

Head of Planning  
City Development – Planning  
City of Edinburgh Council  
Waverley Court  
4 East Market Street  
EDINBURGH  
EH8 8BG

27 April 2007

Dear Sir

**Planning application 07/01208/LBC for the demolition of existing building, boundary walls and gatepiers at 5 New Street, Edinburgh.**

We have had the opportunity to view the plans for the above set of proposals and wish to make the following comments in **strong objection**.

In the first instance, the Caltongate development is considerable in scale involving a number of sites in the Canongate area. Notwithstanding the fact that there are several individual applications we request that the determination of this application is considered in relation to the development as a whole.

Secondly, matching the plan drawings to the various reference numbers in the Weekly Planning Bulletin is very confusing. In order to be correct, it required a number of phone calls to the various planners for clarification. The Association is aware of the considerable local concern over this redevelopment. This disparity between the plans and reference numbers is intimidating and does not allow individuals and local community groups to easily make representation. It is not in the spirit of the new Planning Bill and contrary to the recent Planning Advice Note (PAN) titled Planning with People.

The case for the demolition of the C(s) listed Canongate Venture building has not been made by the applicants. There is no justification for its destruction. Historic Scotland's Memorandum of Guidance, Demolition, 2.10 is clear in stating that *'no worthwhile building should be lost to our environment unless it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it.'* The Memorandum goes on to urge planning authorities in the consideration of applications for the demolition of a listed building to *'presume in the favour'* of its preservation unless a strong case can be made for its destruction. Local authorities are advised to consider the buildings importance individually and as part of the local scene particularly in a Conservation Area. The perceived advantage of removal of the Canongate Venture has to be carefully weighed against its value to the local community. Just as important, is consideration of the building's condition. We note that no structural report on the condition of the building has been included in the plans.

The Canongate Venture is a valuable asset in terms of the cultural life it lends to the locality and the potential economic benefits gained by the growth of the start up businesses housed in it. These businesses are diverse in nature and include various school projects as well as a model maker, other craft enterprises and an electronic design company. The City Council has recently recognised the lack of small business units in the city. Resources such as these are rare citywide, but the few that do exist such as the Canongate Venture and a similar establishment in Abbeyhill are very successful in nurturing embryonic businesses that often go on to become larger companies contributing to the economic success of the city as well as creating employment. The Old Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal, page 45 highlights *'The vitality and variety of different uses which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area'* as being an essential element providing a balance between the interests of residents, business and visitors. Removal of this resource on the grounds that it is of limited importance is wrong as well as being short-sighted.

As previously mentioned, there is no Structural Report on the condition of the building contained in the plans. It appears to be in relatively good order and so demolition on the grounds that it is unsafe to the public is not justified. A similarly erroneous argument is that it is a building that is visually different from the norm in this section of the Old Town. It along with other buildings in this area such as the Canongate Kirk lend the Old Town Conservation Area architectural variety. Its removal on the grounds that as stated in the Caltongate Statement PA5, The Case for the Hotel it *'has become an incongruent aspect of the local townscape'* and *'not specifically acknowledged to be part of the essential character of the Conservation Area or the World Heritage Site'* is not justified. The Old Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal, page 17 clearly states the *'importance of varied building types'* in its Spatial Character analysis. The PA5 statement goes on to say that the building's *'visibility within the wider Conservation Area and World Heritage Site has become restricted'*. This could be said of most of the Old Town as buildings tucked down closes are restricted visibly.

In finishing, we urge the City Council to refuse consent for the demolition of the Canongate Venture as the applicants have failed to make an adequate case for its removal. It remains a viable institution contributing to the vitality of the local area and in architectural terms it adds to the variety of built heritage within the Old Town Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

Yours faithfully

The Rt. Hon. Lord Macfadyen

Moyra Forrest

Moira Tasker

Chair

Convenor of the Cases Committee

Director

cc Edinburgh World Heritage  
Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland  
Architecture and Design Scotland

Old Town Association  
Old Town Community Council  
Chessels Court Residents Association