

Council plan to make Pilrig a conservation area



The council is to designate Pilrig as a conservation area based on findings from its recent consultation.

This means that any planning applications in the area will be subject to stricter control and may take more time and manpower to process, but the end result should be that the historic elements of the area should be preserved, all to the benefit of those who live there.

The consultation process included a couple of open evenings at McDonald Road Library in May this year and a total of 82 responses were submitted online.

Previously the council had considered the area to be of limited historical or architectural interest with the exception of Pilrig House, so it was important to carry out a consultation to find out what people really thought. Of the small number of responses an overwhelming 90% answered that they wanted the area to be designated as a conservation area.

Our photos of Pilrig House are courtesy of RCAHMS and show Pilrig House built around 1638 which is part of the original Balfour Estate, and where Robert Louis Stevenson's grandfather was born.



Notable comment came in the form of endorsements from the local MP Mark Lazarowicz who supported the proposal saying that "Pilrig has many of the features of a distinct 'urban village' with a number of attractive architectural features and historic buildings." The local MSP Malcolm Chisholm also gave it the thumbs up noting the strong local support. Other

support came from local councillors Maggie Chapman and Nick Gardner, as well as The Cockburn Association who drew attention to “the architectural interest and distinctive character of Rosslyn Crescent/Street, Cambridge Gardens/Avenue, Balfour Street and the Pilrig Cottages.” The Leith Business Association considered it would be beneficial and the Leith Central Community Council thought it would help the loss of character by individual changes to buildings in the area.

The council’s report concludes that:-“Pilrig has more limited architectural qualities than some existing conservation areas in Edinburgh. However, it has elements which meet a number of the criteria specified in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy for designation of a conservation area in terms of building groupings, street pattern, distinct character, value as a good example of a local style within the wider context of city, present condition and the scope for improvement and enhancement.”

The council have also been recommended to extend the boundary to include the buildings at the Leith Walk end of Pilrig Street and part of the northern side of Leith Walk, which more closely follows the lines of the original Balfour Estate where Pilrig developed.

Designation as a conservation area results in a number of additional requirements:

planning permission will now be required for any improvement or alteration to the external appearance of a flatted dwelling

conservation area consent is required for demolition;

replacement windows may require planning permission and will be assessed in line with Council guidance;

special attention must also be paid to the character and

appearance of the conservation area when planning controls are being exercised. Most applications for planning permission for alterations are, therefore, advertised for public comment and any views expressed must be taken into account when making a decision on the application; and

notice is required to fell or severely lop trees within the conservation area.

All of the planning papers for next week's meeting [are now online.](#)