

Spurtle



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No 333

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

EYRE PLACE – ROUND 2

Developer CA Eyre Place (Edinburgh) Property has returned with new proposals for the former builder's yard at 72–4 Eyre Pl.

To an untutored eye, latest plans are much like the old ones turned down by the Scottish Govt Reporter in June (Issue 330): 7 townhouses (23/04046/FUL) adjacent to purpose-built student accommodation (23/04048/FUL).

Tweaking

However, expert opinion suggests the plans have been carefully tweaked to address the Reporter's concerns. CA is keen to highlight revised height and massing which it says are now more sensitive to other buildings in the area. It makes much of angled windows and screened terraces designed to mitigate noise and prevent overlooking of nearby residents.

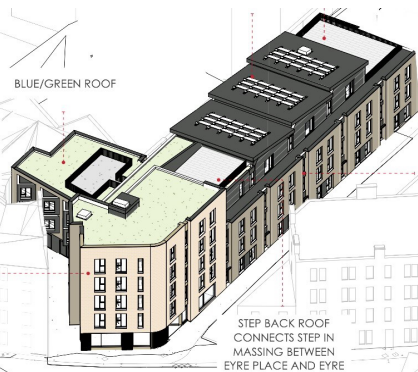
The height of the PBSA is reduced to 3 storeys along the return on Eyre Pl Lane, and this would improve sunlight and daylight levels in some (not all) neighbouring properties and gardens. Ground-floor landscaping and amenity have been extended and improved.

Objections

With the total number of studio bedrooms dropping only from 142 to 139, critics argue the whole still represents massive overdevelopment and a lost opportunity to provide affordable family homes.

Some also claim that, contrary to the Reporter's previous stipulations, the new townhouses exceed the legal boundary with negative implications for access to garages, existing properties and The Yard at the end of the lane.

The last date for comments is 3 Oct. See www.canonmills.net for objectors' website. New Town & Broughton Community Council has promised to work with residents. A determination is scheduled for 3 Nov. It will be interesting to see whether, at the second time of asking, Council planners can organise a hearing soon enough to avoid the case going straight to appeal.



PILLARS OF SOCIETY



Robert Crozier's playful responses to classical Edinburgh architecture will show at the Custom House Leith (Commercial St) from 5–11 October. A painter, printmaker and 'ludic poet', his work appears in numerous public and private collections. We also admire his technical clerihews: 'Linocuts/Are made by making ruts/In the right floor-covering stuff/For these prints fitted carpets, kelims and dhurries are all duff.'

UNEVEN RESPONSE TO NO. 9

Lothian Buses' No. 9 service changed route on 10 Sept and now runs via London St, Drummond Pl and Great King St.

The change has split Drummond Pl residents, so much so that the Civic Association feels unable to take a line in representing local opinion to the bus operator.



Some are concerned about noise and the effect of vibration on their historic properties. Others dismiss this, saying that buses are no worse than SUVs and delivery vehicles passing through the area. Buses, they say, have operated here for decades without causing damage.

Several locals, including some not living beside the carriageway affected, nevertheless fear disruption. This response is countered by those who say a level of noise is par for the course in city centres, and in any case the No. 9 won't operate at night.

Contrary to popular myth, not everybody in Drummond Pl swans over the setts in a top-of-the-range Range Rover. For those who don't drive, the addition of convenient and reliable public transport connecting them to King's Buildings, Muirhouse and all points in-between is a welcome development. More on No. 9 at [bit.ly/To19].

CLUB INFIGHTING OVER FLOODLIGHTS PLAN

As reported in Issue 332, in August the Development Management Subcmte unanimously refused consent for Drummond Lawn Tennis Club's proposed floodlighting of its courts. Drummond LTC has now appealed that decision to the Scottish Govt.

A critic within the club alleges to *Spurtle* that this decision was driven by a minute but opinionated clique, and that there is little if any support for it among the wider membership.

However, we understand that the club committee's hands are tied by an earlier decision to pursue the proposal to consent stage if possible, at which theoretical point all members would vote again on whether to put it into effect. At present, it looks unlikely that a majority would want to do so.

Spurtle's informant disputes the club's claim that floodlights are needed in order to expand playing hours for an increased membership, asserting in the strongest terms that no such demand exists.

Our source continues, 'The amiable view of neighbours has swung from very occasional irritation with bellowing coaches and music played during training sessions, to widespread fury that a tiny number of people have the gall to presume they are entitled to radically change the environment of hundreds of others for whom the area is home.'

Six tennis clubs with floodlit, year-round, all-weather playing surfaces already exist within a 1.7-mile radius of Drummond LTC.



Briefly



Gerald Ogilvie Laing's statue of Sherlock Holmes has returned to **Picardy PI** after completion of the tram extension and partial completion of the noisy, noxious, **NOx-choked** public realm adjacent. It was first unveiled hereabouts in 1991, having been commissioned by the **Federation of Master Builders** to celebrate that body's 50th anniversary. Until work concludes on the space around him and barriers are removed, there's no way to get **up close and personal** with the great non-pipe *fumeur*. We therefore present a **giraffe's-eye view**.

Councillors have green-lighted Danehurst Developments' student-accommodation plans for **22, 24, 26 and 31 Dunedin St** (23/02153/FUL; bit.ly/DndnSt). *Spurtle* would have preferred **affordable housing** but agrees with officials that the accepted scheme offers **well-designed, compact and sustainable** use of the site. We like the inclusion of swift bricks for tourists.

On 19 Sept, **Gordon MacDonald MSP** submitted a motion at Holyrood congratulating 17 local news publications (including us) for forming the **Scottish Beacon** [bit.ly/SBcongrat].

TAKRA Edinburgh Ltd plans to convert former office space at **11–13 S St Andrew St** into a luxury tourist hostel (23/04205/FUL). The ground floor (**Tartan [tat] House**) would remain as retail, while 5 floors above would be converted to house **10 large dormitories**. A **restaurant and terrace** would occupy a metal-clad 6th floor added at the top. The building's current **1978 façade**, reminiscent of a rotting molar, would remain largely unchanged.

Scottish Gas has made a new retrospective planning application to install a gas governor with raised protective slab, vent, solar power mast, cabinets, landscaping and reconfigured parking in the middle of **Bellevue Cres**. The work was completed in summer 2019 without prior permission as part of essential infrastructure improvements to serve the **St James Qtr**. Critics at the time said this was inappropriate in the Conservation Area and spoiled the setting of **Broughton St Mary's Church**. Scottish Gas now argues, in short, that the area was already an unattractive car park and their changes here have, if anything, improved it. Besides, it would be **too inconvenient** to dig everything up and start again.

At last month's **Asian Restaurant Awards (Scotland) 2023** ceremony, **Cilantro** (Albert PI) won in the Best Indian & Bangladeshi category and **Dishoom** (St Andrew Sq) in the Best Casual Dining Venue one. Speaking after the event, **Foysoyl Choudhury MSP**, called for greater UK and Scottish govt support for the sector, which has been hit by steep increases in the cost of living and energy prices.

Bench not fit for purpose

The owner of Griffen Fitness at 3 Balfour St objects to a new bench, originally positioned 2.72 m from the only door of her studio.

The bench, says Tracy Griffen, never appeared in the original approved Trams to Newhaven plans. It's too high, too deep, too sloped and too obstructive to match Edinburgh Street Design guidelines. It should not have been positioned so close to an active street frontage comprising businesses and homes.

It is also an ugly concrete block, not 'aesthetically consistent with surrounding elements' as the guidelines promote. It adds, she says, to what is already a local hotspot for street clutter: 1 new light pole, 2 Virgin boxes, 6 cycle racks, 2 street trees, 1 planter, various temporary cones and barriers.

Worst of all, for residents, businesses and clients, the bench's set-back location attracts drug dealers and addicts, making locals who must pass them fear for their own safety.

In correspondence with Council officials, Griffen has received little acknowledgement of the design's shortcomings and negative consequences. However, in mid-Sept, the bench was moved 50 cm further from her premises, to which Griffen responded with ironic gratitude on social media. After 18 years on Balfour St, she is now considering moving her business out of the area.



Doubts raised about George Street plan

Annette Pollack of the Edinburgh Access Panel (EAP)* has grave reservations about the latest iteration of plans to transform George St.

Addressing the New Town & Broughton Community Council last month, she highlighted:

- Limited times for drop-off and collection by taxi (an unexplained proposal which may contravene the *Equalities Act*), with no explanation of why this is proposed.

- A 'cycle highway' down the middle of the street with no effective separation from pedestrians or enforcement of a notional 10 mph speed limit. Insufficient detail of proposed signage and visual aids.

- No detail on where cycles would go during occupation of central performance spaces.

- No clarity about 'café sprawl' across pavements, particularly on the north side of the street.

- No sharing yet of the results of an underground survey.

Some at the meeting voiced frustration at too little information coming from those behind the design: Atkins Landscape Architecture. The firm attributes this to reasons of commercial confidentiality, an explanation critics describe as 'nonsensical and disgraceful' when applied to such an important public space.

Pessimists criticise Edinburgh Council's lack of hands-on involvement and suggest we may all be sleepwalking into the same kind of unaccountable fudge which shaped Picardy PI's Fantasy Island.

*EAP works with CEC partners and local businesses to improve accessibility for physically disabled and sensory deprived people, mostly relating to the built environment. See [bit.ly/EdAcPan].



Mice, too, favour the flavour

Like the greedy mastic-eating gulls in Pilrig (Issue 332), gourmand mice in Great King St love a linseed-based snack around newly installed windows, writes *Hyacinth B*. It's the fatty acids – delicious and reputed to help keep all creatures regular.

The sleekit beasties' 'regular' droppings allowed us to track them to a den below the patio plants. They were neither cowering nor timorous.

Google-derived wisdom was applied: vinegar (rain washed it away); essential oils (liked them); lemon (ignored it); mound of builders' stewed teabags (used as a ladder to climb higher – some kind of Einstein mouse); trap baited with giant chocolate button (avoided trap, enjoyed sugar rush); trap set with peanut butter (ooh ... never again).

Then an itinerant street-cat visited, peed hither and thither, and the nibblers moved to Pilrig. Chief mouser was the only solution that worked.



Time to move on from Tattie Shaws

After 26 years selling some of the best fruit and veg in the barony, Tattie Shaws' James Welby is now selling the premises at 35 Elm Row. There's no guarantee it will remain a greengrocery.

In its pomp around 2001, 300 customers visited each day, ensuring rapid turnover of super-fresh produce. Typically, it went from picked to shelf in 5 days.

Nowadays, it's more like 50 people a day, and with sales slower across Europe, the produce (typically chilled in storage) takes longer before reaching the shops. James writes off £300+ a week on produce which, having passed its best, he refuses to stock. That's financially unsustainable.

Tramworks, Covid-19, Brexit and the cost of living have changed business here. Older clients now struggle to find convenient parking. Others who began shopping online during Lockdown found one-stop convenience became habitual. Everything now costs more.

However, Lockdown also allowed James to take stock. Work had become a stressful 24/7 merry-go-round, and he's still had only 1 week's holiday away since 2014. Better work-life balance felt vital.

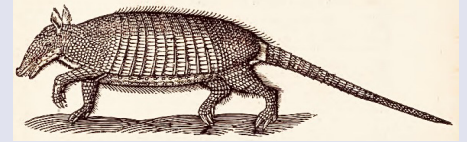
What will he miss most? 'My stunning customers, some of whom have become good friends. Conversations with them are my social life. I'll also miss the weird and wonderful sights of Leith Walk.'

What next? 'I'm not sure yet. I'd love to follow Liverpool FC round the world but will probably try working with older folk – perhaps in social work or care. Whatever it is, it'll be great having somebody else telling me it's OK to take time off.'

James will continue to live in the area, so locals can still enjoy his company, only without a bag of bananas in-between. *Spurtle* joins many others around Broughton in wishing him every success.



Briefly



Friends of Calton Hill gathered at dawn on 10 Sept to survey birdlife in the park for the next 3 hours. Led by the Scottish Ornithology Club's **Stephen Welch**, they heard or saw, in ascending order of probable weight: goldcrest, chiffchaff, wren, long-tailed tit, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, siskin, robin, meadow pipit, dunnock, nuthatch, chaffinch, mistle thrush, stock dove, magpie, feral pigeon, wood pigeon, carrion crow, lesser black-backed gull and herring gull. A peregrine falcon passed overhead but did not alight. **Spurtle calculates** that if you put the largest example of each into a bag and put the bag on a set of scales, their **combined weight** would be 6.25 kg, i.e. roughly that of an adult common long-nosed armadillo.

On 19 Sept, an interpretative brass plaque was 'improperly removed' (i.e. without Council permission) from the **Melville Monument** by some who argue that its assertions about Henry Dundas' **alleged delaying tactics** around the abolition of slavery are historically wrong. They say that Edinburgh Council installed the plaque without proper planning permission, and that unscrewers unscrewed with the full consent of relevant **St Andrew Sq proprietors**. Cllr Claire Miller has called for the plaque's return.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be on 9 Oct at 6pm in McDonald Rd Library. Bruce Keith will talk on **Milestones. Are We Nearly There?**

Plans are afoot to convert a long-vacant warehouse, tucked out of sight at **254 Leith Walk**, into a food, drinks and craft market operating 7 days a week with additional pedestrian access to **New Orchardfield** at the back (23/03964/FUL). The emphasis would be on **local and regional produce and sellers**, as well as promotion of local artists. To ensure **neighbouring residential amenity**, no cooking or music would be allowed on-site.

In September's issue of the *Spurtle*, we finally and definitively explained the source of the **Broughton screech**: defective plant on the roof of the Leith Walk youth hostel. This month, we finally and definitively explain it again. A **Haddington PI** resident says the high-pitched noise comes from the automatic gate of a garage on **Annandale St Lane** when closing. The solution in this case is WD40. The problem in general is city life.

Apex Property Short-Term Lets Ltd has appealed to the Scottish Govt against Edinburgh Council's enforcement notice regarding subdivision of B-listed 11 Pilrig St. The Reporter expects to reach a decision by 17 Oct.

Plans to alter and extend an A-listed 2-storey flat (ground and basement levels) in **Regent Ter** divide neighbours' opinions (23/04091/FUL). The property already comprises a hall, drawing room, shower room, 3 bedrooms, second hall, kitchen, dining room, bathroom, loo and wine cellar. The proposals would involve **substantial internal rearrangements**, plus a 1-storey basement extension. The latter would provide an additional bathroom, and rooftop terrace accessed from a **new exterior sitooterie**. It's the balustraded terrace and aluminium-framed glazing which appear to vex some most.

Too few, too far apart

Since 1 June 2023, 24 parking tickets have been issued to vehicles incorrectly parked on Leith Walk pavements. At least four attendants are dedicated to this route.

Meanwhile, partly in response to Cllr Rae's motion at Aug's full Council meeting, officials seek ways to safely remove parked vehicles blocking trams without damaging public or private property. The solution 'will require additional funding, resources and training – none of which has been allocated'.

SNP councillors wonder if Holyrood should make blocking a tramway with a parked vehicle a new road traffic offence. However, officials assure Transport Convenor Cllr Scott Arthur that the Council will have the necessary legal oomph to enforce measures against such obstructive drivers from Dec 2023 onwards.

Given the frequency of the problem and the surprisingly small number of tickets issued, *Spurtle* suspects there are still too few parking attendants to apply that oomph where and when it's needed.



Egg woes

From the Caledonian Mercury, 14 June 1819:— 'Last week a dandy charger, or velocipede, ran off with its rider on Leith Walk, and coming violently in contact with a basket of eggs, overturned the rider, and sent him, with the contents of the basket, a-rolling on the causeway. Upon recovering himself, the rider, to escape the fury of the egg woman, threw her a few shillings, remounted his charger, and galloped off.' *Spurtle* deplores today's lack of egg women in the area.

All change at the Omni

Nuveen, owner of the St James Qtr, is selling its 220k sq. ft Omni Centre over the road (bars, restaurants, coffee shop, health club, 5-star hotel, 12-screen cinema and 990 car parking spaces) for £65m.

Readers may wonder why, especially when occupants together pay rent of nearly £6.5m per year, 87% of which income is index-linked or subject to fixed uplifts and 75% of which is secured for the next 15–45 years. Can it be that lifestyle businesses look fragile in today's UK economic climate, or does Nuveen have financial holes to fill elsewhere?

For all the marketing hype, there may be other systemic problems. We understand the Omni's value has already fallen over two successive sales, from £107m in 2006 to £74m in 2017. Edinburgh Council may also be sweating. How would any slump in business-rate income affect the far-from-transparent Growth Accelerator Model deal here? We watch with interest.

Moreover ...

Carry-outs with tables and chairs on the footway are **not required to have toilets** for customers. This is more than galling for adjacent cafés which are so obliged and endure a **steady stream** of clients visiting without permission from competing businesses.

The application by **Este Medical Group** to erect 2 flagpoles outside its premises at **37 York PI** has been refused. Officials had no truck with the proposal due to its impact on the **historic integrity** of the frontage and its character.

In addition to planting bulbs and restoring a wildflower meadow, **Friends of Pilrig Park** have been working with the local Community Police Officer on ways to discourage antisocial behaviour in the Millennium Woodland bordering **Pilrig St**. Options include clearing undergrowth, improving lighting, and 'generally **reclaiming the area** for recreation and play'.

Edinburgh Council will stop using **glyphosate** in **parks and green spaces** from April next year, except where invasive species are involved. The herbicide **damages wildlife** and has been linked to cancer in humans. New Town & Broughton Community Council's Simon Holledge would prefer safe alternatives to be used, not least on streets and pavements. These include **hot foam, vinegar and trimmers**. The Council called for glyphosate reduction in 2015, but use of the chemical reached its highest ever level last year.

Naval history buffs, of whom there are many, welcome Cllr McFarlane's call for an update on when Council repair/maintenance of the **Nelson Monument** will be completed, allowing the public to re-enter. It has been shut since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we went to press, locals eagerly anticipated the opening at No. 87 of **Broughton St Flowers** in primrose-yellow premises formerly occupied by Narcissus. It's described online as a 'Charming independent florist with a plant and lifestyle store in Edinburgh's New Town.'

Possible subsidence on **Dublin St** last month, and **Spurtle's** coverage of an earlier occurrence in Feb [bit.ly/Crbrs], prompted **Andy Arthur's thread** in Sept anent calamitous construction of the **Scotland St tunnel**. See [bit.ly/ScStTnl].

Labour councillors have been accused of breaching strict rules prohibiting party-political use of Council facilities. At an event in **City Chambers** on 7 Sept, c.30 party activists and Labour Party members met **Westminster parliamentary candidates** over nibbles and drinks. Among those photographed at the event were Council leader Cllr Cammy Day, **Leith Walk ward's** Cllr James Dalgleish, and **Edinburgh North & Leith** candidate Tracy Gilbert. Liberal Democrat leader Kevin Lang calls for a full investigation.

Footway reconstruction works (plus new cycle rack and pedestrian crossings) on **Dundas St** between Gt King St and Henderson Row began last month and will continue into Dec. **Expect temporary parking suspensions, bus stop closures** and cheery sun-kissed workers with ear-splitting tools. Council refuse collections will be maintained. For further information, contact martin.watson@edinburgh.gov.uk

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Tues-Fri, 11am-5pm; Sat, 10am-2pm



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Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meeting: 7pm, Mon. 23 October, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



Leith Central Community Council



Deidre Brock MP
Edinburgh North and Leith

I'm here to represent you.

Email or call to arrange an appointment at one of my surgeries:

West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre
Second Friday of the month 2-3pm

Stockbridge Library
Last Friday of the month 1-2pm

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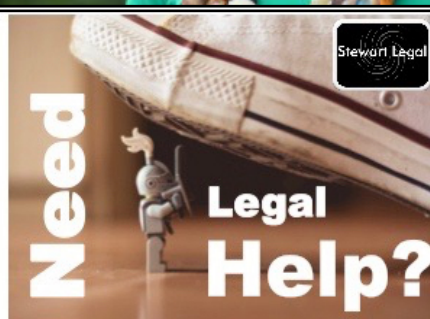


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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency

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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



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first Friday of every month

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11:00 to 12:00
West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, 19 West Pilton Grove, EH4 4BY

15:30 to 16:30
Leith Community Centre, 12A Newkirkgate, EH6 6AD

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