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Which document(s) are you commenting on?	Main Issues Report	<input checked="" 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

*Objections to the MIR in respect of: Site OPI / MR 075
Woodend, Banchory.
See attached statement.*

LDP REVIEW 2022

RESPONSE TO MAIN ISSUES REPORT

OBJECTION TO MIR IN RESPECT OF SITE OP1 / MR075

INTRODUCTION

This site has been reserved in both the 2012 and 2017 LDPs for a mix of community and tourism uses, including a park and ride site, a 30 unit demonstration eco village, and one full sized football pitch.

Built on the site to date have been : an Arts Centre, a Restaurant, a Church, 4 rugby pitches with associated storage and changing facilities, and Community Allotments. A planning application for the Eco Village is currently the subject of a PoAN and will be submitted this month.

However, in the 7 years since 2012, the Council have made no progress with the park and ride site, and despite numerous enquiries, have not been able to provide NBC with any indication as to when the project is likely to proceed. Indeed, they have indicated that their current preference is to proceed with a 'park and choose' option, which would be located at Crathes Hall, some 2 miles east of Banchory.

In the meantime, NBC have for some years been having discussions with Banchory and Stonehaven Athletics Club (BSAC) regarding the possibility of the relocation of their athletics facilities (from Alexander Park – to the west of Banchory) to Woodend. This was to facilitate a betterment in the sporting facilities, and including potentially joint use of changing and storage facilities. These discussions are still ongoing.

It was recognised however that there was no scope on the current OP1 Site to include all the uses which the Council wished to see, as well as allowing for continued expansion of rugby, and the inclusion of athletics facilities.

Accordingly a 'bid' was made to change the text describing the 'opportunity' which was applicable to the OP1 Site.

The bid supported continued allocation of the site for a mix of uses, but wished to see the football pitch, and the park and ride proposals removed, to allow for new athletics facilities to be included as an alternative use.

A separate 'bid' (MR082) was made to relocate the football pitch elsewhere in the vicinity.

OBJECTION TO TEXT OF MIR

The MIR states that the community now wish to see an all-weather pitch provided at Woodend, rather than a full sized football pitch. It is also noted in the MIR that the community are content that the pitch is *“retained on OP1, unless an equivalent site is agreed”*. The Planners however wish the all-weather facility to be on OP1, irrespective of other options.

There is no justification given for departing from the community view that the pitch can be provided elsewhere, if it is on an equivalent site, despite the fact that this approach was accepted by the Reporter at the last LDP Enquiry.

In considering these issues, NBC have looked again at the capacity of the OP1 Site, and believe that the move from a ‘full sized football pitch’ to an ‘all-weather facility’ would be helpful, as it could allow for expansion of both rugby and football activities.

Having undertaken these further feasibility studies, NBC accept that allowing for an all-weather pitch (which could be a multi-sport facility) would be an acceptable change to the land use allocation, and that it can be accommodated on OP1 – while still allowing for the incorporation of athletics facilities.

NBC continue to suggest the Council should consider the inclusion of athletics facilities at Woodend. This is notwithstanding the Objection submitted by BSAC, setting out their desire to remain at Alexander Park, unless it can be shown that relocation would result in improved facilities. The objection notes that this view is based on their interpretation of the *“current proposals”* sent to them.

NBC have been discussing relocation with BSAC for well over a year, and those discussions are still ongoing on an amical basis. At this point, clarifications are being provided by both parties, and this has been particularly helpful. It is hoped that agreement can be reached between the parties in a reasonably short timescale. We hope accordingly that the Council can afford both parties the opportunity to agree a scheme for the delivery of first rate athletics facilities for BSAC, and particularly the next generation Banchory’s young people.

The text of the MIR also says the community wish to see the ‘park and ride’ retained on OP1, as *“parking is a continuing pressure on the town centre that will need to be addressed”*. It should be noted however that the recent decision of the Council to remove the ‘free period’ for town centre parking has exacerbated the problem.

The retention of the P+R site on OP1 raises issues of certainty, which is one of the main reasons for preparing LDPs – to give both the community, and prospective developers certainty as to the outcome of investment decisions. The site has been allocated as suitable for a Park and Ride site since the 2012 LDP was adopted, without the Council showing any sign of taking the site forward as a definite proposal. Recent inquiries with the Council have revealed no plans to introduce the project into their Capital Plan. Accordingly, at the end of

the next plan period in 2032, it seems very likely that the site will have been zoned for 20 years without any prospect of development proceeding.

Notwithstanding this, NBC recognise that there is an issue with parking in Banchory Town Centre, and would be prepared in principle, to accept that the land use allocation for OP1, including the accommodation of a Park and Ride Site, should continue.

NBC would hope however that in the next few years the Council will more actively develop a strategy for the delivery of improved parking facilities in Banchory, and let NBC know whether it is to be a reduced 'parking hub', a 'park and choose' facility at Crathes, and in particular whether the OP1 Site remains part of that strategy.

In all these circumstances, it would surely be reasonable for the Council to provide a timeline for progress with the project.

It is suggested therefore that the wording (for this section of the opportunity) should be "a park and ride site, or other use compatible with the other tourism and community uses deemed acceptable on the site".

The MIR further states that no increase in the number of units on the Eco Village can be supported, as no progress has been made with a planning application.

The suggestion that the Eco Village has not been progressed is absolutely denied.

Detailed discussions with the Council have been ongoing since at least 2016, and the formal assessment process was initiated and registered in 2017.

Various Council services (Planning, Roads, Housing, FPU, Developer Obligations, etc.) have been consulted regarding the application, and a PoAN has been lodged, with a view to an application in April.

To say that no progress has been made does not reflect the factual position. The design has now evolved to a position where 32 units are suggested. Increasing the number to 32 units provides for ready calculation of the affordable housing element (25% = 8 units) yet still provides a low density, highly landscaped and sustainable development of particularly high quality.

Considering all the foregoing, it is accordingly suggested that the wording of the OP1 opportunity reflects the layout shown on the attached site layout plan, and says the allocation is for : A mix of uses, including a 32 homedemonstration Eco Village, tourism uses, community uses – including a full sized all-weather sports pitch, and a park and ride site or other use which is compatible with the tourism and community uses deemed acceptable on the site.

