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| Moderator | Note Taker | Participants | Date | Time | Venue |
| David Porteous | Garry Sneddon | Local Residents(West of site) | Tues 29th Aug | 6.30pm-7.50pm | Portobello Library |

Mod: There we go we are recording now and again to respect that anonymity that we talked about before so not to mention what anyone else has said outside of this group as well. So, we’ve done that everyone’s happy with that, if I can just ask you to introduce yourselves just going round this way –

[Introductions made]

Mod: Excellent, thank you very much everybody and thanks for coming along tonight.

So, There’s a fair bit of information that I need to take you through first of all so bear with me because it is going to be about ten minutes before we actually get to any questions about any of this... so the reason we are here today is that the land on Westbank Street which is currently owned by the Council is being sold. Portobello Community Council and Portobello Amenity Society have asked for the council to be involved in the decision about what criteria the Council should use to make the decision about who the land will be sold to. We’re conducting eight focus groups with local residents to help us understand how people feel about the various options.

Before I take, before I ask any questions, I need to take you through what happens on the Westbank Street so far and give you some background.

So, how the site is currently used eh you’ve all got a map in front of you just now... the area of land that is being sold is potentially the red highlighted area that’s there just now and I’ll explain why it’s only potential.

So, at the moment there are two businesses that operate on the site – one of them is the Powerleague site, which has everything from the pavilion down towards the High Street. And the other is the Tumbles gymnastics and soft play centre which is operated by Edinburgh Leisure.

So, because I know you’re all residents of the site are you all reasonably familiar of where the limits of this are? Yeah ok…

[group agreement]

So there are two different aspects to this... Firstly at the Powerleague site, so Powerleague want to close their business at Westbank Street because they feel it is no longer financially viable and that’s why the land is being sold. Powerleague has a long-term lease with the Council and that is due to expire in 2088, so they signed a ninety nine year lease I think at the beginning of this process. Now this isn’t not the first time they have contacted us, in 2004 Powerleague notified the Council that they no longer wished to run that business and they wanted to sell their interest in it and there were developers who put forward notes of interest at the time but because of the financial crash that happened a couple of years later it was no longer considered viable so Powerleague basically ran it for another ten years beyond that.

They contacted us again in January 2015 on the same grounds saying it’s not financially viable-the site requires additional investment to bring it up to standard and we don’t want to run it long term. So as a result of that the Council and Powerleague are jointly selling their interest so us as the landlord and them as the leaseholder on that particular site and the upshot of that is that the five a side pitches are going to be removed and won’t be replaced with an equivalent set of five a side pitches... so...

When we think about what’s going to happen to Tumbles… now Edinburgh Leisure, which is a wholly owned arms length management organisation of the City of Edinburgh Council runs the Tumbles facility, we, the Council own that land and there are basically two options for what might happen to Tumbles...

Now some developers have expressed an interest in all of the site that is covered by the Powerleague plus the parking area that Tumbles uses at the moment. In the event that the land were to be sold to those developers what would happen is that that parking area which is about fifty spaces would need to be relocated somewhere else on the site – so there would be no loss of parking if that was what was to happen.

Some developers have also expressed an interest in acquiring the Tumbles site as well as the rest of that, if that were to happen what would then transpire is that that Tumbles site would then need to be relocated elsewhere on this site, so elsewhere within the red area. And the reason why they might do that, is because the area that is on the promenade and the land that’s there is more valuable than the land that would be elsewhere.

(Male attendee interjects) Prime...

Exactly. That’s the most expensive area of the site. And some developers have taken the view that it is in their interests to actually knock down that building and rebuild an equivalent facility elsewhere and they can still make a return on doing that.

So what’s going to happen to the site one way or the other? It’s worth pointing out that any development on the land is still subject to planning permission so there’s a process which is different to the decision about the sale, which we will come back to in a minute actually...

Developers who are interested have already submitted bids for the site, now those bids have said what it is they plan to do with the site and how much they are actually willing to pay for the site, because these are commercially confidential, we can’t actually, in fact I don’t have details of what every individual bid is-so we can’t discuss those in any case, but what we are asking all the developers to do, is revise those bids again, based on the feedback that comes from the community. And that’s what we are here for tonight. Now, the decision about who will then be awarded that who will then be sold the land will be made by Council committee on the basis of a recommendation from a panel, and that panel will be made up of a corporate property officer from the Council and a representative of Portobello Amenity Society and Portobello Community Council and they will be using the focus group feedback from all of you and other people in order to inform that decision making.

Once that particular developer has been appointed they’ll take part in what’s known as a place making exercise so there’ll be another round of seeking views from the community in general and based on that placemaking exercise there’s then a planning application which is submitted and approved or not by again, Planning Committee of the Council so there are a number of stages to this process… And this really is about helping to inform those revised bids for the property and decide for who the sale is given to but that is not the final decision about what actually is built or developed on the site.

So, that is all the preamble, oh no there isn’t sorry, what will happen to the money from the sale? ... That’s obviously an important thing... Because Council and Powerleague both have an interest in the site-some of the money will go to Powerleague, some will go to the Council. I had hoped to be able to give you a specific percentage split that’s not secret it’s just that our colleagues have not passed that on to me for today’s group but all of the money that the Council receives from the sale will go to fund the development of the new Meadowbank stadium. That’s already been allocated if you like... Does anyone have any questions based on all of that?

P: So, they’ve got the lease till 2088…

Mod: That’s right…

P: Does that mean that they’re committed? They can’t really get out of it –they need to- or obviously shift it do they not?

Mod: I don’t know the specific…

P: Why do they get money, I mean, If they don’t own the land they only have a lease for what they’ve got there...I would have thought you would have had them in the sense that you know, we’ll rip up your lease, I don’t know how it works

P: They’d have to buy out of their lease.. I’m sure they’d have to buy out of it, if it’s still got that many years still to run... they would have [inaudible] the money and they would have to use some of that money that you say you’re going to give them to buy out of a lease.

Mod: I don’t know the contractual relationship between them, but essentially the lease would be treated as an asset they’re allowed to retain and use the land for, until 2088 basically so, yes, there is, it is normal as I understand it that a lease holder would be given some compensation for something like this and we couldn’t sell it without their permission basically.

P: But they want [inaudible]

Mod: They do

P: So they’ve paid another 10 years if you said this started back in 2004, they’ve paid another 10 years of money that they’re thinking that’s just going down the drain, so they’re going to be pretty peeved that there’s 10 years of money been pumped in and then [inaudible] so you said it was 2015, and it’s now 2017 so it’s taken two years for….

Mod: …Well these things take a long time to get resolved, yes so this went out for bids I think initially at the very beginning of this year and that was when this part of the bidding happened, but to get to that point there had been a significant period of negotiation with them I think.

P: I know you can’t tell us how much, what the bids are, but are you able to tell us what the developments are planning to do with it, are they going to put flats and a bar, are they going to…do we know what they are going to put there?

Mod: that’s actually what we will come onto the type of development that’s likely to go there, and again we can’t be specific but I can outline the sort of things that are being talked about there.

P: But there isn’t any restrictions or any planning [inaudible]?

Mod: We’ll come on to that… because there are some elements although you have to pay to access the football pitches they are still considered to be open space under planning regulations at the moment, so the specifics of that, and we had hoped to have a planning colleague here actually tonight to answer those questions but the specifics of that is that the planning approval process, the developer will need to show they have made adequate consideration of the fact that there is open space on the site. So we will come on to talk about what that open space should be basically as part of this exercise and as well as the football pitches as well the Figgate Burn and the land immediately adjacent to the Figgate Burn is also considered as open space and there are some outline plans for what the Council has asked developers to consider for that too.

So if we are ok we’ll go on to….

P: …One final thing before you move on. You mentioned the removal of fifty car parking spaces but they would be re-sited, re-sited within the site…

Mod: Absolutely, yes

P: Right, so not like re-sited off site?

Mod: No everything that we’re talking about must, so the car parking spaces, and the thing is, the car parking spaces will be moved cos they’re on the most expensive bit of the land, but they must be relocated within that red area to serve Tumbles.

[chatter, inaudible]

Mod: And again we will come on to talk about parking as well as a separate issue cos there are some other considerations in there too. So…

P: Regardless of that, Tumbles so there’s still going to be soft play and gymnastics somewhere within that site is that right?

Mod: Within the area within the red line yes ok. So, let’s start talking about development type, volume and height really are some of the issues we want to begin with. So there are a number of proposals and those proposals range basically from entirely commercial uses for that site, so again without being specific-a supermarket would be an entirely commercial use for that site through to a combination of developments which are predominantly housing. In all likelihood it will be a combination that will be a preferred option for this simply because that is the one that is most likely to return the higher return for the sale. In terms of total development, now we can’t be specific about this but basically the more that goes on the site the more money the sale accrues and generally speaking more development will mean higher buildings around there. Plans that have been received from developers vary between two storey buildings and eight storey buildings.

(gasps)

P: Eight’s too high

[chatter, inaudible]

Mod: For comparison, it is worth pointing out that nearby buildings range from one storey to eight storey so the blocks of flats that are just there are eight storeys high.. if there is housing built then the Council’s affordable housing policy would require that at least twenty five per cent of those houses would have to be affordable houses, that can vary in structure, so we may be talking about housing association for rent properties or we may be talking about more affordable properties to buy essentially.

P: Is that going to devaluate the price of the other houses?

Mod: Well I think that is the question... is that a particular concern for you?

Male: Definitely aye

Mod: Ok

P: This more affordable housing seems to be the word used at the moment, no one seems to have an exact description of what affordable housing is. Is it housing for buying, is it housing for the elderly, is it housing for the homeless? You know you don’t know who you’re going to get. And every time you ask the questions what’s affordable housing everyone seems to have an answer that makes you good but in the end when you see what moves in it is totally different from what you’ve been told.

P: Truth be known, I think what Portobello needs is a casino a couple of topless bars, a few kebab shops, five more pubs

P: Mini Vegas (laughs)

P: It’s got that but it’s spread out..

P: It needs to be more consolidated

(lots of laughs)

Mod: Do you? I genuinely have to ask that.

P: In jest, in jest

P: But the promenade area needs something that’s going to make it aesthetically nice doesn’t it.. so whatever that is joking aside a casino or something, it’s about bars and cafes and restaurants pubs as opposed to houses

P: It’s actually heaving down there... I was down on Sunday and it was beautiful… this was at nine thirty in the morning and it was jumping, I mean absolutely, you could hardly walk along it, people on bikes, there was a volleyball thing on and they’ve got these wee cafes and things and the queues... It was just immense to see, you thought, my god I didn’t realise how much actually goes on here, that’s my first time there for a long time, but it would, like the gentleman said it could be a viable thing to have something there that would maybe entice as well…

P: I think they have to cos it’s awfully neglected down this way, like you have the arcades and they are like run down- you used to have a wee theme park there and it’s just gone you need something in this vicinity to actually make that bit more attractive

Mod: Ok, so how do people feel about that is that prefer to have something commercial that is then on the promenade side rather than residential?

P: Could it be a mixture?

[chatter, inaudible]

P: Maybe not eight storeys... maybe more towards the two if it’s on the prom.

P: Promenade side yeah….

P: I mean a lot of people would love to have a beach view. And to be honest I don’t think that’s a problem really. Like if it’s an eight storey you’ve got to take in to account how many people are going to be there, there’s only really one local primary school, as in, in Porty, that’s Towerbank so like…

P: Bursting at the seams…

P: So like, I’m a student teacher, and the school is struggling to take children. So you’ve got to think about all the stuff that’ll come with it if you’re putting eight storeys. Where If it’s two storeys maybe it would be more like couples and stuff going into the flats for like a beach view, sea view.

P: I think also we’re going to talk about traffic congestion

P: Uhhuh, parking… but if you’re saying…

Mod: We will come on to transport and travel and parking in a second, I’ve just got a few more questions to cover here. So, In general how do you feel residential versus commercial on the site, do you have any particular, do you mind one way or the other?

P: I would like a noise reduction because you hear these guys screaming ‘ hey ya b\*\*\*\*’ and where I stay it’s quite loud and on a summers night you’re sitting, maybe you’ve got the window open you just hear these guys bellowing at each other at the top of their lungs so something quiet would be great for me, I’m not saying a bar might be quieter but…

P: If you put a bar there even if it’s at the front there’s boys sitting there having pints…

P: A selection of restaurants, cos we’ve got enough supermarkets in Portobello, a lot of the smaller shops around here which people enjoy going to have shut down because they’re not getting any trade, things like Aldi are taking over, we’ve got Asda just up the road and now driving even up this road you’ve got people coming out of Aldi, it’s just impossible. Some of those houses they’ve not got people in it yet, it’s just going to get worse and worse.

P: [inaudible] their vans are everywhere, they’re just finished that building across from Aldi and every morning their vans there’s like 50, 60 vans in that car park there, but they’ve been working on that site so I know they’ve put big signs out saying this is only for people’s use when they come shopping cos the vans were parking there the whole day

P: Cos there were lots of objections against Aldi but it still went ahead you know, and caused traffic congestion in Portobello. We’ve got too many supermarkets already. I mean people drive, it’s not that far to Asda

P: Or Morrisons, or Tesco in Musselburgh really, yeah, I think a supermarket would be pointless really, cos you’ve got Morrisons, you’ve got Asda, you’ve got Tesco, you’ve got Lidl at the start of Musselburgh and you’ve got Aldi, you’ve literally got them all so putting another one across the street I think would be really, really pointless.

P: You’re also talking about more houses, you’re talking about 50 spaces, are these 50 car spaces going to be used by the residents who build houses there?

Mod: Well, let’s just talk about that. Tumbles needs to maintain, needs to have the continued 50 spaces…

P: I was going to say that, so the 50 spaces are for Tumbles at the minute and that’s not sufficient, see on busy days, Friday afternoons and stuff when the schools are out, it is rammed and you cannae get parked round about it cos it’s so busy so 50 spaces just for Tumbles, nevermind then if there’s housing or whatever else comes along would definitely [inaudible]

P: We already get an overspill into our streets anyway, no matter what, if Tumbles have something on, the Pitz have something on, they have something else on, sometimes I’ve came down and .. ‘it’s no your parking space, I pay my road tax mate I can park wherever I want’ and you’re like.. I’m no wanting to get in a fight about this but Christ I’m here every day, you’re here for one thing

Mod: So what the… in putting out the initial bid to developers what the Council asked people to do was to keep any new parking on the site to a minimum, how do you feel about that?

P: Keeping it to a minimum?

Mod: Yes, 50 spaces and then a minimum of any additional spaces that were added

P: But again, to raise there are limitations with regards to planning so if you’re putting an eight storey building with x amount of houses do you have to have x amount of parking spaces? Is there a planning consideration there?

Mod: Eh, I don’t th…I think that would be for the developer I don’t think there’s an actual specific planning requirement [inaudible participant speaking]

P: [inaudible speaking over mod] if you’ve got eight storeys and two on each storey, there’s 16 plus [inaudible]

P: And visitor spaces

P: So they don’t have to supply parking spaces for every flat that’s there?

Mod: As I said we’d hoped to have a planning colleague along for specific questions like that. I can’t answer that. I can say that the guidance is…

P: Cos if they’re not providing parking for residents then it’s going to be a nightmare

P: I don’t know cos Portobello’s on such a good bus route, a lot of people might… cos literally it’s the top of the road and then you can jump on a bus into town and you’re in town in like 10/15 minutes so for a lot of people parking might not be…

P: Well they might park their car there but get the bus in, but it’s still a space that a cars taking up

P: Most houses have two cars and then as your kids get older they want their own car also so then two very quickly goes into three…

P: Or four…

P: Or four

Mod: So what would you say your concerns are in terms of parking in that area of Portobello just now?

P: I think it’s going to spill in to the areas that we stay in just now, and for all good graces, I’d like to be able to come home and park reasonably close to where I stay

P: Course, if you cannae then park there, you’re then parking as close as you can bloody get to it, ken what a mean

[Chatter, inaudible]

P:Aye or you’re parking in somebody elses space and there no enough spaces for us that stay there so…I think you’re just fuelling a fire here

P: I think it’s how these guys work though, cos like a car parking space earns absolutely nada, you know what a mean, whereby it’s all about bricks and mortar that you’re getting your buck for but the parking would be a consideration. I cycle so truth be known it won’t affect me to much but I can understand it is going to throw more traffic into the streets in which I reside

P: I have a car but I use public transport, I’ve got a bus pass so…

P: but the only problem I’ve got with this is, nae disrespect to the Council, is the Council’s way round this is, right, you’ll buy a permit and that’s even more money you’ve got to fork out to park in this area, and these permits, they’re no cheap, whether you buy it for the whole year or 6 months or whatever

P: And there’s also not enough spaces to go with the permits

P: It still doesn’t guarantee your space

P: You’re forking out this money it doesn’t mean you’re getting a space at your door

P: It’ll generate money for the Council but it’s the people that stay there that are struggling sometimes to get a space and they’re not guaranteed it but you’re still asking us to pay what is it £480 or whatever it is for the year and you’re like wait a minute…and that’s the kind of thing they’ll just do, we’ll just put permits in [inaudible]

P: Could they put permits in down this end this far out of town?

Mod: Eh, I mean, I believe the Council can introduce a parking permit scheme anywhere but whether they would or not…

[chatter, talking over each other]

P: … the whole bloody city centre and further out, I don’t know where I read that

P: Is that something that you’re privy to that you’re not sharing?

[Chatter, laughter, inaudible]

Mod: It’s not something that I’ve got any special information on. I try not to have secret information because then I get accused of not telling people it

P: It’s not affecting me cos as I say…

P: …but if it does, that’s my worry and if they’re going to, and if there is a problem with parking just now and then they’re going to have these things put in here, will they just turn round and say, we’ll just put permits in but it doesn’t really stop it it just means that people are being punished cos they stay there already, you’re putting even more flats or houses or whatever you want to call and then… you’re suffering

P: See if we go on the basis of like rewinding just a second, so the most money is going to be made from something that’s diverse, that’s got a mix, is what you say?

Mod: Probably

[inaudible]

P: Cos the Council wants the money for Meadowbank and Powerleague wants it for whatever but of course something I want to go back on about the aesthetics of the promenade ,so Portobello, we all grew up playing on the beach as kids so [inaudible] you cannae shove tons of flats in there and a couple of supermarkets, Tumbles 50 spaces, you need to scale it back a bit so that you dinnae ruin the front [inaudible] we’ve all been brought up [inaudible] etcetera etcetera and it’s really nice on a Sunday

Mod: So is it just the look of the promenade or is it about how people would use that space?

P: I think it’s got to be sympathetic to blend in with what we’ve got…

P: …A casino

P: We’ve got quite a lot of spectrum there but you don’t want to punish the people who are already staying there

Mod: Ok, so you think different building heights would have an impact on yourselves? Or people on the other side?

P: I don’t want to be sitting in my garden and Mr Joe Short is looking out his window at my daughters when they’re sitting in the back garden you know what I mean, I’d be going nuts at that.

P: You’ve got the sun as well, if it’s too high, the sun going and you like to sit out in your back garden

P: And it also just takes the look away from Portobello which…

P… it’s turning into a concrete jungle

P: Yeah it is it’s a shame cos like…

P: You’ve got the beach to enjoy but even like I’ve got friends in Portobello that live maybe at Duddingston or up Parson’s Green area and on a summers day everyone’s down the beach so it is used by a wider community, it’s not just Portobello community it’s used by wider, it’s used by schools, and it’s unique to Edinburgh, like I’ve had people that I’ve met abroad and when they’ve come to stay they’re like oh my god, a beach in the middle of Edinburgh, what other city has that? So I think that by putting buildings round it, it’s taking the feel away from Portobello I think, and it is sort of ruining a really nice space. I think if you could get a good balance so you’ve got maybe just some flats so you’s can still make some money from, and maybe, I know saying they want to make them affordable, maybe if they are slightly more expensive and they are quite nice flats maybe people would pay that bit extra so you’re making more money from that but also you’ve got some nice restaurants, cos really in Portobello there’s Forresters, there’s Malvarosa, a few other restaurants but there’s not…

P…the rest are takeaways…

P: Yeah, takeaways, or like cafes and things but I think actually a few nice restaurants would really, Portobello would benefit from it

[chatter]

P: Who wouldn’t want to sit there alfresco

P: Turning it into a bit like what they did at the shore

[Group agreement]

P: Cos you’ve got you’re holidays and you just enjoy sitting out in the nice weather you know

P: You don’t often get nice weather

P: Well, I know but

P: We can always dream

P: What happened at the shore and that sort of what Bruntsfield got sort of area

P: there’s nothing wrong with having a bottom say as your restaurants and then you could maybe have something above that, you know that could still accommodate both of what we’re saying here or underneath these flats that’s where their parking is…

P: But then I don’t know because we’re so near the water whether that would be viable but that’s hopefully the way they would go…

P: Well they could dig it out and make a car park underneath it

P: It might get flooded

[laughter]

P: There’s different ways of thinking, it could benefit a lot of different ways but when you start going higher and higher, I mean I paid for the sun but it doesn’t come but I like to be able to sit out in my garden, somebody’s eight flats up and he’s got a pair of binoculars, I’m like eh what’s he doing?

P: When he said eight I think everybody was like that just seems too high

P: Aye, they might not be that high but any height’s going to block sunlight and is going to make everything darker that’s already there

Mod: I’m only saying the range of possible heights that we’re talking about there. So, just quickly to return back to the issue of parking would you actually prefer there to be more parking put on the site?

P: I think it’s got to accommodate what you’re going to put there, it has to be relevant to what’s there.

P: There needs to be enough parking for whatever’s within that area

P: The thing about no parking is not going to be any good

Mod: And the main concern is because you’re saying your own street is being used for overflow parking for people at the moment

P: They are just now, they are just now and that’s what’s there now so imagine taking that away and adding something that’s going to be even busier, you’re asking for even more trouble

P: I think also, this is a bit out there, but if people are building flats and they’ve got an area of it, when they’re at first, second stage whatever, they’ve got a rough idea of how much space they’ve got actually saying to the buyer we’ve got x amount of spaces or, that space comes with your flat and you get the painted number if you need a two, if you’ve got a two car house or a three car house, to pay extra then and there, so you’ve got your space allocated but you’ve paid for it along with your plot, kind of idea, so that it’s there for you, it’s not a permit situation where you’re paying for it and can’t use it

P: It happens in other [inaudible] exactly like you say

P: Yeah, but you only normally get one space you know but if you’re willing to pay that extra at development stage for that other bit of car park for your car it would save a whole lot of hassle

P: We’re going to be provided underground parking for flats [inaudible]

P: I’m frightened of underground parking, I know what you’re saying but personally I’m a wee bit frightened of underground parking at nights….

P: …But they should have security cameras

P: ..It’s alright if it’s locked yeah…

P: Well they would have to be otherwise anybody could use them

P: They’ve got to be storm proof

[Chatter, laughter, inaudible]

Mod: Ok, so thinking about public transport in the area, how do you feel about public transport?

P: I think it’s great, absolutely perfect.

P: Edinburgh’s public transports brilliant

P: It’s got all these awards eh?

P: I second that

Mod: Any concerns about what the impact on public transport might be from the new development?

P: It’s going to be busier

P: More people on buses and that

P: If more people use the buses it could put the price down

P: It might actually encourage people to use the bus a bit more

P: Like if they are thinking if I leave my car , if I move my car today I’m not going to come back and get a space after work but if I get a bus, if say your work’s in town, you can literally there’s a bus like every 7 to 10 minutes by the time you get there you’re not going to wait longer than 5 minutes for a bus, jump on it, you’re right into town, right back, like it could encourage people to use public transport more.

P: I think it’s ok if you’re a single person but if you’re a family [inaudible] by the time you’ve got kids and everyone on, it all adds up and that’s why I think people usually use cars who’ve got family to take maybe just the one trip. The trouble is, what I’ve noticed lately, I was driving up Leith Walk and they’ve changed, they’ve widened the pavements for some reason and they’ve put this little black bit of tar right in the middle, I assume it’s for cyclists but no signs on it and you go down towards Pilrig Street, you can’t go in the right hand lane for straight ahead the right hand lane turns right and Edinburgh Council have got this fantastic idea where they have a bus lane and if you want to turn, go straight ahead, you have to get into the left lane but you can’t get in the left lane till you’re about ten feet away from the right lane so you have to wait, they talk about congestion, so if you move into the bus lane to get into your right lane you can’t [inaudible]

P: It’s like out there beside Aldi, how they changed that at the roundabout, you’ve got to be, pull into the bus lane to get past the buses to go straight on its murder sometimes when it’s heaving

P: Edinburgh’s good at changing things, they change roads, they change everything but they don’t fix the potholes and suddenly you find you’re driving somewhere you get pulled by the police because you’re in the wrong lane or you’re in a bus lane which you never knew existed, bus lanes have changed from green to orange for some reason, people are confused, tourists are getting confused, coming down Portobello’s confusing enough because you’re driving out of here, traffic coming out of Aldi’s it’s a nightmare…

P: The traffic at that junction is busy at the best of times, nevermind if you’re adding in more, if it was another supermarket or something

P: You should get trams down Portobello

P: Oh dinnae go there…

P: Ignore that!

[laughter]

P: [inaudible] who wants to spend money on trams, we’ve got a fantastic bus service, why don’t they get super efficient buses and just carry on

Mod: Can I ask, was that a casino comment or…?

P: No, no, [inaudible] to Newhaven but there’s nothing in Newhaven, get them from the airport down to the beach, that would get the tourists in, it’ll cause a bit of disruption short term but long term the gains will be there

Mod: I’m going to say when we come to write this up that is going to be a controversial point but we’re going to put it in there, ok. So, how do you feel about active travel in the area, so walking, cycling, experience, concerns, anything around that?

P: No, cycling’s out, I wouldn’t do it, I don’t feel safe enough as it is and as I say if you cycle into town, you get a number of incidents that have happened lately with the tram line… sorry…[laughter] People just don’t have a clue because the roads are changing all the time, you don’t get any warning and it’s a nightmare

Mod: So you are talking about safety concerns around that…

P: Safety mainly yeah

Mod: Is that local safety concerns or is that going further into town?

P: I think if you want to go cycling I think you’re taking your life in your hands basically. Even cycling on the prom, I mean I cycle on the prom sometimes but a number of cyclists, you know, the prom is a busy place and you have people staying along the Esplanade Terrace and all of that and the number of cyclists that come down thinking it is a race track, you get kids or parents opening the gate to the prom and a bike goes flying past, you know there’s no consideration.

P: If I’m on my bike going along there, which I do quite regular, mums and prams are going faster cos you’ve got to take that into consideration that it is busy, you, being on a bike, you really needs to be like real slow, a right slow pace, but I’ve seen idiots, tonight two guys in the full lycra suit thing, come on mate, heading along, it’s like come on eh, and like past me at speed. I mean obviously they were coming into a bit of traffic or like foot pedestrians and they were slowing up but there’s no reason that they should be hitting crazy speeds like that

P: There was a guy on the prom feeding seagulls…

P: But there’s a reason why these guys are there, it’s cos the roads are so bad they feel safer driving there…

P: I get that but if you’ve got pedestrians…

P: …Well that is a pedestrian path so tough luck, you need to be going slow

P: I understand the need for them to go on it, fairplay but if you’re on it, you need to consider…

P: …I’m on your side!

[laughter, chatter over each other]

Mod: So, active travel, sorry that’s a Council buzz phrase, essentially it is about using your own power to travel instead of using motorised transport, so walking, cycling, skateboarding as opposed to…

P: So this is commute as opposed to leisure?

Mod: It could be either, could be either

P: Well, you can walk from Portobello to Musselburgh, that’s a brilliant walk, I do it quite frequently, just to get out the house, it takes about 40 minutes, if that. I think there’s a lot of good walking routes

P: Yeah, even cycling routes, you can cycle out to Dunbar, North Berwick so it’s great

Mod: Ok, so just a couple of questions about Tumbles then, as we explained, the facility, one possible option to illustrate how that move might be accommodated is that on the site, you’ll be aware of this yourself, but you’ve got a significant drop off in terms of height as you go further towards the beach, what’s suggested is that Tumbles might be located in this sort of drop off area with an entrance that would be on the promenade, sorry, not the promenade the High Street end of things, so it would be shop front height at the High Street and then coming in it would be larger facility that was behind that, that’s just illustrative. So the question is really, do you have any preferences about whether or not Tumbles is relocated?

P: I don’t think it makes really a difference like, the kids are going to be in there playing soft play, they’re not looking out the windows, and if parents is, at the moment I know they’ve got windows but if you want to look at the beach walk down, I don’t think it makes a difference at all

P: Like for like [inaudible] so win win

P: My only concern was that Tumbles was going as well and I think it’s really well used and it’s great for the kids to get there, you know the gymnastics clubs, my niece and nephew both go there and use the gymnastics club and I’ve been with them and it’s heaving…

P: …Packed…

P: So it would be a real shame for that to go

P: The only worry I guess would be with it being right on the High Street is all tiny kids, I know obviously it’s the parents responsibility but I guess if you’re being really picky, it could be a safety aspect, but they are locked in and things, it doesn’t make any difference where it is though

P: No I don’t think so, doesn’t make any difference

P: It’s quite the opposite, I think everybody wants it on the High Street

P: Just jump on a bus and you’re there

P: Only problem you’d have though is you’d have though is you’d probably have people who’d want to do quick drop offs…

P:… on the main road, aye, that’s true, that’s true

P: Why don’t the Council maintain an outdoor sports facility you know with the football and just put nice shops at the front, you know restaurants at the front of the prom

P: Like going for a five-a-side and then hit the pub behind it?

[laughter]

P: because a lot of people use the football area

P: I know what you mean, something like what the Corn Exchange have, you know there’s bowling, football, function halls, couple of bars, a café thing

Mod: I mean I think it’s a reasonable point the only thing I would say is that basically we don’t have the money to do it at the moment. The money from the sale of the site is a very large chunk of what funds Meadowbank, in order for us to maintain that site we’d have to buy out, as we were saying earlier on, the interest of Powerleague to do it, we don’t have the money to do that either, so it is from our perspective definitely a financial choice, we’re looking for that receipt to do something else basically

P: Is Tumbles still going to be Edinburgh Leisure then?

Mod: Yes, it is, absolutely. Ok, so open space question, there is along the Figgate burn as we said earlier on some space which is technically open space but which you can’t really get access to just now and we said earlier on that the five-a-side football pitches are currently also designated as open space, now, what the Council’s requested developers do is make equivalent open space available on the site, that could take several forms, we have specifically asked for a walkway alongside the Figate Burn which would link the High Street and the promenade, that would be a pedestrian walkway, not road, and provide, yeah, providing additional access, there may also be other types of space that might be available on the site, so although it’s a little bit vague there, the question is really, if the developer were including open space within the site, what form would you want that to take?

P: I don’t know, I mean, a bit of greenspace, like grass, if they’re putting a pedestrian walkway a bit of green beside it

Mod: Ok, we’ve got a survey that’s currently running with, it’s just available to anyone, in Edinburgh infact, to respond to, and we’ve got some suggestions in there. Would you like to hear some of the things we’re saying might be things you’d want to consider?

[agreement]

Mod: So, we’re talking about small grassed areas within the site, we’ve also put in there the idea of green buildings, so we might be talking about green roofs or green sides for buildings which are planted essentially. We’ve been talking about improved frontage on the High Street or on the promenade side, that could be in the form of open plaza space, it doesn’t necessarily have to be green, we’ve also been talking about additional trees being put in there, those are the sort of things that are in the survey as potential suggestions to see what people might prefer. How do you feel about any of those, or do those spark any new ideas from you about what you might want to see?

P: yeah, slab the lot

[laughter]

Mod: Seriously? Is that what…

P: Yeah, slab it

P: Chips

P: Curry sauce

[laughter]

P: Me, for green…I’ve got a small garden and I hate doing it so for me if there was a cycleway whether it was tarmac or a path for pedestrians walking past, less greens just better for me, I dinnae want to look at a green border

P: I love green and trees

P: I love green and trees as well totally

P: Green and trees for me

P I think, yeah…

P: Grey

[laughter]

P: What about something like, this is a completely random idea, what about something like, maybe not a hotel but sort of like somewhere when people come, cos like I think except from a few B&Bs there’s nowhere that you could actually come and stay in Porty, what about somewhere thinking like a hotel so it is bringing tourists in but then if they’re probably coming on holiday they probably don’t need a car parking space…

P: Complex…

P:.. Yeah, a complex type thing, like maybe like a spa or something that’s green…

P: Green water! Green spa!

P: you could make it glass, then you’re looking out to the sea, it could have a green roof, a roof terrace

P: I know what they’re trying to do in Princes Street Gardens, I’ve seen the plans for the band stand they’re trying to get that like green over it and it’s all underneath, that could be quite sympathetic to potentially what’s ….

P: And again going back to Edinburgh as like a wider city like it’s got a volcano in the city centre, that’s green, so it does link in to like Edinburgh’s feel I think, I think it is a really green city

P: There’s not a hotel on this side really…

P:…not really

P: Or maybe not as such a hotel, I don’t know if that’s a bit like… yeah, it’s what I mean but maybe like holiday apartments or something…

P:… like serviced apartments or something

P: Yeah, something like that, cos in the festival as well it would make…it’s something to think about

P: We’re on a bus route main bus route to the town centre

P: Yeah, it’s great and a lot of people, like if I’ve got friends like if they’re coming for the festival like friends from uni and stuff they live in England or whatever they love it, they raved about staying in Portobello, so like you said ten minutes in to town on a bus, in a taxi it’s not even ten pounds so if you’re sharing it is just great and then you’re not right in the bustle of it all, I think it would be something to think about

Mod: Ok, and the grass roofs of the building, they don’t, you’re fine with those? Right ok

P: Everything’s grey, battleship grey

[laughter]

Mod: Ok, how do you feel about the notion of developing the pedestrian pathway from the High Street down to the promenade along the Figgate burn?

P: It sounds good as long as it is all well lit up, see sometimes they come up with ideas and you find that when you’re walking [inaudible]…

P… Nothing’s well lit up in Edinburgh these days!

P: Thing is any kind of tree is going to shade whatever you’ve got, you look at half the street lighting in Edinburgh, they’re at tree height so the trees diffuse a lot of the stuff that’s coming down to them so if you’re walking down that there’s bits where it is quite bright but there’s other bits where you’re just, a shade, it’s dark, so you’ve got blind spots there. So if you’re going to put things in they need to be back away from the path so that the path’s well lit cos if you want people to go up and down here and then make a better thoroughfare you’ve got to make sure it’s done properly

Mod: Ok, so we talked about maybe some of the things that might happen on the High Street, we have talked about it maybe being a relocated Tumbles, we could also be talking about shops, small offices, various different commercial aspects along the front there, how do we feel about the addition of retail or commercial units along the High Street at that particular point?

P: No issue whatsoever for me

P: I also agree yeah

Mod: Ok…

P: Maybe something that’s not a like hairdressers or a barbers or something…

[chatter, inaudible]

P:… yeah, it’s just and nail places and stuff it seems a bit much, maybe something like a bit different, quirky, unique

P: That’s what makes Portobello Portobello cos they’ve got so many individual wee shops, it’s not all chains, I think it needs to be in fitting with the area

P: Encourage people who are staring small businesses too. You know like you can have pop up shops in the area, see how it gets on

P: Yeah then give maybe local people a chance to dunno have a new wee business

Mod: Ok, so when you’re thinking about potential retail space on the site, I mean we have heard about, it feels like you’ve reacted positively to some potentially large developments like a spa, hotel sort of thing but at the same time you’ve been talking about having small independent…

P:… I think it has to be a good mixture between all of them. You can still have the spa site and it’s all on-looking or your restaurants and things but you could have other things as well in amongst all that as long as they’ve got car parking

P: As long as they don’t Edinburgh Council don’t come with the idea of narrowing roads which we talk about being a green city but they narrow every road, traffic congestion is, like that, smoke belching everywhere [inaudible]

P: [inaudible] around how much you’re actually going to fit into that site, you know so it would be lovely to have this whole landscape of different stuff but realistically….

P: You’ll probably get about three units

Mod: Well, this is it…

P: Tumbles entrance looks like, Tumbles doesn’t have to have a big chunk of that [inaudible] so to speak, they could have an entrance off it, on it I should say but the bulk of the building

P: …Aye, behind…

P: …In, utilising the rest of the space

Mod: Ok, and we, I think we’ve talked about the promenade but essentially my question is what concerns do you have about new development along the promenade side of this site?

P: Can I just, no to be a pest but when you’re talking about Tumbles why couldn’t they have an underthingwy carpark? Then you would have the safety of the kids, they’re all enclosed, they’re all inside that and you could have things going up and into Tumbles that way and then you’re taking quite a lot of the safety factor of the kids walking about outside if they’re all within their 50 spaces which is actually underneath Tumbles you’re really killing two birds with one stone, you’re minimising the space within the buildings structure which leaves other space vacant for whatever else

P: And if it is only used by Tumbles users…

P: And it could be used by Tumbles users yeah

Mod: I mean I think that’s a good suggestion and we’ll certainly put it in I don’t know what the considerations would be in terms of cost

[laughter, inaudible]

Mod: Well you wouldn’t know if it was grey it would be under the ground

[chatter, inaudible]

Mod: Ok, so developers are required to consider whenever any new development is put in place something called community benefit. Now, what community benefit is varies from site to site and from development to development and it depends very much on the scale of the development that’s involved as well but typically community benefit will include jobs in construction fields and other related fields and training for people, it may include improvements to infrastructure and public realm and it sometimes includes the creation of public assets so I mean this site is probably a little small but if you were talking about building a thousand new houses you would certainly expect that developer to build a new primary school entirely for example. So, what sort of community benefit would you like to see from this site? Is there anything particular that you think can be solved through this development that’s a local issue…

P: The lady was talking about the uniqueness of being a beach area for Edinburgh so one of the ones is to try and protect that

Mod: Ok

P: Yeah, I think that as well, it’s quite an important thing like

Mod: So, is that, when you’re talking about protecting that is that about the type of development that’s put in or is that…

P: …[inaudible] the Leith Street building it’s going to be grotesque and you’ve got…

Mod: I never said it would be grotesque

[laughter]

Mod: So, but what I’m saying is, is there something that might be done to the promenade or to the beach itself that you think might be a useful sort of community benefit or is it just about that sort of respectfulness of the development

P: Yeah, it’s just about keeping it the way it is is probably important

P: Sympathetic to its surroundings

P: See I just notice things see when people come off the beach, there’s no really anywhere for them to wash things, like their feet and you see these kids they’re all walking about there and they’re just covered in sand well that sand just gets dragged everywhere, halfway up the street, so you know when you’re on holiday and you come out of the sea or the beach or whatever it is, there’s always an area for washing wee children down cos they’re been rolling about the sand all day or…

P: The pipes would always be frozen down there though eh?...

P: Well that’s the other thing but it’s something that I noticed the other day that I didn’t think before can they go into the baths and use that to wash off or is it just a case of…

[chatter, inaudible]

P: [inaudible] architect but to tier it going back the way as well so it keeps [inaudible] and then you can have, you could have green as you go up tiers

P: [inaudible] I quite like that aspect there, staggered, starting low

P: A tier system

P: Yeah, cos I think it’s yeah, like the beach is where, the streets in between sort of thing, I think having it low and then building it up

P: If they’re needing to put more bricks and mortar in

Mod: So height at that promenade side is the most important place for height on the site is that fair to say

[murmurs of yes]

Mod: Ok. Ok, Garry was there anything that you wanted to ask as part of this?

Notetaker: No, I’m just intrigued about the parking thing cos I’m having the same problem where I come from in Grangemouth so I can understand when someone comes in and builds something you do think, what about, where am I going to park, where’s… I’m just concerned about that part of it, I do feel your pain. No, no specific questions.

Mod: Ok, so to get to our sort of catch all point now, so are there any other concerns or issues of the development that you wanted to raise today or any even questions about things that we haven’t covered now which either we can address now, or we can build into later focus groups because they might be of interest to others…

P…What’s the kind of turn around time, I mean from sign off, good to go, someone puts a spade in the ground

Notetaker: [inaudible]

P: What kind of, realistically…?

Mod: Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer because the different developments may have different build times attached, in terms of this decision making process though we would expect there to be a recommendation that would go to Committee by December and that Committee will make a decision early next year as to who actually gets the site and then what we talked about earlier that placemaking process follows on from that, so realistically I wouldn’t see that there would be any actual development on the site before, there couldn’t be anything before Spring of next year I would think.

P: My point was I mean is that like a two year build, is it a three year build?...

P: Is it an on-going thing, they’ll build so much then there’ll be a lay then…

P: That adds disruption you know into the area you know and the longer that’s taking to build you know the more disruption we have to put up with for the period…

P: and noise

Mod: Ok, I can’t answer that but it seems like a quick turn around is an issue in terms of that…

P:…As long as they’re up safe and they’re not getting blown down by the wind and whatnot

Mod: Ok, anything else? Sorry I can’t answer the specifics

P: No, it’s fine

P: It’s a good size for a tram depot…

[laughter]

Mod: You’re making no friends here…

P: I was thinking an open air swimming pool

P: Well they’ve had that before eh? Got rid of it

[chatter, inaudible]

P: Can I ask a question? How many are in for it? Have you got three, have you got four?

Mod: Oh no, loads… I think the number was nineteen, that is off the top of my head now but it is definitely a double figure

P: And these will primarily be builders I guess…

P: Prime site

Mod: Eh, I can’t even say that it is mostly that, I believe that most of the developments that have been proposed have been mixed use, but again, don’t have the specifics of that

P: As long as it’s not student accommodation cos that’s a waste of bloody building in Edinburgh

P: I wish they were building student accommodation!

P: Eh! Everywhere!

P: I dunno I wish it was!

P: What about Wetherspoons, there’s no Wetherspoons down Porty please

P: they seem to be building like mini Marks and Spencers and Costas and all that just now

P: Express shops

P: I think it’s a shame cos when they start doing that they’re taking away the small businesses

P: That’s right, that’s right well that’s what would happen here

P: I’ve seen the changes here and it’s a shame to see some of the small businesses going [inaudible]

P: Leith Walk’s a prime example, I know a few people who’ve had shops on Leith Walk and they’ve said right this is where the trams going to go and then it just was chaos for three years and these people were getting no business where normally they had quite a lot of business just people pulling in going for a paper and these shops have been there twenty years, maybe more than that and [snaps fingers] it was gone, within three years half of them have shut down

P: It’s getting better though is it no, do you not think Leith Walk’s kind of improving a bit?

P: Leith Walk is the new up and coming

P: It is until they start building the trams again next year and then they’re [inaudible] all over again, I mean they just finished all the traffic, all the stuff going on there

P: I think Leith Walk [inaudible] to be honest because they’re beginning to, from what I’ve seen, they’re beginning to start, as you say building houses now for affordable housing and I’ve noticed there’s a specific family and I think they call them Ahkbars who’ve bought all these empty houses and changing them into affordable housing and they call them hotel boutiques and put any Tom, Dick or Harry into it

P: Oh yeah, these Air bnb things

P: It is shocking cos a friend of mine stays Constitution Street and they bought a garage next to it, they moved to flats there [inaudible] one of the buildings has been damaged by the trams, they’ve not done, they’ve not even completed it just put tarmac on top of the hole and the building has suffered as a result cos it’s a sensitive building, it’s crumbling, through the vibrations and now they’re thinking of doing it again and he’s really totally and utterly upset and I think that’s what happens if sometimes they build and build and probably over build and then you find that the place is empty and the only way they can get round it [inaudible] some kind of affordable housing people in there, before you know it everyone’s moving in and you don’t know who your neighbours are and who’s coming in, going out, I think it’s OTT after a while

Mod: Ok. Ok, so my last question for everyone taking everything we’ve discussed into account how do you feel about the sale of the Westbank Street site?

P: Woohoo!

P: Positive

P: It’s better that cos they’re just not used

[bit of talking over each other, inaudible]

P: In a way it sort of upsets me that they’re no longer going to be there although I’m not really in condition to play football these days but I’ve grew up playing there since age five, age six so it’ll be different to see something, it’s like when they’ve pulled down Portobello High School but it’s like you go past and you’re expecting to see it, so it’ll just take a bit of getting used to…

P: Yeah, but it’s better that than it sitting empty I think and it’s not well used so

Notetaker: I’m old enough to remember when it was the lido so there you go

[laughter, inaudible chatter]

P: Bring back an outdoor pool, a warm outdoor pool

P: And the trams running right along past it eh!?

[laughter, inaudible chatter]

P: I mean ocean front property is huge right now, if you look over the platinum point and things over there, I mean people were paying nearly a million pounds to have beautiful property and all of a sudden they weren’t getting those prices and then like you’re saying it’s like we’ll put this family in it and we’ll put that family in it and these people are just renting them out and if I had paid half a million pounds for one of those properties and I come out of the door and here’s wee Tam ‘Ye awrite mate, how ye doin’ and am like aw what the hell’s going on here and he’s moving into there and he’s paying whatever it is per month, I’d be, I think that’s one of the big problems I’d have with this area if it starts getting into that sort of thing, I paid quite a lot of money for my house and I want it to stay like that [inaudible] bit of concern..

P: And also the medical centre, with more people here it’s not going to cope and the schools are struggling

P: It’s rammed

P: It’s ridiculous

P: And the nursey has got over 60 kids which isn’t meant to be

P: Also the policing is non existent anymore, you can’t find a policeman when you need him and when you phone you’re asked about 600 questions, do you know him, no I don’t, [inaudible] trying to break into a house

P: Just say you’ve got a gun on him and they’ll be round in a second

P: I’m holding up the tram!

[laughter]

Mod: Ok, well, thank you very much everybody, I think that’s been a really interesting conversation, this is the first one, it’ll be very interesting for us to see how the rest of the community reacts to this. There were a lot of things tonight which were very new to me and quite unexpected, before you rush off we have got just a quick form….

End of group – form filling