



Aberdeenshire Council,
Planning Policy Team.
Planning and Environmental Services,
Woodhill House,
Westburn Road,
Aberdeen,
AB16 5GB

20/08/2018

To whom it may concern.

Regarding a planning proposal MR062 (Site 2) relating to land at Hillcroft Road/
Sunset Wood. We have commented below on a number of claims in the application
that cause us concern.

Access is from narrow roads with sharp corners which already present dangers as cars
manoeuvre and cut corners to access Burnett Road. Risks will be increased if traffic
levels rise as a result of these proposed additional houses.

There is reference in the application to “bespoke split-level houses with views over
Scolty Hill to the south”. No reference is made to these houses looking straight into
the bedrooms of all the houses on the north side of Hillcroft Road. The proposed
height of the houses is such that no fencing or screening could be high enough to
mitigate this aspect. The south east corner has a steep slope rising 30 feet in about
100 feet from the back of the Hillcroft Road houses. It is composed of fairly solid
rock (which blocks mobile phone signals).

The land is described as agricultural, which may be its legal classification, but it has
been natural meadowland during all the time that Hillcroft Road has existed. The
description of the land as having “low natural heritage value” is misleading. It has a
wealth of flora and fauna and the many pathways provide great amenity to the people
of Banchory.

Under the heading of “Natural Heritage” the proposal describes the development as
resulting in “habitat creation”. Which seems to be a bit of a nonsense since the
developer’s plan is to remove natural meadowland and replace it with roads and
housing. This application is also competing with two other development proposals
covering the adjacent land areas. Each of these emphasises the amount of “enhanced
Green Network” that will be available. However, if all three proposals go ahead,
there will be close to zero open areas as they are all describing each other’s space as
remaining available.

The environmental section of the report is correct in saying that most red squirrels we see are foraging. The magpie's attack them and discourage them from nesting. However, there are red squirrels in the adjacent woods and we believe, in time, they will spread in to the Hillcroft Road area. We have had frequent sightings of polecats, foxes, hedgehogs etc. and we appreciate the regular visits from roe deer. The bird life includes varieties that go well beyond the usual garden suspects and include Goldcrests, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Bullfinches, Siskins, Long Tailed Tits, Mistle Thrushes, Sparrowhawks – and many more seasonal visitors such as flocks of Waxwings which feed on the rowan berries and the Swifts and House Martins which feed on the many insects that the meadow supports. We participate in the RSPB Great Garden Birdwatch annually and sadly have to report that the numbers of these many charming species are in steady decline. This is partly due to a reduction in natural habitat so the small populations are no longer sustainable. It is also due to the many domestic cats in the area. Clearly, both these problems will be further exacerbated by additional building choking out the meadows.

The proposals offer very optimistic views about the local amenities and the local demand for housing. The local Primary and Secondary Schools are at capacity. The nearest bus stop is over half a kilometre away on Woodside Road – if access is to be from Tocher Lane. The area is at least a mile away from the Deeside Way. The proposed Core Path to the north is scheduled to be built over.

The proposal describes the need for additional houses to meet demand in Banchory. There is already sufficient new-build activity at Hill of Banchory to meet any need. This developer is experiencing difficulty selling their houses and has been advertising special financing terms and part exchange. As an example of the demand in the immediate vicinity, number 4 Hillcroft Road has been on the market for nearly two years now (including an offer of part exchange) and still has not sold.

Our conclusion is that, should this development go ahead, we will have increased traffic congestion and road risk, increased pressure on our amenities, loss of privacy, loss of habitat for wildlife, loss of open space for leisure activities. We recognise that building contractors are under pressure at this time due to lack of demand for housing but their pursuit of profit should not be accepted as sufficient reason in itself to despoil this lovely area.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.