

Blacklands Place Planning Application

TP/ED/17/0517

A Report to Lenzie Community Council

Cala Homes Ltd. has submitted an application to EDC on the 14th of July seeking planning permission to develop a site beside the A806 (Initiative Road/KLR) on the southern edge of Lenzie (see map below).



The area inside the site boundary measures around 7 hectares while the area scheduled for development extends to just over 3 hectares. The southern half of the site forms part of the Millersneuk Wetland, a Local Nature Conservation Site and will not be developed. The northern section that is earmarked for development comprises an open arable field currently used for pasture. The construction site is bounded on three sides by strips of mature deciduous trees. The northern and western strips are subject to tree preservation orders while the southern strip on the edge of the wetland is unprotected. Nevertheless, Cala Homes has promised to protect this strip and use it to form the southern border of the developed site. The Cult burn forms the southern boundary of the extended site while the A806 forms the eastern boundary. The site will be accessed from Blacklands Place in the north-east corner. The northern part of the site is quite steep, dropping some 20 metres from the north to the south while the southern part is flat, lowlying and badly drained.

The proposed development will include a total of 74 dwelling units of which 26 will be affordable. The 48 private dwellings will comprise split-level (to take account of the slope – see drawing on page 3), semi-detached and detached houses. The house types will come in a range of sizes including 3, 4 and 5 bedroom family homes (see table on page 3). The affordable houses will be a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. The developer states that “the height and density of the new neighbourhood [will be] in line with that of the surrounding areas and suitable for the location”.

The diagram below shows the proposed layout of the site.



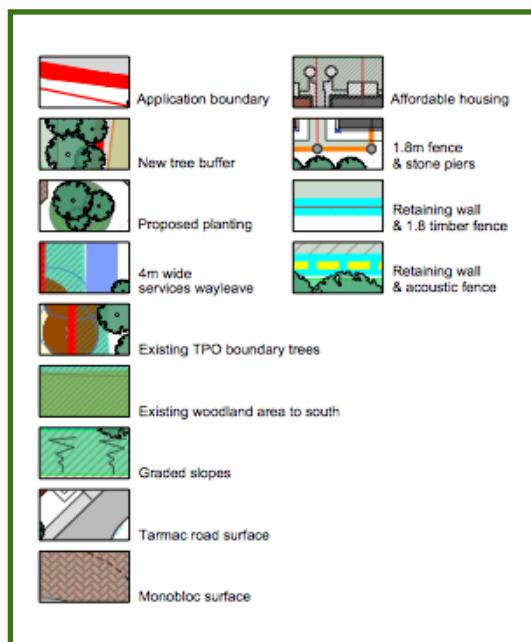
As stated earlier, access to the site is gained from Blacklands Place in the north-east. Internal roads move around a triangular area in the centre and branch out to the corners. Some parts of the internal roads are tarmaced while other parts are monoblocoed. A retaining wall will be built along the southern edge in order to reduce the angle of slope and prevent flooding. This wall will be topped with a 1.8 metre timber fence. A band of trees will be planted along the eastern edge and south-eastern corner of the site to reduce noise levels from the main road. An acoustic fence will also be built along the edge of the trees.

Drainage from the site will be directed to an attenuation pond in the SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) area located in the southwest corner. According to the developer, water flowing towards the wetland from the SuDS area will be filtered and cleaned before being released.

A children's play area will be constructed in the south-eastern part of the site while an area of open space will be created near the entrance in the north-east. Other, smaller areas of open space will be established throughout the site. Open spaces within the site will be served by cycleways and footpaths. These will be linked to existing footpaths in the local area.

The developer states that all buildings will be restricted to two storeys and will be “of a traditional architectural style” and constructed from traditional materials including “reconstituted stone, smooth render and roughcast, in a choice of subtle colours”. All dwellings will be roofed in dark grey concrete tiles. Houses will be positioned “so as to create a varied building line along the street”.

The tables on the next page show the range and type of dwellings proposed for the site. The affordable houses will be confined to the south-eastern corner and will number 26 units. There will be sixteen flats of which eight will be cottage flats. Half the flats will have one bedroom, the other half two bedrooms. There will be four two-bedroom semis and 6 three-bedroom semis.



There will be 48 private houses, mostly detached. The private houses will vary greatly in style and size. There will be six three-beds, two four-beds, fifteen four-bed plus study, twenty-one five-bed and four five-bed plus study.

Affordable housing units will range in floor area from around 50 square metres for the one-bedroom flats to around 90 square metres for the three-bedroom semis.

The floor area of the private houses will range from around 106 square metres to a huge 280 square metres for the five-bedroom plus study Macrea detached house. The average housing density will be around 25 units per hectare (including flats).

Affordable Units	Beds	No.	ft2	Total ft2
FLAT - 2P-1B	1	8	540	4320
FLAT - 4P-2B	2	8	780	6240
SEMI - 4P-2B	2	4	884	3536
SEMI - 5P-3B	3	6	972	5832
		26		19,928

House Type	Beds	No.	ft2	Total ft2
AVON	3	2	1140	2280
ARTHUR	3	4	1232	4928
BRYCE	4	2	1594	3188
DARROCH	5	4	1981	7844
DEWAR	4 + S	4	1977	7908
FRASER	4 + S	5	2023	10115
INNES	4 + S	2	2062	4124
KENNEDY	5	6	2204	13224
LOGAN	5	4	2225	8900
LEWIS	5	4	2386	9544
ELLIOT (dg st)	4 + S	4	2408	9632
MELVILLE	5	3	2459	7377
MONCRIEF	5 + S	3	2513	7539
MACRAE (dg st)	5 + S	1	3000	3000
		48		99,603

The drawing on the left shows how a split-level house accommodates the slope of the site.

The diagram below shows an artist's impression of the site layout.



Lenzie Community Council's Response

Lenzie Community Council may not object to the construction of houses on this site since the rectangular area north of the Wetland has been designated for housing development in EDC's Development Plan which came into effect in February 2017. According to the Plan, the capacity of the site would be around 70 units.

So far as the Community Council is concerned, it can only object to aspects of the proposed development on what are called "material grounds". Material grounds include:

Amenity (for example noise, traffic, impact on sunlight, or privacy)

Design (for example height of buildings, density of development, detailing and materials, or how the proposed development takes account of its surroundings)

Environmental impact (for example loss of trees or open space, flooding or impact on wildlife)

Policy (for example has the proposal taken account of the Development Plan)

Access (for example public transport access, adequacy of parking provision or cycle and footpath provision)

As a small community council, LCC does not have the expertise to challenge the effectiveness of promises made by developers to overcome problems discovered by pre-construction surveys. Neither does it have the resources to engage specialists to verify claims made by developers. It has to rely on agencies like SEPA and other interested groups and organisations to examine critically developers' assertions.

Amenity

Noise

A noise assessment survey was conducted on behalf of CALA Homes (West) Ltd by EnviroCentre.

The survey found that "*daytime external garden noise levels are predicted to exceed the lower World Health Organisation target of 50dB(A) at the most exposed properties (ie next to the KLR). Night-time internal noise levels in the bedrooms of the most exposed properties are predicted to exceed the target of 30dB(A) when considering partially open windows*".

In response to these findings, Cala has undertaken to plant trees, erect an acoustic fence and fit special noise reducing windows to houses to be built along the eastern border close to the KLR. It is not possible for Lenzie Community Council to prove or disprove these measures will be capable of dealing effectively with the noise problem predicted by the surveyors.

Traffic

On the face of it, traffic from this site should not cause too many problems except perhaps during the morning and afternoon rush hours. Vehicles leaving the site will turn right onto Blacklands Place, turn left at the junction of Blacklands Place and Lyndsaybeg Road and head for the Lyndsaybeg roundabout which provides easy access to the motorways as well as to Lenzie and Kirkintilloch. A traffic report commissioned by Cala Homes from Transport Planning Ltd. estimates that around 40 vehicles are likely to pass through the site entrance during the morning and evening rush hours. This estimate of 0.54 vehicles per household departing and arriving during the periods 08.10 and 09.10 am and 16.50 and 17.50 pm appears conservative given the probable high rate of car ownership in the new estate. The report assumes that many residents will walk to Lenzie Station or to local bus stops or cycle to work and school. That remains to be seen.

Design

This appears to be a well-designed plan. The developer has tried to squeeze in three or four extra houses but house type, house style, housing density, open space, connectivity, garden size are all within acceptable limits. The proposed estate is well laid out with priority given to cyclists and pedestrians over vehicles. According to the plans, the site will be connected by footpaths to the local footpath network. The development will be self-contained and has the potential to form a close community. The open-plan design will enable residents to meet their neighbours regularly.

Environmental Impact

Trees and Open Space

The strips of deciduous trees on the northern and western margins of the site are protected and will be retained. The southern strip is not protected but will be preserved to form a buffer zone between the housing estate and the Wetland. A new band of trees will be planted on the eastern edge along the side of Initiative Road (KLR) to reduce noise from the highway. A number of additional trees will be planted throughout the site (see site plan on page 2).

A children's play area and an area of open space will be created on the site and smaller parcels of open space will be formed throughout the estate.

Flood Control

A flood risk assessment conducted by Terrenus Land and Water on behalf of Cala Homes concluded that "*the risk of flooding to the site from overland (surface water) flow, drainage failure or raised groundwater levels is considered to be low to insignificant. The 0.5% probability event (1 in 200 year return period) has been considered for the Cult Burn including an appropriate uplift for potential global climate change over the next 50 to 75 years. This outline analysis suggests that the southern wetland portion of the site will inundate during the design storm but that only the fence line marking the southern limit of the central and northern agricultural portions of the site will be impacted during such an event. The peak water level during the design storm will be below 57m OD. Access to the site lies above the risk of fluvial flooding for both pedestrians and vehicles at all times. It is concluded that the proposed development is feasible and in accordance with the general principles of the Scottish Planning Policy*".

As was mentioned earlier, the developer proposes to erect a retaining wall on the southern edge of the existing band of trees to reduce further the possibility of flooding.

Run-Off Water

All surface drainage from the site will be channelled to a SuDS area which will be located at the south-western end of the site. According to the developer, water seeping away from this area into the Wetland will be filtered to ensure it will not pollute the nature reserve. Again, Lenzie Community Council is unable to assess whether the claims of the developer can be trusted. The LCC depends on SEPA and other interested bodies to examine these claims thoroughly.

The Wetland

Since this site includes part of the Millersneuk Wetland (a Local Nature Conservation Site), the construction of houses so close to the conservation site poses risks to protected local flora and fauna. The EDC Development Plan states that "*Development should avoid the floodplain of the Cult Burn, provide open space and enhance wetland in the south and south-east of the site). No housing should be developed within the Millersneuk Wetlands Local Nature Conservation Site. Landscape capacity for development area excludes the marshland to the south and impact on landscape should be mitigated by low-density development and landscaping in the east and south to screen development from the A806*". Every effort should be made "*to enhance high biodiversity value of Millersneuk Wetland LNCS and [its] protected species. Further survey work [will be needed] prior to development [to detect the] presence of water vole, otter, badger, bat and nesting bird species including appropriate mitigation. Owing to the importance of the Millersneuk Wetland to water voles, surveys should pay particular attention to the distribution burrows within this area. The location of any proposed development should avoid encroaching on water vole burrow areas in order to avoid negative effects on the local population*".

EnviroCentre Limited was commissioned by CALA Homes (West) Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Wetland site in order to identify all broad habitat types within the site boundary. The survey included a search for suitable habitat for and evidence of protected species (i.e. bats, great crested newt, otter, water vole and badger). A second, more detailed ecological survey was conducted by EnviroCentre at a later date.

According to the reports produced by EnviroCentre, the two ecological surveys found no evidence of protected fauna within that part of the site designated for development. Within the section of the site which forms part of the Wetland, water voles were the only protected species found by the surveyors. There was no trace of great crested newts within the site although there was evidence that members of that species were present elsewhere in the Wetland.

The reports made a number of recommendations aimed especially at the protection of the water voles.

Prior to construction

1. *A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will be produced to monitor the function and connectivity of the Millersneuk Wetland and to ensure water is present in the wetland year round;*
2. *Tool box talks will be provided to all construction staff advising of the presence of water vole in the Millersneuk Wetland and the importance of the buffer zone;*
3. *The site compound will be sited away from wetland habitats (as a minimum 10m away) to protect them from pollution;*
4. *Measures will be in place to preserve water quality and prevent watercourse pollution following SEPA Guidelines for Pollution Prevention (GPPs); and*
5. *The culverts under the A806 will be maintained.*

Post construction

1. *Public access into the Millersneuk Wetland will be restricted by the use of post and wire fencing;*
2. *To help ensure that the disturbance to water vole is kept to a minimum, interpretation boards will be erected adjacent to the Millersneuk Wetland which will explain the sensitivity of the area to disturbance, focussing on dog walkers and what they can do to avoid or minimise. This information will be provided following consultation with the East Dunbartonshire Council Biodiversity Officer and a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.*
3. *Annual auditing and assessment of the water vole population and the status of the Millersneuk Wetland and an update of the management requirements for the wetland if required;*

Again, LCC is not in a position to judge whether or not these measures are adequate for their intended purpose or to check if they have been implemented when the housing estate is completed.

Policy

A number of key requirements set out in EDC's Development Plan in respect of this site have been covered in this report already. These include flood risk, environmental impact, noise etc. The Development plan also stipulates that 35% of housing units on this site must be affordable housing. In this case, that stipulation has been met, if only just. The plan includes 26 affordable houses ranging from one-bedroom flats to three-bedroom semis. Twenty-six affordable houses in an estate of 74 houses = 35.14%.

Access

The Access heading includes matters like public transport facilities, parking provision, cycleways and footpath provision.

This is what the Cala claims about public transport in the company's Design and Access Statement: *Lenzie is currently well served by existing bus services operated by First Group and McGill Buses. First Group provides services in the area including the X85 / X87. These services provide regular access to Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station and takes approx. 20 minutes. It also provides access through Kirkintilloch, Milton of Campsie, Lennoxtown and finishes at Clachan of Campsie. Services provided by McGill Buses within the area include the 72 which runs from Glasgow City Centre through Lenzie towards Torrance. Route 178 provides access from Kirkintilloch through Lenzie to Moodiesburn. The site's nearest bus stop is located on Auchinloch Road to the west within a 15-20 minute walk.*

Lenzie Railway Station is located approximately a mile from the application site and is within a 20-minute walk. Services from this station provide quick and regular access south to Glasgow Queen Street Station (in approximately 15 minutes) and east towards Alloa, Stirling and Dunblane.

This is what the statement says about cycleways and footpaths:

The National Cycle Route 754 runs to the north of the site - accessed by the local road network. This route is approximately 56 miles long and runs across central Scotland from Edinburgh to Glasgow and is entirely traffic-free. It runs from Fountainbridge, near the centre of Edinburgh on the towpath of the Union Canal, through the towns of Broxburn, Linlithgow and Falkirk. The site offers the potential to improve the existing footpath network through the new neighbourhood. These will help to improve the connectivity of the area and serve to integrate the new development into its surrounding context.

The plans show footpath and cycle path links from the site to Lyndsaybeg road along the existing path between Netherhouse Avenue and Laxton Drive and also to Broomknowes Avenue. The plans appear to show a link from the site to Newton Road but this access point is not described in the text. These links are shown on the map below.



That concludes my report. I would appreciate any comments you might have or suggestions concerning LCC's reaction to this proposal.

John MacFadden,
Planning Convener,
Lenzie Community Council.

