

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Planning Committee: 3 April 2013

DC13/036: Change of use of land to form play area (relocation of existing play area) at Whiteford Crescent, Dumbarton by West Dunbartonshire Council.

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1** This application has been submitted by the Council and relates to land which is owned by the Council. Under the terms of the approved Scheme of Delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1** **Grant** full planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Section 9.

3. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

- 3.1** The application relates to an area of public open space located on the eastern side of Whiteford Crescent in Bellsmyre. The site is a triangular area of grass approximately 0.09 hectares in area, which forms part of a much larger area of open space extending to the south and east. To the north of the site is a path leading into the open space behind, and a bungalow, while on the opposite (west) side of the street is a vacant area once used for lock up garages, with a children's play area beyond. The surrounding area is residential, mainly comprising two storey houses.
- 3.2** Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of an area of open space to form a play area. No details of how the play area will be enclosed or the equipment that is to be provided have been submitted at this stage. The purpose of the new play area would be to serve as a replacement for the existing play area on the opposite side of the road, which is to be removed so that part of its site can be included within a new housing development on the site of the garages. The remainder of the area will be used as an extension to the adjacent allotments. An application for 5 houses (DC12/035) on the site of the garages has been submitted for consideration and will be reported to a future Planning Committee meeting for determination. It is understood that the new play area will be completed and made available for use prior to the existing play area being removed.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1** West Dunbartonshire Council Estates Service, Greenspace and Access Officer have no objection to the proposal.

- 4.2 West Dunbartonshire Council Roads Service have no objection to the proposal, although they have recommended that suitable fencing or other appropriate boundary treatment is installed between the play area and the adjacent road.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 6.1 The application site is within the Green Belt, and also forms part of the Bellsmyre Grasslands Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS), with the adjacent path leading into the grasslands being designated as a Core Path. Policy GB1 allows for outdoor recreation, leisure or tourist proposals in the Green Belt where these are appropriate for the countryside, contribute to the social and economic development of the plan area and are not contrary to other policies and proposals within the Local Plan. Policy E3A of the plan states that proposals should not have an adverse effect on the integrity or character of a local nature conservation sites. Policy R5 further states that the Council will undertake to protect core paths. The proposal is assessed against these criteria in Section 7 below, and it is considered that the development complies with all of these policies.

7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the play area

- 7.1 The existing play area occupies a 'backland' site located behind existing houses, albeit that access to it has been temporarily opened up by removal of the garages. It is not well sited for a play area, and its removal will enable the redevelopment of the garage site for social housing and the expansion of neighbouring allotments. It is therefore considered that the relocation of the existing play area to a new site is to be welcomed.
- 7.2 In terms of the current application, the proposal involves development of an area of land which, by virtue of its inclusion within a much larger area of open space on the edge of the built up area, is designated as Green Belt. Functionally, however, the particular piece of land in question serves as urban amenity open space rather than being part of the Bellsmyre Grassland. It is not considered that its development as a formal play area would have any adverse impact upon the Green Belt. The site is not part of the grasslands proper, which are higher up the hillside and separated from it by some trees, and the site itself has little nature conservation value. The development would not affect the adjacent Core Path. It is therefore considered that the proposal would not have any adverse impact upon the Green Belt, LNCS or Core Path, and that the proposal would be in accordance with the relevant policies GB1, E3A and R5.

Siting and design of the play area

- 7.3** The play area would be situated next to an existing bungalow and opposite the former garage site which is to be developed for housing. Play areas can give rise to noise complaints arising from children playing, or in the event of anti-social behaviour by older children or youths in the evening. Such problems are less likely to arise if these are located in public view and closely overlooked by houses, as in this case. The existing play area is located behind housing which is an inherently less satisfactory arrangement in terms of disturbance and security. It is considered that the proposed play area would not be likely to have any significant impact upon the amenity of local residents.
- 7.4** The plans submitted with the application detail the extent of the area to be used for the play area, however no details have been provided of access arrangements, fencing, surfacing or the actual play equipment. A condition is proposed which would require that such details to be agreed by the Planning Authority, in order to ensure that the play area is completed to an acceptable standard in terms of its appearance, access arrangements and boundary treatment.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** The relocation of the play area will allow the redevelopment of a site on Whiteford Crescent for residential purposes whilst also ensuring that a suitable replacement play area is provided. The site of the proposed play area is considered to be more suitable than the existing site, and whilst it is designated as Green Belt and as part of a Local Nature Conservation Site, it is not considered that the proposal would have any significant adverse impact upon either of these features.

9. CONDITIONS

- 1. Exact details and specifications of the play area, including access arrangements, play equipment and boundary treatment including a self closing gate and dog grid shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved. Access and boundary treatment shall be designed to minimise the risk of children running onto the adjacent road.**
- 2. Prior to the commencement of development full details of the surface water drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The drainage system shall incorporate the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems within its design, and thereafter shall be implemented as approved.**

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Date: 18 March 2013

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Appendix: None.

Background Papers:

1. Application forms and plans;
2. Consultation responses; and
3. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010.

Wards affected: 2 (Leven)