

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

Name: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am a regular user of Whitegates Park, having lived close to it for the last 25 years. I have walked and played there with children, dogs and friends on a frequent basis throughout that time. It offers a green space which is close enough to walk to and provides a healthy outdoor space in an otherwise overdeveloped area of Lenzie.

I object to this application on the following material planning grounds.

1. Loss of Accessible Public Open Space

Whitegates Park is an established and heavily used public greenspace serving the eastern part of Lenzie. The proposal would remove a significant proportion of this park and replace it with a large institutional development and associated infrastructure.

The application indicates that the land-take has increased significantly compared with earlier plans, rising from approximately 52,053 m² to around 68,800 m². This represents a substantial intensification of the development footprint and correspondingly greater loss of publicly accessible green space. No clear explanation has been provided for this increase.

While reference is made to potential replacement green space at Myrtle Avenue, this is currently only conceptual and remains many years away from delivery. Even if eventually delivered, it cannot replicate the maturity, ecological value, accessibility, or established community use of Whitegates Park.

Loss of an established public park in an area already identified as having limited accessible green

space conflicts with the objectives of both the Open Space Strategy and LDP2 policies protecting community greenspace.

2. Community Wellbeing and Equity Impacts

Whitegates Park performs an important social and wellbeing function for the surrounding community. It is one of the few easily accessible green spaces within walking distance for residents in eastern Lenzie.

The loss of this park would disproportionately affect:

- families with young children
- older residents
- people with mobility limitations
- residents who rely on nearby greenspace for everyday recreation

Relocating equivalent green space to other parts of Lenzie would worsen existing geographic inequalities in access to outdoor space identified in the Council's own Open Space Strategy.

Planning policy recognises the importance of accessible green infrastructure for physical and mental wellbeing. Removing an established community park without delivering a comparable and accessible replacement undermines those objectives.

3. Loss of Existing Sports Provision

The park currently contains a football pitch which is now recognised within the application documents as a full formal pitch.

The proposal would remove this facility without clear evidence that equivalent sports provision will be retained or replaced. Planning policy requires the protection of existing sports facilities unless replacement provision of equal or better quality is secured.

No clear replacement facility within the immediate community has been identified or guaranteed through the application. The removal of an established pitch therefore represents a reduction in local recreational infrastructure.

4. Visual and Townscape Impacts

The proposed development includes a large four-storey building located approximately 30 metres from the nearby Conservation Area and Townscape Protection Area.

Despite this sensitive context, the application does not appear to include:

- verified photomontages
- a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- visualisations from surrounding residential streets

Without such information it is difficult for decision-makers or the public to properly assess the visual impact of the development on the surrounding townscape.

Given the scale and height of the proposed building, particularly within a relatively open landscape setting, the absence of a comprehensive visual assessment represents a significant gap in the supporting information.

5. Unjustified Expansion of School Capacity

The application proposes a new school designed for approximately 1,400 pupils, however the evidence provided does not clearly justify the need for this level of capacity.

Roll projections contained within council documentation indicate that pupil numbers are expected to decline to around 1,140 by the 2028/29 academic year. Despite this projected decline, the proposed development significantly increases the designed capacity of the school.

In addition, available information suggests that a substantial proportion of pupils currently attending Lenzie Academy do so through placing requests, including pupils from outside the local authority area. If placing request patterns change in future, the projected roll figures may fall further.

The case for expanding the school to a significantly larger capacity therefore appears uncertain and insufficiently evidenced. The proposal would permanently remove a large area of protected public greenspace in order to accommodate a development whose scale may not be required to meet projected educational demand.

Given the irreversible loss of an established public park, it is essential that the scale of development is clearly justified by robust and transparent evidence. The information provided does not demonstrate that a 1,400-pupil school is necessary or that such expansion represents the most appropriate use of this site.

7. Public Access to Paths

Whitegates Park currently contains a number of pedestrian routes and informal paths used by local residents for walking and everyday access.

The application does not clearly identify which existing paths will remain publicly accessible once the school is constructed.

It is therefore important that the applicant clearly identifies all pedestrian and cycle routes within and adjoining the site and confirms which routes will remain publicly accessible.

Any routes that currently function as public paths should be retained or replaced on a like-for-like basis in terms of alignment, connectivity and accessibility.

Without clear guarantees, there is a risk that the development could reduce public permeability across the park and restrict access outside school hours.

8. Noise and Residential Amenity

The Noise Impact Assessment raises several concerns regarding potential impacts on nearby residential properties.

The baseline noise survey relied on short 10-minute measurement periods, rather than longer-term monitoring. This limited sampling raises uncertainty about whether the true baseline conditions have been accurately captured.

The assessment also acknowledges that noise from sports pitch activity could increase sound levels by up to 10 dB above evening background levels. According to the Sport Scotland guidance referenced in the report, increases of this magnitude may represent a substantial adverse impact.

Nearby residential properties, particularly those along Larkfield Road, are located close to the proposed sports pitches, with gardens approximately 35 metres from the playing areas.

The assessment also assumes sports pitch use and floodlighting until 9pm, at a time when background noise levels are typically lower and residents expect quieter conditions.

In addition, many mitigation measures described in the report - such as acoustic barriers, operational controls and spectator management - are presented as recommendations rather than firm design commitments secured through planning conditions.

Without enforceable operational controls, the predicted noise impacts cannot be relied upon.

9. Operational Assumptions and Uncertainty

Several technical assessments supporting the application rely heavily on simplified operational

assumptions. These include assumptions about:

- traffic behaviour and drop-off patterns
- sports pitch usage levels
- noise mitigation measures
- drainage performance

Many of these assumptions are not secured through enforceable planning conditions and may not reflect realistic patterns of use once the development is operational.

As a result, the cumulative impacts on nearby residential amenity and environmental conditions may be underestimated.

10. Failure to Comply with PAN 3/2010 (Community Engagement)

National planning guidance set out in Planning Advice Note (PAN) 3/2010: Community Engagement requires that communities are engaged early and meaningfully in decisions about major developments.

In this case, the site-selection process does not appear to meet those expectations.

Public engagement events focused largely on the design and layout of a school at Whitegates Park, rather than inviting meaningful discussion about whether Whitegates Park was an appropriate location for the development in the first place. The opportunity to consider alternative sites appears to have been limited.

In addition, key information regarding environmental constraints and site conditions was not available to the public during the earlier stages of consultation. This restricted the ability of residents and stakeholders to provide fully informed feedback.

Effective community engagement should take place before major decisions are effectively fixed, allowing communities to influence the choice of site as well as the design of development proposals. The process followed here appears to have consulted primarily on the form of development rather than the underlying strategic decision.

As a result, the consultation process does not appear to reflect the principles of openness, transparency and early engagement expected under PAN 3/2010.

Conclusion

Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

This proposal raises serious concerns regarding:

- loss of accessible public greenspace
- reduction in local sports provision
- transport and traffic impacts
- residential amenity effects
- visual and townscape impacts
- uncertainty around public access and operational impacts

Taken together, these issues demonstrate that the proposal would result in significant and permanent impacts on community infrastructure and local amenity.