

Appendix 1: Proposal for an Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Area: Consultation Draft

Background

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 enables the designation of Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs) by Scottish Ministers and the replacement of structure plans with strategic development plans (SDPs).

The Scottish Government's intention, in line with the Planning White Paper of 2005 is that, while local development plans would cover the whole of Scotland, strategic development plans would only cover the four largest city regions – around Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. This was confirmed in the draft Designation Orders published for consultation in July 2007. Final Designation Orders [are expected to be / were] laid before the Scottish Parliament on 19 May 2008.

The Designation Orders [will] identify those planning authorities which are jointly to form a SDPA (Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council in this case) but the proposing of boundaries for the preparation of a SDP (the SDP area) will be the first task of the new authority. From the coming into force of the Designation Orders, the SDPA has three months within which to submit to Scottish Ministers:

- a plan showing the proposed boundary of the SDP area;
- a statement in justification of that proposal; and
- a request that Scottish Ministers determine the boundary of the SDP area.

The SDP area cannot extend beyond the boundaries of the SDPA but it doesn't need to extend to the whole of the area. This is a decision made by Scottish Ministers in light of the proposals made by the SDPA.

Scottish Government Planning Circular 2/2008 stresses the importance of engagement with relevant interests in the determination of a proposed boundary. As a consequence, this document has been prepared as a basis for such engagement.

While the SDP area will define the boundaries of the area for which a SDP will be prepared, the Circular (para 22) emphasises that "wherever the boundary is drawn, SDPAs and planning authorities adjacent to SDP areas will continue to work together on common issues of concern".

Guidance

The statutory guidance contained in Circular 2/2008 requires a clear and precise boundary to be established, with the suggestion that widely drawn boundaries will be more practical than those that are tightly drawn around cities. It is noted in paragraph 22 that "a SDP boundary that matches up with local authority boundaries is likely to be the simplest solution, still allowing for the focus of the plan content to be on the issues and areas with the greatest cross-boundary implications. The exception will be national parks, which we expect to be excluded from SDP areas."

Draft Boundary

Following the guidance summarised above, a draft boundary is proposed which embraces the whole of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with the exception of that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park (see Appendix 1). The area extends to 5,050 km² and had an estimated population of around 440,000 in 2006.

Draft Justification

There are eight factors identified as a justification for the proposed boundary:

- 1) Drawing the boundary to follow existing administrative boundaries provides clarity about the area to be covered by the plan.
- 2) Including the whole of Aberdeen City and that part of Aberdeenshire outwith the national park will simplify the preparation of local development plans. To propose a boundary which excluded further areas of Aberdeenshire would potentially complicate local development plan coverage in both Aberdeenshire and the national park. In both cases, part of the area would be covered by an SDP and part excluded.
- 3) The Scottish Executive published research in 2002 on the definition of city regions around Scotland's four largest cities. Although this did not seek to go down to the level of detail required for precise definition, it did indicate that the majority of Aberdeenshire did fall within the functional city region.
- 4) Drawing this inclusive boundary will help to ensure that the SDP can focus on those issues and areas which raise the most important strategic issues, while limiting the strategic issues which fall outwith the area.
- 5) Drawing this inclusive boundary will help to ensure that there is no need to redefine the boundary in the future as a result of economic, social or environmental change.
- 6) The boundary would be the same as that currently being used for the preparation of a structure plan for the area.
- 7) The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) have, by a letter dated 9/5/2008 and previously, intimated that they would not wish any part of the national park to be included within the SDP area. This will enable a local development plan to be prepared for the national park which is coherent as to its contents – this is especially important as the national park could potentially be covered by two SDPs.
- 8) The draft boundary meets the expectations of the Scottish Government as expressed in Circular 2/2008 paragraph 22.

The proposed boundary has been identified on a number of previous occasions by the two Councils and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee as being a pragmatic one which could be justified for the preparation of a strategic development plan. Any alternative boundary would need to have a justification of greater weight than the draft boundary proposed above.

Summary

In summary, the draft boundary has been proposed taking into account the statutory guidance contained in Circular 2/2008 and evidence of the sphere of influence of the city region. It is logical, straightforward to administer, allows flexibility within the entire city region area, follows existing boundaries and excludes the national park.

Timetable

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee (ASCCPC) agreed this draft boundary and justification on 23 May 2008 as a basis for consultation.

Following the consultation period, and taking account of any responses, it is likely that one of the first tasks of the SDPA will be to agree a submission to Scottish Ministers before the statutory deadline (25 September 2008). Scottish Ministers have indicated that they will endeavour to issue a determination within one month of submission (i.e. by the end of October 2008). In any event, the submitted proposed boundary with justification and the results of the determination by Scottish Ministers will be communicated to all consultees and made available on the SDPA website.

Links

Scottish Executive "City Region Boundaries Study" (2002)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/46951/0030606.pdf>

Scottish Executive Planning White Paper: Modernising the Planning System (2005)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/54357/0014194.pdf>

Scottish Executive "Draft SDPA Designation Orders and Statutory Guidance" (2007)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/182862/0051877.pdf>

Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2006/pdf/asp_20060017_en.pdf

Scottish Government Planning Circular 2/2008
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/220868/0059416.pdf>

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