

# Planning Development Management Committee

ZONE A (SITE BETWEEN), COUNTESSWELLS ROAD/HAZLEDENE ROAD, HAZLEDENE

ZONE A HAZLEDENE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 50 DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED ROADS AND LANDSCAPING ADDRESSING CONDITION 23 PA REFERENCE A8/0530 ACCESS/SITING/DESIGN AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING

For: Dandara Group ( Mr Darren Burns )

Application Type : Approval of Conditions for Planning Permission in Principle

Application Ref. : P130994

Application Date: 08/07/2013

Officer: Gavin Evans

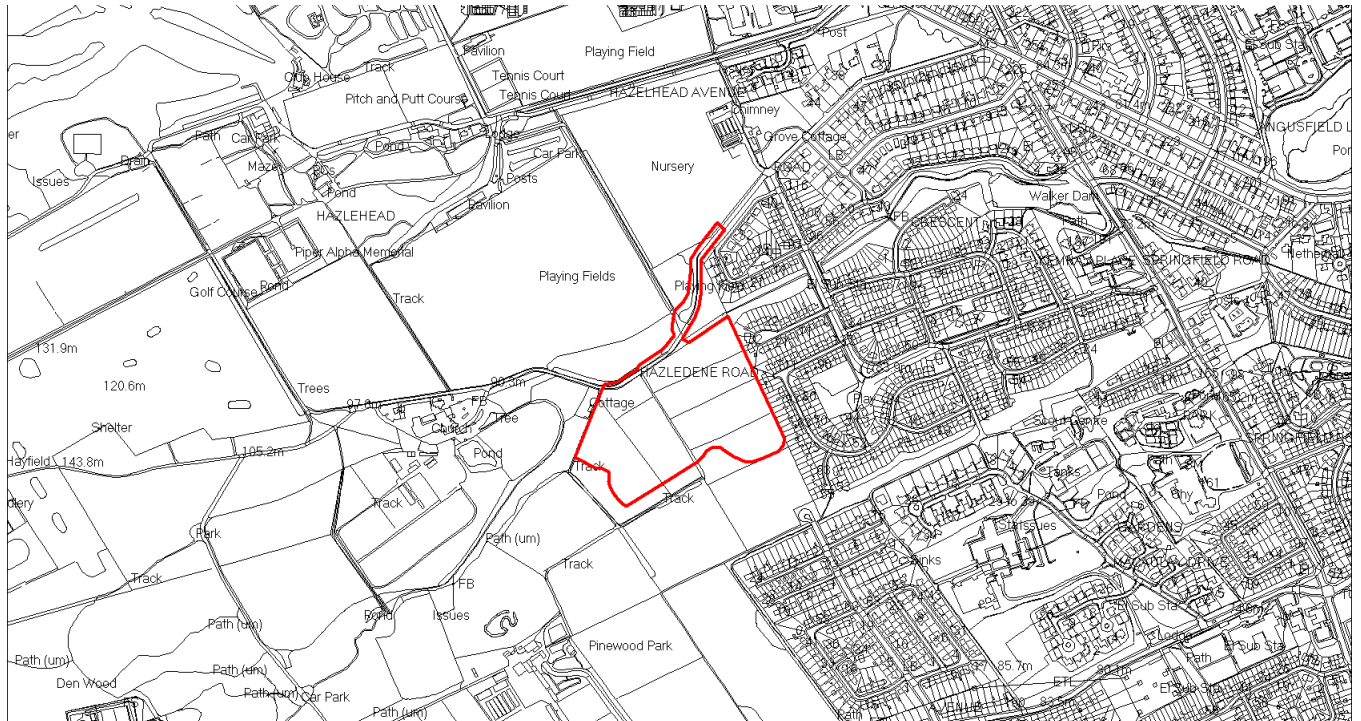
Ward : Hazlehead/Ashley/Queen's Cross(M Greig/J Stewart/R Thomson/J Corall)

Advert : Can't notify neighbour(s)

Advertised on: 31/07/2013

Committee Date: 28 November 2013

Community Council : Comments



## RECOMMENDATION:

**Approve subject to conditions**

The application site forms a component part of the Hazledene development site, which is itself located between Hazledene Road, to the north, and the adjacent Pinewood development site, to the south. The Pinewood site is bounded by Countesswells Road to the south. Those two sites combine to form a wider development area, L-shaped in plan view, which sits directly to the west of the established residential areas of Countesswells and Craigiebuckler. Their combined site area is some 27 hectares, of which roughly 10.5ha is contained within the Pinewood site and 16.5ha within Hazledene.

To the west of the Pinewood and Hazledene sites are the wooded grounds of Pinewood House and the Ben Reid Garden Centre. The land was, for the most part, last used for horticultural purposes, mainly the growing of trees and shrubs, and is currently under grass. The ground rises gently to a central area then slopes down to the north. The site is bounded by mature woodland on the east and west sides and is subdivided by hedges and dry stone dykes.

This application relates specifically to the north-eastern part of the Hazledene site, termed Zone A, which incorporates the site's Hazledene Road frontage. The character and condition of the road surface on Hazledene Road changes noticeably as it progresses westwards from Queens Road towards the application site, and it is not adopted by Aberdeen City Council west of its junction with Craigiebuckler Avenue, although understood to be in ACC ownership. Beyond that point, the road surface is of lesser quality and the road is enclosed on either side by drystone walls, with no segregated pedestrian footway. An existing unbound pedestrian footpath runs through trees on the northern side of Hazledene Road, discrete from the road itself, to the west of Woodburn Crescent. At present there is no pedestrian footway or equivalent pedestrian route on the southern side of Hazledene Road.

Core Path 65 (Hazlehead to River Dee) runs north-to-south down the eastern boundary of both Zone A, continuing the full length of the Hazledene site and ultimately providing a connection to Countesswells Road. Similarly, Core Path 61 (Hazlehead Road to Countesswells Road) runs along the north-western boundary of Zone A, ultimately serving to provide a pedestrian/recreational connection to a point further west on Countesswells Road.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) was granted for a development comprising *'Proposed residential development to accommodate circa 250 plots and 3No.neighbourhood shop units'* on the Hazledene site in August 2010, through approval of application A8/0530. A condition restricted that consent to development not exceeding 200 dwelling units and 3 local shop units.

A subsequent application in January of 2012 sought approval of the majority of the matters specified in conditions attached to that grant of PPiP. At the August 2012 meeting of the Development Management Sub-committee (as was), members expressed a willingness to approve that application subject to appropriate arrangements having been made for the payment of financial contributions in lieu of improvements to the local road network and subject to confirmation that payment had been made to Transport Scotland in lieu of works to the A90(T) trunk road.

A series of further applications have now been made in relation to matters specified in conditions attached to the grant of Planning Permission in Principle. Some of those applications relate to outstanding matters, while others seek approval of alternative proposals in relation to conditions previously the subject of MSC approval.

## **PROPOSAL**

This application seeks approval in relation to condition 23 of Planning Permission in Principle ref A8/0530, which stipulates that works may not commence until such time as further application has been made to the planning authority in relation to (i) means of access; (ii) siting; (iii) design and external appearance of the buildings; and (iv) the landscaping of the site, and that such applications have been granted approval by that authority. It is noted that submissions in relation to parts (i) means of access; and (iv) landscaping of condition 23 were previously approved by members at the committee meeting of August 2012.

This application seeks approval in relation to condition 23 for only part of the Hazledene site, Zone A, which lies at the north-eastern corner of the site, bounded by Hazledene Road to the north and adjoining the rear gardens of properties on Burnieboozle Crescent and Monnymusk Terrace to the east. The plans submitted demonstrate a phase of 50 detached dwellings, in three house styles, with vehicular access taken exclusively via Hazledene Road and an internal layout based upon a main avenue, off which branch more intimate shared surface 'Homezone' areas. No vehicular through route would be provided from Hazledene Road to Countesswells Road, other than a route restricted to use by emergency services vehicles. Rebuilt boundary walls feature within the proposal as enclosures to house plots, formed using downtakings from the existing field boundaries within the site. To the south of Zone A, outwith the current application site, a belt of landscaped open space would be provided, running from the south-east corner of the Hazledene site to connect with the wider green space beyond the north-western site boundary and serving as the central open space for the wider Pinewood and Hazledene development.

This application proposes that, in order to facilitate access to the site, the applicant will resurface Hazledene Road from its junction with Craigiebuckler Avenue to the western edge of the site frontage onto Hazledene Road. Any resurfacing works would be carried out to Aberdeen City Council's specifications, and to 'adoptable standard'. The existing unbound footpath running parallel to the western/northern side of Hazledene Road would be widened to 2m and surfaced to specification to be agreed with the Council's Roads officers. The resurfaced footpath would continue to the point where the application site directly abuts the roadway, at which point a new 2m wide footpath would continue along the southern side of Hazledene Road. That 2m wide pedestrian footway would continue along the length of the site frontage, providing a continuous pedestrian route which would connect with Core Path 61, which in turn runs down the north-western boundary and connects with Countesswells Road.

An extensive scheme of landscaping has been proposed, which incorporates a mix of retained trees and new planting.

## Supporting Documents

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this application can be viewed on the Council's website at - <http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?130994>

On accepting the disclaimer enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

## REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Sub-committee because the local Community Council have expressed objections to the proposal and there have been a total of 31 letters of objection received. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

## CONSULTATIONS

**Roads Project Team** – Following discussions with the applicant, additional information has been provided in relation to swept-path analysis, demonstrating that refuse vehicles can adequately access the site. A link between Zones A and H has been provided for emergency vehicle use in the event that the main access becomes inaccessible, the details of which stand to be determined through progression of the Roads Construction Consent process. Roads colleagues state no objection to the proposal.

**Environmental Health** – No response received

**Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure (Flooding)** - No objection to the proposal.

**Community Council** – Craigiebuckler and Seafield Community Council expresses its opposition to the construction of 50 dwellings on this site on the following grounds;

- Additional traffic generated by the proposed development would access Queens Road at its junction with Hazledene Road. Right turns onto Queens Road from Hazledene Road are currently prohibited, with the result that this new traffic would be required to turn left before doubling back at the roundabout junction at Hazledene Avenue. This is considered likely to add to the traffic congestion at that roundabout junction. It is further stated that the Queens Road/Springfield Road is already heavily congested at peak times.
- The construction works and construction traffic associated with this development would cause disturbance to the residents of existing properties on Hazledene Road.
- Contends that the access to the site off Hazledene Road will be too close to sharp bends in Hazledene Road, and would create a safety hazard for road users.
- Highlights the poor condition of the roads surface on Hazledene Road at present. Notes no reference to the developer contributing towards its improvement.
- The increase in vehicular traffic along Hazledene Road is also considered to be a risk to school children crossing on their way to Hazlehead Primary School and Hazlehead Academy.

- Queries the introduction of an access via Hazledene Road when this was not proposed before.
- The introduction of a vehicular access off Hazledene Road, with its associated road widening and the consequent loss of trees on the northern side of the road, would remove an existing barrier to noise arising from the nearby recycling centre.
- The removal of these trees would also serve to expose the new dwellings within the proposed development to this same noise arising from the recycling centre at Grove Nursery. Recommends that any decision to grant planning permission should require a report by SEPA to determine the increased noise impact from the recycling centre.
- These noise issues may encroach on the operational use of the recycling centre.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

31 letters of representation have been received. The objections raised relate to the following matters –

1. Access was not taken from Hazledene Road in original proposals.
2. Hazledene Road is not well maintained and is not suitable for the level of traffic to be generated by the development.
3. This development, in conjunction with the new Grove Nursery recycling facility, will contribute to traffic congestion in the area, particularly at the Queens Road/Hazlehead roundabout
4. Traffic noise arising from increased traffic on Hazledene Road will disturb both local residents and those enjoying the park
5. Road safety – increased traffic on Hazledene Road poses a risk to pedestrians using the existing crossing point at Craigiebuckler Avenue, particularly children travelling to the nearby primary and secondary schools.
6. The new street layout must be accessible to refuse vehicles
7. Queries whether road improvements would necessitate land held under common good fund being given to the developer for the purposes of carrying out those road improvements. If so, suggests that any such land would be akin to a ransom strip, and would attract a premium if to be sold.
8. Drystane dyke at Woodburn Crescent formed part of the old Burnieboozle estate and should be retained.
9. No consultation was undertaken on proposals for access via Hazledene Road.
10. The access arrangements would lead to rat-running through Woodburn Place/Woodburn Ave to obtain access to Queens Road.
11. The proposal is contrary to Council policies as it involves building on Green Belt land.
12. The proposed 2 storey houses are out of character with the area.
13. Concern over the limited time allowed for representations to be made.
14. Support is expressed for Hazledene Road access, on the basis that this route is not currently subject to heavy traffic, and would be capable of accommodating an increase in volumes.

15. Frequent flooding of this section of Hazledene Road renders it unsuitable for access to the new development.
16. Concern is expressed over the presence of a pedestrian link to the rear of Monnymusk Terrace/Burnieboozle Crescent. It is envisaged that this will provide scope for anti-social behaviour. Will landscaping within the new development be adequately be managed.
17. Concern is raised over potential tree loss as a result of works to Hazledene Road, including trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the road verge at Woodburn Crescent.
18. It is stated that drystone dykes should be reconstructed using traditional means, not modern methods utilising cement.
19. Historical drainage problems can only be worsened by the proposal.
20. The proposal would compromise the recreational value of the Pinewood and Hazledene sites, which represent green spaces currently enjoyed by local residents.
21. It is suggested that building on this site may act as a precedent for building on other green spaces at the edge of communities
22. Insufficient detail relating to the road widening works and impact arising from same.
23. Concern that any prospective linkage through to Zone H would create a new rat-run allowing for even greater traffic flow onto Hazledene Road, further exacerbating pedestrian safety issues.
24. Impact of development on schools and transport infrastructure has not been assessed.
25. No additional public transport provision is to be made.
26. Concern that removal of trees along site boundaries will leave an otherwise unfamiliar open aspect, with resultant loss of privacy. Queries legitimacy of arboricultural assessment, suggesting that trees have been classified as being in 'poor' condition to suit the aims of the developer.
27. Will road widening be required on Countesswells Road and, if so, will compulsory purchase of garden to the front of properties be necessary?

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### **National Policy and Guidance**

#### Designing Places

Designing Places identifies that the most successful places tend to have certain qualities in common. These include a distinct identity, safe and pleasant spaces, and an arrangement of space which is easy to move around, particularly on foot. Visitors feel a sense of welcome. These qualities are seen as being at the heart of good design, alongside adaptability and a good use of resources. Designing Places sets out the value of good design and the price of poor design.

#### Designing Streets

Designing Streets is Scotland's policy statement for street design, marking a change in emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. It sits alongside Designing Places in setting out the Scottish Government's place-making agenda.

### Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

As regards the location and design of new development, SPP states that new housing should take account of its setting, the surrounding landscape, topography, character, appearance, ecologies and the scope for using local materials, with the aim of creating spaces with a distinct character and identity.

## **Aberdeen Local Development Plan**

### I1: Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions

Sets out that development shall be accompanied by infrastructure, services and facilities required to support new or expanded communities. Where development would place additional demands on community facilities or infrastructure that would necessitate new facilities or exacerbate deficiencies in existing provision, the Council will require the developer to meet or contribute to the cost of providing or improving such facilities or facilities as necessary.

### T2: Managing the Transport Impact of Development

New development will need to demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise traffic generated. Maximum car parking standards are set out in the relevant Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility.

### D1: Architecture and Placemaking

This policy requires that all new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting.

### D2: Design & Amenity

In order to ensure that development provides appropriate levels of amenity for residents, development should be designed with regard to a stated set of principles, relating to matters such as privacy, provision of a public face to the street, access to sitting out areas, and 'designing out' crime.

### D3: Sustainable and Active Travel

New development will be designed in order to minimise travel by private car, improve access to services and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging active travel.

### H1: Residential Areas

The site lies within a designated Residential Area (H1), as defined in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Within such areas Policy H1 of the ALDP will apply, requiring that residential development will be acceptable in principle provided it satisfies certain specified criteria. It is further stated that non-residential uses will be refused unless (a) they are considered complementary to residential use; or (b) it can be demonstrated that the use would cause no conflict with, or any nuisance to, the enjoyment of existing residential amenity.

### NE1: Green Space Network

Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted.

### NE5: Trees and Woodlands

There is a presumption against all activities and development that would result in the loss of or damage to established trees and woodlands that contribute significantly to nature conservation, landscape character or local amenity.

### NE9: Access and Informal Recreation

New development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreational opportunities including access rights, core paths, other paths and rights of way. Core Paths are shown on the Proposals Map. Wherever appropriate, developments should include new or improved provision for public access, permeability and/or links to green space for recreation and active travel.

### **Supplementary Guidance**

The Council's published supplementary planning guidance on 'Transport & Accessibility' is of relevance, as is the guidance contained within the Pinewood and Hazledene development brief.

### **Other Relevant Material Considerations**

The allocation of the Pinewood and Hazledene sites in the ALDP, the previous grant of Planning Permission in Principle on both of those sites, and the previous approval granted in respect of the majority of Matters Specified in Conditions to those grants of PPIp carry significant weight in the determination of the current application, establishing these sites as locations for new residential development. The principle of housing on this site may not legitimately be revisited through assessment of this proposal.

### **EVALUATION**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) require that, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Principle of Development**

The principle of residential development on the Hazledene site has been established through the granting of Planning Permission in Principle, its identification as an opportunity site with residential zoning in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, and the subsequent approval of matters specified in the majority of those conditions attached to the initial grant of Planning Permission in Principle. This assessment will focus on the specific requirements of condition 23, the provisions of the development plan as it relates to the matters those conditions specify, and any other material planning considerations identified.

Matters relating to developer contributions and affordable housing have been considered at the PPIp stage, and have since been addressed via necessary legal agreements, now been successfully concluded.

### **Zoning**

The Hazledene site is zoned for residential purposes, with policy H1 of the LDP applicable, and is also identified as an 'opportunity site' for residential



development. This zoning, along with the permission previously granted for Planning Permission in Principle, sets the context for consideration of the current proposal. The principle of development will not be revisited in this assessment, which will focus on the manner in which the current proposal addresses the matters specified in condition 23 of the Planning Permission in Principle.

### **Means of access and roads issues**

This proposal involves vehicular access being taken from Hazledene Road for 50 homes. The new access would be formed approximately 170m from the north-eastern corner of the site, and would represent a single point of access for these 50 homes, with no through route provided southwards, other than for emergency vehicle use. Colleagues in the Roads Projects team advise that there are a range of measures available to restrict/discourage access via such routes, and the final arrangement will be borne out through the Roads Construction Consent process. Whilst permeable street layouts are encouraged by Designing Streets, Hazledene Road would not be the preferred route to serve the entire Pinewood and Hazledene development, with Countesswells Road benefitting from greater capacity and being better suited to handle the level of traffic generated by the development, subject to the road improvements identified through the grant of PPIP. It is therefore acknowledged that vehicular through access is likely to be inappropriate on this site, however the proposed upgrading of Hazledene Road can ensure it is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the 50 homes within Zone A. It is not known what impact the formation of a north-south route through the development would have on the character of Hazledene Road, which currently has a more rural character and limited traffic flow, and its junction with Queens Road. On that basis, it has been accepted that a limited phase of development off Hazledene Road would be acceptable, subject to being otherwise accessible, with the remainder of the wider development being more readily integrated with surrounding roads layouts and principally accessed via Countesswells Road.

### **Improvements to Hazledene Road**

In order to make Hazledene Road acceptable as the principal means of access to Zone A, it would be resurfaced from its junction with Craigiebuckler Avenue and the western edge of the site frontage on Hazledene Road and appropriate provision must be made to ensure pedestrian accessibility. These works would be carried out by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority, for which Policy I1 makes provision as a means of mitigating impact arising from a development. At present, an area of ground to the south-east of Hazledene Road, lying outwith the application site itself and to the north of the SUDS basin in Zone A, sits below the level of the existing road. It is understood that the roads improvements necessary to bring Hazledene Road to adoptable standard will necessitate this ground being infilled to the level of the road, with a resultant impact on existing trees within that area. It is also understood that sections of drystone wall along this section of Hazledene Road may be affected by the works to the road, however the extent of any reinforcement works will be determined through the progression of detailed designs for bringing the road up to adoptable standard. The use of an appropriately worded condition will require the applicant to provide final, fully detailed designs of the works to bring the road to adoptable standard, with no works undertaken within Zone A until such scheme has been

submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority. This is necessary to ensure that the exact details of any impact arising from those works can be fully considered. On this basis, it is concluded that, subject to the appropriate improvement works being carried out to bring Hazledene Road up to a suitable standard to serve the development within Zone A, the proposal is consistent with the aims of Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development) of the ALDP.

### **General arrangement and pedestrian accessibility**

Provision is made for pedestrian accessibility to and from the site. Whilst there is no vehicular through route from north to south, the treatment of internal streets is otherwise based around 'designing streets' principles, with a series of discrete home zones within Zone A. The primary access route off Hazledene Road runs up to a shared surface area, which branches off to a home zone area on either side. The north-eastern home zone features two footpaths connecting to the northern SUDS area, the adjacent core path, and Hazledene Road. The north-western home zone also includes a footpath linking with Hazledene Road. The main access route into the site continues on beyond this shared surface area before branching off towards two further home zones to the east, and one to the west. Each of these home zones is arranged around a central landscaped point, with an area of shared surfacing defined at its edges by buildings.

### **Core Path route**

A designated Core Path (65) exists within the site, running along the eastern boundary of the Hazledene site before cutting in and running down the eastern edge of the Pinewood site, to connect with Countesswells Road. Core Path number 65 is the Hazlehead and River Dee Path. Access would be maintained along this route, with the new internal footpath network connecting in to the retained Core Path route. The resurfaced Core Path route would connect to new footpaths around the northern and southern drainage detention ponds, and would ultimately be connected to the footway adjacent to the main loop road around the remainder of the Pinewood and Hazledene development. The submitted landscaping proposal indicates that native shelterbelt planting is proposed along the eastern edge of the Core Path route as a means of deterring access into private gardens, creating a buffer zone between private and public spaces. The retention and enhancement of the existing Core Path route is consistent with the aims of policy policy NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation), and the network of path connections throughout the development encourages sustainable travel, in accordance with policy D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel) of the ALDP.

### **Design, layout and arrangement of space**

A sense of arrival would be created at the site access through the use of landscaping and drystone walling, along with tree planting along the 'main avenue' from which each of the home zones are reached. A pedestrian footway would be provided along the Hazledene Road site frontage, providing for connection to the existing paths and Core Paths in the surrounding area and within the development site itself.

All properties within Zone A are detached houses, set within varying but nevertheless generous plots. Each is oriented to have a direct street frontage

onto one of the five distinct home zones, with a private face onto enclosed rear gardens. There are three distinct house types shown on the submitted drawings ('Spruce', 'Cedar' and 'Devonshire'), with further variations in the size and arrangement of garages across the site. No dwellings would have a direct frontage onto Hazledene Road, with frontage oriented towards the more intimate Homezone spaces on the interior of the site. The design and materials used in the construction and finishing of the new housing is intended to draw on those of housing in the surrounding area in order to create a sense of place. The dwellings are generally built across two storeys, with pitched, and in some cases hipped, roofs formed in a dark grey tile to give an appearance similar to that of natural slate. Walls would be finished in a combination of white render and stone cladding, with some properties featuring cast stone porches/porticos. Doors of houses and garages are shown in a timber finish. The use of a consistent palette of materials across the Pinewood and Hazledene sites contributes towards the creation of a distinct identity for the site and a sense of place, whilst the orientation and style of roofs and incorporation of stone facing and dormer windows demonstrates regard for their context of the site and the character of buildings in the surrounding areas without slavishly reproducing 1 ½ storey houses of identical design. The approach to Zone A would be defined by the primary street, which is lined with reconstructed dry stone walling and tree planting. That re-sited drystone walling is present at the entrance to the site and extensively in the enclosure of plot boundaries, highlighting the relationship between the new development and the existing character of the site. In considering these matters, it is concluded that the proposal demonstrates due regard for its context and would make a positive contribution to its setting, in accordance with Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking) of the ALDP.

### **Environment created for new residents**

The proposed development demonstrates a desire to create a sense of place, with extensive open space and woodland provided through the central 'wetland park area' and the orientation of home zone areas around central landscaped spaces, enabling many dwellings to benefit from views and vistas towards areas of landscaped open space and trees. A good pedestrian environment is proposed, with appropriate surfacing used to indicate home zone areas and underline pedestrian priority. Links are provided to a wider network of paths within the site and beyond. The individual homes vary in size and style, but each presents a public frontage to a street and a private frontage to an enclosed area of private garden. Distances between dwellings are appropriate for a suburban context and can ensure appropriate privacy for residents. An appropriate density of development is achieved, which is comparable to and consistent with that seen in the surrounding area. It is concluded that the proposal demonstrates due regard for policy D2 (Design and Amenity) of the ALDP.

### **Trees & Landscaping**

The submitted tree survey highlights that the trees within the wider site are relatively few, and are confined to narrow belts and strips along field boundaries. The trees present on site are generally arranged along internal field boundaries, and are understood to be predominantly of planted origin, intended to provide shelter for the former nursery business. Generally those trees present are relatively young, and as such are of relatively small size and stature. The survey

conducted demonstrates that the overall condition of the trees across the Hazledene site is noticeably poor. The tree cover around the site is generally poor and scrappy, with little long term potential. Many trees appear to be in decline and dying, and consequently the tree and hedge cover within the Hazledene site is assessed as being of low retention value. There are two distinct bands of trees currently present within Zone A, both aligned on north-south axes and reflecting former field boundaries. One of these is on the western boundary, to the rear of homes on Burnieboozle Crescent and Monymusk Terrace, and the other is on the interior of the site, to its western side and running almost continuously from the north-western boundary to the southern boundary of Zone A.

In the first of the areas noted above, 7 trees are identified for removal based on their current condition. In the western tree belt, a total of 25 trees are identified for removal. 19 trees within the western belt are classified as being 'category U', meaning they are unsuitable for long-term retention based on their current condition. The remainder of the tree removal is directly attributable to the layout of the new development, specifically at two points where the new road surface would cross the existing tree belt. These trees are within categories B and C, and therefore are of poor-to-moderate quality or value. All other trees within Zone A would be retained and protected by appropriate means during construction, in accordance with a scheme of tree protection submitted in support of this application. An extensive scheme of new landscaping is proposed, which includes provision for planting along the eastern boundary, to replace those trees removed, and for extensive areas of planting, both around new and existing pedestrian routes and along the main access into the site. New tree specimens would generally be planted at a minimum height of 3.5m to ensure, insofar as possible, a degree of maturity in the landscape character of the site from the outset.

Since initial submission, the application has been supplemented by additional information relating to the impact of the resurfacing and improvement works and provision for pedestrian access along Hazledene Road. Arboricultural assessment resulted in 51 trees being surveyed in the area likely to be affected by works relating to road improvement and resurfacing, incorporating young hollies, early mature beech, semi-mature alder and willow. Of those 51 trees, 13 would be removed. 2 of those would be removed due to severe decay and limited life expectancy. The remaining 11 would be removed to accommodate surface infilling, necessary in order to facilitate Hazledene Road being brought up to adoptable standard. The removal of these trees, taking account of their classification (7 category-C, 4 category-B) and low-to-moderate quality and value, the degree of surrounding woodland unaffected by the works, the landscaping proposed adjacent to the site boundary and the benefit secured in enhancement of Hazledene Road, is considered to be acceptable. Appropriate tree protection measures have been proposed, and the implementation of those measures recommended by ACC's Arboricultural Planner can be secured through an appropriately worded condition being attached to any approval granted.

The widening and resurfacing works relating to the existing path on the northern side of Hazledene Road are to be undertaken using a 'no-dig' construction method, in order to minimise the risk of any impact on nearby tree root systems. This is supported as an appropriate means of carrying out such works, and is endorsed by the Council's Arboricultural Planner. Taking account of these matters, it is concluded that tree loss within the site is generally limited to those being removed on grounds of their current condition and those few specimens that require removal to allow the roads layout to be implemented. On this basis, and having had regard for the condition and quality of those trees to be removed, it is concluded that there would be no loss of or damage to established trees and woodlands that contribute significantly to nature conservation, landscape character or local amenity, and therefore there would be no conflict with policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) of the ALDP.

### **Green Space Network**

A section of the Hazledene site, running from east to west along its northern boundary, is designated as a part of the Green Space Network. The Green Space Network is a strategic network of woodland and other habitats, active travel and recreation routes, greenspace links, watercourses and waterways. This encourages connectivity between habitats, improving the viability of species and the health of previously isolated habitats and ecosystems. Given the previous cultivation of this land in connection with its former use, its habitat value is likely to be limited. It is noted also that the designation lies on the periphery of the substantive green space network designation covering Hazlehead Park and its surrounds. The proposed development encroaches upon the existing connection, however the frontage of the Hazledene site would retain its current woodland character, with extensive planting around the 'wetland park' area surrounding the SUDS basin at the north-east of the site, further planting to the north-western corner and tree planting around the access point and along its main avenue. Taking these matters into account, it is concluded that the neither the character or function of the Green Space Network would be adversely affected by the proposal, and that it therefore demonstrates accordance with policy NE1 (Green Space Network) of the ALDP.

### **Open space.**

A central area of open space, though outwith Zone A itself, would be provided through the heart of the Hazledene development, running from south-east to north-west and incorporating extensive landscaping, pedestrian linkages and provision for a childrens' play area comprising a minimum of 5 items of play equipment, as stipulated in the original grant of planning permission in principle (PPiP). Zone A is connected to that central open space via two pedestrian/cycle routes and also via the existing Core Path 65 route, which runs down the eastern boundary. It is noted that the open space provided within the central 'wetland park' lies outwith the current application site, but would serve the wider development rather than any individual zone specifically.

### **Relationship with approved Development Brief**

The development brief for the Pinewood and Hazledene sites, first subject to consultation in 2003, was prepared against a substantially different policy context, however many of its design aspirations remain relevant. It is noted that

the brief envisaged the Pinewood site being developed first, however the applicant is free to proceed as they see fit, with no obligation to this effect incorporated into the grants of Planning Permission in Principle for the respective sites. The development brief places considerable importance on the incorporation of significant areas of open space, structure planting and a footpath network. It is further stated that, in order to ensure the most efficient use of land, slightly higher density than that seen in the surrounding area may be appropriate within some parts of the development. It is further stated that designs must ensure that they fit into the landscape. Developers are encouraged to examine opportunities for creating a sense of place with interest and character through imaginative use of: open space and landscaping; colour and texture of building materials; range of house types and storey height; the provision of distinctive features and landmarks at key viewpoints. It is noted that the design demonstrates significant open space across the site in a meaningful and useable form. 'Home Zone' areas are focused around intimate green spaces, with properties commonly oriented to benefit from views towards open space and tree planting. A clear network of footpath links is provided through the wider site, with Core Path routes maintained. Taking these matters into account, it is evident that the proposals demonstrate due regard for the design aspirations expressed in the Pinewood and Hazledene Development Brief.

### **Matters raised by Community Council**

It is acknowledged that the development of Zone A, with access taken via Hazledene Road, would generate additional traffic. Nevertheless, it is understood that the impact of those 50 houses would not be significant in the context of the wider road network. No concerns have been raised by the Council's Roads Projects Team in relation to the impact of that traffic on the existing road network, including access onto Queens Road.

It is acknowledged that construction works may result in some disturbance to nearby residents, however this is to some extent unavoidable where a significant site is released for development. The applicants have intimated that their intention is to construct the new loop road at the same time as the first phase of housing within Zone H, in order that construction access may be taken from Countesswells Road. The proposed site access arrangements have not been the subject of any objection from the Council's Roads Projects team on road safety grounds.

The poor condition of the road surface on Hazledene Road at present is acknowledged. In order to implement this consent, the applicants would be required to implement improvement works to Hazledene Road, between its junction with Craigiebuckler Avenue and the western end of the site's road frontage, in order to bring it up to adoptable standard. These works would be carried out by the developer, or persons appointed by the developer, to ACC roads specifications.

Whilst there would be an increase in the number of premises using Hazledene Road for access, it would not in relative terms become a busy road due to traffic generated by the development proposed. The level of traffic generated and the character of Hazledene Road are such that there would not be a significant

change in the character of the road, sufficient to warrant dedicated crossing provision. The likely trip rates arising from a development of this scale are not sufficient to warrant provision of dedicated crossing facilities on Hazledene Road.

The original grant of Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) showed an indicative scheme, intended to demonstrate how, in principle, a development of that scale could be accommodated on that site. The conditions attached to that grant of PPiP, requiring further submissions relating to the detail of a scheme, allow for details of access arrangements to be agreed. This allows the applicant to put forward alternative means of access than those shown in the earlier, indicative proposals.

No concerns have been raised by the Council's Environmental Health officers in relation to noise levels arising from the recycling centre at Grove Nursery. The site is approximately 300m from the closest part of the Grove Nursery recycling centre, with tree cover present in the intervening land. The approved recycling centre, which was subject to noise assessment, is significantly closer to existing residential properties at Queen's Grove. The degree of tree loss to facilitate road improvements on Hazledene Road is relatively low, and would be mitigated to some extent by new planting within the development site itself. Taking these matters into account, there appears to be no material risk of noise disturbance to homes within the development arising from the recycling centre, nor any impact on the operational use of that recycling facility.

### **Matters raised in representations**

It has been noted earlier in this report, in responding to issues raised by the Community Council, that the development layout approved previously was indicative and for the purposes of establishing the principle of development. The conditions attached to that grant of PPiP allow scope for details of alternative means of access to be considered. As regards public consultation, the original application was made in outline, predating the implementation of requirements for statutory pre-application consultation. As such, there has been no requirement for pre-application consultation to be undertaken on the subsequent applications relating to the various matters specified in conditions attached to that grant of PPiP. The time permitted for representations to be made is set by nationwide regulations, and was extended by the requirement to advertise the application. Normal processes have been followed in this regard.

The existing condition of Hazledene Road is noted, and it is acknowledged that access to the site via this route in its existing state would not be appropriate. As detailed earlier in this report, it is necessary for Hazledene Road to be brought up to adoptable standard if it is to serve the development proposed. Once adopted, Aberdeen City Council would as Roads Authority be responsible for its ongoing maintenance. The Council's Roads Projects Team raise no concerns over the ability of the network to cope with the additional traffic generated by the proposed development. It is noted that the new Grove Nursery recycling facility would be accessed via Hazlehead Avenue, rather than Hazledene Road. Traffic from these two developments would utilise the roundabout junction at Queens Road/Hazlehead Avenue, however no concern has been raised over this increased usage by the Roads Projects Team. Similarly, no concerns have been

raised over the potential for rat-running in streets giving access from Hazledene Road to Queens Road/Springfield Road/Countesswells Road. The support stated for the use of Hazledene Road is noted.

Trip generation arising from the proposed development is not understood to be of a level likely to give rise to noise disturbance, nor to fundamentally alter the character of the road. It is noted that pedestrians, including children travelling to the nearby schools, commonly use the crossing point at Craigiebuckler Avenue, however the level of traffic generated by the Zone A development is not understood to warrant any requirement for new crossing facilities at that point.

Following discussions with the Roads Projects Team, the applicants have provided additional information to demonstrate that the site can be adequately accessed by refuse vehicles. This has been assessed and accepted by the Roads Projects team.

The roads improvements proposed to Hazlehead Road would be carried out by the applicant, to an 'adoptable standard', and would be regulated by Aberdeen City Council's roads officers. The ownership of the road and adjacent land affected by the improvement works would not change, and no ransom strip would be created.

It is understood that discussions relating to the works necessary to bring Hazledene Road up to adoptable standard have taken place between the applicants and the Council's Roads Projects team. These have taken place on the basis that existing boundary walls will be retained. A degree of strengthening and upgrading is understood to be necessary in certain sections, due to works to level ground beyond those walls, but adapted walls will remain in present in order to maintain the character of the area. Full details of the road improvement works will be progressed with the Roads Projects team, with submission of final details to be required via condition. General principles have been established, and it is understood that the impact arising from those works will extend principally to that required to level land beyond a section of wall, as detailed in the tree impact section of this report.

The application site is allocated in the Aberdeen LDP as a site for residential development. Any green belt designation conferred by previous local plans has since been superseded, and is no longer relevant to assessment of development proposals. As consideration of such proposals is fundamentally based on their zoning in the Development Plan, the approval of residential development on this site would not serve to set any precedent for the development of sites not otherwise zoned for residential development in the Development Plan.

It is noted that properties to the east of the application site are predominantly 1-1½ storeys, however it is not a requirement that development should match in detail the style and proportions of housing in the surrounding area. The design section of this report considers in more detail the design merits of the proposal.

No concerns have been raised over the flooding of Hazledene Road by either the Roads Projects team or the Council's Flood Prevention Team, and it is



anticipated that improvement works and adoption by Aberdeen City Council would likely lead to an improvement in the management of surface water on Hazledene Road. Drainage of the site itself has previously been addressed through the progression of a scheme of Sustainable Urban Drainage, submitted as part of a previous approval of matters specified in conditions. Minor changes to that scheme, necessary to reflect the revised development, do not warrant consideration of a further application.

The retention of Core Path routes is supported by Policy NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation) of the ALDP. It is acknowledged that this existing route runs to the rear of housing, and will be to some extent enclosed by housing within the new development. The Core Path route would be resurfaced and landscaped, but would remain unlit. The woodland character of the route would be maintained, and whilst there is a degree of enclosure, it is not entirely reasonable to apply the same standards to core paths in a woodland setting as one might to newly formed pedestrian routes within residential developments.

Initial discussions with the applicant and the Council's Roads Engineers indicate that no road improvement works would affect the protected trees adjacent to Woodburn Crescent.

The recreational value of the site at present is noted, however this site is identified for residential development in the Local Development Plan, and does not form part of Hazlehead Park itself, which is an immediately available recreational green space. The proposed development would maintain and enhance links with Hazlehead Park, both from the new development and from the communities beyond, which rely upon appropriate pedestrian routes to the park.

Developer contributions were assessed as part of the assessment of the initial application for Planning Permission in Principle, and it is not legitimate for these to be revisited in the assessment of this proposal, which extends only so far as the terms of condition 23.

As above, public transport provision was addressed at the PPiP stage, and it is understood that existing bus routes will be extended from Countesswells Avenue to serve the new development, looping around the main distributor road (to the south of Zone A and outwith the application site) before connecting with Countesswells Road.

The Arboricultural assessment was undertaken by a qualified independent professional, and has been scrutinised by planning authority's own arboriculturalist. There is no reason to doubt the credibility of its findings. The removal of trees within the application site, adjacent to its boundaries, is in many cases related to the existing health of the trees and their proximity to one another curtailing growth and compromising lifespan. Such removals are mitigated through new landscaping, which incorporates trees of sufficient maturity to offer a degree of screening, at approximately 4m in height at time of planting.

No road widening works on Countesswells Road are proposed as part of this application, however it is understood that widening works were identified as part

of the initial grant of planning permission and the necessary roads infrastructure improvements. Those works are not relevant to the assessment of this proposal.

### **Summary**

This proposal demonstrates an appropriate residential layout which, incorporates elements of the 'Designing Streets' methodology, wherein pedestrian access is given priority over vehicular access. Shared surface Homezone areas centred around landscaped spaces create a series of intimate spaces, while the retention and re-use of existing dry-stone walling and extensive wooded open space provision contributes to a sense of place. The development incorporates a mix of house types, which utilise a consistent palette of materials. Provision is made for a network of pedestrian routes, which connect with landscaped open space, adjacent Core Path routes, and other pedestrian linkages across the wider development. An existing Green Space Network designation is encroached upon, however alternative provision is made in a manner which enhances its connection to existing recreational routes and its recreational value as usable open space central to the new residential development. The new wetland park open space provides a central focal point for the development and a meaningful recreational asset, whilst also making a significant contribution to the landscape character of the site and the sense of place created within the new development. The siting of new buildings maintains privacy for neighbouring and ensures appropriate privacy for new residents. New homes would incorporate street frontages and enclosed private gardens, whilst benefiting from the woodland character of the site and its surroundings. Appropriate measures are proposed for the protection of existing trees, whilst new tree planting will contribute to the woodland character of the development. Access improvements along Hazledene Road will ensure that the development is accessible by cars, cycles and pedestrians. The removal of 11 existing trees to facilitate the necessary access improvements is considered to be acceptable, when considered in context to the extensive tree cover in the surrounding area, and it is concluded that the woodland setting of the site and its environs would not be significantly harmed through those tree works. The proposal demonstrates compliance with the aims of the relevant Pinewood and Hazledene Planning Brief, adopted as supplementary guidance, in respect of its aims for a development which retains a semi-woodland character and retains important characteristics of the site. With extensive retention of trees and drystone wall enclosures, generous provision of useable open space which, though not provided in the envisaged buffers around the site boundaries, is at the heart of the development and arguably better able to serve all parts of the new development with a useable open space which contributes to creating a sense of place.

Taking these matters into account, it is concluded that the proposal demonstrates appropriate details in relation to the means of access, design and external appearance of buildings, and landscaping of the site. The proposal accords with policies D1 (Architecture and Placemaking), D2 (Design & Amenity), D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel), H1 (Residential Areas), NE1 (Green Space Network) and NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Approve subject to conditions**

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The proposal submitted demonstrates an appropriate form of residential development on a site allocated for residential purposes, incorporating a variety of house types, utilising a consistent range of materials and appropriate use of boundary treatments in order to create a sense of character and place. Street layouts are arranged around intimate 'Homezone' spaces, incorporating shared surfaces to promote pedestrian priority within secondary streets. Appropriate pedestrian linkages are provided across the site, linking into the wider development and the surrounding Core Paths network. North-south pedestrian access is maintained, with direct routes provided through the development to ensure good access to Hazlehead Park and the surrounding green spaces. Ample provision is made for the landscaping of the site, both through the provision of a central new open space, to the south of Zone A, and in the management and enhancement/replacement where necessary around site boundaries. Tree removal within the site is minimal, and is generally limited to those in poor condition and a small number necessary to form internal roads layouts, and the existing Green Space Network will not be fundamentally compromised. Outwith the residential development itself, road improvement works and path enhancements along Hazledene Road can ensure an appropriate form of access to the development site, with no significant adverse impact on the existing road network. The level of arboricultural impact arising from those works appears to be tolerable in this context, based on the indicative drawings provided, however final detailed designs of those improvement works are necessary to definitively quantify that impact. Taking these matters into account, it is concluded that the proposal demonstrates appropriate details in relation to the means of access, design and external appearance of buildings, and landscaping of the site. The proposal demonstrates due accordance with policies I1 (Infrastructure and Developer Contributions), T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development), D1 (Architecture and Placemaking), D2 (Design & Amenity), D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel), H1 (Residential Areas), NE1 (Green Space Network), NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) and NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP), alongside the relevant content of the 'Transport and Accessibility' and 'Pinewood and Hazledene Development Brief' supplementary guidance documents. Whilst vehicular through access is not provided for, it is considered that specifics of the site may render such access inappropriate. In other respects, the residential environment created is considered to accord with the aims of 'Designing Streets', particularly with regard to shared surfaces and pedestrian priority. The distinct identity created in the new development and the provision for pedestrian linkages is consistent with the aims of 'Designing Places'. The proposal contributes towards achieving the housing targets set in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP), and is consistent with the designation of the site in the ALDP for residential development.

## **CONDITIONS**

**it is recommended that approval is granted subject to the following conditions:-**

(1) No development within Zone A shall take place unless there has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority a scheme for the supervision of the arboricultural protection measures and works to include the time and method of site supervision, record keeping including updates and that this supervision is administered by a qualified arboriculturalist approved by the planning authority but instructed by the applicant.

The proposals and scheme of supervision shall subsequently be carried out in complete accordance any information thereby approved in writing by the planning authority - in order to ensure adequate protection for the trees on site during the construction of the development and in order to preserve the character and visual amenity of the area.

(2) that no development shall be undertaken within Zone A until a finalised scheme of works necessary to bring Hazledene Road up to adoptable standard has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority. Any such scheme shall include such revised arboricultural assessment as the planning authority may deem necessary based on the degree of change from the indicative plans provided in support of this application - in order that any changes made to the proposed improvement works through discussion with the Roads authority are reflected in the planning authority's assessment of arboricultural impact.

(3) that no building within Zone A shall be occupied until works for the upgrading of Hazledene Road have been implemented in full, in accordance with a scheme approved in connection with condition (2), above - in order that the road improvement works necessary to provide appropriate access to the site have been carried out in advance of occupation.

**Dr Margaret Bochel**

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.