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**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
30 MAY 2017**

**SUBJECT: MORAY EMPLOYMENT LAND AUDIT 2017**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To report to the Committee a summary of the key findings of the Moray Employment Land Audit 2017 and ask the Committee to agree the Moray Employment Land Audit 2017.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the review and preparation of Local Development Plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:**

- (i) to note the employment land supply in Moray, as summarised in Section 4 and Appendix 1 of the report; and**
- (ii) the finalised Moray Employment Land Audit 2017.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires that the supply of marketable employment sites be regularly reviewed. The aim is to ensure there is sufficient supply of land to meet current and anticipated market requirements. SPP requires Planning Authorities to ensure that there is a range and choice of marketable sites and locations for businesses allocated in the Local Development Plan (LDP). The levels of effective/marketable employment land and take up of land are National Headline Indicators returned annually in the Planning Performance Framework to the Scottish Government.

- 3.2 The employment land audit has three key functions;-
- To demonstrate the availability of a range and choice of marketable employment sites;
  - To provide an overview of the supply and availability of employment land across Moray Council area; and
  - To provide an evidence base for the monitoring and review of policies and proposals within the LDP.
- 3.3 The draft audit was sent to internal and external consultees and comments invited by 19 April 2017. Comments were received from the Council's Transportation Service, and Scottish Water. These provided updates on infrastructure capacity and provision. Sites have also been discussed with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Council's Estates Manager. The discussion and comments have resulted in several sites being moved to the constrained supply which has largely been due to a better understanding of ownership constraints including unwilling sellers and/or owners seeking alternative higher value uses.
- 3.4 The audit includes four categories of land supply.
- 3.5 **Established Land Supply** – this includes all undeveloped land allocated for industrial/business/employment use in the adopted LDP or land that has a valid planning approval for these uses.
- 3.6 **Marketable/Effective Land Supply** – this is land that as well as meeting business requirements, has a secure planning status, can be serviced within 5 years, and is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport as defined in SPP.
- 3.7 **Constrained Land Supply** – this is land that is not considered developable within 5 years due to issues such as planning difficulties, ownership issues, infrastructure provision and physical constraints.
- 3.8 **Immediately Available Land Supply** – this land has planning permission, is serviced and has no major constraints to immediate development.

#### 4. **FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The 2017 audit identifies that as of 1 January 2017 there was 156.33 hectares of land (net) within the Established Land Supply. This is a decrease of 10.6 hectares since 2016 due to construction activity, identification of land for alternative uses and removal of sites that no longer have planning consent. The emphasis on employment land continues to be within the five main settlements with more limited supply in the "rest of Moray".
- 4.2 80.62 hectares of land (net) across 17 sites is classed as Marketable/Effective. This is a decrease of 18.79 hectares since 2016. This decrease is due to better knowledge of constraints which has led to some sites being classed as constrained, this has mainly been where landowners

are unwilling to sell and/or are seeking alternative higher value uses. The distribution of Marketable/Effective reflects the settlement hierarchy within the LDP. The audit highlights that whilst there is reasonable area available the number and choice of sites across all settlements is limited.

- 4.3 With the development of the Barmuckity Strategic Development Framework the development is considered to be economically viable and deliverable within five years. This has meant that land at Barmuckity has moved from constrained to marketable/effective which has improved supply levels in Elgin, however further land will require to be identified in the next LDP to improve choice and enhance supply. In Forres, investigations are continuing into the potential for new land to be allocated at Waterford, particularly given the proposed new road link between the A96 and Waterford Road. At Buckie, the Council had progressed the acquisition of a site on March Road. The site will be developed on a phased basis, as demand and funding dictates, with the first phase expected to start on site this summer - the Council has submitted a planning application for the site infrastructure.
- 4.4 The amount of land Immediately Available is 18.07 hectares (net) across 6 sites. This is a decrease of 0.78 hectares compared to 2016; and a reduction in the number of sites. This is due to sites at Forres being removed from the supply as planning consent has lapsed, site at Coularbank Lossiemouth being under construction and sites at Westerton Keith being temporarily occupied. The shortage of serviced land ready for development is an issue identified in the Moray Economic Strategy and within The Moray Council Industrial Portfolio Annual Report 2016 reported to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee on 28 June 2016 (para 13 of the minute refers). In recent years the Council has provided new serviced sites ready for development in Elgin and Keith. In addition it has recently acquired a large area of land at March Road, Buckie and will shortly begin construction of access and infrastructure to create serviced development sites.
- 4.5 75.79 hectares (net) across 18 sites is classed as constrained. This means around 48% of the Established Supply has some form of constraint that is likely to prevent the land being developed in the next five years. This is an increase of 11.2 ha compared to 2016. As discussed above this increase is due to a better knowledge of ownership constraints.
- 4.6 1.23 hectares of land was developed in the year to 1 January 2017. This includes development at Dunelands (Findhorn), Waterford (Forres), Coularbank (Lossiemouth) and the brewery at Mulben. At 1 January 2017 there was 3.18 hectares of land under construction. This included land at Glen Moray Distillery (Elgin), Coularbank (Lossiemouth) and the maltings at Buckie. This is a reduction in activity in comparison to previous years, however it is noted this does not reflect all market activity such as expansion of existing buildings or redevelopment of existing sites/buildings.
- 4.7 A summary of the key findings and commentary on supply in settlements is attached at **Appendix 1**. A copy of the full audit is available on the Members Portal and copies have been made available in the Members lounge.

- 4.8 Officers are working with HIE Moray to identify a small number of rural inward investment sites. These will be identified in the next LDP and marketed by HIE Moray to attract inward investment for large scale employment use.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015 – 2017**

Moray 2026 identifies sustainable economic development as its top priority. The Employment Land Audit is a key part of monitoring the effectiveness of the provision and supply of employment land.

Ensuring sufficient provision of employment land provides opportunities for new or expanding businesses.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The preparation of the annual Employment Land Audit is a requirement of SPP to monitor the effectiveness of the LDP and ensure an effective supply of employment land is maintained.

(c) **Financial implications**

None.

(d) **Risk Implications**

None.

(e) **Staffing Implications**

Preparation of the annual Employment Land Audit is part of the workload of the Planning and Development section.

(f) **Property**

The Employment Land Audit includes industrial estates and sites owned by the Council. The Council Estates section was consulted on the draft audit in April.

(g) **Equalities**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the report is to inform the Committee on monitoring of land supply.

(h) **Consultations**

Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure), Head of Development Services, Legal Services Manager (Property & Contracts), Equal Opportunities Officer, Estates Manager and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer).

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 SPP requires that the supply of marketable employment sites be regularly reviewed to ensure there is sufficient supply of land to meet current and anticipated market requirements. Levels of marketable employment land and take up are National Headline Indicators submitted within the Planning Performance Framework.**
- 6.2 The Employment Land Audit 2017 identifies that there is 80.62 hectares (net) of marketable/effective employment land, of which 18.07 hectares (net) is immediately available. Issues are identified with the supply of serviced land for immediate development and the restricted choice of sites across settlements.**
- 6.3 Committee is asked to note the key findings of the Employment Land Audit 2017 and agree the finalised Employment Land Audit 2017.**

Author of Report:

Rowena MacDougall, Planning Officer

Background Papers:

Ref: