ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL **POLICY AND RESOURCES**

DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH **15 FEBRUARY 2024**

OBAN AND HELENSBURGH STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan and LDP2 aim to reverse population decline and promote economically driven growth across Argyll and Bute. There are many strengths and opportunities throughout Argyll and Bute, but the two areas that can potentially deliver and sustain growth of significant size, particularly in terms of population are Oban and its hinterland, and Helensburgh and Lomond. Delivering this would in turn help to support and facilitate the further potential growth opportunities in the wider Area.

1.2 Oban is a Main Town within the Tobermory to Dalmally Growth Corridor having a range of facilities, services and shops that support a strong hinterland including a number of Key Rural Settlements. However, it is becoming increasingly physically constrained and nearing its topographical capacity for growth

1.3 Helensburgh and Lomond enjoys proximity and connectivity with the central belt and the development of HMNB Clyde is increasing the naval staff by 1700 and their families, and brings further associated civilian population. However growth of the area is restricted by the Green Belt designation which was designed to contain the settlements.

1.4 To achieve strategic growth within both these areas; LDP2 identifies commitments to produce Strategic Development Frameworks which will plan for future development over a 20-40 year time period. Production of these is a complex task, but is essential to delivering planned infrastructure investment, land release, and the resultant population growth. It will also be a key part of addressing the housing emergency.

1.5 The report outlines in brief some of the work that would be involved in producing the Frameworks and why resources are required to drive forward these tasks at pace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members of the Policy and Resources Committee:-

i. Note the contents of the paper and agree to the resource request of £450,000 from the Council's Priorities Budget to assist in driving forward the Strategic Development Frameworks.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL **POLICY AND RESOURCES**

DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH **15 FEBRUARY 2024**

OBAN AND HELENSBURGH STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Two areas within Argyll and Bute that can potentially deliver and sustain growth of any significant size, particularly in terms of population are Oban and its hinterland, and Helensburgh and Lomond. Delivering this would in turn help to support and facilitate the further potential growth opportunities in the wider Area. LDP2 identifies commitments to produce Strategic Development Frameworks for both these areas.

2.2 The report outlines in brief some of the work that would be involved in producing the Frameworks and why resources are required to drive forward these tasks at pace.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that members of the Policy and Resources Committee:-

i. Note the contents of the paper and agree to the resource request of £450,000 from the Council's Priorities Budget to assist in driving forward the Strategic Development Frameworks.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The overall objective of the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan is that Argyll and Bute's economic success is built on a growing population. LDP2 sets out a spatial strategy which supports this objective and seeks to reverse population decline and promote economically driven growth across Argyll and Bute.

4.2 There are many strengths and opportunities throughout Argyll and Bute, but the two areas that can potentially deliver and sustain growth of any significant size, particularly in terms of population are Oban and its hinterland, and Helensburgh and Lomond. Delivering this would in turn help to support and facilitate the further potential growth opportunities in the wider Area.

Oban

4.3 Local Development Plan 2 identifies the position of Oban as a Main Town within the Tobermory to Dalmally Growth Corridor highlighting its range of facilities, services and shops that support a strong hinterland including a number of Key Rural Settlements. However, it also sets out that the town is becoming increasingly physically constrained and nearing its topographical capacity for growth. LDP2 identifies that growth could potentially be achieved through rationalisation and restructuring within the town as well as within the wider Growth Corridor through significant investment in road infrastructure and a partnership approach across a range of stakeholders.

4.4 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) recognises the role of the Growth Corridor in identifying areas for future growth and identifies the role Oban plays in providing lifeline links to the islands as well as services to its wider hinterlands. It recognises its position as a developing university town with the European Marine Science Park providing local economic and educational opportunities. Also recognised are opportunities for new infrastructure and repurposing of land to help shift industrial activity towards supporting the off shore renewable sector as well as the connectivity role played by the airport and opportunities there for investment in compliance operations and future drone technology.

Helensburgh

4.5 Local Development Plan 2 identifies Helensburgh and Lomond as a growth area in the spatial strategy. It identifies the development of HMNB Clyde as the UK's single submarine base and resultant increase of around 1700 naval staff and their families as well as the associated opportunities in civilian construction projects and supply chain, servicing and support businesses. LDP2 also identifies the proximity and connectivity of the area to Glasgow and the central belt coupled with its high quality environment as an attractive location for commuters and growth in tourism.

4.6 However, it also recognises that opportunities for sustainable growth are potentially limited by the green belt which was established to contain the expansion of settlements and retain their landscape setting, and that it is anticipated that the green belt will come under pressure in the future as the population and employment opportunities increase.

4.7 LDP2 sets out that whilst an immediate review of the green belt is not required, due to there being sufficient development identified within the plan, there is a need to consider how Helensburgh and Lomond can develop over a 20-40 year period in order to plan for investment and infrastructure considered alongside the need to review the green belt.

Strategic Development Frameworks

4.8 To achieve strategic growth within both these areas; LDP2 identifies commitments to produce strategic development frameworks for each as below:

LDP2 Proposal A – Oban Strategic Development Framework (OSDF)
"*The Council will take forward a Strategic Development Framework for the wider Oban area working with stakeholders including communities, key agencies, infrastructure providers, landowners, the Scottish Government, housing associations and the private sector to deliver a co-ordinated approach to: the rationalisation of existing land uses, improved traffic management and parking (including potential for park and ride), identification of new development opportunities for housing and economic uses, development of the Strategic Transport Hub, investigation of development potential and improvements to network resilience associated with the strategic road and rail network, including the possibility of the Oban Development Road and the consented Dunbeg Half-Way Roundabout, in order to realise the full potential of this strategically important area.*"

LDP2 Proposal B – Helensburgh Strategic Development Framework (HSDF)
"Argyll and Bute Council propose to carry out a review of the Helensburgh and Lomond Green Belt boundaries through a Strategic Development Framework, to provide a framework for the provision of infrastructure and future development, whilst recognising and safeguarding the key environmental features of the Green Belt, the landscape setting of settlements forming part of the Cardross – Helensburgh – Garelochhead corridor, and the contribution which the green network around these communities can make to providing for sustainable development."

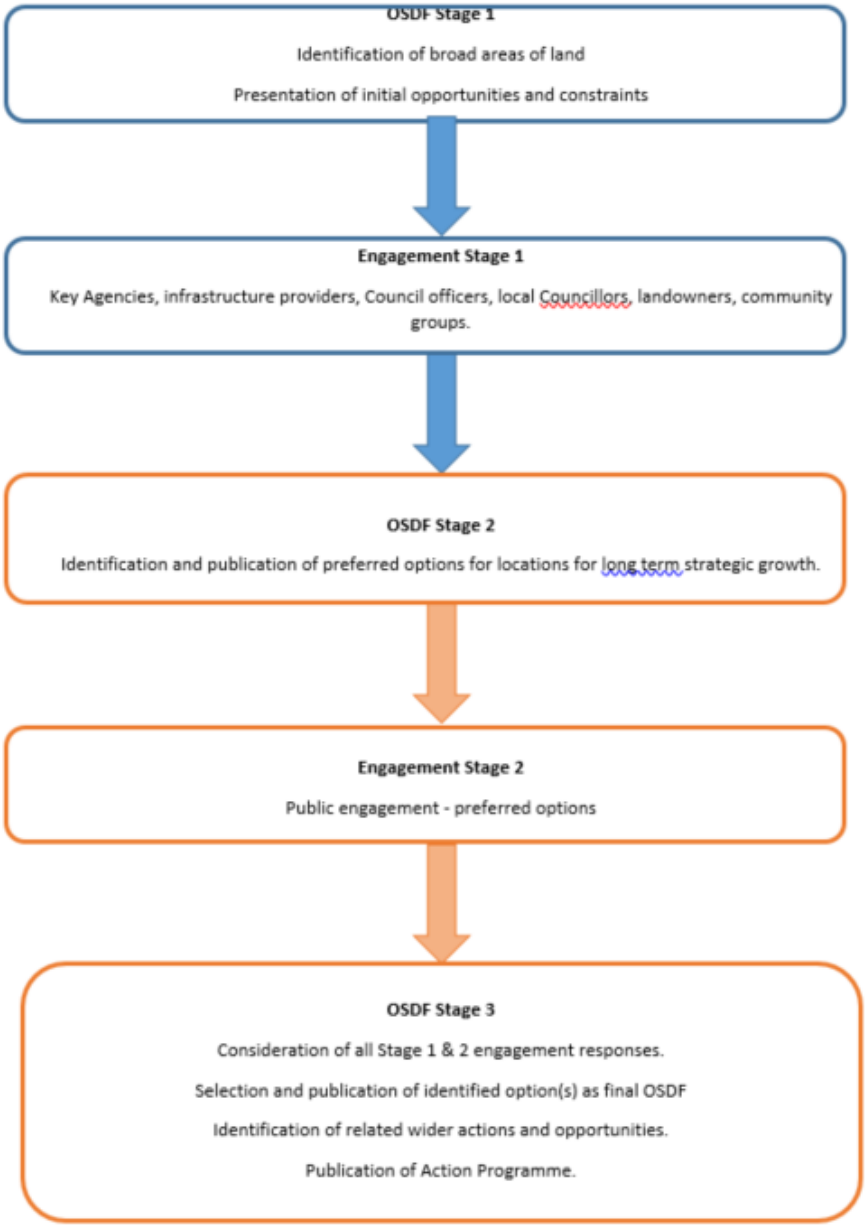
4.9 This 'Strategic Development Framework' approach is recognised as an appropriate way to promote long term growth by the LDP2 Scottish Government Reporters and NPF4 now also reflects this approach supporting planned population growth in a growth corridor from Tobermory to Oban and on to Dalmally and a general infrastructure first approach.

4.10 The two Strategic Development Frameworks will be crucial bedrocks for LDP3, setting out a framework that will plan to deliver growth over a 20 – 40 year period, and will be required to feed in to the Evidence Report which will be part of the new style process for LDP production.

4.11 Although long term, both frameworks are key to addressing the housing emergency, as they are they can lead to planned housing development at scale. Both areas are the places of greatest housing demand, and there are likely to be pressures on the supply of housing land within the medium term.

4.12 Draft and preliminary scoping work has already started and will be discussed with Members at a workshop during the spring of this year. Production of the Strategic Development Frameworks is a complex tax, and will predominantly need to adhere to a land use planning structure, supported by necessary transport and landscape assessment, with an iterative process of site identification, consultation, refinement of proposals and solutions, and further identification. The diagram below illustrates a draft layout of the process

although this will be finalised as more detailed project scoping and planning is completed. Ultimately a settled proposal will need further consultation, support of the Council, and assessment by Scottish Government, before it can be incorporated into the next LDP3. In addition delivery will need to be considered and the Strategic Development Frameworks should be accompanied by an action programme for delivery which might include: land acquisition, further ground investigation, funding identification, more detailed masterplanning, etc...



4.13 In terms of timescale, there is an immediate priority to develop this work even though the outcomes identified will be delivered in the medium term. Ultimately, for the OSDF and HSDF to have maximum influence and leverage on investment, it will be necessary for it to be incorporated into the next LDP which will be LDP3. The aim would be to adopt LDP3 within five years. Adequate resourcing of the OSDF and HSDF will be of significant importance

to delivering within this timescale. Subject to more detailed project scoping and planning, it is estimated that if fully funded with consultancy support it would be possible to produce the OSDF and HSDF in a 2-3 year time frame.

4.14 It is anticipated that the planning policy team will lead the work but with support from other officers within the Council who are able to input specialist expertise. This is likely to include, Property Services, Legal, Roads, Education and Economic Development. In addition a wide range of specialist consultancy work will be required to investigate development feasibility and provide a suitable evidence base to incorporate the Strategic Development Framework within the Council's LDP3, and potentially other partners strategic plans. Ultimately they will need to justify the required infrastructure and development investment. Likely examples of consultancy will include: STAG transport assessment, landscape assessment, flooding studies, peat assessment, environmental, wildlife and habitat surveys, land ownership investigation and masterplanning.

4.15 The work is an existing Council commitment within LDP2, is considered a key element of addressing the Council Housing Emergency, and aligns very well with many of the Council's own, and public and private partners strategic aims.

4.16 It is estimated that in order to deliver the Strategic Development Frameworks in a 2-3 year timescale, £250,000 is required to support consultancy for the OSDF and £200,000 for the HSDF. It is proposed that this be allocated from the Council's Priorities Budget. This is a high level estimate at this stage.

Other Areas

4.17 It is important to note that whilst this report focuses on Oban and Helensburgh, LDP2 provides a comprehensive growth and development strategy for the whole of Argyll and Bute. The plan seeks to deliver a more flexible approach to development within the Countryside where appropriate. Additional but smaller Strategic Development Frameworks are identified for Bowmore and Tobermory. Strategic Masterplan Areas are identified in Inveraray, Lochgilphead, Tobermory and Port Ellen. Areas for Action promoting regeneration include Rothesay, Dunoon, Port Bannatyne and Tarbert. Delivering growth in the areas of Oban and Helensburgh will be a key catalyst to generate and support growth in the wider areas of Argyll and Bute.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 LDP2 identifies Oban and Helensburgh as the centre of two areas with greatest potential to deliver growth at a strategic scale which will help to reverse population decline. To deliver this LDP2 identifies the need to produce Strategic Development Frameworks for both areas. These Frameworks will underpin the identification and release of land and infrastructure, and will form the bedrock of LDP3. Moreover they will be key elements to addressing the recently identified Housing emergency in the medium term. Production of these Frameworks is a

priority for the Council, and funding to resource this is being requested at the Policy and Resources Committee.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – None as a result of this paper, but ultimately the Strategic Development Frameworks would be adopted in to LDP3 which would become the planning policy of the Council, and will be a fundamental part of addressing the housing emergency and delivering economic and population growth.

6.2 Financial – Allocation of £450,000 from the Council's Priorities Budget to procure consultancy support required to deliver two Strategic Development Frameworks.

6.3 Legal – None as a result of this paper.

6.4 HR - None

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None at this stage but full assessments will be carried out as part of the process.

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None at this stage but full assessments will be carried out as part of the process.

6.5.3 Islands - None

6.6 Climate Change – Identifying planned long term development land within a strategic framework assists the location of development in the most sustainable locations and will reduce its impact on the environment. Colocation of facilities will assist in minimising travel demand.

6.7 Risk – Not resourcing this work risks an inability to adequately justify the necessary land releases to deliver investment and growth.

6.8 Customer Service – None.

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

Councillor Kieron Green, Policy Lead for Planning and Regulatory Services

17th January 2024

For further information contact:

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth

fergus.murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Matt Mulderrig, Development Policy and Housing Manager

matt.mulderrig@argyll-bute.gov.uk