



Agenda Item 3

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of Meeting of the Planning Committee held in Bo'ness Academy,
Gauze Road, Bo'ness on Tuesday 28 May 2019 commencing at 7.00 p.m.**

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a pre-determination hearing in terms of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. When sitting in this capacity, the Planning Committee comprises all members of the Council.

Councillors:

David Aitchison	Lynn Munro
David Alexander (convener)	Alan Nimmo
David Balfour	Malcolm Nicol
Gary Bouse	Pat Reid
Gordon Hughes	Depute Provost Ann Ritchie
Cecil Meiklejohn	

Officers:

Ian Dryden, Development Manager
Iain Henderson, Legal Services Manager
Jennifer McArthur, Modern Apprentice
Adeline Orr, Committee Services Assistant
Julie Seidel, Planning Officer
Alistair Shaw, Development Plan Co-ordinator
Antonia Sobieraj, Committee Services Officer
Russell Steedman, Network Co-ordinator

**Also
Attending:**

Stuart Geddes, Geddes Consulting
David Gray, Environmental Protection Co-ordinator
Arthur Mann, Miller Homes Limited

PDH5. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Provost Buchanan; and Councillors Binnie, Bissett, Blackwood, Coombes, Kerr, McCue, McLuckie, Murtagh and Patrick.

PDH6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PDH7.Pre-Determination Hearing Procedures

The Convener formally welcomed those present and outlined the procedures relating to the meeting.

PDH8. Development of Land for Residential Purposes Use with Associated Infrastructure at Land to the North of North Bank Farm, Bo'ness for Miller Homes Limited -P/19/0129/PPP

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services on an application for planning permission in principle for the development of land for residential purposes use with associated infrastructure at land to the North of North Bank Farm, Bo'ness.

1. The Planning Officer (J Seidel) outlined the nature of the application.
2. The applicant's representative (A Mann) was heard in relation to the application. He explained that the planning application in principle, as submitted, related to the building of up to 200 homes. The area was recognised as one of high growth potential. If the application is approved, he advised that detailed permission will be sought with a view to work commencing in the spring of 2020 for estimated completion in 2025 (around 40 units per year). The indicative masterplan proposed open space and tree planting to settle the development into the landscape, which would follow on from the existing housing site. The road would be redirected into the site. In 2021 the building of affordable units would commence, with detailed discussion to take place on that. Technical analysis had been undertaken by way of a desktop study. This will need to be followed up with intrusive checks. There is an awareness of mine shafts but confidence that this can be dealt with on the site. There would be a planning gain package amounting to £1.2m, mainly expanding the primary and nursery facilities. The realignment of Borrowstoun Road would help address the level of traffic and speed and improve road safety. The development will allow Bo'ness people to move up the property ladder in the area. 60% of purchasers come from the area.
3. The undernoted consultee representative present was heard in respect of the application:-
 - (a) Ms V Spencer, on behalf of NHS Forth Valley, raised concern at the impact of additional housing on the sustainability of the local GP practice. This was a national problem and there was an insufficient number of GP's generally. The proposed development would place new pressures on the Kinglass practice as irrespective of the type of housing, all people need a GP. The practice fortunately had a full workforce but was one GP away from significant issues.

4. Questions were then asked by Members of the Committee as follows:-

Q(a) Clarification was sought on proposals to reduce vehicle speed on Borrowstoun Road to improve road safety and measures to mitigate the effect of the dip in the road.

Q(b) Clarification was sought on whether any flooding issues were anticipated at the development site.

Q(c) Clarification was sought on the rationale for the realignment of Borrowstoun Road.

Response by the applicant's representative:-

Changing levels would allow the road to be moved around. The aim would be to reduce vehicle speed and improve road safety. A full flood risk assessment was undertaken and was submitted to Falkirk Council. No flooding issues were identified.

5. Section 38A of the Town and Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 together with Regulation 27 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 give those persons who have submitted representations on relevant planning applications the right to be heard before a Committee of the Council before the application is determined. On this occasion, in addition to those persons who had submitted representations, some other members of the public in attendance at the meeting were permitted to address the Committee.

(a) Ms M Hunt, Convener, Bo'ness Community Council, an objector to the development, indicated that she would like to know the number of vehicles using Borrowstoun Road. She argued that the figures supplied by the applicant were lower than the actual figures. This was an accident waiting to happen. Realignment currently makes the road more of an issue for safety. This needs to be got right. The dip in the road was made worse by water and snow.

(b) Ms S Samson, an objector to the development, raised concern in relation to the opening up of the road. She stressed that the only way to address the current problems was to widen the road with a roundabout to take traffic to the main road. Traffic leading to North Farm was a disaster. Until now drivers relied on local farmers creating sightlines by cutting hedges and grass. The crossroads in particular were narrow leading onto another narrow road. She sought clarification on the definition of affordable housing and indicated that what the area required was social housing. Whilst recognising there was a housing shortfall within the Council area, it was necessary for the local infrastructure to support it. Any future must include both affordable and social housing as many people would otherwise never be able to have a home.

- (c) Mr M Millar, an objector to the development, sought clarification on why no account had been taken of the Local Development Plan in that the development site was greenbelt. Other more suitable areas had not reached their housing capacity. The Bo'ness shore or existing gap sites, for example, within the town had not been developed and he questioned why this was the case. The town centre required regeneration. The infrastructure deficits impacted by this development were significant. He referred to the issues associated with the Municipal landfill site. Bullet point 4.3 of the report indicated that the Council's Environmental Protection Unit advised that a planning condition should be included on ground contamination. He questioned what the condition would include and that the need for a condition indicated that there were problems with the site. There was no mention of this issue within any Environmental Impact Assessment or ecological studies.
- (d) Mr D Webster, an objector to the development, raised concern that the development work undertaken to date had adversely affected the local road network. The road leading to the Champany restaurant was unsuitable for a high level of traffic, and the road was falling apart. It was a death trap and the work undertaken so far by Miller Homes had not improved it. It was also unsafe for pedestrians to cross. The local health centres had almost reached capacity and more housing would reduce the standard of care. Schools were also reaching capacity. The high traffic volume on Gauze Road and Kinnaird Road was chaos and would not be mitigated with a developer contribution. Parking at the local health centres is very difficult. Unless the local infrastructure increased there would be further chaos. He commented that Bo'ness is a commuter town and traffic builds up from 6.30 a.m. The development would undoubtedly increase the level of traffic. Public transport was not viable as the local bus service had been cut back. The development would be a 'noose round our necks' and detrimentally affect the town.
- (e) Mr J Waddell, an objector to the development, concurred with previous concerns regarding the traffic and the road. The development would adversely affect the level of traffic. Redbrae Road is in a cutting and there was no way to widen it. Situated below that is a field at the north end of the development site. This in the past had been used as a tip from the Ironside mine. Wimpy had used it and had treated it badly whilst building their development. Situated at this location were huge clinkers buried just below the ground. The only way the road would have worked is to come out by the coal road. There was no way for vehicles to negotiate the bend at Redbrae Road and it should be closed.

- (f) Ms I Chirray, an objector to the development, indicated that she had contested the developer's previous application which was granted. The Fire and Rescue and Health Services were struggling to cope due to overcapacity. Medical staff were already leaving the NHS services within the area. The strain on the services would get worse should the development be approved. There was a lack of capacity at Grange Primary School to accommodate increased pupil numbers. It is a Victorian building with no space to expand. The road was like is a race track from 6 a.m. and been getting worse since the chicane. The developer had previously blocked off footpaths/rights of way and showed a lack of respect for residents. There was local concern that there would be a large amount of construction debris and dirt together with long working hours leading to another five years of hell for the local residents.
- (g) Mr B Martin, an objector to the development, referred to the level of vehicular traffic within the report. This information had been generated in May 2017 and it predated the existing development. Another 155 houses had not been accounted for nor the likely significant number of additional car journeys. The Council's Roads Development Unit should look again at this issue.
- (h) Ms D Gillooly, an objector to the development, raised concern at the loss of greenbelt space. The Drum was prime land and another 2 or 3 fields were to be built on. It was open season for building on prime agricultural land within Bo'ness. There was a lack of amenity to support the current and future developments. Living in close proximity to the road, he had witnessed that the recent development works had made an already busy road worse. Gauze Road had too much traffic and neither schools nor the health centre could accommodate the development nor the construction traffic. He indicated that there isn't meant to be construction traffic on Gauze Road but there is. Despite having spoken to the Council and the developer about this, nothing to resolve the issue had been done. The site team had shown no respect for local residents and he did not want to experience construction traffic for another five years.
6. Further questions were then asked by Members of the Committee as follows:-
- (a) Concern was raised that there was an outstanding formal consultation response from NHS Forth Valley. A formal response was required for inclusion within the update report to be submitted to the Council.

Response by the applicant's representative:-

There was recognition from the meeting of the widespread concern in relation to the road. This was why the applicant intended to do works to improve the road. The Council could help to make the connection happen.

The applicant was happy to look at a planning gain package around the NHS. It was noted that this seems to be a wider issue for GPs in smaller towns. The applicant advised that it was not their intention to swamp the town with unnecessary housing. There was however a need for people to live somewhere. The applicant welcomed any further concerns and that these could be raised with the applicant directly. There was concern to hear about site work difficulties and that will be looked into.

7. Close of Meeting

The Convener concluded by thanking the parties for their attendance and advising that the matter would be determined by Falkirk Council on a date following the Council recess.