

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
8 DECEMBER 2000**

Revised National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 1): The Planning System

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the recent publication of the revised National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 1): The Planning System.

BACKGROUND

- 2 At the last Committee a paper was agreed on representations to the Scottish Executive on their proposed revisions to National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 1): The Planning System. A final version of NPPG 1 has now been published and this paper explores the main changes in relation to the Committee's previous comment. As before this Committee paper relates only to the impact on the strategic planning process and structure plans in particular.

PREVIOUS COMMENTS ON DRAFT NPPG 1

- 3 In general terms the main thrust of the Draft NPPG was welcomed as confirmation of the importance the Government attached to structure planning in the overall planning process. The main concern related to how the current system linked into the broad national spatial policy framework, particularly on the relationship to National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPGs). Whilst the final version both confirms and indeed extends the significance of the structure plan process to the overall planning process, there is still a lack of clarity on the links to the national policy level. Some topics have been expanded, however, by textual changes to individual sections to clarify linkage to national policy.

MAIN CHANGES IN REVISED NPPG 1

- 4 Whilst much of the NPPG remains as before, there have been a series of changes made as a result of consultation.

(a) The Planning System

The main sections on the purpose of the planning system have been expanded and clarified (See Appendix for full text). The primary objectives are defined as:

- to set the land use framework for promoting sustainable economic development;
- to encourage and support regeneration; and
(*N.B. taking out previous reference to social justice*)
- to maintain and enhance the quality of the natural heritage and the built environment.

Further additions to the text stress the importance of the planning system for the resolution of potential conflicts between the objectives, but should note that development should not prevent or inhibit development unless there are sound reasons for doing so. There is a considerable emphasis placed on sustainable development.

(b) The Planning System and the Wider Objectives of the Scottish Executive

The Committee will recall that whilst welcoming the call for the integration of planning into the broader policy agenda, there were two criticisms levelled at this section. Firstly the need for Government direction to implementing agencies outside local government to integrate priorities. Secondly, the difficulties posed by the Planning Acts in the delivery of cross-cutting plans. Whilst minor changes to the text re-stress the need for a partnership approach to the planning process, the Government's view remains this is best achieved at the local level.

Elsewhere changes reflect:

- repositioning the “sustainable development” section to give priority to its significance;
- emphasising the importance of the promotion of the use of previously developed land and minimising greenfield development;
- clarifying a broader context for conservation measures to include all historic and cultural assets, and encouraging the prudent use of natural resources;
- extending the “minimising greenfield development” principle in the section on economic competitiveness;

- including in the social justice section the need for the planning system to consider the diverse needs of local communities in development plan policies; and
- adding a section to recognise the importance of freight and goods distribution.

(c) Development Plans/Structure Plans

The final version of NPPG 1 re-confirms the commitment of the Scottish Ministers to structure plans. This reaffirmation also now extends to the importance of keeping plans up to date, and to an enhanced system of public involvement. This latter point is clearly as a response to the Human Rights Act now in force, which could significantly alter the process of consulting on a revised structure plan. Indeed a section has been added suggesting the planning system should regularly monitor the views of those affected by the service using surveys and focus groups.

COMMENT

- 5 The final version of National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 1): The Planning System re-affirms the Scottish Ministers commitment to the structure plan process and its implementation, monitoring and review. Sustainable development gains a pre-eminent significance in government planning policy. Integrated action that links the planning system into the broader policy agenda of economic competitiveness, social justice, environmental quality, design and integrated transport are required, delivered by local partnership working. There is clear evidence of the need to take the Human Rights Act into account in the planning process, though as yet Executive advice is not forthcoming.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 The Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

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