

**RURAL WEST EDINBURGH LOCAL PLAN ALTERATION: CONSULTATION
DRAFT
COMMENTS BY WEST CRAIGS LIMITED**

West Craigs Limited (“WCL”) is the owner of a substantial area of land at West Craigs in West Edinburgh. Its landholding comprises approximately 190 acres of land lying immediately to the north of the A8 Glasgow Road near the Gogar roundabout, west of Maybury Road. The land is currently used primarily for agricultural and associated uses. A planning application for development of the site is expected to be submitted to the City of Edinburgh Council (“the Council”) in 2009. The proposal includes 650 family homes (of which one-third will be affordable), a site for a single stream primary school, a 40 acre public park, a doctor’s/ dentist’s surgery and a local convenience store.

WCL wishes to make the following comments on the consultation draft Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan Alteration (“the Alteration”):-

Chapter 3 Alteration 2

While WCL does not object to this alteration, it would query how the proposal to remove this land from the Green Belt and allocate it for housing has been assessed. WCL considers that the Council should consider the findings of the Edinburgh Green Belt Study published in December 2008 before finalising the Alteration and consider the release of other green belt sites suitable for housing such as West Craigs.

Chapter 5 Alteration 3

The report to the Council’s Planning Committee on 29 October 2008 does not indicate whether any other sites in West Edinburgh were considered in deciding to make additional strategic housing land allocations at Ratho and Newbridge through the Alteration. It is noted that the extra 550 units allocated in Policy H2 exceed the requirement in the Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (“the Structure Plan”) for 1,000 units to be allocated in Newbridge/ Kirkliston/ Ratho. The Committee report notes that the new housing proposals are not necessary to meet strategic housing land requirements but will contribute to overall housing land supply and that the Structure Plan supports the development of suitable brownfield sites. However, the report does not explain how, by exceeding the Structure Plan allocation by 50%, these proposals generally conform to the Structure Plan.

WCL considers that if the Structure Plan requirements for strategic housing allocations are to be regarded as flexible, consideration should be given to releasing additional land at West Craigs for housing. The Council should take the opportunity to note in the Alteration the potential future development of West Craigs land both north and south of the railway.

WCL notes the recent withdrawal of the Miller Group from the South East Wedge project because it is no longer viable. Clearly there must be considerable doubt as to whether these units, which are already accounted for in the Structure Plan, can be delivered during the Structure Plan period. Given this fact, WCL invites the Council to consider instead the provision of part of the South East Wedge deficit via an allocation of the land at West Craigs, which has no service constraints.

Chapter 5 Alteration 4

WCL notes that it is not apparent from the reasons given for Alteration 4 whether there has been any assessment of the Ratho Station site against other green belt sites in West Edinburgh suitable for housing in terms of objective criteria e.g. ease of access to secondary schools, public transport links etc.

Chapter 5 Alteration 5

WCL notes that the proposal for housing allocations at Newbridge is being brought forward as result of the aspirations of the local community. WCL would query whether the Council carried out any consultations with the communities to the east of the RWELP area with regard to their aspirations before the Alteration was prepared.

The Alteration notes the environmental challenges that need to be overcome before housing on the former Continental Tyres sites can be delivered. WCL considers that there is a lack of affordable and market housing in the RWELP area. The Council should accordingly consider the release of suitable green belt sites in the RWELP area which have the potential to contribute to the overall housing land supply and provide an element of choice, such as West Craigs. The West Craigs site is fully serviced and capable of being developed economically to deliver easily marketable housing. The site also benefits from good transport linkages to major employers in West Edinburgh and the proposed International Business Gateway (“**IBG**”) and is close to or can easily conform to standards for provision of education space.

Chapter 7 Alteration 15

The Gogar Intermodal Station Project (“**GISP**”) as supported by Transport Scotland will improve public transport links to the West Edinburgh, in particular to the areas immediately to the west and east of the station, which are all owned by WCL. The Council has adopted the station project. The future station at Gogar will further strengthen the linkages between the IBG and the city to the east. WCL understands from its consultations with Transport Scotland that the target date for the opening of the GISP is the first quarter of 2011. The Council should note that, unlike the sites at Ratho/Newbridge, the West Craigs site will have immediate direct linkages to both a main line rail station and a tram stop.