

Planning Policy Team

Infrastructure Services

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Dear Sirs

Your Reference: **LDP 2021 NN**

I wish to object to the Proposed Local Development Plan (PLDP) with respect to movement of the Greenbelt boundary for the inclusion of two development sites, OP1 and OP2 in Potterton, for the following reasons:

- The village of Potterton, has always lain within and surrounded by the green belt designated area of Aberdeen. The new PLDP has specifically changed the boundaries of the green belt in the Potterton area, to accommodate development and has been done without any public consultation. Any proposed development or alteration to the greenbelt designated land, even to the north of Potterton, constitutes an erosion of the greenbelt. The green belt is designated for a purpose, to provide a green lung between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

- This proposal is not an enhancement of the rural economy. Any development in the proposed areas has nothing to do with agriculture, horticulture, forestry nor recreation; it is a residential development not associated with any of these industries or activities and as such contravenes the Scottish Governments advice on Greenbelt policy.
- There are already more than 1410 houses planned for the Belhelvie parish area, with the tremendous expansion of Blackdog (600 dwellings plus retail units), Menie (550 + dwellings, and Balmedie/Belhelvie 210. At present and for the foreseeable future, we are suffering an economic downturn, especially within the North Sea, which is experiencing a permanent decline in oil and gas assets. In addition, with the global energy requirements now trending towards green options, the use of hydrocarbons is diminishing, which has major implications for this area. Many companies are permanently down manning. I recognise this PLDP is for the next 10 years, however, one cannot change the decline in finite oil field reserves. With the Covid 19 pandemic, our working habits have permanently changed, as we have discovered we no longer require to be in the same locus as our work. Consequently, the demand for employment and thus housing in this area is already declining and will continue to do so.
- To add 233 houses to Potterton would increase the village by 60% and destroy village life. As no other settlement, within this Aberdeenshire area is being proposed to increase in capacity, by the same volume, one must question why the proposed sites have been selected, more especially as they lie in greenbelt. Surely there are other larger settlements within Aberdeenshire, where the inclusion of 200+ houses would have less of an impact. According to the Landscape Charter Assessment of Aberdeen (Nicol et al, 1996) 'Potterton is acknowledged as a landscape character area' and as such 'Large scale development would not fit in with the existing pattern.'
- There has been no public consultation on the alteration to the village boundaries, the greenbelt boundaries, and the inclusion of these sites within the PLDP, neither by the developer, Aberdeenshire council nor the Community Council. As the PLDP was published prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this is not a valid excuse for the lack of

consultation. Potterton Community Group, by its own admission is not political and does not represent, nor wishes to be considered as representing the opinions of the village. Similarly, Belhelvie Community Council have not held any public consultations with regards to these sites. However, in 2017, it is recorded in their minutes, that they were against any development in Greenbelt and this includes Potterton. Putting leaflets into the local shop and pub, 10 days prior to the objection deadline, does not constitute public consultation by a developer. Many residents are in the shop infrequently, especially currently, some are shielding, and few use the pub.

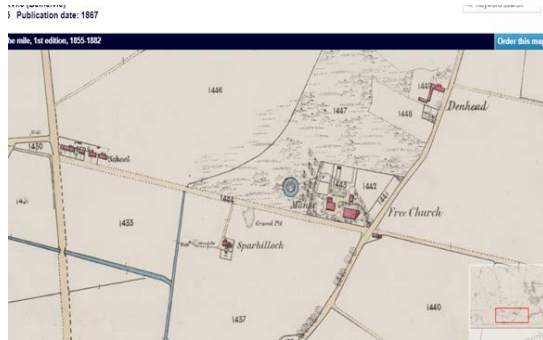
- Like most small villages in Aberdeenshire, Potterton does not have a centre or heart. However, this does not detract from the settlement, as it has an active sense of community and place. Not every village requires a centre, as this contributes towards their uniqueness. When considering the approval of the 4 units at the Stead Inn and the subsequent press release, it was indicated that the building of the four units would give the village a centre – one has to question why this required mentioning, as these units are to be built on the present periphery of Potterton. Unless the applicant has already been informed that there is to be development to the north of Potterton and a decision on the inclusion of the proposed land parcels in the development plan has already been taken?
- There are already ongoing concerns over Balmedie Primary School capacity. The school is predicted to be 118% above capacity within 5 years. The PLDP makes no recognition of this as a potential constraint to development. Whilst future residential developments may be required to contribute to additional education or community requirements, this usually means allocating land for this purpose, whereas the council finance the build costs and the developer looks good at public consultations. In the past, planning gain monies, from developments within the village have been allocated to the building of Aberdeenshire secondary provision. In reality, children from this village are within the catchment area for Bridge of Don Academy, with transport provided. For any who choose to send their children to Ellon Academy, the village is deemed out with the catchment area and families must finance their child's transport to this educational establishment. Considering the demand for secondary school provision within the Bridge of Don area and the rezoning of the catchment areas for

both of the Aberdeen suburb area academies, further development in the Belhelvie parish area has the potential to exceed the acceptable role numbers at Bridge of Don Academy.

- Scottish Water has ongoing issues with the highwater table and drainage within Potterton, which overwhelms the local pumping station. There is already insufficient capacity at Balmedie Wastewater Treatment works to accommodate the already allocated residential sites within the area. It must also be noted that both OP1 and OP2 lie within a 1 in 200-year flood risk area as designated by SEPA.
- In December 2016, planning reporters recognised that no changes to the greenbelt were relevant with regards to Potterton and it was excluded from the strategic growth area. Since then nothing has changed to support growth in the village, so there should be no sites included within the PLDP. To build to the north of Potterton risks the future coalescence of the two unique settlements of Potterton and Belhelvie which both of which have their own sense of community and a slow insidious erosion of the greenbelt.
- There are already acknowledged concerns over the healthcare provision within the area, as the northern areas of Aberdeen and this immediate area expand and no new health care provision is created.

The Main Issues report

According to The Main Issues Report, Potterton village was originally located along Manse road. This is factually incorrect. Public map records from 1867- 1900 would indicate that the original village was located at the junction of the B999 and Panmure Gardens, originally starting as 4 dwellings, a school and the post office. This makes logical sense as the B999 is an old drove road into Aberdeen.

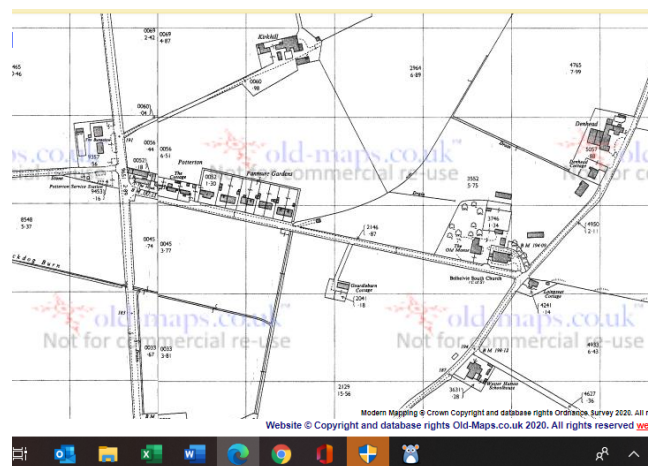


1867 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74478569>



1899 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/75475574>

The only additional houses built within the village up until 1965 were 9 dwellings on Panmure Gardens and 3 in the vicinity of Denhead Farm.



1965 <https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/394878/817768/12/100954>

Consequently, as this fact is inaccurate, it cannot and should not be used as a justification to expand Potterton, towards Belhelvie.

The transportation note, contained within the Main Issues report, compiled by RPS Ltd, on behalf of the developer indicates that any development will not impact on the roads surrounding Potterton. To the contrary, any development will impact the surrounding roads structure, due to increased car movements associated with 233 dwellings. Potterton does not have a frequent bus service. On Manse Road, there is a 2 hourly service both to and from Aberdeen, this being the only transport link. The transportation note indicated a frequent

bus service from this location. To access services, present residents, rely on their own transportation. Any additional development will increase the traffic load on C class country roads, many with passing places and blind summits, such as the road between Potterton and Belhelvie. Increased traffic will cause bottlenecks at the AWPR junction. There are already traffic calming measures in place on Panmure Gardens due to traffic safety concerns. Any increase in traffic will only exacerbate traffic management problems in this area. The transportation note is inaccurate and should not be used as justification to support development.

People move to Potterton because it is rural and they prefer the smaller village settlement, with a sense of community. They move because they consider the amenities adequate and which are easily accessible with modern transport. People who were brought up in the village, leave, then return to bring up their own children because it is a rural, safe settlement with a population of all ages. Residents value the sense of community, which encompasses all age groups and take a pride in the village's identity. We moved to Potterton because of its village feel, as we wished to remain detached from the sprawling suburbs of Bridge of Don, as others do. In the past the long-term settlement strategy for Potterton has always been to build within the village's existing boundaries because it is in greenbelt. This should be continued.

BCC purports to be 'Your voice in the community' (BCC website home page). The role of a Community Council is supposed to 'Represent the views of the community and take action to promote them', ' Campaign on local issues' and organise 'Public meetings on major development proposals and the local plan', according to Aberdeenshire Council. Unfortunately, having viewed the recent BCC minutes of their deliberations on the PLDP of 8/6/2020, this does not appear to be the case.

'Whilst accepting [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] – Potterton BCC member) comments were valid and should be noted, the Council view was that it is inevitable that further housing developments would happen at Potterton as it has at all other parish settlements. The Council was also reminded of the comments we (BCC) made to the MIR in regard to future development at Potterton in that we recommended that it should all take place to the east of the B999 and that

no development should be considered to the west of the B999. These comments have been accepted and actioned by the AC Planning Dept.’ (BCC approved minutes 8/6/20).

It is not ‘Inevitable that further housing developments would happen at Potterton as it has at all other parish settlements.’ Most BCC members seem to have missed the fact that Potterton lies in the green belt and the other parish settlements do not. Consequently, Potterton is unique in this and cannot be considered in the same category as the other parish villages. BCC has conducted no consultations with the community concerning the local plan, PLDP nor any future developments in Potterton, with regards to the MIR (Main Issues Report). Accordingly, any comments forwarded by BCC to Aberdeenshire Council planning department on ‘Future development at Potterton’ have been submitted without the community’s engagement and are the BCC members views. There is a depth of feeling within Potterton, concerning movement of the green belt boundaries, to accommodate development, which is not being reflected by BCC.

Despite a developer indicating in the press on 24/7/20, that they had had ‘Extensive talks with BCC’, this does not appear to be the case. Having viewed the BCC minutes from October 2017 to June 2020, there is no minuted indication of any talks. The only mention of the developer is in May 2019 when ‘Barratts Scotland 2019 community fund – to offer corporate package in return for funding a larger project’ (BCC approved minutes May 2019).

NB I am now aware that a developer attended a BCC meeting on 20 July 2020, indicating that they did not normally engage in community engagements at the PLDP stage. Does attendance at one meeting to give a presentation constitute ‘extensive talks?’

I would suggest that the planning forecasts on which the inclusion of these sites was made, may have been relevant, at the time in which it was made. However recent global events have overtaken these forecasts and they are no longer valid and consequently no decisions should be made using them. In addition, some of the matters within the Main Issues Report are erroneous and it would be unwise to base policy decisions on inaccurate facts. Surely it would be prudent to consult with the communities most affected by changes in the green belt boundaries prior to decisions being made, after all, I am sure we still live in a democracy.

The erosion of the Aberdeen Greenbelt in other areas surrounding Aberdeen, has led to similar objections concerning the long-term integrity of the greenbelt, this time by Kincardine and Mearns Councillors. (<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/fp/news/local/objection-over-plan-to-change-north-east-greenbelt-land-into-site-for-150-homes/>) One has to question, when concerns are being raised over the potential destruction of the greenbelt in the Kincardine area, why is this being proposed as acceptable in the Formartine area? Surely all the Aberdeen greenbelt should be protected from housing development and the consensus of opinion regarding greenbelt should be uniform across Aberdeenshire Council.

As this is a proposed local development plan, this is the time to modify the proposal, reinstate this parcel of land, to the north of Potterton, back within the greenbelt, to preserve the integrity of the greenbelt and to preserve the amenity of the village.

I trust these points will be fully considered before the proposed local development plan is finalised.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Jenkins