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Jennifer Paton
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Dear Ms Paton

**PLANNING APPLICATION – 15/04318/PPP
LAND EAST OF MILLBURN TOWER**

Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) is a Division of the Scottish Government and its property is located immediately adjacent to the proposed development. SASA objects to the proposed development as it would have a severely detrimental effect on statutory work undertaken by Scottish Ministers to support Scotland's agriculture and its wider environment.

SASA undertakes an extensive range of statutory work under Scottish, UK and EU legislation, as well as work under other international agreements. SASA's activities include: protecting Scotland's environment from plant health threats; ensuring the high quality of Scotland's seed and seed potato crops; monitoring pesticide use, including testing for pesticide residues in food; and assessing new varieties of potato and vegetable crops. In addition, SASA preserves a genetic resource of potato and vegetable varieties which is of international importance. SASA also provides forensic support to Police Scotland in the investigation of wildlife crime, including poisonings. Recently SASA has acquired additional farm-based responsibilities to carry out trials to determine the effectiveness of new herbage varieties in the Scottish environment.

The Scottish Ministers' laboratories and farm at Gogarbank SASA has about 160 staff, including seed analysts, analytical chemists, plant pathologists, vertebrate ecologists and other high value, highly skilled scientific jobs. SASA, under various names, has been based in Edinburgh for nearly 100 years. It moved to the current world-class facilities in 2006 with the full support of the local planning authority. The site allows the close integration of laboratory work with field trials in the surrounding agricultural land at Gogarbank Farm, which SASA has held since 1970. SASA has a strong international reputation, representing the Scottish and UK governments in a range of international fora. This attracts visitors from all over the world, including hosting conferences at facilities elsewhere in Edinburgh. SASA is a founding member and partner of the Edinburgh Plant Science hub along with Edinburgh and Heriot Watt universities, as well as running a programme of school visits and participating in Doors Open Day. SASA is a widely recognised part of international, national and local agricultural science communities.



The location of the SASA facility is of paramount importance to its work. Its location was selected for two main reasons:

1. The land at Gogar satisfied the exacting soil quality and climatic conditions requirements.
2. Being located in an area surrounded by agricultural land provides an important protection for the integrity of the work.

In 2006, the new HQ building (costing £28 million) was opened. As it was situated in the greenbelt, it is subject to a planning condition that restricts the development to use by SASA. The HQ building itself was designed and built to accommodate the specific needs of SASA and houses specialist laboratories, controlled temperature rooms, quarantine greenhouses etc. and integrates these with the surrounding farm.

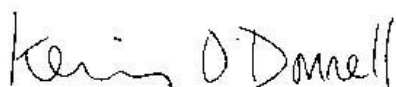
Adjacent agricultural land has provided a buffer for the SASA field trials helping to protect them from breaches of plant health conditions through substantial increased pressure from walkers, domestic pets adversely affecting crop trials, litter and surface run off associated with suburbanisation. A reduction in biosecurity would jeopardise the Scottish Government's ability to meet its statutory duties and cause commercial damage to the agricultural and food chain businesses which rely on SASA's work. Damage to SASA's genetic resource collections could involve irretrievable loss of international significance.

The presence of a large housing development adjacent to Scottish Ministers' site would therefore pose a threat to the satisfactory continuation of our statutory activities. Approval of the proposed development would be inconsistent with the basis of the planning consent upon which SASA relocated its HQ and laboratory facilities to the research farm land at Gogar.

Gogar Station Road has been identified as the only vehicular access route to the entire proposed development site. Gogar Station Road is a rural road which is regularly used by farm traffic and changing the nature of the road to a suburban road potentially creates adverse impacts on the safety of existing and proposed users of it. Given the likely pressure that would be generated at the two points where Gogar Station Road meets with the A8 (to the north) and the A71 (Calder Road) it is a foreseeable consequence that residents would seek out other routes, most likely leading to a significant increase in the volume of traffic on Roddinglaw Road, which is also a rural road, regularly used by farm traffic and any such change in the use of the road would present a safety concern for staff and for other road users.

SASA has consistently worked within the planning system. It has relied upon its green belt location to provide a high degree of bio-security necessary for its scientific work. SASA was granted planning consent for its HQ only on the basis that if SASA were to cease to occupy the building in association with its work at the Gogarbark research farm, the planning consent would lapse. For these reasons SASA remains supportive of the second local development plan proposals which maintain the land in question as part of Edinburgh's green belt, as these give it the confidence that it will be able to maintain the biological integrity of the facility which it requires to continue its work into the foreseeable future. As a result, SASA objects to the proposed development.

Yours sincerely



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