

Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday 23 February 2022

Proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	12– Leith Walk
Council Commitments	<u>15</u>

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee approves the boundary extension to the Leith Conservation Area and the updating of the current Leith Conservation Area Character Appraisal to reflect the boundary extension.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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Report

Proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On [14 May 2015](#), the Planning Committee approved the revised Leith Conservation Area Character Appraisal. This report presents a proposed boundary extension to the Leith Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The proposed boundary extension has been the subject of an online consultation and letters sent to local property owners.
- 2.3 This report provides an assessment of an area proposed as an extension of the Leith Conservation Area and concludes that the historic and architectural character of the area is sufficient to merit its inclusion in the Conservation Area.

3. Background

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement in terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 for local authorities to periodically review conservation area boundaries and consider whether new conservation area designations are appropriate.
- 3.2 The Leith Conservation Area was reviewed in 2015. Since then, there have been enquiries concerning the potential inclusion of the former railway arches on Manderston Street and Jane Street.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Leith Conservation Area was designated in February 1998. It comprises the former Madeira and Old Leith Conservation areas with extensions at Leith Walk, Kirkgate, Albert Dock and the Citadel. The Old Leith Conservation Area was designated in 1977, with several subsequent amendments and the Madeira Conservation Area was designated in 1975. The Conservation Area boundary was amended on 30 August 2013 to transfer part of Leith Walk and Pilrig Street to the Pilrig Conservation Area.

- 4.2 Conservation areas are designated under the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Scotland) Act 1997. Conservation areas are areas which have special architectural or historic interest that are considered worthy of protection.
- 4.3 National planning policy sets out that local authorities are expected to ensure that local development plans and supplementary guidance provide a framework for protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing all elements of the historic environment. In this regard, local planning authorities should designate and review existing and potential conservation areas and identify existing and proposed Article 4 Directions. This should be supported by Conservation Area Appraisals and Management. As part of this process, planning authorities are encouraged to undertake a thorough appraisal of any area before designation to ensure that its character or appearance is understood.
- 4.4 Historic Environment Scotland's 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment' 'Interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas and Conservation Area Consent' states that it is the character of an area, either architectural or historic, created by buildings and open spaces and their relationship with one another which the designation of a conservation area seeks to preserve. Elements such as the street layout, open spaces and the public realm all contribute to an area's special character. To be designated as a conservation area it must meet the criterion of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance', as set out in Section 61 of the 1997 Act. Areas of 'special architectural or historic interest' will be selected based on a range of factors which may include:
- 4.4.1 Areas of significant architectural or historic interest in terms of specific listed buildings and/or ancient monuments;
 - 4.4.2 Areas of significant architectural or historic interest in terms of building groupings, which may or may not include listed buildings and/or ancient monuments, and open spaces which they abut;
 - 4.4.3 Areas with features of architectural or historic interest such as street pattern planned towns and villages and historic gardens and designed landscapes; and;
 - 4.4.4 Other areas of distinctive architectural or historic character.
- 4.5 The designation of a conservation area must, therefore, be based on the historic and architectural interest of an area. Conservation area status is not intended to act simply as a means of controlling development.
- 4.6 In April 2020, an enquiry was submitted requesting that consideration be given to an extension of the Leith Conservation Area to include areas to the east and west of Leith Walk, on Manderston Street and Jane Street. The buildings comprise the railway arches associated with the former Leith Walk West Goods Yard and the abutment of the former railway bridge over Leith Walk (as shown in Appendix 1). It was considered that this would assist in securing the long-term future of Stead's Place and protect the railway heritage of Leith.

- 4.7 The former Leith Walk West Goods Yard was on the Caledonian Railway's *Leith New Lines* from Newhaven to Leith Docks. The goods yard occupied a large area to the south of Jane Street. Built because of intense rivalry with the North British Railway, it was opened for goods traffic in 1903. Stations were partly built at Newhaven, Ferry Road and Leith Walk but by then street tramway competition had removed the chance of passenger services being viable and they were never completed. By 1917 the line had been single-tracked and became in effect a long and underused goods siding.
- 4.8 Threading through a mainly built-up area involved expensive heavy engineering. The buildings fronting Leith Walk formed the abutments of one of the three massive lattice girder bridges on the line. The bridge was removed in 1980. Considerable demolition was also involved; in this case, the row of tenements which fronted 106–154 Leith Walk and the entire south side of Manderston Street. (Historic maps of the area, images of the bridge, and an aerial view of the site are included in Appendices 2, 3 and 4).
- 4.9 The arches are now occupied by a variety of uses. The present bingo hall at 24 Manderston Street was formerly the Leith Capitol Theatre and Cinema. It was the largest cinema in Edinburgh, seating 2,300, when it was opened in September 1928 by Gaumont British Theatres/General Theatre Corporation. The architects were J.M. Johnston and J.A. Ross. The entrance is through one of the railway arches, which leads to the auditorium. The cinema closed and reopened as a bingo hall in July 1961. It was then converted to a Top Rank Bingo Club and is now a Mecca Bingo Hall. The building retains elements of the original interior Art Deco decoration. (Images of the buildings within the proposed extended area are included in Appendix 5).
- 4.10 The buildings reflect Leith's railway history and are considered to be of sufficient architectural and historic character to merit designation as an extension to the Leith Conservation Area in terms of the criteria specified by Historic Environment Scotland's 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment' 'Interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas and Conservation Area Consent'.
- 4.11 The proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area was also the subject of a public consultation for six weeks from 7 November 2021. An on-line questionnaire was set up on the consultation hub to capture views on the proposed extension to the Conservation Area. Letters detailing the proposals were also sent to 29 local owners within and in the immediate area of the proposed extension.
- 4.12 The consultation generated 102 responses via the online survey. Appendix 6 details the responses. 99 (97%) respondents considered the appraisal was either very clear or somewhat clear, with three being unsure. 95 (93%) respondents strongly agreed with the proposal to extend the conservation area and seven somewhat agreed. The majority of comments received note that the proposed extension to the Conservation Area reflect the railway heritage of Leith and are supportive of the proposals. The consultation indicates that there is substantial support for the extension of the Conservation Area.

- 4.13 The Leith Walk/Halmyre Street Place Brief, which was approved in September 2020, proposes a new vehicular access to the rear of the bingo hall on Manderston Street (Appendix 7). It is, therefore, recommended that the rear extension to the bingo hall, which was originally within the proposed extended Conservation Area, is not included. The amended boundary is shown in Appendix 8. This revised boundary would be more focused on the arches of the historic railway line.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Once approved, the proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area will be initiated through formal designation procedures and the current character appraisal will be updated.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area was the subject of an online consultation and 29 local owners were informed of the proposal by letter.

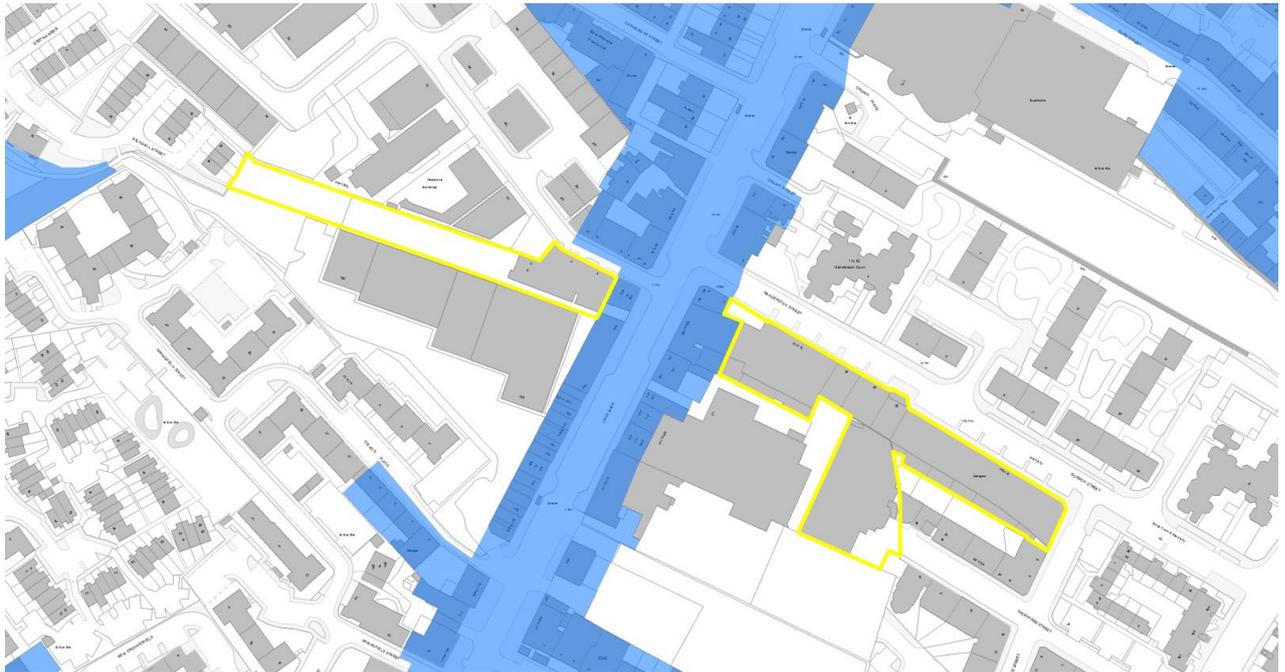
8 Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Report to Planning Committee of 22 August 2018, Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals.](#)

9. Appendices

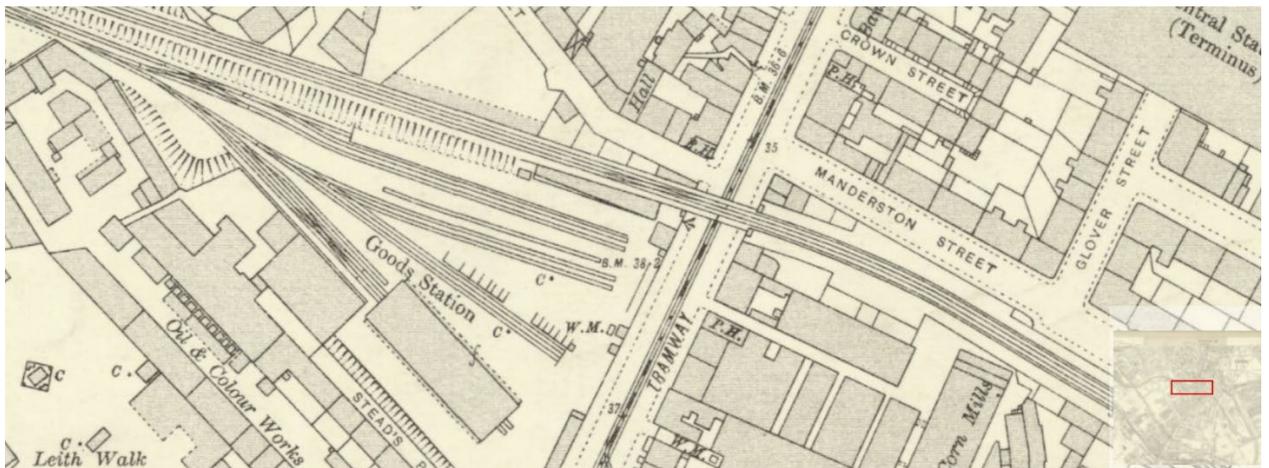
- 9.1 Appendix 1: Plan of originally proposed extension to the Conservation Area.
- 9.2 Appendix 2: Historic Maps of the area.
- 9.3 Appendix 3: Images of Bridge.
- 9.4 Appendix 4: Aerial view of the site.
- 9.5 Appendix 5: Images of the buildings proposed for inclusion in the Conservation Area.
- 9.6 Appendix 6: Consultation responses.
- 9.7 Appendix 7: Plan from the Leith Walk/Halmyre Street Place Brief.
- 9.8 Appendix 8: Recommended revised boundary of the extended Conservation Area.

APPENDIX 1 - PLAN SHOWING ORIGINALLY PROPOSED EXTENSION TO LEITH CONSERVATION AREA

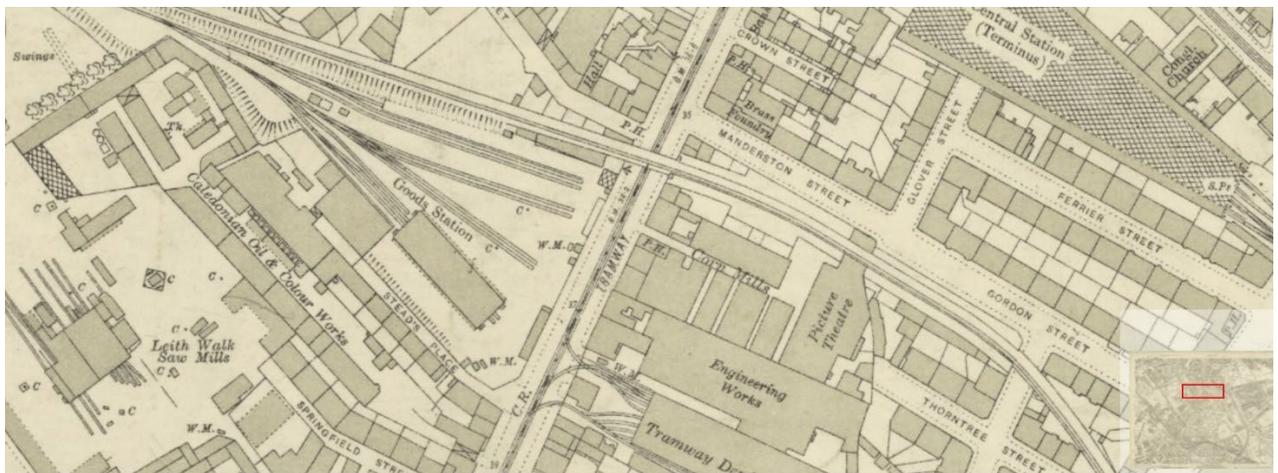


Existing Leith Conservation Area shown in blue.
Originally proposed extension outlined in yellow.

APPENDIX 2 - HISTORIC MAPS OF THE AREA



1912



1933



1944

APPENDIX 3 – IMAGES OF BRIDGE



APPENDIX 4 - AERIAL VIEW OF SITE



Source: Google Street View

APPENDIX 5 – IMAGES OF THE BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR INCLUSION IN THE CONSERVATION AREA



Manderston Street



Jane Street

APPENDIX 6 - PROPOSED LEITH CONSERVATION AREA EXTENSION: CONSULTATION RESPONSES

102 Responses were received.

1 How clearly does the report set out the issues that have led to the proposal to extend the Leith Conservation Area?

Very clear **47**

Somewhat clear **52**

Don't know/Unsure **3**

Somewhat unclear

Very unclear

2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed extension to the Leith Conservation Area?

Strongly agree **95**

Somewhat agree **7**

Don't know/Unsure

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

APPENDIX 7 – PLAN FROM THE LEITH WALK/HALMYRE STREET PLACE BRIEF



APPENDIX 8 - RECOMMENDED REVISED BOUNDARY OF THE EXTENDED CONSERVATION AREA



Existing Leith Conservation Area shown in blue.

Proposed extension outlined in yellow.