

**INVERNESS CITY CENTRE
DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE**

**SEA
SCREENING REPORT**

STEP 1 – DETAILS OF THE PLAN

Responsible Authority:

The Highland Council

Title of the plan:

Inverness City Centre Development Brief (the Brief)

What prompted the plan:

(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

Paragraph 4.8 of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP), Adopted July 2015 makes reference to the need for a review of the existing Inverness City Centre Development Brief, adopted March 2013 as Supplementary Guidance. There is a requirement to review this Supplementary Guidance within a 5 year period.

Plan subject:

(e.g. transport)

Town Planning

Screening is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Based on Boxes 3 and 4, our view is that:

An SEA is required, as the environmental effects are likely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within

Section 5(3)

Section 5(4)

An SEA is not required, as the environmental effects are unlikely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within

Section 5(3)

Section 5(4)

Contact details:

Peter Wheelan
Planner - Development Plans
Development & Infrastructure Service
Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

Date:

27/10/16

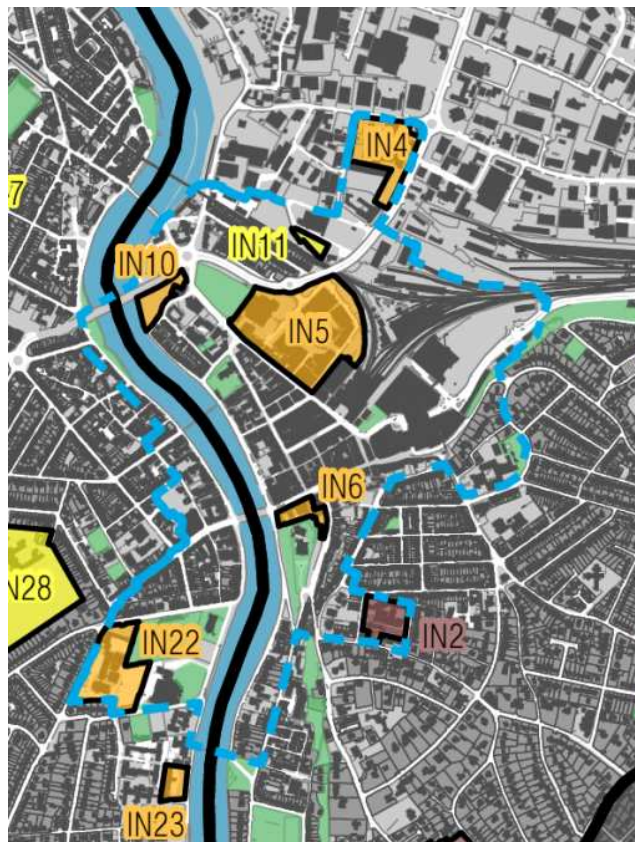
STEP 2 – CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

Context of the Plan:

The replacement Brief will ultimately be adopted as Supplementary Guidance and will form a statutory part of the Development Plan. It will supplement key principles that are set out in policies within the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) (HwLDP), Adopted April 2012 and policies and land use allocations within the [Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan](#) (IMFLDP), Adopted July 2015. When determining planning applications these documents, together with other adopted Supplementary Guidance documents, will be read and considered as a whole, alongside the Brief.

Description of the Plan:

The Brief will give guidance on the acceptable land uses, infrastructure requirements and design principles to deliver high quality development in Inverness city centre. It will provide strategic direction and detailed developer requirements through the identification of city centre objectives, priorities, opportunity sites, development assessment criteria, and site-specific development parameters to help inform decision making. The boundary for the Brief will accord with the city centre boundary (dashed blue line) as defined by the IMFLDP Proposals Map, an extract of which is provided below:



What are the key components of the plan?

Section 1: Context – will explain the context, purpose of the document and feedback received to date which will inform its content.

Section 2: Vision, Outcome and Approach - will set an agreed vision, outcomes and approach for the Brief. The overarching vision will be: *“A vibrant and unique city centre on the river, well connected and accessible, and valued as an attractive place to live, work and visit.”*

Section 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 - will provide five distinct development themes which contain priorities and development assessment criteria. These will be to make Inverness city centre:

- a great place for business;
- a great place to visit;
- a great place to live;
- accessible, easy and safe to move around; and
- distinctive and attractive.

Section 8: Developer Contributions and Delivery – will set out developer contribution requirements and further delivery actions.

An appendix will also identify further key issues and placemaking priorities for significant opportunity sites in the city centre.

Have any of the components of the plan been considered in previous SEA work?

The principle of development in this area has been established through the Spatial Strategy for Inverness contained in the HwLDP and through land use allocations set out in the IMFLDP. Both of these documents have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which have identified mitigation. These mitigation measures have been fully integrated into the developer requirements of the IMFLDP. It is noteworthy that of the 7 allocated city centre sites that 3 of these were previously identified as having significant (positive) environmental effects, with all other sites not generating any significant (positive or negative) effects. Of the significant positive effects, these related to the sites being excellently located with good proximity to facilities, being suited to encouraging and improving sustainable and active travel, and being suitable for the provision of onsite waste recycling.

The existing Brief was also subject to SEA Screening (August 2011). At that time the Consultation Authorities were of the opinion that there was no likelihood of significant environmental effects which concurred with The Highland Council’s screening determination.

As stipulated by Section 22(1) of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, Supplementary Guidance in connection with a Local Development Plan may only deal with the provision of further

information or detail in respect of the policies or proposals set out in that plan and then only provided that those are matters which are expressly identified in a statement contained in the plan as matters which are to be dealt with in Supplementary Guidance. To this end, Paragraph 4.8 of the IMFLDP includes a statement setting out that the replacement Brief will be based on the same guiding principles of the existing Brief's vision and key themes and that the review will take place when new opportunity sites emerge.

Since the adoption of the original Brief and undertaking the IMFLDP SEA, in September 2014 Highland's first Air Quality Management Area was identified in Inverness city centre, for a small area incorporating 6 Queensgate and 62 Academy Street. The draft [Air Quality Action Plan: Inverness, Highland](#), March 2016 for this area details further assessment and steps necessary towards improved air quality. The Brief will be complementary to the Air Quality Action Plan by setting additional development criteria to ensure that air quality is fully considered for new development. For example, the Brief will prioritise developers to consider suitable and active travel provision, streetscape improvements, electric vehicle infrastructure and reduced city centre car parking provision. It will also support enhancements to Inverness Rail Station.

Given that the supplementary information to be set out within the updated Brief will accord with the guiding principles set out within the recently adopted IMFLDP and will not substantially differ from the scope and context of the original Brief, it is entirely reasonable to conclude that this update in itself will not give rise to significant environmental effects.

In terms of your response to Boxes 7 and 8 above, set out those components of the plan that are likely to require screening:

In light of the above, the components of the plan that are likely to require screening include:

- supplementary guiding design principles for emerging development opportunity sites; and
- supplementary development assessment criteria which seeks to maximise the environmental benefits associated with city centre development and regeneration.

**STEP 3 – IDENTIFYING INTERACTIONS OF THE PLAN WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND
CONSIDERING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY INTERACTIONS (Error! Reference source not found.)**

Plan Components	Environmental Topic Areas										Explanation of Potential Environmental Effects	Explanation of Significance
	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air	Climatic factors	Material assets	Cultural heritage	Landscape	Inter-relationship issues		
Boundary revisions and emerging development opportunity sites	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	<p>The city centre boundary will be slightly larger than the current Brief boundary but will reflect the adopted city centre boundary set out in the IMFLDP.</p> <p>Some of the emerging development opportunity sites will also differ from those in the original Brief and there will be additional sites which complement the existing IMFLDP allocations.</p> <p>Development in accordance with the updated Brief may result in an increase in the city centre population, have positive or neutral climate change impacts by focusing development towards the most accessible locations which can easily access facilities and services, and will have potential positive cultural heritage implications by applying the Brief's additional design guidance and bring historic buildings back into use.</p>	<p>Development of emerging opportunity sites within the city centre boundary already have strong HwLDP and IMFLDP planning policy support. Development and investment in the city centre also receives the high level planning support at the national level through Scottish Planning Policy. This is because these are the most sustainable locations to support high density, trip intensive, developments.</p> <p>The environmental merits of each development scheme will be tested against the provisions of the environmental policies of the Development Plan as a whole, including this updated supplementary guidance. The guidance in itself will not therefore result in any significant environmental effects.</p>

<p>Development assessment criteria, development contributions and delivery</p>	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	<p>The development management assessment criteria to be contained within the guidance will help promote the conservation interests of the city centre whilst facilitating new development opportunities. The guidance will set out additional development design parameters to ensure the city centre remains distinctive and attractive, accessible and easy to move around.</p> <p>The developer contributions guidance will help to make clear the Council's expectations in terms of infrastructure requirements to complement the Highland-wide adopted Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions. Some city centre exemptions maybe made to incentives investment in the city centre and particularly, to bring existing buildings back into use.</p> <p>Collectively, the Brief's package of measures seek to result in the city centre being open for business and investment, whilst giving rise to positive environmental effects in terms of population and human health, air quality, climate change, material assets and cultural heritage.</p>	<p>If anything, it could be argued that the updated Brief has potential to result in significant positive environmental effects. This will however be tempered by the Brief only forming a small part of the Development Plan, and the requirement for its' content to complement the extant planning policies contained within the HwLDP and IMFLDP.</p> <p>The document must also allow for innovative and bespoke developments and design solutions to come forward. The benefits associated with developing overly complex or prescriptive environmental development criteria (which could theoretically be developed through further SEA work) must be carefully balanced against the risk of dis-incentivising the city centre with developers preferring to develop more straightforward greenfield or out of centre alterative sites which could give rise to more significant adverse environmental effects.</p>
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STEP 4 – STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE SCREENING

Summary of interactions with the environment and statement of the findings of the Screening:

(Including an outline of the likely significance of any interactions, positive or negative, and explanation of conclusion of the screening exercise.)

With regard to the interactions with the environment, the position as a result of the updated Brief will be little different to the current situation. Environmental interactions associated with the updated Brief are anticipated to be positive in terms of promoting high quality design, respecting the historic build environment, and promoting several other environmental planning matters.

For the aforementioned reasons set out within this SEA Screening report, it is the view of the responsible authority that the updated Brief will not give rise to any significant environmental effects and SEA is therefore not required.

When completed send to: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or to the SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2H (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

