Transportation & Accessibility

Introduction

Local Development Plans contain transport policies for the following reasons:

- To support the reduction of emissions from transport sources.

- To promote sustainable transport by providing infrastructure for public transport, cycling and walking and through appropriate traffic management.

- To ensure new developments are best located so that they are accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport.

- To maintain the safe and efficient movement of traffic

- To enhance wider accessibility by improving road links, promoting rail freight and diversifying the role of Moray's harbours.

- To provide adequate car parking for residents, customers and visitors.

- To safeguard the cycle network, long distance walking routes, active travel routes, core paths and other access routes from adverse impacts and where possible enhance these through the development management process.

The approach to transport therefore seeks to provide the context for economic and sound development whilst at the same time providing opportunities for sustainable travel.

Context

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) seeks to support a pattern of development which reduces the need to travel, facilitates travel by public transport, facilitates freight movement by rail or water, and provides safe and convenient opportunities for walking and cycling. SPP provides guidance on maintaining safe and efficient movement of strategic long distance traffic on the strategic road network. It also supports the provision of roadside facilities and provides guidance on the provision of freight facilities, ports and airports .

Designing Streets is the Scottish Government policy statement on street design and marks a change of emphasis towards place-making and away from a system focused on the dominance of cars. Designing Streets does not support a standards-based approach to street design but requires a design led approach which takes account of site specific requirements. The street design guidance set out in Designing Streets can be a material consideration in determining planning applications. Street Design should meet the six qualities of successful places

- Street design should respond to local context to deliver **distinctive** places.

- Streets should be designed to be **safe and pleasant** places.

- Streets should be **easy to move around** for all users and connect well to existing movement networks.

- Street layout and detail should encourage positive interaction and be **welcoming** for all members of the community.

- Street design should be **adaptable** to accommodate future change.

- Street design should be **resource efficient** and consider orientation, integration of sustainable drainage and use attractive durable materials that can be easily maintained.

The Council has also developed its second Local Transport Strategy that aims to improve connections and accessibility and provide a safe, integrated, reliable and affordable transport system which is inclusive and supports economic development and the needs of local communities whilst safeguarding the environment.

The Transport Strategy stresses the difficulties faced by Moray on account of its peripheral and rural situation. This means that there will be a continuing emphasis on road transport and providing necessary infrastructure whilst also promoting opportunities for public transport, cycling and walking.

The Plan therefore requires to provide the landuse context for the promotion of the transport strategy. This should also address the need to provide more development opportunities that make best use of current transport provision.

The Moray Core Paths Plan, adopted in 2011, provides a framework of "key" paths providing reasonable access throughout Moray for visitors and locals. Through the Local Development Plan core paths and other important routes and access rights are protected. The Moray Core Paths Plan will be subject to review during the currency of the Local Development Plan.

Policy T1   Transport Infrastructure Improvements

The Council will promote the improvement of road, rail, air and sea routes in Moray and priority will be given to:

a) dualling the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness route with early delivery of bypasses for settlements prioritised.

b) improving the A95 (Keith to Grantown) route.

c) Improving A941 (Lossiemouth to Elgin to Craigellachie) and A98 (Fochabers to Cullen) routes. Proposals must avoid or address any adverse effect on the integrity of Loch Spynie SPA or the River Spey SAC including hydrological and water quality impacts on habitat or disturbance to species.

d) improving the Aberdeen to Inverness railway for passengers and freight by providing route and service enhancement.

e) improving harbour facilities for freight and leisure including the diversification of the commercial harbour at Buckie for offshore renewables. Harbour improvement works must avoid or address any adverse effect on the integrity of the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation through noise or vibration disturbance to bottlenose dolphins, cumulative increase in vessel movements, or through dredging and disposal operations.

f) improving access to air facilities, at Aberdeen and Inverness, in particular through public transport, and the establishment of a railway station at Dalcross.

g) improving the transport network within Elgin where there is evidence of positive economic benefits including release of sites designated in the local development plan.

Proposals that compromise the implementation of these priorities will not be acceptable.

Justification

Moray's peripheral and rural location within the UK and Europe puts great emphasis on the need to improve transport infrastructure for improved accessibility to services and markets.

The emphasis is on the improvement of the key road links that serve the vast majority of Moray's current requirements for transport. The Scottish Government has announced dualling of the A9 and A96 by 2030. Moray Council welcomes this announcement and will collaborate with Transport Scotland and others to ensure early delivery of key sections of the A96 trunk road within Moray. It will also be important to ensure that in tandem with dualling of the A9 improvements to the A95 are brought forward to improve links to this important artery south. In addition, efforts should be made to improve the rail links within Moray. Transport Scotland and Network Rail have identified improvements as part of the Strategic Transport Projects Review and Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy. Moray Council welcomes proposed rail improvements and will safeguard and support improvements by these agencies. Support is also given to improving and diversifying the area's harbours, and improving access to the airports in Aberdeen and Inverness.

Improvements to the strategic transport infrastructure in Moray are anticipated through various studies, strategies and projects being developed by Hitrans; Transport Scotland; Network Rail and others.

| **Policy T2** | **PROVISION OF ACCESS** |

The Council will require that new development proposals are designed to provide the highest level of access for end users including residents, visitors, and deliveries appropriate to the type of development and location. Development must meet the following criteria:

- Proposals must maximise connections and routes for pedestrian and cyclists, including links to active travel and core path routes, to reduce travel demands and provide a safe and realistic choice of access.

- Provide access to public transport services and bus stop infrastructure where appropriate.

- Provide appropriate vehicle connections to the development, including appropriate number and type of junctions.

- Provide safe entry and exit from the development for all road users including ensuring appropriate visibility for vehicles at junctions and bends.

- Provide appropriate mitigation/modification to existing transport networks where required to address the impacts of new development on the safety and efficiency of the transport network. This may include but would not be limited to, the following measures, passing places, road widening, junction enhancement, bus stop infrastructure and drainage infrastructure. A number of potential road improvements have been identified in association with the development of sites the most significant of these have been shown on the Settlement Map as TSPs.

- Proposals must avoid or mitigate against any unacceptable adverse landscape or environmental impacts.

Developers should give consideration to aspirational core paths (under Policy 2 of the Core Paths Plan) and active travel audits when preparing proposals.

New development proposals should enhance permeability and connectivity, and ensure that opportunities for sustainable and active travel are protected and improved.

Justification

Policy supports the creation of sustainable communities accessible by a range of transport modes including viable alternatives to private vehicles. Pedestrian movement, cycling and public transport routes will be a priority. At the early design stages consideration should be given to the likely desire routes (public transport, schools, and facilities) which shall inform the layout and design of the development. Inclusion of aspirational core paths and active travel audit proposals will provide new links that have a focus on facilitating active travel and sustainable transport helping to maximise new development's accessibility and connections to existing networks and facilities.

The street design guidance within Designing Streets can be used as a material consideration in determining applications. Proposals must incorporate the principles of "Designing Streets" and the Councils supplementary guidance "People and Paces – A design Guide for Moray". Consideration should also be given to any active travel audits in place. For smaller developments in the countryside the Councils guidance "Transportation Requirements in Small Developments in Rural Parts of Moray" should be considered. The Planning Authority will be realistic about the likely availability of public transport services in rural areas. Innovative solutions such as demand responsive public transport and small scale park and ride facilities at nodes on bus corridors are encouraged to reduce travel demands by private vehicles.

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The practicality of use of public transport in more remote rural areas will be taken into account however applicants should consider innovative solutions for access to public transport.

When considered appropriate by the planning authority developers will be asked to submit a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

Significant travel generating proposals will only be supported where:

- Direct links to walking and cycling networks are available;

- Access to public transport networks would involve walking no more than 400m;

- It would not have a detrimental effect on the capacity of the strategic road and/or rail network; and

- A Transport Assessment identifies satisfactory mechanisms for meeting sustainable transport requirements and no detrimental impact to the performance of the overall network.

Access proposals that have a significant adverse impact on the surrounding landscape and environment that cannot be mitigated will be refused.

It is important to ensure that new development is served by appropriate infrastructure. The access arrangements should be suitable to the proposed development and ensure that there are adequate safety provisions and provision for public transport, cycling and pedestrians. Road access design should be carefully designed to fit in with the surrounding landscape and environment. Where the access to a site is unmade or a private track it may require to be surfaced to a suitable standard and require the provision of passing places or be widened accordingly.

Sufficient information must be provided with planning applications to enable a reasoned decision to be made in assessing transport impact of new development.

| Policy T3 | **ROADSIDE FACILITIES** |

The Council will approve applications for roadside facilities if there is a specific locational need; no adverse impact on the built and natural environment that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated; and where appropriate access, parking and safety standards can be met.

Justification

Roadside service facilities ranging from comprehensive service areas to lay-bys, provide an important safety feature particularly for long distance travellers. They can also provide an input into the local economy. Therefore where environmental access, parking and safety issues can be satisfactorily resolved there should be a positive approach to their provision.

Policy T4   **SAFEGUARDING BUS, RAIL AND HARBOUR FACILITIES**

The Council will promote the improvement of bus, rail and harbour services and facilities within Moray. Development proposals that may compromise the viability of these facilities will not be acceptable.

Where proposals have the potential to impact on the rail network this should be assessed and adverse impacts mitigated.

Diversification of commercial harbours for freight and as operations and maintenance base for offshore renewables will be encouraged. Harbours are identified within settlement statements along with the uses that will be supported.

Justification

The vision for Moray includes to have good efficient transport links to the rest of the country and to reduce the number of journeys made by car. Therefore, it is appropriate to safeguard existing railway and bus stations, rail freight facilities and harbours from development that may compromise their viability. Notwithstanding the above there are likely to be opportunities, particularly related to the area's commercial and leisure harbours, where more diversified development would be acceptable.

Policy T5   **PARKING STANDARDS**

Proposals for development must conform with the Council's current policy on parking standards.

Justification

The application of parking standards related to development assists in the implementation of appropriate traffic management, and in the availability of on-street car parking provision. The standards specify where there is scope to provide commuted payments as an alternative to parking on site, as well as the need for parking for commercial vehicles.

| Policy T6 | **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT** |

There is a presumption against new accesses onto a trunk road, and Transport Scotland will consider the case for such junctions where nationally significant economic growth or regeneration benefits can be demonstrated.

There will also be a presumption against new direct access onto other main/key routes (the A941 and A98) except where required to support the provisions of the development plan. Moray Council will consider the case for such junctions where significant regional economic growth benefits can be demonstrated. Consideration will be given to the traffic impact, appropriate road design and traffic management requirements.

Justification

Scottish Planning Policy details that new junctions onto the trunk road network will normally not be acceptable, but the case for such junctions will be considered where nationally significant economic growth or where regeneration benefits can be demonstrated. There is a national road classification system that aids the efficient management of the road network. Within Moray the A95 and A96 are classed as trunk roads and the A941 and A98 are classed as strategic routes. The road classification and vehicle speeds will be used to assist the assessment of planning applications, in particular to ensure the safety and free flow of traffic on the public road and for the consideration of the appropriate road design and traffic management requirements. The roads classification will be used when considering appropriate traffic management options/scheme to optimise the performance of specific roads.

Policy T7   **SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTION OF WALKING, CYCLING, AND EQUESTRIAN NETWORKS**

The Council will promote the improvement of the walking, cycling, and equestrian networks within Moray. Priority will be given to the paths network including Core Paths and the wider Moray Paths Network. There are several long distance routes that cross Moray including the Speyside Way, Dava Way, Moray Coastal Trail and Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle Route.

Development proposals that would have an unacceptable impact on access rights, core paths, rights of way, long distance routes and other access routes that cannot be adequately mitigated will not be permitted. Where a proposal will affect any of these, proposals must:

- incorporate the route within the site layout and the routes amenity value must be maintained or enhanced; or

- provide alternative access that is no less attractive and is safe and convenient for the public to use.

Justification

The encouragement of cycling and walking both for work and leisure is a national and local priority. There are clear benefits in terms of overall sustainability through a reduction in the use of fuel and in the improvement of the health of the area's population.

Where appropriate the Council will promote and seek improvement to the linkages to the paths network and to the accessibility of the paths network.

Support will be given to proposals which seek to improve the accessibility of the paths network and proposal that improve the network by creating new or improved linkages.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that existing public access is protected and future development does not restrict future opportunities for the extension of the public access network.

Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 statutory access rights apply to most land and inland water in Scotland. People only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by respecting people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and Scotland's environment. The Council has a legal duty to assert and protect any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may be reasonably exercised. A duty also placed on Local Authorities under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is to prepare a Core Paths Plan. The Moray Core Paths Plan was adopted in 2011 and provides a framework of "key" paths for both visitors and locals providing reasonable access throughout Moray.

Planning authorities should consider access issues and should protect core and other important routes and access rights when making decisions on applications.