

After four years, the Fife Structure Plan has been approved by Scottish Ministers (who refused to hold an Examination in Public), with a statutory period of six weeks for a legal challenge. I lodged such a challenge today.

Proposals for St. Andrews include that it become an economic driver for the whole of Fife, plus 1090 houses, distributor road, business and science parks (44 acres), and a share of 930 more houses. Landscape assessments commissioned by Fife Council have confirmed that this level of development cannot be accommodated without permanent damage to the town's landscape setting. Councillors are now making huge and praiseworthy efforts through the Local Plan to relocate some housing and to protect the iconic views of St. Andrews and its surroundings. But the Local Plan has to conform to the Structure Plan. Pressure from officials, developers and the University (whose proposals for 1,000 houses and a science park are included in the Structure Plan as St. Andrews West), may rule out significant change.

The grounds for the legal challenge are that the landscape setting of St. Andrews cannot absorb over 1,000 houses. Ten years ago Fife Council published the Strategic Study, which said that St. Andrews was at its landscape capacity. There is no need or justification for this massive amount of housing, which will result in a huge increase in traffic. All our objections have been ignored. In St. Andrews only 30% of houses will be affordable - if they are built. There is little sign that the economic situation has been taken into account.

This legal challenge will probably take some months to come to court. During that time I will try to fundraise to meet the possible costs (about £60,000) if the case is lost. £17,000 has already been pledged. I hope that anyone who is willing to support me will send an SAE requesting a pledge form, which will only be called in if necessary, and if I am found liable for the costs of the action. I should like to make it absolutely clear that anyone signing such a form will only be responsible for the amount pledged, and that pledges will be kept confidential.

It is difficult for an individual resident, rather than an environmental body or a charity, to lodge a legal challenge. But the rules are strict - only those who sent in objections to the Modifications can do this.

The fact that the Local Plan was republished a month before the Modifications no doubt confused many people.

I am hopeful that the Community Council and the Preservation Trust will offer support for this challenge. The Trust has considerable assets and a history of defending the town against damaging development - it was represented by a Q.C. at the 1994 Local Plan Inquiry, fought against building on the South Street long rigs, contributed to the action against Kingask, and has been in the forefront

of protecting the most important small historic burgh in Scotland' (Historic Scotland).

This was a very difficult decision, but I hope that action may avert what I believe would be the destruction of St. Andrews.

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