

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee -13 January 1998
Planning & Transport Policy Committee - 29 January 1998
Policy & Resources Committee - 10 February 1998

ITEM No. 13**SCOTTISH HOMES - NORTH AND EAST REGIONAL PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998 to 2001**

REPORT by CHIEF EXECUTIVE in consultation with DIRECTORS OF FINANCE, LAW AND ADMINISTRATION, HOUSING, EDUCATION, SOCIAL WORK, PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROPERTY SERVICES, ROADS, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION, RECREATION SERVICES and CONTRACT SERVICES MANAGER.

ABSTRACT

This report relates to the consultative draft North and East Regional Plan that has been issued by Scottish Homes.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to Members that:-

- 1) they note the lack of detail contained in the Plan in regard to the funding to be made available to meet housing needs in Angus;
- 2) they note that under present plans most of Angus will receive little investment from Scottish Homes after year 1999/2000;
- 3) this report be forwarded to Scottish Homes as the Council's comments on the draft North and East Regional Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

Scottish Homes North and East regional office published, towards the end of November 1997, its draft Regional Plan for the period 1998-2001. At the time of publication no clarity was given by Scottish Homes in regard to the consultation timescale. However, following a consultation seminar on 18 December 1997 comments must be forwarded to Scottish Homes by the middle of January 1998.

3. REGIONAL PLAN 1998-2001

The Plan covers a three year period from April 1998 to March 2001. Within the Plan it is indicated that the resources made available will be directed to where there are partnership arrangements. Members will be aware that a new Strategic Agreement with Scottish Homes is to be formally signed on 19 January 1998.

The Plan indicates that there will be a balanced programme between rented accommodation and accommodation for owner occupation. Given Scottish Homes current understanding of resource allocations for the three year period it is noted that the total capital and revenue investment for the period concerned within the North and East region will amount to £108 million. This represents a reduction of 46% on the previous 3 year period. However, it is not possible to determine from the Plan what share of these resources will be directed towards meeting housing needs within Angus. The Plan forecasts that a total of some 3,380 units will be approved during the Plan period for the whole North and East Region.

4. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE CONTENTS OF THE PLAN

a) Housing Needs Context

The Plan provides details of the Housing Market Areas used by Scottish Homes for planning purposes and a map of these Areas is contained in Appendix 1. It will be noted that the majority of Angus falls into the "Intermediate" classification. Housing Market Areas are areas that are relatively self-contained in terms of the proportion of people moving home or travelling to work and are based on an analysis of sasines and other data.

Within the Plan there is clear acknowledgement that some geographic areas will receive little or no financial assistance from Scottish Homes. In particular, much of Angus falls into this category, as can be seen from Appendix 2.

There is a commitment within the Plan to complete, for example, the Strathairlie Regeneration project. Such a commitment from Scottish Homes is to be welcomed. Elsewhere in the Plan there is reference to contributing to the revitalisation of identified smaller urban settlements through participation in investment partnerships. Although specific references are made to Montrose, Brechin and Forfar little detail is given on the types of projects that will receive financial support. However, given that the majority of the programme will go into rented housing in the disadvantaged/pressured areas of the Region, it is likely that there will be little expenditure in these areas.

In regard to rural areas there are references made to developing innovative responses to rural housing issues and to use grant mechanisms to ensure housing provision within integrated programmes. However, it is understood that grants, e.g. Gro-Grant, Housing Association Grant, Rural Home-Ownership Grant and Rural Empty Property Grant will be directed towards the pressured areas, thereby leaving out Rural Angus, although the Angus Glens may qualify for funding.

There is a commitment to funding the provision of housing to meet Community Care and homelessness issues.

There are a number of other issues that are of concern in regard to future housing developments to meet identified housing needs that are specific to Angus.

For example, the Carnoustie, Monifieth and Sidlaw areas are included within what Scottish Homes determines to be the greater Dundee Local Housing Market Area. These areas in Angus have their own particular housing requirements for social rented housing and it seems inequitable that part of Angus should be included within the Dundee housing market area, where any provision may be directed to meet housing needs identified in a Dundee context.

The document makes reference to housing demand as determined by waiting and transfer lists but does not take account of hidden housing problems and needs that can not be established from a crude statistical analysis of those applicants who have taken the time to register with the Housing Department or with Housing Associations.

In regard to providing for Community Care Client Groups the commitment by Scottish Homes to the establishment of Community Care Trusts is to be welcomed. However, the Plan fails to make reference to the potential impact of the closure programme at Sunnyside Hospital, Montrose. In regard to accommodation to meet hospital closure programmes, assessment data on the remaining hospital population indicates that where a housing need has been established it is more likely to be for some form of provision with on-site support rather than mainstream housing.

Issue is also taken with the bold statement that Community Care Client Groups should be automatically labelled as deprived. This is certainly not the case.

Reference is made in the document to the virement of funding from the Housing Association Rental Programme to the Special Needs Capital Grant programme to deal with innovative community care projects. However, no indication is given by Scottish Homes as to precisely what funding will be transferred from one section of the programme to another.

Reference is also made in the document to the matching of revenue resources to implement the Capital Programme resulting from Community Care strategies. However there is no clear definition of what is meant by "matching" and this certainly requires to be clarified so that all partners involved in community care housing provision are certain of their respective share of investment.

b) Planning (Development Plan) Context

In addition to the concerns over the impact of the provisions of the North and East Regional Plan in meeting the area's housing needs, there are specific concerns on the potential impact on the continued investment in the Angus towns on redevelopment and opportunity sites.

In preparing the Consultative Draft Angus Local Plan (due for publication in mid January 1998) Angus Council has taken cognisance of National Planning Policy Guidelines and good planning practice by promoting the re-use or redevelopment of brownfield sites for housing development within settlements.

Consequently the Consultative Draft Angus Local Plan has put forward a development strategy for new housing based on the redevelopment of brownfield sites or re-use of redundant buildings with the aim of regenerating existing towns and communities. This is particularly true of Montrose, Brechin, Arbroath and Forfar where there are a number of large brownfield sites (principally former industrial or manufacturing sites).

In Arbroath, which has the 2nd highest travel to work area unemployment rate in Scotland, redevelopment for housing, particularly in and around the town centre, is an important element of investment by public and private sector agencies who are working in partnership to address the economic, physical and social issues affecting the town. It is important that investment in housing redevelopment continues following completion of the Strathairlie project.

Throughout Angus the Consultative Draft Local Plan seeks redevelopment of brownfield sites, principally for residential use, by releasing them for redevelopment in the period to 2001. To encourage such development, where significant greenfield land is allocated, its release is generally delayed until the 2001 to 2006 period.

As indicated in Appendix 2 the provisions of the North and East Regional Plan identify much of Angus (including Montrose, Brechin and Forfar) as intermediate areas which will receive little or no investment from Scottish Homes in the period up to 2001, other than for Community Care or homelessness projects.

Inner area brownfield redevelopment sites in Angus have generally been brought forward by Housing Associations on their own or in partnership with private housebuilders and the Consultative Draft Local Plan allocations anticipate that this will continue to be the case on some sites. Angus Council are keen to see these sites come forward to both continue and build on existing and previous public and private sector investment programmes.

The provisions of the North and East Regional Plan outwith Arbroath and Greater Dundee may seriously affect the prospects of some significant and long-standing redevelopment sites which are dependent on private sector/Housing Association partnerships. In particular sites such as Mortons Bond, Montrose are dependent on Housing Association and therefore Scottish Homes investment. This and other brownfield redevelopment opportunities at Brechin Road Distillery, Montrose and sites at St. James Road, New Road, South Street

and Forfar Infirmary, Forfar may assume a much reduced level of "effectiveness" without Scottish Homes/Housing Association support.

In broad planning terms any reduction in the effectiveness of such brownfield sites in settlements where the proposed housing land supply is dominated by redevelopment opportunity sites is likely to increase pressure from the private housebuilders for additional greenfield extension sites.

Such pressure would undoubtedly undermine the broad housing land strategy developed by the Consultative Draft Angus Local Plan and run contrary to both National Planning Policy Guidance and the principles of sustainability endorsed by Angus Council, Scottish Homes and Central Government.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report consultation has been undertaken with appropriate Directors and Heads of Service.

7. CONCLUSION

It is accepted that Scottish Homes are operating under severe financial constraints and consequently any investment by Scottish Homes must be maximised in regard to the provision of housing units in Angus.

However, the programmes as outlined within the consultative draft North and East Regional Plan will result in only limited housing activity, funded by Scottish Homes, in the Angus area over the three year period in question, particularly after 1999/2000. Certain projects, such as Strathairlie in Arbroath, will be completed and this is to be welcomed as are the commitments to address homelessness and Community Care needs. However, other projects that have been outstanding for some time, e.g. the development of the Mortons Bond in Montrose does not figure within the programme and the future of this particular development, along with others, is now very much in doubt. There is a need for Scottish Homes to reconsider its view that funding will not be directed to the redevelopment of brownfield sites. Furthermore there should be a review of the funding priority given to Rural Angus.

There is concern that as the housing situation in Angus is relatively stable, the area will miss out on housing investment because Scottish Homes has concluded that the needs of other parts of the North and East Region are that much greater.

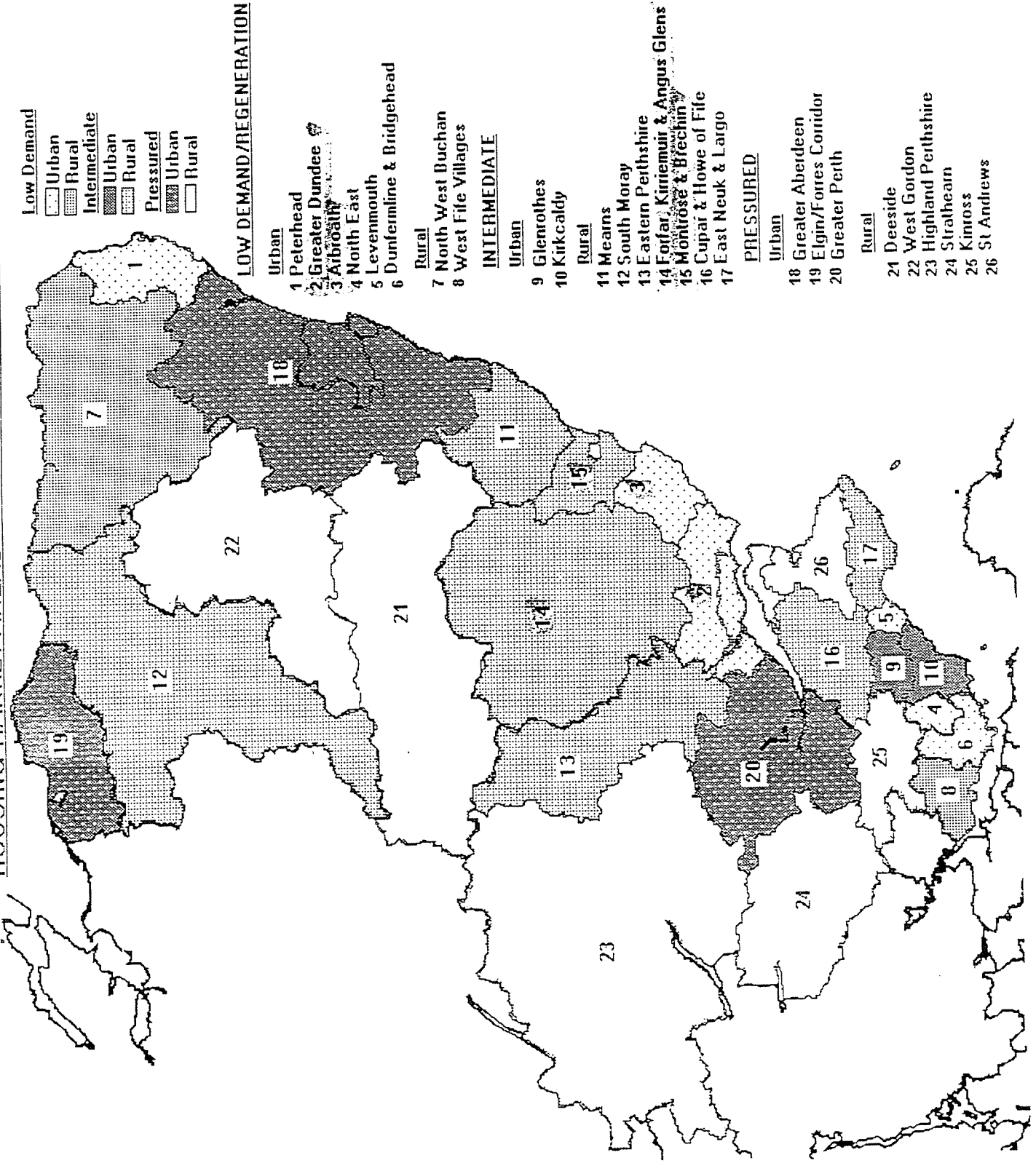
A decline in the amount of funding from Scottish Homes will undoubtedly have a significant impact on economic activity.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

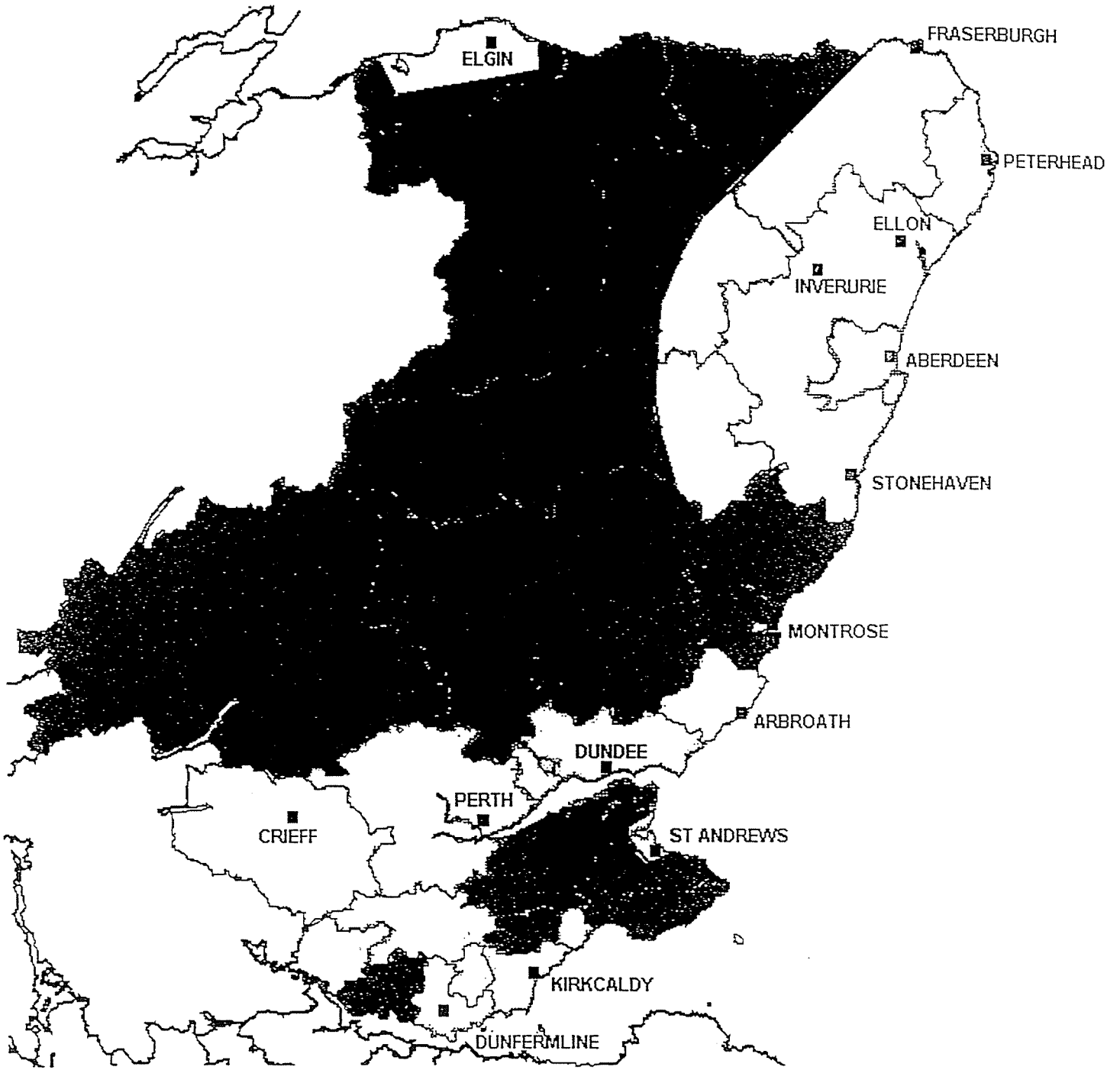
Note - The following background papers, as defined by Section 50d of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied upon to a material extent in preparing this report.

Scottish Homes North and East Regional Plan 1998-2001

HOUSING MARKET AREAS - NORTH & EAST REGION



AREAS WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE INVESTMENT



● AREAS WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE INVESTMENT