

BALERNO FORUM

BALERNO COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S **FREE** QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

<http://www.balerno-communitycouncil.org.uk>

Strategic Plans, Local Plans and such like

Are the public really expected to be able to follow what on earth is going on ?

The process to settle Edinburgh's Local Development Plan looks as though it is going to drag on.

As we reported in the Spring issue of the Forum, Edinburgh Council had put their Local Development Plan out to a consultation which ended in mid June. The LDP has to follow the requirements of SESplan. On the 27 June 2013 Scottish Ministers decided to approve the South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan - SESplan to its friends - but with modifications. That means that the LDP has to go back to the drawing board in order to comply with the modifications which include a requirement that SESplan in turn prepares supplementary guidance to identify the individual housing requirements for each Local Development Plan area.

SESplan will now publish the approved Plan as soon as possible following printing. There may be a further period of consultation on SESPlan. In order to ensure that delays to LDPs are as short as possible, the Government has said that work on the supplementary guidance and any necessary accompanying assessments must be progressed timeously and that the work also needs to be allocated sufficient resource by both the SESplan team and the constituent authorities. They also say that it is essential that the full range of stakeholders is involved in the preparation of the guidance, including the Scottish Government, its executive and non-executive agencies, the other key agencies and the development industry, and,

importantly, that the public must also be given sufficient opportunities to input their views. The Scottish Ministers expect the supplementary guidance to be adopted within 12 months from the date of this letter, and finally that LDPs in the SESplan area should not be submitted to Ministers until after the supplementary guidance has been adopted.



That means that the LDP consulted on by Edinburgh in June will now be revised in the light of SESplan, but will not be resubmitted until this time next year at the earliest and probably not before 2015 since whatever emerges may have to be consulted on again by Edinburgh. In turn that means that until the new LDP is approved - whenever that might be after resubmission by Edinburgh - any planning applications should be dealt with under the rules set out in the Rural West Edinburgh plan.

However at the same time as Edinburgh were consulting on the LDP, Scottish Government were consulting on a new set of planning policies including proposals for how Green Belt should be considered in future. BCC have responded to that consultation expressing support for continuation of Green Belt policies.

Cockburn Crescent Planning Application

As anticipated following on from the PAN process in February of this year Messrs Clarendon Planning and Development Limited lodged an application at the end of July on behalf of Messrs David Wilson Homes for planning permission in principle for 'residential development with associated landscaping, footpaths and roads' at Cockburn Crescent, on 'land 300 Metres West of 200 Mansfield Road Balerno.'

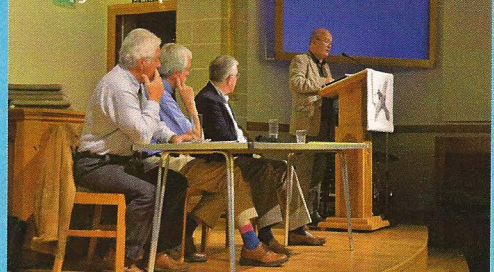
The deadline for comments on the application, reference number 13/02787/PPP, has been extended from 21 to 30 August.

The proposal is for a substantial development for a site within the Balerno Green Belt, and is not consistent with current Green Belt policies, which Balerno Community Council is committed to maintain. The Council has therefore submitted a vigorous objection to the application, addressing, in addition to the Green belt issue, concerns about the impact of additional traffic and transport and generally on the character of Balerno which will necessarily follow from the introduction of 280 additional houses to the community.

BCC will enlarge on their objections in further submissions as a statutory consultee.

The period for commenting on planning applications is in our view ludicrously short, and particularly so where the process is conducted over the peak holiday period. If however you have missed the deadline for commenting and wish to comment whether in support of the Community Council's objection or otherwise then we would like to hear from you.

Gordon McDonald MSP addressing the public meeting on 13th August - see p. 3



223 Members of the public at the Public Meeting - see p. 3

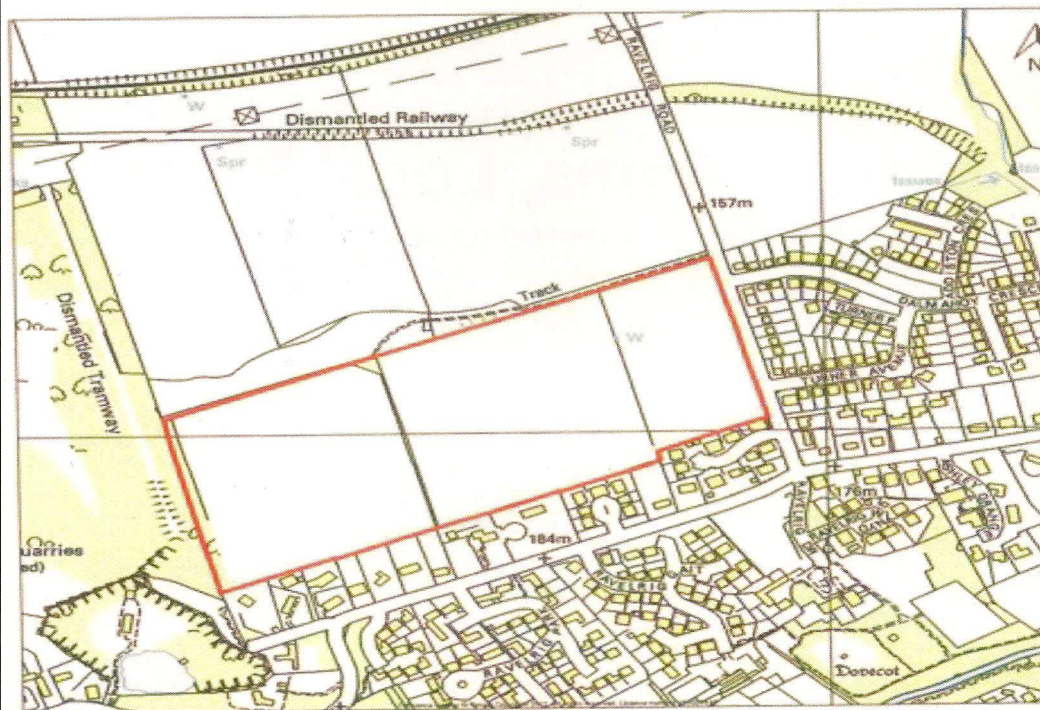


Developers show interest in building at Pilmuir

On 13 July BCC received a Proposal of Application Notice served by Gladman Developments Limited in relation to three fields located west of Ravelrig Road. Gladman say that they will hold a manned public exhibition at Balerno Community Centre. This is likely to be on Thursday 3 October at the Bowling Club. Gladman undertake in their PAN to meet with local community groups in advance of and after the exhibition. The notice starts a formal 12 weeks public consultation period.

Formed in 1987 by David Gladman, Jonathan Shepherd and Kevin Edwards, Gladman is committed to pure speculative development. Based in Cheshire, the business has expanded its activities across the UK, opening offices in Scotland and North East England.

PROPOSAL OF APPLICATION NOTICE



LAND WEST OF RAVELRIG ROAD, BALERNO

The PAN procedure applies in the case of national or major developments. The PAN process was applied in the spring of this year in relation to land at Cockburn Crescent and included a public exhibition in February also at the Community Centre.

The land is Green Belt. Balerno Community Council's general position is that Green Belt land should not be developed except in the ways permitted at present under general planning policies. Housing development on the probable scale envisaged by a major development is not at present permitted. There is also opposition within the City of Edinburgh Council in general terms to building housing developments on Green Belt Land.

The land is good quality Agricultural Land and was used until recently for growing Fruit and Vegetables which were sold to local residents in the Farm Shop, before the farm buildings site was developed for housing by CALA.

The land of the three fields is actually zoned in the current local development plan for the construction of the A70 Balerno Bypass and its associated land restructuring for sound barriers. If the A70 Balerno Bypass was to be built along that line then it would cross the site diagonally. The bypass plan appears to have been deleted from the current draft LDP.

The land concerned is also adjacent at one point on its southern boundary to "Northfield" which is a Listed Building and Listed Garden. Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage would require to be involved in any decision therefore.

The land concerned is also close to an Area of Special Scientific Interest on the West Side and SEPA would also therefore be consulted.

The Ravelrig Quarry extension is in the direction towards the west side of the land concerned. Issues of potential nuisance from noise, dust and ground vibration etc may arise.

BCC also understand that the lower lying areas of the three fields are frequently flooded during periods of heavy rainfall, so some drainage issues might well arise.

Definite signs of green shoots for an all weather pitch

BCC have been pressing for over a year now for Balerno to have its own all weather pitch, and we are absolutely delighted that thanks to the diligence of one in particular of our Councillors we look like getting one in the very near future.

Edinburgh Council's Culture and Sport Committee agreed in early June to allocate £125K to the project, matching Education Committee's £125K. The next step is for the Council to develop the plans and then go forward formally to secure match funding. As Cllr Bill Henderson has said in the past to BCC it is a disgrace that Balerno has not had direct access to such a facility.

The momentum seems certainly to be building and BCC are very hopeful that Balerno will in fact have a floodlit all weather facility within the very near future.

Balerno Forum

First off, an apology; the Forum should have come out in July to maintain our quarterly publication promise. To those therefore who may have been disappointed by its non-appearance we offer profuse apologies. But we also issue an invitation to them and to all Balerno Residents.

2013 is election year so far as Balerno Community Council is concerned. The elections should have been held in 2012 but all Community Council elections were postponed by Scottish Government in light of the local elections last year. But this is your chance now to help build our community by either standing for election or getting your organisation or club accepted as a nominating body.

BCC started the Forum almost two years ago now as part of a drive to ensure that you could have a better idea of what the local issues are and what your Community Council were trying to do on your behalf. You may disagree with some of the things we've done or you may want to do things differently. Whatever your motives the Community Council needs you to be involved whether by coming along to meetings or by becoming a member. Think about it. Balerno needs you.

Much of this issue is, unsurprisingly, taken up with planning issues. The Council is seriously concerned about the spate of interest by developers and applications for large scale housing development. We think this is probably because of the debate over the Local Development Plan and jockeying for position. Our community and the character and setting of Balerno are precious and fragile. We cannot allow them to be put at risk, and in particular for short term gain.

Round about

No issue of the Forum could really be complete without some reference to 'The Roundabout'.

In our 2012 summer issue we published a picture of towering weeds threatening to obscure the direction arrow signs. This year the Council got to the roundabout before the photographer, and by the end of July the roundabout had been reduced to a brown stubble; but it came back up again for a second crop.



The Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership have allocated money to address the problem of this continuing eyesore at what should be the entrance to the old village centre, and BCC have asked to be consulted on the proposals.



We have in previous issues invited suggestions from local residents as to their preferences for landscaping of this site; this is a repeat of that invitation.

It sounds comic to suggest that the roundabout is the centre of the village; there used to be a postcard of Balerno. BCC need to be able to tell CEC what local people want to see at the centre. Let us know what you would like to see taking the place of the weed zone.

Community Council Election timetable

The rules relating to Community Councils are in the City Council's Scheme for Community Councils. At the end of July Edinburgh completed a consultation on a draft for a new Scheme which will apply to the upcoming elections.

Membership of Balerno Community Council, in accordance with the Scheme will, as at present, include both Elected and Nominated Representatives. Balerno will have 18 members of whom 12 may be Elected members and 6 may be Nominated members. Nominated Members are selected from Local Interest Groups who have to register with the City Council to be able to take part in the process. If there are more registered groups than places then a ballot will be held.

In addition Local Councillors, MSP and MP are all ex officio members and the Council can also appoint Associate Members under the Scheme.

The timetable for the 2013 Community Council elections, is likely to be as follows;

for Elected Representatives

- Monday 2 Sept - Notice of Election (start of nomination period)
- Monday 23 Sep - Close of Registration (forms to Returning Officer)
- Thurs 3 Oct - Notice of Poll (if a poll is required)
- Thurs 24 Oct - Polling Day (if a poll is required)

for Nominated Representatives

- Monday 2 Sept - Notice of Election
- Monday 23 Sept - Close of Registration (forms to Community Council Liaison Officer)
- (date tba) - Meeting of registered Local Interest Groups to elect Nominated Members (if necessary)

Edinburgh Council have told us that they will administer the community council elections and will work with community councils to develop a citywide publicity campaign.

They remind us that previous campaigns have included leaflets, flyers, posters, information in libraries, the press, local media, websites, newsletters and Council publications.

Public meeting rejects planning developments at Balerno

Well over 200 people packed into Balerno Parish Church on 13 August at a Public Meeting called by Balerno Community Council to discuss the current interest by house builders in sites around Balerno at Cockburn Crescent, Pilmuir, Glenbrook and Harlaw Gait. Presentations were made both by the Community Council and the Balerno Green Belt Group with contributions also from local Councillors and from Gordon MacDonald MSP.

Cockburn Crescent is the subject of a planning application at present for 280 units while developers have started a PAN process in relation to land at Pilmuir. A public exhibition by the developer on the latter is likely on 3 October from which an application may follow. Meanwhile, in responses to the Local Development Plan preparation process developers have also expressed interest in building on land at Harlaw Gait and on Glenbrook Road.

These sites fall on the north, south, east and west sides of Balerno. Concerns were expressed at the meeting on a range of issues including the effect on the character of Balerno of the possible population increase, the traffic implications, the infrastructure consequences including health and education provision issues as well as landscape, Green Belt and ecological concerns. It was noted the site comprises well managed prime agricultural land and also falls within the Pentlands area currently being considered by Edinburgh Council as a Special Landscape Area.

Balerno Community Council is making vigorous objections in response to the Cockburn Crescent application and will be monitoring and responding to developments on the other areas and any others which may emerge. The proposals are manifestly contrary to the current development plan and also to the draft Local Development Plan. The Community Council believes that any housing need identified for the Edinburgh area can be met from within the 222 hectares of already available brownfield sites within the city and therefore there is no requirement for use of Green Belt land in or around Balerno or the Water of Leith corridor.

BCC welcomes new social group cafe

At its August meeting BCC heard about a new initiative launching a cafe for People with Advanced Loss of Memory. It will meet on the last Tuesday of the month in St Joseph's Centre, 2.30 to 4.00 starting on 27 August.

Further information is available from Kay Latimer : 0131 449 6186





Ricky Henderson's column

I welcomed the trial re-introduction of the N44 night bus service by Lothian Buses. This service was withdrawn a couple of years ago due to not being financially viable and this caused some concern in Balerno. Those who work in Edinburgh's night time economy, bars, restaurants etc, (mainly young people on low wages) and others who want a public transport option when returning from a night out will now be able to get a night bus home. Hopefully it will be well used and Lothian Buses will be able to maintain this service in the longer term.

Thankfully cases of anti-social behavior in Balerno are few and far between, but when they do arise they have a huge impact on the lives of those affected. Reports of anti-social behaviour have reduced across the city and the Council have now reorganised resources to ensure more attention can be given to longstanding cases that have been difficult to resolve. Reviewing these cases should bring a renewed focus to individual situations cases and I'm pleased to confirm that this approach will be deployed in Balerno, hopefully to good effect.

The outstanding success of the Harlaw Hydro project's initiative has attracted attention from around the globe and tribute should be paid to all those involved who have literally put years of hard work to get to this stage. It's an excellent example of what communities can achieve through using the co-operative model.

The recent attempts to breach the Green belt around Balerno will receive more detailed attention in this edition of the Forum but I feel compelled to register my concern at the increase in speculative applications by developers which I suspect are motivated by pressure on the Council to allocate more land for housing development in the next Local Development Plan which is currently being considered.



Dominic Heslop writes

I trust you all have had or are continuing to enjoy this summer where, unlike last year, we have had several weeks of welcome sun. Even the odd thunder burst and downpours were much needed as it was clear that the grass in Balerno was needing a good watering.

On the subject of grass I am pleased to report (touch wood!) that the number of complaints I have received this year from residents in Balerno and indeed across the whole Pentland Hills Ward regarding grass cutting have been kept to a minimum. This follows on from a very positive meeting held last autumn with my fellow South West councillors and representatives from the South West local office, who explained how they were putting together an action plan to prevent future problems with the lack of grass cutting last summer. Without wanting to tempt fate, this would appear to have been successfully implemented so my congratulations to the South West team.

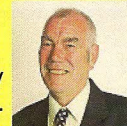
The other good news story for Balerno has been the incredibly quick success of the Harlaw Hydro renewable scheme which in an amazing fundraising period of only 12 weeks raised the target of over £300,000. I very much look forward to seeing construction completed by March next year. This has been a great community initiative led by the Village Trust, the Community Council and many individuals in Balerno.

One thing I have noticed in the last year is the number of applications from individuals to buy council land currently set aside as green open spaces or termed amenity ground as a way of expanding their gardens. While I wouldn't suggest there has been a 'stampede' of applications, this is an area we should keep an eye on as one of the key attractions of Balerno is its green spaces.

Having thoroughly enjoyed the Balerno Children's Gala, the next big diary event to look forward to is obviously the Balerno Music Festival starting next month.

A reminder that I hold my Balerno surgery on the fourth Monday (term time) of each month in the High School, but of course I can be contacted at any time on 0131 529 4066 or alternatively at dominic.heslop@edinburgh.gov.uk

A message from Bill Henderson



About a year ago following complaints and my own observations I started an in depth investigation into why our more rural roads were not being repaired properly. What I discovered was quite startling. In November 2010, after a widespread consultation, the council implemented a prioritisation system which gave a higher priority for repair to roads & pavements with higher vehicle use, on a bus route, more footfall etc. This appeared to make sense, however, an unintended consequence was that roads & pavements which didn't meet any of the criteria would never get resurfaced as the busier roads always obtained a higher priority due to the multiplication factors used. All roads have a score and the higher the score the worse condition with 25 being the worst raw score possible. Since high usage roads can have multiplication factors in excess of 2 applied it means that a road scoring only 13 would get repaired before many roads in our area with even the highest score of 25. This is patently unfair.

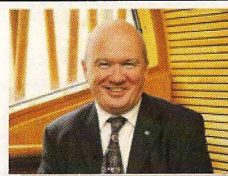
I therefore made vociferous representations and for my efforts was made the Chair of a Working Party to review the whole system. The working party is just about to produce its report which hopefully the Transport and Environment Committee will review shortly.

In the meantime we have put in place some steps to try and bring the roads back up to standard. The council agreed in the last budget to begin to address the problems in the rural west. To this end we have increased the number of residential roads getting resurfaced which means streets like Marchbank Place, Deanpark Place and Bank are being resurfaced. Lanark Road West from the traffic lights to Newmills Road is also being resurfaced.

A new repair regime, carriageway enhancement, has been brought in which does a proper repair instead of the old throw in some tar method which fell apart not long after it was done.

A new repair material which came out at the top of several materials tested, is now being used throughout the area to quickly repair potholes and is achieving excellent results.

I'm not claiming that all our roads are wonderful, far from it but a start has been made and further improvements should be forthcoming over the next few years.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Gordon Macdonald MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for
Edinburgh Pentlands Constituency

Pentlands MSP - ADVICE SURGERIES

Wester Hailes Library	1 st Monday of the Month at 6.30pm
Carrickvale Community Centre	2 nd Monday of the Month at 6.30pm
Currie Library	3 rd Monday of the Month at 6.30pm
Pentland Community Centre	4 th Monday of the Month at 6.30pm
Ratho Community Centre	5 th Monday of the Month at 6.30pm

See details @ www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info