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To: LDP
Subject: LDP Main Issues Response

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021: Main Issues Report 2019

Comments on Main Issues Report in Relation to Banchory

1. I broadly agree with the Planning Officers classification of bid sites into preferred, not preferred, reserved etc. Unsurprisingly, the bids are scattered over the area, irrespective of suitability.

2. Inclusion of sites MR062, MR056, MR040, MR041 & MR077 all to the west of Banchory would push the development boundary over a hill summit with very significant visual impact, leaving a very irregular new development boundary inviting even more development in the future. The existing development boundary being just below the hilltop is far better and should be retained into the future.

3. These five sites would destroy mature mixed deciduous woodland which is part of the “green network” around Banchory. These woodland areas are important for several reasons:

- (1) they provide an immediately accessible network of natural paths which are used extensively by the community;
- (2) they include a mix of mainly deciduous species, mostly mature and worthy of retention;
- (3) they are also worthy of collective retention as deciduous woods;
- (4) they provide habitat for wildlife including red squirrel. (Please see note below);
- (5) they absorb CO2 gas and thereby contribute to achieving the sustainable environment policy;

No amount of new tree planting in artificial clumps will compensate for the loss of this woodland. Nor will paths diverted through housing developments substitute for natural paths through woodland.

Please note that para 5.5 of the Ecological Impact Assessment submitted in relation to MR056 specifically says that no evidence of red squirrel was found. I beg to differ. I categorically state that I have seen red squirrels moving through the tree canopy on many occasions this winter in the areas of MR056 & MR062.

4. Vehicular access to these sites is not as easy as the outline bid application suggests. Most households have at least two vehicles nowadays so these five sites alone would generate over 500 additional vehicles. It is difficult to see how new vehicular access can be made. They would most likely have to link to existing fairly narrow residential streets for access, adding to the traffic passing the primary school and increasing the risk of accident to young children.

5. Banchory Academy will be at 98% of capacity in 2022 (according to the application for MR056). These five sites alone would probably attract 200 or so new families which would give rise to of the order of 500 to 600 additional pupils, albeit spread over the years. How will the Academy cope with these additional numbers? It is only a short time since Aberdeenshire Council decided against a new, enlarged academy building for Banchory.

6. The type of housing proposed typically by developers nowadays bears little resemblance to the needs of the community. A sustainable community requires housing suitable for all ages. A community is not sustainable if its young people have to move away because they can't afford the "executive style" housing preferred by developers or if its older people have to move away to find houses more suited to old age. Affordable housing for young people and smaller bungalow type housing with level access for older people to downsize into will allow people across the age spectrum to stay within their communities. I see no evidence in any of the bid documents of thinking along these lines. These issues are too important to be left to the whims of developers. The housing mix required by each community to make them sustainable should be specified within the LDP.

