

AGENDA ITEM 2

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: CONSULTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATION -
MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AT BURGHMUIR,
LINLITHGOW (0095/P/12)
Meeting: PLANNING COMMITTEE
Date: 4 APRIL 2012
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 West Lothian Council has received a planning application for a mixed use development comprising housing, retail, tourism, community use, and infrastructure works at Burghmuir, Linlithgow, adjacent to Junction 3 of the M9. A location plan is attached. Falkirk Council has been consulted as a neighbouring authority.
- 1.2 Part of the proposal at Burghmuir is the upgrading of M9 Junction 3 to a full 4 way interchange by the addition of west facing slip roads. The northern of these two additional slip roads lies predominantly within the Falkirk Council area, and so a separate application for this slip has been submitted to, and will be determined in due course by, Falkirk Council.
- 1.3 This report considers the implications of the mixed use development proposal for the Falkirk Council area, with particular reference to residential, retail and transport issues, and recommends a response to West Lothian Council on the application.

2. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The mixed use development proposal at Burghmuir includes the following elements:
 - Residential development comprising 600 homes, 25% of which would be affordable;
 - Provision of west facing slip roads at Junction 3 of the M9 motorway;
 - Foodstore of 60,000 square feet gross floorpace, and petrol filling station;
 - Health centre;
 - Residential care home;
 - Hotel (c.60 bed) with conferencing facilities;
 - Greenspace framework including a community park, land for sports and leisure uses, and dance studio; and
 - Associated infrastructure works including servicing of adjacent employment land and a long stay public car park.

3. POLICY BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan identifies Linlithgow as an area of development restraint. In the West Lothian Local Plan, the site lies outwith the

settlement boundary. However, land is safeguarded at M9 Junction 3 for westbound slips and an associated coach park and ride facility.

- 3.2 In the Falkirk Council Local Plan, land is safeguarded on the northern side of Junction 3 for the possible future upgrade of the junction (Opportunity TR.BNS01).
- 3.3 Scottish Planning Policy and the Development Plans of both Falkirk and West Lothian Councils contain retail policies supporting town centres, and providing criteria for assessing out-of-centre retail proposals.

4. KEY ISSUES

Residential

- 4.1 The scale of residential use proposed in the application is large, and if approved, could have some effect on the housing market and housing demand in Bo'ness. However, it is unlikely that the proposed housing would have any significant infrastructural or cross-boundary implications for the Falkirk Council area, assuming that Junction 3 of the M9 is upgraded as intended, and there is no reason for the Council to take issue with the residential element.

Retail

- 4.2 The proposed foodstore has implications in terms of potential impact on Bo'ness Town Centre and food shopping provision within Bo'ness. The proposed store is 60,000 square feet in size, which is similar in scale to the recently opened Tesco store in Camelon and about one third of the store would be given over to comparison goods. It is around 2.3 miles (3.7 km) from the eastern edge of Bo'ness and highly accessible to Bo'ness residents via the A904. It seems likely that, a store of this scale and accessibility will attract substantial trade from Bo'ness residents.
- 4.3 The applicant has undertaken a retail impact assessment which examines the policy context, appraises Linlithgow Town Centre, estimates retail impacts, and applies a sequential analysis to the proposal. The primary catchment area identified for the proposed store includes some parts of the Falkirk Council area (notably the Whitecross and Blackness areas) but excludes Bo'ness. The estimated convenience goods turnover of the store is £23m, of which 75% is estimated to come from within the primary catchment (mainly Linlithgow and its immediate hinterland), with 25% coming from outwith the primary catchment. It is not clear how this 75:25 split has been derived. Bo'ness appears to be the only town out with the primary catchment likely to contribute significantly to this 25%.
- 4.4 The retail impact assessment acknowledges that the proposed development will attract trade from Bo'ness residents but contends that there will be limited impact on existing retail facilities in the town because of their limited scale, and the fact that many residents already do their main food shopping outwith the town, in centres such as Grangemouth and Falkirk. However, there is no attempt in the study to actually quantify the level of expenditure that will be drawn to the store from Bo'ness residents, the impact on the stores in Bo'ness or the effect this might have on Bo'ness Town Centre.

- 4.5 Falkirk Council's own household survey, carried out in 2009, confirms that there is substantial leakage of convenience expenditure out of Bo'ness. The locations most often used for main shopping trips by Bo'ness residents include Grangemouth (30% of residents), Falkirk (19% of residents) and Linlithgow (12% of residents). However, around 39% of residents still do their main food shopping in Bo'ness (mainly Tesco) and there is a likelihood that a proportion of this trade will be diverted to the proposed store at Burghmuir, given its accessibility. This raises concern as to impacts on the existing Tesco, on the vitality and viability of Bo'ness Town Centre, and also on aspirations to improve food shopping in Bo'ness, and reduce overall expenditure leakage, as set out within the Main Issues Report of the Falkirk Local Development Plan. These concerns are not given adequate recognition in the retail impact assessment, where the focus is almost exclusively on Linlithgow Town Centre. Whilst the applicant has since offered to introduce additional information on Bo'ness into the retail impact assessment, this unfortunately is not yet available.
- 4.6 Scottish Planning Policy emphasises the importance of maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres. It states that where proposed retail development is contrary to the Development Plan (as is the case here), planning authorities should ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on the identified network of centres. The Falkirk Council Structure Plan and the Falkirk Council Local Plan seek to support the existing hierarchy of centres, including Bo'ness as a District Centre. This policy support has been backed up by substantial recent investment in the physical fabric of Bo'ness Town Centre, through the Townscape Heritage Initiative. The diversion of further trade from the Town Centre could undermine confidence in the Town Centre and ongoing regeneration efforts.
- 4.7 In conclusion, there are concerns regarding the retail impact of the proposal on Bo'ness Town Centre, which have not been adequately addressed in the retail impact assessment.

Transport

- 4.8 The proposed conversion of the M9 Junction 3 to a 4 way interchange has been supported by successive Development Plans, and would significantly improve the accessibility of Bo'ness. This could have positive economic benefits by improving the attractiveness and marketability of employment sites in the town, such as the Drum Business Park site. The additional slips would also take some pressure off Junctions 4 and 5 of the M9, which would also benefit the area. A disadvantage will be the increase in local road traffic on the A904 and A993 through the eastern side of Bo'ness. However, as noted earlier, the Council will be considering separately the application for the northern of the two slip roads.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The application for mixed use development at Burghmuir, Linlithgow represents a very major proposal on the edge of the Falkirk Council area. Whilst the upgrading of M9 Junction 3 is consistent with Development Plans within both the Falkirk Council and West Lothian Council areas, the development site itself is not allocated for urban uses in the West Lothian Local Plan.
- 5.2 The proposal is likely to have significant retail and transport implications for the eastern part of the Council area, and for Bo'ness in particular. Whilst the upgrade of the

motorway junction would improve accessibility to the town from the west, with potential economic benefits, there are real concerns that the proposed supermarket would attract significant expenditure from Bo'ness, divert trade from existing shops in Bo'ness, and have a consequent detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of the Bo'ness Town Centre. These concerns have not adequately been addressed in the retail impact assessment.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That, in its response to West Lothian Council on the application for mixed use development at Burghmuir, Linlithgow, the Council:**
- (i) supports and welcomes in principle the proposal to upgrade Junction 3 of the M9 to a 4 way interchange; and**
 - (ii) objects to the proposed supermarket, on the basis that there is a risk of significant impact on the vitality and viability of Bo'ness Town Centre, which has not been adequately addressed in the retail impact assessment.**

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Director of Development Services

Date: 27 March 2011

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None