

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager****Council: 24th April 2024**

Subject: **Erection and operation of a mixed-use tourism and leisure development Land at Pier Road, Ben Lomond Way and Old Luss Road Known as West Riverside and Woodbank House (Lomond Banks) Balloch (2022/0157/PPP)**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To agree the Council's response to a consultation received from the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Planning Authority regarding a planning application for tourism led development at West Riverside and Woodbank House Balloch.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Council agrees Appendix 2 as this Council's formal response to the above application.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority received a planning application for the erection and operation of a mixed use tourism and leisure development at Land at Pier Road, Ben Lomond Way and Old Luss Road Known as West Riverside and Woodbank House (Lomond Banks) Balloch in May 2022. West Dunbartonshire Council have been consulted as a statutory consultee as neighbouring Planning Authority to the proposed development site.
- 3.2** The vision is to create a £40million world-class accommodation led tourism destination that integrates itself with the current community of Balloch, bringing with it, much needed investment and job creation to the village. Appendix 1 provides details of the application site, which is within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, in relation to the neighbouring West Dunbartonshire Planning Authority administrative boundary.
- 3.3** Flamingo Land is a family owned Scottish Company who moved from Scotland to Yorkshire and established in the 1970's which has grown to be one of the UK's leading leisure resorts and zoo parks, attracting around 1.5 million visitors per year. Lomond Banks is a major step away from Flamingo Land's traditional portfolio of these parks, with plans to develop family accommodation, a craft brewery, leisure centre and swimming pool, restaurants, events area, pathways and landscaping but no theme park rides.

- 3.4** A previous application for tourism led recreational, residential, food and drink development on land at West Riverside and Woodbank House Balloch (2018/0133/PPP) was withdrawn by the applicants on 17th September 2019. The Council's response in June 2019, whilst recognising the significant contribution to the tourist and visitor economy of Balloch, considered that any development must be suitable for the sites in question with overdevelopment a significant risk and the true impact not being properly considered. The Council objected to the development on the grounds of capacity of the current road infrastructure, biodiversity, economic risk to local businesses and local area, no affordable housing and the quality of the development.
- 3.5** An elected member briefing meeting was held on 24th November 2021 to provide West Dunbartonshire Council Elected Members with further information about the most recent application and give Members an opportunity to highlight any issues which they consider the application ought to address as a consultee to the development proposal. At the meeting, issues were raised about the nature and the impact of the development on the local area in terms of economic benefits, traffic, parking facilities, and access.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The site is located to the north of Balloch and comprises a total area of c.56 acres. It contains two zones known respectively as West Riverside and Woodbank House. Old Luss Road intersects the two.
- 4.2** The application is made in principle and seeks to establish the acceptability of the potential new uses of the site only and does not include details of buildings and infrastructure, which would be determined at a later detailed stage.

The application includes the following details:

Pierhead

- Up to 60 bedroom apart-hotel
- Leisure/pool/water park/spa
- Monorail terminal
- Staff service and welfare accommodation
- Visitor reception area and hub building
- Restaurants/café/retail areas

Riverside

- Forest Lodges
- Picnic and BBQ areas
- Playgrounds
- Monorail

Woodbank

- Up to 104 self-catering woodland lodges

- Woodbank House retained and converted to up to 21 self-catering holiday apartments
- Retention/restoration of the listed Woodbank House and attendant outbuildings

Station Square

- Refurbished Tourist information building
- Up to 32 bed space budget hotel
- Craft Brewery including pub
- Visitor Reception area and hub building
- External activity areas including event/performance areas, children's play areas, picnic and barbeque areas.
- Monorail linking Station Square to Leisure Pool

Drumkinnon Woods

- No built development in ancient woodland area
- Paths and trails
- Woodland management – maintain and conserve trees
- Access to be taken from the surrounding road network including Ben Lomond Way and Pier Road
- Associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure development works

4.3 The current proposal has been amended following feedback from the public to the 2018 proposals whereby a viewing tower has been removed, a 12 metre wide landscape buffer around Drumkinnon Gate Estate created, with no development in Drumkinnon Wood. Access to all key destinations and routes will be maintained during the construction phase and the quality of some routes will be enhanced, removal of the proposed gated access to Pier Road and the potential future connection between Balloch Road and the new parking proposed on Pier Road.

4.4 Appendix 2 includes the Council's recommended response to the consultation. The proposed response welcomes the investment in the local area which has the potential to make a major contribution to the viability of the visitor economy in Balloch by expanding the range of facilities both for visitors and local residents. New opportunities for employment would be created for Balloch and the wider Vale of Leven area. The planned works and the additional facilities to Station Square, of restaurants, cafes, a brewery and outside performing space will provide a focal point for Balloch which will reach out to the residents of Balloch and the wider area. Accommodation includes a hotel, apart/hotel, forest and woodland lodges together with facilities such as leisure pool/water park, restaurants and monorail with a max height 3.5 metres rising to 5.5 metres. The proposed monorail is a particular attraction of the development and it will enhance connectivity from Balloch village to heart of the development – Lomond Shores and Pierhead. The proposed improvements to the riverside walkway, the national cycle and path networks and increased connectivity between Lomond Shores and Balloch are important additions which will also bring benefits to the wider community and provide an attractive tourism destination. This all fits with the aspirations and

objectives of National Planning Framework 4 and creating a sustainable recreational destination.

- 4.5** The construction of the proposed development detailed above is expected to require a total capital expenditure of £40 million. This will give rise to employment and associated expenditure in the economy (direct, indirect and induced). Construction of this development is expected to extend across a 6-year programme of works. Construction will be delivered in phases, with the first phase expected to be complete and operational by the end of 2025. It is estimated that the proposed construction will support a total 366 gross temporary construction jobs over the 6-year construction programme. It is likely that 182 of these jobs will be from within the area. The construction period will also lead to the creation of training and apprenticeship opportunities leading to the development of local skills which in turn will benefit the local economy. The proposed development will lead to significant employment in the accommodation and food & beverage services industries. It is estimated that a total of 80 full time staff and 120 part-time or seasonal staff would be required annually to support the operation of the development. It is likely that the local economy will receive an additional £534,372 of net operational GVA annually, while a further £401,109 operational GVA will be contributed across Scotland annually. The proposal will help to establish Balloch as a tourist destination and help to unlock other redevelopment potential such as Balloch Castle and other tourist attractions in the area.
- 4.6** A Unilateral Voluntary Undertaking (UVU) known as the “Lomond Promise” was submitted to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Planning authority. It is available on the Lomond Banks website www.lomondbanks.com. The Lomond Promise is a legal document that binds the applicant to vows made to the community at pre-application stage and includes providing sustainable transport. There is significant potential for the proposed development to further benefit the local economy. Through the above UVU the applicant has committed to work in partnership with local businesses and the Community Councils and support collaborative marketing campaigns to promote the Local Communities and their businesses. Once the Development or any phase becomes operational, the developer shall promote those local businesses and services located within the Local Communities, by including details of those local businesses and services in “welcome packs” prepared for guests using the proposed holiday accommodation and on the development website.
- 4.7** The “Lomond Promise” also provides a commitment to sustainable transport measures such as a Green Travel Plan, Summer Traffic Surveys when the development is operational, electric hopper bus, electric buggies, a cycle scheme for employees and the provision of signage and facilities for walkers and cyclists together with the potential for integrated bus/rail tickets. Key walking and cycling routes such as NCN Route 7, the John Muir Way and West Loch Lomond Cycle way will be enhanced and widened to bring benefits to the users of the recreational facility and the wider community. Parking provision should provide additional parking for the development and supplement existing parking already in the local area and help to avoid on-

street parking. There is a recognition that while parking demand must be catered for, overprovision is equally unacceptable to encourage the uptake of sustainable transport modes. A Parking and Signage Strategy is proposed and sets out how parking across the site will be managed to minimise the impact on adjacent streets and residential areas and this is welcomed.

- 4.8** The proposal however has the potential for traffic impacts on the adjacent roads - A82, A811, Balloch Road, Old Luss Road, Pier Road and Ben Lomond Way. It is widely known that the summer season, good weather weekends and local events can increase traffic significantly on the A82, A811 and the local roads, all to the detriment of the local area. Traffic Survey data has been gathered on 3 occasions to support this development - August 2017, November 2021 and August 2023 and following a review of the survey data mitigation measures have been developed to support the development proposals. The applicant has entered into an agreement under Section 48 of Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 to make a financial contribution towards Transport Scotland's plans to improve the Stoneymollan Roundabout. Transport Scotland had already identified some improvement projects for the roundabout and the improvements and finance agreed will cover the signalisation of the Stoneymollan Roundabout and realignment of the roundabout. This agreement between the applicant and Transport Scotland has been agreed separate from the planning process, however the Council is very supportive of these agreed mitigation measures to the Stoneymollan roundabout and would recommend that the agreement is implemented.
- 4.9** Following a review of 2023 survey data where the 2023 data is higher in the PM peak, but lower in the AM and Saturday compared to the 2017 traffic flows. The Council's Roads Service commissioned consultants to model the Ballochloan Roundabout applying survey data captured to better understand the operational performance of the junction with the inclusion of the additional development. High level consideration of the Lomond Shores model noted that there was unequal lane usage and a number of traffic flows showed that on a number of approaches unequal lane usage present. This would result in an overestimation of capacity. Therefore, the Council's Roads Service have recommended that mitigation measures are required to the Ballochloan Roundabout which will include widening of the A811 West approach to allow for a left slip lane. This will mitigate against the issue and add further capacity at this junction in times of high usage.
- 4.10** Therefore it is recommended that the required works to Ballochloan Roundabout is undertaken and is conditioned to any grant of planning permission. If these works are not conditioned the Council would object to the development.
- 4.11** Other matters discussed in the response include biodiversity enhancements, an assessment of the impact on existing centres of Balloch, Alexandria and Dumbarton as well as an assessment of the proposed development compatible with the surrounding area in terms of nature and scale of the development and the impacts of visitors. The proposals will need to demonstrate that they have properly considered the impact of the

development on the adjacent residential property within West Dunbartonshire Planning Authority boundary and must ensure that there is adequate control of noise and disturbance during the construction phase and subsequently when the development is operational and also address any impacts on landscape and visual amenity.

- 4.12** It is understood that the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Planning Authority will be carrying out a further notification of the additional information regarding traffic, flooding and ecology in the next few weeks. It is not envisaged that the additional information will result in a change to this response. However, the Council will reserve its right to add to this agreed response if there is further information that it would want to comment further.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** None.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial or procurement implications in terms of this report.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** No risks have been identified relating to the Council's services, property or reputation.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** Not required as the report does not relate to a policy or service of the Council.

9. Environmental Sustainability

- 9.1** Matters relating to environmental sustainability have been fully considered via the planning application assessment.

10. Consultation

- 10.1** Consultation was undertaken as part of planning processes associated with the planning application. No further consultation was required.

11.1 Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** The proposed development complies with the strategic priorities of the Council in particular:

- Our Communities Resilient and Thriving
- Our Environment a Greener Future
- Our Economy Strong and Flourishing

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**Appendix 1: Location
Plan**

Appendix 2: Council's Response

Wards affected: Ward 1 (Lomond)