

Growing Together



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FIFEPLAN – EXAMINATION

The Scottish Government Reporter has issued the Examination report on FifePlan. Her findings are final and Fife Council is bound to take account of the conclusions when finalising the Plan for adoption by the full Council. Thereafter, planning applications will be tested against the approved Plan.

To recap, the issues that Fife Council proposed and that affect Townhill are:

Housing developments at:

- Chamberfield – up to 50 houses
- Kent Street – up to 120 houses
- Colton – up to 150 houses

(TCC objected to all three on the grounds of uncertainty over school places at Townhill PS and coalescence between Townhill and Dunfermline).

Rejected Housing development at:

- Muir Road
- Muir Road – Waxwing

(TCC supported the continued exclusion of these sites from the Plan)

Brownfield site development at:

- Former Power station
- Loch Car Park

(TCC did not object to development of these sites but alerted against coalescence with development of Kent Street)

Transportation:

A new link road , a section of which runs from Wellwood (A823) to Whitefield Road and dissects the Country Park, bespoiling the Loch area. (The Northern Link Road).

(TCC, along with other community groups, objected to the NLR proposals on several grounds and specifically the section through the Country Park)

Issues of indirect impact on Townhill:

- Development by Taylor Wimpey of housing at a 1400 unit site at Halbeath along with a primary school, health centre and retail units, and the onward eastern section of the NLR.

(TCC did not object to this development but alerted against its size and the impact on Townhill and its primary school).

Summary of TCC's agreed position:

- TCC does not object in principle to new housing across North Dunfermline.
- TCC has concerns about the scale of the housing proposed.

- TCC has serious concerns about the infrastructure needed to support that housing, specifically, schools, roads and health care facilities.
- TCC has concerns that the housing planned will be built before the supporting infrastructure resulting in traffic congestion, GP surgeries full to overflowing and the absence of a clear strategy on school places.
- TCC is not averse in principle to the provision of a Northern Link Road although recognises and supports rising concerns as to whether this proposal will be sufficient to achieve the objective of relieving traffic congestion in the centre of Dunfermline.
- TCC would like to see alternative proposals for taking the traffic from North Dunfermline to the M90 motorway.
- TCC objects vigorously to the proposed routing of the NLR round Town Loch and the use of the former railway line. An alternative route has been suggested to Fife Council.

What has the Reporter decided?

The examination report is very lengthy and those who wish to read in full or in part can use the following link to access it:

<http://www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk/CaseDetails.aspx?id=116917&T=25>

If you have difficulty with this, visit the DPEA website and type in Fifeplan Examination.

Relevant to the submissions from TCC, the outcomes are as follows.

(the page numbers on the examination report are shown for ease of access)

General Comments on North Dunfermline: (Page 512)

- There need not be a masterplan for North Dunfermline.
- Each individual site provides a basis for ensuring necessary co-ordination of layout design.
- The scale of development in North Dunfermline warrants one or more health facilities. This is not the responsibility of developers.
- Sites for such facilities should be identified. The funding is normally provided by the Scottish Government.
- It is appropriate for the plan to facilitate the provision of shops but not to restrict commercial competition.
- The traffic assessment process attached to each development is sufficient to address the concerns about transportation issues and each assessment should consider the impact on the whole of North Dunfermline.
- The strategic transportation interventions are necessary to achieve the servicing of developments proposed including the Northern Link Road.
- The proposed Plan adequately addresses the need for school places.

Land at Chamberfield: (PAGE 521)

- The site is suitable for housing development
- The proposed housing density is too high and should be limited to 40 units.

- Access to and from the site (Townhill Road via the Kent Street site proposed) should be determined by a transport assessment but it is thought that access through Chamberfield Road may not be satisfactory.
- The impact on the Country Park and concerns over landscaping are adequately addressed in the proposals.
- Loss of agricultural land is unavoidable.
- A flood risk assessment should be carried out.
- The planning application process should ensure and report on drainage, ground conditions and the existence of any mine workings or pipelines.
- Neighbour amenity is not affected detrimentally.
- Impact on wild life has not been demonstrated.
- The design of the development must be co-ordinated with the design for the Kent Street development.

Land at Kent Street: _____ *(Page 515)*

- The site is suitable for housing development.
- The part of the site that contains an electricity pylon will not be developed reducing the proposed density from 120 to 89 units.
- This part of the site should be landscaped to provide a buffer between the development and Townhill.
- No houses should front on to Townhill Road, a bus route, and this part of the site should be landscaped to provide screening from Townhill Road. This reduces the density by a further 9 units to 80 .
- Access to and from the site should be confirmed by a transport assessment but is thought to be on to Townhill Road and to include access to the Chamberfield development.
- Concerns over coalescence with Townhill are adequately addressed by:

- Woodland planting on the NE corner of the site
- Landscaping along the front of the site
- Removal from the Plan, the site at the former car park for development.
- The site should be landscaped to provide green areas and the impact on the Country Park is addressed adequately.
- No special wildlife issues have been demonstrated.
- There is no detrimental effect on neighbouring houses.

Land at Colton: *(Page 516)*

- The size of the site and the restricted development of 150 units suggests there is plenty of scope to enhance the wider landscape setting of the Country Park and to create an adequate buffer to avoid coalescence between Wellwood and Townhill..
- There should be no unacceptable traffic noise from the Northern Link Road and if there is, acoustic barriers can be built.
- No specific wildlife concerns have been demonstrated.
- Loss of agricultural land is unavoidable.
- The planning application process should address the issue of drainage.

Land at Muir Road: *(Page 553)*

- The site is not suitable for housing development.

- Access from Muir Road is not capable of being upgraded in accordance with Fife Council's Transportation Development Guidelines in order to serve a housing development.
- Access to the site from Main Street is of single track capacity, enters Main Street at an angle and down a noticeable gradient. Using it as an access to a housing development and taking account of the loss of amenity to the existing houses (residents) together with the use by non domestic traffic, is clearly unsuitable.
- The site makes an important contribution to the separation of Dunfermline and Townhill – the proposed development would result in a much less satisfactory settlement edge.
- The visual impact of Townhill from Kingseat Road would be impaired.
- The site would not be a significant addition to housing in North Dunfermline.
- Development of the site would reduce the width of ground between Dunfermline and Townhill.

Land at Muir Road – Waxwing *(no Page no)*

- This site is not dealt with in detail but remains unsupported for development.

Site of former Power station: _____ *(Page 555)*

- The site proposals remain unchanged in that it is available for commercial development or housing as long as it complements the Country Park.
- The green network priorities should ensure concerns over visual intrusion, effects on wildlife, negative impact on the Country Park and coalescence are addressed.

Site of old car park at Loch entrance: _____ *(Page 555)*

- This site should be deleted from the Plan and should not be developed to preserve the space between Townhill and Dunfermline especially in view of the approval of the Kent Street site.
- Part of the site may be required to accommodate the Northern Link Road.

Northern Link Road: _____ *(Page 476)*

- The Northern Link Road is essential to serve the scale of development in North Dunfermline and relieve congestion in the city centre.
- It cannot be criticised for bringing a huge amount of traffic through a populated area.
- Pollution is unavoidable and the design of the road should ensure free flowing traffic at limited speeds with acceptable pollution levels.
- Use of agricultural land is unavoidable.
- The route is described as “indicative” so there is, at planning stage, room to alter it. However this room for change is limited in the sections between Townhill and Town Loch
- The indicative route is sufficient to permit adequate assessment at planning stages.
- Developers will be asked to pay for their sections at planning application.
- Timeous construction of the Northern Link Road can be ensured through the planning application process.
- The alternative routes suggested by both Townhill Community Council and Bellyeoman Community Council were rejected on

the grounds of cost, length of journey and the unlikely prospect of a new junction on the M90.

- The Northern Link Road is unlikely to result in an unacceptable increase in the amount of traffic on Townhill Road and Townhill Main Street.
- The proposed route runs very close to the south-west side of Stewart Street houses and the plan should consider moving the route to avoid undue impact on the amenity of these residents,
- The site at the former car park gives scope to consider this.
- The proposed raising of the level of the former railway line and removal of the blind summit bridge addresses the concerns as to how the new road will intersect with Main Street.
- The embankment at Loch Street provides a barrier between Townhill and the Country Park, removal of that barrier would be replaced by the new road which would also be a barrier but access can be preserved by installing controlled crossings on what will be a busy road. Landscaping will also be appropriate
- Traffic congestion on Halbeath Road or Junction 3 of the M90 is not considered to be an issue of concern.

Land at Halbeath: _____ *(Page 518)*

- The site is suitable for housing development provided a number of concerns can be addressed.
- The traffic assessment for this site should address concerns about traffic through Kingseat, on minor roads and on feeder roads to the town centre.
- The site proposals provide sufficient green space and the loss of agricultural land is unavoidable.
- No evidence of protected wildlife species has been demonstrated.

- The need for an investigation into mine workings and ground conditions should be included as a development requirement.
- The Health and Safety Executive should be consulted regarding the ethane pipeline that passes through the eastern tip of the site.
- A flood risk assessment is to be carried out.
- Council policies should ensure loss of neighbouring house amenity is minimised and any loss in value of such houses is not a planning matter.
- The plan should not be altered to include a secondary school.

What does this mean for Townhill?

- TCC's arguments have been rejected almost in total. The concerns about school places have not been addressed, instead left to Fife Council to deal with as part of the planning application process. Catchment areas are again being reviewed by consultation. The review of secondary schools is not yet complete.
- Taylor Wimpey do not plan to build the new primary school at Halbeath until a substantial number of new houses are built. They believe children can be accommodated at Townhill Primary School by the addition of temporary classrooms.
- TCC's concerns over additional traffic, the dissection of Main Street by the Northern Link Road and the impact of this new road on the Country Park have been dismissed.
- The Northern Link Road may not start until 2019 and will inevitably be a major disruption to the village residents.
- The NLR may utilise some Common Good land and that will result in Fife Council seeking permission to do this.

- A number of assessments need to be carried out prior to developers applying for planning permission and this affords an opportunity to consider if further objections should be lodged.
- Coalescence between Townhill and Dunfermline will be avoided and there is recognition that the village identity should be preserved.
- Positive results include the non development of the former car park and the site at Muir Road together with recognition that the residents of Stewart Street should be taken account of in planning how close the new road will be to their back gardens.

What will happen next?

- The timing of any developments is unknown although the Northern Link Road is pencilled in SESPlan for 2019. The sections that go through the sites at Halbeath and at Wellwood will be finished sooner than that.
- Developers will now be required to draw up a site masterplan including the results of any specific assessments such as flood risk, mine workings, ground condition and transportation.
- When ready, they will need to apply for detailed planning permission that will be considered by the local Planning Committee.
- That will afford an opportunity for the community to comment, support or object to any aspect of the proposals. Time windows to do this are generally very tight and careful monitoring of the planning application process will be vitally important.

What do we do now ?

The first step is to get the results of the examination as widely known as possible and to address the apparent apathy in Townhill by assessing if there is an appetite for further work.

To do this, social media and email will be used by TCC to alert residents to this report on the TCC website.

The North Dunfermline Community Group is meeting with Fife Council, the MP, the MSP and a Councillor as well as representatives of Transport Scotland on 12 December, when, among other things, it is hoped to get a better idea of the timing of these developments.

Next Steps:

Please attend the Community Council meeting in the Community Centre on 19 January at 7pm when this report and any updates will be discussed. This meeting will be a major watershed point to assess the views of Townhill residents on what is planned and if there is further action that can be taken.

Get it in your diary and please come and tell us what you think, there will be few other opportunities to do so and it affects you.

Mike Provan – TCC Planning

28 November 2016

