

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

Strategic Options Meeting with Development Interests Meeting Note

19 April 2007, 2.00pm

The Thistle Hotel, Altens

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 A meeting was held on 16 April 2007 to discuss and record opinions on the different strategies that could be followed in the next structure plan – the strategic options. Issues regarding the scale, timing and location 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 and invitees are provided in appendix 1.
 - Osprey Homes
 - Stewart Milne Homes
 - Cala Homes (East) Ltd
 - Bancon Development Ltd
 - Barratt (North Scotland)
 - Homes for Scotland
 - Gladedale (North East Scotland) Ltd
 - Churchill Homes (Aberdeen) Ltd
 - Stewart Milne Homes
 - Chap Homes
 - Barrat (North Scotland)
 - Kirkwood Homes
3. The Content
 - 3.1 Mr Piers Blaxter, Team Leader of the Structure Plans Team for Aberdeenshire Council, introduced himself and other planning officers in attendance. He welcomed the audience and noted that the meeting was to be run as a workshop, with a focus on capturing the views of attendees on possible strategies for the next structure plan.

Background information on the preparation of the structure plan

- 3.2 Mr Blaxter provided some background information relevant to the process of producing the next structure plan for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. He noted that the new Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006 required structure plans to be replaced with a new style of plan – known as a strategic development plan – but that the regulations

necessary for producing such a plan had not yet been enacted. He stated that the next structure plan for the region was thus being created in order to satisfy the current regulations (for producing structure plans) as well as the likely future regulations for producing strategic development plans.

- 3.3 Mr Blaxter stated that future strategic development plans will be shorter than current structure plans and will focus on the strategy for future development, rather than on providing detailed policies for development management. Given this, Mr Blaxter advised that the next structure plan would have to be much shorter than the current plan and without much of the detailed policy content. He noted that such policies would be left to local development plans – the new version of local plans, also introduced by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006.
- 3.4 Attendees were then reminded of the documents that had so far been published, in aid of producing the next structure plan (these are available from the website: www.acssp.net). Mr Blaxter then provided some information on the timetable for the production of the plan, taken from one of these documents – the Development Plan Scheme. He stated that the two Councils' were currently engaging with stakeholders and communities on both the issues that the next plan should tackle and the Strategic Options. He noted that consultation on the issues involved a public consultation to respond to an Issues Report, but that initial engagement on Strategic Options was being conducted in a more focused manner, through meetings such as this one. He noted that around 30 meeting such as this would be undertaken, for the purposes of engagement.
- 3.5 It was stated that the views captured on all of the subjects discussed today and at other meetings (i.e. the strategy and the issues of scale and timing of development) would be part of the material presented to elected members, to help them decide on a preferred option for the strategy of the draft plan. It was noted that a technical assessment of the various Strategic Options would be undertaken separately and that this would provide the other information members would consider. This technical assessment would focus on what could be done over the time period covered by the next plan (i.e. over the next 25 years).
- 3.6 Mr Blaxter then gave an overview of the simultaneous consultation on the issues that the next plan should cover. Particular attention was drawn to the draft vision that had been included in the Issues Report. He noted that the main elements of this vision provided the basis for evaluating the Strategic Options in one of the later exercises that the attendees were to take part in. Attention was also drawn to the issues surrounding the critical mass of development required to sustain services, issues of balance, and the need to address climate change issues.
- 3.7 A question arose in relation to when the local plans are likely to be reviewed. Mr Blaxter advised that once a strategic option has been agreed then a review will be undertaken at some point after this.

- 3.8 It was highlighted that the requirement to provide an increased land supply from 5 years to 7 years could prove problematic. Mr Blaxter clarified that the land supply will be reviewed in light of the land audits and the preferred strategic option.

The scale of future development

- 3.7 The issue of the scale of future development was then introduced and a discussion on the “working hypotheses” proposed by 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.
- 3.8 There was uncertainty over the appropriate percentage of development that should be allocated within the strategy and the percentage of development that should be allocated for local need. It was highlighted that the appropriate balance will depend on the amount of land that is allocated for development and the strategic option that is chosen.
- 3.9 In response to a question on the land allocation for local need, Mr Blaxter explained that there will not be specific land allocations in the Structure plan as they will be allocated through the local plan in order to ensure that the plan is responsive and there is an element of flexibility
- 3.10 It was highlighted that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council should follow the example of Inverness and Dundee and provide sufficient land for development in order to encourage a growth in population.

More details of the discussion may be found at appendix 2.

Group exercises

- 3.11 The group exercises were introduced and attendees were reminded about how the Strategic Options (as proposed for their consideration) had been produced. The exercises sought to gauge each group’s opinions on one or more of these Options and to allow the groups to demonstrate where they thought development should be concentrated, within their preferred Option.
- 3.12 Results from the exercises may be found at appendix 3. The following preferred Strategic Options were evaluated:
- one of the groups evaluated option 7 although they indicated that their preferred option would be a combination of options 2, 6 and 7.

- options 1,2, 5 and a hybrid of option 2 and 4 were also evaluated as the groups preferred strategic options .
- options 3 and 5 were identified by two groups as their least favoured option.

Timing of future development

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 A scale of between 1-10¹ was introduced to gauge opinion on when land should be released for development. There was a consensus that between 2 and 3 was the most appropriate timing for future development in order that development can happen as and when it is required.

Next Steps

- 3.13 Mr Blaxter concluded the meeting by outlining the next steps for producing the next structure plan and thanking attendees for their contribution. He explained that there will be no more public consultations until the draft plan has been produced. 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 also stated that a note of the meeting would be placed on the website: www.acssp.net within three days and that, eventually, a report summarising all of the meetings on the Strategic Options would also be placed on this website.

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

Full list of attendees

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

Piers Blaxter, Team Leader (Structure Plans Team), Aberdeenshire Council
Craig Michie, Policy Planner (Structure Plans Team), Aberdeenshire Council
David Jennings Policy Planner (Structure Plan Team) Aberdeen City Council

The following individuals also attended the meeting:

John Evans Freke	Muir group
Jim Benton	Osprey Homes
John Low	Stewart Milne Homes
David Hodgson	Cala Homes (East) Ltd
Bill Beattie	Bancon Development Ltd
Bob Beattie	Bancon Development Ltd
Alan Bochel	Barratt (North Scotland)
David Horsfall	Homes for Scotland
Chris Ross	Gladedale (North East Scotland) Ltd
Gordon Pirie	Churchill Homes (Aberdeen) Ltd
Marianne McGowan	Stewart Milne Homes
Michael Anderson	Chap Homes
Bill Cowe	Barrat (North Scotland)
Niall Macleod	Kirkwood Homes

Appendix 2

The scale of future development

Low Growth Current Forecasts	Continuity Current Completions	High Growth Completions + 20%
<i>Too Low</i>	<i>Too Low</i>	<p><i>A consensus amongst all attendees that a high growth completions + 20% was not high enough.</i></p> <p><i>Any affordable housing land requirements should be over and above this figure.</i></p> <p><i>Even if we plan for an economic boom and it does not occur, the land can always be developed when the economy picks up in the next period.</i></p> <p><i>We need a high growth scenario to drive the economy forward.</i></p> <p><i>It is essential to overcome the short-fall of both housing and employment land in order to address issues such as affordability and choice.</i></p> <p><i>The growth should be on a scale of at least 3 times higher than that proposed in the most component of the strategic option (33,000 new homes and 295 hectares of employment land).</i></p>

Appendix 3

Results from the exercises

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. In addition, information on the group exercise which involved distributing development by placing tokens within the pattern indicated by their preferred strategic option is provided.

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.

Option 7	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>We are increasing development</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i> <i>???</i>	<i>No development in the City or north of the City.</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>

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
A hybrid of option 4 and 2	<i>The infrastructure and existing transport links and hubs are in place</i>	<i>It reduces the need to travel as employment land is located in the growth poles</i>	<i>It focuses growth where there is demand.</i>	<i>There would be development in Aberdeenshire and in the City in locations where people want to be.</i>	<i>There is the option of city living and country living.</i>	<i>No comments recorded.</i>

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
A hybrid of option 4 and 2	<i>There is travel involved.</i>	<i>Additional improved infrastructure is required.</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>It is fair</i>	<i>It does increase choice and quality of life.</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>

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

With regard to the favoured distribution of development within a preferred Strategic Option:

Tables have been provided to indicate where groups placed their tokens, within the pattern indicated by their preferred strategic option. All of the groups amalgamated various different options in order to arrive at their preferred strategic option. There was insufficient time at the end of the exercise for a spokesperson from each group to explain the reasoning behind their distribution of tokens.

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Distribution of tokens (settlement: number of tokens)
A hybrid of option 2 and 4.	Laurencekirk: 1 Stonehaven: 2 Newtonhill: 1 Portlethen: 1 Banchory 1 Inverurie: 2 Ellon: 1 Balmedie: 1 Dyce: 1 Lower Deeside: 2 Westhill: 1 Aberdeen City: 5 Balmedie: 1

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Distribution of tokens (settlement: number of tokens)
A variation of Option 2 .	Inverurie: 1 Kintore: 1 Dyce/ Bucksburn/ Ellon and Bridge of Don: 6 Aberdeen City: 9 Westhill: 1 Cove /Portlethen/ Stonehaven: 3 New Settlement: 1

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Distribution of tokens (settlement: number of tokens)
A combination of option 1 and 5	Portlethen: 1 Within the city as edge of city extensions: 7 Within Aberdeen City: 4 Inverurie: 1 Ellon: 1 Banchory: 1 New settlements South: 2 Stonehaven: 1 New Settlements West: 2

Option Chosen as Preferred Strategic Option	Distribution of tokens (settlement: number of tokens)
A combination of option 2,6 and 7	Aberdeen City: 5 New Settlement: 1 Stonehaven: 1 Stonehaven/ Portlethen Corridor: 4 Westhill: 2 Banchory: 1 Inverurie: 2 Ellon: 1 Bellhelvie/ Potterton: 3

