

Development Management Sub Committee

report returning to Committee - Wednesday 12 August 2020

Application for Planning Permission 19/06070/FUL At St Josephs Nursing Home, 41 - 45 Gilmore Place, Edinburgh

Student accommodation redevelopment of existing C-listed building providing 230 beds over 29 flats with associated amenity and external landscaping, demolition of extensions and outbuildings and erection of 3 new buildings in rear courtyard.

Item number

Report number

Wards

B11 - City Centre

Recommendations

It is recommended that this application be Granted subject to the details below.

Background information

This application was continued at the Development Management Sub-Committee on 29 July 2020 for further information. The Committee wanted further details of the following:

- Data about the make-up of the community and who was living in the community;
- Data on development and relevant consents within the area to better understand the community and land uses;
- Clarification if Build to Rent development had been explored by the developer; and
- Clarification on the involvement of University of Edinburgh in the project.

Main report

Make-up of the Community and Consents

The most recent data on population density is taken from the 2019 City Plan Monitoring Statement. This shows that the site is located within one of the areas of the city with the highest residential population. Here, the population density is over 100 persons per hectare. Students are also counted within the residential population figures.

To establish the percentage of students within the population data has been taken from the 2011 Census and from updated population figures provided by the National Record of Statistics (NRS) for 2018. This data is provided by local datazones.

For the Bruntsfield datazone, where the proposed site is located, students made up 27% of the adult population (age 16+) in 2018. This indicates a slight decrease in students by just over 2% from the 2011 data.

To give a broader picture of the area, figures have been taken from the Bruntsfield datazone and 19 neighbouring datazones including Fountainbridge and Tollcross zones. These indicate the percentage of students within the adult population was 39% in 2018. This was an increase of 11% from the 2011 Census data.

When the proposed 230 beds for the application are taken into account this would increase the percentage of students to 56% within the localised Bruntsfield 1 datazone (this is a small datazone of 5.6h with currently a low number of students). However, in the wider area this would represent an increase of just 1% taking the percentage of students within the adult population to 40%.

The 2018 data considers operational student housing schemes, including those at Fountainbridge and Tollcross. Development monitoring indicates that there are two schemes within the wider area which have been consented but were not operational in 2018. These would increase the number of student beds by 247 and increase the percentage of students within the adult population to 42%.

It should be noted that the percentage of students within the population does not differentiate between those living in purpose built student accommodation and those living in properties which may have otherwise been general housing stock. It is also likely to include a small number of students who are age 17 to 18 attending secondary school. However, the population included within the figures within this age range is less than 2%.

The applicant's Supporting Statement Addendum also includes an assessment of the student population for the city centre ward, which includes the proposed development. The applicant's figures state that the proposed development would increase the full time student population to between 35.10% and 41.11%.

Policy Hou 8 (Student Accommodation) part b) seeks to ensure proposals will not result in an excessive concentration of student accommodation (including that in the private rented sector) to an extent that would be detrimental to the maintenance of balanced communities or to the established character and residential amenity of the locality.

The percentage of students within the population is not necessarily an indication of the make up of the community overall and whether this would be detrimental to the balance of the community or the established character and residential amenity.

Hotels, guest houses, hostels and other forms of short term accommodation can also impact on the transient nature of an area.

Close to the development site on Gilmore Place there are a number of guest houses and hostels representing 11 out of 30 properties within the street surrounding the site. These have generally been long established conversions of existing houses and are a characteristic of the local area. They are small in scale generally with under 10 rooms in each. There are no large scale hotel developments in the immediate vicinity, which would indicate a significant transient population which could cause a greater imbalance within the community. Data on short term let accommodation has also not been included in the figures as these are spread throughout the city centre and there is no data to distinguish between those that are actually residential use (and potentially operating without planning permission) other than a limited number of enforcement cases.

The applicants also point out that a number of mainstream housing developments have been approved within a 1km radius within the last five years. They state:

- There have been 4 student residence developments consented - equating to 727 beds; and
- There have been 23 mainstream housing developments (3 or more units) consented - equating to 1,545 units / approx. 2,489 beds equivalent.

In conclusion, this development would not lead to an increase in student population in the wider area which would be above the 50% that may indicate a balanced community is not being achieved. The student housing guidance stresses the contribution higher education makes to the City and that it is preferable that student needs are met as far as possible in well managed and regulated schemes as these have reduced issues of antisocial behaviour. It also states - *There is a need for more purpose built student housing in order to free up general housing stock through an increased offer and increased competition.*

Other Housing Options

This property went on the market in July 2018 and a Planning Brief was developed for the site in consultation with the planning authority. This brief envisaged that a number of uses could be acceptable on the site, including student housing, provided it was compatible with the Development Plan.

As stated in the supporting statement, the Little Sisters of the Poor identified two developers with the potential to bring forward a housing led scheme. Pre-application discussions took place with the two parties but the main points of contention were the scale of development at the rear and the developers' requirement for parking; planning officers had made it clear that a car free development would be a requirement for this site. There was also a lack of clarity about how affordable housing could be delivered on this site. It is understood that these developers withdrew from the process.

No discussions took place on Build to Rent (BTR). However, the applicant has advised the following:

On purchasing the site, S1 Developments Limited had approached L&G who they are already working in conjunction with to deliver one of the largest BTR schemes in Edinburgh. The relatively constrained site at Gilmore Place would not have generated the number of BTR units to make this a desirable prospect for any BTR provider. The cost of converting the listed building is also prohibitively expensive and would require more extensive interior works to ensure adequate space provisions and amenity".any new build to the rear would likely have to follow the existing building footprint meaning any amenity, dual aspect etc. would be difficult to achieve.

S1 Developments are primarily residential developers and should this site have worked favourably for residential use, they would have done so. S1 have thoroughly investigated a residential/BTR use at Gilmore Place. However, it has not proven to be a viable option nor

desirable in design and listed building terms for the various reasons given with our supporting information.

In addition, Legal and General Investment Management who are developing BTR in Edinburgh, have confirmed that due to the scale and size of the potential development, this does not meet their acquisition criteria. It Specifically targets large scale developments of 150+ BTR apartments which allows them to create economies of scale in both the development and operationally. Further to this, half of the development would be in a refurbished listed building which again does not meet their acquisition criteria as they wish to develop their buildings from ground up in order to be in control of every detail of the design. They have stated they would not want the fabric of the existing building to force them to make any compromises to the design or operational and environmental targets.

This site has particular characteristics which make it difficult to develop as residential use either in whole or part. The restricted access, the deep plan of the listed building, the conversion and re-use of the chapel building and the requirement to keep the open, almost collegiate feel, at the rear of the site, were particular challenges in negotiating a potential residential use. The scheme that has been brought forward for a single student use on this site addresses these issues in a high quality development which retains and re-uses the listed building and provides a new positive setting for it.

University of Edinburgh

Although this is not a material planning consideration, it is confirmed that, at this stage, the university is not connected to this project.

Links

Policies and guidance for this application

LDPP, LHOU01, LHOU07, LHOU08, LEN02, LEN03, LEN04, LEN06, LEN09, LEN12, LEN16, LEN21, LDES01, LDES03, LDES04, LDES05, LDES07, LTRA02, LTRA03, NSG, NSGD02, NSGSTU, HES, HEPS, HESDEM, HESINT, HESSET, HESEXT, HESUSE,

A copy of the original Committee report can be found in the list of documents at

<https://citydev-portal.edinburgh.gov.uk/idoxpa-web/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=Q2SYFWEWLQA00>

Or Council Papers online

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