

**PLANNING APPLICATION 130912:
ERECTION OF 97 RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES AND ASSOCIATED
WORKS AT WEST HUXTERSTONE, KINGSWELLS**

RESPONSE BY KINGSWELLS COMMUNITY COUNCIL (KCC)

KCC strongly objects to a number of aspects of this application. In most cases, these aspects relate to previous objections KCC has submitted that have simply been ignored or not dealt with effectively.

1. Background

The Masterplan for West Huxterstone went to the Environment, Planning and Infrastructure Committee on 6 November 2012. The committee decision was to try to resolve some of the contentious issues prior to a planning application. It was resolved to approve Councillor Delaney's recommendation subject to the following revisions:

- (i) Allow for the possibility of two exits to be made onto Fairley Road as a possible alternative to exiting onto the old Lang Stracht.
- (ii) Instruct officers to look at a range of options for affordable housing rather than restrict this to any one type.
- (iii) Phase the site development in conjunction with advice from the Education, Culture and Sport service.

Eight months on from that commitment, we have still not received any feedback about these issues from the developers or from planning officials. The current planning application simply reinforces KCC's view that both developers have chosen to ignore this decision by the Council and their justifications for rejecting each of these aspects have been simply accepted and left unchallenged by ACC planners. This lack of response is completely unacceptable and makes a mockery of the consultation process.

2. Number of homes

The number of homes proposed at West Huxterstone is excessive. The ALDP allocated 120 homes to the site. The actual numbers now proposed (Stewart Milne Homes + Dandara) are 97 and 49 respectively, giving a total of 146. The developer may argue that the 120 figure is "indicative" but how can 120 possibly be indicative of 146? If this reasoning is extended to future developments such as Countesswells, will an "indicative" figure of 3000 homes actually translate (proportionately) to 3650 with all that that would entail for infrastructure needs and additional traffic?

3. Types of homes

Whilst KCC welcomes plans for a variety of house types on the site, the proposal to include 3-storey town houses (22 of the total 97) is completely unacceptable.

It is obvious that town houses are being used to help cram as many homes as possible onto the site. Town houses may be acceptable in an urban setting like Kepplestone where they are overlooked by high flats but are completely inappropriate on an open rural site like this one. This is particularly true of the 10 town houses overlooking the Den Burn. The inclusion of town houses is completely out of keeping with the Masterplan which aims to create a high quality village expansion that compliments the existing character of the area.

4. Educational provision

KCC has explained clearly in previous responses to ACC about this site that Kingswells Primary School will be unable to accommodate the number of children generated by West Huxterstone before 2016 and that careful phasing of the development will be required to avoid overcrowding at the school. Stewart Milne Homes has chosen to ignore this point. In Fairhurst's response to ACC planners dated 22 March 2013 they state that *"There is therefore no requirement to identify infrastructure requirements associated with individual phases given the anticipated short overall timescale for completion of the development."* This statement only goes to show that the developers wish to complete the development with all haste and ignore the school roll.

5. Road Access

KCC maintains its strong objection to any road access off the Lang Stracht. It has already set out its case in detail for the alternative of a second access from Fairley Road as part of its response to the Dandara application. It is clear from the current application that Stewart Milne Homes has again chosen to ignore this. Indeed, in their Access Statement of June 2013 Fairhurst declare that *"The principle of provision of vehicular access to the West Huxterstone development from Lang Stracht has been agreed with ACC."* If true, this implies that ACC planners have acceded to the developer's wishes without providing any explanation for their decision. Given the commitment by ACC last November to review the matter, we would have expected at least to receive an independent assessment by the Council's Roads Department.

We note in the current application the provision of 14 car parking spaces along the Lang Stracht. We cannot tell if vehicles using these spaces have been counted in the traffic analysis. They would certainly pose a potential danger to cyclists using the Lang Stracht especially when residents choose to reverse out onto the road. KCC does not accept Fairhurst's view that bus transit times along the Lang Stracht will be unaffected by the development. Bus transit times into the city from Kingswells are already too slow. The frequency of bus journeys along the Lang Stracht is also set to increase from September 2013. Some residents would inevitably be tempted to drive eastwards along the Lang Stracht, thus adding to the problems. The road is already used illegally by a few drivers trying to avoid the traffic congestion on the A944.

As for the southern access road, the current application plans do not show where this will actually join Fairley Road. The absence of a "joined up" roads plan

involving both developers is unsatisfactory.

6. Provision for future development

Stewart Milne Homes has made no secret of the fact that they plan a future eastwards extension of their development into the green, rolling valley of the Den Burn. Building in this valley has been rejected in the past by successive Scottish Government Reporters and also by ACC. KCC will never accept this extension for the objective reasons put forward in previous public inquiries. The two eastern cul-de-sacs have simply been included to facilitate it. ACC must not be assisting in these future plans. Once again we ask that the two cul-de-sacs be removed or re-located within the development.

7. Transport assessment

Fairhurst submitted a transport assessment on behalf of the developer in January 2013. Unfortunately, traffic levels projected for the development referred to the allocation of 120 homes, not the 146 now proposed.

7. Green Space Network (GSN) and SUDS

The Masterplan stresses the importance of safeguarding and enhancing the ecological habitat of the Den Burn. Within the Stewart Milne Homes site, the distance of roads/buildings from the burn ranges from 30 metres to just 10 metres going west to east. This narrowing to just 10 metres to accommodate 4 car parking spaces is unacceptable.

The main aim of the GSN area at West Huxterstone must be to provide a pleasant and accessible area of biodiversity. GSN is quite different from Urban Green Space of which there are other qualifying areas on-site. KCC has no objection to a pathway through the GSN, but this should be no wider than 1.5 metres or it will take up too much area. The large "lay-by" areas along the pathway must be removed to maximise the area for wildlife in the little space that is left. KCC welcomes the provision of play equipment for young children on-site but seriously questions if this is appropriate in a GSN area and so near to the burn.

KCC understand that SUDS ponds cannot be located within the potential flood zone of the burn. However, the latest plans to install an underground cellular attenuation system (Stormcell) are completely unacceptable as they will involve massive excavation, upheaval and destruction of the of the wetland area close to the burn. The developer has a very poor record in constructing SUDS that protect and enhance the environment. The SUDS pond promised at West 1 never materialised, and instead was replaced by a lifeless "dry basin" that totally ruined the small area of marshland beside the Den Burn. By contrast, the drainage system within Prime 4 a good example of what can be achieved with a bit of thought. If the sustainable drainage system can only be located within the GSN area, then KCC must insist that ACC seeks an alternative solution that will actually enhance the natural environment and not destroy it.

PI

From: webmaster@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Sent: 17 July 2013 21:19
To: PI
Subject: Planning Comment for 130912

Comment for Planning Application 130912

Name : Mr and Rev. Neal and Alisa McDonald Address : Lang Stracht Manse Lang Stracht Kingswells
AB15 8PN

Telephone : [REDACTED]

Email : [REDACTED]

type :

Comment : To whom it may concern,

I am writing regarding the proposed development of houses by Stewart Milne (ref 130912). Whilst we do not object in principle to the development we have concerns regarding the proximity of some of the houses to our property as well as their height. The houses that are proposed to be built closest to our property are at a distance and a height that will seriously impact upon our privacy and quality of life. Given the location and layout of our property the separation distance between our property and the nearest houses is wholly insufficient to the level of privacy that should be expected from a private detached property.

The proposed mitigation measures included in the plans to build a line of trees between our property and the development will, if allowed, obscure any sunlight to our property and seriously degrade our ability to enjoy our house. We have also serious concerns about how this boundary will be managed in future given the potential height of the trees in years to come. It would be best if a formal agreement could be reached before construction commences as to how this boundary and the height of the trees would potentially be managed in the medium to long term future. We would like to request a mechanism be put in place under the scope of the S106 agreement to maintain the trees and their height.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the developers and the council to discuss the matter further, we were unable to attend the previous meetings due to recently moving into our property so have been unable to make ourselves heard in this matter until now.

Regards,

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