

# Artists studios under threat if new development approved by planners

Edinburgh artists have hit back at a developer's plan to demolish their studios for flats – which they say “threatens a thriving creative community in the heart of the city”.

Beaverhall House in Canonmills, currently home to around 30 artists and several other businesses, could be demolished for the development comprising new apartments, co-working spaces, a creative hub and public courtyard.

Of the 205 flats, 52 will be affordable with the remainder offered at market rent.

Between five and seven storeys in height, some objected to the scheme on the grounds it would block out the cityscape and Edinburgh Castle, with one neighbour complaining as the scenic view is a “specific feature of our property”.

In the 1800s the site was home to Waterston's Printing Works and the Craigmill laundries, before Duncan's of Edinburgh, the chocolate company, established its factory.

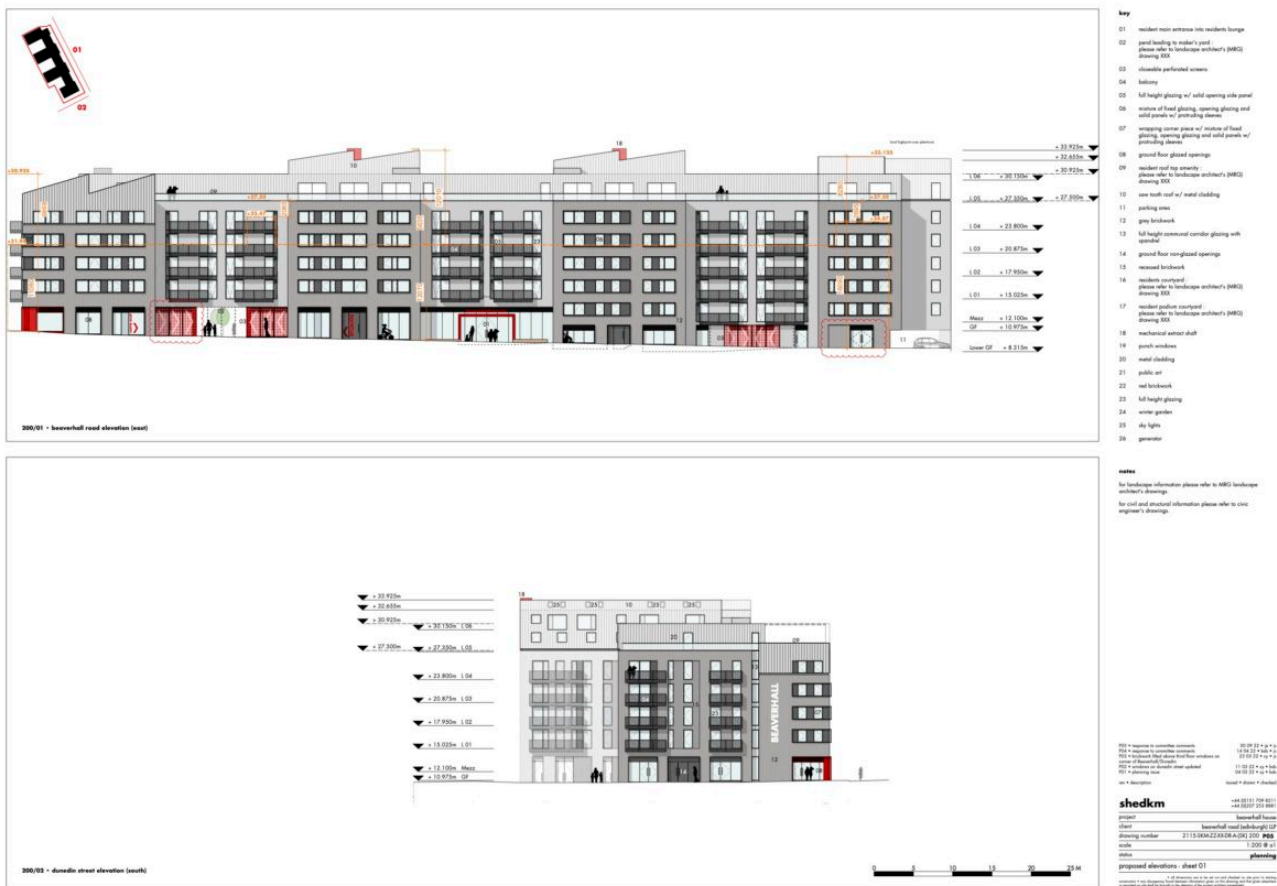
Beaverhall House as it stands today was built in the 1970s with chocolate manufactured there until the 90s. As well as providing studio space for creatives within Beaverhall Studios, the building currently hosts a range of businesses

including a Crossfit gym and axe-throwing rooms.

Councillors will meet on [Wednesday](#) to decide the future of the Beaverhall Road site, with planners recommending the committee to grant full permission for the residential-led development.



Artist's impression



Developers of the Powderhall site, HUB and [Bridges Fund Management](#) ('Bridges'), declared the red brick building "not fit for purpose" and pledged to invite artists, designers and small businesses back once the new space opens.

However, a message has been sent to the council from some of the current occupants to save the existing studios from being torn down.

The planning department received 36 objections to the plans, many of which came from the artists themselves.

"I've been running my business for the past six years from there," one wrote, adding it is "increasingly hard" for creatives to find studio space in Edinburgh.

"Over 25 small businesses operate from Beaverhall (including charities), all of whom have to find a new home in increasing dwindling spaces.

"It's a 6-10 year wait for artist spaces, and all of them are

going up in rent too.

“Beaverhall allows even the messiest and noisiest of creatives a space to work from.”

Another occupant of one of the creative spaces said there is “huge demand for more artists studios in this area already”.

They added despite a promise to assist existing tenants find a new studio and relocate them within the new hub, plans show “only a very small amount of studios will be part of the new overall development”.

A third echoed these concerns saying the part of the new site earmarked for artist space “will not be anywhere near appropriate to the level of need”.

“There is a desperate lack of space for creative practitioners to work in and run their businesses from in Edinburgh,” they wrote.

“And a lack of understanding and recognition that these business need a reasonable amount of space to operate and serve the local community. This development as it stands threatens a thriving long-standing integrated creative community in the heart of Edinburgh.”

Another called on the developer, Bridges, to “aid to rehouse us within the city that we serve” if plans get the go ahead.

They continued: “These plans do not in any way protect this community of local talent and businesses.

“As gentrification is rolled out all over Edinburgh, the development of brownfield land to luxury flats, student accommodation, cafe’s and the like, increasingly our culturally important endeavours are being marginalised and we are left desperately to seek out a space to house our practice.

“To lose this group of creatives would be a sad day for Edinburgh.”

Despite the local pleas, council planners back the proposals saying they have an “acceptable design, scale, height and density which are appropriate for the location”, adding there will be an “acceptable level of amenity achieved for existing and new residents”.

A statement in the planning application says: “A total of 205 residential dwellings are proposed in a mix of studio, one, two and three bedroom apartments of which 20% will be 3 bedroom apartments designed for families.

“The proposed development will also comprise of approximately 1,036sqm of commercial floorspace. Approximately 719sqm of this space will be for creative and business space which will replace approximately 700sqm of existing space within the building which is currently used for creative uses (hobby and business).

“The creative space proposed replaces the existing not fit for purpose space currently occupied by the artists with qualitatively better space which has been designed in close consultation with the tenant artists and creative businesses.”

The Development Management Committee is on the [council webcast](#) from 10am when the Christmas market permissions are also being debated.

by Donald Turvill

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