

## **Pre-Main Issues Consultation Summary**

### **Broad Themes from School Engagement**

**Open spaces are appreciated but there could be more...** Proximity, and easy access, to the countryside and open spaces were noted as positives. It was felt that an appropriate balance between being close to the countryside and being close to the city centre facilities was important. There was a general concern about the scale of new development the city could accommodate, and the pressures on green fields and areas prone to flooding.

**Plan ahead for renewable energy...** It was suggested that Aberdeen will need to produce and use more renewable energy by 2035.

**Improve recycling facilities...** It was recognised that we will need to increase our levels of recycling and therefore provide more recycling facilities throughout the city by 2035.

**Where new housing should go...** Participants dislike housing built on flood plains, poor mix of housing and when new housing is built which blocks views. It is recognised that we need new houses to be built for the increasing population. Some want to see new communities on the outskirts of the city and others want to see more efficient ways to develop housing and to keep fields clear of housing. A mix of housing for all is desired.

**More employment in Aberdeen...** In terms of business, some participants liked that Aberdeen is the oil capital of Europe and that this status brings many jobs to the area. The Harbour was mentioned as something that some participants disliked, generally due to reasons of amenity, congestion and lack of access. It was recognised that in the future the city will need more jobs for the growing population, and suggested that there should be more offices and business parks. It was also suggested that by 2035 there may be an industry shift in the city away from oil and gas and that we should start to plan for this now.

**Sports facilities, services and shops are all appreciated BUT there is nothing for young people or tourists to do in Aberdeen...** It was suggested that the city will need more facilities like care homes, nursing homes and NHS facilities in the future. It was thought that attractions and facilities generally within Aberdeen were very good, but there wasn't enough to attract tourists or young people - there should be more for tourists and young people. Improvements to the Football Stadium at Pittodrie, and for the AECC to be bigger to attract bigger artists are also desired.

**The city needs to be cleaner...** Cleanliness was touched on a number of times, as areas with lots of chewing gum, litter, cigarette butts and graffiti were disliked.

**Aberdeen Beach needs to be improved...** The cinema and restaurants are generally liked, but it was noted that the development around the beach is rundown, dirty and needs to attract more activities. Participants want the beach area to be cleaner and more user-friendly. It was also said that linkages to and from the City Centre must be improved.

**Union Street / City Centre needs to be improved...**The main area that is disliked in the City Centre is Union Street due to its empty shops, dull, rundown, congested and dirty appearance as well as the lack of things to do there. The majority of participants preferred Union Square and liked that it has shops, restaurants, cinema, and bus and train stations all in one place. Other areas which participants disliked within the city centre included St. Nicholas House, Aberdeen Market, Castlegate, the Denburn Carpark and Bon Accord Baths. Participants want to see better shops, less pound shops and for shop fronts to be improved. They also suggested that there needs to be less traffic, with strategies like pedestrianisation and the reintroduction of trams. Elsewhere in the city centre, participants generally agreed that Union Terrace Garden should be made more accessible in the future; however opinion was divided about whether or not the Gardens should be redeveloped.

**Lets brighten up the city...**Many participants like the granite architecture, especially when it has been cleaned (like Marischal College). Others however think the city is too grey and needs more colourful modern buildings. Some participants want to see granite buildings and streets in the city cleaned up, whereas others wanted less granite and more modern buildings made of materials like glass and timber. Almost all participants wanted to see more colour in the city and more green spaces. Others want to see more done about derelict buildings and older buildings brought back into use rather than being demolished.

**Transport and Accessibility...**Road conditions were a dislike for participants from across the city, and noise, the amount of traffic, potholes and air pollution were mentioned frequently. Parking was also a point of contention, with participants disliking areas of onstreet parking and the lack of parking controls.

While some participants liked the bus service in Aberdeen, and thought there was a good service, other participants thought the buses were irregular, expensive and unreliable.

Participants liked the walking and cycling facilities in their local areas, particularly the North Deeside Railway Line. Many participants think there will be more cyclists on the roads and that there should be separate roads for cyclists in the future.

Participants suggested that the Harbour should be bigger and cleaner and the airport extended with more international flights. More radical ways to get about were also suggested such as rollercoasters, flying cars, hovercrafts and teleportation!

A group of participants disliked the plans for the new Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and the impact it would have on their local area.

### **Broad Themes from Workshops**

**Concerns over traffic and transportation** – This was an almost universal topic and focussed on current congestion issues and potential congestion arising from new developments. Public transport was often considered to be inadequate and expensive. Rat running and parking problems were brought up in some local areas as were safe routes to schools.

**Concerns over infrastructure delivery** – Concerns were expressed in most areas over the ability of new developments to deliver infrastructure in a timely manner. School capacity was frequently mentioned and it was stated that new schools should have adequate space to expand if necessary.

**Our open spaces and countryside are appreciated** – there was almost universal appreciation of our countryside, green spaces, playing fields, woodlands and trees, walks and pathways. These places should be retained and some spaces, such as Union Terrace Gardens, should be enhanced. Several suggestions for new pathway links were mentioned.

**Lack of connectivity in the city centre** – Specifically connectivity between Union Street and Union Square is poor. The bus and railway station were considered difficult to access and it is difficult for cars to drop off or pick up people there.

**Union Street and the city centre** – Although people value Union Street, it was felt that its attractiveness has declined over the years. Many suggestions were made to improve it, including using spaces over shops, reducing rates to attract new uses and independent shops and allowing non retail uses such as offices, cafes, residential and leisure. The city centre would benefit from a cultural quarter. A number of people suggested that the Castlegate was a better venue for markets and events. 24 hour uses could be encouraged by free parking after 6pm.

**Greater housing mix is needed** – it was mentioned at several workshops that there was a need for smaller houses or bungalows for older people and for downsizing.

**Consultation events** – we asked for feedback on the workshops themselves and it was suggested that we should use local shops, GP's dentists and schools for advertising.

## **Broad Themes from Questionnaire and Responses**

**Main Issues** - High quality design should focus on delivering a safe, clean and attractive environment with better maintained buildings and green spaces. More emphasis should be placed on better public transport, affordable housing and energy efficiency. Enhance Union Street and the City Centre. Improve road links and transport infrastructure to remove constraints to growth.

**Good place to Live** - Things that people like about Aberdeen are its cleanliness, clean air, availability of cheap parking, a lively street culture, granite architecture, it feels safe and has two universities. Good shops, houses, parks, facilities and schools. Quality of life, easy access to seaside and beach, countryside, open space and mountains. We have low unemployment, a vibrant feel to the city, a strong economy and strong communities.

**Resources** - Encourage recycling and composting of all materials - more recycling points needed - should be provided in all developments. Improve the energy efficiency of housing - all development should incorporate renewables.

Encourage renewables, solar and wind in the right places but views are mixed on wind turbines – both positive and negative. Support the European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre, Aberdeen Hydrogen Project, solar panels at Nigg Bay, District Heating.

**Natural Environment** - Protect and enhance the beach, open spaces, core paths, parks, (Seaton, Hazlehead, Union Terrace, Duthie, Botanical Gardens, Scotstown Moor, St Nicholas Kirkyard), green belt, trees and woodland and wildlife corridors. Clean out drains and avoid developing flood plains, avoid run off from hardstanding areas. Invest in infrastructure and use SUDS. Protect and enhance watercourses.

**Housing and Community** - Build more affordable, council, rental, student, entry level family and low cost housing. Develop brownfield sites instead of green spaces. Tenants should take responsibility for maintenance. There is a pressing need for new housing. Allocate new housing close to the major employment areas in order to provide choice and reduce the need to travel. Prevent illegal traveller camps. Halting sites are required but these need to be in the right places. Scotstown Moor is unsuitable.

Specific concerns were expressed on Policy H8 - out of alignment with the rules of the Air Regulations so amend in the interests of safety. The Council should introduce an Overprovision Policy and place a moratorium on further HMO licenses within Old Aberdeen. Concern about the zoning of the heart of Old Aberdeen as CF1 'Existing community sites and facilities'.

**Business and Industry** - More employment land needs to be available with better rail and road links. Upgrade infrastructure and communications networks. Reduce peak time congestion. Reduce parking charges and town centre rates. More parking required. Create high quality environment attractive to employers. Expand Aberdeen airport. Install rail link between station and airport. Create new business park in Culter. There are still large areas in the City Centre (Cotton St, Virginia St and Regent Quay) which could sustain comprehensive development.

**Design and Masterplanning** - Safety is important for attracting inward investment. Implement strict city centre design code. Buildings need to be cleaned up. Renovate historic buildings in conservation areas. Maintain granite frontages with modern buildings behind. Concrete and glass should not be used in new buildings. More care needs to be taken with satellite dishes, granite setts, trees, gardens and designed landscapes, windows and doors, shopfronts and advertisements.

**Transport and Infrastructure** - Greater accessibility to city centre will enhance its viability but there was mixed opinion on pedestrianisation. Reduce parking charges. Public transport is poor and cost should be reduced - introduce more competition. Oil and gas companies operate in a highly competitive employee market and car parking provision for employees is an essential part of their employee attraction and retention initiatives.

Road connections and rail connections are two of the biggest constraints to growth. More roads and dual carriageways, bridges, rail stations and parking required. Third Don Crossing, A96 flyover, Haudagain, AWPR, Denburn improvements should be

implemented. Remove bus lanes. Improve links to the airport and harbour. Better roads maintenance is required. Development should not be under airport and helicopter routes due to noise issues.

**City Centre and Retailing** - The main planning priorities for the city centre should be trams, pedestrian access and cycleways. Improve pedestrian links and connectivity. As with transport, there was mixed views on Union Street pedestrianisation. Disabled users find major access problems with the Bridge Street/Guild Street/Union Square area.

There were many ideas to improve Union Street and increase footfall: Reduce business rates. Open more cafes, leisure, hotels, homes and offices in west end. Improve retail space, increase the provision of business space and allow additional opportunities for leisure (cafés and restaurants) and cultural activities. Focus on the public realm and spaces / activities which support the generation of increased footfall. City centre needs a masterplan. Clean up the area, clear gum and rubbish. Reduce parking charges and bus fares. Repair and maintain buildings. Support for policies which support the city centre and discourage out of centre retail parks.

There were mixed views on the development or otherwise of Union Terrace Gardens. Golden Square and Bon Accord Square could be valuable green spaces and not just car parks. Castlegate could be a gateway to the beach.

### **Broad Themes from Community Council Toolkits**

**Our open spaces and countryside are appreciated** - Communities identified local parks and gardens as being key strengths within their areas, along with any designated nature conservation sites and other areas important for wildlife. Problems however included a lack of access to some local green spaces, often due to blocked up or poorly maintained paths. Communities are also concerned that valuable open space is being lost through new development in and around the city. Communities believe that there is scope to create and extend green corridors in their area, and that existing open spaces should be protected, maintained and upgraded as appropriate.

**Flooding** - Identified as a general concern. Blocked drains and watercourses identified as a problem in many areas.

**Provision, and quality, of local facilities** - Local facilities such as swimming pools, shops, community centres and leisure facilities are highly valued. Good schools and new school buildings are a particular source of pride. However, many local shopping areas have been identified as having poor access and inadequate parking, with many being in need of a facelift.

**Greater housing mix is needed** - A lack of different housing types to suit people at different stages of life has been identified, along with a lack of affordable housing in particular.

**Greater support needed for new businesses** - Many areas also believe there are opportunities for small business development in their area and more could be done to support this.

**Concerns about over-development** - With regards to new development, many communities with large allocations in their area voiced concern at the scale of development taking place. Many areas also believe that their areas are suffering from 'overdevelopment'. Most communities stated that they wished to see new development sensitively designed to fit in with existing settlements.

**Concerns over infrastructure delivery** - Necessary improvements to infrastructure should be in place before new development begins.

**Our built heritage is appreciated** - Almost without exception, communities have been able to identify specific buildings and features which they believe are positive assets for their local area, and were unanimous in their view that these should be protected.

**More needs to be done to protect and reuse historic assets** - Many areas expressed concern about historic buildings which are currently vacant and are not being maintained properly and face an uncertain future.

**Quality of the urban realm is a concern** - In terms of the urban realm, although some examples of positive interventions were highlighted, the most common theme was a dissatisfaction with the poor state of repair of pavements and street furniture, which could be improved with investment.

**Sustainable transport methods are appreciated** - In terms of transport and accessibility, positive features commonly identified include the Core Path network, cycle lanes and in some instances a good bus service direct into the City Centre.

**Concerns over traffic and transportation** - Traffic congestion and rat-running are very common problems, and many areas expressed dissatisfaction with an infrequent and expensive bus service, which can cause problems for less mobile residents and isolate parts of the community. A lack of parking for local shops and facilities was also highlighted as a key problem. All areas identified that additional road capacity should be provided. However, communities also identified opportunities for more sustainable modes of transport including improved public transport, pedestrian access routes and cycle infrastructure.