

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 the 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 Brodick Hall, Brodick, from 5.00pm to 7.00pm on Monday 8th March. The event was fully subscribed, with almost 60 people in attendance. There were Community Councillors, politicians and individual members of the public participating, along with representatives from local developers, local businesses and various community interest groups. The wide range of interests represented allowed for a constructive and lively debate. 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?

John Esslemont, of the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit, acted as Chairman and introduced the event. Margaret Ferrier, Team Leader of the Development Plans section of the Council's Planning Services, then delivered a presentation.

Margaret outlined 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 role of Market Road, Cladach and Home Farm in providing for employment land for Arran;

2. **Future of our Town Centres**, which



looks at whether Brodick should have a designated centre, and outlined the positive and potentially negative aspects of such an allocation;

3. **Rural, Coastal & Island Development**, which explores woodland crofting, housing in the countryside, tourism and coastal development ;
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 examined issues such as road improvements, cemetery provision and servicing arrangements for new development.

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

Most attendees felt that the Vision set out in the MIR was too mainland focused. There was a desire to see an approach that was more tailored to the Island, given its unique identity.



It was widely felt that the population of the island should grow, but that the demographics should be balanced in the process - fewer holiday homes and more young people, which would help support key services.

Participants were highly concerned at the option to focus new housing development within the three main settlements of Brodick, Lamlash and Whiting Bay. It was felt that this was an “urban solution”, and more diversity and flexibility in allowing housing in other settlements and in the countryside was advocated.

New Uses for Old Sites

In relation to employment land, there was little support for an extension of the existing Market Road allocation. For Cladach and Home Farm, the principle of small scale extensions would be supported, if sympathetically designed.

Most participants felt that more flexibility was required on Arran in relation to employment uses. Rather than centralised



sites for business/industrial development, attendees wished to see more support for residential based business activity - particularly for artisan/craft based uses. It was stated that this would allow a more even spread of employment based uses across the Island.

Future of our Town Centres

Participants were not generally supportive of



any town centre being identified on Arran. There was a desire to see more restriction on businesses being sold for housing, particularly on main thoroughfares.

Rural, Coastal & Island Development

Some attendees suggested that more tourist accommodation could help reduce the number of permanent holiday homes on the Island.

There was recognition of the role of The Auchrannie in meeting tourist demand, and providing a source of employment, but some

participants were concerned that over-reliance on this facility reduced the potential for spin off benefits to other areas of the Island. The principle of expansion of The



Auchrannie was, however, generally supported.

There was a desire to see more Bed & Breakfast and Guest House facilities.

How Much Housing and Where?

Most of the evening's debate centred on the housing situation on the Island.

Participants were virtually unanimous in rejecting any new housing development being focused solely in the three main settlements. Given the affordable housing issues on the island, and lack of opportunities for first time buyers, attendees wished to see a dramatic relaxation of policy for housing in countryside areas.

Furthermore, there was a clear message



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 Arran to 2025 was 562 housing units. The housing land supply (at March 2009) was 417 units, meaning the LDP will need to provide sites to deliver an additional 145 units for Arran, if that option were carried forward.

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.

that it is felt that traditional road, pavement and street lighting solutions are not always appropriate for the Island environment.

It was felt that innovative solutions could be found for any infrastructure issues (such as water supply, power generation, drainage, access and waste management) for new dwellings in more isolated locations.

It was agreed that any housing in the countryside needed to be sympathetically designed, and that there are some locations which are not suitable for development. However it was felt that the existing policy approach was too restrictive, and offered very little flexibility.

The importance of addressing the affordable housing issue on Arran was particularly important in the context of retaining younger people on the island, and also for supporting

services (schools, health facilities, etc.).

Participants generally welcomed the new Rural Design Guidance, introduced last year. However, it was noted that design is subjective, and more innovative and non-



traditional design solutions should be welcomed.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a key issue for the Island. The majority of the additional housing requirement for Arran (145 units) will be specifically for affordable housing.

There are challenges relating to how this will be delivered. The public funding available is increasingly constrained. While an Affordable Housing Policy was introduced in Spring 2009, which requires new development for private housing to provide some measure of affordable housing, there is a limit to the number of affordable housing units the private sector will be able to subsidise.

The LDP proposes to make site specific allocations for affordable housing, and will also be informed by ongoing work on the feasibility of delivery of affordable housing on land owned by the Forestry Commission.

Providing Infrastructure

The nature of infrastructure issues on the Island, relating to water supply, drainage and utilities is such that more unconventional solutions may be required. Participants felt that there should be more openness on the part of the Council, and other agencies such as Scottish Water and

SEPA, for private water and drainage supplies, and generation of energy on site. This would offer greater self sufficiency, and offer a more sustainable solution.

There was widespread support for cemetery extensions at existing locations.

Rural Design Guidance

Updated Rural Design Guidance was prepared and adopted by the Council last year.

It applies to housing developments of one to four dwellings, and deals with matters such as siting, access, parking, scale, massing, materials and character.

It provides good practice principles, which respect their local setting and character, rather than offering a prescriptive, uniform approach to all housing in the countryside.

At present, the new Rural Design Guidance is “non statutory” as there has been no public consultation on the document. Consultation will take place later this year after which the document will be statutory policy (subject to amendments subsequent to consultation).



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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