

ITEM 8 – Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

Report by: Robin Edgar, Acting SESplan Manager/Team Manager, East Lothian Council

Purpose

This report presents the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for the South east of Scotland. It outlines the purpose of the Strategy, summarises its content and recommends it for approval by the Joint Committee.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the SESplan Joint Committee:

1. Approve the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of Scotland, attached as Appendix 1 to this report;
2. Direct the Chair of the SESplan Board to submit the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to the Scottish Government as part of the National Planning Framework process; and
3. Directs the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for ratification by the six SESplan Local Authorities.

Resource Implications

No SESplan financial resources were used in the production of this document. Resources came from existing SESplan authority staff. The SESplan member authorities will want to engage in future developments in the Regional Planning and the National Planning Framework, again this will be from existing staff resource.

Legal and Risk Implications

All risks are detailed in the SESplan Risk Register and reported to Joint Committee on an annual basis.

Policy and Impact Assessment

No separate impact assessment is required as the document is indicative in nature and does not have any planning policy status.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Planning Act 2019 introduces the concept of Regional Spatial Strategies. These are non-statutory documents which provide a spatial representation of the key regional land use issues requiring to be addressed across the region.
- 1.2 Although non statutory in nature (they do not form part of the development plan and will not have a status in planning decisions) their purpose is to guide the development of the two parts of the Development Plan set out in the 2019 Act, namely the National Planning Framework and Local Development Plans.
- 1.3 The Scottish Government is bringing the Planning Act into force in stages and the section that deals with Regional Spatial Strategies will be enacted in the latter part of 2021. However, the Scottish Government has already started the process of producing National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) with the aim of having a draft NPF4 ready in September 2021.
- 1.4 To ensure the Regional Spatial Strategy fulfils its role of guiding the content of the NPF the government has asked Local Authorities to produce Regional Spatial strategies by the autumn of 2020. As these are being produced in advance of the relevant section of the Planning Act coming into force these Regional Spatial Strategies have an indicative nature.
- 1.5 The indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (iRSS) will help guide future Local Development Plans but its main aim is to input into the development of NPF4.
- 1.6 The iRSS exercise was originally to have been completed by June of this year but due to the impact of Covid the timescales have been pushed back. This also applies to the timetable for the production of NPF4 which has been moved back by a year, with the draft now expected in September 2021.

2. Summary of the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

- 2.1 Early in the process of developing the iRSS the Directors from the SESplan Local Authorities took the decision that the Strategy should be based on the content of SESplan2, which was rejected by the Scottish Government in 2019. This encapsulates the most of the regional challenges and projects that would be in the iRSS and it had been agreed through the local authority officer and political process and through independent examination. Added to this would be the projects that have been agreed through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal. Also, as the iRSS is to guide NPF4 it is important that there is also a close synergy between the content of the iRSS and the SESplan submission to National Planning Framework 4 'Call for ideas' process that was carried out by the Scottish Government early in 2020.

2.2 The iRSS begins by setting out three overarching themes that require to be addressed across the region. These are as follows:

Recovery and Renewal – Tackling economic recovery, environmental improvement and inequality.

Accessibility – addressing sustainable transport options, digital access, access to employment and sustainable housing land.

Adaptable – tackling climate change, ensuring conservation and high design standards.

2.3 The strategy provides context under each of these themes, setting out the challenges the region faces. The remainder of the document sets out the actions and projects that are proposed to address these regional challenges.

2.4 The strategy emphasises the proactive stance the SESplan authorities have taken over the last 10 years to facilitate the unprecedented levels of growth that the region has experienced. However, a key part of the document is highlighting to the Scottish Government, actions that must be taken through the National Planning Framework 4 to allow either long-standing infrastructure requirements to be resolved or changes that are required at a national level to allow progressive future planning policy to be implemented. This is particularly around areas such as climate change.

2.5 The Strategy includes housing land requirements at the same level that was agreed by the SESplan authorities and the independent reporter through SDP2, and for North East Fife those approved through TAYplan. These are recommended to the Scottish Government for inclusion in NPF4.

2.6 The document contains an overall strategy, highlighting the inter relationship between the key themes and challenges set out at the start of the document and the projects identified to address them. It also contains more focussed sub regional sections which concentrate on areas that are more specific to one part of the region but are equally important in achieving the overall success of the strategy.

Next Steps

2.7 If approved by the Joint Committee then the iRSS will then require to be ratified by the six SESplan authorities. This process will take place during September and October 2020. In the interim the acting SESplan Manager will submit to the Scottish Government the iRSS agreed by the Joint Committee, making clear that the ratification process is still underway.

2.8 The Scottish Government will use the information submitted by the Scottish Local Authorities through the iRSS process to formulate a regional planning position statement. They will publish this in the autumn of 2020 to

encourage discussion. Following on from this the Scottish Government will publish their draft of NPF4 in September 2021.

Appendices

Appendix 1 indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for South East Scotland

Report Contact

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