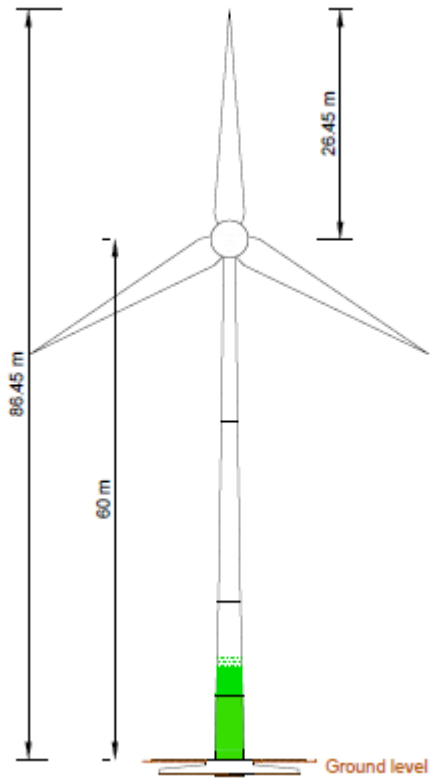


# Onshore Wind Spatial Framework July 2014



## Introduction and background

### Scottish Planning Policy 2014.

Further to the publication of the revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) in June 2014 an update is required to the Onshore Wind Spatial Framework to reflect the changes made from the draft SPP. This document reflects those changes where they are applicable to Aberdeen City.

SPP made a number of amendments to the criteria which help determine “areas of search” for onshore wind farm developments. In all cases a proposed wind farm will still be subject to the standard planning application process and will be required to comply with Supplementary Guidance Wind Turbine Development in Aberdeen City. The purpose of this document is to identify if there are any areas suitable for wind farm developments in compliance with the criteria set out in SPP.

Of the changes made in SPP those of particular interest include:-

- The reduction in the settlement buffer from 2.5km to 2km
- The removal of the 20mw generating capacity threshold
- A requirement to specify the scale of development the Spatial Framework Applies to.
- Removal of a number of Group 2 constraints included in the draft SPP
- Identification of Group 3 areas, as areas where “...wind farms are likely to be acceptable”

SPP (paragraph 161) states that planning authorities should set out in the development plan a spatial framework for onshore wind farms. The spatial framework should identify areas where wind farms will not be acceptable, areas which require significant protection and areas with potential for wind farm development. It also requires Local Authorities to set out in their Spatial Framework the minimum scale of on shore wind development that the Spatial Framework applies to. Due to the urban nature of Aberdeen and the proximity of the cities administrative boundary to the urban core, it has been determined that large scale commercial turbines for which this spatial framework will apply will be defined as:-

- Developments of more than one turbine and over 25m in height.

This spatial framework makes an assessment of the local characteristics that must be taken into account in the siting of wind turbines. The purpose of this spatial framework is to identify areas that require safeguarding and areas where there is strategic capacity. This framework is based on the criteria contained in SPP and does not impose additional zones of protection around areas designated for their landscape or natural heritage value. To draw overall conclusions the framework is supported by a single map which consolidates information on capacity and constraints. To assist in reaching this point more detailed maps of the factors that make up each of the groupings has been included in this document.

SPP identifies three area types, or Groups, which determine what if any wind farm development can take place. Table 1 below is taken from SPP and identifies the constraints for each group.

SPP Table 1: Spatial Frameworks		
<p><b>Group 1: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable:</b> National Parks and National Scenic Areas.</p>		
<p><b>Group 2: Areas of significant protection:</b> Recognising the need for significant protection, in these areas wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.</p>		
<p><b>National and international designations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Heritage Sites;</li> <li>• Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites;</li> <li>• Sites of Special Scientific Interest;</li> <li>• National Nature Reserves;</li> <li>• Sites identified in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes;</li> <li>• Sites identified in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other nationally important mapped environmental interests:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of wild land as shown on the 2014 SNH map of wild land areas;</li> <li>• carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community separation for consideration of visual impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an area not exceeding 2km around cities, towns and villages identified on the local development plan with an identified settlement envelope or edge. The extent of the area will be determined by the planning authority based on landform and other features which restrict views</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 3: Areas with potential for wind farm development:</b> Beyond groups 1 and 2, wind farms are likely to be acceptable, subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.</p>		

## 1. Group 1 - Areas that are not suitable for wind turbines of any scale

SPP identifies areas where wind farms will not be acceptable, Group1, which protects National Parks and National Scenic Areas. In Aberdeen there are no areas with either of these designations and the whole of the City is an area that wind turbine development, with careful design could take place. The next section will examine whether it is possible to identify any areas that can be identified for wind turbine development.

Figure 1. Area for Consideration for Wind Turbines



## **2. Group 2 - Areas with significant protection**

The SPP identifies environmental constraints in Group 2 that require significant protection. These areas are not suitable for the identification in the Local Development Plan as areas of search. Wind farms will only be appropriate in these areas where it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities for which the area is identified can be substantially overcome by siting, design or mitigation and this can only be determined with the detail available with a planning application.

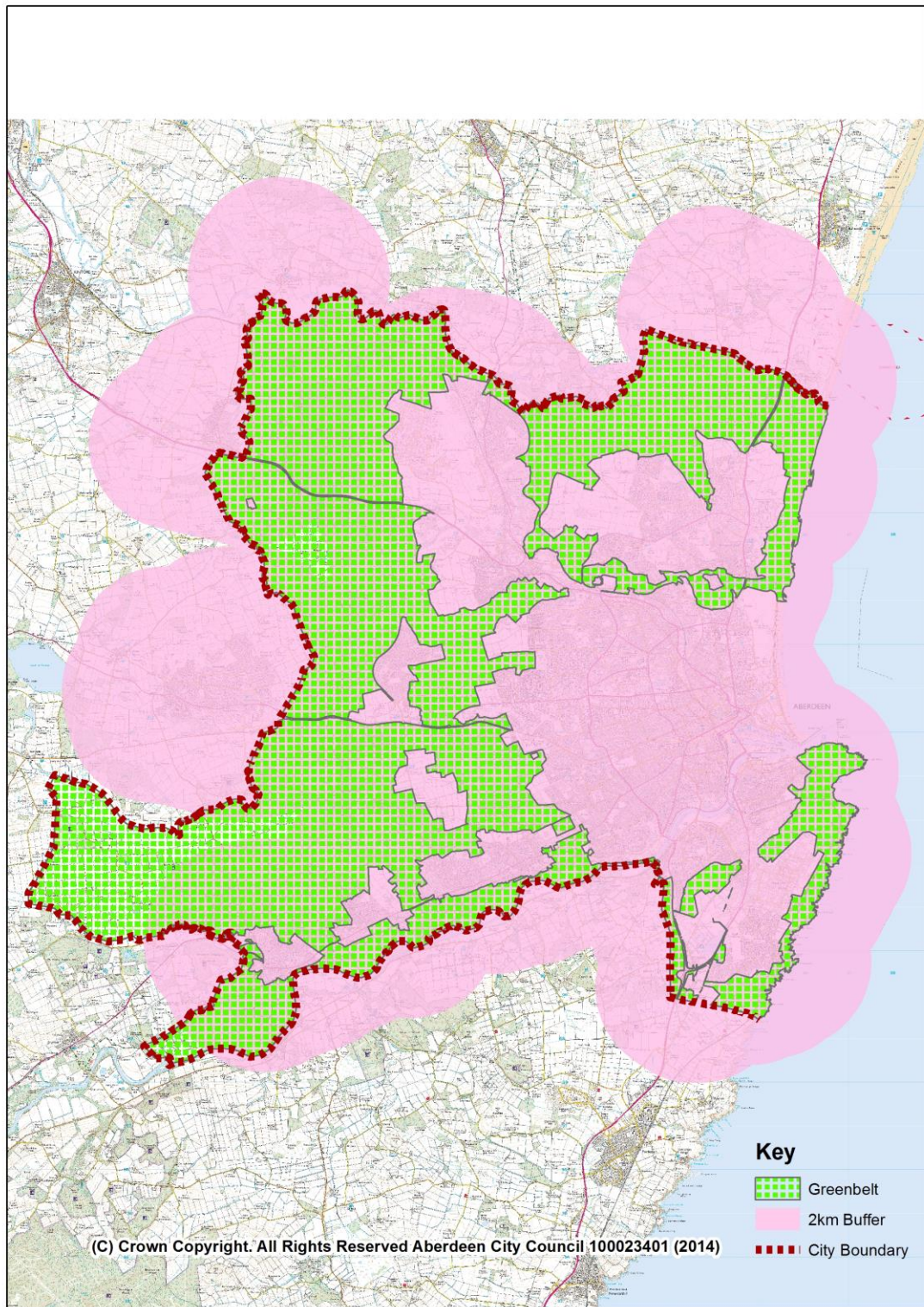
### **Community separation**

SPP recommends a revised separation distance from 2.5 km down to 2km. This is designed to form a buffer between wind farms and cities, towns and villages identified in the local development plan. This is to reduce visual impact but decisions on individual developments should take into account specific local circumstances and geography. In identifying areas of search a buffer of 2km has been used, but as suggested in SPP there may be individual circumstances that may suggest that a reduced distance is acceptable. This judgement will have to be made on a case by case basis to take into account the landscape, turbine height, number of turbines and cumulative impact. Therefore, these areas should not be identified as areas of search but assessed using a policy approach.

In identifying a buffer the existing residential areas of Aberdeen have been supplemented by the allocations for new development in the Local Development Plan and settlements identified in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan that are within 2km of the boundary between the two authorities. The map below indicates that there is only a small area between Peterculter and Garlogie that would be 2km from any identified settlement. Figure 2 identifies the areas that would be covered by a 2km buffer.

In addition to the recommended 2km separation distance the entire surrounding area of Aberdeen is identified as Green Belt. The Aberdeen Green Belt is important to maintain the integrity of the landscape setting of Aberdeen. Paragraph 52 of SPP states that local authorities should describe the types of development which would be acceptable within the greenbelt. SPP goes on to list a number of developments which may be suitable but does not include wind turbines. On that basis it is considered that the Aberdeen Green Belt should be considered as a Group 2 constraint. Only where a turbine can be appropriately sited and designed would development in the Green Belt be acceptable.

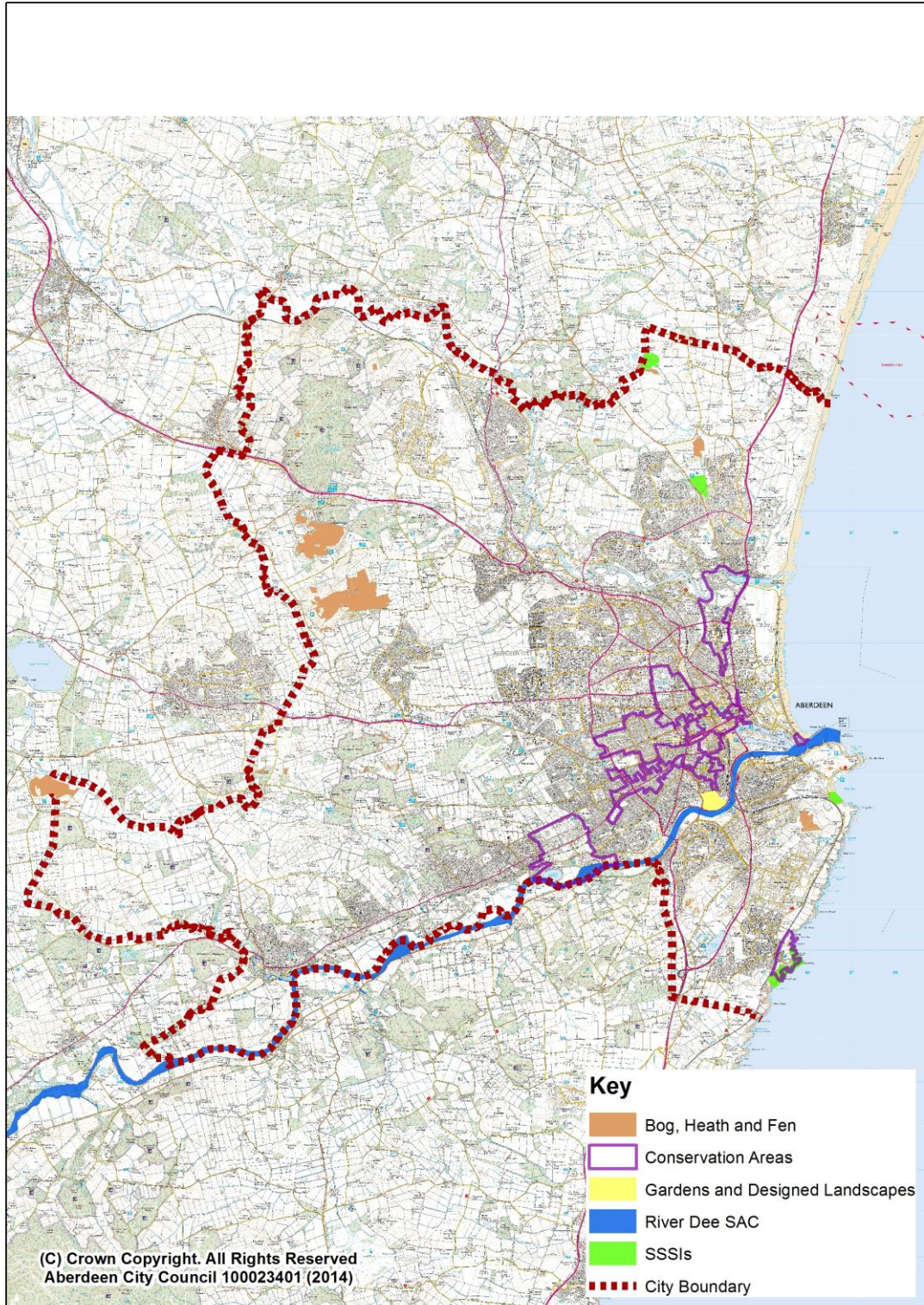
Figure 2. 2km Buffer from Urban Areas



**National and international designations and other nationally important mapped environmental interests:**

SPP identifies the environmental and planning policy constraints. Where present in Aberdeen, these are identified in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Environmental Constraints



### 3. Conclusion

Using the guidance contained in the SPP there are no Group 1 constraints in Aberdeen and there should be no areas identified where development will not be permitted. However, the limited land within the authority boundary for Aberdeen does not cater particularly well for medium to large wind farm developments. Figure 5 below draws together all of the constraints identified in Group 2. This leaves no location where there is the potential to identify areas of search. This does not preclude the development of wind turbines in Aberdeen City, but that any approach for dealing with proposals will have to be different. In summary there are no areas that require protection and there are no areas that can be identified as suitable for wind turbine development.

Supplementary Guidance Wind Turbine Development in Aberdeen City has been prepared as a guide to the consideration of planning permissions for Wind Turbines. This guidance considers all of the factors within Group 2 of SPP, local factors and guidance from SNH.

Figure 4. Consolidated map of the area within Group 2.

