

New Town  
Conservation Area  
Character Appraisal

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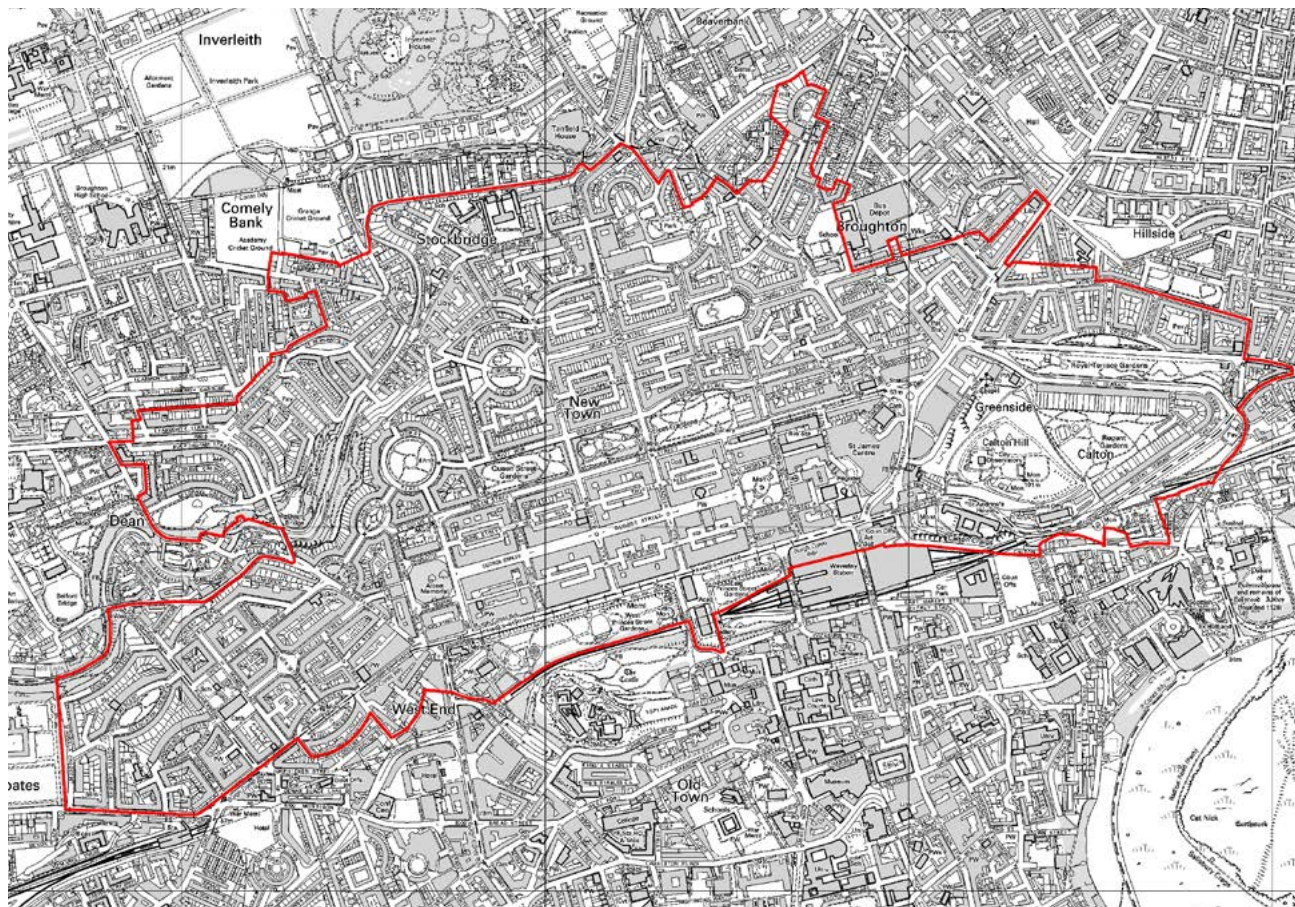
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### Location and Boundaries

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



### Dates of Designation/Amendments

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



## World Heritage Status

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

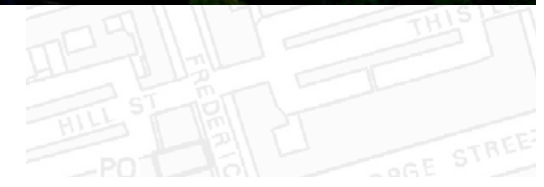
In terms of UNESCO's criteria, the conservation and protection of the World Heritage Site are paramount issues. The conservation of the World Heritage Site is defined as those steps necessary for its protection, conservation and restoration as well as its controlled development and harmonious adaptation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

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



*Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan.*

*Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Statement of Outstanding Universal Value*





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### Statement of Significance

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

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



### Purpose of Character Appraisals

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

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

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

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



## How To Use This Document

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

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

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





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### Historical Origins and Development

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



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





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



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



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





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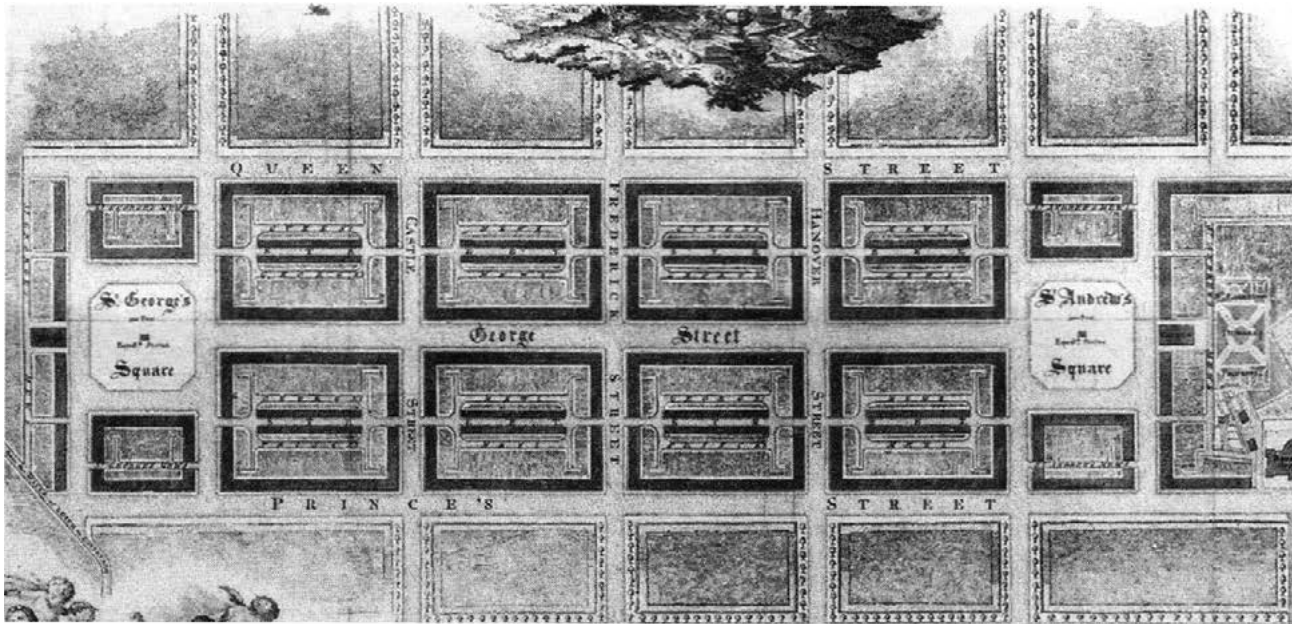
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### The First New Town

In March 1766, the Council announced a competition to produce an overall plan for the new development. The objectives were to create an elite residential suburb, based on 'order and regularity' with 'streets of a proper breadth'. The winning entry was that prepared by the 23 year old James Craig.

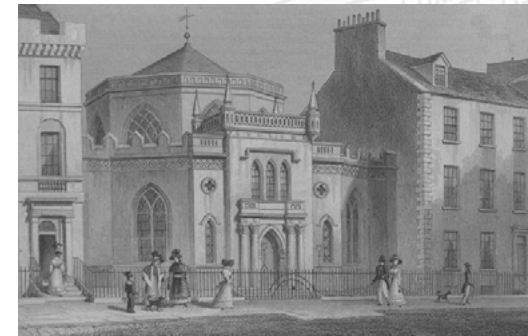


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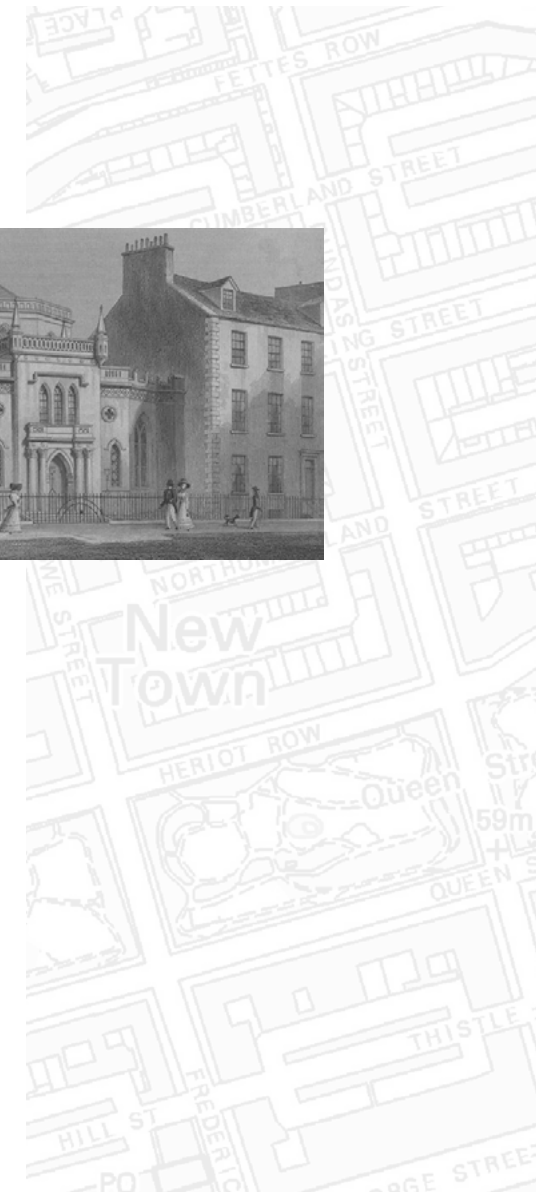
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The final version of the plan was approved by the Town Council on 29th July 1767 - 2017 is the 250th anniversary of the approval of the plan. It is a strikingly simple, self-contained grid, with a broad main street along the top of the ridge connected to two squares. Parallel to this street are two more streets, looking north and south out over the Forth and over the Nor' Loch valley. Three equally spaced cross-streets bisect the grid. Along the long axis of each block is a smaller road, with mews lanes opening off it on each side.



The approved plan incorporated a layout of generous proportions and spaciousness. The central street is 100ft (30m) wide; the outer streets and cross streets 80ft (24m) wide; and the mews 30ft (9m) wide. The spatial layout incorporates a lateral social segregation, reflecting the hierarchy of eighteenth century society in which each class was given its due place. At the top of the hierarchy is the central, widest street (George Street) and the two grand squares. These formed the most prestigious addresses and would host the grandest individual town houses for the aristocracy and gentry. Next came the two outer streets and the cross streets. The subsidiary streets were intended to house shopkeepers and tradesmen, and the mews lanes the stables and outbuildings serviced the rear of the grand houses. In practice, the open views from the one-sided flanking streets meant that Queen Street attracted the most affluent residents.

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





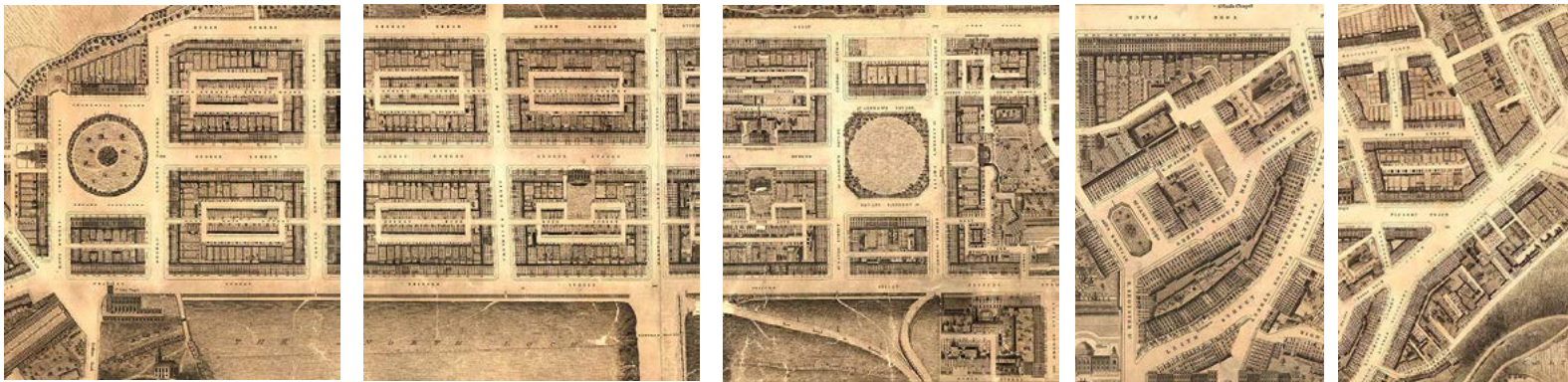
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The original feuing plan of the New Town shows the blocks broken up into regular plots, with gardens behind the houses and access from the mews lanes. However, development on the ground varied significantly from this plan.

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



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

Following concerns about the disparate overall appearance of the initial buildings, the conditions of sale of the land became increasingly prescriptive, and the Town Council passed a series of Acts in the 1780s to control issues such as building height and dormers. In 1781, the Council stipulated that every house on a main street was to be of three storeys with a sunken basement and not more than 48ft (14m) high from the basement area to the top of the wall. In 1791, the Council commissioned Robert Adam to complete detailed plans and elevations for Charlotte Square to act as a detailed design guide. This resulted in the first New Town development to use a coherent palace block design to articulate an architectural unity across a number of individual properties, all controlled by Adam's feuing plan.



#### Post-War Planning

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

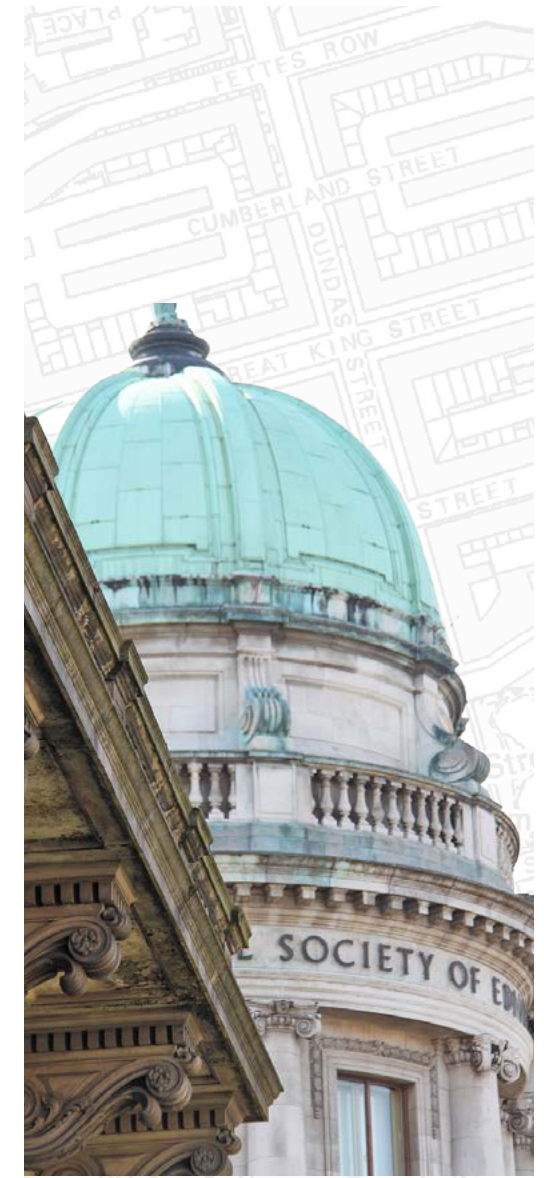
The highly regarded town planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, produced detailed reports with proposals for the redevelopment of a number of British cities including Edinburgh, following the urban destruction and dramatic changes brought about by the Second World War. In 1949, Abercrombie presented his Civic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

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

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

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

In 1996, the consultants EDAW were commissioned to produce 'A Strategy for the First New Town', considering, amongst other things, the issue of perceived conflict between the desire to maintain commercial vitality and the need to protect the historic and architectural character of the area. The recommendations of the EDAW Study were adopted by the Planning Committee in November 1997.





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



## Structure

### Topography

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



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### Development Pattern

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

The Conservation Area is typified by formal plan layouts, spacious stone built terraces, broad streets and an overall classical elegance. The majority of buildings are of a standard type that expresses Georgian ideals of urban living. The standard building form is three main storeys over a sunken basement, normally three bays wide and three storeys high, including steps from street to basement and cellars under the pavement with a slate covered pitched roof. The width of the basement area was standardised at 8ft (2m) in the First New Town, though it is sometimes wider in subsequent developments - for example, nearly 4.0m in Heriot Row. The street elevations of each property typically follow a standard form of evenly spaced vertically proportioned sash windows, with a door at street level. There is usually a high proportion of masonry to window opening on both the front and rear elevations. The facades reflect the internal planning of the buildings with larger balconies and lengthened windows to the drawing rooms at first floor level.





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

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

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

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



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

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

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



### Setting and Edges

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



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

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





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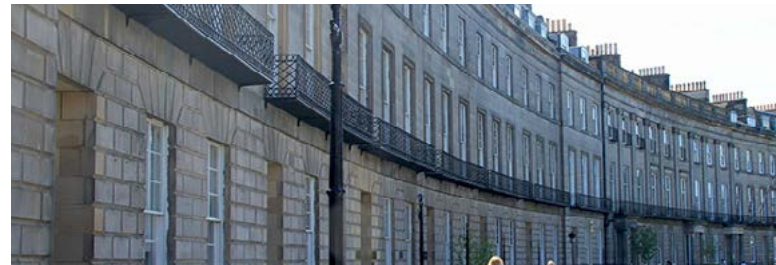
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The principal south western approach enters the New Town via Lothian Road with the Caltonian Hotel on the western junction with Princes Street. The Churches of St John and St Cuthbert terminate West Princes Street Gardens.

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



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





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### Vistas and Views

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

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

To the west, the view of the spires of St Mary's cathedral is visible from many positions and is juxtaposed to the east with the prominence of Calton Hill. Playfair's scheme for Calton follows the contours of the hill and provides a terrace of exception-

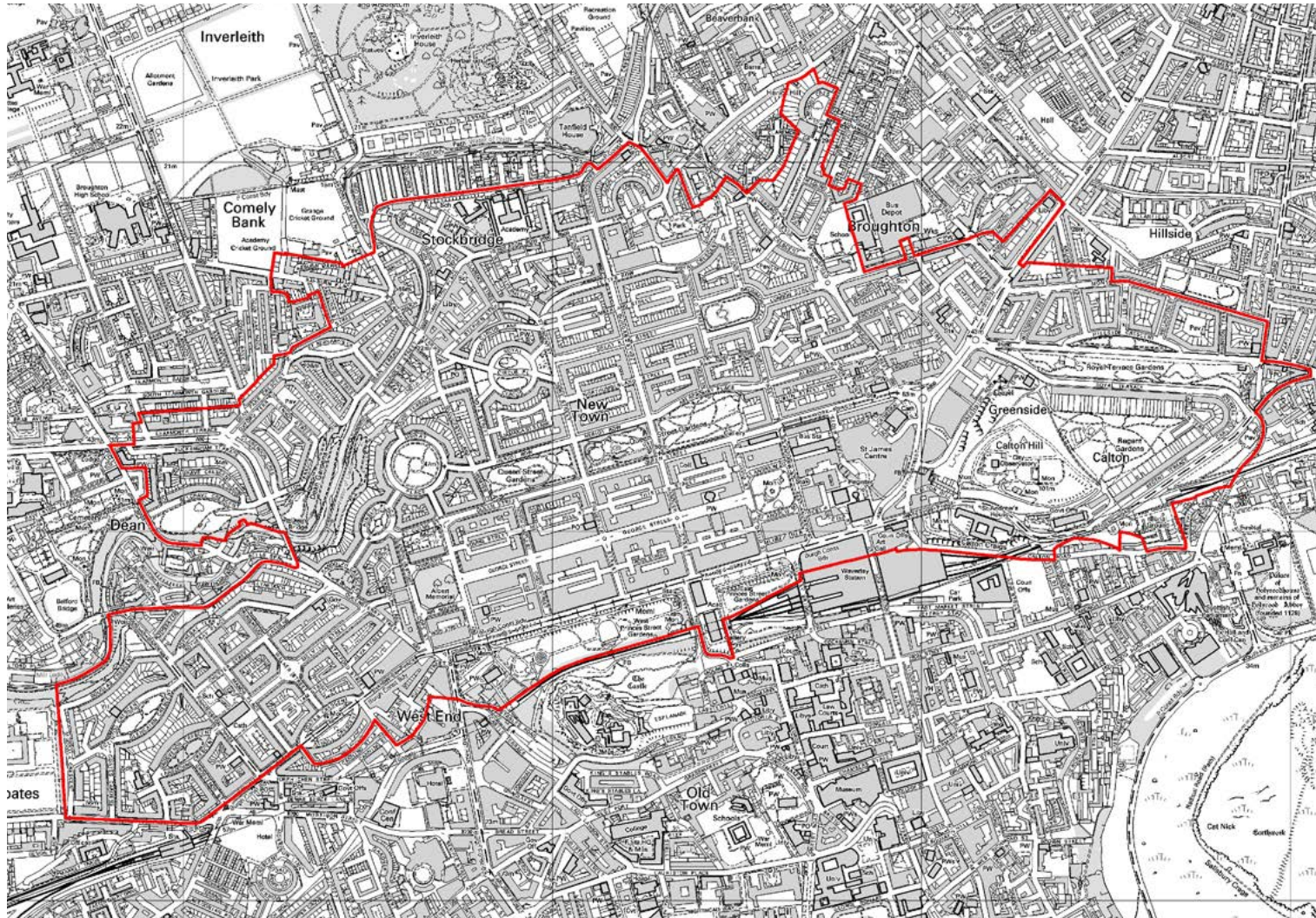
al length and great elegance that exploits spectacular views both to the north, south, and west along Princes Street.

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





## Vistas and Views




**Key** (Interactive map)

 Conservation Area Boundary

 Focal Points

 Vistas/Panorama

 Terminated View



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### Townscape

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



While there are a considerable number of prominent buildings and focal points in the area, the sloping topography means that punctuation above the skyline is limited. The features that are prominent and can be seen from many parts of the area are the Old Town Ridge, Calton Hill with its monuments, and St Mary's Cathedral. The former St James Centre was a prominent feature that could be seen from many viewpoints.





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



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

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



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### First New Town

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

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

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

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

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





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



### The Northern New Town

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

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

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





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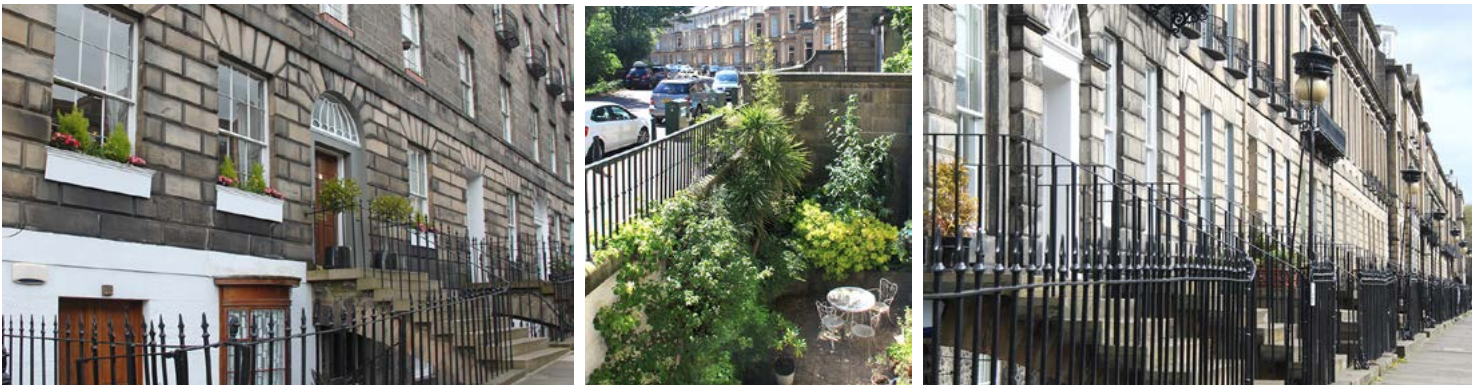
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Great King Street, intended as the most prestigious, and, therefore, the most expensive, address was slow to feu, as Heriot Row, which faced the private gardens north of Queen Street, was the preferred location. These gardens, that became a feature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

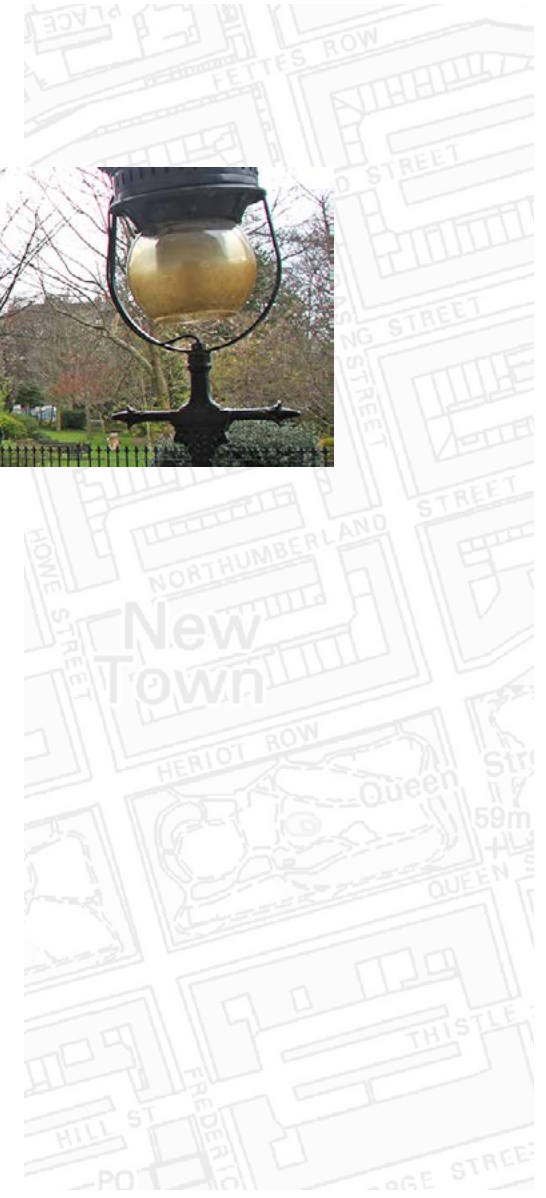


The basic architectural form of the area continued the precedent of the First New Town, with fine quality ashlar residential blocks of three storeys over a sunken basement arranged in straight formal terraces.



### The Moray Estate

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





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

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

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

The townscape of the Moray Estate is on a grand scale. This is expressed by the greater spaces between the blocks and the buildings, although they retain the three storey and basement form. The buildings around Moray Place itself are particularly impressive, taking the form of twelve Roman Doric palace fronted elevations, six of which have imposing columned centrepieces.





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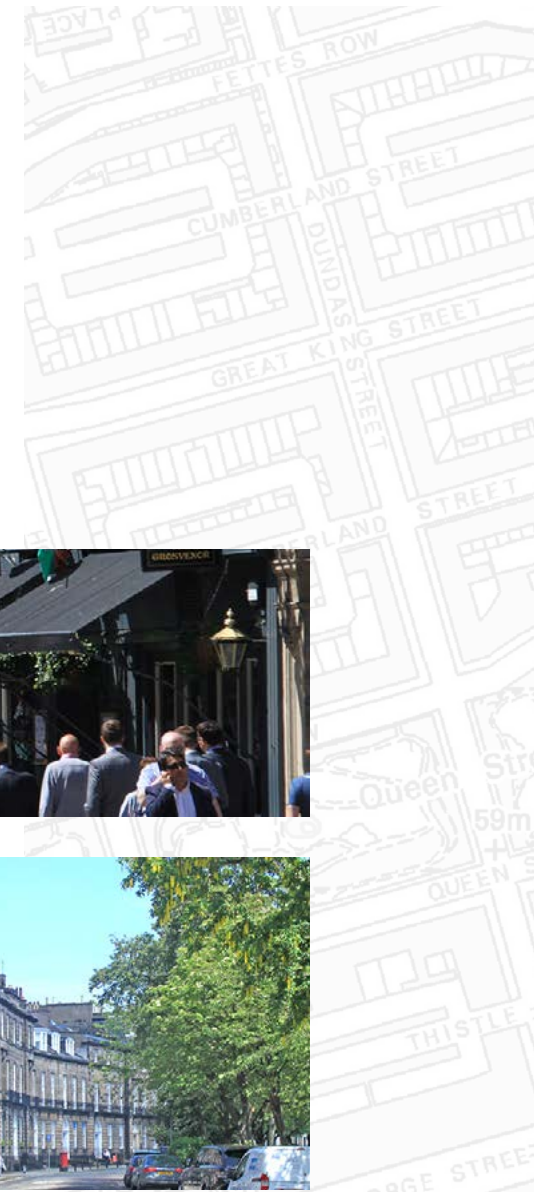
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To the north, running down the slopes of the river gorge, is a mutual communal pleasure ground which was an important element of the scheme.

### Western New Town

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





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

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



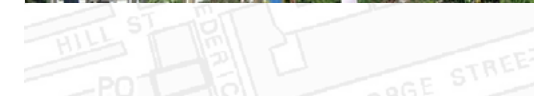
Despite these setbacks, the Walkers made a substantial income and from 1873 Patrick Walker's three daughters funded the building of the three-spired St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral that provides a prominent terminus to the main axis of the development.



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

The spread of the city westward prompted the Heriot's Trust, which owned the land still further west, to develop it from 1860. Recognising the desirability of a green outlook, the designs by John Lessels, Peddie and Kinnear, John Chesser and others included a good proportion of narrow ellipses and crescents. The style of architecture gradually changed from neo-classical to a rich Victorian

Renaissance in the later developments. The most westerly developments, Magdala Crescent and Douglas Crescent, have, uniquely in the area, mansard roofs.





## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

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

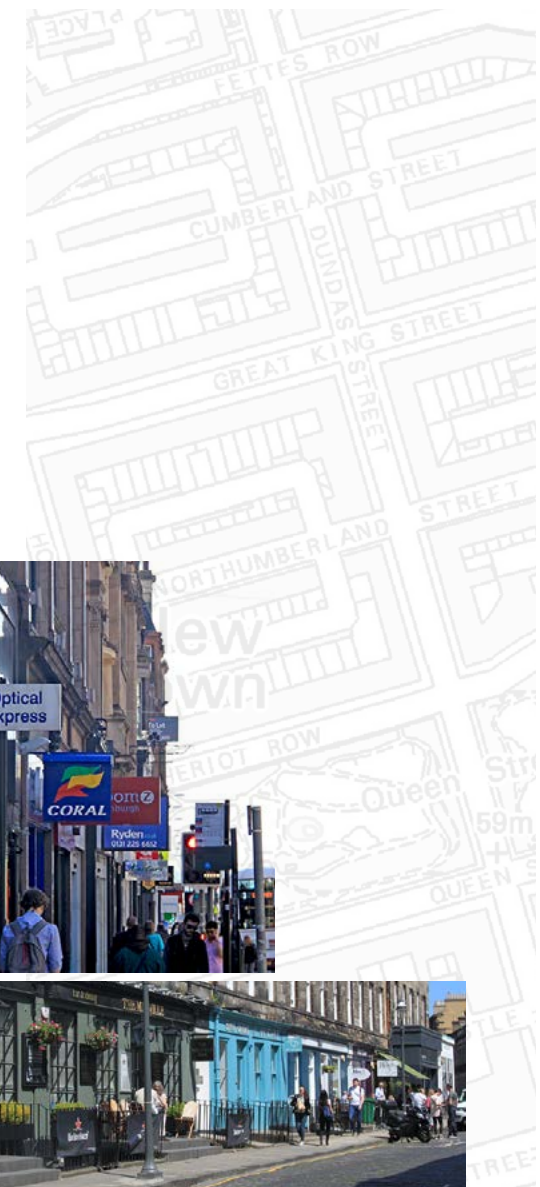
The Western New Town was planned around the grand central axis of Melville Street, with Shandwick Place and Chester Street/Drumsheugh Place as flanking streets. Melville Street is closed by St Mary's Cathedral at one end and the back of West Register House at the other and lined by grand buildings. The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

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



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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Gayfield

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

The western section of Gayfield, between Union Street and Broughton Street, consists of roughly regular rectilinear streets fronted by late Georgian terraces of tenements. Towards the east, the formal grid of streets is based around the development of



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



Gayfield Square which structures the area and is surrounded by a fringe of less regular development which contains significant pockets of piecemeal redevelopment.





## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

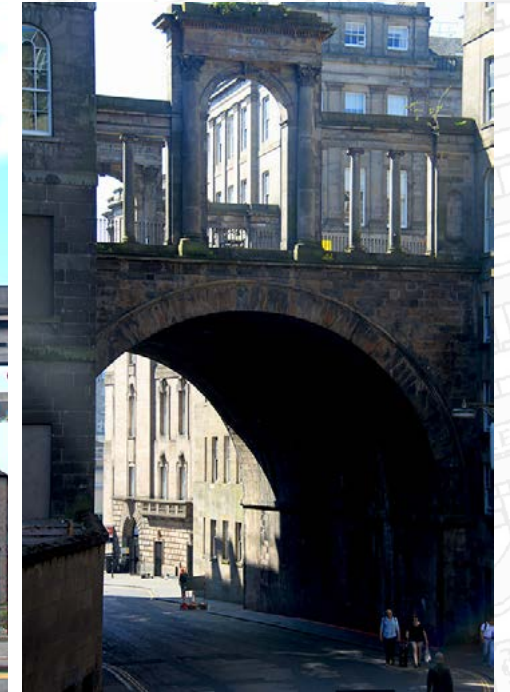
### Calton

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

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

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

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

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



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

The hill is surrounded by a triangle of roads; Waterloo/Regent Road to the south, London Road/Royal Terrace to the north-east and Leith Street to the north-west. Waterloo Place forms an eastern extension of Princes Street, its entrance marked by the western elevation of the first buildings in the street - designed as a matching pair with their ionic pilastered porticos forming a gateway to Waterloo Place. The north and south elevations of the first part of the street are closely lined by late Georgian buildings built in the classical style.



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## New Town

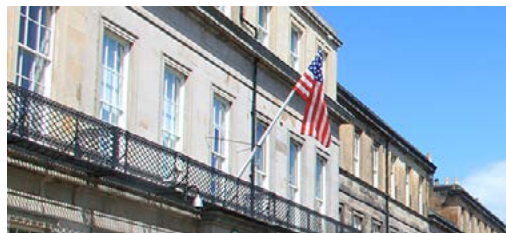
Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

These are followed by Stevenson's Bridge over the Calton ravine, with the Old Calton burial ground and St Andrew's House to the south. Beyond St Andrew's House the road skirts the slopes of Calton Hill and opens up views across the eastern part of the Old Town to Salisbury Crags, with the Old Royal High School to the north.

Royal and Regent Terrace exploit the topography of the site and consist of two long outward facing terraces linked at an acute angle. Royal Terrace facing to the north, with views out to the Forth, is an imposing street, consisting of a 1181ft (360m) row of forty terraced houses with Corinthian and Ionic colonnades. These buildings are of a conception and scale unmatched anywhere else in Edinburgh. To the south, is the only slightly less grand 984ft (300m) stretch of Regent Terrace, linked to Royal Terrace by Calton Terrace. It is built along a natural contour line, maximising long views and the picturesque qualities of the site. To the north of Royal Terrace are the rectilinear city blocks of Leopold Place, Hillside Crescent and Eglinton Crescent, radiating back from London Road.

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

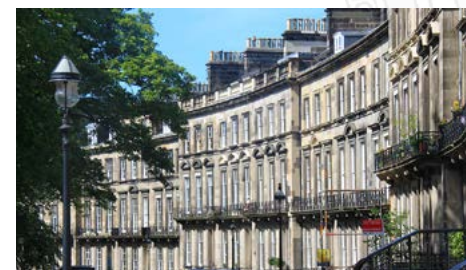
Character Appraisal

### The Dean Estate

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

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

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



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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Stockbridge and the Raeburn Estate

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

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



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

Stockbridge was laid out around a single through route; now called Kerr Street to the south east of the Water of Leith and Deanhaugh Street, Raeburn Place, Comely Bank Road successively on the other bank. Dean Street and Leslie Place join Raeburn Place from the higher ground to the south-west. These streets are lined with Georgian and Victorian terraces of tenements or three storey houses some particularly fine buildings including palace fronted terraces with substantial individual front gardens.





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

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

In 1789, the painter Henry Raeburn, acquired the estate of Deanhaugh, through his marriage to Ann, the widow of James Leslie of Deanhaugh. The estate to the northwest of the New Town was still somewhat out of town and accessible only by the bridge at Stockbridge. Construction began in 1813 to the west of Stockbridge under the direction of the architect James Milne. The first street built, named Ann Street after Raeburn's wife, has some particularly fine buildings including palace fronted terraces with substantial front gardens. Despite its location, the development was successful - later sections were more conventionally urban in style, as it was engulfed by the city. St Bernard's Crescent, a grand fully urban composition with giant Doric columns was completed in 1824, and is a superior example of late Georgian townscape.



### Canonmills and Claremont

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Spaces

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

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

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

### St Andrew and Charlotte Square

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





## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Princes Street Gardens

Princes Street Gardens lie in the valley separating the Old and New Towns. Situated at a lower level than the surrounding streets, there are good views into the gardens from Princes Street, the Mound, and the Castle; but views out from the gardens are limited, and are dominated principally by the Mound and views of the Old Town, which overlook the gardens to the south.

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

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

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

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Queen Street Gardens

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

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

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

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

### Calton Hill

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Regent Gardens

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

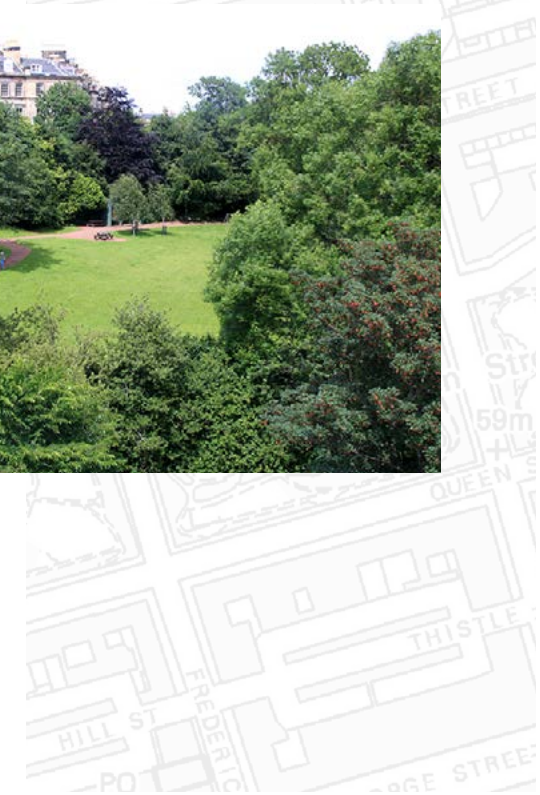
A central lawn on sloping ground is planted with mature parkland trees. A mixture of lime, beech, and sycamore shelters the surrounding walks. The various footpaths lead to a terrace planted with limes, set above a ha-ha at the top of the gardens, just inside the boundary wall with Calton Hill. The ha-ha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



### Dean Gardens

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal



### Water of Leith

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

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### KEY ELEMENTS

#### Vistas and Views

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

#### Building Forms

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

#### Streetscape

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

Within the Conservation Area, the historic street pattern is largely intact. Initially pavements were flagged, probably with Hailes or Craigleith sandstone paving slabs, while carriageways were setted. Streets are bounded on either side by pavements running back in an unbroken surface from the kerb to the building line, or stone base of railings guarding an open basement area.

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Street Lighting

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

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



### Street Furniture

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





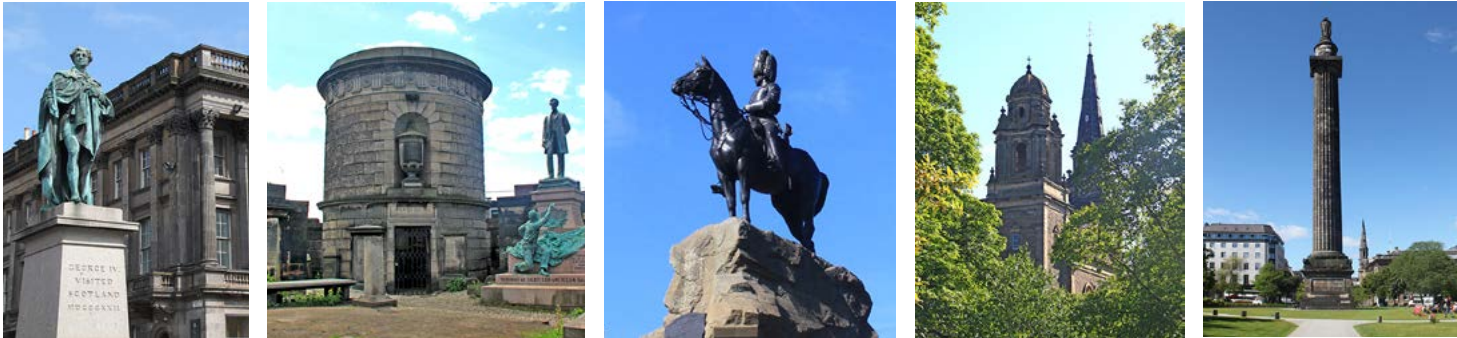
## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Statues and Monuments

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



### Mews and Lanes

Craig's New Town contained lanes that were composed of artisans' dwellings, but as the expansions of the New Town took place, the original purpose of the lanes transferred to the provision of mews. These provided accommodation for stabling and coaches, usually associated with the town houses on the streets that they lay behind. They are usually one and a half stories high, with a carriage entrance and sometimes a hayloft, both on the lane side. They were usually built with a formal high quality design facing the house and an informal rubble elevation facing the lane of the mews.



### Materials

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





## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Stonework

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

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

### Roofs

Most roofs in the First New Town are steeply pitched, with a high central ridge. Roofs in later developments were more likely to have two parallel ridges making a double-pitched 'M' profile roof with a central leaded platform.

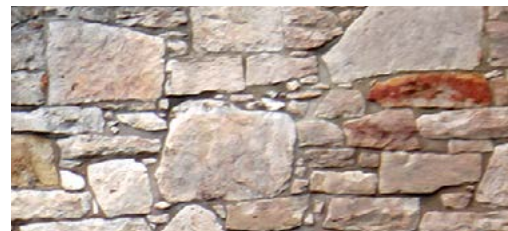
Chimneys and chimney pots occur on party and gable walls, and cupolas are virtually universal over internal stairs. Roofs are generally covered with graded slate with lead flashings to parapet or valley gutters. Rainwater goods are generally cast iron.

### Windows

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

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

Most early windows were glazed with either Crown or cylinder glass rather than the more modern cast or sheet glass. The high surface gloss, slight imperfections and convex planes create interesting reflections and give depth to the façade. Where it exists original glass should, therefore, be retained wherever possible. Since Crown glass and cylinder glass could only be made in small sheets the size of the panes was strictly limited, so large windows demanded sub-division by rebated glazing bars, or astragals, to carry the smaller section of glass.

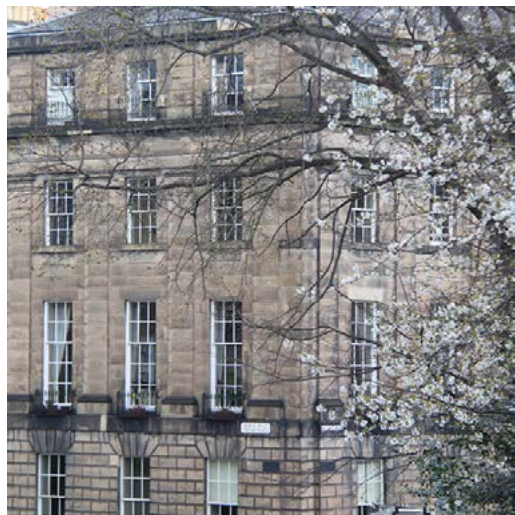




## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal



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

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

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

### Doors

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

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

### Fanlights

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Entrance Platts

Front doors are usually accessed from the street by one or more stone steps leading to a stone slab or platt bridging the open basement area. This arrangement also reinforces the importance of the entrance whilst bridging the difference in level between the street and the entrance. The drop from the pavement to the area and the edge of the entrance steps and platt are protected by cast iron railings, a feature which became increasingly ornate over time particularly on more prestigious buildings.



### Cast Iron work

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

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

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





## New Town

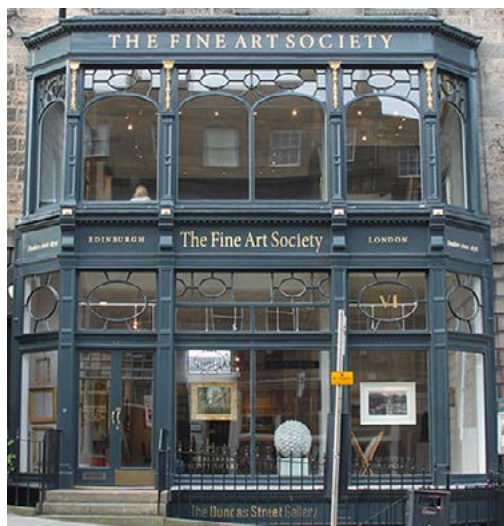
Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

### Shop Fronts

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

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



### Boundary Treatments

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



## MANAGEMENT

### Legislation, policies and guidance

#### Conservation Areas

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

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

- The demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation Area consent;
- Some permitted development rights are removed; and
- Works to trees are controlled (see Trees for more detail).

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

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

#### Listed buildings

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

## New Town

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## World Heritage Site

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

## Planning guidance

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

[The World Heritage Site Management Plan](#)

[Guidance for Householders](#)

[Guidance for Businesses](#)

[Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas](#)

[Developer contributions and affordable housing](#)

[Edinburgh Design guidance](#)

[Street Design Guidance](#)

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

## Article 4 Direction Orders

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

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## New Town

Conservation Area

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

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

Class 38 - water undertakings.

Class 39 - development by public gas supplier.

Class 40 - development by electricity statutory undertaker.

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

### Trees

Trees within Conservation Areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning (etc) Act 2006. This Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of a tree having a diameter exceeding 2" (75mm) at a point 4ft (1.5m) above ground level. The planning authority must be given six weeks' notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. Failure to give notice will render the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Tree Preservation Orders are made under planning legislation to protect individual and groups of trees considered important for amenity or because of their cultural or historic interest. When assessing amenity, the importance of trees as wildlife habitats will be taken into consideration. There is a strong presumption against any form of development or change of use of land which is likely to damage or prejudice the future long term existence of trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The removal of trees for arboricultural reasons will not imply that the space created by their removal can be used for development.

The *Trees in the City* Action Plan contains a set of policies to guide the management of the Council's trees and woodlands.





## Assessing Development within the New Town Conservation Area

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

### General Criteria

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

### New Buildings

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

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



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## New Town

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gap site in a traditional terrace may require a very sensitive design approach to maintain the overall integrity of the area; in other cases modern designs sympathetic and complimentary to the existing character of the area may be acceptable.

### Alterations and Extensions

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

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

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

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

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

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

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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





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## New Town

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

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

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNING ACTION

#### Conservation Area Boundaries

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

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

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

#### Streetscape

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

#### Shop Fronts

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

#### Natural Heritage

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



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## New Town

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

### High Buildings

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

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- Georgian Edinburgh – Ian G Lindsay.
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### Location and Boundaries

The South Side shares a common boundary to the north with the Old Town Conservation Area. However, at this point the two Conservation Areas are overlaid by the World Heritage Site, the boundary of which lies further south and overlaps into the South Side, and Marchmont and Meadows Conservation Areas.





## South Side

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The western boundary is formed by Middle Meadow Walk leading directly onto the Meadows the northern edge of which continues the boundary of the Conservation Area onto Buccleuch Street where the boundary swings southwards following Sciennes. The boundary then follows Braid Place eastwards onto Causewayside turning south till it meets Salisbury Place and runs to the north of Salisbury Road. It then runs eastwards to take in the Royal Commonwealth Pool, Pollock Halls and the Scottish Widows building. It then runs generally northwards to rejoin Drummond Street taking irregular extensions eastwards to include Parkside Street, St Leonard's Bank, the Deaconess Hospital and University buildings off the Pleasance.

The Edinburgh World Heritage Site boundary overlaps the South Side Conservation Area. Starting in the middle of Middle Meadow Walk, it runs eastward to include the northern part of George Square before running up the west side of Bristo Street car park and then turns east into Nicolson Square. The boundary then crosses Nicolson Street to run down Hill Place, turns north up Richmond Place and then east down Adam Street to meet the Pleasance. Everything to the north of this boundary is contained within the World Heritage Site.



### Dates of designation/amendments

The South Side Conservation Area was originally designated in May 1975 and extended in 1986 to include an area around Forbes Street. A further amendment was approved in 1996 to transfer an area to the north of the Conservation Area to the Old Town Conservation Area and include the Deaconess Hospital within the Conservation Area.

In March 2019 an extension of the Conservation Area boundary to include the Royal Commonwealth Pool, the Scottish Widows Building and Pollock Halls and 186 Pleasance.

The flats at Forbes Street and the St Leonard's Police Station are more recent developments and were removed from the Conservation Area in March 2019.

The northern section of the Conservation Area is included within the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

### Statement of Significance

The South Side is one of the most historically and architecturally important parts of Edinburgh with a rich mixture of stages of development and an abundance of heritage interest.

In 1766, Edinburgh made its first ambitious expansion beyond the city walls with the

development of the architecturally unified George Square. The construction of North Bridge in 1772, followed by South Bridge in 1788 was a major factor in the continuing development of the area.

In the fifties and sixties, the South Side was changed by slum clearance programmes and the expansion plans of the University. Large parts of the area were also blighted by uncertainty over road proposals. The designation of the South Side Conservation Area in 1975 reversed the wave of demolition, resulted in the regeneration of the area and the retention of much of its historic identity.

Despite the many changes to the South Side; the history, architectural heritage and mix of communities in the area make it one of the most significant parts of the city.



## CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

### Purpose of Character Appraisals

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

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

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

From PAN 71, Conservation Area Management.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/12/20450/49052](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/12/20450/49052)

### How to use this document

The analysis of the South Side Conservation Area’s character and appearance focuses on the features which make the South Side special and distinctive. These are considered in terms of:

- Historical Origins and Development;
- Structure, which describes and draws conclusions regarding the overall organisation and macro-scale features of the area; and
- Key Elements, which examines the smaller-scale features and details which fit within the structure.
- Management: The Management section outlines the policy and legislation relevant to decision-making in the area. Issues specific to the South Side are discussed in more detail and recommendations or opportunities identified.





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

## HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

The South Side Conservation Area lies immediately to the south of the line of the defensive walls of the city formed by the Flodden Wall, built between 1514 and 1560, and extended by the Telfer Wall, between 1628 and 1636. A clear space was left on the inside of the wall of 12 feet and on the outside of 24 feet. This external space was used later for roads, forming the street pattern of today. Consequently, the northern boundary of the Conservation Area formed by Drummond Street, South College Street, Bristo Port, Bristo Place and Teviot Place follows the line of the defensive walls.

Gates, or ports, at Potterow, Bristo Port and latterly Forrest Road punctuated these walls. These gates were served by two roads approaching from the south, one following the line of Dalkeith Road/Pleasance and the other following the line of Causewayside/Buccleuch Street.

In the Middle Ages, Preston Street was known as Mounthooly Loan – it was the road to the Holy Mount, the site of a small chapel which is now occupied by the Scottish Widows building. The site of Preston Street School has a gruesome history, reflected in an earlier name for Preston Street - Gibbet Loan. During the 16th and 17th centuries, a gallows faced down Dalkeith Road on the site. The mutilated remains of the Marquess of Montrose were buried here, after his execution at the Cross of Edinburgh in May, 1650.



Preston Street School

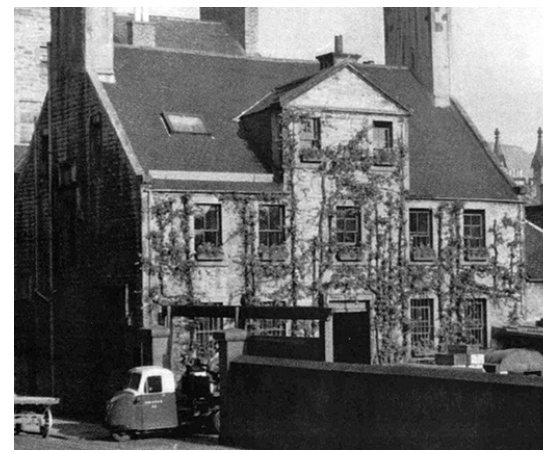


1852

Up to 1700, the area lying to the south of Edinburgh, beyond the City walls, was characterised by scattered houses, open fields and some ribbon development. This stretched along the southern approach roads of Potterow, Buccleuch Street, Pleasance and also Roxburgh Place and Richmond Place, which led to a tower in the Flodden wall.



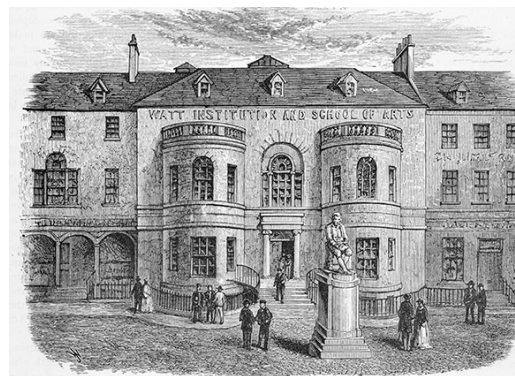
Very little remains of the period prior to 1700, but there are a number of former 'country' houses dating from the early 1700s that still exist embedded in the urban fabric of the South Side. Hermits and Termites at 64 St Leonard's Street which dates from 1734 has provided a home for two generations of artists, a railway office for an adjacent coal yard and is now fully restored as a residence. Chapel House (1750) and Pear Tree House (1747), the former now used by the Mosque and the latter as a pub and restaurant.



The Act of Union of 1707 and the suppression of the Jacobite uprisings in 1715 and 1745, provided a settled political and social climate that allowed Edinburgh to contemplate expansion beyond the City walls. The constraints of the Nor' Loch meant that the initial expansion of the city focused towards the south, outside the Telfer and Flodden walls. Several small developments - Adam, Argyll, and Brown Squares - were undertaken. Although there was no overall planning philosophy these schemes were considered as planned developments at the time. The landowners in the South Side, particularly from Causewayside northwards, were numerous and feuing their policies in an unrelated fashion.



Argyle Square



Brown Square





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After developing Brown Square in the early 1760s, James Brown (1729-1807) drew up plans for George Square - a new development of terraced houses around a central square and the first development of any significant size outside of the overcrowded Old Town. Brown had acquired the site of the Ross Park in 1761 for the development of his 'superior style' houses and the feuing of George Square began in 1776. It was the earliest and most ambitious scheme of development attempted in Edinburgh and a precursor of the New Town. The scale and unity of its design made it an architectural landmark—it was considered to be one of the finest domestic squares in Europe. The design of terraces with individual houses was a new idea in Edinburgh, where flatted tenements were the norm. The layout of the houses around a central semi-private garden was also a relatively new concept in Scotland. It was an immediate success and proved popular with Edinburgh's more affluent citizens – number 25 was the childhood home of Sir Walter Scott. For a time it was the most fashionable residential area in Edinburgh attracting aristocratic and wealthy families from their cramped houses in the Old Town, but by 1800 it had been eclipsed by the New Town. The square was named after Brown's elder brother, George Brown. These were subsequently replaced by Chambers Street in the nineteenth century.

The construction of North Bridge in 1772 followed by the construction of South Bridge in 1788 which linked the New Town, Old Town and South Side directly for the first time were principal incentives to expansion.



The development of Nicolson Street, dates from 1764 when the city was beginning to expand to the South and the land was feued from the estate of Lady Nicolson. Nicolson Street was laid out on the axis of Lady Nicolson's house, which stood in the middle of the road at West Richmond Street, and for many years all traffic had to fork around her mansion. After completion of the South Bridge in 1788, the house was demolished in 1794, allowing Nicolson Street to be extended to Clerk Street. By 1800, building had reached St Patrick Square and Montague and Rankeillor Streets had been laid out.



Up to 1800, the housing that was built was of vernacular style in rubble rather than ashlar, although there were some notable exceptions. By 1830, terraces and villas were being erected as far south as West Mayfield. The housing market was saturated by this time and this, allied to a declaration of bankruptcy by Edinburgh in 1833, resulted in little new building being erected in the South Side for twenty years.

St. Leonards Railway Station served the first rail service between Edinburgh and Dalkeith. The demand for coal in Edinburgh led to the construction of the first railway in the Lothians, when the Edinburgh and Dalkeith Railway opened in 1831. It was known as the 'Innocent Railway' possibly because it was originally horse drawn (until 1846) in an age in which many considered steam engines dangerous. The rate of travel was slow and drivers were warned not to stop and feed their horses between stations. It was designed by Robert Stevenson and constructed by James Jardine for investors including the 5th Duke of Buccleuch. The line passed through Duddingston, Craigmillar, Niddrie, Newcraighall and out to Dalkeith: although passengers simply jumped off when they reached their destination. The line was bought by the North British Railway Company in 1845 and the line is now a cycle path. The service was a great success moving over 300 tons of coal a day with a passenger service, started in 1832, carrying a quarter of a million people by the end of the 1830s. The site was used as a coal yard in the 1960s and has since been developed for housing.

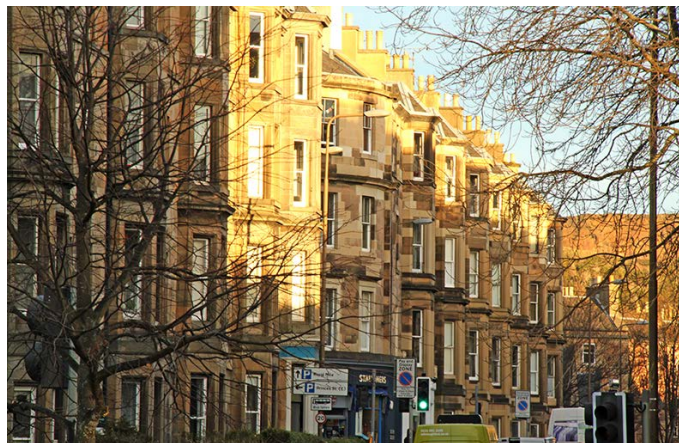


St Leonards's Coal Yard

The final expansion of new building in the South Side took place from the 1850s onwards with Hope Park Terrace, Lutton Place and Bernard Terrace all being completed by the 1870s. From the end of the century until the mid-1920s little new building activity occurred. However, in the northern and central sections of the Conservation Area existing tenements were subdivided twice and sometimes three times without regard to amenity.



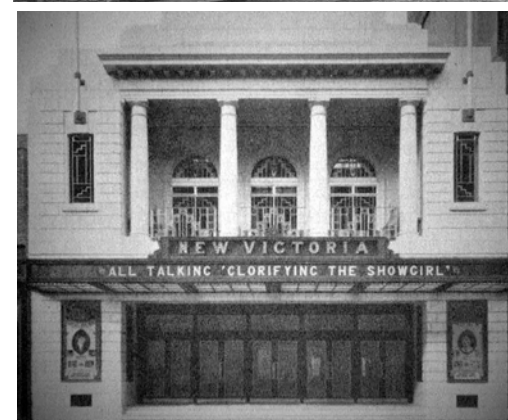
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A scheme for rehousing the population living in the area between the Pleasance and Richmond Place was prepared by the City Architect's Department under Ebenezer James Macrae. Macrae, was City Architect from 1925 to 1946. He was influential, both as an early adopter and promoter of the idea of conservation, and as the creator of numerous inter-war Council housing schemes, many schools and the iconic Edinburgh police boxes. The project commenced in 1931 and was completed by 1938. The work at East Crosscauseway, Buccleuch Street, Simon Square, Gifford Park and St Patrick Square adding up to a considerable amount of housing redevelopment.

In the heyday of cinema going, the South Side could boast numerous local picture houses - the Roxy on Roxburgh Street, the Abbey on Richmond Street, the Lyric and La Scala on Nicolson Street, the Salisbury on Clerk Street, and the Operetta House on Chambers Street. The biggest and most elaborate was the New Victoria Cinema on Clerk Street. The New Victoria opened on 25 August 1930. It was designed by the prominent cinema architect William Edward Trent and is recognised as an exceptional example of an Art Deco picture palace. The name changed to the Odeon in 1964. In August 2003, the cinema closed and was sold to a property developer. There followed a long period of uncertainty about the future of the building. However, at the time of writing, work is underway to refurbish it for use as a cinema.

The site of the Festival Theatre has been occupied by a succession of circuses and performance halls since 1830 and is Edinburgh's longest serving theatre venue. The new



New Victoria Cinema, Clerk Street





Empire Palace Theatre opened on 7 November 1892. The creation of the magnificent new theatre was a partnership between two of the great men associated with the theatre at the time - Sir Howard Edward Moss (1852–1912), a major theatre entrepreneur, and the celebrated theatre architect, Frank Matcham (1854–1920) – ‘Matchless Matcham’. By 1927, the Empire Palace was beginning to look unfashionable and was suffering from competition from the development of cinemas. In November 1927, the theatre closed and was largely rebuilt to a plan by the prominent theatre designers William and Thomas Milburn. The new Empire Theatre (the word Palace was dropped from the name), with its Art Deco façade, reopened on 1 October 1928. By the 1950s, the increasing popularity of television resulted in dwindling audiences for theatres. In 1962, the Empire closed, was sold to Mecca and by March 1963 reopened as the New Empire Casino to cater for the new fad of bingo. In 1992, bingo was falling out of favour and Mecca was having financial difficulties. The local authority negotiated the purchase of the building and it was leased to the Edinburgh Festival Theatre Company. The old frontage was replaced with a stunningly modern concave glass and steel façade which forms a glowing night-time landmark on Nicolson Street and encloses the magnificent 1928 auditorium. The theatre reopened on 18 May 1994 as the Festival Theatre.



Empire Theatre,

In the 1920s the Corporation commissioned Sir Frank Mears to prepare a plan for Central Edinburgh. His proposals of 1931 were shelved with the outbreak of war in 1939. In the thirty years following the Second World War, there was considerable Planning activity in the South Side. The first major plan relating to the South Side was the Abercrombie Civic Survey and Plan of 1949. The proposals included a major road development through the area and redevelopment around George Square to cater for the expansion of the University. The survey also concluded that the majority of housing suffered from multiple deficiencies and should be redeveloped.



View over Dumbiedykes

Dumbiedykes takes its name from Thomas Braidwood's Academy for the Deaf and Dumb which he established in a house on the east side of St Leonard's in 1764. The building became known as the Dummie House, from the Scots dummie, a dumb person. The Dummie House, was demolished in 1939. Beaumont Place in Dumbiedykes included the 'Penny Tenement' whose owner tried to sell it for a penny in 1953 to demonstrate the burden on landlords caused by rent controls. No one came forward with a penny and it was offered free to the council, who also declined. On November 21 1958 at 5am, part of the building collapsed, fortunately with no fatalities. The collapse of the 'Penny Tenement' focused attention on Edinburgh's slums. Two extensive clearance areas around Carnegie Street were declared and a hundred families were moved from dangerous homes and re-housed - the beginning of a major slum-clearance drive. In the early 1960s, 1,030 houses were demolished in the St. Leonard's area and an estimated 1,977 people displaced.





The University of Edinburgh promoted plans to integrate the scattered parts of the University and to redevelop George Square, and a wider part of the South Side, as early as 1945. The University believed that the reconstruction of the Square was the only practical solution to their need for expansion. Debate about the proposals went on throughout the 1950s. Planning permission was granted in 1956, but mounting opposition to the scheme resulted in a public inquiry in 1959. The Historic Buildings Council then indicated that they considered George Square interesting, but not comparable to the quality of Charlotte Square and the technical advice was that the buildings in the Square were too dilapidated for re-use. In the mid-1960s, the redevelopment went ahead. In the face of a public outcry, modernist blocks replaced many of the old Georgian buildings. Now only original portions of the original east side and the west side remain. The University's expansion plans resulted in the redevelopment of all of the old buildings between Lothian Street to the north, Crichton Street to the south, Potterow to the east and Charles Street/Bristo Street to the east.



be restored. The review was not formally approved until 1974. The considerable delay added to the uncertainty over the future of the South Side.

In 1973, it was decided that renewal work in the South Side should proceed on the basis of a Local Plan rather than a comprehensive development plan. In 1975, the South Side was declared a Conservation Area, with conservation and rehabilitation being



the key factors in the Local Plan. This change in policy, allied to the availability of private sector grants, produced a burst of residential rehabilitation activity throughout the South Side. This started in the mid-1970s and continued through the 80s and had the effect of restoring confidence in the South Side.





The single biggest scheme was the partial restoration and rebuilding of a full street block on Nicolson Street between East Crosscauseway and West Richmond Street. The buildings had been acquired in 1960 for a joint project with a development company and the University of Edinburgh. Demolition of the buildings, which dated from the latter part of the eighteenth century, was planned as part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme. Residents and retailers started to move out and the buildings rapidly deteriorated. In 1975, the proposals were rethought and rehabilitation rather than demolition was seen as the way forward. The group of buildings was named the Pilot Block and the project which followed was to mark a new beginning for the South Side. As part of the Pilot Block project, it was proposed to conserve and restore as many buildings as possible, but where the buildings had deteriorated beyond repair they were to be replaced in a historic style to preserve the character of the area. The buildings at each end were least deteriorated and were restored with new buildings between these 'restored bookends'. Funding for the restoration was made available by the Crown Estate Commissioners, who at the time were accruing substantial revenue from oil developments. Work started in December 1978, and was mostly completed by February 1983. The project resulted in 69 flats, a supermarket, 24 shops and a pub.



During the same period, the City Council and Housing Associations began extensive new build housing schemes along the Pleasance and St Leonard's Street where clearance had taken place for the now deleted Bridges Relief Road. By the late 1980s and 90s private housing developers started to erect new housing developments on many of the remaining gap sites, significantly reducing them in number.

Since the original South Side Conservation Area Character Appraisal was published in 2002, the gap sites along Crichton Street, identified in the appraisal, have been developed. These include the former Crichton Street car park, which is now the site of the University's Informatics and Dugald Stewart buildings. The refurbishment of Bristo Square in 2018 provides an attractive new setting for the McEwan Hall. The gap site on the south side of the Nicolson Square created by a fire in the early 1990s has also been infilled.

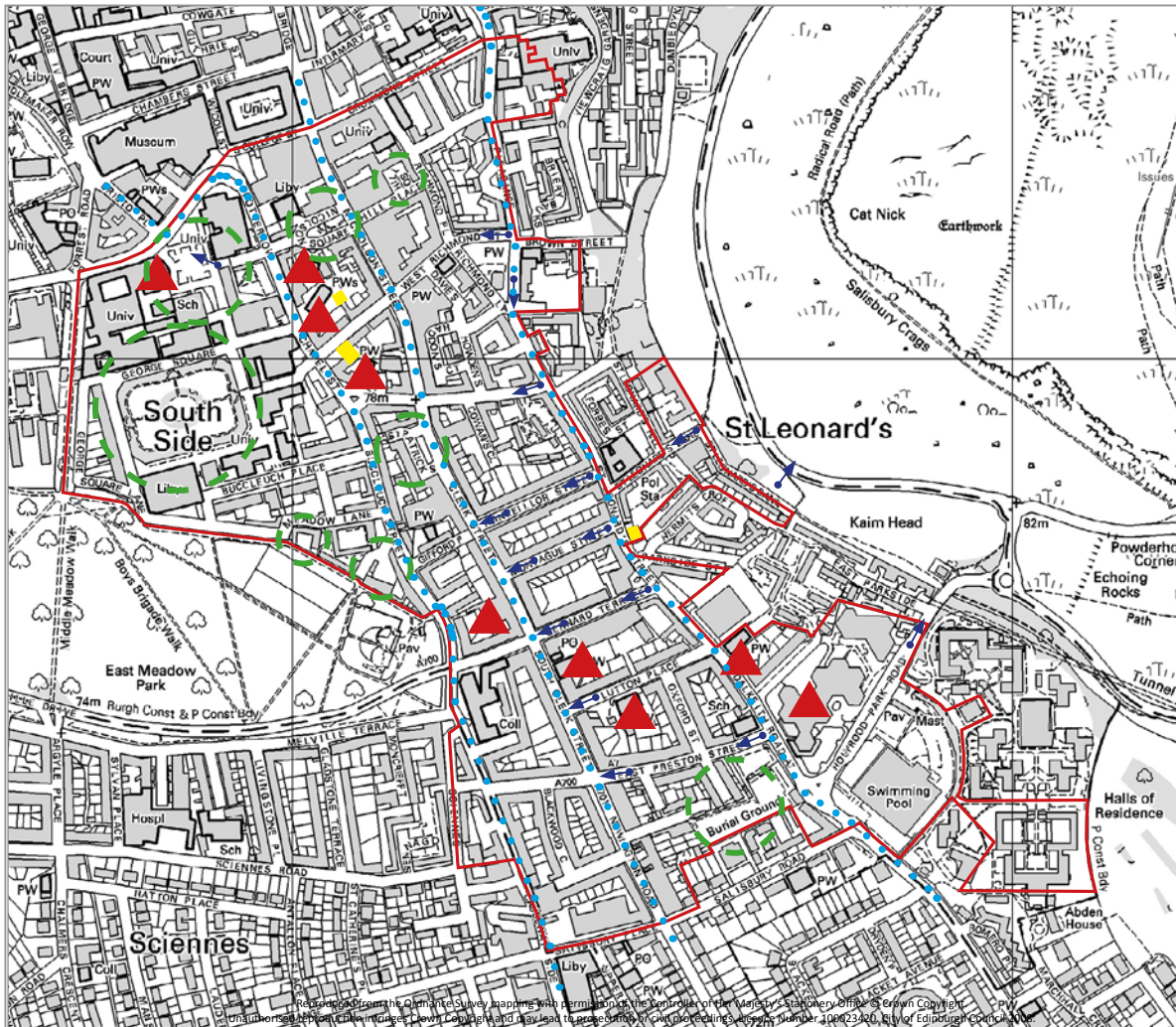













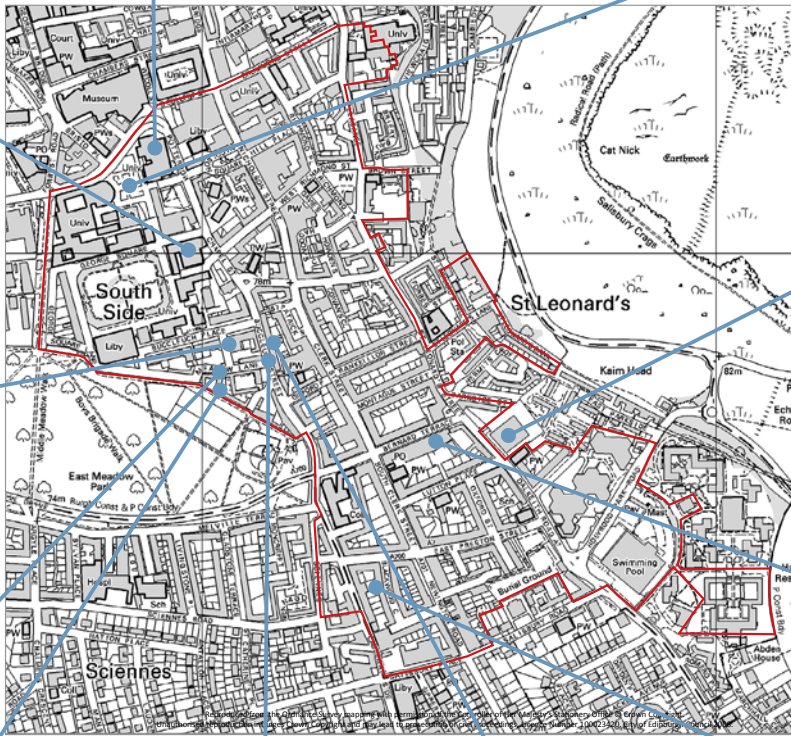
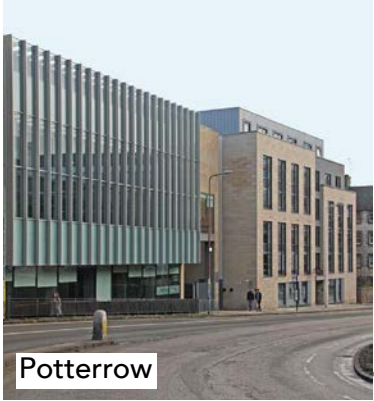
Townscape map



-  Landmarks
-  Important distant views
-  Important enclosed spaces
-  Principal routes
-  Pre 1750s buildings







Recent development in the South Side





## Focal Points and Landmarks

There are a number of prominent buildings that act as focal points throughout the area. These are principally churches and institutional buildings. They tend to occur along two routes - Nicolson/Clerk Street and Buccleuch Street/Causewayside. With the exception of the two modern tower blocks on George Square, the area is generally characterised by the slender towers of churches and the cupolas and domes of institutional buildings.

On Nicolson Street, at the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, the most prominent building at this point is the Old College on South Bridge, which is one of the most notable and important academic buildings in Scotland. The foundation stone of the new building for the University of Edinburgh was laid in November 1789. The existing University buildings on the site were in a dilapidated condition and badly in need of replacement. The design, by the renowned architect Robert Adam, included two internal courtyards. Work began in 1789, but was halted in 1793, with only the north-west corner and main frontage completed, following the death of Adam and the outbreak of the Napoleonic War. In 1818, William Playfair completed the building by retaining much of Adam's design, but with only one large quadrangle. In 1887, the dome, which had been part of Adam's original design for the College, but had been left out as a cost saving, was





## South Side

### Conservation Area

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added. The dome is crowned by the Golden Boy - a statue of youth holding a torch and symbolising knowledge. Although the building lies just outside the Conservation Area boundary; its presence on Nicolson Street is particularly noticeable. Looking northwards, the skyline is dominated by the Tron Kirk and the street is terminated by the dome of General Register House on Princes Street.

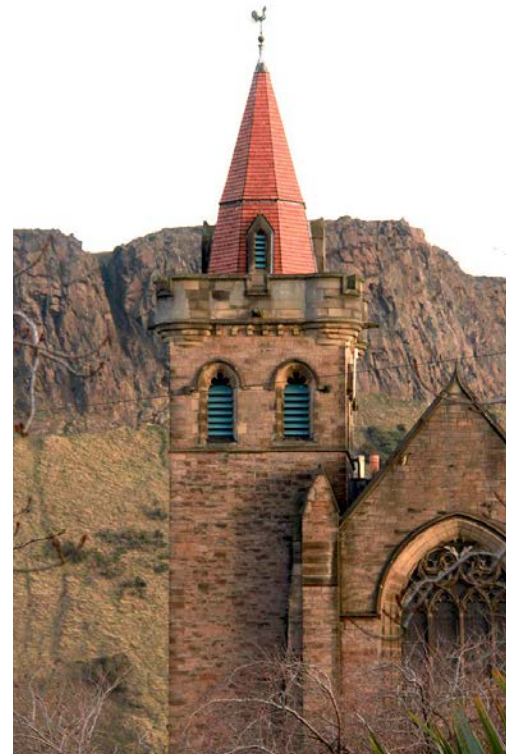
From Nicolson Square the dome of the McEwan Hall is glimpsed along with the

minaret of the mosque on Potterrow and the spire of Buccleuch and Greyfriars church. The views along West Richmond Street are dominated by the University's David Hume and Appleton Towers.

To the south of St Patrick Square the skyline is punctuated by the spires of the Queen's Hall on Clerk Street, St Peter's church on Luton Place and St Margaret and St Leonard's church on Dalkeith Road.

### Vistas and Views

The proximity of Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crag and the Old Town Ridge allow dramatic views and glimpses from a large number of points throughout the Conservation Area and the World Heritage Site. The topography of the area means that there are some fine views northwards towards the Castle and the Old Town and eastwards towards Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crag.





The central position and historic nature of the South Side make the area extremely sensitive to the effects of high buildings. The skyline of the South Side and its landmarks are particularly distinctive and contribute to the prominence of the World Heritage Site, the boundary of which overlaps the South Side to the north.



It is important that where there are development opportunities lying adjacent to the Conservation Area boundary that views out of the Conservation Area are not disrupted and that the style of building reflects the scale, massing and materials of the Conservation Area. This is particularly true along the eastern edge of the Conservation Area along St Leonard's and the northern area of the Conservation Area where it overlaps with the World Heritage Site boundary.



### Natural Heritage

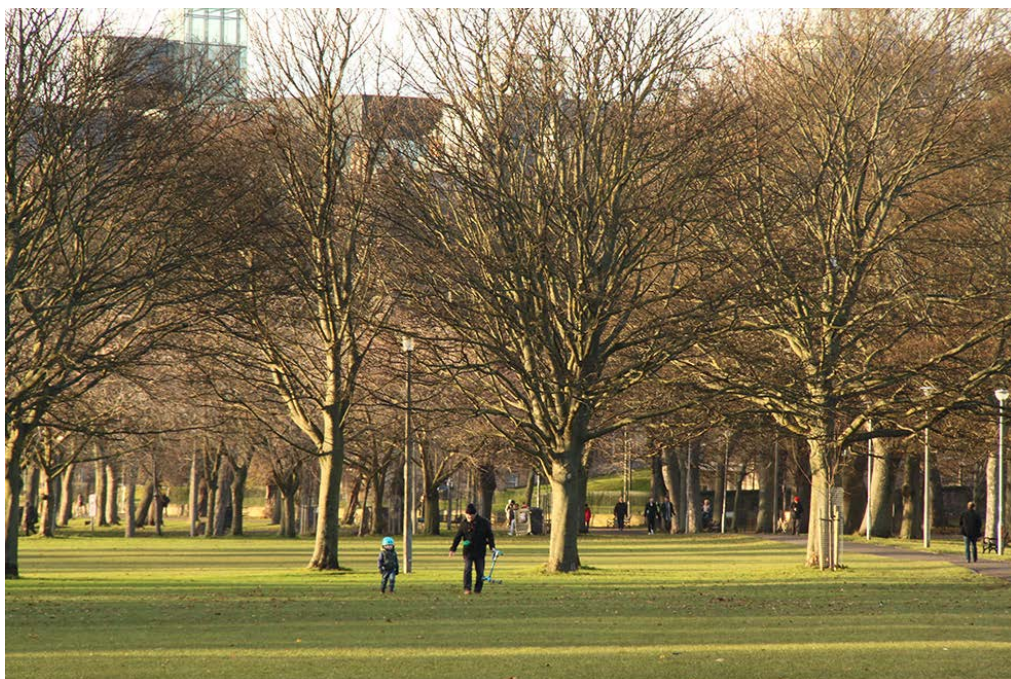
There are two major areas of open space to the east and west respectively of the Conservation Area as well as a number of smaller open spaces and squares within the built up area. Some of these have been designed as an integral part of the urban fabric. The Meadows, on the west side of the Conservation Area, is a major parkland area of open space serving a large part of the population of south Edinburgh. It is a managed open space with recreational facilities including cycleways, tree-lined paths, children's play areas, cricket squares,





and tennis courts. It is characterised by large expanses of mown grass, avenues of mature broadleaf trees, with secondary lines of ornamental flowering cherries.

The expansive natural heritage landscape of Holyrood Park, with Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crag, lie to the east of the built up area. The urban edge, which generally coincides with the edge of the Conservation Area, abruptly meets the rougher terrain; tree planted edge and natural vegetation of the steep slopes forming the boundary of the Royal Park.



Scattered throughout the Conservation Area there are a number of formal and informal open spaces and squares. Although many are small they make a contribution to residential amenity, which is disproportionate to their size. Generally each space is visually linked with at least one other providing significant legibility and an enhanced perception of the amount of open space.



## KEY ELEMENTS

### Building Types

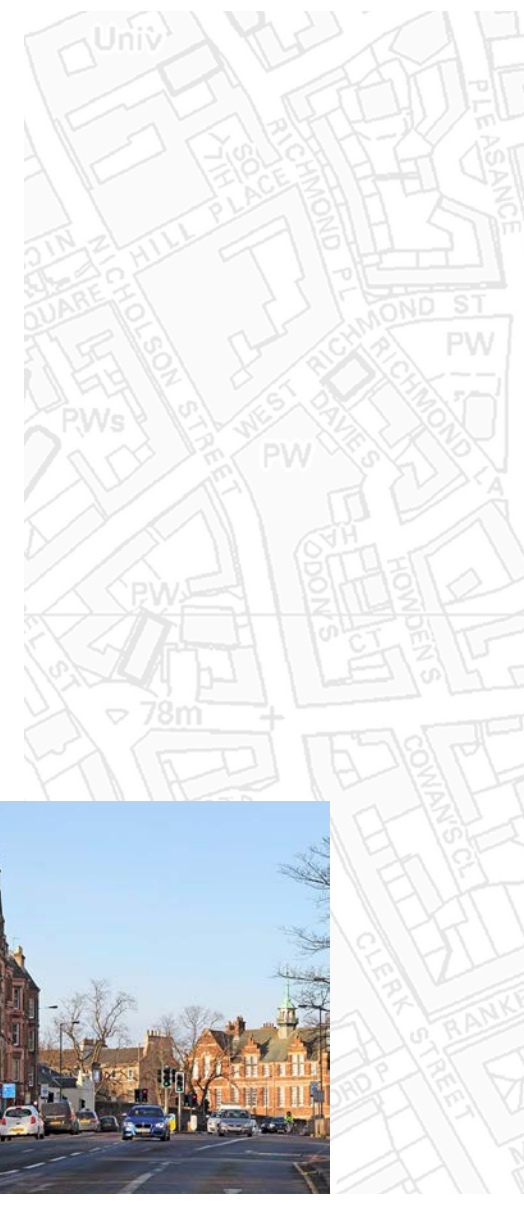
The mixed residential, commercial and institutional buildings of the South Side consist mainly of four to six storeys constructed of stone with pitched, slated roofs. A characteristic in parts of the South Side is the use of wallhead gables in the early vernacular tenements. The general uniformity of building heights provides a background against which important features of the City stand out. Each period of the South Side's history has left buildings of significant interest.

### Routes

Three main traffic routes penetrate the area. The principal route, comprising South Clerk Street/Clerk Street and Nicolson Street, runs through the centre of the area and was constructed in Georgian times to link directly to the City Centre and the New Town by way of North and South Bridge. This route acts as a linear 'High Street' for the South Side.

The other main roads were originally the medieval routes to Edinburgh. The easterly route comprising Dalkeith Road/St Leonard's Street and the Pleasance running down to the Cowgate. The second medieval route comprises Causewayside/Buccleuch Street and Potter Row linking with Candlemaker Row and George IV Bridge. East and West Crosscauseway connected these routes, in medieval times.

During the nineteenth century, the street pattern of the emerging Georgian developments were unified into the line of the historic routes.





## South Side

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### Trees

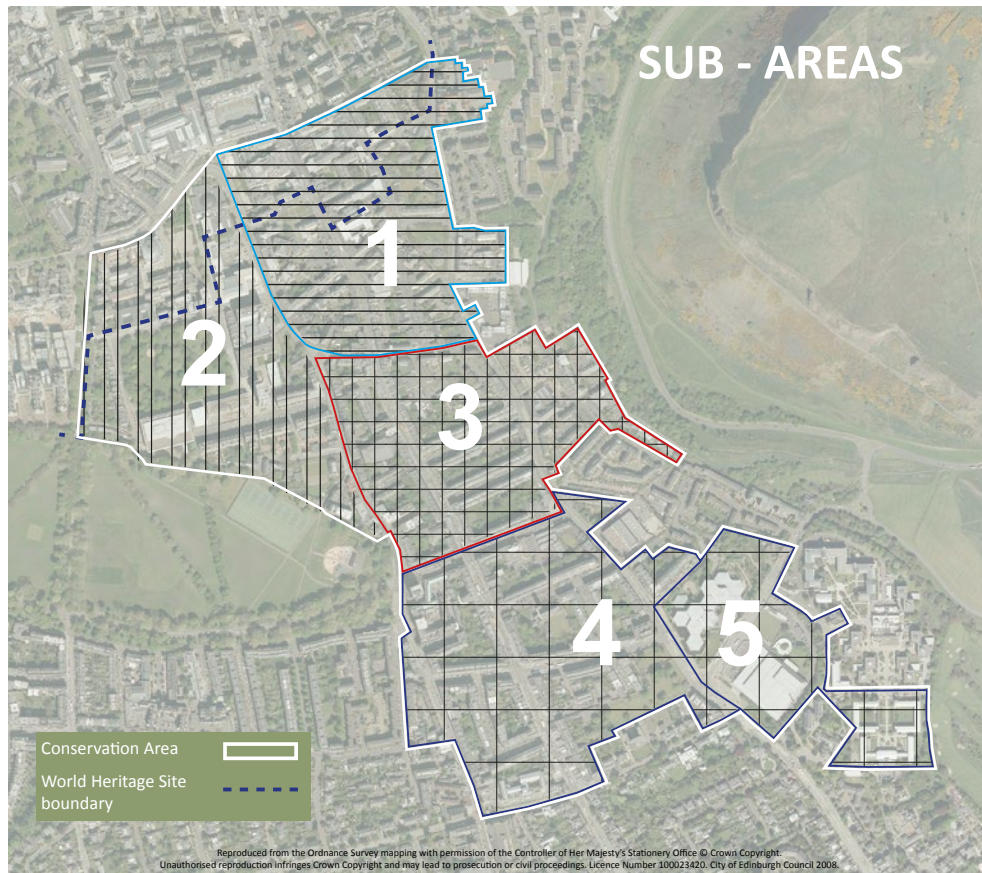
The Meadows, East Preston Street Burial Ground and the grounds of St Peter's Church include trees of significant stature. There is limited tree planting in streets with the exception of Lutton Place, which is sufficiently wide to accommodate trees along pavements on each side, and along parts of the Pleasance where street trees have been planted as part of new developments. There are no Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area.





## SUB-AREA ANALYSIS

The Conservation Area covers a large area which includes various historical periods and stages of development to form a variety of character areas and spatial patterns. For this appraisal the Conservation Area is split into five sub-areas representing distinctive patterns of growth and development.



## FIRST EXPANSION AREA

The first area lies to the north of East and West Crosscauseway bounded by Potterow up to South College Street where the boundary follows the old town walls and meets up with the Pleasance. The boundary follows the line of the Pleasance to East Crosscauseway, deviating to include the University Sports Centre and the Deaconess Hospital.





## STRUCTURE

### Spatial Structure

This area is characterised by small, informal street blocks, which provides a high degree of permeability. Some of the blocks have been infilled with larger buildings, such as the Festival Theatre and the supermarket on Nicolson Street.

Significant redevelopment has taken place in the area, including the City Architect's schemes of the 1930s to address overcrowding including a full street block at Richmond Place/Pleasance and smaller schemes at East Crosscauseway and Gifford Park. The decline that the area suffered from the end of the Second World War up to the mid-1970s, resulted in further redevelopment and a considerable amount of rehabilitation. The largest redevelopment/rehabilitation scheme was at the Pilot Block on the east side of Nicolson Street, between West Richmond Street and East Crosscauseway. All of these schemes have generally followed the grain and height of existing block sizes.



### Routes

The main route through the area is Nicolson Street with roads on both sides linking through to Potterrow and the Pleasance, and creating an informal grid structure. Nicolson Street is the main linear shopping street running through the area, supplemented by a wide range of restaurants and cafes on Chapel Street, Potterrow, West Nicolson Street and Nicolson Square. The main east-west routes are West Richmond Street and East and West Crosscauseway.

Many of the side streets retain setted surfaces. The junction at West Crosscauseway and Buccleuch Street is filled with a pedestrian island and could provide a more formal planned open space.



## KEY ELEMENTS

### Townscape

Between Nicolson Street and the Pleasance there are a number of streets running from north to south creating smaller blocks and reflecting the fact that there were a large number of individual landowners when the ground was originally feued. Consequently block sizes and plot sizes tend to be small scale providing a lively variety of building types and frontages.

Building lines are generally to the heel of the pavement, the exceptions being Georgian residential streets and squares, such as Drummond Street and Hill Square. New residential developments on the Pleasance tend to have small gardens to the front for privacy. Where new development has occurred on Nicolson Street and Potterrow, this has been mixed residential and shopping which has followed the building line.



Generally heights of buildings vary through the area being between three and six storeys. Most buildings built before the Second World War are of stone construction. New post-war development respects the heights and overall massing of the area.

### Architectural Character

This area is characterised by a rich, diverse grouping of architectural styles and buildings using primarily stone and pitched, slated roofs. Despite the variety of architectural styles and periods, the area remains generally harmonious in scale, massing and materials.

Architectural character is considered under the following architectural styles.





Traditional

Dating from the 1730s onwards, these buildings are vernacular in style and form a complete and continuous façade, presenting wallhead gables to the front and newel or turret staircases to the rear. Generally these buildings are of rubble construction, harled or rendered. Examples of this style are found on West Nicolson Street and Nicolson Street.

Two former mansion houses in this area have significant historic associations:

- **Chapel House, Chapel Street (Category B listed).** Chapel House is a distinctive building with rooftop urns located behind the mosque and forming part of the Mosque Kitchen. Chapel House dates from the mid-18th and was originally four storeys high. In 1840, it was purchased by Andrew Melrose, founder of the famous Melrose & Co., Tea and Coffee Merchants. On the death of Melrose in 1855 the house was used by the Edinburgh Royal Maternity Hospital until 1870. The celebrated Professor James Young Simpson, who first made use of chloroform in childbirth, was one of the trustees of the Lying-In Hospital at this time.
- **Pear Tree House, West Nicolson Street (Category B listed).** The pub takes its name from the old jargonelle pear tree which grows over the frontage of the building. The house dates from the mid-eighteenth century and the first occupant was Lord Kilkerran, a Court of Session Judge. Lord Kilkerran's son, Sir Adam Ferguson, who was the Member of Parliament for Edinburgh from 1784 to 1790, was the next owner of the house. Sir Adam entertained many eminent celebrities of the time at the house - James Boswell noted in his journal that he 'drank tea at Sir Adam Ferguson's'. In 1823, the house was purchased by the brewer Andrew Usher as a family home and business premises - it is reputed that whisky was first commercially blended on the premises. Prior to its conversion to a pub in 1982, the building was occupied by J & G Stewart, a firm of wine and spirit merchants.





### Georgian

The expansion of the city from the 1760s resulted in a number of small planned Georgian classical schemes within the vernacular context of the South Side. These are represented in this area by Saint Patrick Square and Hill Square/Hill Place. There is a dignified quality to the architecture of this period complemented by detailed finishes, floorscape and railings. These buildings tend to be five to six storeys in height and finished in ashlar stonework to the front. The transition between vernacular and classical Georgian architecture is demonstrated on the north side of West Nicolson Street.



The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh is one of the oldest surgical institutions in the world and has its origins in 1505, when the Barber Surgeons of Edinburgh were formally admitted as a Craft Guild of the city. In 1647, they established their first permanent meeting place in rooms in a tenement in Dickson's Close. As they expanded, they required a building with an anatomical theatre and, in 1697, they moved into Old Surgeons' Hall in High School Yards. In 1778, King George III granted a new charter giving the surgeons' corporation the title 'The Royal College of Surgeons of the City of Edinburgh'. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, they had outgrown





the building and additional space was required for the large collection of pathological specimens, including a full sized elephant, which had been gifted to the College. A site on Nicolson Street, occupied at the time by the Royal Academy for Teaching Exercise, a Riding School, designed by Robert Adam and built in 1764, was acquired. William Henry Playfair, one of the leading architects of the time, was commissioned to design the new building. The Greek Revival style Surgeons' Hall with its massive Ionic columned portico opened in July 1832.

### Modern

Small inter-war housing developments at Richmond Place, Gifford Park and elsewhere, comprising infill and redevelopment were successfully integrated into the fabric of the area by using traditional materials such as stone and slate. These buildings reflect the scale of the area.

A number of more recent mixed use and residential developments, while keeping in scale, have used brick as a finishing material which looks out of place with the general character of the area.

## SECOND EXPANSION AREA

### GEORGE SQUARE

Buccleuch Street, Chapel Street and Potterrow turning onto Lothian Street and Teviot Row along its northern edge form the boundary to this area. The boundary then follows Middle Meadow walk linking with the northern edge of the Meadows to connect back to Buccleuch Street.

## STRUCTURE

### Spatial Structure

This area is dominated by the University, which first moved into George Square in 1914. The principal through route is Buccleuch Street/Potterrow forming the eastern boundary, the routes to the west off this principal route lead directly into the campus and provide no through routes for vehicles. However, the area is extremely permeable for pedestrians. Bristo Square, which was built in 1983 and remodelled in 2017, provides an appropriate setting to the McEwan Hall.





In the 1960s, the University embarked on a major redevelopment programme around George Square, which is the largest planned open space in the South Side. This involved the redevelopment of the south side of the square and half of the north and east sides. This inward looking Georgian square of small scale residential character has been opened up by modern large scale institutional buildings, which contrast in scale and style with the remaining Georgian properties.

The Georgian tenements of Buccleuch Street and their mews buildings behind occupy the area to the south of George Square. These in turn lead into small informal squares.

While there is more limited vehicular permeability through this area, it is very permeable for pedestrians.

### Townscape

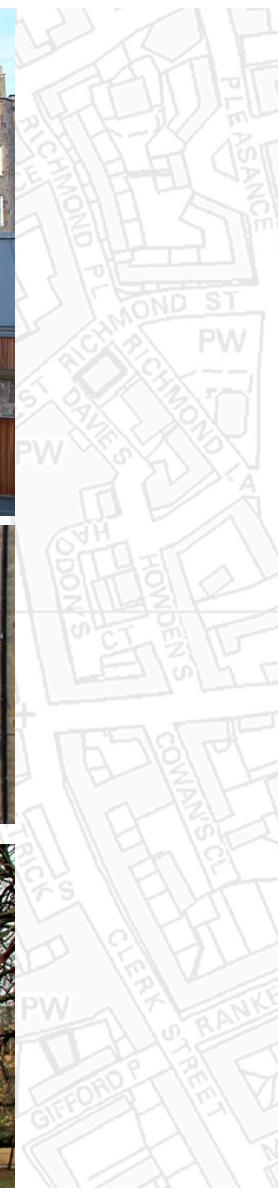
The original form of George Square has been disrupted by the construction of major University buildings. The original plot sizes in George Square have been overlaid by twentieth century international style, tower and podium buildings faced in a variety of materials ranging from slate and stone to concrete and mosaic.

To the south of George Square, original building forms with the Georgian terraces on Buccleuch Place consisting of main door and common stair tenement blocks of four

storeys, basement and attic. The setted street is one of the grandest in the South Side.

The Buildings on Buccleuch Street generally follow a building line which lies to the heel of the pavement.

The charming Hope Park Square, with a Dutch gabled building of 1725, fronts onto the Meadows, and the triangular Boroughloch Square provides an urban edge to the Meadows.





## KEY ELEMENTS

### Architectural Character

Despite the major redevelopments that have taken place in George Square there is still a wealth of architectural styles and buildings in this area, the majority using stone and pitched, slated roofs.

### Traditional

The traditional, vernacular buildings occur to the south of the area, reflecting the fact that Buccleuch Street was one of the main medieval routes into the city. The buildings forming the Buccleuch Street side of Boroughloch Square include wallhead gables to the street and stair turrets to the rear.



### Georgian

Classical Georgian buildings, originally residential, occur on George Square, Buccleuch Place and Buccleuch Street, which were all laid out by James Brown in the 1760s and 70s. These buildings retain their original railings.

The Archers' Hall built in 1776 and extended in 1900 sits in a tarmac forecourt set back from Buccleuch Street. The Royal Company of Archers has functioned as the Sovereign's Body Guard in Scotland since 1822, performing duties at the request of the Queen at

state and ceremonial occasions. The foundation stone of the Archers' Hall was laid on 15 August, 1776, by William St. Clair of Roslin on the edge of Hope Park (now the Meadows) where access to public archery butts was granted by the sovereign. The original building was extended in 1900. When the building opened in 1777, it was used as a tavern and meeting place for dancing assemblies. In January 1785, the dancing assemblies moved to the 'George's Square Assembly Rooms' in Buccleuch

Place and the tavern closed. Each archer is obliged to equip himself with 'sufficient shooting graith (equipment)' and display in his bonnet the Company's seal and arms. Their charter empowers the Archers to convene in military fashion and meet 'at least once every year about midsummer to shoot arrows with a bow at a butt'.



### Victorian

Buildings from this era tend to occur in the north of this area and are mainly institutional:

- The **McEwan Hall** was funded by Sir William McEwan (1827-1913), the Edinburgh brewer who established the successful Fountain Brewery in Edinburgh in 1856. McEwan was the Member of Parliament for central Edinburgh and gave £115,000 to the University of Edinburgh to erect a graduation hall. The design for the building was selected by competition and the eminent architect, Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, was so determined to win that he made a rapid tour of public buildings in England and the continent before submitting his entry to the competition.
- The **Medical School**, Teviot Place. Medicine has been on the curriculum at the University of Edinburgh from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Medical School was established in 1726 and is one of the oldest in the world. The building was completed in 1888 to a design by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson.
- **Teviot Row House**. The students of the University of Edinburgh celebrated the opening of Teviot Row House on 19 October 1889 with a torch-lit procession through the city. The students themselves had set out to raise the funds to build the Students' Union, which takes its place in history as the oldest purpose built Students' Union building in the world. The original imposing design by Sydney Mitchell & Wilson is influenced by sixteenth century Scots-Renaissance architecture.

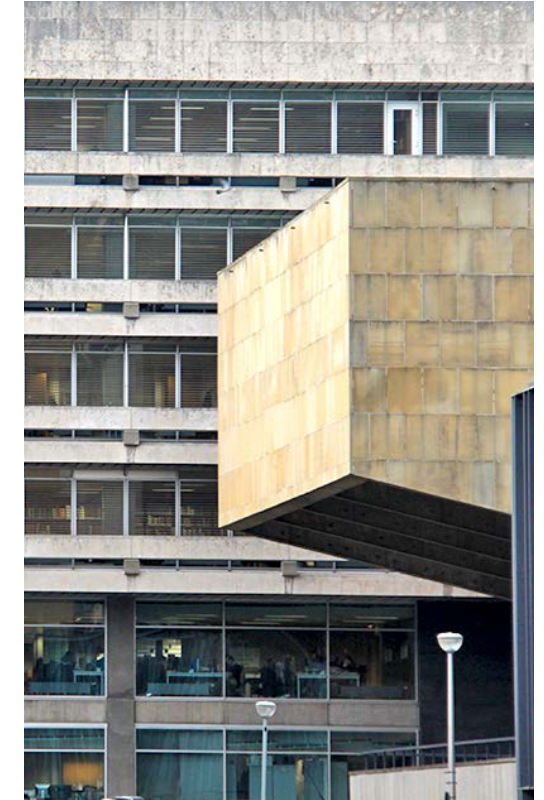




## South Side

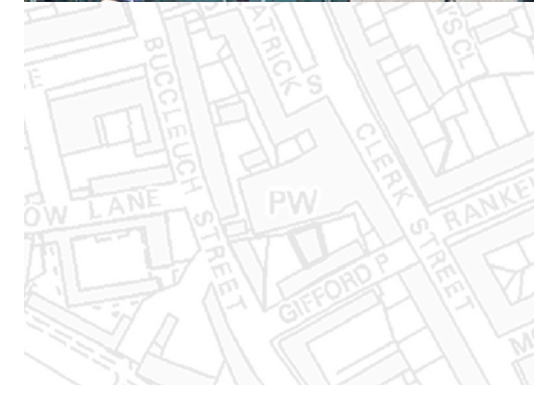
### Conservation Area

### Character Appraisal



### Modern

The George Square campus of the University constitutes the largest concentration of 1960's buildings in the Conservation Area and represents a major project produced by Basil Spence and Robert Mathews. The University Library building on George Square is recognised as a major work by Spence and its category 'A' listing reflects its national importance.





### THIRD EXPANSION AREA

East and West Crosscauseway form the northern boundary of this area. The boundary then runs south on St Leonard's Hill before moving east to include the former James Clark School. St Leonard's Bank is included and the boundary then runs along the back of St Leonard's Bank, excluding the new residential developments on the former goods yard, and returns to the Pleasance taking in Hermits and Termits house. The boundary then takes in Parkside Street before moving west to return to the Pleasance. Bernard Terrace and Hope Park Terrace form the Southern boundary before meeting the eastern boundary formed by Hope Park Crescent and Buccleuch Street.

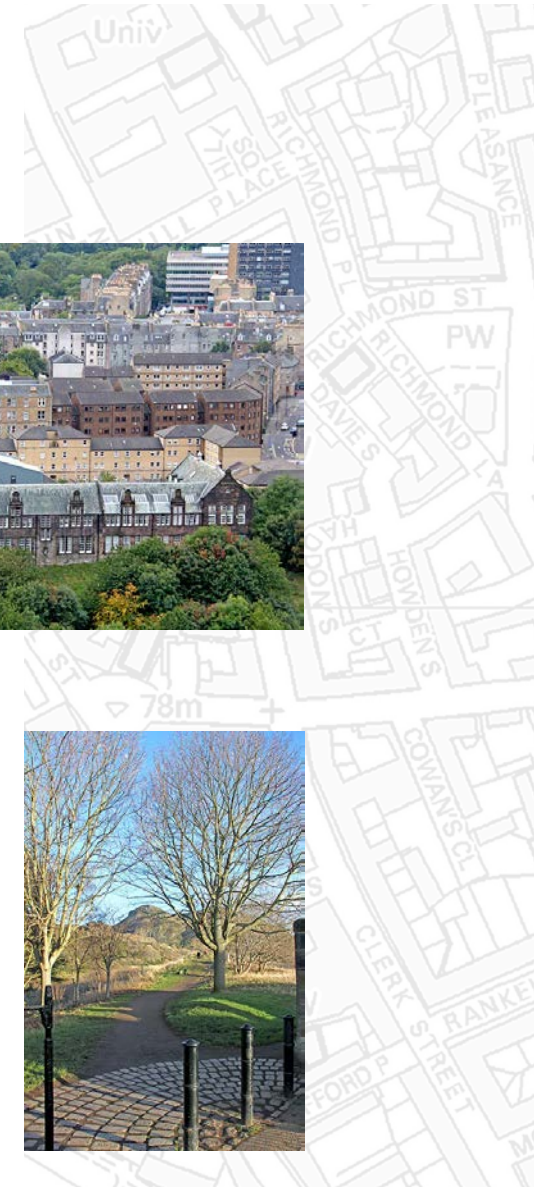


### STRUCTURE

#### Spatial Structure

Although there is some irregularity in the street blocks in the north of this area, between St Leonard's Street and Buccleuch Street, the blocks generally become more regular towards the south, resulting in a greater degree of formality. Infilling occurs with the Odeon and the Queens Hall on Clerk Street. Pockets of residential redevelopment on former gap sites have also taken place on a number of streets.

The garden at St Patrick Square is the only area of public open space within the area. However, the formal planned parkland of the Meadows forms the western side of Hope Park Crescent and Holyrood Park defines the eastern edge of this area. The single sided, St Leonard's Bank has an open view over Queens Drive to Salisbury Crags and Arthur's Seat.





Townscape

Clerk Street is the major linear shopping street with ground floor shopping interrupted only at St Patrick Square. The shops, cafes, and venues on Clerk Street, combined with its function as a major transport link into the City Centre, result in a lively street scene. The open space at St Patrick Square relieves the general line of four storey classical facades. Buccleuch Street is also a busy, more local street, and St Leonard's Street has a number of local shops along its west side. The four streets connecting Clerk Street with St Leonard's to the east are all residential in character.



Building lines on the three main north south routes are mainly to the heel of the pavement. The east to west routes have small front gardens separated from the street by low stone walls with a multiplicity of fencing materials.

The area is dominated to the east by views down streets to Salisbury Crags and Arthur's Seat. The spires of the Queen's Hall, St Peter's, and Buccleuch and Greyfriars churches are prominent landmarks punctuating the roofscape.

As with the other areas there is a variety in building heights between three and six storeys, however, the average height tends towards four storeys. Buildings erected before the Second World War are generally in stone and natural slate finished pitched roofs. Post-war buildings in this area are a mixture of brick and harled construction, which respect the general massing and heights.

St Patrick Square and West Crosscauseway retain their setts.



## KEY ELEMENTS

### Architectural Character

The South Side's variety and diversity of architectural styles and buildings continues to be reflected in this area. The use of stone, harling and slated roofs was universal up to the 1970s and defines the character of the area. More recent developments in brick are less appropriate in the area.

### Traditional

There are a number of vernacular buildings along East and West Crosscauseway and on the returns down Buccleuch Street and St Patrick Street. These tend to be five storeys in height with typical wallhead gables and rear turret stair towers. Buccleuch Pend completed in 2001, adopts the same style.



Hermits and Termits at 64 St Leonard's Street dates from 1734. The small elegant mansion was built for the solicitor William Clifton in the 1730s. The name possibly derives from association with the Abbey of Holyrood (Hermit) and the word for a farm overseer (Termit). In 1807, the house was occupied by the Edinburgh engraver, Robert Scott. Scott's son, William Bell Scott, was an artist. The Edinburgh and Dalkeith Railway Company acquired the building in 1828 and the house was used as accommodation for the stationmasters. The building was vacated in 1968 and fell into dereliction due to road proposals that blighted the area. Hermits and Termits was restored as a house in the early 1980s.

### Georgian/Victorian

The majority of this area is Georgian with streets lined by droved ashlar tenements. St Patrick Square was built in 1800 to a unified scheme and Clerk Street, begun in 1810, continues the line of Nicolson Street. The north sides of Montague Street and Rankeillor Street were built from 1817. These streets were completed in the 1860s, with bay windowed tenements on Rankeillor Street. The most prominent building of this period is the former church on Clerk Street now occupied by the Queen's Hall and built in 1823 by Robert Brown.







**Modern**  
Between the wars, some redevelopment occurred with the City Architect providing new housing on East Crosscauseway, St Patrick Square and Gifford Park. In 1930, an Art Deco cinema was inserted (into the street façade) on Clerk Street.

From the 1970s, numerous infill residential schemes have been completed, particularly in the St Leonard's area. These schemes are a mixture of brickwork, blockwork and render with the blockwork and render developments being most appropriate.

The re-creation of Buccleuch Pend, copying the original vernacular Georgian style with a wallhead gable to the front and a turnpike stair to the rear, and the modern infill residential scheme on Buccleuch Street behind the former Odeon cinema, illustrate two approaches to infill.





## THE FOURTH EXPANSION AREA

Hope Park Terrace and Bernard Terrace form the northern boundary of this area, linked to Summerhall and Sciennes on the west. The boundary then follows east along the back of the properties on Sciennes House Place, before linking with Causewayside and moving south to meet Salisbury Place and Salisbury Road. The northern corners of Salisbury Road at each end are included, but the boundary runs along the rear of the properties in the centre section. The eastern boundary returns northwards along Dalkeith Road taking in Parkside Street and St Margaret's and St Leonard's Church before re-engaging with Bernard Terrace.

## STRUCTURE

### Spatial Structure

This area is typified by larger block sizes which reflect the larger feuing pattern and provide a degree of uniformity and solidity. This more formal block pattern reduces permeability and gives a more urban feeling to the area. This uniformity is broken on the east side of Newington Road by Georgian tenements set back from the pavement and a terrace of individual houses on the opposite side of the street.

The City Architect's redevelopment work of the 1930s occurs on the corner of Dalkeith Road and Bernard Terrace. Other redevelopments are mainly residential infill developments on East Newington Place, Sciennes and Causewayside.

There is no formal open space contained within the area, although the meadows abuts the north-west boundary. Preston Street Burial Ground provides a green area. It dates from 1820 and includes the grave of Jean Lorimer, Robert Burns 'Lassie wi' the lint-white locks'.





## South Side

### Conservation Area

### Character Appraisal

#### Townscape

The principal route through the area is South Clerk Street and Newington Road. This is crossed by East and West Preston Street linking Causewayside with Dalkeith Road (the other principal north/south routes). The effect of this is to create four large blocks, which are only subdivided in the south west and north east blocks. Blackwood Crescent and Oxford Street, which are quiet tenemental streets, subdivide these blocks. Summerhall Place, South Oxford Street and East Newington Place are quiet cul-de-sac street.

Building lines are to the heel of the pavement on South Clerk Street and Causewayside. Elsewhere there are generally small front gardens to the front of tenements and new flatted developments, giving a degree of privacy. A significant departure from the building line occurs on Newington Road. The west side has a Georgian terrace set back from the building line; with the exception of one plot these original front gardens are now occupied by single storey shops. On the east side of Newington Road, between West Preston Street and West Newington Place, there is a terrace of three storey houses set back from the building line with front gardens now completely given over to parking.

Building heights vary across the area from two-and-a-half to five storeys, with an average height of four storeys. As with the rest of the South Side, all buildings erected up to the Second World War are of stone construction with pitched slated roofs. More recent buildings, from the 1980s onwards, tend to use a blockwork or a harled finish. Brick buildings are not so common in this area, as in the rest of the Conservation Area. However, the triangular block formed by Sciennes and Causewayside has been fully redeveloped with brick finished flats.

South Clerk Street and Newington Road are the main shopping streets, with a break in retail uses on the west side of Newington Road where there is a terraced range of small hotels. There is a change from retail uses to residential on the southern boundary of the Conservation Area, where Minto Street begins. Causewayside has more specialised shops.

Institutional uses are represented by Historic Environment Scotland's offices at the former Longmore Hospital on Salisbury Place and a new office block on Bernard Terrace. The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (or the Dick Vet as it was more commonly known) was founded by William Dick (1793-1866), who studied anatomy in Edinburgh and attended the London Veterinary College. In Edinburgh, he established his own veterinary school – the first in Scotland- at Clyde Street in 1819. A much respected practitioner, Dick was appointed Veterinary Surgeon in Scotland to Queen Victoria in 1842. In 1906, the College was named the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College by Act of Parliament. The College moved to custom built premises at Summerhall in 1916. In 2011, the School moved to the Easter Bush campus. The building is now in use as Summerhall, an arts hub.



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## South Side

### Conservation Area

### Character Appraisal

## KEY ELEMENTS

### Architectural Character

There is a continuing variety and diversity of architectural styles throughout this area.

### Traditional

There is one significant vernacular building, dating from the late 1700s with two wallhead gables, at 21–25 Causewayside.

### Georgian

The group of buildings on the west side of Newington Road was started in 1805 and continued over the next 20 years. They vary in height from two to three storeys and Victorian shop units have been built in the once generous front gardens. East Newington Place is an incomplete terrace which was built from 1835.

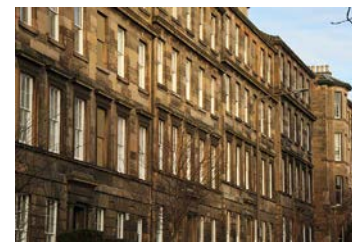
### Victorian

In the early part of this period development continued in the Georgian manner in streets such as Lutton Place and Oxford Street. As the Victorian period progressed mansard roofs and bay windows began to appear. Later buildings introduced gablets and spired towers, some of which are particularly exuberant - the tenement block on Parkside Terrace and on the corner of Dalkeith Road and Salisbury Road are good examples.

St Peter's on Lutton Place and St Margaret's and St Leonard's on Dalkeith Road are particularly significant, with prominent spires that can be seen throughout the Conservation Area.

### Modern

Twentieth century buildings include the 1937 international style former garage on Causewayside designed by Basil Spence, which is now an off licence. More recent developments include infill schemes on Causewayside and Sciennes, Blackwood Crescent, East Newington Place. The more recent residential schemes are generally harmonious in scale and massing.





## THE FIFTH EXPANSION AREA

In March 2019, an extension to the Conservation Area boundary was approved to include the **Royal Commonwealth Pool**, the **Scottish Widows Building** and **Pollock Halls**. These buildings form an outstanding group of Category 'A' listed buildings.



**The Scottish Widows Fund and Life Assurance Society Building** (Category 'A' Listed) is described as 'a major achievement of international status'. In 1970, the Scottish Widows Fund and Life Assurance Society bought a site, beside Holyrood Park, on Dalkeith Road for their new head office. The site had previously been occupied by Thomas Nelson's Parkside printing works. Sir Basil Spence, Glover & Ferguson were commissioned as architects for the new building in 1972. The striking design was planned to be in harmony and scale with the site and its surroundings. It incorporates a series of interlocking hexagonal prisms varying in height from one to four storeys, which were intended to act as a geological analogy, reflecting the structure of the basalt columns of Salisbury Crags - from where the design is best appreciated. The building, which is finished in a continuous curtain wall of brown solar glass, stands partly in a moat-like pool and the main access from Dalkeith Road is over a bridge. Dame Sylvia Crowe, the leading landscape architect of the period, was commissioned to design the grounds. The office was opened in March 1976 and its status as a building of international importance was recognised by the 1977 RIBA Award for Scotland and the American Landscape Award in 1978.





**The Royal Commonwealth Pool** (Category 'A' Listed). The building, designed for the Commonwealth Games held in Edinburgh in 1970, is an outstanding example of a late twentieth century building and it is one of the most successful designs of John Richards, partner from 1964 to circa 1990 in the internationally renowned and prolific practice Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners.



freedom of choice of subjects. The school moved out to Galashiels at the outbreak of the Second World War and closed in 1946. The cartoonist, Ronald Searle, met two of the pupils and was inspired to illustrate their accounts of life at the school, which were published and inspired the St Trinians films. Miss Fraser Lee wrote a book in 1962 *The Real St Trinian's* to set the record straight.



**University of Edinburgh, Pollock Halls of Residence** (Category 'A' Listed). Rowand Anderson, Kininmonth and Paul, 1956-1964. An important grouping of university residence buildings and considered a key work of Scottish Modernism. The first two phases were executed in an idiom often described as Festival Style, owing much to pre-war Swedish design, while attempting to acknowledge Scottish architectural tradition. These buildings are the best extant example of this style in Edinburgh and possibly Scotland.

The Pollock Halls site includes the Category 'A' Listed St Leonard's Hall, a Scottish Baronial mansion which dates from 1870. The house was built for Thomas Nelson, the Edinburgh printer and publisher. In 1925, St Trinian's School moved into the building. The girls' school had been established by a Miss C Fraser Lee in 1922 at 10 Palmerston Road in Edinburgh. Miss Lee ran the school on progressive lines based on self-discipline linked to





## MANAGEMENT

### Legislation, policies and guidance

#### Conservation Areas

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

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

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

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

Alterations to windows are also controlled in Conservation Areas in terms of the Council's guidelines.

#### Listed buildings

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







### Article 4 Direction Orders

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

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

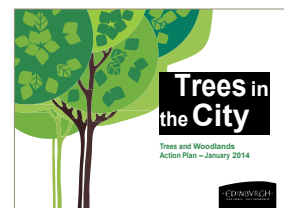
- Class 7 - the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure.
- Class 38 - water undertakings.
- Class 39 - development by public gas supplier.
- Class 40 - development by electricity statutory undertaker.
- Class 41- development required for the purposes of the carrying on of any tramway or road transport undertaking.

### Trees

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

Tree Preservation Orders are made under planning legislation to protect individual and groups of trees considered important for amenity or because of their cultural or historic interest. When assessing amenity, the importance of trees as wildlife habitats will be taken into consideration. There is a strong presumption against any form of development or change of use of land which is likely to damage or prejudice the future long term existence of trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The removal of trees for arboriculture reasons will not imply that the space created by their removal can be used for development.

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



## Assessing Development within the South Side Conservation Area

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

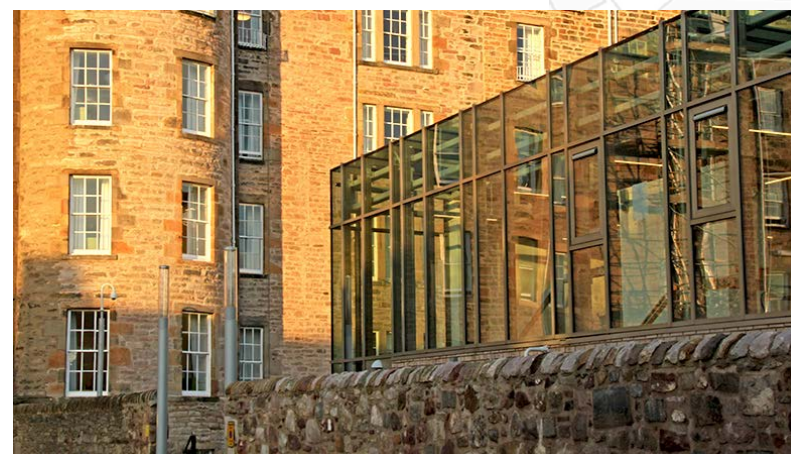
### General Criteria

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

### New Buildings

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

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





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

### Alterations and Extensions

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

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

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

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

Appearance is more limited and relates to the way individual features within the Conservation Area look.

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



## South Side

### Conservation Area

### Character Appraisal

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

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

### Streetscape

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

### Shop Fronts

Whilst there are many fine shop fronts in the Conservation Area, there are also a number which are unsatisfactory and ignore the architectural form of the buildings of which they form part. Encouragement should be given to improving the quality of the shop fronts

in the area, particularly that minority of shop fronts which are particularly poorly or inappropriately designed or badly maintained.

### High Buildings

The South Side has generally consistent heights and is particularly susceptible to buildings that break the prevailing roof and eaves height and impinge on the many important views. It is also important to protect the character of the Conservation Area from the potentially damaging impact of high buildings outside the Conservation Area.

## REFERENCES

Gifford J, McWilliam C, Walker D, Wilson C, The buildings of Scotland – Edinburgh (Penguin Books, 1984)

Gray, John G, South Side Story (W.F.Knox & Co, 1962)





