

Craighouse Campus – planning discussions continue



Jim Eadie MSP for Edinburgh Southern has lodged a topical question at Holyrood today:-“To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Napier University regarding the future of the Craighouse Campus.”

It is difficult to know what the government can possibly have asked, since the campus has been sold by the university to a development company. Recently the company which now own the campus, Craighouse Limited, lodged with the planning authority an application to vary the terms of an existing planning permission for a Creative Industries building which was granted some time back.

With that permission ran some obligations to deal with roads and trees, all of which were detailed in a Section 75 agreement. The terms of that binding agreement obliged the developer to pay £150,000 for use in installing traffic lights on nearby roads and streets, and a further £30,000 is to be paid for what is called “bus improvements”. This agreement was signed in 2007 but now the current owner wants to change it by altering not the amounts payable, but the dates when the money would be paid.

The developer has taken steps to dig a trench on the site to ensure that the planning permission already granted remains valid. If they had not done so then it would have fallen this year. But when The Reporter spoke to the developer’s representatives they confirmed that of course they do not intend building what there is existing planning permission for, and that they are progressing towards putting in an application for a residential development. They will issue a

masterplan for the whole site 'in due course', and we understand that the company are still discussing the terms of the existing planning permission and any variation to that with the council. Their spokesman said:- "We are still in discussion with the council about the whole site, so this matter is ongoing."

We spoke to the campaign group Friends of Craighouse who said:- "Not only do The Craighouse Partnership claim to have recently activated a ten year old consent for a large university building that is no longer required, one which would allow mature woodland to be removed and car parks put in – but they have now have applied to the council planners to amend the associated legal agreement, so that they can delay the payments they have to make as part of this agreement – perhaps indefinitely."

One of their members, Graham Cameron said: "In other words, they have tried to activate a completely inappropriate ten year old consent, get the associated conditions waived, but don't want to pay for it – surely a clear cut case of "have your cake and eat it"?"

Another member, Rosy Barnes said:- " We are disappointed at this latest apparent attempt by The Craighouse Partnership to out-manoeuvre the planning system – under which sites like Craighouse should be clearly protected. The Friends of Craighouse are reviewing the situation surrounding this consent and have serious questions as to how this has happened and what it means for the future of the site."

The Friends of Craighouse have a [Facebook page](#) which you can keep up to date with their objections to the proposed use of the land and they have [a website too.](#)

All of the planning papers relating to Craighouse may be viewed online at the [Council Planning Portal.](#)

Napier University will be moving out of the Craighouse Campus site by May 2013.