

Colleagues,

I visited the offices of GVA Grimley yesterday to look at the plans in hard copy, since their website has the plans in extreme detail and each of the 10 sheets takes up 5-6MB (Dave has pointed this out to them and they apologised for it).

Here again I met a great deal of sympathy for cycling esp as this is to be accommodation for impecunious post-grads, and they are planning no fewer than 200 cycle parking spaces in Holyrood North alone, replacing what was previously to be 160 car spaces in its earlier (2007) residential version.

This is a development in 2 parts called Holyrood North and South. The importance for us is the location since they sit on a potentially major route from south-east and east Edinburgh to the city centre via the Innocent Tunnel, St Leonards, down to Viewcraig Gardens, crossing Holyrood Rd, then rising to Canongate, from where one either goes west to turn into Jeffrey St, or east to turn eventually (when developed) through a pend into the new Caltongate Square which will give a well-graded route to New St and East Market St.

Holyrood South lies on the east side of Viewcraig Gdns and fronts onto Holyrood Rd. If a gap between Plot 10 and St Leonards Land is made accessible for peds and cyclists it will make a very direct connection from the bend near the foot of Viewcraig Gdns to Holyrood Rd and in line with a ped/cycle route through Holyrood North, starting at Mason's Lane. It will have parking for 75 bikes.

Holyrood North runs from Holyrood Rd up to Canongate and includes St John St, which is to be narrowed and made more ped and cycle friendly, with tree planting along the western side. Access from here to Canongate is via a pend. There is another access from the site to Canongate via another pend further west, called Old Playhouse Close. Hence, the north-south route through the development can start at Mason's Lane (you can't see this at present as it's all boarded up), run fairly directly through the new site, and end at Old Playhouse Close.

The 'trick' here is to devise a cycling route which will be relatively direct, yet also avoid climbing unnecessarily, and also avoid St Mary's St which is not only busy but also horribly roughly cobbled. (Peter Wheelan from Grimley's, who I discussed all this with, was quite interested to learn how cyclists view the world from a totally different aspect!).

The deadline for comments was 30 April (but will be accepted a little late) and should be sent to peter.wheelan@gvagrimley.co.uk

Peter Hawkins' comments follow;

Thanks very much for your time yesterday to look at and discuss the plans for this student accommodation project. Just to put my comments in writing:

1 Cycle parking

We are very pleased to see such a large provision of cycle spaces on both sites,

Holyrood N and S. We hope there will also be parking for casual visitors close to the main entrances, and to enable quick and easy access to their cycles for residents too. We are pleased that cycling is being taken seriously as a mode of travel, especially as the development is for students and is fairly close to the city centre and many amenities.

2 Access to and through the site

As discussed, we note that the development sits astride an important longer-distance route from east and south-east Edinburgh to the city centre, via the Innocent Tunnel, St Leonards and Viewcraig Gardens, to the south, and Canongate - Jeffrey St, or Canongate - Caltongate - Market St (when Caltongate is eventually developed) to the north.

The question then is to devise a route through Holyrood N and S which maximises directness along with ease of gradient (and avoidance of St Mary St, which is narrow, busy, and severely cobbled).

We felt the best way to do this is a route through Holyrood S from the bend in Viewcraig Gdns, running between Plot 10 and St Leonards Land, to emerge onto Holyrood Rd opposite Mason's Lane. A toucan crossing of Holyrood Rd at this point would be ideal if possible (we didn't mention this).

The route would continue up Mason's Lane by a fairly direct line through Holyrood N to emerge via Old Playhouse Close into Canongate, whence cyclists could proceed westwards to meet Jeffrey St, or eastwards to the (eventual) link into Caltongate Square.

An alternative route would be to use St John St, which we understand is to be narrowed and made more cycle-friendly.

The cycle route described above could be marked out by different coloured surfacing.

3 Signage

Signage to and through the development, to and from onward destinations, is very important, and the locations of cycle parking should also be signed within the site.

We hope these comments can be taken on board and we look forward to hearing from you when the Planning Application is launched. Once again, thanks for a very positive meeting yesterday.

Best wishes,
Peter Hawkins
CTC Lothians