



30th December, 2012

Kirsteen Sweeney,
Planning Department,
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority,
Carrochan,
Carrochan Road, Balloch.
G83 8EG

Dear Kirsteen,

Application Number: 2012/0163/DET

Location: The Former Torpedo Factory, Arrochar G83 8EG

Proposal: Erection of 130 bedroom hotel, 36 holiday accommodation units, 16 dwelling houses, chandelry /café bar building, pedestrian walkway, parking and landscaping and other associated works.

We refer to the above major planning application that was considered by the Friends Trustees at their meeting earlier this month following the publication of the very detailed Environmental Impact Assessment. This has been very useful in contributing to an assessment of the visual impact of different elements of the scheme and this is an issue we return to later, particularly with regard to the high visual prominence of some of the large 'Tower' housing units close to the shoreline to the south and north of the core tourism development.

We wish to advise you that we are strongly supportive of the core tourism elements of the development as they are an imaginative solution for a prominent site on the shores of Loch Long that has lain derelict for a considerable period of time. The design of the core tourism elements, including the hotel and the fractional ownership holiday units, appear to be designed to a high standard with the use of local stone and timber. The developer has clearly benefited from a number of pre-application meetings with the Park Authority planning staff.

The economic spin off benefits from this tourism development will be substantial and given the operator's track record elsewhere we anticipate high year round occupancy levels will be achieved with a significant number of year round jobs and good levels of patronage by international visitors.

We are aware from other large scale tourism developments nearby that housing for staff will be a major issue and we understand there may be separate proposals to address this in nearby Succoth and we trust some safeguards will be built into the planning conditions to address staff housing needs at an early date.

One aspect of the proposed development that does cause us concern is the positioning

t: 01436 677733 e: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk w: www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Registered Office: 63 West Princes Street, Helensburgh, G84 8BN, Scotland

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and scale of the proposed 7 large 'Tower' housing units on the southern and northern flanks of the development and we wish to formally object to this part of the scheme on the following grounds:

- (1) The positioning so close to the shore line of the large scale housing units that vary between 8.7metres and 11.4 metres in height is inappropriate in terms of the detrimental visual impact on the landscape character of Sea Lochs Shore Fringe. As highlighted in policy documents and the EIA report the 'Sea Lochs Shore Fringe' is an important transitional landscape and this is particularly the case in this instance with extensive vistas looking into the site from Arrochar and other key vantage points with the scenic backdrop of the Arrochar Alps;
- (2) the design and scale of the housing units is inappropriate in this sensitive scenic rural area and while they are described by the architects as 'Tower Houses with a contemporary design' we would suggest they are akin to town houses which are more suited for urban locations;
- (3) the inclusion of 7 large 'Tower Houses' to the north and south of the core development in loch shore locations represents an unacceptable intrusion in such exposed and sensitive rural loch shore settings;
- (4) these large scale houses contribute to an overall feeling of urban sprawl and over development of what is a tightly constrained site; and
- (5) approval of the 7 large houses on the shore line would be setting a dangerous precedent for further housing on loch shore fringes outwith settlements.

No doubt the developers will argue that the inclusion of these 7 large housing units is essential to ensure the viability of the entire development but we would seriously question this. While we have not had the benefit of seeing a business plan for the scheme we assume competently qualified staff within the Park Authority with experience of mixed housing and resort developments have although there is no evidence of this in the documentation.

We would urge the Planning Committee to approve the core tourism development but to reject permission for the 7 large scale shore line 'towers /town houses' which detract from the overall visual impact of what otherwise is a high quality scheme in a sensitive location where the transition from loch shore to high mountain tops is such a crucially important element of the overall Argyll and National Park tourism experience.

James Fraser

James Fraser
Chairman
Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs