

130 Westhill

Response ID	Respondent
2	Mrs Margaret Moss
16	Dr. Alan McCue
20	Mr James Lyon
31	Mr David Rae
49	NESTRANS
57	Mr Bill King
62	Mr Chris Dunridge
74	Mr Richard Clark
88	Mr Scott Dingwall
96	Ms Heather Cook
110	Mr Mark Hagger
111	Echt & Skene Community Council
124	Mr Philip Leat
132	Mr Jonathan Watt
137	Mr Peter McDonald
141	Mr Scott Dingwall
142	Mr Scott Dingwall
152	Mr Mervyn Barr
155	Mr John Paul Smith
434	Westhill and Elrick Community Council
444	Mr and Mrs Ross and Alison Brennan
477	Mr Kenneth Phin
571	Cruden Community Council
671	Ryden LLP
679	Alastair Struthers
717	Mrs Carol Wilson
724	Ms Lucy MacLeod
761	Mr and Mrs Morag & Fraser Beaton
868	Archial Norr on behalf of BP North Sea Infrastructure
870	Archial Norr on behalf of BP North Sea Infrastructure
871	Archial Norr on behalf of BP North Sea Infrastructure
872	Archial Norr on behalf of BP North Sea Infrastructure
873	Archial Norr on behalf of BP North Sea Infrastructure
928	Gourdon Community Council
938	Dr. Sheila & Marcus Marsh
1117	Mr & Mrs Ian Burnett
1134	Ryden on behalf of Westhill golf Club
1144	Mr Frank Stewart
1145	Mr Gary Stewart
1156	Stewart Milne Homes
1317	Barratt Homes on behalf of Barratt North Scotland
1350	Bancon Developments
1355	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce
1360	Banchory Community Council

1416	Scottish Property Federation
1453	Ms Helen Brossard
1458	Halliday Fraser Munro on behalf of CALA Homes Ltd
1521	Mr Scott Leitch
1539	Stewart Milne Group on behalf of Stewart Milne Homes
1552	John Handley Associates Ltd on behalf of Shell UK Limited
1557	Scottish Enterprise
1580	SEPA
1585	Mr Peter Bradford
1809	Scottish Water
1811	Scottish Government
1824	Dee District Salmon Fishery Board
1825	ACSEF

1. Issues

Settlement Objectives

A number of respondents raised concerns regarding traffic congestion (88, 96, 124, 137, 155, 717, 724, 761, 938). Some raised general concerns over the ability of the existing road network to cope with further housing and employment developments (724, 761), whilst others suggested that Broadshade Road should have traffic calming measures (88, 142) and that congestion should be tackled on the A944, the B9119, and in the town centre. (96, 137, 717). Concern was also raised regarding public transport provision and it was suggested that a new Park & Ride should be developed in the town (137, 152, 434, 938). One respondent commented that congestion and lack of parking is restraining economic development (938). Another stated that there is a need for a strategy of infrastructure improvements capable of delivering the wider development of Westhill (671).

A number of respondents questioned the current land supply position and stated that new housing and employment allocations should be made in Westhill to support the settlement objectives, to capitalise on the market appetite to invest in the town and to present loss of investment due to uncertainty (679, 1317, 1416, 1458, 1521, 1539). Two respondents stated support for the continued development of the main settlements, including Westhill, and that they would encourage a masterplanning approach where appropriate (1557, 1825). One respondent raised concern that the existing allocations in Westhill were over-reliant on one developer (1458), whilst another commented that there is overbuilding of houses in the west of the settlement and not enough elsewhere (88, 142, 724). Mixed use development should be promoted (678)

Several respondents raised concern that there is not enough housing in Westhill that has been specifically designed for elderly residents (2, 16, 57, 88, 96, 142, 155, 1117), whilst others stated that there is an over-provision of 'executive homes' and not enough affordable housing (16, 152, 155, 434).

One respondent suggested that the settlement has reached its "natural limits" for housing (434). A number of comments raised concerns over any coalescence with Kirkton of Skene (20, 88, 142, 152, 434, 1117), whilst others suggested that a green belt be created around the settlement (152, 155, 434, 724). Two respondents suggested that development be restricted south of Old Skene Road at Strawberry Fields to create a clearly defined boundary to Westhill (88, 142), and another suggested that the B9119 forms a good boundary to southern development (761).

Concern was raised that there is not enough provision of leisure, sport, community and recreational amenities/spaces in Westhill, and there was also concern over the capacity and suitability of present amenities (16, 20, 88, 96, 124, 132, 142, 155, 434, 717, 724). A number of respondents suggested that new shops are needed (20, 152, 724, 1453). There was also concern regarding the capacity of schools to absorb further housing developments (88, 137, 142, 434) and the planning of new schools and nurseries was suggested (137, 1453).

One respondent stated that the description of Westhill in the MIR as a “new town” is erroneous (137).

Main Issue 16 – Limited Employment Land in Westhill (Preferred Option)

A number of respondents expressed support for the Preferred Option (31, 88, 110, 111, 141, 142, 152, 477, 671, 928, 938, 1156, 1317, 1350, 1355, 1360, 1416, 1458, 1521, 1539, 1557, 1825). There were suggestions that the subsea sector wishes to double in size and therefore a clear strategy, including new housing and employment land allocations, needs to be made to support this growth (671, 1156, 1337, 1355, 1360, 1458, 1521, 1539). Two respondents indicated that, unlike in other sectors, Aberdeenshire needs to be internationally competitive to retain oil and gas industries, and advocated that additional land should be made available in Westhill to support the needs of the subsea sector (1557, 1825). Another suggested that a “working group” be set up to secure the future of the town (1156).

A need for continued investment in roads and infrastructure, including cycle paths, is needed to support the further development of Westhill (49, 74, 88, 110, 111, 141, 142, 152, 671, 938, 1156, 1355, 1360, 1521). Better designed developments would be preferable (152). One respondent suggested allocating housing land in Kirkton of Skene to support the subsea industry’s demand for housing (1317), whilst another suggested that employment land allocations should take priority in Westhill (1416).

However, two respondents raised concern that the MIR has focussed too heavily on the subsea sector in its consideration of Westhill (124, 717), with one requesting that other concerns be considered (as listed under “Settlement Objectives”) (124), and the other stating that this puts the future of Westhill at risk when North Sea oil and gas runs out (717). It was also suggested that additional housing allocations are not the best means through which to support the subsea cluster (88, 141, 142).

Additional concern was raised about how development land would be reserved for subsea companies and not general oil companies (31).

Main Issue 16 – Limited Employment Land in Westhill (Reasonable Alternative Options)

Some support was given for the use of a Reasonable Alternative Option (62, 444, 761). One respondent suggested using Blackburn, Kintore and Inverurie as alternatives to Westhill (62), whilst two suggested that further development in Westhill would increase traffic congestion and put further strain on infrastructure and that there should be no further development of the subsea sector south of the B9119 in particular (444, 761).

However, one respondent objected to the Reasonable Alternative Option, suggesting that more allocations are necessary otherwise there is a risk that the subsea sector and its employees will relocate (1350).

One respondent suggested that Westhill is an “ideal location for the proposed ring road” (571).

Bid Ga022

BP North Sea Infrastructure stated that this site lies within the middle consultation zone of their pipeline corridor and that PADHI (Planning Advice for Development near Hazardous Installations) regulations advise against development of this scale within this zone. It was stated that any development would need to be designed to ensure that it complies with the PADHI regulations, with development in the middle zone being avoided (868, 870). Shell UK voiced similar concerns, and suggested the need for any new development to be undertaken in accordance to the PADHI+ guidelines (1552).

The site promoter welcomed the MIR's comments about the ability of this site to help redress school roll imbalances. However, they disagreed with the MIR's assessment that visual prominence would be an issue, arguing that any development in Westhill would have visual impact owing to the sloping land. They also argued that the mature trees could be retained, and that the design would be fully compliant with PADHI+ regulations (1521).

However, another respondent objected to the site, arguing that it contravenes green belt policy. They also raised concerns about access, loss of character, visual impact, loss of habitat, that the site would reduce quality of life and house prices for neighbouring properties, that it is too far from any school, and that it would be prone to high winds and snow in winter (1585).

Bid Ga034

The site promoter supported the identification of this bid site as an officers' preference. They argued that the site would have minimal visual impact, be well connected to the existing road network, has close proximity to the labour forces of Westhill and Aberdeen City, and that the allocation would be a logical development for Westhill (671).

However, respondents raised concerns regarding the MIR's lack of reference to the pipelines that cross the site (868, 872, 1552). It was highlighted that within the inner consultation zone the PADHI regulations recommend that there is a presumption against any developments for workplaces that are more than two storeys in height or accommodate more than 100 staff (868, 872). The need for any development within a consultation zone to comply with PADHI+ regulations was identified, as was the need for any future allocation to make reference to the pipelines (868, 872, 1552).

Bid Ga048

The promoter of this development bid suggested that it would help to ease the demand for housing in Westhill, add to the creation of a sustainable mixed community in the town, add employment and community land and fill a perceived shortfall in housing numbers in Aberdeenshire (1539). However, other respondents objected to the development bid on the grounds that it may add to coalescence with Kirkton of Skene and Mason Lodge (88, 142). One respondent suggested that this site could incorporate some retail provision (20).

Bid Ga050

The promoter of this site argued that it is part of the wider Westhill West Masterplan which will provide community facilities, housing to meet market demand and meet a perceived shortfall in housing in Aberdeenshire. They also argued that the site is not visually prominent (1539). However, Historic Scotland supported the decision not to prefer this site due to the potential impact it may have on the setting of the Iron Age/ Bronze Age Berryhill Enclosure on the Hill of Keir (1811).

Bid Ga051

It was highlighted that the site lies within the inner consultation zone for a BP pipeline, but that due to the scale of the site it would be possible to develop the proposal to ensure compliance with PADHI guidelines (868, 873). Shell UK Limited raised concern that there was no mention of the pipelines in the MIR and stressed that any new development would need to be undertaken in accordance with PADHI+ guidelines (1552).

The site promoter stated that the bid would fulfil local and regional demands for housing (as evidenced by rapid building rates in Westhill), will fill a perceived shortfall in housing in Aberdeenshire, will help build towards a sustainable mixed-community in Westhill and contribute to the wider masterplanned approach for southern expansion in Westhill (1539).

Bid Ga054

A number of respondents voiced support for the development of this site because: it offers green space (16, 1145, 1458); it offers leisure facilities (16, 1144, 1145, 1458); it will have minimal visual prominence (16, 1145, 1458); it will be well served by existing bus routes (16, 1145); it is not further from the town centre than some other developments already delivered (16, 1458); it will complete the north entrance to Westhill (1145); it is within walking and cycling distance to the town centre and schools (1145, 1458); it will have minimal affect on services due to its small scale (1145); and that and it will help support the golf club (1145, 1458). The site promoter also went on to identify that the site: will not affect school capacity as it is within the catchment of Crombie School which has spaces; will fill a perceived shortfall in housing numbers and provide a range of sites and sizes (as recommended by the SDP Reporter); can help to sustain existing services; will provide affordable housing; and can help maintain Westhill's role as an employment centre (1458).

However, Historic Scotland supported the decision not to prefer this site due to the potential impact it may have on the setting of the Iron Age / Bronze Age Berryhill Enclosure on the Hill of Keir (1811).

Bid Ga075

It was highlighted that site lies within the middle consultation zone of a pipeline but that, due to the size of the site, it may be possible to construct the proposed quantity without breaching regulations (868, 871). Shell UK Limited stressed the need for any new development to be undertaken in accordance with PADHI+ guidelines (1552).

The site promoter objected to the decision not to prefer this site, and argued that the site was necessary to meet a perceived shortfall in housing numbers and to meet local housing needs. The respondent feels that the evaluation of the site contradicts itself by claiming the site is both "close to the town centre... [and] not overtly prominent" yet is also "physically and visually divorced from the settlement". The respondent also argued that the situation has changed since the Reporter's comments and that HSE concerns have been met through design alterations (1350).

Bid Ga090

Two respondents objected to this development as they felt this site should remain undeveloped to act as a buffer to westwards expansion and coalescence with Kirkton of Skene (88, 142).

New Bids

One respondent made a request for a site to the east of Cairnfield Farm (directly west of site H1) to be allocated for a managed retirement facility, retirement homes and affordable housing (1117).

Another submitted a request for a site on the existing golf course at Westhill to be allocated for housing (1134).

Physical and Environmental Infrastructure

Two respondents provided factual information regarding flood risk and water supply issues in relation to the existing allocations and bid sites (1580, 1809). Scottish Water indicated that network upgrades and a new reservoir may be required to support new developments (1809). Another respondent provided factual information regarding the risk to river ecology and environment by allocations and bid sites in Westhill (1824).

2. Actions

Settlement Objectives

The comments regarding traffic congestion within Westhill are noted. Both the MIR and the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study acknowledge that the road network in and around Westhill is at capacity and is unable to absorb any further traffic that would be associated with new development without upgrading. Whilst most major infrastructure constraints can be resolved through funding, continual and increasing levels of development are likely to be required to deliver this funding. The scope for pursuing significant transport improvements within Westhill is therefore largely dependent upon whether or not there is a strategic justification for releasing large scale development allocations within Westhill at the present time. This is discussed in more detail below.

In response to the comment that there is a need for a strategy of infrastructure improvements capable of delivering the wider development of Westhill, it should be noted that an update of the Westhill Capacity Study has been commissioned and will be completed shortly. This will consider the potential longer term development of Westhill (i.e. beyond the current LDP review) and examine, amongst other things, the infrastructure requirements that are likely to be required to facilitate the sustainable growth of the settlement in the long term.

A number of questions have been raised over the land supply position in Westhill. A detailed discussion of the overall land supply position is outlined in the Land Supply Issues and Actions paper, which concludes that sufficient and appropriate development allocations have been made in accordance with the SDP housing and employment allowances. Taking into account the role identified for Westhill within the SDP, which does not include Westhill within a Strategic Growth Area (SGA), it is considered that an appropriate level of development has been provided for the settlement. However, the particular case for allocating further development land specifically to support the sub-sea engineering sector is discussed in more detail below. Whilst criticism has been raised that the existing development allocations in Westhill are over-reliant on one developer and focused on the western part of the settlement only, it should be noted that the existing allocations were subject to independent Examination and found to be appropriate.

Several respondents have raised concerns that there is not enough housing in Westhill for elderly residents and an insufficient supply of affordable housing. These issues are discussed more generally within the Issues and Actions papers on Housing for People on Modest Incomes and Other Housing Needs. These papers explain how the planning system can contribute to the delivery of affordable housing and how proposals for people with particular housing needs will be supported providing that they comply with other plan policies. The existing housing allocations

within Westhill will also deliver a proportion of affordable housing, which will be secured through a section 75 legal agreement.

The concerns regarding the potential for further development to lead to coalescence with Kirkton of Skene are acknowledged. This issue has been specifically taken into account in the assessment of the development bids within Westhill and Kirkton of Skene, and the MIR identifies that development in Westhill which leads to coalescence with Kirkton of Skene should be avoided as it would have a detrimental impact on the heritage and setting of Kirkton of Skene.

In response to the calls for a green belt to be created around the settlement, it is important to note that much of the area to the east of Westhill currently lies within the green belt. A review of the green belt within Aberdeenshire was undertaken in 2010¹. This review recommended potential amendments to the green belt in some locations (including both additions and removals), but did not recommend any extension of the green belt designation around Westhill. It is also significant to note that guidance in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states that for most settlements a green belt is not necessary, as other policies or designations, such as countryside policies, provide an appropriate context for decision making. In the absence of any further evidence, there is not considered to be a justification for increasing the extent of the green belt designation around Westhill at this time.

In response to the concerns regarding the availability of community facilities within the settlement, it is noted that Westhill currently has a number of facilities including a health centre, free standing swimming pool, community centre, library, golf course, bowling green and tennis courts. Planning permission has also been granted for the erection of additional retail development, along with alterations to the existing shopping centre and car park (APP/2012/2154). It is recognised that a number of the bid sites would deliver further community uses in conjunction with other forms of development, and the merits of these bids are discussed in more detail below.

In response to concerns over school capacity, it is acknowledged that Skene Primary School is forecast to be significantly over capacity in 2016 and that Elrick Primary School is also forecast to be over capacity. Westhill Academy and Crombie Primary School are projected to be at 91% and 92% capacity respectively, whilst Westhill Primary School is forecast to have capacity in 2016. A School Accommodation Management Update Report to the Garioch Area Committee on 14 January 2014 noted that the pupils expected from the recent Broadshade development are currently presenting at Elrick Primary School, which has caused a greater than expected roll, whilst the number presenting at Skene Primary School has been lower than expected. School capacity issues have been taken into account in the assessment of the various development bids.

It is not agreed that the MIR's description of Westhill as a 'new town' is erroneous. Westhill was created in the 1960s by the former Aberdeen solicitor with the backing of the former Aberdeen District Council and the Secretary of State for Scotland. It was created as an overspill town for Aberdeen out of the existing villages of Westhill and Elrick, and can therefore correctly be described as a planned new town.

Main Issue 16 – Is Further Development Opportunity Required in Westhill?

There appears to be a significant level of support for the principle of releasing additional development land to support the internationally important sub-sea cluster within Westhill. This ranges from support for the release of further employment land, to requests for the release of both housing and employment land, along with calls for a wider strategy of infrastructure improvements to support the further development of

¹ Review of the Aberdeen Green Belt (Aberdeenshire), March 2010

Westhill. The need for Westhill to remain internationally competitive in order to retain oil and gas industries has been stressed by a number of respondents. However, a smaller number of respondents have raised concerns over the MIR's preferred approach. Specific issues included concern that the focus on supporting the sub-sea sector may have an adverse impact on the delivery of other settlement objectives, and concern regarding the long term impact on Westhill once North Sea oil and gas is exhausted. Concern was also raised about the impacts of further development on traffic congestion.

As identified in the MIR, Westhill is a successful town and it is therefore not surprising that the development industry wishes to see the further growth and development of the settlement. The needs of the highly mobile energy sector must also be taken into account, as it is important to the long term future of the north east of Scotland that the sub-sea cluster continues to see Westhill as a globally significant location.

However, this must also be balanced against the current infrastructure capacity issues affecting the settlement, including significant problems of traffic congestion and primary school capacity limitations. In addition, development aspirations for Westhill must also be assessed against the overall SDP strategy. In this respect, it is important to note that the SDP has determined not to include Westhill within a Strategic Growth Area (SGA), and that the settlement is instead located within a Local Growth and Diversification Area. Paragraph 3.42 of the SDP makes clear that levels of growth in individual settlements within local growth and diversification areas should relate to local needs, although it also recognises that the scale of growth will vary from place to place. For these reasons, and given that there is an adequate supply of existing allocations that are effective or capable of becoming effective to meet the SDP housing requirement within the AHMA, there is not considered to be any justification for releasing further residential development land within and around Westhill at this time.

However, it is maintained that the disadvantages of additional development in Westhill on congestion in the area are likely to be outweighed by the local need to maintain the economic success of Westhill as a centre of sub-sea excellence, and that the limited release of additional land for business use, specifically reserved for the sub-sea sector, would be appropriate. Such land could be reserved for use by the sub-sea sector through the imposition of a suitable designation (such as an 'R' designation) within the Westhill Settlement Statement.

Bid Ga022

The comments in relation to the impact of the BP Forties pipeline corridor on this development bid site are noted. The need for development to be avoided within the middle consultation zone in order to comply with PADHI+ (Planning Advice for Development near Hazardous Installations) guidelines would mean that development would not be possible within much of the eastern part of the bid site. However, as identified in the MIR, and as stated by the site promoter, it appears that a scheme could be designed to comply with the PADHI+ guidance.

An argument has been made that visual prominence should not be considered to represent a constraint to the development of this site, as any development within Westhill would have a visual impact owing to the sloping land. However, it should be noted that this site falls within an area that was specifically identified in the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study as a prominent area. There are other areas around Westhill that do not have the same level of visual prominence, and it is maintained that this site is unlikely to be suitable for development on the grounds of its visual prominence.

The comments that the site is currently located within the green belt are acknowledged and, in the absence of any further evidence at this stage, it is considered appropriate to retain the green belt designation at this location within the Proposed Plan.

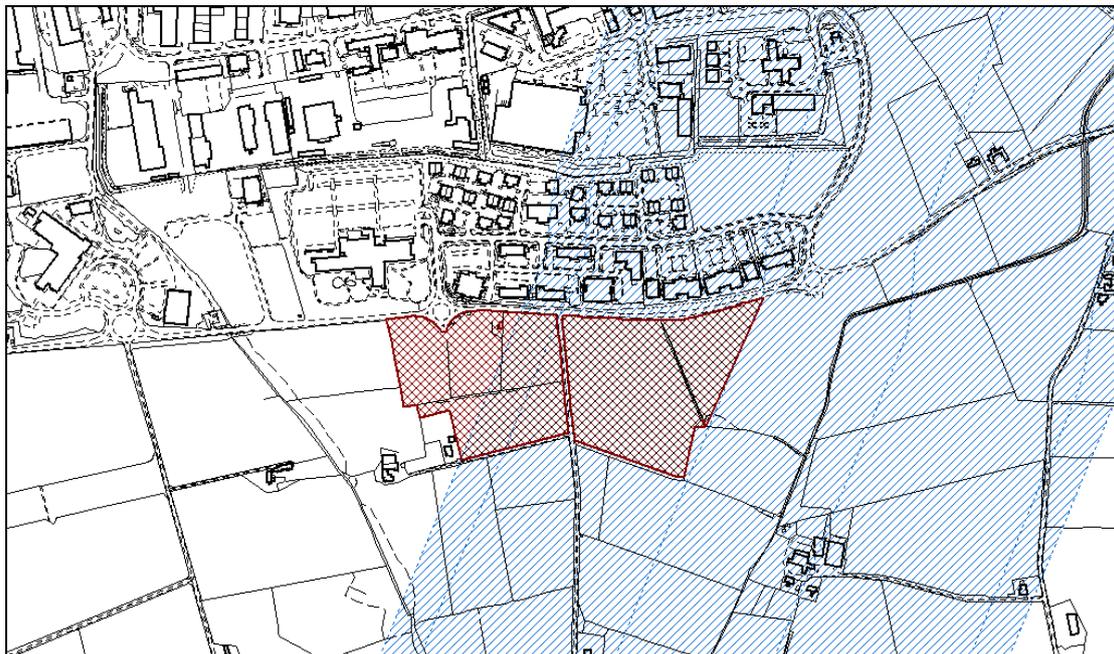
Bid Ga034

The arguments in support of this bid site are noted. A more detailed discussion of the case for allocating additional employment land in Westhill, specifically reserved to support the sub-sea sector, is provided above.

The comments regarding the pipeline corridor that crosses the site are noted. It is recognised that this will impact on the nature of development that can be achieved on the site, but it is considered that an employment development could be achieved that accords with the PADHI+ guidance. The presence of the pipeline corridor, along with the need for any development at this site to accord with PADHI+ guidance could be specifically identified within the Westhill Settlement Statement in line with the requests from respondents.

For the reasons outlined previously, it is considered appropriate to allocate land within Westhill to specifically support the future growth of the internationally important Westhill sub-sea cluster. As such, it is recommended that a limited part of this bid site be identified as employment land to be reserved for the sub-sea sector (as identified within the MIR). It is recommended that development be focused on the western part of the site in order to take account of the presence of the pipeline corridor, which is likely to constrain development in the eastern part of the site.

Figure 1 Revised proposal for strategic reserve allocation for sub-sea industries.



Bid Ga048

The comments in support of this development bid are acknowledged. As identified in the MIR, it is accepted that this site could have merits and would be less prominent than other potential development locations around Westhill. It was identified as one of the most suitable areas for future development within the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study. Nevertheless, there remain concerns over the lack of capacity in the road network to accommodate the proposed development at this time.

Moreover, the SDP has not identified a requirement to provide additional development allocations within the Local Growth and Diversification part of the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA). There is currently an adequate and appropriate supply of land allocations that are effective or capable of becoming effective to meet the SDP housing requirement in the AHMA.

Having taken the above factors into account, it is not considered that there is a strategic justification to allocate this bid site for residential development at this time.

Bid Ga050

Whilst the comments in support of this bid are noted, it is maintained that development at this location would be prominent. The site was specifically identified as a prominent area within the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study, and was therefore not deemed to be an appropriate location for development. The comments from Historic Scotland, who have stated support for the MIR's decision not to prefer this site on the grounds of the potential impact on the Berryhill enclosure on the Hill of Keir, are also significant. On this basis, and given that there is not considered to be a strategic justification for the release of further housing land in Westhill at this time, it is not considered appropriate to allocate this bid site for residential development within the Proposed Plan.

Bid Ga051

The comments regarding the pipeline corridor that crosses the site are noted. It is recognised that this may pose a constraint but, as acknowledged by respondents, the scale of the site is such that it should be possible to achieve development that accords with the PADHI+ guidance. The presence of the pipeline corridor, along with the need for any development at this site to accord with PADHI+ guidance, could be specifically identified within the Westhill Settlement Statement in the event that the site was considered appropriate for development.

Nevertheless, it is maintained that development in this location would be divorced from existing residential areas in Westhill. Moreover, the SDP has not identified a requirement to provide additional development allocations within the Local Growth and Diversification part of the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA). An adequate and appropriate supply of housing and employment land allocations has been made in accordance with the SDP allowances and, having taken these factors into account, it is not considered that there is a strategic justification to allocate this bid site for development at this time.

It should also be noted, for reference, that the majority of this development bid is located outwith Aberdeenshire Council's administrative area. As such, it would not be possible for the Aberdeenshire LDP to allocate the vast majority of this bid site for development.

Bid Ga054

A number of comments have been submitted in support of this bid site. It is acknowledged that the proposed development would deliver community open space and recreational benefits alongside residential accommodation. The other issues raised by supporters are also noted. However, it is maintained that the site is more prominent than other potential development sites within and around Westhill. The 2008 Westhill Capacity Study shows that this site falls within a prominent area, and identifies the ridge to the immediate north of the site as a key skyline. These constraints remain significant.

The comments from Historic Scotland, who have stated support for the MIR's decision not to prefer this site on the grounds of its potential impact on the Berryhill enclosure on the Hill of Keir are also particularly relevant.

Moreover, there is not considered to be a strategic justification for releasing additional housing land within Westhill at this time, since the SDP does not identify a requirement for further housing allocations within the Local Growth and Diversification part of the AHMA and there is an adequate supply of housing sites that are effective or capable of becoming effective to meet the overall housing requirement.

Having taken the above factors into account, it is not considered appropriate to allocate this site for development at this time.

Bid Ga075

The comments regarding the pipeline consultation corridor that crosses the site are noted. It is recognised that this may pose a constraint but, as acknowledged by respondents, the scale of the site is such that it may still be possible to achieve development that accords with the PADHI+ guidance. The presence of the pipeline corridor, along with the need for any development at this site to accord with PADHI+ guidance, could be specifically identified within the Westhill Settlement Statement in the event that the site was considered appropriate for development.

The comments from the promoter of this bid site are also acknowledged, and it is accepted that the site is relatively close to the town centre. However, it is maintained that the need to accommodate the residential component of this proposed mixed use scheme within the eastern part of the site, owing to the presence of the pipeline to the west, will result in a degree of physical and visual detachment from the remainder of the settlement.

In addition, there is not considered to be a strategic justification for releasing additional housing land within Westhill at this time, since the SDP does not identify a requirement to make further development allocations within the Local Growth and Diversification part of the AHMA.

Having taken the above factors into account, it is not considered appropriate to allocate this site for development at this time.

Bid Ga090

Objection has been raised to this site on the grounds that it should remain undeveloped to act as a buffer to westward expansion and coalescence with Kirkton of Skene. These comments are noted. It is also maintained that access to this small site would be difficult and could cause road safety issues owing to the proximity of the proposed access to the junction of the B979 and A944. As a consequence, this site is not considered appropriate for inclusion within the Proposed Plan.

Alternative/New Development Proposals

Respondent 1117 has requested that a site to the immediate west of the road connecting the Old Skene Road with the B979 at Mains of Keir be allocated for a managed retirement facility, retirement homes and affordable housing. It is accepted that this proposal may deliver community benefits. However, it should be noted that this site was proposed for residential development at the previous LDP Examination, when the Reporter concluded that any development of this site would extend the Westhill built up area towards Kirkton of Skene would threaten the rural character of Kirkton of Skene. The Reporter went on to conclude that the present public road that connects the Old Skene Road with the B979 at Mains of Keir provides a defensible boundary for the built up area. It is therefore maintained that development to the west of this road would be inappropriate. It should also be noted that the site is constrained by a pipeline and overhead power lines, although it is considered unlikely that these factors would present an absolute constraint to development.

Respondent 1134 has requested that the Westhill settlement boundary be amended to include two parcels of land at Westhill Golf Club. This modification is requested in order that infill development could be considered at these sites. (The two parcels of land are the subject of a current planning application for 7 dwellings – APP/2014/0146 – and were also the subject of a previous planning application – APP/2013/2156 – that was withdrawn). The respondent argues that the profit generated from development in this location would help to secure the future of Westhill Golf Club. Whilst it is recognised that there may be community benefits associated with this relatively small scale development proposal, it is considered that further development to the north of the existing settlement boundary is likely to be prominent and therefore inappropriate.

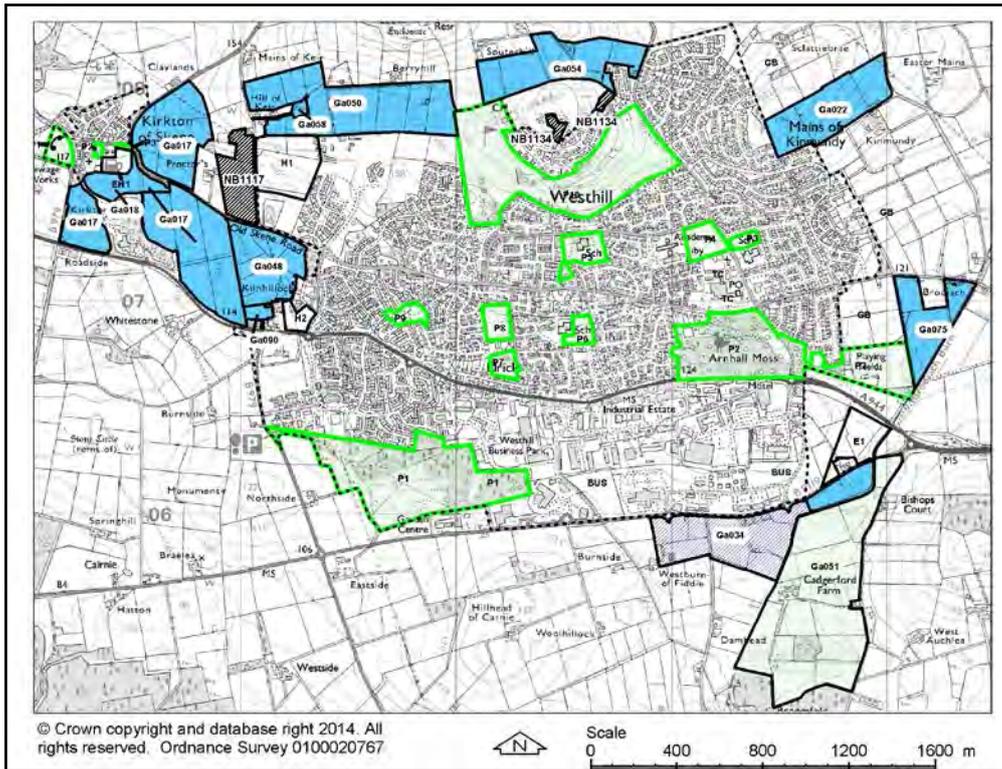
In more general terms it should be noted that neither of these proposals were submitted at the call for sites stage. The sites have therefore not been included in the MIR, and there has not been any formal opportunity for public comment on these proposals as part of the LDP process. Similarly, the proposals have not been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. Planning Circular 6/2013 makes it clear that if a particular issue or site arises that was not consulted on in the MIR, the planning authority may need to carry out further consultation on that particular issue before publishing its Proposed Plan, if it wants to include it in the plan. There is therefore considered to be limited scope for including these site proposals in the Proposed Plan unless further consultation is first undertaken. In any event, there is not considered to be any overall need to allocate further residential development sites within the Proposed Plan given that there are sufficient existing sites within the AHMA to meet the SDP housing requirement.

Physical and Environmental Infrastructure

The technical matters raised by consultees are noted. These issues have been taken into account during the determination of planning applications for the H1 and E1 sites, and will be considered as and when planning applications are determined for the remaining site allocations. No further action is required in response to these detailed comments at this stage.

3. Committee Recommendations

1. The existing H1, H2 and E1 allocations should be carried forward into the Proposed Plan.
2. A limited part of bid site Ga034 should be reserved specifically to support the future growth of the internationally important Westhill sub-sea sector
3. As an appropriate and adequate supply of development sites has already been identified in line with the SDP allowances, there is no strategic justification for allocating additional development sites in Westhill at this stage.



1. Garioch Area Committee agreed the above recommendations at their meeting on 28 May 2014. The committee also agreed not to change to the settlement boundary to include NB1134 sites and stressed the need for non-motorised routes to be provided to the employment land for connectivity.
2. Infrastructure Services Committee noted and agreed with the recommendation of the Area Committee and agreed that no further action was required.