

ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

Date: 21 September 2012

Title: Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a draft of the Proposed Strategic Development Plan (SDP) to the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) for discussion and agreement, recommending that the decision be referred to the two councils for ratification followed by a period for representations before submission to Scottish Ministers.

2 Background

- 2.1 The [Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan](#) was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2009. It was the last structure plan to be approved in Scotland before the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 came into force, introducing a requirement to prepare SDPs in the four largest city regions (including in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire).
- 2.2 Both councils have now adopted local development plans consistent with the structure plan. This was a significant achievement given the scale of change required from the previous local plans.
- 2.3 Although not applying directly to the first SDP, there is a statutory requirement for future plans to be submitted to Scottish Ministers within four years of the approval of the previous plan. The current and previous development plan schemes have presented plan preparation timetables which set this as a target for the first strategic development plan. This means that submission is required to Scottish Ministers by 17 August 2013.
- 2.4 The SDPA started work on the preparation of a replacement plan in late 2010. This has involved the preparation of a range of studies and assessments as well as monitoring of the current structure plan and engagement with stakeholders and agencies. The SDPA approved a Main Issues Report at its meeting of 23 September 2011 and consultation took place between October 2011 and January 2012, with 85 responses received.
- 2.5 All members of both councils have been invited to two informal seminar sessions during the preparation of the plan to date. The first took place on 10 June 2011 on the proposed content of the Main Issues Report while the second took place on 10 September 2012 on the content of the Proposed Plan itself.
- 2.6 An early draft of the Proposed Plan was shared with the Key Agencies for comment and their feedback was useful in informing the final draft attached.

- 2.7 The Aberdeen City and Shire SDP is the last of the four plans to be prepared in Scotland. The plans for the Glasgow and Dundee areas were approved by Scottish Ministers in June this year, while the plan for the Edinburgh area was submitted to Scottish Ministers in August. This reflects the fact that the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was only approved in 2009 – the plans being replaced elsewhere in Scotland were largely approved in the period between 2002 and 2006.
- 2.8 Scottish Ministers' guidance on the form and content of SDPs is set out in Circular 1/2009. The quote below gives an indication of their expectations:

Scottish Ministers expect SDPs to be concise visionary documents that set clear parameters for subsequent LDPs and inform decisions about strategic infrastructure investment. Vision statements should provide a realistic expression of what the plan area could be like in 20 years' time and a useful springboard for the spatial strategy of the plan. The spatial strategy should encapsulate the headline changes that the plan seeks to achieve, and provide a locational strategy for new development up to year 12 from plan approval and a broad indication of the scale and direction of growth up to year 20.

Circular 1/2009 (para 14)

- 2.9 The Regional Transport Strategy prepared by Nestrans is also being refreshed at the current time to ensure it remains up-to-date and consistent with the SDP. Consultation on an issues report is due over the coming months with the intention of publishing an update to the strategy next year. The refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy does not have the same legislative approval mechanism so the two documents will be brought into line at the same time. The Proposed SDP and Regional Transport Strategy refresh have been prepared in parallel through close partnership working.

3 Proposed Plan

- 3.1 The preparation of a Proposed Plan is a key stage in the preparation of the SDP. The proposed plan builds on the monitoring of the previous plan, engagement with stakeholders and Key Agencies, responses to the Main Issues Report and the various studies and assessments prepared in support of the plan.
- 3.2 The Proposed Plan presented in Appendix 1 represents a significant level of continuity with the current structure plan. This was the view clearly expressed by the majority of stakeholders, Key Agencies and those responding to the Main Issues Report.
- 3.3 The plan continues to present an ambitious strategy for growth for the area while also focusing regeneration activity in those parts of the area with particular challenges. A common view throughout engagement and consultation was that the focus should be on implementation rather than making changes to a plan which was widely welcomed and still only a few years old.
- 3.4 As identified in the Main Issues Report, while by no means immune from the consequences of the global economic turmoil since 2007/08, Aberdeen City and

Shire has been one of the most resilient parts of the UK. Aberdeen City and Shire is consistently identified as one area in Scotland and the UK which has the potential to drive economic recovery. It is important that the SDP supports this and helps deliver on this opportunity.

- 3.5 Housing and employment allowances up to at least 2026 have already resulted in allocations being made by the two Local Development Plans so there is already a clearly defined pattern of growth. The focus is therefore rightfully on the implementation of these plans.
- 3.6 As indicated in the Main Issues Report, the opportunity has been taken to expand the 'Spatial Strategy' section of the plan and at the same time include more diagrams to explain the effect of the plan on different areas. At the same time the text retains the Crystal Mark from the Plain English Campaign for its clarity.
- 3.7 The main changes from the current structure plan relate to five additional proposals and the policy positions around waste management and the strategic transport fund. These are addressed below after a consideration of the housing land supply position.

Housing Land Supply

- 3.8 The 2012 Housing Land Audit is reported elsewhere on this agenda. The Audit identifies a record supply of housing land, with further land entering the Audit in Aberdeenshire next year from its local development plan.
- 3.9 While housing completions in Aberdeen City and Shire have declined since the start of the global economic turmoil in 2007/08, they have been more resilient than elsewhere in Scotland. The 2012 Audit indicates that completions are likely to rise again over the next few years as the new LDP allocations are developed.
- 3.10 The Proposed SDP does not require additional housing or employment land to be identified in the subsequent LDPs for the period to 2026.
- 3.11 The housing requirement and allowances in the Proposed Plan are based on the outputs of the 2011 Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). Recent projections prepared by the National Records of Scotland (formerly the General Register Office for Scotland) suggest a significantly higher rate of population and household growth than was used as the basis for the HNDA. The Housing Market Partnership met earlier this year and recommended that the HNDA continue to be used as the basis for the SDP. The Proposed SDP continues to provide a generous supply of housing and employment land and is robust enough to accommodate higher levels of growth such as those projected by the National Records of Scotland in the medium-term (ie to 2026 at least and probably well into the final phase of the plan).
- 3.12 Monitoring of population and household growth as well as the rate of new house building will be important on an annual basis to inform the review of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment and the SDP in five years' time to ensure that the SDP continues to provide a robust plan for the future.

Waste Management

- 3.13 The publication of Scotland's Zero Waste Plan in 2010 set a different context for planning for waste management to that contained in the current structure plan. This was anticipated in the structure plan which stated that the new framework would be reflected in the first SDP.
- 3.14 The urgency and significance of the change to a more sustainable approach to waste management expressed in the structure remains. This plan seeks to facilitate the development of the required infrastructure, viewing waste as an important resource.
- 3.15 The MIR presented a series of options to deal with the area's waste and the preferred option has largely been carried forward into the proposed SDP. The proposed SDP emphasises the objective of meeting our waste management needs locally as far as possible, in line with the waste hierarchy, the proximity principle and the Zero Waste Plan.
- 3.16 While we currently have sufficient landfill capacity, there is a need for at least an additional 300,000 tonnes of capacity in new waste management facilities in the area. These are likely to be facilities such as material recycling and composting plants as well as energy from waste facilities. The plan directs most of this capacity to the strategic growth areas within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area to reduce the environmental and financial costs of transporting waste and maximise the opportunity for using the heat generated by such proposals. Given the nature of modern waste management facilities, sites identified for employment purposes in the two local development plans are likely to be potentially suitable, along with sites adjacent to existing waste management facilities. Sites outwith the strategic growth areas may also be suitable, particularly where they meet a more local need or require a rural location.

Strategic Transport Fund

- 3.17 The SDPA approved Supplementary Planning Guidance on a Strategic Transport Fund (STF) in December 2011 and this was subsequently ratified by both councils in early 2012.
- 3.18 Financial contributions from development have already been received and a number of planning agreements have been signed which require a contribution to be made at a future date. Most of the contributions to the fund will come from new sites allocated in the two recently approved local development plans so it can be expected that the number of planning agreements with STF contributions will rise significantly as sites come forward for development over the next year or two.
- 3.19 Engagement with the development industry is due to take place over the next few months around the timing of implementation of the individual interventions. This will also seek views on the implementation of the guidance and how it can be improved. A review of the guidance will be carried out over the next six to twelve months with reports to future meetings of the SDPA. Consultation will be carried out as part of this process and enable the guidance to be adopted as statutory supplementary guidance alongside the approval of the SDP. The existing guidance will continue in force until that time.

Proposals

3.20 All of the proposals contained in the current structure plan have been carried forward to the Proposed SDP with one exception. The proposal for a new prison at Peterhead has been removed as construction is well underway. All other proposals are still awaiting implementation and there is value in retaining the plan's support for them until that stage has been reached.

3.21 A number of additional proposals have been included in the Proposed SDP. Most of these were highlighted in the MIR, although the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan gave a commitment to dualling the A96 north of Inverurie and this has also been included.

3.22 The new proposals include:

- Upgrading the A96 to dual carriageway north of Inverurie;
- Carbon capture and storage infrastructure at Peterhead as well as infrastructure for the transport of CO₂ to St Fergus from outwith the area (either by pipeline or ship);
- Electricity transmission infrastructure to the south of Peterhead including an extension to the electricity substation and converter stations required for offshore transmission (subject to a development framework for the area);
- Proposals to realise the potential of the ports at Aberdeen and Peterhead, particularly in the context of the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan; and
- Strategic transport interventions required to address the cumulative impact of new development in and around Aberdeen. These interventions were identified and will be funded through the Strategic Transport Fund.

Main Issues Report Consultation Responses

3.23 Consultation responses received to the Main Issues Report were presented to the SDPA at its meeting in March 2012. These were used to inform the drafting of the Proposed Plan. Appendix 2 contains proposed responses to the issues raised.

Publication

3.24 The final version of the Proposed Plan will be graphic designed and presented in such a way as to express the vision and aspiration of the plan as well as highlight its key messages. The current maps in the Proposed Plan are draft in nature and will be completed prior to publication.

3.25 Although distribution via the SDPA website is the preferred means, a number of hard copies of the plan will be required. It is proposed that up to 1,000 copies of the proposed plan are printed and made available free of charge in line with the commitments contained in the development plan scheme.

4 Supporting documents

4.1 A series of supporting documents accompany the Proposed SDP. These are required to be published alongside the plan and are set out in Appendices 3-6 to this report.

- Habitats Regulations Appraisal (Appendix 3)
- Strategic Environmental Appraisal (Appendix 4)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 5)
- Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (Appendix 6)

4.2 A Proposed Action Programme is also required to be published alongside the Proposed Plan. This is still being developed in partnership with those likely to be identified to deliver the plan. Given the high level of continuity with the current structure plan, its action programme has been used as the basis for the new Action Programme. Amendments can be made to the Action Programme at any time and it does not go through the same statutory process as the plan itself. Delegated authority is requested below to finalise the Action Programme prior to consultation.

4.3 In addition to these new or revised documents, a Housing Need and Demand Assessment, Climate Change Study and Monitoring Statement were published alongside the Main Issues Report and are still of relevance. These documents will not be republished but are available from the SDPA website and limited numbers of hard copies will be available on request.

5 Consultation

5.1 The Development Plan Scheme (DPS) 2012/13 sets out the commitments we have made to engagement at different stages of the plan preparation process. It requires that we seek representations for a period of 7 weeks and that we send copies of the plan to all those on our contact database (which includes all Community Councils as well as those who responded to the Main Issues Report). The DPS also identifies that press notices and press releases will be issued to help reach other interested parties.

5.2 In addition to the minimum set out in the DPS it is proposed to place the press notice on the 'tellmesotland.gov.uk' website and provide information to a range of organisations which circulate newsletters by email.

5.3 Following the close of the period for representations, it is proposed to provide a brief summary of responses to the March 2013 meeting of the SDPA and a full response to the June meeting. This will enable the plan to be submitted to Scottish Ministers in advance of the August 2013 target date.

5.4 In order to ensure that the plan can be submitted to the Scottish Ministers by the target date it is recommended that delegated authority is sought from the two councils to submit on their behalf in mid-2013 as long as no substantive changes are proposed to the plan at that stage.

5.5 Submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers starts the examination phase of the plan preparation process where Scottish Ministers appoint Reporters from the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals to examine the representations and recommend any changes required to the plan. They report to directly to Scottish Ministers who can approve the plan with or without modifications.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The financial implications arising from this report relate to the publication, distribution and publicity around the Proposed SDP. These expenses have been accounted for within the SDPA's budget. Costs later in the process around the examination of the plan have been identified in the SDPA's indicative budget for 2013/14.

7 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- a) discuss and agree the draft of the Proposed Plan (Appendix 1) and the associated supporting documentation (Appendices 2 – 6) as the SDPA's settled view of the recommended final content of the plan;
- b) agree the arrangements set out in section 5 above for the period for representations on the Proposed Plan;
- c) delegate to the Strategic Development Plan Manager the task preparing the plan for publication (including the graphic design of the plan) and the finalisation of the Action Programme for consultation alongside the proposed plan;
- d) seek delegated authority from both councils to submit the Proposed Plan to Scottish Ministers for examination and approval if no substantive changes are proposed to the plan following representations; and
- e) refer this report to both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council for ratification.

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