

## **The Cockburn Association**

### **Summary of Caltongate deputation - 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

The Cockburn Association is Edinburgh's Civic Trust. We are an independent charity, working to protect and enhance the City of Edinburgh since 1875. We care passionately about the quality of life and economic vitality of our city, and recognise how much is owed to its wonderful topography and architecture.

Our views have been prepared by our committees. Expert contributors have included modern, conservation and landscape architects, senior professionals in environment, transport and regeneration, engineers, two Judges, a former chief planner, a former depute director of planning, and a former chief executive of Historic Scotland.

We believe it is fundamental that new development in the Old Town respects the area's human scale and massing, urban grain, diverse architecture, high quality materials, sensitivity to heights, and importance of much loved public views. We are in no doubt that the Caltongate planning applications, as they stand, singularly fail to achieve these aims.

We therefore urge the Committee to refuse consent.

#### **Our principal concerns:**

We believe that the planning applications do not accord with the detailed principles of the Caltongate Masterplan approved by The City of Edinburgh Council.

The choice of materials, predominantly horizontal roofscapes, demolition of listed buildings, lack of reference to the Waverley Valley form, and excessively high development also fails to comply with national and local conservation and design policies.

The proposed demolition of the Canongate Venture is unacceptable. Edinburgh has a fine tradition of re-using Victorian school buildings. Furthermore, the proposed demolition of all but the upper floors of the Macrae tenements on the Royal Mile, while preferable to a full height breakthrough, is similarly unacceptable. It is dire in conservation terms and disappointing from a modern design perspective. Retaining only the facades of homes in sound condition and in use should be unthinkable on the Royal Mile in the 21st century.

Outside office hours New Street would be a dead street. The office building still features very few entrances, with the food and retail uses accessed from the public square. No attempt has been made to make this long section of New Street attractive on a 24-hour basis.

The two-storey building rising above Jeffrey Street would result in the loss of a much loved panoramic view. The creation of a viewing platform does not compensate for the loss of the uninterrupted view from St Mary's Street and the Royal Mile. The development of Jeffrey Street was halted in 1876 due to public outcry at the potential loss of this expansive view.

Finally, the developer-led consultation process has failed, with little attempt made to balance the requirements of investors with local and heritage concerns.

#### **Conclusions**

Economically successful development, embracing a balance between the modern and the old, can and has been achieved in the Old Town. Holyrood North provides an excellent local precedent. The potential benefits of the Caltongate development could all be achieved through modern design that respects and takes reference from the Outstanding Conservation Area and World Heritage Site context. The Caltongate planning applications, as they currently stand, manifestly fail to achieve this.