

**MILNGAVIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

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**MAIN ISSUES REPORTS FOR SDP2**

Milngavie Community Council generally supports the policies set out in SDP1, and the preferred options proposed in the Main Issues Report for SDP2. We agree with the principle of a hierarchy of strategic centres, but request that Milngavie Town Centre be included as a strategic centre in SDP2. Whilst we appreciate that it is not proposed to change the existing network of 23 strategic centres at this stage, we consider that Milngavie should have been so-designated at the SDP1 stage. It fulfils a strategic spatial function where currently there is a clear gap in the existing network.

The Bearsden and Milngavie District Local Plan (1996) described Milngavie Town Centre as the main shopping centre for the District. Recently it became a Business Improvement District (BID). This centre also has significant other roles and functions. It provides homes, services and businesses and is also a centre for culture, entertainment, recreation, community and civic activity.

In the context of the city region as a whole, Milngavie contributes to the health and well-being of the people, and to the economy, by serving as a highly accessible tourist and day-trip centre, with a particular focus on outdoor recreation.

This strategic significance of Milngavie Town Centre requires to be recognised and supported. Designation as a Strategic Centre in SDP2 would ensure that the centre’s key roles and functions are protected and enhanced, and that its particular challenges and opportunities are met. This would strengthen the network overall, and would highlight the diversity of East Dunbartonshire – currently only one other Clydeplan authority has just a single strategic centre.

Further details are provided below under the following headings

Spatial context

Historic context

Contribution to city region

Identification of Strategic Centres for SDP1

Strengths, challenges and opportunities

**SPATIAL CONTEXT**

There are strong geographical reasons for including Milngavie as a strategic centre within the network. Page 49 of the Clydeplan Main Issues Report shows fourteen transport corridors converging on Glasgow City Centre. Milngavie is in corridor 14, on the A81 and A809 routes to the Trossachs and has its own railway line. No strategic centre has been identified within this corridor, despite its population of some 45-50,000 (including Bearsden, Milngavie and nearby Stirlingshire villages). There are none in the adjoining corridors 1 and 13 either, so that virtually a whole quadrant of the Plan area currently has no strategic centre, although every other transport corridor, from 2 – 12, includes at least one such centre. This leaves a gap in the network, and there is no circumferential corridor to link with other centres. Milngavie is at the heart of this North West quadrant and is its natural hub.

The nearest strategic centre currently designated is Clydebank, and historically Milngavie has strong ties with this town, sharing an MSP. However Clydebank lies within West Dunbartonshire. The only strategic centre in East Dunbartonshire is Kirkintilloch, in the far east of the authority on transport corridor 2, but east-west public transport connections are very poor.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Milngavie has medieval origins. By the 19th century it was an energetic, well-organised manufacturing town with a number of thriving industries based on the fast-flowing river – the Allander Water. The railway line to serve these was opened in 1863. Soon afterwards Bearsden, a stop on the line, grew up as a commuter town, but Milngavie, with its busy industries, remained a self-contained town in its own right for some considerable time.

Surrounded by beautiful countryside and at the end of a railway line, by the beginning of the 20th century Milngavie was recognised as a good place to live. Commuters, including prominent businessmen, began to settle. During this century Milngavie was described as a “balanced community”. Cultural and community organisations thrived: the legacy includes the Lillie Art Gallery, bequeathed in 1939 by a local banker and member of Milngavie Art Club, and Milngavie Music Club, founded 1942, now promoting an International Concert Series.

Milngavie was an independent Burgh until 1975, when it was combined with Bearsden Burgh to form a District of the Strathclyde Region. This District was in turn combined with most of the Strathkelvin District in 1996 to form East Dunbartonshire.

**ROLE OF MILNGAVIE IN THE CONTEXT CITY REGION**

Milngavie’s contribution to the Glasgow City region as a whole is largely to serve as a tourist and day-trip centre. A high proportion of the people one encounters within the pedestrianised precinct come from outwith Milngavie. Some come for events or shopping because they enjoy the traffic-free ambience of the precinct, but the dominant purpose is outdoor recreation. Three long-distance walks (two of international importance) begin or end within the precinct, and there are splendid shorter walks in the surrounding hills and moorland. The town also gives access to a number of golf courses.

For 150 years the Milngavie Reservoirs have served as a peaceful oasis from the noise and bustle of the city. The Victorian city fathers created beautiful parkland around the now ‘A’ listed reservoirs, to celebrate the clean water supply from Loch Katrine. In 2001 a survey of 3000+ visitors to the reservoirs showed that three quarters came from outwith Milngavie, and that every Glasgow postcode was represented. More recently Mugdock Country Park, which lies partly within Milngavie, has become one of the most popular visitor attractions in Scotland.

**SDP1 IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIC CENTRES FOR SDP1**

We note that twenty strategic centres were proposed in the Main Issues Report for SDP1: the 19 achieving the highest ranking for ‘Shoppers and Expenditure’ in the National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns (Figure 5 in Background Report 14 for SDP1), together with Ravenscraig. Milngavie was ranked 21st in this list.

Responses to the MIR resulted in three additional centres being given strategic status, despite being well below Milngavie on the shopping ranking.

In its response, East Renfrewshire Council commented that, while Newton Mearns serves as a strategic centre for the east of the authority, “*the arguments are equally strong for the inclusion of Barrhead due to the social, leisure and employment role it performs within the Levern Valley area”*. Such arguments are even stronger for the inclusion of Milngavie for the distinct western part of East Dunbartonshire, due to its much larger population and that here there are no circumferential corridors linking with other strategic centres.

Glasgow City responded to the MIR with a request that two further centres be included (Partick/ Byres Road and Shawlands) because they *“exhibit many of the characteristics of other strategic centres,”*  Again this is a strong argument for the inclusion of Milngavie.

**MILNGAVIE TOWN CENTRE – STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

In 2012 Milngavie Community Council, wishing to develop a shared vision for the future of the area, submitted a petition to East Dunbartonshire Council requesting that the Council formulate a masterplan for Milngavie Town Centre and its environs. The Council agreed to consider the matter through the forthcoming Local Development Plan.

**STRENGTHS**

The traffic-free precinct is a conservation area and a pleasant place for shopping and socialising, with many trees.

The large open space in the centre of the precinct - used for events and markets, with a children’s play area – is a unique asset.

There are excellent rail connections with Glasgow and Edinburgh, linking with local buses at the railway station car park.

The centre became a Business Improvement District (BID) in 2014.

The green corridor of the Allander Water runs through the centre. Features include a fish ladder, dramatic waterfall and an ancient corn mill.

Internationally important long distance walks, the West Highland Way to Fort William and the Clyde Coastal Path linking to the Mull of Galloway, start or end in the precinct.

A key asset is the large Town Hall, used for entertainment, events and civic functions, with the adjacent Art Gallery holding works of significant Scottish artists and mounting frequent exhibitions. This complex is very close to the railway station/public transport hub.

**CHALLENGES**

Connections: The traffic-free precinct is the consequence of the town centre by-pass constructed in the 1970s. Whilst the precinct is a bonus, the by-pass has severed connections between the town centre and its south east side, where the town’s main foodstore was later developed. There has been a sharp decline in the number of Class 1 units. The altered road structure has also made the town hall/art gallery complex feel dislocated.

An out of town Waitrose store, in the process of construction, is likely to further threaten town centre shops.

The river is largely hidden away where it runs through the precinct.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Improve the pedestrian connections over and under the by-pass – currently these are unsuitable for disabled people except at the eastern (railway) end.

Improve the pedestrian connection between the precinct and the town hall/art gallery complex.

Enhance the centre for visitors. This could include transforming the first 50m of the West Highland Way and providing things to do on a rainy day in the covered spaces of the town hall complex, complementing the Art Gallery and Heritage Centre exhibitions.

Make more of the unique features - including the precinct open space, the Lillie Art Gallery and the Allander Water with its natural and built heritage.

Improve sustainable links with Mugdock Country Park.

Yours sincerely

***Milngavie Community Council***