

Inch Park – still zoned for housing for now

Councillors discussed proposals for the City Plan 2030 on Wednesday.

Following that meeting, Inch Park remains included as a possible site for a future housing development.

Every Scottish council has to regularly draft up a new Local Development Plan (LDP) as it cannot be more than five years old. The plan sets out the long term vision for certain types of development in certain areas, and offers protection to areas where development should not take place.

The council put this new plan out to consultation earlier this year, and some 1800 responses were made by the time it closed on 30 March 2020. This is about four times as many responses as the council had to the consultation on the current LDP, and just as many as the council received for the City Mobility Plan which ran alongside. The report confirms that social media interactions on the consultation reached 26,000 people with over a million social media impressions.

The council recognises that Inch Nursery is one of the so-called 'campaign' sites (the other is in Kirkliston) in response to which they received many comments, mainly objections. The Planning Convener confirmed that these comments will be considered, but it is apparently not yet time for that, nor indeed is it possible to simply remove Inch Park or the nursery within it from the plan right away.

Council officers say that the council now needs to formulate its 'settled view' in light of the responses, and it also has to carry out some technical work to develop the proposed LDP. A key piece of that is the Transport Assessment with up to date levels of public transport use, as well as numbers around car use and active travel.

Some of the comments included in the council report are narrated in the [report](#) produced for Wednesday's meeting. One of the questions put out for comment was whether the city should identify specific sites for allotments and food growing both within new developments and in open spaces. There were 862 comments on this topic alone, showing a certain strength of feeling.

One comment identified the Inch Park Nursery site, and read: "The Inch Park Nursery site is already used for growing, is secured with fencing for any allotment development which would help with the massive waiting list for allotments and also afford the capability of tying in with the Growing/Food/Green activities at Bridgend Farm. Allow the Farmhouse project to use some of the land develop this as they do not have any land to support the healthy eating projects they want to roll out to schools etc."

The Chairperson of the Inch Community Association based at Inch House Community Centre, Kevin Gibbons, said: "Local people are astonished that among the options being considered is that of building between 465 and 813 dwellings (in other words, housing for up to 2000 people) inside Inch Park. These would be located in the Inch Park Nursery, which is currently used for growing many of the flowers and plants which transform Edinburgh's parks and gardens every summer. It is immediately adjacent to a Local Nature Conservation Site as indicated in the current LDP.

"Much confusion has arisen from the Council's practice of referring to the Nursery as one of its "depots", as if it has

an existence quite separate from Inch Park. But this is not the case. The Nursery is situated smack in the middle of Inch Park and is surrounded by parkland on all sides.”

Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham of Gilmerton & Inch Community Council said in a consultation response: “We fail to understand why we are losing so much green space from our own Community Council area, including an area zoned for housing within Inch Park.”

Cllr Chas Booth a member of the planning committee said: “In relation to a number of specific development sites there has been strong local feeling that these are not appropriate, and Inch Nursery is one of them. My personal preference would be to say at this stage that it is not appropriate to propose housing on what is, effectively, open space at the moment. However, I have been advised by officers that this is not the appropriate time, and we have to wait until December. Greens will strongly support the moves to protect open space, and I hope that officers reflect the strength of opinion that has been clearly expressed by local people.”

After the meeting Cllr Booth pointed out to The Edinburgh Reporter that the responses to the consultation had given over 90% support to some of the options put forward, and that none of them received less than 50% support. He said: “There is a near universal view that open spaces are important, but this is a process issue, and yesterday’s meeting only allowed for a narration of the responses to the council consultation. If we had removed Inch Nursery from the plan it may have laid the council open to legal challenge from developers at a later date. But, I think people can take some hope from the strong response in favour of using brownfield sites over green.”

During the meeting Planning Convener Neil Gardiner had accepted some additional wording from the Green group, and confirmed that the default position adopted by the

administration is that they would prefer brownfield developments first over any on the greenbelt.

Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron who represents Liberton Gilmerton Ward had made her views known to the committee ahead of their meeting. She explained that she supported all of those who have objected to Inch Park being zoned for housing in the City Plan 2030. She wrote: "The treasured amenity that is Inch Park is much loved, and hugely enjoyed and cherished by countless people, families, community groups and sports organisations. "It is an invaluable asset to South Edinburgh and the wider city, and one which I respectfully request the Planning Committee to protect for this and future generations so that all of the social, psychological, physical and environmental benefits of this important green space can be enjoyed in perpetuity.

"The impact of Covid-19 has also sharply highlighted the vital importance and inherent value of access to public gardens and green space to people and communities alike."

Bill Cook former Labour councillor for Liberton & Gilmerton also wrote to the committee saying: "I strongly object to the proposal to use the Inch Park Nursery site for housing development.

"The proposal to zone this area for housing is completely contrary with the vision that established The Inch Housing & Community Development after the war. Indeed, the original specification for The Inch community development included this area and the entire park. It specifically stated this area should be retained for community and recreational use. A large part of the area in the present nursery site was once part of the park itself (some 50%). Should the nursery site no longer be required this area should be developed for community use."

After the planning committee meeting Kevin Gibbons told The Edinburgh Reporter: "We regret that this terrible proposal was not taken out of the local development plan at this early

opportunity. There will be anger in the local community.

“We are really disappointed by this decision. The council had a chance to put local people’s minds at ease over the future of their beautiful park. Instead, uncertainty remains that the council might go ahead and use it as a building site. We will be launching a vigorous campaign to bring this threat to Inch Park to an end.”



Graphic map of the area produced by Elena Gardelli

There were four main outcomes outlined in the consultation on the

proposed City Plan 2030. These are:

a sustainable city which supports everyone's physical and mental well-being

a city in which everyone lives in a home which they can afford

a city where you don't need to own a car to move around

a city where everyone shares in its economic success

The plan will be brought back to the planning committee in due course for approval. When approved the plan is then published for representation for a period of six weeks, neighbour notifications are sent out and the council then submits it to Scottish Ministers for examination.

There are some further statutory periods before it is eventually adopted – so it has a way to go yet, and councillors realise it may well be affected by Covid-19.

Meantime the full responses to the consultation Choices for City Plan are available on the Council's website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cityplan2030

