

Planning Committee (including Licencing matters) Report – Tuesday 7th January 2014

Note these are recommendations to Community Council until passed at full Council Meeting or submitted under delegated powers due to time constraints

Members Crick Carleton (Chair), Alan Mackenzie, Martin Tolhurst, Lesley Morrison, Robin Tatler, Gary Rennie, Derek Horsburgh, Anne Snoddy

Present – Crick Carleton (Chair), Anne Snoddy, Martin Tolhurst, Myriam Baete, Derek Horsburgh, Gary Rennie

Apologies – Robin Tatler, Alan MacKenzie

Key issues this month are:

- Vision for Peebles Open Forum – 18th January 2014
- Second Bridge
- Local Development Plan consultation – closes 3rd March
- Pre-application consultation – housing at Innerleithen Rd / Hydro

Strategic issues

SESplan SPG – Housing allocations

The closing date for this is **23rd December**. Key details of the draft SPG are shown at Annex A.

We propose to respond along the following lines:

- Whilst the additional housing proposals for the Peebles – Walkerburn corridor are relatively modest compared to other parts of the SESplan area, they represent something like a 20 per cent uplift on the existing figures; we think this is excessive.
- Methodologically the revisitation of housing allocations has overly focused on a few small housing areas (the Western Housing area is in fact a smaller area than we had assumed, only extending from Walkerburn to Peebles, and north to Eddleston), which we think is disproportionate.
- No additional allocation has been proposed for the West Linton area, on the basis that West Linton has undergone recent expansion; but this area includes a large number of rural settlements, including Broughton, Manor, Lamancha etc. – where there may yet be room / demand for further expansion.
- There are smaller settlements where community infrastructure – such as shops, pubs, schools, bus service – is at risk, where modest expansion of housing allocation numbers might be appropriate and welcome.
- From the proposed SPG (and other readily available documentation) it is very difficult to establish what the existing and additional housing allocations are for each area; whilst we recognise that this is a contentious issue, and thus over-focus on the issue may not be encouraged, unfortunately it is of major significance to a community such as Peebles, and this information should be much more accessible to the general public.

- There is mention that Peebles High School “has room for already committed housing, but there may be very limited additional capacity”. Whilst this statement is factually accurate, it does not give the impression that the current state of affairs is serious. With housing development elsewhere in the catchment area of Peebles High School the school is effectively full, and has been for some time. Further, one of our three primary schools (Priorsford) is also at full capacity. To be clinically accurate, both these schools will reach 100% capacity within the next LDP period. There needs to be clearer recognition that these schools are full, and that at the very least there needs to be a reduction in the catchment area from which the High School takes pupils (currently 9 primary schools). Simply upping the future housing allocation for the area only exacerbates an already stressed and stretched situation.

The proposed SPG can be downloaded at <http://sesplan-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/sg/hsgland>).

A second bridge for Peebles

Arising from discussion concerning our response to the LDP and the issue of a second bridge, it was evident that not only were a range of views being expressed, but views also focused on different issues. To bring greater clarity to this it is proposed that the main issues may be summarised as three:

- Over-reliance on a single road bridge crossing presents a tangible risk for the community should that bridge be closed for any reason on the future
- Remediation of traffic congestion within the town – with a particular focus on congestion at the southern end of Tweed Bridge, and congestion on the High Street
- Facilitation of expansion of the settlement footprint of Peebles south of the River Tweed

In addressing the first issue, an alternate to building a second road bridge would be to have a well-developed and effective disaster plan in place to specifically address the, unlikely but possible, situation where the Tweed Bridge cannot be used for road traffic – for example, detailed assessment of the feasibility of installing a temporary bridge crossing just north of south of the existing bridge.

For the second issue, opinion appears to be divided as to whether or not Peebles can really be described as having a traffic congestion problem, or if it has, is a second bridge the right or only means of addressing traffic congestion.

The third issue appears to draw the more widely held view that significant further housing development south of the river will irreversibly alter the complexion, feel and attractiveness of Peebles – for the worse; and this is in part based on the experience that current consented developments at Whitehaugh and Kettleary are largely disconnected satellite developments to the town – representing unsustainable asymmetric development of the settlement – and that the infrastructure of the community cannot sustain such development.

If pressed to take a position on the matter, most are of the view that a second bridge is an invitation to developers to seek to build several hundred more houses to the south of the river within the next 20 years, and that this would not be good for Peebles.

It is proposed that the Community Council submit a letter to SBC planning along these lines as its contribution to the current Second Bridge consultation process.

Draft Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan is now out for consultation, and consultation will close on 3rd March 2014.

The draft of the plan can be downloaded in three volumes from the SBC website at http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/659/local_development_plan.

Note that these files are large.

In an effort to draw some of our thoughts on the issue together, we note the following (further developed following the December CC meeting, and the January meeting of the CC Planning Committee):

- 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 next ten years, but next twenty and thirty years), making for an untenable split town
- Needs to be much more focused effort on reconnecting the existing settlement pattern – through upgrading of paths and cycle network, amongst other issues
- Second bridge option needs to be ditched in favour of 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
- 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
- There needs to be a much clearer statement of the composition of current and future housing allocations – including a statement of the existing number of houses in each category
- 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, to do with Caledonian Road (the issues are to do with 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 survive as simply a dormitory to Edinburgh and Pentland Science Cluster
- 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.

Peebles Town Master Plan / Vision for Peebles

Vision for Peebles is to hold a Public Information Day and Workshop on 18th January at the Burgh Hall – 10.30 til 4.00 – all welcome.

Scheduled discussions will include:

- 11.30am Whole Town Master Plan for Peebles
- 1.00pm A second bridge – what it might mean for Peebles
- 2.00pm Housing – how many, where and why
- 3.00pm Getting about Peebles – by bus, car, bicycle, on foot.

This is an opportunity for Community Councillors to interface with town residents and canvas their views on a wide range of issues facing the town. Accordingly it is proposed that the event include a rolling Community Council Surgery – a display board and table where residents can expect to meet and talk with their Community Councillors. We are calling for Community Councillors to man the “Surgery” desk across the day, and a roster is being circulated. CCs are encouraged to sign up for, ideally, a two-hour slot.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill consultation

The consultation focuses on:

1. Definition of community body
2. Right to participate in discussions on service provision
3. Cost recovery on repairs to dangerous buildings
4. Extension of community right to buy
5. Formation of Community Planning Partnerships in each community
6. Provision of allotments
7. Focus on outcomes (rather than inputs or outputs)

8. Improvements to local decision-making
9. Likely impact (under various heads) of proposed legislation

It is proposed to try and respond with something under items 5 and 6 above.

The closing date for responses is **24 January 2014**.

Consultations

Rosetta Road Caravan Park

We are still awaiting the revised application.

Innerleithen Road / Peebles Hydro housing development

We are awaiting notification that a planning application has been submitted.

Veitch's Corner

Some minor activity evident.

Cross Keys

Work on the site has commenced.

Planning Applications

AOCB

none

Planning Applications.

There are fewer than normal applications to consider this month.

Listed

Conservation Area

Change of use from school ground to garden ground | Land West Of Springwood House Springwood Drive Peebles | Ref. No: 13/01375/FUL | Received: Wed 04 Dec 2013 | Validated: Thu 05 Dec 2013 | Status: Pending Consideration

No objection in principle, but area lies outside ownership of applicant. Rabbits undermining garden wall.

Replacement windows | Marchmont 22 March Street Peebles Scottish Borders EH45 8EP | Ref. No: 13/01336/FUL | Received: Mon 25 Nov 2013 | Validated: Thu 05 Dec 2013 | Status: Pending Consideration

Support Civic Society objection to style and lack of information on siting of windows.

Regular

Erection of three dwellinghouses (change of house type on plots 98 and 99 from previous consent 06/01164/REM) and erection of additional dwellinghouse on plot 100A | Plots 98, 99 And 100A Land East Of Whitehaugh Park Peebles | Ref. No: 13/01428/FUL | Received: Thu 19 Dec 2013 | Validated: Mon 23 Dec 2013 | Status: Pending Consideration

Amendment of previous consent. No objection as not outside context of the development site generally.

Intallation of roller shutter door | 2 Elm Court Cavalry Park Peebles Scottish Borders EH45 9BU | Ref. No: 13/01382/FUL | Received: Fri 06 Dec 2013 | Validated: Tue 10 Dec 2013 | Status: Pending Consideration

No objection. Council is examining issues of parking impact separately.

Rural