

To: PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: EDINBURGH AND THE LOTHIANS STRUCTURE PLAN 2001. DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 20 March 2002	Ref: PL/FGMCN/31/07	

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report is to inform Members of our invitation to comment on the Draft Edinburgh and The Lothians Structure Plan 2001 produced jointly by the four Lothian planning authorities of East Lothian Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council.

**2. Sustainability Implications**

2.1 There are no adverse sustainability implications associated with this Draft Plan; indeed the implementation of the Plan will enhance sustainable development within the Plan area and complement the approach taken in the adjacent Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan area.

**3. Background**

3.1 In 2000 the Edinburgh and The Lothians Joint Structure Plan provided the Council with a Major Issues Report seeking our comments on a number of options for the long term planning of the Edinburgh city region. The Council responded by providing in summary the following points:

- It was noted that there was projected to be intense continued development pressures in the Edinburgh area and that this involved an increasing demand for housing land. The possible need to “export” excess development demand beyond the Lothian area was encouraged as a means of regenerating and reducing the population loss of the declining towns and villages bordering on West Lothian.
- Given the relative scale of development pressures focused on Edinburgh the Council advocated a better balance of development opportunities be sought throughout Central Scotland area and that there was capacity in North Lanarkshire in terms of infrastructure and labour force to assist in the absorption of this development pressure.
- Other cross boundary issues were mentioned; Improved transport links both the M8 and rail links; Concerns about open cast mining priorities and the definitions of preferred areas for extraction and concerns about major out of centre retail proposals which have a regional catchment.

3.2 The Draft Structure Plan is to provide the strategic planning framework to guide public and private investment up to 2015 and covers the key topics of housing, economic development, transport, environment and retail. When approved it will replace the Lothian Structure Plan 1994. Comments are being sought on the layout and policy content by 29 March 2002.

**4. Draft Edinburgh and The Lothians Structure Plan 2001**

- 4.1 The document layout consists of only 40 pages in an easy read format and targets the following topics- The development strategy aims, settlement structure, housing (10 policies), economic development (6 policies), transport (6 policies), retailing and town centres (4 policies), environment (12 policies) and implementation.
- 4.2 The four key aims of the development strategy are welcomed:
- To maintain and enhance economic competitiveness
  - To promote a more just society
  - To protect and enhance the natural and built environment
  - To integrate land use and transport
- 4.3 Settlement Structure
- 4.3.1 It is noted that within the proposed settlement structure new development will focus on seven core development areas. One of these core areas and perhaps the largest in area is the Central West Lothian which in part abuts the boundary of North Lanarkshire. The Draft Plan states that there is considerable potential for further economic and residential potential in central West Lothian provided that major infrastructure is secured. “ If transport objectives are to be achieved and congestion avoided, significant investment in transport links to the east, west and north is essential.” The Plan specifically mentions service improvements, upgrading and extension of the Bathgate rail line and Shotts rail line and service improvements to the express services to Lanarkshire and Glasgow. The Plan also states that service standards for essential business traffic on the M8 must be maintained. Clearly it is essential that the proposed growth in housing and business in West Lothian is accompanied by significant transport infrastructure and this aim can be supported from a North Lanarkshire point of view.
- 4.3.2 It is disappointing to note that while the Draft Plan flags up the possibility of new settlements within the core development areas the decision has been left to be taken by the individual Councils in preparing their local plans. It would be useful if the Draft Plan provided more strategic advice on this issue.
- 4.4 Housing
- 4.4.1 In terms of housing it is noted that of the 18,200 new housing allocations within the Plan area, 7,000 of this total (just under half) is to be provided in the Central West Lothian core area. The Council welcomes this development and reiterates the request in the Draft Issues response, to joint working and to make provision in North Lanarkshire for an element of this mobile demand originating in Edinburgh and the Lothians. This may require significant investment in new public transport facilities and joint working on this matter between SESTRAN and WESTRAN would be welcomed.
- 4.5 Economic Development
- 4.5.1 Within economic development paragraph 4.10 it is welcomed as a positive statement that where industrial land remains dormant for a substantial period of time it should be redesignated through local plans as Green Belt.
- 4.6 Transport
- 4.6.1 In terms of transport table 5.1 outlines the key transport investment proposals. Particularly welcomed are the proposals to enhance the Shotts Railway Line including the express service Edinburgh – Livingston – Glasgow, more frequent local services and an East Calder A71 parkway station. Similarly the Bathgate line upgrading with the re-opening to Airdrie is welcomed as is the principle of the Rapid M8 Transit proposals.
- 4.7 Environment
- 4.7.1 In terms of the environment and in particular ENV 10 Opencast Coal – Broad Areas of Search, it is noted that in the West Lothian area - west and south west of Blackridge and the area around Fauldhouse along the boundary with North Lanarkshire are mentioned as acceptable areas for working coal by opencast methods. The Draft Structure Plan states that the local plans will define these broad areas in more detail and set out the criteria to be addressed when assessing individual

proposals. This approach is compatible with the approach taken by the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan as it relates to this area. However, given the mineral planning application history in the area it is recommended to the Lothian Councils that they take cognisance of these decisions when the relevant local plans consider defining these areas in detail. North Lanarkshire Council would wish to reserve its position in relation to any future proposals for opencast coal extraction until the extent, scale and Location of the proposal is known.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to authorise the Director of Planning and Environment to provide comment on the Draft Edinburgh and The Lothians Structure Plan 2001 in the terms outlined in this report and within the consultation period.



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