

## 2. STRATEGY

### **Council Objectives**

- 2.1 The document “Changing Edinburgh for the Better” (March 2000) sets out the key priorities and targets the Council has committed to achieve over the next five years. It incorporates the City Strategy which expresses the Council’s long term vision, core aims and values. At their heart is a concern to promote the city internationally, to reduce poverty and disadvantage, and to promote a healthy and sustainable environment. The Council is committed to the concept of sustainable development and playing its part in ensuring that economic growth and material progress is not achieved at the expense of the environment and its capacity to meet the needs of future generations. These ambitions are to be built around partnership, equality of treatment and efficient and democratic service delivery.
- 2.2 The West Edinburgh Local Plan will express these aspirations in planning and land use terms for the area it covers, and will help them to be realised. It will apply the strategy for Lothian set out in the 1994 Lothian Structure Plan. It will work with other strategies and documents prepared by the Council, including the “Changing Edinburgh for the Better” document, the local transportation strategy; social inclusion strategies/plans and others which may be brought forward during the life of the Plan.

### **Policy Context: Lothian Structure Plan 1994**

- 2.3 The 1994 Structure Plan sets out a general strategy for development in Lothian up until 2005. It establishes in broad terms the types and amounts of development that have to be provided for in local plans, and the general location of this development.
- 2.4 The Structure Plan seeks to improve the quality of existing urban areas. Attention is drawn to peripheral housing areas, including Wester Hailes and Pilton/Muirhouse, where special renewal measures are needed to tackle problems of poverty and unemployment. The Plan also encourages physical and economic improvements in the area of North Edinburgh between Pilton and Leith
- 2.5 The West Edinburgh Local Plan area is not identified as an appropriate location for major growth in terms of new housing and economic development. However, the Structure Plan promotes appropriate infill developments within the urban area, subject to protecting open space and amenity and meeting infrastructure requirements.
- 2.6 Other aspects of the strategy for Lothian which have a significant bearing on this local plan area are:
  - Housing needs are to be met as far as possible by development on suitable sites within the urban area, but not at the expense of land of recreational or amenity value or of environmental quality.
  - The Green Belt is to be maintained and vigorously defended, but a study is to be undertaken, to identify where changes might make boundaries more defensible. This work has been completed and the Edinburgh Green Belt Boundary Study was published in 1999.
  - Major business development is to be promoted primarily as far as Edinburgh is concerned in specified strategic business centres – the city centre, Leith and South Gyle – and discouraged in residential areas.
  - Major retail development is to be supported in specified strategic shopping centres, including The Gyle and Wester Hailes, but subject to applicants being

able to demonstrate that there would be no prejudice to the vitality and viability of any other strategic centre.

- The promotion of the CERT guided bus way scheme to provide an improved public transport link between the city centre, South Gyle and Edinburgh Airport.

2.7 In March 2000, the Lothian Structure Plan Joint Liaison Committee agreed to commence a full review of the Lothian Structure Plan 1994. Work on the new Structure Plan is underway and it is intended that a draft plan will be produced by Summer 2001. The Major Issues Report, approved in July 2000, raises a number of matters relevant to this Local Plan area. In particular, it refers to the contribution that brownfield sites at Granton Waterfront can make towards meeting housing and economic development needs to 2015.

### **Policy Context: Central Government**

2.8 Central government policy advice and guidance to planning authorities is expressed mainly in a series of National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs). These are cited in the ensuing topic chapters of the Plan where relevant to local planning matters, and especially if published after approval of the Structure Plan and as a result not fully reflected in it. Other sources of Central Government policy and advice come in the form of primary legislation, secondary legislation (Regulations, Orders and Directions), Circulars, and Planning Advice Notes (PANs). Some Government legislation and guidance implements EC Directives, applying European environmental policy to the Scottish context. The general thrust of Government planning policy increasingly reflects the importance of promoting sustainable development and transport systems, energy conservation and the protection of wildlife and other natural assets.

### **Character of the Local Plan Area**

2.9 The West Edinburgh Local Plan area forms a broad arc running from Cramond, and Granton Waterfront in the north through to the northern slopes of the Pentland Hills in the south. It extends from the edge of inner city suburbs such as Gorgie in the east to the city bypass in the west. The population is approximately 155,000, comprising 64,000 households. Car and home ownership levels generally reflect the Edinburgh average (57% and 65% respectively) In terms of travel-to-work patterns, 27% of the area's workforce work in the plan area; of the remainder, the vast majority (44%) work in central Edinburgh.

2.10 The Local Plan area is varied in character. Much of it is made up of suburban residential communities including many of the city's outer suburbs such as Colinton, Corstorphine and Cramond. It also includes the Social Inclusion Partnership Areas of North Edinburgh (Granton/Pilton/Muirhouse) and Wester Hailes and the Granton Waterfront project area which are the focus of major regeneration initiatives. Major business and industrial areas are located at Edinburgh Park, Sighthill and South Gyle industrial estates and at Granton, with the main shopping facilities found at the Gyle, Corstorphine, Wester Hailes and Hermiston Gait. A number of key existing and proposed transport routes run through the Local Plan area.

2.11 Significant areas of greenspace and landscape features such as Corstorphine Hill, the foreshore at Cramond and Silverknowes, the valley of the Water of Leith, the northern slopes of the Pentland Hills and several golf courses and public parks make an important contribution to the quality of the environment in this area. Many of these green spaces form part of the Edinburgh Green Belt. Eight Conservation Areas lie wholly or predominantly within this Local Plan area, including those at Cramond, Colinton, Corstorphine, Craiglockhart Hills and Juniper Green.

## **The North West and South West Edinburgh Local Plans.**

- 2.12 West Edinburgh has been subject to considerable development and change since the adoption of the previous two local plans. A significant amount of housing development has been undertaken as part of comprehensive regeneration schemes in Wester Hailes, Granton and Muirhouse. In addition, new housing development has taken place in the South Gyle area and a number of infill sites distributed throughout the Local Plan area. The previous Local Plan sought to promote economic development activity in the South Gyle/Sighthill area and at Granton. Whilst the west of the Local Plan area has been relatively successful in attracting business development, most notably at Edinburgh Park, progress at Granton has been slow. However, the area is now the focus of the Granton Waterfront regeneration initiative, which seeks to redevelop the area for a wide range of uses through public and private sector investment.
- 2.13 There have been a number of new shopping developments in this area since the early 1980s – The Gyle Shopping Centre, Hermiston Gait Retail Park and more recently two new superstores at Corstorphine and Colinton Mains Drive. Wester Hailes town centre has undergone considerable change. Renamed Westside Plaza, it now includes a multiplex cinema, bingo club, library and new local housing office.
- 2.14 Whilst the previous Local Plans have been successful in promoting development, they have also been used to resist inappropriate proposals and protect areas of importance to the character of the environment, such as the Green Belt and significant open space.

## **Granton Waterfront**

- 2.15 Granton Waterfront is the focus of a major regeneration initiative which aims to create a vibrant new city quarter in North Edinburgh. In April 2000, the Council and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian (SEEL) set up a joint venture company, Waterfront Edinburgh Limited to promote the regeneration of Granton Waterfront in accordance with the approved Master Plan for the area. The Master Plan was prepared on behalf of the Council, SEEL and Scottish Homes by Llewelyn-Davies consultants. It sets out a framework for the redevelopment of 140 hectares of mainly industrial land to be implemented over a 15 year period. The Master Plan aims to develop a mixed-use urban environment, incorporating 5000–6500 houses, including over 1000 affordable homes and a range of sites for business and industry development. Other key features include two new local centres incorporating retail, ancillary service and community facilities, two new primary schools, the potential to accommodate a university/college campus, marina and leisure uses, a network of public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes and significant areas of open space.
- 2.16 A draft version of the Master Plan was published in February 2000 and this was followed by six week consultation exercise. The finalised Master Plan was approved in principle by the Council as supplementary planning guidance in January 2001. The key land use and design components of the Master Plan can be found in Chapter 10 and are also referred to in the relevant topic chapters of this Local Plan.

## **Objectives for the Local Plan**

- 2.17 The Plan's focus is land use and physical development issues, but it must also take account of, and contribute to, a wider agenda for social and economic change and environmental conservation. Several themes can be identified for this Plan, derived from the Council's core aims and values, and which provide the basis for a strategy for the Plan. These themes, stated simply, are:

- ❑ Sustainable Development
- ❑ Regeneration and Equality
- ❑ Quality
- ❑ Diversity and Identity

These are all inter-related and overlapping. They all inform the Plan to some extent, but some are more central to the Council's planning powers than others. Each can be explained more fully, as set out below.

### **Sustainable development**

- 2.18 Sustainable development is a broad overall concept that came to the fore in the 1980's, as concern mounted over the impact that economic development was having on the health of the planet and the climate system. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published its report "Our Common Future" (the Brundtland Report), which contained the following definition:  
 "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
- 2.19 The achievement of sustainable development is now well established in government policy, as is the important role of local authorities and the planning system in its delivery. Strategic and local planning policies must be developed with the need for energy efficiency, pollution control and other resource protection issues in mind, and all other planning objectives must be achieved within this overriding aim.
- 2.20 It is recognised that the major challenge facing the planning system is the need to reduce car dependency and the need to travel, and to promote more sustainable travel choices: the greater use of public transport, walking and cycling. Other objectives for planning are to:
- Minimise the loss of countryside and greenspace to development;
  - Encourage the most efficient use of urban land;
  - Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity;
  - Encourage energy efficiency in building and layout design; and
  - Avoid future pollution and contamination of land.

### **Regeneration and Equality**

- 2.21 An essential objective of the Council is to open up opportunity and reduce poverty and disadvantage in the deprived areas of the city and among its most disadvantaged groups. "Closing the Gap" is the title given to the City's strategy for urban regeneration. It was prepared by the Capital City Partnership – an independent body charged with overseeing and co-ordinating the delivery of the social justice agenda in Edinburgh. It comprises the Council as lead partner, the private sector, community networks, Scottish Homes, Lothian Health and the voluntary sector. The strategy, for delivery through all areas of Council service delivery, aims to address the causes of social exclusion, reduce the stark inequalities of income and opportunity across the city, regenerate areas of concentrated deprivation and develop stable and balanced communities in identified priority areas. It seeks to address a range of inter linked and reinforcing problems, including unemployment, low incomes, low skills and educational attainment, poor health, poor housing in a depressing and alienating environment and high levels of family breakdown.
- 2.22 It is recognised that the high quality of life available to many in West Edinburgh is not shared equally by all parts of the Local Plan area. Priority will be given to the Partnership areas of North Edinburgh (comprising Muirhouse, Granton, Pilton and

Wester Drylaw) and Wester Hailes and an area eligible for Urban Programme funding at Broomhouse/North Sighthill. The North Edinburgh Social Inclusion Partnership operates within the framework of the NEAR (North Edinburgh Area Renewal) project which covers a wider area, including Granton Waterfront. In recent years, considerable investment and commitment has focused on these areas in an effort to address environmental, social exclusion and economic problems. Through SIP funding and other resources that become available, further regeneration will be undertaken.

- 2.23 The redevelopment of Granton Waterfront provides the opportunity for the physical regeneration of a traditional industrial area to create a vibrant mixed use environment. The proposals will benefit not only those people living in the new housing within the Waterfront area, but it will also provide jobs and shopping and recreational facilities for residents in the neighbouring North Edinburgh SIP area. The Waterfront proposal will therefore make a significant contribution to the social and economic regeneration of North Edinburgh.
- 2.24 The Local Plan and planning decisions generally will have an important role to play in assisting regeneration initiatives in the priority areas to achieve their aims by:
- Improving the environment and ensuring high standards of design;
  - Helping to improve housing quality and widen choice;
  - Maintaining and improving locally available employment; and
  - Helping to sustain local neighbourhood shopping and community facilities

## **Quality**

- 2.25 Maintaining and improving environmental quality is an important objective of planning. A good environment is the essential basis for successful communities in which people will choose to live and to invest. Planning is concerned with the appearance of new development in terms of its design qualities and visual impact, but also with wider impact issues relating to noise, air, water, soil quality and wildlife. Consideration should also be given to how development proposals relate to the existing historic fabric where this exists, and to trees and important open spaces. It is important that pressure for development does not lead to “town cramming” resulting in the loss of valuable areas of open space and landscape features and a built environment where proposals fail to respect the scale and setting of existing buildings.
- 2.26 With the exception of Granton Waterfront, new development in this Local Plan area will generally take the form of infill proposals where integration with the existing environment will be a key consideration. In many parts of West Edinburgh, the existing environmental quality is high and the role of the Local Plan will be to protect the general character of the area and valuable features of built and natural heritage from inappropriate development. However, there are less attractive locations where development proposals will provide the opportunity to enhance the environmental quality of the area. In the SIP areas, the challenge will be to ensure that lessons have been learned from previous mistakes and that housing redevelopment schemes lay the basis for more successful communities and a better quality of life. At Granton Waterfront, the opportunity exists for a design-led approach to sustainable quality on a grand scale. In approving the Waterfront Granton Master Plan, the Council has emphasised its commitment to creating a high quality waterfront worthy of a capital city.
- 2.27 Regardless of the scale of development, planning can guide and improve proposals, and can refuse unsuitable proposals where this is not possible, but only the developer can bring forward proposals which are truly innovative and imaginative. Within that

context the Council will seek to ensure that new development is well designed, creates a convenient, safe and secure environment, fits harmoniously into its surroundings, but is distinctive in its own right, conveying a sense of place and urban design.

### **Diversity and Identity**

- 2.28 Private housing development particularly in the outer housing areas has tended towards a low density and unvaried character, so-called family housing. Future proposals should incorporate more mixed and varied forms of housing development, with higher densities, a mix of house types, sizes and tenures in order to meet the needs of different sectors of the community and create a more stimulating residential environment. Consideration should also be given to achieving a greater mix of land uses, including shopping, some employment, leisure and community facilities alongside housing. Such an approach would be more consistent with the principles of sustainable development. It would represent a more efficient use of land and reduce the distances people have to travel to meet their basic needs.
- 2.29 A concept that helps focus those objectives is that of ‘urban villages’, as promoted by the Urban Village Forum, a government sponsored agency also supported by the Council. This suggests that where achievable, new development should provide a mix of uses, be focussed on neighbourhood centres in which local shopping and community facilities can be sited, and be of a size which encourages walking and cycling rather than car dependency. Urban village principles will be key to the successful regeneration of the Waterfront at Granton. The approved Master Plan is based on the understanding that successful communities are built around a full range of local services and facilities including commercial, educational, health, spiritual and civic uses, which need to be conveniently sited and connected to residential areas with safe and comfortable routes. Although radical re-structuring of established housing areas is not in prospect, the urban villages concept may still have some lessons where new development is proposed.

### **Broad Objectives for the Local Plan**

- 2.30 Particular importance will be attached to the following objectives:
- Ensuring that development or use of land is sustainable and meets present needs without reducing opportunities or resources available to future generations;
  - Securing social, economic and physical regeneration through concerted action by the Council and other agencies;
  - Protecting and enhancing the quality and character of the built and natural environment while ensuring that new development is of a high standard;
  - Maximising employment prospects, promoting and enabling economic and employment development and activity and improving accessibility and the choice of transport in a safe and sustainable way; and
  - Fostering a sense of place, identity and community for local areas.

### **Contents of this Plan**

- 2.31 The following chapters of this Local Plan deal with the principal topics of: development quality and the built environment; the green environment; housing and public services; economic development and tourism; shopping and commercial leisure uses; and transport. The policies and proposals promoting the regeneration of Granton Waterfront are contained in a separate chapter with a further chapter describing how the plan will be implemented. Proposals involving land use change are included within the

relevant topic chapter and shown on the Proposals Map. Policies which relate to specific areas or sites are also identified on the Proposals Map.

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