

IMFDP Draft Comments from Culbokie Community Trust

Comments on Culbokie

Sustainability of village

We accept that in the current context it's impossible for the village to grow to a size that could support commercial public transport. On this basis we support the view that growth should be restricted.

However, we don't really accept the general description of the village as 'unsustainable' as transport is only one facet of sustainability. A better approach would be to describe many of the positive aspects of the village and how it could build towards greater sustainability - for the people who currently live here or will occupy new homes. To achieve this, beneficial developments should be encouraged that reduce residents need to travel or open up sustainable travel options. Positive developments would include more active travel networks and connections, home offices, home working support services, local business, shops and services, digital connectivity, EV charge points and local growing opportunities. Such developments, suited to the village scale, will make the village more liveable and sustainable in the future.

We would also welcome more affordable housing and/or starter homes which would provide opportunities for greater diversity in the community and for young people and families to stay in the area. A mixed community is more sustainable in terms of the roles people play at different stages of life and in different circumstances.

In the longer term, it's easy to envisage a time when technologies such as driverless vehicles improve opportunities for sustainable transport. Meanwhile we need the revised plan to support a positive new direction for the village in which its social fabric and resilience is enhanced. We'd like to suggest that assistance from the Council to develop a 20 year village plan along these lines would be highly beneficial.

On the more general issue of the use of the term 'sustainable', while we understand the specific interpretation which THC is putting on this, we do not feel this is particularly helpful in discussion with the general public. An alternative formulation might be of communities for growth (major or minor), for consolidation (eg Culbokie) or for maintenance (eg Mulbuie). This would assist in presenting a less negative picture.

Description of village

We'd like to suggest a serious reworking of the description of the village to present its range of positive attributes and opportunities.

1. The use of the word dormitory suggests there is no village life or sense of community which couldn't be further from the truth and this should be reflected in the text. The community is highly active as follows:
 - Community run village hall (recently reroofed and upgraded)
 - Community run football club
 - Community owned church
 - Community garden at Netherton
 - Community owned land currently being developed into a new village green, Hub and affordable housing
 - Community project with Sustrans for an active travel route through the village

- Community run orienteering course
 - Weekly community market
 - Sharing Shed
 - Community bus project being developed with Highland Council, Stagecoach and HITRANS
2. The description notes that the village has a 'poor microclimate'. Whilst it is clearly north facing, it also benefits from good, free draining soils, lots of summer sun and a lack of midges. We really can't see that the microclimate is something that merits a special mention or adds anything to the plan. It just adds to the image created of a village going nowhere.
 3. The number of people living in the village is estimated at 650. The Culbokie Community Trust covers an area including a hinterland of around 2-3 Km around the village. During a postal ballot in 2015 there were 1,034 people on the electoral register. Including young people under 18 we've always assumed that the total number would be about 1250. While it would appear that around half of these live outside of the strict village boundary, many look to the village for local community activities and services and this needs to be recognised in the local plan.
 4. It is also stated that the population within the village is declining which adds to the bleak impression. We find that statement hard to understand when the following developments have occurred in recent years and we hope this statement can be reviewed:
 - Ravencroft – around 15 houses
 - Fowlers Croft – 1 new house and a further 4 in construction
 - Several single infill houses
 - In addition there are 39 new houses to be built at Baluachrach, 7 further homes to be built at Fowlers Croft and more infill opportunities
 5. The statement that the 'linear pattern makes active travel less likely' doesn't seem to us to be the most significant issue – people generally like a walk. The real issue is the domination of the village by a busy through-road which makes active travel unpleasant and sometimes unsafe. The plan should promote the opportunities to enhance the active travel experience and its safety. Options to achieve this include re-routing through-traffic along the lower road (B 9163?) and more path connections through the various cul-de-sacs (see below) so that there is more permeability through the quieter back streets.

Important greenspaces and links

- The Culbokie Community Trust is working on the design of a new Active Travel route through the village with support from Sustrans. This has been widely consulted on and is supported by the community and Highland Council is supportive of this development and have indicated that it would be adopted. Sustrans will pay 70% of implementation costs but finding match funding is a key issue and developer contributions would assist.
- A second stage of the active travel project is to take the route out to the A9, as a shared use path alongside the main road, to connect with buses along the A9. This has been paused for the present to focus on the section through the village. This has also been generally supported by the community but not by the neighbouring landowners who would be

required to sell strips of land for the scheme. There should be recognition of the ambition for this link in the plan and developer contributions towards it would assist.

- A highly beneficial development would be the creation of a safe crossing of the A9 at Duncanston for pedestrians and bicycles.
- Culbokie Woods are a fundamental part of the green infrastructure of the village.
- We see Glascairn Wood as a 'wild extension' to the new village green and were hopeful of making a direct path link from the new village green into the wood. This appears to have been prevented by a narrow strip of privately owned land. As a result the link to the woods is longer and less direct to the detriment of pretty much everyone, with no clear winners. We would like to see the plan make provision for the direct link to be achieved in the future
- In order to improve permeability through the various cu-de-sacs of the village there is an opportunity to make a link through a privately owned gap site between Fowlers Croft and Schoolcroft. Such a link would be of great benefit to open up more much-needed circular walking routes away from the busy traffic. The plan should make provision for this route.
- Other important greenspaces which are or could be used for leisure and amenity, community growing and /or art and culture are:
 - Land in front of Ferindonald
 - Pump area
 - Open space on main road looking north with bench
 - Strip of land down road by manse
- In addition the privately owned sites of Findon Burn and Findon Wood are much appreciated by local people.

Development Land

Our views on the various pieces of zoned land are as follows:

CU7 (old plan) – This was designated for 22 houses of which 12 have been serviced or built. This is still a significant piece of land in a central location with the potential for 10 future houses. We think this land should be developed with the future sustainability of the village in mind – to include some business and community uses and affordable / smaller private starter housing or flats.

CU4 (Mount Eagle) – The status of this site needs to be made clearer. Has it been completely removed or is it an 'established infill site'? We'd support its abandonment as a housing development site.

CU5 (village centre) – this site is in a highly strategic location and could have a role in the long term sustainability of the village – for example a market garden business, affordable housing, care facility or a small retail development. We'd support zoning for business and community use although this is probably academic as it looks unlikely to become available.

CU2 – We're delighted to have the opportunity to develop a new village green, community hub and additional 6 affordable housing units on this site. Crucially, developer contributions to assist the long term maintenance of the village green would be highly beneficial.

Land Adjoining old primary school - We support the brown field land going into affordable housing or community or business use.