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Local Development Plan Team
The Environment Service
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Dear Sir or Madam

Portmoak Community Council submission to the Main Issues Report

We welcome the opportunity to get involved in the creation of the new Development Plan for Perth and Kinross, we are pleased with our initial conversations with your planning officers on this matter and we are keen to take a constructive role in the Plan's evolution.

We do need of course to reflect the viewpoints of the residents of Portmoak, as conveyed to us on many occasions and in many meetings during the life of the Kinross Local Plan 2004. We are aware of a widespread feeling that this community has already had to absorb a relatively large number of new houses in recent years, including those approved but not yet completed; that the infrastructure in the area seems already at capacity, including in particular the Primary School; and that most new applications appear to be for very large "executive" homes, of an unsympathetic suburban design, unaffordable to local people and often on sites that detract from fine landscapes. There is also great concern about repeated attempts to build outside the defined settlement boundaries.

Accordingly our starting point is to ask that the existing Settlement Boundaries and Conservation Areas for Wester Balgedie, Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell/Kilmagadwood (as shown on Maps 9, 12 and 13 respectively in the Kinross Area Local Plan) be reaffirmed, and in one case retracted [see below]. Also specifically that the Land Areas defined on those maps be retained to "safeguard" (Policies 87 and 88) and "maintain" (Policy 90) "the setting of the village". We would also wish to see the Area of Great Landscape Value to the north of Wester Balgedie reinstated to its pre-2004 boundaries.

We are especially concerned to protect Wester Balgedie, which we understand is the only remaining "ferm toun" in Kinross-shire and one of few in Scotland. Similarly we think there should be a strong prohibition of any extension of the village envelopes towards Loch Leven; we have no doubt those low-lying areas would be highly

attractive to developers if drainage / flooding problems were overcome but building on them would detract from the beauty of the setting of the loch and the visual amenity of existing residents.

In Scotlandwell/Kilmagadwood, we ask that the extension of the north-western part of the Settlement boundary (site known as "Land at Kilmagadwood") originally incorporated into the Settlement under "Topic 73" without consultation with or the knowledge of immediate neighbours, be taken back outside the Settlement Boundary, re-designated as agricultural land and incorporated back into the AGLV. This is the site development of which was opposed by over 100 letters of objection and twice rejected for housing by both PKC and the Scottish Govt Appeal Reporters Unit,

While that is our starting point we stress however that we are willing to consider well thought out proposals for housing developments that are affordable to local people, sympathetic to adjacent housing styles and scale, and enhance rather than detract from the area. We would only be supportive of any such a proposal if we are convinced that Perth & Kinross Council would actively enforce such conditions at both the planning and construction stage – it would not be enough for prospective developers to simply assert that their proposals meet those aims, as has happened too often in the past. The actual plans and buildings must demonstrate they actually would do so.

We would though be reluctant to give any support at all to proposals that extend any of these settlements towards each other. The villages are already separated by only short distances and any possibility of ribbon development, even by increments of single dwellings, should be prohibited within the Plan. A number of applications to build on adjoining lands have been made in recent years (and rejected by PKC) so this is no theoretical concern and we would not like to see the Council's grounds for rejecting such applications weakened in any way.

Recent applications have also reminded us of the importance of the Airfield Safeguarding Policy (49) within the KALP and we would ask that this is retained and preferably strengthened. It would be absurd if a small housing development or business expansion close to the airfield were allowed to jeopardise the Scottish Gliding Centre, which has been here for many decades and in no small measure puts Portmoak on the national map.

Another issue that has aroused a great deal of feeling is wind generators. Accordingly we would ask for retention of Policy 17 in the current KALP, including in particular the prohibition of wind farms on certain named hills and ridgelines. In addition we feel there should be a policy on individual wind turbines, specifically to close the loophole of creating a windfarm one turbine at a time, also requiring the applicant to demonstrate useful power generation – they are generally regarded as unsightly intrusions into the countryside and should therefore only be accepted if there is a genuine offsetting advantage through the generation of renewable energy. It should be a condition of any such planning approval that the owner is required to

remove the generator/turbine if it is evident that it is ineffective in generation or has otherwise become dysfunctional, and there needs to be a mechanism for making and enforcing such a judgement.

Finally we are dismayed that it has proved so difficult to get consistent estimates of the number of new houses to be built in Portmoak during the life of the new Plan. We do think that the Main Issues Report should include or be accompanied by very clear statements from PKC of how many new builds would be likely under the new Plan. There is frankly a lack of trust in this matter at present.

In conclusion, we are finding within our Community growing awareness of and interest in the new Plan and accordingly we may well receive further relevant contributions over the next few months. Given that PKC has until April 2010 to prepare the Main Issues Report, we trust that the Council will consider sympathetically any further comments we submit this year.

Yours truly,

Ian McGrattan, Chair
For and on behalf of Portmoak Community Council