

The Council is responsible for preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) which will act as the framework for determining planning applications in the area. It will allocate land for uses such as housing, retail and industrial, and set out policies relating to these uses. The LDP will promote some sites for development and protect others from development.

The first stage in this process is the preparation of a "Main Issues Report" (MIR). The MIR was published in December 2009 and a consultation period ran from 22nd January 2010 to 19th March 2010. The MIR sets out key areas of change across five "Main Issues", with options to respond to these issues.

## Who came?

The Planning Forum was held in the Ardrossan Civic Centre, Ardrossan, from 5.00pm to 7.00pm on Monday 22nd February. There was a good turnout to the event - around 40 people attended. There were individual members of the public participating, along with representatives from each of the Community Councils, local developers, local businesses and various community interest groups. The wide range of interests represented allowed for a constructive and lively debate. Some local Councillors also attended to listen to the discussion. The summary of the debate, set out below and overleaf, has been formally recorded and will be taken into consideration as we move to the next stage, the Proposed LDP.

## What happened?

After a short introduction by the chair, Ian Johnson (Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit), attendees received a presentation from Margaret Ferrier, Team Leader of the Development Plans section of the Council's Planning Services.

Margaret introduced the LDP preparation process and provided a timeline for its production. She then went on to explain the Main Issues Report, examining the Vision and the five Main Issues:

1. **New Uses for Old Sites**, which deals

with the oversupply of vacant and derelict business and industrial land;

2. **Future of our Town Centres**, which looks at the role and function of our



town centres, how we stem the loss of retail spend to other areas, and improve the environment of our centres;

3. **Rural, Coastal & Island Development**, which explores how we both protect and promote our coastal and rural assets for biodiversity, outdoor recreation and tourist attraction;
4. **How Much Housing and Where?**, which looks at the housing requirement for North Ayrshire, where this should be built, and deals with other issues such as housing design and affordable housing;
5. **Providing Infrastructure**, which considers matters such as the A737/A78, new waste facility provision and the Magnum Centre.

After an explanation of the five Main Issues, everyone broke into groups - facilitated by members of the LDP team - to investigate the issues in more detail, and provide their views on the issues and the options set out to deal with them in the MIR.

## The Vision

Attendees wished to see a stronger emphasis in the Vision on employment generation and investment in the LDP. There was a feeling that “creation of stronger communities” should be a theme



for the Vision, with more prominence given to creating a distinct identity for each of the three towns. This would mean building more on the quality and range of services in the individual town centres and making more of the history and culture of each town.

While the delivery of the 3 towns bypass was largely welcomed, many attendees felt that there was still perceived detachment in the area because of the poor nature of wider connecting road links (primarily the A737). It was felt that improvements to this route were necessary to maximise the investment potential of the area and attendees welcomed the support for road upgrades in the Vision.

Many participants wished to see a drive towards more renewable energy production as an objective for the Vision.

## New Uses for Old Sites

As part of the debate for this Main Issue, Ardeer Peninsula was widely discussed. Most attendees were aware of NPL Estate's proposals for major redevelopment of the peninsula, including residential, industrial

and leisure/tourism uses. There was little support for mixed use development (including housing, industrial, tourism and leisure uses) at Ardeer. Most attendees felt that redevelopment would not offer benefits to Stevenston, due to the detached nature of the peninsula. The remote location of the site meant that many felt it was an ideal location for heavy industrial uses, although there was recognition that there were issues with visual impacts on the landscape. There was clear support for protecting the unique environmental character of the peninsula.

Some attendees highlighted an opportunity for “urban greening” on vacant/derelict industrial sites, rather than promoting them for redevelopment.

There was support for more masterplanning of key sites within the three towns, to avoid incremental development, and instead set out a suitable pattern for future development.

## Future of our Town Centres

Most attendees felt that a Town Centre Hierarchy would be beneficial, by reducing the likelihood of larger scale retail proposals being consented in the three towns. Some attendees felt that application of this would be inappropriate and that retail uses in any town centre should be left to the market. The majority of participants did not support any further retail development away from town centres (for example in Retail Parks). There was little support for any further supermarket development anywhere in the three towns.

There was a clear feeling that the public realm environment in all of the town centres needs to be improved, and there was recognition of the objectives of the Irvine Bay Regeneration Company in delivering improvements to shopfronts, street furniture and general design improvements in town centre areas.

Most attendees agreed that financial contributions from new housing developments could be sought to improve town centres, although some were concerned that this would not provide any tangible improvements due to low levels of new house building.

Attendees were keen to see better links between town centres and the coast, to strengthen the seaside identity of the three towns.



The number of hot food takeaways was a concern to some participants, who wished to



## Preferred Options for Housing

The MIR does not make confirmed allocations for housing development. The preferred options set out in the MIR are areas that have been identified, in principle, as acceptable for housing development on environmental grounds. Most of the areas are not considered to have sensitive landscapes, are not at risk of flooding and do not have any environment designations, for example.

The total housing requirement originally identified for the 3 Towns to 2025 was 2,813 housing units. The housing land supply (at March 2009) was 1,020 units, meaning the LDP will need to provide sites to deliver an additional 1,793 units, if that option were carried forward.

However, because of the number of brownfield sites in the Irvine & Kilwinning area, the two housing market areas covering Irvine Bay were merged. It is therefore proposed that some of the 1,793 housing units are redirected to the Irvine & Kilwinning area. A total of 2,894 housing units for the Irvine Bay area as a whole is therefore the preferred option.

Not all of the preferred options are needed for new housing. The selection criteria (appendix 4 of the MIR) will provide the basis for choosing which of the sites should be allocated in the next stage of the process, the Proposed LDP.

see a limit on such uses in town centres particularly.

A recurring issue within town centres was traffic management and parking. Attendees wish to see more short term parking provision and easier vehicular access to town centres. There were concerns over new development exacerbating existing access and parking problems.

### **Rural, Coastal & Island Development**

The coastal environment was recognised as a unique asset. There was support for the creation of a “Coastal Park”, with identified

areas for larger scale, high quality development at key locations, and other areas identified for smaller scale development. The type of development permitted at coastal areas will be informed by “Coastal Design Guidance” which is under preparation and will accompany the Proposed LDP as Supplementary Guidance. A number of attendees felt that any development at the coast should be for tourism or leisure use only. Coastal access is important to the creation of a Coastal Park, and participants pointed out that the former Shell site provides an important link for coastal access. There was widespread support for ensuring redevelopment of the



Shell site provides good continuous coastal access links.

In seeking to attract more visitors to coastal areas, some participants identified a shortfall of parking provision to accommodate this.

### How Much Housing and Where?

There were concerns over the provision of infrastructure to cope with new development - in particular road and parking capacity for increased traffic but also for local schools.

There was some support for the delivery of more affordable housing, but it was felt the term “affordable housing” should be more clearly defined. Some attendees felt that there was a need for larger, upmarket housing particularly in Saltcoats to try and attract more spending power into the area and attract a greater mix of residents. It was felt there was a need for more accommodation for the elderly given the ageing nature of the population over the life of the plan.

There was widespread demand for better

design standards, materials, layout and play space provision in new residential development. Many attendees wanted to see new housing incorporate more renewable energy production.

There was much debate regarding the future of the Shell site at Ardrossan. There was no support for housing on the entirety of the site - most attendees advocated a mixed use development on the site, with commercial and light industrial uses being acceptable. All participants felt that any housing on the site should be of a particularly high design quality. Some attendees wished to see the site retained for industrial use.

### Providing Infrastructure

Many attendees felt that upgrades to the A737 were crucial to the success of North Ayrshire’s future. It was felt that economic development within the 3 towns would continue to be constrained because of the upgrades required to the A737.

There were concerns regarding the capacity of sewage infrastructure in Ardrossan.

Most attendees felt there were major issues with roads capacity, particularly at Princes Street/Glasgow Street, Ardrossan, and parking in both Ardrossan and Saltcoats town centres.



## What Happens Next?

Subsequent to the consultation period, all the responses and submissions will be collated and assessed. This process is designed to be transparent, and there will be a clear decision making trail.

A Proposed LDP will be prepared, which will contain site allocations for uses such as housing, employment and retail, with a series of policies to govern such uses. The target for publication of the Proposed LDP is December 2010.



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COUNCIL

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