

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

From: Annick Gaillard,  
On behalf of NTBCC Planning Committee

31<sup>st</sup> May 2024

To: Conor MacGreevy,  
The City of Edinburgh Council,  
Waverley Court,  
East Market Street,  
Edinburgh, EH8 8BG

**24/01889/FUL | Erection of new 5-bedroom family home on land between Greenside Parish Church and No. 12 Blenheim Place. | Land 45 Metres East Of 12 Blenheim Place Edinburgh**

Dear Conor,

Following the discussion of this application at the New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) Public Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024, and subsequently at the Regent, Royal, Carlton Terraces and Mews Association (RRCTMA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024,

**NTBCC wishes to OBJECT to the proposed development.**

The proposed development is located on a strip of land that is attached to the site of the Greenside office building at 12 Blenheim Place. It is made to exclusively face the garden grounds of the Greenside Church (category A-listed), but also the church officer's cottage (category A-listed).



Overall, the proposed development was acknowledged to be innovative and elegant in design... when considered in isolation.

The departure from the initial design during the pre-application stage was noted:



While the proposed design responded to some concerns raised by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) with regards to impact on the setting of the Greenside Parish Church, we consider that the revised scheme – as submitted through the current application – doesn't go far enough to alleviate material concerns however.

On page 8 of the Design Access Statement (part 1 of 2), it is stated: *There is no planting on the site so the site cannot be described as part of the "established planting around the church"*

This is fundamentally incorrect.

Until 2017, this was a wooded area with a number of mature trees and a significant amount of undergrowth. The Council approved the removal of four mature trees (17/04500/TCO) due to potential concerns for their impact on the structural integrity of the surrounding retaining walls. In fact all trees, including one shown to be retained in the plans, plus all undergrowth was removed. This is therefore not a piece of disused land as described in the planning application but a rare area of long standing urban woodland. Historic maps show this as woodland from at least 1851.

Below is a picture from 1883 taken of Greenside Church from Blenheim Place showing a wooded area where the new development is proposed. This is very consistent with the principles that Playfair established for the area which was intended to bring the countryside into the urban environment (or for the classically inclined *rus in urbe*).



This is corroborated by this extract from the Statement of Special Interest on the HES listing:

*“The church is also very important in the context of Playfair's Calton scheme, contributing to and continuing its Picturesque aims by terminating the view down Royal Terrace with a scene reminiscent of a rural parish church surrounded by trees”*

Following the granting of the application **all the trees on the site were cut down, 19 in total, not just the four trees specifically referred to in the application as being of ‘concern’**. There were drawings submitted with 17/04500/TCO showing that the tree canopy covered the whole site.

The removal of the trees fronting the railings we assume was necessary, firstly to remove any possibility of a formal Tree Protection Order (TPO) being applied even though it sits within a Conservation area; and secondly, perhaps to carry out a topographical survey there to map the features, elevation, and boundaries of the site prior to developing the detailed proposal?

Whichever the reasons, it is clear that this application consists in a proposed **development on woodland**.

Further, it is stated that there are no neighbours but as referred earlier, there is a category A-listed house within the church grounds, which until recently was occupied by a church official. We understand that it is now or will be shortly vacant following the recent closure of the church, but the house is intended to remain in residential use.

Not only is the proposed development made to fully face the church's garden grounds and its residential cottage within it, but all the living space also sits higher than the boundary wall.



This would adversely **impact on the privacy and amenity** of future occupants of that existing house within the church grounds.

Perversely, the currently pleasant walk up (and view of Calton Hill beyond the church's garden grounds) on the street side would now meet a faceless wall that doesn't engage with the street, unlike the rest of Blenheim Place / Royal Terrace – as showed in the below illustration.



Further, the building does not respect the **historical planning line** where all buildings are set back from the railings as specified by William Playfair in his original design for this area of the New Town in 1820-24. Both the adjacent later buildings, Greenside Church (1837-39) and the office building at 12 Blenheim Place (1989) also respected this historical building line.

The height of the wall running along Blenheim Place especially at the west end will be much higher than the listed railings and as such impact on the setting of the railings but also block one of the few views of Calton Hill from this side of the hill. The **views of Calton Hill** are an integral part of the designation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site and therefore should be protected.

Finally, the windowless aspect on the street side means that the 'façade' would be a magnet for anti-social behaviour – namely a giant canvas for graffiti artists.

There are other practical considerations, given the location on a fairly steep hill and the loss of green-space which would have served to capture rainfall. NTBCC was also alerted about the presence of Japanese Knotweed. This is a highly invasive species which we understand the owner would have a legal responsibility to eradicate, before any soil could be removed from the site.

In summary, there is no doubt that this has been a carefully considered application in terms of its appearance. However, NTBCC is unable to support it at this proposed location.

We trust that these comments are helpful in the determination of this application.

Annick Gaillard  
On behalf of the New Town & Broughton Community Council