

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 Brisbane Centre, Largs, from 5.00pm to 7.00pm on Wednesday 17th February. There was an excellent turnout to the event - it was fully subscribed with over 50 people attending. 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 explore 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 and Hunterston.

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 much discussion regarding future infrastructure in relation to the A78. Most attendees were keen to see A78 upgrades secured to accommodate future development in the North Coast. There



was little support for clean coal power at Hunterston, but a recognition that some redevelopment at Hunterston was appropriate. The principle of Hunterston being utilised for uses such as clean coal power was established in National Planning Framework 2. The LDP must reflect this. Attendees were also keen to see upgrades to the A78 realised, but understood the LDP cannot deliver these directly.

It was felt that the LDP should seek to protect good quality agricultural land in the long term.

There was generally support for planning for a stable population but there were concerns over whether this could be achieved. Given projections of an ageing population, there was a feeling that the LDP Vision should be stronger in planning for this sector of the population.

There was a general presumption against future coalescence of settlements, although some attendees felt that this was not an issue.



Some attendees wished to see a “carbon reduction” theme in the Vision, as they felt that new development should play a role in reducing carbon emissions.

It was felt that the Vision was too focused on Irvine Bay.

### **New Uses for Old Sites**

There was limited support for the option of providing an allocation for small scale employment units within the existing Hunterston allocation. Concerns centred on access, road/rail congestion, possible conflict with town centre uses, loss of agricultural land and severance from the surrounding settlements. Attendees mostly noted, however, that there is anecdotal evidence for demand for workshop style units for small scale enterprise/storage for local trades and businesses.

There was widespread support for the reduction of the boundary of the Hunterston allocation.

Some attendees felt that specific allocations for marine related industry should be made, for example at Largs Marina.

### **Future of our Town Centres**

There was general support for the retail hierarchy approach, with Largs as an “Area Centre” and West Kilbride as a

“Local Centre”. The main town centre issues were highlighted as parking and traffic management.

Attendees highlighted the importance of green spaces within town centres, and wanted to see the protection of these areas continue.

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

Attendees felt that the boundary for the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park could be redefined in certain areas.

There was recognition of clear tensions between protecting environmental assets and attracting more visitors to coastal areas, and attendees wished to see this



carefully managed. A number of attendees highlighted that any future industrial development, particularly at Hunterston, may also exacerbate these tensions.

There was general resistance to any ribbon development. Attendees felt that



## 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 North Coast to 2025 is 1,500 housing units. The housing land supply (at March 2009) was 588 units, meaning the LDP will need to provide sites to deliver an additional 912 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.

new development should be well contained.

### How Much Housing and Where?

Attendees were generally supportive of the identified housing requirement, recognising that more houses were needed in the North Coast. Most attendees wished to see more family housing built, and fewer flats. It was also felt that design should be substantially improved, particularly for development at coastal locations.

There was agreement that there is a high level of need for affordable housing in the North Coast. Attendees were keen to see social housing interspersed with private housing as far as possible.

One of the largest scale “preferred options”

for housing land is at West Kilbride.

Attendees were keen to see other options closer to the town centre explored more fully. There was some limited support for the option, provided concerns regarding access, traffic, and integration with the town were resolved, and some level of amenity housing was provided. However, most attendees were opposed to the extent of the preferred option area. There were concerns regarding the loss of the agricultural land and also the proximity to the Hunterston allocation (although this allocation may be reduced) and impact on scenic views.

Most attendees supported the redirection of some of the housing requirement from the North Coast to other areas such as the Garnock Valley and Irvine because of the environmental sensitivity of the North

## Hunterston

The Hunterston allocation has been designated since 1971. The situation was reviewed in 1991, and an independent consultant's study recommended that the safeguarding of the allocation be continued.

The site has been identified in National Planning Framework 2 (a Scottish Government planning document) as a site for a clean coal fired power station, biomass/gas fired power station, carbon capture infrastructure, container transshipment hub, maritime construction and decommissioning yard, downstream industrial processes and associated environmental work.

The new LDP must reflect this designation in NPF 2. Some of the outstanding matters, to be addressed at planning application stage, include: siting, design and layout of facilities; road and rail access arrangements; carbon impact; landscape, seascape and visual impact; effects on Portencross SSSI; and any measures to mitigate or compensate for adverse effects on the environment or communities. A transport assessment will also be required.

Coast. A minority of attendees were keen to drive forward growth in the North Coast and wished to see the full housing requirement for the area met within the North Coast settlements.

### Providing Infrastructure

There was very little support for a clean coal power station at Hunterston, but again, it was emphasised that the principle for this has been established at a Government level and the LDP must reflect National Planning Framework 2.

Some attendees felt that infrastructure issues such as transport could be

overcome by funding improvements through a strategic release of housing land. This would mean developers make a financial contribution to secure the infrastructure upgrades required.

There was a strong feeling that capacity of infrastructure such as schools, health centres etc. must be confirmed and any issues resolved before new development comes forward.





## 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.



**NORTH AYRSHIRE**  
COUNCIL

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