

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING FARM BUILDINGS AND FARMHOUSE, AND ERECTION OF 8 NO. DWELLINGHOUSES WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS AT NETHERTON, FALKIRK, FK2 0BU FOR SPRINGFIELD PROPERTIES PLC - P/13/0706/FUL

Meeting: PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 26 June 2014

Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Local Members: Ward - Upper Braes

Councillor Gordon Hughes
Councillor John McLuckie
Councillor Rosie Murray

Community Council: Avonbridge and Standburn

Case Officer: Allan Finlayson (Senior Planning Officer), Ext. 4706

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL / SITE LOCATION

- 1.1 The application site comprises a vacant farmhouse and 5 derelict farm buildings on a site extending to 1.4 hectares at Netherton Farm, Candie, Falkirk. The site lies within a larger agricultural holding of approximately 30 hectares.
- 1.2 The application site is served by an existing vehicular access from the C62 Candie Road, taken from the A801. The site is level and surrounded on all sides by agricultural land. Mature tree planting screens the site to the immediate north and at a greater distance on the south, west and eastern boundaries.
- 1.3 The proposed development is for the demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide 8 detached dwellinghouses arranged and constructed in a manner reflecting the arrangement and design of existing buildings on the site.

2. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 The proposed development is considered to be contrary to the Development Plan, but not significantly so.

3. SITE HISTORY

- 3.1 No site history exists.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Falkirk Council's Roads Development Unit has expressed concern that the development is proposed in the countryside on a rural road of restricted width lacking footway and lighting provision. The Roads Development Unit considers that traffic generated by the proposed development could result in a road safety concern with the resulting increase in vehicular movements at the site and on surrounding rural roads.
- 4.2 The Environmental Protection Unit has requested the imposition of a contaminated land condition and construction noise informative in the event that planning permission is granted.
- 4.3 Scottish Natural Heritage has no objections to the proposed development.
- 4.4 Scottish Water has no objections to the proposed development.
- 4.5 The Coal Authority advises that the site is at risk of being affected by historic mine working activity. A mine entry is recorded to the south of the site. The applicant has provided a Coal Mining Report, which has been reviewed by the Coal Authority. A planning condition requiring pre-development investigation and, if necessary remediation, has been requested.

5. COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- 5.1 No comment received.

6. PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

- 6.1 One objection has been made, by a resident of the surrounding area. The objection is made on the grounds that the existing road network is not suitable for an increase in the number and type of vehicular traffic that would result from residential development. The objector does not object to new development but seeks alternative access to the A801 to avoid the use of C62 Candie Road.

7. DETAILED APPRAISAL

Under section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, the determination of planning applications for local and major developments shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Accordingly,

7a The Development Plan

Falkirk Council Structure Plan

7a.1 Policy ENV.1 ‘Countryside and Protected Areas’ states:

- “(1) There is a general presumption against development in areas defined as countryside, unless it can be demonstrated that a countryside location is essential or is an appropriate form of agricultural diversification. Where it is established that a countryside location is essential, development proposals will also be assessed in relation to Local Plan policies appropriate to specific protected areas as defined generally by Schedules ENV.1 and ENV.3.*
- (2) The policies applicable to countryside and protected areas within it, together with the detailed boundaries of each area, will be set out in Local Plans.”*

7a.2 The Structure Plan recognises the boundaries between urban areas and the countryside. To protect the countryside the aim is generally to confine built development to urban areas unless it can be demonstrated that it is essential for it to be located in the countryside or it is an appropriate form of agricultural diversification. The proposed development does not satisfy these criteria. An assessment of Local Plan policy follows.

Falkirk Council Local Plan

7a.3 Policy SC3 - ‘Housing Development In The Countryside’ states:

“Housing development in the countryside will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

- (1) Housing essential to the pursuance of agriculture, horticulture or forestry, or the management of a business for which a countryside location is essential. In these instances, the applicant must demonstrate:*
- The operational need for the additional house in association with the business*
 - That no existing dwelling which might have served that need has been sold or otherwise alienated from the holding*
 - That there are no reasonable opportunities for reusing or converting redundant buildings rather than building a new dwellinghouse*
 - That the business as a whole is capable of providing the main source of income for the occupant;*
- (2) Proposals involving the rehabilitation of former residential properties, or the conversion of farm and other buildings to residential use, where*
- The building, by virtue of its existing character, makes a positive contribution to the rural landscape*
 - The building is in a reasonable state of repair, still stands substantially intact and is capable of beneficial restoration, as verified by a report and certificate from a qualified structural engineer*
 - The restored or converted building is of comparable scale and character to the original building*
 - In the case of former non-residential buildings, the building is no longer required for the purpose for which it was built; or*

- (3) *Appropriate infill opportunities within the envelope of an existing group of buildings, where the development would not result in ribbon, backland or sporadic development, and the proposal satisfies Policy SC8.”*

7a.4 The proposed development is not essential to the pursuance of agriculture and no demonstration of operational need has been made. Whilst the proposal represents new development on the site, it can also be considered that rehabilitation of the site is taking place given that the layout and orientation of new buildings replicates the existing form of the farmhouse and farm buildings.

7a5 The proposed development is considered to represent a form of development that will positively contribute to the rural landscape when compared with the existing dilapidated buildings. The applicant has provided a structural engineer's report. This report confirms that the existing buildings lack foundations and are in such a poor state of repair that renovation is not a viable option.

7a.6 Policy EQ19 - 'Countryside' states:

- (1) *The Urban and Village Limits represent the desirable limit to the expansion of settlements for the period of the Local Plan. Land outwith these boundaries is designated as countryside and will be subject to the detailed policies for specific uses indicated in Table 3.3. Development proposals in the countryside for uses not covered by these policies will only be permitted where:*

- *it can be demonstrated that they require a countryside location;*
- *they constitute appropriate infill development; or*
- *they utilise suitable existing buildings.*

- (2) *In circumstances where development meets the relevant countryside policy criteria, the scale, siting and design of development will be strictly controlled to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the character of the countryside. In particular:*

- *the siting should be unobtrusive, making use of natural features to integrate development into the landform and avoiding skylines;*
- *building design should be sympathetic to vernacular building styles and comply with the design principles contained within the Council's 'Design Guide for Buildings in the Rural Areas'; and*
- *boundary and curtilage treatments should be sympathetic to the rural area, with a preference for stone walling and hedging using native species.”*

7a.7 The application site lies within the countryside. The proposed development of new houses in the countryside has not been demonstrated to be essential. The proposal does however utilise the layout and orientation of existing buildings and stone will be re-used as feature elements of the proposed new houses.

7a.8 The proposed development is considered, on balance, to be contrary to policies ENV 1 of the Structure Plan and policies SC3 and EQ19 of the Falkirk Local Plan. However the development advances a sensitively designed proposal that seeks to replicate the layout of existing dilapidated buildings which are unsuitable for conversion. Proposed building styles are appropriate and re-use of existing stone is proposed. Boundary treatments and landscaping proposals are sensitively designed. The proposal is considered to represent a positive rehabilitation of this site.

7a.9 Policy EQ26 - 'Trees, Woodland And Hedgerows' states:

"The Council recognises the ecological, landscape, economic and recreational importance of trees, woodland and hedgerows. Accordingly:

- (1) Felling detrimental to landscape, amenity, nature conservation or recreational interests will be discouraged. In particular ancient, long-established and semi-natural woodlands will be protected as a habitat resource of irreplaceable value;*
- (2) In an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or a Conservation Area, development will not be permitted unless it can be proven that the proposal will not adversely affect the longevity, stability or appearance of the trees. Where necessary, endangered trees and woodlands will be protected through the designation of further TPOs;*
- (3) Where development is permitted which will involve the loss of trees or hedgerows of amenity value, the Council will normally require replacement planting appropriate in terms of number, size, species and position;*
- (4) The enhancement and management of existing woodland and hedgerows will be encouraged. Where the retention of a woodland area is integral to a development proposal, developers will normally be required to prepare a plan and make provision for its future management; and*
- (5) There will be a preference for the use of appropriate local native species in new and replacement planting schemes, or non-native species which are integral to the historic landscape character."*

7a.10 The application site has mature landscaping immediately adjacent to the north. Additional mature landscaping exists in proximity to the south, west and eastern boundaries. The landscaping to the north would require protection during construction works. The applicant has submitted satisfactory tree protection proposals. All remaining landscaping is to be retained and augmented with additional planting proposals.

7a.11 Policy ST1 - 'Core Path Network' states:

"The Council will safeguard and promote the development of the core path network as and when this is defined. Where appropriate, developer contributions to the implementation of the network will be sought."

7a.12 The proposed development has been negotiated to provide footpath and cycle linkage from the site to Falkirk Council Core Path 022/0947. This in turn provides further linkage to Core Paths 022/905 and 022/944. The proposed development therefore represents an opportunity to link the site to Standburn to the north and the Avon Gorge to the south to aid sustainable travel and recreational use.

- 7a.13 Accordingly, the proposed development does not fully accord with housing development in the countryside policies of the Structure Plan (Policy ENV1) and the Falkirk Local Plan (Policies SC3 and EQ19) on the basis that the existing farmhouse and buildings are to be demolished and rebuilt. However, the proposed development is considered to comply with all other relevant Development Plan policies in that a high quality design appropriate and sympathetic to the countryside is proposed.

7b Material Considerations

- 7b.1 The material considerations to be assessed are Scottish Planning Policy, the policies contained within the emerging Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan), the views of Falkirk Council's Roads Development Unit and the submitted objection from a resident of the surrounding area.

Scottish Planning Policy

- 7b.2 Scottish Government Scottish Planning Policy (2010) recognises the opportunity to expand the opportunities for new development in the countryside through Development Plan policy. In addition, the possible opportunity for sensitive redevelopment of 'brownfield' sites is recognised.
- 7b.3 The proposed development is considered to accord with the guiding principles of Scottish Planning Policy by the utilisation of an existing 'brownfield' site with appropriately designed new development.

Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan)

- 7b.4 The Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan) was approved by the Council for consultation in March 2013, with the period for representations running from April to June 2013. It is expected to be adopted in early 2015, at which point it will replace the current Structure Plan and Local Plan. It provides the most up to date indication of Falkirk Council's views in relation to Development Plan policy and constitutes a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 7b.5 The following policies of the emerging Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan) are relevant to the assessment of the application under consideration:
- Policy CG01 – Countryside
 - Policy CG03 – Housing in the Countryside
 - Policy GN04 – Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows
 - Policy GN05 – Outdoor Access
- 7b.6 The above policies evolve policy considerations expressed in the extant Falkirk Council Local Plan and previously considered in this report. The most relevant policy evolution is contained in Policy CG03 – Housing in the Countryside which introduces the acceptance of the replacement of substantially intact buildings in the countryside with sensitive new development.
- 7b.7 The proposed development is considered to accord with all relevant policies of the emerging Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan).

Points Raised by Consultees

- 7b.8 The Roads Development Unit of Falkirk Council has expressed concerns that the proposed development is not appropriate development for a rural location because of the nature of the C62 Candie Road in terms of restricted width, lack of lighting and passing places.
- 7b.9 The applicant has submitted supporting information that provides a comparison between the traffic impacts resulting from the proposed eight dwellinghouses and what could be expected to be generated if farming was re-established at the site. In addition the applicant has offered to provide a vehicular access junction and access road to the proposed development that is constructed to an adoptable standard. The Roads Development Unit considers that the suggested access arrangement would not address their more general concerns relating to increased vehicular use of rural roads. The comparison of traffic generation between farming and residential usage is noted by the Roads Development Unit. However, concerns remain that higher trip generation would result especially at the peak am and pm periods.
- 7b.10 Two opportunities exist to access the C62 Candie Road from the A801. Both are single track roads of limited width with no street lighting. The northern access from the A801 is of wider construction with opportunity for the passing of two vehicles. The southern access from the A801 is more restricted in width. Passing opportunities do however exist although less regularly. A new passing place has been provided on the southern access from the A801 negotiated during the approval of previous planning permission for the re-development of Melonsplace Farm, Candie.
- 7b.11 It is considered that there is similarity between the traffic that would be generated in comparison of farming or residential use although the differences in peak time generation are noted. It is also considered that, given the proximity between accesses/egress of the C62 on the A801 and the increased width of the northern route, drivers are likely to select the northern route when accessing or egressing the C62 Candie Road.
- 7b.12 On balance, it is considered that there is similarity between traffic generation of agricultural and residential uses and that the C62 Candie Road affords adequate capacity to serve limited residential development at the site.

Points raised by Objection

- 7b.13 The submitted objection does not object to the principle of the proposed development. Concern is however raised at the suitability of the C62 Candie Road to accommodate an increase in vehicular traffic. A more direct vehicular access to the A801 is suggested by the objector.
- 7b.14 The suitability of the C62 to accommodate the proposed development is considered above in the assessment of the concerns raised by the Roads Development Unit. A more direct access to the A801 is not achievable.

7c Conclusion

- 7c.1 The proposed development accords with Scottish Planning Policy and emerging Development Plan policy (Falkirk Local Development Plan) in respect of sensitive new development in the countryside.

- 7c.2 The proposed development has been demonstrated to be contrary to a strict interpretation of policy SC3 – Housing Development in the Countryside given that neither the rehabilitation of existing former residential properties nor conversion of existing farm buildings is proposed. The proposed development is therefore considered to be a departure from the extant Development Plan but not significantly so on the basis that it is in accordance with established Scottish Planning Policy and the emerging Development Plan (Falkirk Local Development Plan).
- 7c.3 Material considerations relative to concerns over the ability of the existing road network to accommodate the proposed development are considered to have been adequately assessed. No significant adverse impact is considered likely to result should the proposed development be approved.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that the Planning Committee approve planning permission subject to the following planning conditions:-

- (1) The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the plan(s) itemised in the informative below and forming part of this permission unless a variation is required by a condition of the permission or a non-material variation has been agreed in writing by Falkirk Council as Planning Authority.**
- (2) Before development commences, site investigations shall be undertaken as identified in the approved Coal Mining Risk Assessment Report. In the event that site investigations confirm the need for remedial works to ensure the safety and stability of the development all necessary works shall be undertaken prior to the occupation of any approved dwellinghouse. The developer shall inform Falkirk Council as Planning Authority in writing in advance of any necessary site remediation works.**
- (3) Before development commences on site samples of all construction materials for all masonry, slate, aluminium rainwater goods, wet dash render, timber fenestration and timber cladding shall be submitted for the written approval of Falkirk Council as Planning Authority including amendment as required.**
- (4) Before development commences on site construction techniques for the re-use of all retained natural stone in the approved dwellinghouses shall be submitted for the written approval of Falkirk Council as Planning Authority including amendment as required.**
- (5) The site access arrangements approved in the "Site Access Arrangements" plan (drawing number 29) shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any approved dwellinghouse.**
- (6) All approved core path connection works (drawing number 30) shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the last dwellinghouse.**

Reason(s):-

- (1) As these drawings and details constitute the approved development.
- (2) In the interest of public safety.
- (3, 4) In the interests of visual amenity.
- (5) In the interest of road safety.
- (6) In the interests of recreation use.

Informative(s):-

- (1) In accordance with section 58(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), this permission lapses on the expiration of a period of 3 years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted unless the development to which this permission relates is begun before that expiration.
- (2) For the avoidance of doubt, the plan(s) to which this decision refer(s) bear our online number(s) 01 - 30.
- (3) The builder should ensure that noisy work which is audible at the site boundary shall **ONLY** be conducted between the following hours:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Monday to Friday | 08:00 – 18:00 Hours |
| Saturday | 09:00 – 17:00 Hours |
| Sunday / Bank Holidays | 10:00 – 16:00 Hours |

Deviation from these hours of work is not permitted unless in emergency circumstances and with the prior approval of the Environmental Health Unit.
- (4) The developer should contact Scottish Water and SEPA to seek water connection and approval of the proposed private drainage arrangements.

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Director of Development Services

Date: 17 June, 2014

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Letter of Objection received from Mr Douglas Frater, The Hawes, Candie, Falkirk, FK20BU on 6 January 2014.
2. Scottish Planning Policy.
3. Falkirk Council Structure Plan.
4. Falkirk Council Local Plan.
5. Falkirk Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan).

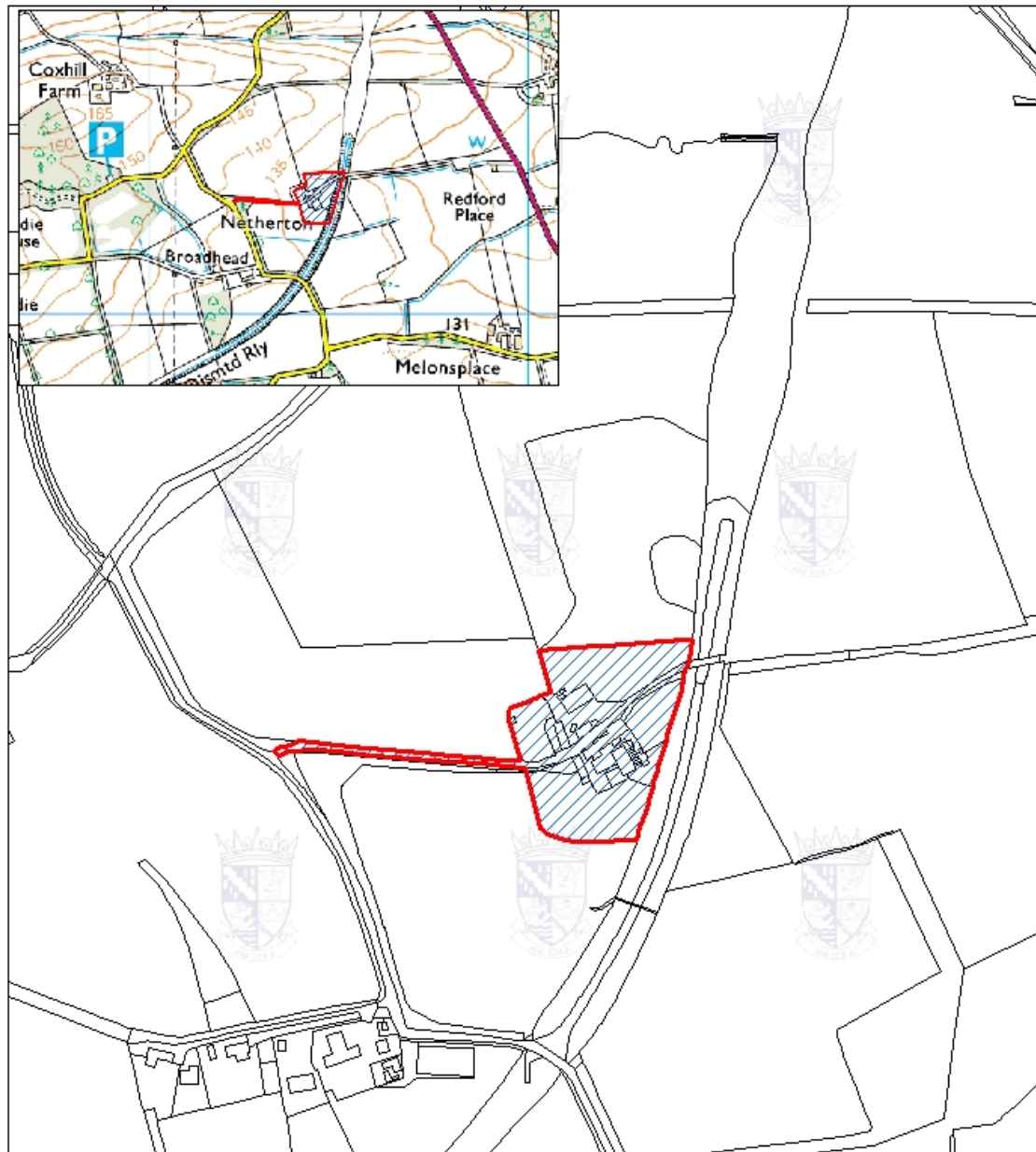
Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 504706 and ask for Allan Finlayson, Senior Planning Officer.

Planning Committee

Planning Application Location Plan

P/13/0706/FUL

This plan is for location purposes only. It should not be interpreted as an exact representation of the application site.



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