

# Delivering More Homes and Better Places in Scotland

## Case Study 2: Bertha Park

### Introduction

Bertha Park is one of five case studies featured in the report [Delivering More Homes and Better Places: lessons from policy and practice](#), which is jointly published by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) and the Scottish Land Commission. Bertha Park demonstrates the importance of collaboration and masterplanning, and upfront finance for infrastructure to unlock development land. The main report is part a series of reports that make up the Commission’s Review on Land for Housing & Development, which will report later this year.

### Project description and background

Bertha Park is a 333 hectare (823 acre) greenfield development project promoted and developed by Springfield Properties Ltd. and supported by Perth & Kinross Council within its Local Development Plan (LDP). The development will be built out in three phases over 30 years and will see delivery of more than 3,000 new homes and employment land encompassing various uses.

The development plan includes a mix of housing for sale and affordable homes: the former comprising of 2 and 3 bedroomed

apartments and 2-5 bedroomed detached houses; while the affordable element includes a mix of 2 and 3 bedroomed flats, cottages and terrace houses. Figure 1 outlines some of the key milestones and anticipated outcomes from the commencement of the project in 2018 to its expected completion in 2049.

Given the 30 year development programme, such proposals are subject to market conditions, variations in investor needs, preferences and externalities.

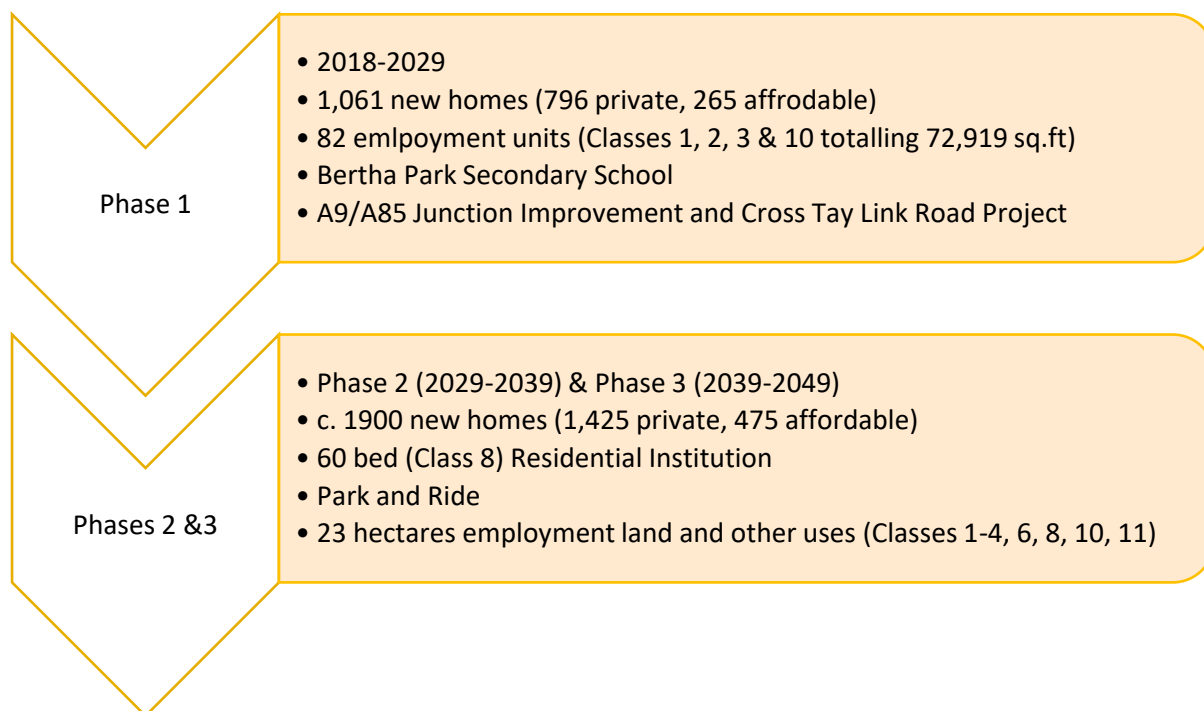


Figure 1: Three Phases of Development, Bertha Park



*Figure 2: Aerial View of Bertha Park (Phase 1) Development, January 2019. The school and sports fields can be seen in the top right (Courtesy of Perth & Kinross Council)*

### Project promoter

Springfield is investing a substantial sum of £1 billion in the development of Bertha Park. To promote and progress the development, Springfield has also formed a Joint Venture Company (JVC) – Bertha Park Ltd. – with the landowner. The landowner in this case is a local family still resident in the area.

In addition to the JVC, Springfield and the Council have formed a working group with representatives from both organisations to ensure an effective procedural structure from the outset. There is therefore a significant degree of collaborative working in this case. This collaboration has also been recognised by the Scottish Government in the shape of the 2018 Scottish Award for Quality in Planning within the Partnership Category which went to Springfield and the Council.

While the amount of private investment is significant, and the degree of collaboration commendable, key informant interviews suggest that the development of Bertha Park was made possible largely through advanced

funding for infrastructure provided by the Council.

Through the Perth Transport Futures Project (PTFP), the Council is upgrading the road network in and around Perth. At a cost to the Council of £37m, Phase 1 of the PTFP saw delivery of the new A9/A85 junction and link road to Bertha Park, significantly improving access to the site. Phase 2 of the PTFP will see construction of the new Cross Tay Link Road (CTLR) connecting the A9 to the A93/94, to be completed after occupation of the 750<sup>th</sup> home at Bertha Park; and Phase 3 will see delivery of the Bertha Park North Link to the A9, which will connect phases 1 and 2 of the PTFP.

This programme of investment has unlocked development land across the north and west of Perth.

The Council is funding this programme of transport infrastructure improvements through borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, plus an additional £40m from the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland, and developer contributions. Traffic

modelling undertaken in 2018 showed that 50% of projected growth in traffic in the Perth area is associated with new housing development sites included in the LDP. Developer contributions therefore equate to 50% total cost recovery, or £83.7m.

A new secondary school has also been built and opened in August 2019, just a year into the Berth Park development programme. At a total cost of £32m, Bertha Park High School was jointly funded by the Council and the Scottish Government through the latter's Schools for the Future programme.

### Land assembly

The land in this case was owned by a single landowner who, together with the Council and the public roads network, controlled access routes in and out of the site. To the best of our knowledge, therefore, there were few if any significant land assembly challenges. There was however a dispute between the landowner and SSE, one of the country's major energy suppliers, concerning six electricity pylons which prevented development on a large corridor of land. A Public Inquiry was called but before it could go ahead both sides agreed a settlement that allowed the pylons to remain in place.

Besides this, the main land assembly challenge relates not to the housing development but to the PTFP. Given the extent of land required for Phase 1 of the PTFP and the number of landowners affected, the Council promoted a CPO in parallel to negotiations with landowners to purchase land by agreement. The CPO was made in October 2014 and confirmed in July 2016. The land was vested in August 2016.

The Section 75 Agreement, which is the planning agreement that sets out developer obligations in Scotland, also bestowed an obligation on the Springfield Properties to convey to the Council land for the construction of the school.

### Planning and design

The development of Bertha Park is driven in large part by population growth. The number of households is also projected to increase at a faster rate than for Scotland as a whole over the period to 2041. These projections underpin planning assumptions in both the 2012-2032 and 2016-2036 TAYplans, which set housing supply targets and land requirements for local authorities within the TAYplan-wide area, which in turn informs LDPs.

Bertha Park was allocated for housing in the Council's 2014 LDP and is one of three Long-term Strategic Development Areas in the west and north-west of Perth to have been carried forward into the 2019 LDP.

Springfield Properties obtained in-principle planning permission for the whole development and detailed planning permission for Phase 1 in December 2016.

The approved masterplan was designed by AREA Urban Design and sets out a vision for a new settlement which includes 3,000 homes and the secondary school, as well as a care home and a mixed-use village core comprising of retail, office space, hospitality and leisure, medical and other community facilities.

Phase 1 is centrally located and will include many of the key components of Bertha Park. Phases 2 and 3 will be located on either side of Phase 1, to the west and east, respectively.

### Development commentary

Bertha Park is still in the early stages of development but, at the time of writing, over 100 private market homes have been built, sold, and are now occupied. In addition, 54 affordable homes have been built and handed over to Kingdom Housing Association. Construction has also started on a further 58 affordable homes. A new central park area has been created, complete with a play park for children and large SuDS pond which forms the centrepiece of the village. Springfield have also built six commercial units, four of which have sold and two of these are already occupied.

There are clearly already a number of positive placemaking elements to the Bertha Park development. The secondary school not only provides a modern learning environment for pupils but could also help to build a sense of community in a new settlement, and the emerging mixed-use and varied scale of the development should help to promote wider economic and social activities. The delivery of homes for social and affordable rent in parallel to those for sale may also help to create a socially balanced community from the outset, as opposed to other developments where the affordable element is built later in the process.

There are extensive areas of green and open space, including existing woodland and the area around Bertha Loch, contained within the redline boundary of the masterplan. The masterplan aims to enhance this by incorporating new woodland and parkland areas and constructing green corridors throughout the development, some of which have been completed already.

There are also a number of existing walking and cycling routes around the site into which new connections are being developed, enhancing opportunities for active travel. For example, a new bridge over the A9 connects existing active travel routes into the town centre, and a new underpass connects the west and east of the village core area on either side of the CTRL.

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The concentration of development in the north and west of Perth also creates economies of scale which, with the completion of the link road, has enabled the creation of new public transport links, including a bus service which is being subsidised by Springfield Properties for five years at a cost of £600,000.

However, this service is limited and there are no guarantees that it will become self-sustaining as the community grows. It is also unclear how the concentration of development will help to alleviate the traffic problems that resulted in Perth city centre being declared an Air Quality Management Area in May 2006. With 7,500 new, mostly family homes to be built over the next 30 years across three strategic out of town sites, it seems likely that many more families will be using cars to drive to and from the centre of Perth.

Moreover, while Springfield Properties appear to have followed the strategic principles of the approved masterplan drawing, it seems that the detailed street design principles set out in the accompanying design code have not been enforced. The design code puts particular emphasis on the importance of overlooking open space, threshold design, boundary treatments, and minimising front curtilage parking.



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