What will Edinburgh look like in 2050? – here's what David Gaffney thinks

David Gaffney from Charlotte Street Partners tells us about his hopes for the city in 2050 and beyond…

I consider myself one of Edinburgh's biggest fans. Born and raised here, I've barely experienced life anywhere else, if you discount four hazy years spent at university in Stirling and very occasional foreign holidays.

I used to find it embarrassing when I'd meet well-travelled citizens of the world passing through our great city, and they'd ask me if I'd always lived here.

"Yes", I'd admit, suddenly self-conscious about how insular and parochial that made me. "But it's a brilliant place to live…" I'd add defensively, to justify my narrow horizons, "….and, well, it's home."

And what a home. The history, the architecture, the vibrancy, the quality of life, and just the sheer aesthetic beauty of the place – that exhilarating combination of hills, rooftops, and sea in one vista.

Edinburgh does so much so well that it feels churlish to criticise and demand more. But, as in sport and business, successful teams only remain at the peak of their powers through constant self-improvement. So it's refreshing that Edinburgh Council is casting a critical eye over the city as part of a concerted effort to make Auld Reekie the best it can be, not only now, or in the next 10 years, but in 2050 and beyond.

At the launch of Edinburgh's City Vision last month, we were challenged to tweet about what we thought our city should aspire to in 2050. I wrote:

I'd like a clean, ambitious, healthy, fair, and multicultural Edinburgh with the best state schools in the UK. Easy, eh?

One hundred and forty spontaneous characters will never be enough to describe what an ambitious capital city should be, so I'll try to expand slightly here.

Clean, because I walked up Castle Street yesterday and it was strewn with litter. Wrappers, bags, takeaway cups, fag ends, the whole shebang. Anything that wasn't stuck to the pavement (and there was plenty of that) was flapping at my ankles. On a sunny autumnal afternoon, on a street boasting one of our city's defining views, it made me wonder: where is our civic pride?

Multicultural and fair, because Edinburgh's heritage as a melting pot for a range of cultures and nationalities is something worth celebrating and preserving, particularly in a post-Brexit era where fear of difference is being exploited by xenophobic politicians to drive us apart. Diversity is a strength and an opportunity.

Healthy, because health equals happiness and what more can we aspire to than that? Healthy also means less pressure on the NHS, a more effective, efficient workforce and a more productive economy.

I visited Copenhagen recently and, as someone who cycles daily through Edinburgh, often in abject terror, the Danish capital was a revelation. Copenhagen's city-centre appears to have been designed for cyclists, by cyclists. Drivers wait patiently for bicycles to negotiate busy junctions, cars give generously of both space and time. Many roads are flanked by double pavements; one for pedestrians and another for cyclists. So more people ride their bikes, fewer people are

overweight, and the traffic flows more fluently. Edinburgh has the opportunity to follow the lead of cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam in having a transformational attitude to encouraging cycling. We must.

Schools. Edinburgh is renowned for its many highly distinguished private schools. By 2050, I'd love it to be renowned for having the most highly distinguished state schools in Scotland, so all of our children's children can benefit from a best-in-class educational experience in our capital city, not only the wealthy few.

Finally, I'd love to see a decent mid-sized sports stadium for Edinburgh Rugby (and others) to call home, and a decent mid-sized music venue to ensure we no longer play second fiddle to Glasgow when it comes to attracting the very best acts to Scotland.

Easy, eh?

You can have your say on what Edinburgh might look like in 2050 by [clicking here.](#)