

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Public Consultation Event – Aberdeen North

7pm-9pm on 19 August 2008 at Bankhead Academy, Aberdeen

Officers Present:

David Jennings	Strategic Development Plan Manager – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority
Bruce Strachan	Senior Planner – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority
Maggie Bochel	Head of Planning & Infrastructure - Aberdeen City Council

1. Welcome and Outline of the Evening

Mr Jennings welcomed 6 people to the meeting; the 2nd 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 others 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 in addition to sending out copies and future updates to those who register their name and address/e-mail details.

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 includes 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 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, we have been following an agreed consultation strategy for developing the plan 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 12th 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 we are now seeking comments on this draft prior to a boundary submission to Scottish Ministers by 25th September 2008. The SDPA will meet on 18th September 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 submitted online, by fax, e-mail or letter by 5pm Friday 29th 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. 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 a 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 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.
- 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.

- 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, quantity 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. A key strand of the spatial strategy strives to bring these areas back to meeting their full potential by addressing inequalities, recognising the potential for tourism, encouraging concerted involvement 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 to 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 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.

4. Question & Answer Session

How wide are the strategic growth area (SGA) corridors?

Mr Jennings explained that these corridors were centred on roads, but also had to take in rail stations and other public transport infrastructure. This being the case, for the majority of the corridors should be no more than 2km either side of the centre.

What happens if Crossrail does not happen, a review of the plan?

Crossrail has been broken down into various stages, Edinburgh trains for example continuing through to Inverurie can be implemented quite quickly. However, significant infrastructure (such as new stations) are more likely at later phases of the plan.

There are no policies, how will people know their proposals fit with the plan?

Correct, there are no policies in the draft plan. However, there is policy material and people should be in no doubt what the plan wants to achieve in terms of accessibility, design, sustainability etc. The Scottish Government have indicated that they don't expect new strategic plans to be development management manuals. This also means that the public and private sector will have to work better together e.g. on masterplans. Dr Bochel added the plan should give much more flexibility for developers to demonstrate that their proposals fit with targets etc.

The context and aspirations are laudable, but on a technical level there must be a risk not to have policies in it if it is being done under a new system?

Dr Bochel states that we did not want go down the route of an old style structure plan and felt this draft reflected the move toward new plans. However, if we were forced to produce an old style plan, we can do so. Mr Jennings went on to explain the process of an examination versus proposed modifications route depending on the legislation in place at the time.

Are Ministers who represent the area going to be the ones who approve it?

The ultimate responsibility for approving the plan will lie with John Swinney, who does not represent the area.

The plan doesn't say much about offshore renewables or the upgrade of St Fergus?

The plan aims to tackle the energy issue from two sides, carbon neutrality in new development and self-sufficiency in electricity. Recognise it is quite a challenge and aspirational, but believe it is achievable. The grid upgrade shown in the plan reflects the National Planning Framework 2 document.

Is the City working on infrastructure provision up-front as I believe the 'shire are looking at?

Dr Bochel gave the example of Dyce Drive as a situation where this has been done. They have also begun to look at education requirements. The question over the alternatives in Schedule 1 does not apply to the City, these will influence the phasing in the 'shire, particularly in SGA's.

Will the alternatives be sifted and become one in due course?

Mr Jennings gave the assurance that there will be only one column in the final document. Previous structure plans have been quite prescriptive in the past, this plan moves on from this. Do not believe whether individual settlements get an allocation is a cross-boundary strategic issue.

Do I understand correctly that no decision has been taken on where development will take place i.e. not a strategic concern whether allocation goes

to Stonehaven instead of Newtonhill?

Correct, that is a decision that will need to be taken later.

So you are hoping that people will submit bids to you?

Yes, will need to see what is on offer.

Assume to the north of Aberdeen the Third Don Crossing is important?

Yes, this is fundamental and along with Haudigan improvements and AWPR will benefit the NE.

Do the stated densities apply to local growth and diversification area as well as SGA's?

The plan gives enough of a hint about densities, but the target is for SGA's only. Densities in many rural settlements will not be a strategic issue.

Can you say what would happen when a large development crossing the City / 'shire boundary?

The structure plan needs to be very specific about numbers, units in the City area will contribute to their allocations and vice versa.

The green belt review must be fundamental, what is the timing for this?

Both Councils are committed to deliver this review by 2010 to feed into the Issues Report.

5. Workshop

Due to the numbers present, the workshop session format was altered to allow the group to sit together and Mr Strachan offered to scribe, with Mr Jennings and Dr Bochel available to answer specific questions as they arose.

Mr Jennings finished the meeting by thanking all for their attendance and restated that the closing date for responses to the draft plan is 12th 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 9:20pm.

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?

No reference to the word 'growth' which there should be as a fundamental part of the plan and which people will see first in the plan.

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?

Would the first two aims be demeaned in some way by grouping them with the other four?

Is Aim 2 not implicit in Aim 5?

Could be called 'action points', but need to be clearer on importance of first two if these are the main aims.

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)

Is there any demand for the Huntly corridor instead of going to Banchory?

The Peterhead corridor is not demand led, so how can it be justified?

Demand will continue in Westhill and Banchory, but not for area north of Ellon for example

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

Numbers should be revised upwards to account for recent GRO(S) information

B/F component is overly optimistic, especially when the Urban Capacity Study was so criticised at the City LPI

Concerns about delivery when tied to the GB review; this may not report until 2010

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Numbers look good for the development industry, but dates look optimistic for completions – or is it just allocations by this time?
How many hectares or acres of G/F land will be required to deliver all these houses in the City?

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

There is a short-term problem with financing in the housing market, but will pick up and we'd expect it to take off quickly again. No need to reconsider the front-loading issue, leave as it is shown in the plan
City must maintain release of G/F allocations to help make up for the lag in demand

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

No comment

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)

Assume no local growth is allowed for in SGA's, they will only deliver huge chunks of development in key settlements? If plan means otherwise it should say so

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

No comment

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

No comment

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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)

Presumably numbers are over and above existing units. Or are they replacements?
Are there any specific policies to direct growth / investment to them?

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

No comment

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

There should be a ranking, is 'economic growth' more important than 'quality of the environment' since it is a government priority?

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

No comment

Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

Consultation Questions

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?

Target for the GB review by 2010 is too far in the future

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.

Do you feel any others should be added – why?

No comment

Do you feel any should be removed – why?

Is the first proposal really a land use issue?
Due to lack of information about Energetica, should this really be in?
If there is close liaison between SP and ACSEF this is not very clear

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Consultation Questions

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

...not very clear and difficult to read

...very difficult to read and understand