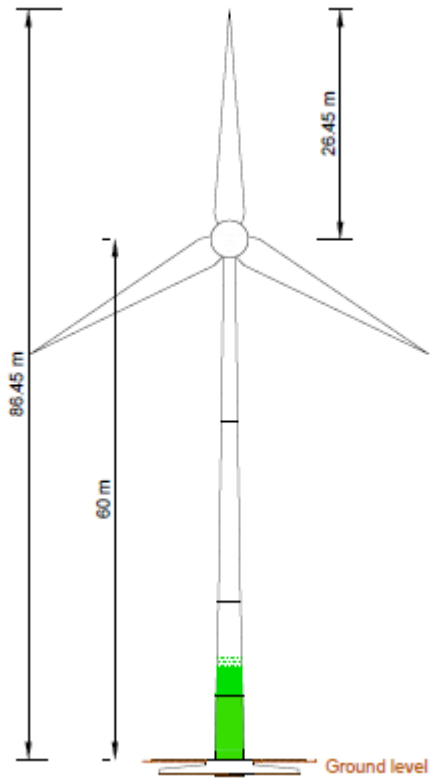


Onshore Wind Spatial Framework

June 2013

Version 1



Introduction and background

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (paragraph 189) states that planning authorities should set out in the development plan a spatial framework for onshore wind farms of over 20 megawatts generating capacity. The spatial framework should identify areas requiring significant protection, areas with potential constraints where proposals will be considered on their individual merits against identified criteria, and areas of search where appropriate proposals are likely to be supported subject to detailed consideration against identified criteria.

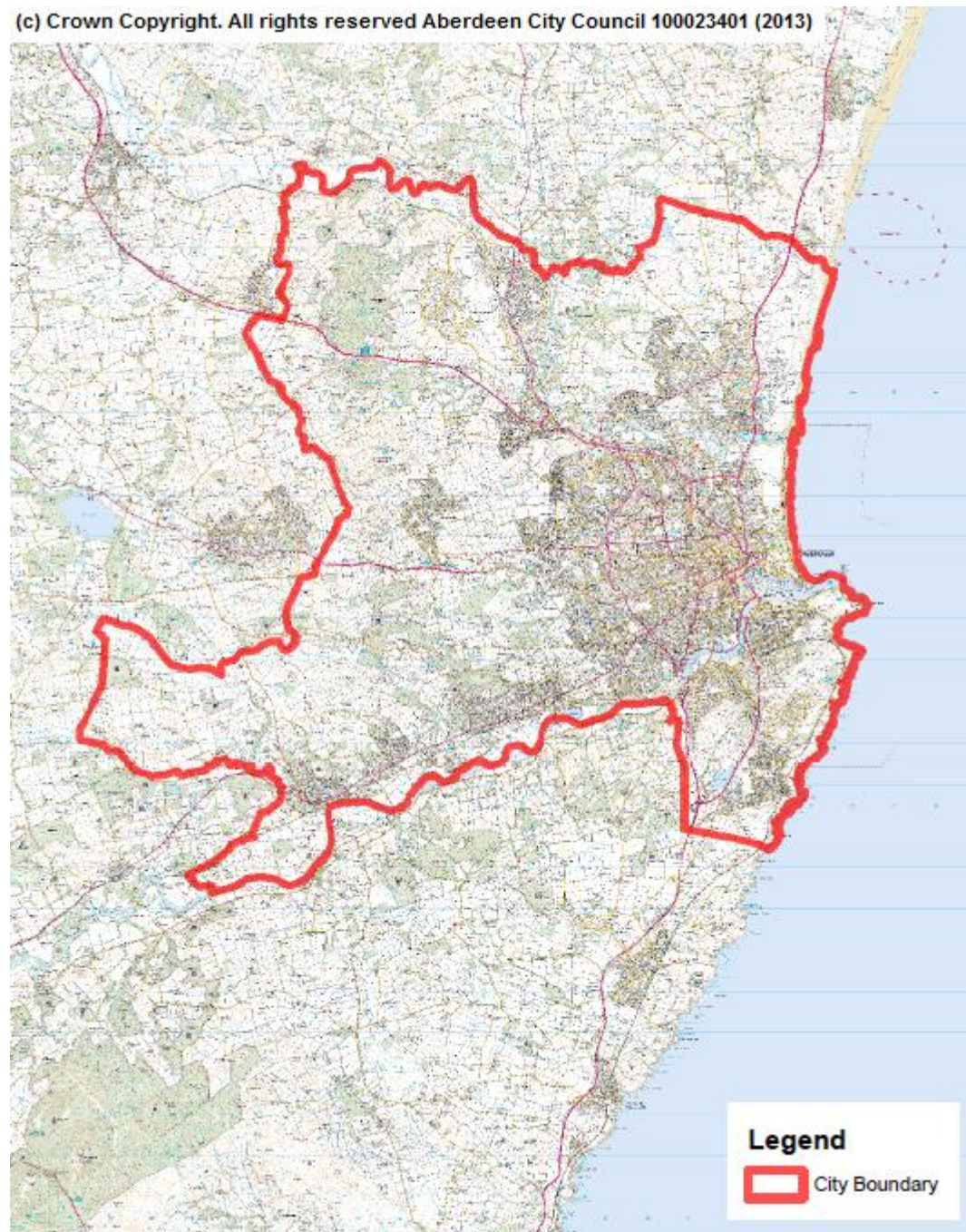
Work is underway to review SPP and the draft SPP (paragraph 216) has changed the scope of this work. It states that development plans should support the development of wind turbines at locations where impacts on the environment and communities can be satisfactorily addressed. Strategic development plan spatial strategies should identify capacity for strategic onshore wind farm developments as well as cumulative impact pressures. Local development plans should clearly set out the potential for wind turbine and wind farm development of all scales as part of the spatial framework.

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 the Draft 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.

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

The Draft Scottish Planning Policy 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. Areas with significant protection

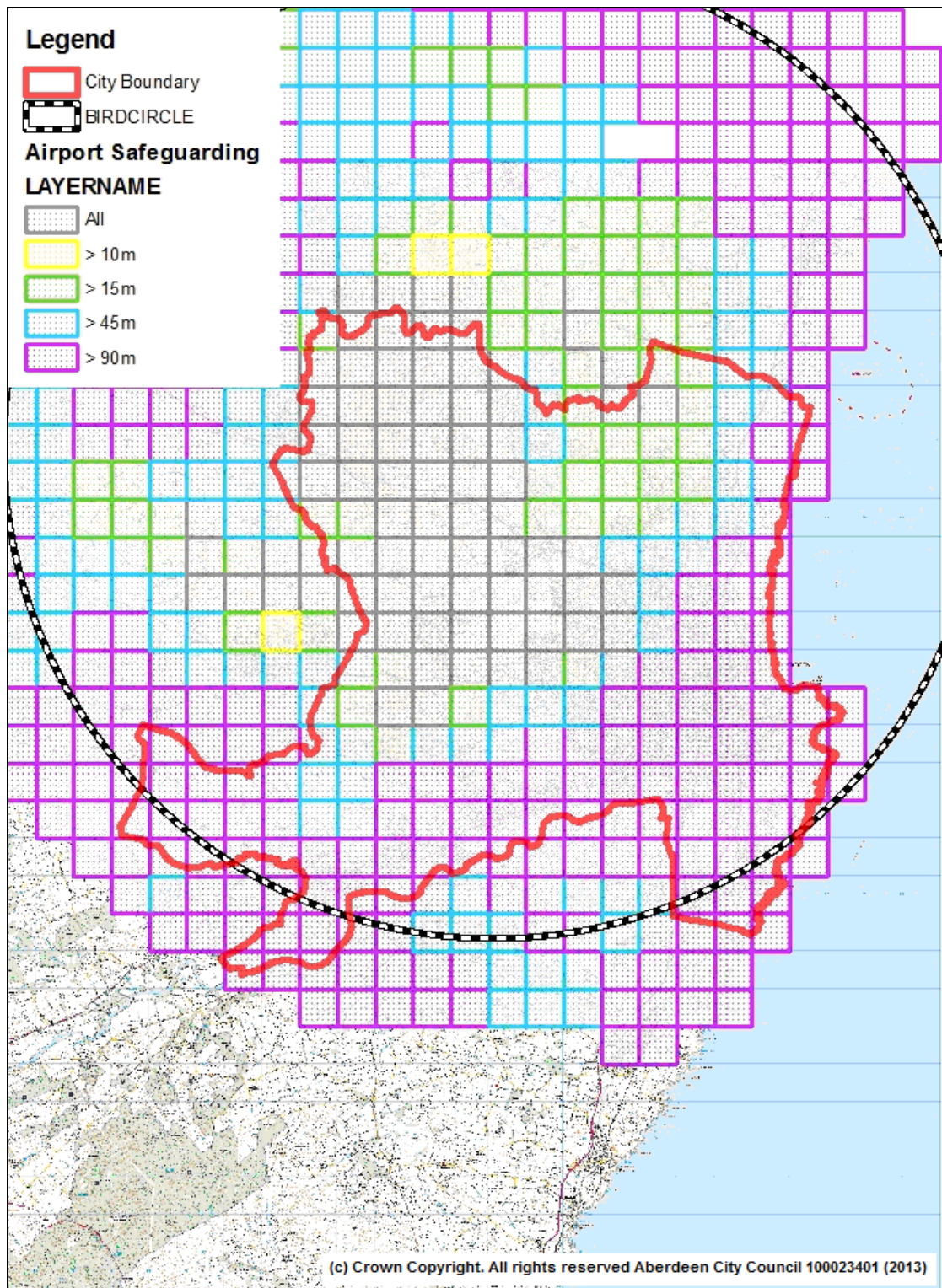
The Draft SPP identifies environmental constraints in Group 2 that require significant protection. These areas are not suitable for the identification in the Local Development Plan as areas of search. Wind farms will only be appropriate in these areas where it can be demonstrated that any significant 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.

Aberdeen International Airport

Aberdeen International Airport places a significant constraint on the development of wind turbines in Aberdeen City. There is a requirement to consult with NATS and Aberdeen International Airport on almost all applications for wind turbines. NATS are a statutory consultee and are responsible for ensuring that all of their assets are protected from interference. Aberdeen International Airport is responsible for safeguarding their airport operations and associated assets. Through consultation there can be solutions and mitigation measures that mean development can happen, but this can not be determined until they are consulted on a planning application, and can be informed of the detailed design, siting and materials proposed. Therefore, the Airport places a significant constraint on the development of wind turbines across all of Aberdeen.

Figure 2 below highlights the areas around Aberdeen International Airport where NATS and the Airport must be consulted (the multi-coloured boxes). For standard developments there are height thresholds, but for wind turbines this does not apply and consultation is required for any height of turbine in the area. This is due to the moving parts of a wind turbine that can interfere with radar. Advice on the suitability of these areas can only be provided with the detail of the location and type of development. Therefore, any land within Aberdeen must be included within Group 2.

Figure 2: Aberdeen Airport Safeguarding Map



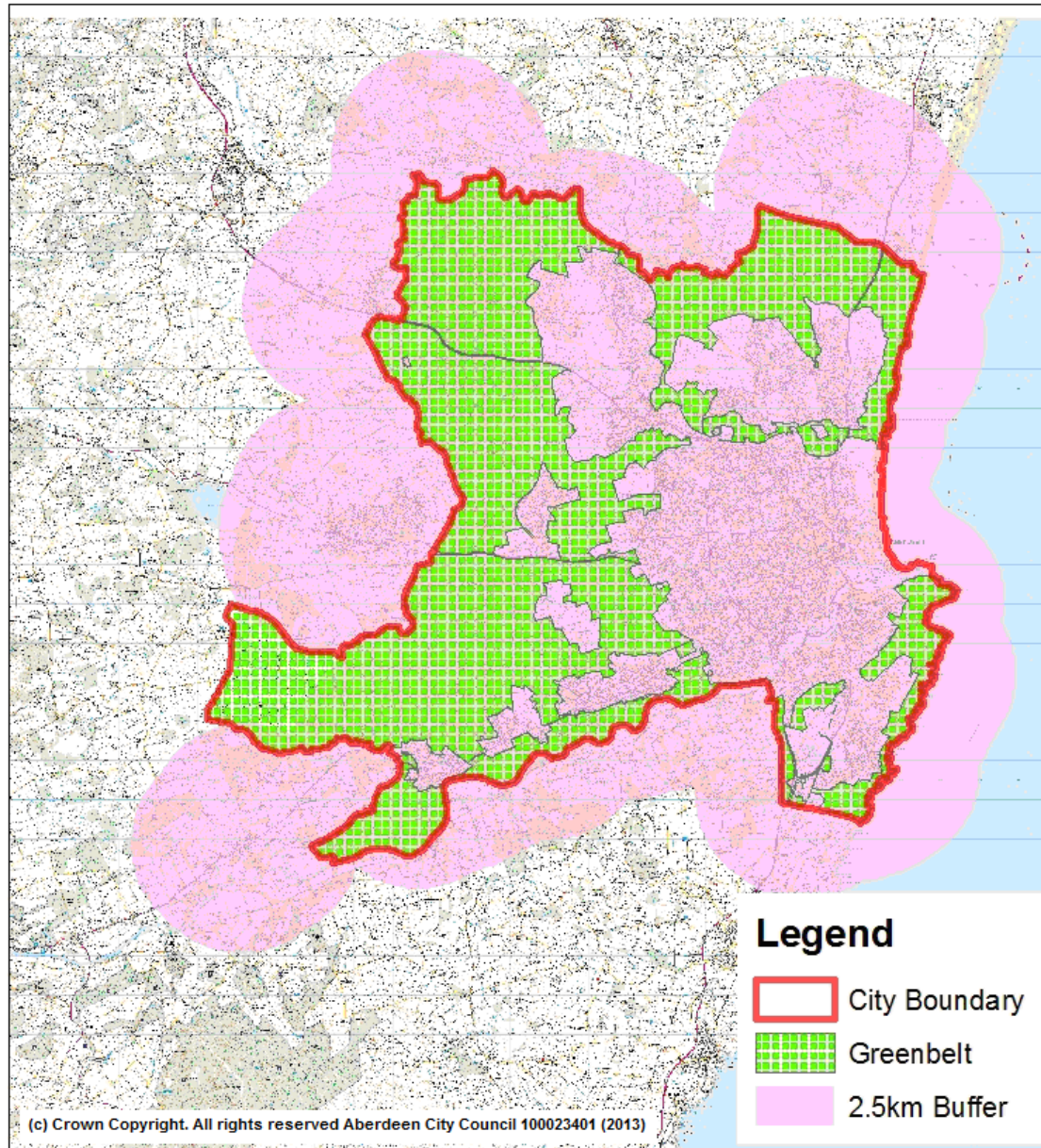
Community separation

The draft Scottish Planning Policy recommends a separation distance of up to 2.5 km 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 2.5km has been used, but as suggested in Scottish Planning Policy 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 2.5km 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 2.5km from any identified settlement. Figure 2 identifies the areas that would be covered by a 2.5km buffer.

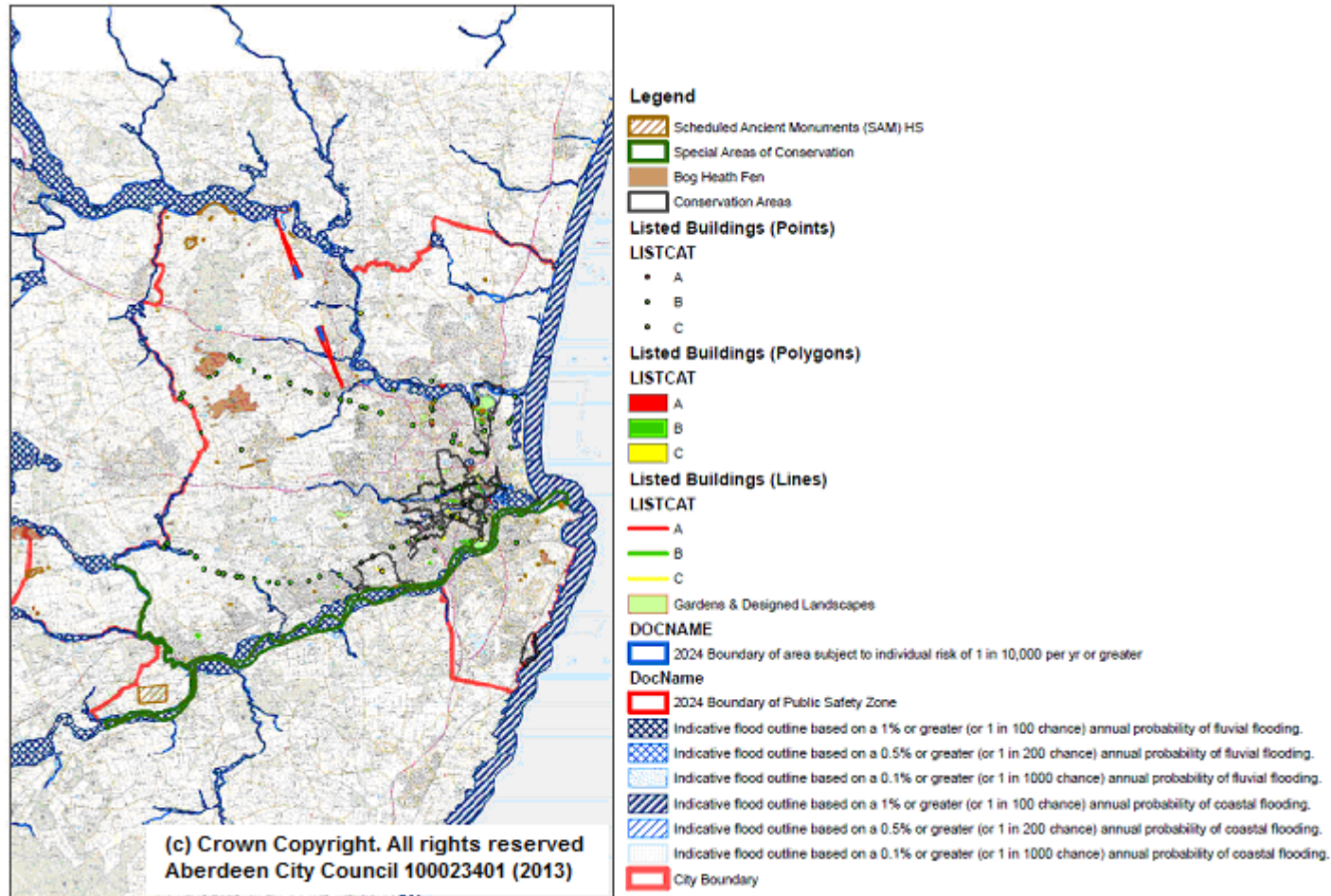
In addition to the recommended 2.5km separation distance the entire surrounding area of Aberdeen is identified as Green Belt. The Aberdeen Green Belt is important to maintain the integrity of the landscape setting of Aberdeen. Scottish Planning Policy does not comment specifically on the allowance of wind turbines in the Green Belt and whether they are acceptable or not. It is considered that the Aberdeen Green Belt should be considered as a Group 2 constraint and only where a turbine can be appropriately sited and designed that development in the Green Belt would be acceptable.

Figure 3. 2.5km Buffer from Urban Areas



Environmental Constraints

The Draft SPP identifies the environmental and planning policy constraints. Where present in Aberdeen, these are identified in Figure 4. Figure 4. Environmental Constraints



3. Cumulative Impact

SNH have produced guidance on assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind energy developments. SNH suggest that strategic cumulative impact assessment should be undertaken to assess the capacity of the land for proposals. Therefore, should any areas of search be identified it will be essential to consider the cumulative impact with other existing turbines in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. At the Development Management stage it will be necessary to consider the cumulative impact of all turbine developments that are proposed.

4. Conclusion

Using the guidance contained in the Draft 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. It is recommended that detailed guidance is provided on the considerations that will be used to determine applications for planning permission. This guidance will need to consider all of the factors within Group 2 of SPP and any other local factors. It will also need to provide advice on how the cumulative impact of wind turbines will be determined as on their individual merits small to medium turbines may be appropriate, but a number of turbines in close proximity or within a landscape may have unacceptable impacts.

Figure 5. Consolidated map of the area within Group 2.

