

**14 August 2009**

## **Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan approved today**

The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) today received notification from Scottish Ministers that they have approved the recently submitted structure plan with no modifications and no requirement for an examination in public.

This announcement marks a major step forward in providing Aberdeen City and Shire with a visionary planning policy framework on which each council can build. The plan comes into force on Monday 17 August 2009.

Aberdeen City Council Leader Councillor John Stewart said: "This hugely important document provides us with the framework for growth for the whole region and will affect the way we develop over the next two decades.

"It lays down in the clearest terms how the area will diversify and prosper, while at the same time preserving our beautiful environment. The plan will also ensure we have the size of population, the number and quality of homes, and the jobs to compete and thrive, nationally and globally.

"I am delighted too that Scottish Ministers have approved the plan with no modifications. It shows that there is a broad consensus that Aberdeen City and Shire is on the right track towards a sustainable and prosperous future."

Aberdeenshire Council Leader Councillor Anne Robertson said: "This is a really welcome announcement and one which pays testament to councillors and officers of the SDPA, who successfully completed a large amount of work in a short period of time with a number of partners.

"This project involved a new approach to the development of strategic plans and with this endorsement from Ministers we can build on the excellent foundation which has now been set.

“The North-east’s communities and the future of our shared economy lie at the heart of the Structure Plan and we believe it sets out a blueprint for an even brighter future for the area.”

SDPA Chairman Councillor Scott Cassie said: “This is excellent news. We have spent a considerable amount of time trying to make sure we got this plan right for the people and economy of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and I am pleased that the Scottish Government supports our vision for the area.

“The fact that they have decided to approve the structure plan in just 24 weeks and without any changes is a testament to the fact that that we did just that. I welcome the speed with which they have approved our plan.

“I also want to thank all those who got involved in the process in whatever capacity, whether this was by attending meetings, sending us comments or working in partnership to produce the plan. The focus must now shift to implementation.”

Work on the plan, a replacement for the 2001 structure plan ‘North East Scotland Together’, began in February 2007 and included numerous phases of consultation with community groups, key stakeholders and the development industry. The finalised plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 27 February 2009.

At less than 30 pages long and with a Crystal Mark from the Plain English Campaign, the plan breaks the mould of previous plans and is more focused on change and the actions required to deliver it.

The plan, which aims to capture a vision and ambition for Aberdeen City and Shire, has established a clear land use strategy for the next 20 years.

This strategy sets out locations for sustainable growth for housing and employment uses and emphasises the importance of providing public transport links, community facilities and other infrastructure necessary to build sustainable mixed communities.

Alongside strategic growth areas where the majority of development will take place, areas identified for local growth and regeneration have also been firmly established. This allows both local authorities to respond effectively to the different opportunities and challenges in these communities.

Approval of the structure plan means that both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils can continue to progress their local development plans with a higher degree of certainty.

These local development plans will provide a more detailed policy context and identify specific sites for development.

SDPA Vice-Chair Councillor Peter Argyle said: “I am delighted that the structure plan has been approved. This is real progress in delivering our aspirations for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. But it must not be seen by anyone as a case of business as usual, because it is not.

“The main aims of the plan are to grow and diversify the regional economy and take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change. Delivering this will be demanding but we expect everyone to work together for the benefit of new and existing communities.”

Now the structure plan has been approved there is a six-week period, ending on Friday 25 September, during which any legal challenges can be lodged.

In the meantime, the SDPA will work towards implementing the structure plan through the action programme, which will identify key partners and responsibilities in order to deliver the targets and proposals set down.

The letter of approval and a version of the structure plan as approved by Scottish Ministers are available on the SDPA website at [www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk) They can also be inspected at St Nicholas House, 8th Floor Reception, Broad Street, Aberdeen, at Woodhill House (Planning and Environmental Services), Westburn Road, Aberdeen, and at all public libraries throughout the area. A published version of the approved plan is likely to be available in October.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority was established under section 4(1) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006. It is a partnership between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils with a remit to complete the preparation of a structure plan for the area before starting work on a strategic development plan.

A structure plan (or strategic development plan) provides a framework for the long-term land use of the area, including a strategy for where homes and businesses will be allocated through local development plans and a basis for policy statements on a broad range of subjects.

Strategic Development Planning Authorities are a key element in the modernisation of the planning system. There are four in Scotland, centred on Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.