

Comments on the Draft Planning Brief for Housing Development at Crathes

For and on behalf of the Crathes, Drumoak & Durriss Community Council

23rd May, 2006

1.1 Purpose

Bullet 1 – The community council responds to this development brief against the backdrop of having previously lodged objections to both the inclusion of further Crathes development within the Local Plan and subsequently the changes requested by the land owner. These objections lodged in 2005 are attached as appendix 1. The community Council responds now to the proposed development brief without prejudice to those previously stated views.

Bullet 2 – Clarification is sought as to what ‘must have regard to’ means and who decides that ‘difference’ are ‘justified’ and how.

1.2 Constraints and limitations

Clarification is sought as to how and why such a prominent site within an Area of Conservation came to be identified for development through the local plan process. This being the case, it raises the question as to whether it is at all possible to come up with a sensitive development that respects and enhances the quality of the environment. The Community Council notes that landowners and developers only seek to encourage sensitive development. The community would suggest that it is the role of the council to enforce it.

1.3 Relevant development plan policies

No comment

2.1 Location/setting/views

Bullet 1 – The phrase ‘around 45 houses’ provides no upper limit. It is proposed to establish an upper limit for this site in order to provide some useful boundary and definition necessary for meaningful comment. The community needs to know what it is commenting on.

Bullets 2-5 – No comment

2.1- 2.3 Climatic Considerations & Potential Hazards – No comment

2.4 Ecological Considerations

Bullet 1 - ‘highest standards of design...will be required’ Clarification is sought as to what this means, how it is specified and then enforced.

Bullets 2-4 No comments

Bullet 5 – Supported. The community looks forward to having input to, access of and comment on any assessment.

Bullet 6 – The woodland consists of a limited pine break, which one presumes could be removed by the land owner at any time. It is by no means a substantial feature and presumably can not be relied upon in any permanent way to provide shelter to the site from the west.

Bullet 7 – Clarification is sought over the term ‘defensible boundary’.

Bullet 8 - No Comment

2.5 Urban Context

Bullet 1- Supported. The community looks forward to having input, access to and comment on any evaluation.

Bullets 2-3 - No comment

Bullets 4 - See comments against item 2.4, bullet 6.

2.6 Access

Bullet 1 – It is understood that signage to the Deeside way will direct users along the private road that runs to the north of the proposed development. It is recommended that consideration be given to bringing the Deeside Way into the north edge of the proposed site. This would have the benefit of connecting the proposed development to the route as well as removing the route from a private road currently used for vehicular access. This would improve safety.

Bullets 2-3 – No Comment

2.7 Utilities and other services

Bullet 1 - Clarification is sought as to the source of the water supply. Invercarnie or Glen Dye.

Bullet 2 - What capacity should be installed? Provision should be made for connection of existing housing.

Bullet 3 – The local community would consider the provision of gas to such a development as a prerequisite for planning consent. The environmental impact of oil, LPG or solid fuel heating is considered unacceptable in terms of transport and spill risks. If gas can not be brought into Crathes, then this site must be considered unsuitable for further development.

Bullet 4 - It is extremely unlikely that this development will have any significant impact on the Crathes Primary school. The nearest primary school ‘Crossroads’ was closed some years ago. The Crathes primary school is some 2.4 miles away from this development. There are no foot/cycle paths. In parts, the roads have no or narrow verges and are totally unsuitable for cycling or walking. The roads are also used as rat-runs by HGVs which already cause a safety issue for car drivers. It is considered

far more likely that families from the development would opt to send their children to the new Banchory primary school.

2.8 Other Considerations

The development brief will have the desired impact when it looks at the village as a whole and all potential development areas mentioned in the local plan. Such a document could examine the overall longer term vision and objectives for Crathes. The mooted development(s) creates a significantly larger Crathes Community around an A-Road T-junction. This T-Junction, also has the Deeside Way running through it. A Crathes development brief should deal with the interaction and consequences of these planned developments on the local community and road users. It should deal with the matter of road crossings, speed limits and lighting. None of this is mentioned in the brief which pertain to core HSE issues.

Instead the brief refers to 'strategic landscaping' which appears to have more to do with isolating and hiding the new development than bringing about integration.

2.9 Conclusions

Clarification is sought on the meaning of the terms 'round-off', 'create the southern gateway', 'a high standard of design', 'ensure that the development is compatible' and 'every effort should be made'. What do these words really mean?

3.1 General approach

The Community Council awaits access to the Index 21 model.(Applied for via www.index21.org.uk on 23rs May, 2006) and looks forward to examining any further proposals based on this and other approaches.

3.2 Layout

Bullet 1 – No Comment

Bullet 2 - The requirement to 'lower the buildings into the site' to minimise the effect of wind on heat loss is supported.

Bullets 3-4 are supported

Bullet 5 - The character of the site is manifest in its topography (undulating nature of the fields on the Dee banks) and therefore any plan to reduce the relief should be prevented as should any plans to export of sand and gravel from the site.

Bullets 6-7 - Supported

Bullet 8 - An explanation of 'The proposed development ... can encourage the introduction of new facilities and services' is required. The implication is that Crathes, following this development, is now somehow opened up to other development opportunities.

Bullet 9 - If this development is to create a 'sense of place', the place should be Crathes, rather than just limited to creating a sense of place relating to the new development.

3.3 Distribution of Land Uses

Bullets 1-2 – Supported

Bullet 3 – It is not at all clear that with the housing situated in the troughs that there remains sufficient space for as many as 45 houses. Neither were the current residents of Crathes aware that the village was in need of 'rounding-off' to the south or in any other direction. Given that the concept of rounding off has been raised, clarification is sought as to whether the planners feel the village could also do with rounding-off in any other direction.

Bullet 4 – What density is appropriate to this site?

Bullet 5 – What mix of housing is appropriate?

Bullet 6 – Supported

Bullet 7 – Open space is supported, but some of that should also be at the more sheltered lower levels.

Bullet 8 - Supported

3.4 Access

This chapter is demonstrative of the opportunity missed by this document to address the development of Crathes as a whole rather than see the development as purely incremental.

It is the opinion of the Community Council there are now a number of developments and environmental changes that impact the roads and access to Crathes.

This development extends the community and increases the requirement for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles to both cross and access the A957

The Deeside Way has a similar impact some 1-200m further north

In addition to this and in recent times the existing traffic on the road has increased in both volume and speed. Volume due to development in Banchory and beyond, speed due to development in cars and motorcycles.

This proposed development will exacerbate the existing safety issue. It is therefore vital that the development brief also includes proposals that deals with these issues.

3.5 Infrastructure & Other Services

Bullet 1 – What capacity should be installed? Will provision be made for connection of existing housing?

Bullets 2-4 No comment

Bullet 5 – Lighting has been an issue for this community in the past and any ‘solution’ for additional development must be one that is integrated with the village as a whole. Once again, the weakness of this brief is that it deals only with the incremental development whereas facets such as lighting need to take the wider village and the roads into account.

Bullet 6 - It is extremely unlikely that this development will have any significant impact on the Crathes Primary school. The nearest primary school ‘Crossroads’ was closed some years ago. The Crathes primary school is some 2.4 miles away from this development. There are no foot/cycle paths. In parts the roads have no or narrow verges and are totally unsuitable for cycling or walking. The roads are also used as rat-runs by HGVs which already cause a safety issue for car drivers. It is considered far more likely that families from the development would opt to send their children to the new Banchory primary school.

Bullet 7 – The Crathes community would want to make input to and be kept up to date with Planning Gain discussions prior to any planning approval.

Bullets 8-10 – No comment

3.6 Design

Bullets 1-2 Supported

Bullets 3 The height of buildings and the use of the natural topography is a point brought out in the public meeting of March 2005. These statements are fully supported and viewed as critical as is the way in which the concept is enforced through the planning process.

Bullet 4-6 – No comment

3.7 Other Considerations

Bullets 1-2 - The Crathes community would want to make input to and be kept up to date with Planning Gain discussions prior to any planning approval.

End

Appendix 1

Objection lodged December 2005

Crathes Proposed Development

Response from the Crathes, Drumoak & Durris Community Council

The community council wishes to record its objection not only to the proposed changes but to the development as a whole.

Grounds for objection to the development as a whole:

The community is unable to support any development in Crathes in the absence of a properly consulted holistic plan for the village, such as the proposed and awaited Development Brief. The development brief is seen as vital to address key local concerns:

1. This is not a proportionate development. The proposed development outnumbers the existing dwellings by more than 2:1.
2. The absence of mains sewerage – provision of mains sewerage to any new development and connection for existing housing.
3. The absence of mains gas – provision of mains gas to any new development and connection for existing housing. The environmental impact of oil, LPG or solid fuel heating is considered unacceptable in terms of transport and spill risks.
4. The absence of local shops or PO
5. Implication for road safety and lighting – The current traffic/road situation is deemed to be unacceptable at present, is incompatible with the existing plans for the Deeside Way (pedestrians crossing the A957) a situation exacerbated by further development. This is a public safety issue.
6. Topography and Relief – Given the relief ‘large mounds’ in the proposed site there is local concern relating either to the height of the proposed development or the amount of earthworks necessary to reduce the relief. Doubt is therefore cast on the suitability of the site.
7. The impact of key changes to local communications (Aberdeen WPR) - Opportunities clearly arise associated with the WPR to provide for development sites with good road connections. It is therefore hard to imagine that developments such as that proposed in Crathes can now be considered a sustainable policy given this new opportunity to avoid further impacting public safety on the already hard pressed and unsuitable commuter routes such as the South Deeside Road.

Community Council Objections to the Proposed Modifications:

1. Object to the expansion of the proposed development (fh1) on the basis that it further exacerbates the local concerns raised above.
2. Object to the proposed P1 strategic landscaping concept on the basis of unclear meaning and intent. P1 would appear to isolate rather than integrate the new from the existing development.
3. Seek clarification on the intent of the extension to P2 which again could isolate rather than integrate both new and existing developments from the countryside.

4. The community council supports the notion of a Development Brief for Crathes. It objects to the notion that such a brief , covering only areas A & fh1, can ensure a well planned and integrated development.
5. The community council objects to the retention of fh2* for future development until the Development Brief process has clarified and resolved local concerns with A and fh1

In addition to the above, the CC requests that the whole of the route of the former Deeside railway (as it appears in the Crathes map) should be designated as a safeguarded area - in accordance with Aberdeenshire Council's Policy INF/12.