCES ..................................................................................................... 23
BOUNDARY OF GILMERTON CONSERVATION AREA
INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, describes conservation areas as “...areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The Act makes provision for the designation of conservation areas as distinct from individual buildings, and planning authorities are required to determine which parts of their areas merit conservation area status.

There are currently 38 conservation areas in Edinburgh, including city centre areas, Victorian suburbs and former villages. Each conservation area has its own unique character and appearance.

Character Appraisals

The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation; rather designation demonstrates a commitment to positive action for the safeguarding and enhancement of character and appearance. The planning authority and the Scottish Executive are obliged to protect conservation areas from development which would adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore, important that both the authorities and other groups who have an interest in conservation areas and residents are aware of those elements which must be preserved or enhanced.

A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements which contribute to the special historic and architectural character of an area.

It is intended that Character Appraisals will guide the local planning authority in making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement proposals. The Character Appraisal will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the conservation area and applications for significant new developments should be accompanied by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the proposals take account of the essential character of the area as identified in this document.

NPPG 18: Planning and the Historic Environment states that Conservation Area Character Appraisals should be prepared when reconsidering existing conservation area designations, promoting further designations or formulating enhancement schemes. The NPPG also specifies that Article 4 Direction Orders will not be confirmed unless a Character Appraisal is in place.
**Gilmerton Conservation Area**

The Gilmerton Conservation Area was originally designated on 13 October 1977 and has since been amended to exclude playing fields and adjacent housing to the north east and the housing developments of Ravenscroft Gardens and Gilmerton Place.

The village of Gilmerton lies on the top of a hill some 400 feet above sea level and is approximately four miles south east of the centre of Edinburgh. Part of the southern edge of the conservation area abuts the Green Belt.

The conservation area includes the historic core of the village (Ravenscroft Street, Ravenscroft Place and Drum Street) as well as the majority of properties in Newtoft Street and its junction with Ferniehill, Gilmerton Road and Drum Street. Just north of the junction, the Faith Mission and Bible College and community centre are also included within the conservation area.

The conservation area falls within the ward boundaries of Moredun and Gilmerton.

*Traditional Building Materials*
**Historical Development**

**Origins**

Early records of Gilmerton go back to the 12th century. Gilmerton’s long history as a rural village is reflected in its former name of Gilmour’s tun or “farm place”. However, Gilmerton developed as a coal mining centre from the 17th century and later as a lime working community in the 19th century. The presence of these minerals probably explains why Gilmerton is one of the few larger villages in the Edinburgh area away from a water course.

**Growth of the Village**

The structure of the original settlement was typically linear with development along the principal routes of Drum Street and what is now Ravenscroft Street (Map of 1766).

The map of 1855 indicates that there had been little change in the village in the intervening years, two of the most significant developments being the building of a school and the parish church, both in 1837.

The period between 1852 and 1894 saw significant development take place away from the historic core of the village. New Street (now Newtoft Street) was constructed running south west to north east on a line almost parallel with what is now Ravenscroft Street. By 1894, the Tofts at the west end of the street and two large detached buildings on the north side of the street had been built.

By the end of the century, the village was grouped around the rectangle formed by New Street, Drum Street, Main Street (later to become Ravenscroft Street) and Ravenscroft Place, and was beginning to extend eastwards along Drum Street.

The most significant changes during the first half of the 20th century were the building of the Faith Mission and Bible College in 1903, the community centre on the adjacent site in 1912 and the erection of inter-war public sector housing in New Street and Drum Street.
The creation of the new east-west route of Ferniehill and Gilmerton Dykes Road in the 1940s and 50s resulted in a noticeable shift in the centre of the village northwards to the new crossroads. Further significant housing development in the 1960s reinforced this change of emphasis away from the historic core of the village. Significant new development around the crossroads and the construction of Ravenscroft Gardens to the south of Ravenscroft Street also date from the 1960s.

Significant intrusions within the conservation area have taken place in more recent years with the building of the Burghtoft housing estate, off Ravenscroft Street, in 1986 and the Limefield estate, on the south side of Drum Street in 1994. In addition, a number of smaller housing developments, mainly single dwellings in Ravenscroft Street have been erected along with the two commercial developments of the supermarket and bingo hall.
**ESSENTIAL CHARACTER**

**Spatial Pattern and Built Form**

Old plans show a linear hilltop settlement which developed on and around a ‘T’ junction. A central street (Ravenscroft Street) is connected to Drum Street, the main Edinburgh / Dalkeith route. This junction is now the heart of the conservation area. The development pattern responds to its location by siting accesses and buildings either along the contours or in gentle curves to ease the transition up and down hill. It also reflects the original feu patterns. Essentially, there are four main building types: single storey terraced cottages, rural two storey tenements, single storey cottage farm courtyards and traditional houses. These forms reflect the initial linear layout of the village with their broad frontages and narrow footprint.

Much of the original spatial pattern remains intact. The Ravenscroft Street structure is defined by terraced cottages often sited opposite other buildings set back from the street on larger plots. The relationship of buildings to open spaces forms a ‘beaded’ pattern of staggered development creating variety and visual interest.

Along Drum Street, longer and continuous frontages are built against the heel of the pavement. In particular two storey tenements give a sculptural visual form, reflecting the curves of the street and with their gables stepping downhill. The structure is enriched by the way the rows of tenements are opposite single storey cottages and farm courtyards located on alternate sides of the street. Terraced forms give way to semi-detached or detached houses with increasing spacing between them as the street leads out of the village. Stone walls, railings, hedges or the walls of stone houses bound most open spaces.
Pedestrian movement around the village is provided in some places by the remains of an old footpath system, often sheltered from the weather by stone walls or buildings. Past evidence indicates it provided direct links between houses and the school, village hall, open spaces and countryside.

There are also village institutions including the former Dr. Guthrie’s School, the Community Centre and Parish Church. These buildings sit comfortably on larger sized plots and contrast with the domestic scale of surrounding architecture.

Essential Character

- Underlying structure of access ways.
- Development and open spaces reinforced by traditional building forms.
- Predominance of a limited number of building types within the historic core.
- ‘Beaded’ pattern of development and open space along Ravenscroft Street.
- Groups of buildings visually reflecting varied plot sizes and feu shapes.
The conservation area has an intimate relationship with the surrounding countryside. There is an attractive softening of the scale of the buildings in the settlement as it merges into the countryside. The rural setting to the south is reinforced by the green belt designation.

There are two main junctions, which are the centres of public activity. They are quite distinctive in character. At the north end, at the intersection of Newtoft Street and Drum Street, the street space has a large scale. It is defined by attractive institutional and community buildings well set back from the pavement and a combination of housing with shops underneath and recreational buildings, some of which are of mixed quality. Trees, landscape features, boundary stone walls and railings, help to define the public space. This is a transitional and spacious cross-roads which allows distant vistas towards the heart of the city but lacks enclosure and a sense of place.

At the ‘T’ junction formed by Ravenscroft Street and Drum Street, the streets are narrower with a more enclosed building line giving the area an attractive and intimate character. A mix of uses reinforces this. From the brow of the hill, there are panoramic views of Edinburgh and the countryside.

Along Ravenscroft Street, the mixed size and type of buildings and open spaces demonstrate a contrasting and rhythmic townscape. The changing building line, storey heights, orientation and spacing of buildings along the street reveal a variety of visual planes. These provide framed glimpses into intimate courtyards and gardens and views through the spaces between to other buildings or the open countryside beyond. An attractive gable end provides a framed vista closing the view up Ravenscroft Place.
Ravenscroft Street: Mixed size and type of buildings

The buildings on Drum Street show less variety in size and their longer frontages provide a more uniform setting. The winding pattern of the street gives a sequence of views out to the countryside and the stepped forms produce a skyline that follows the slope of the land. Open farm gates reveal courtyards and stable buildings behind the street frontage. Within the area, the Parish Church, Royal Bank, Community Centre and the Bible College form landmarks and focal points of local interest.

**Essential Character - Townscape**

- Rhythmic and intimate townscape at ‘T’ junction and along Ravenscroft Street and an overall sense of human scale.

- Permeability allowing views through gaps between buildings, along streets and outwards to distant landmarks.

- Variety and interplay of frontage planes, building lines and heights, angled gables, roofscapes and reflection of traditional feu sizes.

- Sensitive softening of the scale of buildings as the village merges into the countryside.
**Architectural Character**

The village contains examples from a range of building types, styles and periods. However, the strong representation of vernacular buildings within the historic core of Ravenscroft Street and Drum Street has resulted in a uniformity of character lacking in the area to the north defined by Newtoft Street and its junction with Drum Street and Ferniehill.

Within the historic core, the significant majority of buildings date from the 19th century and are a mix of one and two storeys. The domestic vernacular tradition is typified, both in the form of low terraces typical of agricultural and mining communities and the occasional grander house. The most notable examples are the former farmhouse of East Gilmerton at 83 Drum Street, the red pantiled cottage at 41 Ravenscroft Street, the single storey three bay cottage at 89 Ravenscroft Street and the Mechanics Arms at 36 Drum Street. The house at 96 Ravenscroft Street reflects a more classical inspiration. The most prominent building within the historic core is the Romanesque church by John Adams which sits within a constrained site at the east end of Ravenscroft Street. It has a shallow-pitch gable with buttresses, triple windows and a conical-topped bellcote. The area is also characterised by a significant number of two storey tenements, the most notable examples being the terrace on the south side of Drum Street, east of Ravenscroft Street, which was constructed in 1881.

The early part of the 20th century is represented by the single storey Royal Bank (1933) with its prominent Tudorbethan gablehead to the doorway, which sits comfortably between earlier properties. The later 20th century has seen the construction of two housing estates within this area. In addition to these a number of individual houses have been built within vacant plots, predominantly in Ravenscroft Street.

In the area to the north of the historic core there is a significant variety of buildings of various ages and types. At the west end of Newtoft Street, there is a terrace of single storey properties, with dormers, also built in the 19th century. The two large stone built properties on the north side of Newtoft Street were constructed in the latter half of the 19th century.
Further 20th century buildings are the Faith Mission and Bible College (formerly Dr. Guthrie’s Girls School), built in the Picturesque Renaissance style, and the Gilmerton Community Centre (formerly Gilmerton Board School) of 1912, built in the Free Renaissance style. The two storey terraced public sector housing in Newtoft Street was constructed in the inter-war period. The 1960’s developments grouped around the crossroads are characterised by expansive front roof planes.

Although the predominant building material in the conservation area is stone (mostly grey), unlike many of the other conservation areas in the city, the presence of a variety of other wall finishes prevents Gilmerton from being described as “stone-built” in character. The extensive use of wet-dash harl, for example, is a conspicuous feature of the area, most notably within the historic core. A small number of buildings are finished with a smooth render.
In new developments, the tendency in more recent years has been to apply a dry-dash finish to walls or use reconstituted stone for example, the supermarket and bingo hall in Drum Street. The miners’ welfare institute and supermarket also use large expanses of metal cladding. These elements combined with lack of design quality undermines the character of the conservation area.

The predominant roof covering is Scots slate although a significant number of properties within the historic core of the village, particularly in Ravenscroft Street and Drum Street, have pantiled roofs. Rosemary tiles have been used on the community centre and Faith Mission properties. A number of properties are finished with concrete tiles, notably the two storey housing and shops grouped around the crossroads and Newtoft Street and the Burghtoft development, whilst artificial slate is a more common treatment on recent developments. This use of non-traditional roof finishes represents a further detracting element within the conservation area.

**Essential Character - Architectural Character**

- **Strong representation of buildings in the vernacular tradition displaying domestic scale and attractive proportions.**
- **Variety of architectural styles throughout the conservation area, the best examples of which make a positive contribution to the character of the village.**
- **Predominance of traditional materials (stone, wet dash, Scots slate and pantiles) providing a unifying element within the townscape.**
Activities and Uses

The conservation area is predominantly residential. The recent construction of the supermarket on Drum Street has reinforced the area around the crossroads as a local shopping centre which acts as a focal point for the surrounding area. A mix of commercial activities continues south on both sides of Drum Street terminating at the T junction with Ravenscroft Street. There is local industry within the conservation area with a working farm at the top of Ravenscroft Street. Other uses within the area are leisure (bowling green, miners’ welfare club, public houses and bingo hall), educational (Faith Mission) and community (library, places of worship, church hall and Community Centre). The garage on the south side of Drum Street is just outside the conservation area but is both an asset to the village and a drawback in terms of its appearance and increased traffic levels.

Traffic flow through the village is heaviest along this route which links the city centre with Dalkeith. The impact of this traffic is more pronounced around the ‘T’ junction where the road is narrowest. Traffic flows along Newtoft Street and at the crossroads are also heavy although not to the same extent as they were prior to the construction of the by-pass. Ravenscroft Street and Ravenscroft Place, on the other hand, experience very low traffic levels and are significantly quieter.

Essential Character - Activities and Uses

- Vitality at the ‘T’ and crossroad junctions with community uses and commercial activity.
- Tranquillity in the inner streets and at countryside edges with predominantly residential use.
- Continued agricultural use within the village.
The essential character of many conservation areas has remained stable over decades due to sympathetic new build and relatively little demolition. Policy in these areas focuses on conserving and enhancing what exists and introducing new development in a sensitive manner. Gilmerton is not typical as it has experienced significant changes over the past 50 years.

The conservation area has both strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths are in the clarity and unifying spatial structure, the attraction and history of its traditional buildings and its fine setting at the edge of the countryside. The weaknesses of the area are in those parts, often prominent, where its character has been eroded by unsympathetic developments. These include substantial redevelopment with the addition of large public and private housing estates at its boundaries. Parts of the area would also benefit from environmental improvements.

There are opportunities to improve and strengthen the character and appearance of the conservation area and the way in which these are handled is crucial to the future of the area, its upgrading and recovery.

**Boundary Changes**

The southern boundary requires alteration following recent new development. Part of the Limefield estate is within the conservation area whilst the rest is outside. It is proposed to make the boundary more logical by removing all of Limefield from the conservation area.

Although unattractive, the garage on Drum Street is recognised as being a prominent feature in terms of the approach and setting of the conservation area as well as forming part the frontage of Drum Street. The site is also surrounded by an original stone wall. The inclusion of the garage within the conservation area would protect the wall and provide additional controls for any future redevelopment.
The introduction of Article 4 Directions are required in order to control a range of inappropriate works by householders as well as public and private developers. The following Article 4 Directions would help to enhance the character of the conservation area:

1. enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house.
2. provision or alteration of buildings or enclosures within the curtilage of a dwelling house.
3. installation, alteration or replacement of satellite antennae.
4. construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure.
5. agricultural buildings and operations.
6. local authority development.
7. water undertakings.
8. development by gas suppliers.
9. development by electricity undertakers.
10. development by telecommunications code systems operators.
New Development

The design quality and attention to detail on recent developments have at times failed to respect the character of the conservation area. Closer attention must be given to encouraging developments that reinforce those features that give Gilmerton its unique character. This is fundamental to the prevention of any further deterioration in or adjacent to the conservation area.

Use of Materials

The traditional materials of stone, harling, slate and pantiles have not always been used in new buildings, extensions and alterations, modern substitutes having generally failed to respect the character of the area.

Role of the Property Owners

It is essential that property owners accept their maintenance responsibilities. The emphasis should be on the repair rather than replacement of original features, as these contribute to the conservation area as a whole. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style and of an appropriate scale.

Window Alterations and Dormers

A significant number of inappropriate window alterations, together with a number of intrusive box dormers, have occurred. These have tended to detract from the character of the individual buildings, as well as undermining the profile of many traditional buildings and roofscapes. They also have a cumulative effect on the character of the area. It is important that these do not create a precedent for further alterations. The introduction of an Article 4 Direction would ensure more effective controls over window alterations.
**Condition of Built Fabric**

The appearance of some buildings due to their under-use and/or poor condition has a negative impact on the character of the conservation area. Particular problems are the poor condition of some of the pantiled roofs and the presence of boarded up buildings and shopfronts. Encouraging re-use of these buildings and stressing the importance of regular maintenance would help to address this issue.

**Shop Frontages**

In general the shop fronts do not incorporate many of the basic principles of good design appropriate to a conservation area. Particular problems are the poor selection of materials and lack of attention to signage treatment. Better attention to shop fronts and advertisements would improve the image and perception of the area.

**Floorscape**

Extensive and exclusive use of tarmac and concrete slabs detracts from the general environment. Although there has been a limited enhancement scheme centred around the crossroads areas the conservation area would benefit greatly from a comprehensive enhancement scheme.
**Statutory Policies relating to Gilmerton**

The South East Edinburgh Local Plan identifies Gilmerton as lying within an area of predominantly residential character. Within these areas, the establishment or extension of non-residential uses will not be permitted if likely to lead to an unacceptable loss of amenity through increased traffic, unsightliness or noise.

With regard to new development within the conservation area, all development will be carefully controlled to retain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. In particular, new buildings should make a positive contribution to the overall quality of the environment.

There are a number of listed buildings within the conservation area and the Local Plan incorporates policies which seek to ensure that proposals affecting a listed building are considered for their effect on its character. The important consideration is that alterations, extensions or changes of use should not diminish the architectural integrity of the building.

The South East Edinburgh Local Plan also contains relevant policy advice on a range of matters relating to conservation and development within the Gilmerton Conservation Area, including:

- Classes of permitted development within a conservation area.
- Development within a conservation area.
- Design quality of new development and use of materials.
- Development within the Green Belt and Countryside Areas.
- The protection of listed buildings.
- The protection of open space, trees and nature sites.
Supplementary Guidance

The Council also produces supplementary guidance on a range of development control issues. These are contained within the Development Quality Handbook.

Implications of Conservation Area Status

Designation as a conservation area has the following implications:

• Permitted development rights under the General Development Order are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stonecleaning, external painting, roof alterations and the formation of hard surfaces. The area of extensions to dwelling houses which may be erected without consent is also restricted and there are additional control over satellite dishes.

• Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the planning authority can seek approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict permitted development rights. These effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas which can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals. At present, there is no Article 4 Direction Order covering the Gilmerton Conservation Area. However, the need for the introduction of a range of Article 4 Directions has been identified as a means of preventing further erosion of character.

• Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations will, therefore, be advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application.
Buildings which are not statutorily listed can normally be demolished without approval under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Within conservation areas the demolition of unlisted buildings, including boundary walls, requires conservation area consent.

Alterations to windows are controlled in terms of the Council’s policy.

Trees within conservation areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of a tree having a diameter exceeding 75mm at a point 1.5m above ground level, and concerns the lopping of trees as much as removal. The planning authority must be given six weeks notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. Failure to give notice renders the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a TPO.

Grants may be available towards the repair or restoration of historic buildings. Such grants are normally dependent on restoration or repair of original features.
REFERENCES


*Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes (TANs)*
- TAN 1 Preparation and Use of Lime Mortars (1984)

Wilson M in Scots Magazine (March 1987) *Getting to Know Gilmerton*. 
Andrew M Holmes
Director of City Development
The City of Edinburgh Council
1 Cockburn Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1ZJ

Produced by the City Development Department: Planning & Strategy: February 2007

ISBN 1 85191 073 5