

Seafield Sounding Board (Wednesday 11th May 2022)

Attendees:

- Ewan Aitken, Chair
- Cllr Danny Aston, City of Edinburgh Council (ward councillor)
- David Cooper, City of Edinburgh Council (Commercial Development & Investment)
- Kyle Drummond, City of Edinburgh Council (Commercial Development & Investment)
- Andrew Fournet, Craigentenny and Meadowbank Community Council
- James Fraser, EMA Architects
- George Fyvie
- Angus Hardie, Leith Links Community Council
- Robin Holder, planning consultant for Manse/Smart
- Jane Iannarelli, CEC (Planning)
- Justin Kendrick, Action Party
- Lee Kindness, Portobello Community Council
- Cathy Maclean, Action Party
- Colin MacPherson, Manse
- Iain McFarlane, City of Edinburgh Council (Planning)
- Lesley McGrath, Holder Planning
- Sam McHardy, Heriot-Watt University
- Frazer McNaughton, Portobello Community Council
- Richard Slipper, Richard Slipper Planning Consultancy, adviser to Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
- Gregor Southall, Montagu Evans
- Cllr Alex Staniforth, City of Edinburgh Council (ward councillor)
- Murray Stewart, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
- Duncan Tait, J. Smart
- Neil Tulloch, Leith Harbour/Newhaven Community Council

1) Welcome

- Apologies were received from:
 - Councillor Kate Campbell, the City of Edinburgh Council
 - Lindsay Fyffe-Jardine, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
 - Paul Lawrence, the City of Edinburgh Council
 - Gordon McOmish, City of Edinburgh Council (Flood Prevention)
 - David Smart, J. Smart
 - Mark Woodcraft, MWM Property
- Ewan Aitken welcomed the new members of the Sounding Board.

2) Note of last meeting

- The note was agreed as an accurate reflection of the discussion.

3) Opportunities and constraints discussion

Presentation

- David Cooper gave a presentation on the opportunities and constraints discussion. David noted that the vision for Seafield is for housing-led regeneration.
- The community will help shape the Development Framework and Planning Committee will be asked to approve it. There will be three stages: call for ideas; design development; consultation.

- Questions: What are the local area’s needs and what does it need? How and where can accessibility be improved? What form should development take?
- The Council should appoint a design team for the Development Framework in the next few weeks.

Breakout groups

A

- Amenities and services need to be thought about: primary schools, etc.
- Social housing should move beyond the policy and be fully integrated.
- Once it is built-out boundaries should not be evident.
- The road and rail line are divisive.
- Potential for an orbital bus route?

B

- Links into the site are key. There is a need to consider not only existing patterns of movement but also how people will want to move around the site after it is developed. This should be considered first then built form.
- Opportunities for bold/creative ideas – e.g. could the road be moved to the back of the site allowing better connection with Craigentenny?
- This is both a neighbourhood for people living there and a destination. Therefore, active travel links need to consider both leisure and commuting.
- Considerable consideration must be given to safe movement.
- Affordable housing must be integrated into the site as must services and outdoor space. Should consider healthy assets (eg sports/recreation/green space).
- Acknowledged that the sites constraints will dictate density. Need for a realistic yet high quality design.
- The beach should not be overshadowed. Consider lower densities closer to the beach.
- Coastal defences are a key consideration for CEC.

C

- The sea is a big opportunity. The community should address the sea.
- Connectivity has the potential to be improved, with a better character/nicer experience.
- The sea needs infrastructure; it is not purely an asset.
- Land ownership is a constraint too.
- Cohesive development is important.

D

- Seafield can feel isolated with poor bus links and limited connectivity to Craigentenny. Links to Leith and Portobello should be strengthened.
- Development should be set back from the beach to avoid overshadowing.
- Seafield Road East does not work well for non-car users. It is unsafe with previous traffic deaths. It could be urbanised more, taking a cue from Barnton where roads have been narrowed. Alternatively, the road itself could be relocated closer to the railway.
- Information is needed on the Council’s plans for maintaining flood defences. It was noted that even now some waves are hitting the promenade.

- It was noted that Portobello had won an Academy of Urbanism Award so to some extent Portobello could be looked at as an exemplar. An asset of Portobello identified by the Academy was that the promenade was well used and in some ways the heart of Portobello.
- Ewan asked how brave we are willing to be? Ewan invited any further comments on the questions posed.
- Frazer McNaughton referenced the Academy of Urbanism Award to Portobello in 2019. Community life on the promenade and beach was identified as an asset, along with density and diversity in the urban form and the secondary lanes that run through Portobello. Frazer will endeavour to locate the report and share it. Ewan noted that a main road runs through Portobello but does not feel like it divides it.
- Iain McFarlane asked if the community saw the golf course as an asset, or if it could be put to better use in a different way? Ewan noted it has been a golf course since 1867 and that the club (but not the course) is run by a local organisation; it is well-used by local residents.
- Justin Kendrick recognised any development needs to stack-up, but the beach should not be overshadowed – density should be focused internally. Housing-led does not mean only housing. Coastal defences should be a priority.
- Cathy Maclean thought most people would objective to tall buildings next to the Promenade. Cathy suggested putting high-rise buildings on the solum of Seafield Road East. Seafield Road East is in some ways the biggest constraint. Cathy mentioned innovative solutions to putting infrastructure by the sea in Japan and Rio de Janeiro. The promenade could perhaps be widened. Ewan noted that moving the road would change the debate around ownership.
- David Cooper noted the Council would compile and anonymise comments and that it would circulate the slide pack. David noted it would be good to have more time for breakout groups.
- Richard Slipper asked about City Plan deadlines – Iain McFarlane noted that the formation of the new Council administration will have a bearing on this, e.g. if changes are requested.
- Ewan Aitken asked about meeting with the design team. David Cooper thought the design team could be in place in three weeks or so, all going well.

4) AOB

- N/A

5) DONM

- It is proposed to meet again in late-June 2022 to discuss