

Musselburgh Conservation Society
Minutes of the 290th Executive Committee Meeting
held on
Monday 30th November 2020, at 7:30 pm
by
'Zoom'

1). Present.

Alan Armour (Chair & Treasurer), Alan Stevens (Planning & Correspondence), Gavin McDowall (Membership & Trips), Andrew Coulson (Minute Secretary), George Kinnaird, Finlay Lockie (Patron).

2). Apologies for Absence.

Barry Turner (Planning).

3). Minutes of 2020 AGM.

The Minutes of the 2020 AGM, which had been held virtually, had been circulated and accepted by the Committee. There were no further comments.

4). Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer presented a written report, which is attached to these Minutes.

Andrew Coulson confirmed that he had so far made 3 monthly payments to 'Zoom', of £14.39, and the Treasurer undertook to reimburse £43.17.

The Committee agreed that £100, already agreed to be donated to St Peter's Church, should be paid before Christmas.

Alan Stevens asked that the annual donation of £30 to the Scottish Civic Trust should be paid again this year, and the Committee agreed.

5). Planning Report.

Alan Stevens reported that the following planning applications relevant to the Musselburgh area had been posted on the East Lothian Council site:

20/00007/PAN Land at Old Craighall (Other side of motorway from services). Construction of crematorium, garden of remembrance & associated works. *Noted.*

20/00904/P & 20/01164/LBC: Development in conservation area. Millhill Stables. Change of use of former stables to office buildings, storage buildings & associated works. *George Kinnaird explained that there were small amendments and corrections to a scheme upon which MCS had made no adverse comments.*

20/01266/P 4 Smeaton Grove. Alteration to house (window & door). *Noted.*

20/01169/P 13A Inveresk Village Road. Extension to house (conservatory). *Noted.*

20/01195/P 15 Promenade. Extension to house. *Noted.*

09/00550/FUL Site at Kirk Park. Formation of care village. This application was superseded by the more recent scheme, and has now been withdrawn. *Noted.*

6). Membership Report.

Gavin MacDowall reported that there were now 82 members of the Society, who had donated £225 in addition to their formal subscriptions, to give a total income of £1045.

7). Speakers for 2020/21.

Several potential speakers were identified, and members of the Committee undertook to research topics that might be addressed.

8). Update on QMM:

Andrew Coulson said that Buccleuch Estates had now effectively blocked the mountain bike tracks by half-burying very substantial timbers at path crossings. With HES's approval, they will proceed to

repair damage to the hill-fort, and re-open their car park. At that point, we expect to discuss with them the reinstatement of trail markers and information boards.

9). Look – See – Musselburgh

Andrew Coulson presented a paper outlining a proposed project to this title, aimed at collecting historic and other information for Musselburgh buildings and their sites. Following discussion, he agreed to consider preparing a buildings/sites index for the Conservation Area.

10). Proposal to give Design Award 2020 to the Archer sculptors..

The Committee agreed that the *Archer* sculpture and trail was fully worthy of this award: it had been completed in 2019, but in that year had faced exceptionally strong competition from the *Mussel* sculpture. In 2020, by contrast, no design projects appropriate to the Award had been completed – perhaps in part because of the impact of Covid-19.

11). Co-option of Treasurer for 2020/21.

The formal co-option of Alan Armour as Treasurer for 2020/21 was proposed by Alan Stevens, seconded by George Kinnaird and agreed by the Committee.

12). Insurance Renewal.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Public Liability insurance for the Society had not been renewed, when it became clear that MCS would not be responsible for any public events in the current year. He reported that Insurers had suggested that there would be value to MCS in maintaining Trustee Liability insurance. Following discussion, the Patron agreed to consider this issue further, and make recommendations.

13). Goshen Farm Appeal to Scottish Government.

The Committee thanked Barry Turner warmly for preparing a submission (attached) to the Scottish Government Reporters, opposed to the Appeal for development at the Goshen Farm site.

14). Any Other Business.

There was no other business.

15). Date for Next Meeting.

It was agreed that a Zoom meeting for the Committee would be arranged for 7:30 pm on Monday 25 January 2021.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR COMMITTEE MEETING 30TH NOVEMBER 2020

At the beginning of the current financial year the balance at the bank was recorded as **£2678.93**. As at the 25th November 2020 the balance at the bank was **£3416.95** and this was made up as follows:

Income to date comprised £820 in subscriptions and £225 in donations. Add an insurance premium refund of £31.36 – giving an income total of: **£1076.36**

Expenditure to date was made up of the following:

Skyline Print Services	£150.00	
Stamps & Envelopes for mailing list for subs.	£ 66.40	
Flowers for Lady Cameron	£ 20.00	
Auditor Fee	£ 41.94	
Lecture fee – John Oldham	£ 30.00	
Lecture fee – Bil Fulton	£ 30.00	

Expenditure		£ 338.34
Excess income over expenditure		£ 738.02
Surplus to date added to balance on bank at 1 st September 2020		<u>£3416.95</u>

Thanks are due to GMcD for his excellent work in collecting and collating the income. He is also to be congratulated on following up members who were slow in making payment. Perhaps the point has been reached when we cannot expect any further income but it must be pointed out that last year our total income from subscriptions was £858 with donations £71 compared to this year's figures of £820 and £225. Even with the £63 added for visitor fees, we have exceeded last year's total income by £53. Whether or not the expenditure for stamps and envelopes noted above has been covered is a moot point and one that cannot be verified. However, it is likely that membership numbers would have declined but for the hard copy mailing to the members. It is recommended this should be continued for the 2021/22 subscription collection if the virus has still prevented a return to normality.

Regarding expenditure for the rest of the year, there will be lecture fees plus a donation of £100 to the church (as previously agreed). There may or may not be an insurance premium and there is a possible further purchase of a Design Plaque award if the members agree to our suggestion of the "Archer". There will be no wine at Christmas, regrettably but there may be donations to outside agencies if so agreed. It is unlikely there will be a coach outing. The auditor suggested his fee should be reduced.

In my opinion, the Society is in a healthy financial situation and barring unforeseen circumstances, should return to surplus at the end of the financial year.

MUSSELBURGH CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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30th October 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

PLANNING PERMISSION APPEAL: PPA-210-2085 Land at Goshen Farm, Haddington Road, Musselburgh, East Lothian

Here is a further representation from the Society regarding the above.

Background

The Musselburgh Conservation Society stands by the objection it made on 5th September 2017 and remains totally opposed to this development for the reasons then stated which referred back to its objections to an earlier application (23rd November 2015). There have been some changes to the circumstances prevailing at the time of our September 2017 objection which will have a bearing, to different degrees, on the consideration of this appeal.

- 1) The Local Development Plan (LDP) is now effective and represents the settled view on where development should take place around Musselburgh.
- 2) A policy relating to development on battlefield sites (Policy CH5) has been included in the LDP, relevant here because the site lies within a defined battlefield inventory area.
- 3) Though extra capacity has been provided on the local rail service through the operation of six coach rather than four coach trains, this capacity is rapidly being taken up by latent demand and demand generated by those living in the numerous housing developments along the line. Frequency remains abysmal with only two trains an hour in the peaks. Since there is still no realistic prospect of a more frequent service, rail capacity remains an issue here.
- 4) Local developments have had the effect of worsening traffic congestion and presumably pollution levels in Musselburgh and this is now a serious concern not only in but well beyond the High Street and

especially in the vicinity of the Tesco store. We invite the Reporter to visit these areas at the busiest times to witness the unacceptable and detrimental conditions that prevail.

5) COVID 19 has had a major impact on the way people live their lives and there will be implications for the quantity and location of new housing required to satisfy likely new patterns of demand.

6) Access to primary healthcare provision has become a major issue for many in the Musselburgh area with frequent press coverage and the intervention of the MSP.

In different circumstances we would be arguing that the matter under consideration is simple. Goshen Farm is not an area identified for strategic housing development in an up to date Development Plan and therefore the appeal should be dismissed and the application refused on the basis that the proposal does not conform with the plan and that need for it has not been demonstrated. However, the developers' principal points are that housing numbers are not being delivered as required and envisaged and that the development at Goshen Farm is now needed to help in addressing this. I will deal first with the assertion that there is a shortfall in housing provision that needs to be addressed.

Assessing the alleged shortfall in housing provision

We cannot say whether or not there is a shortfall; we do not have access to any data. It is for the local authority to monitor, examine and provide evidence and to identify appropriate action. We contend that if there is a shortfall some of it can be explained by circumstances brought about by COVID 19 whereby development activity was put on hold for some time. Also to be considered is that those circumstances may well have changed demand for new housing and that developers will be having regard to this in their programming. A significant rise in uncertainty, redundancy and unemployment will undoubtedly affect demand. And the new opportunities to work from home long term will, we suspect, cause those considering buying a new property in the wider Musselburgh area to question whether they need a home with convenient access to Edinburgh and its workplaces or would rather buy in a more rural, less densely developed district.

There are other possible reasons for a shortfall. Can non-delivery be put down to capacity problems in the location? The Society has always maintained that the new housing allocated to the Musselburgh area in the LDP is unrealistically high having regard to environmental, social, transport and road capacity. We believe that these constraints, manifested through pressures openly apparent in the town, may have affected sales

and influenced building programmes. Add to that, marketability must surely have been affected by so much new housing being provided at the same time in the same general location and also nearby. We would argue that all these factors have to be built into the equation before it can be assumed that there is a shortfall that has to be addressed, and agreed housing numbers reasserted. It must be remembered that current allocations were set some time ago and that circumstances have changed dramatically since then, with implications for both housing need and demand which have to be understood.

If in the new and continuing set of circumstances there is in reality no shortfall in housing provision then the developers have no case. If it can be demonstrated that there is indeed a shortfall, is Goshen Farm a location where some or all of that shortfall can be made up? First of all we must ask whether the development is actually 'oven-ready' as the developer suggests, the panacea to the shortfalls to which they refer. Having argued for their sites other developers in the area will have obviously encountered problems that have caused delay, COVID aside. Who is to say that similar, now unforeseen, issues will not be encountered at Goshen Farm or that planning permission will not be treated as a saleable asset? Securing development here through a planning consent would not be without risk. The second and fundamental question is why Goshen Farm when there are many good reasons for not developing there which are seemingly recognised by its omission from the LDP and widely supported by the local community - and common sense we would argue?

The case against development at Goshen Farm

As indicated above our overall case against development at Goshen Farm was not comprehensively set out in our September 2017 objection which referred back to and updated our objection to a larger and abandoned proposal with much the same issues. For this reason and due to the passage of time I will refresh and summarize it here.

- 1) The proposal would result in over development and further urbanisation of Musselburgh's eastern fringe given the scale of development already proposed around Wallyford. It involves the further loss of Green Belt at a point where this provides an important and welcome open lung into the built-up area and has an important role in protecting the landscape setting of Musselburgh. In this respect Haddington Road represents a logical and defensible settlement boundary which should not be breached.
- 2) There is no defensible eastern boundary to the proposed development area and no guarantee that it is will not simply and in reality be the first stage of the much larger development that was originally envisaged.

Indeed once the principle of development has been established here, negating the stated objections, it would be very difficult to resist a sizeable eastwards extension that would further exacerbate structural and over-development problems and potentially lead to coalescence with Prestonpans. Add to this it will detract from cultural heritage by impacting upon the setting of the Listed Drum-Mohr House the site of the English camp prior to the Battle of Pinkiecleugh (as now identified by Historic Environment Scotland in the battlefield area inventory).

3) By virtue of its location development here would channel much of the generated traffic directly into and through Musselburgh Town Centre to reach various objectives, notably the Tesco store and other supermarkets. This would be disastrous in our view, adding to the already acute problems of congestion.

4) The development represents just another add-on to the town offering no particular advantage such as an aid to regeneration. Neither does it appear to contribute to place creation being somewhat nondescript with no particular identity and a poor relationship to neighbouring communities.

5) It would be a further and unnecessary loss of Grade A agricultural land, an asset which developers regrettably appears to consider dispensable.

Conclusions

There should clearly be no development here; there are sound arguments for rejecting the developers' case and refusing planning consent. But that leaves the question where should any development required to meet the shortfall, if there is one, be located? This we believe is a separate matter and one for urgent consideration by the local authority. We would argue that there is a strong case for it not being located in the Musselburgh area. The area is under pressure from too much development. Accepted environmental and infrastructure constraints around Musselburgh are already pointing in strategic thinking to the need for any future developments to be dispersed to locations further east along the along the (East Lothian) growth corridor. This would accord with what we say above about where new demand might be focussed. In the short term consideration might be given to how programming of agreed developments further east might be adapted or sites extended given that the broad locations are approved.

Our conclusion is that this application should be refused because of the unacceptability of the Goshen Farm location for the reasons set out. This land should promptly be returned to beneficial agricultural use, possibly with some innovatory community involvement (e.g. educational

agriculture). If a shortfall in housing delivery is identified after having due regard to all circumstances that might have caused it, an urgent study should be undertaken by the local authority to determine the most appropriate locations in which it can be addressed effectively and with least damage. We do however urge against a knee-jerk reaction in seeking alternatives whilst there remains so much uncertainty in society which undoubtedly impacts on new housing provision.

If the Reporter disagree with this overall analysis and is minded to grant permission, he or she must have regard to the fact that notwithstanding any current shortfall in delivery, all designated sites around Musselburgh could well be fully developed long term as envisaged in the LDP. Development at Goshen Farm, especially if extended eastwards, will mean acute over-provision and over-urbanisation in the Musselburgh area which the plan has not accounted for in terms of infrastructure, social and health provision and impact on the Musselburgh community.

Yours faithfully

Barry Turner MRTPI (retired)

Committee member, Musselburgh Conservation Committee

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