

We would like to bring to your attention the proposed sale of Council owned property at East Market Street/ Cranston Street to Mountgrange (Caltongate), which is to be discussed at today's full council meeting. Referred to as *Fit For Future Project*

Waverly Valley Redevelopment (Item 8.9) on the Agenda.

We are surprised that this sale looks set to go ahead when Mountgrange have not yet submitted plans to the Council's planning department for their proposed re-development of the Waverley valley.

How can the Council possibly take a disinterested and objective view of any plans submitted when they stand to receive a further £2M payment on the granting of planning permission for the scheme, plus 20% of any profit arising from the development?

There are several concerns raised by the Mountgrange master plan, namely, the eviction of people from their homes, the proposed demolition of listed buildings, changing the character of a World Heritage site and of course the inevitable increase in traffic which would be generated by the scheme. There has been minimal public consultation on the master plan and many local residents are concerned about the impact this development will have on their neighbourhood, not least the fact that there seems to be very little in the plan to benefit the existing community. This is not just an issue for the local residents though; it is an Edinburgh-wide and even a Scotland-wide issue, as the Royal Mile is the centre of the World Heritage site at the heart of our capital city.

The Edinburgh World Heritage Trust has expressed concerns that the plans to demolish flats on the Canongate could destroy the historical character of the area. Instead of jumping at the Mountgrange proposal, the Council should be taking a more considered approach towards the re-development of this extremely important area. This seems to be yet another example of the Council selling off assets for short-term gain. The report going before committee states that Mountgrange have submitted a Masterplan for the area (Para 4). This is not true.

The developers have exhibited in a limited way draft outline proposals which heritage groups such as the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust have already publicly condemned as being inadequate detail to be considered.

A full Environmental Assessment would be required for consideration of these proposals however they are in outline only and as such an Environmental Assessment cannot be submitted under current planning legislation.

The developers have consistently refused to hold a public meeting to discuss the proposals and therefore a Community Forum group has been established to encourage full and open debate of the potential for the future of this site. A variety of interest groups have been invited to this public meeting on 28th November and local MSP Sarah Boyack has also agreed to attend as she feels this is an appropriate way to ensure public involvement, consultation and the achievement of local democracy.

The Council is a partner in the Community Plan which promotes full consultation and involvement and the aims, Key issues and Strategy which it stands for will be undermined if the council agrees to the sale of public assets to the first off-market offer which is made.

If it can be demonstrated that these buildings and land are indeed surplus to requirements then it should be offered on the open market and Mountgrange can bid for the site along side any other developers or interest groups who are willing to make a reasonable offer.

It is not the business of private developers to ensure the appropriate comprehensive development of the Waverly Valley. It is the duty of the Council to ensure development is appropriate and an integrated comprehensive approach is taken. The planning legislation is there to ensure proper public consultation. The Development Plan process allows for communities to play a part in ensuring appropriate national and local planning policies are supported by the council and that any development accords with them. At present we do not have an up to date Local Plan for this area and therefore any proposals should be discussed publicly.

I would urge you to vote against the sale of this land or at least ask that the sale be postponed until plans have been submitted to the planning department and the full implications of the proposals are clearer.

Consideration of the sale of this land should be deferred until such time as the public have had an opportunity to comment on the proposals which have not as yet been submitted for planning approval.

In addition the recommendation to approve the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to secure a development which has not even been submitted for planning approval should be rejected and should only be considered once the decision making authority are satisfied that planning approval is to be granted.

Finally all councillors who are members of the Planning Committee should exclude themselves from voting as a matter of council protocol due to the potential conflict of interests.
Sally Richardson and Julie Logan

On behalf of the Canongate Community Forum

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