

Student flats at Jock's Lodge given approval on appeal

Alumno Group has been granted planning permission for the construction of what the developers describe as “high-quality purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA)” on London Road at Jock's Lodge following a successful appeal.

Alumni say the development will help “meet increasing demand from a growing student population and take pressure off local housing, while rejuvenating the area economically”.

The Scottish Government Reporter has approved the project, which involved community engagement programme organised by the PBSA specialist Alumno and their planning consultants Stantec. The City of Edinburgh Council refused the development in June 2023.

Colin Lavety, Planning Director at Stantec said: “This included two public consultation events and one online, together with our attendance at a local fair.

“All comments were carefully considered and fed back into the final submission. This included reducing the proposed number of storeys from eight to seven and shortening the parapet in response to concerns over the building's height.”

The development will house 191 students in a mix of mix of single bedrooms with shared kitchens and larger studio-style

bedrooms. The facilities are designed to provide the best environment for both socialising and work, including a ground floor lounge, study, gym, communal spaces and laundry. The residence will be car free, with more than the recommended cycle storage space provided, along with a bike hire scheme, and the developers hope this will help minimise environmental impact.

On the ground floor the space will be for commercial use including a new local food and drink store, replacing the neighbouring Limelight public house, although under the same ownership. Alumni say that local businesses on the site agreed to its sale because current facilities were “no longer commercially viable”.

The site was once home to the original Jock’s Lodge inn, dating back to at least 1650, which was the first stop where the Edinburgh-to-London stagecoach would change horses. It was occupied by the Willow public house, which has relocated to another part of the city, with the owners planning to trade in both locations until redevelopment begins.

Edinburgh-based architect Stellan-Brand designed the new building, which features two interlocking wings, “softened” by a facade that curves away at London Road.

Design Director Paul Stellan said: “The playful composition nods to the characterful neighbours and acts as a transition from the more rigorous approach taken on the street elevations fronting bedrooms. “Playing with scale, through relief and layering, we’ve aimed to break down the form, creating a visually arresting corner that enriches the site and setting.”

In line with its commitment to supporting the arts by integrating local works into its projects, Alumno will partner with Arts Consultant Matthew Jarratt to curate site-specific sculpture and text commissions by Edinburgh-based artist Kenny

Hunter, a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. The theme of the art will be travel to commemorate Jack's Lodge. Students from Edinburgh College of Art will also be given the opportunity to make work for the atrium.

Alumno Managing Director David Campbell said: "We are very pleased with the Reporter's decision.

"We are now focused on delivering a development that we believe will contribute to the overall improvement of the local area, and we remain committed to engaging with the community as we move forward.

"I'd like to thank the local community for their valuable input to date, along with our partners Stantec and Stallan-Brand for their hard work and commitment to the project. It will provide much-needed local PBSA and help rejuvenate this historic site economically and socially."

Local SNP councillor Danny Aston, who has been campaigning against the students flats proposal, said: "I'm so gutted for the local residents who drove forward the campaign to Save Jock's Lodge – volunteers who worked tirelessly in the interests of the local community. But most of all, I'm very concerned about the impact of this plan, if built in its present form, on the local community through the damage it will cause to the Jock's Lodge local centre – the closest thing we have in this area to a high street.

"I find it very hard to see how the Reporter has come to the conclusion that this plan doesn't harm local retail provision at Jock's Lodge sufficiently to warrant dismissing the appeal, quite apart from the other issues like the gargantuan size. I am entirely open to having further conversations with the developer, even at this late stage, around any way that their plan can be made more acceptable to our community, and address at least some of the concerns that local people have raised."

