



Additional submission from Helensburgh and Lomond Chamber of Commerce to members of the PPSL Committee, Argyll and Bute Council, in respect of Helensburgh Seafront Development, reference 18/01614PP. (continuation of Hearing).

The papers for the PPSL committee were published on Thursday 13th and it has been extremely difficult to consult widely with the business community in the short timescale allowed before the PPSL committee meets to determine the economic future of commerce in Helensburgh. However, consultation and discussions have taken place with local businesses on the material change to the current Planning Application, and one which they had not seen before, the building of a new sea wall to attempt to protect the new leisure centre in its proposed exposed site. These discussions have taken place over the last three days, hence the tardy submission of this document for consideration at tomorrow's meeting.

The solution offered by the Applicant to resolve the issue of long term sustainability for the building is rejected by the business community as it merely allows the Design team consultants to "save face" as they attempt to rebuff undisputable evidence that the new leisure centre will not withstand all that Helensburgh tides, weather and currents will literally throw at the building in the next forty years. The consensus continues to be that the leisure centre in its proposed position is unsustainable and will prove to be lasting maintenance burden to Argyll and Bute Council and ultimately to local taxpayers for decades to come. In business terms this is seen as proposal that could only be approved if financial risk and viability of investment did not need to be considered and this is clearly not the case for public sector projects.

The majority of PPSL members also expressed their concerns at the Hearing on the 19th November that the building was in the wrong place and that placing it in the selected position would place an unwarranted burden on Argyll and Bute Council and expose it to unnecessary financial risk for the lifespan of the building. The new sea wall will not mitigate that risk and the Applicant has singularly failed to find a solution that resolves the fundamental flaw in this application, that of place.

Helensburgh needs this new development on its seafront, it is long overdue, but the business community does not want it at any price. One of the recurring comments from PPSL members at the Hearing was the need for compromise in order to deliver the benefits that this seafront development will undoubtedly bring to the town. Business owners are sympathetic to the concept of compromise for this site and would suggest that the majority of residents and businesses would support a resubmission of the application with just a few minor amendments and this could be achieved in a very short timescale.

It is suggested that:

- The new leisure centre should be positioned in line with the 2012 Masterplan.
- Soft landscaping should be removed from the site because of the long term burden of maintenance, particularly given the exposed site, only hard infrastructure to be retained, suitable for what is essentially a town centre car park.
- Provision should be retained for the bonfire at the seaward end of the site.
- A viable parking plan for the site should be developed which must include at least six coach parking bays and an array of electric charging points. Disabled parking bays should be positioned adjacent to West Clyde Street, as near to the Leisure Centre and the town access as possible.
- Pedestrian access to the perimeter of the site should be retained and enhanced to allow the vista from the site to be maximised at all points for both residents and visitors and ensure the linkage from East Clyde to West Clyde Street and the promenade to Kidston.
- The cost saving from not determining to infill and build a sea wall will be significant and will allow the Applicant and Elected Members to address many of the budgetary issues which are currently constraining the development as a whole.

Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce reiterates its concerns about the current proposal as articulated at the Hearing on the 19th November and objects to the proposed inclusion of a sea wall on the site. Although the current proposal does not have the support of local businesses and the Chamber, it is clear to the business community that members of the PPSL committee do in fact have a compromise solution within their grasp and it is respectfully requested that the committee reject the application as submitted and request that an amended application be brought forward by the Applicant early in the New Year in line with the Chamber's suggestions and any others which are deemed to be affordable and beneficial to the town.

Vivien Dance.

On behalf of the Board. 18th December 2018.