

West End Community Council

Minute of Meeting

7:30pm on the 7th of December 2021 on the ZOOM video platform

Present: Community Councillors Gordon M Wyllie (in the Chair), Ian Robertson (Vice Chair), David Duncan (Secretary), David Hewitson (Finance), Isabel Thom (Planning), Paul Hancock (Communications), Marta Bauer, and Gordon Renton. City Councillor Jo Mowat along with local residents Sara Craig, Linda Cunningham, James Benbow, John McGurk, Christopher McHale, and Ian Woollen. Special guests Julia Frost, Ewan Anderson and Paul Scott.

Discussion	Action
<p>1. Presentation anent the Elgin House Development site</p> <p>Before proceeding to the normal business of the Community Council the Chairman welcomed Julia Frost of the Scott Hobbs Planning consultancy who would lead this evening's presentation, and she in turn introduced her co-presenters, Paul Scott, Christopher McHale and Ewan Anderson all Architects.</p> <p>Mr Scott commenced by saying that those acting for the developers were aware of the need to consult with, and make presentations to "key" Community Councils, as well as others with an interest, including Murrayfield Residents.</p> <p>Asked to identify the developers, Mr Scott said that this was a company called Elgin Haymarket Ltd in which principal players were Uri Goldberg and Malcolm Horn, who had been behind the Candleriggs development in Glasgow. He went on to say that the company has a website which could be consulted for further information.</p> <p>Saying that the proposals are currently at the stage of a pre-application consultation Mr Scott went on to say that the site lies in the "Haymarket business district" identified for office and hotel use and that the development had been accepted in principle. It lies outside the World Heritage Site .</p> <p>Ewan Anderson explained that the buildings currently on the site (which was formerly part of a railway yard) presently occupied by HM Revenue & Customs and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland are "out of step with current thinking and demand", as exemplified by current proposals for the adjacent new student accommodation and the replacement for Rosebery House,</p> <p>Sites such as this one are currently attracting a lot of interest from developers believing that potential occupiers are increasingly keen to be close to public transport, seeking high levels of sustainability, and reappraising their use of space.</p> <p>Elgin Haymarket Limited wish to create a positive frontage to the proposed new building, which will be part of an "entrance" to city centre. They wish pedestrians and cyclists to feel comfortable, and CCWEL will be a factor in this.</p> <p>An illustration shown by Mr Anderson appeared to show a building comprising eight double storeys, which he said could accommodate 1400 workers. It is to contain an hotel as well as offices, with 3 winter gardens containing trees and a roof terrace with a continuous colonnade round the top.</p>	



<p>The planning application will include a views assessment. The new building's height is proposed to be marginally less than that of the proposed new Rosebery House, which will screen the development from the main road.</p> <p>On the facilities side, there is to be a heat pump, and the roof is to be a rainwater catchment area. Electric car charging will be available, but only six parking spaces for motor vehicles, whereas it is planned to have lots of cycle space.</p> <p>Julia Frost now spoke to the construction timetable. With the PAN closing on 14 December, the planning application lodged in March 2022, and the construction team expected to be on-site until 2025.</p> <p>At this point the presentation stopped, and an opportunity was given for those attending the meeting to make comments and put forward questions.</p> <p>A number of concerns were raised by Community Councillors and members of the public.</p> <p>These included concern about construction noise and disruption, how the height of the building would overshadow the Citypoint Building, and the impact of loss of daylight. In response, Paul Scott maintained that all the proposals fell within the City Plan as confirmed by the City Planning Dept.</p> <p>A resident of the flats opposite Rosebery House, referring to the attention and consideration being paid to cyclists and travellers from out of town, contrasted this with the treatment being meted out to local residents, who would be looking out on to an expanse of glass and concrete. While impressed by the care taken of people coming in to town the needs and wants of local residents were being ignored. Expressing a popular view, she felt that new buildings should take account of locality requirements as well as those of the workers to be housed in them.</p> <p>Other comments were made to effect that apart from its towering height the building's outward appearance would be "a bit bland and insufficiently Edinburgh-related", especially with regard to the materials of construction. In response to a query regarding potential public accessibility the presentation team expressed their impression that the terrace and garden areas would probably be private to the building's occupants. The point was made that the new building will face the railway tracks, not the tenements. Queries were also raised regarding the potential provision of publicly-accessible toilets., and the impact of demolition works on the local community, especially with a programme planned to take place at the same time as the proposed Rosebery House redevelopment. It was noted that a Transport Impact Statement will be part of the planning application, and expected to be a planning condition. It was stated explicitly that the new building should provide wider local community benefits than the Tram Track Contribution and immediate public realm improvements</p> <p>After the presentation the team were thanked for their attendance and the manner in which they had responded to questions, the meeting proceeded to normal business in their absence.</p>	
<p>2. Apologies</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been sent by Community Councillor Dr Leonora J H McAndrew, City Councillors Clair Miller and Hal Osler, and local residents Benoit Culioli and Darcey Black.</p>	



<p>3. Minutes</p> <p>The Minute of the combined Ordinary and Extraordinary General meetings held on 28 October had been circulated prior to the meeting and was approved.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising</p> <p>(a) Bin Review - A number of those present had also attended the area presentation held in the Walpole Hall. While it was common cause that the current collection arrangements do not work well, the consultation meeting was also felt to have been poorly and inefficiently organised. David Hewitson referred to the concern expressed by fellow-residents of Eglinton and Glencairn residents regarding poor consultation and the lamentable conduct of the event. Isabel Thom expressed similar views on behalf of the residents of Douglas Crescent. Expressing some sympathy for these views, Cllr Jo Mowat explained her understanding of the City Council's official position. It was felt that the proposals seem a bit inflexible and insufficiently reflective of quality of place, design, etc. She'll be meeting World Heritage site personnel to discuss the situation in the not-too-distant future. The meeting felt that " the show's not over till the bins are on the street". Mr Hancock would collate comments received into a single document for the benefit of the City Council bins team.</p> <p>(b) Public Toilets – Cllr Jo Mowat advised that she is still awaiting responses from the Legal Department. Gordon Renton spoke for many people in wondering why a capital city and focus of international tourism should have so few, and why it is not a statutory obligation for local authorities to provide them. Cllr Jo Mowat will continue to follow this up with the relevant officials.</p> <p>(c) Slippery Pavement Surfaces - As this matter remains unresolved, Cllr Jo Mowat will again follow it up with the relevant officials.</p> <p>(d) Licensing Convener for the WECC – Local resident James Benbow would speak to Gordon Wyllie about volunteering for this job. <i>(After a discussion via Zoom, Mr Benbow kindly agreed to take this on.)</i></p>	
<p>5. Police Matters</p> <p>Paul Hancock referred to various incidents apparently linked to the current use of the Haymarket Hub Hotel. After walk-rounds with Angus Robertson MP, Christine Jardine MP, and Cllr Jo Mowat, he had convened a meeting with representatives of Mrs Jardine, the Bethany Trust, the City Council, along with Cllr Jo Mowat, Police Inspectors Mark Hamilton and David Duthie , and the Chairman and himself, kindly hosted by the Grosvenor Hotel. It was noted that there is a lack of amenity at the Hub Hotel, coupled with restrictive conditions of continued residence. With Cllr Jo Mowat pointing out that police action is impossible if matters go unreported, it had been agreed that the police would issue a neighbourhood letter explaining what to do as an initial step if residents saw or encountered untoward behaviour. Further actions would be considered in the light of emerging information and actions requested.</p>	



<p>Mr Hancock mentioned that the police stall initiative in the Haymarket Station had been poorly attended. He also referred to the three places still available on the Women's Safety Course being run in conjunction with the Grosvenor Hotel.</p> <p>Linda Cunningham referred to the valuable work being carried out by the Bethany Trust and the volunteering opportunities which this represents for assisting those in need of emergency care and are on the waiting list for alternative accommodation.</p>	
<p>6. Councillor's Report</p> <p>Most of the issues which Cllr Jo Mowat wished to bring to the meeting had been covered by the above discussions. Other matters coming before the CEC included issues concerning the climate, waste disposal and housing as well as transport and a reworked proposal for a Low Emissions Zone.</p> <p>A planning determination regarding the Rosebery House redevelopment had been due on 18 November, and departmental officials now admit that matters are proceeding in a less than timely manner at the present time.</p>	
<p>7. Finance</p> <p>Treasurer David Hewitson referred to the written report circulated prior to the meeting, and his delight at receiving the hoped-for municipal grant as a result of holding the last meeting within the necessary timescale.</p>	
<p>8. Communications Report</p> <p>Paul Hancock advised that while there are still some technical issues to be resolved regarding the new website, it is anticipated that these can be dealt with over the Christmas holiday period. He had attended the recent meeting of the Association of Edinburgh Community Councils, and been in liaison with City officials over what appeared to be a systematic neglect of certain drains, including an outfall at Bishop's Walk. It was pleasant to report that Girlguiding Scotland is leading an appeal for the erection of an statue commemorating the work and significant achievements (including the creation of the Scottish Women's Hospitals during the First World War) of the late Dr Elsie Inglis, in which connection it is hoped to apply for a grant from the Baillie Gifford company. He also advised that the Facebook Group are planning to have a sit-down in Walker Street as part of the fundraising efforts for the appeal.</p>	
<p>9. Planning Report</p> <p>Isabel Thom spoke to the summary Report circulated prior to the meeting, pointing out in particular that comments regarding the Elgin Hose proposals had to be registered by 14 December, and referring to a number of applications granted and refused. It was agreed to entirely support the objections expressed by neighbouring proprietor John McGurk regarding the proposals being made anent the erstwhile corner restaurant entered from 22 Coates Crescent.</p> <p>Local Applications which had received assent included those at 23 Manor Place, 54 Palmerston Place, and for short-term lets at 13 Dewar Place Lane.</p> <p>In the context of Variations, Mrs Thom referred to the extension of a 2018 grant for roof skylights above original ridge level at another location. As the Weekly List does not include variations, it is too late to make any comment. It was suggested that she should</p>	



<p>write in with objections even though this would now be out of time. Cllr Jo Mowat would enquire regarding the appropriate official to be contacted.</p> <p>Guidance regarding the erection of 5G electronic signal relay masts is that while in general these are likely to be permitted, there is however an ongoing dialogue with the NTBCC with respect to the mast where Randolph Crescent meets Queensferry Road.</p> <p>Regarding the proposed Edinburgh City Local Plan 2030, it was important that people should make their views known before the consultation closed in a few days time. Notwithstanding the closure of the consultation period, this would be an agenda item for the meeting in January.</p>	
<p>13. Next Meetings</p> <p>11th January, 1st March, 5th April, 3rd May (AGM), 7th June, 5th July, 2nd August, 6th September, 4th October, 1st November, and 6th December.</p>	

There being no further business Dr Wyllie closed the meeting.