

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee: 23 May 2008

Draft Structure Plan – Update

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the ongoing work to prepare a draft structure plan for consultation.

2 Background

- 2.1 A 'Provisional Draft' structure plan was agreed under delegated powers by the Joint Chairs in consultation with officers and was published on 2 April 2008. This document formed the basis of consultation on the content of the draft plan with both Councils. That consultation has now ended and the next stage is to prepare a draft structure plan as the basis for wide public consultation.

3 Draft Structure Plan

Consultation with the two Councils

- 3.1 The 'Provisional Draft Structure Plan' is attached at Appendix 1 with the comments received from both Councils at Appendix 2. Appendix 3 gives an indication of how these comments are proposed to be dealt with in the draft plan.
- 3.2 The consultation with the two Councils was extremely useful and has highlighted a large degree of consensus around future strategic planning in the North East.
- 3.3 Many of the comments made are helpful and changes have been made to the plan as a result. Some others were questions or relate to matters already covered in the plan which do not necessarily require a change to the provisional text. In addition, some others relate to matters more appropriately dealt with in a local development plan. However, the exercise was a useful one in the preparation of the draft plan.

Plain English

- 3.2 The 'Provisional Draft' has been reviewed by the Plain English Campaign and revisions suggested. These have now been considered by officers, the outcome of which is contained in Appendix 4 (which also includes the changes identified under the previous paragraph). However, the revised document has been re-submitted to the Plain English Campaign for further comment. It is likely that there will need to be further rounds of review until the text meets the 'crystal mark' standard. This process has been quite complex and time-consuming – especially since the wording of the final document

needs to be precise as to its meaning given the uses to which it will be put, particularly in the determination of planning applications, at appeals and development plan examinations.

- 3.3 A draft 'Key Diagram' – an essential component of a structure plan - has now been prepared and will be circulated prior to Committee. This expresses the strategy and proposals contained within the plan. A number of amendments have still to be made and it will need to be reviewed by the Plain English Campaign for clarity of expression.

4 Associated consultation documents

- 4.1 In addition to the draft structure plan, a number of additional documents will be published alongside it. These are outlined in the paragraphs below.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.2 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the draft plan has been subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. This is designed to ensure that environmental issues are taken into account during the preparation of a plan and that decisions on the plan are made in a way that explicitly recognises the potential environmental impacts. The SEA has been through a number of stages already, including the preparation of a scoping report which was sent to the SEA Gateway for comment from the 'consultation authorities'.

- 4.3 The preparation of an Environmental Report to accompany the draft structure plan is almost complete. This is a substantial body of work which stretched back to the start of the plan preparation process. This will be published alongside the draft plan and be open to comment during the consultation process. Any comments made will be taken into account during the preparation of a finalised plan.

Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment

- 4.4 A commitment was made in the Development Plan Scheme to equal opportunities and the assessment of the draft and final plan to make sure they do not discriminate against anybody. An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA) is used to assess the policies and plans for this purpose.
- 4.5 An EqHRIA has been prepared on the basis of the draft plan. This has been carried out by using the Aberdeen City Council methodology, although checks have been made to ensure that it is consistent with the form of assessment emerging in Aberdeenshire Council.
- 4.6 The Assessment will be published alongside the draft plan and be open to comment during the consultation process. Any comments made will be taken into account during the preparation of a finalised plan.

Background Paper

- 4.7 A Report of Survey was published in February 2007 alongside the Notice of Intention to prepare a structure plan, the development plan scheme, the issues report and the 'Getting Involved' leaflet. In relation to some of the information contained in the Report of Survey (where it impacts on the content of the draft plan), there is a need to provide an update by way of justification. The main elements to be covered by the Background Paper will be recent population and household forecasts / projections, the agreement on the principle of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and an updated Urban Capacity Study for Aberdeen City.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 Over the next two weeks, final changes will be made to the draft plan to secure a crystal mark, the associated documents will be finalised and they will be desk-top published and ready for the printers. Following the next meeting of the Committee and the printing of the documents it will be possible to start the consultation process. A new website to make the draft plan (and associated documents) available online is due to be up and running in mid-June to coincide with the publication of the draft plan.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that this report be noted, that the response to the comments from the two Councils contained in Appendix 3 be agreed and that is be agreed to progress final changes to the draft plan and associated documents and refer them back to a meeting of this Committee in mid-June to authorise publication and the start of consultation.

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