

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Planning Committee: 14 August 2013**

---

#### **DC13/108    Formation of mountain bike skills trail at Howatshaws Road, Dumbarton by West Dunbartonshire Environment Trust**

#### **1.    REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1**    This application relates to land owned by the Council. Under 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 conditions set out in Section 9.

#### **3.    DEVELOPMENT DETAILS**

- 3.1**    The application site forms part of an area of open space within the northern part of Bellsmyre. The 0.22 hectare site is bounded to the north-east by Howatshaws Road with several vacant blocks of high rise flats beyond. A playing field to the south-east of the site and an equipped play area to the south-west separate the site from residential properties on Merkins Avenue. To the north-west of the site lies a grass-covered area of open space. The site is located on a hill and slopes downwards from the south-west towards Howatshaws Road in the north-east. The site is mainly covered with grass, but a hawthorn hedge and three small trees form a line along the middle of the site.
- 3.2**    The proposed development would involve the formation of a mountain bike skills trail. The trail would form a loop measuring approximately 220 metres long and at least 1.2 metres wide within the site. The trail would have a number of different features designed to challenge riders and improve their skills such as banked and curved corner features known as berms, 'drop offs' where the rider takes a step down from a higher level to a lower level, and a rock causeway constructed from rock boulders which provides an uneven surface to ride on. The trail would be constructed from compacted stone scalplings with a finishing layer of stone dust, and features would be constructed with slightly sloping sides covered with top soil and grass seed. The undulating design of the trail would provide most of the drainage for the site, but drainage pipes would also be used. An interpretation panel and waymarker posts would guide riders. The trail would be accessed via the existing footpath that lies immediately to the south of the site. The facility

would provide a mountain bike skills track where riders of all ages and abilities could learn and develop their riding skills.

- 3.3** The current application forms part of a mountain bike facilities project that is being developed by the Environment Trust in partnership with Bellsmyre Development Trust. Planning permission was previously granted in August 2012 (DC12/115) for a mountain bike trail in the open space behind Allan Crescent, and the current application would complement that facility. The project includes an intention to develop a mountain bike club based at the new community centre that is currently being constructed nearby. Bellsmyre Development Trust will be responsible for maintenance of the track.
- 3.4** The land involved in the application belongs to the Council and the proposed development is in keeping with a HEED Committee approval to lease the land for this purpose.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1** West Dunbartonshire Council Roads, Environmental Health, Greenspace and Estates Services all have no objections to the development.

#### **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 5.1** No representations have been received.

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

##### West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 6.1** The site is identified as Open Space, and policy R1 states that there will be 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 should not affect the existing use, quality, function and value of the open space. It is considered that the proposed development would improve the quality of the open space by providing a facility for the local community to participate in sport. The proposal would therefore be in accordance with policy R1.

#### **7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

##### Impact on the Amenity of the Area

- 7.1** At present the site is an area of open space primarily covered in grass with some hedging and trees. Although the space contributes to the amenity of the area it is considered that the proposed development would provide a more usable facility for the local community and would compliment the previously approved mountain bike trail and training track which are to be constructed nearby. The mountain bike trail would also provide an alternative recreational activity to the adjacent playing field and equipped play area, and would further contribute to the variety of amenities in the area. The nearest residential properties are located approximately 35 metres away from the site and it is considered that the amenity of these properties would not be affected by the

development provided that motor-powered vehicles are not allowed to use the trail. It is intended that the site will be entirely fenced off and motorcycle barriers similar to those used at the BMX track in Clydebank will be installed to prevent motorised vehicles accessing the site. A condition can be used to ensure that these are put in place prior to the trail being used.

- 7.2** It is expected that this facility would be used primarily by local people, however together with the larger trials which have been approved nearby it would form part of a group of mountain bike facilities which it is hoped will attract some visitors from outside the Bellsmyre area. The streets and car parks which once served the tower blocks to the north of the site are currently unused and in the short term they will provide more than ample parking facilities. It is expected that most users will cycle to the tracks from Bellsmyre or elsewhere in Dumbarton and that the proposal is unlikely to give rise to any significant level of traffic or parking demand.
- 7.3** The trees and hedging on the site were planted by the Environment Trust a few years ago as a biodiversity project and to minimise the risk of children running onto the road from the play area. It is intended that these would be retained within the site which would contribute to the landscaping and visual amenity of the development. The play area would be unaffected by the development.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1** The proposed mountain bike track would use existing open space to provide a recreational facility for the benefit of the local community. It would provide an activity for local young people and would encourage participation in sport with its associated health benefits, which is in keeping with the Council's objective of encouraging a healthier lifestyle.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

- 01. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.**
- 02 Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of the design and location of all walls and fences to be erected on site shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented as approved.**
- 03 Details of the fencing/barriers to be erected on the site to prevent use of the tracks by motor-powered vehicles (including motorcycles, mopeds and quad bikes) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to development commencing. The approved measures shall thereafter be implemented prior to the trail being used and maintained in a condition which prevents access by such vehicles.**

- 04 Notwithstanding the approved plans and prior to the commencement of development on site full details of the earthworks and path and track formations shall be submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the trail being used.
- 05 Prior to the commencement of the development details of a crossing point to be provided on Howatshaws Road shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the trail being used.

**Elaine Melrose**  
**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental**  
**and Economic Development**  
**Date: 23 July 213**

---

**Person to Contact:** Pamela Clifford, Planning & Building Standards Manager,  
Housing, Environmental and Economic Development,  
Council Offices, Clydebank. G811TG.  
01389 738656  
email: [Pamela.Clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:Pamela.Clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendix:** None

**Background Papers:**

1. Application forms and plans
2. Consultation responses
3. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010
4. Planning application no: DC12/115

**Wards affected:** Ward 2 (Leven)