

MUCKHART COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Muckhart Community Council, held in the Coronation Hall, on Wednesday 24th July 2019, at 7:30pm regarding the development of site H49

Present:	John Anderson (JA)	Chair
	Patrick Thompson (PT)	Vice-Chair
	Mike Wilson (MRW)	Secretary
	Philip Lord (PL)	Minute Secretary
	Stuart Dean (SD)	
	Jon Jordan (JJ)	
	Marlene White (MW)	
	Val Whyte (VW)	
	Peter Wyatt (PW)	

Status: **Approved**

N.B. the Coronation Hall was opened at 7:00pm to offer both members and residents the opportunity to examine the complete set of Springfield Planning Application documents which had been made available for review. The Special Meeting itself began at 7:30pm.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Muckhart Community Council (MCC) members Jonathan Bacon (JB) and Danny Conroy (DC).

2. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

3. Welcome and Introduction

JA welcomed the MCC members and circa 65 members of the community to the meeting.

Before proceeding to the main business of the meeting, JA noted the passing away of Ken Bibby who, in the past, had served over many years as a member of MCC and who had made many significant contributions to the village and the wider Muckhart area. He expressed his thanks, on behalf of the members, for all of Ken's contributions.

JA went on to note that the purpose of this Special Meeting was to determine MCC's response to the Planning Application, submitted by Springfield Properties plc, to develop part of area H49 (Reference: 19/00148/FULL - Clacks website). He noted that Clackmannanshire Council had granted an extension to the statutory three week period for comments, until 9th August, due to the application being submitted at the start of the summer holidays.

JA thanked the Planning Group for all of their hard work, in examining the documents submitted by Springfield, in preparation for the meeting. Thanks were also expressed to Mona's of Muckhart for agreeing to hold a printed copy of the documents for public viewing (note: the documents will remain at Mona's until 9th August).

An agenda had been distributed listing eight issues for consideration or as possible reasons to object to the proposals. JJ asked that a ninth issue, Sustainability, be added to this list, and that that Transport be added to the 6th item (Traffic calming and footpaths). These were agreed.

A presentation had been prepared, to assist the discussion, and JA asked SD to lead us through the slides which also provided some background information.

4. Outline of Proposals

SD gave a short presentation on the history of the development and the key facts regarding the Springfield application. The main points were:

- The H49 site was identified in the 2015 Clackmannanshire Council Local Development Plan (LDP). The original proposal, as outlined in the Main Issues Report, suggested 160 houses spread over the current H49 area and across Maudies Loan, east towards the Yetts. The community objected to this proposal and, with the assistance of Cllr Alistair Campbell, this figure was reduced to 80 houses, all to located west of Maudies Loan. The number of 80 was subsequently reduced to 35 houses, on the current H49 site, further to Cllr Campbell arguing that this figure was Muckhart's proportional share of the overall expected increase in Clackmannanshire's housing, over the period of the LDP, and this reduced figure was supported by the community. (Cllr Campbell also argued that the area of H49 be reduced, commensurately, due to the decrease in the number of houses allocated, but this was not accepted by the Council, at the time)
- In the LDP, H49 covers 6.64 hectares, with 35 houses allocated for the whole of the site, equating to a density of 5.3 houses, per hectare
- The current Application by Springfield encompasses only the Izat's share of H49, an area which comprises 4.32 hectares (approximately two thirds of the total H49 site). However, nearly half of this area is unsuitable for housing, due to the impact of a 1 in 200-year flood risk, leaving only 2.47 hectares available for development
- Springfield is proposing to build 50 houses on this remaining tranche of land, equating to an actual density of 20.2 houses, per hectare. However, in the Application, they quote a value of 11 houses, per hectare, which encompasses the whole area of the Izat's land, not just the area that can be developed. For comparison, the approximate housing density in Pool of Muckhart is close to 8.2 houses, per hectare. The increase in the number of houses proposed is 43% over the LDP allocation. 50 houses represents an increase of approximately 45% in the size of the village, in terms of the current number of houses (and at least this in terms of population), taking place over a relatively short period of time
- SD presented a table of the properties proposed; 38 houses as private dwellings and 12 as affordable (rented). The distribution of number homes and number of bedrooms as follows:

	No. of Bedrooms	No. of Houses
Private:		
Bungalows	3	3
Detached houses	4	20
Detached houses	5	15
Affordable:		
Terraced bungalows	2	3
Terraced houses	3	9

- The Muckhart Community Plan (MCP), which again resulted from a lengthy and detailed consultation process within the community, states that: “Any new homes to be built on site H49 as detailed in the Local Development Plan, should number no more than 35”. The plan also notes a community desire for “gradual and incremental growth”
- SD concluded by noting that it must be remembered that: a) Councils do not treat necessarily the number of houses included in an LDP, as an absolute maximum, and b) the most successful arguments against a proposal are those which are based on planning regulations and the LDP in particular

5. Issues to be considered

The meeting then went on to discuss the various issues raised in turn:

a) Number and Density of Houses

SD noted three arguments for objecting to the development:

- I. The increase in the number of houses to 50, over the LDP figure of 35, a figure which had been arrived at through due democratic processes, detailed consultation and had community acceptance (this would result in nearly a 50% increase in the size of the village)
- II. The density of houses proposed at circa 20, per hectare, four times that as detailed in the LDP, and over twice the current density for Pool of Muckhart; furthermore the figure of 11 houses, per hectare, outlined in the Application was a slight of hand, since the whole of the site area had been used, half of which is not suitable for building. SD noted the LDP says that housing densities should “...reflect the townscape and quality of the surrounding area.” Clearly this is not the case.
- III. The Application argues (Planning Statement: paras 2.10 to 2.27) that since Clackmannanshire Council is behind with their expected build of new houses, the proposed development would help hit their targets. He asked the question, why should high density housing be built in Muckhart, in order to solve the problem of a lack of building on sites elsewhere in Clackmannanshire?

The proposal was opened to debate:

- PL noted that the proposed development would increase the number of houses in the Pool by about 45% over a very short period, and that this would seriously damage the character of the village and community

- Mrs Allan noted that the area of H49, under her family's control, was being prepared as a wildlife area. This was greeted warmly by the meeting
- Another resident noted that the applicant can push for even more houses after being given the go ahead. There is a need to get a fixed limit to the number which can be built
- A resident asked whether it is possible to negotiate down the 35 houses to 25 (commensurate with the area left for development and the LDP figure of 25)? SD noted that there was no element of negotiation in the process but that MCC could comment on this point
- Another resident asked if the power cables, now running overhead across the northern side of the site, would be taken underground? MRW confirmed that this was MCC's understanding
- SD asked for views on the mixture of housing proposed; PL noted that 70% of the houses were 4 or 5-bedroomed
- SD also asked are we objecting to the design and style of the houses?
- PL and PW agreed that the uniformity of design of the houses was out of character with the nature of the village. PL also noted that the style of housing was out of character with the village's status as a Conservation Area
- MW noted that it would be preferable to have smaller house and noted this would also be more in keeping with the Conservation Area
- A resident noted that he had photographs over a 20-year period showing regular floods on the pool area
- JJ noted that if development should go ahead on this site, we would need something much more special and sensitive in the pool site than that proposed - after all this is where the village gets its name

JA asked members if they agreed that the key points, relating to housing numbers and density, as raised by SD, should be used by MCC as the basis for a formal objection. This proposal was agreed unanimously.

It was noted that some of the supporting comments would also be included in MCC's response to the consultation.

b) Landscape

SD raised issues regarding landscape – e.g. Is the proposed development sympathetic to, and does it enhance, the local landscape character?; has proper attention been given to the local landscape character including features such a trees, woodland, key views to and from the site?; and, does the proposed development protect views into and out of the Conservation Area as required in the Conservation Area Appraisal?

He noted that many comments had already been provided on this subject and that these will be collated. This will be discussed further should the development proceed.

c) Biodiversity and Ecology

SD noted that the ecology report had been conducted after a single site visit in February, thus, not the optimum time for observing the full extent of wildlife on the site; a further ecology report expected in July had not been seen. He noted that the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) has indicated that it would be commenting on the biodiversity/ecological aspect of the application and that the Planning Group was in communication with them.

One idea, which had emerged in the Group's discussions, was the development of a corridor of trees along the eastern edge of Maudies Loan, as a compensatory wildlife corridor. Possibilities for leaving the "pool" area as marsh or as a reconstructed pool were also discussed. However, again these are matters for further discussion with the community should the development proceed.

Comments made:

- PW asked whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should have been produced?
- A resident commented that the ecology report says the site "comprises woodland" which is not true - is this a slight of hand by the rapporteur? She also noted that a wider wildlife corridor would be desirable on the **western** side of Maudies Loan

JA asked if members were happy that the points noted above were commented upon in our response to the consultation, including investigating the need for an EIA? This was agreed by all.

d) Bowling Green Area

SD reported both Springfield and the Council had indicated they would like to discuss what should be included and located here, should the development proceed. This would be for a later stage.

e) Traffic Calming, Transport and Footpaths

SD started the discussion noting it was MCC's understanding that proposed traffic calming measures in the village would be a matter for further discussions.

Comments made:

- JJ drew attention to the Transport Statement which appeared to be "a fantasy" with regard to the low level of additional traffic movements it predicts. Given the number and size of the proposed housing, and the lack of employment within the local area, there will be a significant increase in the number of car journeys undertaken from the proposed development
- PL concurred with this. He also noted that the report does not give an accurate picture of the availability of public transport, as there are only four buses, per day, and none on a Sunday. Further, places of work are not accessible by 9:00am by public transport, except to the very closest Hillfoots villages. He also noted

that the proposed on-site roads are narrow, with cul-de-sacs, and this will cause road safety issues – especially if there is road-side parking and in the light of increased home deliveries and utility vehicle access

- MW noted that we can expect at least another 100 car journeys resulting from the development – there will, on average, be over two, per day, per household
- MRW noted that the Transport Statement was probably the weakest of the proposal documents. He also noted that it did not address the written request by the Council’s Transport Officer (Lesley Deans) for it to address the enhancement of walking, cycling and public transport within the wider Muckhart area

Again, it was agreed, unanimously, this matter should be commented upon with a review of the report and a subsequent revision requested.

f) Planning Gain

SD noted that this was a topic was still open at this stage and would be the subject of further discussions. He noted various proposals including improved connectivity of local foot and cycle paths, education gains to benefit the school and proposed traffic calming measures, such as improvements to the existing zebra crossing and village gateways.

- A resident noted that some properties around Muckhart were still not able to connect to a fast, fibre broadband service and that remedies to that might be considered. MRW commented that this topic had already been raised, in discussions with Springfield, together with a request that any future fibre cabinet should be sited to also benefit those properties with no current connectivity

g) Flood Risk

SD noted that SEPA have yet to respond to the Application.

- A resident asked if there was a need to (re)consider this question in the light of forthcoming climate change report

h) Sustainability

- JJ drew attention to the lack of discussion of the subject of sustainability by Springfield - it is only mentioned in section 3.3 of the Planning Statement. He expressed his dissatisfaction, specifically, with the sections relating to district heating schemes (see 4.11 to 4.19) which fail to make the case for such systems; furthermore, it makes assumptions (para 4.16) about people’s preferences. He noted that the Council already has experience with district heating systems.

i) Any Other Issues

JA asked for any other contributions:

- Resident: what will the effect on the village school be? The emphasis on larger houses may not help it, as these owners would be likely to send their children to Dollar Academy. MRW commented that this point had already been raised and noted

- Resident: does the sewerage and water treatment plant have enough capacity? SD noted that it was his understanding that Scottish Water would be obliged to make the necessary upgrades (but it is not clear who pays for this)
- Resident: will car charging points be made available and is there enough capacity in the local sub-station?
- PL: a number of residents fear that the design and layout of the proposed development will create an enclave within the village; worse, the siting of affordable housing at the very end of the cul-de-sac may make an enclave within an enclave. SD noted that we need to comment on this issue to the Council
- Resident: what are this community's "red lines" over this proposal. Surely to be successful these need to be defined. Also, do we know what has worked in similar places?
- MW noted a case in Inverness where Springfield was refused approval. This will be investigated

6. Thanks

JA again thanked the Planning Group members for all the hard work they had put into preparing for this meeting and to the members of the community attending for their contributions.

He urged members of the community to submit their own individual objections and comments to the Council via the Clacksweb site:

<https://publicaccess.clacks.gov.uk/publicaccess/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=makeComment&keyVal=PTGD4REYIHH00>

He noted the more comments that are made, the better.

MRW also urged residents, who have not already done so, to sign up to the MCC Community mailing list. This will allow them to keep up-to-date with the Application, as well as other community-related issues and topics, as it progresses. He can be contacted via the MCC Secretary's email address: sec.muckhartcc@gmail.com

The meeting closed at 9:25pm.