

Craigcrook Castle Care Home application at 95,95A,95B Craigcrook Road. Castle Craig Investments are seeking planning permission to demolish buildings including stables, obsolete offices, and part of stone wall (ref.16/04792/LBC) and to erect a 60 bed care home (ref.16/04744/FUL).

While Craighleith / Blackhall Community Council recognises that the site has been developed previously with former offices, we are of the view that before approval is given a number of matters should be addressed far more thoroughly by the applicant. They have been either ignored or addressed superficially.

The care home is a significant departure from the new Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) which we understand will be approved and adopted by the City Council in November. The site lies within the designated green belt and as Mr Devaney (Edinburgh Planning Dept) informed the applicant, the proposed care home does not fit neatly into any of the restrictive criteria that apply to development in such circumstances.

The new local development plan is intended to provide the local community with greater certainty. In the absence of any justification for departure from its policies by the applicant, one of its main purposes is undermined. Ignoring the LDP could also be used as a precedent by other developers. There is currently a repeat application (ref.16/05074/FUL) to develop housing at Ravelston Quarry which effectively seeks to ignore and set aside the new LDP. Developers have also shown interest in the nearby horse field which we understand may be in the same ownership as the Craigcrook Castle site. The care home proposal at Hillhouse Road Woods is also contrary to the LDP.

We accept that the former office buildings on the site have little architectural merit, but we understand that the stable block proposed for demolition is different and has significantly more character. We note the applicant is dismissive of its historic value and we would expect the Planning Department to be guided by the views of Historic Scotland on the impact of the proposals on the stable block. It is also not clear that the proposed care home improves the setting for Craigcrook Castle and again we would expect the decision making process to be guided by Historic Scotland's recommendations.

There is no reference in the application materials submitted of the impact on and implications for local GP services or even whether the GPs or NHS have been consulted. This care home proposal has the potential to be the third care home, including the adjacent Strachan House, within the Blackhall area covered by the Blackhall Medical Centre. A fourth care home is proposed at the site of the Royal Victoria Hospital. We are of the opinion that this is a major omission.

Craighleith/Blackhall Community Council is of the view that the case for the care home is not adequate and if the proposals are to proceed, there should be a stronger and a more resilient case for departure from the new Local Development Plan which does not set a precedent for other developers in the Blackhall area whose developments are also contrary to Local Development Policies.

AWD
12 Nov 2016

