

Dear Sir

I would like to take the opportunity to correct some of the comments published in your report on the Park of Keir development following comment by Judy Murray to a national press sports reporter.

The Park of Keir Section 75 negotiations have been ongoing for an unprecedented 15 months. The key condition: "affordable and accessible" is at the heart of Judy Murray's concept, so it is difficult to imagine why it is taking so long. All the rest of the planning process has taken place in public but the developer's refuse to allow a transparent discussion of these key conditions, in spite of the obvious public interest. In fact they have gone to great lengths to ensure that no details are released to the public. One can only draw the conclusion that they have something to hide.

The headline is for work to "start in Spring", which is clearly impossible. Even if the Section 75 negotiations are finalised between the Stirling Council and the developer in the next month it still need ratification by Stirling Councillors. Such ratification cannot be assumed to happen, as the Section 75 Agreement will need considerable scrutiny because they have taken so long to finalise and clearly will be very complex and nuanced. Even if it is finally agreed by Stirling Council, the Minister still has to review the agreement before making his final decision. If this happens before Easter 2019 it will be the first part of this protracted planning application to have been done quickly.

Then the developer will need to apply for detailed planning permission for the tennis centre and the houses. This will need to conform to the planning permission as granted, including all the conditions. These new applications will be subject to considerable and rigorous scrutiny and comment by the local community to ensure that the developer is abiding exactly by all that they are required to do and that they said they would do.

So it is unlikely that detailed planning permission could be granted before the end of 2019.

On that basis, construction of the tennis centre could not start on site before Easter 2020, giving an earliest possible completion date of summer of 2022.

The article included the quote "it'll be a mix of sport and leisure. The leisure elements can make the money that will allow us to make the sports, the golf and the tennis, affordable. It's a different feel to it."

This inability of tennis to operate as a freestanding and self-supporting operation was patently clear from all the papers that the developers presented at the Public Inquiry.

The developer's proposal was to make the money required to support the tennis facility from the 6 hole golf course and the driving range, which was challenged as not financially possible. There are no "substantial leisure facilities" in the current outline planning application. In fact the proposed leisure activities - the Country Park and Adventure Playground - would be free, so they add cost to the operation rather than contribute revenue.

The highly controversial housing element will only contribute £2m towards the quoted £40m – 5%.

The proposal has insufficient profit generating facilities to support a tennis facility of this scale and this lack of long term financial viability one of the fundamental reasons why the Community Council consider this is an inappropriate site for a facility of this nature especially when other less expensive sites were available.

A further quote was “It is a sport and leisure facility for the immediate catchment area”. This is completely contrary to the case that the developer has been making for the past five years where the stress has been on the “National” importance of the facility.

The plan as proposed does not have a wide enough range of facilities to be able to function as a “sports and leisure facility for the immediate catchment area” which means that either local people will have limited access or the use of the indoor tennis courts for a range of other sports will render the "National" tennis designation untenable as it will not be available for the purpose and to the extent claimed in the application.

The “National” context was the only justification that the Minister used to overturn the Planning Inspector’s Report, as recorded in his "Minded to" letter. If this is the new proposal the Minister needs to reconsider his “Minded to” decision, as his justification has gone.

In summary the developers appear to be talking about a different project to that currently being negotiated with Stirling Council. This needs to be resolved before the current Section 75 negotiations can be finalised by the Council.

Yours Sincerely

David Prescott
Chair Dunblane Community Council