

ABERDEENSHIRE AND ABERDEEN CITY COUNCILS

HOUSING LAND AUDIT 2010 MEETING

**BANFF AND BUCHAN ROOM, WOODHILL HOUSE ANNEXE, ABERDEEN,
18 JUNE, 2010**

NOTE OF MEETING

Present:- John MacRae (Chair), Aberdeen Solicitors' Property Centre
Ian Downie, Planning Consultant
David Horsfall, Homes for Scotland
Marianne McGowan, Stewart Milne Group
Harry McNab, Bancon Homes
Chris Ross, Barratt East Scotland
Peter McRae, Aberdeenshire Council
Michael O'Sullivan, Aberdeenshire Council
Sarah Shaw, Aberdeenshire Council
Jane Whytock-Celeste, Aberdeenshire Council
Daniel Harrington, Aberdeen City Council

Also in attendance: Alastair Nicol, Corporate Services (Legal and Governance),
Aberdeenshire Council

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Mr MacRae, welcomed all those present to the Housing Land Audit 2010 meeting.

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 meeting would begin with consideration of a paper setting the context for the Housing Land Audit 2010. There would then follow detailed discussion of the status of individual sites which would be recorded by the 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 2010

A paper on the context for the Housing Land Audit 2010 was tabled at the meeting. The paper (a) advised that the Housing Land Audit 2010 consultation had been carried out through the two Councils' websites and listed those who had responded to the consultation, (b) commented that consultees had again raised the issue of the inclusion of long term constrained sites in the audit, (c) referred to potential constraints with brownfield sites and Council owned sites in Aberdeen, (d) reiterated the practice for reporting of the audit within Aberdeenshire, (e) commented that Homes for Scotland had again questioned the validity of including retirement homes in the audit, and (f) concluded with an update on the progress of the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Local Development Plans.

Long Term Constrained Sites in Aberdeenshire - Mr Downie expressed concern that many of the long term constrained sites had been included as allocations in the new Local Development Plan. Ms Shaw advised that Aberdeenshire Council's view was that the Local Development Plan process of renewal and review was responsible for both the allocation of sites and their removal where necessary. It was understood that a number of these sites

had not been recommended for inclusion in the new Local Development Plan. However, it would be premature for the sites identified as being long term constrained to be removed from the current audit, as they remained allocated sites in the adopted Aberdeenshire Local Plan. Mr O'Sullivan commented that a few of the sites had dropped out, particularly where physical or infrastructure constraints were present, but most had stayed in, either because landowners or developers had confirmed their intentions, or elected members had decided to keep them in, or there was no impediment to the site being developed over the course of the next plan. The housebuilders were disappointed that more of these sites had not been dropped. Mr O'Sullivan advised that new sites had been allocated in nearly every settlement, providing an element of choice, and the vast majority of new sites had attracted bids from developers. If necessary, over the course of the future LDP, it was the intention of the proposed LDP to allow the use of Supplementary Guidance to review and add sites if required. He added that decisions by elected members also had to be taken into account. Ms McGowan responded that she still believed these sites should be removed, but she acknowledged that officers had taken a pragmatic approach and she appreciated what had been done. She accepted that officers had indicated the sites would be reviewed.

Brownfield Sites in Aberdeen City - Mr Harrington advised that, for brownfield sites which had been indicated by consultees to be constrained, there had been a check to see if planning consent was still valid and they had been removed from the audit where planning consent had lapsed. Where planning consent remained valid, advice from the agent had been sought on whether the owner had intentions to build, and if so what the likely timetable for development was. Responses to individual sites would be considered later in the meeting.

Local Plan Sites owned by Aberdeen City Council - Mr Harrington advised that, in relation to Local Plan sites owned by Aberdeen City Council, the sites were not currently contained in a publicly available programme of land disposal and had therefore been moved into the constrained land supply for this year. Identifying constrained sites, and the nature of constraints, was an important part of the audit process. The Council had committed to delivering these sites to meet the requirements of the Local Plan, and the inclusion of these sites as constrained in the Housing Land Audit would encourage the Council to take steps to remove any constraints to the delivery of these sites. All the private sector representatives expressed their sincere appreciation for Mr Harrington's welcome response to this particular issue.

Reporting of the Audit within Aberdeenshire - Ms Shaw advised that the audit was reported to the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA), and it was for the SDPA to consider any implications of the audit. The audit was submitted to the Infrastructure Services Committee as an information bulletin item and it was not proposed to make any change to current practice. Mr Downie asked how the Council could monitor land supply to ensure that there was an adequate supply. Mr Peter McRae replied that it was the role of the SDPA to identify any problems and the Council would then take action. Mr Harrington commented that Aberdeen City Council would follow a similar procedure and provide an information bulletin to their Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

Retirement Housing for Over 55s - Ms Shaw recalled that a difference of opinion about the inclusion of retirement housing for over 55s in the audit had been raised by Homes for Scotland during the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Housing Land Audit consultations, on the basis that restrictions on the age of the buyer meant that this housing was not available on the open market. The two Councils disagreed with this view for the reasons detailed in the 2008 Housing Land Audit and recent appeal decisions had supported their position.

Development Plan Update - Mr Harrington advised that the proposed Aberdeen City Local Development Plan would be presented to the Council on 18 August, 2010. There would follow a period for representations to be made, with a target to submit the plan to the

Scottish Ministers by April 2011. It was anticipated that the plan would be adopted by April 2012. Ms McGowan spoke of the critical position of land supply in Aberdeen City and asked whether it would be possible to look at strategic reserve sites individually. Mr Harrington replied that current practice was not to release sites under Supplementary Planning Guidance as this would take resources away from the delivery of the plan and could not guarantee the delivery of housing land any sooner. Ms McGowan stated that the situation was critical for house builders as they did not have sites to bring through, particularly greenfield sites. She wanted to flag up the issue and get a policy response. Mr Harrington replied that the Council knew there was a problem in relation to the five year land supply and would be working on that. Mr McNab suggested that there was perhaps a need for a discussion to be had on this as a separate meeting outwith this forum.

Mr O'Sullivan advised that the proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan would be presented to the Council on 24 June, 2010, with a period for representations to be made. The target to submit the plan to Scottish Ministers was by January 2011, and it was anticipated that the plan would be adopted by October 2011. He commented that sites within the proposed Development Plan would gain materiality from the point at which the plan was approved by the Council for public consultation. This materiality would increase at subsequent stages as the plan moved from proposed status to adopted status. Sites which had proved to be non-contentious might be recommended as departures to the current plan from January 2011. Concerns were expressed by the private sector representatives that Aberdeenshire appeared to be promoting new allocations and settlement statements through Supplementary Planning Guidance and this would, in effect, serve to restrict the extent to which allocations could be challenged at any Examination in Public. Mr O'Sullivan responded by suggesting that the new allocations were referred to in the Local Development Plan in the form of tables and proposals maps and that any representation in respect of these tables would then draw the Reporter at the Examination in Public to the greater detail to be found in the Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Mr Downie commented that there were no figures available for a split between the Aberdeen City and the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen Housing Market Area so it was difficult to identify where the problems were. Mr Peter McRae replied that the SDPA had the monitoring role for this. Mr McNab suggested that it would be useful if the SDPA could look for a way to identify the split.

4. DISCUSSION ON THE STATUS OF INDIVIDUAL SITES

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

5. NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

It was noted that the next part of the process was for the draft audit to be updated with changes agreed at this meeting and the final version produced. This would go to the September meeting of the Strategic Development Planning Authority for final approval before publication. As referred to earlier, the audit would also be put forward to the Aberdeenshire Council Infrastructure Services Committee as an information bulletin.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and for their input.