

Main Issues Report – Q&A

What is SESplan and why do we have a strategic development plan?

- SESplan, the name for the South East Scotland Strategic Development Planning Authority was set up in 2008 when the Scottish Government introduced the requirement for Strategic Development Plans to be produced for each of Scotland's four largest city regions.
- SESplan's job is to prepare the Strategic Development Plan for the Edinburgh City Region, which covers the council areas of City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, the southern half of Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.
- Strategic Development Plans are about long-term planning, setting a vision and spatial strategy for the city region area. They focus on matters which cross local authority boundaries such as housing, economic growth, green networks and infrastructure.

What is a MIR?

- A Main Issues Report or MIR is the first official stage in the preparation of a new planning document, either a Local Development Plan or a Strategic Development Plan. It is not itself a plan or draft plan. The aim of a Main Issues Report is to identify the most important challenges an area faces such as population growth, housing demand and environment concerns, and set out options on how to best deal with these challenges.
- SESplan has recently approved for consultation (subject to member council ratification) a Main Issues Report for the second Strategic Development Plan.

Why do we have to write a new plan so soon after the old one?

- SDPs have to be prepared and reviewed at least every five years to make sure they are responsive and can lead and manage change. The law requires a new Strategic Development Plan to be submitted within four years of the approval of the last one.
- For SESplan, the last plan was approved in June 2013 so the next plan has to be ready for submission by June 2017.

How will SDP2 affect councils' LDPs?

- The six Council areas which make up the SESplan region are all at different stages in preparing their Local Development Plans. These LDPs are responding to the direction set in the first Strategic Development Plan. When finalised, these LDPs will set the physical sites for development and will be used in the assessment of planning applications.

- The second Strategic Development Plan is not expected to be approved until late 2017 or early 2018, after most of the member authorities will have their new Local Development Plans in place. For most Councils, their second Local Development Plans, as opposed to the ones currently being prepared, will then have to be in line with the second Strategic Development Plan.

What are the main issues facing the region?

The main issues facing the region are the amount, scale and direction of development over the next twenty years and how infrastructure and services are needed to support the development. Within the SESplan Main Issues Report these are set out as 15 issues, as follows:

- a. The vision for south east Scotland to 2037
- b. The spatial strategy for south east Scotland
- c. Location and identification of significant business clusters
- d. The visitor economy
- e. Resource extraction
- f. Housing land in south east Scotland
- g. Housing land in City of Edinburgh
- h. Generous supply of housing land
- i. Affordable housing
- j. Strategic green networks
- k. Transport policy
- l. Prioritising strategic transport infrastructure
- m. Infrastructure delivery
- n. Funding transport infrastructure through developer contributions
- o. Assessing the five year effective land supply

Does the plan allocate sites or set housing numbers?

A Strategic Development Plan sits at a level above Local Development Plans. Whilst Local Development Plans have the role of specifying actual sites for housing development, Strategic Development Plans set the number of houses needed and general areas for development.

Does this mean more housing on top of what is already being proposed in my Council's Local Development Plan?

- At this Main Issues Report Stage specific numbers of houses in each Council area are not set but options are given, including a preferred option, as to the overall figure for the region. The Strategic Development Plan, when prepared, will set housing figures by area.

- For some areas in the Strategic Development Plan this will mean that the number of houses already proposed in their Local Development Plan are sufficient, in other areas there is potentially a requirement for further allocation of housing over what is proposed in the current Local Development Plan at that time.

Why should we plan for more houses when services, schools and roads can't cope with what is already here?

- National policy sets out that one of the key roles of a Strategic Development Plan is to identify the number of houses required over 20 years (2017 to 2037 for Strategic Development Plan 2).
- To do this a range of sources are used including economic and population forecasts to assess the need and demand for housing. The identified need and demand is used alongside the consideration of environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, public transport accessibility and a range of other factors to determine the level of housing which is required.
- The Strategic Development Plan then sets a general direction for how this housing growth is best accommodated in relation to access to public transport, jobs and other services whilst looking to protect the most important environmental assets. These are not simple or easy choices to make and this is why it is important for the public to be involved.
- We need to plan for significant growth and avoid overcrowding and an unstable economy. If we did not plan for more houses it could lead to ever increasing house prices, overcrowding and economic decline. By having a plan we have the means to protect the most valuable environments from development, have methods to ensure development is close to public transport reducing congestion and a means to ensure services can be planned alongside development.
- Strategic Development Plans are not just about housing they are about a rounded strategy. The plan needs to ensure the region is sustainable, economically successful and that deprivation and inequality are reduced. Plans also need to be specific to their area and recognise what makes a place like the Edinburgh City Region so desirable in the first place ensuring it is protected and enhanced.
- The Main Issues Report for the Edinburgh City Region asks many of these difficult questions and provides options on how best to deal with them. It gives everyone the opportunity to explore these issues and influence how they will be dealt with.

What is the plan timeframe?

Analysis of representations and preparation of the Proposed Strategic Development Plan 2 will begin in autumn 2015. The proposed plan will be available in 2016 with submission of the finalised Plan in spring 2017.

How does this affect the Local Development Plan timescales of the member authorities?

All member authorities are at different stages of preparing their Local Development Plans. These plans are written in response to the first Strategic Development Plan which was approved in 2013. It is most likely Strategic Development Plan 2 will not be approved until late 2017/ early 2018. For Local Authorities the second round of Local Development Plans will respond to Strategic Development Plan 2.

Will this influence decisions and appeals on planning applications?

At this current Main Issues Report stage, no decisions have been made about the content of Strategic Development Plan 2. The Development Plan for each of the local authorities will remain as their adopted Local Plans and the approved SDP1.

What does this mean for the Green Belt?

The Main Issues Report presents a series of options for how growth is accommodated within the region. These options consider if growth should be accommodated where demand is highest, if growth should be dispersed to limit green belt change or if there is a balance between green belt change and growth.

Find out more

Consultation on the SESplan Main Issues Report runs from 21 July to 30 September.

Responses to the Main Issues Report can be made during this period by visiting the consultation portal. Register here for further details: <http://sesplan-consult.objective.co.uk>

For more information on SESplan please visit the website www.sesplan.gov.uk or contact us on the details below.

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