



Portobello Community Council
c/o Portobello Library
Portobello CC c/o
14 Rosefield Ave
EH15 1AU

22 Sept 2014

Lesley Carus
Planning & Building Standards
Services for Communities
City of Edinburgh Council

CC: Ian Perry, Convener of Planning Committee; Maureen Child, Convener of Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee

REF: PAC Report for 14/03736/PPP

Dear Lesley,

I write in connection with Pre-Application Consultation Report submitted as part of application 14/03736/PPP for the site 100 metres west of 17-21 Portobello High Street.

While we are satisfied that the applicants and their agents have complied with the statutory minimum requirements, we feel strongly that these minimum requirements need to be updated to reflect modern media consumption and busy lifestyles. It would have been helpful if the applicants had published their materials online, provided electronic feedback forms and posted notices on social media as well as traditional media. The approach taken by LIDL in their application for 99 Inchview Terrace was an excellent recent example of a more up-to-date approach to planning consultation.

The purpose of the PAC is to conduct 'meaningful engagement with those who can represent the community's views, and should offer the opportunity to mitigate negative impacts and misunderstandings and deal with community issues that can be addressed'.

On balance, we feel, the PAC has fallen short of this purpose with too much emphasis on spinning a positive message on behalf of the developers. We also have some concerns about the efforts made by the developers to mitigate negative impacts and misunderstandings and deal with community issues that can be addressed.

Please consider the following points. We hope you will read them as suggestions for improving the process in future as much as complaints or criticisms of this report.

- The feedback form provided at the consultation event lacked objectivity and focused on what the developers and their agents saw as 'positive' aspects. It would have been preferable if they had provided a list of statements and allowed respondents to say whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral.
- Given that the PAC was for two quite distinct elements – a food store and 220+ housing units – the form should have drawn a distinction between whether the response was in support / neutral / not supportive of the housing or the food store. What if someone was supportive of the housing but not the food store? Or vice versa?



- The report claims on page 10 that: "71% of those attending the public exhibition event supported the proposals. A further 18% remained neutral and 11% were unsupportive." This is clearly incorrect as the figures were reported elsewhere in the report as 350 attendees (approx), 300 leaflets given out and 128 returned with feedback. Less than half the attendees actually completed feedback forms.
- The report also asserts: "These consultations also confirmed that the overwhelming majority of local shoppers welcome Aldi's proposals, the employment the proposals would bring and the regeneration of this vacant site." This cannot be concluded from this consultation exercise. Portobello Community Council area alone takes in almost 12,000 people. The feedback amounts to a total of 128.
- The statement: "Our consultations confirm there was overwhelming support for the development of the Baileyfield site and a general acceptance of the scale of the combined Aldi/Cruden Group proposals" is carefully worded to suggest a positive response to the whole proposal. "Overwhelming support" is an overstatement of responses to the potential for developing the site only. The "general acceptance" (pretty lacklustre statement), is only for the scale.
- The responses to the consultation, paint a different picture with lots of serious reservations to the loss of studio spaces. The issues associated with any development, infrastructure, traffic congestion, schools and services appear not to have been reflected in the PAC.
- The three options for the Aldi building use two of the worst examples of pastiche architecture on the high street and should not have been the basis of their design. Is the choosing of one of these by the public to be reflected in their choice?
- The application constantly refers to "High Quality Landscaping". Is the "1800mm high close boarded timber fence" quality? This fence, which bounds the South and West elevations of the Aldi site, is not shown on their perspective street view which is misleading.
- All of the drawings used in their presentation material (other than the plan) lack any reference to adjacent context to allow informed judgement and assessment.
- Although the report publishes the comments received during the consultation, - many very detailed - it is not immediately obvious how the issues have been responded to by the developers.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Lynn,

Chair

Portobello Community Council