

New planning applications at Eyre Place Lane will be considered by council

A council hearing on “new” plans for student flats at Eyre Place Lane will be held on 6 December 2023.

Residents of Eyre Place, Eyre Place Lane and Rodney Street remain opposed to the plans to build townhouses and student flats behind the tenements in which they live.

The developer has resubmitted plans not dissimilar to those which were refused permission by the government Reporter earlier in the year. The new plans reduce the tally by two townhouses and three student beds. This is an unusual case, but it is safe to say the residents have not run out of steam.

The plans were initially submitted at the beginning of the year and the appeal by the developer turned on “deemed refusal of the application in February 2023”.

The council had failed to consider the plans within a reasonable timescale. The developer lodged the appeal, perhaps hoping for the plans to be passed without any objectors having the opportunity to put their views forward in

a public forum. The opposition was fierce and hundreds of people had noted their objections online.

Then – for the developers – the unthinkable happened and the Reporter refused their application.

The company CA Ventures, which usually builds and develops student flats, regrouped and resubmitted their planning application which was a surprise for their neighbours. The developers say that the scheme has been revised in terms of design, scale and massing.

The application will now be considered afresh at a hearing of the Development Management Sub-Committee on Wednesday 6 December at 10am. The plans which the developer has resubmitted for 72-74 Eyre Place,, EH3 5EL include proposals to erect 7x townhouses with associated amenity space, access, cycle parking, car parking and landscaping – application no. 23/04046/FUL, and the erection of student accommodation with associated amenity space, access, cycle parking, disabled car parking and landscaping – application no. 23/04048/FUL.

The new application looks very similar to the first one and Vince Meiklejohn, who has until now been one of the leading lights on the campaign group, said there is one key difference. This time round the six storey block is one floor lower, and the number of flats has only reduced by three as the length of the building has been increased. Roof terraces are included in the plans as before.

Mr Meiklejohn said: "I think the general feeling having spoken to other neighbours and community groups is confused and outraged, actually. Obviously, the reporter's judgement pleased everyone, and the door was left slightly open, but we're astounded that this has come back in this format.

"I guess the hope was that the landowner Daltons would speak to some other developer and come back with some ideas on residential housing across the whole site in line with the

original city plan, which hasn't been adopted yet.

"CA have again attempted a land grab as the townhouse plans show the plans go outwith the legal boundary and therefore cause access issues for the garages at the bottom of the Lane and the Yard.

"This was again documented by the Reporter when permission for the previous version of the townhouses was refused. It was noted that if permission had been granted, which it wasn't, it would be a condition that there would be no access issues for the Yard or neighbours and that the proposal was unacceptable."

Scott Baxter, another resident, will appear to speak for the residents at the council hearing. He will speak mainly to the part of the plans which deals with the townhouses and another member of the group will speak to the proposal for PBSA.

He said: "There are around 50 more objectors than there were to the original applications. Some 450 people have lodged objections. We were quite surprised by this and ready to accept that people might have lost impetus, but we were all very heartened to realise it was even more of an issue for residents.

"Our core action group feels that the developer has made as little change as possible, really just to incorporate any issues the Reporter mentioned. And after the hearing on 6 December we fully expect it could go back to the Reporter if it is refused on any basis. We get a feeling that this will keep going round and round until they get the decision they want.

"It is quite clear they are not trying to get the community on side in any way. They're just trying to push through this proposal with little effort for maximum gain."

The Yard is a Scottish charity supporting disabled children

and young people aged 0-25 through adventure play. Celine Sinclair CEO of The Yard which has premises adjacent to the site said: "We are bitterly disappointed to learn that the potential for a major development of this nature is still being considered. The impact on local families has been well voiced and we have grave concerns in relation to health and safety of our children and families at The Yard. The site would be much better suited to residential housing. We are hopeful that planners will see sense."

There has been an amount of political support for the residents.

Cllr Vicky Nicolson said: "I will be attending the hearing to represent my constituents in and around Eyre Place Lane. The new student accommodation proposal is only a slightly modified version of the earlier proposal which was rejected. The Scottish Government Reporter, on 14 June 2023, concluded that the 142 unit plan should be refused on the grounds of design and amenity and sense of place and scale. Of course, this leads members of the Eyre community to whom I have spoken to, to feel the developer has little interest in proper community engagement or the local impact of such a development."

Lothians MSP, Miles Briggs said: "There are a number of reasons why the proposed new development at Eyre Place would not be appropriate.

"The proposed site would include a high density of student flats which would not be suitable to local residents or for The Yard.

"As well as the potential for increased noise and disturbances, the development of the site at Eyre Place Lane could impact access for ambulances to the Yard, which are

required from time to time. The previous application for planning for the development on Eyre Place Lane was rejected, so it is disappointing that a new application has been received.”

Foysol Choudhury, MBE, MSP, who has supported the residents previously, said: “The DPEA Reporter appointed by the Scottish Government refused permission just months ago, on the grounds of design and amenity, sense of place and scale.

“It is very concerning that the same developer has put in another application which has been altered minimally and may even have a more negative impact than the previous design.

“I have seen for myself what a crowded area it is and how narrow the lane is, already having a plenty of traffic, both motor and pedestrian, going to the Yard play centre at the end of the lane.

“I will continue to support my constituents ahead of the Council hearing on the 6th December and represent my constituents’ concerns in their campaign for better community consultation on these plans.”

