

## **SDPA Bulletin – March 2012**

### **1 Local Development Plans Update**

#### **Aberdeen City**

- 1.1 Aberdeen City Council received the report into the examination of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan in the week before Christmas.
- 1.2 The examination was conducted by Reporters from the Scottish Government's Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals and considered all unresolved representations to the plan and made recommendations to the Council on how the plan should be changed.
- 1.3 A total of 17 requests for further information were received covering 38 separate issues but there were no hearings or inquiry sessions held.
- 1.4 The vision and spatial strategy of the Plan were supported and no alternative or additional sites have been included in either the first or second phase of the Plan. Four very small sites allocated for development have been removed from the Plan. A relatively small number of minor modifications were proposed to the plan by the Reporters.
- 1.5 Aberdeen City Council met on 25 January 2012 to consider the modifications recommended within the report and agree to adopt the local development plan (as modified) on 29 February 2012 unless directed otherwise by Scottish Ministers. The Council has now received confirmation that Ministers do not propose to issue a Direction and that it can now, therefore, adopt the Plan. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan will be the first to be adopted in Scotland following the introduction of the new development plan legislation on 28 February 2009.

#### **Aberdeenshire**

- 1.6 In Aberdeenshire the examination into the proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan is still on-going following its submission on 31 March 2011.
- 1.7 The Reporters conducted 10 hearing sessions over the autumn and consulted on 16 potential development sites over the Christmas period via neighbour notification. The views of neighbouring owners / occupiers will be taken into account as the Reporters prepare their report.
- 1.8 It is anticipated that the report will be published in the next few weeks which would enable the plan to be adopted by mid-2012.

### **2 Cities Outlook 2012**

- 2.1 In the March 2011 Bulletin it was reported that the Centre for Cities, an independent urban policy think-tank, had identified Aberdeen as one of five UK

cities best placed for a private sector-led recovery (along with Milton Keynes, Reading, Leeds and Bristol).

- 2.2 In January, the Centre for Cities published “Cities Outlook 2012”, an update of the previous study. Along with Milton Keynes, Aberdeen retained its top-five status but this year is joined by Cambridge, Edinburgh and London.
- 2.3 In 2010 Aberdeen was the only city to experience more business start-ups than business closures. In 2009 it had been one of only two cities to have a positive ‘churn rate’.
- 2.4 The full Centre for Cities report is available from [www.centreforcities.org](http://www.centreforcities.org).

### **3 Cities Agenda**

- 3.1 The Scottish Government published “Scotland’s Cities: Delivering for Scotland” (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/365367/0124252.pdf>) in December 2011.
- 3.2 The document focuses on growth and opportunity, concentrating on developing and promoting the key assets of Scotland’s cities and their regions to attract investment, stimulate economic activity and create jobs.
- 3.3 Although focused on collaboration between Scotland’s six cities, the report emphasises the importance of the city region on numerous occasions, noting that “our cities must continue to strengthen effective partnerships that recognise the co-dependent relationship they have with their neighbours and with the other cities”.
- 3.4 The vision is for “a Scotland where our cities and their regions power Scotland’s economy for the benefit of all”. A Scottish Cities Alliance has been established (facilitated by the Scottish Council for Development and Industry) and four key areas for collaboration and investment are identified:
  - Connected Cities
  - Sustainable Cities
  - Knowledge Cities; and
  - Vibrant and Cultural Cities.
- 3.5 A relatively modest fund has been established by the Scottish Government to facilitate the delivery of the collaborative work.
- 3.6 The Main Issues Report (para 5.4) highlighted this emerging agenda as well as the importance of Aberdeen City and Shire benefiting from it in the years ahead.

### **4 Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011**

- 4.1 In December 2011 the Scottish Government published an its ‘Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011’, updating the 2008 version of the plan (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/364225/0123778.pdf>).

- 4.2 A number of the transport, energy and digital infrastructure projects highlighted in the current structure plan and main issues report are highlighted in the plan, as well as some additional projects (principally the dualling of the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness).

## **5 A Land Use Strategy for Scotland – Action Plan**

- 5.1 The Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy for Scotland was published in March 2011. The SDPA responded to the consultation in December 2010 and the publication of the final strategy was highlighted in the June 2011 Bulletin.
- 5.2 In December 2011 the Scottish Government published an action plan setting out how the strategy will be implemented (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/365706/0124378.pdf>).

## **6 Scotland's Digital Future: Infrastructure Action Plan**

- 6.1 In the December 2010 Bulletin it was reported that the Scottish Government had published "A Digital Ambition for Scotland" paper and that officers had responded to this to outline the importance of new development being served by future-proofed technology.
- 6.2 In March 2011, the Scottish Government published its response to the consultation in 'Scotland's Digital Future: A Strategy for Scotland' (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/343733/0114331.pdf>) and this was followed in January 2012 by its associated Action Plan (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00386525.pdf>).
- 6.3 Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) has carried out detailed work to establish the baseline position in Aberdeen City and Shire and, along with both Councils, is seeking to progress a three-pronged approach to the delivery of next generation broadband. This will be progressed alongside the Scottish Government's allocation of funding and procurement set out in the Action Plan.
- 6.4 BT has also made a number of announcements recently regarding the upgrading of exchanges. Although next generation broadband (40-100Mb/s) is still not available from any exchange in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, the Ashgrove and Denburn exchanges in Aberdeen are due to be able to offer the service in March and June 2012 respectively. The Balgownie, Kincorth, Lochnagar, Aberdeen West, Portlethen and Stonehaven exchanges are due to be upgraded by the end of 2012. This leaves 95 out of the 103 exchanges with no announcement of a timetable for upgrade yet made.
- 6.5 A number of additional exchanges are due to be upgraded to the 'up to 20Mb/s' speed which is the top speed for the non-fibre network. Towns which are due to be upgraded in this way during 2012 include Banchory, Bucksburn, Dyce, Huntly, Kintore, Peterculter and Peterhead.

## **7 Structure Plan Proposals**

- 7.1 Four proposals set out in the structure plan have made significant steps forward over the last few months.

### **Peterhead Prison**

- 7.2 An application for planning permission in principle for the demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a new prison (HMP Grampian) within the existing site boundary of Peterhead Prison was approved unanimously by a meeting of Aberdeenshire Council on 10 March 2011.
- 7.3 In November 2011 Skanska signed a contract with the Scottish Prison Service for the construction of the new prison.
- 7.4 Aberdeenshire Council granted a 'Matters Specified in Condition' application in February 2012 and construction is due to commence during the summer with completion in summer 2013.

### **East Coast Electricity Transmission Upgrade**

- 7.5 In January 2012 Aberdeenshire Council approved an application for a new electricity substation near Rothienorman.
- 7.6 The application is the first of a number required as part of the project to upgrade the high voltage transmission line (running through Aberdeenshire from the border with Moray to the border with Angus) from 275kV to 400kV by 2016. The project is identified as a proposal in the current structure plan and as a 'national development' in National Planning Framework 2.
- 7.7 A further application is anticipated near Kintore in the next few months for an extension to the existing substation, followed by consultation from the Scottish Government on an application under the Electricity Act 1989 to re-insultate the pylons themselves.

### **Inveramsay Bridge**

- 7.8 The Scottish Government allocated additional funding to a number of transport infrastructure projects in early February 2012 following the UK Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement. This made provision to start work on the new bridge on the A96 to remove the single-file traffic restriction on this part of the trunk road north of Inverurie where the railway bridges over the road.

### **Haudagain Roundabout**

- 7.9 The budget announcement also made provision for preparatory work to commence on the improvements to the Haudagain junction on the A90 at the appropriate time. This will enable work to begin at the junction on completion of the Western Peripheral Route.