

The proposed Tiger development at Haymarket



## Development

TWO of the biggest recent blows to the development of Edinburgh have been the rejection of a proposed 17-storey, 172-bedroom Intercontinental hotel at Haymarket by the Scottish Government and the collapse of Mountgrange Capital, which was behind the Caltongate project in Edinburgh's old town.

The £250m Tiger Developments proposal at Haymarket – which also included 335,000 sq ft of offices, a Travelodge hotel and a café-lined pedestrianised street near Haymarket train station on a site which has been derelict for 40 years – was approved by Edinburgh City Council but subsequently thrown out by the Scottish Government.

**Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce** chief executive Ron Hewitt says it was a bit of a disaster when the Tiger development, which would have created over 2000 jobs, was rejected. "I hope it is delayed rather than lost," he adds. "It was a fabulous opportunity to introduce the Intercontinental brand to the city and it would have been the only one outside of the London."

He says the Intercontinental hotel developers are looking at how it might be redesigned. "It is difficult. When you are talking about a five star hotel it has to be of a certain size for it to be profitable and the reason it went to that height was to meet that size. It was already 100 bedrooms less than the optimum. But they are having a look at reconfiguring this site to see if it can be accommodated in a different design."

Ironically, Mountgrange had just won planning permission for its £300m Caltongate project after four years of battles with heritage and local community campaigners. The development on the site of the former New Street bus station included a 200-bed five star hotel and conference centre, an arts quarter with a live music venue with capacity for 1500, a new public square, offices, and 200 new homes. A quarter of the residential homes were to be affordable housing.

**City of Edinburgh Council** leader Jenny Dawe believes both sites will be developed. "The Tiger development got through our planning system but was called in and the major hotel which was an integral part of Tiger's first plans got a knock back. However, within a few weeks Tiger were in here talking about how they could still take things forward. I am confident something will happen there."

At the time of interview, Dawe said a decision on Caltongate was imminent. "There is still a great deal of interest in that site and I understand we are likely to hear something about it in the not too distant future," she says.