



PRE - APPLICATION REPORT REGARDING THE REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING SNOW SPORTS CENTRE TO INCLUDE LEISURE FACILITIES; TOURIST ACCOMMODATION; HOTEL; FUNCTION SUITE AND ANCILLARY RETAIL AND RESTAURANT; FORMATION OF ACCESS AND CAR PARKING AT MIDLOTHIAN SNOW SPORTS CENTRE, BIGGAR ROAD, EDINBURGH (18/00970/PAC)

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Economy

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of a pre-application consultation submitted regarding the redevelopment of the existing snow sports centre to include leisure facilities, tourist accommodation, hotel, function suite and ancillary retail and restaurant at Midlothian Snow Sports Centre, Biggar Road, Edinburgh.
- 1.2 The pre-application consultation is reported to Committee to enable Councillors to express a provisional view on the proposed major development. The report outlines the proposal, identifies the key development plan policies and material considerations and states a provisional without prejudice planning view regarding the principle of development.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Guidance on the role of Councillors in the pre-application process, published by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland, was reported to the Committee at its meeting of 6 June 2017. The guidance clarifies the position with regard to Councillors stating a provisional view on proposals at pre-application stage.
- 2.2 A pre-application consultation for the redevelopment of the existing snow sports centre to include leisure facilities, tourist accommodation, hotel, function suite and ancillary retail and restaurant at Midlothian Snow Sports Centre, Biggar Road, Edinburgh was submitted on 21 December 2018.
- 2.3 As part of the pre-application consultation, a public event took place at the Midlothian Snow Sports Centre on 28 January 2019, from 2pm until 7:30pm. On the conclusion of the requisite 12 week consultation process the applicant could submit a planning application for the proposal. It is reasonable for an Elected Member to attend such a

public event without a Council planning officer present, but the Member should (in accordance with the Commissioner's guidance reported to the Committee at its meeting in June 2017) not offer views, as the forum for doing so will be at meetings of the Planning Committee.

- 2.4 A copy of the pre application notice has been sent by the prospective applicant to the local elected members as well as Damhead Community Council and Fairmilehead Community Council (in the City of Edinburgh Council administrative area).

3 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In assessing any subsequent planning application the main planning issue to be considered in determining the application is whether the currently proposed development complies with development plan policies unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The development plan is comprised of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (June 2013) and the Midlothian Local Development Plan 2017 (MLDP).
- 3.3 The Midlothian Snow Sports Centre is located to the west of the A702 on the northern slopes of the Pentland Hills within the Hillend Country Park. It covers an area of 7.8 hectares and adjoins the boundary with the City of Edinburgh Council administrative area.
- 3.4 The site has its own policy designation (policy VIS3) in the Midlothian Local Development Plan 2017 (MLDP). Additionally, the area is covered by a number of policies designed to protect the sensitivity of the landscape setting of Hillend Country Park and the wider Pentland Hills (policies RD3 and RD4). The site is also located within the green belt and the Pentland Hills Special Landscape Area (ENV1 and ENV6).
- 3.5 Policy VIS3 of the MLDP supports the upgrading and enhancement of the Midlothian Snow Sports Centre and ancillary facilities in order to secure its future as a centre of excellence for artificial skiing and snowboarding. Proposals which have a significant adverse environmental impact are not acceptable unless appropriate mitigation measures can be secured to overcome the relevant concerns.
- 3.6 Policies RD3 and RD4 provide protection for the Pentland Hills Regional Park and Midlothian's Country Parks (Hillend being a Country Park). Proposals within the parks are not acceptable where they are contrary to the aims and objectives of the park.
- 3.7 Proposals within the green belt are not permitted unless they are necessary to further agricultural, horticulture or forestry or provide opportunities for access to the open countryside, outdoor sport or outdoor recreation or relate to other uses appropriate to the rural character of the area.

- 3.8 Development within the sites sensitive landscape must incorporate high standards of siting and design so that they do not have an unacceptable impact on the qualities of the Pentland Hills Special Landscape Area (SLA). The *Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance* was adopted by the Planning Committee at its meeting of 9 October 2018 and contains a Statement of Importance for each SLA that outlines the important characteristics of the landscape.
- 3.9 Policies relating to tourism and retail are also pertinent in determining an application. Policy VIS1 promotes the establishment of new, or the expansion of existing, tourism-related development where it can be demonstrated that it improves the quality of visitor facilities within Midlothian. Policy VIS2 supports proposals for the development of hotels or self-catering tourist accommodation, including at key gateway locations with ease of access to the major junctions on the A720 City Bypass.
- 3.10 With regard to the retail policies in the MLDP (particularly TCR2), major retail proposals outwith identified town centres are not supported. Exceptions are made with regard the Straiton Commercial Hub and an identified potential opportunity in the Gorebridge/Redheugh – Newtongrange corridor, provided the proposal does not undermine the vitality or viability of the town centres within the expected catchment of the proposals.
- 3.11 Consequently, the retail element of the proposal may be contrary to the development plan. However the scale and nature of the retail offer in relation to the redevelopment of the site as a whole would be an important consideration in determining its acceptability as an ancillary development. Furthermore, the Council can consider proposals where the retail offer is provided to primarily service the tourism market and where it would not undermine local town centres – in these cases the Council would have to give consideration to appropriate controls to mitigate the impact of the offer.
- 3.12 Another significant material consideration will be the access arrangements and what alterations to the existing access will be required to ensure it can cope with the expected increase in patronage of the site arising from the development.
- 3.13 The prominence of the site on the northern slopes of the Pentland Hills will make the detail of any landscaping treatment and the design of buildings of great importance in determining the acceptability of any proposal. The potential environmental impacts arising as a result of the proposed development will require to be considered. The submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may be required in relation to the application. This process systematically sets out the relevant environmental impacts in order that they can be assessed, designed out of the proposal, minimised or mitigated.
- 3.14 If an application is submitted there is a presumption in favour of redeveloping the existing snow sports centre to include leisure

facilities, tourist accommodation, hotel and ancillary tourist based retail. There may be a requirement for developer contributions to be made towards the A701 relief road.

4 PROCEDURES

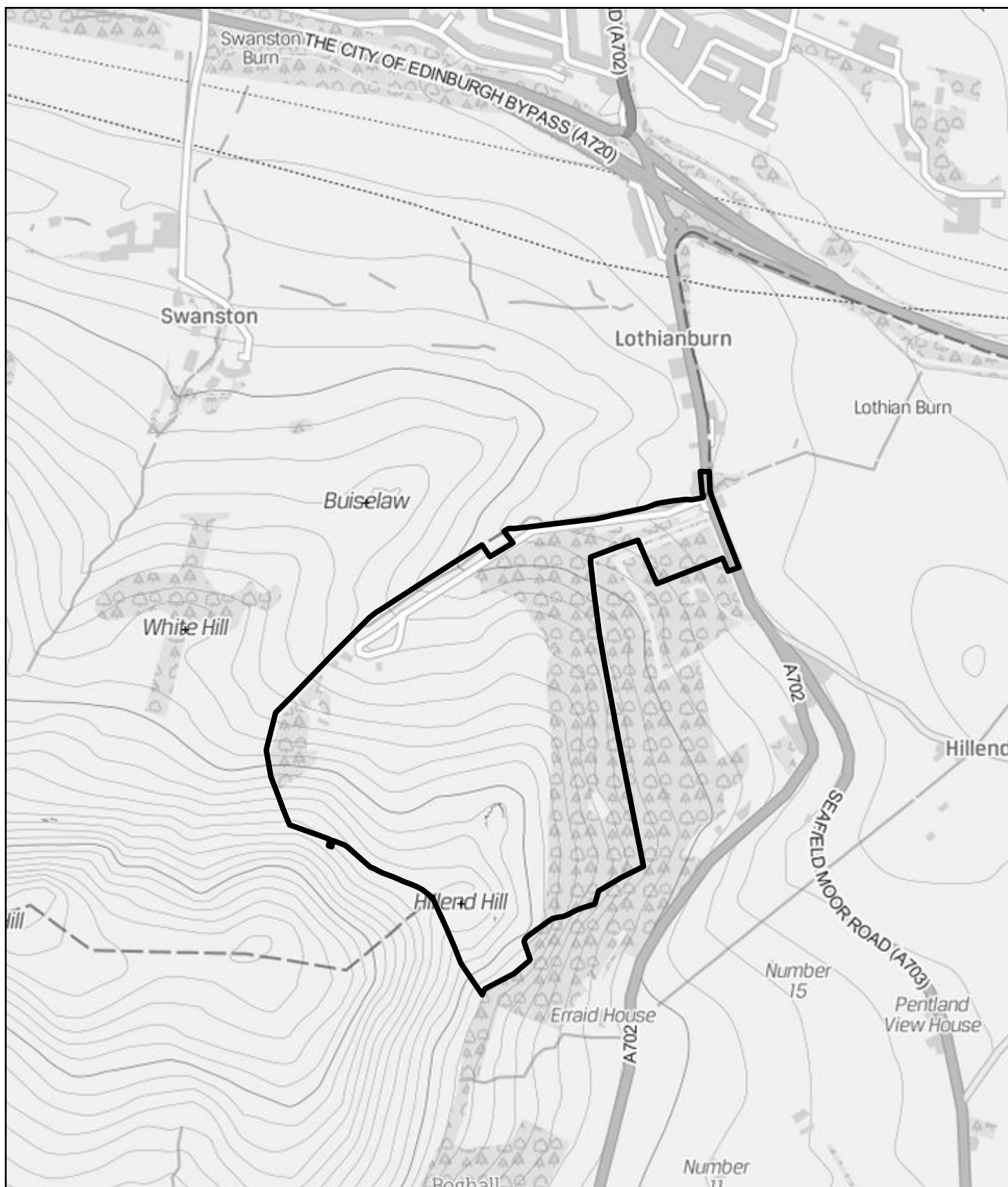
- 4.1 The Scottish Government's Guidance on the Role of Councillors in Pre-Application Procedures provides for Councillors to express a 'without prejudice' view and to identify material considerations with regard to a major application.
- 4.2 The Committee is invited to express a 'without prejudice' view and to raise any material considerations which they wish the applicant and/or officers to consider. Views and comments expressed by the Committee will be entered into the minutes of the meeting and relayed to the applicant for consideration.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government's Guidance on the Role of Councillors in Pre-Application Procedures advises that Councillors are expected to approach their decision-making with an open mind in that they must have regard to all material considerations and be prepared to change their views which they are minded towards if persuaded that they should.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:
 - a) the provisional planning position set out in this report;
 - b) that any comments made by Members will form part of the minute of the Committee meeting; and
 - c) that the expression of a provisional view does not fetter the Committee in its consideration of any subsequent formal planning application.

Dr Mary Smith
Director of Education, Communities and Economy

Date:	12 February 2019
Application No:	18/00970/PAC (Available online)
Applicant:	Montagu Evans, 19 Canning Street, Edinburgh
Validation Date:	21 December 2018
Contact Person:	Fraser James
Tel No:	0131 271 3514
Background Papers:	



**Education, Economy
& Communities**
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Proposal of application notice for redevelopment of
existing snowsports centre to include leisure facilities;
tourist accommodation; hotel; function suite and
ancillary retail and restaurant; formation of access
and car parking at Midlothian Snowsports Centre,
Hillend

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