

'No' to woodland homes at Kippendavie

A bid to build four houses in woodland in Dunblane has been unanimously rejected by Stirling Council's planning panel. The IGM Dalgleish (1991) Trust had sought to create an urban woodland, four houses plus vehicle access at Kippendavie Wood. However, Stirling Council planners recommended refusal of the application considering it to be contrary to the Local Development Plan. They said the proposal did not provide appropriate measures for safeguarding the natural environment, that the design and scale of the houses were out of character and the development would encroach "unsympathetically" onto Greenfield land. The planners also felt the proposals would lead to "a significant loss of biodiversity without adequate provision being made on or off site to mitigate against such loss" The site at the northern leg of the woodland is owned by the applicant and has been the subject of three previous planning applications - one for 20 flats submitted in 2002 but withdrawn, one for five houses in January 2015 which was also withdrawn, and one for four houses which was refused by the planning panel in April 2015. The refusal at that time had seen the panel consider to overturn policy considerations if presented with a sound woodland management plan. The latest application was brought before the panel last October, when planning officers accepted the new housing as enabling necessary capital for woodland improvements and a mechanism for future management and maintenance. However, the same application was this week being recommended for refusal, with the planners saying they didn't feel a Section 75 legal agreement was enough to protect the woodland. Speaking on behalf of the developers at this week's panel hearing, John McCallum said: "This area has been overgrown and is unsafe for access by the public. I would appeal to members not to lose sight of this objective. There would be the formation of new paths suitable for use by all users and drainage provided for surface water." He pointed out that the applicant had agreed to set aside £40,000 for the management and maintenance of the woodland for around 14 years. A total of 19 objections had been received from 17 households in the area, however, citing concerns such as impact on woodland, open space and biodiversity. Speaking on behalf of objectors, Ochiltree resident Alex Cranston said: "If this application is approved the decision will be irreversible and it will rob the community of a valuable asset. "I have witnessed the considerable expense there has been in a bid to develop this woodland. I have seen no evidence of significant sums being spent on maintenance of the woods. The landowner is seeking to be rewarded for its own negligence of the woodland. Scottish planning policy states that poor maintenance and negligence shouldn't be used as justification for other purposes. This is a thinly veiled speculative application and nothing to do with conservation." Mr Cranston said the plans overlooked at least nine Local Development Plan policies and that Kippendavie Woods was the last area of deciduous woodland in Dunblane and "invaluable"; adding that rejection of the application would free the way for the community to progress hopes of looking into how to protect the site through projects like the Woodland Trust. Panel members unanimously rejected the application.