

A VISION FOR CAPITAL GROWTH  
DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION



The views expressed in this paper are the City of Edinburgh Council's and do not necessarily represent those of our three joint structure plan partners: East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council.

對首府增長的抱負  
諮詢文件（草擬本）

শহর کی ترقی کیسے ایک تصور  
مشاورت کیلئے مسودہ

রাজধানী সম্প্রসারণের ব্যাপারে একটি দূরদৃষ্টি  
পরামর্শ করবার খসড়া

رؤية مستقبلية لنمو العاصمة  
مسودة للاستشارة

# A VISION FOR CAPITAL GROWTH: 2020 – 2040

## DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Edinburgh is one of the most successful and prosperous cities in the country. I believe most of us want it to stay that way in the years ahead. If we do, then we must think about what shape we want our future to be.

Success and growth go together. We'll need more places for people to live and work. We'll need more green spaces to relax in and better transport to get around the whole city. We'll need to carry on protecting the world-class historic environment we all value so much. And we'll need to play our part in protecting our climate.

That will be difficult and will only happen over many years. This paper sets out this Council's vision for the future shape of the city – which we believe will help deliver those goals. We'd like to know what you think.

**COUNCILLOR TREVOR DAVIES**  
CONVENOR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE



“CHANGE IS THE LAW OF LIFE. AND THOSE WHO LOOK ONLY TO  
THE PAST OR PRESENT ARE CERTAIN TO MISS THE FUTURE.”

JOHN F KENNEDY

# A VISION FOR CAPITAL GROWTH: 2020 – 2040

## DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The four Lothians authorities are consulting on a joint proposal to alter aspects of our current structure plan and roll its development strategy forward to 2020. The consultation paper heralds the start of what we hope will be a fascinating debate on the future size and shape of Scotland's capital city and its region, and we want to add the City of Edinburgh Council's distinctive voice to this important public conversation.

The consultation paper's basic thrust is that there's a lot of land in the planning pipeline across the Lothians with in-principle and detailed support for development, and major new strategic allocations are not needed to 2020. We fully support this view. But the paper also has a section which looks

further ahead, to 2040, and poses three open questions:

- **Do you think that the Edinburgh city region should plan for significant growth in the period 2020 - 2040?**
- **If there is to be growth, should the emphasis be on concentrating it around Edinburgh, dispersing development around the city-region or some other approach?**
- **How can we ensure that development on the ground is delivered as sustainably as possible and its full environmental impact assessed and mitigated?**

What follows is the City of Edinburgh Council's response to these important questions. We have an exciting vision for the

sustainable development of a thriving mid 21st century city and its region. At its heart is a leading northern European capital that continues to drive its regional and national economy. A prosperous, connected city whose long term growth is guided by a shared understanding of future city form. A city that appreciates and protects its superb built and natural heritage.

Our vision builds on a range of work we've done in recent years, including the Edinburgh City Vision, the Case for Edinburgh, work on Key Economic Sectors and a 2020 Scenarios Planning exercise. The Scenarios presented two starkly different futures in 2020: a bright one based on a positive attitude to sustainable growth

("Capital Gains") and one of genteel decline, stemming from a failure to grow and grasp economic opportunities ("Capital Punishment"). In this paper we develop the Capital Gains scenario and think it forward two decades.

We're optimistic about the future but we know that looking so far ahead is an uncertain business and we don't have all the answers. The planning strategy we choose will therefore need to strike a balance between stability and flexibility. It will need to evolve in full partnership with our Lothians partner authorities, neighbouring councils and key stakeholders. First and foremost it has to grow from continuous and meaningful engagement with our region's people.



## BEYOND 2020: SIZE MATTERS!

The first and most basic issue we need to tackle is whether we should plan for the city and its region to continue to keep growing, or grow faster, after 2020. We think the answer is yes for compelling demographic and economic reasons, as summarised in the 2020 consultation paper's section on the case for higher levels of growth, and the Experian paper on growing the city region's economy (see Sources).

Looking at the features of successful cities suggests size – population and economic activity – really does matter. Yes, Edinburgh is doing well in a UK context, but we lag behind our northern European rivals in terms of wealth creation, growth rates and scientific innovation. And the size of these competitor cities appears to be a factor in their success. We estimate the population of the Edinburgh city region, including parts of Fife and Scottish Borders, is around 1.25 million, projected to grow to about 1.33 million by 2020. But the average of northern Europe's three leading city regions, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo, is 1.5 million.

Larger cities are more able to offer a range of employment and lifestyle choices. They can successfully combine economic and social diversity, attract creative people and innovative “new economy” employers, and they can achieve critical mass and economies of scale in key economic sectors.

We think there's a good case for saying Edinburgh hasn't reached its ideal size yet and needs to actively attract more people and more high-value, knowledge-driven, diverse economic activity. So we see compelling reasons to retain and expand our existing well educated local workforce. Increases in the demand for labour have led to increases in the travel to work area as first time buyers and those on modest incomes, including many of our key workers, have to look further and further afield to find affordable housing. The current labour supply gap (see Figure 1) is creating a low pressure system over the capital, sucking in commuters over increasingly long and increasingly unsustainable distances. And the gap is forecast to widen.

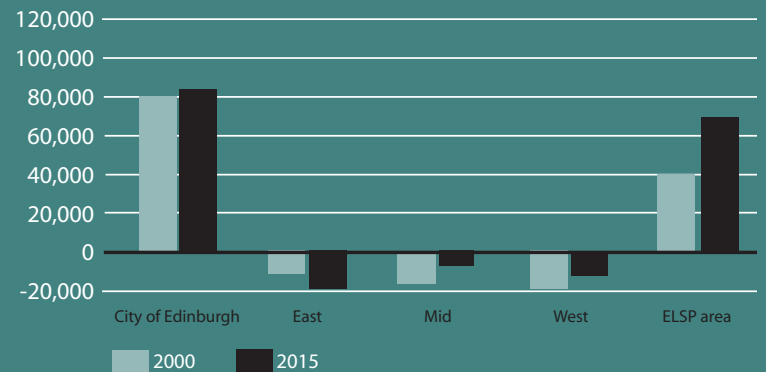
We don't think today's travel to work patterns can be sustained in the long term, and we therefore want to plan for a larger local workforce. We also want to make sure those workers can find

homes they can afford, close to the city – the regional employment hub – by planning for more homes and a larger range of house types and tenures.

We believe Edinburgh's growth is Scotland's success: our capital city region is, and should continue to be, a key driver of the national economy. We must continue to build on that success and play to our strengths in attracting new economic activity to help us compete not with other Scottish cities but with European and international competitor city regions.

Growth brings clear benefits but inevitably comes with an environmental price tag. But that cost can be minimised. We wouldn't allow growth to undermine the things that currently make our city so attractive – its beauty, breathtaking vistas, compact structure, easy access to countryside and sheer liveability. These things are hard to measure, but they really matter. So we need to find ways of reconciling growth with preserving the city region's precious environment. The challenge will be to protect the best of our built and natural heritage by identifying growth thresholds and unambiguous “no go” areas for development. We will also need to create long term land use certainty which would reduce the pressure for damaging speculative development.

FIGURE 1: LABOUR DEMAND/SUPPLY MISMATCH 2000 – 2015









## WHERE SHOULD THE GROWTH GO?

Our position is clear: we want to grow the city. The next key question we have to answer, assuming strong demand for housing and economic growth continues beyond 2020, is: where should we put this new strategic growth? Looking this far ahead, the year-on-year levels of growth start to open up real strategic planning choices. An incremental, short-term approach to planning for growth is not the answer – we will need a coherent long term vision of the city’s future shape and connections.

The 2020 consultation paper asks whether we should concentrate new development close to Edinburgh, disperse it more widely around the city-region or take some other approach. To answer this question we need to be clear what we’re trying to achieve.

The current structure plan is based on a set of overarching strategic objectives. We think these will remain relevant and have used the same guiding principles when weighing up alternative strategic development patterns and arriving at our preferred growth model. Rooted in sustainability and social justice, they seek to provide in full for the region’s development needs and deliver a sustainable pattern of development by:

- maintaining and enhancing economic competitiveness
- promoting a more inclusive society
- protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment
- integrating land use and transport and minimising the need to travel

The pros and cons of alternative approaches based on concentration and dispersal are already summarised in the 2020 consultation paper. For the following reasons set out below, we think a strategy based broadly on concentrating growth close to the city best meets these aims.

## HOW MUCH CAN WE EXPECT FROM RECYCLED LAND?

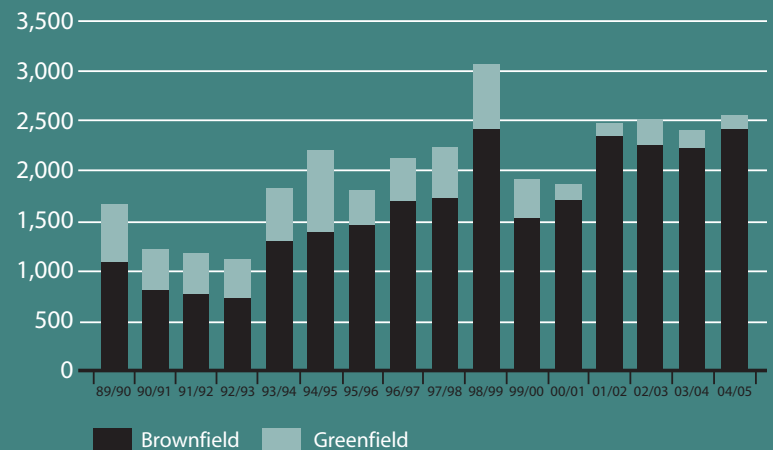
Recycled, or “brownfield”, land in Edinburgh has delivered housing at historically high levels in recent years and far exceeded the structure plan’s assumed contribution rate (see Figure 2).

We think we can safely count on a continuing contribution from city brownfield land in the long term but probably at lower levels; it is often suggested that this source will “dry up” over time, but land uses in towns and cities are continuously changing and a base level of land use “churn” is healthy, and indeed necessary, to take advantage of new ways of living, working and building.

Even with policy support for increased urban density, the existing urban area’s ability to soak up the levels of strategic growth we envisage has its limits. Design-led planning will help deliver modern living environments at urban densities, including new or revived formats for family housing in the city. These will be comparable with those that have stood the test of time in our most successful historic inner residential neighbourhoods. But we must ensure this doesn’t go too far and lead to “town cramming” and the loss of the city’s precious open spaces – our “green lungs”.

Land economics also come into play. We mustn’t let very high values for housing and retailing land erode our open space heritage or skew the balance of uses in the city by driving out less lucrative, but vital, small service businesses and community uses.

FIGURE 2: HOUSING COMPLETIONS BY LAND USE 1989 – 2005





## CONCENTRATE OR DISPERSE?

So brownfield will have an important but limited role, but to underpin a strong long term growth strategy the inescapable reality is that the bulk of new strategic development would need to be built on previously unused “greenfield” land.

We agree that the solution needs to be planned at the regional level and recognise that development land will continue to be needed across the Lothians for local needs, for example to help reach infrastructure delivery thresholds. But beyond 2020 we would not view a strategy weighted towards greenfield releases in outlying parts of the landward areas as being very sustainable.

Similarly, we don't think it would be very sustainable to plan for a large proportion of Edinburgh-generated demand for homes and jobs to be met in areas outwith the Lothians. A “dispersal” approach works best when homes and jobs are decanted to new or expanded towns to produce communities which are reasonably self-contained. But we know that in practice that can be hard to achieve and if the jobs lag behind the homes, or don't arrive at all, in-commuting by car back across the green belt is inevitable. This doesn't sit well with the aim of containing travel and minimising car trips.

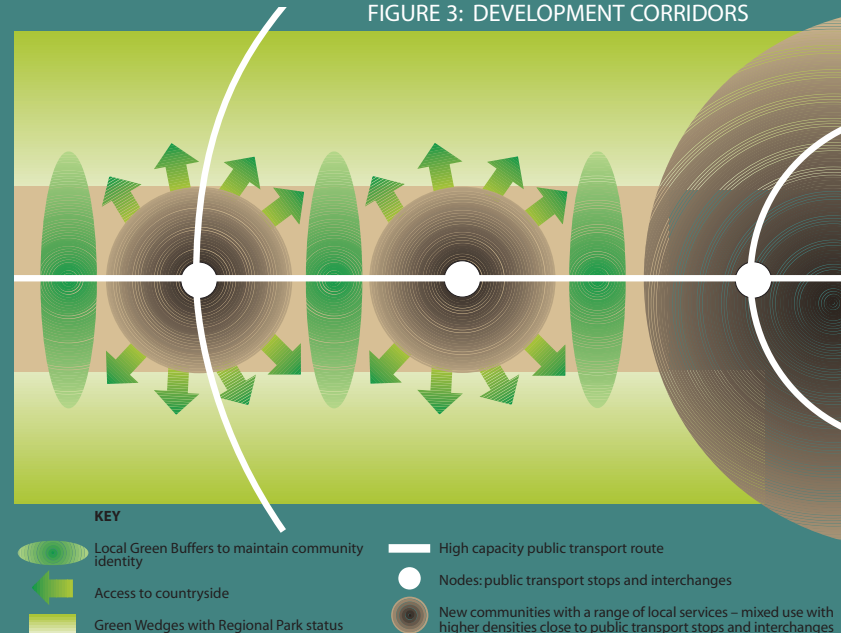
There will be exceptions however, where wider city region locations are particularly well served by public transport. For example, allocating some of Edinburgh's growth to parts of the central Borders, served by a new Borders rail line, could make a sustainable contribution to a regional strategy based on directing new development to heavy rail corridors.

A joined up vision therefore needs to achieve many goals. We want to meet our needs for affordable homes in and close to the city, including the full range of homes for families. We think people should generally have the opportunity to live closer to the city's current and future sources of employment. We'd like to create accessible green spaces that people can use. We want to deliver a world class integrated public transport system that gives easy access to jobs and services for everyone.

## SUSTAINABLE CITY FORM

To help achieve these things as sustainably as possible we favour a growth model which extends the city outwards in a planned way. We would direct expansion into mixed use development corridors built around nodes on high capacity public transport arteries (existing and planned), with a strong emphasis on heavy rail and tram routes. The separate identity of each new community would be preserved as they grow by local green buffers. The “spokes” would be separated by large green wedges, some of which would, as now, flow right into the city. Figure 3 shows in schematic terms the kind of pattern we have in mind.

FIGURE 3: DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS



A development corridors approach would:

- reduce the need to travel and minimise overall travel distances
- help provide housing in the city people can afford, in turn helping families to stay together in or close to the City
- maximise the interface between city residents and countryside
- help achieve internationally competitive critical mass
- make efficient use of existing urban infrastructure
- provide critical mass to deliver new infrastructure
- enable efficient public transport penetration
- respond to market signals – allocations closer to jobs hub





In many countries, radial development corridors or “fingers” are at the heart of long term strategies and have led to successful place-making. They have proved a flexible tool to manage urban growth while still regenerating brownfield land and protecting strategically important green wedges. Copenhagen’s “finger plan” for example was first conceived in 1947 and this clear, long term, spatial vision has been applied consistently over several decades with great success. It still guides the Danish capital’s strategic growth today, as Figure 4 shows.

This is not “ribbon development” by another name – narrow bands of uncoordinated development, strung out along roads. These corridors would be substantial urban extensions along public transport spines, with the critical mass to deliver well designed 21st century mixed communities within easy reach of jobs, shops and leisure facilities.

FIGURE 4: COPENHAGEN “FINGER PLAN” AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



## MODERNISING THE GREEN BELT

The spokes and wedges approach is an attractive one but if we are to plan for the post 2020 city to “breathe out” along growth corridors there would be clear implications for the Green Belt as currently conceived.

The Edinburgh Green Belt has served us well for fifty years. It has helped to maintain the openness of the city’s landscape setting, contain urban sprawl, safeguard the identity of towns and focus development pressure back into the city, helping regenerate socially excluded communities. But the way we live, work and move has changed hugely since the 1950s, and we need to stand back and take a hard look at whether the traditional green belt concept is fit for the future.

We have seen how rigid, old-style green belts can lead to undesirable spillover effects as development is forced to “leapfrog” to landward areas, increasing both the length of commuting journeys and car dependence. Their positive regeneration effects, if not carefully managed, can put pressure on urban open spaces and contribute to town cramming. They can also be a factor in pushing up land values and squeezing out suburban density detached homes with gardens. And increasingly the new growth industries want spacious green campus-style sites close to the city, a trend which is clearly at odds with a deep and continuous city green belt.

Recognising the need for change, a more flexible approach to green belts is emerging from the Scottish Executive in the shape of Draft Scottish Planning Policy 21: Green Belts. This confirms that green belts don’t necessarily have to encircle cities, they can take other forms such as buffers, corridors, or wedges.

Para. 13 says

“Growth on the urban fringe or in a development corridor, associated with a key public transport link, may represent the most sustainable solution. Leap-frogging of the GB, where housing devt in particular is pushed to outlying settlements, has the potential to increase commuting by private car, and should be considered only where more sustainable options are not practicable.”

Our vision chimes with this new policy direction, and we think the key to a sustainable urban future lies with reinventing our green belt to meet the new challenges of the next fifty years. How would that work in practice?





## A STRATEGIC GREENSPACE NETWORK FOR ALL

A concentration strategy inevitably means losing some existing green belt land, but we could make the sizeable areas left much better. We could deliver real benefits by harnessing some of the development value from strategic growth and channelling it into a new network of strategic green spaces on the city's doorstep. The Council is currently looking at innovative ways of achieving this.

A truly strategic plan would create greater land use certainty and, because we had identified long-term outlets for development pressure, we could give even stronger protection to the remaining network of green spaces. Working with environmental organisations and landowners, we could develop new ways of delivering increased public access and improved recreational value.

We could build a network of new woodland parks, providing

new opportunities for accessible outdoor recreation. Public access could be opened up to existing high amenity greenspace and we could create new "destinations" through biodiverse woodland planting. We would work with the Forestry Commission and landowners to find solutions that work with the grain of agricultural activity.

## REALISING THE VISION – A SUGGESTED APPROACH

Our vision has three main elements:

- radial development corridors based on public transport routes
- a network of strategic green wedges
- new mechanisms for delivering the necessary infrastructure.

To illustrate our thinking, we have identified the following candidate corridors and green wedges. We would emphasise that this is a preliminary list and it's unlikely all these potential corridors would be needed or supported. Proposals that extend beyond our own boundary are our ideas and should not be taken to imply support by our partner authorities in and beyond the Lothians. Before we'd be able to reach any firm conclusions we'd need to work with our partners to flesh out and test options and carry out transport and infrastructure modelling, landscape capacity analysis, strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisals.

Each development corridor would be based on existing or new heavy rail or tram services, or both. At the inter-regional level, new transport links will also be needed. In this timeframe, we can consider the local opportunities that may be offered by radical improvements to the national transport infrastructure, such as new dedicated high-speed rail links to London and Glasgow. Figure 5 illustrates some of the principal transport opportunities that we have considered and Figure 6 summarises the main elements of the overall vision.



FIGURE 5: TRANSPORT SCHEMES

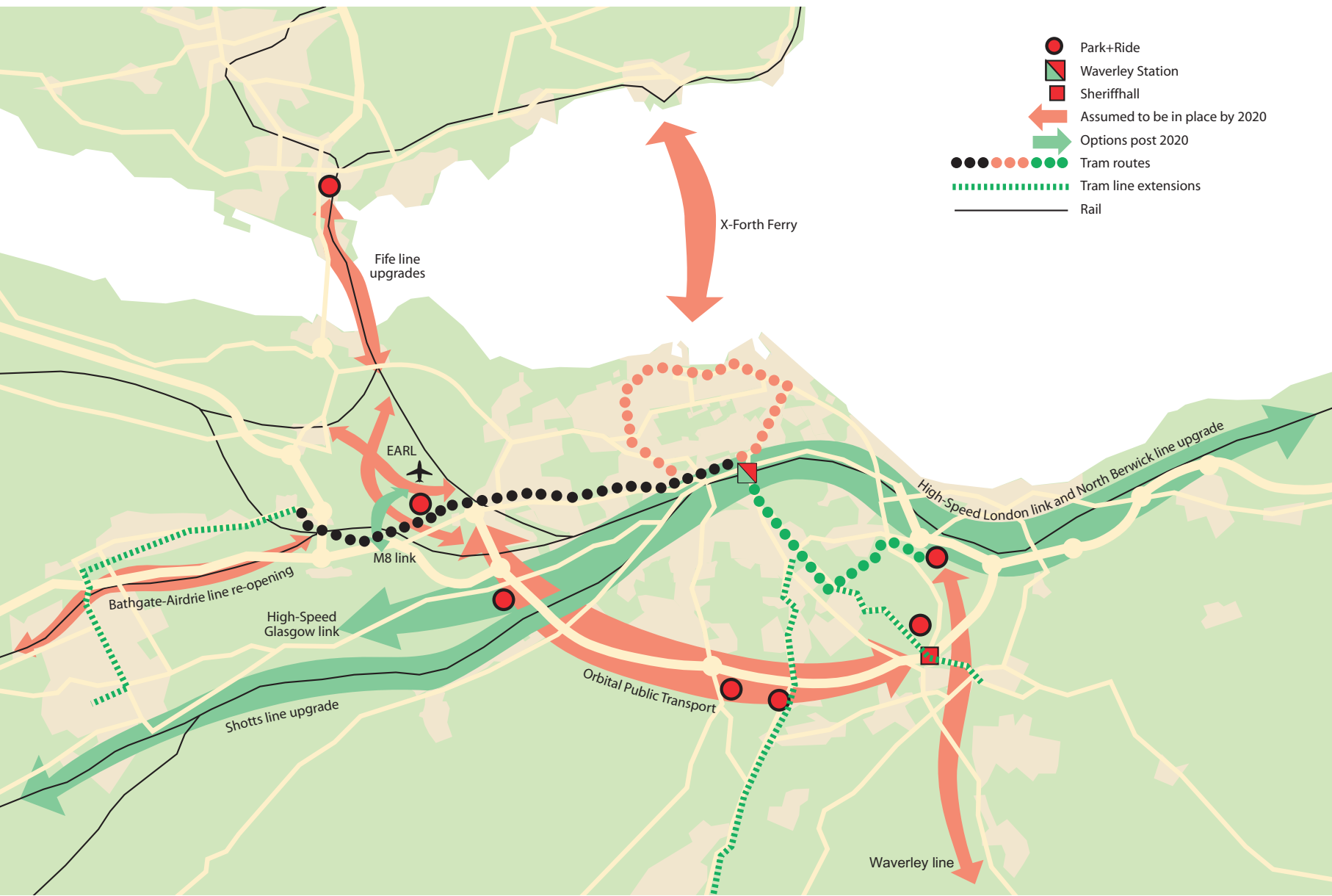
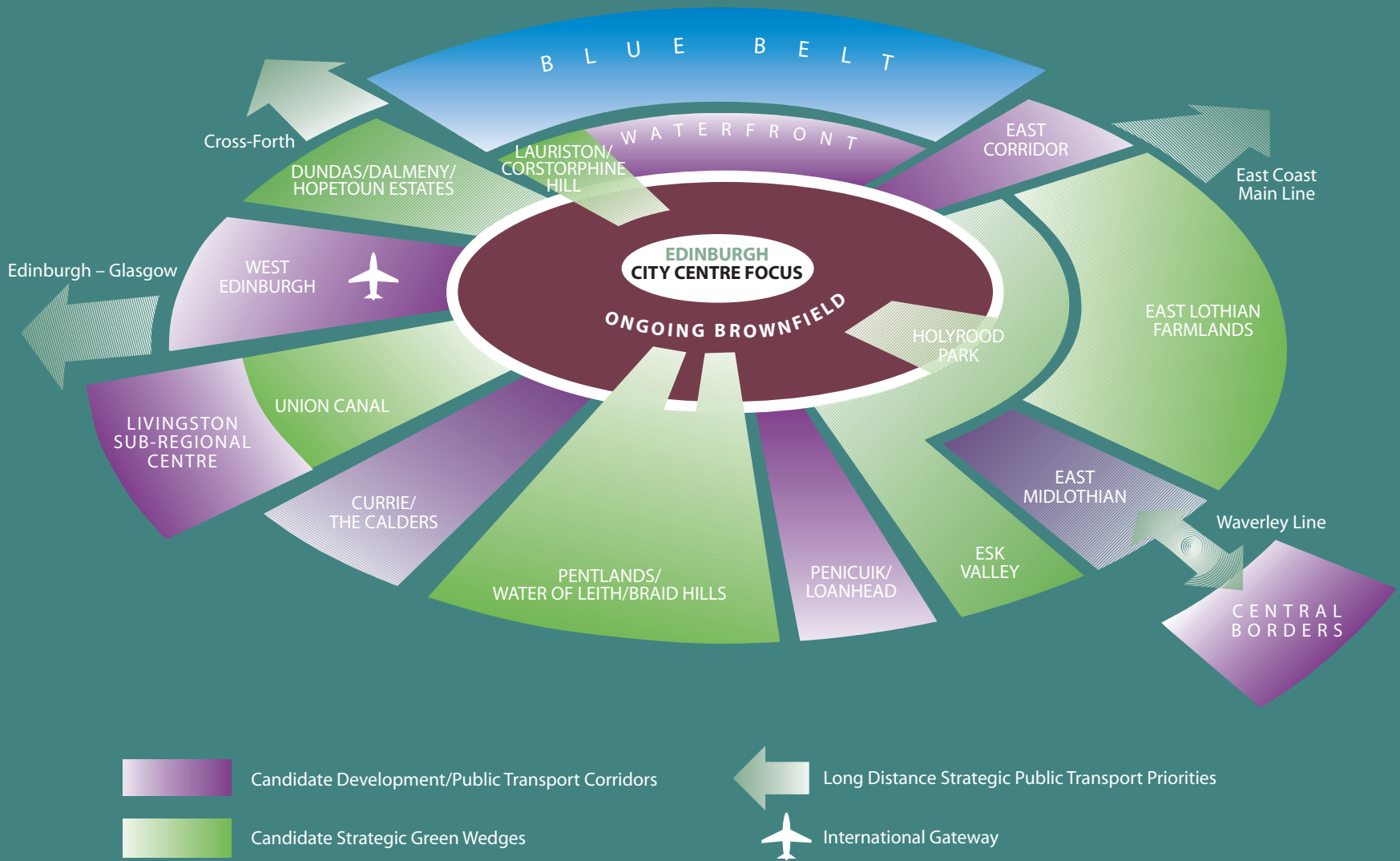


FIGURE 6: EDINBURGH – A VISION FOR CAPITAL GROWTH 2040







## CANDIDATES FOR DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS (2020 TO 2040)

Candidate Corridor	Existing and Potential Associated Public Transport Improvements	Likely Principal Land Uses
West Edinburgh/A8 Corridor/ expanded Airport/ Newbridge/Kirkliston	EARL, Tram Line 2 (and extensions), Ingliston park and ride, bus corridor, new Newbridge rail station, Airport second runway	WORLD CLASS BUSINESS/ AIRPORT USES/ INTERNATIONAL GATEWAY
Shotts Line/Riccarton/ Hermiston/Currie – out to East Calder and Livingston	Curriehill Station upgrade, parkway station at East Calder, general Shotts line enhancements, tram extensions to Livingston	HOUSING/KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY
Penicuik/Loanhead	Tram/rail line to Loanhead and Penicuik, subject to further study	HOUSING/BIOSCIENCE
East Midlothian – Dalkeith, Gorebridge – Central Borders	Borders Rail Line	HOUSING/OTHER MIXED USES
Eastern Growth Corridor	East Coast main line/North Berwick commuter line upgrade Tram Line 3, tram extension to Musselburgh	HOUSING/OTHER MIXED USES
Edinburgh Waterfront	Tram Line 1	HOUSING/EMPLOYMENT/ OTHER MIXED USES

## CANDIDATES FOR STRATEGIC GREEN WEDGES

North West: Hopetoun, Dundas and Dalmeny estates	Maintaining value of attractive Forthside countryside and the A90 as green approach to the city from north
Pentland Hills, linking to extensions penetrating into the city at the Water of Leith and Braid Hills	Key landscape and recreational assets for the city-region, providing priceless access to wild countryside on city's doorstep
Union Canal and associated countryside	Further potential to develop the Union Canal as a key green linear recreational route from the heart of the city to open countryside. Strategic separation between Edinburgh and Livingston
Esk Valley corridor and Holyrood Park	Strategic separation between Bonnyrigg/Lasswade/Dalkeith and Loanhead/south-east Edinburgh. Maintaining value of significant green corridor
East Lothian Farmlands	High quality agricultural land with relatively poor public transport potential
Lauriston/Corstorphine Hill	Key green wedge allowing countryside to flow into urban west Edinburgh



## OTHER ELEMENTS OF STRATEGY

These elements from our current strategy can be expected to be continued into a longer term vision:

- Strong support for the city centre – the city region's economic success depends on a vibrant, accessible, world class Edinburgh city centre. Any long-term strategy must continue to support and improve the city centre's strategic tourism, retailing and financial services role.
- Cultural Capital – we have a uniquely rich cultural offer for a city of our size which helps us punch above our weight economically. We will nurture and develop this key asset.
- Support for our key economic sectors and growing the knowledge economy. Our current key sectors are financial services, the creative industries, higher education and research institutions, health, real estate, tourism, retail, electronics, the life sciences, government and administration.
- Key role for Waterfront redevelopment – post 2020, we still expect parts of the wider waterfront to contribute to our urban regeneration strategy. Leith Docks, for example, is phased beyond 2020.
- Connected City – good regional, national and international connections help us stay competitive. Any long term strategy will promote stronger connections to Glasgow and better cross-Forth links. Strong links to the core English provincial cities of Manchester and Birmingham, and to London and Europe will also be key.
- One new element we are proposing is the introduction of a "Blue Belt" – we see a role for a new strategic policy mechanism to regulate the city's northern expansion onto land reclaimed from the sea.

## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

A long term plan will need to be crystal clear on the timing and phasing of development and the infrastructure needed to deliver each phase. Growth thresholds and trigger points will need to be built in. National spending plans and an understanding of market cycles would inform this work. Without clear phasing, highly marketable development close to the city earmarked for later phases could undermine earlier phases in less marketable areas.

In addition to the existing Waterfront growth areas, the candidate corridors which are already subject to significant committed transport infrastructure improvements are West Edinburgh (EARL and Tram Line 2) and East Midlothian/Central Borders (the Waverley Line). It may be that these corridors offer opportunities for development sooner after 2020 than other corridors.

The potential of the East and Shotts Line Corridors may be limited until, or unless, rail

capacity is freed up by the construction of new and improved dedicated high-speed links to London and Glasgow. The A702 corridor would also be subject to further study to assess the feasibility of enhanced public transport.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN - REMOVING BARRIERS TO GROWTH

There is little point creating visions and plans that can't be implemented. And we've seen it is in the national interest to grasp the opportunities offered to Scotland by a powerful, growing capital. The Government and infrastructure providers therefore need to facilitate our nationally important growth by aligning investment plans with the finalised vision to help overcome current bottlenecks and invest in vital new capacity. In particular, we will need strategic investment to build a quality transport system, create capacity in water and drainage systems, and deliver affordable housing and education. We see the next version of the National Planning Framework, working alongside the National Transport Strategy and the Framework for Economic Development in Scotland, as the vehicle to more closely align the spending plans of infrastructure bodies with national planning priorities. The close integration of land use, transport and economic development should also be reflected in regional transport strategies.

The Council has commissioned consultants to examine options for how such infrastructure could be funded, including ways of harnessing the uplift in land values that comes with earmarking land for development. There is potential for greater use of developer contributions but a lot of work still needs to be done to assess the most appropriate mechanism for doing this.

## CONCLUSION

We need to think beyond normal structure planning horizons about the scale and form of growth we need, and a coherent, long-term vision is essential. We see a persuasive in-principle case for going for growth and are minded to set that growth in a robust planning framework – a framework with clear phasing and trigger points, sufficiently flexible and far-sighted to accommodate a broad range of growth futures.

We think the model of concentrating growth in planned radial development corridors close to the city, served by excellent public transport services and separated by strategic green wedges, will lay the foundations for future prosperity and best meet the aims of sustainability. We appreciate these are bold ideas but we think that harnessing the enormous benefits of growth calls for a bold approach. However, we see this as the start and not the outcome of a thinking journey and we're very keen to hear what people have to say.

So if you or your organisation have a view on the long term future of our city and region we'd like to hear it. We urge you to get involved in the Structure Plan Review 2020 consultation and let us know what you think about this draft Vision. The consultation period for both runs from 2 May to 30 June 2006.

## TOGETHER LET'S MAKE SURE WE DON'T MISS THE FUTURE!

Here's how to tell us what you think about our draft Vision:

E-mail us at: [2040vision@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:2040vision@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Write to us at: 2040 Vision Feedback  
City Development  
Planning and Strategy  
PO Box 12472  
1 Cockburn Street  
Edinburgh EH1 1ZH

Telephone: Ken Tippen, Group Leader – Strategy  
0131 469 3613

You can also view or download the Vision paper, and check out all the supporting papers on the Planning page of the Council's website at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk)







