

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 24 August 2018

**Report Title: Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic
Development Plan**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to present a Proposed Strategic Development Plan (“Proposed Plan”) to the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) for agreement.

2. Background

- 2.1 The review of the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2014 is a significant piece of work that has involved, and will impact upon, Council services, public bodies, the business and development industry, and communities throughout Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The Strategic Development Plan provides certainty for the public, development industry and businesses as to the where and when development will take place.

Why is the Strategic Development Plan Being Reviewed?

- 2.2 The extant Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014, and in 2017 both Councils adopted Local Development Plans (LDPs) which are consistent with the SDP.
- 2.3 Strategic Development Planning Authorities are required by Section 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 to prepare and review Strategic Development Plans, and submit these to Scottish Ministers within four years of the approval of the existing Plan (Section 10(8)).
- 2.4 Due to the timing of the Supreme Court case for the Strategic Transport Fund, as well as work associated with the Scottish Government’s review of the planning system, this requirement to submit within four years of the previous approval date proved unachievable. In this context, Officers wrote to Scottish Ministers asking that they use their Default Powers (under Section 23B of the 1997 Act) to instruct the Strategic Development Planning Authority to continue to prepare the next Strategic Development Plan.
- 2.5 On 3 August 2018 a letter was received from Aileen Campbell MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, responding to this request, and formally directing the SDPA to prepare a Proposed Strategic Development Plan, and submit this Plan to Scottish Ministers for approval. It is therefore particularly important that work on the SDP review continues at a prompt pace.

Progress To Date

- 2.6 Under Section 20B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, the Strategic Development Planning Authority is required to prepare a Development Plan Scheme at least annually. The Development Plan Scheme sets out the programme for preparing and reviewing the Strategic Development Plan and what is likely to be involved at each stage. The current Development Plan Scheme for the SDP was approved on 21 March 2018 and is available to view [here](#).
- 2.7 The first formal stage in the review of the Strategic Development Plan was the publication of a Main Issues Report. Consultation on this document took place from 12 March to 21 May 2018. A total of 78 representations were received in response to the Main Issues Report, and a Report summarising these representations was presented to the SDPA Meeting on 27 June 2018. This Report is available to view [here](#) as part of the Committee Papers for the June SDPA meeting.
- 2.8 A Senior Officer Workshop and Member Briefing Sessions were held on the Main Issues Report responses, and discussions with representatives of the house building industry and the key agencies / infrastructure providers have also been ongoing over the summer period to inform preparation of a Proposed Plan. An early draft of the Proposed Plan was shared with the key agencies for comment and their feedback has been useful in informing the final version attached.

3. Discussion

Proposed Strategic Development Plan

- 3.1 A copy of the Proposed Strategic Development Plan is attached at **Appendix 1**. The Proposed Plan represents a review of the SDP 2014 and continues to present an ambitious strategy for growth for the City Region. The Proposed Plan builds on the monitoring of the previous SDP, engagement with stakeholders and key agencies, responses to the Main Issues Report and the various studies and assessments prepared in support of the Proposed Plan.
- 3.2 Much of the content of the Proposed Plan remains the same as that in the extant Plan, however a number of important updates have been made to both content and presentation.
- 3.3 In terms of presentation, the structure and flow of the Proposed Plan has changed from the extant Plan in order to try and enhance readability and understanding. In particular, the Glossary has been reviewed to ensure that definitions of technical terms and references are up to date. All supporting diagrams have also been redesigned to ensure they are accessible and easy to understand.
- 3.4 The content of the Proposed Plan has been updated to take into account changes in national, regional and local legislation, policy and guidance since the preparation of the last SDP. It also includes reference to the City Region

Deal, Regional Economic Strategy and the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan and Delivery Programme, all of which have been agreed since the preparation of the last SDP.

- 3.5 The topics which received most comment at Main Issues Report stage were Spatial Strategy and Land for Housing and Employment. The approach that the Proposed Plan takes to these topics is discussed in detail below.

Spatial Strategy

- 3.6 The Spatial Strategy has been in place since the Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan 2009, and is key to shaping where development happens. The Spatial Strategy was carried forward into the Strategic Development Plan 2014 and is continued into the Proposed Plan. This Strategy has been responsible for significant positive change across the City Region in the last decade, and the Proposed Plan will continue to support its ongoing delivery. Continuing with the existing Spatial Strategy will provide certainty for the public, development industry and businesses as to where and when development will take place.
- 3.7 The possibility of changes to the Spatial Strategy to take account of requests for “Western Expansion” was investigated by SDPA Officers following a number of responses to the MIR consultation. Suggestions for Western Expansion ranged from the inclusion of Westhill in the Aberdeen City Strategic Growth Area, to the designation of a completely new Strategic Growth Area to the west of the City.
- 3.8 SDPA Officers have spent considerable time evaluating this option, and have consulted with Senior Officers and Elected Members from both Councils on the possibility of amendments to the Spatial Strategy and the implications of Western Expansion. The conclusion of this exercise is that Western Expansion is still considered to be premature and is not supported at this time, however the Proposed Plan commits to undertaking a range of studies over the next five years in order to explore whether any amendments to the Spatial Strategy will be necessary within the next Strategic Development Plan. This will include a City Region Deal appraisal of the effect of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.

Land For Housing and Employment

- 3.9 The other major issue for the next Strategic Development Plan (as identified through the MIR consultation) is the amount of land required for housing and employment. Although the specific location of housing and employment land is dealt with at the Local Development Plan level, the SDP sets the overall requirements for the City Region.
- 3.10 Turning first to land for employment, the City Region continues to have a generous supply of employment land. The 2015/2016 Employment Land Audit identifies over 860 hectares of employment land, almost 60% of which (510 hectares) will be available within the next five years, and 131 hectares is available immediately. This is on top of the 52 hectares which was under

construction at the start of the Audit. As well as this, the supply of existing vacant land and buildings is currently at a very high level.

- 3.11 Therefore, sufficient allocations for employment land from the Structure Plan 2009, and the Strategic Development Plan 2014, have been “rolled forward” into the Proposed Plan and, as a result, no additional employment allocations are proposed at this time. However, in order to plan for growth, the Proposed Plan instructs LDPs to ensure that all Strategic Reserve Land for Employment (which is proposed for the period 2033 to 2040) is allocated. In exceptional circumstances this land could be released for development in advance of 2033 if required. This will make sure that the supply of employment land can be flexible to future changing economic circumstances.
- 3.12 In terms of land for housing, Housing Land Audit data indicates that there is sufficient housing land already available to meet the Housing Land Requirement for both the Aberdeen and Rural Housing Market Areas for the period 2020 to 2032 at current rates of completion. This is a result of the considerable allocations made in both the Structure Plan 2009 and the Strategic Development Plan 2014.
- 3.13 It is possible that no further housing land allocations could be made for the next anticipated LDPs. However, in order to address current issues surrounding deliverability, and to ensure that the Proposed Plan can be as forward looking as possible, new allocations are proposed over the period 2020 to 2032, with an additional Strategic Reserve of housing land identified for the period 2033 to 2040.
- 3.14 The total number of new allocations proposed is 27,195 homes across the City Region, and this will be split between the two Housing Market Areas at a divide of 80% / 20% in favour of the Aberdeen Housing Market Area. This is a change to the extant Plan, which currently divides housing numbers on a 75% / 25% basis. The rationale behind altering this position is discussed in detail in **Appendix 2** of this Report.
- 3.15 Monitoring of population and household growth, as well as the rate of new house building, will be undertaken on an annual basis through the Housing Land Audit.

Supporting Documents

- 3.16 There are a number of supporting documents available alongside the Proposed Plan:
 - Housing Methodology Paper
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment
 - Habitats Regulation Assessment
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
 - Cumulative Transport Appraisal
 - Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment
- 3.17 These documents are all available to view on the SDPA’s website [here](#).

- 3.18 Officers have also prepared a Proposed Action Programme (also available via the above link) which sets out what actions are needed for the targets and objectives in the Plan to be delivered, who is responsible for delivering them, and the expected timescale for doing this. Following the final approval of the next SDP by Scottish Ministers, the Action Programme will be monitored, updated regularly and published every two years.
- 3.19 In addition to these documents, a Housing Need and Demand Assessment, the Westhill Public Transport and Access Study and a Monitoring Statement, were published alongside the Main Issues Report and are still of relevance. These documents remain available on the SDPA's website [here](#).

Next Steps

- 3.20 Should the SDPA agree to approve the Proposed Plan and supporting documents (as listed above), then it is recommended that Members of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils are asked to 'ratify' this decision at the Full Council meetings of 10 September and 27 September 2018, respectively.
- 3.21 Should Members agree to ratify, the Proposed Plan will constitute the "settled view" of both Councils on the intended form and content of the final approved Strategic Development Plan for the area. The Proposed Plan, alongside the existing Plan, will also become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.22 Within a Strategic Development Plan area, Section 16(6) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires Planning Authorities to ensure that Local Development Plans are consistent with the SDP. The Proposed Plan is an important stage in the review process for the Local Development Plans, as LDP Main Issues Reports are published on the basis of the Proposed Plan (para 18, Circular 6/2013). Publication of the Proposed Plan will allow both Councils to progress with their Main Issues Reports in line with their statutory requirement to replace the LDP at least every 5 years.

Consultation

- 3.23 The Proposed Plan is a critical stage in the SDP review process. Whereas the Main Issues Report contained Officers' views as to future direction of the next SDP, the Proposed Plan becomes the settled view of the SDPA, and both Councils, as to the form and content of the next Strategic Development Plan for the City Region. As such, the focus for consultation will be on informing people of the Proposed Plan's content, and advising of the process for making representations and the next steps in the process.
- 3.24 There are certain legal requirements for publicising the Proposed Plan and these are summarised in the table below, along with our proposed intentions:

What We Have To Do:	Our Proposed Intentions:
A period of at least six weeks should be given for representations to be made.	It is proposed that a 10 week period for public consultation be agreed given the level of information to review. This would also be consistent with the 10 week period for the submission of representations at Main Issues Report Stage.
Publication of a Notice in one or more local newspapers circulating in the area covered by the SDPA.	A Public Notice will be placed in the Aberdeen Press and Journal Newspaper. A Press Release will also be issued to help reach other interested parties.
Publication of a Notice and a copy of the Proposed Plan on the internet.	A Public Notice will be placed on the SDPA website, alongside a copy of the Proposed Plan and all supporting documents.
Copies of the Proposed Plan to be sent to the key agencies, adjoining Planning Authorities and SDPAs, Scottish Ministers and all Community Councils within the area covered by the SDPA.	Copies of the Proposed Plan and supporting documents (either hard copy or CD) will be sent to all those noted, as well as a number of other local interest groups and stakeholders.
Make a copy of the Proposed Plan available to inspect at an office of each of the constituent Planning Authorities and in all public libraries in the area covered by the SDPA.	A copy of the Proposed Plan and supporting documents (either hard copy or CD) will be made available in all Council planning offices across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council areas. The documents (either hard copy or CD) will also be available in all public libraries.
People who commented on the Main Issues Report are to be notified of where and when they can inspect the Proposed Plan.	SDPA Officers will contact all respondents to the Main Issues Report who provided contact details in order to advise of the publication of the Proposed Plan, and to provide details of where a copy of the Proposed Plan and supporting documents can be viewed.

- 3.25 In addition to the above, Officers will inform those on the SDPA mailing list of the publication of the Proposed Plan and supporting documents, and provide information on how to submit representations. An Advice Note will also be prepared to guide those who wish to submit representations through the process. The consultation period will also be advertised via social media, including through the two Local Development Plan accounts.
- 3.26 Although distribution of the Proposed Plan via the SDPA website will be the preferred means, hard copies of the Proposed Plan will also be printed and distributed. CDs containing all the supporting documents will also be produced. It is proposed that these hard copies and CDs are made available free of charge. Before being published for consultation, the Proposed Plan will be graphically designed. A foreword from the Chair of the SDPA will also be added.
- 3.27 Once the Proposed Plan has been published, the SDPA must consider all the representations it receives, and a summary of the responses will be reported to a future SDPA meeting.
- 3.28 Minor modifications arising from the representations can be made to the Proposed Plan if it is deemed appropriate. However, major modifications at this point would require the whole Proposed Plan to be amended and re-published for consultation, causing a significant delay. The Development Planning Circular 6/2013 states that such modifications should not be undertaken as a matter of course. Examples of a 'major' modification would be an amendment to the Spatial Strategy or a change to the Housing Supply Target. If no significant changes are proposed, a summary of unresolved issues must be prepared before submission of the Proposed Plan to Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Ministers will appoint a person (a Reporter) to hold an Examination in Public on the Proposed Plan if there are unresolved representations.
- 3.29 The Reporter will decide what form the Examination will take. Most issues are expected to be handled without the need for further information, but where additional evidence is requested, this will normally be in written form. Where a face-to-face meeting is required, this will normally take the form of a discussion with questions led by the Reporter (called a Hearing). Only in exceptional circumstances will a formal Inquiry be necessary to test information through cross-examination.
- 3.30 After completing the Examination, the Reporter will present their conclusions and recommendations to Scottish Ministers. Ministers can then choose to approve the Plan, with or without modifications.
- 3.31 It remains the intention to submit the Proposed Plan to Scottish Ministers for Examination in Public in March 2019. In order to ensure that the Proposed Plan can be submitted to the Scottish Ministers by the target date it is recommended that delegated authority is sought from the two Councils for SDPA Officers to submit on their behalf as long as no substantive changes are proposed to the Proposed Plan following the period of public consultation.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Strategic Development Planning Authority:

- a) Agree the Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (**Appendix 1**) and the associated supporting documents (listed in paras 3.16 – 3.18) as the SDPA's settled view of the recommended final content of the next Strategic Development Plan for the City Region;
- b) Refer this Report to Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council for ratification;
- c) Seek delegated authority from Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council for the SDPA Team Leader to submit the Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan to Scottish Ministers for Examination In Public and approval if no substantive changes are proposed to the Proposed Plan following the period of public consultation;
- d) Agree the arrangements set out in paragraphs 3.23 – 3.26 for public consultation on the Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan and supporting documents; and,
- e) Delegate to the SDPA Team Leader the task of preparing the Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan for public consultation (including graphic design and printing).

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