

# Aberdeen City Local Development Plan 2016 – Developer Bids

## Introduction and Background

The Local Development Plan (LDP) bid form provided by Aberdeen City Council (ACC) suggests that there is no requirement for the submission of bids for development of additional greenfield sites within the City. The form indicates that this is because 'the 2012 LDP identified a significant number of greenfield sites to accommodate these [Strategic Development Plan] requirements'. Bancon believes that this position is at best premature, for a number of reasons, and as a result considers it both sensible and prudent to submit bids for the development of additional greenfield sites. The reasons are: -

- 1) The requests for LDP bids is based upon the proposed Strategic Development Plan, published in February 2013. It is Bancon's view that the proposed SDP is woefully under allocating land for development. There are significant contradictions between the vision, aims and actual requirements and allowances in the plan. More importantly its growth projections are significantly below those predicted by the Scottish Government. It will surely be rejected by Scottish Ministers.  
It is submitted therefore that the LDPs should be planned to accommodate this likelihood. Considering the SDP and subsequent LDPs will be unlikely to be adopted until 2016, Bancon calculate that there will be considerable additional housing land allocations required in the 2017-2026 and 2027-2035 periods to accommodate the growth that the Scottish Government predicts, and indeed the North East will already be experiencing.
- 2) Bancon submit that the 2012 LDP fails to provide a 5 year supply of effective housing land, as identified in the latest Housing Land Audit figures. The reliance of the 2012 LDP on a small number of large development sites also fails to provide opportunities for 2<sup>nd</sup> phase sites to be drawn down early, because these are primarily the same sites as are failing to become effective in phase 1. The current Housing Land Audit identifies a 4.4 year supply, and while the draft 2013 audit suggests an improved situation, there is considerable doubt about some of the projected delivery rates for large sites. Prudence therefore suggests that there is a requirement to identify more small sites for development as soon as possible to address the shortfall.
- 3) There are several large sites identified in the 2012 LDP that are proving difficult to develop, or slower to develop than anticipated. While it is tempting to point the finger of blame at the economic conditions, this does not bear close scrutiny. The North East has performed better than most of the UK (only London and the South East being the exceptions), and the population growth since 2006, when the last strategic Development Plan review began, has exceeded even the Scottish Government's high migration forecasts. The 2009 Structure Plan aimed to increase the City Region's population to 480,000 by 2030, and current trends suggest that we have already exceeded that number in 2013. The provision of a range of effective housing sites, bolstered by new allocations, is essential to accommodate the rapidly expanding population.

This Local Development Plan bid is therefore necessary to address any one, two or all of the above. The bid itself will concentrate on the proposed development, and the deliverability of that development. The requirement for the land will be established through the proposed SDP consultation, 2013 Housing Land Audit and progress on large 2012 LDP sites in the interim. Seeking to predict these three variables at this stage in the process is impossible.

1 Name of proposer: Bancon Developments Ltd.  
Date: 14/06/13  
Address: Banchory Business Centre, Burn O'Bennie Road, Banchory.  
Postcode: AB31 5ZU  
Telephone: 01330 824900  
Email: [ben.freeman@bancon.co.uk](mailto:ben.freeman@bancon.co.uk)

2 Name of landowner: Bancon Developments Ltd.  
Address: As above.

### The site and your proposal

3 Site Name: Clinterty

4 Site Location map: The proposed development site seeks to consolidate several existing groups of houses and other buildings/brownfield sites in the Clinterty area. The site is around 800m south of the A96 at Blackburn, alongside existing minor roads (B979 and C road).



Fig 1 – site location.

This consolidation will create a linear village incorporating the existing development areas at:

- The SAC Campus (already excluded from Green Belt)
- The former Council housing site
- The existing Travellers site, and
- Their extension southwards to the group of buildings at Little Mill of Clinterty.

The linear village will run north to south, parallel to the Little Mill Burn, and a linear park will be designed to occupy the land between the burn and the new hamlet. The extended development area will have the capacity to incorporate around 100 new homes and supporting services.

- 5** National Grid reference of the site: NJ835106
- 6** Current Use of Site/Previous Development: Agricultural land, travellers site, residential, education/community facilities.
- 7** Proposed Use of the Site: Residential and supporting services.
- 8** Details of Housing Proposals: The proposed development will consolidate existing disjointed development, with scope for around 100 houses. Part of the site is currently identified as Green Belt, and part of it is identified as Community Facilities (the SAC site). The College has stated their plan to centralise their facilities and abandon the use of this site for education.
- 9** Provision of Affordable Housing: Affordable housing will be provided on site at 25% of the development.
- 10** Business Land Proposals: The provision of local services such as a shop and office accommodation will be explored with a view to creating a sustainable rural village. These will be scaled to suit the development, and not aimed at attracting others into the village.
- 11** Other Proposed Land Uses: A burnside park is proposed alongside the Little Mill Burn, to provide attractive public open space and improve the local biodiversity for existing and new residents of the area.
- 12** Phasing: It is proposed to develop the site in three phases of around 33 houses each.
- 13** Community Engagement: The proposed development of this site was promoted through the last LDP review. Bancon attended local consultation events, and presented the proposals to the general public.

#### **Sustainable Development and Design**

- 14** Sustainability Checklist:

- A) Exposure – The site is surrounded by higher ground, and is therefore well protected from prevailing winds.
- B) Aspect – the site is gently west facing.
- C) Slope – The site is gently sloping, and not greater than 1:20 at any point.
- D) Flooding – No part of the proposed housing site is at risk of flooding.
- E) Drainage – The site is capable of being drained effectively with foul water to an extended sewage treatment plant and surface water disposed of using SUDS.
- F) Built and Cultural Heritage – The development will not lead to the loss or impact upon any listed building or historic landscape.
- G) Nature conservation – The site contains little in the way of valuable habitats or species. The development of the burnside park will improve the local biodiversity significantly.
- H) Landscape features – The site does not have any significant landscape features, having been in agricultural use.
- I) Landscape fit – A landscape capacity study was carried out in support of a larger Local Development Plan bid for the 2012 LDP review. Whilst the proposals are now outdated, the assessment in the report remains relevant, and it has been appended for information.
- J) Relationship to existing settlements – The proposed development will consolidate a number of scattered developments, creating a cohesive and sustainable village.
- K) Land use mix – The primary use of the site is residential, with supporting services creating a sustainable cohesive village.
- L) Accessibility – It is recognised that the road network currently serving the existing settlement is not as good as it might be, and requires upgrading. It is also notable how busy these roads can be at peak times, with traffic seeking to avoid the city. This will largely be alleviated by the AWPR construction. This change in traffic patterns will create an ideal opportunity to address current issues and maximise the capacity that will be created.

In particular, the junctions between the B979 and the roads leading to Westhill, Tertowie and Kingswells all require rationalisation. In addition, the existing road leading from the site towards Blackburn is rather tortuous, and will be realigned on a more direct route to the existing roundabout on the A96.

The proposed development will also be easily accessible from the AWPR, with Grade Separated Interchanges on the A944 and the A96 corridors to the northeast and southeast of the site.

- M) Proximity to services and facilities –  
Community facilities – to be provided on site, or 1km away in Blackburn.  
Local shops – to be provided on site.  
Sports facilities – 1km away in Blackburn.  
Public transport networks – 800m away on the A96 corridor.  
Primary schools – 1km away in Blackburn.
- N) Footpath and cycle connections – The site will be served with foot and cycle path connections to the surrounding countryside, the burnside park, and importantly to Blackburn where it is expected that primary schooling will be provided.
- O) Proximity to employment opportunities – The proposed site is ideally located to serve large employment hubs at Dyce, Kingswells and Westhill, and the supporting services within the development will provide local employment opportunities. Blackburn also offers a developing business park with further opportunities.
- P) Contamination – No constraints.
- Q) Land use conflict – No conflict.
- R) Physical Infrastructure –  
  
Electricity – available  
Gas – available – easily extended from nearby supply.  
Water and Sewage – There is water capacity in the area, and a sewage treatment works exists alongside the SAC campus. It is proposed to expand this to serve the development.  
Secondary School Capacity – Capacity is available at Bucksburn Academy or Westhill.  
Primary Capacity – There is no capacity in the primary school in Blackburn. However, a new primary school is planned. Alternatives are available in Westhill.
- 15** Supporting Surveys: A Landscape Capacity Study is appended to the bid.
- 16** Community Benefits of the Proposed Development: The area is currently unattractive, and the sporadic development of housing, travellers site and education and industrial facilities undermine the potential character of the area. The consolidation of these sites into a cohesive and sustainable village, and the formation of a burnside park will create an attractive character with greater biodiversity.
- 17** Masterplan/Framework: No detailed plans have been prepared to date.



**CLINTERTY**  
LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY

On behalf of Bancon Developments  
October 2008

**DAVID WILSON ASSOCIATES**  
landscape architects



Tel: 01698 200035 Fax: 01698 200036  
Aros House 121 Cadzow Street Hamilton ML3 6JA  
e-mail: [design@dwandscape.co.uk](mailto:design@dwandscape.co.uk)

**CLINTERTY**

**Landscape Capacity Study**

**On behalf of Bancon Developments  
October 2008**

**DAVID WILSON ASSOCIATES  
landscape architects**

121 Cadzow Street, Hamilton ML3 6JA  
Tel: 01698 200035 Fax: 01698 200036

**CONTENTS**

- 1. Introduction..... 1
- 2. Methodology ..... 2
- 3. Landscape Character ..... 3
- 5. The Potential Development Area ..... 5
- 6. Planning Context ..... 6
- 7. Landscape Capacity Assessment..... 8
- 8. Proposed Development Areas..... 12
- References..... 13
- Practice Information..... 14



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Clinterty is located in the northwest of the City of Aberdeen. It consists of a group of small settlements at Little Clinterty, Clinterty Croft and Little Mill of Clinterty, together with Clinterty Home Farm. The Clinterty Agricultural College opened here in 1974 and is now part of Aberdeen College. The college operates the farms at Meikle Clinterty and the Haughs of Clinterty. (Gazetteer for Scotland)
- 1.2 The location sits between the A96 and A944 roads that connect Aberdeen City to the northwest of Aberdeenshire (drawing no. L1). The A96 road links with Inverurie, Elgin and Inverness beyond and is a significant transport corridor within the area. The B979 links the two routes through Clinterty Croft and Little Mill of Clinterty.
- 1.3 There is currently no direct public transport link provided for the area. The nearest services towards Aberdeen City are located in Blackburn and at Bishopston on the A96 road. The best access to the city centre by car is provided through the A96 road, some 9 miles and taking approximately 20 minutes or more, depending on traffic.
- 1.4 Bancon Homes have commissioned David Wilson Associates to prepare a landscape capacity study for a potential residential development in the area. This should be carried out with regard to the relevant development plans of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.
- 1.5 The goal of this study is to identify the limits and opportunities and set out an optimal structure for potential development in the area.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. Designation of the potential expansion area was based on an indicative area provided by Bancon Developments, showing the possible directions of development. This was defined as the approximate search area and provides a loose set of parameters for the study to focus upon. This search area crosses the boundary between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. (See drawing no. L2.)
- 2.2. In order to establish the setting into which the new development should blend, the report starts with a description of the Landscape Character of the area. This is examined in relation to both the "South and Central Aberdeenshire: landscape character assessment", prepared by the Environmental Resources Management in 1998 and "Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen" prepared by Ian Nicol, Anne Johnstone, Laura Campbell in 1996, as the site lies across the boundary of these two areas. These documents set out the officially accepted description of the character of the area. Its guidelines for development within this landscape character type are taken into consideration.
- 2.3. Following this, the potential expansion area is introduced in a general overview. The main landscape character units identified here are then described in detail.
- 2.4. The use of the site is governed primarily by the policies of the Structure Plan and the Local Plans. These are considered in detail, and the appropriate ones listed, and their relationship to the potential development discussed.
- 2.5. Having assembled all the relevant information, the landscape capacity of the potential development area is then determined in three steps. First, areas that are inevitably not suitable for any type of urban development are identified and excluded. Then, the rest of the area is divided up into and assessed against several criteria in order to identify sites that are less favourable for development from that certain aspect. The potential visual impact of development is looked at through the determination of the Visual Envelopes of the sites. The Visual Envelope (envelope of landscape from which any development on the site will be seen) is established using the KeyTERRA-FIRMA modelling programme.
- 2.6. Based on the result of the assessment, the study includes an outline structural proposal for the potential development. This is explained and the most important considerations for the proposed land use described in the last chapter.
- 2.7. Since there is no official methodology for landscape capacity assessment, the study is based on the recommendations of "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment" published by the Landscape Institute in conjunction with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, applying them to this situation with a more comprehensive context. Results of similar studies have also been taken into consideration.
- 2.8. The study also takes into account the relevant national planning policies including Scottish Planning Policy 15 "Planning for Rural Development" and 21 'Green Belts', National Planning Policy Guideline 3 'Planning for Housing' and Planning Advice Notes 44 'Fitting New Housing Development into Landscape', 55 'Planning in Small Towns', 65 'Planning and Open Space' and 72 'Housing in the Countryside'.
- 2.9. There has not been a separate ecological or tree survey prepared, but the character of the vegetation and limiting ecological features have been identified during the site survey.
- 2.10. The relevant Ordnance Survey Explorer map and an extract of the local plan were used to prepare the layouts. In addition to the various printed and electronic sources of information detailed amongst the references, the study was based on a site visit in August 2008.

### 3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 The aim of this chapter is to identify the main landscape character that is the setting of Clinterty and its potential to accommodate residential development. This is based primarily on both the "Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen" (LCAA) prepared by Ian Nicol, Anne Johnstone, Laura Campbell in 1996 and the "South and Central Aberdeenshire: landscape character assessment" (SCAA) report, prepared by the Environmental Resources Management in 1998.

3.2 The South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment classifies the landscape character type as Agricultural Heartland and says of this type:

*"...they are distinguished as a single landscape character type by their patchwork of mixed agriculture and scattered woodland and by their numerous towns and villages, linked by a network of main roads and lanes..... Variations in relief are particularly important in distinguishing different character areas for, as well as determining landscape character directly, they influence patterns of fields, woods and settlement.*

*.....They are already the most densely populated areas, and continued development of houses, both in the urban fringe and in the countryside, will continue to present further pressures along with the associated infrastructure of road improvements, industrial estates, schools and shops..."*

3.3 This Landscape character type is further sub-classified as Central Wooded Estate. The relevant key Characteristics of this classification are:

- *Rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys*
- *Strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies, adding rich and diverse texture.*
- *Mixed farmland with varying size and pattern of fields*
- *Numerous and varied archaeological features, including hedges, carved stone balls, recumbent stone circles and pictish monuments.*
- *Numerous towns and villages, many subject to recent residential expansion*
- *Frequent settlement with a variety of sizes and styles of architecture: local vernacular stone buildings with conversions, modern bungalows and houses.*
- *Long views across open farmland contrast with sudden enclosure by woodland as one passes through the area.*

3.4 It also goes on to recommend the following aim: To integrate new development in the landscape:

- *Native broadleaf trees may be used to integrate and contain new housing estates and soften the edge of urban developments*
- *In exposed locations, simple styles and forms of housing are more appropriate, especially where they may compete with views of more distinguished landmarks: development should avoid exposed locations especially where such visual conflict might occur.*
- *Use (or re-use) of local stones can help to integrate buildings in the landscape: conversion of the old derelict should also be encouraged.*

3.5 The larger section of the site lies within the "Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen" study area with the boundary line following that of the local authorities along the Littlemill Burn and then Black Burn watercourses. This describes the Landscape Character of the site as Open Farmland which it describes as follows:

*".....The open Farmland is an extensive character type that forms much of the immediate hinterland of the city outwith the river valleys..... Generally the landform is rolling, with low-lying peat-filled basins at a few locations....."*

*Agriculture is the predominant landuse, with the fields often being bordered by drystone dykes formed from boulders removed from the glacial till-derived soils. Post and wire fences are also used, but hedgerows are rare. Woodland occurs, but not in significant amounts. The traditional settlement pattern in this character type consists of scattered farmsteads that are often associated with small clumps of trees. In present day there is considerable pressure from the expanding city to increase the amount of development into these areas adjacent to Aberdeen.*

*The views that are possible from within the area vary according to altitude and topography, but can be fairly wide due to the lack of visually enclosing woodland. The visibility of the character type depends on its location: those areas that are close to main approach routes to the city are highly visible. Other areas, even adjacent areas, can be almost hidden from city and its transport routes by intervening topography. The sensitivity to development of any of these areas can be quite high because of their open character, but there will be variations due to factors such as visibility that are not uniform across the whole character type."*

3.6 The landscape is further sub-classified as Clinterty and West Brimmond Farmland with Distinctive Landscape feature listed as;

- *The varied topography, ranging from hill slopes to flat ground;*
- *The mixture of tree clumps and shelterbelts – occasionally wholly coniferous;*
- *The scattered settlement pattern, becoming sparser towards the south-east;*
- *College buildings at Clinterty with conifer screening*
- *Views to adjacent residential areas*
- *Views north-westwards*

3.7 Sensitivity to Landscape Change

*Visibility: The northern part of the area has a high visibility, as it can be viewed from the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness trunk road, one of the main approach roads to the city from the west. The southern part of the area has a medium level of visibility. It can be seen from nearby roads and areas of settlement, and glimpsed from the A96 Aberdeen – Inverness trunk road. It can also be seen from the recreational vantage points of the four hills, of which Brimmond hill is the highest.*

*Built Development: The village of Blackburn lies on the northern edge of the area and Westhill can be seen from the south. The Aberdeen College campus at Clinterty, and the travelling people's site nearby are relatively large developments. Apart from this, individual houses, occasionally sited in small groups, are the main form of development. They are scattered throughout the area, but are most sparsely distributed in the south.*

*Summary: The area itself has a rural character despite the presence of nearby large residential areas which, together with the nearby presence of the main north-western approach to the city, make it visible, particularly the north of the area. The character area has a varied settlement pattern and a variety of field boundaries. Its open character acts as a foreground to higher moorland on Brimmond Hill.*

3.8 Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- *Tree and shelterbelt management, to retain these distinctive characteristics*
- *Maintain open Character*
- *Maintain stone dykes and Hedgerows.*

Enhance

- *Consider phasing-in mixed tree species in place of conifers at Clinterty College to increase its integration with the surrounding landscape.*
- *Consider some additional boundary tree planting.*

**Conclusions**

3.9 The landscape character is defined in two separate ways in the two Landscape Character Assessment documents but there are many similarities between the two descriptions. Both indicate that the woodland cover in this landscape type is important and can be used to help reduce impacts and that the visual integrity of the landscape should be safeguarded in terms of both visual impact and architectural style.

## 4. THE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA

- 4.1 The search area around Clinterty covers a natural basin formed by the surrounding hills on all sides (drawing no. L3). Tyrebagger Hill (250m) to the northeast, Elrick Hill (202m) to the east, Brimmond Hill (265m) to the southeast, Hillhead of Concraig (142m) to the southwest and several smaller hills to the west create an enclosed effect that helps to shelter and screen the area around Clinterty (see Photo sheet 2).
- 4.2 Drainage through the area takes the form of small watercourses fed by a system of field drains and ditches. The Auchincloch Burn and Littlemill Burn converge to the west of Clinterty and form Black Burn which flows northwards through a small valley towards the River Don.
- 4.3 The underlying solid geology of the area is Granodiorite, an intrusive igneous rock similar to granite, at which Clinterty is at the centre. This is overlaid with Till for the majority of the area and an area of River Alluvium along the courses of the burns and some islands of Glacial Meltwater Deposits.
- 4.4 These geological conditions have produced land which is reasonably productive but not of the highest quality. According to the relevant map of Soil Survey of Scotland the majority is Class 3<sub>2</sub> with a few areas of 3<sub>1</sub> to the west of the Agricultural College. These classifications are described as Land Capable of Producing a Moderate Range of Crops. Other areas, especially higher grounds of the surrounding hills provide lower quality soils. (See drawing no. L4).
- 4.5 The land use is dominated by agriculture with large rectangular fields spreading all around the basin. The surrounding hills are covered by heath and woodland patches. The largest of them is Kirkhill Forest to the northeast of the area. (See drawing no. L2)
- 4.6 The basin provides a characteristic framework for the settlements in the area. Clinterty is comprised of a group of settlements and smallholdings collected loosely around the intersection of the B979 and other minor country roads. Significant features in the area are Little Clinterty, Clinterty Croft and Little Mill of Clinterty, Clinterty Home Farm and Clinterty Agricultural College (see Photo sheet 1/1).
- 4.7 Around 2 miles to the north, Blackburn also sits within this basin. It is a small village on the north side of the A96 with some other small settlements such as Glasgoforest, Muir of Kinellar and Bishopton along the transport corridor. It is noticeable that the village and most of the developed area within the basin stays below the 120m contour line (see L3).
- 4.8 Also, regarding this section of the A96, major settlements appear on the northern side, and it is not until Elgin that development occurs both sides of the road to any noticeable degree.
- 4.9 To the south, around 3 miles away, sits the larger settlement of Westhill. Despite its proximity, it is rather separated from the search area by the landform, though some of the new development started to spread towards the basin (see L3).
- 4.10 Although there are no designations related to landscape or natural features, several historical, and Listed, buildings sit within the basin. These include buildings at the historical estate of Tertowie House. Other listed features in the search area exist at Little Mill of Clinterty and Clinterty House (see L2).
- 4.11 Approximately 1 mile to the east sits Elrick Country Park (see picture 3 on Photo sheet 1/3) and to the south of this is Brimmond Country Park (L2). These are popular recreational areas particularly for walking. **Proposed Core Paths are designated around Blackburn and Westhill, but do not link with the areas around Clinterty.**
- 4.12 The area is crossed by two prominent lines of overhead power cables and associated pylons. These run to the south of Clinterty in a south-east to north-west direction.

### **Conclusions**

- 4.13 Most of the soils of the area belong to Class 3<sub>2</sub> and 3<sub>1</sub> types, capable of producing a moderate range of crops. This provides the basis of the agricultural use that dominates the character of the area.
- 4.14 The topographical limit to development within the basin area appears to be the 120m contour line. Development should be restricted to below this height.
- 4.15 The potential impact upon the settings of listed buildings should also be considered in any development.
- 4.16 The overhead powerlines will also be restrictive to the developable area of the search area.

## 5. PLANNING CONTEXT

5.1 In this chapter, policies of the development plans of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for the area are highlighted, which have a relevance to this Landscape Capacity Study. Designations regarding natural or cultural heritage are also included here.

5.2 The Structure Plan part of the development plan is common for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The extant Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Structure Plan was formally approved in 2001. Preparation of a new structure plan is currently underway.

5.3 In the current Structure Plan, anticipated housing market allocations are predicted for the period until 2005 and 2006 to 2010. Original allocations in the Structure Plan for the Aberdeen Housing Market for 2006 to 2010 (Policy 9) were to build 5900 new houses with 3800 of these being within the City and the remainder spread around larger towns on the periphery.

• <i>“Aberdeen City brownfield</i>	<i>3,000</i>
• <i>Aberdeen City greenfield</i>	<i>800</i>
• <i>Westhill</i>	<i>500</i>
• <i>Inverurie</i>	<i>500</i>
• <i>Portlethen</i>	<i>400</i>
• <i>Banchory</i>	<i>200</i>
• <i>Other Aberdeenshire settlements*</i>	<i>500</i>
• <i>Total</i>	<i>5,900”</i>

5.4 For the period 2011 to 2015 Policy 10 states:

**“Indicative Housing Distribution: 2011 to 2015**

*Strategic housing land reserves sufficient to accommodate 5,700 houses in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area ..... are required. These land reserves shall allow for an anticipated 3,000 houses on brownfield land in Aberdeen, with the remainder distributed amongst accessible greenfield locations adjacent to the urban area of Aberdeen and in main service centres in Aberdeenshire. Local plans may, where possible, indicate where this housing should be accommodated, based on the capacity of settlements and in accordance with their function and roles as set out in Table 1 of the Strategy section, and all in the same broad proportions that are set out in Policy 9. These indicative allocations will be subject to review through the development plan process, as part of our commitment to continuous plan making.”*

5.5 The new Structure Plan is at a Draft stage at present and open to consultation and as such is lacking in detailed policies, however it does contain amended housing allocation figures until 2030. For the period 2007 to 2016, it is predicted that 29,500 houses will be required across the Structure Plan Area

and 23,700 in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area alone. This compares with 11,600 units for approximately the same time period in the previous plan. It also estimates the current land supply to be adequate for 9007 units which clearly leaves a shortfall.

5.6 **The demand for development land allocations** will inevitably place a great deal of stress upon both the City and smaller towns in the region which will be expected to bear the increase on resources and infrastructure. Opportunities for expansion are already scarce in many of these settlements, and more locations outwith these settlements are likely to be required, if the targets are to be achieved.

5.7 The Aberdeen Local Plan "Green Spaces, New Places" was adopted on 25 June 2008 to replace the former Aberdeen City District Wide Local Plan. The Aberdeenshire local plan was adopted in 2006.

5.8 Both local plans designate most of the study area as part of the Green Belt. Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 28 and Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Gen13 exclude any major developments within this area unless it is essential for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, informal countryside recreation, or mineral or landfill workings or if it is directly related to nature conservation.

5.9 For any other purposes, only minor developments may be permitted within the Green Belt, such as conversion of existing buildings or minor housing related to an existing primary industry appropriate to the Green Belt (Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 28 and Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Hou3, Gen13). **However, the Green Belt is currently under review in order to locate potential greenfield sites for the targeted developments.**

5.10 Some areas within Aberdeen City are also designated as parts of Green Space Network. According to Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 29, proposals *“for development that is likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the green space network will not be permitted.”* (p. 52)

5.11 Since agriculture is the dominant land use of the area, Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Env11 'Agricultural Land' is also relevant here:

*“Development that would cause the permanent loss of productive agricultural land will be refused unless it has been allocated for development in the Plan or the developer demonstrates:*

- a) its social or economic benefit clearly outweighs the agricultural value of the site; AND*
- b) there is no suitable alternative site for the development.*

*Where the agricultural classification of the land is in question the developer must demonstrate its quality.” (p. 23)*

However, there is no similar policy to Aberdeen City.

- 5.12 Due to the presence of some woodlands within the area, relevant local plan policies are also important to mention:

*The City Council will protect and enhance Aberdeen’s trees and woodland with the aim of doubling the existing tree cover of the City.*

*1. There is a presumption against all activities and development that will result in the loss of or damage to established trees and woodlands that have natural heritage value or contribute to the character, biodiversity or amenity of a particular locality.*

*2. Planning authorities have a duty to have regard to the planting of trees. Where proposed development unavoidably involves the loss of trees, permission will normally be conditional on a replanting scheme with trees of appropriate species and numbers. New development should make a positive contribution to the enhancement of tree cover by, where appropriate, ensuring provision is made for new street and garden trees and community woodland. New tree planting should consist wholly or mainly of native species.” (Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 33, ‘Protecting Trees and Woodlands’; p. 55)*

*“Development that would cause the loss of, or serious damage to, trees or woodlands, which are EITHER covered by an existing or proposed Tree Preservation Order OR of significant ecological, recreational, historical, shelter or landscape value, will be refused unless:*

- a) its public benefits at the local level clearly outweigh the value of the habitat;*
- b) the development will be sited and designed to minimise adverse impacts on the biodiversity of the site, including its environmental quality, ecological status and viability;*
- c) there will be no further fragmentation or isolation of habitats as a result of the development; AND*
- d) the development incorporates satisfactory measures to replace and/or enhance existing trees and woodlands.” (Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Env8, ‘Trees and Woodlands’; p. 20)*

### **Conclusions**

- 5.13 Regarding the targeted numbers of new housing set in the new Draft Structure Plan and the scarce opportunities for expansion of existing settlements, more locations are likely to be required to meet the demands.

- 5.14 Most of the study area sits within the designated Green Belt. Although residential development here would contradict the extant green belt policies (Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 28 and Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Gen13). However, the Green Belt is currently under review.

## 6. LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

6.1 This assessment is carried out in three phases. First, those areas are listed which should be excluded from the development for some reason. Then the rest of the area is divided into units, and assessed against several criteria. These include considerations of the sensitivity of the landscape which make development at certain locations less acceptable. Finally, visual impacts are assessed separately.

### Exclusions

6.2 A significant share of the study area is designated **Green Belt** (see figure right), where local plan policies exclude major residential developments. However, since this designation is currently under review, for the purposes of the study this has been ignored.

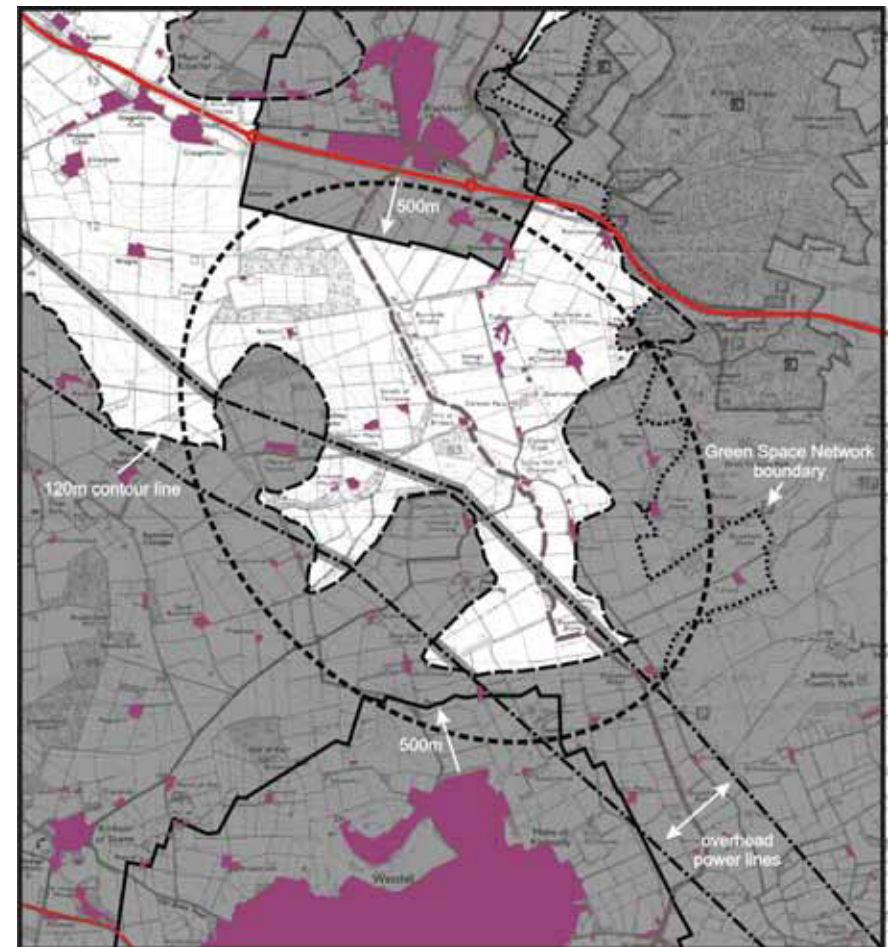


6.3 **Landform** is a dominant feature providing a unique character to this area. It is noticeable that most of the developed area within the basin stays below the 120m contour line. In order to protect this feature and the open spaces of the surrounding hills, any areas above this height have been excluded.

6.4 Taking account of the size of the search area, if new development occurs, there is a risk, in the long term, of Westhill coalescing with Blackburn. Even if physical coalescence is not an immediate issue visual coalescence could be. In order to avoid **coalescence** between them and the potential new development a 500m zone around them is strictly excluded.

6.5 The eastern part of the area, within Aberdeen City, is designated as part of **Green Space Network**. The Green Space Network is currently being reviewed, but it is reasonable to anticipate that it will stay. It should therefore be excluded from the site area.

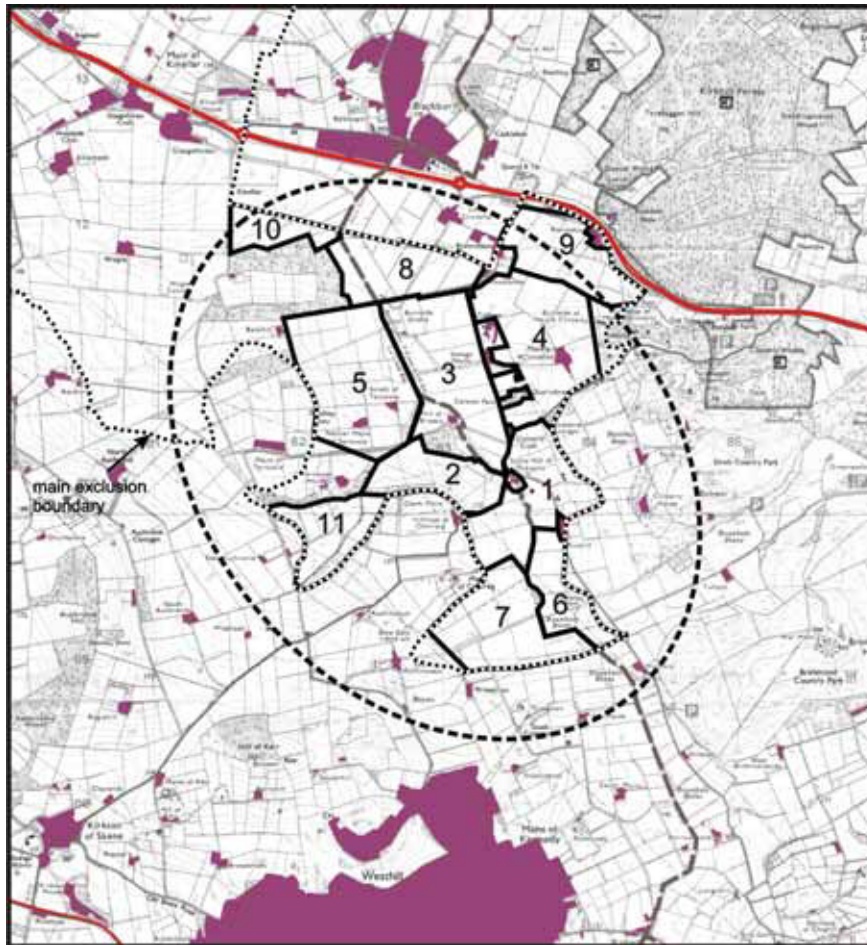
6.6 Area of the high voltage **overhead electric cables** should also be excluded with a 100m buffer zone designated. Although it is possible to alter the line of the cables, due to the high costs this is not likely to happen. (See figure opposite for the areas excluded.)



### Potential development areas

6.7 For the purposes of further assessment, the potential development area has been divided up into sections so that they can more easily be analysed. These have been allocated based on rough physical boundaries and are only a superficial grouping of field boundaries at this stage for ease of study. There are eleven such parcels of land and they have been given numbers for identification purposes, starting from a cluster around Clinterty and radiation out into the search area (see figure next page).





- 6.8 **Potential Development Area 1** occupies the land to the south and east of Little Mill of Clinterty between the 120m contours.
- 6.9 **Potential Development Area 2** sits on the north face of Hillhead of Conraig to the west of site one.
- 6.10 **Potential Development Area 3** occupies the land to the west of the Agricultural College, between the road and Black Burn. It is a large site and sits in the floor of the basin.

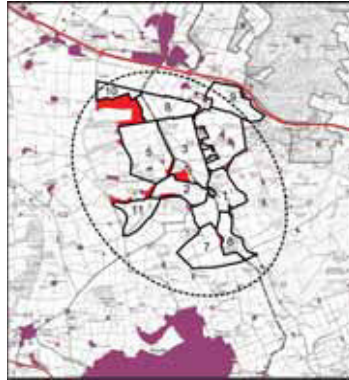
- 6.11 **Potential Development Area 4** sits to the east of the college, between the road and the 120m contour and development at Burnhead of Meikle Clinterty. There are a few significant developments within the site which are Clinterty Caravan Park, a site for travelling people and Aberdeen College, Clinterty Centre (Photo sheet 2/1-2).
- 6.12 **Potential Development Area 5** is to the west of site three and covers a series of field boundaries.
- 6.13 **Potential Development Area 6** sits to the south of Clinterty between the country road and Littlemill Burn. It is on slightly higher ground but fairly well enclosed by the landform.
- 6.14 **Potential Development Area 7** sits to the west of site six and is again quite well enclosed.
- 6.15 **Potential Development Area 8** sits to the north of site three in on the base of the basin.
- 6.16 **Potential Development Area 9** occupies the land south of Bishopton and the A96.
- 6.17 **Potential Development Area 10** sits in the low land at Kinellar, south of the A96.
- 6.18 **Potential Development Area 11** is slightly separated from the others by the topography and the estate around Tertowie House. It sits in the high ground but is fairly enclosed.

**Landscape considerations**

- 6.19 The Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Env11 safeguards the productivity of **agricultural land** in general. This relates particularly to prime quality land that is represented by Class 3<sub>1</sub> soils in the area (see figure to right). Although there is no such policy constraint for Aberdeen City, from the aspect of landscape assessment Class 3<sub>1</sub> soils on the other side of the boundary have the same value. Using these areas for the purposes of new development should preferably be avoided.



- 6.20 Although it does not completely exclude it, Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy Env8 severely restricts developments affecting **woodland areas** and the relevant Aberdeen Local Plan Policy 33 also sets similar constraints. Therefore areas covered by woodlands are considered throughout the whole search area. **There are only a few patches of major woodlands within the potential development areas** (see figure). Protection of minor ones and individual mature trees is also important.



### Visual impacts

- 6.21 The visual envelopes of potential developments at each of the eleven sites have been established through ground model analysis using KTF 6.7 software produced by Key TERRA-FIRMA Ltd and topographical Land-Form PROFILE data supplied by Ordnance Survey. The 'Zones of Visual Influence' output data (drawing no. L5) show the areas from which the developed sites could be seen based on the topography of the landscape, with the larger areas of woodland superimposed as visual barriers at a generic height of 15m. The supposed height of development is taken to be 8m from ground level. It takes no account of physical visual barriers such as individual houses or buildings and smaller tree cover. These can be added to the analysis but are too numerous and varied to be included accurately. Each area has four points located evenly throughout. The degree of view can then be assessed. These are illustrated in drawing L5. The locations that the sites can be seen from are referred to as visual receptors.
- 6.22 **Potential Development Area 1** – The visual envelope is mainly concentrated upon the course of the Littlemill Burn and surrounding valley but also spills over onto the higher hills in the area. Views on the higher part will only be of part of the site. Views will be possible from the edge of Elrick Country Park and Brimmond Hill. Views will also extend out towards the north edge of Westhill and towards Blackburn although over a distance of around 2 miles.
- 6.23 **Potential Development Area 2** – This site can be seen from approximately the same area of the basin but will have greater impact on the higher grounds. The site will not be as visible from the area north of Westhill.
- 6.24 **Potential Development Area 3** – Similarly site three will be seen mainly from the floor of the basin and is well contained within the ring of hills. Again it will

be visible from the highest ground but is reasonably well screened from settlement areas.

- 6.25 **Potential Development Area 4** – Site four is somewhat screened within the basin floor but visible from the higher ground again. It is less visible from Elrick and Brimmond Country Parks and only partially visible from the main settlement areas.
- 6.26 **Potential Development Area 5** – Most of the views of site five are to the east within the basin due to the fact that it sits on the east facing slope of one of the hills and has a large group on its immediate north. There will be partial views from Tertowie House and clear views from Brimmond Hill however.
- 6.27 **Potential Development Area 6** – Site six is on higher ground but also quite enclosed by the topography. Views from the basin floor are restricted but are possible from the north part of Westhill and Elrick and Brimmond Hill Country Parks. Views will be possible from Blackburn but these will be distant.
- 6.28 **Potential Development Area 7** – Similarly to site six, site seven will be visible from the same areas but less so from Blackburn and the north due to the topography at Hillhead of Concraig. It is closer to Westhill however and will be more visible from here.
- 6.29 **Potential Development Area 8** – Site eight is close to the A96 and to Blackburn and will therefore have a significant impact upon both. Views are contained within the basin to the south and east but views extend out to the west where the landform is not as high.
- 6.30 **Potential Development Area 9** – Site nine will be visible from the basin and will have a significant impact upon Elrick Country Park, the A96 and Blackburn. It will be seen from the west and also from the high ground to the south west and south out towards Westhill.
- 6.31 **Potential Development Area 10** – Site ten will have an impact upon the basin and the land to the west and a significant part of Blackburn, A96 and the Country Parks at Brimmond Hill and Elrick.
- 6.32 **Potential Development Area 11** – Site eleven is a bit separate from the rest of the potential development areas and is enclosed in a valley space between the hills and linked to the remainder through a narrow passage. Views will be restricted to a parcel of land around it and an area across the basin to the east of Blackburn. It would however have a significant impact upon Tertowie House and would be visible from Brimmond Hill.
- 6.33 Based on the designated visual envelopes, it is possible to establish the risk of **visual coalescence** as described below:

- 7 can be clearly seen from the northern edge of Westhill. Viewed from the areas east and west of Blackburn it may be seen as part of Westhill. There is therefore a risk of Visual coalescence.
  - Although 6 can be seen from both Blackburn and Westhill it is further away and outwith the direct line of sight between the two villages. There is therefore a negligible risk of Visual coalescence.
  - 8 is relatively close to Blackburn but is not visible from Westhill. Therefore, although it can be seen as an extension of Blackburn, across the trunk road, there is no risk of Visual coalescence between the two villages.
  - From Westhill 9 will be seen against the backdrop of Kirkhill Forest. There is therefore very little risk of Visual coalescence.
  - 10 cannot be seen from Westhill but it is close enough to Blackburn to appear as an extension. It will not, however, contribute to Visual coalescence between the two villages.
  - 1 to 5 and 11 will only be seen as contributing to Coalescence if the whole area is developed. Their coalescence would be with 6 to 10 rather than the two villages.
- 6.34 Regarding **view from the A96** all of the potential development sites can be seen from the A96 to some degree. The area of greatest visual impact on Blackburn will be any impact on the area between the two roundabouts. 7 and 11 will have the least impact.
- 6.35 8, 9 and 10 are very close and will be clearly seen. 1 to 6 will be seen but they will be at some distance and will be softened by various elements in the landscape. Subsequent detail design will need to take account of the view from the road.
- 6.36 The importance of **Brimmond Hill** and its view towards Aberdeen and the coast has already established in another context. In this case the view west is important but not iconic.
- 6.37 10 is the only site that cannot be seen from Brimmond Hill but the views of all of them will be into the hollow and from a distance. The visual impact is moderate.
- 6.38 **Elrick Country Park** is an important receptor and all of the sites can be seen to a greater or lesser degree. Again they will be seen from some distance and there is clear countryside between them. Again the visual impact will be moderate.
- 6.39 **Tertowie House** has three listed buildings and the impact on its setting will be a consideration. 11 will have the greatest impact with the edge of 2 also affecting the setting. This is a concern.

- 6.40 Taking all the visual impacts into consideration, the land most suitable for development within the area could be designated as sites 3 and 4 and parts of 1 and 5 as it is shown on the figure below.



### **Conclusion**

- 6.41 Having excluded the areas not appropriate for development, the rest of the potential development area was further assessed.
- 6.42 In terms of the landscape considerations, the minor woodland areas do not impose a significant constraint, and could be integrated into the potential development. Protection of prime quality agricultural land is a concern that may affect Site 3 and Site 9.
- 6.43 From a visual point of view, the sites most suitable for development are located in the centre of the potential area.

## 7. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

- 7.1 The development area was established on the basis of the results of the assessment, designating the settlement boundary line with the necessary minor corrections. The proposed structure respects the character of the landscape, being governed in principal by the natural features, particularly the topography.
- 7.2 Recreational open space is proposed along the burn at the bottom of the hollow. This will provide an important green corridor throughout the settlement, having both ecological and recreational functions. It is also justified by the potential flood risk along the burns shown on the Indicative River & Coastal Flood Map for Scotland. Moreover, it would provide excellent views as seen from the residential areas which mostly face this direction.
- 7.3 The ridge with a minor hilltop above Meikle Clinterty is proposed as woodland planting. By providing this backdrop, it is possible to significantly reduce the impact on the affected receptors (especially the A96 road and Blackburn). Although gradient is not a significant constraint throughout the area, steeper grounds have also been avoided.
- 7.4 The area is currently part of the Aberdeen City Green Belt which is currently being revised at a district and regional level.
- 7.5 Also, some parts of the proposed development area include Class 3<sub>1</sub> soils. Since neither the Aberdeen City policies nor the relevant SPP 15, "Planning for Rural Development" do not completely exclude development on prime quality land; this could be possible if the benefits of this development outweigh the loss of this productive land.

### Development areas

- 7.6 Layout 6 shows the proposed development framework. This is structured along the gentle slopes enclosing the burnside open space. The total area of the development is approximately as shown below:

Phase 1	893,000
Phase 2	382,000
Phase 3	315,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,590,000m<sup>2</sup></b>

- 7.7 Although the community facilities and retail areas of this potential new settlement have not been designated, these should be centred at the crossroads at Clinterty Croft. This could be ideally integrated with the adjacent

open spaces, and the proposed new roads (see hereafter) would relieve its transit traffic.

- 7.8 The Proximity of the Clinterty Centre of Aberdeen College provides a great core feature for the development. There could be mutual benefits through coordinating the development of the college and the future residential areas.
- 7.9 Development should take place in several phases, starting with the core area contained within the City boundary. Phase 2 would complement this symmetrically along the western slopes of the hollow. Phase 3 would be a bit separated, and should be considered only as a reserve development area for long term allocation.
- 7.10 Scale and design of development should be in sympathy with those characteristic of the region. The nearby Westhill provides a good example for what to avoid. As set out in the South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment, "simple styles and forms of housing" would be more appropriate to this location. Also, it is important that, in order to maintain the rural character, a full landscape framework should be part of the overall masterplan.

### Road Network

- 7.11 New roads should be provided in order to access the new residential areas. These are proposed to be routed so that they would also be suitable to relieve the settlement centre of transit traffic. It is also important that they do not separate the residential areas of the green corridor, thus allowing safe and easy access to these areas.

### Open Spaces

- 7.12 Provision of proportionate areas of open space is necessary in order to avoid large continuous urban-style areas within this rural setting. The green corridor along the Littlemill and Black Burns (approx. 390,000m<sup>2</sup>) provides opportunity for locating leisure areas. It is easy to link it to the residential areas, and allows for pedestrian and bicycle routes along the burns. Also, it could be an attractive section for a potential future core path between Westhill and Blackburn.

### Woodlands

- 7.13 Woodland belts have been provided along the settlement edges where necessary.

## REFERENCES

### Plans and Research Studies

1. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2002)  
The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, London and New York
2. Landscape Character Assessment. Guidance for England and Scotland  
Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity  
Scottish Natural Heritage – The Countryside Agency  
Source: [www.snh.org.uk/www/sharinggoodpractice/cci/cci/guidance/](http://www.snh.org.uk/www/sharinggoodpractice/cci/cci/guidance/)
3. Landscape character assessment of Aberdeen. Scottish National Heritage Review.  
No 80 (1996)  
Ian Nicol, Anne Johnston, Laura Campbell
4. South and Central Aberdeenshire: landscape character assessment. Scottish  
National Heritage Review No 102 (1998)  
Environmental Resources Management, Edinburgh
5. North East Scotland Together. Approved Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Structure Plan  
(2001–2016)  
Source: [www.nest-uk.net](http://www.nest-uk.net)
6. Aberdeen City and Shire: A brighter outlook. Draft Structure Plan (2008)
7. Aberdeen Local Plan (2008)  
Source:  
[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/accl/web/site/Planning/SL/pla\\_LocalPlan\\_home.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/accl/web/site/Planning/SL/pla_LocalPlan_home.asp)
8. Aberdeenshire Local Plan (2006)  
Source: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/finalised/index.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/finalised/index.asp)
9. Draft Core Paths Plan (2008)  
Source: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess/core\\_paths\\_plan/maps.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess/core_paths_plan/maps.asp)
10. Final Draft Core Paths Plan (2008)  
Source:  
[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ACCI/web/site/WalkingCycling/SL\(WalkingCycling\)/wac\\_corepaths\\_visionaimsobjectives.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ACCI/web/site/WalkingCycling/SL(WalkingCycling)/wac_corepaths_visionaimsobjectives.asp)

### Maps

11. Ordnance Survey, Explorer 406: Aberdeen & Banchory (2002)
12. Soil Survey of Scotland. Sheet 38: Aberdeen (1984)  
The Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen

### Websites

13. Aberdeenshire Council  
[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
14. Aberdeen City  
[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk)
15. Historic Scotland Listed Building  
[hsewsf.sedsh.gov.uk](http://hsewsf.sedsh.gov.uk)
16. Indicative River & Coastal Flood Map for Scotland  
[www.multimap.com/clients/places.cgi?client=sepa](http://www.multimap.com/clients/places.cgi?client=sepa)
17. Scottish Natural Heritage's Information service  
[www.snh.org.uk/snhi](http://www.snh.org.uk/snhi)
18. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland  
[www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk)
19. Gazetteer for Scotland  
<http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/towns/townfirst5649.html>

## PRACTICE INFORMATION

### David Wilson Associates

1. The landscape architectural practice of David Wilson Associates was established in 1992 and now works from a busy design studio in Hamilton town centre. The staff consists of five qualified Landscape Architects including David Wilson, who has now over twenty five years professional experience. This is reinforced by two qualified and experienced garden designers and administrative back up.
2. The company use computer-based design and communication systems to provide a professional landscape design and planning service to public agencies, commercial clients and private individuals throughout Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of England.
3. The workload includes commercial housing layout design, industrial, residential developments, road corridor improvement projects, community parks, play areas, private garden design and ecological and woodland habitat the full range of landscape initiatives.
4. In addition, the practice has provided a specialist service in preparation of landscape and visual impact studies and, over recent years, has undertaken them for many developers including Bancon, Gladedale, Dawn, Manor Kingdom, Miller, Persimmon, Scotia, Stewart Milne and Wimpey Homes. This has often been followed by David Wilson acting as a professional expert witness at a subsequent public inquiry.