

CRAIGIEBUCKLER AND SEAFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Mr Matthew Easton,
Drive, Senior Planning Officer,
Planning and Sustainable Development,
Aberdeen City Council,
Hub 4,
College,
Street,
AB10 1AB.

10 Craigiebuckler
Aberdeen,
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Business
Marischal
Broad
Aberdeen,
27th May 2023

Dear Mr Easton,

Planning Application 211528/DPP - Site of Former Treetops Hotel 161 Springfield Road Aberdeen AB15 7SA. Residential development of 77 units (including 25% affordable) comprising 44 houses and 33 flats (6 storey block), and associated roads and parking, drainage infrastructure, open space and landscaping.

Due to the planners' oversight in informing us of a significant change to the plans in November 2022, we were only given 2 days to send in comments.

After raising concerns with members of the PDMC, we were given an additional 6 days enabling us to at least try and engage with our local community to ask for comments. We are emphatic that it is unfortunate we were not informed 6 months ago as we could have received more feedback from our local community.

We object to the above referenced planning application for the following reasons: -

This development proposal will result in the loss of public space to the West of the site because the blocks of flats have been removed from the plan in favour of a terrace of 13 townhouses, crammed into the space originally intended for apartment blocks.

The anticipated population increase attributable to the proposed development is expected to place additional pressure on other open spaces in the local area. A contribution should therefore be required towards the enhancement of existing open spaces in the vicinity of the development.

We note from the landscape strategy plan that the planning application calls for the felling of 48 trees and two tree groups, identified as incompatible with the site plan. We believe this to be detrimental to the area, having already lost trees when the site was cleared.

We also believe that the developers should plant more trees in the area to offset those being lost. The Community Council would be happy to provide suggestions on suitable areas near the site, e.g., Springfield Meadows and the area of land opposite Craigiebuckler Church where large Cypress Trees were removed last year.

The pond to the West of the site, known locally as 'Coupers Pond' was constructed by building a dam across a water course that flows from a westerly source. It is located on privately owned land and has an outflow to the East, towards the development site. Unfortunately - and we believe to the detriment of the proposed development - the pond's lining leaks to the extent that, according to our own estimate, it's level drops by about 6 inches per day after the height of its water surface has been increased by heavy rainfall. The Flood Risk Assessment, provided by Fairhurst for the Applicant, refers to "the high-level overflow pipes from Coupers Pond". It then reassures the Applicant that "In the event that flows from the pond enter the site, they will be conveyed via an existing spillway to the culvert located within the site".

However, we contend that the spillway is too close to the 6-storey block of flats planned for the northwest corner of the site. We see no mention of that in the Flood Risk Assessment.

This assessment, in our opinion, takes no account of the unmonitored leakage from the pond. During a consultation with the Developer's Representatives, we informed them that the pond had a considerable leakage, and we advised them to contact its landowner with a view to negotiating measures to lessen the flood risk from that body of water. Yet it seems that the Applicant has taken no account of the potential of this unseen leakage to flood the site.

Furthermore, we have been informed by the landowner of Coupers Pond that the Applicant has not approached them to discuss measures to decrease the risk of water from the pond entering the site of the proposed development.

We believe that, until this flow of water from the leaking lining of the pond is detected, it cannot be factored into flood or drainage risk assessments.

Immediately behind the West boundary of the site are the homes in Macaulay Gardens, Place, Walk and Park. There is an embankment between those Macaulay homes and the back of the site where 13 townhouses are planned to be located. A belt of veteran trees, which vary in height between 19m and 28m, sit on top of the embankment. The embankment is between 70m to 71.5m (Above Ordnance Datum), i.e., above sea level. Therefore, the height of the trees is around 93m and 94.5m above sea level.

Although the trees are significantly taller than the proposed townhouses, they are not close enough together to form a continuous screen. They are also deciduous. So, for much of the year, the proposed townhouses will be visible to the residents of the Macaulay houses whose back gardens will be overlooked.

The planned townhouses will also be overlooked by the proposed 6-storey block of flats in the northwest corner of the site, resulting in a loss of privacy by their occupants.

Existing houses behind the West boundary of the site will also be overlooked by the proposed 6-storey block of flats, resulting in a loss of privacy by their occupants.

Only nine houses in this development (11%) have southwest gardens, which will get the sun, all the rest will be in the shade. Studies have shown that green spaces lower levels of stress, reduce rates of depression, feelings of anxiety, and improve general well-being. There seems to be nothing in the plans and drawings associated with this development that suggests that the Applicant has taken these attributes into consideration.

In our opinion, the proposed development of 77 homes will have an impact on the roads' infrastructure, the schools, and the medical practice. We believe that the traffic movements generated by it will impact considerably on traffic congestion in and around the junction of Springfield Road and Countesswells Road. Not only does additional traffic bring an increased risk to child safety, but there is also the unhealthy effect of idling vehicles to be considered at a time when governments are attempting to take fossil fuel gasses out of the atmosphere.

Whilst we are aware that the council only consider individual planning applications in isolation, we are aware of other residential developments being proposed. Our concerns regarding the load on the existing

infrastructure will be further exacerbated if planning permission for these developments is granted in the future. We will submit separate representations when the planning applications are made but wanted to highlight our concerns at this time.

With pedestrian safety in mind, we contend that this development should not be permitted until accident prevention measures, such as pedestrian crossings and traffic calming structures, are installed at suitable locations on Springfield Road at the Applicant's cost.

Traffic and parking around Airyhall school is already a concern for parents, and this development will increase the traffic on Countesswells Road and Springfield Road. Better crossing facilities are already needed.

The Applicant is proposing a development which will take advantage of the proximity of a good primary school.

We are aware that the increase in pupils, attributed to major housing developments in the catchment area since Airyhall Primary School was built, has meant that any spare rooms and space in the school has already been converted to provide additional classrooms. This has reduced the space available for out of classroom learning (i.e., music, art, and one-to-one learning for pupils with specific learning and support needs). The additional number of children from the proposed development may represent a substantial increase to the school roll, which would significantly impact the ability of the school to deliver the same level of learning and pupil support that is currently experienced.

According to the Council's 2020 based School Roll Forecasts, Hazlehead Academy could be over capacity by 2025. This indicates that there is a lack of spare capacity at that educational establishment. Therefore, the increase in the number of secondary school students, inherent in the proposed development, may hasten the over capacity of Hazlehead Academy and result in students being placed on a waiting list.

We are of the opinion that the cost of mitigating the impacts of any increases to the school roles, attributed to the proposed development, should be the responsibility of the applicant.

The local medical practice, which serves 10,000 patients, is already struggling to accommodate the increased numbers of patients caused by the recent major housing developments in this area. Even before the advent of Covid, patients had to wait three weeks for non-urgent GP

appointments. This situation has worsened because the practice is short of doctors. Only one urgent medical appointment is released each day. Therefore, we consider that it is against the interests of primary health care provision in this area to accept the planning application for 77 dwellings on the site of the former Treetops Hotel, thus effectively causing another increase in patient numbers to impact on the GP medical practice.

Finally, another 77 households will increase the footfall on the already deteriorating footpath system - a popular amenity which came under heavy use during the pandemic. Consequently, it is hoped that a proportion of the "planning gain" associated with this proposed development will be allocated to the maintenance of the footpaths and an expansion of the footpath system.

Yours sincerely,
William Sell,
Chair.