

# ALDP Economic Development Stakeholder Meeting: Issues for the main issues report

**23 April 2013  
Meeting Note**

## Present:

Douglas Rennie (DR)  
James Bream (JB)  
Roddy Matheson (RM)  
Andy Willox (AW)  
Brian Stewart-Coxon (BSC)  
Rona Main (RMN)  
Alan Davidson (AD) (Senior Policy Planner)  
Sarah MacRitchie (SM) (Policy Planner)  
Alison Hogge (AH) (Policy Planner)

AD started the meeting by giving an overview of the LDP process, and timescales. The policy team is currently at the stage of reviewing the policies, and this meeting is to allow input into that process at an early stage. There are difficulties with the timing, in that the ALDP has only been published for one year and so it is difficult to see how policies are performing.

## **Process**

AW queried how the main issues are identified.

AD advised that there are a number of methods: monitoring policy use, consulting with Development Management (DM), stakeholder events and community consultation. We are trying to identify the 'main issues', minor changes are not main issues.

AW reiterated that they would expect to see our thoughts on the policies published, and JB also added that it would be useful to know about the delivery of sites. RM raised the issue of Elswick as an example.

SM advised that the Action Programme is updated regularly, and published yearly to show the status of sites, and whether they are being delivered.

AH highlighted that the review of the policies are likely to be published in the monitoring report (generally published at the same time as the MIR), and that they are not published before these meetings so that comments and views can be taken on board and inform what the main issues are.

## **Live work Units**

DR raised the policy issue of live/work units as there had been a recent example where these were refused. It was questioned whether there is a policy gap?

AD advised that there is a policy on home working, and DM officers can take into consideration the benefit of this type of development, however the circumstances of the case raised were different as the site was allocated as employment land.

AW raised concern that it is difficult to give an informed view on policies when they don't know what is going on (i.e. would expect to see views published).

### **Infrastructure requirements**

RMN queried whether there is an issue with providing infrastructure up front for big sites. They are told by developers that sites are released on a phased basis, but that the infrastructure is required upfront in phase 1 and so there is bit 'hit' up front.

AD advised that the ALDP has allocated major sites, and large allocations were required to meet the Structure Plans housing requirement, and therefore there are going to be issues with infrastructure. However, it is about the mix of sites, and the next LDP will look to allocated smaller sites.

DR highlighted that the opposite problem can also be an issue, as in Cairngorm National Park, developers are complaining that there are not enough houses allocated to pay for the infrastructure.

RM also made the point that we don't want to incrementally provide infrastructure, we want to be able to look at final scheme & get infrastructure right from day one.

AD advised that an Infrastructure Stakeholders Meeting has been held to discuss such issues and that the entire of the next FIRS meeting will discuss the next LDP.

AD advised that there are large allocations and infrastructure available in the north, but it is not where developers want to build.

### **Office development and Westhill**

AD moved the discussion onto office development. He outlined that changes are being considered to the policy. The opportunity to allow class 4 development in town centres that need regeneration. Whereas the current policy is to allocate big sites for class 4, and only class 2 (solicitors etc) are permitted in town centres.

AW advised that his organisation can assist in getting a feeling from businesses.

RM suggested that there is a need to be realistic, if offices need to be in the town centre then its OK, but if they don't want to be there then it won't work. He also raised the success of Westhill in attracting new offices, however also highlighted the issues facing companies in terms of staff retention and car parking. He outlined that more car parking is definitely required. The Subsea market in Westhill is working in a hugely competitive employer market (world market). If it captures growth, introducing offices into established centres would be supported.

It was added that Westhill has 5% of global subsea sector and the city are trying to draw subsea within the city. Westhill is a magnet and a unique opportunity.

AD added that Westhill started as an industrial estate and has developed on an ad hoc basis (mistakes of the past). He advised that there are car parking standards which we need to adhere to.

AH clarified that car parking standards are set in SPP, and advised that SPP will shortly be out for consultation, so people may wish to make their thoughts known through this consultation process.

JB suggested that from a logical point of view, it doesn't seem to make sense to ignore the success of Westhill.

### **Car parking provision**

RMN stated that while she accepted that increased car parking is unpalatable (from planning point of view), it is required.

AD suggested that DM have started to consider additional car parking in Westhill, (e.g. TAQA multi-storey).

There was general discussion about the need for increased parking, and situations elsewhere. Schemes to prevent car use don't work, they simply move the problem (i.e. result in cars parked in surrounding streets / residential areas). The profile of the profession of engineering is changing to desk based, and the type of person employed expects to be able to drive to work and park their car.

There was some discussion around the potential for greater public transport / bus provision. There was concern about this approach in rural areas where people can't get the bus.

The potential for flexible working was discussed, and it was agreed that companies are generally moving to a more flexible work pattern (in order to retain and attract staff reflecting the competitive nature of industry).

It was agreed that there are potentially other options for transporting staff. However, the issue of car parking was said to be key in attracting and retaining staff. Even in the city, offices would be expected to have car parking (from an oil & gas perspective).

### **Travel to work areas and the employment pool**

It was questioned whether there has been any study on the employment pool? i.e. Inverurie, and where people travel to work.

RMN suggested that the market won't make a distinction between City and Shire. The outcomes of employee surveys was highlighted, people want to be able to access a shop, go for a walk, park their car.

AW outlined the results of their survey suggested that a school, broadband and shops were important for employees.

JB added that employers look at the employment pool when looking to locate.

Travel time to airport was also said to be a key consideration (at least it had been in the past).

AD added that while Westhill would appear to be well located for additional employment land it was not in the Strategic Growth Corridor.

RM outlined the impact the AWPR junctions could have, as people will want to be based there due to easy access. Create employment and people can choose to live.

It was raised that competitive infrastructure is needed.

AD queried what the market was like in the north of the area, i.e. Fraserburgh.

SM advised of the economic enabling development policy in the northern regeneration priority area which is supportive of enabling development for new businesses at a small scale.

RM advised that there is no demand. Development would need Council or Government agency support.

The potential for fish processing was discussed, as the fish are presently transported to Aberdeen (due to the historical nature of the business, and the fact fish processors live in Deeside).

RM suggested we need to encourage growth in the north, but it is dependent on demand.

It was suggested that we need to remember our fortunate position of having growth (unlike many other Local Authorities).

The importance of oil and gas was raised. Despite offshore wind being a growth industry, spending on it will never be greater than 50% of current spending on oil and gas.

Carbon capture & storage is an emerging market. This will require knowledge & skills. There was some discussion about whether this would result in benefits for the north (Peterhead).

### **Safeguarding of land**

AH outlined the safeguarding employment land policy, and its current approach, and queried whether any stakeholders have any issues.

RM raised the issue of the demographic of the area, and an ageing workforce.  
AD suggested that we need to have a mix of house types coming forward.

RMN suggested we need to support young businesses and entrepreneurs.

### **Retail development**

SM provided an overview of the retail policy.

The value of business and retail next to each other was raised.

AW advised that the FSM have a number of retail studies which they could share.

It was queried whether property agents have been consulted with, as they would be able to provide significant information about trends / demands and the market.

AD closed the meeting, and thanked everyone for their attendance.