

Blacket Newsletter: Wednesday 27th January 2010

- Planning Application Now Submitted For Rowans Site
- Time To Express Your Views To City Planning
- Submissions Due In By Friday 19 February Latest

A detailed application for planning permission to develop the 1.5 acre Rowans site, off Alfred Place within the Blacket Conservation Area, has now been registered with City Planning by S1 Developments, the new owners of the land. The plans for which permission is now sought have been drawn up by S1's architects, McLaren, Murdoch & Hamilton; these plans may be viewed on-line at:

citydev-portal.edinburgh.gov.uk/portal/portal then: view planning applications online /application search / 09/03307/FUL

or, in hard copy form at Edinburgh Council Offices - Waverley Court, 4 East Market St, EH8 8BG (open Monday to Thursday 0830 to 1700 and Friday 0830 to 1540 hrs). The property address is 5 Alfred Place.

This is, of course, a crucial development for our area – the Rowans being the only undeveloped site within our ‘five streets’ – and the results of this planning application will almost certainly be with us for many years to come. Blacket Committee Officers, in liaison with the ‘Rowans Group’ of immediate neighbours, are currently working on the Association’s written comments (which will be posted here as soon as they are submitted to the Council) and now is also the time for local residents who have views on this matter to make them known to City Planning, in writing or online, as soon as possible and not later than Friday 19 February.

Since the last Blacket Newsletter was circulated on 13th January some members of the Blacket Committee and a wider group of residents met with the Developer and Architects on 18th January to get a presentation on the proposals and to raise issues with them. The architects agreed to get back to us on a number of points which it was suggested they might wish to take into account or reconsider, (but have not yet done so). The Blacket Committee has also met, along with Austin Flynn of the ‘Rowans Group’, to consider further points and the likely substance of the Association’s planned submission to City Planning.

The underlying fact is that unless a planning consent is given on the present or other substitute proposals, the planning permission given some ten years ago for 12 flats and 8 penthouses, in a modernist style, will remain current.

In the meantime, it may be useful to Blacket residents considering individual submissions to note the following listing of issue/points which have been raised by one or more individuals to date:

- While acknowledging economic realities, there remain some continuing concerns about density of the development;
- As regards lay-out, there has been a general failure to understand why one of the housing units has been placed un-necessarily close to the party wall in the south east corner of the site and a wish to see this modified.

- There are worries about the implications of limited parking provision; the formula of, in general, one planned parking place per dwelling unit is seen to ignore the realities of average car ownership levels among purchasers of this type of property, with the likely result of further parking pressures on already densely-taken-up kerbside parking places in the vicinity.
- It has been pointed out that the selective retention of existing trees on the site is in apparent conflict with the earlier tree survey and listings, leading to unacceptable losses. Existing trees should be retained and suitably protected.
- The changes in ground level beyond the western side of the site appear to indicate a likely view blockage for certain houses in Blacket Place, even after removal of rubble from the demolished nursing home; this and allied topography lead to the proposition for reducing ground level, at least in parts of the site.
- The creation of some 15 substantial dwelling units on this site is seen as almost inevitably creating significant extra traffic flows in an exclusively residential setting in Alfred Place/Mayfield Terrace leading to the suggestion that planning consent should be dependent on the developer's installing some simple traffic restraint across the Alfred Place/Mayfield Terrace T junction.
- There have been some expressions of appreciation of the developer/architects' efforts to plan the buildings on site in a style reasonably consistent with the 'Blacket overall look', but there are also reservations, as regards aspects of materials/design and finishes, including the indicated use of rendering to the sides and rear of all units and about certain other architectural details, such as style of quoins, projection of flues proud of the wall line, fascia stone finish etc.
- On materials sourcing, it has been suggested appropriate Scotland-sourced stone and slate should be used rather than those from elsewhere.
- On boundaries treatment, the proposal to use wooden fencing for party wall divisions is seen as inappropriate in a conservation area characterised by stone walls, particularly on dwelling frontages; use of stone walling/planting might also be advantageous to the front of the properties, particularly given the location of exposed parking sites.
- There is a requirement for a quality landscape scheme assisting with fitting the development into the surroundings, and providing screening.
- On services, it is suggested there would be an obvious rationale for a single appropriately-treated TV reception dish, rather than proliferations of dishes across individual units in a conservation area.
- As regards disruption during construction, noting that the developers' plans appear to be based on a phased, but continuous, building programme stretched to perhaps two years, on a site surrounded by existing residential property, it is seen as essential, if planning permission is granted, that there should be clear enforceable commitments from the developer to contain site works within normal working hours, to keep adjacent streets clear of building deposits and to adequately protect the historic site entry Pillars.

NB The above list is not exhaustive and the points it contains do not necessarily represent the views of the Blacket Association; it is simply an attempt to share with - and inform - the wider local community, within which individuals will have a range of views, about some of the issues that have been raised to date in connection with the current planning application for the Rowans site.

Any views you may have on this proposed development should be received by the planning authority not later than Friday 19th February, if by mail, addressed to - Head of Planning, City Development Dept, Business Unit G2, Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh EH8 8BG. It would be helpful if any local resident making a submission either on-line to city planning, or by mail, could copy the document or a note of the points made in it to Ian Carter: email: ian.carter@cityofedinburgh.gov.uk or write to Bartholomew House Flat 3, 12 Duncan Street, EH9 1SZ.