

Planning decision today for Pinkhill

We were reminded by local residents that the decision on the replacement for a three storey office building in Pinkhill is to be made by the [planning committee today](#). You can watch the planning meeting online by [clicking here](#).

This has gone through a few hoops at the planning stage including a site visit last week by the members of the committee, and is on the agenda today with officers recommending approval. The scheme they say should be approved has been amended to a five storey building with 51 apartments. The original application sought the go ahead for seven storeys (where once there were three).

It is not yet known of course how the committee will vote, and there will be a presentation on the development by the Chief Planning Officer during the meeting.



But this is, according to our correspondents, another example

of locals feeling disenfranchised by the planning system. They claim not to be NIMBYs and agree that some form of development must take place on the site. But they do make their views known very succinctly and reasonably in their letters to us. It is of course perhaps too late, as their representations have to be made to the correct body – the council – during the planning process. They did this.

Corstorphine Community Council said that they did not oppose the development per se but they did ask for the development to be reduced to no more than four storeys in height. They asked for 119 secure bike storage spaces while it looks as though the developer will have to provide 86 such spaces.

In total there were 147 objections to the scheme when it was in its original state last August. When the revised scheme was publicised in March this year there were 149 objections made. There was one comment in support of the application at each stage.

While it is unlikely that it will make any difference to the decision, we reproduce the letters we received from objectors below. It is not the time for the council to comment on the application as it is a live planning matter, but it is perhaps timely to remind ourselves that planning legislation is being examined by The Scottish Government.

The Planning (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 4 December 2017 and is at Stage 1 in its parliamentary process. There have been ten meetings at Holyrood to discuss its progress, the most recent on 21 March 2018. Among other things it seeks to improve in allowing communities to influence planning decisions. Local place plans would, in the words of Kevin Stewart MSP who is Minister for Local Government and Housing, “give people a greater opportunity to come together to discuss consider and express their aspirations and a chance to have real influence over the future of their places”.

One problem that communities have is that they have no right of appeal. That lies fairly and squarely with either the planning authority or the applicants themselves. Andy Wightman MSP who is a member of the Local Government and Communities Committee wrote on the Scottish Greens website at the end of last year that he fears any amendments to the legislation will not help communities much, but instead that it will 'perpetuate a corrupted system designed to promote the vested interests of developers'.



PINKHILL

Letter from Glenn Telfer resident at Pinkhill Park

Dear Editor,

RE: DANDARA APARTMENT PROPOSAL PINKHILL PARK

The Dandara apartment block proposal for Pinkhill Park has been revealing of the essential nature of Dandara as a developer and the planning committee as the approver of the proposal. What has been revealed is very dispiriting, not only in terms of the process and outcome, but also one's

faith in the systems they represent. There is something rotten in the whole thing. And this always has a knock-on effect in our society.

We have in Dandara, a developer knowingly proposing a building massively out of scale with its surroundings, and which will have an obvious permanent negative impact on the entire area well outside the zone of the development itself, but totally indifferent to this. They care nothing for the community or good will they should engender, but only to max out a profit from the site and then move on.

We have in our planning committee, a body ostensibly tasked with overseeing on our behalf the suitability of such proposals, and which invites objections to help assess this. But which ultimately ignores such objections, even though they number hundreds. Despite this being a very large development, they even had to be cajoled at the very last instance to visit the site. It's as if it wasn't going to make any difference anyway.

What then is the point then of our systems of accountability?

It seems in the planning committee's case just to give a veneer of democratic consideration to the decision that was already taken when Dandara's proposal first crossed their desk.

The planning committee should be protecting our communities from developer greed, aesthetic vandalism and the ruinous consequences of over development.

I hope that they will do their job on Wednesday and not rubber stamp the Dandara monstrosity.

I note that at present Dandara are actively preparing the site ahead of the decision, it's almost as if they know something.



The second letter is from Peter Henderson

*The Editor,
The Edinburgh Reporter.*

Dear Sir / Madam,

I live close to number 33 Pinkhill, a former 3 storey office property, which developers Dandara wish to replace with a 5 storey flatted development (which would, if approved, be sandwiched between the 4 storey flats of Pinkhill Park to the east and and 2 storey houses in Traquair Park and Carrick Knowe to the west). The site was the subject of an inspection visit by the Council's Planning Sub-Committee during last week with the Planning Application due to return to the Committee within the next few days. Several hundred Objections have been submitted to the proposed development citing, amongst other things, building height, infringements of privacy, parking, traffic problems / safety and building density.

The Council's own design guidance states: "New development should achieve a density that is appropriate to the immediate site conditions and to the neighbourhood"

The Council's own documentation, tabled for their forthcoming further consideration of this Application, notes that: "The proposal for 51 apartments on a site measuring 0.43 hectares equates to approximately 118 dwellings per hectare..... Neighbouring dwellings at Pinkhill Park which is a larger site have a density of approximately

70 dwellings per hectare". Whilst mathematics may not be my strongest subject I calculate that an increase from 70 to 118 dwellings per hectare equates to an increase in density of about 68%. Even in one's wildest dream a deviation of this size cannot possibly be described as either insignificant or achieving a density "appropriate to the immediate site conditions and to the neighbourhood" so how can the Planning Department, in their submission to the forthcoming Committee meeting, suggest that this increased density is not a serious breach of their own Design Guidance ??

Whilst, in addition to referring to building density I could address all the other points of Objection that have been raised by the substantial body of Objectors, I believe it would be more relevant to simply highlight the occurrence, during the past week, of a serious accident at the junction of St John's Road and Pinkhill when a car ended up on its side. Whilst, luckily, there were no serious injuries this accident highlights the concerns of those who have Objected and those who live in the area that the entry to and exit from Pinkhill has been and continues to be an "accident waiting to happen". Next time those involved may not be quite so lucky and there could be injuries or, even worse, fatalities.

Finally, I should emphasise that I am not against the redevelopment of the 33 Pinkhill site – but any development must be appropriate to the site and fit in with its surroundings.

Yours faithfully

Peter Henderson



And a second letter from Mr Henderson :

There have been a substantial number of Objections to the Planning Application but unfortunately when it comes to the Planning Committee Meetings and Planning Committee Site visits those who are Objecting (or Supporting) an Application are not allowed to speak. There is a very strict window during which the general public can lodge Objections or Support an Application but once that window closes (and that point was reached quite some time ago) the general public is not allowed further input although the Planning Department will continue talking to the Applicant. This on-going dialogue, in a perfect world, is to allow "clarification" by the Planning Department of aspects of the Application but obviously the on-going communication allows the developer to put further "input" (by way of answers to queries or dressed up as answers to queries) into the Planning Department.

The original proposal from Dandara was for a seven storey block of flats which then came down to six and eventually their formal Application was for five. Those who are cynical about such things would suggest that this was a deliberate ploy to try and suggest to Planning and the general public that they are "listening".

What is being replaced is a three storey office building. To the East of this building are four storey Apartments at Pinkhill Park and to the West are two storey houses in Traquair Park East and Carrick Knowe so what is being proposed by Dandara will be not only be higher than the Pinkhill Park properties but will tower over the Traquair Park and Carrick Knowe properties. During the site visit last

week the Committee were taken into a garden immediately to the West of the proposed site and were shown how it (and other properties) would lose their privacy and be badly overlooked.

Height is just one of the factors of Objection. Population Density, as I mentioned in my letter, is another. Lack of car parking is also going to be a problem because Pinkhill and Traquair Park are already used as overflow parking for Edinburgh Zoo, Murrayfield, the Bridge Club on Pinkhill, the Forestry Commission building at Citrus House plus the “park & ride brigade” who get free parking in this area and then take the bus to places such as the City Centre and the Airport where they would be faced with very costly parking fees. Also Pinkhill and Traquair Park East are used as a regular “rat run” and only last week a car ended up on its side at the junction of Pinkhill and St John’s Road – but thank the driver was not seriously injured.

Whilst I and a very substantial number of others have objected strongly to the Dandara proposals we have also stressed that this is NOT a case of NIMBYISM. We would welcome the replacement of the empty offices by the building of residential apartments – but what we want is for a building or buildings which will fit in with and blend into the area and are appropriate for this particular site.



AND (finally) a letter from John Kerr who also kindly supplied the photos.

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you regarding a long running battle with Planning Department about 33 Pinkhill and the developer Dandara wishing to build a five story apartment block. (Planning Ref 17/03433/FUL)

I attach our latest one page summary with evidential photos of our objections.

There are 300 objections on the planning portal and if you were to add in the Pre Planning Consultation process that would be more like 400 objections I am sure. The three local councillors all object including Frank Ross our mayor and Christine Jardine our local MP has also written to the Planning Development Sub Committee objecting to the proposal and saying that it should be rejected.

The developer is an off shore based developer who is new to building in Edinburgh and I am sure they are trying to make their mark and are profiting at the expense of local residents and new residents who will move in. They embarked on a cynical process to defeat the planning system and get their own way. They opened up with a ridiculous seven storey proposal within a suburban low rise area at Pinkhill/ Traquair which has two storey houses to the West, modern 4 storey apartments and townhouses to the East and a two storey care home.

Their latest proposal is still 5 storeys and will tower above everything, please see photo of the existing office block in the attachment taken from the back garden of 1 Traquair Park East. The new building will tower 8 metres above what you can see in that photo!

The proposal actually breaches Edinburgh Councils own Design Guidelines which clearly states **"The Council want new developments to integrate well with existing buildings and spaces. This means that new buildings that are clearly higher than their neighbours should be avoided"** What on earth is going on we ask? The flat roof proposed building will tower above the adjacent 4 storey apartments in Pinkhill Park let alone the two storey private houses in Traquair Park East and Carrick Know Avenue.

Local residents are outraged that Planning Department could have recommended this for approval. The Planning Development Sub Committee visited the site last week and are due to make a decision on it [next Wednesday](#) so it would be absolutely fantastic if you could quickly run an article on this. I do

hope you can help given such a short timescale.

One of the other things that we have been predicting in our objections is a bad traffic road accident at the junction of Pinkhill and Corstorphine Road. Please also see photos below of the scene there last Friday around 2:30pm where a van and a car collided overturning the van.

Regards

John Kerr



Photo by John Kerr



Photo by John Kerr

