

Response to the Aberdeenshire Main Issues Report

by

Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore
Community Council

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8 July 2009

Summary

This document represents the formal response to the Aberdeenshire Main Issues Report by the Community Council.

Three consultation exercises were carried out in the Community Council area. The findings from these three events, along with other submissions, have been incorporated into this report.

It is the clear outcome of the consultation exercises that the preferred option for the Portlethen – Stonehaven corridor should be proposal K142, submitted by Elsie Development Company Limited for a new Community on land to the west of Newtonhill, but with the provision that West Cammachmore remains a separate village and that traffic from the new development does not pass through the village to connect with the A90.

While the Community Council chose not to answer some of the policy questions raised by the Main Issues Report, most were agreed with.

Introduction

The Main Issues Report, published by Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan team, is a document to promote public consultation prior to the Local Development Plan (LDP) being published. The deadline for response from the public is 6th July 2009 and from Community Councils, it is 20th July 2009.

The Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council held two public consultation exercises to discuss the impact of the Main Issues Report. The first was a Drop-In held on the 9th May 2009, in conjunction with a Planning for Real event, at the Bettridge Centre, Newtonhill. The second was a public meeting held on the 7th June 2009 at the Bettridge Centre. The Planning for Real event provided residents with the opportunity to question some of the developers regarding the proposals put forward for the LDP. Some developers chose not to be present at that event.

The Muchalls Village Association also held a meeting on the 28th May 2009.

The Community Council received a number of other submissions from members of the public, including a petition from the residents of East & West Cammachmore.

This document summarises the comments received, both generally and for specific development proposals. The conclusions of the Community Council are presented along with our response to the questions posed in the Main Issues Report .

Development Proposals

The LDP web site identifies ten development proposals that fall totally or partially within the Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council Boundary.

The identified development proposals are:

- K47 East Cammachmore, North of Newtonhill
- K59 Muchalls
- K71 Newtonhill
- K90 North of West Cammachmore, near Portlethen
- K100 Newtonhill
- K105 North of West Cammachmore
- K119 Newtonhill Farm
- K123 East & West Cammachmore, North of Newtonhill
- K142 Elsie Estate
- K157 Site of Twentieth Century Classics Ltd.

General Comments

The majority of the general comments received at the three events fall into three main categories:

- Concern that settlements would lose their identities
- Concern for the impact on infrastructure
- Concern for the environment

Settlement Identity

The residents of each of the three settlements of Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore expressed a very strong sense of pride and community in their respective villages. There is also a very strong opinion that these settlements should not be allowed to merge so that one community completely loses its identity. These opinions were made time and time again in the submissions at all three events. Many submissions spoke of the need for a *Green Belt* surrounding each of the settlements, where a *Green Belt* is an area where strict planning controls are applied to protect the rural character of the landscape; it may be a country park or agricultural land which has cycle ways and footpaths through it.

Impact on Infrastructure

Section 4.4 of the Finalised Structure Plan says *Future development should not be allowed to limit the growth of the economy by making the region less attractive to business, particularly in relation to congestion and access to roads...* To ensure that this objective is met, it will be necessary to substantially improve traffic flow on the A90 before any major development in the Laurencekirk – Bridge of Dee corridor is undertaken.

The A90 is the main road from the south through to Aberdeen and as such is very busy, especially at morning and evening rush hours. The Bridge of Dee is already a substantial bottleneck to commuters and this needs to be addressed before any further

development south of Aberdeen. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) will do little to improve the flow of traffic through the Stonehaven – Portlethen corridor. However, the proposed Fastlink from Stonehaven to the AWPR at Milltimber Brae may take some traffic flow from the A90.

Environment

Safety

Particular emphasis was given to the impact on safety by additional developments.

The A90 is seen as a very fast and dangerous road. It was expressed that additional developments that could not access the A90 via a grade separated junction should be avoided.

Causey Mounth

Causey Mounth was the most easterly route over the Mounth or Grampian mountains, which probably existed in the twelfth century. This ancient roadway, that passes through Cammachmore, must not be allowed to disappear under a new development, but be preserved for future generations. It is essential that the Causey Mounth and its local environment are formally protected from all development.

Leisure

Several of the areas covered by the development proposals are used for leisure purposes by the residents of the settlements, especially for walking, dog walking, running and cycling. A large number of residents expressed concern that these facilities may be lost. Several people expressed the need to keep roads in the countryside for leisure pursuits, e.g., running and cycling.

Comments relating to specific development proposals

K47 & K123 East & West Cammachmore, North of Newtonhill

These two proposals are now presented as one. There was very strong opposition to these developments as they would cause Newtonhill and Cammachmore to coalesce into a single entity. A large number of residents from East & West Cammachmore signed a petition to object to these proposals.

The building of another grade separated junction on the A90 under a mile from the existing Newtonhill flyover is a totally disproportionate development for this area. It would completely transform the nature of Cammachmore from a small village into a major road junction with no gain for the local community.

These proposed developments are adjacent to the northern boundary of Newtonhill and linked to Newtonhill by two footpaths. The original proposal showed one footpath being made into a road by demolishing two homes in St. Anne's Wynd. The developer has since written to the residents to confirm that they have abandoned this idea. However, there is now another proposed road linking directly to St. Michael's Road in Newtonhill, again with the need to demolish one or two homes.

There was a great deal of concern that St. Michael's Road would become a very busy route as an alternative entry into Newtonhill from the A90. St. Michael's Road has not been designed as a main road and the additional traffic would present a major safety hazard, especially when children are walking and cycling to and from Newtonhill Primary School.

The road alongside the Elsieck Burn is used as a safe route to Newtonhill Primary School by children living in the part of Newtonhill east of the railway line.

Newtonhill is bounded to the north by a steep hill and the Elsieck Burn. The Elsieck Burn has been known to flood and burst its banks to cover the adjacent road from time to time. Development on the adjacent fields will increase the potential for flooding as rainwater runoff will be much more rapid.

K59 Muchalls

The community at Muchalls discussed this proposal at their Village Association meeting on 28th May 2009. The overwhelming majority of those present voted against the proposal. The main objections were regarding the inadequate junction with the A90 and the need to protect the environment of the village. The area is designated as a Conservation Area in the current Local Plan.

K71 Newtonhill

It was felt that the proposed access route via Cairnhill Road should not be used, as too many houses are in close proximity and it would be too narrow to use as a road with a pedestrian footpath. General opinion was that the path is currently used by walkers and cyclists and should be kept that way, as it is too narrow to use as a road with a pedestrian footpath.

K90 North of West Cammachmore, near Portlethen

No specific comments received regarding this area.

K100 Newtonhill

There was agreement with the Main Issues Report that this proposal should be rejected as it lies within an environmental designation. There would be major transport problems finding a suitable road to link potentially 300 houses with the grade separated junction on the A90. There was a very strong opinion that development should not be allowed to progress too far towards Muchalls so that the two communities eventually coalesce.

K105 North of West Cammachmore

It was stated that this area has been rejected in the past because it was too close to the A90 and would be very noisy.

K119 Newtonhill Farm

Objections were raised regarding access onto the A90 directly from this proposed development and the impact on road safety.

K142 Elsick Estate

This proposal received a complete mix of comments. Most residents from Cammachmore were extremely concerned that West Cammachmore would be completely swallowed up by the development and by the irreplaceable loss of countryside. The petition received from the residents of East & West Cammachmore also objected to this proposal.

There was strong agreement with the developer's proposals that the new settlement should connect to the Fastlink in the west, to the existing grade separated junction on the A90 at Newtonhill and to an upgraded junction at Bourtreebush. However, the suggestion of a junction with the A90 at Cammachmore met with universal rejection.

However, there were many positive comments about the proximity of a new academy within walking/cycling distance of Newtonhill. A sustainable community designed and built to a masterplan was also a very popular concept considering the mistakes that have been made with Portlethen.

K157 Site of Twentieth Century Classics Ltd.

Objections were raised regarding access onto the A90 directly from this proposed development and the impact on road safety.

Banchory Leggart

Considered to be an alternative option to Elsick, but has the disadvantage of being less than half the size. It was seen by many as more of a dormitory town, slightly smaller than Newtonhill, but being situated closer to Aberdeen. It would add significantly to the congestion at the Bridge of Dee.

Conclusion

The Community Council agrees that existing communities should be protected from piecemeal developments that are more concerned with profits for the developers than benefits to the communities. Existing communities should be surrounded by a *Green Belt* to prevent coalescence into one large town along the eastern side of the A90 with no discernable heart.

Piecemeal developments will inevitably lead to significantly more traffic on the A90 and major congestion at the Bridge of Dee. Modifications to the traffic flow proposed for the Banchory Leggart development will add to the problems at the Bridge of Dee.

The two sustainable communities of Elsick and Banchory Leggart offer a substantial quantity of housing without the inevitability of greatly increased traffic, as both propose a substantial amount of employment land. Banchory Leggart will fulfil only half of the proposed housing requirement for the Portlethen – Stonehaven corridor, so a considerable amount of piecemeal development will also be required. Elsick, on the other hand will completely satisfy the proposed housing requirement.

The Elsick proposal offers a sustainable development with employment, commercial and community facilities designed into the development at the planning stage. There are also considerable recreational and leisure opportunities. Furthermore, the fact that the

development will be built to a masterplan makes it a far more attractive proposition than other piecemeal development proposals.

Therefore, Elsick is the preferred proposal and all other proposals within the Portlethen – Stonehaven corridor should be rejected. However, West Cammachmore should remain a separate village and the Causey Mounth must be protected from development. Traffic from the proposed development should not be allowed to pass through Cammachmore to connect with the A90. A development of this scale should use an upgraded junction at Newtonhill and a new grade separated junction towards Portlethen as well as a junction with the proposed Fastlink.

Community Council Masterplan

It has been proposed that Community Councils should, if they wish, have their own masterplan to cover all or part of their Community Council area. This masterplan would be similar to those proposed for major developments and would reflect the views of the local community on how they would like to see their community develop. The masterplan could then be used by planners, developers and elected councillors as a guide to see what the community would like to see developed and where.

Response to questions posed in the Main Issues Report

| Number | Question | Response |
|--------|--|----------|
| 1 | Are the preferred options suitable and appropriate objectives for the Local Development Plan? | Yes |
| 2 | Are there any further objectives of a similar nature to these that the Local Development Plan should be trying to deliver? | No |
| 3 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the Huntly to Pitcaple part of the Strategic Growth Area? | None |
| 4 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the Inverurie to Blackburn part of the Strategic Growth Area? | None |
| 5 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the Portlethen to Stonehaven part of the Strategic Growth Area? | No |
| 6 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the South of Drumlithie to Laurencekirk part of the Strategic Growth Area? | None |
| 7 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the Peterhead to Hatton part of the Strategic Growth Area? | None |
| 8 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the Ellon to Blackdog part of the Strategic Growth Area? | None |
| 9 | Is this an appropriate strategy to follow for the rural areas? | None |
| 10 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for developer contributions? If not, how should we change it? | Yes |
| 11 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for minerals? If not, how should we change it? | Yes |
| 12 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for planning for waste? If not, how should we change it? | Yes |
| 13 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt to protect and enhance landscapes within Aberdeenshire? If not, how should we change it? | *13 |
| 14 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for Enabling development? If not, how should we change it? | *14 |
| 15 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for destination retailing in rural areas? If not, how should we change it? | None |

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| 16 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt for rural development? If not, how should we change it? | Yes |
| 17 | Is the use of the 8-fold rural classification appropriate for Aberdeenshire? Would an alternative typology be better suited to Aberdeenshire? | Macaulay |
| 18 | Is this an appropriate approach and policy to adopt to improve design quality? If not, how should we change it? | *18 |
| 19 | We propose to take the existing policy approach for "important issues" forward largely unchanged, with modification of the way the objectives are delivered. Do you have any views on the way that we deliver these, or other policy topics? | *19 |
| 20 | What are your views on the sites preferred for development? Do you agree that these represent the best locations for development in the area? Do you think that other sites should be promoted for development other than those preferred? | *20 |

- *13. We agree with the preferred approach, but the residents should be involved in the process of Landscape Character Assessment in their local area.
- *14. We prefer Alternative Option 1. We do not agree with the concept that developers could use the excuse that an old building in need of repair in one location justifies a new development in a totally different location. This will be a huge 'loophole' that must not be allowed.
- *18. Consideration should be given to off street parking and garages that are big enough to accommodate a normal sized car with its door open, rather than the smallest possible car.
- Generally, the new housing stock is quite well designed, with a few notable exceptions. However, the standard of construction has fallen dramatically over the past twenty years and this should be addressed if properties are to be sustainable.
- *19. We strongly support the modification of policy to prevent overdevelopment of allocated sites.
- A policy to cover Community Council masterplans should also be considered.
- *20. We do not agree with the preferred sites and this document gives our reasons why and states the site that we do prefer.