



Make your views known!

Last year Fife Council's Draft **Structure Plan** provoked a huge public outcry. The "Finalised" version has now been published. On most of the major issues, Fife Council has ignored the public response. Indeed, in some respects the "Finalised" version is worse than the Draft one.

Even though this latest version of the Structure Plan is called "Finalised", there is still an opportunity to change it. The Plan has now been passed to the Scottish Executive, and it only becomes set in stone if the Executive is willing to approve it.

History suggests that the Executive is usually more open to rational argument than the Council. If you want to make your voice heard, you have to write to the Scottish Executive **BY JULY 17**. (See overleaf.)



Huge expansion threat to St Andrews

The "Finalised" Structure Plan is a developers' charter:-

- * It requires 4400 new houses by 2026 in the St Andrews Housing Market Area which covers the eastern part of the St Andrews and East Fife Local Plan Area (an INCREASE of 400 on the Draft Plan).
- * It makes St Andrews itself a **Strategic Development Area** (SDA). (This notion was not present a year ago and was included without any public consultation.)
- * SDAs must have a **minimum** of 1200 new houses by 2026, plus all those on land already zoned for housing.
- * The Local Plan must find sites for a **further** 550 of the 4400 houses. These could also be in St Andrews.
- * Despite overwhelming objections, the link road from the A91 to the Strathkinness High Rd is to go ahead.

Remember also that, when detailed planning consent is sought, the Council usually agrees to accept more houses on a site than the number in the Plan. Past experience also suggests that the Council will consent to housing on a large proportion of 'windfall' sites – ones not listed in the Plan which come on the market unexpectedly.

How will this affect us?

There are several threats to your quality of life:-

- * Traffic gridlock in the centre will become far more frequent, and not just in the summer.
- * The Southern hillside will probably be covered with houses, destroying the "green bowl" setting of the town.
- * Overspill demand for parking spaces will stretch still further from the town centre.
- * New estates in Leuchars/Guardbridge and the East Neuk will make the town busier still.
- * Development between the Strathkinness High Road and the Guardbridge Road will destroy a view of the town treasured for centuries.
- * The Green Belt will be emasculated before it is born, with the key areas that give it its main rationale covered by urban sprawl.
- * The overloading of Madras College will be further exacerbated.
- * The general increase in traffic will lengthen waiting times at junctions and roundabouts.



Affordable housing in St Andrews – a tempting mirage Indisputably St Andrews needs affordable housing for those who brought up here or working here. The Structure Plan requires 30% of houses in new developments to be affordable. This looks initially attractive, but there is still the loophole allowing "affordable housing" to be sold on at market price in no time. So the long-term policy is as effective as building sand-castles on the beach. Indeed it is worse than useless, as it wastes the town's scarce supply of suitable housing land. The Plan should require affordable housing that stays affordable in perpetuity. This can be done through housing cooperatives and by building housing for rent. The Community Council welcomes the suspension of the Right to Buy in the town. The opportunity to build for rent must be exploited.

The Southern hillside When Fife Council approved the application for the new hospital on the Largo Road, it imposed a condition that the developers **MUST** provide an access across the hospital site to permit the development of the southern hillside to the east of the site. The Draft Local Plan also left a swathe of hillside inside the Green Belt as a sitting duck for developers. Fife Council must know that both these moves go against the oft-expressed wishes of the town. The Council's actions must delight the Muir Group which has made it clear it wishes to build up to 1000 houses on the hillside.

Green Belt The specification in the 2002 Structure Plan has been diluted, omitting the need for the Belt to encircle the town. The ban on all developments in the Belt that would cut views of the historic core has also gone, as has the promise (shamefully not kept) to deem premature applications likely to prejudice the determination of the Green Belt boundaries. Under the Plan, developments in the Belt which may be acceptable include those for tourism and golf – as if the town needs more courses or club houses!

Schools . . . Something for nothing? Recently Fife Council's approach to planning applications has laid increasing weight on what public works can be demanded from the developer in return for consent. The Structure Plan adopts a similar something-for-nothing tactic. In St Andrews, it declares that, in return for permission to build large numbers of houses, developers will have to build a new primary school. This will hardly be music to the ears of those who recently tried to save Langlands. For secondary schools, there is a weaker requirement for developers to contribute towards schools in St Andrews and at the Tay Bridgehead, leaving even vaguer the time-scale for any action. In the case of Madras College, it is not reasonable to over-develop the town to provide the funding that the Council should have found years ago.

A leap in the dark The Plan declares, "New development should not have a detrimental effect upon the communities of which they will be a part, or adjacent to. Rather it should contribute to the quality of the environment and to these communities". The notion that development on the proposed scale would improve the environment is ridiculous. This huge expansion would also impact adversely on the whole range of public services. A small number of developer contributions would not start to repair the damage. There has been a failure to foresee all the implications of the Plan, never mind make proper provision for them.



The big picture The Plan cites government policy that seeks to ensure that development occurs in the right place, and avoids causing unnecessary journeys. Yet Fife has clearly not applied it. A major plank of the Plan is to build housing in West, and particularly Central, Fife for Edinburgh commuters, and to attract Dundee commuters south of the Tay. Long distance commuting, necessitating the "further multi-modal Forth crossing" that the Plan seeks, will do nothing to cut global warming. Nor will the St Andrews World Class emphasis on attracting more rich American golfers, when the world needs air travel to be reduced.



Rail link One developer contribution that the Plan does NOT envisage is funding towards reinstating the rail link. A more far-sighted Council would have built the Structure Plan proposals for the town around this target. It offers a way for tourism to expand without suffocating the town, and the methodology of Prof. Hazel of E-Rail Ltd shows how to make the idea viable. The "Finalised" Structure Plan does require the safeguarding of the vaguely-named "St Andrews public transport route" but is as feeble as the Draft, in calling for "further consideration of transport link options for St Andrews to the rail network".

Notable Omissions Several useful parts of the last Structure Plan have been cut. Fife asserts that some will re-appear later in the Local Plan, but policies omitted from this developers' charter include:-

- * the policy on built heritage, which helped to protect St Andrews Conservation Areas;
- * the policy protecting the unbuilt coastline;
- * the policy protecting archaeological sites;
- * the policy requiring developers to provide adequate cycle facilities where appropriate;
- * the policy protecting sport and recreation facilities from adverse development;
- * the policy restricting development in areas of known flooding risk.

Write! NOW! Stop St Andrews being swamped!

Say *explicitly* that you object to and briefly explain why.

Send your objection by post to:-

The Secretary,
The Scottish Executive Development Department,
Planning Services Division, Floor 2-H,
Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

Or by email to:- fifesp@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

All letters and emails should be in by **July 17.**

A letter of objection need not be long, nor does it need to be on an official form. What's important is to tell the Scottish Executive what you think. If you have an unresolved objection from last year, send the Executive a copy of your earlier letter.

For more information, visit the Community Council web-site

<http://www.standrewscc.net/>

for links to the "Finalised" Structure Plan, the earlier 2002 Structure Plan (for comparison), and the references for the items in this newsletter.