

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 12 OCTOBER 2005

SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY (SPP) 8: TOWN CENTRES 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, SPP8, Town Centres: 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 town centre policy and the key uses which contribute to their economic growth and enhancement. The Executive has consequently produced consultation draft Scottish Planning Policy 8 on town centres and retailing. When approved, the policy will replace National Planning Policy Guideline 8, Town Centres and Retailing. Responses on the consultation document are requested by 11 November 2005.

3 THE CONSULTATION DRAFT

3.1 The main aims of the SPP as drafted are to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, thus strengthening their position as the focus for communities by directing development and regeneration to them. The key policy objectives for town centres are to:

- promote competitive places and encourage regeneration, in order to create town centres that are attractive to investors and suited to the generation of new employment opportunities;
- create a climate that enables all sectors of the community to have access to a range of shopping, leisure and other services and for deficiencies in provision to be remedied;
- improve the physical quality of our town centre environments;
- support development in existing accessible locations or in locations where accessibility can be improved.

3.2 The consultation document defines the role and function of town centres, giving advice for defining, identifying and reviewing them in terms of development plans and other strategies. The SPP stipulates that in order to deliver the key policy objectives stakeholders should focus on the following policy principles:

- identify and promote town centres as part of a network of centres – such a network could include a hierarchy of town and shopping centres, with the definitions for each contained in the SPP;
- focus development in existing town centres by using a sequential approach to development, which requires that locational preference should be as follows: first, town centre sites; then where no suitable town centre sites are available, edge-of-centre, and where neither town centre nor edge-of-centre are available then out-of-centre sites in locations that are, or can be made, easily accessible by a choice of modes of transport;
- maintain, improve and develop town centres – through various actions such as town centre strategies or public realm works;
- promote an attractive and safe environment – the SPP attaches priority to securing high design standards in new development, including the promotion of mixed-use, higher density developments in town centres;
- ensure that centres are accessible to all sectors of the community by a range of modes of transport; and
- regularly monitor and review town centre policies – town centre health checks should be carried out regularly and provides examples of vitality and viability indicators.

3.3 With regard to assessing proposed developments, the SPP stipulates that proposals should be rigorously assessed against the development plan and the policies set out in the SPP. In summary, the assessment will need to ensure that:

- the proposal is of high design quality and at an appropriate scale for its location;
- the location is, or can, be made conveniently and safely accessible to all sectors of the community by a choice of modes of transport.

3.4 In addition, where the proposal is not consistent with the development plan, the assessment should ensure that:

- a sequential approach to site selection is used;
- there is no unacceptable impact on the vitality and viability of the network of centres identified in the development plan;
- the proposal helps to meet any qualitative and quantitative deficiencies identified in the development plan; and
- the proposal does not conflict with other significant objectives of the development plan or community plan strategies.

3.5 The SPP also requires that an impact analysis should be undertaken in support of retail and leisure applications of over 2,500 sq m gross floorspace which are at an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location and which are not in accordance with the development plan.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

4.1 The underlying policy approach to, and support for, town centres stipulated within the SPP remains largely unaltered from NPPG8. However, while the previous

policy document emphasised the value of retail development within town centres, the SPP expressly acknowledges the importance of a broader range of land uses rather than a specific focus on retailing. The SPP highlights the importance of establishing a mix of uses and activities in town centres, with housing forming an important element of the mix.

4.2 The commitment to the sequential approach, and the onus on developers to demonstrate that more central options have been thoroughly assessed when submitting proposals for out-of-centre or edge-of-centre developments, is also welcomed as a key policy consideration for the enhancement and growth of town centres.

4.3 One area of relevance to East Ayrshire that is not addressed in the SPP, as drafted, is that of cumulative impact from new retail developments within a network of centres outwith a Local Authority boundary but within range of another town centre that is part of an established hierarchy of centres and within the Local Authority boundary. For example, built and recently approved retail developments at Braehead, East Kilbride and Pollok (all within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan hierarchy of retail centres) individually have or will have relatively small-scale adverse impacts on Kilmarnock. However taken cumulatively and in combination they significantly impact the town centre. It is considered that the SPP should provide policy direction in these matters so that combined and cumulative impacts can be fully considered.

4.4 Overall, the aims and objectives in relation to town centre growth and enhancement are clear and concise in emphasising support for town centres. It is considered that the SPP will be of valuable assistance in, and of direct relevance to, the assessment of development proposals related to identified town centre uses, strategies currently being undertaken by the Council in relation to Kilmarnock and Cumnock town centres and the formation of an appropriate planning policy framework regarding all town centres within the Council 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 (MG/SA)
FV-AN

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Scottish Planning Policy SPP8: Town Centres: Consultation Draft**
- 2. Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy: Consultation Draft**

For further information on the contents of this report contact Karl Doroszenko, Policy and Projects Manager or Mark Greaves, Planning Officer on 01563 576751 or 01563 576758 respectively.

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish