

Eyre Place decision is a success for community organisers

A Scottish Government Reporter appointed to consider the Eyre Place planning application has dismissed the developer's appeal and refused planning permission.

Nearly 400 objections to the planning application 22/0384/FUL (Student Accommodation) 72-74 Eyre Place were received from residents. The residents were largely concerned with the overall scale of the development, its overbearing presence blocking natural light for neighbours, and dense accommodation which would overburden local infrastructure and amenities.

Many local people felt the proposal was not compatible with the character of the area in terms of use or design and could also increase noise and disturbance due to plans that the top storey of the flats would be dedicated to 'entertainment' and karaoke booths.

On 11 January 2023, it was agreed by the council that a hearing would be held, so that local residents and developers could make their case in the City Chambers, before a final vote was held. But the developers, CA Europe Operating Company, appealed, and a Reporter, (a lawyer appointed by Scottish Government Ministers), instead was tasked to decide on the merits of the planning application.

Lothian MSP Foysol Choudhury raised deep concerns at the time about the fact that the public hearing would not take place and that the voices of local residents would not be heard, with local democracy being sidelined by the developer's appeal.

Mr Choudhury said: *"My constituents are overjoyed at this result and they should be congratulated for all their hard work in organising as a community, to ensure their concerns about this planning application were heard by elected officials."*

"Many of my constituents told me that the community was in despair, not just because of the proposed development but because they felt the decision to sideline the public hearing led to their voices being silenced."

"The developers attempted to bypass local democracy and failed in their appeal, which is of course a relief for my constituents, but we must learn lessons so that local democracy is not circumvented like this again in the future."

"Nevertheless, I am glad that this deeply unpopular planning application has been denied. It's great to see what can be achieved through the power of community!"

Local resident, Hannah Edwards, said: "Our community is delighted with the Reporter's decision. It reflects what was obvious to so many when we first saw this aggressive proposal 18 months ago. A development of this size on a constrained site would have had a really negative impact on the lives of so many. We're eternally grateful to each and every person who fought so hard to get the result we were so dearly hoping for."

