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| Moderator | Notetaker | Participants | Date | Time | Venue |
| Emma Candy | Julie Dickson | Local Residents | Weds 13th Sept | 6.30pm-8.00pm | Portobello Town Hall |

EC: Our conversation will probably last about an hour, when we’re discussing the point during the session there are no right or wrong answers, it’s all your opinions, it’s all your feedback, we want to hear your ideas so don’t be worried, there’s nothing that can’t be said. This is an informal, open space for whatever views you want to share. What I would ask is if you wouldn’t mind trying not to talk over each other, that makes it easier for us to capture everyone’s views.

So, 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 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’ve been asked to conduct eight focus groups, this is the last one, thank you for coming and the groups are with local residents and local interest groups to help us understand how people feel about the various options.

Before I ask any questions, I need to take you through what has happened so far with the Westbank Street site is and give you some background on what has happened so far.

So, everyone has the map there and what we have here is this area that is basically marked in red, this is the area that we’re discussing today. So what you’ve got here is, if everyone has it with North facing up the way we’ve got Aldi just along here on the high street across from the five-a-side pitches, there’s also the Figgate burn that runs down the right hand side here. That leads on to the promenade there. At the moment the site is used by two businesses, Powerleague runs the five-a-side football pitches next to the Portobello high street and then Edinburgh Leisure runs Tumbles which is the gymnastic and soft play centre and that’s there just next to the promenade.

Powerleague want to close their business at Westbank Street because they say it is no longer financially viable – this is why the site is being sold. Powerleague has a long-term lease with the Council which will expire in 2088. They first contacted the Council about selling the site in 2004 and developers were interested in the site at that time, but the sale could not be competed due to the downturn in the housing market that accompanied the financial crash.

They then contacted the Council again in January 2015 to arrange sale of the site.

As Powerleague don’t want to operate their business on the site anymore, the five-a-side pitches will be removed and they won’t be replaced.

Edinburgh Leisure, a wholly-owned arms-length management company that runs the city’s public sport and leisure facilities – they operate Tumbles.

There are two options for what will happen to Tumbles.

First option is that it won’t be sold and will remain in its current location. The location of the Tumbles car park, so what you’ll see on the map is that we have Tumbles and then the car park beside it (points to map) may change to another location on the site, but the same capacity (50 spaces) will be retained, so that will stay, it just might be in a different place.

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

The reason Tumbles could be relocated on the site in this way because the land next to Portobello Beach is considerably more valuable than the land elsewhere on the site, beach views.

So, what is actually going to happen to the site. Any actual development on the land will still be subject to planning permission. So, they’ll still have to go through that whole process.

However, developers who are interested have already submitted their intentions for how they would use the site and how much they are prepared to pay. We can’t share with you any detail about what any one developer has said, but we can go through the different aspects of the site and say what developers have suggested for each of these. We also can’t share how much money developers have bid for the site, but generally you should assume that the more developed the site, the more developers are prepared to pay.

Following your feedback, all developers will be invited to revise their proposals again to take into consideration the views of the community. The appointed developer will take part in a place-making exercise, where there will be more opportunity for the community to input into the planned development.

Is that ok so far? Great. What will happen with the money raised from the sale. The sale will be split between Powerleague and the Council. All of the Council’s share of the money from the sale will go towards the redevelopment of the new Meadowbank Stadium.

Does anyone have any questions at the moment?

P: So the Meadowbank stadium isn’t relocating it’s just being refurbished?

EC: It’s being refurbished that’s right

P: I’m a bit confused about if the Council own the land, and they’ve only got a lease Powerleague, how are they involved in the sale of it?

EC: That’s been raised at another group and we’ve taken a note of it so what we’ll do is we’ll feedback these questions that everyone has so unfortunately you might have questions that we don’t have the answer to but what we’ll do is we’ll take a note and we’ll let you guys know the answers to that, but that has been raised so…

P: Yeah, that’s a good point

P: If anything they want to get out of their lease early so they should be paying a penalty

P: Or some monetary value, I don’t think they should make a profit as such from such, because say we rented our house so to speak, for say… six months we do it and we wanted to leave early, we will have to pay that factor. I understand they’re closing their business I totally get that but I don’t see why they should make a financial gain when they’re leaving early, I think they should maybe give back to the Council

EC: We’ll get some more clarity on that

P: I’d understand if they’d gone into administration or something but they haven’t they’ve a thriving site at Sighthill

P: It’s a massive long lease, did you say 2088? So it’s not as if we’re talking a couple of years here, we’re talking about a massive long time

P: Was that a hundred year lease cos they’ve been there a while, a long time

P: Like I say, I’m not sure exactly how they’ve come to that deal or anything but we’ll get some background information for you

P: So, when did they decide to put that lease to 2088 was it…?

P: When they were agreeing the lease in the first place I’d imagine

P: Cos what’s the point in having it 2088 if they’re not going to keep it to that year to be honest? There’s just no point

P: Seems a lot, a long lease

P: But I think a lot of leases, I’m in a golf club and they’ve got a hundred year lease on their golf club

P: And their rates were probably agreed on the pretence of taking it for that length of a period, that’s probably why they’ve came to agree to it

EC: We can find out more information for you about that

P: Uh huh

EC: Ok, so basically there are a number of proposals for use of the site, which range from entirely commercial to mostly housing. And I basically just want to explore these options with you just now.

The total development on the site will substantially determine the price the Council receives from the sale. More development generally mean taller properties.

Plans received from developers vary between two-storey buildings and eight-storey buildings. For comparison, nearby buildings in Portobello ranges from single-storey to eight-storey.

The Council’s Affordable Housing Policy typically requires new developments to include 25% of all units to be affordable housing.

So I just want to ask do you have any views about what kind of development would be on the site – residential or commercial?

P: Can I ask what you mean by affordable housing, is this houses that are basically rented out through the Council to people in difficult circumstances or is this done through a housing association… what’s the…

EC: I’m not sure we can get more clarification on that for you

P: because as far as I’m concerned obviously sort of way back a lot of the Council housing was actually sold off and therefore the availability of Council housing just generally is really really restricted so you would think when there was an opportunity like this that actually what the Council should be doing is making the majority of it Council housing, that’s my personal opinion

EC: Does anyone else have any…

P: I think it’s a legal thing, to do with the developer rather than the Council, I think every developer has got to make a percentage of any new properties, a certain amount of its got to be this affordable housing

P: If there’s so many properties within a block, if there only like 8 properties I don’t think they have t have two properties…

P: I think it’s all pro rata isn’t it, I think it’s based on the scale of the development so if it’s going to be eight storeys high then yes proportionally I think they’d have to make twenty five percent of that into affordable housing

P: I wouldn’t be happy with it being eight storeys high, I think that’s… I would like something about two storeys high because…

P: I just think yeah, because of where it is, it’s right on the prom where they’re potentially wanting to build that’s going to be a bit of an eyesore isn’t it, eight storeys… in my opinion, a bit extreme.

P: As you come out of Tumbles, if you can visualise it there’s kind of new houses along here (points to map) and they’re lovely they look almost like holiday homes with balconies and things, am just trying to think how many storeys that is…

P: About four

Group: Agreement round table

P: I think that’s high enough

P: I think that’s yeah, high but I think any more than that is just going to look like a tower block really isn’t it, not that there’s anything wrong with that but just its location and I just don’t think that would look very good personally

P: The tower blocks in Joppa they look terrible

P: Absolutely they stick out like a sore thumb

P: It’s like Fools and Horses…

P: I just think it is such a beautiful area and there so much, I understand we’ve got a shortage of houses but eight storeys high…

P: They’re not building these though to accommodate or get more social housing they’re only bringing social housing cos they have to by legislative features this is to get money to help fund another project or to…

P: I understand that but we’re just saying that if it was used for the purpose of houses I just think that eights a bit extreme.

P: Oh massively yeah

P: Would you think that at this side as well (points to map)

P Uh huh, I think eight anywhere

P: Cos that’s tenements round there so they’re going to be about that high anyway, maybe 6?

EC: So that’s the side on the high street?

P: Yes, I don’t think it would look quite as bad as it would on the front

P: I appreciate what you’re saying in terms of whatever happens to the development it’s going assist the funding of the Meadowbank but then how much of the resources do the Meadowbank actually need? So you know, if you look at the scale of it, to go eight storeys high is obviously going to generate the highest volume of revenue, is it a money factor that’s important to fund the Meadowbank stadium because if that’s the case then what are we doing sitting round the table because it’s a fait accomplice that they’re going to just take the highest bid that’s going to then put the biggest money pot into the redevelopment of Meadowbank and that’s the concern, you know that’s the concern you could sit round and discuss it and put your views across but at the end of the day…

EC: Like I say, these groups, basically this feedback will be taken back to the developers and they have to revise their plans based on what the community are saying so all this is valuable and this is the time when you can input to what that development will look like

P: And to throw something else in from a personal point of view I’ve got a granddaughter and she goes to the play area and it’s great and it is safe and everything and I think I would like to see that remain. It doesn’t really matter if it’s at the front or if houses suits the front better than that but I think somewhere on that site it would be good to retain Tumbles

EC: Tumbles will be retained

P: Even if there was a counter balance between commercial and housing because effectively on the street side you could have the commercial aspect and then you could have the Tumbles in that area there (points to map) and then the front part because that’s obviously got the sea view to develop housing so that there’s a bit of a balance because to go eight storeys high and develop that as housing and then to go and proportionally do it commercially you know whether it it’s seventy five/twenty five percent you know proportionally money wise you’re probably going to get the same return

EC: So developers, there have been different bids so some are mostly commercial and then some people are mostly housing, so you think a balance?

P: If you could get a balance maybe having seventy five percent retained for commercial and then the twenty five percent at the front for housing and then taking it up four storeys high

P: The other thing as well is, to put the houses on the prom, is the difference enough to justify the demolishing of that building, relocating it, rebuilding it here, the loss of, you know I know there’s gymnastics groups and that there are those people then going to go off and find other gymnastics groups, is that going to cause job losses for people just for the sake of having houses on the prom when they could just leave that and develop the Powerleague bit, is it worth it? I suppose that’s what we’re here to discuss

EC: What’s people’s thoughts on the mix, has anyone got any preferences whether it is housing or commercial, what would you prefer to see there?

P: Would you be back in the same situation, if you make it all commercial is going to be another Powerleague waiting to happen are you going to end up with, for whatever reason shops or businesses that are not going to succeed and then you end up with vacant properties

P: You’re going to end up with, I can see it now….

P: Pound shops

P: You’ll see a Starbucks, you’ll see a Sainsburys local on the front and flats behind it personally, I can actually visualise it now along that front

EC: And how do you feel about that?

P: Well, they create jobs, that’s a plus but on the flip side you know Portobello’s quite renowned for its little tearooms it’s got little shops and I think some of them... again, I mean Aldi’s coming and that’s probably been detrimental to them… it’s great for everyone else, they’d love it, if you put in a Sainsburys or a Starbucks people aren’t necessarily going to go to the little cafes…

P: The greengrocer shut down because basically cos Sainsbury and Aldi came along…

P: I can definitely just visualise it, going down there and seeing these, they’re makeshift shops aren’t they they just seem to pop up, they’re all over Leith and everything else

P: And there’s nothing worse looking and seeing empty shop premises in a town

P: And they’ll become charity shops or something

P: Or Scotland shops… you know the tartan and all that…

P: No that I’ve got anything against charity shops but

EC: What concerns, if any, do you have about additional homes being built in Portobello?

P: Nothing at all, apart from I think it should be based on looking at the community. The schools have expanded, Portobello High School had to relocate, it is a thriving community and I don’t see the point in if you’ve got it as affordable housing to put it out subjectively to people coming from other parts of the town, it needs to be something for the local people in the community.

P: I’ve got huge concerns about GP appointments, schools, all these services are so oversubscribed as it is, you add eight storeys of however many houses, a lot of additional people and have these amenities been looked at to see if there is capacity cos I don’t think there is

EC: Anyone else? Or would you agree with what’s been said there?

P: What is currently, I would be questioning the Council to see what the current waiting list for housing in Portobello is at the moment.

P: On the flipside, if these are going to be beachside apartments you’re going to be paying an absolute premium and no offence to social housing, we absolutely require it, if I’m paying through the nose for a penthouse overlooking the beach and I’ve got someone on social housing in the same block as me I’m not going to be chuffed, I’m going to be absolutely raging, I’m not going to be happy

P: Yeah cos you’re paying high end for your house

P: I’d prefer housing of whatever type than commercial, I think it is more worthwhile and there must be waiting lists, even if it’s from people outside Portobello if there isn’t a waiting list for here, I think that’ more important than a commercial thing.

P: It’s a massive site, a really big site, I’ve been playing there for fourteen years and I can see why it has gone down the tubes because it is not being used or utilised, you can go down a Thursday night and there’s maybe four pitches being used out of the eight/ten pitches. I’d have like to have seen some form of pitch remain, like they’ve got at Lochend just one pitch and kids there can hire it out in some sort of capacity but by the sounds of it it’s all away

EC: We’ll be discussing use of open space in a bit as well

P: But if the Council really wanted to, if it wasn’t about money then they could just take it over and run it as it is, football pitches but obviously they want the money for the site, that’s why they’re grabbing it with both hands

P: It does seem a bit strange why it is Meadow bank and obviously the Council need money for Meadowbank but I just find that really strange why the money would be going to another area of Edinburgh instead of providing something for the community in Portobello

P: Yeah, putting the money that’s been taken out of the community back into it for something that us that live in the area could use or benefit from

P: And why did they start developing Meadowbank without the money in place to do it, rhetorical question

P: Have they started developing it at the moment or is it a case of their waiting to get the funding

P: Edinburgh City aren’t playing there at the moment because the redevelopment has started (inaudible) I’m assuming because they’re not able to fulfil their fixtures at the moment cos it’s started

P: If Powerleague are due some money then obviously the Council couldn’t take it all over and use it for their own benefit, whether its housing or keeping it as football pitches so obviously there’s pressure on the Council they have to sell it to pay off Powerleague for whatever reason they’re due money, like we talked about before, we’re not quite sure why someone leasing it should be due money but probably n option but to get money out of it now

P: I mean it is a massive area to have as one to have as either all commercial or all accommodation of whatever form because you can’t put individual houses on it it has to be something that s you know wither two storey upwards so that’s got to be factored into the decision making as well

P: It could go into a housing estate, it’s got one behind the football pitches, it is a big enough site, you could probably put up a lot of forty/fifty houses there, one up one down

P: Yeah but if you look at the site in terms of if you completely demolished what was there it makes sense to go up

P: Absolutely course it does. And the infrastructures probably not there if you’ve got a housing estate there with a main road

P Car parking is always an issue isn’t it, even if they could incorporate some form of underground car parking for whatever amenities or whatever proportion they’re intending to do

EC: That’s a nice little Segway into the next bit! Tumbles will have a dedicated parking facility of 50 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 that area of Portobello?

P: It’s bad enough as it is

Group: Agreement round table

P: I was about to say that I don’t see how they could stipulate that parking be kept to a minimum cos what are they going to do go down and police it? That’s not going to work, I don’t think.

P: Do you all live quite local to that area?

Group: Agreement

P: And Tumbles car park would become swamped, people living in the housing, would they not want to park in Tumbles?

P: Well it would have to be gated and you’d have to have a pass to get in and out

EC: What are the issues that you face with parking, is it just getting a space

P: There’s not enough spaces, no

P: If you’re on a bus or in a car trying to fae Portobello it’s a nightmare

EC: Just because of cars parked?

P: Nightmare, terrible. Especially if you’re going past Aldis where they park the bus to change driver it is just a nightmare, sometimes on a Friday or a Saturday you can’t see anything at all, you have to wait till the bus pulls out and it takes forever.

P: That would be another concern for me if there were too many houses on this site is the impact on the traffic, emissions and all that kind of thing, cos you can sit on Portobello High Street for ages just still in the traffic and if you put another however many families in there as well with their cars and whether there’s parking or not people have cars so that would increase the traffic in the area as well

EC: do you have about public transport in Portobello? Does everyone use public transport

Group: Agreement – chatter inaudible

P: It’s pretty good

Group: Agreement

P: Just what I was saying before about parking the buses, parking at the Aldis changing driver, it’s just a nightmare, see trying to get through that

EC: What about active travel walking and cycling? Do you have any concerns about that in that area of Portobello?

P: I don’t personally no

EC: Does anyone cycle?

Group: General no round table

P: Scary enough in your car nevermind on a bike

P: We’re the unhealthy group who don’t cycle

Group: Laughter

EC: What do you think the developer could do to promote active travel more or to deal with issues you were saying about parking? You mentioned underground parking could be an option, anyone else got any ideas

P: I think that’s very clever underground parking definitely because they’re still maintaining the space as such but they’re going underground rather than having to clear more space for parking then those residents will get there, well probably they’d do it by key fob system, they would be able to use those and they would be restricted to them so they wouldn’t have to use, I don’t know how we would operate the Tumbles car park but that was something that we would need to look at I think, I mean I don’t know how they would do that.

P: Just the sheer build of that in a place like that is going to be at least a two to three year timescale timeframe. Can you imagine the bulldozers everything to incorporate an underground car park as well. Fair enough if you’re starting at the bottom and building up we’ve already said about the height wise of the building

P: Unless you’ve got it earmarked for a McCarthy Stone development…because then you wouldn’t have very many cars at all just because it is a retirement site and it would be potentially five storeys high.

EC: Anyone else, what about incorporating more active travel, being able to encourage that more, any ideas of how a developer could do that?

P: Make it an eco-environment

EC: In what sense?

P: Become the first developer to have an eco-environment facility, housing no cars

P: I think there’s a set of flats near… kind of at the far end of Gorgie and I’m sure they’re not allowed there are no spaces, you’re not allowed to own a car in that area

P: IT’s 2017, I don’t think it’s feasible, why don’t they just do what they were supposed to and increase the tram network, maybe bring that down here…

P: Did you say the T word

Group: Laughter

P: That’s’ a lot more eco than trying to say we’re going to build 80 properties and no-ones going to have a car it’s not realistic, people just park on the street, it would become a nightmare soon enough. Tram system, the bus system works anyway but the tram system is here to stay whether people like it or not, it works, it does work York Place to the airport

P: Think of the carnage that caused, a nightmare

P: absolutely but think of the longer term goals, if we are talking about more the eco routes then relatively short term ok three four years doesn’t seem that short but it’s there, it’s not going anywhere so just increase the route.

EC: Does anyone else have anything they want to say about parking, public transport, active travel? No, ok. Let’s then think about the relocation of Tumbles. Not all developers are bidding to move Tumbles. One possible option for where the facility might go is closer to Portobello High Street, with pedestrian access from the High Street. Do you have any preference on whether tumbles is moved or not?

P: I think it has to be used, or if they’re going to consider moving it then there has to be parking facilities, because of the numbers it has, then numbers that it can actually occupy.

EC: It may stay where it is, it may be relocated but with that would be the 50 parking spaces, protected for Tumbles customers so it’ll still have that parking facility there.

P: It’s a safety issue if you’re putting it on the high street, kids…

P: But then it may generate more business cos people maybe forget about it a little bit where it is and if there seeing it all the time it is fresh in their head. But I get what you’re saying…

EC: So just because the high street is so busy?

Agreement

P: Presumably the car park would be round the back that way anyway?

P: I mean if Tumbles, like you’ve not said what the commercial site could be but say it was an office, a company wanted to set up offices there they would probably want to be overlooking the sea for prestige or whatever, the views, so it probably makes sense to move it as long as it was cost effective and you mentioned, I don’t know how costly it is to demolish and move it but it probably would be better for offices to have a sea view or even houses to look over the sea but Tumbles it doesn’t really matter cos it is all sort of indoors isn’t it

P: I think it should maintain on that site at some place

P: I do think that, I think for disruption to the local community by demolishing it or moving it to somewhere else, I don’t think that there’s any need, I think you’d just keep it where it is and basically obviously it means that if you have to move it somewhere else on this development, how many years, how long is that build going to take

[Chatter Inaudible]

P: People’s jobs while that’s going on

P: Maybe it’s being moved to a temporary position and maybe this new one may be more fit for purpose, more up to date

P: If you’re going to move it to the front, there’s nothing to stop you doing that first and then doing the relocation then they’re sort of there before you dig up the rest of the site

P: I think that’s probably good for business and obviously people’s employment at well and activities for kids and yeah definitely, I think that should definitely stay open

P: As long as if they move it you can still get to the prom because it is quite nice to come out of Tumbles and go for a walk along the prom and so if you’re not able to do that that would be a shame.

EC: Has anyone got any other concerns about relocating of Tumbles or any ideas? No, ok so, open space and the Figgate burn the site includes some existing open space along the Figgate Burn. The five-a-side football pitches are also designated as open space. While this space is currently not accessible, so we know you have to go through Powerleague to get access to that, the Council has requested that developers have equivalent open space within the site. So there will be an element of open space in there. This could take several forms, including the development of a walkway alongside the Figgate Burn (points to map), providing additional pedestrian access to the promenade. There may also be other space within the development. If the developer were including open space within the site, what form would you want this to take? Any ideas of what you would like to see there in terms of open space?

P: Does open space mean public space or could this be gardens or a garden area for people whose houses are there?

EC: Either, what would you like to see?

P: For the public, I think the public should be able to access it, yeah the whole community should be able to use it a s walkway down to the prom or, yeah, I definitely think it should be more accessible

EC: So open space would be more public?

EC: Yeah, that’s right

P: I take it it’s not, when you say open space it’s just pedestrian access and not car access?

EC: Not car access no. Although what would you think about car access? Would you want to see some?

P: No, cos when you go when you try to go down to the prom in any way there’s cars parked either side, it gets really congested, obviously mums or dads with young kids have got to be on their guard watching what’s happening, so actually if it could be a walkway that involved pedestrians only that would actually make it quite a safe way to actually access the prom

EC: Anyone else any ideas of what you might want to see included in that open space or how they would want to use that open space? You mentioned about maybe retaining a pitch?

P: Yeah, just down at Lochend there’s a seven aside pitch and local football teams can go and hire it out at a reasonable rate for the kids or amateur teams can go and train on there, it’s a revenue source, there is changing room at Lochend but it doesn’t have to have a changing room, the goals are actually built in to the side of the fencing so there’s no risk of damage, I just think it’s a good space and it’s a revenue source it could be taken up

P: Or a multi-purpose pitch that could be utilised for basketball or football or hockey or just different amenities

EC: Any other ideas?

P: I suppose just like grass or trees or something rather than just a path down there would be trees at the side of it and grass areas

P: It would be nice not to lose that light when you’re coming down there so it doesn’t feel all…. So as there’s gaps and it’s high, you know it’s quite a light part of the street

P: So it still tends to feel quite safe

P: So maybe not lots of trees all the way down, maybe still quite open, as you say, bright and welcoming so you’re maybe on an early evening able to still feel perfectly safe to walk down

P: Uhhuh, and lit as well, that’s a huge thing

P: Cos it is a very pleasant walk, well it would be pleasant walk and it’s lovely to walk along there so…yeah, I think something quite welcoming

EC: What do you think the positive impacts would be of developing a pedestrian route along the Figgate Burn?

P: It’s all dependent on what actually is going to go in there, if it is an eight storey high apartment block then no not necessarily, it’s not going to be very pleasant and they might not want to be looking down on people walking along or drunkards hanging around

P: It has to be well lit no matter what, it also has to be well maintained and who is going to maintain it as well? Whose cost is it going to be?

P: Yeah, that’s a good point, whose cost is it going to be?

P: Is it classed as part of the development or is that going to be retained as Council?

P: Let’s charge Meadowbank they seems to be taking all our money (laughs)

P: I don’t think it would look too good if there was eight storey buildings all down the side of it, that’s not a walkway is it? So it would need to be a space between the pathway or whatever and whatevers built and hopefully it’s not going to be too high

EC: So more open?

P: Aye, so there’s light coming, natural light

P: I’m presuming because of obviously the Aldi across the road that that’s not a very high building at all that presumably they’ve only had to keep it at that height for a set reason so perhaps to reflect that perhaps the whole development shouldn’t go over a set, I mean eight storeys is, it just seems to me to be absolutely ridiculous

EC: Anything else about open space or any ideas of what you would like to see in that open space?

P: I don’t know if they’d have swings or something, I suppose it depends how big it is, for kids, you know…

P: Just an area of tranquillity where you could have seating and go and lose yourself in the space, everything in a city seems to be overdeveloped and everyone feels like it is kind of cramming in but it would be nice to have something that’s well lit, well maintained, looked after, you know that you just go and walk and sit and chill. A memorial garden or something?

P: I was in Spain on holiday and over there they seem to have play swings and shoots all over the place

P: Very family orientated yeah

P: You know something like that

P: [inaudible] quality of life, we get 360 days of rain

P: Aye I suppose you’d need to dry the shoot before they got on

Group: Laughter

P: Wet bum

EC: Some developers plan to include active frontage on the development. By active frontage we mean either commercial space such as shops, or small offices, or access to a relocated Tumbles could be classed as active frontage as well. In different submissions this active frontage is either on the High Street with the new pedestrian route along the Figgate Burn, or along the promenade. What concerns, if any, do you have about the development of new active frontage on the site? Would you have preference on either side?

P: I don’t think it should be along the prom.

EC: Why’s that?

P: I think to be honest with you what was there before in terms of we had well we’ve still got in terms of amusement arcades I personally thought it made the whole thing particularly when they weren’t upkept, very tacky. Potentially there’s the same thing would happen with a commercial development on the prom. I think you’d want to keep that just as a nice promenade somewhere for people to go and walk you know and be with their families have exercise that sort of thing. I think if you’re going to have any commercial development then it has to be on the high street itself

EC: What does anyone else think?

Group: Agreement from people

P: I suppose it depends what the development is if it was a café for example then that might sit quite nicely on the prom but then well, yeah it depends what it is

P: Yeah but if the café shut down and then we’re left with this empty unit aren’t we…

P Charity shop

P: Or pound shop

P: It would be fine in summer but come the winter a café’s not necessarily…

P: Down the prom yeah who’s going to go down to the café on the prom when it’s raining from the heavens

P: Again

EC: What kind of things, if it was commercial what kinds of things would you want to see included there?

P: On the prom or the high street side?

EC: Let’s go high street first then we’ll do prom. On the high street side what would you like to see?

P: I think it would need to get employment for the community

P: I can visualise the Starbucks and Sainsbury’s Local popping up

P: I put my money on that it’s going to be a Fatface and a Costa Coffee

Group: Laughter

P: I’ll bet that’s what it would be cos wherever a Fatface go yet get Costa Coffee moving in

EC: How do you feel about that? Is that the kind of things that you want to see there? Do you mind?

P: It’s moving into you know more kind of community based areas. I don’t find it a problem as long as it doesn’t detract business away from other small businesses.

P: You mind end up with a Burger King, McDonalds or a Pizza Hut which I wouldn’t like

P: Wetherspoons or something?

EC: What would you feel about Wetherspoons?

Group: Laughter

P: Everybody’s like oh a Wetherspoons

P Put it down the promenade, I’d go there £2.19 a pint

EC: Ok, so Wetherspoons on the promenade what else would we like to see on the promenade?

P: I don’t really want to see anything on the promenade commercial

EC: Ok, so you think if anything is there it should be housing

P: Yes

EC: Anyone else, any feelings on that?

P: Or a nice office block, low, modern, glass, not to see in but just to look nice

P: Hotel or something?

P: That’s a good idea

P: Novotel or a Holiday Inn

P: Would depend on height

P: Oh yeah, I suppose

P: Not a bad idea though, good site for a hotel

EC: Anything else about introduction of commercial premises, anything anyone would like to see?

P: You could have training centre, as long as it was low level, to rent out rooms for people that want meetings or training courses or whatever as long as it was low level it would look ok and probably be a nice outlook for them with glass frontage

P: But then you’re not guaranteed to rent that out 365 days a year so revenue wise.

P: No, I’m thinking of someone who bought and could offer facilities but it might not be viable as you say, maybe they’ll say nobody will rent our rooms down there but it might be a good view

EC: So, we’ve said that Tumbles car park is included in the sale even if the building itself remains in its current location what will very likely happen is that the car park will move somewhere else within the site

P: Is that where it says indoor bowling centre?

EC: Yes, that’s Tumbles, apologies. So Tumbles may stay where it is but what we might find is that the parking will move somewhere else within the site and then what they would do is develop up on that side. I know we’ve touched on developing around the promenade, is there any other concerns about developing on the prom that you feel you haven’t had a chance to voice or anything like that?

P: Just access to the prom from Tumbles, that would be the only thing for me.

EC: Ok, so retaining access to it, anything else, anyone else?

P: When you think of the prom as it is, apart from that new build flats which I’m very sorry to say but I actually think it’s an eyesore.

EC: Which ones? Pipe Lane?

P: Yeah, so basically cos I usually start off from that end then going up the way I just think it’s ugly, I think it has got an underground car park, but I think it’s ugly, it’s an eyesore, cos when you walk further down the prom there’s cafes but there’s not any large flats or developments that are currently that close it is all community buildings or cafes or even the hotel that’s along there is set back, there’s a garden in front of it. And obviously all the housing goes up the side streets I don’t think there should be anything… I mean I know that the Council, that’s the way that they’re going to get the most money if they actually sell the stuff off at the prom as housing and probably go with the flats that are there in terms of height but if you go down, the other place that I make an effort to go and walk in is Cramond and there isn’t anything like that and I think that’s why it is so well used, cos there is no housing down there whatsoever. And you’ve got a free run to walk along. I don’t think there should be anything, any housing or that.

EC: Anyone got anything else that they haven’t said yet?

P: Is Meadowbank going to have a swimming pool?

EC: I’m not sure, I’m not sure what the development will have

P: Cos you know Portobello used to have an open air swimming pool now there’s nothing down this stretch at all, you know you’ve got Leith and you’ve got Newington, you know it would be quite nice to have a combined swimming pool with a fantastic view out, with Tumbles in it and perhaps other amenities like a trampoline centre, that’s you know on the up

P: Even those Pure gyms seem to be popping up everywhere, there’s one at Ocean Terminal…

P: I suppose the only problem with a gym would be that it would maybe take away from the Council gym

P: If there is some swimming pool [inaudible]

EC: Ok, when new developments are created, the developer is required to provide community benefit. This varies from site to site, and depends on the scale and type of development. What we mean by community benefit typically includes jobs and training, improvements to infrastructure and public realm, and the creation of public assets – for example, very large housing developments are sometimes required to build new schools that kind of thing. Thinking about this development what kind of community benefit would you like to see this development provide?

P: Definitely jobs

P: I don’t know if we need another school, cos if they’re building all these houses, the catchment area, I mean not just here but the catchment area is so jam packed isn’t it

P: Maybe the developer could go into local schools and offer apprenticeships for trades, they’ve got to employ some people in that locally

P: Anything else, any other ideas of what kind of community benefits they could provide?

P: Wetherspoons

Group: Laughter

P: Another taxi rank or something maybe, see trying to get a taxi sometimes in Portobello’s a nightmare

P: Also, obviously depending the number of houses that’s agreed whether to look at actually further health care facilities would be good

EC: Any other ideas?

P: What about a tourist information?

P: It is quite hard to visualise it until you know you actually get confronted with what the objections of the proposals are, I think you know if you have the proposals in front of you, you could say well we could have a bit of that or a bit of that, I think it is quite difficult for us to imagine you know the ideal situation

EC: I understand that and what we’ve said is that when the appointed developer is in place there will be that placemaking exercise which would have more engagement and you’d be able to your points forward as well

P: So will we be invited back to that to carry this through? Or not necessarily?

EC: I’m not sure, we can put that forward as a suggestion though, is that what you would like, would you like to be more involved?

P: I think so yeah, because now we’re here and we are involved so then we’d like to see it getting carried through to really see that the communities voice is actually being heard as well would be good, I think, that’s my opinion anyway.

EC: Would the rest of you be interested in that as well?

Group: General agreement

P: I think whatever the outcome of this, which I’ve got a horrible suspicion, feeling that a lot of it’s already been decided that it has to benefit the community, you’re taking away a community resource and it has to be something that’ll really benefit the community

P: I’m a bit more pessimistic, I think it’s just to do with money, whatever will produce the most money, I think that’ll be it, but maybe I’m biased in thinking that

P: I’m with you on that, I think it’ll be the largest, with the absolute minimum criteria restrictions there, to say tick box, yes, we have to have that, we’ve got that, and then the biggest pot of money is going to get the tender

P: How will these people, do they have to bid if there’s about eight people that have ideas that want to get involved in this do they put bids in to the Council or is that how it works?

EC: Yes, so they put their bids in and I think they give a price of what they’re willing to pay for that and then it is assessed on that, but as I say there has already been submissions there but now they’ll have to revise it on the back of what the community feedback is

P: So in theory someone could put in a bid for the whole site? Or there could be eight people taking a bit each or whatever?

EC: I’m not sure about that, I’m not sure how that works if they can do that kind of split there but we’ll take that back and find out for you

P: Just you were saying earlier that it is hard to imagine, you know I’ve got in my mind that it wouldn’t be one big site it might be a number of different ones

P: So when is the decision likely to be made in terms of, what timescale are we looking at?

EC: This is the last focus group that we have so that will be the eight that have been completed and the report on the findings from this group and the online survey which closes on the eighteenth, so from that we’ll do a report on the findings and I think there’ll be a report to Committee towards the start of next year about the appointed bidder and I think there’s an evaluation process as well round about October, but a report to Committee beginning of next year

P: So at the moment the five-a-side football is still in existence, still operating until what time?

EC: I’m not sure, we’d have to find out for you

P: They’re still advertising their function suite, until next year

P: Don’t be booking no parties there….

Group: Laughter

EC: Any other concerns or issues about the development that you haven’t had the chance to raise that you’d like to?

Silence

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

P: If the facilities aren’t being used to their full potential it has got to move forward but at the same time I feel it has got to be some sort of balance between you know giving something back to the community not taking it all away, retaining some of that and not just saying we’re going to retain that because that’s all part of the criteria that it has to be retained, giving a wee bit more than that back

EC: What more would you like to see given back?

P: Well, it is very difficult because although I live in the area I don’t use all the facilities and I think it is hard because of all of the developments that have gone on to know roughly what the numbers of rations of age groups we are dealing with, whether we’ve got a large proportion of toddlers to ??? to elderly so if I knew that then I might have an idea of saying that I’d like to something like a day care centre for the elderly or something that’s going to give something for everybody, the Tumble tots and a day care centre for the elderly and something else maybe an opportunity for a youth facility for music because they struggle to play music anywhere so I think there’s an opportunity there for that

P: I just think again that it is a shame again that it’s another Council owned site that’s going to be sold off to a developer for money

EC: Anyone got anything else?...

EC: Thank you