



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

SUBJECT: BROWNFIELD SITES

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the extent of brownfield sites in Moray and agree that sites are assessed further and prioritised.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as Planning Authority under the Planning Act.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee;**
 - (i) **note the extent of brownfield sites identified;**
 - (ii) **agree that sites are assessed against the criteria set out in paragraph 3.6 and that a report be considered at a future meeting of this Committee on prioritisation of sites.**

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 will be 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. The 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.

- 3.2 The approach to brownfield sites within successive Local Development Plans has been to identify these as “OPP” or “Opportunity 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 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. 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.
- 3.4 A review of the extent of brownfield land beyond those identified in the Local Development Plan was needed to provide an up to date baseline of the extent and type of brownfield land. This will form part of the evidence collated for the Evidence Report stage of Local Development Plan preparation (see separate report to this Committee on Local Development Plan Regulations and Guidance.) To identify the current extent of brownfield sites within Moray the following information was considered to create the list of sites in **Appendix 1**.
- Existing OPP sites
 - Scottish Government Vacant and Derelict Land Survey
 - Buildings at Risk Register
 - Members were also contacted to identify sites within their Ward
- 3.5 Sites were visited to confirm they meet the definition to be considered brownfield. Sites under restoration were removed from the list. **Appendix 1** lists the sites that have been identified as brownfield.
- 3.6 It is proposed to further assess the sites and prioritise these taking into account the following.
- the level of disrepair,
 - the impacts on community of the site remaining vacant,
 - potential sustainable uses,
 - benefits of bringing sites back into use
 - the likelihood of sites being brought back into use without further intervention.
- 3.7 It is proposed to bring a short list of prioritised sites back to this Committee. This shortlist would aim to identify potential new uses along with possible sources of funding and the next steps to enable redevelopment/re-use.
- 3.8 The Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme is a £50 million capital programme which is being delivered from 2021 over a five year period. Eligible projects are those looking for capital grant to cover costs associated with unblocking long term brownfield sites. Other funding opportunities could be identified depending on the location or potential reuse of the site.

- 3.9 It is noted that the list at **Appendix 1** 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.

4. 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

None identified at present however the next stage of site prioritisation and identification of next steps to enable redevelopment of sites is likely to have financial implications. Therefore future report on brownfield sites will outline these.

The change to a 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 of sites can be 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. This is covered in a separate report to the Committee.

(f) Property

None at this stage.

(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.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 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.

5.2 Appendix 1 identifies a baseline of the extent of brownfield land in Moray. Further assessment and prioritisation of brownfields sites is required. A short list of sites will be brought back to this Committee outlining potential future uses, identify funding opportunities and set out the next steps to enable sites to be brought back into use.

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Background Papers:

Ref: