

Tollcross Viability and Improvement Study – Presentation to Community Held at the Barclay Church, 24th April 2007

Introduction provided by Simon Lievesley (City of Edinburgh Council - Services for Communities - Development & Regeneration), thanking the Community Council, traders and members of the community for the good turnout and for their input to the preparation of the study. He provided a quick background to the Study and how it has progressed to this stage.

He added that the Study was reported to Planning Committee on 23 April 2007 where it was welcomed and the intention to remit it to the appropriate Neighbourhood Partnership for further development noted.

Julian Farrar (Ironside Farrar Ltd) presented the main findings and recommendations of the Report. The Study focussed on three key themes:

Enhancing Retail Vitality

- Business/retail association
- Improve retail mix
- Developing and promoting the retail mix

Customer Access & Sense of Welcome (Encouragement to Shop)

- “Stop & Shop” parking where achievable
- Improved pedestrian linkages and accessibility
- Improved lighting and invitation to shop

Enhance Quality of Place

- Shop front and building refurbishment
- Cleansing/litter/waste/fly posting
- Place reference: King’s Theatre canopy/signage and environmental works

Also noted that the Study is pragmatic and realistic, containing a progressive / phased set of measures. A public – private partnership is required and local participation and consultation needed to determine priorities. The Strategy focuses on the Home Street and Leven Street core and connections to and from these streets.

Julian Farrar identified a real opportunity in and around the area due to the large regeneration schemes to the West (Fountainbridge / Former Brewery site) and East (Quatermile / Former Hospital site).

Simon Lievesley stated that the recommendations of the Study remain draft until the Study has been considered and the appropriate course of action agreed by the Neighbourhood Partnership. However, as a result of the Study, the Council will be considering its recommendations regarding the Greenway in Tollcross as part of a strategic review of the bus priority system.

Sarah Bryson (City of Edinburgh Council - Services for Communities - Development & Regeneration), introduced the incoming Neighbourhood Management / Partnership approach to be introduced throughout Edinburgh and explained that although different areas of Tollcross would be covered by three of the upcoming Partnerships areas, it was intended to identify a lead Partnership with input from the others as appropriate.

A series of questions and answers on some of the issues within the area followed.

The Community Council, who have been involved in workshops and consultations providing valuable input to the Report, welcomed the Study and its recommendations. They agreed that it represented a great opportunity to improve Tollcross and take advantage of the regeneration that is taking place in and around the area. There was agreement and optimism that there was now a genuine chance to take Tollcross forward.

Traders in the area, such as Lupe Pintos and Ndbele, and members of the community also welcomed the Study and its findings and recommendations. It was also advised from the floor that progress was being made to reforming the Tollcross Traders Association.

The approach adopted by the Action Plan was also welcomed: through the incremental set of measures recommended in the Study, rather than a "grand slam" approach which would be difficult to achieve..

Councillor Wigglesworth also welcomed the Study and stated that this was now a great opportunity to take Tollcross forward.

Response from City of Edinburgh City Development Department regarding a query raised at the meeting over retail protection for Tollcross Town Centre in the draft Edinburgh City Local Plan:

As part of the preparation of the Edinburgh City Local Plan, a review of the policy approach to uses in town and local centres was undertaken. One of the key findings of this review was the importance of town and local centres in providing a diverse range of services - shopping is important but so is providing a range of businesses, services and leisure uses in an accessible location.

Consistent with national guidance (SPP8), the policies in the ECLP do introduce a more flexible approach to the change of use from shopping in some parts of Tollcross. However it is important to note that alternative uses will only be supported if "the proposal is for an appropriate commercial or community use which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability".

The Local Plan seeks to protect the Tollcross Town centre but also to be proactive in allowing the centre to evolve to adapt to changing shopping trends and best meet the needs of the local community.

The finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan was approved on 22 March 2007. The document will be available towards the end of May and the formal objection period will commence on 25 May. Tollcross Community Council and other community groups will receive a copy at this time.