

### Alarm Boxes on Listed Buildings

#### ■ OBJECTIVE

This guideline is supplementary to local plan conservation and design policies, providing additional guidance on siting external alarm boxes on listed buildings.

#### ■ POLICY CONTEXT

Local plan policies protect the character and appearance of listed buildings. For example, policy CD 2 of the Central Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“All proposals affecting a listed building ... will be considered for their effect on its character .... Alterations, extensions or changes of use ... will not be allowed if likely to diminish the architectural integrity of the building or its historic interest.”

#### ■ SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guideline applies to proposals to fit external alarm boxes on listed buildings in the following conservation areas: New Town, Old Town, West End, Leith, Marchmont and Meadows, and Dean.

#### ■ STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The fitting of standard sized alarm boxes (up to 350mm by 200mm) is considered not to involve development and does not require planning permission. Listed building consent is required for alterations to a statutorily listed building which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, and in terms of this requirement alarm boxes require listed building consent.

Notwithstanding statutory provisions, the practice of the Council will be to impose a time limit for enforcement action of four years from the breach of listed building consent in the case of alarm boxes.

The guidance listed below applies to listed buildings in the following conservation areas: New Town, Old Town, West End, Leith, Marchmont and Meadows, and Dean.

1. There will be a general presumption against the location of alarm boxes on the main front elevation of listed buildings which retain their original domestic character irrespective of the use of the premises.
2. In certain cases, where alarm boxes have to be located on the front elevation, they should be restricted to locations where they are least visible.
3. On tenemental properties alarm boxes should not normally be located above the ground floor.
4. Alarm boxes should be painted to match the background colour or stonework.
5. Alarm boxes should not bridge mortar joints in the stone particularly where V or square joints are used.
6. Where there are basement areas, it may be possible to fit alarm boxes in inconspicuous locations selected following discussions with Planning staff. These may include on in-facing walls, under entrance platts and stairs, and on the sides of platt supporting arches close to the junction with the pavement.
7. Concealed locations on side and rear elevations should also be considered for alarm boxes. Consideration should also be given to fitting boxes inside the building behind windows and fanlights.
8. The smallest available alarm boxes should be selected for use on listed buildings.
9. Alarm boxes will normally be considered acceptable in appropriate locations, on painted shop fronts and other painted frontages of a commercial character. In these cases, the boxes should be painted to match the background colour.
10. Property owners and security companies should consult with staff of Planning before erecting alarm boxes.

On listed buildings in other areas, alarm boxes should be fitted in the least conspicuous location compatible with their purpose and painted to match the background.

## ■ REASONED JUSTIFICATION

There is normally a functional requirement that alarm boxes should act as a visual deterrent by being brightly coloured and fixed to the building in a conspicuous position. They are also required to be “tamper-proof” which results in their location at high levels on buildings.

These factors often conflict with the architectural character of historic buildings and can have a seriously adverse affect on the appearance of domestic fronted buildings in the New Town and other tenemental areas.

For further details contact:

Head of Planning & Strategy, The City of Edinburgh Council, 1 Cockburn Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1ZJ.  
Tel: 0131 529 4403 Fax: 0131 529 7478

