

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Public Consultation Event – Banchory

7pm-9pm on 26 August 2008 at the Burnett Arms Hotel, Banchory

Officers Present:

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
Alanna Lyle	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 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

Ms Robertson provided information on structure plans and their strategic role in the development plan system. She 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). She 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.

Ms Robertson explained that a new planning Act, which will introduce changes to the current planning system, is currently in the process of being implemented. She 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.

Ms Robertson 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.

Ms Robertson 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.

Ms Robertson 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

Ms Robertson 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, Ms Robertson 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. She 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 the Aberdeenshire part of the Cairngorms National Park) can be received 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.

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.

Focussing on the Banchory area, Mr Jennings explained that Banchory 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. 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.

4. Question & Answer Session 1

1. If the Scottish Ministers make alterations does it have to go back out for Consultation?

Mr Jennings answered that if the plan is determined under the 1997 Act the Ministers would propose modifications and then the plan would go out to consultation. However the new legislation is due in January and after this date there would be an examination in public and the reporter would make recommendations and approve it. There would be no further consultation with 3rd parties.

2. In this area the consensus was for a new town, why was this not followed up?

There has been some response to this in the past mostly objection to it. We are asking if you feel this should be followed up, and whether people feel this would be the answer.

3. Sustainability - there should be a reference to agriculture and production of food locally – is this not something that would be included, is this reasonable?

The plan has tried to be focused and does not have much of an impact on agricultural output. There are many issues that we cannot influence. Previous plans did mention agriculture but they neither helped nor hindered, we could tell a story but that is not what this plan aims to do and not sure it would influence anything. However if you feel it would let us know.

4. Green Belt land is to be used, where is this?

The green belt is located around Aberdeen City. This will require review prior to any allocations being made at the local level.

5. There is a lack of reference to economic development in the plan, the increase in population can only be driven by jobs – there is a need for economic development in the plan.

The ACSEF economic manifesto is mentioned and the plan shows other strategies and plans which are an important influence on the plan. These have all been taken into account.

These are vital and there is a need for more emphasis on these other plans.

Mr Jennings said that we feel we are close in the way the plan talks about economic growth, but maybe we need to highlight this more.

6. A member of the public made the statement that once the AWPR had been built there will be development on either side of it.

Mr Jennings stated that such development is not what is being proposed in this plan.

The member of the public stated that this was bound to happen.

7. A member of the public had concerns about an existing development at Cairnie Cross and Roundabout.

Mr Jennings had no comments to make on this statement.

8. There is a need for buildings to be energy self sufficient.

Mr Jennings agreed with this statement.

9. Has water abstraction from the Dee been considered, this is a major problem?

Mr Jennings confirmed that there are concerns from SEPA and SNH about flows in the Dee. Scottish Water have a license to extract half as much again than

they are at present. The plan is looking for population growth and we must be careful to make sure the situation at the River Dee must be looked at carefully, and quickly. We need to be clear of problems before we can come up with a solution. There is definite scope however for features like rainwater harvesting for toilets etc.

10. In terms of economic growth we are trying to attract businesses but the centres of excellence on p8 and 9 do not mention small places like Banchory. Can these come to Banchory?

Yes, economic development is strongly supported in the smaller settlements outwith the Strategic Growth Areas. This however is not something that this plan should consider. It would be down to the Local Development Plan to determine where employment provision will be appropriate. It is clear that we need to make sure that there is employment growth as well as everything else. It is important to ensure that any proposed development is appropriate for the town.

The member of the public confirmed that they would like to see something along those lines mentioned to help address these concerns.

11. A member of the public stated that this is a golden opportunity to further develop growth nodes, the energy park took some years to develop. Concerns how going to attract people where there is currently 0% unemployment. This needs to be maintained and attract new people.

We recognise that this is an attractive area and things have to happen to grow the population. There is a need for improvements in the design and environmental quality of development being approved, which will help attract people. We now recognise there is a need to do something different. BT will provide improved technologies where there is a demand for them.

12. We need to reduce the need to travel mentioned in the accessibility objective. There is a fleet of cars travels into Aberdeen each day this will happen until there is local employment.

Mr Jennings confirmed that there is a need for local jobs for local people and this plan does not restrict this. But we must also ensure that if people are commuting it is in the most sustainable way possible.

13. Finally it was stated that a link between sustainability and commuting. Need a balance with houses and employment.

Agree, but the targets may not be appropriate at this level. It is important to have both jobs and houses, the Local Development Plan is the place to do this.

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 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 9:35pm.

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?

Agree with Vision
Question use of 'Modern'
There is a need for targets to influence Local Plan
The strategic plan should say more about economic development in Local Growth Areas. These areas may lose development and funding if priority is strategic growth.
Long, although a lot of information to include.
Growth not mentioned in the vision.

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?

Agree to sustainable development.
All aims are as important as the top two
Aims as aspirations are good.
Agree those are the right 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)

Agree with proposed Strategic Growth Areas however infrastructure – roads, rail, need to improve in advance.
Concern about how this is developed.

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Consultation Questions

Acknowledge transportation already available.
Logical
Infrastructure needs to lead in advance – difficult issue.
Strategic to Banchory to have that level of employed.
Key options open for future rail link/public transport to north.
Link route.

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

Require targets for Aberdeenshire for economic growth.
No issues with housing numbers.
Expectation for total figure to have more front loading.
Generally agree.

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

Agree
Needs to be ambitious.

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

Growth in local areas shouldn't be constrained e.g. employment. Strategic to local.

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)

Even out Local Growth Areas and Rural Housing numbers.

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Consultation Questions

Issue in extensions to existing communications.
More flexibility in numbers.
Inconclusive.
Ensure sustainable mixed communities.

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

More front loading in AHMA. Housing allocation 2007-2016 compared with 2017 – 2023 should be reconsidered.
Covered partly above (4a)

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

Agree
Covered partly above (4a)

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)

No comments

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

No comments

OBJECTIVES (15 minutes)

Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

Consultation Questions

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

Concerns about water and sewage to cope with increased housing and business.
May need reservoirs and storage for water.
Agree to mixed communities
Need to increase business potential in smaller settlements.
Economic Growth – Objective needs to be clearer, more concise. Change ‘allow’ in last line to encourage. Principle okay.
Population Growth – Agree with principal
Accessibility – Good aspirations but difficult to deliver.
Sustainable development and climate change – agree with principles
Sustainable mixed communities – agree with principle
Quality of the environment – agree with principle of objectgives.

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

Infrastructure development comes hand in hand. Education improvements required.

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?

Sustainable development and climate change – second target impossible to achieve.
Targets need to be reviewed to be realistic. Aspirational but not too much.

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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?

Replace Bridge of Dee
Satellite education and business with improved ICT connection.

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

Stadium accessible by rail, prefer south of city.

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 some ambiguity

...not very clear and difficult to read

...very difficult to read and understand

Use less technical terminology

Plan needs to be supported by quicker and more efficient planning process.

The resources to deliver.

Concern regarding infrastructure as having a negative impact on communities hence they become reticent.

Important to overcome these issues.