



# PORTOBELLO CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Portobello 地区人物建筑 从历史色彩研究  
تقييم طابع ومقتضاة المنطقة Portobello المحيطة  
No.3 2004 (Portobello) Historic Character Appraisal  
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*THE PORTOBELLO CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER APPRAISAL WAS APPROVED BY THE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
ON 11 MAY 2000*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

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### *Conservation Areas*

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

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

### *Character Appraisals*

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

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

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

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

### *Portobello Conservation Area*

Portobello lies on the coast, some four miles east of the centre of Edinburgh, between Leith and Musselburgh. The Portobello Conservation Area was originally designated on 13 October 1977. In July 1978, the conservation area became classed as “Outstanding” for grant purposes. The original boundary was amended in July 1985 and again in February 1998.

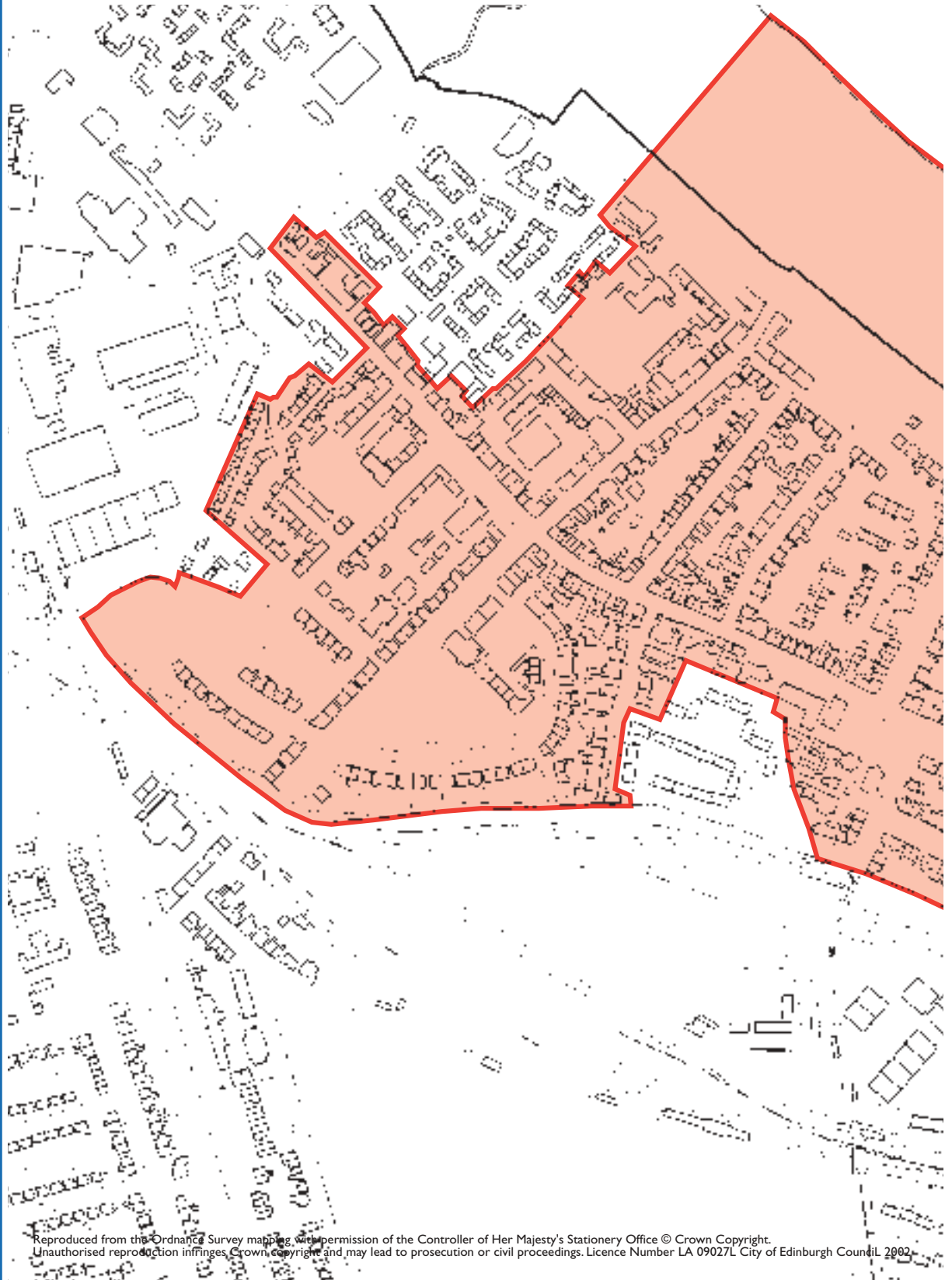
The conservation area is enclosed to the north east by the sea and to the south west by Sir Harry Lauder Road which creates a visual and physical boundary for the conservation area as far as Windsor Place. At this point, the boundary turns north down Windsor Place and excludes the housing on the former 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.

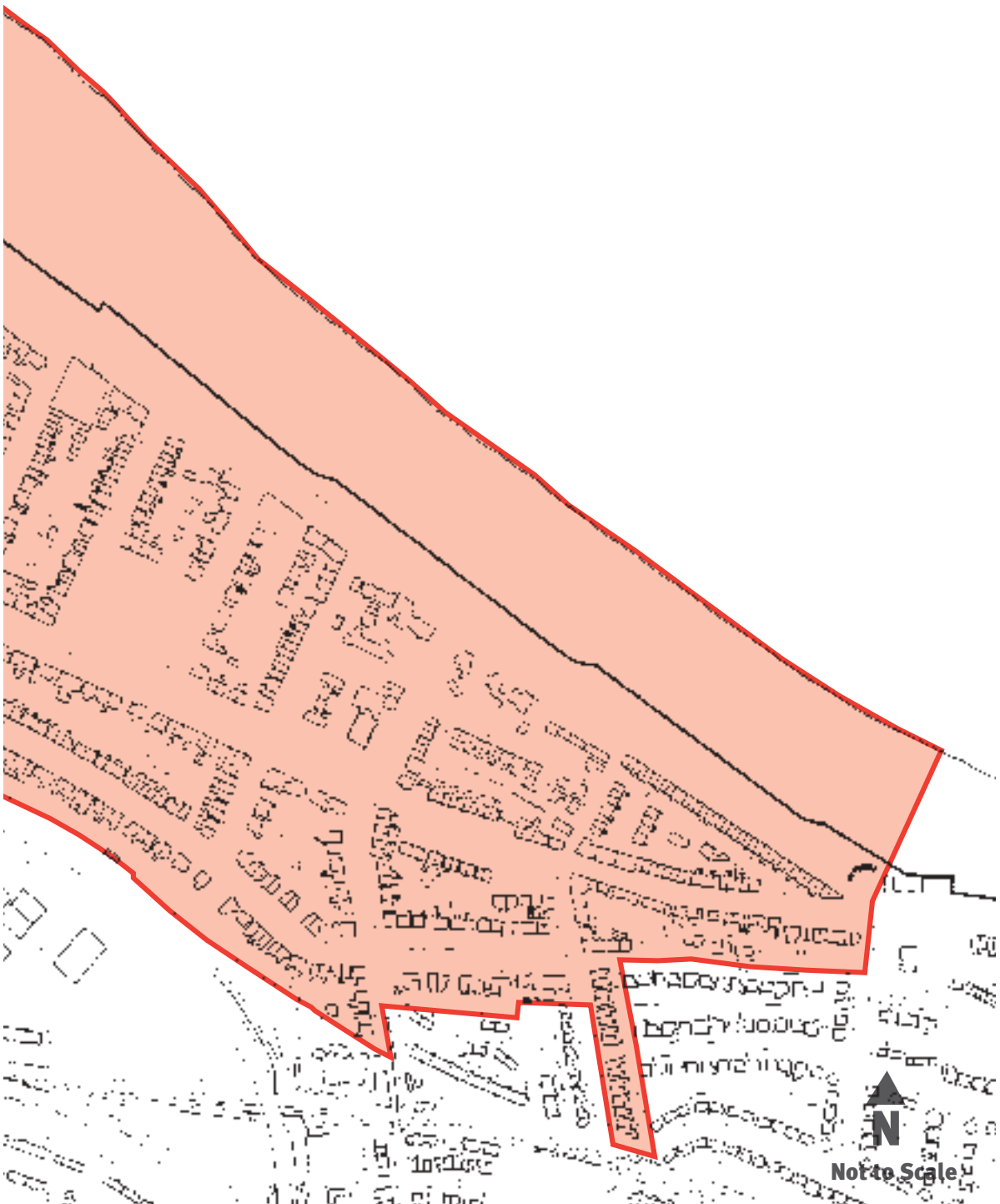
The conservation area falls within the Ward boundaries of Portobello and Milton. The 1997 Population Model indicates that there are in the order of 4,500 people living within the conservation area and approximately 1,700 residential units.

### *Portobello Amenity Society*

In 1981, the Portobello Amenity Society succeeded the Abercorn Amenity Association which had been formed in 1979. The Society aims to stimulate interest in Portobello as well as care for the beauty, history and character of the area. The assistance and enthusiasm of the Portobello Amenity Society has been invaluable in the production of this document.

## *BOUNDARY OF PORTOBELLO CONSERVATION AREA*





## *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 1740, George Hamilton, one of the sailors involved in the battle, built a house four miles east of Edinburgh in the 1740s 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 was built in 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”.



However, 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.



*Wood's Plan of 1824*

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 now 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 2781 residents within 517 houses, but William Baird in "Annals of Duddingston and Portobello" (1898) argues that by 1833, an additional summer population of not less than 2000 should be added.

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.



*Historic sketch of Portobello*



*Sutter's Plan of 1856*

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 streets, like Bath Street and Marlborough Street now contain, amid elegant Georgian houses, large Victorian tenements, some of them spectacular, for example, Windsor Mansions (1899) in Straiton Place and St. James's Terrace (1870) in Bath Street. Several of these

tenements were built in red sandstone contrasting with the grey stone of the original Georgian buildings.

Thus, the Regency Spa 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. A 1200 foot pier was opened in 1871 (demolished 1917) which included a restaurant, shops and kiosks lining the western section of the Promenade.



*Ordnance Survey Plan of 1919*

The beginning of the 20th century saw the construction of some fine individual buildings, 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.



*Portobello Town Hall*



*St. John's Church - Brighton Place*

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. On the Promenade, the Marlborough Mansions (1899) near the foot of Bath Street were demolished in the 1960s as part of proposals to widen the Promenade. Several houses and shops were also demolished, creating the grassed area at the foot of Marlborough Street. At the same time the number of tourists coming to Portobello fell and many of the shops and kiosks which were once a common feature on the Promenade closed.



*Former Portobello open-air baths*

Despite the unfortunate nature of some developments that have taken place in the 20th century, 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 town retains a recognisable seaside character with its long promenade, reclaimed and improved beach, amusement arcades and funfair.

## *OVERVIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF PORTOBELLO CONSERVATION AREA*

Portobello retains its character of a small village/small town. It has a “town centre” with amenities such as the Police Station and Town Hall, an exceptional high quality residential hinterland and a long sea-front promenade.

### *KEY ELEMENTS AND TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS*

#### *Townscape*

On approaching the town, a series of focal points, particularly church spires, predominate. Together, the combination of views and landmarks give the area considerable legibility.

From the west, tenements on either side of the High Street form a gateway to the core area. From the east the transition is more gradual through residential development with large front gardens and houses, mainly villas, well set back from the street to shops with flats above which are built right to the heel of the pavement.

Attraction to the centre of the town is emphasised by a sequence of views framed by this changing building line, a change from residential to more intense commercial uses and the closing off of views to the sea as the centre is approached. There is a sense of arrival and activity at the crossroads junction, Town Hall and main shopping area.



*St. John's Church -  
Brighton Place*



*Shops in Brighton Place*

Some commercial activity in the side streets helps to draw the visitor down them towards the sea. Between the central area and the Promenade, the layers and spacing of development from different eras and of different building types, and a more intricate pattern of narrow streets and lanes give considerable permeability of views to buildings, streets and landmarks beyond. Small front gardens help to soften the street frontage and introduce colour.

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.

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 provides a more relaxed character when compared with their counterparts in the City Centre. Behind these frontages are a series of attractive access-ways and lanes which provide glimpsed views to landmark buildings beyond.



*The Beach*

### *Prominent Buildings*

There are a number of buildings which contribute to the character of the area and give focus to the townscape. In the High Street, the Town Hall and Police Station add variety to the facades of the High Street shopfronts.

The other notable public buildings within the conservation area are:

- The Tower, in Figgate Lane, was built in 1785, possibly by William Jamieson as a summerhouse for John Cunningham. This unusual octagonal castellated gothic building is constructed in sandstone with red brick dressings.
- Public Baths on the Promenade (1901) is in red sandstone and has a long front with two curving gables, first floor timber balconies and a brick chimney.
- Former post office in Windsor Place was designed by W. W. Robertson in 1904 and, like the baths, is in red sandstone.
- Designed in 1862 by David Bryce as Portobello's first Town Hall, the Baptist Church in the High Street has an impressive skyline with its ornate gothic clock in the centre gable flanked by Griffon gargoyles.
- The most prominent of Portobello's churches is St. John's Roman Catholic Church in Brighton Place (J. T. Walford, 1906). It is a highly individual building, mixing Gothic and Arts and Crafts styles, and its octagonal pinnacle towers dominate the town's skyline.



*Portobello  
Swim Centre*

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### *Open Spaces*

There are several open spaces which contribute to the townscape pattern of the area. These are 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 beach, along with the Promenade, provides the most significant amenity.

Together, they emphasise Portobello's reputation and character as a seaside "resort".

Other areas of open space are the bowling greens off Rosefield Avenue and the large open blaze area at Maryfield.

### *STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL CHARACTER - TOWNSCAPE*

- Series of focal points, views and landmarks lending the area considerable legibility
- Layers and spacing of development from different eras and of different building types allowing significant degree of permeability
- Generosity of space giving an air of informality and relaxation



*View of the Promenade from the beach*

## *ANALYSES OF 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 Regency buildings as well as a number of significant public buildings.
2. The traffic free Promenade beach and the attractions such as the permanent fair and amusement facilities highlight Portobello's reputation and 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.

### *HIGH STREET*

#### *Overview*

Portobello High Street shops represent the bulk of the shopping facilities in the conservation area and provides a focus of activity for the community.

#### *Spatial Pattern*

Approaching from the west, the High Street is generally linear before curving significantly 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.

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.



*Public space  
on Portobello  
High Street*



*Building heights on Portobello High street*

The building heights vary along the entire length of the south side from single storey to four storey. However, unlike the north side, there are no street blocks where the building height is uniform.

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.

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.

### *Building Materials*

The predominant building material in the High Street is natural stone which varies in colour, texture and condition resulting in a lack of harmony in the street scene. Some of the stone built buildings have been painted and where the paint has started to peel, the resulting poor image has a detrimental effect on the appearance of the street. Other than stone and painted stone a small number of buildings are in render and reconstituted stone.

### *Shops/Commercial Frontages*

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, most notably the supermarket site. 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. There are few shops off the High Street and many lie vacant or have been converted into housing. Two converted churches feature in the High Street; one was converted to a shop about 1930 and the other is now sheltered housing.



*Georgian properties on Portobello High Street*



Although there are shopfronts of historic or architectural quality, the majority are modern replacements in timber or metal which, for the most part, incorporating poor quality and badly proportioned signage. A number of shops are vacant and boarded up.

### *Townscape*

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.

Along the entire length of the High Street, excluding the areas where the buildings are set back, the pavement is significantly narrower on the south side of the street. The surface of the pavement varies from small buff coloured slabs to large grey slabs and a combination of large and small grey slabs, the latter between Bath Street and Regent Street on the north side. Within the central space, lines of red paviers break up the expanse of buff coloured slabs on both sides of the street. The other large expanse of slabbed area is at the west entrance to the conservation area which, although not within the conservation area, nevertheless has an impact on the character.

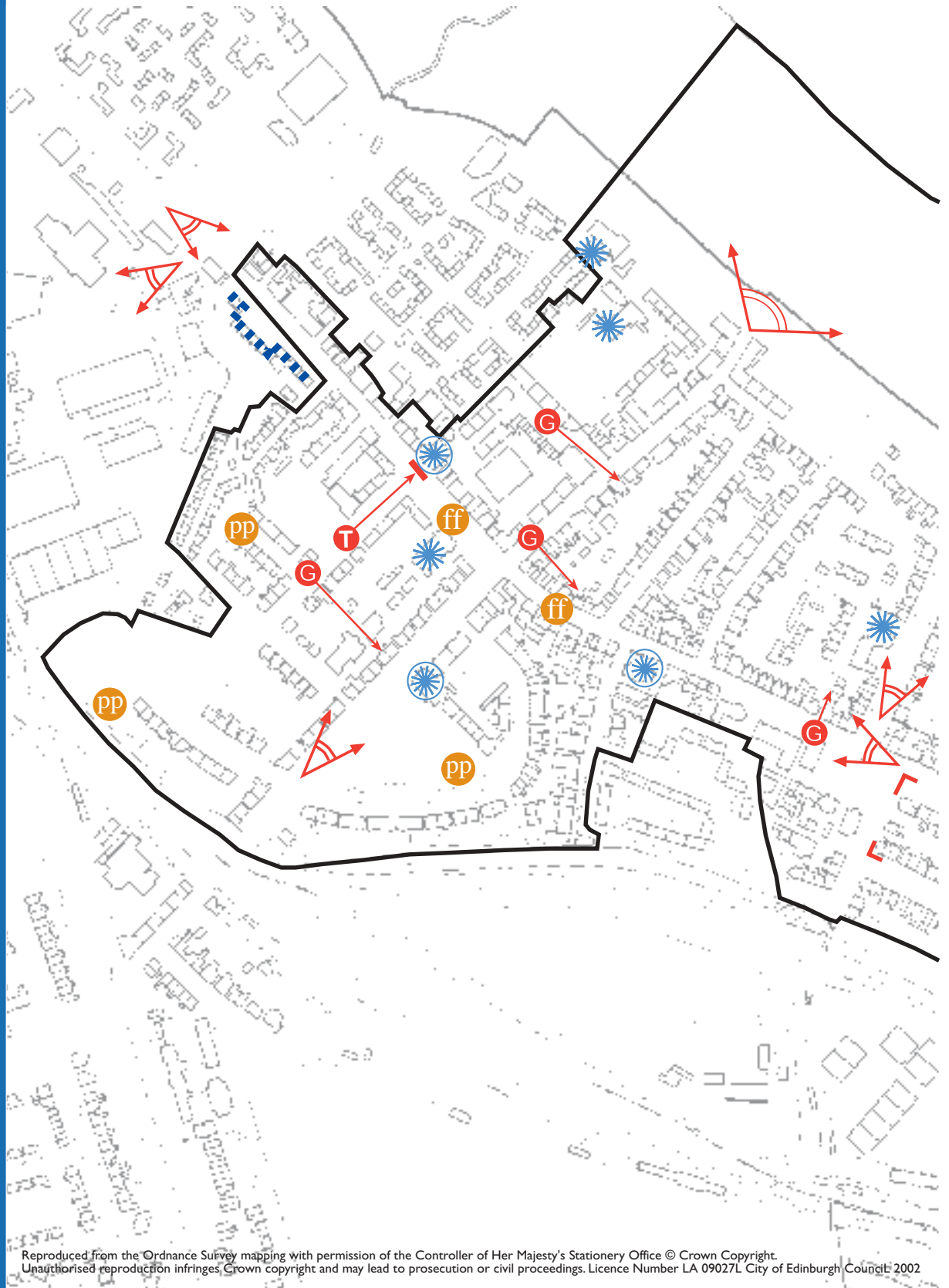
There are few significant vistas in the High Street, except in the streets and lanes leading to the Promenade which offer views of the sea. Bath Street, which changes direction just before it reaches the Promenade, provides a glimpse of the sea.

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.

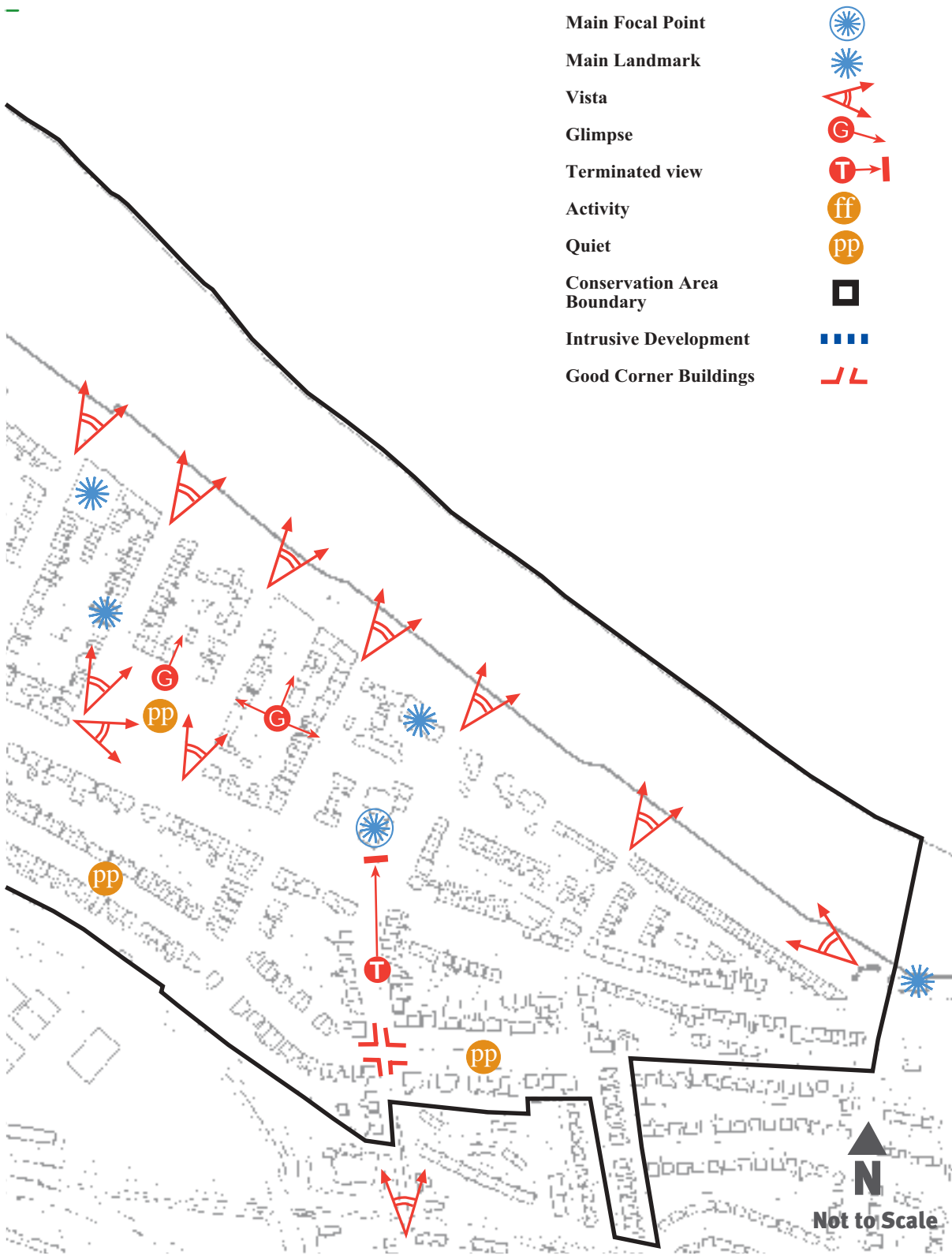


*View down  
Bellfield Street*

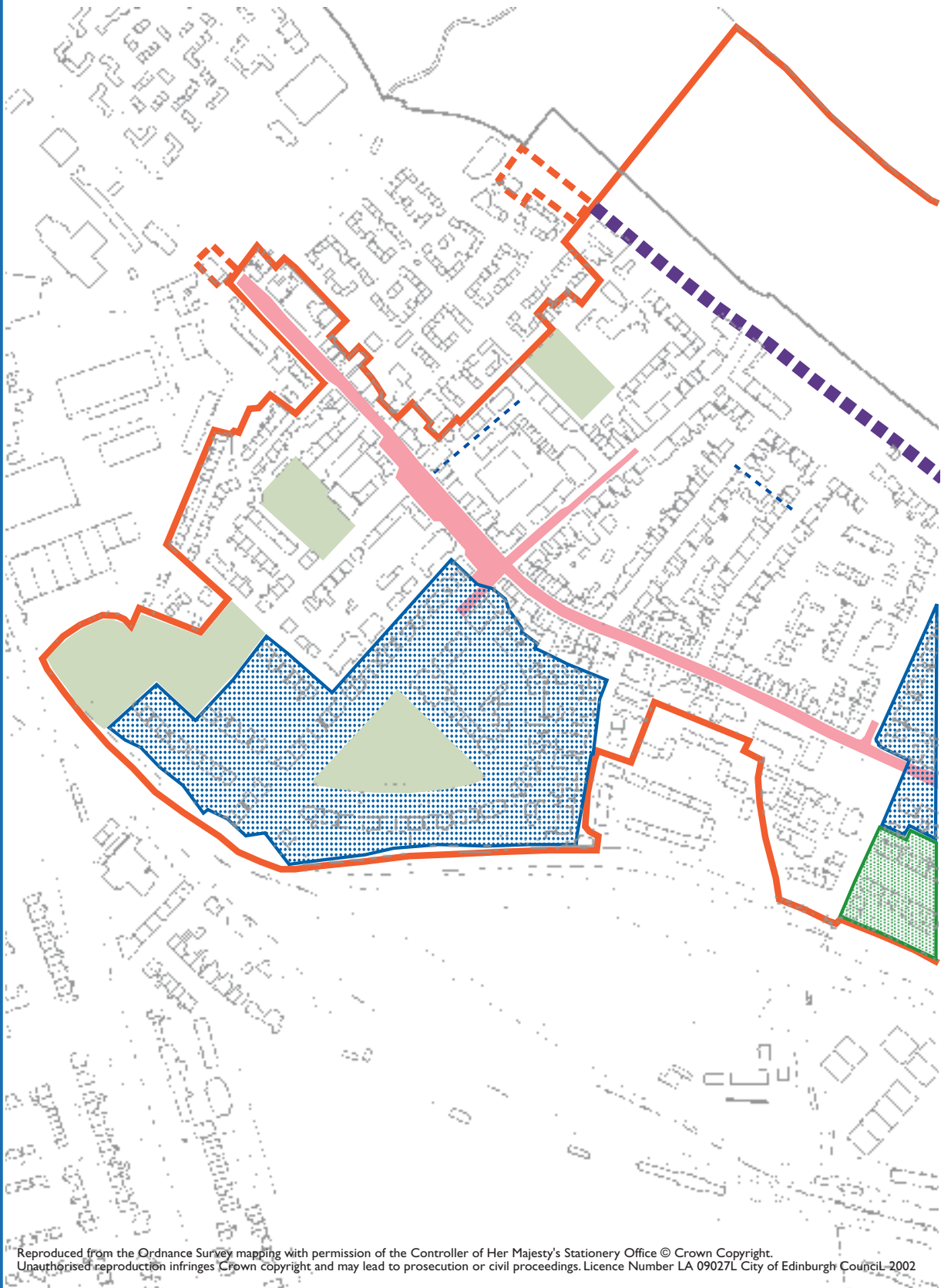
## TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

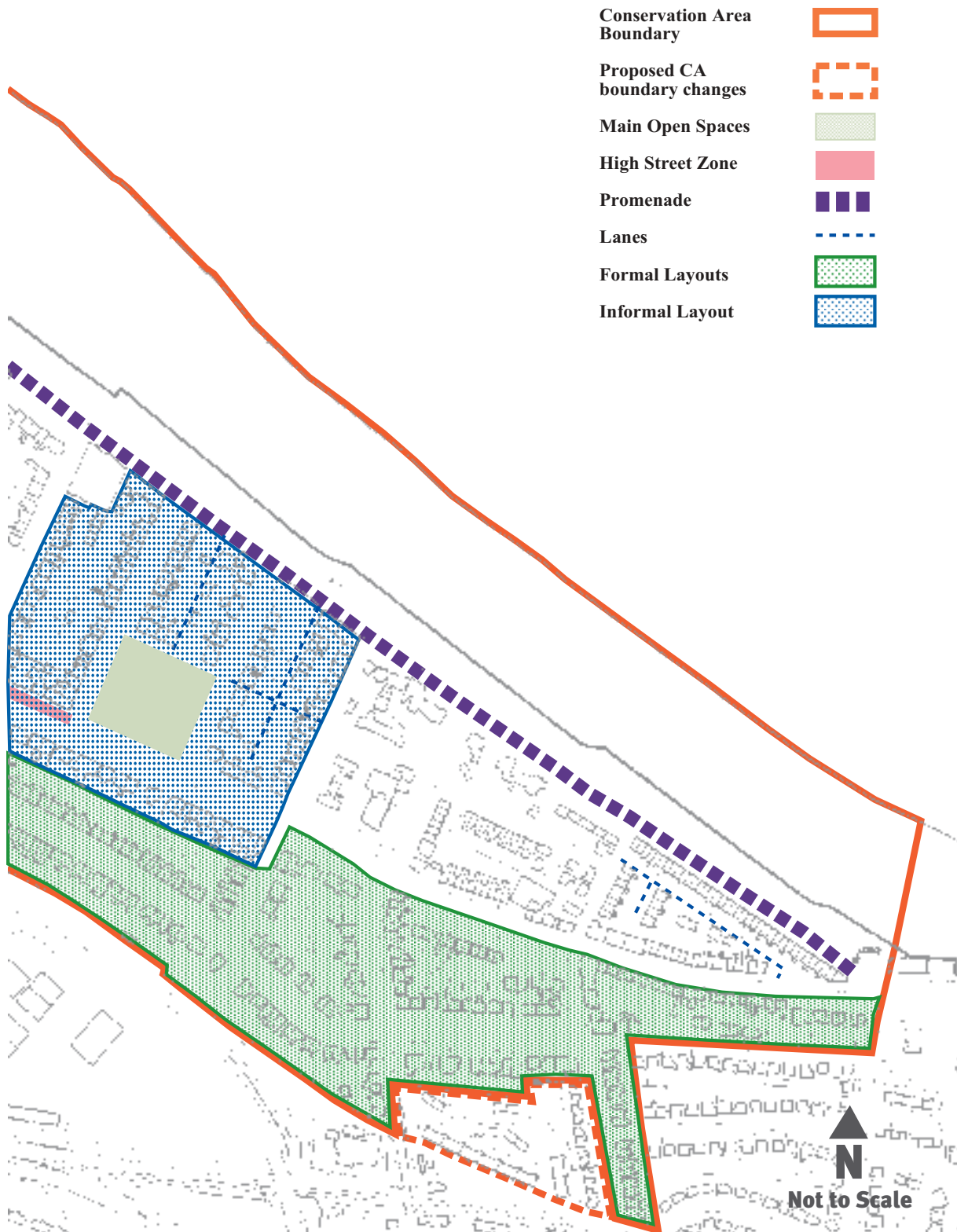


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## *CHARACTER ZONES AND PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES*





### *Architectural Character*

The commercial section of Portobello 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.



*Large scale Victorian tenement on Portobello High Street*

The street retains its Georgian/Victorian character, being 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.

#### *STATEMENTS OF ESSENTIAL CHARACTER - HIGH STREET*

- Curvi-linear spine running parallel to the coastline
- Sense of arrival and departure as road narrows and building line changes
- Views of the sea at various points along the street
- Small number of prominent buildings
- Predominance of natural stone on the upper floors
- Presence of a small number of good quality original and historic shopfronts
- Building lines to the heel of the pavement
- A mix of uses, often with residential on upper floors
- Variation in building periods, types and heights

## PROMENADE

### *Overview*

The Promenade was constructed during the Victorian era. It can be seen from Wood’s map of 1824 that, prior to its construction, gardens and garden walls extended down to the beach and the seafront was generally 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. It was eventually completed in 1891 and adopted as a public highway.

Today, the Promenade is a 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 had been constructed around the same time as the Promenade.

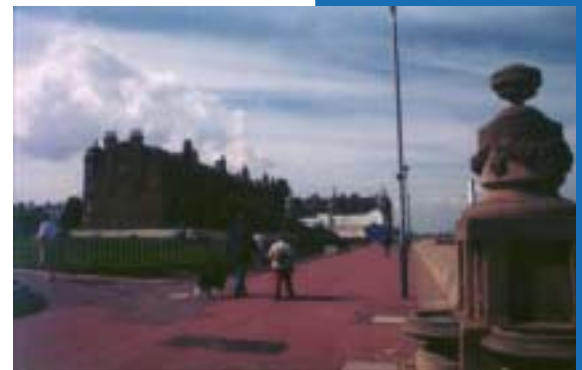


*Portobello pier*

### *Street Pattern/Streetscape*

The Promenade starts at the bottom of Kings Road and curves 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. In addition to the red tarmac, there are areas of grey concrete slabs and, in the extended area between John Street and James Street, it is half-grey tarmac. The red tarmac does not have a uniform appearance due to patch repairs in a different colour.



*The Promenade*

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



*Playground adjacent to Promenade*

A small number of square planting troughs have been located at various points. 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 former Ghost Train site to the front of Bath Place and the former paddling pool site at the corner of John Street are both underused and unkempt, giving an air of degeneration to 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.

From the Promenade, there are views of Fife, Cockenzie Power Station and North Berwick Law.

### *Architectural Character*

There is a rich mix of building styles fronting, or slightly set back from the Promenade. 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 low level "Fun Park" amusement building to the north west is just outside the conservation area, but has a significant impact on the character of this part of the Promenade. Another amusement arcade has been built in front of the Tower between Figgate Lane and Beach Lane (Nobles Amusements). There is also a two storey painted stone building at the bottom of Bath Street, which housed an amusement arcade and cafe but is now vacant.



### *Building Materials*

The predominant material for the residential buildings along the Promenade is red and grey sandstone, a small number of which have been painted (in particular some of the single storey properties between Beach Lane and Bath Street). The 1996 four storey flatted block at the bottom of Pittville Street has been constructed in re-constituted stone. The predominant roof covering is slate.

The amusement arcade building in front of the Tower has a predominantly timber frontage, incorporating murals and a red felt roof. The other amusement building outside the conservation area is a mix of materials including brick, glass, metal cladding and render.

Whilst the majority of the boundary walls which front the Promenade are constructed in rubble stone (some with railings), there are also rendered brick/stone walls and, to the front of the large grassed area between Straiton Place and the Promenade, a low metal palisade fence. A wire mesh fence also bounds the grassed area immediately outside the conservation area to the north.

### *Shops/Commercial Frontages*

The only shop on the Promenade is located on the ground floor of a four-storey tenement block, adjacent to the public house, at the bottom of Bath Street. The corner property at the easternmost access to the Promenade has a commercial use on the ground floor and associated signage.

The only other commercial frontages on the Promenade, and within the conservation area, is the timber fronted Nobles Amusements. The other main commercial frontage the “Fun Park” amusement arcade, is outwith the conservation area.



*Tower Amusements*



*Shop on  
The Promenade*



### *Beach/Coastline*

The conservation area extends eastward to include the beach as Portobello's coastal location was integral to its development. The beach is a good expanse of sand, broken up by a series of timber breakers. The beach is generally well-maintained and clean. Dog walkers use the beach all year round but in the summer months, it is also used for leisure and play activities.

### ***STATEMENTS OF ESSENTIAL CHARACTER - PROMENADE***

- Linear traffic free walkway with views of Fife, Cockenzie Power Station and North Berwick Law
- Predominance of stone built properties, many with front doors to the Promenade, and generally retaining their original features.
- Some good quality stone boundary walls
- Easy access from side streets/lanes
- Seaside attractions, funfair and indoor swimming pool
- Well maintained sandy beach

## RESIDENTIAL ZONE

### Overview

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.



*Mid 19th Century  
properties on  
Elcho Terrace*

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.

## GEORGIAN DEVELOPMENT

### *Street Pattern/Streetscape*

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.

### *Architectural Character*

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 shapes and sizes. 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 pantiles (some having later slate roofs).



*Georgian property  
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.

### *Building Materials*

For a district with several brickworks, producing most of the brick used to build internal walls in Edinburgh's New Town, few houses were built of brick in Portobello and even fewer remain. The group of brick-built houses on the south side of High Street, opposite Regent Street are some of the few remaining from this period. Grey ashlar sandstone is the predominant building material with a few houses displaying fronts of squared rubble. Scots slates are used on roofs and windows are timber framed sash and case, originally with small panes of glass. Garden walls are generally of rubble stone or brick, frequently with a smooth cement render and natural stone copings. Many original ornamental railings have been removed, although in recent years, a number have been replaced under the Portobello Town Scheme.



*Back access lane*



*Georgian single storey villa*

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## VICTORIAN DEVELOPMENT

### *Street Pattern/Streetscape*

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.

### *Architectural Character*

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.



*Victorian villas*



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.

Tenement 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.

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### *Building Materials*

Generally the same range of building materials continued to be used in the Victorian period - grey sandstone, Scots slates and timber sash and case windows. However, there was one very important addition - the use of red sandstone. This is most apparent at the foot of Bath Street, in Straiton Place and along the Promenade where red sandstone was used to build several large tenement blocks. The same stone was used to construct a scheme of neat two-storey terraced houses in Ormelie Terrace and Bedford Terrace on the site of a demolished Victorian villa.

Brick was used to build several of the workers cottages in the Adelphi area. These cottages, like the earlier cottages in Joppa Road, have no front gardens are entered directly from the street.

#### *STATEMENTS OF ESSENTIAL CHARACTER - RESIDENTIAL ZONE*

- 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

## *OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT*

### *Introduction*

There are a number of elements that detract from the character of the conservation area. These items are detailed below under the three sub-areas of the High Street, Promenade and Residential Zone. Where appropriate, areas that would benefit from some form of enhancement scheme are highlighted. Possible changes to the existing conservation area boundary are also explored.

### *HIGH STREET*

#### *Appearance of Upper Floors*

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.

Although 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 streetscene. This poor image is only 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.

#### *Shop Frontages*

Although there are a small number of original or historic shopfronts along the High Street, the majority now have modern single paned, aluminium non-traditional frames with flush doors. These frontages fail to relate to the upper floors in any significant way 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.



*Poor quality shopfront  
on Portobello High  
Street*



The single storey shopfronts in the High Street are generally flat-roofed and of poor quality creating awkward gaps within the street. Furthermore, the presence of a small number of vacant and boarded-up shopfronts has a detrimental impact on the appearance of the streetscene, adding to the run-down appearance.

### *Streetscape*

There is no common treatment to the hard surfaced pedestrian areas in the High Street. The large expanse of unbroken paving to the northwest of the conservation area creates a poor approach. The streetscape of the High Street includes a variety of bus stops, trees (south side), lampposts, litter bins, benches, telephone boxes and other services, to which there is no unifying treatment.

### *Traffic*

The High Street is subject to traffic congestion at certain times which restricts pedestrian movement.

## *PROMENADE*

### *Vacant/Underused Land*

There are three significant areas of vacant or underused land: the site just outside the conservation area to the northwest, the former ghost train site to the front of Bath Place and the former paddling pool site at the corner of John Street. The degraded nature of these three areas has a negative impact on how both locals and visitors perceive the Promenade. Consideration should be given to their redevelopment or landscaping as appropriate.



*Public toilets  
at the Promenade*



*Former ghost train  
site on Promenade*



*Former paddling pool  
on John Street/Promenade*

### *Streetscape Elements*

There are a number of unifying streetscape elements along the Promenade, notably the street furniture and the low dividing wall to the beachside. The red asphalt surface, however, is basic with repair work in black asphalt having left a patchy appearance. The Promenade would benefit from a comprehensive re-surfacing scheme in an appropriate and sympathetic finish.

### *Commercial Frontages*

In general, the commercial frontages along the Promenade are not of high quality with both their design and materials failing to enhance the character of the Promenade. The fun-park complex, although not within the conservation area, forms an important element at the approach to the conservation area from the northwest and detracts from the character of the area. The juxtaposition of Nobles Amusements with the

Tower affects the setting and restricts the views of the listed building.



*Vacant Commercial premises at the Promenade*



*Tower Amusements and Tower*

### *Loss of Original Features*

For the most part, residential properties fronting the Promenade have retained their original window pattern. However, the appearance of the terraced houses at the east end of the Promenade has been affected by window alterations, the loss of railings and variation in the appearance of the low stone wall.

### *Beach/Coastline*

It is important that the beach is kept clean in order to encourage leisure activity. The existing coastline should be preserved against development which would be harmful to amenity, landscape quality and accessibility for recreation.

## *RESIDENTIAL ZONE*

### *Inappropriate Development*

Because of the nature of the stock of villas within the Portobello Conservation Area, some over-development has occurred in back gardens as well as some over-building in back lanes. Careful attention needs to be paid to the extent and type of extension and particularly to the amount of garden which is built on.

In addition, some recent development, mostly at the ends of streets has tended to block out the permeability that is an attractive feature of the area. It also ruins scale and proportions.

Proposed new and/or infill development should relate more to the existing character. For example, it is not necessary to finish streets running down to beach with a feature turret. There are some exemplary corner/junction designs at Argyle Crescent/Dalkeith Street/Brunstane Road.



*New development on Pitville Street/Promenade*

### *Loss of Original Features*

A major threat to the architectural unity of the residential zone is the loss of original features such as railings, doors, windows and chimneys. A further problem is the condition of much of the stonework which is particularly badly affected by the elements and subsequent inappropriate repair.



*Altered property at Regent Street*

### *Erosion of Housing Mix*

The sub-division of larger properties, in order to create smaller flatted units, is reducing the variety of housing types within the residential zone.

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### *SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGES*

At the west entrance at the south corner of High Street and Fishwives Causeway, there is a tall stone tenement that is excluded from the conservation area. It plays a very strong role as one side of a ‘gateway’ looking towards the centre.

Another area for inclusion is Joppa Gardens and Grove along with the bowling green, at the south east corner of the conservation area as there are a number of high quality stone - built properties.



*Joppa Grove*

## ***GENERAL INFORMATION***

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### ***Statutory Policies Relating to Portobello***

The North East Edinburgh Local Plan identifies Portobello as lying wholly within a “Housing and Compatible Uses” land use designation, within which the Council seeks to protect the high level of amenity enjoyed by the neighbourhood. Consequently, impact on residential amenity is a determining consideration for all development proposals, including changes of use. The parks within the conservation area are designated open spaces and there is a presumption in favour of retention.

Portobello Beach, as part of the Firth of Forth is designated as a Ramsar site, Special Protection Area and Special Site of Scientific Interest. The ornithological and habitat interest is the over-riding concern when determining development proposals.

There are a number of listed buildings within the conservation area and the local plan incorporates policies which seek to ensure that proposals affecting a listed building are considered for their effect on its character. The important consideration is that alterations, extensions or changes of use should not diminish the architectural integrity of the building.

The Local Plan also contains policy advice on a range of issues including protection of built and natural environment, redevelopment within the conservation area, new development and change of use.

### ***Supplementary Guidelines***

The Council also produces supplementary planning guidance on a range of development control issues. These are contained within the Development Quality Handbook.

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### *Implications of Conservation Area Status*

Designation as a conservation area has the following implications:

- Permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(Scotland)Order 1992, are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stonecleaning, external painting, roof alterations and the formation of hard surfaces. The area of extensions to dwelling houses which may be erected without consent is also restricted and there are additional control over satellite dishes.
- Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the planning authority can seek approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict permitted development rights.
- The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals. The Portobello Conservation Area has Article 4 Directions covering the following classes of development:
  1. enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house;
  3. provision or alteration of buildings or enclosures within the curtilage of a dwelling house;
  6. installation, alteration or replacement of satellite antennae, and;
  7. construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure.

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- The North East Edinburgh Local Plan proposes an extension to the degree of control under the Article 4 Direction Order to cover the following classes of development:
    - 30 local authority development
    - 33 local authority development;
    - 38 water undertakings;
    - 39 gas suppliers;
    - 40 electricity undertakings;
    - 67 development by telecommunication code system operators.
  - Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations will, therefore, be advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application.
  - Buildings which are not statutorily listed can normally be demolished without approval under the Planning Regulations. Within conservation areas, the demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation area consent.

### *Protection of Trees*

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

### *Grants for Conservation*

Grants may be available towards the repair or restoration of original features, particularly under the long-running Portobello Town Scheme. Such grants are competitive and subject to budget availability.

### *The Role of the Public*

It is essential that property owners accept their maintenance responsibilities. The emphasis should be on the repair rather than replacement of original features, as these contribute to the conservation area character as a whole. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style and of an appropriate scale.



*Railing reinstatement on Bellfield Street*



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