

Cockburn Association Annual Report 2014

Cases Committee

Jens Bergmark

The cases committee has had another busy year, reviewing and commenting on a considerable number of planning applications and Proposal of Application Notice (PANs). Concerns remain regarding the on-going pressures on the Green Belt, failure to develop brownfield sites within the City to an appropriate density and the level of student accommodation proposed in various residential areas within the city.

As the economy recovers, a significant number of commercial development projects have come up, either as PANs or full applications. These are often large-scale developments in sensitive inner City locations. They are often complex in nature with a large number of drawings and documents attached to the applications and so require a fair amount of background research before we can make any useful comments and give feedback. A lot of hard work has been put in by our Cases Committee members, as well as by our director and cases officer.

The development to the south side of St Andrew Square has been a controversial issue where a listed building was de-listed and subsequently demolished. The site is now cleared and awaits redevelopment. The south-east corner of St Andrew Square, along West Register Street, is also up for redevelopment and a listed building is proposed to be demolished. The Cockburn Association has raised concern over aspects of this proposal.

Craighouse, the former Napier campus on Easter Craiglockhart Hill, gained planning permission for restoration of the old hospital buildings as well as enabling developments in the form of blocks of flats and townhouses. Cockburn was against the majority of the new developments on the site and remained of the opinion that enabling development was not justified.

The application for redevelopment of the St James Centre is another major development site with which we have been engaging, primarily commenting on skyline issues, height of buildings, materials and pedestrian permeability through the site.

The University of Edinburgh is a major landowner and developer in the city and they are currently working on plans for the second stage at Potterrow as well as refurbishment and restoration projects for the Old College and Edinburgh College of Art.

Perhaps the most controversial project is the proposal to redevelop the former Royal High School for a luxury hotel operator. The pre-application discussions have taken place and the project is to be presented to the Council's Urban Design Panel in early May. The Royal High School is an enormously valuable architectural asset which the Cockburn Association is working hard to protect. The extraordinarily dramatic setting of this internationally important Greek revival building is unique in the world and now seriously under threat. The proposed hotel wings to either side of the main building would, if given planning consent, permanently alter the setting of the building and the very nature and character of Calton Hill. The Cockburn is questioning if development can be justified on this site.

The work of the cases committee would not come about without the contribution of a large number of people, i.e. the members of the committee and the Cockburn staff. I would like to thank all the committee members for their continuous hard work and invaluable contribution; Lorraine Briggs, John Byrom, Simon Byrom, John Fleming, Louise Forsyth, Neil Gardiner, Jon Grounsell, Lawrence Marshall, Lorn McNeal, Richard Rogers, Jane Roy, Richard Scothorne and Ian Temple. We always welcome new members to supplement our team so please contact Marion if you are interested in contributing. We meet every second Tuesday at 5.30 in the Cockburn Association offices.

The cases officer, Joe Taylor, keeps the day to day work of the committee on track and the comments and letters we issue on a weekly bases are drafted by Joe and edited and signed off by Marion. So, finally, I would like to thank Marion and Joseph for their steadfast support of the Cases Committee.