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Dear Mr. Hackland

### **130 McDONALD ROAD**

Thank you for making your presentation on the above project to the Community Council on 12 April. I apologise for the somewhat ad hoc nature of the meeting. This was the first time the CC had met in the refurbished church premises, and instructions for access were not as clear as they might have been.

I summarise the points made in discussion as follows:-

- 1) The new tenement is too bulky in appearance in juxtaposition to the existing tenement particularly as seen on approaching from the Leith Walk end of McDonald Road (take as south for the purposes of this letter). The substitution of residential units for the proposed ground floor shop units could reduce the ground floor ceiling height and so bring the wallhead level down to a more satisfactory and harmonious level with surrounding buildings.
- 2) We are at a loss to understand why the provision of commercial units is in your brief in any case, given that the street has little precedent for such outlets there being only a tyre depot and public house available to the public as it is. We accept there are some office premises on the east side going north mainly in older buildings but feel that as adequate shopping is available in Leith Walk, the site should be entirely residential.
- 3) We are concerned at the loss of the 3 bathroom windows in the existing tenement gable. While you say that only one has a certificate of lawfulness, there is little doubt that the other 2 would gain such approval if the owners applied for it. We were not clear whether discussion had been held with those affected, and whether any compromise solution had been investigated.
- 4) The housing proposed on McDonald Place has been well designed elevationally – in appearance it is the best we have seen of all the recent schemes for this site. However, we share the existing residents concern about overlooking of their houses from the large windows and balconies. While the considerable width of the street would mitigate this to a certain extent, the provision of townhouses as opposed to flats would go some way to alleviating the overlooking problem. Failing this some reduction in window size would be appreciated.

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5) Likewise you were asked to ensure that the raised garden did not result in overlooking of the tenement properties. It was also felt that the gardens to the McDonald Place flats were too small to be of much practical benefit to their occupants.

6) The Community Council was concerned at the lack of affordable housing provision and a suggested quid pro quo to a local housing association seemed to us simply a 'cop-out' on a site that was large enough and ideally suited to making such provision. McDonald Street would be the obvious location due to the poor outlook making it the least marketable component of the site.

7) The use of natural stone to the new-build tenement in McDonald Road was welcomed but the widespread use of brick elsewhere was challenged. A similar scheme just completed in Fountainbridge (Brandfield Street) shows however well constructed, brickwork on mass can look extremely utilitarian in a stone city. Perhaps the use of render to match the existing houses and as used in the nearby Hopetoun Street blocks should be considered. It could also save costs.

Thank you for consulting the Community Council.

Yours sincerely

John Knight  
Planning Convener