

# Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy

## Planning Guidance and Public Realm Framework

Consultation Draft, September 2024



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*Front cover: Aerial photograph looking east over buildings in the First New Town and green space of Princes Street Gardens to the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 What is the Strategy?

This draft Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy (the 'Draft Strategy') establishes an overarching Vision for the revitalisation of Princes Street and the Waverley Valley.

It recognises the value of Princes Street as an iconic city centre destination where redevelopment benefits from the unrivalled views to the Castle and Old Town, the natural asset of Princes Street Gardens and excellent access to the public transport network.

The Draft Strategy brings together the remits of multiple Council service areas to ensure a coordinated approach to place.

To support the delivery of the Vision and supporting objectives, the Draft Strategy comprises:

- Planning Guidance to promote and shape new development on Princes Street, including a Proposed Place Brief to inform

Waverley Station's renewal (Chapters 4 and 6).

- A Public Realm Framework setting out improvements to be delivered to Princes Street including enhanced access to West Princes Street Gardens (Chapter 5).
- Guidance to inform a new improvement plan for Princes Street Gardens to help deliver the Council's [Thriving Greenspaces 2050 Vision](#) (Chapter 6) and to set out the way forward for the Ross Bandstand.

The draft Strategy supports the delivery of agreed placemaking policies and principles for the city centre and Princes Street including those set out in the Council's finalised [City Plan 2030](#), the [City Mobility Plan \(CMP\) 2021](#), [Edinburgh City Centre Transformation \(ECCT\) 2019](#), and [Our Future Streets \(OFS\) 2024](#).

The draft Strategy also supports a core aim of the Council's Economic Strategy in maintaining a vibrant and sustainable city centre economy.

It also complements [other city centre public realm and sustainable travel projects](#) to ensure a coordinated approach to enhancement of the First New Town



*Image above: The Johnnie Walker Experience opened in 2021, re-imagining the category B Listed inter-war department store originally built for Binns in 1935 at 144-147 Princes Street. The premises were previously occupied by House of Fraser.*

## 1.2 What is the Strategy's Status?

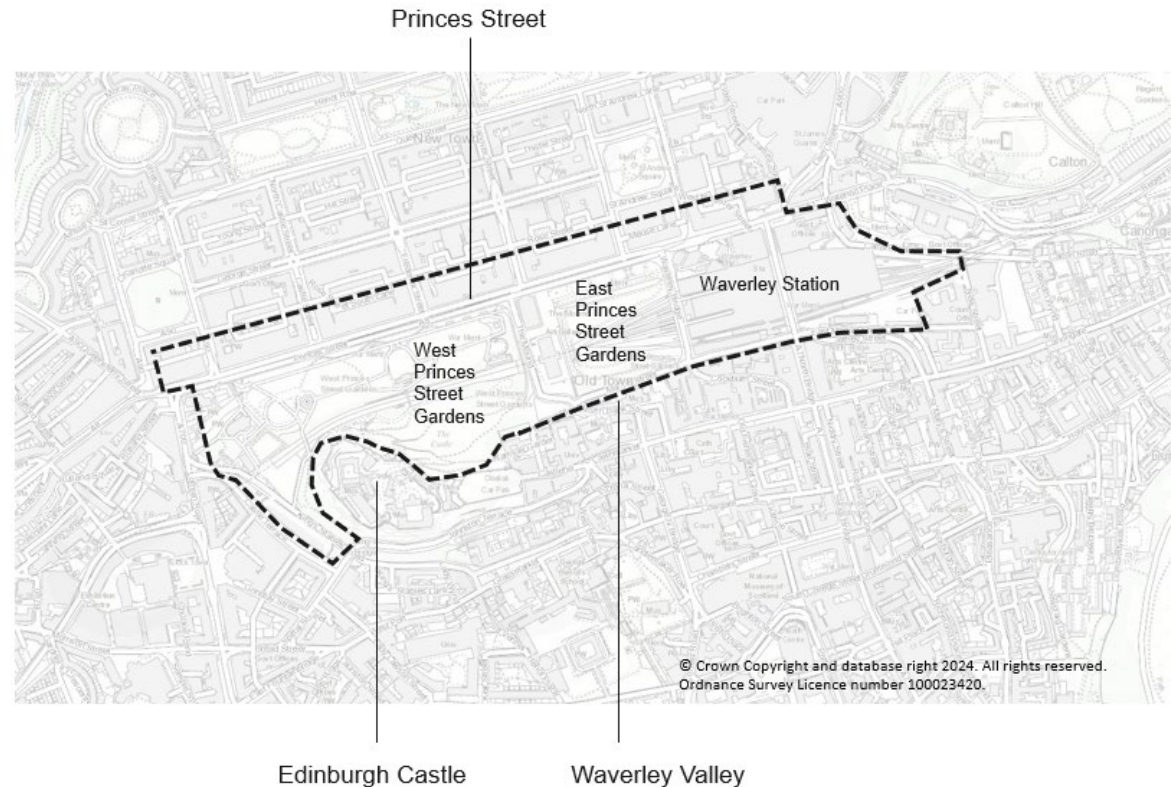
The Draft Strategy is a consultation document. Once finalised and approved after the consultation period, this Strategy will:

- Become non-statutory Planning Guidance, replacing the [City Centre Princes Street Development Framework \(2007\)](#) and [Princes Street Blocks Development Briefs \(2009\)](#). The existing [Princes Street Heritage Framework](#) will be retained as background information on the built heritage within each block.
- Provide an approved Place Brief to ensure clarity on the Council's requirements for the renewal of Waverley Station.
- Form a material consideration for the Council, as Planning Authority, in the determination of planning applications.
- Inform the future management of the Waverley Valley, including a new improvement plan for Princes St Gardens.

- Support funding bids to deliver Council-led public realm and Waverley Valley enhancements and where appropriate, provide a basis for securing developer contributions.

## 1.3 What area of the city is the Strategy focussed on?

Image below: a map of the Strategy's study area



The Strategy focusses on buildings forming the south edge of the New Town, between Princes Street and Rose Street; the footways and carriageway of Princes Street and adjacent spaces; and the wider landscape divide between the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh, which includes Waverley Station and Princes Street Gardens.

## 2. Vision and Objectives

### The Vision for Princes Street and the Waverley Valley

“By 2040 Princes Street and the Waverley Valley will be a more welcoming place designed for people and nature with sustainable mobility, liveability, and biodiversity at its heart. It will support a thriving economy with a quality shopping, leisure and cultural experience and enable inclusive access to enhanced Gardens. As part of a rejuvenated First New Town public realm, the status of one of Scotland’s most iconic streets will be restored to offer a fitting and climate resilient setting for our World-renowned heritage.”

The Vision is supported by the following Objectives:

#### Placemaking

Ensure Princes Street and the Waverley Valley is a safe, attractive and welcoming place for residents, workers and visitors to experience as a destination for leisure, shopping, culture and wellbeing.

#### Heritage

Protect, promote and enhance the street and Valley’s unique heritage and archaeology, including its Outstanding Universal Value as part of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS).

#### Economy

Through a high-quality public realm, continue to attract investment in the city centre, providing employment and supporting local services.

#### Mobility

Enhance conditions for walking and wheeling and optimise the efficiency of the public transport network. Continue to enable safer cycling linked to the strategic cycle network.

#### Climate

Adapt buildings, streetscape and greenspaces to our changing climate, and strengthen the appeal of the city centre to meet a range of needs by sustainable travel.

#### Nature

Strengthen the role of the Princes Street, the First New Town and Princes Street gardens as part of Edinburgh’s nature network and promote nature-based solutions where possible.

#### Safe and Inclusive

Provide an environment which is as safe, accessible and inclusive as possible for everyone at all times of day.

#### Operations and Logistics

Ensure effective service access is maintained to support the city centre economy, whilst securing a high-quality public realm.

### 3. Policy Context

#### 3.1 The Development Plan

The Development Plan, against which applications for new development within Princes Street and the Waverley Valley will be assessed, comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Council's finalised Local Development Plan – 'City Plan 2030'.

City Plan 2030 Policy Place 1 – Edinburgh City Centre, sets out the requirement for this Strategy to:

- guide regeneration of the street and its buildings.
- establish a place-making vision for its public realm; and
- manage the outstanding urban landscape of the Waverley Valley.

This is further supported by the CityPlan 2030 Economy Policies.

The WHS receives planning policy protection through the Development Plan, including for its skyline and requires certain proposals to be assessed for their heritage and/or environmental impacts.

Statutory consents apply in terms of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The study area largely falls within the New Town Conservation Area, with the Old Town Conservation Area embracing the southern part of the Waverley Valley. The character and appearance of these areas must be preserved and enhanced through planning decisions. The majority of Princes Street's buildings are statutorily listed due to their special architectural and historic interest.

Princes Street and the Waverley Valley hold significant archaeological importance, which City Plan seeks to protect and enhance.

Princes Street Gardens form part of the nationally important New Town Gardens designed landscape. Castle Rock forms part of the Arthur's Seat Volcano Site of Special Scientific Interest and many local planning policies serve to protect its open space, trees, biodiversity, landscape qualities and to ensure the sustainability and design quality of new developments.

##### 3.1.1 Planning Guidance

Key guidance for Princes Street and the Waverley Valley includes:

- Edinburgh Design Guidance and related Street Design Guidance;
- Guidance for Businesses;
- Guidance on Listed Building and Conservation Areas; and the
- City Centre Retail Core Supplementary Guidance

Princes Street is located within the City Centre Retail Core, which protects Edinburgh's role as a regional focus for retail and leisure.

Other protections include [legal restrictions](#) on the type of building which may be erected in Princes Street Gardens and height restrictions upon Waverley Market.

#### 3.2 Related Strategies

Other strategies which are key to this area include:

##### 3.2.1 City Mobility Plan

The City Mobility Plan (CMP), approved in 2021 and updated in 2024, sets the Council's strategic approach to sustainable, safe and effective movement of people and goods around Edinburgh.

- strategically reviewing the bus network in partnership with bus

operators to reduce service gaps in the context of the city-region and continue to ease city centre congestion, particularly on Princes Street, building on work already undertaken by Lothian Buses to rationalise bus volumes as part of the delivery of the tram extension;

- improving public transport interchange, including fully integrated ticketing and securing the future of the bus station;
- review opportunities to reduce bus stop dwell times and stacking;
- expanding the tram network, including a new Tram from Granton to Bioquater.

### **3.2.2 Edinburgh City Centre Transformation**

Edinburgh's City Centre Transformation Strategy (ECCT) approved in 2019, promotes a vibrant and people focused capital city centre which seeks to improve community, economic and cultural life.

As part of a renewed city centre, ECCT identifies a series of Catalyst Areas including for Princes Street and the

environment around Waverley Station.

Key actions include to:

- enhance the pedestrian experience, to improve crossings and seating, and to create a people focussed place.
- strengthen links between George Street, Princes Street and Princes Street Gardens
- optimise bus routes through the city centre, including a city centre hopper bus, to improve operational efficiency and create a more balanced pedestrian environment
- create a pedestrian plaza at Waverley Bridge, supporting a transformed entrance to Waverley Station

### **3.2.3 Future Streets**

Future Streets (FS) 2024 is a citywide framework against which the Council will deliver streetspace reallocation to support sustainable travel and placemaking. It includes a City Centre Circulation Plan (CCCP).

The CCCP defines Princes Street's functions as a priority for place, for

walking/wheeling and public transport, with access for cycles and operational considerations.

Access by public transport and high-quality spaces are key to the street's economy and vibrancy. The Draft Strategy supports the street's public transport role, whilst enhancing its public realm at key locations.

Princes Street is only categorised as a strategic cycle connection east of South St David Street, with this section of the 'primary' cycle network forming an important link between George Street / Waverley Station and Leith Street, Regent Road and North Bridge.



Above: A view of Princes Street's east end from the top of the Scott Monument.

However, in addition to enhanced cycle parking on street and within the public realm, FS identifies that the east end of Princes Street will require a localised design solution to be developed.

The eastern end of the street is subject to heavy footfall, provides critical interchange between bus passengers, the rail network and tram at St Andrew Square, and forms part of the safeguarded tram route to the southeast of the city.

Providing for all these uses whilst also delivering a safe cycling connection and enhancing the street as a public space presents a major challenge that will require very careful design.

Additionally, major developments in this part of the city centre and the Waverley Station Masterplan will place additional demands on this section of street.

FS includes a commitment to develop an Operations Plan for the city centre which will include strategies to coordinate deliveries, servicing, cargo bikes and coaches.

### **3.2.4 Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan**

The Plan interprets the Site's important qualities and sets actions to protect and manage it through the work of partners Historic Environment Scotland (HES), the City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH).

The draft Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan 2024 – 2035 places additional emphasis on climate adaptation, public realm and the need for management of the Site to be informed by ongoing research.

### **3.2.5 Green Blue Network, Open Space Strategy, Water Vision, and Biodiversity Action Plan**

The Council is committed to enhancing open spaces and connections to them, managing flood risk, and protecting and expanding biodiversity.

Princes Street Gardens and the Waverley Valley more generally are of key importance including for recreation, nature, and supporting flood management.



*Above: Aerial view of the Waverley Valley as viewed from the west, showing Princes Street, West Princes Street Gardens, The Royal Scottish Academy and National Gallery of Scotland on The Mound, the railway and Edinburgh Castle. Image courtesy Historic Environment Scotland.*



## 4. Princes Street's Uses, Blocks and Buildings

### 4.1 Background

This section provides place specific planning guidance to inform proposals for new development, focussing on:

- creation of a vibrant place on street through a mix of uses.
- Princes Street's urban blocks and the First New Town plan.
- opportunities to enhance and restore the street's building stock.

### 4.2 A Vibrant Mix of Uses

Princes Street is part of the City Centre Retail Core, which guides the balance of shops and other uses in the New Town.

Edinburgh is a vibrant destination and Princes Street has a prime south-facing aspect to the Castle and Princes Street Gardens.

Despite the growth in online retail, the city region's population still needs shops but as part of mix with leisure and culture, adding to the street's appeal throughout the day and evening.

In 2020, [Council planning guidance](#) introduced greater flexibility for food and drink (class 3), and leisure and assembly use (class 11) on Princes Street, where a change of use requires planning permission. Up to one third of the total number of units on each block can be in non-shop use at ground floor.

In 2023, The Scottish Government introduced legislation to support city, town and local centres, including to:

- Merge shops and financial, professional and other services into one use class (1A)
- Allow change of use from class 1A to food and drink (class 3) except for premises below or within 1m of a dwelling.
- Enable furniture outside food and drink premises subject to Roads Authority permission.

Food and drink uses are now emerging and scope exists for more whilst retaining sufficient retail space to support the city centre's shopping needs.

At upper levels, planning policy continues to support office, commercial leisure and

hotel accommodation. Hotels and bars have begun to bring upper floors into active use, in place of stock storage, back office or staff rooms.

Residential use of upper storeys is supported but challenging to achieve when converting former commercial buildings.

The Council continues to [monitor occupancy](#) and will re-assess commercial needs to inform City Plan 2040.

*Image below: Ground floor food and drink below hotel use, formerly the New Look clothing store*





### 4.3 Princes Street's Blocks

Princes Street has evolved over the past 260 years but the underlying principles of the First New Town plan remain remarkably intact, including:

- the distinction between the Old and New Towns;
- the hierarchical structure;
- the symmetrical grid layout;
- its planned vistas and views; and
- single-sided Princes Street and Queen St

*Above: Princes Street between Castle Street and Frederick Street as viewed from the Castle ramparts, showing the landform of the Waverley Valley, layered roofscape and cross-streets rising to George Street.*

To conserve and enhance the form and spatial pattern of the First New Town and its underlying landform, the following urban block considerations apply:

Buildings on Princes Street should sit below those of George Street as the prime, central street in the First New Town, with buildings of lesser scale again on Rose Street.

Princes Street's role in defining the south edge of the First New Town and its symmetrical grid is paramount and should be reflected in the treatment of elevations, roofscape, frontage widths and materiality.

Roofscape, in particular, forms a fifth elevation and important element of its character in protected skyline views and locally important views.

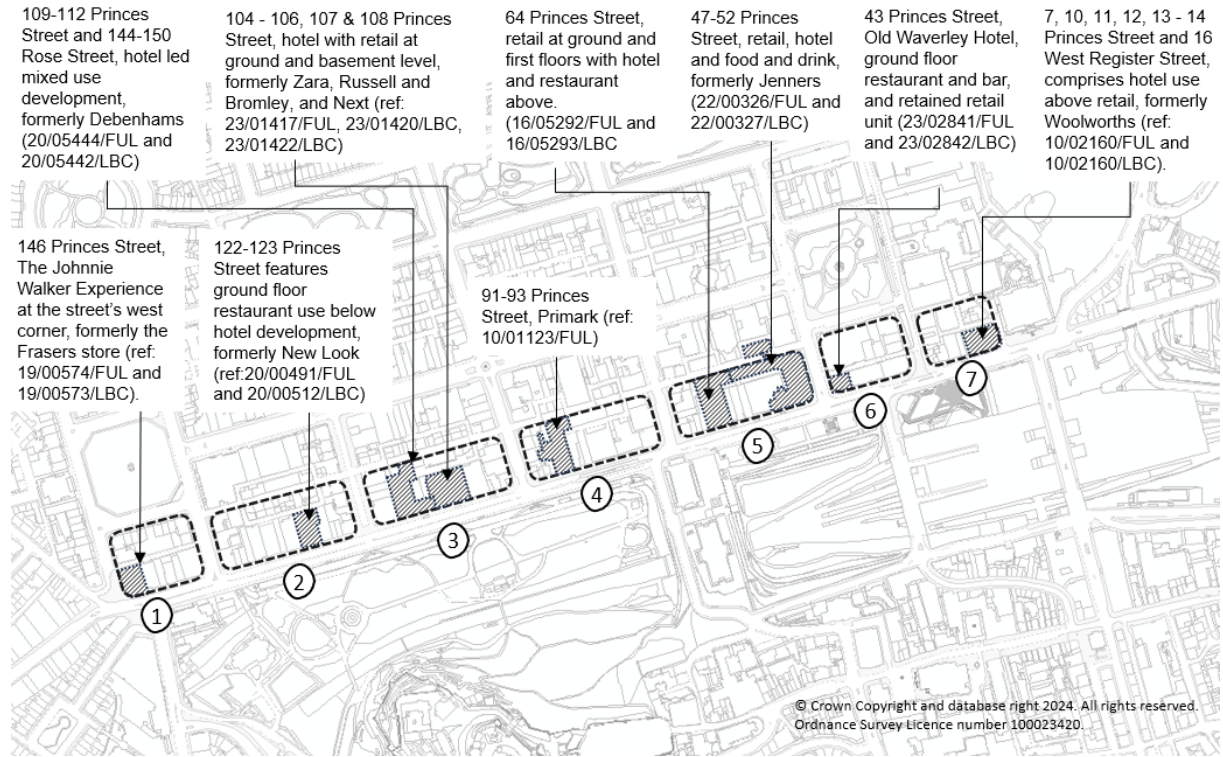
Corner buildings are of particular importance in framing views between the Old and New Towns, including early 19th century buildings, hotels and former department stores.

Surviving elements of each block's historic structure and layout should be retained, including former boundary walls, garden ground and setted lanes.

The unique role of each block should be understood to inform development proposals, which must contribute to the regeneration of the block overall without compromising adjacent premises.

The [Princes Street Heritage Framework](#) continues to provide a valuable reference to the evolution of the street and its urban blocks.

DRAFT PRINCES STREET AND WAVERLEY VALLEY STRATEGY



Above: Plan of Princes Street's Blocks and selected development activity

Forming part of the First New Town grid, seven blocks of buildings front Princes Street, with Rose Street and its lanes to the rear, divided by the cross-streets of Castle, Frederick and Hanover streets and Charlotte and St Andrew squares.

The City Centre Princes Street Development Framework (2007)

introduced block references, which are continued below. The diagram and accompanying text outline some of the key characteristics of each block, alongside a selection of developments from the last 15 years.

Block 1 is a gateway to the city from the west, addresses Lothian Road and encloses Charlotte Square.

Blocks 2, 3 and 4 directly overlook West Princes Street Gardens and the Castle and comprise a mix of large commercial buildings and more modest scaled properties.

Blocks 4 and 5 feature larger commercial buildings, whilst late 18th century classical corner tenements with later additions frame The Mound and Royal Scottish Academy at Hanover Street.

Blocks 6 and 7 form a gateway to the city from the east and Waverley Station. Block 6 addresses Waverley Bridge and encloses St Andrew Square.



Image above: the completed redevelopment at 64 Princes Street, a category B Listed building and home to Edinburgh's Uniqlo store.

#### 4.4 Building Design

Development should enhance the street's economy and the contribution of its buildings to the World Heritage Site.

Most of Princes Street's buildings are Listed - protected by law due to their special architectural or historic interest, with their refurbishment and adaptation a constant feature of city life.

Over the last 15 years, many unlisted properties have been redeveloped, including several former Princes Street Panel buildings (refer to Appendix A).

To enhance Princes Street's frontage and provide a mix of new uses, redevelopment of unlisted buildings of little townscape value includes the following opportunities:

- 101- 103, Princes Street (Boots)
- 80-83, Princes Street (The Abbey Business Centre).

Redevelopment could include refurbishment, or where re-use is not viable, replacement with new high-quality buildings, subject to a whole life carbon assessment.

In addition to these redevelopment opportunities, heritage-led regeneration of individual buildings or groups of buildings will be supported.

Georgian scale buildings can provide for independent and boutique retail or food and drink use seeking a unique and characterful setting.

The townscape value of some larger 19th century buildings could be enhanced, replacing unsympathetic alterations or shopfronts.

Parking garages in some 20th century plots add little to the character of the rear lanes and are out of place today with a city centre served by sustainable transport.



*An example of the original Georgian scale Princes Street buildings at 94-98 Princes Street.*

The following detailed guidance for Princes Street's buildings supplements the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

##### 4.4.1 Overall Design Approach

- new development will be of the highest design quality, informed by contextual analysis of the street, and the character of the wider block in terms of scale, proportions and materiality.
- where possible, a whole building approach should be taken, opening under-used lower ground floors and upper storeys to manage building stock sustainably.
- to achieve access to upper floors with a mix of uses, proposals will be required to integrate lift and stair access from Princes Street with entrance lobbies which interface positively with the street.
- to enhance inclusive access across the New Town, the creation of accessible routes between Princes Street and Rose Street internal to the buildings, will be supported.

- proposals should be based on detailed understanding of external and internal features, especially original elements which remain intact or contribute positively to the Listed Building and Conservation Area.
- as appropriate, proposals should be assessed to understand their potential effect on the setting of Listed Buildings, the Conservation Area(s), Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Protected Views and other locally important viewpoints.
- a Heritage Impact Assessment may be required to understand the effect of a proposal on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

#### **4.4.2 Shopfront and Commercial Frontage**

- improve the design of [shopfronts](#) replacing low quality materials, and ensure these tie in with adjacent premises and the full elevational treatment of the building.

- on longer facades or plot widths, seek to create regular interest at street level and consider reflecting the human scale of the historic feu pattern (refer to Appendix A).
- projecting signs and banners will not be supported. Shopfront illumination must be white and static.
- awnings and porticos were a historic feature of the street and can provide shade, shelter and a welcoming entrance at street level.
- a high quality paved entrance and threshold within the building's curtilage will be required in Scoutmoor Yorkstone.

#### **4.4.3 Heights and Roofscape**

- building heights should respond to the existing building(s) on site and the prevailing character of the wider block and street frontage.
- changes to heights and roofscape may be justified where benefits include removal of unsympathetic extensions, outdated rooftop

equipment or which enables restoration of the building fabric.

- building heights which rise above the prevailing roofline will require careful justification, supported by contextual analysis, street elevations and photomontage visualisation from appropriate viewpoints.
- where justified, roof terraces should be inset within the form of the roofscape or parapet walls. In general, projecting glazed barriers or railings will not be supported.

#### **4.4.4 Climate and Nature Emergencies**

- [retro-fitting of traditional buildings](#) should be undertaken as appropriate to support net zero carbon targets as part of a holistic approach to repair and adaptation.
- proposals involving photovoltaic panels or air source heat pumps should seek to sensitively integrate these within the overall form of the building, rather than in additional rooftop enclosures.

- the use of living roofs to provide green blue infrastructure solutions to manage surface water and further biodiversity within inconspicuous areas of roofscape will be supported.

#### 4.4.5 Lighting

- external lighting in the city centre is specifically used to celebrate focal buildings and monuments with dark skies maintained around the Castle and Princes Street Gardens.
- façade and rooftop design, through the balance of solid exterior materials to voids and windows should be used to manage excessive light spillage from Princes Street's buildings.
- in addition to listed building records, further references include the [Princes Street Cultural Significance Assessment](#)



*Redevelopment at West Register Street highlights the potential to activate rear lanes with ground floor uses and to renew the public realm.*

#### 4.5 Servicing and the Lanes

Links through Princes Street's blocks can provide accessible routes across the city centre and support a greater density of shops and services.

The lanes behind Princes Street (Hope Street Lane, Rose Street South Lane,

Meuse Lane, West Register Street) provide servicing access for businesses.

This vital role reduces the impact of servicing on surrounding streets and public realm but affects the quality of the lanes and perceptions of safety.

Large buildings in blocks 5 and 6 enclose the lanes and create a canyon-like effect, limiting their placemaking potential.

To the west, blocks 2 and 3 have more potential to activate their lanes due to lower building heights and remnant back court spaces.

The Council's Operational Plan once developed (refer to chapter 3) will improve the future management of city centre loading and servicing. In addition, developments should:

- retain links through blocks where these exist or bridge over/under Rose Street South Lane.
- activate the east and west flanks of Rose Street Lanes and rear of the cross-streets in the First New Town, which are visible from Rose Street.

- address the lanes with active uses in the west blocks, to complement the existing character of Rose Street and its lanes in this location.

#### 4.6 Pop-up Uses and Hoarding

In bringing forward development proposals, applicants are encouraged to activate vacant premises through:

- Pop-up uses;
- Building wraps; and/or
- Creative use of street hoardings.

'Pop-up' uses can avoid the negative perception of empty units on the street and provide some income for building owners. Temporary uses could include exhibitions, creative workspace or business start ups. The Council's Business Growth and Inclusion Team can help match interested parties. Planning, lease, licensing and insurance requirements need careful consideration.

To minimise construction impacts, applicants are encouraged to [net scaffolding with one to one scale images](#) of the buildings under construction or refurbishment. Proposals will require advertisement consent and listed building consent, as appropriate.

The use of creative and non-commercial artwork or observation windows on street level hoardings is equally encouraged.

*Below: mural on the construction hoardings during the North Bridge refurbishment project by artists Christopher Rutterford and Craig Robertson. Image courtesy C Rutterford.*



#### 4.7 Construction Considerations

Early dialogue with Council services is recommended to consider how design proposals will be constructed in the city centre.

For Princes Street, limited options exist for temporary allocation of street space to provide construction access. Hoardings must minimise disruption to footways and restrictions apply in terms of construction or building maintenance in proximity to the tramway.

## 5. Princes Street's Public Realm and Mobility

### 5.1 Background

This section sets out a series of public realm improvements for Princes Street and a related design code, building on principles agreed by ECCT.

### 5.2 Staged Transformation

The revitalisation of Princes Street's public realm is proposed in three stages to deliver placemaking benefits whilst recognising the street's crucial role in the public transport network. These include:

- Stage 1 - Placemaking Projects;
- Stage 2 – West Garden Links; and
- Stage 3 – Improved Footways.

Alongside this approach, a design code is set out in Stage 3 to ensure a consistent treatment is achieved. Together with projects such as George Street and the First New Town, these measures will provide a connected and high quality network of city centre public realm.

*Image far right: Elevated view of Princes Street looking east from the roof terrace of the Johnnie Walker Experience*

The Council will seek funding through various sources to promote a coordinated programme of public realm enhancement.

An aspirational future stage could result in major street redefinition, with changes to carriageways and widened footways.

Such changes depend on the outcome of the strategic bus network review, informed by engagement with bus operators and stakeholders, recognising the need to maintain effective public transport access along Princes Street and through the city centre. The future of the bus station, interchange opportunities to the east and west of Princes Street, and expansion of the tram, will inform this work. This does not form part of the Draft Strategy.

### 5.3 Stage 1 – Placemaking Projects

The first stage comprises a series of placemaking projects to create accessible, high quality spaces along the street:

- 1a) The West End
  - 1b) Castle Street
  - 1c) The Mound Precinct
- The East End, including:
- 1d) Waverley Bridge
  - 1e) General Register House

The changes focus on making existing spaces more welcoming and respectful of the historic environment.

Bespoke street furniture would provide places to rest and strengthen the street's identity, whilst managing vehicle controls.

Alongside enhanced dwell spaces, paving and drainage cleansing, repairs and removal of street clutter, would deliver benefits.

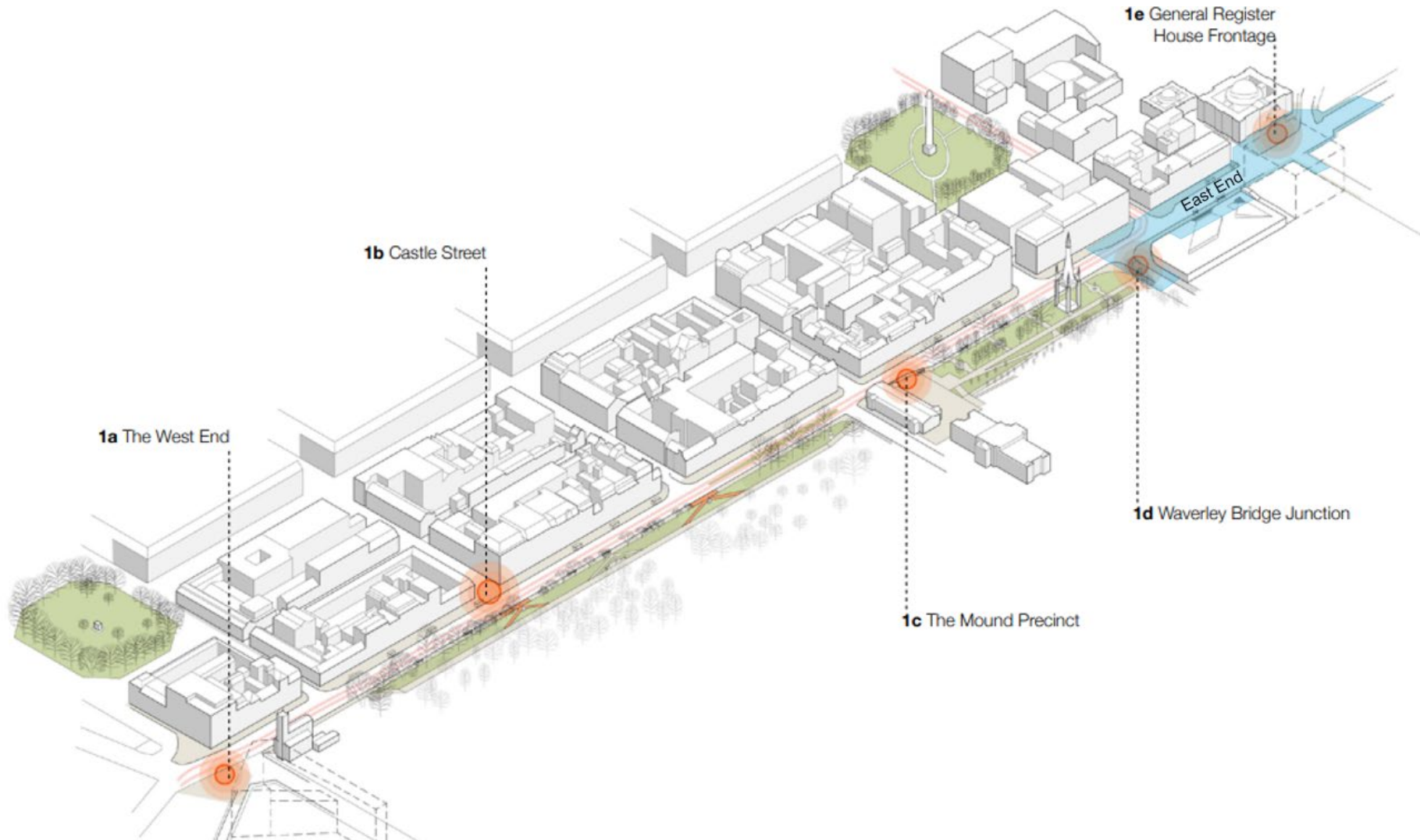
Proposals could be timed to enhance the city centre's offer whilst George Street is under construction.

In dialogue with donors, the Council's Parks and Greenspaces service could relocate some benches from Princes Street's south footway to the Gardens.





*Princes Street Public Realm – Location of Stage 1 Placemaking Projects*



### 5.3.1 1a The West End

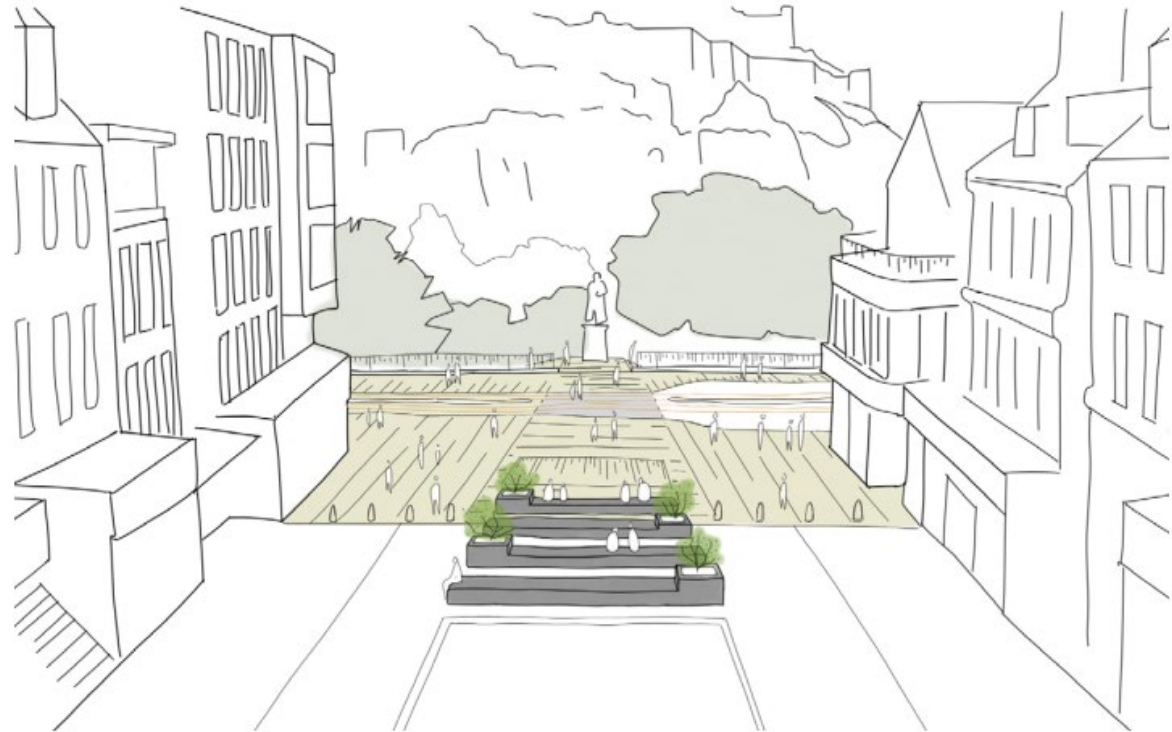
This visually prominent space sits at the busy junction of Princes Street, Lothian Road, Shandwick Place, Queensferry Street and Hope Street.

The existing public realm is cluttered and simplification would ease walking and wheeling. The design of this space falls within the Lothian Road project, which will see the junction redesigned.

In the interim, there is an opportunity for high quality, re-usable seating to be installed.



Above: A view of Castle Street looking south towards Edinburgh Castle. Above right: sketch view of Placemaking Project 1b at Castle Street, looking south towards the Castle.



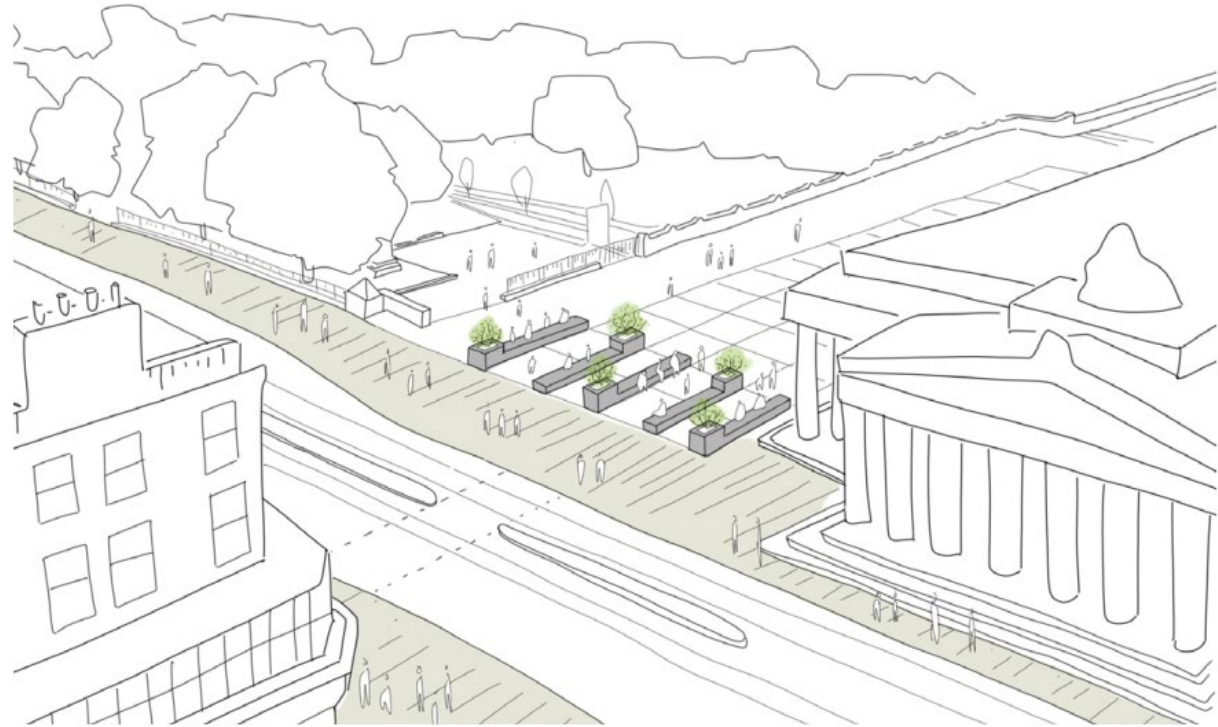
### 5.3.2 1b Castle Street

Castle Street was redesigned in 2007, introducing a pedestrian zone to capitalise on its unique view to Edinburgh Castle. The space is used periodically for markets, events and

provides for street traders at its north end. The proposal would extend the pedestrian zone at its junction with Princes Street, creating a more open space to provide for:

- new, generous benches, for sitting, socialising, picnic lunches and admiring the views to the Castle.
- existing street trading stances would be arranged to flank Castle Street, opening up the space.
- a small, managed performance space could be included for solo, unplugged performers.
- additional cycle parking capacity would be created for people coming to Princes Street from the City Centre West East Link (CCWEL) / National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1).
- existing barriers for delivery vehicles/servicing would be moved northwards.

Coupled with access improvements set out in Stage 2, the proposals will strengthen connections to West Princes Street Gardens.



*Above: sketch view of Placemaking Project at 1c The Mound Precinct*

### **5.3.3 1c Mound Precinct**

The Mound Precinct forms the setting to the two Playfair galleries of the Royal Scottish Academy and National Gallery of Scotland.

It forms part of a key north-south pedestrian link to the Old Town

connected by the Playfair Steps, and provides open views across the Waverley Valley to Edinburgh Castle and the East Gardens.

The space is used frequently for festival activity and events but outwith these periods seating is limited to the Gardens and tiered steps around the Weston Link's circular rooflight. The

space sits parallel to the Meadows to George Street project, which will see Hanover Street upgraded.

To improve this space, new high quality benches would be introduced to provide a dwell space outwith events and festivals.

Furniture would be moveable and fit in with recent upgrades, including the Transport for Edinburgh wayfinding totems and the widened access to East Princes Street Gardens, delivered as part of the Scottish Gallery Project.



*Above: Pavement congestion outside Waverley Steps and Waverley Market at the East End of Princes St*

### **5.3.4 The East End**

The east end of Princes Street faces several significant challenges which require a holistic approach, in partnership with key stakeholders.

This area provides critical interchange between bus passengers, the rail network, and connections to tram at St Andrew Square.

Pavement overcrowding, especially on the south side of the street between Waverley Steps and Waverley Bridge is a significant challenge.

Waverley Market roof terrace has a geometric layout which steps down from the street, creating an awkward series of spaces.

Taxi servicing for the Balmoral Hotel and the inefficient use of streetspace that this involves exacerbates footway crowding, bus delays and danger to people cycling.

The area between South St Andrew Street and North Bridge forms part of the safeguarded tram route.

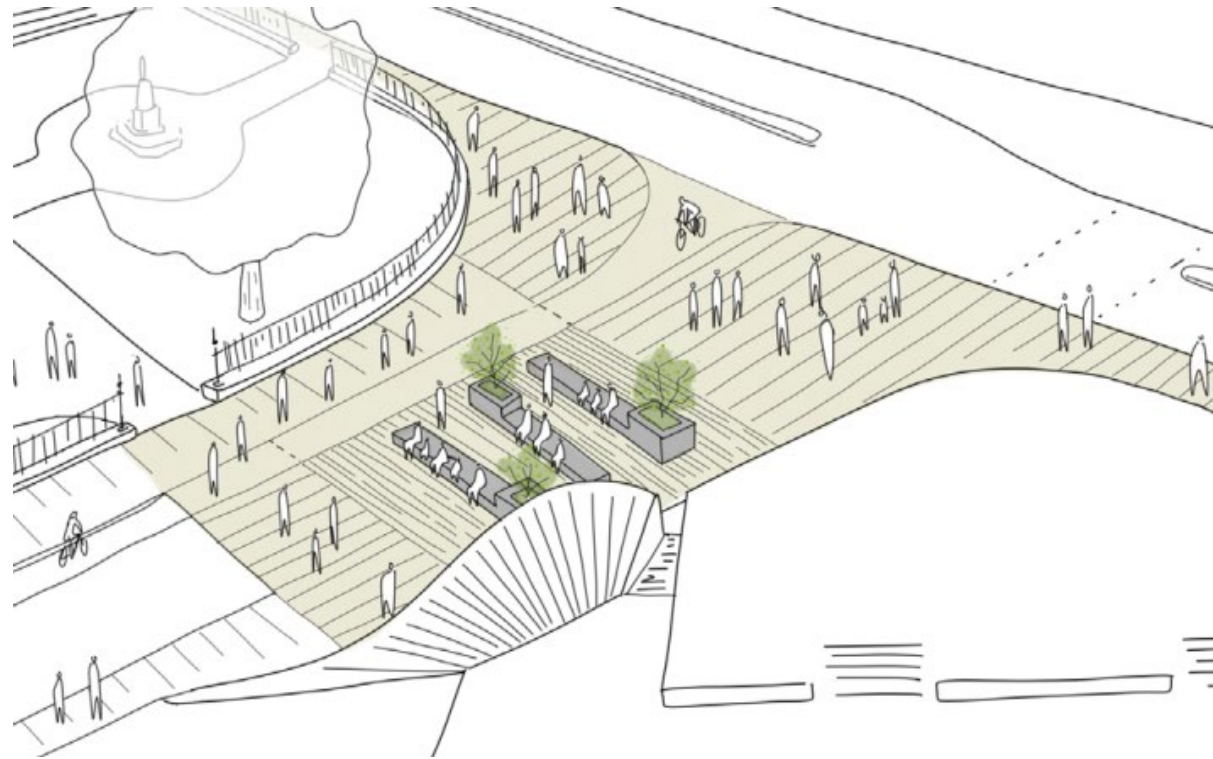
It also represents a gap in the strategic cycle network between George Street, Waverley Station, Leith Street, Regent Road and North Bridge.

There is a level of uncertainty around what can be achieved to address these competing mobility needs until further feasibility and design work is undertaken. Despite this uncertainty, key public realm principles include:

- Take a holistic approach to form a connected network of high-quality, public space.
- A street-level set-back should be a guiding principle for any future redevelopment of the Waverley Market roof terrace to create a more comfortable street, shopping experience and accommodate the essential functions of the street.
- Consider a consistent materiality across footways and spaces bordering and potentially extending into the carriageway, to

unify and de-clutter the space and respect the setting of landmark buildings.

- Use of Waverley Market roof terrace for events and activities can animate the street, however as part of any redesign this would need to be carefully managed to avoid adding to crowded conditions on street.
- Increase specimen tree planting and greening on the roof terrace, aligned with the East Gardens.
- Consider the re-introduction of a bus gate to give more priority to public transport, walking and cycling, by restricting general traffic and limiting servicing times when levels of pedestrian activity are lower.
- Consider other short/medium term measures to address the acute issues at the east end of Princes St including amended taxi/loading arrangements, footway widening and measures to improve cycle safety.



- Improve space for north-south pedestrian crossing linking to Leith Street and West Register Street in front of The Balmoral Hotel.

Two placemaking projects have been set out in greater detail for Waverley Bridge and General Register House.

*Above right: sketch view of Placemaking Project 1d at the junction of Waverley Bridge and Princes Street as viewed from above Waverley Market*

### **5.3.5 1d Waverley Bridge**

Waverley Bridge's closure to general traffic was agreed by the City Centre Transformation Strategy, in order to:

- increase the efficiency of public transport services on Princes

Street by removing traffic exiting the Bridge; and

- create an arrival plaza outside Waverley Station to support Network Rail's masterplan, as set out in Chapter 6.

The south end of the bridge continues to provide taxi and cycle access, alongside servicing access for the Station, The Balmoral and Waverley Market. This closure will be temporarily paused to allow bus access to Waverley Bridge while the Jenners building is undergoing construction works.

In the medium-term, to improve the Bridge's interface with Princes Street, the elevated northern end of Waverley Bridge would be upgraded.

The area between Princes Street and the entrances to East Princes Street Gardens and Waverley Market would be pedestrianised, with cycle access.

This placemaking project would include new, generous benches, for sitting, socialising, picnic lunches and

admiring the views to the Old Town and simple interpretation.

Temporary surfacing could be used to define crossing priorities, and to set out a public realm zone aligned with East Princes St Gardens, whilst providing through access for cycling.

The space will be further transformed by the full design for the Bridge and Waverley Station at a later stage.

### **5.3.6 1e General Register House**

A wide footway space exists in front of this key civic building, divided by the Duke of Wellington statue which faces the busy North Bridge junction.

Opportunities to improve this space include:

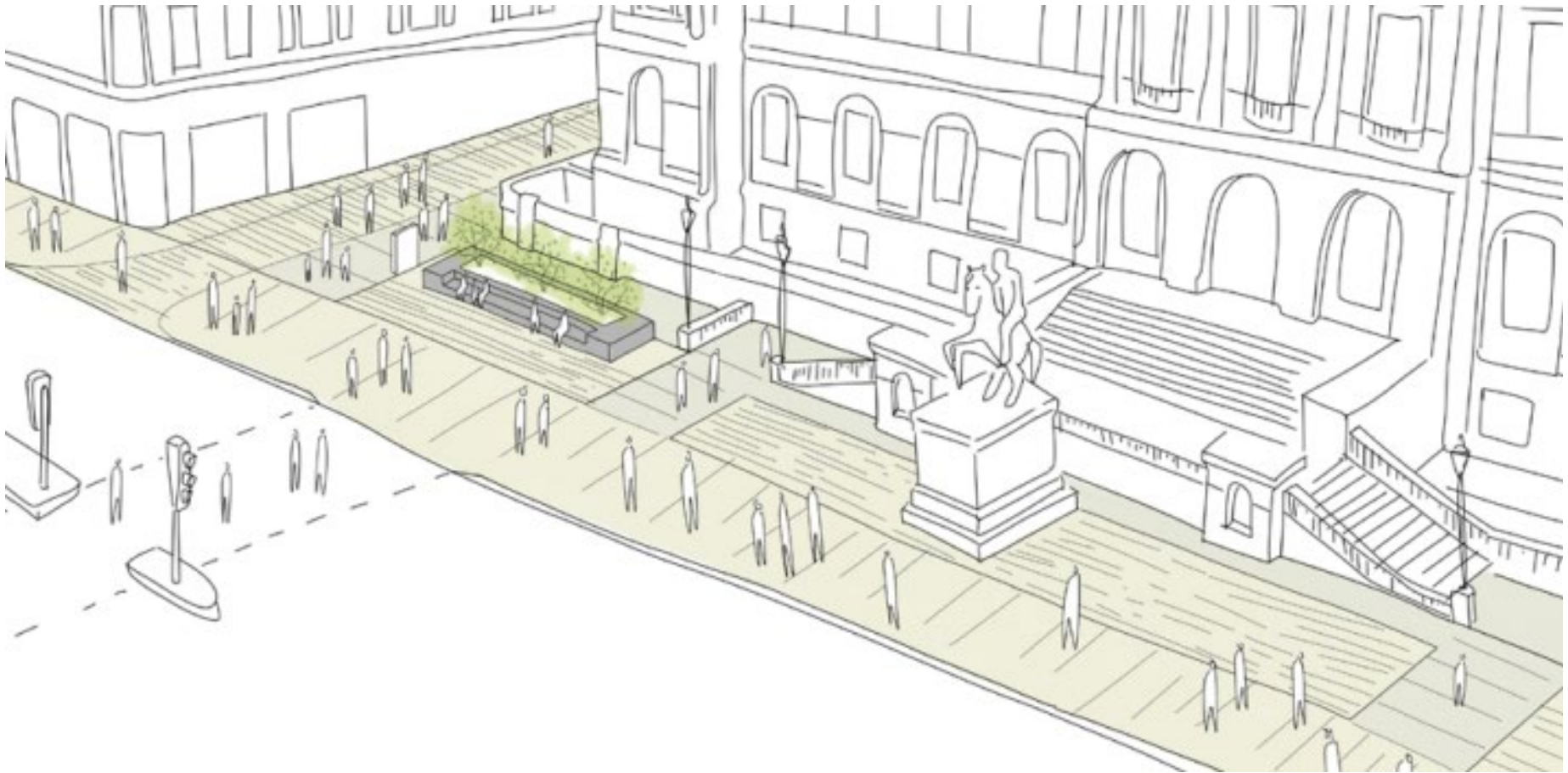
- new, generous bench seats to create a rest point to the west of the Wellington statue, adjacent the wayfinding totem and sensitive to the setting of the Category A Listed Building.
- a planter and interpretation to celebrate the archives and family history within General

Register House and link to the Archivist's Garden, revealing the building's history and purpose to people on street.

- decluttering of existing street furniture and inclusion of ample cycle parking.
- installation of a continuous footway at the junction of Princes Street and West Register Street.



*View east to Waterloo Place and the southern face of General Register House.*



*Above: sketch view of Placemaking Project 1e  
General Register House*

#### 5.4 Placemaking Furniture

Stage 1 would introduce a simple, high-quality, movable seating unit, designed with stakeholders. Repeated along the street to reinforce its character and sense of welcome, benches could be contemporary and contrast with the historic street fabric, potentially including elements such as planting, cycle parking and inscriptions.



Above: Bespoke planters, Rose Street celebrating the Rose Street Poets.

#### 5.5 Stage 2 – West Garden Links

This stage improves accessible routes into West Princes Street Gardens and strengthens the Street's relationship with the Gardens. They align with upgraded north-south crossings from Castle and Frederick Street, promoting links between George Street, Princes Street and the Gardens.



Existing access points to West Princes Street Gardens formed by steep ramps present accessibility challenges

The proposals address longstanding actions from the Princes Street Gardens Conservation Management Plan (2003) and include:

- replacement of two existing steep ramped paths with

reduced gradient (maximum 1 in 12 slope) ramps at both entrance points.

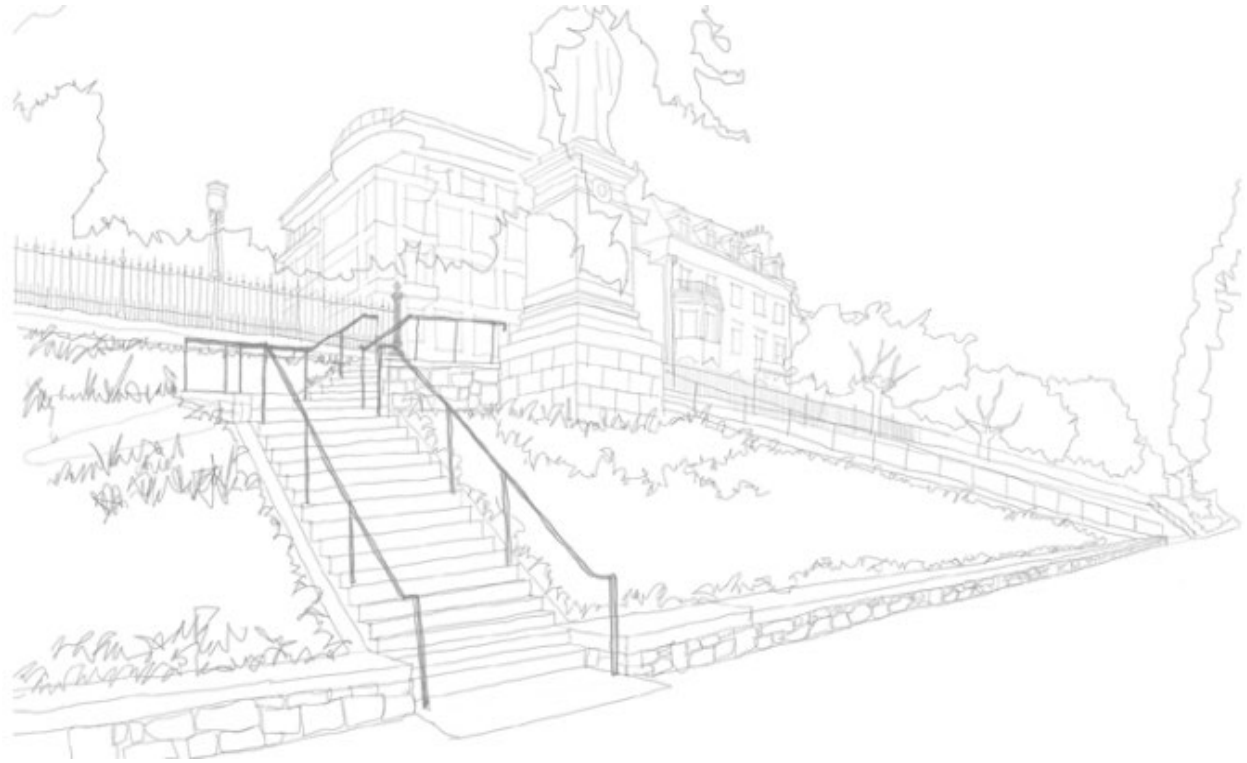
- provision of new wide stepped access to provide an alternative to the ramps at both entrance points.
- the entrances to the Gardens would be locally widened in natural stone paving, with the railings and gates reconfigured.
- the central gate and ramps, a background to the Scottish American Memorial, would be kept and restored.
- enhanced planting on the Garden's banking with species linking to the George Street proposals, bringing climate adaptation and biodiversity benefits.
- retention of existing trees and, where possible, enhancement of below ground rooting space.
- reuse of the traditional hononised paving, a feature of the New Town, as an edge trim to the new ramps.



Further opportunities to be explored include:

- seating and simple interpretation as part of reinstated walling to the ramps and steps;
- management of surface water flow paths from Princes Street to reduce flood damage; and
- renewal of power supplies, historic railings and their lamp standards.

The proposals maintain the Waverley Valley's dramatic landform and avoid extending onto the Upper Terrace Walk. The design maintains the symmetry and decorative pattern of the Garden's banking in views from the Castle. Detailed design will require a conservation-led approach, recording historic features and using traditional materials and methods.



*Improved accessibility into West Princes Street Gardens would be achieved through a combination of new ramps with reduced gradients and new formal steps.*



## 5.6 Stage 3 – Improved Footways

Stage 3 focusses on renewal and enhancement of Princes Street's footways and crossing points. This will adopt a design code, as follows:

- replace pre-cast concrete paving with durable, high quality, sandstone flagstones and whin kerbs.
- lay flagstones in transverse stretcher bond, in courses of varying width, with level changes carefully detailed.
- use consistent sandstone units to define the building line and entrance thresholds.
- bring forward bespoke seating for Princes Street to reinforce its identity.
- reorganise street furniture, increase cycle parking - group mid-block and at cross streets.
- retain and re-use historic features within the street, e.g. honoured paving and kerbs.
- replace slot drainage, exploring sustainable solutions to tackle more intense downpours.

- where new kerbs to manage surface water are required, use Whin or dark grey granite.
- blue green infrastructure must consider historic basements, cellars and chambers.
- where links to Rose Street and its lanes are proposed through blocks, these should be subtly announced e.g. tooled finishes.
- historic setted surfaces should be retained and relaid as per the Council's Setted Street Policy.
- introduce flat top setts to improve materiality of east-west crossings, subject to load bearing.
- proposals must respect the First New Town grid, its symmetry and hierarchy of streets, street proportions and kerb lines.
- lighting is integrated with tram columns and historic railings. Elsewhere, wall-mounted lighting is preferred to reduce street clutter.
- public art should be appropriate to context and reflect the city's emerging public art strategy.



*Above: use of wide Whinstone or dark granite kerbs with Sandstone flagstones*



*Above: a building trim detail, formed by smaller paving units, could be utilised as a threshold indicator.*

Detailed design will require a conservation-led approach, using traditional materials and methods.

*Below: Stage 3 – Improved Footways*

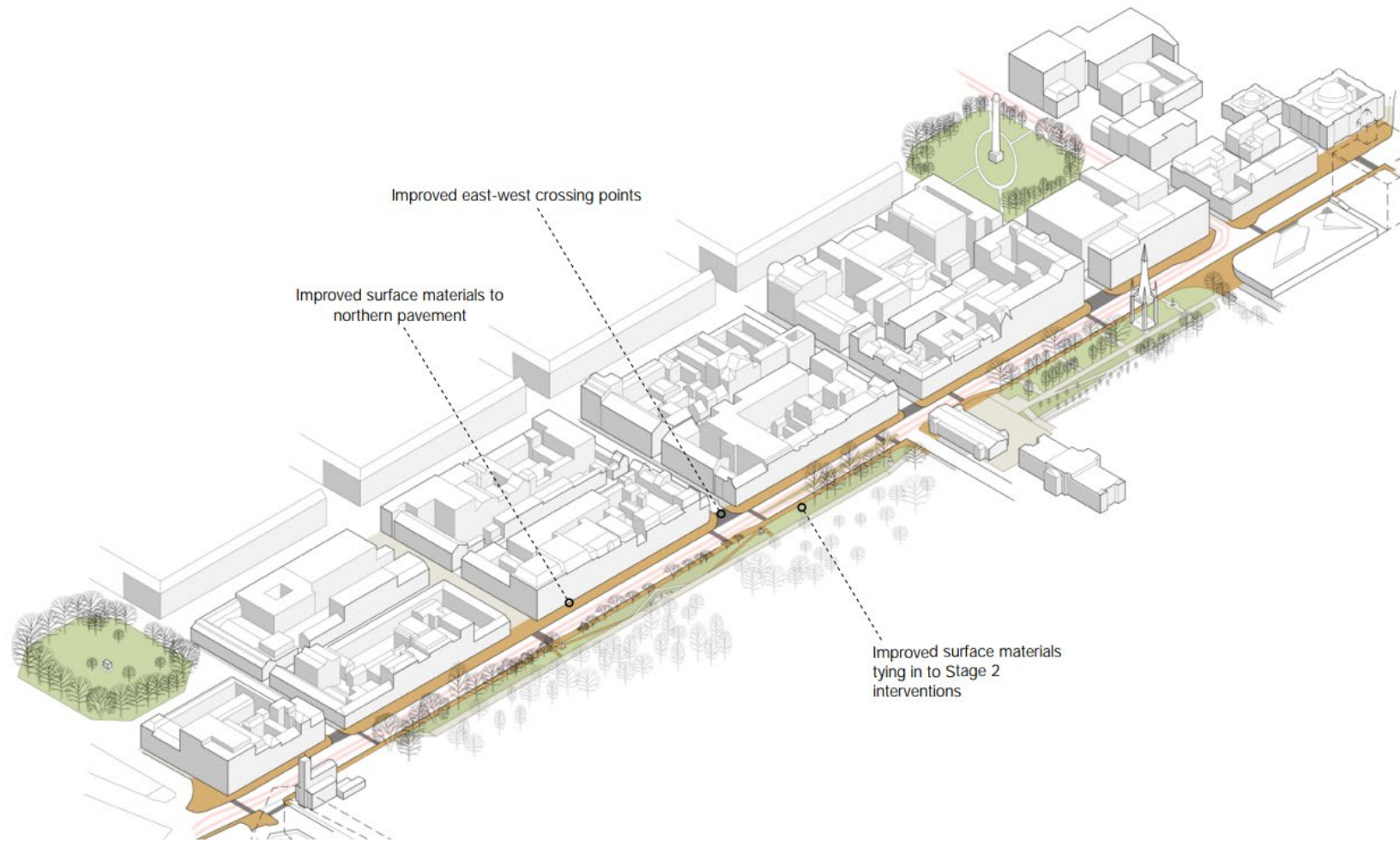


Table and chairs permits will generally be restricted by the street's high footfall and pedestrian comfort needs. However, where the building line steps back and outwith bus stops or other

street furniture, a narrow seating zone could be considered alongside improvements to surfacing.

Developments featuring ground floor food and drink could also blur internal and external space design to activate the street.

## 6. The Waverley Valley

### 6.1 Background

The Waverley Valley sits between the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh and includes Princes Street Gardens, Waverley Station and extends eastwards toward Holyrood Park.

The Valley that we value today is an integral part of the World Heritage Site (WHS) and provides contrast between the Old and New Towns through its landscape.

Evolving over millennia, including being the site of the former medieval Nor Loch, the valley's key attributes include its landform, wooded character, open spaces, views and vistas, focal buildings, monuments, and bridges. Managing change through this strategy's guidance and actions aims to:

- strengthen our understanding of the Waverley Valley;
- enhance the Valley's green, blue and nature networks;
- upgrade the Ross Pavilion and park facilities; and

- inform the Waverley Station masterplan by setting out a Proposed Place Brief.

### 6.2 Heritage Research and Managing Change

Continuing to develop our understanding of the WHS is vital to its ongoing care and management.

An early output of this Strategy will be a Heritage Statement for Princes Street and the Waverley Valley.

This will further inform understanding of the valley and streetscape in terms of their significance or Outstanding Universal Value, present condition, and scope for improvement.

The Heritage Statement will support Planning and place management decisions in considering the effects of proposed changes on the WHS, evidenced by Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).

It will add to the body of knowledge set out in existing references and support the draft 2024-35 WHS Management Plan.

### 6.3 The Valley's Greenspaces



*East Princes Street Gardens.*

At 15 hectares combined, East and West Princes Street Gardens are integral to the New Town layout.

The Garden's formal layout of flower beds, specimen trees, shrub borders and sloping lawns represent a relatively intact example of a Victorian public park.

For their historic, scenic, and architectural value and as works of art the Gardens are recorded on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland.

Recent changes in the Gardens include:

- restoration of the Gardener's Cottage, Ross Fountain and new memorials in the West Gardens.
- accessible ramps formed in the East Gardens as part of the Scottish National Gallery's extension.

Princes Street Gardens now require an improvement plan to deliver the [Council's Thriving Greenspaces 2050 Vision](#) and support this Strategy's joined up approach to the valley and its public realm. The Garden's improvement plan will consider:

- Access and Inclusion - ensuring the Gardens provide an accessible, healthy and welcoming space for all the city's communities.
- Children and Young People – offering a social and playful space in the city centre for all ages.

- Community – establishing a Friends Group to represent the Gardens, support voluntary and fund-raising activities.
- Climate and Nature Emergencies – managing stormwater, adapting planting, connecting habitats and pollinator pathways.
- Facilities – creating a quality visitor experience, toilets, café offer and exploring the role of the Gardener's Cottage and shelters.
- Heritage – conserving and raising awareness about our historic landscape whilst meeting modern-day needs.
- Safety – ensuring the Gardens address safety considerations, including feedback from Women's Safety consultations.

Planning and/or Listed Building consent will be required for material changes to the Garden's layout, levels, boundaries, historic assets, or for the

construction of new buildings, public art or statues.

Legal restrictions apply to the types of permanent buildings which can be constructed in Edinburgh's parks<sup>1</sup>.

Building a new café for example in Princes Street Gardens would require legal amendments to permit this type of building and to allow the use of Common Good land for this purpose.



*The Ross Fountain, West Princes Street Gardens, a fine example of 19th century French cast-ironwork, restored in 2017 by the Council, Edinburgh World Heritage, and the Ross Development Trust with funding from Historic Environment Scotland*

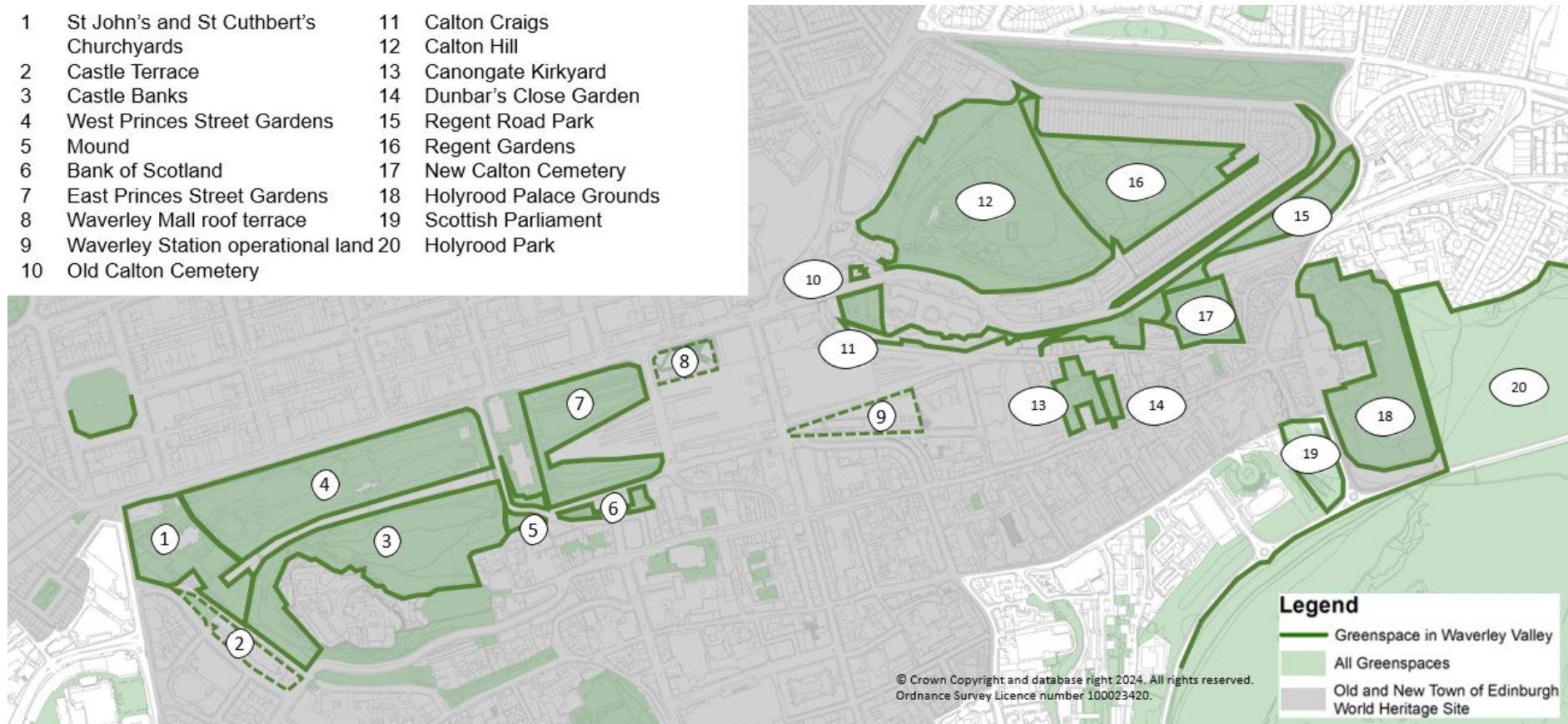
Any new built form should recede in the landscape, reflect the historic layout of the Gardens and avoid impacts on views, trees, archaeology, statues and memorials.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Edinburgh District Council Order Confirmation Act 1991

DRAFT PRINCES STREET AND WAVERLEY VALLEY STRATEGY

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 St John's and St Cuthbert's Churchyards | 11 Calton Craigs           |
| 2 Castle Terrace                          | 12 Calton Hill             |
| 3 Castle Banks                            | 13 Canongate Kirkyard      |
| 4 West Princes Street Gardens             | 14 Dunbar's Close Garden   |
| 5 Mound                                   | 15 Regent Road Park        |
| 6 Bank of Scotland                        | 16 Regent Gardens          |
| 7 East Princes Street Gardens             | 17 New Calton Cemetery     |
| 8 Waverley Mall roof terrace              | 18 Holyrood Palace Grounds |
| 9 Waverley Station operational land       | 19 Scottish Parliament     |
| 10 Old Calton Cemetery                    | 20 Holyrood Park           |



Plan of greenspaces contributing to the Waverley Valley

In addition to Princes Street Gardens, the valley includes and is framed by major greenspaces such as Calton Hill, Regent Road Park, and historic churchyards and burial grounds.

Potential exists for new public realm at Waverley Market and Waverley Station to add to the valley's contribution to the city's blue green networks. Considering these spaces jointly and alongside new streetscape proposals, will enhance their collective value to the city.

## 6.4 The Ross Bandstand



*The Ross Bandstand or Theatre, West Princes Street Gardens and backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.*

Cultural venues have long been part of Princes Street Garden's history, from the original 1880's bandstand to the 1930s version we see today.

In 2017, the Ross Development Trust proposed a new pavilion, welcome centre, café and events spaces as part of the £25m Quach project.

The Quach was not progressed due funding shortfalls, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on the city's heritage.

There remains a need for an open-air, accessible venue in the city's cultural landscape to provide for both small

civic and community events and larger concerts during the city's festivals.

The Bandstand is not protected as a Listed Building but its cultural use and simple design below Castle Rock, contribute positively to the Gardens and New Town Conservation Area.

In the short-term, the Ross Bandstand requires to be upgraded. Subject to funding this will include:

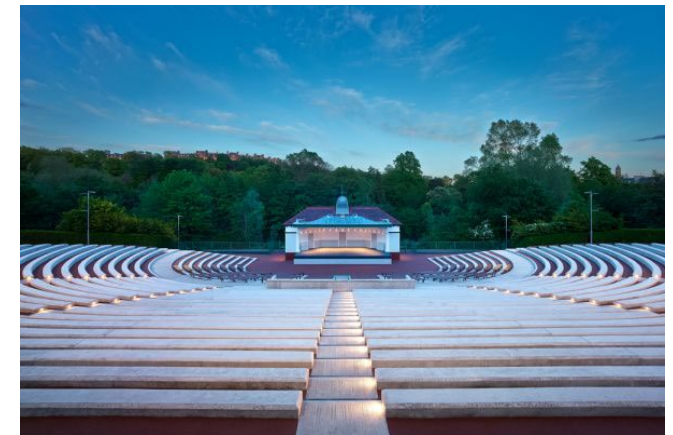
- Adaptive re-use of the existing building to create a better equipped facility, power and data supply, minimising generator use.
- Ongoing use of temporary stages to extend the venue for key events e.g. Hogmanay.

Longer-term, the Princes Street Gardens improvement plan will consider options for new or upgraded facilities which:

- Create an amphitheatre space that is useable and welcoming throughout the year, replacing the concrete terraces with a mix

of paved and landscaped seating.

- Enables access for all by adapting the steep ramps down to the bandstand, linked to new entrance ramps from Princes Street (as set out in chapter 5).
- Ensure sensitive scale, massing, design and materials which respect the site's special character and the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS.



*The £2.1 million restoration of the 1920's Kelvingrove Bandstand by Glasgow Building Preservation Trust in partnership with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life. Image courtesy Page Park architects © Andrew Lee*



## 6.5 Waverley Station



*Image above: The roofscape of Waverley Station within the Waverley Valley, as viewed from the Castle ramparts.*

Edinburgh Waverley is a fine surviving Victorian railway station, nestled in the Waverley Valley beneath Waverley Bridge and North Bridge.

Network Rail seeks to reconfigure Edinburgh Waverley to serve the growing needs of intercity, national and UK travel, whilst optimising accessibility, connectivity and placemaking for all station users. This presents a significant opportunity to enhance the station's role as an

accessible multi-modal interchange with a world-class arrival experience.

### 6.5.1 *The Station's existing features*

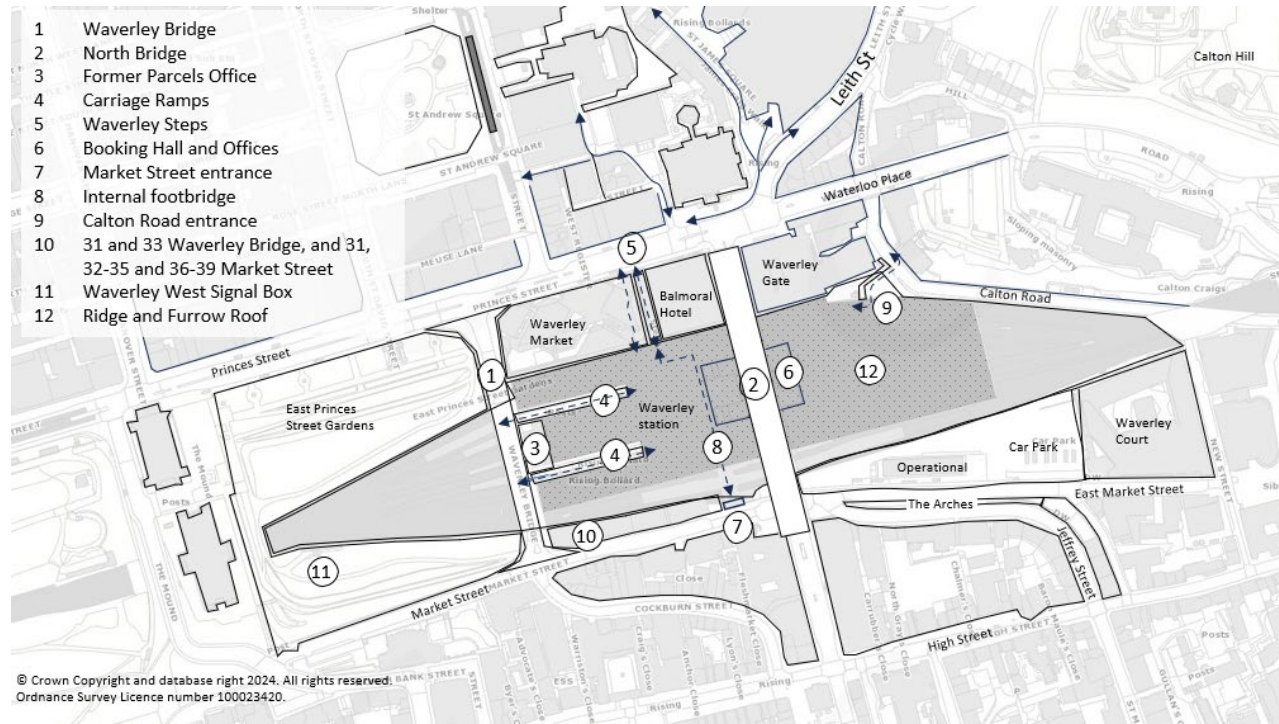
Key features which should inform the master plan process include:

- the Station is part of a [category A Listed Building group](#), together with Waverley Bridge, the former parcels office, and flanking carriageway ramps.
- outstanding features include the Booking Hall and the ridge and furrow glazed roof (restored

2014) set on cast iron columns and arcaded masonry screen walls.

- the Station's east end sits under the category A Listed North Bridge, its three ironwork arches span the station's roof and tracks.
- the Station's sunken position and simple roofscape maintains open views across and along the Waverley Valley and enables outward views to the surrounding cityscape.
- other decorative elements include awnings and the Market Street entrance (new lifts and canopies added 2014).
- at the corner of Waverley Bridge and Market Street, the category B Listed former 19th century warehouses and offices which serviced the Station.
- the category B Listed Waverley West Signal Box in East Princes Street Gardens

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Above: Waverley Station Plan of Existing Features

Above right: the Booking Hall's elaborate ceiling and central domed rooflight. Right: the relationship between Waverley Station's roof and the spans of North Bridge

Waverley Steps are not protected by listing but offer an iconic city gateway (canopy and escalators were added in 2014).

Between Market Street and the Waverley Steps, an internal footbridge provides platform access and a valued civic link across the valley.

Accessible routes include lifts at Calton Road, Market Street and via Waverley Market roof terrace from Princes Street.



### **6.5.2 Waverley Station Masterplan – Proposed Place Brief**

The following Place Principles and supporting plan set out the Council’s key requirements for the masterplan, as follows:

- strengthen interchange with public transport services, incl. bus, tram (and future tram safeguards) taxi, cycle hire, and provide secure and accessible cycle parking.
- respect the station’s setting and historic assets, its simple roofscape and relationship with the city, including the valley views, outward views from the station, and the passenger experience of arriving/departing Edinburgh.
- within the station, enhance the setting of key component features, such as the Booking Hall and Offices.
- enhance accessibility through multiple step-free entrances and retain the internal civic pedestrian link between East

Market Street and Princes Street.

- maximise the contribution to the Council’s net zero 2030 and car kilometre reduction targets.
- deliver positive effects for biodiversity within the Waverley Valley.
- bring forward public realm improvements to benefit place and accessibility. Aligned with Edinburgh’s approved City Centre Transformation Strategy, deliver:
  - Waverley Bridge arrival plaza;
  - north-south walking, wheeling and cycling link across the east end of the valley, maintaining access out with revenue protection barriers; and
  - enhanced vertical connections with the Old and New Towns.
- modernise the station’s retail, food and drink offer, to complement but not compete with the wider city centre.

- set out arrangements for servicing that minimise impacts on adjacent streets and public realm.
- re-use downtakings that contribute to the Station’s character elsewhere on site or within the public realm.
- retain publicly accessible toilets.

### **6.5.3 Land at East Market Street**

Adjacent to the Station, car parking and operational land present an opportunity for commercial led development, as follows:

- uses should reflect the Old Town and Station contexts, complementing New Waverley and shops and cafes at Sibbald Walk and The Arches.
- buildings should be of appropriate scale to:
  - respect the valley landform, grading in layers down from the Royal Mile to Calton Road.
  - provide active frontages to Market Street, broken up by public realm and views to

the New Town and Calton Hill.

- articulate the roofscape, enhancing views across/along the valley, avoiding large flat roofs with plant housed within the building form.
- create a network of public realm, including civic space, public gardens, street trees and rain gardens.

#### **6.5.4 Waverley Market**

As part of any future redevelopment of Waverley Market, regard will be given to:

- protection of publicly accessible open space and creation of inclusive public realm.
- [legal height restrictions](#) apply to built form. The roofscape of the 1980's Waverley Market building was deliberately kept low to preserve open views from Princes Street's footways.
- the role of the civic space as a setting for Listed Buildings and

its contribution to designated areas, including the WHS.

- retention of open views to and from the site, including outward views to the Castle, Old Town ridge and Arthur's Seat from Princes Street's footways and the roof terrace.
- widening the footway to the south side of Princes Street and creating a wide set-back to the roof terrace to ease crowding and provide more space for people walking, wheeling, and accessing public transport.
- lighting improvements to promote a safe and welcoming space balanced with areas of darkness within the wider Waverley Valley.
- providing a balance of street trees and planting alongside paved civic space, as a contemporary response to the Market's historic rooftop garden and to further biodiversity.

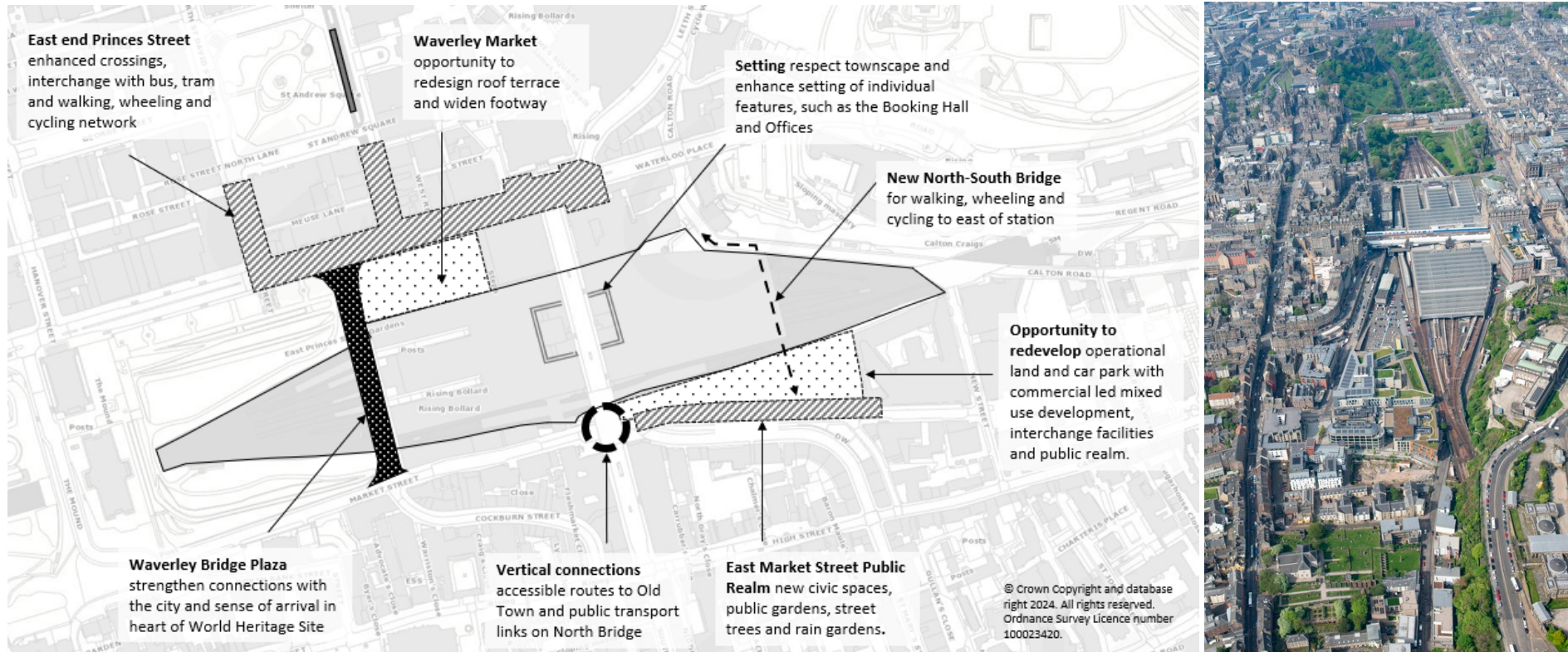
#### **6.5.5 The Station Masterplan process**

The Council continues to liaise with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to inform the station's masterplan and ensure it reflects the City's Planning and mobility policies in its role as an important civic facility.

Network Rail benefits from deemed consent for certain works to rail infrastructure under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Scotland Order 1992 (as amended). However, statutory consents apply in terms of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Development that falls outside the permitted development regulations will require planning permission and may require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or impacts on the outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site to be assessed

Waverley Station – Place Principles



Above: Aerial view of the Waverley Valley as viewed from the east, showing the Canongate, Regent Road, Waverley Station and backdrop of Princes Street Gardens. Image courtesy Historic Environment Scotland.

## Appendix A - A Brief History and Case for Change

Princes Street is culturally significant as the southern-most street of Edinburgh's New Town. Its elegant Georgian and Victorian architecture, lush gardens within the Waverley Valley and panoramic views of the castle, create a unique scene of urban grandeur.

Sitting in the heart of Edinburgh's Old and New Towns World Heritage Site, its unique positioning requires change to be managed with the greatest respect and sensitivity.

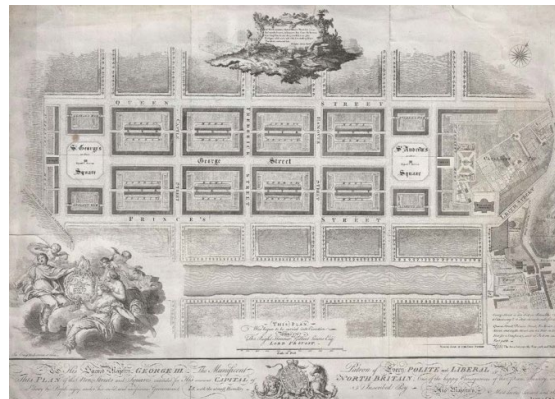
### A Brief History

Princes Street forms the southern edge of James Craig's New Town of 1767, a competition winning urban grid, inspired by the classical architecture of Ancient Greece and Rome.

This major, purpose-built, city expansion was designed to offer improved living conditions in response

to the crowded medieval burgh of the Old Town.

The symmetry and order of the New Town layout contrasts with the organic form of the Old Town, clustered around the defensive site of Castle Rock.



*Extract of James Craig's plan for the First New Town 1767*

Between the two towns, in the drained Nor' Loch, Craig planned pleasure grounds for the New Town residents.

The New Town's formally planned streets and open spaces, together with underlying land form set up much valued views and vistas, including south over Princes Street Gardens to the Old Town ridge and east to Calton

Hill. Equally, its roof-scape can be viewed from above, from the Castle, The Mound and Calton Hill.

Princes Street's life began as a Georgian residential street, evolving to feature the mix of shops, cafes, offices, hotels and cultural attractions which characterise the street today.

In the 1780s, Princes Street's construction began at its east end. Controls emerged to limit its sandstone buildings to three storeys and a basement with pitched roofs.

Plans show the intention for up to 15 plots or feus fronting Princes Street. Modified townhouses remain on these narrower plots today, at corners and amongst the blocks, with 95 Princes Street retaining a basement well.

The street's relationship to the Old Town and Leith Walk, as well as its popularity as a thoroughfare, led to an increase in commercial activity and by 1800, the east end of the street was mainly non-residential. By the 1820s, shops and hotels featured along the whole street.

By the 1840s, additional floors appeared as height restrictions were relaxed. Grand Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings soon replaced the townhouses and tenements, infilling rear gardens, extending shop fronts and sweeping away the grain of the original plots.

In the early 20th century glazed extensions to form tea-rooms and restaurants on the first floor emerged to make the most of views to the Castle.

After World War II, Town Planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie advised Princes Street should be remodelled to a standard, unifying design, separating pedestrians from traffic on a first-floor walkway.

This led to the street featuring seven modernist buildings to a pattern agreed by the 1954 Princes Street Panel. The panel design was later dropped when a conservation body and conservation policies for the New Town emerged.

The Princes Mall opened in 1985 at the east end, replacing the 1869 Waverley Market, which traded in fruit, vegetables and flowers. The Palace Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1991 and replaced by a 6-7 storey building with shops and offices at 113--117 Princes Street and corner of Castle Street.

Successive redevelopment over the last 30 years has continued. The early 2000s saw the city secure investment in George Street, Harvey Nichols, Multrees Walk, St Andrew Square and public access to its Garden, the arrival of the Apple Store and St James Quarter redevelopment.

However, the second decade of the 21st century and early 2020s weighed heavily on Princes Street's most familiar department stores and high street names, with many closing following the global financial crisis, growth in online retail, COVID 19 pandemic, or relocating to the St James Quarter.

Encouragingly, ongoing development activity underlines the continued interest in the street, its world-renowned setting and potential to adapt.



*Princes Street in 1858 showing carts, setted paving, original footways and lighting with the Royal Scottish Academy and Scott Monument. The City of Edinburgh Council - Libraries  
[www.capitalcollections.org.uk](http://www.capitalcollections.org.uk)*

The [Princes Street Heritage Framework](#) provides further background information on Princes Street's history, with a focus on the built heritage within each Princes Street block.

## **A Case for Change**

In 1998, the Council commissioned the Danish Architect and Urbanist Jan Gehl to undertake a Public Spaces Public Lives study to examine future options for the improvement of Princes Street public realm. This work was further revisited in 2010.

Building on the Public Spaces Public Lives study, Edinburgh's City Centre Transformation Strategy set out some key challenges and opportunities for Princes Street, which are reflected and updated as necessary here.

Improvements have been made to address some of the challenges highlighted, including changes to planning guidance to enable a more varied mix of uses on Princes Street, but many remain.

### ***Pedestrian Experience***

Princes Street faces challenges to providing a high quality pedestrian experience.

At a strategic level, Princes Street has evolved into a high-volume bus

thoroughfare. This results in congestion on the carriageway, a noisy environment, and overcrowding on pavements especially around bus stops and at the interface with Waverley Station. Cyclists share the carriageway with this busy traffic including tram, heightening risks of conflict.

Crossing points face significant congestion and resulting safety issues, which need to be addressed. This is due to crossings being signalled, limited waiting space, as well as the sheer volume of pedestrian activity.

Footway congestion can be a barrier to inclusion for people with physical or sensory impairments and for parents and carers with young children. It can also be intimidating and create opportunities for personal safety to be compromised.

There are limited places to dwell, and the small number of benches on the south side of Princes Street are oriented towards the traffic rather than towards views of the Valley, Old Town

and Edinburgh Castle. The north side of Princes Street faces south and presents an opportunity to create spaces to pause and appreciate the street's unique setting especially in good weather.



*Congestion on Princes Street*

Access to Princes Street Gardens presents challenges especially for disabled people due to steep path gradients. Points of access into the Gardens are often also overcrowded due to narrow pavements.





*Existing 1870's access ramp between Princes Street and West Princes Street Gardens.*

Notwithstanding recent upgrading of streetscape around St James Quarter, Picardy Place and St Andrew Square, much of the public realm across the First New Town and City Centre Retail Core, particularly that of Princes Street is in need of renewal.

Although several projects are coming forward, most notably the major remodelling of George Street and the recent completion of City Centre West East Link (CCWEL) active travel project, further investment and coordination is required to secure the high quality renewal of public realm across Princes Street and the wider

city centre, befitting of its UNESCO World Heritage status.

### **Street Condition**

The general condition of Princes Street is in need of a comprehensive upgrade. Issues include:

- Existing concrete flag paving dating from the 1990s are now life expired, and do not reflect the world-class heritage status of the New Town;
- Poor drainage as a result of previous footway widenings;
- Lack of consistency in material finishes across the street.



*Low quality, easily damaged pavement surfaces*

### **The Waverley Valley, Princes Street Gardens and Waverley Station**

Like many historic parks, Princes Street Gardens face a number of challenges.

- their ornamental layout and planting was established at a time when parks benefitted from large workforces to manage and maintain them.
- original tree planting is maturing and facing threats from disease and climate change.
- the climate and nature crisis require us to manage rainwater sustainably and adapt planting to suit both wet and dry conditions, and to benefit biodiversity.
- inclusive access and fit for purpose facilities are also needed to manage the expectations of all visitors, including residents, shoppers, workers, and tourists.

- scope exists to provide for greater community involvement and volunteering, and to create a park that appeals to people of all ages.

Renewing the Gardens and other key public greenspaces that contribute to the Valley is central to the Council's Thriving Greenspaces 2050 and needs to be considered jointly with the improvement of surrounding streets and public realm.



*In East Princes Street Gardens, recent improvements include the Scottish National Gallery's new exhibition space, landscaping, and access ramps.*

Waverley Station occupies a pivotal position in the Valley between the Old and New Towns. It began as three separate stations operated by separate railway companies before its expansion in the 1870s and 90s to create the Station we recognise today.

Network Rail recognises the need to restore and modernise the station to meet the need for longer platforms to accommodate longer and electric trains and the growing demand for regional commuters and intercity travel. The upgrading of accessibility, passenger facilities and need for ticket barriers to protect revenue are also key issues.

Managing change within the Valley as an urban landscape, which has evolved over two centuries, requires careful consideration to ensure that collectively the authentic and intact nature of this key part the World Heritage Site is not lost.

Through the World Heritage Site Management Plan, ongoing research projects will support and further inform

future planning and management decisions.

### **Safety**

Enhancing safety, particularly with respect to addressing feedback from recent consultations on 'Women's Safety in Public Places', is critical.

Feedback from these consultations in the context of Princes Street and the Waverley Valley area presented both positive and negative views. Issues to further explore and address included improving lighting in areas of low coverage, reducing overcrowding on pavements, reducing spaces where people can hide, addressing antisocial behaviour especially associated with alcohol consumption, supporting uses/events which provide more activity at night, and regular cleansing and maintenance including graffiti removal.

## Appendix B – Indicative Actions and Cost Estimates

The Draft Strategy’s vision will be delivered through actions set out in the table below. Except for actions to be delivered by third parties, including Network Rail and private developers, an implementation plan will be developed following consultation and included in updates to the ECCT Delivery Plan.

### Draft Actions

Action	Who’s Involved?
New development/ Listed Building adaptation	Development sector
Pop-Up Uses	Development sector, incl. specialists in commercial space, creative industries, and/or charitable organisations.  Advice from Council’s Business Growth and Inclusion Team
Placemaking Projects	Council’s Placemaking and Mobility Team (lead), Planning. Aligned with relevant projects, incl. Lothian Road, George Street and First New Town, Tram. Key stakeholders including bus operators, Network Rail, businesses, development sector

Action	Who’s Involved?
West Garden Links	Council’s Placemaking and Mobility Team and Parks and Greenspaces
Footway upgrades	Council’s Roads & Infrastructure Team (lead)  Aligned with relevant ECCT projects, incl. George Street and First New Town, and Meadows to George Street.  Bus/Tram operators, Network Rail regarding east end Princes Street.
Heritage Research	Edinburgh World Heritage (lead) Planning, Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Valley Greenspaces Improvement Plan, including Princes Street Gardens	Parks and Greenspaces (lead) Placemaking and Mobility, Planning
Ross Bandstand	Culture (lead), Parks and Greenspaces, Placemaking and Mobility, Planning
Waverley Station Masterplan	Network Rail (lead) Transport Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council.

### Indicative Cost Estimates

Cost estimates are set out below for the public realm framework of placemaking projects, West Garden Link and footway upgrades.

The draft proposals are unfunded and are brought forward during a period of budgetary constraint for local authorities.

- Stage 1: Placemaking projects £0.5-1 m
- Stage 2: West Garden Links £4.5-5 m
- Stage 3: Improved Footways £2-3 m per block

Costs associated with Greenspace improvements and upgrading the Ross Bandstand require to be developed at the next stage.

The overall package of proposals, once costed and prioritised, has potential to form part of a combined application for external funding.

Potential sources of funding could include:

- Small placemaking proposals could be funded by pooling funds for footway maintenance, climate resilience, public safety, transport infrastructure and economic regeneration, working with interested parties.
- The West Princes Street Gardens links could be eligible for external grant funding for heritage and greenspace projects. Matched funding from the Council and other partners is likely to be required. Establishment of a Friends Group could enable additional fundraising from sources which are not available to local government.
- The potential contribution of City Centre development to public realm where there is a net increase in floorspace is set out in the Council's draft guideline

on Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Delivery.

- The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill, passed on 28 May 2024, gives Councils powers to introduce a revenue-raising Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) to improve tourist offerings and manage the impacts of tourism. The Council is working towards the implementation of a TVL in partnership with key stakeholders.
- With an agreed public realm vision, phased upgrading of existing footways could be considered as part of asset renewal.
- Investment in public realm would also need to be considered alongside new public transport infrastructure including expansion of the tram network and the Waverley Station masterplan.

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## **DRAFT PRINCES STREET AND WAVERLEY VALLEY STRATEGY**

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September 2024



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