



CORSTORPHINE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL



*THE CORSTORPHINE CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL WAS APPROVED BY THE PLANNING
COMMITTEE
ON 4TH OCTOBER 2001*

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

Character Appraisal

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 would adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore, important that both the authorities and other groups who have an interest in conservation areas, and residents are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced.

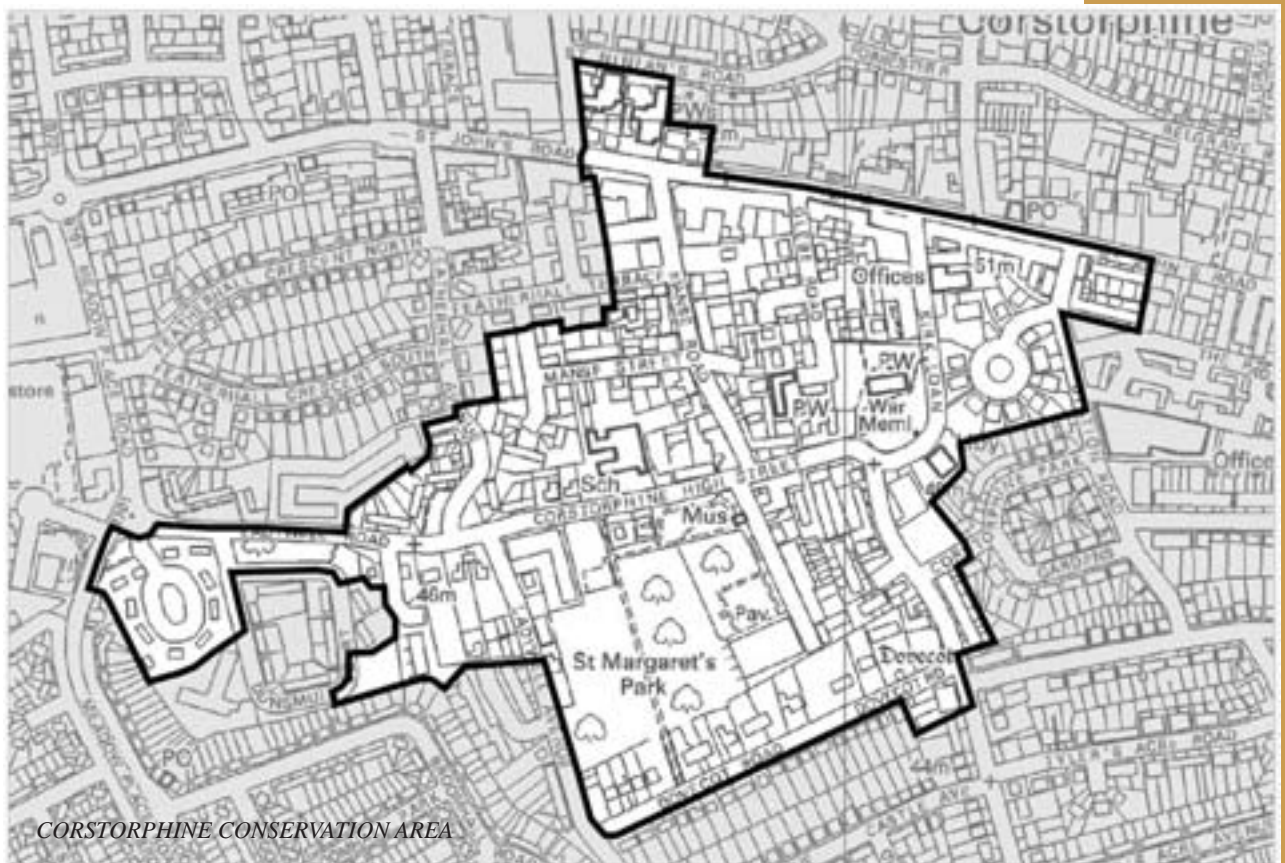
A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character of an area.

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 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.

Corstorphine Conservation Area

Corstorphine was originally proposed as a conservation area in 1973. The Conservation Area proposals were the subject of a public exhibition and a continuing period of consultation with the Corstorphine Trust. The Conservation Area was designated on 28 July 1977.

The Corstorphine Conservation Area is located 6 kilometres west of the centre of Edinburgh, reached by way of Haymarket, Roseburn and Murrayfield. The northern boundary of the Conservation Area follows the line of St John's Road with an extension northwards to include St John's and St Ninian's Churches. The western boundary is irregular following the line of Featherhall Terrace, Ladywell Road, and Ladywell Avenue, and including Murray Cottages. Dovecot Road forms the southern boundary. The eastern boundary follows the line of Saughton Road North, Corstorphine Park Gardens and Station Road.



HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Although now a suburb of Edinburgh, Corstorphine was originally an agricultural village separated from the city by open countryside. There were really two villages, each of which retains its character: the old village was located a short distance south of the present main road, and the new or 'high' village developed on the route of St John's Road, the traditional main road from Edinburgh to Glasgow. As Edinburgh grew outwards the village was incorporated within the administrative area of the city in 1920 and since then housing developments pushing towards Corstorphine have completed the process of absorption.

The original form of the Corstorphine place name, Crostorfin or Corstorfyn, probably dates from the late ninth century, and it was firmly attached to the chapel at Corstorphine by the time David I gifted it to his new abbey of Holyrood in 1128. There is a legend that the name is derived from the French 'croix d'or fine' (cross of fine gold). Another suggested derivation is from the Gaelic *crois torfin*, Torfin's crossing, relating to the water barriers which until modern times were the dominant feature south of Corstorphine Hill. There was a narrows at Corstorphine, between shores in the vicinity of Dovecot Road and Broomhall Avenue, with an island where Saughton Road passes Roull Road. The earliest settlement was established on this narrow neck of land between the lochs and close to the protection of Corstorphine Castle.



Seventeenth century maps still show a pair of small lochs east and west of Corstorphine, linked by the boggy course of the Stank Burn. From the 1660s onwards they were progressively reduced by drainage and by about 1837 they were completely drained, leaving an extensive tract of level alluvial meadows which gave further impetus to agriculture to meet the demands of Edinburgh. The 1850 Statistical Account describes Corstorphine Parish as ‘a tract of low-lying meadow land, which extends from near Coltbridge to Redheughs. The village is situated in the centre of this tract, and is slightly elevated above the level of the meadows on both sides.’

The Manor of Corstorphine was acquired in 1347 by Sir Adam Forrester from William More of Abercorn. The Forrester family built a castle on this land and were owners of the estate until 1689. The history of Corstorphine Old Parish Church stems from this acquisition of the lands of Corstorphine by Adam Forrester. Sir Adam built a family chapel next to the existing church of St Mary. His son expanded the chapel in 1429 and the Collegiate Church of St John the Baptist was formed, functioning alongside St Mary’s. After the Reformation, parish worship was transferred to the Collegiate building. It is possible that the entrance porch built in circa 1646 is constructed from the remnants of St Mary’s which was demolished at that time. Despite the many alterations and additions over the centuries, much of the original medieval building remains.

The Forrester family were also responsible for the construction of the mid-17th century Dower House, also known as Gibsone’s Lodge from it’s late 18th century occupants, which is set within the north east corner of St Margaret’s Park. The entrance gateway to the house is reputed to have been constructed from stone from Corstorphine Castle, which was demolished in the 18th century. It was badly damaged by fire in 1991 but has since been restored and is now occupied by the Corstorphine Trust, an organisation dedicated to the stimulation of public interest in the character, history and preservation of Corstorphine.



The Dower House



The Physic Well

In the 18th century, the village became popular as a fashionable summer spa resort for visitors attracted by the beneficial medicinal qualities of the Physic Well. Its reputation was such that in 1749 a regular stagecoach ran between Edinburgh and Corstorphine eight or nine times a day. However, the Well lost its medicinal properties and fell into disrepute around 1790.



A map of 1777, shows the village as having a broad High Street lined by small cottages. On the east side, a row of cottages formed a crescent round the south side of the churchyard and into Kirk Loan. The land on the south side of the High Street, where St Margaret's Park now is, was occupied by small houses with crofts behind except for the ground surrounding the Dower House. Those fronting the High Street were known as Cross Cottages derived from the location of the Cross of Corstorphine formed by five elm trees planted one at each corner of a square with one in the middle. On the north side of the road was Ladywell, a group of cottages demolished in 1956. The Kirk Loan led northwards to the High Road, now St John's Road which was a tree lined avenue on the same line as the modern road.

Manse Road is shown on mid 18th century maps, and is also recorded as Barney's Slap, from Bernard Hunter a local blacksmith, or simply the Slap. It is likely that both names were in use from an early period: as it was the road that led to the manse and also a narrow lane or slap. Traditionally Corstorphine villagers spoke of going 'down the Loan' (Kirk Loan) and 'up the Slap' (Manse Road). The village boundary was thereby defined as a rough circle bounded by the Church and Glebe to the east, the High Street to the south, Manse Road to the west and St John's road in the north.

The Census of 1841 shows that in the village area around the High Street there were 372 persons living in 85 inhabited houses. The Manse and the Dower House were the largest houses in single occupation, most of the village consisting of thatched roof cottages. The community was more or less self-contained with agricultural workers forming the largest group. A range of other workers and local shops were located in the High Village on the turnpike road, now known as St John's Road. The farms that surrounded the village at the time drew much of their labour from the village. The area of the village around the former Black Bull Inn, which stood at the corner of the High Street and Saughton Road, was known as "Irish Corner", because of the Irish immigrants who lived there. Some came in 1818 to build the Union Canal, others in 1842 to work on the Glasgow-Edinburgh railway, and many were employed as farm labourers.



With the Victorian period, Corstorphine started to take on the architectural form visible today and St John's Road was established as the central commercial street. Larger houses were built at first on the rising ground north of St John's Road with a southern aspect. These were followed by smaller villas in Saughton Road, Dovecot Road and in the 1890s, Forrester Road and Roull Road. Dovecot Road, which was formed by 1881 was named for the 16th century Dovecot of Corstorphine Castle, which stands at its western end. The stone cottages along Manse Road with their attractive domestic scale also date from the Victorian period. Glebe Road was developed in the inter-war period on the former Glebe of Corstorphine Kirk.



The former workshop for Dovecot Tapestries, which is internationally renowned for its tapestry products, was established on Dovecot Road in 1910 by the Marquess of Bute. Murray Cottages date from 1910-11 and were funded for the benefit of Edinburgh residents who were 'sober, respectable men and women about sixty years of age'. St Margaret's Park was gifted to the Parish Council in 1915 by Christopher Brown of Arizona, whose wife Margaret came from a long established Corstorphine family. The park and the Dower House were taken over by the Council of Edinburgh in 1923.



The village grew slowly and retained much of its rural character until the development of public transport in the 1900s. In 1902, a branch railway line was

opened to a terminus on the eastern edge of the village, placing it within 11 minutes of the city centre. In 1906, a motor bus service was introduced and the tramways reached Corstorphine in 1923, the same year that the village was incorporated within the administrative area of Edinburgh.

The effect of these developments was to tie the village more and more closely to the neighbouring city, making it practicable and inexpensive to commute from Corstorphine.



Shop Frontages on St. John's Rd

St John's Road was widened to accommodate the tramway resulting in the loss of front gardens and the demolition of some buildings. The sites of these can be seen in the more modern blocks of shops with flats above which are set-back from the original building line. There was not the same amount of change in the old village centred on the High Street. A few cottages were replaced by local authority housing and some road widening took place when the gates at the Dower House were set back and when Cross Cottages were demolished in 1929. At the foot of Kirk Loan the red pantiled cottages of Irish Corner were demolished in 1928 to open up a view of the Old Parish Church.

Following the First World War, the relative ease of commuting resulted in suburban sprawl, typified by bungalows set in relatively large gardens, which rapidly engulfed the village. Since the Second World War, the majority of development has occurred along the St John's Road shopping frontage. In the 1960s, new groups of shops were built at the corners of Manse Road and St John's Road, and Kirk Loan and St John's Road. Re-development on the north side of St John's Road has been more limited. This has established St John's Road as an important local shopping centre and left the historic core of Corstorphine relatively untouched. Corstorphine remains a popular residential suburb of Edinburgh, in no small part this is due to its ready access to the city and its connection with the west, the Central Belt and the countryside.



Shopping Parade on St. John's Rd

ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

Spatial Structure

There are four main approaches to Corstorphine's historic core. From the west past more recent developments Ladywell Road undulates up and down until it rises up again onto the ridge on which the village core stands. Similarly from the south Saughton Road North rises up the slope created by the draining of the loch. The other accesses conversely come down from St. John's Road, Manse Road coming into the middle of the High Street and Kirk Loan following the eastern edge of the original village joining the High Street in a 'T' junction with Saughton Road North.



View from Ladywell Rd



View from Manse Rd



View from Saughton Rd Nth

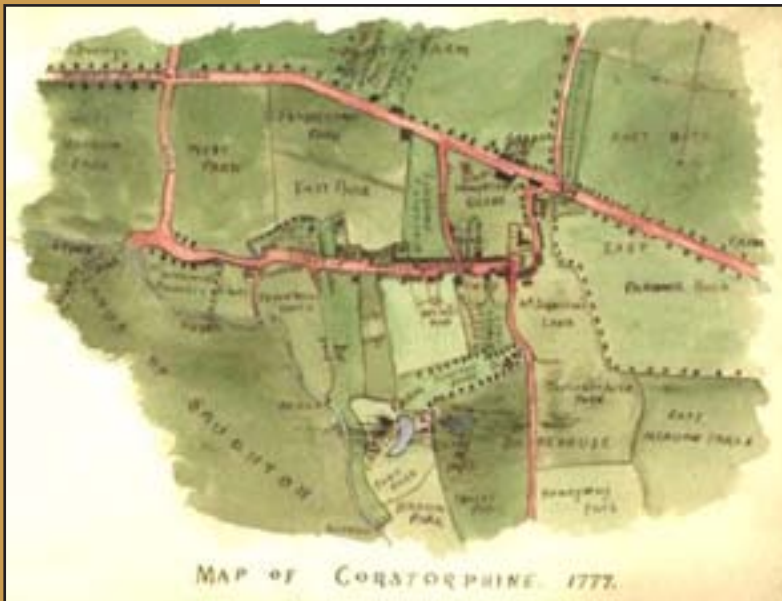
The approach down Kirk Loan is still much as it looks in early views, a narrow road bound on one side by a high stone wall and on the other by trees with little room for the pavement which has been added. It is nowadays more typically lined with parked cars and these approaches are in constant use by traffic. This is one disadvantage of the location of Corstorphine's historic core despite the main east - west route and focus for shopping facilities now being concentrated on St. John's Road.

It is probably this change of focus that has meant that the original village core and much of the development along the streets up to St. John's Road remains considerably intact. On plan these streets appear straight, but in reality the differences are more clearly reflected in the subtle changes in building line, stone boundary and front garden dwarf walls as progress is made down a street. This original road pattern is further emphasised by the way it has few right angles and often seems to disappear into lanes, driveways, pends and footpaths; reflecting the complexity of desire lines and the greater pedestrian emphasis of earlier eras.

The footpath network is not as extensive as in more outlying villages of Edinburgh and mainly occurs around Corstorphine Parish Church, but there remains a similar

village character with the narrow paths passing between gables, round the side of the cemetery, through decorative cast iron gates and through a timber door set into a stone wall. Now a meeting place for residents moving between home, schools, shops and library; footpaths once had a more precarious function leading people across the lochs, a light to guide their passage being recently reinstated in the east gable of the Parish church.

The Parish Church looks onto a small green which now acts as a focus for the village core. It was formally occupied by the curved terrace of cottages at 'Irish Corner' which were demolished in 1928. To one edge of the green is the offset crossroads to the High Street and at which, like many villages, Corstorphine's War Memorial is located with the other main village institutions of Library, Hall and Church Hall surrounding the Green.



From the junction and Green the High Street continues to the west in an unplanned informal linear pattern. The 1777 plan shows the High Street like an elongated square in which it is possible to imagine regular horse and coach teams having space to stop. To the east the former Black Bull Inn building surrounded by very small single storey cottages still survives before two and three storey tenements built right to the heel of the pavement accentuate a narrow 'gateway' into the High Street. The building line on both sides then steps back, on the north side behind front gardens and to the south to the buildings in the park, set on the foundations of the original cottages shown

in the 1777 plan. The width of the original space can still be envisaged before being closed to the west by the surviving blacksmith's building and Claycots House. Behind the small tenements and cottages on the street frontage footpaths and pends lead to further cottages built down the sides or at the backs of the riggs or feus, reflecting the early land ownership pattern.

With the exception of the access along Manse Road, which has front gardens along it, the approaches to the village core and the High Street have a sequence of built and open spaces. This is especially evident on Ladywell Road with mature trees at the side of the Murrays and opposite Ladywell House. Further along there are semi public open spaces which form a focus for small scale housing

developments. Other open spaces are behind stone walls with trees and hedges overhanging them, as along Kirk Loan and the bowling green. These spaces are an important element in the village structure. They provide amenity, separation from busy routes, relief to the low rise but high density built character especially round the original village core, and a sense of provision for community benefit as well as for the residents living round them. This sequence of spaces reveal another characteristic of Corstorphine's spatial structure. Early maps show these walls marking not only fields, but also the grounds of small estates, a number of which, such as Dunsmuir House and only recently St. John's Manse, have since been demolished. Corstorphine House, Ladywell House, Corstorphine Church Glebe still survive though now surrounded by development.

These fields and grounds mark an interesting period of Corstorphine's early expansion, possibly reflecting an early stage of the drainage of the lochs, as they are located around the edges of the village core. St. Margaret's Park, an undeveloped 'estate' possibly because of the emigration of its original landowner, is very much in the Edinburgh pattern of open spaces created by former lochs which were drained and which remain important natural components of the city.

The spatial structure this creates is very different to the formally laid out plans and feuing of Edinburgh's Victorian suburbs such as the Grange, though part of Dovecot Road with its regular and generous plots does have some similarities to planned Victorian villa developments.

The resulting spatial structure appears opportunistic rather than planned and helps to emphasise the organic village character. This remains true today and although all of these sites have subsequently been redeveloped they retain many of their original stone boundary walls. This is partly because redevelopment has also been on a by site basis at regular intervals over the last 100 years, reflecting a steady growth of the village, rather than a sudden extensive development in any one era. With the retention of boundaries, they now provide identifiable small groupings of between 10 to 30 houses.

The size of the groupings, their relation to movement with a pedestrian emphasis, their mix of plot size and their provision of semi public open space, almost in a series of small central village greens, are in contrast to those beyond these early expansions of the village in the scale, standardisation and repetition of much of the pre-, inter- and post-war housing which in turn surrounds them.

This is clearly shown by the street maps for the area. Between street corners, the village has 'square' sides of 80 metres to 120 metres long, whereas much of the surrounding development has an 'oblong' street pattern of houses fronting streets

with gardens back to back with a regular 'grid' structure of sides 180 to 240 metres by 70 to 100 metres long. These dimensions reflect the change in scale which occurred when development moved from a pedestrian to a car borne emphasis.

The way Corstorphine has been surrounded by subsequent development on all sides makes it difficult to see a clearly defined edge to the village. However, its village character is clearly discernible not only in plan but also in townscape differences.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: SPATIAL STRUCTURE

- *A strategic location between city centre and motorway accesses which makes it a popular residential area at the cost of congestion.*
- *The varied grain of the area and the irregular feu shapes and sizes which in parts provides evidence of the lang rigg pattern.*
- *The widespread retention of stone boundary walls.*
- *A mix of plot sizes, building types and forms.*
- *Development which respects the historic ownership patterns from the initial informal linear structure of the village core to later organic development around its edges.*
- *Development grouped around communal and semi public open spaces.*
- *Main institutions located around a green providing a village focus.*
- *Retention of an informal street layout and footpath network respecting original desire lines and demonstrating a pedestrian emphasis.*
- *The relationship of open spaces to built form which provide interest, amenity and greenery.*
- *The contrast in uses and character between the 'High' and 'Low' villages.*
- *A distinct change from the more random and close knit structure of the Conservation Area to the standardisation and lower density of surrounding development.*

Townscape

The spatial structure reveals a sequence of built and open spaces, sometimes marked by gateway buildings, which gives a changing sense of enclosure and openness. In the village core the High Street has changed from an enclosed elongated square with the south side now largely opened up to St. Margaret's Park and to the Dower House, which now has a wider setting. To the north, the High Street is still more enclosed by a mix of single storey cottages and small two storey tenements but opens up again with the insertion of the Victorian Primary School which, with its playground to the front, is well set back from the street edge.

The sense of enclosure produced by the intensity of development in tightly knit terraced, grouped and compact forms behind the High Street is in contrast with the openness of the well spaced villas in Dovecot Road to the south and with the broad width and straighter layout of St. John's Road to the north.

Redevelopment over time has meant the demolition of many of the original cottages, other properties have been affected by conversions and elsewhere later new forms of development have been added. This includes the insertion of 2 storey 'rural' tenements, some with shops, which have rear stairs to flats above similar to those found in outlying areas of the city and throughout rural towns in the Central Belt. Whilst generally plain, the tenement at High Street/ Manse Road has triangular pedimented dormers on both street frontages and on a splay all of which help 'turn' the corner and draw attention to the small shop below.



More tenements, looking like single storey terraced villas, continue up Manse Road and are punctuated by pends through to access stairs and more cottages at the rear. Tenements give way to small-scale cottages, then single storey terraced villas towards St. John's Road, and some three storey tenements in Manse Street and Featherhall Road. This variety of building types and forms emphasises the village character.



Development in the historic core still demonstrates frequent changes in the building line and depths, steps in storey height and in ridge/eaves heights (even for properties with the same number of storeys), narrow separation over and along streets, pends and external staircases, low door and window heights giving a scale and mix of property more typically rural in character. They are all in traditional natural stone and slate roof construction which change in design from the individual, vernacular and rubble stonework to increasing standardisation, to the appearance of a deliberate aesthetic, to early Victorian in style with more dressed stonework and off-the-shelf detailed elements.

St John's Road, the original turnpike road with some of its turnpike stone mileage sign posts still in evidence, became increasingly the focus for commercial activity. With almost continuous shops under three storey tenement blocks its development form still provides variety. Its character is one of a country town high street rather than that of the historic core, which with shops dotted here and there, is more akin to the main street of a small rural village.



Turnpike

These contrasts are reflected by the relative tranquility of the High Street and by the often busy and congested St. John's Road. There are also differences in the types of views and vistas they each provide.



Box Hedge Garden

The sequence of small open spaces described above, the changes in ground levels, the access paths between gables or through pends, gaps between terraces and the narrow roads leading to the core of the village give glimpses and framed views of church steeples, the school's pitched roofs and bellcote, stepping gables and varying roofscapes from single storey cottage to three storey tenement and into intricate gardens or rear courtyards. One very small cottage front garden in Manse Road has either side of a central path to its front door an immaculately clipped and small scale version of classically patterned box hedge garden with central rose 'climbers' all set behind stone dwarf wall and railings.

The views along St. John's Road and some of the accesses to it have longer framed views, especially to the steeple of St. Ninians or shorter views to that of the Parish Church. There are fine views through the trees in the park to the Dower House against the small cottages around it and the backdrop of Corstorphine Hill. Looking over the park and south down access roads there are in complete contrast panoramas towards the Pentland Hills.

It is a significant achievement that despite the pressures of its location a village character still predominates. Examples of later housing to that in the village core, with the limited size of each development conveying a sense of individuality yet not being of a scale to dominate, also reveal a range of styles and tastes as they changed through the decades in a way which helps to reinforce a sense of place rather than fragmenting it.

In the main, later housing is still single to two storey, in small groupings clearly demarcated by feu boundaries and in detached or terraced form. They range from the grander Victorian stone built detached villas in generous grounds, later Edwardian villas with their mix of red and buff sandstone and attention to detailing, small scale and half-timbered Arts & Crafts terraced villas and at Murray Cottages, with similar inspiration but more modern interpretation, the ‘rural idyll’ is best illustrated with its small group of semi-detached single storey cottages set around an oval green.



Murray Cottages

The inter war period gives a further mix of examples most notably the white rendered semi-detached houses at Glebe Grove, with their cubic forms set out in a cruciform arrangement giving a sense of the early modern international architectural style. There are also public and private examples in 2 storey 4 in a block flats and single storey detached bungalows, for example those set around a small green in the former grounds of Corstorphine House.



Glebe Grove

The 1950s sheltered housing in Ladywell Road continues a tradition of render walling, stone door and window details, slate roofs and setting around a small green to the road, with generous front, back and common gardens screened from view by linking walls and decorative metal work gates. There has also been some later infill developments sensitive to the rigg pattern in the village core.



Infill Development

These developments are laid out to a standard that recognises and respects The surroundings, they use the same vocabulary of materials yet in quite different design approaches and incrementally they achieve an overall sense of place. There is development which is less in character with bulky forms, showing a lack of sympathy for their neighbours and the historic patterns, poor proportions and materials, especially the use of brick, and which make little contribution to the public realm.

Important individual buildings include; the recently restored Dower House, the Parish Church, St. Ninian's, the local Library, and the Doocot. These are not only significant individual historic buildings, but are important landmarks, standing out in the village's physical setting and enhancing its character.

Much of Corstorphine's character is in its varying styles of development and its respect for its natural setting; its organic layouts, reflecting a close knit village structure expanded in stages through time; its sympathetic location to neighbours; the provision of common amenities, and the use of distinctly Scottish building traditions. Corstorphine has maintained the physical character of a village.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: TOWNSCAPE

- *Townscape features including stone boundary walls, gateways, changing building lines, stepped building forms and roofscapes, landmark buildings to guide orientation, and ponds which reinforce the village character.*
- *A predominance of small and closely related buildings which provide a human scale.*
- *Contrasts of enclosure to openness between historic core and village edges.*
- *Wide range of terminated and framed views to broad panoramas.*
- *A mix of house forms and architectural styles over time in modest sized developments giving a sense of incremental change, respect for prevailing character and fit.*
- *The use of a restricted palette of local building traditions and materials to provide a sense of continuity with and respect for adjacent developments.*
- *Development which contributes communal open space and landscaping to the public realm.*

Architectural Character

Corstorphine maintains a recognisable village character. The form and style of the stone-built cottages, stone garden walls and mature trees all contribute to the village ambience, with the historic St John's Church forming a focal point within the historic core. The Conservation Area is characterised by a central area of vernacular buildings and a surrounding area of 19th century residential development of some quality.

The focus of the historic core of the Conservation Area is the Category 'A' Listed Corstorphine Old Parish Church with its squat 50 foot high west tower, heavy buttresses, irregular roofline and distinctive slabbed roof. The churchyard contains many good 18th century monuments and is enclosed by coped sandstone rubble walls, low and stepped to Kirk Loan, with coped semi-pyramidal piers at the Kirk Loan entrance. The single storey gabled rubble gatehouse and vault to the entrance at Corstorphine High Street and Glebe Terrace all contribute to the setting of the church.

Opposite is the Public Library (Category 'C (S)' Listed) dating from 1927, which was designed by E.J. MacCrae. It is a single storey T-plan sandstone building in the vernacular tradition with a low stone boundary wall. Its simple plan and materials reflect the horizontal accents of the Old Parish Church and the village green opposite. Corstorphine Public Hall dates from 1903 and is designed in an economic Scots vernacular style with red sandstone dressings and incorporates Salamanders climbing the door pediments. Both buildings stand behind low stone walls.

Westwards of Manse Road, the first section of the High Street is dominated by the Category 'B' Listed harled and lime-washed three storey Dower House. Standing back from the road behind railings and ornamental gate piers at the edge of St Margaret's Park with the Pentland Hills as a backdrop. The Dower House is embellished with characteristic Scottish vernacular features such as crow stepped gables and scrolled skew putts.

St Margaret's Park has a boundary to the High Street of cast iron railings on a low stone wall with robust rusticated gate piers surmounted by ball finials and a red tiled gate lodge at the main entrance.



Old Parish Church



Public Library



Public Hall



The Dower House



Gate Piers at St. Margarets Park



Claycot House

To the west, Corstorphine Primary School stands behind a high stone boundary wall in a tarmac playground area. The school dates from 1893, is designed in a Scots Renaissance style and is a major element in the street scene. On the other side of the High Street is Claycot House, one of the oldest houses in Corstorphine, which is now incorporated in a modern housing development.



Primary School

Murray Cottages at the western end of Ladywell Road are a picturesque assemblage of single storey, semi-detached Arts and Crafts cottages with bell-cast roofs grouped around an oval green. They are finished in harled brick with sandstone dressings and are Statutorily Listed (Category C (S)). The boundary treatment consists of coped sandstone walls to the north and west, railings to east, and fencing and hedging to the south.



Arts and Craft Cottage

The north side of Dovecot Road and the two-storey Baronial houses on the south side of the street at the junction with Saughton Road are included within the Conservation Area. The houses consist of substantial villas in a variety of styles set within large garden grounds with an effective screening of trees. The late 16th century Corstorphine Doocot, which is the only remaining structure from the Corstorphine Castle estate, stands in a prominent position immediately behind the stone boundary wall at the eastern end of the road. It is a well-preserved example of a beehive doocot, constructed in rubble sandstone and with over 1000 nesting boxes. It is Category 'A' Listed, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is in the care of Historic Scotland. It is within the front garden ground of the Category 'C (S)' Listed former Dovecot Studios at 2 Dovecot Road which is a single storey building in a Scottish influenced Arts and Crafts style.



Doocot

To the northern boundary of the Conservation Area along St John's Road there are buildings of wide ranging form, age, and height up to three-storey. Most have commercial uses on the ground floor with residential above. There is a general uniformity of building line with the exception of



St. Ninian's Church

the small development of shops at the western junction of Kirk Loan which is set back with forecourt parking. The high Victorian Gothic spire and rose window of the Category 'C (S)' Listed St Ninian's Church is prominent in an elevated position on the northern side of the street, opposite Manse Road. Adjacent to it, and in distinct contrast with it, is the modern streamlined Church of St John the Baptist.



Shops at Kirk Loan

Materials are a crucial element in establishing the architectural character of the Conservation Area. The village is characteristically built in sandstone with slate roofs. Buildings are typically of relatively narrow-span depths, pitched roofs, uncomplicated elevations and with wall areas that dominate openings. Window openings are of vertical proportions, traditionally as sashes.

Architectural features include prominent wall-head dormers and chimney stacks. Scale and building line are important characteristics, and buildings generally promote enclosure, either in themselves or by strong boundary treatments.

The old village core retains a considerable number of surviving vernacular buildings and much of its more recent infill development is domestic in scale, small in size, dispersed in location and though stylistically different, still incorporates a restricted palette of traditional materials. These buildings have an important role to play both as a backdrop or context to the listed buildings and in maintaining the village spatial structure. While there are significant examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture on the boundaries of the Conservation Area, it is the mix in layout, respect for scale and use of vernacular treatment which helps to maintain a distinct village character. It serves as physical reminder of the Conservation Area's historic past and interest.



Church of St. John the Baptist

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- *The high quality architecture exemplified by distinguished buildings such as the Dower House and the Old Parish Church.*
- *The historic setting of the Parish Church.*
- *A number of landmark buildings which help to structure the urban form, add focus to the area, and create a strong character.*
- *The historic alignment and traditional vernacular character of many buildings which reflect Corstorphine's history as a rural settlement.*
- *Consistency in the use of traditional materials (stone, harling, Scots slate, and pantiles) which are unifying elements within the townscape.*
- *Key original architectural features including timber sash and case windows, timber doors, stone chimneys, traditional style dormers, and simple pitched roofs which provide unifying elements.*
- *The substantial garden settings, mature trees and stone boundary walls on Dovecot Road.*

Activities and Uses

Corstorphine is a predominantly residential area with numerous enclaves of quiet domestic amenity and a full range of facilities associated with community life. There are number of community uses within the historic core of the village. Kirk Loan is a particular focus of community activity with the library, Parish Church and church hall grouped around the village green. The Bowling Green and St Margaret's Park are important leisure facilities.

These areas of residential amenity contrast with St John's Road which is the commercial centre of the immediate district with numerous shops, offices, pubs and restaurants, and an often congested principal route from Edinburgh to the west.

The High Street is also a much used through route for vehicles accessing the A8 and over Clermiston and Drumbrae to Queensferry Road and the Forth Road Bridge. The development of major retail sites in the vicinity attract visitors from far afield and have significantly increased traffic movements in the historic core of Corstorphine.



St. Margaret's Park



Retail Site

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: ACTIVITIES AND USES

- ***Prevalence of residential use.***
- ***Provision of full range of community facilities.***
- ***Contrast of busy main roads and short transition to peaceful residential areas.***
- ***The general tranquility and privacy within the residential areas.***
- ***Importance of St. John's Road as a local shopping centre.***
- ***The recreational value of St Margaret's Park.***

Natural Heritage



Green Space

St Margaret's Park represents the main area of open space within the Conservation Area. There are further green amenity areas around the Parish Church, fronting the houses at Featherhall Avenue and on the south side of Ladywell Avenue. Corstorphine House Road and Murray Cottages also include central green spaces, and the bowling green on Saughton Road provides another area of recreational space. Trees are a principal feature of most of these spaces and generally play an important role in defining the character of the village.

St Margaret's Park includes a bowling green, tennis courts and a large area of open space with numerous mature trees which contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The attractive tree lined walkway through

the park links the High Street and Dovecot Road. At the north west corner of the Park a new Cross of Corstorphine, consisting of five rowan trees, was planted in 1987 by Corstorphine schoolchildren.



Bowling Green

The Corstorphine Sycamore which until recently dominated the corner of Saughton Road and Dovecot Road was reduced to a stump following a storm in 1998. It was a tree of great antiquity and gave its name to the species *Acer Pseudoplatanus* Corstorphinense. It remains protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is likely to regrow. The Forestry Commission are also growing replacement specimens for replanting. There is another TPO covering trees along Kirk Loan and around Corstorphine House.



Tree-lined walkway

The trees along the east and south boundaries of the Churchyard are an important element in the landscape appearance of the village, and the footpaths through the Churchyard which link different parts of Kirk Loan and Glebe Road contribute to permeability in the area and the integration of the Church and its environs into the structure of the village.



Footpath



Footpath

Some notable trees include the group of cedars at the corner of Manse Road and Corstorphine Road, the broadleaf at the corner of Manse Road and the High Street, which is of particular townscape value, and the line of mature trees and hedges on Dovecot Road, which partially screen and soften the front garden boundaries and provide screening.



Corner of Manse Road



Trees on Dovecot Road

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: NATURAL HERITAGE

- ***A variety of open spaces which play an important role in the townscape.***
- ***The significant numbers of mature garden trees.***
- ***The historic pathways through the Parish Church.***
- ***The significance of St Margaret's Park and the village green as central areas of open space within the historic core.***



Open Space at St. Margaret's Park

Opportunities for Enhancement

The Conservation Area has both strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths are in the clarity and unifying spatial structure, the attraction and history of its traditional buildings and its village character



Recent interventions have not always respected the domestic scale prevailing in the area, and the opportunity of interpreting the traditional vernacular mass and forms in a modern way has not always been taken. Close attention must be given to encouraging developments that reinforce those features that give Corstorphine its unique character. This is fundamental to the prevention of any deterioration in the character of the Conservation Area.

The traditional materials of stone, harling, and slate have not always been used in new buildings, extensions and alterations, modern substitutes sometimes fail to respect the character of the area.

The following pressures are associated with development proposals which conservation area designation, together with the statutory and non-statutory policies of the Council, are designed to manage:

- new development which affects the setting of buildings, garden spaces and boundary walls;
- development and alterations which affect the traditional architectural character and are out of, scale with the village character of the Conservation Area;
- loss of mature trees and planting of trees which fail to provide the appropriate scale, shelter and natural.

New development will require to be of appropriate architectural quality and relate in mass, scale, outline, materials and character to the existing village fabric.

The introduction of an Article 4 Direction would ensure more effective controls over window alterations and other minor alterations which cumulatively can have a significant adverse affect on the architectural character of the Conservation Area.



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's character as a whole. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style and of an appropriate scale.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Statutory Policies

Corstorphine Conservation Area is covered by the North West Edinburgh Local Plan which was adopted in 1992. A number of land designations and local plan policies protect the area, namely:

- A significant area of public and private open space, i.e. St Margaret's Park
- Tree preservation Orders are in force in three individual areas of the Conservation Area
- Part of St John's Road has been designated as a principal shopping centre, of which, a small section is included in the Conservation Area.

Local Plan policy further protects the Corstorphine Conservation Area by ensuring that careful controls are exercised over all development to retain and enhance the traditional character of the area.

Supplementary Guidelines

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

Boundary Changes

The North West Edinburgh Local Plan proposes the removal of St Johns Road from the Conservation Area to reduce the extent of the area nearer to its original form.

St John's Road includes development which is not immediately in keeping with the character of the remainder of the village, however, it is important in maintaining a buffer around the historic core and offering greater controls to retain and improve the general quality of shop fronts, windows, dormer extensions and other features which are subject to change. St John's Road also has strong historical associations with Corstorphine village.

There is a potential argument for extending the boundary of the Conservation Area to include adjoining Victorian villa developments, however, this would alter the balance of character from a vernacular village to that of a residential suburb. It is, therefore, proposed that the boundary should remain unchanged.

Implications of Conservation Area Status

Designation as a conservation area has the following implications:

- Permitted development rights under the General Development Order 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 to 16m² 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 Corstorphine Conservation Area is not currently covered by an Article 4 Direction Order, and it is proposed to seek approval for restriction of the following Classes of development:

- Class 1 enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house
- Class 3 provision or alteration of buildings or enclosures within the curtilage of a dwelling house
- Class 6 installation, alteration or replacement of satellite antennae
- Class 7 construction or alteration of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure
- Class 38 water undertakings
- Class 39 development by gas suppliers
- Class 40 development by electricity undertakers and

- 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 conservation areas are covered by the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1972, as amended 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 renders the person liable to the same penalties as for contravention of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

TPOs are used to secure the preservation of trees which are of significant stature, in sound condition, and prominently located to be of amenity value to the public at large. When assessing their contribution to amenity, the importance of trees as wildlife habitats will be taken into consideration. There is a strong presumption against any form of development or change of use of land which is likely to damage or prejudice the future long term existence of trees covered by a TPO. The removal of trees for arboricultural reasons will not imply that the space created by their removal can be used for development.

- Grants may be available towards the repair or restoration of historic building. The Council runs a conservation grant scheme. Such grants are normally dependent on comprehensive repair and restoration of original features and priority is given to tenement housing and prominent buildings.

REFERENCES

- Corstorphine: A Pictorial History of a Midlothian Village, W.G. Dey
- The Corstorphine Heirloom: A History of the Old Parish Church of Corstorphine, Thomson
- Corstorphine Heritage Trail: Corstorphine Trust
- Edinburgh by John Gifford, Colin McWilliam, David Walker.

You can get this document on tape, in Braille, **large print** and various computer formats if you ask us. Please contact Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) on 0131 242 8181 and quote ref. 08956. ITS can also give information on community language translations.

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