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Mr Andrew Kerr
Chief Executive
City of Edinburgh Council
Chief Executive Department
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Our ref: A15862868

9 November 2016

Dear Mr Kerr,

**Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
Notice of Intention to Adopt – Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP)**

I refer to correspondence from your colleague Ben Wilson of 16 September 2016, certifying notice of City of Edinburgh Council's intention to adopt the Edinburgh Local Development Plan.

I write to confirm that Scottish Ministers do not propose to issue a Direction in the case of this plan. The Council may therefore proceed to adopt the plan in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Two copies of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan should be sent to Scottish Ministers in due course.

My decision not to intervene in this plan will enable its adoption and provide communities and investors with a greater degree of confidence about the future development of Edinburgh. However, this decision has not been made lightly, and I must stress my dismay at the very significant issues with timing and content that have arisen in this instance.

The city's first LDP has been in preparation since 2011, yet it is only being adopted now. Not only has the plan preparation period been lengthy but at the end of the process the Reporter has found that it contains a shortfall in the housing supply of over 7,000 homes. As I am sure you will agree, these homes are needed. In failing to provide an appropriate supply of land for housing, the opportunity for planning to support the continued growth of Scotland's capital city is being missed. Whilst I appreciate that this is a particularly challenging time for housing delivery, my concern as Minister is compounded by the fact that there is unmet need and demand for housing across Scotland and we need to take the steps that are necessary to resolve this situation. I appreciate that the City of Edinburgh Council has been taking positive action, for example in its support for private rented sector projects, but this imperative must also be an essential driver for the local development plan.



Substantial concerns have been raised throughout the plan's preparation that there is insufficient infrastructure, either available or being planned, to support future development and the much needed housing. The independent examination has resulted in significant changes to the plan to identify the relevant infrastructure required for development areas. Concerns also remain that City of Edinburgh Council will delay decisions on applications until further supplementary guidance is published. However, with a newly adopted LDP, I expect the City of Edinburgh Council to make decisions at the earliest opportunity which provide for or contribute to the infrastructure requirements identified in it. In part, I am reassured by the published statement that 'At the hearing the Council explained it would carry the risk of the required infrastructure provision and this would not delay development' (Examination Report page 146, paragraph 96). I expect to see this assurance carried through to future decision making.

In the instance of the International Business Gateway, I do not believe it is appropriate to support a change in housing numbers to a scale six times that identified as the settled view of the Council, which departs from the National Planning Framework (NPF) and which would effectively become one of the largest housing allocations in the plan. Such significant changes late in the process reduces the transparency on which trust and confidence is built. The International Business Gateway is of significant interest to Ministers given its status as a National Development and it having been considered by the Scottish Parliament. As the updated masterplan is prepared, I would wish to reinforce the conclusions of the Reporter regarding consistency with NPF and housing elements being subordinate to the primary role of business-led development which supports strategic airport enhancement.

Strong and effective leadership at the local level of government is absolutely vital, particularly so for a capital city. Planning involves taking difficult decisions about change to local areas and Councils should be resolute in fulfilling their responsibility, as planning authorities, to uphold the public interest and make those decisions. It is unacceptable that uncertainty is introduced by Council motions and late support for changes which are significantly different to the published Proposed Plan. This effectively passes responsibility to others and falls short of providing a fair and transparent planning service to members of the public who have engaged in the process in good faith.

An early review of this plan is to be progressed, as recommended by the Examination Reporter. I trust this review will be achieved in a timely and transparent manner. It is essential that the confidence of communities and investors in the value of the development plan process for Edinburgh is restored. When done well, I believe development plans have a critical role to play in setting the direction for the future of our places and in contributing to the achievement of overarching objectives of sustainable growth and reducing inequalities.

I hope to see this successfully delivered in the next Edinburgh LDP. In the meantime I would be happy to meet with you to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,

KEVIN STEWART

Copied to:

John Bury, Head of Planning
Ben Wilson, Development Plan Team Manager