

Planning Committee

10am Thursday 19 May 2016

Portobello Conservation Area - Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Item number 10.2

Report number

Executive/routine

Wards

Portobello/Craigmillar

Executive Summary

This report seeks approval of the revised Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in draft, for consultation. This has been developed in the new style of appraisal. The content has been updated to reflect changing issues in the area, the community's views and concerns and is presented in a more user-friendly format.

A small boundary extension at the north-west corner of the conservation area is proposed for consideration.

Portobello Conservation Area - Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisal

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the attached revised Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in draft, for consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1 Conservation area character appraisals are intended to help manage change. They provide an agreed basis of understanding of what makes an area special. This understanding informs and provides the context in which decisions can be made on proposals which may affect the character of a conservation area.
- 2.2 On 3 October 2013, the Planning Committee approved a programme of review of Edinburgh's conservation areas. Six priority conservation areas were identified - Portobello, Grange, Inverleith, Queensferry, Morningside, and Merchiston & Greenhill. Revised character appraisals for Grange, Inverleith and Queensferry have since been completed. The appraisals for Morningside and Merchiston & Greenhill will be progressed following the revision of the Leith Character Appraisal and the commencement of work on the Old Town and New Town Character Appraisals. The latter two revisions have been prioritised to support the review of the Old and New Towns World Heritage Site Management Plan.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The revised Conservation Area Character Appraisal is intended to reflect changes that have occurred in Portobello since the previous appraisal was published in 2000. It aims to focus more on the analysis of character and townscape and guide decisions more clearly.
- 3.2 Early engagement with the community to inform the draft appraisal has consisted of discussions with the Portobello Community Council, the Portobello Heritage Trust and Portobello Amenity Society. An on-line survey relating to the quality of recent development in the Conservation Area was carried out.
- 3.3 These activities provided useful information on the community's priorities and current concerns regarding the nature of change and recent development in the area. Fifty responses to the survey on recent developments were received - a summary of the results is attached at Appendix 1. The main issues raised were:

- The impact of new builds/extensions to dwelling houses came high in the list of concerns. Comments recognised the need to consider the scale and position of new buildings or extensions more carefully. Concerns were raised that dwellings are being extended beyond their original capacity, undermining their character and their garden settings. This is specifically highlighted in respect of new development within the back lanes such as at Bellfield Lane.
 - Boundary treatments were mentioned both in terms of protecting historic walls and railings, and ensuring that new interventions protect that element of character. New developments are perceived as eroding boundaries by widening vehicle openings, removing pedestrian gates, and replacing visually-permeable railings and gates. The location, scale and quality of design of newly erected boundary treatments have also been highlighted as an area of concern, with examples along the boundaries to the Promenade identified as detrimental to its character and appearance.
 - The quality of shop fronts and shop signage along the High Street was raised as an area of concern. This has also been linked to respondents' criticisms of the effectiveness of planning enforcement against unauthorised alterations to shop fronts and signage on the High Street/Promenade.
 - The quality of the urban realm and the streetscape characteristics of the Conservation Area were also raised by respondents with specific reference to the proposed removal of the setts along Brighton Place, and the poor quality/ state of repair of the Promenade.
- 3.4 The draft Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal, attached at Appendix 2, reflects the feedback received during this initial engagement process - greater emphasis has been given to the need to consider context and quality in designing interventions, shop frontages and boundary treatments. To reflect better the active role of the appraisal in guiding decisions, a management section has been introduced which summarises the controls and policies which apply in the area and identifies a series of pressures and sensitivities, with recommendations made to address each type. Opportunities for development or enhancement are also identified.
- 3.5 The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been examined through the appraisal process. At the north western edge of the Conservation Area, an important element of the Promenade, the beach and foreshore signify the approach and entrance to the Conservation Area. This edge also includes the two surviving historic kilns. This area warrants consideration for inclusion within a proposed boundary extension.
- 3.6 This document is the text-only version of the proposed appraisal. It will be developed as a more user-friendly, interactive, online format.
- 3.7 The appraisal will be completed in the interactive format following a public consultation. It is intended that the consultation will consist of information presented on-line with a feedback form. An exhibition will be displayed at Portobello Library, with Officers on hand at two Open Days to discuss and explain the appraisal.

- 3.8 The consultation information and related events will be promoted in the local area, on Twitter and online. Local and citywide amenity groups, and local councillors, will also be notified.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The completion of a programme of public consultation on the draft appraisal, the incorporation of public feedback and production of the finalised Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The work will be undertaken with existing staff resources. There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no significant risks associated with approval of the report as recommended.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 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. Consultation processes and venues will ensure accessibility. 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.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report will reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the conservation of resources and energy embodied in existing buildings, rather than demolition and reconstruction, major generators of carbon emissions.
- 8.3 The need to build resilience to climate change impacts is not relevant to the proposals in this report because conservation of the built environment is not considered to be significantly affected, positively or negatively, in this regard.
- 8.4 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.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Significant public engagement has been carried out in Portobello to inform the content and emphasis of the draft revised appraisal. The Portobello Community Council, Portobello Heritage Trust and Portobello Amenity Society have provided invaluable support and feedback to this process.
- 9.2 Once approved for public consultation, the draft revised appraisal will be taken to a broader audience for detailed comment. This will consist of information presented on-line with a feedback form, an exhibition and information events in Portobello Library, with officers on hand to discuss and explain the appraisal. The consultation information and related events will be promoted by in the local area, on Twitter and online. Local and city wide amenity groups, and local councillors, will also be notified.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 10.1 Report to Planning Committee of 3 October 2013: Review of Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

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11. Links

Coalition Pledges	P40
Council Priorities	CO19 CO23 CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4
Appendices	1 Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal Design Survey Analysis of Results 2 Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Appendix 1

Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal Design Survey Analysis of Results

An on-line questionnaire was set up to capture residents' views on a selection of recent developments in the Portobello Conservation Area and to encourage comments about the character and appearance of the area.

Fifty responses were received. 100% of respondents completed the evaluation of recent developments answering two questions about each development with a multiple-choice answer of either 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' with space for additional comments about each of the developments. Respondents also completed a final question which asked if there were any developments that had affected the character and/or appearance of the area.

Q1 Does this development preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Portobello Conservation Area? Please write comments below.

Q2 Do you feel that this development reflects the character and appearance as identified by the current Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal? Please write comments below.

Q3 Do you know of any other changes that have been made within the Portobello Conservation Area that you feel have had affected the character and/or appearance of the area.

The dominant responses for each question were:

Development 1 (28 Promenade / 53-59 Bath Street)

Q1 – No (78%) Q2 – No (72%)

Development 2 (5 Bridge Street)

Q1 – No (46%) Q2 – No (38%) / Don't Know (38%)

Development 3 (76 Portobello High Street)

Q1 – Yes (76%) Q2 – Yes (68%)

Development 4 (9A Joppa Park)

Q1 – No (50%) Q2 – No (46%)

Development 5 (Towerbank Primary School, 1 Figgate Bank)

Q1 – Yes (56%) Q2 – Yes (48%)

Development 6 (The Japanese House land to the rear of 17 Bellfield Lane)

Q1 – Yes (70%) Q2 – Yes (50%)

Development 7 (15 Malborough Street)

Q1 – Yes (94%) Q2 – Yes (88%)

Development 8 (21 – 23 Windsor Place)

Q1 – No (48%) Q2 – No (42%)

Development 9 (9D Bellfield Lane)

Q1 – Yes (68%) Q2 – Yes (50%)

Development 10 (58 Regent Street)

Q1 – Yes (38%) / No (38%) Q2 – Don't know (40%)

Development 11 (19A + 19B Bath Street)

Q1 – Yes (76%) Q2 – Yes (72%)

In the open-text questions as part of the case studies and additional question covering any further matters, the following subjects or areas of concern featured most prominently (in descending order of number of comments):

- Design of new development (82)
- Materials (56)
- Scale (42)
- Streetscape (23)
- Roads / parking issues (19)
- Loss of garden ground (16)
- Boundary issues (12)
- Enforcement of unauthorised development (10)
- Driveways/paving (8)
- Views / vistas (7)
- Trees / natural landscape features (5)
- Satellite dishes / cables (3)

Appendix 2

PORTOBELLO CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Portobello lies on the coast, some four miles east of the centre of Edinburgh, between Leith and Musselburgh.

The Conservation Area is enclosed to the north-east by the sea and to the south-west by Sir Harry Lauder Road, which creates a visual and physical boundary for the Conservation Area as far as Windsor Place. At this point, the boundary turns north down Windsor Place and excludes the housing on the former Mount Lodge Estate. The north western and south eastern boundaries are less well defined: the north western boundary being generally defined by Beach Lane on the north side of the High Street and to the rear of Adelphi Place properties on the south side of the High Street, and the south-east boundary extending to the end of Joppa Road taking in Dalkeith Street and Morton Street.

The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been examined through the appraisal process. At the north western edge of the Conservation Area is an important element of Promenade, beach and foreshore that signifies the approach and entrance to the Conservation Area and includes the two surviving historic kilns. This area warrants consideration for inclusion within a proposed boundary extension.

The Conservation Area falls within the Ward boundary of Portobello/Craigmillar. There are in the order of 4,500 people living within the Conservation Area and approximately 1,700 residential units.

DATES OF DESIGNATION/AMENDMENTS

The original Portobello Conservation Area was designated on 13 October 1977. The original boundary was amended in July 1985 and again in February 1998. The first Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal was completed in May 2000.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Portobello retains the character of a small town with a distinct town centre, an exceptionally high quality residential hinterland, a shoreline setting and a long sea-front promenade. The architectural form and character of Portobello is rich and varied, with many fine Georgian and Victorian historic buildings. The building materials are traditional: stone, harling, slate, pantiles, timber windows and doors.

PURPOSE OF CHARACTER APPRAISALS

Conservation area character appraisals are intended to help manage change. They provide an agreed basis of understanding of what makes an area special. This understanding informs and provides the context in which decisions can be made on proposals which may affect that character. An enhanced level of understanding,

combined with appropriate management tools, ensures that change and development sustains and respects the qualities and special characteristics of the area.

“When effectively managed, conservation areas can anchor thriving communities, sustain cultural heritage, generate wealth and prosperity and add to quality of life. To realise this potential many of them need to continue to adapt and develop in response to the modern-day needs and aspirations of living and working communities. This means accommodating physical, social and economic change for the better.

Physical change in conservation areas does not necessarily need to replicate its surroundings. The challenge is to ensure that all new development respects, enhances and has a positive impact on the area. Physical and land use change in conservation areas should always be founded on a detailed understanding of the historic and urban design context.” (Planning Advice Note PAN 71: Conservation Area Management).

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The analysis of Portobello’s character and appearance focuses on the features which make the area special and distinctive. This is divided into two sections:

- Structure, which describes and draws conclusions regarding the overall organisation and macro-scale features of the area; and
- Key Elements, which examines the smaller-scale features and details which fit within the structure.

This document is not intended to give prescriptive instructions on what designs or styles will be acceptable in the area. Instead, it can be used to ensure that the design of an alteration or addition is based on an informed interpretation of context. This context should be considered in conjunction with the relevant Local Development Plan policies and planning guidance. The Management section outlines the policy and legislation relevant to decision-making in the area. Issues specific to Portobello are discussed in more detail and recommendations or opportunities identified.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Origins and Development

Portobello takes its name from the Spanish port of Puerto Bello on the Isthmus of Panama. In a notable offensive of 1739, the port was captured by a British fleet under Admiral Vernon. In the 1740s, George Hamilton, one of the sailors involved in the battle, built a house four miles east of Edinburgh which he named his “Portobello Hut” after the battle of Puerto Bello.

In 1765, rich clay deposits were discovered just to the west of the Figgate Burn and this led to the establishment of brick, glass and pottery works, a soapworks, a white lead works, and associated workers’ housing. The earliest reference to Portobello appears in ‘The History of Edinburgh’ by Hugo Arnot, published in 1779. Arnot refers to Mr William Jamieson’s brickworks in the area. William Jamieson was a local

entrepreneur who built several large villas in the area at this time. Of the large houses built during this period, only the Tower, which dates from 1785, remains.

In 1787, local industry was further stimulated by the founding of a small harbour at the mouth of the Figgate Burn and, by 1811, Thomas Bonar's 'Plan of Edinburgh and Leith with the Roads Adjacent' shows some 90 buildings under the heading 'Village of Portobello'.

Portobello developed significantly in the 18th century, not only because of its industry but due to its popularity as a bathing and spa resort. Discovery of mineral wells added to the village's attraction and in the early years of the 19th century, elegant residential terraces were developed, mainly between the High Street and the sea. Bath Street and Tower Street (Figgate Street) were laid out in 1801-1802, and Regent Street and Wellington Street (Marlborough Street) in 1815-1816.

The next phase included the building of Melville Street (Bellfield Street), Pitt Street (Pittville Street) and John Street, designed by the architect Robert Brown who lived in Pitt Street. The Brighton/Rosefield area was developed and built by a local builder, John Baxter. This area is one of the most attractive in Portobello, the uniform facades with their linking screen walls giving these streets considerable distinction.

Portobello was established both as a fashionable summer resort and as an attractive place to stay all year round. The population census of 1831 gives a population of 2,781 residents within 517 houses, which was swelled by an additional summer population of not less than 2,000.

Building continued eastwards towards Joppa from the 1830s onwards and also south of the High Street until the end of the century, with rows of Georgian terraces gradually giving way to Victorian semi-detached and detached houses.

As the 19th century progressed, the Georgian two storey buildings on the north side of the High Street became punctuated by larger Victorian tenements. The scale and symmetry of the streets between the High Street and the Promenade were also compromised to a degree. Some villas were demolished and their grounds redeveloped.

Many Georgian streets, such as Bath Street and Marlborough Street, now contain large Victorian tenements, some of them spectacular - Windsor Mansions (1899) in Straiton Place and St. James's Terrace (1870) in Bath Street are two examples. Several of these tenements were built in red sandstone, contrasting with the grey stone of the original Georgian buildings.

The Regency Spa Town became both a Victorian suburb of Edinburgh - the Burgh Reform Act of 1896 had seen Portobello incorporated into the City of Edinburgh - and a Victorian sea-side resort, popular with day trippers from Edinburgh and Glasgow. The establishment of rail and tram links increased the popularity of Portobello as a holiday destination.

Prior to the construction of the Promenade, gardens and garden walls extended down to the beach and the seafront was not easily accessible to the public. The first

section of the Promenade was completed in the 1850s, from Bath Street to Melville Street. It was extended in the 1860s but was swept away twice by storms and was eventually completed in 1891. A 1,200 foot pier was opened in 1871 (demolished 1917) which included a restaurant, shops and kiosks.

A number of fine individual buildings were built at the start of the 20th century - notably the baths in Bellfield Street (1901); the Town Hall (1911) and St. John's Roman Catholic Church in Brighton Place (1906), the spire of which dominates the town's skyline.

Between the wars, when Portobello was in its heyday, a number of buildings were constructed in the modern style. The former cinema in Bath Street remains, but the Open Air Swimming Pool (1925) was demolished in the 1980s.

The whole area between Figgate Street and Bridge Street, north of the High Street, was redeveloped between 1976 and 1980. The Marlborough Mansions (1899), near the foot of Bath Street, were demolished in the 1960s as part of proposals to widen the Promenade. By the 1960s, the number of tourists visiting Portobello reduced significantly and many of the shops and kiosks, which were once a feature on the Promenade, closed.

Portobello retains a heritage of fine buildings from all stages of its history, most notably the elegant Georgian terraces and the complementary fringe of Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The layering of high quality development from different eras makes a major contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The town retains a recognisable seaside character with its long promenade, reclaimed and improved beach, and amusement arcades. It has a thriving resident population of around 4,500 and remains popular with visitors - on fine summer days the beach and promenade are crowded with day-trippers.

CHARACTER ZONES

The Conservation Area includes three areas of distinctly different character:

1. The High Street provides the commercial and administrative focus for the Conservation Area retaining many original two storey Georgian buildings as well as a number of significant public buildings.
2. The traffic free Promenade, beach, cafes and amusement arcades highlight Portobello's character as a seaside resort.
3. The remainder of the Conservation Area constitutes Portobello's main residential zone and includes an abundance of fine Georgian villas as well as a robust stock of Victorian villas and tenements which contribute to the suburban character.

1 HIGH STREET

Structure

The High street is an identified shopping centre that provide a diverse mix of commercial activities and in which retail frontages are protected. Key objectives involve encouraging regeneration to attract investors and generate new employment opportunities, promoting good quality design and enhancing existing quality.

Development pattern

The High Street forms a wide curving linear spine parallel to the sea with side streets running perpendicularly from it down to the Promenade. Commercial activity in the side streets helps to draw visitors down them towards the sea. The architectural quality of the High Street is exemplified by individual buildings such as the Town Hall, the Police Station and the Georgian terraced shops with first floor housing in the eastern section

The building heights along the north side of the High Street show a high degree of uniformity, reflecting the planned Georgian development. This contrasts with the south side of the street, where building heights vary along the entire length from single storey to four storey.

There are few 20th century buildings on the north side of the High Street except a large office building and flats in the eastern section and shops and flats in the western section. All of these more recent additions are set back from the building line with the exception of the flatted block adjacent to the former Windsor Place Church.

Streets

Approaching from the west, the High Street is generally linear before curving significantly to the east of the Bath Street/Brighton Place junction. It then curves almost imperceptibly in the other direction before straightening out as it runs into Abercorn Terrace. Whilst the actual width of the street varies little throughout its length, at various points on the south side buildings have been set back from the building line - these are mostly 20th century developments - and the road widened to allow for parking. This gives these areas an air of spaciousness and helps to induce expectation and a sense of arrival in the town centre..

The street is predominantly a mixture of small scale Georgian buildings and larger Victorian tenements, with shops at ground floor and residential flats above. On the north side of the street, between Figgate Burn and Bath Street, the building height varies significantly, ranging from single storey shops to four storey tenements. East of Bath Street, the buildings are predominantly two storey with the notable exception of a three storey block at the extreme east end and the four storey tenement at the junction with Marlborough Street. There are a number of buildings which contribute to the character of the area and give focus to the townscape - the Town Hall and Police Station add variety to the facades of the High Street shop fronts.

A number of original windows remain on the upper floors, however, there are a significant number of inappropriate replacement windows

There a small number of original or historic shop fronts along the High Street, however, the majority now have modern single paned, non-traditional frames with flush doors. Over-deep fascias, garish paint and inappropriate signage further detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

The street is at its widest between Rosefield Avenue and Brighton Place. This area has a sense of being an important place for people to congregate; benches on both sides of the street and the grouping of the town's main bank, Town Hall and Police Station all contribute to this feeling.

The High Street shops represent the bulk of the shopping facilities in the Conservation Area and provide a focus of activity for the community. The shops are mainly independent retail units catering for local needs. The shops in the High Street extend from Figgate Burn to Pittville Street on the north side with some commercial uses continuing down Bath Street. On the south side, the shops extend from Adelphi Grove to east of Marlborough Street with some shops returning down the east side of Brighton Place as far as Lee Crescent.

The commercial section of the High Street is centred on its crossroads with Brighton Place/Bath Street, and extends eastwards to Pittville Street and westwards to Kings Road, with some residential interruptions.

The spaces between the buildings are predominantly in tarmac (roads) and concrete slabs (pavements). However, soft landscaping in the form of trees is located on the south side of the High Street to the front and side of the bank and in front of the Social Security offices, adjacent to Hope Lane.

Spaces

The buildings are set back significantly at the western entrance to the Conservation Area and to the east of Marlborough Street. The greater width at the entrance to the Conservation Area results from the grouping of residential blocks set back from the road. This area, although not part of the Conservation Area, accentuates the sense of arrival in the High Street as the building line returns sharply at the junction with Adelphi Grove, creating a sense of the street narrowing. At the east end of the High Street, the shops start at Pittville Street on the north side, the narrowing of the road and the forward building line east of Marlborough Street confirms the entry to a commercial area.

Abercorn Park is an attractive green space lined by elm, whitebeam, holly and hawthorn which forms a prominent break in the building line on the High Street.

Views

Streets and lanes leading to the Promenade offer views of the sea from the High Street. The spires of churches are distinctive landmarks and prominent in views along the High Street.

Key Elements

- Spine with secondary streets running perpendicular.
- A recognised shopping centre.
- Uniform height terraces to the north of the High Street.
- Views of the sea at various points along the street.
- A number of landmark buildings.
- Building lines to the heel of the pavement.
- A mix of uses, mostly with residential on upper floors.
- Variation in building periods, types and heights to the south of the High Street.
- The predominant building material in the High Street is natural stone which varies in colour, texture and condition.
- A number of good quality original and historic shop fronts.

2 PROMENADE/BEACH

Structure

The beach, along with the Promenade, are significant amenities which emphasise Portobello's reputation and character as a seaside resort.

Development Pattern

There is a rich mix of building styles fronting, or slightly set back from the Promenade. The form of development has resulted in buildings some of which have their frontages to the Promenade and others their rear elevations. These include single storey Georgian houses, two storey Victorian terraced properties, large two to three storey detached Victorian villas and four storey Victorian tenements. There are also two modern residential developments: a pair of two storey semi-detached houses (1990) at Straiton Place and a block of flats (1996) at the bottom of Pittville Street.

In addition to the residential properties described above, there are a number of other buildings along the Promenade related to the seaside leisure industry - the Public Baths on the Promenade (1901) in red sandstone with a long front, two curving gables and first floor timber balconies.

The Tower, in Figgate Lane, was built in 1785, possibly by William Jamieson as a summerhouse for John Cunningham. It is an unusual octagonal castellated gothic building and is constructed in sandstone with red brick dressings.

Spaces

Today, the Promenade is an important part of Edinburgh's waterfront and forms a popular pedestrian route, which, along with the well maintained sandy beach, emphasises Portobello's seaside resort character. This character is maintained despite the loss of the pier in 1917 which was constructed around the same time as the Promenade.

The Promenade starts at the bottom of Kings Road following the edge of the sea and curving significantly before becoming part of the Conservation Area at Figgate Lane. Its width alters according to the building line and opens out between John Street and James Street and at three points between James Street and the end of the Promenade.

The surface of the Promenade is predominantly red tarmac with a thin grey concrete strip adjacent to the low concrete wall forming the physical boundary between the beach and the Promenade. The red tarmac does not have a uniform appearance due to patch repairs in a different colour.

The unifying streetscape elements are the low concrete wall to the beach side, the predominantly red tarmac surface and the benches and bollards, where each street or lane meets the Promenade.

There are also a number of public grassed areas grouped together between Bath Street and Bellfield Street with the larger area also incorporating a children's playground. An additional small grassed area is located adjacent to the north west boundary of the area. There is also a hard-landscaped children's play area to the north west of the Promenade.

The front gardens of residential properties set back from the Promenade, and generally enclosed by varying heights of stone wall, represent the predominant form of soft landscaping on the Promenade.

The Conservation Area extends eastward to include the beach as Portobello's coastal location was integral to its development. The beach is generally well-maintained and clean.

Views

The Promenade provides panoramic vistas to the coast of Fife, back towards the City and Leith, and down to the East Lothian countryside and North Berwick Law.

Key Elements

- Linear traffic free walkway with open views of Fife and North Berwick Law.
- Open views to the sea.
- Predominance of stone built properties, many with front doors to the Promenade, and generally retaining their original features.
- The predominant roof covering is slate.

- Good quality stone boundary walls.
- Easy access from side streets/lanes.
- Seasonal seaside attractions and indoor swimming pool.
- Well maintained sandy beach.
- Beach protected by groins.

3 RESIDENTIAL ZONE

Structure

Development pattern

In the early part of the 19th century, residential development took place in four distinct areas of Portobello. By far the main development took place between 1800 and 1825 on the north side of the High Street, where streets were laid out on a grid plan, progressing from east to west. The next important area to be developed was on the south side of the High Street in the Brighton and Rosefield area. Two other small groups of houses were also built in this period; villas and part of a classic terrace in Windsor Place and several houses, mainly semi-detached, on the south side of Joppa Road, west of Morton Street.

In the Victorian period, residential development continued eastwards on both sides of the High Street. In the 1840s and 1850s, houses in a neo-classical style were built in James Street, Abercorn Terrace, Dalkeith Street and Elcho Terrace.

As the century progressed, buildings displayed a greater variety of styles and influences, including Baronial and, by the turn of the century, terraces of plain two-storey houses with bow windows at the east end of Joppa.

By this time, several detached houses in Bath Street and Marlborough Street had been demolished and these sites and other gap sites were filled with large Victorian tenements. These tenements, often in red sandstone and many displaying a profusion of exuberant carved detailing, overwhelmed their modest Georgian neighbours. Gap sites in other Georgian streets to the east were also filled with two storey houses, for example, the east side of Bellfield Street.

Residential development also continued eastwards along the Promenade where several grand villas in the French and Italian styles were built as well as large tenement blocks.

Thomas Tough, a local pottery owner, built housing in the Adelphi Place area around 1850-1860 to house his workers. As fashionable housing was being built towards the east, areas to the west, on the north side of the High Street, were filled with cheaper housing of a much higher density.

Development has changed the character of parts of the Conservation area, particularly within lanes and back-land areas, and further pressure for this type of development may arise in the future.

Streets

The residential areas, whether they are Georgian with a classical layout and restrained architecture, or Victorian with more informal layouts and exuberant designs, have a generosity of space that provide a tranquil character.

- **Georgian Development** - Streets are generally relatively narrow, although they tend to become wider towards the east. Houses have small front gardens with low stone boundary walls, originally with cast iron railings (some of which have recently been replaced). Back gardens are much larger and are bounded by high stone walls.

On the north side of the High Street, the majority of Georgian streets run at right angles north towards the Promenade. Most of these streets are serviced by back lanes which originally provided access to stables and mews buildings. This grid plan layout is not repeated on the south side of the High Street where East and West Brighton Crescent cross over Brighton Place in a sweeping curve. This has resulted in a less formal layout and interesting vistas. Brighton Place is the main entrance into the Conservation Area from Duddingston and is the only remaining setted street.

A wide range of classical detailing is used. Two storey houses generally have five windows on the front elevation. Semi-detached houses often have paired doorcases, with Roman Doric pilasters. Ground floor elevations can be rusticated or smooth ashlar. There are many other variations including gothic style windows and timber external shutters.

The houses on the south side of Joppa Road, west of Morton Street are built in a variety of styles. However, they reverse the normal practice, having high stone front garden walls and large front gardens, with smaller rear gardens. This took advantage of what was originally an open outlook at the front over the Firth of Forth.

East of Morton Street, on the south side of Joppa Road, is a long low terrace of workers' houses. Few houses of this type built in the early part of the nineteenth century survive in either Portobello or Joppa. These are single storey, built in stone (some with later modern facings) and roofed with red Georgian property pantiles (some having later slate roofs) on Pitville Street

The Brighton and Rosefield area (circa 1823) is one of the least altered and most architecturally important areas of Portobello. The area displays a distinctive unity of style as John Baxter, the builder, provided designs for the elevations of the houses. Distinguished one and two storey villas are linked by single storey wings, the two storey properties being rusticated at ground floor. The single storey villas and villas with basements have doorways in both wings and houses which are within segmentally arched recesses.

- Victorian Development - Streets became wider in the Victorian era, continuing the pattern of small front gardens and larger back gardens. Most streets were serviced by back lanes, although the railway line prevented this from happening on the south side of Argyle Crescent.

In the early Victorian period, houses continued to be built in the classical style. Both houses and gardens became bigger as development progressed eastwards. However, by the end of the century, houses became increasingly smaller in scale and detailing tended to become less elegant.

Gradually a greater variety of building styles came to be used. The baronial style can frequently be seen, with canted bay windows beneath steep gables. Many houses incorporate barge boarding and others decorative cast-iron balconies.

Tenemental development began to invade some of the streets laid out in the early part of the century, notably Marlborough Street, Straiton Place and Bath Street, the latter now containing a rich mixture of building styles from all eras.

Overall, the more exuberant approach to house construction adopted by the Victorians has, in places, resulted in a disparity of scale between the neat and ordered Georgian villas and the grand decorative flourish of the Victorian tenements. This has created an interesting but restless and fragmented character.

St. John's Roman Catholic Church in Brighton Place is the most prominent of Portobello's churches. Designed by J.T. Walford and dating from 1906, it is a highly individual building, mixing Gothic and Arts and Crafts styles, and its octagonal pinnacle towers dominate the town's skyline.

Key Elements

- Strong formal patterns of Georgian housing eg. grids, crescents, squares and associated open space.
- Overlapping and less formal patterns of Victorian housing often of more exuberant design demonstrating a range of interesting street corner treatments.
- High quality architecture.
- Views of the sea from the streets leading down from Abercorn Terrace/ Joppa Road.
- Predominant use of traditional building materials: stone, slate, timber sash and case windows.
- Stone retaining and separating walls, some with original railing pattern.
- Variations in plot sizes and building types, heights, spacing and setbacks from the pavement.
- Small scale cottages with narrow plot widths at the west and east ends of the Conservation Area.
- System of narrow lanes and access ways between streets.

MANAGEMENT

Legislation, policies and guidance

Conservation Areas

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that Conservation Areas “are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area when planning controls are being exercised. Conservation Area status brings a number of special controls:

- The demolition of unlisted buildings requires Conservation Area consent.
- Permitted development rights, which allow improvements or alterations to the external appearance of dwellinghouses and flatted dwellings, are removed.
- Works to trees are controlled (see Trees for more detail).

The demolition of unlisted buildings requires Conservation Area consent and the removal of buildings which make a positive contribution to the area is only permitted in exceptional circumstances, and where the proposals meet certain criteria relating to condition, conservation deficit, adequacy of efforts to retain the building and the relative public benefit of replacement proposals. Conservation Area character appraisals are a material consideration when considering applications for development within Conservation Areas.

Listed buildings

A significant number of buildings within the Portobello Conservation Area are listed for their special architectural or historic interest and are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Listed building consent is required for the demolition of a listed building, or its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its special character.

Planning guidance

More detailed, subject-specific guidance is set out in Planning Guidance documents. Those particularly relevant to the Portobello Conservation Area are:

- [*Guidance for Householders*](#)
- [*Guidance for Businesses*](#)
- [*Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*](#)
- [*Developer contributions and affordable housing*](#)
- [*Edinburgh Design guidance*](#)
- [*Communications Infrastructure*](#)
- [*Street Design Guidance*](#)

In addition, a number of statutory tools are available to assist development management within the Conservation Area.

GPDO and Article 4 Directions

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, amended 2012, (abbreviated to GPDO), restricts the types of development which can be carried out in a Conservation Area without the need for planning permission. These include most alterations to the external appearance of dwellinghouses and flats. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals.

Under Article 4 of the GPDO the planning authority can seek the approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict development rights further. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor developments in Conservation Areas which can cumulatively lead to the erosion of character and appearance. Portobello Conservation Area has Article 4 Directions covering the following classes of development:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Class 7 | The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure. |
| Class 35 | Development on operational land by statutory undertakers in respect of dock, pier, harbour, water transport, or canal or inland navigation undertakings. |
| Class 38 | Development by statutory undertakers for the purpose of water undertakings. |
| Class 39 | Development by a public gas supplier. |
| Class 40 | Development by an electricity statutory undertaker. |

Trees

Trees within Conservation Areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning (etc) Act 2006. This Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of a tree having a diameter exceeding 75mm at a point 1.5m above ground level. The planning authority must be given six weeks' notice of the intention to uproot, fell or lop trees. Failure to give notice will render the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Tree Preservation Orders are made under planning legislation to protect individual and groups of trees considered important for amenity or because of their cultural or historic interest. When assessing amenity, the importance of trees as wildlife habitats will be taken into consideration. There is a strong presumption against any form of development or change of use of land which is likely to damage or prejudice the future long term existence of trees covered by a TPO. The removal of trees for

arboricultural reasons will not imply that the space created by their removal can be used for development.

Trees in the City contains a set of policies with an action plan used to guide the management of the Council's trees and woodlands.

Assessing Development within Conservation Areas.

General Criteria

General issues to be taken into account in assessing development proposals in a Conservation Area include the appropriateness of the overall massing of development, its scale (the expression of size indicated by the windows, doors, floor heights, and other identifiable units), its proportions and its relationship with its context i.e. whether it sits comfortably. Development should be in harmony with, or complimentary to, its neighbours having regard to the adjoining architectural styles. The use of materials generally matching those which are historically dominant in the area is important, as is the need for the development not to have a visually disruptive impact on the existing townscape. It should also, as far as possible, fit into the "grain" of the Conservation Area, for example, by respecting historic layout, street patterns or existing land form. It is also important where new uses are proposed that these respect the unique character and general ambience of the Conservation Area, for example certain developments may adversely affect the character of a Conservation Area through noise, nuisance and general disturbance.

New Buildings

The development of new buildings in a Conservation Area should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. What is important is not that new buildings should directly imitate earlier styles, rather that they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well-established character and appearance of its own. Therefore, while development of a gap site in a traditional terrace may require a very sensitive design approach to maintain the overall integrity of the area; in other cases modern designs sympathetic and complimentary to the existing character of the area may be acceptable.

Alterations and Extensions

Proposals for the alteration or extension of properties in a Conservation Area will normally be acceptable where they are sensitive to the existing building, in keeping with the character and appearance of the particular area and do not prejudice the amenities of adjacent properties. Extensions should be subservient to the building, of an appropriate scale, use appropriate materials and should normally be located on the rear elevations of a property. Very careful consideration will be required for alterations and extensions affecting the roof of a property, as these may be particularly detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Definition of 'Character' and 'Appearance'

Conservation areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The character of an area is the combination of features and qualities which contribute to the intrinsic worth of an area and make it distinctive. Special character does not derive only from the quality of buildings. Elements such as the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries, paving materials, urban grain and more intangible features, such as smells and noises which are unique to the area, may all contribute to the local scene. Conservation area designation is the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and of ensuring that planning decisions address these qualities.

Appearance is more limited and relates to the way individual features within the conservation area look.

Care and attention should be paid in distinguishing between the impact of proposed developments on both the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Landscape and Biodiversity

There are several open spaces which contribute to the townscape pattern of the area - squares, parks, the Figgate Burn, and the beach. Brighton Park and Abercorn Park are part of a formal structure surrounded by residential streets and gardens. Rosefield Park through which the Figgate Burn runs, has a less formal layout.

The Council has an obligation to take account of the impact of development on species protected by legislation and international commitments. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity as far as is consistent with their functions.

The Figgate Burn is designated as a Local Biodiversity Site for its value as a mixed habitat wetland for its amenity grassland, broadleaved plantation, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, standing water and running water. A small section of the beach to the east of the Conservation Area is part of the Joppa Shore Geodiversity Site which is designated for its geological interest including sedimentary rocks of the Upper Limestone Formation and coal measures of the Carboniferous Period.

The beach and foreshore within the Conservation Area are part of the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area for their value as an estuarine and coastal habitat for the wintering population of wading birds and wild fowl.

These sensitive nature conservation sites must be considered if affected by any development proposal.

Archaeology

Prior to the mid 18th century Portobello appears to have remained relatively undeveloped as an area of coastal sand dunes and farmland, bisected by the medieval coastal road linking Leith to Musselburgh. This historic road may have had

earlier Roman origins, as the coastal road linking the 2nd century AD Roman forts at Cramond and Inveresk (Musselburgh).

Development at Portobello commenced in earnest in 1765 when William Jamieson, an Edinburgh architect and speculative builder feued his first parcel of land from Baron William Muir of Caldwell to set up a pottery to utilise the recently discovered rich clay deposits to the west of the Figgate Burn. This early industrial pottery expanded with the addition of new potteries and brick and tile works across the mouth of the Figgate Burn over the following 18th and 19th centuries. As a result, by the end of the 19th century Portobello had become one of Scotland's most significant industrial potteries of which the scheduled early 20th century pottery kilns built in 1903 and 1911 are the last residual remnants. A wider range of associated industries were also attracted to the area including: glass works, a soap works, a white lead works and associated workers' houses. The early industrial development of the Portobello Potteries was aided by the foundation of a small harbour at the mouth of the Figgate Burn in 1787 - the remains of the harbour survive under the present beach, on the eastern side of the Figgate Burn. Recent excavations across the site of the former potteries demonstrated that, despite the demolition of the former pottery buildings and redevelopment for housing in the 1970s, extensive archaeological remains survive across the area.

In addition to the area's important industrial heritage, the historic core of Portobello is of archaeological interest in its own right in terms of the social development of the settlement from its 18th century origins through to the 20th century. Excavations in advance of the new extension to Tower Bank Primary school unearthed the remains of former Georgian housing providing an important insight into the early development of the town.

Portobello is considered to be an area of archaeological significance principally in terms of both its industrial heritage and its development during the 18th and 19th centuries. Depending on the scale and impact of any development proposal, the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS) may recommend a pre-determination evaluation in order to assess the presence and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits and to determine the scope of any required mitigation including preservation and interpretation. Similarly for works affecting standing structures of historic significance, a programme of archaeological building assessment and recording may be recommended.

PRESSURES AND SENSITIVITIES

The following pressures are associated with development proposals which Conservation Area designation, together with the Council's policies and guidance, are designed to manage. The Edinburgh Design Guidance, Guidance for Householders and Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas explain the Council's approach to design in historic contexts.

Townscape and Architectural character

Portobello originally developed as a settlement based on industry. In the Victorian period, it became established as a prosperous seaside resort. The town initially grew

rapidly as a resort increasing in size every year with little regularity or uniformity. From the middle of the 19th Century there was a greater planning of the layout of the streets and building. This has resulted in a varied spatial structure, townscape and architectural character providing an interesting blend of layouts, tenures and architectural styles. Careful attention now needs to be paid to the extent and type of development and particularly to the amount of land which is built on.

Some recent development, mostly at the ends of streets has tended to negatively impact on the scale, proportion and permeability that are part of the Conservation Area's essential character.

The sites on the Promenade that formerly accommodated the ghost train, to the front of Bath Place, and the paddling pool, at the corner of John Street, are now well maintained landscaped areas and represent a marked improvement in terms of townscape quality. However, the edge of the sites to the Promenade would benefit from improved boundary treatments or, where acceptable, appropriate development.

The area is characterised by the rows of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian villas, terraces and tenements in a variety of styles with the use of blonde and red sandstones helping to unify the distinct building periods within the area. Contemporary developments have tended to utilise non-traditional materials that can adversely affect the character of the area if used indiscriminately or excessively. Multiple similar developments in close proximity can have a negative cumulative effect on character.

A number of gable ends of properties, predominantly at junctions with streets leading off the High Street, are in very poor condition due to unsightly and patchy rendering, poor or unfinished repair works and peeling paint.

A small number of original windows remain on the upper floors, their generally poor condition combined with the presence of a significant number of inappropriate replacement windows means that the upper floors of the High Street present a rather poor image within the street scene. This is exacerbated by the significant number of original chimneys that have been replaced in brick and render, and the general lack of maintenance to stonework and paintwork.

Although there are a small number of original or historic shop fronts along the High Street and Promenade, the majority now have modern single paned, non-traditional frames with flush doors. These frontages fail to relate to the upper floors and are discordant notes within the street scene. Over-deep fascias, garish paint and inappropriate signage further detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

Streetscape

The High Street has benefitted from a resurfacing of pedestrian walkways as part of a previous Town Centre Regeneration Fund Programme. However, the use of a variety of sizes of concrete paviors in the context of the Conservation Area does not support a simple palette of materials as promoted by the street design guidance. The streetscape of the High Street includes a proliferation of bus stops, lamp posts, litter

bins, benches, telephone boxes and other services which can appear cluttered in places.

There are a number of unifying streetscape elements along the Promenade, notably the street furniture such as the cast iron benches, decorative bollards and the low dividing wall to the beachside. However, the red asphalt surface is basic, with repair work in black asphalt leaving a patchy appearance.

The diverse range of boundary treatments along the Promenade is in many cases mismatched and of poor quality in terms of their scale, design and the materials.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Small-scale development opportunities for infill or replacement may arise within the area, and will be considered in terms of the relevant guidance. No sites within the Conservation Area are identified for significant housing or other development through local development plans. Development of a significant scale is unlikely to take place within the Conservation Area. However, it is recognised that development has changed the character of parts of the Conservation Area over time, particularly at the peripheries of private open spaces or within lanes and back-land areas, and further pressure for this type of development may arise in the future.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNING ACTION

The diverse quality of the architecture of Portobello creates a need for a sensitivity of approach to any new development or intervention. Most importantly, the design of new buildings or interventions should be based on a sound understanding of context. Policy DES1 of the Edinburgh City Local Plan and Proposed Local Development Plan requires that design should be based on an overall design concept that draws on positive characteristics of the surrounding area to create or reinforce a sense of place.

The Council's planning guidance generally states a presumption for sandstone and other traditional, natural materials where these form the predominant palette in the surroundings of the development. High quality, innovative modern designs and materials are not precluded, but proposals must be able to demonstrate their respect for the historic character of the host building and the area. The cumulative effect of multiple developments within the same street or area should be taken into account.

Conservation Area boundaries

The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been examined through the appraisal process.

At the north western edge of the Conservation Area is an important element of Promenade, beach and foreshore that signifies the approach and entrance to the Conservation Area and includes the two surviving historic kilns. This area warrants consideration for inclusion within a proposed boundary extension.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

The areas of open space on the Promenade at the foot of Marlborough Street and to the north east of Figgate Bank would benefit from enhanced landscaping and planting, and improvements to the boundary fencing. The full potential of these pieces of land as areas of accessible amenity space should be more thoroughly realised.

The foundations of the former band-stand on the Promenade would benefit from attention with the potential installation of an appropriate piece of public art

Roads and transport

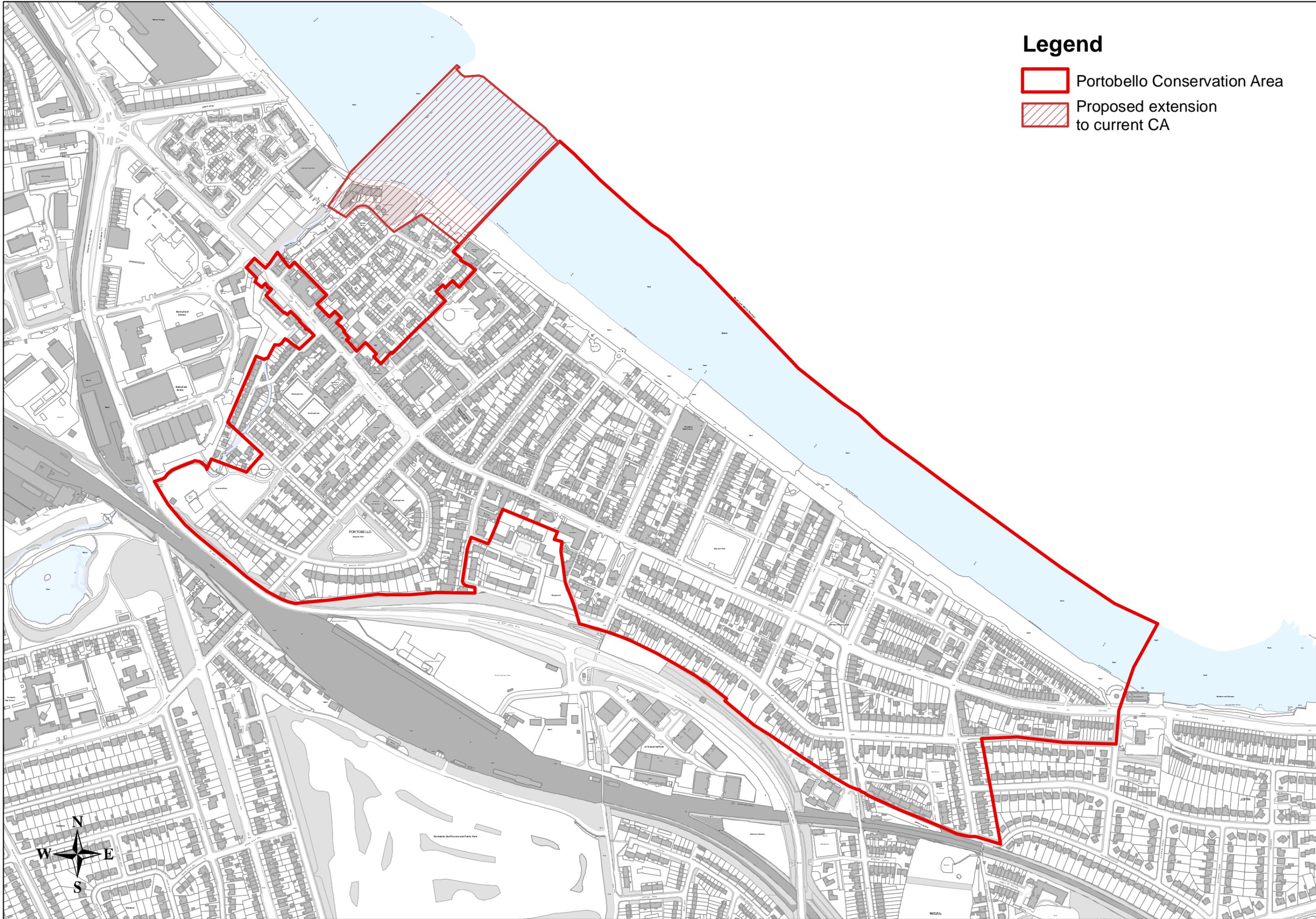
Road safety, traffic management and parking are identified as priority issues in the Portobello Neighbourhood Plan along with enhanced walking and cycling opportunities. The unique characteristics of the streetscape of the area should be protected and enhanced in any road and transport proposals. Interventions should be planned and designed taking account of their broader context in order to reinforce the sense of place. This will also involve minimising visual clutter, avoiding generic, 'off-the-peg' solutions, and protecting traditional surface materials and design details.

Natural environment

Enhancing the walking and cycling environment provides an opportunity to promote the unique and valuable open space and natural landscape characteristics of the area. The aims of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan should be considered in any enhancement proposal throughout the area.

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Legend

-  Portobello Conservation Area
-  Proposed extension to current CA

