

From:



## Main Issues Report – Comments

### General

I am horrified at the number of house sites proposed for the Peebles area, being substantially all of the sites identified for the whole of the region. These are in addition to many sites already subject to housebuilding proposals. All this will do is provide yet more houses for long distance (road) commuters whose lives are largely based elsewhere and who contribute little to the community. This is particularly unnecessary when there is a lot of housebuilding taking place much closer to Edinburgh.

I am also very disappointed in the way that these figures were presented, with many of the sites identified not in section 5 Planning for Housing but in section 4 Growing our Economy, and on a site described as Mixed Use with the number of houses shown under the heading Site Capacity, with no explanation that these are in fact houses. A suspicious reader might well conclude that this presentation was designed to mask the enormity of the housing proposals from the casual reader.

These proposals are despite capital spending on schools, transport infrastructure etc being in large part directed to anywhere but the Peebles area. For example how can the Borders Railway be called a success if it does not generate housing demand from people who want to be close to it? This is certainly what happens in London and elsewhere when a new rail link is built.

I am also disappointed that there seems to be a lot of emphasis in this report on the provision of land for housing. Land for expanded public services that may be required following the provision of more housing land does not seem to have been addressed. It is beyond belief that current school and health care capacity will be sufficient to cope with the very large increase in population that will inevitably ensue from even some of these sites being developed, though that is what we are repeatedly told by SBC representatives. When this issue is finally addressed, all the suitable land will only be available for sale at inflated housing land prices.

I do consider that the Main Issue for our region is not the number of house sites, but the dismally low value added per capita.

Issues I think are critical, but only referred to in general and without much detail include upgrading roads, better broadband, and 5G mobile networks (I rarely see even 4G in our region).

It may well be true that the Borders Railway has been successful in giving improved connection to Edinburgh, but it needs to be recognised that it is not of the slightest use for transportation to anyone living in or around Peebles. Much the same applies to the line extension south to Carlisle as well as an improved rail service for the Berwickshire communities with a rail halt at Reston. The cost will be considerable.

In general there are references to encouraging/ promoting things which are done by others, but less reference to important public services such as the provision of health care and education which are the direct responsibility of SBC.

Response to questions:

Q1

Providing 'adequate' housing land should be judged in relation to employment opportunities. It is wrong if all it does is provide yet more houses for long distance commuters whose lives are largely based elsewhere and who contribute little to the community. Peebles certainly has an imbalance between the amount of housing and the employment opportunities close by.

Under 'Growing Economy' the encouragement of high value-added employment is critical. I believe that not a single stock exchange listed company has its headquarters in our region. Why is this and what can be done about it?

#### **Section 4**

The **Background** section has one paragraph about Peebles, mainly a list of impediments to extensive house building.

Q2

Classes 4,5, and 6 may involve 'bad neighbour' activities which are liable to generate noise, pollution, and heavy goods vehicle movements. They may also adversely affect income from tourism. These should only be permitted where they will not cause a nuisance to others, and where there are very close to trunk roads.

This category should include such activities as high-volume battery egg production which seem closer to industrial activities than farming.

Q3,4,5

No knowledge

Q6

I only have knowledge of Tweeddale, and there are no alternative options listed. The sites identified are broadly suitable for high quality business development, but sites described as mixed use seem to be scheduled largely for housing, and should have been included in that section. Also the proportions of those sites not designated for housing must be protected against housing development in perpetuity.

Owing to poor roads unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles, Tweeddale is unsuited to industrial development which requires significant truck movements.

#### **Section 5**

I would recommend setting aside a number of small areas of land around the Borders and within identified sites for self-build housing.

Q7

It is hard to believe that there are not massive areas of land suitable for housebuilding out-with the Peebles area.

Q8

Alternative option.

Q9

No view.

### **Section 6**

The Core Areas of towns are very important, especially for towns that aim to attract visitors. Empty shops are deeply unattractive. It is clear that there is an oversupply of retail space, most of which is worth a lot less than historic values.

Q10

Be prepared to reduce size of Core Areas and allow a wider range of uses so long as they are not unsightly and generate footfall. Peebles Core Area size looks OK at present.

Q11,12

No views

### **Section 7**

Q13

This is waffle.

I do not support windfarms in areas which depend on tourism, or where the electricity network cannot handle full capacity operation so that the sites will generate taxpayer subsidies more than electricity.

Q14

I certainly support extending the Pentland Hills Country Park into Tweeddale.

Q19

Dark(er) skies are a reasonable idea, worthy of further investigation, but has been used as an excuse not to provide illumination in places (eg a 'black hole' in The Green at the centre of Peebles). A more sensible idea is to consider whether in residential areas lights could be dimmed after midnight. Dimmer switches are now cheap but an alternative is to have two smaller bulbs, one of which is switched off after midnight.

  
30 January 2019