



Economic Development and Employment Land

Introduction

Local Development Plans contain policies on economic development and employment land for the following reasons:

- To provide locations for new business and employment related development to take place, and support job creation
- To separate uses and activities which may not be compatible
- To support the historical, traditional industries within the area
- To control development in sensitive areas
- To provide a sustainable economic infrastructure, making best use of population, location and transport links
- To accommodate and facilitate new trends, technologies and growth sectors
- By doing so the planning process can create conditions which support economic growth, sustain and create jobs, and contribute to the well being and prosperity of the area.

Context

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires Local Authorities to ensure that there is a range and choice of sites and locations allocated in Development Plans in order to support economic growth.

The National Planning Framework (Scotland's spatial growth strategy) identifies Life Sciences; renewables; tourism, food and drink as important sectors for Moray.

Moray's reliance on the defence sector was exposed by the Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2010, although the closure of RAF Kinloss was to some extent offset by the relocation of an Army regiment.

The Moray Economic Strategy (MES) was produced in response to this situation, and has put forward a series of actions intended to attract and create new jobs; diversify the economy; retain young people and increase average earnings. Emerging sectors such as Life Sciences and Renewable Energy along with traditional food, drink and tourism sectors will be pursued. Enhanced digital connectivity will improve prospects for more rural areas, allowing employment opportunities to take advantage of location and environment, and supporting lifestyle choices of where to work.

MES has now been adopted by Community Planning Partners as the framework for promoting economic growth, and has identified spatial/geographic roles across Moray which are reflected in the Local Development Plan.

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| Elgin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Primary Centre for investment ● City Centre redevelopment ● Promotion of Barmuckity Business Park ● Elgin West Business Park ● Central Area office provision ● 25 ha of additional employment land ● Life science centre/Moray College Campus re-development (as part of an Inverness to Elgin “life sciences corridor”) |
| Lossiemouth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop/expand the role of tourism |
| Buckie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quayside facilities to support offshore renewables ● East Moray Science and Business campus ● Central Area office provision ● Additional employment land at Harbour and March Road |
| Forres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Area office provision ● Additional 10ha of employment land ● Forres Enterprise Park (as part of an Inverness to Elgin “life sciences corridor”) |
| Keith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gateway role in Tourism, based on language and musical heritage ● Improved coach drop off facilities |
| Speyside | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tourism/visitor facilities ● Visitor accommodation/Quality Hotel ● Town Heritage Trails |

The formation of new industrial estates, or business related development will require to satisfy the following requirements. Where appropriate, further details will be contained in site designation texts in settlement statements.

Road Access: Junctions with the public road and internal service roads should be built to Moray Council standards for adoption, and provision made for on site and off site parking. Layout proposals should provide for pedestrian and cycle links and provide options for linking with public transport services (eg by provision of bus stops/laybys/shelters as deemed appropriate).

Drainage: All foul drainage must connect to the public sewer, with surface water drainage incorporating appropriate sustainable urban drainage (SUDS).

Landscaping: Requirements for individual sites will be specified in more detail in the relevant settlement designation. Proposals should address issues such as screening; noise barriers; treatment at boundaries/frontages; general visual appearance of the site. Details for maintenance arrangements will be required for landscaped areas.

Design: Where site frontages are highly visible (eg onto a main road, or town gateway site) a high standard of design for front elevations; layout of yard; storage areas; parking must be a consideration.

Designing Out Crime: New estates should be designed so that they provide deterrents to crime, by ensuring sufficient lighting, planting and boundary treatments. Consultation will be carried out with Police Scotland for new proposals. Examples of best practice will be provided to applicants at pre-application stage.

Natural Environment: Provision should be made to ensure appropriate protection and enhancement of the natural environment, and integration with natural heritage on adjacent lands.

Waste Management: Provision should be made for the collection, separation and management of waste materials.

Justification

Development of new employment land is an investment in economic infrastructure. It must be provided to a standard that will attract and accommodate industrial and business activities, and provide a degree of amenity.

Compliance with the above criteria should ensure that development of new sites is looked at in a comprehensive way that satisfies all technical and design requirements. Individual proposals will then be expected to comply with an overall plan and not prejudice subsequent proposals.

It will also ensure that visual appearance does not have a negative impact on the wider area.



Policy ED2 Business Uses on Industrial Estates

Recognised and purpose built industrial estates will primarily be reserved for uses defined by Classes 4 (business), 5 (general) and 6 (storage and distribution) of the Use Classes Order 1997. Some uses within Class 5 may be considered inappropriate for environmental reasons (eg noise, dust, vibration, fumes) and will not be permitted.

Shops and outright retail activities will not be allowed; the only retailing permissible will be that which is considered to be ancillary to some other principal use (e.g. manufacture; wholesale). For the purposes of this policy, "ancillary" is taken as being linked directly to the existing use of the unit, and comprising no more than 10% of the total floor area up to a total of 1,000 sq metres (gross).

Class 2 (Financial, professional services), Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure), and activities which do not fall within a specific use class (sui generis) will be considered in relation to their suitability to the industrial estate concerned, and the supply of serviced employment land.

Justification

There is a shortage of readily available serviced land, and this policy seeks to ensure that sites are used primarily for the role that was intended i.e. to provide land for employment creating activities. It also restricts non conforming uses, including visiting members of the public, where traffic generation and pedestrian movements may cause conflict with the primary use of the site. This approach should also help retain town centres as principal retail areas.

Policy ED3 Business Parks

Business Park designations are made to accommodate uses which require a higher amenity/environmental setting than is available on traditional industrial estates, and may include more "commercial" activities such as offices; call centres or high technology uses. A high standard of building design and landscaping would be expected, and development that impacts upon the high amenity value of a business park will not be permitted.

Business parks have been identified at Forres Enterprise Park; Elgin West; Buckie High Street, which will be the site reserved for the East Moray Science Campus, until this concept is further developed.

Elgin Barmuckity will be a mixed site, accommodating business park uses in addition to more general industrial use.

Justification

This policy seeks to provide locations where a high quality environment is available, and to retain these sites as locations for new, "clean" employment sectors. This will assist in the attraction of inward investment, and provide a location for non-retail, commercial enterprises who do not require a town centre location.

Moray Economic Strategy has identified Life Sciences as a sector to pursue, and Inverness to Elgin has been identified as a "life sciences corridor" in the National Planning Framework. Part of Forres Enterprise Park has been designated as an Enterprise Area for this purpose.

Policy ED4 Existing Business Areas

Within existing business areas, business development, redevelopment, or expansion (excluding retail) will be acceptable subject to technical and environmental considerations, and compatibility with neighbouring uses. These areas tend to have a long established usage (identified in settlement statements as Established or Mixed Use) and the expansion or introduction of non business uses will not be permitted, except where the total redevelopment of the site is proposed.

Justification

The policy seeks to ensure the retention of sites that have a long established business use, where the continuation of this principal use is appropriate. The introduction of non conforming uses (eg Housing) could through time prejudice the principal activity.

This approach will establish the primacy of the business use of the site, and the policy allows the consideration of alternative uses only when the whole site is involved.

Policy ED5 Opportunity Sites

The town and village statements will identify “opportunity sites” which present the opportunity for appropriate alternative uses in the event of a proposal to re-develop. These are often vacant or derelict sites that are no longer required for their original or previous uses. These “brownfield” sites are an alternative to utilising undeveloped, “greenfield” land. Any new proposal should be compatible with surrounding uses.

The historical uses of “opportunity sites” could require contaminated land assessments to be carried out, with remediation prior to re-development.

Any uses that are given should be viewed as illustrative examples only, and not taken as a definitive list of acceptable activities.

Justification

This policy seeks to promote sustainable development and encourage the use of previously used land which is now vacant or derelict.

Policy ED6**Digital Communications**

Proposals for communications equipment and infrastructure (including masts, antennas, relay stations, cabling, etc) related to mobile phone or broadband provision must demonstrate that the following options have been considered in the lead up to their site selection and designing of base stations:

- mast or site sharing;
- installation on buildings or other existing structures;
- installing the smallest suitable equipment, commensurate with technological requirements;
- concealing or disguising masts, antennas, equipment housing and cable runs using design and camouflage techniques where appropriate; and
- installation of ground-based masts.

Planning applications for specific developments must also include:

- a description of the siting options and design options that have been considered which would satisfy operational requirements – and the reasons for the chosen solution;
- details of the design, including height, materials and all components of the proposal;
- a demonstration of how the proposal is sited and designed to keep environmental impacts to a minimum;
- details of any proposed landscaping and screen planting, where appropriate;
- an explanation of how the proposed equipment fits into the wider communications network;
- an assessment of any visual impact and the cumulative effects of the proposed development in combination with existing equipment in the area (and other committed developments yet to be installed);
- a declaration that the equipment and installation is designed to be in full compliance with the appropriate ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure to radiofrequency radiation.

Justification

Modern telecommunication systems continue to grow rapidly, and are an integral part of business operations and lifestyles. The availability of, and access to, these technologies will allow Moray to remain economically competitive, and facilitate business opportunities in rural areas.

Often the equipment has to be located on high ground or buildings, or be in proximity to roads and railways. The visual impact of proposals on the landscape, environment and scenery must be minimised wherever possible.

The health and safety level of radio frequency emissions are controlled by other regulatory bodies, and are not deemed to be a valid “planning consideration”. Accordingly they will not be taken into account when considering proposals.

New business developments, or extensions to existing industrial/economic activities in the countryside, will be permitted if they meet all of the following criteria:

- a) There is a locational justification for the site concerned, particularly if there is serviced industrial land available in a nearby settlement
- b) There is capacity in the local infrastructure to accommodate the proposals, particularly road access, or that mitigation measures can be achieved
- c) Account is taken of environmental considerations, including the impact on natural and built heritage designations, with appropriate protection for the natural environment; the use of enhanced opportunities for natural heritage integration into adjoining land.
- d) There is careful control over siting, design, landscape and visual impact, and emissions. In view of the rural location, standard industrial estate/urban designs may not be appropriate.

Proposals involving the rehabilitation of existing properties (e.g. farm steadings) to provide business premises will be encouraged, provided road access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

Where noise emissions or any other aspect is considered to be incompatible with surrounding uses, there will be a presumption to refuse.

Outright retail activities will be considered against retail policies, and impacts on established shopping areas, but ancillary retailing (eg farm shop) will generally be acceptable.

Justification

The Council would wish to support economic development and to sustain employment in rural areas, by granting approval to new business proposals that fit into the environment and can be adequately serviced. In addition, there are already many long established, traditional business operations in rural areas, (e.g. distilleries) which may have expansion requirements and for whom re-location is not a realistic option.

Policy ED8**Tourism Facilities and Accommodation**

The Council will generally support proposals which contribute towards Moray's role as a tourist area. All proposals will require to

- a) Be compatible with policies to protect and enhance the built and natural environment
- b) Provide adequate infrastructure arrangements (e.g. roads, parking water, drainage), and
- c) Demonstrate a locational need for a specific site.

Developments built as holiday accommodation (e.g. caravans or chalets) should be retained for that purpose and not become permanent residences. Conditions will be applied to planning consents to control this aspect.

For caravans or chalets in countryside areas, visual impact and access arrangements will be important considerations. Proposals must demonstrate what landscaping measures will be put in place to assist in integrating the site into its rural setting, in addition to providing for on-site amenity within the layout. Rigid, formal arrangements should be avoided, with stances/pitches separated to provide discrete, screened locations.

Provision within sites for touring caravans, and tents will be encouraged.

Justification

Tourism is an important part of the Moray economy and is identified as a target sector in the Economic Strategy. In particular the need for additional hotel accommodation is recognised and forms part of the action plan for investments. It provides jobs and in particular supports rural areas. Much of Morays attraction is its environment, with heritage, scenery and outdoor activities being key features.

The Council would wish to build on this asset and maximise economic and employment opportunities. However, whilst wishing to encourage and support development within this sector, care must be taken to ensure that the assets which create this attraction are not damaged by inappropriate or unsympathetic development.



Proposals for roadside tourism signs must comply with the Council's current policy.

Justification

Promotion of tourist attractions and directional information, are important aspects of supporting Tourism as a sector of the local economy, particularly with a large segment of car borne visitors.

There is also a need to ensure that roadsides do not become cluttered with road signs, thereby detracting from the scenery, confusing drivers and prejudicing road safety.

Thus there is a presumption against outright advertisements, in favour of a much more standardised directional/information signage promoting only those establishments which have reached a minimum quality threshold as assessed by Visit Scotland.



