



ALBERT DOCK, EDINBURGH

OVERCOMING DENSITY WITH CLEVER DESIGN





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CALA's Albert Dock development is located on the edge of the still operational Albert Dock within the Leith Conservation Area. A gap in the dockside between a casino and Forth Ports Offices had been lying empty for years, declining into disrepair, and became an overgrown eyesore within what is a thriving cosmopolitan area of Edinburgh.

Development attempts of the area by others did not come to fruition, but CALA (East) saw the site as an opportunity to provide a lower scale and lower density development, designed to pay homage to the industrial characteristics of the surrounding historic buildings.

Today, this area of brownfield land is home to 41 homes, comprising 32 three and four bedroom townhouses, and 9 apartments. Ten of these units were sold as affordable 'Golden Share' homes, in conjunction with Edinburgh City Council.

Due to the development's proximity to the listed dock and dock waters, the construction and management of Albert Dock presented a number of key challenges, ranging from renovating the listed dock wall, to working closely with SEPA and Forth Ports to prevent the pollution of the dock waters during construction.

Albert Dock is one of CALA's most successful developments, having received a number of industry recognised awards.



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FROM BROWNFIELD...

Originally a cleared brownfield site fronting the B-listed Albert Dock, located within the heart of the historic 19th century docks at Leith, the site is part of the Leith Conservation Area. Until the early 1980s the site was still part of the operational Albert Dock and housed three-storey industrial warehouses.

Situated two miles from Edinburgh City Centre, Leith docklands are renowned throughout the city for their industrial heritage, and more recently for the vibrant, cosmopolitan and fashionable 'Shore' area, which has had significant investment in recent years, both commercially and residentially.



However, this particular site had been left untouched and declined into disrepair, becoming an overgrown eyesore within the area and causing a disconnect between the community of The Shore and the industrial working Albert Dock. The site was desperately in need of redevelopment, and was the missing piece of the jigsaw in order to continue the success of the nearby Shore, blending the two areas into one community.

In 2003, consent was given to CALA for a development of 100 apartments, over seven to ten storeys in height, which was larger in scale and numbers to our revised development plan for the site, but due to the timing of the financial crisis, this was not taken any further. 2009 saw plans for a hotel, but this was not progressed as there was no interest from the hospitality industry. This important location within the city was desperately in need of regeneration.

During the recession, CALA revisited the proposed plans for the site and the current market, at which time it was decided that a smaller scale development would be most appropriate.

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...TO A NEW DOCKSIDE COMMUNITY

The area's recent residential development had been dominated by apartment stock. CALA identified a demographic demand for an imaginative lower density, lower scale development than previously planned, which creatively mirrored the industrial character of the historical warehouses that would have previously stood there. This was a welcome diversity of housing to the location. The use of townhouses, three storeys in height, alongside a small apartment block 4 storeys in height with pitched roofs, was in fitting with the preferences of the Edinburgh City Planning Department. CALA reduced the number of units from the original consent given to enable the provision of more parking for both residents and visitors.

Situated on Ocean Drive, CALA built 41 units, consisting of three and four bedroom townhouses, each benefitting from two car park spaces and a private terrace, and apartments.

Ten of these units were provided as affordable 'Golden Share' properties, in conjunction with Edinburgh City Council, comprising one townhouse and nine social apartments, contributing to 25% affordable homes.



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DESIGN APPROACH

The inspiration for the design of the Albert Dock development was deeply rooted in the area's history, with the scale and materials utilised to mirror that of the traditional warehouse buildings that would have stood in this location. The site posed as a missing piece of the regeneration of the overall area. The opportunity was identified to design a development that would enhance the Albert Dock area, celebrating its industrial character, suiting city buyers who bought into the identity of its location.

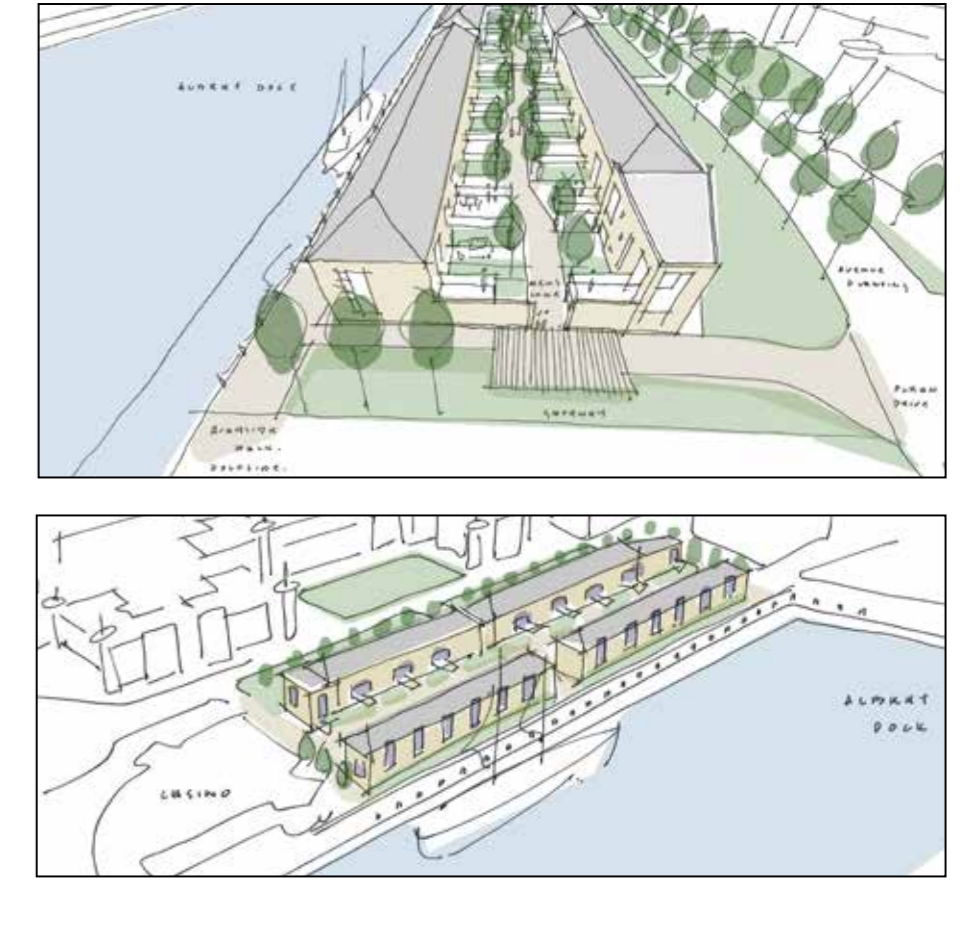
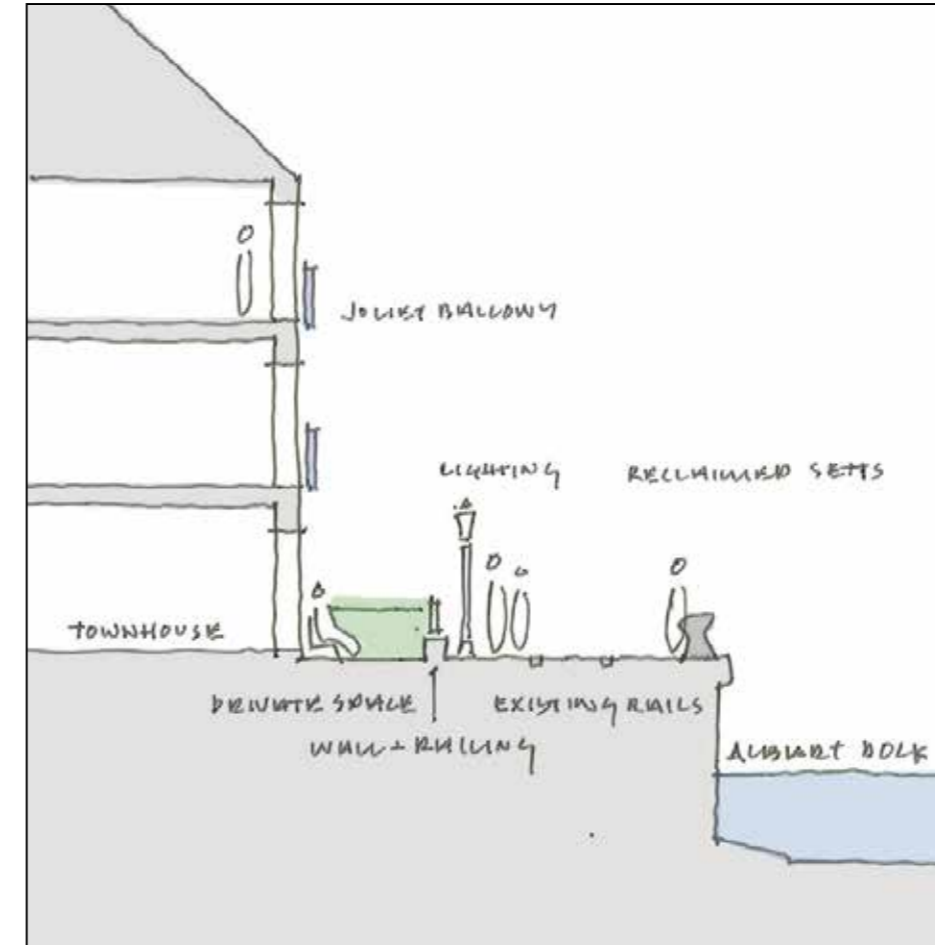
As the site sits in the Leith Conservation Area – seeking to preserve and enhance the character of Leith – it was crucial that this was considered at all points of the design process. It was important that the buildings contributed to the sense of place and demonstrated a combined presence rather than an individual status.

The proposals were developed in accordance with the local plan, which identified the site for residential development, and took into consideration the Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design and Designing Streets. The design was well received by the Planning Department and approved by the Planning Committee in 2013.

The design for the development was developed from the original approved consent for ten storey flatted blocks with common open space on a landscaped deck and parking, to three storey housing with private open space and terraces. CALA's revised proposal was for two simple lines of development along the northern and southern edges of the site, which was in line with the historical use of the development as a dock. As such, the development consists of two striking east-west terraces mimicking dockside warehouses, one looking directly onto Albert Dock and the other across the greenery to Ocean Drive.

CALA's architectural team worked closely with renowned architects, EMA, to design this development, reinforcing the street pattern and dock edge by providing simple urban forms around the perimeter of the site. The form was generated from a modern interpretation of the simple dockside industrial warehouses that had stood here proudly for many years, alongside pitched roofs, and a contemporary approach to fenestration and openings than that of the traditional warehouses.

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THE STRIKING EXTERIOR

- Large panels of brickwork were utilised, which was appropriate material for industrial style buildings, and the palette was deliberately simple with two types of brick forming the external envelope.
- Traditional red stock formed the majority of the edifice, and was punctuated by steel grey Juliette balconies, inset matched painted woodwork and pitched slate roofs.
- Albert Dock was designed as an insular development with its external space looking inward over a one-way central street, which has been designed as a meandering mews, offering an idyllic 'home zone' away from the industrial surroundings.



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THE STRIKING EXTERIOR

- Unlike warehouses, natural daylight was maximised through expansive floor to ceiling height windows, enhancing the views over the water
- The design afforded residents private open space through private first floor terraces, whilst also maximising the relationship with the water's edge and the dock.
- Two-car driveways and visitor parking were incorporated - a rarity in many parts of Edinburgh city centre.
- The design also addressed active boundaries and encouraged communities.
- Access to the dock edge was increased, reinstating an important feature of the area that had fallen into disrepair.



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THE STRIKING EXTERIOR

“ The design was developed to take advantage of the stunning views across the dock and establish a strong urban form along the dock edge. The form of the building also addresses the important streetscape, and tram route along Ocean Drive. There were opportunities at the extremities of each block to create feature elements or ‘bookends’ to the street and the dockside elevations. This is particularly evident at the eastern end of the site and the view from the listed building at Forth house. The large contemporary openings, glazing and balconies offset the traditional form and materials. The properties also benefit from quality useable outside space at first floor level within the mews lane between the blocks. EMA are very proud of the concept, design and final product which represents welcome additions to the increasingly popular and desirable Shore area. ”

EMA ARCHITECTS



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CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Connections were an important part of the design proposal, particularly the route along Albert Dock, which linked the development area to the casino on the south east boundary and to the adjacent development site on the north west. The intention was that the space became not only a route through dock area, but a place to stop to take in the views across the historic dock towards the Forth and beyond. The aim was to provide a residential development that was appropriate for a dock edge location and reflective of the former dockside industrial buildings.

As the proposed development was for less than 50 units, and the site area was less than 2 hectares, no community consultation was required. As the site had consent for a much higher density with much taller buildings, it was not envisaged that the revised proposals would present any significant concerns for the local community. CALA did, however, engage fully with the local authority throughout the pre-application process and we received a positive response to our proposals.



--- ROUTE THROUGH THE DOCK AREA
— WALKWAY AT DOCK EDGE

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KEY CHALLENGES

Due to the proximity of this project to the listed dock and dock waters immediately adjacent, the construction and management of Albert Dock presented a number of engineering and construction challenges throughout the process.

There were a number of stakeholders involved, including Edinburgh City Council with regards to the tram zone to the rear edge of the development, and Forth Ports and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) in relation to the dock edge and water.

- A full dilapidation survey of the existing dock wall had to be carried out to the satisfaction of Forth Ports. This included a photographic survey from a boat within the dock, and all associated method statements and risk assessments.
- CALA had to divert an existing 300mm surface water sewer, and construct a new outfall to the dock, including the fitting of a flap valve to the listed dock wall. This work had to be approved by Forth Ports prior to commencement to ensure the integrity of the wall and that no material would run off into the water.
- The listed harbour wall, which was only 1.5 metres wide, was to be renovated, including full removal of existing tracks on top of the dock wall, refurbishment, replacement and cleaning of existing bollards, and replacing capstans. Again, all work was to be completed avoiding contamination or run off into the dock water.



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KEY CHALLENGES

- In order to prevent any pollution of the dock waters, surface run off measures had to be implemented, including the installation of “downstream defenders”, cut off trenches and silt traps, all to the satisfaction of SEPA and Forth Ports.
- During vibro ground improvement works, full vibration monitoring of the dock wall and surrounding properties had to be carried out, including the provision of trigger alarms that would be set off if a limit was exceeded. A full report was then sent to Forth Ports upon completion of the works.
- Protracted liaison with Tram Infrastructure Edinburgh took place in relation to the proposed route of the tram extension to the rear of the site, and the drainage interface with this route.

One plot was uniquely designed to accommodate the tram works that were scheduled to take place after the development was complete.

- Having raised decked terraces sitting independently from the townhouse product meant that once the initial scaffolding was down, further concrete pads and hanging bolts were required to bolt the terraces into position ready for decking before the external ground to the homes could begin. Completion of the plotworks around the houses had to be extended considerably to accommodate this extra work.



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ADDING THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

CALA's development of Albert Dock into a residential neighbourhood has enabled the area to again be publicly accessible and inclusive, revitalising the previously derelict site within the Leith Docks area.

CALA realised the importance of this development's location and, throughout the process, linked back to its historical beginnings as a working dock.



- We commissioned a contemporary chain artwork sculpture to pay homage to the ships and cranes that surround the development on its water's edge.
- We refurbished the listed crane tracks formerly used by the now listed moveable cranes, which are permanently positioned to the east of the development.
- The regeneration of the listed dock wall, bollards, chains, walkway and historical tram lines into a public, useable space was cleverly linked in the development design scheme, all the while rebuilding the character of this location.



“The development has been carefully designed to be in keeping with the surrounding area, creating a genuine sense of community.”

PHILLIS STEPHEN, FOUNDING EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH REPORTER, 13TH OCTOBER 2013



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COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Given the development's proximity to the Edinburgh tram route, a Section 75 contribution was made of £109,277 to Edinburgh City Council.



AFFORDABLE HOMES

CALA provided ten affordable units as 'Golden Share' properties, in conjunction with Edinburgh City Council, comprising one townhouse and nine apartments.

Golden Share provides an opportunity for local people to purchase a home at 80% of the market value, with the remaining 20% retained by the local authority, making them affordable to those who could not normally afford to purchase a similar home of its size in that local area. The Golden Share discount will also pass to future owners, meaning that local people will benefit for years to come.



THE KITCHEN OF A GOLDEN SHARE APARTMENT

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SALES SUCCESS

Albert Dock has become one of CALA's most successful developments having sold 17 homes in its first three months since its sales launch in February 2014. Reservations remained steady at an average net rate of 3 homes per month, until the development sold out in October 2015.

The development's unique qualities have been recognised within the industry; Albert Dock was awarded Best Large Development at the Homes for Scotland Awards in 2015, and won Best Brownfield at the WhatHouse? Awards 2014.



“ The development stood out for their approach to addressing the challenge of developing a narrow site between a working dock and a narrow tram halt. The design of the private open space in the mews lane and the use of terraced decks enhance a sense of community within the development. ”
HOMES FOR SCOTLAND JUDGES' NOTES 2015





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