

Contin Community Council

Report from a meeting held on 1st August 2011 in the Village Community Centre

This meeting was called principally to enable the community to discuss issues affecting Contin, Jamestown and Tarvie in relation to the Highland Council's 'Call for Sites' as being the preliminary stage of the proposed 'Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan'. Some 50 local residents were present at the meeting and everyone was given ample opportunity to express their views.

Laurence Gunner (*Chair*) explained that the Highland Council had changed the format for creating the 'Local Plan' and appreciation was expressed that the opportunity was being given to the local community for it to be involved at such an early stage. It fully intends to participate in a meaningful way and would hope to be further consulted, listened to and have their views given appropriate weighting at every stage of the decision-making process.

The meeting was first made aware of the possible constraints [on the existing development within Contin, Jamestown and Tarvie](#) and therefore any proposed development.

Wastewater: Contin has two concrete sewage treatment tanks of 50 cubic metre capacity each, [both believed to be within the functional flood plain](#). One below Torview and the other under the football ground by the divide in the river. Scottish Water states that there is capacity for less than ten new sites. There is certain concern in the village about sewage disposal in that there have been reports of untreated sewage discharging into the river from the playing field tank. The last upgrade was in 2004. [This is of considerable concern to residents, but more broadly is concerning given the Blackwater's multiple users and adjacent designated sites.](#) The last upgrade to these facilities was in 2004. This is a considerable existing constraint for the existing proposed houses with outline permission, never mind future development. As such the community needs to be reassured that any development can be satisfactorily catered for. [The wastewater constraints were of Jamestown were not discussed.](#)

Water Supply: Contin's water comes from Assynt Water Treatment Works at Loch Glass above Evanton. The stated capacity is for 2000+ housing units for most of Mid and Easter Rioss, though Scottish Water website indicates that Contin has only 10 allowed for. [Water supply is not viewed as a constraint.](#)

Primary Schools: Strathpeffer has a capacity for 234 pupils. At present there are 163 (70%) with a projected drop to 60% if housebuilding in the area averages 11 units pa. Schooling provision isn't an issue at present. [School capacity is not viewed as a constraint.](#)

[The residents then discussed the existing undeveloped capacity previously detailed in the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan. There was some uncertainty how Jamestown and Tarvie fit into these allocations.](#)

Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan. Under the existing plan provision for a total of fifty one houses was made for Contin, of which thirty-four are still unused.

- [Smithy Croft](#): 15, of which 2 have been taken up
- [Torview](#): 4 sheltered accommodation housing, not yet built
- [Old Village Hall](#): 2. Both built

- Contin Mains Steading: 4 not yet built
- Woodland Park: 21, of which 13 will have been built by end of 2011.
- Caravan Site: 5 not yet built.

The view of the meeting was that with an unused capacity of 34 housing units, there seemed to be no great call for any more houses to be planned for. It was understood that the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan was not up for re-negotiation at this stage and that it would be carried forward with other proposals to be considered for the Inner Moray Firth Development Plan.

Although the residents were mindful of the benefits of devolving some of these issues to the Community level, there was a clear desire to ensure adjacent Communities' views were joined up or at least we were made aware of each other.

The 'Call for Sites' asks local communities to identify land which should be safeguarded against development as having intrinsic value to the community and as such are to be regarded as cherished areas of public open space. Working in small groups, the meeting came up with:

Public Areas to be conserved:

- The Islands
- 5 Acre Wood
- All recreation and sports areas (the football pitch, paths, forestry and cycle network)
- The War Memorial and Millenium Stone Triangles
- The squares in Torview

Privately owned areas which have particular significance for Contin's landscape and heritage and where visual impacts of proposals for development should be fully taken into account in the decision-making process.

- The Caravan Park
- All prime agricultural land to the east, south and west of Contin
- Field between Torview and Coul House
- No vulnerable development should allowed within areas at Significant Flood Risk.

Future Development.

Contin Community Centre: Reference was made to the proposed new Centre in the southern part of the present Old School site together with 10 housing/affordable housing units in the northern part of the site, all of which have planning permission.

Attention was also drawn to the proposal by Highland Council to build 4 low-cost units to the north of Torview, although previous private attempts to build 4 units in the grounds of Torridon, the site just to the east had come to nothing.

The meeting was also told of two proposals for housing development in fields to the south of the A834 Contin to Jamestown road, one on the corner of the junction with the Inverness road and the other to the west of Jamestown. It was felt that the visual and landscape

impact assessment of both sites would show them to inflict serious and long-term damage to the environmental heritage of not only Contin and Jamestown but also to an area of outstanding natural beauty both along the lower reaches of the Blackwater river with its unique and distinctive landscape and also in a wider context of the whole valley between the Fairburn hills and Wester Moy. Residents were surprised and concerned at the scale of these proposals. It was felt that the extent of these two sets of developments would greatly affect the character of both Contin, Jamestown and the adjacent greenspace. In addition to these aspects, the Jamestown field is known to have longstanding drainage and surface water problems. This was said in no spirit of nimbyism but out of a deeply-felt respect for the countryside which over many centuries has given Contin so much of its character and heritage.

In summary, given the existing sewerage constraints being already felt by a number of residents, the existing proposed capacity not being utilised, there was little need within the community for supplementary large-scale development. The overwhelming view of the meeting was that the present development allocation was sufficient and there was little benefit in changing this and a good deal of risk if large-scale domestic developments were allowed on the fringes of Contin, Jamestown and Tarvie.

One further aspect was aired: Improved parking facilities is required in Contin. At least two of Contin's business are hamstrung by limited parking. This constraint not only proves a regular frustration to the business and their customers, but also hinders the continued growth of these local firms with obvious implications on local jobs.

It was noted (and it was well received) that there would be further chances to discuss the plan in its next stage, the Main Issues Report, in November/December.