

**ABERDEEN
CITY AND
SHIRE**

*Strategic Development
Planning Authority*

Planning Performance Report | 2014-15

July 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aberdeen City and Shire is a growing and economically dynamic city region with high quality environmental assets and exceptional quality of life. The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA), in partnership with others, has a key role in shaping the future development of the area.

1.2 Aberdeen City and Shire is one of four city-regions in Scotland and is made up of the areas of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. However, the area covered by the strategic development plan (SDP) excludes that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 1).

1.3 This is the sixth annual report of the SDPA since its formation in 2008. This report covers the year to 31 March 2015 and incorporates the authority's 'Planning Performance Report'. The SDPA's audited accounts for 2014/15 will be published separately.

1.4 This year has been an important one in the life of the SDPA, with the approval of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (SDP) just three days before the start of the reporting period. The publication of an Action Programme, Monitoring Statement and Draft Supplementary Guidance were key highlights of the year.

1.5 This report provides the opportunity to both review the achievements of the past year and look forward to the year ahead. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the SDPA, while section 3 provides a description of the area. Section 4 gives an overview of the activity of the SDPA over the last year. Section 5 covers the National Headline Indicators, while section 6 presents information to demonstrate the performance of the SDPA against a defined set of themes. Section 7 looks forward to the year ahead and identifies the service improvement commitments identified for the year ahead while the final section of the report provides references for supporting evidence. Appendices are provided as appropriate to present more detailed information.

1.6 All 32 local planning authorities, 4 strategic development planning authorities and 2 national park authorities in Scotland are preparing performance reports in a common format. Due to the particular function of the SDPAs, their reports are more limited in scope.

Figure 1: Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Area



2. Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority

2.1 The SDPA was established in 2008 through the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, meeting for the first time on 18 September 2008. The SDPA's initial task was to take a structure plan forward to approval by Scottish Ministers, taking over this role from the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee. Due to the need to replace the structure plan, work had started in 2007 and was completed before starting work on a strategic development plan.

2.2 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers without modification in August 2009 and was commended at that year's Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. A replacement strategic development plan has now also been prepared and was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. Well in advance of the five year deadline.

2.3 The SDPA is made up of 12 Councillors, six from Aberdeen City Council and six from Aberdeenshire Council (Appendix 1). It is currently chaired by Councillor Peter Argyle (Aberdeenshire Council) who took up the role in January 2015 after being the Vice Chair for the previous 2½ years. Councillor Ramsay Milne (Aberdeen City Council) became the Vice Chair after being the Chair for the previous 2½ years.

2.4 Formerly the Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee of Aberdeen City Council (replaced by the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee during the year) and the Infrastructure Services Committee of Aberdeenshire Council are the two committees with a development plan remit, while the six Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council also have a consultative role. However, the approval of the proposed Strategic Development Plan is done by Full Council in both councils.

2.5 The SDPA meet at least quarterly to conduct its business, although it can meet more often if necessitated by workload and project timescales. The work of the SDPA is supported by a small dedicated officer team.

2.6 More details are provided in section 4 in relation to the year just passed and section 7 in relation to the year to come.



Cllr P Argyle (Chair)



Cllr R Milne (Vice Chair)

3. The City Region

3.1 Aberdeen City and Shire is a large city region in the north east of Scotland, occupying around 6% of the landmass of Scotland and accounting for around 9% of the country's population and households. The City of Aberdeen is at the heart of the region, with Aberdeenshire forming a large and varied hinterland. The North Sea to the north and east provides an important setting to the region as well as critical resources for its continuing prosperity.

3.2 The area is characterised by high employment, low unemployment and a high growth rate over the last few years. The area's economy has seen the fastest rising productivity of any part of the UK since 2004 and the economy has grown by 20% since the start of the recession in 2007, four times faster than the rest of Scotland.

3.3 Aberdeen City and Shire is projected to be the fastest growing part of Scotland over the next 25 years. The SDP has a key role to play in promoting, facilitating and managing that growth. However, the fall in the price of oil during 2014/15 is likely to have significant impacts on the local economy over the next few years which are only starting to be felt.

3.4 Figure 2 below provides some summary statistics which paint a picture of the area.

Figure 2: City-Region Statistics

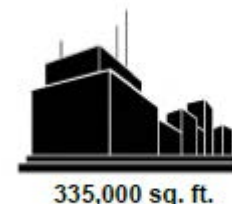
| | Aberdeen City & Shire | Scotland |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Geographical Area* | 5,050 sq km (6%) | 77,933 sq km |
| Households* (2014) | 212,200 (9%) | 2,419,921 |
| Population* (2014) | 486,350 (9%) | 5,347,600 |
| Jobs (2013) | 301,000 (12%) | 2,643,000 |
| Unemployment (March 2015) | 3,212 (1.0%) | 78,600 (2.3%) |
| New Housebuilding* (2014) | 1,996 (13%) | 15,541 |
| Vacant & Derelict Land (2014) | 117ha (1%) | 10,874ha |
| Carbon Emissions 2012 (per capita) | 7.1 tonnes CO ₂ (+ 6%) | 6.7 tonnes CO ₂ |
| Average House Price (2014/15) | £225,312 (+ 35%) | £167,360 |
| Gross Value Added (2013) | £36,242 per head (+ 65%) | £21,982 per head |



ABERDEEN CITY AND SHIRE ACCOUNTED FOR 9% OF THE SCOTTISH POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS IN 2014



VALUE OF THE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MARKET IN 2014/15 ... 16% OF THE SCOTTISH TOTAL.



SCOTLAND'S LARGEST EVER OFFICE LEASING DEAL BY AKER SOLUTIONS ASA AT ABERDEEN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PARK (NOVEMBER 2014)

65%

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY PER HEAD IS SECOND ONLY TO INNER LONDON IN THE UK...65% HIGHER THAN THE SCOTTISH AVERAGE.

4. SDPA activity during 2014/15

4.1 While the publication of the SDP and the associated post-approval procedures have been the main activity of the SDPA during the year, a range of other activities have also been carried out and these are summarised below.

Strategic Development Plan

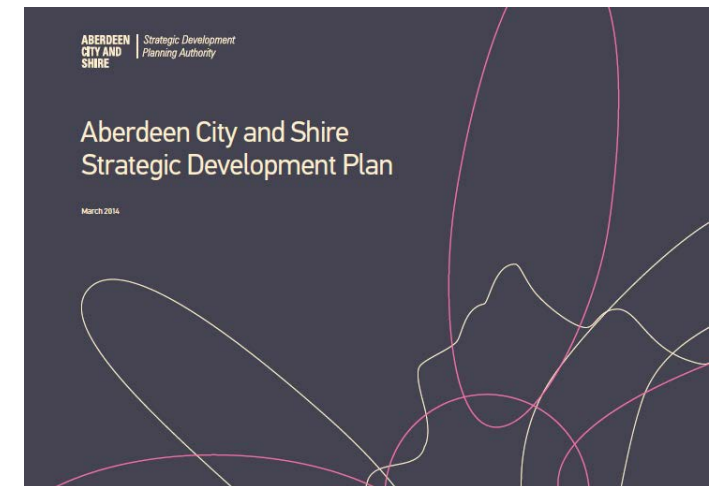
4.2 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. The SDP was the last of the four plans across Scotland to be approved due to the approval of the previous structure plan in August 2009. However, the SDP was approved less than 5 years after the previous plan, maintaining the fully up-to-date development plan coverage of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, an achievement the area is rightly proud of. This has enabled a plan-led approach to the development pressures being experienced at a time of significant economic growth, particularly the rapidly expanding commercial floor space requirements of the Oil and Gas industry.

4.3 During the early part of the year, attention was focused on the publication of the SDP and its associated Action Programme as well as the final version of all the associated assessments. This was done at the June 2014 meeting of the SDPA, with a monitoring report being agreed at the September 2014 meeting.

4.4 The SDP Manager was interviewed for Planning Resource magazine to coincide with the approval of the Strategic Development Plan which helped to promote the publication of the new plan.

4.5 Implementation has been a significant focus of activity during the year. This has included three awareness raising events with Development Management planners in the two councils as well as sessions with different parts of the private sector. It also included continued work with the private sector to demonstrate the robustness of the plan to those who were still seeking to challenge it through the two local development plans. This work has been fruitful and potentially significantly reduces land supply arguments at the forthcoming LDP examinations.

4.6 Considerable time has been spent during the year in taking forward statutory supplementary guidance on the strategic transport fund. This went through various stages during the year, including consultation between December 2014 and February 2015. The proposed supplementary guidance was submitted to the Scottish Ministers early in 2015/16.



4.7 Work on a strategic development framework for south Peterhead has not been taken forward for consultation during 2014/15 due to uncertainty about future development pressures. A decision will be made during 2015/16 as to whether this guidance is still required.

4.8 The SDP is a robust and visionary plan for the future development of the area, identifying the need for a significant increase in historic levels of housing and commercial development as well as the infrastructure required to deliver it. While the take-up of employment land over recent years has been significant, housebuilding is only now returning to pre-recession levels. However, Aberdeen City and Shire is the only city region to achieve this, with the rest of the country still lagging well below pre-recession averages.

4.9 Figure 3 demonstrates the potential impact of the plan on anticipated house completions over the next few years compared to the historical trend since 1981. These figures, agreed with the house building industry, predict levels of completions not seen for the last 30 years and remaining at this level for several years.

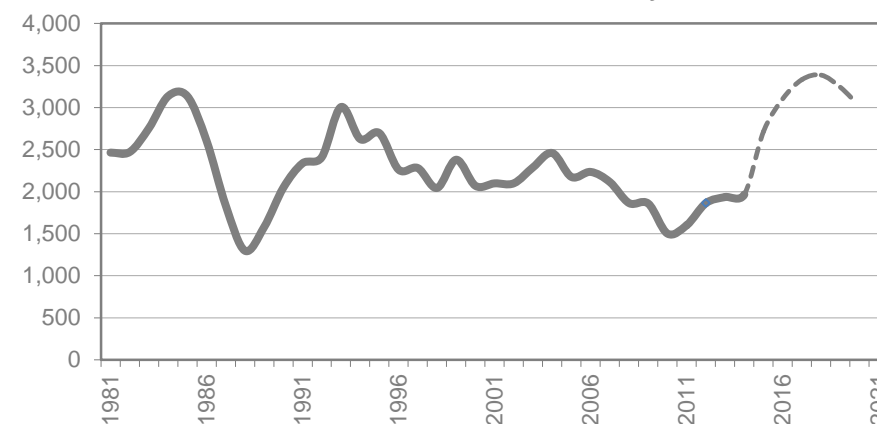
Conference presentations

4.10 The SDP Manager made a presentation to a Brodies seminar on housing land supply in March 2015. Presentations were also made to the Aberdeenshire Planning Focus Group on two occasions throughout the year, once on land supply issues and once on wider processes associated with the review of the plan in the years ahead and lessons learnt from the last plan-preparation process.

Consultation responses

4.11 The SDPA responded to one policy consultation during the year, the Main Issues Report for the TAYplan Strategic Development Plan. In addition to this, a wide range of responses were made to consultations on planning applications and masterplans over the reporting period. These ranged from electricity transmission infrastructure and residential development to the s75A application relating to the Strategic Transport Fund at Chapelton of Elsick. This last application necessitated a special meeting of the SDPA in February 2015 to enable Councillors to directly express an SDPA view prior to the application being determined. The SDPA also engaged with the two councils on the preparation of their LDPs.

Figure 3: Actual and anticipated house completions since 1981 across Aberdeen City and Shire



Review of Strategic Development Plans

4.12 The Scottish Government and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) have both conducted research on strategic planning during 2013/14 to which the SDPA contributed. Both of these were published during 2014/15, with the SDPA formally responding to the Scottish Government's Action Plan during the year and implementing a range of the actions identified. The RTPI research was reported in April 2015 and was noted by the SDPA.

Service Improvement Activities

4.13 As noted above, the later than expected approval of the strategic Development plan on 28 March 2014 meant that many of the service improvements identified in the previous PPF report were not able to be carried out to the originally envisaged timescales (by the end of 2013/14). However, most of these are now complete and the rest are at an advanced stage.

4.14 Figure 4 below outlined the progress made in more detail, with those not complete by the end of 2014/15 added to the commitments for 2015/16 identified in section 7 of this report.



Figure 4: Delivery of Service Improvement Commitments (2014/15)

| Service Improvement Commitments 2013/14 | Progress | Comment |
|--|----------|---|
| Develop and outcome focused monitoring report | ✓ | Report largely complete during 2013/14 but couldn't be published until the approval of the SDP. Published in September 2014. |
| Conduct a 'Lessons Learnt' exercise to establish an action plan for improvements for the next SDP | ➔ | While a number of the elements of the review were carried out, the review is yet to be completed and will be finished in 2015/16. |
| Carry out implementation sessions with the councils and development industry, using existing structures as appropriate | ✓ | Five sessions were held in early 2014/15, just after the approval of the SDP. Opportunities with the private sector are taken as they become available. |
| Establish topic groups with the two councils and Key Agencies to focus work on the next SDP | ✓ | A number of topic groups have been established during the year, with a number of others to be set up during 2015/16. |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Carry out a customer survey to establish the value of E-updates and how they could be improved | ➔ | Could not progress during year due to reduced staffing capacity. The survey will be carried out in 2015/16 before significant work on the next plan. |
| Prepare the project plan for the second SDP | ✓ | The Development Plan Scheme for 2015/16 was approved by the SDPA in April 2015, setting out the timescale for the preparation of the next SDP. |

Other activities

4.15 The SDPA continues to facilitate a range of proposals of strategic importance identified in the SDP, some of which have been designated as National Developments in National Planning Framework 3. These include the extension of Aberdeen Harbour, a carbon capture proposal at Peterhead, a potential electricity interconnector to Norway (NorthConnect), as well as various transport and electricity transmission projects.

4.16 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014) was recognised as good practice in 'Opening up Infrastructure Planning', a report published by the Green Alliance towards the end of the year.

4.17 The four SDP Managers met several times during the year, with work focussing on monitoring, housing need and demand assessments and the Scottish Government's review. This included a joint meeting with the Scottish Government on housing and marine planning issues. This work has fed into wider discussions and joint work with the Scottish Government which is likely to inform future policy guidance.

4.18 The SDPA were represented on the Heads of Planning Scotland Development Plan Subcommittee during the year and led work focused on addressing weaknesses in the reporting of development plans and land supply in the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) as well as addressing wider issues of housing land supply across the country. This has facilitated greater consistency between councils through revised guidance for PPFs as well as jointly addressing the issue of housing land supply with the Scottish Government and Homes for Scotland. The SDPA take it in turns with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to be represented on the group for a two-year term.



5. National Headline Indicators

5.1 This section reports on the Key Outcome measures identified within the National Headline Indicators which are relevant to the work of the SDPA.

Figure 5: National Headline Indicators

| Key Outcome | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014/15 | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Development Planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months). Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N) Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y/N) Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N) | 3 yrs (at 31 March 2013) | 0 yrs (at 31 March 2014) | 1 yr 0 mths (at 31 March 2015) | <p>The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. This was well in advance of the 5th anniversary of the previous structure plan on 19 August 2014.</p> <p>The current development plan scheme anticipates that the current Strategic Development Plan will be replaced by its 5th anniversary of 28 March 2019.</p> <p>The expected date of submission of the next Proposed Strategic Development Plan to Scottish Ministers remains March 2018.</p> <p>There were no engagement / consultation commitments given in the previous development plan scheme for 2014/15 except in relation to supplementary guidance and these were met.</p> |

| Key Outcome | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014/15 | Comment |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established housing land supply (units) | AHMA = 26,418 RHMA = 9,118 SDP = 35,536 | AHMA = 36,114 RHMA = 13,695 SDP = 49,809 | AHMA= 34,731 RHMA= 13,569 SDP= 48,300 | Both housing market areas continue to evidence a healthy land supply, exceeding 5 years in both cases. A considerable quantity of land is programmed beyond year 5 (2020 onwards) which will supplement the supply in years to come. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year Effective housing land supply (units) | AHMA = 11,013 RHMA = 3,754 SDP = 14,767 | AHMA = 11,664 RHMA = 3,786 SDP = 15,450 | AHMA= 12,091 RHMA= 3,686 SDP= 15,777 | The 2015 Audit is the first to make use of the 'requirement' from the new Strategic Development Plan. Previously it was based on the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year Housing Supply Target (units) | AHMA = 9,673 RHMA = 3,026 SDP = 12,699 | AHMA = 9,459 RHMA = 2,869 SDP = 12,328 | AHMA= 7,827 RHMA= 3,336 SDP= 11,163 | One site accounted for almost half of the housing approvals during the year – 4,045 units at Grandhome, with a further site for 3,000 units receiving consent in early 2015/16 which will be reflected in the 2015/16 figures. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year Effective housing land supply (years, to one decimal place) | AHMA= 5.7yrs RHMA= 6.2yrs SDP= 5.8yrs | AHMA= 6.2yrs RHMA= 6.6yrs SDP= 6.3yrs | AHMA= 7.7yrs RHMA= 5.5yrs SDP= 7.1yrs | Housing Land Audits are carried out on the basis of calendar years, with a base date of 1 January. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> housing approvals | AHMA= 2,861 RHMA= 744 SDP= 3,605 | AHMA= 8,226 RHMA= 907 SDP= 9,133 | SDP= 8,459 | AHMA = Aberdeen Housing Market Area (whole of Aberdeen City and part of Aberdeenshire) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing completions in last 5 years (units) | AHMA= 5,569 RHMA= 3,115 SDP= 8,684 | AHMA= 5,926 RHMA= 2,831 SDP= 8,757 | AHMA= 6,300 RHMA= 2,566 SDP= 8,866 | RHMA = Rural Housing Market Area (the rest of Aberdeenshire but excluding the CNPA) |
| | | | | SDP = Strategic Development Plan (AHMA + RHMA) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketable employment land supply (Ha) | SDP= 522ha | SDP= 541ha | SDP= 500Ha | Employment Land Audit Base Date = 1 April 2015 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment land take-up (Ha) | SDP= 19ha | SDP= 18ha | SDP= 32Ha | A further 44Ha of employment land was under construction at the base date of the Audit. |

6. Defining and measuring a high quality planning service

6.1 A high-quality planning service is vital to Aberdeen City and Shire to ensure development is supported in the most sustainable locations and in a sustainable way. This section of the report focuses on a number of themes which characterise such a service and the contribution the SDPA has made to each.

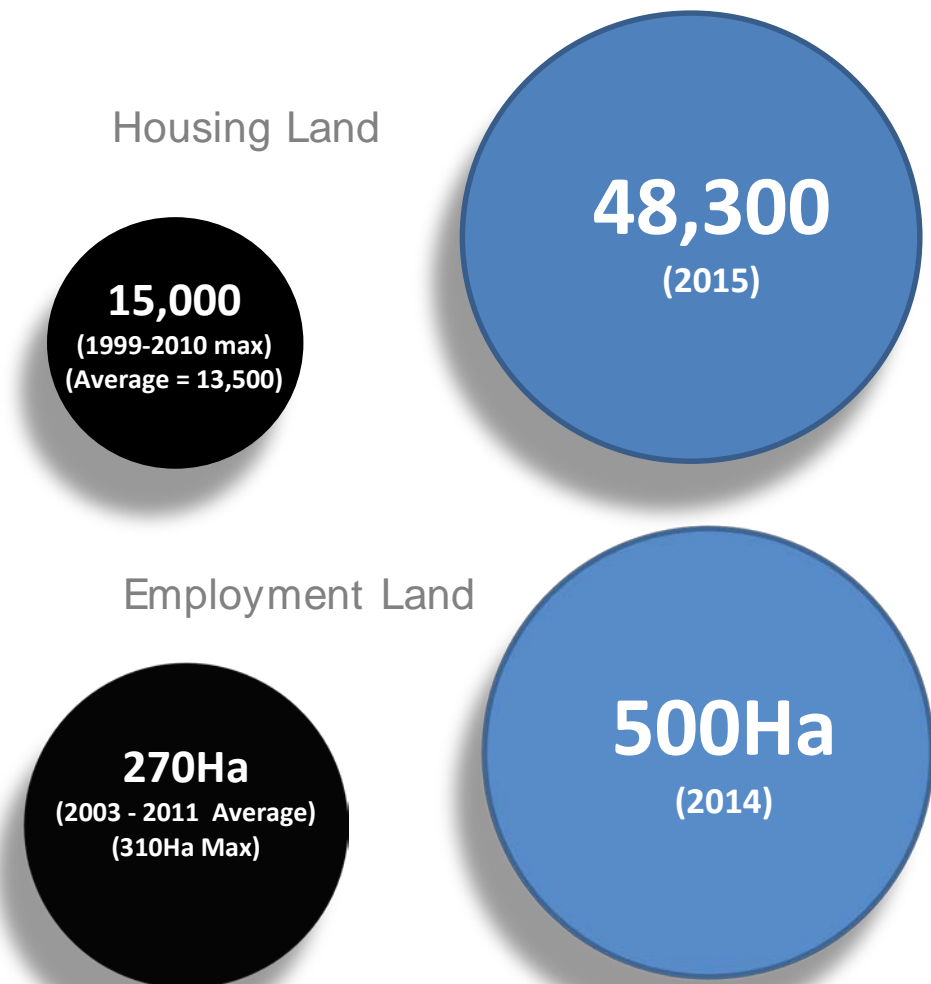
Open for business

6.2 The SDP area is one of the most economically dynamic in the whole of the UK, built on a strong presence from the oil and gas industry. One of the primary purposes of the strategic development plan is to facilitate this growth and direct this to the most sustainable locations. While the oil price fell fairly dramatically during the year, the effects on development rates will slowly emerge over time.

6.3 The Strategic Development Plan, Housing Land Audit and Employment Land Audit all highlight the positive and aspirational nature of the plans prepared by the SDPA. Significant quantities of land are now available in locations attractive to the development industry and end-users. The available supply of housing land, for example (see Figure 6) has more than trebled over the last five years through the development plan since 2009. Over a similar period of time, the availability of employment land has almost doubled. This will facilitate the significant expansion of house building (Figure 3) to complement the significant take-up being experienced in commercial floorspace. This effectively moved away from the long-term trend evident since the late 1990's to a significantly more positive land supply position.

6.4 The SDPA has worked with the house building industry to demonstrate the generosity of the land supply over the last year and this bore fruit in the representations to the two LDPs in early 2015/16, increasing the efficiency of the LDP process as a result.

Figure 6: Established housing and employment land supply



Source: Housing & Employment Land Audits (rounded to nearest hundred)

High quality development on the ground

6.5 One of the fundamental reasons for the delivery of an aspirational plan was to focus more on the quality of new development rather than fruitless arguments with the development industry over the quantity of new development.

6.6 The SDP sets the strategic framework for the delivery of high quality development on the ground, focusing as it does on the delivery of sustainable mixed communities. The plan explicitly targets national recognition for schemes, with award-winning schemes being highlighted to the SDPA on a regular basis. Recent examples include the University of Aberdeen Library and projects by Kirkwood Homes, and Dandara. However, it is still recognised that there is a long way to go to pull the quality of the majority of schemes up to that of the best. The SDP highlights the potential of the Chapelton of Elswick site south of Aberdeen where construction is now well underway, with completions expected during 2015.

Certainty

6.7 An up-to-date development plan is one of the primary contributions the SDPA can make to providing certainty to communities and the development industry.

6.8 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2014, within five years of the previously approved Structure Plan. It had been submitted to Ministers within the 4-year target set in legislation.

6.9 Local Development Plans consistent with the previous structure plan were adopted by both councils in 2012 so the whole area has an up-to-date development plan. Both councils had published Proposed Local Development Plans by the end of the reporting period to implement the SDP.

6.10 A Development Plan Scheme has now been published for the next SDP, with the publication of the Proposed SDP anticipated in September 2017. The election



cycles for Holyrood and Local Government elections have had a significant impact on the timetable, with the aim being to ensure decisions can be made in an inclusive way as possible and not constrained by pre-election periods. However, the statutory nature of the submission target (four years after plan approval) makes this particularly challenging. The timetable does mean, however, that the new plan will be agreed by the new administrations in both Councils after the elections in May 2017. The time likely to be spent on the various stages of plan preparation is set out in Figure 7 below.

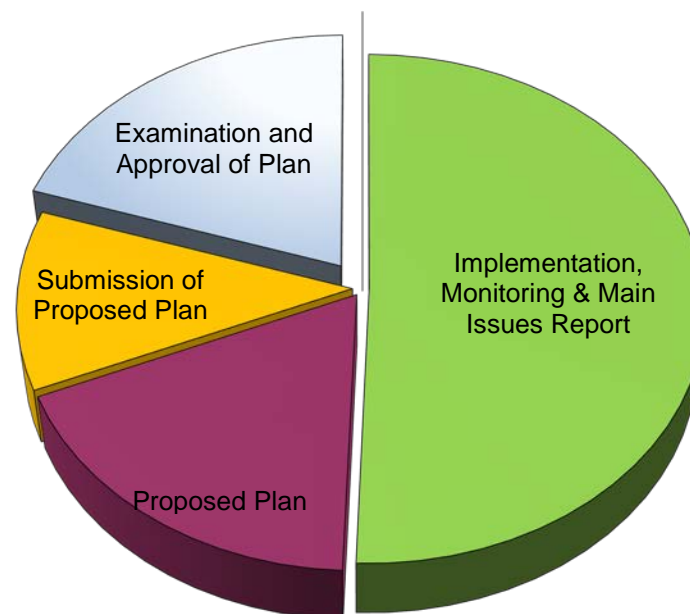
6.11 The highest element of risk identified to date for the delivery of the project plan revolves around the two election cycles. This will be actively monitored and managed throughout the plan preparation process, with consensus on a proposed plan being sought before the elections even though it won't be agreed and published until after the elections. Reducing risks in this way reduces risks at the implementation phase when both councils prepare Local Development Plans and make decisions on strategic planning applications. The previous structure plan was subject to no changes while the SDP was subject to very limited changes. This gives certainty to LDP preparation (enabling Main Issues Reports to be prepared on a firm foundation) as well as developers and communities.

Communications, engagement and customer service

6.12 The SDPA pioneered the use of Plain English for strategic development plans. The current SDP as well as the Development Plan Scheme, Main Issues Report and Proposed Strategic Development Plan all have 'Crystal Marks' from the Plain English Campaign. The purpose of this accreditation is to recognise the importance of clear communication with customers.

6.13 An E-Update system was introduced on the launch of the SDPA's website in 2008 and the recipients of the emails now number around 180. Recipients range from interested individuals, community groups, neighbouring planning authorities, developers and consultants and it is considered to be a useful way of communicating with customers.

Figure 7: SDP Preparation Timescales



Note: The Pie diagram represents the five year plan preparation cycle, with the Main Issue Report stage not starting immediately after the approval of the previous plan.

6.14 The use of the SDPA website is regularly monitored and reported to the SDPA. A particular focus is put on reporting site traffic during consultation periods when activity increases significantly. The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA website is highly rated by search engines, with a Google search for 'SDPA' putting the website at the top of the list. This helps to ensure easy access to the website. A total of 10 news items were added to the website during the year.

6.15 Early engagement has already taken place on the preparation of the new SDP through a joint seminar with SDPA Members and the Nestrans (Regional Transport Partnership) Board. This will be repeated throughout the plan preparation process and rolled out to all 110 Councillors of both councils at appropriate points in the process.

6.16 The SDPA agendas normally include a Bulletin which is designed to inform Members and other interested parties of a range of matters related to the work of the SDPA but where decisions are not required. This included updates on various aspects of plan implementation in terms of both LDP progress, infrastructure projects and strategic planning applications related to the plan's proposals.

6.17 Liaison took place during the year with the two LDP teams with a particular focus on ensuring consistency between them, effective implementation of the SDP and assistance with issues such as housing land supply.

Efficient and effective decision-making

6.18 The SDPA is comprised of six Councillors from each council with three professional advisors (the Heads of Planning from both councils and the SDP Manager). The SDPA meet a minimum of four times a year, coinciding with key decision-making events in the life of the SDPA. However, there is the provision for additional meetings if required by the project plan. Attendance at the meetings is open to the public, with papers available in advance on the SDPA website.

6.19 Appendices 1 and 2 set out the membership and attendance of SDPA members during the year. At the end of 2014 Councillor Argyle and Councillor Milne swapped roles, with Councillor Argyle taking the chair until mid-2017 and Councillor Milne being elected as vice chair. Councillors Grant and Taylor swapped substantive and substitute roles midway through the year. Four of the five meetings during the year were attended by at least 10 members (out of 12). In addition, 4 of the 12 substitute members also attended at least one meeting.

6.20 Appropriate powers are delegated to the SDPA to ensure that decisions only need to be ratified at key points in the SDP process, primarily the agreement of the Proposed Plan. This ensures that the SDPA is effectively able to co-ordinate the preparation of the SDP and associated workstreams without constant recourse to the partner councils. The scheme of delegation to officers will be reviewed during the year to help avoid the need for special meetings of the SDPA.

Effective management structures

6.21 A Management Team comprising the SDP Manager and the Heads of Planning from the two constituent councils meets on a monthly basis to direct the work of the SDPA and consider reports for subsequent meetings of the SDPA.

Financial management and local governance

6.22 The SDPA is governed by a Minute of Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council as well as a set of Financial Regulations, both of which are publically available on the SDPA website. Aberdeenshire Council act as Treasurer to the SDPA. The SDPA is audited on an annual basis as part of Audit Scotland's local government audit activities, with Deloitte being the current auditor. The Auditors Report and Audited Statement of Accounts are published annually on the SDPA website.

6.23 A budget for the SDPA is set and agreed on an annual basis, with indicative budgets produced for the following two years. The SDPA consider a Budget Monitoring Report at least three times a year and also agree unaudited and audited accounts on an annual basis.

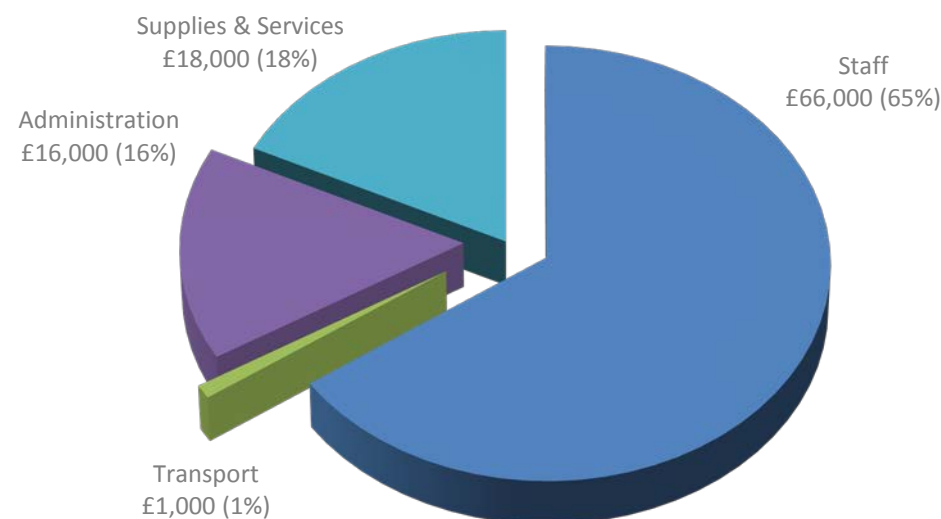
6.24 Costs for 2014/15 (£101,000) were considerably lower than in the previous year (£171,000), due in part to the stage reached in plan preparation (see Fig 8). However, the most significant factor was that there was just one member of staff during the whole of 2014/15.

Culture of continuous improvement

6.25 During the year staff benefited from a range of training opportunities and opportunities to share good practice – including the Homes for Scotland annual conference and the Brodies seminar highlighted above (para 4.10).

6.26 SDP Managers across Scotland's four SDPAs meet on a quarterly basis to focus on innovating together and sharing good practice. Sub-groups have continued to focus on the preparation of Housing Need and Demand Assessments and their link to the SDP. The benefits of this have included joint approaches to the Scottish Government for clarifications and joint actions to improve processes and guidance.

Figure 8: SDPA Expenditure 2014/15 (Unaudited)



7. The year ahead

7.1 The early part of 2015/16 will focus on a range of consultation responses for National Developments which are on the verge of being submitted as planning applications, including the carbon capture plant at Peterhead Power Station and the nearby proposed electricity interconnector project. Work during this period will also focus on submitting proposed statutory supplementary guidance to Scottish Ministers and the adoption process which follows.

7.2 In addition to the above, work has now started on several of the tasks which will eventually lead to a Main Issues Report for the next SDP. The preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment is a key element of this work and this is now underway as well as an assessment of the economic context for the next plan and building towards a Monitoring Statement. Work has also started with Nestrans and Transport Scotland to examine whether the ASAM regional transport model needs to be upgraded before being used to assess the transport impacts associated with MIR options and the review of the regional transport strategy. While these will not be published until the first half of 2016/17, much of the work needs to be done this year. If deemed necessary, work will also start on the preparation of a development framework for Peterhead South to address the delivery of the strategic projects concentrated in that area, building on earlier phases of work.

7.3 Two further workstreams during the year are likely to relate to the potential City Region Deal and the review of guidance in relation to housing land audits, housing supply targets and development plans.

7.4 The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities & Pensioners' Rights has indicated that he wants to see further reforms of the planning system, focusing on development planning and housing delivery in particular. This is likely to take up a large part of the year and the SDPA will need to be actively engaged in this national discussion.

7.5 Five meetings of the SDPA are planned for 2015/16.

Service improvements: 2015-16

7.6 In the coming year we will:

- *Complete the 'Lessons Learnt' exercise to establish an action plan for improvements (Qtr 3)*
- *Carry out a customer survey to establish the value of E-updates and how they could be improved (Qtr 2)*
- *Review the scheme of Delegation to Officers (Qtr 1)*

SDPA Meetings 2015/16

| |
|-------------------|
| 24 April 2015 |
| 25 June 2015 |
| 23 September 2015 |
| 2 December 2015 |
| 23 March 2016 |













8. Supporting evidence

Supporting evidence

8.1 This report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- [Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan \(2009\)](#)
- [Housing Land Audit 2015](#)
- [Employment Land Audit 2014](#)
- [Minute of Agreement and Standing Orders \(Version 2, 2010\)](#)
- [Audited Statement of Accounts 2013/14](#)
- [Report by External Auditors 2013/14](#)
- [Unaudited Statement of Accounts 2014/15](#)
- [Development Plan Scheme 2015/16](#)
- [Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan \(2014\)](#)
- [Planning Resource interview with SDP Manager \(8 April 2014\)](#)
- [Scottish Government SDP Approval letter \(March 2014\)](#)
- [Strategic Development Plan Monitoring Report \(September 2014\)](#)
- [Supplementary Planning Guidance: Delivering Transport Improvements through a Strategic Transport Fund \(2012\)](#)
- [Graphical Communication in Strategic Development Plans \(2012\)](#)
- [Regional Gross Value Added \(Income Approach\) \(December 2014\) – Office for National Statistics](#)
- [Sub-national Population Estimates \(June 2014\) – National Records of Scotland](#)
- [Registers of Scotland – Monthly House Price Statistics](#)
- [Scottish Government Signals Planning Modernisation - 9/6/2015](#)

Appendix 1: SDPA Membership (as at 31 March 2015)

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cllr P Argyle (Chair) | Cllr R Milne (Vice Chair) | Cllr P Bellarby | Cllr J Corall | Cllr J Cox | Cllr A Finlayson |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cllr R Merson | Cllr N Smith | Cllr R Grant | Cllr R Thompson | Cllr B Topping | Cllr I Yuill |

Appendix 2: Councillor attendance at SDPA meetings

| | 26 June 2014 | 24 September 2014 | 10 December 2014 | 6 February 2015 | 25 March 2015 | Total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Councillor Peter Argyle | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Councillor Peter Bellarby | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Councillor John Corall | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | 3 |
| Councillor John Cox | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 4 |
| Councillor Andrew Finlayson | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Councillor Ross Grant ¹ | | | | | ✓ | 1 |
| Councillor Rob Merson | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 4 |
| Councillor Ramsay Milne | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Councillor Norman Smith | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | 3 |
| Councillor Angela Taylor ¹ | | ✓ | | | | 1 |
| Councillor Ross Thomson | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Councillor Brian Topping | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Councillor Ian Yuill | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | 3 |
| SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS | | | | | | |
| Councillor Marie Boulton | | ✓ | | | | 1 |
| Councillor Graeme Clark | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Bill Cormie | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Steve Delaney | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Alan Donnelly | | | ✓ | | | 1 |
| Councillor Alan Gardiner | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Gordon Graham | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Ian Gray | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Martin Kitts-Hayes | | | | | | 0 |
| Councillor Jean Morrison | | | (✓) | | (✓) | (2) |
| Councillor Gillian Owen | | | ✓ | | | 1 |
| Councillor Stephen Smith | | | | | | 0 |
| | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 8 | |

Note: Substitute Members are only entitled to attend meetings of the SDPA when substantive members are unable to attend.

¹ Councillors Grant (previously a substitute) and Taylor swapped roles on the SDPA prior to the December meeting of the SDPA.

Appendix 3: Workforce and financial information

| Head of Planning Service | Tier? | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | |
| | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| | Managers No. Posts Vacant | | Main Grade Posts No. Posts Vacant | | Technician Posts No. Posts Vacant | | Office support/Clerical No. Posts Vacant | | Totals |
| Development Planning | | | | | | | | | 1 |

| Staffing profile | Number | Committees & site visits | No. per year |
|------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Under 30 | 1 | SDPA | 5 |
| 30-39 | | Full Council | 0 |
| 40-49 | | Council Committees | 0 |
| 50 and Over | | Area Committees | 0 |

| Budgets Planning Service | Budget | Costs | | Income |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|
| | | Direct | Indirect | |
| Development Planning | £101k | | | £101k |

Note: More detailed information is available in the SDPA's audited accounts for 2014/15 which are available from the SDPA website

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