



# WEST END CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

West End 市中心西區特色評估

ویسٹ اینڈ (West End) کی خصوصیت کا جائزہ

وےسٹ اینڈ - اےر بےشپٹیا تار مڈیا - نیرپا

تقییم ملامح منطقة ویسٹ اینڈ (West End)



*WEST END  
CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER APPRAISAL WAS APPROVED BY THE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
9TH MARCH 2006*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

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### *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 39 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 that 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 that must be preserved or enhanced.

A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that 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.

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### *West End Conservation Area*

The West End Conservation Area lies immediately adjacent to the New Town on its south west boundary and the Old Town on its western boundary. The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1980 and amended in 1995.

The northern boundary of the West End Conservation Area touches the end gable of the Caledonian Hotel on Lothian Road before moving westwards to then follow the rear of the properties on Rutland Square. It then swings north westwards onto Canning Street, turning onto and following Athol Crescent Lane before exiting onto Shandwick Place. The boundary then follows the centre line of Shandwick Place and West Maitland Street down to Haymarket.

At this point it turns to the east along Morrison Street, before turning south east to follow the rear line of the properties on the west side of Grove Street. This line continues down to the bridge that crosses the West Approach Road, at which point it turns northeast following the northern edge of the Approach Road. It then crosses the road to continue along the rear and southern edge of Rosemount Cottages, before crossing Gardner's Crescent to turn north along the rear of the Georgian crescent to Morrison Street.

From this point the boundary runs eastwards along the centre line of Morrison Street arriving at Lothian Road, where it follows the centre line south before turning east onto East Fountainbridge. The buildings at the tip of Main Point on the corner of East Fountainbridge, High Riggs and Lauriston Street are included, after which the boundary follows the centre line of the West Port. From the West Port the boundary then turns down Lady Lawson Street to meet Castle Terrace, where the boundary turns northeast up to King's Stables Road, which it follows to Lothian Road and back to the Caledonian Hotel.

The Edinburgh World Heritage Site boundary overlaps the current West End Conservation Area. From Haymarket the boundary runs up Morrison Street to Torphichen Place, where it turns north to meet Torphichen Street and then turns east. After this, the boundary follows Canning Street Lane before skirting the rear of Rutland Square, moving onto Rutland Street up to Princes Street, skirting round the Caledonian Hotel and then following Lothian Road to meet East Fountainbridge. The boundary follows East Fountainbridge up to the West Port where it meets with and follows the boundary of the Old Town Conservation Area on Lady Lawson Street.



## ***HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT***

In the time of David 1 in the 1120s, the ground below the Castle was originally known as the King's Garden adjoining St Cuthbert's glebe. By the 1400s it is was known as Orchard Field and may have amounted to some 35 acres lying between St Cuthbert's glebe and Morrison Street (formerly the Linlithgow road) and stretching from Castle Terrace to Haymarket. A significant part of this land was purchased towards the end of the 18th century; half by the Grindlay brothers, tanners on King's Stable Road, and the remaining half by the Merchant Company. This area contained all the early roads leading westwards out of the Old Town to Glasgow, South Queensferry and Linlithgow.

Main Point at the junction of East Fountainbridge, High Riggs and Bread Street was the collection point of these former principal routes connecting the Grassmarket to the west. Just off the West Port lies Lady Lawson Street built in 1882 under the City Improvement Acts.

The development of the west end from the late 18th century onwards was influenced by various forms of transport being overlaid across it and reducing the importance of the early roads radiating out from the West Port. In 1783 the Town Council planned Lothian Road as a "transverse great road" to link the west end of Craig's New Town to the Midlothian road at Tollcross. The road was completed in 1785 (See map Kincaid 1784).



*Kincaird 1784*

From this point on, the existing patchwork of individual estates between the Castle Rock and Haymarket were identified as possible developments with many producing hopeful Georgian layouts. By 1804 (See map Ainslie 1804) development layouts had been produced for both the eastern and western sides of Lothian Road. However, uncertainty about the form and alignment of the New Western Approach to the Old Town, eventually built in 1836 and becoming known as Johnston Terrace, delayed these original proposals.



*Ainslie 1804*

Over this period the First New Town and its northern extensions became increasingly fashionable and this, allied to the delayed development, resulted in the area around Lothian Road becoming less fashionable. By 1823 (see map John Wood 1823) a new layout was proposed by William Burn. Although some schemes were started in this period, they were not completed, and it was only sites fronting main thoroughfares that were attractive. This sporadic building, left gaps that were completed by the Victorians under very different circumstances from the earlier Georgian period.

Following the completion of Lothian Road, other forms of transportation were successively proposed from the late 1700s that had a significant impact on the area. From 1797, various proposals to build a canal linking the Clyde with Leith were advanced. The connection to Leith proved financially unsound. However, a route proposed by Thomas Telford was agreed and completed in 1822, (See map John Wood 1823). Although the canal did not penetrate directly within

the boundaries of the conservation area, it determined the development pattern of Fountainbridge and Tollcross lying along the southern boundary, with new industries, new roads and three canal basins located nearby. The largest basin, Port Hopetoun, fronted directly onto Lothian Road south of Fountainbridge. The canal and its basins prompted a wave of new industries, including distilling, brewing, printing, rope-making, silk spinning, meat marketing and tanning.



*John Wood 1823*

The era of the canal was rapidly overtaken by the railway age with the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company opening in 1842 with a terminus at Haymarket. In an attempt to fend off competition, the E & G company bought the Union Canal in 1845 to prevent the Caledonian Railway buying it and draining it to use the bed as a rail track.

Undeterred, the Caledonian Railway pressed on with its proposals, opening its terminus on Lothian Road in 1848. This was the end of the layout plans that had been produced for this area since 1804. From this point on, three railway termini were built with freight being distributed from Lothian Road. An extensive coal yard was located behind the main station. The Caledonian Hotel that was added to the terminus in 1903 is all that remains.



*Lothian Road Goods Yard*



*Lothian Road Station*

Through the early 1800s, proposed canal and railway developments, plus the uncertainty about the New Western Approach road to the Old Town, delayed the implementation of a number of development proposals. These factors, allied to the continuing residential expansion of the New Town northwards, significantly reduced the attractiveness of the West End Conservation Area as a fashionable extension of the New Town.

Shandwick Place and West Maitland Street were initially planned in 1805/6 as a new road to Glasgow connecting the New Town with the existing Glasgow Road, which passed through Haymarket from the West Port. It was some twenty years before development began on the east side of this street, with Torphichen Street being partially developed at the same time.

Apart from this marginal development, two further schemes were started at this time (1820s) which formed the beginning of two proposals that were never completed due to the canal and rail proposals that took place shortly after. The first of these schemes was Grove Street which started at Morrison Street in 1822 and was intended to connect to a large square that was never built due to the railway taking up the necessary ground. The second scheme was Gardner's

Crescent, constructed in 1826, which was originally meant to have a matching crescent facing it. This scheme too was clipped by the railway as well as having a canal basin, Port Hamilton, located immediately behind the existing crescent.

Once the canal and the railway had been built, the Victorians began to pick up on projects which had been started and abandoned some decades before. The road layout for William Burn's plan for the east side of Lothian Road began to be constructed in the 1860s and was closely followed by the construction of the tenemental street blocks defined in that layout. At this time, concerns were expressed about the cramped unsanitary conditions that existed around the West Port. However, it was not until the 1880s that these conditions were tackled under the City Improvements Act, resulting in clearance and the building of Lady Lawson Street.

The situation behind West Maitland Street and Atholl Crescent was similar to that on Lothian Road, with tenemental blocks being completed from the 1850s onwards. Two examples of model housing were developed to the front of Gardner's Crescent in 1853 and 1860, both promoted by James Gowans. Gowans also had a major impact on Castle Terrace with his idiosyncratic tenement in high Victorian gothic. This was matched in 1875 by his development for a new Theatre, Winter Garden and Aquarium on the vacant site between Cornwall Street and Cambridge Street. This building was demolished in the 1960s, creating a site which remained vacant for some thirty years.

In 1883, the Royal Lyceum theatre was built immediately behind Gowans' West End Theatre, and this was followed by the construction of the Usher Hall in 1914 on the site of a former Board School.

The canal and the railway lasted well into the twentieth century. However, by 1920, all commercial traffic to Edinburgh had ceased. In 1922, Ports Hamilton and Hopetoun were closed, drained and sold to Edinburgh Corporation. Port Hamilton, immediately behind Gardner's Crescent, was developed by St Cuthbert's Cooperative Society as a large bakery and milk depot (The Co-op having started in a corner shop on Fountainbridge in 1859).



*Port Hopetoun*



*First Store*



*Princes Street Station*

The Caledonian Station lasted until 1965, and was closed due to a combination of railway cuts in 1962 and its inability to compete with Waverley in terms of routes and accessibility. Once the rails were removed, the railway line was eventually turned into the Western Approach Road, in the late 1970s, for the relief of traffic through Gorgie and Dalry.

The 1980s and 90s saw considerable development occurring in the conservation area. The vacant site on Castle Terrace, left after the demolition of Gowans' winter garden in the 1960s, was developed as an office building with the Traverse Theatre relocated on Cambridge Street behind the Usher Hall. The conversion of Lothian Road Church in 1981 to the Edinburgh Filmhouse reinforced the cultural hub surrounding the Usher Hall.

The early 80s also saw development of the former railway site with the construction of the Sheraton Hotel, Festival Square and an office block adjacent to the Filmhouse. To prevent piecemeal development, the Council produced a development strategy for the area west of Lothian Road, lying between the Caledonian Hotel and including former railway ground and the area formerly occupied by the Co-op bakery and milk depot.

The thrust of the strategy was to relieve the demand for office accommodation in the City Centre by the provision of a new international financial office complex and an international conference centre. A Masterplan produced by Sir Terry Farrell was accepted in 1989 and on this basis development took place through the 90s.

The canal, which played a significant role in the development of the conservation area, although falling outside the southern boundary, is now itself the focus of a major regeneration exercise involving leisure, housing and office uses.

## *ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTER*

### **Site Context**

The West End Conservation Area is a large diverse area with a rich mix of historical periods and stages of development. It stretches from the Castle to Haymarket, east to west and from the western end of Princes Street southwards to Fountainbridge. It lies on a gentle north facing slope, with the Western boundary abutting the World Heritage Site and the New Town Conservation Area boundaries. The eastern boundary abuts the Old Town Conservation Area boundary.

The topography of the area means that views to the east towards the Castle are particularly important and are visible from many points outwith the conservation area.

The area is characterised by mixed, residential commercial buildings with the Georgian and Victorian tenements being mainly 4-6 storeys, constructed of stone with pitched, slated roofs. In the central section of the conservation area, there is a major modern financial section consisting of modern offices, which spills over the conservation area to the south. This central section is more characteristic of big city commercial districts which are untypical in an Edinburgh City Centre context.



Large scale development has, and is taking place, on the margins of the conservation area. It is important that where there are development opportunities lying adjacent to the conservation area boundary, the design of new buildings should reflect the scale, massing and materials of the conservation area. Development opportunities both within and adjacent to the conservation area must respect views out of and into the conservation area. The West End Conservation Area is of importance as a buffer zone to the World Heritage Site in terms of new development.

## Archaeology

Within the conservation area there are sites and areas that are of archaeological interest. In particular the area around the West Port and Portsburgh, which was a suburb of Edinburgh and lay on the main route out of the city to the south west. Similarly the area adjacent to the EICC may contain remains from the period when this was the terminal of the Union Canal.

## Routes

There are three distinct periods that have overlaid traffic routes that are critical to the area.

The early medieval period established three routes connecting the Old Town to Glasgow, South Queensferry and Linlithgow. For centuries these were the principal routes coming into Edinburgh from the west. These routes still exist, as Morrison Street, Bread Street and High Riggs. With the exception of High Riggs, which has become a pedestrian only street lying primarily outside the area; the other two streets still play a significant role linking areas within the city, but have lost their importance as routes that connect Edinburgh to other towns and cities.

The Georgian period saw the construction of Lothian Road built to bypass the Old Town and link the eastern main routes with the emerging New Town. This route forms the principal spine running through the conservation area today. Shortly after the construction of Lothian Road, Shandwick Place and West Maitland Street were built, as the principal route linking the New Town, via Haymarket, with the west.



*Lothian Road*



*Shandwick Place*



*West Maitland Street*

Finally, the construction of the Western Approach Road in the 1970s on the former Caledonian Railway Line provided an inner city relief road to the city centre.

Lothian Road forms the spine of the area and acts as the “High Street” for the West End Conservation Area. Two of the three principal traditional routes into the Old Town, namely Bread Street and Fountainbridge, still link areas within the city.

The Western Approach Road provides an inner city relief road to the city centre.

### **Natural Heritage**

The glacial topography has an important influence on the character of the conservation area as it gives rise to the ‘crag and tail feature’ of Castle Rock. The eroded remains of a volcanic plug, which now creates impressive views out from the conservation area to the east. This feature constitutes part of the area designated as a composite SSSI, which also includes Arthur’s Seat and Calton Hill; notified for geological and biological interests. The ice flow that created the glacial landscape created steep level changes at the rock’s base, which now provides the location for a car park of several storeys.



Other more recent changes in topography due to the excavation of transport routes, influence the character and create level changes that result in ‘left over space’. The area has relatively few open green spaces. Gardner’s Crescent is the largest designed public garden, which is important in providing a setting to the adjacent Georgian Buildings.



Other green open spaces include spaces adjacent to buildings and small gardens. These areas, even though few in number, play an important role in softening building edges, and providing areas of habitat. Examples include the steep slopes adjacent to the car park at the bottom of the Castle rock and the steeply sloped area adjacent to the Western Approach Road as it passes under Morrison Street.

Other spaces are softened by the use of a variety of different specimen trees. These are either in planters, shrub beds or set into the pavement and play an important part in contributing to the local environment.



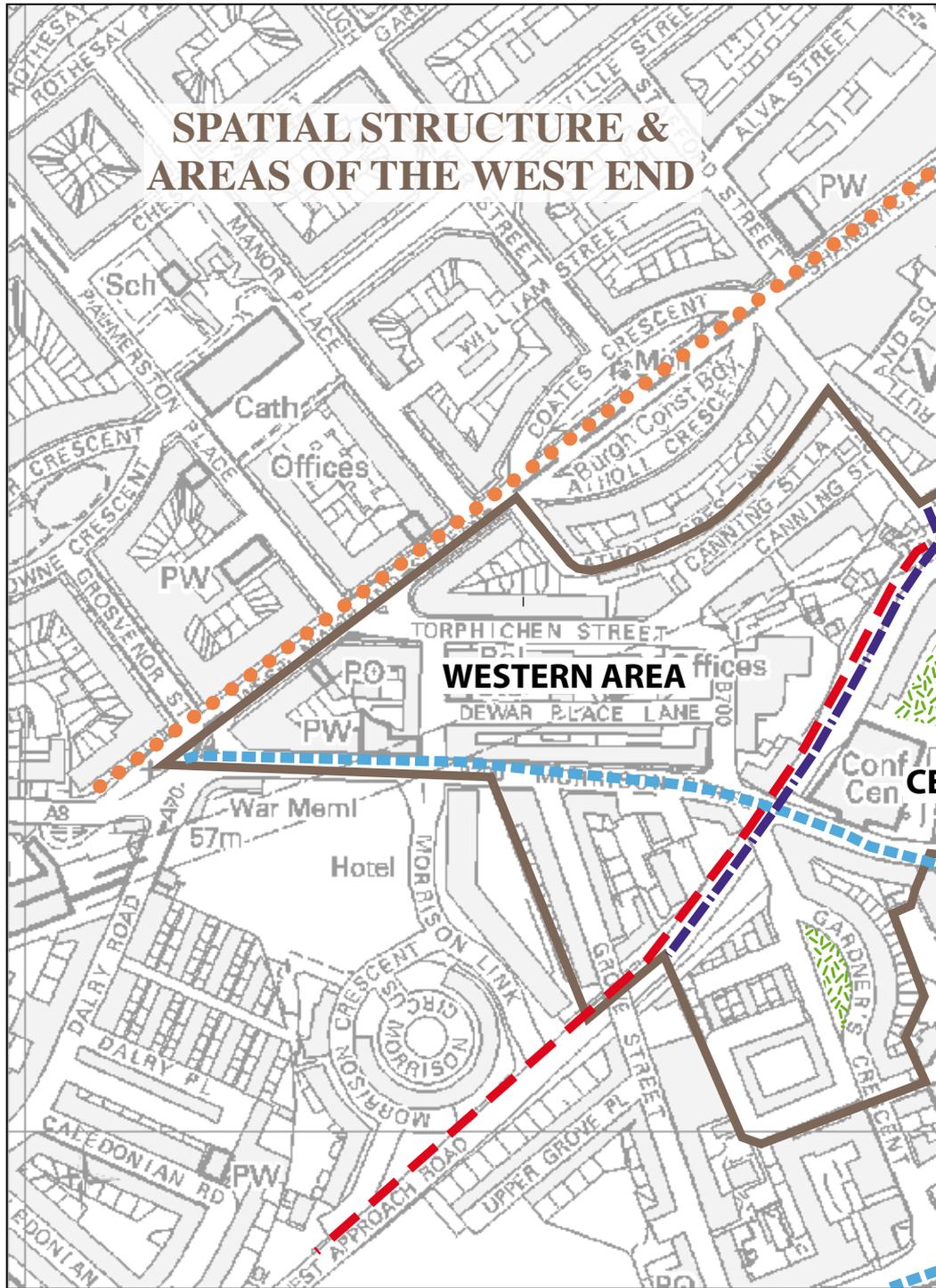
### **Spatial Structure**

There are three distinct elements contained within the conservation area which are a result of the development in the Georgian period of the road and canal system, closely followed by the railway in the Victorian era. The canal, while not within the conservation boundary, had a significant impact on it.

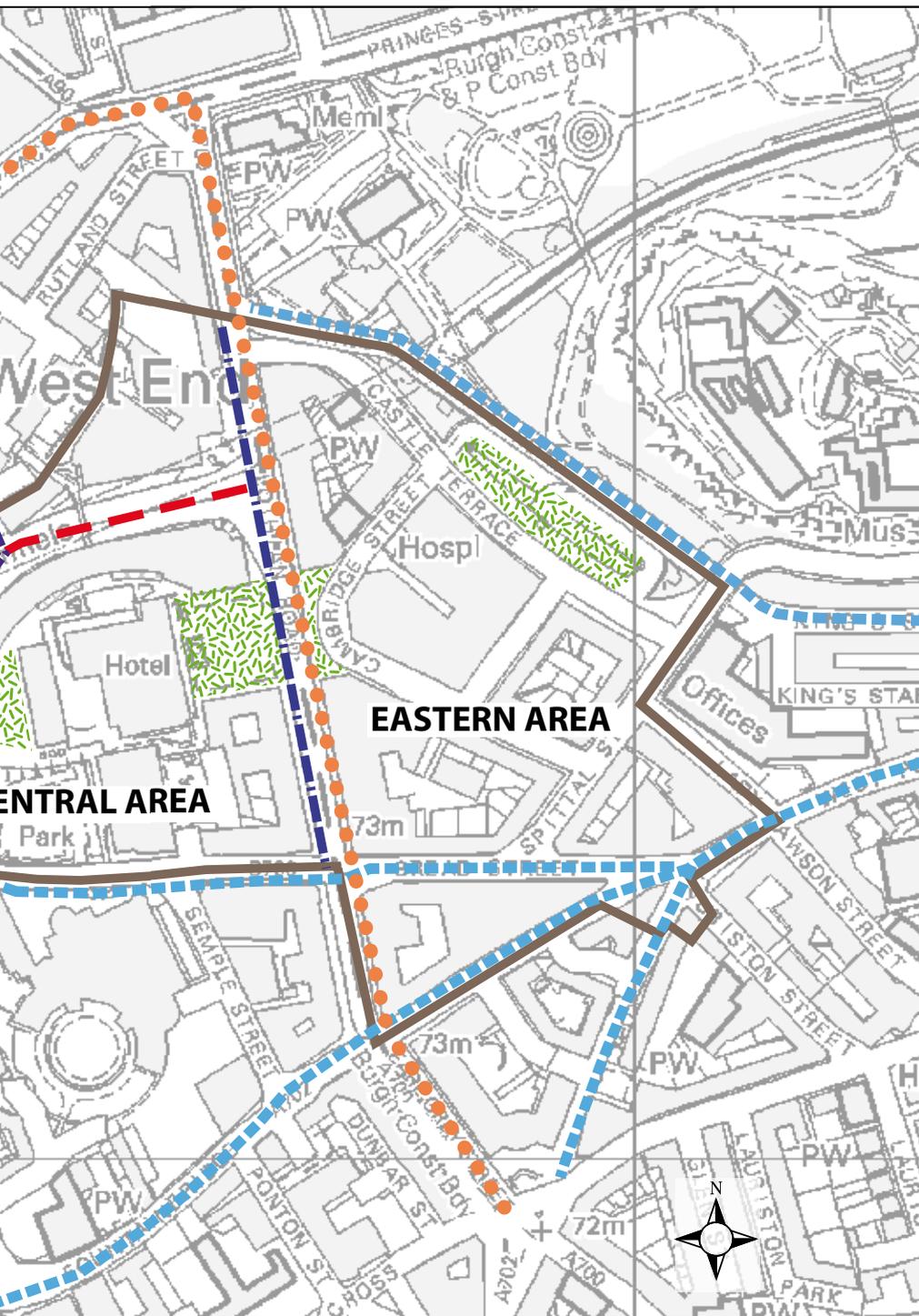
The Caledonian Railway came right into the centre of the conservation area and absorbed substantial amounts of ground for its operations. The demise of the railway released ground for the construction of the Western Approach Road and latterly provided sites for modern office and hotel developments.



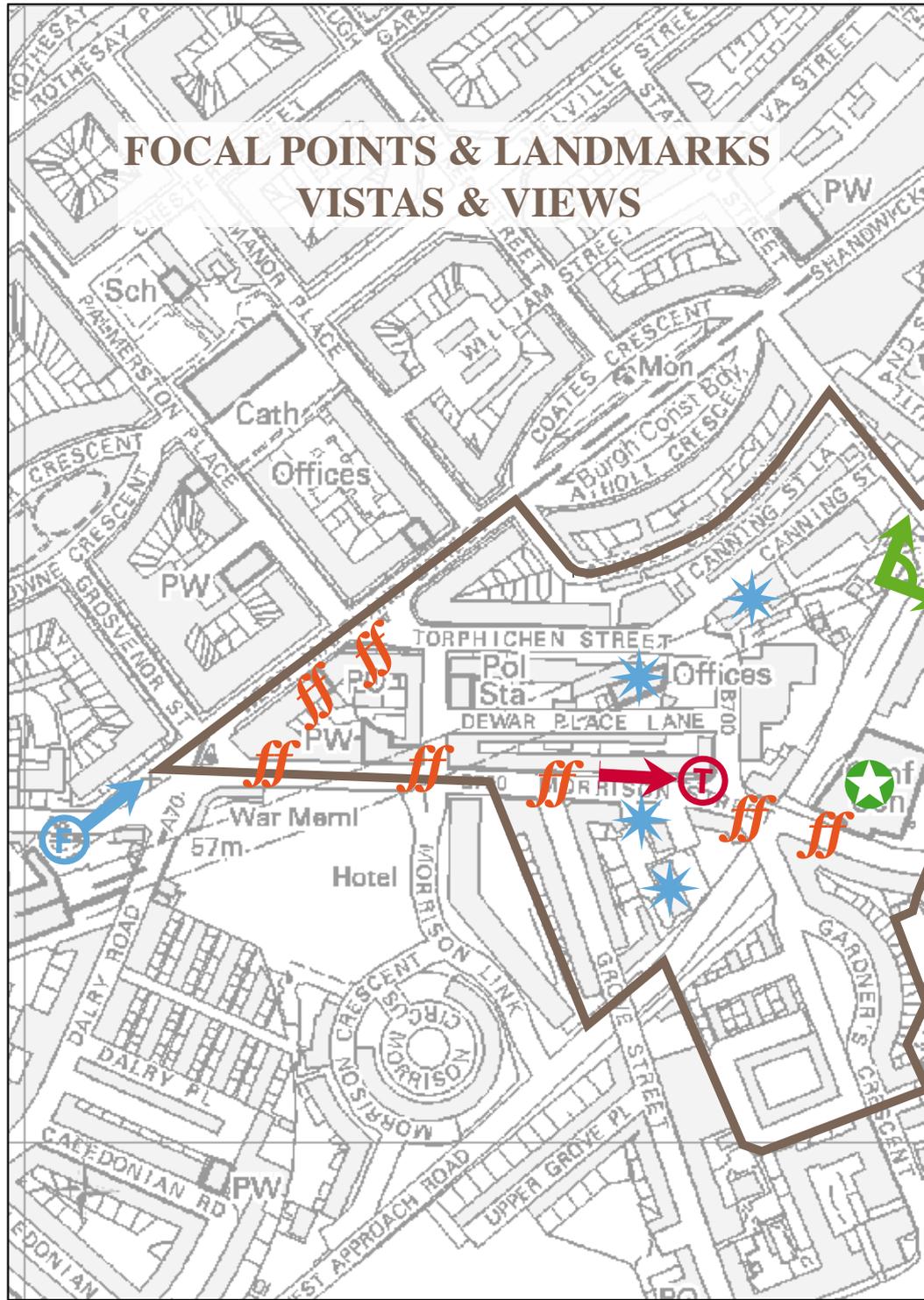
# SPATIAL STRUCTURE & AREAS OF THE WEST END



Conservation Area Boundary ——— Medieval Routes - - - - -  
Areas of the West End - - - - -

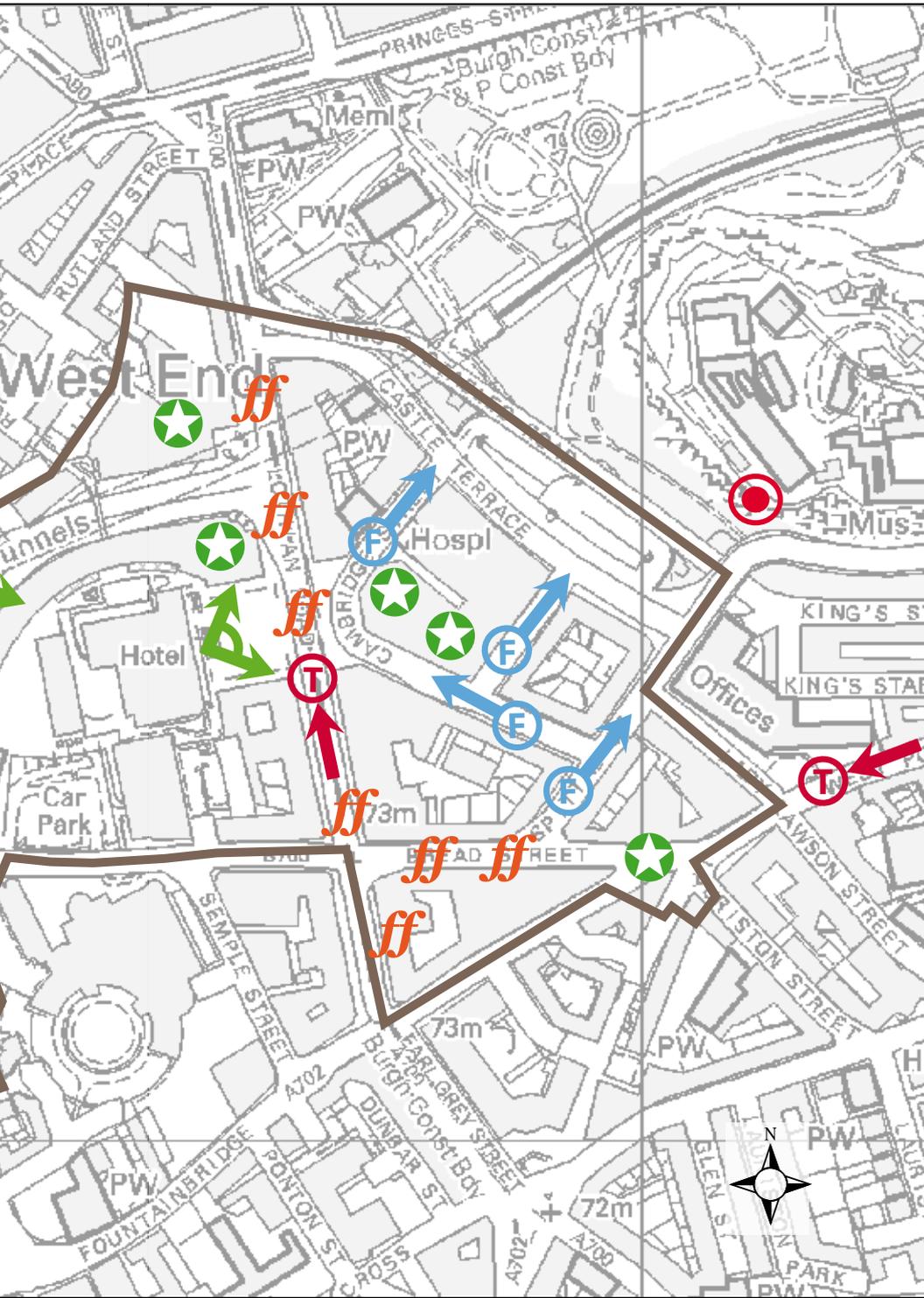


- West Approach Road - - - Squares/Open Spaces ▨
- Georgian Routes ● ● ● ●



**FOCAL POINTS & LANDMARKS  
VISTAS & VIEWS**

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Vista/Panorama
- Landmark Feature
- Terminated View



- Focal Points
- Activity *ff*
- Intrusive Feature
- Framed View

## *The Eastern Area*

### **Spatial Structure**

This area was not affected physically by the development of either the canal or the railway. The boundary lies to the east of Lothian Road and runs from King's Stable Road down to Fountainbridge. Here it turns east up to Main Point and the West Port, before turning down Lady Lawson Street. Reaching Spittal Street it turns east to reconnect with King's Stable Road. This area is also located within the World Heritage Site.

This area is characterised by six perimeter blocks closely following the original layout by William Burn of 1823. One of these blocks now forms the cultural hub of the City containing the Usher Hall, two theatres and Saltire Court.



The other blocks are residential tenements, some of which have been infilled containing the former Co-op department store, now the Point Hotel, and Lawson's timber merchants, which is now vacant.

Lothian Road, on the western boundary, is one of the main routes into the City Centre and cuts across the former medieval routes into the Old Town.

### **Townscape**

This section of the conservation area is contained within the boundary of the World Heritage Site and is dominated on its eastern edge by the presence of the Castle.

Building lines vary within the area. Along Lothian Road, shop fronts generally project beyond the building line to the heel of the pavement. On the Victorian streets, the tenements come down on the heel of the pavement, but Castle Terrace,

Cambridge Street and Cornwall all have their buildings set back, with either small front gardens or basement areas.



Generally heights of buildings are between three and four storeys with all buildings of stone construction, or stone faced. New buildings erected in the 1980s respect the heights, materials and overall massing of the area and sit well in the shadow of the Castle.

The Castle forms a dramatic backcloth overlooking the eastern boundary. Two theatres and a concert hall form a significant cultural quarter in the city. The area is characterised by tenemental perimeter blocks, some of which have been infilled.



### **Public Realm**

There are two important public spaces contained in this area.

The multi-storey car park on Castle Terrace is a discreet building nestling against the steep slope of Kings Stables Road, which fits well into its site at the foot of the Castle rock. The top deck of this car park forms the eastern pavement to Castle Terrace, facing Saltire Court and is approximately 10 metres in width. Currently it provides the location for the Farmers' Market. As a public space, facing onto the Castle rock, it has great potential. However, its current mix of concrete slabs, black top, trees and surface car parking fails to capitalise on its location.

The square in front of the Usher Hall is particularly important linking three of Edinburgh's primary cultural activities, namely the Traverse and Royal Lyceum Theatre and the Usher Hall. It also is adjacent to Festival Square, immediately across Lothian Road.



### Architectural Character

This area is characterised by a rich diverse grouping of architectural styles and buildings, generally comprising tenemental blocks using stone and pitched, slated roofs. The area is harmonious in scale despite the presence of large cultural buildings.

Georgian development is found principally on Lothian Road, with the largest grouping occurring on the east side of Lothian Road between Bread Street and Fountainbridge. This constitutes a four storey, ashlar fronted tenement, with projecting Victorian shopfronts cast iron balconies on the upper floors. Georgian buildings tail off into Bread Street and Fountainbridge, where a transition occurs with Victorian buildings which tend to follow the layout, form, massing and use of materials established by William Burns layout.



Lady Lawson Street was developed under the City Improvement Acts and is in a typical baronial, tenemental style. In the 1890s the St. Cuthbert's Co-operative Association built a department store, which infilled the block between Bread Street and Fountainbridge. This was remodelled in the 1930s and given a simple glazed curtain wall. In the 1990s this building was adapted to become the Point Hotel.

The most singular picturesque tenement built in the Victorian era is that designed by James Gowans on Castle Terrace. It is a four and five storey building with a basement and finished by a pair of stone built crowned towers as the main centrepiece.

The Royal Lyceum Theatre of 1883 has a channelled stucco front with a pedimented centrepiece. A glazed extension to the foyer was added in the 1990s.



The Usher Hall, a notable Beaux-Art building of 1914, successfully occupies an awkward wedge at an oblique angle to Lothian Road. The curving facade of the Usher Hall is echoed in the entrance to the Traverse Theatre which forms part of a larger grouping with the office development of Saltire Court, which overlooks Castle Terrace. This is a high quality, well designed grouping that fits well into its context with modesty and discretion.



Despite the variety of architectural styles and periods, this area remains harmonious in scale, massing and materials.

## *The Central Area*

### **Spatial Structure**

The boundary lies to the west of Lothian Road, running from Kings Stables Road to Morrison Street, where it turns left to run down to the bridge over the Western Approach Road. From here it follows the Western Approach Road and then ties in with the conservation area boundary, running along the rear of Rutland Square that then turns east to reconnect with Lothian Road.

The exception in this area is the north western corner of Lothian Road, which is occupied by Georgian tenemental buildings, with a former church that closes this small tenement group on Lothian Road. The remainder of the area has been extensively developed over the last decade on former railway ground in a number of modern styles.

The layout consists of a large scale hotel fronting Festival Square overlooking Lothian Road, with the “entrance” to the West Approach Road flanked by similar office buildings for financial institutions. The southern most of these blocks forms the northern side of Festival Square and provides the starting point for a curved office block that follows and overlooks the line of the West Approach Road, ending in a further square partially closed by the Conference Centre. The overall layout of the modern developments was an urban rationale in creating two new squares linked by a pedestrian route.



The area is generally characterised by modern buildings linked by a curved block and anchored by a square at each end.

The Film House, occupying a converted church, complements and reinforces the cultural hub on Lothian Road.

### **Townscape**

The Georgian buildings are generally between three and four storeys and constructed of stone. On Lothian Road, shop fronts come to the heel of the pavement, while on Morrison Street there are basements.

Landmarks include the office buildings flanking the entrance to the West Approach Road which are between nine and ten storeys, and splayed on their entrances. The Conference Centre on Morrison Street, designed as a drum, is approximately six storeys in height. The curved link block between Festival and Conference Squares is five storeys with a sixth floor set back.



### **Public Realm**

Within this central area, there is a clear separation between pedestrians and vehicles, with car parks located under buildings and accessed from the West Approach Road and Morrison Street.

Pedestrian access through the area is good and linkages in a variety of directions are catered for. Both Festival Square and Conference Square are paved with high quality natural materials and the use of standard lighting is carried through into both squares.

Festival Square consists of a formally designed layout containing a mixture of caithness, granite and sandstone. It also contains a formal planting scheme of hedges and clipped trees. In an attempt to create activity, sculptured balls and a fountain have been located in front of the hotel entrance.



The main pedestrian link to Conference Square is all hard landscaping, with occasional colonnades. Stairs which overlook carparks at lower levels occur along this route, Conference Square itself is minimalist in the sole use of granite cubes as flooring material.

The Western Approach Road is almost completely car dominated, lying along a former rail line and crossed at intervals by bridges, which provide pedestrian linkages.



Festival Square would benefit from a more direct pedestrian link to the Usher Hall, Festival Square and Conference Square. The pedestrian route between them comprises a range of high quality, floorscape materials, which are unco-ordinated from one space to another.

### **Architectural Character**

With the exception of the south west corner of this area, which consists of a typical Georgian tenement with ground floor shops turning the corner of Lothian Road and Morrison Street, designed by William Burn and executed in 1822; the remainder of the buildings all date from the 1980s.

The first modern building was the Sheraton Hotel, a stone faced, pedimented and corniced six storey building echoing a classical style. The positioning of the building creates a new urban square to its front overlooking Lothian Road and the square in front of the Usher Hall. This square is flanked to the south by Capital House, a six storey, stone faced office building.

The pressures for development in this area prompted the adoption of a masterplan for a new financial district, most of which has now been constructed.

Two landmark buildings now frame the entrance to the West Approach Road. Both take their height reference from the Caledonian Hotel and echo the dome of the Usher Hall and the Traverse Theatre, although the topmost features of the southernmost building resemble pagodas rather than domes. The buildings are faced with natural stone and have metal roof elements.



The north side of Festival Square is occupied by the Clydesdale Bank offices and has a crescent block leading to the west into the triangular space of Conference Square. This post modern styled block, reflects Atholl Crescent across the West Approach Road. Conference Square is part terminated by the large drum of the Conference Centre, with the new Health complex attached to the Sheraton Hotel forming the southern flank. The car park on Morrison Street forms a development opportunity, that once complete, will close the Square.



The area is harmonious stylistically and in its use of high quality materials, particularly stone. It is somewhat of a counter point to the rest of the conservation area. Further developments should carefully examine the historic context within which they are located, particularly in relation to heights.

### *The Western Area*

#### **Spatial Structure**

The boundary to this area follows Canning Street from the West Approach Road and runs westwards up to Atholl Crescent Lane. It then runs along the back of Atholl Crescent, exiting onto Shandwick Place and following West Maitland Street down to Haymarket, where it turns to the east onto Morrison Street. The boundary then runs along the rear of the properties on the west side of Grove Street up to the bridge over the West Approach Road, where it turns to follow the West Approach Road for a short distance, crosses it and incorporates Rosemount Cottages and Buildings. The boundary then crosses Gardner's Crescent, and runs to the rear of this Georgian block before rejoining Morrison Street and running back to the West Approach Road.

Morrison Street, one of the original medieval routes leading to the Old Town, cuts through this area, linking with West Maitland Street, the Georgian route to Glasgow, at Haymarket. The West Approach Road cuts through the area at Gardner's Crescent and forms the eastern boundary over the remainder of the area. The original Georgian planning for this area was significantly altered with the introduction of the canal system followed by the railway.

The area is generally characterised by irregularly shaped tenemental blocks, comprising buildings from a variety of periods, some with mews to the rear. Haymarket forms one of the most significant junctions in the city, a major entry point into the World Heritage Site.



### Townscape

Georgian buildings are generally confined to West Maitland Street and the margins of Morrison Street and Torphichen Street, consisting of three storey tenements, some with basements. The exceptions are Grove Street which has a residue of two storeys, with basement, housing and Gardner's Crescent, which is an exceptional four storey Georgian tenemental crescent with a basement.



The rest of the area is primarily Victorian, again tenemental, but four storeys in height. There are also Victorian mews on the lanes of Canning Street and Dewar Place.

The Georgian and Victorian buildings are cohesive in scale, massing and use of materials, and are constructed of natural stone with slated roofs.

Torphichen Street and Canning Street have modern office blocks dating from the 1960 - 70s. Some of these buildings are unsympathetic in terms of scale and massing with the rest of the area. At the rear of Canning Street, there are electricity sub stations which through the use of lighting have been turned into "public art". These buildings, while overlooking the streets at ground floor level, do not provide activity and hence the streets have a feeling of emptiness.



## Public Realm

The public realm consists of busy streets affected by one way systems to ease the flow of traffic around and approaching Haymarket. Consequently, footways are constrained by pedestrian barriers, traffic signs, route signs and other street furniture.



Haymarket provides a convergence point for three major vehicular routes as well as a busy railway station. This major meeting point is currently dominated by vehicular traffic, resulting in constrained pedestrian movement and does not reflect its importance as a gateway into the World Heritage Site. The insertion of the tram linking Princes Street with Haymarket presents an opportunity for removing street clutter and improving the public realm. Great care will have to be taken in order to minimise any adverse environmental impact.



## Architectural Character

This area reflects a number of architectural periods. Georgian tenemental architecture turns the corners from West Maitland Street into Torphichen and Morrison Street and presents a trickle of domestic buildings on Grove Street. One of the finest pieces of Georgian architecture is found on Gardner's Crescent, consisting of a four storey and basement tenement, which was originally meant to be mirrored with a matching facing crescent. Instead, it overlooks two fine examples of working class model housing.

The first of these is Rosemount Cottages, built by James Gowans in 1853 and comprising six blocks of flatted cottages for "the better class of mechanics." The ground floor flats are entered on one side and the upper flats by outside

stairs on the other. These “model houses” acted as a prototype for the colonies developments that occurred throughout the City. They are two storey stone built with pitched slated roofs.



Rosemount Buildings constructed in 1860 is a three storey quadrangle of red and yellow brick consisting of ninety six flats. This is one of the first housing schemes to break with the strong Edinburgh tradition of stone building.



Morrison Street consists of a mix of Georgian, Victorian and pre-Second World War tenements, most with shops at ground level. St. David’s Terrace and St. David’s Place are occupied by two brick buildings, one comprising offices and the other housing.

There are three buildings of interest - the Victorian school on Torphichen Street, which has been converted for office use; the former electricity offices and depot, and Conference House, a late 90s office building perched on the bridge next to the International Conference Centre overlooking the West Approach Road.

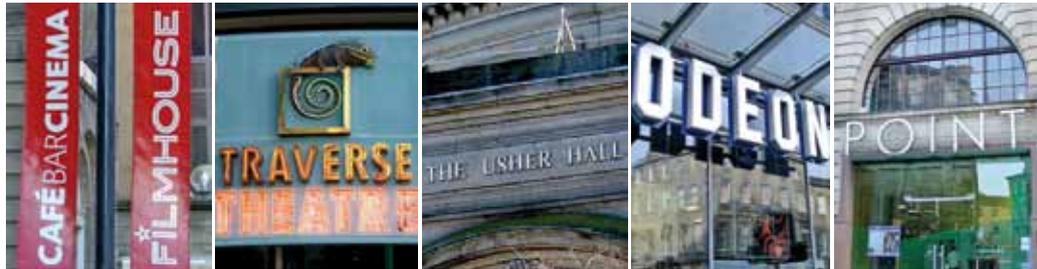


## *ACTIVITIES AND USES*

The West End Conservation Area is extremely diverse in terms of its activities and uses ranging over city wide cultural activities, small offices and major headquarter offices, conference facilities and a wide variety of shops and restaurants.

### **The Eastern Area**

This area forms a significant cultural hub within the city with two theatres, a concert hall and a film theatre. The cinema also lies just outside the conservation area boundary to the south. This area also contains one of the city's premier hotels, The Point, a converted department store on Bread Street.



The east side of Lothian Road is a solid wall, at ground floor, of shops, pubs and clubs with shops filtering into the side streets to the east and a number of restaurants occurring on Grindlay Street.

### **The Central Area**

This financial district contains a significant number of banking and insurance company offices along with the International Conference Centre and the Sheraton Hotel, all built within the last twenty years. There is a coffee bar, restaurant, and health club located in this area.



### **The Western Area**

The mix in this area is similar to the eastern area with some modern office accommodation interwoven into the shops and a small office presence. One

characteristic is that the former Georgian residential properties along West Maitland Street and Torphichen Street are largely given over to office use.

The conservation area has a very wide mix of activities contained within it.

A Shop Front Initiative in the 1990s produced some improvement, particularly around the Conference Centre. However, shop fronts throughout the conservation area are generally poor.



### ***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, architectural and landscape design needs to be continuously improved if the character of the Conservation Area is to be enhanced. The retention of good quality buildings and open spaces, allied to the sensitive interpretation of traditional spatial structures in securing appropriate new development, are of particular importance.

The West End Conservation Area east of Lothian Road is wholly contained in the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. The rest of the conservation area acts as an important buffer zone to the World Heritage Site. Consequently this Character Appraisal stands alongside the World Heritage Site Management Plan. Both documents compliment and reinforce each other. The latter document sets out those elements of significance that make up the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

In considering action to mitigate risks and improve the area, it is important that both documents do not solely focus alone on a narrow range of conservation policies, but recognise the balance between the Council's strong conservation

and heritage policies and those policies to maintain the City Centre as a viable economic entity, including the regionally important City Centre shopping area. The area must respond to the challenges of a capital city centre.



The aims are set out in Edinburgh City Centre - Charting a Way Forward:

Selective redevelopment opportunities will be clearly defined and promoted to encourage the creation of additional high quality retail floorspace. At the same time an effective balance between shopping, leisure, living and working within the city centre needs to be maintained.

Improved pedestrian linkages will be forged between different parts of the city centre to enhance geographical connectivity, social integration, and connection between different activities.

Continuing investment in the public realm will be secured to preserve that unique sense of place, create the conditions for a vibrant yet safe street life, and encourage continuing private sector developments and improvements. Commitment to a rigorous and exacting maintenance regime needs to be agreed by all parties, along with funding.

Trouble-free accessibility of the city centre from other places by various modes will continue to be pursued - new and integrated public transport facilities, new walking and cycling routes, more welcoming transport interchanges, and improved car parking arrangements.

Moreover, these aims are entirely consistent with sustainability - car dependency reduced, encouragement to use public transport, renewal of the heart of the city - and with environmental protection - safeguarding our most precious asset, our world class environment.

### **General**

The presumption of retaining and reusing buildings of merit within the area must continue, allied to priority being given to restoring and regenerating buildings through a process of high quality repair.

New development from the late 1980s onward has been of some quality, including Saltire Court and the Traverse Theatre on Castle Terrace and Cambridge Street respectively, but others have failed to integrate well with the rest of the conservation area.

### **Public Realm**

The square in front of the Usher Hall is an important public space, linking three of Edinburgh's primary cultural activities, and lying adjacent to Festival Square across Lothian Road.

The top deck of the multi storey car park on Castle Terrace forms a ten metre wide pavement to Castle Terrace, facing Saltire Court. A footway maintenance and planting scheme is programmed for this space in the near future, which will greatly improve this space.



The public realm should be of the highest quality in terms of the materials used. Transport requirements should respect the original street layout and should follow the guidelines contained in the “Edinburgh Standards for Streets.” Temporary layouts using cheap materials should be avoided.

Street furniture and road markings can detract substantially from the public realm. Strong efforts should be made to reduce the clutter that currently exists and future proposals should be guided by the “Edinburgh Standards for Streets.”

Where new developments occur, the pavement area should adopt a simple palette of natural quality materials which is co-ordinated with adjacent buildings.

### **Shop Fronts**

Encouragement should be given to improving the quality of the shop fronts in the area, particularly those shop fronts which are particularly poorly or inappropriately designed or badly maintained.

### **Natural Heritage**

In development sites in the area, the opportunity should be taken to introduce large scale street trees in soft planting areas to improve the local environment.

The garden at Gardner's Crescent has some low quality materials and missing railings, trees and grass. The garden should be part of an enhancement scheme that would create a quality green space to complement the character of the Georgian Buildings.



### **Control of New Development**

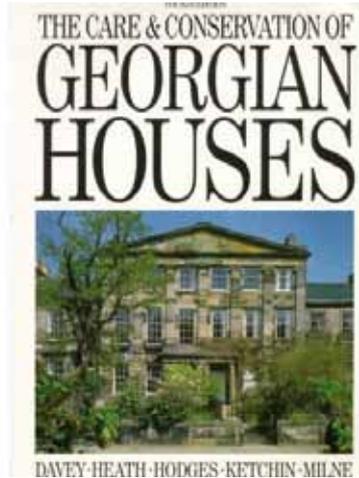
The local authority should continue to insist that new development within the area is of the highest design quality. New development should fit within and complement the urban grain and massing characteristics of the area they are located in.

Development should use the existing historic palette of building materials, particularly natural stone. It should also retain and reinforce the standard plot widths and height of street elevations, avoiding long single elevations, even where larger land packages have been assembled.

### **Role of the Public**

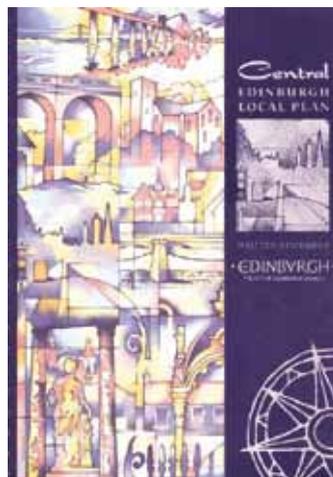
It is essential that property owners accept their maintenance responsibilities. The emphasis should be on the repair rather than replacement of original features, as these contribute to the conservation area's character as a whole. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style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

scale. A significant reference for maintenance is “The Care and Conservation of Georgian Houses” by Davey, Heath, Hodges, Ketchin and Milne.



### ***STATUTORY PLANNING POLICES***

The West End Conservation Area lies wholly within the area covered by the Central Edinburgh Local Plan (adopted in May 1997). This conservation area contains Edinburgh’s city centre and as such there are a significant number of policies contained in the plan.



- Conservation Area

Within the Conservation Area, the existing architectural character, historic and landscape character is to be preserved and enhanced.

- **Mixed Activities**

The West End Conservation Area lies wholly within a mixed activities zone where the emphasis is on promoting an appropriate mix of activities which contribute to local character and vitality.

- **Shopping**

Lothian Road from Kings Stable Road up to Morrison Street and West Maitland Street from Torphichen Street to Haymarket are classed as District Shopping Centres where the policy states that new shopping development will be encouraged.

- a) in the defined District shopping centres
- b) in locations where it will consolidate defined shopping centres or complement the speciality shopping areas, visitor activities and entertainment areas;
- c) generally in areas where it will improve local convenience.

The Council is currently preparing the Edinburgh City Local Plan, which will eventually supersede the current adopted Central Edinburgh Local Plan.

Supplementary to the Central Edinburgh Local Plan is the World Heritage Site Conservation Manifesto and the Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan. The objective of the Manifesto is to assist in preserving the historic fabric of the World Heritage Site and ensure that changes complement and enhance its special character. The Management Plan is a requirement of UNESCO and identifies the outstanding universal values of the site, what the threats are to those values and how they might be mitigated.

### **Supplementary Guidelines**

The Council also produces supplementary planning 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 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 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 to 16m<sup>2</sup> and there are additional controls 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. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that 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. The West End Conservation Area is currently covered by the full range of Article 4 Directions:

- Class 1 enlargement, improvement or other alteration to a dwelling house
- Class 3 provision or alteration of buildings or enclosures within the curtilage of a dwelling house
- Class 6 installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite dish
- Class 7 construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure
- Class 38 water undertakings
- Class 39 development by public gas supplier
- Class 41 development by tramway or road transport undertakings
- Class 40 development by electricity statutory undertaker

- 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 Planning Regulations. Within conservation areas the demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation area consent.
- Alterations to windows are controlled in terms of the Council's policy.
- Trees within conservation areas covered by the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1972, as amended 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.
- Edinburgh World Heritage administers grants for the external repair of buildings within the World Heritage Site and enhancement of the Site's public realm.

### REFERENCES

“By the Three Great Roads, A History of Tollcross, Fountainbridge and the West Port” edited by Drew Easton. Aberdeen University Press.

“The Buildings of Scotland - EDINBURGH” by Gifford, McWilliam and Walker. Penguin Books.







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