

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 APRIL 2009

SUBJECT: FINALISED ABERDEEN CITY AND SHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

<p>Abstract: This report comments on and provides the suggested basis for the Council's response to the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan.</p>
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1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

1. note the publication of the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan;
2. agree that no formal objection be made by Angus Council to the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have been working together on a replacement Structure Plan for their area and have recently published and submitted (27 February 2009) the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan to Scottish Ministers. There is an eight week period for objections, extending to 24 April 2009. The boundary excludes that part of the area contained within the Cairngorms National Park. When approved by Scottish Ministers this new Structure Plan will eventually replace the existing Structure Plan (NEST – 'North East Scotland Together') which was approved by Scottish Ministers in 2001.

2.2 The replacement Structure Plan is an important document that sets out a clear direction for the future development of the North East of Scotland. The Structure Plan looks towards the year 2030 and broadly establishes where housing and employment land should be located during that period and outlines how planning can contribute to making sustainable mixed communities, growing the economy and protecting the environment. The Structure Plan sets out guidance on the following matters:-

- the spatial strategy;
- economic growth;
- sustainable development and climate change;
- population growth;
- quality of the environment;
- sustainable mixed communities; and
- accessibility.

2.3 Members will recall that the Infrastructure Services Committee at their meeting of 26 August 2008 agreed report 799/08 as the basis of the Council's response to consultation draft Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan. Although there were no adverse comments submitted clarification was sought in relation to the improvement of the A90 (T) and A937 road junction (to a grade separated junction) and the level of employment land that might be expected in the Laurencekirk area. The response

from the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority to the points raised is set out in appendix 1. No changes were made to the Finalised Structure Plan document as a direct result of the Council response.

- 2.4 The Committee also requested a follow up report providing a commentary on possible implications for services and infrastructure in North Angus arising from the development strategy proposed for the Laurencekirk area of south Aberdeenshire. This was presented to Infrastructure Services Committee at their meeting of 25 November 2008 (Report 1146/08 refers). That report concluded that there will be a range of impacts in north Angus stemming from the implementation of the Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan strategy most of which are expected to be positive and/or neutral as far as Angus is concerned. The one area where there is likely to be most direct impact is housing, where the dynamics of the current Brechin and Montrose housing market area may be affected to a greater or lesser extent. The Committee agreed to note the report.
- 2.5 This report provides a synopsis of the new Structure Plan and any implications for Angus Council as an adjoining planning authority. The report also provides the basis for a formal response on the document.
- 2.6 A copy of the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan has been placed in the Members' Lounge.

3 SUMMARY OF FINALISED ABERDEEN CITY AND SHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN

- 3.1 Following consideration of numerous consultation responses the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan document has been redrafted and refined. In the main the strategy has been broadly retained as previously published, with many of the adjustments being made to update information, clarify, strengthen and improve the content and text.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Structure Plan is to set a clear direction for the future development of the North East which the public and private sectors can work towards to deliver the following vision.

Vision:

'By 2030, Aberdeen City and Shire will be an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European City region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business.

We will be recognised for:-

- **our enterprise and inventiveness, particularly in the knowledge economy and in high value markets;**
- **the unique qualities of our environment; and**
- **our high quality of life.**

We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable, including dealing with climate change and creating a more inclusive society.'

- 3.3 A central part of the plan is the aims and spatial strategy for the Structure Plan area. A copy of the contents page (setting out the structure of the document) and main

aims of the Finalised Structure Plan is included as Appendix 2 of this report. Overall the Structure Plan makes provision for 72,000 new houses in the period 2007 – 2030, with around half that number being accommodated in the City through both brownfield regeneration and greenfield developments. The balance are expected to be accommodated in the following growth areas – the Huntly area, Inverurie area, Peterhead area, Ellon area, Stonehaven area and Laurencekirk area - and in the rural areas identified as local growth and diversification areas. Provision of employment land and other key infrastructure is also identified.

- 3.4 The Structure Plan spatial strategy seeks to promote development in places which meet the needs of business and, at the same time are sustainable and take on the challenges of climate change. The strategy also recognises the need to maintain and improve the area's communities and services that they depend on... The spatial strategy comprises three principal components:-
- strategic growth areas;
 - local growth and diversification; and
 - regeneration priority areas.
- 3.5 This is supported by targets for the provision of employment growth, sustainable development and climate change, population growth, quality of the environment, sustainable mixed communities and accessibility.
- 3.6 The Plan identifies three strategic growth areas which will be the main focus of development in the area up to 2030. These are centred on Aberdeen and the main public transport routes. Together they are expected to account for around 75% to 80% of the growth during that period. The growth areas are:-
- Aberdeen City – where around half of all new development in the city region will take place;
 - Huntly to Laurencekirk – significant development will take place in the road (A90 and A96 routes) and rail corridor; and
 - Aberdeen to Peterhead – the focus will be on developing and diversifying the economy, delivering vital infrastructure projects in the first half of the plan period to help create growth.
- 3.7 Outwith the three corridors, the majority of rural Aberdeenshire is identified as '*Local growth and diversification areas*' where there is a need for diversification and growth in the economy in this area to meet local needs, with tourist related development having a role to play. Encouraging employment growth in these areas is a central part of making them more sustainable and reducing the need to commute, with its economic, social and environmental consequences.
- 3.8 The third strand is '*regeneration priority areas*', principally the coastal areas of Banff and Buchan, parts of Aberdeen City and south of Stonehaven where '*these areas will not meet their full potential unless we take positive steps*'. Improving the economy, environmental quality, accessibility, employment opportunities and competitiveness of business should play a particular role in these areas.
- 3.9 The finalised Structure Plan is about establishing a vision and broad objectives. It will be for local development plans, action plans and supplementary planning guidance to flesh out the detail to enable implementation of the strategy.

- 3.10 In terms of the south Aberdeenshire area (the area abutting north east Angus), the Laurencekirk area (South of Drumlithie – Laurencekirk) is identified as a growth area with a housing allowance of 1000 houses over the 2007 – 2030 period. It will be for the new Local Development Plans to identify development sites. The housing allowance is phased as follows:-

Housing allowances 2007 - 16	500
Housing allowances 2017 - 23	400
Housing allowances 2024 - 30	100

- 3.11 In terms of economic development and particularly in relation to business land the Huntly – Laurencekirk corridor is identified as requiring some 105ha in the period 2007 – 2023, with a strategic reserve of 70ha in the period 2024 – 2030. However unlike the housing figures the location of the business land is not disaggregated below development corridor level.
- 3.12 The coastal villages south of Stonehaven (eg. Johnshaven, Gourdon, Inverbervie) are identified as '*regeneration priority areas*'. Key elements of the strategy response, set out in paragraph 3.8 above, seek to support ongoing community efforts and involve forming partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Further development of tourism in some coastal areas is also identified. The emphasis is on bringing about positive change that provide lasting benefits and improve their vitality and viability.
- 3.13 The remainder of south Aberdeenshire area is identified as a *local growth and diversification area* where levels of growth in individual settlements should relate to local needs. The scale of growth will vary from place to place with the aim to provide a mix of housing opportunities, affordable housing, and mixed use developments which respect the character of the landscape and local identity.
- 3.14 The finalised Structure Plan is supported by a number of associated documents, including:-
- Report of Survey (and Addendum);
 - Publicity and Consultation Statement;
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environment Report; (and Addendum)
 - Appropriate Assessment;
 - Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment; and
 - Background Paper.
- 3.15 Following close of the objection period, Scottish Ministers will consider any objections and representations and determine whether an Examination in Public (EiP) is needed. That would require a public inquiry style hearing in front of a Reporter who would hear evidence from the Strategic Development Planning Authority and objectors and then report back to Scottish Ministers identifying any modifications. If no EiP is needed, Ministers will consult on any proposed modifications, consider any objections to the proposed modifications, and then approve the Plan with or without changes. The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Authority hope that approval will take place before the end of 2009.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The finalised Structure Plan is a policy response to the strategic issues, challenges and opportunities facing the north east of Scotland. The Plan sets out the vision and ambitions for the north east with the structure plan designed to be flexible and able to respond to changing circumstances whilst at the same time setting a clear strategy for the next twenty years. The document lays out objectives, targets, delivery mechanisms and monitoring arrangements to ensure that the policies and proposals are achieved.
- 4.2 In terms of vision and aspirations for the future the document places north east Scotland in context and highlights the quality and potential of the area for development. The three strand spatial strategy is clear, recognising the opportunities, constraints, differences and needs of the three zones and how the Structure Plan can provide the broad framework for investment and development through Local Development Plans.
- 4.3 Given that the broad strategy is similar to that previously set out in the consultation draft plan and as reported to Infrastructure Services Committee (August 2008), and given the response to the earlier points raised, the Head of Planning and Transport does not consider that formal objection should be made to the contents of Finalised Structure Plan.
- 4.4 From the Angus perspective there is little of concern in relation to the broad strategy of the Plan in that it seeks to provide a balance between development and protection of the environmental qualities of the south Aberdeenshire area. New housing in the Laurencekirk area (South of Drumlithie – Laurencekirk) on the scale suggested would appear to be in keeping with the principle of making development sustainable.
- 4.5 In terms of north east Angus, the adopted Angus Local Plan Review (February 2009) identifies the scale and location of housing and employment land in Brechin and Montrose in the context of the approved Dundee & Angus Structure Plan for the period to 2011 and also looks tentatively towards 2016. It will be for a future TAYplan (Strategic Development Plan) to similarly establish a vision, development strategy and policies for the City Region area and for a subsequent Angus Local Development Plan to identify land allocations. This will take cognisance of the strategy of the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and ensure that north east Angus continues to offer opportunity for inward investment and local needs.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations contained in this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This report responds to a consultation document of an external agency and consequently does not directly contribute to the local outcome(s) contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law & Administration have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The publication of the Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan is an important step in the maintenance of an up to date development plan base for the north east of Scotland. The vision, strategy and targets established by the plan seek to maintain and expand the economic well being of Aberdeen and its hinterland and address a number of key issues and challenges affecting the area.
- 10.2 The finalised Structure Plan is to be generally welcomed. It will form an important consideration in the preparation of TAYplan - the new Strategic Development Plan for the Dundee City Region which will commence this year.

ERIC S LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

- Draft Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, July 2008;
- Finalised Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, February 2009;
- Publicity and Consultation Statement, February 2009;
- Publicity and Consultation Statement – Appendix 7, February 2009
- Dundee & Angus Structure Plan 2002;
- Angus Local Plan Review 2009;
- Report 799/08 – Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan to Infrastructure Services Committee, 26 August 2008;
- Report 1146/08 – Aberdeen City and Shire Draft Structure Plan - Follow up report – implications for Infrastructure and Services in North Angus, Infrastructure Services Committee, 25 November 2008.

APPENDIX 1

**RESPONSE BY STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY TO POINTS
RAISED BY ANGUS COUNCIL REPORT 799/08**

Rep Number	
464 1	Subject Schedule1
Summary	
Response is in the form of a committee report and highlights concern regarding:	
Para 4.10 – the level of housing development in Laurencekirk, particularly in the initial period of the plan and the potential for further safety issues with the A90 /A937 junction south of Laurencekirk. Additional clarification is needed on the amount of business land to be released in the settlement.	
Agreed response:	Acceptance: Partially accept
The A90 south (RHMA) corridor is proposed to accommodate 500 units in the first period and 500 in the two later periods. The settlements outwith the SGA will also be considered for development in line with the spatial strategy. However the allocation of specific sites will be determined within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan process. The junction of the A90 / A937 is recognised as a significant safety issue and a determination will have to be made if / how this specific intervention can be progressed.	
The amount of business land allocated to this area will also be determined through the LDP based on distribution of the overall figure on p. 10 of the plan.	

Rep Number	
464 2	Subject Objective (sustainable mixed communities)
Summary	
Response is in the form of a committee report and highlights concern regarding:	
Para 4.11 – the significant movement of households from Aberdeenshire into NE Angus in recent years. However the provision of new housing in south Aberdeenshire will provide a sustainable alternative for house purchasers.	
Agreed response:	Acceptance: Accepted
1000 new units are proposed in the SGA up to the Angus boundary and further development will take place in the communities designated as LGD's. This level of growth and the requisite level of affordable housing will provide additional choice.	

APPENDIX 2

**FINALISED ABERDEEN CITY AND ABERDEENSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN
(EXCLUDING THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK)****Contents**

Introduction

The Vision for the Plan

The Spatial Strategy

- Strategic Growth Areas
- Local Growth and Diversification Areas
- Regeneration Priority Areas

Objectives

- Economic Growth
- Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- Population Growth
- Quality of the Environment
- Sustainable Mixed Communities
- Accessibility

Putting this Plan into Practice

Monitoring and Reviewing this Plan

Schedule 1: Housing Allowances

Glossary

Key Diagram

Structure Plan Vision

'By 2030, Aberdeen City and Shire will be an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European City region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business.

We will be recognised for:-

- **our enterprise and inventiveness, particularly in the knowledge economy and in high value markets;**
- **the unique qualities of our environment; and**
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We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable, including dealing with climate change and creating a more inclusive society.'

Structure Plan Aims

The main aims of the plan are to:

- Provide a strong framework for investment decisions which help to grow and diversify the regional economy, supported by promoting the need to use resources more efficiently and effectively; and
- Take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change.

To support these main aims, the plan also aims to:

- Make sure the area has enough people, homes and jobs to support the level of services and facilities needed to maintain and improve the quality of life;
- Protect and improve our valued assets and resources, including the built and natural environment and our cultural heritage;
- Help create sustainable mixed communities, and associated infrastructure, which meet the highest standards of urban and rural design and cater for the needs of the whole population; and
- Make the most efficient use of the transport network, reducing the need for people to travel and making sure that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive choices.

Policy

In assessing development proposals, we will balance the importance given to each aim in coming to a decision, taking account the spatial strategy, objectives and targets of the plan.