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## Development Plans

### What is a Development Plan?

Every part of the country is covered by a Development Plan. Development Plans consist of two different statutory documents. These are:

- The Structure Plan, and
- The Local Plan.

The Development Plan gives an understanding of planning issues for your area.

The Development Plan contains your local planning authority's (normally your local council's) intentions for the development and use of land within your area. It addresses a wide range of issues, including housing, shopping, business, industry, transport, recreation and the natural heritage.

The Development Plan contains policies and proposals and provides the main basis for your local planning authority to assess applications for planning permission. Every local planning authority is required by law to prepare a Development Plan for its whole area (by virtue of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997).

Structure Plans should provide:

- Strategic land-use framework at the regional level
- Policy context for the Local Plans within their boundary
- Framework for investment
- Basis for decision-making
- Complete and consistent consideration of the environment
- A ten to fifteen year time span, reviewed after the first five years.
- Policies and proposals approved by the Scottish Ministers.

Local Plans are:

- Obviously more local - they usually cover a smaller area than Structure Plans
- Detailed and site specific. Must conform with the Structure Plan (see below)
- Reviewed every 5 years
- Adopted by the local planning authority

The Local Plan consists of a Written Statement and a Proposal Map (a site-specific map on an Ordnance Survey base).

### How 'important' are Development Plans?

The policies contained in these plans affect your life everyday. Getting involved in plan preparation gives you a say in the future of your community and environment. Your opinions at this stage can be more effective than trying to influence decisions over planning applications later. This is because planning applications must be decided in accordance with the Development Plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

### Where can I get access to the Development Plan?

- Your local planning authority (your Council's Planning Office) and your local library should have copies of the Structure Plan and Local Plan available for free inspection.
- Your local planning authority should sell copies of the Structure and Local Plans (costs likely to be in the range of £10-£50).
- Community Councils should be supplied with at least one free copy of the Development Plan at all stages of its preparation.
- Copies of the Structure and Local Plans may also be available for viewing and downloading for free from your Council's web site.

### How is the Local Plan prepared?

There are specific stages for Structure and Local Plan preparation at which your comments can be taken on board. If you do not want to miss the chance of influencing the policies that affect you, contact the local plan section of your Council to ask whether the Plan is adopted or at a consultation stage. The six stages in Local Plan preparation are:

1. Statutory notice: a notice will be published in local newspapers advising that a new or replacement plan is to be prepared. Comments may be invited on issues to be covered.
2. Survey and research: the local planning authority will carry out extensive surveys and research.
3. Preparation of a draft plan: this is known as the "draft written statement" and contains draft Policies and Proposals. When published, it will be advertised as being available for public comment. There is then a period in which anybody can lodge comments.
4. Finalised plan: the production of an updated version of the plan called the "finalised" version, will follow the consideration of comments. There is a period of six weeks following its publication for making objections.

5. Public inquiry: if objections to the final plan cannot be resolved, the local planning authority will organise an inquiry and appoint an independent Reporter to hear evidence. The Reporter will consider submissions either in writing or in person at a Public Local Inquiry.
6. Modifications to the plan: after the inquiry, if there is one, the Reporter will produce a report in which (s)he will suggest changes to the plan. The local planning authority must then decide whether they wish to incorporate these suggestions into a modified version of the plan. The local planning authority is not legally bound to adhere to the Reporter's suggested changes
7. Adoption: if the local planning authority decides to modify the plan, it must again give opportunity for objections from the public. It will then either adopt the plan (the point at which the plan comes into force), or hold another public inquiry (back to stage 5 again!)

#### How is the Structure Plan prepared?

1. Statutory notice: a notice will be published in local newspapers advising that a new or replacement plan is to be prepared. Comments may be invited on issues to be covered.
2. Survey and research: the local planning authority will carry out extensive surveys and research. In many areas of Scotland, adjoining councils will work together to prepare a Structure Plan for a wider area
3. Publicity and consultation: a draft Structure Plan will be prepared and publicised and an opportunity given for the public to put forward their views on the Structure Plan before it becomes committed to any particular policies and proposals.
4. Scottish Ministers: Once the finalised Structure Plan is prepared, it is submitted to the Scottish Ministers. At the same time, the Plan will be advertised and there is a period in which anybody can lodge objections or comments. The Scottish Ministers then consider the plan and any comments received, and have three options:
  - a. approve the plan unchanged
  - b. decide that the plan should be altered or 'modified'
  - c. decide to hold a hearing, called an 'Examination in Public'

#### How can I get involved?

Local planning authorities must publicise the preparations of their Development Plans to the general public and provide opportunities for you to comment. To make the most of these opportunities you could:

- Contact your local planning authority. Find out what stage they have reached in plan preparation and make your views known.

- Meet the relevant planning officer. Benefit from their professional knowledge, experience and opinions.
- Find out which councillors will be making decisions about the Development Plan, and make sure they know your views and any alternative suggestions you may have.
- Obtain copies of relevant documents such as the relevant Structure Plan, existing Local Plans, and issues papers.
- Liaise with similar groups within your area - swap experience and ideas.

#### After adoption/ approval

After adoption of a Local Plan or the approval of a Structure Plan, the target will be to review the plan in a five year timespan. So, you need to maintain contact and monitor the progress of the plan. Planning officers will be able to advise on the progress of both parts of the Development Plan; when you can have your say; and how to obtain any information you need.

#### The future of Development Plans

The Scottish Executive intends to alter the development planning structure within the next few years. It is intended to replace the two tier system of Structure and Local Plans across the country with a system of single tier Local Development Plans in most areas while retaining a streamlined two tier format in the four main city regions around Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee. The final form of this new structure has yet to be announced. Existing Development Plans will remain in force until replaced by the new plans.

#### Further Information

- Contact your local planning authority
- Contact Planning Aid for Scotland
- Scottish Executive Planning Advice Notes 37 (Structure Plans) and 49 (Local Plans) contain good practice for local planning authorities when producing Development Plans.
- Scottish Executive Planning Advice Note 47 (Community Councils and Planning) outlines the role of Community Councils in Development Plans.

Your local planning office should be your first stop for planning information. If you are still unsure or need independent advice then Planning Aid for Scotland may be able to help. We offer professional advice free of charge to individuals and community groups.

For more information contact Planning Aid for Scotland.