

Woodilee Road Hotel Proposal TP/ED/18/0292

Introduction

Lenzie Community Council has considered the above revised application to build a 24-bed hotel and wishes to oppose this proposed development. Three material grounds are cited in support of this opinion, namely **environmental impact**, relating to the well-being of protected trees, **access issues**, relating to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists travelling on a designated 'active travel' route and **parking**.

Environmental Impact

Problematic features of this site are the former railway embankment, which runs SW/NE at the rear of the site, together with the parallel row of protected trees which lie behind it. These features can be seen in figure 1 below, where the embankment is marked out by closely spaced contours and the protected trees and their root protection areas (RPA) are shown behind the embankment. This also shows that the rising face of the embankment is to be excavated to accommodate the proposed building, with a 2 – 3m high gabion retaining wall on the remaining embankment.

Another important factor on the site is that a substantial growth of trees had taken place on the embankment over the years, but these were unprotected and were felled without permission. There was therefore a requirement from the Forestry Commission that these trees be replaced, although not necessarily in the same positions as they had been growing. The applicants now propose that a large proportion of these replacements should be positioned on the remainder of the embankment, as shown by the small circles on figure 1.

In two previous proposals for this site, it was argued that the embankment could be removed in whole or in part, as the area of building disturbance would be wholly or mostly outwith the RPAs of the protected trees.

The first proposal was refused and went to appeal. The Reporter rejected the appeal, citing EDC's grounds that removal of the embankment could cause *'change in ground and soil levels, change to ground stability and erosion and change in the hydrological nature of the ground'* and therefore damage the roots of the protected trees.

In the second case (28-bed hotel), embankment (bund) removal was again proposed and the arboricultural consultants stated that it is *'unlikely that any significant tree roots will have developed upward into the bund'* and therefore be damaged, thus jeopardising the health of the protected trees. LCC opposed that proposal on the grounds that no definitive assurance had been given by the developer that the protected trees would be unharmed.

In the present case, there are two factors – firstly, part of the embankment will be removed as indicated and the remainder of the excavated section will be confined behind a gabion wall and secondly, a large number of trees will be planted on the embankment in excavated holes 1.2m square and 600mm deep.

For the first factor, the tree consultants state that *'the retention of the bund will effectively provide sufficient protection to the trees'* and *'they will not be compromised in any way'*. However this does not provide a specific answer to the potential problems raised by EDC and upheld by the Reporter in the first of the Planning applications, nor is there any comment on the possibility of damage to protected tree roots

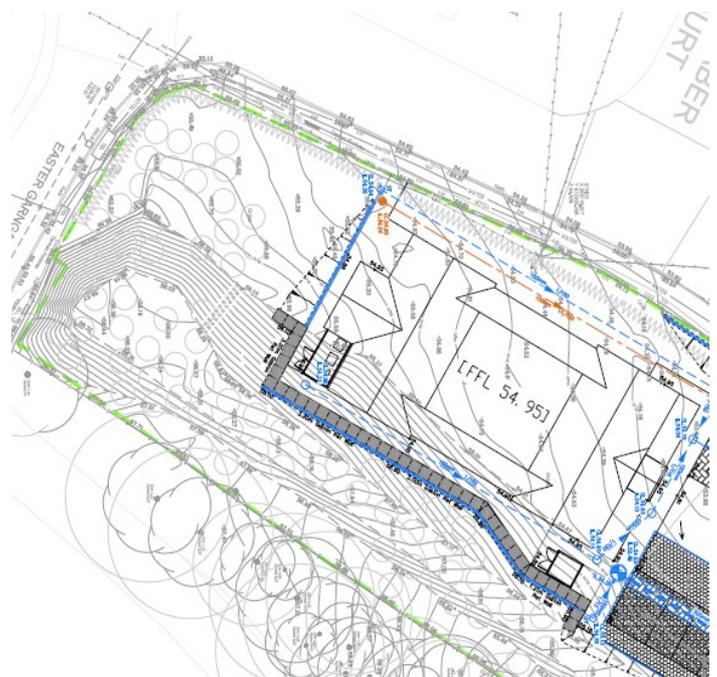


Figure 1
Contour plan of embankment and protected trees

which have penetrated the embankment.

In the case of the proposed tree re-planting, it will be seen from figure 2 that the felled trees on the embankment were mature and densely packed. This indicates that the present top surface and the main body of the embankment are closely packed with tree stumps and tree root systems. Neither the tree consultants nor the landscaping consultants have raised any questions regarding the feasibility of the re-planting operation proposed. However, it would seem reasonable to confirm that dense planting on the embankment is in fact feasible. In other respects, the re-planting plan is probably beneficial in terms of restoring the environment of the protected tree line.



Figure 2

Woodilee Road site before tree felling

Access safety

Figure 2 also shows the 'advisory' bike lanes on Garngaber Avenue. These are key elements of the 'active travel' route between Lenzie Station and Woodilee Village, which was created a few years ago. Both cycle lanes are transitioned across the end of Easter Garngaber Road into a widened and re-surfaced footpath on the south-east side of Woodilee Road. This widened footpath is essential, as the north-west footpath on Woodilee Road is very narrow and the road itself is too narrow and winding at this point for safe on-road cycling.

The history of the access junction provided for the restaurant needs some explanation. Initially, the Strathkelvin Railway Path from Kirkintilloch crossed Woodilee Road in a straight line and continued in a south-easterly direction as an unmade footpath. The major risk to pedestrian/bike users then, was from vehicles on Woodilee Road and there were warning signs to drivers to be aware of cyclists crossing. The Railway Path continuation was extinguished during the construction of Initiative Road and users were re-directed on the Woodilee Road footpaths towards the traffic lights on Initiative Road. It was at this point that the active travel route was created on the south-east footpath of Woodilee Road (and the 'cyclists crossing' signs removed).

In 2016, East Dunbartonshire Council created a new, surfaced, blank junction opposite the Railway Path, without consultation. Eighteen months later this became the access point for the new restaurant. Representations were made at the time that this access was unsafe and assurances were given at the Planning Board concerning improved signage. In the event, two double-sided '*pedestrians crossing*' signs have been provided towards the end of the access road – no mention of bikes, which arguably form the greater hazard. Although the priority should be with pedestrians '*who have started to cross*' (Highway Code rule 170) drivers tend to focus on the point where they have to stop, in this case, behind the '*stop*' line at the edge of the main road (in figure 3, at the edge of the dark grey road area on the plan). Note also that the proposal is to have a 900 mm high hedge at the edge of the footpath to the left of the access, which may affect sight lines.

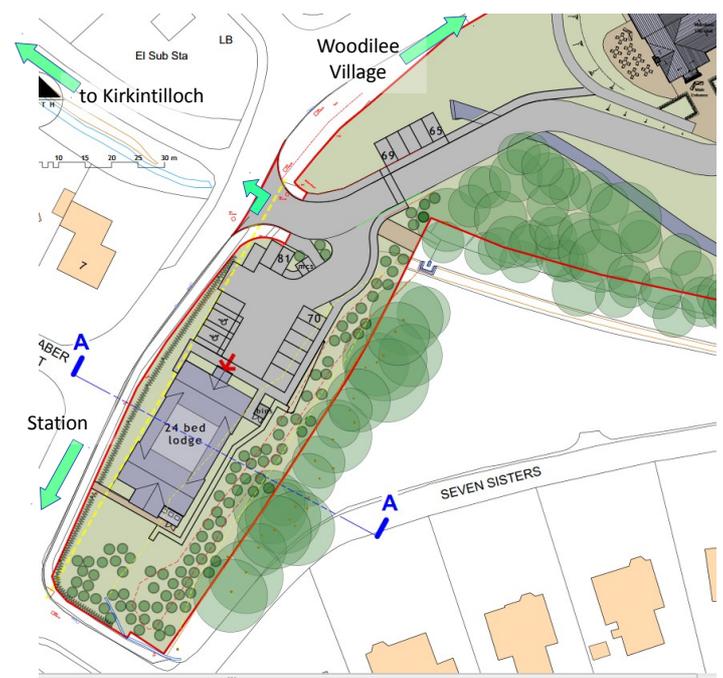


Figure 3

Interaction with active travel route

However, although direct crossing of the access road using the dropped kerbs is fairly straightforward, the manoeuvre, which is not so, is the cycle crossing from the south-east footpath to the Railway Path (following the green left-hand turn arrow on figure 3) or vice versa. The only way to do this is to turn and stop in the left-hand half of the access road and then cross when Woodilee Road is clear both ways. The reverse journey is perhaps more difficult, as a turn and stop has to be made *after* crossing Woodilee Road, by which time a vehicle may well have arrived along the access road, blocking the path to turn right (see figure 4 overleaf).

Figure 4
View across
Woodilee Road
From
Railway Path



These points have been raised previously and traffic experience since the restaurant opened has done nothing to dispel disquiet about the junction. Conflicts between vehicle movements and pedestrians/cycles do occur. Taking the increase in proposed parking spaces as a guide, over 40% increase in vehicle movements on the current situation would be expected if the hotel is built and a greater number of conflicts could reasonably be expected.

The Railway Path is the most used off-road walk/cycle way in Lenzie and the Garngaber Avenue route, from Larkfield and Woodilee to the centre of Lenzie and the Station is also much used. Woodilee Road is also a walk-to-school route, via Easter Garngaber Road. More recently, the opening of the Deafblind Scotland Centre on Initiative Road has led to a new pedestrian presence of people with sensory impairments travelling to Lenzie by train and walking from the Station to the Centre along either side of Garngaber Avenue and Woodilee Road. The footpath improvements on Woodilee Road were very welcome when they were instituted, but have been devalued by construction of the new access.

It is recognised that it is not possible to move the access location at this stage. In fact there is no need to do that if some simple measures are put in place to ensure that all road users have the space to make the crossings that they need to make and the priorities are clear. The present '*pedestrians crossing*' signs are not particularly helpful. Does the warning apply to pedestrians crossing between the dropped kerbs or at some other point along the access road? It is also noted that the present proposals for the hotel include a pedestrian crossing on the access road to the five-vehicle park. The details of this crossing are not shown, but it would seem important to use clear road markings to remove doubt about its use. Such zebra-type crossings are frequently used in supermarket car parks, despite the fact that they have no legal status without the normal beacons, signals, stop lines or zig-zag lines, but they serve a useful purpose.

If it were possible to move the dropped kerbs further into the access road and mark the location as a zebra-type crossing, this could provide sufficient space for a cyclist wishing to continue on the Railway Path to stop and turn in preparation for crossing Woodilee Road. Such a crossing would also provide a safe arrival point for a crossing from the Railway Path.

Parking

Figure 3 shows that there are 10 parking spaces at the entrance to the hotel, not including two spaces for disabled users, and a further five end-on spaces on the north side of the access road. The remaining 9 spaces, required to match the 24-bed capacity of the building, have been squeezed in at the Restaurant car park, which is some distance from the entrance in terms of moving luggage. Furthermore, there is little room left at the hotel entrance for drop off/pick up if cars are already parked there. Parked cars on the access road, as shown, also do not seem like a good idea, as drivers will require to manoeuvre into the traffic stream across the only footpath access to the restaurant. If parking provision turns out to be insufficient for the combined restaurant/hotel requirement, this will lead to indiscriminate parking along the access road and in other unsafe locations.

Conclusion

Lenzie Community Council opposes the revised Proposal to build a hotel at Woodilee Road on the material grounds that the proposers have not proved their case that there is no risk of damage to protected trees, the vehicle access cuts across a designated active travel route with little regard to those who use it and the parking arrangements are inadequate.

Thomas G F Gray – Secretary, Lenzie Community Council