

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) – MAIN ISSUES REPORT (MIR)**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval for the Main Issues Report (MIR) and its associated appendixes, the first formal stage of the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 When Members approve the above documents subject to any changes, the Council's Executive Committee will be asked to formally approve them and to allow the public consultation process to begin.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- a) **approve the Main Issues Report (MIR)(Appendix A of this report) with any amendments they see fit as a basis for public consultation and delegate the Development Policy Manager to submit the Main Issues Report to the Council's Executive for final approval and then the Scottish Ministers;**
- b) **delegate to the Development Policy Manager to undertake the Main Issues Report (MIR) public consultation in line with the statutory requirements and the Participation Statement as set out in the latest version of the Development Plan Scheme (DPS):**

**3. SUMMARY**

- 3.1 The local Development Plan (LDP) is a vital strategic document that sets out Argyll and Bute Council's land use planning policy for the whole of Argyll and Bute excluding the area covered by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park that has its own land use plan. The timescale of the LDP is over a 20 year period although greater detail is provided for the first 10 years and will be subject to a statutory comprehensive review every 5 years. The LDP when finally approved by the Council, following due consideration by the Scottish Ministers, will replace the current

Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan). The first formal stage of this process is the production of the Main Issues Report (MIR) that identifies a preferred vision and puts forward a series of possible policy options together with asking a series of relevant questions linked to identified main issues that concern the Council's future planning policy that require a response from all interested parties.

- 3.2 The content of the LDP needs to address a series of challenges that have been identified through early consultation with key stakeholders and conforms to international and national legislation in relation to land use planning, the environment and climate change. The LDP also needs to take account of past planning policy performance and all other local policies expressed through important documents such as the Council's Single Outcome Agreement and renewed Corporate Plan.
- 3.3 Members are no doubt aware that the LDP is being prepared in very difficult circumstances given the current adverse economic situation, the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change, the unprecedented pressure on public finances and the lack of available private capital to bring forward high quality development and much needed economic growth. These challenges and others identified in the MIR's Challenge Wheel require the LDP to provide, as far as possible, sufficient certainty for our communities to take ownership of the plan and potential developers to invest in Argyll and Bute with a degree of confidence.
- 3.4 The Main Issues Report (MIR) consequently identifies a preferred headline vision for Argyll and Bute, a series of key objectives to support that vision and five policy themes that are considered necessary to achieve the identified vision and aims. The MIR goes on to identify major areas of potential spatial change that is considered most appropriate to address these challenges together with possible alternative policy directions that offer a different way forward than what we already do. A future spatial strategy, with alternatives, for each of the Council's four Administrative Areas Main Towns and Key Settlements is also included which have been shaped by the MIR's preferred settlement strategy.

#### **4. INTRODUCTION**

- 4.1 The MIR is the first formal stage of producing the Local Development Plan (LDP) that will eventually replace the current Development Plan. The purpose of the MIR is to set out spatial strategy options with a preferred settlement strategy and a proposed vision to stimulate discussion with all key stakeholders. The MIR considers the challenges and major changes that will shape the next 20 years of our lives in terms of land use planning. Options for growth, including where, when and at what scale are suggested and opinions are sought on their suitability or otherwise. All the information gathered with inform the LDP finalised draft that is intended to be published in January 2012 for a twelve week period of public consultation.

- 4.2 The MIR takes account of the Council's principle strategic documents as represented by the Single Outcome Agreement, the Community Plan and the renewed Corporate Plan. In addition, national and regional plans and strategies including the National Planning Framework 2, the National Economic Strategy, the relevant Regional Transport Strategies, and the Climate Change Act 2009. The MIR is also influenced by other important local policy documents such as EDAP (Economic Development Action Plan), existing and evolving supplementary guidance together with past Development Plan performance as expressed through the associated Monitoring Statement that will accompany the MIR prior to approval by the Executive. The content of the MIR has also been influenced through early engagement with key stakeholders in the first six months of 2010 and their collective responses.

## **5. THE MAIN ISSUES REPORT – A DISCUSSION**

- 5.1 The Main Issues Report (MIR) and its associated Appendixes (attached as Appendix A) sets out the issues of major policy change and preferred spatial/settlement strategy options to provide a robust planning policy framework over the period to 2013-2033. The MIR briefly sets out the context it has been prepared in, the challenges we have to address and the headline strategic vision we are trying to achieve together with suggested objectives and proposed variations to established planning policy.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the MIR concentrates on issues that have significantly changed or emerged since the adoption of the previous Development Plan and presents options about how these issues could be dealt with and asks for views from all interested parties. These views, along with other evidence, will contribute towards producing the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP) which will be published in January 2012 and subject to a further 12 weeks of public consultation. After submission to Scottish Government Ministers in September 2012 the proposed plan will be examined and later approved as the Local Development Plan (LDP) subject to any changes determined by the Reporter and subsequently accepted by the Council.

### **Creating a Vision**

- 5.3 A Government requirement of a standalone Local Development Plan is to contain a strategic vision that helps inform the plan's main objectives, the key themes that flow from them, our settlement strategy and any other Land use planning issue we need to address. The MIR proposes to set out in the LDP a vision that fits with our new Council Corporate Plan objectives and the statutory requirement under the new Climate Change Act to address the impacts of climate change.

**“The overall vision for Argyll and Bute is one of an economically successful, outward looking and highly adaptable area, which enjoys an outstanding natural and historic environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their full potential and essential needs locally, as far as practicable, without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.”**

5.4 This headline vision is expanded upon in the Monitoring Statement which informs the key objectives and central themes of the LDP. The vision reflects the Council’s corporate documents and has also been influenced by comments received during earlier consultations. The MIR asks if you support this vision and main objectives of the proposed LDP. The following objectives flowing from this vision provide a context for the key themes, the land use policies they contain and the issues of major change we need to address. These key objectives have been identified as:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) to listen to our customers, value their opinion and explain our decisions at all times, in an open and transparent manner;</li><li>b) to make Argyll and Bute’s main towns and key settlements increasingly attractive places where people want to live, work and invest;</li><li>c) to secure the economic and social regeneration of our smaller rural communities;</li><li>d) to support the continued diversification and sustainable growth of Argyll and Bute’s economy with a particular focus on our sustainable economic assets in terms of renewables, fishing, tourism, high quality food and drink and forestry;</li><li>e) to ensure the outstanding quality of the natural, historic and cultural environment is protected, maintained, conserved and enhanced ;</li><li>f) to meet our future housing needs, including affordable, throughout Argyll and Bute</li><li>g) to continue to improve Argyll and Bute’s connectivity, transport infrastructure and associated networks;</li><li>h) to optimise the use of our existing scarce resources, including our existing infrastructure, vacant and derelict land and reduce consumption;</li><li>i) to address the impacts of climate change in everything we do and reduce our carbon footprint:</li></ul> |
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5.5 There are numerous inter-related issues that will affect Argyll and Bute which are broken down into a number of key themes “Protecting, Conserving and Enhancing our Outstanding Environment Together”, “Strengthening our Communities”, “Creating a Sustainable and Growing Economy Together”, “Maximising our Resources and Reducing Consumption Together” and “Improving our Connectivity and our Infrastructure Together”. Embedded through them all is the need to address the issue of climate change and the challenge of rising fuel costs and peak oil.

## **Protecting, Conserving and Enhancing our Outstanding Environment Together**

- 5.6 Argyll and Bute has an outstanding natural and historic environment with internationally important biodiversity, land, freshwater and seascapes combined with a rich cultural heritage that can be traced back over 5,000 years in the buildings and structures that remain. The main issues we face here are the need to reduce our impacts on the natural environment, enhance our biodiversity, embrace and use our ecosystem services so that they can contribute to our sustainable development and improve the quality of place in our main towns, villages and rural communities, particularly our town centres. These actions will help us to mitigate and adapt to climate change whilst at the same time look to increase local peoples' overall quality of life.

## **Strengthening our Communities Together**

- 5.7 With our population either static or falling in many parts of Argyll and Bute our communities are beginning to lose the essential rural services that our modern way of life demands. People are forming smaller households, living longer lives and the area is increasingly popular for people to retire to, which brings its own set of opportunities and challenges. We are failing to meet all of our housing needs in the places people want to live and there is an urgent need to find practical and affordable solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and the consequences of peak oil. The MIR asks how best we can address these challenges within the new LDP looking at how we best retain our services, deliver new housing opportunities through the planning process, provide for our ageing population and attract more economically active families to live and work here in a sustainable manner.

## **Creating a Sustainable and Growing Economy Together**

- 5.8 Our economy is highly dependent on our abundant natural resources such as trees, wind, water, tides, landscapes, our ecosystems and soils. We have tremendous potential to develop our main growth industries of tourism, forestry and the production of renewable energy to take greater advantage of these resources in a way that does not compromise what we take for granted, our outstanding environment. There is also a need to generate further economic activity by allowing our economy to diversify further with new business opportunities and adding value to our existing business sector. The MIR will look at how best to identify strategically important business sites and support the sustainable growth of our rural industries, allowing more people to live and work in the same community, reducing the need to commute long distances to find employment.

## **Maximising our Resources and Reducing Consumption Together**

- 5.9 Consuming the Earth's resources at our current rate is unsustainable and increasingly unaffordable. This situation is further compounded by the affects of climate change which is the single most important issue facing mankind. We need therefore to maximise the use of our existing resources by making the best use of existing buildings, previously developed land protecting carbon sinks i.e. peat lands and improving the efficiency of how we use energy in new developments through better siting and embracing new technologies. Reducing our carbon footprint will also play a key role in Argyll and Bute together with how we deal with our waste. Consequently the MIR will examine the possibility of requiring the LDP to ask for higher efficiency standards in new development, examine the best place to site renewable energy developments, explore where we can achieve best value in terms of providing much needed new infrastructure and how to best protect our scarce resources.

## **Improving our Connectivity and our Infrastructure Together**

- 5.10 Transport and the infrastructure it relies on, such as our roads, perform a vital role in our lives. It affects everything we do – getting to work, accessing resources and essential services, shopping, going on holiday, visiting family and friends, or just exploring. Transport is therefore a key driver of a modern rural economy and fundamental to the vitality of our towns and rural communities. It is increasingly expensive however and in rural areas is a major contributor to carbon emissions and greenhouse gasses. We therefore need to locate new development and improve our transport infrastructure so that it is easier and more appealing to use public transport and other modes of personal and freight transport which minimise resource consumption. The MIR will look at how we can locate new developments in accessible areas and where they can best contribute to reducing the need to travel. New technologies will also have an increasingly important role here in the way we conduct our lives such as broadband and virtual services.
- 5.11 Our communities also rely on other forms of infrastructure such as electricity supply, broadband, water and waste water supplies. Early consultation has suggested that they are in need of investment and upgrading in many areas if new development is to be acceptable in certain locations. The MIR will examine how the LDP can make best use of our existing capacity and focus any improvements on where they are most needed in order to best satisfy the plan's main objectives.

## **Spatial Plans**

- 5.12 In addition to the above themes the MIR presents a series of site specific spatial plans for each of the Main Towns and Key Settlements together with any other major spatial proposal submitted through the initial consultation process. These plans represent the main areas of major

physical change during the life of the LDP and opinions are being sought on how they should develop in the short, medium and longer term.

## Settlement Strategy

- 5.13 The settlement strategy sets out where new development should and should not be located in order to achieve the vision and deal with the main issues. Given the challenges we face and the requirement to deliver sustainable development, this MIR considers two possible settlement strategies and asks for your opinion.

### Settlement Strategy A

The preferred Settlement Strategy can be broadly summarised as enabling all parts of Argyll and Bute to meet their own needs, in a mutually supportive *and sustainable* way. Protecting, conserving and enhancing our outstanding environmental assets and, where appropriate, making better economic use of them, together with the prudent use of our scarce resources.

In order to achieve sustainable communities, different policy responses are required for remote rural, rural and urban areas. However, as places have functional inter-relationships with each other, for example sharing housing markets or relying on each other to provide employment, recreational, or shopping opportunities, these different responses should be complementary to each other. The Key aspects of our preferred Settlement **Strategy A** are:-

- 1) **Regenerating our Main Towns and Key Settlements** – continue to concentrate medium and larger scale development in our existing main towns and key settlements to assist in their ongoing regeneration, helping to create economies of scale, making best use of existing key services, infrastructure and our finite resources, reducing travel to work and supporting established businesses.
- 2) **A Rural Renaissance** – supporting the development of our rural communities to achieve their economic and social potential whilst embracing the challenges of improving connectivity, protecting our landscape and settlement character, addressing the rising cost of fossil fuels and helping them adapt to the effects of climate change.

### Settlement Strategy B

The alternative Settlement Strategy would allow for a more dispersed approach to development by promoting medium and larger scale development in a wider variety of locations. For example, this could

involve allowing medium and large scale housing developments in the villages and some of the smaller settlements and allowing employment, shopping and recreational facilities to be developed wherever appropriate opportunities occur. Another example could be that larger scale employment and shopping facilities would not always be located in the identified Main Towns and Key Settlements. While this alternative approach could maximise economic development opportunities in locations that the previous plan did not support a more dispersed pattern of development would increase the need to travel, not make best use of our existing resources, including our established town centres and generate additional carbon emissions.

- 5.14 The MIR is supported with a range of documents (Sections 7-10 of the report) including a Appendixes A to D covering the assessment of sites; Supplementary Guidance; Review of development Plan Policies and a summary of the main issues/questions to enable easier engagement with the MIR .
- 5.15 Each chapter of the MIR identifies the key issues together with possible alternative policy approaches identified were it has been considered appropriate to do so. In addition to the issues there are also a series of questions posed in the document that seek all interested parties opinion on the appropriateness of our preferred policy approach to deal with emerging issues that have either been identified through our early consultation exercises or changes in legislation or policy. The MIR also contains spatial options in a simple traffic light system (with green for acceptance from 2013, amber or orange from 2023 and red being unacceptable) for our Main Towns and Key Settlements that show potential growth over a 20 year period. The comments received will influence the approach taken in drawing up the Local Development Plan which will again be subject to an extensive public consultation period.

## **6. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- 6.1 The Participation Statement for the MIR is presented in a separate report on the development Plan Scheme that will be presented to the Council's April Executive Committee together with the MIR report for final approval. The MIR is written in a plain English style that provides a series of options and set questions that are intended to stimulate discussion and allow interested parties to provide considered response on the main issues and highlighted questions. The information gathered through this public engagement exercise will help inform our future policy direction that will contained in the finalised draft of the LDP. The MIR will be made available on line and in paper form at a number of accessible locations throughout Argyll and Bute. A series of open invitation events will be held during the consultation period of 9 weeks to allow all interested parties to have face to face discussions with planning policy staff. Comments will also be welcome on all of the key documents that accompany the MIR. The events will be publicised through individual invitations, the Council's web site, press releases and the latest version of the LDP newsletter that



will be sent electronically to our database of interested parties. Paper copies of the newsletter will also be made available on request and at our area offices.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 The MIR and its appendices represents the first formal stage of preparing the new Local Development Plan (LDP) that will eventually replace the current Development Plan. This is an important document that helps shape the future direction of land use planning policy in Argyll and Bute over the next 20 years with the exception of the area covered by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The MIR puts forward a strategic vision and a series of proposed policy changes and spatial alternatives that are intended to address the various challenges we face and comply with all the relevant international, national and legislation together with national and local policy. Depending on the results of the public consultation the content of the MIR will directly influence the content of the Local Development Plan. Members are asked to approve the MIR to allow all interested parties to comment. The MIR will be extensively advertised and a series of open day events will also be held during the consultation process to allow policy planners to meet people face to face in an effort to explain the content of the MIR and answer any queries. The consultation period will run for 9 weeks from the end of April through to the beginning of July.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Argyll and Bute SEA Scoping Report (October 2010).
- 11.2 The Planning (Scotland) etc Act 2006.
- 11.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 11.4 The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & C.) Regulations 1994.
- 11.5 Argyll and Bute Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) (2010).
- 11.6 Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

PERSONNEL	None
FINANCIAL	None rising directly from the report
EQUALITY	Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared to accompany the Main Issues Report
LEGAL	None

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