

Site Forms

YOUR DETAILS	
Your Name (and organisation if applicable)	Nick Wright, Nick Wright Planning
Your Address / Contact Details	276 Main Road
	Elderslie
	Johnstone
	PAS 9EF
Landowner's Name (if known / applicable)	Robertson Homes
Agent (if applicable)	Nick Wright
Agent's Address / Contact Details (if applicable)	Nick Wright Planning
	276 Main Road
	Elderslie
	Johnstone PAS 9EF

DETAILS OF SITE SUGGESTED		
Site Address	Westercraigs, Inverness	
Site/Local Name (if different from above)		
Site Size (hectares)	119.8 hectares	
Grid Reference (if known)	NS 635439	
Proposed Use (e.g. housing, affordable housing, employment, retail, waste, gypsy traveller, utility, community, retained public open space)	Mixed uses, including housing, holiday accommodation, community hub, retail, hotel, renewable energy production and community greenspace	
Proposed Non Housing Floorspace / Number of Housing Units (if known/applicable)	Office	40,000 sq.ft
	Retail	20,000 sq.ft
	Hotel	100,000 sq.ft
	Hub/Leisure	22,000 sq.ft
	Lodges	58,750 sq.ft
	Renewable Energy	30,000 sq.ft
	1,000 units (total including 420 units shown on approved 2006 Masterplan)	
Map	(please attach a map of the site ideally on an Ordnance Survey base)	

If you wish to suggest a site that should <u>not</u> be built on, fill in this form	
REASONS WHY YOUR SITE SHOULD BE SAFEGUARDED FROM BUILDING	
How do the public enjoy the space - e.g. used for dog walking, children's play?	n/a
What makes the site more special than other areas in the village/town?	n/a
Does the site have attractive or rare features such as mature trees, historical significance or protected wildlife?	n/a

Landowners, developers and/or agents wishing to suggest a site should fill in the following form and as much as possible of the strategic environmental assessment form (at the end of this document) which assesses the environmental effects of possible development sites.

If you wish to suggest a site that should be built on, fill in this form	
REASONS FOR YOUR DEVELOPMENT SITE SUGGESTION	
How can the site be serviced? (give details of proposed access, foul drainage, surface water and water supply arrangements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular access via Leachkin Rd • The foul drainage strategy was approved by Scottish Water in 2003, and includes a connection to the existing network with some new infrastructure • Surface water drainage via SUDS • Water supply from a new reservoir on site, approved and adopted by Scottish Water
FORM CONTINUES BELOW	

REASONS FOR YOUR DEVELOPMENT SITE SUGGESTION

<p>What are the site's constraints and how can they be resolved or reduced? (e.g. does the site flood, are there protected species present, will good farmland be lost, will the local landscape be affected, will valued trees be felled, are any other heritage features likely to be affected?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site access: sufficient capacity on the local road network via Leachkin Road. • Protected species: no adverse impacts which cannot be mitigated (see Q18 of SEA form). • Impact on Torvean SSSI: would be minimised through removal of the requirement to upgrade the estate road (see Q17 and Q33 of SEA form). • Landscape impact: the site is an important part of the city's landscape setting. These proposals suggest relaxing the 125m contour building demarcation, instead carefully fitting new buildings to the landscape context to conserve the city's landscape setting up to the ridge line for the very long term, well beyond the LDP plan period.
<p>What benefits will result to the wider community from the site's development? (e.g. will there be more or better jobs, will the land be put to a more productive use, will the development increase infrastructure capacity for others, will more affordable houses result, is there an unmet demand for the development?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an exemplary sustainable community as part of the city (greater focus on ecologically sustainable design, renewable energy generation and landscape integration). • Valuable tourist gateway for the city, including a 120 bed hotel with leisure/banqueting facilities, eco holiday accommodation, and much improved links between the city and the Great Glen Way. • Community benefits including woodland and local neighbourhood facilities. • High quality, innovative and sustainable development of which the city can be proud, in line with the draft City Vision (complementing the 2010 Housing Expo and the SNH offices).
<p>What impact will there be on travel patterns from the site's development? (e.g. will more or less people engage in active and healthy travel (walk / cycle) or go by public transport as a result of the site's development rather than travel by private car?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subsidised bus service has already been in operation for 3 years to the site as a requirement of the masterplan consent for the site. This service currently terminates at the SNH office but will eventually terminate within the site as part of the original agreement, when the level of demand increases. The service is now continuing to operate without subsidy, evidence that it has been established – and that there is effective public transport between the site and the city centre. • Cycling is also a viable alternative to get to the city centre.
<p>Is the site well connected? (e.g. will the average travel time to community and commercial facilities reduce or increase as a result of the site's development, is the proposed use compatible with existing / proposed surrounding uses?)</p>	<p>Traffic modelling and ongoing technical work with the Council's roads engineers demonstrates that the local road network can accommodate additional traffic from up to 1,000 residential units. A recently completed Transport Assessment prepared by Dougall Baillie Associates (April 2011) indicates that the proposed increase to 1,000 units would have "a very minor impact on the road network compared to previously committed developments".</p>
<p>Is the site energy efficient? (e.g. will the site allow for energy efficient siting, layout, building design and local renewable energy source connection?)</p>	<p>Yes – ecologically-sustainable construction, design and on-site renewable power generation will be defining features of the development proposals, representing a significant shift from the approved 2005 masterplan. The development proposals are designed to put into practice the green aspirations of the draft City Vision.</p>
<p>What other negative impacts will the development have and how will they be resolved or offset? (e.g. will the site's development increase any form of pollution or decrease public safety?)</p>	<p>The main potential negative impacts are associated with upgrading the estate road (West Drive) from the A82 via Torvean SSSI. The 2005 consent required that this be upgraded to a 6m wide distributor road, despite substantial impacts in a sensitive locality" (relating to excavation and tree loss) noted in the 1997 Development Brief (paragraph 19). Previous and more recent traffic modelling demonstrates that there is no need for further upgrading as the road network via Leachkin Road can, subject to minor improvements, accommodate any additional traffic. We therefore believe that widening and associated environmental impacts are unnecessary.</p>

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORM

Landowners, developers and/or agents wishing to suggest a site should fill in as much as possible of the following form. Strategic environmental assessment of local development plan sites is now a statutory requirement and considers the possible environmental effects of development proposals. We will check your answers and fill in any gaps.

No.	Issue	Detailed Explanation	Answer	Any Proposed Mitigation Measures (how will you reduce or offset the effects of your development?)
1	<p>a) Will the site safeguard any existing open space within the area?</p> <p>b) Will the site enable high quality open space to be provided within the area?</p>	<p>Will the site have any impact on useable public open space (such as parks, playing fields etc) or any opportunities to create additional public open space?</p>	<p>The proposals will further establish the woodland on the upper part of the site in perpetuity, and other public greenspaces in the middle and lower parts of the site. These are shown on the attached plan, which was submitted as part of the representation to the Highland Wide LDP Proposed Plan (Council ref. 402).</p>	<p>The proposals will result in an enhancement of public open space provision.</p>
2	<p>Will the site encourage and enable provision for active travel (walking, cycling and public transport use)?</p>	<p>Is any part of the site within 400m straight line distance of any community/commercial building? or will development provide a community/commercial building within walking distance of existing residential areas? - Are there opportunities to create new walking/cycling routes or improve existing routes?</p>	<p>New neighbourhood facilities, including retail, commercial units and a Community Hub, which may include café, workshops and visitor centre, will be provided as part of the proposals. These will benefit existing neighbourhoods to the north of the site as well as integrating with the Great Glen Way which traverses the site.</p>	<p>n/a</p>
3	<p>Does the site provide an opportunity for you to provide a financial contribution towards encouraging more sustainable travel patterns?</p>	<p>For example, can a subsidy to a local bus route be provided?</p>	<p>A bus service has already been established between the site and the city centre after a three year subsidy by the developer.</p>	<p>n/a</p>
4	<p>Will the site involve "off site" road improvements that will contribute to road safety?</p>	<p>Is the site likely to improve the local road network such as junctions or crossings?</p>	<p>Yes. A number of off-site road improvements have already taken place.</p>	<p>As indicated above, a Transport Assessment (TA) has recently been prepared for the proposed development. Any impact on the existing road network</p>

				is forecast to be "very minor" (paragraph 5.23 of the TA). In terms of the proposed Southern Distributor Road, the Transport Assessment has stated that "it may be appropriate for the developer to contribute a sum towards the completion of the SDR through a unilateral planning undertaking or planning obligation. The level of this agreement would be a matter to be discussed and agreed between Highland Council and the developer." (paragraphs 6.13-14 of the TA). The developer understands that such additional investment may be necessary to unlock the additional potential of the site, co-ordinated by the Council with investment from developers of other sites.
5	Is there scope for road safety measures as part of the development of the site?	Will development incorporate on-site traffic calming measures (e.g. speed bumps) or street lighting? Will it incorporate the principles of Designing Streets available via: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/22120652/0	Yes.	Detailed street design will be in accordance with <i>Designing Streets</i> .
6	Is the site near any existing "bad neighbour" uses?	Will the site be negatively affected by any neighbouring use? (bad neighbour uses include those that affect residential property by way of fumes, vibration, noise, artificial lighting etc). Is the site affected by any of the Physical Constraints identified in the Council's Physical Constraints: Supplementary Guidance?	n/a	n/a
7	Are there any contaminated land issues affecting the site?	Are you aware if the site has been previously used for industrial or any other uses likely to cause contamination?	There is some localised contamination around the former hospital buildings.	A remediation plan has been agreed and remediation work has started.
8	a) Is the site on derelict, vacant or other land that has previously been	a) Has the site been identified in Scottish Government's Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (which can be found here:	The site is brownfield land – the former buildings and estate grounds of Craig Dunain hospital, which closed some years ago. The main building	Development in the upper parts of the site would be sensitively combined with the woodland – "green" low density

	used? b) Is the site on greenfield land?	http://scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/01/26135819/0) or has the land got an existing use? b) Will the site be located on presently undeveloped land e.g. presently or capably used for agriculture, forestry or amenity purposes?	(a Listed Building) is being brought back into re-use; refurbishment work is partially complete. The upper parts of the site are composed of the estate grounds of the former hospital. They comprise a mixture of open space, woodland and ponds ancillary to the hospital function (e.g. water supply).	development in a woodland setting, designed to fit the special landscape setting of the city.
9	Is the site within the current settlement boundary?	Is the site within any identified settlement boundary in the Local Plan? Is it allocated for any uses?	The site is covered by a 1997 Development Brief (linked to the then adopted Local Plan) and is covered by a 2005 planning consent.	n/a
10	Will the site affect the distinctiveness and special qualities of the present landscape character or affect any landscape designation?	Does the site conform with the Landscape Capacity Assessment (if available)? Will the site result in the removal of valued landscape features or negatively affect any key views? Is it located within or would otherwise affect a National Scenic Area or Special Landscape Area, having regard to their special qualities?	The 1997 Development Brief recognised the site's landscape characteristics, particularly when viewed from the city and the A9. The policy response used in the 2006 adopted Local Plan was to restrict built development to below the 125 metre contour. This is not, however, the only approach to accommodating development on this site. We believe that the draft City Vision, with its focus on green issues, tourism and innovation, offers a fresh opportunity to look at an alternative landscape response. The accompanying illustrative design proposals suggest allowing development to extend further up the slopes towards the top of the site - but only on the basis of sustainable "ecobuildings" in a landscape setting, respecting existing archaeological, biodiversity and woodland interest. Achieving this will be partly about good siting and spacing of buildings; partly about attention to the detail of materials (such as sedum roofs and timber walls) and design; and partly about careful integration with existing and new planting.	What we hope to achieve is to move away from the demarcation line of the 125 metre contour, which we are increasingly uncomfortable with. We are concerned that development/no development above/below 125 metres will result in an unsubtle horizontal line across the hillside, clearly visible from across Inverness – exactly the kind of landscape impact that we wish to avoid. Moreover, as the city continues to grow in the long term (50 or 100 years) it will be difficult to maintain that 125 metre contour as the built-up boundary: pressure will intensify for the urban area to expand up the hillside to the ridge. Our proposal to design new development into the landscape – both above and below the 125 metre contour – avoids both of these pitfalls. It also offers two positive benefits: better conservation of the city's landscape setting (both in the immediate future and in the very long term), and putting into practice the draft City Vision's aspirations for new development.
11	Will the site affect any	Are you aware if the site is inside or likely to	n/a	n/a

	areas with qualities of wildness? (that is land in its original natural state?)	affect an area of Wild Land? (These areas are identified on Map 3 of SNH's Policy Statement, Wildness in Scotland's Countryside) and areas of Remote Coast identified by the Council, or an area of wildness identified in the draft Wild Land Supplementary Guidance?		
12	Will the site affect a conservation area?	Is the site inside or likely to affect the character of a confirmed Conservation Area?	n/a	n/a
13	Will the site impact on any listed building and/or its setting?	Is there a listed building or a part of the setting "area" of a listed building within the site?	Implementation of the existing 2005 consent is already bringing the former main hospital building, which is B Listed, back into re-use.	n/a
14	Will the site affect a site identified in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes?	Is any part of the site inside the outer boundary of an Inventory "entry" or will the site affect the setting of an "entry"?	n/a	n/a
15	Will the site affect any locally important archaeological sites identified in the Historic Environment Record?	Does the site contain any features identified in the HER? If yes, will the site affect the feature?	Yes, the site contains a number of features identified in the HER. These are recorded in a Cultural Heritage Assessment undertaken for the entire site in 2004. 34 features of cultural significance were identified. 6 of those are recorded in the HER.	The Cultural Heritage Assessment concluded that, in overall terms, that the proposed development would not have a significant environmental effect on cultural heritage interests. A number of mitigation measures were proposed. Taking these into account, the development will not conflict with the aims of national, regional and local planning policy as regards cultural heritage.
16	Will the site impact on any Scheduled (Ancient) Monument and/or its setting?	Is there any SAM within the site boundary or will a SAM be affected?	Yes; Leachkin Chambered Cairn.	The Cultural Heritage Assessment concluded that, in overall terms, that the proposed development would not have a significant environmental effect on cultural heritage interests. A number of mitigation measures were proposed, including around the Chambered Cairn. Taking these into account, the development will not conflict with the aims of national, regional and local planning policy as regards cultural

17	<p>a) Will the site affect any natural heritage designation or area identified for its importance to nature conservation?</p> <p>b) Will the site affect any other important habitat for the natural heritage?</p>	<p>a) Is any part of the site inside or likely to affect the designation (SAC, SPA, SSSI, NNR, Ramsar) or Local Nature Conservation Site?</p> <p>b) Is any part of the site within or likely to affect non-statutory features identified as being of nature conservation importance e.g. Ancient, Semi-Natural or Long-Established Woodland Inventory sites, priority BAP habitats, habitats included on the Scottish Biodiversity List, non-designated habitats listed in Annex 1 of EC Habitats Directive?</p>	<p>The southern edge of the site includes part of Torvean SSSI. An estate road (West Drive) runs through the SSSI from the A82 to the former hospital. The 2005 consent required that this be widened to a 6m wide distributor road, despite substantial impacts in a sensitive locality" (relating to excavation and tree loss) noted in the 1997 Development Brief (paragraph 19).</p>	<p>heritage.</p> <p>Recent traffic modelling demonstrates that there is no need for further upgrading beyond passing places and other work that has already taken place. We therefore believe that widening and associated environmental impacts are unnecessary.</p>
18	<p>a) Will the site affect any protected species?</p> <p>b) Will the site affect any other important species for the natural heritage?</p>	<p>a) Will the site affect any European Protected Species, Badgers and species (birds, animals and plants) protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. If such a species may be present on or near the site, a survey should be carried out to inform this assessment (for which a licence from SNH may be required)</p> <p>b) Will the site affect species listed in the UK and Local BAPs, the Scottish Biodiversity List and relevant annexes of the EC Habitats Directive?</p>	<p>Survey work has shown evidence of bats, squirrels and badgers on the site.</p>	<p>A Natural Heritage Management Plan has been prepared. This proposes mitigation measures which will avoid unacceptable impacts.</p>
19	<p>Is the site proposed to provide any form of renewable energy?</p>	<p>For example, will the site provide or be capable of providing a district heating system, solar panels or a wind turbine?</p>	<p>Investigations are being made into a number of technologies to provide on-site renewable energy. In addition to end users within the site, the SNH headquarters, Newcraigs Hospital and schools/community facilities outwith the site may also benefit from on-site energy generation.</p>	<p>n/a</p>
20	<p>Is any part of the site at risk from fluvial or coastal flooding as</p>	<p>Are you aware of any part of the site being within the 1 in 200 year flood risk contour as identified by SEPA? (which can be found</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

	shown on SEPA's flood map or from local knowledge?	here: http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/flood_risk_maps/view_the_map.aspx		
21	Will development of the site result in the need for changes in land form and level? If yes, how will soil and drainage issues be addressed?	Will there be any change in rate, quantity, quality of run-off plus groundwater impact on or off site? If so, will these affect priority habitats, especially blanket bog?	Earthworks will be minimised. There will be no adverse impact on groundwater or priority habitats.	n/a
22	Is there a watercourse, loch or sea within or adjacent to the site? If yes, how will the water environment be protected from development?	Will there be any culverting, diversion or channelling of existing watercourses?	No impact on watercourses beyond works already approved by SEPA, some of which are already complete.	n/a
23	Will the site offer opportunities for sustainable waste management?	Will the waste produced by the site be minimised and processed close to source in a sustainable way?	Collective recycling and waste management proposals are being progressed. These would integrate with the Council's municipal system.	n/a
24	Can the site be connected to the public water and sewerage system?	Can the site be connected at reasonable cost? If not, what alternative is proposed?	Yes.	n/a
25	Will the site require alteration to the local landform?	Can the site (including access) be developed without significant re-contouring etc.? Will access tracks and parking areas have significant cut and fill?	Yes, the site can be developed without significant re-contouring. There is a potential issue around earthworks required for widening of West Drive – please refer to Q17 above.	Please refer to Q17 above.
26	Will the site affect or be affected by coastal erosion or natural coastal processes?	This will be noted on any relevant shoreline management plan.	n/a	n/a
27	Is the site sheltered from the prevailing wind and does it have a principal	Will development make best use of the site in terms of energy efficiency?	The principal aspect is SE.	The proposals would be designed and constructed to be ecologically efficient, in line with the green aspirations of the draft City Vision.

	aspect between SW and SE?			
28	Will the site have any impact upon local air quality?	Is the site near areas of employment or close to public transport? Such developments are less likely to result in additional traffic which may contribute to air pollution.	n/a	n/a
29	Will the site have an impact on light pollution levels?	Is it likely that the Council policy likely will require street lighting at this location? Are there proposals for floodlighting on the site?	Street lighting will be required.	The development will use Highland Council's low glow street lighting system.
30	a) Will it the site affect the present green network of the area? b) Will the site provide opportunities to enhance the present green network of the area?	a) Will the site affect features that currently provide for the movement of species and/or people e.g. woodland, hedgerows, field margins, watercourses, coastlines, tree belts, greenspace? b) Will connectively of natural features or open space and paths used for public amenity be improved? Will existing fragmentation of habitats and open spaces be improved? Will species be enabled to move where at present there is an obstacle?	The proposals will enhance the green network by further establishing the woodland on the site in perpetuity. Public access through the site and to the Great Glen Way would be improved.	Development would be carefully designed to avoid adverse impact on the city's landscape setting and existing natural features on the site. At the detailed design stage, the intention would be to enhance rather than remove existing features.
31	Will the site provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate nature/natural environments?	Is the site close to (within 1.5km) an opportunity to come into contact with nature/natural environments e.g. Local Nature Reserves, local greenspace, green networks? Are there proposals which will increase opportunities to come into contact with nature/natural environments?	Yes, through the woodland and other community greenspace components of the site.	The woodland proposals would, in particular, be designed collaboratively with the local community.
32	a) Will the site affect any core paths or right of way? b) Will the site affect any other existing paths or outdoor access opportunities?	a) Is a diversion of a core path or right of way required? Will there be any impact on the usability of a core path or right of way? b) Will it affect an existing path in the Highland Path Record? Will it provide additional access opportunities or adversely affect access opportunities afforded by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003?	Public access and paths through the site will be improved and upgraded, contributing to the aspirations of the Council's outdoor access strategy. The improvements will provide benefits for local residents as well as strategic benefits by providing a more fitting start/finish at the point where the Great Glen Way enters the city.	n/a

	c) Will the allocation provide new access opportunities within the site and linking to the path network beyond the site?	c) Will new paths be created within and beyond the site? Will any existing paths be improved e.g. to increase accessibility to a wider range of users? Will the site help to realise priorities identified in the Council's outdoor access strategy or aspirational paths identified in the core path plans?		
33	Will the site have an impact on the geodiversity of the area?	Are you aware if the site lies within or adjacent to an un-notified Geological Conservation Review site or Local Geodiversity Site? (or other site with geodiversity value e.g. distinctive landforms, areas with natural processes, rock exposures for study?)	Torvean SSSI, already mentioned in response to Q17 and Q25, has geomorphological interest. The current requirement to widen the West Drive would have an impact on that interest.	As explained in response to Q17, technical work has shown that further upgrading of the West Drive is unnecessary. We therefore hope to remove the requirement for further upgrading.
34	Will soil quality and capability of the site be adversely affected?	Will the site result in a loss of soil due to development or removal of good quality soil from the site? Is the site on land identified as Prime Quality Agricultural Land?	n/a	n/a
35	Is the site on peatland?	Is the site within or functionally connected to an area of peatland? Would the allocation involve the disturbance of peat? If yes, how would impacts on peatland be avoided or minimised? Would any tree felling be required?	There are no significant peat resources on the site.	n/a
36	Will the site have any affect on the viability of a crofting unit?	Does the site represent a significant loss of good quality inbye crofting land or common grazing land?	n/a	n/a

HIGHLAND WIDE LDP PROPOSED PLAN

REPRESENTATION FROM ROBERTSON HOMES: WESTERCRAIGS, INVERNESS

1 PROPOSALS

Our revised proposals for the Westercraigs site build on the Council's 1997 **Development Brief** and the **masterplan** prepared in 2003 for residentially-led development, which forms the basis of the outline planning consent granted in May 2005 (ref. 03-00676-OUTIN) and is currently being built out.

In response to the Council's Brief, the masterplan envisaged refurbishment of the existing Listed Building, new housing development up to certain topographical height, and community woodland and open space extending up to the ridge on the site's western edge.

Although our vision for the site remains true to these original intentions, we would like to update it to take account of evolving policy and circumstances in the intervening period. The vision contained in the **Proposed Plan** promotes development that contributes to health, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. The emerging **Inverness City Vision**, approved in draft form by the Council in August 2010 (see also Policy 2 of the Proposed Plan), places great emphasis on Inverness becoming greener, younger, healthier, building on its assets, 'thinking tourism', and placing the economy at the heart of everything. We support this draft City Vision. Meanwhile, public aspirations for more sustainable communities have increased – from demand for more local goods and services to community involvement in greenspace (as exemplified by Dunain Community Woodland group).

Our updated vision for the site proposes a greater focus on **environmental sustainability and community**:

- a greater focus on ecologically sustainable construction and design in sensitive areas
- renewable energy generation
- community access and management
- better landscape integration
- wider community benefits

Although these concepts are largely already there in the approved masterplan, we believe that their greater emphasis amounts to a **significant shift** in the nature of the development. The enclosed draft **Development Framework Plan** and **indicative proposals** illustrate how the shift would be realised at Westercraigs. These illustrative proposals give a clear idea of what we are intending, and form an integral part of this submission.

As part of this shift we propose an increase in housing numbers. The outline consent approves 550 residential units at Westercraigs. We would like to increase this to 1,000 units, as was proposed in the original masterplan for the site. Although this represents a substantial increase, we are confident that it can be accommodated without detrimental impacts on the critical issues of transport, landscape and community facilities – as we will explain below.

But we do not wish to come across as simply trying to defend an increase in housing numbers. We believe that our refreshed vision for the site means that the area will become an exemplar of **high quality, innovative, sustainable development** for Inverness:

- a worthy complement to the recent Housing Expo and the SNH headquarters, itself designed and built by Robertson
- a place which makes the best of Inverness's natural assets
- a place contributes positively to the city's community and economic life
- an asset to the local community which strongly supports the Proposed Plan's vision of healthier, greener and more competitive places

In short: a place which reflects the aspirations of the Council's Proposed Plan and City Vision, and of which Inverness can be proud.

2 DELIVERABILITY

Development of the masterplan's 420 residential units is well advanced. We have made good progress in and around the former hospital building, and will be starting work on the 191 units approved on Site 4 of the consented masterplan before the end of 2010. Eighty-four of these units are being developed by either Albyn Housing Society or the Highland Housing Alliance.

Our message is that we are building, and would like to continue. **These sites are deliverable.** The land is already serviced. Development can be delivered in the immediate future. It can directly contribute to the increasing shortfall of new housing which the Proposed Plan seeks to tackle.

Furthermore, Westercraigs will help to **consolidate the city** – a key aim of the Proposed Plan. The sites are closer to the city centre than the A96 corridor and indeed any other Future Expansion Sites identified in the Proposed Plan. Development at Westercraigs will therefore directly help to achieve the aims of both the Proposed Plan and the City Vision of supporting the city centre. Even back in 1997, the Council's original Development Brief (paragraph 30) noted that the site "compared very favourably with mixed residential sites in other parts of the town in terms of proximity to services and amenity".

Given this context, we are perplexed why the Proposed Plan's spatial strategy for Inverness only identifies the Charleston lands and site 4 of the consented development area as a Future Expansion

Site, particularly as the entire Westercraigs site is included in the existing adopted Local Plan. We would suggest that the consented development area as a whole, plus the Charleston area, should be identified as an **Expansion Site**.

We note that the Proposed Plan states (paragraph 9.21.1) that the sites “are currently constrained by the lack of a river and canal crossing”. This need not be a constraint on describing the site as an Expansion Site: the terms of the outline consent state that 420 of the 550 consented residential units can be occupied before the crossing is built.

3 LANDSCAPE

Westercraigs occupies a **prominent site** in the natural amphitheatre within which Inverness sits. The wooded and open nature of the site’s slopes are clearly visible as one approaches the city from the south along the A9. The reverse view outwards from the site is a broad vista encompassing the city centre, recent development extending uphill to the south-east, and also towards the Black Isle and Moray Firth beyond. The site itself also forms an important **tourist gateway** to Inverness, being the point at which the city dramatically appears to walkers nearing the end of the Great Glen Way. The landscape impact of development at Westercraigs is therefore important in a number of ways.

The 1997 Development Brief recognised the site’s landscape sensitivity, particularly when viewed from the city and the A9. The policy response used in the 2006 adopted Local Plan was to restrict built development to below the 125 metre contour.

This is not, however, the only approach to accommodating development on such a sensitive site. We believe that the City Vision, with its focus on green issues, tourism and innovation, offers a fresh opportunity to look at an **alternative landscape response**. The accompanying illustrative design proposals suggest allowing development to extend further up the slopes towards the top of the site - but only on the basis of sustainable “ecobuildings” in a landscape setting, respecting existing archaeological, biodiversity and woodland interest.

Achieving this will be partly about good siting and spacing of buildings; partly about attention to the detail of materials (such as sedum roofs and timber walls) and design; and partly about careful integration with existing and new planting. (It would also be our intention to apply these design principles elsewhere at Westercraigs wherever possible.)

What we hope to achieve is to move away from the demarcation line of the **125 metre contour**, which we are increasingly uncomfortable with. We are concerned that development/no development above/below 125 metres will result in an unobtrusive horizontal line across the hillside, clearly visible from across Inverness – exactly the kind of landscape impact that we wish to avoid. Moreover, as the city continues to grow in the long term (50 or 100 years) it will be difficult to maintain that 125 metre contour as the built-up boundary: pressure will intensify for the urban area to expand up the hillside to the ridge.

Our proposal to design new development into the landscape – both above and below the 125 metre contour – avoids both of these pitfalls. It also offers two positive benefits: better conservation of the city's landscape setting (both in the immediate future and in the very long term), and putting into practice the draft City Vision's aspirations for new development.

4 ACCESS

Before closure of Craig Dunain Hospital, the local road network served some 1,500 patients and staff at peak times; the 1997 Development Brief notes that "the existing road network west of the canal has 'latent' spare capacity" as the hospital operations declined (paragraph 16).

The 2005 outline consent required a number of improvements to the local road network (Clachnaharry Road/King Brude Road junction, King Brude Road/Leachkin Road junction, and Leachkin Road itself). Most of these improvements have been implemented, as have public transport infrastructure improvements to the city centre.

Clearly, the Council needs to be satisfied that there is capacity on the local road network for up to an additional 1,000 residential units at Westercraigs. Our technical work has now established that this is the case.

Our transport consultants have analysed the impact of this proposed increase in residential units, using 'Visum' traffic modelling which has been discussed and agreed with the Council. The result of this modelling demonstrates that the local road network can accommodate the additional traffic from up to 1,000 residential units provided that minor improvements are carried out to other existing junctions. These are currently being discussed with the Council and do not pose fundamental implementation problems.

There has also been some discussion of lifting protocols for the A82 canal bridge in the past, including in the Transport Assessment prepared for Westercraigs in 2002. During peak periods there are no traffic problems, as the canal bridge remains open to road traffic. The current detailed modelling work is examining the impact of the proposal during off-peak periods, when the protocols already allow the bridge to be closed to road traffic. This modelling is expected to demonstrate that traffic generated by the proposed development outwith peak periods has only a limited effect.

There is also the issue of a new river/canal crossing. The 2005 outline consent for the site limits the number of residential units to 420 before a new canal/river crossing is constructed. We understand this requirement, and note the commitment to implementation of the crossing in the Proposed Plan (paragraph 9.21.1) and in the Council's Programme 2009-11 *Strengthening the Highlands*.

We understand that the timescale for implementation of the crossing is now well within our proposed masterplan development timescale. This means that the construction of the crossing is unlikely to hinder delivery of the masterplan. We are content to contribute to the Council for the

proposed crossing on a 'per house' basis above the 420 number, as already agreed with the Council, but would expect to be allowed to deliver these houses in advance of the crossing if it is, for any reason, delayed. The current modelling work will establish whether a new threshold is required.

Finally, the 2005 consent required the estate road (West Drive) to be widened to a 6 metre distributor road, despite the "substantial impacts in a sensitive locality" of widening this road noted in the 1997 Development Brief (paragraph 19). The sensitivities relate to excavation and loss of woodland in Torvean SSSI, one of the largest eskers in Britain. Some upgrading of this road has already taken place, including passing places, to accommodate heavy construction traffic. Since the recent traffic modelling demonstrates that there is no need for further upgrading, we believe that the environmental damage caused by widening – which would be substantial – is unnecessary. It would also contravene Proposed Plan Policies 53 (Woodland) and 58 (Heritage).

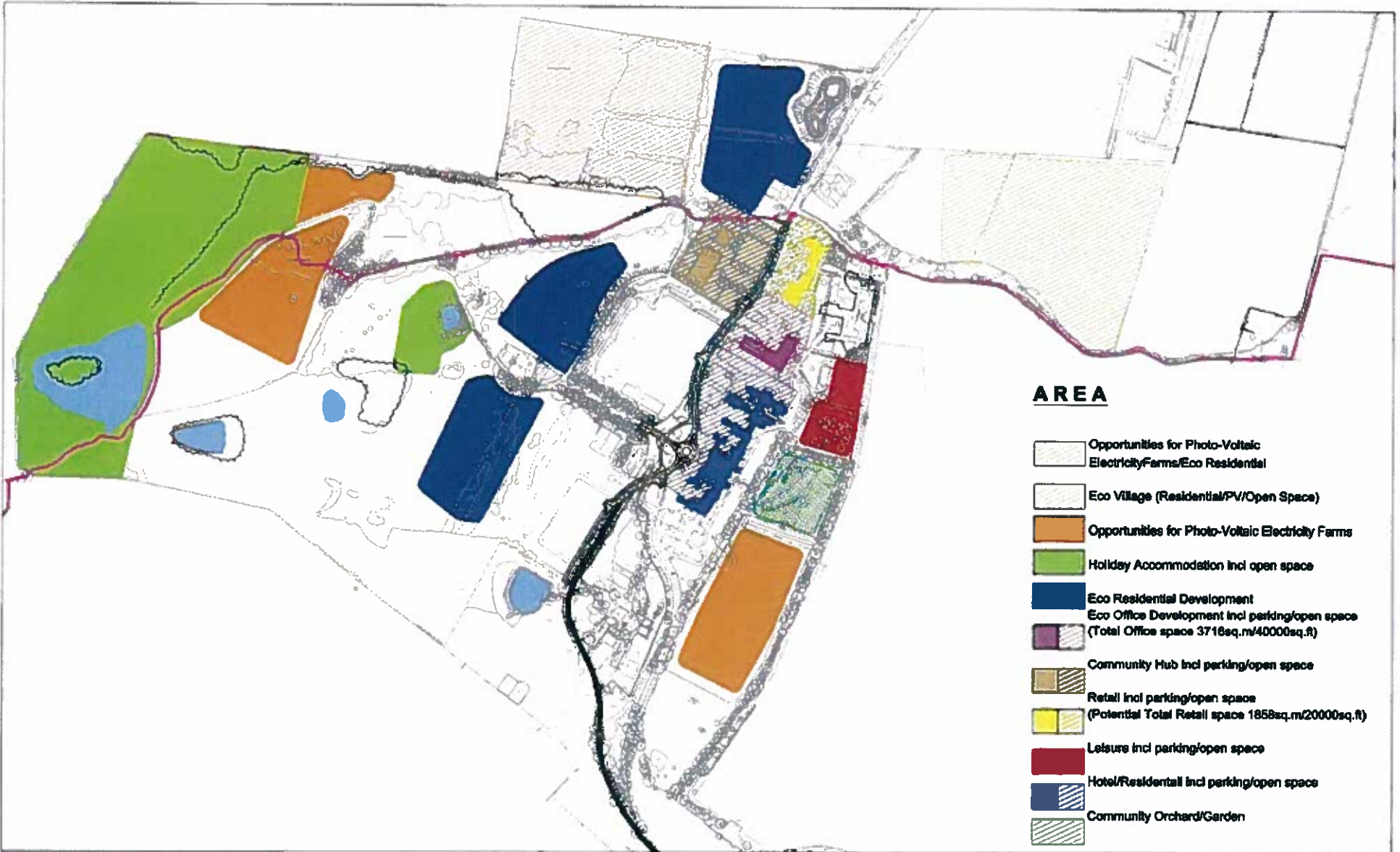
5 LDP PROPOSED PLAN

We suggest that the following amendments be made to the Proposed Plan:











- the Westercraigs site, as delineated in the 2005 outline consent, and the Charleston lands should be identified as an Expansion Site
- a revised masterplan, based on the principles outlined in section 1 of this representation, should be prepared in partnership with the Council and the local community; it should ensure that benefits to Inverness are maximised, as suggested in the Proposed Plan (paragraphs 9.21-22)
- the requirement to widen the estate road should be dropped

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- indicative Development Framework Plan
- illustrative draft layout and details of ecological housing



AREA

-  Opportunities for Photo-Voltaic Electricity Farms/Eco Residential
-  Eco Village (Residential/PV/Open Space)
-  Opportunities for Photo-Voltaic Electricity Farms
-  Holiday Accommodation incl open space
-  Eco Residential Development
Eco Office Development incl parking/open space
(Total Office space 3716sq.m/40000sq.ft)
-  Community Hub incl parking/open space
-  Retail incl parking/open space
(Potential Total Retail space 1858sq.m/20000sq.ft)
-  Leisure incl parking/open space
-  Hotel/Residential incl parking/open space
-  Community Orchard/Garden



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Project
**WESTERCRAIGS
 ECO DEVELOPMENT**

Drawing
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

Date	Scale	Drawn By	Checked
20/10/11	1:5000	PK	
Drawing No			Rev.
WCEc/ENG/SK001			

