

## Blacket Newsletter: Wednesday 1st March 2010

### **Supplementary Submission, dated 1st March 2010, from the Blacket Association on Application 09/03307/FUL for 5 Alfred Place**

In our more wide-ranging submission of 16 February we gave notice that if S1 Developments and their architects submitted revised plans for 5 Alfred Place, the Blacket Association would wish to make a supplementary submission; that is this document, which should be read in conjunction with our 16 February comments.

In that paper we advanced the view that Blacket's outstanding & unique position as Edinburgh's first-ever Conservation Area meant any proposed redevelopment should be examined with special care in relation to five questions: acceptability of principle and scale; adverse adjacent amenity effect; preservation of character/ appearance; adverse on-site/adjacent tree effect; and, adequacy of infrastructure.

On both occasions the Developers have now made Planning Submissions to the Council, they have subsequently invited comments from local residents and in their second Submission have picked up on some, but not all, of the initial material points put to them on 18 January. The essential amendments they have made to their original plans, we understand, are:

- selective extension of stone cladding on component buildings, from frontages only, to certain of the more readily-visible side elevations of some of the blocks and to the single storey rear utility room extensions (though at the time of writing, this is not immediately evident from the resubmitted drawings). This is welcome but falls short of a development maintaining the appearance of a Conservation Area built throughout almost exclusively of stone. The Association's view would be the stone cladding should extend to all elevations - which should also increase the attractiveness of the properties.
- changes in the treatment of boundary walls between properties to the - more readily-visible - front of the buildings. The commitment to erect either 2.1m stone or low stone walls with matching railings is welcome, as is the projected hedging screening some of the parking spaces and the dropping of the earlier planned 2m high timber fencing elsewhere in gardens across the site. Less welcoming, however, is the latter's proposed replacement - not by stone but - by hedging with 'temporary' wooden fencing (where we assume the Council could not guarantee that the 'temporary' fencing will all have been removed, without right of replacement within the five years after construction). As one of the obvious characteristics across the Blacket Conservation Area is high stone walling, the Association's position remains that not only would stone walling across the site be more visually consistent with the character of the area, but that it would give the planned properties a more positive and secure profile.
- Not for nothing is this part of Blacket known as a very green area with widespread tree and other plantings, some very mature, referring back to when it contained the orchards of old Newington House. The Tree Survey latterly commissioned by the Developers' architects reveals some interesting and very relevant data, documenting the presence on site of around 40 trees. Some two-thirds of these are apparently to be removed, despite the fact it appears around one in three of those which may be lost are characterised under the survey

as being 'desirable' or, in one case, 'most desirable' for retention. The Association regards the tree removal figure as too high, since it believes that mature tree removal should be minimal and where it is permitted, it should be linked to a high specification for appropriate and approved semi-mature tree replacements, within a quality landscaping scheme.

- Movement of housing Units 14/15 away from the southern boundary wall, to give clearance of app 3m. Again welcome, but our view is this would be well complemented if, as the Association has previously advocated, there was also a modest movement of the overall development towards the eastern boundary, to achieve symmetry across the site. This would also, particularly if combined with a lowering of ground level at the western end of the site, help mitigate presently-anticipated affected sight-lines from - and the overlooking of - two adjacent Grade A-listed houses.
- Introduction of some changed detailing, delivering externally flush flues and simplified chimney stacks, which should help aid consonance with surrounding properties.

As for other amenity and safety issues not so far addressed - where the applicants' revised plans do not reflect any changes in areas which the Association regards as very important - these centre on:

- an un-necessarily created parking problem, where inadequate on-site provision for this type of large house/flat development will have obvious parking overflow consequences for adjacent streets (though we recognise this is basically determined by Council guidelines, rather than Developer's decisions).
- the need for appropriate traffic calming measures at the Alfred Place/Mayfield Road junction, to help maintain amenity and safety in the context of increased traffic flows and more on-site families
- the desirability of a common communications/satellite receiver system

Ray Footman, Chairman BLACKET ASSOCIATION

Ian Carter, Secretary