

Morningside Community Council meeting on 20th December 2023.

Note on the Presentation on a preliminary proposal for the Old Post Office site by Mr Archie Maclean and Mr Ross Maclean.

At present there is already planning permission to both build a 4-storey block of flats and to trim the nearby trees.

- Archie Maclean was invited by MCC to give a presentation on his alternative proposal for the site at our December meeting. He has not yet applied for planning permission for this proposal.
- Archie Maclean began by stating that he recognised this is an important location and he wanted to build better than the existing proposal.
- His plan for the site is a boutique hotel with a ground floor restaurant and bar (like their Raeburn Hotel, Stockbridge). The first-floor plan hosts a coffee shop with a bakery and also a space for private dining. The second and third floor will have the 13 bedrooms and the top floor will be a roof garden and pergola with a bar, directly accessed by a lift from the ground floor.
- The aim is that 69% of the business's trade will be from the local market.
- To make the financial investment work the use of a basement is required. The basement plan will include toilets, stores and power generation, possibly using ground source heat pumps or harnessing power from the flow of the Jordan Burn.

Questions were then invited from the floor.

- An attendee, who lives in a nearby cottage, raised concerns about the loss of privacy and light from the proposed building. There is no easy answer to this as the existing plan for 4 storeys would also impact on the attendee's garden however some mitigation could be undertaken by using some opaque glass and curtains in windows of this proposal.
- Another attendee welcomed the proposal as good quality facilities would be beneficial.
- An attendee also appreciated the developer coming along to discuss the proposal.
- Concerns were raised about the technical difficulties of keeping a basement dry due to the water table locally and the Jordan Burn. The use of Jordan Burn as a power source was also thought challenging.
- In response to questions about the noise from the roof garden, Ross Maclean explained that they would operate the same as the Raeburn hotel and close it at 10pm.
- The owner of the Ballroom and the trees, explained that he also owned the lane and would not permit the use of the lane for deliveries. The owner of the Ballroom also asked about arrangements for deliveries and waste bins. He explained that previously 2 car spaces at the back of the old post office were used by the Post Office but the Ballroom owner said he wouldn't allow this for bin stores. Archie Maclean responded by stating that he had taken KC legal advice. MCC explained this is a meeting about planning matters and hopes the differences between owners can be resolved amicably.

- Archie Maclean explained that the Community Council asked for a lower height design than the flats that already have planning permission for a 4 storey building.
- If the developer doesn't redevelop the site then he has 2 options: firstly to lease it to a national pub chain or secondly to sell it.
- It was suggested that as it stands the existing building is increasingly becoming an eyesore.
- Archie Maclean thinks this proposal would create a fantastic place and he is looking to invest over £7 1/2 million.
- An Attendee then asked if the pavement at the front of the building would remain public, but it was explained that the pavement is owned by the property and there is already permission to build on it.
- Another attendee enquired how long it would take to build and the developer estimated 18 months.
- An Attendee thought the proposal is better than the flats that have planning permission and a empty building is not wanted.
- It was recommended by one attendee that the developer works on minimising the noise from ventilation systems and resolves technical issues in ways that go the extra mile to avoid neighbour concerns arising.
- Ross Maclean acknowledged this and explained that in Stockbridge he works with local residents and this is important to the success of the hotel.
- An attendee then asked if the architect and engineers are local and it was confirmed that they are.
- Comments were made about traffic generated both in building and running the hotel and restaurant. However it was recognised that any construction work will generate traffic and the running of the old Post office also generated traffic.
- Finally, Ross Maclean assured the meeting that he will try to make things work.

MCC Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and invited people to stay for the monthly MCC meeting or to use the meeting break to leave if they wished.