

Notes on Meeting of Planning and Economic Development Policy Board Monday 15th November

All 14 Councillors were present:

McMillan, Green, Hood, Kelly, Hall (5 Labour)

Nicolson (Convenor), McFee, McLaren, McQuade, Lawson (Provost), McGhee (6 SNP)

Dillon, McGurk (2 Lib Dem)

Clews (1 Cons)

RC officials: Bob Darracott, Crawford Russell, David Bryce, Scott Allan (Roads), A. Jamieson (Env. Serv.)

Reps from the developers and Cass associates were there also.

BD gave an outline of the planning context of the development proposals. He referred to its status in the Structure Plan (SP) and the Local Plan. It has been subject to a “very extensive” EiP. The Government expects the system to be “plan led”. The site has been identified in a number of policies over the years. The aim is sustainable economic growth – this is a key government policy as well as a policy within the SP. The Government has recently approved the revised SP – this includes identity of Bishopton as a Community Growth Area. It is also referred to in National Planning Frameworks 1 & 2 (NPF 2 was released on Friday) as an area capable of long term expansion within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley area. During the planning application process, on at least 12 occasions of Planning Boards, there has been “agreement in general” to plans to develop the ROF. We have to look at the impacts of the plans in the context of “wider economic development policies”. They have been considered on many planning boards over the years.

Material considerations:

- Views of the community
- National Planning Frameworks 2004 and 2008
- EiP
- National planning policy
- Environment Impact Assessment

Have to relate the views of the community to the views of other consultees and balance them.

Views of the community summarised as

- health & safety and nature of the contamination
- ability to fully decontaminate the site
- methods of remediation/wider social and economic consequences

It is in everyone's interests to come up with plans to successfully decontaminate the site. Its size and complexity should not be a barrier to achieving remediation. Many contaminated sites have been dealt with over the years (e.g. Ravenscraig, Riverside, Chorley, and Waltham Abbey). Contaminated land legislation has changed and been tightened up over the years.

Views the consultees have to be taken into account – all the decontamination work will be controlled. None of the statutory consultees has objected. There is more than enough information to determine an outline planning application at this stage. The Director of Environmental Services approves it. They accept that there is more to come. Regarding the proposals to burn buildings, there are “some concerns” over the methodology, therefore they will condition that.

In terms of transport, concerns of the objectors were: volume of traffic generated, impacts on M8, and rail capacity issues. In response, they recognise that there is a continuing pressure on M8, and if development is not accommodated at Bishopton, it would be accommodated in other areas - that would also result in impacts upon traffic. They recognise that the M8 is a problem. However Bishopton came up well in terms of other areas being assessed – if they had to look elsewhere, this wouldn't benefit from the same access characteristics that Bishopton possesses. In summary, there are problems, but none of the statutory consultees have objected (TS and Network Rail).

In terms of community facilities, these are usually dealt with through Section 75 agreements. Page 64 of the report lists areas to be negotiated. They will not issue any consent until Section 75s are in place and signed off.

In conclusion:

- This is an application with Renfrewshire-wide implications
- Population is declining – this will do something to help this
- It has economic development implications
- Context of derelict land/sustainable development/protection of greenbelt
- There is a significant and well co-ordinated level of opposition, and whilst this is understood, it is not just the number of objections but their content, and this has to be related to the views of the experts and the statutory consultees. This is an outline application, there is more to come. The other applications were withdrawn because there is more information to come.
- Every consultee has stated that there is enough information to make a decision on outline

The reasons for recommendation are:

- Policy
- Views of consultees (therefore there are “really no grounds for refusal”)
- Scope to manage and monitor the process in longer term

- Wider economic and social implications for the whole of Renfrewshire

Councillors then raised questions:

Cllr. Hood – What other methods of decontamination are there, apart from burning of buildings?

Reply from RC – burning is a potential method. There are real concerns about it, relating to proximity of buildings to houses, managing the process in terms of the weather etc. There could be dismantling and decontamination on site without burning; however HSE say that generally, burning is an efficient method. Methods haven't been specified, this will be decided in consultation with others, and they have not accepted that burning is "the way forward".

Cllr. Nicolson - Page 47 of the Report states that they are not happy with burning, therefore the acceptability of the method needs to be looked at later. These issues are relevant for another day.

Cllr. Hall – would the future detailed plans come back to the Board?

Cllr. Green – mentioned number of conditions attached. Will the Directorate oversee this or will reports come back to the Board?

Reply – normally, conditions delegated to the Director of Planning. However, because of the importance of the application, BD will be happy to come back with progress reports on a regular basis. Regular 3 monthly reports will explain how negotiations are going.

Cllr. Clews – decisions should be in the hands of the elected members

Cllr. Nicolson – there has to be a balance that reflects the importance of the decisions but also finds a way to ensure that the councillors are aware of the "rolling out" of the conditions being applied.

Cllr. Green – quite happy to get updates, doesn't want lots of technical detail.

A handout was given out and Cllr McFee spoke to an alternative motion, that the Outline Planning application be refused as it is "contrary to the requirements of both the Structure and Local Plans, and further fails to accord with the finding of the Examination in Public (EiP) and good planning practice." He outlined the grounds for this.

The history of the process is well documented. The inclusion in the SP is not disputed. The EiP is not in doubt – albeit with conditions attached. However, despite the "clear push" for development, the application has to be assessed in the same way as any other planning application i.e. Is it a good plan? Does it fulfil the criteria? When we look at the information in the papers – the proposals are ill conceived, badly thought out, and not fit for purpose. They will result in a divided community.

He referred to page 50 of the Report, and the comments from Architecture and Design Scotland. He referred to their letter which stated: "We are disappointed that the re-submitted planning application has not significantly addressed issues that were raised in our earlier report. We encouraged the project team to be visionary in

their approach to create a strong sense of place and a sustainable community". In terms of integration they stated that "the extent to which the new development relates to Bishopton remains unclear, and there is still very little analysis of the existing settlement.....the impact of the new settlement on the existing village centre and services should be fully considered and demonstrated". They have stated that further consideration should be given as to whether the new settlement is conceived as a "separate entity in itself or is designed to complement the existing town". Their conclusion was that the proposal does not comply with current Government policy and planning guidance.

Architecture and Design Scotland have recognised that the proposals are woefully inadequate.

He spoke about Station Road, and the fact that there is an additional 7,000 population projected. Station Road is prone to severe flooding, is "an underpass", and emergency vehicles need 3.5 metres width. It is "unsafe and uninviting" and yet it is proposed as the main gateway to the new development. He referred to condition 54 of the Report – Newton Road and Rossland Crescent can't comply with DDA.

There will be no "sense of place" and Bishopton will just be a dormitory commuter town for travel to Glasgow. There is no understanding of the impact of the new settlement on the existing village.

He spoke about primary schooling – in the initial settlement, children will be sent to the existing school. Even after a new school is built, 150 children will still attend the existing primary school – this will cause problems.

The two new access roads will be built on greenbelt land. In addition, the route of the Northern access road has not been determined, therefore this is contrary to the policy that any greenbelt edge is "clear, high quality and defensible in the longer term."

The height restriction on the Houston Road which the "haul road" accesses means that large heavy construction traffic will have to reach the site through Houston and Crosslee – the safety issues are "clearly enormous".

As Economic Development spokesperson, the proposals regarding job creation are "unconvincing". There is no link between residential units and the occupation of floorspace. Condition 9 states that prior to the occupation of the 412th residential unit, there will be a minimum of 10ha of serviced employment land – by insisting that the only link is to employment *land*, it could easily end up with no jobs and lots of houses.

In relation to transport, the EiP report stated that the development of a CGA at Bishopton was dependent on capacity problems being “satisfactorily addressed”. There is nothing in the proposals that addresses this requirement. He would caution against the STPR as it is not evidence of a solution, and is full of “ifs, mights and maybes”. Hard shoulder running has not been sanctioned by the Scottish Executive. “Intelligent Transport Systems” is transferring problems from the M8 to the local network, producing gridlock.

With regard to contamination, he posed the question – if burning is not the best method, then why is it still in the conditions for the planning application? The application is lacking in knowledge of the extent, location and nature of contamination. There will be restricted access in the community woodland due to the contamination.

The “pulling” of the two applications was the only way that the developer could get outline permission. They want a “comfort blanket” but this will be at the expense of the people of Bishopton. With regard to the conditions, all but one will be negotiated by the officials.

At one stage, the Convenor tried to curtail Cllr. McFee’s speech, but he continued until he had covered all the points he wished to make.

He asked for a seconder to his amendment – Councillor Clews (Cons) seconded it.

Cllr. Kelly remarked that Cllr. McFee had “regurgitated” every complaint. This was an outline planning application, and the detailed provisions will follow. This was “not the final thing.”

The Convenor then proposed the motion to grant the application and it was seconded by Cllr. McQuade. It was then carried by 12 votes to 2.

The motorway junction application was then very briefly dealt with. Cllr. McFee wanted it to be recorded that he was against this application. He asked the question whether the junction reduced reliance on private cars – the answer is “no”. Furthermore, the junction is predicated on a functioning mixed use development.

He then proposed the refusal, and it was again seconded by Cllr. Clews.

Permission to grant the application was again carried by 12 votes to 2.