

Old bench is “new” street furniture on Balfour Street

Tracy Griffen, the owner of Griffen Fitness on Balfour Street, has accused the council of dumping an old bench outside her shop even though it was not included in the Trams to Newhaven plans.

The fitness instructor says that the bench is unsightly, and it does not comply with the Edinburgh Street Guidance (ESDG) as it is simply too high. The bench is 52 cm and exceeds the recommended height of between 45 and 50 cm.

Tracy runs her business both online and in person but many of her clients need access to the gym in a shop unit on Balfour Street. Now a bench has appeared outside within 2.7 metres of her front door within along with six bike stands. All the street furniture was installed a few weeks ago by a squad of workers at midnight.

The ESGD also provides that seating will not be placed in an area where it might obstruct the clear walking zone. The bench now obstructs the only access to Tracy’s shop as well as being close to other domestic front doors. There are already two Virgin boxes on the pavement (although these were not shown on the TTN plans).

Tracy told The Edinburgh Reporter that the Trams to Newhaven team had drawn up designs for how the corner would look, and she tried to be involved and interested over the years. [These](#)

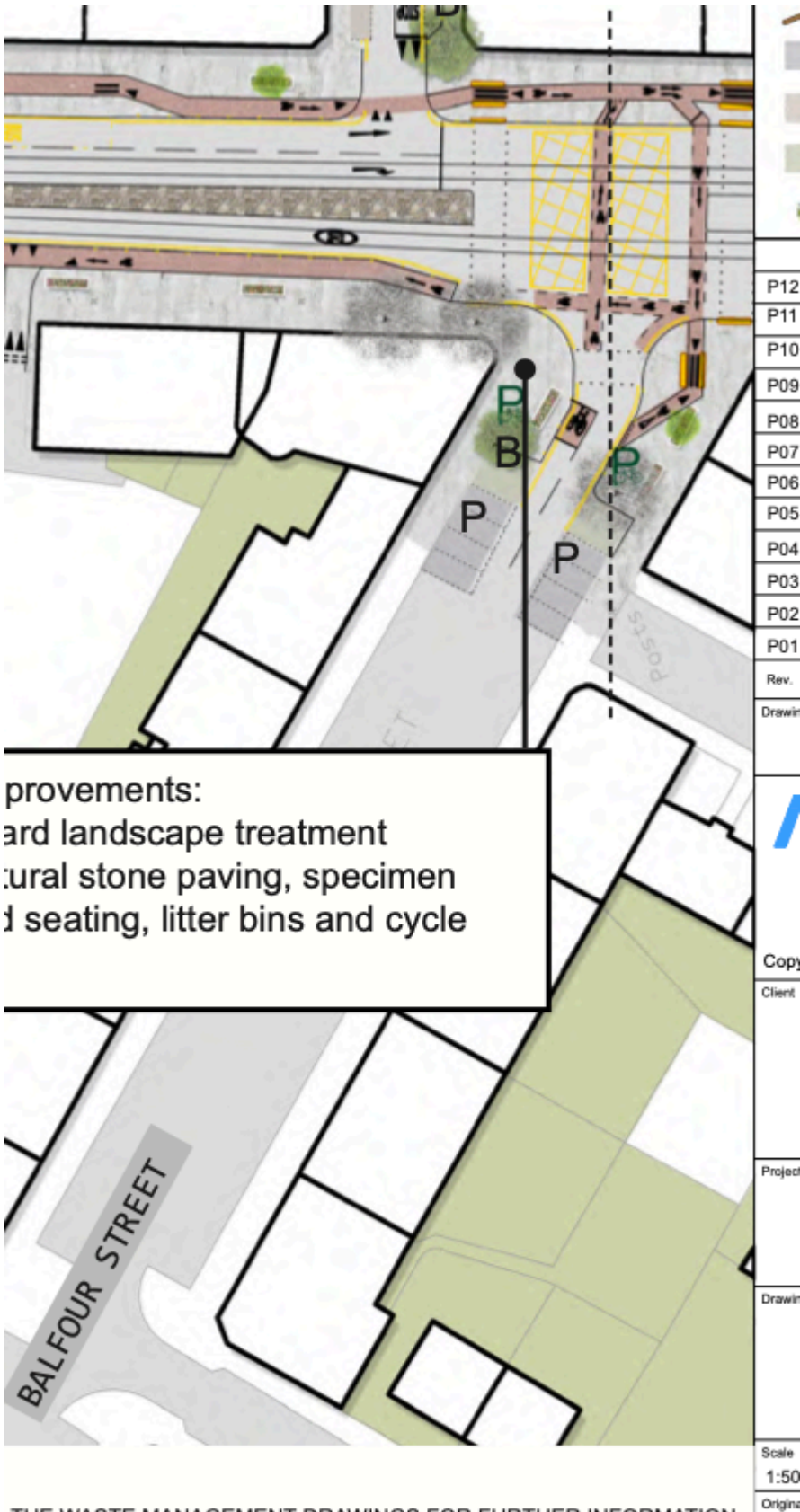
[can be viewed here.](#) There were plans to include planters in this area – but not benches. Now there are benches round the corner at the Balfour Street tram stop as well as this bench on Balfour Street itself.



Tracy Griffen is unhappy about the bench which has been placed outside her business on Balfour Street PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

On the extract of the plan below P stands for parking and B for bin. The green blobs are supposed to be trees in planters. There are no planters at this end of the street.

There is a planter on the side street nearby – with a rusted look and it remains surrounded by roadwork barriers.



Tracy said: "I live upstairs and I watched them installing all of this in the dark. There is a whole PDF of how street furniture should be grouped and there were no benches on the plan. I would just like them to do what they said they would do – and put in the planters, or really just put this bench

elsewhere. I'm just very disappointed that this corner looks as it does and there is now too much street clutter." She explained that there are "two Virgin boxes, a cycle path, concrete bench, 6 cycle racks, 2 street trees plus 1 planter and 4 redundant plastic barriers on nearby Arthur Street".

Tracy feels that there is no need for anyone to use a bench here and that the corner feels less safe as it is "badly lit as it is". The ESDG states that where there is no need for a rest then there should not be any seating. It also states that "The palette of street furniture should be aesthetically consistent with surrounding elements." Tracy questions the aesthetics of the Balfour Street bench – or as she calls it that "dirty concrete block". She continued: "It is certainly not world-class street furniture! My worry is that everything is going to be left as it is, which is awful and attracting vandalism already."

We found the matching pair to the Balfour Street bench on Iona Street where the Pilrig Wheels have been installed as part of the public realm. This too has been tagged by graffiti artists and already looks as though it is at the end of its life rather than freshly installed.



Bench on Iona Street



Bench on Iona Street

We asked Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener for a comment at the beginning of the week when the graffiti was still visible on the bench. He said then: "We've installed furniture like benches along the Trams to Newhaven route, which are an important part of the design, to allow people to rest, relax and spend time. They are particularly important for people with mobility problems.

"I am disappointed to see there is graffiti on the bench at Balfour Street and we'll arrange for this to be removed."

Tracy said she is pleased that the graffiti has been removed but thinks that the bench remains unsuitable.



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