

# Planning Committee Meeting 19 May 2011

By George Ward and Jenny Kassner

After a heated debate at today's Planning Committee meeting, councillors agreed to heed the Court of Session's ruling against the Council's plans to build on the greenbelt in Newcraighall.

Residents lobbied the Council as they were afraid the Court of Session's ruling would be ignored, and that the Council would go ahead and build on the land.

During the meeting, the Council seemed unsure whether to hold the remainder of the discussion in private due to certain legal implications.

Opposing the plans were Councillor Eric Milligan and Councillor Lesley Hinds. Councillor Milligan said: "The bitterness towards the Council from the people of Newcraighall will only increase if we do not openly discuss the issues." Directed to the convener, he continued: "If you are trying to deliberately antagonise the situation, you could not do it any worse by doing what you are doing now."

Councillor Hinds added: "Holding the session in private would be totally unacceptable." The council then retreated for an entire hour to discuss the legalities surrounding this issue.

Councillor Cameron Rose disagreed, by saying that this issue had to be considered more fully. "It does not just relate to Newcraighall but also to communities else where, even to those that are not yet in place."

Sheila Gilmore MP for Edinburgh East, which includes Newcraighall, welcomed today's decision by the Planning

Committee not to appeal against the judgement.

Lord Malcolm ruled the committee was wrong in the way it made a decision to allow all 400 houses included in the City's Local Plan for the urban fringe areas to be built at Newcraighall.

Commenting on the decision, Sheila said:-

"After attending the public meeting on Monday, many local people emailed and wrote to Committee members to make their feelings known.

With just a few days notice to prepare their response, this was a great result thanks to their efforts.

There are still issues to be resolved and residents' groups and local politicians will be watching to see what happens next. But this was an important victory."

One other key point on the agenda was Portobello Community Council's request to lengthen the time that Community Council representatives are granted to speak at Planning Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

The committee further agreed to the conservation plans of the old Barnton Hotel but also pointed out that the building in its current state was an eyesore for everyone coming into the city from the west, and asked for measures to be taken by the Council to make the building look more attractive.