CALA

Trinity Park, Edinburgh

Award-winning design, shaped by its surroundings

Executive summary

Built by Cala Homes (East), Trinity Park is unique within the Edinburgh market, and the Cala portfolio. The walled, 6.5 acre enclave of Georgian-style villas, mews homes and apartments is set in the historic, conservation listed area of Trinity.

Paying homage to Edinburgh's historic Georgian architecture, the design of Trinity Park was not without its challenges, with reconstituted stone used to create a development with a mix of housetypes available for a variety of new homeowners.

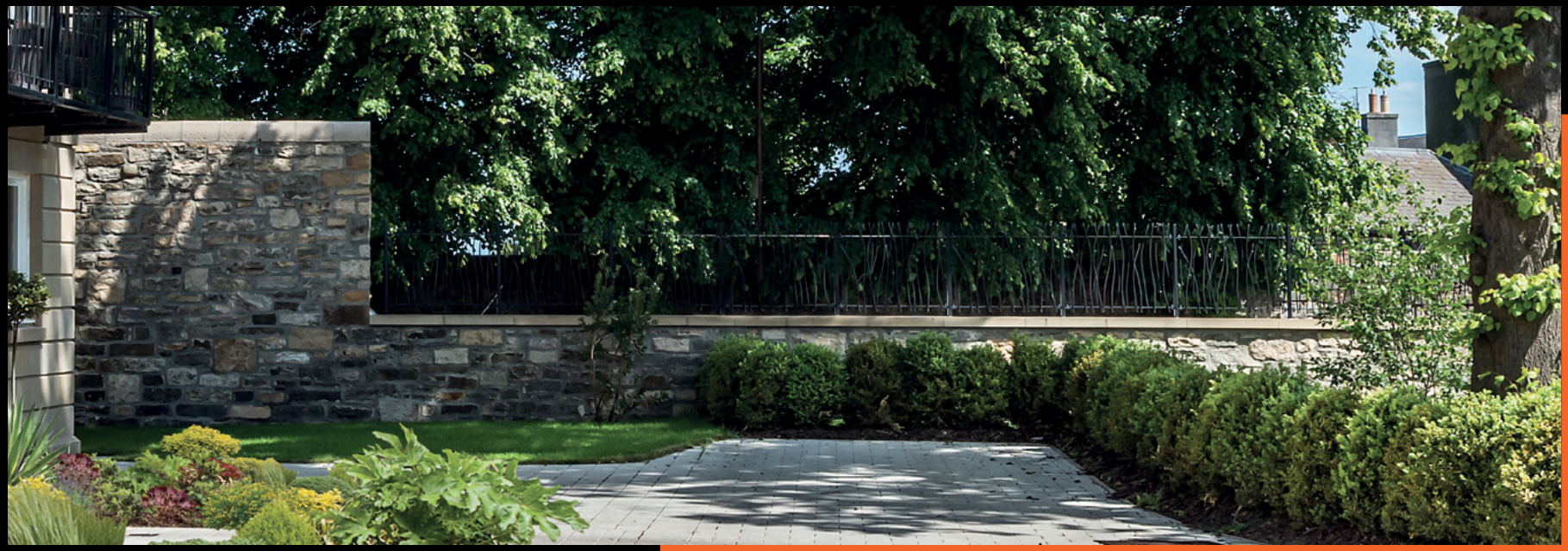
Completed in December 2015, Trinity Park has won numerous coveted industry awards for its bespoke design, mirroring the Georgian history rooted in Edinburgh's city centre.

History of the site

The 2.6 hectare brownfield site of Trinity Park was originally a commanding private home and office for one of the city's most prominent shipping families, before becoming home to a four-storey modernistic NHS office block. Demolished in 2008, the site remained a blemish in the cityscape, but Cala's architects recognised the immense potential for a walled development, unlocking the value of this neglected plot in Edinburgh's popular Trinity area, situated just two miles from the city centre.

The site is enclosed by stone walls, ranging from 2 to 4 metres in height, and includes a number of pedestrian gates on the street frontages. An original Victorian stone-built gatehouse sits to the south of the development. Both the boundary walls and gatehouse are category C listed buildings.

The site was acquired by Cala Homes (East) from a former apartment developer, whose plans had included extensive underground car parking.



Purchased site

Purchased site
23rd December 2010

Planning committee approval
25th May 2011

Detailed planning permission
22nd September 2011

Construction start (enabling works)
13th June 2011

Construction start (infrastructure)
10th October 2011

Housebuild start
10th October 2011

Sales release
17th October 2011

Showhome opening
17th March 2012

First legal completion
30th May 2012

Construction complete
31st December 2015


South Trinity Road
Ferry Road
Ferry Road
Denotes development boundary
Denotes timber fence
Denotes feature wall

Community consultation & planning process

Following extensive and highly successful public consultations, Cala revised the previous apartment developer's concept for the development, which had comprised of 256 apartments of up to seven stories in height.

A Proposal of Application notice was submitted in October 2010 to Edinburgh City Council, with copies issued to Trinity and Stockbridge Community Councils and all ward councillors. Cala's proposals were submitted to the Urban Design Panel in November 2010 with community consultations held throughout December 2010 and January 2011.

As part of the planning and local council presentations, Cala's design team created detailed mood boards and computer generated images to bring to life the unique nature of this bespoke project. These boards became a very important reference point throughout the design development to ensure that Trinity Park stayed true to its original design concept.

Cala addressed local residents' and planning requests to minimise the impact on this sensitive conservation area. The listed boundary walls and gatehouse building remained as part of the development – a nod to the site's Georgian heritage.

Despite their initial preference for Cala to build the more standard product as seen elsewhere in Edinburgh, and that which had previously been consented by the original developer, local planning and City Councillors recognised Cala's reputation in delivering premium developments, but understandably needed to be reassured that the neo-classical yet modern interpretation of the Georgian homes and lifestyle could be achieved without being pastiche.

Trinity Community Council welcomed Cala's proposals for Trinity Park, as the density and design of the development were felt to be more appropriate than that of the previous developer. They agreed that Trinity Park offered a unique opportunity within the community council area to provide a number of high quality family homes.

In order to communicate the proposed scale, housing mix, materials, density, traffic generation and enhancement of existing boundary trees and stone wall, Cala embarked on a lengthy process over several months of numerous meetings and site visits.

- Public engagement meetings were conducted to gather feedback from the local community on the designs, which helped to overcome concerns following the collapse of the previous design by another developer.
- Models, drawings and material samples were all produced to support these discussions.
- Field trips were undertaken across the UK to demonstrate to City Planners the quality of materials, detailing, design and craftsmanship was worthy of its location.

Community consultation & planning process (cont'd)

All of these factors were crucial in executing the design – any cutting of corners would not only make a material difference but would jeopardise the first and lasting impression.

The new scheme won significant public support and was well received by the local council. The reduced height, increased retention of mature trees and development of more open spaces also struck a powerful chord with the surrounding homeowners.

The Urban Design Panel praised the design approach to Trinity Park, in particular the retention of the listed wall that surrounds the site, the retention of the existing protected trees, and the proposed low density of a variety of housetypes.

Design approach

Reconstituted stone was used throughout the development, which required an extraordinary level of craftsmanship. To achieve the important correct shading and colour of the facades, every stone was placed to match a meticulously planned pattern with nine elements in each repeat. With stone construction, everything starts with the very first foundation stone, and with joints of just 5mm, there was no room for error.

The repetition and regularity of facades, and the arrangement of homes into character areas, made for ordered streets and fostered the new community. Shallower pitched roofs reduced the impact of the slate tiling and made the streets scenes even more evocative of the Georgian kerb appeal, which was preserved by hidden gutters, downpipes, bespoke street lighting and hidden service points.

Internally the scale and proportions of the Georgian villas offered stunning ceiling heights of up to three metres, over all three floors. The mews homes and villas boasted a modern interpretation of the traditional iconic Georgian cupola to flood light into the heart of the homes. The apartments were elegant and well proportioned with Cala's signature high ceilings.

> "The detailing is exquisite because it addresses the issue of weathering as well as dealing with vents and grilles in a coordinated way. The standard of workmanship is exemplary. The setting of the buildings is sensitively and confidently handled."
>
> Judges' Report, Whathouse? Awards 2012

> "The decision to use stone for the main facades of the buildings clearly helps them integrate into the wider context of Inverleith/ Trinity, contributing positively to the streets created and the sense of space. The council will be keen to explore this type of approach in other developments across the city. The development is a very welcome addition to the city's housing stock."
>
> David Givan,
> Planning Officer (Design), City of Edinburgh Council

48 Georgian villas
20 Mews homes
11 Apartments
2 Penthouses

Computer generated image of the apartments

Overcoming key challenges

No development is without its construction challenges, and this case was proved with Trinity Park.

- Cala overcame initial objections from planning on the plotting of the mews homes based on a 10.5m distance apart, when 18m is the minimum for the policy of privacy. A case study was produced to show how this reduced space had been successfully used in mews lanes built in the 1900s throughout Edinburgh, supported by visualisations showing that sunlight and daylight would not be negatively affected.

- From the outset, Cala was faced with the challenge of filling a gigantic hole, which had been the result of the former apartment developer who had plans for extensive underground parking. This took three months and circa 80,000 metric tonnes to fill under controlled engineering infill, with convoys of lorries delivering material throughout the day, negotiating only one access point.

The process required ground testing at every 300mm infill layer before the subsequent layer was placed, ensuring solid compaction to support the new building foundations.

- The presentation and finish of the stone used at Trinity Park was fundamental to the development. In order to achieve the all important correct shading and colour of the facades, each stone was allocated a number matching a pre-designed pattern. Pre-delivered on pallets, nine different combinations were created using A, B and C colours and 1, 2 and 3 sizes of stone, further underlining the attention to detail and complexity of the required finish.

- Such bespoke stonework, along with other carefully selected materials ensured the desired Georgian look and feel for the development was created. Stone masons had to be contracted to achieve the level of skill and finish required. There was no room for error, unlike standard builds where variances can be caught later within the build stage.

- All pipework and services had to be disguised or designed so that the front facades of the homes were clean and simple.

- External cantilever balconies required steel work to be anchored back into the internal building carcass to achieve the 'floating' appearance required to best fit with the Georgian look desired.

Delivering technical and build excellence

Despite the key challenges, there was still a requirement to achieve a build that maintained the high specification and quality demanded of any Cala development.

- There was an increase in cost of core build components, to facilitate the design vision.
- Materials and fixtures had to be future proofed.
- To reduce the need for maintenance call outs, which would have been costly to Cala and inconvenient to new homeowners, coloured mastic joints that adapt with future movement and hoppers to the downpipes were sealed for longevity.
- New quality forums were created for suppliers to provide an arena for feedback for continual development and quality control.
- Suppliers had to deliver the quality threshold and build tolerances to achieve the required design.
- Oregon Timber were required to eliminate any margins in error to ensure windows had a reduced 20mm top and bottom tolerance to accommodate the exactitude of the stonework.
- Cupolas were built in to the roof and lifted by crane into position. An additional process to erect internal scaffolding to finish painting and sheeting was required to ensure low future maintenance.
- Featured staircases took one week to install, and needed internal scaffolding to construct the supporting central steel structure. The staircase design accommodates increased widths to allow homeowners to easily take furniture upstairs.
- The Health and Safety teams required new procedures due to staff and contractors working at new internal heights, higher than that of our standard product.
- Between 90 and 100 workers were on site at any time, meaning site management were co-ordinating up to 26 different contractors.
- Edinburgh City Council unusually requested that Cala built an adjoining cycleway on their behalf due to the build technicalities faced after the design was changed to accommodate or save the existing specimen trees. A zig-zag path was required rather than a straight path, following the gradient, which took nine months to complete.

Considered infrastructure

Parking provision on the development was generous to prevent on-road congestion. The villas boast the convenience of two car driveways and integrated garages. Meanwhile the mews homes benefit from pedestrianised lanes with rear car parking provided, and parking for the apartments is accessed through a pend.

One point of entry flanked by pillars in the restored stone walling, with featured ironmongery, provides a sense of arrival. The mature trees, well planned pedestrian and cycle routes, and landscaped green spaces lend the development the air of a country estate.

> “The quality of the housing is top end and is much talked about in the community. I can honestly say that the management of the project has been excellent.”
>
> Councillor Allan Jackson,
> Forth Ward, Edinburgh City Council

Contributions

Over £900,000 was provided towards Section 75 contributions to be used towards

- Off site affordable housing
- Primary school education

Affordable housing contributions

The provision for affordable housing was located off site. After extensive discussions with the housing association partner, it was concluded that on-site affordable housing would not have been viable, given the external materials to be used throughout the development.

Off-site affordable housing, located at Great Junction Street, was able to provide an increased number of homes delivered at a quicker rate than on-site. This location has similar characteristics to Trinity Park – it was a prominent eye-sore gap site, with main road frontage, surrounded by long-established neighbouring housing. 32 affordable homes were provided under Cala's Section 75 contributions – 12 more than what would have been possible if on-site affordable housing had been viable.

Development success

Trinity Park received a string of industry awards:

- Best UK Development at the WhatHouse? Awards 2013
- Best House of the Year at the WhatHouse? Awards 2012 for the Georgian Villa.
- Best Luxury Home – for developers building over 50 units per year, and Best Luxury Showhome at the Herald Property Awards 2012.
- Best Luxury House Commendation at the Scottish Home Awards 2012 for the Georgian Villa.

Trinity Park's Site Manager, Mike Harding, received an NHBC 'Pride in the Job' Award in 2012 – Mike's engineering background helped to deliver the technical tolerances required for the build and develop new techniques and processes to achieve this.

> "I am immensely proud, not only of the management team, but of the complete workforce who have embraced the whole Cala ethos of quality. Especially when you consider the nature of the build, and that the construction method is not just working with the internal fabric already built, but that everything must comply with the stone superstructure, due to the tolerances of the stone. With this in mind, the workforce have embraced this and still managed to control the quality of the build."
>
> Mike Harding,
> Trinity Park site manager

CALA

For more highlights from the
Cala East team visit
cala.co.uk/eastland

CALA.CO.UK