

*THE HERMISTON CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL WAS APPROVED BY THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
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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 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 would adversely affect their special character. It is, therefore, important that the authorities and other groups who have an interest in conservation areas, and residents are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced.

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

It is intended that the Character Appraisal 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.

Hermiston Conservation Area

The Hermiston Conservation Area was designated on 20 June 1997.

Hermiston Village is located to the west of Edinburgh and immediately north of the Riccarton Estate. It is bounded to the south by the A71 and to the north by the Union Canal. The boundary includes an area of open space to the north to maintain the landscape setting of the Village. The west and east boundaries reflect the extremities of the built-up area of the Village.





HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Hermiston is recorded from about 1214 onwards; and the early forms of the name, Hyrdmanestoun and Hirdmanstoun, show that it was the tun or farm place of a hiredman (literally a 'household man'), a yeoman or freeholder of some substance and one of those assisting in the administration of the shire. It is also mentioned in early 14th century documents as a part of the Riccarton Estate. Langherdsmanstoun, an estate name, implying that a lang row or village had been established, is recorded as early as 1320.

Hermiston was historically connected with land in Currie. In 1458, there is reference to "a 3rd part of Langherdsmanstoun, Currie and Redhuis", then, in 1570, a Mr Mossman purchased "the lands of Langherdsmanstoun and Currie".

Hermiston developed as a traditional Lothian 'Ferme Toun'. In the case of Hermiston a group of farms: West Hermiston, Mid Hermiston and East Hermiston, which were also associated with brewing. Hermiston House is listed in charters back to the time of Robert I, and from 1696 it was the Dower House for the Riccarton Estate.

In the late 18th century, new forms of farm management resulted in a requirement for more labour and a process of increasing the number of farm workers, constructing new farm buildings and increasing stock was set in motion. Hermiston was consolidated as an agricultural village at this time and its present day structure dates from this period.





Most of the village consisted of farm workers cottages supporting a Sabbath school, post office and blacksmiths located centrally between West and Mid Hermiston. The 1845 Statistical Account notes that Hermiston enjoyed the privilege of a twice-daily postal service brought from Edinburgh via Colinton by a pedestrian carrier. The character of Hermiston at this time is evoked in the following quote “the real sight of the day was when the men and horses came in from the fields. The group of farms held by Mr Jack was generally worked by 12 men, each with a pair of horses”.

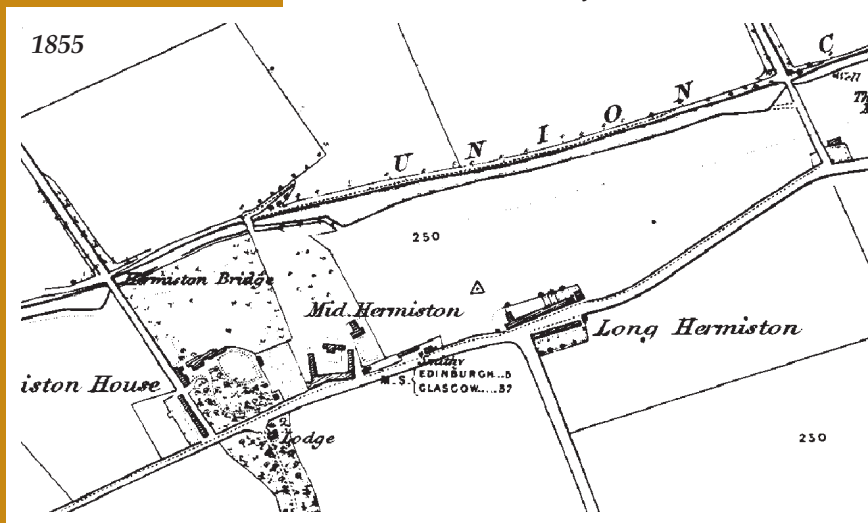
As farm work declined, in the late 20th century, the cottages were sold off, although as late as the 1950s two cottages were kept as bothies for the itinerant workers who arrived to “howk tatties and tumshies”.

The Mill Burn, which ran to the north of Hermiston, was included as part of the Union Canal, the construction of which commenced in 1818 and was completed in 1822. Designed by the engineer Hugh Baird, the canal was an important part of the infrastructure of Central Scotland until the opening of the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway line in 1842.

CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTER ELEMENTS

Overview

The small scale and irregular form of Hermiston is typical of a Lothian 'Ferme Toun', reflecting its origins in a group of farms worked by tenants which later amalgamated into a larger single unit. Comparison between the current plan of Hermiston and that of the mid 19th century shows that, with the exception of some infill development, the



overall form, spatial pattern and fabric of the village has remained unchanged for two centuries. Its character derives from the domestic scale and vernacular style of its mainly single storey cottages, which date from the early 19th century and the open form of the land to the north. The core of the village is based around Hermiston House and Farm. The principal building materials are stone, harling and slate, which contribute to the unified architectural character of the Village.

SPATIAL STRUCTURE AND TOWNSCAPE

The spatial structure comprises a street set in the countryside, the rural road, the canal and bridges. The grain of the settlement is varied. Visual interest is given by the combination of its different components: the building forms with different settings, arrangements and scales, and the varied open spaces which play important roles in the streetscape and help to articulate the buildings neatly into the countryside setting.

The entrance to Hermiston is to the east from a minor road off the A71, and the village consists principally of a linear main street with buildings grouped along its length. This street is fronted and enclosed mainly by vernacular cottages, the central farm complex (of contrasting layout, scale and geometry), stone walls and the landscape setting of Hermiston House.

The street is no longer a through route, the A71 having been realigned to bypass the village in 1987, and serves only light slow moving local traffic. It is a quiet place whose activity is derived from within the area. The main street runs parallel to the busy A71, but is visually and substantially separated from it by a landscaped belt and stone boundary wall. Towards the centre of the village this wall encloses a green space and curves away from the A71 to approach the buildings opposite. It provides a visual marker between the cottages to the east and the more substantial stone buildings and gardens to the west. The main street is narrowed at this point and its character changes. The cottages at Wester Row on Hermiston House Road, which form the western boundary of the conservation area, have a different alignment to the rest of the houses. Spatially the group provides a stop end to the street. It is linked to the rest of the village only by a footpath.

Essential Character

- the general tranquillity due to the landscape setting and lack of heavy through traffic;
- the strong sense of place derived from the vernacular and picturesque character within a rural setting;
- the stone boundary walls and landscaping which provide containment and enclosure from the A71;
- the linear street pattern and intimate grouping of the buildings;
- the substantial garden settings, mature trees and stone boundary walls in the western part of the village;
- the minimal front gardens and extended pavements in the eastern part of the village; and
- the uncluttered streets.



ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The north side of the main street was historically the most developed and retains a large number of traditional village buildings. The character of the eastern end of the north part of the main street is established by the picturesque row of terraced single-storey cottages, all harled with a white finish and slated roofs. The original smithy building stands to the east of the row of cottages. The cottages conform to a building line hard on the heel of the pavement that has been extended in width using York stone paving slabs.

West of the cottages, a group of mainly single-storey stone buildings are set back from the road behind stone boundary walls. Here, the former Gibson Craig Memorial Hall has been the subject of modern alteration to adapt it for use as a house.

Hermiston Farm House was originally part of the Riccarton Estate. It dates from the late 18th century with extensions of circa 1830, possibly by William Burn. The 18th century steading lies immediately to the west. The farm house group is statutorily listed (Category 'B'). The Farmhouse is set some distance back from the main street with a gate lodge at the entrance. Privacy is ensured by the mature growth of hedges and trees. Another tied cottage next to the gate lodge is dated 1899, and thereafter the buildings are typical stone built steadings.

Hermiston House is a two-storey mansion whose Baronial character can be attributed to William Burn who remodelled the house around 1830. A pedimented window is dated 1633 and the gargoyle on the main elevation is from Corstorphine Church. The house was restored and modernised by Esme Gordon in 1955. It is statutorily listed (Category 'B') along with its west lodge, gate towers, gig house and boundary walls. Hermiston House is also set back from the main street with a substantial landscaped front garden and lodge house enclosed by a stone boundary wall. There are many fine mature trees in the grounds of both listed houses.

The south side of the main street commences at the east end with two modern houses and the premises of Hermiston Motors. A short row of single storey harled cottages follows which has a wide area of grass, planted with cherry trees, on the frontage. Adjoining the cottages to the west is a path which forms a pedestrian link to the A71.

Wester Row consists of a terrace of single storey harled cottages with slate roofs on Hermiston House Road. This road leads down to one of the statutorily listed bridges over the Union Canal and gives the impression of a quiet country road with the stone boundary wall of Hermiston House to the east and a hedgerow to the west.

Essential Character

- the historic and architectural significance, and setting of Hermiston House and Hermiston Farmhouse;
- the predominant building form of small-scale, vernacular terraced cottages with simple pitched roof forms;
- the consistency in the use of traditional building materials stone, harling and slate, which contribute to the unified architectural character; and
- the fenestration pattern of vertically proportioned, timber sash and case windows.



OPEN SPACE

The south side of the main street mainly consists of landscaping and a small park area that acts as a village green and contains children's play equipment. The central location of the park area makes it an important focus. Other varied public and semi-public open spaces with different sizes and functions, the area of trees to the main road; landscaped setbacks; the canal and open fields, provide further amenity, settings and background to the buildings and village.



The Union Canal forms the northern boundary of the conservation area. The Canal is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the two identical single span stone bridges within the Conservation Area (West Hermiston Bridge and Mid Hermiston Bridge) are both statutorily listed (Category 'B'). West Hermiston Bridge (Bridge No. 12) is located to the west of Hermiston House on West Hermiston Road and Mid Hermiston Bridge (Bridge No. 11) is located east of Hermiston House and is no longer in use. The canal is a key landscape element and important amenity facility. The area between the rear of the main street houses and the Canal consists of open fields and the landscaped rear garden of Hermiston House.

Hermiston is surrounded by fields that provide a rural context and an open aspect to the north, over the Union Canal to Gogarbank, Corstorphine and beyond with the hills of Kinross in the distance. The Pentland Hills are the predominant feature in views to the south. Distant views show the settlement neatly integrated into its rural hinterland. The form and scale of the building fabric reflect their agricultural origins. The view from the Canal over the fields to the village incorporates the large sheds of Hermiston Farm which are not clearly visible from the main street.



Essential Character

- a variety of open spaces which play an important role in the townscape and articulate the buildings into their countryside setting and wider context;
- the key landscape and amenity feature of the Union Canal;
- the long distance and prominent views, and views along the canal; and
- the relationship of the houses to the public open space created by the small park to the south of the main street.



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 countryside setting.

Recent interventions have generally respected the domestic scale prevailing in the area, although 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 Hermiston its unique character. This is fundamental to the prevention of any deterioration in or adjacent to 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 introduction of an Article 4 Direction would ensure more effective controls over window alterations. A number of inappropriate window alterations have occurred which detract from the character of the individual buildings, as well as undermining the traditional profile of many buildings. They also have a cumulative effect on the overall character of the area.
- The eastern entrance to the settlement lacks definition and does not form an appropriate quality gateway. Its generally untidy and cluttered appearance creates a poor initial impression of the conservation area, and an appropriate improvement scheme would enhance this element.



Priorities for Action

The following priorities for action were identified during the consultation process:

- Enhancement of the entrances to the village with appropriately designed signs which should emphasise the name Hermiston Village.
- Enhancement of the village green to emphasise its functional importance.
- Review of the street lighting.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Statutory Policies Relating to Hermiston



The Currie Balerno Local Plan identifies Hermiston as lying within Edinburgh's Green Belt, where there is a presumption against development incompatible with Green Belt objectives, and also within a Countryside Policy Area land use designation.

Within the Countryside policy area the objective of the plan is to protect the countryside from development and maintain its rural character. This places a

general presumption against any development that is not related to agriculture and outdoor recreation. Consequently, in the case of Hermiston the emphasis is on ensuring that new development does not alter the rural character of this group of properties.

The Council is in the process of replacing the Currie Balerno Local Plan with the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan. The finalised version of the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan, also identifies Hermiston within Edinburgh's Green Belt.

The Local Plan contains advice on:

- The classes of permitted development within the conservation area;
- the preservation or enhancement of a conservation area where development is proposed;
- the protection of listed buildings;
- the protection of open space;
- development within Edinburgh's Green Belt; and
- design and amenity criteria for development within Edinburgh's Green Belt.

Implications of Conservation Area Status

Designation as a conservation area has the following implications:

- Permitted development rights under the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 are restricted. Planning permission is, therefore, required for stonecleaning, external painting, roof alterations and the formation of hard surfaces. The area of extensions to dwelling houses which may be erected without consent is also restricted 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 Ministers for Directions that restrict permitted development rights. The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance. Development is not precluded, but such alterations will require planning permission and special attention will be paid to the potential effect of proposals . The Hermiston Conservation Area is not currently covered by such an Article 4 Direction, and the following range of permitted development classes are proposed in the Finalised Local Plan for restriction under an Article 4 Direction:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 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. |
| 18 | Agricultural buildings and operations. |
| 30/33 | Development by local authority. |
| 38 | Water undertakings. |
| 39 | Development by gas suppliers. |
| 40 | Development by electricity undertakers. |
| 67 | Development by telecommunications code systems operators. |



- Special attention must be paid to the character and appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations will, therefore, be advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application.
- Buildings which are not statutorily listed can normally be demolished without approval under the Planning Regulations. Within conservation areas the demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation area consent.
- Proposals for work on trees must be notified in writing to the Council, six weeks in advance of commencing works.
- Alterations to windows are controlled in terms of the Council's policy.
- Grants may be available towards the repair or restoration of historic buildings.

Supplementary Guidelines

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

Protection of Trees

Trees within conservation areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The Act applies to the uprooting, felling or lopping of trees 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 week's 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 TPO.

Grants for Conservation

The Council also runs a Conservation Grant Scheme. Such grants are normally dependent on comprehensive repair and restoration of original features and priority is given to tenemental housing and prominent listed buildings.

Competition for grants is very strong and applications are assessed in terms of the merit of the building and its wider setting, the nature and urgency of works proposed, and the real need for assistance from public funds.



The Role of the Public

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

A summary of this document is available *on request* in Braille, tape, large print and various computer formats and community languages. Please contact ITS on 0131 2428181 and quote ref. 01607

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