

Rural Development & Green Belt

The referenced parts of the Scottish Planning Policy should be changed to include **good** agricultural land (class 3.2) specifically, instead of just **prime** agricultural land (classes 1 - 3.1), of which there is very little in Aberdeenshire:

80. Where it is necessary to use good quality land for development, the layout and design should minimise the amount of such land that is required. Development on **prime** agricultural land, or land of lesser quality that is locally important should not be permitted except where it is essential:

The references to green belt providing separation between developed settlements should be strengthened. Developments in green belts, whether designated as green belts or not, providing separation between development settlements, should not be allowed.

There is no benefit in increasing the population of rural areas near urban centres that haven't been depopulated. Additional measures should not be introduced too fast – track any housing in rural areas at the expense of green fields or green belt land.

Agricultural buildings can be constructed without planning permission. This privilege has been abused, as evidenced by the number of retrospective change of use applications that have been made following intervention by enforcement officers. Full planning permission should be required, following the same process as for other commercial buildings, where the proposed location is on any land which is classed for industrial, retail or commercial use or borders on land classified for such use.

Valuing The Natural Environment

Environment impact assessments should be required for all commercial developments meeting the size criteria in Schd 2 of the EIA Regs on greenfield sites.

Planning authorities should establish, in consultation with local communities, a list of areas designated for local landscape or nature conservation value. This list should be revised and updated before each local development plan is finalised, and be definitive as to which areas should be protected from commercial development, and what character should be safeguarded.

There should be a presumption against development which would destroy areas of established woodland.

Maximising The Benefits Of Green Infrastructure & Flooding

Development sites should not include sites designated as “protected” as contributing to their requirement to provide open space within the development.

SPP references “core paths” with respect to access to green infrastructure. There are very few core paths compared to the number of desire lines and tracks used to walk in the countryside which have no protection in planning law. By definition, desire lines and rough tracks are means of access which people use to access green infrastructure. They should be referenced as means of access and safeguarding them should be considered in planning applications.

Pedestrian access to river, loch, burn and canal banks should be specified in planning policies, and should be specified as normal practice. Developments should be required to provide evidence to justify blocking, removing or preventing pedestrian access to the banks of rivers, lochs, canals and burns.

Flood prevention measures should be required to maintain access to the banks of rivers, lochs, canals and burns.

Countryside access policy should allow for seasonal variations, i.e. to allow routes to be closed for specified periods during lambing season or bird rearing season.

Enabling Delivery of new Homes (All) & Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

Planning policies requiring housing estates to have walkable access to local amenities, to have adequate public transport and to demonstrate that they won't generate significant reliance on car transport for routine journeys should be strengthened.

Supporting infrastructure should be provided by the housing developer as part of the development.

Planning policy should specify garages should be adequately sized for the large SUVs available on the market. This would reduce the amount of on-street parking that we see on new housing estates. Housing estates should be designed to connect with surrounding countryside, and should have no dead ends preventing pedestrian access to surrounding countryside.

Supporting Business And Employment

Planning policy should consider the visual impact and nuisance from light and noise emission from business developments involving large buildings and/or lighting on hillsides or near housing or trunk roads.

Community Facilities

Planning policy should recognise the role of restaurants and pubic houses as community facilities contributing to the sense of place for a town, and developments should not jeopardise them if already present and should be required to provide land to enable them where possible.