



22 February 2013

Proposed strategic development plan published today

Aberdeen City and Shire's first ever strategic development plan embarks on its formal representations stage today [Friday, 22 February].

The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan has been drafted to ensure the region maintains its enviable quality of life and strong position in the Scottish and wider UK economy through the identification of the new homes, employment land and infrastructure improvements required up to 2035.

Residents, businesses and organisations are being encouraged to respond to the Proposed Plan at this, the final phase of consultation. Building a consensus as to what the priorities for the North-east are and how we can collaboratively address them has been a key consideration throughout the whole process of preparing this Plan. Beyond consultation the Plan will be submitted to Scottish Ministers later this year for examination and approval.

While the plan marks the region's first official Strategic Development Plan, the document retains a clear link to the current Structure Plan which was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2009. The Proposed Plan also builds on responses received last year to the Main Issues Report.

The document states that the North-east must avoid complacency to become an even more attractive place to live, visit and do business, ensuring continued prosperity by grasping opportunities and taking on the challenges which will be faced by the North-east over the lifespan of the Plan.

It addresses the aspirations of the region through an overarching and ambitious vision, which states: "Aberdeen City and Shire will be an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European City Region. We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy."

Commenting on the publication of the Proposed Plan, Aberdeen City Councillor Ramsay Milne, chair of the Strategic Development Planning Authority said: "This area has unrivalled assets and opportunities. Evidence suggests that the economy of the area has been the fastest growing in the UK since 2007. That growth needs to be facilitated and supported. We are playing our role but the Scottish and UK governments need to play their part as well to maximise the contribution of the most economically dynamic part of the country."

Vice-chair, Aberdeenshire Councillor Peter Argyle added: "The current Structure Plan was well received by many in the area as well as further afield. This Plan builds on that success and will help to deliver the continued prosperity and quality of life enjoyed in the area."

The document sets out a series of aims and objectives which, along with a spatial strategy, build a clear framework for the delivery of the Plan.

The spatial strategy provides a strong geographical foundation to the Plan, offering direction as to the type of development which should take place and where this should happen. The Plan recognises the important role each part of the region will play in delivering the overall vision.

Infrastructure priorities include road, rail, port, and sustainable transport proposals, as well as vital energy infrastructure, the widespread deployment of super-fast broadband and the regeneration of the city centre.

Key to the Spatial Strategy will be the Strategic Growth Areas, which are centred around Aberdeen and the main transport routes. The Plan identifies that these areas combined are to account for 75% of all development within the region over the next 20 years. The Strategic Growth Areas as outlined in the Plan are:

- **Aberdeen City** – the focus of around 50% of all new development over the life of the Plan. City centre regeneration is seen as vital to retain and enhance the regional focus for retail, leisure and cultural activity.
- **Aberdeen to Peterhead** – earmarked as having the potential to become a global hub for the energy sector. This area includes the Energetica Corridor and is to see a number of exciting developments of national and international significance.
- **Aberdeen to Huntly** – A key corridor linking Aberdeen to Inverness, this area will be the focus of important infrastructure developments including the completion of the A96 dual carriageway between Inverurie and Inverness.
- **Aberdeen to Laurencekirk** – this corridor is to become the focus of significant new developments early in the Plan period. A site south of Portlethen is to see the development of a sizeable sustainable new community. Chapelton of Elsick is a development which could potentially set the standard in Aberdeenshire and beyond.

The Plan highlights that an integral component in the successful implementation of the Spatial Strategy and the Strategic Growth Areas will be the much anticipated completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.

Beyond the Strategic Growth Areas the new Plan outlines that further growth of the region is to take place within areas designated either:

- **Regeneration Priority Areas** – coastal communities to the north and south of Aberdeen (as well as in the city) have been identified as the focus of regeneration projects.
- **Local Growth and Diversification Areas** – most of Aberdeenshire is identified in the Plan for local growth. These areas have been identified as being of great value to the North-east, providing rich agricultural landscapes and high environmental quality. However, there is a need to encourage diversification and employment growth in these areas in order to make them more sustainable going into the future.

The proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan commits to the same key regional objectives as the existing Structure Plan:

Economic Growth – dominated by the oil and gas industry and, while this will continue to be important, a changing emphasis will require the region to sell itself more strongly in other sectors to secure continued growth. The Plan encourages this, stating that at least 60 hectares of marketable land should be available at all times within Aberdeen and 60 hectares of marketable land available within Strategic Growth areas throughout Aberdeenshire.

Sustainable Development and Climate Change – This objective is addressed in the Plan through targets aimed at reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air. The Plan puts forward ambitious targets which include; all new builds to be carbon neutral by 2020, and 100% of the city region's electricity needs to be met by renewables by 2020.

Population Growth – The Plan identifies that the population of the region is expected to grow by 35,000 from 465,000 (in 2011) to 500,000 (in 2035). The document highlights that this level of population growth poses a real challenge in terms of the provision of housing within the region. The Plan targets a significant increase in house building and the need to identify land for 67,500 new homes throughout the region by 2035 – a target which can only be met through collaborative working with all partners involved. Land for most of these has already been identified in the two local development plans.

Quality of the Environment – the Plan encourages development which will maintain and enhance the regions built, natural and cultural assets. This will be done through a framework of development which will improve and not damage these regional assets.

Sustainable Mixed Communities – the Plan's objective is to meet the present and future needs of the whole community, while creating more pleasant and attractive places. This objective will be addressed in part through greater provision of affordable housing, an increased range and quality of housing and giving development priority to areas in need of regeneration.

Accessibility – the Plan focuses on the need to deliver key infrastructure projects as well as promote sustainable travel, ensuring that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive choices.

Local development plans produced by Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council provide a key mechanism to deliver the Strategic Development Plan, which is accompanied by a Proposed Action Programme which is also open for comment. A range of assessments and background documents are also published for consultation.

Opportunity to comment

The Proposed Plan and associated consultation documents are now available on the SDPA website at www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk. More than 600 copies are being sent out to interested individuals and organisations, with copies available in all public libraries throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Copies are also available on request.

The consultation period will run for seven weeks, ending on 12 April 2013. Responses should be made on the appropriate form to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority. Responses should ideally be submitted by email but can also be sent by post to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority, Archibald Simpson House, 27 – 29 King Street, AB24 5AA.

Notes to editors:

The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority is a partnership between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council tasked with preparing and keeping up-to-date a strategic development plan for the area. It is one of four SDPAs in Scotland covering the largest city-regions and was formed in 2008.

The Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was prepared by the SDPA on behalf of the two councils. The proposed plan was ratified by both councils late last year.