

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

### **Public Consultation Event – Ellon**

**7pm-9pm on 27 August 2008 at the New Inn Hotel, Ellon**

#### **Officers Present:**

Robert Gray	Head of Planning Policy and Environment
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 Gray welcomed members of the public to the 7th 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 Gray 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 Gray 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**

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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The SDPA will meet on 18<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

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

Mr Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan stated that the draft plan's 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Strachan 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 Ellon area, Mr Strachan explained that Ellon falls within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA) and the Aberdeen to Ellon strategic growth area. 2,400 homes have been suggested for the SGA until 2030 in three time periods. 400 homes are planned over the 10 year period between 2007-2016; 1,400 between 2017-2023 and 600 between 2024-2030. Outwith this development area further development will fall within the Local Growth and Diversification area. Local Development Plans will detail the specific details with regards to allocating land for housing.

Mr Strachan 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. How will this Structure Plan fit in with the new legislation when it is an old Structure Plan?

Mr Gray answered that under the current legislation we have to produce a Structure Plan. We are however taking the 2006 act into consideration and we have taken good practice forward. The other Strategic Development Planning Authorities have looked at the plan and are seeing it as good practise.

We can use this Structure Plan and take Local Development Plans (LDPs) from it. The council is currently starting work on the LDPs and will be looking for bids. There are a few hard decisions to be taken in the next few years. The way forward is a collaborative approach; we are all in this together.

The same person again asked if the plan will come forward because it could be a disaster.

Mr Gray confirmed that this is the way we want it to develop and there is no way that it could be abandoned. It will not morph into a Strategic Development Plan. It would be approved as a Structure Plan and then reviewed after 2 years and then an SDP would be developed. These plans would have to be reviewed every 2 years to avoid problems that have occurred in the past.

2. Two years ago the council's were looking to review the current Structure Plan and now they are not reviewing it but starting this process.

We have not just gone off and done this ourselves. The new plan is using the thinking behind the new Act; this has been encouraged by the Scottish Government.

3. Pleased with the corridors but have concerns about the allocation from Aberdeen to Peterhead, aware of the potential in this area and 400 does not seem to satisfy demand.

Mr Gray answered that there are a number of things constraining this corridor. There are two main constraints for development in this corridor. The first being the traffic issues at Bridge of Don, this won't really be resolved until the Western Peripheral Route is in place. There is also the need to make some hard decisions in terms of education, at the moment some of the southern pupils go into the city, will need to look at the Green Belt strategy. If a new school is built it wants to be built and filled quickly, this would not be anticipated till the middle to late plan periods. This corridor is employment led.

4. Why is this classed as most congested route when all the routes into and out of Aberdeen are the same.

Mr Gray confirmed that there is a railway on the other routes but there is obviously an issue on these routes too.

5. There is supposed to be 400 houses in the first period, when Trump gets approved for 500 houses that takes all of the allocation in this area, there will be no restrictions on when they can build these.

Mr Gray answered that we will not know the outcome of the Menie Estate appeal until the end of the year. If the 500 are approved we will probably look upon them as windfall and then have to look again at the numbers.

6. Under the section on Sustainable development and climate change it encourages renewable energies but where will the wind farms be, will this plan select an area.

Mr Gray confirmed that the Structure Plan is a high level document. SPP6 says there is a need to start to identify areas, grid, speed, discuss with the industry. We are looking into areas and we know places that would work.

It would be nice to have a plan for the windfarms locations.

Mr Gray confirmed that the Macaulay Institute has done a report on Aberdeenshire. There is a plan due at the end of the year for the best sites but the main concern is the cumulative impact that could occur.

7. The environment will be trashed if this plan is implemented.

Mr Gray answered that there is a section on the quality of the environment and built environment along with sustainability.

8. It does mention that there will be an improvement to the natural assets? How will the Trump development improve the dune system at Menie? Energetica is important for employment but does not impact on the estuary.

Mr Gray confirmed that the Menie issue is not what we were here to discuss and this is no longer with the council for a decision.

9. Current building regulations are helping towards producing less carbon. All new development will produce 15% less carbon.

We are moving this forward and trying to improve and eventually achieving carbon neutrality. There are also improvements in the design and layout of new developments to improve this. This will also help towards energy efficiency. This is all now coming through government guidance and policy it is at the forefront of the new agenda.

10. Will the Aberdeen – Peterhead corridor happen?

Mr Gray confirmed that nothing he has heard has dissuaded him from the importance of this corridor. There is already a lot proposed in this area. There has been a few developments passed in Peterhead over the past months. However if you have an opinion on phasing and other aspects this is the time to mention it. If you want to see it more front loaded let us know.

## 5. **Refreshments**

At this point Mr Gray 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 Gray 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?

No indication of being sustainable  
Recognition of economic growth for the longer term strategy.  
Requirement for front loading of housing for immediate needs of employers.  
The visions appear excellent but we have reservations as to how they may be implemented.  
It is not a vision it is a wish list  
More detail is in 'Objectives'  
More council vision to give a uniform goal.

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?

Housing requirement/provision should be included in the first two main aims.  
Question the compatibility of economic growth and sustainability.  
The first 2 aims – we agree that they should be the main aims.  
The next 3 aims appear robust but public transport is not nearly robust enough to change people ways of travel.  
Order gives importance – split weakens aims 3-6



# 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)

Logic of the growth areas is good (transport links/existing employment centres/ energetica corridors)  
Risk of the growth of Aberdeen Housing Market being too constrained – numbers too low.  
Potentially create a secondary city area (Westhill/ Blackburn/ Portlethen) to be included in the 50% Aberdeen City housing allocation, this will help deliverability in the city.  
Could have separate Peterhead/ Fraserburgh/ Inverurie Housing Markets.  
We are agreed in the locations but there are reservations regarding the huge allocation given to Aberdeen City.  
Allocations probably assume applications therefore correct.  
Some concerns that Deeside has no SGA outline.

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

Diagram should include employment allocations  
Ellon area allocation needs to be increased and also front loaded.  
2007-2016 – Too few houses allocated to the Ellon area.  
Aberdeen City – too many houses allocated to the city – would lead to excessive expansion.  
Front load allocations to give scope and flexibility (and kill pointless discussion)  
Not enough business land and no means to protect it from housing development.

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

Ellon front loaded  
Insufficient housing allocated to the Ellon – Blackdog area.  
Ellon corridor needs to be more front-ended loaded as a matter of urgency.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

Make it all available in first phase and put back when development does/ does not happen.

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

Question the need for continued economic growth as it is incompatible with sustainability and climate change.

Rail link to Peterhead should be a longer term aspiration.

Agree with the exception of Aberdeen – Peterhead corridor – we consider this does not adequately reflect the hopes and ambitions of the local communities who will be seeking better transport links and more front loading for land supply for housing and employment.

This will be developer lead, and should be fully aware of potentials at Peterhead and Energetica etc.

### 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)

Westhill/ Blackburn/ Portlethen/ Newmacher should be included in the Aberdeen City Growth Allocation of 50%

There should be more housing allocated to LGAs in the shire.

Make the allocations flexible then it won't matter

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

Too much in RHMA and not enough in AHMA.

Earlier land release in needed, otherwise the phasing is adequate.

Front load again

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

No comments

Needs to be more flexible to reflect local people's desire not just their needs.

This will follow demand, if development is promoted by local people and developers?

# 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)

Need more specific reference to Aberdeen City regeneration areas – too vague.  
Coastline areas should have more tourism facilities – particularly west of Fraserburgh and Ellon corridor.  
Yes

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

City – the figures should show the predicted net increase of units (ie incorporate the no. of units lost to demolitions)  
Detail re defining the areas missing

## 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

Quality of environment - What plans are there for the expansion of agriculture and food production – farming, forestry and fishing not included. - Ythan estuary – threatened by nitrogen pollution from housing development.  
Newburgh could do with more growth but outside of the protected area.  
Sustainable development and climate change – More clarity and more detail required. We don't need to take the lead at all – we merely need to adequately meet reasonable requirements.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

Economic growth – Must encourage economic development – we agree with the draft in principle – is it deliverable? Can the principles as given be mirrored in reality.  
Not enough land – Economic Growth  
Detail who is to be the increase in the population – population growth  
Start planning for the rail replacement, make rail realistic - accessibility  
Unrealistic - sustainable development and climate change  
You need to require better standards and enforcement – sustainable mixed communities  
You will need a better mechanism , what is it? – quality of the environment

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

Links and connections to agriculture/ fishing/ forestry. Is not here – it should be.  
How can the areas youth be retained, rather than attracting floating populations.

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?

Should all be flexible  
New buildings to be carbon neutral by 2016 – this is likely to be very unrealistic and needs further consideration  
City regions electricity – again this would seem to be unrealistic under the stated timeframe.  
Water saving technology – yes excellent  
Yes (risk from coastal or river flooding)

## 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?

Waste management in the energetica corridor should be included.

# Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan

## Consultation Questions

Address the bottleneck a the river Dee crossing (beyond the western peripheral route)  
Include farming initiatives.  
Tourism and marina developments on the coast (like Banff and tourism in general)  
Better transport links from rail stations (eg Dyce) to access the industrial estates – eg use free or cheap minibuses  
Insufficient local links on to the WPR – eg no link from B999 to the WPR.  
Agriculture, fishing, forestry – the bulk of the area!  
Tourism

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

No

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

Added by public: Suggested that it was easy to read and difficult to understand.