

Review of the Local Development Plan and the Tillyoch proposal

By Councillor Marie Boulton, July 2020

The Scottish Government has set broad national targets to raise Scotland's population and to increase the provision of both mainstream and affordable housing. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires all local authorities to maintain at least a 5 year effective supply of housing land at all times. Development Plans (Strategic Development Plans and Local Development Plans) have to identify enough housing land to maintain a 5 year effective supply throughout a Plan's lifetime. Because our Local Development Plan will have a 5 year lifespan, it needs to identify at least 10 years supply – for the 5 years of the Plan and for a 5 year supply to still be in place at the end of the Plan.

Establishing how much housing land is required is a long process and essentially, is as follows;

- The Scottish Government periodically produce population and household forecasts for each local authority area.
- The Strategic Development Plan Authority (Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire) produces a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA). This looks at different growth scenarios and how much housing is likely to be needed for each, and the Authority decides which is the most appropriate for its area. This is a well-established model which is used by all Scottish local authorities to determine how much housing is likely to be required over a 20-25 year period.
- The figure established by the HNDA is called the housing supply target. Scottish Planning Policy then requires local authorities to add a further 10-20% Generosity to this to produce a figure called the housing land requirement (HLR). These figures take into account existing planning consents and allocations to ensure there is no double counting.
- The housing land requirement is identified in the Strategic Development Plan which decides how this is split between the two Councils (in our case 50/50 for City and Shire).
- Local Development Plans have to identify the actual sites to ensure that the Strategic Development Plan's HLR is met and that the 5 year effective supply is maintained throughout the lifetime of the Plan.
- This whole process is almost continuous and is reviewed every 5 years.

The Strategic Development Plan in our Region is between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire. One element of this plan is to set the numbers of houses required across City and Shire. Once the joint Strategic Plan was completed we sent it to the Scottish Government Reporter for his review. The Reporter having reviewed our Plan, had hearings with Developers and Council Officers to hear their arguments, he then decided that both authorities had to find an additional 1000 houses each.

Officers had already reviewed the sites submitted for the proposed Local Development Plan 2022 and prepared a Main issues Report on which they carried out the consultation. The remaining sites were deemed as 'undesirable' on the understanding that we didn't require any more sites. However with the intervention of the Scottish Government Reporter now requiring an additional 1000 houses, Officers had to revisit the 'undesirable' list and make additional selections in a matter of weeks. Officers chose sites in the Bridge of Don for the additional 1000 houses, Councillors chose to spread the sites across the City choosing the Bridge of Don, 650 houses, Banchory Devenick, 150 houses and Culter 260 houses.

Councillors also took the opportunity to remove an allocation from the previous Local Development where the Scottish Government's Reporter had put forward development in the fields in the middle of Milltimber for 70 houses plus retail/commercial use. Milltimber had received a large development at Oldfold, housing on Culter House Road, Contlaw Road and the North Deeside Road under the existing local development plan, ending up with housing on all sides of the existing settlement, the primary school is full, although we are in the process of building a new one. Cults also saw a large housing development at Friarsfield off Kirk Brae as part of the existing Local Development Plan, the Primary School is significantly over capacity and is now the largest Primary School in the City.

Culter Community Council has received a consistent message for over 10 years asking for more housing in Culter, particularly for the children of our residents as they bring up their own growing families. This message has come from a variety of sources: physical surveys at the annual Gala, web surveys, planning exhibitions, and MIR consultations. The same message was repeated in the feedback from the Tillyoch public exhibition, as one of the top ten themes.

I too have had representations for more family housing. With the predicted school roll at Culter Primary to drop to 56% by 2025 we felt the area could support around 250 houses. All the bid sites in Culter are Greenbelt, and when reviewing the options, Tillyoch was the most suitable, in terms of being adjacent to Culter, already having development on site such as 8 large buildings and hard standing, and the area of woodland nearest to Bucklerburn has been excluded from any development. Cults Academy will be at 106% by 2025, however Education Officers do believe there is an opportunity to create the additional capacity by better use of classroom space, timetabling and developer's contributions.

Additional information which may add to the understanding:

1. The portacabin in the Culter playground is a temporary building only there while the Nursery building is being redeveloped to accommodate the additional hours that School nurseries have to offer pre-school children. Culter Primary School is nowhere near capacity, the figures which are available on the Council website, are as follows 2020 67%, 2021 63%, 2022 60%, 2023 57%, 2024 57%, 2025 56%.
2. Cults Academy capacity is currently sitting in 2020 92%, 2021 97%, 2022 100%, 2023 103%, 2024 107%, 2025 106%.
3. In the Proposed Local Development we have included a provision, which was agreed with the NHS, that any development must produce a health assessment report, which will identify if any contribution from the developer to extend NHS local facilities is required.

There is currently a call for representations on the Proposed Plan, which is on the Council's website, this has been advertised in the press and on social media. The requirement to hold this process is set out in legislation and the period we need to hold this over is 6 weeks. However, given the situation, I have agreed with Officers to run the process for an additional 8 weeks, which takes us to the end of August. 17,000 letters have been sent out to addresses 20 metres from the proposed zoned sites, as required by legislation.

Lower Deeside received the largest number of bid sites from developers wanting to be included in the Proposed Local Development Plan. These are listed below. Just two have been accepted in Culter.

Ward 9 - Lower Deeside: MIR bids

B09/01 Culter House Road Phase 2	B09/03 West Craigton Farm	B09/04 Countesswells Woods	B09/05 Culter House Road
B09/06 Contlaw	B09/07 Albyn Playing Fields	B09/08 Countesswells	B09/09 Pineacres Contlaw Road
B09/10 Friarsfield North	B09/11 Land at Culter House Road	B09/12 Craigton Road South 1	B09/13 Craigton Road South 2
B09/14 Craigton Road South 3	B09/15 Land at Sunnyside	B09/16 Craigton	B09/17 Land at Inchgarth Mews, Cults
B09/18 Mill of Brotherfield	B09/19 Land at Craigton Road	B09/20 Binghill Farm	B09/21 Countesswells Expansion
B09/21 Countesswells Expansion Sites 4, 5, 6	B09/21 Countesswells Expansion Sites 2, 3, 7	B09/22 Land at West Craigton / Blaircara Village	B09/23 Hillhead of Pitfodels
B09/24 Land at Loirsbank Road	B09/25 Highview House, Countesswells	B09/26 Huxterstone	B09/27 Contlaw Road
B09/28 Land West of Malcolm Road	B09/29 Guttrie Hill West	B09/30 Guttrie Hill East	B09/31 Friarsfield Woodley
B09/32 Hillhead of Countesswells	B09/33 Damhead Cadgerford (Westhill / Kingswells)	B09/34 Kennerty Farm (Peterculter)	B09/35 Newmill Hill (Peterculter)
B09/36 Treespark 1 (Pitfodels)	B09/37 Treespark 2 (Pitfodels)	B09/38 Lovers' Walk (Peterculter)	B09/39 Peterculter East 1 (Peterculter)
B09/40 Peterculter East (Peterculter)	B09/41 Peterculter East (Peterculter)	B09/42 Milltimber South (Milltimber)	B09/43 Milltimber Farm (Milltimber)
B09/44 Inchgarth Road (Pitfodels)	B09/45 Shepherd's Retreat (Milltimber)	B09/46 Malcolm Road (Peterculter)	B09/47 Binghill House (Milltimber)
B09/48 Tillyoch (Peterculter)	B09/49 Friarsfield North (Cults)		