

Ratho and District Community Council

Annual Report October 2020

I think it is an understatement to say it has been an unusual time since my last report in May 2019 with Covid controlling everybody's lives and actions for the last 9 months.

This year the City of Edinburgh began the development of the City Plan 2030, which will amongst other things earmark suggested areas for development. The initial consultation took place in the spring and all responses have been published for each suggested site. It is lengthy! The next stage is publishing the final version, which it is proposed, will go out for consultation in December for a period of six weeks. At that point we will advise you of the implications for our area.

So what are the major things we have responded to?

We started the period with a change to the road markings at the Gogarstone Road/A8 junction. Active Travel had implemented the changes to facilitate the safety of cyclists using the A8. However as the slip road had been removed it meant that motorists joining the A8 at this point had to join the 2 lane main road from a stationary start while vehicles leaving the A8, despite indicating, were assumed to be going to the Airport. There have been many scares for motorists but despite representations from Cllr Webber and letters to the Council no changes have been made and many residents have changed their route to the centre of Edinburgh. Some 18 months later discussions are still ongoing but appear to have been overtaken by Active Travel's involvement in the Spaces for People initiative. To date no Spaces for People changes have been proposed in our area although a bus lane has been proposed on the A8 west of Edinburgh Airport under the Public Transport Initiative.

A controversial application in 2018 was for the building of 11 houses at west end of West Croft. This included closure of a path accessing the Canal. As there were 118 objections this application went to committee and after a site visit and an analysis of the main concerns the application was refused this spring and subsequently a revised application for 5 houses has been submitted taking the previous comments into account.

At the same time a site visit was made to the former Continental Tyres site to review an amended site plan, which was agreed. However no building has been commenced and the site appears to be for sale. Equally there has been no building movement at the International Business Gateway, again the land is on the market, nor at the Garden District. The consultations continued for the former runway site, known as the Crosswind site and finally a planning application was submitted for a mixed development including a digital quarter and residential areas on a car lite basis. This development is proposed over a twenty five year period but there will be an impact on the Gogar Roundabout and adjoining roads once construction commences

Other ongoing projects include the Wave Garden that received approval for its detailed planning application, subject to conditions, with building work due to commence in the New Year and the Taylor Wimpey application in Ratho Station which was subject to discussions with planning officials but no decisions have been made to date. We are told that there is progress with the traffic lights at the Dalmahoy Junction and all land should be acquired before the end of 2020.

Slightly less controversial applications include an extension to the Bridge Inn, which was amended to blend into the conservation area as well as an application to convert

Kirklands House for residential use. There are also proposals to extend the Calderwood development into the City of Edinburgh. This last proposal together with the proposed Drumshoreland Garden Community based on the site of Clapperton Poultry Unit will impact on the already overcrowded A71 and A8.

One of the major concerns of the Community Council when considering planning applications is infrastructure and roads in particular. It is hoped that when applications are considered the infrastructure should be in place prior to the commencement of the project. Sadly this rarely happens.

Last autumn the Council Education Department announced that a new and larger Preschool Department was required and the Primary school also needed to expand. Therefore a new Library and Preschool would be built on the site of the existing Library and the Primary School would take over the whole Community Centre but as a compromise the Community could use a space in the new Library! As you can imagine this was met with significant objections and a public exhibition was one of the largest turn outs for many years We joined with the Community Centre management committee and the rest of the village in objecting to this proposal. Subsequently the Education Department decided to delay the expansion of the school buildings. However planning permission was granted for the demolition of the library and the rebuilding of the library and preschool which should be ready for use in 2022.

Equally the proposed new High School for Edinburgh North West appears to have been put on hold. However Balerno High School is about to undergo considerable refurbishments scheduled to last 62 weeks, but maybe longer with Covid delays, and there is also significant expenditure budgeted in 2027.

As well as the Council consulting on the Draft City Plan 2030 they also produced the Draft City Mobility Plan in January. The results of this were presented to the Transport and Environment Committee on 1 October and finalised report will be published next spring.

During 2020 the 20 bus route was put out to tender again. Despite discussions with transport officials and with the support of our Councillors, the desire for a direct service into the centre of Edinburgh from Ratho was not considered and the service was transferred to First Bus. Unfortunately Covid impacted the implementation of the new service and we wait to see if there will be improvements on the existing service. However if residents do not use the service we will lose what we already have.

Once again I must thank our local Councillors and the whole Community Council for their hard work and support over the year and in particular the office bearers. Sadly after five years Graham Low has moved to pastures new – all the way to Balerno. We will miss his wise words and excellent letters to the planners. Thank you Graham

Judy Wightman
Chair
Ratho and District Community Council