

DRAFT AGENDA ITEM 1

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in DOBBIE HALL, MAIN STREET, LARBERT on 19 OCTOBER 2009 commencing at 6.00 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.

PRESENT: Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Alexander, Buchanan, Carleschi, Coleman, Goldie, Gow, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, Lemetti, A MacDonald, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, McLuckie, McNeill, Meiklejohn, Nicol, Oliver, Patrick, Thomson and Waddell.

CONVENER: Councillor Buchanan.

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Constable, Fry, McNally and Nimmo.

ATTENDING: Director of Development Services; Acting Director of Law and Administration Services; Acting Head of Planning and Transport; Development Manager; Roads and Development Manager; Roads Development Officers (B Raeburn and G Crawford); Transport Planning Officers (K Short and L Slavin); Senior Planning Officer (A Finlayson); Planning Officer (D Paterson); Assistant Planning Officer (G Clark); Committee Officer (A Sobieraj); and Committee Assistants (S McGhee and L Cornforth).

ALSO

ATTENDING: Director of Education; Head of Educational Resources; Senior Forward Planning Officer; Design Coordinator; and Architect (S McEwan), all representing the applicant.

DECLARATIONS

OF INTEREST: None.

P97. ERECTION OF SCHOOL, FORMATION OF PLAYING FIELDS, CARPARKING AND ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT ON LAND TO THE SOUTH OF 49 EDWARD AVENUE, STENHOUSEMUIR - P/08/0875/FUL

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 8 October 2009 by the Director of Development Services on an application for the erection of a single stream primary school, incorporating a nursery school, the formation of playing fields, car parking and ancillary development on land to the south of Edward Avenue, Stenhousemuir.

1. The Convener formally welcomed all those present and outlined the procedures relating to the meeting.
2. The Development Manager outlined the nature of the application.
3. The applicant was heard in relation to the application.

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

Q(a) An overview of the parking arrangements at the proposed school was sought.

Response by the Acting Head of Planning and Transport:-

The school's main entrance was designed in accordance with appropriate specifications. The roads neighbouring the school site are currently on a bus route. There was sufficient space for school buses to leave the main road and offload safely. A traffic calming scheme would also operate should the school be built.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

It was not anticipated that the traffic on the bus route would be exacerbated should the school be built.

Q(b) Clarification was sought on the criteria against which the various site options were assessed.

Response by the applicant:-

Four sites were considered for the school. The Antonshill site was considered to be the most suitable following a detailed assessment which took into account a variety of issues such as ground conditions, flooding concerns, security etc.

Q(c) Clarification was sought on the number of staff to be employed within the primary and nursery schools and parking available for staff.

Response by the applicant:-

It was anticipated that 16/17 members of staff would be employed in the primary and nursery schools. The drop off point for the nursery school would be adjacent to the primary school.

Response by the Acting Head of Planning and Transport:-

Sufficient parking was planned for all staff. Traffic calming and other traffic management measures would be put in place, however it was premature to indicate whether there would be a school crossing patrol.

Q(d) Clarification was sought on the measures adopted to combat parking congestion at the school.

Response by the Acting Head of Planning and Transport:-

A School Travel Plan assessment was undertaken in relation to traffic and parking at the school site.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

While one way traffic systems had been considered on a pilot basis at a small number of schools, the road network in this area which serves a number of developments would not be suitable for such a system.

Q(e) Clarification of the status of the Structure and Local Plans was sought. In addition, and with reference to paragraph 7a. 2 (i) of the report, information was sought on whether there had been a community wide assessment of open space and recreational provision.

Response by the Development Manager:-

The site had been assessed with regard to the existing Development Plan which was now of some vintage and with regard to the emerging Local Plan which was a material consideration and in which the site had been allocated for education provision.

Q(f) Parking at Margaret Terrace was highlighted and officers were asked whether the narrowing of the road as a consequence of traffic calming measures would impact on the parking spaces available to residents.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

There would be a loss of one parking space as a result of the raised table build out, the purpose of which would be to slow traffic and to enable pupils to cross the road.

Q(g) Clarification was sought on the consultation with the community carried out by the applicant.

Response by the applicant:-

Neighbour notification of the planning application was carried out in accordance with statute.

Q(h) Clarification was sought on the traffic survey, the date on which it was carried out and on the suitability of Edward Avenue for traffic calming measures.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

A traffic impact assessment was submitted by the applicant in October 2008. Speed and traffic volume counts were also carried out. Traffic calming measures at Edward Avenue will require to be appropriate for buses and this issue is being examined.

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 2008 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, other members of the public in attendance at the meeting were permitted to address the Committee.

(a) Ms K Grant, on behalf of Antonshill Action Group, an objector, raised the following issues:-

- The application is contrary to policy;
- The reduction of space for local residents;
- The loss of the only open space and play area available to young people locally;
- That the site was an important recreational area for the community;
- The loss of leisure facilities which would not be ameliorated by construction of the MUGA;
- The issue of road safety;
- The roads leading out of Antonshill are already congested in the morning and this will be exacerbated by the proposed development;
- There are alternative and better suited sites for the school;
- The unfairness of applying policy. com 6 to new housing developments; and
- That the site was not justified only because it was owned by the Council.

(b) Ms K Shaw also from Antonshill Action Group sought clarification on the nature of the consultation undertaken with the community in 2004.

(c) Ms D Watson, an objector, raised the following issues:-

- The proposal to move the bus stop nearer to the cemetery would impact adversely on the dignity of mourners;
- The potential for an increase in noise at or near the cemetery; and
- With reference to the proposal to provide a pathway to the development site from the bus stop a previous pathway had sunk.

(d) Mr G Alexander, a member of the public, sought clarification on the following issues:-

- The source of the budget for the school;
- The school catchment area; and
- The arrangements for transport to the school.

(e) Ms M Brown, an objector, stated that there was a more suitable site for the school at Kinnaird and that she believed funding had been allocated for the building of a school at that location.

(f) Mr R Wardlaw, an objector, questioned why the application was contrary to the existing Development Plan but was acceptable under the emerging Local Plan.

(g) Mr S Thomson, an objector, stated that his home was situated 20 metres from the MUGA and that this would create a nuisance by way of noise, floodlighting and stray balls in his garden.

(h) Mr J Binnie, an objector, raised the following issues:-

- The reasons for calming measures outside his front door; and
- That removal of bus stops would have an adverse impact on the amenity of older residents.

(i) Ms R Gallagher, an objector, questioned whether the choice of this site was based solely on a financial decision.

(j) A resident of Linlithgow Place raised the following issues:-

- The loss of access to the bus stops for elderly people;
- That only four children currently used the bus stop; and
- That children from Bo'ness, Grangemouth and Camelon would not walk to the school.

(k) Ms Shaw, a member of the public, raised concern that should the school be built at this location, her son would not have a park in which to play.

(l) Mr Murray, an objector, raised the following issues:-

- The importance of open space and play facilities for children and young people's health and their diversion from anti social behaviour, vandalism and crime.

(m) A member of the public raised the issue of the impact of the development on house values.

6. Responses were given to the issues that had been raised as follows:-.

- Consultation as required by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 had taken place in 2004 with the majority of respondents favouring the Antonshill site.
- The funding for the school was allocated in 2004.
- The catchment for the new school would be broadly equivalent to Larbert High School excluding Airth and the Skinflats corridor.
- In 2004 funding was allocated in the capital programme for the building of a school but was not specifically earmarked for Kinnaird.
- The Antonshill site was allocated in the emerging Local Plan as a consequence of a growing population in the Larbert/Stenhousemuir area. The development was based on statistical information on population and following full public consultation on the Plan proposals. There was no objection to the allocation during that consultation process. A traffic impact assessment had been carried out by independent consultants and revealed no significant congestion requiring improvement of the junctions. Traffic management options throughout the area had been assessed and it was considered that the best option had been adopted.
- Access to two bus stops would be maintained for local residents. They would be moved a short distance only to accommodate the traffic calming measures and in the interests of road safety. It was not anticipated that children attending the school would use these bus stops.

7. Further questions were then asked by Members of the Committee as follows:-

(a) Clarification was sought from the applicant on whether consultation had been undertaken since 2004 to establish whether Antonshill was still the favoured site.

Response by the applicant:-

Following the original consultation finance was allocated in the Council's Capital Programme. There was a delay in taking the project forward as other projects had taken priority. A full technical assessment had been carried out on this and alternative sites establishing that Antonshill was still the optimum site for the new school. Consultation on the formal planning application was now being carried out in accordance with statute.

(b) Clarification was sought from the applicant on:-

- The scope of the consultation in 2004 and whether it was limited to parents of pupils of St Francis Primary School; and
- Whether the delay in the project was to allow further site surveys after 2004.

Response by the applicant:-

A public meeting took place in February 2004 at St Francis Primary School. It was not limited to parents from the school and had been publicly advertised. The project was delayed to allow for further site investigation and having regard to prioritisation of the capital programme.

(c) Information was sought on the nature of the Traffic Impact Assessment and the period over which it was carried out.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

The primary function of a Traffic Impact Assessment is to look at the existing network. Core traffic figures are established to which are added the anticipated increase in traffic generated by the development. With regard to the Antonshill development, while it was acknowledged that the volume of traffic would increase it was nevertheless acceptable when judged against national criteria.

(d) Clarification was sought on whether the two proposed entrances for the school were justified as they were in close proximity and would lead to a significant increase in the number of bus movements.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

The guidelines for access and egress to developments were based on national standards. This particular development was chosen to have two entrances for practical purposes. This raised no concerns when measured against the national standards.

(e) Clarification was sought on whether a Flooding Assessment had been undertaken at the site.

Response by the Roads and Development Manager:-

The site was not at risk of flooding from a watercourse. Should the application be approved a condition would be imposed to deal with site drainage.

(f) The community was asked about the use currently made of the site.

Response by Ms K Grant, on behalf of Antonshill Action Group:-

The site was currently used by walkers, young people meeting friends, for dog walking and general community use. It was an important area of open space.

- (g) Clarification was sought on the nature of the 2004 consultation.

Response by the applicant:-

The consultation was undertaken by Education Services in accordance with standard procedures.

- (h) With reference to paragraphs 7a.2 and 7b.13 in the report, the extent of development in the Larbert and Stenhousemuir area and the consequent reduction in open space was highlighted. Clarification was sought on whether an audit and assessment of open space had been carried out.

Response by the Acting Head of Planning and Transport:-

As part of the preparation of the emerging Local Plan these issues had been considered. Further information on this would be contained in the report to Council on 27 October 2009.

Response by the Development Manager:-

The existing Local Plan had been adopted in 1998 since when there had been significant growth in the area. The Antonhill site had been allocated as a school site in the emerging Local Plan and had been subject to full consultation as part of that process. The emerging Local Plan was a material factor in consideration of the planning application and sought to achieve a balance between accommodating growth and environmental protection.

8. 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 27 October 2009.