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Submitted to **Local Development Plan Main Issues Report 2019 Consultation**

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Additional Documents

Please include comments on other documents below:

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Shaping Development in the Countryside

The fact that the development area is located in the current green belt demonstrates the Council's commitment to "making no changes to the green belt policy at this time" (MIR, Ch 5, Shaping Development in the Countryside, Main Issue 5). The unique character of Banchory Devenick is acknowledged in the Kincardine and Mearns Appendix Part 2: KN 069 - 072:

"This area is important in terms of the landscape setting of the City, and the site would have a negative impact on the Aberdeen green belt and the City."

Furthermore the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA), Jan 2019, states that the KN 069 - 072 developments are "Not Preferred due to being set within ancient woodland and it shall have a negative impact on the Green Belt."

I am relieved to know that the preservation of green belt land is a key priority for the Council.

Natural Heritage and Landscape

The 'not preferred' recommendation is consistent with the two policies on Natural Heritage and Landscape (Ch 8):

"Policy E1 Natural heritage which sets out protection for nationally and locally designated nature conservation sites, protected species and wider biodiversity and geodiversity."

Banchory Devenick is widely recognised for its landscape beauty and wildlife population. The area is an essential habitat for variety of wildlife. Designated species identified in the NESBRc 'Notable species search' (survey undertaken in July 2018) identifies the following: bats, badgers, red squirrel, pine marten, otter, hedgehog; numerous birds including osprey, kingfisher, kestrel, barn owl, and over 30 other species.

"Policy E2 Landscape protects landscape character as defined by Scottish Natural Heritage, and Special Landscape Character areas of local importance."

Within the Banchory Devenick area The River Dee has a Special Area of Conservation status (SAC), and The Den of Leggart has a Local Nature Conservation Site status (LNCS). Both should be protected at all costs, and it is good to know that both Councils have made an important pledge specifically about the river (section 6.6, The Aberdeen City and Shire Councils' Strategic Plan 2018). The specific locations proposed in the KN 069 - 072 development bids would raise significant challenges re waste water treatment and drainage arrangements. I am please to see that the Council considers these as "not acceptable at this scale nor so close to the River Dee Special Area of Conservation" (Kincardine and Mearns Appendix Part 2: KN 069 - 072).

"Policy E2 sets out a general presumption against development that would cause unacceptable effects on a landscape's overall character and quality, and it expects developers to take account of the Landscape Character Assessments produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Special Landscape Areas designation developed locally and included in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017."

Tollohill Wood is acknowledged as a local nature conservation site. The specific locations proposed in the KN 069 - 072 development bids would encircle this wood. Views of Tollohill from the City, and views of Aberdeen City itself from Tollhill would be disrupted by the proposed developments. I am pleased to see that the Council's 'not preferred' recommendation is consistent with these policies.

The Historic Environment

The 'not preferred' recommendation is also consistent with the policies on The Historic Environment (Ch 9).

"The historic environment includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, archaeological sites, conservation areas, battlefields, and historic gardens and designed landscapes. It has an important role in the character of an area and the quality of life for the people who live there, and is an economic asset that should be valued."

Tollohill Braes are historically significant. These were the resting and camping place of the Covenanter army coming up Causey Mounth from the south before the Battle of Aberdeen in 1646. In excavating the site of the current car park to the Wood musket balls were found.

The Causey Mounth, an ancient drovers' road constructed in the 12th century, is a designated 'Heritage Path' - see

<http://www.heritagepaths.co.uk/pathdetails.php?path=24>

The specific locations proposed in the KN 069 - 072 development bids would destroy these historical features going far beyond having "a negative effect on these sites." (ref. Policies HE1 and 2). I am pleased to see that the Council's 'not preferred' recommendation is consistent with these policies.

Protecting Resources

The 'not preferred' recommendation is also consistent with the policies on Protecting Resources (Ch 10).

"The main purpose of the policy is to avoid harming or causing irreversible effects on unique and important land resources. ... trees and areas of woodland."

Within the Banchory Devenick there are areas of ancient woodland.

"... These woodlands are already protected through the reference to woodlands with 'significant ecological, recreational, historical, landscape and shelter value' within the policy. Ancient woodlands are places where these tests are likely to result in a recommendation for refusal of planning permission, unless there are truly exceptional reasons."

The specific locations proposed in the KN 069 - 072 development bids would destroy these ancient woodlands. I am pleased to see that the Council's 'not preferred' recommendation is consistent with these policies.

Other issues

I cannot see in the MIR any policies concerning roads (maybe this is within another document?). The KN 069 - 072 development bids would necessitate "substantial new road infrastructure" and "significant upgrade to access to the A92(T) (formerly the A90) south of the Bridge of Dee (two new roundabouts)" (ref. Kincardine and Mearns Appendix Part 2: KN 069 - 072).

It would appear that the AWPR has significantly reduced the volume of traffic on the A92 into Aberdeen from the south, easing pressure on the Bridge of Dee. I would hope that the proposed dual carriageway link road - A92 to B9077 - and the proposed upstream new bridge over the Dee into Garthdee - will now be deemed redundant. This proposed route would cut through greenbelt land, destroy woodland and forest tree planting undertaken by the Forestry Commission in recent years (at public expense), cross the ancient Causey Mounth Road, and pass close by the Den of Leggart woodland, effecting the habitat of many animals including family groups of roe deer that move frequently between the Den of Leggart woodland and Tollohill Wood. This would clearly go against all your policies I have identified earlier in my response.

One other issue raised in the Kincardine and Mearns Appendix Part 2: KN 069 - 072 concerns the "insufficient primary and secondary school capacity for any homes in this location without immediate upgrades or new school provision". Banchory Devenick Primary School is the only one in the area, being a small, rural establishment of currently 34 pupils. KN 070 (Phase 2) proposed a new primary school that would need to cater for possibly 1,000 or more children (given the scale of the whole development - 1,300 homes). The Council's recommendation to identify this as an issue of concern is welcomed - particularly as the proposed siting of the new school would be just south east of the Camphill community of Beannachar and close to its boundaries. This important educational community would be seriously affected by any development on its doorstep, disrupting the peace and quiet that its special needs students require to learn and live.

The Conclusion to the Kincardine and Mearns Appendix Part 2 states:

"Several bids propose a large number of homes in rural locations that do not provide a sustainable pattern of development, propose private sewage works that could impact on the River Dee Special Area of Conservation, result in the loss of trees/ancient woodland"

I congratulate the Council's fortitude in upholding important policies in order to keep Banchory Devenick, Aberdeenshire the fantastic place it is to live. Well done.

Strategic Environmental Assessment of Bid Sites

This is a thorough assessment of the key environmental factors likely to be affected by the proposed developments KN 069 - 072 Phases 1 - 4. The overall and cumulative 'negative' and 'significant negative' effects on air, water, climatic factors, biodiversity, landscape, material assets, cultural heritage (even post-mitigation) cannot be ignored, with only soil and human health identified as neutral. The one positive is population. The SEA table states objective reasons for the bid to be deemed 'not preferred'.

The crucial importance of the green belt (as Banchory Devenick is designated) as a 'lung' for the City and an essential habitat for a wide range of wildlife.

The Den of Leggart - a Local Nature Conservation Site and a designated a Prime Landscape (DWP) Area - lies inside the Phase 1 Royal Devenick Park site. The Den comprises semi-natural and ancient woodland, and provides a habitat for a number of protected species.

The landscape vistas of Banchory Devenick (especially Tollohill Wood) from, for example, Holburn Street, Duthie Park, the riverside, Garthdee and Cults would be degraded. With regard to this particular Phase, views from Kincorth and the A92, of the Wood, the Dee Valley and Aberdeen west would be particularly adversely affected, significantly impacting on the green belt and landscape setting of Aberdeen.

Road upgrades would be necessary for site entry - presumably from Deeside Braes (constrained by the Den of Leggart), the A92 and from the ancient Causey Mounth itself.

Phase 1 City is just a small part of the overall proposed developments. If the City Phase is eventually approved it would constitute 'the thin end of the wedge', paving the way for further unwanted developments.

Additional Files

If you have further information you would like to provide you may upload it here.:

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