

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 started on 22nd January 2010 and closes on 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 Bridgend Community Centre, Kilbirnie, from 4.30pm to 6.30pm on Thursday 25th February. There was a good turnout to the event - around 30 people attended despite adverse weather conditions. 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?

Margaret Ferrier, Team Leader of the Development Plans section of the Council's Planning Services introduced the event and 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 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;

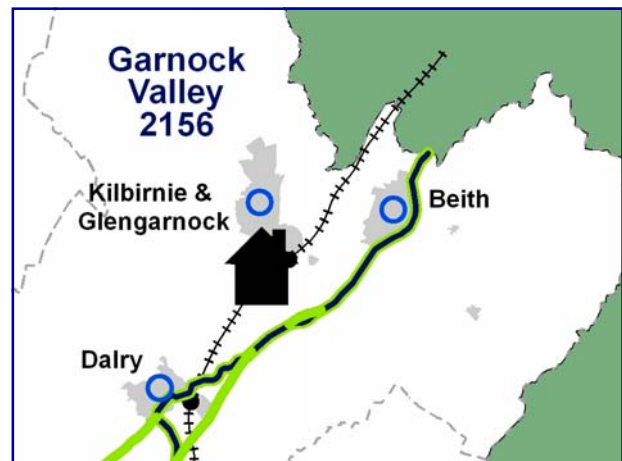
3. **Rural, Coastal & Island Development**, which explores how we both protect and promote our coastal and rural assets for biodiversity, outdoor recreation and tourist attraction;
4. **How Much Housing and Where?**, which looks at the housing requirement for North Ayrshire, where this should be built, 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

There was general support for the Vision as set out in the Main Issues Report, however participants were keen to see more of a focus on promoting renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.

Attendees wished to see more emphasis on infrastructure provision, noting the pressing



need for improvements to the A737.

It was also felt that Glengarnock Railway Station could act as more of a public transport hub for the area.

There was recognition that trying to sustain the population was an important objective, although there were concerns regarding how this would be secured. Attendees noted that more had to be offered than just new housing to attract or retain the population. Concurrent investment in employment, the environment and infrastructure is also required.

New Uses for Old Sites

The Lochshore site was identified as still having potential for redevelopment, although no major investment has been secured on the site for some years. Participants, although concerned at the level of contamination likely to exist on the site, felt that the location of the area offered the potential for an upmarket housing development, sports/recreation hub and even hotel/conference facilities. Attendees were



aware of the proposals for a new Garnock Academy, and supported Lochshore as a preferable location for a new secondary school.

Participants were also keen to see better links from Beith to Kilbirnie Loch.

Future of our Town Centres

Traffic management and parking were major concerns for participants. It was felt that more short term parking and better traffic



management would help attract more people to use their town centre. Some participants felt that existing gap sites within town centres should be used for parking.

There was general support for the Town Centre Hierarchy, provided this helped affirm each town's distinct identity. Attendees were keen to see more residential uses in town centres, to increase footfall and activity.

There was concern regarding an overprovision of hot food takeaways. People felt such uses were detrimental to town centres. Some attendees felt that the traffic movements, noise, litter and odour associated with hot food takeaways outweighed any benefits of bringing an empty shop unit back into use.

There was support for developer contributions to a Town Centre Regeneration Fund, but concerns over how viable such a scheme would be.

Some participants wished to see Beith Conservation Area extended, and there was enthusiasm for further Townscape Heritage Initiative projects.

Rural, Coastal & Island Development

Attendees were mostly in favour of a more flexible approach to housing in the countryside. It was felt that location was of prime importance, to ensure sites would not have a detrimental impact on the landscape. Attendees were also keen to see natural features maintained where possible, such as



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 for the Garnock Valley to 2025 is 2,150 housing units. The housing land supply (at March 2009) was 625 units, meaning the LDP will need to provide sites to deliver an additional 1,525 units, should that option be 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.

It is important that we get the views on the acceptability of the preferred option and reasonable alternative areas from as many people as possible.

trees and hedging. There was some concern regarding the sustainability of rural housing, because of poorer accessibility. A suggestion



to counteract this was to ensure that rural housing demonstrates exemplar renewable

energy features.

In relation to tourism, attendees felt that North Ayrshire as a whole had untapped tourism potential and wished to see more attractions and accommodation for visitors.

How Much Housing and Where?

Attendees wished to see brownfield sites developed before greenfield locations. There was particular support for the redevelopment of the former steelworks at Lochshore although some had concerns regarding the viability of the site.

Participants were in favour of housing locations being as close to town centres as



possible, and within 1km of a railway station.

Attendees generally agreed with the approach of redirecting some of the housing requirement from elsewhere in North Ayrshire to the Garnock Valley, to stimulate regeneration. This was subject to adequate investment in infrastructure provision such as schools, health centres etc.

In terms of housing design, attendees advocated a rethink regarding housing layout, density, play provision and construction

materials. There was demand for new development to have better integration with existing development.

Providing Infrastructure

There was much discussion regarding the A737, in relation to a need for upgrades to the road to improve traffic flow particularly in Dalry.

Attendees wished to see more small scale waste management projects, to comply with the “proximity principle”, that is, dealing with waste as close to source as possible.

Lochshore

Glengarnock Steelworks closed in 1985, and the site has had very limited investment since. Scottish Enterprise now own the majority of the site.

Scottish Enterprise prepared a masterplan for redevelopment of the site, which was approved in 2006. The masterplan provided for a wide range of uses, including housing, business space, recreational facilities and parkland.

The masterplan has not been implemented, and Scottish Enterprise have now instructed a consultant to update the development strategy for the site.



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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