

# SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10.30am on FRIDAY  
12<sup>th</sup> MAY 2017

**Present:** Mr Councillor D W Christian (Chair), the Mayor, Mr Councillor I J G Clague, Councillor Mrs C L Wells, Mr Councillor R H McNicholl.

**Officers in Attendance:** Chief Executive (Miss K J Rice), Director of Finance (Mr G M Bolt), Director of Environment & Regeneration (Mrs D Eynon), Director of Housing & Property (Mrs S Harrison), Assistant Chief Officer (Regeneration) (Mr C Pycroft), Building Control Manager (Mr N J Kaighin), Executive Officer (Mrs J M Keig) (taking minutes).

## **PART A: Matters within the scope of the Executive Committee's delegated authority (Public)**

### **A1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr Councillor S R Pitts.

### **A2. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

## **PART B: Matters subject to Council approval (Public)**

### **B3. The Eastern Area Plan – Preliminary Publicity Stage**

The Committee considered a written report by the Assistant Chief Officer (Regeneration) seeking comments on and approval of the Council's proposed responses to the consultation on the Preliminary Publicity Stage of The Area Plan for the East.

It was noted that the Cabinet Office had commenced work on The Area Plan for the East (TAPE), which would ultimately replace the Douglas Local Plan 1998 (and similar plans in Onchan, Braddan, Marown, Santon and Garff (Laxey and Lonan Wards)) in respect of land use zoning.

The Assistant Chief Officer (Regeneration) gave an overview of the consultation:-

- Stage 1 – the Call for Sites, which had been completed in 2016. This had been an initial opportunity for anybody to submit sites in the east of the Island for consideration as potential development sites.
- Stage 2 – the current Preliminary Publicity Stage, which provided a summary of all of the sites proposed at Stage 1. It included suggested frameworks for development, and sought responses on policy issues that were specific to the east of the Island.
- Stage 3 – the draft plan, which would be published in early 2018 for comment.
- Stage 4 – during 2018, a Public Enquiry would be held when the

draft plan would be considered by an independent inspector.

- Stage 5 – approval of the Plan by Tynwald in mid-2019.

The Area Plan for the East would provide a geographic perspective on planning policy, as set out in the Isle of Man Strategic Plan 2016, and Members recalled that the Strategic Plan had also set out a spatial strategy and breakdown of housing demand across the Island. The recommendation had been that 2,440 houses would be required for the East, and, since the publication of the Strategic Plan, 150 houses had been started or were close to construction.

The Strategic Plan had not, however, considered the demand for Employment land, which was estimated to be approximately 10 hectares for the ten-year period from April 2016 to March 2026. Employment land considerations had taken place as part of the Employment Land Review in 2015, and the Employment land sites identified within The Area Plan for the East were Middle River and White Hoe; Kirby Farm Industrial Estate; Tromode / Ballafletcher; Isle of Man Business Park; and south of the Cooil Road / Kewaigue. It was noted that the current demand appeared to be for smaller sites, with some limited demand for larger sites.

Members were advised that there were three distinct development scenarios used in The Area Plan to explore how development might take place within the policy framework of the Strategic Plan -

- Scenario 1 – Settlement Hierarchy: development (housing and employment) would be contained where possible within existing settlement boundaries, but some greenfield sites would also be required. Employment growth would be spread across the five separate sites at the edges of the Douglas conurbation.
- Scenario 2 – Urban Expansion: development would be permitted largely on greenfield sites around the edges of the Douglas conurbation. Employment growth would be concentrated to the south of Cooil Road.
- Scenario 3 – Dispersal: housing development would be dispersed more evenly amongst various settlements (with over a third of development taking place in Baldrine, Crosby, Glen Vine, Newtown (Santon), and The Strang). Employment growth would again be concentrated to the south of Cooil Road.

Following the Call for Sites exercise, a total of 222 sites had initially been considered. Of these, 35 sites were considered to be Category 1 sites – these were sites where the proposed use was identical to the area surrounding them, and so were accepted without further detailed assessment. The remaining 187 sites were considered to be Category 2 sites – which were sites that required a policy decision to be made about future land use, and would be subject to a full site assessment using the Site Assessment Framework. The Site Assessment Framework would comprise four steps -

- Step 1 – Preliminary Screening: sites where the proposed use was in clear conflict with policies in the Strategic Plan and which would be eliminated at this first stage.

- Step 2 – the Application of Critical Constraints: sites where there was a critical issue that was likely to make their development undesirable or inappropriate and which would be eliminated at this stage.
- Step 3 – Detailed Consideration: the relative merits of each of the sites would be scored in relation to the policy aspirations set out in the Strategic Plan, although none would be eliminated at this stage.
- Step 4 – Consideration of whether the site was Developable: sites that were considered to be developable would need to be available and viable.

The Main Consultation Document contained questions relating to the foregoing subjects, set out under the following headings:-

- Section 2 – Strategic Policy Context;
- Section 3 – Existing Land Uses and Potential Development Sites;
- Section 4 – Scenarios for the Distribution of Development;
- Section 5 – Central Douglas;
- Section 6 – Wider Housing Issues;
- Section 7 – Wider Employment, Retail and Town Centre Issues;
- Section 8 – Wider Environmental Issues; and
- Section 9 – Measures to Ensure Sufficient Flexibility.

Members accordingly considered the proposed responses to each of the Consultation Questions (as set out in the written report). It was noted that officers had considered various responses to each of the questions, but that those put forward for consideration were considered to be the most appropriate, with each aiming to support a beneficial environmental impact, and encouraging economic development in a manner that was beneficial to Douglas ratepayers.

Adjournment and Resumption

The Committee adjourned at 1.15pm and resumed at 2.30pm, when the following Members were present: Mr Councillor D W Christian (Chair), the Mayor, Mr Councillor I J G Clague, Councillor Mrs C L Wells (from 2.40pm), Mr Councillor R H McNicholl.

On resumption of the meeting, Members considered in detail the proposed designations of each of the sites, as set out in the list of potential development sites (also appended to the written report).

Members expressed their appreciation to officers for the amount of work that had been undertaken in respect of the production of the report and associated appendices.

Resolved, "(i) That particulars of the written report be noted on the minutes;

(ii) That as a major land and property owner, the Council will continue to engage fully with the development of The Area Plan for the East, representing ratepayers' interests and examining the wider implications for Douglas as the Island's capital, and for the Eastern area as a whole; and

(iii) That the proposed responses to the Consultation on the Preliminary Publicity Stage of The Area Plan for the East, including the proposed designation of sites, as amended and appended to these minutes, be approved and recommended to Council"

The Committee rose at 4.30pm.

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Chair

26<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**Appendix A Revised Responses following Executive Committee Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

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**Section 2 Strategic Policy Context**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
Do you have any comments about the existing employment land provision?	No. The Council agrees with the Strategic Plan Spatial Policies, that Douglas remains the main employment and service centre for the Island.
Do you have any comments about the amount and type of employment land which is needed?	<p>Yes. The Employment Land Review (ELR) Study clearly provides an important evidence base for TAPE. Consequently it is likely to be important for the findings of that study to be monitored and updated regularly to ensure that the Eastern Area does not result in either an oversupply or undersupply of employment land. To what extent will other factors such as the findings of the 2016 census and any developments subsequent to the research stage of the ELR Study or changes in occupancy be monitored and given consideration during the development of TAPE and during the life of the plan?</p> <p>The Council believes that employment development should look to re-use existing infrastructure wherever possible. The Council also suggests that clustering of related or mutually beneficial employment uses be encouraged on each site as this will enable any new infrastructure requirements to be tailored to the use of the site. For example, high-technology industries may not require the same highway infrastructure as heavy engineering sites but may require a more developed communication infrastructure and vice versa.</p>
Do you have any general comments about where new employment sites should be concentrated?	The Council considers that new employment sites should be concentrated within existing settlement boundaries wherever possible and ideally within scenario testing areas 1 to 4. Scenario testing area 5, Cooil Road should be restricted to single developments that are genuinely too large to be accommodated within any of the other four areas. Employment sites are important generators of customer (shopper) footfall, particularly between the hours of 12.00 and 14.00 in the week. Where they are within easy walking distance of existing centres this supports the economic health of the centre. Permitting high levels of employment sites outwith easy walking distance of centres is likely to create a detrimental impact on town centre footfall particularly where it allows businesses currently located within the town centre to move to

peripheral sites. The Council believes that this applies both to industrial and office developments. Existing vacant office sites should be improved or redeveloped in preference to new developments on greenfield sites as this approach is most likely to exert least impact on supporting infrastructure requirements and deliver greatest benefit to existing centres. The Council suggests that financial incentives to encourage redevelopment of brownfield sites with higher development and occupancy costs might assist in supporting the development of brownfield sites and might prove a viable investment if it avoids the need for a high level of investment in new public (off-site) infrastructure elsewhere.

### **Section 3 Existing Land Uses and Potential Development Sites**

#### **Question**

Do you think any changes are necessary to the draft Existing Settlement Boundaries or the Land Uses shown on the Inset Maps in Annex 2?

#### **Response**

No. However if residential or employment development is permitted outside but adjacent to the Borough boundary the Council would be looking to extend the Borough boundary to the new extended settlement boundary.

Are there any areas of Open Space which are not shown on the Inset Maps?

Yes.

DH053 Land to the East of Ballanard Road.

DH041 St Mary's School playing field, Somerset Road.

DH049 Old Rugby Pitch, Glencrutchery Road.

DH038 Brunswick Gardens

Do you think there are any other sites which should be considered for development?

The Council owns land at Homefield Close, Homefield Road and Greenfield Road, including houses on School Road. This site splits the site of the University College Isle of Man and other land in education use bounded by Greenfield Road and First Avenue. Subject to agreement for a suitable land swap with Government, there would appear to be potential for the current residential zoning in this area to be re-zoned to facilitate development for educational purposes.

Although both sites are currently zoned for mixed use and re-zoning is not required, consideration should be given to relocating the Isle of Man Transport bus depot from Lake Road to the Summerland site. This would remove a major bus route from the leisure area on North Quay and free up the land at Lake road for new

development.

Do you have any general comments on the Site Assessment Framework or specific comments on how an individual site has been assessed?

Yes.

When investigating ownership during site assessments, options on sites should be considered as well as ownership when considering whether a site is developable. This would assist in ensuring land owners and developers are less able to manipulate the supply and therefore the value of that land in response to market demand.

DE009, Fire Station, Peel Road

The Council supports designation of this site for employment use but also considers it would be appropriate for bulky goods retail.

DH001, Westmoreland Road

The Council owns part of this site, currently used for sports purposes, and has no intention of disposing of or changing the use of its land in the area. Consequently the Council considers that its own land within this site is not developable. It has no objection to re-designation of the other land with DH001 although it considers the current grocery shop on the site provides a useful amenity for local residents.

DH015, Corner of Anacur Lane

The Council would be amenable to developing this land in its ownership for social housing.

DH017, Field 524767, Saddle Road

The Council objects to the designation of this site for housing use as any development would overlook neighbouring sites in an unacceptable manner.

DH026, Masterplan SG1, Circular Road

These sites should be designated for employment use, not housing.

DH027, Masterplan SG3, Mount Havelock

This site is suitable for employment use but not housing. The open space immediately in front of the Law Courts is an important amenity that should be retained.

DH038, Brunswick Gardens, Cronkbourne Road

The Council is opposed to designation of this site for housing as development would result in detrimental impact to the amenity and character of the conservation area.

DH041, Somerset Road

The Council is opposed to designation of this site for housing as development would increase congestion and car parking problems in the area and the loss of greenspace would not be

	acceptable. The site has potential to allow a valuable expansion of St Mary's school facilities in the future.
DH049, Glencrutchery Road	The Council is opposed to designation of this site for housing as it would be an unacceptable loss of greenspace and a well-used recreational area.
DH053, Land between Ballanard Road and Willaston Estate	The Council is opposed to designation of this Council-owned site for housing as it would be an unacceptable loss of greenspace. Consequently the site is not developable.
BE002, BE005, BE006, BE007, BE008	The Council is opposed to the designation of these sites for employment uses as it considers that employment sites should be located in scenario testing areas 1-4. The sites are much larger than demand will require during the life of the plan and are not therefore required.
BE010, Land at Middle Farm Braddan	The Council is opposed to the designation of this site for employment uses as it considers that employment sites should be located in scenario testing areas 1-4. The site is much larger than demand will require during the life of the plan and is not therefore required.
BH005, Head Road, Douglas	The Council supports the conclusion of the Site Assessment that this site is not suitable for development and that therefore it should not be designated as housing land.
BH037, Land at Ellenbrook	The Council opposes the designation of this site for housing use.
BM004, Spring Valley	The Council opposes the designation of this site for Mixed Use as it would create an opportunity for out of town retail development, which is opposed by the Council because of the impact it would have on Douglas town centre. Business Policy 9 is not currently sufficiently robust or supported by planning guidance to prevent an expectation by retailers that they might secure planning consent to sell goods that could reasonably be sold from a town centre location. This in turn creates a disincentive to town centre redevelopment and investment.
BM005, Ellenbrook Farm, Old Castletown Road	The Council opposes the designation of this site for Mixed Use as its rural location makes it unsuitable for development.
BM006, Land adjacent to Vicarage Road	The Council opposes the designation of this site for Mixed Use because of the potential for the site to be developed for retail use. Please see the comments for BM004, which also apply to this site.

BM007, Lhergy Cripperty Road

The Council opposes the designation of this site for Mixed Use as it is considered unsuitable, in part, due to the narrow road. It is however suitable for residential use.

BO001, Land adjacent to Vicarage Road

The Council has no objection to this site being used as a sport field and ancillary development but would be opposed to it being designated such that it could be developed for formal commercial leisure use.

How do you think the Plan should deal with the issue of land designations between settlements?

The Council suggests such land be designated as non-development land but that this designation should retain the potential for review during the lifetime of the plan.

#### **Section 4 Scenarios for the Distribution of Development**

##### **Question**

##### **Response**

Do you have any comments on the Scenarios 1, 2, or 3? (Do you think different Scenarios should be considered?)

The three scenarios described are the ones that should be considered.

Which Scenario (or combination of Scenarios) do you think would be the most appropriate to form the basis of the Draft Plan?

Scenario 1 (Settlement Hierarchy) should be dominant in order to ensure brownfield sites are redeveloped. Only in circumstances where suitable sites cannot be identified within the existing settlement boundary should Scenario 2 (Urban Expansion) be endorsed. Scenario 3 (Dispersal) is not supported at this stage. The additional 289 residential units proposed for the Central Douglas Masterplan area under scenario 1 (compared to scenarios 2 and 3) should be reserved for low occupancy social housing as there is currently very limited demand for privately owned town centre apartments.

How could the Plan ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place (in terms of capacity, quality and resilience)?

Development Briefs should be produced for all large sites or groups of sites forming a large area to be developed. These briefs should prescribe the infrastructure necessary to support the development and should consider broad layout options to demonstrate acceptable distribution of Infrastructure such as formal and informal play areas, open greenspace (the Council strongly supports paragraph 4.19 in this respect), infrastructure to encourage and support walking and cycling, improved highway and utility infrastructure and community amenities such as schools, shops, health facilities, public houses etc. Where improved infrastructure, including utility infrastructure, is required outside the site to support the development, the cost of investing

in this infrastructure should be met either wholly or in part (depending on the specific circumstances) by the developer, making use of commuted sums where applicable.

The Council considers that any new demand for secondary education should be developed on the outskirts of settlements in order to relieve congestion in existing built-up areas. This may also create an opportunity to redevelop some existing secondary educational sites for housing or other suitable use.

ICT infrastructure should be improved generally to help promote regeneration and enable the Island to compete or provide a better offering than the UK in terms of attractiveness to businesses.

Development to the south of Douglas is least likely to impose demands on the existing highway infrastructure. Development to the west and north would require major improvements to junctions at Quarterbridge, Braddan Bridge, Governor's Bridge, and Onchan to improve flow capacity and reduce congestion. Some of these junction improvements may need to be substantial in order to meet the demand of development in the areas they serve at peak times.

## **Section 5      Central Douglas**

### **Question**

Do you think there are key aspects of the Masterplan which need to be tested through the Site Assessment Framework and have not been identified within the Table in Appendix 1?

Do you think there are elements of the Masterplan which should be reviewed due to changes in circumstances since the Masterplan was approved in 2015?

### **Response**

It is not clear why SS3 and SS4 have not been included.

There is a need to include some degree of prioritisation in relation to certain uses and sites proposed in the Central Douglas Masterplan (such as car parking and hotels) in order to assist in unlocking development where site owners are waiting to see how competitor sites are being developed. The Site Assessment Framework would provide a useful tool in assisting with this prioritisation.

No, although the Council is concerned at the lack of progress in developing the sites proposed in the Masterplan. It considers that a forum for communication and agreement between respective site owners and developers may assist in stimulating development and that the plan should be reviewed if in five years from launch no significant development has been secured.

Which Character Areas do you think should be included within the Town Centre Boundary?

Central Douglas Masterplan zones Strand Street, The Promenade, Villa Marina Gateway, The Fort, Maritime Gateway, The Quayside.

## **Section 6 Wider Housing Issues**

### **Question**

### **Response**

Should the Plan encourage building at higher densities (either generally or in specific areas) and, if so, how?

The Council believes that it is important in all cases to ensure an appropriate level of open greenspace is retained or provided in all housing developments. This is likely to be particularly important on sites where higher densities are permitted. It also recommends that on new residential estates, road widths greater than those used in recent developments, such as Governor's Hill, are required to allow for increased rates of car ownership.

There is a demand for low occupancy social housing renewal in and surrounding Douglas town centre and it is appropriate for densities to remain high in these areas.

How should the plan approach the issues of Affordable Housing and Elderly Persons' Housing and Sheltered Accommodation?

It is appropriate for affordable housing to be based on a minimum percentage of each development although the Council believes it should be acceptable to transfer affordable housing requirements between sites.

Age related accommodation is likely to be more accessible if it is close to village and town centres where more amenities are available. This also applies to some social housing where tenants do not have their own vehicles and rely upon public transport and local amenities within easy walking distance. The Site Assessment Framework and Development Briefs should consider the specific suitability of each site.

Are there areas where new/improved community facilities would be of significant benefit?

Greater use should be made of educational buildings as community facilities with fees for the use of these buildings being set at a level to encourage such use.

Do you think there are areas not included in Table 4 which should be assessed as potential Groups of Houses in the Countryside?

No.

Are there areas where the identification of a Regeneration Area would provide significant benefit?

South Quay, Douglas.  
Douglas Promenade.

## **Section 7 Wider Employment, Retail and Town Centre Issues.**

### **Question**

How can we best support our Town Centres?

### **Response**

The Council believes that the four most important factors in supporting town centres are;

1. Preventing competing uses from being permitted outside town centres. Strict application of Business Policy 5, Business Policy 9 and Business Policy 10 are therefore very important. Some planning guidance on BP5(a) would be helpful in order to avoid any ambiguity on circumstances to which it would be applicable. Where Retail Impact Assessments are required in accordance with Business Policy 9 we believe these should be funded by the applicant but commissioned independently by the Department to avoid any potential for bias.
2. Protecting and growing footfall in town centres. The Council is concerned that planning consents for office development out of town has the potential to impact footfall detrimentally, particularly in circumstances where the town centre building vacated is not re-occupied. Consequently, any policies (including planning policy and zoning) that encourages town centre development in preference to urban expansion will be beneficial.
3. Environmental Quality. It is important that town centres provide a high quality experience to customers as this is one factor where they can compete against online retailing and other retail formats. Consequently any measures that maintain or improve the customer experience should be supported.
4. Convenient and high quality access. This includes car parking, public transport and public toilet facilities and high quality pedestrian/cycle routes.

Which areas (if any) should be identified as being specifically for Tourism?

In Douglas the only area where tourism should be specifically identified is Douglas Head. The Council is opposed to any development on Douglas Head other than very minor development that would improve leisure and

tourism amenity.

Where is there a need for more (or less) parking provision?

Douglas town centre currently has a shortage of public car parking as concluded by the Douglas Parking Study commissioned by the Department of Infrastructure in November 2013. It is important that parking provision is varied in relation to location and tariffs in order to ensure it meets the needs of a range of customer requirements.

## **Section 8 Wider Environmental Issues**

### **Question**

### **Response**

Are there any particular measures that should be taken in the Plan to ensure it adequately addresses the issue of Climate Change?

Provision of facilities for cycle parking and shower/changing facilities in all new employment sites and public charging points for electric vehicles.

Development design that at least meets 1/100 year storm events.

Are there any areas which should be considered as a potential Green Gap?

The Council supports paragraph 8.3 (Green Gaps) and proposes that Douglas Golf course be designated as a green gap between the estates of Pulrose and Anagh Coar. Although it is recognised that these are not different settlements, the golf course plays an important role in separating and defining the individual character of these two large residential areas.

Are there any areas where improvements to the footpaths/cycle network would be of significant benefit?

The Council supports paragraph 8.4 (Cycling, Walking and Access to the Countryside)

Cycle and pedestrian links from central Douglas to all major employment and residential sites are important. The link from central Douglas to the Heritage Trail to Peel is likely to be the most important opportunity to link the urban conurbation to the countryside. The Heritage Trail itself requires re-surfacing at its western end in order to provide a consistent surface along its length. Links to King Edward Road from the northern end of Douglas Promenade are likely to be straightforward to deliver. There is also potential to link the centre of Douglas to Old Castletown Road through the Nunnery, White Hoe and/or Douglas Golf Course. Marine Drive is partly closed to traffic and therefore also provides an important link to the south along the coast.

Are there areas where Environmental Enhancement would provide significant benefit?

Completion of Castle Street, Marina Road, Duke Street, Market Hill and Victoria Street in Douglas town centre.

South Quay, Douglas.

Summerland site.

Douglas Promenades, including the Cultural

Quarter.

**Section 9 Measures to Ensure Sufficient Flexibility**

**Question**

**Response**

Do you have any comments about how we could build flexibility into the Plan?

Monitoring assumptions used of employment and housing land development requirements is important. There is a need to be cautious in initial assumptions so as not to result in an oversupply. The gradual release of reserve sites during the plan period is likely to be a better option than designating too much land for development.

Do you have any comments on how we might control the supply of development land?

Using the three scenarios proposed in section 4 with development of brownfield sites and other sites within existing settlement boundaries (Scenario 1) taking priority.