

Aberdeen Local Development Plan Review 2018 – pre-Main Issues Report

1. YOUR DETAILS

1.1 Please let us know the capacity in which you are completing this questionnaire. Response from Culter Community Council

1.2 Please provide your name and contact details:

Andy Roberts, Planning Liaison, Culter Community Council

Please make sure I am on the LDP e-mailing list, to be kept informed of progress in producing the next LDP.

2. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

Vision

2.1 What do you think are the most important things that make Aberdeen a good place to live, visit and/or work? The proximity to beautiful areas of Scottish countryside – the Dee and Don valleys – together with being a coastal city makes living in Aberdeen enjoyable. The city has a vision and plan to make it more attractive to be in and around, although funding the work is still a challenge. Development proposals tend to be directed towards some of the more attractive areas of the city rather than those that would benefit from regeneration.

There needs to be strict control of new housing and commercial development to ensure that it does not damage the aspects that make living in Aberdeen enjoyable – green space needs to be preserved and development needs to be directed to brownfield sites.

2.2 What do you think should be the Council's top priorities for the next Aberdeen Local Development Plan? To ensure planned developments already included in the LDP are progressed before allowing any additional proposals, particularly along the A93 corridor where we already have approved developments in progress for around 3900 homes. There should be a policy presumption against approving any scheme not in the LDP.

To ensure that the additional and improved infrastructure needed to support the development already included in the LDP is provided as a priority – better roads, public transport, school places, leisure facilities, core paths and cycle routes are needed, and confirmation that health and care provisions can cope.

To plan infrastructure improvements to manage flood risk, following completion of AWPR.

To ensure traffic movement around the city is fully assessed – including the impact of the AWPR and specifically its junction at Milltimber Brae, and the junction at the bottom of Malcolm Road - and any improvements required are planned, before any major new developments are accepted in the Dee valley, the A93 and A944 corridors.

To resist uniform infill growth of the city out towards the AWPR. The new Local Development Plan should protect the junctions and corridor of the AWPR from inappropriate or speculative development.

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2.3 Do you have any particular aspirations for your community or Aberdeen as a whole? The new LDP should set out that housing land needs to be allocated with a clear view to the needs of individual communities. There is a critical need for new homes for growing families in the Culter area, after the Reporter deleted nearly 70% of the planned housing provision in the last LDP. “Affordable” houses in the numerous developments in Cults, Bielside and Milltimber are beyond the financial reach of Culter folk, and our community will wither if our vibrant young families keep having to move to places where getting back to the extended family means a journey of two buses and a lengthy walk, each way.

There should be a greater mix of house type in future development proposals (small, large, detached, semi-detached, terraced, bungalows; and including low-cost housing and retirement homes). Current LDP Policy H4 should be more strictly applied when reviewing development proposals.

We wish to see the condition of local roads restored through quality repairs. We and our local businesses suffer from the lack of parking in the village centre. We want to see the completion of more core path routes connecting communities to key community services and the city, to encourage wider use of sustainable transport. Improvements to the local school, and to drainage arrangements around the village, are required just to maintain previous quality of life. Areas of Culter still suffer from poor broadband service and mobile coverage.

Maintaining the quality of the city requires the preservation of greenspace between communities along the A93 and A944 corridors. This is something achieved to enormous benefit in Holland, a far-more-densely populated area than ours. The existing green space between the individual Cults, Bielside, Milltimber and Peterculter communities should be preserved as agricultural or amenity land to support the character of the separate communities. The retention and preservation of a minimum area of green space between communities to provide a distinct boundary should be clearly stated as a policy for the LDP.

The attractiveness of the Deeside Way as a recreational benefit drops markedly every time there is any development adjacent to it. Milltimber South, forced upon us by the Reporter, will create building adjacent to the Deeside Way throughout the length of Milltimber. In addition, the Deeside Way’s appeal is deteriorating because the drainage is not being maintained, and with large sections of the old system now clogged, stretches of stagnant, foul, insect-breeding bog ensue. Over time water has made its way under the old rail bed and de-stabilised the lower embankment throughout the Culter section, and unless the drains are renovated we will lose large sections of the embankment and trees as well as the Deeside Way itself.

Main planning priorities

2.4 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for the city centre? To make the city centre more welcoming and attractive to residents and visitors – progress the key projects of the City Centre Masterplan to give people a reason to come to the city centre and support the city of Aberdeen. Support new plans for residential and commercial development to encourage people to live and work in the city, whilst maintaining the granite ‘look and feel’ of the centre.

2.5 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for providing infrastructure? Develop a city centre access plan; establishing key routes into the city centre for private vehicles that connect with good and reasonably priced public parking sites; establishing prioritised bus routes with minimal or no access to HGV and private cars; keep all HGVs out of the city centre except for deliveries outside the working day and

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with only smaller vans used for deliveries during daylight hours. Address the need for a modern and welcoming integrated bus and rail station which is easily accessible to the public.

The availability of school places and the ability to expand capacity should be a key determinant of any future development proposals and this should be evaluated in the aggregate, so whilst decisions are required on specific individual proposals, the burden of expansion must not fall on the latest applicant but be shared amongst all those seeking planning permission in each area.

2.6 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for transport and accessibility? Vision, not incremental change, is needed to deliver a shift away from the use of private cars. It requires really deep thinking: about the repercussions of 50+ years of development based on cars (supermarkets, out-of-town business parks, relatively low-density housing such that walking to a bus stop can be lengthy) for most of the lifetimes of the current population; about the delivery of attractive (not just credible) transport alternatives; and about what all this means for the required infrastructure. It would be powerful to commit to creating a credible and effective plan for future transport during the next LDP period.

Look for options to improve the bus service and access to all parts of the city, eg via more competition through a Strategic Transport Authority model where NESTRANS has the power to define service requirements and then franchise out the operation (as in London, Strathclyde &c) or reinstate a publicly-owned bus service that provides transport for all areas of Aberdeen. Establish circular bus routes to complement the current radial system so that people do not have to go through the city centre when commuting.

The new Local Development Plan should protect the junctions and corridor of the AWPR from inappropriate and from speculative development.

The need for a new Bridge of Dee crossing should be incorporated with a timescale for delivering the preferred option; this is particularly relevant if Local Development Plans move to a 10 year timeframe. The potential interaction with transport needs for the new Nigg Bay harbour should be assessed so that we end up with a cohesive solution south of the river.

2.7 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for ensuring we have high quality buildings and places? Ensure new buildings proposed for the city centre reflect the heritage of Aberdeen through the use of Planning Guidance and Control. Opinions are strongly voiced about the MUSE development and while one can argue that the juxtaposition of the modern with the traditional of Marischal College provides a topic for discussion, a more sympathetic design may have led to less division in public opinion. Ensure landlords maintain the appearance of their property to make the streets safe and attractive to walk along – use of gentle persuasion, possible grant funding and legal enforcement (By-Laws?). Incorporate more open public space in new developments, and protect existing open spaces, both public and private.

2.8 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for meeting the needs of businesses and industry? Improve accessibility to the city centre (see 2.5) and increase the amount of city centre accommodation to encourage more people to live and work in the city.

2.9 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for meeting Aberdeen's housing and community needs? Encouraging the building of more accommodation in the centre, through private developers, housing associations or council-supported housing schemes. There is also a need for more social housing to accommodate lower-paid workers, particularly in the health and education sectors.

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2.10 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for supporting retail centres across Aberdeen? The existing centres should be encouraged to renovate and expand – we don't need any new ones and we should not encourage or support out-of-town retail parks. Work with the owners of existing centres to improve their offering and adapt to the needs of Aberdeen residents. Improve pedestrian connectivity and accessibility between the main centres e.g. safe walkways, well lit routes, and good signage, remembering the sometimes-inclement weather in the NE of Scotland. Encourage growth of local retail businesses in prime locations perhaps through rent or rate relief.

2.11 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for protecting and enhancing the natural environment and preventing flooding? Develop an up-to-date understanding of flood risk, including the effects of AWPR, and use this actively to influence planning decisions. Planning Officers need to be clear and firm when reviewing and refusing applications for development in recognised flood areas. Similarly a city access strategy (see 2.5) needs to incorporate clean air requirements and ensure that levels of pollution are reduced across the city, particularly in problem areas. Encourage the increased use of hydrogen- and electrically-powered buses and vehicles, including by enforcing future-proofing of new houses so that charging facilities can be easily installed as required.

2.12 What do you think should be our main planning priorities for ensuring that resources and waste are managed sustainably? Waste collection services must be continued at a frequency that ensures our streets are clean and hygienic, with recycling further encouraged through continued education in schools and improved access to recycling points in the city, including more separate recycling bins in the main streets.

The commercial robustness of the business case for an incinerator for the region looks much more doubtful in light of ever-improving recycling and the rapid withdrawal of plastic packaging. Waste incineration is outdated technology, no longer supported by many local authorities in Scotland and not at all in EU. Before any commitment is made, a thorough review led by people separate from the current political and cultural expectations in the Council should be undertaken to assess whether an incinerator is truly a necessary part of the area's facilities from the early 2020s for the subsequent 20+ years.

2.13 Any other views on topics not covered above? Encourage the creation of sustainable home energy supply in new developments, in particular looking at geothermal energy. Ground-source heat pumps make sense for individual new dwellings; for developments, the availability of drilling expertise in the city and its geological setting should be an advantage when developing deep high-temperature heat generation systems as an alternative to energy from waste.