

Report By Jim Henry – Liberton & District CC

Thoughts on City of Edinburgh Draft Edinburgh Economic Strategy

Introduction

EACC should welcome the opportunity to comment on the Draft Edinburgh Economic Strategy (DEES).

Addressing Poverty

EACC notes, with alarm, that the Poverty rates in many of the Wards but it would be interesting to see the figures for poverty on the basis of Community Council area for information purposes.

It is noted that the strategy seeks to ensure that Edinburgh delivers good growth for everyone by a range of mechanisms. This includes ensuring that the economy delivers a range items and also ensure in a number of ways that the benefits are distributed across the city.

The main vehicle for facilitating good growth is the land use planning system. At bullet point DEES states it is seeking to deliver growth in jobs and wages. The emerging Strategic Development Plan also appears to identify the South East Edinburgh area as a Strategic Development Area but without any significant requirement for the provision of new employment land. (There was no provision in the existing Adopted Local Development Plan for new employment land despite the South East Edinburgh area being designated as a Strategic Development Area in the first SESPlan.) Whilst the development plan framework has set the scene for investors and developers, the only real development has been house building which creates many short lived jobs which end when site development is completed. The new DEES must be amended to recognise and spell out a role for the development plan system as, it can not only identify land but address the infrastructure requirements which are fundamental to making development happen.

It is accepted that the housing is needed for people who bring expendable income into the area, local employment opportunities would be more sustainable, especially when the ability for speedy movement by both public and private transport to other parts of the city continues to decline.

Assuming the Strategic Development Plan is approved in 2018 as it was in draft form, the replacement Local Development Plan should be tasked to look beyond SESPlan2 and look also to how it could help implement DEES. This will include addressing the requirement to provide ever more houses and address the need to provide land to generate employment opportunities, especially in the poorly performing Ward areas.

Ten Steps For Good Growth

The following comments are applicable to the steps of DEES throughout the document.

Steps One, Two, Three, Four and Five

It would have been helpful if the location of all the bodies mentioned on pages 11/12 re step 1 had been included in the text for the lay reader.

Employment land provision in the poorer Ward areas especially those close to the identified growth locations could provide an opportunity for improving the employment opportunities as it lies in close proximity them e.g. the University, the Innovation Corridor, the Bioquarter etc and those with good road links. Thought should be given to how the growth locations could be better linked by public transport to the whole of the City of Edinburgh but especially the more poverty stricken areas.

Step Six

Laudable but not a CC issue.

Steps Seven and Eight are laudable and maybe some thought should be given to the potential extensions of the waterfront areas by way of land reclamation promoted some years ago especially in the light of the proposed extensions to the tram network which will improve the accessibility of the area.

Step Nine

The opportunity address the delivery of good step nine should promote the in city brownfield sites rather than an insatiable drive to provide for the development of the affordable housing in the

Strategic Development Areas which are largely Greenfield / Green Belt areas . The delivery of the land for affordable housing will not be delivered by the private sector alone as a tariff on owner occupier / private for rent property so additional dedicated sites will be needed. The sites for affordable housing must be clearly identified via the second LDP process to ensure that the sites are fully integrated into sites for other tenures to help deliver the aims of good growth step ten. The provision of sites for affordable housing should be spread around the city and not just directed to a single area, with, perhaps, some of it directed to the areas currently with lower levels of poverty.

The issue of providing affordable places is addressed in the foregoing sections of this response. It is noted at page 20 of the DEES that City of Edinburgh is setting a target for 2018 to 2028 of 20,000 affordable houses. It is assumed that these are included within the figures set out in the land requirement identified in the existing and emerging Strategic Development Plan but L&DCC would wish that this is clarified in DEES. Further, it is impossible to envision how any of the 20,000 can make a significant contribution to the Scottish Government target of 50,000 houses by 2021 as there is insufficient time to achieve it short of ignoring the application of the development plan led planning system and bringing forward sites without any public debate over the provision of sites.

Step 10

The commitment to ensuring that there is the delivery of a clean, efficient transport network is welcomed, especially to link poorer wards to employment opportunity areas. However the provision of land to facilitate employment opportunities locally must addressed. Local provision of land for employment, especially in the poorer performing areas, would do much to attain the sustainable growth sought in good step ten.

Challenges For Places and Infrastructure

The issues raised on page 18 appear to ignore the impending Strategic Development Plan by focussing only on West Edinburgh as a source of land to provide for business and residential growth. It is anticipated that South East Edinburgh will see residential growth but without the required business growth it needs. Perhaps the DEES could be revised at pages 18 and 19 (with specific reference to the revision of the contents of section 8) to promote business growth in South East Edinburgh to complement the aforementioned anticipated residential growth.

The figure on page 19 is of interest as it appears to support a prohibition on development in the Green Belt on the south east of Edinburgh. Whilst L&DCC would be delighted to see the Green Belt “control outward growth of the (the) city” it is suggested that it is not a realistic scenario. This figure appears to fail to recognise the existing and emerging Strategic Development Plan which does, and in all probability will, promote future development in this area. It is suggested that this figure be amended to reflect the Strategic Development Plan.

Making It Happen

The contents of pages 22 – 23 are noted. However, this section appears to ignore the role that the Development Plan needs to play in any the process as there must be a degree of local involvement in the selection of sites for all the forms land use allocation to help implement DEES. This section must be revised to make a commitment to local involvement via the Local Development Plan process.