

Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021

Report of Conformity with the Participation Statement – Full Report

26 February 2021

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Executive Summary

The Statement of Conformity with the Participation Statement is a Report that accompanies the submission of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 (“the Proposed Plan”) to Scottish Ministers. This is to allow an assessment to be undertaken as to whether we have done what we set out to do in respect of consultation. Reporter(s) appointed on behalf of Scottish Ministers will consider the Participation Statement, the Report of Conformity and any representations relating to the Planning Authority’s consultation and public involvement activities.

This Report relates to the Participation Statement contained in the [Development Plan Scheme \(DPS\) 2020](#) as approved by Infrastructure Services Committee, Aberdeenshire Council on 14 May 2020.

The Proposed Plan was formally approved by Aberdeenshire Council on 5 March 2020 and subsequently published for formal public consultation on 25 May 2020. A ten-week consultation period followed, ending on 31 July 2020.

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 provided emergency legislation with provision to allow Planning Authorities to undertake public consultation without the need to make physical documents available for inspection, for example in libraries or planning offices. A letter issued by the Chief Planner on 3 April 2020 echoed this and encouraged Planning Authorities to continue progress on delivering new Local Development Plans. Engagement on the Proposed Plan also took cognisance of the Scottish Government’s “Coronavirus (COVID-19): development planning consultation and engagement advice” note published in May 2020.

Key States of the Proposed Plan’s Preparation

The DPS 2020 set out five stages for the production of the Local Development Plan. These were:

Preparation Stages of the Local Development Plan		
Stage 1	Pre-Main Issues Consultation	October 2017 to January 2019
Stage 2	Main Issues Report 2019 Consultation	14 January 2019 to 8 April 2019
Stage 3	Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 Consultation	May 2020 to July 2020
Stage 4	Submit Proposed Local Development to Scottish Ministers for Examination	December 2020 for Examination from January 2021
Stage 5	Adoption	June to September 2021 for adoption by 31 December 2021

This Report demonstrates that in preparing the emerging LDP, that Aberdeenshire Council has carried out consultation in accordance with the commitments made in its Participation Statement within the DPS, with particular emphasis on consultation associated with the Proposed Plan (Section 3 to 8). For clarity, dates associated with Stage 4 and 5 were intended to be indicative at time of publishing the DPS.

What did the Participation Statement Say?

The Participation Statements outlines when, how and with whom consultation will take place. Innovative techniques and activities were identified to ensure the fullest and most effective engagement could be had tailored to each stage of the Plan-making process and the issues being dealt with. In terms of the Proposed Plan, the Participation Statement took full cognisance of legislative action taken to control the incidence or transmission of Covid-19.

What we did, why and when

For the Proposed Plan we committed to, and undertook the following activities:

- **Distinctive Branding:** a strong visual graphic to be carried through from Proposed Plan to Adopted Plan; pictorial symbols used in the Plan content to provide a strong visual connection between the Vision and the Policies.
- **Pre-consultation information/updates:** there was early communication with Community Councils, public media updates and e-newsletter bulletins keeping the public and stakeholders closely informed on a delayed public consultation due to Covid-19 outbreak. There was public announcement on revised consultation dates, and that a revised DPS and participation would be required to enable an electronic means of consultation.
- **Publication of statutory notices:** regional and local newspapers published the notices in the first available edition week commencing 25 May 2020, announcing an 8-week consultation to 17 July 2020 (this was subsequently extended to 10 weeks ending 31 July). The statutory notice announced that documents would not be available for public inspection in libraries or area offices.
- **Informing all stakeholders:** we issued formal notice of publication of the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Government, neighbouring Local Authorities, Community Councils, local Councillors, all those who engaged with us on the MIR, key agencies, all other stakeholders on our database. All stakeholders were advised on the publication of the Proposed Plan and SEA, directing them to the on-line documents, response pro-forma and other supporting documents, stating that hard copies were available on request.
- **Neighbour Notification:** letters were issued to all owners, lessees or occupiers of land neighbouring proposed allocations within 20 metres of allocations identified in the Settlement Statements of the Proposed Plan.
- **Bid proposers:** letters issued to all bid applicants who had a proposal altered from their original bid, or where there had been a change to a proposal since the MIR.

- **Regular press releases and social media posts:** Twitter and Facebook promoted consultation on the Proposed Plan and the SEA, directing people to our virtual drop-in and website.
- **Community planning/area-based promotion:** there was dissemination through local contact networks via Facebook and community planning e-bulletins using promotional material provided in the form of poster, leaflet and images for social media posts.
- **LDP E-newsletter bulletins:** there were frequent updates to customers throughout the consultation period, providing comprehensive coverage of the information and engagement tools available, and how to make a response.
- **'Live Life Aberdeenshire' promotion:** we used this on-line/virtual library resource to promote our consultation via a promotional page with 'have your say' link to our website.
- **Radio publicity:** we undertook radio interviews on BBC Radio Scotland and Mearns FM.
- **Dedicated webpage on the Proposed Plan:** we provided a comprehensive set of information, with the following key items to facilitate our consultation:
 - An outline of our programme as set out in the DPS and key stages involved, providing links to DPS and MIR
 - Links to the Proposed Plan and all supporting documentation
 - 'How to respond' weblink
 - Three short films
 - An interactive online version of the Proposed Plan
 - Community Resources section with posters, FAQs and promotional leaflet.
- **Virtual drop-in room:** a 360-degree, interactive virtual community hall setting, with posters enabling the user to 'walk' through a summary of the Proposed Plan, poster by poster around the virtual room, including 'project' folders on tables, screens showing 3 short films, a live chat function, FAQs, a poster explaining how to make a response, and a downloadable response form.
- **Skype meetings with Community Council Forums:** these provided open question and answer sessions, helping to signpost people to information and to receive feedback on our consultation.
- **Gypsy / Traveller community:** liaison Officer promoted the consultation through Facebook and email contacts.

- **Schools' engagement:** we engaged with parent councils and schools to invite their participation; interactive tools were created to encourage young people to participate in the consultation and learn about planning.

Evaluation of engagement activities

The DPS stated that we would adopt the principles of the updated National Standards for Community Engagement. These standards have been embodied in our approach and in so doing, we have committed to assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement. Therefore, this section evaluates our key engagement activities with a particular focus on where we have sought to meet the Ministers' expectation to employ a range of innovative methods to meaningfully engage with stakeholders and communities. We also refer to an assessment of our overall performance using SP=EED[©] (see Appendix 1).

Representations received on the participation process

Of the 1,390 representations received on the Proposed Plan, 109 representations that referred in some way to engagement processes undertaken in preparing the emerging LDP. Of these, 83 were specifically related to engagement undertaken with respect to proposed sites at Potterton.

In considering these representations there were no substantive omissions, errors or failings identified that pertained to our process and engagement as a planning authority. We do however acknowledge from the representations received, and from our evaluation and lessons learnt exercises, that there are some areas for improvement. We have noted that: our Committee process could be clarified at the outset, including "requests to speak" at Committee meetings; that Neighbour Notification letters could go beyond the Schedule 2 template to include clarity as to the purpose of the letter and more detail on the proposed sites; and that reserved sites would be better included in the Delivery Programme to avoid public concern and queries generated that may be difficult to answer without sites updates being readily available in a central location. A number of representees raised matters that fall outwith the scope of the forthcoming examination. Concerns raised have been passed to the relevant Area Team.

It is considered that the high number of representations received overall to the Proposed Plan 2020 is a positive reflection of the progress made since our Proposed Plan in 2015. This highlights how proactive we have been in raising awareness, and that we have helped enable communities and stakeholders to engage in the Plan-making process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this Report has demonstrated that we have implemented the steps set out in our Participation Statement to involve a wide range of people and organisations in the making of the LDP. We have used a range of innovative methods for meaningful engagement, going above and beyond our statutory requirements in many respects, and so achieving a broad and open public engagement throughout our process. The engagement undertaken has been recognised by the Scottish Government and the Royal

Town Planning Institute. This demonstrates, our strive to ensure we have met and provided a best practice approach.

1 Introduction

The Statement of Conformity with the Participation Statement is a Report that accompanies the submission of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 (“the Proposed Plan”) to Scottish Ministers. The Statement of Conformity is required to meet legislation set out in Sections 18(4)(a)(i) and 19(4) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 which stipulates that Planning Authorities are to report on the extent to which they have consulted with and involved the wider public in preparing their Proposed Plan, and to demonstrate how this consultation conforms with the intentions that were set out in the Participation Statement.

This Report relates to the Participation Statement contained in the [Development Plan Scheme \(DPS\) 2020](#) as approved by Infrastructure Services Committee, Aberdeenshire Council on 14 May 2020. This was a second DPS prepared by Aberdeenshire Council in 2020. The initial DPS 2020 was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council on 12 March 2020, however this was prior to the UK entering ‘lockdown’ in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 6 April 2020 provided emergency legislation with provision to allow Planning Authorities to undertake public consultation without the need to make physical documents available for inspection, for example in libraries or planning offices. A letter issued by the Chief Planner on 3 April 2020 echoed this and encouraged Planning Authorities to continue progress on delivering new Local Development Plans.

As a consequence of the provisions made in the emergency legislation, we considered it appropriate to progress with our public consultation using a revised Participation Statement to take into account the need for social distancing measures in our engagement associated with the Proposed Plan. We also took into account the expectations set by Scottish Ministers to see Local Authorities enhance their use of digital engagement approaches, as well as using non-digital communication to enable opportunities to have specific questions responded to informally, if the whole engagement period takes place whilst there is a ban on gatherings. Engagement on the Proposed Plan took cognisance of the Scottish Government’s “Coronavirus (COVID-19): development planning consultation and engagement advice” note published in May 2020.

Aberdeenshire Council are committed to the principles in Circular 6/2013 “Development Planning”, paragraph 21, that “there should be meaningful consultation in the preparation of development plans... [and] contain a range of innovative techniques and activities for consulting stakeholders, tailored to local circumstances and the issues being dealt with in the Plan”. As set out in paragraphs 70-72 of Circular 6/2013, the nature of this engagement activity will shift as the Local Development Plan process progresses, and engagement should be early and at a point where there is a genuine opportunity to influence the vision, strategy and detail of the Plan.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which received royal assent in July 2019 is continuing to come into effect section by section. We anticipate that changes

introduced through the Act for development planning will not result in fundamental changes to the emerging Plan, given the current stage we are at in its preparation.

The Proposed Plan was formally approved by Aberdeenshire Council on 5 March 2020 and subsequently published for formal public consultation on 25 May 2020. A ten-week consultation period followed, ending on 31 July 2020. A total of 1,390¹ representations were received.

This Report will evidence our engagement activities and evaluate our conformity with the Participation Statement as follows:

- Section 2 provides an overview of our consultation, summarising how we delivered our stated intentions set out in the DPS at each key stage of the Development Plan process. A more detailed description of the consultation undertaken at each stage of the process is then provided as follows:
- Section 3 presents the public engagement undertaken at Pre-Main Issues Report stage;
- Section 4 presents the Main Issues Report consultation;
- Section 5 details the consultation undertaken on the Proposed Plan;
- Section 6 details representations received on the participation process;
- Section 7 evaluates our conformity with the Participation Statement; and
- Section 8 draws conclusions on our conformity with the Participation Statement.

¹ Total number of representations excludes representations that have been withdrawn.

2 Overview of key stages in the Plan-making process and engagement undertaken

2.1 Preparation of the emerging Plan began in Autumn 2017 and culminated in July 2020 following consultation on the Proposed Plan.

Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') stage	Date	Overview of engagement activity
1.Pre-Main Issues Report	Prepare SEA Scoping Report	Autumn 2017 - January 2019	<p>Early community consultation: findings from 'How was it for you' Survey, Citizens Panel Survey and Place Standard events informed and shaped the Participation Statement.</p> <p>Early stakeholder engagement: seminars were held with external and internal stakeholder including statutory and non-statutory consultees and local Councillors.</p> <p>Transparency of the 'Call for sites' process: redacted bids and bid map were published on website to allow early public viewing.</p> <p>Communication / awareness: there were regular LDP e-newsletter bulletins and press releases, a dedicated webpage was created; advance notices of the MIR report publication was given to Community Councils, offering them additional support.</p>
2.Publish Main Issues Report 2019 for consultation Publish Draft Proposed Local	Publish Interim Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment	From 14 January to 8 April 2019 (12 weeks)	<p>Distinctive branding: clear identity achieved by carrying forward the 'Shaping Aberdeenshire' theme in the policy structure e.g., 'Shaping Development in the Countryside', together with use of a strong visual graphic.</p> <p>Publication of statutory notices: published in regional and local newspapers in first available editions from 14 January 2019.</p>

Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') stage	Date	Overview of engagement activity
Development Plan for consultation			<p>Printed copies of the MIR made available in all public libraries: copies distributed for public display in all libraries and area offices, together with hard copies of pro-forma response forms.</p> <p>Informing all key stakeholders: all stakeholders were provided with formal notices of the MIR and advised where to find an online version together with all supporting documentation including the Draft Proposed Plan on our website, and that hard copies were available on request.</p> <p>Additional support for Community Councils: visits from a Planning Officer were provide on request, in preparation of making submissions.</p> <p>Dedicated website and interpretation tools: the webpage provided online access to the MIR and associated documentation, with downloadable response form, draft Proposed Plan, interactive MIR showing all bid sites, two short films, and contact details of the Policy Team.</p> <p>Drop-in sessions: 17 drop-in events were held in community venues across Aberdeenshire; these were advertised and promoted extensively, at both regional and local level.</p> <p>Schools/youth involvement: a Youth Engagement Pilot Project was undertaken, with children's views on the MIR sought and taken into account in the Issues and Actions papers.</p>
3.Publish (electronically) Proposed Local	Publish (electronically) Strategic	25 May to 31 July 2020	<p>Distinctive Branding: a strong visual graphic to be carried through from Proposed Plan to Adopted Plan; pictorial symbols used in the Plan content to provide a strong visual connection between the Vision and the Policies.</p>

Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') stage	Date	Overview of engagement activity
Development Plan 2020 for consultation	Environmental Assessment (SEA) - Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan	(10 weeks)	<p>Pre-consultation information/updates: there was early communication with Community Councils, public media updates and e-newsletter bulletins keeping the public and stakeholders closely informed on a delayed public consultation due to Covid-19 outbreak. There was public announcement on revised consultation dates, and that a revised DPS and participation would be required to enable an electronic means of consultation.</p> <p>Publication of statutory notices: regional and local newspapers published the notices in the first available edition week commencing 25 May 2020, announcing an 8-week consultation to 17 July 2020 (this was subsequently extended to 10 weeks ending 31 July). The statutory notice announced that documents would not be available for public inspection in libraries or Council area offices.</p> <p>Informing all stakeholders: we issued formal notice of publication of the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Government, neighbouring Local Authorities, Community Councils, local Councillors, all those who engaged with us on the MIR, key agencies, all other stakeholders on our database. All stakeholders were advised on the publication of the Proposed Plan and SEA, directing them to the on-line documents, response pro-forma and other supporting documents, stating that hard copies were available on request.</p> <p>Neighbour Notification: letters were issued to all owners, lessees or occupiers of land neighbouring proposed allocations within 20 metres of allocations identified in the Settlement Statements of the Proposed Plan.</p>

Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') stage	Date	Overview of engagement activity
			<p>Bid proposers: letters issued to all bid applicants who had a proposal altered from their original bid, or where there had been a change to a proposal since the MIR.</p> <p>Regular press releases and social media posts: Twitter and Facebook promoted consultation on the Proposed Plan and the SEA, directing people to our virtual drop-in and website.</p> <p>Community planning/area-based promotion: there was dissemination through local contact networks via Facebook and community planning e-bulletins using promotional material provided in the form of poster, leaflet and images for social media posts.</p> <p>LDP E-newsletter bulletins: there were frequent updates to customers throughout the consultation period, providing comprehensive coverage of the information and engagement tools available, and how to make a response.</p> <p>'Live Life Aberdeenshire' promotion: we used this on-line/virtual library resource to promote our consultation via a promotional page with 'have your say' link to our website.</p> <p>Radio publicity: we undertook radio interviews on BBC Radio Scotland and Mearns FM.</p> <p>Dedicated webpage on the Proposed Plan: we provided a comprehensive set of information, with the following key items to facilitate our consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outline of our programme as set out in the DPS and key stages involved, providing links to DPS and MIR

Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') stage	Date	Overview of engagement activity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to the Proposed Plan and all supporting documentation • 'How to respond' weblink • Three short films • An interactive online version of the Proposed Plan • Community Resources section with posters, FAQs and promotional leaflet. <p>Virtual drop-in room: a 360-degree, interactive virtual community hall setting, with posters enabling the user to 'walk' through a summary of the Proposed Plan, poster by poster around the virtual room, including 'project' folders on tables, screens showing 3 short films, a live chat function, FAQs, a poster explaining how to make a response, and a downloadable response form.</p> <p>Skype meetings with Community Council Forums: these provided open question and answer sessions, helping to signpost people to information and to receive feedback on our consultation.</p> <p>Gypsy / Traveller community: liaison Officer promoted the consultation through Facebook and email contacts.</p> <p>Schools' engagement: we engaged with parent councils and schools to invite their participation; interactive tools were created to encourage young people to participate in the consultation and learn about planning.</p>

3 Pre-Main Issues Report Consultation

3.1 The following activities were undertaken from late 2017 through to publication of the Main Issues Report in January 2019.

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Early engagement</p>	<p>‘How was it for you survey’ (2016)</p> <p>A survey was conducted to seek feedback on our Plan-making processes from Community Councils and other members of the public who previously engaged with the Local Development Plan (LDP) process, including developers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>A key finding of the survey was the importance participants attached to early and broad engagement. Other findings of the survey highlighted the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased public awareness of the processes and stages; • increased public awareness of, and broader opportunities for, engagement; • use of simple language; • feedback to participants on the outcome of their involvement; and • drop-in sessions. <p>These findings informed and shaped the Participation Statement and engagement activities outlined in this Report. Notably, we held ‘Place Standard’ events at pre-Main Issues stage to ensure an early focus on settlement planning, as requested by Elected Members.</p>

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
<p>Early engagement</p>	<p>Citizens Panel 51 survey (Autumn 2017):</p> <p>Responses reinforced the view that significant change is required on a number of policy topics. In general citizens agreed with the position set out in the current LDP 2017. The survey identified that topics such as rural development, design, affordable housing and “infrastructure first” need to be explored as Main Issues.</p> <p>This survey was an Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership (ACPP) initiative and provided an opportunity to gain views on the LDP 2017. Approximately 560 respondents returned the survey out of 1199 issued to current Panel members in November 2017.</p>	
<p>Early engagement</p>	<p>‘Place Standard’ events offered to all 68 Community Councils (Autumn 2017):</p> <p>These events were hosted by Community Planning Officers, with Policy Team Officer involvement, using the Place Standard Tool. There was a very high level of participation from the Community Councils with all but one participating.</p> <p>The event was preceded by a Community Council briefing to explain the forthcoming programme of Plan development. The Place Standard sessions sought to identify what the local issues were in order to identify planning objectives important to the community and inform a vision statement for the settlement. This included identifying features that should be protected or enhanced, and local community aspirations for each settlement.</p>	 <p>Inverbervie, 13 November 2017</p>

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
		 <p data-bbox="1487 783 1984 815">Laurencekirk, 29 November 2017</p>
Effective engagement	Feedback to Community Councils (Autumn 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Councils were emailed to thank them for their active involvement early on in the process. • A summary of the main issues arising from the Place Standard events was enclosed and we requested they advise us if there was any disagreement with the points we recorded. • We explained this note will form part of the assessment and we would then send to Local Councillors. 	
Early and broad engagement	Stakeholder engagement with those with land development and building interests, key agencies, other special interest groups – (early 2018) External stakeholder seminars / topic meetings (held with Agents; Housebuilders, Economic Development, Rural Development, Environment)	

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<p>Key stakeholder consultation with Transport Scotland, Scottish Water, SEPA, NHS Grampian, Historic Environment Scotland.</p> <p>Internal stakeholder meetings were held with Development Management, specialist teams including the Environment Team.</p>
<p>Ensure that any issues highlighted by stakeholders were recorded, and where possible actioned</p>	<p>Options and solutions were explored.</p> <p>In preparation for Local Area Committee Seminars (see below), all issues raised through the Pre-MIR engagement workshops were collated and documented. All non-LDP issues were re-directed to the appropriate service e.g. Roads and Transportation Service.</p> <p>Policy and plan options were considered for presentation to Local Councillors as discussion points.</p>
<p>Early engagement with Elected Members</p>	<p>Six Local Area Committee Seminars (October 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These seminars enabled us to capture comments on policies and proposals at an early stage and be reflected in the Main Issues Report. • Members (Local Councillors) were presented with summaries of the main policy and plan issues identified from the Place Standard events and from the stakeholder seminars/topic meetings.
<p>Ensure transparency and raise awareness (bid process)</p>	<p>‘Call for sites’ from development industry and landowners</p> <p>In order to enhance public engagement and raise awareness of this stage of the LDP process, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • published redacted versions of the bids on a new dedicated LDP 2021 website: https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2021/development-bids-2018/

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enabled the public to view the bid sites on an interactive map on the Council's website. <p>Bid seminars with Local Councillors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These seminars were held to ensure that comments on proposals could be captured at an early stage and be reflected in the MIR. These were open to the public and as such members of Community Councils and agents took the opportunity to attend. This enabled their issues and concerns to be raised and discussed at this early stage, and have their views recorded to be factored into the MIR.
<p>Early, effective and efficient engagement, with raised awareness</p>	<p>Community Council 'heads up' briefing on Main Issues Report (November 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To coincide with ISC papers being published, all Community Councils were written to in order to direct them to the Committee papers which gave early sight of the MIR and supporting documents (Environmental Report, Monitoring Statement and a DRAFT Proposed Plan) and inviting response during the consultation period. The briefing explained the LDP process and suggested an approach for the Community Councils to gather and to co-ordinate their views and agree on their submission. Policy Team support was offered to Community Councils to assist with their understanding of the process and attend any special meetings as required. <p>Publicising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our e-newsletter bulletins were issued regularly to keep people updated as to what was happening, when and why and raising awareness of our dedicated web page.
<p>Maintain a consultee /</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A database has been maintained and updated periodically to keep it current throughout the Plan-making period. Non-statutory stakeholders have had the opportunity to withdraw from receiving notifications sent regarding progress of the Plan.

What we said we would do (Pre-MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
stakeholder database	

4 Main Issues Report 2019 – Public Consultation

4.1 The following activities were undertaken as part of the formal public consultation process associated with publication of the Main Issues Report 2019 (MIR) which commenced on 14 January 2019 continuing for 12 weeks until 9 April 2019.

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Communication / awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use distinctive branding to provide a clear identity	<p>Main Issues Report 2019 published 14 January 2019:</p>  <p>A clear visual graphic was used, and ‘Shaping Aberdeenshire’ was carried forward as theme. This theme was initially adopted for the Local Development Plan (LDP) 2017 to emphasise placemaking e.g., ‘Shaping Development in the Countryside’:</p>

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 5 Shaping Development in the Countryside</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Different Types of Rural Areas</p> <p>Scottish Planning Policy requires that we identify “pressured and easily accessible” and “remote” rural areas to protect against an unsustainable growth in car-based commuting and suburbanisation of the countryside. It also suggests that “intermediate” areas can be defined, tailored to local circumstances. There are different pressures for development across Aberdeenshire. Modification of the boundary that we currently use which is the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA) would principally impact on opportunities for additions to clusters of houses in area outwith the AHMA.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; border: 1px solid #add8e6; padding: 5px;"> <p>Main Issue 7</p> <p>The preferred option would be to use the Scottish Government’s Six Fold Urban Rural Classification to define accessible and remote areas for the application of rural policy.</p> <p>An alternative option would be to modify the Scottish Government’s Urban Rural Classification and identify a boundary for an intermediate area using local knowledge.</p> </div> </div>

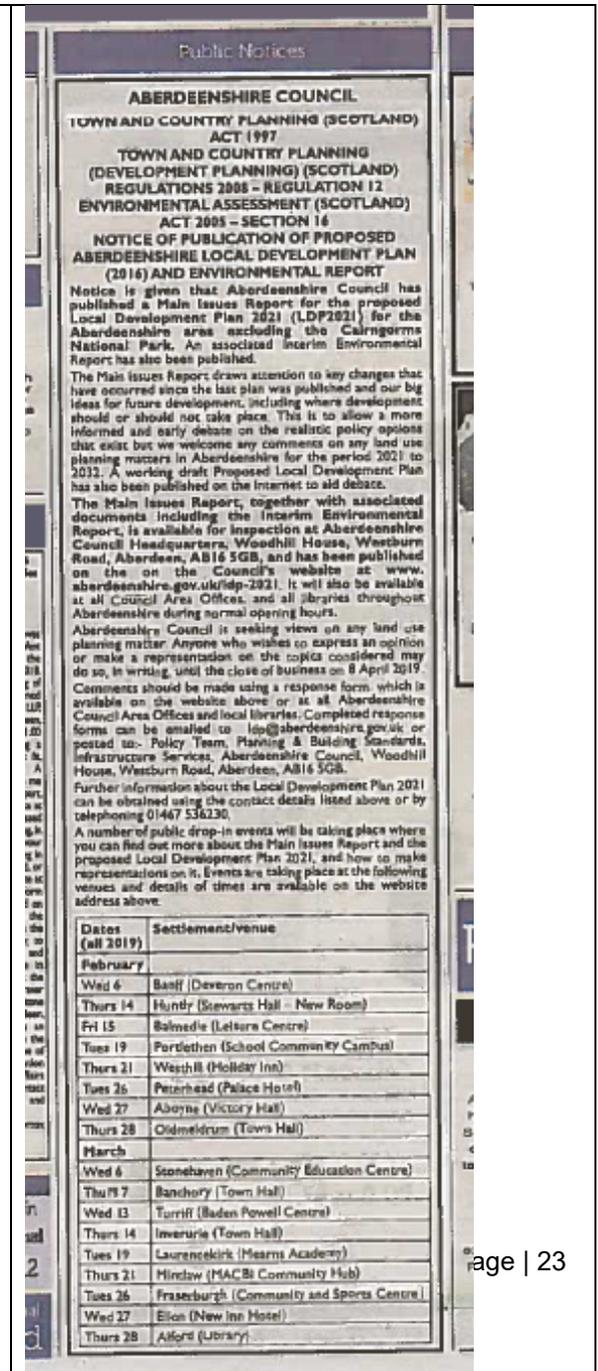
Communication / awareness:

- **Publish statutory notices in regional and local press**

Press release issued to announce publication of MIR, providing 12 weeks for people to give us their views (14 January 2019)

Statutory notices were placed in the regional and local newspapers across all areas, together with publication on the internet, to notify that the MIR has been prepared and where it can be inspected, inviting representation from the public, with information on how to do this and by what date. A brief description of the MIR content and purpose, and where further information can be obtained were also provided, together with a programme of drop-in events.

On 14 January 2019 a public notice was published in the Aberdeenshire edition of the Press and Journal newspaper and thereafter the first available editions of local newspapers (proof of insertion is available upon request).

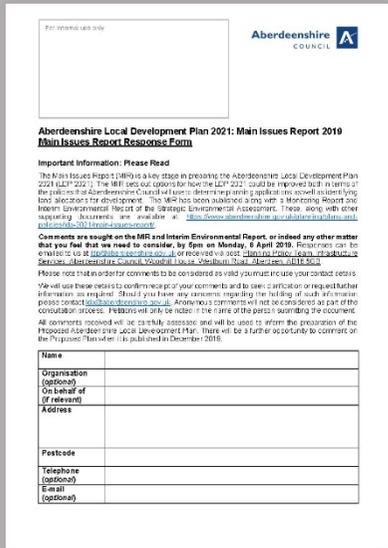


What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>- Broad publicity</p>	 <p>The image shows a news release document from Aberdeenshire Council. At the top left is the council's logo with the tagline 'From mountain to sea'. To the right is the council's name and logo, along with contact information: 'E mail: news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk', 'Phone: 01467 438222', and 'Web: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/news'. The main heading is 'News Release'. Below this, the issue date is 'Thursday, January 17, 2019'. The title is 'Consultation open on Main Issues Report for Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021'. The body text explains that communities, developers, and anyone with an interest in local planning policy and land allocation are invited to take part in a consultation. It details the purpose of the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Main Issues Report (MIR), and provides information on how to access the documents, including online and at local libraries.</p>
<p>Make printed copies of the Main Issues Report available in all public libraries</p>	<p>Printed copies of the Main Issues Report together with copies of the pro-forma response form were distributed to all 35 libraries and all planning offices during week commencing 14 January 2019. These were accompanied by a letter explaining that the MIR should be displayed for the full duration of the consultation period.</p>

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	
	<p>The MIR was delivered to all 35 libraries in Aberdeenshire (and one in neighbouring Cairngorms National Park (CNP)):</p> <p>Banff and Buchan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aberchirder Library Banff Library Bracoden Library, Gardenstown Cairnbulg Library Fraserburgh Library Macduff Library Portsoy Library Rosehearty Library Whitehills Library <p>Buchan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boddam Library Cruden Bay Library Mintlaw Library

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<p data-bbox="714 312 1003 416">New Pitsligo Library Peterhead Library Strichen Library</p> <p data-bbox="524 459 958 603">Formartine: Balmedie Library Ellon Library Meldrum Library Turriff Library</p> <p data-bbox="524 643 994 858">Garioch: Inch Library Inverurie Library Kemnay Library Kintore Library Newmachar Library Westhill Library</p> <p data-bbox="524 903 994 1193">Kincardine and Mearns: Fettercairn Library Inverbervie Library Mearns Library Newtonhill Library Portlethen Library Stonehaven Library</p> <p data-bbox="524 1233 1048 1377">Marr / CNP: Aboyne Library Alford Library Banchory Library Brander Library, Huntly</p>

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	Ballatar Library (in CNP)
Inform all key stakeholders of MIR publication and to invite responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key agencies, neighbouring Authorities, Scottish Ministers and Elected Members were issued with a printed copy of the MIR and advised that the draft Proposed Plan will be available on our website. • We wrote to all other stakeholders advising them that the Main Issues Report and a Draft Proposed Plan had been published, and to invite responses. Attention was also drawn to the Draft Proposed Plan available on the website. • Community Councils were provided with formal notice of the Main Issues Report consultation and advised of the availability of the Report with hard copies available on request. • All stakeholders were advised of where to find the MIR and associated documents on our website.
Offer additional support to Community Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Community Council was offered a further visit from a Planning Officer to answer questions and provide advice on preparation of submissions. Community Council meetings were attended by an Officer where requested either before or during the consultation period. The Community Councils we attended on request were: Banff and Macduff, Inverurie, Bennachie, Cromar (Tarland), Mintlaw, Newmachar and Kingseat, Westhill and Elrick.
Develop a dedicated website, publish copies of the MIR and response form, together with additional tools and information:	<p>A dedicated webpage went live on 14 January 2019 created on LDP 2021 to promote the MIR, encourage electronic submission of representations, with tools to assist in the interpretation and understanding of the information.</p> <p>The website provided the following key items to facilitate engagement:</p>

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
<p>- Documentation and response form</p>	<p>1. Main Issues Report with 6 Appendices for each area, Response Form and all supporting documentation including SEA, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, HRA and Monitoring Statement.</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows the Aberdeenshire Council website page for the 'Main Issues Report 2021: Main Issues Report 2019'. The page includes a header with the council logo and a title. Below the title is a section for 'Important Information - Please Read' which contains text about the Main Issues Report (MIR) and the need for comments by Monday, 8 April 2019. It also includes a form for providing contact details, with fields for Name, Organisation (optional), On behalf of (if relevant), Address, Postcode, Telephone (optional), and Email (optional).</p>
<p>- Interactive interpretation tool</p>	<p>2. Interactive map based Main Issues Report</p> <p>The interactive Main Issues Report was created to allow greater and easier interaction with the area's bids received, and main issues identified.</p>	

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL
Aberdeenshire Council Main Issues Report 2019

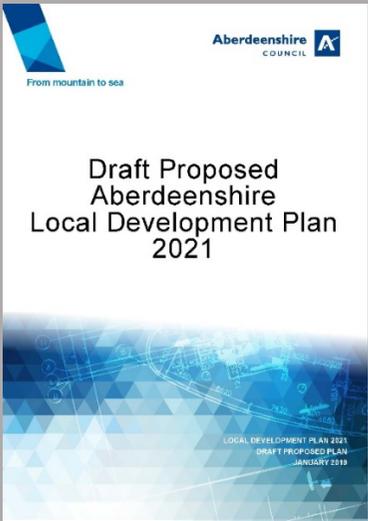
Garioch Settlements

In this section, you can view:

- [The full Main Issues Report in PDF format.](#)
- [The bids in PDF format.](#)
- Information and location of bids and allocations by following the links below:

- Auchincroft
- Blackburn
- Chapel of Garioch
- Cluny and Sauchen
- Cullittie
- Dunsicht
- Durno
- Drum of Wartle
- Eids
- Gartlogie
- Gaval Junction, Dyce
- Hatton of Fintray
- Insch
- Inverurie and Port Elphinstone
- Keithhall
- Keithroy
- Kellochbank
- Kermoy
- Kingskirk
- Kinmuick
- Kintore
- Kirkton of Boyne
- Kirkton of Skene
- Leithenry

The map shows the Garioch area with various settlements marked by red dots and labels. The map includes a legend, a search bar, and a zoom control. The map is titled 'GARIOCH SETTLEMENTS' and shows the locations of the settlements listed on the left. The map is a topographic map with a grid overlay. The map is titled 'GARIOCH SETTLEMENTS' and shows the locations of the settlements listed on the left. The map is a topographic map with a grid overlay. The map is titled 'GARIOCH SETTLEMENTS' and shows the locations of the settlements listed on the left. The map is a topographic map with a grid overlay.

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation tools to assist in visualising potential change 	<p>3. Draft Proposed Local Development Plan as a tool to aid with the interpretation of the MIR.</p> <p>‘Tracked changes’ were used to illustrate where changes are proposed in the text, and settlement maps provided to illustrate how settlements might change based on recommendations in the MIR. (See extract illustration below).</p>	

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

DAVIOT

Vision

Daviot is an attractive village set within rolling farmland and on the edge of Daviot Estate. The village is characterised by large areas of open community land, its historic assets and by the scenic views across the Forthglen and Carboth countryside.

Due to the attractive setting of the village and its proximity to large service centres, there is some significant development pressure which needs to be carefully managed, so as to maintain the community land and setting of the village. Development requires to be modest and restricted over the next 10 years. The community recognises the difficulties of sustaining services in such a small community. Consequently, the planning objectives for Daviot are to protect the amenity of the village, provide homes to meet local demand and support local services, including Daviot Primary School.

Narrow streets and excessive vehicular speeds through the village remain of concern.

Natural and Historic Environment

The Loanhead stone circle and enclosed cremation cemetery is a scheduled monument located to the north of the settlement just beyond the settlement boundary.

Settlement Features

Protected Land	
P1	To conserve the landscape setting of Daviot Estate.
P2	To conserve the community land as a local amenity.
P3	To conserve the open space and recreational areas as amenities for the village.
P4	To conserve the car park as an off-street parking area.

Services and Infrastructure

- Strategic drainage and water supply: Development will connect directly off trunk main. 24 hour water storage will be required for developments in Daviot.
- Community facilities: All residential development may be required to contribute towards facilities that serve the community in Daviot or towards facilities in the wider catchment area at Oldmeldrum. These may be identified in the Community Plan or relevant Community Action Plan.
- Sports and recreation facilities: All residential development may be required to contribute to indoor and outdoor sports and learning facilities in Daviot or towards facilities in the wider catchment area at Oldmeldrum. These may be identified in the Community Plan or relevant Community Action Plan.
- Waste and recycling: All development must contribute to a household waste and recycling centre in the Inverurie area.
- Health facilities: All residential development must contribute towards a new health centre in Inverurie.

Allocated Sites

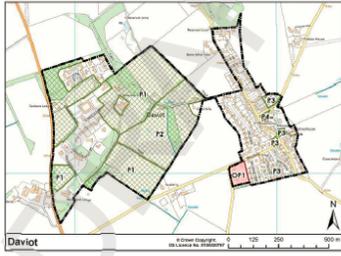
OP1: Land to the south east	Allocation: 8 homes
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This site was previously allocated as site OP1 in the 2017 LDP. The site is a logical location for development within close proximity of the village centre, the school, and the pub, and so can

help support these services. Overdevelopment will be prevented by its closely defined boundaries. The development will be well screened by mature trees along its southern boundary.

Access to the site should be taken from Weirbrae, as this will allow the strongest linkage to be made to the village centre. Active travel links within the site are encouraged and these should link to both the village and to the surrounding countryside. A footpath linking the site with the village and the Weirbrae core path will be required. Specific care should be taken regarding visual impact of the development from the west.

The site should be landscaped in such a way to retain the remaining trees and woodland to the south of the site to screen the development. Housing on the site should be sympathetic to the character and setting of the site and to nearby housing. It is expected that the site will contribute towards affordable housing in line with Policy 44 Affordable Housing. The affordable houses on the site must be integrated into the development and should most appropriately be small, low-cost houses for sale.



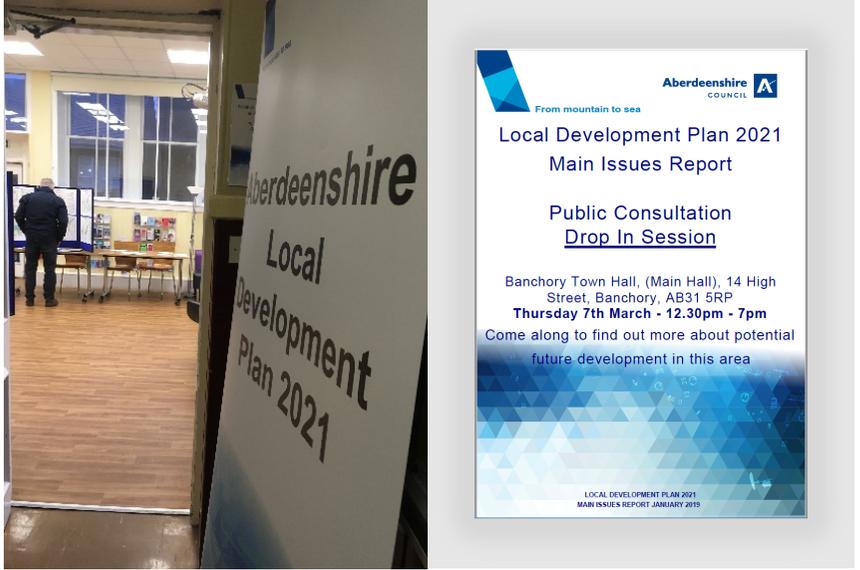
- Explanatory tools

4. Short Films

Two short films explained the [Main Issues Report process](#) and the [MIR content](#) including how to make a response.

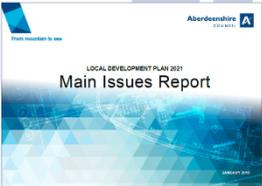


What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)																																																												
<p>Hold Drop-in sessions</p> <p>- 17 venues across Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>During February and March 2019, we visited 17 community venues across the Local Development Plan area to invite the public to submit comments on the Main Issues Report:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="533 459 1473 1002"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Time</th> <th>Settlement/venue</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="3">February 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed 6</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Banff (Deveron Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 14</td> <td>12.30 – 6.30 pm</td> <td>Huntly (Stewarts Hall)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fri 15</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Balmedie (Leisure Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tues 19</td> <td>2 – 7 pm</td> <td>Portlethen (School Community Campus)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 21</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Westhill (Holiday Inn)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tues 26</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Peterhead (Palace Hotel)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed 27</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Aboyne (Victory Hall)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 28</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Oldmeldrum (Town Hall)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">March 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed 6</td> <td>2.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Stonehaven (Community Education Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 7</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Banchory (Town Hall)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed 13</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Turriff (Baden Powell Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 14</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Inverurie (Town Hall)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tues 19</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Laurencekirk (Mearns Academy)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 21</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Mintlaw (MACBI Community Hub)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tues 26</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Fraserburgh (Community and Sports Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed 27</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Ellon (New Inn Hotel)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs 28</td> <td>12.30 – 7 pm</td> <td>Alford (Library)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Time	Settlement/venue	February 2019			Wed 6	12.30 – 7 pm	Banff (Deveron Centre)	Thurs 14	12.30 – 6.30 pm	Huntly (Stewarts Hall)	Fri 15	12.30 – 7 pm	Balmedie (Leisure Centre)	Tues 19	2 – 7 pm	Portlethen (School Community Campus)	Thurs 21	12.30 – 7 pm	Westhill (Holiday Inn)	Tues 26	12.30 – 7 pm	Peterhead (Palace Hotel)	Wed 27	12.30 – 7 pm	Aboyne (Victory Hall)	Thurs 28	12.30 – 7 pm	Oldmeldrum (Town Hall)	March 2019			Wed 6	2.30 – 7 pm	Stonehaven (Community Education Centre)	Thurs 7	12.30 – 7 pm	Banchory (Town Hall)	Wed 13	12.30 – 7 pm	Turriff (Baden Powell Centre)	Thurs 14	12.30 – 7 pm	Inverurie (Town Hall)	Tues 19	12.30 – 7 pm	Laurencekirk (Mearns Academy)	Thurs 21	12.30 – 7 pm	Mintlaw (MACBI Community Hub)	Tues 26	12.30 – 7 pm	Fraserburgh (Community and Sports Centre)	Wed 27	12.30 – 7 pm	Ellon (New Inn Hotel)	Thurs 28	12.30 – 7 pm	Alford (Library)
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<p>- Broad publicity</p>	<p>We publicised the events as broadly as possible to encourage participation:</p> <p>All drop-in events were advertised in the press in the Statutory Notices (national and local press), and locally through posters in venues and by Community Planners promoting the events through their community contact networks by email, social media, blogs, together with use of traditional posters in venues and in libraries.</p>																																																												

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive to all, and inviting 	<p>All venues were selected to reduce as far as possible any barriers to engagement. All venues were located on the ground floor or accessible by lift. We took into account people's comfort needs e.g., availability of chairs. We ensured all events were signed from the main entrance to ensure ease of access and to encourage passers-by. Large text was used in the posters to assist with readability, in particular for those less well sighted. On request, we were able to make MIR documents available in large text.</p>	
<p>Assess impact of engagement and use what has been learned for future community engagement</p>	<p>We carried out an evaluation of our drop-in events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 800 people visited overall, with widely varying attendance across different events ranging from 13 people in Huntly, to approximately 350 or more in Banchory. • An in-depth Evaluation Report was carried out incorporating informal feedback received from the visiting public, to assess factors such as venue suitability, display information, room set up, topics of interest, how people found out about events, and any unexpected outcomes. • The Report identified what worked well and what did not and concluded with a set of practical recommendations for future events (see below, Section 7 Evaluation). 	 <p>The image shows a drop-in session for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021. On the left, a person is standing near a table in a room with large windows. On the right, a large sign reads 'Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021'. Next to it is a poster for the 'Local Development Plan 2021 Main Issues Report Public Consultation Drop In Session'. The poster includes the Aberdeenshire Council logo, the slogan 'From mountain to sea', and details for the session: 'Banchory Town Hall, (Main Hall), 14 High Street, Banchory, AB31 5RP Thursday 7th March - 12.30pm - 7pm'. It also invites people to 'Come along to find out more about potential future development in this area'.</p>
	<p>Photo montage of MIR drop-in sessions 2019:</p>	



What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Schools' engagement, taking account of the Children's Charter (involving young people in the planning process, treating every child as an individual who can form a view)</p>	<p>Youth engagement pilot project (January – March 2019):</p> <p>Planning Officers engaged with 14 primary schools and 2 secondary schools across Aberdeenshire. This equated to approximately 450 young people. Pupils were given the opportunity to comment on the MIR. These comments were subsequently considered in the Issues and Actions Report (see Fraserburgh Issues and Actions). The project was shortlisted for a Scottish Award for Quality in Planning 2019. There is a separate Participation Statement for the Youth Engagement Project (also see below, Section 7 Evaluation).</p> 

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Communication / Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular bulletins and news releases were issued to the press throughout the MIR consultation period to encourage participation and encourage promotion through local press e.g. 'only a week to go' storyline. • Local press and community newsletter articles helped encourage participation in local areas e.g. Ellon Times two-page spread (28 February 2019) and Westhill Local Councillors' bulletin (Spring 2019). • In-house promotion also took place within the Council through posters in Council area offices and internal publications (Infrastructure Quarterly and Policy Bulletin).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-newsletter 	<p>Monthly e-newsletters were produced to keep customers fully informed prior to, and during, the MIR consultation period:</p> <div data-bbox="526 683 1120 1150" style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Main Issues Report 2019 Public Consultation Underway!</p> <p>The Main Issues Report is the main opportunity for early engagement to inform the content of the Local Development Plan 2021. The Main Issues Report is the first formal stage where members of the public and stakeholders can get involved and comment on those areas where significant policy change might be required. It is also the first formal opportunity to comment on those sites where new homes or businesses could be permitted for the period beyond 2021.</p> <p>All the published documents are on our website, with hard copies of the Main Issues Report available in libraries and Council Area Offices across Aberdeenshire (including Woodhill House, Aberdeen). We have a response form that we would encourage all respondents to make use of. Responses should be made in writing (email or by post) by 8 April 2019.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>We have produced two short films on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan process and the Main Issues Report. These films can be viewed on Aberdeenshire Council's YouTube channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 - Process • Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 - Main Issues Report </div> </div> </div> <p>We also kept customers informed about our Development Plan Scheme:</p>

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)			
	<div data-bbox="533 316 1182 746" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Development Plan Scheme 2019</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">The Draft Development Plan Scheme 2019 was considered by Area Committees during November and December 2018. The Development Plan Scheme will be considered by Infrastructure Services Committee on 24 January 2019 where we will be seeking authority to formally publish it.</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; font-size: small;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Aberdeenshire Council - Development Plan Scheme 2019</p> <p>Introduction</p> <p>The purpose of a Development Plan Scheme is to inform communities and participants of the programme for production of the Local Development Plan. Aberdeenshire Council is required to include a 'Participation Statement' within the Development Plan Scheme that sets out who we will consult with, how, and when.</p> <p>Review of the Development Plan Process</p> <p>The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the legislation surrounding the preparation of Local Development Plans and a new Planning Act is anticipated in 2019. A number of changes are proposed to the current Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. 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In the meantime, Aberdeenshire Council will continue to prepare a Local Development Plan under the legislative guidance which is current at the time.</p> <p>What is a Local Development Plan?</p> <p>The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2019 is a place based land use planning document that contains the policies used by Aberdeenshire Council to determine planning applications and identifies the allocated sites on which development should take place. It covers the whole of the Aberdeenshire area, excluding the Cairnryan National Park, which has its own Local Development Plan.</p> </td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>The Development Plan Scheme outlines when, how and with whom Aberdeenshire Council will consult with in preparing the next Local Development Plan. Area Committees recommended a number of organisations that should be added to our consultation database. 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<p>Ensure transparency in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how we have dealt with information received - how we have considered all 	<p>Main Issues Report responses:</p> <p>Issues and Actions papers went live and were therefore available to the public through the Committee webpages during August and September 2019 when Special Area Committee Meetings² were held prior to final papers being presented and considered at Infrastructure Services Committee on 3 October 2019.</p> <p>Out of a total of 1,083 submissions received from our MIR consultation, a small number of representations were received about our public engagement the MIR process. These were summarised in our Issues and Actions papers as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcomed the support given to our engagement, but on the other hand regretted that it was perceived there was insufficient time available for questions at the public meetings. We agreed that detailed local 			

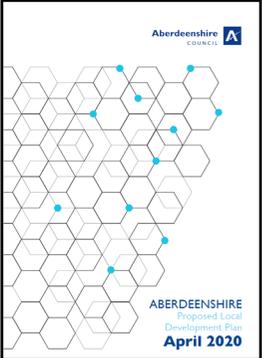
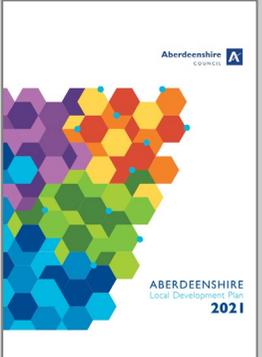
² Special Area Committee meetings were held during August and September 2019 for the purpose of presenting and discussing the Issues and Actions concerning policies and proposals for each of the six Administrative areas.

What we said we would do (MIR consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>representations received</p> <p>- making all representations public</p>	<p>plans for each settlement are necessary and highlighted that there is no restriction on whom can engage in a LDP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to representations made regarding our methods used in the production of the MIR and our evidence gathering, and that analysis and assessment of need in settlements is required beyond housing numbers, we highlighted that the Vision Statements (in the Settlement Statements) expresses planning issues raised by Community Councils at the Place Standard exercise. • We highlighted that the MIR was publicised widely, but acknowledged more could have been done, and that our limited use of social media was on the understanding that this is not a ubiquitous means of communication. • There were representations about confusion caused by including the Draft Proposed LDP. However, we did not agree with this, but rather the intention was to add clarity. • Redacted copies of all representations were made available for public view on our website.

5 Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 – Public Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2020 took place between 25 May and 31 July 2020. Due to restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face ‘drop-in’ events previously programmed for May and early June 2020 could not take place. As set out in our revised DPS May 2020, our engagement strategy progressed largely using an electronic means of engagement, including a virtual drop-in ‘room’ as a like for like replacement for the traditional drop-in format. However, also pursued a traditional means of engagement to provide an overall digital and non-digital consultation ‘package’:

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
Distinctive branding	Branding of the Proposed Plan in order to achieve a strong identity for customer recognition and enhanced understanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong visual graphic with a continuous theme from the Proposed Plan to Adopted Plan;• Icons used within the Proposed Plan representing the main policy outcomes the Plan aims to achieve to provide stronger visual connection between the Vision and Policies, and so enhance understanding:

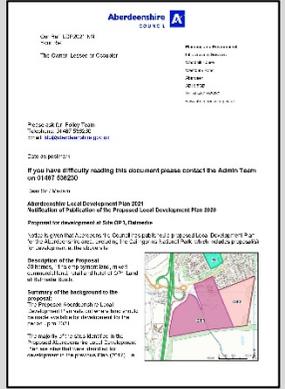
What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1357 357 1816 395">  To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design <li data-bbox="1357 424 1753 475">  To take on the challenges of sustainable development and climate change <li data-bbox="1357 504 1794 539">  To protect and improve assets and resources <li data-bbox="1357 568 1742 603">  To increase and diversify the economy <li data-bbox="1357 632 1809 667">  To promote the creation of green-blue networks within and between settlements <li data-bbox="1357 711 1805 762">  To make efficient use of the transport network, reduce the need to travel and promote walking, cycling, and public transport
Keep people informed	Prior to publication of Proposed Plan we ensured there were regular updates, as follows:	

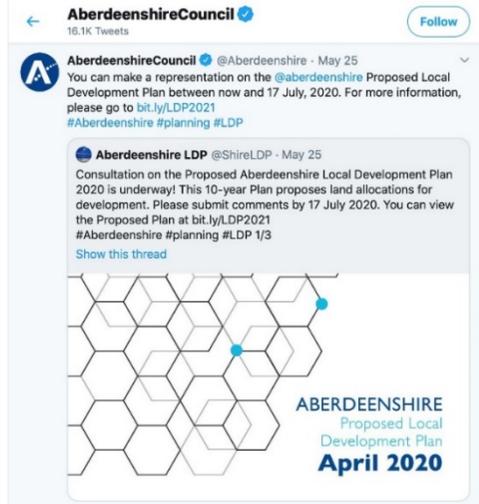
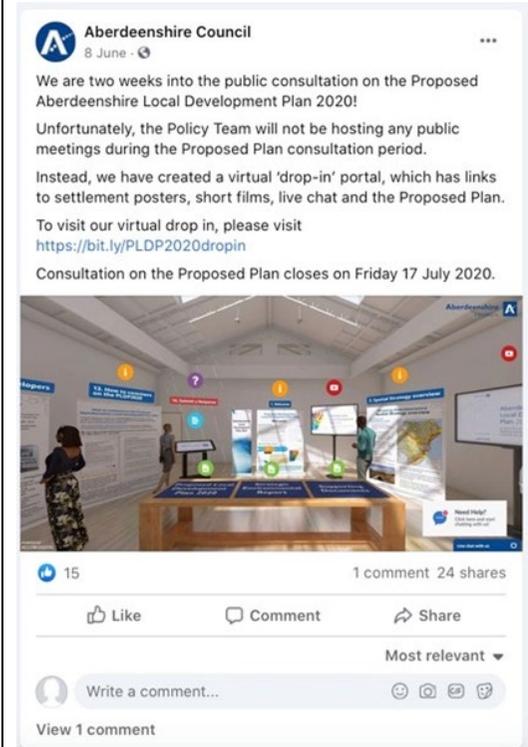
What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Council were sent a ‘heads up’ email 09 March 2020 – following Full Council, we gave early notice of the DPS and a timetable of drop-in events and offered Community Councils additional support. Note: Subsequently, the country went into lockdown with social distancing measures introduced, and the engagement strategy changed as set out in the revised DPS May 2020, resulting in the drop-in events being cancelled. • LDP Media update (31 March 2020) – there was a public announcement on our website that the formal consultation due to commence on 27 April 2020 had to be postponed with a date yet to be decided and announcing that the approved Proposed Plan would be published on our website. We also announced there would be a revised DPS with an updated Participation Statement. • E-newsletter (April 2020) – we advised customers of the postponed public consultation and gave advance notice that this was likely to go ahead using electronic means of engagement. We continued to keep customers updated regularly subsequently throughout (pre, during and post) the consultation period by frequent and additional e-newsletter issues as required. 

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release (01 May 2020) Council website – this announced revised consultation dates 25 May – 17 July 2020, and that a revised DPS and Participation Statement would be required in light of The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 which allows Planning Authorities to undertake public consultation without the need to make physical copies of documents available for public inspection. It was announced that the Infrastructure Services Committee will be asked to approve the new consultation approach at their meeting on 14 May 2020, which would provide an electronic means of consultation, replacing real world drop-in events with a virtual approach. The Director of Infrastructure Services, Stephen Archer was quoted: <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Changes brought about by the current circumstances present an opportunity for Aberdeenshire Council to embrace engagement through alternative means than purely relying on face-to-face interaction.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Innovative ways of communicating with and meeting customers and stakeholders ‘virtually’ will be adopted where possible which will provide an opportunity to also learn for future engagement and consultation undertaken by the Council.”</i></p>
<p>Publish statutory notices in regional and local press</p>	<p>Formal announcement of publication of the Proposed Plan and associated SEA, announcing 8-week consultation period commencing 25 May 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was early announcement in the regional press, followed by the Statutory Notices being published in the first available editions of regional and local press from 25 May 2020 (proof of insertion is available upon request)³, allowing 8-weeks for people to give their

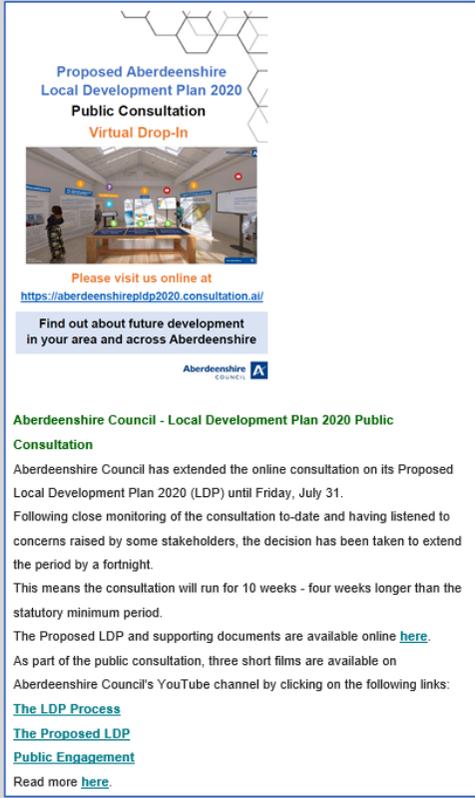
³ Press and Journal (Aberdeenshire edition) 28.05.2020, preceded by article on 20.05.2020. Evening Express 28.05.2020 preceded by article 18.05.2020; Local press notices in: Aberdeenshire batch – Turriff Advertiser/Ellon Advertiser/Inverurie Advertiser/Huntly Express 28.05.2020; Grampian batch – Buchan Observer/Banffshire Journal 26&28.05.2020; Ellon Times/Inverurie Herald 28.05.2020; Deeside and Donside Piper 29.05.2020; Mearns Leader/Kincardine Observer 29.05.2020.

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<p>views. (Note: the consultation was subsequently extended to 10 weeks, with a further extension of 2 weeks allowed on request).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A link was provided to our LDP 2021 website and it was announced that documents would not be available for public inspection in libraries or Council Planning Offices in accordance with Section 7 and Schedule 6(9)(2) of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020. <div data-bbox="645 531 1084 1038" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Public Notices</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT PLANNING) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2008 – REGULATION 12 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005 – SECTION 16 NOTICE OF PUBLICATION OF PROPOSED ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2020) AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT</p> <p>Notice is given that Aberdeenshire Council has published a Proposed Local Development Plan for the Aberdeenshire area. An associated Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan has also been published.</p> <p>The Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan and associated documents set out the proposals made by Aberdeenshire Council for future development in Aberdeenshire and in particular proposals for where development should or should not be carried out. The Proposed Local Development Plan also contains policies that would be used to determine future applications for planning permission. The next Local Development Plan will shape the future of land use in Aberdeenshire for the period until 2031.</p> <p>The Proposed Local Development Plan, together with associated documents including the Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan, has been published, and is available for inspection by electronic means, on the Council's website at: https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2021/. In accordance with Section 7 and Schedule 6(9)(2) of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, documents will not be made available for inspection in public libraries or at Council Planning Offices throughout Aberdeenshire due to action taken in order to control the incidence or transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council is seeking views on its Proposed Local Development Plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan. Anyone who wishes to express an opinion or make a representation on the Proposed Local Development Plan or Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan may do so, in writing, until 5pm on 17 July 2020. We encourage respondents to utilise the pro-forma response form, which is available at the website above or by contacting the Planning Policy Team.</p> <p>Completed responses can be emailed to: ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or posted to: Planning Policy Team, Infrastructure Services, Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB. Further information about the Proposed Local Development Plan can be obtained using the contact details listed above or by telephoning 01467 563230.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1106 544 1554 1034" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NEWS / LOCAL</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Online consultation on north-east development plan to be launched</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">by David Walker 18/05/2020, 6:30 pm</p>  <p style="font-size: x-small;">Councilors on the communities committee heard a report on the amount of rent arrears owed</p> <p>Residents across the north-east will get the chance to have their say on future developments through an online consultation.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were further media updates issued by the Council throughout the consultation period.
<p>Provide formal notice of publication of the Proposed Plan to all stakeholders</p>	<p>Formal notice of publication of the Proposed Plan and related documents was provided as follows (25 May 2020):</p> <p>We provided formal notice to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Government;

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbouring Local Authorities, • Community Councils; • Local Councillors; • All those who engaged with us on the MIR; • Key agencies • All other stakeholders in our database, advising on: <p>publication of the Proposed Plan and SEA, directing them to the on-line documents and response proforma, inviting representations, and advising that the Proposed Plan, response pro-forma and all supporting documents, with hard copies were available on request.</p>
<p>Send Neighbour Notification letters</p>	<p>Neighbour Notification letters issued prior to start of consultation (11,717 letters) – All owners, lessees or occupiers of land neighbouring proposed allocations within 20 metres of allocations identified in the Settlement Statements of the Proposed Plan, were issued with a Neighbour Notification letter, issued prior to the start of the consultation.</p> 

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
Provide clear communication and ensure the process is understandable	<p>Bid proposer letters (prior to start of consultation) – in addition, we wrote to all the bid proposers who had a proposal altered from their original proposal, or a Main Issues Report (MIR) recommendation subsequently changed, or where the bid had been amended.</p>
Keep people informed via e-newsletter updates and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular social media posts were issued at intervals throughout the consultation period – Twitter and Facebook were used. Social media proved a key means of promotion for the virtual drop-in (see below).
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div data-bbox="636 612 1326 1391" style="width: 48%;"> <p>Twitter:</p>  </div> <div data-bbox="1326 612 2004 1391" style="width: 48%;"> <p>Facebook:</p>  </div> </div>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We published 29 tweets on our @Shire LDP Twitter account on key dates, the virtual drop-in, interaction story map, our short films and the Strategic Environmental Assessment. • We published 23 Facebook posts on the Aberdeenshire Council account.
<p>Broad publicity / electronic engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement Area Teams / Community Planning / Project officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community planning team and project officers – promoted the consultation through their contact networks via community planning e-bulletins and Facebook posts. Promotional information in the form of a poster, leaflet and images for social media posts were provided for this purpose. For example, Garioch Community Planning Bulletin:

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	 <p>Aberdeenshire Council - Local Development Plan 2020 Public Consultation</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council has extended the online consultation on its Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 (LDP) until Friday, July 31. Following close monitoring of the consultation to-date and having listened to concerns raised by some stakeholders, the decision has been taken to extend the period by a fortnight.</p> <p>This means the consultation will run for 10 weeks - four weeks longer than the statutory minimum period.</p> <p>The Proposed LDP and supporting documents are available online here.</p> <p>As part of the public consultation, three short films are available on Aberdeenshire Council's YouTube channel by clicking on the following links:</p> <p>The LDP Process The Proposed LDP Public Engagement</p> <p>Read more here.</p>
- E-newsletters	Our LDP e-newsletter bulletins provided frequent updates throughout the consultation period, with bi-monthly editions in May and July 2020.

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

Revised Development Plan Scheme 2020 Adopted

On 14 May 2020, Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC) agreed a revised Development Plan Scheme (DPS) for 2020. This includes agreement of a new Participation Statement which outlines the specific ways in which we will engage on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP). The Committee also agreed that the public consultation period should commence on 25 May 2020 for a period of 8 weeks, ending on 17 July 2020.

A DPS is prepared to inform stakeholders of the stage that the LDP is currently at, and to identify the nature of the consultation being undertaken to inform the content of the LDP.

The revised DPS has been prepared to reflect the impact that social distancing measures associated with the Covid-19 outbreak and changes introduced through emergency legislation has had on our proposed engagement during the Proposed LDP consultation. The revised DPS replaces the DPS previously agreed by ISC on 12 March 2020.

Consultation on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020

Following the approval of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) by Aberdeenshire Council on 5 March 2020, an 8-week consultation period on the Proposed LDP commenced on **25 May 2020 and will end on 17 July 2020**.

We will be pursuing a consultation that is largely focused on an online means of engagement. In place of face to face drop-in events that were previously planned across Aberdeenshire, we will be engaging with members of the public and stakeholders, including Community Councils, using electronic means. This will include an interactive virtual drop-in 'room', and there will also be opportunities for question and answer sessions to be held between planning officers and the public. We will however also be available to communicate with stakeholders and members of the public through non-digital communication e.g. telephone calls/ letters.

Anyone can comment on the content of the Proposed LDP during the consultation period. Any comment made outside the consultation period will not be considered. All those who made comments on the Main Issues Report will be contacted and expressly invited to examine the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on the issues identified. Likewise, all Community Councils, Key Agencies and neighbouring Planning Authorities will be notified. All properties that are adjacent to a site proposed for development will be notified in writing and views sought on the proposals.

Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 Consultation Period Extended!

Following close monitoring of the Proposed LDP consultation and having listened to concerns raised by some stakeholders, we have decided to extend the consultation period by a further fortnight. This means the consultation will run for 10 weeks, four weeks longer than the statutory minimum. As such representations on the Proposed LDP will be accepted by the Policy Team until Friday, 31 July 2020. We are in the process of updating our website to reflect the revised closing date. This news will be published on social media and a press release will be issued shortly. We will also issue direct correspondence to statutory stakeholders, including Community Councils alerting them to the additional period during which representations can be accepted.

The Proposed LDP represents the Council's "settled view" as to what the final adopted content of the LDP should be. This consultation is an opportunity for you to tell us if anything should be changed and why. Anyone can comment on the content of the Proposed LDP during the consultation period and any comment made outside the consultation period. Unfortunately, any comment made outside the consultation period will not be considered.

We have contacted all those who made comments on the Main Issues Report, as well as Community Councils, Key Agencies and neighbouring Planning Authorities. Nearly 12,000 neighbour notification letters were also sent out to properties that are adjacent to sites proposed for development. So far, we have received approximately 70 representations. Responses will receive formal acknowledgements in due course.

Consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed Local Development Plan is also taking place during this period.

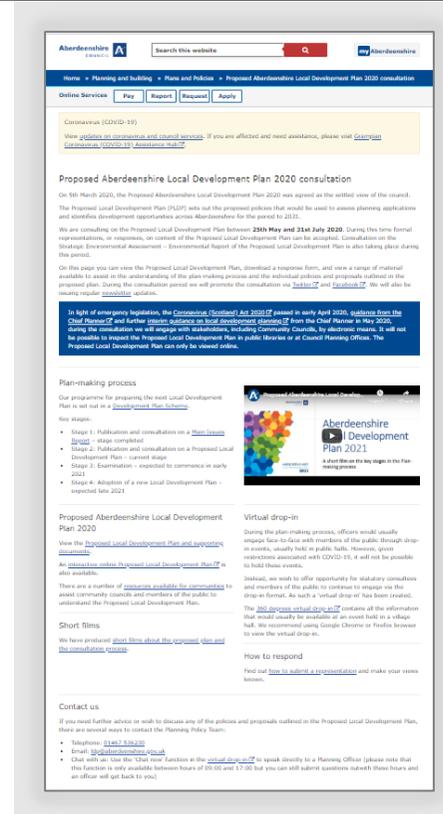
FAQ
Frequently Asked Questions

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries – we distributed posters for putting up in the window whilst they are closed to publicise the virtual drop-in room/public consultation. However, library staff were not able to undertake this. • 'Live Life Aberdeenshire' – an on-line/virtual one-stop shop, offering a range of engaging, and informative activities and resources. A promotional page for our public consultation linked people to our website: <div data-bbox="645 571 1339 1129" data-label="Image"> </div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio publicity 	<p>Interviews took place on BBC Scotland and Mearns FM.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Other community-based publicity 	<p>Community Councils – publicity achieved through Community Council’s own communications / bulletins e.g., Westhill Community Council bulletin (29.06.20)</p>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
- Other in-house publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy bulletins • Sustainable Aberdeenshire newsletter https://readymag.com/u3515330211/1965787/
<p>Publish the Proposed Plan on our website, with response pro-forma on the website, with hard copy forms available on request</p>	<p>A dedicated webpage on the Proposed Plan went live on 25 May 2020, providing the following items to facilitate our consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan-making process – we outlined our programme for preparing the LDP as set out in the DPS and the key stages involved, with links to the DPS and MIR. • Links to the Proposed LDP 2020 – all documentation was placed on the website, providing pdf's of: The Proposed Plan and all Appendices; all supporting documentation comprising the HRA, EqIA, SFRA, Monitoring Report (Nov 2019), Proposed Delivery Programme (April 2020), Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG) Assessment Report; the Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report of the Proposed LDP. • How to respond – we provided a dedicated weblink highlighting the consultation deadline, explaining how to write a response (the need to state the modification(s) sought and be concise), links provided to the response form in pdf or word.doc, offering this in print form if required, and a link to a privacy notice to explain what we will do with people's data.

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

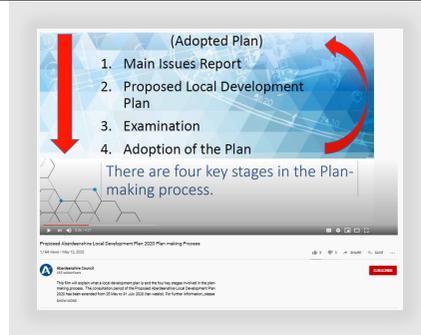


- **Short films** – we provided links to 3 short films as below, uploaded onto our YouTube channel, and accessible from our website. We received 3,367 views overall during the consultation period:

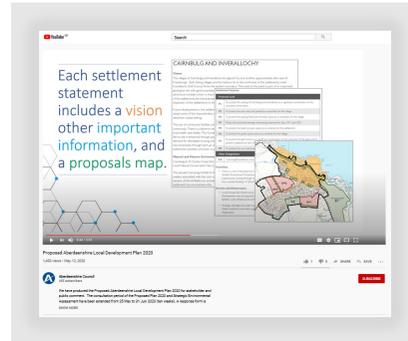
1. The [plan-making process](#), explaining the four key stages (received 1,202 views):

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

What we did, why (and when)



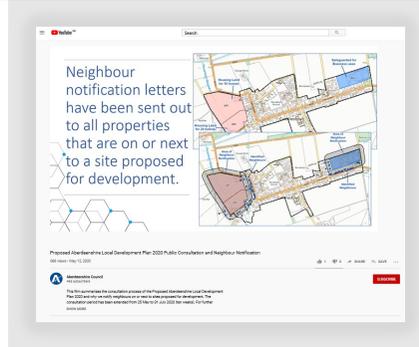
2. The [Proposed LDP 2020](#), explaining what a local development plan is and how to get involved in the consultation (received 1,470 views):



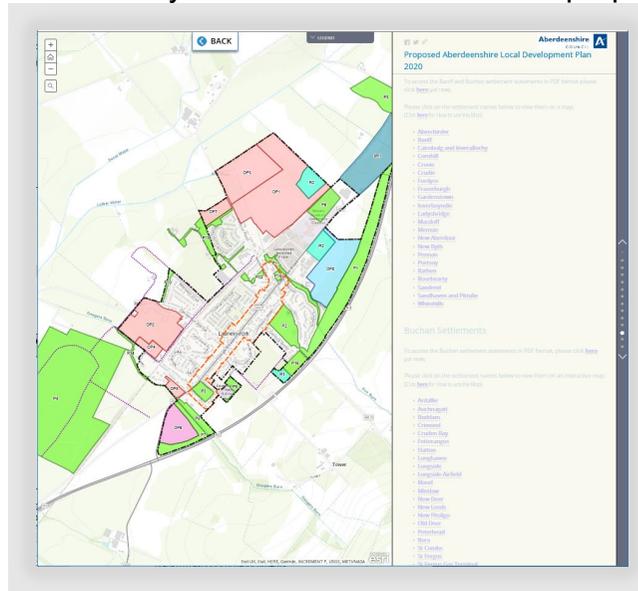
3. The [consultation process](#), including neighbour notification, summarising the process and why we notify neighbours (received 695 views):

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

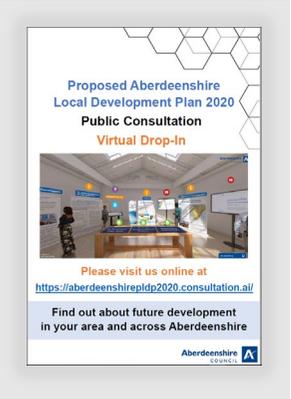
What we did, why (and when)



- **An interactive online Proposed LDP** – this provided a navigational tool to allow people to easily scroll through the Plan, with user-friendly interactive settlement maps providing a zoom facility to allow a detailed view of proposed allocations and designations.



What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the Policy sections, users can search an address to see if it falls within/near areas of designation or protection such as green belt, coastal zone, Special Landscape Areas, Local Nature Conservation Sites, Battlefields or Prime Agricultural Land. • Similarly, settlements that have a Settlement Statement in the Proposed LDP can be explored to learn about proposed areas for development, safeguarded areas for business use, protected land, reserved sites and boundaries to retail centres or the built-up area. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community resources - additional community resources were provided to assist Community Councils and members of the public understand the Proposed LDP. These comprised of posters which provided settlement overviews of each of the 6 areas, policy overviews, the plan making process, FAQs and a promotional poster and leaflet. 	<p>Plan making process poster:</p>  <p>Leaflet:</p> 

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)	
		<p>Promotional poster:</p> 
<p>Undertake stakeholder engagement via electronic means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual drop-in 	<p>1. Virtual drop-in ‘room’ (went live 25 May 2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a user-friendly ‘interface’ inviting visitors to a broad range of information in an accessible format. Being live and interactive, publicly accessible with no sign-up required, publicly accessible with live-chat function, content-sharing, instructions on how to engage/respond, are some of the criteria we have met in terms of meeting the Scottish Government’s recent planning guidance on consultations for public events. • positive feedback received about the effectiveness of the virtual tool, and the indications are this has helped make a complex subject more accessible. It has been commented that the display of information encourages people to view and interact, and it has been suggested that the tool seems to be a good way of engaging younger audiences with the Local Development Plan process. 	

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

- The Virtual Drop-In suggests a more inclusive approach overall, although we recognise there are people who are digitally excluded and/or challenged by the technology.



- We endeavoured to make it clear how to make a response:

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

What we did, why (and when)

How to comment on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020

Formal responses known as 'representations' can be made during the public consultation period by using a response form available for download from www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/pldp-2020/how-to-respond/

The response form can also be issued by email or post on request by emailing us at ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or telephoning 01467 536230.

We can only accept representations during the consultation period from 25th May 2020 to 31st July 2020.

YOUR COMMENTS

Please provide us with your comments below. We will summarise comments and in our responses will consider every point that is raised. Once we have done this we will write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the submissions made. We will publish your name as the author of the representation, but will not make your address public.

Any representation seeking to modify the Proposed Plan would need to be strongly justified.

Representations should be concise (no more than 2,000 words with limited supporting information), but should fully explain the issues to be considered.

There is no further opportunity after the consultation period to provide information, unless specifically asked by the Reporter during the Examination.

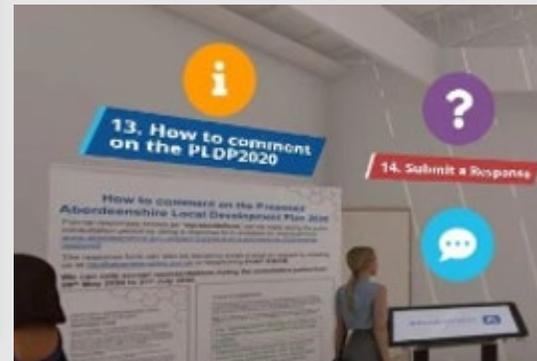
Any supporting information submitted will be made available to the Reporter during Examination of the Proposed Plan.

What happens next..

We will summarise and analyse representations received. We will then write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the issues raised.

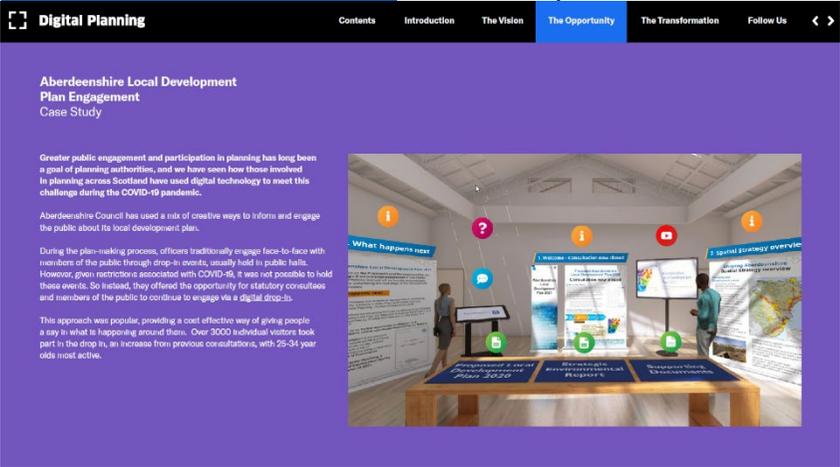
We will publish your name as the author of the representation, but will not make your address public. The Proposed Plan will then be subject to formal 'Examination' by a person appointed by Scottish Ministers, who is also known as a 'Reporter'. This will take place during 2021.

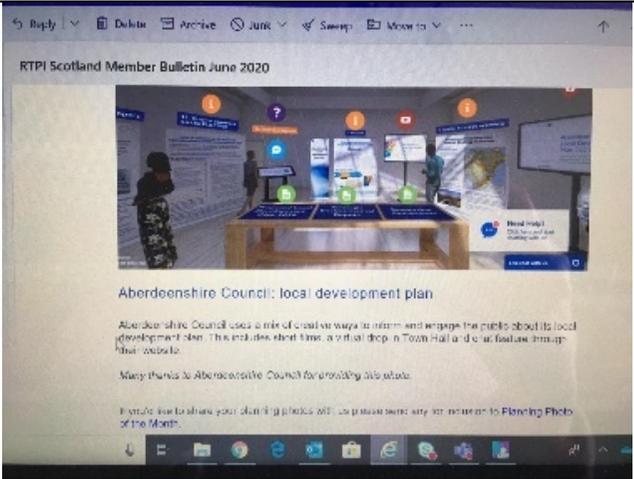
Aberdeenshire Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 – Public Consultation



2. Virtual drop-in monitoring - analytical customer data

'Google Analytics' provided a picture of the levels of activity (see separate detailed evaluation in Section 7 below). In summary, there have been 3,279 visitors ranging from 3 to 300 people per day, with demographic results indicating the 25-34 age range as the most active audience entering the virtual 'room', and the 18–24-year-olds as the least active. Social media has shown to play a key role in prompting visits and peaks in viewing can be correlated with when our Facebook posts went out.

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	<p>3. Digital Planning (Scottish Government)</p> <p>The Scottish Government showcased Aberdeenshire Council as an inspiration for others to make best use of digital tools for public consultations, in light of ongoing restrictions associated with preventing the spread of Covid-19. The virtual drop-in has subsequently been included as a case study in the Scottish Government's Transforming Places Together: Digital Strategy for Planning document published in November 2020.</p>  <p>4. Other showcasing – Planning photo of the month RTPI</p>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	 <p>5. Interest generated from other public bodies A number of requests received from other Local Authorities and public bodies to find out more about our virtual drop-in and digital engagement approach to assist in their own consultations. Aberdeenshire Council was invited by Architecture and Design Scotland (ADS) and the RTPI Grampian Chapter to present its approach to digital engagement and to share good practice as CPD for other professionals.</p> <p>6. RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2021 – Finalist Aberdeenshire Council named as finalist in two categories of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Excellence in Plan Making Practice; and ○ Excellence in Tech within Planning Practice. <p>Winners are to be announced on 29 April 2021.</p>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Undertake stakeholder engagement via electronic means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skype meetings - Information giving / receiving feedback 	<p>7. Skype/virtual meetings with Community Council forums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the consultation period we attended Community Council Forums using Skype to connect with participants. • These forums and meetings proved popular and useful in signposting people to information, and in order for us to receive feedback on our consultation process, and the engagement tools and information provided. • Informal feedback included a comment that these Skype meetings were very successful, it was good in that the meetings were kept to an hour, but that the downside was the loss of networking, although it was felt people might get used to this as a new way (Marr Community Council Forum attendee, speaking at a PAS Roundtable event on 17 August 2020). • People commended us for our virtual/interactive methods, but with nostalgia for the traditional face-to-face drop-in sessions.

<p>Liaise with 'hard to reach' groups to identify engagement methods suitable for these groups</p>	<p>We endeavoured to be more proactive in overcoming barriers to engagement by focussing on working with advocates and representatives of vulnerable and/or 'hard to reach' groups:</p> <p>Gypsy/Traveller community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We invited the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer to promote the consultation through any contact they had with the community. Due to Covid-19 restrictions information was distributed primarily through Facebook and email to approximately 20 different families. The community responded using all methods of communication include telephone via the Liaison Officer. This resulted in the submission of a collective representation. <p>Visual impairment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We examined what we could do to assist those with a visual impairment in terms of poster style information, as well as printed documents. We used large text where possible in posters, and we offered support to people in whatever form was needed e.g. providing documents in a specified font/spacing. In our final PLDP print production we added an additional 'read out loud' facility for visual information. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to Covid-19 lockdown we sought out innovative ways to broaden our engagement. We had intended to put up posters in GP surgeries, engage with older people's forums and learning disabilities groups. We were not able to pursue these avenues due to the pandemic. • On account of Covid-19 lockdown, with assistance from Community Planners we explored alternative innovative avenues of engagement, e.g., through the 'Connecting Scotland' initiative to enable vulnerable people to become digitally connected, and by connecting with people via the Health and Social Care Partnership 'Assistance Hub'. However, we were not able to pursue these avenues in practice on account of the prioritisation given to dealing with the pandemic. However, we were able to engage with
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	<p>schools through their parent forums and interactive tools we provided to engage children with the planning process (see below).</p>
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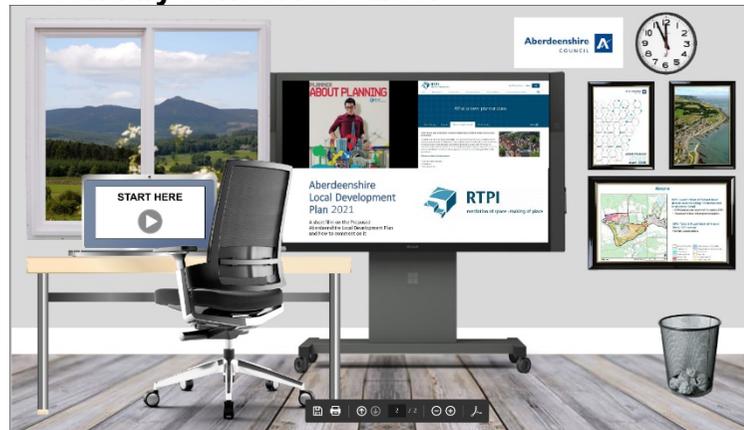
What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
<p>Emphasis on schools engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Particular emphasis will be placed on engagement through the education system. - Referring to Children’s Charter to link with young people, and write to schools to invite comments from pupils - Engagement methods fit for purpose 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All schools and parent councils were emailed attaching a promotional poster and leaflet, to invite comment from pupils. 2. Interactive tools were created to encourage participation from young people and enhance our digital engagement. These resources were distributed to all teachers and uploaded on our website and appeared to be well received, e.g., feedback from parent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“I just wanted to let you know how much our family has appreciated these home school resources. We have all learnt so much! They are very helpful and educational. They have enabled us to include an important subject in our home school learning which I think we would otherwise not have included.”</i> (email response from parent, 31.07.2020) <p>To build on previous engagement schools in lieu of not being able to offer a programme for the young people within Aberdeenshire in the usual school environment due to restrictions associated with Covid-19, we produced a set of activities that can be undertaken by pupils from home. These comprised an interactive PDF with activities designed to help young people learn more about planning in general and also about the current consultation. The interactive tools provided videos to watch from the Royal Town Planning Institute’s “Agent Plan-It”, with a comic and materials provided to make your own town for the younger children, and more age-appropriate learning materials for the older children.</p> <p>Primary school resource:</p>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)

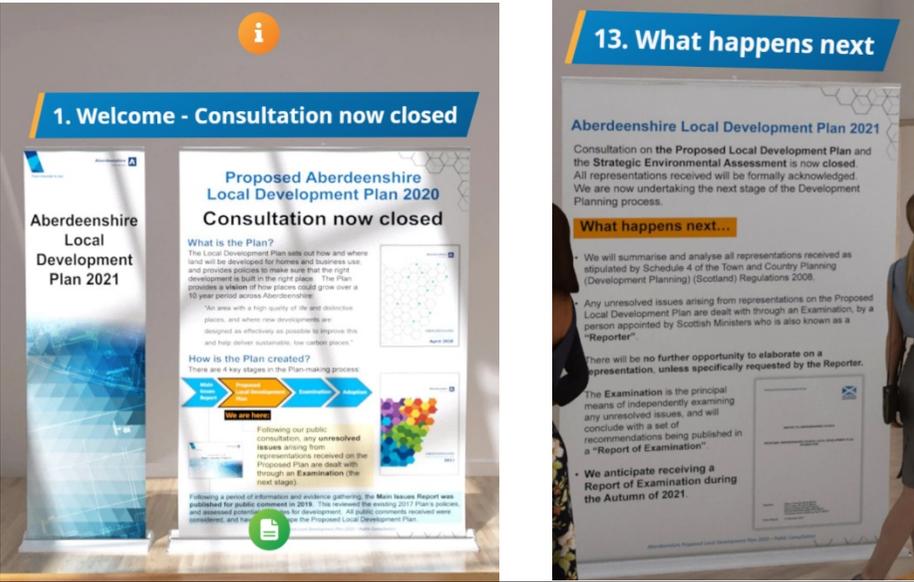
What we did, why (and when)



Secondary school resource:



What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
Allow 8 weeks for people to give us their views	Following our initial announcement at the publication of the Proposed Plan, we subsequently extended the consultation to 10-weeks, and in a limited number of cases and where requested, people were granted a further 2 week extension (i.e. 12-weeks in total).
We will enable participants to engage efficiently and effectively	We kept a log of all queries received before Full Council, pre-consultation, and during the consultation. During the consultation approximately 350 queries were received in total by either email, phone, or through our LiveChat facility in the virtual drop-in. All queries were answered typically within a day, and we kept a record of all these communications and dates. There were also some FOI requests which were dealt with following due diligence.
Keep people updated at each stage	<p>End of consultation: Website was updated 03 August 2020 to announce the consultation has closed.</p> <div data-bbox="792 751 1839 927" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 - consultation closed</p> <p style="margin: 0; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 2px 5px; text-align: center;">The consultation period for the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 is now closed.</p> </div> </div> <p>All documentation relating to the Proposed Plan and tools to interpret the Plan were retained. The short films, the interactive version of the Plan and the Virtual drop-in remain accessible through the PLDP website, with the drop-in amended to state the consultation is now closed, but with continued viewing of the information enabled.</p>

What we said we would do (Proposed Plan consultation)	What we did, why (and when)
	
	<p>In addition to our responses to individual queries, briefing notes, press notices, and our e-newsletter were issued regularly throughout the consultation to keep the public and Local Councillors fully updated on progress and informed as what happens next in the process.</p>

6 Representations received on the participation process

- 6.1 In making representation on the Proposed Plan, a number of representees made representation relating to the Council's engagement undertaken during the Plan-making process. Representations are summarised and comments addressed in the Table below.

Proposed Local Development Plan-Making Process & Engagement	
Development plan reference:	Proposed Local Development Plan-Making Process
Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):	
	PP0022 Bill Slee PP0025 Michael and Marie Duncan PP0087 Chris Clarkson* PP0104 Diane Massie* PP0106 Nick Wade PP0108 Fiona Adams* PP0109 Kenneth Gibson* PP0110 Meredith Gibson* PP0135 Jane Waters PP0138 Ritchie Cattanach PP0180 David Foster PP0206 Helen Smith* PP0207 Raymond Smith* PP0209 Stephen Nicol* PP0210 Jennifer Nicol* PP0212 Jamie Black* PP0213 Linda Reid PP0214 Maurice Farquharson* PP0227 Mary Junor* PP0228 David Junor* PP0229 John Boota* PP0231 Doranne Dawson* PP0232 Graeme Dawson* PP0233 Lindsay Junor* PP0250 Ron Hetherington* PP0270 Allan Macinnes* PP0278 Fiona McWilliam* PP0298 Alan Sutherland* PP0332 Alan Newell PP0345 Methlick Community Council PP0352 Stuart Kennedy PP0353 Tom Sanders PP0356 Christiane Taylor* PP0361 Kerry Robertson*

PP0364 Craig and Sophie Pike*
PP0365 Bartosz and Maryla Olszewska*
PP0370 Nicola Norrie*
PP0372 Jean Baxter*
PP0373 Margaret Porter*
PP0407 Esther McKay*
PP0418 Simon Parry*
PP0419 Jo Parry*
PP0443 Ricky Greenhowe
PP0449 Audrey Wright*
PP0455 Amy Anderson
PP0460 E Mitchell
PP0479 Mairi Duff*
PP0498 Sarah Wingrove
PP0505 Liam Parry*
PP0508 Paul Butler*
PP0514 Paul Butler*
PP0518 Diane Massie*
PP0527 Aaron Dobby*
PP0528 Kerry Dobby*
PP0546 Shona Anderson*
PP0559 Caroline Anderson*
PP0560 Caroline Anderson*
PP0586 S Jenkins*
PP0594 Adam Brown*
PP0608 Frances Getliff
PP0652 Hilary Foxen*
PP0660 Graeme Fergusson
PP0661 Kelly Thow
PP0695 William Wright*
PP0745 Deeside Climate Action Network
PP0771 Maureen Pirie*
PP0806 David Wilson*
PP0824 Kenneth Badenoch*
PP0830 Stephen Fletcher*
PP0841 Paul Mair*
PP0850 Christopher Brown*
PP0852 Norma Simpson*
PP0853 Doreen Cassell*
PP0854 Phylis Mathers*
PP0858 James Bruce*
PP0859 Marion Bruce*
PP0860 Robert Pirie*
PP0864 Ellie Jenkins*
PP0904 Maureen Pirie*
PP0912 Amanda Russell*
PP0913 Amanda Russell*
PP0914 Andrew Russell*
PP0915 Andrew Russell*
PP0916 Sandra McLaughlan*

PP0928 Bancon Homes Ltd
 PP0964 Graeme Massie*
 PP0970 Graeme Massie*
 PP0982 Paul and Kelly Buchan*
 PP0989 Michelle Milne*
 PP0995 Audrey Wright*
 PP0983 Robert Maitland
 PP1003 Jacqueline Nelson*
 PP1023 Richard Orren
 PP1127 Jack Reuben
 PP1123 Glen Milne*
 PP1135 Jane Parker*
 PP1157 Jack McGregor*
 PP1166 Dawn Manders*
 PP1167 Jenni Clarke*
 PP1171 Peter Anderson*
 PP1190 Rachel MacLugash*
 PP1226 Portlethen and District Community Council
 PP1243 Paul Butler*
 PP1295 Ian Auchterlonie*
 PP1305 Doreen Weir*
 PP1326 Derek and Nancey Matthew*
 PP1360 Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum
 PP1392 Jennifer Taylor
 PP1397 Raymond and Norah Barnett*

*representations relating to engagement undertaken with regard to specific proposals at Potterton.

Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):

The Plan-making process

The process should be more open regarding proposed developments that affect a settlement as a whole. The consulted parties should be all the residents within a settlement that have a proposed development (PP0087) and not just Community Councils (PP0982). Clear communication and greater efforts are needed to engage local residents to ensure people are involved from the outset to help obtain 'buy in' for the Plan (PP0455).

The benefits of proposed developments need to be outlined clearly, specifically how they will benefit everyone, and not just provide reasons why a proposed development is not a bad proposal (PP0087).

The value of the whole Plan-making process is questioned in that it is for development, housing and an economy that supports profit for building companies, and not for the protection of the environment. A representee has noted they are 'saddened' about the effects of this on both the human and non-human community (PP0135).

The process appears to be completely developer-led with no regard to communities or providing opportunities for communities to input (PP0449).

Pre-Main Issues Report (MIR) Consultation

It is felt that the wishes of the community that were discussed at the pre-MIR engagement meeting held with Methlick Community Council in 2017 [at the Place Standard event] have been ignored (PP0345 and PP0352). It was discussed at that meeting that a small development of housing would be appropriate in the settlement, although for fear of bias and being sensitive to landowners involved, the Community Council did not want to favour any single development over another. However, the Council Officer who was present indicated that even if they did support all sites, the overall impact of the developments on the size of village meant it was unlikely they would all be in the final Plan. The allocations and the Settlement Statement should be reviewed (PP0345). It is also disappointing that whilst the community's request for additional parking is stated within the Settlement Statement Vision, there is no mention of any new parking within the development proposal (PP0345).

Main Issues Report 2019 – Public Consultation

It is welcomed that the views of Torphins residents and the Community Council were given proper recognition, and that their views have been reflected in the preparation of the Proposed Plan, with removal of large-scale sites (PP1023). For others it was felt there was no appropriate engagement with the local community, and that the process has failed, notably, the Belhelvie community. The community were not consulted over the drafting of the Plan. Although the Community Council was consulted, they did not consult with the local community. Community concerns should be adequately considered now (PP0106, PP0138, PP0660 and PP0661).

Bid Sites

It is requested there is full public consultation on any new or revised bids after the MIR consultation. New/revised bids and their assessments were hard to access, there was no process for public consultation and comment, and this undermines public trust and transparency (PP0498).

There appears to be a lack of transparency behind the decision to include bid site KN125 (OP3) in Luthermuir, for which the material planning considerations are unclear. The evidence base presented to the public in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and in the MIR indicated that site KN125 was not a preferred site. Despite a range of impacts and constraints, and no clear identified need, and an officer recommendation to not take this site forward, it was proposed for inclusion in the PLDP by the Kincardine and Mearns Committee with no indication of the evidence base for so doing in the associated paper (see attachments Issues and Actions – Kincardine and Mearns p73-75 re site KN125, and attachment on Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee August 2019) (PP0460).

A full public consultation should be undertaken on any new/revised bid sites as this was not the case during the MIR phase with regard to the site 'Royal Devenick Park' at 'Leggart Brae'. New/revised bids and their assessments were problematic to access and comment on. This undermines public trust and transparency (PP0498).

Issues and Actions Papers

Errors were reported by two representees as follows:

- It has been suggested that a MIR representation (reference 28 on Issue 66 Blackdog) does not appear to have been considered or assessed, based on the Issues and Actions papers (PP0443).
- It is concerning that an objection submitted at the MIR stage (attached at Appendix 1) does not appear to be referenced, nor a response provided within the Council's Issues and Actions papers in respect of Issue 124 Chapelton, given the representation specifically related to that settlement (PP0928).

Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 – Public Consultation

Engagement strategy and impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Council has been commended for its documentation and access to information for the Proposed Plan stage of the LDP process which has been excellent, including the Virtual drop-in room displays. This was a significant effort to ensure that communities were able to engage in an accessible way despite the difficulties of Covid-19 (PP1023). Accessing the documents and the information was very easy and logical, and possibly better online in this format than the local engagement might have been (PP0608 and PP0745). The online home school lesson materials were considered very interesting and helpful (PP1127).

It is suspected that there will have been a lack of response to the PLDP due to Covid-19. This is a missed opportunity and the pandemic ought to provide a sound rationale for sense checking the PLDP against the significantly changed economic outlook, and to check whether the proposals remain valid (PP0022).

Holding the consultation during the Covid-19 lockdown was questioned. Not everyone can access the internet and have their say, not everyone would be aware of this consultation, and discussion of proposals will have been hampered by the restrictions. The Plan should be on hold until public meetings can be held for further consultation. This would give the opportunity to residents who are interested in the Plan to see and comment (PP0180, PP0025, PP0209, PP0210, PP0213, PP0231, PP0232, PP0278, PP0356, PP0361, PP0373, PP0527, PP0528, PP0559, PP0594, PP0853, PP0858,

PP0859, PP0860, PP0904, PP1123, PP1157, PP1166, PP1167, PP1171 and PP1190).

One representee was not able to contact the Planning and Environment Service by phone (no reply) and was not able to use the Chat facility (PP0025).

A significant number of representees have raised concern surrounding the engagement leading up to the identification of proposed sites OP1 and OP2 at Potterton in the PLDP, including amendment to the green belt at this location to account for the proposed allocations, and consultation undertaken on the PLDP (PP0087, PP0104, PP0108, PP0109, PP0110, PP0206, PP0207, PP0209, PP0210, PP0212, PP0214, PP0227, PP0228, PP0229, PP0231, PP0232, PP0233, PP0250, PP0270, PP0278, PP0298, PP0356, PP0361, PP0364, PP0365, PP0370, PP0372, PP0373, PP0407, PP0418, PP0419, PP0449, PP0479, PP0505, PP0508, PP0514, PP0518, PP0527, PP0528, PP0546, PP0559, PP0560, PP0586, PP0594, PP0652, PP0695, PP0771, PP0806, PP0824, PP0830, PP0841, PP0850, PP0852, PP0853, PP0854, PP0858, PP0859, PP0860, PP0864, PP0904, PP0912, PP0913, PP0914, PP0915, PP0916, PP0964, PP0970, PP0982, PP0989, PP0995, PP1003, PP1190, PP1123, PP1135, PP1157, PP1166, PP1167, PP1171, PP1243, PP1295, PP1305, PP1326 and PP1397).

Comments included that:

- the community/residents were unaware of the proposals coming forward, and others may still be unaware (PP0108, PP0109, PP0110, PP0206, PP0207, PP0209, PP0210, PP0212, PP0231, PP0232, PP0278, PP0361, PP0365, PP0373, PP0407, PP0449, PP0479, PP0527, PP0528, PP0594, PP0830, PP0912, PP0914, PP0995, PP1190 and PP1295).
- there has been a lack of, inadequate or no engagement/communication on the proposed changes, including those related to proposed sites OP1 and OP2, changes to the green belt and proposals for a community hall, by:
 - the Council (PP0087, PP0104, PP0108, PP0109, PP0110, PP0206, PP0207, PP0209, PP0210, PP0212, PP0227, PP0228, PP0229, PP0231, PP0232, PP0233, PP0250, PP0298, PP0356, PP0361, PP0364, PP0370, PP0372, PP0373, PP0407, PP0418, PP0419, PP0449, PP0479, PP0505, PP0508, PP0514, PP0527, PP0528, PP0546, PP0559, PP0560, PP0586, PP0652, PP0695, PP0771, PP0806, PP0824, PP0841, PP0850, PP0852, PP0853, PP0854, PP0858, PP0859, PP0860, PP0864, PP0904, PP0915, PP0916, PP0982, PP0989, PP1003, PP1123, PP1135, PP1157, PP1166, PP1167, PP1171, PP1190, PP1243, PP1305, PP1326 and PP1397);
 - Councillors (PP0214 and PP1397);
 - the Belhelvie Community Council (PP0206, PP0207, PP0212, PP0449, PP0518, PP0586, PP0771, PP0850, PP0858, PP0859,

PP0860, PP0904, PP0964, PP0970, PP0982, PP0995, PP1243 and PP1397); and/or

- the bid proposer (PP0250, PP0270, PP0518, PP0559, PP0594, PP0652, PP0771, PP0858, PP0859, PP0860, PP0904, PP0913, PP0915, PP0964 and PP1397).
- there has been no opportunity for a public meeting to discuss the proposals (PP0108, PP0109, PP0110, PP0206, PP0207, PP0209, PP0210, PP0212, PP0227, PP0228, PP0229, PP0231, PP0232, PP0278, PP0356, PP0361, PP0373, PP0407, PP0418, PP0419, PP0449, PP0527, PP0505, PP0527, PP0528, PP0830, PP0841, PP0854, PP0858, PP0859, PP0913, PP0914, PP0915, PP0916, PP1003, PP1167, PP1190, PP1305 and PP1397).
- the community has been ignored (PP0407, PP0850, PP0858 and PP0859).
- the consultation has been 'flawed' (PP1295).
- the Council issued an update indicating there was an opportunity for an Officer from the Policy Team to attend a Community Council meeting virtually, however this has not been made available to the residents of Potterton (PP0278, PP0361, PP0373, PP0527, PP0858 and PP1190).
- not all residents were neighbour notified (PP0913 and PP0915).
- a representee has noted that they were not informed of the proposed development in purchasing their property a year ago (PP0231 and PP0232).

Neighbour Notification

The Neighbour Notification letter provided insufficient information regarding change of use from industrial to housing on site OP1 in Huntly, and letters have not been sent to all affected residents. The lack of notification should be investigated, and further consultation is required (PP0025).

There was limited notification to householders in Findon regarding OP1 site (PP0213).

The representee highlights that a neighbour affected by OP1 (bid site GR067) in Old Rayne, was not aware of the site at the MIR stage. It is noted that others, including Bennachie Community Council had the opportunity to comment on the site at an earlier stage and is particularly concerned as the affected neighbour was mentioned within the bid documents under section 11 'Historic Environment'. The representee also questions whether a key agency was missed as there is no comment from Historic Scotland. It is considered this site has not been dealt with properly through the process and questions the impartiality of the process owing to the land ownership. The Council needs to act in the best interest of the community (PP0332).

It is submitted that there has been no attempt to contact the property owners who live beside a proposed link road at Newburgh. It should be a matter of course that those affected by a planning proposal are informed, even if it is initially indicative. Contact being made later makes it more difficult to raise issues (PP0353).

With regard to site OP2 in Auchnagatt, it is questioned why notification about sites is only taking place now, when these were identified in 2017. Clarity is needed as it is not included in the literature as to how this site was identified, what were the alternatives mentioned, who had this consultation, and when did this take place. This information is not in the letter (PP1392).

The landowner has not been consulted as to the change of classification of part of site R2 from protected/reserved to allocated land in Inverurie (PP0983).

Examination

A representee has objected to the fact that community and local Councillors' concerns or objections have not in the past been considered by the Reporter when assessing a site at examination level and considers this goes against democratic rights (PP1226).

Future Consultees

Requests that Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum is included as a consultee in future such consultations (PP1360).

Summary of responses (including reasons) by planning authority:

The Plan-making process

The Council notes the desire for a more open approach with clear communication and increased efforts to engage with all those who might be affected by a proposal, and that the benefits of a proposed development should be clearly explained to obtain 'buy in' from the community. The Council would highlight that at a local level, we generally seek to engage through Community Councils as representing the views of their community, and this has been the case from the outset of the process, starting with a Place Standard exercise during the pre-Main Issues Report (MIR) phase in 2017 to identify key issues within settlements locally. Subsequently, in 2018 representatives of Community Councils were given early sight of the bids received during a seminar undertaken with Councillors at which initial feedback was provided to assist Officers in the process of identifying preferred options outlined in the MIR.

Upon publication of the MIR in 2019, all Community Councils were formally notified as a statutory consultee and offered assistance in the preparation of their consultation responses. A number of drop-in events were held across Aberdeenshire to publicise and engage all members of the public in the

proposals presented in the MIR, and enlisted the assistance of Community Councils, community planners, schools and a range of community representatives to promote these events through their local networks. Community Councils were again notified of the publication of the Proposed Local Development (PLDP) 2020. Indeed, in our endeavour to enhance communication wherever we can, we provided additional early notice to Community Councils of our intention to publish the PLDP.

The Council considers that we have made considerable efforts to portray information in as clear a manner as possible, using a range of tools throughout the process, e.g., interactive maps and short films, easy to read posters, to assist in communication. We recognise that planning is complex and that this in itself can present a barrier to engagement, therefore we have sought to communicate in 'Plain English' at all opportunities throughout our engagement activities, and to be as extensive and inclusive in all our consultation activities.

In terms of seeking 'buy in' from the community, it is important to note that the nature of our engagement changes at each stage of the process. Whilst the MIR consultation is largely concerned with setting out options for an informed debate, concentrating on involving stakeholders to shape the Plan, the character of engagement changes following publication of the PLDP. At the PLDP stage a settled view has been reached following a considerable period of scrutiny. The extensive process we undertook, the engagement and publicity is fully evidenced through our Report of Conformity with the Participation Statement (see Sections 2 to 5).

The Council notes the value of the whole Plan-making process has been questioned. We would highlight that LDPs are about placemaking and Plans are prepared with the objective of contributing to sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). With regard to the concern that the process is for development and not for the protection of the environment, whilst the 'call for sites' means this part of the process is generally development led, a lengthy process of assessment, democratic scrutiny and debate follows before any site is included in the PLDP. There was nothing that prohibited community groups from proposing sites in response to the Council's call for sites, however there was an expectation with all sites, that the proposed development was 'deliverable'.

Furthermore, all planning applications must meet the requirements set out in the PLDP which is consistent with the principles and policies set out in NPF3 and SPP and its definition of sustainable development, unless material consideration indicate otherwise. The Vision for the PLDP strives to balance economic growth and development with the need to protect and improve our environment.

Pre-Main Issues Report (MIR) Consultation

The Council notes an expression of dissatisfaction that the community wishes of Methlick were not upheld in the final allocations included in the PLDP, and

that further community consultation on the PLDP is being sought. The additional housing allocations (bid FR040/site OP2 for 12 homes and bid FR040/site OP4 for 63 homes) were not the Officers' recommendation in the Issues and Actions papers. Following Local Area Committee debate with Local Councillors in Formartine, the Committee made the decision to include the additional sites. The decision was subsequently endorsed through Infrastructure Services Committee in late 2019, and subsequently by Full Council in March 2020. With regard to the request for additional parking, we consider this is appropriately captured under the Settlement Statement Vision as this is best addressed as a settlement wide issue. Specific matters raised by representees are discussed in further detail in Schedule 4: Issue 29 – Melthlick and Tarves.

Main Issues Report 2019 – Public Consultation

The Council welcomes acknowledgement given by the Torphins community that we have taken account of their views in preparing the PLDP. On the other hand, we note that other communities felt there had been a lack of engagement at the MIR stage. As stated above, we generally seek to engage through Community Councils as representing the views of their community, and this has been the case from the outset of the process. There has also been considerable debate with Local Councillors throughout the entire process as they typically have a greater knowledge about local community needs and wishes than planning officers. We have followed due process as set out in the Planning Circular 6/2013 Development Planning which requires us to present our MIR for public consultation over a period of at least 6-weeks, whereas we provided a 12-week consultation. Following consideration of the responses received, 'Issues and Actions' papers were submitted to Local Area Committees and agreement sought from Local Councillors as to what development is to take place, and where. There were further layers of scrutiny through the Infrastructure Services Committee late 2019, and subsequently by Full Council in March 2020 when the PLDP 2020 was approved as the 'settled view' of the Council.

Bid Sites

The Council notes requests for further consultation on any new or revised bids after the MIR consultation, and the perceived lack of transparency. However, consistent with Planning Circular 6/2013 Development Planning, not all housing allocations for the PLDP have to be contained in the MIR. Some sites have been included in the PLDP without the benefit of inclusion as a preferred site in the MIR 2019, however adequate publicity was given as to alternative sites being considered. Even if sites are not included in the MIR, the PLDP Examination will consider any responses received following publication of the PLDP and associated Neighbour Notification and publicity, and the Reporter will make a judgement based on all evidence presented. With regard to the site at Royal Devenick Park, this is subject to Aberdeen City Council's LDP consultation, where any cross-boundary issues will be addressed. Specific matters raised by representees are discussed in further

detail in Schedule 4: Issue 47 – Other Settlements in Porthlethen to Stonehaven SGA.

The Council notes specific concerns regarding the Luthermuir site OP3 (bid KN125) and the stated lack of transparency over the Area Committee decision to include the site. The additional housing allocation was not the officers' recommendation in the Issues and Actions papers. Following Local Area Committee debate with Local Councillors, the Committee made the decision to include the additional sites. The decision was subsequently endorsed through the Infrastructure Services Committee in late 2019, and subsequently by Full Council in March 2020.

Issues and Actions Papers

With regard to the comment regarding the Blackdog MIR representation (MIR respondent reference 28), the Council confirms that the representee is identified in the list of respondents in the Issues and Actions paper, and their comments were expressly noted, considered and agreed by the Area Committee.

With regard to the Chapelton MIR submission identified by the representee as being neither referenced nor responded to, we can confirm that the representee is identified in the list of respondents in the Issues and Actions papers under Issue 8 Shaping Homes and Housing (pages 72-96), and their comments were expressly noted, considered and agreed by the Area Committee.

Given there are no further perceived or actual errors reported by representees with regard to the Issues and Actions papers, we consider this a reflection of the rigorous auditing and tracking of representations adopted in the MIR process.

Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 – Public Consultation

Engagement strategy and impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Council welcomes the positive feedback on the PLDP consultation format, including the virtual drop-in display material. In particular, we note this was considered a 'significant' effort to provide an accessible way to engage with people despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We also note it was felt the online resources were 'possibly better' in this format, and that the interactive education resources for school age children were well received. It is relevant to point out that whilst not received as formal representations, the Council has received a range of informal positive feedback on, and interest in, the use of our virtual drop-in 'room', in particular from other public and local authority bodies wishing to adopt a similar approach. The Council has also been showcased by the Scottish Government as an inspiration for others to make best use of digital tools for public consultations in light of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. We consider the

virtual drop in platform was instrumental in our ability to engage effectively with stakeholders and the public at a time when traditional means of engagement were impractical.

With regards to the comment about there being a lack of response to the PLDP due to Covid-19, we would highlight that the consultation received 1,390 representations. This is significantly higher than received to the PLDP in 2015. The Council considers this a reflection of the progress made in awareness raising and the ability for communities and stakeholders to engage in the Plan-making process, rather than necessarily being a reflection of the content of the PLDP itself.

It is not agreed that the PLDP consultation presents a missed opportunity to 'sense check' the PLDP against the changed economic outlook. The timing of our consultation had been scheduled into our programme, with significant implications should the Aberdeenshire LDP 2021 be postponed. In light of the ongoing social restrictions and economic impacts due to the pandemic, this remains an ever-changing situation for the time being, and we maintain that we took appropriate and legal action by continuing with the consultation, as endorsed by the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, and a letter issued by the Chief Planner on 3 April to encourage Planning Authorities to continue progress on delivering LDPs.

The Council acknowledge that not everyone can access the internet, and that people would have been hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions. We recognised in the development of our Development Plan Scheme (DPS) which was revised to provide an engagement strategy that was fully responsive to the situation. This was endorsed by ISC on 14 May 2020 and is the DPS against which our public engagement performance will be assessed at Examination. We ensured that people could still engage with us through all traditional means, including by phone or by post, although we note that one representee had difficulty reaching us by phone on one occasion. It should be noted that this was due to an unfortunate technical problem early in the process, but this was very quickly rectified. The Council also offered to issue hard copy extracts of the PLDP on request i.e., individual Settlement Statements, and hard copy response forms.

The consultation approach taken by the Council in light of the Covid-19 pandemic has been recognised at a national level in two categories (Excellence in Plan Making Practice and Excellence in Tech within Planning Practice) at the RTPPI's Awards for Planning Excellence 2021.

With regard to the 'chat facility' in our Virtual drop-in this was 'manned' Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm by Policy Officers, with an automatic reply should they be busy or unavailable. Outwith these hours, the person's request was automatically forwarded by email to be picked up and addressed as soon as a Policy Officer became available.

With regard to the Potterton specific comments, it should be noted that the single biggest issue arising from the representations was objection to the

proposed opportunity sites (OP1 and OP2) in Potterton. Approximately 23% of all representations received concerned Potterton. A number of these representations overall raise matters outwith the scope of the forthcoming examination and the Policy Team have liaised with the Formartine Area Manager, the local groups Belhelvie Community Council and 'Keep Potterton Green' to highlight the wider concerns of representees.

In response to the representations regarding the consultation process, and concerns about this being inaccessible to those without appropriate technology and the lack of publicity, we maintain that our consultation was fully publicised and whilst primarily a digital means of engagement by necessity (due to the pandemic), we remained 'open for business' offering telephone, email and postal mail communications. Our offer for an Officer to attend meetings with Community Councils was extended to all Community Councils, and by virtue of it being 'virtual' was available to all members of the community who were interested (technology permitting) via the Community Council. Officers attended Skype meetings with all Community Council forums which attendees welcomed and found helpful. Our invitations to Community Councils were taken up by four, and we subsequently attended those individual Community Council meetings. Belhelvie Community Council did not wish to take up this offer.

The Council sought to engage with Community Councils, including the Belhelvie Community Council from the outset. As part of pre-Main Issues Report engagement, the Policy Team met with Community Councils to undertake a Place Standard exercise for settlements and to discuss local issues that communities wished to see considered and/or addressed in preparing the next LDP. A meeting with Belhelvie Community Council took place on 2 October 2017. The Community Council were also invited to have early sight of bid proposals and discuss Officers initial assessment of sites. Representatives of Belhelvie Community Council attended a seminar with Elected Members and Council Officers on 22 May 2018. A series of drop-in events were held during the Main Issues Report consultation in 2019. According to Officer notes taken during the drop-in event held in Balmedie Leisure Centre on 15 February 2019, a representative from Belhelvie Community Council attended this event. The Council did not hold a drop-in event in Potterton. It was not possible to hold a drop-in in every settlement in the Aberdeenshire area. However, we did attempt to make the drop-ins as accessible as possible, holding them in larger, more accessible settlements. There was no requirement for members of the public to attend the drop-in closest to where they live. Officers were on hand to answer questions on any proposal in any settlement at all events. In addition, as part of the MIR consultation, we also offered to attend a Community Council meeting to present and discuss the bid proposals. This invitation was not taken up by Belhelvie Community Council. The conduct of the Community Council in engaging with the community for which it represents is considered to be a separate matter and in terms of the Plan-making process, the Council as a Planning Authority have engaged with Community Councils as a statutory consultee, including the Belhelvie Community Council from the outset.

For reasons set out in detail above and evidenced through our Report of Conformity with the Participation Statement, the Council disagrees that our PLDP consultation has been 'flawed'.

In terms of the Plan-making process, it is not a statutory requirement that bid proposers undertake community engagement. However, conformation of what level of local engagement is a question in the pro-forma used by proposers in submitting their bid proposal in response to the Council's call for sites. In considering Schedule 4: Issue 26 – Potterton, should the Reporter be minded, to recommend that proposed sites OP1 and OP2 be retained, statutory pre-application consultation will be required by any applicant in bringing the site forward. Further neighbour notification would be undertaken as part of the development management process.

In terms of the PLDP, the Council are required to notify premises within 20m of a proposed development site, not all premises within a settlement. Neighbour notification for sites OP1 and OP2 in Potterton was undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements.

Notification of land allocations in property transactions is a civil matter. The Council has no control over this matter.

Neighbour Notification

The Council notes there was some dissatisfaction expressed because of a lack of, or insufficient, or late notification regarding sites. There was also dissatisfaction caused by a lack of information in the notification and lack of notification of a potential new link road at Newburgh.

In the first instance we would highlight that our Neighbour Notification process was in accordance with, and strictly followed, Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008, using the Schedule 2 template. As such notice was given to the owner, lessee or occupier (not a named individual) of any premises on or neighbouring to proposed development sites within 20 metres of the boundary of a proposed site. Our methodology using CadCorp mapping to set up the 20 metre buffer zones and identify address sites, together with manual checks to review and find address points against the notification buffers where they overlap, was rigorous. We recognise that some letters would not have been received on account of the Covid-19 lockdown in the situation where businesses were temporarily shut down or occupants were otherwise absent.

With regard to those representees who are questioning why they are being notified at this stage and not earlier in the process, we maintain that subsequent to all our endeavours at the MIR stage of the process to publicise and engage people (fully evidenced in the evidenced through our Report of Conformity with the Participation Statement), upon reaching the PLDP stage, the intent of the Neighbour Notification is in line with the nature of the engagement activity at this stage. Upon publication of the PLDP the

engagement activity gives a greater emphasis on 'informing' people, given that the Plan is now the settled view of the Council. In particular if sites have been changed or included since the MIR, the PLDP consultation and associated Neighbour Notification helps ensure that the reporter is furnished with the necessary information to reach a conclusion, and if appropriate to recommend a modification to the Plan taking into account representations received. The site-specific concerns raised by representees concerning Neighbour Notification are addressed as follows.

With regard to site OP1 in Huntly, whilst we acknowledge it was felt further information should have been provided, the letter was not a 'change of use' notification, and all the key information was included to enable the recipient to find out more by phone, email or by following the weblink provided. We can confirm that letters were duly sent to all affected neighbours within the 20-metre radius of the OP1 site in Huntly. For all the reasons outlined above with regard to the extent of our public engagement, further consultation is neither appropriate nor required. We do however recognise that our Neighbour Notification letters could have exceeded the Planning Regulations (using the Schedule 2 template) and provided further clarity regarding the purpose of the letter. Notably, we acknowledged that recipients would have benefited from additional wording to explain this is not a planning application and potentially provided further information about the proposed site.

In Findon, the notification was by default 'limited' on account of there being only 13 properties 'affected' in terms of the 20-metre buffer. We note the representee's point that others in the settlement would be affected by increased traffic, however this is outwith the scope and purpose of Neighbour Notification. As identified above, further clarification as to the purpose of the letter could have been provided within the letter to address this concern, however we have complied with Planning Regulations in respect of the information provided.

In response to the concerns regarding the neighbour affected by OP1 in Old Rayne, we would reiterate that we met all our obligations with regard to publicising and engaging people at MIR stage. We can also confirm that Historic Environment Scotland are a statutory consultee who have been involved at all stages of the Plan-making process.

The proposed distributor link road that the representee in Newburgh refers to is indicative only. This is a long-term aspiration identified by the community for a future by-pass, with no detailed design work to determine the exact route of the road and does not constitute a development proposal within the scope of the Neighbour Notification process. In respect of the representee's request that those affected by a planning proposal are informed by a matter of course, even if a proposal is indicative, we would suggest that on the basis the representee is now informed of this community aspiration, the overall process has been effective. We acknowledge that in our attempts to be transparent about the aspiration for a link road, this has however caused some apprehension on account of this being interpreted as a viable road route. Should the road be delivered in future, detailed design and engineering work would explore all

options to determine the exact route of the road and there would be full public consultation. This means that members of the public would get further opportunity to comment on the proposal for a key piece of infrastructure for the settlement.

With regard to site OP2 in Auchnagatt, it would appear the representee has interpreted the Neighbour Notification to mean that this letter is the very first notification of sites to be included in the LDP. The site in question was allocated in the LDP 2017 and is being carried forward. Whilst this has been fully publicised through the LDP 2017 engagement process, and through our engagement strategy leading up to the publication of the PLDP, as stated above, we acknowledge that we could have exceeded Planning Regulation requirements by providing further clarification in our Neighbour Notification letters. It is however impracticable to meet everyone's specific informational requirements.

We do not consider the comment about the lack of consultation over site R2 in Inverurie is merited. Firstly, the changed boundaries of site OP4 are to reflect the planning permission that has been granted and implemented on the site, with construction underway. The element of the former R2 site that is now a protected site is to accurately distinguish between the part the Ury Riverside Park that exists (the P site) and that which is reserved for a future extension (the R site). We consider the Neighbour Notification has served its purpose in that the representee/landowner is now updated on these approved changes.

Examination

The Reporter's role is to test the appropriateness and sufficiency of the PLDP in the context of matters raised in any unresolved representations. The Reporter will assess all of the evidence before them in relation to each Schedule 4 submitted. Throughout our engagement we have taken every opportunity to explain the examination process and the Reporter's role e.g. short films, newsletters, posters at our real-world drop-in events and virtual drop-in.

Future Consultees

We note the request for Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum to be included as a consultee in future and agree this should be added to our stakeholder database.

Table: Representations relating to engagement and public involvement during the Plan-making process.

7 Evaluation of engagement activities

We stated in our DPS that we would adopt the principles of the updated National Standards for Community Engagement. These standards have been embodied in our approach and in so doing, we have committed to assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement. Therefore, this section evaluates our key engagement activities with a particular focus on where we have sought to meet the Ministers' expectation to employ a range of innovative methods to meaningfully engage with stakeholders and communities. We also refer to an assessment of our overall performance using SP=EED[©] (see Appendix 1).

7.1 Pilot Youth Engagement Project – Pre-MIR consultation onwards

A separate Participation Statement has been prepared for this project⁴. In terms of meeting its overall aim to raise awareness of the planning process in schools, it was concluded the project did achieve this. All primary and secondary pupils who were involved in the project are now aware of planning in that they have additional knowledge and awareness than before, albeit to varying degrees of understanding. The project proved a very positive experience for all involved. The Planning Officers' engagement skills significantly developed through undertaking this project. The ability to simplify planning terms is something that Officers have worked on through this project to ensure that all participants understood what was happening. This skill is not only appropriate for this type of engagement but is also transferable to other community engagement that Planning Officers undertake.

Recommendations from the project included the roll out of schools' engagement on a yearly basis for primary schools, and to include secondary schools' engagement as part of the standard community engagement package at key stages of the Local Development Plan making process going forward.

7.2 Evaluation of drop-in events – MIR consultation 2019

An evaluation⁵ was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the 17 drop-in events that took place across Aberdeenshire. We looked at the number of visitors per event and considered observations from Officers and informal feedback from participants⁶. This provided a 'lessons learnt' on what worked well, what did not work well, and how to improve in future. In our evaluation six themes were assessed: (1) public attendance per event; (2) venue suitability; (3) information provided (display material/room set up); (4) topics of interest; (5) how people found out about events; and (6) unexpected outcomes.

⁴ Full statement available on request.

⁵ Full report available on request.

⁶ It should be noted that we did not consider it appropriate to issue a visitor evaluation feedback form at the drop-in events in order to avoid confusion with the MIR response form.

We identified a number of practical issues where engagement could be enhanced such as rooms with better lighting and acoustics, poster information using larger scale maps and drawing attention to the event to passers-by. We also found out that people found out about the events in a variety of ways ranging from posters on lampposts, to formal press adverts and social media via community planners. Across all events people were interested in localised issues and development affecting their areas, as well as wider issues and policies, in particular housing and rural development. With regard to visitor attendance, in summary:

the busiest drop-in sessions (40+ attendees) were:

- Banchory (350+), Oldmeldrum (67), Westhill (50), Ellon (49), Inverurie (40); moderately busy sessions with 20-39 attendees were:
- Balmedie (34), Portlethen (32), Laurencekirk (28), Stonehaven (27), Aboyne (25), Turriff (22); and the quietest sessions with less than 20 attendees were:
- Peterhead (10), Fraserburgh (11), Huntly (13), Mintlaw (17), Banff (18) Alford (19).

The unprecedented numbers attending Banchory were largely due to the press mis-reporting the drop-in session as a developer-led event concerning a controversial revised distributor road proposal. However, a range of community concerns regarding the MIR proposals were raised at the drop-in event including loss of woodland, loss of site reserved for a school, and impact on a nature reserve. A significant number of MIR representations were subsequently received pertaining to Banchory, and we consider it testament to the Officers' response in the Issues and Actions papers that there were relatively few representations received in response to our PLDP consultation.

A key learning outcome from our drop-in events was that the number of attendees should not in itself be seen as a measure of 'success' since people appeared to benefit from all the sessions, valuing the opportunity to speak to Officers.

7.2 Evaluation of Virtual drop-in 'room' – Proposed Local Development Plan consultation 2020

As demonstrated in Section 5 above, a virtual drop-in 'room' was created as a like-for-like replacement for the traditional drop-in format. The online consultation tool delivered by AECOM used content prepared by the Policy Team with the intention of providing a user-friendly 'interface', inviting visitors to a broad range of information about the Proposed LDP in an accessible format. Some of the key findings of the Officers' review of the data produced on the use and interaction by

visitors to the virtual drop-in 'room' during the consultation period using 'Google Analytics'⁷ are outlined as follows.

(1) Audience Overview

Visitor Numbers

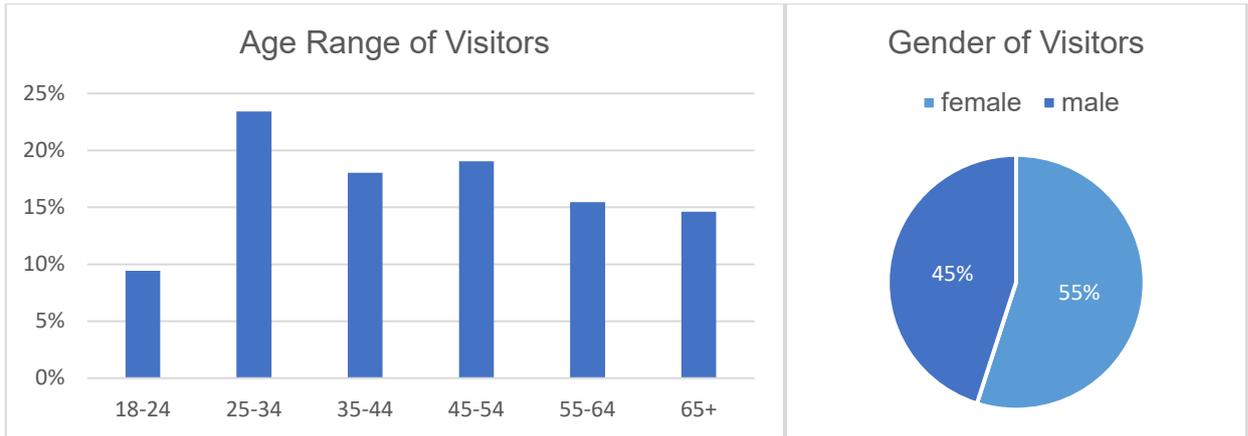
Throughout the consultation period there were 3,279 individual visitors to the virtual drop-in 'room', ranging from 3 to 300 visitors per day. The indications are that the first peak in viewing was generated by a combination of the Neighbour Notification letters arriving at notified premises, and social media posts going live upon commencement of the consultation period. We believe subsequent peaks are also linked to the use of social media by the Council, and one post on a community group's Facebook page (the Inverurie Loco Works Football Club), on 4 June 2020, although the post appears to have since been removed, and this could explain the high number of visitors recorded from the Inverurie area (see below). Whilst interest tailed off over time during the 10-week consultation period, there was a smaller peak of activity towards the end of the consultation as 'final week' social media posts were published.



Demographics

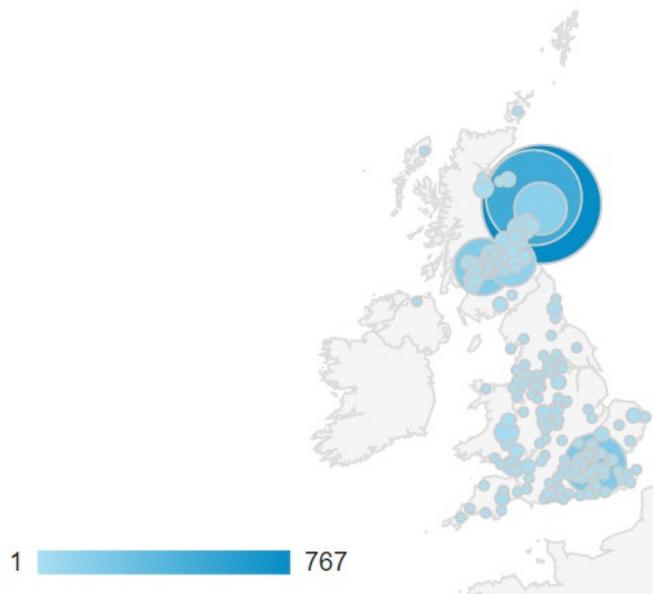
There was approximately a 50/50 split between male/female users. The most active age range being 25-34, the least active group has been 18-24-year olds.

⁷ Information is sourced from **Google Analytics** unless stated otherwise. Note: Google Analytics cannot measure 100% of visitors nor guarantee total accuracy, however this is widely recognised as the best available system for gathering insights on the real people visiting a website.



Geography / Location

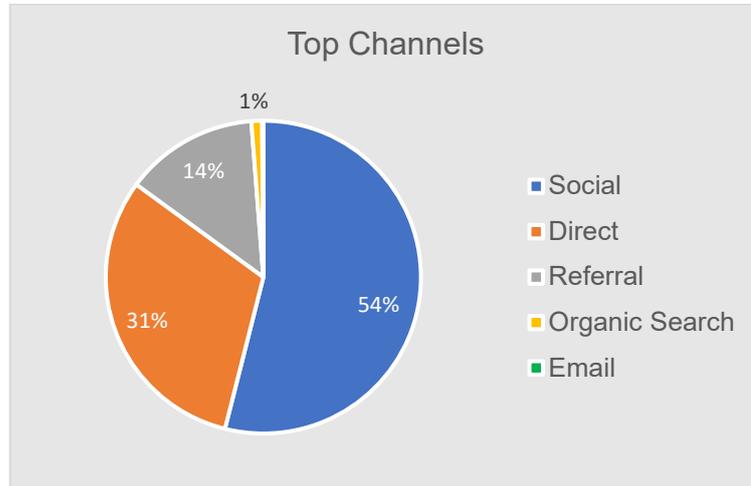
Visitors were primarily UK located, with the vast majority being locally based in the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire areas. At a very local level, a number of visitors are recorded as being from Inverurie, with a particular interest also shown from users located in Portlethen. There was also notable interest from those located in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh. There was a spread of interest across England and Wales which could in part be due to interest from other Local Authorities in our digital engagement approach using the virtual drop-in platform. Indeed, this was been substantiated by a number of requests received by the Policy Team enquiring about the virtual drop-in ‘room’.



(2) Where Visitors Originated From (e.g., search engines, social networks or website referrals)

Overview

Social media played a key role in prompting visits to the virtual drop-in, primarily from Facebook. There was a notable number of ‘direct’ visits to the website i.e., going directly to the virtual drop-in webpage, and out of the ‘Referrals’ the majority came from the dedicated Proposed LDP 2020 webpage. Also, a notable number were referred from the Transforming Planning webpage where Aberdeenshire Council was showcased for its use of innovative Digital Engagement methods.



Social Media

Further analysis of the role of social media reveals that out of the channels monitored, 90% were through Facebook.

(3) Behaviour⁸ / Interactions With ‘Room’ Content and Functions

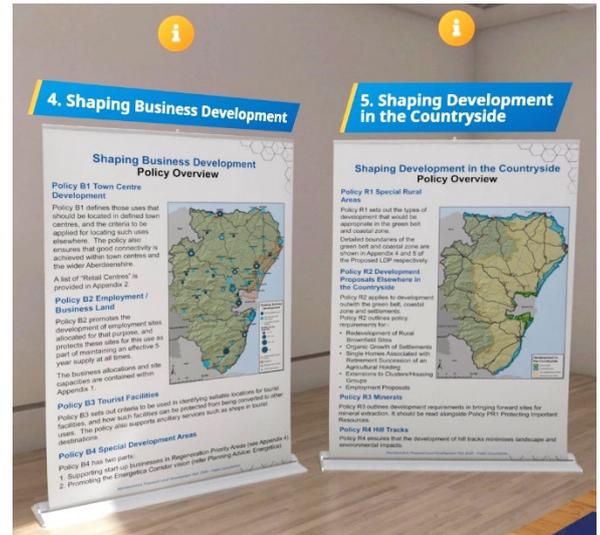
Visitors showed interest in all the poster display boards and the settlement posters, with low levels of interest in the ‘Live Chat’ function. The number of ‘hits’ for the short films have been recorded separately (outwith Google Analytics) as approximately 3,367 in total for all three films.

Poster Display Boards

User interaction with the 13 poster display boards arranged around the virtual room are identified below in order of ‘preference’. This tells us that people showed most interest in the Spatial Strategy Overview poster, whilst the Protecting Resources poster attracted least interest overall. However, users were looking at all the display boards, and there were not significant differences in levels of interest between them.

⁸ Note: Analytics for monitoring people’s interactions with the Virtual Drop-In was not set up until 15 June 2020 therefore this data should be interpreted with some caution.

1. Spatial Strategy Overview
2. Shaping Development in the Countryside
3. Shaping Homes and Housing
4. Shaping Business Development
5. Policy Outcomes
6. Shaping Places
7. Responsibilities of Developers
8. Natural Heritage and Landscape
9. How to comment on the Proposed Plan 2020
10. Welcome
11. The Historic Environment
12. Climate Change
13. Protecting Resources



It is noted that the above list of ‘preference’ in the display boards did not follow the position of the posters as displayed in the virtual drop-in ‘room’, i.e., level of interest does not follow a consecutive pattern. It is therefore believed that these are policy areas that visitors had a particular interest in.

Settlement Posters

When examining levels of interest in the settlement posters compared with the room display boards, there was approximately equal interest shown in the settlements as shown in the room display boards. In the settlement posters, people showed most interest in Formartine (27%) and Kincardine and Mearns (26%), followed by Garioch (20%) and Marr (15%), with the remainder of visitors looking at Banff and Buchan, and Buchan settlements.



Live Chat Facility

There was relatively low usage of the ‘Live Chat’ facility overall, however from the 38 queries received over the 10-week consultation period, people appeared to find this facility helpful. Approximately half of all the queries were either related to the

content of the Proposed LDP or were Development Management issues that were referred onwards. Other queries were about the virtual platform, mainly from other Local Authorities seeking to use this approach for their own consultations. The remainder of the queries were from people needing guidance to help them navigate their way through the information on the Proposed LDP webpage, or to seek help in making a response, or were outdoor access queries not directly related to the Proposed LDP.

7.4 Lessons Learnt from the preparation and publication of the Proposed Plan

Key lessons learnt in relation to our engagement were:

- Clarification of “request to speak” protocol in Council Committees is needed to reduce confusion and confirm what arrangements might be put in place to afford those who wish to speak at or address a Council Committee the opportunity to do so.
- Neighbour Notification letters could have gone beyond the Schedule 2 template to provide more clarity such as including glossary terminology and explaining this is not a planning application. This would have prevented some of the calls made by the public to help understand the meaning of the letter and the proposal being made.
- Reserved sites in Neighbour Notification letters generated public concern and queries, but as there is no detail available to give people regarding ‘R’ sites, these would be better included in the Delivery Programme.
- Social media using Twitter and Facebook were effective in notifying and update the public about the process of the Proposed Plan.
- Uploading the short films to YouTube was advantageous for public viewing.
- The Virtual drop-in ‘room’ has potential for future use to complement traditional means of engagement, post-pandemic, to provide stakeholders with a range of means by which they can participate in the Plan-making process.

7.5 Evaluation using SP=EED[©]

We stated in the DPS that we will assess the depth of our consultation using SP=EED[©] and a related set of questions against which to examine our performance. Therefore, using the 8 criteria established by SP=EED[©], our overall conformity with our Participation Statement is evaluated in Appendix 1.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this Report has demonstrated that we have implemented the steps set out in our Participation Statement to involve a wide range of people and organisations in the making of the Local Development Plan. We have used a range of innovative methods for meaningful engagement, going above and beyond our statutory requirements in many respects, and so achieving a broad and open public engagement throughout our process. This demonstrates, our strive to ensure we have met and provided a best practice approach.

There were no substantive omissions, errors or failings identified through representations that pertained to our process and engagement. We do however acknowledge from the representations received, and from our evaluation and lessons learnt exercises, that there are some areas for improvement. We have noted that: our Committee process could be clarified at the outset, including “requests to speak” at Committee meetings; that Neighbour Notification letters could go beyond the Schedule 2 template to include clarity as to the purpose of the letter and more detail on the proposed sites; and that reserved sites would be better included in the Delivery Programme to avoid public concern and queries generated that may be difficult to answer without sites updates being readily available in a central location.

We consider the high number of representations received overall from the Proposed Plan 2020 consultation is a positive reflection of the progress made since our Proposed Plan in 2015. This highlights how proactive we have been in raising awareness, and that we have helped enable communities and stakeholders to engage in the plan-making process. In particular, due to the timing of our consultation and on account of our Covid-19 pandemic response, we have played a key role in shaping a digital strategy for planning. As summarised by one of our representees:

“I wish to note that the documentation and access to information for this stage of the LDP process has been excellent – including the ‘Virtual Drop In’ displays. Thank you for the significant effort you have made to engage the community in an accessible way despite the difficulties presented by Covid-19.” (PP1023).

The virtual drop-in ‘room’ together with the support of Live Chat clearly enhanced the consultation experience at the Proposed Plan stage by providing a user-friendly ‘interface’ that feels real world. This brings many possibilities for the future as a communication method and a way of organising information to make the complex subject of planning more accessible and understandable. It is believed that use of this tool may have helped open up the consultation to a range of ‘silent’ groups e.g., young working families who generally cannot go to conventional drop-ins, and a method that should be used to enhance consultations going forward. Signposting through use of social media was essential to directing potential users to the virtual drop-in ‘room’ and helping people land on the page. Ultimately, going forward it is believed that the use of a virtual ‘drop-in’ could be a valuable addition to the more traditional methods of engagement usually adopted, to achieve a ‘blended’ approach to public consultation.

Appendix 1 – Evaluation against SP=EED criteria

Criteria	Levels	What to aim for	How Aberdeenshire Council achieved it
Transparency & Integrity	Level 1	The purpose of the engagement was clear, and people could find out about it easily.	The Council's intention to engage with the public in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 process was clearly set out within the Development Plan Scheme (DPS) which has been revised annually. We published the DPS on the LDP webpages of the Council website and advertise it through our e-newsletter bulletins, press statements, place a copy in public libraries, and issue to Community Councils. Our LDP website has been regularly updated with new webpages and weblinks added at 'Call for Sites', MIR and Proposed LDP consultation stages. Our e-newsletters have been issued on a monthly basis throughout the entire LDP process. We advertised the 'Call for Sites', the MIR consultation and PLDP consultation using digital, written press social media, posters and through radio interviews.
	Level 2	Rights to participate were clearly explained and opportunities to express opinions are publicised.	We sent explanatory letters to Community Councils ahead of each consultation launch.

	Level 2	Distribution of information and feedback received on the engagement process was analysed after the process is completed.	<p>We carried out a level of monitoring and evaluation throughout the process, publicising key findings at each stage e.g., number of representations received, key issues arising.</p> <p>We analysed representations received after MIR consultation, after PLDP consultation, and factored into our assessment all informal feedback received following our virtual / online consultation.</p> <p>Views received at MIR stage were logged, summarised, then analysed by way of an Issues and Action report which sought to group and highlight respondents' comments and issues, followed by a response from Officers and a note of the action(s) arising as a consequence of the comment being made and fully considered.</p>
Co-ordination	Level 1	The timetable for the engagement process was published and relevant relationships explained.	A Development Plan Scheme is updated and published annually. It sets out how, when and for how long we will publish and consult on the varying aspects of the LDP.
	Level 2	The timetable for the engagement process included adequate periods for meetings, public events and discussion with stakeholders.	<p>The participation process began early, with pre-MIR engagement with communities across Aberdeenshire using the Place Standard tool, together with early discussion meetings held with key stakeholders and Local Councillors.</p> <p>Our public consultation period on the MIR was for a period of 12 weeks. This was preceded by publicly open bid seminars with Local Councillors and followed by Special Local Area Committee meetings held to scrutinise the Officers' recommendations.</p> <p>The PLDP consultation was launched for a period of 8 weeks, extended to 10 weeks to allow the public/stakeholders more time to submit their representations, with further additional time offered</p>

			to individuals upon request. The start of the consultation was subject to an unavoidable delay on account of our original start time coinciding with the outbreak of Covid-19. There was extensive publicity concerning the launch of our consultation, with frequent press and social media releases to remind people of the deadline.
Information	Level 2	Information was relevant, accurate and comprehensible to the target audience.	Our information has been presented throughout in terms of 'policies' and 'sites'. Distribution of information at MIR stage was supported by a draft PLDP to aid understanding by illustrating the potential consequences of the proposed changes in map form. Poster information was used in drop-in events (both real world and in the virtual 'room') to summarise key policy changes and provide pictorial overviews of proposed development sites in settlements. A leaflet was prepared that could be used by groups, such as Community Council's to alert members of the public to the Proposed Plan consultation. A set of FAQs was also prepared and updated as questions were coming forward.
	Level 2	Information was communicated and shared, aiming to invite feedback.	Participation was invited by email, telephone or by post for both the MIR and PLDP with the additional support of a chat function in our virtual drop-in for the PLDP. A response form was prepared to assist participants to structure their response. People were also offered the option to submit their representation by email to a dedicated email inbox or by traditional postal letter. Local Area Committees and Infrastructure Services Committee were engaged throughout the process to update or seek approval at key stages. Stakeholders/Community Councils were advised of forthcoming Committee meetings, the purpose of those meeting in relation to the LDP process, and how people could participate. We helped Community Council representees, in particular,

			understand what role they could play in attending LAC's and that their contribution mattered.
Appropriateness	Level 1	Information was presented to suit its intended audience and can be accessed by all stakeholders at each stage of the process.	A high level of response, particularly at PLDP stage, indicates we have provided broad and open engagement.
	Level 2	Engagement processes to fit the situation were used, with opportunities for discussion and for questions to be raised and answered.	<p>For the MIR consultation we held 17 drop-in events and offered additional support by attending Community Council meetings as requested. The drop-in events were held to span across lunch time, afternoon and evening where possible for each event. Locations were chosen where main concentrations of population exist for each of the 6 administration areas within Aberdeenshire, largely based on secondary school catchment areas. Posters and maps were made available to help explain key policy issues and visualise potential changes to settlements, and to promote discussion.</p> <p>For the PLDP consultation, through our virtual drop-in room, we had a live chat facility open with officers available to answer questions 5 days a week, 9 – 5pm. We had a FAQs sheet that was kept updated throughout process, made available through the virtual drop-in, and on the PLDP website. Through the virtual drop-in we provided an array of poster information with links to documents and further information together three short films. Through our PLDP website in addition to the full set of documentation, we provided an interactive map version of the PLDP. We attended (virtually) Community Council forum meetings and individual Community Council meetings on request, to help answer questions and guide people as to how to make a representation.</p>

Responsiveness	Level 1	Relevant information was provided at every stage of the process.	Information was published online and made available in libraries and Council area and/or planning offices (where possible). A set of FAQs was updated on a regular basis when new questions came forward. The e-newsletter was a primary means of keeping those subscribed up to date regarding progress on the Plan and to highlight key dates and activities being undertaken.
	Level 2	Findings from the engagement process have been analysed, disseminated, and potentially incorporated.	Views received at MIR stages of the process were recorded, analysed and considered by way of Issues and Actions papers which sought to group and highlight representees' comments and issues, followed by a response by the Council and a note of the action(s) arising as a consequence of the comment being made and fully considered. Our MIR and draft PLPD also incorporated findings from our pre-MIR engagement, notably by reflecting community aspirations into the Vision statements within the Plan's Settlement Statements.
Inclusiveness	Level 1	Relevant representative groups/ organisations were identified, and information will be designed and disseminated to reach them.	Relevant groups/organisations/stakeholders were identified at an early stage of the project and key stakeholders listed in a database.
	Level 2	An emphasis will be placed on allowing the voices of seldom heard groups and those most likely to be affected to be heard.	Our Equality Impact Assessment was used as a tool to assess our inclusivity. Community Planner involvement was key to our communication and engagement strategy. There was Schools' involvement and we provided tailored, interactive school activities.

Monitoring & Evaluating	Level 1	Distribution of information and feedback received on the engagement process was analysed after the process is completed to inform future consultation exercises.	Lessons learnt exercises were conducted after each stage of the process. This included a comprehensive evaluation of our drop-in sessions following MIR, and an analysis of our virtual drop-in using 'Google Analytics'. There was also a separate evaluation of the Pilot Youth Engagement Project. Key findings were shared with ISC and summaries of our findings were provided in our e-newsletter and issued through press releases.
	Level 2	Monitoring and evaluation of the engagement process will take place on an on-going basis.	'Lessons learnt' exercises were conducted after each stage of the process with a comprehensive review expected upon adoption of the Plan. Opportunity for reflection and critical assessment of the process will help inform development of the next again LDP in accordance with advice and best practice coming forward at that time.
Learning & Sharing	Level 1	Lessons from the engagement process will be identified and lead to on-going improvements in quality.	Prior to commencement of work on a new LDP for the area a 'How was it for you' project was undertaken, and this fed into the approach adopted for engagement on the emerging Plan. Lessons learnt exercises were carried out at key stages of the process to identify what worked well and where things could be improved.
	Level 2	Lessons from the engagement process will be reviewed and shared with a focus on learning and training.	We have shared our innovative and responsive approach to achieving wide ranging participation through the Covid-19 lockdown period using our virtual platform with a number of other Local Authorities and public bodies across the UK. Lessons learnt from key stages of our process can be developed to apply an improved approach to engagement in future consultation processes undertaken by the Policy Team.