

F.A.O. Mr W Young,
Finance Committee Convener
Aberdeen City Council
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9th April, 2014

Dear Mr Young,

Subject : Marischal Square Development

Further to the meeting of the Community Council Forum last Monday 7th April, I append below the reasons for particular concerns over the plans especially relating to the Public Exhibition responses.

Firstly you should be aware that shortly after plans for the development became known Queens Cross / Harlaw Community Council wished to put forward their opinion that there should be an open public area which allowed clear view of Provost Skene's House from Broad Street with the opportunity for people to congregate, sit, and stroll with coffee etc available from vendors. See my letter to Mr H Murdoch (attached) which was sent to promote this view and also to try and ensure the Public Response to the 1st Exhibition (which I had by that time acquired a copy) was taken into account.

I asked Mr Murdoch how we obtain copies of the 2nd Public Response report and the report on possible Broad Street closure. Mr Murdoch stated my letter had been sent to MUSE but no information as to how to obtain the 2nd Public Response report. Some time later I obtained the City Council report into possible Broad Street closure but the report on the 2nd or now 3rd Public Exhibition has not been forthcoming.

I understand from your comments at the Community Council Forum meeting on Monday that MUSE hold the public response information and as they are a private company they are not open to a Freedom of Information request to obtain details about the public responses.

There are two examples of why this is concerning :

1. The City Council report on closure of Broad Street states that keeping Broad Street as it is "did not gather much support". That is not my interpretation of the Publics comments on the 1st Public Response Report.
2. The placards regarding Broad Street closure that are alongside the Marischal Development exhibition in the front reception area on the City Council offices states "many people liked this idea" but my reading of the Public Response report suggests that also there were many people AGAINST the idea.

Thus to promote public confidence that the Public Responses are being taken into account surely an anonymised report of the public's responses should be made available. Indeed I was led to believe the delay on the issue of the 2nd report was because of the anonymisation of the comments.

It should be said that the small scale of the development model and the perspective of the simulated pictures of the final development make it very difficult to understand the real views which will be seen of Provost Skene's House.

I passed on your comments regarding the setting up of a new Board which was looking at creating a new Master Plan for Central Aberdeen to the Queens Cross / Harlaw Community Council last night (Tuesday) and they responded with the same view as the Community Council Forum did on Monday. That is they are surprised there will be no representative of the public or any Community Council on that Board. I understand you will be reviewing this decision with your colleagues.

Finally I note from the Aberdeen City report of 5th March on Broad Street closure that it states in its 1st paragraph regarding modelling the traffic situation "in advance of the pedestrianisation of Union Street". Can you clarify if this decision has been taken or is part of the Master Plan considerations. It does not seem to figure in the bus rerouting plans shown on the MUSE development diagram.

Thank you for the opportunity to get these matters clarified.

Kenneth Hutcheon on behalf of Queens Cross / Harlaw Community Council