

Review of SG Bus3: Working from home

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to examine the content of SG Bus3: “Working from home” whilst considering any changes in national and regional policies that may alter the scope of this policy. This policy review will consider whether SG Bus3: “Working from home” continues to meet the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy and other relevant planning policies and whether it continues to form a sound basis for making planning decisions regarding home based employment in Aberdeenshire.

2. Policy Approach

- 2.1 This policy will only apply in those cases where a significant change of use of land, or substantial built development is proposed within the curtilage or structure of a dwelling house. Small businesses based in the home are encouraged through this policy, where it is ensured that the surrounding environment does not encounter any detrimental effects as a result. Criterion 1 supports this in that no adverse impact should be placed upon neighbours as a result of home based employment. There is a need to identify that small scale business can successfully co-exist with housing, creating sustainable mixed communities and driving economic growth.
- 2.2 The site should remain within the curtilage of the single dwelling and any construction to accommodate business functions should coincide with the existing character and appearance of the building; if an extension to a dwelling house is proposed it should not visibly appear as a business unit from the exterior.

3. Background

National context

- 3.1 Scottish Planning Policy urges development plans to support the formation and expansion of small businesses:

Development plans should support small business development and growth and promote opportunities for low impact industrial, business and service uses which can co-exist with housing and other sensitive uses without eroding amenity.

SPP encourages small business start ups as a driver of economic development within a sustainable environment. The main aim of SG Bus3 should reiterate Scottish Planning Policy.

- 3.2 A flexible approach should be taken to working from home in terms of SPP, ensuring that the amenity of neighbouring properties and the surrounding environment would not be significantly affected.

Strategic/regional context

- 3.3 Working from home is not dealt with at the strategic level, but in terms of economic development. the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009 supports the provision of opportunities which encourage economic development and the creation of new employment.
- 3.4 The proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan identifies the need for high-speed broadband to be consistent throughout the strategic

region. The plan states that public and private authorities must work together to obtain world leading internet access, available to all. This growth in internet services and speed, especially in rural Aberdeenshire could lead to an increase in those working from home and setting up businesses from within their residential property.

4. Drivers of change

- 4.1 The Scottish Government continues to promote the creation and growth of small business, as well as sustainable development. SG Bus3 encompasses both of these objectives in that it enables small businesses to be created from within the home, reducing cost and the need to travel.
- 4.2 Advances in broadband connectivity throughout rural Aberdeenshire may result in a further increase of people working from home. Aberdeenshire Council is currently undertaking a broadband survey with all residents in the region to confirm there is demand for improved broadband which may then result in securing funding from the Scottish Government.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Applying for permission for a 'change of use' is common for home based employment planning applications and the policy may not be entirely clear that it also applies to development within the garden. It is recommended that the inclusion of a paragraph referring to 'change of use' be inserted into paragraph 3 of the Reasoned Justification.
- 5.2 A minor alteration is suggested for criterion 2, so it reads:
"it does not **significantly** change the overall character, appearance and perception of the property's use as a single dwelling".
The word 'significantly' has been inserted because if a home business is of such a scale that it requires planning permission, it is likely it will have some minor impact on the appearance of the house. Inserting the word 'significantly' allows for minor change to the physical impact of the house.
- 5.3 Criterion 3 should be deleted as any home extension would be assessed using SG LSD2 and SG LSD3. Criterion 3 is unnecessary as it is a duplication of criteria 2.
- 5.4 These modifications are of minor significance and do not constitute discussion within the Main Issues Report.

6. Summary of main points

- 6.1 This supplementary guidance addresses the key issues on how to determine planning applications for home based employment. This policy is in accordance with SPP in that it supports small scale business development, providing that the proposal does not have any significant detrimental effects on the surrounding environment. Minor modification is proposed to the supporting text to clarify that it applies to any business use within the house, or garden ground (curtilage) of a property, and to criterion 2 to allow for minor change to the physical impact of the house. Criteria 3 should be deleted as any home extension would be assessed using SG LSD2 and SG LSD3 and is a duplication of criteria 2.

References

Aberdeenshire Council (2012) *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012*

Scottish Government (2010) *Scottish Planning Policy*

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011