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Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2008

Proposal for a site to be included in the Main Issues Report

Please use this form to provide details of the site that you would wish to have included in the Main Issues Report for consideration as a proposal for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

One of the purposes of this form is to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed. All information submitted will therefore be made available to the public to promote a transparent and open process.

Please feel free to provide any further information you feel appropriate to support your submission. Please ensure your proposal is with us by 6 November 2008.

Name of proposer: Bancon Developments Ltd
Date: 24/10/08

Postal Address: Banchory Business Centre, Burn O' Bennie Road, Banchory, AB31 5ZU

Name of landowner (if known) [REDACTED]

Postal address of landowner [REDACTED]

To comply with the data protection Act 1998 this information will not be made public

The site and your proposals

Under what name would you like the site to be identified? Hill of Banchory North

Have you any information on the internet which promotes your aspirations for the site? If so please provide the URL :

The site name could be descriptive ("Site north of") or an address (Site at Westburn Road , Aberdeen)

Have you provided a map showing the exact boundaries of the site you would like considered?

Yes No

Please provide the National Grid reference of the site

NO705968

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What is the current use of the site? Woodland and Agriculture

Has the land been built upon before (Brownfield Land)? Yes No

Is there any suspicion that the land is contaminated? Yes No

If yes Please provide a statement of the nature and extent of the contamination suspected
Statement attached

What use(s) do you propose for your site? Housing, Business and Commercial land, Heat and Power Plant, New Secondary and/or Primary School.

If you are proposing a mix of uses on your site please ensure that the area of each is noted on the site plan

Are you proposing to phase your development? Yes No

If you are proposing phasing your development please provide additional details of what is anticipated to be built, and when.

Please see supporting statement.

If you are proposing housing on the site please provide us with details of what you think would be appropriate, both in terms of the number of dwellings, and their form (Flats, detached houses etc).

Please see the supporting statement for details, but the total allocation sought is circa 610 houses and 9 ha of business land, along with a site for educational use (10 ha). This would suggest an average density of around 13 houses per hectare, which would lend itself to a continuation of a mix of house types, including large detached housing, smaller detached and smaller semi-detached and terraced housing, and flatted developments. Bancon accept that 25% of the housing provided on the site will be 'affordable housing'.

If you have a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it.

If you are proposing business land please provide us with details of what you would market the land for?

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Businesses and offices (Use class 4)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
General industrial land (Use Class 5)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Storage and distribution (Use Class 6)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Please make sure the area of land proposed for business use shown on the site plan.

If you are proposing uses other than housing or business please provide us with as much detail as possible on what you propose.

Bancon acknowledge the existing and proposed school rolls in the town, and see land being required for either a new Secondary or a new Primary school (with the existing secondary school site being redeveloped) within the draft structure plan's timescale. Land would be made available for this as part of the area sought for development. It is also concluded that land for a neighbourhood retail centre may be required, associated with the new Secondary school.

Please continue on additional sheets as required.

The wider area

Please provide a statement on the siting and design of your proposal (how will the development fit in with the wider landscape, or complement the urban design of the area?)

See Landscape Capacity Assessment.

If you have a landscape statement, a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it. *Statement attached*

If you have prepared any frameworks or masterplans showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form. *Framework attached*

Have you applied principles of sustainable siting and design to your site? Yes

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No

If you have undertaken a site assessment please provide details

Statement attached

The Code for Sustainable homes or www.index21.org.uk provides guidance on this issue

Effect on the community

Has there been any opportunity for local people to influence what you propose through local engagement?

Yes

No

Not Yet

If you have undertaken any community consultation please provide details of the ways in which engagement was conducted, its effectiveness and the way in which it has influenced your proposals. Please provide details of any engagement you may propose to undertake.

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At least 25% of all housing is likely to be required to be affordable. If applicable, are you considering providing more or less than this? More
25% or Less

What community benefits arise from your proposals? What would the nature of these be, and how would they be delivered?

Please see the attached statement

Community benefits may be material, such as community facilities, or intangible, such as affordable housing or the ability to live locally. Include elements which you anticipate may be required as developer contributions from the development (although specifics will have to be negotiated with the Council on the basis of the development proposed)

How easy is it for people using or living in the development you propose to access services? Are the following facilities within:

	400m	400m-1k	>1km
	Please tick appropriate box		
Local Shops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community facilities (eg Hall)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports facilities (eg playing fields)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residential areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Transport networks	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>

Cycleways and Main pedestrian routes will be designed into proposals, to link with existing networks, and the core path network, and the majority of the site is within 1km of both Primary and Secondary schools.

If you propose to provide any of these as a component of the development itself then please answer "yes". NA=Not Applicable

Servicing the site

Have you undertaken any of the following studies to determine whether your site is capable of being developed, or what might be required by you to make it developable?

Flood Risk Assessment	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic Impact Assessment	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Drainage Impact Assessment	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Habitat / biodiversity Assessment	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Other as applicable (eg noise, dust, smell Retail impact etc)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>

Rather than full studies it may be appropriate to undertake initial assessments to identify the scale of any works that might be required, as this will impact on the deliverability of the proposal. This assessment may be no more than an exchange of letters with appropriate

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agencies. Information on water and sewage capacity is available online at :
http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/portal/page/portal/SWE_PGP_CONNECTIONS/SWE_CORP_CONNECTIONS/ASSET_CAPACITY_SEARCH

What are the access arrangements you propose for the site. Does your site plan clearly show where you propose to access the road network? Yes No

Other information

What other information would you like to be considered in support of your proposal? In order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 please do not include any personal information

Various assessments are currently underway to look at the development of the site in more detail. SEPA's flood maps have been consulted, and drainage tests have begun to inform a drainage impact assessment. A traffic assessment is underway, and habitat and biodiversity assessments are currently being re-visited.

Please see the supporting statement for more details on the proposal.

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Please return the completed form to the Policy Planning Team, Planning Policy and Environment Service , Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB or e-mail to ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

Fair Processing Notice

- The Data Controller for this information is Aberdeenshire Council.
 - The data will be used for the following purposes:
 - 1) to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed,
 - 2) to evaluate submitted bids
 - This data will potentially be disclosed worldwide (via publication on Internet)
- By completing and submitting this form, you are consenting to the above processing.

Hill of Banchory North Local Development Plan Bid

1. Hill of Banchory

Hill of Banchory has been developed over several years, and has provided the vast majority of growth in Banchory over the last two local plan periods. Banchory as a settlement has an obvious pattern of growth, along the north side of the River Dee. This is a pattern repeated all along the river from the outskirts of Aberdeen to Ballater. The western edge of the town is constrained by two golf courses, and the town is bordered by the River Dee to the south. Across the river, the south of the town is constrained by access difficulties and environmental and visual sensitivities. To the east of the town, agricultural land quickly turns to woodland and the designed landscapes surrounding Crathes Castle. For these reasons primarily, the growth of the town has logically developed to the immediate east and north of the original settlement.

The town went through very rapid growth in the latter half of the 20th century, and as such it can be argued that before the development of the Hill of Banchory area, the traditional character was lost to an extent. There is little 'sustainability' in much of the developed areas, and reliance on car use is apparent. It is also apparent that the town did not expand in terms of commercial and employment facilities in a manner reflective of the population growth, and as such much of the town is seen as a commuter satellite town serving the city of Aberdeen. This was largely due to the economic climate, but in more recent years the ideas of sustainable development have led to a change in the character of the development of the town.

Hill of Banchory accommodates around 400 houses at present, with proposed development on existing allocated sites increasing this to around 550 units. Allied to this there is a primary school, opened in 2005, a business centre, with permission to expand, along with significant areas of business land and community land that is due to be developed in the near future. A leisure centre is currently in the planning process (outline consent has been granted) and this will compliment the existing dance school on the site. Further community and commercial uses are planned and identified in the current Local Plan. This community and commercial hub will form the neighbourhood centre for the area as it expands northwards as proposed in this bid.

The entire area of Hill of Banchory was initially earmarked for 600 houses, but market conditions have dictated the development of less flats and more detached houses. Given the current market situation, there is potential that developments in the remaining phases, and the balance of land remaining may be of a type that will increase the target to closer to 600, rather than the 550 currently planned. It is a difficult task to predict the demand for new housing over the next year or two.

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In the interests of reducing the environmental impacts of the development, Bancon are currently connecting new developments to a district heating system. Currently this is gas powered, but once the use expands, it will be transferred to a biomass fuelled combined heat and power plant. The implementation of the combined heat and power plant will be significantly more successful if it can be utilised in the long term by further expansion of the town in this area. Indeed, its use will help new development to achieve the ambitious targets for reduced carbon emissions in an appropriate manner.

In addition to the above assessment, a current application by Tesco for a supermarket is ongoing on the existing EmpC site, and plans are advancing for a park and ride scheme either on that site or an alternative site to the east of the spine road.

2. Draft Structure Plan

The draft structure plan is a significant material consideration in preparing bids for the Local Development Plan. Banchory falls within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area, but outwith any of the identified Strategic Growth Areas. It is somewhat disappointing that the town has been considered in this way, as it is a popular place to live, and expansion will certainly contribute to the Aberdeen City and Shire's ambitious targets of expansion. Within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area, the current draft plan indicates an allowance of 1,700 houses to 2016, a further 1,500 from 2017 to 2023, and 1,500 thereafter until 2030, giving a total of 4,700 units. It is difficult to translate these numbers into a Local Development Plan bid specifically for Banchory, but 610 units (out of 4,700 units) represents circa 13% of the total allocation over the structure plan period (to 2030) which seems reasonable given the role of Banchory as the key settlement in Marr, and the limited number of other settlements in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area that fall outwith the Strategic Growth Areas. Notwithstanding that, the overall assessment of these numbers is that they are actually quite low considering the capacity of the area involved. It is therefore important that the development of housing within this area is directed towards the areas where it can be achieved in the most sustainable manner possible.

The draft structure plan does not provide detailed housing allocations like previous plans have, but rather concentrates on the bigger picture, and identifying specific aims to shape the development in Aberdeen City and Shire. The main aims are to provide a strong framework to facilitate population and economic growth, whilst also taking on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change. The additional aims include the need to create sustainable mixed communities with associated infrastructure, to make the most of the transport network, and reducing the need for people to travel.

3. Landscape and Visual Assessment

Bancon Developments have commissioned David Wilson Associates to carry out a Landscape Capacity Assessment of Banchory, and a copy of the report is attached to this submission. Banchory has grown along the north side of the river Dee, primarily up the south facing slope in a traditional pattern, but in the latter part of the 20th century, growth turned further east, and finally further north over the crest of the hill, as pressure for more housing continued. Interestingly, no significant growth has happened to the south of the river, and the character of the town is all the better for it, matching the traditional growth pattern of all the settlements along the river, and maintaining the attractive green outlook for much of the town.

Development to the south of the river would be visible from many parts of the town, and would create a significant change to the established character. The south side of the river includes significant constraints in relation to both vehicular and pedestrian access to the town, and it is difficult to see how these can be addressed. The enclosed report from David Wilson Associates highlights all of the above.

Development to the north of the town breached the main ridge in the 1980s, and development beyond that has been on the slightly north facing slope. Most recently, development has reached the bottom of the resulting dip at Upper Lochton. Development in Hill of Banchory has also breached the top of the slope, and remaining allocated housing and business land slopes north. Following the landscape and visual assessment carried out by David Wilson Associates, the long term extent of development potential can be established by the Loch of Leys, which we have shown on our plan as a Local Nature Reserve (beyond a buffer area of at least 100 metres in depth). To the east and west of that, there is scope for a Country Park, and we have also included this on our draft plans.

To the east of the existing developments at Hill of Banchory, the landscape becomes more 'visible' from a number of locations, primarily from the south side of the river. It would seem sensible to avoid any significant expansion involving dense housing or employment based development in that direction for the present time.

The remaining area considered in the landscape capacity assessment is the area around Arbeadie woods and Upper Lochton. This is a complex area, with some pockets of agricultural land and woodland, but it has limited visual impact from the surrounding area. These areas are considered in separate bid submissions.

4. Accessibility

Banchory is well placed to provide access to Aberdeen by road. The A93 links it directly with the site, with easy access to alternative routes along the A944 (to Westhill) and the B9077 South Deeside Road also available. Currently, there are a number of bus services that provide access to Aberdeen, and in fact a number of people utilise the existing car parking facilities in the town centre as an informal park and ride service. A formal park and ride site is proposed, and negotiations are ongoing between various parties to facilitate its creation as quickly as possible. This is likely to be well used, and will increase the ability of Banchory to be a sustainable location in terms of links with the city.

5. Mixed Land Use

Far from trying to paint a picture of Banchory as an ideal commuter town, it is important to consider the ability of the town to grow in a sustainable manner, providing employment, education, community facilities and other facilities within its existing and potential envelope. Banchory Business Centre is already a popular development, with the initial centre full and with construction due to be started on a second building in the immediate future. A significant amount of the allocated business land has identified end users, and planning applications for each area will be brought forward in the coming months.

6. Environment

Within the proposed expansion area, there is a mix of woodland and agricultural ground. The agricultural ground is of mostly class 3(2) quality, capable of producing only a moderate range of crops, and the woodlands are mostly monoculture coniferous plantations. To the north of this, Loch of Leys is a wetland area (the loch having been drained in 1850) with a crannog in the area that is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. For these reasons, and the obvious wildlife habitats that the area provides, we have shown it as a Local Nature Reserve, and positive discussions are ongoing with SNH with regard to this possibility. Woodland areas and belts would be retained as part of the developed area, as has been done throughout Hill of Banchory to date.

Bancon appreciate that the area that has been developed, and parts of the area proposed for further development are covered by woodland, and as such there are environmental issues to consider. Woodland corridors have been retained throughout the scheme to date, and mitigation including native planting on strategic areas has been promoted primarily to protect the population of red squirrels. We are committed to protecting habitats as part of the development process as expansion continues.

With regard to the visual impact on the environment, the tree belts and corridors play an important role, creating a visual scale for the development. This is a feature lacking in previous developments in the town, and a feature we wish to continue building into the future phases of development.

7. Community and Education Infrastructure

At the current time, Hill of Banchory has included a primary school and a dance studio, but plans are ongoing with regard to the creation of extensive Leisure Centre facility. Outline planning permission has been granted, and a detailed application has recently been submitted. This is sited within an area identified in the current local plan for community uses. The balance of this site was initially considered as a supermarket site, but was not considered a beneficial location by the major operators, who have subsequently pursued the EmpC site to the east of the town as their preferred location.

It is our intention to develop the remainder of this site for further community and commercial uses, and have a number of potential users, although these proposals are in the early stages of negotiation at present. We foresee the area becoming a hub of community activity, and benefit the town as a whole and not just the residents of Hill of Banchory. Due to the rapid expansion of the town in the last century, there is limited space to expand the town centre to provide such facilities, so it seems appropriate to locate them in a second, local centre to reduce the need for separate journeys.

With regards to education, the opening of Hill of Banchory Primary School in 2005 saw a significant improvement to the facilities, with the new community school proving a great success. One of the great successes of the school is the large number of journeys to and from it that are carried out on foot or by bicycle, which are far in excess of the norm. It is hoped and expected that the good siting and the excellent pedestrian linkages between the site and the housing that surrounds it will create the same story for the leisure centre and the local centre, and underline the success of the current development in terms of sustainable transport links.

At present, the primary school is well below capacity, and will stay that way until at least after 2015. Banchory Primary School, which was previously under pressure, is now well under capacity, and the roll is set to fall further, so there is capacity for the medium term in the town. The Academy is currently around 120% capacity, but the school roll is falling almost in direct negative to the new pupils created by the development of new housing, should this continue at current rates (approx 60-70 completions per annum in the town – 12-14 pupils per year). The facilities at the existing Academy are under pressure, however, and expansion space is non-existent. Bancon acknowledge that there will be increasing pressure for a new Academy, and as such have incorporated this need into the development proposals for the coming years.

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8. Development Proposals

The development proposals for Hill of Banchory North are set out on the attached plan. Given the scope of the emerging Local Development Plan to provide a five year housing land supply, in addition to future housing land, Bancon have considered what might be suitable land allocations for the next 20 years following completion of the existing allocations. It is interesting to note that the current Aberdeenshire Local Plan identifies a new spine road (P4), which already has detailed planning consent, and hints at further expansion to the north. A small adjustment to the location of the proposed spine road allows for the creation of further housing land, and also allows better access into potential future business land to the north of the current employment allocations.

The creation of additional housing in this location will facilitate the completion of the spine road linking to the Raemoir Road opposite the recently constructed access road to the Crows Nest landfill site. This has been identified intentionally, as it offers an opportunity to complete a northern relief road to the west of the town, to relieve the growing traffic numbers in the town centre. This is not seen as the 'ring road' solution of town planning from previous decades, but rather as a main route for by-passing traffic, to allow the traditional high street to operate in the way it should. The completion of a relief road around the whole town may be outwith the timescale and scope of this Local Plan, but has been identified in an indicative location for the purpose of demonstrating the future possibilities.

Having considered the existing housing mix within Hill of Banchory, and the necessity to maintain a mix of house types, the resultant densities would equate to approximately 400 units within area 1 on the attached masterplan, with around 9 ha of additional business land being provided to the east of the spine road. With the current allocations for employment land, this area could form part of a future allocation (i.e. beyond the initial 5 years of the new Local Plan). It is important to note that the identification of the chosen location is closely linked with the proposed biomass combined heat and power plant, and the desire to make it's location as sustainable as possible (i.e. central to the main users of heat and power). The use of the combined heat and power plant will enable the development of a net zero carbon development.

Bancon see future housing development (beyond area 1) taking place to the north of the proposed spine road, but stopping short of the proposed Local Nature Reserve at Loch of Leys (with a substantial retained landscaping buffer or circa 100m). This future housing land would provide in the region of 340 houses.

Bancon have also considered the school rolls, and the current situation with Banchory Academy in particular. It will therefore be necessary at some stage to incorporate a new or relocated Secondary school in the town, and the latter part of the Hill of Banchory expansion would seem to tally with the need in terms of

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timescales. Given the average land take required for a Secondary school (10 hectares), this would reduce the housing allocation by around 130 units, regardless of which phase it was located in. Bancon therefore estimate, for the purpose of the draft masterplan, phase 2 of the Hill of Banchory expansion to be 210 units plus a site for a new Academy.

Bancon are not definitively specifying a location for an Academy, and are open to suggestions from Aberdeenshire Council on any of their land. It is important, in urban design and general planning terms, to make sure a school development is well related to the housing it supports, and in this case located within a suitable distance of the district heating system, to ensure a carbon neutral development can be achieved, in line with the Council's committed targets.

As identified in the landscape character assessment, the eastern edge of the settlement is somewhat more sensitive in terms of visual impact. For this reason, Bancon do not propose further urban expansion for this area, beyond the existing spine road. Given the existing employment land allocation at the eastern settlement edge, and the fact that Tesco are committed to pursuing this site for a new supermarket along with Aberdeenshire Council's desire to locate a park and ride scheme here, there would seem to be some scope for softening the approach to the town, rather than it appearing to be a large car park. A separate Local Development Plan bid has been prepared for possible enhancements to this area, under the title of Woodend.

9. Community Engagement

Bancon are keen to promote and benefit from community involvement at various stages of the planning process. Banchory has an active and attentive community council, who are well versed on the complexities of the planning process. Currently, a Planning For Real exercise is under way ('Making it Real'), and Bancon have actively supported this process, presenting our plans and utilising feedback received to adapt our draft masterplan into something that seeks the best solution for Banchory, not just Bancon as a developer. Our company is based in Banchory, and we see our role as much more than a house builder, but as an important player in shaping the future of the town and ensuring its success in terms of sustainability and an attractive place to live and work.

Community meetings to date have involved Church groups, youth organisations, school groups and the business community. The Making it Real programme moves to a public exhibition on the 21st November, at which Bancon will be displaying details of the proposed developments, and ongoing projects.