

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 17 June 2009

Title : Planning Update

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) of development plan progress within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and other planning issues of interest to the SDPA. Matters relating to the progress of the structure plan will be addressed in other reports on this agenda.

2. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Local Development Plans

2.1 Both the Aberdeen City Development Plan Team and the Aberdeenshire Planning Policy Team had their first development plan schemes considered and approved by their respective council on 19 March 2009. These are statutory documents that set out the timetable for the production of the local development plan as well as what will be involved at each stage, including how they will engage with communities and other stakeholders. The schemes were subsequently submitted to the Scottish Ministers and published.

2.2 Figure 1 below provides a very brief summary of the timetables proposed by each Council. It can be seen that both Councils are proposing timetables that would see Local Development Plans adopted within the next 2-3 years.

Figure 1: Summarised Local Development Plan Timetables

	Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire
Publish Main Issues Report	Sept 2009	May 2009 (✓)
Publish Proposed Plan	Sept 2010	April 2010
Adopt the LDP	April 2012	March 2011

2.3 The finalised structure plan identifies the need for quick progress in preparing both local development plans to be consistent with the emerging structure plan and both Councils informally started this process before the development plan legislation came into force on 28 February 2009. The two development plan schemes are consistent with this.

2.4 Aberdeenshire Councils Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (MIR) and the associated consultation process were approved at a special meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee on 30 April. Publication of the Local Development Plan's Monitoring Report, Interim Environmental Report and an explanatory leaflet for consultees were also approved. The consultation period, which commenced on 18 May, will end at 10am on 6 July. As part of the 7 week consultation process, 20 public meetings have been organised to take place across Aberdeenshire and the final meeting takes place on 18 June. The next

stage of the plan-making process, the Proposed Plan, will be written in light of the responses received to the MIR and its associated Strategic Environmental Assessment, with publication expected in early 2010. A proposed response to the MIR is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

- 2.5 Aberdeen City's Development Plan Team are currently processing and assessing the 122 Development Options that were received from the development industry during the recently completed development options exercise for the new Aberdeen Local Development Plan. A number of events are taking place in June giving the opportunity for the public and others to seek more information on the developer submitted options from those who proposed them. Aberdeen City Council intend to draft a MIR, environmental report and monitoring statement in the coming months with publication expected in September 2009.

3 Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Core Path Plans

- 3.1 Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 authorities are required to draw up a system of core paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. The Core Paths Plans will be important supporting documents to the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Local Development Plans as well as the Structure Plan and future Strategic Development Plan. The Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan recognises the importance of Core Path Plans within the Accessibility objective.
- 3.2 Aberdeen City Councils Core Path Plan was adopted at the 28 April 2009 meeting of the Policy & Strategy Committee following three rounds of consultation.
- 3.3 Aberdeenshire Council are following a consultation process akin to that of Aberdeen City and are about to begin the 3rd round. A twelve week formal consultation on the modified plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment is likely to begin in June 2009 and will run until September 2009. Following the consultation period if a Public Local Inquiry is not required, Aberdeenshire Councils Core Path Plan should be approved by the end of 2009. If there are Objections that require the Plan to be submitted to the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals then it will be into 2010 before the plan is likely to be approved.

4 National Planning Framework 2 – Progress

- 4.1 The Scottish Parliamentary consideration of the proposed National Planning Framework is now complete (its recommendations being reported to the last meeting of the SDPA) and the Scottish Government is currently considering its response before publishing NPF2 in its final form. This is expected to take place later this month and will be accompanied by a finalised action programme.

5 Planning Summit – ePlanning Launched

- 5.1 Major elements of the ePlanning system were launched at a planning summit in Edinburgh on 29 April 2009 which was attended by Ministers and representatives of local government, agencies and the development industry.

- 5.2 It follows a wide-ranging package of improvements announced by the Scottish Government in “Delivering Planning Reform” (October 2008) to make Scotland's planning system leaner and fitter. As part of this package, ePlanning was identified as a key means of improving the efficiency of the planning system. It will provide a facility to apply online for planning permission or an appeal, more planning information online, a mechanism to consult electronically with statutory consultees and, in the longer-term, information on local development plans.
- 5.3 ePlanning has been developed in partnership with all of Scotland's Councils, National Parks, the Directorate of Planning and Environment Appeals, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Transport Scotland, Scottish Water and the Scottish Government.
- 5.4 The Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) has also launched a new service. Details of all appeals and all documents considered by the decision maker are now published on the internet where there is access to all current cases.
- 5.5 Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils went live with e-planning as part of the Scottish Government's launch of its national eplanning programme. This allows planning applications to be submitted electronically and for the public to view applications on-line.

6 ACSEF Culture Change Workshop

- 6.1 Following the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) ‘Culture Change in Planning Workshop’ held by Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) in March 2009 a Modernising Planning Group consisting of members from a variety of academic, business, consultancy and local government backgrounds has been set up.
- 6.2 The group aims to facilitate the culture change that is required by both business and planners to make sure planning is a streamlined, fast and efficient decision-making process. Two meetings of the group have since taken place focussing on the development of an action-orientated prioritised programme of work in order to assist in making the planning process more effective and efficient. The group will report back to ACSEF Management Team and the ACSEF Board and information will be available on the ACSEF website.

7 River Basin Management Plan

- 7.1 As agreed at the 27 March 2009 SDPA meeting an interim response to the consultation on the River Basin Management Plan and Area Management Plan was submitted to SEPA. Consultation on both documents runs until 22 June 2009, with publication of the final document is proposed for December 2009. A further response to the consultation is not proposed.
- 7.2 It was reported to the SDPA at the 27 March 2009 meeting that a North East Scotland Area Advisory Group (AAG) was established in mid 2006, prior to the formation of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Team. An

Area Advisory Group forum has also been established to allow wider consultation with stakeholders and interested parties.

- 7.3 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Team have since made a request to be represented on the AAG or the AAG Forum as appropriate to provide regional, strategic level planning input. This will contribute to the development of close partnership working and to enable the facilitation of information sharing.

8 Housing Market Activity

- 8.1 The Scottish Government recently published the first monthly edition of a Local Authority Housing Bulletin. The publication collates a range of timeseries statistics on the volume of transaction and house prices by Council area in Scotland. The bulletin is produced by the Scottish Government Centre for Housing Market Analysis and extracts from the first edition (May 2009) can be found in Appendix 1 and covers the period to end March 2009.
- 8.2 The information contained within the bulletin shows a marked decrease in the number of house sales over the last year in both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, along with stabilisation in house prices over the same period.
- 8.3 The publication of the bulletin is to be welcomed and will provide a useful data source in years to come.
- 8.4 At the January 2009 meeting of the SDPA it was agreed to keep data on housing starts and completions under review and report these on a regular basis.
- 8.5 Figures 2 and 3 below provide starts and completions data for both Aberdeen City and Shire and Scotland as a whole (sourced from the National House Building Council). It can be seen that new housing starts over the last two quarters appear to have rebounded faster locally than for Scotland as a whole (figure 2), although completions have continued to fall (figure 3).

Figure 2: NHBC Housing Starts Data (Qtr 1 2005 – Qtr 1 2009)

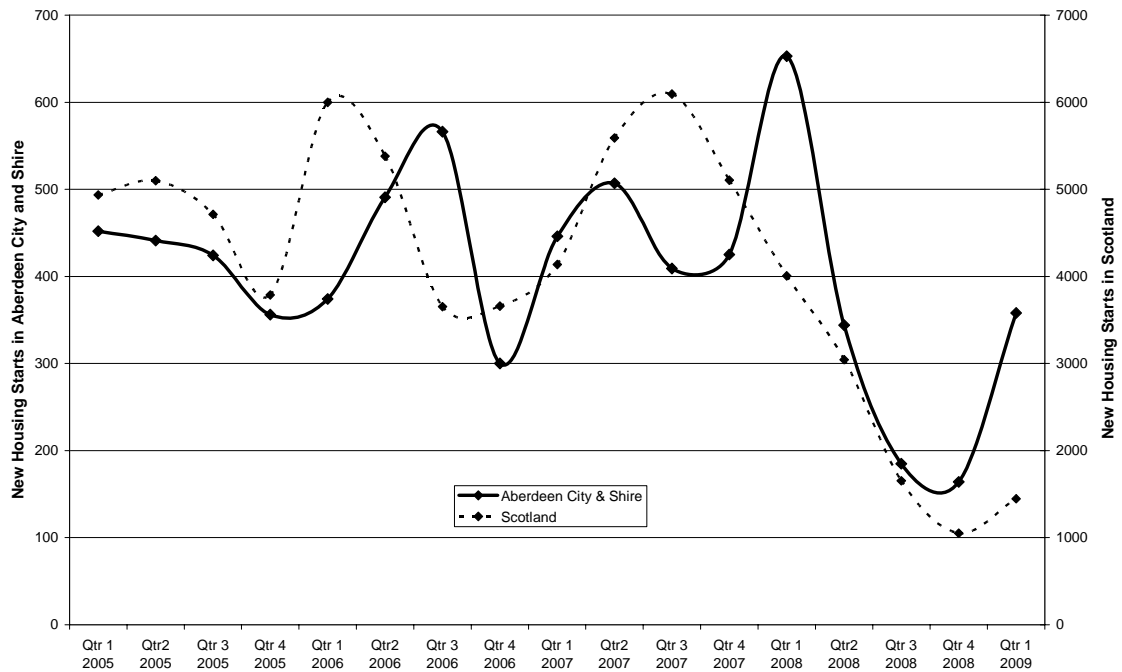
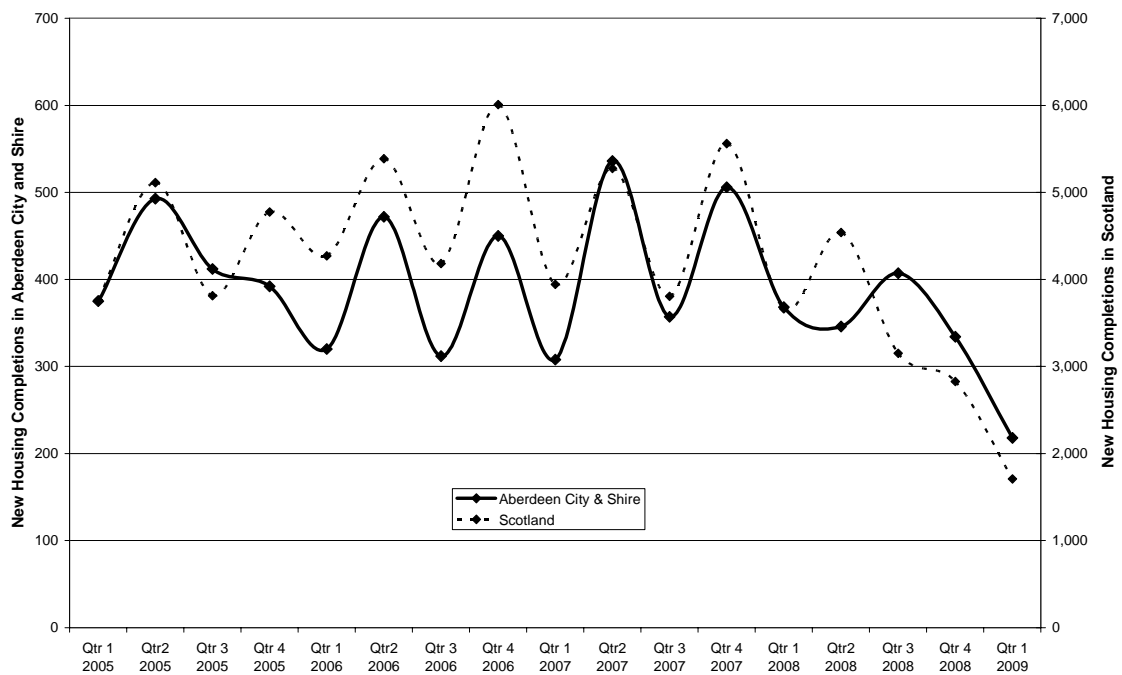


Figure 3: NHBC Housing Completions Data (Qtr 1 2005 – Qtr 1 2009)



8.6 More detailed analysis of the housing starts and completions data will be provided at the next meeting of the SDPA.

9 Scottish Government Climate Change Adaptation Framework

9.1 The SDPA were made aware of the initial stage of the Scottish Government’s adaptation framework consultation on 18 September 2008. No comments on the document were submitted at that time but a request was made to be

involved in stage two of the process. This has now been launched and is open for consultation until 20 July 2009.

- 9.2 The main aim of the framework is to find ways to adapt to a changing climate. The framework “sets the strategic direction for Scottish Government actions but, because many adaptation decisions are taken at local level by individual organisations, action from across all sectors will be required to achieve its objectives.” The framework will focus on three areas of ongoing action:
- Exposure: the degree to which Scotland is exposed to change,
 - Adaptive capacity: the ability of organisations and stakeholders to identify risks and take appropriate action,
 - Competing pressures: the degree to which organisations are restricted in how much they can do to adapt to a changing climate by other, competing pressures and constraints.

One of the main aims of the framework is to provide support to individuals and organisations along with providing a greater awareness of the need to act immediately.

- 9.3 Within the framework there is a distinct lack of reference to the role of the planning system. The document tends to skirt around the topic with small sections throughout the document, with the mention of the National Planning Framework 2 on page 28 being the most notable. In this instance however it is under the heading of Scottish Government Economic Policy.
- 9.4 Further mention of planning is made on page 33 under the role of government which states that the Stern review highlights that “Governments have a role in providing a policy framework to guide effective adaptation by individuals and firms in the medium to longer term.” It goes on to highlight four key areas, one of which is “land-use planning and performance standards should encourage both private and public investment in buildings and other long-lived infrastructure to take account of climate change.” This clearly shows the importance of the planning system in implementing the adaptation framework but is not developed further.
- 9.5 It is proposed that the Chair of the SDPA send a brief response to the consultation which requests that greater prominence be given to the role of the planning system in the adaptation framework.

10 Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative

- 10.1 The SSCI was launched by the Scottish Government in June 2008 to encourage the creation of a number of very low or carbon zero communities and provide a platform to stimulate a rise in environmental and design quality standards. The initiative was reported to the SDPA in the ‘Planning Update’ report of 18 September 2008.
- 10.2 The SSCI complements the aspirations set out in the finalised structure plan for high quality sustainable mixed communities. The finalised plan includes a target and action point mentioning the SSCI, as set out below:

Targets...

- *For the quality and design of new developments in the city region to be nationally recognised, including developments recognised under the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative.*

How to meet the targets...

- *Working with partners to bring forward appropriate proposals for development (in line with this plan) through the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative.*

10.3 A total of 68 diverse proposals were submitted to the SSCI across Scotland by the closing date and seven of these were in Aberdeen City and Shire, as set out in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: SSCI Submissions in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire

Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire
Donside Urban Village	Newtonhill
Grandhome & Whitestripes	Mintlaw, near Peterhead
Stoneywood	Park Village, near Drumoak
	Stonehaven South

10.4 An announcement was made on 20 May 2009 by Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP that 11 of the 68 proposals had been selected as 'exemplar projects'. One of the successful proposals was a submission at Grandhome and Whitestripes (to the west of Bridge of Don) by the Grandhome Trust. A description of the proposal and assessment findings are outlined in Appendix 2.

10.5 The Grandhome and Whitestripes proposal is one of the submitted developer options which Aberdeen City Council are currently assessing for inclusion in their local development plan Main Issues Report. This will then be subject to consultation later in the year along with other potential development sites in the City.

10.6 Each proposal will receive different levels of support targeted to their specific needs, focusing on the themes of connectivity, mixed communities, climate proofing, masterplanning, collaboration and finance and infrastructure. An additional general support package is also being put in place for the unsuccessful submissions (and others) which will focus on providing opportunities to access specialist advice and share experience and knowledge with others.

10.7 As part of the action planning process for the structure plan, the potential ongoing role of the SDPA in the progress of the initiative will be explored in more detail. However, any role is likely to focus on facilitating the dissemination of information to enable lessons to be learnt in Aberdeenshire as well as Aberdeen City and beyond.

11 Financial Implications

11.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12 Recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- (a) agree that a response to the adaptation framework consultation be sent by the Chair in line with section 9 above; and
- (b) otherwise note the content of this report.

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