

ROSEBURN ACTION PLAN

This plan contains some matters which are essential and others which may be considered visionary. All plans must inspire action at all levels to improve the area and the human condition.

Murrayfield Community Council
October 2014
Roseburn Action Plan

To many people Roseburn is a minor event on the radial road into town from Corstorphine. On Crossing the Water of Leith, passing through some shops and on under the old railway bridge Roseburn is left behind, and so on past Donaldson’s Hospital to Haymarket and the City Centre.

It is however a fairly dynamic area which has been undergoing change on a number of scales – minor and major over the last 70 years. It has reflected the quite dramatic changes in society and its activities over time seen in the alterations in shops and industrial sites which have largely been changed to housing. Supermarkets have pulled away much of its business and the vast increase in traffic has resulted in a noisy and congested area which is not a pleasant place for people.

The area of the proposed Action Plan stretches from the old railway bridge in the east along Roseburn Terrace to the west of the bridge across the Water of Leith to where Murrayfield Gardens joins Corstorphine Road. The whole of the area is included in the Coltbridge and Wester Coates Conservation Area.

The shops on the south side of the road are bookended by the area’s two public houses while those on the north side are between two banks, although the eastern bank site is now an office. At the western end the old bridge is now used for pedestrians and the ‘new bridge’, apparently widened and remodelled in 1932, takes the main road and all its traffic.

Old Bridge



Waste bins



North west view



It appears that the area in question was largely built at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries.

The Edinburgh Map of 1863 shows the railway line crossing the radial road from the south on an embankment across the existing fields of Coltbridge. The line came from the Caledonian Station at the west end of Princes Street going north on its way to Barnton.

Figure 1 1878

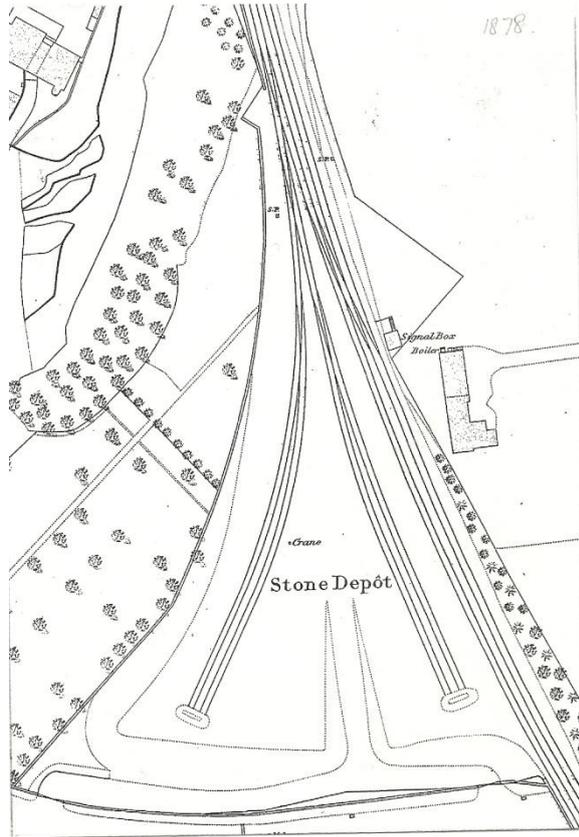


Figure 2 1912

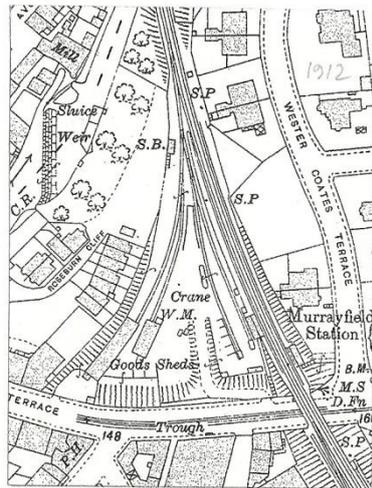
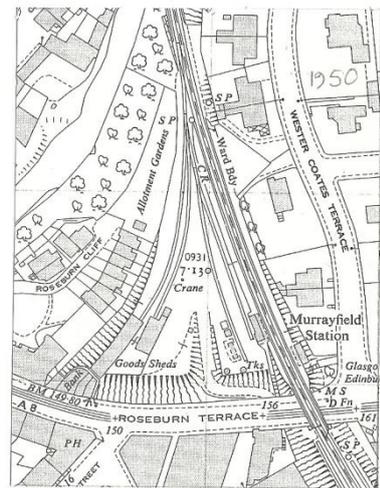


Figure 1950



The 1878 map (fig 1) shows that the adjacent area had become a railway yard after being filled to bring it up the required level,

perhaps from the material from the cuttings to the north. As can be seen on the 1912 map (fig 2) the railway yard was fully developed. This site is no longer used for industrial activity, but abandoned and used for advertising hoardings above the main road. At the time of the railway yard development a brewery was developing opposite and stretched back along Russell Road. The shops and tenements on the south side of Roseburn Terrace appear to have been built about 1890 and finished by 1900. The north side, finished a few years later, was a development encouraged by Sir Patrick Geddes, the great Town Planner and polymath, which included Roseburn Cliff with the entrance to the tenements above the shops via a rear garden almost unique in such developments.

Rear of north side



South side shops



North towards the hoardings



Murrayfield Community Council (MCC) is concerned about the area and had proposed an Action Plan. In recent months MCC has walked the area with City of Edinburgh Council officials and discussed the problems of the area on site. These discussions are continuing at MCC meetings.

To make it easier to deal with the area can be divided into three. The western area around the bridges including Murrayfield Place and the entrance to Roseburn Cliff; the central area is the shops and main road; while the third area is the old railway yard with the advertising hoardings.

North end of Old Bridge



North into 'cutting'



OUTLINE PROPOSALS FOR AREA AROUND OLD BRIDGE

(The numbers refer to the areas on the map)

Area 1: the pavement on the north side of the Corstorphine Road between Murrayfield Avenue and the entrance to Roseburn Cliff. The whole of this area should be repaved in a similar way to that recently finished at Western Corner at Saughtonhall. This would provide a proper surface for pedestrians to use. On this area are the traffic lights which require to be seriously modified. The road bridge parapets globe-lights were recently reinstated but still require replacement of four missing small steel cover plates approximately 300 x 200mm.

Area 2 – the Old Bridge: Remove the tarmac and slab pavements. Reset the existing Sets and add where missing. On the east side of the bridge, laid at the same level as the Sets, there should be a 1.5m wide slab path as used in Area 1 or better still Caithness slabs. Walls may require minor pointing and railing repainted black.

Area 3 – areas of transmission: These areas accommodate changes from one type of paving to another. The Murrayfield Place end may require to be kerbed. Consideration should be given as to whether bollards, large heavy planters or street trees be used to control through pedestrian traffic and prevent vehicles crossing the paved area without permission. Trees have the advantage of cleaning the air of particles from diesel fuel which could be a help in this polluted atmosphere. Trees however form a visual barrier and this may be wrong at a bridge where a clear sighting of the way ahead is expected. Planters too have a disadvantage that they require constant maintenance, which may be difficult to keep up but this should be investigated. If not possible then the existing bollards should be replaced with C I Edinburgh ones.

Area 4 – Control of vegetation: ivy growing from the river bank should be cut back beyond wall. This has been done recently but will require annual attention.

Area 5 – Bins: remove recycling bins from existing area and replace in area between the parking on south side of Murrayfield

Place. Remove a section of pavement to let them be pushed against the existing wall or build a recess in the wall to house them.

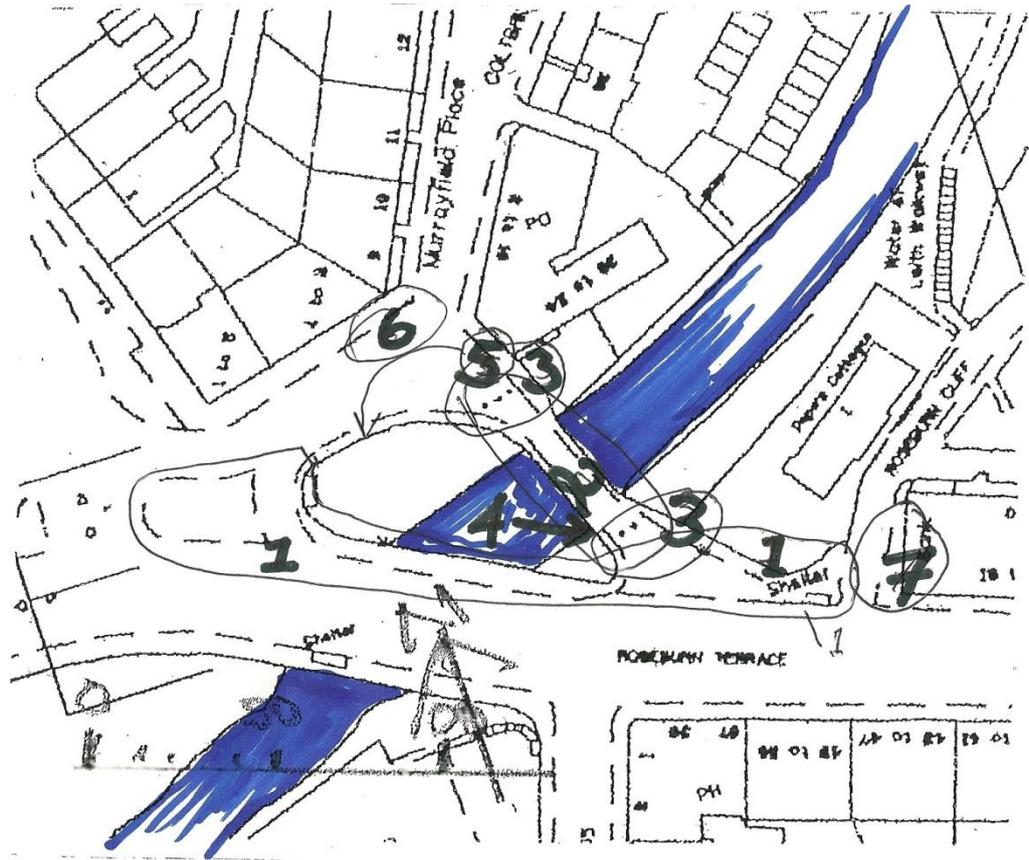
Area 6 – Murrayfield Place: maintain the short term parking but adjust for the new position of the bins. On the north east corner can the pavement be widened to allow the new cafe to have a reasonable number of outdoor tables and allow a screen (glass) at the edge of the pavement to separate from the cars and protect from the wind?

Area 7 – Roseburn Cliff entrance: remove all bins. They make the place look like a slum and interfere with pavement use and activity

Area 8 – New activity: there is room on the west side of the Old Bridge to accommodate eleven or twelve market stalls and it is suggested that a half day market be tried, say on a Thursday morning, to see whether it would take off. The suggestion is for a Farmers Market or for Premier Scottish Food Producers. The short term parking would have to be lifted for the duration of the market for stall-holder vans. The area would have to be cleaned one hour after the stalls were removed. Should the market prove successful it may be possible to extend the area.

Drainage: so many pedestrian crossings are blighted by puddles that the whole area should be test flooded to eliminate the possibility of puddles.

Benches: It was suggested that several benches be located in the area. The Urban Researcher Jan Ghel (pronounced Gale) has suggested three rules for benches, that they drain quickly after rain, they do not conduct heat, and they have backs and arm rests. His research shows that the seats most used in urban areas have three characteristics: they face the sun, they face the action, and their back is covered, no approach from the rear. The only bench in the area meets these requirements but is on the bridge facing all the traffic in a noisy place.



THE SHOPPING AREA

The shopping area is hardly fit for purpose. The pavements are too narrow and the road too wide. The pavements are cluttered with plastic rubbish bins, A frame advertising boards and litter bins recently installed by the local authority, as well as poles with traffic signs and so on – the clutter continues. As a result of the above and the noisy, busy and smelly traffic the area is used only for local inhabitants to ‘pop in for a message’ and not to linger or walk there for pleasure.

The pavement clutter must be removed. The narrow pavements must be widened by a minimum of 600mm (60cm or 2 feet) on both sides of Roseburn Terrace. The road is wide and inefficiently used. The Road Engineer must give up a reasonable amount of road space. They have after all managed to reduce the vehicle flow in the centre of the city so there must be room for improvement in Roseburn.

The right turn into Russell Road and Roseburn Street requires major change. The pollution caused by waiting vehicles is unacceptable.

The appearance of the shop fronts and their signs is not a pleasant sight. Greater design control and a little bit of continuity is required. The shops don't have to shout at the passersby in such a vulgar way! One would have thought that in a conservation area attention to design and appropriateness would be given the requisite attention. Jan Gehl has an excellent piece on shop fronts in one of his books, it is a useful guide

THE HOARDING AREA

The large triangular site, the old railway yard, immediately west of the now disused railway is now itself disused except for the advertising hoardings. Recently a new company has proposed to take down the existing hoardings and erect new hoardings and landscape the slope to the wall at the roadside. The City authorities receive a small amount of money annually from this activity; however they would gain more funds if they sold the land for housing and a few shops. The rates income from a development of say about 60 homes would be a much better financial deal for the City coffers and it might save 5 – 10 hectares of green belt land on the city boundaries. On the latest version of the Local Plan the site is shown coloured green as some sort of open space but unused and uncared for.

There is of course a problem but also a solution. To develop the whole of the site properly it would be wise to return the site to near its original level and remove much of the 'fill'. This can be an expensive and taxing business and finding a destination for the fill could be difficult. However the adjacent old railway is now a reserve for a future tramline and presently used as a cycle track and walkway. Following the track north it crosses the Water of Leith and then becomes part of a deep cutting rather like an inverted V. While the tree clad sides are pleasant to look at it is isolated and perceived as dangerous unless on a bike to make a quick getaway.

The perception of danger means that it is not frequented as much as it might be. If the area was to be filled such that gradients were suitable for a tram they would also be suitable for cyclists and

walkers and would have a much improved appearance of safety. It would be more like an upside down A which would mean a wide space properly landscaped. If a reserve in the middle was for trams one side could be used for walking while the other side is used for cycling. If either side were lined with medium sized trees, perhaps with blossom in the spring, it would be a much more pleasant place. At the existing bridges headroom would have to be maintained for trams.

By using the fill a short distance from the old railway yard along the route to the north the City could get a considerable improvement to its greenway system and a well developed area at Roseburn. A minor deal done with the contractor for the housing should not prove difficult. The improvement to Roseburn would be immense.

Many of the former industrial sites in Roseburn have been changed in the last 30 years to housing. Both sides of Russell Road and south of the 'new bridge' two sites were rebuilt as retirement homes. The only site of any prominence left is the hoarding site.

Notes on the development of the old railway yard.

The Local Plan will require that the Architecture is of modern appearance and faced with stone. The layout at Roseburn Terrace is of concern. Continuity with the existing street is important and a new building should line up with the old bank for a few meters then crank back from the line to form a space towards the bridge. The housing development opposite has tried to do this but the space is private garden and the wall and fence do not give passers by any feeling of the space. On the north side the space will get sun at various times of day and year and be relatively sheltered.

The ground floor should be shops. Roseburn has few shops unoccupied and they were all built over a hundred years ago and not quite up to the standards of the present time so new shops would provide much needed diversity. Servicing the shops from the rear could take up a very large and therefore uneconomic area of the site. In this instance servicing from the road outside rush hour would be reasonable or from a lay by, but this might attract

parking. Rear service areas are perfect areas for burglars, and should be avoided.

The shops should have four stories of apartments above and as the site is south facing perhaps the roof can be used for solar panels. The Patrick Geddes development along the street has some good lessons in development. He changed the basic tenement form from entrance off the street to central stair with way out to the drying green to one entrance from the street but all the others from the rear garden with only a small drying green.

The proposed new development will have to have an entrance hall from the front with all the letter boxes etc. However with a garden at the rear and parking beyond, an entrance at the rear would be necessary. Entrance to the site for residents and their cars would be from the main road adjacent to the existing access with a path through the building. The northern triangle of the site is, it is understood, to be a yard used to build the tramway passing to the east and the area would not be available for development the tramway is built or abandoned. The re landscaping of the whole site virtually from scratch would in the end provide a greater bio diverse area than at present.

November 2014