

Blacket Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Planning Committee
12 June 2003

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present a draft of the Blacket Conservation Area Character Appraisal, for Committee's consideration, before undertaking public consultation.

2 Summary

- 2.1 National Guidelines emphasise the importance of preparing Conservation Area Character Appraisals. The preparation of such an appraisal for Blacket is part of this Council's programme to cover all of the conservation areas, which will help justify the application of Article 4 Directions.

3 Main report

- 3.1 The Committee on 6 November 1997 approved a report that outlined the process to be adopted for the preparation of character appraisals for Edinburgh's 38 conservation areas. This involved inviting local amenity associations, where willing, to contribute information on the character and appearance of their areas, which would form an important input to the character appraisals.
- 3.2 The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation, rather designation should be seen as a commitment to positive action for the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance. "Users" of conservation areas, which include residents, property owners and developers also have a significant role in the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance. It is, therefore, important that both the authorities and other groups who have an interest in conservation areas are aware of those elements, which must be preserved or enhanced.

- 3.3 One way of getting this message across to professionals and the public alike is through the formulation of Conservation Area Character Appraisals. A character appraisal should define the special qualities and architectural and historic interest which warranted the conservation area designation. In particular, a character appraisal should determine the distinctive qualities of the conservation area as a whole, rather than focus only on the constituent parts. They provide the following benefits:
- used in conjunction with existing statutory planning policies, detailed guidance and site specific development briefs, they can assist the ongoing management of conservation areas;
 - they can form the basis for programmes of enhancement; and
 - they can also provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for local plan policies and development control decisions.
- 3.4 National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG 18) stresses that local authorities should consider preparing character appraisals for all conservation areas within their area on a priority basis. The Scottish Executive have declined to approve any new Article 4 Direction Orders until such time as character appraisals for the relevant area have been prepared. This makes the preparation of character appraisals an imperative where planning controls require to be strengthened.
- 3.5 The preparation of the Blasket Conservation Area Character Appraisal is part of the programme of work to establish a framework for the consideration of an Article 4 Direction and to coincide with the Local Plan programme.
- 3.6 The draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal will be the subject of public consultation within the local area and with city-wide heritage based amenity groups. The following organisations, as well as other Council departments will be consulted before finalising the character appraisal:
- The Blasket Association
 - The West Blasket Association
 - Scottish Civic Trust
 - Cockburn Association
 - Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
 - Historic Scotland

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Any costs associated with the consultation exercise will be contained within the Department's Revenue Budget for 2003/2004.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The draft Blacket Conservation Area Character Appraisal is part of a programme of work to define the special qualities and architectural and historic interest that warranted the conservation area designation. Public consultation is appropriate before the draft is finalised.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the Blacket Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a draft for consultation purposes.

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Appendices Appendix 1: Draft Blacket Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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Wards affected Newington (49)

Background Papers None

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT BLACKET CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, describes conservation areas as "...areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which 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 Ministers are obliged to protect conservation areas from development that adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore important that the authorities, other groups who have an interest in the conservation area and residents are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced.

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

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

Conservation Area Details

The Blacket Conservation Area lies approximately a mile south east of the centre of Edinburgh and falls within the Newington Ward. The Conservation Area was designated on 13 January 1972 and is considered 'Outstanding' for grant purposes.

The Conservation Area (FIG 1) is bounded on its southern side by a line running from the corner of Dalkeith Road/East Mayfield along East & West Mayfield to South Gray Street. The boundary then turns from the Western edge to encompass the back gardens on South/Upper Gray Street. The National Map Library on the corner of Causewayside/Salisbury Place is included within the Conservation Area and forms its north west corner. The boundary then follows a line along Salisbury Place and Salisbury Road where it is drawn out to include the properties on its northern side. The boundary follows Dalkeith Road south taking in the historic buildings of Edinburgh University Pollock Halls of Residence before meeting up with East Mayfield.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS & DEVELOPMENT

Between 1586 and 1795, the lands of Newington in which the Blacket area is located consisted of open countryside and a few small farms. Located in Edinburgh's Burgh Muir the lands of Newington were a large flat expanse of land to the west of Arthur's Seat.

By the second half of the 18th century, Edinburgh was experiencing severe problems of overcrowding in the Old Town, which were initially alleviated by the construction of Edinburgh's New Town. The South Bridge Act of 1785 facilitated Edinburgh's expansion towards the south and by 1788 the Old and New Towns had an effective connection with the tenemented Nicolson Street and the Lands of Newington.

The first notable development in the Blacket area, built in 1805, was Newington House, located within a site of eight and a half acres. Newington House was to provide the focus around which the Blacket area was developed. A smaller mansion at Salisbury Green predated Newington House. Built in 1780, this mansion was extended in 1820, and in 1860 turreted Baronial towers were added.

The first villa developments within the Conservation Area adopted a sequential linear form along Minto Street, and by 1817 (FIG 2) there were a number of villas on the east side of Minto Street. There was also considerable development on Upper and South Gray Street, with the beginning of a terrace at Middleby Street. The villas along Salisbury Road were largely complete, with March Hall having been constructed on the eastern edge of the Conservation Area.

The development of the core Blacket area was initiated by Benjamin Bell of Hunthill, a distinguished Edinburgh surgeon. In 1803, when he bought the lands of Newington, he started the planning of Edinburgh's first large-scale development to the south. However, he died in 1806 before his plans were realised. His son, George Bell, commissioned James Gillespie Graham to draw up plans for development, starting with Blacket Place. Under the feuing conditions, the value of the houses erected was not to be less than £600. The feuing conditions for the whole area illustrate the concern the Bells had to conserve amenity throughout the estate.

In 1825, the stone pillars and gates, at the Minto Street and Dalkeith Road ends of Blacket Place, Blacket Avenue and Mayfield Terrace were erected. A porter's Lodge was planned at each gate to ensure seclusion and safety in this select development.

The land was further subdivided into smaller lots, according to James Gillespie Graham's feuing plan. By 10 October 1825, the new feus were advertised in the Edinburgh Evening Courant:

"These lands command the best access and drainage and are supplied with water from public pipes...(they are) within the bounds of police, and are well watched and lighted. For the benefit of the feuars it has been resolved to keep present approaches and porters' lodges in Minto Street and Dalkeith Road which will secure to the several lots within the gates all the privacy and convenience of country residencies and will render them more desirable than any yet offered to the public. Advantageous terms will be given to the Builders in respect of the period of entry, advances of money, if required, and other points."

The northern part of Blacket Place was developed around the 1830s and contained semi-detached and individual properties, each with their own columned doorway, high gates and railings. The area towards the west of Blacket was largely completed in the 1830s. Kirkwood's 1834 map of Edinburgh shows the villas of Upper Gray Street, the terraced streets of Middleby Street and Duncan Street.

The introduction of horse drawn buses and the opening of Newington Railway Station in the mid 19th century accelerated growth in the area. The properties towards the southern part of Blacket Place were developed and the majority of the large Victorian villas on Mayfield Terrace were built.

In 1907, Dr J G Bartholomew, of the map-making firm, moved into Newington House and was the last private owner. In 1915 the house was bought and used as a centre for the Scottish National Institute for the War Blinded. After lying empty for several years and succumbing to dry rot, Newington House was eventually demolished in 1966. The ground now houses student flats for Edinburgh University.

One of the chief attractions of the Blacket development was the privacy afforded by the high walls and restricted entry controlled by gate keepers. The streets were private to the feuars, and the superiors pledged "to keep gate keepers in each of the five lodges, for all time coming". The original plans show lodges for all five entrances, although only the three lodges on Dalkeith Road remain (the lodge at the Minto Street end of Blacket Avenue was demolished in the 1920s).

There was little major change in the overall grain of the area during the 20th century. However, there were a number of significant new developments around the periphery: the Synagogue on Salisbury Road was built in 1932, the former Longmore Hospital on Salisbury Place was completed in 1947, Newington House was demolished in 1966 and developed for student flats, and the National Library extension was built on the site of the former Middlemass biscuit factory at the corner of Causewayside and Salisbury Place in 1995.

ANALYSIS & ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

Site Context and Views

The Blacket Conservation Area lies on a gentle south facing slope and is dissected by Dalkeith Road and Minto Street, two of the principal north south

routes leading into the city centre from Gilmerton and Dalkeith. These principal north south gateway routes effectively divide the Conservation Area into three sections. The core Blacket area which is separated from the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls of residence /Marchhall Place area to the east, and the Duncan Street/Gray Street area to the west.

The western edge of the Conservation Area takes in all the properties lying on the west side of Upper and South Gray Streets, deviating to the north to include the prominent National Library building on the corner of Ratcliffe Terrace and Salisbury Road.

Within the core of the Conservation Area, there are significant views out of the area. The dominating mass of Arthur's Seat rises to the east and is clearly visible from Blacket Place and Avenue. Views to the south are only present from Dalkeith Road and Minto Street, where the southern boundary of the city and the countryside beyond are visible. The views to the north are also limited, due to the gradient of the land which blocks out the city centre skyline.

Essential Character: Site Context & Views

- **The Conservation Area is divided by the two principal north south gateway routes of Dalkeith Road and Minto Street that effectively dissect the area into three distinct elements.**
- **There are prominent views of Arthur's Seat from Dalkeith Road and the core Blacket area.**

Spatial Structure

The area contains three distinct elements resulting from its division by Minto Street and Dalkeith Road. Both of these roads are principal routes into the City Centre.

West Blacket

This area is generally rectangular in shape, formed by the western strip of the Conservation Area which is bounded by Minto Street, West Mayfield, the rear of the western boundaries of the properties on South Gray Street and Upper Gray Street and Salisbury Place. There are more connections with the surrounding areas (especially Minto Street) than in the Core Blacket Area. The main thoroughfare of Minto Street is lined by large detached and semi-detached Georgian and Victorian housing, while to the west the principal development form is Georgian single storey cottages and villas interrupted by former industrial buildings and offices. Duncan Street provides a classical Georgian Terrace on its northern side.

There is little public open space and the small front gardens provide a compact urban environment in this area. There are also substantial private rear gardens to most properties.

Essential Character

- **The development pattern consists of single and two storey Georgian terraces and villas interspersed with former Victorian commercial buildings.**
- **The narrow internal street layout allied to small front gardens gives a secluded introverted character to the area.**

Core Blacket Area

The Core Blacket Area is clearly delineated on its east and west sides by the busy arterial routes of Dalkeith Road and Minto Street. The entrances at Blacket Place, Blacket Avenue and Mayfield Terrace are relatively narrow and are visually restricted by the lodge buildings and high stone walls. The seclusion is further emphasised by the restricted views to the surrounding area.

This area is largely square in shape with a perpendicular grid layout, and follows the original plan provided by James Gillespie Graham in 1825. This formerly gated estate is characterised by standard plot sizes, occupied by a mix of detached, semi-detached, and small groups of terraced houses. These properties have mature garden areas to the front and large gardens to the rear. The area is scattered with mature trees and these, with the gardens, give a pleasant garden suburb feel to this area.

Subsequent alterations and extensions to the height and width of some of the properties have partially changed the spatial structure. A number of the villas have ground floor extensions that have linked neighbouring properties; this blocks views into the rear gardens and results in a terraced appearance.

There is little communal open space within the area. Blacket Avenue, the principal road through the area has a narrow fringe of shrubs and trees on either side. The front gardens of all the villa properties have an abundance of mature planting and are of generous proportions, which give the street considerable width and a sense of openness.

The majority of open space is located in private rear gardens and is shielded by the buildings themselves. These private back gardens constitute a large area that is not apparent from the streets. The back gardens generally back on to adjacent gardens creating substantial areas of open space. The grounds around the Edinburgh University halls of residence and the former Nursing Home on Alfred Place form an extensive area of open space.

The properties on the margins of this area generally follow the same format as those described above, with the exception of East Mayfield on the southern boundary, where a long stone wall contains the rear gardens of Mayfield Terrace.

The northern boundary spans both sides of Salisbury Place and here there is a diverse mix of Georgian residential properties interspersed with a former 1930s nurse's home and a synagogue.

Essential Character

- **The predominant development form comprises Georgian and Victorian properties occupying large plots.**
- **The perpendicular street layout.**

- **The gardens, abundant mature planting within private gardens and in communal areas which make a significant contribution to the character of the area.**

East Blasket

This area extends to the east of Dalkeith Road and includes the three historic mansions contained in the grounds of the University's Pollock Halls of Residence and the adjacent NHS Trust. These are distinctive and stand in large grounds.

A small group of Georgian villas front onto Dalkeith Road just to the north of Priestfield Parish Church which acts as a significant local landmark and impressive focal point to the eastern edge of the Conservation Area.

The spatial structure is characterised by the extensive adjacent area of parkland at the foot of Arthur's Seat which dramatically overlooks the area. The general quiet atmosphere of this area contrast with the busy Dalkeith Road.

Essential Character

- **Large garden grounds allied to the visual proximity of Arthur's Seat give an open landscaped feeling to this area.**

Townscape

Dalkeith Road and Minto Street are wide gateway routes into the city centre from the south containing large Georgian and Victorian villas. The buildings are set back with garden frontages, the majority of which have now been converted into car parking to cater for the numerous guesthouses. There have been successive additions and alterations to some of these villas over the years that have had a negative impact on the townscape of the area.

Minto Street (A7) is lined with two storey villas, some with extensions and alterations effectively linking properties, thereby blocking spaces and disturbing their massing. The wide front gardens accentuate the feeling of width and space. Dalkeith Road (A68) curves towards the west and is characterised on its western side by villa properties. Spence Street is a small cul-de-sac containing a terrace of Victorian houses. On the eastern side, the boundary encompasses the tall turreted buildings of Edinburgh University and the surrounding spaces.

West Blasket

This area contains a varied range of townscape elements and is less formally planned than the Core Area. Georgian residential development predominates,

generally fronted by private gardens bounded by low stone walls. The Edinburgh Geographical Institute, which fronts Duncan Street, and the former coach works on Upper Gray Street represent examples of recent residential conversion.

Non residential development is interspersed with the mainly residential uses. The stone masonry yard located behind one of the villas and the saw mill beside the Duncan Street Dental School consist of cast iron sheds and work yards that are visually out of context with the historic townscape of the area. The site at the corner of Duncan Street/Upper Gray Street contains a number of timber garages and workshops. Along Duncan Street over the Upper/South Gray Street crossroads there is a cluster of non-residential buildings (dental school, Baptist church and telephone exchange). St Columba's, a RC Church, stands towards the northern end of Upper Gray Street.

The National Library building, situated at the corner of Causewayside and Salisbury Place is a major landmark feature in the Conservation Area in terms of its scale, form and materials, and Salisbury Place consists of a mixture of modern and Victorian houses with a small row of local shops.

Essential Character

- **The west Blacket area demonstrates a diverse mix of building types given coherence by the limited range of traditional materials.**
- **Front and back gardens of terraced and villa properties provide open space relief.**
- **A grouping of public and commercial buildings helps bring a diversity of townscape features to this otherwise residential area.**

Core Blacket Area

The entrances into the Core Blacket Area, the most unified of the three areas, are defined by enclosed gateways. Four of these entrances, three off the Dalkeith Road and one off Minto Street, are very restricted and those on Dalkeith Road have gate-piers and lodge houses, whose original purpose was to provide security within this select area. These entrance features are of townscape interest to the area and symbolise its exclusive character.

The area has a successful mix of single villas and terraces of large houses, that are shielded from the surrounding city. There are clear views to Arthur's Seat from the eastern end of Blacket Place and Blacket Avenue. The proportions of the houses and mature planting give the area an air of maturity. This is a tribute to the original guidelines set out in the feu charters, stating that plot sizes were to be uniform, building lines respected and that the height of buildings should not exceed 2 storeys. The character of the area stems from these original guidelines and gives the area a defined unity, without diminishing the individual characteristics that give each property its charm.

The Georgian villas at the north end of Blacket Place are collectively very similar in terms of height, building line and materials. Their individual character is derived from subtle variations in architectural detailing. There have been a number of ground floor extensions that have resulted in the linking of neighbouring properties. This has resulted in restricted views of gable walls and rear gardens and gives these villas a terraced feel. One of the most distinctive townscape features of the villas is their elevation to incorporate basement levels.

Edinburgh University Halls of Residence on Blacket Avenue are located on a sizeable piece of land, with trees and plants effectively blocking views to it from the surrounding area. Belleville Lodge on Blacket Avenue is one of the largest villas in the Blacket area. Set within extensive gardens, it is situated between the back gardens of Blacket Place and Dryden Place. A band of shrubs and small trees line the entire northern side of Blacket Avenue, which contrasts with the more intensively developed Blacket Place.

The northern side of Mayfield Terrace from the Dalkeith Road end to the corner of Alfred Place, consists of villas that have been aligned to minimise views from neighbouring properties on the western side and possibly to improve views of Arthur's Seat. The adjoining side of the street follows a more consistent alignment, with the rest of the area and consists of large villa properties with more variation than is apparent in the rest of the area. These villas are the largest in the Core Area and are set back from the street, with substantial private gardens to the rear. The road curves into a narrow gap when leaving Mayfield Terrace and entering Minto Street. The back gardens of Mayfield Terrace are bounded by a high stone wall that runs virtually the whole length of the street. There is also no pavement on the wall's side.

Salisbury Road includes a number of two storey semi-detached Victorian villas with front gardens. The former Nurses' Home at No. 31 is a good example of 1930's architecture. This five storey building with modern extension on the top floor is of impressive proportions and dominates the area. It is set back a considerable length from the road with a high boundary wall.

The Salisbury Centre, a Victorian villa, is set in a large plot of land with high boundary walls. The red brick walls and dome of the Synagogue contributes to the mixed nature of this street, providing another interesting feature in the townscape of this area.

Essential Character

- **Unified architectural form and materials.**
- **Mix of villas and terraces of substantial houses.**
- **Planting provides an air of maturity.**

East Blacket

This area contains a small number of fine Georgian and Victorian mansion houses now occupied by institutional uses and situated in their own grounds. New halls of residence partly occupy and disrupt the space between these mansions and Dalkeith Road. The effect of this modern development is to detract from the townscape qualities of openness and quiet solitude, by providing an intrusive element in terms of height, materials and massing.

The northern part of the Dalkeith Road frontage is defined by the high stone wall of Salisbury Green shielding the University's Halls of Residence and reducing their impact. A short terrace of Georgian houses set back from the road occupies the southern part.

The Priestfield Parish Church designed in an Italian renaissance style punctuates the southern corner of this area and provides a major landmark for the whole Conservation Area.

The backcloth of Holyrood Park, Salisbury Crags and Arthur's seat dominates this eastern section of the Conservation Area, which can be viewed from most locations.

Essential Character

- **The varied Georgian and Victorian mansions with their associated open grounds.**
- **The stone walling of the Halls Residence on Dalkeith Road, allied with a fine Georgian terrace.**
- **The Priestfield Parish Church which punctuates the area.**
- **Holyrood Park which visually dominates the area.**

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The Conservation Area contains a wealth of architectural heritage with over 90 buildings identified as being of historic or architectural importance. The overall character of the Blacket Conservation Area derives from its development as an early suburb of detached and semi-detached Georgian and Victorian villas, now enhanced by mature garden and street planting.

Whilst there are variations in character within the area, the predominant use of local sandstone for buildings and natural slate roofs contributes to a significant degree of architectural unity. The density of development is also low, due to the rigorous enforcement of the feuing plans which ensured separation between properties and allowed for garden spaces to the front and the rear.

Roofs are uniformly slated, with the later Victorian properties having steeper pitches with decorated eaves projections and dormer windows of varying

design. The majority of properties have timber sash and case windows with the Victorian properties having fewer astragals than their Georgian predecessors.

Distinct architectural features of the Conservation Area are the picturesque Tudor Gothic octagonal gate piers and gate lodges which provide a clearly identifiable boundary to the Core Area.

The Edinburgh University Hall of Residence on Blacket Avenue, built on the site of the former Newington House, contrasts with the more unified and traditional architecture of the surrounding area. However, this four-storey semi-circular 1980's development is set in a large plot of land with an abundance of mature trees and planting that effectively shields it from general view.

A category "A" listed two storey and attic double villa is at 23-25 Blacket Place. Designed by Sir James Gowans, its distinctive frontage reflects the architect's design principles in the use of polychromatic random stonework based on a 2 feet square modular grid. The mosaic of polychromatic masonry is prominently used on the quoins, a deep centre belt, chimneys and crow stepped gables. The round arched dormers, crow steps and decorative iron cresting to the mansard roof all contribute to the building's picturesque skyline.

Arthur Lodge at 60 Dalkeith Road is one of the most distinguished buildings in the area. The building is attributed, on stylistic grounds, to Thomas Hamilton who designed the former Royal High School. Arthur Lodge was built between 1827 and 1830 by Robert Mason, an Edinburgh builder. It is designed in a classical Greek style with distinctively incised polished ashlar.

West Blacket is characterised by a diversity of architectural styles and densities. The terraced streets of Duncan Street, Middleby Street, Upper Gray Street and West Mayfield predate the majority of villas in the Core Blacket area.

The former Edinburgh Geographical Institute, now in residential use as 'Bartholomew House' on Duncan Street, was built in 1909 and incorporates a Corinthian columned portico salvaged from Falcon Hall. The modern residential development located behind the front façade reflects the building height of the original building.

There has been a similar union between the old and the new on Upper Gray Street, where at No. 30-34 the three storey cream sandstone former L-plan commercial coachworks has been extended to form a residential development. The original building height and massing are taken from the original building, which does not reflect the general character of the area.

There are few public buildings in this substantially residential Conservation Area. One of the landmark buildings of note is the National Library Map Annexe located on the corner of Causewayside and Salisbury Place in the

north west corner of the Conservation Area. This modern iconic piece of architecture with its high cornered peaks dominates the predominantly two storey buildings within the Conservation Area.

The small scale pedimented St Columba's RC Church on Upper Gray Street sits comfortably within the terrace. The Synagogue on Salisbury Road adds an interesting and diverse architectural dimension to the Street. This two storey building is constructed in red and purple brick and was built by James Miller between 1929 –1932. Priestfield Parish Church, on the corner of Dalkeith Road/Marchhall Place, is a key building in the Conservation Area. The Lombardic Romanesque, Latin cross-plan church was built by Sutherland and Walker between 1877-79 and is an interesting focal point on the eastern edge of Conservation Area.

Essential Character: Architectural Character

- **Rich variety of architectural styles evident throughout the Conservation Area, which are given homogeneity through the feu charter which controlled heights (two storey and half storeys), building lines and massing.**
- **Properties are characterised by the predominant use of stone construction, slated roofs and timber sash and case windows.**

NATURAL HERITAGE

There is no publicly accessible open space in the Conservation Area, but there is a sense of spaciousness derived from the generously proportioned gardens and large mature trees.

Trees and shrubs are fundamental to the character of the Conservation Area, contributing to landscape quality and amenity and complementing the built environment. Their presence helps to dampen the noise from surrounding streets and provide shelter for houses and gardens against wind and frost, as well as acting as "green lungs" and a habitat for wildlife. The Conservation Area relies very much on the vegetation and mature trees within gardens for its leafy character and robust landscape structure. In addition, there are sizeable trees within the grounds of the University properties at Pollock Halls and the former Newington House. There has been some successful roadside planting on verges in Blasket Place and Blasket Avenue, which have contributed to the amenity and wildlife value of the area.

There can be conflict between larger tree species and shade within a garden, but wherever possible it is important to accommodate large species replacement trees to reinforce the robust landscape framework. Where space is limited, consideration should be given to more fastigate and less densely foliated species.

There are several Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area, in Salisbury Road, Blasket Place and Blasket Avenue. These preceded the

Conservation Area designation and were largely due to development pressures.

Views from the Conservation Area are important and provide it with both a context within the city and visual links to contrasting landscape of more open Green Belt areas. There are fine views along the east-west orientated streets to Arthur's Seat. Views along the north-south orientated streets are urban in character and associated with the approach roads to the city centre.

Essential Character: Natural Heritage

- **Sense of spaciousness derived from the generously proportioned gardens and large mature trees.**
- **Important vistas to Arthurs Seat.**
- **The contribution of private open spaces at Pollock Halls and the Blakett Avenue University Halls of Residence to the character to the area.**

ACTIVITIES AND USES

The predominant use within the Conservation Area is residential, with detached and semi-detached villas and terraces constituting the vast majority of properties. There are also a small number of flatted properties throughout the Conservation Area.

There are limited local amenities within the area. There are two small groups of shops, one of which is located at the north-east quadrant of Minto Street and West Mayfield. The other group forms part of a local shopping centre at the north end of Minto Street, along Salisbury Place. There is a large public house on the north east corner of the Conservation Area, at the corner of Salisbury Road/Dalkeith Road.

The predominant uses along the gateway routes of Minto Street and Dalkeith Road are hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfast accommodation. These two roads constitute the main tourist routes from the south into the city centre and their uses comply with Council policy.

There is a stone masonry yard and a saw mill within the Duncan Street/Upper & South Gray Street area. A telephone exchange and Baptist Church complete this diverse area.

There are two churches within the Conservation Area: St Columba's RC Church on Upper Gray Street and Priestfield Parish Church on the corner of Dalkeith Road and Marchhall Place. The National Map Library located on the corner of Causewayside and Salisbury Place constitutes another public use within the Conservation Area.

Essential Character: Activities and Uses

- **Predominance of residential uses, with hotels and guest houses on arterial routes.**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

New Development

Development has been strictly controlled since the time of the original feuing plans. New development needs to be treated with great sensitivity in order to enhance the Conservation Area and reinforce the sense of cohesion and unity. Any development should be restricted in height and scale in order to protect the character of the surrounding area. New design must respect the existing spatial pattern, massing and traditional materials. Open space should be preserved and existing buildings of value should be retained.

The site at the corner of Duncan Street and Upper Gray Street presently contains a number of timber structures which do not relate well with to the surrounding environment. Appropriate redevelopment of this site is encouraged.

Boundaries

Cast iron railings once enclosed the front gardens of many properties within the Conservation Area providing an attractive secure edge to the properties. However, many of these railings were removed during the Second World War and boundary treatment subsequently became a mixture of hedges and modern railings. This has resulted in a lack of unity and cohesion which has been compounded by the creation of off-street parking. The reinstatement of railings would result in a significant improvement to the historic fabric of the area.

Boundary Changes

No changes to the existing boundaries of the Conservation Area are proposed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Statutory Policies

The Blacket Conservation Area lies wholly within the area of the Central Edinburgh Local Plan. The majority of the Conservation Area is covered by an area of 'Housing and Compatible Uses' in which the existing residential character and amenities are to be safeguarded. Within the Conservation Area the existing architectural character, historic and landscape character is to be preserved and enhanced.

Minto Street and Dalkeith Road are identified as main tourist approach routes where limited hotel/guest house use will be allowed, provided that the

commercial uses do not exceed 40% of the frontage of the street block. Minto Street is also safeguarded as a route for a light rapid transit system.

The Development Quality Handbook policy on Villa Areas and the Grounds of Villas applies to the Conservation Area. This policy aims to achieve the following:

- To enhance the predominantly stone built character of villa areas.
- To respect spatial character and setting and to locate buildings appropriately on sites.
- To encourage appropriate building forms, their quality and design.
- To maintain the general low-density of built form and retain the high percentage of garden area on sites.

Supplementary Guidelines

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

Implications of Conservation Area Status

Designation as a Conservation Area has the following implications:

- Permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stone cleaning, external painting, roof alterations and the formation of hard surfaces. The area of extensions to dwelling houses which may be erected without consent is also restricted and there are additional control over satellite dishes.
- Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the planning authority can seek approval of the Scottish Executive for Directions that restrict permitted development rights. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in Conservation Areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals. The Blasket 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
 - 7 construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure
 - 30 development by local authorities
 - 38 water undertakings
 - 39 development by gas suppliers
 - 40 development by electricity undertakers
 - 41 development by tramway or road transport undertakings
 - 67 development by telecommunications undertakers
- Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations will, therefore, be advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application.
 - Buildings which are not statutorily listed can normally be demolished without approval under the planning regulations. Within Conservation Areas the demolition of unlisted buildings requires Conservation Area consent.
 - Alterations to windows are controlled in terms of the Council's policy.
 - Trees within a Conservation Area are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The act applies to 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 (TPO).

Grants may be available towards the repair or restoration of historic buildings. The council runs several conservation grant schemes. One scheme, the 'Main Conservation Grant' is dependant on the comprehensive repair and restoration of original features with priority given to tenemental houses and prominent buildings that are either listed or located within Conservation Areas.

The 'Listed Building Small Grant Scheme' applies to listed buildings, not tenements throughout the city except in the World Heritage Site and involves small-scale reinstatement work i.e. the restoration of windows, railings, stone repairs etc.

REFERENCES

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The Blacket Association, A Guide for Residents 1999

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Gifford J, McWilliam C, Walker D, Wilson C, The buildings of Scotland, Edinburgh (Penguin Books, 1984)