

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Strategic Options Meeting with Communities and Stakeholders - Aboyne

Meeting Note

21 May 2007, 7.00pm

Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A meeting was held on 21 May 2007 to discuss and record opinions on the different strategies that could be followed in the next structure plan – the strategic options. In addition, issues regarding the scale and timing of future development were raised and discussed.

2. The Audience

- 2.1 The following interests were represented at the meeting. A full list of attendees is provided at appendix 1.

- Ballater & Crathie Community Council / Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board
- Marr Area Partnership
- Cromar Community Council
- Mid Deeside Limited
- Mid Deeside Community Council
- Lumphanan Community Council
- Birse & Ballogie Community Council
- BBCC DWP Housing
- Nicol Chartered Forester
- Birse & Ballogie Community Council
- Ballogie Estate Enterprises
- The MacRobert Trust, Tarland

3. The Content

- 3.1 Mr Piers Blaxter, Team Leader of the Structure Plans Team for Aberdeenshire Council, introduced himself and the other planning officer in attendance. He welcomed the audience and noted that the meeting was one of a series of workshops being held across the region, designed to capture views on possible strategies for the next structure plan (the Strategic Options). It was explained that

views would be sought on the issues of where development should occur, when it should occur and how much development should be promoted.

- 3.2 Mr Blaxter explained that the views recorded from the meeting would be part of the evidence base of information that would be presented to elected members in September 2007, to help them decide on a preferred option for the strategy of the draft plan (the preferred strategic option). He stated that a meeting note for tonight's meeting would be available on the website (www.acssp.net) and would allow attendees to see how their views had been recorded. A report summarising the results of all of the meetings held on the Strategic Options will also be placed on this website; this report should be available by August 2007.
- 3.3 It was noted that a technical assessment of the various Strategic Options would also be undertaken as a separate process and that this would provide additional information for elected members to consider. Mr Blaxter suggested that the views of communities and stakeholders were needed to ensure that the draft plan would reflect something of the aspirations of groups and individuals from the region.

Background information on preparing the structure plan

- 3.4 Mr Blaxter provided some information on structure plans and their role in the planning system. He noted that structure plans form part of a Development Plan – something that, amongst other things, provides a set of rules to help make decisions on planning applications. He contrasted a structure plan with the other part of the Development Plan – a local plan – and noted that a structure plan is not as detailed in specifying the location of future development. A structure plan instead provides a long term, strategic vision for the development of land in an area. It was stated that the Councils' next structure plan is being prepared with the intention of providing a 25-year vision for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.
- 3.5 After outlining the role of a structure plan, Mr Blaxter noted that a new planning Act, which will introduce changes to the current planning system, had recently been passed. Mr Blaxter listed a number of reasons why the new legislations had been written – to speed up the structure and local plan preparation process; to minimise repetition between the two plans; and to increase the level of stakeholder and community consultation earlier in the plan making process.
- 3.6 Under the new Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006, structure plans will be replaced with a new style of plan – a strategic development plan. He noted that such a plan would concentrate on setting a vision, or “spatial strategy”, for the long term development of land across a City Region. As such, it is thought that the new documents will contain fewer detailed policies than is typically found in a structure plan.
- 3.7 It was stated that the regulations necessary for preparing a strategic development plan had not yet been drafted. As such, the two Councils are still preparing a structure plan, albeit one that will be in the style of the new documents; it is hoped that the end product can be converted into a strategic development plan.
- 3.8 Attendees were then reminded of the documents that had been published so far, in aid of producing the next structure plan (these are available from the website: www.acssp.net). Mr Blaxter also informed the attendees that the Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping report has recently been published. The document sets out how the council will measure environmental performance against the structure plan.

- 3.9 Mr Blaxter provided some information on the timetable for the production of the plan, taken from one of these documents – the Development Plan Scheme. He noted that the council is engaging the members of the community now, rather than at the draft plan stage, which had not been done before. Mr Blaxter also noted that the process of writing the draft plan would not begin until after elected members had decided upon a preferred strategic option. He further noted that this decision, in addition to being based on the views of stakeholders and on a technical assessment of the Options, would also be made in view of the draft vision for the plan.
- 3.10 Mr Blaxter then drew the audience’s attention to the draft vision, as stated in the Issues Report (one of the documents already published, as part of the plan-making process). He noted that the main elements of this vision provide a basis for evaluating the Strategic Options, in the first group exercise that the attendees were to take part in.
- 3.11 It was asked if the councils will be looking at broad developments, and not issues. Mr Blaxter said that the structure plan is a land use plan, which focuses on the bigger picture, and not specific developments.
- 3.12 It was noted by an attendee that although the “where, when and how much development” was being considered, but not ‘why’ development should be allocated. Mr Blaxter identified that this is a question of scale, which will be discussed later under “The scale of future development” topic. He clarified that the structure plan will consider land allocations for housing and employment.
- 3.13 Returning to the main issues affecting the northeast, Mr Blaxter brought to the groups’ attention three themes:
- critical mass, which can be broken down into two categories – social infrastructure (i.e. the number of people required to sustain a shop or an ice rink) and development infrastructure: the critical mass of the development itself (e.g. the amount of development necessary to pay for a new sewerage treatment works, which is necessary for the scheme);
 - balancing needs of the City/urban and rural settlement; and
 - climate change, as it is likely to become a reality during the lifetime of the plan (e.g. to mitigate against the effects of it, and to actively plan for climate change, such as flooding).

The scale of future development

- 3.11 The issue of the scale of future development was then introduced and a discussion on the “working hypotheses” of the planning team ensued. Three “working hypotheses” were suggested:
- the idea that the next structure plan should only seek to accommodate 75% of development within the strategy, with the rest accommodated as local need in a local development plan;
 - the idea that two thirds of development should be suggested for one theme of an Option (the “most” component) and one third in another (the “significant” component); and
 - the idea that there are three possible options for growth: slow growth, continuity or high growth.

- 3.12 Mr Blaxter asked a series of questions on the amount of new development currently taking place in the region, and if the balance of City and rural development is right. Details of the responses to these questions can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.13 The discussion progressed to focus on the first of the three hypotheses (the idea that 75% of development should be allocated by the strategic plan). The following bullet points summarise the issues discussed:
- The location of development is important, as not everyone can afford to commute to the City (e.g. rising in oil prices).
 - IT is likely to become more important and people will be commuting less. However, Mr Blaxter added that most businesses want to be in the city, as the labour, customers and suppliers are there (the critical mass is also there). As a result, there will always be a need for face-to-face businesses.
 - Energy security will be more important, resulting in more rural development. Mr Blaxter said that this is a valid view, and this view would result, in a need for a greater proportion of development to be in rural areas. However, he added, this would also depend on the spatial strategy adopted.
 - The need to maintain quality of life, and how this looked for improvements may be dependant on reaching the critical mass.
 - Need to be confident and courageous, but require the money to build the infrastructure.
 - Need to plan for an eco-catastrophe.
 - Increase in the delivery of services in rural communities, rather than larger services, and would favour a higher allocation in rural areas (and more rural control). However, Mr Blaxter highlighted that the trend of centralisation is down to economics and the low number of services in the public domain – only the council services and the health service. The council does have area offices in Aberdeenshire; there are few local offices in the City. The health service requires the critical mass for it to operate (as said by the Health Board at a stakeholder meeting) and students need to be educated centrally for ease of service.
 - Need to reduce commuting traffic, and have higher allocations. Mr Blaxter suggested that development in the City would reduce travelling distances.
 - Require development for tourism, to sustain growth and to provide opportunity. Mr Blaxter suggested that this would make support for less than 25% of development to meet local needs.
- 3.14 Mr Blaxter concluded from the group that they are generally happy with a “wash of development”, but would want more than 25% of new development to meet local needs.
- 3.15 The discussion then moved on to discuss the third of the three hypotheses (the possible options for growth). Appendix 2 summarises the questions and issues raised.
- 3.16 Mr Blaxter concluded that the group favoured low/medium growth, with one person supporting high growth.

The Group Exercise

- 3.17 Mr Blaxter then introduced the group exercises. He explained that the purpose of the first exercise was to gauge a group's opinions on their preferred and least preferred Strategic Option. A subsequent exercise – involving a map and some tokens – was to allow groups to demonstrate where they thought development should be concentrated.
- 3.18 Results from the exercises are to be found at appendix 3. The group identified options 4 (supported by two groups) and 7 (supported by one group) as their preferred option, with options 5 (least preferred by two groups) and 7 as their least favoured option.
- 3.19 The results to the second exercise, involving the distribution of development can be found at appendix 3. All the groups who took part in the exercise distributed their tokens on settlements that corresponded to their preferred strategic option. In all cases, Aberdeen City received most tokens, although this varied from 3 to 14 tokens.

Timing of future development

- 3.20 After the group exercise, a brief discussion was held on the timing (or phasing) of development to be promoted by the plan. Mr Blaxter explained that the issue of phasing was being considered simply – in terms of whether the plan should be front-loaded (with land being released at the start of the 25 year plan period), back-loaded (with land released at the end of the plan period), or whether development should occur at a sustained rate.
- 3.21 A scale of between 1-10¹ was introduced to gauge opinion on when land should be released for development.
- 3.22 An attendee asked if there was not an issue phasing the whole region the same, and suggested that phasing should be focused. For example, front-loading the City, as there is a shortage of dwellings. Mr Blaxter complimented the attendees' suggestion, suggesting that there will be a variation in the area.
- 3.23 Attendees also highlighted the need for affordable homes and that brownfield land should be redeveloped. Mr Blaxter reported that there is limited brownfield land available, and only through releasing more land for housing, would builders start to build different types of housing.
- 3.24 Mr Blaxter concluded from the discussion that attendees favoured a sustained rate of release with some front-loading (4 or 5).
- 3.25 Mr Blaxter brought the meeting to a close and outlined the next steps for producing the structure plan. He reminded attendees that the results from the group exercises would be used to inform a recommendation to elected members, on a preferred strategic option. He further stated that a note of the meeting would be placed on the website: www.acssp.net and that the attendees are unlikely to hear anything on the structure plan until the New Year, when the draft is published for comment. Attendees were thanked for their contribution and the meeting was brought to a close.

¹ 1 indicates a desire for the plan to undertake extreme front loading and release a large proportion of land for development at the beginning of the plan period while 10 indicates a desire for the plan to release a large proportion of land at the end of the plan period.

Appendix 1

The planning team in attendance during the meeting were as follows:

Piers Blaxter, Team Leader (Structure Plans Team), Aberdeenshire Council

Alison Hogge, Policy Planner (Structure Plans Team), Aberdeenshire Council

The following individuals also attended the meeting:

Name:	Interest/organisation:
Robin Bilyth	Ballater & Crathie Community Council / Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board
Judith Aylest	Marr Area Partnership
Donald Gordon	Cromar Community Council
Sarah Wright	Birse & Ballogie Community Council
Moira Milne	Mid Deeside Limited
Shenna Duffy	Mid Deeside Community Council
Pete Goddard	Lumphanan Community Council
Sabrina Shand	Ballogie
Andrew Walker	Birse & Ballogie Community Council
Andrew Nicol	BBCC DWP Housing
John Belchamber	Nicol Chartered Forester
Jane Angus	Birse & Ballogie Community Council
Malcolm Neil	Ballogie Estate Enterprises
Simon Power	The MacRobert Trust, Tarland

Appendix 2

The scale of future development

Question from the audience	Response
What forecasts were used for the scenarios?	2004 Forecasts have initially been used. Oil is forecasted to decline, and household numbers are predicted to increase. Forecasts on economic and demographic forecasts were also used.
Can growth be controlled?	Only with difficulty. However, there is an issue if development is built in places the councils do not want developed.
Is there the capacity figure to assess them [the growth scenarios]?	The technical assessments will look at this.
If we are [currently] on the medium growth scenario, and it has not met demand, is there a need for more development?	Yes, but development could be phased, and if the oil industry declines, fewer houses would be required. However, to promote the area, there would need to be an increase in development.
Climate change appears to have been considered, but energy appears not have not been.	Energy is considered under climate change.
Should be focusing on energy efficiency, and should be looking at the low growth scenario.	A Global Footprint exercise will be carried out to assess all 8 strategic options. Furthermore, the existing housing stock is inefficient, and could be rebuilt to be energy efficient. Future housing will require to be more sustainable.
What are the likely impacts to watercourses?	There is a need to investigate water abstraction on the River Don with Scottish Water.
Why has the council not looked at water impoundment?	This will be discussed with Scottish Water, and water abstraction will be a feature in any plan.
Scottish Water say that water will come from the Cairngorms National Park, and that will affect water abstraction.	The River Dee is a Special Area of Conservation, which could constrain development along the River Dee corridor.

Appendix 3

Over the following pages, information is provided on the responses set down by groups of attendees, when undertaking the exercise to evaluate their preferred Option.

The Options referred to in the following tables are as follows:

Option 1: Most of the development in Aberdeen City, significant development in Edge of City Settlements.

Option 2: Most of the development in Aberdeen City, significant development in the existing transport corridor.

Option 3: Most of the development in Aberdeen City, significant development in a new transport corridor.

Option 4: Most of the development in Aberdeen City, significant development in growth poles across Aberdeenshire.

Option 5: Most of the growth in Aberdeen City and significant growth in new settlements.

Option 6: Most of the development in the existing transport corridor, significant development in Aberdeen City.

Option 7: Most of the development in the existing transport corridor, significant development in growth poles across Aberdeenshire.

Option 8: Most of the development in the existing transport corridor, significant development in a new transport corridor.

A table to show the good points recorded in the evaluation of preferred Strategic Options

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Good Points of the Option					
	It reduces resource use and impacts on climate through...	It would be good for environmental quality because...	It would be good for the economy because...	It would be fair because...	It would increase choice and quality of life because...	Other remarks
Option 1	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploiting existing infrastructure and brownfield sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces car journeys • Reduces impact on heritage sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport links improved • Improved transport to Inverness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people would have ready access to most services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defines areas of growth, so people have choice over where to live. • Quality of life will be improved through environmental benefits 	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 3	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible reduction in travel • Location of services and energy and road development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It reduces transportation of supplies with most services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be more local employment • It would encourage local enterprise and would benefit land based and other industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would spread development and economic opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only if it included affordable housing • Reduce need to go into Aberdeen 	<i>No comment recorded</i>

Option 5	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 6	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of existing infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development would be more evenly spread and there would be no one centre of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would provide local employment opportunities 	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 8	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>

A table to show the bad points recorded in the evaluation of preferred Strategic Options

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Bad Points of the Option					
	It does not reduce resource use and impacts on climate because...	It would have impacts on environmental quality because...	It would not be good for the economy because...	It would not be fair because...	It would not increase choice and quality of life...	Other remarks
Option 1	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 2	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 3	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 4	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	• It does not address needs of western Aberdeenshire
Option 5	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 6	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 7	• Of the wide dispersal of the development	• Of greater transport structure requirements	• Of inappropriate development	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 8	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>

A table to show the good points recorded in the evaluation of least favoured Strategic Options

Option Chosen as least favoured Strategic Option	Good Points of the Option					
	It reduces resource use and impacts on climate through...	It would be good for environmental quality because...	It would be good for the economy because...	It would be fair because...	It would increase choice and quality of life because...	Other remarks
Option 1	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 2	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 3	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 4	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 5	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be more economical to build 	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 6	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 7	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 8	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>

A table to show the bad points recorded in the evaluation of the least preferred Strategic Options

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Bad Points of the Option					
	It does not reduce resource use and impacts on climate because...	It would have impacts on environmental quality because...	It would not be good for the economy because...	It would not be fair because...	It would not increase choice and quality of life...	Other remarks
Option 1	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 2	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 3	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 4	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>
Option 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not reduce resource use and impact on climate • It concentrates transport on two main routes and would increase congestion • It would require improvements of the transportation network in the City to avoid congestion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of density of development • It would require a huge take of land in two locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resources would be concentrated and rural areas would suffer • It focuses development in two locations and does not show development possibilities more widely across the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not show development opportunities across the whole area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the lack of recreational space. • There may be a risk of creating a new Westhill's 	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 6	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>

Option 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would increase car transport from growth poles into Aberdeen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would increase car transport from growth poles into Aberdeen • There is an increased need to use Greenfield sites • There is a need to upgrade and/or build new roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread resources too thinly • Would lead to poorer services and increased costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of life of small rural communities would be diminished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Aberdeen City would lose significant development opportunities and this would impact negatively on the whole region. 	<i>No comment recorded</i>
Option 8	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>	<i>Not Evaluated</i>

A table to show the results for the distribution of development within a preferred Strategic Option

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Distribution of tokens (settlement: number of tokens)	Additional Remarks
Option 2	Huntly: 1 Inch: 1 Inverurie: 1 Aberdeen City: 14 Portlethen: 1 Stonehaven: 1 Laurencekirk: 1	This group chose to distribute their tokens on settlements sited along the existing transport corridors, with more than 2/3 of the allocation in Aberdeen City.
Options 7 and 8	Peterhead: 1 Boddam: 1 Hatton: 1 Huntly: 1 Turriff: 1 Ellon: 1 Potterton: 1 Inch: 1 Inverurie: 1 Alford: 1 Aberdeen: 3 Portlethen: 1 Aboyne: 1 Banchory: 1 Stonehaven: 1 Laurencekirk: 1	This group chose to distribute most of their tokens in the main settlements of Aberdeenshire, with less a quarter in Aberdeen. One quarter of the allocation of tokens was proposed along the 'new transport corridor'.
Option 4	Huntly: 2 Banff: 1 Fraserburgh: 2 Peterhead: 1 Tuffiff: 1	This group chose to distribute most of their tokens around Aberdeen and in the main Aberdeenshire settlements. Three of these settlements received 2 tokens each.

	Ellon: 1 Alford: 1 Inverurie: 1 Aberdeen City: 7 Nr Aboyne: 1 Stonehaven: 2	
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