

## **National Planning Framework 3**

### **Report by Ian Johnson, Head of Planning and Development**

#### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1** This report informs Cabinet about the work begun by the Scottish Government to prepare its third National Planning Framework (NPF3), the consultation arrangements, timetable for preparation, and the current call for potential developments of national significance which should be included.

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1** The National Planning Framework is at the top of the hierarchy of development plans as prescribed in the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. The first version (NPF1) was published by Scottish Ministers in 2004, and the second (NPF2) in 2009. That document set the overall national planning agenda in the context of the challenges of global competition, climate change and resource depletion: further, it established a key role in co-ordinating policies with a spatial dimension and aligning strategic investment priorities to promote sustainable economic growth across Scotland. Strategic development plans (SDPs) (for Midlothian this means SESplan) and local development plans (emerging Midlothian Local Development Plan) need to take due cognisance of the NPF: in the case of the SDPs these must accord with the NPF. The NPF is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals.

#### **3 Commencement of Work on National Planning Framework 3**

- 3.1** Scottish Government has now begun its initial consultation stage on NPF3. This involves publication of its intended programme of consultation ("Participation Statement 2012") and its "Call for National Developments 2012". The closing date for that call is 14 December 2012. Thereafter, Scottish Government will publish and consult on its NPF3 Main Issues Report in March 2013. The results of that will be taken into account in the preparation and publication of the Proposed NPF3 in Autumn 2013. Following formal Parliamentary consideration, Scottish Ministers expect to publish the Finalised NPF3 in June 2014. Concurrent with this will be preparation of a review of 'Scottish Planning Policy' due for completion in Autumn 2013.
- 3.2** The initial information from Scottish Government is in the form of a pack which is publicly available. Copies of the pack have been distributed to each Member, and Scottish Government has advised that it has sent packs directly to all community councils via community council liaison officers. Included within the pack are details of the public event drop in sessions being held by Scottish Government during

November, the most local one to Midlothian being at the Skills Shop, St. James Centre, Edinburgh from 3pm to 7pm, Thursday 22 November.

- 3.3** The initial consultation document sets a general direction in the following terms:

*“We think Scotland needs planning to focus on achieving sustainable economic growth. We believe there are opportunities to develop the low carbon economy and to improve our strategic infrastructure, so that we are better connected to each other and to the outside world.”*

- 3.4** The NPF does not allocate land specifically for certain uses; that being the responsibility of local development plans. However, NPF does identify, in accordance with its overall principles, specific projects/developments of national significance. These generally comprise major infrastructure items in such sectors as transport, energy, waste management etc. Examples in NPF2 include the replacement Forth crossing, Grangemouth freight hub, and Commonwealth Games facilities and infrastructure. In calling for candidate national developments for inclusion in NPF3 the Scottish Government is expecting to see those that will make a significant contribution to Scotland’s sustainable economic growth. In terms of more detailed criteria, any proposal must be of more than regional significance and must make a significant contribution to one or more of the following:

- An 80% reduction in emissions by 2050
- Achieving the zero waste plan
- The Scottish Government’s renewable energy targets
- Skills development, reducing unemployment and job creation
- Strengthening Scotland’s links with the rest of the world
- Improving our digital, transport, utilities or green infrastructure networks
- Adapting to or mitigating the effects of climate change
- Improving the quality of the built or natural environment

## **4 Potential National Developments in Midlothian**

- 4.1** NPF looks ahead to a 30 year horizon which is well beyond those of the strategic (20 years) and local (c.12 years) development plans. Whilst a fairly long list of new developments in Midlothian can be considered for candidate status most are of local or regional significance only, and would therefore be unlikely to be included in NPF3. Projects which could be regarded as meeting many of the stipulated criteria are:

## **Infrastructure to Further Develop the Bush Estate Centre of Scientific Excellence**

Members will be aware that the Easter Bush area is a major employment location, already supporting some 2000 jobs. It is almost exclusively a science-based area of activity, this being a growing sector both regionally and nationally. The recent designation of the Biocampus site as an Enterprise Area by Scottish Government is further endorsement of this status. Work towards the preparation of a masterplan to promote the co-ordinated further development of the Bush area, commissioned jointly by the Council, Scottish Enterprise, and the University of Edinburgh is shortly to be concluded. This identifies a number of known and potential major infrastructure requirements, primarily in respect of transport links, but also in relation to drainage, water supply and electricity supply. It is considered that the unconstrained further development of this key industrial sector is a matter of national significance.

## **Improvements to the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass**

Although used heavily for local trips by residents of Edinburgh and the Lothians area, the A720 road is an acknowledged national route linking the north-east of England with all parts of Scotland. Congestion of this road and the consequential impact on other routes which link to and from it is well-documented, such congestion not just being evidenced at prime commuter times. The adverse impact of the inadequacies of this route, particularly at its main junctions, on both the regional and national economies is likely to be substantial and, on current traffic growth projections, will worsen. Accordingly, it is considered that a comprehensive investment programme to improve the full length of the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass is an urgently required project of national significance: and should include examination of potential public transport measures, such as the orbital bus route, to seek to reduce the rate of growth of traffic levels.

## **Central Scotland Green Network**

Since its identification as a national development through NPF2, the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) has become a well established project across Scotland with all party support. It encompasses a total of nine local authorities working through the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Partnership in the west, the Central Scotland Forest Trust in the central area and the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership (LFGNP) in the east. The national project is being taken forward under the auspices of a Partnership Board and support team based in Shotts. The LFGNP has aligned its priorities to help deliver the aims and aspirations of the CSGN in the East of Scotland. It comprises the four Lothian Authorities and Fife Council, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, the Woodland Trust Scotland and Fife Coast and Countryside Trust operating through a Steering Group, a Partnership Manager and a newly created post of Development Officer. Whilst the national project was not directly funded

from Scottish Government, it has received strong funding support from FCS and SNH. The main flagship project for the CSGN Board is the John Muir Coast to Coast Trail due for delivery in 2014. Midlothian Council has been involved in the development of the CSGN since its inception through participation in the Steering Group leading to its conceptualisation and incorporation as a national development in NPF2. It would be inappropriate to allow support for the CSGN to diminish at a time when it is gathering momentum through flagship partnership projects like the North and South Esk Woodland and Access Project supported by FCS, and its interpretation and delivery through the new round of development plans in the context of strategic and local green networks and open space strategies.

- 4.2** This report provides a brief summary justification of each of the three potential national developments. If approved by Cabinet for submission the case for each would be fully articulated on the proforma supplied by Scottish Government.

## **5 Report Implications**

- 5.1 Resources:** none arising directly from this report.
- 5.2 Risk:** if the Council does not submit proposals for national developments then there is the risk that they will not form part of NPF3; the consequences being that there will not be clear endorsement in planning terms for them, and there is potentially less chance of them being prioritised for funding.
- 5.3 Strategy:** all three prospective national developments set out above accord with the Council's corporate objectives and extant and/or emerging development plans.
- 5.4 Consultation:** Scottish Government is undertaking widespread public consultation at this early stage of NPF3 preparation, and has prepared a detailed Participation Statement of its consultation arrangements for the remainder of its preparation.
- 5.5 Equalities:** no issues arising directly from this report.
- 5.6 Sustainability:** the proposed national developments can all be considered as environmentally sustainable.

## **6.0 Recommendation**

- 6.1** It is recommended that Cabinet:
- i. notes the current stage of preparation being undertaken by Scottish Government in its preparation of National Planning Framework 3; and
  - ii. agrees to submit to Scottish Government information to support this Council's view that the three projects referred to in part 4 of this report should be included as national developments in NPF3.

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**Background Papers:**

National Planning Framework: Scottish Government (2004)

National Planning Framework 2: Scottish Government (2009)

Correspondence and Information Packs: Scottish Government (2012)