

# PROPOSED ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 RESPONSE FORM

As part of the production of the Local Development Plan, a 'Main Issues Report' was published in January 2019. The responses from these consultations have helped to inform the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan ("the Proposed Plan").

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan will direct decision-making on land-use planning issues and planning applications in Aberdeenshire for the 10-year period from 2021 to 2031. The Proposed Plan was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2020 as the settled view of the Council. However, the Proposed Plan will be subjected to an independent examination and is now open for public comment.

**This is your opportunity to tell us if anything should be changed in the Proposed Plan, and why.**

When writing a response to the Proposed Plan it is important to specifically state the modification(s) that you would wish to see to the Plan.

This is the only remaining opportunity to comment on the Proposed Plan. The reasons for any requested changes will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person known as a Reporter to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on any unresolved issues and the changes sought.

Ministers expect representations (or responses) to be concise (no more than 2000 words) and accompanied by limited supporting documents. It is important to ensure that all of the information that you wish to be considered is submitted during this consultation period as there is no further opportunity to provide information, unless specifically asked.

Please email comments to [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or send this form to reach us by 17 July 2020.

We recommend that you keep a copy of your representation for your own records.



## ACCESSIBILITY

If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone 01467 536230.

Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti 01467 536230.

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la 01467 536230.


Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer 01467 536230.

Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz 01467 536230.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan  
Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

Tel: 01467 536230  
Email: [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)  
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If you wish to contact one of the area planning offices, please call 01467 534333 and ask for the relevant planning office or email [planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).



Please use this form to make comments on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020. If you are making comments about more than one topic it would be very helpful if you could fill in **a separate response form for each issue you wish to raise**.

Please email or send the form to reach us by 17 July 2020 at the following address:

Post: Planning Policy Team, Infrastructures Services  
Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, ABERDEEN, AB16 5GB

Email: [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Please refer to our **Privacy Notice** at the end of this form for details of your rights under the Data Protection Act.

## YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Mr
First Name:	Angus
Surname:	Dodds
Date:	31/07/2020
Postal Address:	Savills [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Postcode:	[REDACTED]
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]

Are you happy to receive future correspondence only by email? Yes ☒ ☐ No ☐

Are you responding on behalf of another person? Yes ☒ ☐ No ☐

If yes who are you representing? **Learney Estate**

☒ Tick the box if you would like to subscribe to the Aberdeenshire LDP eNewsletter:

*An acknowledgement will be sent to this address soon after the close of consultation.*

# YOUR COMMENTS

Please provide us with your comments below. We will summarise comments and in our analysis will consider every point that is made. Once we have done this we will write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the submissions made. We will publish your name as the author of the comment, but will not make your address public.

**Modification that you wish to see** (please make specific reference to the section of the Proposed Plan you wish to see modified if possible, for example Section 9, paragraph E1.1):

## **Appendix 7F: Settlement Statements: Marr**

### Include:

Include the Site MR069 Land at Wester Beltie, South West of Torphins Golf Club, Torphins as a housing allocation.

### Suggested Text

OP1: Land at Wester Beltie  
Allocation: 12 homes

The proposed site is self-contained, and sensitively extends the existing hamlet with good links to Torphins and the railway footpath link avoiding coalescence.

A generous provision of planting is required on the site within which houses reflecting the existing settlement pattern can be situated. A stronger woodland buffer screen with permeable access points for the adjacent railway path is also required.

## **Section 07: 'Shaping Development in the Countryside', Paragraphs 2.11 – 2.14 and Planning Advice: 'Organic Growth of Settlements'**

### Include/Amend

Include the settlement of Wester Beltie as an identified settlement in the Marr area where organic growth is permissible under the terms of policy R2 (sections R2.11 to R2.14).

### Suggested Text

New identified settlement to be called: Wester Beltie

### Key Supporting Documents

Appendix A – Main Issues Report Form for site MR069  
Appendix B - Call for Sites Development Bid for Site MR069  
Appendix C - Location Plan

## **Reason for change:**

### **Introduction**

We are disappointed to note that the above site has been removed from the Proposed Plan despite being identified as a preferred housing site within the Main Issues Report. In addition, the site has been omitted despite Learney Estate's continued support for its inclusion and despite there being a clear demand for countryside plots, which provide variety to the housing market in this location.

Learney Estate objects to the exclusion of the site MR069 on Land at Wester Beltie, south west of Torphins Golf Club, Torphins (See Location Plan) from the Proposed Plan.

Learney Estate also seeks the inclusion of this site alongside neighbouring development to the east, south and west as an identified settlement (Wester Beltie) where organic growth is permissible under the terms of policy R2.

This representation must be read in conjunction with, the initial Development Bid (2018) and Main Issue Report (MIR) submissions, (Appendices to this statement).

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of New Allocated Sites and Alternative Bid Sites (April 2020) – MR069 Land at Wester Beltie, South West of Torphins Golf Club, Torphins**

The SEA identifies that the proposed site MR069 would have neutral effects post-mitigation on the following factors: air, water, climatic factors, soil, landscape, material assets, and cultural heritage. Human Health, Population and Biodiversity are all assessed as having the potential for positive effects post-mitigation.

To be clear, no negative post-mitigation effects are expected, while three of the SEA topics bring potential for positive longer-term effects.

### **Previous representations and case for allocation and identification of Wester Beltie (MR069) as a housing allocation**

Learney Estate has promoted the Wester Beltie site through each of the formal LDP review steps. At the Main Issues Report stage, the site was identified as a preferred option.

Learney Estate was supportive of this position and we conveyed this position within our MIR representation, which stated:

*“This development will successfully bring a range of plots to market that can either accommodate the self-build sector, or provide an opportunity for a small to medium scale local builder/developer. Whichever route is taken, this site is within an attractive place to live, and can make a valuable contribution to local housing land supply in the short-term”*

We also outlined that the development of the site would achieve the six qualities of successful places. We note that in achieving this, the site would also meet the Proposed Plan's Local Vision in relation to:

*“An area with a high quality of life and distinctive places, and where new developments are designed as effectively as possible to improve this and help deliver sustainable, low carbon places.”*

And

*“An area that promotes sustainable development that reduces the need to travel, reduces reliance on private cars and promotes safe and convenient active travel opportunities”*

Further, our MIR representation stated:

*“An attractive layout can be created where each plot will enjoy generous garden and open space provision. There is potential for architectural expression alongside green infrastructure, and the existing green network and its enhancement will ensure a welcoming environment. The properties can be south-facing to take advantage of solar orientation and other renewable energy provision. In addition, it will also provide a site which is well connected to Torphins, and can accommodate a range of houses for people of different ages/incomes”*

We consider that the delivery of the site relates well to the tenets of the **Vision** of the Proposed Plan, in particular:

*“To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design”.*

We consider, and have previously outlined, that development of the site brings the potential for the provision of either self-build plots or delivery of a site that a small scale developer can undertake. As a result, the site brings variety to the housing market in providing greater choice to prospective house purchasers and to meet a demand for self-build plots in rural Aberdeenshire.

The site is well connected to Torphins and local services via the road and the old railway line. As a result there is a viable option for active travel to be used as opposed to car journeys.

*“To take on the challenges of sustainable development and climate change”*

As set out above, the option to develop the site for self-build or for a small, local house builder to develop, means that its allocation would be commensurate with house building rates in the local area, where national, volume house builders may not take an active interest in the housing market.

In such circumstances, allowing for a modest extension of development as an allocated site, or for ongoing organic growth through policy R2, the settlement of Wester Beltie can continue to replenish itself in a sustainable manner.

*“To protect and improve assets and resources”*

The land is classified as non-prime agricultural land (4.1). As a result there would be no loss of prime agricultural land as a result of its development.

The SEA assessment considered there were no likely adverse effects on natural heritage/cultural heritage assets. Depending on the scale, the allocation of land at Wester

Beltie could provide scope for wider improvement to the locale in terms of improved open space and/or a prospective planting scheme.

*“To increase and diversify the economy”*

We have previously outlined that development of the site brings the potential for the provision of either self-build plots or delivery of a site that a small scale developer can undertake. As a result, aside from bringing variety to the housing market in providing greater choice to prospective house purchasers, such a development can also provide important local employment to the area.

Self-build plots or small scale development sites support local trades businesses related to both house building and fit-out. In a challenging, post-COVID economy this opportunity for economic growth should not be ignored.

Savills Development Colleagues comment that:

*“Following the onset of the Coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic, enquiries and demand for self-build plots has increased as purchasers seek to design their own homes to suit their specific needs and enjoy more outdoor space and larger gardens.*

*The Scottish Government continue to support this market as a means of encouraging the development of more homes across the Country. The Scotland Self-Build Loan Fund runs for 3 years and offers loans of up to £175,000 to help with the construction of self-build projects in both urban and rural areas.*

*Undoubtedly there are challenges in relation to self-build plots in the countryside including a lack of access to amenities, community facilities or lack of public transport. However, this has not hindered demand for plots in semi-rural or rural Aberdeenshire, particularly those that benefit from a ‘Deeside’ location, as many purchasers have a preference for more remote locations where they have access to larger plots, garden space and views of the countryside”*

*“To promote the creation of green-blue networks within and between settlements”*

Improving access and use of the old Deeside railway line which runs through the site, is a great example of where an existing but underused green network link can be used to connect settlements.

*“To make efficient use of the transport network, reduce the need to travel and promote walking, cycling and public transport”*

Key to the success of Wester Beltie as an allocation or a settlement for organic growth is its relationship with Torphins and the services that the latter provides.

As noted above, the dismantled railway provides a perfect active-travel link and route to the surrounding countryside. Torphins enjoys public transport connections, linking it with other parts of Deeside and Aberdeen.

The type of development that could be accommodated here on sizeable plots allows for home-working to be designed-into housing. While this cannot be guaranteed, a knock-on effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that rural properties enjoying ample private amenity space are popular in the current market. Trends identified during summer 2020 by Savills

rural residential team in Scotland, show there has been a marked uplift in the number of people looking for rural properties when compared with the same period last year.

## **Spatial Strategy**

We consider that the Wester Beltie site shows good alignment with the type of development that the Council seeks to promote at paragraphs 5.8-5.10 of the Spatial Strategy of the PLDP. As a result, we are disappointed that Wester Beltie has been discounted from inclusion within the Proposed Plan.

We also consider that there are no educational or service capacity issues that justify the removal of the site from the PLDP. The 2016 school roll forecasts show that there are no capacity issues to 2022 with regards to Torphins Primary School. There is capacity available for water and waste water connections. Electricity is available at the site.

Savills Energy team has previously assessed the site in terms of renewable energy provision. There is potential for a small district heating scheme that could be operated by Learney Estate. The Estate owns local commercial forestry which could provide fuel to a biomass scheme. There is potential for land adjacent or on-site to be used to provide a ground source heat pump. The site is also south facing and so rooftop solar panels are likely to be viable for prospective units.

We note that paragraph 5.16 of the PLDP explains that the boundaries of the “remote” rural area have recently been rationalised. However, we do not see any rationale why this should have impacted on Wester Beltie’s ability to sustain further modest residential housing development, either as an allocated site or as a settlement suitable for organic growth.

We do not accept that development at Wester Beltie would bring any adverse effect on the *“heritage and sense of place of rural Aberdeenshire.”* For the avoidance of doubt there would be no demolition of older buildings to allow suburban style homes.

At the Main Issues Report stage the Council indicated that it would prefer to see 6 units developed at the site as opposed to Learney’s proposal of 12. If the site and the wider settlement of Wester Beltie were identified as appropriate for organic growth under policy R2, then based on the current quantum of housing here this would allow for up to 10 units within the Plan period. If this approach was taken rather than allocating the site in its own right, the development management system would equally ensure a successful place is created.

## **Section 7 Shaping Development in the Countryside: ‘Organic Growth of Settlements’ (R2.11 to R2.14)**

The Spatial Strategy map on p21 of the PLDP confirms that both Torphins and Wester Beltie are within the ‘remote rural area’ and so the restriction on settlements without an opportunity site for housing (2.12) does not apply.

We consider that Wester Beltie’s inclusion as a small settlement for organic growth would be in line with other settlements highlighted on the list relating to policy R2 in the Marr area.



It is more substantial and more readily recognised as a settlement than some of the other hamlets identified on the Marr list such as Glass, Glenkindie and Tullynessle.

## **Conclusions**

We respectfully ask that the Wester Beltie site (MR069) be included as a housing allocation in its own right, and/or that Wester Beltie should be an identified settlement for organic growth.

We consider that the site at Wester Beltie is largely unconstrained, has excellent potential as a small housing development, occupies an attractive and marketable site as plots for self-build, or has potential as a stand-alone project for a small-scale local builder.

We are confident that there is demand for house plots in this locale, and that the site is deliverable within the period of the next Aberdeenshire LDP.

# PRIVACY NOTICE

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENT

The Data Controller of the information being collected is Aberdeenshire Council.

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at Town House, 34 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY.

Email: [dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Your information is being collected to use for the following purposes:

- To provide public comment on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The data on the form will be used to inform Scottish Ministers and individual(s) appointed to examine the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. It will inform the content of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021.

### Your information is:

Being collected by Aberdeenshire Council	X
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### The Legal Basis for collecting the information is:

Personal Data	
Legal Obligations	X

Where the Legal Basis for processing is either Performance of a Contract or Legal Obligation, please note the following consequences of failure to provide the information:

It is a Statutory Obligation under Section 18 of the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, for Aberdeenshire Council to prepare and publish a Proposed Local Development plan on which representations must be made to the planning authority within a prescribed period of time. Failure to provide details requested in the 'Your Details' section of this form will result in Aberdeenshire Council being unable to accept your representation.

Your information will be shared with the following recipients or categories of recipient:

Members of the public are being given this final opportunity to comment on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The reasons for any changes that the Council receives will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on the unresolved issues raised and the changes sought.

Your name and respondent identification number (provided to you by Aberdeenshire Council on receipt of your submission) will be published alongside a copy of your

completed response on the Proposed Local Development Plan website (contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive will not be made available to the public).

In accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 where the appointed person determines that further representations should be made or further information should be provided by any person in connection with the examination of the Proposed Plan the appointed person may by notice request that person to make such further representations or to provide such further information.

Your information will be transferred to or stored in the following countries and the following safeguards are in place:

Not applicable.

The retention period for the data is:

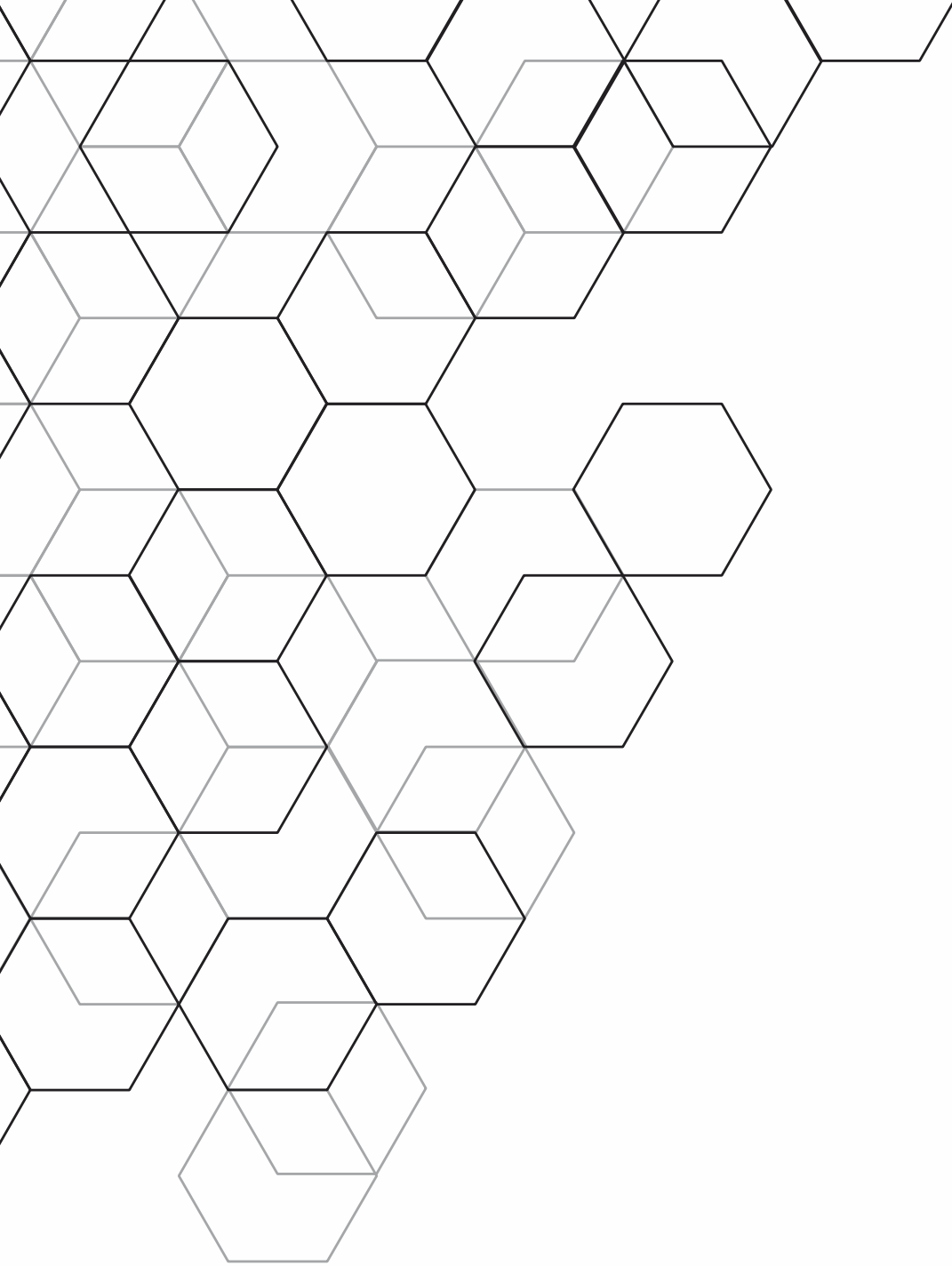
Aberdeenshire Council will only keep your personal data for as long as is needed. Aberdeenshire Council will retain your response and personal data for a retention period of 5 years from the date upon which it was collected. After 5 years Aberdeenshire Council will review whether it is necessary to continue 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.

The following automated decision-making, including profiling, will be undertaken:

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- to withdraw consent at any time, where the Legal Basis specified above is Consent;
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (after raising the issue with the Data Protection Officer first);
- to request access to your personal data;
- to data portability, where the legal basis specified above is:
  - (i) Consent; or
  - (ii) Performance of a Contract;
- to request rectification or erasure of your personal data, as so far as the legislation permits.



## **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021: Main Issues Report 2019**

### **Main Issues Report Response Form**

#### **Important Information: Please Read**

The Main Issues Report (MIR) is a key stage in preparing the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 (LDP 2021). The MIR sets out options for how the LDP 2021 could be improved both in terms of the policies that Aberdeenshire Council will use to determine planning applications as well as identifying land allocations for development. The MIR has been published along with a Monitoring Report and Interim Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. These, along with other supporting documents are available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2021/main-issues-report/>.

**Comments are sought on the MIR and Interim Environmental Report, or indeed any other matter that you feel that we need to consider, by 5pm on Monday, 8 April 2019.** Responses can be emailed to us at [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or received via post, Planning Policy Team, Infrastructure Services, Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB.

Please note that in order for comments to be considered as valid you must include your contact details.

We will use these details to confirm receipt of your comments and to seek clarification or request further information as required. Should you have any concerns regarding the holding of such information please contact [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk). Anonymous comments will not be considered as part of the consultation process. Petitions will only be noted in the name of the person submitting the document.

All comments received will be carefully assessed and will be used to inform the preparation of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. There will be a further opportunity to comment on the Proposed Plan when it is published in December 2019.

<b>Name</b>	██████████
<b>Organisation (optional)</b>	Savills
<b>On behalf of (if relevant)</b>	Learney Estate
<b>Address</b>	██████████ ██████████
<b>Postcode</b>	██████████
<b>Telephone (optional)</b>	██████████
<b>E-mail (optional)</b>	██████████████████

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Tick the box if you would like to subscribe to the Aberdeenshire LDP eNewsletter:

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## Fair processing notice

Please tick to confirm your agreement to the following statements:

☐ X

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

### Your Data, Your Rights

You have got legal rights about the way Aberdeenshire Council handles and uses your data, which include the right to ask for a copy of it, and to ask us to stop doing something with your data.

If you are unhappy with the way that Aberdeenshire Council or the Joint Data Controllers have processed your personal data then you do have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Officer, but you should raise the issue with the Data Protection Officers first. The Data Protection Officers can be contacted by writing to:

- [REDACTED], 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 committing on?</b>	Main Issues Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Draft Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strategic Environmental Assessment Interim Environmental Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Your comments

### Introduction

This statement records our support for Aberdeenshire Officers including site MR069 at Wester Beltie as a preferred housing option within the emerging Local Development Plan. It also details why we feel the housing numbers allocated to the site should remain as flexible as possible.

At the Call for Sites stage we expressed Learney Estate's interest in developing a site for c.12 units. We acknowledge that Council Officers consider that this site should be allocated for a lower number, suggested as 6 in the Main Issues Report now published for consultation. We consider however that market evidence suggests that retaining flexibility on matters of density for landward sites such as this is important to allow for choice in the local housing market.

This allocation in the next Local Development Plan will provide Learney with the confidence to be able to market the site effectively to a range of potential developers. Revenues generated from any sale(s) can then be used to ensure continued investment in the Estate, in turn supporting the local economy.

### Site Context

The site is 1.5ha and has generous land to provide a range of housing with a pleasing south-facing aspect toward Deeside. In addition, it is in close proximity to Torphins and has good links to the settlement by the railway footpath and the A980.

The site as it stands enjoys well-established natural boundaries with shelter planting around the edges of the site, and other sporadic mature planting.

There are a number of detached houses located in the area immediately to the south of the site, fronting the A980. Thus this site seems a logical extension to the existing housing settlement pattern, which is readily identified as a developed part of the countryside.

### Planning Policy Context

Turning to the published Main Issues Report, the importance of ensuring that a sufficient housing land supply is maintained is highlighted at length. This development will successfully bring a range of plots to market that can either accommodate the self-build sector, or provide an opportunity for a small to medium scale local builder/developer. Whichever route is taken, this site is within an attractive place to live, and can make a valuable contribution to local housing land supply in the short-term.

As discussed in our original call for sites submission, we consider that the development of this land will achieve the six qualities of successful places. We consider that this can be achieved either with the Council's preferred quantum of 6 houses, or with a higher density, subject to detailed site design.

Development of the site will be safe and pleasant. An attractive layout can be created where each plot will enjoy generous garden and open space provision. There is potential for architectural expression alongside green infrastructure, and the existing green network and its enhancement will ensure a welcoming

environment. The properties can be south-facing to take advantage of solar orientation and other renewable energy provision. In addition, it will also provide a site which is well connected to Torphins, and can accommodate a range of houses for people of different ages/incomes.

The site is not affected by any constraints in relation to Landscape or Historic Environment designations, and in fact presents an opportunity to extend the Torphins Railway Path. The site is within 500m of the River Dee SAC, however it is divorced from the designation by physical barriers and there are considered to be no adverse impacts likely.

If required there is scope to carry out ecology surveys to ensure the development would not impact on any natural heritage interests or biodiversity. Ground condition surveys can also be undertaken. The site is within single ownership.

### **Site Delivery**

As discussed, we consider that the marketing of this site should be aimed at the self-build market and/or a local developer who does not require a high volume of units to achieve profit on site.

In terms of the self-build market, we feel that the site is well suited; this is a market which the Scottish Government are supporting and keen to expand to encourage the development of a range of more homes across the country. Market evidence from local development professionals confirms that demand for plots in the Deeside area which are in commutable distance to Aberdeen are well received by the market.

As set out in both the Adopted Local Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Plan, 25% of the development would be affordable. There would also be contributions made to allow for improvements to Aboyne Academy to address capacity constraints.

Access is not a constraint, as there is land available for prospective passing places and road upgrades. All of this land is within the land owners control.

In regard to services, electricity is available and a link to mains water is available, although septic tanks would be required.

### **Conclusion**

This statement details why we support the Officers decision in allocating site MR069 as a preferred site within the Main Issues Report for the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

We consider that Wester Beltie provides a site with excellent potential for a small housing development on an attractive and marketable site through the provision of plots for self-build or for development by a small or medium scale local builder.

Local market evidence shows that purchasers have a preference to occupy semi-rural locations where they can enjoy outdoor living and generous gardens. We are confident that such delivery could be achieved within the next LDP period.

Further investigations will be required to establish the presence of local habitat, more detailed site conditions and utilities connections. However, initial analysis does not suggest that there are any issues that would preclude development.



**Your comments (continued)**





## **Supporting Statement: Land at Wester Beltie**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This supporting statement provides further detail for a proposed residential site at Wester Beltie, Torphins. It should be read in conjunction with the Call for Sites form.
- 1.2. Learney Estate are interested in developing a site for c. 12 units or plots. The land will be developed either by small/medium housebuilder(s) or sold to self-builders. Savills Development Land team (based in Aberdeen) have provided deliverability and viability commentary in Appendix 1 and they confirm that in their opinion a viable scheme can be delivered.
- 1.3. An allocation in the next Local Development Plan will provide Learney the confidence to be able to market the site effectively. Revenues generated from any sale(s) can then be used to ensure continued investment in the Estate, in turn supporting the local economy.

### **2. Site Context**

- 2.1. The site is currently overgrown greenfield land, with scrub planting comprising most of the site. Around the edges of the site is shelter planting and other sporadic mature planting. To the east of the site is Wester Beltie farm; to the south of the site is the A980 road; and to the north of the site is greenfield planting.
- 2.2. There is a number of detached housing located around the site. To the south there is around 12 properties which face the A980 road, taking advantage of the south facing views. In addition, there are further properties to the east and to the north.
- 2.3. Wester Beltie is located to the west of Torphins in close proximity to the settlement boundary (around 400m) and to the services of the town (around 1km). The railway path provides a safe pedestrian/cycle link between the site and the town.

### **3. Planning Policy Context**

#### **○ Placemaking**

- 3.1. The 2017 Aberdeenshire LDP states that designs have to demonstrate the six qualities of successful places. As a result we have considered the site in this context below.
  - We consider that a sense of place can be created given the attractive views the site would have and its potential to sit well within the landscape. In addition, the site is benefitted by proximity to countryside recreation (including Torphins Golf Course) and the Railway Path into Torphins.
  - Development of the site will be safe and pleasant. An attractive layout can be created which will allow natural surveillance. In addition, there is potential for trips into Torphins to be taken on the Railway Path as opposed to the A980.

- Dependent on the ultimate development approach, there is potential for architectural expression through provision of self-build plots. In addition, potential communal open space, green infrastructure, and green network enhancement will bring a welcoming environment.
- The development could be adaptable through provision of sizeable plots to allow adaptation of houses in response to circumstances such as climate change and old age. There will be a mix of housing to provide accommodation for people on a range of incomes.
- In addition, properties can be south facing to take advantage of solar orientation and other renewable energy provision as described below. There is also green network and green infrastructure potential on the site. Wester Beltie is also sheltered from prevailing south westerly winds.
- The site is well connected to allow active travel to Torphins.

3.2. We have also completed a Place Standard assessment to engender discussion of the site. We have shown the matrix below at Figure 1:

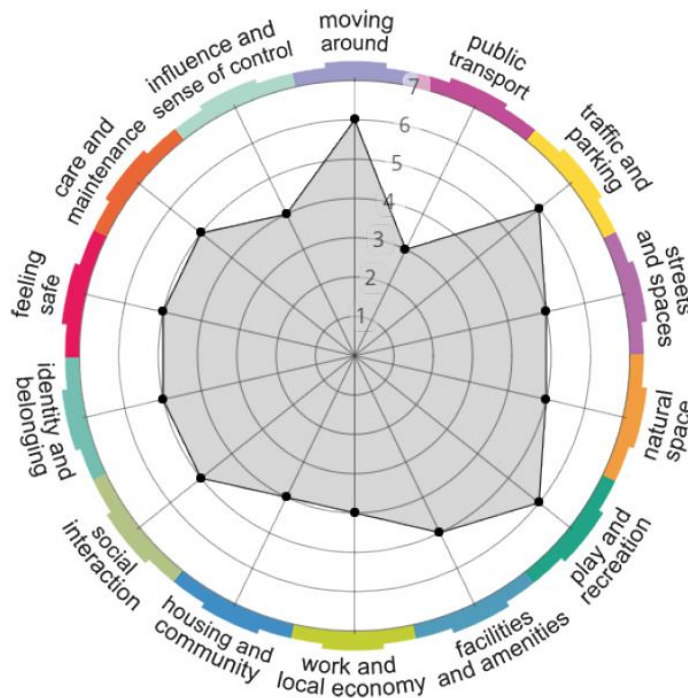


Figure 1: Place Standard Assessment Matrix- Land at Wester Beltie

- 3.3. The matrix shows that the site brings strong potential to take advantage of sustainable transport links, accessibility to play and recreation. The assessment also shows that a safe, distinctive and social development could be created given the characteristics of the site. However, some consideration of public transport and potential for unsustainable commuting are concerns.
- 3.4. Wester Beltie is a rural area and car use is to be expected. However, there is potential of live-work units, promotion of active travel links to Torphins and electric vehicle charging that counter these concerns.

#### **4. Site Delivery**

- 4.1. Learney Estate do not envisage this allocation to be a typical residential development site. Instead it is envisaged that marketing of the site should be aimed at the self-build market and/or a local developer who does not require a high volume of units to achieve a profit on a site.
- 4.2. We consider that this strategy is more responsive to local housing needs in this rural area of Aberdeenshire, and it also continues the Estate's recent history of investing in the locale and in housing provision.
- 4.3. Savills Development Land opinion on deliverability and viability is provided at Appendix 1.
- 4.4. We are confident that given the limited number of units, delivery could be achieved within the next Local Development Plan period. Learney Estate have recently achieved consent for plots under the Housing in the Countryside policy in close proximity to the site, and are aware of local developer interest. In addition, there is recent house building on adjoining land.
- 4.5. To be clear, the Estate would expect at least 25% of the development to be affordable housing.
- 4.6. The Estate will not be reliant on external finance to bring the site forward. There is an option to consider servicing of the site which would bring additional up front cost, however this would require to be full investigated before any firm commitment could be given. Learney Estate would prefer to have the Council's opinion on the site at the Main Issues Report stage before consideration of servicing. At the current time there are no issues evident that would preclude development.

#### **5. Natural Heritage and Biodiversity enhancement**

- 5.1. We have shown at Section 10 that the site is within 500m of the River Dee SAC. However, the site is divorced from this designation by considerable physical barriers including, mature planting, housing, the A980 and then fields. As a result, we consider that a reasonable conclusion is that there is no prospect of an adverse impact on the qualifying interests of the designation.
- 5.2. It is unknown as to whether there may be impacts on priority habitats or European Protected Species as a result of development. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey could be undertaken in due course and mitigation then considered.
- 5.3. At this stage, we are only aware that the SPP paragraph 194 points: 'connected with benefits for biodiversity', and 'to support opportunities for enjoying the natural environment' are relevant. In particular, site assembly could allow for habitat creation in public open space, native tree planting, ponds and soakaways and wildflowers etc. within and around the site (where the Estate have land ownership). There is also opportunity to extend the Torphins Railway Path and this could be done with biodiversity enhancement in mind, for example adjoining planting etc. beside the route.

## **6. Historic Environment**

- 6.1. The development of the site brings the opportunity to extend the Torphins Railway Path. Evidently this path runs along the route of the former railway, and is an important feature of the history of the Torphins area.

## **7. Landscape Impact**

- 7.1. The site is not within a Special Landscape Area.
- 7.2. Development of the site will not bring any particular landscape impacts. As the site is located behind a shelter belt and existing housing fronting the A980, we do not consider the housing will be visible from the road nor will longer views from the south to the site be a concern. It is also the case that the topography of the site means that development could sit well in the landscape.
- 7.3. The Torphins settlement profile within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan identifies an area of land (P6) between the western edge of the settlement and the building group to the south of Wester Beltie which is to be protected "To conserve the setting of Torphins to avoid coalescence". The Wester Beltie site does not impinge on this area. We consider that the allocation will present an opportunity to consolidate development in this location without extending ribbon development and providing an appropriate setting in the landscape.
- 7.4. The properties would be able to take advantage of fine southern views and have natural protection from prevailing south-westerly winds.

## **8. Infrastructure**

- 8.1. Learney Estate have reviewed the potential for green gardens and are supportive of their integration into the site in principle. In addition, we also feel that using the fringes of a prospective extension of the Railway Path to the south of the site and/or open space on site would also provide for opportunities to use swales, seasonal wetland etc.
- 8.2. Dependent on the method of site assembly, plot specific features (green roofs, window boxes, green walls etc.) would be down to individual plot owners or the developer. However, the development management system can pick up on this and encourage positive placemaking.
- 8.3. The 2016 school roll forecasts show that there are no capacity issues to 2022 with regards to Torphins Primary School. However, it is accepted that an agreed contribution would be required to allow an extension at Aboyne Academy, due to capacity constraints at this school.
- 8.4. A Plan has been developed (Appendix 2) which shows that an acceptable access solution is possible, this has been based upon Aberdeenshire access standards. There is land available for prospective passing places or road upgrades. If further information was required, this could be investigated in due course.
- 8.5. Local bus services are available on the west side of Torphins and can be accessed via a 1km walk, either along the Railway Path or via the pavement on the A980.

- 8.6. Sustainable transport is available from the site to Torphins via the Railway Path and this means that there is a safe, environmentally friendly option to access shops and services.
- 8.7. In terms of utilities connections, mains gas is not available. However, there is capacity available for water and waste water connections. Electricity is available at the site.
- 8.8. Savills Energy team have assessed the site in terms of possible renewable energy. Their opinion is that there is potential for a small district heating scheme that could be operated by Learney Estate. The Estate owns local commercial forestry which could provide fuel to a biomass scheme. There is also potential for land adjacent or on site to be used to provide a ground source heat pump. The site is also south facing and so rooftop solar panels are likely viable for prospective units. The above is subject to the viability of such schemes at the time of development.
- 8.9. As has been stated development at the site brings the opportunity to extend the Torphins Railway path and to implement new open space and planting. As a result there is potential to extend the green network. Land is also available for open space standards to be met, options could include provision of play space and/or allotments associated with plots.
- 8.10. The Torphins Open Space Audit findings state that “The rural nature of Torphins provides for good links to the surrounding countryside and in the case of future development within the village these links should be protected, enhanced and maintained”. Learney Estate consider that development of this site will utilise the Railway Path and bring opportunity to extend it. The Estate would also consider alternative open space suggestions on land in the vicinity of the site.

## **9. Other Constraints**

- 9.1. The ground conditions are unknown at this time, although our clients know of no link to contamination or ground instability. This could be confirmed through appropriate studies in due course.

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1. This supporting statement and associated submission form show that Wester Beltie provides a site with excellent potential for a small housing allocation of c. 12 units. These units would either be provided via provision of plots for self-build or through a small-medium scale local builder.
- 10.2. The site sits well in the landscape, is sheltered and also has views to the south. There is also room for an adaptable layout which can take advantage of solar gain and renewable energy provision. Green network, green infrastructure and active travel links also elevate the quality of the prospective development.
- 10.3. Further investigations are required in terms of habitats, site conditions and utilities connections. However, initial findings do not suggest any issues that would preclude development.

Land at Wester Beltie  
Torphins

