

aberdeen local development plan

Main Issues Report – Consultation Responses and Officer Response

Area F - Countesswells: Summary of Responses

Wards: Lower Deeside & Hazlehead/Ashley/Queens Cross

Main Issues Report Proposals

	<p>Area F: Countesswells Site shaded pink is already zoned for employment use in the Aberdeen Local Plan 2008 (Friarsfield, Cults)</p> <p>Sites outlined in pink were development options assessed by Planning Officers as being 'desirable' sites for housing, employment and related uses in the Main Issues Report.</p> <p>Sites shaded blue are development options submitted, but considered 'undesirable' following assessment by Planning Officers.</p>
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Sites	Local Development Plan period		Future Growth
	2007 – 2016	2017 – 2023	2024 – 2030
9/05, 9/24 and 9/50 Countesswells	1900	1100	-
	10 ha employment		
Housing Total	1900 homes	1100 homes	-
Employment Land Total	10 ha		-

Summary of Responses

We received 597 responses relating to the Countesswells area. The types of respondent were classified as follows:

Number of Respondents	Respondent Type		
581	Member of the public	579	Individual (including 534 using Kingswells Community Council card)
		2	Submitted by an agent on their behalf
3	Community Council (Culter Community Council, Kingswells Community Council, Cults, Milltimber & Bielside Community Council)		
11	Landowner/Agent		
2	Key Agency (SEPA, NHS Grampian)		
597			

A wide range of comments were also made at the community consultation events held at Kingswells and throughout Lower Deeside. The vast majority of comments we received about Countesswells were made at the Cults Community Centre event on 19th November 2009. A note of that meeting is attached at **Appendix 1**.

1. Summary Overview of Responses

As can be seen from the respondent type table, a fairly wide range of interests have been represented in relation to the development proposal at Countesswells.

We received a large number of comments relating to Countesswells because the response card issued by Kingswells Community Council contained 4 statements relating to Countesswells: 3 in support of the preferred sites, and 1 in support of our assessment of Bellfield Farm as undesirable. A total of 466 respondents agreed with Kingswells Community Council's support for the Main Issues Report preferred sites at Countesswells and 500 with Kingswells Community Council's support for our assessment of Bellfield Farm as undesirable for development. As well as the Kingswells Community Council card responses, and the favourable response from proponents of preferred sites, there was both support and objection from members of the public and Key Agencies. The support tended to be conditional on a package of measures being delivered, the objection arose from a similar list of issues (summarised below) focussing on: appropriate infrastructure (transport, education)/

car dependence and wider impact on road network, reduced number of homes/ excessive scale, habitat protection/ impact on wildlife.

Proponents of sites assessed as undesirable continue to promote their sites. There was a far lower level of response from members of the public in relation to sites assessed as undesirable.

One new site was put forward in the Countesswells area – a proposal for a hotel and conference centre, 50 timeshare and 50 residential units at Hayfield riding school and nearby riding schools at Hazlehead.

Overall response to Area F

The number of homes required on greenfield sites is set out in the Structure Plan, and the Local Development Plan must release enough land to satisfy this. If we were to reduce the number of homes proposed on the Countesswells site, we would need to compensate for that reduction by the release of sites elsewhere that we have assessed as less desirable than Countesswells.

Some concerns have been raised about our assessment of sites. For example, the Countesswells Consortium (whose proposal, 9/24, was the largest development option in the Countesswells area) submitted alternative sustainability scores for their sites when compared with our scores. The sustainability scores are, however, only one set of tools used in exploring the suitability of any site, and is not the sole determinant of whether a site is desirable or not. Other factors included the Transport Framework and Strategic Environmental Assessment. Account was also taken of views expressed at an earlier stage in assessing development options, other information about sites and existing policy considerations.

The development of the Countesswells site has a number of issues to address - as the assessments make clear. There are landscape considerations, such as the treatment of the northern boundary; there will also have to be sensitive handling of the recreational and natural heritage assets. Given the location of the site, in order to reduce the need for residents to travel to access employment, schooling, retail, services and facilities outwith the site, these will have to be incorporated within the development and residents given a realistic choice of more sustainable modes of transport. Much of the infrastructure required for this development to work will be set out in the Local Development Plan and coordinated through a masterplanning exercise for the whole area and this site provides an opportunity to provide a new community in an attractive setting.

We intend to adjust the phasing at Countesswells and would move 250 units from the Housing 2017 – 2023 phase to the Housing 2007- 2016 phase to meet the removal of this number at Gillahill, Kingswells. The

overall level of development would not change and we still anticipate that the site will deliver the 3000 homes anticipated in the Main Issues Report

Housing 2007 -2016 - 2150 homes
 Housing 2017 – 2023 - 850 homes

We assessed the new development option proposed at Hayfield Riding School and fields adjacent to Dobbies as undesirable due primarily to its potential impact on landscape character and the recreational function of the area.

2. Site by Site and General Area Responses

The comments we received on Countesswells relate to either the overall principle of a new settlement here, the specific sites listed in the Main Issues Report (9/05, 9/24, 9/50) as preferred, the general area, or alternative development options. The table below sets out the level of response we had to each of these topics, with a summary of the content of those responses provided below the table. Comments on alternative development options are presented separately, below the comments on the Main Issues Report preferred options.

Site Ref	Site	Total no. of respondents*	Respondents generally supporting Main Issues Report*	Respondents generally opposing Main Issues Report.	Respondent offering advice/ comment only.
	Settlement Strategy (new settlement)	5	2	3	0
9/05	Land at Countesswells	20 + 446	10 + 446	10	0
9/24	Countesswells	23 + 446	10 + 446	12	1
9/50	Land to west of Loanhead Road, Countesswells	18 + 446	10 + 446	8	0
	Comments about general area	27	3	16	8

* Kingswells Community Council cards in bold

Settlement Strategy

Supporting Comments:

Cults, Milltimber and Bieldside Community Council (6/891) would favour a new settlement (Countesswells) over settlement expansion (Oldfold, Milltimber) because sufficient infrastructure can be planned for and provided, and road traffic generated by developments in Aberdeenshire impact on the viability of new housing in Lower Deeside.

Culter Community Council are in favour of development at Countesswells, to protect the identity of Peterculter and its 'village' feel.

Objections:

Stewart Milne Homes (2/167) question how realistic the phasing for development at Countesswells is. They suggest the following: 1st period: 1000; 2nd period: 1500; post 2023: remainder.

Response: In line with the Structure Plan (paragraph 4.17), the allocation of land for housing does not represent an expectation that all of the new homes will be built within the relevant plan period.

Emac Planning on behalf of Countesswells Ltd (2/863) state that a number of smaller sites in the Countesswells area would be preferable, ones closer to existing services and settlements without requirements for new services and infrastructure. They propose that Foggieton can accommodate the growth requirements for the area together with other sites.

Response: The Development Options assessment discounted the Foggieton site (9/22) on nature conservation, landscape, and access to and provision of employment and facilities grounds. The reduced number of houses proposed on 9/22 would slightly reduce the general impact of the development, but make it even less self sufficient. It would also not make any significant contribution to delivering the level of housing required by the Structure Plan.

One member of the public was in favour of the alternative settlement strategy options 1 or 2, whilst another believed releasing such a large Greenfield site would divert developers' attention from brownfield sites.

9/05, 9/24, 9/50 Land at Countesswells

Apart from proposers' own support for their sites, comments we received regarding the preferred allocation at Countesswells were not specific to the three development options sites but refer to the preferred allocation area. The comments are therefore listed together.

Supporting Comments:

11 members of the public responded independently, voicing their support for the preferred allocation at Countesswells, but also conditioning their support on some of these provisions:

- Level of housing reduced to 1000 or 1500-2000.
- Wildlife and mature trees protected, appropriate buffer zones and conservation measures incorporated.
- Green areas between development to be provided/protected.
- Appropriate infrastructure provided.
- Road improvements made, including separated cycle ways and paths.
- Schools and community facilities provided.
- Include all aspects of 'sustainable living' and access carefully thought out.
- Facilities to be shared with Kingswells.

These individuals gave the following reasons in support of the proposal:

- It will be self-sufficient and prevent urban sprawl.
- Area does not meet objectives of SPP21 so should be removed from the Green Belt. Preferable to other options in Green Belt in landscape terms.

Kingswells Community Council (Kingswells Community Council) (6/171) is in favour of development at Countesswells if restricted to 2000 homes, with the remainder going to Clinterty. Kingswells Community Council also wishes mature trees to be protected and road improvements made.

Kingswells Community Council distributed response cards and their own report on the Main Issues Report to Kingswells' residents during the consultation period and, subsequently, we received 575 of these cards. Kingswells Community Council's card contains 12 statements, which break down to 29 possible comments, 3 of which are in support of the 3 sites which make up the preferred allocation at Countesswells. This support for Countesswells is conditional on development being limited to 2000 houses, and 9/50 A, B and D being excluded. 446 of the cards submitted to us supported these 3 comments.



The following comments were made by those proposing development on the preferred Countesswells sites:

- Site 9/05 Proposer (GVA Grimley Ltd on behalf of Heron Property) refers us to Appendix 3 of their Development Options Report, which details a package of sustainability measures that the development could deliver.
- Site 9/24 Proposer (Barton Willmore on behalf of the Countesswells Consortium) supports the inclusion of the site, as it will assist the Council in meeting its housing requirements and ensure an effective housing supply. Development can be integrated into the transport network - see Transport Appraisal submitted with report.
- Site 9/50 Proposer (Keppie Planning on behalf of IDJ Properties) supports the inclusion of the site, stating development of the site would have no adverse impact on natural or built heritage, dry stone dykes preserved where possible. The site should be used for residential and recreational activities, services and community uses focussed on more central areas of the Countesswells site. A proportion of affordable houses could be provided.

Objections:

26 members of the public responded independently, voicing their objection to the preferred allocation at Countesswells, giving the following reasons:

- The proposal doesn't meet the Structure Plan's aim to use greenfield resources 'efficiently and effectively'.

- It will destroy the greenbelt.
- It is excessive.
- It is not necessary.
- New Communities should be smaller in scale - 20-50 houses.
- The local community is against this and the proposer has conducted no consultation with the community.
- Current road infrastructure is unsuitable. Countesswells Rd cannot sustain more traffic. Development would create huge problems with additional traffic on local roads and the wider network including Craigton Road and Kirk Brae.
- The transport proposals are unrealistic. Linking to the A944 is a poor solution.
- The site is unsustainable in transport terms - no AWPR junction, no easy extension to existing bus routes, 1.5 km from Kingswells Park & Ride.
- There has been no prior investigation into city wide transport/ access infrastructure.
- There should be no development at Countesswells in the absence of new roads, but the site is land locked, with no viable access.
- New developments should be adjacent to railway stations.
- Poorly related to existing settlements and remote. It will be a car dependent suburb and not self-sustaining.
- In Kingswells' experience, uses other than residential are often unviable.
- The site is exposed and has drainage problems.
- No gas or sewerage infrastructure on site.
- Development would likely increase flood risk to existing communities to the south.
- There are drystone dykes on the site.
- The site is a natural habitat.
- Intrusion into the landscape replacing a rural landscape setting with a semi urban one. Development would also impact on the landscape after loss of tree cover, as part of the site is visible from the Lang Stracht.
- Increased reliance on the private car will impact on boundary trees, which are strong landscape features.
- Loanhead sports facility would be lost if development went ahead.
- The area currently serves as a recreational link between Hazlehead Park and Countesswells Woods, containing three established equestrian centres, grazing land and paths. Development would take away open space, disrupting a continuous stretch of recreational land.
- Development should not be located in or adjacent to Countesswells or Foggieton Woods, which are popular destinations with a diversity of wildlife. The beauty and biodiversity of this and the wider area needs to be conserved.

- There would be loss of woodland and wild life.
- Site boundaries should be reduced so as not to encroach on the woodland and wildlife.
- Development will lower our quality of life.
- Both Cults and Hazlehead Academies would not be able to absorb the requirements of this development and due to their location would generate further trips by private car.
- A more natural location for a school to relieve pressure on Bucksburn Academy would be to the west of Sheddocksly, not Countesswells.

Bancon Developments Ltd (2/160) object to Countesswells on the following grounds:

- The Scottish Government Reporters were against Countesswells at the last inquiry.
- No sustainable transport solution.
- Little cohesion between the three development bids.
- A difference of 1000 homes between the submission and the allocation.

Kingswells Community Council is against development at Countesswells sites 9/50C and D (see above map) as it would involve felling of trees and won't help Scotland to reduce greenhouse gases.

The objection from Emac Planning on behalf of Countesswells Ltd (2/863) has been summarised under Settlement Strategy (above). They list poor access and lack of public transport as reasons why they do not consider the site appropriate and connection to A944 and AWPR, a dedicated bus service, local road improvements, and new academy and one or two new primary schools as necessary infrastructure.

Barton Willmore on behalf of the Countesswells Consortium (2/1017) also object to the appraisal score of 46 for the whole of site 9/24, which they propose should be 56 and the recommendation changed to desirable, as proximity to facilities, employment etc will be greater when the development is complete.

Knight Frank LLP on behalf of Bett Homes (2/145) continues to promote the part of the development option 9/50 it submitted that was assessed as undesirable in the Main Issues Report. This is part of the land also being promoted by Barton Willmore on behalf of the Countesswells Consortium (2/1017), and is labelled 9/50A on the Kingswells Community Council map insert (above). This is therefore not a new site.

Additional Comments:

GVA Grimley Ltd on behalf of Heron Property state that they are willing to discuss the infrastructure required to support development at Countesswells with the City Council. They also wish to discuss final boundaries of the Countesswells site as they are currently indicative.

Two members of the public expressed concern that certain properties were included within site 9/24:

- 1/932 is concerned that their house is included.
- 2/12 is concerned that Newton of Countesswells Farm is included. Land Registration details were submitted to us.

Area F Comments

Some of the comments submitted raise issues for the Countesswells site and the wider impact of its development.

4 Members of the public stated that current access arrangements to retail facilities and RGU from Lower Deeside are unsuitable. New Developments in the area should be conditional on the creation of a new link road between North Deeside Road and Garthdee, preferably through currently undeveloped land to the west of Garthdee.

One member of the public who objected to Countesswells expressed the hope that schools and shops would be viable and that employment land would attract local resident workers.

Three members of the public focussed on the impact this scale of development would have on the wider road network, especially routes into the city centre and 'the important commuter route' between Kingswells and Cults. The traffic management would require careful consideration, connecting to A944, the AWPR, the provision of a dedicated bus service and local road improvements.

Maclay Murray and Spens LLP on behalf of Forbes Homes Limited (2/852) state that if Countesswells does not survive the scrutiny of the Plan Examination, sites such as Inchgarth are readily accessible, requiring no upfront investment in new infrastructure and can be quickly delivered.

SEPA note that Countesswells is a Flood Risk Category D area, and that this was not mentioned in the Environmental Report.

Scottish Natural Heritage (3/851) note that the development at Countesswells would be a remote new settlement with no linkages to any existing housing areas, and question whether it could be anything other than car-based. They state that it would be essential to design in good habitat linkages across the site, as the surrounding woodlands are

important for a range of protected species. They also wish the site to be released for development towards the latter part of the life of the plan, so that any lessons learned from Grandholme SSSI can be applied.

Although not objecting to development at Countesswells, one member of the public echoed concerns raised through objections, and SNH's comments. Namely, the impact this scale of development would have on wildlife, due to noise, pollution, rubbish, traffic and increased numbers of users, many with dogs. The impact on red squirrels is a particular concern. "If you must build, make it smaller and allow for large green corridors in which the animals have still some measure of safe movement."

Ryden LLP on behalf of NHS Grampian state that a new practice, dentist and pharmacy will be required as part of the development to serve the new settlement of Countesswells.

Response:

Scale of development and consultation

The Structure Plan sets the number of homes the Local Development Plan has to allocate sufficient land for, and also specifies how many of these should be allowed in on Greenfield sites. The Local Development Plan has to comply with this, and therefore cannot reduce the Greenfield housing allowance. The Countesswells "Future New Community" was deleted from the current local plan in response to the PLI Reporters' recommendations. One of the main arguments against Countesswells at that time was that it over-allocated housing land compared to the 2001 Structure Plan requirement. The 2009 Structure Plan requires a much greater amount of housing land to be identified than its predecessor, and therefore requires us to reconsider sites that have been previously left in greenbelt.

The number of houses proposed at Countesswells has come about by considering the proposals put forward by developers, which parts of the development options are suitable for development and the Structure Plan requirements in terms of both housing numbers and the density of new housing developments. Reducing the number of houses in this location would require the Local Development Plan to compensate for the reduction by allowing development on sites we assessed as undesirable during the Development Options process.

Concern was raised that no consultation had taken place with local communities. However, the workshops we organised in June 2009 allowed developers to present their proposals to communities and we took on board comments members of the public submitted to us at these events in our assessment of the sites. The three preferred development

options that make up the Countesswells site will be coordinated through the preparation of a masterplan.

Landscape

The ridge in the northern part of the site is fairly high and exposed with little in the way of tree cover to provide shelter. The site becomes more sheltered further to the south due to a general lowering in altitude, greater tree cover, and intervening higher ground. The Development Options assessment exercise flagged up to us that the north of the site was not only exposed to the elements but also visible from the Lang Stracht. This was one of the reasons why development option 9/53 (directly to the north of the preferred Countesswells site) was assessed as undesirable. We acknowledge that the northern boundary of the Countesswells site will have to be examined in some detail to mitigate the potential visual impact and to ensure a robust green belt boundary can be established. Detailed boundaries for the site will be presented in the Proposed Plan.

The drystone dykes throughout the site will inform the masterplan for the site. They are likely to determine the overall layout, allowing for adjacent paths to run through the site, enhance residents' and visitors' experience of the area and be a refuge and corridor for wildlife. This was explored in the development brief the proposer prepared for site back in 2004 and submitted during the development options process (see figure 11 of the development option 9/24).

Natural Heritage and Recreation

The Countesswells site is a mixture of wooded and open farmland with trees located mostly around the edges of the site, along field boundaries, Countesswells road and in the forestry plantation in the north eastern corner. We will resist the loss of trees on the site, and where it is unavoidable, we will require a replanting scheme with trees of appropriate species and number.

The widening of Countesswells road would entail loss of boundary trees. But, the current proposal is to take the principal access off the A944 and to use Countesswells road as a bus/cycle only route, thereby avoiding the need to widen the road.

We would agree this area is rich in biodiversity and recreational assets. As a result of greenfield development it is inevitable that open areas will be lost and wildlife disturbed. We feel however that with appropriate mitigation measures and careful planning the impact on the environment can be minimised and access and recreational opportunities enhanced for a range of users. The masterplanning process will seek to incorporate substantial green links between Countesswells Woods and Hazlehead and through engagement with the local community, protect

the most important areas of open space and improve access and recreation opportunities.

Concern was raised about the future of the equestrian facilities in the area. The 2004 Brief prepared by the proposer proposes bridleway paths alongside pedestrian/cycle paths connecting the wider equestrian network and does not propose any development on Loanhead Equestrian Centre. We would wish to see this retained as a recreational asset.

We recognise the need for buffers to protect sensitive habitats from new developments. The Local Development Plan and associated Supplementary Guidance will seek to both identify and require further assessment of nature conservation interests through the masterplanning and planning application process. The boundaries of allocations do not indicate the extent of the built environment. Rather, they contain areas developers are responsible for addressing sensitively during the masterplanning process. However, we will investigate at this stage whether we are able to use the Green Space Network Policy designation to highlight and safeguard the periphery of the site due to its landscape and wildlife sensitivity. This approach was recommended by the Reporters at the Inquiry into the current Aberdeen Local Plan (Ch.5, para.110).

Transport

Sustainability has been key to our assessment of development options proposed by developers. The location of development determines how sustainable it can be. We acknowledge that the Countesswells site is remote from existing services and facilities and, therefore, without interventions there will be a significant impact on the transport network. Through the use of developer contributions we will require developers to make upgrades to the local and regional road network and specifically contribute to improved public transport provision to mitigate the impact of development. Key to reducing transport impacts from all developments, is the issue of how easily additional traffic can be compensated by more sustainable travel modes, which is heavily influenced by the location of development. With the scale of development proposed, significant improvements to the public transport provision in the area can be achieved. As the site is currently not served by public transport, a service will therefore be required to ensure residents have a realistic choice of more sustainable modes of transport over and above the private car. Cycle routes will also need to be extended into the site to link with the A944 and Countesswells Road cycle routes.

The mixture of uses on the site and its layout can also affect travel behaviour. An element of employment will be incorporated into the Countesswells site to enable some residents to work close to home, and

avoid the need to travel. The 2004 development brief compiled by the proposer states that 96% of the development would be within 400m/ 5mins walk of bus stops and 75% within 200m/ 2.5mins.

Additional infrastructure

The infrastructure required to deliver appropriate development at Countesswells (including schools, roads, paths, open space, water and sewerage) is currently being assessed and the requirements and responsibilities will be set out in the Local Development Plan.

SEPA advise that the area is a category D flood risk area. This means that there are small watercourses on the site that may be at risk from flooding. As a part of any planning application a Flood Risk Assessment will be required (to assess potential on and offsite impacts) and careful surface water management will be undertaken. In addition to this a Drainage Impact Assessment will be required as a part of any planning application to deal with waste and surface water drainage.

The site will require access to the public sewer and local energy requirements will need to be addressed.

In addition to 2 primary schools, a new secondary school may be required on the Countesswells site to serve Countesswells and possibly a wider catchment. The site will also require a new medical practice, dentist and pharmacy.

Individual properties within the preferred allocation

Two members of the public expressed concern that their properties lay within the Countesswells preferred allocation. The development plan does not confer or imply property rights. However, we would recommend the concerned individuals contact the development proposers to discuss how their proposals will relate to the individual properties and to participate in any masterplanning events.

Sites previously assessed as undesirable in the Main Issues Report

Site Ref	Site	Total no. of respondents *	Respondents generally supporting Main Issues Report*	Respondents generally opposing Main Issues Report.	Respondents offering advice/ comment only.
9/05	Land at Countesswells	2	0	2	0
9/22	Countesswells	6	5	1	0

9/23	Countesswells Road, Aberdeen	4	3	1	0
9/24	Countesswells	1	0	1	0
9/50	Land to the west of Loanhead Road, Countesswells	7	4	3	0
9/53	Bellfield Farm	2 + 500	1 + 500	1	0
	Alternative Development - Comments	1	0	1	0

* Kingswells Community Council cards in bold

9/22 Countesswells

Supporting Comments:

5 representations (from members of the public) were received supporting the Main Issues Report's assessment of the site as undesirable, one citing the unsuitability of Baillieswells Road.

Objections:

Emac Planning on behalf of Countesswells Ltd (2/863) continue to promote Land at Foggieton (Development Option 9/22), wishing it to be identified for mixed use development for 300-500 houses. Countesswells Ltd wish the Local Development Plan to allow a first phase of 100 units on the area indicated on plan. The subsequent phases and scale being guided by the masterplan.

Response: This objection has been responded to under Settlement Strategy (above).

9/23 Countesswells Road, Aberdeen

Supporting Comments:

4 representations were received (3 members of the public and Davies, Wood and Summers LLP on behalf of The Davidson Childrens Trust and Graham and Gayle Davidson) supporting the Main Issues Report's

assessment of the site as undesirable, one citing the unsuitability of local roads.

9/24 Countesswells

Barton Willmore on behalf of Countesswells Consortium (2/1017) continue to promote part of their original development option submission (9/24) which was assessed as undesirable in the Main Issues Report. The part of the land they continue to promote comprises the southern field of development option 9/50 (9/50A on the above Kingswells Community Council map insert). They argue that the site is well contained, providing reasonable green belt boundaries. It is sheltered, flood risk free. Also, that the assessment score would increase if the site were included within the Countesswells site rather than as a stand alone development.

Response: The objection does not raise any new issues to be assessed; therefore we stand by our original assessment.

9/50 Land to the west of Loanhead Road, Countesswells

Supporting Comments:

Kingswells Community Council (6/171) supports the Main Issues Report’s assessment of 9/50A and 9/50B as undesirable, stating that development around Countesswells House will damage recreational amenity of area between Countesswells and Foggieton Woods.

3 representations were received from members of the public in support of the Main Issues Report’s assessment of the site as undesirable.

Objections:

Knight Frank LLP on behalf of Bett Homes (2/145) continue to promote development of the southern section of 9/50, to ensure Countesswells is of a sufficient size. The site also acts as a defensible green belt boundary, has minimal landscape, recreational, agricultural or historic value.

1 representation was received from a member of the public (1/348) stating that the land is suitable for development.

Response: The objection does not raise any new issues to be assessed; therefore we stand by our original assessment.

9/53 Bellfield Farm

Supporting Comments:

Kingswells Community Council (6/171) supports the Main Issues Report’s assessment of the site as undesirable, citing negative impact on landscape, access and addition to traffic congestion.

497 of the Kingswells Community Council cards submitted to us agree that this development option is unsuitable and should not be pursued.

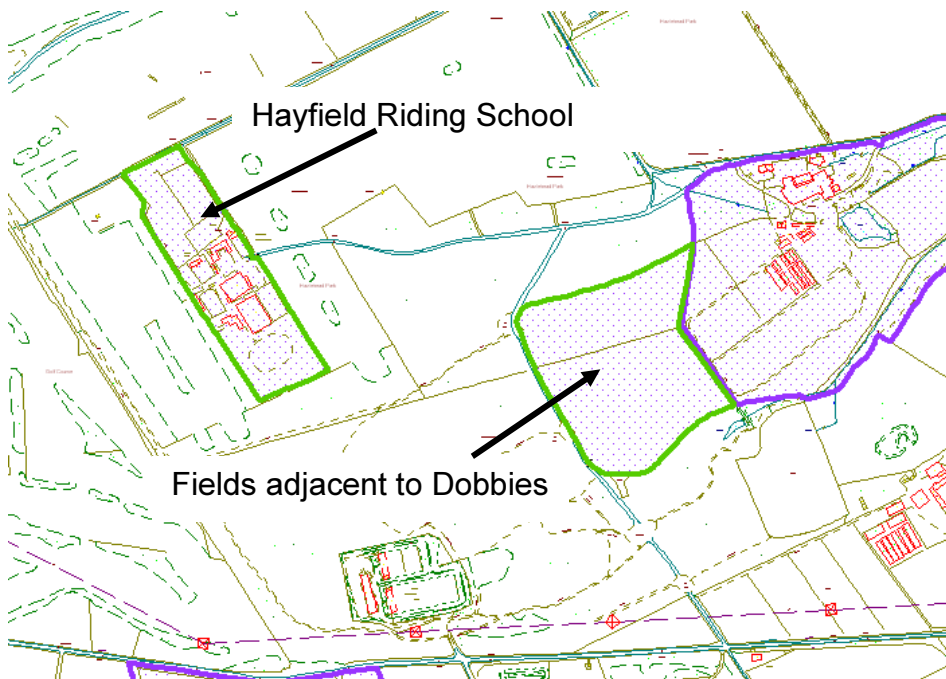
Objections:

Barton Willmore on behalf of Countesswells Consortium (2/1017) object to the assessment of the southern most end of 9/53, stating that development in this area would be sensitively accommodated, with stone dykes retained wherever possible.

Response: The objection does not raise any new issues to be assessed; therefore we stand by our original assessment.

Alternative Development - Comments

The Mackenzie Club (2/232) have put forward a proposal for a hotel and conference centre, 50 timeshare and 50 residential units at Hayfield riding school and nearby riding schools at Hazlehead.



Response:

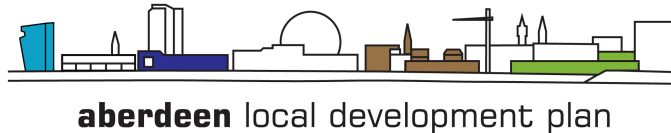
Both sites are unrelated to the existing residential areas at Hazlehead and Craigiebuckler and remote from public transport.

The Hayfield Riding School site contains traditional and contemporary agricultural buildings associated with the riding school. Surrounded by woodland and the Hazlehead golf course, the riding school is functionally related to the recreational uses in the area. The proposal to develop a hotel and conference centre on the site of the riding school has the potential to relate well to the recreational function of the area and create an asset for the city, but the relationship between the proposal and wider area is unclear. There are significant accessibility constraints to the site, and the combination of increased development and the improvements required for the local roads in Hazlehead Park will erode the rural identity of the area and blur the distinction between rural and urban that exists there. This will compromise the landscape setting of the area.

The development of the undeveloped fields adjacent to Dobbies would significantly change the character of the site, although, due to the secluded location of the site, the impact of this change in character would only be experienced locally. A residential development of the scale proposed would create a car-dependent residential development in a rural area surrounded by a sensitive habitat. The additional traffic generated is likely to require widening of Hazledene road, which would entail felling of mature trees.

The extra traffic and development from both of these proposals is likely to erode the quiet recreational experience of what is essentially a country park. The recreational function of Hazlehead Park and the contribution it makes to landscape setting means that it should remain as green belt.

Appendix 1



Cults Community Centre

19th November

Summary

The evening began with members of the public asking some general questions and getting more familiar with the Main Issues and preferred options displayed on the boards. The presentation started at 7pm and concluded by saying that we would then break down into smaller groups to allow for meaningful discussion. After the presentation, six large workgroups were formed where discussion over the sites and issues took place.

Approximately 100-110 people attended the event.

Comments

Comments were made regarding:

Countesswells

- Large developments are not practicable
- it would be more appropriate to develop several smaller areas (of around 50 houses each). Smaller communities would be much more popular with residents and have more of a community or village feel to them. Their impact on the road network and landscape would be much smaller than what is currently proposed at Countesswells.
- 20,000 homes on Greenfield sites conflicts with government targets of reducing our global footprint. This would cause more road congestion and increase greenhouse gas emissions.
- Countesswells has several negative impacts;
- Road infrastructure cannot cope with existing traffic, this development would overwhelm it.
- There is a drainage problem on the Cults to Kingswells Road to the north west of Loanhead which can cause flooding.
- Negative impact on wildlife in the area.
- It is not practicable to make Countesswells Road bus only - it is a well used road.
- A development of this size would require more than one access point. Concerned about traffic filtering through the Deeside communities on inadequate roads.

- It is not practical to expect many shops and businesses to be attracted to Countesswells. It is not large enough to support them and people will use those at Westhill instead.
- Countesswells will add pressure to the A944 Lang Stracht. The traffic lights at the Lang Stracht and Old Skene Road junction have made congestion worse. This area is impassable during peak times.

Infrastructure

- The existing infrastructure is inadequate to support development, and there is a need to identify all the improvements that will be required as a part of development.
- The infrastructure is inappropriate for housing in Deeside currently. There is very little that can be done to improve the network into Aberdeen, and new development will add to the problems.
- Are medical services to be included in big developments?
- Developers should have the responsibility of providing facilities in their developments.
- What can be done to change the way developers handle developments? At the moment they just arrive, make their money and leave, without improving the area.
- We accept that there has to be development, but there must be the infrastructure to support it.

Retailing and City Centre

- The decline of Union Street could allow for consideration of alternative uses: more residential use, cafes and independent stores to improve the vitality of Union Street.

Design

- Developments should be of a better quality, and should add to the appeal of Aberdeen rather than detract.
- High quality development - house type that fits in with the area.
- Policies to control quality and design of housing.
- Like that there seems to be an emphasis on design.
- The long views of development need to be looked at. The new school at Cults looks fantastic close up yet the long view of the site from the river is not so pleasant.

Identity

- Village feel/identity of Cults.

Environment and Biodiversity

- Avoid areas of flooding - i.e. Loirsbank.

- Protect existing woodland.
- Floodplains could be used for recreational facilities rather than housing.
- You must look at the impact of housing allocations on flood plains.
- What provision of housing will be zero carbon by 2016?
- Flooding is a major issue; development must take this into account. Especially with climate change and the possibility of more and more floods in the future.
- Has biodiversity really been taken into account? There are badgers and bats in the area which must be protected.

Open Space

- The maintenance and management of open areas is very important. This has not been the case in many recent developments.

Transport

- Accessibility is a huge factor.
- It is essential that connections between Friarsfield and Craibstone are considered thoroughly.
- Is the transport modeling you are carrying out looking at public transport also?
- It is reassuring to hear that you are taking transport so seriously.
- The traffic at present is unsatisfactory at Friarsfield. Especially as parked cars block the road, impeding the flow of traffic.
- Affordability of public transport is an issue. It is very expensive to get in and out of town. This is impacting on our children who aged 16 have to pay adult prices. It is cheaper to drive our children into town than for them to get the bus.
- To compare Aberdeen to Edinburgh, we have the same bus company yet very different pricing, the park and rides in Aberdeen are nowhere near as successful as Edinburgh. Aberdeen is 20/30 years behind Edinburgh regarding transport, park and ride, parking charges.
- Successful places are those where there is good access through development for walking, cycling. Many people use the proposed sites to gain access to areas further afield for walking and cycling, activities that are going on now have to be able to continue and this will happen with good accessibility. Access to small shopping facilities, corner shops etc is also important.
- Lower Deeside has a lot of problems with traffic congestion, speeding, and an overall volume of traffic. Where is all the new traffic resulting from these developments going to go?
- Why would you choose preferred sites which are miles away from existing bus routes?
- How can developers be made to pay for road improvements into Aberdeen? Especially traffic resulting from the Countesswells development. It seems like in the past developers have got away with not paying.

- Everyone from Kingswells/Westhill uses the Lower Deeside road network, causing congestion plus the cars tend to speed.
- The traffic at present is unsatisfactory at Friarsfield. Especially as parked cars block the road, impeding the flow of traffic.
- This scale of development will not work without the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, you need to consider this.
- Main Issue is roads, for example Craigton Road.

Education

- There will be an impact on the school with the proposed level of housing. Cults academy has capacity issues, it had one 17 years ago and it continues to have one even with the new school.
- The projections of the numbers of children going to each school is vital and must be calculated correctly.
- You need to have clear plans for how education will be provided.

Housing

- Where appropriate make use of higher densities to avoid the need for such large land allocations.
- People cannot afford to get houses in the City so they move out to the Shire.
- There tends to be a predominance of executive housing in new developments. There should be more of a mix.

Other comments

- Issues are infrastructure (roads, drainage, sewage, water) and affordable housing. We also need safe and accessible cycle routes for all.
- Who makes the decisions about what should be a preferred site and what is not a preferred site?
- Where are all the people going to come from to grow the population to the levels suggested in the Structure Plan?
- The overall impacts of developments should be looked at. You must look at the implications of existing allocations plus the future allocations. It must all be masterplanned as a whole.
- When developers suggest numbers of houses in each area, do you bargain with them to get the numbers beaten down?
- The impact of light pollution has not been taken into account. There will be a particular issue at the Friarsfield development.
- There is a lack of jobs in the area, so everyone uses their car to travel into Aberdeen.
- Perhaps there should be less housing but more of a focus on sustainable construction.

- How do we get the current Local Plan (2008) allocation for the Loirsbank site deleted?
- We want the quality of life to continue yet 36,000 proposed houses means losing greenfield and putting up with badly designed roads, with speed calming measures such as speed bumps. These do not help our quality of life.
- There is an artificial division between the city and shire. You (ACC) have the hardest job as there is less room in the city for the 36,000 houses. Should there be a 50/50 split of housing, or should the Shire get more?
- Is the economic climate an impact on the Local Development Plan?