

**West Highland & Islands Local Plan
Examination
Fort William Hearing Sessions**

Day 4 (pm) – Friday 22 January 2010

Expansion Sites MU10 (Waterfront)

Statement by Fort William Waterfront Limited

Fort William Waterfront Limited (FWWL) will be represented at the hearing by:

- Charlie Barbour, Development Manager, (FWWL); and
- Brian Muir MRTPI FRSA, Partner, Muir Smith Evans.

There are no additional documents to which FWWL wishes to refer, other than those already notified to the Reporter by other parties.

Statement

- 1 FWWL notes the statement prepared by The Highland Council in response to the questions set out by the Reporter.
- 2 FWWL's principal objective, as the council's selected partner for the development of Fort William Waterfront, is the regeneration of Fort William as a whole to the economic and social benefit of the town and the surrounding area.
- 3 Within this context, the waterfront development itself is envisaged as a mixed-use area, extending the town centre and refreshing the viability and vitality of the area. The mixed-use aspect is important. The range of proposed uses will ensure that a genuine mix of buildings and spaces for living, working, shopping, and recreation will reinforce and revise Fort William town centre as an attractive place to be.
- 4 In relation to the Subject headings set out by the Reporter, FWWL associates itself with the responses submitted within the Statement prepared by the council, subject to the following additions and clarifications.
- 5 **Subjects 1 and 2:** Both the approved structure plan and the adopted local plan identify the need for investment and new development in Fort William. This is particularly important for the promotion and development of the commercial tourist economy which, in turn, is fundamental to the economic and social wellbeing of the resident population. The adopted local plan identifies the possibility of land reclamation providing platforms for new development opportunities. The expansion

of the town centre is promoted as an option. The terms of the emerging local plan (which is the subject of this hearing) are clear.

6 **Subject 4:** The development potential of the site is considerable. At the present time, the “menu” of proposed uses which are the subject of discussions between FWWL and the council is as follows:

- Retail/office development, including 5,000sq m (approximately 55,000sq ft) of modern office and business accommodation;
- town centre superstore (5,580sq m):
- hotel;
- underwater centre (refurbished and upgraded);
- restaurants;
- auditorium/visitor centre/library;
- outdoor activity zone (former library site);
- integration of existing Lochaber House/Tweedale House within the overall masterplan scheme; and
- 300 homes including a mix of live/work town houses and flats, and including affordable homes.

7 Also in relation to **Subject 4:** The development provides an opportunity for the realignment of the existing trunk road, allowing the better integration of the town centre as a whole.

8 **Subject 5:** See comments on subject 4 above.

9 **Subject 6:** FWWL will be addressing all of these matters in the planning application, work on which is currently underway.

10 **Subject 7:** Development frameworks and masterplans for the site have already identified the preferred frameworks for developing the various land-uses and ensuring that they properly integrate with each other. It is noted that the council’s own recently-commissioned Wider Waterfront Study reaches very similar conclusions to those reached by FWWL in its own, independent, masterplanning process. Together, these form a sound basis for future discussions with the council regarding the nature of the development proposal that will form part of the application.

11 Within this context, and in relation to Subject 5 as set out by the Reporter, FWWL notes that, in the council's commended change in relation to the Waterfront Expansion Site (MU10), a minimum of 2 hectares of employment land should be allocated within the MU10 policy area for "employment land and other community, retail, leisure and tourism uses". FWWL does not oppose, in principle, this commended change, provided the interpretation of employment land does indeed include retail, leisure, tourism, and other community uses as well as the more traditional classification of business and industry.

Conclusion

FWWL is committed to the promotion and development of the Fort William Waterfront scheme.

FWWL has been selected as the council's preferred partner for the development and has commenced work on the planning application which is likely to be submitted in early 2011.

If FWWL believes that the delivery of the Fort William Waterfront project is of crucial importance of the future economic and social health of Fort William and its surrounding hinterland.