
**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
7 JUNE 2002**

Review of Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To seek the Committee's approval to prepare a review of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan for submission to the Scottish Ministers.

BACKGROUND

- 2 One of the key criticisms of the planning system is that it is slow to respond to changing circumstance and that the statutory development plan system is often out of date. In order to address these concerns in 1996 the Ayrshire Councils set up the joint structure plan team to ensure that a joint structure plan was prepared speedily and thus maintain a context for the promotion of local plans. A biennial monitoring process of the plan's policies was also set in train to ensure early warning of potential issues. Monitor 2002 is the second of such documents.
- 3 Government advice in National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 1) "The Planning System" is that in order to maintain an up-to-date planning process a structure plan should be reviewed every 5 years when policies "should either be reaffirmed or replaced", and this advice is continued in the Review of Strategic Planning. The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers in March 1999 and approved in January 2000 having taken some two years to complete. In order for a potential replacement plan to be in place by the 5 year period will require a submission by 2004, and with a two year lead in work should ideally commence as soon as possible.

THE NEED TO REVIEW THE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN

- 4 If there is no need to review any plan then clearly it is not appropriate to do so. In the last few months, therefore, in conjunction with Councils, and informally with a small number of external agencies, soundings have been taken on the material changes that have taken place that might warrant a review. Replacement of the plan would become necessary if the strategy has already been implemented, or when it no longer reflects economic and/or social trends or development control decisions, or where it fails to address major new land use issues.

- 5 In those discussions it has become apparent there is a pressing need to review the plan. The reasons for this can be identified as:

Strategy

- Monitor 2000 and 2002 show a worsening economic context and uncertain and worrying social trends;
- Census 2001, published this Autumn, is likely to provide the most accurate information on the state of Ayrshire for some time;
- Government advice is that a 20-year, rather than a 10-year view should be taken about development in a structure plan;
- There may well be previously unrecognised future infrastructure constraints in parts of Ayrshire;

Working

- The previous study on land for business and industry (see September 2001 Committee report on Business Location Strategy) indicated a need to identify a new generation of business locations;
- The basis on which site development funding is realised is being modified because of changes at Scottish Enterprise;
- Farm Diversification, Rural Affairs and Agriculture have taken on a greater significance than 5 years ago;

Living

- Because of changes to future housing land supply and household projections the figures contained in the plan are out of date;
- New national planning guidance is likely to recommend major changes to the preparation of strategic housing land assessments including the need to prepare urban capacity studies;
- Retail policy is under considerable threat from development adjacent to Ayrshire, and outside our control: does this require a rethinking of attitude towards retail development?

Environment

- Farm Diversification etc. could have an impact on more general policies in the countryside;
- Quality of life issues have gained in importance;

- Sand and gravel reserves are thought to be below the nationally recommended 10-year supply level;
- There will need to be new policies on flood management as a result of an increasing knowledge about climate change;
- Parts of the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy will need to be translated into structure plan policy;
- The context for renewable energy will need to be re-assessed in the light of current approvals and cumulative impact;

Transport

- Much of the transport section of the plan has been overtaken by events in the last three years.
- 6 Although these elements of strategic policy are significant, there are still large sections of the plan that would not require a review. This would seem to apply to a majority of the Environment section and to most of the policies requiring local plans to prepare a more detailed course of action. This has already been achieved, as has a rationalisation of development control/promotion throughout Ayrshire to provide common parameters. The main thrust of any future plan therefore would be to concentrate on a longer-term strategy for Ayrshire.

NEXT STEPS

- 7 With agreement in principle to review the joint structure plan, a detailed work programme will need to be worked out in consultation with Councils, and target dates and an agreed programme of consultation will also need to be arranged. In order to comply with a submission date of 2004, a Notice of Intention to prepare a review will need to be agreed by September 2002 and issued shortly thereafter. It is suggested the Ayrshire Development Plan Working Group - the Heads of Local Plans for each Council plus the Joint Structure Plan Manager - meet on a regular basis over the summer to detail the programme. A Committee Paper outlining these elements will be presented in September.

CONCLUSION

- 8 Since the preparation of the first Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan there have been substantial changes to economic and social trends and to Government advice on the future of long-term strategic planning. In order to ensure the development plan process remains up-to-date it is important the joint structure plan is reviewed for completion by January 2005. As not all aspects of the plan are likely to need reviewed, any new plan is likely to concentrate on a 20-year strategy. This will allow Ayrshire to set the most appropriate context for its future development.

RECOMMENDATION

- 9 The Committee are asked to approve the preparation of a review of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan for completion in 2004.

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