

Spurtle



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**October
2020**

No 300

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

LATEST MOVES ON NEW TOWN NORTH

A full application was submitted last month for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of a mixed-use development on the former RBS site between Dundas Street and King George V Park (20/03034/FUL).

Interested parties have until 9 October to comment on a staggering 403 documents [bit.ly/3keZWtF], a task which would challenge a team of focused full-time professionals. Extensions may be permitted. Daunted non-professionals may find it useful to start with illustrative visuals in Section 8.6 of the Design and Access Statement here [bit.ly/3kcjSNS]. For initial local reactions, see below.

A decision was originally expected by 6 January 2021. If the scheme is approved, construction could begin in summer 2021 and be completed in 2024.

Meanwhile, a date has been set for the pre-application public consultation on the parallel proposal first reported in Issue 299. This replaces hotel provision with up to 79 new housing units (20/03825/PAN).

It will take place on 8 October via online video conference call at [www.newtownnorth.co.uk] (times TBC). Community councils, residents and their associations, heritage groups, local businesses and services are invited to participate.



POSEIDON IN PLASTIC



Following hot on the fins of this summer's mermaid in Newhaven (Issue 297), a new denizen of the deep has emerged on the pier at Granton. Poseidon rises majestically, draped in mortals' detritus. This is a new work by 'The Rebel Bear', a Banksie-inspired street-artist whose provocative designs have previously appeared in Glasgow and Leith.

NEW TOWN NORTH – FOR AND AGAINST

Local businesses look forward to increased footfall.

Local critics say:

- the proposal is too dense
- buildings opposite Fettes Row are too high
- there is insufficient car parking
- 89 out of 149 trees on site would be cut down
- development on this scale would spoil King George V Park, through increased user numbers and passing cyclists.

Developers and supporters counter:

- height and density match the surrounds
- parking for cars and bikes meets Council guidelines
- green space/soft landscaping will increase by up to 25%
- sufficient healthy trees are being retained
- plans have been amended to prioritise pedestrians over cyclists.

SMALLER, MORE DIGESTIBLE ... AND STILL A CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Underbelly's reduced and dispersed layout for Edinburgh's Christmas Market (Nov-Jan, 2020-21, 2021-22) was submitted for planning permission last month. We report proposals closest to home (George St, 20/03708/FUL; Mound/E. Princes St Gardens, 20/03707/FUL) and ignore those for the High St (20/03728/FUL).

At the west end of George St, the plans envisage a 500m² ice rink with associated bootroom, box office, bar, and infrastructure plus 18 market stalls. A further 12 stalls, storage, office, generators, and loos would fit between George and Rose Sts on Castle St.

Agents Turley acknowledge constraints here: protection of nearby cultural heritage resources; key views; need for appropriate massing/scale; need to maintain vehicular and pedestrian access; proximity of existing properties.

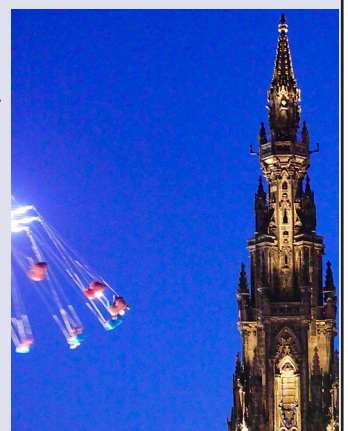
Some 27 stalls are clustered on the Mound next to the RSA, with plant, toilets, the Big Wheel and Star Flyer limited to E. Princes St Gdns' top tier. As usual, there is an avowed commitment to 'mitigation' (e.g. not damaging statues, trees, soil structure) and 'remediation' (e.g. restoring damage afterwards). The lower section of EPSG would stay open as a public park throughout.

Covid-19 concerns mean visitor numbers would be limited, with attractions encouraging one-way flow and no concentrations. Given the human race's herd stupidity, one

wonders how effective these measures could be without strict marshalling. Given the virus' virulence, the wisdom of holding any such event is also questionable.

The scheme reflects, says Turley, apparently without its tongue in its cheek, 'the positive characteristics of the local vernacular, and responds to the varied immediate setting in terms of historical context, natural environment, topography, scale and massing'. We're curious to know how this will play out for those outside the compound barriers, some of which will comprise 3m-high timber-clad wall panels.

From a low base, these proposals improve on last year's explosion of tat, and have at least approached the planning system in timely fashion. Comments can be made until 9 October, and a determination is expected by 2 November. The proof of this pudding will be in the management, and many may wish for a robust assessment of it before the 2021-22 event is allowed to proceed.



Briefly

The Forth St-based **Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council** is seeking financial donations. It needs funds to carry on providing **essential items** such as nappies, baby milk, and halal meat to local black, Asian, and minority-ethnic families facing hardship due to **Lockdown and Covid-19**. To donate, visit [bit.ly/3hvnatZ].



Three new eateries have opened here in recent weeks: **Harmonium at 7–11 E London St**, a vegan restaurant, bar and (eventually) events space relocated from Henderson St; **DaVinci's**, a family-run Italian bar / restaurant offering breakfast, lunch, and dinner menus at **73 Broughton St**; and **Sinshen Sushi at 43 Broughton St**. Sinshen is run by Gabriel Ion (L) and Gheorghe Olar, who are a lot more friendly than our photo suggests. This is their second recent food venture, the first on **Nicholson St** having succumbed to the Lockdown in March. These are **difficult and uncertain times** for all small businesses in our area. If you can find a way to support them, do.

Rettie's are marketing a 'limited release' of studio to 3-bedroom flats in the new **St James Quarter** [bit.ly/3mK7BCf]. These are the first of 152 '**exceptional living spaces**' on the 5th–8th floors. 'This is about modern living without limits,' reads the breathless blurb. **Prices start at £350k**. A perfect stocking filler for that special person in your life.

Owing to Covid-19, introduction of **low emission zones** in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow has been delayed until **Feb–May 2022**. That date may slip.

Graffiti on the foot/cycle path over the river at **Warriston Junction** has been removed, and a protective (unpleasantly shiny) coating applied in its place. Lest anyone think **anti-social damage** is an exclusively recent phenomenon, see p. 3.

The Oxtail Steakhouse restaurant on **Antigua St** has closed. We don't know why, but it seemed to be doing OK until the pandemic. Agents **Edinburgh Commercial Property** agents say a rental of £35k is sought and the annual rateable value of £52k is under appeal.

MMMARS Dundas Limited has submitted a proposal of application notice for **108–14 and 116 Dundas Street** (20/03923/PAN). It plans demolishing **Centrum House** (on the corner with **Fettes Row**) and erecting in its place a major mixed-use development including residential, retail, and café/restaurant uses. **Bupa House** next door would also be involved. E-consultation dates have yet to be confirmed.

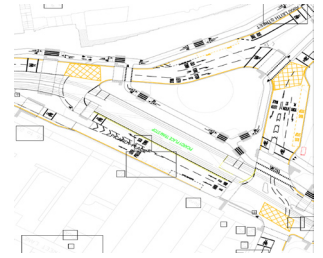
Three-cornered splat

The adjacent image is a detail from a Council plan showing Traffic Regulation Orders proposed to regulate moving traffic, banned turns, one-ways, and parking areas around the new tram route between London Road and Leith Street and York Place.

Our focus here is on Picardy Place, but you can see the wider proposal (and others) here [bit.ly/3kdsKcX]. 'Overall landscape design is being finalised.'

Reaction on social media has dwelt mainly on the controversial priority given to motorised traffic (and excessive parking provision beneath the new St James Quarter).

Two-wheeled campaigners are again bemoaning the lack of a continuous cycle route from the foot of Leith Street to the junction with Waterloo Place. *Spurtle's* first reaction is that a northbound cyclist on the road attempting to access Broughton Street both outside the Cathedral and then on the downhill section would need nerves of steel and a suit of armour negotiating buses, cars, and lorries.



Short-term lets under the microscope again

The public has until 16 October to respond to a Scottish Govt consultation on proposals to regulate short-term lets through, for example, a mandatory licensing scheme. You can take part here [bit.ly/33N2Gba].

If passed, new regulations could come into effect in April next year. They are intended to balance different priorities of rural STLs, where they can usefully supplement tourist capacity, against areas like Edinburgh city centre where overprovision of whole-property STLs in particular causes problems for locals. Critics say STLs' negative effects include: economic harm; loss of privacy and security; anti-social behaviour and impact on mental health; displacement of community; reduced availability of housing; and increased rents and house prices.

'I am confident that our proposals will allow local authorities to ensure a safe, quality experience for visitors, whilst protecting the interests of local communities,' says Housing Minister Kevin Stewart.

The detailed response of activists PLACE (Protecting Liveable Affordable Communities in Edinburgh) can be accessed here [tiny.cc/wlqxsZ]. A PLACE spokesperson tells us, 'We find much to celebrate in the proposed legislation but suggest several amendments to detect and address unlawful activity. We encourage those affected by this issue to read our recommendations and respond to the consultation.'

Chat about charter for festival city



With increasing use of public space for disruptive commercial events have come increasing tensions between organisers, visitors, officials, politicians, businesses and residents feeling variously unloved, shackled, and dispossessed.

Cllr Joanna Mowat is now leading informal consultations to see how workable compromises could be found. In a discussion document shown to *Spurtle*, she floats mutually agreed:

- clear and enforceable management rules requiring prior permissions and passable pavements
- bespoke management rules for specific spaces
- a publicly accessible, timely, and up-to-date log of forthcoming events.

She also suggests closer, early involvement of residents, festivals, and tourism businesses in shaping the forthcoming Public Spaces Manifesto before it is offered for public consultation and ultimately consideration for approval by the Culture & Communities Cmte.

If common values can be agreed on how public space is used, and if relevant parties can be held to account, Mowat suggests residents could return to doing what they do best – providing a warm welcome.

In praise of pink fir apples

Here, from the Giraffe Garden by Drummond Tennis Club, are two recently unearthed pink fir apple potatoes.

Famously eccentric, with knobbly surfaces and torpedo or sausage shapes (which, alas, exclude them from blandly perfectionist supermarket shelves), they are however highly sought after by gourmands and discerning cooks, as well as a joyful array of allotment devotees. They have a fine pale yellow texture, and their taste is subtly waxy and nutty. Little wonder, they are French in origin – hence the apple/*pomme-de-terre* association in their name. Once quietly steamed, and served with cold butter and a smidgeon of black pepper, they are an epicurean feast in themselves. But they are also superb in all manner of dishes, particularly salads. This ancient Highland émigré in Edinburgh never thought any potato could match the supreme Golden Wonder, but the pink fir apple befits its charmed name, and is equal to it.

So, *Vive Solanum tuberosum!*—JRM



Heritage is key to tackling climate change

Edinburgh World Heritage last month issued a climate emergency manifesto aimed at policy makers, experts, and residents. By preserving and improving the city's historic environment, it aims to back the Council's ambition of making Edinburgh carbon-neutral by 2030.

You can read the whole document here [bit.ly/2FG797p], but in short:

- Regular maintenance, high-quality conservation, and sensitive energy-efficiency measures can put Edinburgh's historic environment at the heart of tackling climate change.
- Tackling climate change can strengthen the conservation, understanding, and appreciation of the EWH site.
- Our historic environment and traditional buildings are inherently sustainable.
- Whole-life carbon assessment shows demolition and new builds are less efficient than existing traditional structures, especially if the latter are retrofitted with improved lighting and heating.
- Well-maintained buildings are more energy-efficient than poorly maintained ones.
- Changes to the public realm (parks and gardens) must take into account its unique character, heritage value, and usefulness in tackling climate change.
- Empowered and supported local residents are key to conserving the EWH site during this challenge.
- Evidence-based, locally appropriate responses require funding and prompt application.



Desecration of the Calton Hill

Condensed from the Caledonian Mercury, 18 May 1833.

The common people of this country must certainly have the organ of destructiveness enormously developed. Nothing that they can possibly lay their hands upon escapes demolition.

Wherever they gain admittance the work of devastation begins; and nothing but bars, bolts, and ramparts of stone can prevent their indulging in an incredibly barbarous propensity to mischief.

This spirit of Vandalism has been recently displayed on the Calton Hill, where walks, shrubberies, and monuments have been indiscriminately attacked, and all sorts of ravages committed in the most daring and outrageous manner, and where well-dressed blackguards often interfere to protect, sometimes to cheer on, the tatterdemalion perpetrators of the mischief in their work of havoc and dilapidation.

We hear the Police blamed in this matter; but we scarcely think justly. Their force is small; the rates do not at present admit of its being increased.

In the meanwhile, we beg to inform the exterminating angels, that what they consider as only mischief is a crime of a heinous nature and severely punishable; and that if any of them, whether young, old, or middle aged,—male, female, or hermaphrodite,—be caught in the fact, and handed over to the public prosecutor, 'he, she, or it' may lay their account that the law will be enforced against them with a severity proportioned to the wanton and malicious spirit which such a species of crime displays in the perpetrator. *The full foam-flecked effusion with footnotes is available on our website from 1 Oct.—AM*



Blest be the ties that bind

Peter Wesolowski's passion for rugs began as a boy in Poland, a nation with a rich tradition of commissioning and importing these beautiful works of art. In recent years he turned from expert enthusiast to trader, and since July has been running the jewel-like Knots about Rugs at 1 Tanfield.

His business specialises in highly decorative collectables of all ages, at present mainly from Iran, Morocco, and Afghanistan. The market is worldwide, although the new 'kerb presence' in Canonmills is generating fresh interest in Edinburgh, too. He welcomes visitors, and – with an academic background in Italian civilisation, film studies, and creative writing – is a keen conversationalist on a dizzying range of subjects.

Wesolowski settled in Edinburgh five years ago and, given his abiding passion for the work of Robert Louis Stevenson and the fact that he now works opposite the great man's birthplace, the move north has about it a sense of happy inevitability. We wish him every success.—AM.



Briefly



With the new **W Edinburgh** hotel now twirling turdlike over the Edinburgh skyline, we were again reminded that its signature design is London-based architects **Jestico & Whiles'** tribute to local traditions of paper-making and publishing. How odd, then, that Japanese architects **Kengo Kuma & Associates'** very similar 'unique façade' for the new library in Sydney's Darling Sq – squeezed similarly into a space slightly too small for it – is instead intended as a 'playful likeness to a bird's nest'. It's almost as though some people will spout any old tosh to justify something with **no real contextual relevance**. Thanks to @occuluseye on Twitter for pointing this out: [bit.ly/2FFFumI].

Fabric Focus on **E Claremont St** has made it down to the last 5 nominations in this year's *Best of Craft* magazine award for **Best Independent Store – Scotland**. 'I am beyond excited, humbled and downright "chuffed" to be nominated,' says FF's **Kevin McGovern**. 'Never been nominated for anything before, so this is amazing!' Fans have until the end of this month to add their vote here [bit.ly/2ZL35tD].

City of Edinburgh Council has appointed **Edinburgh World Heritage Trust** as agent to apply to install an interpretative brass plaque (Issue 298) on the **Melville Monument** in St Andrew Sq Garden owned by the **surrounding street proprietors**. Remarkably, the application (20/03382/LBC) had attracted **1285 comments in favour** and **1004 comments against** by the 15 Sept deadline.

And now a shameless plug. **Napier Bathrooms & Interiors** of Canonmills has been awarded Corporate Live Wire's **Bathroom Showroom of the Year 2020** Prestige Award. Judges were impressed by the team's 'knowledge, passion and service'.

Want to feel tip-top and more elitely athletic? **Only 60 members** can belong to Murray Thomson's newly opened **Summit Fitness** gym on **Beaverhall Rd**. He promises a friendly and quiet atmosphere suitable for all sorts of activities and people with all levels of experience. For details visit [bit.ly/2ZYGzXu].

Leith Victoria Swim Centre on **Junction Pl** was among Edinburgh Leisure's first venues to reopen on 14 Sept. **Customer safety** and a '**huge big warm friendly welcome**' are staff priorities. Card not cash. Book slot in advance. No showering.

Moreover ...



Pictured here are the remains of a World War 2 air-raid shelter recently uncovered at **Shrub Pl.** Weekly vlogs explaining archaeological work and discoveries along the **Trams to Newhaven** route began on YouTube in July. Over 50 skeletons have been unearthed so far from **Constitution St**, some in good enough condition to permit forensic facial reconstruction by Dundee University's **Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design**. You can begin your journey here [bit.ly/2ZzItV0].

A framework for coordinated development of variously owned plots of land around **Leith Walk and Halmyre St** was approved by the Development Management Subcommittee last month [bit.ly/2ZgHR6x]. The **Place Brief** emerged after consultation with interested community and other groups [bit.ly/3jTbdQd]. It comprises guidelines for **housing-led mixed-use development** of the site, all of which would be subject to further public consultation before any full planning application were submitted.

Happy clapping will replace secret handshakes now that **Grace Church** has gained consent for its application to change the use of the former **Edinburgh Masonic Club** in Shrubhill to a church.

Central, Stockbridge, and McDonald Rd Libraries are expected to reopen this month. Admissions will be limited and social distancing imposed. Some services may have to be booked. No shushing without a mask.

The Empress on Broughton St (formerly Mather's until 2018) shut its doors during Lockdown and now looks **unlikely to reopen** them under the old regime. The current leaseholder seeks to **assign the remainder of the lease**, which runs until 2036.

What's the connection? (1) **57 stops** between **Cameron Toll and the Airport**. (2) The number of seconds in which a record **271 baked beans** were eaten with a cocktail stick in 2014. (3) **Gerard Butler** and the **Hot Gates**. (4) **10-pin bowling** perfection. (5) 1 Feb. 1994–1 Oct. 2020. Fresh and renewed subscriptions **gratefully received**: [bit.ly/2Hr1L8X].

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.

Participate in local democracy.

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Next meeting: to be confirmed. For local information, visit the website at

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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The Scottish Parliament
 Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Constituency Surgeries
 (no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
 5-6pm at
 Leith Library
 28-30 Ferry Road
 Edinburgh
 EH6 4AE

Every Friday:
 4-5pm at
 Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre
 Pilton Drive North
 Edinburgh
 EH5 1NF

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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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