

KILMACOLM COMMUNITY COUNCIL – 29/05/12

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity of speaking to you again this evening on behalf of St Columba's School.

You will be aware that I have been consulting with your group throughout the last year and have been greatly encouraged by the regular discussions we have had regarding our proposals.

May I begin by explaining why St Columba's needs an extension to the Senior School.

Most schools run on a maximum 80% room occupancy rate, whereas there are times in the week when St Columba's is at 100%. We need more classrooms and new modern facilities.

The proposed extension would have to be on this site if it is to act as an extension to Senior School. A completely new Senior School on an alternative site, including Balrossie which has been mentioned, would cost over £30M which is completely out of the question. An extension is the only option.

We then submitted a PAN to Inverclyde Council last September and opened a consultation period with the local community.

In our initial discussion with the Community Council regarding our proposals there was no inclusion for a community car park within our development. At that meeting you urged us to include this and we have done so. This initiative has met with the overwhelming support of the community.

Some nine months ago the School held full consultations with each of the local interest groups: neighbours, parents and then finally the wider community at an open exhibition held in the Community Centre. The level of our consultation was significantly beyond

our statutory obligations and the voice of the community was clearly supportive of our plans.

There are inevitably, in any development of this scale, always going to be some people who are opposed to it. We have recognised this and have tried to overcome as many of the objections as possible.

I will now clarify a number of issues.

TRAFFIC

Throughout the design and consultation process our traffic consultants have worked very closely with Inverclyde Council to ensure all the relevant requirements have been achieved.

During this process, we listened to concerns from parents with children at Kilmacolm Primary School.

The Rector of St Columba's has had communications with both the Head Teacher and Chair Person of the parents' council regarding this very subject. Further discussions have also been held with Inverclyde Council regarding the provision of a crossing assistant at this point. These discussions have been very supportive.

We have carefully considered the timings and potential traffic flow patterns of the community car park and staff parking.

We consider these facilities will primarily be used for long term parking by people/staff entering early and leaving late, thereby not materially affecting children walking to school.

There will not be a constant flow of traffic in and out of the junction and crucially the safe route to the Primary School along Lochwinnoch Road will be maintained.

CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC

I can assure you that this will be managed very professionally by our consultants and contractors. We will ensure that there will be no access to the site in the critical early morning and afternoon periods. It will be of interest to note that the village has a £10m construction project, at Avanell, ongoing for some time using very similar routes as we intend to have for our development. This development I believe at one time was a woodland. Happily, this development does not seem to have caused any traffic issues and we are confident that ours will be the same.

WOODLAND

There is clearly concern about the impact of our development on Milton Woods; indeed the “Save the Milton Woods” campaign seems to centre on this.

Our site is based on the edge of Milton Woods on an area that is currently meadow land. I can categorically state we have absolutely no intention of causing any widespread change to Milton Woods. In the woodland where there are literally thousands of trees, we are seeking permission to remove only four mature trees.

We are **not** building the school buildings in the woodland – we were careful to position the buildings to ensure the minimal effect on the woodland.

HOUSING

The understandable concern of many people. Let me first say that this planning application by St Columba’s School is purely and simply for educational purposes. We have said this all along.

Outside our plans, there have always been the aspirations of Duchal Estate.

You must, however, distinguish between these two matters. It is one thing to seek permission to build on greenbelt for educational purposes; it is an entirely different

matter to build housing on greenbelt and one most definitely does not lead to the other.

A number of people seem exercised by our transportation assessment and the mention of the Estate's aspirational future. People seem to be concluding that this School's development is merely a fore-runner for housing development within Duchal Woods. This quite simply is not the case and an access road of the size specified is required to solely meet our development plans. Crucially section 2.15 of our Assessment states:

"It should be made clear however, that the potential future residential development being promoted by Duchal Estate does not form a constituent part of the development content of the School's current planning application".

Ladies and gentlemen, be absolutely clear our application is for educational purposes only and must be considered on its own merits.

We feel our application "is good for St Columba's" and excellent for the village of Kilmacolm where it will retain the school at the centre of the village where it has been for the last 116 years.

It will provide jobs for the community at a time of economic hardship by partnering with Inverclyde Council and local agencies to ensure local labour is utilised and it will undoubtedly help local businesses.

I thank you for your time and attention this evening and urge you to support our application.