



SITE AT WELLINGTON CIRCLE ABERDEEN

Site Proposal to the Aberdeen LDP Pre-MIR Stage

June 2013

**BARTON
WILLMORE**

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INTRODUCTION

This submission to the Aberdeen City 2016 Local Development Plan (Pre Main Issues Report consultation stage) has been prepared, on behalf of the William Pears Group, to highlight an important emerging development opportunity. We believe this site has the potential to provide a strategic retail destination to support continued economic and population growth to the south of the city.

With ongoing engagement with local stakeholders, there is also the potential for the site to form an appropriate gateway development to the adjacent Loirston Development area.

The proposed site comprises of the land and building, currently occupied by Makro, at Wellington Circle, Aberdeen on the southern approach into the city. Makro is looking to vacate this site in the near future and various parties have been in discussion to determine the most viable and positive re-use of this land.

The current stage of preparation for the emerging Aberdeen City 2016 Local Development Plan offers an ideal opportunity for a strategically important new use to be promoted for this key site through the development plan. This document outlines the main elements of our proposal and also identifies the main areas of future work and engagement that will be undertaken to progress consideration through the development plan process.

The William Pears Group recognise the strategic importance of this opportunity. Adopting an open and transparent approach, we hope to engage with Aberdeen City Council and others to deliver a project capable of meeting a strategic need.

1. THE SITE

The proposed site is located approximately 2.5 miles south of Aberdeen city centre and faces the A956, the principal route into and out of the city from the south. The site is at Wellington Road Industrial Park, Wellington Circle, Aberdeen, AB12 3QW and comprises the unit currently occupied by Makro, along with the associated access, car parking and service areas.

The A90, the main road south to Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, is just over one mile to the south of the site. The A90(T)/A956 junction will be replaced by the Charleston junction following completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR).

As well as the proposed site being in a highly accessible location, the current LDP allocates land for 1,650 new homes and 33.5 Ha for new employment uses within a 2km radius. The site is situated at one of the potential gateway locations for the largest of these allocated strategic development areas, at the Loirston Development Framework Area. Therefore, the impending availability of this site offers a windfall, brownfield site of, potentially, strategic importance.

The site covers an area of 3.2 hectares and includes the existing Makro unit, car parking provision for 507 vehicles to east of the unit and a service yard to the west. The individual accesses to the car park and the service area are both taken from Wellington Circus, which itself connect to Wellington Road / the A956 via a major roundabout.

The unit itself is highly visible from Wellington Road and is a large portal framed building that accommodates 9,675 sq m net on the ground floor level and 616 sq m net on a mezzanine level.

The site does not have any significant constraints to redevelopment or reoccupation. It is not within, or close to, an area of 1:200 flood risk and is not subject to any major environmental or heritage designations.



2. SITE CONTEXT

Immediate Surrounding Character

The site is within an area designated by the current Aberdeen City Local Development Plan (LDP) as Business and Industrial land. As such, there are a number of large units to the north, occupied by business users. These include Plaza Interiors Ltd, a depot for Parcelforce Worldwide / Royal Mail, engineering product suppliers Smith John & Co and technical recruitment specialists Fircroft Engineering Services Ltd.

There are some smaller business units and lockups to the south of the site, beyond Wellington Circle, including printing and reprographic specialists Xpress Image Communications. The large headquarters complex of the Balmoral Group lies further to the south. A Burger King restaurant and Shell petrol filling station bound the eastern edge of the site, on opposite sides of the access point to Wellington Circle. The large Aberdeen Altens Thistle Hotel lies further east, beyond the Wellington Road roundabout.

Wellington Circle passes the southern edge of the Makro unit and terminates with an existing roundabout that provides access to the Makro service yard and a blocked off access point to open countryside to the west. This countryside is identified as an opportunity area for major urban expansion as part of the Loirston Development Framework area.

Surrounding Residential Neighbourhoods

Cove is the closest, and largest, residential neighbourhood and lies beyond Wellington Road to the south east. Cove is well connected to the site by road, but not by pedestrian links. However, emerging development proposals seek to improve the connections of Cove to the Wellington Road Industrial Park and Balmoral Business Park. The residential area of Charleston, further to the south of the site but adjacent to Cove, is subject to continuing growth.

Kincorth is less than one mile north west of the site, on the opposite side of the Local Nature Reserve, Calder Park. There is potential to link the site to this large residential neighbourhood, by means of footpaths/cycleways.

Local Employment Areas

Altens Industrial Estate, within 450m from the north eastern edge of the proposed site, is one of Aberdeen's key industrial and employment locations. It covers an approximate area of approximately 164 hectares and has a wide range of business, industrial and distribution uses.

Two more major employment areas, the East Tulloch and West Tulloch Industrial Estates, lie further to the north, approximately 1.25km from the proposed site. These also have a range of industrial, business and office units. However, they are also characterised by bulky goods comparison retail and two foodstores, on their northern edge towards the city centre.

Aberdeen Gateway

The Aberdeen Gateway is less than 2 kilometers south of the site, and provides a new employment area on a 18.2 hectare site, currently being developed to include a mixture of office space, industrial space and speculative industrial units.

The site has three occupiers to date: Hydrasun Ltd; National Oilwell Varco (NOV); and The Driving Standards Agency.



3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Over recent years, both the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) and the adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012) have identified land for significant strategic growth towards the south of Aberdeen City, with many new developments in the pipeline.

Within a 2km radius of the proposed site at Wellington Circle, the adopted Aberdeen LDP allocates land for a total of 1,650 new homes and 33.5 Ha of employment land. This significant scale of land allocation for residential and employment growth is expected to be continued within the emerging 2016 LDP. A breakdown of the existing key allocations and development opportunities is provided below.

Sites	Local Development Plan Period		Future Growth
	2007 - 2016	2017 - 2023	2024 - 2030
OP69 (part)	2 ha employment		-
OP72	homes		
OP75	150 homes		
OP77 Loirston	1100 homes	400 homes	-
	11 ha employment		
OP78 Charleston	-	-	20.5 ha employment
OP80	new stadium and sports facilities (Cove Rangers)		
Housing Total	1650 homes		
Employment Land Total	33.5 ha		

ADLP Allocations Table

Cove Rangers Football Club (CRFC) Stadium

Land directly west of the proposed site, accessed by Wellington Circle, is allocated as OP80 within the adopted LDP for a new stadium and sports facilities for Cove Rangers Football Club, who are looking to relocate from their existing ground at Allan Park, Cove to this location entitled Calder Park.

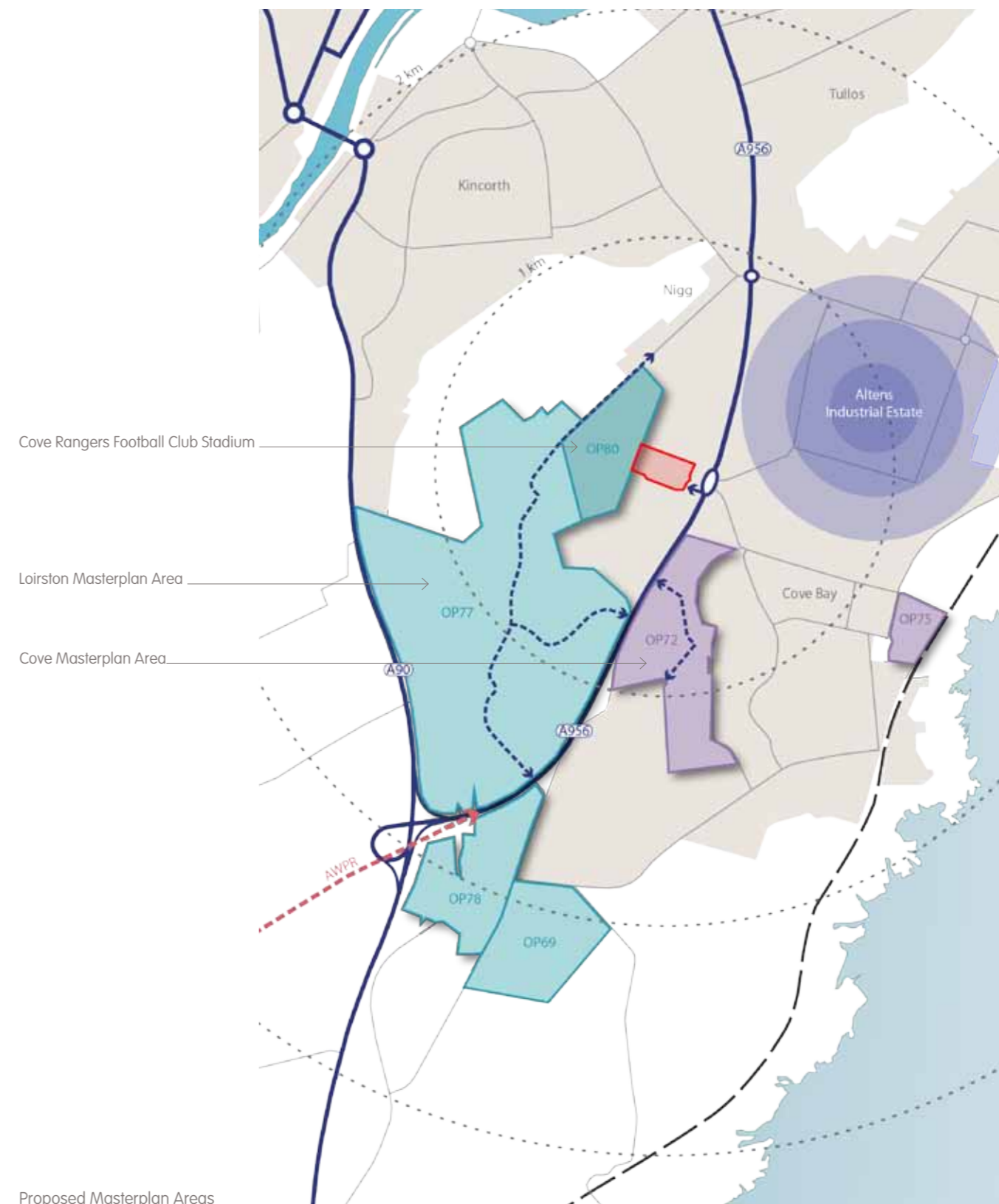
Approval of a detailed planning permission (reference 111193), submitted jointly by Cove Rangers Football Club and Aberdeen Football Club, was approved on 13 January 2012. However, the future of this development was put in doubt following a vote by Aberdeen City Council in August 2012 to refuse Landlord's Consent for the completion of facilities at Calder Park and investigate other development opportunities in the area, "including the possibility to establish regional sports facilities".

Despite this, recent press reports suggest that further discussions between Cove Rangers and Aberdeen City Council are ongoing, with potential for facilities at Calder Park to be provided by 2015.

The Loirston Development Framework (November 2012) includes the Calder Park OP80 site within its study area, with the expectation of a similar type of development to the approved planning consent but also including alternative options should Cove Rangers not be able to relocate.

The Development Framework identifies the existing roundabout at Wellington Circle, adjacent to the proposed site, as a "major connection to surrounding road network" (page 35).

The impending availability of the proposed site provides a potential opportunity for an improved gateway to new sports facilities at Calder Park and development further to the west.



Proposed Masterplan Areas

Loirston Development Framework Study Area

Opportunity Sites OP77 and OP78 of the adopted LDP ('Loirston' and 'Charleston' respectively) are allocated with potential for 1500 homes and 31.5 hectares of employment up to 2030. These sites form the core of the Loirston Development Framework, which was approved by the Council as interim planning advice in November 2012.

The Loirston Development Framework study area occupies an important strategic position within the context of Aberdeen City, both as a gateway site and as a resource to open spaces, such as Loirston Loch and Kincorth Hill.

The provision of the housing is split into two phases, with 1100 homes proposed for the period up to 2016, and 400 homes for the period up to 2023. A new stadium for Aberdeen Football Club was proposed at the northern bank of Loirston Loch, subject to a planning application in 2010. This is believed to have fallen through, due to Councillor involvement with the linked Cove Rangers stadium plan, although the Development Framework retains the potential for a new stadium for to be provided.

The Development Framework recommends that a new neighbourhood centre, with "local retail" provision, be provided towards the southern edge of Site OP77, close to the junction between the A90 and A956, and be delivered through Phase 1 of the project. No floorspace of provision is proposed.

Other development proposed through the Development Framework includes community facilities and new education facilities, such as a new primary school.

Balmoral Business Park

The Balmoral Group has secured Planning Permission in Principle for a new business park development adjacent to its headquarters complex, approximately 250m south of the proposed site. Some infrastructure work has now been completed and detailed planning consent has been secured for initial phases. The completed development is expected to provide a range of offices, industrial warehouses, a car showroom/workshop and a new 128 bed hotel. A new vehicular access will be provided off Wellington Road.



Balmoral Business Park

Cove Masterplan

Site OP72 of the adopted LDP provides an allocation for an expansion of Cove to provide residential growth, community uses and green space. Site OP75, at Stationfields, Cove was identified in the 2008 Aberdeen Local plan for 150 homes and its identification continued in the adopted LDP.

Promoted jointly by Stewart Milne and Scotia Homes, the Cove Charrette took place in September 2008 and resulted in a concept masterplan for the two sites. An update to the Cove Masterplan was approved by the Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee in April 2010.

Proposals for OP72 include a High Street off Wellington Road, which will accommodate a mix of retail, office uses and alternative housing. Smaller neighbourhood centres have been proposed throughout the site in order to provide some day-to-day services for residents and are intended to compliment the more intense commercial uses along the High Street.

The High Street proposed as part of the Cove masterplan would be approximately 500 metres south of the site (approximately 5 minute walking distance), and has potential to offer a number of small scale retail opportunities.

Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

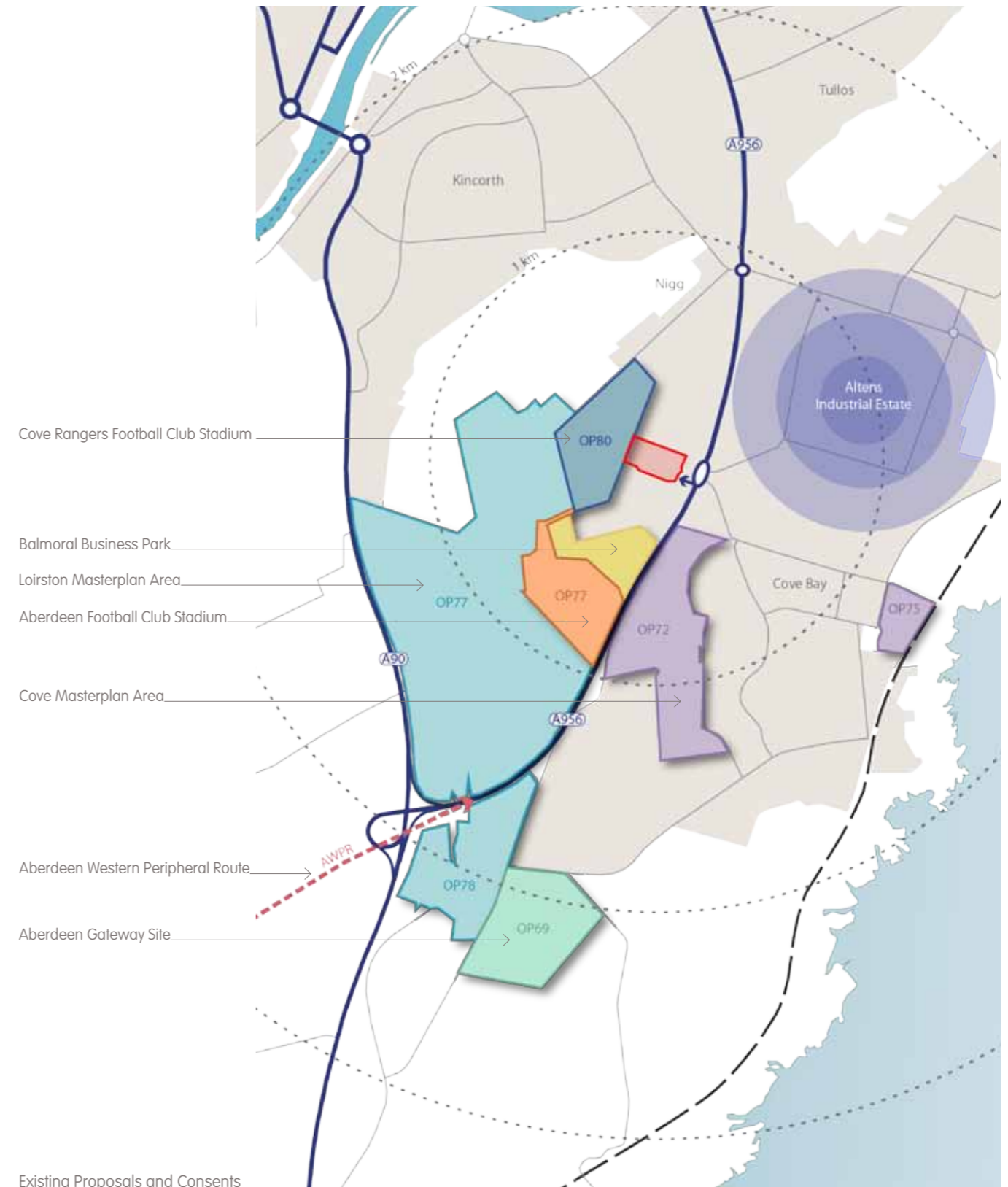
The proposed Charleston junction of the AWPR is located to the south of the site and will replace the existing A90(T)/A956 junction.

Aberdeen Gateway Site

The majority of the Aberdeen Gateway site has already been granted consent and is serviced land with development continuing. An application for Planning Permission in Principle for a northern extension, to accommodate approximately 10,000 sq m of further employment land (Class 4) is pending determination.



Aberdeen Gateway Site



Existing Proposals and Consents

4. A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH ABERDEEN

As shown by the analysis of the surrounding area, the proposed site is in a highly visible location directly adjacent to one of the major thoroughfares into Aberdeen. It is also on the northern and eastern edge of a large area that is already identified in the adopted Aberdeen LDP as having potential for significant change over the next 15 years.

Makro is expected to leave this site in the near future, which brings the potential for this large site to be considered as a windfall site in strategic terms. The timing of this, in line with the emerging development plan process, gives the opportunity to test a new use that will best support proposed growth on adjacent sites.

The Proposal

We propose that the site be identified in the 2016 LDP Main Issues Report as a strategic retail area with potential to serve residential led expansion to the south of Aberdeen. Initial marketing research has indicated that there is interest from national retailers for establishing a retail foodstore (Class 1) on this site.

The site size of 3.2 Ha, and the existing building floorspace of approximately 10,291 sq m net, would be able to accommodate the majority of foodstore formats. However, the exact scale, format and type of retail that can be offered at this strategic retail area and gateway location is still to be decided. This could, for example, be one large operator or an anchor operator that supports a range of smaller retail uses. Similarly, we are willing to discuss with the Council where this strategic retail area would fit in the Hierarchy of Retail Centres. This level of detail can be discussed for a subsequent stage of the LDP.

There is a likelihood that, due to its location, a new user could be found to reuse the site for Use Classes 4, 5 or 6. However, we propose that the site's location at a potential gateway to a major development site, which may accommodate a regional sports hub and new stadium for Cove Rangers, offers greater potential to accommodate a different option that would improve the visual character of this area.

The incorporation of this site as a strategic retail area may also allow for the gradual change of the surrounding area, complementing the more commercial nature of Balmoral Business Park to the south and creating a key route between the Loirston development area and centre of Cove, via the proposed new High Street.

The proposed site is free from any significant constraints and will be able to deliver new retail development within the lifetime of the emerging LDP.

The Strategic Case for New Retail in South Aberdeen

The economy of Aberdeen has continued to prosper in recent years, despite a challenging financial climate nationally. This relative position of strength should be utilised to attract and establish further economic activity.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), approved in 2010, strongly states that the Scottish Government's central purpose is to increase sustainable economic growth (Paragraphs 4 and 22). SPP also stresses that **"the development plan should enable gaps and deficiencies in provision of shopping, leisure and other services to be remedied by identifying appropriate locations for new development and regeneration"** (Paragraph 56).

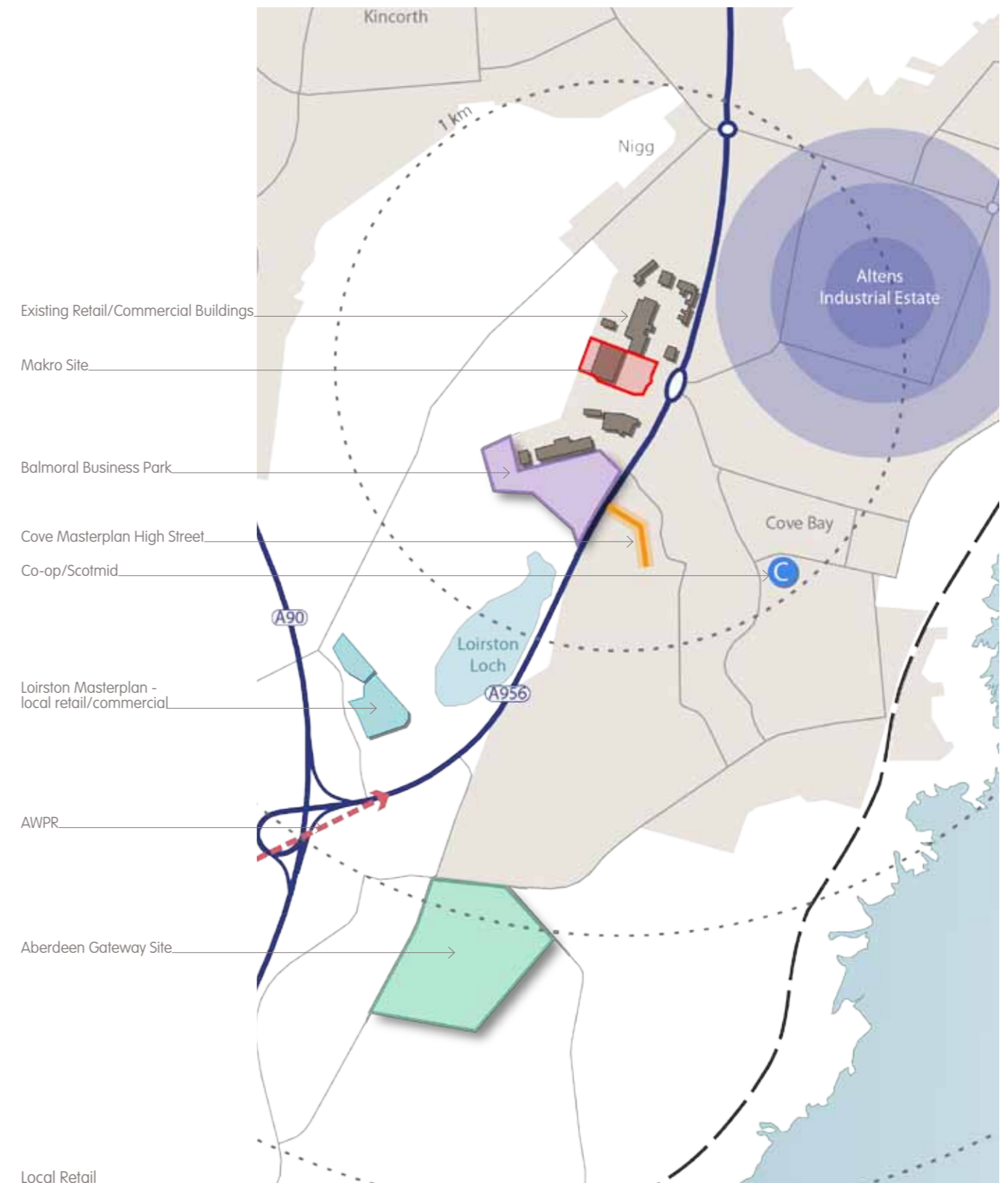
We recognise that one of the key objectives of Aberdeen City Council is to protect the vitality and viability of Aberdeen City Centre, as well as the Local and Neighbourhood Centres identified through the retail hierarchy.

Aberdeen City Centre is approximately 3.5km to the north of the site, with existing supermarket provision already located on the main connecting thoroughfares. A Tesco and Aldi are located on the A956 route, at West Tulloch Industrial Estate, while an Asda and Sainsburys are located at Garthdee, accessible from the route south of the centre along the A945 or A90.

We consider it unlikely that a further supermarket, some distance south from this existing offer, will have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the City Centre. Similarly, the nearest Local Centre is at Torry, 3km to the north. Retail expenditure is more likely to be drawn to provision within the City Centre than to the proposed site.

There is potential for impact on the closest neighbourhood retail centre at Cove, 1.1km to the south east. However, as stated above, we consider that the strategic opportunity of the proposed site can improve linkage with new growth and provide qualitative benefits to the functioning of Cove as a centre.

We note that the Council has commissioned the preparation of a new Retail Study to inform the retail strategy of the 2016 LDP Main Issues Report. We will seek to continue engagement with the Council to discuss how the promotion of our site can help meet any requirements identified at the strategic level. Similarly, we will seek to engage with the key partners leading the Loirston Development Framework to discuss how any strategic retail proposal at our site could best work with its future development, particularly with regard to the neighbour retail centre proposed at the southern edge of its study area, 1.5km south west of the site.



5. WORKING WITH OTHERS

Our approach is based upon analysis, evaluation and community and stakeholder engagement. Our planning and design teams have been involved in a large number of innovative development and regeneration projects and have developed both sensitive and robust strategies for engagement. As a team we recognise that quality of place and community buy in are key aspects in delivering successful developments. We believe that these two interrelated goals are key requirements at the heart of effective engagement.

Some of the projects which the team have carried out over the last number of years with engagement at their heart, include:

- Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework;
- St Leonards, St Andrews Development Framework;
- North Torglen Delivery Framework and Masterplan;
- Laurieston TRA Regeneration Project; and
- Forth Energy Renewable Energy Projects.

We will seek to employ a co-ordinated engagement strategy through the preparation period of the 2016 Aberdeen LDP with the involvement of the local community and key stakeholders.

The principal aim at the start of the process will be to explore the potential of creating a strategic retail destination at this site, and the

wider benefits that this can bring, rather than debating the technical specifics of the potential retail offer. Engagement on subsequent stages on the plan will offer the opportunity for the proposal to be tested in greater detail.

Early engagement with Aberdeen City Council will be sought in order to explore its latest thoughts on the future development of Site OP80, particularly whether a new stadium for Cove Rangers may still be provided. This engagement session will also seek to set out the potential of the site as a gateway to new development to its west.

Discussion will also be sought with Cove Rangers to explore their aspirations for the land at Calder Park, as well as Hermiston Securities, the lead partners of the Loirston Development Framework, to ensure that the proposed site is considered as a complementary proposal to the progression of masterplanning the Development Framework area.

Engagement with the local communities will be held, potentially through option workshops, to inform how the strategic potential of the proposed site can best be realised.

We will maintain close contact with Aberdeen City Council through the 2016 Aberdeen LDP preparation process to determine when and how any further engagement may be required, as consideration of the form and extent of any new strategic retail area is progressed.



6. OUR EMERGING VISION

There is an emerging opportunity to investigate the potential of supporting a key new use at the site of the existing Makro at Wellington Circle, Aberdeen, which may bring wider benefits to the local area. Although detailed proposals have not been developed at this stage, the William Pear Group would like Aberdeen City Council to consider identifying this site as a potential strategic retail area within the 2016 Aberdeen LDP Main Issues Report.

We consider that the site has the potential to:

- Bring new economic investment to a Strategic Growth Area;
- Retain the active occupation of a key unit adjacent to a major thoroughfare into Aberdeen;
- Provide an improved visual and physical gateway towards the potential new sports hub and stadium of Cove Rangers Football Club, as well as for a main access point to the residential led development of the Loirston Development Framework area;
- Encourage meaningful debate with local communities on how they wish their neighbourhood to evolve;
- Provide a major new supermarket to serve and increase retail choice for both existing and potential future residential communities in south Aberdeen; and
- Have the potential to create a new key linkage between development at Loirston, the proposed site, facilities at Balmoral Business Park, the proposed new Cove High Street and residents in the centre of Cove.

Further to our stated engagement strategy, we will welcome the opportunity for early discussion with Aberdeen City Council regarding how this vision may be incorporated into the strategy of the emerging 2016 LDP Main Issues Report and how the strategic potential of this site can be best delivered in the forthcoming years.



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