

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

**Report by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and
Environmental Services**

Planning Committee: 6 September 2006

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER: DC06-077

PROPOSAL: Mixed use development comprising new adult centre, children's therapy centre and residential development (outline)

SITE: Auchentoshan Estate, Clydebank

APPLICANT: Bobath Scotland, Golden Jubilee National Hospital, Beardmore Street, Clydebank, G81 4HX

AGENT: Dallman Johnstone Architects, 24 New Kirk Road, Glasgow, G61 3SL

WARD: 4

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REPORT:

A. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to two separate parcels of land within the Auchentoshan Estate, Clydebank. The estate is bordered by Mountblow Road to the west, Great Western Road to the north, Ocean Field to the east, and Clydebank Golf Course to the south. Formerly the land formed the estate of a large house (Auchentoshan House), and it comprises a mixture of woodland and parkland. Auchentoshan House was demolished in the 1960s and a single storey flat-roofed structure was built on its site, this building being an adult occupational centre for people with learning difficulties. Nursery, primary and secondary schools were also built in parkland in the north-western part of the estate, and these also cater for people with learning difficulties. Three 1½-

storey monopitched houses, originally built for staff at the various establishments, are situated between the adult occupation centre and the schools. Access to the estate is by way of a private road from Mountblow Road.

The two sites to which this application relates are the adult occupational centre and its curtilage, and an area of parkland in the south-western corner of the estate. The adult occupational centre is almost entirely surrounded by woodland, although the three existing houses lie immediately to its west. The southern part of the curtilage comprises the terraced garden of the former Auchentoshan House, and is at a lower level than the centre itself. The site borders the golf course to the south and south-west, although it is screened from this by existing mature trees.

The parkland site comprises a grassed area, roughly triangular in shape, bordered by the golf course to the south, Mountblow Road to the west, and the estate access road and schools to the north-east. The site is elevated above all of these, and is surrounded by mature trees. The trees form a thick belt along the edge of Mountblow Road, and thinner screening on the other sides. A small football pitch exists towards the western end of the site, and the site is used informally for recreational purposes.

B. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

The applicant, Bobath Scotland, is a charity which provides therapy for children from all over Scotland who suffer from cerebral palsy, and specialist training and support for their families and for health care professionals. Originally, the charity occupied premises in Knightswood, but around two years ago they relocated to larger rented accommodation within the Golden Jubilee National Hospital, and planned to build a purpose-built centre within the hospital grounds. However, NHS plans for the hospital have since changed, and there is no longer land available for a new centre. In addition, the charity's existing accommodation is needed by the NHS for a new heart and lung unit, and Bobath Scotland have been asked to vacate it during 2006. Bobath Scotland therefore require new accommodation, and their preference is that this should be in the Clydebank area so as to minimise disruption to families and staff. It is hoped to have a larger facility, to serve an increased number of children and to enable an expansion of the research and training activities.

The Auchentoshan Adult Occupational Centre was built in 1965 to provide 120 day centre places to people with learning disabilities. Today, this kind of facility has become old fashioned, as services for people with learning difficulties are increasingly provided individually or in smaller groups. The building is no longer used to its full capacity, it is of a design unsuited to modern needs, and it is in poor physical condition requiring major expenditure on repairs. The Council has therefore been considering how best to replace the centre, although no decision has been taken at this time.

Bobath Scotland propose to develop a new children's therapy centre for their own use. In addition, a smaller more modern adult centre would also be built to replace the existing facility. These would be built within the existing parkland area. The proposal is in outline only, but an indicative plan shows two detached buildings, with the adult centre positioned closest to the entrance of the site, and the therapy centre to its east. The new therapy centre would provide the charity with approximately double the capacity of their existing accommodation. Once the new adult centre was completed, the existing facility would become redundant, and the application also seeks outline permission to demolish it and to redevelop its site (including the terraced gardens) for housing, which would help to finance the project.

C. NATIONAL POLICY

Scottish Planning Policy 21: Green Belts

The Scottish Executive published the above document in April 2006. This policy replaces Scottish Office Circular 24/1985: Development in the Countryside and Green Belts. Due to the Green Belt status of the site within the existing development plan, it is considered necessary to have regard to the content of this new policy document which sets out the Scottish Executive's view as to the purpose of Green Belts and the forms of development which are permissible within these areas.

SPP21 sets out clearly the Scottish Executive's views as to the role and function of Green Belts and how Green Belts should be established and reviewed within development plans. The document identifies those uses which may be considered appropriate within individual Green Belts. These include agricultural uses, woodland and forestry, horticulture and recreational uses compatible with a natural setting. The document goes on to indicate that proposals for non-conforming uses can be considered in certain circumstances and establishes a framework for the consideration of proposals of this nature.

D. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan 2000

The Metropolitan Development Strategy and Strategic Policy 1 (Strategic Development Locations) require the continued designation and safeguarding of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Belt. Within the Green Belt there is a presumption against the spread of built up areas and the encroachment of development into the countryside.

Criteria for the assessment of development proposals which constitute departures from the Development Plan are set out in Strategic Policy 9 (Assessment of Development Proposals).

Clydebank Local Plan 2004

The whole of the Auchentoshan Estate, together with the adjacent golf course, is allocated as part of the Green Belt. The whole of the Estate is also covered by a Tree Preservation Order, and is recorded on the Interim List of Non-Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

Policy GB1 (Green Belt) indicates a presumption against development within the Green Belt, other than that meeting specified criteria. The policy does allow for development which forms part of an establishment or institution standing in extensive grounds, provided that the development does not adversely affect the countryside character of the area.

Policy E3 (Tree Preservation Orders) indicates that the Council will continue to protect those trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Policy E4 (Development Affecting Trees) indicates that new development proposed on sites with, or adjacent to, existing trees or woodlands should be designed to minimise any impacts upon the trees.

Policy E8 (Landscape Character) indicates that within the Green Belt and within green corridors through the urban area, development should have regard to the landscape character and distinctiveness of the area. Proposals with a detrimental impact will not normally be supported unless there are mitigating circumstances which do not conflict with other relevant policies.

Policy R1 (Retention of Open Space) indicates a presumption against development which adversely affects the use of or alters the character or amenity of areas of open space. Developments on existing recreational facilities or open space will be considered in the light of the availability of alternative recreational or open space in the vicinity.

Policy PS2 (Public Service Opportunities) encourages the provision of new or improved public services and utilities within the plan area.

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan (Consultative Draft)

The Green Belt boundaries have been reviewed as part of the preparation of the draft plan, with the intention of drawing the boundaries less tightly around the existing built up area. It is considered that this approach is consistent with the Scottish Executive's latest advice as contained within Scottish Planning Policy 21 'Green Belts' (SPP21). As a result, much of the Auchentoshan Estate (including both of the application sites) has been removed from the Green Belt in the draft plan. Instead, the different parts of the estate are designated either as 'Existing Public Services' (the schools and the adult centre buildings), 'Woodland/Parkland Retention' (the wooded areas, including the terraced garden area), or as 'Existing Areas of Open Space' (the former playing fields).

Policies in the draft plan are similar to those of the Clydebank Local Plan 2004 in terms of preservation of open space, protection of trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders, and development affecting trees. There is a presumption in favour of the retention of areas of existing woodland or parkland, in particular those areas specifically identified on the proposals map.

As a result of a consultation exercise earlier this year, 118 representations have been received in opposition to this change in policy. These representations comprise of comments from Clydebelt, 56 members of the public by individual response and a petition signed by 61 people.

E. CONSULTATIONS

Scottish Water	Objects to proposal, until such time as the applicant agrees water supply and sewerage details with Scottish Water.
SEPA	Objects to proposal, until such time as the applicant demonstrates the availability of an appropriate means of foul drainage disposal. Surface water disposal should be by way of SUDS, and the development should include provision of facilities to encourage the recycling of domestic waste.
Sport Scotland	No objection, but any development should include provision for informal recreational use.
West of Scotland Archaeology	The site is assessed as having some archaeological potential, and an evaluation should be carried out before any reserved matters permission is granted.
Woodland Trust Scotland	No objection.

F. REPRESENTATIONS

Four letters of objection have been received from local people. Grounds for objection can be summarised as follows:

- the parkland area is used by local people for recreation, children's play, sport and dog walking;
- the proposal may restrict access to the woodland for walkers;
- loss of green space would detract from the appearance and character of the area;
- Auchentoshan Estate is a long established and historic area of green space;
- encroachment of development into the woodland and impact on protected trees;

- impact on wildlife in an area designated as a SINC and a wildlife corridor;
- the proposal would undermine the value of the Green Belt and set an undesirable precedent;
- there is sufficient space to locate both the therapy and occupational centres on the site of the existing occupational centre without the need to develop the field;
- there is no requirement for additional housing land in the Clydebank area, and therefore no need to release land from the Green Belt for this purpose;
- increased traffic on Mountblow Road;
- noise and disturbance during construction.

Parkhall, North Kilbowie and Central Community Council objects to the application, for the following reasons:

- the proposal is contrary to Green Belt policies and its development would undermine the integrity of the Green Belt;
- loss of open space which is used by local people for recreational purposes;
- proposal would detract from the appearance and character of the area;
- impact on protected trees and woodland;
- no justification for the proposed housing development in this location;
- the Council has a financial interest in the site and may not act impartially.

Clydebelt also objects to the application, reiterating that it is contrary to development plan policies and would result in the loss of valuable green space. Clydebelt would have no objection to building a therapy centre on the site of the existing occupational centre, but in these circumstances the replacement occupational centre should be relocated to another site. They consider that there is no justification for new housing.

The applicant has provided a letter explaining their reasons for choosing this site for their proposed therapy centre. Numerous alternative sites within West Dunbartonshire, and in Glasgow, Bearsden, Erskine and Coatbridge, were considered, but all were unsuitable for various reasons. The site at Auchentoshan was considered suitable because of the charity's desire to remain in Clydebank and because it would allow a new 'state of the art' centre to be built which fully met their requirements. The site was chosen following discussions with West Dunbartonshire Council, and the Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee has previously endorsed the principle of development. Bobath Scotland consider that there is a clear locational need for the new centre to be based in or around Clydebank, and the application site is the only one which is suitable. Retaining the facility in Clydebank would be consistent with the Council's policies of encouraging the improvement of local services and retaining local jobs. It is not possible to confine development to the existing adult centre site, as this is not large enough, and the adult centre requires to remain open until its replacement is built.

As the therapy centre and replacement occupational centre cannot be built on the existing occupational centre site, this will become redundant, and it is proposed to build a small housing development on the site, adjacent to the existing houses. This would be required in order to help finance the project, and would also help to provide security for the whole of the Auchentoshan Estate by increasing the 24 hour presence. At a previous public local inquiry, a shortage of sites in Clydebank for large executive housing was identified, which the proposal would help to address.

G. ASSESSMENT

The proposal requires to be assessed against the policies of the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The content of the Scottish Planning Policy 21, Green Belts, published recently by the Scottish Executive in April 2006 is also relevant.

The site is within the Green Belt, and as such Policy GB1 of the Clydebank Local Plan 2004 is applicable. That policy indicates a presumption against development other than that meeting specified criteria. These criteria do allow development where this forms part of an establishment or institution standing in extensive grounds (such as parkland), provided that the development does not adversely affect the countryside character of the area and where there is a specific locational requirement for the development and it cannot be accommodated on an alternative site. All development should be sympathetic and sensitive to the landscape character of the local area.

Scottish Planning Policy Document 21: Green Belts indicates that where a proposed use would not normally be consistent with Green Belt designation, exceptionally it may still be considered appropriate, either as a national priority or to meet an established need and only if no suitable site is available. These exceptions to the policy should be highlighted in the Development Plan. Existing institutions in large grounds may be redeveloped where they are no longer needed for their original purpose. In this case, ideally, proposals should be identified in the Development Plan. In all cases, every effort should be made to redevelop within the existing envelope.

The Auchentoshan Estate is an extensive area of woodland and parkland, which already contains several educational and health related establishments. The existing adult occupational centre already occupies part of the estate. There are also separate special schools premises. The proposed children's therapy centre would be compatible with the existing uses within the estate. There is strong policy support for the creation of new and improved public services. The work carried out by Bobath Scotland to help children with cerebral palsy is of recognised importance, and it is considered that the retention of their national facility within West Dunbartonshire is to be strongly encouraged.

Despite an extensive search, no alternative location has been identified for the Bobath development.

With respect to the Adult Occupational Centre, the existing facility is no longer fit for purpose. There is a strong desire on part of the users and their carers to remain within the Auchentoshan area and a new centre would require to be developed before the existing centre could be closed.

In the case of both the Bobath Centre and the new proposed Adult Occupational Centre, there is a pressing need to bring forward the proposals outlined in the Planning Application.

The application also involves the erection of residential development on the site of the existing adult centre and its grounds. This aspect of the proposal would be clearly contrary to local plan policies on development in the Green Belt. It has been suggested by the applicant that some of the new housing may possibly be occupied by the families of children undergoing therapy, but the majority would be private homes for sale, and the main justification seems to be that the income from these houses is required to finance the scheme. Notwithstanding the existing handful of houses within the estate, the introduction of a significant pocket of housing in the middle of the Auchentoshan Estate would significantly change the character of the estate.

Scottish Planning Policy 21: Green Belts, published by the Scottish Executive in April 2006, does indicate that existing institutions in large grounds may be redeveloped where they are no longer needed for the original purpose. The document goes on to indicate that ideally proposals should be identified in the development plan. The more recent West Dunbartonshire Local Plan (Consultative Draft) does seek to change the designation of this site away from green belt but in its present form does not suggest that any housing should be built in Auchentoshan Estate.

Notwithstanding the above, in the event that the existing Adult Occupational Centre is closed, there is no apparent alternative use and the site would require to be redeveloped. SPP21 allows redevelopment in these circumstances and residential development could be considered to offer the only realistic prospect of sympathetic redevelopment.

Both parts of the site are already quite well screened by existing trees, and new planting could be employed to enhance the screening of the site boundaries. It is considered that the development of low rise institutional buildings on the parkland site and housing on the adult centre / terraced garden site could be carried out without adverse impact upon the landscape character of the wider area. Impact upon the protected trees could be minimised by employing a sympathetic layout. However, the proposal would involve the loss of an existing area of open space which is used for local recreational purposes, and which adds to the character of the area. Although the land is not specifically allocated as open space in the plan, the proposal would nonetheless be contrary to Policy R2 of the Clydebank Local Plan

2004, which seeks to protect existing areas of recreational and open space from development.

The existing access into the estate is by way of a private road, and this would require to become a public road in order to serve the proposed new housing. No plans showing works to the road have been provided, but upgrading this road to an adoptable standard may require modifications to the alignment of its junction with Mountblow Road. The existing junction of the private road is opposite an existing bus terminus / layover point and its proximity to the junctions with Perth Crescent and the A82 westbound slip road does not meet the Council's usual junction separation distance. The upgrading may require the removal of some of the existing trees from the site frontage.

The parkland site was considered for residential development in 2001-02, during the preparation of the Clydebank Local Plan. At that time it was considered that the housing land supply was overwhelmingly comprised of urban brownfield sites, and that there was insufficient variety. The parkland site was therefore suggested as a location for approximately 80 dwellings. That proposal attracted approximately 200 objections from individuals. Partly as a result of this substantial body of local objection, the Council modified the plan, and the housing allocation was not included in the adopted plan. Alternative greenfield land for large suburban houses was instead allocated at Cochno Road.

In the event of the Committee being minded to approve this application, it would require to be referred to the Scottish Ministers, on account of the Council's interest in the site and the fact that it would involve a departure from the statutory development plan within a defined Green Belt.

H. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There is broad policy support for the provision of important community facilities such as the children's therapy centre and the adult occupational centre, and the Auchentoshan Estate is considered to be a suitable location for such uses. The introduction of significant housing development to the estate would normally be incompatible with Green Belt policies. Planning policy, particularly the newly published SPP21 Green Belts, indicates that the redevelopment of institutional uses in the Green Belt can be considered. While it is accepted that proposals of this nature should ideally be considered with the Development Plan, there is a pressing need to deal with this issue in this case. **Having regard to the above, it is recommended that this application be granted subject to the following conditions.**

I. CONDITIONS

1. **Approval of the details of the siting, design and external appearance of the building(s), the means of access thereto and the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be obtained from the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services within 3 years of the date of this permission and the development must be commenced within 5 years of the date of this permission or within 2 years from the date of final approval of all the foregoing reserved matters.**
2. **No development shall take place within the development site until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services. Thereafter, the developer shall ensure that the programme of agreed archaeological works is fully implemented and that all recording and recovery of archaeological resources within the development site is undertaken to the satisfaction of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services.**
3. **At the same time as the Reserved Matters, detailed plans shall be submitted which clearly illustrate in cross-section form, the existing and proposed ground levels, the finished floor levels of the proposed development and the extent of any under-building involved. The floor levels shall clearly relate to a Fixed Datum Point on the site which shall be clearly identified on the submitted plans.**
4. **All new roads and footpaths within the site, and those existing roads and footpaths utilised to access the site (including the junction onto Mountblow Road), shall be constructed to or upgraded to the specifications required in the Council's adopted Roads Development Guide. Details of these works shall be submitted for the agreement of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services along with the Reserved Matters.**
5. **Full details, including phasing, of a surface water drainage scheme shall be submitted along with the Reserved Matters.**
6. **The existing trees and shrubs on site shall not be lopped, topped, felled, lifted, removed or disturbed in any way without the prior written consent of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services.**

- 7. At the same time as Reserved Matters, the developer shall submit a detailed survey of all trees and hedging on the site. This survey shall be displayed on a site layout plan and include an identification of the existing tree species, an estimation of their height and spread of branches and their location within the site accurately plotted (any trees around the perimeter which overhang onto the site shall also be included). Those trees which it is proposed to retain and those to be felled or remove shall be identified.**
- 8. No development shall commence on the site until the trees marked for retention in the aforementioned plan, have been protected by suitable fencing erected around the extremities of the crowns of these trees. Details of this fencing shall be submitted for the consideration and written approval of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services prior to commencement of works.**
- 9. During all construction works on site, including the provision of services, any excavation works through root areas shall only be undertaken by hand.**
- 10. The development shall be landscaped in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted along with the Reserved Matters. The scheme shall indicate the siting, numbers, species and heights (at the time of planting) of all trees, shrubs and hedges to be planted and the extent of any areas of earth mounding, and shall ensure:-**

 - (a) completion of the scheme during the planting season next following the completion of the building(s), or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services,**
 - (b) the maintenance of the landscaped areas for a period of five years or until established, whichever may be longer. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within three years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.**
- 11. Full details of the design and location of all fences and walls to be erected on the site shall be submitted along with the Reserved Matters.**
- 12. Full details of all hard surfacing to be provided on the site shall be submitted along with the Reserved Matters.**

13. That prior to the occupation of any house in this development all roads and footpaths within and serving the development shall be completed to the level of bottoming and bitmac base course, including the access bell mouth, visibility splay and all turning heads to the satisfaction of the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services.
14. Prior to occupation of the last dwellinghouse in the development, all roads and footpaths within and serving the development shall be completed to their final specification and adoptable standard of the Roads Authority.
15. No dwellinghouse shall be occupied until the vehicle parking spaces and turning area has been provided within the site in accordance with the approved plan. The space shall thereafter be kept available for parking at all times.
16. If during demolition, site preparation or construction, the presence of any contamination of the ground within the site is detected, this shall be reported to the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services within one week. At this stage, if requested by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services, a comprehensive contaminated land investigation shall be carried out and appropriate mitigation measures shall be agreed with the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services.
17. During the period of construction, all works and ancillary operations which are audible at the site boundary (or at such other places as may be agreed with the Council) shall be carried out only between the hours of 08.00 and 18.00 Monday to Saturday inclusive, and not at all on a Sunday or Public Holiday.
18. During all demolition and construction works the plant and machinery used shall be in accordance with the relevant Codes of Practice specified in the Control of Noise (Codes of Practice for Construction and Open Sites) (Scotland) Order 2002

David McMillan
Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services
Date: 28 August 2006

Wards affected: 4

Appendix: None

Background Papers:

1. application forms and plans;
2. letters of representation from:
 - i. Eric Blackwell;
 - ii. David McKinnon;
 - iii. James N. Paisley
 - iv. Helen Fraser
 - v. Parkhall, North Kilbowie & Central Community Council
 - vi. Clydebelt
3. consultation responses from:
 - i. Scottish Water;
 - ii. SEPA
 - iii. SportScotland
 - iv. WSAS

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