

Comments for Planning Application TP/ED/26/0104

Application Summary

Application Number: TP/ED/26/0104

Address: Whitegates Park Middlemuir Road Lenzie East Dunbartonshire

Proposal: Erection of a secondary school including road access, landscaping, car parking, sports pitches, recreational areas and associated development.

Case Officer: Fraser McNair

Customer Details

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:Re: Objection to Planning Application TP/ED/26/0104

Address: Whitegates Park, Middlemuir Road, Lenzie, East Dunbartonshire

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Case Officer: Fraser McNair

Dear Mr McNair,

I am writing as a local resident to lodge a formal objection to planning application TP/ED/26/0104, which proposes the construction of a secondary school and associated infrastructure at Whitegates Park, Middlemuir Road, Lenzie. My objection is based on a range of material planning considerations, including the site's protected status, longstanding groundcontamination issues, ecological sensitivity, drainage and watertable concerns, and the significant construction complexities associated with developing contaminated land. These issues, taken together, demonstrate that the proposed development is fundamentally unsuitable for this location and would result in longterm harm to the environment, public health, and the surrounding community.

1. Protected Open Space and Conflict with Planning Policy

Whitegates Park is a designated protected open space, valued by residents for recreation, wellbeing, and its contribution to the local environment. The park is used daily by walkers, families, dog owners, and individuals seeking a safe and accessible green area within the community. Its importance extends beyond leisure; it provides a natural buffer between residential areas, contributes to air quality, and supports biodiversity.

The proposed development would result in the permanent loss of this open space, replacing it with buildings, car parks, sports pitches, and associated infrastructure. This represents a significant and irreversible change to the character of the area. The loss of protected open space is contrary to established planning policy, which seeks to safeguard such areas from development unless there are exceptional circumstances and no suitable alternative sites exist.

In this case, no such exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated. The proposal does not justify the destruction of a valued community asset, nor does it align with the principles of sustainable development. The council has a responsibility to protect designated open spaces, and approving this application would set a concerning precedent for future encroachment on protected land.

2. Ground Contamination: A LongStanding and Unresolved Issue

One of the most significant concerns associated with this site is the well documented ground contamination, which has been recognised by the council in previous planning decisions. Earlier applications for a special needs school and a nursery were rejected specifically because the contamination posed unacceptable risks, particularly to children.

These earlier refusals are highly relevant. They demonstrate that the council has already acknowledged the site's unsuitability for educational development. There is no evidence that the contamination has been remediated or that conditions have changed sufficiently to justify a different conclusion now.

Contaminated land poses serious risks to human health, especially for children, who are more vulnerable to pollutants. Exposure can occur through direct contact with soil, inhalation of dust, or ingestion of contaminated materials. Schools, by their nature, involve outdoor play, sports, and frequent ground contact, increasing the potential for exposure.

Remediation of contaminated land is often complex, costly, and disruptive. It may involve excavation, soil replacement, chemical treatment, or longterm monitoring. These processes can themselves generate environmental impacts, including dust, noise, and disturbance to wildlife. In some cases, remediation is not feasible without causing further harm to the surrounding environment.

Given the scale of the proposed development and the sensitivity of the site, the risks associated with contamination cannot be dismissed. The council has already recognised these risks in previous decisions, and there is no justification for reversing that position now.

3. Ecological Impact: Loss of Habitat for Protected and AtRisk Species

Whitegates Park is not only a valued recreational space but also an important ecological area. The council has previously acknowledged that the site supports a diverse habitat, including:

Bird species on at-risk conservation lists, and

Bat habitat, which is subject to strong legal protections under wildlife legislation

Bats, in particular, are protected under UK and European law. It is an offence to disturb, harm, or destroy bat roosts or their habitats. The presence of bats on or near the site imposes strict legal obligations on developers and planning authorities. Any development that threatens bat habitat must be subject to rigorous assessment and mitigation, and in many cases, development cannot proceed without demonstrating that no harm will occur.

Similarly, the presence of at-risk bird species highlights the ecological value of the site. These species rely on the park's natural environment for feeding, nesting, and shelter. The proposed development would destroy or severely disrupt these habitats, leading to a decline in local biodiversity.

Construction activity, increased lighting, noise, and human presence would all contribute to habitat loss and fragmentation. The introduction of artificial surfaces, buildings, and car parks would further reduce the ecological value of the area.

Protecting biodiversity is a key objective of national and local planning policy. Approving a development that would cause significant harm to protected species and their habitats would be inconsistent with these policies and contrary to the council's environmental responsibilities.

4. Drainage, Water Table, and Flood Risk Concerns

Whitegates Park plays an important role in local surface water management. As a natural green space, it absorbs rainfall, reduces runoff, and helps regulate the local water table. Developing the site with buildings, hardstanding, and sports pitches would significantly alter these natural drainage patterns.

The proposed development raises several concerns:

4.1 Increased Surface Water Runoff

Replacing permeable ground with impermeable surfaces will increase the volume and speed of surface water runoff. This can overwhelm drainage systems, leading to localised flooding, waterlogging, and increased pressure on surrounding infrastructure.

4.2 Impact on Surrounding Properties

Residents living near the park may experience increased flood risk, dampness, or water table changes as a result of altered drainage patterns. These impacts can lead to property damage, reduced property values, and long-term maintenance issues.

4.3 Disturbance of Contaminated Ground

Any remediation or construction work on contaminated land will disturb soil structure, potentially releasing pollutants into groundwater or surface water. This poses additional environmental and public health risks.

4.4 Insufficient Mitigation Measures

The application does not provide sufficient reassurance that these issues can be effectively mitigated. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) may help, but they cannot fully replicate the natural drainage capacity of a large green space. Moreover, the effectiveness of SuDS on contaminated land is limited, as infiltration may not be appropriate or safe.

Given the importance of effective drainage and the potential consequences of inadequate mitigation, the risks associated with developing this site are too great to ignore.

5. Construction Complexity, Environmental Impact, and Financial Viability

Building on contaminated land is inherently complex and costly. It requires specialist remediation, engineering solutions, and ongoing monitoring. These interventions are not only expensive but also environmentally intrusive.

5.1 Technical Challenges

Construction on contaminated land often requires:

Deep excavation

Soil removal and replacement

Installation of protective barriers

Specialist foundations

Longterm monitoring of soil and groundwater

These processes can generate dust, noise, and disruption, affecting nearby residents and wildlife.

5.2 Environmental Damage

Remediation and construction activities can harm the environment by:

Disturbing wildlife habitats

Releasing pollutants

Increasing noise and light pollution

Damaging soil structure

Given the ecological sensitivity of the site, these impacts are particularly concerning.

5.3 Financial Risks

The cost of remediation and specialist construction can escalate quickly. There is a risk that budget constraints may lead to compromises in safety, environmental protection, or construction quality. This raises legitimate concerns about the longterm viability of the project and the potential for unforeseen costs to fall on the council or taxpayers.

6. Previous Planning Decisions: A Consistent Recognition of Unsuitability

The council has already rejected previous applications for educational development on this site due to contamination and environmental concerns. These decisions are highly relevant and should carry significant weight.

The issues that led to those refusals have not been resolved. The contamination remains, the ecological value of the site is unchanged, and the risks associated with development are still present. Approving this application would contradict the council's own previous assessments and undermine the consistency and credibility of the planning process.

Conclusion

For all the reasons outlined above - including the site's protected status, longstanding contamination, ecological importance, drainage risks, construction complexities, and the council's own previous decisions - I respectfully request that planning application TP/ED/26/0104 be refused.

Whitegates Park is a valued and environmentally sensitive area that plays an important role in the community. The proposed development would cause irreversible harm to the environment, public health, and local amenity. It is not an appropriate location for a secondary school, and alternative sites should be considered.

Thank you for considering my objection. I would appreciate confirmation that it has been received and recorded