

**GLASGOW AND THE CLYDE VALLEY  
2005 STRUCTURE PLAN ALTERATION**

**GLASGOW AND THE CLYDE VALLEY 2025  
CONSULTATIVE DRAFT STRUCTURE PLAN  
MAY 2005**

**BACKGROUND REPORT**

**BR 7/05**

**Criteria for Assessing Potential Future  
Urban Expansion Areas:  
A Discussion Document**



## Criteria for Assessing Potential Future Urban Expansion Areas

### Introduction

- 1 The Structure Plan Review Consultative Draft has been prepared in the context that:-
  - (a) There may be a potential need, arising from the Agenda for Sustained Growth, for major urban expansion beyond the established areas of urban expansion.
  - (b) There is a contingency policy (Strategic Policy 2) to express a specific commitment to keep this matter under review and bring forward development areas through an alteration to the Plan, if necessary. This policy is related to both residential and employment issues.
  - (c) There is consultation on the range of factors to be used in evaluating potential longer term urban expansion areas.
  - (d) The Structure Plan should address strategic locational issues and that local planning considerations will determine specific site selection.

### Context

- 2 The 2000 Joint Structure Plan highlights the factors that should be used to guide longer term Greenfield expansion. The Metropolitan Development Strategy seeks to support the regeneration of the established communities of the Conurbation through urban renewal. Over the last two decades, this has achieved notable success. If this momentum is to be sustained, it is clearly desirable not only to minimise the scale of any Greenfield release but also to direct any urban expansion to those locations that are most consistent with this Strategy. This means giving priority to those locations which can make a positive contribution to the regeneration process in particular:-
  - (a) by being integral to the urban renewal process;
  - (b) by protecting those areas of Green Belt which create the environmental setting and urban form of the Conurbation;
  - (c) by being related to an existing or proposed 'priority public transport route'; and
  - (d) by reinforcing the role of existing communities.
  - (e) by having a controlled programme of delivery of new areas.

The relative balance between these factors also needs to be considered. There can be tensions for example between the traditional Green Belt objectives (e.g. coalescence and setting of towns) with the emerging emphasis upon sustainable transport policy objectives.

- 3 These factors highlighted in the 2000 Plan are also reflected in the requirements of Circular 24/1985 which require that any Green belt release should have regard to the following factors:
  - (a) The longer term settlement strategy;
  - (b) The stability and endurance of Green belt boundaries; and
  - (c) The scope for upgrading areas of poor environment.

- 4 Although this guidance is being reviewed, the planning principles that they express remain sound and should form the basis of the consideration of any Structure Plan Green Belt releases (even if they are stated in a different format in any new guidance). These principles are considered under the following headings for ease of presentation which relate to the key themes of the Metropolitan Development Strategy.
- (a) Urban Renewal: The need to complement the urban renewal and regeneration priorities that underpin the Strategy
  - (b) Relationship to Existing Communities: The need to strengthen existing communities
  - (c) Environmental Factors: The need to safeguard and enhance the environment.
  - (d) Transport Linkages: the need to promote sustainable transport policies

## **A. Urban Renewal and Regeneration**

- 5 The Metropolitan Development Strategy gives priority to urban renewal. The requirement to release Greenfield land is therefore based on the assumption that priority has already been given to maximizing the effectiveness of the urban brownfield capacity before any search for urban expansion is undertaken. It is appropriate therefore to consider where there are opportunities for expansion that they would also form an integral part of specific urban renewal and regeneration projects. As a corollary, in general 'brownfield' sites within the Green Belt do not support the renewal of urban areas, being fragmented and dispersed in their location. This has been accepted by Ministers in their approval of earlier Structure Plans.
- 6 From experience, there have been two broad types of Green Belt releases:-
- (a) Small scale incremental releases of land have been easier to manage as a short term response to housing land short falls, but they have not always provided the most sustainable development options in terms of transportation links, urban structure, environment or housing choice.
  - (b) Larger scale releases which have a longer lead in time for their development and can raise significant environmental issues (e.g. in terms of urban coalescence but can be more supportive of the regeneration of the Metropolitan area and support of communities by being linked to the creation of community facilities, infrastructure enhancement and better master planning.

## **B. Environmental Factors**

### **i. Green Belt Structure**

- 7 The Metropolitan Development Strategy requires the continued designation and safeguarding of the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Green Belt within which there is a presumption against the spread of built up areas and encroachment of development into the countryside. In the Green Belt, this relates especially to the need to maintain the character of the towns in the Clyde Valley and also creates significant corridors and sensitive Green Belt wedges as defined in the 2000 Plan Inset Diagram A. The 2000 Plan confirmed that these environmental sensitivities should guide any future releases required from the Green Belt. In this context it is important to protect the integrity of the major "corridors" and inner "wedges" of the Green Belt which define and separate the communities within it. The corollary is that new major free-standing development opportunities (for example, new villages) would have to be located outwith these

environmental corridors and would need to be related to the established settlements and infrastructure network.

## **ii. Green Belt Boundaries**

- 8 A key issue is the question of appropriate Green Belt boundaries. This was reviewed in principle in earlier Structure Plan Updates. The conclusions which were accepted by successive Secretary's of State were that there are few "natural" boundaries to the physical limit of potential urban development. Even where 'stable and enduring' boundaries have been established they have been adjusted in exceptional and localised circumstances. It is however important to avoid options which create "salients" of development into the countryside which might be seen as defining the new outer limit of development of a much wider area. Similarly it is important that the brief for the development of any release area should require good site planning to achieve a new urban fringe landscape of high amenity including, where possible, the treatment of any areas of poor environment. However, the potential for such further environmental action should not be the determining factor in any choice of location.
- 9 The scope to which urban expansion should be linked to areas of poor environment in the Green Belt also needs to be considered in its own right. A policy decision based upon this approach would be damaging not only to the prospects of urban renewal but also to initiatives for positive management and remedial Green Belt action. There may however be specific opportunities for environmental action to be associated with such areas as part of the creation of the Green Network. It would therefore be appropriate to require such action as part of the development of any such release. The possible scope for such a policy initiative will require further consideration in the context of the emerging Green Network Framework.
- 10 One of the main purposes of the Green Belt is also to maintain the landscape setting of towns and a further specific issue relates to the amenity of conservation villages or areas of very high amenity within the Greenbelt. Landscape Character criteria have been of particular importance in the Public Local Inquiry (PLI) process. Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) can be generally helpful in the categorising the Green Belt but is of limited help in the judgements about whether a development is acceptable. However, it is possible to consider two criteria to aid assessment of Green Belt impacts:
- (a) Landscape Setting of Settlements: Certain communities' character is defined or enhanced by the landscape character around it. The landscape character of the Green Belt for communities should therefore be taken into account.
  - (b) Conservation Areas: Those communities which have previously been recognised as being sensitive to urban expansion because of their conservation interests.

## **iii. Green Belt and Countryside Resources**

- 11 In addition to the broader strategic role of the Green Belt in sustaining and enhancing the character and identity of urban communities, much of the countryside has specific value as recreation (e.g. parks, river valley, or golf courses), prime agricultural land or other conservation interest (i.e. woodland). There is a range of specific environmental resources which lie within and are protected by the Green Belt as being valued for recreation, amenity, agriculture, flood protection and other ecological and conservation interests. Many of these site-specific resources can be safeguarded in the master

planning of any general Greenfield release but the following strategic environmental resources will be given specific consideration as required in Strategic Policy 7.

Environmental Resources listed in Schedule 7 of the 2000 Joint Structure Plan will also have to be taken into account:

- Ecological Resources: SACs, SPAs, SSSIs, NNRs, RSPB and SWT reserves, and species or habitats protected by national or international legislation;
- Landscapes: NSAs, RSAs and AGLVs, and the landscape character of the Green Belt;
- Existing and Potential Recreational Resources: National, Regional, Country and Major Urban Parks, including opportunities emerging from the Green network strategy, and the Green Belt, long distance walkways and cycling routes;
- Built Heritage: Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological sites and landscapes, Listed Buildings, World Heritage Sites, Conservation Areas, the locations identified in the Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes;
- Agricultural Land: ESAs, Grades 3.2 higher (10ha+) as identified in Key Diagram Inset E;
- Mineral Reserves: Specialised mineral resources defined in Local Plans (e.g. brick making clays and barytes);
- Undeveloped Flood Plain Areas: As advised by SEPA and confirmed by the Local Planning Authority.

There are also important resources that have also been identified in the recent local plans coming forward. Urban expansion would not be supported if it involved any threat to these environmental resources in terms of their extent or viability.

### **C. Transportation Linkages**

- 12 The Metropolitan Development Strategy also seeks to maximise the use of the existing infrastructure. Given the commuter orientation of most private housing, it would be appropriate to give added weight to locations which offer integration opportunities to integrate with the existing transport network or could be linked into it (e.g. by new stations or rail links) in line with SPP3: Planning for Housing aim to reduce reliance on the private car. Such locations have the capacity to absorb a phased longer term development to which short term releases could be related. There are equally other locations which have the capacity to absorb major development but their transport links are not good or could only be created in the longer term either linked to existing towns or as free standing locations.

#### **i. Rail Network**

- 13 Longer term urban expansion will be required to be related to existing or proposed enhancements to the strategic rail network. The conurbation urban structure has developed around transport corridors (especially rail) which are separated by strategic green belt corridors and wedges. In the main therefore the development of options based upon transportation and the environmental framework would be generally reinforcing of the Metropolitan Development Strategy. In this regard the alternatives of focusing new development into the 'residual' areas of countryside which lie closest to the main towns or in seeking to open up new development areas will require to be assessed in relation to the transport system and their impacts on the green network.

## **ii. Road Network**

- 14 The relationship of Green Belt areas to the road network varies. Some locations are intrinsically inappropriate to expand because of their detachment. These include many smaller settlements where there is limited local infrastructure and are basically served by rural roads. There are also some larger settlements where the links to the strategic road system are relatively poor and where major expansion would exacerbate particular problems on the network and should not be preferred.

## **D. Relationship to Existing Communities**

- 15 A further Metropolitan Development Strategy consideration is the extent to which areas of urban expansion would reinforce the established communities by being closely related to services. In this context the following factors in particular will need to be taken into account in the assessment of potential longer term urban expansion.

### **i. Town Centres**

- 16 Access to facilities is an important consideration for longer term urban expansion areas, especially their relationship to existing town centres. Town Centres are a focus of a range of commercial and community activities such as employment, shopping, cultural and leisure activities and administration.

### **ii. Tenure Choice**

- 17 In terms of tenure choice, the allocation of new private housing can help to redress the major imbalances of housing tenure across the Conurbation. Within many communities there are relatively low levels of owner-occupied housing and an increase in owner occupation could aid their regeneration. In contrast there are certain communities which currently have high levels of owner-occupied housing and the addition of other tenures could help address identified needs, such as for affordable housing.

### **iii. School Capacity**

- 18 Another important consideration regarding access to facilities is the proximity of urban expansion locations to primary and secondary educational facilities which have the capacity to accommodate an increase in the school roll. Any spare capacity currently present needs to be evaluated against plans for reprovisioning or increased capacity of school sites.