

# **Perth & Kinross Council Local Development Plan**

## **Main Issues Workshop: Economy**

**20 January 2011**

The following notes record the points of discussion and statements made at the above workshop. Three issues:

Question 1: How do you think our towns and settlements can ensure existing employment land is retained and new employment is attracted to Perth & Kinross?

Question 2: Do you support the proposed requirement and proposed distribution of employment land?

Question 3: How do we ensure delivery of effective mixed use development areas close to existing business and residential areas?

A general criticism was made of the Main Issues Report that it identifies the economy as a main driver but the remainder of the report seems to be driven by housing sites. It was felt that there was little point in the identification of additional land for housing development when the MIR identifies so little employment land in the area. Particular concern was expressed at the Council's opinion that there is a potential need for 5 ha of employment land in the Highland area, which was felt to be inadequate.

There was a call for better strategic linkages between the Main Issues Report and TAYplan.

The important factors when considering employment land are not just numbers of sites and site area, but also the quality and range of the sites. It was generally felt that location and access are important, and some members of the group felt that road access to employment land is difficult, particularly across the River Tay to land east of Perth. It was generally agreed that having a stock of employment land is wise, and that the future projected requirement should be evidenced.

The Council should be more proactive and should be going out to the market with sites and opportunities.

A question was raised as to who should do the promotion of the sites, and linked to this point was the need for Council planners to become involved at an earlier stage in identifying land, and should know the market for employment land. It was stated that for each of the smaller growth areas, the Council should be identifying and developing sites and low-cost premises for rent. Services such as starter units and land with infrastructure for speculative take-up were suggested.

On the subject of competing uses it was discussed and there were calls for the Council to hold a firmer line against developing identified employment land for other competing uses. In fact some members of the group felt that unused brownfield sites should be prioritised for development over greenfield sites.

There was some discussion on finding an economic use for farm buildings that are no longer used. It was generally felt that the Council should become strict on only allowing economic or business uses, and that this could be balanced by promotion of business uses capable of operating from home.

The issue of mixed uses was also discussed, where it was recognised that in traditional rural communities, employment uses were usually side by side with other uses but were generally compatible because of the type and hours of work. In more industrialised settings, it was felt to be better to take each case on its merits.

Turning to tourism sites specifically, it was generally recognised that location is a very important consideration for new developments. There was a discussion on the need for a criteria-based policy for tourism development setting out what would be required, particularly with regard to evidence to support a business case.

The hypothetical scenario of whether all land should be identified as development land was discussed, where any reasonable offer to develop should be assessed and decided promptly without the need for a Local Development Plan. This was suggested because it is difficult for planners to go round in advance and get land allocated based on where it is thought that developers might wish to locate tourism developments. The drawbacks of this approach were also discussed, including what might happen if a top tourist attraction or resort wished to locate in Perth & Kinross. It was suggested that if the Council thinks that there is a need for a five star hotel (for example) in its area, then it should identify and market a selection of sites for that use.

# **Main Issues Workshop: Housing**

**20 January 2011**

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss in more detail several of the housing issues identified in the Main Issues Report (MIR). The event was attended by a range of stakeholders who contributed to the discussions on the issues highlighted below.

Four issues:

1. Are the housing distribution variations from TAYplan MIR supported?
2. What can the planning system do to encourage the provision of low cost private housing?
3. Is it appropriate to aim to identify a 7 year effective housing land supply?
4. Key issue is ensuring sites in the Proposed Plan are effective – what criteria establish effectiveness?

## **1. Variations from TAYplan MIR**

In general the variations proposed in the LDP MIR were supported as being reasonable on a local level.

All groups supported the assumption that 10% of overall housing land requirement would be met by windfall sites; the proposed reallocation of 10% of the Kinross HMA requirement to the Greater Perth HMA; and the assumption 15% of the overall housing requirement in the Highland HMA will come from small sites (5 units or below).

There was greater discussion on the proposal there is no additional allowance for the impact of second homes in the Highland HMA. It was suggested that the Council should look for ways of rebalancing the current housing numbers if possible by supplying more in this area.

The robustness of the figures used was queried by a stakeholder but it was concluded the figures were robust subject to the economy.

## **2. Low Cost Private Housing**

It was felt that flexibility with housing densities will be necessary to encourage the appropriate development to an area; it was highlighted that the use of prescriptive policies will more likely stifle development by making too onerous demands on developers in the current economy.

It was felt by some attendees that the provision of this housing should be left as a market response.

Partnership/collaborative working between the private and public sector was seen to be a possible route of meeting this need; evidence of the 21st Century Homes project in Edinburgh was highlighted as a good example. This model has worked well in regeneration areas.

The idea of building to income levels rather than open market value was also suggested, although there was recognition this would be a much longer term view and would probably necessitate a change of policy at central government level.

Land values were seen to be an issue in achieving the most appropriate mix on sites, it was suggested the Council could encourage this type of development by taking a long term view and reducing or removing the affordable housing policy requirement on appropriate sites where low cost private sector housing was to be delivered.

It was recognised that the Proposed Plan will need to promote a range of housing and tenures to meet the needs and demand in the market.

### **3. 7 Year Effective Housing Land Supply**

This proposal was positively supported; it was felt it encouraged a longer term and more flexible approach.

### **4. Criteria for Establishing Effectiveness of Sites in Proposed Plan**

It was recognised that sites in the Proposed Plan must be effective; if not all at the start of the plan then by at least part way through they must become effective to contribute.

The provision of infrastructure was considered the biggest issue re site effectiveness, especially with respect to the large site allocations. It was suggested that clear timetabling of when infrastructure would be in place to make the site effective would be helpful, although this is only possible where the public sector is providing the infrastructure. A recent report by Savills was referred to which highlights that small, serviced sites are preferred by lenders and builders in the current market and that public/private partnerships will need to be entered into to facilitate infrastructure provision on larger sites.

It was felt that marketability is an important criteria but the difficulties in judging and monitoring this and when a site becomes effective due to this criteria are complex.

It was noted by some stakeholders that the Proposed Plan may need to have 'reserves' of sites to keep the land supply effective should some become ineffective or not come forward.

# **Main Issues Workshop: Landscape**

**22 January 2011**

Wide ranging discussion across a range of landscape issues – many common to the three groups

## *Preserve and protect the setting of towns and villages*

- Need local level protection
- Setting of settlements important
- Define greenbelt boundary
- Need for policy to control development and protect setting of settlements
- Levels of acceptance: current residents may be against something but new residents may accept what has changed
- We need to understand what a 'quality settlement' is and what contributes to its quality
- Landscape has to be easily accessible to all especially around settlements

## *Manage and protect the wider landscape*

- Identify site(s) for nuclear power station to reduce need for windfarms and the negative impact they have on landscape
- Need to control all land-uses
- Understanding of the effects of development on landscapes
- Landscapes should change in a 'slow' and managed way
- Development has to be appropriate to the landscape
- It's the diversity of landscapes that make P&K attractive. A one size fits all approach may not be appropriate
- Clarity on landscape definition required

## *Importance of landscape to economy*

- Positively identify areas where development can/should take place
- Promote small-scale hydro as while it has short term effects on landscape this reduces over time
- Need to protect/manage landscapes in tourist areas and along tourist routes
- Need to manage A9 corridor as important tourist route. But commuter routes also important for quality of life.
- Landscape important for tourism – need to ensure that it's managed/developed in a way that doesn't detract from what makes the area attractive.
- The view from the road is important

## *Importance of landscape to well-being*

- Need for community involvement to identify locally important landscapes and protect them
- Need to manage A9 corridor as important tourist route. But commuter routes also important for quality of life.
- Landscape provides inspiration, recreation and contributes to health and well being

#### *Loss of important elements of the landscape*

- Potential pressure on a landscape because of its designation and concern about overuse and degradation
- The development of walled gardens and the loss of orchards
- Visual effects of water flows from small-scale hydro
- Some concern at 'iconic' views approach
- Objective of landscape policy should be to repair damage from past activities

#### *Community involvement*

The opinion of communities important

- Type of development and the community is important. Those who have holiday homes may be less tolerant of change than those who live and work in the area.
- Communities feel under pressure from development- pylons, houses, wind farms forestry planting etc – and don't want change that's unacceptable to them

#### *Capacity of landscape to accommodate change*

- An understanding of what is the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development of various types
- Existing landscapes are not 'natural' they are a result of our management and they have to continue to be managed.
- Landscape needs to be protected and a vision of how it should look in 50 years is needed

# **Main Issues Report Workshop: Rural Issues**

**22 January 2011**

Wide ranging discussion across range of rural issues – many common issues

## *Preserve and protect existing rural / village communities*

- recognise the difficulties but we should be aiming towards making rural communities / villages sustainable
- sometimes people moving into villages from urban areas don't support the rural economy as much as they perhaps could
- commuting for work and for services
- continually increasing levels of traffic affecting amenity / quality of the environment
- sometimes rural communities feel additional development (primarily housing) is unwanted and unnecessary but is imposed on them anyway – lack of consultation / consideration of their views

## *Support and encourage the development of appropriate rural businesses*

- one of the key elements towards achieving sustainable communities
- need for the allocation of sufficient amounts of business land in rural communities
- developments need to be of an appropriate scale and in locations where they can be supported by the necessary infrastructure
- LDP policies need to be flexible and recognise that a different approach is needed in rural areas e.g. attitude towards retail uses in business areas, or to zone land specifically for small businesses to allow sharing of facilities
- there can be difficulties in bringing forward small business sites in rural areas e.g. economies of scale can be an issue and often such developments need public investment
- need to support business growth although often problems in expanding existing and encouraging new rural businesses because of poor communications and poor transport linkages although there is a limit to the extent to which the planning system can influence things like broadband access
- impact on town / village shops of supermarket home delivery services – lifestyle choices
- some benefit of small supermarkets in small towns as they can stop people travelling e.g. to Perth

## *Importance of tourism to rural economies*

- LDP policies should support sustainable non-conflicting tourism activities that are complementary – e.g. rafters in Aberfeldy conflicting with fishing

### *Rural housing*

- developers 'cherry-picking' the best sites / areas according to market forces
- development has to be supported by infrastructure – not just housing

### *Affordable housing in rural areas*

- need for sustainable affordable housing – needs to have facilities and services such as public transport links provided alongside
- needs to be of the right type and size

### *Accommodation for employees in rural areas*

- need for provision of accommodation in association with local businesses – should consider whether this is an issue

### *Housing in the Countryside policy*

- needs to be rigorously applied
- particular concern raised that the policy doesn't protect more modern farm buildings from redevelopment for housing

### *Removal of boundaries round smallest settlements*

- some support for removing boundaries round smallest settlements providing that the Housing in the Countryside policy is rigorously applied as it would provide adequate protection

### *Protection and maintenance of the landscape*

- a need to protect and keep the countryside we already have – importance of appropriate management of the countryside
- protection and enhancement of habitat networks e.g. green networks
- provision of open space for recreation

### *Vision for rural Perth & Kinross*

- perhaps not appropriate to have a single vision for rural communities as they are so diverse
- different LDP policies may be needed in different areas

# Main Issues Workshop: Climate Change

22 January 2011

Wide range of issues discussed:

## *Mitigation vs. adaptation*

- emphasis on the need for accurate science and measurement
- help businesses operate more sustainably; how will the nature of business have to change and what type of employment will result?
- develop local building recommendations that are better than national Building Standards for home energy efficiency
- it's a slow process and the timeframe for climate change is longer than the plan period; need to look longer term
- study the impact of pylons and turbines on the tourism economy
- consider how to integrate the habitat network – because species movement will occur as climate change takes place
- more focus on public money for adaptation in case of worst case scenario

## *Policy suggestions*

- absolute restriction on development on land at flood risk
- exploitation of renewables, but without carte blanche on monitoring and regulation
- reuse of old buildings, balance redevelopment against greenfield development
- up rate infrastructure to make it more robust to cope with climate change
- protection of peatland and wetland
- promotion of combined heat and power generation and hydro electricity generation
- guidance on cumulative effect of new proposals for large scale wind energy developments
- more emphasis on the link between where people work and where they live reducing the need to travel
- special focus on the issues affecting highland and rural areas
- promotion of anaerobic digesters
- promote sustainable transport, from bicycles to rail freight
- improve street planning and reuse stalled urban development sites
- obligation to enhance biodiversity

## *Practical suggestions*

- improve public transport
- find and allocate funding for adaptation
- promote education about adaptation
- reduce the need to travel to work and school

- maintain drains and ditches, begin managed gravel extraction from river beds
- consider more emphasis on local expertise e.g. Community Councils; and consult widely to raise local awareness of the issues
- investigate seasonal water storage for irrigation of crops or hydro energy generation
- improve range of crops grown
- allow cycle storage on buses
- plant appropriate trees to promote natural attenuation of flood water
- new cross Tay bridge a priority for Scone
- make existing available data more readily usable
- planning applications should consider waste collection, transportation