2.2 DISTINCTIVE PLACES

2.2.1 DENSITY

Make sure proposed density is:

- **sensitive to the immediate and wider context.**
- **the result of a high-quality design and layout, rather than acting as a determinant**
- **an appropriate response to the accessibility of public transport and the provision of local facilities.**

City Plan 2030 policies

Env 26 - Housing Density

NPF4 Policies

Policy 14 – Design, quality & place

Policy 15 – Local Living & 20 minute neighbourhoods

High density development helps Edinburgh be a compact and vibrant city. It allows land to be used more efficiently, helps maintain the vitality and viability of local services and encourages the effective provision of public transport. An increase in density may be appropriate where this enhances the area's character and leads to better placemaking. Density can also make the provision of district heat networks more viable - helping to achieve targets to de-carbonise heat.

Responding to context

The appropriate density for a particular site will depend on both the immediate and wider context. The density of an area is part of an area's character. This is particularly important in areas of heritage significance, such as the World Heritage Site, Conservation Areas, and Victorian and Edwardian villa areas. In these areas density should respect the scale, form and grain of the historic context by making sure the form of any new building and its positioning reflect the spatial characteristics, building forms and heights within the area.

Density through high-quality design: Rowanbank Gardens *- A high level of housing density has been achieved without compromising the quality of the amenity space.*

Density from high-quality design

A desire to achieve a high density is not a justification for poor quality design. If the density of a scheme means it is unable to meet the other design guidelines set out in this document, it will be taken as an indication that the proposed density is too high and that the quantity of development on the site should be reduced or the design re-configured.

Density & accessibility

Consideration should be given to the impact that density will have on surrounding services and the transport network. Successful high density requires good access to a full range of neighbourhood facilities. Sufficient facilities should exist or be proposed in the area. The appropriate density should respond to the accessibility of public transport and active travel.

Increased density

Increased density can enhance an area's character, particularly in low density developments that create featureless townscapes lacking in visual interest or focus points.

For example, higher density low-rise building types, such as small flat blocks, mews, colony, or terraced housing of a high-quality design could be inserted in low-density, low-rise areas without adverse impact on neighbourhood character.

How to calculate and report density and areas

To ensure a consistent approach across the city, built density and areas will be measured as set out below. These simple calculations allow comparisons to be drawn with other developments within the city.

- **Development Site Area (ha/m2)**: the total land area within the site boundary, measured on a horizontal plane.
- **Development Site + Roads Area (ha/m2):** the development site area measured to the middle of roads or other routes bounding the site.
- **Development Floor Area (m2):** the total floor area of the buildings being constructed on the site. This includes all the floors of all buildings, including ancillary buildings or structures. This can be measured as Gross External Area or Gross Internal Area, but whichever is used must be clearly stated.
- **Plot Ratio** – Also known as Floor area ratio, the ratio of total Development Floor Area to Development Site Area.
- **Site Coverage** – the extent of the site that construction is taking place on. This is calculated by the ratio of the Gross External Area of the Ground Floor of all buildings to the Development Site Area. This should be expressed as a percentage.
- **Net Internal Area (m²):** the internal area of all floors of a building measured to the interior surface of external walls including internal walls and partitions but excluding communal features such as stairs.

Residential Density Measures

- **Dwellings per ha/m²**: the number of dwellings per ha/m2 of the Development Site + Roads Area.
- **Habitable rooms per ha/m²**: the number of habitable rooms per ha/m2 on the Development Site + Roads Area.

Examples of these density measures applied to existing Edinburgh neighbourhoods are in *"Appendix 5 - Example Densities" on page 141.*

High-density responding to historic context *- The density of Shrubhill responds well to the heritage and character of the area.*

Density with a mix of housing types - *Cammo includes a mix of flats, colony houses, townhouses, terraced and detached houses.*

Density enhancing an area's character *- Canonmill Gardens provides a large number of homes next to the Water of Leith.*

High-density supporting a mix of uses *- the density of the development at Quartermile supports a range of ground floor uses.*

2.2.2 POSITION OF BUILDINGS ON SITE

Position buildings to:

- **create streets and spaces that are interesting and attractive for walking, cycling, and wheeling**
- **line up with the building lines of neighbouring buildings**
- **reflect surrounding townscape character where this is positive**
- **take account of site orientation, exposure, topography and environmental constraints.**

When locating buildings adjacent or close to a historic building or landscape, make sure their position protects:

- **the historic setting, including key views to and from the building.**
- **the landscape's essential characteristics.**

For infill development, position buildings to respect surrounding spatial character and neighbouring amenity.

Where building lines do not exist, position development to engage positively with streets and spaces.

City Plan 2030 Policies

Env 3 - Development Design – Incorporating and Enhancing Existing and Potential Features

Env 4 – Development Design – Impact of Setting

Env 7 – Sustainable Developments

NPF4 Policies

Policy 14 – Design, quality & place

Contribute to a network of well-defined, attractive streets and spaces

Site layouts must be designed to be safe and attractive for all users and particularly pedestrians, cyclists, and people with disabilities.

It is particularly important to make sure streets and spaces are defined by the position of buildings rather than the route of the carriageway or vehicle parking. This is a key positive characteristic of Edinburgh's historic network of streets and spaces that development is required to replicate.

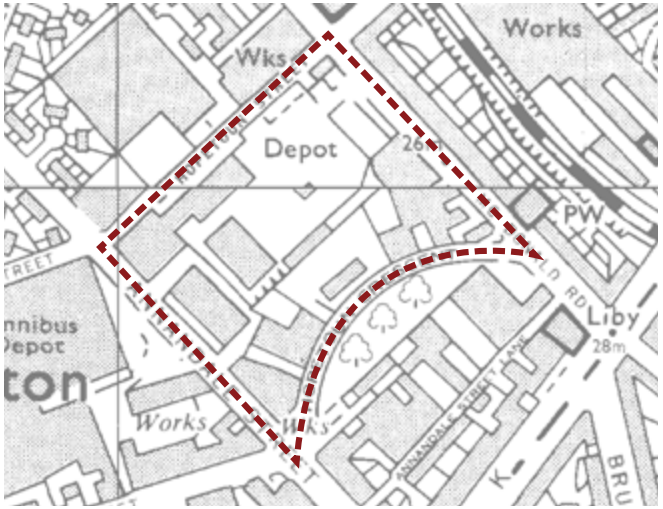
Take cues from the setting and surrounding townscape character

Design and layout should take cues from the historic settlement pattern, urban grain, plot boundaries, pedestrian routes and enclosures, where these exist.

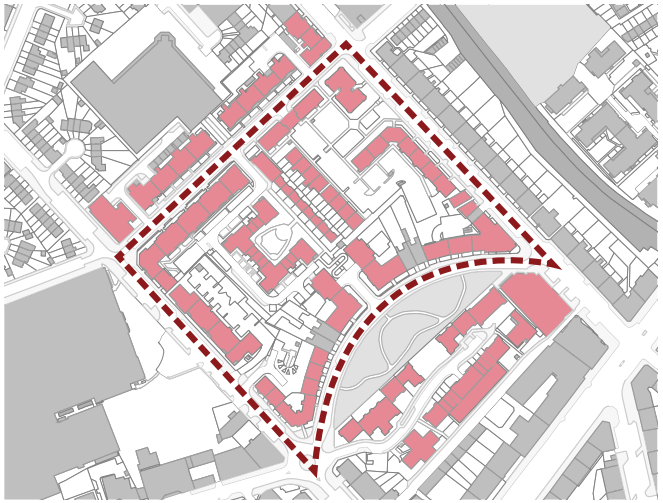
In historic settings and areas with established building lines such as tenement streets, mews streets and villa areas, development should respect and reinforce the predominant building line.

In areas where buildings do not line up (for example the Old Town), plans of the wider context are extremely useful in helping to determine how well the proposed position of buildings on site is likely to make a positive contribution to surrounding spatial character and urban grain.

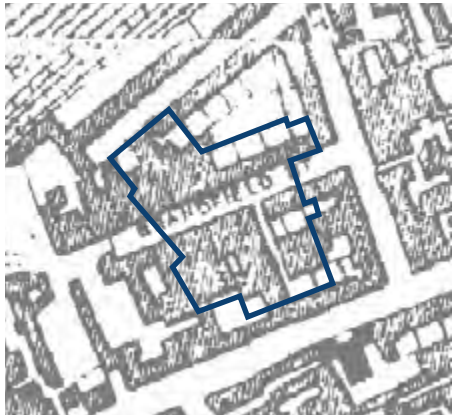
Rebuilding the urban fabric: Hopetoun Village *- New development (shown in pink) has enhanced the urban fabric of this formerly industrial area, taking cues from the tenements, terraces and perimeter block form of the surrounding area and creating a range of new places and spaces.*



1995 OS map showing the historic block structure to serve industrial uses



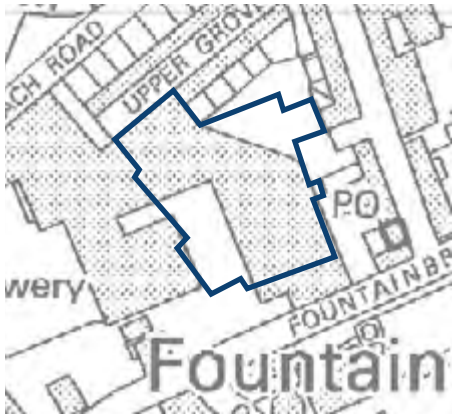
2024 OS map of residential development



Development site boundary

c1900

Map of Fountainbridge showing historic urban grain.



1997

OS map showing loss of historic block structure to industrial uses.

2024

aerial view of residential development informed by historic street pattern.

***Use of historic analysis to inform street layout and block structure** - The design and layout of these new flats were informed by analysis of historic maps, reinstating positive characteristics of the surrounding area.*

Sensitivity to historic context

Where inserting buildings into a historic setting:

- Make sure the principal elevations of a listed building remain visible from main viewpoints.
- Avoid disrupting the relationship of a listed building to surrounding streets.
- Make iterative use of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to insert buildings into a historic landscapes or townscape, prioritising protection of the historic setting.
- Demonstrate an understanding of sensitive views and characteristics.

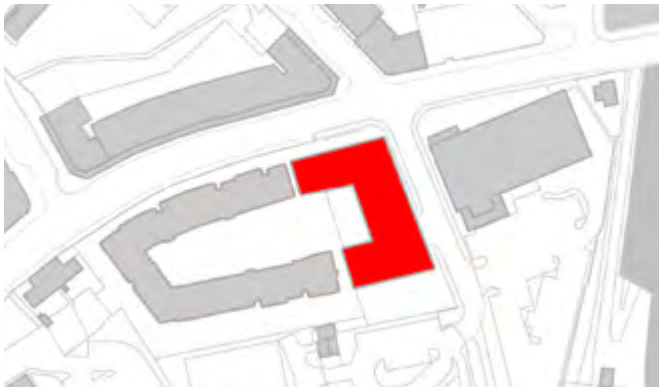
Sensitive infill development

Back-land development may be acceptable where it would not disrupt the spatial character of the area and the amenity of neighbours and future residents.

Proposals will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will consider the cumulative impact of proposals in an area (including impact on surface water drainage, biodiversity, and trees).

***Sensitively constructed in a mews context: Portobello Mews** - The height and pitched roof of this development matches the other buildings in the mews*

***Infill development in a villa area -** The proposed building (shown in red) is roughly the same size in plan as its neighbours and is positioned so that its frontage is the same distance from the road as its immediate neighbours.*



***Infill development in a tenement area -** The proposed building (shown in red) completes a block of development. This will allow active frontages to be placed onto streets and allow private space for the development in the courtyard that is formed between the buildings.*

2.2.3 HEIGHT AND FORM

Match the general height and form of buildings prevailing in the surrounding area.

Where development exceeds the height of neighbouring buildings make sure it enhances the city skyline, roofscape and surrounding townscape.

Tall buildings must be justified and of outstanding quality that enhances rather than detracts from the city skyline and townscape.

City Plan 2030 Policies

Env 4 - Development Design – Impact on Setting

Env 30 – Building Heights

NPF4 Policies

Policy 14 – Design, quality & place

Much of the city's urban area is defined by a traditional townscape character that creates a high quality, sustainable and vibrant urban environment. The Council wants development to integrate well with existing buildings and spaces. The objective is to preserve and enhance the existing townscape character while pursuing the highest architectural and urban design quality.

Architectural form and building heights must be appropriate to location. This means new buildings should be match the building height of neighbouring buildings. This helps to protect the visual character of areas where there are uniform building heights. It also helps to protect key views.

The height of the part of the building where the external wall meets the roof (the eaves) is at least as important to the perception of height as the height of the top of the roof (the ridge). This means that new buildings should sit within the form set by the eaves and ridge of neighbouring buildings. This is particularly important for development in historic settings, where built form should remain within the range of heights of historic neighbouring properties. It is also important in areas where there are established building heights, for example tenement streets, mews streets and villa areas.

Integrating into the historic context *- The height and massing of recent development on Advocates Close help to integrate the building into this important view of the Old Town © Getty Images*

Matching the height of existing mew: Circus Lane *- This newly built house matches the eaves and ridge heights of the adjacent historic mews buildings.*

Matching the height of the context: Fountainbridge *- The height of the modern building is very similar to its historic neighbour. This helps it integrate with its surroundings.*

Taking cues from neighbouring heights - *The height and roof pitch of this new building is designed to match the height and roof pitch of the adjacent building.*

Matching heights in tenement streets - *It is important that new buildings on tenement streets have similar heights to their neighbours. This modern building is designed so that the height of its main walls matches the eaves heights of the adjacent tenement.*

Built form that rises above the prevailing height is only acceptable in exceptional circumstances. It must be of exceptional design quality and contribute to the visual interest of the city's streets and skyline. A slight increase in height may be appropriate in response to a specific context, such as to mark a key focal point in the townscape like a prominent corner or gateway. Or it might be appropriate in response to a specific use, such as a prominent civic or cultural use. Any proposal that will affect any of the key views outlined in *"1.1.3 Visual Impact, Protected Views & City Skyline" on page 9*. will be assessed to ensure that it is not having an adverse impact.

Existing high and intrusive buildings will not be accepted as precedents for the future. If they are being replaced, the redevelopment should include more sensitively scaled buildings.

The impacts of height in relation to aviation safety should be considered.

Roofscape

Edinburgh's topography is a key aspect of the character of the city. This is reflected in the roofscape of buildings, which is often viewed from above. In the design and layout of development the articulation of roofscape needs to be carefully considered. In historic settings, roof forms and materials should reflect the tradition of the locality.

Where there is a prominent difference in ground level between neighbouring buildings that is clearly visible in the surrounding roofscape, it will not be appropriate to match the height of the lower building with the higher neighbouring building.

Plant infrastructure, particularly at rooftop level, should be sensitively integrated into roof design and profile. Where rooftop plant is provided, edge protection railings should be avoided.

Integrating into a key view - *The set back of the upper floors and materials help integrate the new buildings in Caltongate into the view from Calton Hill. The green roofs reflect the nearby Canongate Kirkyard*

Roofscape that responds to context *- The roof of this hotel on Market Street has been designed to reflect the form of the roofscape behind it.*

Tall Buildings

Edinburgh's skyline is composed of tall, slender, elegant objects which, when viewed against the topography, give the city its unique character and identity. Any proposed tall structure will have to be of exceptional quality and emulate these attributes in terms of slenderness, proportions and elegance.

A tall building must be clearly justified in relation to its context and may be acceptable provided:

- The proposed scale, height and massing do not adversely affect a protected or key view, or the setting of an historic asset.
- The design is of exceptionally high architectural and urban design quality, informed by contextual and microclimate analysis.
- The proposal contributes to the visual interest of the city skyline and the immediate townscape.

The Council expects the silhouette of a tall building to take its cue from the exceptional quality of the Edinburgh skyline in terms of verticality, elegance, slenderness and proportion. The silhouette of the top of the building (uppermost storeys, roof and plant) will be particularly important in assessing its impact on the skyline. This "crown" should be articulated through massing or materials.

Where a tall building is justified by relationship to a cluster, it should be demonstrated that existing, consented and proposed development will not merge visually to undermine the city skyline and its backdrop to the Firth. Tall buildings in clusters should vary in height to avoid appearing as a continuous wall of development in distant views.

The building's base should interact with and make a positive contribution to the immediate setting, typically providing a mix of uses that contribute to the safety, diversity and vitality of the neighbourhood. The base should present active frontages and generous footways to all parts of the public realm focussed on creating a safe, attractive pedestrian environment and an appropriate sense of street enclosure. See *"2.3.1 Creating Safe Places" on page 94* The elevational treatment of the base should integrate well with the existing streetscape.

The site layout should provide high quality, usable public open space that benefits from views, shelter and direct sunlight at appropriate times of day. Open space must also relate well to ground floor uses.

Applicants must demonstrate how design and layout respond to and mitigate adverse climatic effects, such as wind and overshadowing, on existing and proposed buildings, streets and open space. Guidance on the visual assessment required is provided in *"1.1.3 Visual Impact, Skyline & Protected Views" on page 9*. Tall buildings should also be designed to limit risk to birds by avoiding large glazed areas that could confuse birds or by specifying bird-safe glass.

Taller buildings that have public or shared access to the roof, balconies or ledges can present a greater risk of suicide by providing easy access for jumping from a height and should follow the guidance on designing for suicide prevention in*"2.3.1 Creating Safe Places" on page 94*.

A landmark for the wrong reasons: Walker Street *- The office tower has a negative impact on views from surrounding streets due to its inharmonious height and form.*

Impact on distant city views. Development should not detract from Edinburgh's skyline and backdrop to the Firth - *Avoid tall, large, square/ rectangular buildings with flat horizontal rooflines as these are very conspicuous. Instead building height and mass should respect the city's townscape. Roof articulation helps to break up built mass and is encouraged. Building materials and colours also need to be chosen with care. White colours and reflective materials are very noticeable in distant views whereas muted colours blend into the landscape much better.*

2.2.4 SCALE AND PROPORTIONS

Harmonise the scale of buildings including their size and form, windows and doors and other features by making them a similar size to those of their neighbours.

Where the scale of development is different to that of surrounding buildings, make sure there is compelling reasoning for this difference.

City Plan 2030 Policies

Env 4 - Development Design – Impact on Setting

Env 30 – Building Heights

NPF4 Policies

Policy 14 – Design, quality & place

Buildings that are designed to work together in harmony are key to creating positive character and a sense of place. Matching the scale and proportions of buildings to their neighbours is important to achieving this.

In parts of the city that have strong townscape character the Council expects development to be sensitively inserted into the townscape framework, respecting its scale. Façades should respond well to the rhythm, scale and proportion of neighbouring properties.

A typical example of a problematic difference in scale is where new tenements are located next to older tenements. Often the windows on the new building are smaller and a different shape and because the floor-to-floor heights are lower than the older buildings there will be an extra row of windows. This creates a visual mismatch that can erode the character of the area.

In sensitive settings, floor to floor heights of new buildings should match their neighbours.

Where elevations have large projections or recesses, three dimensional views may be sought so that the scale and proportions can be assessed.

Matching height, proportions and form, Hopetoun Crescent - *The housing either side of the historic townhouses above has been designed to match the scale originally intended for this street.*

Recessed top floor, Montrose Terrace *- The top floor of this student accommodation scheme has been set back. This means that the dominant height of the front façade matches the eaves height of the adjacent tenements.*

Modern development with a similar scale, Wester Coates Gardens - *This villa has large windows which help to integrate it with the scale of surrounding historic villas. The proportions of stonework help also.*

Windows too small? - *While the five storey tenement has the same eaves height it has much smaller windows than those of neighbouring tenements. The small scale creates an inharmonious relationship.*

2.2.5 MATERIALS AND DETAILING

Maximise use of materials that have low or negative embodied energy and are locally sourced, re-usable and/or recyclable.

Harmonise materials on new development with the materials used on surrounding buildings.

Use sandstone where sandstone is the commonly used building material.

Keep the number of materials on new development to a minimum.

Detail buildings to ensure they have a good visual appearance that lasts over time.

Where alternative materials are used, make sure these either harmonise or provide a striking contrast.

Protect and enhance biodiversity by incorporating habitat structures into the detailing of buildings.

City Plan 2030 Policies

Env 4 –	Development Design - Impact on Setting
Env 7 –	Sustainable Developments
Env 27 -	Public Realm, New Planting and Landscape Design
Env 37 -	Designing-in Positive effects for Biodiversity

NPF4 Policies

Policy 12 -	Zero waste
Policy 14 –	Design, quality & place
Policy 16 –	Quality homes

Materials are key to whether development achieves sufficient design quality, appropriate for its context.

Edinburgh's distinctive appearance and character is partly a result of the limited palette of high-quality traditional materials that are used in its buildings. Much of the city's built heritage is characterised by sandstone buildings and slate roofs.

Most conservation areas have a predominantly consistent design, or one which is layered and made up of diverse components, yet with an overall integrity. The consistent use of a limited range of materials for roof coverings, walls, ground surfaces, and for other elements and details can be vital to the integrity of an area. In these areas, the selection and detailing of materials and boundary treatments should respect and strengthen local traditions, reflecting naturally predominant materials. This includes using traditional means of enclosure such as a wall or hedge that is sympathetic to the local context and/or railings of an appropriate design.

New buildings should be designed with due regard to their site and surroundings using materials that will weather and age well and settle into their place in the townscape.

Some parts of the city use a wider range of materials in addition to sandstone and slate. In these areas there may be more scope to use alternative, high-quality materials than elsewhere.

Development at the urban edge should make use of materials, colours and textures that integrate well with adjacent settlements and contribute to the overall unity of the landscape setting. Materials that detract from the visual character of the greenbelt boundary will not be supported.

The long-term visual success of building materials is dependent on how they are detailed and how they weather. Some materials are more likely to suffer from adverse weathering such as staining. Where the Council thinks this might be the case, detailed drawings may be required to fully assess the proposals. The durability of materials can be assessed by observing how well they have performed in existing buildings.

Supporting information

The reasoning behind the selection of materials should be set out in a Design Statement. The choice of building materials may be a condition of planning permission. On larger or more prominent schemes, sample panels may need to be constructed for approval. This is to demonstrate how the proposed building materials fit together. This should include hard landscaping details.

Where a Sustainability Statement is required, this must demonstrate how materials and detailing address the climate emergency, including requirements set out in *"1.2.1 Whole-Life Energy Approach" on page 13.* In addition to minimising the embodied energy of building materials, sustainable development prioritises materials that are:

- Recycled and recyclable (e.g. stone; timber; slate);
- Renewable (e.g. timber from a sustainable source);
- Non-toxic and non-polluting in manufacture and disposal
- Easily repaired and maintained.

On-site recycling of materials, e.g. hardcore from demolition materials, is strongly encouraged to minimise construction waste.

The following pages set out in more detail the Council's technical expectations for building materials. *"1.4.5 Hard Landscape" on page 46*, sets out the Council's expectations for materials in hard landscaped areas.

Technical guidance

Stone

Edinburgh's distinctive sandstone forms the basis of the city's traditional character and inherent quality.

Much of Edinburgh's sandstone was hewn from local quarries that are now closed; most famously Craigleith but also at other quarries such as Hailes, Humbie, Ravelston, Binnie and Granton.

Red sandstone, historically from the West of Scotland, also contributes towards the city's character. It has been used effectively to help integrate modern buildings into historic areas where red sandstone is already used.

Scottish sandstone is still available from a few quarries, such as Clashach in Moray and Cullaloe in Fife, a good match for Craigleith stone. Pennine Sandstones – Crosland Hill can also provide suitable matches.

It is expected that natural sandstone will be used as the main external building material in development where sandstone is the dominant material on neighbouring buildings or in the surrounding area. This is particularly important on façades that can be seen from the street.

This principle applies in conservation areas but also to other areas of the city with stone buildings including prominent areas such as arterial routes.

Design and detailing of stone cladding should respond well to the character of surrounding built form, especially where this is of special interest or importance. Stone coursing and sizes, and depth of window reveals, should take cues from the pattern of nearby elevations.

Granite is considered acceptable where a contrast with surrounding buildings is appropriate (for example to emphasise important public buildings) and as a secondary element (for example on plinths where its robustness and good weathering characteristics helps maintain the appearance of buildings).

Modern use of stone in an historic context: Market St - *Hotel development on an important gap site next to the City Art Centre introduced a modern stone façade to this historic street*

Sandstone in a villa area: Newbattle Terrace *- Sandstone will be sought for new buildings in villa areas where the surrounding buildings are built of sandstone.*

Sculptural and contextual stone cladding *- At the Museum of Scotland rigorous and sculptural use of sandstone cladding provides the building with a striking contemporary aesthetic that responds positively to the surrounding historic context. Care needs to be taken with any proposal like this, that the detailing mitigates adverse weathering and staining.*

Informatics Forum: Charles Street *- Sandstone is built into vertically proportioned panels which are used to order the design of the elevations.*

Cast stone and Concrete

Cast stone and concrete are acceptable where their uniform appearance is appropriate and where measures have been taken to avoid adverse weathering such as the build-up of dirt, streaking and staining.

It is important that there is a strong underlying reason for using cast stone or concrete rather than stone such as, for example, a design approach that uses large or unusual shaped panels that would be difficult to construct in single blocks of stone.

Measures to avoid adverse weathering include:

- Architectural detailing that controls rainwater run-off from a facade in ways that enhance weathering characteristics, such as overhangs and drips
- The specification of the surface finish
- The application of surface sealants

Cast stone is manufactured with aggregate and a cementitious binder. Its appearance is intended to be similar to natural stone. Unlike naturally formed stone, which tends to be visually rich, it is usual for blocks of cast stone to have a uniform appearance. This can look dull in comparison with natural stone. This effect is emphasised over time when typically cast stone will weather in a more uniform way than similarly detailed natural stone.

Further information about pre-cast concrete cladding can be found at www.britishprecast.org

A mixture of cast stone & natural stone: Morrison St. - *Cast stone was used at high level on the drum shaped part of the building while natural stone was used at low level on the corners.*

Sculptural concrete - *In-situ concrete is used on the Museum of Scotland building to create a sculptural effect.*

Concrete used sculpturally to contrast with brick - *At Bangholm Outdoor Centre, precast concrete with the school badge creates an attractive contrast to the texture and colour of the brickwork, while marking the entrance of the centre.*

Textures created with concrete - *Concrete panels with a textured surface treatment are used on this recent building on Princes Street.*

Cladding

High quality metal cladding may be acceptable in some historic environments where there is already a range of building materials. It may also be acceptable where overt contrast is sought and considered appropriate. The surface finish of the cladding should be raw or treated metal which does not have a coating. The fixings of any cladding should be hidden.

Metal cladding can provide buildings with a striking contemporary appearance; however, if used inappropriately it can have a negative visual effect. Its appropriateness of depends on the quality of the finish and detailing as well as the character of the surrounding environment. For example, high quality metal cladding might be acceptable in some locations in the Old Town but is less likely to be acceptable amongst the Georgian frontages of the New Town.

Resin and cement-based panels can be used on less sensitive sites and where their use is limited or will have a minimal visual impact. Because of their poorer visual characteristics in comparison with metal claddings (such as anodised aluminium, stainless steel, and zinc), these cladding systems should be avoided in conservation areas including those with villas.

Where resin-based panels are used as cladding, synthetic prints which aim to emulate wood should be avoided. Their visual effect is not as positive as natural timber.

Using zinc to provide striking contrast: Infirmary St. *- The zinc cladding combined with the modern building form for Dovecot Studio provides a positive contemporary contrast to the historic former Infirmary Street Baths building.*

Aluminium: Simpson Loan *- Multi-toned anodised aluminium cladding provides a striking and positive contrast to the historic buildings making the distinction between new and old very clear.*

High quality detailing: metal cladding - *Carefully detailed metal cladding on the rear wall of new flats in the New Town creates a variety of textures and a rich relationship of solid to void.*

Timber

Timber should be appropriately specified and detailed to ensure that the species is sufficiently durable, from a sustainable source and retains a good visual appearance over time. Durable species include European Oak, Western Red Cedar and Sweet Chestnut. Durable timber should be used in all major developments and for local developments in sensitive sites, including conservation areas and arterial routes into the city.

Moderately durable timber species such as Larch, Douglas Fir and European redwood can be used on smaller proposals that are not in sensitive locations.

Tropical hard-woods should be avoided unless it can be clearly demonstrated that these are sourced sustainably. Information about sourcing sustainable timber for construction can be found at:

- *Sourcing Timber Sustainably*
- *Sustainable construction timber: sourcing and specifying local timber*

Specification and architectural details of proposed timber cladding, at a scale of 1:5 or 1:10, may be sought. These should set out the thickness of the timber (which should not be less than 19mm finished size) and the types of fixings, which should be specified to ensure no staining. The details should show how timber will be prevented from absorbing moisture, including how water will be shed clear of the end grain.

Careful detailing: Arboretum Place - *The timber cladding overhangs cladding on lower levels of the building. This helps shed water from its surface, and protects it from adverse weathering.*

Timber and stone: Meadow Lane - *Timber cladding to the upper floor of this mews development provides a positive contrast to the stone base that adds visual interest to the lane.*

Timber informed by historic context: Sugar House Close - *Timber cladding to the upper floors of this development off the Royal Mile takes a cue from the pattern of external finishes on adjacent historic buildings.*

Creative timber cladding *- This new timber-clad garden café at Saughton Park forms part of the conversion of the stable block into a popular community hub.*

Brick

Although not a prevalent building material, brick has been used in certain locations within Edinburgh to positive effect. Brick is commonly used in industrial structures such as maltings and as a secondary element, for example on side and rear elevations or chimney stacks. Many traditional Edinburgh examples used locally produced Portobello brick which was produced into the early 20th Century.

Brick generally has good weathering characteristics and can be specified so that its colour and texture harmonise with surrounding buildings.

In sites outside of conservation areas and where the design proposed is of a high quality, brick can be used positively. Where used in an existing context of stone buildings it is expected that the brick and mortar will be specified to harmonise with the range and tone of colours in the surrounding buildings. Note that generally, the expectation is for the use of natural stone where natural stone is the prevalent building material.

Brick can also be used to provide contrast. However, care needs to be taken with this approach to ensure that the architectural effect is not at the expense of the wider street character.

The proportions of windows play a major role in giving new brick buildings an Edinburgh character. Traditional tenements have large vertically proportioned windows with generous reveals. Using windows of the same size and alignment can help integrate brick buildings into their surroundings.

Care needs to be taken in both specification and construction of brick façades to avoid efflorescence. This is the build-up of salts present in the brick material appearing on the surface of the wall as the mortar cures.

Modern use of brick in an historic environment: McEwan Square, Fountainbridge - *Brick has been used to integrate this development into its historic surroundings. The development is overtly contemporary in its appearance. The colour of bricks was chosen to harmonise with the stone of the adjacent tenements. Combined with the vertical emphasis to the window and the building's scale, the material choice has helped ensure this development adds to Edinburgh's sense of place.*

Sculptural brick - *The massing and brick detailing of the design of these mews buildings in Portobello creates an interesting and varied sculptural form.*

Subtle variation: MODA, Fountainbridge - *Variation in brick colour has been used to modulate large building mass and add rhythm and variety to new streets and spaces.*

Modern use of brick in a historic setting - *This Fountainbridge hotel was built using a modular off-site construction system and clad in brick to present a contemporary aesthetic that references the area's industrial heritage.*

Render/Harl

There is a strong tradition of rendered buildings in parts of the city area which pre-date the building of the New Town, for example, the Old Town and the centre of Queensferry. This use has continued and, in locations like these, render can be used to provide contrast in contemporary buildings. Traditional lime renders and lime harling are encouraged, as appropriate.

When appropriately specified and in appropriate locations, render can be used as an external building material which can contribute towards the city's sense of place. Render also has a contemporary appearance that is appropriate in areas where the overall character is modern.

Where render would make a building stand out in long range views, this should generally be avoided.

In some areas, because of levels of vehicular traffic and microclimate, pronounced weathering is evident. This can detract from the appearance of rendered buildings as is evident, for example, on the Cowgate where the canyon-like form of the street traps pollution that stains the surface of external walls. Render tends to highlight these effects rather than suppress them. Contextually appropriate alternative materials, with better weathering characteristics, will be more appropriate in areas or streets where staining might occur.

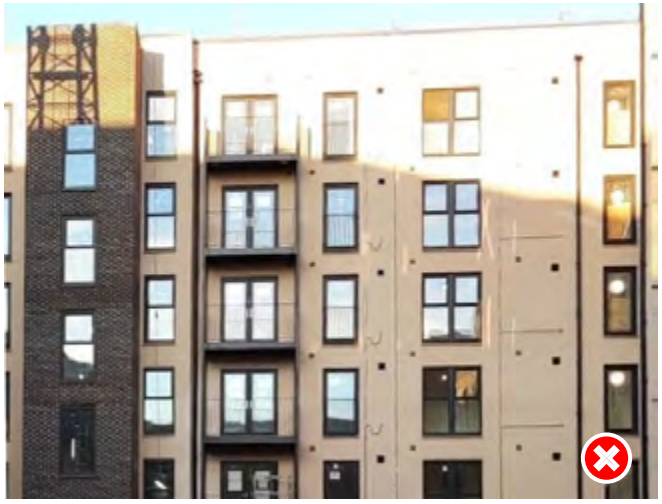
When specifying render, it is important to:

- Ensure it will not discolour or fade over time and it does not suffer from algae growth or lime bloom.
- Consider the location of expansion and movement joints, slim vents, service runs, boiler flues, extract ducts and rainwater goods etc. to ensure these do not have an adverse visual impact; and
- Use architectural detailing to shed water from the surface of the render. Note that applicants may be required to submit details of how this will be achieved.

Integrating the new with the old: Scottish Storytelling Centre, High Street - *The controlled use of render, combined with sandstone, create a positive modern addition to the Old Town.*

Positive contrast: Old Fishmarket Close, off High St - *The use of render and timber contrast positively with surrounding stone buildings.*

Impacting adversely on views - Calton Hill - *The rendered buildings stand out against the surrounding stone and slate buildings. Alternative materials may have allowed the buildings to integrate better into the view.*



Render dominated by servicing *- The dominance of service runs, flues, vents, and rainwater goods detract from the overall appearance of this rendered wall.*

Hard roofing materials

Edinburgh has a strong tradition of using slate (such as Ballachulish) as a roofing material. The slate palette of darker greys helps to draw out the warmth of sandstone. Pantiles and metals such as lead, stainless steel, zinc, and copper also contribute to the city's roofscape. All these materials are generally considered appropriate.

The vulnerability of metal roofing to theft should be considered at an early stage in the design process.

Synthetic versions of traditional roofing materials should be avoided in conservation areas. Synthetic materials typically fail to replicate the characteristics of materials they seek to emulate, resulting in a poor appearance.

In other parts of the city the use of synthetic materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Their appropriateness will be assessed against:

- The extent of use
- The prominence of the material on the building
- The prominence of the building in the context of both the immediate setting and the setting of the city

Traditional roofing materials - *Slate, Lead and zinc are traditional roofing materials used in Edinburgh © Getty Images*

Gull and Pigeon Deterrents

The design and detailing of all roofs should deter roosting and nesting gulls and pigeons. Example of roof designs which are unattractive for nesting are:

Roofs which have a smooth surface and a pitch of more than 25%; and

Intensive green roofs that serve as accessible roof gardens, where human activity will deter nesting.

Where a flat roof, or features on other types of roofs, could support roosting and nesting, appropriate deterrent measures should be included in the design. Measures must be carefully designed and maintained to avoid negative impact on non-target bird species and to avoid welfare issues such as trapping, injury, or death of birds. Gulls and Pigeons are protected by law (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981). Measures that would have an adverse impact on the special character of the building or its context will not be supported.

Measures to offset risk of collision between aircraft and hazard bird species (including Gulls and Pigeons) in the vicinity of the airport are addressed in *"1.4.3 Green Roofs" on page 39.*

Metal roofing in a historic context: Canongate *- Stainless Steel roofing has been used on the Scottish Parliament.*

Enhance Biodiversity

New building standards have reduced opportunities for building-reliant species such as birds and bats. Habitat features should be designed and built in to create spaces for wildlife within new and existing buildings. Examples include integrated Bat, Swift and other Bird boxes – these can be bespoke or utilise ready-made options. Consideration should also be given to artificial lighting, designing wildlife-friendly lighting schemes to prevent disturbance. These measures will further support biodiversity. *See Chapter "1.4.1 Biodiversity" on page 30*

Installation of roofing membranes must consider likelihood of bats within the structure. Where bats are known to roost, bituminous roofing felt must be used to reduce the risk of entanglement. Non-bitumen-coated roofing membranes should not be installed where bats may be present.

Further information can be found in *'Design for Biodiversity: A Technical Guide for New and Existing Buildings' (2019)*

Windows

For guidance on windows in listed buildings and conservation areas refer to the Council's *Guidance on Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas*.

Use of uPVC window frames on major planning applications will not be supported. Timber windows, aluminium/timber composites, and thermally broken aluminium windows may provide suitable alternatives.

Opaque panels in glazing systems or windows should be avoided.

Frameless glazing: Festival Theatre, Nicolson Street *- The refined detailing of the frameless glazing helps create a striking modern addition to the street.*

Glazing to provide contrast *- Glazing is used in Quartermile to create a clear contrast between the new buildings and the retained historic buildings.*

Frameless glazing: Chapel of Saint Albert the Great, George Square Lane - *Glazing is used to create the effect of a floating roof on this distinctive Catholic Church.*

Curtain Walling: Buccleuch Place - *The potential offered by glazing systems with variations in the window widths, patterning of the glass and mullion depths is fully taken advantage of here.*

2.2.6 INCORPORATE ART IN PUBLIC PLACES

Match the quality of existing public art in the design and delivery of new work.

Make sure the position and scale of public art, and the materials used, make a positive contribution to the setting.

Consult the Council's planning team for advice at the outset of the design/delivery process.

City Plan 2030 Policies

Env 27 - Public Realm, New Planting and Landscape Design

NPF4 Policies

Policy 31 – Culture and creativity

Public art involves the placing of art and craft works in areas which are in public use within the environment. It can include building and landscaping related works of art, fixed or free-standing, permanent or temporary. It aims to integrate artists' skills and creativity into the environment.

Public art can enrich the appearance of an area, make a positive contribution to its cultural and community identity and act as a catalyst for wider improvement. It can also encourage sustainable cultural and economic activity through the employment of artists and reach a public who may never have any other first-hand contact with the arts.

The Council is drafting a Public Art Strategy that is due to be considered by the Culture and Communities Committee in spring 2025.

Consents for public art

Public art works that have fixed foundations or are fixed to buildings will require planning permission and/or listed building consent. The location, scale and in some cases the materials of proposed new art works are principal material considerations in the assessment of a planning application. Other essential considerations are:

- An appreciation of existing public art work.
- The established architectural character and artwork tradition of the area.

Proposals may also be considered in terms of road safety. A permit under Section 56 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 may be required for construction of art works on any public road, footway or footpath. A road safety audit may also be required.

The content of public art

The content of art works is not subject to Planning control. The issue of content is due to be addressed in the Council's forthcoming Public Art Strategy.

Projects should be site specific and carefully integrated with existing built form and the context of the surrounding environment. They should illustrate a comprehensive understanding of site considerations and the physical, social, historical, topographical, and architectural context.

In the World Heritage Sites public art should celebrate events or persons of generally accepted national importance. A period of five years should have elapsed from the death of anyone proposed for commemoration by a statue.

Community Approval

Engagement with and participation of the local community is encouraged at all stages of a public art project. Projects will be more appropriate, and more valued, if they have some social relevance or significance to the local community.

Edinburgh's strong tradition of public art

Edinburgh has a long history of using monuments and civic statuary to mark important events and special people. They tell us about the history of the city - like a museum collection, but on display in the parks and streets.

Community-led art enhancing place, Coalie Park *- This brick wall next the Water of Leith was painted by volunteers to a design created by Kate George through a series of community workshops.*

Public art works can be divided into one or more of four categories:

- **Symbolic:** Normally representing civic, national, or military events or prominent individuals in the form of bronze or stone statuary groups, and commemorative monuments and memorials.

Symbolic Art: *Mortonhall baby ashes memorial, Princes Street Gardens*

Symbolic Art: *Memorial to Wojtek the soldier bear, Princes Street Gardens*

- **Functional:** Elements in the urban environment serving a functional requirement which have functional artistic qualities by their design, materials, and craftsmanship.

Functional Art: *Statue of Greyfriars Bobby drinking fountain for people and dogs*

- **Informative:** Works providing a public reference to specific sites, to provide informative interpretation of its relevance or importance. Decorative wall plaques or façades mounted sculptures are the normal form for these.

Informative Art: *Plaque at the entrance to Advocate's Close*

- **Aesthetic:** Non-functional elements which are intended directly to enhance the urban aesthetic environment.

Aesthetic Art: *Literary panel at middle Meadow Walk*

Technical Guidance

Public Safety

Proposals should consider their potential to increase or detract from people's perception of safety in public space by, for example, improving lighting levels or generating footfall at different times of day or, conversely, attracting anti-social behaviour *"2.3.1 Creating Safe Places" on page 94*.

Location and ownership

The approval of the owners of the land on which the art work is proposed will be required. On most street locations the owner will be the Council. The Council will assist in identifying suitable location for proposed public art. In considering granting approval, as owners of the land, this guidance will be used to assess proposals.

The Council will normally agree to accept the work into public ownership if a future maintenance provision is agreed. Maintenance costs should be calculated at about 15% of overall costs and endowments for maintenance are accepted. Design and materials used should demonstrate minimum maintenance requirements, and resistance to theft and vandalism.

World Heritage Site Locations

There is a particular demand for new public art in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site. The aims in World Heritage Site locations are that public art should result in landmark structures of the highest quality and make a positive contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site.

Quality

Projects should involve the highest aesthetic standards, structural and surface durability, innovation and originality within the traditions of the area. Design and materials should be of the highest quality and give permanence to the artwork with little or no maintenance required.

Opportunities for public art in development

Development, either architectural or landscape, can provide opportunities for inclusion of contemporary public art works. Art works should be seen as an integral part of the project, with experienced artists involved from the outset in conception and design.

Temporary Installations

Temporary moveable installations have no fixed foundations (although they may be tied down as a safety measure) and are displayed for a limited period not exceeding 6 months.

Temporary installations will not normally require Planning Permission. They should be designed to be appropriately durable for the period of their display, equal to the quality of permanent art works and present no road safety risk.

Interventions on existing public art works are not encouraged. Where considered appropriate, they will be limited in time scale and should not result in any possibility of damage to the existing art work.

Public art as part of a new development *- 'Going to the Beach' by Vincent Butler is public artwork located in Saltire Square, near Granton Beach. The bronze shows a family in 1950s dress.*

Artwork referring to a building's history *- The cast concrete artwork 'Catalogue Wall' by Mark Doyle is located on the wall of Edinburgh Printmakers. It references the history of this former rubber factory and the products it manufactured.*

Public art at Edinburgh Park *- The Orangery Urns by Andrew Burton were initially part of a temporary exhibition at Gibside, before being located on Edinburgh Park.*