

Residents continue their campaign against student housing on Eyre Place Lane

Locals who live near Eyre Place Lane are continuing their campaign against a development of student housing on a gap site which used to be occupied by Jewsons.

The developer, CA Student Living/Novel Student, has altered the [plans](#) in light of some of the objections made at the pre planning stage, and has now lodged two applications, one for the [student block](#) and one for [nine townhouses](#) (instead of the second student block). The townhouses will mirror those already in place on the lane, but apart from this apparent concession, the residents say there are still some issues.

They question whether the developer has extended their application over land which is not within their proposed ownership, and they feel that the block of 142 student flats is wholly inappropriate for this site. A development of this size will be a huge building on a constrained site according to the residents who are now working as The Eyre Place Residents Special Interest Group with a website [here](#).

OBJECTIONS

Anyone with an interest in objecting is asked to do so now as the planning consultation is only live until 2 September 2022 on The City of Edinburgh Council planning portal. There is a

useful list of steps to take now that the planning application has been lodged on the Eyre Place website [here](#).

At the pre-planning stage the residents conducted a survey and out of the 200+ responses they received there was an overwhelming majority opposing the use of the site for student accommodation. There is also a petition with around 260 signatures. But the group would like to point out that even if an objection has already been lodged it must be lodged now in relation to the planning applications.

There are more details of the proposals in the Pre-Application Consultation Report which we reproduce below and which states that the development will have “a positive impact on the local area”. It appears that some of the transport timings have been altered from what was initially stated – and that the time it might take a student to get a bus to Napier University at Merchiston is now 35 minutes. This is regarded as an issue since the council has a stated aim to create 20 minute neighbourhoods, but the site on Eyre Place Lane is not within reach of any of the universities or colleges in the city to support that aim.

Local residents fear that the impact of the size of the student block with its top floor party room and terraces in the proposed student block will be a negative one. They also question whether such a development would fit within the draft Local Plan.

Cllrs Osler and Mitchell are on the planning committee and unable to comment on the application, but we have asked other local politicians for comment.

Cllr Vicky Nicolson said: “I have spoken with people in the Eyre Place area while canvassing before and after the planning application was submitted, have had a walk round with a group of concerned residents and have frequent email communication. I have also liaised with the resident when, twice, the yard

has been flooded with sewage.

“The local community has coordinated to oppose these plans by way of a community website and petition set up during the pre-consultation process. Their concerns centre around the scale of the development in a long, narrow site. It is felt the height and scale of the development will block sunlight and overshadow a recently cultivated community garden which was well used during the pandemic and to this day.

“When I visited them, residents also cited and the lack of consideration of 20-minute neighbourhoods, the lack of available doctors in the local surgery and other amenities locally not having capacity to cater to such a large number of new residents in addition to the key statutory considerations that they feel the proposed development does not adhere to.

“The residents have said they are very open to the site being developed but tell me this development is not right for the space and their neighbourhood.”

Local councillor Jule Bandel said: “This purpose-built student development is neither in the best interest of the local community nor students. I first got in touch with the community earlier this year when the pre-planning application came out which I, like many other people, objected to and I’m disappointed that the developer has decided to press on with their plans for a purpose-built student accommodation despite huge opposition.

“Local amenities and services such as King George V Park and GPs are already overstretched and the development of a high-density student accommodation in addition to the nearby development on the former RBS site would only add further pressure. Given this high population density of the area, the application shows an unacceptable lack of consideration for the needs of the community.

“People have also raised concerns that a transient population

– which fixed term contracts for students naturally create – would weaken community cohesion as well as the over-provision of student accommodation in the nearby area.

“Students and long-term residents alike are struggling in Edinburgh’s housing crisis and need affordable homes. Judging by the extortionate rents and poor living standards that have been reported in other private student accommodations by this developer, the only one I would see profiting off this development is the developer.

“I’m in touch with the local community and supporting them in liaising with planning officers and objecting to this application.”



Residents point out that Eyre Place Lane is already narrow and would become even more difficult for emergency services to access with townhouses built on the left hand side. Emergency vehicles were unable to access the lane following three sewage floods there.



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