

# Local Place Plan

## Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council

[November 2024]

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# 1 Introduction

This Local Place Plan describes the needs, hopes and aspirations for the communities living within the boundary of the Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council. The Community Council has developed this Local Place Plan for adoption by Aberdeenshire Council to be included in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

## 1.1 Map of area covered by this plan

The geographical area covered by this plan is the Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council area as specified by Aberdeenshire Council, see Figure 1.



Figure 1 Geographical area covered by this plan

## 1.2 Prepared by a Community Body

The Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council is a community body established in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

## 1.3 Contact for plan

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## 1.4 Acronyms used in this document

NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
LDP	Local Development Plan

## 1.5 References

During the development of this Local Place Plan, the Community Council has made extensive reference to the following documents:

- [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)
- [Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Place Plans\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#)
- [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 \(LDP 2023\)](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council's Topic Papers](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council's 2023 Based School Roll Forecast](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Land Audit](#)
- [Aberdeen City and Shire Housing Need and Demand Assessment](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council's Draft Local Housing Strategy 2024 - 2029](#)
- [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\), PISA assessment 2022](#)
- [Kincardine and Mearns Community Plan 2022](#)
- [NESTRANS Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study](#)
- [Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021-2025](#)
- [Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods](#)
- [Platinum Jubilee Coastal Path](#)

## 1.6 Evidence Gathering – Community Engagement

The Community Council takes every opportunity to engage with our local community. The first major engagement event, based on the “Planning for Real<sup>®</sup>” consultation model, was held in 2009. The main event of this consultation was a drop-in, held on the 9<sup>th</sup> May at the Bettridge Centre, Newtonhill. Part of “Planning for Real” is to make models of the community area. Three models were made, one of each village. Pupils from Newtonhill Primary School made part of the Newtonhill model, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Newtonhill & 1<sup>st</sup> Muchalls Brownies and the Newtonhill Out-Of-School Club made the models of Muchalls, Cammachmore and the remaining part of Newtonhill. Engaging local children in the model making, encouraged them to bring their parents to the well-attended event.

“Planning for Real” was closely followed by “Making it Real” held in June 2011. “Making it Real” followed a similar format to “Planning for Real” and the event was used to disclose the results to the community and to gather further information in order to publish the Community Action Plan in September 2011.

With assistance from Kincardine and Mearns Area Partnership, the Community Council developed an updated Community Action Plan for Newtonhill, that was published in November 2014.

During July 2016, a community questionnaire was delivered to all households. It took the form of a paper questionnaire with four open questions that could be returned on paper or completed using SurveyMonkey.

Planning application KM/ENQ/2017/1004 consulted on a Masterplan for Proposed Residential Development on Land to the south of Park Place, Newtonhill. The Community Council sought views from the residents of Newtonhill and Muchalls to issue a formal consultation response to the planning application.

Planning application APP/2018/1213 for 121 houses to be built on the moor between Newtonhill and Muchalls was vigorously contested by the Community Council and attracted 650 submissions opposing the application from local residents. The road link to Park Place was a very contentious subject for residents of Newtonhill as it crossed an area of land gifted to the village for recreational use by residents and was also protected land, within the terms of the LDP. The Community Council received many submissions from residents which has provided strong background to the views expressed in this Local Place Plan.

During 2019, the Community Council published a Locality Plan that brought together the input covering a broad range of topics from past consultations.

In March 2024, the NEWSEY magazine, delivered to all households in Newtonhill, Muchalls, Cammachmore and Chapelton, by the Newtonhill Village Association, asked for feedback on the need for housing in Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore.

To aid with the development of this Local Place Plan, a number of consultation questions were published on facebook to gather up-to-date views from the community. This was deemed especially important as the Covid pandemic has influenced all aspects of working life, home life, and leisure.

Other information was gathered at community group events, by visits to residents, and by casual meetings.

The draft Local Place Plan was published on the Community Council Facebook page, asking for comments by Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024. None were received.

### **1.7 Evidence of compliance with the requirements of regulation 4**

Regulation 4 of the 2021 Regulations (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997) sets out what the Community Body must do before submitting its Local Place Plan.

Details of how the evidence was gathered to create this local Place Plan is given in section 1.6 above. The draft Local Place Plan, having been adopted by the Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The Community Council sought the views of:

- a) Ward 17 Aberdeenshire Councillors: Cllr. David Aitchison; Cllr. Shirley Burnett; Cllr. Mel Sullivan; Cllr. Catherine Victor; and
- b) the adjoining community councils of: Stonehaven and District; North Kincardine Rural; Portlethen and District.

The draft Local Place Plan and the Information Notice were sent on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, with a deadline for responses of before Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024. No responses were received.

### **1.8 Information notice**

See Appendix A for a copy of the Information Notice.

### **1.9 Reasons for amending the Local Development Plan**

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires that the LDP 2029 is to be written in a completely different format from LDP 2023. This includes the introduction of Local Place Plans.

Starting from a position where it is assumed that the content of LDP 2029 will closely resemble that of LDP 2023, it is possible to describe what should remain the same and what should be amended, and giving the reasons for those decisions.

Legislation provides for planning authorities to prepare LDPs that include policies and proposals for development and use of land in their area. There is no legal requirement for LDPs to be directly 'compatible' with NPF4, although in preparing LDPs, there will be a statutory requirement, under section 16(2)(a)(i) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, that planning authorities take the National Planning Framework into account.

This Local Place Plan draws on NPF4 policy, Aberdeenshire Council's Topic Papers, and local knowledge to inform its conclusions. To comply with Aberdeenshire Council's deadline of the end of 2024 for the submission of a Local Place Plan, we have not been able to refer to Aberdeenshire Council's Evidence Report, as it has yet to be published.

Sections 3 through 8 set out how the Local Development Plan should be amended.

- Section 3, 'Planning and Development' considers which spatial planning elements from LDP 2023 should be retained and which should be amended.
- Section 4, 'Jobs and the Economy' considers how the LDP can support the local economy.
- Section 5, 'Education' examines the capacity of schools in the local area. Secondary schools are over capacity and with the build rate in Chapelton predicted to be 100 homes per year for several years to come, the LDP must ensure that this problem does not become a crisis.
- Section 6, 'Transport and Connecting People' considers the solutions that the LDP must take into account, to make transport more sustainable and to encourage the reduction of car-based travel.

- Section 7, 'Health, Wellbeing and Active Travel' sets out what facilities need to be retained and what facilities needs to be improved, to support community resilience.
- Section 8, 'The Environment and local amenities' set out the action that the LDP must consider to preserve the environment and local amenities.

## 2 Sustainability – Design, Quality and Place

The ethos behind creating a Local Place Plan can be summed up by sustainability. It is essential for the health and wellbeing of each member of our community, to create and maintain a place fit to grow and thrive. This is encapsulated in the Scottish national spatial strategy, and is worth repeating here.

*'Scotland's future places will have homes and neighbourhoods that are healthier, affordable and vibrant places to live. We have an opportunity to significantly improve our places, address longstanding inequality and eliminate discrimination, helping to transform our country for the better. Cleaner, safer and greener places and improved open spaces will build resilience and provide wider benefits for people, health and biodiversity, in a balanced way'.*

Topic Paper 14 'Design, Quality and Place' says that it is necessary to involve communities in the design process. Creating Places calls for a greater degree of engagement and advises that communities should be engaged from start to finish. This opportunity can be potentially addressed as part of the Local Place Plan process. High level generic design for places will need to be discussed in the LDP. The last theme that the data sets identify, is that design should support health and healthier lifestyles: well-designed physical environments support wellbeing. The LDP should support places that are well connected and encourage people to go outdoors, supporting access for all abilities. Developments should be conducive to active travel and enable and facilitate local living, not inhibit it.

NPF4 policy 14, 'Design, quality and place' encourages, promotes and facilitates well designed development by taking a design-led approach and applying the six qualities of successful places. The Community Council has considered these six qualities when developing this Local Place Plan.

1. **Healthy:** supporting the prioritisation of women's safety and improving physical and mental health.
  - lifelong wellbeing through ensuring spaces, routes and buildings feel safe and welcoming e.g. through passive surveillance and use of physical safety measures.
  - healthy and active lifestyles, through the creation of walkable neighbourhoods, food growing opportunities and access to nature and greenspace
  - accessibility and inclusion for everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, ability and culture
  - social connectivity and creating a sense of belonging and identity within the community
  - environmentally positive places with improved air quality, reactivating derelict and brownfield land, removing known hazards and good use of green and blue infrastructure
2. **Pleasant:** supporting attractive natural and built spaces.
  - positive social interactions including quality of public realm, civic spaces, streets and ensuring a lively and inclusive experience
  - protection from the elements to create attractive and welcoming surroundings, including provision for shade and shelter, mitigating against noise, air, light pollution and undesirable features, as well as ensuring climate resilience, including flood prevention and mitigation against rising sea levels
  - connecting with nature including natural landscape, existing landforms and features, biodiversity and eco-systems, integrating blue and green infrastructure and visual connection
  - variety and quality of play and recreation spaces for people of all ages and abilities
  - enjoyment, enabling people to feel at ease, spend more time outdoors and take inspiration from their surroundings
3. **Connected:** supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency
  - active travel by encouraging more walking, wheeling and cycling together with reliable, accessible, public transport and shared transport hubs that allow for simple modal shifts
  - connectivity including strategic cycle routes, local cycle routes, footpaths, pavements, active travel networks, desire lines, destinations, permeability, accessibility and catering for different needs and abilities

- convenient connections including local and regional interconnection, infrastructure, sustainable travel, interchange between public transport and active travel and supporting easy modal shifts in transport
  - pedestrian experience including safe crossing, pedestrian priority, reduced vehicular speed and noise, inclusive design and surfaces, assistive technology, reduced street clutter, catering for suitable vehicular parking and management of loading/unloading and deliveries and refuse collections
4. **Distinctive:** supporting attention to detail of local architectural styles and natural landscapes to be interpreted, literally or creatively, into designs to reinforce identity.
    - scale including density, building heights, massing, orientation, building lines and legibility
    - built form including mix of typologies, types, uses, sizes and tenures
    - sense of place including design influences, architectural styles, choice of materials and finishes, detailing, landscape design, active frontages and cultural context
  5. **Sustainable:** supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play, work and stay in their area, ensuring climate resilience, and integrating nature positive, 4/86 biodiversity solutions.
    - transition to net-zero including energy/carbon efficient solutions, retrofitting, reuse and repurposing and sharing of existing infrastructure and resources
    - climate resilience and nature recovery including incorporating blue and green infrastructure, integrating nature positive biodiversity solutions
    - active local economy including opportunities for local jobs and training, work spaces, enabling working from home, supporting community enterprise and third sector
    - community and local living including access to local services and facilities, education, community growing and healthy food options, play and recreation and digital connectivity
  6. **Adaptable:** supporting commitment to investing in the long-term value of buildings, streets and spaces by allowing for flexibility so that they can be changed quickly to accommodate different uses as well as maintained over time.
    - quality and function, ensuring fitness for purpose, design for high quality and durability
    - longevity and resilience including recognising the role of user centred design to cater for changing needs over time and to respond to social, economic and environmental priorities
    - long-term maintenance including effective engagement, clarity of rights and responsibilities, community ownership/stewardship, continuous upkeep and improvements

### 3 Planning and Development

Aberdeenshire Council has designed and encouraged the growth of the Community Council area in its Local Development Plans, and now has a responsibility to do much more to support our three communities and enable them to flourish. Until recently, it has been the strategy of Aberdeenshire Council to encourage developers to build more and more houses. A strategy that has been driven by the Scottish Government. The community decided that Chapelton is the right place to build a new town and the community has also made it abundantly clear that there should be no further development to the east of the A92.

#### 3.1 Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023

LDP 2023 protects the green belt and the coastal zone as Special Rural Areas under policy R1. However, NPF4 Policy 10, 'Coastal Development' does not take into account the unique nature of the coastal zone as defined in LDP 2023. Conversely, it seeks only to protect coastal communities and assets and support resilience to the impacts of climate change. In particular, R1.3 states: 'In the coastal zone development must require a coastal location or there must be clear social, economic, environmental or community benefits arising. In either case there must be no coalescence of coastal developments or adverse impacts on natural coastal processes or habitats'.

#### 3.2 Green Belt

Topic Paper 8, 'Green Belts' recognises that pressure for development along the A92(T) is pronounced. The Green Belt to date has helped maintain the distinct identity of communities between Portlethen, Cammachmore, Newtonhill and Muchalls. The Community Council agrees that future Local Development Plans must continue to protect the identity of these distinct communities.

This Local Place Plan retains the same spatial maps from the LDP 2023. Figure 2 Local Development Plan 2023 Green Belt map 9, shows the green belt area for the whole plan area. Keeping the green belt will prevent coalition of the distinctive communities along the east coast at the same time as preserving blue-green spaces.



Figure 2 Local Development Plan 2023 Green Belt map 9

### 3.3 Coastal Zone

NPF4 Policy 4, 'Natural Places' says 'LDPs will identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets, on land and along coasts. The spatial strategy should safeguard them and take into account the objectives and level of their protected status in allocating land for development. Spatial strategies should also better connect nature rich areas by establishing and growing nature networks to help protect and restore the biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes in their area'.

Managing competing land use demands in coastal areas, is a key consideration for the LDP spatial strategy. As well as the physical competition for space, compatibility of neighbouring uses must be considered, alongside impacts on natural character, coastal landscapes, coastal historic heritage, and coastal biodiversity. Understanding the extent,



characteristics and dynamic nature of the coastal environment is important for managing the wide range of coastal development issues.

The current LDP 2023 Coastal Zone boundary largely follows the East-Coast main railway line. The landward extent of the 'undeveloped' coast must be based on the status quo of the current LDP designation.

### 3.4 Newtonhill

Figure 3 Local Development Plan 2023 allocation for Newtonhill, includes three sites currently allocated to the settlement:

OP1: Park Place - Allocation: 121 homes – completed 2024.

OP2: Land to the West of the A92 – Allocation: 12.1ha employment land.

OP3: West Monduff – Allocation: 6.5ha employment land.

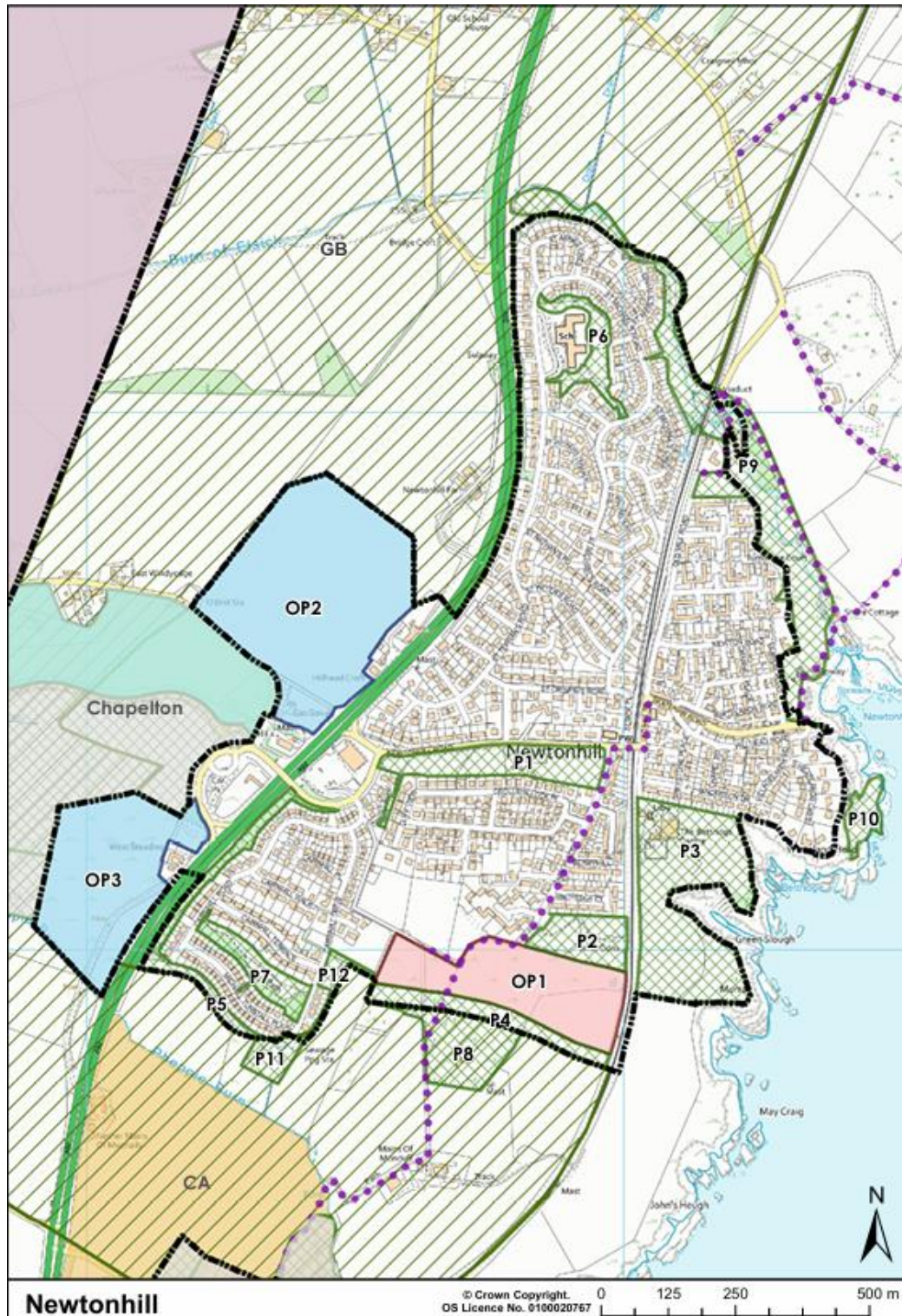


Figure 3 Local Development Plan 2023 allocation for Newtonhill

OP1, having been completed, is no longer needed as part of the LDP.

Development proposals for OP3 will need to meet the conditions of NPF4 Policy 26, 'Business and industry', as this site is poorly located due to the limited and potentially dangerous access from the A92 slip road. However, the Community Council supports employment opportunities for local residents.

No additional land allocations should be made in Newtonhill.

### 3.5 Muchalls Conservation Area

Figure 4 Local Development Plan 2023 allocation for Muchalls highlights that the unique nature of Muchalls is preserved by its Conservation Area status.

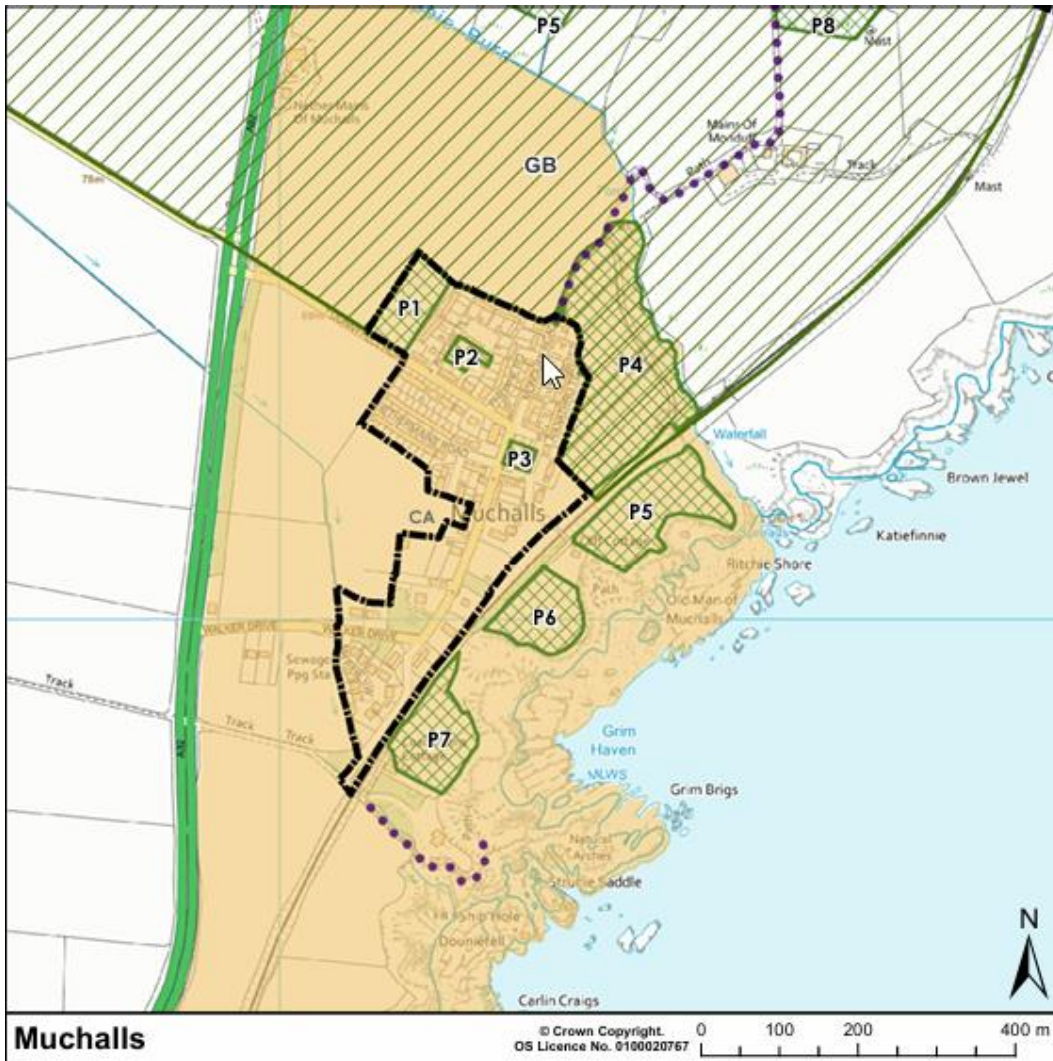


Figure 4 Local Development Plan 2023 allocation for Muchalls

Topic Paper 14, 'Design, Quality and Place', section 3.5.3, 'Conservation Areas' states:

*'These areas aim to preserve and enhance neighbourhoods of special architectural or historic interest, groups of buildings, open spaces, planned towns and villages, street patterns and historic gardens. Aberdeenshire currently has 40 conservation areas. Conservation Areas may be seen as a constraint, but they provide a useful basis for informing new development and highlight the qualities and characteristics of local vernacular architecture.'*

The residents of Muchalls were consulted, via the Muchalls Village Association, on whether they wanted their Conservation Area status changed. The residents agreed that the Conservation Area status must be retained.

No additional land allocations should be made in Muchalls.

### 3.6 Housing

In 2009, following the publication of the Main Issues Report, residents told us that all new development should be concentrated in Chapelton. This response was fed into the Local Development Plan and Phase 1A of the new development at Chapelton is under construction. The Community Council views, as a matter of principle, that the

development should be allowed to proceed without undue competition from nearby new developments, particularly those which do not provide any improvements to local facilities.

Aberdeenshire Council published a new Main Issues Report in 2019 for the 2023 Local Development Plan. The report contained bids for more than 500 houses to be built within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore. Residents supported the Community Council in opposing all bids in the Main Issues Report for development within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore and we fed that back to Aberdeenshire Council.

Planning application APP/2018/1213 for 121 houses to be built on the moor between Newtonhill and Muchalls was vigorously contested by the Community Council and attracted 650 submissions opposing the application from local residents. In spite of all those objections, the development was allowed to proceed. Building work showed that the ground was totally unsuitable for development, as months of rock-breaking was required to lay the foundations and install services. Currently, residents of the new houses are reporting problems with water-logged gardens.

Residents also supported the Community Council asking for all current, unused land allocations within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore to be removed from the 2023 Local Development Plan.

Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Land Audit 2023 shows a build rate at Chapelton of 100 homes per year. Section 6.4 of Topic Paper 14, 'Design, Quality and Place' seeks to prioritise developments in sustainable places. The Community Council and residents have long argued that the development of Chapelton should be allowed to proceed to completion without competition from speculative developments nearby.

## **4 Jobs and the Economy**

The economy of the northeast of Scotland was once sustained by fishing, agriculture, and shipbuilding. However, since the 1970s, the Oil and Gas industry emerged as the dominant economic force in the region. Unfortunately, the recent decline in the Oil and Gas sector has resulted in a loss of income for both the region and the nation as a whole. The UK Government has increased the rate of the Energy Profits Levy to 38% from 1 November 2024, bringing the headline rate of tax on upstream oil and gas activities to 78%. This will put in doubt most new investment in, what is, the key local industry. The ever accelerating run-down of this industry will have profound impact on the NE of Scotland. To prevent a catastrophic decline similar to that which befell the steelmaking and coal communities, it is crucial to find a replacement for this income stream.

Topic Paper 26, 'Business & Industry' states that three-quarters of businesses operating in northeast Scotland are already engaged in low carbon and renewable energy initiatives. The topic paper goes on to say that regionally, manufacturing is currently closely linked to the energy sector and during the next decade it is expected that the creation of high-value manufacturing facilities will come forward to support the transition away from oil and gas. It is vital that political decisions made elsewhere in Scotland or the UK do not impact negatively on the economy of the Northeast.

The new development at Chapelton promised to bring shops, businesses, and employment opportunities to the area. Local residents overwhelmingly support having more employment opportunities close to Newtonhill.

### **4.1 Economic resilience**

Topic Paper 'Lived in Experience' rightly highlights the impact on the local economy of the financial crises, and economic downturns of the last 20 years. Communities need to have economic resilience built in. Employment and local shops need to be within walking distance or accessible by public transport. This is essentially, the concept promoted in NPF4 Policy 15, '20-minute neighbourhoods'. Building more houses, without the necessary facilities for daily living, will not solve this problem.

### **4.2 Tourism**

Tourism plays a significant role in many parts of the world, providing income and benefits to various regions. In order to revitalize the northeast of Scotland, it is essential to attract tourists who will spend their money here. Enterprising individuals can create opportunities that will not only employ local people but also boost the local economy. To attract tourists, the Northeast must develop itself as a desirable tourist destination with well-maintained and constantly improved infrastructure. It is essential to preserve the natural environment and to protect those amenities that will encourage tourists to visit, stay, and spend their money locally. Fortunately, we are blessed with stunning natural coastal scenery that tourists are eager to explore. The Local Development Plan must ensure that this valuable asset is preserved for future generations.

## 5 Education

Primary and secondary school education provision is inextricably linked to housing development. Part 2, section 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires the Local Development Plan to take into account: **the education needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those education needs and; the capacity of education services in the district.**

The Community Council wrote to the Local Development Plan team to ask that the Evidence Report predict the school role for the area to a date beyond the expiry of the Local Development Plan under development. In reply, Environment and Infrastructure Services (May 24, 2023) said: *'This will be part of the Infrastructure Audit and 'Infrastructure First' topic paper. Our education colleagues are actively considering their input into the infrastructure audit'*.

In the absence of the 'Infrastructure First' topic paper, the Community Council has used existing school roll estimates, along with the predicted build rate at Chapelton of 100 homes per year (Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Land Audit 2023), to estimate school roll figures for up to 2039. Over the ten year period 2029-2039, Chapelton is expected to grow by 1000 homes, slightly less than the current size of Newtonhill. Accordingly, the school population can be expected to grow by a comparable amount.

The Scottish Government's 'Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods: planning guidance' cites a paper written by Rodriguez-Lopez et al (2017). The paper, 'Threshold Distance Associated with Walking From Home To School', measured the distance that children and adolescents were prepared to walk to and from school. The resulting 20-minute return journey became the standard for 20-minute neighbourhoods. Applying the Scottish Government's principle, no school should be more than a 10-minute walk away.

To avoid a crisis in education, the Local Development Plan must include proposals to provide a sufficient number of primary and secondary school places for pupils from the Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore catchment area, or a moratorium on housing development.

### 5.1 Primary

At the public engagement meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estates Team stated that Phase 1 of Chapelton Primary School will be built with a capacity of 217 pupils; indicative completion within academic year 2026-27. Future Phase 2 extends the capacity to 434 pupils. The Scottish Government has announced up to £500m of cuts to balance their budget. The Community Council is concerned that this may delay or cancel the opening of the new primary school.

Newtonhill Primary School is accepting pupils from Chapelton, until the new primary school is ready for occupation. **Aberdeenshire Council's 2023 Based School Roll Forecast** for Newtonhill Primary estimates that the school will be running within capacity until 2028.

### 5.2 Secondary

**Aberdeenshire Council's 2023 Based School Roll Forecast** shows Portlethen Academy to be over-capacity by 2024 and at 128% capacity by 2028. An alternative is Mackie Academy in Stonehaven, which is also very close to capacity. When asked for comment, Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estates said:

*'The capacity pressures at Portlethen Academy are being managed in a number of ways.*

- *There is no budget available or identified for any capital works at Portlethen Academy however, there has been some small changes internally which supports capacity.*
- *S1 Limits admissions have been set for August 2024/25 and this supports staffing and utilisation. All out of zones into Portlethen Academy for this year and next year have been refused.*
- *The main contributor to the increasing roll at Portlethen Academy is the new housing within Chapelton. Academy Catchment areas will be reviewed in line with the new school catchment area at Chapelton which are subject to informal engagement and statutory consultation.*

*The 300 houses to the north of Thistle Drive are programmed into the School Roll Forecasts from the year 2025'.*

Parents, responding to a facebook consultation, expressed a willingness for their children to attend Mackie Academy in preference to Portlethen Academy.

## 6 Transport and Connecting People

NPF4 – Policy 13, ‘Sustainable transport states’:

*‘To encourage, promote and facilitate developments that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport for everyday travel and reduce the need to travel unsustainably.*

*LDPs should prioritise locations for future development that can be accessed by sustainable modes. The spatial strategy should reflect the sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy by making best use of existing infrastructure and services. LDPs should promote a place-based approach to consider how to reduce car-dominance. This could include low traffic schemes, shared transport options, designing-in speed controls, bus/cycle priority, pedestrianisation and minimising space dedicated to car parking. Consideration should be given to the type, mix and use of development; local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods; car ownership levels; the accessibility of proposals and allocations by sustainable modes; and the accessibility for users of all abilities’.*

Not everybody has a car and, with climate change becoming significantly more of a problem, society is urged that fewer journeys should be made by car. To achieve the goal of reducing car-km, improved public transport is needed, alongside active travel infrastructure including physically segregated routes. Options include an improved bus service, and the reopening of Newtonhill Railway Station. Reopening the station may bring its own problems of parking in the roads around the station which may include commuters from Chapelton. The Scottish Government provides free bus passes for persons under 22, those who are 60+, and for qualifying disabilities, but not for train travel. With very little employment within Newtonhill, most residents need to commute elsewhere for employment. Without improvements to public transport, there is no opportunity to reduce car usage.

We are aware that our communities’ priorities have changed post Covid pandemic and as such, local living and working from home have become much more significant issues. The Community Council welcomes the work being undertaken by NESTRANS during 2024 on updating the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi Modal Corridor Study. NESTRANS said: *‘while rail options including the potential for new stations south of Aberdeen will form part of the study’s considerations, the study will examine a wider range of multi-modal interventions, including improvements to the active travel and bus networks, designed to increase sustainable travel along the corridor’.*

### 6.1 Greenhouse gas emissions

Scotland is now paying for the planning mistakes of the past. Homes are built in one place, employment in another place, and retail in yet another place. Given the high level of car ownership in Aberdeenshire, very few people opt to walk or cycle to work, or to collect shopping. This is not going to change on its own. If the pattern of development continues as it is now, then greenhouse gas emissions will only get worse. Topic Paper 1, ‘Climate Crisis’ lacks any mention of public transport being part of the solution. Public transport needs to be integrated into the Local Development Plan. It is not enough to hope that a private bus company might decide to provide a service. Electric and hydrogen-fuelled buses, augmented by active travel, offer a sensible alternative to the number of cars needed, to transport the same number of people. Bad planning and bad guidance from the past and present, have led to a road system that is unsuitable for buses. The roads on a bus route need to be wide enough to allow a bus to pass vehicles parked on both sides of the road. Roads in Chapelton have been built recently, but still prove difficult for buses to manoeuvre.

### 6.2 Newtonhill Station

Journey times to Aberdeen by train could be around 15 minutes compared to approximately 50 minutes on the service 8 bus. Some local residents would welcome the re-opening of the station, while others have expressed real concerns about car parking causing congestion in roads near the station.

The Community Council conducted a survey during May 2024 to ask residents if they wanted a railway station opened in Newtonhill, and how often they would use it. Like previous Newtonhill Station surveys, the response included those in favour and those against the idea. Many of those in favour of re-opening the station cited the current unreliable bus service as the reason. Even if the trains were less frequent, the expectation is, that they would keep to a timetable. A few respondents said that they would use the station on a daily or weekly basis.

The [NESTRANS Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study](#) reinforced the need to find a solution to car parking congestion if a station were to be provided at Newtonhill. NESTRANS would need to provide a strong enough business case for the capital outlay and determine the best location to build the station. NESTRANS should also investigate if opening the station would see the end of the bus service that serves the Skateraw area of Newtonhill.

An alternative to opening the station could be a shuttle bus service connecting the Park & Choose with Portlethen and Stonehaven stations.

### 6.3 Bus service to and from Newtonhill

Newtonhill is the one major housing area in the Portlethen-Laurencekirk development corridor that has the twin problem of not having a railway station and, at the same time, having a very poor bus service.

### 6.4 Electric car charging points

To promote sustainable transport, charging points for electric cars are needed.

### 6.5 20-Minute Neighbourhoods

The concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood is about using planning to remove the need for residents to use cars to access key local services. The Scottish Government defines a 20-minute neighbourhood as an area that can be accessed by a 20-minute return walk. The distance covered by a ten-minute walk is roughly 0.8km, dependent on a number of factors. Topic Paper 15 discusses access to 20-minute neighbourhoods within 30-minute drive times. However, this does not have anything to do with National Planning Framework 4, Policy 15 'Local Living and 20-minute neighbourhoods'. Newtonhill, Muchalls, and Cammachmore do not qualify as 20-minute neighbourhoods.

## 7 Health, Wellbeing and Active Travel

In many of its policies, NPF4 mentions the need to support and improve community resilience. This is a fundamental part of National Planning Framework and must be central to the proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. We are aware that our communities' priorities have changed post Covid pandemic and as such, mental health, local living and working from home, have become more significant issues. Green spaces, play spaces and active travel have all become more important for both health and wellbeing.

### 7.1 Portlethen Medical Centre

Table 4 of the 'Health & Safety' Topic Paper lists Portlethen Medical Centre as both Red and Amber, depending on where you live. Either way, it is clear that the medical centre is under extreme stress. During February and March 2024, posts on the Portlethen Medical Centre facebook page indicated that they would only see emergency cases and closed its phone lines. While the NHS is currently under unprecedented pressure, other medical centres do not appear to be showing similar stress levels.

The narrative of Topic Paper 23, 'Health & Safety' indicates that the existing facilities require increased capacity before any extra housing is allocated. NPF4 Policy 23, 'Health and Safety' says that development proposals which are likely to have a significant adverse effect on health will not be supported.

With the predicted build rate at Chapelton being 100 homes per year (Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Land Audit 2023), all development proposals must be supported by a Health Impact Assessment.

### 7.2 Green Open-Spaces

Local residents are adamant that green open-spaces within and surrounding Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore must be preserved. Residents have told us that living close by or having access to green space benefits physical and mental health.

The need for green spaces, in particular the area to the north of Newtonhill, the coastal park and the moor between Newtonhill and Muchalls, is seen as vitally important to the wellbeing of the community. These areas must not be built on.

Newtonhill Park was once a large grassed area running the entire length of Newtonhill Road. Aberdeenshire Council then turned the top half into a wooded walk/nature reserve. Many trees and bushes were planted and have been left to become overgrown. The path running adjacent to the rear of the houses on Cliff View is densely covered and not a particularly safe place to walk for lone females, especially in the dark. This fails the first of the six qualities of successful places - **Healthy**: supporting the prioritisation of women's safety and improving physical and mental health.

### 7.3 Play-park facilities

Facilities for children to play, exercise and socialise are extremely important and bring many benefits to the community. It is essential that all play equipment is well maintained, fit for purpose and there is provision for a range of age groups.

Many of the open spaces and play parks are used by residents to exercise their dogs. Subsequently, the quality of such spaces is very much diminished.

Police Scotland make particular reference to youth disorder in their monthly reports. This must correlate with the lack of facilities for teenagers.

#### 7.4 Active Travel

There is a great deal of support from local residents for improvements to walking and cycling routes that avoid travelling alongside the A92. Whereas the A92 cycle track/footpath is functionally adequate, it is unpleasant due to the traffic and risks of cycling or walking in close proximity to the speeding traffic.

A route closer to the spectacular coastline would not only be much safer, it could open up the possibility of reducing short vehicular journeys. It might just encourage a number of children to cycle to Portlethen Academy from Muchalls/Newtonhill (or potentially Mackie in Stonehaven if there was a suitable path).

The Platinum Jubilee Coastal Path project, see Figure 5, plans to develop a coastal path from the River North Esk to the southern edge of Aberdeen City limits at Cove. This project coincides with requests from residents for off-road walking and cycle tracks linking Muchalls to Stonehaven and Newtonhill to Portlethen and beyond to Aberdeen. The route needs to be well defined and well maintained.



Figure 5 Route of the proposed Platinum Jubilee Coastal Path

Another viable active travel route, suggested by residents, would be to reopen a section of the Causey Mounth to link the flyovers at Newtonhill and Badentoy. Additionally, the existing underpass offers an ideal, safe pathway

under the A92 to link Newtonhill with West Cammachmore. A network of existing footpaths links the eastern end of the underpass with Newtonhill Primary School, Tesco, Skateraw, the beach, East Cammachmore and the Core Path between Portlethen and Muchalls. On the western side there is also a network of paths and tracks linking with Chapelton, the Causey Mounth, West Cammachmore and beyond. As well as enhancing the general footpath network, the underpass would become a 'Safe Route to School' between Chapelton, West Cammachmore and Newtonhill Primary School. At present there is no safe active travel route between West Cammachmore and Portlethen. This, along with the Platinum Jubilee Coastal Path, could create a circular route. Eventually, more of the Causey Mounth could be added to the route, even as far as Leggart Terrace in Aberdeen.

The path to the beach at Muchalls, washed away by violent storms, must be reinstated. Access to the beach is viewed as a core asset by those who live in Muchalls. There are a lot of walkers, climbers, geologists, as well as local residents who want access to the beach.

## **8 The Environment and local amenities**

This sets out the action that the LDP must consider, and the improvements needed to preserve the environment and local amenities.

### **8.1 Flood Risks and Climate Change**

#### **Risk of soil erosion**

The Community Council is very concerned about recent cases of soil erosion and landslips in Newtonhill and Muchalls and insists that these are considered in the next Local Development Plan. NPF4 Policy 20, 'Blue and green infrastructure' lists as its policy outcomes: climate mitigation, nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood prevention and water management. Similarly, NPF4 Policy 22, 'Flood Risk and Water Management' seeks to ensure through the LDP that places are resilient to current and future flood risk.

Residents have reported that the water-table is rising and, in many areas, is close to the surface. Home owners in the new Barratt development on the moor to the south of Park Place, Newtonhill have complained about waterlogged gardens. With already saturated ground, there is little capacity to cope with severe storms.

In Topic Paper 22, 'Flood Risk and Water Management', Section 3.1, 'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment', uses information provided by SEPA to identify Potentially Vulnerable Areas and actions required to mitigate the impact of flooding. Figure 6, taken from the SEPA web site, shows that Newtonhill, Muchalls, and Cammachmore are not included in a Potentially Vulnerable Area, despite having the Elsick and Pheppie Burns, both with a recent history of flooding and each having lost a bridge due to a flash flood. Homes in the area have been flooded. The A92 at Muchalls and at Cammachmore has a history of excess surface water and flooding.

The Community Council wrote to SEPA in October 2021 and again in April 2024 to point out that Newtonhill, Muchalls, Cammachmore, and Chapelton should be considered as a 'Potentially Vulnerable Area'.



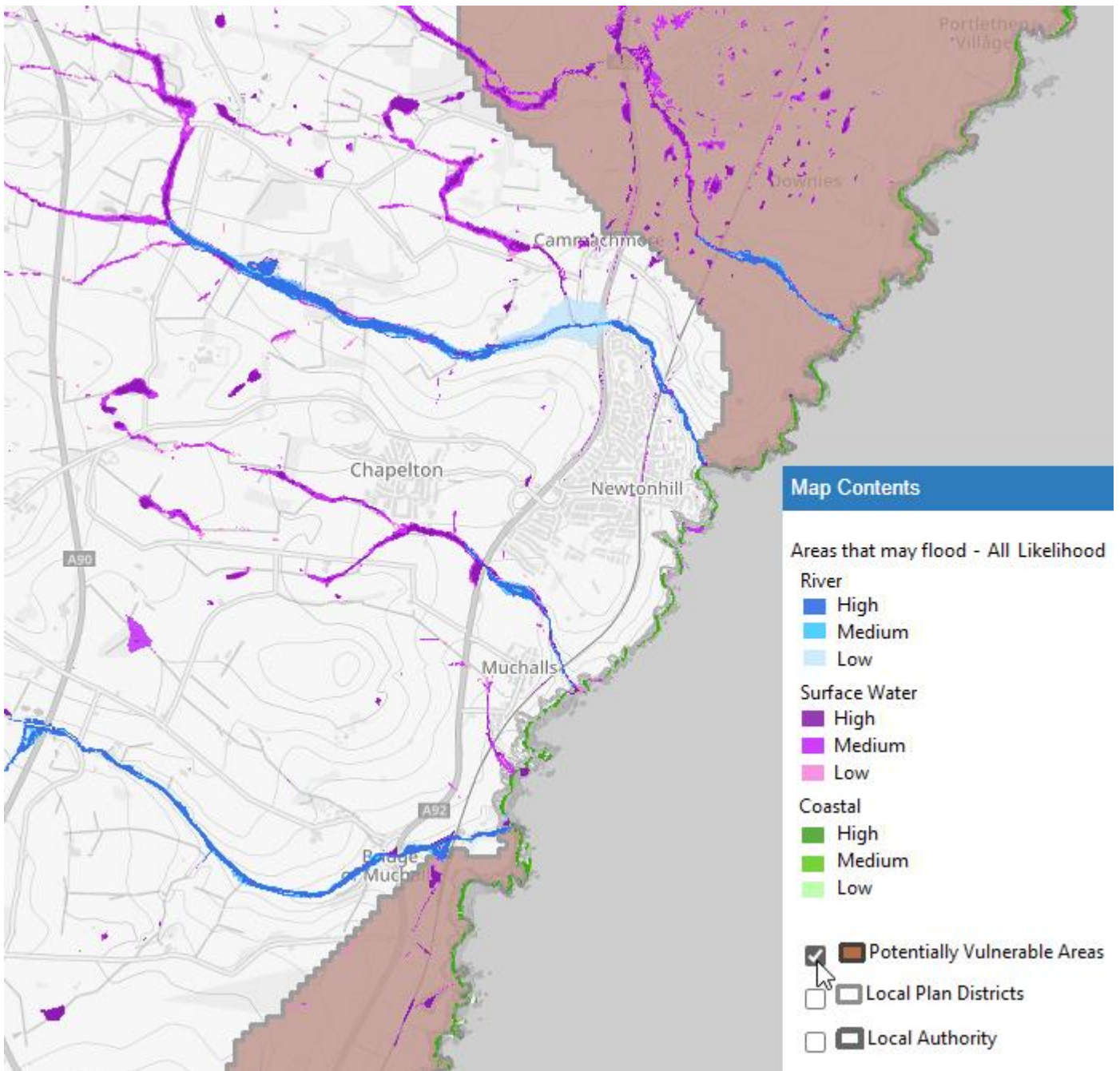


Figure 6 SEPA Flood map. Includes Potentially Vulnerable Areas.

## 8.2 We do not trust that SEPA is acting in our best interest

In 2021 the Community Council wrote to SEPA to inform them that the Pheppie Burn between Newtonhill and Muchalls had washed away a bridge, which had since been replaced by Aberdeenshire Council.

Part of planning application APP/2022/1346 involved realignment of the Pheppie Burn as part of the Chapelton development. This resulted in the Pheppie Burn being straighter, with increased channel cross-section, and smoother banks to allow faster water flow. It is the opinion of the Community Council that this will result in an increased likelihood of flooding and scouring downstream. The culvert under the A92 may fail or become blocked leading to collapse or flooding of the A92. The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011, requires authorisation to be obtained from SEPA for any activities related to water courses. Report handling for APP/2022/1346 states that SEPA did not respond to the planning application.

## 8.3 Electricity supply failures

During storms in the Winter of 2022, Newtonhill Primary School and a dozen or so nearby houses lost their electricity supply for a couple of days. The rest of Newtonhill was unaffected by the power cut. It transpires that the school and the nearby houses are fed by an overhead cable from Cammachmore, while the rest of Newtonhill has a

separate underground supply. Following these storms, we have asked Aberdeenshire Council to request that Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks upgrade their distribution network to provide greater resilience.

#### 8.4 Broadband and landline telephone connections

There is a need for a resilient broadband and phone network that will continue to function after severe weather events. All households need access to a reliable and fast communication network.

Openreach has said that power to all copper circuits (their Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN)) will be turned off by 31st January 2027. Aberdeenshire Council's Draft Local Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 reports that a number of Aberdeenshire residents rely on Technology Enabled Care (TEC), an umbrella term that covers a range of technologies that support people to live independently. It is essential that the Local Development Plan ensures that all TEC applications continue to function after PSTN switch-off and also during power cuts.

#### 8.5 Library

Part 2, section 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires the Local Development Plan to take into account **the desirability of maintaining an appropriate number and range of cultural venues and facilities (including in particular, but not limited to, live music venues) in the district.**

Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021-2025 says: *'Public libraries deliver a wide range of benefits which place them at the centre of the collective endeavour to improve literacy, close the attainment gap, promote health, champion wellbeing, pioneer sustainability, tackle social isolation, reduce inequality, and close the digital divide. Public libraries deliver significant economic benefits on preventative spend and return on investment'*.

The library is a much-valued cultural amenity in Newtonhill, currently located at the Bettridge Centre. Aberdeenshire Council and Live Life must continue to keep it open and to improve opening hours, provide better facilities and a wider selection of books to browse. It is seen as essential that children especially, continue to have access to the written word. As education attainment levels in Scotland continue to fall, everything must be done to support and improve facilities for our children.

The types of service we would want from a local facility for our area – as a minimum would be:

- Good opening hours to encourage browsing, which is one of the best experiences to be offered in the library and can encourage people to try different genres from those they are familiar with.
- A specialist Local Studies section – Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore have such a rich history as much information as possible should be gathered and available in one area for us all to share.
- A reading room facility that could be used by anyone who needs a warm, quiet environment to read / research / study without being under pressure to move on or spend money.
- Sessions tailored for particular age groups / interest groups – Storytelling / Calligraphy / Puppeteering, and so on.
- Computing facility with internet access.
- Curricular support for all age groups to support the education of the community (from nursery level up).
- Special interest book collections e.g., Large Print Books, Audio Books, Braille Books.

Libraries are much more than just books. Visit <https://www.livelifeaberdeenshire.org.uk/libraries/> to find out more. Here is one quote from their website:

*'The world of technology is fast paced and forever moving forward and that's exactly how we like to operate in the libraries. We love technology and are committed to delivering new hardware and services to all our library members. We would like to show you some of the new technology to be found in your library and how you can get access to it. Remember, you don't need to be a tech wizard to be able to experience any of this new kit as we have plenty of knowledgeable, helpful staff ready and waiting to assist you'*

Topic Paper 31, 'Culture and Creativity' stresses the significant positive effects for Local Living, as it helps towards creating well connected and compact places which support health and well-being.

NPF4 Policy 31, 'Culture and Creativity' supports the return of the former library building to full use as a library so that the community has access to cultural and creative activities.

## Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council

Dear Ward 17 Councillors and adjacent Community Councils,

### Information Notice of proposed Local Place Plan

In accordance with regulation 4 of the 2021 Regulations (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997), I attach a copy of the Community Council's Local Place Plan with this Information Notice.

Sections 3 through 8 of the Local Place Plan set out how the Local Development Plan should be amended.

- Section 3, 'Planning and Development' considers which spatial planning elements from LDP 2023 should be retained and which should be amended.
- Section 4, 'Jobs and the Economy' considers how the LDP can support the local economy.
- Section 5, 'Education' examines the capacity of schools in the local area. Secondary schools are over capacity and with the build rate in Chapelton predicted to be 100 homes per year for several years to come, the LDP must ensure that this problem does not become a crisis.
- Section 6, 'Transport and Connecting People' considers the solutions that the LDP must take into account, to make transport more sustainable and to encourage the reduction of car-based travel.
- Section 7, 'Health, Wellbeing and Active Travel' sets out what facilities need to be retained and what facilities needs to be improved, to support community resilience.
- Section 8, 'The Environment and local amenities' set out the action that the LDP must consider to preserve the environment and local amenities.

### Representations

Please send any representations that you wish to make, to [planning@nmccc.org.uk](mailto:planning@nmccc.org.uk), before Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Morgan

Planning Officer

Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council