

# **NORTH EAST STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2001 PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

## **Appendix 1:**

### **IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

#### ***Background***

The Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan (NEST) was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2001. The plan sets down a clear set of aims and objectives which are shared by other plans and strategies produced by the two councils and have been agreed by significant partners in the economy, environment and community within the North East. The plan seeks to make a significant contribution to community goals of creating a better quality of life for everyone in the North East, now and in the future.

The structure plan makes this contribution through specific land use policies. It is recognised that the time-scale, priorities, plans and actions of other private and public sector agencies operating in the North East will have a significant bearing on the pace and success of movement towards the structure plan's stated aims and objectives. Likewise Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire councils are not a unified body and it is possible there will be significant differences in emphasis between the two authorities which will impact on implementation of the plan. Partnership between the authorities and with these external organisations is crucial in the attainment of both the structure plan's objectives and the wider community goals.

The structure plan has not yet been approved by Scottish Ministers. Draft modifications are expected to be published in late September 2001 and it is hoped that the plan will be approved by Ministers in February / March 2002.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the actions required and the process to be followed to ensure successful implementation of the plan. Performance can only be measured through monitoring. Monitoring not only informs whether a particular course of action has been followed but also requires analysis of the success of the policies in achieving their aims, subsequently the contribution the policies make to the attainment of the objectives and ultimately the contribution that the structure plan makes to wider community goals. Monitoring should inform on the effectiveness of the plan and assist in identifying when review or alteration, in whole or in part, might be necessary.

It is of the highest importance that the structure plan is seen as credible and that its "ownership" is shared by the partners of the two councils. This credibility can only be maintained through effective involvement of these partners within the implementation and monitoring process'. As a continuation of the plan preparation process every opportunity must be taken to engage with partners to ensure that the plan remains more of a community rather than just a corporate document.

The relationship between the structure plan and the local plans is very close and it is important to stress the importance of this intimacy. The relationship extends to both

implementation and monitoring where the local plan is one of the principle mechanisms to achieve both implementation and monitoring intelligence.

### ***Implementation***

Implementation is crucial to the attainment of the structure plan aims and objectives. By its very nature implementation needs to be focused at the level of policy, it is implementation of the policy which will result in the realisation of the objectives, and ultimately the achievement of the aims. There are four principal means of implementation of the plan's policies and these are detailed in the appended table:

#### **The local plans**

The structure plan along with local plans comprise the statutory development plan. Local plans are required to "conform with the structure plan" (NPPG 1 para. 26). Much of the implementation of the structure plan will take place through the local plans, implementing specific land use policies which are underpinned by strategic policies within the structure plan itself. Examples of such policies are the housing land allocations (Policy 8), where local plans will allocate land to accommodate the structure plan requirements, or the policies protecting greenbelt and environment (Policies 19, 20, 27 and 28). It is incumbent upon the structure plan to ensure that the integrity of the objective of the structure plan policy is maintained in its translation into local plan policy.

The structure plan provides a context for these local plan policies. In those cases where an extraordinary application is made for which no generic policy within the local plan is applicable; for which significant ambiguity in interpretation is possible; or for which there is an incompatibility between the application of different local plan policies, then the structure plan becomes the main policy tool on which to base any decision. The structure plan will determine how much weight should be given to conflicting policy objectives either through specific expression within the structure plan policies or by reference to the plan's aims and objectives.

#### **Development control**

In addition to the role that the structure plan has in advising and informing the local plan there are numerous elements of advice made directly to the development control function. Most commonly these are expressions of procedure (for example that the sequential test should be used in determining applications for retailing (Policy 15) or that developer contributions should be sought from certain types of application (Policy 13)) or advice on the standards to be striven for from any application for development (for example policy 21 which promotes high design standards). Again most of these expressions will find their way into specific land use policies within the local plan but in some cases implementation will be directly by the development control function. In these cases it may be necessary for additional guidance and interpretation to be provided.

In the majority of cases the structure plan is depending on the local plan and, by inference, the development control function to achieve its implementation. Checks and balances are required to ensure that the principles underlying the policies find their way into development control decisions, particularly for large applications

which could have a significant implications for the whole of the North East, either in isolation or by virtue of a cumulative impact. Procedures are being developed to ensure that such applications come to the attention of the structure plan management team to ensure that when necessary adequate policy advice is provided to development control staff.

### Commitments within the structure plan

A third category of policy within the structure plan exists. In a small number of cases the structure plan makes a specific commitment to undertaking a course of action (for example promotion of environmental sustainability and equity in design (policy 21)) in these cases it is incumbent upon the structure plan to undertake research and analysis with partners, in order to produce and disseminate detailed guidance. These tasks will require to be prioritised and resources identified to ensure that implementation is effected timeously. While the structure plan does not require local plans to implement these policies it is often the case that these plans, in “conforming with the structure plan”, have similar policies and it will be a matter of resource availability whether these actions will be implemented by local plan or structure plan teams.

### Engaging others

A final facet of implementation relates to potential impact that the plan could have on the actions of others. Both councils are frequently asked to comment on the plans and programmes of our partners within the North East and beyond . While it would not be expected that the ultimate objectives of such plans would be at odds with the “community goals” to which the structure plan is working it is important that these other documents are cognisant of the land use strategy set out within the structure plan. Implementation may also require that every effort is made to ensure that these plans and programs are influenced by that strategy.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is vital to the success of the plan. Without monitoring we have no way of knowing whether the policies proposed are actually performing as we would hope, or whether circumstances have changed to such a degree that adaptation or review of policies are required.

At the broadest level monitoring revolves around four basic questions:

- Has anything happened, has change occurred ?
- Are the policies delivering the aims?
- Has anything changed which may cause policy not to perform as anticipated?
- Has the policy failed ?

Monitoring is required at both the level of performance of individual policies and at a more generic level assessing the contribution of policy to the objectives of the plan and ultimately its aims and contribution to community goals.

### Guiding principles

A number of principles underpin the approach taken to monitoring of the structure plan:.

- Much of the information required to monitor plan performance is already collected by others for other purposes.
- Ownership of the process by stakeholders is of prime importance to maintain the credibility of the plan.
- It is more important to monitor the plan's impact than to monitor the plan's performance.

It is impracticable and inefficient to try to monitor everything and the use of generic and grouped indicators are proposed to make the monitoring task practicable..

### Structure Plan Aims

It must be recognised that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, while working to the same aims and objectives in delivering the goals of the two Community Plans, will have different priorities according to circumstance. At this corporate level it is not intended that the joint structure plan monitoring process will have a formal role although those with strategic planning remits within each authority will require to make their own contribution to the corporate monitoring process. Such "community goals" will be influenced by many factors, most of which will only be marginally affected by the structure plan (for example economic vitality may have as much to do with economic development initiatives than with the availability of land for industrial development) What is measured as indicators of the contribution of the structure plan towards these goals will likewise differ.

### Structure Plan Objectives

The objectives within the plan are, however, specifically related to and influenced by land use planning and it will be necessary to promote monitoring of a set of indicators in order to ascertain the impact of policy on these specific issues. If monitoring reveals that progress is not being made towards a stated objective, then this indicates the possibility that the thrust of policy is failing. Further detailed analysis would have to be undertaken to determine whether this is indeed the case or whether events external to land use planning are the cause of the problem.

### Structure Plan Policies

Individual policies, as stated above, require to be assessed in terms of implementation (has a mechanism for the delivery of policy been put in place), performance (has anything actually happened), and context, (have there been changes in "policy environment, development pressures and political priorities" (PAN 37 "Structure Planning")). For the majority of the policies in the plan the responsibility for monitoring performance at this level can be delegated to the local plans. Likewise monitoring of implementation is a straight forward task, requiring assessment of whether the local plans have included an issue, whether the necessary guidance has been produced, or whether the commitment made has been satisfied.

## ***Proposed Arrangements***

### Monitoring of objectives

It is proposed that a set of indicators are developed to assist in the monitoring of overall plan performance. These indicators will be the subject of agreement with the structure plan focus group and may be more than one indicator to reflect the different priorities of the two authorities. The structure plan focus group will be asked to agree a set of indicators, developed by the structure plan team, which reflect progress to the plan's stated aims and objectives, while at the same time makes best use of existing monitoring regimes. Such indicators are likely to cross the gap between the community planning process and the development plan process.

Monitoring of the objectives will be undertaken on a relatively long cycle as it is unlikely that the chosen indicators will exhibit much movement on a yearly cycle. Once the indicators have been identified they will be benchmarked to enable future comparisons

### Monitoring of policies

It is not necessary to monitor all the policies in the plan as much of the monitoring effort is an abdicated responsibility to the local plans. It remains important to retain a strategic overview however and as such it is proposed to undertake monitoring by topic. It is proposed that the three topics of housing and community services, economy and transport, and environment are subjected to scrutiny on a regular basis. In each case it will be the purpose of monitoring to assess change in the policy environment, identify development pressures and assess the performance of the policies themselves both in terms of their contribution to the objectives of the plan and in achieving their own internal objectives.

#### Economy and Transport

Policy 1	Employment Land
Policy 2	Employment land distribution
Policy 3	Other employment opportunities
Policy 6	Tourism
Policy 31	Connecting communities in the north east
Policy 32	Transport infrastructure, safeguarding land and minimising impact

#### Housing and community services

Policy 8	Five year effective housing land supply
Policy 9	Housing allocations 200-2006
Policy 10	Housing allocations 2005-2011
Policy 14	Affordable and special needs housing
Policy 15	Retailing and town centres

#### Environment

Policy 22	Water management
Policy 23	Indicative Forest Strategy
Policy 25	Waste Management Facilities

Policy 26	Four tier policy areas
Policy 28	Development in the green belt
Policy 29	Coastal Planning

Through consultation with the focus groups it is proposed to identify and confirm monitoring regimes appropriate for each policy.

Monitoring of policy impact on the economy, transport, housing and community services will be undertaken on an annual basis , reflecting their importance and volatility. Environmental policies will only be reviewed on a triennial cycle.

In all cases an initial “benchmarking” will be undertaken as soon as possible to provide a baseline from which to measure change.