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By submitting a response to the consultation, I agree that Aberdeenshire Council can use the information provided in this form, including my personal data, as part of the review of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. This will include consultation on the Main Issues Report (including any subsequent Proposed Plan).

I also agree that following the end of the consultation, i.e. after 8 April 2019, my name and respondent identification number (provided to you by Aberdeenshire Council on receipt of your submission) can be published alongside a copy of my completed response on the Main Issues Report website (contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive will not be made available to the public).

The data controller for this information is Aberdeenshire Council. The data on the form will be used to inform a public debate of the issues and choices presented in the Main Issues Report of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021. It will inform the content of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

Aberdeenshire Council will only keep your personal data for as long as is needed. Aberdeenshire Council will retain your response and personal data for a retention period of 5 years from the date upon which it was collected. After 5 years Aberdeenshire Council will review whether it is necessary to continue to retain your information for a longer period. A redacted copy of your submission will be retained for 5 years beyond the life of the Local Development Plan 2021, possibly until 2037

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- Mr Andrew Lawson, Data Protection Officer, Aberdeenshire Council, Business Services, Town House, 34 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY

If you have difficulty understanding this document and require a translation, or you need help reading this document (for example if you need it in a different format or in another language), please phone us on 01467 536230.

<b>Which document(s) are you commenting on?</b>	Main Issues Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Draft Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Strategic Environmental Assessment Interim Environmental Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Your comments

### **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2021 – Main Issues Report Appendix Marr Settlements – Banchory Pages 14-25**

Please accept the following comments on the above report as part of the current consultation process.

#### **Banchory – Introduction**

“... new retail opportunities within the town centre promoted” – this objective is highly welcome. This objective should be provided with more prominence and support given the current number of retail units to let in the town centre. Banchory needs a good mix of retail units if they are to serve the needs of the community and to encourage more tourists / other visitors. At present the town centre is the most depressed it has been in recent times. A more specific plan of action is required.

“...improve footpath and cycle path provision...” – this takes on even more importance if the mental and physical health of the local community is to be enhanced. Provision of footpaths and cycle ways can only be improved if suitable routes and land are retained / enhanced. This objective should not take second place to random and unsympathetic housing and business developments on existing forest paths and walkways.

#### **Planning Objectives**

The four planning objectives all look highly commendable. Much more specific detail to support each needs to be developed before further comment can be forwarded. All housing development needs to be proportionate and sympathetic to the needs of the community. The location of any new facilities or the relocation of existing facilities needs to be balanced and equal weight given to both the west and east side of Banchory. It would be unacceptable for all facilities to be concentrated on one side of the town at the expense of the other.

#### **Existing Development Sites**

The existing development sites already includes for an additional 450 new homes in Banchory. This together with other recent developments within the Hill of Banchory will add considerably to the population of the town. This expansion in population needs to be kept in balance with the current state of infrastructure and other necessary community facilities. Whilst the long overdue and eagerly awaited construction of the new sports village is a welcome addition to the town, other facilities, such as the provision of a modern school complex and health centre, appear not to have kept pace with such growth in population.

#### **Development Bid Sites**

##### **MRO14 – Retail Park**

I am unsure how actively this area has been promoted for potential business use. However, if the Council’s fourth Planning Objective is to be fulfilled - “to provide opportunities for employment” -then Banchory needs to be more positively marketed as a potential business centre. There is already an abundance of talented, well-educated personnel who already live in the town and who regularly commute into Aberdeen. While on a much larger scale the Prime Four site at Kinsgswells and Business Park at Westhill shows what can be achieved with a little imagination. Any retail development on this site must take into consideration the impact it will have on the traditional town centre, which, as already noted, is in desperate need of some regeneration.

## Your comments (continued)

### **MRO24 – Visitor Centre and Heritage Hub**

Further detail on this potential development is required, particularly with respect to the positive impact it is expected to have on visitor numbers and the additional volume of tourists. Such a development must surely go hand in hand with improvements to the attractiveness of the town and the establishment of additional and appropriate visitor attractions / other leisure pursuits within the locality.

### **MRO38/39 – Housing Development**

The development of these two sites could potentially add a further 300 homes to the town in an agricultural area that forms the entry point into Banchory. This will inevitably mean that the existing boundary of the town is extended, resulting in a further erosion of our rural setting and imposing further pressures on our already congested roads, schools and other local community services including an outdated and not fit for purpose health centre. Any extension to the existing town boundary needs to be well controlled and in keeping with the local infrastructure and other critical community facilities.

### **MRO61 – Glen O’Dee Hospital Housing Development**

On the face of it this looks like an appropriate site for development. The land has been underutilised for many years even before fire damage to the A listed Glen O’Dee hospital. As such the site is now in a state of disrepair and would benefit from some sympathetic development. The area is relatively isolated and on the edge of the town. Any development would need to be accompanied by an improvement to the connecting road. The development should seek to retain as many of the surrounding ancient trees as possible. The nearby area is one that is regularly used by the community for walking and cycling. Any development needs to take this into consideration.

### **MRO80 – Health Care use**

The current health centre, whilst not fit for purpose, is ideally located in the centre of the village and provides a useful focal point to the local community. Any relocation of the health centre needs to take into consideration the impact this will have on the rest of the town centre and how accessible it will be for the majority of the residents. The location of the two existing pharmacies needs also to be carefully considered.

## **Other Options – Not Preferred**

I am in agreement that the sites listed under this section should not be developed. The current scale of development already approved is more than sufficient for the time being. Completion of the additional 450-750 houses will add pressure on to the current infrastructure and other community services. The continued and unfettered development of Banchory will also lead to a loss of its’ rural setting and unique characteristics.

### **MRO62 – Land at Hillcroft Road**

More specifically, I also wish to register my strongest objection to this proposal on the following grounds:

- The proposed development location includes an area of ancient woodland, with many old and well established trees and an abundance of natural flora and fauna. It is also an area where the occasional red squirrel can be seen. The woodland and associated network of pathways needs to be preserved for future generations. The area is regularly used by many local residents for different forms of recreational use including dog walking, running and cycling. The area is easily accessible and, as it is near to the centre of Banchory, encourages people to take exercise and to gain quick entry to the countryside. This provides immeasurable physical and mental health benefits that cannot be easily replaced, without placing an additional burden on the NHS. More specifically Sunset Seat provides an irreplaceable viewpoint of the setting sun for everyone to enjoy.

- The construction of 50 houses would irreparably destroy an area of outstanding natural beauty and habitat, which would be lost to the community forever. It would also vastly increase the volume of traffic in the vicinity putting a further severe strain on a heavily burdened road network, both in the immediate local area and for those commuting to and from Aberdeen.
- Banchory is also ill-equipped to cater for such a significant increase in population in terms of the local infrastructure, shops, schools and GP practice. It has taken the existing community a number of years to gain approval for a new sports and swimming pool facility that is only now in the process of being constructed. A sudden and significant increase in local numbers of people would only serve to further increase the strain on these already limited facilities / services.
- The development of houses in this area would cause severe disruption and inconvenience to local residents during the period of construction. Banchory is already well served with new housing stock at the Hill of Banchory and there are other sites that have already been approved for development that would cause less disruption and would allow the local infrastructure to be steadily evolved to accommodate this growth, without requiring an immediate and substantial capital investment in infrastructure.
- Banchory has grown substantially in recent years and is now in danger of losing its rural identity. The recent downturn in the Oil and Gas industry has clearly shown that without further significant economic, industrial and commercial development in Aberdeen / Aberdeenshire, the potential fall in employment opportunities will lead to a net migration away from the area and the consequent decline in the need for additional housing.

**MRO76 – Alexander Park**

No development should be allowed on Alexander Park as this provides a valuable sports facility to the local community, set in idyllic surroundings. Any re-location should also be resisted as this would destroy the link with Burnett Park and would mean that a larger number of facilities are located on the eastern side of Banchory. Part of the pleasure of living in this area is the open countryside and the fact that all the facilities are not currently concentrated in just one area.