

NEW TOWN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

- 1.1 Section 61 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997*, describes Conservation Areas as "... areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The Act makes provision for the designation of Conservation Areas as distinct from individual buildings, and planning authorities are required to determine which parts of their areas merit Conservation Area status. ***Before a conservation area is designated there is a requirement for the Planning Authority to engage in public consultation and involvement in the designation and management of the area.***
- 1.2 ***PAN 71 on Conservation Area Management gives guidance on their preparation and recommends that Planning Authorities prepare a management plan for each of their conservation areas.***
- 1.3 There are currently 38 conservation areas in Edinburgh, including city centre areas, Victorian suburbs and former villages. Each Conservation Area has its own unique character and appearance.
- 1.4 The New Town Conservation Area was originally designated in 1977 and extended in 1980. A further amendment was made in 1995. ***The conservation area is classified as "Outstanding" under the 1997 Act for the purposes of grant aid.***
- 1.5 The Conservation Area falls within Wards 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 32, 34 and 35.

Character Appraisal

- 1.6 The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation; rather designation demonstrates a commitment to positive action for the safeguarding and enhancement of character and appearance. The Planning Authority and the Scottish Executive are obliged to protect Conservation Areas from development that would adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore, important that both the authorities and other groups, who have an interest in Conservation Areas, are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced.
- 1.7 A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character of an area. It is intended that Character Appraisals will guide the local Planning Authority in making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement proposals. The Character

Appraisal will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the Conservation Area and applications for significant new developments should demonstrate how the proposals take account of the essential character of the area as identified in this document.

- 1.8 Planning and the Historic Environment (NPPG18) states that Conservation Area Character Appraisals should be prepared when reconsidering existing conservation area designations, promoting further designations or formulating enhancement schemes. The NPPG also specifies that Article 4 Direction Orders will not be confirmed unless a character appraisal is in place.

2.0 NEW TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- 2.1 The New Town Conservation Area forms the northern section of the city centre of Edinburgh and its inner suburbs. It is 322ha (825acres) in area, and approximately 3.7 kilometre (3 miles) wide west to east and 2 kilometres (1.25miles) north to south.
- 2.2 The Conservation Area ranks as one of the most important in the United Kingdom, in terms of both its architectural and historic interest. Its significance is reflected in the extensive number of Statutorily Listed Buildings, the number of tourists that visit the area, its 'Outstanding' status and its international recognition as part of the UNESCO designated Edinburgh Old and New Town World Heritage Site.

World Heritage Status

- 2.3 All but the northern fringe of the Conservation Area is included in Edinburgh's Old and New Town World Heritage Site which was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list in 1995. This was in recognition of the outstanding architectural, historical and cultural importance of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh.
- 2.4 Inscription as a World Heritage Site brings no additional statutory powers, however, it does commit 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. In furthering these aims the Council produced a World Heritage Site Manifesto, which is a material consideration in assessing planning applications.
- 2.5 In 1999 the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust was formed and this character appraisal should be read in conjunction with their Management Plan for the World Heritage Site.

3.0 HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

1700 – 1750

- 3.1 During the 1600s and early 1700s, the population of Edinburgh grew considerably within the old walls of the city, producing conditions of squalid overcrowding. The Act of Union of 1707 and the suppression of the Jacobite insurgencies in '15 and '45 provided a settled political and economic climate that allowed Edinburgh to contemplate expansion beyond the City walls. In 1728 it had been suggested that the City expand northwards across a drained and bridged Nor Loch. However, the constraints of the Nor' Loch meant that the initial expansion of the City focused towards the south outside the Telfer and Flodden walls.
- 3.2 Before the building of North Bridge linking the Old Town and the New Town, the land to the north was characterised by open ground with a smattering of villages such as Broughton, Stockbridge, Canonmills, Dean, Picardy and Calton. All these villages were difficult to access from the Old Town due to the restraining influence of the Nor Loch and the hilly topography.
- 3.3 ***Little remains of the individual buildings that existed prior to the development of the New Town. The most significant buildings being the old Easter Coates House built in 1615, now St Mary's Music School, Deanbank House in Deanbank Lane, the Earl of Leven's 1765 Gayfield House in East London Street and St Cuthbert's church founded in the 9th Century which was the church of a large parish surrounding the old city.***

1750 – 1800

- 3.4 In 1751 the Town Council produced a pamphlet 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. From the mid 1750's, the Town Council, through ***the Heriot Trust*** started buying up the lands beyond the Nor' Loch. At this stage the Council had no ambitions to extend beyond what became the first new town.
- 3.5 Draining of the Nor' Loch began in 1759, with the foundation stone of the North Bridge laid in 1763. It was not until 1772 that the bridge became fully operational, due to an earlier collapse.

The First New Town

- 3.6 The Council sponsored a competition to produce an overall plan for the new development in 1766. It was won by the 23 year old James Craig ***and developed in published form as*** a strikingly simple, doubly symmetrical grid layout. An Act of 1767 gave formal approval to the expansion of the Royalty of the City of Edinburgh.
- 3.7 Originally the layout reflected the social hierarchy of 18th century society, each class being given its due place, in striking contrast to the

Old Town. At the same time the naming of the streets was a clear political statement celebrating the Union of England and Scotland under the Hanoverian Monarchy.

- 3.8 ***The streets are hierarchical in their width and the quality of design and finish. The three parallel streets of Princes, George and Queen Streets allied with Charlotte and St Andrew Squares are the grandest in Craig's Plan, consisting originally of individual town houses. The cross streets contained more tenements and the intermediate streets and lanes contained artisan dwellings.***
- 3.9 Construction began around 1770 with buildings at the east end of Queen Street and Thistle Street, and the sides of St Andrew Square. From here construction crept from east to west, entering Charlotte Square in 1792. 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, being controlled by Adam's feuing plan. This First New Town, between Charlotte and St Andrew Squares, was substantially complete by 1830.***
- 3.10 As the First New Town became increasingly successful, adjacent land owners began to consider similar ventures. As early as 1775, a Mr Walter Ferguson feued St James Square to the east of St Andrew Square.
- 3.11 Following closely on from this, the grounds of Gayfield House were *feud* in 1785 with the impressive tenement of Gayfield Place begun in 1790.
- 3.12 In 1799, the Heriot Trust, which owned much of the land to the north of the First New Town, feued York Place.

1800 – 1830

- 3.13 ***The success of the First New Town stimulated a demand for further expansion that prompted a number of schemes which were as bold as the first. However, these were delayed by the Napoleonic wars.***

The Northern New Town

- 3.14 ***During the 1780s increasing interest was shown in developing the lands to the north of Queen Street Gardens and in 1800 the Town Council held a further competition for its layout. This competition was inconclusive and a composite layout was prepared by Sibbald and Reid.***

- 3.15 In 1803 work commenced on this plan with its square, circus and subsidiary streets **following the grid orientation of** Craig's First New Town.
- 3.16 Building started in 1803, but proceeded slowly until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The plan underwent modification as building proceeded and in 1823 William Playfair ingeniously redesigned Royal Circus, awkwardly placed on a steeply sloping site. **Feuing proceeded well but the northern fringe was not completed until the 1880s.**

Picardy

- 3.17 A five acre site lying to the east of York Place was feued to a design by Robert Burn in 1803. This area framed by Broughton Street, Picardy Place, Union Street and East London Street was largely complete by 1809. The triangular development of Picardy Place was demolished in 1969 to accommodate a projected road scheme that never came about and resulted in a large roundabout.

The Western New Town

- 3.18 Development began to the west of the First New Town In 1805. Shandwick Place, an extension of Princes Street, flanked by two wide crescents, was the first street to be built and was completed by 1825. The area north of Shandwick Place was developed from 1813 to a plan by Robert Brown, based on the now well-established gridplan, but with Melville Crescent as the only square, set diagonally in the centre.

The Gayfield Estate

- 3.19 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, now replaced by a 1960's police station, while Broughton Place was lined with two-storey palace blocks similar to Heriot Row but on a smaller scale.

Stockbridge

- 3.20 The expansion of the New Town impacted on the milling community of Stockbridge. From around 1813 growing prosperity increased the demand for property, leading to the incremental replacement and development of the village.

The Raeburn Estate

- 3.21 In 1789, the painter Henry Raeburn, acquired the estate of Deanhaugh, northwest of the New Town. The estate 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, **Raeburn** named, Ann Street after

his wife, consisted of relatively modest three storey houses with extensive front gardens. Despite its location, the development **after a slow start** was successful, later sections being more conventionally urban in style as it was engulfed by the city.

The Moray Estates

- 3.22 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 for his estate. The estate, 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.

Calton Hill

- 3.23 East of the First New Town, across a steep valley, lay Calton Hill. On its summit was the Observatory **House** built between 1776 and 1792 and on the southern slopes the Bridewell or House of Correction. The decision in 1814 to site a felons' prison next to the Bridewell prompted the Council to improve access to Calton Hill by building a bridge over the Calton valley. Work began in 1815 with Robert Stevenson appointed as engineer, and Archibald Elliot as architect. A single developer built all the buildings along Waterloo Place, ensuring that Elliot's conception of a grand entrance to the city was consistently executed.
- 3.24 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 to Leith. 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.***
- 3.25 ***Playfairs' plan retained the hilltop as public open space with development of the hill limited to its midlevel being served by an extended Princes Street. A tree flanked, grand lower row London Road was then brought through to link up with Leith Walk.***
- 3.26 ***The sides of the hill were to be clothed plainly and informally with a canopy of deciduous woodland. The street layout was set to converge on the hill to give 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.***

- 3.26 ***Feuing of the mid level stances was not complete until the 1880s. The lower levels were never fully taken up and were transacted by railways and other developments.*** The blocks to the immediate north, beyond London Road, were built to Playfair's design intermittently between 1820 and the 1880s.
- 3.27 On the south side of the Hill, Thomas Hamilton in 1825 designed a new building for the Royal High School in a pure Greek Revival style, while the summit of the hill attracted a miscellaneous collection of monuments; to Nelson by Robert Burn (1807), Robert Burns by Hamilton (1830) Dugald Stewart by Playfair (1831), and most conspicuously, the National Monument, an incomplete replica of the Parthenon, erected in 1829 to ***a design by Cockerell and executed by Playfair, who had already topped the hill with his diminutive Greek observatory (1818). The Calton, skyline embellished with this distinguished ensemble of monuments, confirmed Edinburgh's identity as the Athens of the North.***

Hope Estate

- 3.28 Seeing the success of the Calton scheme, Major John Hope offered his land for ***feuing*** in 1824 – 5 to a scheme prepared by Robert Brown. However, demand slackened and only graceful fragments were produced.

Canonmills and Claremont

- 3.29 Like Stockbridge, Canonmills was originally a milling community. Although a number of modest sized developments were started in the 1820s none of them were completed. Perhaps they were too remote and overambitious and consequently it was left to the Victorians to fill the gaps with lesser designs.

1830 – 1900

- 3.30 The beginning of the Victorian era in 1837 saw little change in the continued adoption of the general principles of a grid layout using crescents and gardens to give a feeling of space and order. One change that had occurred with the advance of the industrial revolution was that streets for artisans were no longer prevalent. ***The artisans' streets were replaced with mews buildings for stabling in the back lanes. This allowed the earlier hierarchy of street widths, facing gardens etc to be maintained***
- 3.31 Between the 1830s and 50s, development slowed throughout the City and when it did occur, it was in the form of extending existing developments.

The Dean Estate

- 3.32 Following the completion, in 1831, of Thomas Telford's Dean Bridge, which spanned the deep valley of the Water of Leith, a number of institutions such as the Dean Orphanage and Daniel Stewart's School were built beyond the river. The building boom, however, had passed, and Learmonth's hopes of a profitable housing development were not realised.
- 3.33 In the 1850s John Tait designed Oxford Terrace, Eton Terrace, Lennox Street and Clarendon Crescent northeast of Queensferry Road, taking advantage of the views afforded by the valley location. This was followed in 1860 by John Chesser's ***Buckingham Terrace***, set back behind a garden along the side of Queensferry Road. These were the first buildings in the New Town developments to incorporate bay windows. Belgrave Crescent by Alexander Macnaughten overlooking the valley followed in 1874 and Belgrave Place in 1880. Mirroring ***Buckingham Terrace*** on the other side of the road, Learmonth Terrace was built to designs by Chesser in 1873.

Extensions to the Western New Town

- 3.34 James Gillespie Graham was commissioned in 1826 to produce a layout to the north of Melville Street that would link to his grand design for the Moray Estate. This plan, for Chester Street, Rothesay Place and Drumsheugh, with some modifications, was not begun until the 1860s.
- 3.35 In 1865, a plan was produced for a double crescent (Grosvenor and Landsdowne) on the axis of Melville Street, being entered from the south by Grosvenor Street and Roseberry Crescent. In 1872, John Chesser produced a plan for the ground to the north of the double crescent by designing another double crescent (Glencairn and Eglinton). The outward facing Douglas and Magdala Crescents close the scheme to the north and west.

Canonmills, Claremont and Hope

- 3.36 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 pick up on what had been produced, but not necessarily following the original layouts.

Changes in the New Town

- 3.37 From the beginning of the First New Town, retail and commercial uses were attracted to it. Princes Street became the principal shopping street with buildings being extended over the basement areas to give pavement frontage to shops with new shopfronts. Gradually, with increasing demand, buildings were expanded at the rear and began to merge with buildings on Rose Street. The retailing on Princes Street expanded into Shandwick Place

- 3.38 George Street became a prime location for financial institutions and a number of Victorian banking halls and insurance offices spread from St Andrew Square westwards along George Street. At the same time, professional offices began to be located throughout the New Town.
- 3.39 In the 1840s, despite much opposition, railway lines **disrupted** Princes Street Gardens resulting in the **later** building of two large hotels, one at each end of Princes Street and each associated with its own railway **line. The station at Waverley served the North British rail line and the station at Lothian Road served the Caledonian rail line**
- 3.40 By the 1900s, most of the New Town had been completed and there was a respite from large scale building until the period following the Second World War.

Post war planning

- 3.41 In 1949, Sir Patrick Abercrombie presented his civic survey and plan to Edinburgh Corporation. His plan recommended **major** changes to the city centre, including the remodelling of Princes Street in its entirety to regain the Georgian unity, which he felt, had been lost. These radical proposals were taken up by the Princes St 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.
- 3.42 In 1970, a conference on the conservation of Georgian Edinburgh resulted in the formation of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee and a **consequent** upsurge in conservation thinking and policies. This upsurge led largely to the abandonment of the traffic proposals for the city centre put forward by Buchanan in the mid 1970s, which were a progression of Abercrombie's proposals. However, this turning of the tide was insufficient to prevent the demolition of Picardy Place *and* St James Square. The former for road proposals, and the latter for a shopping centre.
- 3.43 From this point, **a much greater** emphasis was placed on conservation within the New Town, which was designated as a conservation area in 1977.
- 3.44 Recognition of the City's unique heritage came with the inscription of the Old and New towns in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 1995. In September 1997, the Council approved a Conservation Manifesto for the World Heritage Site. The manifesto represents the Council's reaffirmation of its commitment to the conservation and protection of the World Heritage Site and its acceptance of its responsibilities as guardian of the Site. In 1999, the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust was established by the merger of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee and the Edinburgh Old Town Renewal

Trust. The Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, which is funded by Historic Scotland and the Council, focuses on championing the management, protection and enhancement of the Site.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

Site Context

- 4.1 New Town Conservation Area forms the northern part of Edinburgh's City Centre, stretching some 3 miles from east to west and 1.25 miles from north to south. It is almost completely surrounded by conservation areas: Wester Coates and Dean to the West, Inverleith to the north, Leith to the east and the Old Town to the South. Topographically, the majority of the area sits on a north facing slope, although Calton Hill to the east forms a dramatic punctuation ***with the Water of Leith gorge acting as a counterpoint to the west*** the ground also slopes northeast towards Leith. 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 brilliant use of the topography to achieve a cohesive, uniform urban whole

Views

- 4.2 A combination of the use of grid layout masterplans being adopted as standard practice for well over a hundred years, allied to the good use of topography in these layouts, has produced a wide range of views and vistas that in some cases are spectacular. 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 panoramic views towards and across the Firth of Forth. To the West, the view of St Mary's cathedral spires is ***visible*** from many positions and is neatly juxtaposed to the east with the prominence of the monumented Calton Hill. Playfair's brilliant scheme for Calton follows the contours of the hill and provides a terrace of ***prodigious*** length and great elegance that ***exploits*** spectacular views both to the north, the south, and west along Princes Street.
- 4.3 Within the grid layouts, terminated vistas have been planned, using churches, monuments, buildings ***and civic statuary***, resulting in a plethora 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 gardens within the grid layouts, provides a background against which important features of the City stand out and allows views across the city to be appreciated.

- ***The City's collection of civic statuary provides a focus and punctuation point for many vistas creating an outdoor sculpture gallery in its affect.***
- **The use of grid layout forms throughout the area provides a formal hierarchy of streets with controlled vistas and planned views**
- **The central position, grid layout and uniform building heights make the area extremely sensitive to the effects of high buildings**
- **Terminated vistas within the grid layouts and the long distance views across and out of the conservation area are an important feature**

5.0 ROUTES AND APPROACHES

- 5.1 The construction of the New Town could not take place until a direct link was secured between the Old and New town with the building of North Bridge. As further phases of the New Town occurred, ***Dean Bridge, Waterloo Bridge and George IV Bridge (lying in the Old Town)*** improved linkages. ***This gave rise to*** new roads ***which*** became the principal connections between Edinburgh and the ***surrounding*** country. The main approaches into the City ***were carefully designed to*** penetrate into the conservation area and lead into the city centre.

Southern Approaches

- 5.2 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 and 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 North British Hotel frame the bridge at Princes Street.
- 5.3 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 halves. Playfair's Galleries provide classical temples that sit in elegant isolation against the backdrop of the Old Town ridge.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The principal south western approach enters the New Town via Lothian Road with the Caledonian Hotel, which rivals the North British in size,

sitting on the western junction with Princes Street. The Churches of St John and St Cuthbert terminate West Princes Street Gardens

Eastern Approach

- 5.6 Leith Walk, connecting the City with its Sea Port, enters the **New Town** Conservation Area at Haddington Place, **which** leads on to Playfair's Elm Row and Gayfield Square.
- 5.7 ***Playfairs' London Road also provides a set piece entrance to the Conservation Area, linking through to Leith Walk.***

Western Approaches

- 5.8 The Glasgow road 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 on Princes Street.
- 5.9 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.

The importance of bridges as access routes into and within the New Town.

All the major routes into the city converge on Princes Street.

6.0 SPATIAL STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Driven by the Grid Plan of Craig's New Town as a precedent and the topographical characteristics of the area, ***including the special relationship linking St Andrew and Charlotte Squares, George Street, the central monuments and the terminating buildings;*** each succeeding development has 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.
- 6.2 The First and Northern New Towns generally have the same ***hollow square shape and size*** (perimeter block) while the later schemes have smaller ***hollow squares***. ***The backlands to these hollow squares occupy a large area within the conservation area and are a significant feature.***

- 6.3 The encroachment of commerce and retail in the new town has resulted in the infill of the perimeter blocks; particularly along Princes Street, George Street and Shandwick Place.
- 6.4 The planned, formal use of gardens throughout the conservation area introduces punctuation, emphasises views and terminations, whilst providing *informal* amenity and recreational space within the discipline of the grid layouts.
- **The grid hierarchy of grand streets, lesser streets, lanes and mews throughout the conservation area.**
 - ***Formal geometric grid enclosed gardens and larger informal grid edge gardens soften the classical discipline of the buildings.***
 - **Layouts follow the topography to create vistas and views both inward and outward *to and from high ground all round and particularly northwards over the estuary.***
 - **Landmark buildings, usually churches as well as monuments, establish formal punctuation.**

7.0 TOWNSCAPE

- 7.1 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, the monumented Calton Hill, and St Mary's Cathedral. Sitting alongside Calton Hill, the concrete development of the St James Centre forms an obtrusive element that can be seen from many angles.
- 7.2 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 sitting at the foot of the mound give credence to Edinburgh as the "Athens of the North". Further to the east lies the familiar Gothic steeple of the Scott monument. The Balmoral Hotel completed in 1902 (formerly the North British) is a large quadrangular building, with a domed clock tower overlooking Waverley Station.
- 7.3 These features apart, the New Town is made up of ***a mix of town houses and*** tenemental 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 showing uniformity in design***

and materials. This makes the roofscape and skyline very sensitive to any modern intrusion rising above the uniform tenemental heights.

7.4 The Castle and the Old Town ridge form a dramatic southern edge to the conservation area.

7.5 Within the conservation area, the monuments and observatory on Calton Hill to the east and St Mary's Cathedral to the west provide the principal features that can be seen from most parts.

7.6 Spires and steeples punctuate the area and help reinforce the character of the conservation area by respecting the uniform height of the tenemental blocks.

7.7 The designed relationship of stone buildings, pavements and setted roads gives a disciplined unity and cohesion to the conservation area.

7.8 In its location, height and bulk, the St James Centre is a particularly obtrusive development

- **The important contribution that the cohesive, historic skyline makes to the conservation area means that it is particularly crucial to control incremental creep in building height. Especially along skyline ridges.**
- **Views from above turns the New Town roofscape into a "fifth" elevation with a uniform design and use of materials, which needs to be protected.**

Building Forms

7.9 The uniform character of the New Town is built up on the application of the standards for tenemental form, streets and public realm that were accepted and applied for over one hundred and fifty years.

7.10 The principal building form throughout the New Town is the hollow square, residential, tenemental block consisting of a sunken basement area with three to four storeys above.

7.11 With the possible exception of Ann Street there are almost no front gardens.

- **The consistent relationship of the buildings and building line to the layout of streets and footways which retain the original street geometry and the original surfaces.**
- **Terraces of buildings with regular building plot widths.**

- The consistent massing of buildings retaining the original building proportions - except along Princes Street, George Street and Shandwick Place where there has been historic and continuing pressure for the establishment of a new, larger form of building.

Street Surfaces and Streetscape Design

- 7.12 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 having a consistent ratio based on where the street lies within the hierarchy. Carriageways** 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. At road junctions, the carriageways meet at a simple and modestly scaled radius. Within the conservation area, the historic street pattern is largely intact. Initially pavements were flagged, probably with Hailes or Craighleith sandstone paving slabs, while carriageways were setted. Few pavements remain with stone flags, the majority being paved with precast concrete flags, but many setted streets remain. Some horonizing of pavements can still be found.
- 7.13 Only Princes Street has been the subject of significant change: the boundary has been moved back, leaving the Royal Scottish Academy protruding into the street. The pavement on the northern side of the street has also been significantly extended using basic materials and details. Indeed, there are now instances of extensive temporary street works throughout the first new town.
- 7.14 **Currently the issue of streetscape and street furniture is being reviewed and will be published as the Edinburgh Standard for Streets. This policy will establish standards for streetscape design, materials and street furniture to give a consistency to these items.**

Street Lighting

- 7.15 The Local Authority first installed street lighting in 1785. In 1955, the Town Council began a ten-year programme to replace all surviving gas lighting with electric light throughout the city. The Council reinstalled and reinstated railing-mounted lamps in a few streets, such as the Mound and the south side of Princes Street. Elsewhere, many railing mounted lights still remain **with acting as arches over the entrance platt.**
- 7.16 **Several sandstone plinths for carriageway lights also survive (minus standards). Examples occur jutting out into the road on Howe Street and India Street. A number of late 19th and early**

twentieth century free standing decorative cast iron standards, marked with the city crest also survive.

Street Furniture

- 7.17 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.
- 7.18 Unfortunately, there is a plethora of street signs, guard rails, parking meters and road markings that visually detract from the elegant layout of the conservation area. ***Further clutter such as cable TV equipment boxes, TV aerials and alarm boxes adds to the detracting of the classical layout.***
- **The simple geometry of the street and pavement layouts are currently disrupted by temporary works such as pavement buildouts and blisters.**
 - **There is extensive retention of *original* historic street surfaces, particularly roads surfaced in whin or granite setts and some high quality stone paving, *which should be used as guiding references in new works.***
 - **The extensive retention of items of historic street furniture such as railing mounted lighting, police boxes, telephone boxes etc.**
 - **The presence of a great deal of street clutter that visually detracts from the conservation area.**

8.0 ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- 8.1 The New Town conservation area is typified by formal plan layouts, spacious stone built terraces, broad streets and an overall classical elegance. The buildings are generally three/four storey and basement, with some four/five storey corner and central pavilions.
- 8.2 Little remains of what existed prior to the development of the New Town. The only significant buildings are the old Easter Coates House built in 1615, now St Mary's Music School, Deanbank House in Deanbank Lane and the Earl of Leven's 1765 Gayfield House in East London Street. The New Town is a creation of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century and is perhaps ***one of*** the finest examples of urban town planning of this period. ***Thistle Court at the eastern end of Thistle Street, reputedly built in 1768, is probably the earliest example of New Town architecture approaching its original state.***

- 8.3 The majority of buildings are of a standard type that expresses Georgian ideals for urban living. The standard building form is of three main storeys over a sunken basement, ***normally three bays wide as well as three storeys high, including steps from street to basement and cellars under the pavement.*** This has resulted in a building stock of extraordinary quality which has proved to be both durable and capable of adapting both to the needs of changing residential standards, or to different uses.
- 8.4 ***Parts of the New Town can be characterised as being restrained or even austere, relying on for their architectural effect on their proportions regularity and repetitive design. There is usually a high proportion of masonry to window opening on both the back and the front. The elevations obviously reflect the internal planning of the buildings with larger balconies and lengthened windows reflecting the drawing rooms at first floor level; entrance halls being lit by fanlights above the front door and stair lit by a cupola.***
- 8.5 ***There are a variety of masonry treatments on front and rear elevations, none of which were originally painted: polished ashlar (smooth); broached ashlar (horizontal tooling); droved ashlar (fine banded tooling); stugged ashlar (lightly tooled with a mason's punch or point); channelled V-jointed ashlar; vermiculated (as if eaten by worms); random rubble and squared rubble.***
- 8.6 The legacy of the Local Authority relaxing height restrictions in the 1840s can be seen in the additional floor that was added to a significant number of buildings. Apart from a few of the very earliest properties, which are of rubblework stuccoed to represent ashlar, the street elevations of all buildings were built of finely dressed squared ashlar of the durable local Craigleith sandstone. By the 1860s, improved transport led to the importing of significant quantities of cheaper and ***often*** softer stone.
- 8.7 The street elevations of each property typically followed a standard form of three or four evenly spaced vertically proportioned sash windows per storey, with a door at street level. Rear elevations were similarly laid out but usually constructed of rubble masonry.
- 8.8 ***The Victorians changed the nature of Princes Street and George Street with their commercial buildings. However, when developing residential areas in the New Town they invariably followed the grid plan precedent set by Craig.***
- 8.9 ***The twentieth century's contribution to the New Town has been muted by comparison with the Georgians and Victorians with a sprinkling of good modern buildings that make a positive contribution to the New Town.***

Roofs

- 8.9 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' roof with a **central leaded platt**. A few roofs have **an original** mansard behind a balustrade, as seen at Henderson Row, Royal Terrace and Douglas Crescent. These were only popular towards the end of the nineteenth century. **Chimneys and chimney pots occur on party and gable walls and cupolas are virtually universal over internal stairs. The roofs are covered with graded slate having lead flashings leading to parapet or valley gutters. Rainwater goods were cast iron.**

Windows

- 8.10 Timber **single** glazed sash windows that slide vertically in a case or frame are typical throughout the Area, the sashes being subdivided into smaller panes. **There has been a longstanding Council policy to encourage windows to be painted white to maintain a unity of architectural schemes.**

Doors and Entrances

- 8.11 Doors and their ironmongery, overdoor lights and fanlights are a distinctive feature of the Area **occurring in an enormous variety of decorative designs**. The doors consist of a simple four or six panel design and much of the original ironmongery has survived.

Platts

- 8.12 Front doors are usually accessed from the street by one or more stone steps leading to a stone slab or platt bridging the 'area'. **This arrangement also reinforces the importance of entrance and practically irons out 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.

Cast Iron work

- 8.13 **Elaborate** cast iron railings and balconies at first floor level are an important and characteristic feature throughout the conservation area, adding significant interest and rhythm to the facades. **There is a long standing Council policy to encourage the painting of all iron work in black to maintain architectural unity.**

Mews and Lanes

- 8.14 **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. Sometimes they are continuous rows and sometimes they individual.

- 8.15 *They were built with a formal high quality design facing the house and an informal rubble elevation facing the lane of the mews.*

Victorian Commercial Buildings

- 8.16 In commercial areas particularly, the pressure for more accommodation led, from the 1840s onwards, to the complete redevelopment of single or groups of buildings. Early examples were usually built up to the back of the pavement, infilling the area.
- 8.17 Although limited in height these buildings tend to be of a larger scale than their predecessors. Being Victorian, they are more ornate than the austere Georgian building they replaced, often having bay windows, decorated stone parapets and ornate detailing. In their proportion and horizontal and vertical modulation, they are similar to the earlier buildings, so the overall character of the area, although modified, remained essentially unchanged. Commercial buildings of this period were often of great architectural merit.

Shopfronts

- 8.20 The form and appearance of shopfronts make an important contribution to the appearance and character of certain parts of the area.
- 8.21 Streets of shops and artisans flats were included from the beginning of the New Town. These shops have survived on the fringes of the central area, such as Stockbridge and William Street. Within the central area, however, these early shopfronts have largely disappeared.
- 8.22 Victorian and early twentieth century shopfronts incorporated fine and elaborate joinery, becoming more elegant and maximising display space.
- 8.23 With the post-war period, the availability of a wide range of new materials and changing architectural philosophy saw a discontinuity in the development of shopfront design. Too often the shopfronts of this period are extremely poor and many are unsympathetic to the building they sit within.
- **The overwhelming retention of buildings in their original design form, allied to the standard format of residential buildings, strongly contributes to the character of the area.**
 - *The retention of mews of mews and lanes, largely in their original form, strongly contributes to the character of the area.*

- **The encroachment of modern shopfronts which tend to be unsympathetic in design and materials**
- **The standard palette of materials including blonde sandstone, timber windows and pitched slated roofs.**
- **The importance of door, fanlight, window, cast iron work and stone surround details throughout the area.**

9.0 ACTIVITIES AND USES

First New Town

- 9.1 The First New Town was planned to be a neighbourhood for elegant living. Non-residential buildings were confined to ancillary uses such as churches, or the Assembly Rooms. Shops **and service buildings** were confined to Rose Street, Hill Street and Thistle Street **and to the hollow square backlands.**
- 9.2 The new environment proved to be ideal for the developing retail trade and over the years Princes Street has become 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 present on upper floors.
- 9.3 The importance of the First New Town as Edinburgh's main shopping area is recognised and it is believed that it is possible to sustain and extend retail use in the area while maintaining its historic integrity. Since the Second World War, the significance of the City Centre in terms of its heritage has increased dramatically with annual festivals and a yearly influx of tourists.
- 9.4 North of Princes Street, Rose Street and George Street have considerable shop frontage, but retail use has not achieved the **concentration** of Princes Street. Further north, Thistle Street and Queen Street house a modest amount of retail use.

Northern New Town, Moray and Dean Estates

- 9.5 The Northern New Town, Moray and Dean Estates remain substantially residential in use. However, Dundas Street, Kerr Street and, to a lesser extent, Howe Street have a significant number of small shop units at street level. Office use is relatively common in some parts of the area, principally Heriot Row and Great King Street in the Northern New Town and Randolph Crescent, the southeastern quadrant of Ainslie Place and Moray Place and Forres Street in the Moray Estates.
- 9.6 ***Since the 1990s offices occupying former residential properties throughout the New Town have been reverting back to residential use.***

Western New Town

- 9.7 This area also has been subject to increasing pressure from commercial uses. Shandwick Place, the western extension of Princes Street, 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.
- 9.8 Adjacent to these retail areas, many of the original Georgian buildings have now been utilised for offices so that in Rutland Square, Melville Street, Coates and Atholl Crescent the majority of buildings are now in office use.

Gayfield

- 9.9 Gayfield, standing between the main routes to Leith has always been varied in character. It is beyond the commercial core of the city centre yet not wholly within a clearly residential area. As a result there has always been a substantial residential population living amongst other uses. This variety has been extended by redevelopment and by residential property being converted to office use.
- 9.10 Shop units occupy the street level accommodation along Leith Walk and Broughton Street and occasional shop use is present in Union Street and in other locations. Gayfield Square is a notable office location as is Leith Walk, but both contains a considerable residential presence.

Calton

- 9.11 Although retaining substantial residential use, this area has also attracted prestigious offices such as consulates, while a significant portion of Royal Terrace has become hotels, often involving merging adjacent properties. In either case, the exterior fabric of the terraces is largely intact. ***Regent Terrace remains primarily residential***

Stockbridge and the Raeburn Estate

- 9.12 Stockbridge forms a neighbourhood shopping centre primarily based around small shop units in Raeburn Place. To the southeast, across the bridge, the shops in Kerr Street and Hamilton Place are similar but tend to be more specialist in character many of the shops have fine original shopfronts. The majority of property remains in residential use.
- **The importance of the city centre as a regional shopping centre**
 - **The presence of satellite shopping in Stockbridge, the West End and Broughton/Leith Walk**

- The strong and continuing presence of a residential community outwith the central area.
- The *flexibility* of original townhouses being converted to office accommodation *and then reconverted back to residential.*

10 NATURAL HERITAGE

- 10.1 The most profound influence is the topography, as the formal designs were laid out without substantially altering the existing landform. This results in an area with extensive long distance views, landmarks, a deep river gorge and interesting building forms that respond to changes in level.
- 10.2 The most prominent natural landmark within the area, Calton Hill, *is a crag and tail* remnant of a volcano, which erupted 350 million years ago. This feature is part of the area that is designated as a composite SSSI 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' which includes Arthur's Seat and Castle Rock, *notified for geological and biological interests.*
- 10.3 The distinctive layout of Princes Street, George Street and Queen Street was very much dictated by a ridge, resulting in excellent views north to the Firth of Forth and south to the Old Town ridge
- 10.4 The Water of Leith is an important landscape feature and a key wildlife resource. It forms the principal wildlife corridor between the uplands of the Pentland Hills and lower Water of Leith Valley and 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.*
- 10.5 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 area within the Conservation Area.

New Town Gardens

- 10.6 The Conservation Area contains a series of 18th Century and 19th Century town gardens, squares and walks reflecting the area's neo-classical town planning and *picturesque tradition of landscape improvement.* These gardens are of international significance and are designated in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, *a joint publication by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland.*
- 10.7 *There are many shared garden enclosures within the New Town. They occupy about 13% of the new town area, and considerably more if the edge open spaces are included. They contribute a*

value to the character of the conservation area far in excess of their area.

- 10.8 ***Most of these gardens are developed within the grid pattern and are bounded and shaped by woodland. The woodland offers side and terminal views, and also characteristic Georgian 'peep' views between the gardens and the surrounding buildings. The remaining gardens are developed on the edge of the grid. These include Calton hill, the Water of Leith Gorge and the Waverley valley. They are also shaped and bounded by woodland.***
- 10.9 ***The design of all these gardens may be regarded as an inside-out version of an improved Georgian country parkland, evoking the ideal of feminine beauty which was created by the use of smooth curving lawns contained within an edge belt of billowing forest trees that allowed partial 'peeps' of the house or the woodland outer edge. .***
- 10.10 ***The grid gardens have the billowing edge of trees and curving lawns but the relationship is reversed and the houses are on the outside of the of the peep views. This is well represented by Moray Place gardens.***
- 10.11 ***The woodlands of all these gardens provide a plain green billowing deciduous canopy of broadleaved hardwoods, some 5000 in all, and with a character and ecology based on the native woodlands that once grew there. The wooded landscape with its surrounding and enclosing buildings creates an unsurpassed example of uniquely British and late Georgian large-scale, urban, picturesque improvement.***
- 10.12 ***The rear private domestic gardens were often laid out informally with meandering paths and some tree planting around the outside and a central area of lawn. Some had vegetable patches and all generally had high stone boundary walls. Many of the original communal garden cast iron railings were removed for the war effort in 1940, and later replace with inferior steel railings.***
- 10.13 ***There are also important graveyards associated with St John's, St Cuthbert's and Calton Hill.***
- 10.14 **Most of the New Town Gardens were laid out on fertile farmland. A major influence on the design of the gardens was the growth and establishment of a thriving nursery trade in Edinburgh, growing from five in 1773 to 37 by the 1870s. In addition, between 1822 and 1824, the Royal Botanic Gardens moved to its **current** site and developed as a prestigious, innovative and influential horticultural institution.**
- 10.15 **Major gardens include:**

St Andrew and Charlotte Square

- 10.16 St Andrew's Square was laid out in 1770 while Charlotte Square was not completed until 1808, although railings were erected around it in 1797. ***These gardens were laid out as formal geometric pleasure gardens providing a retreat for the surrounding owners.***

Princes Street Gardens

- 10.17 Princes Street Gardens lie in the valley separating the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh.
- 10.18 In 1776, the Town Council became responsible for the area of land, strategically placed between the Old Town and the New that was to become East Princes Street Gardens. It was not until 1829 that permanent ground works were carried out.
- 10.19 In 1844, the construction of Waverley Station and the railway cutting through the garden required a redesign of the gardens, which reopened in 1851. In 1903 the first floral clock in Britain was formed.
- 10.20 West Princes Street Gardens were formed at the insistence of residents of Princes Street who leased land from the Council. In 1820, James Skene's plans were finally adopted and implemented by Alexander Henderson.
- 10.21 Between 1845 and 1847, the Edinburgh-Glasgow Railway Company took its line through the bottom of the gardens. In 1862, the owners added the spectacular Ross Fountain by A. Durenne of Paris.
- 10.22 By the 1870's, 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, in 1876.

Queen Street Gardens

- 10.23 ***Craig's plan for the First New Town included a wide band of open space to the north of Queen Street. However, it took considerable time, starting in 1809, to form the gardens and safeguard the three Queen Street Gardens. This was finally achieved by a private Act of Parliament in 1822.***
- 10.24 ***East Queen Street Gardens, commenced in 1814, and was the first of the three private pleasure gardens to be laid out. The original layout of the path arrangement has not survived. In 1868 the existing terrace was constructed to give generous views down the garden.***
- 10.25 ***A design for Central Queen Street Gardens was submitted by Wilson in 1823, a proposal based on an appraisal of the site's***

natural features which were enhanced in a simple and informal manner. The design included reforming a pond with a small rocky island in the middle of it. A tool house was also designed as a small Doric pavilion which forms an important feature in the formal garden east of the pond.

- 10.26 *West Queen street gardens was also designed by Wilson and approved in 1823. As in East and Central Queen Street Gardens, a terrace was built to allow good views.*

Calton Hill

- 10.27 The public open space, 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.

- 10.28 *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.*

Regent Gardens

- 10.29 Regent Gardens were formed between 1830 and 1832, the feu charter having been granted in 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 planned.

Dean Gardens

- 10.30 In the 1860s, the area surrounding Dean Bridge was undergoing rapid development. Local residents successfully petitioned and purchased land for the provision of a private garden. The layout of the gardens allows picturesque views to St Bernard's Well, a classical temple built on the site of a mineral spring.

The essential natural heritage elements are:

- *A richly varied topography of ancient landform shaped by vulcanism and later by glacial scouring.*
- *Open space that creates a valuable resource for Biodiversity throughout the area*
- *Internationally important private and public open spaces lying within, and on the edge of a neoclassical grid pattern and reflecting the picturesque tradition of landscape improvement*
- *Gardens with an exceptional setting*

- *Gardens that create exceptional quality of long distant picturesque views both open and framed.*
- *The presence of the Water of Leith and Calton Hill , grid edged gardens, that create naturalistic areas rich in biodiversity, the former a secluded river valley, unspoilt by development, an invaluable wildlife corridor, green wedge and major recreational resource that links the area to the Pentland Hills and Firth of Forth.*
- *The presence of high quality boundary elements, including random rubble walls and black railings in stone coping, often curved.*
- *A wooded landscape predominantly of round-crowned deciduous tree of forest scale.*

Complex management regimes for private gardens, due to multiple ownership.

11 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

- 11.1 The Character Appraisal emphasises the more positive aspects of character in order that the future can build on what is best within the Conservation Area. The quality of urban, architectural and landscape design needs to be continuously improved if the character of the Conservation Area is to be enhanced. The retention of good quality buildings and open spaces, allied to the sensitive interpretation of traditional spatial structures in securing appropriate new development, are of particular importance.
- 11.2 This Character Appraisal stands alongside the World Heritage Site Management Plan. Both documents complement and reinforce each other.
- 11.3 The latter document sets out those elements of significance that make up the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and then identifies the risks that these might face. The values are:

Landscape

- setting and views
- juxtaposition of the Old and New Towns
- valley of the Water of Leith, ***Waverley and Calton Hill***

Urban Form and Architecture

- Contrasting Characters
- The Outstanding Townscape

- Outstanding Buildings
- Interiors
- Statues and Monuments
- Parks, Gardens and Graveyards

History and Heritage

- Historic City and Ancient Capital of Scotland
- Communities
- Association with people of world recognition
- Edinburgh - Festival City.

11.4 In considering action to mitigate risks and improve the area, it is important that both documents do not solely focus alone on a narrow range of conservation policies, but recognise the balance between the Council's strong conservation and heritage policies and those policies to maintain the City Centre as a viable economic entity, including the regionally important City Centre shopping area. The area must respond to the challenges of a capital city centre.

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

- Selective redevelopment opportunities will be clearly defined and promoted to encourage the creation of additional high quality retail floorspace. At the same time an effective balance between shopping, leisure, living and working within the city centre needs to be maintained.
- Improved pedestrian linkages will be forged between different parts of the city centre to enhance geographical connectivity, social integration, and connection between different activities.
- Continuing investment in the public realm will be secured to preserve that unique sense of place, create the conditions for a vibrant yet safe street life, and encourage continuing private sector developments and improvements. Commitment to a rigorous and exacting maintenance regime needs to be agreed by all parties, along with funding.
- Trouble-free accessibility of the city centre from other places by various modes will continue to be pursued -new and integrated public transport facilities, new walking and cycling routes, more welcoming transport interchanges, and improved car parking arrangements.

Moreover, these aims are entirely consistent with sustainability - car dependency reduced, encouragement to use public transport, renewal of the heart of the city - and with environmental protection - safeguarding our most precious asset, our world class environment. The more detailed heritage and conservation requirements to safeguard this are set out below.

The Council's Cultural Policy, approved in 1999 states under Objective 8 that the aim is "to preserve and interpret Edinburgh's heritage" which goes on to state:

"Edinburgh has an important built and natural heritage. The Old and First New Town areas of the city have been designated as a United Nations World Heritage Site. Working with others, the Council believes it is important to foster the public interest in the City's heritage. This will be achieved through –

- ***Preserving and enhancing the City's built heritage.***
- ***Arranging displays on aspects of the City's history.***
- ***Carrying out archaeological and social history research.***
- ***Developing close links between the City's schools and its museums and galleries.***
- ***Maintaining and encouraging the enjoyment of the City's natural heritage of parks and open spaces.***
- ***Interpreting the City's architectural and historical background and identifying ways of making it more accessible to the public.***
- ***Collecting and preserving artefacts relating to the City's heritage".***

General

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

Public Realm

The streets of the New Town form a key component of the geometric hierarchy of the area being a grid pattern of streets with right angled corners. This public realm should be of the highest quality in terms of the materials used. Transport requirements should respect the original street layout and should follow the guidelines contained in the emerging "Edinburgh Standards for Streets." Temporary layouts using cheap materials should be avoided.

The City has recognised the importance of the public realm and is currently embarking on a programme of enhancement work. The first schemes under consideration are in Castle Street and St Andrew Square and should be regarded as the first phase of a prolonged programme of enhancement.

The proposals for a tram running through the city centre present a challenge in terms of integrating the tram and its infrastructure with the historic

environment. This will require careful design and a Tram Design Manual has been produced to provide guidance.

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

Where adequate evidence of original designs of **kerbs**, railings, lights and balconies exists, encouragement should continue to be given for their **preservation and** reinstatement.

Shopfronts

Encouragement should be given to improving the quality of the shopfronts in the area, particularly that minority of shopfronts 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 accord with the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, NPPG 14 and respecting the historical** character.

The design of the gardens within the conservation area is of crucial importance to its character and landscape assessments should be considered for the New Town Gardens potential indicating the need for conservation, enhancement, management and maintenance **in accordance with the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, NPPG 14 and respecting the historical character** and involving private owners.

Control of New Development

The Local Authority should continue to insist that new development within the Area is of the highest design quality. New development should.

Fit within and complement the urban grain and massing characteristics of the area they are located in

Make use of the existing historic palette of building materials, particularly natural stone

Retain and reinforce the standard plot widths and height of street elevations, avoiding long single elevations, even where larger land packages have been assembled.

Wherever possible native deciduous tree planting should be encouraged

Retain the character of the New Town Gardens, with use of predominantly round-crowned forest scale species of trees and

avoid the use of coniferous, purple, gold and silver variegated forms of deciduous tree.

High Buildings

The current policy is under review, however, 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. These factors will be taken into account in the emerging High Buildings Policy.***

Boundary Changes

The draft character appraisal made some proposals for boundary changes, which are listed below. After consultation it has been decided to defer any boundary changes affecting the World Heritage Site to allow a compendium report on full boundary changes to be brought forward. This report will examine the World Heritage Site boundaries and those conservation areas that abut the World Heritage Site to determine where the appropriate boundaries should be. This report will also take into account the requirement for a “buffer zone” to surround the World Heritage Site.

The boundary changes proposed in the draft New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal were as follows:-

1. Move Donaldson's school, presently within the Coltbridge and Wester Coates Conservation Area to within the New Town Conservation Area. Playfair, a significant architect within the New Town, designed the school and this change would make the boundary of the New Town coterminous with the World Heritage Site boundary.
2. Adjust the boundary in the vicinity of Canning Street, Torphichen Street and Morrison Street.
3. Include Haymarket Station and its associated public realm at this location.

There may be further changes following on from an examination of the West End Conservation Area and an assessment of the World Heritage Site boundary. ***The map illustrating these proposals in the Draft Character Appraisal has been removed.***

Role of the Public

It is essential that property owners accept their maintenance responsibilities. The emphasis should be on the repair rather than replacement of original features, as these contribute to the conservation area's character as a whole. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style and of an appropriate scale. A significant reference for maintenance is “The Care and Conservation of Georgian Houses” by Davey, Heath, Hodges, Ketchin and Milne.

STATUTORY PLANNING POLICES

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

Conservation Area

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

Open Space

Princes Street gardens, Queen Street gardens and the formal squares, crescents and circuses scattered throughout the area are regarded as open spaces of outstanding landscape quality and townscape significance where no development will be allowed. The Water of Leith valley is also covered by policies that declare the valley as an urban wildlife site and promote the enhancement of its amenity and recreational value. Calton Hill is a Site of Special Scientific Interest where no development is to be allowed.

Retail

Edinburgh city centre is of regional significance in terms of its shopping and leisure facilities. The area stretching from Princes Street to Rose street is identified as the City Centre retail core where proposals for redevelopment should primarily provide for shopping. Some frontages along Rose Street and George Street are identified as secondary where a maximum of 40% of non retail use will be allowed. Secondary frontages are also found on Queensferry Street, Shandwick Place and Stockbridge. The latter, identified as a District shopping centre, is interlaced with speciality shopping, whose character is to be protected, along with primary shopping where a maximum of 20% non retail would be allowed. Broughton Street and Rodney Street are identified a Local Centres where shopping development of a suitable scale would be allowed.

Office Core

Rose Street to Queen Street, including York Place, the St James Centre, Picardy and Waterloo Place are included in an Office Core designation which seeks the retention of office use subject to other important city centre uses being retained.

Mixed Activities

The West End up to Palmerston Place is designated as a mixed activities zone where the emphasis is on promoting an appropriate mix of activities which contribute to local character and vitality.

Housing and Compatible Uses

Covering the extreme West End and the whole of the Northern New Town, this policy identifies mainly residential areas in which the existing residential character and amenities are to be safeguarded.

Main Tourist Approaches

These are identified as London Road, Queensferry Road and Haymarket Terrace, where limited Hotel/Guest House use will be allowed.

Light Rapid Transit (Tram)

Safeguarding a route identified as travelling up Leith Walk to York Place, turning into St Andrew Square, down onto Princes Street and out to Haymarket Station and the west end.

The Council is currently preparing the Edinburgh City Local Plan, which will supercede the current adopted Central Edinburgh Local Plan. A consultation paper on this new local plan was approved with amendments by the Planning Committee in November 2004. It is anticipated that this consultation paper will be publicly available in early 2005.

Supplementary to the Central Edinburgh Local Plan is the World Heritage Site Conservation Manifesto. The objective of the Manifesto is to assist in preserving the historic fabric of the World Heritage Site and ensure that changes complement and enhance its special character.

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES

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

IMPLICATIONS OF CONSERVATION AREA STATUS

Designation as a conservation area has the following implications:

Permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stonecleaning, external painting, roof alterations and the formation of hard surfaces. The area of extensions to dwelling houses, which may be erected without consent, is also restricted to 16m² and there are additional controls over satellite dishes.

Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the planning authority can seek approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict permitted development rights. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance.

Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals. The New Town Conservation Area is currently covered by the full range of Article 4 Directions:

- Class 1** enlargement, improvement or other alteration to a dwelling house
- Class 3** provision or alteration of buildings or enclosures within the curtilage of a dwelling house
- Class 6** installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite dish
- Class 7** construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure
- Class 30/33** local authority development
- Class 38** water undertakings
- Class 39** development by public gas supplier
- Class 41** development by tramway or road transport undertakings
- Class 40** development by electricity statutory undertaker
- Class 67** development by telecommunications code system operators

Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations will, therefore, be advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application.

Buildings, which are not statutorily listed, can normally be demolished without approval under the Planning Regulations. Within conservation areas the demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation area consent.

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

Trees within conservation areas covered by the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1972, as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of a tree having a diameter exceeding 75mm at a point 1.5m above ground level, and concerns the lopping of trees as much as removal. The planning authority must be given six weeks notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. Failure to

give notice renders the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a TPO.

Edinburgh World Heritage administers grants for the external repair of buildings within the Area and enhancement of the Site's public realm.

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