



Aberdeen Local Development Plan Review

Proposal for a site to be included in the Main Issues Report

The Proposed Strategic Development Plan does not require us to allocate extra housing or employment land in the next Local Development Plan (LDP). Because the 2012 LDP identified a significant number of greenfield sites to accommodate these requirements, we are not looking to allocate any more greenfield housing or employment land in this plan. It is for this reason that we are not asking for greenfield development options this time around. However, we are always keen to identify new brownfield sites for housing or for other uses. Please use this form to provide details of the site that you wish to have included in the Main Issues Report for consideration as a proposal in the next Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

One of the purposes of this form is to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed. All information submitted will therefore be made available to the public to promote a transparent and open process.

Please feel free to provide any further information you feel appropriate to support your submission. The City Council has produced a Sustainability Checklist which provides guidance on the issues which will be used to help us judge the merits of competing development options. This can be found on www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/localdevelopmentplan

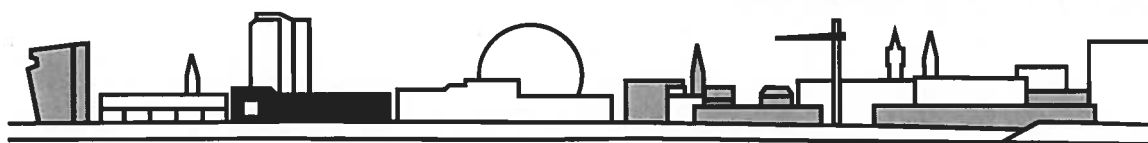
Please ensure your proposal is with us by 14th June 2013.

Using your personal information

Information you supply to Aberdeen City Council (ACC) in this form will be used to prepare the Local Development Plan. The information provided will be made public and will be placed on the Council's website. This will include the name and address of the proposer and landowner.

The Local Development Plan team may also use your contact details to contact you about the information you have provided.

For further information on how your information is used, how ACC maintain the security of your information, and your rights to access information ACC holds about you, please contact Andrew Brownrigg, Team Leader, Local Development Plan Team, Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure, Aberdeen City Council, Business Hub 4 Marischal College, Broad Street, Aberdeen AB10 1AB.



1

Name of proposer: University of Aberdeen

Date: 16 June 2013

Address: c/o Ryden LLP, 25 Albyn Place, Aberdeen

Postcode: AB10 1YL

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

2

Name of landowner: University of Aberdeen

Address: c/o agent

The site and your proposal

3 What name would you like the site to be known as?
[The site name could be descriptive or an address]

Former Hillhead Centre

Have you any information for the site on the internet? If so please provide the web address:

no

4 Please provide a map showing the exact boundaries of the site you would like considered.

Map Provided

5 Please provide the National Grid reference of the site.

NJ942093

6 What is the current use of the site?

Playing fields/ recreation area

Has there been any previous development on the site? Yes No

If so, what was it?

Tennis Courts, Sports Pitches, Pavilion, Area of Hardstanding and Car Park

7 What do you propose using the site for?

Student Accommodation or
Affordable/ Key Worker Housing

- 8 If you are proposing housing on the site please provide details of what you think would be appropriate, both in terms of the number of dwellings, and their forms (flats, detached houses, terraces etc).

Flatted Development

- 9 It is likely that there will be a requirement for 25% of the housing within the development to be affordable. If applicable, are you considering more or less than this figure?

25% More Less

- 10 If you are proposing business uses please provide details of what you would market the land for?
[Please make sure the area of land proposed for business use is shown on the site plan]

Business and offices (Use Class 4)

General industrial land (Use Class 5)

Storage and distribution (Use Class 6)

Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site? Yes No

- 11 If you are proposing uses other than housing or business please provide as much detail as possible on what you propose.
[Examples could include retailing, tourism, renewable energy, sports, leisure and recreation, institutions and education.]

Student Accommodation

- 12 Will the proposed development be phased? Yes No

If yes, then please provide details of what is anticipated to be built and when.

To Be Confirmed

- 13 Has the local community been given the opportunity to influence/partake in the development proposal?

Yes No Not Yet

If there has been any community engagement please provide details of the way in which it was carried out and how it has influenced your proposals. **If no consultation has yet taken place, please detail how you will do so in the future.**

Extensive consultation to be carried out in line with Council guidance, national policy and statutory requirements.

Sustainable Development and Design

14 Have you applied principles of sustainable siting and design to your site? The City Council has produced a Sustainability Checklist which provides guidance on the principles of sustainable siting and design and other issues which can be found on www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/localdevelopmentplan

Please provide the following information:

A) Exposure – does the site currently have

- Little shelter from northerly winds
- Some shelter from northerly winds
- Good shelter to northerly winds

B) Aspect – is the site mainly

- North facing
- East or west facing
- South, south west or south east facing

C) Slope – do any parts of the site have a gradient greater than 1 in 12?

- Yes

If yes, approximately how much (hectares or %)

- No

D) Flooding – are any parts of the site at risk of flooding?

- Yes

If yes, approximately how much (hectares or %)

- No

E) Drainage – do any parts of the site currently suffer from poor drainage or waterlogging?

- Yes

If yes, approximately how much (hectares or %)

- No

F) Built and Cultural Heritage – would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of archaeological sites or vernacular or listed buildings?

- Significant loss or disturbance
- Some potential loss or disturbance
- No loss or disturbance

G) Natural conservation – would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of wildlife habitats or species?

- Significant loss or disturbance
- Some potential loss or disturbance
- No loss or disturbance

H) Landscape features – would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of linear and group features of woods, tree belts, hedges and stone walls?

- Significant loss or disturbance
- Some potential loss or disturbance
- No loss or disturbance

I) Landscape fit – would the development be intrusive into the surrounding landscape?

- Significant intrusion
- Slight intrusion
- No intrusion

J) Relationship to existing settlements – how well related will the development be to existing settlements?

- Unrelated (essentially a new settlement)
- Partially related
- Well related to existing settlement

K) Land use mix – will the development contribute to a balance of land uses, or provide the impetus for attracting new facilities?

- No contribution
- Some contribution
- Significant contribution

L) Accessibility – is the site currently accessible to bus, rail, or major road networks?

	Bus Route	Rail Station	Major Road
Access more than 800m away	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access between 400-800m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access within 400m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

M) Proximity to services and facilities – How close are any of the following?

	400m	400m-800m	>800m
Community facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local shops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public transport networks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

N) Footpath and cycle connections – are there any existing direct footpath and cycle connections to community and recreation facilities or employment?

- No available connections
- Limited range of connections
- Good range of connections

O) Proximity to employment opportunities – are there any existing employment opportunities within 1.6km for people using or living in the development you propose?

- None
- Limited
- Significant

P) Contamination – are there any contamination or waste tipping issues with the site?

- Significant contamination or tipping present
- Some potential contamination or tipping present
- No contamination or tipping present

Q) Land use conflict – would the development conflict with adjoining land uses or have any air quality or noise issues?

- Significant conflict
- Some potential conflict
- No conflict

If there are significant conflicts, what mitigation measures are proposed?

R) Physical Infrastructure – does the site have connections to the following utilities?

- Electricity
- Gas
- Water and Sewage

If you are proposing housing, is there existing school capacity in the area?

Secondary Capacity

Primary Capacity

Are there any further physical or service infrastructure issues affecting the site?

See Paper Apart

15 No site is going to be perfect and the checklist above will inevitably raise some potential negative impacts from any development. Where negative impacts are identified, please provide details of their nature and extent and of any mitigation that may be undertaken. Listed below are examples of further information that may be included in your submission;

	Included	Not applicable
Contamination Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Flood Risk Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drainage Impact Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Habitat/biodiversity Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Landscape Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other as applicable (e.g. trees, noise, dust, smell, retail impact assessment etc please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16 Does the development proposal give any benefits to the community? If so what benefits does the development bring, and how would they likely be delivered?

Community benefits can include new community facilities (such as local shops, health, education, leisure and community facilities), affordable housing, green transport links and open spaces. Include elements which you anticipate may be required as developer contributions from the development. (Please note, specific contributions will have to be negotiated with the Council on the basis of the proposal.)

See Paper Apart

17 If you have prepared a framework or masterplan showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form.

Masterplan/ Framework attached

If you need help reading this document
(for example if you need it in a different
format or in another language), please
phone us on 01224 523317.

ভাষা/ইন্টারপ্রেটিং এবং অন্যান্য ফরমেটের
যোগাযোগ সাহায্যের জন্য দয়া করে
: 01224 523317
নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

如果需要語言/傳譯及其他形式的傳訊支援服務，
請聯絡: 01224 523317。

Если требуется помощь при выборе
языка /переводчика или других
способов общения, звоните по
телефону: 01224 523317

للحصول على مساعدة بخصوص اللغة/ الترجمة
و وسائل الاتصال الأخرى، الرجاء الاتصال
بالرقم التالي: 01224 523317

Lai saņemtu palīdzību sakarā ar
valodu/tulkošanu un citiem iespējamiem
komunikāciju atbalsta formātiem, lūdzu
zvanīt 01224 523317

Jej jus turite sunkumu su kalba/ vertimu
ar kitomis bendravimo formomis,
skambinkite 01224 523317

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy **językowej /
tłumacza** lub innej pomocy w
porozumiewaniu się, proszę zadzwonić
pod numer: 01224 523317



Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.
Please return completed forms to:

Local Development Plan Team
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
Business Hub 4
Ground Floor North
Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1AB

Or email it to: ldp@aberdeencity.gov.uk

March 2013
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk



University of Aberdeen

**Development Bid for land at the
Hillhead Centre**

June 2013

Ryden LLP

25 Albyn Place

Aberdeen

AB10 1YL

Tel; 01224 588866

Fax; 01224 589669

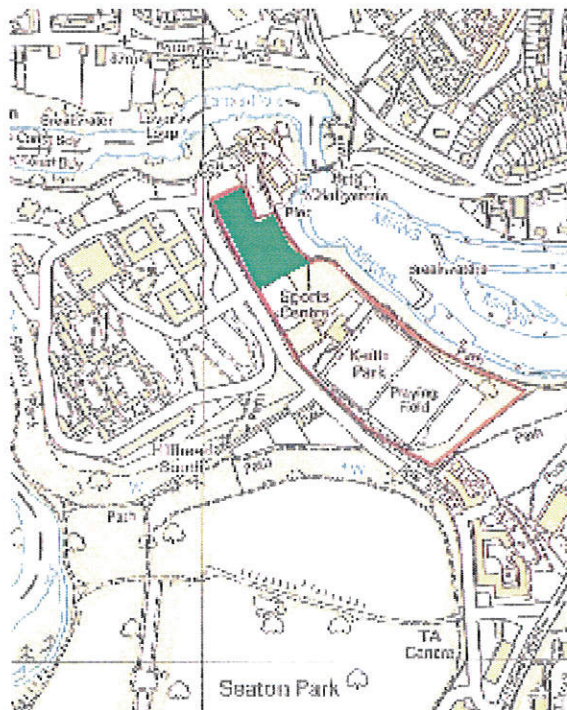
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This development bid is submitted on behalf of the University of Aberdeen who own land at the Hillhead Centre, to the north of Aberdeen, as highlighted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Site Location Plan



- 1.2 The University of Aberdeen was founded in 1495. It opened with 36 staff in 1497 and boasted the first chair of medicine in the English speaking world. A second University was founded in 1593 and until Kings College and Marischal College were united to form the University of Aberdeen in 1860, the City had two Universities. It is the third oldest University in Scotland with a student population of 14,500, studying 700 programmes across 85 subject areas. The University community represents 10% of the City's population. A recent report has estimated the University contributes around £377 million annually to the economy of the North East of Scotland and supports over 8,000 full-time jobs across the region¹.
- 1.3 One of the key development priorities of the University relates to physical infrastructure. This includes the need to work independently and in partnership to provide a suitable physical infrastructure within which cultural engagement can flourish. This includes developing infrastructure to enhance the University's support

¹ "Economic Impact of the University of Aberdeen", Biggar Economics, 2009

for cultural and community activity, in particular through major capital projects such as the new library, sports facilities and student accommodation.

- 1.4 Hillhead campus, which adjoins the bid site, consists of a number of separate halls of residence. This campus was first opened in 1968 and comprises a number of single bed, self catering units totally 2,164. It is currently subject of a comprehensive refurbishment programme designed to update the facility to cater for the changing needs of students today. It is an ambitious programme and will ensure that the University is able to offer potential students an attractive and modern accommodation that is able to support higher education learning in the 21st Century. However, capacity at this site is limited with no further opportunities to expand student accommodation once the current development is complete.
- 1.5 The bid site is located adjacent to Hillhead campus within Old Aberdeen, to the north of the City. Seaton Park is within close proximity to the site. The main University Campus is located approximately 850 metres away. For a long time, this area was isolated on the edge of the City. However, since the 1960's and 70's housing developments have surrounded the area, namely Tillydrone and the Bridge of Don.
- 1.6 Considering that the site has existing development it should be removed from its current Green Belt and Green Space Network designation. Also, given the sites strategic location within the built up area of Seaton and along one of the main transport corridors through the city, the bid site is an ideal location for development. Further justification is provided in section 6.0.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The site extends to approximately 4.5 hectares (11.1 acres) and can be accessed from Don Street, which itself leads directly to King Street. King Street is one of the main routes through the City connecting Union Street with the A90 to the north.
- 2.2 The site is bound to the north by Don Street, which leads to the historic Brig of Balgownie and a cluster of residential dwellings; to the east by the breakwaters of the River Don; to the south by open space, residential dwellings, a supermarket and restaurant; and to the west by Don Street and beyond this Seaton Park and the University's Hillhead Halls of Residence, which is zoned as a residential area in the extant Local Plan.

- 2.3 In topographic terms the southern part of the site slopes from north west to south east, with the northern part falling south east to north west. The majority of the site is south east facing. Mature trees line the northern boundary ensuring it is well screened from the Bridge of Don.
- 2.4 Existing sporting facilities occupy part of the site. The Hillhead Centre boasts two large fully floodlit pitches; one grass and the other astroturf which was recently resurfaced. There are also changing and parking facilities. To the south of the Astroturf pitch is an area of rough hardstanding and to the north of the changing facilities is an underused tennis court, which is in poor condition. The remainder of the site is wooded. The wooded area is coloured green in Figure 1 and is an area of amenity ground that contributes positively to the character of the local area. The University has no plans to develop this area and would retain it as amenity ground within which the wider campus sits. Figure 2 shows an aerial photograph of the site.

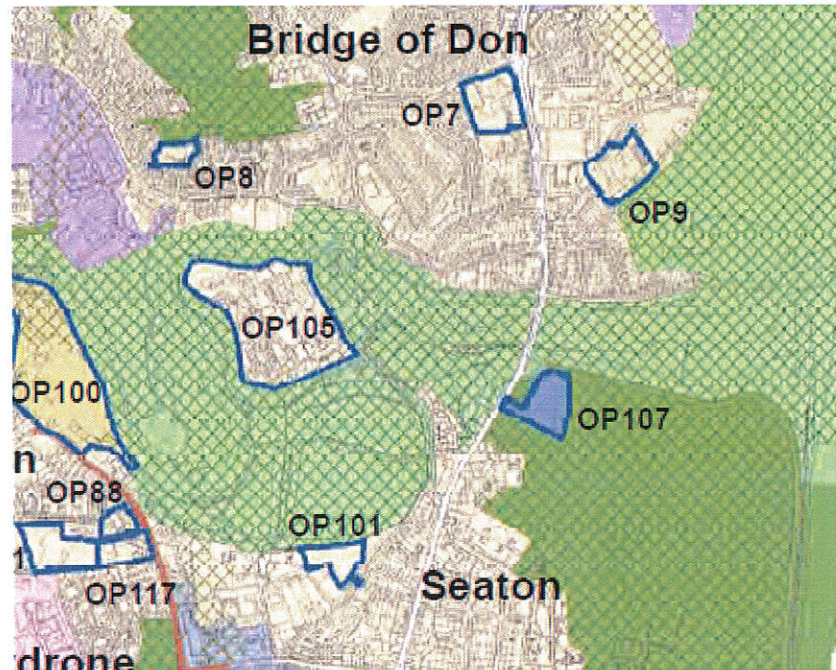
Figure 2: Aerial Photograph



- 2.5 Within the extant Aberdeen Local Development Plan, the site is identified as Green Space Network (NE1) and Green Belt (Policy NE2). An extract of the Local Plan is shown in Figure 3 below. Current policy states that no development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, forestry, recreation, mineral extraction or restoration or land renewal. Green Space Network land consists of areas of land that are considered to have particular value

in terms of recreation, public access, wildlife or landscape together with links between such areas.

Figure 3: Aberdeen City Local Development Plan 2012



- 2.6 The site also lies within the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area. This is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. This Conservation Area focuses mainly on the historic buildings around the University's Kings College Campus, but extends as far as the bid site and the River Don. The main aim of the conservation area status is to protect important buildings and the character of the area.
- 2.7 The proposals for the site include its removal from the Green Belt and Green Space Network. In addition to this, student accommodation and/ or mainstream residential development is proposed. There is also the potential for the restoration of Rose Cottage, which is currently a derelict stone cottage lying to the north of the site, adjacent to existing residential properties. Any development will be built so as not to affect the important areas of landscaping on the site.

3.0 SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The 2010 consolidated document on Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) places sustainable economic growth at the heart of town planning policy in Scotland. It is designed to encourage the right development in the right place, which enables social, environmental and economic benefits to result from land use change. This “triple-bottom line” approach to spatial planning is recognised as the best way to promote sustainability which will help this generation meet its needs without compromising future generations’ ability to meet theirs.

3.2 Paragraph 3 of SPP explains that the purpose of planning is to guide the future development and use of land.

“Planning is about where development should happen, where it should not and how it interacts with its surroundings”.

3.3 Development plans are discussed in paragraphs 10 – 21 of SPP. In monitoring development plans, SPP directs local authorities to focus on key assumptions previously made and whether or not they remain valid and whether or not land allocations proved viable. Monitoring plans are a key practice for local authorities and should set the direction for the future review of the plan.

3.4 SPP is split into various subject policies that deal with the composite elements of town planning. The first of these that concerns this development bid is housing. SPP affirms the Scottish Government’s commitment to providing new homes and ensures that the planning system is fully committed to supporting this aim. A generous supply of effective housing land is one of the ways planning authorities can support this aim. Development plans should provide a housing land supply that is effective and robust enough to ensure that there are no unnecessary impediments to housing developments coming forward.

3.5 The key aspect of a local authority’s housing land supply should be flexibility. In this sense, the supply of housing land should be adaptable to changing conditions and able to react to external circumstances or failures within existing supply. SPP also directs local authorities towards the possibilities of the siting of specific housing land requirements in an attempt to achieve other non-housing policy objectives, such as promoting active lifestyles and place-making.

3.6 High-quality design of new residential development is a key policy objective of the Scottish Government and should guide the whole process of delivering new

housing. The aim for this policy is to create places that are distinctive, with a good mix of integrated land uses including homes of varied types and tenures. Fundamental to this policy is the integration with new residential development of active travel solutions, including walking and cycling as well as public transport. This will reduce reliance on the private car and encourage easy access to local services and promote healthy lifestyles.

- 3.7 To this end, SPP promotes new housing land that is located within or adjacent to existing settlements. This helps to reduce costs in terms of servicing sites but also helps to sustain local services, schools, shops and community facilities, as well as encouraging investment in new services. Paragraph 40 explains that the *“settlement strategy set out in the development plan should promote a more sustainable pattern of growth for an area, taking account of the scale and type of development pressure and the need for growth and regeneration”*.
- 3.8 SPP makes it clear that affordable housing needs should be met within the housing market area that the need is based. It sets a benchmark of 25% of new housing to be affordable yet allows for an increased allocation where the housing need and demand assessments identifies areas with acute need.
- 3.9 Economic development is an important consideration for the planning system in Scotland, and SPP promotes a proactive and flexible approach to the diverse locational needs of different businesses. It is essential that the planning system does not create any unnecessary barriers to the realisation of new economic opportunities.
- 3.10 SPP encourages development to consider carefully the opportunities to strengthen local ecosystems, such as habitat networks and wildlife corridors, which re-establish broken links and fragmented ecologies. Open space, which enables the enjoyment and appreciation of natural heritage, can have a profound impact on the sustainability of new developments. Landscapes constantly change and evolve and the aim of Scottish Planning Policy is to facilitate this change whilst enhancing the distinctive character of places. What is clear from careful reading of Scottish Planning Policy is that, whilst concerns over landscape and natural heritage conservation may act as a constraint on development, more often than not, careful planning and design can minimise potential conflict and maximise the potential for positive enhancement of the natural environment.
- 3.11 The links between spatial planning and transport are vital to ensuring new development contributes towards sustainable economic growth. These links are

addressed by SPP, which aims to encourage new patterns of travel behaviour that are more active (i.e. walking and cycling) or more sustainable (public transport and car-sharing). The planning system in Scotland should support a pattern of development which limits the need for car-based travel and supports a range of travel options.

- 3.12 This theme is explored more thoroughly in Planning Advice Note 75: Planning for Transport. It recommends local authorities create accessibility profiles for sites in the production of development plans. The profile should reflect the catchment areas served, likely quality of service and result in indicators of accessibility. A maximum threshold of 1600m from local services and 400m from bus stops should be achieved by new developments.
- 3.13 The outcomes of these subject policies should be to encourage sustainable and well-designed places that are accessible to as many people within the community as possible. The key to a successful place does not just rest with the buildings themselves, but the function of the space between buildings and their ability to adapt to the changing circumstances of local residents and visitors. These outcomes form the basis of all planning policy documents including for Aberdeen City.

4.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009

- 4.1 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan approved by Scottish Ministers in 2009 sets growth targets for the city region and promotes a spatial strategy designed to accommodate this growth in the most sustainable locations. It identifies a requirement for 72,000 houses within the Structure Plan area over the period to 2030. Aberdeen City is identified as one of three Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) which will be the main focus for development in that period. Around half of all new development is likely to be located in Aberdeen City. Of those 36,000 houses required within the City it is envisaged that 21,000 will be provided on greenfield sites with a further 15,000 split between brownfield sites and identified regeneration areas within the City. In terms of phasing of greenfield housing, 12,000 are anticipated to be required between 2007 and 2016; 5,000 between 2017 and 2023 and 4,000 between 2024 and 2030.

- 4.2 The Structure Plan advocates sustainable mixed communities with new housing and developments for employment and commercial use well related to each other to improve people’s quality of life and opportunity. One of the targets to meet the sustainable mixed communities objective is for all housing development over 1 hectare in the Strategic Growth Areas to be in line with approved supplementary guidance and generally have no less than 30 dwellings per hectare.
- 4.3 With regard to economic growth, the plans objective is to provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment in a range of areas that are both appropriate and attractive to the nature of different industries. The Plan seeks to ensure that at least 60 hectares of land available to businesses at all times in a range of locations within the City. New employment land allocations in the City between 2007 and 2023 require to total 105 hectares, with 70 hectares identified as strategic reserve land to come forward in the period between 2024 and 2030.

Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan

- 4.4 The proposed SDP for the Aberdeen city region was published in February 2013 for consultation. It is expected that a finalised Plan will be sent to Scottish Ministers in the coming weeks for approval. The Plan sustains many of the fundamental principles contained in the Structure Plan. As in the preceding Structure Plan, Aberdeen City is identified as a Strategic Growth Area with around half of all new development in the SDP area to be located here.
- 4.5 The Plan acknowledges the scale of growth expected in the City region, and anticipates that a significant proportion of development will be located on greenfield sites. The housing and employment allowances for Aberdeen are set out in the table below.

Figure 4: SDP Land Allowances

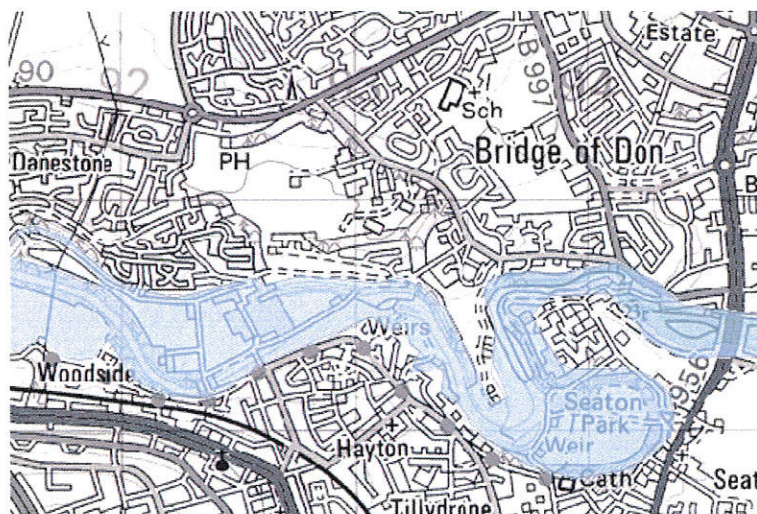
	Housing Allowances		
	Existing allocations to 2016	LDP 2017 – 2026	2027 – 2035
Brownfield	4,500	3,000	3,000
Greenfield	12,000	5,000	4,000
	Employment land allowances (hectares)		
	105		70

- 4.6 Economic Growth is a key objective for the SDP. The Plan looks to provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment in a range of areas that are both appropriate for and attractive to the needs of different industries. It acknowledges the success of the area's economy during the recent global downturn and looks to capitalise on this by continuing to diversify the economy into other key sectors such as life sciences, food and drink and tourism.
- 4.7 On sustainable development and climate change, this objective looks at the energy resource use in new developments and stipulates the need for employing energy saving technologies in all new development. The target for this policy is for all new buildings to be carbon neutral by 2020. Transportation use, as it impacts on climate change, is another focus of this policy and new developments are encouraged to consider a proposal's impact on the environment from increased unsustainable forms of transport.
- 4.8 With regard to population growth, the region's population has risen in recent years and the plan is based on the assumption that this will continue to grow up to 500,000 people by 2035. However, as many stakeholders have argued during the recent consultation on the proposed plan, these projections significantly underestimate the anticipated population growth published by the National Records of Scotland (NRS). They project the population of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Area to rise to 567,800 by 2035. This is reinforced by the projections for household growth published by the NRS which is set to increase by 35% over the period from 2010 – 2035. Overall, whilst the SDP sets an annual average housing requirement of 2,159 units for the period 2011 – 2035, according to realistic projections, this figure is more likely to be 2,815 units a year, creating an annual shortfall of 656 units across the plan period. Over the plan period, this points to a requirement for an additional 16,400 houses for which the Local Development Plan Review should be seeking to identify sites for.
- 4.9 Another key objective of the plan is the creation of sustainable mixed communities, where housing, jobs, services and recreation facilities are available to as wide a range of people within existing settlements as possible. The Plan states that within the SGAs, services and facilities for the community must be part of a development. Employment and commercial use must be well integrated with new housing to maximise the benefits for the environment and the quality of life of local residents.

5.0 SERVICES

- 5.1 Mains drainage and gas are available in the surrounding area. An extension would be required to service the development of the site.
- 5.2 SEPA's Flood Risk Map is shown below in figure 5. The extent of the flood risk associated with the site ends at the boundary of the site. Given the difference in levels along the southern boundary there is no flood risk associated with the site.

Figure 5: Flood Risk



- 5.3 Seaton Primary School has a capacity of 198 pupils. In 2012, it was operating at 85% of capacity. This was forecast to increase to 115% of capacity by 2015. Developer contributions could therefore be provided to alleviate this. Secondary schooling would be provided by St Machar Academy is operating at a capacity of 86%, rising to 92% by 2017. Therefore, there would be enough spare secondary school capacity to support mainstream residential development on the site.

6.0 DEVELOPMENT JUSTIFICATION

- 6.1 The development of green belt land is necessary to allow the future growth of the City and this is acknowledged in the Strategic Development Plan². There is a strong argument that available land within the built up area should be developed in advance of sites on the periphery. This is an example of such a site and, in the first

² Proposed SDP, paragraph 3.16

instance, there is a strong justification for the removal of this site from its current Green Belt/ Green Space Network designation.

- 6.2 This site contributes little to the objectives of the Green Belt, which are, as highlighted in SPP: to direct growth to the most appropriate locations; to protect and enhance the character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities; and give access to opens spaces within and around towns and cities³. However, the majority of the site is developed with two large outdoor hockey/ football pitches; changing and parking facilities; a tennis court in poor condition; a derelict cottage; and an area of hardstanding, which is used as a car park as highlighted in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Photograph of hard standing to the south



- 6.3 The removal of the site from the green belt would not impact on the ability to give access to open space around the city. Footpaths to the wider area would be retained and enhanced and any development would respect the most important mature landscaping on the site. The University of Aberdeen have conducted an extensive engagement process with local interest groups regarding improved path networks through the site to this effect. The character, landscape setting and identity of this area has already been affected by this built development, but this has been accepted in the area. The removal of the site from the green belt would not therefore affect the identity of the area and should be identified as a mixed use opportunity.

³ SPP paragraph 159

- 6.4 Further to this, the Green Belt designation on this site is not required to manage growth or prevent unplanned growth. The site has already been developed and growth has already taken place. The Green Belt at this location would not prevent the coalescence of settlements in this instance as the River Don provides a permanent physical barrier between Aberdeen and Bridge of Don. The wooded valley in which the River sits provides a natural visual barrier that separates the two built up areas. There is no particular advantage to this area by the designation of this land as green belt. Scottish Planning Policy promotes Green Belts that contribute towards the long-term growth of a settlement, and warns that boundaries should not be drawn too tightly round settlements. Not all Greenfield land will be designated Green Belt, according to SPP⁴
- 6.5 In terms of the Green Space Network designation, current policy aims to protect and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of these areas. The importance of the mature trees on this site to these policy aims is acknowledged and the proposals will not affect them. Any built development will be located on areas of waste land and playing fields with no wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value. The areas of trees and network of paths which contribute to these aims will not be affected. There is therefore no reason why this site needs to be classified as Green Space Network. It should therefore be removed from this status in the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan and identified as a mixed use site.
- 6.6 Development will not affect the conservation area status. Most of the site has already been developed and is therefore considered acceptable. The University of Aberdeen has done much to preserve the historic core of the area and would not want to see it affected by development. It is committed to preserving the character of the area and any development would be sympathetic to this. It is argued that any development will enhance the conservation area status as development would be concentrated on areas of underused land and wasteland and would improve the environment in this case. The immediate area is already characterised by modern development in the form of the halls of residence, and further development would be small scale and complimentary to this and existing development to the south.
- 6.7 The University are dedicated to sustaining sporting excellence and this was demonstrated through the purchase of Keith Park in 2004 and the investment made in the Aberdeen Sports Village at Linksfield. This facility has rendered the Hillhead Centre redundant as the University's Hockey Club have established themselves there. The current under-use and poor condition of the facilities will only continue if

⁴ SPP, paragraph 160

redevelopment of the site is not allowed to come forward. Aberdeen Sports Village provides this replacement with a significantly enhanced facility that is available to all members of the community, not just University students and staff.

- 6.8 The bid site is considered suitable for student accommodation development/mainstream residential development due to its location adjacent to one of the main routes through the City. The Proposed Strategic Development Plan encourages the development of locations along these corridors and any development will contribute to a sustainable mixed use community due to easy access to various modes of public and active transport. SPP also encourages the coordination of housing land provision with improvements in transport infrastructure, as a means of promoting sustainable economic growth. Bus stops along King Street and Don Street are within the 400m walking distance thresholds stated in PAN75: Planning for Transport.
- 6.9 The site is also well-connected and close to a wide range of services within walking distance. It is well connected to King Street to the east, which provides good access to the surrounding area. The site is an infill site surrounded on all sides by development. The site is also immediately adjacent to Hillhead Halls of Residence which is undergoing an extensive refurbishment programme aimed at increasing the University's provision of accommodation to students. This site is nearing capacity and, therefore, further sites will be required to accommodate this expansion. The bid site is considered ideal given the co-location to existing student accommodation and the other amenities present in the area.
- 6.10 King Street lies approximately 370 metres from the site, which is a major road network leading to the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor strategic growth area. The further development of the bid site would meet the Proposed Strategic Development plan requirement to concentrate new proposals in this area. Community facilities, such as Seaton Park, are located within 100 metres of the site. St. Machar Cathedral is approximately 650 metres away. Local shops are approximately 170 metres and sports facilities located at Aberdeen Sports Village, 1.6km away. These are all within the 1.6 km requirement of PAN75.
- 6.11 The site is also very well connected to existing employment sites. Bridge of Don industrial estate, approximately 1.7 kilometres from the site, is outwith the distances required by PAN75. However, the University of Aberdeen, one of the largest employers in the North East and is located within 850 metres of the bid site. Employment opportunities can also be found along King Street to the east and Ellon Road to the north.

- 6.12 There are a number of footpath networks adjacent the site. Part of the Aberdeen City core path network is located along the northern boundary of the site. Therefore, the site offers good connections to the wider area. The University have been active in engagement with local interest groups into the provision of enhanced footpaths through the site.
- 6.13 With regard to the natural environment, development would not be intrusive into the surrounding landscape. Much of the site is already developed and already integrated and accepted in the landscape. Additional development would improve the area and be seen in the context of existing development, well contained by mature landscape features. Development of the site would also present opportunities to enhance local biodiversity through reconnecting habitats and feeding grounds. Sensitive landscaping around new development can re-establish wildlife networks and fragmented ecologies, adding to the environmental gains associated with landscape change. The area at present contributes little to landscape quality of the area, whereas redevelopment can enable this improvement.
- 6.14 As the site has previously been developed, it is classified as brownfield land. The proposed Strategic Development Plan makes it clear that the re-use of brownfield land is strongly encouraged at all levels of policy. The SDP recognises that not all land requirements can be met by previously developed sites and acknowledges the constraints associated with land that has a history of prior development. These can include site contamination works, demolition and clearance. These upfront works are costly and often render proposals financially unviable. With the University's site at Hillhead, the University has the finance in place to overcome these costs, remove these constraints and deliver the regeneration of brownfield land.
- 6.15 This policy is supported by Scottish Planning Policy due to the range of environmental, social and economic benefits of re-using brownfield land. Vacant and derelict land can act as a barrier to investment and reduce the environmental quality of an area. Therefore, planning authorities should bring forward proposals to bring vacant or derelict land back into productive use, adopting a "proactive approach"⁵.
- 6.16 Redevelopment of the site for student accommodation can also be justified in economic development terms. Recent changes in the funding of higher and further education sector have increased the competition between institutions to attract

⁵ SPP, paragraph 48

students, particularly non-Scottish students facing increased tuition fees and levels of debt. This has resulted in a 7.7% fall in applicants to University places in June 2012⁶.

- 6.17 The impact on institutions of these changes is that they must provide an attractive package to prospective students in order to secure their enrolment. Within this mix, the provision of modern, attractive accommodation in suitable and convenient locations is often high on student's selection criteria. Recent research by property company Savills suggests that many top institutions in Scotland continue to struggle with their supply of purpose built student accommodation and this could impact negatively on their abilities to attract students, particularly from higher fee paying students from south of the Border⁷ and further afield.
- 6.18 Indeed, higher education institutions are increasingly competing for students on an international scale. In order to effectively compete, the University must be able to present an attractive package to prospective students. Accommodation plays an extremely important role in this mix. It is no longer acceptable to provide mass accommodation blocks made of cheap materials, draughty halls and outdated dorms. Student accommodation is evolving and experimenting with different formats such as 'study hotels', 'education hubs' and 'international study villages' which provide a much more comfortable and tailored set of accommodation options for different students, whether they are undergraduates, postgraduates or research fellows. The demographics of modern students are fragmenting dramatically because of the limitations imposed by high tuition fees. Students are enrolling later in life, at different stages of their career and are no longer just 17-18 year olds fresh out of secondary school. This fragmented student body needs to have a range of accommodation options to suit a variety of needs and it is this range of options available that can be the deciding factor for a prospective student.
- 6.19 The University is committed to ensuring that enrolment in available course remains as high as possible. The direct and indirect benefits associated with a large student population are well known and widely acknowledged. Being able to attract students on an international stage will broaden the expenditure on local services in Aberdeen to beyond UK borders, increasing the student body's support for local businesses. Indirect benefits include student's families visiting the area and supporting local hotels, restaurants and tourist facilities.

⁶ "Student Housing Market Overview", GVA 2012

⁷ "Spotlight on Student Housing: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Savills Research Winter 2011/2012

- 6.20 As an alternative to student accommodation, the University present this bid site as a possible location for residential development. The University is keen to explore a mix of options on this site and would envisage the residential development contributing towards its aims to create affordable/ key worker housing to accommodate its staff. As a major employer in the area, the University is keenly aware of the difficulties in recruitment currently felt by other employers across the various economic sectors in Aberdeen. A major barrier to attracting talented teaching staff, research assistants and other support workers is the lack of affordable housing in the city. The site at Hillhead could be developed to provide a mix of affordable housing that is located close to the main University campus that would help overcome some of the barriers that exist in attracting employees to Aberdeen.
- 6.21 Given the importance of the University to the economic, social and cultural life of the city (see section 1.2 above), it is important to reflect the growth and development needs of the University in the review of the Local Development Plan. The provision of modern and attractive student housing is an important element of the University's offer to prospective students. Attracting these students is essential in order to ensure the University is able to contribute towards the success of the City and the wider region, through its contribution towards the local economy, providing local employment and attracting investment by providing the skills required to fuel economic growth in the region.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This development bid looks to remove the bid site from its current Green Belt and Green Space Network designation. The land contributes little in terms of environmental quality, does not protect the landscape or identity of the city nor prevents coalescence with surrounding settlements. Access to open space would be retained within any future proposals on the site.
- 7.2 The policy objectives of NE1 – Green Space Network and NE2 – Green Belt can be achieved through a design-led approach to redevelopment of the site. Mature landscaping will be retained and incorporated into the proposals, whilst wildlife and biodiversity will be enhanced through strategic landscaping. Footpath connections will provide links through the site to surrounding areas and create excellent residential amenity for new occupants. The wooded area coloured green on Figure 1 would not be developed and remain as valued amenity ground.

- 7.3 The remainder of the site has previously been developed and should be classified as brownfield land. The recently opened Aberdeen Sports Village provides alternative and significantly enhanced sports facilities for staff, students and the people of Aberdeen, making the bid site redundant. Planning policy at all levels strongly supports proposals to re-use brownfield land to bring it back into productive use. The University believe that student accommodation, or mainstream housing would constitute a more productive use of the land than currently exists. Student housing would allow the University to successfully compete for new students, whilst affordable residential use would assist in the University's growth plans by improving the quality of teaching and support staff.
- 7.4 The Strategic Development Plan sets ambitious growth targets for the City region up to 2035. Significant development pressure will be exerted on outlying areas of the City to help meet these targets. However, whilst many of these sites will be able to contribute towards this growth, the bid site is able to contribute towards the supply of brownfield sites, thus helping to achieve sustainable growth targets.
- 7.5 On the basis of the above, this land at the Hillhead Centre should be considered favourably as a location for development within the review of the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan to meet the requirements for the Aberdeen City area as identified in the Strategic Development Plan.