

Submission to CEC Planning Portal on 10/2/2023

Planning Proposal 23/00008/FUL

Student accommodation development including ground floor retail /commercial space with associated access, landscaping, open space and drainage at 35 Jock's Lodge Edinburgh EH8 7AA

This is submitted on behalf of Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council(NWCC). NWCC has not carried out any specific community consultation on this application because of a lack of time due to the short consultation window. In the pre-application period, the developers outlined their proposals at a community council meeting and had a stand at our 2022 Environment Fair where they displayed their proposals and discussed them with local residents. Many individuals contributed their views to the CC in writing and verbally and two public meetings were organised by another group. We understand that views in support of the application have been received by the Council, but we have received none and so cannot comment on these.

Our purpose in this response is to inform the council of our understanding, from informal discussions with residents and from comments made in meetings and in emails, of the general community view of the proposal. Clearly, those who express a view will be those who have the strongest feelings about the proposal and others may feel differently.

The view of the Community Council is that the current plan falls short of the ideal which the Council strives for through its local plan and that a better solution could have been achieved for this high profile site. Our concerns centre around three aspects of the plan.

1. Excessive amount of student accommodation.

There is a widely held view that there is too much student accommodation in our area, which is not located close to any University and has a limited infrastructure of shops, entertainment and other facilities. Several other student residences have recently been built close by and local residents are concerned that a large increase in the transient population may put extra pressure on existing facilities.

2. Loss of an important amenity - a pub.

There is only one other pub in the Jock's Lodge area. The Willow is well used and well-liked and it will be difficult to replace the facilities it offers. The cafe area in the proposal will not do this, as it will be a very different type of premises with little to attract local residents other than students.

3. Impact on surroundings

Residents are concerned about several aspects of the building itself. The height is considered by many to be excessive and not in keeping with the general low height of buildings on the north side of that part of London Road. The building is not set back from the pavement at all (unlike the other larger buildings like St Margaret's House), and its appearance is not in keeping with an area of mainly Victorian buildings.

Taken together, these criticisms suggest that a lower building, with a wider pavement or garden at the front, would be more acceptable.

We are grateful for being consulted on this proposal and are happy to provide further information on request.