Dear Mr Doris,

Consideration of Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs)

I thank you for your letter of 31 May regarding the Local Government and Communities Committee’s consideration of the SHIPs. I apologise for the delay in this response as I did not have sight of your original enquiry until receiving the reminder.

Midlothian Council is confident that its proposed SHIP can be delivered given the actions and initiatives undertaken to date by the Council and its strategic partners to source suitable sites for development. However, a number of challenges need to be addressed by the Council and its partners in order that an accelerated pace of development can be achieved.

In respect of the Committee’s specific questions, the detail for Midlothian is provided for your information;

- how you decide on the number of specific house type, house sizes and tenures that will be delivered in your area (which may either be detailed in your SHIP or decided at a later date).

The Council is committed to the construction of new build council homes in Midlothian. The Council allocated £108M for its phase 1 new build programme, with 864 homes developed on 16 sites across Midlothian by the end of 2012.

The Council has committed a further £60M for the development of Phase 2 new building with new build completed on three sites and a further 3 sites currently in construction and a planned Phase 3 in the social housing programme.

You will be aware of the Strategic Development Plan for South East Scotland and the Midlothian Local Development Plan, as SESplan is the Strategic Development Planning Authority for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland region. The region covers six council areas including City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, the Scottish Borders and the southern half of Fife. SESplan works in partnership with these six councils to prepare a Strategic Development Plan for the area. A Strategic Development Plan is a statutory planning document which is prepared or updated every five years and covers a twenty year time period.

The Midlothian Local Development Plan allocates land for housing, employment and other uses, and provides a policy framework to assess planning applications.

A Housing Need and Demand Assessment is developed for the SESplan as detailed studies which identify the need for new housing, both private sector and affordable in
a housing market area. These studies are then used to inform key policies, such as the Local Housing Strategy and the Strategic Development Plan. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment also provides evidence in order for the local authority to set a Housing Supply Target in order to address the need for housing in the area.

This process, together with the planning procedure for specific sites, determines the number of specific house type, house sizes and tenures delivered in Midlothian.

- how you monitor and evaluate whether the SHIP, and the projects finally delivered, meets the requirements and needs of the local area and also contribute to the Scottish Government’s target of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.

Midlothian’s Strategic Housing Investment Plan details the priorities for investment in new affordable housing in Midlothian and supports the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) Outcomes, these are:

- Households have improved housing options across all tenures;
- Homeless households and those threatened with homelessness are able to access support and advice services and all unintentionally homeless households will be able to access settled accommodation;
- The condition of housing across all tenures is improved;
- The needs of households with particular needs will be addressed and all households will have equal access to housing and housing services;
- Housing in all tenures will be more energy efficient and fewer households will live in or be at risk of fuel poverty.

We review the outcomes and delivery of projects through the performance management framework of established performance indicators. This integrates the corporate plan monitoring database with the service strategies, the key results and the budget estimates and added appropriate measurements from identified business priorities.

We have rigorous, quantified analysis of current service plans balanced between core service delivery and specific projects and a performance reporting framework from Team Plans escalating through to elected members. This performance management provides the process to monitor and evaluate the Council’s SHIP programme and results.

Midlothian Council, together with RSL partners and the Scottish Government, have delivered an impressive 1,368 new build properties over the last 8 years. Nevertheless, the demand for affordable housing continues to grow at a significant rate and the next 5 years will present the Council and RSLs with further challenges on how to deliver investment to meet this need.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Anderson
Head of Customer and Housing Services