

# Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

## Strategic Options Meeting

### Meeting Note

**16 April 2007, 7.00pm**

**The White Horse, Balmedie**

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
    - Newmachar Community Council
    - Belhelvie Community Council
    - Aberdeenshire Council
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](http://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 meetings 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 provide 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.

### **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 a consensus amongst attendees that 25% of all development for rural and local need was too low. It was highlighted that there are greater opportunities to work from home now due to the internet, meaning that more people could potentially live and work in rural areas.
- 3.9 The view was expressed that we can be certain that over the next 10 years the oil price will double, and that this will have positive and negative effects for the region, but we need to take radical measures to address this. It was highlighted that we need to include contingency measures when considering the growth scenarios to accommodate these potentially radical changes.
- 3.10 It was also suggested that more employment land should be allocated in Aberdeenshire and that if we are to rebalance and reduce commuting, then we have to rebalance the amount of land allocated for employment and residential purposes throughout Aberdeenshire. This could be structured by ensuring that developers cannot build more houses until employment land is developed.

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. Mr Blaxter confirmed to attendees that none of the strategic options specifically promote the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route as a development corridor.
- 3.12 Results from the exercises may be found at appendix 3. The following bullet points summarise findings from the exercise to evaluate a preferred Strategic Option:
- One of the groups chose option 4 while the other group created their own strategic option.
- 3.13 Neither group had time to undertake the additional exercise of distributing development within the pattern indicated by their preferred strategic 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 variety of views were expressed and more details of the discussion may be found at appendix 2.

### **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 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](http://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.

## **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

The following individuals also attended the meeting:

David Watson	Belhelvie Community Council
Allan Hendry	Belhelvie Community Council
Karen Secombes	Belhelvie Community Council
Shuna Jenkins	Belhelvie Community Council
Debra Store	Councillor
Paul Johnson	Councillor
Jim Benton	Osprey Homes
Professor Ron Bridges	Newmachar Community Council

## Appendix 2

### The scale of future development

<b>Low Growth</b> Current Forecasts	<b>Continuity</b> Current Completions	<b>High Growth</b> Completions + 20%
	<i>There will be no boom after the peak of the oil industry and we should therefore be planning for sustainability.</i>	<i>If we go for the high growth scenario, then we could have developments that we cannot sell.</i>  <i>Where will the employment come from for the people living in these new houses?</i>

A table to show the comments recorded during the discussion on the timing of future development:

<b>Front Loading</b>	<b>Sustained development</b>	<b>Back Loading</b>
<p><i>The plan should only be front loaded where there is a specific objective to boost the economy.</i></p>		<p><i>The plan could be backloaded but with certain triggers to release employment land.</i></p> <p><i>If the plan is backloaded then Scottish Water cannot plan for infrastructure provision.</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 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
Low growth scenario for option 6, some growth in Aberdeen City and development along a new transport corridor (A 90 North).	<i>using existing infrastructure</i>	<i>focuses development on narrow corridor and provide more opportunities to use sustainable forms of transport.</i>	<i>allow growth- linked to transport infrastructure in planned locations.</i>	<i>known in advance.</i>	<i>No comments recorded</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
Low growth scenario for option 6, some growth in Aberdeen City and development along a new transport corridor along the A90 North. (Medium/ High growth scenario)	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>relies on road network</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>the concentration of development would be on the corridor</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>	<i>No comments recorded</i>

#### Additional comments

- The concept behind this strategy, which is almost a variation of option 8, is the need to focus development along a new transport corridor in order to ensure it is sustainable and that there is the essential critical mass in order to make it work.
- The members of the group were sceptical over whether the city will be the focus of growth. Why is the city perceived as an unattractive place to live- how can this be changed?

The group assumed that there will be a high 'background radiation' in other settlements which will be driven by the development of employment land.



