Review of SG Enabling Development1: Enabling development

1. Introduction

1.1   This paper will review SG Enabling Development1 in order to assess whether it remains a durable policy for inclusion in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2016. National and regional policies will be considered to understand if there are any significant changes with regards to enabling development that should be incorporated within SG Enabling Development1. The aim of this review is to ensure this supplementary guidance continues to assist and clarify development management when determining enabling development applications.

2. Policy Approach

2.1   The policy provides measures for the planning authority to assess the merits, plausibility and detail of enabling development applications. SG Enabling Development1 is currently split into two separate sections. The first section details where enabling development will be approved for the retention of listed buildings; and the latter describes what could be approved as an employment, leisure or tourism use as enabling development if it is within one of the Regeneration Priority Areas.

2.2   For enabling development that aims to retain listed buildings, development proposals must satisfy four criteria under this policy. Generally, they must ensure that:

•   the building is on the Buildings at Risk Register or the council has agreed the building is at serious risk of decay or collapse;

•   all other development funding options have been exhausted;

•   the amount of enabling development is the minimum required for conservation and reuse;

•   the wider public benefits outweigh any disadvantages of the development.

2.3   In addition to those criteria above, where enabling development is sought for the start up of an employment, leisure or tourism proposal within a Regeneration Priority Area, the proposal must ensure that:

•   the regeneration or economic rural diversification could not otherwise be achieved;

•   it is not a substitute for normal development or being used as a subsidy.

2.4   As well as meeting the above criteria, developments must also ensure that the funds will be channelled into the historic building at the earliest opportunity and, where the proposal is for a housing development it must satisfy all other relevant planning policies and be fully developed by the developer.

2.5   The Reasoned Justification clarifies that any enabling development granted will be a unique opportunity and they are not granted frequently. The policy should mainly only be utilised when the proposals breach normal policy and it is used to ensure the public benefit remains paramount. Affordable housing provisions should also be incorporated into the development to increase the public benefits.

3. Background

<u>National context</u>

3.1   There is no dedicated national policy guidance relating to enabling development although Scottish Planning Policy is supportive of it where it is proven to be the only means of retaining a listed building.

3.2   Scottish Planning Policy understands that enabling development is sometimes acceptable when it is the only catalyst for the retention of a listed building.   If enabling development is to go ahead, it should have a high design quality, protect the listed building and setting, and it should be the minimum necessary to enable its conservation and re-use (SPP, 2010).

<u>Strategic/regional context</u>

3.3   The Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2013) promotes the importance and protection of the region's built environment. A target of the proposed plan is to ensure that "development improves and does not lead to the loss of, or damage to, built…heritage assets". Enabling development is a tool that can be utilised to help achieving this regional aim.

3.4   Regeneration is also identified as a vital strategy of the proposed strategic development plan.   Within the areas in most need of regeneration, "improving the environmental quality, accessibility, employment opportunities and the competitiveness of business should play a particular role".

4. Drivers of Change

4.1   The Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2013) continues to emphasise the importance of regeneration within the specific Regeneration Priority Areas.   Therefore, enabling development in Aberdeenshires Regeneration Priority Areas will produce an extra catalyst to deliver employment, tourism or leisure based development.

4.2   A relaxation in SG Rural Development1 could have implications on enabling development for the development of housing and business in the Rural Housing Market Area. Providing a disincentive for regeneration in these areas.

4.3   The possibility of drafting an Enabling Development Planning Advice will further advise developers of what Aberdeenshire Council expects with enabling development applications.

5. Recommendations

5.1   There are no recommendations for alterations to SG Enabling Development1: Enabling development.

6. Summary of Main Points

6.1   Since enabling development was a main issue in 2009 and resulted in the creation of a comprehensive policy and associated supplementary guidance there are no main changes required to the recent SG Enabling Development1: Enabling development. The ethos of the policy and SG remain robust and provide development management with a thorough policy to aid their determination of enabling development proposals. Planning advice to aid developers with their submission of enabling development

proposals may be produced to ensure a thorough understanding of Aberdeenshire Council's stance.

References

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (2013) *Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan*

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

Scottish Government (2010) *Scottish Planning Policy*