



Friends of Cammo – Comments on West Craigs North

Planning application 21/04210/PPP for Land North of Craigs Road, called West Craigs North

These comments are on behalf of Friends of Cammo, Scottish Charity SC033394. Our membership comprises around 200 households, many living near Cammo Estate, but some from further afield. Our remit is to preserve and enhance the amenity of Cammo Estate for the benefit of the public, taking into account scenic, historical, architectural, landscape and ecological aspects. We have an interest in the whole area historically covered by Cammo Estate, but the portion containing Mauseley Hill, Water Tower, Portugal Garden and surrounding fields was separated from the rest of the Estate in 1896, is privately owned, and not currently managed in the same way as the rest of the historic Estate for environmental and public benefit. Cammo Estate's 18th century designed landscape is an important element in the landscape of West Edinburgh and is identified as a 'Historic Garden and Designed Landscape'. Its setting in the surrounding landscape is part of this importance. Our remit, and hence our desired engagement, is focused on matters that directly or indirectly affect Cammo Estate.

Friends of Cammo is opposed to the proposed development, on general principles and specific impacts.

General Principles

The proposed City Plan 2030 is opposed to any new greenfield developments beyond those identified in Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016. A development on West Craigs North would therefore be contrary to the proposed principles for Edinburgh.

Even if greenfield sites were to be considered, West Craigs North would not be suitable. According to City Plan 2030 Housing Study (Jan 2020), the site assessed as Cammo Southern Parkland that includes West Craigs North is not suitable for development. In particular reflecting our concerns on landscape character, it concludes "No scope is identified for development on this site due to its prominence in views from Cammo, Barnton and from the A8 and A902, the requirement for considerable and visually intrusive ground modification and its provision of an important undeveloped backdrop to the allocated developments at Maybury and Cammo. " There was a similar conclusion in the site assessment for LDP 2016.

Part of the case for the development now called Cammo Meadows is that the Bughtlin Burn would form a new strong natural boundary to the Green Belt. Building on West Craigs North site would breach this boundary and offer no other natural Green Belt boundary.

Specific Impacts

a) Landscape

Any development at West Craigs North would have a major detrimental impact on views to and from Cammo Estate and the area surrounding the Water Tower. The view south from Cammo House (called Vista Avenue) is an important element of the designed landscape of Cammo. The development would adversely affect Cammo's setting in the surrounding landscape and close off the only views from Maybury Road left after the current developments at Cammo Meadows and West Craigs.

The application excludes the former recycling site and the large triangle of land north of the roundabout, which are in different ownerships. Approving this application would be likely to result in pressure to develop the land north of the roundabout, which would close off the last views north from Maybury Road.

The application includes a larger area of open space in the northern part of the site, closest to Mauseley Hill, which was part of the historic area of Cammo Estate. This might help to form a buffer between the development and the historic Cammo Estate, but the limited number of trees indicated would not screen the development.

b) Roads and Traffic

West Craigs North would add to the increased traffic from Cammo Meadows and West Craigs, causing delays in access to/from Cammo Estate, and more rat-running on the narrow roads (Cammo Road and Cammo Walk) passing Cammo Estate.

The developments will add to traffic volumes, congestion and delays on Maybury Road. Maybury Road is already severely congested most weekdays during morning and evening peak periods, as it forms a main link between the west (M8, M9) and north Edinburgh, west Edinburgh and the A90 to Fife. The increased traffic and proposed mitigation measures (e.g. light controlled junctions / crossings) will contribute to traffic congestion and delays, mainly affecting through traffic and local residents, but also affecting visitors to Cammo Estate.

There is a fundamental clash between the desire of planners to domesticate Maybury Road (through housing developments) and its continuing use as the main connection between North Edinburgh and the airport/M8/M9 (and also as a route between West Edinburgh and the Forth Road Bridge / Queensferry Crossing). We are not convinced that any improvements to the junction layouts and signals at Barnton and Maybury will be sufficient to avoid severe congestion when pressures are added from developments along the Maybury Road especially when combined with other developments proposed for NW Edinburgh and Queensferry. More proactive planning of roads and public transport in NW Edinburgh is essential before agreeing to further developments.

Limiting West Craigs North to housing with no shops or community facilities would be likely to increase road traffic to and from the site and further add to traffic congestion. The choice of linking to the roundabout may be a good choice in isolation, but when taken together with plans for West Craigs and airport freight to use Craigs Road, this site adding to the traffic at a second junction nearby would add to the risk of queues between the junctions. Adding to the congestion on Maybury Road would affect Cammo Estate by encouraging rat-running on narrow roads beside the Estate.

The Masterplan for West Craigs North shows various options for the part of Cammo Walk running through or along the edge of the site. There is a separate planning application as yet undetermined for this, but it is dependent on the Council's decisions about the future status of Cammo Walk between the Cammo Estate south car park and Craigs Road. The Masterplan shows possible changes to the alignment of the southern part of Cammo Walk, from just north of the roundabout to Craigs Road, with the area between Cammo Walk and Maybury Road shown as greenspace with trees. We agree that having greenspace there is desirable, rather than have housing next to Maybury Road as in the Cammo Meadows development, but the alignment changes and proximity to the new housing would alter the character of the countryside road as an active travel route. The option for vehicle access from the site to the more northerly part of Cammo Walk would generate a potential rat-run and prevent the active travel route continuing to Cammo Estate.

We are concerned that Cammo Walk and the narrow part of Cammo Road leading past Leny to Turnhouse will increasingly become traffic rat-runs to avoid congestion on the Maybury Road, posing environmental and safety issues for local residents, visitors to Cammo Estate and users of the River Almond Walkway. We think that

further thought needs to be given to the future of these roads, for use by local residents and to provide access to/from Cammo Estate, while avoiding rat-running by through traffic.

c) Increased visits to Cammo Estate

The proposed housing at West Craigs North, added to developments at Cammo Meadows, West Craigs and other West Edinburgh sites proposed in City Plan 2030 will generate increased visits to Cammo Estate, for dog walking and other recreation. This will require increased infrastructure within Cammo Estate. We would hope that most from the closest developments would travel on foot, but our visitor surveys show that many local visitors come by car, so adding to the parking pressure around Cammo Estate. Further thought needs to be given on how best to provide access to/from Cammo Estate by car, cycle and on foot.

d) Impacts on wildlife habitats and biodiversity

The loss of open land resulting at West Craigs North will add to the impacts of Cammo Meadows and West Craigs in affecting the wildlife habitats and biodiversity of these areas and of Cammo Estate and its environs. West Craigs North has a number of mature hedgerows containing species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, rose and honeysuckle. These provide shelter and nesting sites and are a vital food source for increasingly scarce farmland birds such as Yellowhammer and warblers such as Whitethroat. Hedgerows like these take decades to mature to the point where they support a diverse ecosystem and once lost, they cannot easily be recreated. West Craigs North with its rabbit warrens is also a hunting ground for owls and foxes.

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