

Response to City Council Consultation

Aberdeen's Main Planning Issues

2. What do you think should be the Council's top priorities for the next Aberdeen Local Development Plan?

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A top priority for the city council in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan should be ensuring good provision of affordable HMO properties for those who work, study and live within Aberdeen City. Key to this is rejecting any proposals for an HMO Overprovision policy which would have a negative impact on affordable housing provision, and subsequently, a negative impact on attracting key workers and students into the city. As AUSA has stated in previous representations on this issue, limitations on HMOs would have an adverse effect on the ability for students to live affordably within the city, and would further effect key workers. Housing is one of the most pertinent issues facing students – rent is often the largest annual expense, and it is thus critical that the council does everything within its power to ensure that students and residents alike do not find themselves impoverished as a result of housing costs.

3. Do you have any particular aspirations for your community or Aberdeen as a whole that you think should be taken forward through the Aberdeen Local Development Plan? For example, what are your views on recycling of waste, affordable housing, access to green space or ways to reduce CO2 emissions?

Do you have any particular aspirations for your community or Aberdeen as a whole that you think should be taken forward through the Aberdeen Local Development Plan

We aspire for all students and young professionals to have access to affordable housing within the city. Availability of HMO properties is crucial in this regard. HMO properties provide provision for students to move in with their friends, and also offer a great opportunity for University staff to live with colleagues, helping to create a community feel in the residential areas on and surrounding campus. In addition, we welcome the stringent conditions HMO properties are subject to, and note that this drives up housing quality within Aberdeen's private rental sector. We share concerns raised by The University of Aberdeen in a representation made to the council during last year's consultation that an HMO Overprovision policy could have the effect of increasing rogue landlordism within the city, leading to further insecurity and poorer conditions for those living in the private rental sector.

Policy Topic Areas

3. What do you think should be our main planning priorities for transport and accessibility? (For example, how can we make it easier to travel in and around Aberdeen? Should we look at pedestrianisation in the City Centre?)

What do you think should be our main planning priorities for transport and accessibility?

In terms of transport, it is crucial that transport links are both more frequent, and less expensive – particularly between Hillhead, King’s College Campus and the City Centre. Over the last year we have seen numerous changes to the First Bus Number 20 service (and, latterly, the 1A, service) which has limited the amount of evening services leaving from campus to Hillhead, with students instead having to take the 1A from King Street. This is a safety issue: many students may be working late at night at the Sir Duncan Rice Library, for example. The frequency of the 20 service has also decreased consistently over the last decade (it used to run every 15 minutes, for example) and we would welcome a more frequent bus service connecting students on campus with the city centre. Aberdeen currently has one of the more expensive bus services in the country and it is pivotal that the cost is reduced. One avenue to achieving this could be through bringing the buses under municipal control, whereby the service would also be more accountable to students and the public more broadly.

6. What do you think should be our main planning priorities for meeting Aberdeen’s housing and community needs? (For example, how can we meet the needs of people who cannot afford mainstream housing?)

What do you think should be our main planning priorities for meeting Aberdeen’s housing and community needs?

As noted in above responses to ‘Main Planning Issues’ Q2 and Q3, ensuring that the housing and community needs of Aberdeen are met can be in part achieved through ensuring greater provision of HMO properties in the city as well as council housing. HMO private rental properties are statistically cheaper per person than renting a single bed property, and council housing further less expensive. It is essential that students, young professionals, and key workers are able to afford to live within the city – and housing costs are a critical component of this.

10. If you have any views on topics not covered above, please write them below.

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Just to re-iterate the importance of ensuring adequate provision of HMO properties in the city so that students and residents can live affordably within the city. It is crucial that proposals to introduce an HMO Overprovision policy are rejected as such. AUSA would welcome the use of previous representations and deputations on this issue to be used by the City Council in this report.