

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Planning Committee: 6 March 2013**

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**Subject: Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and proposal for erection of mixed use development at Braehead, Renfrewshire**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** To inform Committee of, and agree this Council's response to:
- (i) proposals by Renfrewshire Council in its Local Development Plan to designate Braehead as a town centre; and
  - (ii) a planning application received by Renfrewshire Council for mixed use development at Braehead including additional 41,000 sq.mt of additional retail floorspace.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is considered that the designation of Braehead as a town centre and the additional retail floorspace proposed at Braehead would adversely impact on West Dunbartonshire's town centres and Glasgow City Centre.
- 2.2** It is recommended that the Committee approve Appendices 1 & 2 as West Dunbartonshire Council's objections to these proposals.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1** Renfrewshire Council's Local Development Plan Proposed Plan (the 'Proposed Plan') was published on 14 January 2013 for a six week consultation period. The Plan reflects the 'settled will' of Renfrewshire Council in respect of how it would like to see the Plan adopted. The Proposed Plan recognises Braehead as a town centre. This reflects the preferred strategy set out in Renfrewshire Council's Main Issues Report as reported to Planning Committee in January 2012. West Dunbartonshire Council's response to Renfrewshire Council's Main Issues Report stated that the Council would object if Braehead was identified as a town centre in the Proposed Plan.
- 3.2** On 25 January 2013, Renfrewshire Council consulted with West Dunbartonshire Council in respect of a planning application (13/0049/PP ) submitted to it by Capital Shopping Centres plc for *Erection of mixed use development comprising Class 1 (retail use), Class 2 (financial, professional and other services), Class 3 (food & drink use), Class 7 (hotel use), Class 11 (assembly & leisure), including an events arena and other ancillary uses; construction of transport interchanges and route for Fastlink bus service, car parking, roads & accesses, footpaths and covered walkways, public realm works (including provision of open space & civic square), together with*

*landscaping, all associated works and necessary infrastructure ; and demolition of some buildings at Kings Inch Drive / King's Inch Road (Braehead), Renfrew.*

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The Council has been consulted on two separate issues which both relate to Braehead. Appendices 1 and 2 set out the Council objections already submitted to Renfrewshire Council to meet with consultation deadlines.

#### Renfrewshire Local Development Plan Proposed Plan

- 4.2** The Proposed Plan recognises Braehead as a town centre. The rationale for this is that Braehead is central to the Clyde Waterfront regeneration initiative and the emerging community of Renfrew North, and to secure this regeneration the backing of town centre status is important, as it would allow further retail development. A framework for a masterplan for Braehead is set out by the Plan. This shows:
- additional retail floorspace
  - additional leisure floorspace
  - new civic space
  - improved pedestrian linkages and a new transport interchange.
- 4.3** The framework closely resembles the details of the recent mixed use planning application for Braehead also considered by this report, more details of which are provided below.
- 4.4** The key points of the objection set out in Appendix 1 are:
- Insufficient justification is offered by the Proposed Plan for designating Braehead as a town centre, with the change in designation being proposed to enable additional retail floorspace at Braehead.
  - Braehead matches the definition of a commercial centre as set out in Scottish Planning Policy and lacks the features ascribed to town centres by that document.
  - Braehead does not serve as a town centre for any particular community.
  - The additional retail floorspace that would follow Braehead's designation as a town centre would have an adverse impact on West Dunbartonshire's town centres and Glasgow City Centre.
  - The term town centre is not simply a planning designation. Town centres are places that have evolved over time to serve a community. The designation of Braehead as a town centre would redefine the understanding of the term town centre.
- 4.5** The Proposed Plan raises no other matters of concern for West Dunbartonshire Council.

Planning application to Renfrewshire Council (13/0049/PP) for mixed use development at Braehead, Renfrewshire

- 4.6** The mixed use planning application for Braehead includes:
- An additional 41,000 sq.mt of retail floorspace
  - 3,100 sq.m of financial services and cafes/restaurants
  - A 200 bed hotel
  - A 5000 seat arena
  - A new/relocated transport interchange
  - Almost 800 additional car parking spaces giving a total of 8500.
- 4.7** There is currently 55,000 sq.mt of retail floorspace in the Braehead Shopping Centre (a figure which excludes the surrounding retail warehouses and superstore). The current proposals would increase the retail floorspace within the shopping centre by 75%. This is to be achieved by a reconfiguration and extension of the western part of the centre towards Xscape. It is suggested that 25-30 new retail units will be created including a department store.
- 4.8** A new arena would be developed to the west of the expanded shopping centre between it and Xscape. This would be fronted by a civic space. The civic space would replace the car parking currently in place between the shopping centre and Xscape. A new hotel would sit on the other side of the civic space from the arena.
- 4.9** A new transport interchange would be created to the south of the existing centre. The applicant hopes that Fastlink will be extended from the Southern General to serve Braehead. The additional and replacement car parking will be located within a number of new multi-storey car parks. New footpaths, cycle paths and landscaping are also part of the proposal.
- 4.10** This Council's concerns are with regard to the proposed additional retail floorspace and are set out in Appendix 2. The key points are:
- That a sequential approach to selecting the location of the new retail floorspace has not been taken, and therefore the proposal is not in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy.
  - That the proposal for additional retail floorspace is not supported by the Strategic Development Plan and does not meet the criteria of the Plan's Sustainable Location Assessment or Strategy Support Measure 11, by way of the proposal's impact on Glasgow City Centre and the wider network of Strategic Centres including Clydebanks and Dumbarton.
  - That the retail impact of the expanded Braehead on West Dunbartonshire's town centres is not acceptable.
  - That the regeneration argument offered to support the expansion is not evidenced.
  - That the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan which identified Braehead as a town centre is only at the Proposed Plan stage and is to be subject to Examination.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

## **6. Financial Implications**

**6.1** There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** It was not considered necessary to carry out a risk assessment in relation to this report.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** It is not considered that the report or recommendations raise any equalities issues.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** The Council's Roads and Transportation Service replied that the proposals raised no concerns in respect of its responsibilities.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** It is considered that the Council Priority of improving economic growth and employability is threatened by the proposals to identify Braehead as a town centre and increase retail floorspace there. This would result in a loss of expenditure and investment in West Dunbartonshire, reducing economic growth.

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**Date: 15 February 2013**

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**Appendices:** 1) West Dunbartonshire Council response to  
Renfrewshire Local Development Plan

2) West Dunbartonshire Council response to planning application 13/0049/PP to Renfrewshire Council for mixed use development at Braehead, Renfrew

**Background Papers:**

- 1) Report to 10 January 2012 Planning Committee on the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan Main Issues Report
- 2) Renfrewshire Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan

**Wards Affected:**

All

### **West Dunbartonshire Council response to Renfrewshire Local Development Plan**

West Dunbartonshire Council objects to the designation of Braehead as a town centre.

The Proposed Plan does not make the case for this change in designation. Rather, it confirms that the purpose of this designation is to enable further retail development at Braehead. No commentary is offered as to how Braehead has or will change to make it become a town centre, other than the Local Development Plan deeming it as such. The justification offered is that town centre status is important to secure the regeneration of Clyde Waterfront. This is not accepted. The Braehead area of the Clyde Waterfront is not in need of physical regeneration and no evidence is presented as to how conferring town centre status on Braehead will achieve the regeneration of the wider Clyde Waterfront area. Scottish Planning Policy states that any change in the network of centres should be justified using the results of a health check. The Proposed Plan offers no evidence that this has been done.

Scottish Planning Policy differentiates between town centres and commercial centres with the latter being defined as 'distinct from town centres as their range of uses and physical structure makes them different in character and sense of place. They generally have a more specific focus on retailing or on retailing and leisure uses'. It is considered that Braehead matches this definition of a commercial centre. Scottish Planning Policy also sets out attributes of a town centre referring to a 'diverse mix of uses', a 'sense of place', and 'wider economic and social activity' rather than 'a retail-led approach which can create homogenous centres'. Braehead is considered to be a retail and leisure focused centre, lacking in diversity of uses and one which does not have a community focus or serve a particular community. There are no proposals included in the Proposed Plan or concurrent planning application to suggest that this is going to change. There is no town of Braehead. The Renfrew Riverside residential area does not justify the designation of a centre the size of Braehead as a town centre and is adequately served by Renfrew Town Centre which is within walking distance. Indeed, the Proposed Plan discourages local scale community, civic and service uses at Braehead.

The main concern of this Council with regard to the designation of Braehead as a town centre would be the impact of further retail development on West Dunbartonshire's town centres and, from a strategic perspective, Glasgow City Centre. The Strategic Development Plan Background Report 14 shows that the shopping catchment of Braehead already extends significantly beyond Renfrewshire and covers a substantial area of West Dunbartonshire. 8% of the Clydebank catchment expenditure and 12% of the Dumbarton catchment expenditure was drawn to Braehead in 2008, and this may have increased as Braehead becomes more dominant and other centres weaken as a result. Additional retail floorspace at Braehead would increase the trade drawn from West Dunbartonshire, at the expense of West Dunbartonshire's town centres and will largely be drawn by means of the private car as public transport links between West Dunbartonshire and Braehead are poor. This is not considered to be a sustainable approach.

An additional concern is the potential impact of additional retail floorspace at Braehead on Glasgow City Centre, a sustainably accessible location at the heart of the city-region. As a significant retail destination at the UK level, the retail offer of the City Centre is an economic driver for the city-region. However, its ability to attract new investment and retain expenditure is at risk from out-of-centre locations such as Braehead, and the additional retail floorspace proposed there.

A town centre is not simply a planning designation. It is a place that evolves through time to serve a community. It is considered inappropriate to use the designation to enable further retail development at a location which has already had such an adverse impact on centres across the western Glasgow city-region. The regeneration arguments for additional retail floorspace at Braehead are limited, and retail expansion would be at the expense of other town centres which are in actual need of regeneration, but which suffer from the loss of expenditure to Braehead.

The designation of Braehead as a town centre would completely redefine the understanding of the term. It is not considered appropriate that such a significant change should be driven by a Local Development Plan.

### **West Dunbartonshire Council response to planning application 13/0049/PP to Renfrewshire Council for mixed use development at Braehead, Renfrew**

West Dunbartonshire Council objects to planning application 13/0049/PP.

#### **Scottish Planning Policy and the sequential approach**

Scottish Planning Policy requires the application of a sequential approach to selection of locations for retail and commercial leisure uses, with town centres preferred to commercial centres. A sequential approach should therefore be applied to the additional retail floorspace proposed for Braehead, which is not a town centre and recognised as a commercial centre by the Strategic Development Plan. Given the scale of floorspace proposed and the wide catchment from which expenditure will be drawn, sequentially preferable opportunities throughout the catchment should be assessed, and not just in Renfrewshire.

It is not accepted that the Development Plan provides an exception to the sequential approach being applied to Braehead. The Strategic Development Plan does not offer any support for retail development at Braehead or on Clyde Waterfront in general. The Renfrewshire Local Plan directs major retail development to strategic town centres, which do not include Braehead. The Proposed Renfrewshire Local Development Plan recognises Braehead as a town centre, but this is subject to objection and will be subject to Examination.

In applying the sequential approach it is not accepted that the proposed floorspace cannot be disaggregated. Unlike the judgement referred to in the applicant's Planning Statement at paragraph 2.69, the proposed floorspace is not intended to operate as a single unit. Page 3 of the Planning Summary refers to 25-30 new stores being proposed. This demonstrates that the proposed floorspace can be disaggregated. It is argued by the applicant that the scale of retail development is necessary, otherwise the viability of the entire project would be undermined. However, the most significant part of the project *is* the retail element. Other commercial aspects of the application should only be proposed if viable without subsidy from the retail element.

It is strongly considered that a sequential approach is recommended in relation to these proposals. The absence of a sequential assessment is considered challengeable.

Paragraph 55 states that that investment in commercial centres should be supported where investment will not undermine town centres. West Dunbartonshire Council believes additional retail floorspace at Braehead will undermine its town centres and Glasgow City Centre.

The Braehead proposals are considered not to accord with the Development Plan, and therefore to be contrary. With regard to the criteria set out in paragraph 64 of Scottish Planning Policy, it is considered that:



- a sequential approach to site selection should have been used, and that opportunities exist across the Braehead trade draw area that could accommodate the proposed floorspace;
- West Dunbartonshire considers the additional trade draw from its town centre's catchments, and the impact on the vitality and viability of these centres to be unacceptable; and
- no qualitative or quantitative deficiencies have been identified in the development plan in relation to Braehead.

### Strategic Development Plan and impact on Glasgow City Centre

The Clyde Waterfront, which Braehead forms part of, is identified as a key component of the Strategic Development Plan Spatial Development Strategy. Diagram 3 of the Plan sets out forms of development in line with the strategy. Retail is not listed.

It is therefore considered that reference to supply-side criteria of Diagram 4 is required. In relation to the network of centres, this asks if the proposal is:

- Respecting the scale of the centre – the proposed additional floorspace reflects a 75% increase in retail floorspace at the Braehead Shopping Centre which is considered disproportionate
- Supporting the network of centres – the proposed additional retail floorspace will have an adverse impact on several centres within the Network of Strategic Centres including Clydebank and Dumbarton. This is considered further below.
- Keeping impact on the City Centre to an acceptable level – the proposed additional retail floorspace will have an adverse impact on Glasgow City Centre.

In relation to sustainable transport it is recognised that the proposal includes public transport enhancements. However, a 10% increase in car parking spaces to 8500 spaces is proposed reflecting that Braehead is predominantly reached by the private car.

Overall, in relation to Diagram 4 it is considered that the proposals for additional retail floorspace at Braehead are for an unsustainable location and that there is no known demand/need for the additional floorspace established in the Development Plan.

Schedule 12 of the Strategic Development Plan identifies a Network of Strategic Centres. This identifies Braehead as a commercial centre. Under 'Challenges', it is indicated that Braehead should diversify to incorporate a range of functions but no reference to additional retail floorspace is made. The West Dunbartonshire town centres of Clydebank and Dumbarton are recognised as part of the Network with challenges including retail offer and expenditure leakage (Clydebank) and retail offer and town centre vacancies (Dumbarton). Glasgow City Centre is also recognised with competition from other centres as its sole challenge. It is contended that additional retail floorspace at Braehead does not accord with the challenges set out for that centre in the Strategic Development Plan, but exacerbates the challenges identified for Clydebank and Dumbarton town centres and the City Centre.

Strategy Support Measure 11 calls for Local Development Plans to bring forward provisions to arrest the decline of traditional town centres, and for the long-term health and well-being of Glasgow City Centre to be reflected in the development management decisions of local authorities.

West Dunbartonshire's town centres are considered below. It is considered that the status of Glasgow City Centre, a significant UK retail centre and a key economic driver for the city-region, is at risk from the current Braehead proposals. They will significantly increase and improve the retail offer of the centre, drawing additional trade that would otherwise be spent in the City Centre and other town centres. It presents the risk of creating a competing retail centre to Glasgow City Centre and threatening investment in new retail floorspace in the City Centre.

Much reference is made to Background Report 11 to the Strategic Development Plan Main Issues Report which makes reference to Braehead as a town centre. This document is considered to have no policy status and no significant weight should be given to it. The Strategic Development Plan Authority Joint Committee of June 2011 when approving the Proposed Plan agreed that a reference to Braehead having 'town centre functions' should not be included in the Plan.

In summary, the Strategic Development Plan does not offer support for additional retail development at Braehead; assessment against the supply-side criteria of Diagram 4 is required; and the proposal runs counter to the Strategic Development Plan's support for Glasgow City Centre and the wider network of centres set out in Strategy Support Measure 11.

#### Retail Capacity and Impact Assessment

The consultation period has now allowed time for a full interrogation of the retail capacity and impact assessment tables submitted by the applicant. It can be assumed that the submitted figures will be favourable to the applicant's case. West Dunbartonshire Council trusts that Renfrewshire Council will thoroughly assess these and take account of impact on town centres in other authority areas.

That said, the retail capacity assessment is considered to be overly-complex, running to 79 tables, 25 of which are based on assumptions of other developments being implemented and drawing trade from Braehead. Much is made of this and the justification for a 75% increase in retail floorspace is largely based upon Braehead reclaiming expenditure it would lose were these developments to go ahead. However, because of Braehead's dominance and the uncertainty caused by the expansion proposals, many of these developments will not proceed. Further, Braehead is not a town centre, but a commercial centre, and there is no justification for it to draw back this trade from what are mainly town and edge-of-town centre developments.

Table 68 of the applicant's assessment shows the turnover of almost all other retail centres increasing in the period 2012-2018, whilst the turnover of the Braehead Centre and Retail Park decreases by 33%. It is on this basis that a justification is made for additional floorspace at Braehead, but such a drop in turnover at a time

when the applicant suggests significant increases in expenditure generally and increases at almost all other centres seems unlikely and should be challenged.

The 2004 Household Shopping Survey showed that Braehead was already drawing significant trade from the catchments of West Dunbartonshire's town centres, with 11% of trade from Dumbarton/Vale of Leven and 8.2% of trade from Glasgow North West/Clydebank. The applicant's figures suggest that in 2018 with the Braehead expansion plans implemented trade draw will be 6% from Dumbarton/Vale of Leven and 4.1% from Glasgow North West/Clydebank, but this is on the basis of the assumptions challenged above. Regardless of that, and taking the applicant's figures, the Braehead expansion would result in an additional draw of over £4M from Dumbarton/Vale of Leven and almost £9M from Glasgow North West/Clydebank (based on a comparison of tables 67 and 76). This is not acceptable to West Dunbartonshire Council at a time when it is trying to secure investment in its own town centres. The total expenditure drawn to Braehead following its expansion is estimated at £10.66M from Dumbarton/Vale of Leven and £42M from Glasgow North West/Clydebank. This is a significant loss of trade to a centre not easily sustainably accessed from these areas, and a loss which damages West Dunbartonshire's town centres.

#### Regeneration argument

The applicant offers strong justification for the additional retail floorspace at Braehead based upon it being the catalyst for economic regeneration on the Clyde Waterfront. No evidence is offered as to how this will be achieved. The proposed investment is contained within the Braehead area, an area which is not in need of physical regeneration. It does not follow that physical regeneration will occur outwith the Braehead area as a result of the expansion proposals. Whilst there would be investment and jobs created at Braehead, this would be at the expense of other areas on Clyde Waterfront that are arguably in greater need of regeneration.

#### Status of Renfrewshire Local Development Plan

The Proposed Renfrewshire Local Development Plan identifies Braehead as a town centre. West Dunbartonshire Council has objected to this and it is expected that this matter will be subject to an Examination. No weight should therefore be given to Braehead's status as a town centre until this matter has been concluded.