

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Public Consultation Event – Aberdeen Central

7pm-9pm on 8 September 2008 at the British Legion, Turriff

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 14th 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 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 12th September 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 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 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 Turriff area, Mr Strachan explained that Turriff falls within the Rural Housing Market Area (RHMA) and the Local Growth and Diversification area. 12,400 homes have been suggested for the RHMA until 2030 in three time periods. 4,400 homes are planned over the 10 year period between 2007-2016; 4,000 between 2017-2023 and 4,000 between 2024-2030. There are a number of varying sizes of settlements within the AHMA. 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. Share of areas housing, is there any economic development proposed for the Local Growth and Diversification Areas?

Mr Gray stated that Turriff is a thriving place, people want to live here. There have been housing developments and this will not stop however it should develop at the rate Turriff wants to grow. Want people to live, work and go to school in the area.

4,000+ proposed for first period in the RHMA, assessed need added a % of flexibility then added an aspiration on top of that.

There is a requirement to allow flexibility at the Local Development Plan level to decide where the need is, we want to listen.

Economic growth and diversification are just as important in local growth areas in strategic growth areas. We want to see the rural economy grow and flourish.

2. Yes we see that there will be more people in the community but we are not sure where the employment land is earmarked.

Again the Local Development plan will decide where the employment land is best suited. We feel that there is enough in the plan saying that there needs to be sufficient employment land.

3. Growth should be local. Why has the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor been chosen to kick start employment opportunities?

Peterhead has a deep-water port, Energetica proposal has Ellon in the middle, promotion of the energy industry. If there is a business or industry wanting to locate to Turriff this will not be turned down under this Structure Plan.

If there is more you feel could be done please let us know.

4. Will the new Local Plan fit in with the Structure Plan?

Yes

5. If you took some of the numbers from the Peterhead/Ellon corridor and gave it to Turriff this would help. Turriff has the tourism potential.

New industries and houses will not be stopped by this plan.

6. The road networks around this area are extremely poor.

The plan shows grey arrows which indicate road upgrading.

7. Cant live on aspirations alone.

Previous Structure Plans were very rigid, this new plan provides flexibility. In previous plans it showed the maximum numbers of houses allowed in any one area, this plan will allow need to be considered.

Under the previous Structure plan there were not as many houses proposed as there are in this plan.

8. What about infrastructure?

There is some capacity in schools. Some areas will need new schools. A major contributing factor would be new houses with young families. Developer Contributions are to be reviewed and we are trying to bring infrastructure along at the same time as housing.

9. How do the Local Development Plans interpret schedule 1? How do they allocate land?

Each area will be considered and assessed on need, capacity and many other aspects before allocations will be made. There will be widespread engagement with local communities on the options.

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 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 9:30pm.

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?

On the whole in agreement with the vision
Achievable and realistic
Aspirational
Cautiously challenging

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?

First aim is agreeable overall, the other equally important and should be incorporated into the main aims.
Need to emphasise importance of infrastructure – “clothes line” on which else can hang
Yes agree these
First two – agreed – emphasis on sustainable communities.

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)

Too focused on the three corridors highlighted in yellow – not enough for rural area, ie Turriff and surrounding.
Yes, based on transport – accessibility, opportunities to improve infrastructure.
Opportunities presented by former rail-line to Fraserburgh and Peterhead should be examined.
Infrastructure and environmental constraints in Inverurie /Kintore and Portlethen etc corridors.

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Consultation Questions

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

Housing – need employments opportunities to bring in housing opportunities, therefore more businesses opportunities must be considered and encouraged for areas outwith yellow corridors and Aberdeen City
Need for affordable and single family housing
Business – Need better communication corridors to encourage companies to rural North east area.
Need to be practice in attracting employment as well as zoning land.
Link to infrastructure improvement.
How realistic are the numbers – can they be achieved – especially in the city.
What happens if the numbers are not met.
Need to ensure infrastructure provided along with development.
Importance of retaining character of communities.
How is changing pattern of retailing to be accommodated/consequences for sustainability.

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

In agreement equal spread apart from Inverurie – Blackburn.

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

80% too high for Aberdeen City and Yellow corridor areas.
Better focus on rural employment and housing required.
Yes as per (a) but need to remember other areas.
Should not be to detriment of other areas of Aberdeenshire.

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)

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Allocation Agreeable

Generally acceptable, but very important to ensure employment opportunities to present increase in commuting.

Presentational issue – give more focus to “market towns and hinterland”

Link to additional services and facilities.

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

Agreeable

On an as needs basis

Need to ensure communities are not overwhelmed by scale of new development and balance of provision of provision of services/facilities.

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

Room for growth but reliant on local plan, too focused on yellow corridors.

Yes but too little emphasis as opposed to SG areas.

Need to be proactive in terms of service and infrastructure provision.

Housing in the countryside issue should not be overlooked.

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)

Why are they preferred over other inland attraction.

Yes generally but need to integrate with improvements in the local growth areas, to provide better links to markets etc.

Difference between these and local growth areas.

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

Too big an area, more frequent public transport and regeneration in all areas.
Tourism is important to whole area and not just in regeneration areas.

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

Improvements to A947 priority for accessibility to North East Area.
Need land for companies etc to relocate to area, which in turn will bring population growth.
Infrastructure such as transport, medical services and school should be outlined when any planning applications are considered.
But not to ignore future strengths in regard to newly emerging industries – economic growth
Yes – population growth
Fine in theory but needs to be realistic for rural areas, needs integrated transport infrastructure in city - accessibility
Yes – sustainable development and climate change
Yes also stress need for tourism and visitors – sustainable mixed communities
Yes the highest quality design standards but sympathetic to area including energy and waste – quality of the environment

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

Importance of tourism suggests should be built into all six aims.

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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?

More focus needs to be considered and aimed at rural areas, as all proposals on page 20 are geared to the city and yellow corridors.

Need to be adaptable and flexible but yes.

Economic growth – also need to add modern transport technologies.

Water major issue – is extraction target achievable?

Population target – need to ensure jobs, homes, services available – where will folk come from?

Sustainable communities – 40% city brownfield target – is this realistic? Need to ensure other elements of sustainable communities.

Accessibility – should also apply in other areas.

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?

Improvements to trunk road to give better access to rural areas.

Need to improve towns and villages throughout the area not just in strategic growth.

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

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Consultation Questions

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