

***Fossoway and District Community Council***

***Trudy Duffy – Wigman (chair)***

***Devon View***

***Crook of Devon***

***Kinross***

***KY13 OUR***

**Consultation on re-zoning proposals for LDP2**

***Background***

Fossoway District has a long history of community involvement in the planning process for the Local Development Planning. When it became clear that there was a delay in the process for LDP2, the local elected members, supported by the Community Council, pressed for a consultation on the re-zoning of three additional sites, initially rejected by the planners. It was felt that these three sites, in Blairingone, Rumbling Bridge and Crook of Devon merited a closer look.

Perth and Kinross Council, in conjunction with Cllrs Mike Barnacle and Dave Cuthbert subsequently organised the consultation process, consisting of an open day on 18<sup>th</sup> February with the possibility of online comments. These were followed up with an extra-ordinary meeting called by Fossoway and District Community Council (FDCC). This document is based on all the opinions and information gathered so far, including comments sent after the extra-ordinary meeting, and is the recommendation of Fossoway and District Community Council.

We convey our special thanks to Katie Briggs and her team from Perth and Kinross Council and to Cllrs Dave Cuthbert and Mike Barnacle for their efforts.

***Preliminary remarks***

It is not an understatement to say that this was one of the most complex issues FDCC has had to deal with in the last few years. We have always maintained that the desire to develop is an understandable one and a necessary one, as is the desire to keep the status quo and leave a site, an area or a village undeveloped. Consequently in this consultation we had to balance the right of landowners to develop with the rights of existing residents. Understandably, the process has generated passionate responses from either side of the divide. FDCC has tried to take as much of this into account as possible; this therefore has not been an exercise of counting numbers for or against a proposal. In the same vein, in compiling this document the CC has worked on the basis of consensus rather than majority vote.

Throughout the process we have found the prospects and offers of a variety of community benefits proposed by the developers more of a hindrance than a help. One reason is that residents - either opposed or in favour of the development - focus on the possible benefits (e.g. play park, roundabout, bus shelter, shop, village hall, etc.) rather than on the merits of

the development on its own. In the future we would recommend an approach that centres on the merits of the development, rather than any windfall for the community.

The other general comment is that wherever houses are built in any of our villages, the need for and reliance on car transport will greatly increase. Public transport is insufficient; even travelling from Kinross the majority of commuters are not able to get to their place of work at a reasonable time. This will have to be addressed if we are to reduce our carbon footprint as a nation; it cannot be solely left to private companies to provide adequate transport.

We recognise the need for smaller, affordable housing. We are deeply concerned about the lack of houses for local people to downsize to or for young families wanting to move into the area. We are worried that such housing always seems to be an afterthought, something that has to be done because it is in the planning regulations.

### ***Blairingone***

The proposal in Blairingone is a substantial one, straddling the A977 with a potential for 70 to 90 homes. Possible community benefits are a playground and a pitch, a village green and a community hub/village hall and possibly a community shop.

The proposal to develop a substantial site in Blairingone has generally met with approval. Indeed, the CC and the local elected members have always been in favour of development- a village needs a critical mass to be a community and if these plans are carried out, a sympathetically designed development will improve and enhance Blairingone. The public consultation attracted 27 positive comments, some qualified; and six objections. Objections centred on the scale of development and the impact on the character of the village. Most of the positive comments mentioned the need for more residents to make Blairingone into a more coherent community and to keep the school viable. The Community Council agrees with these comments.

We therefore welcome and support this re-zoning proposal, provided the community benefits are delivered, and if plans to mitigate the traffic on the A977 are robust enough to ensure we do not create another community that is cut in two by the road. Our reservations are about the lack of public transport in the area, meaning that commuting to work requires private transport, so exacerbating the problems on the A977. Another reservation we have is the educational provision in Blairingone. A development this size may cause problems for the existing primary school, which it may not be possible to expand to accommodate this development.

We understand that a proposal on this scale would be subject to a major development consultation process, in which residents could, as a community, together with the developers, determine what kind of village they would like to see. A community planning exercise is recommended to make sure that a development of this size, doubling the existing village, is acceptable to the community.

### ***Rumbling Bridge***

The proposals for Rumbling Bridge concern a site on the A823 beside the Nursing Home and opposite the Braehead development. According to the developers, the modest development would consist of four houses. Rumbling Bridge has had a fair bit of development over the last few years, not all of it on a scale that is sympathetic with the village. Several planning sites are 'live' and hence more building will go ahead in Rumbling Bridge. The site in question has been the subject of two previous planning applications, for a development of seven houses. It was refused on the grounds that the field was not in the village envelope and the 'houses in the country-side' policy was not applicable.

The Community Council has sympathy for this proposal. We feel that housing on this site would make Rumbling Bridge more of a coherent village. There is already planning permission for four houses on a site along the Naemoor Road. Looking at the map, it makes sense to include this site in the village envelope. There has been some doubt about the suitability and the necessity of the offered community benefits, notably a proposed car park for the Gorge. There have been several comments in support of this; an earlier proposed car park by Thomson Homes is currently being delivered although is not yet completed or signposted. Comments against re-zoning most commonly mentioned the loss of greenspace with the increase of building in the last few years.

A petition was circulated against any development in Rumbling Bridge, but this was partly done before the consultation event so it is difficult to gauge whether or not the community was sufficiently aware of the nature of the proposals. The CC is very unhappy with this petition, which in our view has made it impossible to get a clear and objective view of the wishes of the community, and has generated anxiety and mistrust amongst residents. The CC cannot discount this petition, but it would have been a fairer process if comments for or against this proposal were made after the consultation event and via the official channels.

The 38 supporting comments outweigh the 26 objecting comments if the petition is not included. This petition was signed by people from 35 addresses, not all of them in the village envelope. After the extraordinary meeting the CC received more representation, both positive as well as negative. When the Community Council discussed this proposal, we were unable to reach consensus. Therefore we feel unable to make a recommendation on this proposal. Future proposals for development should be subject to a process of community planning to avoid a similar situation.

### ***Crook of Devon/ Drum***

The proposal for rezoning in Crook of Devon/ Drum concerns a large field in a prominent setting, on the A977/ B9097 and close to the Village Hall. The proposal is for a large development of approximately 50 houses, room for business units and possibly a farm shop. Included in the proposal would be affordable housing. Proposed community benefits are a footpath and a bus shelter and discretionary benefits include a large roundabout situated in the A977 junction with the B9097, extension to the Village Hall car park and the play area and making Crook Moss more accessible to the public.

As far as the proposals in Crook of Devon/ Drum are concerned, the residents against the proposals have been more vocal and outspoken than the residents who support the proposal. The consultation attracted 53 objections and 26 supportive comments, 8 of which were qualified, and 6 neutral comments. Some of the arguments against the proposal were focussed on the developers' contribution. Though the plans for the A977 mitigation will be discussed separately, some of the proposed uses of the developers' contribution were for mitigation measures on the A977- and those attracted a lot of comments. In particular the use of a roundabout to slow down the traffic coming from the Kinross direction was questioned. The replacement of the pedestrian crossing with one a little further up the road also attracted some criticism. But the main problems with the proposed housing development were the number of houses on the proposed site, resulting in a change in character of the village and an increase in traffic.

Comments in favour of the proposal were the provision of affordable housing, that it would slow the traffic due to the roundabout; the development would be a gateway to the village and would offer employment.

In the case of this proposal it is FDCC's opinion that the offered community benefits were not helpful in the process of deciding for or against re-zoning. During the extraordinary meeting, and also in correspondence - formal and informal- afterwards, residents argued for or against several of the community benefits offered rather than commenting on the merits of the development itself. It is also not clear which benefits could be - and would be - delivered; understandably a developer can only deliver discretionary community benefits if the profit (i.e. the size of development) is large enough.

FDCC has concerns about the proposed number of 50 houses on this site, plus units to allow rural business to be set up, and a farm shop. The density of such a proposal is out of scale with the rest of the village and because the site is very visible from the road, it will have an impact on the visual amenity of both Crook of Devon and Drum. It will change the character of the village.

A development this size will also generate an increase of traffic on the A977 and the B9097.

Another concern is the drainage. The proposed field has had problems with drainage; the entire area directly around it experiences problems with flooding. It may well be that the problems with the site are, or can be, solved, but more houses with associated driveways and roads through the development will severely affect the capacity of the soil to absorb water and so may exacerbate the flooding in the immediate area.

We are unsure about the viability and the benefits of a farm shop. While there are many successful examples in the area, these are all established as diversifications of existing farms. We would be mindful that a farm shop in this area would take away business from the existing retail outlets in the village and generate additional traffic. We understand that in the proposals there is no business case made for a farm shop and we would strongly recommend more research before committing to building one.

Taking all the arguments for and against into account, FDCC is currently against re-zoning this site to be included in the LDP for development. The reasons for this are as follows:

- This proposal generated a substantial number of comments objecting to it

- The size and scale of the proposed development is out of character with the village
- The need/ want for a roundabout at this site is contested
- The uncertainty whether the other proposed community benefits can be delivered and mixed views about whether they are needed

We strongly recommend a process of community planning, a charrette, to look at possible infill sites in Crook of Devon and Drum and future development plans around the villages. An exercise like this should include services needed in the future; a more detailed breakdown of what types of houses will be needed in the next decade. FDCC would like to build on the work of the Strategy group to find a way forward.

We have concerns about the provision of affordable and smaller housing. We realise that if this proposal does not go ahead, the chance that Crook of Devon/ Drum will get any smaller housing units/ affordable housing is negligent.

### ***Concluding remarks***

Development is something that can divide communities. Development proposals, either large scale or smaller scale, generate passions and heated exchanges. This consultation process was no exception. All in all, the combination of an Open Day, followed by a community meeting, was in our opinion a good way of handling it; it gave ample opportunity for the residents and the wider community to let their voices be heard. Generally, in these situations people against a particular proposal will be more vocal than the people in favour. The Community Council is mindful of conflicting interests in these cases and has tried to take into account all arguments.

Development is necessary. However, finding the best places for development requires a lot of effort from developers, community organisations and the Council. The resident community should be included in this process from the start to ensure opinions do not become entrenched.

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