

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 9 March 2012

Title: Development Plan Scheme 2012/13

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) for a replacement development plan scheme (DPS).

2 Background

2.1 Under s20B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, the SDPA are required to prepare a development plan scheme (DPS) at least annually. The DPS needs to set out the programme for preparing and reviewing the strategic development plan and what is likely to be involved at each stage.

2.2 The current DPS was agreed by the SDPA in March 2011. A new DPS must therefore be published and submitted to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2012.

3 Review of 2011/12

3.1 Scottish Government policy is that the DPS should focus on actions that have to be taken to ensure that an up to date development plan is in place as swiftly as possible. The current Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was only approved in August 2009 so the strategic element of the development plan is already up-to-date. The main driver for preparing a strategic development plan is the need to keep it up-to-date and submit a proposed plan to Scottish Ministers by August 2013 (four years after the approval of the structure plan).

3.2 The focus of the current DPS for 2011/12 was on the preparation of the Main Issues Report (MIR) and completion of the various studies and assessments which needed to be published alongside it, as well as consultation on the MIR itself.

3.3 The draft MIR was made available on the SDPA website on 19 September, prior to the SDPA meeting of 23 September 2011 where it was agreed with minor changes as the basis for consultation. The MIR was formally published for consultation on 7 October 2011. This is broadly in line with expected publication in September 2011 as stated in the DPS.

3.4 Although the DPS indicated a 12 week consultation period, the consultation ran for 13 weeks to avoid closing between Christmas and New Year. While a few negative comments were received to the effect that having a closing date on 6 January was difficult for Community Councils and some businesses, the option would have been open to them to submit comments in advance of Christmas.

- 3.5 Even with a 13 week consultation period, 12 responses (14%) were submitted up to three weeks late. While a flexible approach was adopted to these, such an approach will not be possible at the proposed plan stage.
- 3.6 It was decided that a draft action programme was not required at the Main Issues Report stage because potential actions were highlighted in the text and the existing structure plan action programme covered the majority of actions. It was also decided that an additional retail study beyond that carried out for the Aberdeen Business Improvement District was not required.
- 3.7 All other actions were carried out as specified in the DPS and are set out in more detail in the MIR Consultation Report.

4 Good Practice

- 4.1 The Scottish Government provided general best practice feedback in relation to previous rounds of DPSs. The DPSs of all four SDPAs were commended as good – being short, simple, well laid out and clear. The Scottish Government has identified that DPSs should:
- be short, simple and clearly laid out;
 - provide a brief context;
 - present timetables only showing key stages;
 - use a table format to combine key information;
 - use diagrams and images; and
 - print off well from the web.
- 4.2 The current DPS meets the requirements of legislation and the above criteria, along with having a 'Crystal Mark' from the Plain English Campaign.

5 Areas for Amendment

- 5.1 The timetable for the strategic development plan was initially set out in the first statutory DPS in March 2009. Timings were amended in March 2011 to take account of the local government elections now due in May 2012.
- 5.2 The development plan context for the area will be changing over the next few months following progress with both local development plans (LDPs). It is anticipated that Aberdeen City Council will adopt the Aberdeen Local Development Plan as of 29 February 2012. While the examination into the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan is still on-going, it is anticipated that adoption will take place by mid-2012. It would not be desirable to publish a proposed SDP until such time as both councils have adopted their LDPs. As a consequence, there is a small risk that the proposed SDP may need to be delayed. This risk of such a delay is thought to be small so it is not intended to identify it in the DPS explicitly.
- 5.3 While Aberdeenshire have set provisional dates for meetings of Council through to the end of 2012, Aberdeen City have only done so until May 2012 at the current time. This raises a series of uncertainties over the timing of publication of the proposed plan towards the end of the year because its publication will need to be ratified by both councils. It is proposed that the proposed plan be

published for consultation on 2 November 2012 with consultation taking place over a seven week period closing on 21 December 2012. This is shorter than the 12 week period envisaged in the current DPS but provides flexibility to the two councils in their ratification and avoids starting the consultation period during the October holiday fortnight. Of the three other SDPAs, two held eight week periods for representations at the proposed plan stage while one held a six week period so seven weeks is consistent with current practice.

- 5.4 The change highlighted above would still see the period for representations close in December 2012 as anticipated in the current DPS and keep on track for submission to Scottish Ministers in June 2013.
- 5.6 A further change proposed is to reference the intention to prepare strategic supplementary guidance in support of the SDP as well as highlight the supplementary planning guidance already prepared covering the Strategic Transport Fund.
- 5.7 Appendix 1 contains the proposed 'Development Plan Scheme 2012/13' setting out a structure and dates for the preparation of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. The revised DPS will continue to have a 'Crystal Mark' from the Plain English Campaign.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The DPS, once agreed, will be submitted to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2012.
- 6.2 In line with a commitment to environmental responsibility and resource efficiency, the preferred means of distribution of the DPS will be through the SDPA website. However, there will be a limited circulation of hard copies as follows:
 - Scottish Ministers (2 copies);
 - All public libraries in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire;
 - All Key Agencies (2 copies each);
 - All Community Councils in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire; and
 - On request from the Strategic Development Plan Team.
- 6.3 In line with the decision of the SDPA last year, all Councillors will receive electronic rather than hard copies of the DPS.
- 6.4 This meets the statutory requirements for publication set out in s20B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- 6.5 A new DPS needs to be prepared at least annually, with the next scheme required by 31 March 2013.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The costs associated with the publication and distribution of the DPS are likely to be around £400. This will be met from the SDPA's existing resources.

8 Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- a) agree the content of the DPS 2012/13 (Appendix 1) and its submission to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2012; and
- b) agree the publication and circulation of the DPS as set out in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 above.

David Jennings
Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager

Dr Margaret Bochel
Head of Planning & Sustainable Development
Aberdeen City Council

Robert Gray
Head of Planning & Building Standards
Aberdeenshire Council



Report prepared by: David Jennings, Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager