

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Planning Committee: 10 January 2012**

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**Subject: Renfrewshire Local Development Plan Main Issues Report**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the publication of the Main Issues Report of the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and to seek approval of the Council's response to the document.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** Renfrewshire Council published its Main issues Report on 4 December with the consultation period running until 24 February 2012. The Main Issues Report is accompanied by a Monitoring Statement, Strategic Environmental Assessment and a series of background reports.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** The Main Issues Report has been assessed for issues that may be of interest or concern to the West Dunbartonshire area. The document sets out a number of issues and options but it is considered that only the issue affecting Braehead is of direct relevance to West Dunbartonshire.

- 3.2** The preferred strategy for Braehead as set out in Renfrewshire Council's Main Issues Report is:

To designate Braehead as a town centre and support the expansion of the centre to include:

- Expansion of retail floorspace
- Development of a new arena/hotel complex
- Development of a new public square/event space
- New bus/public transport interchange
- Provision of new decked car parks
- New walking/cycling links to Renfrew

- 3.3** Renfrewshire Council considers Braehead fulfils all of the characteristics in terms of its role and function as an established town centre, and that its recognition as such would allow for its continued retail development.

- 3.4** Alternative strategies for Braehead are also set out, as this is a requirement of a Main Issues Report. Alternative 1 is that Braehead is not defined as a town centre, but that explicit support is offered by the Local Development Plan to the development of the centre leading to its designation as a town centre in

the next Local Development Plan in 5 years time. Alternative 2 is that Braehead is not defined as a town centre, that retail expansion at the centre is not supported by the Local Development Plan, but diversification of uses is supported, possibly also leading to its designation as a town centre in the next Local Development Plan.

- 3.5** West Dunbartonshire Council would object to the designation of Braehead as a town centre in the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan. Scottish Planning Policy differentiates between town centres and commercial centres with the latter being defined as 'distinct from town centres as their range of uses and physical structure makes them different in character and sense of place. They generally have a more specific focus on retailing or on retailing and leisure uses'. Scottish Planning Policy goes on to give examples of commercial centres including 'out-of-centre shopping centres'. It is considered that Braehead matches this definition of a commercial centre exactly and is an obvious out-of-centre shopping centre. Scottish Planning Policy also sets out attributes of a town centre referring to a 'diverse mix of uses', a 'sense of place', and 'wider economic and social activity' rather than 'a retail-led approach which can create homogenous centres'. Braehead is considered to be a retail-dominated centre, lacking in diversity of uses and one which does not have a community focus or serve a particular community. There is no town of Braehead, and the ongoing residential development at Renfrew Riverside does not justify the designation of a centre the size of Braehead as a town centre and could be adequately served by Renfrew Town Centre which is within walking distance.
- 3.6** The main concern of this Council with regard to the designation of Braehead as a town centre would be the impact of further retail development on West Dunbartonshire's town centres and, from a strategic perspective, Glasgow City Centre. Scottish Planning Policy states that 'where proposals support a centre's role and function, as identified in the development plan, there is no requirement to provide a detailed assessment of need'. The role and function of a Braehead town centre has not yet been defined in a development plan, but it is clear that the centre is already serving a regional role, meaning that substantial retail expansion could be justified if it was designated as a town centre. Recent work by the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan Authority set out in Background Report 14 to the Proposed Strategic Development Plan shows that the shopping catchment of Braehead already extends significantly beyond Renfrewshire and covers a substantial area of West Dunbartonshire, and that there is already 8% and 12% of the Clydebank and Dumbarton catchment expenditure is drawn to Braehead. It is not considered acceptable that any centre, other than the city centre should have and seek to increase such a trade draw, particularly when this is trade that will be largely drawn by means of the private car as public transport links between West Dunbartonshire are poor.
- 3.7** In addition, there is also concern about the potential impact of additional retail floorspace, for which no limit is suggested, on the City Centre, a sustainably accessible location at the heart of the city-region. The Proposed Strategic Development Plan recognises the importance of Glasgow City Centre, and

requires all city-region authorities to consider its long-term health and well-being in decision making.

- 3.8** A town centre is not simply a planning designation. It is a place that evolves through time to serve a defined community. It is considered inappropriate to use the designation to enable further retail development at a location which has already had such an adverse impact on centres across the western Glasgow and Clyde Valley region. The regeneration arguments for additional retail floorspace at Braehead are limited, and retail expansion would be at the expense of other town centres which are in actual need of regeneration, but which suffer from the loss of expenditure to Braehead.
- 3.9** Question number 5 of the Main Issues Report asks if the preferred strategy for Braehead is correct, or if the suggested alternative should be pursued. It further asks if another strategy should be pursued. This Council considers that Braehead should be identified as a commercial centre, and that this option should have been presented in the Main Issues Report.

#### **4. People Implications**

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** No risks have been identified.

#### **7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 7.1** Renfrewshire Council has the responsibility for undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment of its Local Development Plan.

#### **8. Strategic Assessment**

- 8.1** This report has been prepared with regard to the Council's Strategic Priority of Social and Economic Regeneration and the comments on Renfrewshire's Main Issues Report seek to support West Dunbartonshire's town centre regeneration focus.

#### **9. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 9.1** The proposed designation of Braehead as a town centre is the only issue of direct consequence for West Dunbartonshire to be included within Renfrewshire Council's Main Issues Report. It is considered that its designation as a town centre and associated expansion of retail floorspace would have an adverse impact on West Dunbartonshire's town centres, which already lose significant trade to Braehead, and potentially the city centre. It is

considered appropriate that Braehead should be identified as a commercial centre by the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.

- 9.2** It is recommended that paragraphs 3.5-3.9 of this report be submitted to Renfrewshire Council as this Council's response to its Main Issues Report.

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**Elaine Melrose**

**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

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**Background Papers:** Renfrewshire Local Development Plan Main issues  
Report

**Wards Affected:** All