



The Community Council represents the views of local residents to Edinburgh City Council

New Town and Broughton Community Council

Annual Report May 2019

Planning Sub-committee.

Convenor: Richard Price

The Planning Sub-committee continued to follow the development of the proposed **IMPACT performance venue**, located to the rear of 36 St Andrew Square); the development team presented at the June meeting. NTBCC, as a statutory consultee, submitted a representation with a neutral stance, as whilst supporting the principle of the proposal, we were concerned as to size (footprint), height and the proximity to the last remaining tenement in St James Square. An amendment to the application was submitted in February 2019 reflecting comments submitted. NTBCC made a further brief representation on the amended scheme - maintaining a neutral stance given the impact on nearby residents. The application was scheduled for a hearing at the April Development Management Sub-committee.

The scheme for **The Royal Bank of Scotland site on Dundas St. / Fettes Row** which had been vigorously discussed at several NTBCC meetings throughout the previous year was suddenly withdrawn; with the site then being put up for sale in the Autumn of 2018. NTBCC met with one of the potential bidders (now believed to be the successful party) but NTBCC await formal confirmation of sale and details of the required public consultation and future planning applications.

In August there was a presentation by CEC on planned development at **Powderhall (the ex- CEC Waste Transfer site)** and adjoining bowling greens. After several public consultations, a Draft Place Brief was produced in December. NTBCC and Councillors were very much in favour of this methodology and approach to a large scale planning development where local communities were involved at an early stage and concerns or potential difficulties could be raised and managed before the application became a reality. The CEC Planning Committee endorsed the Place Brief in December 2018.

The planning committee have also been involved with many other smaller applications, one of which has been a persistent Agenda item - linked planning applications regarding properties at **Baxter's Place** and **Blenheim Place** (ex RBS branch) which have been variously through refusal, enforcement, Reporter, withdrawal and resubmittal throughout the year. NTBCC has been glad to support the

tenacious hard work of local residents in pursuing these applications through the system. A new scheme involving a retain use was brought forwards for Blenheim Place, which had the support of both the CC and local residents. The long term use for Baxter's Place remains uncertain – currently the subject of both a judicial review and further planning applications for a 'boutique hotel' as well as the rear outshot being a self-contained (?) residential unit. We continue to remain involved in supporting local residents in scrutinising these.

The Planning Convenor also had the thankless task of preparing the brief for NTBCC as part of the Coalition (together with The Cockburn Association and Edinburgh World Heritage) convened for **the Inquiry regarding the ORHS hotel proposals** in September / October and being a Witness for the Coalition. Currently, the Reporters are finalising their submission to Scottish Ministers with comments being sought on the (untimely) revision to Historic Environment Scotland's policies regarding development on important buildings such as these. NTBCC await a final decision from the Scottish Government later in the summer of 2019.

Other activities included an initial objection to the proposal for significant demolition of the **Canon Mill building** at 1-3 Canon Street and a subsequent meeting with the applicants prior to their submission of an amended and improved planning application which was subsequently approved as well as attending site visit on the '**Gleneagles hotel' proposal in St Andrews Square** and the **Johnnie Walker Experience** being proposed for the former House of Fraser's building on Princes Street / Hope Street.

Finally - it is worth noting a recent change to the CEC process for determining applications by **delegated authority**, increasing the number of objections from 7 to 21 to enable the application to be put in front of the Development Management Sub-committee. However, this change does give more weight to a representation submitted by the CC.

Transport Sub-committee

Convenor: Allan Jack

In April 2018, a presentation by CEC '**Trams to Newhaven**' team was cancelled at the last minute and members expressed deep concern about CEC's commitment to engaging on the project. It was agreed to promote liaison with neighbouring CCs. NTBCC later joined a formal collaboration with neighbouring CCs (**Community Councils Together on Trams - CCTT**) which launched on 29 June. The Chair and the transport convenor attended the inaugural meeting. NTBCC responded to the '**Trams to Newhaven**' consultation in November, welcoming progress but seeking more information on the future of bus services and stressing that no use should be made of the "triangle" at Picardy Place which would prevent the possibility of its eventual incorporation into the public space in front of the Cathedral. There was a presentation and discussion on Picardy Place at the May meeting and the transport convenor attended a workshop on Elm Row in June which explored possible designs for the area.

There was engagement with the landscape architects for the **George Street and First New Town redesign** proposal in July. We suggested a priority for residents was to ensure there was no traffic dispersal into the Second New Town. On design, we argued for an uncluttered streetscape, stricter control of the appropriateness of events held in the street, and preservation of symmetry

particularly regarding the statues sited at nodal points in the grid structure which pin the whole design together. Further thoughts were submitted following a well-attended Stakeholder session in November 2018.

Later in July NTBCC responded to the consultation on the **London St/Drummond Place** crossing favouring the 2nd option put forward by CEC. This was subsequently adopted but NTBCC's suggestion of incorporating a pedestrian island was not.

CEC Parking and Traffic Regulation Manager Gavin Graham attended the September meeting. NTBCC is concerned that CEC proposes significant increases in the number of parking spaces in the NTBCC area, details of which were not available when NTBCC originally supported the **Parking Action Plan**. NTBCC believes this could be highly detrimental to road safety and air quality, and runs counter to the CEC's stated aim to reduce private vehicle journeys and make environmental improvements. The plan also includes a reduction in residents' spaces in favour of shared spaces for which residents compete with vehicles from outside the zone. The introduction of **Sunday parking controls** in the city centre is also likely to displace vehicles into the NTBCC area. NTBCC is extremely concerned about the combined effects of these plans and will pursue these issues with CEC in the year ahead.

The September meeting also heard a presentation from Daisy Narayanan, project lead for **Connecting our City, Transforming our Places (CCTP)**. In November NTBCC responded to consultations on Open Streets, the 'Trams to Newhaven' proposal and also the CCTP document. On the latter, NTBCC supported the general ambition of CCTP to reduce traffic and improve air quality but stressed that it would be counter-productive if the measures resulted in increased traffic, parking and pollution in areas adjoining the centre. NTBCC said that preservation of existing public realm was more important than developing new spaces.

Responding to concerns about speeding following the introduction of the **20 mph limit**, it was agreed in December to pass suggestions to Police Scotland for streets in the NTBCC zone in which to hold speed checks.

There was vigorous debate about **the Final Business Case for the Tram Extension** in the run-up to its approval by CEC in February/March and NTBCC supported the statement issued by Community Councils Together on Trams.

Licensing Sub-Committee

Convenor: Jonathan Finn

During the year, where licensed premises were adjacent to residential property, we continued to oppose the **removal of the licensing condition** requiring these premises to ensure no noise was audible in neighbouring property. We attended Licensing Board meetings where we could to make this case. During 2018/9 the board has upheld our suggestion in these cases.

We have also been approached by the public with specific licensing problems, and we try to help where we can. During the year this has included noise from pub customers and a problem with short term lettings. We were also approached by someone wishing to apply for change of use from a retail use to licensed premises that was keen to demonstrate to us that they would not be a problem for local residents, and we met with them to discuss their plans.

In terms of **new legislation and guidance**, we provided a full response to Edinburgh's Licensing Board's consultation on their Statement of Licensing Policy. In particular we provided detailed information on their consultation on **overprovision**, and were pleased to see that nearly the whole of the city centre has now been classed as an area of overprovision – as this makes it difficult for licensees to open new premises or increase the capacity of their existing premises.

We also requested that the removal of the inaudibility condition be reviewed. In the past, this condition had made it much easier for residents to have their noise complaints treated seriously but the Board approved the removal on a case by case basis a couple of years ago. We welcomed the Board's proposal to carry out a review of this change as we do not believe it has encouraged live music in Edinburgh, which was its original intention.

We also responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on the **Licensing Procedure Regulations** making the point that the current process was opaque and that it was difficult for the public to find out about licence variations. We have not yet seen what changes to legislation are proposed. We continue to argue for improved neighbour notification and access to documents relating to license applications and variations, as the current system seems to be heavily stacked in favour of the licensing trade and against residents.

Short term lettings in Edinburgh remain a concern for many residents and we are keen to see a full licensing policy put in place in the city for short term letting such as Airbnb. We wrote to support the MSP trying to get this legislation passed.

Environmental Sub-Committee

Convenor: Lewis Press

On environment, we continued to contribute in the early part of the year to the council's **Waste & Street Cleansing forum**, and have recently urged the council to reconvene the regular forum meetings in order to make CEC aware of residents' views of the waste collection and recycling service.

Another issue that arose during the year was the **removal of trees from East Princes Street Gardens (EPSG)** as part of the re-development of the access to the **National Gallery of Scotland (NGS)**. The re-development had been briefly considered during the wider planning application, but the scale of tree removal was not fully understood at that stage, and the process by which it was approved was opaque.

NTBCC councillors met with the Director of NGS to express our concerns about this, and a constructive discussion ensued. We have been assured that plans for partial replacement of the trees and finalisation of the NGS access area in EPSG will ensure the restoration of the area which is currently not an attractive feature of the city centre.

The committee has investigated the management of trees in Edinburgh more generally, and discussed this matter with CEC officers; we continue to investigate this topic, and to engage with CEC as required. One particular instance of concern is the **use of public space**, generally green spaces, for events such as music festivals, and including the Christmas market in EPSG. We have expressed our concern about overuse of green spaces for these purposes in comments on permit applications and in wider discussions with CEC officers.

Communications Sub-Committee

Convenor : Simon Holledge

The committee are looking at ways of **raising the profile** of the community council — both offline and online — so more of our residents realise we exist, understand what we do, and know how they can approach us.

Offline, we are producing notices to be displayed on all available area noticeboards, to tell people when and where we are meeting.

Online, we are looking at ways of making the **website more accessible** for residents, while concentrating our social media activity on twitter — increasingly used as the bulletin board for public affairs in our city — while curtailing our Facebook participation.

A **multi-use, scalable logo** has been designed, which we hope can be adopted by the NTBCC, for consistent use on noticeboards, notices, letters, the website and social media.

From now on, the various passwords used by NTBCC will be updated, collated and presented annually to the Chair for safekeeping.

Given our current age-profile, the committee is considering **how to increase involvement** of both under-40s and schoolchildren, in community council affairs.