

Planning Committee

10am, Thursday 3 October 2013

Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals

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Executive summary

Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals

Summary

This report seeks approval for a programme of review of the existing conservation area character appraisals and explains the rationale behind the proposed programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposed review programme for conservation area character appraisals.

Measures of success

- Development of a successful model for conservation area character appraisals.
- Completion of the first 2 year programme of reviews.
- The conservation area character appraisals being more relevant for decision making in the Development Management process.

Financial impact

The work will be undertaken within existing staff resources. There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report. There may be financial implications arising from recommendations for specific projects such as enhancement schemes within individual appraisals. However these will require further approval from the relevant Committee as each area is reviewed.

Equalities impact

The aim of conservation area status is to preserve and enhance the quality of the area. This has the potential to improve quality of life and support sustainable communities. The review of the format of character appraisals provides an opportunity to make the documents more accessible than at present.

There are no predicted negative impacts on equalities.

Sustainability impact

Conservation of the built environment minimises the use of natural resources and helps to reduce carbon emissions. The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because the conservation and management of the historic environment contributes directly to sustainability in a number of ways. These include the energy and

materials invested in a building, the scope for adaptation and reuse, and the unique quality of historic environments which provide a sense of identity and continuity.

Consultation and engagement

Significant public engagement will be an essential part of the review of each area.

Background reading / external references

Report to Planning Committee of 8 August 2013, Pilrig Conservation Area.

Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71 – Conservation Area Management.

Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals

1. Background

- 1.1 The City of Edinburgh has 48 conservation areas with a 49th, Pilrig, approved for designation by this committee on 8 August 2013. The majority of these areas were first designated over a period between 1971 and 1998 (see Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning authorities to “*formulate and publish, from time to time, proposals for the preservation and enhancement*” of its conservation areas. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) encourages planning authorities to carry out conservation area character appraisals. Character appraisals define the key elements, essential features and special qualities that contribute to each area's architectural and historic interest, and reinforce the Council's policy objectives of promoting, protecting and enhancing the environment.
- 1.3 Character appraisals play an important role in development management decisions. In making planning decisions, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any affected conservation area. Appraisals provide a basis of understanding of that character and appearance to guide decision-making. They can also assist owners and developers in formulating proposals.
- 1.4 The City of Edinburgh Council produced character appraisals for all of its conservation areas between 1998 and 2007. More recently designated conservation areas such as the Colonies have had appraisals carried out as part of the designation process. Whilst no precise review period for appraisals is specified in national legislation or policy, Planning Advice Note PAN 71, Conservation Area Management, notes that, “*It is necessary to establish a review cycle in order to give continuing support to conservation area management. The local community should be actively involved in the monitoring and review process*”. PAN 71 also specifies that “the review of existing areas is required and provides an opportunity to assess the justification for designation, consider the validation of boundaries, identify opportunities for enhancement and set management priorities”.
- 1.5 Some of these original character appraisals are now up to 15 years old and are in need of review. Requests for review, or suggestions to address anomalies or issues in particular areas, have been received from elected members, council officers, local amenity bodies and individual members of the public (noted in Appendix 1). Examples include individual buildings, streets or spaces outwith

the current boundaries which are suggested for inclusion; new areas considered to be potentially of special interest; and the former Areas of Window Control which should be assessed for their potential inclusion within existing conservation areas. Of particular significance are the requests for review received from local community groups. The Grange Association has noted that a considerable time has elapsed since the publication of the Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal (1998), and expressed concern at the appropriateness of some of the recent development which has been carried out in the area in the interim period.

- 1.6 This report seeks approval for a programme of review of the existing conservation area character appraisals and explains the rationale behind the proposed programme.

2. Main report

Review process

- 2.1 An officers' working group has been established to guide the form and content of the new character appraisals. The working group has gathered comments and suggestions from their respective work areas to inform the new proposed format, and considered alternative formats and good practice examples from elsewhere. This group will also act as a mechanism for internal user feedback as new appraisals are drafted and published.
- 2.2 Given the relatively large number of variables to consider, a ranking system was devised to assist decision-making and allow prioritisation of conservation areas on the basis of their relative need for an updated appraisal. Each area was scored under four criteria:
- the age of the current appraisal;
 - development and housing pressures;
 - requests for change;
 - other initiatives in the area.

Scores were then combined to derive an overall ranking in order of priority. The resulting table is attached at Appendix 1.

- 2.3 'Other initiatives' refers to projects identified through the Development Plan or other Council programmes where a relevant and up-to-date character appraisal would be beneficial in guiding design, directing resources or securing external funding.
- 2.4 The rankings should be seen as tools to aid judgement, flexible enough to allow for new information or areas of interest expressed by different communities to be taken into account. All requests will be considered on their merits, but not all character appraisals need to be reviewed.

- 2.5 The initial ranking produced Grange, Leith, New Town, Inverleith, Morningside, Old Town, Portobello, Marchmont, Meadows & Bruntsfield, and Merchiston & Greenhill Conservation Areas as the top priorities.
- 2.6 The New Town and Old Town are covered by the World Heritage Site Management Plan, Leith has a recent Conservation Area Management Plan, and Marchmont, Meadows & Bruntsfield Conservation Area has been the subject of relatively recent boundary review. These four conservation areas are not, therefore, considered as high priorities for updated character appraisals at present.
- 2.7 Queensferry is currently the focus of attention relating to the World Heritage Site nomination for the Forth Bridge which is being submitted to UNESCO early in 2014. An up-to-date character appraisal will be invaluable in terms of this process and its ranking has been increased to reflect this.
- 2.8 The resulting top six areas are, therefore: Inverleith, Grange, Morningside, Portobello, Merchiston & Greenhill and Queensferry.

Format of revised character appraisals

- 2.9 A key aim of the review is to develop a new format for character appraisals which is as concise and user-friendly as possible. Options for a more visual, interactive format are being investigated, with the content more tightly focused on the analysis of character and townscape, and targeted at guiding decisions more clearly.
- 2.10 Much of the information regarding the history, development and essential character of each conservation area is already in place in the current appraisals and is unlikely to change significantly. New research and content will therefore need to focus on the impact of recent development and areas of information which have been omitted or require updating.
- 2.11 Public engagement on proposals for conservation areas is a statutory requirement and essential to ensure that local interest and knowledge has been captured. Community groups and stakeholders will be involved through the development of the review and the new appraisal format. More detailed community engagement will then take place to inform the content of each revised character appraisal.

Proposed programme

- 2.12 It is estimated that the review process for each conservation area would take approximately six months, allowing for research, drafting, reviewing, public engagement processes and committee timetables. Two reviews could overlap, meaning that three areas could be reviewed in any one calendar year. The top six areas identified at 2.8 would therefore form the programme for the next two years, ie:
- Grange
 - Queensferry

- Inverleith
- Portobello
- Morningside
- Merchiston & Greenhill

Next steps

2.13 The general process for each review will be:

- review existing conservation area character appraisals and examples from other local authorities;
- prepare a draft appraisal in the new format, involving local community groups – initially for Grange Conservation Area;
- arrange a programme of community engagement to seek feedback on both the form and content of the draft appraisal; and
- report results back to Planning Committee with recommended actions (eg. if boundary changes or additional controls are required).

2.14 Progress will be monitored as this initial two year programme continues. Priorities will then be determined and an updated programme produced for the next batch of character appraisals.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposed review programme for conservation area character appraisals.

Mark Turley

Director of Services for Communities

Links

Coalition pledges	<p>P17 Continue efforts to develop the city's gap sites and encourage regeneration.</p> <p>P31 Maintain our City's reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure.</p> <p>P40 Work with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and other stakeholders to conserve the city's built heritage.</p>
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Council outcomes	<p>CO19 Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.</p> <p>CO23 Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community.</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4 Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.
Appendices	Appendix 1: Ranking table for Conservation Area Character Appraisal review priorities

APPENDIX 1:
REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

Name of Conservation Area	First Designated	CACA Approved	Priority Order	Development Pressure? No. of Applications	Priority Order	Housing Pressure. Sites Highlighted for development in the LDP	Priority Order	Requests For Changes?	Priority Order	Other Initiatives in Area?	Priority Order	Total	Final Priority Order
BALERNO	1975	30th Jan 2001	4	8	28	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	53	21
BARNTON AVENUE	1997	29th Nov 2001	4	9	27	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	52	20
BLACKET	1972	4th Oct 2001	4	29	15	N/A	8	Causewayside	5		4	36	9
COLINTON	1977	22nd July 1999	2	40	12	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	35	8
COLTBRIDGE AND WESTER COATES	1987	3rd Nov 2005	8	29	15	N/A	8	Kingsburgh Rd	6	Haymarket Urban Design Framework	2	39	12
COSTORPHINE	1977	4th Oct 2001	4	17	21	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	46	16
CRAIGLOCKHART HILLS	1997	27th Mar 2001	4	34	13	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	38	11
CRAIGMILLAR PARK	1997	27th Nov 2003	6	27	16	N/A	8	Blackford Hill	6		4	41	13
CRAMOND	1977	4th Oct 2001	4	30	14	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	39	12
CURRIE	1972	26th Sep 2000	3	16	22	N/A	8	N/A	9		4	46	16
DALMENY	1977	21st Nov 2000	3	2	30	HSG 2	4	N/A	9		4	50	19
DEAN	1975	5th Feb 2004	7	11	25	N/A	8	Belgrave Mews	8		4	52	20
DUDDINGSTON	1975	13th June 2002	5	11	25	HSG 14	2		9		4	45	15
EDINBURGH EIGHT COLONIES	2013	15th Mar 2013	11	N/A	32	N/A	8		9		4	64	25
GILMERTON	1977	24th July 2000	3	5	29	HSG 24	3		9		4	48	17
GRANGE	1983	In Sep 1998	1	81	9	N/A	8	Causewayside Blackford Hill (10 Eva Pl)	3		4	25	1
HERMISTON	1997	26th Sep 2000	3	1	31	N/A	8		9		4	55	22
INVERLEITH	1997	10th Aug 2006	9	103	5	HSG 9	7	Comely Bank WCA + various: 4 Granton Rd	2		4	27	3
JUNIPER GREEN	1993	9th Aug 2001	4	30	14	HSG 29	5		9		4	36	9
KIRKLISTON	1977	26th Sep 2000	3	10	26	HSG 3	6		9		4	48	17
LEITH	1975/77	18th Apr 2002	5	107	4	N/A	8	Prospect Bank	4		4	25	1
MARCHMONT & MEADOWS	1987	18th May 2006	9	123	3	N/A	8		9		4	33	6
MERCHISTON & GREENHILL	1986	3rd Apr 2003	6	98	6	N/A	8		9		4	33	6
MORNINGSIDE	1996	4th Oct 2001	4	60	10	N/A	8	Morningside central area/shops	1		4	27	3
MORTON MAINS	1993	27th Mar 2001	4	N/A	32	N/A	8		9		4	57	24
NEW TOWN	1977	16th June 2005	8	792	1	HSG 12	7	Belgrave Mews	8	Haymarket Urban Design Framework	2	26	2
NEWHAVEN	1977	11th May 2000	3	18	20	N/A	8		9		4	44	14
OLD TOWN	1977	In Feb 2005	8	239	2	N/A	8		9	Southern Arc, Royal Mile Project	3	30	4
PLEWLANDS	2010	12th Feb 2010	10	23	18	N/A	8		9		4	49	18
PORTOBELLO	1977	11th May 2000	3	84	7	N/A	8		9		4	31	5
QUEENSFERRY	1977	30th Jan 2001	4	19	19	HSG 2	4		9	WHS Nomination/ funding Bids	1	37	10
RATHO	1971	21st Nov 2000	3	5	29	N/A	8		9		4	53	21
SHANDON	1996	18th Apr 2002	5	10	26	N/A	8		9		4	52	20
SOUTH SIDE	1976	8th Aug 2002	5	83	8	N/A	8		9		4	34	7
SWANSTON	1975	5th June 2001	4	1	31	N/A	8		9		4	56	23
THISTLE FOUNDATION	2007	15th June 2006	6	1	31	HSG 16	1		9		4	49	18
TRINITY	1975	4th Oct 2001	4	24	17	N/A	8	Clark Rd Path	5		4	38	11
VICTORIA PARK	1998	16th Mar 1998	1	13	23	N/A	8		9		4	45	15
WAVERLEY PARK	1977	28th Nov 2002	5	12	24	N/A	8		9		4	50	19
WEST END	1980	9th Mar 2006	6	52	11	N/A	8		9		4	38	11
WEST MURRAYFIELD	1986	5th Feb 2004	4	12	24	N/A	8	Kingsburgh Rd	6		4	46	16