

**MINUTES of the MEETING OF
EDINBURGH AND LoTHIANS
STRUCTURE PLAN JOINT
LIAISON COMMITTEE held at
HADDINGTON on MONDAY 26
MARCH 2007**

Present:

Cllr N Hampshire, East Lothian Council (Chair)
Cllr J Dunsmuir, Midlothian Council
Cllr K McIntosh, Midlothian Council
Cllr T Davies, City of Edinburgh Council

Attending:

Mr P Collins, East Lothian Council
Mr P Zochowski, East Lothian Council
Mr R Matthew, East Lothian Council
Mr D Williamson, Midlothian Council
Ms J Long, Midlothian Council
Mr J Inman, City of Edinburgh Council
Mr K Tippen, City of Edinburgh Council
Mr J Dickson, West Lothian Council
Mr C McCorriston, West Lothian Council

Apologies:

Apologies had been received from Cllr D Costello, Cllr A Montgomery, Cllr W Dunn,
and Cllr C Bartholomew

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2007

The minutes were approved as a true record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

*Order of Business: It was confirmed that item 7, Structure Plan Abandonment
Submission, would be discussed as item 3.*

*These minutes will be ratified at the next meeting of the Edinburgh and Lothians
Structure Plan Joint Liaison Committee*

3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN ABANDONMENT SUBMISSION

Cllr Hampshire tabled a letter received from Mr Jobling of the Scottish Executive on 26 March 2007 regarding the proposed abandonment. Mr Collins spoke to the letter, remarking that he had been pleased to receive this positive decision from the Scottish Executive before the elections due to be held in May 2007. He commented that it had been beneficial to involve officers from the Scottish Executive in recent workshops.

The key paragraph of the letter, as confirmed by Mr Jobling this morning by telephone, related to Housing Land supply. The Scottish Executive had expressed concern regarding the availability of land available for Housing within the area. Mr Collins indicated that lobbying would be taking place by those with housing interests to this effect.

Mr Collins drew the Committee's attention to the pieces of information required by the Scottish Executive as part of the agreement, notably a succinct audit of recent and planned house building by the beginning of July 2007. He suggested that this should be produced as a result of a meeting between all Councils, Homes for Scotland, and Communities Scotland. He highlighted that it would represent an opportunity to make clear that the release of land for housing was less challenging than ensuring that the necessary infrastructure was in place, which was not wholly within the power of Local Authorities. He stated that the involvement of the Chief Planner would not be necessary unless there were ongoing problems between the Planning Authorities and housing interests.

In conclusion he assured the Committee that although the letter had stated it would be important not to pre-empt decisions which had not yet been taken by Scottish Ministers regarding the involvement of Fife and Scottish Borders Councils this had been included as a formality, and it was not anticipated that the four Lothian authorities would be asked to work with any other Local Authorities than Fife and Borders as had previously been suggested.

Mr Dickson agreed that difficulties with land allocation were often due to infrastructure related matters. Mr MacCorrison reported that a legal opinion had confirmed that it would not be appropriate to release land for housing allocation before the publication of West Lothian Council's Local Public Inquiry report. He recommended that the Committee should emphasize that procedural issues of this kind led to further difficulties in allocation.

Cllr Davies agreed that the situation was not in the control of Local Authorities, in a similar way to the provision of affordable housing. In response to a question from Cllr Hampshire, Mr Dickson explained that there was no planning procedure in place for Scottish Ministers to allow a relaxation in the allocation of land for housing.

Mr Collins advised that policy HOU10 had set targets of 10% to ensure that there was no land shortfall, and that at present, no shortfalls had been recorded. He added that the allocated sites for housing were only part of the total number of housing sites, and that windfall sites had contributed to the achievement of these targets. Mr Matthew confirmed that 42% of completions in 2006 had come from windfall sites. However,

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Mr Collins warned against over-reliance on windfall sites, as they were difficult to anticipate.

Cllr Davies recommended that once the report had been produced in July, the Committee should ask for a meeting with the relevant officers in the Scottish Executive to discuss the issues surrounding housing land allocation and emphasise the Committee's position in the matter. Mr Dickson remarked that the production of the report should take priority. Mr Williamson pointed out that the report could include external factors which could reflect unfavourably on the targets stipulated in the Plan.

Cllr Davies agreed that the report should include a list of constraints on Local Authorities which hampered progress with land allocation. Cllr Hampshire warned against allowing those in the building trade to prove that relevant infrastructure was in place, as this could lead to the private sector steering the planning process instead of the Committee and Local Authorities. Mr Williamson recommended that a balanced view of the issue should be provided to the Scottish Executive, and highlighted that if in future there was a drop below targets, all potential sites would have to be reappraised and subject to consultation. Mr MacCorrison stated that the relevant report had been updated two cycles previously, so there should be a good basis from which to commence work on the report.

Involvement.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- i) to note the letter received from the Scottish Executive;
- ii) to meet to discuss the required report relating to Housing Land Supply before the deadline of the end of June 2007
- iii) that the report should include details of the difficulties Local Authorities faced when allocating land for housing; and
- iv) that the participation of Fife and Borders Councils would continue to be supported by the ELSPJLC until such time as legislation was put in place confirming this involvement.

4. INTERIM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN JOINT COMMITTEE: FINALISED CONSTITUTION

Mr Tippen spoke to the report, highlighting various features of the constitution, including membership, quorum, number of meetings per year, and administrative arrangements.

In response to questions from Cllr Hampshire, Mr Collins remarked that it was doubtful that the member Councils would extend or differ from the four Lothian Authorities, Fife and Borders. The letter from the Scottish Executive had not been able to confirm the position as the legislation had the potential to change before final approval, although it had been verbally confirmed to the Committee that this was

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unlikely. Mr Tippen added that the make up of SESTRAN had been based on the same six Local Authorities, as well as Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils.

Decision

The Committee agreed: -

- i) to endorse the finalised constitution attached to the report as the basis for setting up the new Strategic Development Plan Joint Committee; and
- ii) to refer the constitution on to the first meeting of that Committee for information.

5. EDINBURGH GREEN BELT STUDY

Mr Williamson spoke to the report and drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 which highlighted the main purposes of the proposed study. Colour copies of a Green Belt map were tabled, showing the Green Belt divided in landscape terms into five categories. The study would revisit the landscape context in light of the new SPP21 guidance, as well as look at capacity.

Mr Williamson reported that all of the main points that had been raised during discussions with other Councils following the January meeting of the Committee had been incorporated into the study brief. In response to a question from Cllr Davies, Mr Williamson confirmed that the purpose of the study was a landscape and capacity review. He maintained that the output from the study, together with other pieces of work including transportation and education, would inform work on the new strategic development plan.

Mr Collins welcomed the report and stated that it had been produced timeously, especially with regard to recent communication with the Scottish Executive. Mr Dickson agreed that the Green Belt Study would represent part of a range of information required to take these matters forward.

Mr MacCorrison suggested that West Lothian Council could provide funding for this project to ensure that their involvement was maintained throughout the process. He added that a similar project could be carried out regarding the area of Green Belt around Livingston, West Lothian. Cllr McIntosh highlighted that issues of green belt and green spaces were especially important around Cities.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i) to confirm its support for undertaking a Green Belt Study, as detailed in the brief attached to the report;
- ii) to tender for this work;
- iii) to refer this report back to Councils for a view on funding contributions; and

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- iv) to request a report to the next meeting of the Joint Committee on the tenders received and on the funding implications.

6. STRUCTURE PLAN ANNUAL HOUSING MONITOR

Mr Matthew spoke to the report, highlighting various aspects including relevant percentages of the overall five year housing land supply, individual Council's five year housing land supplies, the contribution to these percentages of additional land for housing, population and household projections, completions 2001-2006 including future completion requirements until 2011, base, constrained and windfall site developments, and affordable housing.

In response to a question from Cllr Davies, Mr Williamson confirmed that GROS projections were trend based and did not reflect planned developments. Mr MacCorrison remarked on the links between the letter received from the Scottish Executive and this report, and drew the Committee's attention to the difficulties that West Lothian Council had experienced when progressing allocations of land for housing.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i) to note the findings of the second Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 Annual Housing Monitor; and
- ii) to note that there is sufficient housing land supply, based on Housing Land Audit 2006, available in Edinburgh and the Lothians to address Structure Plan requirements at this time.

7. WEST EDINBURGH PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Mr Tippen spoke to the report, tabling an updated version of Appendix 1 to the report which was a copy of a report which had been approved by City of Edinburgh Council's Planning Committee. He outlined the framework, an extension of building projects to the north and south of Edinburgh Airport in order to create an International Gateway Facility. He expanded on the relevant issues relating to the release of Green Belt for building in the area, and drew the Committee's attention to the recommendations contained within the report.

Mr Williamson reported that Midlothian Council had considered a report at Cabinet on the draft West Edinburgh Planning Framework consultation document, and had submitted comments to the Scottish Executive. While Midlothian Council was supportive of the provisions set out in the draft West Edinburgh Planning Framework, it had submitted representations about certain matters. These included the view that the appropriate vehicle for major change to the Green Belt in this location should be by way of the structure plan rather than a local plan.

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Cllr Davies pointed out that the Brown Field land selected for development was not of concern to the Committee, and that the wider impact on the area would be of greater import. Cllr McIntosh advised that these discussions were a little premature, and that Local Authorities should await the outcome of relevant decisions made by the Scottish Executive. He added that this Committee should come to an agreement concerning the issue of developing land from the Green Belt. Mr Tippen confirmed that development proposals in the affected area would be subject to a criteria based assessment rather than the land removed from the Green Belt.

In response to comments from Cllr Hampshire, it was agreed that a formal decision on this matter should be delayed until a decision had been made by Scottish Ministers following the completion of the consultation period. Cllr McIntosh agreed that a further report should be brought back to the Committee at a later date. Mr MacCorrison confirmed that West Lothian Council would not recommend a Structure Plan alteration but he accepted that there was a prematurity issue. Cllr Hampshire confirmed that the Committee should reserve its position on this report at this time.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- i) that it would be premature to take a view on whether the draft West Edinburgh Planning Framework could be taken forward without the need for a structure plan alteration, pending the outcome of the consultation process and the Scottish Executive issuing the new guidance; and
- ii) that a further report should be brought back to the Committee at that stage.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in June, at a date to be confirmed.