



**Aberdeen City and Shire
Strategic Development Plan**

Main Issues Report 2018

March 2018

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Foreword

This Main Issues Report may lead to a new Strategic Development Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire, and may also be part of the supporting evidence for a new National Planning Framework for Scotland.

Given the likely time it will take the Scottish Government to make amendments to planning laws, should they choose to put the Planning (Scotland) Bill's proposals into practice, the new Strategic Development Plan is likely to be able to go through its complete preparation process before any change is put in place.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Aberdeen City and Shire is rightly recognised as an attractive place to live and work, with a high-quality environment, above-average incomes and low unemployment. Indeed, both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are in the top 10 places to live in Scotland for quality of life. The high-quality environment and strong economic performance make the area one of the most vibrant in Scotland.
- 1.2. We, the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority, are responsible for preparing a Strategic Development Plan to tackle strategic planning issues which affect the area. The current Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2014.

1.3. The Strategic Development Plan currently sits between the National Planning Framework (prepared by the Scottish Government) and Local Development Plans (prepared by Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council).

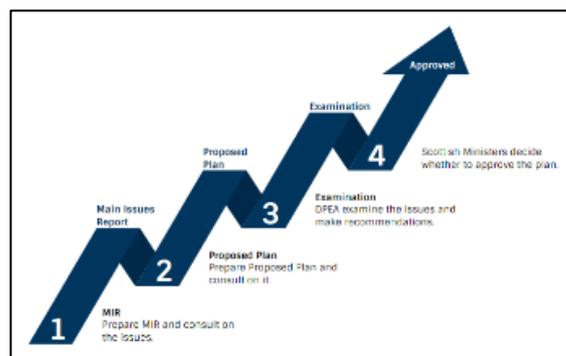


Figure 1: Strategic Development Plan Review Process

1.4. The Strategic Development Plan also sits within a much wider network of other plans and strategies at the local and regional level.

1.5. This Main Issues Report is the first significant stage in preparing next Strategic Development Plan, which will set a framework to develop Aberdeen City and Shire over the next 20 to 25 years. Because of this, it provides the best opportunity to get involved as the plan starts to take shape. Figure 1 summarises the process as a whole and the point we have reached so far. A glossary is included at the end of the document.

Purpose of this Report

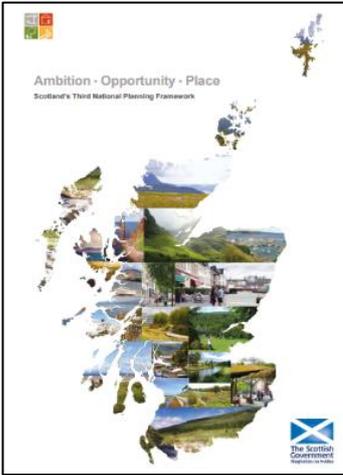
- 1.6. The 2014 Strategic Development Plan and the Structure Plan of 2009 have successfully delivered a decade of stability and growth in Aberdeen City and Shire. The spatial strategy has provided a long-term focus for growth in the most sustainable areas. We have set aside unprecedented levels of housing and employment land across the region. This will allow us to strengthen our economy in a planned way, maintain our high standard of living, and protect and improve our environment.
- 1.7. The transport network, particularly in and around Aberdeen, is currently undergoing significant change which will increase accessibility in and around the region. Our area has a long-term supply of mineral reserves (such as sand and gravel) which will help to support growth and development. Our facilities for managing waste are currently being modernised by moving away from using landfill to much more sustainable alternatives. We will soon be a net exporter of renewable energy.

- 1.8. Aberdeen City and Shire is in a good place and we see no need to make any sudden changes in direction. This document identifies a limited number of Main Issues and questions which do however need to be discussed to help make sure the area's Strategic Development Plan stays up to date and relevant. The report also identifies a range of other changes and updates which we consider need to be made to the plan. The Main Issues Report is not a draft plan, but identifies those areas of the existing plan where evidence suggests we may need to make changes. We have also published other supporting documents which provide the evidence and justification for the options set out in this report.
- 1.9. We would welcome comments on the whole document and the issues and options presented. We will also take account of any comments on the existing plan, which we have not dealt with here, as we move towards production of a 'proposed plan'.

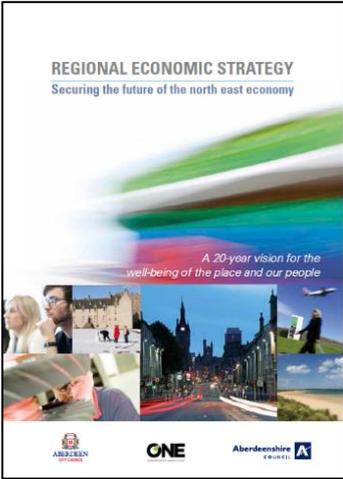
2. Background

2.1. It is four years since the last Strategic Development Plan was approved, and a number of significant changes have taken place since then which affect the background for the next plan. Highlighted below is a selection of those changes which we consider will have a significant effect on the region.

2.2. Both **Scottish Planning Policy** and **National Planning Framework 3** were published within three months of Scottish Ministers' approving the Strategic Development Plan in March 2014. Scottish Planning Policy in particular introduced a number of changes at a national level which we will need to take account of in the next Strategic Development Plan. Policy relating to the supply of housing land, wind energy and the introduction of the 'town centre first' principle are some of the main changes. The Scottish Government also published a **National Marine Plan** in March 2015. We have over 110 miles of coastline where important economic sectors (mainly fishing, oil and gas, and energy more generally) are connected to the marine environment.

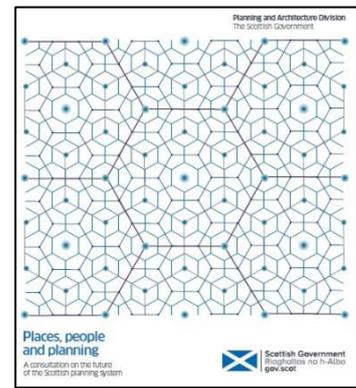


2.3. The **economic background** for the plan is undoubtedly one of the biggest changes we need to take account of. Thousands of jobs were lost as a consequence of the fall in the price of oil. The two councils prepared a provisional **Regional Economic Strategy** in late 2015 and, along with the United Kingdom and Scottish governments, agreed a **City Region Deal**. Terms of the Deal were agreed on 28 January 2016 and the agreement signed on 21 November 2016. The Regional Economic Strategy is focused on maintaining and increasing the regional economy with four main strands – infrastructure, innovation, inclusive economic growth and internationalisation. It is closely linked to the current Strategic Development Plan in aiming



to improve the economy using the remaining oil and gas reserves in the United Kingdom Continental Shelf and strengthening the expertise and activity in the region while diversifying the economy. The 10-year City Region Deal is valued at £250 million, with a further £254 million coming from the Scottish Government. The deal included £200 million towards improving Aberdeen - Central Belt journey times by rail, a new grade separated junction at Laurencekirk, as well as funding to carry out a detailed transport appraisal for the future of the region.

2.4. The Scottish Government finished their **review of the Scottish planning system** and published a Proposed Planning Bill at the beginning of December 2017. One of the proposed changes in the Bill is to remove the Strategic Development Plan from the development plan hierarchy, and replace it with an improved National Planning Framework. However, we do not yet know what this might look like in practice, and current legislation continues to require the production of a new Strategic Development Plan for the region.



3. Vision

- 3.1. The vision is an important part of the plan. It influences the direction of the document and is reflected in the two Local Development Plans.
- 3.2. The vision currently sees resilience (our ability to cope with changes to the economy) as a primarily economic issue, whereas we now suggest it should be thought of in a broader way, including social and environmental issues. Although not enough on its own, economic diversification is a vital part of strengthening our economy, particularly as we rely so much on the oil and gas sector. Emphasising this will also mean the vision will more clearly relate to Aberdeen City and Shire, rather than any other part of the country.

Main Issue 1 – The Vision

- 3.3. The **Preferred Option** is to make changes to the vision which we have set out below.

“Aberdeen City and Shire will be an even more attractive, prosperous, resilient and sustainable European city region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business. We will be recognised for:

- our enterprise and inventiveness in the knowledge economy and high-value markets – with a particular focus on energy, bio-pharmaceuticals, tourism and food, drink and primary industries;
- the unique qualities of our environment; and,
- our high quality of life.

We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and diversified economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable, including dealing with climate change and creating a more inclusive society.”

- 3.4. We consider that this updated vision will better reflect the Regional Economic Strategy and will show that resilience applies to social and environmental issues, not just the economy.
- 3.5. Maintaining the area as an excellent place to live and developing our high quality of life will involve making sure that planning works alongside high-level strategies for education, health and community facilities, as well as strategies of other infrastructure providers (in particular the Regional Transport Strategy).
- 3.6. An **Alternative Option** would be to leave the vision unchanged from that set out in the current SDP to make sure there is continuity.

Q1 – Do you agree with the updated Vision, as set out in the Preferred Option?
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4. Spatial Strategy

4.1. The spatial strategy is important in shaping where development happens. The current strategy for the growth of Aberdeen City and Shire has been in place since 2009 and was put into practice in two rounds of Local Development Plans. There are three main elements – ‘Strategic Growth Areas’, ‘Local Growth and Diversification Areas’ and ‘Regeneration Priority Areas’. Figure 2 illustrates the current Spatial Strategy.

4.2. The strategy recognises that all parts of the area are important, with different areas taking different roles as a result of their current characteristics and future opportunities. It focuses development in places where there are clear opportunities to encourage people to use public transport and where public and private investment can be targeted – to help with both growth and regeneration. It also allows for growth to meet local needs in communities throughout the area where opportunities and demand exist. Providing long-term certainty is a central aim of the spatial strategy.

4.3. There has been widespread support for this strategy over almost 10 years, with few suggestions for another approach. Indeed, the motivation behind the shift to public transport is now even stronger, based on air quality, climate change and the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan. This shows the need to significantly reduce the number of cars coming into the city centre, while increasing the number of pedestrians and the range of uses within the area.

4.4. The Monitoring Statement which accompanies this report shows that the two Local Development Plans have set aside significant quantities of housing and employment land in line with the spatial strategy (land for 47,000 homes and 800 hectares of employment land). Development rates are broadly following the strategy as well. As a result, we do not propose to change the broad structure of the spatial strategy. However, there is some benefit in exploring the detail of the strategy in relation to some areas, as is discussed below.

Aberdeen to Peterhead

4.5. Progress is now being made to bring forward a large area in Ellon for development. Ellon will also become more accessible over the coming months with the opening of the dual carriageway from Aberdeen. Peterhead has seen significant investment in its port, and Scottish Enterprise are confident that the Energetica Business Park can now move forward. Beyond making sure there is a suitable site for business growth of the type represented by the Energetica Business Park (see **Preferred Option** below); we do not propose any further changes in this area.



Figure 2: Existing Spatial Strategy

Aberdeen to Huntly

- 4.6. The dualling of the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness as well as the significant rail improvements planned (for example faster and more frequent trains and a new station at Kintore) mean that significant transport improvements will be put in place over the next 10 to 15 years. Transport Scotland has said that decisions on the route of the A96 will be made following a two-year examination and consultation period starting in late 2017. Developing most settlements in this area is not likely to happen until this transport infrastructure is in place.
- 4.7. There is one major area in Huntly which is restricted due to a range of technical issues. The **Preferred Option** set out below proposes that Aberdeenshire Council continue to work with landowners. An **Alternate Option** would be to identify a modest extra site in the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan to make sure growth can be maintained.

Potential for Growth West of Aberdeen (A93 and A944)

- 4.8. Westhill and the Banchory area continue to be attractive to the development industry. However, there are significant infrastructure challenges (particularly for transport and education) if there is to be growth. The extent of the transport challenges and the action needed will not be certain until a City Region Deal appraisal of the effect of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route is completed and any necessary solutions can be identified. While opening the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will have a significant effect on settlements to the West, current transport modelling suggests it is unlikely to create any room for growth.
- 4.9. We therefore think it would be a very risky strategy to identify western expansion for strategic levels of growth before a realistic and deliverable solution is identified. As a result, we do not plan to consider the A93 or A944, including Westhill, in a Strategic Growth Area until transport issues have been dealt with.

Main Issue 2 – The Spatial Strategy

Q2 – Do you agree with the Preferred Option that the existing spatial strategy, in general terms, remains fit for purpose and should be carried forward?
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Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

- 4.10. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will be completed soon and have a significant effect on travel patterns and accessibility across the region. It will ease traffic congestion and reduce journey times. It will make the growth areas in Aberdeenshire even more attractive to investors. We now need to protect the benefits of the road for future generations and identify extra benefits which can be delivered.

- 4.11. Recent planning applications clearly show the development pressures some of the junctions are likely to come under. As a result, we need to give more thought to whether the route (and / or its junctions) needs particular protection in planning policy terms.

Main Issue 3 – Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

- 4.12. It is important that the free flow of traffic and the junction capacity of the new road are protected and not affected by development taking place which would have a negative effect on the road and its junctions. We have developed two broad options to deal with this issue:
- 4.13. The **Preferred Option** would be for the next Strategic Development Plan to be clear about the need to avoid high footfall-generating uses near the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route's junctions, and to make it explicit that any development proposals should only come through the full and open development plan process. This would help us to consider proposals in a strategic way while also allowing us to test detailed options in an open way through the Local Development Plan process. It would provide a clear policy position for any speculative applications.
- 4.14. An **Alternate Option** would be to take no further action and leave decisions on individual proposals to be considered through existing and emerging Local Development Plans without any strategic direction from the Strategic Development Plan. While this is a flexible approach, it could mean inconsistent decisions are made on speculative applications, and would avoid issues that are very likely to be strategic and cross-boundary in nature being addressed within the Strategic Development Plan.

Q3 – Do you agree with the Preferred Option that the new plan should protect the junctions of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route from inappropriate speculative development?

Regeneration

- 4.15. Since the preparation of the current Strategic Development Plan, both councils have concentrated on regeneration priorities, i.e. those parts of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire which need specific attention to improve their economy, social infrastructure and environment.
- 4.16. In Aberdeen City, the City Centre Masterplan has identified a series of projects covering a 20 to 25 year period to bring new life and activity back into the area. We consider that some of these projects will need to be specifically mentioned in the new SDP to emphasise the importance of the City Centre to the city and wider region.
- 4.17. The City Centre Masterplan has a focus on people living in the city centre. One consequence of this will be helping to deliver housing on brownfield sites (areas of land which have previously been built on) in Aberdeen, through both new buildings and converting existing buildings.

- 4.18. A number of 'Locality Plans' are likely to be prepared in Aberdeenshire, while Aberdeen City has already identified three areas for these plans. Prepared by Community Planning Partnerships, they focus attention on improving outcomes for the people living in the most deprived communities.
- 4.19. In Aberdeenshire, regeneration activity has shifted over recent years, with the focus now clearly on the four largest towns on the north Aberdeenshire coast. It is the **Preferred Option** that the four towns of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead should be identified (graphically and in the text) as 'hotspots' for regeneration activity.

Main Issue 4 – Regeneration Priorities

Q4 – Do you agree that the Preferred Option for the new plan should focus on the towns of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead for regeneration?

5. Economy

- 5.1. The economy of Aberdeen City and Shire is vital to our future, our quality of life and our attractiveness to visitors and investors. The area has outperformed other parts of the United Kingdom over recent decades and benefited from enviably high levels of growth, wages, employment and quality of life. The city region has come through three very challenging years caused by the fall in oil prices on world markets. Combined with the referendum vote to leave the European Union, the maturing of the United Kingdom Continental Shelf, and likely changes worldwide in energy demand and supply, future uncertainty has increased.
- 5.2. The economy is central to the current Strategic Development Plan and an overall theme which covers all parts of the plan. As well as the importance placed on developing a strong and resilient economy in the plan's vision, increasing and diversifying the local economy is also one of the two main aims of the plan and is recognised as an urgent priority. The plan focuses in particular on making sure there is enough employment land and infrastructure is in place to support business growth throughout the area. While acknowledging the importance of the oil and gas sector, the plan also recognises the contribution of others, including primary industries, the retail sector and tourism.
- 5.3. The focus of this section of the report is around three main questions:
- Have we identified enough employment land for the period to 2030 and beyond?
 - Is the planning system dealing with the priority sectors in an appropriate way?
 - Is there anything more that the planning system could do to help facilitate economic growth?

Challenges and Opportunities

- 5.4. While oil prices fell from historically high levels to the more stabilised levels we are currently seeing, this change has given a real push to increasing the economic resilience of the area. Although the immediate effect on the economy was substantial, the change in oil prices will have longer-term benefits, and there are positive signs for the future and reasons to be optimistic. Lower wages and house prices, as well as prices for hotel rooms and office space, will all help to make the city and region more competitive. The area has an enviable reputation for innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as a highly educated and productive workforce. These are attributes which will be critical to the future success of the area.
- 5.5. At the heart of this will be a new Regional Economic Strategy and the City Region Deal agreed with the Holyrood and Westminster governments, which will further boost the economic prospects of the area over the next 10 years. There will be significant investment in innovation – mainly in the oil and gas industry but also the other growth sectors. It has been estimated that 3,300 jobs will be created over the next 10 years on the back of the City Region Deal. Investment in infrastructure arising from this which would benefit from specific identification in the next Strategic Development Plan is likely to be limited, and will largely build on current proposals. However, we do propose

to include in the next Strategic Development Plan new off-site transport infrastructure associated with Aberdeen Harbour's southerly expansion.

- 5.6. While the United Kingdom Continental Shelf continues to mature, specialist decommissioning opportunities will develop and bring significant opportunities for developing business and innovation. This is a growing market opportunity, with a gradual increase in activity expected over the next 10 years, and both Aberdeen Harbour Board and Peterhead Port Authority are looking to take part in this important opportunity. Decommissioning is expected to be worth £47 billion over the period to 2050.
- 5.7. Most projections still see oil being extracted from the North Sea at the end of the next Strategic Development Plan period, and this may be given a boost given recent announcements in the November 2017 United Kingdom Government Budget. Nevertheless, our economic diversification needs to be largely complete by 2040 so that the region can continue to thrive and maintain the current high standards of living. While a swift return to substantially higher oil prices isn't expected in the near future, it will be important to make sure the next Strategic Development Plan is effective and flexible enough to deal with higher levels of economic performance than are currently expected. It can do this in a variety of ways which we explain later in this chapter and the one to follow (Housing).

Main Issue 5 – Economic Growth

- 5.8. Our **Preferred Option** is that, while we shouldn't assume a rapid return to high oil prices and accept that diversifying our economy will take time, the next Strategic Development Plan should be flexible enough to deal with levels of economic growth that are significantly higher than we are currently experiencing.

Q5 – Do you agree that we should present an optimistic view of future economic growth in the new plan?

Employment Land

- 5.9. Aberdeen City and Shire continues to have a very generous supply of employment land throughout the area. The 2015/2016 Employment Land Audit identifies over 860 hectares of employment land, almost 60% of which (510 hectares) will be available within the next five years and 131 hectares is available immediately. This is on top of the 52 hectares which was under construction at the start of the audit. As well as this, the supply of existing vacant land and buildings is at very high levels due to companies moving and closing down over recent years.

Main Issue 6 – Employment Land

- 5.10. The current Strategic Development Plan has set aside land for employment purposes until 2026, with 'Strategic Reserve' land identified for the period 2027 to 2035. The **Preferred Option** would be that land identified for the period beyond 2027 continues to be safeguarded and protected in the new Strategic Development Plan, but for the

period beyond 2030 instead. It is important that the existing supply is protected and is the main focus for new development.

- 5.11. In addition, Aberdeen City should also examine current employment areas to assess how much regeneration they need to make sure they are fit for the future economic needs of the area. We need to make a concerted effort to improve some of the existing employment areas. This will be particularly important given the recent tax changes which increase the burden of business rates on vacant business premises.

Q6 – Do you agree with the Preferred Option that the new plan should delay releasing safeguarded employment land until after 2030 and look at improving existing employment areas for future use?

Focusing on Sectors

- 5.12. The Regional Economic Strategy and City Region Deal each focus on four main sectors as those where the area has the greatest potential over the next 20 years. These are:

- food, drink and primary industries;
- biotech;
- energy; and,
- tourism.

- 5.13. The current Strategic Development Plan already recognises the importance of these sectors, and there is a strong argument for making sure that each of the four priority sectors receives a specific mention in the next plan (as well as including them in the vision – highlighted above), with appropriate policies being created to help them grow.
- 5.14. It is important to make sure that suitable and attractive land is available, but it is also reasonable to assume that a high proportion of needs could be met from the current supply – both in terms of location and site characteristics. As a result, we think there is no need to make any further arrangements for three of the four priority sectors.
- 5.15. However, future opportunities for the tourism sector are likely to have unpredictable requirements which make it hard to plan for effectively. VisitScotland’s ‘Tourism Development Framework for Scotland’ (2016) sets out the value of visitors to Scotland as a whole, and identifies ways in which growth can be supported by the planning system. A significant expansion in hotel accommodation in and around Aberdeen over the period of the last plan (with some projects still under way) and the construction of the new Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (due for completion in 2019) will have significant potential to support business and other forms of tourism over the years to come.

Main Issue 7 – Tourist Development

- 5.16. While the current Strategic Development Plan focuses appropriately on many of these issues, we propose that we express the importance of tourism to the local economy more strongly in the next plan.
- 5.17. The **Preferred Option** is therefore that the new plan clearly recognises that long-term proposals for tourism need to be dealt with sympathetically through the planning system. This is because they often depend on resources and there is a need to be realistic about their benefits and the challenges they present to a planning system that is based on allocating land. This is particularly relevant to tourist accommodation in rural areas.

Q7 – Do you agree with the Preferred Option that the new plan should take a stronger and more flexible approach to long-term tourist development?

- 5.18. The current Strategic Development Plan is very positive about economic growth for the future of the city region, and we want that to continue. As a result, apart from the proposals above in relation to the vision and tourism, we are not proposing significant change. However, we are keen to do all we can to support long-term economic growth and would be interested in any ideas you may have in how the planning system and the Strategic Development Plan in particular could help with this.

Q8 – Is there anything more the planning system should do to support sustainable economic growth?

Digital Infrastructure

- 5.19. Digital infrastructure is increasingly important when businesses are deciding where they should be based and it is also important for households. The current Strategic Development Plan emphasises the importance of high-speed digital connectivity to the economic, social and environmental future of the area. This has been a high priority since the 2009 Structure Plan and considerable progress has been made since then through Openreach's commercial roll-out, Scottish Government and local authority programmes and the City Region Deal.
- 5.20. Both the Scottish Government (focusing on residential properties) and the City Region Deal (focusing on employment areas) are investing in the wider network which will increase broadband speeds in those rural areas without 30 Megabits per second. 95% of premises are due to be covered by March 2018. This is hoped to be 100% by 2021.

5.21. Mobile phone coverage (including mobile broadband) is also important. Aberdeenshire in particular is well behind in terms of coverage by 'third generation' (3G) and 'fourth generation' (4G) technology as the industry prepares for 'fifth generation' (5G) in the next few years.

Q9 – Is there anything more that the planning system can do to help improve mobile data coverage and ultrafast broadband?

6. Housing

6.1. Delivering appropriate levels of affordable, good-quality and sustainable housing in the right places is a basic issue for the next Strategic Development Plan and the future of the city region, and is critical to meeting our economic, social and environmental aims.

6.2. Despite current challenging market conditions, the two Housing Market Areas within the Strategic Development Plan area have a healthy supply of housing land due to up-to-date and generous development plans. Land is available for over 41,000 new homes on 'effective' sites (the same number of homes as built over the last 20 years), as well as a further 10,000 homes on sites unlikely to start before at least 2021.

6.3. It is in this context that we are preparing a plan for the next 25 years – a position of strength but with short-term challenges and uncertainty. As a result, we will look to support a strong economic recovery by delivering new housing (particular affordable housing) and a continuing generous supply of land.

6.4. The Strategic Development Plan has three main roles in relation to the scale and location of new housing:

- To clearly establish realistic 'housing supply targets' (defined by Scottish Planning Policy (2014) as 'the total number of homes that will be delivered') for both housing market areas, both council areas and the plan area as a whole, divided between 'market' and 'affordable' tenures.
- Set out a 'housing land requirement' (which includes 10% to 20% 'generosity' on top of the housing supply target). (The housing land requirement is the amount of land needed so that we can meet the housing supply target. This can be found from a variety of sources, including the existing land supply and windfall developments, as well as new allocations as shown in the Strategic Development Plan.)
- Distribute the required new allocations, taking into account the current supply, in line with the plan's spatial strategy.

How did we do?

Between 2011 and 2016, a total of 11,433 homes were built (2,769 fewer than the Strategic Development Plan requirement). Private-sector completions were 165 units more than the requirements identified in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (2011) but delivery of affordable housing fell almost 3,000 units short of the need that was identified.

Current Plan and Evidence Base

- 6.5. The current Strategic Development Plan (in figure 10) sets an average housing requirement over the 25-year plan period of 2,159 new homes each year. This section explores how the new Strategic Development Plan could deal with the need and demand for new housing over the next 25 years. There are a number of sources of information we have used to write this chapter and which are available from the Strategic Development Planning Authority website – mainly the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2018, the Monitoring Statement and the Housing Land Audit 2016.

Setting the Housing Supply Target

- 6.6. The housing supply target sets out how many homes we need over the period to 2035. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment helps us do this by exploring three potential growth options, based on low, principle and high migration scenarios (see Figure 3 below).

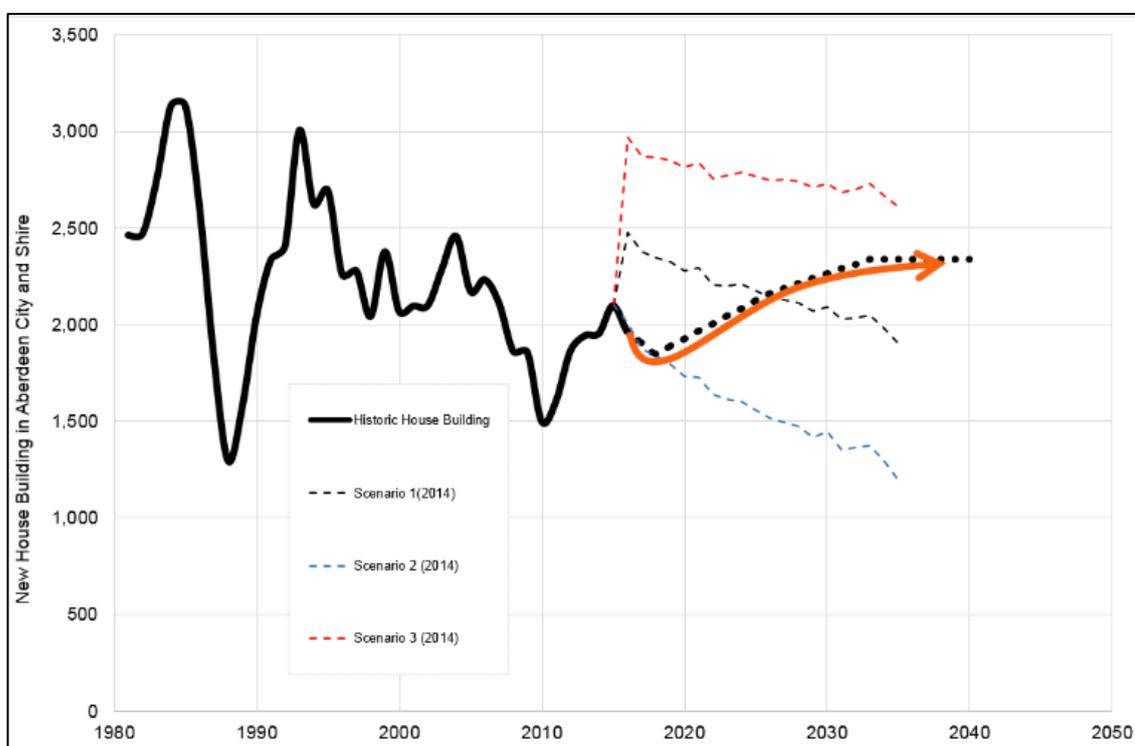


Figure 3: Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2018
Growth Scenarios

Main Issue 8 – Housing Supply Target

- 6.7. We think that Housing Need and Demand Assessment Scenario 2 (low migration) is too low for the first five years (1,850 homes a year) and that we should instead set the target to average the same level of building achieved in 2016 (1,950 homes a year). In practice, it may well fall before rising again during this period.
- 6.8. With economic recovery, we can expect growth generally in line with Scenario 1 (principle migration) during the period 2021 to 2030, although rising over time rather than falling over the 10-year period. As a result, we propose to set the housing supply

target at 2,100 homes a year over the period 2021 to 2025, rising to 2,200 homes a year for the period 2026 to 2030.

- 6.9. Beyond 2030 there is the possibility for further growth in a scenario with strong economic growth. In light of this, we propose to set the housing supply target to increase again to a level midway between Scenario 1 and Scenario 3 (high migration) at a level of 2,340 homes a year. We call this our Composite Scenario.
- 6.10. This would see the level of housebuilding recover over the next few years, return to the historic average levels of the past by 2025, and increase slightly after this. This would result in a total housing supply target of 54,750 homes over the next 25 years, which would be split in the following ways.

Table 1: Proposed Housing Supply Targets (equivalent of Figure 10 in the current Strategic Development Plan)					
	2016 to 2020	2021 to 2025	2026 to 2030	2031 to 2035	2036 to 2040
Aberdeen Housing Market Area	7,313	7,875	8,325	8,775	8,775
Rural Housing Market Area	2,437	2,625	2,775	2,925	2,925
Total	9,750	10,500	11,100	11,700	11,700
Split as follows:					
Aberdeen City Council	4,875	5,250	5,550	5,850	5,850
Aberdeenshire Council	4,875	5,250	5,550	5,850	5,850

- 6.11. We think that our Composite Scenario more realistically reflects current circumstances and the potential for growth in the medium to long term. It is consistent with the Regional Economic Strategy and builds on the evidence provided by the Housing Need and Demand Assessment. It recognises the economic benefits which are expected to result from providing infrastructure and investment from the City Region Deal over the next five to 10 years.
- 6.12. The **Alternate Option** would be to use one of the ready-made scenarios from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment. However, these tend to not be flexible and do not recognise changes that can take place over time.

Q10 – Do you agree that the housing supply target should be based on a composite scenario rather than directly on any of the three scenarios identified in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment?

Affordable Housing

- 6.13. Scottish Government affordable housing funding is increasing significantly over the period 2016 to 2020 to help meet their target to deliver 50,000 more affordable homes over the current parliament. This will see funding in Aberdeen City and Shire increase over the period 2016/2017 to 2021/2022.

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Aberdeen City	£10.956	£12.279	£16.027	£18.133	£19.436
Aberdeenshire	£17.2	£19.3	£25.3	£28.7	£30.6

- 6.14. If the level of funding is maintained at 2021/2022 levels for the period to 2040, it is likely that the assessed need for affordable housing in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment can largely be met (if land can be made available as well). However, if funding falls back to 2016/2017 levels, there would be a large gap in delivering the homes needed.

Main Issue 9 – Affordable Housing

- 6.15. Our **Preferred Option** is to assume that funding will be maintained. This would allow both councils to increase the development of affordable housing and return it to the high levels of the past.
- 6.16. The **Alternate Option** is to assume funding returns to more modest levels beyond the next three years. This would mean it will not be possible to meet the affordable housing targets or overall housing supply targets from 2021 onwards. Under this scenario, a significant gap will continue to grow between identified need and the ability to deliver affordable housing.
- 6.17. The affordable housing target identified in Table 3 is 19,200 homes up to 2040 (approximately 35% of the total housing supply target identified in paragraph 6.10). While we do not expect to ask Local Development Plans to increase the 25% obligation for affordable housing from private-developer sites, we do expect that extra mechanisms will be needed to secure affordable housing. This will increase the percentage of affordable housing in the north east to the 35% necessary. These mechanisms will include Aberdeen City's partnership approach with Places for People and developing fully affordable development sites in Aberdeenshire.

Q11 – Do you agree that we should assume continued funding for affordable housing at 2020/2021 levels from the Scottish Government for the whole of the next plan period?

Table 3: Proposed Affordable- Housing Targets (included in Table 1 above)					
	2016 to 2020	2021 to 2025	2026 to 2030	2031 to 2035	2036 to 2040
Aberdeen Housing Market Area	2,775	3,190	2,815	2,815	2,815
Rural Housing Market Area	925	1,060	935	935	935
Total	3,700	4,250	3,750	3,750	3,750
Split as follows:					
Aberdeen City Council	2,115	2,125	1,625	1,625	1,625
Aberdeenshire Council	1,585	2,125	2,125	2,125	2,125

Housing Land Requirement

Main Issue 10 – Housing Land Requirement

- 6.18. Scottish Planning Policy says that Strategic Development Plans should add 10% to 20% generosity to the housing supply target to form the housing land requirement – the amount of land provided for by the plan. We propose to add 20% generosity in the initial period of the plan to 2030 to make sure it is flexible enough to allow more homes to be built than the targeted level if there is demand for them. However, beyond 2030, it is proposed that the level will be set at 0%, as a large element of generosity is likely to be carried forward from the earlier period. There will be opportunities to review the need for housing in this period before it is needed.
- 6.19. The **Alternate Option** would be to set generosity levels at either 10% or 20% throughout the period, although the possibility exists for this to be set at different levels for the two Housing Market Areas. Adding 20% to the housing supply targets to 2030 gives us the following housing land requirements.

	2016 to 2030	2031 to 2035	2036 to 2040	Total
Aberdeen Housing Market Area	28,215	8,775	8,775	45,765
Rural Housing Market Area	9,405	2,925	2,925	15,255
Total	37,620	11,700	11,700	61,020
Split as follows:				
Aberdeen City Council	18,810	5,850	5,850	30,510
Aberdeenshire Council	18,810	5,850	5,850	30,510

Q12 – Do you agree that significant generosity should be included in the early years of the plan but, for the later periods, no generosity should be added? This would be subject to review in future plans.

Housing Land Allowances

6.20. The housing figures above recognise the current weakness in the housing market but plan for economic recovery over the medium to long term while allowing even faster rates of recovery if needed. They now need to be translated into allowances – in other words, the proposed number of houses which need to be identified in Local Development Plans. In doing so, we need to consider the existing effective housing land supply which is shown in Table 5.

	2016 to 2030	2031 to 2035	2036 to 2040	Total
Aberdeen Housing Market Area	26,640	2,750	1,963	31,353
Rural Housing Market Area	7,962	979	760	9,701
Total	34,602	3,729	2,723	41,054
Split as follows:				
Aberdeen City Council	15,408	1,198	1,000	17,606
Aberdeenshire Council	19,194	2,531	1,723	23,448

Main Issue 11 – Housing Land Allowances

- 6.21. The **Preferred Option** in Table 6 would give rise to the two Local Development Plans needing to identify land for around 5,500 new homes up to 2030 and safeguard a total of around 16,000 homes for the 10-year period beyond that.

	2016 to 2030	2031 to 2035	2036 to 2040	Total
Aberdeen Housing Market Area	4,200	5,700	6,300	16,200
Rural Housing Market Area	1,300	1,700	2,500	5,500
Total	5,500	7,400	8,800	21,700
Split as follows:				
Aberdeen City Council	3,500	4,700	4,800	13,000
Aberdeenshire Council	2,000	2,700	4,000	8,700

- 6.22. The **Preferred Option** (shown in Table 6) allows us to deliver new homes consistently at levels not seen for 20 years, and provides 28% generosity on top of the housing supply target. Without this extra level of generosity, the Local Development Plans would not be able to identify any significant new housing allocations up to 2030. For the period 2031 to 2035, Local Development Plans should also safeguard possible future housing land. There would be no requirement to allocate or safeguard land from 2036 to 2040.
- 6.23. The **Preferred Option** aims to build 2190 homes over the next 25 years and would allow a substantially higher rate of delivery if there is a demand for more homes. It sets out a challenging framework for delivering new homes over the period to 2030 and beyond. It positively engages with the Scottish Government's target to deliver 50,000 new affordable homes across the country.
- 6.24. An **Alternate Option** would be to have no further housing allocations in the Local Development Plans beyond what has already been identified. This would allow both councils to focus on delivering identified sites. However, if any of these sites fail to come forward, there is a risk that the housing land supply could not be maintained.

Q13 – Do you agree that our Preferred Option should allow Local Development Plans to make some further housing allocations?

6.25. In taking forward our **Preferred Option**, both councils would be expected to prioritise brownfield sites and the currently 'constrained' supply before making any new allocations. However, any new greenfield (land which has never been built on) allocations should preferably be under 100 units in size, aim to deliver affordable housing above 25%, and not be extensions to existing sites which could delay their delivery. Identifying more substantial strategic sites could play a role beyond 2030.

Q14 – Do you agree that any new greenfield allocations should preferably be under 100 houses in size?

7. Energy

Electricity Demand and Supply

- 7.1. The demand, supply and transmission of electricity are all issues which are important in terms of the current and future Strategic Development Plan. While electricity use has reduced over the last decade, it is likely to rise by 10% by 2030, mainly due to a rise in the number of electric and plug-in hybrid cars (among other trends).
- 7.2. Aberdeen City and Shire has one fossil-fuel power station at Peterhead as well as a large number of smaller renewable-energy generators – ranging from domestic scale through to large wind farms.
- 7.3. The future of the power station at Peterhead is currently under review by its owners, however it is an important employer in the area and provides important energy infrastructure for the country as a whole.
- 7.4. The current Strategic Development Plan supports developing Carbon Capture and Storage technology at Peterhead as well as transporting carbon dioxide up to Peterhead and St Fergus from elsewhere in the country for storage in the North Sea. Although there is no longer a full-scale Carbon Capture Scheme project being developed at the current time in the United Kingdom, it is proposed that the new Strategic Development Plan maintains its support for these projects and for its deployment at Peterhead in particular.
- 7.5. Over the life of the 2009 Structure Plan and the current Strategic Development Plan, we have made considerable progress in the quantity of renewable energy generated in the region. This is shown in more detail in the Monitoring Statement.
- 7.6. The current Strategic Development Plan supports renewable-energy generation, targeting over 100% of electricity from renewables by 2020. This aim is now within reach as there is agreed capacity for over 150%. However, most of this is from on- and off-shore wind farms. We think that a more balanced energy mix is needed, so we propose to encourage other forms of renewable energy such as solar and biomass while still maintaining support for wind energy.

How did we do?

By 2015, the equivalent of over 50% of the electricity used in Aberdeen City and Shire was generated from renewable sources. If projects which have been agreed are added to this, almost 150% of demand would be generated from renewables, with most of the extra capacity coming from offshore wind farms.

Main Issue 12 – Renewable Energy

- 7.7. The **Preferred Option** would be to become a net exporter of renewable electricity by achieving a target of at least 5 Gigawatt hours over the lifetime of the plan, mainly through implementing the offshore wind schemes that have been approved and moving towards non-wind resources and energy storage.
- 7.8. The **Alternate Option** would be to remove the target for renewable energy but continue to be supportive, particularly of non-wind generation.
- 7.9. We consider that the Strategic Development Plan should continue to support expanding renewable energy and the infrastructure serving it. However, it should also be stressed that, in doing this, we should give preference to upgrading existing infrastructure and that the effect on the environment should be reduced as far as possible.

Q15 – Do you agree with the Preferred Option that the new plan should target generating 5 Gigawatt hours of renewable electricity and seek to diversify non-wind based generation by 2040, along with energy storage?

Managing Flood Risk

- 7.10. The Strategic Development Plan area is covered by two of Scotland's 14 Local Plan Districts under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. Both the North East Flood Risk Management Strategy and the Tay Estuary and Montrose Basin Flood Risk Management Strategy were published in 2016 and cover the period 2016 to 2022. Their purpose is to set out the short- to long-term ambition for managing flood risk in their areas.
- 7.11. In total, 22 'Potentially Vulnerable Areas' have been identified, with two of these only partly in the area. It is proposed that the next Strategic Development Plan would present these areas and require Local Development Plans to use these strategies (and the more detailed plans which sit beneath them) to guide both future allocations and the detailed requirements on specific planning applications.



Figure 4: Potentially Vulnerable Areas

8. Minerals and Waste

8.1. The supply of minerals and the availability of appropriate waste management have significant effects on the economic competitiveness of the area but can also have potentially significant environmental effects as well as transport costs and the effect of emissions.

Minerals

8.2. Scottish Planning Policy promotes a ‘landbank’ approach to make sure there are adequate supplies of construction aggregates over, at least, a 10-year period based on current production levels. Strategic Development Plans should make sure that adequate supplies of construction aggregates can be made available (Scottish Planning Policy paragraphs 236 to 238). The Monitoring Statement gives details of these considerable mineral reserves.

8.3. As well as this, the two Local Development Plans both protect existing mineral sites. Over 1,100 hectares is currently protected for mineral extraction and over 5,700 hectares identified as ‘Areas of Search’ for possible new extraction. As a result, we consider that there is no need for any extra policy response at the current time.

Waste

8.4. In line with the Zero Waste Plan (2010) and Scottish Planning Policy, we need to provide infrastructure to reduce waste, help manage it in a sustainable way and promote recovering resources from waste (Scottish Planning Policy, paragraph 29).

8.5. We can promote the idea of a ‘circular economy’ by reusing materials in the construction and energy infrastructure sectors.

8.6. The amount of waste generated in Aberdeen City and Shire has fallen over recent years, in spite of significant population growth. The proportion of waste recycled (and that sent to landfill) has moved in the right direction but slower than had been hoped.

8.7. The current Strategic Development Plan promotes meeting our waste-management needs locally as far as possible, and making the most of the economic, social and environmental value of this resource while reducing transport and associated environmental costs. No extra landfill capacity was needed and new facilities were focused on the Strategic Growth Areas in and around Aberdeen. It was suggested that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils should work together in developing a residual waste-management solution.

How did we do?

Between 2011 and 2016, the quantity of household waste fell by 8% and the quantity of waste sent to landfill fell by over 18%. As well as this, the percentage of household waste recycled increased to 42%.

- 8.8. Since then, improvements have been made in terms of treatment capacity and there is significant space for landfill which is shown in the Monitoring Statement. As a result, there is no need for extra landfill capacity across Aberdeen City and Shire at the current time.
- 8.9. We therefore propose to continue in the direction shown in the current plan as an appropriate response to the waste issues faced by the area. This will include building the consented Energy-from- Waste plant on a timescale to meet the landfill diversion targets, and confirm that there is no need for extra landfill space for inert or non-hazardous waste.

9. Transport

- 9.1. By the time the Strategic Development Plan is approved by Scottish Ministers, the transport network in large parts of the SDP area will have experienced a great deal of change. Not only will the long-awaited Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route be complete, but the A90 dual carriageway will extend to Ellon and the 'Fastlink' between the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route at Milltimber and Stonehaven will also be in place. A new station will be about to open at Kintore and half-hourly local train services will run from Inverurie to Montrose. Refurbished intercity trains will have replaced the current rolling stock on journeys to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness and journey times will have started to reduce due to changes to timetables. Connections to London will also have benefited from new dual-fuel trains on the East Coast mainline, and the Caledonian sleeper service will be using new carriages as well. Work will also have started on the Haudagain roundabout improvements and should be about to start on a new grade-separated junction on the A90 at Laurencekirk. There will also be greater clarity about how rail journey times will improve between Aberdeen and the Central Belt. By 2030, the A96 to Inverness will also be upgraded to a dual carriageway.

Strategic Transport Fund

- 9.2. In spite of the scale of investment, these projects won't solve all our transport challenges. Because of this, the current Strategic Development Plan was accompanied by supplementary guidance relating to funding strategic transport interventions. However, while this guidance was well meaning in its intentions, the recent judgment of the Supreme Court considered it unlawful. The recently published Planning Bill refers to an infrastructure levy, but this is at its early stages and it will be some time before there is a way to collect funding for action.

Cumulative Transport Appraisal

- 9.3. As part of the evidence for the current Strategic Development Plan, we carried out a Cumulative Transport Appraisal. This helped to identify hotspots for transportation issues across the City and Shire over the life of the plan's housing and employment-land allocations. Based on this we decided on taking action which included using the Strategic Transport Fund to tackle future transport issues.
- 9.4. Nestrans (the North East of Scotland Transport Partnership) and the Strategic Development Planning Authority have commissioned a new Cumulative Transport Appraisal to add to the evidence for the next Strategic Development Plan. The goal of the appraisal is to again see whether the housing and employment allocations in the next plan will result in hotspots for transport issues.
- 9.5. While at an early stage, the initial stage of the appraisal repeats what was previously found – that growth, as predicted, will result in a considerable rise in overall traffic delays across areas such as Dyce and the Airport and Kingswells (including the A944 corridor to Westhill).

Strategic Transport Appraisal

- 9.6. As part of the City Region Deal, a Strategic Transport Appraisal is being carried out to identify how the system needs to change over the next 20 to 30 years. The transport modelling for this will be calibrated when the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route opens. The timing of this project means that its output will inform future plans rather than this one.
- 9.7. In the meantime, it is proposed that the next Strategic Development Plan should continue to identify those transport projects which will not be complete by the time the plan is approved, such as the Laurencekirk junction and the cumulative transport interventions.
- 9.8. We propose to continue to support transport projects outwith the city region area which bring significant benefit to the people and economy of the area. The main one (on the road network) being a new relief road in and around Dundee to relieve congested journeys on the Kingsway. On the rail network, the standout project is the infrastructure needed to reduce journey times to the Central Belt by 20 minutes. This is the Strategic Transport Projects Review project that the Scottish Government have promised £200 million for alongside the City Region Deal. Most, if not all, of the infrastructure element to these proposals is likely to be outwith the area, in Angus, Fife, Perth and Kinross and Falkirk.

Q16 – Do you agree that the next Strategic Development Plan should continue to identify regionally significant long-term transport projects and cumulative transport interventions?

- 9.9. Current information suggests that new railway stations on the current line through the area can be provided once a local rail service is delivered in 2019, and we will work with Nestrans on identifying potentially suitable sites which best serve current and future households. There will also be a need to continue to explore options for road and rail improvements to the A90 north of Aberdeen (particularly between Ellon and the Toll of Birness) to reduce accident rates and journey times while helping to regenerate the north Aberdeenshire coast. Capacity issues on the A944 also need to be addressed (highlighted previously under the spatial strategy).

Modal Shift

- 9.10. The regeneration of Aberdeen City Centre is a main priority. However, achieving the vision of the City Centre Masterplan will involve a major change in the way residents and visitors access the city centre. This will involve a number of changes likely to reduce the number of cars and increase the attractiveness of other forms of transport. Aberdeen City Council is also considering the potential for a Low-Emission Zone to improve air quality, which is a significant health issue in parts of the city. Aberdeen has some of the most polluted streets in the country.
- 9.11. Following the approval of the Strategic Development Plan in 2014, Nestrans prepared their Active Travel Action Plan which identifies the need to improve connections by walking and cycling (active travel). Aberdeenshire Council is currently examining the

Strategic Growth Areas in their area to identify projects that can be delivered to better connect the communities along these routes and into Aberdeen itself. This should result in identifying 'gold standard' active travel routes, building on the 'National Walking and Cycling Network' being developed by Scottish Natural Heritage. While improvements have been made and more are planned, much more is needed across the area to make active travel a more attractive option. In particular, development proposals still tend not to pay proper attention to active travel, concentrating instead on access by car.

Aberdeen International Airport

9.12. Aberdeen International Airport provides important domestic and international links for business and tourism and is an important part of the local economy. In 2015 a total of 3.47 million passengers flew to 66 destinations. Heathrow continued to be the main destination (of over one million journeys to and from London, 71% were to Heathrow), with Amsterdam and Gatwick also having more than 100,000 passenger journeys each.



Figure 5: Aberdeen – London Air Passenger Numbers

9.13. At the time of producing the last Strategic Development Plan it was thought that the issue of a possible extension to the runway would need to be looked at in the forthcoming Strategic Development Plan. However, passenger numbers at the airport have fallen over the last two years and are only now starting to grow again. As such, the Strategic Development Plan will continue to support the improvements to the terminal in Aberdeen (particularly relating to access) and increasing the destinations served.

Aberdeen Harbour

9.14. Aberdeen Harbour Board have begun an expansion programme to form a new harbour at Bay of Nigg, south of their existing facilities. The City Region Deal includes a project to improve off-site transport infrastructure to get the most benefit from the Harbour Board investment, and this will be reflected as a proposal within the new plan.

Glossary

Term	Definition	Source
Affordable housing	Housing of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on modest incomes.	Scottish Planning Policy
Allocated site	An area of land which has been approved in principle by the planning authority for a certain type of future development, for example, housing.	Planning Aid Scotland
Brownfield land	Land which has previously been developed. The term may cover vacant or derelict land, land occupied by redundant or unused building and developed land within the settlement boundary where further intensification of use is considered acceptable.	Scottish Planning Policy
Climate change adaptation	The adjustment in economic, social or natural systems in response to actual or expected climatic change, to limit harmful consequences and exploit beneficial opportunities.	Scottish Planning Policy
Climate change mitigation	Reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and reducing activities which emit greenhouse gases to help slow down or make less severe the impacts of future climate change.	Scottish Planning Policy
Community	A body of people. A community can be based on location (for example people who live or work in or use an area) or common interest (for example the business community, sports or heritage groups).	Scottish Planning Policy

Term	Definition	Source
Development Plan	A generic term for the Strategic Development Plan and/or Local Development Plan, which apply to a planning authority area. Any planning application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.	Planning Aid Scotland
Effective housing land supply	The part of the established housing land supply which is free or expected to be free of development constraints in the period under consideration and will therefore be available for the construction of housing.	Scottish Planning Policy
Flood	The temporary covering by water from any source of land not normally covered by water, but not including the overflow of a sewage system.	Scottish Planning Policy
Flood risk	The combination of the probability of a flood and the potential adverse consequences associated with a flood, for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.	Scottish Planning Policy
Greenfield	Land which has not been developed, in either urban or rural areas.	Planning Aid Scotland
Housing need and demand assessment	The Housing Need and Demand Assessment estimates the future number of additional homes to meet existing and future housing need and demand. It also captures information on the operation of the housing system to assist local authorities to develop policies on new housing supply, management of existing stock and the provision of housing-related services.	Housing Need and Demand Assessment Manager's Guide 2014
Housing market area	A geographical area where the demand for housing is relatively self-contained.	Scottish Planning Policy

Term	Definition	Source
Housing supply target	The total number of homes that will be delivered.	Scottish Planning Policy
Local Development Plan	Part of the Development Plan - a statutory document required to be prepared (as of 2009), after full public consultation, by all planning authorities in Scotland. The Local Development Plan is the basis for making planning decisions in a given area. It must contain a spatial strategy and a vision statement, planning policies and maps. In the four city-regions, the Local Development Plan will be supplemented with a Strategic Development Plan; elsewhere the Development Plan will comprise only the Local Development Plan.	Planning Aid Scotland
Scottish Planning Policy	A documents stating Scottish Government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters	Planning Aid Scotland
Strategic Development Plan	Part of the Development Plan – a statutory document prepared after full public consultation. Strategic Development Plans apply to the 4 city-regions (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and their surrounding areas) and cover several local authority areas. Strategic Development Plans are required to be prepared jointly by planning authorities acting as Strategic Development Planning Authorities. Strategic Development Plans will set parameters for Local Development Plans; contain Vision Statements and Spatial Strategies; and will consider how land use proposals for neighbouring areas will impact on the Strategic Development Plan area.	Planning Aid Scotland

Term	Definition	Source
Sustainable Development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.	Brundtland, Our Common Future, The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.
Sustainable Economic Growth	Building a dynamic and growing economy that will provide prosperity and opportunities for all, while ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life too.	Scottish Planning Policy
Town Centre First	A Town Centre First policy is intended to support town centres, where these exist, or new centres which are supported by the development plan.	Scottish Planning Policy
Windfall Sites	Sites which become available for development unexpectedly during the life of the development plan and so are not identified individually in the plan.	Scottish Planning Policy

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