

Catalogue of Neglect: The Elusive Balmore

- 27 September 2001 **WENDY ALEXANDER** writes to Renfrewshire Council requesting details change of ownership of Linwood Shopping Centre
- 1 October 2001 **Letter to Wendy Alexander from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL** confirming sale of Linwood Shopping Centre
"Clearly Balmore propose some form of redevelopment. We propose a further meeting with Balmore to determine what their investment/development proposals may be within the parameters of the planning policy".
- 27 February 2002 **Letter from LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore**
"We would appreciate it if you could let us know what plans you have for the refurbishment of the centre. Its air of dereliction was a god-send to the advertising agent who produced the 'Toilet sale' commercial which is currently being screened almost every night by TV".
- 27 March 2002 **Balmore respond: "We are looking seriously at the potential refurbishment of the shopping centre".**
- 3 April 2002 **Letter from LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore**
"I am sure you will agree that any community requires a community heart of retail and other services and that the centre does provide this, however inadequate, and should be allowed to continue to do so".
- 15 April 2002 **Letter from LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore**
No response received
"I attended the meeting last Friday in Linwood and I am sorry to say that I came away with the impression that you're intention is to tear the heart out of our shopping centre and to leave us with some other form of profitable development which will be contrary to the well-being of Linwood and that of the traders currently trading in the Linwood centre and their customers. Especially the discussion between Mr Ian Rhodes and the representatives of the TSB representatives left me, and others, wondering whether you or they were hell bent on getting them out of Linwood.

Please, please, reassure us that this is not the case and that the fact that a number of traders have disappeared from the centre is merely a coincidence and is not a part of a grand plan by yourself to empty these premises so that you can demolish them to make way for some other development."

15 April 2002

Letter from LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

"Mr Rhodes of Balmore Properties Ltd., is determined to defy the wishes of the Linwood people and Renfrewshire local plan and to destroy the present shopping centre to make way for some other form of lucrative development. The fact that one man can act in this way is deplorable and I would be most grateful if Renfrewshire Council could find a way to rein him in and ensure that Linwood will continue to have it's core retail and services centre into the future.

Surely there is some power available in the planning and "sustainable development" strategies that can allow you and the Council to protect the Linwood community from blatant rape."

29 April 2002

Circulation by Renfrewshire Council by RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL of minute of meeting Balmore, shopping centre tenants, Wendy Alexander + representatives of RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL + LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

"Wendy Alexander asked Balmore Properties to confirm that they only had one asset and that the company was set up with the sole purpose of purchasing Linwood Shopping Centre, as well as requesting confirmation as to how many employees the company had. Iain Rhodes confirmed that Linwood Shopping Centre was the sole asset of Balmore Properties and that Dallas Rhodes was the company's only employee although they had a team of professional advisers in place to advise on future proposals."

"Crawford Russell advised that a meeting had been arranged for the week commencing 1st April 2002 which had subsequently been cancelled by Balmore Properties."

21 June 2002

Letter to WENDY ALEXANDER from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

"Heads of Service Secretaries have, on numerous occasions, contacted Dallas Rhodes office in an attempt to secure a common availability date to meet."

"Mr Rhodes is unwilling to confirm a meeting until he can speak with his "advisors". It is not clear who, exactly, these "advisors" are."

31 July 2002

Letter from LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore

Request for a reply to April letter, re Balmore's plans for shopping centre
No response received

10 October 2002

Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

"What is an issue for the Council is what Balmore propose to do with the Centre in the future. They have a ground lease from the Council and any development they may propose, an issue they have not raised formally via the Planning process, will be for the Council to consider in terms of the merits thereof or otherwise in addition to our rights as landowner. The Council also have a concern as to the continuing decline of the Centre on a number of fronts. There is the affect on our house tenants and on our operational services (eg. our decision to relocate the day centre to Killallan House at Houston due to the condition of the day care centre) and the general concerns we have on the conditions in the area."

10 February 2003

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Asking for update on negotiations with Balmore

11 February 2003

Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY ALEXANDER

"As regards Linwood Shopping Centre, Balmore have not yet clarified what their true intentions are, but the effect of their actions is clear. The Council have significant investment in the area in terms of public facilities including peoples homes. Seven of the 26 homes (i.e. those at Ardlamont Square), are declared as initiative properties not to be relet, or invested in, and we are actively seeking to obtain vacant possession. This was in response to an understanding that once vacated, then Balmore, would demolish this block along with the vacant former Kwik Save unit on the ground floor at their expense, as the first positive move towards regeneration of the area. Balmore have subsequently declined to accept there was any such agreement. They merely seek to create more void units in the centre by their actions. This is a particularly negative way to approach matters

and is clearly having a significantly adverse effect on the area."

"Clearly Balmore are working to their own agenda and timetable and are holding out for a large/retail unit (to obtain the greatest financial returns) which use and scale of redevelopment is not supported by the Council and they have, as you are aware, been advised of this on a number of occasions."

25 February 2003

Letter from Councillor Hall to Balmore

"Over the recent weeks, I have received numerous complaints at my Surgeries, at Tenants Associations and Community Meetings, about the state of Linwood Shopping Centre."

"You will remember that we had a meeting last year, where these issues were raised, with Police, Fire, Health, Council and Community Groups represented. Sadly, to date, it would appear that little or nothing has been done to address the issues, in fact I understand that you have still not submitted a draft plan to the Council's Planning Department."

19 March 2003

Reply from Balmore to Councillor Hall

"The only realistic prospect for Linwood centre is redevelopment, this has always been Balmore's intent. For any real progress to be possible, Balmore Properties require full control of the centre. The Council currently control the freehold of the centre and the surrounding land, and clearly they too have a significant role to play in the centre's future. We are keen to progress with a planning application, however we cannot do so until we have a contract with the Council."

10 April 2003

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Asking for update on shopping centre

2 May 2003

Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY ALEXANDER

"The council recognises the problems with the condition of the shopping centre and is very concerned with the increasing number of vacancies appearing since the purchase of the centre by Balmore properties. The Council's revised Local Plan... proposes that options be considered for the regeneration of the centre to maintain and enhance its role in providing facilities to meet local needs."



"We still retain the ability to seek approval for compulsory purchase in due course to buy out the lease. Council practice however is only to do so when a willing partner has been identified, ready to take over the development and fund the level of investment required. We are some way from this at this time. I am afraid that the issue of compulsory purchase powers is a far from simple one in this case but... the Council is very concerned about the condition of the centre and is addressing the problem as a priority."

14 July 2003

Reply from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY ALEXANDER

"The Council is well aware of the issues involved and the difficulties with the current owners."

"Firstly, we have now at a cost employed development consultants to undertake a feasibility study to examine the scope of the redevelopment of the Town Centre (see copy report attached. Hopefully this will test alternative development options for the centre compared to the currently unacceptable approach by the owners."

"I trust that the foregoing demonstrates the positive action the Council are taking and the pressure we continue to exert on the owners of the property."

9 December 2004

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore

Asking for update on plans for shopping centre + whether they ever have any short term plan to upgrade the properties to keep them from falling ever further into disrepair.

17 December 2004

Reply from Balmore to WENDY ALEXANDER

"It is important that this redevelopment delivers long term benefits to Linwood and we do not consider that short term investment will bring this about."

"Given the present configuration of the site and scale of the work required to regenerate it, our investigations indicate that it is not a viable alternative to improve the centre in its existing form."

"Please be assured that Balmore is determined to bring new investment to the centre and is currently working on a solution that will achieve this."



7 January 2005

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore
Request for update on repairs
No response received

1 February 2005

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore
Request for update on Balmore's plans in light of Petition
to Scottish Parliament
No response received

29 March 2005

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore
Requesting update
No response received

4 April 2005

**Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY
ALEXANDER**

"The current position is that I am continuing discussions with Balmore Properties in an effort to an agreement on what form and scale the redevelopment of the centre should take... Ideally any redevelopment of the centre would take place in the form of a partnership between Balmore and the Council."

"It is Balmore's wish to redevelop the site for a full sized superstore but this would be contrary to the policies of the Development Plan, both the Structure Plan and Local Plan. Discussion is therefore focussing on the implications of a superstore in relation to Linwood and the potential impact on other centres. Although I am encountering certain difficulties in progressing these discussions with Balmore, the company is taking action to achieve the redevelopment of the centre. In these circumstances it would not be appropriate for the Council to take compulsory purchase action at this time."

"The Council would not welcome the submission of a planning application at this time. An application will be appropriate when agreement has been reached between Balmore and the Council in respect of the form, scale and extent of a redevelopment scheme. The Council would require to be satisfied that the scheme provided for the needs of Linwood and did not adversely affect other town centres. In this respect I would not expect an application to be submitted for some months."

15 April 2005

**Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to RENFREWSHIRE
COUNCIL**
Asking for an update on shopping centre



8 June 2005

Letter from **RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL** to **WENDY ALEXANDER**

The Scottish Parliament

"It is the Council's hope that an agreement can be established with Balmore on the form and scope of a redevelopment scheme that would be appropriate for Linwood. Our discussions with Balmore are therefore focussed on achieving a redevelopment that would serve the interests of Linwood but also fit into the retail hierarchy of the wider Renfrewshire area. Achieving agreement has so far proved difficult but I am pursuing Balmore to provide me with tangible plans and information that can be properly assessed by the Council to allow progress to be made. As I mentioned at our recent meeting I will discuss this matter directly with Dallas Rhodes in the next few days. I would not however welcome the submission of a formal planning application at this time until I am sure the basics of any submission is acceptable. Agreement between Balmore and the Council should be achieved regarding the form and scale of the redevelopment prior to any formal step being taken."

21 September 2005

Letter from **WENDY ALEXANDER** to **Balmore**

Requesting update
No response received

21 September 2005

Letter from **WENDY ALEXANDER** to **RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**

Requesting update on negotiations with Balmore

13 October 2005

Letter from **RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL** to **WENDY ALEXANDER**

"Balmore have been vague about their proposals from the start, only providing brief indications of their intentions. Although sketch plans were on occasions tabled at meetings, no plan had been submitted for assessment until recently. However, it appeared that their intention was to redevelop the centre and replace it with a single large foodstore."

11 November 2005

Letter from **Balmore** to **WENDY ALEXANDER**

"I am sure you are aware that Balmore Properties has been in continued dialogue with Renfrewshire Council, in an attempt to ensure that the scheme proposed for Linwood Shopping Centre is the most appropriate for the site. I genuinely feel that progress is now being made towards finalising a deliverable solution for the area. I will



happily discuss the scheme with you in person once we have concluded discussions with the council."

The Scottish
Parliament

20 December 2005

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore

Request by WENDY ALEXANDER to meet Balmore any time that would suit Balmore
No response received

21 December 2005

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

"In December 04 you indicated a "legal agreement is being progressed with a major food retailer" Is this still the case?

Thereafter in your letter of April 05 you note it was the Council's view that "ideally any redevelopment of the centre would take place in the form of a partnership between Balmore and the Council" I would be grateful for an update on whether that still represents the council's view.

*Likewise in April "the Council would not welcome the submission of a planning application at this time. An application will be appropriate when agreement has been reached between Balmore and the Council in respect of the **form, scale and extent** a redevelopment scheme". Again I would be grateful for an indication on whether over the intervening 8 months agreement has been reached on any one of these 3 areas?*

Your letter of October 05 also touches on the vagueness of Balmore's proposals since they acquired the centre in 2001. You will be aware of local resident's ongoing irritation about this matter. Hence I would be grateful for an update on your expectations regarding the likely timescale for the receipt of any concrete plans, a RIA formal application from Balmore."

24 January 2006

Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY ALEXANDER

"Discussion with Balmore has been progressing well recently with a series of meetings which I have arranged to deal with different aspects of the project.

Balmore have now submitted an informal sketch indicating the form, scale and extent of their proposed



scheme. In addition, they have submitted a Retail impact Analysis indicating the estimated effect on other centres of their proposed development. I have given an initial response to the submitted scheme and also responded to the Retail Analysis. In this respect I have engaged the services of a Retail Consultant who has provided specialist advice to assist the discussions.

I have serious concern over the scale of the proposed development and the likely effect this may have on existing centres and have also many reservations on the form of the development and the proposed site layout. These matters are the subject of ongoing discussion with Balmore and their agents.

I can confirm that for any redevelopment scheme to take place, Balmore require the co-operation of the Council as site owner and part occupier and a partnership agreement in whatever form will be required. I would not expect that a planning application would be submitted until the Council is happy with the proposals and has entered into such an agreement.

In conclusion therefore, progress is being made and the fundamental issues of Balmore's proposals are being addressed. These are difficult issues for the council and therefore it is not possible for me to be certain about a timescale but I would be hope that matters can be brought to a conclusion in the early part of this year."

8 March 2006

Letter LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore
No response received

"I wonder if we could prevail on you to grant Linwood a very big favour? We have just heard that our local 'Farmfoods' store in Ardlamont Square will close 'in the summer' due to the non renewal of it's lease. Would it be possible to renew the lease on a 'notice of one month basis similar to that granted at one stage to the TSB bank. This would ensure that this significant retail outlet could remain open and maintain it's service to the local shoppers for as long as possible in the re-development period."

"I wrote to you on the 10 February asking if you could bring us up to date in your discussions with Renfrewshire Council regarding our shopping centre but have not yet had a reply. I trust that you will be able to reply to me soon." (not replied to)



14 April 2006

Letter LINWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL to Balmore
Request for update on plans
No response received

20 September 2006

Letter from WENDY ALEXANDER to Balmore
Request for update on plans

12 October 2006

Letter from Balmore to WENDY ALEXANDER

"I would reaffirm Balmore's commitment to redeveloping the centre to satisfy fully the needs of the local people."

12 October 2006

Letter from RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL to WENDY ALEXANDER

"The Council has been using its best endeavours to help find an acceptable long term solution. Council planners have encouraged Balmore Properties to consider a mixed- use redevelopment on the site, consisting off new retail units and an element of housing. The existing proposal for a major superstore is unlikely to proceed because of the adverse impact it would have on nearby communities, and the Council has on several occasions stressed the need for positive and early action to Balmore. However, the option of compulsory acquisition is unrealistic for practical, financial and legal reasons at present.

I am not sure that a meeting with local residents would be especially productive at this point, as our efforts need to be focused on working with Balmore properties in an attempt to make early progress."