

City of Edinburgh Council
Edinburgh World Heritage Trust



**London Road Gardens and
Hillside Crescent Gardens**
Conservation Statement

February 2007

Consultants
Peter McGowan Associates
with
Ironsides Farrar Environmental Consultants

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Figure 1, Existing Site

A3 folded, back of report

1 Introduction

This Conservation Statement has been produced in support of the process of producing proposals under the *Improvements to Parks* programme for the wider Calton Hill site comprising the public open spaces of Calton Hill, London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens. Calton Hill itself was the subject of detailed assessment and conservation policies in the Conservation Plan (LDN Architects 1999). While this considered the wider setting of the Hill, specific management issues and policies for the two London Road spaces was not part of the Plan. The present volume therefore aims to put all three open spaces on the same basis by applying the Conservation Plan process of *understanding – statement of significance – management issues – policies* in the condensed form of a Conservation Statement before management proposals for the three sites are developed in a Management Plan.

The Conservation Statement has been produced for City of Edinburgh Council by Peter McGowan, landscape architect, working with Ironside Farrar, environmental consultants, with funding by Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.

The site areas of the two Gardens and their main features are shown on Figure 1 (A3 folded at back of report).



London Road looking east

2 Understanding the Site

2.1 Description and key features of London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens

2.1.1 Historical Outline

The main way in which London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens impact on the life of the people of Edinburgh today is as open space which forms the setting of London Road, one of the principal arteries to the city centre. Their success in this respect was planned and the result of the master plan for Calton Hill that produced to effect the north-eastward expansion of the city beyond Leith Walk and Waterloo Place in the early 19th century.

London Road Gardens (originally known as Royal Terrace Gardens) and Hillside Crescent Gardens are inextricably linked to Calton Hill and the development in the hill locality, mainly during the 19th century.

The development of this area came in the third phase of Edinburgh's new town following the initial rectilinear layout following James Craig's competition winning plan in 1767, situated between Princes Street and Queen Street, and the second



William Playfair's engraved plan of December 1819 for 'a New Town between Edinburgh and Leith'

new town based on the Moray estate land to the north where a greater variety of geometric forms was applied to the layout. In 1812 an inconclusive design competition was held for a 'Building Plan or Design for Laying out in Streets, Squares, etc for Buildings' on the undeveloped lands of Calton Hill and land to the north. The main useful outcome was a report by William Stark ...

William Playfair's first design of April 1819 for 'a New Town between Edinburgh and Leith' shows public buildings beside the Great London Road opposite Hill Side Road (later Hillside Crescent). By December 1819 an engraved plan shows the garden spaces drawn in detail, broadly as they were laid out, with no public buildings.

In his plan for the development of the area, Playfair deliberately kept the space free from buildings so as to preserve the view from Royal Terrace above and to enhance the main thoroughfare. Playfair also became responsible for the design of the terraces of houses and the communal gardens.

The two London Road gardens had a fraught history which included quarrying to offset the cost of laying out the gardens and reclamation of the former quarries to create the Royal Terrace Gardens landform. The two gardens remained the property of Heriot's Hospital and the Allan family, and the larger garden was let to a succession of tenants who were permitted to use part of the space for nurseries and were responsible for upkeep of the public grounds. A cottage, *Royal Terrace Gardens House*, was built speculatively in 1837 to the design of Alexander Black and became the home of successive tenants. Railings were not added until 1860 along the upper boundary and it was 1891 before matching railings were added alongside London Road at the Council's request. Shortly afterwards the gardens were leased to the City Council and have continued to be public gardens ever since.

Hillside Crescent Gardens fared better initially with a parapet and railings being erected at the start in 1822 but the area was not levelled and planted until fourteen years later. Playfair's produced plans for the garden but they were never fully implemented and lack of either funds or a local body of residents to take responsibility for the gardens led to a long history of recurring periods of neglect. Finally in 1952 the Council compulsorily acquired the Gardens.

2.1.2 London Road Gardens

The two Gardens are different in shape and character although they share a basically linear form. London Road Gardens is by far the larger at 4.35 hectares compared with Hillside Crescent Gardens 0.58 hectares.

West end of London Road Gardens near Leith Walk



Parallel gardens and road



London Road Gardens runs from Easter Road to the junction with Blenheim Place at the west end of Royal Terrace near Leith Walk. London Road itself – shown on historic maps at 100 feet wide – and the parallel Royal Terrace define its long linear form of 695 metres and its regular width over most its length of 72 metres (on plan). Its dominant features are its steep north-facing slopes facing the road and cover of mature trees.

The landform is complex and varied, with clear signs of quarrying use in the early 19th century and the adaptation of the modification of the landform organised by Playfair (see Section 2.2), leaving only one small rock outcrop.



*Mainly mature and even aged
tree cover; paths and steps
linking levels*

The tree cover is almost continuous apart from the far west end, although not quite describable as woodland, and is fairly uniform in composition, comprising ash, beech, elm, lime, oak and sycamore of fairly even age that appears to conform with the original planting in 1829-30. Some of the largest trees have already been lost, several due to Dutch elm disease, and overall it is a mature or aging tree population. Some restocking with standard trees has taken place, but not consistently through the whole Gardens. The fairly uniform cover means that there is no understorey or little natural regeneration and few open sunny areas attractive for public use. The few planted features that stand out are the lime avenue along the roadside path, shrubbery around the garden and on the east side of Royal Terrace Gardens House, a hedge at the back of the verge beside Royal Terrace and modern annual beds at the west extremity. The 19th century Ordnance Survey maps show that shrubbery was part of the original planting but little survives.

*Mounded landform and trees
near east end of London
Road Gardens*





London Road Garden and Hillside Crescent Gardens
Conservation Statement
Draft • February 2007



Upper path and Royal Terrace from east end

Royal Terrace Gardens House

Three paths run the length of the Gardens – one straight route set back from the roadside footway, a winding mid-slope path following the intricacies of the varied landform, and an upper path set back from Royal Terrace behind the hedge. A number of cross slope paths link between the levels although not providing direct links between London Road and Royal Terrace. Path surfaces are mostly poor, apparently reflecting the original dry-bound, loose gravel or ashes surfaces, although some local replacement with bitmac has occurred on cross-slope paths and steps.



Rails and clutter at west end of London Road Gardens

Near the two extremities – Leith Walk and Easter Road – the presence of bus stops, public conveniences and the like, and the consequent greater levels of use, has resulted in additional paved areas and materials including handrails and other barriers. These additions relate to the local facilities (toilets) and circulation (path short-cuts) rather than the layout of the Gardens so that design of entry points to the Gardens themselves has been ignored.



At east end of London Road Gardens

Historically significant built features are limited to Royal Terrace House (aka Royal Terrace Gardens House and London Road Gardens House), a single storey B-listed classical cottage built in 1837. It became the house of the Gardens' tenant (see 2.2) and is now rented by the Council. The ground cope around most of the site boundary is all that remains of the original enclosing railings. The east end comprises a high retaining wall indicative of how Easter Road was cut through the east end of Calton Hill. The south-east extremity of the site tails to a no-man's-land of unmaintained wall, broken railings, telephone junction box, and seedling elms and sycamore lifting ground cope and pavings. The public conveniences at the Easter Road – London Road corner is a typically severe building positioned for maximum impact in spoiling the view of the Gardens from this busy junction. Set up the slope, it is accessed by steps resulting also in accessibility limitations. Insensitively placed junction boxes and litter bins, poor quality railings, remains of older railings, and inappropriate planting (large, vigorous shrubs) further detract from the highly visible corner of the Gardens.

Greenside Church terminating view along Royal Terrace

Visually the most significant views are those from and along the London Road and the effect of the wooded slopes in forming a parkway character to this principal transport corridor. The tower of Greenside Church forms a dramatic terminating feature at the west end of Royal Terrace and to a lesser extent from the upper path of the Gardens. Within the Gardens views are controlled by the landform and trees, creating short attractive views from all the main paths. The tree canopy restricts long views from the upper path, although the higher floors of Royal Terrace will still benefit from the views over the city to the Forth and Fife to the north. Locally poor character due to discordant features occur at the west



and east end, and on the east side of the House where a cleared area is used for maintenance purposes. At the rear of the house a persistent 'trouble-stop,' resulting from the hidden nature of the path due to tall shrubbery, has been dealt with by increasingly clumsy fencing and intrusive barbed wire.



Tree cover, Hillside Crescent Gardens



Evidence of former path and perimeter lime trees, Hillside Crescent Gardens



Section of original railing at west end of Hillside Crescent Gardens



Bench stances set within ground cope of Hillside Crescent Gardens

Lime avenue looking west, London Road Gardens

2.1.3 Hillside Crescent Gardens

Hillside Crescent Gardens shares London Road Garden's function in contributing to the setting of London road, although on a lesser scale, but is otherwise much different, being shorter (270 metres), narrower (30 metres at its widest point), segmental-shaped and flat. Although reasonably well treed, the narrowness of the area means it is only a partial screen with clear view under the canopy of the mature trees.

Playfair's plan of December 1819 and a later design drawing show a grand civic design for the space related to the radiating pattern of the streets to the north, with a central fountain and symmetrically placed statues. However, the poor take up of fees for the houses proposed along the crescent meant that there was never any income to implement the plan and for several decades few residents to pay for its upkeep. Money was found by the land owners for the indispensable enclosure of cast-iron railings in 1822, a basic layout of gravel paths, and planting with trees and bushes followed some time later in 1836, and that was it.

There followed a history of long periods of neglect and occasional efforts of renewal to put maintenance on a new footing, until Hillside Crescent Gardens were finally taken over by the Council in 1952. What we have at Hillside Crescent Gardens basically is what had been carried out by 1836, less a perimeter path, that has become grassed over (though still visible and shown on recent Ordnance Survey maps), and less the iron railings removed during WW2. A design drawing for the railings by Playfair survives, dated 1822, as do short sections of railings at the two extremities of the Gardens and the ground cope. The latter has been altered along the road side to create gaps for benches. The remaining two paths which arc round the central grass space are now bitmac. A green but not very inspiring or useful space.

The trees are of a similar age to the London Road Gardens trees so are all mature, but being a small area are of a narrower range of species, predominantly horse chestnut, lime and elm (plus several elms lost), with a few younger more ornamental trees (Norway maple, purple Norway maple and Sorbus). As in London Road Gardens, a number of larger trees have been felled for tree health and public safety reasons.



2.2 Development chronology of Royal Terrace and Hillside Crescent Gardens

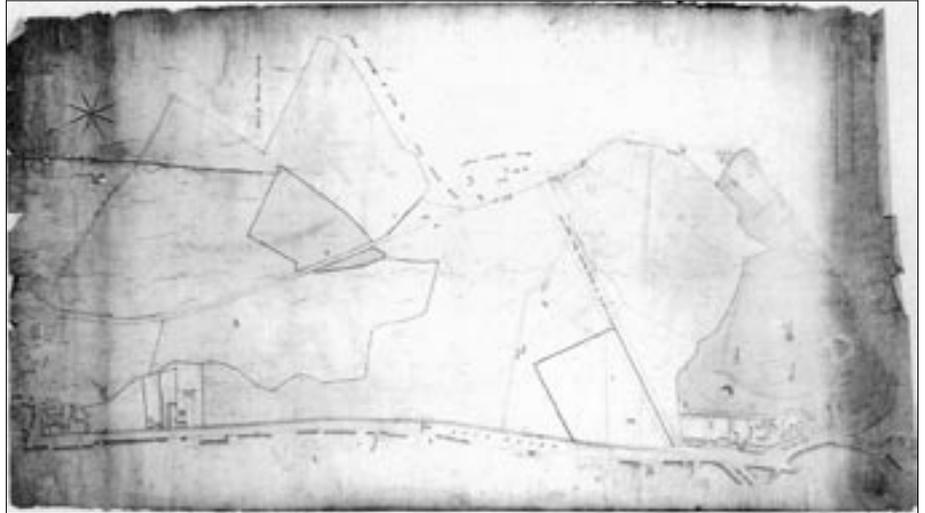
This Conservation Statement deals specifically with London Road Gardens (aka Royal Terrace Gardens) and Hillside Crescent Gardens, although much of the history of the development of Calton Hill is also relevant and some key dates are included for context. The history of Calton Hill was summarised in the Calton Hill Conservation Plan, Section 2.05.

- 1724 South part and summit of Calton Hill purchased by the Town from Lord Balmerino.
- 1766-67 James Craig's plans for the New Town show Princes Street aligned on the southern summit of Calton Hill, although Princes Street initially terminated at its east in an unsatisfactory turn into Leith Street. A row of buildings on the east side of Shakespeare's Square formed a screen at the end of Princes Street, behind which the slope dropped to the old street pattern and buildings of Low Calton and St Ninian's.
- 1775 The period also saw the development of Calton Street or High Calton (now Calton Hill Road) providing access to the burying ground and to the terrace of houses on its north side. From it the first 'walk round the hill' (Kincaid map, 1784) was developed, instigated by a petition of David Hume and others in 1775.
- 1776 The gothic Observatory House was built on the west part of the hilltop at the south-west corner of a walled enclosure, one of the few surviving buildings designed by James Craig.
- 1795 The Bridewell prison or *House of Correction* built on the south side of Calton Hill, to Robert Adam's design in his castle style, approached up Leith Street, a 'steep, narrow, stinking, spiral street'.
- 1800-20 The approximate period of the development of the second New Town north of Queen Street Gardens which had no particular relationship to Calton Hill. The period also saw development of the land between Greenside Place and Nottingham Place at the north-west foot of the hill with wynds pointing in the direction of the hill, later described as 'now all covered with lanes and factories' (Groomer 1885 p485).
- 1804 John Ainslie's map shows 'Proposed New Road to Haddington' between Leith Walk and Quarry-holes and the Eastern Road to Leith



Extract from John Ainslie's
map, 1804

*Plan showing Calton Hill
and land in the ownership of
Heriot's Hospital and others
to the north (George Heriot's
Trust/RCAHMS)*



further east, with the open topography of Calton Hill to south and fields to north, apparently mostly in use as nurseries or orchards.

- 1807 The Nelson Monument, a 30m castellated tower topped by a time-ball, built on the south-east part of Calton Hill summit, aligned on the axis of Princes Street, designed by Robert Burn.
- 1809 Extant plan showing Calton Hill and land in the ownership of Heriot's Hospital and others to the north, the area of the design competition of 1812 (George Heriot's Trust/RCAHMS)
- 1812 July–August. Advertisements inviting submissions for a 'Building Plan or Design for Laying out in Streets, Squares, etc for Buildings' on the lands of Calton Hill. Heriot's Hospital owned about half of the land in question on the east and north of the hill, with most of the rest owned by Trinity Hospital further north and east. Alexander Allan of Hillside, an adjacent proprietor owned an important part of about 5 percent which overlapped the proposed line of the new road (road to Haddington or London Road).
- Thirty-five entries were received and publicly exhibited, but many were considered by the architectural assessors to be 'wholly inadmissible', being inappropriate to the site's physical features. Points of criticism included: the ground being over-developed; too many cross streets and buildings at awkward angles (resulting from radial streets); poor distribution and balance of open space; and insufficient variety of accommodation. The need for improved access from Princes Street to the south of the hill was also highlighted and the 'poor taste' of many competitors in proposing villas across the hilltop was criticised.
- 1814 The report of William Stark, one of the competition assessors who died before its completion, was published and circulated because of its merit. Stark concentrated on "issues arising from his own detailed appraisal of the site" and his "comments have come to be seen as the core of good town planning practice" (Byrom 307). He considered the site's unique qualities, configuration and existing planting each to be a 'vendible commodity' not to be compromised by any artificially regulated plan, 'the niceties of square and rule', but rather to be sensitively exploited. Three ideas Stark had intended to cover were added as a postscript. The first was to the need for access to Princes Street on the south of Calton Hill. The second was for a grand terrace to sweep round the lower south and east flanks of the hill, close to the new road. The third was to form the upper portion of the hill as public open space, 'too elevated for dwelling houses', as a necessary 'appendage to a great city' that would add 'considerable attraction to



Extract from Robert Kirkwood's map, 1817

the buildings in its vicinity'. At this time none of the Princes Street and Queen Street gardens had been laid out.

1816–18 Building of Waterloo Bridge or Regent Bridge over Low Calton (Calton Road) and through Old Calton Burial Ground linked to Princes Street by Waterloo Place with Regent Road across the south face of the Hill to the east, effectively eliminating the deep chasm between the city and hill and delivering people to the hill already half-way up.

1817 Robert Kirkwood's map shows Regent Road or Great London Road and Regent Bridge now present on the south side of Calton Hill. A different proposed road line is shown on the north side of the hill, although not annotated. Two quarries to the south of the line and one Whin stone Quarry to the north.

1818 The City Observatory was built on west summit of hill within the walled enclosure of Observatory House, designed by William Playfair. About 1827 the old enclosure wall was rebuilt to a more symmetrical plan, with gates at the centre of the south and east sides, including the memorial constructed to Professor John Playfair – mathematician, natural philosopher and uncle of the architect – at the south-east corner.

William Playfair appointed 'to prepare a plan suited to the varied and picturesque state of the ground' on Calton Hill and the land to the north,

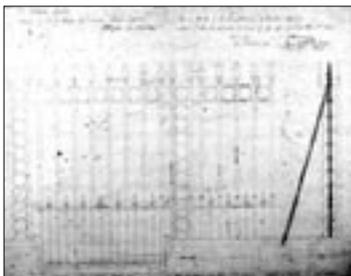
reflecting William Stark's observations on the original competition entries and the changed design priorities since the planning of the first new town. Plans were produced in 1818 and 1819 and elevations for the Royal Terrace, Carlton Terrace, Regent Terrace and Hillside Crescent were prepared in the early 1820s. Playfair commended his proposals to the committee overseeing the development, demonstrating that his design offered greater convenience and economic return compared to the previous competitors plans. He justified the space allocated to pleasure ground – both the public area on the hilltop and the enclosed private ground that would form Regent Gardens – in that it would produce 'considerable revenue by the sums that will be paid for admission to walk there' and 'the Houses in the vicinity will be much more productive from the beauty of the situation in which they will be placed'.

William Playfair first design of April 1819 for 'a New Town between Edinburgh and Leith' shows public buildings beside the Great London Road opposite Hill Side Road (later Hillside Crescent). By December 1819 an engraved plan shows the garden spaces drawn in detail, broadly as they were laid out, with no public buildings (page 6).

The majority of the houses in Regent Terrace and Carlton Terrace were completed and occupied by the end of the 1830s, although over 40% of the houses in Royal Terrace were not completed until the 1850s and 1860s, with Hillside Crescent faring even worse with changing market conditions and competition from development in the west end of town. The V-shaped block of development formed by Royal Terrace, Carlton Terrace, Regent Terrace enclosed a substantial area of private pleasure gardens, Regent Gardens – the largest such in the city, other than Dean Gardens – and faced onto two other substantial linear green spaces along Regent Road and London Road.

Although conceived as a single complementary development, Playfair's designs for Regent Terrace and Royal Terrace could not be more different, even though both are of immense scale and command superb views. The first is understated, loosely composed row of two storey houses, with sections of three storeys, stepping with the slope with shallowly projecting doorways with Doric half-columns, all avoiding competition with the mountain scene of Arthur's Seat and the royal palace which it faces. Royal Terrace, on the other hand, is 1200 feet long and built on an unprecedented and palatial scale, with three storey central sections, organised around three colonnaded units of the Corinthian order, and two storey wings. The terrace occupies an elevated and commanding position with views over the rest of the planned eastern extension area and to the Forth, and also over Royal Terrace Gardens on the lower slope of the hill to the north.

Playfair's drawing for the railing at Hillside Crescent, 1822 (Edinburgh University Library Special Collections)



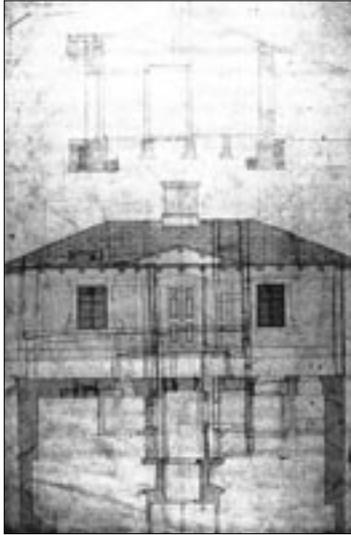
1821 William Allen, acting on behalf of his father, owner of the west third of the crescent area, took steps to have the Hillside Crescent Gardens formed, offering £200 towards the expense, 'as it will be a most prominent feature in the new city'. He wanted the work carried out to Mr Playfair's plan and completed within three years. A parapet wall and railing were erected soon afterwards following the signed drawing by Playfair, the cost divided between Mr Allan and the Hospital. Nothing more happened until the Hospital began forming Royal Terrace Gardens in 1836.

1822 Date of Playfair's drawing for the railing at Hillside Crescent. A plan for the gardens of about the same date (or earlier) shows it with a central fountain and pools near either end, as on the engraved development plan of 1819.



*Playfair's plan for Hillside
Crescent Gardens, c.1820
(Edinburgh University Library
Special Collections)*

- 1823 Playfair reported on the viability of extending the life of two quarries within the Royal Terrace Gardens area operated by two builders – Mr Dinn and Mr Dickson – and the proposal to open a third one. He recommended the idea on the basis that it would provide cheaper stone than the Hailes or Craigleith quarries for the proposed development and the availability of excavations for the disposal of soil from the cutting into the slope of the Royal Terrace development. He noted that 'The Bank between the quarries of Mr Dickson and Mr Dinn must be partially cut away in all events, and the Governors by following this course will be receiving money instead of paying it away.'
- 1824 Henderson & Currer made a successful bid at £180 annually to quarry stone for three years.
- 1826 Heriot's Hospital decide that the time had come to have the quarries filled, partly to avoid the expense of fencing the quarries to protect the proprietors of Royal Terrace. The period favoured this action because unemployment was high and the Committee for Relief of Distressed Manufacturers offered to supply labour to fill the quarries 'with earth now lying around them to the satisfaction of Mr Playfair for the sum of £100 sterling'. This only paid only for filling the quarries, not for levelling or dressing. (Byrom, 339)
- 1826-29 The National Monument commemorating those who died in the Napoleonic wars, an unfinished Parthenon of twelve columns and their architrave, was built on the eastern part of the hill summit, visible from Princes Street, with C R Cockerell and William Playfair as architects.
- 1828 Following complaints about the 'present state of the ground' of Royal Terrace Gardens from residents of Royal Terrace and also 'proprietors of houses on the lands of Hillside,' the Governors of Heriot's Hospital were asked 'to get the same inclosed and laid out as ornamental pleasure grounds' as shown on the feuing plan.
- 1829 Action triggered again by residents in Royal Terrace and 'proprietors of houses on the lands of Hillside' about the 'present state of the ground'. Calton Hill Committee obtained estimates for enclosing the whole of the Royal Terrace Gardens area with larch fencing. Later in the year the land was fenced, shaped and laid out under the supervision of William Playfair. The architect's plans had shown the bank planted with clumps of trees, a path running parallel with London Road, and serpentine walks at the east and west ends linking lower parts of the gardens with the upper level, and with gates to Royal Terrace and London Road
- 1830 Wall enclosing Regent Garden completed on the east side of the public area of Calton Hill, followed by laying out and planting the garden, to plans prepared by Playfair.
- 1831 Dugald Stewart monument built on the lower west side of Calton Hill, south-east of the Observatory House, designed by William Playfair.



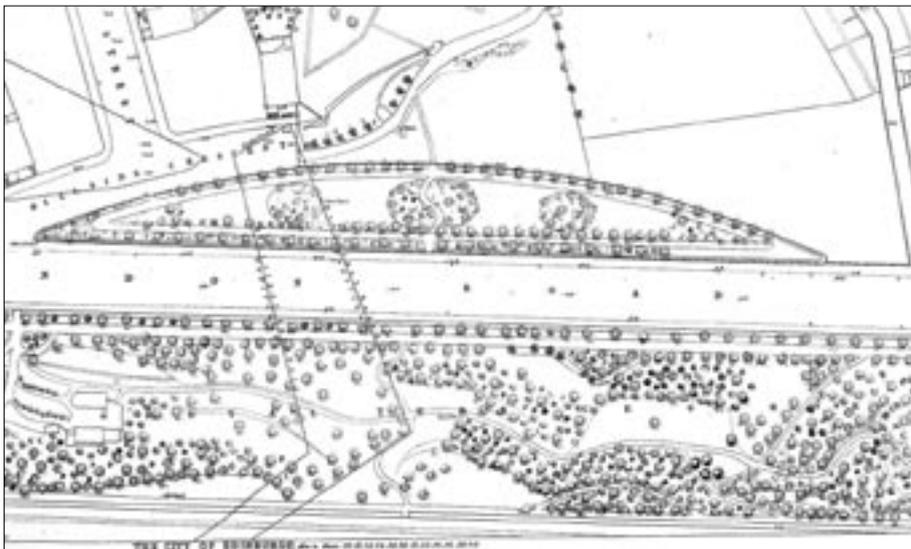
*Design for the cottage called
Royal Terrace Gardens
House, by Alexander Black,
1836 (George Heriot's Trust;
RCAHMS)*

- 1834 The energies and funds of residents of the upper terraces were going into the creation of Regent Garden so most of the expenses and management for the Royal Terrace Gardens had fallen on the Hospital, with little prospect of this changing. A Garden Committee, appointed in June, came up with the idea of renting out the Royal Terrace Gardens space as a nursery or garden ground, provided that the tenant, 'Keep and uphold the walks in a proper manner'. It was also agreed to improve renting prospects by building a house 'upon some part of the ground least likely to prove a deformity'.
- 1836 The Governors employed a gardener who was allowed to rent out keys for Royal Terrace Gardens to local residents. About this time the Hospital admitted that care of the ground 'without considerably more hands than have hitherto been employed – can never be done in a creditable manner'.
- Heriot's Hospital employed James Cross and Charles McCaul to supply earth for levelling the ground in Hillside Crescent. Eagle & Henderson then top-dressed the ground before it was planted with trees and shrubs. Expenditure came to £265. The layout had an outer border of trees and shrubs flanking a gravel pathway. Circular beds were made at either end and one in the middle, a gesture to Playfair's more expensive symmetrical design. Both parties – Allan and Hospital – agreed to its upkeep as laid out and to rent out keys to raise funds for its upkeep, although there is no evidence that this happened.
- 1837 *Royal Terrace Gardens House*, a cottage to the design of Alexander Black, superintendent of works for Heriot's Hospital, was built by Robert Shillinglaw at a tender price of £212. Although built as a speculative development to offset costs of developing the gardens, it was let to tenants with the garden on the understanding that the garden was maintained in return for use of some of the space for nurseries.
- 1838 John Niven negotiated a ten year lease of 15 guineas a year on the conditions that no other buildings were allowed, the whole was kept in good order, the tenant lived constantly within the grounds, and had the responsibility for renting out keys. The Governors were responsible for maintaining fences until the hedging became established. As a goodwill gesture, the Hospital also built a greenhouse on land to the east of the cottage, and costing almost as much as it, also designed by Black.
- Later in 1838 a group of proprietors offered to accept the perpetual feu-right over the grounds on the understanding that they and their heirs would maintain it as ornamental pleasure grounds at their own expense, but the offer was not taken up by the Hospital.
- 1841 Niven surrendered his lease after neglecting the grounds and generally flouting the rules. James Turner, gardener at Heriot's Hospital, took over the lease, initially for eight years. He was allowed £5 a year to maintain the fences and gates. Any respectable family could become key-holders for a fee of one guinea annually. Key-holders soon complained 'that the use of the grounds was severely curtailed' due to the walks 'being laid with coal ashes of the Gas Works in place of gravel', as cost saving measure by the Hospital on account of the negligible income it derived from the ground.
- Turner's tenancy was to last 18 years until age began to affect his standards of care.
- 1845 *Proposed Parapet & Rail, Royal Terrace, July 1845*, a drawing by Playfair may relate to the house frontages (George Heriot's Trust; RCAHMS).



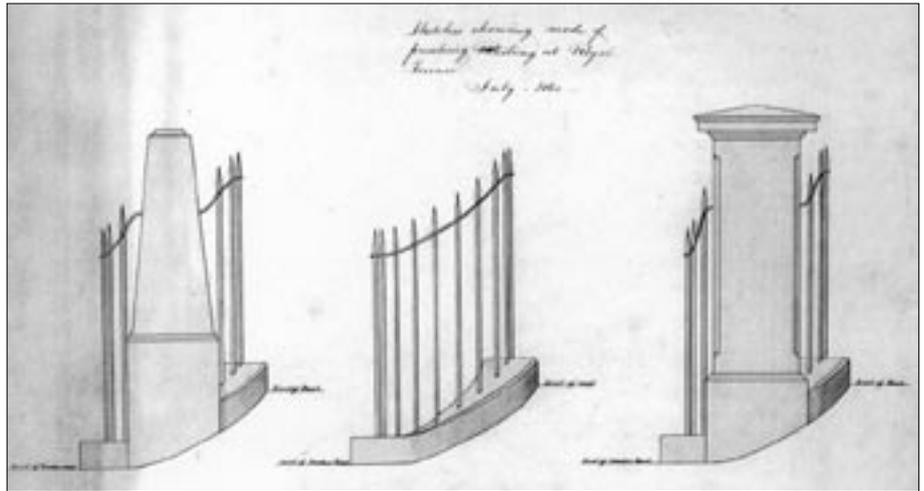
Extract from Robert Lancefield's map, 1851, showing Calton Hill, Royal Terrace Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens

- 1851 Robert Lancefield's detailed map shows the Royal Terrace and Hillside Crescent gardens as if completed according to Playfair's layout. On Royal Terrace gaps remain in the terrace and only a small west part of Hillside Crescent has been built.
- 1852 A Mr Smith was consulted, probably Charles H J Smith whose book *Park and Pleasure Ground* has recently been published. The lime avenue alongside London Road is thought to date from this time (Byrom 342).
- 1853 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:1056 map shows Royal Terrace Gardens densely planted, predominantly with broadleaved trees with smaller trees and one conifer; with a row of trees along London Road side; localised open areas particularly in west half; all paths as existing in place with a few other short sections; and occasional *Chairs* shown. Royal Terrace Gardens House present (not named) with a glasshouse and second structure to the east. Hillside Crescent Gardens (not named) shown with a perimeter path and an S-shaped path across the centre; planted with trees around the edge and in three roundels,



Extract from Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:1056, 1853

John Chesser's drawing of
spiked railings dated July
1860 (George Heriot's Trust/
RCAHMS)



one cut by the S-path; one *Iron Chair* shown. Hillside Crescent road is shown constructed only as far as just east of Brunswick Street with houses only at its west end.

The Hillside Crescent planting was pruned and thinned supervised by Charles Smith. Otherwise the Garden got only occasional attention by the Royal Terrace Gardens tenant, although it was not his responsibility.

1859 George Wood, a gardener from Inveresk, took over the lease at double the previous rent (now £30 annually). About this time proprietors in Royal and Carlton Terraces canvassed for a parapet and iron rail to be erected along the upper length of the gardens.

1860 Railings added along upper boundary of Royal Terrace Gardens at a cost of £600. John Chesser (Black's successor) produced plans and a specification; a drawing of simple spiked railings dated July 1860 survives (George Heriot's Trust/RCAHMS).

The resident of 3 Hillside Crescent complained that Hillside Crescent Gardens was 'not only overgrown with weeds but open and exposed to visits from all sorts of vagrants who are stealing and destroying what they please'. George Wood, the new Royal Terrace Gardens tenant, was then allowed to use the space for growing flowers and shrubs in return for the Garden's upkeep. But this approach was short lived. Within a few years the Garden was used for 'improper purposes' and in a 'most disgraceful state, box and walks having disappeared, and nothing done to them for some years'.

1867 The Governors were considering terminating Wood's lease due to recurring problems of poor maintenance resulting from his poor health and large family.

After the Hospital suggestion that 'under sheep it would look better' was not taken up by the Allan family and residents, the Hospital decided to rent their ground at the crescent to Hillside Curling Club who had formed two curling ponds to the north of the Garden and were in the process of establishing a bowling green, as shown on the 1877 Ordnance Survey map.

1871 Wood gave up the lease of Royal Terrace Gardens. A group of proprietors tried to buy the garden, but the Hospital held on and re-let to Alexander Donald. He remained the tenant for twenty years, with few problems.

1877 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:1056 map shows Royal Terrace Gardens as in 1853 but with some small trees in the vicinity of Royal Terrace Gardens House; other small trees and shrubs are shown



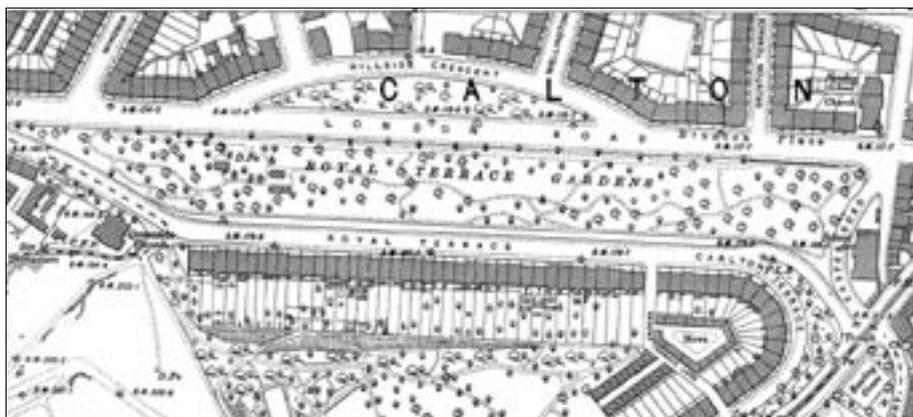
Extract from Ordnance Survey
1:1056, 1877

among the maturing broadleaved trees. Hillside Crescent Gardens is shown without paths and with trees as before but undefined edges to the roundels; Hillside Crescent road remains as in 1853; a bowling green and three curling ponds adjoin the gardens on the north side.

1880s-1890s Hillside Crescent completed as flatted accommodation to plans by John Chesser. Playfair's plans for a third new town were never realised over the lands to the north. By this time they were out of step with a changed market and one spoilt for choice in other parts of the city.

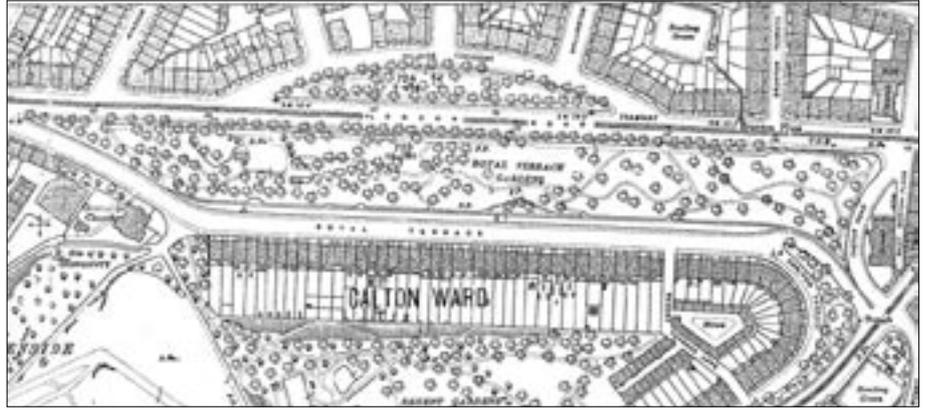
1891 A public footpath was formed adjacent to London Road and alongside the Royal Terrace Gardens. The Governor's agreed to the Council's request to add a cope stone and railings in place of a rickety wood fence beside London Road, to match the upper line, which was undertaken at a cost of £760. Soon after, the Council began negotiations to acquire the Gardens for public use. The Hospital was reluctant to relinquish the ground, although pleased to find a solution to unreliable tenants. Instead a lease was agreed, the first for 25 years at £40 per annum. Conditions stipulating the standard of care to be maintained reassured residents of the upper terraces that standards would not deteriorate with the Gardens opening to all members of the public. Walks were to be 'thoroughly reformed and carefully gravelled'; the shrubbery, grass, flower-plots and lime tree walk were to be preserved; the gated accesses along Royal and Carlton Terraces were to be limited to terrace key holders only; and the ban on horses, cattle, sheep or other animals was to be kept.

1893-4 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 map surveyed (published 1896), shows Royal Terrace Gardens simply planted with broadleaved trees with a few conifers (probably yews) and a glasshouse and second



Extract from Ordnance Survey
1:2500, 1893-94

*Extract from Ordnance Survey
1:2500, 1931*



structure to the east of Royal Terrace Gardens House (not named). Hillside Crescent Gardens (not named) shown simply planted with trees.

- 1896 Heriot's Hospital employed Methven & Sons, nurserymen, to put Hillside Crescent Gardens in good order, preparatory to offering it to the City Council on a similar basis to Royal Terrace Gardens. Negotiations failed when the divided ownership became apparent.
- 1931 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map shows little evident change in the two Gardens; tram lines now present along London Road.
- 1936 A further attempt by Heriot's Hospital to dispose of Hillside Crescent Gardens to the City Council.
- 1939-45 Iron railings removed from both gardens during the World War II.
- 1952 Hillside Crescent Gardens compulsorily acquired by the City Council, after increasing deterioration and failure of surrounding proprietors to comply with an order to put the ground in good order.
- 1955 Eastern corner of Royal Terrace Gardens acquired for public conveniences.
- 1974 An attempt by the Parks Department to form a private car park on the site of the former greenhouse was opposed by the citizenry and overturned by the Secretary of State for Scotland.
- 1976 Photographs of Hillside Crescent Gardens enclosed by low chainlink fences.
- 2007 Land still belongs to Heriot's Hospital and is leased and maintained by the City of Edinburgh Council and the paths still wait to be properly gravelled. Otherwise the Gardens that Playfair planned and supervised have survived to their full extent as ornamental public space.



*Photograph of Hillside
Crescent Gardens with
low chainlink fences, 1976
(RCAHMS)*

3.0 Statement of Significance

3.1 Existing designations

Statutory designations provide an important reference point because a site can only be granted protection if it meets certain criteria, ie. it achieves a set level of significance. Existing statutory designations include:

- World Heritage Site, approved by UNESCO in 1995: the two Gardens lie within the designated World Heritage Site
- Outstanding Conservation Area: the two Gardens lie within the New Town Outstanding Conservation Area.
- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes: both gardens are included within the boundary of the New Town Gardens in the Supplementary Volume 1, Lothians to the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Listed Buildings: Royal Terrace Gardens House is a Category B listed building.

3.2 Statement of Significance

The process of identifying categories of significance, features of major significance and their grading has involved the consultant in reviewing *Understanding the Site* and the existing designations. Grading has been compared with statutory designations and other authoritative statements. Drafts of the statement has been considered by the Working Group and their views incorporated to arrive at the final statement.

The statement covers the whole site and its major areas and features.

- Two gardens lie within the New Town of Edinburgh, built during its third phase, where communal or public gardens form an essential component of the plan, and are typical of these gardens in many respects. The New Town is recognised as one of the two areas of central Edinburgh on which its World Heritage status is based. The gardens can therefore be considered to contribute to this significance and have some world heritage value.
- The two gardens were planned and designed by William Playfair, one of the premier architects of the 19th century. Playfair's work in the locality includes design of a majority of the buildings and terraces of houses. Due to his involvement in the planning, architecture and landscape design of the area it can be considered an outstanding example of his work, demonstrating his skills in all these areas.
- The two gardens are components of the early 19th century residential and open space development plan for greater Calton Hill and continue unaltered in their original functions. The integration of outstanding natural topographic features, high quality residential building on a grand scale and extensive public and private open space equals any other part of the New Town in terms of complexity and visual variety. The gardens therefore have high significance in design terms as mature landscapes of high quality and fit for purpose.
- The two gardens are linear in form and create the parkway character of London Road between Leith Walk and Easter Road and form the views for road users. The gardens have outstanding local value for their impact on the local roads environment.
- The two gardens supply substantial tree cover on the perimeter of an area, to the north, without significant trees and open space. Trees are large-growing forest species selected to be in scale with the space and adjoining terraces and are mostly mature trees from the original planting. The gardens therefore have outstanding local value in the greening or woodland cover of the city.

- The Gardens have some local value for passive recreation, particularly for walking and similar activity; they also functioning as a pedestrian access corridor separate from London Road footway.
- The Gardens are public open space accessible to all, in contrast to communally owned Gardens accessible to key-holders typical of much of the New Town. The history of the development of these two gardens indicates that they were never really viable as communal gardens.
- The Gardens have some local nature conservation value on account of their tree cover, with potential for enhancement of their habitat value and species diversity.

3.3 Significance of Individual Features

- Tree population: original planting from late-1820s comprising ash, beech, elm, lime, oak and sycamore
- Royal Terrace Gardens House, a B-listed building of some architectural value and of some local historical significance in the 19th century development of the gardens.
- Railings at extremities of Hillside Crescent Gardens: some local significance as surviving examples of Playfair's railing design. Elsewhere the ground cope is all that remains of the original enclosure.
- The varied and complex landform of London Road Gardens is a notable feature and evidence of the earlier use of the site for quarrying and Playfair's adaptation of the quarried land to the landscape of the Gardens by filling and earthworks.

3.4 Intrusions and Negative Significance

- Traffic on London Road. Although part of the original concept for the Gardens, the heavy traffic of cars, buses and good vehicles creates intrusions in noise, air quality and movement that impact on the use of the Gardens and their landscape character.
- Public conveniences and associated features at the east end creates a major impact on the views of the Gardens from the Easter Road / London Road junction.
- Steel barrier rails and new steps are a lesser intrusion but detract from the character of the Gardens at west end, as does the annual bedding bed.
- Some secluded areas appear neglected and suffer from anti-social behaviour, notably at the rear of Royal Terrace Gardens House; 'security' fencing added to combat problem is of very poor quality and highly intrusive.
- Loss of detail in the form of enclosing railings (both gardens); loss of copes at seat stances in Hillside Gardens.
- Neglected area of damaged railings, seedling trees, uplifted path etc at extreme south-east end between Easter Road and Carlton Terrace Brae.

3.5 Essential Characteristics

These characteristic summarise what is important about these Garden that should form the basis of future policies.

- Linear open spaces preserving the long views from Royal Terrace houses and forming the setting for London Road.
- Mature trees cover comprising large forest tree species in scale with space and adjoining terraces of buildings.

- Complex landform resulting from natural north slope of Calton Hill, 18th and 19th century quarrying, and earthworks to create the landscape for the gardens
 - Interesting views from upper levels but long views screened by trees.
 - A range of different paths – long through routes, meandering stroll routes and cross paths – are characteristic of London Road Gardens. Materials are inconsistent and of poor or basic quality reflecting the history of restricted investment.
 - Enclosure by railings set on a sandstone ground cope were features of both gardens, removed during WWII. Only short sections remain at Hillside Crescent Gardens.
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4.0 Management Issues

4.1 Need for Entrances



Entry point, west end, London Road Gardens



An entry point at east end of London Road Gardens



Maintenance access near west end, London Road Gardens



Mature trees and tree stump, London Road Gardens

London Road Gardens, east end entrance

At one time the entrances to London Road Gardens were at intervals along Royal Terrace and London Road and these continues to be used. However, with their modern public use, entrances at the extremities of the Gardens are also important, although developments here have concentrated on other priorities (public conveniences, routes to bus stops etc). There is a need for well-designed entrances to London Road Gardens, which need not be elaborate but should encourage use and emphasise the routes that are available. The same principal could be applied to the paths across Hillside Crescent Gardens.

4.2 Single-age Tree Population

Predominantly single-age tree population which is now mature and although with a fair life expectancy, will all decline together. Introduction of a young population of replacement planting now and periodically in the future is needed to achieve a healthy and diverse tree cover. The technique for creating space for new planting needs to be developed.

The Gardens tree cover is not so much woodland as scattered individual trees with little or no ground storey of shrubs or native bushes. The 19th century OS maps indicate that shrubbery was part of the original planting. Re-establishment of a shrub layer locally and in ways that will not create new secluded areas attracting anti-social behaviour would contribute to species, habitat and visual diversity.

4.3 Lack of Bio-diversity

While the forest tree cover is an essential characteristic of the Gardens it does not result in a species-rich habitat in its present form. Restocking could present the opportunity to create more species diversity and different habitats particularly in the herb, shrub and small edge-tree layers.



4.4 Poor Path Surfaces and Edging

Paths are generally of very poor quality, comprising compacted earth or old drybound surfaces in many parts. Edging is also variable or non-existent with makeshift retaining edges to stop erosion along tops of slopes. Locally elsewhere rockwork edges or low stone retaining walls are used, often with broken or missing sections. A Design Guide covering path surfacing and edging to achieve a consistent quality of materials and detailing, appropriate to the situation and to the scale or extent of the paths – is needed, followed by a phased programme of footpath and edging upgrading works.



Upper path with remains of gravel or ash surfacing, Royal Terrace

4.5 Loss of Copes and Railings

The practicality and benefit of restoring railings in this situation has been questioned. Although ground copes (or parapets) and railings are typical features of New Town gardens, the public nature of these two gardens and their linear form and roadside situation makes the re-introduction of railings less essential to their present design and use. The ground copes continue to define the perimeters of the gardens and their conservation, replacement of missing sections and realigning displaced lengths is needed. The conservation of the remaining sections of railings at Hillside Crescent Gardens and their better integration by adding terminating features is also required.

The quality of some new types of rails in terms of design and materials has also to be questioned. Appropriate types should be covered by a Design Guide.



Ground cope displaced by tree roots, Hillside Crescent Gardens

4.6 Decline of Hedges

Hedges are an important landscape features alongside Royal Terrace and locally elsewhere, but are generally in a poor state or overgrown. The value of a short section near the Easter Road end has also been questioned. Renewal or replacement of hedges, and a review of the value of others, needs to be incorporated into the management plan.

4.7 Anti-social Activities

The anti-social activities at the rear of Royal Terrace Gardens House need to be tackled by specific physical changes to make the area less secluded and attractive as a drinking den etc. Measures include: reducing hedges to a maintainable height; hard pruning local shrubbery; permanent secure railings around the house garden perimeter, of a suitable type; secondary screening within the house garden by fence or shrubs up to 1.8m high.



Temporary security fencing at rear of Royal Terrace Gardens House

4.8 Setting of Royal Terrace Gardens House

The setting of Royal Terrace Gardens House is an important part of its value, although at present the vicinity is one of the poorer parts of the Gardens, including overgrown hedges and shrubbery, scruffy bonfire and maintenance area on the east, and the quality of the private garden itself. While the garden is private and part of the tenant's responsibility, some help with upgrading the front path, front gate and other hard elements may be appropriate. This should be undertaken within a checklist of general improvements to the locality.

Bonfire area east of Royal Terrace Gardens House

4.9 Intrusive Public Conveniences

Improvements are required to the appearance of the public toilets and their locality, including the intrusive junction boxes and fences at the front and the relationship of the building and steps to the roadside pavement. The value of the privet hedge in this situation may be questioned and the possibility of replacement railings at this corner considered. The need for disabled access to



London Road Gardens from east, showing entrance and effect of public conveniences building



the toilets may be considered with any environmental improvement to the area in order to achieve integrated scheme.

4.10 Central Feature in Hillside Crescent Gardens

Playfair intended a fountain or statue as a central feature in the Hillside Crescent Gardens, although the poor uptake of fees for housing meant that there were never sufficient funds to develop the Gardens beyond the enclosing railings, basic paths and tree planting. A tree roundel originally took the place of this potential feature. A new planted or built feature is needed to occupy this space now that much of the original planting has disappeared and the rest is in decline.



Featureless central area of Hillside Crescent Gardens



Shaded north-facing slope, London Road Gardens

4.11 North-facing Wooded Slope

The steep north-facing slope of London Road Gardens and its mature tree cover – combined with the position beside a main traffic artery – make the London Road Gardens very shaded and limits their use. Opportunities to create more sunny spaces and encourage people to sit and linger in the Gardens should be sought – again this appears to have been intended from what is evident in the 19th century OS maps.

4.12 Community Involvement

The two gardens have always suffered from a lack of ownership which in the 19th century limited their development and continues to make them *public* but not *community* spaces. Ways of involving the communities to the north and south and of encouraging new uses of the Gardens, through a Friends organisation or other means, should be developed.

4.13 Need for Interpretation

The Chronology in Section 2.2 gives some of the interesting history of these Gardens which is available for wider dissemination. How this is done will depend on the planned Interpretation Strategy for the wider Calton Hill area into which these Garden should be integrated.



Robert Lancefield's map, 1851, showing Calton Hill, Royal Terrace Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens

5.0 Conservation Policies

In this section are presented the policies derived from the imperative to conserve the cultural significance of London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens within their context of wider Calton Hill. Broader management policies are not dealt with here, but should be introduced as the next stage within the context of a management plan or proposals.

The conservation policies should provide the context for all future planning, design and management within or affecting the Gardens. They are the basis of the detailed management proposals in the emerging Management Plan for the landscape of the wider Calton Hill site, but should also have relevance in the planning process and other decision-making about any development or change which could affect the two Gardens.

5.1 Conservation Goal

To conserve London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens and their context within the wider Calton Hill, and their historical and urban contexts, to promote a fuller understanding of their cultural significance and to present them to the public to a standard which matches the standing of the whole site within the World Heritage Site and respects its sensitivity.

Core Policies or Principles

- To conserve the best of the past, particularly as represented by the layout of the two Gardens
- To continue the history of the evolution of the Gardens by upgrading surfaces and planting to a new but appropriate standard that may not have been achieved previously due to budget limitations.
- To promote new uses and community involvement in the Gardens.

5.2 Conservation Policies

The proposed policies are presented in no particular order and no priority is intended by their order.

- Conserve the historic circulation pattern and upgrade surfaces, edges, steps and drainage etc. to a common standard
- Introduce well-designed entrances to the Gardens, particularly at the ends of London Road Gardens and at historical gateways.
- Conserve the tree cover of the two Gardens, based on historic the pattern and species, with priority to improve age diversity of trees
- Enhance species and habitat diversity through management of the tree population, in coordination with other policies.
- Restore railings and built features where justified by current and future use.
- Discourage anti-social behaviour by management actions, physical improvements, encouragement to higher levels of use and self-policing, and policing (by Park Rangers etc).
- Upgrade the garden and setting of Royal Terrace Gardens House
- Remove intrusive features under a phased programme, including general vicinity of the public conveniences and associated features at the east end; steel barrier rails and new steps at west end; 'security'

fencing at Royal Terrace Gardens House; neglected area at extreme south-east end.

- Encourage higher levels of use and suitable new uses
 - Encourage local community to engage with restoration and events
 - Interpret the cultural interest of the Gardens in conjunction with the interpretation strategy for Calton Hill
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London Road Gardens and Hillside Crescent Gardens

Conservation Statement