

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan - Modifications

**Habitats Regulation Appraisal
Screening Report**

The Scottish Government

25 March 2014

Preamble

1. This screening report considers the modifications recommended to the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan in the report of the examination into that plan.
2. The Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) prepared a [Draft Habitats Regulations Appraisal Record](#) in February 2013. Following comments from Scottish Natural Heritage in a letter dated 9 April 2013, the SDPA agreed to make some revisions to the Draft HRA Record. These were set out in a letter dated 26 June 2013. This screening report does not revisit the consideration of Habitats Regulations issues contained in that Record or its revisions, where these are connected with parts of the plan unaffected by the modifications. However it has been prepared in the light of the information on sites and effects contained in the earlier work. This report is intended to form an annex to the earlier HRA record.
3. This report is informed by Version 2.0 of the Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance for Plan-Making Bodies in Scotland on Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans of August 2012 ('the [SNH Guidance](#)'¹). Where modifications are screened out for the purposes of HRA, the table below refers to the relevant screening step described in the SNH Guidance.
4. This screening report is based upon the modifications proposed in the report of the examination into issues raised in representations on the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. It is possible that, in approving the plan, the Scottish Ministers may make some further changes. If further changes are made, and these go beyond editorial amendments then the Scottish Government will revisit this screening report.

¹ <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B1116296.pdf>

Summary of the modification	Screening	Relevant step of SNH Guidance
<p>Issue 1. Introduction Extend list of legislation and strategies that influence the plan to include the <i>2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland</i>.</p>	<p>This is a factual update to reflect the importance of this strategy on the plan. It is part of the section on 'Influences on the plan' which then feeds into the aims and vision. Although not a policy statement itself, it may be seen for the purposes of HRA as a general policy statement. It does not itself have any likely significant effects and can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Issue 2. Vision To clarify that the plan's aims will also contribute towards the overarching Scottish Government purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth, to ensure that the plan is in line with Scottish Planning Policy.</p>	<p>This is to ensure that the plan is explicitly consistent with the Scottish Government's central purpose, albeit that this is implied in the range of policies and proposals. The draft HRA record already establishes that the vision and aims are general policy statements, which can be screened out.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Issue 3. Economic Growth To clarify that Aberdeen <i>city centre</i>, rather than Aberdeen as a whole, should remain one of the top 20 retail areas in the UK.</p>	<p>This is a clarification of the location to which the target will apply. It remains an overarching target which points to further action, and is a general policy statement. It does not itself have any likely significant effects, and can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>1</p>

Summary of the modification	Screening	Relevant step of SNH Guidance
<p>Issue 4. Sustainable Development and Climate Change</p> <p>A number of changes:</p> <p>(1) To clarify that the aim of increasing the supply of renewable energy relates both to heat and power;</p> <p>(2) To highlight potential limitation of water abstraction from the River Dee in order to protect the river's status as a Special Area of Conservation, and to highlight related mitigation measures in the Habitats Regulation Appraisal that may be required;</p> <p>(3) To clarify that, taking into account an ongoing need for some non-renewable power generation, that the target for renewable energy relates to an amount <i>equivalent</i> to the city region's needs;</p> <p>(4) To clarify that the target for waste management infrastructure is a minimum target;</p> <p>(5) To ensure that Local Development Plans (and supplementary guidance) promote water efficiency in relevant developments;</p> <p>(6) To ensure that the necessary safeguards in the Habitats Regulations Appraisal are applied to subsequent Local Development Plans and development management decisions.</p>	<p>(1) This is a factual correction to a general policy statement and no likely significant effects are predicted, so can be screened out.</p> <p>(2) & (6) This is to strengthen the text and highlight that adaptation measures of a particular kind may be required in future, as well as ensuring that local development plans and development proposals take into account related safeguards in the Habitats Regulations Appraisal. This change does not itself have any likely significant effects but it is recognised that these may occur at later stages of planning. The modifications in themselves are intended to be protective of the natural environment , so can be screened out.</p> <p>(3) This is a point of clarification around a general policy statement and no likely significant effects are predicted, so can be screened out.</p> <p>(4) This is a point of clarification. It could be seen to increase the amount of infrastructure required but the plan is not altered on the general locations for new waste management facilities so no likely significant effects are predicted by the modification as it is too general. It can therefore be screened out.</p> <p>(5) This is to strengthen the plan by backing up its existing target on water efficiency in new developments with action through local development plans (and supplementary guidance). However, given that the target already exists and the actions are in later stages of planning, no likely significant effects are expected and this can be screened out.</p>	<p>Stage 1 (for (1), (3), (4) & (5); Stage 3a for (2) & (6)</p>

Summary of the modification	Screening	Relevant step of SNH Guidance
<p>Issue 6. Sustainable Mixed Communities To focus on the creation of successful and sustainable communities, with the necessary services and facilities.</p>	<p>This is to ensure the plan is consistent with national policy and guidance around delivering appropriate services and facilities linked to developments. It guides future decisions on development and infrastructure. It is not possible to determine any effect at this stage as the specific locations are not identified. It can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>3e</p>
<p>Issue 7. Quality of the Environment To ensure adequate monitoring of the improvement of, as well as the loss of, built, national or cultural heritage assets.</p>	<p>This is a factual correction to ensure effective monitoring. The modification ties monitoring of development to a target of the Strategic Development Plan that development improves and does not lead to the loss of, or damage to, natural heritage assets. Of itself this modification will not lead to development or other change, since it relates to the monitoring rather than the development stage. This modification can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>3b</p>
<p>Issue 8. Putting this Plan into Practice (1) To remove references to increases in land value funding a large percentage of new infrastructure; and (2) to include a new proposal to identify and develop green networks in and around Aberdeen and other major settlements in the area.</p>	<p>(1) The removal of the references to land value will ensure that the plan properly reflects the intentions of legislation and national policy in relation to the use of planning obligations. It will guide future work on local development plans and on individual planning applications but environmental effects cannot be determined at this stage as it is not possible to identify specific locations or proposals. The modification relates to the general context for infrastructure contributions from developers and the public sector, so of itself it will not lead to development. It can therefore be screened out</p> <p>(2) The inclusion of a green network proposal brings the plan into line with Scottish Planning Policy. The proposal is to carry out further work to identify and develop such a network. This will be implemented through Local Development Plans and through decisions on planning applications. Again, while the proposal may have environmental effects, these are not possible to determine at this stage as the location of the network or the detailed policies that may apply there are not identified, so the change can be screened out.</p>	<p>3b & 3e</p>
<p>Issue 9. Strategic Transport Fund A number of changes:</p>	<p>These are corrections to bring the text in line with legislation and national policy on the use of planning obligations. The proposed modification defines the transport</p>	<p>3b</p>

Summary of the modification	Screening	Relevant step of SNH Guidance
<p>- To clarify that statutory supplementary guidance on the Strategic Transport Fund will define the types of development to which it will apply, and be used only to support projects that are related to the developments concerned and necessary to make those developments acceptable in planning terms; and</p> <p>- To clarify which infrastructure projects will be delivered through the Strategic Transport Fund.</p>	<p>projects to benefit from the Strategic Transport Fund as those that are identified in Schedule 2 of the plan. These were assessed within the Draft HRA Record, being screened in under Table 4.1 and with mitigation measures set out under Table 4.6. Of itself therefore the modification does not identify or include any additional development or other change in the plan, and therefore can be screened out.</p> <p>The proposed changes to Schedule 2 are factual corrections to clarify which proposals are delivered by the Strategic Transport Fund rather than by other means. It should be noted that Table 4.1 in the draft HRA record identifies that the projects proposed for delivery through the Strategic Transport Fund will have likely significant effects and Table 4.6 in the draft HRA record sets out appropriate mitigation measures to ensure future local development plans and strategies fully mitigate any adverse effects. An agreed amendment to Table 4.6 in SDPA's letter of 26 June 2013 is to add: "Plans for the River Dee Link should include measures for the protection of qualifying interests [of River Dee SAC]". This relates also to one of the reporter's proposed modifications under Issue 4 above, to ensure that local development plans and development proposals take into account related safeguards in the Habitats Regulations Appraisal.</p>	
<p>Issue 10. Spatial Strategy - General To clarify that consideration of a strategic walking and cycling network should form an integral part of planning for the strategic growth areas.</p>	<p>This is minor point of clarification and does not change the effect of the text. It remains a general policy statement with no likely significant effects and can be screened out.</p>	1
<p>Issue 11. Strategic Growth Areas – Active Travel To show diagrammatically that the strategic walking/cycling links on page 17 are proposed, rather than existing, projects.</p>	<p>This is a factual correction to the diagram to reflect the actual status of the proposal. It does not change the general spatial strategy in the plan. The detail of the strategic walking/cycling links in this Strategic Growth Area will be considered at the Local Development Plan level. The diagrammatic line is too general to assess at this stage, so can be screened out.</p>	3e

Summary of the modification	Screening	Relevant step of SNH Guidance
<p>Issue 12. Strategic Growth Areas – Aberdeen City To emphasise the need for more major office developments in the city centre, to support the region’s economic development.</p>	<p>This is to strengthen the text and capitalise on the city centre’s economic development role. The text promotes development of a specific kind (office) within the existing urban area, but specific proposals are not yet identified, so no significant effects can yet be identified as the text is too general. This change can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>3e</p>
<p>Issue 13. Strategic Growth Areas – Aberdeen - Peterhead To clarify that a development framework for the southern gateway to Peterhead will be prepared as statutory supplementary guidance, and that the southern end of the Energetica corridor extends into northern Aberdeen, where projects on energy technology development and energy efficiency will continue.</p>	<p>This is to clarify that supplementary guidance will be prepared at a later date so no environmental effects can be identified at this stage as the text is too general. A factual correction is also made to reflect the true extent of the Energetica corridor, within which energy related developments are promoted. Decisions on specific proposals or locations within that corridor are for later stages of planning, so again no likely significant effects can be identified at this stage. These modifications can therefore be screened out.</p>	<p>3e</p>

The ‘in-combination’ test

No in-combination assessment is necessary for the modifications to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan because all the modifications are either general policy statements or will have no effect at all on any European site because the proposed change is too general in nature, would not of itself lead to development, or is intended to protect the environment. In these circumstances, paragraph 4.35 of the SNH Guidance confirms that no in-combination assessment is required as the modifications will not result in any minor residual effects.

Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that the modifications to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan are not likely to have any significant effect on any European site.

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