

Fountain Brewery plans granted as Odeon case postponed

At yesterday's Development Management Sub-Committee meeting, the focus was very much on the proposals for the site at Fountain Brewery, as, much to the disappointment of the majority of the gallery and the councillors, the case examining the demolition of the Odeon cinema was postponed.

Councillor [Steve Burgess](#) expressed particular concern about this, worrying that the delay "might raise a precedent that anybody who doesn't like a report can send in a letter and get it stalled". The application will be examined in two weeks' time.

So the main application left for discussion at the hearing was the large retail, office, residential and leisure development at the site of the former Fountain Brewery. A hotel, care home and student housing are also part of the project, with student housing being a key topic of debate at the hearing.

With the Council committed to extending public involvement in the planning process, Community Councillors Paul Beswick and John Davidson had both been invited to raise their concerns. Beswick, Chair of Tollcross Community Council, said that he and current residents of the area were broadly supportive of the development, but did have concerns about the potential over-provision for student rooms.

He considered that the student data was "not of use when planning a development such as this". The committee did comment that, although student accommodation is heavily sought after today, in 10 to 20 years when the works would be complete, the "demand may be significantly smaller, due to what is going on down in Westminster."

Edinburgh Napier University are very supportive of the application as, to be able to remain an internationally competitive place to study, enhancement of their accommodation portfolio in the area is essential. Roughly 780 student rooms will be created at the development.

Beswick also alerted the committee to the concerns raised by British Waterways (Scotland) who thought that the height of the buildings would have a detrimental effect, simply by detracting from the quality of activities on the canal itself. He went on to say that although there were plans to create centres for the community to use, such plans rarely go ahead in developments like this, claiming that they are often shelved and then used for more office space instead. But as well as requiring strict conditions about community use, Beswick was generally supportive of the plans.

John Davidson raised concerns about the extent of student accommodation too, warning that "student numbers may implode", recommending that the student flats should be built in such a manner that they can be converted to family housing if demand for student housing does fall.

Mike Halliday, Planning Consultant at Lloyds TSB, and architect [Allan Murray](#) were fully committed to the greatly-needed regeneration of the site. They asserted that the market would determine the final uses of the build, but highlighted the economic benefit, with potentially 2000 jobs being created. Flexibility was claimed to be an important element of the plans, as it would attract more developers.

After examining a scale model of the development, the main concerns were the height of buildings, the location of paths in and out of the development and the potential for the site to become a 'white elephant'. The Lloyds associates confirmed it did conform with daylight and height measures after thorough testing.

Aside from this, the committee held an overwhelmingly positive view on the plans, granting them after all evidence was delivered.

A statement made by Murray was echoed – ambition is paramount for the project to ultimately be successful.