

APPENDIX 2: HOUSING LAND AUDIT MEETING NOTE 2009

ABERDEEN CITY AND ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCILS

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 12 JUNE, 2009

Present: John MacRae (Chair), Chair of Aberdeen Solicitors' Property Centre
Paula Argo, Aberdeenshire Council
James Benton, Osprey Homes
Alan Bochel, Barratt East Scotland
Toby Coke, Aberdeen City Council
Ian Downie, Planning Consultant
Marianne McGowan, Stewart Milne Homes
Harry McNab, Bancon Homes
Peter McRae, Aberdeenshire Council
Blair Melville, Homes for Scotland
Sarah Shaw, Aberdeenshire Council
Jane Whytock-Celeste, Aberdeenshire Council
Sharon Wilkinson, Aberdeen City Council

Also in attendance: Niall David, Law and Administration (Committee Services),
Aberdeenshire Council

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Mr MacRae, welcomed all those present to the Housing Land Audit 2009 meeting. Those present then introduced themselves.

2. PURPOSE OF MEETING

The Chair indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to seek to reconcile outstanding issues between consultees and the two Councils following consultation on the draft Housing Land Audit. The draft 2009 Housing Land Audit had been available for consultation on both Councils' websites for a six week period from 3 April to 15 May, 2009.

The meeting would begin with consideration of a paper setting the context for the Housing Land Audit 2009. There would then follow detailed discussion on the status of individual sites which would be recorded by the planning service staff present from each local authority. This detail would not appear in the note of the meeting. Finally the meeting would be advised of the next steps to be taken to progress matters from the draft to the final Audit.

3. CONTEXT FOR HOUSING LAND AUDIT 2009

A paper on the context for the Housing Land Audit 2009 was circulated. The paper explained that, following the six week consultation period, responses had been received from Homes for Scotland, Ian Downie, Barratt East Scotland, Scottish Water, Cala Homes (North), and one local councillor.

Retirement Housing for Over 55s – Ms Wilkinson highlighted that Homes for Scotland had again questioned the validity of including retirement housing in the Audit on the basis that restrictions on the age of buyers meant that this housing was not available on the open market. She recalled that the issue was also raised in the course of the 2007 and 2008 Housing Land Audit consultations. The position remained that both Councils disagreed with Homes for Scotland's position. Mr James Benton asked that the note of meeting reflect that he also concurred with the view of Homes for Scotland. Ms Wilkinson emphasised that, since the last Audit, the Scottish Government had produced Scottish Planning Policy 3 "Planning for Homes" (SPP3) which explained that, in carrying out housing land audits, local authorities could include house types referred to as "sheltered accommodation". Recent appeal decisions had also supported this view.

Long Term Constrained Sites – Mr Melville of Homes for Scotland highlighted the issue of the inclusion of long term constrained sites in the Housing Land Audit and proposed that these should be removed from the established supply.

The circulated paper on Context and Issues highlighted that Scottish Planning Policy 3 stated that the Audit should include "land allocated for development in adopted local development plans" and that those sites should then be evaluated as to whether they formed part of the effective supply or were constrained. Paragraph 21 stated that in a small minority of cases a site could be removed from the Audit where it proved "impossible" to remove the development constraints. In this regard, the local development plan process for renewal and review was responsible for both the allocation of sites and their removal when necessary. The purpose of the Housing Land Audit was to monitor the progress of these sites. Ms Shaw highlighted that Aberdeenshire Council considered it important that these sites, the majority of which were in the rural housing market area, remained in the Audit in order to highlight problem areas where constraints were affecting development. This information would then inform decision making about where new housing land allocations should go in future local development plans.

There followed a discussion during which all the representatives of the house builders concurred with the view of Homes for Scotland that the long termed constrained sites be removed from the Audit. The Chair, Mr MacRae, suggested that consideration be given to the finalised Housing Land Audit including a separate schedule of sites with long term development constraints.

Further discussion followed and it was agreed that whilst such sites would remain in the Audit, they would be included in a separate schedule of constrained sites highlighting that they were very unlikely to make a contribution to the housing supply. It was further agreed that any sites which had been included within the Housing Land Audit since 1999, and had not yet been developed, should automatically be included in this separate schedule.

Ms Shaw advised that she would discuss with Homes for Scotland and the representatives of the house builders, the layout and format of this new schedule.

Housing Land Supply Comparison Against NEST Requirements – The Context and Issues paper advised that one of the consultees had raised the matter of the continued use of the requirement figures in Table 2 to measure the housing land supply. It was explained that since the new Structure Plan had not been approved by

Scottish Ministers on 1 January, 2009, there was a requirement to show the housing land comparison against both Tables 2 and 3 from NEST, but similarly to the previous year, this would also include the comparison with the Strategic Forecasts and past completions. It was anticipated that this would be the last Audit before a replacement structure plan came into force.

Development Plan Update – The Context and Issues paper explained that a finalised Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan was approved by both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils on 19 February, 2009, and subsequently submitted to the Scottish Ministers on 27 February, 2009 for an eight week period for objections and representations. Approximately 250 individuals and groups responded to this consultation, with around 50% of these relating to the proposed third River Don crossing. It was hoped that Ministers would approve the plan by the end of 2009.

It was further explained that Aberdeenshire Council approved its Development Plan Scheme on 19 March, 2009. This set out a programme for the replacement of the Aberdeenshire Local Plan by the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan by March 2011. In support of this, and following nine months of stakeholder engagement on both policies and sites, Aberdeenshire Council published a Main Issues Report on 18 May, 2009. This document was intended to draw public comment on a range of development options, including the detailed settlement strategy consistent with the scale and location of development identified in the Finalised Structure Plan, major policy changes and specific site proposals. The results from this consultation would inform a Proposed Plan, likely in February, 2010. The Proposed Plan would be the Council's set view on development matters within Aberdeenshire and would have material status, subject to any objections that may be lodged.

The Aberdeen Local Plan was adopted in June 2008. The Main Issues Report for the plan to replace the 2008 Local Plan, the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, was due to be published in September, 2009 and adoption was timetabled before April, 2012.

4. DISCUSSION ON THE STATUS OF INDIVIDUAL SITES

As explained at the start of the meeting, consideration of individual sites would not form part of the note of the meeting. Instead, detailed notes were taken by the planning staff present from both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils.

With regard to discussion on individual sites in Aberdeen City, it was agreed that the note of the meeting should reflect discussion that arose during consideration of the Hazledene and Pinewood sites. Specifically, the Chair, Mr MacRae, expressed disappointment that Aberdeen City Council officials would not accept, in his view, the logical and well founded arguments of the private sector representatives that these sites should be constrained. The private sector representatives concurred with his view that this undermined the credibility of the whole process.

5. NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

Ms Shaw explained that the next part of the process was for both Councils to consider the comments which had been received and update the draft Audit for submission to the meeting of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority in September 2009. Thereafter, the Audit would also be

submitted to Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee as an information bulletin item.

Mr Benton and Mr Downie, with the agreement of all the other private sector representatives present, requested that the note of meeting record their view that the next steps should include a report on the updated draft Audit being submitted to the meeting of Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee for consideration by that Committee rather than simply an information bulletin item.

Thereafter, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and for their input.