

OLD TOWN DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, describes conservation areas as "... areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The Act makes provision for the designation of conservation areas as distinct from individual buildings, and planning authorities are required to determine which parts of their areas merit conservation area status

There are currently 38 conservation areas in Edinburgh, including city centre areas, Victorian suburbs and former villages. Each conservation area has its own unique character and appearance.

Character Appraisals

The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation; rather designation demonstrates a commitment to positive action for the safeguarding and enhancement of character and appearance. The planning authority and the Scottish Executive are obliged to protect conservation areas from development that would adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore, important that both the authorities and other groups who have an interest in conservation areas and residents are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced.

A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character of an area.

It is intended that Character Appraisals will guide the local planning authority in making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement proposals. The character appraisal will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the conservation area and applications for significant new developments should be accompanied by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the proposals take account of the essential character of the area as identified in this document.

NPPG 18: Planning and the Historic Environment states that Conservation Area Character Appraisals should be prepared when reconsidering existing conservation area designations, promoting further designations or formulating enhancement schemes. The NPPG also specifies that Article 4 Direction Orders will not be confirmed unless a character appraisal is in place.

Old Town Conservation Area

The Old Town Conservation Area was designated in July 1977 with amendments in 1982, 1986 and 1996. An Article 4 Direction Order was first made in 1984, and this was extended in 1996.

The resident population is currently estimated at around 11,000. The Old Town is an easily recognised entity within the wider city boundaries, formed along the spine of the hill which tails down behind the steep castle rock outcrop to terminate at its foot at Hoyrood Palace. It has a naturally defined boundary to the north where the valley contained the old Nor' Loch, and on the south the corresponding parallel valley of the Cowgate.

The northern and western boundaries of the Conservation Area are well defined by the Castle and Princes Street Gardens, and the eastern by Calton Hill and Calton Road. Arthur's Seat, to the southeast, is a dominating feature which clearly defines the edge of the Conservation Area.

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.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

A complex interplay of various elements has shaped the character of the Old Town. The long and eventful history of Edinburgh has been dealt with in detail, and from many different aspects, in numerous written accounts. This section of the Appraisal provides only the briefest outline of the Old Town's development as it relates to its overall structure and appearance.

The Castle Rock is the hard core of a 350 million-year-old volcano, buried and subsequently revealed by the erosion of glaciers in the last Ice Age. The eastward flow of the ice left the characteristic 'crag and tail' of the Castle Rock and the Old Town Ridge, together with parallel valleys to the north and south. The original location was strategic and occupation of the naturally defensible site can be traced back as far as the Bronze Age. The rock of Edinburgh also commanded the point where the Roman route from the south reached the firth of Forth. The first literary reference to Edinburgh can be traced to the 6th century Welsh heroic poem *Y Gododdin*, in which it is referred to as Din Eityn. The name became Dunedene in Gaelic, which is Edineburg in English (Din, Dun and burg all having the same meaning of fortress). A Royal Castle was present on the Castle Rock from at least the 10th century and the first buildings in Edinburgh were hard by the Castle, for protection.

The only adjacent site for development was the long ridge spreading eastwards down to the Abbey of Holy Rood, which was founded by David I in 1128. Separate medieval settlements, Edinburgh and the Canongate, grew astride the ridge.

By the 12th century, Edinburgh was granted 'Royal Burgh' status and the Canongate, was a Burgh of Barony under the Canons of Holyrood Abbey. The principal streets of the two burghs, formerly separated by the Netherbow Port (gate) together form what has been known since the 16th century as the Royal Mile. The Royal Charters also granted the right to hold markets, an important economic concession, resulting in the main streets being laid out at a generous 30m wide.

In the early medieval period, the Old Town was a relatively spacious place with a population of around 2,000 and the houses were of a semi-rural character, perhaps two floors in height with 'Burgess plots' - long narrow strips of land, known as rigs or tofts, - running down either side of the ridge. These strips of land were originally cultivated, but by the early 14th century as the population increased the houses were rebuilt higher. Further buildings were erected at right angles to the street on the tofts, which were gradually covered until only a narrow access passage, the close, remained.

By 1540, the population had increased to around 10,000. The High Street was continuously built up with markets in its wider stretches, the Canongate had buildings in each toft, and the suburbs of Grassmarket and Cowgate were in existence. The outlying suburbs were brought within the Burgh during the 16th and 17th centuries by the construction of the Flodden and Telfer Walls. On the accession of the Stewart Kings in the 15th century, Edinburgh became the capital of Scotland. A Royal Court was established at Holyrood, resulting in the development of numerous nobles' town houses in the Canongate.

Until the second half of the 18th century, Edinburgh was constrained by the town walls and confined to the crest and flanks of the sloping ridge linking the Castle with Holyrood. Within that relatively small area were distributed the military, administrative, craft, merchant, market, religious and residential functions of the city. Edinburgh's constricted site meant that as its population increased, the original burgess tofts or strips of land were subdivided, with development being forced upwards rather than outwards. The result was a dense pattern of tall buildings stretching downhill to the north and south of the High Street, separated by innumerable closes. In 1752 it was recorded in a report that "the houses stand more crowded than any other town in Europe and are built to a height that is almost incredible".

Most Old Town buildings featured timber frontages and thatched roofs until the expansive rebuilding programme in the earlier part of the 17th century. A number of controls to improve the quality of construction were also introduced. From at least the 16th century, building control was enforced through the Dean of Guild, and such laws had an effect on the development of the Old Town. For instance, as a precaution against fire, from 1621, roofing materials had to be either tile or slate, and from 1674, facades had to be of stone. In the same year, regular fenestration and 'piazzas', ground-floor arcades, were recommended.

The population of Edinburgh gradually increased within the restrictive town walls during the 17th and early 18th centuries. This resulted in an increase in the height and density of buildings, which strained existing servicing and access arrangements, as the Old Town grew, 'piled deep and massy, close and high'.

At the mid point of the 18th century, conditions for the population were very mixed. One estimate shows that 10 per cent of the population lived in houses in the streets, 60 per cent in the densely packed closes, 20 per cent in dugouts or sheds, with the remaining 10 per cent being without regular shelter.

The deteriorating condition of the Old Town resulted in a number of rebuilding initiatives to remove and replace the most squalid and unsafe parts of the building stock. The major innovation of the 17th century was the amalgamation of tofts and their redevelopment as courts surrounded by tenements, following an Act of 1644 which gave the Town Council power of compulsory purchase over derelict property. Parliament Close was rebuilt on these lines after 1675, and the climax was reached with Royal Exchange Square (now the City Chambers) in 1754-7.

During the second half of the 18th century, the conditions in the Old Town contributed to a shift of population to the newly developed New Town, and the Old Town experienced progressively rapid social and commercial decline. The extent of the problem was highlighted by the collapse of a tenement in Paisley Close with multiple loss of life. When Henry Littlejohn, Edinburgh's first Medical Officer of Health, surveyed mid-Victorian Edinburgh, the Old Town emerged as an unhealthy, squalid, overcrowded and insanitary area in desperate need of remedial action. An important strand in the subsequent response by the authorities was the demolition of unfit housing and the implementation of Improvement Schemes.

Until the deep contours each side of the Old Town ridge were spanned by a series of monumental bridges in the 18th and 19th centuries, the naturally constrained site of the city posed problems. With the construction of these bridges from 1763, geology no longer dictated how the city would develop, and new roads were cut through the medieval pattern of tofts and closes.

Other significant improvements included: the removal of structures such as the Luckenbooths in the High Street; and the clearing of spaces, such as James Court, behind the main streets, to allow the penetration of air and light and provide higher amenity housing. Several new streets were also constructed, with the specific purpose of locally truncating the dense network of closes and wynds.

These were facilitated by the Improvement Acts of 1790, (South Bridge), 1827 (Victoria Street, George IV Bridge and Johnston Terrace), 1853 (Cockburn Street) and 1867 (Jeffrey Street, Chamber Street and St Mary's Street). All these new streets were lined with new buildings built to strict controls. The motives of social improvement and concern for the historic centre of Scotland proved mutually advantageous during this period with the architects of the "Edinburgh Improvement Act", David Cousins and John Lessels, adopting a romantic Baronial style.

The Improvement Schemes included the construction of a number of institutional buildings, and the net effect was gains in terms of access and environmental conditions but losses in the total, albeit defective, housing stock. The latter trend initiated a progressive depopulation of the historic heart of the city, which accelerated in the post 1950 period.

Late in the 19th century, the Old Town was the scene of important experiments in inner city regeneration by Sir Patrick Geddes, a pioneer in sociology and urban planning who proposed re-using older buildings. Development during the first half of the 20th century continued to follow a tenemental form, similar to that established in the previous 150 years. In some areas, notably the Canongate, residential accommodation was included on the ground floor, while in other areas, for example Ramsay Garden and Tron Square, architects experimented with the reintroduction of 'harled' walls and other picturesque elements. In the early post-war decades, a major effort was made by Edinburgh Corporation to renovate the residential fabric of the Old Town. This had a major impact in the Canongate and was achieved through a mix of new building and conservation. Robert Hurd worked on bringing many of the Canongate tenements up to date by restoration or rebuilding, following the pioneering work at 221-229 Canongate by the City Architect, E J MacRae. Hurd's work included Shoemakers' Land, Bible Land and Morocco Land. In 1947, the City Architect, E J Macrae, also published two reports *The Royal Mile* and *The Heritage of Greater Edinburgh*, which were brief, well documented inventories of the city's historic and architectural assets and were intended as a basis for a preservation and protection policy. However, despite these measures and influenced by the wholesale redevelopment envisaged by the 1949 Abercrombie Plan, the Old Town entered a period of decline.

The population reached its lowest point at the time of the 1981 Census, and the environmental problems arising from gap sites and derelict properties pointed to the need for a broader range of investment and innovative renewal approaches.

Recognition of this led to emphasis being placed on a more sympathetic approach to restoration and rehabilitation. The Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust was established in 1985, and restoration initiatives by various agencies have preserved properties, substantially improved the visual appearance of the Old Town and recreated a sense of the traditional morphology.

The Edinburgh World Heritage Trust was formed in 1999 by an amalgamation of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Area and the Edinburgh Old Town Trust. Historic Scotland and the Council fund the Trust. The aim of the Trust is to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the World Heritage Site's special architectural or historic interest. The Trust seeks to co-ordinate activities necessary for the protection of the heritage value of the World Heritage Site through its controlled development and its harmonious adaptation to contemporary life. In recent years there has also been considerable recent investment in work to the public realm in the form of improvements to closes and the High Street.

ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

SPATIAL STRUCTURE

Introduction

As the previous section has illustrated, the Old Town became the historic centre of government, attracting the nobility, legal and ecclesiastical authorities, merchants and craftsmen. The shape of Edinburgh emerged to accommodate this population growth, which was met through what can now be seen as a precursor of various types of urban expansion and improvement.

The Old Town is a microcosm of urban development, reflecting a long history from the earliest needs for shelter and protection, through cycles of intensification and expansion, with consequent phases of improvement, conservation or re-development.

This process of change can be seen in so many ways that it is difficult for this Appraisal to be any more than a general analysis. Individual development proposals may use this as an introduction, but must be accompanied by their own contextual analysis to address particular circumstances in greater detail. It is also important that proposals outside the boundaries of the conservation area do not erode the appreciation of the Old Town or intrude into views of the Castle. A city wide or macro perspective (see Edinburgh Standards of Urban Design) must be considered in such cases.

The richness of the Old Town's natural setting and 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 Old Town is to be sensitively interpreted and enhanced.

This analysis of Spatial Structure and Townscape has been left in short sections to identify the range, rather than the depth, of qualities that can be found in the Old Town. The analysis is made more complex by the multiple layering of the built heritage, in its all dimensions, the many cycles of development that have taken place and the periodic requirements to bring order and improvement. This layering is not just important in its own right, but in its connections with and influence on subsequent development patterns for the rest of the city.

Setting and Edges

Second in height to Arthur's Seat, the Castle Rock is the most defensible of a group of distinctly shaped hills on the narrow coastal plain close to the Forth Estuary.

The Old Town setting is visible from many land and sea approaches to the city. Though part of the continuous built-up form of the city in distant views, the Old Town is surrounded to quite a considerable extent by a natural setting.

To the north lies Princes Street Gardens, which curve around the western end of the Castle Rock, and the sides of Calton Hill. The current Conservation Area boundary to the south contains the open grounds of Heriot's School and the Greyfriars Kirk graveyard. The section of the Conservation Area adjoining the South Side Conservation Area is built up for a short section, but then it is bounded by the Queens Park and the green space to the east of Holyrood Palace. Arthur's Seat is a major natural feature, bringing today's Green Belt right in to the city, and offers a major viewing point not just for the Old Town but the whole city.

Approaches and Gateways

The historic core respects the topography, sloping down from the Castle Rock to the Abbey and Palace of Holyrood House. Beyond, the ground rises steeply again to Arthur's Seat. South-eastern and eastern edges of the Conservation Area are formed by approaches through existing inner city areas of similar architectural character now making these edges of the Old Town less well defined.

To the south, the historic approaches of The Pleasance, Nicolson Street and Buccleuch Street are still main routes into the Conservation Area. At one time these old drove roads would have passed through the original medieval suburbs, the extent of which was defined by 16th and 17th town wall extensions on a line from Lauriston Place to Drummond Street. Little now survives, and has largely been replaced by subsequent institutional development. Nicolson Street leads past one of the grandest examples of these, the Old College, before entering the Conservation Area along South Bridge. Designed by Robert Kay in 1785, it takes the form of a grand processional route up to the Royal Mile.

Equally impressive, though in a different way, is the access from the north over North Bridge. The Bridge straddles the valley between Old and New Towns, high above Waverley Station, providing views which range from the East Lothian coast in the distance to Arthur's Seat closer by. There can be few more dramatic city approaches, accentuating the topography and the difference in character between the two major components of the World Heritage Site,

Buildings at either end form gateways, those to the south are Baronial, turreted and decorated with sculpture, "the Old Town overawing the New". This is an impressive feat considering that one of the buildings at the north end is the 'colossal' former North British Hotel, the other the more restrained but not inconsiderable former Post Office.

The other northern and north-western approaches are via 'improvement' streets: the Mound, Johnston Terrace and King Stables Road. Passing through open stretches of gardens and providing a setting for the Castle before entering the built up area of the Old Town, these also provide a clear sense of arrival. They connect with another major north/south route through the area, George IV Bridge, from which, as at South Bridge, the drama of the changes in topography to the other major east/west route of the Cowgate below are revealed.

The main entry point to the Conservation Area from the west is West Port, the corners of which are marked by two office developments, the one to the south

completed in 2003 and a dramatic improvement in terms of form and scale to that opposite from the 1970s. The building line is then brought back to the pavement edge as West Port narrows and winds down hill, the enclosure quickly opening out as it enters the Grassmarket before passing on to the Cowgate.

Spatial Structure

Varying spatial structures have emerged through time on the Old Town ridge. In some cases only vestiges of these may remain, and a chronological/thematic perspective must be used to understand and identify how the present day layering of spatial structures has emerged. Despite this variety, the Old Town still retains the linear emphasis dictated by its site and the Royal Mile, linking its two most important institutions, the Castle and Palace.

Enclosure

The Burgh of Edinburgh was enclosed soon after its foundation. It is thought a first wall, a timber palisade, was replaced with a more extensive stone wall, the King's Wall, and "Edinburgh Castle must be counted one of the earliest, if not the earliest of Scotland's castles of enclosure". The Castle was remodelled in 1368–77, including an outer circuit of walls below the rock; this and the formation of the Netherbow Port would have been contemporary. There is in both the Castle and the earliest forms of the Old Town, and in common with many early settlements, a theme of enclosure. Examples of remaining sections of the city walls are at Heriot Place and the Pleasance. Whilst possibly not in their original form and much opened up behind, many of the buildings looking over Princes Street today echo this enclosure. Rising out of the sides of the volcanic ridge, they still give the appearance of enclosing the Old Town behind.

"New Towns"

Royal burgh status was conferred on Edinburgh, c.1130, and Canongate in 1140. These were seen at the time as 'new towns' designed to attract merchants and craftsmen. The Canongate, due to its closer proximity to the Palace, attracted the town houses of the nobility and courtiers. Although it shared the traditional lang rigg ownership pattern with that of Edinburgh, development took the form of grand houses such as Queensberry, Acheson, Moray and Whitefoord House rather than tenemental flats.

The openness and lower density that this created is still visible today, particularly on the north side of the Canongate. It also attracted over time its own institutions: of Tolbooth and Kirk. Though more often now thought of as a street name, it is important to recognise the Canongate as a former independent settlement and Royal Burgh.

Linear Settlement and Royal Mile

Along the ridge runs the Royal Mile, it is the spine of the Old Town, the main thoroughfare and great processional way of old Edinburgh. The Royal Mile is a sequence of spaces as well as a street, and these variations reveal buildings and

views sequentially that are equally impressive in which ever direction they are approached from. The ridge, the volcanic tail on which it sits and the natural constraints of the former loch and river on its long sides, helped to dictate a linear settlement form which is still clearly evident today.

The alignment of the Royal Mile is also subject to the underlying natural topography and is not straight. Its gentle twists reflect the setting, and the work involved in its original creation. It also varies considerably in width, the narrow uppermost stretch along Castlehill being more typical of a medieval street, before widening out to the Lawnmarket and High Street sections. The street narrows again at the site of the former Netherbow Port, before opening out again along Canongate. The spaces created were in part used for markets, and the present day street theatre during the Festival provides an indication of what the medieval scene of street trading must have been like.

Traditional Lang Riggs And Closes

Equally evident in the earliest plans is the impact of the Scottish system of land ownership, the ground on either side of the Royal Mile being divided into 'tofts' in the form of strips down the slopes of the ridge. The closes and wynds that run along the sides of the tofts accentuated this. These still make the Old Town highly permeable, giving pedestrian priority through frequent access and choice of route, whilst retaining a sense of intimacy and potential for surprise. In some areas they have been developed into arcades, covered stair ways linking different levels and roof top walkways such as that round Victoria Street giving magnificent views out across the Grassmarket.

Town Extension

Another form of urban expansion use was that of town extension. Initially, this involved the enclosure of the Grassmarket and Cowgate. Almost a century later, in 1620, the Old Town, was extended by some 10 acres purchased by the Town Council to the south of Grassmarket and enclosed by The Telfer Wall. Their description at the time as suburbs of the Old Town is rather at odds with our present day perception of them as key elements of the city centre and World Heritage Site.

Intensification

In contrast to these various forms of expansion, the predominant spatial elements of the linear Royal Mile and 'lang rigg' or 'toft' ownership pattern within the walls were also affected by population increase. Changes in the spatial structure of the Old Town were brought about by intensification of land use and the infilling of the lang riggs. The increasing lack of sanitation and risk of fire led to the need for consequent intervention by the city administration.

Markets

The Grassmarket, the Fishmarket, the Fleshmarket, the Green Market and the Land Market (now Lawnmarket) were all located within short walking distances. They functioned not only for the trade of their respective commodities, but also as

important social spaces. Though no source confirms the development, it is not hard to see how these spaces led to the formalisation of squares. In some European cultures the word for market and square are the same. The High Street around St. Giles, the location of the luckenbooths, was the scene of considerable street trading. Churches, the Parliament, the City Council, the law courts, offices of the guilds and inns for travellers developed around the markets. The Lawnmarket, now looked over by the statue of David Hume, is seen historically as an important meeting point of minds and personalities that led to the Scottish Enlightenment. Possibly in no other time since have residents and institutions of the Old Town been so closely linked.

Town Improvements - Tenements & Courts

The 16th Century witnessed a massive rebuilding programme after the sack of Edinburgh in 1544. The forelands along the north side of the Royal Mile were allowed to encroach by 6 metres and extra living space was gained by cantilevering wooden galleries out above the ground floors. This is still evident in John Knox's House and the adjacent Moubray House. Intensification resulted in the sub-division of the original burgess tofts and the evolution of that now traditional and typical Scottish building form, the tenement, in which houses are built on top of each other.

Gladstones Land and Moubray House show that tenement living was still for the prosperous, "who, by living above ground floor, could avoid the worst of the street noise and smell". For the same reasons, mansions came to be built towards the rear of the tofts as can be seen at Riddles Court, Lady Stairs House and Tweeddale House. In part, these buildings reflect the increasing intervention of Town Council controls to guard against the risks of fire. From the early 17th century roofs on new properties had to be slated or tiled, and from 1674 new buildings facing the High Street had to be stone fronted, with regular fenestration and ground floor arcades being recommended.

In spatial terms though 'the major innovation of the 17th Century was the amalgamation of tofts and their redevelopment as courts surrounded by tenements'. This was helped by legislation which gave the Town Council compulsory purchase powers over derelict property. The results can be seen in Mylnes Court, the much larger James Court and Wardrop's Court with carved dragon brackets at its entry. Recent improvements continue to other courts: closes have been linked together, between Roxburgh Close and Warriston Close with its natural stone landscaping, Trunk's Close with its soft landscaping and sculptures, and the almost completely modern Chessels Court.

Squares and Perimeter Blocks

The Buildings of Edinburgh observes that 'the climax was reached with Royal Exchange Square in 1754'. This may more appropriately be seen as the ending of one stage and the beginning of another in the Old Town's development. To the south of the Royal Mile, approximately along the present alignment of Chambers Street, Brown Square and Argyle Square had been developed by 1765 and to the east Adam Square had been started by 1780. None of these now remain but George Square, started in 1757, in the adjacent South Side Conservation Area,

marks another high point in urban design terms. In 1786, Hunter Square was developed around the partially demolished Tron Kirk as the termination to Robert Kay's new 'processional' way along South Bridge linking the Old Town to the University of Edinburgh Old College. 'Squares' remain a major characteristic of the South Side at Nicolson Square (1765), St. Patrick Square (1800), Hill Place (1808) and, not long after, Browns Place. Initially developed for the parking of carriages and horses, they came to represent emerging ideas in design and civic amenity. These ideas were further developed after the fire of 1824 in the transformation of Parliament Close into Parliament Square. Whilst many of these squares can be considered as trial runs for the New Town, they were, with the exception of South Bridge, not linked together in an overall urban design framework.

Over this period can be seen the emergence of two basic spatial arrangements, not just in Edinburgh but all Scottish cities, which developed over the next 250 years. These were the perimeter tenement block and the of the square. In both these arrangements, concerns for amenity and civic life are evident. These were two of the driving forces that led to the development of the New Town. That it should be designed with a concern not just for building but for the creation of a public realm, of relationships between built form, the streets and open spaces, marks out one of the essential differences with the Old Town. Another legacy is a concern to provide an appropriate mix of uses and their inclusion in ground floors of the emerging tenement forms.

Improvement Streets

As the plans for the New Town were developed and implemented, they in turn influenced later demands for increased accessibility and street improvements in the Old Town. One of the earliest in 1786 was the formation of the South Bridge running between Hunter Square and Chambers Street over the valley of the Cowgate.

The demolition that was required for its construction would have been considerable, certainly 'radical surgery' of a degree to stand comparison with that of other city's classically inspired improvements. Its thirteen concealed, (with the exception of that over the Cowgate) vaulted arches flanked by tenements formed the first street in the city of uniform design. Spatially, it forms a processional route to the heart of the Old Town at the Tron Kirk, part of which had to be demolished for the route's construction. As it passes over the Cowgate it reveals not only the drama of Edinburgh's topography but also, though to a lesser degree than former times, the contrasts between the formality and institutions along it and the tight knit pattern of closes and mix of uses below.

Further changes were brought about for better access from the south and west under the Improvement Act of 1827. George IV Bridge acted as a connection between the South Side and the New Town via the Mound. Though important institutions such as local government, and the national and city libraries came to be located along either side, they are not the product of a formal set piece design as at South Bridge, despite its alignment with the Bank of Scotland building on the Mound. The width of George IV Bridge is almost double that of South Bridge, built

some 150 years earlier, but whether this is due to an increase in traffic demand at the time or design considerations is not clear.

Improvement Acts

Under the 1827 Improvement Act, further works were undertaken to improve access from the south and west, including Johnston Terrace and Victoria Street. These were followed by the insertion of Cockburn Street (1856) and then St Mary's Street (1867). These not only created new streets but also made dramatic changes to the spatial pattern of the Old Town, by clinically cutting between houses and the lang rigg pattern to leave truncated close arrangements to either side. They improved the overcrowding, fire risk and insanitary conditions and also incorporated defined aesthetic styles. The 'serpentine curves' of Cockburn Street are given cohesion by the use of the 'Baronial manner', but the individual buildings are 'resourcefully varied'.

Early 20th Century Redevelopment

The value of the pioneering efforts of Patrick Geddes and E. J. Macrae in early restoration and new build housing infill, especially along the Royal Mile, can not be underestimated - both in terms of conservation and in maintaining the residential population of the area.

Rationalisation of building forms and street layouts also coincided with the increasingly large forms adopted for institutional uses. These included new local government council chambers and offices, buildings for academic use by the University and Moray House, the central and national libraries, the national Museum, new banks and commercial buildings and a new building form altogether, Waverley Railway Station.

There were also until very recently, large industrial uses present in the Old Town. At one time there were some 16 breweries and utilities, such as the former gas works, at the Dynamic Earth site, which had to be accommodated. These uses occupied considerable land areas and would have had a major impact on the heritage of the area.

Late 20th Century Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Holyrood North site has provided numerous infill opportunities, until recently undertaken by the public sector, and the site for the Scottish Parliament building.

The redevelopment represents an imaginative and sensitive reuse of the former brewery providing a mix of uses and institutions. By retaining the best of the original buildings, the Holyrood North area opens up the former close system and reinterprets the lang rigg pattern by inserting new development. Varied developments are linked through a consistent and high quality public realm. This demonstration of empathy with the cultural and historic character of the area has been interpreted with the highest urban design skills. Here, and in other examples elsewhere in the Old Town, there are emerging a considerable number of high

quality urban and architectural design responses to the character of the Conservation Area. These qualities need to inform other major opportunities which still exist.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: SPATIAL STRUCTURE

- **The topography creates a dramatic natural setting and separation of the Old Town from much of its surroundings.**
- **The spatial structure of the Old Town is a microcosm of urban development, reflecting the multiple layering of built heritage and responding to the drama of the site's topography and setting.**
- **The survival of the underlying linear arrangement set by the volcanic ridge (forming the route of the Royal Mile, running from Castle to Palace) and of the early land ownership pattern of lang riggs and closes.**
- **The contrast in density and built form between the original walled city and the relative openness of Canongate.**
- **The survival of the original medieval street pattern overlaid with late 18th and 19th century improvement streets in organic forms responding to the contours.**
- **Dramatic gateways created over the Waverley Valley.**
- **The proportion and rhythm of building frontages, determined by ownership patterns of both the original medieval 'Burgess' plots and later tenement layouts.**
- **The evolution of the tenement, the perimeter block and the development of the urban square as the focus for civic life.**
- **The first designed street layout as a processional way between square and quadrangle, between town and gown.**
- **The importance of varied building types in providing a mix of uses and a living town centre.**

TOWNSCAPE

“Site and buildings together produce townscape – from the most predictable to the most improbable and spectacular, and often both at once”. Edinburgh has one of the most spectacular settings of any European city. Its townscape, frequently described as a stage set, has come to represent a romantic vision of the city, with multiple layering of vertical facades building up to a skyline punctuated by spires, domes, towers and the battered walls around the Castle. The Castle is as well known an icon for Edinburgh as the Eiffel Tower is for Paris or the Opera House for Sydney. Together with the Old Town ridge and Arthur’s Seat, it dominates the Edinburgh skyline, not just from the present day city boundaries but also in many more distant views and approaches to the city.

Landmarks/Focal Points/Skylines

The Old Town has a range of buildings punctuating the skyline. After the Castle, the best known Edinburgh skyline feature is the central spire of St. Giles, its uppermost crown spire being carried by eight buttresses springing from each corner and the mid points of the sides of the tower which supports it. The open and curving arches appear like delicate tracery in a distinctive style.

The spire of the former Tolbooth Church, ‘stunningly sited’ at the top of Castlehill, soars above the city. Between it and the Castle esplanade is Geddes’ Outlook Tower and his ‘ultra-picturesque and colourful’ development at Ramsay Gardens. Its mix of Scots Baronial and English cottage styles, towers, conical roof forms, oriel windows and balconies cascade down the north side of the ridge. Combined with its idiosyncratic materials (harl, timber, red sandstone and red tiles), it forms a termination to the Royal Mile before the separating space of the esplanade in front of the castle.

New College and the Assembly Hall, to the north of the Tolbooth with its main frontage on the Mound, was originally built as a church and theological college for the Free Church. Its Tudor front and the towers of its gatehouse sited on the axis of Playfair’s Royal Scottish Academy below frame the spire of the Tolbooth spire behind. The towers would be a significant contribution on their own, but their location in the middle ground between such significant neighbours demonstrates the wealth of the townscape. These in turn are in alignment with Hanover Street and demonstrate the use of townscape composition to link the Old and New Towns.

To the east of the Assembly Hall and ‘standing forward from the Old Town to lord it over the New’ is the former Bank of Scotland Head Office. An imposing baroque building with a central copper clad dome, wings extending to either side terminating in towers and later pavilions all sitting on a massive masonry plinth. The power of its presence is softened to some degree by a proliferation of decoration, statues and serried flagstaffs. These elements reinforce a sense of the theatrical, especially when it is seen against the formidable backdrop of multi-storey plain stone tenements behind. The framed views of the main entrance and dome terminating the vista south along the axis of George IV Bridge is perhaps more in keeping with the scale of the Old Town.

To the east, the unadorned north elevation of the City Chambers rises 12 storeys abruptly from Cockburn Street to dominate the stepped roofscapes surrounding it. The sweep of roofscapes rising up Cockburn Street are almost terminated by the spire of the Tron Kirk. The line and descent of the Royal Mile from the Mound to North Bridge can be traced in the skyline by the alignment and steps in church spires. At one time this would have continued east beyond North Bridge with the gabled frontages of the former Netherbow and Canongate U. P. churches.

From Calton Hill, the tenements of Jeffrey Street wrap round the north edge of the Old Town. Gated arches and stone walls below, protecting pavements and supporting Market Street, give a greater impression from the east of a 'separate' and defensive character created by the valley and bridge.

The sense of separation created by the valley is a key element in the appreciation of the Gardens themselves, the sense of dramatic scale particularly to the Castle Rock, to Calton Hill and Arthur's Seat beyond and to the visual distinction between Old and New Towns. The industrial roofscape of the bus depot gives way to the rear elevations of the tenements on the Canongate. Further to the east, the feus remain relatively open. This sense of openness is reinforced by the Canongate Kirk's graveyard and the 17th. Century style garden at Dunbar's Close. The north side of the Canongate still gives an impression of what the area might originally have looked like, with larger houses, free from the pressures of the Old Town, set in larger grounds.

From the vantage of Arthur's Seat, the Cowgate valley is obscured and the Old Town merges with the South Side. The sense of drama may be less than that from the north but the Castle still clearly dominates. Other landmarks include the white tented roof of Dynamic Earth, giving the impression of a giant marquee standing at the edge of the Queen's Park. Less in keeping with the traditional character of the Old Town are the multi-storey flats at Dumbiedykes and, despite softening their presence with colour, the modern facilities of Moray House.

The vantage point does clearly show the central spine or ridge extending down from the Castle to the Palace. The Old Town is set against surrounding hills, the greenery of Calton Hill separating it from the formality of the set pieces of the former High School and Calton Terrace, and beyond the Firth of Forth and Fife. Below the views into the buildings gives an idea more of the 'pell-mell' of the Old Town.

Vistas and Views

The topography of the Old Town makes it both very visible and provides a wide range of dramatic views. The Castle dominates views from all over Edinburgh, although some encroachment has occurred in recent years, especially from the west. The Old Town skyline and World Heritage Site can be seen from a range of near to distant views from many locations especially to the south, west and north. The High Buildings Policy report by W. Holford & Associates provides a good analysis.

Views should be considered from static and sequential points, taking into account oblique angles and levels. Assessments must also be made of the impact of

development outwith the Conservation Area. Some of the most dramatic views and a key element in giving Edinburgh a worldwide identity, is the perception of the Old Town in approaches to the city. The following is not a comprehensive list of the most important views, but is indicative of the type of views which should be taken into consideration:

Vistas/Panoramas into the Old Town

- From the north: immediate Princes Street, intermediate Ferry Road and distant Leith/Fife.
- From the South: immediate Arthur's Seat, intermediate Bruntsfield Links/Braid Hills, distant Gilmerton/Pentlands.
- From the West: immediate Haymarket/Tollcross, intermediate inner/outer suburbs and Corstorphine Hill, distant Gogar/Ratho/Harthill.
- From East: immediate Calton Hill & Calton Terrace, distant East Lothian

Vistas/Panoramas out from the Old Town

- North from the Castle esplanade.
- Eastward from the Lawnmarket and the High Street.
- Southwards from Johnston Terrace.
- Northwards from Jeffrey Street.
- Northwards from the Canongate to Calton Hill.
- East and west from North Bridge.
- Northward from the Mound and St Giles Street.
- The views north across Princes Street Gardens.

Vistas/Panoramas within the Old Town

- South from the Castle esplanade over the Grassmarket and Heriot's School to the Pentlands beyond.
- North from Greyfriars Kirkyard and Heriot's to the Castle and Royal Mile.
- From Victoria Terrace across the Grassmarket and Heriot's School.

Sequential Views

- South from west to east end of Princes Street.

- East and west along the Royal Mile from Castlehill to Holyrood.

Terminated Views

- North and south along George IV Bridge.
- North along North Bridge towards Register House.
- From the High Street to the Hub

Framed Views

- From Cowgatehead through the Grassmarket to the Castle.
- From the Vennel to the Castle.
- From the Royal Mile through Jeffry Street to the obelisk in the old Calton Burial Ground.
- From the Canongate to Salisbury Crag.
- From South and George IV Bridges along the Cowgate

Glimpsed Views

- North through closes to Fife, the Scott Monument, Princes Street, courtyards and gardens.
- South through closes over the sides of the Cowgate, to the Old Quad dome, Arthur's Seat and courtyards.

Building Forms

The Old Town is still largely dominated by tenements, both old and new. Interwoven with them is the wide range of public buildings that are to be expected in a capital city. They include churches; the university and schools; government buildings, including the emerging parliament; libraries; museums; offices; hotels; and visitor attractions. Short streets and respect for the topography limit the apparent mass of any one building, appearing to almost create a fusion between tenements and these other forms. This contributes to an appearance of density, a 'close knit' character and cohesive groupings associated with a medieval town. Scales are often made larger than they really are by the drama of the topography, the narrow and irregular width of feus, the apparent verticality of much development, changing viewing levels and comparatively restricted void to solid relationships. The rhythms of regular feus and the fenestration characteristic of the New Town are only found in planned developments such as the Georgian and classically inspired progression along South Bridge, or the later 'improvement act' streets.

More recent developments such as: the Poetry Library, Dance Base, the extension to the National Museum of Scotland, housing at the Holyrood North site, the office development at The Tun and the emerging Parliament make important contributions to the character of the area and set a bench mark for quality in all new development. They also continue the traditional character by adding to ground floor interest and street life.

Building Line/Heights/Proportions

In successfully uniting buildings from different periods, respect for building lines and heights are essential.

From early prints and engravings, it can be seen that building lines became more established with the introduction of the street structure. Despite the apparent formality of the introduction of building lines, they are not set at predetermined grids and angles, but respond to natural features and contours. The consequence of this is that much of the 'organic' character of the Old Town is still retained and building lines sweeping along the contours create a sculptural appearance to many streets as they wind up and down hill. Buildings are largely set right at the heel of the pavement.

The higher buildings addressing the Waverley Valley, between 8 and 10 storeys, help to reinforce a sense of enclosure, separation and defence associated with medieval towns in a dramatic way. These heights are also found where developments have risen from the Cowgate floor right through to streets above, for example along South Bridge and George IV Bridge. A more usual relationship with the street is between 3 to 5 storeys which respect changes in level. This creates stepped and angled roofscapes which are further articulated by narrow dormers, crow step gables, pediments, towers, spires, skews, chimney heads etc. A limited palette of materials, mainly stone and slate, provide a unity of character. In early buildings forestairs, small and irregular window arrangements, vestiges of timber construction and cantilevered upper floors help to break up the massing. In later buildings, this is achieved through the retention of narrow feus, the verticality of windows and a variety of decorative elements such as semi-circular corner turrets, domed or conical roofs, statues etc. These features give added interest and help to provide a human scale.

Streetscape

Many of the different street types have been referred to in other sections and, considerable reference has also been made to the high degree of priority and permeability for pedestrians through the traditional close pattern. The Edinburgh World Heritage Trust carried out a comprehensive streetscape survey of all major streets in the World Heritage Site in 1999, and this should be referred to for further detail. The streetscape character is predominantly one of 'hard' natural materials right up to the edge of buildings fronting.

Improvements to the streetscape of the Royal Mile, using setts and Caithness paving, and a programme of close and courtyard improvements have been carried

out, particularly from the Lawnmarket to the Netherbow. These show the scope not just for street improvement, but also for enhancement of the quality, amenity and value of the public realm as an important ingredient in the character of the Old Town.

Considerable potential exists for further improvements to the rest of the Royal Mile, its closes and to other streets in the area. The benefits of a co-ordinated approach to streetscape is exemplified by the redevelopment of the Holyrood North Site. Some 15 different developments are linked by a consistent and high quality streetscape which helps to provide an integrating context and sense of place.

Materials

The overwhelming impression is of natural materials: stone walling and detailing, harling with stone dressings, slate roofing, and timber doors and windows and setted streets with stone pavements. This limited palette of materials should not disguise the subtle tones and rich character of stone from different sources and with varied texturing. This helps the impression that buildings appear to come out of the rock which supports them. Changes in topography can make for an energetic walk through the area but it is significant that many of the steps have a generous tread size and the streets sweep through the natural contours.

The hustle and bustle of the main streets provide attractions for a wide range of visitors to institutions and leisure interests. In contrast, peace and quiet can be experienced in the closes and wynds. The kirkyards of Greyfriars and Canongate also offer respite a sense of tranquillity. Whilst splendid natural spaces exist on the edges of the area, some of the close walls have shrubs growing up them or plants hanging over them in what has been described as 'vertical landscaping'.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER : TOWNSCAPE

- **Site and buildings combine to form one of the most spectacular and romantic townscapes in Europe.**
- **The importance of the Castle as an icon for Edinburgh to match the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Opera House in Sydney.**
- **The Castle, the spires, towers and domes on the Old Town ridge and Arthur's Seat dominate a distinctive skyline, not just from the city boundaries, but also in many more distant views and approaches to the city.**
- **The Old Town has a considerable wealth of important landmarks, reflecting its long role as the location for the complete range of a capital city's institutions.**
- **The clear definition and drama of much of the northern, western and south eastern edge of the area, particularly the visibility of the Castle and the Old Town ridge from all over Edinburgh.**

- The many important vistas and views in, out and within the area, and the importance of development outwith the conservation area to not intrude.
- A wide range of institutional buildings from different eras set against a backdrop of tenements contributing to an appearance of density, a 'close knit' character and cohesive groupings associated with a medieval town.
- Building lines and heights respond to natural features and contours to create a sculptural appearance as streets wind up and down hill, reinforcing the 'organic' character of the Old Town.
- The variety and irregularity of mediaeval buildings contrasts with imposed styling of later 'improvement act' architecture.
- A limited palette of materials, mainly stone and slate, provide a sense of unity to widely varying building types and designs.
- Pitched roof forms given interest by stepped and angled roofscapes articulated by narrow dormers, crow step gables, pediments, towers, spires, skews, chimney heads etc.
- The hard edged nature of the main streets and spaces within the area formed by the continuous frontages of tall buildings built directly up to the back pavements.
- Street lighting mounted on building elevations reduce street clutter by day and emphasise changes in street width and building lines at night.
- The contrast between bustling main streets and quiet pedestrian accessed rear areas emphasised by the street layout and the contrasting built forms of the front and rear areas.
- The importance of steps in closes and access ways offering permeability and ease in changing levels.
- The simple layout of streets consisting of a carriageway flanked by pavements running directly from kerbline to building frontage.
- The importance in providing consistent and high quality natural materials, street furniture and lighting in the public realm to unite and set off the built heritage.
- The high level of pedestrian permeability throughout the Old Town.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Introduction

The Old Town is the historic heart of Edinburgh and is interwoven with the narrative of Scotland's past. It has been at the heart of Scottish architectural history for centuries and retains the essence of Scotland's indigenous built heritage and townscape. The conservation area incorporates Scotland's ancient capital and is characterised by:

- the survival of the little altered medieval 'herringbone' street pattern of narrow closes, wynds and courts leading off the spine formed by the Royal Mile,
- its 16th and 17th century merchants' and nobles' houses,
- important early public buildings such as the Canongate Tolbooth and St Giles Cathedral,
- the quality and massing of stonework, and
- the density and height of its picturesque multi-storey buildings.

The number of buildings of outstanding historic and architectural stature in the Old Town is such that it is not appropriate in the context of the Character Appraisal to consider in depth every building of importance included within the Conservation Area. A limited number of examples of the most important items will, therefore, be considered. This is not intended to detract from the merit of buildings not mentioned in the Appraisal.

The architectural character of the Old Town owes much to the formation of its topography by prehistoric volcanic and glacial processes, and its landscape is too robust to be effaced by the buildings which occupy it. A unique quality of the Old Town is, therefore, the clarity of its historical record against the background of a spectacular landscape. In spite of many clearances, new cross streets and new buildings, the plan of the Old Town has retained much of its ancient pattern and distinctive character. It is an environment of enclosed streets and dramatic changes of level with occasional distant views. The skilful use of land contours, the careful siting and design of individual buildings and groups of buildings, and the use of local stone combine to create an intricate and varied architectural character. The compactness and fine grained pattern also allows many forms of activity to function in close proximity.

The Royal Mile is a sequence of five historic streets (Castle Hill, Lawnmarket, High Street, Canongate and Abbey Strand), between the Castle and Holyrood, that descends the sloping ridge on which the Old Town was first built. Castlehill is the narrow uppermost section and opens out into the much broader expanse of the Lawnmarket, which ends at the crossroads of George IV Bridge and Bank Street, from which point the Royal Mile becomes High Street.

The street narrows at the point where it was formerly closed by the main gateway into the town, the Netherbow Port. Beyond the Netherbow, the Canongate developed up the ridge from Holyrood. It was always historically more spacious than Edinburgh, with large houses in generous gardens. Abbey Strand links Canongate with the Holyrood Palace complex of buildings.

The durable architectural character of the Old Town is based around the main medieval streets of the Royal Mile, the Lawnmarket and High Street being exceptionally broad for a medieval town, extended to the south to include early suburbs. The original dense medieval urban fabric has been overlain by a series of Georgian and Victorian street improvements: North Bridge, South Bridge, George IV Bridge, Johnston Terrace, Victoria Street, Cockburn Street and Jeffrey Street. The main streets have a hard urban form with frontages of tall relatively uniform buildings. The back areas are more fragmented with lower buildings. These differences are emphasised by the activity on the main streets and the quiet and relative privacy of the back areas. Building facades are generally laid out in continuous rows along main street frontages, with few gaps, forming a continuous building line directly abutting the footway. Access to rear areas is usually through pedestrian only pends.

Closes

A series of tightly packed narrow closes branch out in a herringbone pattern from the main spine of the Royal Mile. This historic pattern of closes and courts which closely reflect the topography is a unique quality of the Old Town. Prior to the end of the 18th century, there were no roads running off the High Street west of the Netherbow, with the exception of the steep and narrow West Bow which provided access from the Grassmarket. Access to the rear of the buildings fronting the High Street was by narrow closes running down the side of the ridge. In the mid 18th century there were around 400 closes in the Old Town; there are now approximately 100, with a number having been reopened and restored in recent years. Most are marked in gold lettering on black cast iron plates or by lettering on the stone paving at the entrances. They are an integral part of Edinburgh's history and have their own individual character and atmosphere, ranging from the picturesque to the dark. They also act as a source and frame for many important vistas.

Amongst the most evocative of the Edinburgh closes are: the restored re-creation of the 17th century White Horse Close, the picturesque qualities of which compensate for any lack of authenticity; Tweeddale Court, which contains the 16th century Tweeddale House and stone sheds which are believed to be sedan chair stores; Bakehouse Close which is entered through a broad arch beneath Huntly House; Riddle's Court with a fine timber external stairway and McMorran's House which is one of the best-preserved examples of old domestic architecture remaining in Edinburgh. Numerous closes were reinstated in the redevelopment following the devastating fire of 1824 which destroyed all the buildings on the south side of the High Street between St Giles and the Tron. These closes plunge spectacularly down to the Cowgate. Mary King's Close is subterranean and incorporated in the extended City Chambers. The Scandic Crown Hotel (1989) development reinstated the entrances to three old closes and a sense of the traditional pattern of closes has also been re-created at the Holyrood North site.

Major Buildings

The Conservation Area includes numerous buildings of outstanding architectural and historic importance, and international significance. This is reflected in the large number of buildings within the Conservation Area which are Statutorily Listed for their Architectural or Historic importance, with around 90 being of national importance (Category A). Although these buildings have individual qualities, often exhibiting European or classical influences, they also possess strong elements of the local character that reinforces the distinctiveness of the Conservation Area. The historic varieties of architectural forms successfully integrate with each other through careful attention to scale, design and materials.

The Castle is the pre-eminent building of historic and architectural importance within the Conservation Area. Its imposing bulk towers dramatically over the centre of Edinburgh from its precipitous location on the massive sheer rock faces of the Castle Rock. With its commanding site, standing 135 metres above sea level and 100 metres above Princes Street, the turreted and battlemented complex of buildings dominates the skyline and is an international iconic architectural symbol of Edinburgh and Scotland. The Castle's disparate architectural styles reflect its many changes in usage. At its core is Palace Yard, bounded on the south by the Great Hall with the neo-Renaissance Scottish National War Memorial by Sir Robert Lorimer to the north. The tiny 12th century St Margaret's Chapel (the oldest surviving building in Edinburgh) stands on the summit of the rock.

The Esplanade forms the entrance to Edinburgh Castle. It was laid out in the 18th century as a parade ground and completed in its present form, with ornamental walls, in 1816. There is a row of appropriately military monuments on its north side and it commands panoramic views to both the north and south.

Parliament Square is dominated by St Giles, the High Kirk of Edinburgh, and the continuous neo-classical facades of the Law Courts. St Giles has been the central feature of the Old Town for nearly 800 years. Subjected to an over-enthusiastic restoration in the early 19th century, it has lost much of its medieval character. Its distinctive open crown steeple surmounted by a gilded cockerel and supported by eight flying buttresses was the only part of the exterior of the building to survive this restoration. The façade of the Law Courts masks the old hall of the 17th century Parliament House which faces the southern side of St Giles with a life-sized equestrian statue of King Charles II in the garb of a Roman emperor in the intervening space. The Heart of Midlothian marks the location of the old Tolbooth, whose site is also marked on the roadway by blocks outlining its plan, and the repositioned old Mercat Cross stands just to the east of St Giles.

St Giles is also an important landmark in historic skyline views of the Old Town. Other buildings which contribute to the architectural character of the Old Town skyline are: the Old College; the distinctive dome of the Outlook Tower; the spire of the Tron Kirk and the soaring octagonal Gothic tower, the highest built point in Edinburgh at 73 metres, of the former Tolbooth St John's Church (now the Hub) which dominates the approach to the Castle.

The Palace of Holyroodhouse impressively punctuates the eastern end of the Royal Mile. Tall ornate iron gates lead into a spacious forecourt the centrepiece of which is a carved octagonal Gothic fountain. Two massive towers dominate the symmetrical west elevation of the Palace. The picturesque ruins of the 12th century Holyrood Abbey stand adjacent to the palace and provide an indication of how elaborate the structure must have been. Croft-an-igh is an early 17th century villa built into the south east wall of the gardens of Holyroodhouse. It is three storeys high and rubble-built to an L-shaped plan, with corbelled turrets and pepperpot roofs topped by copper balls.

In terms of public buildings, the most significant from the first half of the 17th century are Parliament House (1633); the Tron Kirk (begun 1636) and George Heriot's Hospital (school), which was built in 1624 on the southern edge of the Old Town below the Castle Rock. Heriots is one of the finest 17th century properties in Scotland and was a key building in the Scots architectural renaissance of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Canongate Tolbooth, built in 1591, is a rare survivor of 16th-century municipal architecture and was the administrative hub of the Canongate when it was an independent burgh. It is a prominent landmark on the Canongate with its turrets and gunloops to the street, forestair in the angle of the tower and oversized scrolled wrought-iron clock, which is a later addition of 1822. It now functions as 'The People's Story' museum.

The Old College of the University was begun by Robert Adam in 1763, and was intended as the centrepiece of an ambitious overall plan which was never achieved. The Triumphal Arch façade onto South Bridge is the best and the only part wholly designed by Adam. William Playfair completed the colonnaded quadrangle in 1834, and the landmark dome was added in the 1880s.

The City Chambers is constructed on a flank of the Old Town ridge. Its three-sided courtyard, which is open to the street through a rusticated screen, is an uncommon feature of Old Town development. The predominant features are the centrepiece, which has a pediment with urns and fluted Corinthian pilasters. It appears as a 3 storey building on its High Street frontage, but has no fewer than 12 storeys on the north, to accommodate the sharp drop into Cockburn Street. It is one of the tallest buildings remaining in the Old Town and makes an important contribution to the skyline of the Conservation Area.

The architectural character of the northern cliff-like outline of the Old Town is formed by the dominant ridge, between the Castle and Holyrood Palace, complemented by the slender spires and domes of the principal buildings, and extended by the profile of the land mass of Arthur's Seat. Buildings which contribute to this distinctive north facade of the Old Town are the folly-like Ramsay Garden, the Tudoresque New College & Assembly Hall, the neo-Jacobean Church of Scotland offices on North Bank Street, the Baroque Bank of Scotland on the Mound and the turreted gateway entrance to the Old Town formed by the former Scotsman and Carlton Hotel buildings on North Bridge.

The Canongate Kirk, with its striking multi-curved gable and Roman Doric portico, dates from the late 17th century, it stands back from the road in a churchyard with a number of important memorials.

The churchyard also provides views towards the Royal high school and the Burns Monument. The ancient and classical funerary monuments in the churchyard of Greyfriars Church makes the main contribution to the character and atmosphere of the area.

Waverley Station lies below North Bridge in the valley to the north of the Old Town. The station was designed to sit below a glass roof canopy to minimise its overall impact, as was the cutting required for the track through Princes Street Gardens which is flanked by high retaining walls and arches of fine ashlar. This minimises its intrusion in views from the north. However, it has more of an impact in views from the Old Town.

Domestic Architecture

An important and outstanding collection of high-quality domestic architecture survives forming the background of the Old Town, and the setting for the greater monuments, which would be much less interesting without their appropriate historic surroundings. They are the outward reflection of Edinburgh's history: with their traditional proportions, gablets and dormers, crow steps, pends and wynds, and carved inscriptions. The original ownership pattern of 'Burgess plots' is still evident in many areas, although often overlaid with a later tenement pattern. In later streets, particularly the 'improvement' streets, the regular pattern of tenement blocks, although slightly more generous in scale, also often reflects the earlier 'Burgess plot' pattern.

The tenement as a basic urban form was developed in Edinburgh through a combination of geography and circumstances. The crag and tail site and the presence of the Flodden Wall from the early 1500s constrained the burgh to around 130 acres for more than 250 years. Sustained population growth could only be accommodated by building high, and pressure for space was increased as more people demanded higher standards of accommodation within the fixed boundaries of the city. By the 17th-18th centuries, Edinburgh contained the tallest series of urban domestic building of their age, surpassed in scale only with the introduction of tall framed buildings in the 20th century. Necessity, therefore, created the flat tradition in Edinburgh.

The 16th century Riddle's Court and Bailie MacMorran's House represent an early courtyard phase comparable with structures in the Canongate which was always an area of less dense population and of larger and more substantial houses, courtyards and closes: such as Moray House (1628), Acheson House (1618), Whitehorse Close (17th century) and Huntly House (1570). Mylnes Court is a later surviving example of tenements, incorporating purpose-built mansion-flats, set around wide open squares, which began to appear in the mid 17th century. It is a massive building, opening on to a court-yard and represents an early attempt at urban renewal. The street frontage has a distinctly modern and plain look; while the less visible back facing the Mound remains medieval in appearance. The adjoining

James Court separates Mylnes Court from Gladstones Land, and was built in the 1720s, following the same general pattern.

Gladstone's Land in the Lawnmarket is one of the finest and most original surviving examples of an early 17th-century tenement. It is a tall narrow six storey building in ashlar with two gables facing the street and a curved forestair. It incorporates a re-constructed luckenbooth type shop front, typifies the height to which the early Edinburgh tenements were built and incorporates the only surviving example of the original arcaded house front which was once a common feature of Old Town houses.

The picturesque John Knox House, dating from the early 16th century, is the earliest surviving tenement in Edinburgh and a conspicuous building in the Old Town with its projection into the High Street which stops the view southwards. Its jettied timber balconies, forestair and other external detailing constitute a prime example of the earliest domestic architecture in Edinburgh. The building now forms part of the early 1970s Netherbow Arts Centre, which stands to the east. Immediately to the west of John Knox House is the four storey Moubray House, dating from c.1630, with an elegant curved forestair springing from first floor level. Outside on the street is one of the wells which provided the water supply for the Old Town.

Much of the Canongate consists of re-modelled, reconstructed or entirely re-built housing blocks constructed to harmonise with the street as a whole, rather than copy those they replaced. Chessel's Court is a group of tenements around an open courtyard reached by an arcaded frontage on the Canongate. It is dominated by the harled three storey mid 18th century Chessel's Building which, with its pedimented chimney and well proportioned Georgian windows, resembles a modest country house. Robert Hurd designed the adjoining new blocks in conjunction with the restoration of the historic original buildings. This was completed between 1958 and 1966. The rendered walls have rows of windows without glazing bars, creating a modern effect and the top storey is set back but conforms to the roofline of its neighbours. The Chessel's Court group represents an early example of conservation linked with innovative new building.

The series of neo-vernacular tenements at 79-121 Canongate are constructed in rubble, concrete, and harling, with blocks both parallel and horizontal to the main street, forming courtyards behind the Canongate. There is a pattern of large square windows and also horizontal and vertical slits on the façade, and some corner windows have stone mullions. The series of monopitch roofs form an interesting roofscape.

The Scottish Baronial style was a 19th century revival of the architectural forms of the Scottish Renaissance. In its revival form it is typified by the incorporation of architectural features such as crenellations, turreted bartisans, crow stepped gables and oriels which were intended to make the buildings look Scottish. The 'Scottish baronial' linked newer houses stylistically with older buildings. One of the principal motivations behind its development was an interest in the exploration of national identity, and the Scottish Baronial was seen as a romantic expression of Scottish architectural nationalism and tradition. Mid 19th century Scotland was also keen to show the 'civic strength' that these solid and powerful buildings symbolise.

Such was the influence of the Scottish Baronial, that it was adapted from its more natural context of large country houses for use in urban settings. From the 1850s it was used extensively as a treatment for redevelopment schemes in the Old Town in streets such as Jeffrey Street and St Mary's Street. Cockburn Street has thirty Baronial blocks built between 1859 and 1864 along a serpentine curve to provide access to Waverley Station from the Old Town and clear the densely packed backlands of existing closes. The Edinburgh Railway Station Act, of 1853, which authorised its construction, specified the need to preserve the architectural style and antique character of the locality to secure harmony between the new buildings and those of the Old Town. The variegated Baronial architecture acknowledged the steep gradient of the street, recreated some of the intimacy of an old Edinburgh close and provided a new architectural gateway to the Old Town.

There was a degree of continuity in the use of Baronial forms well into the 20th century exemplified by the picturesque qualities of the infill and restoration work by Patrick Geddes, for example at the theatrical red-roofed and half-timbered Ramsay Garden which was intended to reflect the colour and architectural chaos of the medieval town. A late example of the influence of the style can also be seen in the adoption of neo-Baronial features for the late 20th century design of the façade at the former Scandic Crown Hotel (1989), with its massive Holyrood-style tower as a corner feature.

The Southern Suburbs

The Grassmarket is the largest open space in the Old Town and an important focal point to the south of the Royal Mile. It is one of Edinburgh's most dramatic urban spaces: a 230-yard long rectangle providing a spectacular prospect of the southern cliffs of the Castle Rock. The first written record of its use as a market dates from 1477, and its long rectangular shape is still immediately recognisable as a market place. The architecture is principally later Victorian Scottish Baronial with some older survivors principally on the north side. It is reached by way of Victoria Street which contains a small fragment of the Old West Bow, complete with five of its old houses, and a fine group of arcaded shop fronts surmounted by a pedestrian terrace. The best preserved section of the Flodden Wall (1520s-1530s) incorporating the only surviving tower, with gun-loops, stands in the Vennel, south of the Grassmarket.

The Cowgate, the main thoroughfare of the Old Town south of the Royal Mile, enters into the Grassmarket at its south-eastern end, running roughly parallel to the Royal Mile but on much lower ground. It is one of Edinburgh's oldest surviving streets and formerly one of its finest. The construction of the architecturally important South Bridge and George IV Bridge over the Cowgate reduced it to minor status. It remains the best viewpoint for these bridges, from which the only visible arch of the 19 which form South Bridge is visible. A limited number of interesting historic fragments remain, including the neo-classical church of St Patrick's, St Cecilia's Hall, unimpressive externally but with an outstanding interior, and the mid 16th century Magdalen Chapel.

Candlemaker Row rises from the eastern end of the Grassmarket and leads to Greyfriar's Kirk, a mainly 18th century building erected on older foundations and well known for its graveyard which is the oldest in Edinburgh. The Greyfriars Bobby statue is the most famous memorial to a dog to be found anywhere and perhaps the smallest Listed Building in the country.

Archaeology

The archaeological interest of the historic burghs of Edinburgh and Canongate was analysed in 1981 as part of the Scottish Burgh Survey. Archaeological excavations have shown that Edinburgh's origins extend into prehistory. Significant archaeological remains survive within Edinburgh Castle and excavations have uncovered evidence which indicates that an aristocratic residence existed on the rock from at least the 6th to 10th centuries AD. Archaeology also remains beneath and within historic buildings and streets all along the Royal Mile, and in and around the Holyrood Abbey and Palace complex. Since the 1970s, excavations have revealed the remains of medieval and later timber and stone structures. At the Tron Kirk, fragments of the foundations of stone-built houses which occupied the site before the kirk was built were uncovered. The range of finds during the excavations on the site of the new Scottish Parliament provides a recent example of the significant archaeological potential of the whole area.

Ancient Monuments

The Conservation Area also contains a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments comprising Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Abbey, Holyroodhouse, the Canongate Tolbooth and the historic town walls. Fragments of the town walls remain at Heriot's School, the Pleasance, Tweeddale Court, the Vennel, Bristo Port and Drummond Street. All surviving elements of the town walls are of considerable historic significance.

Materials

Harled rubble was historically the main building material, except for the grandest buildings, and this continued to be used for tenements well into the 19th century. However, stone is the basic building block of Edinburgh's paving, stairs, walls, and roofs in its predominant form of silver grey ashlar from the sandstone quarries of Craigleith and Hailes, with a more limited amount of red sandstone.

Roofs are traditionally pitched and covered with dark grey Scots slates, principally quarried in the West Highlands, Ballachulish and Easdale. Scots slates are characteristically grey green, relatively thick, and usually of modest sizes. They are normally laid in random widths and diminishing courses, and have a deeply textured, uneven appearance. The topography of the city is such that roofs are a dominant feature in many views, and the traditional slate roof coverings make an important contribution to the architectural character of the Old Town. Slates quarried in Cumbria and Wales are also present in small quantities. These slates vary in shades from grey to purple and green. Stone chimneystacks with stoneware pots to individual flues, make an important contribution to the character of the roofscape.

Crow stepped' gables, wallhead chimneys, dormer windows, and ornate finials, are typical details on 19th century Baronial buildings. Sash and case windows in various configurations specific to particular buildings are the traditional fenestration method. The Old Town also contains many fine shopfronts in a variety of traditional and contemporary forms and materials which make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Natural stone paving slabs and stone setts were extensively used for street surfaces throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Over much of the area of the Old Town, the historic paving has survived or has been reinstated. It displays a tradition of high quality workmanship, attention to detail and the use of robust and durable materials. It also provides continuity, complements the design of the buildings and is frequently carried through into private staircases and closes. It is essential that this simple palette of materials is continued as they are durable and encourage the slower movement of traffic, creating a more pedestrian friendly environment.

Other street furniture elements, such as traditional lamp standards, red phone boxes and Edinburgh Police boxes make a significant contribution to the architectural character of the Conservation Area. In 1995-96, the High Street was refurbished with wider pavements and Caithness stone surfaces. Hunter Square was also redesigned at this time with granite benches and sculptures. The variety and number of statues, carved stones and sculptures add to the individual historic and architectural character of the area.

Boundaries are important in maintaining the character and quality of the spaces in the Old Town. They provide enclosure, define many pedestrian links and restrict views out of the spaces. Stone is the predominant material. Harled and brick walls also exist and can be in keeping with the surrounding character but only in areas where visual reference can be made to other materials. The limited number of concrete walls generally detracts from the overall character of the area. Openings through the walls are frequently arched with ornate gates and iron railing designs are common throughout the Conservation Area. Their individuality is important to the character of the area.

Recent Developments

Since the 1930s, numerous initiatives to restore and rehabilitate the Old Town houses have undertaken. One of the most successful, dating from the late 1970s, is at 14-42 High Street where sheltered housing, shops and the Museum of Childhood have been skilfully integrated in a mix of new development and restoration, with effective use made of interconnecting closes.

Buildings from the later half of the twentieth century show a variety of different approaches to redevelopment - some more successful than others. The most sympathetic developments are those that reflect the scale and materials of the surrounding development. Much of the office development of the 1960s and 70s is unsatisfactory in this respect. Argyle House is a large group of offices dating from the mid 1960s in a modernist simply detailed, style.

The mid 1990s extension to the Royal Scottish Museum on Chambers Street combines ashlar cladding with a bold massing of diagonals and incisions, and a prominent corner round tower intended to reflect the Half Moon Battery of the Castle and refer to early Scottish traditional broch designs. This was followed in 1998 by the flamboyant modernism of the design for the new Scottish Parliament.

A number of recent small-scale interventions follow patterns established by existing buildings and historical reference. The design of the infill building at 112 Canongate for the Old Town Housing Association is a modern interpretation of what were once common elements of town houses in the Old Town: a colonnaded ground floor to the street, external stairs, horizontally-galleried windows and cantilevered upper floors projecting over the street. A limited palette of largely traditional materials is used in a modern and creative way to create interest and incident, and considerable richness of texture.

Evolution House at the south east quadrant of West Port and Lady Lawson street occupies an important gateway site to the Old Town. The form of the development blends the fragmented grain of medieval frontages with the commercial need for uninterrupted floorspace.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- **The historic street pattern which is a product of the topography and built form.**
- **The architectural coherence and authenticity of setting and historical context.**
- **The landmark buildings which make a contribution to the city's historic skyline.**
- **The survival of an outstanding collection of archaeological remains, medieval buildings, and 17th-century town houses.**
- **The outstanding collection of statues, monuments, historic graveyards and national memorials.**
- **The consistent and harmonious height and mass of buildings: usually four or five storeys high on street frontages.**
- **The proportion and rhythm of building frontages, determined by ownership patterns of both the original medieval 'Burgess' plots and later tenement layouts.**
- **The quality, robustness and durability of the materials of construction.**
- **The importance of stone as a construction material for both buildings and the public realm.**

- **The use of high quality natural materials and workmanship for paving and street finishes.**
- **The clarity of the streetscape due to the integration of street furniture with the architecture.**

NATURAL HERITAGE

The natural processes of volcanic eruptions, land upheaval, erosion and deposition have profoundly influenced the topography of the Old Town Conservation Area. Man's influence on this landform has been relatively limited, and the historical geological processes underlie many aspects of the form and character of the area.

The rock formation that creates the impressive setting of the castle is the result of the erosion of the remains of a volcano which erupted 350 million years ago and cooled as a plug of very hard dolerite rock. Two million years ago, as the glaciers moved eastwards, the softer surrounding sedimentary rock was scoured away, leaving the 'crag' that forms the Castle Rock. The sedimentary rock of the 'tail' feature was protected and now forms the Royal Mile.

The hard dolerite rock has maintained its shape and form and is clearly visible due to its sparse vegetation. Yellow gorse or whin is present on the south-west side of the rock where it thrives on the thin stony dolerite soil. The rugged black coloured slopes of bare rock are characteristic of the Castle's setting.

The 'crag and tail' of the Castle Rock and the Royal Mile is one of many features exposed during the last ice age that are evident in the present day landscape. This landscape, which includes the volcanic vents of Arthur's Seat and the dolerite sill that forms Salisbury Crags, results in a topography that creates the dramatic panoramas and views to and from the Old Town. These include long distance views down the Royal Mile to the Firth of Forth.

Early man chose this high area of land as a safe place for settlement in a tree-covered landscape. Once the trees were cleared the rocky outcrops formed a defensible site and settlement continued to grow. As the settlement developed along the spine of the 'crag and tail feature' enclosed open space was developed around important buildings, as gardens and for burial grounds. Other spaces on steep banks and at the edge of the settlement remained open.

Open spaces within the Conservation Area have a wide variety of different characters. This diversity of character and the irregular distribution results from the historical development of the city and its natural topography. Spaces are exposed, windy and naturalistic: or alternatively enclosed, hidden, sheltered, quiet, and surrounded by high buildings, spaces that are discovered down closes. They can also be private and screened such as Holyrood Gardens, or, visible to the public through railings or from above, or publicly accessible as at Princes Street Gardens. The ownership and maintenance also vary, the spaces may be highly maintained as formal gardens or have low maintenance regimes which encourage wildlife.

There are a relatively large number of small areas of green open spaces within the densely urban structure of the Old Town. A number of them are of historic value in their own right and they also provide settings for the historic buildings. They frequently take the form of small semi-private spaces with formal elements of planting behind main facades. Examples include Chessel's Court and the garden behind Panmure Close.

The streetscape is principally hard and urban. However, groups of single forest scale and smaller trees are present in selective locations throughout the Conservation Area. Many date from the late 19th century, although some are more recently planted. These make a significant contribution to the character of the area, as they highlight the scale of the buildings and soften views. They also create local distinctiveness, seasonal variation and alter the local micro-climate. Sculptural features also make a further contribution to the individuality of the area.

The scale of some larger spaces, the relatively large number of smaller spaces and individual trees, make a highly significant contribution to the city's ecology and environment. The presence of wildlife habitats in the Conservation Area is limited due to the irregular and unlinked distribution of the spaces.

The natural features of the glacial landscape left some areas of open space that were more difficult to develop. These now contribute to the overall setting of the town and are valuable spaces for wildlife and amenity.

- Castle Rock

The steep western slopes below the Castle Rock wrap around the Rock and create the dramatic setting for the Castle. The area has a naturalistic character of mature trees and ground cover providing a relatively undisturbed wildlife habitat. The area is also designated as part of a composite Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which includes Arthur's Seat and Calton Hill. The areas are linked by their complex geology and this is reflected in the richness of the plant communities that are present. A recent re-introduction of the rare Sticky Catch-fly, *Lychnis viscaria* (an Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan species) on the cliffs of Castle Rock is important in the restoration of habitats and the Grayling Butterfly, *Hipparchia semele*, has recently re-colonised the area. Access through the space is by a formal path that is bounded by a stone wall. It is clearly visible from many different areas across the city.

- Johnston Terrace and Granny's Green

Mature trees also characterise the steep bank to the south of Johnston Terrace. This makes a valuable contribution to the screening of the road and the setting of the Castle. The eastern part of this steep bank, known as Granny's Green, was used as a south-facing drying green for the former army barracks. This historical use is represented today by the collection of varied antique clothes poles. It is important to the setting of the Castle, and adds to the character of the area.

- Princes Street Gardens

Princes Street Gardens, another remnant of the glacial landscape, was once a marshy valley. Part of it was drained and planted in the mid 12th century and the River Tumble, which ran through the marsh, was dammed in the 14th century to form an artificial loch, the Nor' Loch, to defend the castle. The Nor' Loch was fed by springs issuing from the Castle Rock and the Well House Tower and

made a significant feature in the city's landscape for three centuries. The water level of the loch varied, but plans drawn in 1742 indicate the loch's presence and later plans in 1765 shows that it had been drained. In the 18th century, rubble from the development of the New Town was deposited mid-way along the valley, to form the Mound, dividing the valley into eastern and western sections.

The southern section of the West Gardens are now maintained as an area of trees with rough grass and sinuous footpaths dating from the 1823 layout. This now forms a valuable area for wildlife and creates a naturalistic setting for the Castle that is striking in spring when hundreds of daffodils are in flower. The Well House Tower is an important feature in this section of the Gardens.

The lower part of East Princes Street Gardens is maintained in a modern interpretation of the Victorian Style, with short grass and recent additions of exotic specimens. One such species successfully introduced is the elegant Raoul, *Nothofagus procera*. This area was first designed in the mid 19th Century by Thomas Cleghorn as a Nursery garden. With the arrival of the railways the Town Council took over the land and opened the gardens to the public - one of the first public parks in Britain. The mature trees on the steep bank were planted in 1825, and this more naturalistic feature is now an important part of the setting of the Old Town and an important screen to the road for garden users. It also provides a variety of habitats.

Links from both East and West Princes Street Gardens are important in terms of forming continuous areas of urban wildlife habitat. The Gardens are included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes as part of the New Town Gardens. These are recognised as having international significance.

- Holyrood Park,

Contains the mountain wilderness of Arthur's Seat, and Calton Hill, with its assemblage of classical monuments, immediately abuts the Old Town. They are both Urban Wildlife Sites and a SSSI, and have an important visual and symbolic impact on the Conservation Area. Holyrood Park and the gardens of Holyrood Palace are also listed in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The Palace gardens are noteworthy due to their outstanding historical value, their associations with the Abbey and Royal Residence, and as a setting for the Palace. The gardens are designed to suit their role as the setting for summer garden parties. There are extensive lawns with herbaceous borders and island shrub beds. Planting is designed to provide colour in the summer months. The ruins of the Abbey are now a garden feature and in the north-east area there are a number of glasshouses providing displays of pot plants for the Castle and Palace. The high boundary walls and mature shrubs restrict views into the garden.

- Greyfriars Kirkyard

Is a significant open space within the Conservation Area. It was originally the garden of a monastery that was transformed into a graveyard in 1562. The

kirkyard makes a significant contribution to the setting of the surrounding buildings and creates a peaceful, secluded open space. The character of the space is defined by the large variety of historically important gravestones, monuments and graceful mature trees. It is also a valuable resource for urban wildlife, particularly as it links to the open space surrounding George Heriot's School. The grounds of George Heriots are partially visible through the railings on Lauriston Place. The open space is important as a setting creating a street scene with mature trees, lawns with the historic building set back from the street. The Canongate Kirk, another burial ground and significant open space, was laid out in 1688. The graveyards are significant both for their local amenity value and the contribution they make to the greening of distant views.

Long elongated formal gardens were a prominent historic feature of the less developed Canongate, and the small garden at Dunbar's Close was restored in 1978 as a reflection of this 17th century tradition. Hidden from view from the Royal Mile, the intricate layout of the garden, using appropriate materials and planting species, provides a quality open space. A variety of different planting environments are created with soft boundaries of hedges and trellis providing the opportunity to display a variety of plant material and forming sheltered spaces for wildlife. There are impressive views towards Calton Hill from the lower part of the garden.

Sir Patrick Geddes was active in establishing community gardens or pocket parks in the Old Town during the early part of the 20th century. As part of his Civic Survey of Edinburgh in 1909, 75 open spaces in the Old Town were identified as having potential for community gardens. By 1911, nine of the gardens were 'in working order'. They are now represented by: Advocate's Close; the Patrick Geddes Memorial Garden on the south side of the West Port and the Scottish Wildlife Trust Garden which occupies a prominent position on the south side of Johnston Terrace, adjoining the Patrick Geddes Steps and the former Castlecliff Workshops.

Many other linked small spaces in the densely urban structure of the Old Town create a strong identity and character. They also create a variety of views at unusual angles that are important in appreciating the buildings and the surrounding landscape. Accessed through archways and closes, their charm lies in their secluded location and their variety of scales and styles.

The landscaped garden at Trunks Close is a more recently designed space. The modern design uses good quality materials and a circular seating arrangement. A single forest scale specimen tree, a Roble beech (*Nothofagus obliqua*), complements a bold planting scheme around the seating.

Sinuuous curves and circular forms are common in the hard and soft landscape of the Old Town. As these are very characteristic of the area, it is important that these forms are not eroded over time. An example is the coping and railing in Lady Stair's Close, the circular seat in Bow Close Garden and the many curved splayed steps. Radial paving with a central part-circular feature is an important detail at pavement corners.

The limited number of specimen trees contribute to the local environment and can act as focal points. Examples of forest scale trees include the Lime trees, *Tilia sp*, planted in Hunter Square and adjacent to St Giles. Recently planted, these trees already contribute to the quality of the spaces, providing shade in the summer. Single smaller trees have also been used very successfully in narrow closes. A striking example is at Lady Stair's close where the Flowering Cherry, *Prunus avium 'plena'*, contrasts with the dark stone wall behind and provides a focal point in the view.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: NATURAL HERITAGE

- **A landscape and topography dominated by geological activity.**
- **The irregular pattern of open green spaces determined by topography and historic development.**
- **The quality of long distance views both open and framed in, out and through the spaces, and the views from different levels and idiosyncratic angles.**
- **Management regimes, from naturalistic to high maintenance, which correspond appropriately to the location and use of open spaces.**
- **Landscape design styles which reflect the shapes and forms of the surrounding architectural environment.**
- **Areas with high biodiversity significance with unusual species**
- **A wealth of hidden, enclosed spaces characterised by their individuality. These are mainly accessible to the pedestrian only through curved arches, gates and narrow closes.**
- **The use of high quality paving materials and sculptural elements within the spaces.**
- **The presence of a few selective individual or groups of forest scale and small trees providing a setting for buildings and creating focal points.**
- **High quality boundary elements including stone walls frequently of a high and sinuous form.**
- **The use of appropriate and often individualistically designed iron railings and gates, often of a curved or arched form.**

ACTIVITIES AND USES

The Old Town has been the site of many of Scotland's most important historical events and is closely associated with some of the world's most celebrated philosophers, writers, scientists, and architects. It is now a varied and vigorous community supporting a wide-ranging mix of uses and activities which make an essential contribution to the area's vitality and character. The Old Town is the primary focus of the City's ceremonial, administrative, cultural, legal and religious functions. Important civic and national institutions include: the Scottish Parliament, the City Chambers, the High Court, the Sheriff Court, the Court of Session, the University and the National Library of Scotland. Artistic and cultural institutions such as the Royal Fine Art Commission, the Saltire Society, the Scottish Poetry Library and Dance Base are also established in the area. Co-existent with these uses and activities are the area's important residential and tourism functions.

The breadth of facilities and attractions establishes the Old Town as a cultural, leisure, entertainment and tourism centre of national importance. The preservation of the many historic buildings, and their settings, in the conservation area is a fundamental matter if the tourism function is to be maintained. Included amongst the area's attractions are the museum collections that are a significant part of Scotland's cultural heritage.

Edinburgh Castle attracts one million visitors each year and is Scotland's most important visitor attraction. It is managed by Historic Scotland and retains a military garrison. The Old Town accommodates many other tourist venues, is an integral part of the setting of the Castle and is itself a destination for tourists. The Old Town, therefore, has an influence on the tourism economy of Scotland as well as Edinburgh.

The world's largest arts festival, the International Festival and Fringe, is also centred on the Old Town and makes a major contribution to the cultural life and image of the Old Town. The opening of two major visitor attractions, the Museum of Scotland and Dynamic Earth, in the late 1990s consolidated the Old Town's position as one of the most important tourist centres in Scotland. The range and quality of shopping concentrated in the Old Town also forms an important part of the city centre's attraction for visitors.

The Old Town as a centre of employment is closely associated with public service activities historically linked to the area: national and local government, legal institutions and the universities. There is also a substantial number of small office uses, primarily housed in traditional buildings. The Holyrood area was largely industrial, until the end of the 20th century: two breweries and a major gas holder station were located in the area. These former large-scale industries have moved out of the Old Town, leaving major redevelopment sites and the Holyrood area has undergone substantial regeneration since the late 20th century. This has included the construction of the 'Our Dynamic Earth' visitor centre and new offices for the Scotsman newspaper on the site of the former gas holder, and the development of complex of buildings at Holyrood North and the Scottish Parliament on the former breweries site.

From a low point at the time of the 1981 Census, the Old Town is now home to a significant and expanding residential population of about 11000. The building of new housing on sites such as Holyrood North and the restoration of many historic residential properties throughout the Old Town has provided a firm foundation for a thriving modern community.

It is essential that a productive balance between the interests of residents, business and visitors is maintained. The continued existence of a creative mix of uses is essential for the retention of the character and attraction of the Old Town.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: ACTIVITIES AND USE

- **The vitality and variety of different uses which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.**
- **The various important institutional and public service uses that contribute to its character as the nation's capital.**
- **The strong and continuing presence of a residential community.**
- **Increasing residential development is ensuring a living town centre.**
- **Mixed uses at ground floor level are important in securing active streets and 'streetlife'.**

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 spatial structures in securing appropriate new development are of particular importance.

The organic and articulated massing of the Old Town is being eroded by the scale and lack of modulation in some recent developments. This is manifested in the unbroken lengths of elevation and rooflines, large areas of brightly coloured render, shallow roof pitches giving raised eaves, added heights and cruder gable profiles. These become especially noticeable when building orientations do not respect the north – south layout of the original lang rigg pattern. It is important that further new development respects traditional articulation, heights and the use of stone if the character of the Conservation Area is to be protected and enhanced.

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.

Due to its topography and medieval street pattern, the character of the Old Town is particularly susceptible to the effects of traffic. The scale and intimacy of the Old Town is best suited to pedestrian movement.

The public realm of the Conservation Area offers a wealth of spaces created at various stages during the development of the Old Town. They are generally of a robust urban form in a limited palette of colours which is easily adversely affected by street clutter. The quality of these spaces is variable and would benefit from adherence to the criteria set out in the Streetscape Manual. Any strategy should consider and analyse the existing features and spaces of value and consider opportunities to improve their quality and nature. The different character of the spaces needs to be clearly defined and guidance developed for the maintenance of planting, hard materials and design of any additional street furniture within that defined character.

Careful consideration needs to be given to floorscape which is an essential part of the overall appreciation of the Old 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.

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.

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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Statutory Policies

All Local Authorities are directed by Scottish Office Development Department Circular No. 13/1998 to Historic Scotland's Memorandum of Guidance on listed buildings and conservation areas, in their consideration of conservation and listed building consent matters.

The Old Town Conservation Area lies wholly within the area covered by the Central Edinburgh Local Plan (adopted in May 1997). The Local Plan identifies the conservation area as falling within a mixed activity zone with an emphasis on promoting an appropriate mix of activities, which contribute to local character and vitality. Within the Conservation Area the existing architectural character, historic and landscape character is to be preserved and enhanced.

The area contains a number of speciality shopping streets in which planning policies seek to protect their distinctive shopping character. These are an important aspect of Edinburgh's regional and leisure shopping role which it is considered desirable to protect.

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 publishes 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 General Development Order are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stone cleaning, 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 control 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 Executive 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 Old 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 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 are covered by the Town and Country Planning (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 render the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a TPO.

- A grant aid scheme on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland is operated by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.