

## Objection to Planning Application 19/00116/FUL | 179A Canongate Edinburgh

### Tommy Sheppard MP

I object to the proposed partial demolition of the attractive brick-built late Victorian industrial building at 179A Canongate – the last remaining part of the former city gas works complex – to build a new Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) development. The building as it currently stands, while not listed, makes a clearly positive contribution to the Old Town Conservation Area and the wider Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

#### Impact on the World Heritage Site and Old Town Conservation Area

As one of a number of remaining historic former industrial buildings in the area between the Canongate and Calton Road, it typifies and adds to the very specific character of this particular part of the Old Town. The proposed partial demolition of this building threatens to diminish that distinctive character.

In my view, then, the proposed development is in breach of **Policy Env 1 (World Heritage Sites)** because partial demolition of this attractive historic building would not 'respect and protect the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Site', particularly as this would impact on the setting of a number of key grade A listed buildings in immediate proximity to the site – namely the Canongate Tolbooth and the Canongate Kirk, both of which are of outstanding architectural and heritage value. For the same reason, the proposal is also in breach of **Policy Env 3 (Listed Buildings – Setting)**. The partial demolition and the proposed redevelopment would very clearly impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings, a number of which are recognised as having national/international value, by introducing elements of a new structure which are of a poor quality design and which would be incongruous in that context.

Similarly, demolition of the historic building would be contrary to Local Development Plan **Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas - Demolition of Buildings)** and the non-statutory guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas as the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the design of the proposed replacement building does not outweigh the loss of the existing building. Additionally, the proposal is contrary to the **Historic Environment Policy Statement 2016** because the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Furthermore, the design of the proposed replacement building, which is in my view poor and not in keeping with its historic location, clearly does not outweigh the loss of the existing building.

Again, in a similar vein, owing to the poor, unattractive and inappropriate design of the proposed PBSA, the proposal breaches **Policy Env 6 (Conservation Areas - Development part a)** because the proposed development does not preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the Old Town Conservation Area – in fact, it diminishes it. Indeed, the proposal is contrary to **Policy Des 1 (Design Quality and Context)** as the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the surrounding Old Town Conservation Area.

#### Overprovision of Student Housing

I welcome the enormous social, cultural and economic benefit that our large student population brings to Edinburgh but PBSA is bad for students and bad for communities. Segregating students from settled residents does no good for anyone in the long term.

Even if it is accepted that Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) developments are the solution to student housing shortages – a contention of which I am highly doubtful – this is not a suitable location for one. This is because in my view the proposed development would clearly result in an overconcentration of student accommodation. There is a large student population in the Canongate/Holyrood area living in privately rented flats and, on top of this, there is a huge amount of PBSA already nearby, particularly concentrated around Holyrood Road and Sugarhouse Close.

Adding to this overconcentration will further diminish the proportion of the population that is permanently settled and accentuate the perception that the city centre is for tourists or semi-transient residents such as students. The proposal is therefore in breach of **Policy Hou 8 Student Accommodation part b**.

For the policy breaches described above, I urge you to reject this application.