

Leith Central Community Council objects to the proposed planning application (Public House to Class 1 retail for 8 McDonald Road (11/00435/FUL) for the following reasons:

1. The applicant's claim that the proposed application is necessary to '*address the deficiency of convenience retail provision which exists at the south-western end of the Leith Walk Town Centre*' (5.14) and that a '*particular need [has been identified] to improve upon the availability of convenience retail floorspace around McDonald Road*' (5.21) is spurious and inaccurate, since the methodology behind this claim consists of dividing Leith Walk into eastern and western sides and assuming that prospective shoppers from the McDonald Road area are unlikely to cross Leith Walk to shop. However this ignores the fact that there is 4-way pedestrian crossing immediately outside the existing Tesco Express at 4-6 Brunswick Place (which is opposite the entrance to McDonald Rd) and, at 340sq m, this shop is significantly larger than the proposed application and so likely to provide a wider choice of goods.
2. Even if shoppers from the western side of Leith Walk were unable or unwilling to cross that road to shop, there is already a Scotmid convenience store (of a similar size to the proposed application and with a similar choice) at 209 Leith Walk. This is also on the western side of that street and within a few minutes walk from the proposed Co-op convenience store. There is also a second Tesco Express at Picardy Place.
3. It is therefore apparent, contrary to the assertions in this planning application, that shoppers on both sides of Leith Walk are already well catered for by convenience store branches of the major supermarket chains and we see no possible reason why it would be desirable to have another of these in the immediate area.
4. A further convenience store of this type would not, because of its greater purchasing power, ability to stay open for much longer hours, etc '*facilitate healthy competition*' but would inevitably have a serious impact upon the nearby small family-run shops which give a friendly and more personal service and are therefore important to the community, such as Croall Newsagents.
5. Similarly, the proposed store would not, as claimed, '*add[ing] to the range, choice and quality of local convenience goods*' since it would inevitably take some trade away from specialist food retailers, for example, the local greengrocer Tattie Shaw., and thus threaten their viability. Shops like this offer a much better choice and variety of fresh produce than the local convenience stores and since independent butchers, bakers and fishmongers have already disappeared from Leith Walk, such specialist shops that remain are a valuable resource. Their survival, already precarious because of years of tram-related disruption, should not be threatened by this application which is of no possible benefit to the community.
6. Empty shops are already a significant problem in the Leith Walk area and any economic benefit from the jobs which would be provided by the proposed Co-op store would need to be set against the likelihood that the saturation of this area by yet another convenience store would lead to yet more retail business failures.
7. We maintain therefore that this application is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Retail 2, in that it fails to meet the both the condition that '*the application will.....have no significant adverse effects on the vitality and viability .....of.....town or local centre*' and also because it will not '*reinforce the range of facilities and the vitality and attractions of the centre*'.
8. An additional small supermarket would be likely to lead to the over-provision of off-licences in the area since there could be pressure on small shopkeepers to seek licences themselves.
9. The application has traffic implications since it underplays the adverse effects of deliveries, and the increased parking (over a 17 hour timescale) that would inevitably follow from having a convenience store in this location.
10. Because the building already has offices on the upper floor we believe that a conversion to office use (in an area where there are other office developments) would be more appropriate than the proposed conversion to Class 1 usage.

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