

# **Eyre Place plans for student housing referred to hearing**

**The public are to be given a final say on highly controversial plans to build more student flats in Canonmills.**

The application for 142 studio flats on the “complex” site of a recently-demolished builders’ merchant in Canonmills attracted nearly 400 objections from locals.

They argue the plot on Eyre Place is “totally unsuited” to student accommodation, with fears the six-storey block would tower over neighbouring properties and block out sunlight.

And councillors have stressed the need for more affordable housing to be delivered on on vacant land across the capital.

Planning officers at the city council have backed the proposals – which were split into two applications, one of which is for nine residential townhouses – and recommended councillors gave plans the green light.

However, members of the planning sub-committee agreed unanimously on Wednesday there should be a hearing for the applications, which will allow residents and the developers, CA Student Living/Novel Student, to address the committee before a final vote is held.

All four Inverleith councillors and Lothian MSP Foysof Choudhury also called for a hearing to allow the community’s voice to be heard.

In total, the council received 398 objections and 25 statements of support.

Eyre Place Residents Special Interest Group said: "A building of this scale will have highly detrimental impacts on the residents of Canonmills".

Furthermore, New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) said in its objection to planners: "NTBCC supports the principle of redevelopment on this site to provide residential accommodation including 'affordable' housing".

"We remain unconvinced that the current proposal for the northern section of the wider site is a suitable or supportable location for student housing (PBSA).

"Furthermore, the proposed height, massing and proximity of the proposed development have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing residents."

Committee convener Cllr Hal Osler said it was "quite a complicated application" and added the council should "give the residents a chance to have a say as well as the applicants a chance to answer some questions about this site".

Neil Gardiner, SNP, said: "Having been on the site visit with committee members it clearly is quite a complex site, the proposals are quite complex and it has raised a lot of issues locally."

Meanwhile Cllr Jo Mowat told councillors the plans "throw up a number of challenges that we're going to have to face as a committee going forward about how we squeeze in developments into already developed areas".

And the City Centre councillor added: "Given the number of people who have taken the opportunity to write in and state their concerns, there's a lot of issues here to get through and I'd be happier if that was done via a hearing."

Inverleith councillor Vicky Nicolson, said following the decision: "This is good news not only for local people, but for the whole city. For too long Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) has been approved on sites in residential areas, far enough from colleges and universities so they don't meet the 20 minute neighbourhood standards. This is not a criticism of students, who bring so much to our city and are often exploited by student housing landlords.

"I hope that the hearing will bring an opportunity to explore fully why the development has been divided into two which allows the developers to proceed without any requirement to build social housing on the site."

The Eyre Place residents group said: "'We are very pleased that the development management sub-committee have agreed to our requests for a hearing.

"We would like to see, in line with the council's own City plan, family homes, affordable homes and some green space.

"Although the developer changed the plan following pre-consultation, at its heart there is still a large, high density, student block in an inappropriate location.

"Now the Planning Department of the council have recommended that the planning application is granted. The community is disappointed and feels let down by the process to date as substantive concerns have been ignored.

"The landowner and Developer are making two separate planning applications to potentially exploit the system and subvert the wishes of neighbours and the wider community, however the community will continue to fight for better and more creative use of this site. Surely Edinburgh can do better than this!?"

"We will continue to oppose this application from a developer with no interest in the local community."

Foyso Choudhury Labour MSP for Lothian said: "I am delighted the Councillors on the Planning Development Sub Committee have all agreed a Hearing for this application which had almost 400 objections.

"I was so disappointed the Planning officers were recommending approval of the Eyre Place application.

"I contacted the Development Management Sub-Committee asking for a Hearing and I am delighted they have agreed to my request.

"The Hearing will give an opportunity for the concerns of the local residents and groups to be heard. I hope that following the Hearing, Councillors will reject the application.

"Having visited Eyre Place myself on 23 September 2022 and discussing with the residents of Rodney Place, I concur with their objections.

"Local residents and community groups object to the overall scale of the development, its overbearing presence blocking natural light for neighbours, and dense accommodation which would overburden local infrastructure and amenities.

"The massing and height would lead to an overdevelopment of the site, with the potential to result in adverse impacts on residential amenities.

"The proposal, overall, is not compatible with the character of the area neither in terms of the proposed use nor its design, the approach for which is incongruous and alien to the established urban form in terms of roofscape and appearance.

"I am also concerned that a storey of the student flats will be dedicated to 'entertainment' and karaoke booths and can understand why local residents are worried about noise levels."

by Donald Turvill

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