

DRAFT

MINUTES of MEETING of the EDINBURGH AND
LOTHIAN STRUCTURE PLAN JOINT LIAISON
COMMITTEE held in the Conference Room 1, West Lothian
House, Almondvale Boulevard, Livingston on Monday 19
December 2005 at 9.30 am.

Present:-

City of Edinburgh Council – Councillor T Davies.

East Lothian Council – Councillor D Costello.

Midlothian Council – Councillors J Dunsmuir and K McIntosh.

West Lothian Council – Councillor W Dunn (Chair)

In Attendance:-

City of Edinburgh Council - J Inman and K Tippen.

East Lothian Council - I Glen.

Midlothian Council - J Long and D Williamson.

West Lothian Council – J Dickson, C McCorriston and A Rose
(Clerk).

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors N Hampshire (East Lothian
Council), A Montgomery (Midlothian Council), I Murray (City of
Edinburgh Council), C Bartholomew and J Sibbald (West Lothian
Council).

Order of Business.

1. The order of business would be as set out in the agenda.

The Chair took this opportunity to remind all officers that although he appreciated that everyone was busy, the timely receipt of papers to be considered at future meetings would be appreciated.

Minutes.

2. The Minutes of Meeting of 25 July 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

3. With reference to paragraph 3 (Strategic Environmental Assessment) of the Minutes of 25 July 2005, Craig McCorrison, Strategic Planning Manager at West Lothian Council, informed the meeting that West Lothian Council had received notification that approval had been granted for an exemption from the Regulations relating to the West Lothian Local Plan.

Structure Plan
Monitoring

4. There was submitted report, by the Director of City Planning, City of Edinburgh Council, regarding Structure Plan monitoring.

The report advised that the monitoring process has three elements:

- The first annual Housing Monitor Report
- The first Biennial Monitoring Statement 2005
- An update of the Action Plan

On 25 July 2005 the Joint Committee approved the project brief which contained a publication date of December 2005. However, progress in some areas had been affected by competing work priorities, primarily local plan/inquiry preparation in East, West and Midlothian Councils. Constraints on staff time in face of these competing demands was a risk identified in the project brief. Consequently, while some parts of the work had progressed well, and the housing work is complete, others had yet to conclude.

Having heard from Ken Tippen, Group Leader - Strategy, at City of Edinburgh Council, the Committee discussed the difficulties being faced by the building industry in finding sufficient skilled labour in the area.

After discussion, the Joint Committee:

- a) noted the progress to date in preparing the first annual Structure Plan Housing Monitor and Biennial Monitoring Report;
- b) noted the findings of the Housing Monitor and provisional output from the Economic Development and the Retail and Town Centres chapters; and;
- c) noted the commitment to complete all monitoring work by 31 December 2005 and to report the full Biennial report to the Committee's next meeting.

5. There was submitted report, by the Director of City Planning, City of Edinburgh Council, regarding the review of the Structure Plan Action Plan.

This was the first full review of the Action Plan since the original was published in March 2003 and an interim Update produced in March 2004. The Action Plan review showed that implementation of the Structure Plan development strategy, and in particular the delivery of many of the strategic housing allocations, was likely to be impeded by infrastructure constraints.

A particular problem is constrained capacity in the existing water and sewerage network and road network capacity constraints were also a major issue.

Having heard from Ken Tippen, Group Leader - Strategy, at City of Edinburgh Council, the Committee discussed issues relating to the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the uplifting of value of land. There was a general consensus that the Scottish property market was different to that of England and maybe required a different approach.

Councillor Davies advised the Joint Committee that City of Edinburgh Council was currently in the process of undertaking a piece of work on this issue and would be in a position to report back, possibly to the next meeting.

After discussion, the Joint Committee:

- a) noted the preparation of Action Plan 2 and agreed to publish the amended document;
- b) noted that the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan development strategy is being severely constrained by lack of strategic investment by infrastructure providers in crucial enabling schemes; and;
- c) agreed that officers from all four authorities undertake co-ordinated discussions and to bring back to this committee a report on the affect to the area of the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his pre-budget speech regarding the uplift of the value of land.

6. There was submitted report, by the Director of City Planning, City of Edinburgh Council, regarding the Consultation Paper for the Structure Plan Review 2020.

A report on the Structure Plan Review Project Brief was considered by the Committee on July 25 2005. Committee agreed to undertake a statutory Structure Plan Review to 2020 and a complementary non-statutory City Region Spatial Vision to 2040 and to approve the proposed project brief and governance arrangements. Officers were authorised to seek the support and involvement of neighbouring councils, SEDD, SESTRAN and Scottish Enterprise in progressing the project. Committee also noted that a strategic options paper was to be presented for approval in December, to be followed by public consultation early in 2006.

Having heard from Ken Tippen, Group Leader - Strategy, at City of Edinburgh Council, the Committee commented on the necessity for plain English to be used in consultation papers, and indeed, in all reports to the Joint Committee.

The Chair recommended that the consultation paper should be referred back to each individual authority for consideration, and there was an agreement to this proposal.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee:

- a) agreed that the consultation paper be referred to individual authorities for approval prior to consultation being carried out;
- b) approved the Structure Plan Review 2020 Consultation Paper as the basis for public consultation in the first quarter of 2006, subject to no adverse comments from individual authorities;
- c) authorised the project steering group to make any necessary non-material editing and presentational changes to the paper prior to consideration;
- d) noted that, subject to agreement of neighbouring partner councils, it is the intention to present at the appropriate time a report to the Joint Committee on options for political and technical governance structures to manage the new statutory city region joint planning arrangements; and
- e) made a request that all reports and consultation papers be written in plain English.

Water and
Drainage Issues

7. There was submitted report, by the Director of Strategic Services, Midlothian Council, regarding water drainage issues.

Reports on various water and drainage issues had been considered by the Committee on 13 December 2004, 21 March 2005 and 25 July 2005. The principal matters of concern were the proposed funding of water infrastructure, namely the Q&SIII Project and the lack of investment in infrastructure to support growth in the Lothians, which led to a spate of correspondence with the Scottish Executive/ Scottish Ministers. A specific infrastructure matter of concern related to the Eastern Interceptor Sewer, and this resulted in a commitment from Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian, with Scottish Water and SEEL, to fund a model of the Eastern Interceptor Sewer and its catchment.

Having heard from David Williamson, Head of Planning, Midlothian Council, the Joint Committee discussed the impact which funding, or lack of funding, for water infrastructure, affects the planning process

Following discussion, the Joint Committee:

- a) noted the issues arising from the Scottish Executive consultation "Connecting to the System: Paying for Connections to Water and Sewerage Networks";
- b) agreed to make further joint representations to Scottish Ministers on these issues;
- c) noted the note of the meeting with Scottish Water; and;
- d) noted the progress on the Eastern Interceptor Sewer Study.

Transport
Modelling Update

8. There was submitted report, by the Director of Strategic Services, Midlothian Council, regarding an update on transport modelling.

In approving the Structure Plan, Scottish Ministers required that a land use / transportation modelling exercise be carried out to inform an early review of the plan. At its meeting on 21 March 2005, the Committee considered an initial report on the aims of the modelling, and its potential scope, timing, likely costs and options for delivery.

A Cities Growth Fund bid was prepared and submitted in July by Midlothian Council, on behalf of the four Councils, to secure funding assistance for the transport modelling exercise. The modelling will be commissioned jointly by the four Lothian Councils in consultation with the Scottish Executive and SEE&L. In October, City of Edinburgh Council agreed to nominate this project to receive a sum of £200,000 from the Cities Growth Fund though this decision is still to receive Ministerial approval. It was hoped that this approval would be forthcoming early in 2006.

Having heard from Janice Long, Planning Policy Manager, Midlothian Council, the Joint Committee discussed the difficulties being faced in encouraging the public to use public transport in place of the car.

Discussion also centred around the apparent lack of joined up working by separate departments at the Scottish Executive.

Following discussions, the Joint Committee:

- a) noted the terms of the letter received from the Head of Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Scottish Executive) dated 12 October 2005.
- b) confirmed that it wished to meet with the relevant Ministers to pursue these matters;
- c) noted progress to date with the first phase of the strategic modelling exercise and agreed to circulate the outline brief to the Scottish Executive and SEE&L for comment;
- d) noted the requirement to put in place appropriate project management arrangements to implement the modelling exercise as soon as funding approval is received; and;
- e) approved the drafting of a letter by officers to be sent to the Scottish First Minister highlighting problems faced by local authorities and stressing that the Scottish Executive should be working in a joined up way.

9. There was submitted report, by the Director of City Development, City of Edinburgh Council, regarding implications for the structure plan of the Edinburgh Area Retail Needs Study (EARNs).

In September 2004 economic and development consultants Halcrow were appointed by City of Edinburgh Council and other partners to advise on the future supply and demand for non-food retailing throughout the Lothians up to 2015 (i.e. the period of the current structure plan). In addition to quantifying the 'capacity' for new development, the consultants were asked to consider scenarios for addressing any shortfall in provision. The study was based on research of recent retail trends, including shopper surveys, demographic and economic analysis, and advice from commercial property specialists and the Institute of Retail Studies. The findings were reported to City of Edinburgh Council Planning Committee on 3 November 2005.

Having heard from John Inman, Strategy Manager of City of Edinburgh Council the Joint Committee discussed the challenges being faced by Princes Street at the centre of the city of Edinburgh.

There was some concern expressed by the members of the Lothian authorities as to the tone of the report and that it was written from an Edinburgh perspective. However, all members agreed that it was important to the whole region that the city centre of Edinburgh maintains its role as the regional shopping centre. Councillor Davies explained the reasons why it was more difficult to develop a city centre than an out-of-town retail centre. The consensus of the Lothian members was that they could not afford to stop development in their respective authority areas to allow Edinburgh to catch up, otherwise, the entire region would lose out to Glasgow.

Following this discussion the Joint Committee:

- a) noted the contents of the report; and;
- b) agreed that further work be carried out, as part of the Structure Plan Review, to set out more clearly the respective roles and objectives of Edinburgh city centre, Almondvale, town centres and other major shopping centres.

10. There was submitted report, by the Head of Planning, Midlothian Council, regarding a planning application for retail units and a restaurant at the Peel Centre, Straiton Road, Loanhead, Midlothian which was due to be considered by the Planning Committee of Midlothian Council that week. The application had been objected to formally by City of Edinburgh Council.

The proposal comprises new gross retail floorspace of 8,756m², about half of which involves extensions to existing units, and the other half new buildings. Taking into account all existing retail developments at Straiton, the proposal represented an increase in floorspace of about 7%. There was no change proposed to the boundary of the Retail Park, as defined in the Midlothian Local Plan.

Councillor McIntosh declared an interest in this matter as he is a member of the Midlothian Council Planning Committee. Councillor McIntosh did not participate in the discussion and decision on this matter.

Having heard from David Williamson, Head of Planning, Midlothian Council, the Joint Committee discussed the benefit that could be gained by officers from both Midlothian Council and City of Edinburgh Council meeting before that week's Midlothian Council Planning Committee, to establish whether the objections raised by City of Edinburgh Council could be overcome.

Councillor Davies, of City of Edinburgh Council, stated that today was the first chance he had had to read the report and so was not in a position to comment on the application.

Following this discussion the Joint Committee noted that there were no strategic issues for the Joint Committee and Midlothian Council and City of Edinburgh Council were encouraged to work together to resolve the objection to the application.

The meeting terminated at 11.25 am.