

CITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT QUALITY HANDBOOK

High Buildings & Roofscape

■ OBJECTIVE

This guideline is supplementary to local plan policies that deal with building height and the design of roofs, including service structures on roofs and roofing materials. It provides policy guidance in areas where local plans do not contain such policies and gives guidance on when planning permission will and will not be required.

■ POLICY CONTEXT

In general, the Council seeks to maintain the character of the city, including its historic skyline and important views. It also seeks to secure high standards of design for all development. For example, policy CD12 of the Central Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“New development, which by reason of its height is likely to have an adverse effect on the historic skyline of the city or on views into or out of the centre, including landmark buildings and the traditional roofscape will not be allowed.”

Policy CD13 of the Central Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“The height of new building should be suppressed where necessary to retain or emphasise the significance of important topographical features, including the valley features at: Princes Street Gardens/ Waverley Station/ Calton Road; Holyrood Road/ Cowgate/ Grassmarket; and Water of Leith.”

Policy E25 of the North East Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“The Council will encourage and promote high standards of design for all development and its careful integration with its surroundings as regards scale, form, siting, alignment and materials.”

■ SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guideline applies city-wide and relates to building height and the design of roofs.

■ STATUTORY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Planning permission is required to alter or extend a building, including roof alterations and the installation of plant and machinery, where the height of the building as altered or extended would exceed the height of the original building and where the external appearance of the building would be materially affected.

The Council may require the following additional information to be submitted in support of a planning application for high buildings:

- Site levels;
- Heights and elevations of neighbouring buildings;
- Photomontages (required views to be the subject of consultation) and/ or a model.

POLICYGUIDANCE

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1. High Buildings

- a) All new development should generally be well integrated with its surroundings as regards, scale, form, siting, alignment and materials.
- b) Accordingly, development should conform to the general height of buildings prevailing in the surrounding area. In residential areas this will be commonly set by tenemental or villa building forms or, in a mews location, will be determined by existing mews buildings. Well-designed architectural features that rise above this height, and which would contribute to the visual interest of the city's skyline and not adversely affect key views, may be acceptable.
- c) Existing high and intrusive buildings will not be accepted as precedents for the future and their replacement with more sensitively scaled buildings will be sought when their redevelopment is in prospect.

2. Roofscapes

- a) Where it is possible to view roofs from street level and/or other prominent locations, all plant and machinery, and other services, should be incorporated within a building or located behind a parapet wall, or similar feature, which is part of the overall design of the building.
- b) New buildings, which are visible from above, should seek to continue the interesting pattern of roofs created by the variety of traditional roof styles found in the following locations:
 - (i) the Old Town and New Town Conservation Areas which are extensively in view from the Castle, the Scott Monument and Calton Hill;
 - (ii) other conservation areas seen from prominent locations;
 - (iii) other sensitive areas where low rise buildings are seen from adjacent higher buildings. New buildings will be treated on their merits depending on local circumstances but it will be necessary to produce carefully designed and detailed roofs to take account of views from above.
- c) On new buildings, in appropriate locations, green roofs and roof gardens may be acceptable, subject to compliance with other policies of the Council, particularly those relating to the preservation or enhancement of a conservation area.
- d) Roof gardens should not be seen as an alternative to open space on the ground which may be required as part of an overall development, although they may make a valuable contribution to the overall provision (open space standards are specified within local plans and are addressed by a separate guideline), or as a justification for an unacceptably intense form of development.

■ REASONED JUSTIFICATION

Development throughout much of the city has the potential to impact adversely on views of the city centre skyline. Likewise, over-simplified building forms and unattractive roof structures can have a similar harmful effect on views of intricate roofscapes. Accordingly, the Council requires the careful integration of all new development with its surroundings in order to protect city-wide and local views of importance, to reinforce the visual effect of the city's topography, and to preserve the special character of conservation areas.

An integral part of the historic and architectural character of the City is its varied skyline. A principle governing the design of roofs and the upper levels of all new development is that they should be designed to maintain and respect the traditional 'roofscape' of the City.

Due to the varied topography of the City, roofs can be seen from many street level locations - for example buildings on Princes Street when viewed from The Mound. These guidelines seek to ensure that the roof of a building is seen as an integral part of the overall design of a building and considered as such from the beginning of the development process.

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