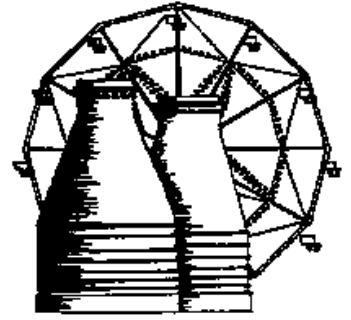


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter – Autumn 2015



PAS Response to the SESPlan Consultation

PAS has submitted a response to the consultation being carried out by SESPlan – The Strategic Development Planning Authority for Edinburgh and South East Scotland. This policy will determine future local development plans for the area. PAS is concerned that Edinburgh's Green Belt is not being given the protection that it needs. The Council's 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 being a case in point.



Yachts from Portobello Sailing and Kayaking Club, which has enlivened the Promenade at Bath Street.

Picture: Brenda Molony

In our response to SESPlan we argued that one of Edinburgh's biggest economic draws is its attractive and historic setting and that the economic benefits of Edinburgh as an historic city, whose setting is enhanced and protected by the Green Belt, are not given sufficient recognition by their principles of development. We also argued that the development of brownfield sites should come before any development of greenfield sites, which are important to public health and also add to the city's attractions.

We argued that the only part of the Green Belt that might be developed should be along corridors with good public transport and with easy access to the A1, the Borders Railway and other rail networks.

We were also concerned that the SESPlan document, which is currently out for consultation, made no mention of preserving the Green Belt, which is crucial to the character and integrity of Edinburgh. The plan seems only to be concerned with considering the interests of business and commercial users, either existing or potential, and not with those people who actually live here now.

The Baileyfield Site, Portobello High Street

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that PAS had 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 was concerned that the erection of a retail store at this location would have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of the high street, the independent traders in particular. We were also concerned that the erection of a retail store would create considerable traffic problems for Portobello High Street. In this application, Aldi had asked for double the number of car parking spaces that was usual for a retail store of this size – 94 car parking spaces instead of the 47 car parking spaces which parking standards would normally allow.

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 also objected to the use of red brick as the main building material for both the retail store and the residential units as we felt that this would not tie in with the main building materials used in the conservation area. We hoped that, when the full planning applications were lodged for both the retail store and the residential units, a higher quality of design and materials would have been chosen for this important and prominent gateway site.

Sadly, when the detailed planning applications were lodged for both the retail store and the housing units on the rest of the site, the society was disappointed in the quality of the designs and the materials that were being proposed. Aldi was still asking for 94 car parking spaces, red brick was still being proposed as the main building material and most of the 3 and 4 storey blocks of flats were designed with flat roofs.

One of the detailed applications was by McCarthy and Stone for a block of 42 sheltered apartments. While the society does not object to retirement flats being built at this particular location, we objected to the design and the materials that were proposed. The site is just outside the conservation area and there are no major examples of red facing bricks being used within the conservation area. We felt that a north facing 4 storey building should use a much lighter pallet of colours as the colours that were proposed would, in the society's view, create rather a dark building. We were also of the view that a flat roof was not appropriate in this location as the majority of roofs on the high street are pitched roofs in either slate or tile.

Barratt had also lodged an application to erect 61 dwellings and 44 flats behind the retail store. While the society approves of housing being built on this part of the site, and appreciated the way in which the design of much of the new housing related to the existing single storey cottages on Baileyfield Road, we did have objections to the design of some of the flats and some of the materials that were proposed. Again red brick is to be used on two of the large 3 and 4 storey blocks of flats. The society believes that a lighter colour would be less oppressive and would relate better to the 61 dwellings to be built behind them which are to be built in a much lighter colour of brick.

Barratt proposed that the roofs of two of their large blocks of flats would be flat. The society believes that flat roofs are inappropriate on this site and that pitched roofs, as was proposed for the other Barratt dwellings on the site, would be more appropriate and would relate better to the existing surrounding housing on Portobello High Street.

The last detailed application lodged for this site was by Cruden to erect a block of 52 affordable housing units along Fishwives Causeway. Again PAS felt that a better quality of design was required for this very large block of flats than that which was proposed.

The Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal stresses the importance of significant vistas within and from the conservation area. One of these is from Portobello High Street, up Fishwives Causeway, towards Arthur's Seat. PAS felt that the height, size and scale of the flats that were proposed for the Fishwives Causeway side of this development would completely destroy this important vista.

The society believed that a better quality of design was required for this important gateway site than the designs that were proposed for all of the buildings. These designs we felt had no sense of place did not relate to the architecture of the rest of Portobello and, in the society's view, were featureless and uninspiring.

All of these applications have been granted, without any amendments having been asked for. Aldi has also been allowed the 94 car parking spaces they wanted. The planning department was of the view that an exception could be made in this case but its reasons for recommending this exception remain obscure. When the 3 other applications for the residential units on the site came before the Development Management Subcommittee on the 18th of November, only one councillor expressed the view that the designs of the residential buildings were unattractive and institutional, would not enhance the area and that Portobello deserved a far better quality of design than that which was proposed. Unfortunately his views were not shared by the other councillors on the committee and the applications were approved.

Millerhill Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre

A planning application has been granted to build a waste treatment facility at the former Millerhill Marshalling Yards, Whitehill Road, Millerhill, Dalkeith. It is understood that this facility will be used by Edinburgh City Council and Midlothian Council and will be in operation in 2018.

Access to the site will be off Whitehill Road, past B&Q at Kinnaird Park and then on to a new access road which is currently being built. Vehicles approaching the facility will primarily be using the main arterial routes but PAS has not yet been told how many vehicles will be accessing the site via the Sir Harry Lauder Road and therefore what the impact on the Kings Road Junction will be.

The Millerhill facility will provide a sustainable waste management solution, which would assist in diverting waste from landfill, maximising recycling and also provide renewable energy. The building of a waste treatment facility at Millerhill will, hopefully, make it less likely that Viridor will submit another application to build a waste transfer facility in Portobello at the former freightliner terminal site off the Sir Harry Lauder Road.

Plaques on buildings in Portobello and Joppa

Over the past 13 years PAS has placed eleven plaques on buildings in Portobello which are of historic interest or are associated with famous people. Bronze, used for the first six plaques, did not wear well so the later five plaques are powder-coated blue or maroon aluminium. All plaques are oval, about 14 inches wide and mostly placed above shoulder height. Funding was obtained from a variety of sources, with five plaques being paid for by people or groups with an interest in the particular person celebrated.

Photographs of these eleven plaques, and of three plaques erected in Portobello by other groups, together with a brief description of the building or person celebrated and the postcode of the building, are displayed on two websites: www.portobelloheritagetrust.co.uk and www.porty.org.uk. At the latter site the pictures are in the gallery subset of the media section.

The buildings celebrated are: Portobello former Town Halls, (Police station and Baptist church); Rock Cottage; the Tower. The people celebrated are: Hugh Miller; David Laing; William Russell Flint; William Speirs Bruce; Helen Hopekirk; Ned Barnie; William Hay; Eric Lomax; Harry Lauder; J.G. Lockhart.

Other Matters

Over the course of the year, PAS monitored 100 planning applications for the area and commented on 19. Like last year, rear extensions and attic conversions formed the majority of these.

We also submitted a response to the new Edinburgh Local Development Plan 2, arguing that the Council's proposals to amend the LDP by designating land at Brunstane for a further 1330 units would weaken the Green Belt and increase the likelihood of coalescence between Edinburgh and Musselburgh.

We continue to liaise with the Council regarding various issues such as broken pavements, blocked drains, pot holes and unauthorised signage. Malfunctioning street lights, recycling bins, and unauthorised shop fronts are some of the other issues we have taken up. We have also had discussions with the Council regarding the replacement of railings at Rosefield Park and Abercorn Park and the condition of some sections of the wall along Christian Path.

We submitted a response to the proposals regarding the resurfacing of Brighton Place, arguing that the setts, which form an important part of the character of this part of the conservation area, should be re-laid.

The society continues to work with the 'Signs and Plaques' group to maintain the information boards and building plaques throughout Portobello and to raise funds to erect new boards and new plaques.

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.

In a joint project with Portobello Heritage Trust we are trying 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 several meetings with Council officials to explore what can be done to facilitate the clock's return but the Council is refusing to acknowledge that the clock actually belongs to them although we believe we have proved otherwise.

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

We continue to add to the data base of members' email addresses so that we can inform you when major planning applications are lodged for the Portobello area and seek your views on these applications. If you have not already given us your email address we would be grateful if you could do so. This is best done by emailing a request to our secretary, P.K.Wraith@btinternet.com, which will enable him to add your details to the database.

We 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.

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 2015 – March 2016 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)