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| Moderator | Notetaker | Participants | Date | Time | Venue |
| Garry Sneddon | Emma Candy | Local Residents | Thurs 7th Sept | 12 NOON – 1.30pm | Portobello Library |

So why are we here then?

Westbank Street, I’ve got a bit of stuff to go through first and foremost – so if you can just bear with me while I go through this information… if you do get a wee bit stuck or you think ‘oh, I don’t know, I’m not really following you or I need you to explain a certain bit again or repeat a part’ then just let me know, we’ll go back a wee bit and then we’ll get into the questions on the different aspects of the consultation.

So, the reason we are here today is that land on Westbank Street, which is currently owned by the Council, is being sold. Now, Portobello Community Council and Portobello Amenity Society have asked for the community to be involved in the decision about what criteria the Council should use to make the decision about who the land will be sold to. We’re conducting, in total, eight focus groups and this is number five already, with local interest groups and obviously local residents to help us understand how people feel about what’s going on with the sale and the various options being examined.

Before I ask the actual questions, I’m going to take you through a bit about the Westbank Street site and give you some background on what has happened so far, where we’re up to.

Is everybody familiar with the site itself and what we’re actually discussing today?

[Group agreement] …

We’ve got a wee map. So, you’ve got obviously the supermarket opposite, the Figgate Burn running down the side there and then the beach itself. At the moment is used by two businesses. Powerleague, which runs the five-a-side football pitches, um, next to Portobello High Street and then you’ve got Edinburgh Leisure, which runs Tumbles, the gymnastic / soft play centre - sort of - next to the beach.

Powerleague want to close the business at Westbank Street because they deem it to be no longer financially viable, so that’s why the site is actually being sold. Powerleague has a long-term lease with the Council which actually expires in 2088. Now, they first contacted the Council about selling the site back in 2004 and the developers were interested in the site, but the sale couldn’t be competed due to a downturn in the economy and of course it was accompanied with the crash later on.

Powerleague contacted the Council again in January 2015 to arrange sale of the site. As Powerleague do not wish to operate their business on the site anymore, the five-a-side pitches will be removed and they will not be replaced.

Tumbles… what will happen to tumbles? Edinburgh Leisure – which is actually a wholly-owned arms-length management company they run the city’s public sport and leisure facilities – they operate Tumbles. There actually are two options for what will happen to Tumbles.

Right… the first option is that Tumbles will not be sold and it will stay where it is, in its current location. The location of the Tumbles car park may change to another location on the site, but the capacity will remain the same, so there will be the same fifty allocated spaces retained.

The second option for Tumbles is it will be sold and the current building will be removed, but a new facility will be created within the existing site. The new facility must completely replace all of the existing functionality of Tumbles, and will also need to provide those 50 car parking spaces, exclusively for use by Tumbles customers. If Tumbles were relocated, there would be no loss of amenity.

Tumbles may be relocated on the site in this way because the land that’s next to the beach is actually worth more than the land near the High Street, in terms of actual value. Does that make sense so far?

[Agreement] …

So, what’s going to happen to the site? Well, any actual development on the land will still be subject to the planning permission. However, the developers who are interested – and I believe there are seventeen different proposals that have been sent forwarded… I haven’t seen any of them. Emma and I are not privy to that information, it’s deemed commercially sensitive, so we don’t know the value of the bids or seen any of the proposals that these developers are putting forward – just to make that clear today. What they’ve done is that they’ve submitted their intentions for how they’ll use the site and how much they’re prepared to pay obviously. Eh, what we’ll say it that we can’t share that sense of the money and planning stuff today – you might raise questions about the planning site, we’re not from the Planning department but what we’ll do is that we’ll record any questions that remain unanswered, if we can’t answer, and we’ll obviously get back to people and it’ll help inform the overall piece.

So, following your feedback, all the developers will be invited to revise those proposals that they’ve made again and obviously they’ll have to take into account community views. The appointed developer, the final developer that gets the actual contract will take part in a placemaking exercise and again, there will be an additional opportunity for the public to be involved – to be able to influence into the plan development.

So, what will happen to the money from the sale? Well, the sale will be split between Powerleague and the Council, and all the Council’s share of the money will go towards the development of the new Meadowbank stadium.

At this point, does anybody have any more questions?

Group: No…

Ok, right, ok. So, what I’m going to do is each of these things are the things we need to consider and need to look at and I want your views on any of these, anything at all.

First of all, in terms of the development – I’m looking at volume, height of the buildings, and stuff like that. So, there are actually a number of proposals for this site which range from entirely commercial, a business, and or to something that’s mostly housing, or a mix of the two. The total development on the site will substantially determine the price that the Council receives, so the actual value of it – so more development will probably actually mean more properties.

Plans that have been received from developers range from two-storey buildings to eight storey buildings; and for comparison, nearby buildings they range from single storey to eight storeys.

You have to take in account as well, that the Council’s Affordable Housing Policy will require, typically, that new developments to include quarter of all units, so 25%, of all units have to go to affordable housing, under the Affordable Housing Policy. Do you have any views about what kind of development should be on that site? Residential? Commercial? Whatever? Anybody want to start the ball rolling?

P1: I have seen that area, and I go down there many time with my wee one and… so, I suppose like what you have said I think they should go with the commercial. Like the Tumbles is right now is comparatively a small site, if you compare it with the Royal Commonwealth Pool and the centre. I wonder if Tumbles could be made a little bit larger with/including the activities like badminton, tennis – what we have at Meadowbank Sports Centre.

F1: Like expanding the facilities and making it much more dynamic?

P1: Yeah, yeah.

F1: Ok, anyone else?

P6: I remember when I was a kid, the open-air pool.

Group: \*Laughter\* I remember that as well, going back a bit…

P6: I loved it, I mean I think I went there nearly every day on the school holidays from dawn til dusk kinda thing – and it was just really great and I feel that maybe something similar would be great for the area and maybe Edinburgh Leisure could run it but maybe they could enclose it in the winter, like with a roof and it just open-air in the summer. And I remember we used to take a packed lunch and we’d just spend all day there. It was brilliant, so…

F1: So, you’re thinking about leisure because it’s been a leisure site?

P6: Yeah.

P5: I was thinking about it, after I knew I was coming, there’s just really nothing, you know, you walk around Portobello and there’s people visiting here and you think “Oh my god, where you going to go, what you going to do?” because in Portobello there’s really… nothing, it’s you know the whole leisure thing. There’s plenty houses getting developed and developed and I just think a good space like that would serve better as a leisure place, sort of leisure place in the past and I think it should be kept like that, for the residents as well – some sort of leisure so you don’t have to go into town and you don’t have to go out into town, you know, yeah.

F1: I’d just like to emphasise that Tumbles facility will definitely remain, just in case there was any ambiguity about that.

Group: agree, yeah.

F1: I can assure you of that, so that is part of the stipulation of the planning. Anybody else got anything to say about the leisure aspects or the way the site would be, the mix between commercial or housing or…

P4: Well, I think it should be more leisure as they’re building housing all about. You know, you’ve got the new retirement homes opposite, you know, you’ve got houses being built at the back, you know a lot could be done for different age groups. You know, a…

P5: There’s a lot of housing already [P4: yeah, uh-huh] but there’s not going to be facilities for them anyway, you’re going to have more people anyway but there’s no facilities for them locally... I mean you can go up to Meadowbank and everything but there’s just nothing, I mean no parks… [P6: agreeing] and just…

F1: Does anyone have any concerns about the additional housing or putting additional housing in?

P3: Additional housing brings additional people and that puts more pressure on the infrastructure; like schools, doctors’ surgeries you know, things like that you know, so – it just seems, like you say, they’re already building housing and then to build more would.

P7: It’s like they’re piling more people in. [Group agreeing] … and there’s nothing for them.

P6: What you said about the land at the beach being more, obviously worth more, so if they did move Tumbles and built new luxury flats overlooking the sea and that, it’d surely be out the reach of the residents of Portobello because they’d be a fortune and it’d be very expensive and I’ve got the worry as well for my kids, you know? Where are they going to live, will they get a house and…so really affordable housing or council housing or something like that…

F1: Okay…

P3: Or even the fact that Powerleague aren’t going to be there anymore. Obviously, there’s loads of folk that use that the now. I mean, we use it as a family for different things, no only for the football but you’ve got events there like birthday parties or, you know, the function suite and all these sorts of things. So obviously the folks that use it the now are going to have to go… I mean there’s one at Sighthill but I mean, that’s a bit of a trek you know for actually playing football.

F1: So, are you thinking about where that’s going to end up, where’s that going to go? Where will people go to carry out that activity?

P3: Aye…

F1: Okay, anything else on that? What about the actual height of the buildings, any buildings that they build there what about the height of them?

P7: I don’t think they should be too high. What’s the height of those flats going up?

F1: I’m not sure, I’m not familiar with this area, but from looking out over there some of them are about 5, they’re quite high but they’re obviously away from the beach and so on. You know?

P5: I think where the power station was, they’re high. They’re high enough.

F1: They must be… they quoted eight storey there [indicates to guide] so there must be somewhere a block of eight.

P5: I can’t think of any like that but certainly, they’re high when you come back into Portobello, you’ve no view or anything, so you certainly don’t want anything higher.

F1: Are you thinking about the impact of them then?

P8: Yeah, yeah… [Group agree]

F1: Do you have any comments in general about how the development, if you were to speak to the developers, what would you say about… how would you develop that?

P2: It depends on what you can fit in. If you’re talking about moving Tumbles, which would probably be a better idea to move it up to near the High Street and then you’ve got the land down at the beach, which is more expensive. I think it would be quite good, I like the fact that a lot of visitors do come to Portobello and I think something needs to be there to attract more visitors and to have more facilities for them, something like em, like a Wetherspoons or something, with an outdoor area for families and things like that. So, it encourages people to come visit and there’s somewhere decent, with good facilities, an outdoor play area, cheap food, you know – things like that.

F1: Is there nothing comparable to that at the moment? Or…

P2: Smaller ones but they can be very busy because of… because they’re quite small.

F1: So, you’re thinking making better use of the commercial? P2: Aye F1: Because it’s a prime site, yeah…

P5: Anybody who comes here to visit and stays down here has got to go elsewhere for facilities. It’s not as welcoming as like a holiday or something like that. There’s just no… I mean, what you’re saying about a pool, I really like that idea, I mean maybe not the open-air part [laughter] but something like that, I think would be grand and popular. I’m actually surprised that the place is not financially viable.. [group agree] …

F1: As I said, that’s twice they’ve been at the Council about the sale.

P2: There’s competition now. When they first opened that was the first one but then they opened the Sighthill one and now there’s Corn Exchange and other places.

P5: Think there’s one now down at the bottom of Muirhouse. Gypsy Brae.

P2: A new one? [group acknowledging and agreeing]

P5: And there’s obviously the pool just along, so I don’t know if they’d justify another one, well unless it was a private health centre for example. But I wouldn’t think Edinburgh Leisure would justify another one so close to the other one. [group acknowledging, agreeing]

F1: Thanks for that. I’m going to move onto parking now. Parking within the site, transport and travel more in general. As I said earlier, Tumbles will have this dedicated parking facility of 50 spaces for use of customers. Otherwise, the Council has requested that parking within the new development is kept to a minimum. Now what concerns, if any, do you have about parking in that area of Portobello?

P8: You’d need to have some sort of parking, cause the roads quite… no that wide, when you’ve got the buses coming down and they stop. That’s where they change drivers and everything.

P5: Think it’s, it’s such a good bus service in Portobello, you know – I don’t think people have a real need to, the same need for cars as they would have once upon a time, because the buses are 24 hour and it’s a good bus service and it’s cheap. You know, so, I don’t know, I mean obviously some people would want a car but I don’t need one.

P1: Do you think, like, if we are thinking that it can be related to the leisure centre, that the kids would be coming today and most of the parents have got the car with the kids… so they really need the good parking.

P7: But there’s going to be parking facilities for the leisure centre.

P5: That was for the Tumbles.

P1: Like, what about them building up in this area and we are thinking that the leisure centre could be extended over here, so right now the parking at Tumbles is really very good – there’s no restriction of the spaces at all. Any time, we get the parking for the classes that are going on, so if they minimise the parking then it would be struggle for us to find the parking facilities.

F1: From, obviously, I’ve got this script that I’ve got to follow here. Basically the 50 spaces are secure, they’re there but they’re really meant for the customers of the leisure facility. Whereas, overall, there’s obviously going to be housing and whatever, there would have to be some kind of parking or something.

F2: The dedicated 50 spaces are for Tumbles and what they’ve said, asked for any additional parking to be at a minimum within that development. So…

P5: Trouble is, you’d want it off street as well. The roads round about are quite narrow and the High Street not good.

F1: Yeah, I mean, I take it everybody lives pretty much near to the site?

Group: agreement

F1: What’s the parking like at the moment? I mean, in terms of your own street?

P8: Usually, all the streets are quite busy. [Group agree]

P5: Weekends are pretty bad.

F1: When the visitors come?

Group: Yeah, yeah.

F1: What about things like walking and cycling? I mean, in terms of active travel? Promoting active travel and whatever – any concerns about that in the area?

P6: I don’t think there are any problems with walking but I would be terrified to cycle on the roads [laugh].

P5: I cycle on the proms now. It didn’t used to be, you used to not be allowed to but now it is, but yeah. The main road’s not…

F1: What could the developer do then, is there anything that could be done in that area for walkers or cyclists… joggers?

P5: What kind of… I can’t see what.

P2: The thing is, they’ve not really got the much. The percentage of land that they’re going to have… I’m assuming that’s all that they can have any control over, eh?

F1: Pretty much, yeah. I’m thinking more along the lines of is there anything that they could maybe do in that area that would help the rest of the area in terms of walking, cycling? There is talk, and I’ll come on to that in a wee minute or two, about providing a walkway from the High Street down to the Promenade. Down the Figgate Burn, you know, down that way. A pedestrian type of walkway and maybe making that more open space down there. How do you feel about that?

Group: Yeah, yeah, think that would be a good idea.

F1: What about this relocation of Tumbles? Because not all of the developers are bidding to move the actual facility. I mean, they said earlier that there could be a possiblility of putting it on the High Street, em or leaving it where it is. Do you have any concerns about it being on the High Street?

P8: Not really. If it’s still got its parking facilities then it wouldn’t affect where it was – as long as it still had somewhere to park.

F1: And the entrance being on the High Street…

P5: As long as there were a nice entrance that fits in with the sort of area then… Uh-huh. I think the entrance on the High Street wouldn’t be any…

P1: I mean, like, customers who are like coming in right now into Tumbles. Most prefer to come with their kids because the café it’s getting the beach view. Which none of the other leisure centres get that view. So, that is a more important point as well. To move the Tumbles on the back side.

F1: Yes, to the High Street. Ok, then. At the moment, the five-a-side pitches are designated as open space and obviously, you can see around the perimeter of the site that there’s quite a lot of open space in there. Em, so some of it isn’t accessible. You can’t access the Powerleague pitches unless you’re a paying customer, em. The Council has asked the developers to try and create the equivalent of space so that it’s got a mix of open space as well. And as I said, the idea of creating a pedestrian access to the Promenade on the High Street on that site. Em, in terms of thinking about open space and positive aspects and so on, like do you think that would be. How do you feel about this idea of having sort of pedestrian access on the High street to the Promenade?

Group: Yeah, agreement.

P4: You wouldn’t have a lot of room but maybe a garden space. Maybe with benches, where people could sit. A picnic area?

Group: Yeah, uh-huh, for visitors too, with trees, yeah.

F1: That’s good, cause we’re trying to see if you’ve got any ideas that could maybe be accommodated.

P4: Not everybody loves going to the beach, you know. You maybe want to go to Portobello but not necessarily actually go *on* the beach.

P5: It’d be good if there was a bit that had the view of the beach where people could sit. But just nicely laid out and landscaped and everything with a reasonable amount of seating. I think it’d be quite nice and then if we get the sunshine…

Group: laughs, yeah.

P5: I’m just saying that if developers are wanting to buy that they’re going to pay a lot of money and I’m sure their plans will all be to pack in as much as possible… to utilise every sort foot of space but I think Edinburgh’s got that sort of policy that there should be green. It’s not even… like, other people would like to go and sit. I’d like to walk along the High Street and go down and sit, read your paper… have a coffee, you know if that facility was available then…

F1: Any other ideas on how we could use the open space or what we could do with it?

P2: I’m still gunning for a Wetherspoons like… [Group laughter] You have other chains that have loads of outdoor space and outdoor seating like, things like that. And I think, the nearer the beach – it would encourage people who were just walking along the promenade to actually go in there. And I think that with these types of pubs as well, cause they generally charge cheaper – you know, for food and drink – that they’d give back to the other sort of businesses in the community so they’re not affecting their business. Emm, so you could have as much land as you want – you could have a nice play area for the kids, plus outdoor seating, eating, drinking, whatever as well.

P5: So, that could be something stipulated to the plans as well…

P6: Something child friendly.

F1: Okay, anything else?

P3: I wonder if something for music might be quite nice… I mean, I don’t know. Like, maybe something during the summer where there’s live music and the other week there, along Porty they had the buskers thing at the front and stuff like that. Maybe if they had a wee sort of stage thing or something, you know like could do a wee music thing, like a concert bit aye.

P5: And that’s going to bring business in as well. [P3: Aye] Bring some money in as well.

F1: So, High Street frontage then. Thinking about the actual High Street and how it might look. Some of the developers are planning to include, what’s called, active frontage – if that makes any sense, it’s a commercial space so it’s got shops and offices, em or access to the relocated Tumbles. In different submissions that they’ve made, the active frontage is either on the High Street with a new pedestrian route, as I said, down the Figgate Burn or it’s actually along the Promenade. So, there’s these different options. What concerns, if any, do you have about the development of active frontage? Thinking about how it might look and so on…

P4: Some wee shops would be nice, you know. In Portobello there’s a lot of charity shops but if you had nice, I dunno what you’d do, but not craft shops but just touristy type shops, you know. You’ve got people coming down on holiday and you know just eh, cause like I said, there’s a lot of charity shops.

P8: You don’t need any more of them. You know… [chuckles]

P4: There’s a lot of them… along the High Street.

P3: But if it was all just offices, it would be quite boring.

P4: Sometimes when you’re away for the day or on holiday, you like looking round about. Not great big supermarkets but…

P5: It wants to something that attracts people [agreement]… as visitors. If you’re going to have that sort of thing.

P1: And a restaurant as well as along with the shops. So, all, like, all in one so they’re getting leisure as well, like they’re getting the beach around there as well, they’re getting shopping as well, they’re getting… yeah. So, that, they can bring them here as a tourist.

P4: And as that gentleman [P2] says, a child friendly restaurant that where you can take children to play and have a meal as well and… you know, there’s not a lot of restaurants for people that are child friendly.

F1: The Promenade then. As the Tumbles carpark is included in the sale, even if the building itself remains where it is, it’s very likely that there will be new development next to that Promenade… It’s likely. So, what concerns do you have about new development on the Promenade?

P4: Well, if it’s houses… there should be more reasonably priced houses. But if that land is very expensive then that’s not going to happen. I mean, as that lady [P6] was saying there’s people growing up now that can’t afford property and then if they’re building luxury flats or luxury houses then…

P8: It’s going to bring the wrong people… [group agree]

P5: There’ll be a lot of disruption round about as well, you’re going to have construction traffic for a long time and that sort of thing… But if it’s a good end product then people wouldn’t mind that.

P4: And I suppose, if it’s luxury penthouse, then the retirement flats, they might have a say, I mean they would have spent a lot of money on these. You would imagine, you know that…

F1: So you’re thinking the impact on… the property, the value?

P4: Big high flats, you know, the view. I know there’s nothing that can be done about that but if you’ve spent a fortune on a flat and this time next year there could be, you know. But there are a lot of houses round about…

F1: Ok, I feel like we’ve rattled through this! I hope we’ve not gone too fast but has anybody got any questions at this stage? Or is this what you thought you were going to be asked? [group agreement] Okay…

P5: I was just going to say, I’m just thinking as well. If you want visitors to the place, then people would come down Portobello Road on the bus and they turn in and coming in round the corner and see that big bit then they could think “Let’s get off here”, you know, you want something that’s gonna pull them in… “oh that looks nice, get off here, have a coffee and then plan where we’re going to go.” Just that nice frontage, I’m not sure what kind of frontage but something nice. Cause the bus stops there so “let’s get off here and go in there have a coffee and walk along, see, walk along the prom” and if you want it for visitors, make it holiday and have some nice frontage to it.

F1: You know when they do new developments, developers are usually required to provide what is known as community benefit – em, and that can vary from site to site. To give you an example, if maybe they’re building lots of houses you might have to provide a school as well or could be jobs, training that kind of thing. You do this, we do that. so, I’m thinking here about what would you like to see the developer providing in terms of community benefit? Anybody have any ideas or suggestions?

P4: If they’re building more houses, I don’t know if they’d need to extend the doctors’ surgery, school, another school, depending on what type of houses they’re building. You know, if it’s family houses then maybe another nursery.

F1: How are things with these at the moment?

P4 [chuckles] I’m passed the nursery stage now [group laughter] … But there’s always babies coming up, you know, I don’t know what facilities there are, nursery wise and pre-school age children.

P6: Maybe provide just more open spaces, benches and that for the residents of Portobello to enjoy.

P5: I was just thinking there, that they could be, they should be responsible for if they do a landscaping thing – this is for people to sit kinda thing and they could provide the outlets for cafes or whatever but they should be responsible “this is how we see the landscaping – we’ve got designers in for the landscaping”, maximum seating but spaced out kinda thing.

P3: Maybe an allotment or something would be quite nice. Like a small thing for the community kind of thing. That would be quite nice as well or get, like, school kids involved in it or…

F1: Okay, anything else?

P1: Instead of, if the builders want to make some residential, then instead of making it for a family or making a flat, instead of that they could make a serviced apartment? So, when there is a serviced apartment there would be no issue of more children coming in, getting admission into nursery or school. If they want to include the apartments then the.

F1: so, you’re saying… could you elaborate a bit?

P1: Yeah, I mean to say that building resident buildings and all, if you need, you know, there is a serviced apartment near Fountainbridge so they can make sort of serviced apartment that…

F2: Like a holiday let…

P1: Yeah [F agreement / understands], with the leisure centre and they can also have the option to say in the serviced apartment.

F1: Okay, like with a concierge…

P1: Yeah, so all in one. Stay, food, shops, leisure centre as well.

F1: Talking about the shops, say if it was an all commercial development, how would you feel about that?

P8: It would depend on the shops… [group agree]

F2: [Indicating to P5] I was interested in when you were saying, someone’s on the bus and they see something and it draws their attention… So, you’re on the bus, you’re entering Portobello – what would draw your attention? What would make you think “Oh, let’s get off here…”

P5: I don’t know what types but it’s the frontage… It’s that view in the front on the main road, that’s going to be what attracts people from passing and I’m not sure what you would have, but something to make people say “oh we’ll just get off here” and get to...

F2: So, the look of it, the aesthetics at first…

P5: Yeah, you know, if they’re heading along to Joppa or something em, but this looks nice, let’s get off and see what this is. And I’m not really sure what you might have but I can’t think that far ahead but just as long as it’s… [group agreement]

F2: \*Laughing\* Just as long as it’s pretty? [group laugher]

P5: You don’t want another bland bit of concrete, smoked glass windows – I mean, you just don’t want that. Something, that “I wonder what that place is?” To draw them…

P1: To raise their interest.

P4: And sometimes the buses stop there for a few minutes or that’s where they change drivers, I mean, not every bus stops there but tourists have got a few minutes to look round and things and think “that looks nice, let’s get off here” and…

P5: Like on the other side you’ve got an old folks’ home and an Aldi, and there’s the Kwik Fit… So that’s not going to attract.

F1: That’s interesting. Really, you’re talking about something that will make people go “wow, what’s that?” [group agree]

P4: And it’s going to for the residents as well. It’s not just for tourists.

P7: Get another bowling green! [Group laughter]

P8: I’ll second that.

P7: They’ll see it and think “that looks lovely, I’ll have a shot of that.” Cup of tea, a biscuit.

P5: You could still have your seats around that…

P7: Exactly! [group agree]

F1: That’s interesting… Not the tenpin…

P7: No! The old one. The one on the green. [group laughter]

F1: I think we’ve covered everything… Is there anything you want to ask me? Or anything you…

P3: What sort of timescales? Obviously, we have to go through the whole process but once the developers are chosen, if you like, what kind of timescales?

F2: I’m not clear on the details of that, but I know that we’ve got more focus groups next week, and there’s also the online survey out at the moment and I think that’s due to close on the seventeenth. And we’ll need a couple of weeks just to analyse that and pull all the feedback together and see what everyone is saying about it. Following that, there will be a session where em, everyone will feed back, so there will be an evaluation session with community representatives and that’ll be round about December / January time and then that will allow bidders to revise plans and we’d hope a report would go to committee seeking approval on the approved / appointed bidder round about the start of next year. And then after that, it’ll then be subject to planning permission stage and I have no idea what timescales would be for that as it will depend on how much they want to develop and stuff… [group agreement] exactly, so I can’t give an exact timescale on that, sorry guys, but yeah, at least you know the sort of engagement side of it.

P5: What I’m thinking as well, will it be a developer? Because, sometimes you get, I used to live down at Drylaw and you used to get all different developers who’d go in there and a wee bit of that built and a wee bit of that. Barratts and then Wimpey went in and so… but to me, if it was one developer they’d all be singing from the one hymn sheet and you won’t get different standards, designs and everything. A developer, who’s got plenty money to spend, would be better than having lots of different ones and all their ideas and a little bit there and a little bit there and…

F1: I think I would emphasise that this is crucial to the whole end product that you’re going to see, we’d hope that the public’s influence was there and that all these ideas would come into fruition and, obviously we can’t do everything for everybody, but it would be nice to see that these meetings and so on are influencing the criteria as much as possible so that these developers have good ideas but then going back to the drawing board and saying, well we were told that and let’s try and have a look at it again. So, that if it’s one developer or a mix of developers, it would at least be, you’d see the public’s influence in there.

P5: Will there be meetings once they’ve decided something when they’ve decided this is the plans. I know you can like object it and but would it be meetings with the public?

F2: I’m not sure, but we can put that forward as a suggestion. I’m not sure what the next stage would be in that. You’d hope this would be the start of more engagement…

P5: Yeah, I would happily go to a meeting, like a public meeting but I wouldn’t want to go to a planning meeting and say, I don’t like the sound…

F1: From what I understand of it, that placemaking exercise that will be quite crucial as well as you’ll have an indication of what they’re planning to do and there will be certain things that can be influenced around it so maybe, we don’t want it to look like that or want the trees here or that kind of stuff… things that matter to people as after a bit of time you might find yourself saying who put that seat there or who thought about that and I think if the public is involved in the placemaking then that will cover a lot of those angles.

F1: I’ve just got a couple of wee ones before you go. Just generally, have you any concerns or issues that are burning away and you think I need to get this off my chest about the development? Anything?

P5: They need to make sure, obviously, there’s going to be a lot of construction, to keep the traffic flowing cause we don’t want when they were working before – you don’t want big queues of traffic all along Portobello and up High Street and temporary traffic lights and you know.

F1: Anything else?

P1: Just going back to your community benefits, if I do get my pub [group laughter], then em, they could stipulate that they would employ staff from the area.

P5: A Wetherspoons would actually be fantastic as here’s really nothing

P1: And I don’t work for Wetherspoons by the way [group laughter]

P5: There’s really nothing like that round here. just to sort of take the family in or even better sit outside and have drink…

P6: They should have their own sort of space outside for customers and then maybe a picnic area for anyone to use… that would be quite nice.

P5: Just to walk along, when you get there have a pint.

P1: Then the bus to city centre or any part of Portobello is very good – so that will invite more people to come with the family and just…

P2: And they always name it and design it around there.

P4: If you get a nice day, the buses up to Porty are always busy and everybody always gets off at either the first stop at Kings Road or goes along to that stop just opposite, you know, that…

P5: Did you see those open top ones on the 26 and they were packed, even though the weather wasn’t that fantastic, they were packed. But you know, again, they’re coming down Portobello Road and they get to that and think “oh look at that place and” …

P2: I mean, it is the main beach there [group agreement]

P5: Trouble is, when you go along there at night and there’s all the barbeques and lights and everyone’s enjoying themselves and there’s scope there to get the people back.

F1: Coming from Grangemouth, I can tell you it’s [Portobello] a beautiful wee place. [group laughter] I’ve always liked it.

P3: What about something like a community centre? Maybe something like a sporting place but also a meeting place for groups and you know football in doors or whatever. Just some sort of community space. There’s no really anything like that.

F1: Taking everything we’ve discussed into account; how do you feel about the sale of the Westbank Street site?

P3: I wee bit more optimistic now than when I first heard about it. You know at first I was like “oh no, what are they doing, it’s been there for years” you know?

P4: And as long as they involve the locals, Sometimes, the locals give their opinion and they’re ignored. You’re not going to please everybody but you know, it’s about listening.

F1: I hope that that’s helped the day, that we’ve come to hear what you think.

P5: I think it’s a good idea, the consultation, give my opinion. Rather than, this is what we’ve decided do you like it?

F2: What were your concerns initially when you heard about it? Was it that Powerleague was going or…

P3: Aye, pretty much. Initially. I was like you know, my husband and my son use it and we’ve used it for other, like I say, for functions and parties and things like that. And just thinking of all the leagues that are there and there’s women’s football there and everything. It just seems a shame for it to... and none of it to be replaced, you know.

P5: My dread was… You’ve got an Aldi on this side, let’s stick a Lidl on this side. It’s just not required.

P3: It’s just in this age you know you want to encourage kids or adults as well to be taking part in sport, know what I mean, when you’ve got obesity rates as they are and as I said there’s not much else down here except the swim centre but you think people maybe needing help getting into it then they think I can’t be bothered trekking into town or going to Meadowbank or whatever. So, you want to be encouraging healthy…

F2: Did anyone else have any concerns when they initially heard the plans?

P4: You always just think, new houses cause that seems to be as far as they can go and there’s no really… I think there’s enough at the moment.

P5: It’s not just the houses, it’s what comes with it. Like extra patients for the medical practices, extra kids for the schools and…

P4: You’ve got the retirement home across the road and the old people’s home that they’re building round the corner now and like everybody else they’ll need doctors and facilities as well.

F1: There’s a lot of activity already here? [group agreement] Okay, anything else? [silence] I’ve really enjoyed the group, lots of good ideas, good, thanks very much. Any other questions?

P3: Have the other groups brought up the same sorts of ideas?

F1: A myriad of stuff, people are putting forward many ideas, some people more happy about the commercial side, others with housing but we take all this stuff in and produce a report, we’re completely impartial, we’re not connected to the sale so we that doesn’t bother us one way or the other… it’s about what you want so we’ll be doing a report and thanks very much for coming along.