



26th July, 2020.

Planning Policy Team
Infrastructure Services
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen AB16 5GB.

Dear Sir/Madam,

L.D.P., Settlement Statements, Kincardine and Mearns,
Appendix 7E, Page 681 Site O.P.1, Inverbervie.

I am writing to ask that the above Site, OP1, be removed from the Local Development Plan for the reason that it does not accord satisfactorily with the stated aim of the Council that the settlements of Gourdon and Inverbervie should not be allowed to coalesce. I would argue, also, that, in the current climate, it would constitute unwise overdevelopment of the area.

As first mentioned, development of this site, on the scale that is proposed, would contravene the stated aim of the Council that Gourdon and Inverbervie should not be allowed to coalesce, and, I would have thought, that this meant visually, as well as physically.

While this now seems to have been recognised on the seaward side of the A92, where a large area of ground, formerly scheduled for development, has been given protected status in the current plan, this is not so with the corresponding area of ground on the landward side, which is represented by site OP1., resulting in a very odd imbalance where, on one side of the road, Inverbervie will be allowed to advance almost to the very beginnings of Gourdon, while, on the other side, it will be allowed to remain at a considerable, and thoroughly acceptable, distance.

There is absolutely no justifiable reason why houses should be built any closer to Gourdon than at present, other than, perhaps, to satisfy the needs of council, landowner, and developer, something which should not, in any way, take precedence over the stated aim of the Council, and the constantly- expressed wish of many people in the area, that Inverbervie and Gourdon should be kept, always, at a reasonable distance apart.

If more houses do indeed require to be built in this area, which I have already said is questionable, the sensible approach, I would have thought, would be to continue building in the landward area, west of Townhead, where building has already taken place and where unlimited room for expansion exists, in the manner of Stonehaven, and which gives no possibility of Inverbervie encroaching to an unacceptable degree on Gourdon.

That it is recognised in the L.D.P. that a road ought to be built linking the A92 and Townhead, is the perfect reason why building of more housing should be diverted to that area of the burgh instead of the opening up of yet another site by extending Inverbervie to the south, and unacceptably closer towards Gourdon.

The site in question, at O.P.1, was formerly, I believe, designated for approximately two hundred houses, and in the present L.D.P. it is referred to as an area with potential for a large amount of housing.

While this is undeniably true, one has to question the wisdom of such thinking with regard to the situation which exists at present. With the oil industry in serious decline and unlikely to recover to anything like its former state, which I am assured by people currently heavily involved in the industry is indeed the case, to contemplate building on this scale would be unwise, to say the least, and possibly even foolhardy.

A very large development of, I believe, one hundred and twenty-one houses, is already underway in St.Cyrus, with room for ever more to follow. Sixty-seven are planned for Johnshaven, and forty- six for Kineff. There is no conceivable way that the Inverbervie area genuinely needs this volume of new housing, nor is it in any way desirable to put so much of a greater strain on the local facilities, such as the schools and health centre.

It is stated in the L.D.P. that developer contributions will be required to extend these facilities, and that of the pharmacy, but one wonders how and where, and whether unfettered house- building is genuinely required, or has just become the accepted norm, and an idea which continually goes unchallenged.

The reality is that the country is currently indulging in a mad frenzy of house-building with little, or no, thought for the future consequences. Aberdeenshire Council's contribution to this utter madness would seem to be to leave virtually no community, large or small, untouched, and an example of the thirst for covering green spaces, and gobbling up valuable farm land, is the crazy number of nine hundred and thirteen houses planned for Laurencekirk.

Common sense, which does not seem to be applied much in these circumstances, dictates that to continue building ever more houses on the scale that councils wish at present, will eventually result in a very serious oversupply to which nobody seems to be giving the slightest thought.

If we continue to build unabated, as we are currently doing, without taking into consideration the declining birth rate, we are most likely setting up a very serious problem for future generations to face, and we may easily end up, if the oil industry further declines, or indeed collapses and quits the area, with a huge oversupply of houses which would have very serious consequences for all concerned, save those who have already profited.

The consequences to be faced could well be the possible near collapse of the house- building industry, negative equity for all those people with large mortgages, serious loss of value for those already paid up, and houses everywhere unsellable, or drastically reduced in value; a situation which might even result in abandoned homes, and estates, as is already the case in large parts of the United States, a fact which many people are largely unaware of, or conveniently choose to ignore.

If such a situation were to occur, then the blame would surely lie at the door of local councils who are essentially the people promoting house-building on such a troubling scale. Aberdeenshire Council likes it to be known how much it is committed to preserving and protecting small villages and communities, yet its very actions of actively promoting continuing large-scale developments surely makes an absolute nonsense of such a commitment.

One has to wonder why the Council continually targets small, established communities for such intrusive development, and why it is not possible, if expansion of the housing stock cannot be reduced in scale to a sensible level, to turn its attention instead to the establishing of new settlements, such as Chapleton of Elswick, rather than continuing to beleaguer existing small communities by foisting large-scale housing estates onto those which are wholly unsuited, in the first instance, ever to comfortably accommodate such a degree of sudden, and unnatural, growth.

In past times, the development of a small community might have been controlled by the local "laird", who was responsible for feuing land, and if the look and feel of an entire community was in such limited hands today, questions might be asked whether, or not, this was desirable or even acceptable.

Yet, at present, with the current policy of councils, we are not that far removed from such limited control of our small towns and villages. We have merely swapped the laird for the triumvirate of landowner, developer and council. If we thought that it might not have been a good idea for one man to be able to control and shape, and change for ever, the look, feel and character of a community, is it any better that we have now invested that role in only two people, heavily encouraged and supported by the local council?

One major problem with the system, as it exists today, is that the stated aim of councils is to promote development and not to hinder it, even if this not in the interest of the community in question, and perhaps, as is often the case, against their wishes. This, I would argue, is far too extreme a position for the council to hold.

One would expect the council to have a more balanced position than this. It should not be necessary to be at one extreme end of the spectrum, or the other, either being wholly in favour of promoting development, or hindering it, but to be somewhere in the middle, looking at all sides of the equation, and genuinely doing what is best for a community, and not what is in the interest of the council, itself, or a handful of individuals.

I would, therefore, urge the Council to give very serious consideration to the points I have raised, and the reasons given, and to agree to remove site O.P.1 from the Local Development Plan.

Yours faithfully,


William Heath.

1440 words.