|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Moderator | Notetaker | Participants | Date | Time | Venue |
| Garry Sneddon | Saty Kaur | Local Interest Groups | Tues 12th Sept | 6.30pm-7.50pm | Portobello Library |

Some background on what’s happened so far... you’re probably aware of all the landmarks (map)

The reason we are here today is that land on Westbank Street which is currently owned by the Council is being sold. Portobello Community Council has 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 eight focus groups in total with local residents and special interest groups to help us understand how people feel about the various options.

Before I go into the sort of specific questions and things about each of the topics I need to take you through what the Westbank Street site is and give you some background on what’s happened so far. So, I’m presuming you are all familiar with the site... You’ll obviously be aware of the landmarks such as the supermarket opposite, the Figgate burn that rounds down the side and of course the beach.

Now, at the moment the site is used by two businesses; Powerleague that runs the five-a-side football pitches next to Portobello High Street. Edinburgh Leisure which runs Tumbles, a gymnastic and soft play centre, next to Portobello Beach.

First of all what will happen to Powerleague?

Powerleague want to close their business at Westbank Street they see it as no longer financially viable and that’s why they have decided to sell. Powerleague has a long term lease with the Council and it’s actually expiring in 2088 but they were first in touch with the Council about selling the business way back in 2004 and developers were interested in the site but the sale couldn’t be completed at that point due to the downturn in the housing market that accompanied the financial crash. Powerleage contacted the Council again in January 2015 to arrange sale of the site. And as Powerleague do not want to operate their business any longer on the site the five aside pitches will be removed and they will not be replaced.

The Tumbles centre which is operated by Edinburgh Leisure which is a wholly-owned arms-length management company-they run the city’s sports and leisure facilities – they operate Tumbles and there are two options for Tumbles.

Female P – Sorry can I just ask a question..? Do Powerleague..? The Council own the whole site.. and so... and Power league are just they lease this part of the site (points to map).

Mod- That’s correct yes-the part in which their interest’s are in yes.

MaleP-I think a point of further clarification therefore they approached the Council to sell the site-they’re not in a position to be able to sell the site.

Mod2-No, they approached the Council to come out of the lease as they no longer wanted to become leaseholders for the site and as a result of them doing that and the lease that they had was a long term lease then that Council decision was made at committee to sell the site.

Female-For the whole site..

Male P-That doesn’t quite correlate precisely with what you were saying and I think this was something I was saying and I think this has been circulated prior to having these focus groups... what you seem to suggest that they approached the Council with a view to selling the site and it would rather be more accurate to say they approached with a view to negotiating an exit from their lease.

Female P-My understanding from a historical aspect was that the first time they approached the Council was that they wanted to sell the site but they discovered they couldn’t as they still had only had the lease maybe this is something we should – do you want to come back to.. (interruption)

MaleP-Sorry, I think it’s important

FemaleP-Yes I agree it is an important difference but maybe if you go through what you have got to say then maybe we can come back to it..

Mod-Ok that’s fair enough, I’ll just draw back a little-there are two options for what will happen to Tumbles-you can appreciate that I am reading this from the script... (Continues)

The first option is that Tumbles will not be sold and would remain in its current location as is. The location of the Tumbles car park may change to another location on the site but the capacity will remain the same which is 5o at the moment. They’ll be retained the second option for Tumbles is that the building will be sold and removed and a new facility will be created within the site. This new facility must completely replace all of the existing functionality of Tumbles and it will also need to provide the fifty car parking spaces exclusively for Tumbles Customers. If Tumbles were to be re-located there will be no loss of amenity.

The Tumbles site could possibly be relocated in this way because the land next to Portobello beach is more valuable than the land near the high street.

So what’s going to actually happen to the site- any actual development on the land will still be subject to planning permission. However, developers have already submitted their intentions on how they would use the site and how much they are prepared to pay. We cannot share with you what any particular developer has said but we will go through the different aspects of the site and say what developers have said for each of these.. We also cannot share with you in terms of the money that was bidded for each of the proposals but generally the more developed the site the more developers are prepared to pay. and following the feedback from all the community groups etc bidders will be invited to rebid and basically change or look at their submissions again taking into account community views.

The appointed developer will take part in what’s known as a place making exercise where there will be an additional opportunity for the community to input into the planned development.

What will happen to the money that’s raised from the sale? It will be split between Powerleague and the Council and the Council share of the money from the sale will go towards the new Meadowbank stadium.

Does anyone have any questions at this point?

I’m sure that’s quite a lot to take in all of a sudden ok so we’re going to go into different areas for discussion, first of all development type volume and height and there are different proposals for the use for the site from entirely commercial to housing and a mix of the two. The total development on the site will substantially affect the amount the Council gets from the sale... with more development generally meaning taller properties. Plan received range from two storey to eight storey and for comparison nearby buildings range from single to eights. Another important point is that the Council affordable housing policy typically require new development s to require 25% of all the units affordable housing.

Do you have any views of what type of housing should be on the site residential or commercial? And what concerns do you have if any about additional home being built?

FemaleP-Shall I go first right I have got parent council have got concerns about any further housing being built in Portobello particularly in such close proximity to the primary school which I’m not sure if you... it has been the subject of a catchment review over the past two years and has been a very difficult and very involved process for everyone concerned and it is designed to address the fact that (inaduible) school roll ahs been spiralling and there has been an extension built on the school and that did not do enough to tackle the roll.. there are already a number of new developments in Portobello I understand there has to be affordable housing but every time these are built in the area it places a huge pressure on schools wich are already bursting at the seams and from my perspective and certainly from the school’s perspective as well they simply cannot cope with any more pupils so I’m very concerned about that site and certainly were there to be housing (inaudible)

Although there are restrictions.. (Inaudible)

Female P-(Inaudible) there is a requirement for the developers to give the Council a benefit for educational services... the services, the infrastructure is really struggling here.. something’s got to give at some point the school they’ve already drawn from their catchment area... they’re already going to have to go to the high I mean we’ve already said and I mean there’s nowhere else for them to go.. there’s (inaudible) Portobello school but everything else has been built on..

Female P-and it just seems very contradictory that that one department of the council is having to deal with the tricky issue of rising rolls and catchment boundary and then then another part of the council is selling a bit of land potentially which will increase the budget pressures..

FemaleP – A historical aspect to that piece of land-(interruption) there was a meeting held not a million miles from here-and the director of leisure-it was when the old outdoor pool was sold off and sadly most of us wanted to keep it but we realised that it wasn’t viable so but there was ... and I don’t know whether it was in writing anywhere but it was the community council, I was at the meeting, Margaret was probably there sadly it’s the same faces (laughs) but I am fairly certain that there was a guarantee that that piece of land was to be kept for leisure. Not sure if that’s down on paper but look at what’s happened in Edinburgh just down with massive legal things and issues with trams and stuff you can see how these things are in the hands of and how it’s put down in paper but I feel strongly and I think the people that I represent feel strongly an awful lot of people that I know would like to see that piece of land left and used for leisure activities.. it could be a mixture of leisure activities involving Tumbles I would have to say either in it’s present for or revamped.. I may as well get all of this over with right now but I think Tumbles is one of the best things that we’ve had in Portobello for decades and to see that diminished in any way shape or form I think would be an absolute travesty-people would be marching in the streets and it would be a very silly thing for anyone to do-I realise having been involved in politics the money aspect, Meadowbank’s very close to my heart and I want to see it done and I’m sure it can be done without impinging on Portobello little bit of leisure activity..

Femalep –Another thing is the site is zoned as open space in the development plan so you’re going to get but I agree it was to be used as a recreational space in perpetuity (inaudible) but there’s a couple.. we’ve been asked here to make choices or a decision when the decision about the land has already been made when you’ve decided to sell it.. You’ve come to us almost a fete a complait (not you personally –the Council) and I don’t call that a good community consultation because we’ve now been given the choice of residential or commercial we’ve not had any choice and moving Tumbles which everyone wants to keep because its one of the few recreational facilities we have for youngsters the decision has already been made and now we are being asked about what goes on the site but the overall decisions already been made so in a way this is kind of a gesture towards the community to make that decision but the first has already been taken and I find that kind of offensive in a way...

MaleP-And again just to emphasise the point taht you made this is feedback directed at the Council...

Mod – I understand...

Male P-It is tokenistic, the process that’s being pushed through at the moment is demonstrably a very bad way to make place – it’s a terrible way to design it and it’s developer led and at the core of anything the developer is going to be doing and at the core of what the Council are trying to achieve out of it this is profit, it’s money it’s short termist what’s going to be driving the development here is the profit margin of the developer they’re not interested with any will in the world about amenity or facility or quality of space in the short or the long term for the community it’s not in their interest and I don’t think it’s too strong a term to use it’s offensive to be given this consultation process and the questionnaire where we are saying would you like a wee square of paved spaced or would you like grass or would you like mostly residential that’s just not good enough it’s a terrible process and fundamentally there seems to me to be a potential legal conflict of interest in the context of the council both selling the land looking to achieve the most return for it and then determining the planning application because it’s clear that these two things that could be seen as over-development as the preamble states itself whatever is going to increase the value, whatever process is taken whatever is put forward by one of these developers is going to be very contentious and seems to be at odds with the local development plan so...so there’s going to be a very lengthy process of determining that which I think will be inevitably open to being legally challenged because the Council are selling it and determining the application so the whole thing is just a terrible process that we have been shoehorned into and at the end it’s a fete a complait we are being asked to put forward some opinions on this after the event..

Mod- Ok,, there’s not a lot I can say to that. I’m not here to defend anything

MaleP-Again, I don’t expect you to come back to that...

Mod- Absolutely, I’m not here to defend anything

MaleP-You’ve not made the decisions that have brought about this place but I mean given the historic context of the thing that has been as site of leisure since the pool was built in 34 I think..

Femalep-And I think you’re point about it being short sighted I mean Portobello over the past ten years has been transformed in terms of its amenities its facilities it’s a town where you’d want to bring up your children and that has never been anything to do with the Council that has been driven by the community and the local business and when we are in a situation when the Council aren’t even prepared to keep open the public toilets they’re not actually looking at the whole of Portobello holistically at all there needs to be some kind of strategy, housing infrastructure tourism all of these things and this is an example of all of that.

Male P-Just to add to that.. I agree there really is.. given the amount of housing that’s going up on the Baileyfield site.. we’re likely to get a population increase of around 50% ad what we’re not getting to balance that is that we need to build homes but we need to have a certain type – we need affordable homes.. the infrastructure within our communities has been put under stress at the cost of our amenity and often what would the return is that it’s lining the developers pockets. We’re getting nothing back from this.

FemaleP-If this goes ahead we will have no community benefit whatsoever – well Meadowbank is getting done up but our Portobello community are getting no benefit from the sale of the site plus we’re going to lose quite a lot by it I think.

Mod-Throughout this exercise it’s my job and Saty’s job to get as much information , feelings, about what people think about the plans etc.. or how it’s got to the stage its at and for the purposes if this exercise I will be going on to stuff and will be touching on community benefit that will touch upon loss of amenity and so on.. So if you could forgive me by going through the process and get the information from you..

Male P- You’ll forgive me if I reiterate that fundamental position that I

ModP-Cause it would be futile otherwise...

Saty – Just to throw in the mix that part of this exercise is that one of the questions that we’ve got is around community benefit and what that would actually mean so where you are making the point of we are not getting any community benefit well that’s your opportunity to then tell us so that we can feed this back what that would look like to you in Portobello. There’s a section in this focus group around community benefit and Garry will explain that expect them to deliver some kind of community benefit and it should be shaped around what you are looking for as opposed to us or them just presuming what it is, part of the.(attempt at interruption).- just to let me finish- part of the other bit around housing is that yes we understand that there’s a feeling in this room that you are not entirely happy with the development whilst we can’t sit here and defend that we can explain the history behind it can’t talk to you about Portobello when the swimming pool shut because we weren’t around then, we are not saying we are for or against it we are impartial, but part of the discussion that we are trying to have is about if this development goes ahead and we are saying we’ve got proposals is (Inaudible) and if it is at the end of the day that it does go ahead then is the point where we can say what would you prefer to see, storeys, height, two storeys, four storeys..and you’re probably all saying well we’ll have none and that’s fine and that’s recorded and that’s noted and we’ve got that - I’m almost kind of saying to try and move forward in the discussion to try and understand better what is the least least offensive solution towards this is do you know what I mean I get what you’re saying...

Male P- I understand that entirely but that’s a problematic process because it in some way legitimises our acceptance of the thing so.. the nature of the consultation questionnaire is designed to give you the answer that you are looking for and again it’s not you personally but thats..

Saty-No... but I think as well it’s just about...

Male P-Well it is demonstrably that

FemaleP-Well you went into the questionnaire and at the top is said and I’m paraphrasing here.. the decision has been made it’s going to be commercial or housing and that can’t be changed but I actually read that and I thought that was quite-I thought it was a bit of a cheek asking for your but we’ve already made this big decision. You now get to footer with the fine details about how many commercial do you move Tumbles or do we not move Tumbles.

Male P-five or six stories, wee patch of grass I mean it’s just so tokenistic as I said to be offensive..it really is like..

Mod-I’m getting that, I’m getting what you are saying.. but I think as Saty is saying as well though is what I need from you if anything from this so we get something productive on this-throughout each of these parts yes it does probably demonstrably do that yes, it does kind of demonstrate that it’s ok a done deal in certain areas but there’s still that place making exercise, there’s still planning permission that has to be agreed, there’s still the council who have to agree it.. There are all of these things whether negative or constructive or otherwise that are coming into the mix here This is I.. coming in as an outsider when I first got involved there’s an opportunity here not to frustrate or make it difficult but to say right ok the council obviously needs the money it’s made that quite clear and it’s decided to go ahead with some kind of sale through this bidding process and it’s now got the public involved perhaps...

FemaleP-too late?

Mod-Perhaps, but again but it’s not for me to say that.. maybe there’s a learning point there

MaleP-It’s for us to say ... It’s not for you to say it’s for us to say

Mod-Absolutely and I appreciate that yes...

Saty-it is yes, but it’s also about us trying to it’s also a part of our role is.. I don’t mean for this to sound negative, don’t take this the wrong way.. but to sit round a table for an hour and a half where we just turn round and say we adamantly disagree with this is not going to help in terms of so I don’t know if anyone has explained but as part of the next stage of this process so the focus groups and the consultation and the survey and the focus groups all of that stuff will be written up into a report again everything’s all FOI’d it’s all like transcribed it’s you know transparent we don’t take the answers and decide this is what we think you’ve told us all we do in our team is we take all that information and compile into a report the report is then written and the report goes out to the developers who have already submitted initial bids so the bidding is closed at the moment they’ve submitted their bids and we ask them to go back and revise their bids in accordance taking cognisance of everything that’s come through from all of the feedback and it will be explained to them what’s come through the focus groups what’s come through the consultation because the questions in the consultation are a bit more direct but that’s the challenge sometimes with an online survey as opposed to focus group where we can have much more informed discussions cause you can’t ask a question in a survey because you’re not going to get an answer in filling it out.. all of that stuff goes back and then developers then come back with a second phase of bidding hopefully taking acknowledgement of the feedback and then shaping their proposals around that and then following on from that an evaluation session whereby members of Portobello Amenity Society and Portobello Community Council who have submitted the participation request for us to be here today then sit in a room with Council officers to then look through all those bids to evaluate all of those bids there’s a scoring matrix that has a weighting a particular weighting towards different things including whether it’s feasible from a planning perspective probably something to do with financial as well but an important part of it is around how much of the developers revised bids have taken acknowledgment of what the community feedback is and that’s weighted there’s a scoring system it’s matrixed all of that is then presented at Council to make a decision at Council based on that evaluation session then recommending who they think the preferred bidders should be from there.. that goes to Council and then from there there’s the place making exercise as you would expect to be involved in anyway as with any development and that’s the kind of next phase of it so suppose what I’m trying to get at is that the value of this discussion is where yes by contributing to the discussions by sitting in this room today by no means says that you are supporting of this development either personally or as part of the group you represent but what we can say is all of these groups have made representations in terms of collectively out of what the options are on the table with where we are. We can’t change that position we have made so far this is their preferences so it’s about trying to have a structured conversation and I get what you were saying but by if you don’t want, I mean if you personally don’t want to give us an opinion that’s absolutely fine but none of this is going to be written up to say that the groups you represent because you’ve talked about what possible community benefit you know might be further down the meetings doesn’t necessarily mean that means that your group is supportive of this plan but you know in order for us to inform that engagement and that report we kind of need to understand you know not what you would like to see ‘cause I know what you would like but from what we’ve got what our boundaries are at the moment where we can go so it’s just about trying to focus the discussion around that...

(interrupted by female P)

Female P- I think we understand that and basically what you are saying is we’re being asked to make the best of a bad deal and if we’ve got to accept this deal then we have a chance to make it as good as it can be

Saty-But I mean I...

(interrupted by female P)

Female P-But it’s really important for us to make clear that this is not the deal that we want

Saty-Yes and I get that and also...

(interrupted by female P)

Female P-And we don’t think it’s the best thing for the community and I think as long as can I don’t know.. guarantee? ‘cause you know there’s a way of writing things up you know we’ve all done it and read reports that have been written up ion a certain way to highlight certain things but it’s clearly really important to all of us that it is made absolutely clear this is not what we want but we are here obviously to try and contribute and get the best deal we can if this is.. fete a complait cannot be changed ‘cause this is what it is. And it’s not your fault you know..

FemaleP-I think we can all understand that my own view is that we should actually move on otherwise we are just going we are flooging a dead horse we are all of the same view. I am comforted to hear that it’s going to full council.. It’s full council?

Saty-Finance and Resources committee in January because they were the ones who made the original decision.

FemaleP-It may well-will it possibly go to full council?

Saty-I would need to double check a lot of it is to do with the committee scheduling but I can certainly check that..

Femalep – because it’s a big thing for the community and also the fact that PAS and the Community Council will look at the things as well and I’m sure we will put our final you know crucial points...

Saty-They are, they’re part.. they’re not just looking at it though-it’s not like they are all sitting in a room with council officers and they are all just making a decision and they’re just there as token gesture they’re there to weight and score as part of you know ...so they’ll see the proposals they might have to sign a confidentiality agreement or something because it’s commercially sensitive or whatever that is depending what’s in the.. but they will be part of making that decision taking on board everything that they can see through the community engagement they can read the transcripts you know all that stuff and can get a feel for the conversations we’re obviously not privy to... in these rooms..

Mod-Thanks Saty

FemaleP-Can I just ask you to clarify something for me which is maybe a bit legalistic and perhaps I am really naive but if Powerleague want to leave the site like I understood that if you want to give up a lease then you either sell the lease on or you buy the lease out I can’t understand why if they want to leave the site and give up this 99 year lease that they were given which runs to 2088 that you said why are they entitled to a share of the money-maybe I am really naive about this...

Mod-I think I am too... but I don’t know much about planning law but I know if you were going to buy them out of the lease you’d be owing them some of the money I would have thought and if the site is going to produce you more income if you are going to have a sale to make more cash for some other capital project then that would be my explanation for it.

Female P-Ok.. I just didn’t understand why

Male P-I am also perplexed by that scenario as well I don’t really see how, if somebody wants to because they find their business that they are operating is no longer financially viable and they want to get out of their lease why the Council would compensate them for the inefficiency of their own business..

Mod-I wouldn’t have thought that they would have been forced as a business to keep a lease that wasn’t financially going to make them..

Femalep-But I thought if you had a shop and you gave up the lease you had to.. this is the thing I don’t know I’m surprised by that if you gave decide to give up the lease you can actually say well I’m not doing this anymore

Femalep-well may be this point can be noted

Mod-We’ve got it recorded yes

FemaleP-You talked about the possibility of eight storey flats and usually when they build there has to be kept in line with what’s been build round about

Mod-that’s kind of why I mentioned just for comparison we’ve been told the nearby buildings I can see that on the front they are two or three storeys..

FemaleP-This is the one’s on the side... they are five but none are eight.

Femalep-their older and they are higher because modern buildings are more (inaudible)

Malep-Even these one’s here (inaudible)

Femalep-Maybe they are talking about the local authority housing across the road

Male-Future housing that is yet to be built – I think that’s a bit disingenuous...

(General conversation)

Saty-That’s not what Garry said Garry said...

Femalep—From two to eight storeys

Saty-...the proposals we have received to date from the bidders range from two to eight storeys-that’s the proposals received that’s not anything we have agreed but he did reference that at the moment

Mod-Just nearby buildings just...

Saty-in the local area at the moment the highest are five to put it in perspective

Female-Oh right ok the highest are five that makes sense

Mod-No I didn’t say that I actually said for comparison nearby buildings range from single storey to eight storeys so there must be eight storey ones somewhere

Femalep-The only one I can think of is Coliston House and that’s in Joppa and that’s an anomaly so I don’t think in this day and age wanting..

Mod-theres’ the tower block in the high street which is maybe eight or ten but again that’s an anomaly

FemaleP-You’re right, you’re right you’re right Garry you’re right

(Various interruptions)

Mod-Let’s not argue over the point...

Saty-It’s nearby buildings which is .. housing

Mod-yes but we’ve agreed they are pretty much in the area right and we’ve talked about the affordable housing policy just so we can draw a line under that can we continue ok? And go through the process I don’t want to offend anybody..

Femalep-We’ve vented our spiel you can carry on..

Mod-Parking. Tumbles will have a dedicated parking facility of fifty spaces for use by its customers otherwise the council has requested that parking within the new development be kept to a minimum what concerns if any do you have about parking in Portobello?

Femalep-well if you are saying there will be a car park and you are keeping parking to a minimum and you’re going to restrict the parking to Tumbles customers then the streets are going to be jam packed..

Mod-Any other views?

Femalep-I think there’s a point to be made about the fact that Towerbank Primary is part of the safer streets zone so you are not allowed to drive round the streets in the surrounding area at school drop off pick up time and a lot of people already disregard that so there is a potential impact.

FemaleP-I think that Tumbles to be a success and to attract people it would need its fifty spaces and it should be sacrosanct, the people that buy the houses it’s up to them what they do.

Male-I would echo the stresses on the infrastructure in terms of the amount of traffic going through the High Street at peak times it is almost at a standstill.. and as I understand it the facility at Tumbles is well used and should be expanding it’s exactly the kind of facility the Council should be expanding and if it gets moved into better purpose built then that’s great the existing facility should not just be retained it should be enhanced (inaudible)

Mod-What about public transport in the area? Any observations concerns?

(General agreement)

MaleP-Pretty good

Femalep-Quite good

Femalep-As good as you get

Femalep-We’ve lost the 15, we’ve actually only got the 26 which is the only one that goes straight into town

Female P-45?

Femalep-yes but it doesn’t run on a Sunday basically it’s good unless you are trying to get on a bus on a Sunday of course

MaleP-I don’t know why there isn’t a service that runs all the way along to Leith

FemaleP-thats a perennial problem you can’t get a bus along to Leith Walk, or along London Road you’ve never been able to...

Female-And we have got the station at Brunstone which is keeping people at that end happy

Mod-What about active travel-you know walking, cycling?

(General agreement)

Mod-Any concerns in that area?

Female-I think the High Street is not particularly great for cycling

Male-It’s terrible for cycling-it brings about yet again a perennial issue of a conflict of users and along the promenade it’s an ongoing issue

Female-for another night I think

Mod-So what could a developer do about your concerns then?

Female-A developer could put money into helping the transport by putting lights in left and centre (?) in my view

Mod-Well I mean again if you are handing the sight to a developer I would be getting as much out of them as I possibly could and I would be narrowing their profit margins to as much as possible and extracting as much as possible certainly the High Street’s really bad for cyclists I don’t cycle regularly myself but I hear this time and time again and so if someone like sustrans or whatever could come in and make some assessment of what kind of improvements could be made and then planning be set aside for particular issue..

Female-Yes you’re absolutely right the lack of safe cycling on the high street drives cyclists on to the prom which is a massive bugbear for parents because you’ve got one of the safest school commutes on the whole of Edinburgh and your kid is having to run the gauntlet of cyclists weaving in and out means it can be really challenging

Male-and the folk with their bikes I’d guess would rather not be weaving in and out..(female int-toddlers exactly) five year old kids like my daughter so upgrading the infrastructure the cycle lane potentially on the high street I think would be something for a developer..

Female-it would be tricky though – it would be a monumental task I mean at the moment people will park where they shouldn’t be there’s shops I mean where do you put them? I mean I’m just being devil’s advocate where do you put them?

Male-I agree but if we just acquiesce to everything then you know that’s what when you end up with these..

Female-I mean Portobello’s a particular site because you’ve got the sea on the other side so there isn’t anywhere to go there...You know you can’t just find a field and broaden it.. I think if there had been an issue it would have been sorted if it could have been fixed a while ago I think we’ve got to really realistic

Male-I think, there’s potential to upgrade the way the high street is laid out making it potentially safer for cyclists as I understand it.. (inaudible) is there a professional able to assess that?

Female-Nor am I, but I do know if you’ve got lorries parked outside the supermarkets you’ve got ambulances you’ve got buses you’ve got cars I don’t see where else you can you know something has to go..

Saty-Is there something you could do with the prom in terms of (inaudible) in the morning , just throwing another...

Female-I think that’s been widely discussed I think the idea of having a cycle lane and that’s been ruled out or having it restricted at particular times and I thin again that all of this has been considered-I don’t think its possible to keep either the cyclists of the pedestrians or the parents ...(inaudible)

Saty-But we could throw it into the mix..

(General agreement)

Male-Any developer would need to be cognisant of that issue there’s definitely an issue there where there’s a stress there that they should be aware of that they would be impacting on.

Mod-we touched upon this next subject earlier that not all developers are bidding to move Tumbles one possible option where the facility may go closer to the high street with pedestrian access from the high street-do you have any preference as to whether Tumbles is relocated or not and what concerns if any do you have about that relocation?

Female-I just think it’s absolutely bonkers to move it I mean I can understand obviously in financial terms why you would want to move it but I mean again, in the last five years the council has gone through the upheaval of kicking out the indoor bowlers which caused a great deal of trouble that’s a great facility it’s you know used for soft play , gymnastics clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs why the cost and hassle involved in moving it fifty yards why on earth would anyone want to do that how is that an environmentally, financially sound idea I really don’t see how it is

Female-And you also have the safe access on the prom

Female-yes absolutely

Female-And there’s very little on the prom for culture and leisure we nearly lost a swimming pool twenty odd years ago so anyone new coming to Portobello at least if you’ve got Tumbles there..

Male-I entirely agree that Tumbles is sacrosanct-and again speaking to one of the managers down there very recently you know it’s like nine o’clock on a Sunday evening the place was full of teenagers and you think this is exactly the kind of facility the Council should be supporting and expanding so I personally wouldn’t have an issue with it it’s not a purpose built facility and it doesn’t make good of the space for one and the nature of the building is that it’s a big shed so from the point of view of the embodied energy and the environmental impact of taking a building like that down I wouldn’t have a great concern about that if it was to be replaced with a better purpose built facility which was enhancing the facility that they have the amenity the scope to expand that’s a very successful facility there that we have I don’t think the way it presents itself to the prom its’ pretty terrible I don’t think its a great building it doesn’t give anything back really in terms of place making it doesn’t relate very well to the prom it overshadows a sort of expanding apron on the north side which is a sort of perennial problem that you get with a north facing beach but I’m not I don’t feel whilst I value tremendously the facility that it provides form an architectural point of view the building is pretty terrible and they are shoehorned in there they don’t make good use of the space because it is a big shed at the end of the day. I think that facility could be better provided if it was to be moved.

Female-What would happen to all the classes and facilities that are all going on in that space whilst it is being redeveloped?

Saty- We don’t know the answer to that because part of it is around (inaudible) if they were going to take Tumbles away... Edinburgh Leisure would need to be consulted - not meant to be leading but... (Continued inaudible)

Male-The continuation of service would be sacrosanct any preference...

Female-Just for the record I would love them to build a new building personally I think it should be on the prom where children would be the safest... kids can walk along..

Female-It’s already an option as people are already on the beach

Male-The only reason they would do it would be to improve their profit by building stuff because of the freeboard needed by flood prevention you’ve got this metre and half of freeboard built up... They have a huge impact in terms of the overshadowing of the beach.. but they also it’s a disengaging boundary to the edge of the prom which is bizarre.

Mod-newish looking flats just beside?

Male-It’s an associated point but when you talk about developers signing up to things.. there’s a unit on the south side of those flats which I believe was offered to..

Female-It was promised to Portobello Heritage Trust it was part of the community benefit as was the new notice board but we cannot get any reply from the council.

Female-That’s why I don’t have great deal of faith in the community benefit because quite often the council doesn’t push them and we just seem to finish the development and then the developers just disappear..

Male-Is there not a time limit of five years if they Portobello Heritage Trust haven’t occupied the space then they are no longer required to give it back I know the beach wheelchair guys they were desperately trying to get in touch with the developer to use that space as well and they just refused to communicate..

Mod-Is this the developer that has not replied?

Female-Doesn’t reply.. I’ve emailed him... often the artwok emailed asking if they could use it

Mod-Do you know what’s in that at the moment?

Female-Nothing but it was boarded up but it was agreed that we would get it for the heritage trust for their archive and I have lost track of how many times I have emailed him he just doesn’t answer and he was supposed to provide an information board at part of the kilns as part of the community benefit and he hasn’t done that and we have pestered the council and the council has taken it over and that’s just an example of how developers get away with not providing community benefit and I’m always a bit cynical about what they promise.

Mod-I’m just conscious of time as we have to be out at ten to eight and I want to cover all these different angles... this is about open space and the Figgate burn the site includes some existing open space along the Figgate burn and the five a side football pitches are also designated as open space whilst this space is currently not accessible though the council has requested the developers have equivalent open space within the site now it could take several forms it could include for example the development of a walkway alongside the figgate burn providing additional pedestrian access to the promenade there may also be other space within the development. Now if the developer were including open space within the development what form would you prefer this to take?

Female-I would like a walkway down from the high street to the prom.. it’s not a new suggestion it was in the north east development plan when we did that and it was ignored and I’ve been involved in lots of plans where we’ve spent hours and hours talking about it and it just doesn’t happen.. it would be nice to get down to the prom from the high street down a nice walkway..

Mod-Anyone else?

Male-and it’s open accessible space that’s the crucial thing there I think. I know it’s not classed as accessible space because it’s owned by the pitz on the site but in reality people regularly walk across the site and use the recycling facilities which we go and use and the rest of it.. it’s your question which is leading towards let’s provide some space which isn’t quite as accessible.

Mod-Any negative impacts from having a pedestrian access?

Female- Only if that was to take away any money which was for culture and leisure. If they use that as a sop we’ll get a wee pathway down there I walk down past the Figgate burn..

Mod-Are you meaning something of quality?

Female- A boardwalk

Female-Something with lights and that, streetlights

Male-I won’t start going on about it again but this comes to the heart of this this site could be developed very well but not in this fashion it is developer led and they are not going to be interested in providing some genuinely good spaces or places or amenities that’s not what they do that’s not in their remit they are there to make profits that’s not what we will get with this process.

Female-I know you can’t discuss the details of the individual developers but have you got any information about what the commercial proposals are? i.e. non-residential

Mod-We’re coming on to ...Well you might know by the topics because the next bit is about High Street frontage and some developers are proposing to have active frontage and by that they mean either commercial space such as shops or small offices or access ti the relocated Tumbles.In different submissions this active frontage is either on the high street on a new pedestrian route along the Figgate bur or along the promenade. What concerns (if any) do you have about the development of active frontage on the site?

Female-So are there any of the development proposals that have no housing in them

Saty-We don’t have, Garry and I haven’t seem them.. (laugh) this did come up on Saturday and I think David did say that he thought that all of the proposals had an element of housing within each of them..

Female-That would make sense

Saty-Yes that’s our understanding. I will double check it. I’ve been emailing planning throughout the course of the evening to see if anyone .. I am 99.9% sure there isn’t an entirely commercial bid

Mod-Given that these are the kind of things that we are talking about I can safely assume that we are looking at the shaping so we get what you want. What about that active frontage what would you like to see there?

Female-Well we don’t want another supermarket. Well I don’t.

Female-I don’t think we want any commercial at all. I’m thinking of Salamander street which is where the flats are down the left hand side and underneath there’s except for about fifteen years now they can’t let them any shops...

Male-I would be a bit sceptical as to what commercial what small shop units would be viable. There’s room for providing some places for people to actually work in Portobello. On the Baileyfield site we’ve lost quite a lot of studio spaces there was the verndon studios out of the blue managed studios on the Baileyfied site and they haven’t been replaced in any way so we are losing amenity non-housing amenity within the community and as we see things like Phoenix house being turned into housing again it perpetuates this problem where we end up with a community that is just housing and no amenity and that’s not really a community.

Saty-When you reference studio space... are you thinking more creative but are we talking of (inaudible)?

Male-A combination of open studio space and smaller units that can be leased for anyone but it means that sometimes people travel in to other parts of the city would just be able to walk to work instead. It’s about providing a multiplicity of options within a community. This would be an appropriate place to provide it..

Female-Another thing that could be considered is a childcare or nursery because there’s like everywhere the availability of private nursery places is at a premium. T’s just going to get more pressured.

Female-even a dentist or a doctor’s surgery

Male-What the developer will end up doing is exactly if you’ll forgive my cynicism which they’ve done already on the high street which is cheap an easy for them is basically a kind of dead zone basically beneath the residential through which they make their money. Owned by a pension fund or something.. so we get this dead space and it’s not they’re not going to activate the high street they’re going to provide a load of empty units.

Female-To give you a bit more context the Church of Scotland has sold off a lot of its buildings in the area which is a huge pressure on lots of the clubs and societies that operated out of three sites that are now on one site and that’s affected a lot of after school clubs.

Saty- When you talk about after school clubs that kind of thing are you talking about something that’s made that’s purpose built to accommodate (inaudible)... obviously its an ideal world and we don’t know what will come out of it... but just to get an idea.. to get a better understanding.

Female-I think I suppose a flexible space that can be used by an after school club or leased by the club..

Saty-A community space?

Male-Out of the blue have the drill hall in Dalmeny street and they’ve got a variety of recreational spaces which could happily be a surgery or whatever, you could provide that on the high street with workspaces above that that could be done over three fours with parking underneath that-that’s the kind of creative thinking should be applied to the site.

Mod-Ok right

Female-The community council about a year ago-whoever the developers were across the road and they were promising community space and the community space now is some sort of office space so I can’t believe that the powers that be have just accepted that and I was all set to check with the NHS to see if we could get a doctor’s surgery and the next I hear is that’s pencilled in for

Male-I won’t labour it as I already have but if you start a process but allowing the developer to dictate what they want to do they are going to try and get as much as they can through tokenistic exercises well we’ll give you a wee square of grass there or we’ll reactivate your high street by putting some units there these kind of things won’t ever materialise in any case you have to go to the opposite end of the scale and ask what do we actually want because that site you know people use the football pitches the Tumbles is used it’s not well planned that site could be much more vibrant it could have a greater use it could have some social housing on it and maybe it should do not withstanding the pressures on the infrastructure that we have. We need to set the bar higher we’re basically just acquiescing inevitably to just what the developer wants.

Mod-Clearly I’m sorry to hear that... I’m more optimistic than that I mean the amount of ideas that have been put forward the views, collectively and otherwise plus you’ve made it quite clear what you feel the issues are then that can’t really be a bad thing. I can really feel the sense of disappointment. I really get that from you but in this position it is difficult for me to you know.

Male-Ultimately, who is leading the development of that site it’s not the community and its not somebody who has got the desires of the community at their heart. It’s not somebody who wants to make that pace a good place.

Mod-It’s always difficult though when you set up a new process and you engage with people at a set point or whatever you’re inevitably going to end up with this kind of thing I don’t know cyncicism or lack of trust

Female-Am I right in saying that this is the first time this kind of engagement has happened?

Mod-Can you comment on that Saty?

Saty-It’s the first time we’ve done a participation request.

Female-Which was initiated by the Community Council so we are all just feeling our way in this so I think...

Male-The movement is towards genuine participation and community led development amd that is what has to happen in the next few years so this has been shot through at the last minute-you’ll not be able to do a process like this in a few years time It’’’ be impossible.

Saty-Just for clarity though-this isn’t a planning led process there is the planning led process of placemaking which I’m sure you are all aware of (inaudible) which is usually further down the events they occur.. this engagement has been carried out as there was a request from the Community Council and amenity society..

Female-Cause this is part of the new community empowerment act

Saty-Yes and obviously the Community Empowerment act talks about what the outcomes will be and as part of the act how we will shape services going forward and there will be an evaluation of this exercise what works and what does not and (inaudible) this isn’t to the purpose of this is not to definitively change planning I mean it may be as a result of we cant predict the future maybe some things do change what we do.. but that’s not the exercise..

Male-We understand that and again let me re-iterate but I don’t mean to moan at you personally...

Saty-No that’s fine..

Male- I feel that this is the only opportunity given that the nature of this scenario

Mod-That’s exactly why we are here all of your views are just as important as anyone and everyone else’s and that’s the way it will always be from my perspective

Saty-I’m not saying you are right or wrong I am completely impartial-I don’t get anything on the back of it-no, no brown envelopes I just get to walk down the prom afterwards.

(general laughter)

Mod-From my perspective it’s been about hearing what the people have got to say and whether we agree or disagree is neither here nor there

Male-But that’s understood, I think the Community Council’s request for participation was about them showing they were keen to design that and as I understand it the Community Council had no involvement in that

Female-The planning department put out the suggestions-the nuts and bolts of this exercise came from planning

Mod-Any concerns about having new development on the promenade?

Male-Architectural quality-the impact of what’s done there-needs to be carefully designed

Female-Yes high quality.. the new flats that are there already have enhanced a pretty run down area.

Female-High quality

Male-The broader social justice element needs to be considered if providing very expensive flats in that prime location-there’s an equality issue there but I won’t dwell on

Female-As long as it looks nice

Mod-What kind of community benefit would you like to see this development provide?

Female-That the social housing isn’t shunted off site and that they do actually provide it.

(End of recording)