

Spurtle

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

UNITE WINS ON STUDENT HOUSING

The Scottish Government is 'minded to allow' the Unite Group's appeal and grant permission for a 295-bed student accommodation block in McDonald Road (*Issues 155-7, 164*).

Reversing the Council's decision of March 2008 the Reporter approved the scheme on 12 February subject to 18 conditions and Unite contributing £91,457 to the Edinburgh Tram Scheme and £32,165 to the local cycling infrastructure. A legal agreement to this effect must be registered by May, when a final decision will be issued.

Rejecting 130+ submissions from local residents, associations, Broughton PS and politicians, the Reporter found in favour of Unite in all respects:

- The design took account of local houses in McDonald Rd/Place and would not unacceptably damage local character, environmental quality or amenity.
- Built forms were mostly 'uncontentious'; materials were modern but appropriate.
- Given the very good public transport links nearby, it was unlikely that car use would increase as a result of the scheme.
- The area was suitable for Unite's purpose and would not suffer an excessive proportion of students (11.5% in the ward).
- There was no evidence that residents' behaviour in other Unite-run schemes was bad. This development would reduce student pressure on local HMOs.

Among the Reporter's conditions were safeguards about: hours for deliveries; restriction of commercial

uses; installation of quiet plant and machinery on site; maintenance of landscaping; and provision of parking spaces for a shared-car club.

Unite's proposal must be built within 5 years or permission will have to be sought anew. Unite's claim against the Council for expenses will be dealt with separately in due course.

Mark Lazarowicz MP commented: 'I am extremely disappointed by the decision. It will be a great blow to local residents who, with the support of myself, the MSP, and many local councillors, put in a very strong case against the proposed development. What this emphasises is the need for the local community to get together to make the Council and other authorities come up with a positive strategy for the area, or else every other site will gradually be eaten up by piecemeal overdevelopment.'

Local campaigner Jackie Bell said: 'I am very disappointed that the design will remain unaltered, especially as the revised plans were never accepted at Committee level and that the refuse collection/recycling facilities do not appear to have been designed in a way which is fit for purpose. The decision to refuse this building made by our elected representatives – the Planning Committee, our MP, MSP and 4 local councillors plus the voices of 167 members of the community has been overruled by hard cash. Yet another chance wasted to build some fine architecture in this area.'

For a full copy of the Reporter's Notice of Intention, visit [www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk] and search for Ref. P/PPA/232/1032.

BELLA M'BRIANA VOTED 'BEST IN SCOTLAND'

Bella M'Briana, the popular Italian restaurant at the foot of Broughton Street has won national recognition in the Scottish Restaurant of the Year awards for 2009.

The awards comprise 16 categories, and Bella M'Briana (Neapolitan for 'soul of the house') won Best Italian Restaurant of the Year against fierce competition.

Although of recent origin, the restaurant has gained a widespread reputation for the excellence of its Neapolitan-inspired cuisine and has been uniformly lauded by reviewers.

Pictured are Andrea Cuomo and Head Chef Rosario Sartore receiving the accolade from broadcaster and writer Hardeep Singh Kholi at the glittering event in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

Bravi ragazzi!



Cack-handed Council snips again

Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet! Perhaps the Council's Environmental wing should pay heed to Gerald Manley Hopkins. Yet again, it has displayed deplorable insensitivity in mishandling relandscaping projects across the city.

In early February, residents in King's Stables Rd were appalled at the wholesale removal of trees and shrubs, and consequent loss of wildlife, in the embankment beneath the Castle. They were not informed or consulted, and the site now resembles a battleground.

Nearer home, locals were completely unprepared

for a Council taskforce which, on 1–3 February reduced their charming leafy corner of west Barony St to 2 clipped cherry trees and a forlorn commemorative rowan.

The Council's aim – to reinvigorate and 'revamp' its green sites – may be laudable, but it should surely inform the public of its intentions well in advance. Some Barony St residents were distraught at the loss of trees they had loved all their lives.

There is also a compelling argument for keeping some areas 'wild' provided they do not endanger the public or attract detritus. These alone might ensure the City will not have a silent spring in its most populous areas.

Slow progress on road safety

Local parent councillors have welcomed Council promises of safety improvements around Broughton Primary School. However, the long overdue measures will not be made until Financial Year 2010–11.

On McDonald Rd a number of small build-outs are planned to improve the junction at the crossing. A new speed-reducing 'flat-top' Zebra crossing will also be put in place.

On Broughton Rd the kerb will be extended to ensure cars slow down when turning left into E. Claremont Street. Anti-skid surfaces will be put down on both sides of the nearby pedestrian crossing.

Interim measures for the McDonald Rd crossing involve a temporary build-out on the side opposite the school, flashing lights, and chevrons on the approach.

Whilst pleased at the development, Parent Council Chair Gordon Chromka is carefully monitoring the plans' progress through the system. He is determined to ensure that the expensive proposals are not quietly dropped before the next Council Budget.

Floreat rosa rugosa, inter alia ...

Judy Conn (Environment Convenor of the NTBCC) writes: The Friends of King George V Park and Scotland Yard Parks have been given a grant of £500 by the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan.

In the recent Council survey of City parks and green spaces (*Issue 166*), KGV Park scored badly for biodiversity. The grant allows the Friends to bulk up planting in the park to provide food and shelter for wildlife. To deter graffiti taggers on a wall to the south of the park, lots of native prickly plants, *rosa rugosa* and *rosa canina* will be planted as well as gentler shrubs, guelder roses, honeysuckle and *hydrangea petiolaris*. British bluebells will go into the slope under the trees below Royal Crescent, and wild flowers along the edges of Eyre Crescent.

The grant has been the catalyst for further welcome biodiversity boosts: 20 bird nesting boxes made available by PC Simon Daley will be installed free of charge by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Planting began on 28 February with input from Friends and the wider community. Other dates will be arranged for March and April.

'Boutique' proposal for Leith Walk

Proposals to convert and extend adjoining Category A-listed properties at 1–5 Baxter's Place look set to go ahead [Ref. 08/03635/LBC]. Council planners are 'minded to grant permission' for the 167-bedroom hotel and restaurant, latest in Dublin-based Fitzpatrick Design Collection's (FDC) boutique portfolio.

The hotel, estimated to cost around £40m, is set to open in 2010 and could create over 100 jobs in the city. Boss Paul Fitzpatrick said: 'Edinburgh is a fantastically cosmopolitan city and one of the most desirable places in Europe to invest, visit, work and live.'

Local objections included one from New Town and Broughton Community Council, which fears the venture's 6 storeys (including modern penthouses and rooftop garden terraces) in Greenside Place could invade neighbours' privacy. But on 4 February, and after support for the hotel from Economic Development's Tom Buchanan, officials gave it the green light, subject to legal agreement.

Crucial to the site's attractiveness was its closeness to the new tram network, scheduled to open in 2011. FDC will pay some £327,000 towards the transport scheme.

Paolozzi rules at Drummond CHS

On 12 February, Drummond CHS held its annual art exhibition. The diversity and quality of students' work were again of a very high order and often took the breath away. There were many highlights but alas we have space to mention only a few.

S2 displayed a fascinating project on the work of Edouardo Paolozzi. This leading light of pop art never forgot his Leith background and his parents' sweetie-shop in particular. The motif of sweeties appeared in his early work, and S2 were inspired to create a range of thrilling clocks reflecting this. These objects would sit well in any gallery of modern art. Elsewhere, audacious themes included: Douanier Rousseau-inspired landscapes (I loved 'Toucan' by Melanie M.); Van Gogh news-sheets with appropriate titles ('Sunflower News', 'The Starry News'); Gustav Klimt-inspired prints; Fantastic Fish, and Beautiful Birds. Most of these were created with striking aplomb by S1's 12–13-year-old artists. The show also featured the portfolio of Advanced Higher student Lindsey Maclean which will be illustrated in a future issue.

Paolozzi would have applauded Drummond's perspicuity in including scintillating works by transition pupils from Broughton, Leith Walk and Abbeyhill Primaries. The wider media often present a negative picture of our schools and young people. On the evidence of this uplifting exhibition, *that* picture is, to say the least, badly executed and poorly presented. *JRM*

Holocaust victims remembered

On 28 January we were honoured to have Eva Schloss (Anne Frank's step-sister) at our whole-school assembly to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, writes *Jon Reid, Headteacher of Drummond CHS*. We were joined by the Lord and Lady Provost, Councillor Marilyne MacLaren (Convenor of Children & Families) and Mr Mike Rosendale (Head of Schools and Community Services).



Eva Schloss with senior DCHS students

We were also fortunate to host a performance of James Still's award-winning play *And Then They Came For Me*, which has received worldwide acclaim. The production is a unique theatrical experience: a multimedia event in which videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors Ed Silverberg and Eva Schloss are combined with live actors recreating scenes from those individuals' lives during World War II. It aims to challenge prejudice and encourage all to stand up to hatred. The play was followed by a question-and-answer session with Eva Schloss.

The play had been performed the previous day in The Scottish Parliament, an event which school Captains and I attended as part of the national commemorations.

Eva Schloss was brought to the school partly thanks to her friend, activist and former Drummond pupil Iain McGill.

Nooks and crannies: the Cowan Building

In the canyon of W. Register Street stands a building of life-affirming oddity, whose 'Venetian-Bodleian-Gothic' strangeness is easily missed in the gloom.

The 4-storey Cowan Building was built in 1864 as a palatial warehouse for a firm of papermakers and printers. Second and third-generation proprietors Alexander and Charles Cowan are depicted in bas-relief busts by William Brodie on either side of the wheelie-binned service entry, and their family name appears over a door at the SE corner.

Alexander was a philanthropist whose influence is reflected in the property's generosity of detail. The walls abound in decoration: an exuberance of flowers and foliage; a beautiful pelican; a slithering crocodile; a stalking cat; a Chinese dragon; a spaniel starting ducks; each detail unique and skilfully rendered. Anyone who thinks the Victorians were grim should look again.

The architect was William Hamilton Beattie (1842-98). In a varied career he was responsible for: another Cowan building at 16 Princes St; Nos 40-4 Elm Row; the Jenner's Buildings; the North British Station Hotel (the Balmoral); and the Bonded Stores in Bonnington. He was also key to the enabling Act (1884) and construction of Edinburgh's first tramway between Hanover St and Comely Bank/Trinity, for which he designed the elegant engine house on Henderson Row.

The B-listed Cowan Building is owned by the Royal Bank of Scotland, which should surely be doing more for this now grubby masterpiece. *AM*



Briefly

Broughton History Society's next 2 meetings will be as follows. On **9 Mar.** Jill Powlett-Brown will talk about "**A Unique Concentration**" – **Women in 19th-century Morningside**'. On **27 Apr.**, Nicholas Oddy will speak on "**The Machine in the Parlour**" – **Victorian Domestic Machinery**'. Meet in Drummond CHS, 7pm. Visitors £2, members free.

Brian Rafferty's **Broughton St Bookshop** will have its grand opening on 7 Mar. Sir Tom Farmer, who has taken a great interest in Brian's achievement, will be 'cutting the ribbon' at noon. Bubbly and canapés will be available later in the day for customers.

Free safe-cycling tuition for 5-7s is offered in the **Botanic Gardens** every Sunday, 11am-noon. Pre-booking essential: [event@dancult.co.uk]. Parents must accompany. On 8, 14-15 Mar. **Dr Bike** will fix minor problems with kids' cycles, free, at the East Gate, as part of the **Danish Cultural Institute's** Dreams on Wheels programme.

More gourmet news. A new bistro, '**Nom de Plume**', will open shortly next to L'Escargot Bleu.

Contractors are busy installing lights, surfacing and signage to the **Rodney St Tunnel** which connects King George V Park to the North Edinburgh Cycle Network. Go-slow signs and improved sight-lines have been designed to ensure pedestrian safety. Completion, with financial support from Sustrans and the Scottish Govt, is expected by the end of Mar. and an official opening in Apr. **Cllr Phil Wheeler, Transport Leader**, said: 'Developing Edinburgh's network of cycle paths is important in ensuring that the City offers a full range of transport options.'

Young arsonists broke into the rear of **51-3 East Claremont St** on 19 Feb. and set a fire. Four pumps attended a call at around 3.30pm, and soon put out the flames. This is not the first time the increasingly dilapidated building has attracted attention from fire investigators and police. A 'suspicious' blaze wrecked the interior on 25 May 2007. On this latest occasion, the young people involved **were spotted and recognised** by locals.

The **Community Council noticeboard** in Broughton St (by the Stafford Centre) is being updated. Local associations and Friends groups wishing to advertise events are invited to use it. Contact Ross c/o *Spurtle*.

Spring term ends at state schools on 3 Apr.

STOP PRESS! At the last moment, we learn that **Unite** have just placed their site at **130 McDonald Rd on the market**. See [www.rettie.co.uk].

Belle's View

Hi fans



Grrrrrrrr! And the March wind roars in like a lion in the sky! What's for fun and frolics in springy, breezy Broughton this month?

Down in the Botanics snuffling around in the spring flowers? Make sure you sniff out the exhibition by erstwhile pop-chanteuse Sue Tompkins from weegee band Life Without Buildings, staging her first ever solo exhibition – PTO – at **Inverleith House Gallery**. Her twin Hayley is also exhibiting in Gallery 2 (10:00–15.30 [17:30 in Mar.], 21 Feb.–19 Apr., free).

If you're a flower fan, but a big softie who can't bear to see the real thing uprooted, opt for some gorgeous felt flower brooches from new gift shop **The Cat's Miaou** at 36 Elm Row. Recently opened by Kate Mackenzie, it has a great range of fair trade goods including funky recycled glassware and organic baby clothes – in fact, everything you need to be the cat's whiskers!

Yearning for Patee in the *printemps*? Don't worry, sunny Paris can be found on our very own doorstep, in the form of French restaurant **L'Escargot Bleu**, at 56 Broughton Street (Tel. 557 1600). It's opening especially on Sunday 22 March for Mothers Day, so why not treat your Mammy to a lovely bit of French cuisine? And if the credit crunch is really biting, well, you can always treat her to a bag of *pommes frites* and a pickled *oeuf* across the road at **Rapido**.

Till next time!

Persephone Bone

Rodney St Tunnel open by Spring ...



Cyclists must respect other users

New Town/Broughton Community Council Vacancies for 3 Community Councillors

The Community Council represents the views of local residents to Edinburgh City Council.

Next meeting
2 March at 7.30pm
at Drummond CHS

For details please contact:
mowats@blueyonder.co.uk

Malcolm Chisholm MSP Edinburgh North and Leith



Constituency Office:
5 Croall Place, Leith Walk, EH7 4LT
Tel: 0131 558 8358
Fax: 0131 557 6781
Saturday surgeries:
9am Leith Library
10.30am Royston/Wardieburn
Community Centre
12pm Stockbridge Library

Mark Lazarowicz MP for Edinburgh North and Leith



Constituency Office:
5 Croall Place, Leith Walk, EH7 4LT
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Friday advice sessions:
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