

**Formartine Community Council Forum  
Meldrum Academy, Oldmeldrum**

**6<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

**Local Development Plan Process and Identification of Main Issues  
Meeting Note**

At this meeting approximately 20 members of Community Councils across Formartine were briefed on the Local Development Plan preparation process and the need to identify 'main issues' for the Main Issues Report.

**Issues**

The discussion which followed focused on open space provision, supply of mixed housing, the future use of Ellon Academy, infrastructure requirements/constraints and the consultation process. Piers Blaxter (PB), the Policy Team Leader and Ashley Hamilton, the local policy planner for Formartine, were available to answer questions.

Concern was expressed about the LDP requirement for open space provision within new developments, with a forum member asking whether this acts as a deterrent to development by effectively reducing the site area/allocation. PB advised that the current Aberdeenshire LDP requires 40% of a site to be open space, adding that this requirement reflects, approximately, the current provision of open space within Aberdeenshire's settlements. PB also pointed out that there is flexibility in how open space is provided. For example, investment in community woodlands outside the site can count towards the 40% requirement. Finally, PB mentioned that feedback from developers did not suggest that open space provision was a significant deterrent to development in Aberdeenshire. PB was asked how the Council's open space requirement compared with that of Aberdeen City and Moray Council. PB advised that Aberdeenshire was not comparable with Moray Council and pointed out that while Aberdeen City does not use a 'percentage of site area' to calculate open space provision, they are probably close to an equivalent 40% requirement.

With regard to housing, concern was expressed about the insufficient provision of 2-3 bed houses in Aberdeenshire, particularly for retired people who wish to downsize. PB mentioned that the Proposed Strategic Development Plan (SDP) focuses on the need for sustainable mixed communities, which includes the provision of mixed house types. When asked if the LDP could influence this provision, PB added that the LDP already requires a mix of housing types, although this requirement is only partly being met at the moment, i.e. through bungalows etc. PB explained that the need for a mix of house types is often addressed through the provision of affordable housing, with the LDP requiring 25% of housing sites to be affordable. PB added that while there is an obvious correlation between house type and cost, in practice, the 25% requirement is often met through payments in kind to the Housing Authority, who use it to provide socially rented housing, which doesn't necessarily deliver a mix of house types. PB expressed the view that it is not the role of the planning system to be the sole deliverer of socially rented housing and emphasised the need for a mix of housing, which addresses wider planning needs. PB said that we can perhaps get a better deal by bridging the gap between delivering a 'mix of housing' and 'affordable housing'. A forum member commented that it was planning's role to require developers to provide a greater mix of housing. PB agreed, but pointed out that the

difficulty is that affordable housing is currently defined as socially rented housing, which leads to a polarisation of provision.

PB mentioned the need to identify 'main issues' at the settlement level, giving 'Ellon Town Centre' as an example. In response, a forum member pointed out that the future use of the existing Ellon Academy site is a pressing issue for the town. PB advised that this perhaps should have been considered as a 'main issue' in the current LDP, as the issue will need to be addressed before the next LDP is published. However, PB also mentioned that the decision on the future use/redevelopment of the site should properly be identified in the LDP.

A forum member asked when potential developers will be aware of the infrastructure requirements for their proposed sites. PB advised that before submitting a development bid the majority of developers will have a basic understanding of the key infrastructure requirements and constraints on their site. In addition, the 'Bids Form', which potential developers must complete by the end of April 2013, requires them to provide basic information on potential constraints and infrastructure requirements. The Main Issues Report, which is due to be published in October, will also highlight the infrastructure requirements of each settlement.

The Area Planning Officer asked how much time Community Councils have to provide feedback. PB advised that responses would be required by the end of August.

The Area Planning Officer also asked if developers will be encouraged to consult Community Councils on their development bids. PB advised that developers will not be encouraged to consult, although they are free to do so. Instead, developers will be invited to promote their sites and consult with communities at the public consultation meetings in November.

Concern was expressed about why the Council was not doing more to improve congestion on commuter roads to Aberdeenshire. PB pointed out that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council's are making a multi-million investment in road infrastructure, giving the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route as an example. PB also mentioned that both Councils have jointly developed the Strategic Development Fund, which takes small contributions from all new development in the AHMA and uses the money to address road issues in the area.

PB thanked attendees for their time.