

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/41/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 30 November 2017

Report Title: Draft Inverness East Development Brief

Report By: Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper seeks approval for a Draft Inverness East Development Brief (IEDB) to be published for public consultation. The Draft Development Brief sets out detailed planning guidance for new development in the eastern part of the City of Inverness.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. approve the Draft IEDB at **Appendix 2** for public consultation;
- ii. authorise officers to make illustrative and presentational changes prior to publication, in consultation and agreement with the chair of the Committee;
- iii. note that, from the point of approval by this Committee meeting, the Draft IEDB is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications;
- iv. note that comments received on the draft IEDB will be reported back to this Committee for its consideration, together with possible amendments prior to completion of procedures leading to its adoption as statutory supplementary guidance; and
- v. agree that the Council formally writes to Transport Scotland to set out its case for the B variant to be selected as the preferred route for the road.

3. Context and Purpose

- 3.1 The Council has made a long standing commitment that the land bounded by the A9, A96 and the Culloden suburbs should be developed as a series of City expansion areas. The land has been allocated in the Council's Development Plan for many years, including the most recently adopted Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (July 2015). Some of this land has been developed for example at the Campus, some has planning permission for development for example at Stratton but most remains undeveloped awaiting improvements in key infrastructure, notably strategic road connections and new schools. The IEDB's primary purpose is to set a detailed framework for how, when and where this land should be developed and ensure that the new neighbourhoods have adequate facilities and infrastructure.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 23 February 2017, the City of Inverness Area Committee noted the results of initial consultation on the issues affecting the Brief area and agreed a set of guiding principles for the area. Since that committee, officers have met with various stakeholders including Culloden Youth Forum to discuss the progress of the IEDB and gather further input. In addition, a workshop has been run in collaboration with HIE to gather input from staff at Inverness College UHI on how Inverness can become a [Magnet City](#). This feedback has been collated and analysed and the results used to inform the preparation of the Draft IEDB.
- 3.3 The A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton road project (better known as East Link) is integral to the pattern and timing of future land use within the IEDB area. Transport Scotland is forward funding the construction of East Link as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal. At its February and June 2017 meetings, the City of Inverness Area Committee agreed an initial Council stance and objectives in respect of Transport Scotland's A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton road project. This included a Council preference for the 'B variant' of the options presented passing to the east of the Ashton Farm buildings. The Draft IEDB has therefore been based on this decision as shown in the Indicative Masterplan which presents an optimum land use arrangement based on the B variant route. It is suggested that the Council formally write to Transport Scotland to set out its case for the B variant to be selected as the preferred route for the road.
- 3.4 More recently, on 31 October 2017 Transport Scotland announced its decision to progress 'Option 3' to the next detailed design stage. Option 3 connects the A96 Smithton roundabout with Culloden Road at Inshes. The previous A and B variants for this route have been retained pending further discussions and analysis.
- 3.5 Transport Scotland proposes a related but separate road scheme to dual the A96. Its route has reached Trunk Road Orders stage and for the purposes of the IEDB it has been assumed that the road will be completed as indicated in these Orders.

4. Content of the Draft Inverness East Development Brief

- 4.1 The Draft IEDB is set out at **Appendix 2** and shows how the "Guiding Principles" agreed at Committee in February 2017, and other related issues, have been incorporated and further developed into a more comprehensive land use planning framework. Section 1 sets out the following overarching **vision** that any development in the area would be expected to contribute towards:

- a series of high-quality, distinctive and well designed places, some

characterised by enclosure or mature trees and others by coast and mountain views;

- a well-connected and easy to move around place where pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised, people have access to good public transport and vehicles move in a safe way;
- a series of attractive and inviting places, including a central destination, for people to meet, socialise and do business, where communities have easy access to a usable natural environment and facilities; and
- places that promote vibrant diverse communities with access to a range of housing types and tenures and good quality space for business and leisure.

4.2 The IEDB plans for new City neighbourhoods that, when fully developed, will accommodate:

- around 3,000 new homes of which at least 25% will be affordable;
- at least 23.6 hectares of employment land;
- a new 'Ashton Centre' centred around a new high school with integral leisure and community facilities and adjoining commercial uses;
- 2 new primary schools, at Stratton east and Ashton west;
- a new, central 12 hectare district park laid out with formal play and sports provision;
- additional sports facilities at the campus; and
- new strategic connections for all forms of travel including a cycle superhighway, a park and ride facility and a possible rail halt.

4.3 The suggested distribution and layout of these components is illustrated on the Indicative Masterplan at **Appendix 1** and incorporated in the Draft IEDB at **Appendix 2**. In preparing this draft masterplan, officers have balanced a wide range of often competing interests, constraints and funding opportunities, along with the feedback gathered through consultation and distilled these into the proposed Masterplan.

4.4 The overriding aim has been to create a series of high quality well connected places that form an integral part of the City, where people and businesses choose to locate. These places must be physically, economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and viable and we believe the timing, mix and arrangement of land uses shown on the Masterplan meets all these objectives.

4.5 Specifically, Section 2 of the Draft IEDB describes how the Masterplan will help create high quality places by:

- ensuring land is made available for community facilities such as schools in parallel with the construction of new houses;
- making travel more direct, convenient and safer than in other urban neighbourhoods, particularly active travel by foot or cycle, whilst enabling improved connectivity of existing surrounding communities;
- providing community, commercial and recreational facilities in locations central and accessible to the catchments they serve and where they can achieve a critical mass to attract dual or multi purpose visits;
- making the place easy to navigate by creating legible, distinctive neighbourhoods which will have separate identities, a degree of physical separation and landmark buildings to orientate local residents and visitors;
- avoiding and increasing the set-back of development from flood risk areas;
- retaining and enhancing the area's natural assets, for example by retaining and

adding to its riparian woodland belts which provide shelter and a landscape framework;

- locating and orientating development to maximise the attractive outlook to existing/new greenspaces and to the Beaully and Moray Firths;
- promoting a wide variety of housing types and tenures within each neighbourhood to ensure each is socially inclusive and to provide choice; and
- promoting a range of residential and employment densities to sustain new businesses, shops, community facilities, public transport and other amenities.

- 4.6 At the local neighbourhood level these criteria and the vision set out above have been applied to create distinct '**character areas**' that are described in Section 4 of the draft IEDB. The first page of each character area section includes a list of criteria that detail how the vision for the Inverness East area is expected to be addressed within each 'character area'. This is accompanied by more detailed design guidance that outlines the Council expectations on matters such as: block structure, street hierarchy, street design, housing mix and tenure, active travel, frontages, density, parking, landscaping, building design and drainage.
- 4.7 The new neighbourhoods will need to be supported by new facilities and infrastructure including roads and paths, school, healthcare and recreational provision. To assist in the delivery of such facilities **developer contributions** will be sought to offset the impacts of particular developments. Section 6 of the Draft IEDB contains a schedule of expected developer contributions that would be applied to developments in this area. These are compatible with the Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance that was agreed by the November 2017 Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee. The developer contributions rates also correspond with the updated costs for new-build schools (within Inverness associated schools groups) approved by the Places Committee in August 2017. The Draft IEDB reflects an equitable approach to the distribution of infrastructure costs associated with the development proposed in line with central government guidance.
- 4.8 The precise **phasing** of development within the Brief area over its 25 year construction period will depend upon several variables. The Draft IEDB proposes phasing in Section 7 of **Appendix 2** that takes account of these circumstances, and outlines the triggers for the delivery of key items of infrastructure in parallel with development, including:
- the opening year of East Link;
 - the opening year of the related, dual carriageway section of the A96;
 - the buoyancy of the local property market for both housing and commercial uses;
 - the availability of public funding for schools, healthcare and leisure provision;
 - the availability of spare development and infrastructure capacity in other City expansion areas; and
 - the personal circumstances of landowners and their decision on if and when to release land for development.
- 4.9 For each phase of development, developers will generally be required to provide and/or make appropriate financial contributions towards the facilities and amenities necessary to support their developments, in accordance with the requirements in section 7 of the Brief - before being permitted to progress to the subsequent phase.
5. **Proposed Consultation Arrangements**

5.1 A minimum 6 week consultation period is proposed early in the New Year including at least one public exhibition of the proposals set out in the Draft IEDB. The event will be held at a venue local to the IEDB area.

6. Implications

6.1 Resource: Resources to complete statutory processes for the IEDB are allowed for within the service budget.

6.2 Legal: Later in the process of preparation the IEDB could be subject to legal challenge but due process will be followed in consultation on and adoption of the Brief and therefore the Council will have a defensible position in the event of any challenge.

6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): The IEDB will help to deliver future development and infrastructure at Inverness East. This will ultimately provide new and existing communities with housing, facilities and services.

6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: The principle of developing land at Inverness East has been subject to several rounds of environmental assessment including Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) informed through consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage and other consultation authorities. Suitable mitigation text has been incorporated into the wording of the Brief and the 'parent' Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. This requires developers to undertake further environmental and other assessment work.

6.5 Risk: There are no known significant risks associated with the Brief.

6.6 Gaelic: Gaelic headings will be added prior to publication.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 15 November 2017

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Development Plans

Background Papers:

1. Adopted Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan: July 2015
2. City of Inverness Area Committee Agendas and Minutes: February and June 2017

The above documents are available via: www.highland.gov.uk

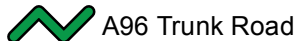
Inverness East Development Brief Indicative Masterplan



Development Brief Boundary



Road Hierarchy



Active Travel Links



East Link A-variant



Land Use

