

## Members' Library Service Request Form

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Originator	Phil Mclean
Originator's Ref (if any)	Planner (Policy & Projects)
Document Title	Response to Scottish Planning Policy 'Sustainability and Planning' consultation

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**REPORT TO:** Members' Library Service

**MEETING DATE:**

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Partnership and Services for Communities)

**SUBJECT:** Response to SPP 'Sustainability and Planning' consultation

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the planning service's response to the Scottish Planning Policy 'Sustainability and Planning' consultation.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members note the contents of the consultation response.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was first published in February 2010, setting out the Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It replaced and consolidated a suite of earlier national policy documents. As a statement of Ministers' priorities it is a material planning consideration that carries significant weight in planning decisions.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government is reviewing SPP and produced a draft for consultation purposes in April 2013. East Lothian Council's planning service submitted a response to that consultation, which was reported to the Members' Library Service in July 2013.
- 3.3 Having reflected on the responses to this consultation, Scottish Ministers are now considering further changes on the topic of 'sustainability and planning', and how economic considerations should be balanced against social and environmental factors.
- 3.4 The consultation document proposes to replace the draft SPP principal policies on 'sustainable economic growth' and 'sustainable development'

with a principal policy on 'sustainability and planning' and to introduce a presumption in favour of sustainable development into the SPP.

- 3.5 Council planning officers have sent a response to the SPP 'Planning and Sustainability' consultation, broadly welcoming the proposed changes but raising some matters of concern and clarification. This is attached for Members' information.
- 3.6 The revised SPP is expected to be published in its final form in June 2014 alongside the third National Planning Framework (NPF3).

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The final version of the new Scottish Planning Policy may have policy implications for the East Lothian Local Development Plan and for the determination of planning applications.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – None.
- 6.2 Personnel – None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 SPP 'Sustainability and Planning' consultation (Oct 2013).
- 7.2 Consultation response by East Lothian Council planning service.

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# Draft Scottish Planning Policy: 'Sustainability and Planning' consultation

## Comments of East Lothian Council planning service

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East Lothian Council welcomes the opportunity to provide further comment on the draft SPP and is pleased that the Scottish Government has responded to the findings of the original consultation.

### Consultation question 1:

It is not clear what 'a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development' means for the plan-led system, and in what respect it is different from the existing need to weigh the development plan against material considerations. It is logical the development plans themselves reflect the principle of 'a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development'.

Is it to be assumed that there is a corresponding presumption against development that contributes to unsustainable development?

### Consultation question 2:

We welcome the thrust of the proposed changes, which we feel are a distinct improvement on the original draft. In particular, we support the recognition at paragraph 1 that costs and benefits of a proposal over the longer term must be weighed up; the original wording appeared to prioritise short-term economic considerations at the expense of social and environmental matters.

At paragraph 7 we would welcome clarification of what is meant by 'due weight' to net economic benefit. A further reference to the need to consider longer term timescales may be useful here. At the 4<sup>th</sup> bullet, we are concerned at the unqualified statement about supporting the delivery of housing, business, retailing and leisure development, which could be taken as implying that any proposals for such uses are to be supported. We suggest rephrasing, including a qualifier such as 'appropriate', or 'necessary'. In the penultimate bullet, the concept of 'over-development' is open to widely varying interpretation in the absence of any definition. We also suggest referring to the importance of town centres in this list of policy principles.

At paragraph 9, it will be essential to have clarity on what is meant by an 'out-of-date' plan, whether this is to be a simple measure of time since adoption (e.g. over 5 years), or a more qualitative judgement depending on the particular circumstances.

We welcome the inclusion of definitions of 'sustainable development' and 'sustainable economic growth' although the latter definition in particular is not very clear.