



REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 1 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: PLACEMAKING - QUALITY AUDIT REVIEW

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report asks the Committee to agree the revised Quality Audit (QA) in order to streamline the process and provide further clarity to applicants on the design improvements necessary for development proposals to comply with the Moray Local Development Plan 2020 (MLDP 2020) on Placemaking.
- 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 Strategic and Local Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee;

- (i) approves the revised Quality Audit to support the delivery of high quality places;**
- (ii) agrees the revised Quality Audit will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and,**
- (iii) notes that the QA will form part of committee reports on planning applications reported to this Committee.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Quality Audit (QA) process supports the delivery of the MLDP 2020 Primary Policy 1 (PP1) Placemaking and other relevant policies to deliver high quality development on the ground. Placemaking is an overarching policy within the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) recognising the multiple benefits that high quality development brings for health and well-being, climate change, biodiversity and nature, resilience and the economy. This reflects Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which also requires the planning system to set out 'a relevant and consistent approach to the assessment of design and place quality' (SPP, para.47).

- 3.2 The QA provides a consistent and multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment of the design quality of development proposals. The current QA consists of 9 categories based on PP1. A multi-disciplinary team led by Strategic Planning & Development (SPD) and consisting of officers from Development Management, Transportation, Flood Risk Management, Housing and Nature Scot assess development proposals using the QA. Where a proposal scores red, officers identify improvements through mitigation measures to move the proposal to green. These mitigation measures form the basis of discussion with the applicant and provide clarity over what needs to be done to comply with the MLDP 2020, specifically PP1 and associated policies.
- 3.3 The QA has been a successful tool in improving the quality of development since 2015 when it was first introduced to support the placemaking policy of the Moray Local Plan 2015 (MLP 2015). 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.
- 3.4 The QA was updated to accord with the MLDP 2020 and the current format has been in place for over 18 months. Based on the experience of both officers and developers a number of minor revisions are proposed to streamline the process and provide further clarity to applicants on the improvements necessary to comply with the MLDP 2020.

4. REVISED QA PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed QA is shown in **Appendix 1**. The QA will now score whether the proposal complies with a Masterplan or development brief (where applicable) and the existing requirements have been refined and reordered into key themes. For example, the Character and Identity section has sub-groupings on site context, character areas, and buildings. This section also incorporates key buildings, vistas and public art which were previously under Healthier, Safer Environments. Whilst they are still important for legibility and supporting mental health, for practical reasons it is more logical to discuss these in the wider context of character and identity. A new category on technical requirements has also been introduced for the same, pragmatic reasons.
- 4.2 The presentation of the QA will be in the form of a table and annotated plan. An example of a QA for a recently approved development that has been reformatted to illustrate the proposed QA is provided in **Appendix 2**. The information conveyed to applicants is set out clearly and concisely in bullet points in the table and the accompanying plan illustrates the key issues visually. The proposed revisions will help to streamline the QA process and provide further clarity to applicants on the design issues and improvements necessary to comply with PP1 Placemaking, and other relevant policies of the MLDP 2020.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

The QA supports the implementation of 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

The MLDP 2020 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 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 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 and biodiversity lost.

(e) Staffing Implications

Work on the revisions 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 QA seeks to ensure that development proposals reduce carbon emissions and enhance biodiversity. The QA requires development proposals to provide active travel routes thereby reducing carbon emissions associated with vehicles, create green and blue infrastructure, and incorporate and enhance biodiversity through planting and other mechanisms. This reflects the direction of travel for national policy as set out in the draft NPF4 specifically policies 2 (Climate Emergency) and 3 (Nature Crisis).

(i) Consultations

Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive Economy, Environment and Finance, the Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Housing and Property, the Legal Services Manager, the Senior Engineer Transportation, the Principal Climate Change Officer, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager and Paul Connor (Principal Accountant) 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. The current format of the QA has been in place for over 18 months. Based on the experience of officers and applicants minor revisions are proposed to streamline the process and provide greater clarity to developers on the key placemaking issues and the improvements necessary to comply with the MLDP 2020 PP1 Placemaking and other relevant policies.**

Author of Report: Eily Webster, Principal Planning Officer
Background Papers:

Ref: