

**THE THREE AYRSHIRE COUNCILS AND  
THE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN TEAM**

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN 2025  
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL GROUP**

**SECOND BRIEFING PAPER FOR MEETING, 13 OCTOBER 2004**

11.00 – 3.00, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2004  
Council Chamber, 15 Links Road, Prestwick

**PURPOSE**

1. The meeting on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October aims to agree a response from the Group to the draft Structure Plan. This is intended to complement the responses from agencies and the public, by focusing on an assessment of the June 2004 Consultation Draft from a sustainable development perspective.

**OUTLINE PROGRAMME**

2. The Programme for the half-day meeting will include:

11.00 Briefing Presentations:

- Overview of consultation responses (and update on progress)  
Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Team
  - Reactions to the draft plan from a sustainable development perspective  
Tim Birley
- Initial question and answer session

Buffet lunch

- Group discussion on, and reactions to, the Briefing Paper, and providing material for inclusion in the Group's response.

15.00 End of meeting

**BRIEFING PAPER and NEXT STEPS**

3. The paper, which starts overleaf, develops the outline set out in the first briefing paper, taking into account comments received. In particular, it expands the section on housing. It is intended as the starting point for our discussions next week, together the briefing on the consultation responses to the Structure Plan.

4. A further paper, which will be the Group's draft response, will be circulated after the meeting. There will then be a short period for revisions and any further work identified at the meeting, before submitting a final version. This has to be completed in sufficient time for the Structure Plan team to be able to take it into account before they report to the Joint Committee in early December 2004. It is intended that our document will be published on the Joint Structure Plan website as the Group's second main paper.

## BRIEFING PAPER

### Progress so far

5. The Group had productive initial meetings, reported on the AJSP website (at [http://www.ayrshire-jsu.gov.uk/download/1st\\_report.pdf](http://www.ayrshire-jsu.gov.uk/download/1st_report.pdf)). However, there was some caution about the sustainable development criteria proposed. Perhaps these were felt to be imposed on the group, rather than emerging from it; also, at that stage there was no draft plan, so it was not clear how criteria might be applied. One of the areas for consideration at the next meeting should be how our criteria might be included within the plan's policies.

6. Then the Group at its March and May 2004 meetings:

- Reacted to the (unexpected) strategic preference to centre the new plan around the retention of existing population levels; and
- At the May 2004 meeting, the Group expressed some unease with the policy format of the new plan (relative to the existing plan), with the reduction to a very limited number of strategic policy statements.

### Retaining existing population levels

7. A strategic decision to base the new plan on the retention of existing population levels (rather than planning for a decline in line with RG forecasts) has the most important and wide ranging impact on the new plan. The Group need to evaluate this from a sustainable development perspective.

8. The initial reaction is that this strategy would generate far more development than would otherwise be the case. In particular, when allied to the need for new housing in any event (arising primarily from the decline in household size), the outcome would be a substantial increase in housebuilding, and therefore a substantial release of land for housing. If the same population level gave rise to significant extra infrastructure requirements and associated resource use, then this would seem to be moving away from, rather than towards, more sustainable development.

9. However, on reflection the picture is much more complex than this:

- The position advocated by the draft plan moves away from 'predict and provide', normally criticised by advocates of sustainable development (especially with respect to air and road transport), even though the consequence in this case is more, rather than less, development.
- Retaining population at or near current levels is consistent with maintaining current provision of social and community facilities, and with current retail and services demand. Conversely, loss of population would lead to loss of at least some facilities, almost certainly with some geographic concentration, and potentially adversely affecting disadvantaged communities more than others.
- If population is not retained in Ayrshire, it will be because it has moved elsewhere. This will either be to other parts of Scotland (likely to be to those areas already experiencing population and growth pressures - the belt from Stirling to East Lothian), or outwith Scotland (contrary to national policy objectives). Therefore in assessing the impact in terms of sustainable development, the implications for development elsewhere have also to be considered.

10. It is not easy to provide a quantitative assessment of the structure plan scenarios. The following table tries to suggest possible implications of the two main

alternatives: planning for the GRO projection of population loss, and planning for retaining current population levels (over the longer term).

**Table 1: Potential implications of alternative Population Scenarios**

Population Scenario	1. GRO(S) Projections	3. Stable Population by 2017+
Population	362,495 ? 331,000	362,495 ? 362,495
Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of demand &amp; skills ? some 'export' of jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintenance of demand (including for housing &amp; infrastructure).</li> <li>More need to retain/create job opportunities.</li> </ul>
Industrial land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less requirement for industrial land than scenario 3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing requirement for portfolio of employment sites</li> </ul>
Housing (but see also Table 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modest overall growth of housing demand (but still significant development because of radical change in household structure).</li> <li>More of the less attractive housing falling out of use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially large growth in number of households, with radical change in household structure.</li> <li>More development and land release in Ayrshire than scenario 1.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some reduction of public transport viability (especially more dispersed areas).</li> <li>Some reduction of overall vehicle mileage and congestion.</li> <li>More difficult to justify infrastructure investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain public demand for transport (potential increase if more commuting).</li> <li>If population more dispersed (because of new housing locations), more travel, and more difficult to serve by public transport.</li> </ul>
Shopping & Town Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of declining viability and choice with falling catchment.</li> <li>Less viable to secure town centre investment and renewal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain demand, but may redistribute its location.</li> </ul>
Impact on the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in waste arising</li> <li>Less land take</li> <li>Reduced resources for environmental renewal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More development pressure and risk of loss of habits and landscape quality.</li> <li>More infrastructure demands.</li> </ul>
Services & Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some loss of catchments, e.g. for schools: likely to impact most on disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New service requirements, especially if new housing dispersed.</li> <li>More opportunity to secure additional community facilities.</li> </ul>
Impact on other parts of Scotland (especially eastern Central Belt)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant additional development pressure to accommodate people moving to areas already under development stress (congestion, car commuting, loss of Green Belt).</li> <li>Less likely population can be accommodated in town centres or existing settlement boundaries</li> <li>Additional infrastructure requirements (schools, social facilities) to replace underused capacity in Ayrshire</li> </ul>	

11. Table 1 is purely indicative, and clearly could be much debated. However, what it does suggest is (a) that considered within Ayrshire, there are arguments either way,

but (b) when external impact is taken into account, the balance is likely to be that the 'alternative' of seeking to retain population is the more sustainable option.

12. Retaining current population levels is much more likely to be a more sustainable option if:

- New housing is provided where there are existing community facilities and other infrastructure and services, **or** new housing releases are of a sufficient scale to enable facilities and services (including public transport) to be provided with the housing development.
- What should be avoided is the substantial release of land leading to housing development remote from community facilities, local shops, leisure and recreation, and dependent primarily on the car for transport.
- In addition, since the demand for additional housing arises solely to retain **existing** population levels, the demand is not for vast quantities of new large family homes. The demand will arise through a mix of factors, in which one and two person households will dominate. That is not to say that there will be a need for some larger properties (to accommodate stock renewal and changing aspirations); but most will be for single people and couples without children, and also for those who are retired and for single parents. *The draft consultative plan does not make this clear.*

13. In response to comments received, this has been examined further. The key references are the draft plan, and the accompanying technical report on "Strategic Assessment of Housing Land Requirements". Table 2, taken directly from these documents, sets the scene:

**Table 2: Population and Household Scenarios**

Scenario:	2005	2025		
		1. GRO(S) Projections	2. National Household Growth Rate (7%)	3. Stable Population by 2017+
Population	362,495	331,000	334,457 – <b>352,000</b>	362,495
Households	160,040	165,500 - 174,210	176,030	181,247 - 190,787
Household growth		5,460 - 14,170	16,000	21,207 - 30,747
Household growth p.a.		273-709	800	1060-1537

Sources:

- Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025: Consultative Draft June 2004
- Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025: Report of Survey: Technical Report 1: Strategic Assessment of Housing Land Requirements

14. These figures set out the options, but do not tell the whole story. The draft structure plan methodology for Housing Land Requirements is based on two elements. It sets out the forecasts of population and overall household numbers, and then derives the housing *numbers* which cannot be met through existing housing land allocations. There are two key omissions here. It has yet to explicitly consider the implications of household change (though these are set out in an Appendix to the Technical Report); and to assess the *area* of land required (for example by considering the types and location of housing, and the associated issue of density).

15. To get a better assessment of the first of these, Table 3, set out below, aims to estimate future sizes of households in Ayrshire. The figures are derived from the Scottish Executive’s Household Change projections, and are comparable to those in publications by Communities Scotland and both East and North Ayrshire Councils. The figures are based on the assumption that the rate of change of household size structure from 2002-2016 continues throughout the period to 2025. However, as a check that the analysis is robust, the figures given in brackets are on the basis that there is no further change in family structure after 2016. It is also assumed that the pattern of household change is not affected by the choice of scenario (whereas, as discussed later, the option of population retention could set out to attract or retain specific types of household).

**Table 3. Estimated and projected Households by Type  
 (NB: these are derived estimates, giving indicative figures only)**

Scenario:	2005	2025		
		1. GRO(S) Projections	2. National Household Growth Rate (7%)	3. Stable Population by 2017+
Population	362,495	331,000	334,457 – <b>352,000</b>	362,495
Households	160,040	165,500 - 174,210	176,030	181,247 - 190,787
<b>Household Type:</b>				
Two or more adults with children	33,600	16,000 – 18,000 (24,700)	17,000 – 18,000 (25,600)	17,000 – 20,000 (27,000)
One adult with children	10,890	16,000 – 13,000 (12,600)	17,000 – 14,000 (13,000)	18,000 – 14,000 (13,800)
One person household	50,720	68,000 (62,800)	71,000 (65,000)	75,000 (68,700)
Two or more adults	64,540	69,000 – 70,000 (69,900)	73,000 (72,400)	77,000 (76,500)

Sources:

- Scottish Executive Household Projections for Scotland: 2002 Based (2002-2016)
- Communities Scotland Housing Market Context Statement: Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway April 2002
- East Ayrshire Council Information Archives (projections for 2004-2009)
- North Ayrshire Council Projections (2000 – 2012)
- Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025: Report of Survey: Technical Report 1: Strategic Assessment of Housing Land Requirements

16. What can be said with some certainty about these projections is set out in the considered language of a Government agency (see also Annex A):

“The number of households is projected to rise. This growth is likely to have implications for the demand for housing. The main household types will increasingly be either single person or two or more adult households with no dependent children. There will be a reduction in the number of households with children. Average household size is projected to decrease.” (Communities Scotland, 2002)

17. It may be possible to go further. The figures in Table 3 suggest that considering housing requirements (and not just the structure plan issue of housing *land* requirements):

- The 'down-sizing' of households and changing household structure are *more* significant than the decision whether to retain existing population levels.
- There is a significant decline in the requirement for family housing in *all* scenarios (and irrespective of whether the projected continuation of marriage break-up is correct or not).
- By far the greatest requirement in all scenarios is for more single household accommodation.

18. The purpose of this analysis is to underpin the points made in paragraph 12 about some of the key choices, if housing development is to contribute to more sustainable development. Clearly housing need will not be met through the provision of large family homes alone. But this need not mean provision solely through flatted accommodation on brownfield town centres sites either. What it does suggest it that if the plan is to be housing-led, then there is a need for quite sophisticated policy to guide development to provide the right kinds of housing in the locations where it is wanted.

19. It is not unreasonable that if the plan is challenging the assumption of planning for decline on the basis of GRO forecasts (a position this paper supports), it can also challenge other assumptions. These include the assumptions that we should plan for the inevitable further fragmentation of society, and that planners can only zone land for housing and not guide what kinds of housing should be developed there.

20. On this basis, the plan could set a framework for assessing what sections of population it seeks to retain. There will be places where it will be right to provide larger houses to retain and attract families (North Kilmarnock for example?), providing there are alternatives to car commuting and all social facilities are provided. It will also be right to provide homes large enough to enable working from home and to meet other social aspirations. At the same time, other people may welcome opportunities for more compact homes, easy to run and maintain, and near shops, transport and other facilities. The requirements here may range from barrier-free retirement homes (is a key role for the coast to provide attractive opportunities for retirement?) through to up-market flats in the centres of towns.

21. To address these questions, and their downstream implications (such as service provision), requires developing a close working relationship between the structure plan, and not only the local plans for which it provides the framework, but also the 3 Council's community and corporate plans, including housing strategies. Again, the kind of issue to address is exemplified in the Communities Scotland report:

"Across ADG [Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway] there are supply and demand mismatches at some locations in the social rented sector, particularly within the local authority sector. Demand is now mainly from smaller sized households while supply is weighted towards the larger sized properties, resulting in increasing voids and tenancy turnover problems in some areas."

22. Taking into account the overall aims set out in paragraph 12, the characteristics of a housing land strategy aiming for more sustainable development should include:

- Harnessing the capacity of housebuilders to match the aspirations of local communities in terms of the location, types, variety and choice of housing.
- Having a phased and monitored release of housing land, including matching site release to provision of infrastructure (including water services), and

avoiding land releases years in advance of development (as with Edinburgh's South East Wedge).

- Securing clustered, not piecemeal or incremental, releases so that where new infrastructure and community facilities are required, these can be provided as part of the development, and with developer contributions to the costs.
- Taking 'windfall', small sites, conversions, and sub-division fully into account. Previous structure plans in the Central Belt have retrospectively acknowledged these contributions as providing as much as 40% of completions, at a time before the full weight of the current policy emphasis on brownfield sites.
- Ensuring that housing renewal, provision of affordable homes (including for rent), and provision of community facilities, are all as much part of the structure plan policy as release of land for building new houses for sale.

### Other main issues for Sustainable Development

23. Overall, to minimise the need for travel and promote energy and resource use efficiency, it would be welcome if the new plan included:

- Even more emphasis on existing town centres as the main focus for all types of development (service employment and housing as well as retail) and transport provision.
- An explicit set of criteria giving preference to making use of previously developed land and sites which are serviced and accessible by public transport.
- Ensuring that where development cannot be compact or clustered, such as new housing in the countryside, then there is explicit encouragement for development which is low impact in terms of its resource, energy and infrastructure requirements.

24. Unlike several other strategic plans in central Scotland, the plan appears to contain no explicit commitment to new public transport investment (i.e. Ayrshire equivalents of the Bathgate-Airdrie line; Borders rail line; busways, tramlines or light rail). Given the long time horizon of the plan, it should be possible to include at least a firm commitment to restoring the double track rail connection between Kilmarnock and Glasgow. A sound start, directly relevant to reducing dependency on commuting car in the housing options for North Kilmarnock, would be early commitment to the proposed 'dynamic loop' to enable a half-hourly interval service on the Kilmarnock line.

25. Further, and to the extent that it may not prove possible to accommodate the all the potential expansion of development within the existing envelope of Ayrshire's main towns, it could be of considerable benefit to see a new focus for proposed development. This is not least to reduce the risk (outlined above) of sporadic development remote from facilities and dependent on the car. Any such new focus should be designed to reinforce, and not detract from, the existing settlement structure. The range of possibilities might include:

- As a first preference, a new public transport network linking the three main Ayrshire towns, especially their town centres and complementary facilities, and in particular, linking Kilmarnock to Irvine and Ayr (the last two already served by electric rail);
- A University of Ayrshire, (or at least a 'University College') to provide an education resource locally (noting the length of journey times to Glasgow; and that in population terms Ayrshire is as significant as either Dundee or Aberdeen). Higher education is a growth sector in terms of employment; and such an institution could be a significant plank in the case for retaining and

attracting population. It would provide options for younger people who may wish to stay in, or move to, Ayrshire, and reinforce perceptions of a well trained work-force.

- Development of the Ayrshire coast. This is already reasonably served by public transport, and is one of Ayrshire's vital environmental assets. An earlier workshop with senior officers identified 'clean beaches' as an emblem of a clean, safe and attractive place with a future.

26. From a sustainable development perspective, there is a continuing problem with the commitment to expand Prestwick. The UK Sustainable Development Commission and House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee have both reported that UK policy for the growth of air travel, which sets the future for Prestwick, will render it impossible to meet the Government's own greenhouse gas reduction targets. However, setting aside debate about whether local economy benefits off-set the contribution to global climate destabilisation, this is a topic where the Structure Plan is constrained by – and has to comply with - Government Policy.

27. The best response may therefore have to be that *if* cheap air travel continues to be promoted notwithstanding its adverse environmental impact, then it is better it takes place where it causes least local environmental damage, and where it is relatively accessible by public transport.

28. Much of the foregoing may appear consistent with the tenor of the Consultation Draft, but there are some significant differences of emphasis.

29. As currently presented, notwithstanding its preamble, the plan does not give the impression of being suffused with sustainable development. Two aspects might change this perception. One would be the more explicit inclusion in the policies that development must meet social, economic and environmental criteria. Many of the components are in place, but would benefit from being brought together. The second would be a more radical vision of making progress on the Scottish Executive's early action priorities of waste, energy and travel. Over the time frame of the plan, all three of these topics will have gone through radical transformation, and the plan should provide more of a framework for this. The suggestion of a search area for a biomass power plant is a good one, and could be supported by other early action priorities. At present waste and energy in particular have only limited treatment in the draft.

Tim Birley for AJSP Sustainability Appraisal Group  
8 October 2004

Extract from: **Communities Scotland Housing Market Context Statement: Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway April 2002, pp27**

**Household Composition**

5.37 Table 5.7 illustrates the significant changes projected in household composition between 2000 and 2010. In 2000 the most common type of household was one with two or more adults, accounting for around 43 per cent of all households, followed by single person households. Households with two adults and one or more children accounted for over 21 per cent of all households, with single parent households at around six per cent.

**Table 5.7: Household Type Numbers In ADG**

Household Type	Year/No. of Households (thous ands)			Percentage Change 2000-2010
	2000	2006	2010	
1 Person	67.5	76.2	82.4	+22.1
1 Adult and Children	13.5	15.3	16.4	+21.5
2 Adults and Children	46.8	39.2	34.0	-27.3
2 or More Adults	95.4	101.0	104.7	+9.7
Total Households	223.2	231.8	237.7	+6.5

Source: Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin HSG/2000/4

**Table 5.8: ADG Household Type 2000-2010, Per cent of Total**

Household Type	Year/Per cent of Total	
	2000	2010
1 Person	30.3	34.8
1 Adult and Children	6.0	6.9
2 Adults and Children	21.0	14.3
2 or More Adults	42.7	44.0
Total Households	223,200	237,000

Source: Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin HSG/2000/4

5.38 There will be an estimated growth in number of one-person households of 22 per cent, just under the Scottish projection of 23 per cent. In addition there will be increases in the absolute number of households with one adult and one or more children (21 per cent), at a rate below the national forecast of 22 per cent, and an increase of 9 per cent in the number of households with two or more adults. This is below the projected growth of 11 per cent for Scotland as a whole. The number of households with two or more adults and one or more children is expected to fall by 27 per cent, compared to a fall of 26 per cent for Scotland, by 2010<sup>35</sup>.

5.39 The change in the balance of household type may have a significant impact on the nature of demand for housing. For example the large rise in the number of single person households may mean that particular housing markets experience a rise in demand for smaller sized properties. The decline in 'traditional' family households may also mean a reduction in demand for the types of housing associated with this group (e.g. larger detached, terraced and semi-detached properties). However both these trends could be tempered by increasing consumer aspirations for larger properties.