

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 12 OCTOBER 2005**

### **SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY (SPP) 21: GREEN BELTS CONSULTATION DRAFT**

#### **Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To advise the Committee and obtain the Committee's views on a Scottish Executive publication entitled 'Scottish Planning Policy, SPP21, Green Belts: Consultation Draft.

## **2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 As part of its ongoing programme to update current national planning policy guidance, the Scottish Executive is intending to clarify the objectives of green belt policy and the way in which it should be used and enforced. The Executive has consequently produced consultation draft Scottish Planning Policy 21 on the subject. When approved, the policy will replace Scottish Office Circular 24/1985: Development in the Countryside and Green Belts. Responses on the consultation document are requested by 28 October 2005.

## **3 THE CONSULTATION DRAFT**

3.1 The main aims of the SPP are to strengthen and enhance the role of green belts and to increase their effectiveness, with the key objectives of green belt policy being:

- to direct planned growth to the most important locations and support regeneration;
- to protect and enhance the character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities; and
- to protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities, as part of the wider structure of green space.

3.2 The consultation document defines the role and function of green belts and gives advice establishing and reviewing green belts in development plan terms. In so far as development planning is concerned, the SPP stipulates that

- green belts should have a timeframe of at least 20 years;
- green belt boundaries should be robust and clearly identifiable on the ground;
- any release of green belt land for development should be considered through review of the local plan rather than through individual planning applications;

- development plans should define the uses that are appropriate in green belts including agricultural uses (including the reuse of historic agricultural buildings in keeping with their surroundings), woodland and forestry (including community woodlands), horticulture (including market gardening) and recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting; and
- development plans should highlight any exceptional situations where non conforming uses may be considered appropriate within green belts.

3.3 With regard to development management and promotion, the SPP stipulates that

- any development that is permitted must be of suitable scale and form for the particular location concerned and that many uses will only be appropriate when the intensity is low and any built elements are ancillary to the main use, small scale and of high quality design;
- existing settlements, major business and industrial operations, major educational and research uses and airports should be explicitly excluded from green belt designation to allow for growth and change;
- non conforming uses may exceptionally be considered appropriate in green belts in cases of national priority or to meet an established need, but only if no other suitable site is available;
- applications for development in the green belt that do not conform to the development plan shall be subject to standard notification procedures.

## **4 COMMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL**

4.1 At the present time, no green belts have been designated within East Ayrshire and, consequently, there are currently no implications for the Council in respect of the proposed SPP. However, should it ever be agreed that a green belt be designated around or adjacent to any East Ayrshire community, the SPP will be of direct relevance to the Council.

4.2 Much of the content of the draft SPP can be supported but only if green belts are strategically used as a tool to direct, in general terms, the location of future growth. It is considered that green belt designations should be used sparingly to protect valuable green spaces between settlements and to preserve their landscape setting and identity. They should not, except in very exceptional circumstances, encircle communities. Over use of the designation could encourage the identification of 'white' or undesignated land in the countryside between, for example, local plan housing land allocations and the inner edge of the green belt. Such a situation, rather than directing development to appropriate locations, could hinder the proper planning of an area. For example, the landbanking of white land by developers could prevent windfall brownfield regeneration opportunities being realised or the phased release of allocated land within local plans being achieved. This could well prejudice the achievement of successful sustainable development throughout the area.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications for the Council as a direct result of the consultation exercise.

## **6 LEGAL / AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal / authority implications for the Council as a direct result of the consultation exercise.

## **7 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications for the Council as a direct result of the consultation exercise.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**8.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees:**

- (i) to note the contents of this report; and**
- (ii) to authorise the Executive Director of Development and Property Services to submit a copy of this report to the Scottish Executive as representing the views of the Committee on the draft SPP.**

**James Lavery**  
**Executive Director of Development and Property Services**

29 September 2005 (JL/SA)  
FV-AN

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

#### **1. Scottish Planning Policy SPP21: Green Belts: Consultation Draft**

For further information on the contents of this report contact Karl Doroszenko, Policy and Projects Manager or John Lilley, Principal Planning Officer on 01563 576751 or 01563 576754 respectively.

***Implementation Officer: Alan Neish***