

Development Management sub-committee 25 May 2011

The Development Management sub-committee met in the Dean of Guild Room at the City Chambers today to discuss, amongst other things, the application by Cala for a vacant site at 4 South Trinity Road. The proposal is to build 81 villas, mews houses and apartments within walled grounds which used to be occupied by a three storey office block. The buildings will be stone fronted and have slate roofs to tie in with the surrounding area.

There will be a new link to the cycle path to the rear of the development on the former railway cutting which links Newhaven to Roseburn. This will involve the formation of a new path on the existing embankment. The embankment is very steep and the new path will have to be 100 metres to allow the gradient.

The councillors also discussed at length the matter of affordable housing, which means housing to be made available to those on lower incomes through renting or shared ownership. It is usually a condition of any planning application that there is a certain proportion of affordable housing provided by a developer in return for the granting of planning permission. In this particular case the affordable housing will not actually be built within the site at Trinity. Instead the condition will be met by CALA contributing to an off-site development in Leith. It was explained that this is very unusual. What will happen is that Cala will transfer the ownership of the site in Great Junction Street to the Port of Leith Housing Association for free, in exchange for the planning permission on South Trinity Road.

The report produced for the meeting stated:-"While there is a preference for on-site affordable housing in every case where it is viable, the viability for on-site provision has been

thoroughly examined in this development...the proposed off-site affordable housing in this case will provide more affordable housing, and delivered at a quicker rate, than would have been the case if on-site provision was sought. It is therefore recommended to Committee that the affordable housing arrangement be the provision of an agreed off-site location at Great Junction Street."

The report went on to explain that the provision of affordable housing in this area would work out at £168,000 per 2-bedroomed unit, which rendered it unviable for any housing association. Councillor Lesley Hinds asked whether there was actually any affordable housing in Trinity at all. She said:-

It was admitted that there are a few trees which will have to be removed to allow this development, but the committee deemed this within acceptable limits, and granted the application subject to a suitable design being approved for the access to the cycle path.

Councillor Stuart Roy McIvor asked if the path could perhaps be split into two distinct halves to allow for access by pedestrians and cyclists separately. He said bikes could come down the path too fast perhaps colliding with pedestrians. It was suggested that bollards or gates be put up to help with this problem.

Councillor Jackson showed the meeting some photographs which he had taken of the pavement outside and which he suggested was too narrow to allow safe access onto the road by cyclists. He suggested that a more suitable arrangement might be a bellmouth access. Councillor Joanne Mowat said:- "People don't have a choice if they live in private housing or not. I was walking there with my daughter yesterday and she said to me 'Mummy, I think you have to make the path wider if you want bikes on it.' The path is currently 1.2m and it's not wide enough."

Councillor Rob Munn said:-“I welcome the news that the gap site in Great Junction Street will now be developed and further welcome that all the ownership issues of the site have been resolved. I also make the point that I think that the issue of the development economics that affects the South Trinity site are something that possibly needed to be addressed through other means rather than the Development Management Sub Committee.”

Councillor Lesley Hinds commented:- “The average age of first time buyers is around 38, which means that young people can’t afford to live in this area. We are trying to avoid creating ghettos.”

The other main item on the agenda which was discussed was the application relating to 21-23 Windsor Place. This is for a flatted development. Councillor Child remarked that she thought it was over-development of the site, but since it was all affordable housing it should be recommended. The consent was eventually approved subject to three conditions:- That one of the parking spaces is designated for disabled persons, that a suitable colour of render is used on the outside of the building and that the developer is asked to contribute towards membership of the City Car Club to each of the first occupiers on the site, all to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning.

Other items on the agenda were all approved without further discussion.