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7 July 2020

Ref planning application 19/01259/P

Thank you for notifying me of the appeal.

I note that you will take my previously expressed objections into account, so will not repeat them. In that regard, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, while the trees are fully clothed, Letham house is quite well concealed; but it is, as I said before, clearly visible from Letham lane during the half year when the trees are bare. I do not feel that the applicant has presented any factual information that challenges my original objections.

I thought the case officer expressed a balanced view in moderate terms. I suppose we should expect an applicant to bend information to suit their argument, but I hope that the board agrees that the tone of this appeal is unnecessary.

The applicant states that the case officer “failed” to take account of the consent to return Letham house to a private dwelling, thus precipitating a loss of business and jobs. I had assumed that the applicant sought consent and that ELC gave it, not that ELC was evicting them and depriving them of their business. And what bearing does that have on the application?

The applicant states that the case officer understated the proportion of the proposed building given over to B&B and points, among other things, to the fact that the bedrooms have ensembles. It would be unusual for such a high value new build not to have ensembles. It is difficult not to conclude, on reading the section on “Countryside and Landscape”, that the applicants’ principal objective is to develop a profitable exit strategy from Letham house and, the previous Clarendon proposal having been refused by the Reporter, this is their next bid. And that the status of B&B

is thought to be the only hope of gaining permission to develop in the countryside. The applicant's willingness to embrace a section 75 agreement is no protection. We all know that if the subject of such an agreement chooses to ignore it, such are the financial constraints on councils that they are rarely, if ever, enforced. And it is hard to imagine, in view of the economic situation facing us, that council finances will grow stronger.

The identities of those who support the application is not available to me, but I would imagine that among them will be others who value their land as a development opportunity rather than for what it is and its part in a wider landscape that is enjoyed by many and was especially valuable to Haddingtonians during the lockdown.

The pictures supplied with the appeal to support the proposed height include one or two of the council's weaker planning and enforcement moments and a building that predates planning law by a century or more, but it shows not one holding dwelling house. The reference to comparative footprint size also appears to be misleading. The sizes given for the holdings appear to be the total footprint size of all the buildings on a site, of which there are sometimes several, rather than just the dwelling house.

You may wish to note, during the requested site visit, that the applicants have gone to some trouble to close in the view from Letham house by constructing, within the past year, a berm along the garden side of the burn and planting it with laurel and that they have in the last week planted some quite large trees in the field to the south of the core path. The view from the Letham lane suggests their determination to see the application through. I append photographs to the email that brings this objection.

Sincerely yours,





ANDREWS  
Quality material  
ANDREWS  
SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 3LR  
0131 640 7777

SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 3LR

SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 3LR

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SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 2LR  
0131 610 7772

SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 2LR  
0131 610 7772

SA STENHOUSE MILL LANE  
EDINBURGH, EH11 2LR  
0131 610 7772





