

NOT RELEASABLE – ADVICE TO MINISTERS

From: Andy Kinnaird
DD Planning 1:4
9 September 2005

Deputy Minister for Communities

PLANNING APPLICATIONS: STIRLING SCHOOLS PPP SCHEME PROPOSED NEW STIRLING, WALLACE, ST MODANS AND DUNBLANE HIGH SCHOOLS AND RELATED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS ON FORMER SCHOOL SITES

Purpose

1. To seek agreement that these eight planning applications be called in for determination by Scottish Ministers.

Priority

2. **Routine.** However, our two-month target for reaching a decision on each of these applications has already passed. An early response, if possible, would therefore be appreciated.

Proposed Developments

3. New school buildings are proposed for Stirling High School, Wallace High School, St Modan's High School (all in Stirling) and Dunblane High School, all involving development on greenfield sites. It is also proposed to build new housing on each of the sites of the existing high schools. Together, these eight applications form a substantial part of the Stirling schools PPP project. Further background information on each development proposal is at Annexes A to H. Relevant plans are at Annex J (top copy only).

Procedures

4. The applications were notified to Scottish Ministers because Stirling Council was minded to grant planning permission for the proposals, in which the Council has a financial interest, are contrary to the development plan and are the subject of objections. Ministers must now decide whether to call in the applications for their own determination or to clear the case back to the Council to deal with the applications as they think fit (in effect to allow consent to be granted).

Consideration

5. For the reasons set out in the attached annexes, all four housing proposals are clearly and significantly contrary to the development plan and to national planning policy. The proposed new schools are also contrary to development plan policies, although we do recognise wider benefits of delivering new schools. Of particular concern though is the manner in which Stirling Council has assessed the proposals and reached a view that planning permission should be granted.

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6. Our White Paper *Modernising the Planning System*, published in June, stated our commitment to a fairer, more balanced planning system; a system that is driven by the development plan and makes it easier for people to get involved and shape the future of their communities. Our handling of these eight planning applications carries possible implications for the commitments made in the White Paper. The proposed developments are contrary to the development plan, they have been subject to strong and well-founded local objection and the need for further housing in the area has not been demonstrated; but it appears that Stirling Council's judgement has been influenced by the benefits it would receive should the developments proceed. Calling in these applications would signal a clear confirmation of our commitment to enhanced scrutiny of development plan departures and local authority interest cases, but not doing so could have the opposite effect.

7. Taken individually, we consider that the strength of planning argument for call-in is different for each proposal and, therefore, there could be a case for clearing some and calling in others. However, there are some recurring themes throughout all applications which cause us concern and, as they all relate to a single PPP scheme and it is clear that the schools would not proceed without the housing development as part of the package, we consider that they are so inextricably linked that they should be considered together. Detailed advice is contained in Annex I.

Recommendation

8. We recommend that these eight planning applications, for new Stirling, Wallace, St Modan's and Dunblane High Schools and for housing developments on the sites of the existing schools, be called in for determination by Scottish Ministers.

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Deputy First Minister					X
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Minister for Education and Young People			X		
Deputy Minister for Education and Young People			X		
Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform			X		
Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform			X		

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