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**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
25 OCTOBER 2022**

**SUBJECT: BROWNFIELD SITES – SHORTLIST**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Committee of the assessment of brownfield sites, the prioritisation of sites and next steps to assess feasibility and develop options.

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 or preparation of all Local Development Plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

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

- (i) agree that the sites identified at 4.3 are taken forward in the short term for further investigation and feasibility work; and**
- (ii) delegates authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to incorporate substitute sites to be taken forward for feasibility work should funding not be secured for other priority sites or any of the sites prove at an early stage to be unfeasible.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) gives greater emphasis and priority to the redevelopment of brownfield sites. With the sharper focus on delivery a more proactive approach to enabling the re-development of brownfield sites is required. Redevelopment of brownfield sites will help deliver the spatial principles set out in NPF4 including compact growth, balanced development and conserving and recycling assets. Draft NPF4 defines “brownfield” as land which has previously been developed. This covers vacant or derelict land, and land occupied by redundant or unused buildings. Reuse of vacant land for greenspace, growing spaces or other community benefits can contribute to climate change targets and support biodiversity and health and wellbeing. Redevelopment or reuse of brownfield

sites and buildings for housing or business can bring unused or underutilised sites back into productive use and reduce the need for expansion onto greenfield land. Future Local Development Plans will be required to identify a brownfield land target within the overall housing land requirement.

- 3.2 The approach to brownfield sites within successive Local Development Plans has been to identify these as Opportunity (OPP) sites with a policy approach that supports redevelopment. Monitoring of specific types of Vacant and Derelict land is also carried out annually with a return made to the Scottish Government. Many of these sites have remained undeveloped and vacant over successive plans with limited information on the barrier to redevelopment available.
- 3.3 A review of the extent of brownfield land beyond the sites identified in the Local Development Plan was completed to provide a baseline of the extent and type of brownfield land. A list of sites identified was reported to the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 1 March 2022. It was agreed to assess the sites further and report prioritised sites back to the Committee (para 17 of the minute refers).
- 3.4 Each site has been assessed and scored against the following criteria
  - The level of disrepair and contamination on the site.
  - The impact the vacancy has on the community taking into account the visibility of the site, the length of time the site has been vacant and the impact on perceptions of the area.
  - The potential sustainable new uses.
  - The benefits of bringing the site back into use including wider benefits and taking account of Council/Community Planning Partner priorities.
  - What will happen if nothing is done i.e. unsafe structure, target for antisocial behaviour, becomes naturalised.
  - The likelihood of sites being brought back into use without further public intervention.

#### **4. BROWNFIELD SITE SHORTLIST**

- 4.1 Assessing and scoring the sites using the criteria above has identified the following shortlist of priority sites.
  - Grant Lodge OPP10, Elgin
  - Flemings Sawmill (OPP1), Linkwood Road, Elgin
  - Jailhouse/Old Junners, High/South Street, Elgin
  - The Elgin Club, 10 Commerce Street, Elgin
  - Auction Mart (OPP4), Tytler Street, Forres
  - Old Lemonade Factory, Blairdaff Street (OPP2), Buckie
  - Mclarens Brae, Buckie
  - Castle Inn, 29 Caroline Street, Forres
  - Auction Mart (OPP5), Linkwood Road, Elgin
  - Former Leancoil Hospital (OPP6), Forres
  - Former Grampian Pork (OPP6), Great Western Road, Buckie
  - Former Gasworks Barron Street (OPP3), Buckie

- 1-3 Bank Street, Buckie

- 4.2 Some of the sites on this shortlist are already included within other projects or there are proposals to progress these through other means. Grant Lodge in Elgin is included within the Growth Deal Cultural Quarter, and the former Jailhouse nightclub/ Junners toy shop, Elgin Club, the old sawmill site (Elgin OPP1) and Elgin auction mart (Elgin OPP5) are part of a Levelling Up Fund application to the UK Government. Leancoil Trust are also working to secure the future of the former hospital building (OPP6) in Forres for a community health and wellbeing centre. In Buckie the former Grampian Pork building (OPP6) has recently secured investment from HIE for a leisure facility. These sites have not been included in the list below to be taken forward in the short term for further investigation but should funding not be secured to progress these they will be added to the list of sites to be progressed.
- 4.3 Given the ongoing work and funding applications on some of the shortlisted sites above the remaining sites on that list will be taken forward for further investigation and feasibility work. This work will be undertaken by consultants using funding secured through the Just Transition Fund for the Sustainable Development project. The feasibility works will include establishing contact with owners, identification of constraints, option appraisal of the suitable uses and initial design concepts. The sites to be taken forward in this way are set out below.
- Blairdaff Street (OPP2), Buckie.
  - Castle Inn, Caroline Street, Forres
  - Barron Street (OPP3), Buckie
  - 1-3 Bank Street, Buckie
  - McLaren's Brae, March Road, Buckie
  - Tytler Street (OPP4), Forres
- 4.4 Should any of the shortlisted sites be found, at an early stage, not to be feasible (non-starters) they will be substituted with another site from the "long list" previously presented to the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 1 March 2022. It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to select an appropriate substitute site if this occurs.
- 4.5 All sites on the "long list" will be considered for inclusion within the next Local Development Plan either as opportunity sites (OPP) or otherwise identified in the Local Development Plan (LDP). Any new sites that are identified that meet the definition for brownfield land will be added to the "long list" and will be considered for inclusion in future LDPs. Some of the buildings have also been identified as projects in the Town Centre Improvement Plans which are the subject of a separate report to the Committee.
- 4.6 Potential funding sources to deliver options identified within the feasibility studies are set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.7 It is noted that the prioritised sites and the long list of brownfield sites does not include empty homes unless they have been identified on the Buildings at

Risk Register. Moray Council's Empty Homes Officer works to support owners to bring their property back into use.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

Redevelopment of brownfield land has the potential to reinvigorate long term vacant land either through a new sustainable economic use or community uses including growing spaces and community green spaces. Bringing these spaces back into use can have positive impacts for the surrounding communities.

### (b) **Policy and Legal**

Preparation of a LDP is a statutory requirement and the new regulations and guidance aim to bring significant improvements to the process and introduce additional statutory requirements.

### (c) **Financial implications**

Taking forward sites for feasibility study and development of options will be completed by consultants using funding secured from the Just Transition Fund for the Sustainable Development project. Funding requires to be spent in the 2022/2023 financial year.

The feasibility study will provide a programme of potential sites and work to be developed over a number of years. A number of funding sources will be explored to deliver the programme and the potential funding sources are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

The change to more delivery focused Local Development Plans under The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires to be appropriately resourced.

### (d) **Risk Implications**

Not completing a review of brownfield sites and taking a proactive approach would risk undermining the principles and strategy set out within draft NPF4.

### (e) **Staffing Implications**

Shortlisting and prioritisation of sites has been undertaken within existing staff resources however, a more proactive approach to delivery is part of the staffing pressure arising from the requirements of draft NPF4 and The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

### (f) **Property**

The feasibility study and options development will require liaison with property owners and investigations into site constraints. In the future delivery of the programme of work/ development identified through the feasibility work could include acquisition of property.

### (g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

None.

**(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

The reuse of brownfield sites can contribute to climate change targets, support biodiversity and use less embodied carbon where foundations and infrastructure are already in place. Reusing brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites can help reduce the impact of development on the climate by reducing the need for travel. Sites may also have potential to become amenity greenspace or community growing sites. Brownfield sites can be important habitats and there will be a requirement to survey and provide compensatory or mitigation measure where necessary.

**(i) Consultations**

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, Paul Connor (Principal Accountant), Principal Climate Change Officer and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted.

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Greater emphasis and priority is given to the re-development of brownfield sites within NPF4 which requires a more proactive approach to be taken to these sites than within previous Local Development Plans.**
- 6.2 Section 4.1 identifies a shortlist of priority sites identified through the scoring and assessment work. From this list the priority sites that are not currently being progressed by other means will be taken forward for further investigation and feasibility.**

Author of Report: Rowena MacDougall, Planning Officer  
Background Papers:  
Ref: