

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

9th DECEMBER 2024

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair)
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)
Christopher McLaughlin
Lorna McIntosh
Joanne Logan
Mo Wright
Lynsey O'Dwyer
Dougie Wilson
Meenal Poddar
Mukesh Poddar
Julie Flaherty

Apologies: Michela Pagliocca
Jennifer Clare Abalo
Anne Marie O'Brien
Elizabeth McHaffie
Iltaf Dean
Samantha McConnell
Mairead Brophy
Katrina Adams

School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")
M. Gallagher
J. Cumming
C. McCrea
J. Wilson

1. Welcome

The Office-Bearers ("OB") welcomed the Parent Council ("PC") Members in attendance. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer.

2. Apologies

A note was taken of the PC Members & School staff in attendance, and of intimated apologies.

3. Adjustment/Approval of Previous Minutes

The draft Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting held on 11 November 2024 were proposed and approved, subject to the following adjustments: (i) a correction to the attendees (ii) in paragraph 6 (School Values), deletion of the final sentence; (iii) in paragraph 6 (Eastwood Park Development), insertion of the following new sentence: "Mixed views were expressed"; (iv) in paragraph 7 (Eastwood Park Development), deletion of the words "an objection letter", and substitution of the words "a letter"; (v) in the "Summary of Action Points", item 1, deletion of the word "objection" and substitution of the word "letter".

4. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neil reported the following:

- (i) The Prelim exams are underway and progressing smoothly.
- (ii) The Christmas Concert is scheduled for the 2nd last day of term. Mr O'Neil is concerned numbers may exceed capacity. Ticketing was considered, but a decision has been taken to leave matters on a "first come, first served" basis
- (iii) Staff and pupils are in the midst of UCAS applications. Many have already been submitted.
- (iv) Mr O'Neil displayed a presentation showing increased pupil attendance in the lead up to the October break. It had significantly improved on last year. In a similar fashion, he planned to focus on improving attendance in the week leading up to the Christmas break. He will write to all parents to encourage full attendance up to the end of term. A similar letter will be sent at Easter.

Some PC members suggested that teaching of the syllabus up to the last day of term would also encourage attendance.

- (v) Mr O'Neil reported that the cost of school trips is increasing across the board.

The Advanced Higher Geography trip has had to be cancelled as the cost is proving prohibitive (having increased from £70 to over £200 per pupil).

The OB reiterated that the PC would be more than willing to assist by organising fund-raising initiatives. Such parental fund-raising initiatives would also contribute to a sense of community cohesion among the Parent Forum. In the past there had been more parental involvement in such fund-raising initiatives – notably with the Burns Night Celebration, the Summer Fete, and the "Tea for Life".

The OB suggested that the Parent Forum would benefit from a rejuvenated involvement in such fund-raising activities.

Mr O'Neil thanked the PC, but advised that he considered that existing "School Fund" would be sufficient for the time being.

The OB requested that Mr O'Neil alert the PC in advance if any further school trips (such as the Rome trip) were in jeopardy due to increase costs, as this may prompt parental intervention to raise funds.

5. The Eastwood Park Development

The OB reminded the Meeting that ERC had lodged a (second) Planning Application seeking permission for the demolition of the existing leisure centre and theatre in Eastwood Park, and for the construction of a substantially larger Leisure Centre and Theatre. (The first Application had been granted, but the Council decided not to proceed with it in that form.)

The time-limit to respond was due to expire imminently.

The OB tabled a draft letter to East Renfrewshire Council responding to the planning application for the Eastwood Park Development. The letter constituted a formal objection

to the Planning Application. The draft had been circulated earlier to members on the WhatsApp Group for consideration in advance of the meeting.

A lively discussion ensued. Differing views were expressed on strategy.

Following the discussion, the OB proposed that the objection letter be issued.

A vote was taken. A tie ensued.

The Joint Chairs exercised their casting votes in favour of issuing the objection letter.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action point was:

- 1. The OB shall issue the approved Objection Letter to the ERC Planning Application (See Annex 1).**

6. Scottish Government Consultation on Opting-out of Religious Education

The OB advised the Meeting that, on 14 November 2024, the Scottish Government published a Consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the current legislation on religious observance (RO) and religious and moral education (RME) in schools.

Section 9 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 gives parents a right to withdraw their child (of any age) from both RO and RME as a subject.

Current Scottish Government Guidance on RO (updated in 2017) states that schools should ensure pupils' views are taken into account in discussions regarding their school experience. However, this guidance is non-statutory.

The Scottish Government proposes to amend section 9 of the 1980 Act to require that "due weight" be given to the pupil's views when parents are exercising their right to withdraw their child from RO/RME.

Concerns were expressed within the Meeting as to the wider repercussions of the proposed legislation.

The OB agreed to consider how to respond to the Consultation.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action point was:

- 1. The OB shall consider how to respond to the Consultation.**

5. AOCB

A PC Member expressed concern about a perceived significant reduction in familial participation in the School's faith events. The Member suggested that this may be an area of focus for the School, with an enhanced role for the School chaplains.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on 27th January 2025.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

<i>The Eastwood Park Development</i>		
1. The OB shall issue the approved objection letter to the ERC Planning Application	OB	Dec 24
<i>Scottish Government Consultation on Opting-out of Religious Education</i>		
1. The OB shall consider how to respond to the Consultation	OB	Ongoing

ANNEX 1

EASTWOOD PARK DEVELOPMENT

1. Copy Letter of Objection dated 10th December 2024 from SNHS PC to East Renfrewshire Council

THE PARENT COUNCIL
OF
ST. NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

Joint Chair:

J. Stewart
S. Reid

c/o St Ninian's High School
Eastwood Park
Rouken Glen Road
Giffnock
Glasgow

Vice Chair

A. Wilmott

Email: pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com

The Planning Department
East Renfrewshire Council
Rouken Glen Road
Glasgow
G46 6UG

10th December 2024

Dear Sirs,

Objector: The Parent Council of St Ninian's High School
Applicant: East Renfrewshire Council
Subjects: Eastwood Park Leisure Centre/Theatre
Online Ref: 100682668-001

We refer to the Planning Application dated 14 October 2024 by East Renfrewshire Council for the demolition and re-building of a leisure centre and theatre in Eastwood Park (Online Reference 100682668-001).

We are grateful to you for affording us the opportunity to comment on the Application.

We respectfully intimate the following Objections to the Application.

They fall into five chapters:

1. Access Issues – Arrangements for vehicular traffic access (both during and after construction) are unsafe and inadequate.
2. Parking Issues – Arrangements for parking (both during and after construction) are inadequate.

3. Detimental Impact on Neighbouring Amenity – The pupils of St Ninian's High School ("SNHS"), being the most significant neighbouring constituency directly affected by the proposed demolition and construction, will suffer a disproportionate loss of amenity.
4. Incompatibility with Local Development Plan – The Application is incompatible with the Local Development Plan and National Policy.
5. Defective Consultation Process – The consultation process is defective in that the Applicant has failed to inform, and seek the views of, the SNHS pupils, in breach of section 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024.

Preliminary Observations

The most frequent and significant users of Eastwood Park are the pupils of SNHS.

Over 1,800 school children attend SNHS daily during term-time.

Our paramount concern is the safety, well-being, and educational advancement of SNHS pupils both during and after the disruptive demolition and construction stages of this major proposed development.

We are duty-bound to seek to mitigate the significant negative impacts of the development on those pupils.

To that end, we explain each of our Objections as follows.

1. Unsafe & Inadequate Access

Firstly, the proposed development will significantly and detrimentally affect vehicular access to, and egress from, the Park.

There is only one vehicular route into and out of the Park; that single route (for access and egress) is already significantly congested and dysfunctional; and the proposed construction will exacerbate that existing unsatisfactory situation.

The junction to the Park from Rouken Glen Road is a notorious local bottle-neck.

It causes significant traffic disruption, not least at peak times. It generates traffic congestion in both directions along Rouken Glen Road. Often, congestion at the junction brings traffic at Eastwood Toll roundabout to a stand-still.

The traffic congestion arising from the inadequate access route will prejudice the pupils of SNHS, both during and after construction.

During Construction

During the demolition and construction phases, the proposed development will have a prolonged negative impact upon SNHS pupils. Heavy works vehicles will be entering and leaving the Park by the single, congested shared access route from Rouken Glen Road, as used by the vast majority of SNHS pupils.

The pupils will have to tolerate this increased volume of heavy traffic and congestion for the entirety of the demolition and construction phases – estimated at no less than two years.

We are gravely concerned that the safety of SNHS pupils (and other pedestrians within, and approaching, the Park) will thereby be put at risk.

In this respect, the project is set apart from other “tandem build projects”, such as the new Barrhead High School, where there was much easier access from the main road. It is also unlike the new Glenwood Family Centre, in that the scale of that build was significantly smaller.

During the construction phase, it may be possible to mitigate the traffic hazards presented by the proposed development.

We suggest two alternative *temporary* routes into and out of the Park, whereby the entrance on Rouken Glen Road is not used by construction and demolition traffic. The alternative routes would involve either: (i) the use of the path and break in the tree line on Wood Farm Road, to the side of the Auldhouse Burn and the allotments; or (ii) the removal of the temporary metal bollards at the new Glenwood Family Centre. Both would be temporary entrances only, during the demolition and construction phases. We suggest the attachment of a planning condition directing all construction and demolition-related traffic towards one of these alternative temporary routes. This would then split the Park into two sections, and quarantine the School from some of the hazardous effects of the construction and demolition work.

If the decision is taken to continue to use the single junction from Rouken Glen Road for construction and demolition traffic (which we would oppose on safety grounds), we suggest that planning conditions should be attached to ensure continued, unimpeded and safe access to the Park for SNHS pupils throughout the demolition and build process.

After Construction

After construction, the proposed vehicular access route to the development will be inadequate and unsafe due to excessive volumes of congested traffic funneled into a single, confined, “bottle-necked” access route, shared by vehicles and pedestrians (most of whom are children).

ERC acknowledges that Eastwood Park will be busy after completion. The Planning Statement states that the proposed Centre will occupy “a strategic position within Eastwood Park” and will be “a high occupancy building” (para 2.7).

Yet the single junction at the entrance to Eastwood Park from Rouken Glen Road is already operating in excess of practical capacity.

After completion of the project, even without the presence of construction and demolition vehicles, significant traffic congestion at the junction is virtually inevitable.

This is vouched by the original Traffic Assessment dated 10 August 2021 (prepared by SYSTRA (UK) Ltd on behalf of ERC in support of the first planning application for the Leisure Centre). It stated (para 3.6)(our emphasis):-

“The site is served by a single vehicular access on Rouken Glen Road, via an all-movements signal-controlled junction with Eastwood Park Drive … All road traffic (including school buses accessing St. Ninian’s High School) access the site from this signal-controlled junction and compete for car parking spaces during peak operating periods.

Previous analysis of the site access junction … have identified a capacity issue at this junction during the AM peak hour.

… It is understood from discussions with ERC that there have been past instances (pre-Covid-19) in which the westbound queue which forms on approach to the site access at times blocks back to the roundabout …”

The original Traffic Assessment concluded (para 8.1.8):

“The site access is currently operating in excess of practical capacity. The increase in flows associated with the development will exacerbate this, pushing the junction over its theoretical capacity during the AM peak hour.”

In contrast, the updated Traffic Assessment dated 14 October 2024 (also prepared by SYSTRA (UK) Ltd, but in support of this second application) adopts an entirely different position.

SYSTRA now asserts that, according to its updated “modelling”, the signalised junction at Rouken Glen Road (into Eastwood Drive) “is predicted to operate under capacity in 2027, both with and without the Leisure Centre/Theatre re-development” (para 8.1.17)

This is a startling *volte-face*.

In its updated Traffic Assessment (para 8.1.18), SYSTRA acknowledges that it had previously predicted that the junction would operate “over capacity” in 2024 without the additional development traffic, and would operate “further over capacity” when traffic from

the development was added. Based upon this assessment, SYSTRA had previously proposed, as a mitigatory measure, an extension (from 25m to 40m) to the length of the right-turn lane into the Park.

However, SYSTRA now claims that, based on its updated analysis (including recent observed reduced traffic flows), the Rouken Glen Road junction is predicted to operate “under capacity” – and that the previously-suggested lane extension is no longer required.

This dramatic reversal in opinion undermines the reliability of SYSTRA’s updated Traffic Assessment.

In our respectful opinion, SYSTRA’s latest conclusions are flawed.

Critically, their recent traffic surveys were undertaken in June 2024. SYSTRA acknowledges that these observed traffic levels may thereby have been “slightly affected” by the school exam period, as older pupils may not have been attending school at that time (para 5.2.2).

With respect, that this is an under-statement.

The observed traffic levels (in June 2024) are likely to have been *significantly* affected by the timing of this survey because (i) the School population will have been noticeably depleted by reason of older pupils being on study leave at this time, and (ii) vehicular traffic to the Park is invariably reduced during the summer months, when better weather encourages pupils to access the Park on foot and cycle, rather than being driven there and back.

In truth, the snap-shot survey undertaken by SYSTRA in June 2024 is not representative of, or consistent with, the lived experience of every-day, year-round Park users who often face grid-lock when seeking to access Eastwood Park at this notoriously-problematic junction.

The traffic congestion through this sensitive vehicular bottle-neck will only get worse with (i) the additional calculated demand for the new Centre and (ii) ERC’s announced consolidation of more offices into the ERC HQ site.

The reduced size of the proposed Leisure Centre also cannot satisfactorily explain the dramatically inconsistent conclusions in SYSTRA’s two Traffic Assessments (in 2021 and 2024). The current proposed development remains 40% larger than the existing facility and is described by ERC as a “transformational” development within the Park.

Nor is the access issue capable of being resolved by changes to the traffic light sequencing at the Rouken Glen Road junction. The sequencing of the right-hand turn filter on the traffic lights at this junction has long been a source of public aggravation and complaint. The sequencing is random and unpredictable. Often, at peak times, the “green” filter is only illuminated long enough to allow just a handful of cars through at a time. This significantly contributes to regular traffic tail-backs to Eastwood Toll, and beyond. Sequencing alterations have failed to resolve the problem.

In truth, the junction is, by design, structurally incapable of coping with the current level of traffic, far less with the anticipated increased volume.

The original Traffic Assessment provided further evidence of the existing intolerable pressures on the bottle-neck junction off Rouken Glen Road and the knock-on consequences elsewhere. It stated (para 3.7.5):-

“SYSTRA also understands that the existing pedestrian accesses into the Park and school from Woodfarm Road encourage drop-off within surrounding residential streets which are not designed to accommodate this. This is primarily an issue at school drop-off and pick-up times leading to the assumption that drop off and pick up sensitivities are as a result of activity associated with St. Ninian’s High School.”

The updated Traffic Assessment also acknowledges this problem, though in more diluted terms. It states (para. 2.5.4):

“Vehicles parked on-street often constrain the usable width of [Woodfarm Road]. Woodfarm Road can be a busy area at school drop-off and pick up times.”

It can reasonably be inferred that existing problematic parking on Woodfarm Road (and nearby side-streets) arises, in large part, because vehicular access to Eastwood Park (specifically, to SNHS) is already intolerable. In order to prevent consequential parking problems in Woodfarm Road, vehicular access to the Park needs to be improved, not exacerbated.

Finally, we are concerned that, following completion, public buses will be routed into the Park from the Rouken Glen Road junction to allow visitors to use the new facility. This was foreshadowed in the original Traffic Assessment (para 3.20).

To be clear, the re-routing of public buses into the Park will exacerbate the vehicular access difficulties described above.

It will also significantly increase the risk to the personal safety of children (specifically, SNHS pupils) who rely on safe pedestrian passage to school via this same narrow junction.

It can also be envisaged that additional vehicles in the Park, unconnected to SNHS, are likely to use the roadway immediately adjacent to SNHS as a sort of loop road, in order to exit from the Park. This will increase traffic flow in the immediate vicinity of the School, increasing the risk of injury to SNHS pupils, and disturbing their privacy and amenity.

2. Inadequate Parking Provision

Linked to the anticipated increase in traffic flow to the development, the Application fails to make adequate parking provision to cope with the increased visitor numbers to the Park.

Understandably, the long-term hope would be to encourage less car usage within ERC and elsewhere. We support that ambition. However, in the short and medium term, we are concerned that the Application causes undue disruption to the School and its staff and pupils by failing to incorporate adequate provision for new parking spaces to meet anticipated visitor numbers to the new Centre.

The starting point is that the *existing* parking provision within the Park is inadequate.

The additional demand which will inevitably be generated by the development will place further pressure on the limited parking spaces available for School staff and parents.

The spaces adjacent to SNHS are likely to be used by others not connected to SNHS. Aside from the limited number of parking spaces, there is currently no adequate delineation/demarcation between parking areas to clearly indicate to the public those spaces which should be reserved for SNHS staff/parents/visitors, and those which are available for non-school public use.

This deficiency was also vouched by the original SYSTRA Traffic Assessment dated 10 August 2021. It stated (para 3.7.4):

"Delineation between parking areas (which serve different land uses) could be improved. At present, users often have to compete for spaces during peak periods which leads to a displacement of parking for each land use across the various parking areas."

Further, we understand that ERC has prepared a "Masterplan" Report into potential further development within Eastwood Park. This document includes, amongst other things, reference to "*a new public realm between the School and Leisure Centre; a new entrance formed to the School and additional parking to east & west of the site*".

We understand that part of that Report addresses the car parking provision directly outside SNHS. The Report concludes that a further 100 car parking spaces could be created by re-ordering the car park. The "Masterplan" Report also envisages the creation of a new entrance to the front of SNHS and additional parking to the east of the School.

We are disappointed that none of this appears in the present Application.

The omission is significant for two reasons.

First, the Masterplan Report discloses that ERC is aware of the inadequacy of the current parking provision within the Park, both spatially and in configuration.

Second, by omitting to incorporate this necessary improvement to address an acknowledged deficiency, the Application is rendered objectionable because it proposes a major development which will significantly exacerbate an already deficient parking provision within the Park.

3. Detrimental Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

We object to the Application on the ground that it results in a significant loss of amenity for the pupils of SNHS, and the loss of valuable public "green space".

The loss of amenity arises in two ways.

During the construction process, SNHS pupils (as the immediately adjacent neighbouring constituency) will be forced to tolerate significant noise, vehicular traffic, dirt and dust from a major demolition and construction site located on their doorstep. Inevitably, the prolonged construction process will be highly disruptive and distracting to the pupils. It is estimated to endure for at least two years.

After the construction process, SNHS pupils will have lost the natural amenity of a large expanse of parkland surrounding their school. The footprint of this development is significant; it extends over a large area of natural and ancient parkland currently enjoyed by the pupils of SNHS as part of their curricular activities (including cross-country running) and at school break-times. The peaceful parkland setting and outlook of the School contributes to the overall mental well-being of the pupils and staff who study and work there. The proposed development adversely affects that amenity.

There may, of course, be ways to mitigate and compensate for such loss.

One such mitigatory and reparative measure would be the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between ERC, the Operating Trust, and SNHS PC.

The purpose of the Memorandum would be to formalise and secure to the School, for the benefit of its pupils, certain limited curricular privileges, in the form of carefully-defined access to educational and vocational facilities within the Centre.

Annex 1 provides illustrations of the limited curricular privileges sought to be embodied within that Memorandum.

The execution of such a Memorandum of Understanding would ameliorate the likely detrimental impact of the development on the SNHS pupils, both during and after construction.

Such an arrangement would also be consistent with the Applicant's own Planning Statement and Policy D12 (Community and Education Facilities and Infrastructure) of the Local Development Plan.

The Planning Statement states (our emphasis):

"4.30 Our client's proposals follow the principles of sustainable development, proposing an enhanced replacement leisure and theatre facility, allowing for more linked trips to occur, including trips by other users of Eastwood Park, including school pupils, people working in the school and the Council offices..."

5.16 The application site is also affected by Policy D12 (Community and Education Facilities and Infrastructure) of the Proposed Local Development Plan which establishes that:

'The Council will support the protection and enhancement of existing community, leisure, health, sports and education facilities.

The Council will encourage multi-use community facilities and the shared use of facilities to maximise the extended or multiple use of buildings or facilities for community, leisure and recreational use where appropriate ...'"

SNHS pupils, as the directly affected neighbouring constituency, fall squarely within the category of persons who ought to benefit from the "shared use" envisaged in the Planning Statement.

At present, the absence of any proposal to ameliorate the loss of amenity suffered by SNHS pupils renders the Application susceptible to challenge on the basis that it involves a disproportionate detrimental impact on their amenity.

4. Inconsistency with Local Development Plan and National Policy

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that the Application be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this case, the development plan comprises the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2 (adopted in March 2022) and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

In our respectful opinion, the Applicant has failed to demonstrate that the Application is consistent with the development plan or with National Policy.

We identify three deficiencies.

4.1 The Wrong Applications

In the Planning Statement, the Applicant concludes that the Application meets the Spatial Objectives of the local development plan (paragraph 3.52).

However, this conclusion bears to be directed at a different application. It is directed at an application in relation to a “golf course”.

Paragraph 3.52 of the Planning Statement states (our emphasis):

“.....The predominant parts of the application are for the alteration and improvement of an existing golf course in order to re-activate golfing use and to make it more appealing and better used by a wider section of the local population, and for the introduction of a 4 acre outdoor Woodland Retreat which will provide a facility for outdoor recreation for children and adults. As such, the proposals align with the Spatial Objectives...”

The conclusion in the Planning Statement is *ex facie* flawed because it is addressing the wrong application.

To add to the confusion, the Planning Statement (paragraph 3.30) asserts that “the predominant parts” of the Application meet “the significant majority of planning policies”, in part because “the application only seeks permission for a reduced number of three dwelling houses as necessary to fund the other elements”.

Again, this conclusion is *ex facie* flawed. It relates to an entirely different application (apparently involving the construction of dwelling houses).

One is left with the uneasy feeling that the Planning Statement may have been cut and pasted from a style.

Overall, the reliability of generic conclusions in the Planning Statement is undermined.

4.2 Incompatibility with Local Development Plan and NPF4 Policies

In our respectful opinion, the Application fails to demonstrate compliance with the local development plan and NPF4 Policies.

This Application proposes a “major development”, in planning terms. The Application site extends to approximately 1.055 hectares in size. The majority of the site is occupied by parkland. The southern and western perimeters are flanked by ancient, native woodland. Tree cover consists of a diverse array of canopy types ranging from minor ornamental trees to significant parkland specimens in addition

to areas of native and ancient woodland. The canopy itself is protected by the Eastwood Park Tree Preservation Order Ref. 17.

Further, the western end of the site is in close proximity to an area identified as a Local Biodiversity Site.

The proposed development will result in the destruction of 31 trees.

All of the foregoing is incompatible with NPF4 Policies. Specifically:

- Policy 1 of NPF4 requires that “significant weight” will be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals.
- Policy 3 (Biodiversity) requires all development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, building and strengthening nature networks. It states that “major development” will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposals will “conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity”.
- Policy 4 (Natural Places) states that development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have a significant impact on the natural environment, including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Scientific Interest, local nature conservation sites or landscape areas, will not be supported.
- Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees) states that development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover will be supported.

Moreover, ERC's published Policy (D7) in relation to trees and development presents a clear obstacle to the Application. It states (our emphasis):

“There will be a strong presumption against development on or adjacent to Natural Features where it would compromise their overall integrity, including Local Biodiversity Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Tree Preservation Orders and ancient and long-established woodland sites”

Development affecting trees, groups of trees or areas of woodland will only be permitted where... in the case of woodland:

- (i) its loss is essential to facilitate development that would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits, in line with the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal; or
- (ii) in the case of individual trees or groups of trees, their loss is essential to facilitate development and is clearly outweighed by social, environmental, community or economic benefits...

In addition, the ERC Local Development Plan states:

... The loss of ancient or semi-natural woodland, or trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders will not be supported. Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable resource and should be protected from adverse impacts arising from development."

In its terms, the Application is inconsistent with the foregoing provisions of the Applicant's own Local Development Plan and the NPF4 Policies.

The Applicant's proposed justifications and mitigatory measures are inadequate.

They fail to attain the high standards set by Policy D7. For example, the Application fails to demonstrate (as opposed to merely asserting without vouching) that the loss of woodland is essential to facilitate a development that would "achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits", in line with the Scottish Government's Policy. It fails to demonstrate (as opposed to merely asserting without vouching) that the loss of woodland is "clearly outweighed by social, environmental, community or economic benefits".

Significantly, our objection is supported by the Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 26 June 2024 prepared by Treeplanner Ltd (on behalf of Wild Surveys Ltd)

The conclusions of this expert Report (section 6.3) are stark and unforgiving.

It states (our emphasis):

"Outcome

The aforementioned removal of trees outlined in Section 6.1 will have a long-term negative impact on the arboricultural interests of the site. The proposed design requires the removal of several significant, mature parkland specimens and trees attributable to an ancient, native woodland

Such trees are described as "irreplaceable" in the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and would "not be supported" by the Local Planning Authority or Policy 6 of the National Planning Framework 4.

Whilst compensatory planting may offer some mitigation, the impact of tree loss as a result of the proposed site layout is unlikely to be fully compensated in the short, medium or long-term."

Given the unequivocally negative conclusions in the Applicant's own exhibited Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 26 June 2024, we are at a loss to understand how the Applicant's Planning Statement can assert that the NPF4 Policies are met.

The expert report carried out by Wild Surveys Ltd dated 28 June 2024 (entitled Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Roost Assessment and Aerial Tree Survey) also tends to support the objection. It states (our emphasis):

"Notable ancient and native woodland within the site may be directly affected by the proposed development through tree removal. Trees being retained may be indirectly affected by the proposed development through noise/dust/light pollution or root compaction during the construction phase, and after completion, due to the proximity of the new building to the trees and woodlands..."

Ancient woodland is considered an irreplaceable habitat, with compensatory planting unlikely to provide suitable compensation...

Eastwood Park Local Biodiversity Site lies immediately adjacent to the site and may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development...

The site lies within an East Renfrewshire Green Network which provides ecological connectivity to the wider area which includes Local Biodiversity Sites, further woodlands, parklands and watercourses, particularly to the southwest..."

These incompatibilities with the Local Development Plan and NPF4 Policies are ignored, diluted or glossed over in the Planning Statement.

4.3 Incompatibility with National Planning Framework

The relevant national policy in relation to trees and development is set out within Policy 6 of the National Planning Framework 4 Document. It states:

"Development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover will be supported.

Development proposals will not be supported where they will result in...[a]ny loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition...

Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal."

For the same reasons as previously explained, the proposed development is also incompatible with the National Planning Framework.

5. Defective Consultation Process

The consultation process is defective in that the Applicant has failed to inform, and seek the views of, the pupils of SNHS, in breach of section 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024.

Section 6 of the 2024 Act imposes a new legal duty on local authorities (among others) to seek the views of children on any matters which may materially affect them. This would include planning applications and decisions.

The SNHS pupils would be materially (and directly) affected by this Application, if granted.

They have not been consulted.

They are not identified as persons consulted (or even notified) in the Pre-Application Consultation Reports 1 to 4.

Accordingly, the consultative process is defective.

We are grateful to you for considering our objections.

Yours sincerely,

J. Stewart

Joint Chair

S. Reid

Joint Chair

ANNEX 1

Memorandum of Understanding

We set out below the type of privileges that ought to be incorporated in a Memorandum of Understanding:

- * The School presently hosts substantial music events during the School term, notably at Christmas and at the end of the year. Increasingly, the School's facilities for hosting such events are constrained. Acoustics are poor. Space is limited. The pupil disruption and staff resource involved in setting-up such events within the School is considerable. The School would benefit enormously from free access to the new Theatre, for a defined number of days, to host such large-scale annual musical events. This would provide tangible educational and community benefit.
- * Likewise, the Theatre would also be of great educational benefit to pupils wishing to pursue a career in drama or stage production. The pupils could gain invaluable work experience, both on and off stage (working with directors, actors, set designers, and sound, lighting and stage management);
- * The School may wish to have the option to access the swimming pool at limited times, in a manner that would not materially interfere with public use;
- * The School's pupils could also benefit from training and qualification in lifeguard duties;
- * The School's library resource is limited. The library in the new Centre could also be used to give SNHS pupils work experience;
- * The café within the development could give SNHS pupils valuable vocational work experience, training and qualification (in, for example, barista work and business management);
- * The planned six-court indoor Games Hall would be invaluable for the School's pupils (for teaching tennis, badminton, and the like, and to avoid having children's clubs outdoors at 4pm in the winter months), in a limited and regulated manner that would not materially interfere with public use.

A Memorandum of Understanding between ERC, the Trust and SNHS PC could readily incorporate such limited "shared access" privileges in a defined and formal manner, for the benefit of present and future SNHS pupils, and without materially impacting on public use.