

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Public Consultation Event - Fraserburgh

7pm-9pm on 18 August 2008 at Darlymple Hall, Fraserburgh

Officers Present:

Robert Gray	Head of Planning Policy and Environment – Aberdeenshire Council
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
Bruce Strachan	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 over 50 members of the public and press to the 1st 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).

Members of the public commented on the poor acoustics in the room and requested that officers speak louder to the audience. Mr Jennings apologised.

2. Background information on preparing the draft plan

Mr Strachan provided information on structure plans and their strategic role in the development plan system. He stated that a structure plan provides a long term, strategic vision for the development of land in an area (in this case until 2030 for the North East of Scotland). He explained that the plan is not just important as a planning document, but also because of the way that proposals within the plan affect where people live and do business, how they move about and how the environment should be protected.

Mr Strachan explained that a new planning Act, which will introduce changes to

the current planning system, is currently in the process of being implemented. He outlined a number of reasons for the new legislation which 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 Strachan continued to explain that the current adopted structure plan (NEST) which serves the North East of Scotland is outdated, only details how land is to be used until December 2010, no longer meets the aspirations of either council and has constrained the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils Local Plans.

Mr Strachan went on to provide a brief description with regards to previous consultation events which informed the current draft plan. The Councils released a formal notification of intent to begin preparing a new structure plan in February 2007. Prior to this date early internal consultation had taken place involving planning, education, transportation and economic development colleagues. Since February 2007, we have been following an agreed consultation strategy for developing the plan involving four main groups; the general public, community groups; people and organisations in the private sector and people and organisations in the public sector e.g. SNH, NESTRANS and ACSEF.

Mr Strachan explained that a dedicated strategic development plan team was established in March 2008 to progress the current draft structure plan to adoption and work on the new style strategic development plans following the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

In April 2008 the provisional draft structure plan was launched for discussion within the Councils at Committee meetings. After consideration of the comments received from each Council, an agreed draft structure plan was published for consultation in June 2008. As part of the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 the Strategic Development Planning Authority was established by the Scottish Government in June 2008 coinciding with the commencement of the draft structure plan formal consultation process. In addition to the draft plan there are a number of associated documents which are also out for consultation:

- Background Paper
- Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

- Strategic Environmental Assessment

Mr Strachan explained that a new website has been created for the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority which holds all aforementioned documents for viewing/downloading and where online responses can be submitted. In addition to online responses, comments can be submitted to the Strategic Development Plan Team by fax, e-mail and letter until the consultation period ends at 5pm on Friday 12th September 2008.

In addition to the draft plan consultation period, Mr Strachan detailed that there is currently an ongoing 6 week consultation on the Strategic Development Plan area. A draft boundary and justification were agreed as a basis for consultation by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee at their meeting of 23 May 2008. He added that we are now seeking comments on this draft prior to a boundary submission to Scottish Ministers by 25th September 2008. The SDPA will meet on 18th September to consider the responses received to the consultation exercise and submit a proposal before the deadline.

Responses to the proposed boundary (which embraces all of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with the exception of that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park) can be 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. 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 explained the 6 main objectives of the draft structure plan:

- Economic Growth – the plan encourages growth and diversification in dominant industries such as oil and gas but also in sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing.
- Sustainable Development & Climate Change – we are following the broad targets set by the Scottish Government in terms of reducing emissions, mitigation measures and adaptation in addition to setting targets at a

local level with the goal for communities to be sustainable in their age structure/level of facilities and services etc.

- Population Growth – the plan envisages balanced population growth over the entire North East region and in doing so create a vibrant place for people to live.
- Quality of the Environment – the plan aims to ensure that new development maintains and improves the region’s important built, natural and cultural assets and in doing so make the environment a selling point for the North East.
- Sustainable Mixed Communities – the plan aims to ensure that new development meets the needs of the community at the present time and in the future by ensuring that communities are accessible to all in terms of housing and services for example.
- Accessibility – the plan aims to reduce the need to travel by improving connectivity and choice of transportation in the North East.

Mr Jennings moved on to explain the draft structure plans spatial strategy which has 3 main strands:

- Local Growth & Diversification – ensuring that modest growth is developed in the right places, 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 involvement by the public, private and voluntary sector in dealing with issues such as dereliction, improving economic performance and infrastructure improvements.
- Strategic Growth Areas – the spatial strategy outlines that the majority of development in the North East is aimed take place in 3 Strategic Growth Areas. This involves brownfield development in Aberdeen City, road and rail connectivity improvements in the Laurencekirk and Huntly corridors and Scottish Enterprises Energetica initiative in the corridor to Peterhead. It is envisaged that the 3 areas will require major infrastructure improvements.

Mr Jennings concluded by confirming that the constituent councils will work together to progress the plan whilst involving stakeholders, internal members of the Council, Councillors and the communities who will be affected by the changes proposed.

A member of the public queried the number of homes allocated to the Fraserburgh area. Mr Jennings referred to Schedule 1 at the rear of the draft structure plan and explained that the rural housing market area had been allocated 12,400 homes over the period until 2030. He continued to explain that this number was in accordance with the Scottish Governments aspiration to increase the rate of housebuilding although their target is a 40% increase. Mr

Jennings stated that we are currently experiencing a decrease in the rate of housebuilding but this will rise again and as the structure plan is a long term document these intrinsic highs and lows will be accounted for. Mr Jennings went on to explain that the draft plan aims to improve linkages between the North of Aberdeenshire to Aberdeen and further south which means that the A90 and roads leading north are critical to this strategy. Mr Jennings stressed that the focus of this draft plan is not purely on housing, but that housing is integrated with other areas (e.g. employment/infrastructure etc) as a way to achieve all the aims.

5. Question & Answer Session 1

1. A question was asked as to whether the plan was prepared with the aim to raise the permanent fishing status of the North East of Scotland. It was suggested that there should be mention of this in the plan considering that Peterhead and Fraserburgh are two of the most important fishing ports in Europe.

Mr Jennings responded stating that the area around Fraserburgh had been identified as an area of the north coast of Aberdeenshire which is in need of regeneration and diversification.

He said the plan is fundamentally a land use plan, although economic development issues are important. The diversification needs of the area are recognised in the plan, although Mr Jennings recognised that these messages could be given greater emphasis.

2. A member of the public commented that Strategic Growth Areas were to consume most of the development leaving the North East with very little scope for growth.

Mr Jennings responded by confirming that the draft plan does identify 75-80% of growth to take place in the Strategic Growth Areas but that the draft plan is for the whole of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and reflects the needs of different areas. Housing and employment land is just as important outwith SGAs as within it. Regeneration areas therefore require consideration when identifying appropriate levels of development.

3. A question was asked as to why the Aberdeen to Peterhead SGA does not extend to Fraserburgh.

Mr Jennings responded stating that one of the reasons for this relates to the Energetica Initiative and the oil and gas industry. He acknowledged that the draft plan may give an impression that SGAs are given priority for growth but this is not intentional nor is it true. The draft plan outlines 3 different areas; Strategic Growth Areas, Local Growth & Diversification Areas and Regeneration Areas and the areas are not hierarchical in terms of importance or priority.

4. A member of the public requested that the Aberdeen to Peterhead be extended to include Fraserburgh.

Mr Jennings responded by saying that they had noted the suggestion and the reason we undertake public consultation events is to gain views and opinions of local people and the Team would like to hear these in order to assist in progressing the plan to finalised stage and adoption.

5. A question was asked as to the difference between regeneration areas and strategic growth areas in terms of what funding was available.

Mr Jennings responded by stating that the draft plan does not take financial matters into consideration and no funding was being directly made available for the different areas. This draft plan deals solely with planning the land use of the North East of Scotland by identifying what type of land use is required where to meet the needs of different areas in different ways.

6. How will investment be attracted to the area?

The Local Plans (soon to be replaced with Local Development Plans) will deal with the specific details. A structure plan sets out figures for housing/employment land throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire however Local plans will identify land allocations on a specific, smaller scale providing a bottom up approach. The draft plan identifies the need for public, private and voluntary sectors to work together in regeneration priority areas to bring lasting change.

7. Does this mean that planning makes the decisions?

Mr Gray responded saying that areas outwith the SGAs will be flexible in terms of numbers in the Local Growth and Diversification Areas. This plan does not restrict this as it is a plan for growth. The purpose of this evening is to listen to the views of the people of Fraserburgh in terms of investment and job opportunities. He continued by saying that Fraserburgh has problems in terms of the urban fabric but added that there are many great granite buildings which have great potential to encourage visitors and business. He continued in saying that Peterhead has great capacity as a large harbour and has benefits over Fraserburgh as a deep water harbour that can accept freight. He added that what is good for Peterhead is good for Fraserburgh as the improvements to the corridor from Aberdeen to Peterhead in terms of the A90 and harbour investment will also have benefits for Fraserburgh.

Mr Jennings invited the members of the public to break for tea and coffee followed by returning to join groups for the workshop and question and answer session. The members of the public declined to go into groups for the workshop and instead requested no break for coffee and to continue with questions and answer sessions.

8. A member of the audience stated that it was great to see that Regeneration Areas have been highlighted in the draft plan however Strategic Growth Areas have land allocated for housing and business land. Only 2000 homes are allocated in 8 years in the Regeneration Areas. If no money is set aside and no land has been made available then no encouragement is given for

investment in the area.

Mr Jennings responded by saying that the draft plan does make large amounts of allocations available and that the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Local Development Plans will allocate land on a smaller scale.

Mr Gray added that the draft structure plan is a high level strategic document which has no intention to deprive Fraserburgh but he accepted that it needs to encourage investment into the area.

Mr Jennings added that the previous structure plan was rigid, precise and prescriptive. The draft plan looks to move away from this and not prejudge any area of Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire. The plan aspires to be flexible and appropriate for the area that it serves.

9. A member of the audience suggested that the draft plan prejudged the area by having corridors.

Mr Jennings added at this point that there appeared to be two opinions being expressed, as some members of the audience wished there to be no corridors and some wished Fraserburgh to be included in the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor. He added that hearing varied opinions is one of the reasons why we undertake consultation events and all opinions are taken into consideration.

10. A member of the audience queried whether Councillors will have a part to play in approving the plan as she had grave concerns that some Councillors were not truly interested in the people and communities that they represent.

Mr Jennings responded by confirming that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councillors will approve the plan to be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for approval. Following this stage any further comments will require to be sent to Scottish Ministers who will decide on the final version of the plan.

Mr Gray added that over 100 Councillors will be involved in the plans approval between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils.

11. Councillor Tait advised members of the public that he was categorically opposed to the plan and added that the fact that three corridors have been delineated was wrong. He believed that as the plan aspires for 75-80% growth in the SGAs, this was a clear statement of the two councils intentions for growth in only these areas. He suggested that either the 3 SGAs are removed and a fair plan is developed or that the corridor from Aberdeen to Peterhead should be extended to include Fraserburgh as it is the 2nd largest settlement in Aberdeenshire. He believed the plan does not recognise the skills available at the local College and is generally a failure.

12. A member of the public queried how they could contact the team and how they can receive updates with regards to the next stages in the draft plans progression towards adoption.

Mr Jennings directed the audience to a table of literature with contact cards and to the display banners which detailed the Teams contact details. He also advised the audience to register their details with the Team at the consultation event or via the Teams website and online registration form.

13. A member of the public stated that she attended the initial issues and options meetings and recalled that corridors were not wanted at those meetings. She questioned whether consultation was worth it if decisions are already set in stone.

Mr Jennings responded by assuring the public audience that there were certainly no definite decisions in the draft plan and added that the Team expects to view hundreds of responses to the draft plan by the end of the consultation period on 12th September. He added that there are 14 public meetings and each will have different views on the draft plan.

14. A member of the public stated that the biggest view at the meeting appeared to be that the corridors should be removed. He went on to query whether anything will be done to help developers and help progress housing developments as he had been waiting over a year for a planning application to be approved for a small number of houses never mind the thousands of homes that the draft plan envisages.

Mr Gray suggested that he discuss this specific planning application at the end of the meeting as a separate issue to the draft structure plan consultation. He added that the draft structure plan encourages investment into the area and is flexible for housing and employment throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

15. How can investment be encouraged to Fraserburgh?

Mr Gray responded by saying that the draft plan cannot solve all issues at once and that the phased approach will see improvements made and developments occurring in stages.

16. A member of the audience reiterated that the corridors should be removed to spread development across the region by having pockets of development and improving road linkages.

17. A member of the audience highlighted that Peterhead is receiving £40million for a breakwater. Fraserburgh wishes to deepen their harbour as it is the number 1 shellfish harbour. He queried why Fraserburgh were unable to receive any funding yet Peterhead receives a large sum of funding?

Mr Gray responded in saying that the draft structure plan did not deal with specific funding issues such as this. He added that Peterhead can take freight and has a huge potential in increasing the areas economy. He added that the plan does provide for Fraserburgh's growth as it allows for Fraserburgh to grow faster than it has historically. He added that if the plan does not put this message across that the Team will examine this closer but he assured the public audience that the plan does allow for Fraserburgh to grow.

18. A member of the public queried why the Key Diagram showed Fraserburgh in lower casing but Peterhead was shown in upper casing.

Mr Jennings explained that the largest towns in the corridors are shown in upper casing to identify the corridor, but recognised that this could be misinterpreted.

6. Short Interval

At this point Mr Jennings requested a short interval to break and encouraged members of the public to view the available literature and information on the display banners.

7. Question & Answer Session 2

Although members of the public previously declined the offer of the group workshop session to discuss the questions prepared by the Strategic Development Plan Team, Mr Jennings encouraged the direction of this question session to follow the prepared questions to enable effective public consultation.

1. Mr Jennings asked the public audience for their opinion on the draft plan's vision.

A member of the public responded by suggesting that too many plans had been put forward for public consultation and very few had come to fruition. It was also suggested that lack of funding would result in Fraserburgh not achieving the vision for vitality. Additionally, although the vision was very good it was not specific enough therefore very little comment could be given as to what the vision meant for Fraserburgh.

2. A member of the public audience stated that Fraserburgh needed funding to achieve the aims of this draft plan.

Mr Jennings responded by confirming that the draft plan identified Fraserburgh as a Regeneration Priority Area in recognition of this need.

3. A member of the public suggested that this zoning was contradictory as at the present date housing developers cannot get homes approved and supermarkets cannot get built.

Mr Jennings explained that the previous plan was extremely rigid whereas the draft plan in front of the audience was a promotional plan which positively encouraged regeneration and economic growth at a level appropriate for the area.

4. Councillor Tait queried why the grid reinforcements were necessary to the Peterhead area.

Mr Jennings explained that this was to achieve the Scottish Governments renewable energy targets and to improve the network capacity throughout the North East as identified within the National Planning Framework 2 publication. This did not minimise the need for further, more localised, grid improvements.

5. Councillor Tait queried whether it was a coincidence that the grid improvements across the North East followed the 3 Strategic Growth Area corridors.

Mr Jennings confirmed that yes this was a coincidence and restated that the Scottish Government identified the location of the grid reinforcements and that these are the location of the 275kv power lines which need to be upgraded.

At this point general comments were received from the public with regards to the draft plan and are listed below:

- Corridors should be removed to be fair to all communities in the North East.
 - The vision requires amendment.
 - The draft plan is led by pre-conceived ideas about the communities in which it serves therefore the plan should be taken back to basics and reviewed.
 - The plan should look at the entire Aberdeenshire area and not particular areas such as the corridors.
 - The Strategic Growth Areas will receive 75-80% of all housing growth which leaves only 20% for the rest of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and this is not enough to promote growth throughout the region.
 - On the key diagram Fraserburgh does not have a port symbol whereas Peterhead does.
 - A great deal of money has been spent on improving walking and cycling however this money should be spent on dualling the A90 to Aberdeen.
 - It was requested that the Team do not portray that the members of the audience in attendance were in agreement with the draft plan.
 - The presentation font colour should be changed from white to black to improve visual clarity.
6. A question was asked as to whether the Regeneration Areas were less important than Strategic Growth Areas. If this is not the case this should be stated in the plan.

Mr Jennings stated that there is no hierarchy, that all 3 designations are different and not prioritised.

It was suggested that promoting 80% growth in the SGAs did give priority.

Mr Jennings reaffirmed that the SGAs were not given priority.

7. A member of the audience queried how the comments given at this meeting will ensure changes to the plan.

Mr Jennings stated that the Team had listened to the comments received and a note of the meeting was being taken by Ms Lyle. He restated that the deadline for comments is Friday 12th September and that there are various ways to contact us (via e-mail, fax, telephone, letter, online response form).

Mr Jennings continued to confirm that we will view all comments after the consultation period ends and change the plan where appropriate. He restated that all those who write their name on the attendance register will be notified of new plan documents and progress.

8. A question was raised as to whether a full Council Committee will approve this plan.

Mr Jennings confirmed that 12 Councillors at a joint Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Committee will approve the plan (Strategic Development Planning Authority). Although 12 Councillors will be responsible for approving the Finalised Plan all Councillors at Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils are able to input.

9. Mr Jennings directed the questions towards the 6 objectives (whether any tensions were perceived and if there should be prioritisation within them for example) which received the following responses:

- In terms of sustainability how is it sustainable to have a main airport at Dyce which has no public transport to it? The transport system is of a poor standard and requires upgrading.
- Two of the objectives appear to be linked to one another in terms of the ageing reality within the area and the aim to rejuvenate and grow the population. A solution to this would be rejuvenating the skills in the area provided by the College and encouraging local grown economic growth. Encouraging young people to stay in the area will stimulate business in Fraserburgh and this will assist in balancing the population in terms of age structure.
- There should be a decent road from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh, however dualling the carriageway to Peterhead will only assist Peterhead and will leave Fraserburgh no better off.

Mr Jennings advised that the comments received would be noted.

10. The number of meetings outwith the Strategic Growth Areas was questioned by a member of the audience as more agreement will be given about the draft plan in the Strategic Growth Areas.

Mr Jennings stated that the whole of the North East were consulted via letters and press notices with regards to the publication of this draft plan. He continued by saying that public consultation meetings are just one part of the consultation process and the Team would like as many responses as possible.

11. It was suggested that the draft plan in its current state would be approved if more meetings are held in the Strategic Growth Areas than in other areas as more support would be given to the draft plan.

Mr Jennings stated that it was not possible to judge this.

12. A member of the audience queried how people have been notified about this

draft plan.

Mr Jennings responded saying that there were press notices in local and regional papers in addition to writing to all people from previous consultation events and all Community Councils.

Mr Gray added at this point that being in the Strategic Growth Areas is not necessarily better than not being in one. He summed up by concluding that Fraserburgh wanted better connections, no lowercase letters on the Key Diagram, increased investment, more housing, more employment, no Strategic Growth Areas or for the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor to be extended to include Fraserburgh.

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 9:15pm.