

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Planning Committee: 4 October 2011**

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**DC11/186/COU: Change of use of open space to community garden and associated works on open space at Whiteford Avenue, Dumbarton by Bellsmyre Community Garden Association.**

#### **1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1** This application relates to land over which the Council has an ownership interest. Under the terms of the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Authority.

#### **2. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS**

- 2.1** The application relates to an area of open space located within Bellsmyre. The site lies on the east side of Whiteford Avenue, opposite the junction of Stoneyflatt Road. It is bordered by a children's play area to the east, the back gardens of houses to the north and south, and a bus stop layby on the road frontage. The site extends to 0.16 hectares and is currently an area of grass enclosed by 1.8m high green weldmesh fencing.
- 2.2** Planning permission is sought to change the use of the open space to a community garden. There would be one main pedestrian access and a vehicular access point on Whiteford Avenue, and the existing pedestrian gate into the adjacent play area behind would be retained. The existing fencing on site would be retained and the grass on site replaced by a self binding gravel surface. Within the site, raised beds would be installed to allow the growing of fruit, vegetables and plants. Some of the raised beds would incorporate timber seating into their design. Within the community garden there would be greenhouses, polytunnels, shelters, a storage container, composting toilet and site hut including toilet. A verge along the front of the site would be used as a drainage swale with planting appropriate for that purpose. The garden would be managed by Bellsmyre Community Garden Association through a programme of volunteer led activities, including projects to encourage involvement by local children and various disadvantaged groups.
- 2.3** The project has been subject to extensive community engagement including a residents' survey undertaken in 2010, which indicated broad support for the establishment of a community garden at this location from local residents and community groups.

#### **3. CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 West Dunbartonshire Council Roads Service, Estates Service and Environmental Health Service all have no objection to the proposal.

#### **4. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 4.1 No representations have been received.

#### **5. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

##### West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 5.1 The site is identified as open space and Policy R1 states that there is a presumption against development which adversely affects the use, character or amenity of areas of functional and valued open space. Developments on existing open space other than sports pitches will be considered as to whether they will detract from the use of the open space. The community garden would remain an area of open space used for the benefit the local community, and would not have any negative impact on the adjacent play area. The creation of the community garden an area of open space to be utilised for the benefit of the local community, and consequently complies with the local plan.

#### **6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

##### Appearance and Location

- 6.1 The existing area of grass is capable of being used as a play area but is understood not to be particularly well used, and other play areas and kick-about areas exist in the vicinity. The proposal that the site become a community garden arose as a result of the efforts of members of the local community, and the proposal would result in the area being used more effectively for the benefit of local people.
- 6.2 The site is located in a prominent position within Bellsmyre, and it is important that the facility is visually attractive. It is considered that the provision of a managed garden area and a landscaped swale along the frontage would improve the appearance of the site. The proposed buildings on site would each be of a minor nature with a small footprint, would not detract from the predominantly open character of the garden, and would be in keeping with the nature of the use.
- 6.3 The buildings on site would be used solely in connection with the running of the community garden and will not be large enough to offer any other use or to impact upon any of the neighbouring residential properties. There would be no dedicated parking, but it is considered that the users of the garden will be local residents who would mainly come on foot and that parking is not necessary. The applicants are conscious of the risk of vandalism and would implement a risk reduction strategy in order to minimise this.

#### **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposal would provide a new community facility which would be a welcome addition for the local Bellsmyre residents and is to be supported.

The community garden will enhance and encourage greater utilisation of an existing area of open space within a residential area, and is therefore supported by Policy R1.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

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

## **9. CONDITIONS**

- 01. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.**
- 02. The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this decision notice:**
- a) A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);**
  - b) A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.**

**Elaine Melrose**  
**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental**  
**and Economic Development**  
**Date: 21 September 2011**

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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)