



STRATHBLANE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Public Meeting to discuss the
Draft Local Development Plan
Wednesday 23rd November 2011 in the school

Members Present: - Margaret Vass, Alan Hutton, Willie Oswald, Marian Lever, John Gray, Richard Arnold, Fiona Murray, Elspeth Posnett.

In attendance: - Dai Hutchinson & Gordon Ash SCDT. + 42 members of the community.

*(SC = Stirling Council. CC = Community Council. CDT= Community Development Trust.
LDP= Local Development Plan)*

Margaret Vass (CC Chair) opened the meeting with a brief **introduction** to discuss the purpose of the meeting. A show of hands indicated that a majority of those present had attended the earlier drop-in session which had been held two weeks ago at the Village Club. This meant that most people present had some idea of the Stirling Council proposals for the village and that John Gray could abbreviate some parts of his presentation detailing the plans.

John Gray (CC Planning Correspondent) then gave a powerpoint presentation covering the history of the evolution of the plan, the drivers from the Scottish Government which necessitated the drawing up of the plan, the LDP vision for the area and the overarching policy, followed by detailed criteria and proposals. The Open Space Strategy which runs concurrently with the LDP was also presented and discussed. Developments in the LDV had to tie in with the Open Space Strategy.

Various points not shown in the presentation, but which arose out of it were:

- a) It was envisaged that there would be some housebuilding of appropriate design and in small groups allowed in the countryside (ie outwith the village boundaries)
- b) There was a desire to retain businesses in the community such as shops and there was presumption that shops and business premises should not be permitted to become residential.
- c) There was a need for business accommodation in the area. A survey of 20% of businesses established here said that they would expand if space was available. There is a desire to avoid migration of businesses to larger centres of the community. The former Killearn Hospital site was thought to be a possible area for rural business development.
- d) SC want to largely retain the green belt as it stands with some realignments to existing boundary features such as roads etc and to include two sites which could sustain housing development.
- e) With regards housing, the Scottish Government has decreed that more housing **must** be provided and all Local authorities are charged with coming up with plans to provide this.

It was stressed during the presentation and subsequent discussions that the Community Council was not the driver for these plans. The CC had to find out the

prevailing views of the community and present these to SC who have the power to decide and implement their policies. Our hope was that the CC could **influence** these policies and resultant decisions. We could not simply reject all proposals as this could result in the council taking unilateral action.

The presentation is reproduced in full on the village web site at www.strathblanefield.org.uk

Open Discusstion

WO opened the discussion phase by commending JG for the work he had done in preparing the presentation. The difficulty of finding the maps showing changes to the green belt and changes to open spaces, on the SC web site was raised. The CC will try to create links from the village web site to resolve this. There was a comment from the floor that the SC website was not easy to navigate.

Robin Taylor was unhappy that after all the work in the past to retain the green belt this was being relaxed in the areas indicated. He was against development in the "Singh" field.

MV replied to say that the CC had been successful in having all the other proposed sites dropped. There is demand in the village for housing; at least 50 units are needed.

Patsy Fischbacher queried the change from low density housing. She said that the housing needs were based on the needs of the whole rural area. She had used her powers under the Freedom Of Information legislation to find that the total council waiting list was currently 90 people, with 18 in the local area and another 10 who wanted housing here and who had local connections.

Bill McNaught asked why we should believe SC about the robustness of the proposed green belt extension.

JG said that geographical features were preferred to delineate a boundary – hence the new alignments.

Neill Gould cited the Valhalla development which had resulted in a gross development in the green belt, inferring worries about similar inappropriate developments elsewhere in the green belt. This appears to have arisen because of council planning failings and a misunderstanding by them of the size of the buildings.

JG commented that all the ground from Milndavie Rd up to and including Mugdock Village was green belt. Mugdock Village was in fact a settlement, not a village and development there would be very strictly controlled.

MV then asked the meeting whether 50 house units were wanted. Some discussion determined that a unit was for example one flat/ one house.

Alan Campbell said that the only way to reduce demand for housing was to reduce population growth. He said that the roads infrastructure was not up to standard to handle all the potential traffic including that from Killearn. Matters were also going to be made worse in Milngavie when 300 new houses were built there with everyone trying to get to Glasgow. Others present at the meeting also agreed that the roads infrastructure was inadequate.

Various residents were against building of houses in the “Singh” field. Dai Hutchinson suggested that the field at the Ballewan end of Blanefield would be a much better site. He also pointed out that Cala were already interested in the “Singh” field with a potential of 20 low rise (luxury) homes. Alan Campbell suggested that at the same density level as Milndavie Crescent housing the “Singh” field would accommodate 31 houses. He also made the observation that when he was young he could not afford a house in the village. By dint of hard work he accrued the means to make a purchase later in life, The same would apply to young people today and in future.

Ann Ryan asked whether the school could cope with possibly, 100 additional pupils. JG said that an assessment would be needed. AH said that there needs to be a study of the interconnection of all these services. School replacement is a high priority, but in 20 year’s time! The capacity of Balfron school was also queried. SC have already indicated that capacity would have to be increased to cope.

Keith Vass had spoken to Claire Milne who had denied that 50 houses were planned. He said that if smaller houses were built to encourage residents with young children this would feed into the primary school where the school roll was down. Owners of larger homes may send their children to private schools outwith the village.

Patsy Fischbacher reminded the meeting that the sewage capacity of the village is already at its limit. It was thought that if an upgrade to the sewage farm was required, the developer should pay.

Robert Christie asked about the possibility of a road bypass around the village. ML replied that this had been considered many years ago and found to be too expensive. Also lack of suitable land was a barrier.

Alan Campbell commented that councils never upgrade facilities as they promise.

A number of residents were in favour of affordable housing for the young and for flats suitable for older people

Sheena Gosling suggested that more smaller and affordable housing could free up family homes in the village. More young residents are needed in the village for better balance. There was a need for both bought and rented smaller homes and there should be a bias towards local people for local authority housing. Housing unit density increase could be considered for older persons’ housing and in the case of “Singh” field, access to the village and public transport was good.

Another resident disagreed; it was too hilly for older people. She also said that the “Singh” field should be used for a new graveyard. Building of the graveyard as a boundary to the “Singh” field as a housing plot would make access from the church dangerous on this busy road.

MV then addressed the meeting again to say that if we opposed everything, the will of the council will be imposed upon the village. She suggested that we press for lesser number of houses which might be acceptable both to community and SC. She also pointed out that a development of over 5 houses required the developer to contribute to affordable housing, but this may not accrue to

Strathblane/Blanefield but would go into the SC “pot” for housing outwith our immediate area.

JG then went through a slide showing the SC Housing Needs Assessment. 60% of this need was within the Stirling core area. There were major shortfalls in the housing market in the lower and median quartile. There was no need in the upper quartile.

The concensus from several residents was that we wanted affordable housing for young people and housing suitable for the elderly.

Jane Meek said she had been speaking to a SC rep at the drop in session, who had indicated that the building of houses on the “Singh “ field was “done deal”. Elizabeth Normond expressed concern at this . She had a particular mistrust of Cala and she said that we were likely end up with large luxury houses and little else.

Anther resident said, however, that Cala had built affordable housing in each cul-de-sac in their recent Marchfield development in Milngavie.

Many comments form those at the meeting reflected the view that affordable and elderly/special needs housing was the priority for the village and that there was adequate family housing provision. Sheena Gosling said this was more important than a cemetary – homes for the living . With more young people living in the village there may be job opportunities for them caring for the elderly.

AH said as a long time resident in the village there may come a time when he no longer wants or needs a 4 bedroom home. With suitable alternatives for him this could be released for family needs.

Archie Roy said that no young people he knows live in the village. He had asked Claire Milne if there was any local priority. She replied that this was up to SC Housing dept and that tenants from outside the area could be allocated. MV said that she was on the Rural Stirling committee and they are looking into ways to prioritize local people.

MV then said that she wanted to discuss CC policy on the proposals from the village. The proposal for housing at Ballewan seemed a reasonable alternative as it was also close to a bus stop, so the CC may wish to consider this.

Elisabeth Normand asked if the community could be involved in the design and planning of any proposals. She also suggested the creation of a woodland burial site, which could also double to provide renewables for wood burning. JG pointed out that woodland “ticked all the boxes”.

WO said that considering housing at Ballewan end (plots STRA 03 and STRA07), the planned construction of a mini roundabout at Ballewan Cresc could also provide an access into these locations. JG said that SC Roads would approve of a road realignment in this area.

Sheen Gosling referred to the success of shared developments between a developer and Housing Association in Forfar. Could this be a model here?

Alan Campbell had sympathy for the idea of accommodation for older people. They would not have any children to place demands on school infrastructure. Consideration could be given to constructing such accommodation in the school grounds when this is redeveloped in due course. JG replied that the Open Space Plan may preclude this; we need to ensure that this policy does not preclude future school development. Patsy Fischbacher said that care was needed in making any housing proposals in this area. It was suggested that any new school redevelopment should incorporate other facilities.

Green Belt Boundary discussions:

JG outlined the current green belt boundary. He explained that Mugdock was within this boundary, but not as a village. This meant that there were very strict planning restrictions. There were plans for a retraction of the green belt in the areas of "Singh" field, the woods below Glenarden and along the north area of the Cuilt Road. This gave rise to concern. WO said that part of this area was a conservation area and that part of it was the "Huts" area which was now under community management control. JG felt that this was an improvement on the previous arrangements. There were comments against any change in the green belt boundaries – "why did our forefathers set the boundaries as they are"?

MV pointed out that the plan is at draft stage and that when the plan comes back we can appeal to the Scottish Government at that stage. Evidence from Milngavie shows that this can be successful.

Patsy Fischbacher asked whether we could stipulate that the proposed cemetery be the boundary to the "Singh" field.

MV then raised the site at the "Devil's Elbow" below Glenarden. SC had at this stage ruled it out for housing because it is woodland. There would also need to be consultation with a housing association regarding a development here. The question of access to this area had been raised during the meeting. This would not be from the main road but from Old Milngavie Road above Edenkiln Place – (an access road end exists already).

Elizabeth Normand suggested that if the area was not used for housing it could be turned into "nice" woodland for community access and as a woodland cemetery.

Another resident suggested moving the school to this woodland area.

MV then drew the meeting to a close at 9.30.

It was hoped that we as a CC could discuss this prior to our **next CC meeting on Monday 5th December** when we hoped to report back on our decisions. She asked everyone to send their comments to Stirling Council and it would help if the CC were also copied in to help us to judge community feelings.

We wanted to be in control of what happens.

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see appendices at www.strathblanefield.org.uk