

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTE of the Special Meeting of the  
PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE held in Council  
Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells TD6  
OSA on Monday, 16 July 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

-----

Present:- Councillors T. Miers (Chairman), A. Anderson, J. A. Fullarton, H. Laing, S. Mountford, C. Ramage, E. Small.  
Apologies:- Councillors S. Aitchison, S. Hamilton.  
In Attendance:- Chief Planning Officer, Principal Officer – Plans and Research, Solicitor (Emma Moir), Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic services Officer (Fiona Henderson).

## 1. **TOWN CENTRE CORE ACTIVITY AREA PILOT STUDY**

- 1.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services which sought approval of a pilot study, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, in respect of amendments to current planning practice for processing planning applications for proposals within core activity areas within town centres in the Scottish Borders. The Principal Officer explained that the primary purpose of the study was to examine ways to revitalise and reinvigorate the town centres of Hawick and Galashiels by considering options to add more flexibility to policy ED4 (Core Activities in Town Centres) within the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016 which was aimed at protecting core activity areas within these towns. It suggested a number of options to be considered, identifying potential advantages and disadvantages for each. In essence the study recommended the removal of the core activity area in Hawick and the retention of the core activity area in Galashiels but proposed a wider and more flexible range of uses which could be supported.
- 1.2 The study also laid down some further criteria guidance relating to policy ED4 to be considered for planning application proposals within other core activity areas within Scottish Borders towns i.e. Galashiels, Peebles, Kelso, Melrose, Jedburgh, Selkirk, Eyemouth and Duns. As this pilot scheme proposed to remove the core activity area from Hawick this would not be relevant to Hawick. The guidance stated, with reference to considering the longevity of vacancy of premises, that if premises had been vacant for 6 months and evidence was submitted which confirmed it had been adequately advertised for a substantial period of that time, then that would carry much weight in the decision making process. Policy ED4 also made reference to the need to give consideration of any “significant positive contribution” in relation to proposals within the core activity. The study expanded upon examples of what were considered to be factors determining “significant positive contribution” and sought the consideration of removing the requirement for Developer Contributions within Galashiels Town Centre. Members welcomed the report and were supportive of the proposals which responded to the changes in town centre retail activity. In terms of Appendix 3 of the report, during discussion it was suggested that in the “yes/no” column heading that “no” be amended to illustrate a more flexible policy approach to allow developers the opportunity to make the case for change. It was noted that the annual Footfall Study was carried out during September/October so members agreed that the follow up report should not be presented to Committee until this information was available.

## **DECISION**

**AGREED:-**

- (a) that, subject to minor changes to text to be delegated to officers, the Pilot study to be implemented with immediate effect for a period of one year.**
- (b) to receive a report back following the end of the trial period which detailed any relevant issues and outcomes.**

*The meeting concluded at 2.50 p.m.*