



Queensferry & District Community Council

www.queensferrycommunitycouncil.org



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Planning & Strategy
City of Edinburgh Council
Waverley Court
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19th November 2019

Attention of Jennifer Paton

Dear Ms Paton

DEVELOPMENT OF A FORTH BRIDGE WALK RECEPTION CENTRE; NEW SECTIONS OF BRIDGE ACCESS SYSTEM; NEW VIEWING PLATFORMS; ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING; LANDSCAPING; SERVICING AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESSES. AT FORTH RAIL BRIDGE, HAWES BRAE, SOUTH QUEENSFERRY, REFERENCE NUMBER: 19/04116/FUL

I am writing on behalf of Queensferry and District Community Council as a consultee with our comments on application 19/04116/FUL.

QDCC met with representatives from Network Rail prior to the public consultations for a briefing on the proposed plans. We found this to be an exciting opportunity for our town and in general supported the proposal although we did have a few concerns.

QDCC is pleased that car parking provision for walkers will be available within the site, the experience and car parking will have to be pre-booked and nobody can just turn up on the day, encouragement for walkers to travel to South Queensferry via public transport/cycling or by foot, the proposal of incentives for a combined rail and Experience ticket, improvement of paths from Station Road/Dalmeny Station to the Reception Hub and Hawes area, the use of a brownfield site for the reception hub

QDCC seeks

- That visitor numbers are maintained at a manageable level
- There is effective traffic and car park management
- A robust visitor booking system for both the experience and the car parking

- That there is a robust security system put in place for all the site
- That materials used for the reception hub are sensitive to the setting
- A tree and woodland management plan be set up
- Planting of mature trees where required for screening purposes to help with the privacy concerns of nearby residents
- The proposed coffee/snack bar in the reception hub building is only for the visitors to the experience and not for the public passing by
- Appropriate signage for the Experience and promoting what Queensferry as a town has to offer

Transport

- The single track access road can be expected to carry one vehicle of participants every 90 seconds on average, with a transit time of about 30 seconds at the speed limit of 10mph and longer for cyclists. Therefore some conflicts can be expected occasionally. Although the two passing places alleviate direct conflict, the convention for traffic leaving the site having priority over those arriving risks creating a queue of traffic onto Hawes Brae. The queuing scenario hasn't been modelled.
- No road signs are shown in the Transport Statement document to indicate that the access road is blocked by a barrier about 200 yards after the Hawes Brae junction. Drivers using the entrance road by mistake are more likely to reverse onto Hawes Brae when they see the barrier rather than negotiate access to the site for turning around.
- Outwith operating hours it isn't clear how uninvited vehicles can be turned back. If the barrier is left open overnight there is potential for the car park to attract anti-social behaviour. Experience of road barriers elsewhere in Queensferry (Ferry Muir development) is that they become damaged and abandoned very quickly. A commitment to maintaining an effective access system should be sought.
- As noted in the Transport Statement, on-street parking is presently experienced around the access road therefore restrictions on Hawes Brae are proposed to address visibility splay concerns. However it is not clear how the displaced vehicles will be accommodated, and there are concerns that they may be moved to the junction with Bankhead Road or onto Bankhead Road itself, which is arguably more dangerous than around the access road.
- The application stresses that staff and visitors will be encouraged to use public transport and active travel facilities that already exist in South Queensferry. However beyond the distance-based isochrones the Transport Statement is light on detail and commitment. The area continues to witness quite high car use due to mode integration difficulties (eg bus-train-tram) and some areas of Central Scotland being impractical or expensive to reach by other means. Although direct access from Dalmeny Station's northbound platform and

proximity to the 43 bus route are a great help for Edinburgh or Fife based public transport users, the problems of navigating to the site through Queensferry town from the Forth Road Bridge area remain unaddressed.

New Path and Steps connecting the Reception Hub to the foot of the Hawes Brae

QDCC recognises that this path will be a significant change and improvement to the present Jacob's Ladder steps. We ask that this new path has handrails and is constructed using non slip materials. The present Jacob's Ladder is constantly in need of repair and it is the consensus of QDCC that these steps be removed once the new path is in place although there may be others who think it should be kept as it is part of the history of Queensferry but with no one to take responsibility of the upkeep of these steps we feel unfortunately it has to go.

Forth Bridge Structure Additions and the Gun Emplacements at the Forts

We feel as a Community Council we cannot evaluate this and that the lead should be taken from HES. We do however agree that any structural changes on the Forth Bridge should be reversible and that the Gun Emplacements and the Bunker should be preserved by whatever means are possible and also as these are in the proposed car parking area it has to be made safe for the visiting public.

The Community Council received representations from residents objecting and supporting the application and QDCC representatives met for an on-site visit. There have been many objections voiced from over the South Queensferry area but the majority are from residents who stay in close proximity of the proposed site.

The main concerns from local residents are:

Transport and traffic congestion

Loss of privacy

Noise pollution

Light Pollution

Loss of Character of the Conservation Area and World heritage Site

Loss of trees, shrubs and foliage

Loss of wildlife

Some feedback is supportive of the concept but there are concerns over the impact and design.

The calculated parking capacity was a concern voiced by residents with the risk of adding to an existing problem in the town and in adjacent streets - NR stands by their calculations.

A suggestion made to provide more car parking within the site was that the turning circle in the car park area appears to facilitate drop offs and rejections. It creates a two way requirement on the single width access road. This circle could be removed and a loop through the car park employed, with entry in the west end of the car park, a drop off zone and exit to the east minimising two way traffic conflict. The significant area freed up at the circle could then facilitate additional parking capacity.

Signage is also proposed advising No Access to Forth Bridge Experience at required locations

Loss of privacy concerns were voiced from residents who live at the east end of Ashburnham Loan regarding the height of the new path down from the Dalmeny Station platform and that their homes could be overlooked by users of this path. There were also concerns raised that walkers could overlook the homes nearest to the facility from the walkway at the reception hub.

Light pollution although ground level lights are proposed on the paths, light pollution is a concern from the reception area - QDCC asks that no floodlights are used on the outside of the hub building.

Loss of Trees - the loss of 130 trees was deemed unacceptable for some residents - NR have explained that where appropriate other more attractive specimens can be introduced and that they will look to plant approx 3 trees for every tree lost.

The reception hub building presents a solid grey concrete wall facing outwards, concerns were raised that this could attract graffiti artists, it has been suggested that this could be softened for example by timber panels

Concerns have also been voiced re the hours of operation which states 10am -10pm. QDCC understands that the hours will be seasonal however residents have raised the concern that sunset and sunrise walks are expected and would like a realistic limit on the times of operation.

QDCC understands that Network Rail representatives have met with residents from Ashburnham Loan on site to try and give them a better understanding of what is proposed and to try and eliminate at least some of their concerns.

Supportive comments given:

We don't celebrate our amazing bridge enough and this is an important step in doing this and bringing extra income to the community.

The steps at the back of the Hawes Inn are in need of repair and the path from Dalmeny Station to the town has been in need of better signage/ upgrading since I was a child growing up in Queensferry.

I believe this development to be a positive investment in employment and infrastructure in South Queensferry.

It is important to note that the development is on a brownfield site

The private developments over the last 10 years in South Queensferry have been large-scale residential with no investment in or benefit for employment in the town.

I welcome the investment in pedestrian and cycle infrastructure that this development offers, and it follows a long and community-led process within South Queensferry of upgrading and extending core paths and connectivity. I welcome Network Rail's vision for the FBWC at South Queensferry, especially its sustainability aspect linking with, and encouraging, rail travel to and from the FBWC. This is a forward-thinking aspect and mirrors both the City of Edinburgh Council's and the Scottish Government's commitments to sustainability and to regional inclusive growth.

To enhance planting around the site is welcomed

South Queensferry is a town that is growing fast and desperately needs employment and investment that benefits us all and the FBWC is a positive step in that direction.

QDCC has every confidence in Network Rail working with the community on this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Diane Job(Mrs)
QDCC Planning Convener