

Response to the consultation on the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan

The Community Council of the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District appreciates the opportunity to comment on the LDP and the effort that has gone into producing such a comprehensive and well presented document. We are broadly supportive of the aspirations behind the plan.

The following comments highlight local concerns -

- Existing development to the south east of Peebles is disconnected from the town – more building in this area simply makes the current bad situation worse; this may be reasonably described as extreme asymmetric development of the town.
- Polarisation of the town (north of the river, south of the river) will only get worse with the construction of further housing arising from building of a second bridge (not just in the next ten years, but in the next twenty and thirty years), making for an untenably split town.
- There needs to be more focused effort on reconnecting the existing settlement pattern – through upgrading of paths and cycle network, amongst other issues.
- There remain community issues associated with proposals for a second bridge across the Tweed. On balance, proposals for a second bridge are secondary in importance to a footbridge / cycle bridge around the same sort of proposed location – linking to pedestrian / cycle paths north and south of the new footbridge / cycle bridge.
- The second bridge debate divides into three community concerns:

1. Over-reliance on a single road bridge crossing presents a tangible risk for the community should the bridge be closed for any reason in the future.	This issue should be addressed through development of an appropriate disaster response strategy – and not through the building of a second road bridge – this is not addressed within the draft LDP
2. Remediation of traffic congestion within the town – with a particular focus on on congestion at the southern end of Tweed Bridge and congestion on the High Street.	We are not won over by the arguments that the levels of traffic using the existing bridge are nearing capacity, or that traffic congestion (and delays to travel) are at a level that warrants a second bridge; we are of the view that road and path connectivity across Peebles, in part reflecting the Victorian lay-outs in the centre of the town, do not meet modern requirements, and need to be optimised (physically and through management of demand) before promoting the idea of a second bridge as a traffic remediation measure.
3. Facilitation of expansion of the settlement footprint of Peebles south of the River Tweed.	The community is overwhelmingly of the view that further substantial expansion of the settlement footprint of the town south

	of the town is not needed, is unsustainable, and would lead in the first instance to further asymmetric development of the settlement, followed by polarisation of the town around separate settlements north and south of the river.
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- ❑ Proposed housing and economic development by Edderston Ridge – the reporter addressing objections to the last amendment to the consolidated LDP rejected proposals for both housing and economic development at this location on the basis of poor area road access and traffic congestion. The basis of this objection remains – with effectively a single track road along Caledonian Road by the Ambulance and Fire Station, and a pinch point associated with the roundabout at the bottom of Edderston Road. These traffic management issues need to be resolved before any further residential development in this area is included in the LDP
- ❑ Future housing needs need to be re-allocated to other sites north and south of the river – significantly, for example, medium and longer-term provision cannot be accommodated within the current development boundary north of the river without genuine improvements to access routes and supporting community services.
- ❑ There needs to be a clearer statement of the composition of current and future housing allocations – including a statement of the existing number of houses in each category in Tables 2, 3, and 4 in Appendix 2 (Meeting the Housing Land Requirement) as these affect individual SDA's within the overall plan.
- ❑ There is still a requirement for more truly affordable housing within Peebles – i.e. housing that people can afford to buy or to rent; this should not be interpreted as poorly designed or cheaply constructed housing
- ❑ A clear statement needs to be made that Priorsford Primary School is now at capacity, and that additional pupils will need to be directed to Kingsland Primary (nearly full) and Halyrude Primary
- ❑ A clearer statement needs to be made that the High School is at full capacity and its catchment area (9 primary schools) needs to be reduced to contain numbers
- ❑ The physical setting of the settlement of Peebles is such that its boundaries cannot be reasonably expanded much further – both north and south of the river; there are opportunities for some modest infill and expansion, north and south of the river, but the layout of the predominantly Victorian core of the settlement (which establishes the core character of the town) is not amenable to further large-scale (>100 house developments)
- ❑ There remain major weaknesses in traffic management within the Peebles – notably associated with Rosetta Road, March Street, Elcho Street Brae, Young Street and the Old Town, with Caledonian Road (in respect to the straight section of this road and not with

other parts), and to do with traffic movements associated with each of the schools – there is no mention of this in the plan, or how this could or should be addressed

- ❑ Insufficient attention is given to the provision of economic development land; exacerbated by the fact that existing sites with economic use are being replaced with residential development (such as Dovecot, and such as various workshop sites that are being replaced with one, two or three houses); Peebles has some outstanding medium scale businesses of national and international standing; there is no reason why more such business should not operate from the town, if suitable sites and support were provided; Peebles cannot thrive simply as a dormitory to Edinburgh and Pentland Science Cluster
- ❑ There is concern that current / future allocations for economic land fall far short of requirements, and that presents a real and current problem with the identification of the Dovecot site for redevelopment; this is currently home to a wide range of businesses, all of which have been put on notice that they might have to relocate in the near future; efforts to identify premises that they can reasonably move to have been singularly unsuccessful; either redevelopment of this site should be nominated for economic use, or significant additional sites for economic development should be identified within this LDP
- ❑ There needs to be some explicit recognition of the impact of recently revised flood risk modelling undertaken and published by SEPA – part of which shows the land to the southeast of the town (Kittlegairy and beyond) to be at high risk of regular flooding
- ❑ The “core activity areas” need to be extended to include the Northgate, Cuddy Bridge, Old Town, and frontage to the east of Eastgate
- ❑ Connectivity across Peebles is poor – there are plenty of paths, footpaths and green spaces, but they are not joined into a coherent whole that meets the needs of both the community and visitors; there are clear opportunities for infill and further development of the core paths network in and around Peebles, and more needs to be done to facilitate the movement of children to and from school, residents to and from medical and other social support facilities, and residents to and from shops and leisure facilities; such developments fit well with the LDP focus on Green Networks – not to do something about this would suggest that Green Networks are more spin than practice
- ❑ In the context of green networks, and protection of key green areas, we are very supportive of designation of a large number of green areas for protection against development within this plan; in addition, however, we would note that there are other areas of structured woodland and/or fields / beds that would benefit from increased levels of protection (note the identification of some such key features within the Landscape Capacity Study undertaken by SBC landscape architects in 2007), much of which lies in private ownership; we would note in particular the woodland associated with Kingsmeadows House (currently on sale, with a brochure suggesting potential for significant development of new housing), and the need to protect green corridors

surrounding and associated with access to the town's four schools.

M A Tolhurst

On behalf of the Community Council of the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District.

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