

## **Structure Plan Community meeting - Central**

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006**

**Venue: Committee Room 2, The Town House, Broad Street, Aberdeen  
18:00 – 20:00**

### **Present:**

Richard Bush (Aberdeen City Council)  
Inspector Kenneth Buchan (Grampian Police)  
Christine Burgess (Old Aberdeen Community Council)  
Colin Cranfield (Cults, Bielside and Milltimber Community Council)  
Jim Fletcher (Ruthriestone Residents Group)  
David Fryer (Cults, Bielside and Milltimber Community Council)  
Charles Hamilton (George Street Community Council)  
Isobel Hunter (Bridge of Don Community Council)  
Willie Jaffray (Rosemount and Mile End Community Council)  
David Jennings (Aberdeen City Council)  
Keith Paterson (Neighbourhood Community Planning Officer, Aberdeen City Council)  
Gary Purves (Aberdeen City Council)

### **1. Introduction**

Mr Bush introduced himself and the other representatives from Aberdeen City Council (Planning and Infrastructure). He welcomed everyone and explained the purpose and agenda for the meeting.

#### *The current structure plan (North East Scotland Together)*

Mr Bush explained that the current structure plan was approved in 2001. Since then changes have occurred in the North East, for example, the price of oil has risen and there is increased confidence in the economy of the area. The current structure plan is robust but does not look, in any detail, beyond 2011. In this context, both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council are currently considering drawing up a new structure plan for the North East, although no formal decision has yet been taken.

#### *The Planning (etc) Scotland Bill*

Mr Bush explained that a new planning regime is being brought in by the Planning Bill. This will place an emphasis on sustainable development. The Bill will also require plans to be short and concise. Public involvement will have a much higher priority, and communities will be encouraged to get involved earlier in the planning process i.e. before a planning application is lodged. Mr Bush highlighted that, as the Bill has not been passed by Parliament, a new structure plan would be commenced under the current legislation but it will adopt the spirit and culture of the proposed new system. Mr Bush informed the audience that one main difference is that a new structure plan would not be too detailed. Rather it would be a spatial plan that will consider cross authority issues, for example, housing land supply, industrial land or waste. For example, how much land will be available, where

development will go (in the north east), and when it will be released. Issues that would impact on the city alone would be a matter for a Local Development Plan.

### *Timetable*

Although no formal decision has yet been taken by either Aberdeen City Council or Aberdeenshire Council, both have a statutory duty to prepare development plans on a rolling basis. Mr Bush stated that, should a decision be taken to prepare a new structure plan, the plan would not be formally commenced until after the completion of the Public Inquiry into the Finalised Aberdeen Local Plan, which is scheduled to finish on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2006. Both Councils are engaging with stakeholders (at meetings such as this) regarding issues and options that a new structure plan could address. It is envisaged that a notice of intent and an issues report will be prepared by January 2007. A further round of consultation exercises would take place in spring 2007 where the pros and cons of the strategic options would be evaluated. A decision would be taken sometime after May 2007 (local government elections) on the form of a draft plan (consultation in early 2008) and a final plan by summer 2008. The plan would then have to be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for their approval.

## **2. Discussion**

Mr Jennings facilitated the group discussion that sought to capture the issues that a future strategic land use plan for the north east should address. These are detailed in appendix 1. These issues will be fed into the main issues report that will help influence the plan and will be available for the public to view in the New Year.

The following indicates an indication of the flow of the discussion:

### Housing

1. The amount of affordable housing in the city should be increased to encourage people to live in Aberdeen.
2. Encourage people not to move from the city to the 'Shire.

### Economic development

1. Encourage businesses to locate in Aberdeen and increase employment opportunities for residents.
2. Economic sustainability. Diversify the economy; don't rely solely on the oil and gas sector.
3. Encourage retail and industrial use in the city and away from peripheral locations.
4. Attract new industries to the north east. Encourage sustainable tourism.

### Transport

1. The existing transport corridor isn't coping. We could either improve the transport infrastructure or fundamentally change the way in which we travel.

2. Tackle congestion in the city centre. Improve public transport e.g. bus, rail etc.
3. Reduce the dependency on the private car.

#### Regeneration

1. Regenerate urban areas of the city. Improve standards of living.
2. Provide mixed tenure housing e.g. private and rented.
3. Integrate affordable housing into areas, encourage social cohesion.

#### Environment

1. Make Aberdeen an attractive place to live and work.
2. Improve the image of the city; ensure a regional distinctiveness.
3. Consider alternative energy sources such as wind, tidal, solar etc.
4. Provide adequate infrastructure to deal with waste.
5. Ensure that new development is energy efficient and environmentally sustainable.

#### Open Space

1. Ensure new development isn't of too high a density. Prevent town cramming.
2. Increase the amount of public open space in the city.

### **3. Strategic Options**

Mr Bush continued the meeting with a discussion of "strategic options" and sought views on the range of strategic options that were being proposed. Mr Bush explained that these "strategic options" were being derived from three planning dimensions: time (when in the plan period development should take place); scale (how much development should be promoted); and location (where development should be located). Mr Bush explained that the purpose of the meeting was not to evaluate the strategic options, as this will be done in a further round of consultation in due course. Rather, he was seeking views on whether the right set of options were being proposed and whether there were any other options that should be considered.

### **4. Other options?**

Three points were raised in response to the strategic options which had been presented:

1. Could we have the growth poles idea but apply it to the city? For example, could we have a variation of strategic option 4? This would encourage development in the regeneration areas.
2. What are the growth poles? They cannot simply be areas of development, they need to be self-sustaining entities, for example, not just areas of housing development but also shops, employment, amenities etc.
3. Will developers not simply want to build along the WPR? This could, in effect, form a circular transport corridor. Mr Jennings acknowledged that the role of the WPR as a transport corridor is likely to be raised as an issue.

## **5. AOCB**

It was also pointed out that some of the topics discussed were quite complex and some of technical terms were confusing to members of the general public. It was suggested that a briefing pack, setting out background to the meeting, would have been helpful in advance. Mr Bush acknowledged this and advised that the Council would look to prepare pamphlets, in plain English, which could be distributed to members of the public outlining the role of a structure plan in terms of the overall planning system.

A request was made for the slides from the presentation to be made available so that the individuals present could report the information back to the organisation(s) they represent. This request was respectfully declined because no formal decision to prepare a structure plan has yet been taken and the discussions to produce the strategic options are being held at an officer level only at the present moment. It is considered inappropriate for the information to be given an official status, as may be the case if they were given to the general public, and this may also lead to the information being misinterpreted. Mr Bush advised that all the information on the possible strategic options would be made available when they are made available for public consultation in the New Year, should the two Councils agree to commence a new structure plan.

## Appendix 1 - List of Issues Captured

Increase the amount of affordable housing. Encourage people to live in the city as opposed to Aberdeenshire	Tackle congestion in the city centre, improve alternative means of transport e.g. rail, bus, trams etc. Improve accessibility.
Maintain the viability of social assets e.g. schools. Tackle population drift.	Increase employment in Aberdeen. Diversification of employment.
Prevent town cramming, provide more open space. Reduce the density of development in urban areas.	Ensuring adequate transport infrastructure. Development that is sustainable in transport terms.
Provide adequate facilities/amenities for leisure and recreation, encourage families into the city.	Encourage retail and industrial use in the city. Deal with the conflict between locating in the city centre and locating in peripheral areas.
Increase the amount of green space in the city. Improve the links between public open space.	Improve public transport. Reduce the need to travel by car.
Create a new area of open space in the city. Environmental sustainability.	Develop brownfield land. Regenerate urban areas in the city, improve deprived areas, provide sustainable communities, mixed tenure areas e.g. mix between private and rented housing. Positively encourage development in regeneration areas, town centres.
Have a visionary, innovative, attractive environment. Improve the image of Aberdeen.	Provide facilities in an off-centre location, not in a remote location.
Is the beach area becoming over-developed? Provide better seaside recreation.	Maintain the character/image of the city. Ensure a regional distinctiveness e.g. granite buildings, architectural image. Prevent a “clone-city”.
Respecting city heritage. New development should fit in with the surrounding area, contribute towards the “sense of place”	Economic sustainability. Have a long-term view, realise the reduction in value of areas unless new developments make a contribution to the city.
Provision for alternative energy, new development should look at alternative energy sources e.g. wind, solar, tidal etc.	Waste management. Provide adequate infrastructure for waste.
Attract new industries, sustain tourism.	Energy conservation e.g. in new development
Integrate affordable housing, encourage social cohesion, mixed development.	Address the city-shire imbalance.