

ANDREW BOWIE MP

Member of Parliament for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Alan Wood
Director of Infrastructure Services

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25 October 2023

Ref: Parks and Greenspaces in Hillside, Portlethen.

I am writing to you with regards to the lack of parks and greenspaces in Hillside, Portlethen. I am sure you are aware that this issue has been raised by the community for several years. In fact, it was raised as part of the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report prior to completion of the LDP but appears to have been left out of the final draft.

Furthermore, whilst the 2022 Portlethen Town Health Check suggests there is ample greenspace outside the town centre, it does not actually reference Hillside. It should also be noted that the inclusion of a golf course as a greenspace will naturally skew the results, when in reality a golf course is not a public greenspace at all.

I recently contacted residents of Hillside to gather more feedback on the issue prior to writing this letter. The general feeling amongst residents is that housing developers have been able to avoid providing the facilities they should due to several reasons, some of which I've highlighted below,

- In some areas the original developer has split the proposed site and sold phases to other developers, resulting in separate, smaller developments not requiring the same level of developer obligations or commitments.
- Developers adjusting plans to reduce the number of homes from what was originally proposed, or not completing a phase fully, therefore avoiding the commitments that were due on completion, or that were subject to the number of houses being built.
- Some developers appear not to be delivering the 40% open space required in a new development, but due to how planning applications are treated they are allowed to seek and have approved planning permission for additional phases or sites without recourse.

Whilst the above focuses on the lack of parks and greenspaces, and highlights some of the reasons why. I do recognise that there are some parks within the Hillside settlement. However, the general view amongst residents is that the existing parks do not meet the requirement and are in most cases the bare minimum required to get through the planning process. Some of the issues are highlighted below,

- There are too few parks and greenspaces within the settlement, approximately four in total and seemingly nothing at all north of Cookston Road.
- Those parks that do exist appear entirely designed for toddlers and pre-school age children with very little and limited play equipment. There appears to be no provision at all for older, school age children.

- Other greenspaces, or potential greenspaces seem inaccessible or have been forgotten. The all-weather pitch at the school is closed outside of school hours. The proposed allotments, discussed year ago have never come to fruition. And despite there being a number of potential greenspace areas (such as the land adjacent to Craigleith Avenue), they have been left redundant to overgrow with vegetation, some even being fenced off entirely.

I do understand that this is a very complex situation with council funds already stretched and national planning legislation restricting what can and cannot be taken forward with developers. However, it is clear that something must be done to address the issue, it is vital for health and wellbeing that both children and adults have sufficient open spaces with such a large housing development.

I would appreciate it if you could provide responses to the bullet points above, however, I would also like to ensure that action is taken to resolve the overarching problem and understand that this cannot be done overnight with a simple letter response. I would therefore ask if we could arrange to meet and discuss in further detail, looking at ways to fix the existing problem and ensuring that further development of Hillside will always include much more in terms of greenspaces and parks.

I look forward to receiving your response and meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Bowie MP

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