

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

### **Public Consultation Event – Aberdeen Central**

**7pm-9pm on 27 August 2008 at St Machar Academy, Aberdeen**

#### **Officers Present:**

Margaret Bochel	Head of Planning and Infrastructure – Aberdeen City Council
David Jennings	Strategic Development Plan Manager – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority
Alanna Lyle	Planner – Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority

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

Mr Jennings welcomed 7 members of the public to the 8th 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.

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

Mr Jennings 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 Jennings 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 Jennings 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 Jennings 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 Jennings 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 Jennings 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 Jennings 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 the Aberdeenshire part of 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 prejudice 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.

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**

1. A member of the audience queried whether the Local Development Plans will be in line with the Structure Plan.

Mr Jennings responded by confirming that the Structure Plan has to be in place first as Local Development Plans must be consistent with it.

2. The plan is aspiring to a large amount of development however the roads in and around Aberdeen are not in good condition. The road to Peterhead is also dangerous. The plan does not detail improvements in roads required to support the aim for economic growth and diversification. Could the road between Huntly and Peterhead be singled out for improvements?

Mr Jennings responded by saying that part of the road to Peterhead is already programmed for dualling. He added that improvements will be related to the location of future development. Mr Jennings confirmed that he was aware of strategic infrastructure issues, however addressing infrastructure is key in delivering the structure plan and there will be a significant increase in the level of developer contributions to fund improvements. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will assist in reducing congestion.

Dr Bochel added that singling roads out for improvements is not appropriate within a Structure Plan. She added that the Structure Plan is the statutory document for land use planning whereas the Regional Transport Strategy is the statutory document for roads. In addition both documents must conform with one another.

3. A member of the audience gave an example of a specific development in Aberdeen where 836 houses are proposed however there is no public

transport serving the area.

Mr Jennings responded in stating that planning applications may require road improvements and added that planning conditions would require the development to be accessible by public transport and by road.

Mr Jennings stated that masterplans will see proposed developments in a wider sense than just the proposals immediate area. He added that the draft structure plan recognises that past errors have occurred and masterplans will take into account schools/roads/public transport and how the development may impact on the community around it in order to achieve an attractive place to live.

4. A member of the audience recalled a structure plan from over 29 years ago and stated that much of that plan was not implemented. There is no reassurance that this plan will be implemented.

Mr Jennings stated that the Modernising Planning Agenda recognises failures in the past however the draft structure plan before the audience was focussed on delivery.

Dr Bochel responded in stating that the culture change within the Modernising Planning Agenda will ensure that delivery mechanisms are in place. She added that plans will be reviewed more regularly to keep them up to date with changing circumstances.

5. A member of the audience queried whether the consultation was valid due to the poor turnout. He added that the same date was chosen as the Community Council meeting which was unreasonable. It was suggested that the consultation was for show and not effective.

Mr Jennings apologised for the clash but considerable efforts had to be made to minimise these. However, with 14 meetings over three weeks, it was not possible to avoid everything. He made it clear, however, that the written responses were the main focus of the consultation, not the meetings.

6. A member of the audience suggested that it was not good enough just to consult with community councils and more time was required for consultation.

Dr Bochel stated that the nature of strategic planning (long term visions) meant that it is difficult to encourage people to become involved. It is recognised that it is simpler to get people involved when the consultation is for a specific development. She added that we are always willing to hear suggestions how to involve more people as we want to hear a wide range of views.

Mr Jennings added that the draft structure plan and consultation events were publicised via press releases and press articles in addition to hosting over 100 meetings by the time the consultation period ends. We have also written to over 1000 people on more than one occasion, e-mailed updates and set up a website to enable various ways of responding to the draft plan. He added that

suggestions are always welcome.

**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 2008. 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 9:00pm.

# 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?

Vision isn't broken down into small enough sections.  
Vision states that we wish to be recognized for high quality of life however an increase of traffic and housing numbers won't increase or retain high quality.

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?

Infrastructure  
Sustainable Mixed Communities  
Affordable Housing – an up to date Housing Needs Assessment will be required to enable LDP to suggest modifications to increase % of affordable housing required.  
Last two are more important. Increase importance of 3, 5 and 6.

### 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)

Within the corridor to Ellon residents of Bridge of Don believe that is all for business development all the way to Ellon. Will all business be located in a stream to Ellon? It should not be a long line of business development – housing should be included too.  
Employment is crucial  
The SGAs are appropriate if it is recognised that green space is important – masterplanning.

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## Consultation Questions

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

Unsure if feasible.

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

No comment

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)

No comment

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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## 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)

Agree but is action going to occur?  
Concern re: standard of housing.

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

Standard needs to be high.

## 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

Sustainable Mixed Communities:

Mix of houses; infrastructure; carbon neutral; open space, mix of tenures; shared equity schemes; public transport to serve areas.

Communication with communities is a necessity p16: whole community NOW and in future.

Airport and public transport – Regional Transport Strategy

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## Consultation Questions

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

No comment

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?

No comment

## 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?

No comment

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

No comment

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## 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

### General comments:

Too much emphasis on housing and business

Plan gives wrong impression

Increase emphasis on facilities/environment/open space.

Plain English Campaign

Highlighting boxes draws attention to key parts

Aims and objectives clear

Key diagram excellent, clear and shows areas well

Pictures break up text and are appropriate