

# **Stirling Local Development Plan 2017 Main Issues Report**

## **Comments of Strathblane Community Council**

Strathblane Community Council appreciates the work done by the officers of Stirling Council in preparing the Main Issues Report. We comment here only on points of particular relevance to our local area and community.

### **Main Issue 1 - Housing Land**

#### **General Issues affecting Strathblane CC area**

The CC is concerned that, even within the proposed allocation, there is insufficient land to supply the existing and anticipated housing needs that arise within our community. We are a highly pressured area and the community values its green belt boundaries. Land prices are high so there is a tendency to compensate for this by building large homes. We do not need any more large homes, and the community does not want large scale housing developments. We are keen to work with the council and housing associations to map LOCAL needs in more detail and come up with innovative ways of meeting them for the benefit of our community.

We agree that housing of smaller units is in short supply, including affordable housing to rent or part purchase. We understand that at least 33% of the housing will be allocated for affordable homes. It is regrettable that the Government set this threshold at 33% rather than 50%. Either social rented housing or shared ownership models may be suitable. We prefer that the affordable element of 33% of the total number of units is provided and run by a local housing association, to maximise benefit to the local community and to capitalise on positive experiences .

It would be good if the remaining 67% were also smaller, as required for a more sustainable mix of housing types in the village.

A big problem is that our community has ZERO housing units for particular needs. We note that the council has offered to build a few such units in the village, (one bedroom bungalows), if land can be found, belonging to Stirling Council, yet the LDP and Main Issues report make no proposal to facilitate such a development. The site SBL06 is not ideal for this type of housing because of its elevated position and steep nature. Are particular needs units to be included here?

We urge the council to review its own land in the village area and reconsider sites that may have been rejected in the past. If particular needs housing were available, other units would surely be freed up, and local residents who are unable to manage their current homes for whatever reason would be able to stay close to friends and family instead of being forced to move away.

#### **Sites SBL01, SBL02, SBL03, SBL04, SBL05, SBL07**

We support the rejection of these particular sites for the reasons given in the Site Assessment. However, the problem remains that insufficient housing land is identified.

## **Site SBL06 South of A81 (Below "Devil's Elbow")**

We have no objection in principle to the allocation of the land for housing, if this is to meet the needs of a sustainable community. However, a number of concerns have been raised, which could make the site unviable. The community should be consulted fully as proposals are developed.

### **Type and Number of units**

It is not known how 30 units are proposed to fit on the site: on the larger, more level site that is currently under development at Campsie Road, there are only 28 units, and the larger ones are crammed close together. Due to the topography of this site, we would not expect promote this many housing units. We would wish to be heavily involved in decisions as to what type of units are envisaged. Are they proposed to be smaller in size and possibly flatted?

### **Access for pedestrians & private/commercial vehicles**

This is perhaps the most critical matter to be resolved before any development is to be permitted on site SBL06. The MIR assessment does not identify any suitable access and does not consider an obvious alternative to access via Old Mugdock Road.

We understand that the landowner owns the house site Blue Risk, and that part of the site can be sacrificed to enhance road widths and sight lines at and below the junction of Old Mugdock Road and Milndavie Road. It would be very welcome if this part of the hill could be made safe for pedestrians, who have no footpath at all between this site and Milndavie Road. However, at the same time, we would not be advocating either the knocking down of existing houses to make access to an undeveloped site, nor would we promote that Old Mugdock Road as a whole is suitable for increased traffic of this type of development with 20-30 housing units. Nor is Milndavie Road suitable for increased two-way traffic.

### Additional factors not highlighted in the MIR should be taken into account:

- The junction of Old Mugdock Road and Dumbrock Road is already subject to obstructions and safety hazards daily due to the presence of the Co-Op and Post Office with very large HGV deliveries.
- The housing in this part of the village is of the highest density and the number of cars and car movements creates parking and congestion hazards which do not need adding to.
- The roads such as Milndavie Road, Old Mugdock Road and Dumbrock are all narrow and 'quirky' in parts, and existing residents have enough trouble with parking and congestion at present. In freezing weather Old Mugdock Road is often impassable, and has low priority on the Council gritting rota.
- If the developer would propose access via the Blue Risk site and Milndavie Road, the problem remains that the junction of Milndavie Road and the A81 is narrow and sharp, and not suitable for higher volumes of traffic.

There are therefore many objections to providing the sole road access for 30 new dwellings via Old Mugdock Road. The proposed development must be rejected if it would add to these problems. It should be designed to ease these problems, if possible.

Alternative solutions to road access should be explored, in full consultation with the community. Why is it not considered to create a new access directly to the A81? We agree that pedestrian access to Old Mugdock Road and the A81 is critical, but why not car access the A81 as well? It may also be

an option to provide entrances to the A81 and Old Mugdock Road as well. This would allow an element of through-traffic. Through traffic would be undesirable, considering the development in isolation, but an additional route for through traffic, designed to modern standards, could be of benefit to the community as a whole, and ease the difficulties of the roads and junctions that must be used at present.

As a minimum, provision should be made for pedestrian through traffic, and with sympathetic landscaping to enhance the amenity for all residents of the development and its neighbours.

Provision of new bus stops seems unnecessary and it may be undesirable to have buses stopping on this stretch. There is already a bus stop not far below the site and another one above it by Milndavie Road/A81 junction. Enhancement of pavements and kerbs at both sides of the site would be most welcome, especially with guard rails or barriers at the lower bend on the A81.

### **Green space, water quality, 'good neighbour' issues.**

The comments of the council's review are noted. As a matter of policy, we believe that the planning system should be designed and operated in ways that encourage and reward 'good neighbour' behaviour. Any permission granted for this site should have such conditions attached to ensure that the owner gets no reward for certain 'bad neighbour' behaviour shown in recent years.

Specifically:

1. A piece of woodland amenity has been lost by the (unlicensed, as far as we know) felling of the plantation. The trees, including non-crop deciduous beech etc. were uprooted and strewn across the site in a haphazard way, creating an eyesore for months. A reason was given relating to safety of the neighbouring road, but at least one tree leaning towards the road has been left at the southern (higher) end of the site. The wood in question, although it was a cash crop contributed to a very special feeling on approach to the village which could be recreated by planting of trees along the A81 boundary of the site. The loss of green space and tree numbers can only be justified if there is proper gain for the neighbours and the community at large, not only for the landowner. Considerations should be given to requiring landscaping and planting on the site, and possibly tree planting on some other site, to compensate the loss of this woodland.
2. The scheme seems dependent on successful negotiations with neighbour to change their long-standing sewerage arrangements. It is highlighted that properties along Milndavie Road are not connected to the main sewerage network, and rely on septic tanks, which they have said they are presently happy with. At least one of these septic tanks is evidently not being maintained properly, as walkers report raw sewage flowing over the field along the Old Mugdock Road boundary, This happens to be the ground below the owners' own property at Blue Risk. The Community Council was shocked to learn of this state of affairs. We assume that any allowed development scheme will provide public sewer connections for all affected neighbours, with no cost to the neighbours, only benefits.

### **Flood Risk**

Flood Risk is an issue now and obviously a serious issue both during and after the construction phase. Residents (especially on Edenkiln Place) and users of the A81 and Old Mugdock Road need

complete reassurance that mitigation measures are in place before construction can be permitted and begun. Any agreed measures must be rigorously enforced.

### **Heritage**

The comments about a medieval steading are noted. There is a local Heritage Society who should be contacted as they may be interested to be involved in any investigation.

## **Main Issue 8 - Housing in the Countryside Policy**

We welcome the review of this policy after a few years of operation. We are pleased that the policy has been effective in controlling development, especially in the Green Belt, but note that developers continue to press aggressively for exceptions to be made. There is in our view no doubt that the slightest slackening at any site in the Green Belt would be the thin end of a wedge seized upon by other developers. Even if these other proposals would be rejected, it would involve lengthy battles and onerous appeal processes of the type that we have seen in the past and that we have mercifully been spared under the current LDP.

We agree that the present restrictions in the Green Belt (and the present boundaries of the Green Belt) should be maintained.

With regard to the proposed tightening of the policy *outside* the Green Belt, we support the principle of establishing clear guidance. We note that MIR conclusions in favour of restricting certain types of development. We have no objection to the main option presented in the report, but we note that there is a need for housing sites to be found *somewhere*.

If for any reason this main option would be rejected, we agree that criteria for interpretation of 'Building Group' and 'Infill Sites' can be clarified and tightened to achieve policy goals. Based on recent planning panel experience, we also support a strict and predictable interpretation and application of the policies, so that 100m (or 50m if changed) means what it says, and developers are not tempted to pursue sites which have 105m (or 55m) etc.. As mentioned already, we believe that the local planning system, communities and developers alike all benefit from the clear policies and the knowledge that they will be applied consistently.

That is not to say that the council cannot override the guidelines in exceptional cases, but the council must continue to be robust and not allow every developer with deep pockets to plead 'exceptional' situations in every case.

## **Main Issue 15 - Hutting policy**

Our CC area includes the Carbeth Huts area. We have no objection to a hutting policy being made applicable over the wider area of Stirling. We were surprised to learn that the council has not consulted the Carbeth hutters to benefit from their experience of many years, before proposing a policy. Perhaps the hutters have had input to the Scottish Government

policy guidance, but we urge the council to consult the Carbeth hutters before adopting any policy on this topic.

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