

Digging into the objections about the Garden District application

The development of the greenbelt land at Gogar proposed by Sir David Murray has been the subject of some media comment and controversy, particularly in recent weeks when it was given approval by the planning committee against the advice of the planning officials. And it was also subject to some contrary views at the full council meeting yesterday.



The application is contrary to the Local Development Plan currently with the Reporter for approval.

The decision had to be ratified by the whole council as it is such a major piece of the planning jigsaw.

Members were reminded by the Lord Provost very fully of the code of conduct before the pre-determination hearing on Gogar Station Road was discussed. He said: "Due to the nature of this item it is handled quite differently so I would remind members that the Council Code of Conduct stresses that members should judge planning applications on an individual basis and should not prejudge their merits. As such the application of any party group whip is not appropriate for this particular item of business. Complying with any political group decision on this matter, where this differs from your own, is a breach of the code. Members who have already expressed an opinion on any application at the pre-determination stage during the Development Management Sub-Committee are permitted to take part in the council decision.

"Council is now invited to consider the recommendation from the Development Management Sub-Committee to grant the

application.

Planning Convener, Councillor Ian Perry moved the report and explained first that this was a recommendation for outline planning permission but it was not a blanket green light to the developer to simply start building houses.

Councillor Alex Lunn seconded the motion by Councillor Perry to approve the pre-determination application. He writes about his reasons [here](#). He said: "If we are building on the greenbelt area we must make sure it is the right place. It is not something we do lightly."

The Green Group lodged an amendment to the recommendations and asked that the council refuse the permission. The full amendment is here:



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Commenting on the planning debate [at full council](#) on the allocation of land in the Greenbelt at Gogar, Green councillor Steve Burgess said:

“I am deeply disappointed that the Council agreed to wave this application through, despite very significant reasons for refusal: on transport, on the environment and on the integrity of the planning system.

“It is very clear that the development will increase car use, congestion and air pollution. It is clear that cyclists’ and pedestrians’ needs have been ignored. And the development sacrifices a green belt which has served the city for over half a century.

“And, finally, it does not serve to meet the city’s pressing need for affordable housing in well-connected places. The additional housing demands of the city are almost entirely from older and single person households. Adding to suburban sprawl does nothing to meet their needs.”

The Labour councillor and Transport Convener Councillor Lesley Hinds also lodged an amendment requiring the council to refuse the application on traffic grounds as set out in paragraph 3.4 in the council report which is reproduced below.

She made a forceful appeal to councillors to support her view: “People don’t understand why we have to allocate greenbelt sites when we have brownfield sites empty and available. It just doesn’t make sense. This site is not required to meet housing need. It is not well-connected for public transport, pedestrians or cyclists.

“The access is two tunnels and one narrow rural road. The site is not acceptable in terms of access.”

The Council voted 35-17 to approve the plans. Among the 17

voting to refuse were all Greens, both Lib Dems, 9 Labour, 1 independent and 1 Tory councillor. All SNP councillors voted in favour of the development.



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