

Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 11 September 2024

Motion on Queensferry Town Centre Designation

Executive/Routine:
Wards

Executive
Almond

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Planning Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the advantages and disadvantages in planning terms of Queensferry being a designated a town centre as opposed to a local centre;
 - 1.1.2 Notes that there is no statutory provision to alter or modify an adopted local development plan;
 - 1.1.3 Recognises that any agreed change to the status of the Queensferry local centre would be progressed through the City Plan 2040 preparation process; and
 - 1.1.4 Agrees that this report discharges the remit set by the Council on 21 March 2024.

Peter Watton

Service Director, Sustainable Development

Contact: Keith Miller, Senior Planning Officer

E-mail: keith.miller@edinburgh.gov.uk

Motion to alter the status of Queensferry local centre

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report presents the advantages and disadvantages in planning terms of Queensferry being designated as a town centre as opposed to a local centre and outlines the process to change the status if it was considered appropriate.

3. Background

- 3.1 The motion [approved](#) by the Council on 21 March 2024 requested that officers prepare a report to the Planning Committee in three cycles which outlines the advantages and disadvantages in planning terms of Queensferry being designated as a town centre as opposed to a local centre. In addition, the motion requested considering any possible way of expediting this designation before the adoption of the City Plan 2040.
- 3.2 The motion is a result of concerns that the designation of Queensferry as a local centre places it at a disadvantage in terms of resource allocation or expenditure.

4. Main report

- 4.1 National Planning Framework 4 requires local development plans (LDPs) to support sustainable futures for city, town and local centres, in particular opportunities to enhance city and town centres. LDPs are required to identify a network of centres that reflect the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods and the town centre vision.
- 4.2 Queensferry High Street was formally designated as a local centre in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan 2016. Outside the city centre, there are eight town centres and 63 local centres designated in City Plan 2030 which the Council has resolved to adopt. The town and local centres designations were reviewed through the City Plan 2030 preparation process, which did result in some changes to the boundaries of the centres including the creation of some new local centres. These designated centres serve as a focal point for their local communities with a mix of retail and other commercial and community services.

- 4.3 Local centres are smaller shopping centres, usually 10 units or more, serving a local retail function which contributes to the quality of life and sense of identity of a place by providing facilities within walking distance for more local communities. They differ from the larger scale town centres which provide a more diverse mix of activities and land uses and act as a destination for a wider catchment. These town centres have a clear identity and character that defines their broader function and wider town centre role in the network of centres.
- 4.4 Queensferry was not redesignated as a town centre in the last review because in terms of scale it has significantly less retail units than the smallest existing town centre, just 36 units compared to 109 units in Corstorphine or the average (220 units). The number of retail units in Queensferry is close to the average for local centres (20 units). As a result, in terms of scale, Queensferry's centre is comparable with other local centres in Edinburgh.
- 4.5 The choice of designation, in terms of local or town centre, influences the planning policies that apply to a centre as applied by City Plan 2030. Policy Re 3 (Town Centres) sets out requirements for retail proposals in town centres. The policy requirements are similar to the policy requirements for local centres, as set out in Policy Re 5 (local centres) but are designed to be more restrictive to protect their character and function.
- 4.6 In particular, criterion a) of Policy Re 3 requires retail proposals in town centres to demonstrate that 'there will be no significant adverse effects on the vitality and viability of the city centre retail core or any other town centre'. This criterion is not included within Policy Re 5. Criterion d) of Re 3 is also more restrictive requiring proposals to demonstrate that 'the proposal will reinforce the retail vitality and improve the appearance, including public realm'.
- 4.7 With regard to local centres, the policy requirements in Re 5 are deliberately chosen to provide more flexibility and only require half the units in a local centre to be in non-shop use in order to ensure these centres retain their vitality and viability. In contrast, similar proposals in town centres under Policy Re 4 are required to demonstrate that a non-retail proposal would not undermine the retail function of the centre. This is to protect town centre's role from excessive loss of retail floorspace.
- 4.8 From a planning policy perspective, Queensferry is not disadvantaged by being designated as a local centre, as policy Re 5 provides flexibility to allow changes of use in light of commercial trends. In contrast, the policies for town centres bring additional requirements for planning applications in terms of studies and supporting documentation, and there is a risk that it could deter or impede small businesses if it was designated a town centre.
- 4.9 The status of town and local centres can only be determined through the local development plan process. City Plan 2030 is now at the 'intention to adopt' stage and, as it was prepared under the old planning system, there is no provision to alter or modify it. As a result, the only feasible means of changing the Queensferry local centre's status would be through the City Plan 2040 preparation process.

- 4.10 There are opportunities to engage with the City Plan 2040 process as outlined in the Development Plan Scheme if there is an intention to pursue the change to the local centre designation, including promotion through a local place plan.
- 4.11 It should be noted recent changes to the use class order and permitted development rights introduced greater flexibility for changes between retail and non-retail uses without the requirement for planning consent.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 This report fulfils the remit set by the Council on 21 March 2024.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no financial impact resulting from this report.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are not anticipated to be any negative implications in terms of equality, human rights (including children's rights) and socio-economic disadvantage of the change of status of Queensferry.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There is not anticipated to be direct impact on the environment resulting from the alteration of the status of Queensferry from a local centre to a town centre.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 There are expected to be no significant impacts relative to risk, policy, compliance and governance resulting from this report.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [City Plan 2030](#)
- 10.2 [National Planning Framework 4](#)

11. Appendices

None.