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Ross Finnie MSP  
Minister for Environment and Rural Development  
Constituency Office  
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GREENOCK  
PA15 1DB

Dear Ross

**ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY, BISHOPTON**

Thank you for your letter of 18th June 2006 which I received on 28th June, expressing the concerns of Bishopton residents and requesting information regarding the redevelopment of the Royal Ordnance Factory.

The Council is fully aware of the concerns of the Bishopton community regarding the possible environmental issues raised by the redevelopment proposals at the site and will take great care to comprehensively address these matters in the course of the planning process.

Before responding to the specific points you raise in your letter, I think it would be useful to provide you with some background information.

The Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Bishopton extending to almost 1,000 hectares, is the largest derelict brownfield site in Scotland. BAE Systems, the owners of the ROF, announced their intention to cease manufacturing at the plant in 1999. The Scottish Executive subsequently set up and led a working group to investigate the feasibility of the remediation and redevelopment of the site. The group members consisted of the Scottish Executive, Renfrewshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Renfrewshire, Paisley Chamber of Commerce, Bishopton Community Council and the ROF Trade Unions. The group considered the longer term future of the site, the options in terms of attracting investment and the requirements and detail of site decontamination. This exercise concluded with a final report in 2001. Since then BAE, their development partners, Redrow Homes and appointed consultants have worked towards the preparation of a site master plan. This is designed to secure regeneration of the whole site funded through development of around 25% of the area for a mix of uses comprising residential, business/commercial space and community facilities.

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The planning context regarding the Bishopton site is quite clear. The National Planning Framework published by the Scottish Executive refers to this site as the preferred location for expansion of the Glasgow metropolitan area to the west. At strategic level the 2000 Structure Plan identified the site as having long term potential for development and this policy was strengthened in the 2006 Structure Plan Alteration (currently lodged with the Scottish Executive for final approval). The Alteration identified the site as one of 30 community growth areas across the Structure Plan area to accommodate 19,000 houses during the period to 2018. The Alteration provides an indicative housing capacity for the ROF site of 2,500 houses. At the local level, the Renfrewshire Local Plan (adopted in April 2006) highlighted the potential development of the ROF site identifying it as "a major area of change and development - to be proved through the production of a masterplan". These statutory development plans have been prepared in accordance with current legislation, including extensive public consultation and in respect of the Local Plan following a detailed Public Local Inquiry. In addition, BAE/Redrow have undertaken 2 rounds of public consultation in 2005 and 2006 and have participated in the local liaison group with the community council, churches, the Bishopton Action Group and officers and elected members of the Council. Subject to approval of the 2006 Structure Plan Alteration (which is anticipated by early 2007) planning policy will support the broad principle of redevelopment at Bishopton, providing detailed feasibility and assessment is made into the full development potential through production of a master plan and subsequent detailed planning applications.

Against this background BAE and Redrow have submitted a planning application in outline for the whole ROF site and this was registered on 20th June 2006. The application is based on a master plan for the whole site and indicates the broad land uses, access and roads, community facilities, open space and proposed phasing. It is expected in the next 2 or 3 months that 3 further applications will be submitted in detail, the first explaining the decontamination and restoration works proposed covering the whole site, the second application explaining how a landfill operation will contain contaminated material and thirdly, an application relating to the connection to the M8 motorway. Although submitted at different times, these applications will be determined by the Planning Board together, however the Council will not be in a position to decide on these until the Scottish Executive have approved the Structure Plan Alteration.

The processing of the applications will be in accordance with the Scottish Executive Planning Advice Note 33 "Development of Contaminated Land". This guidance makes it clear that where development is proposed on contaminated land, the planning system is the appropriate mechanism for dealing with the remediation works designed to make it suitable for the proposed use/s. The planning system is organised to deal with contamination and other potential environmental issues through the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations.

The current outline planning application and both the detailed remediation and the landfill containment applications require the submission of an environmental statement in terms of the above regulations as an essential part of the planning application submission. The environmental statements will provide comprehensive detail of investigations and site surveys, contamination identified, analysis of

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materials together with a remediation strategy and specific proposals for dealing with the materials on the site.

The information submitted relative to the contamination issue will be extensive and the Council will draw on expert advice from bodies such as the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and will appoint specialist consultants if necessary, in order that the information and proposals can be fully assessed and evaluated.

In relation to your specific questions, I can respond as follows:

- As explained above, an environmental audit will be submitted as part of the environmental statement submissions and this will provide a comprehensive baseline for assessment and treatment of contaminated material.
- The planning applications will cover the whole site and therefore the information on contamination will be assessed and a remediation strategy agreed prior to start of work on site.

In conclusion, I can give you an assurance that the planning system is well organised to appropriately deal with the contamination of the site and that in doing so the necessary expert advice will be applied. This will be done in accordance with all of the statutory provisions and current guidance. The proposed redevelopment scheme provides an opportunity to create a high quality development that will facilitate the effective remediation of this heavily contaminated site.

The Council has had direct contact with the local community through the preparation of the Structure Plan and Local Plan and more recently in the lead up to the submission of the planning applications. The Bishopton Liaison Group has been in operation for some time and this has been attended by local elected members and the Director of Planning and Transport. The feelings and concerns of the local community are therefore well known to us and we have provided substantial information and discussed many aspects of the proposed development, in particular the contamination issue. We can assure you that the Council will continue to work with the local community and with our advisers to ensure the effectiveness of the remediation works and the protection of the community and the environment. If you feel a meeting is necessary to discuss this issue I will be pleased to arrange this with Bob Darracott, Director of Planning and Transport and Shona MacDougall, Director of Environmental Services.

Yours sincerely



Tom Scholes  
Chief Executive

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