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SPF Response to Towards West Edinburgh 2050

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5. The strategy identifies several aspects that are good in the west of Edinburgh. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

There is good access to a range of employment opportunities in the area.

Agree

There are good public transport connections that allow for travel into and out of the city and beyond.

Neither agree nor disagree

It is easy to access and enjoy the natural environment.

Disagree

There are a good range of education institutions available in the area.

Disagree

There are lots of leisure and cultural facilities in West Edinburgh that can be enjoyed.

Neither agree nor disagree

Existing communities are well-established and are actively engaged in improving their local areas.

Neither agree nor disagree

Is there anything else that you think is good about the area?

The location of West Edinburgh is conveniently positioned towards West Lothian, Glasgow, Fife and other Scottish town and cities making it an attractive gateway for those commuting to and from the area. West Edinburgh also benefits from existing rail networks which should be better utilised to deliver improved connectivity between the city centre and more nationally. For example, Edinburgh Park hosts the slow train to Glasgow via West Lothian but not the faster shuttle trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The proximity to the airport, Herriot Watt University and Edinburgh Park, Hermiston gait and South Gyle are existing large scale employment sectors. The broader proximity to Crammond and the Pentlands also provides good access to the natural environment, though public transport links are limited.

6. The strategy identifies several barriers to inclusive growth. These were suggested by people during early discussions while preparing the strategy. These are summarised below.

There is a need for more detailed master planning to deliver better development in the areas.

Strongly agree

There is a lack of housing and in particular affordable housing.

Strongly agree

It is difficult to move around the area without a car.

Strongly agree

There is a lack of infrastructure to support new development.

Strongly agree

There are areas in need of investment to address inequality.

Strongly agree

A lack of visible progress makes it difficult to get further investment in the area.

Agree

If you disagree, please can you explain why? (Please use text box below)

N/A

Do you feel there are any other key challenges? (Please use text box below)

The current uncertain regulatory environment with regards to private rented sector reform and the potential for the introduction of rent controls, is a key challenge for developers to secure investment in the rental market, as there has been a significant loss of investor confidence in the sector. The delivery of social and public transport infrastructure to support the anticipated housing delivery is also a potential barrier to investment.

7. Towards West Edinburgh 2050 proposes the following vision for West Edinburgh:

“to create a place over the next 30 years, which will include consolidation and improvements to existing settlements and communities, new mixed-use urban expansion, within the context of creating a high-quality sustainable environment (physical, social, environmental) that meets the needs of existing and future communities and reinforces Edinburgh as a world class city for today and tomorrow.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this vision?

Agree

If you disagree, please can you explain why? (Please use text box below)

N/A

Do you have any other comments? (Please use text box below)

We agree with the overall vision but there should be a greater emphasis on the creation of sustainable jobs for local residents. This statement could be strengthened by a commitment to creating a ‘sustainable economic environment’.

8. We think that any new development should be focused on the “central corridor” and “western district” areas of west Edinburgh.

This diagram is indicative only. The areas shown are illustrative and seek to indicate differing characteristics with overlapping opportunities. (SEE IMAGE)

Central corridor: spine of commerce, aviation, industry and tourism gateway linking city centre, west of Edinburgh and beyond. Requires a coordinated approach to low carbon travel, distribution, production and strategically planned mixed use development. Areas north and south of the A8 have different existing and potential functions and characteristics with links to places of learning. This corridor is a key focus for future growth and should be considered holistically in context of city region.

Western district: area to the south-west of the city where the socio-economic and spatial conditions provide a range of opportunities for inclusive growth within new and existing areas through enhanced connections, learning/skills opportunities, rail networks, waterways and leisure.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Agree

If you disagree, please can you explain why? (Please use text box below

N/A

Do you have any other comments? (Please use text box below)

It is important that the Western District is not neglected. The Western district must be supported with specific economic policies designed to improve the socio-economic conditions. Attracting apprenticeships opportunities, improving access to skills and development programmes as well as the provision of quality health care and educational facilities should be prioritised. Transport barriers must be removed to improve the mobility and connectivity of residents in accessing quality employment within the Western district and wider city. The proposals for improved public transport to cross the by-pass appear welcome therefore. Ensuring some mixed-income residential development would promote social inclusion and diversity while meeting the aims of inclusive growth.

9. There are five main themes of Towards West Edinburgh 2050. They are described as ‘interconnected strategies’.

These are:

- **Environment and climate change**
- **Economic growth**
- **Connectivity**
- **Resilient and sustainable places**
- **Tackling inequality**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these themes and the related actions will ensure that the west of Edinburgh will develop in the right way?

Agree

If you disagree, please can you explain why? (Please use text box below)

N/A

Do you feel there are any other themes and/or actions that should be added? (Please use text box below)

The ‘connectivity’ theme is based on local travel and lacks detailed plans on how West Edinburgh will connect more nationally. Infrastructure that boosts greater national connectivity with the airport and Edinburgh Park will be fundamental to increasing the attractiveness of employers to the area and access to jobs. While it is important to prioritise local employment for residents of West Edinburgh, improving their mobility to work and travel to other Scottish towns and cities is important for generating regional growth. This includes improving North-South transport axis to complement the Central Corridor.

The ‘environment and climate change’ theme requires a greater focus on improving EV charging infrastructure and grid capacity to support the transition to electric vehicles. Significant expansion to the city will require greater grid capacity. Coordination of district heat systems that can serve multiple developments will require significant planning and collaboration between different sectors. Further details outlining where the retention and creation of green spaces in the central corridor would be useful for planning.

10. The ‘Making it Happen’ section of Towards West Edinburgh 2050 identifies six “dependencies” – actions that must be taken to deliver the vision for West Edinburgh.

These are as follows:

- Providing leadership and clarity.
- Taking a people-focused approach.
- Investing in sustainable transport.
- Encouraging a collaborative approach to landowners and development.
- Planning for infrastructure costs and timing.
- Taking an inclusive approach to skills, culture, and learning.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these dependencies?

Agree

If you disagree, please can you explain why? (Please use text box below)

N/A

Do you feel there are any other dependencies or actions that should be added? (Please use text box below)

Housing provision must be balanced with better guidance on improving the economic strategy for West Edinburgh. If we are to secure 20-minute neighbourhoods, we need employment places and commercial or leisure amenities to go alongside housing and public infrastructure.

The strategy lacks clear policies for improving meaningful job growth and what types of jobs we want to bring to the city. This is particularly important for the Western Corridor where there is a clear need to expand the provision of training and employment apprenticeships. In addition, careful thinking is required around the prioritisation of brownfield sites for residential development where land remediation costs remain significantly higher. Brownfield development must be balanced with the local conditions and be considered alongside other available sites to achieve the strategies aims.

11. Do you have any other comments on Towards West Edinburgh?

Overall, the expansion of the city towards the West is a logical and positive plan for the city. The vision is clear insofar that it identifies high-level spatial opportunities and priorities for the area which support the creation of 20 minute-neighbourhoods. However, the delivery phase of the strategy could benefit from more specific timescales to be set against the vision to make it more meaningful. The Spatial Strategy should also be better aligned with the Local Plan and its policies which consists of evidence on current opportunities. Combined with this, should be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of other European case studies to support best practise.

There needs to be a greater focus on creating West Edinburgh as a destination for residents to shop, eat and play within the immediate area to enhance economic growth and the community vibrancy of the area. This will inevitably make the area a more attractive and liveable community for residents and visitors. Greater collaboration with Herriot Watt University could be key to unlocking further growth and help to retain students and employees in the area.