

## **Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan**

### **Public Consultation Event – Westhill**

**7pm-9pm on 20 August 2008 at Holiday Inn, Westhill**

#### **Officers Present:**

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| David Jennings  | Strategic Development Plan Manager – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority |
| Laura Robertson | Senior Planner – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority                     |
| Bruce Strachan  | Senior Planner – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority                     |

#### **1. Welcome and Outline of the Evening**

Mr Jennings welcomed members of the public to the 3rd of 14 public consultation meetings in relation to the Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan. He explained that the meeting was designed to gain the views of the public and that opinions expressed would be noted and used as a base of information when progressing the plan to Finalised Stage. However, it was also emphasised that this was not a substitute for written responses and attendees were encouraged to send these in by 12 September.

Mr Jennings introduced the officers present at the meeting and the roles they would be undertaking in addition to outlining the timetable for the evening and general housekeeping issues.

Mr Jennings informed the members of the public that a note of the meeting would be available from the Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA website at [www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk) in addition to sending out copies and future updates to those who register their name and address/e-mail details (Ms Robertson greeted members of the public and took a register of attendees).

#### **2. Background information on preparing the draft plan**

Mr Strachan provided information on structure plans and their strategic role in the development plan system. He stated that a structure plan provides a long term, strategic vision for the development of land in an area (in this case until 2030 for the North East of Scotland). He explained that the plan is not just important as a planning document, but also because of the way that proposals within the plan affect where people live and do business, how they move about and how the environment should be protected.

Mr Strachan explained that a new planning Act, which will introduce changes to the current planning system, is currently in the process of being implemented. He outlined a number of reasons for the new legislation which include speeding up the development plan process; increasing levels of public consultation and ensuring that plans remain up to date to reflect changing circumstances in the area that they serve.

Under the new Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006, structure plans will be

replaced with strategic development plans. This new style plan will set a vision and spatial strategy for the City Region that it serves. In accordance with the Scottish Governments aspiration for “strategic focused, accessible, action-orientated and outcome driven” plans it is thought that strategic development plans will contain fewer detailed policies than is typically found in the current style of structure plan. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils will be 1 of 4 City Regions which create these new style plans. This draft structure plan reflects the Scottish Governments aspirations for strategic development plans whilst adhering to the current, but soon to be replaced, planning legislation.

Mr Strachan continued to explain that the current adopted structure plan (NEST) which serves the North East of Scotland is outdated, only details how land is to be used until December 2010, no longer meets the aspirations of either council and has constrained the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils Local Plans.

Mr Strachan went on to provide a brief description with regards to previous consultation events which informed the current draft plan. The Councils released a formal notification of intent to begin preparing a new structure plan in February 2007. Prior to this date early internal consultation had taken place involving planning, education, transportation and economic development colleagues. Since February 2007, an agreed consultation strategy for developing the plan has been followed involving four main groups; the general public, community groups; people and organisations in the private sector and people and organisations in the public sector e.g. SNH, NESTRANS and ACSEF.

Mr Strachan explained that a dedicated strategic development plan team was established in March 2008 to progress the current draft structure plan to adoption and work on the new style strategic development plans following the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

In April 2008 the provisional draft structure plan was launched for discussion within the Councils at Committee meetings. After consideration of the comments received from each Council, an agreed draft structure plan was published for consultation in June 2008. As part of the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 the Strategic Development Planning Authority was established by the Scottish Government in June 2008 coinciding with the commencement of the draft structure plan formal consultation process. In addition to the draft plan there are a number of associated documents which are also out for consultation:

- Background Paper
- Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment
- Strategic Environmental Assessment

Mr Strachan explained that a new website has been created for the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority which holds all aforementioned documents for viewing/downloading and where online responses can be submitted. In addition to online responses, comments can be submitted to the Strategic Development Plan Team by fax, e-mail and letter until

the consultation period ends at 5pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

In addition to the draft plan consultation period, Mr Strachan detailed that there is currently an ongoing 6 week consultation on the Strategic Development Plan area. A draft boundary and justification were agreed as a basis for consultation by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee at their meeting of 23 May 2008. He added that Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority were seeking comments on this draft prior to a boundary submission to Scottish Ministers by 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The SDPA will meet on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 to consider the responses received to the consultation exercise and submit a proposal before the deadline.

Responses to the proposed boundary (which embraces all of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with the exception of that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park) can be received online, by fax, e-mail or letter by 5pm Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

### **3. The Draft Plan**

Mr Jennings outlined the aspirations of the Scottish Government for new style strategic development plans to be strategic, focused, accessible, action-orientated and outcome driven. He added that the draft plan had been created to encompass such aspirations whilst adhering to the current, but soon to be replaced, planning legislation.

Mr Jennings explained the development plan hierarchy and the relationship between structure and local plans (emphasising that local plans contain a more specific level of detail). He added that Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils will be reviewing their local plans in the form of local development plans in accordance with the new planning legislation as part of modernising the planning system. Mr Jennings added that the previous structure plan was rigid, precise and prescriptive. The draft plan looks to move away and not prejudge any area of Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire. The plan aspires to be flexible and appropriate for the area that it serves.

In addition, Mr Jennings highlighted that the plan had received a Crystal Mark from the Plain English Campaign which ensures the document is clear, easy to read and jargon free.

Mr Jennings outlined the North East of Scotland local context with regards to housing demand in terms of the requirement for different house types as well as numbers, a history of population decline which is now rising however the demographics are showing an ageing population. There is a requirement to improve the quality of life and encourage regeneration in some areas. There is also a need to acknowledge that the economy requires growth and diversification whilst recognising the challenges faced by the oil and gas industry. The plan also aims to improve connections within the North East in terms of road/rail and communications whilst also recognising the need to take sustainable development and climate change into the equation.

Mr Jennings stated that the draft plans vision looks to make the area an

excellent place to live, visit and do business. He acknowledged that there are many good things in the North East to build on but recognised that there are courageous decisions which need to be made where there are issues which need resolved.

Mr Jennings explained the 6 main objectives of the draft structure plan:

- Economic Growth – the plan encourages growth and diversification in dominant industries such as oil and gas but also in sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing.
- Sustainable Development & Climate Change – we are following the broad targets set by the Scottish Government in terms of reducing emissions, mitigation measures and adaptation in addition to setting targets at a local level with the goal for communities to be sustainable in their age structure/level of facilities and services etc.
- Population Growth – the plan envisages balanced population growth over the entire North East region and in doing so create a vibrant place for people to live. Mr Jennings confirmed that the areas population has begun to rise again although Aberdeenshire has seen a population increase whereas Aberdeen City has seen a population decrease. Mr Jennings confirmed that the current population of the area is 440,000 and the plan intends for a rise to 480,000 although we aim for 500,000 in the longer term. Mr Jennings highlighted that although we aspire for population growth we also aim to rebalance the proportion of the population which is of working age (16-65).
- Quality of the Environment – the plan aims to ensure that new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets and in doing so make the environment a selling point for the North East.
- Sustainable Mixed Communities – the plan aims to ensure that new development meets the needs of the community at the present time and in the future by ensuring that communities are accessible to all in terms of housing and services for example. Mr Jennings affirmed that we wish to create attractive places with associated facilities and infrastructure and move away from the historical trend of housing estates.
- Accessibility – the plan aims to reduce the need to travel by improving connectivity and choice of transportation in the North East.

Mr Jennings moved on to explain the draft structure plans spatial strategy which has 3 main strands:

- Local Growth & Diversification – ensuring that modest growth is developed in the right places, quantities and is suitable for all whilst providing opportunities for economic growth and diversification. It is envisaged that there will be an emphasis on growth, which respects the areas landscape character and local identity, near or adjacent to existing settlements.
- Regeneration Priority Areas – the plan recognises that some areas in the North East aren't living up to their potential however as a key strand of the spatial strategy the draft plan strives to bring these areas back to meeting their full potential by addressing inequalities, recognising the

potential for tourism, encouraging concerted action by the public, private and voluntary sector in dealing with issues such as dereliction, improving economic performance and infrastructure improvements.

- Strategic Growth Areas – the spatial strategy outlines that the majority of development in the North East is aimed take place in 3 Strategic Growth Areas. This involves brownfield development in Aberdeen City, road and rail connectivity improvements in the Laurencekirk and Huntly corridors and Scottish Enterprises Energetica initiative in the corridor to Peterhead. It is envisaged that the 3 areas will require major infrastructure improvements.

Mr Jennings stated that the plan is focussed on delivery, providing quality not quantity with a higher level of standard in terms of environmental design, environmental quality, design and facilities. He advised that work is soon to commence on action programming which details who, what, why and where in terms of delivery and action required.

Focussing on the Westhill area, Mr Jennings explained that Westhill falls within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA) and the Local Growth and Diversification area. 4,700 homes have been suggested for the AHMA until 2030 in three time periods. 1,700 homes are planned over the 10 year period between 2007-2016; 1,500 between 2017-2023 and 1,500 between 2024-2030. There are a number of varying sizes of settlements within the AHMA. Outwith this development area further development will fall within the Strategic Growth Areas which determines that within the Inverurie corridor 6,500 homes will be built to 2030. Local Development Plans will detail the specific details with regards to allocating land for housing.

Mr Jennings concluded by confirming that the constituent councils will work together to progress the plan whilst involving stakeholders, internal members of the Council, Councillors and the communities who will be affected by the changes proposed.

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| <b>4.</b> | <b><u>Question &amp; Answer Session 1</u></b> |

1. A member of the public asked how this plan will impact on Westhill?

Mr Jennings answered in terms of housing and growth there are 4,700 houses allocated over the 25 year period. How much to each area is not identified this would be down to the Local Development Plan to determine.

Previous Structure Plans have been quite explicit. In this plan we need to be clear in some areas but in some areas it would be better to have the bottom up approach. The specific allocations for individual settlements within the Local Growth and Diversification areas will be determined through the Local Development Plan.

The Local Development Plan consultation will be carried out by the relevant team of Aberdeenshire Council.

2. We have attended meetings on the Capacity Study for the area and we were told it categorically satisfies the needs of the greater Aberdeenshire. Is this the case? Where does the capacity study stand in relation to this plan?

Mr Jennings confirmed that there were constraints in every settlement across Aberdeenshire and this is what the capacity study aimed to identify. Capacity studies may well inform the Local Development Plan and Structure Plan. The Structure plan does not need the level of detail that the Capacity study or Local Development plan would identify.

3. A member of the public asked what level of development would be carried out in Westhill?

Mr Jennings confirmed the views of the community would be sought on the appropriate level and location of development through the local development plan process.

4. Westhill is a substantial settlement well located close to Aberdeen in the past it has had a high level of development, why is it not in a Strategic Growth Area?

The past is not what we have to look at. The SGA's are based around public transport / road and rail, and the demand for employment and housing land. Westhill is not convenient for bus links, buses into the city can take an hour. Public transport, walking and cycling are the key. It must also be recognised that choices have to be made because of the need for new infrastructure.

For Huntly etc there are trains.

5. A member of the public requested further information on the electrification of the rail line, light rail. i.e. bus stop type stations would be better.

Mr Jennings confirmed that the two councils and NESTRANS have a cross rail initiative. This will increase the frequency of trains between Stonehaven and Inverurie. There are also indicative plans for a three further stations (ie at Kintore)

It would be a stepped approach ie the Edinburgh train would continue to Inverurie, not finish in Aberdeen.

Two way train journeys in the longer term for Aberdeen – Inverness. This is all part of the regional transport strategy.

6. Will this plan supersede Aberdeenshire Local Plan?

Mr Jennings confirmed that it would not supersede ALP, but would supersede the existing Structure Plan North East Scotland Together (NEST). The Local Plan would require review to bring it in line. This would take the form of a local development plan.

7. A member of the audience asked for confirmation on the regeneration numbers. The regeneration numbers state 5000 how many are demolitions?

Mr Jennings answered that the 5,000 demolitions are being replaced by 5,000 units but his has been accounted for in the housing forecasts. If the demolition numbers are removed the total number will drop by 5,000.

8. A member of the public asked if the high level of build in the Green Belt is because there is nowhere else to put them?

Mr Jennings stated that there will be about 10,000 units on Brownfield land in Aberdeen but yes the majority are in the greenbelt. There is a higher level of growth planned than before and all Greenfield site within Aberdeen City is greenbelt. However, even with this level of growth more than half of the area of Aberdeen would remain as greenbelt.

9 Finally a member of the public said there was some support for a new town however there is no mention of it in the plan.

Mr Jennings confirmed that the questions that were sent out with the plan include a question that asks if a new settlement would help to meet this plans strategy. He also said that opinions are sought good and bad.

## **5. Refreshments**

At this point Mr Jennings suggested a short interval to break and encouraged members of the public to view the available literature and information on the display banners.

## **6. Workshop**

See separate note.

## **7. Conclusion**

Mr Jennings finished the meeting by thanking all members of the public for their attendance and restated that the closing date for responses to the draft plan is 12<sup>th</sup> September. He encouraged all attendees to add their name and address/e-mail to the register if they wished to be notified of the plans progression to adoption and to receive a copy of the minute of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:30pm.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

### VISION & AIMS (5 minutes)

1. What do you think of the draft plan's vision on p.5?

Bit wooly - does not do what it says it is words without actions.  
Not measurable – how can we tell.  
Need criteria as part of the vision.  
Considered NEST and Grampian SP and exactly the same.  
It is like it is written by PR.  
It does not say I want to invest.  
What we can provide to bring people in – who is the target audience.  
Not specific on how the linkages etc being forward.  
Don't feel this area is non-inclusive (in the North East)  
Vision not powerful enough to tackle inequality

2. The six aims of the plan are also on p.5. Are these the right aims and do you agree that the first two should be identified as the main aims?

Reasoning behind main aims and aims – all should be read together.  
They are individually strong statements.  
Make most efficient use – needs to be put in place  
Sustainable mixed communities what is the financial impact of this?  
At present the cycle routes are very dangerous.  
Not joined up – bus lanes zigzag down langstacht - express ways / more direct buses  
Need for policies to support the aims – this is a requirement of the legislation.  
Aims are too broad  
Potential conflict between aim 1 and 2



# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

### SPATIAL STRATEGY (15 minutes)

3. Most development is proposed in the Strategic Growth Areas as outlined on p.7. Do you feel the following are appropriate?

a. Location (City and yellow corridors on the key diagram)

WPR does not really play a part in the Structure Plan.  
Move Westhill towards AWPR – the support services – fire stations etc  
Improve employment land opportunities across the board  
Need for a joint up solution for infrastructure.

b. Scale of housing (table on p.22) and business land (table on p.10)

Scale of 72,000 is misleading – some replacements.

c. Phasing for housing (table on p.22, column 2007-2016 etc)

No Comment

d. Approach to Strategic Growth Areas (p.7)

Positive about bus and rail corridor

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

4. The majority of Aberdeenshire is designated for Local Growth and Diversification as outlined on p.8. Do you feel the following are appropriate?

a. Scale of housing proposed (table on p.22)

What is within the Local Growth and Diversification areas?  
Should Westhill be in a Strategic Growth Area – to help to meet all the needs  
Planning Gain?  
Too high in rural area?  
Too low in Aberdeenshire settlement area

b. Phasing for housing (table on page 22, column 2007-2016 etc.)

Attractive place to live and build

c. Approach to Local Growth Areas (p.8)

No immediate reference to facilities – NHS/ Police/etc – want to be central and accessible.  
Not the ability to have mixed communities on a small scale – does this support the new town idea?  
The centre of the communities must support the growth.  
Need an infrastructure shopping list – economics of development to allow to expand.  
Local Growth Areas very important – not contribute to facilities – bolt ons.  
Right time to improve commuting routes – complementary.  
People in Westhill don't work there.  
Better linkages within the settlements required ie industrial estates.  
Integrated solution required.  
Across the whole plan response times for emergency services do not appear to have been considered.  
Question knowledge – economy jobs.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

5. Parts of Aberdeen City and some of Aberdeenshire's coastal communities have been designated as regeneration Priority Areas as outlined on p.8. Do you feel the following are appropriate?

a. Locations (hatched areas on key diagram)

What will the SP do to improve these areas? Any EU money available?  
Will it help?  
Planning Gain money?

b. Approach to Regeneration Priority Areas (p.8)

Some linkage issues, need to address serious infrastructure issues.  
Need for the communities to link in with health facilities

### OBJECTIVES (15 minutes)

6. Six objectives have been identified and associated issues outlined on p.9-18 - Please consider the objectives we have highlighted below, are these clear and will they help meet the vision?

- Economic growth
- Population growth
- Accessibility
- Sustainable development and climate change
- Sustainable mixed communities
- Quality of the environment

Sustainable development and climate change  
Not measurable, who is taking the lead.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

It is too high level and wooly  
We need to have an impact

### Accessibility

Need for a shift in culture, change in the ways of thinking.  
Need for decent, safe access.

### Economic growth

What is economic growth?  
GDP and GDP per head? – not just monetary benefits, quality of life

### Quality of the environment

Great care needs to be taken with Green Belt review.

Public transport etc needs to be cheap and easy  
Need for mention of the cross – rail project  
Not clear what the strategy is and how it is to be delivered  
Creating a hub within the city so can link together.  
Need to encourage competition ie more than just first bus.

Considering all six, are there any others you can think of?

No comments

7. A number of targets are shown for each objective. Using the same objectives as we highlighted for you in Q.6, consider whether any need to be changed or if there are any additional ones that we should set?

These are not targets – can't possible assess it all.  
Specific policies, not targets should back up objectives  
Smaller houses needed  
Larger percentage of affordable houses.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

### PUTTING THE PLAN INTO PRACTICE & PRESENTATION (5 minutes)

8. A wide range of proposals are outlined on p.20 - these are seen as critical in helping the area achieve its potential.

a) Do you feel any others should be added – why?

The proposals come across as an afterthought - cross rail and WPR. They should be integrated rather than an add on at the end.  
Health care initiatives – Foresterhill masterplan, integrated transport plan for health and transport to health.  
PC list – Prison?  
Integrated emergency response.

b) Do you feel any should be removed – why?

Is the structure plan the place for proposals?

9. We have tried to produce a draft structure plan which is both clear and easy to read. Is the plan...

...very clear and easy to read

...quite clear and easy to read but not saying the right thing

...not very clear and difficult to read

...very difficult to read and understand

Titles on graphics

Data tables could be easier to read

# **Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan**

## **Consultation Questions**