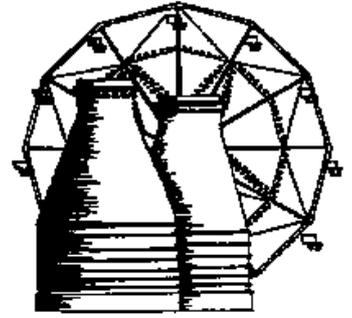


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter – Autumn 2014



Plaque to William Hay Unveiled



.Picture: Celia Butterworth

William Hay, architect, 1818 – 1888, is now commemorated by a blue plaque at 18 Brunstane Road North, better known as Rabbit Hall. The plaque, funded by a Scotmid Community Grant to Portobello Amenity Society, was unveiled on 1st June by Graham Philip, then manager of Portobello Scotmid. Born in Peterhead, Hay gained his architectural experience in Edinburgh before moving to work with George Gilbert Scott in London. Hay later moved to Canada where he was responsible for the

construction of Scottish-style Gothic churches. He was an international architect: the cathedral in Hamilton, Bermuda is considered to be his most significant building. On his return to Scotland Hay was commissioned by provost William Chalmers for restoration work in St Giles cathedral, in particular the removal of partitions which divided the nave into several parts for different congregations. Whilst William Chalmers is celebrated in St Giles by a window (and mention in the guide-book), Hay is celebrated only by a hidden bronze relief in the unused north entrance. Hay built Rabbit Hall, Hamilton Street, now Brunstane Road North, Portobello where he died in 1888.

Plaques and Signs

Since PAS is no longer represented on Portobello Community Council, the joint Signs and Plaques group is no longer a sub-group of the Community Council but is independent. It continues its work maintaining the present information boards throughout Portobello and raising the funds to erect new boards and new building plaques. The information boards will however continue to be owned by PCC who will also continue to pay half of the cost of insuring them, PAS paying the other half. The group is also working with Edinburgh College students who are carrying out a project to photograph all of the building plaques throughout Portobello.

Threat to Brunstane Green Belt

PAS has objected to the proposal in the Second Edinburgh Local Development Plan to remove land at Brunstane from the Green Belt and to designate the land for housing development of up to 1330 residential units. This land is owned by EDI, the development arm of the Council, and as the Council is seeking to change the designation of the land, the society believes that there is a conflict of interest here.

The society also believes that this land should remain within the Green Belt. There is a real danger of coalescence between Musselburgh and Edinburgh and, as Edinburgh's Green Belt is at its narrowest at this point, PAS believes that the Green Belt here should be strengthened, not weakened.

Should the proposal be granted, the settings of both Brunstane House and Newhailes, two of the most important country houses on the outskirts of Edinburgh, both in architectural and historical terms, would be damaged should so many new houses be built in their immediate vicinity. The settings of both houses have gradually been eroded and diminished by modern developments over recent years and it is therefore vitally important that the rural surroundings that do remain should be protected. The fields at Brunstane were the site of the Scottish camp at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547 and are therefore of great archaeological importance.

Portobello Amenity Society is also concerned about the massive traffic implications for the whole area should this proposal be granted. Milton Road East is already an extremely busy road. It will become even more so once the new Portobello High School is built on Portobello Park. The site of the proposed access road to the development area, to the east of Portobello cemetery, is extremely narrow and at present completely unsuitable as an access road for 1330 residential units, especially if, as proposed, it is also a major bus route to Queen Margaret University.

The implications of the proposal on the village of Newcraighall will also be enormous. Newcraighall Road has a high volume of traffic at present, acting as it does as the main eastern access road to Kinnaird Park. The village would face impossible traffic problems should this proposal be granted.

The period for representations closed on 3rd October. All representations will be considered by the Council's Planning Committee in February which will decide whether any modifications need to be made to the plan. Any unresolved representations will be submitted to Scottish Ministers who will appoint a Reporter to examine the development plan in March and decide whether or not to recommend any changes to the plan. This process concludes in September and the finalised plan will be adopted by the Council at the start of 2016.

The Baileyfield Site, Portobello High Street.

PAS has objected to a planning application in principle to erect a retail store with associated parking and a residential development of 219 units at the above site.

The society believes that the application is contrary to the North West Portobello Development Brief which states that no new retail provision, other than a purely local 'corner shop' facility, is envisaged within the area. Given the need for new housing in Edinburgh and the requirement for the Council to identify suitable development land, the society believes it would be more appropriate for the whole site to be developed for housing. This would also decrease the need to develop so much Green Belt agricultural land as is proposed at Brunstane.

The society believes that the erection of a retail store on this site would have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of Portobello High Street. The independent high street traders operate on a very small profit margin and a new retail store on this site could put several traders out of business. There is already a 'Scotmid' and a 'Sainsbury's' within Portobello itself as well as 12 supermarkets within a radius of a few miles of the town centre.

The erection of a retail store at this location would create considerable traffic problems for Portobello High Street. The applicant proposes the creation of a 'ghost' island to make it easier for traffic turning right off the

high street into the store car park but this will not by itself solve all of the traffic problems that will be generated by this proposal.

The traffic assessment lodged with the application states that the kerb line on Portobello High Street will be realigned opposite the entrance to the store to enable the high street to be widened at this point but no mention is made of how this will affect the space at the bus stop on the North side of the high street where bus drivers change over.

The applicant has asked for double the number of car parking spaces normally sought for a retail store of this size. Does this indicate that the applicant expects a far greater number of store customers to travel by car than is normally the case? Will there therefore be even more pressure on the surrounding road network than would normally be the case for a store of this size? The traffic assessment also mentions that it is predicted that the Kings Road junction will operate over capacity once all of the residential units are built.

The society also objected to the proposed use of red brick for both the retail store and the residential units. The developer's argument is that red brick would tie in with the former power station and the nearby conservation area. To argue that the main building material should match a long demolished building which once stood opposite the site is a strange argument to make. It is also erroneous to say that the choice of red brick will match the conservation area when by far the main building material of the conservation area is either red or grey sandstone.

Although the present application is for planning permission in principle, the society wished to express its disappointment at the uninspiring designs proposed both for the store and the blocks of flats which will be part of the residential development. We had hoped for a higher quality of architecture for this important gateway site.

PAS does wish to see the Baileyfield site developed and recognises the need for more housing, especially affordable housing, to be built in Edinburgh. We are concerned however that this proposal will affect the viability and vitality of Portobello Town Centre and will generate considerable traffic problems for the immediate road network. We would also hope that, if this application is granted, a higher quality of design and architecture will be evident in the full planning application which will require to be lodged as the next step in the planning process.

Environmental Issues

PAS regularly liaises with the Council's East Neighbourhood Environment Team, and with its Planning Department regarding various issues such as broken pavements, blocked drains, unauthorised satellite dishes, road repairs and unauthorised signage. We have had meetings with the Council concerning the new signage on the Promenade and the repair and updating of the fingerposts throughout Portobello. Solid roller shutters, the state of the Figgate Burn, recycling bins, missing manhole covers and unauthorised shop fronts are some of the other issues we have taken up with the Council.

Chevron markings were promised at the junction of side roads with the Prom, to provide a safe space where pedestrians can check for approaching bikes before stepping out. The 'Look Right' and 'Look Left' signs were painted in error. Proper markings are still awaited.

Some puddles on the Prom were filled in earlier this year, but a large one at the foot of James Street was missed. PAS pointed this out and attention was promised.

Another issue is the uneven pavement beside the large refuse bins at the foot of James Street. This was brought to our notice by a PAS member and is a hazard for nearby residents when they go to deposit their refuse. We reported this some time ago and it is apparently on the Council's list of issues that need to be dealt with. Let's hope no one trips and breaks an ankle before this is done!

Other Matters

Over the course of the year, PAS monitored 92 planning applications for the area and commented on 13. As with last year, rear extensions and attic conversions formed the majority of these. As described above, PAS also submitted a response to the new Edinburgh Local Development Plan and objected to the proposed development on the Baileyfield site.

PAS has had discussions with the Council regarding new planting in Abercorn Park and the replacement of railings at Rosefield Park and Abercorn Park as well as the maintenance of the window boxes at the Town Hall. We also submitted a response to the proposal for a new pedestrian crossing at Abercorn Terrace.

The revised and updated Portobello Architecture Heritage Trail leaflet, a joint project with Portobello Heritage Trust, is still proving very popular. This is available free in several local outlets.

PAS and the Portobello Heritage Trust continue to work together to try to get the Council to put back the municipal clock they removed from the Baptist Church building some years ago and which the Council has spent £50,000 restoring. We have had one meeting with Council officials to explore what can be done to facilitate the clock's return and another meeting is currently being organised.

PAS continues to be represented at meetings of the Edinburgh Civic Forum, which is an umbrella group of amenity societies and residents' groups throughout Edinburgh.

We continue to hold regular monthly meetings to which all members of the public are welcome. If you would like to become involved in any of the work that PAS does, please do let us know.

PAS Members' Email Addresses Request

Many PAS members have already given us their email address. This has been invaluable in enabling us to contact members quickly and easily about major planning applications, such as the one for the Baileyfield site, and for alerting members to important planning consultation such as the proposed Second Edinburgh Local Development Plan and the proposal to take land at Brunstane out of Edinburgh's Green Belt. We felt that the Baileyfield application was of such importance that all PAS members needed to be made aware of it and of the ways in which they could submit a response of their own. We therefore contacted all our members, whose email address we did not have, by post encouraging them to participate in the consultation. This we are happy to do for major planning applications but our task would be far easier and far less expensive to do if more of our members could give us their email address.

If you have not already given us your email address, we would be most grateful if you could contact, preferably by email, our secretary, Dr. Peter Wraith. His email address is: P.K.Wraith@btinternet.com

Local Business Support for P.A.S.

Please use our excellent local businesses, especially those which help the society to make Portobello a pleasant place to live and to work. The society is very grateful to the following businesses for their continued support as associate business members: -

Robin Bond, CA; Findlay Meats; Brian Forde, Optician; Gordons, Butchers; Joppa Turrets, Guest House; H.S.Kidd, Chemist; McIntyre Lewis, Solicitors & Estate Agents; J & S Penman, Vets; Portobello Library; Jas. Scott, Funeral Directors; Shapes Hair.

Please support our local businesses, especially those who themselves support our local community.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year April 2014 – March 2015 are now due. If you have not already paid for this year, please complete this slip and send it to:

Dr P.K.Wraith, 3 East Brighton Crescent, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 1LR.

Name:

Address:

I enclose my subscription of:-

£5 per household (normal)

£2 per household (retired/unwaged)

(Please tick as appropriate)