

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

To: PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE	Subject: Formation of Country Park Including the Construction of 11 Dwellinghouses, Associated Buildings to Accommodate Rural Uses (e.g. Equestrian Centre and Ancillary Infrastructure Works) at Staylee Farm (off Hulks Road) Riggend, Airdrie
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	
Date: 9 March 2007	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the further information supplied by the applicant in support of the above planning application and to address the issues raised.

2. Background

2.1 The original report on this planning application was presented to Committee on 13 December 2006 and at the request of the applicant the Committee agreed to an extension of time of 2 months, to allow further information to be submitted in justification of the development which was recommended for refusal in the Director's report. Subsequently a supplementary report was submitted to the Committee on 14 February 2007, at which time the applicant request a site visit and hearing was approved by Committee.

2.2 Subsequently the applicant submitted, on 1 March 2007, two further letters with supporting information and an additional letter from the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC).

2.3 In the first letter the applicant has responded to the reasons for refusal stating the following:

- a) The submitted business plan requires the units to be manned with full time workers (eg. agriculture, equestrian, forestry, and ground maintenance)
- b) The business plan viability is presented with minimum liability standards as it is easy to project the most optimistic and show a huge profit. This plan shows the trust would survive with minimum liability.
- c) The area involved is approximately 27 hectares with substantial frontage onto Hulks Road and safe vehicular access could be provided.
- d) The Greenbelt would be enhanced by this development as a caring on site community would make sure vandalism/fly dumping were kept to a minimum and the destruction of forests by fire was controlled.
- e) The current trees planted on the site are at 15 feet (approx.4.5metres) and in future years would totally screen this small development and cause no visual impact.
- f) Infrastructure is partly in place at the moment as considerable public monies has been spent to site and plant this forest, the pathways and other requirements would be put in place making this development very acceptable and a credit to the local community.
- g) The development would create employment in an area of high unemployment.
- h) Create the structure to take our youngsters off the streets and give them a sense of purpose and pride in themselves, give them training in self-sufficiency and a grounding in rural activities. These activities would include mountain climbing, pony trekking, youth club, agricultural pursuits and wild life/animal husbandry. In addition the consideration CSFT is giving to an education facility close by.

2.4 In answer to the comments above the department would respond as follows:

- a) In terms of the issue of full time workers it should be noted that 5 of the dwellinghouses proposed within the development would have no direct link to the proposed country park other than that the capital from their sale would help finance the proposal. In addition, although it is agreed that some of the additionally proposed 6 units would have a use that may be considered to require a rural justification, this has not been proven.
- b) It is considered in terms of the profit margins that at its lowest level the proposal would not be successful. In addition the supporting information regarding the ability of the development to exceed these predicted levels is contradictory.
- c) Regarding the ability to provide safe access it is agreed that there is possible scope for the sightlines to be improved however the comments from the Transportation Section were provided to the applicant and revised plans were not provided to address the issue.]
- d) In terms of the minimisation of tipping and forest fire it is agreed that the having dwellinghouses within the development this could be achieved, however this alone is not a suitable justification for a development of this nature.
- e) In respect of the current tree planting on the site it is agreed that should these mature they would provide good coverage. However, the ability to screen a development from the surrounding area cannot solely justify its location. The Local Plan already identifies this area as 'high quality landscape'.
- f) Regarding the current level of infrastructure through the existing provision of trees, when these trees were planted they attracted a supplement payment above the standard grant to facilitate 10 years of public access. The provision of this type of access to the application site is not in dispute. The issue is that the facilitating dwellinghouses and businesses are contrary to the Development Plan.
- g) In relation to the claims of the creation of local employment, evidence has not been provided that the proposed businesses would necessarily use members of the local community or that employees would specifically be taken from the neighbouring villages.
- h) With reference to the adventure centre this is not included in the planning application. Notwithstanding, it begs the question of how this type of facility would be funded.

2.5 A further letter from the SAC, dated 2 March 2007, discusses the adventure centre added to the proposed list uses by the applicant. It would appear that the adventure centre would replace the proposed children's park. SAC's letter indicates that the concept of an adventure park is good and well worth working on, in addition it is a community need which may well be under serviced in North Lanarkshire. Finally the letter indicates that the training element is in keeping with the concept of the park and would be used to the overall benefit of the wider community.

2.6 In response to SAC's comments it is difficult for these comments to be fully assessed as there is no factual information regarding the proposed 'market' for such a use. In addition it should be highlighted again this element, although would provide an additional use that would cover all ages and abilities, would not generate any revenue and it is considered that this would put additional strain on the overall financial viability of the development.

2.7 A second letter from the applicant also highlights Scottish Planning Policy 21 (SPP21) Green Belts and identifies specific sections that he considers to support the planning application under consideration:

- a) *'To protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities, as part of the wider structure of green space'.*
- b) *'Green belt should be used to direct development to suitable locations, not to prevent development happening in general'* and in terms of the proposal it is in a suitable location and will enhance the rural economy, provide opportunities for recreation and rural activities, and provide benefits to the local community.
- c) *'Designated green belts should be managed effectively to enhance the quality of life for local people and this could include: providing a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation, outdoor education and tourism; Providing access to the countryside; and protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the landscape resource'.* The applicant feels that the proposal meets all of these criteria.
- d) Appropriate uses in the green belt are defined as including *'woodland and forestry, including community woodlands'* and *'recreational uses that are compatible with agriculture or natural setting'*. The applicant considers that the proposed development meets these definitions.

2.8 In answer to the aforementioned the Planning Authority would firstly respond by indicating that SPP21 looks for the development of the greenbelt to *'be taken forward as part of a long-term*

settlement strategy in the development plan and that *'development plans...will define the scale of land use change'*. Therefore it is considered that it is more appropriate for the applicant to progress this proposal through the North Lanarkshire Local Plan process.

2.9 In addition to the above, the elements of SPP21 specifically identified by the applicant may support the proposal, however as previously discussed in the main committee report it is considered that the business plan for the application has not adequately supported its financial integrity and long term viability. Failure to reasonably satisfy this requirement could undermine the greenbelt and provide a precedent for other such developments that have not been adequately proven from the financial perspective. In addition not all of the uses proposed for the development would require a rural location, in fact not all of the proposed uses have been more clearly identified.

3. Recommendation

3.1 It is considered, having regard to the points raised, there are no substantive new issues that would alter the original recommendation to refuse the application.



David M. Porch
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
(6 March 2007)

Local Government Access to Information Act:

For further information about this report, please contact Leigh Menzies on 01236 812372.