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: Neighbour
Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application
Comment Reasons:
Comment:The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that the proposed development would result in the removal of a substantial proportion of the existing tree resource within Whitegates Park.

The report records 139 individually surveyed trees, of which 98 would require removal to facilitate the development. This represents the loss of approximately 70% of surveyed trees on the site. In addition, the assessment identifies approximately 1.71 hectares of tree canopy loss, including the removal of a significant portion of Category A woodland (TG8). Category A trees represent the highest arboricultural value and normally carry a strong presumption for retention under BS5837 and national planning policy.

The report itself identifies this woodland as the primary arboricultural constraint on the site, noting that TG8 comprises mature broadleaf woodland enclosing a wet area on the south-eastern side of the park. Despite this acknowledged constraint, the proposed layout requires the removal of approximately 0.66 hectares of this woodland canopy, representing the majority of this high-value woodland feature. The proposal would therefore result in the loss of a large proportion of one of the most significant tree groups within the park.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment also acknowledges that the site itself cannot accommodate sufficient compensatory planting, and therefore relies in part on off-site replacement planting at the existing Lenzie Academy site (Myrtle Avenue). While compensatory planting is referenced, replacement planting elsewhere does not replicate the ecological, landscape and hydrological functions provided by established mature woodland within Whitegates Park. Newly planted trees cannot replace the structural and ecological value of mature woodland for many decades.

Furthermore, the arboricultural assessment indicates that the baseline tree survey data derives primarily from surveys undertaken in 2022, with only a later walkover proposed to confirm conditions. Given the passage of several years and the presence of factors such as ash dieback affecting trees on the site, the reliance on older survey data raises questions about whether the current arboricultural baseline has been fully and accurately assessed.

The report also notes that the key woodland group surrounds a wetland or swamp feature, indicating that the woodland forms part of a sensitive wet woodland system. The removal of substantial canopy from such areas can alter local hydrology and site conditions. However, the arboricultural report does not appear to assess the interaction between woodland removal, soil conditions and drainage behaviour within this wet area.

Taken together, the proposal appears to involve the large-scale removal of mature trees and woodland, including high-value Category A woodland, in a location which the applicant's own assessment identifies as the principal arboricultural constraint on development. The scheme relies heavily on compensatory planting rather than avoidance of impact.

For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal does not demonstrate that the loss of mature woodland within Whitegates Park has been adequately avoided or minimised, nor that the development layout has been designed to retain high-value trees wherever possible. The scale of tree loss and the removal of a significant portion of Category A woodland therefore raise serious concerns regarding compliance with policies intended to protect woodland and mature trees within the natural environment.