



**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
15 AUGUST 2023**

SUBJECT: PLACEMAKING - QUALITY AUDIT UPDATE

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report asks the Committee to approve the updated Quality Audit (QA) to align with the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) policy 14 Design, Quality and Place.
- 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:

- (i) approve the updated Quality Audit (QA) to support the delivery of high quality successful places;**
- (ii) agree the updated QA will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and**
- (iii) note that the QA will form part of the committee reports on planning applications reported to this Committee.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) recognises the multiple benefits that high quality development brings for health and well-being, climate change, biodiversity and nature, resilience and the economy. Policy 14 Design, Quality and Place sets out that Local Development Plans (LDPs) should provide clear expectations for design, quality and place and that a design-led approach should be taken to creating successful places. NPF4 sets out that the 6 qualities of a successful place are: healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable, and that developments that are consistent with these qualities will be supported. NPF4 along with the

Moray Local Development Plan 2020 (MLDP) now forms the 'development plan' for Moray.

- 3.2 Since 2015 the Quality Audit (QA) process has supported the delivery of the placemaking policy in the Moray Local Plan 2015 (MLP) and more recently Primary Policy 1 (PP1) Placemaking and other relevant policies of the Moray Local Development Plan 2020 (MLDP). The QA has been a successful tool in improving the quality of development in Moray. In recognition, the QA was the subject of a Scottish Award for Quality in Planning (SAQP) in 2018 and has been replicated by a number of planning authorities throughout Scotland.
- 3.3 The QA provides a consistent and multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment of design quality of development proposals. The current QA is based on the categories within PP1 which encompass the 6 qualities of a successful place as set out in NPF4. The QA is presented in a table format with proposals scoring red or green for each category. The information conveyed to applicants is set out clearly and concisely in bullet points in the table and an accompanying plan that illustrates the key issues visually. This forms the basis of discussions with applicants. The aforementioned revised QA format was agreed at a meeting of this Committee in March 2022 (para. ? of the Minute refers) to streamline the process based on operational experience and provide further clarity to applicants on design issues and improvements necessary to comply with the relevant policies and guidance of the MLDP.

4. UPDATED QA PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Given that NPF4 now forms part of the Moray 'development plan' the QA has been reformatted to align with the 6 qualities of a successful place. The updated QA categories are set out in **Appendix 1**. The QA table will continue to be supported by an annotated plan setting out the key issues visually.
- 4.2 The updated QA combines the requirements of NPF4 policy 14 and MLDP PP1 Placemaking as well as other relevant policies of the development plan into one tool. The QA update primarily focuses on re-categorising the QA criteria to align with the 6 qualities of a successful place rather than be a fundamental review as PP1 Placemaking mainly accords with NPF4. The QA update streamlines the assessment of the design quality of development proposals against the relevant development plan policies clearly and consistently via one collective process, and provides further clarity of the interpretation of the 6 qualities of a successful place set out in NPF4 in a Moray context.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The QA supports the implementation of NPF4 Policy 14 Design, Quality and Place and the MLDP 2020 PP1 Placemaking and other relevant policies, to deliver high quality development and in doing so supports healthy living, climate change resilience, biodiversity, and the provision of affordable housing which are all priorities for the Council.

- (b) Policy and Legal**
NPF4 and the MLDP is the statutory development plan for Moray. The QA brings a consistent approach to the assessment of the design quality of development proposals to comply with NPF4 Policy 14 and MLDP PP1 and other relevant policies.
- (c) Financial implications**
None.
- (d) Risk Implications**
The QA provides a clear, consistent and multi-disciplinary approach to implementation of NPF4 and a primary policy of the MLDP 2020. There is a risk that without the QA the quality of places would be eroded and associated benefits for health and well-being, climate change, nature and biodiversity lost.
- (e) Staffing Implications**
Work on the updates to the QA has been undertaken as part of the workload of the Strategic Planning and Development team.
- (f) Property**
None.
- (g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**
None.
- (h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**
The NPF4, specifically policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises) gives significant weight to the global climate and nature crises in the determination of planning applications. NPF4 Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaption) states that all proposals should be designed to minimise emissions over their lifecycle and development is to be sited and designed to adapt to current and future risk from climate change. Similarly, policy 3 (Biodiversity) requires development to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity. Whilst policy 15 (Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods) supports the principle of Local Living. The QA seeks to ensure the intent of these policies are delivered through a clear and consistent approach to the assessment of planning applications.
- (i) Consultations**
Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive Economy, Environment and Finance, the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Head of Housing and Property, the Legal Services Manager, the Senior Engineer Transport Development, the Principal Climate Change Officer, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, the Chief Financial Officer and the Democratic Services Manager and their comments incorporated into the report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The QA has provided a consistent and multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment of the design quality of development proposals since 2015. Given that NPF4 now forms part of the Moray 'development plan', the QA has been updated to align with the 6 qualities of a successful place. This provides an updated tool to assess the design quality of development proposals and convey the policy intentions of NPF4 and the MLDP to delivery high quality development on the ground.**

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Background Papers:
Ref: