



# countesswells, aberdeen

## development framework and phase 1 masterplan

Client: Countesswells Consortium

Document No: 110342\_DF-MP

Revision: 140625

Date: June 2014



*This document sets out a **Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan** for the site at Countesswells, Aberdeen, identified as OP38 in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.*

*The document has been produced following Aberdeen City Council's **'Masterplanning Process'** and it is intended that this Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan will be approved and adopted by Aberdeen City Council as formal **Supplementary Guidance** to the Local Development Plan.*

Project: Countesswells, Aberdeen

Document: Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan

Document Number: 110342\_DF-MP

Issue	Revision	By	Approved	Date
27/11/2012	First draft for ACC Review.	IL	PM	27/11/2012
08/11/2013	Second draft for ACC - Incorporating comments previously received from ACC	IL	PM	08/11/2013
10/01/2014	Draft for ACC Review (DF on 10/01/2014 and PH1 MP on 17/01/2014)	IL	PM	10/01/2014
21/02/2014	Final DF and MP for SG.	IL	PM	21/02/2014
25/06/2014	DF and MP update following ACC Consultation.	IL	PM	25/06/2014

The Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan was produced prior to the adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017, however its content remains valid and the document is still relevant in informing decision making. As part of the publication of the Local Development Plan 2017, an appraisal of the document has been undertaken and, as part of this process, policy references within the document have been reviewed and updated. Additional detail in relation to Phase 1B is also now included.

Any queries concerning the text of the document should be directed to Planning and Sustainable Development (03000 200 292 or [pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk)) for clarification.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Countesswells

The Countesswells site is located approximately 7km to the west of Aberdeen city centre. The site OP38 as included within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan covers an area of approximately 165.9 hectares (410acres), see Figure 1 opposite.

## 1.2 Document purpose

This document has been produced to fulfil the Aberdeen Local Development Plan requirement for the production of a Masterplan for the land at Countesswells OP38 (Masterplan zone 6) aiming to coordinate the planning and delivery of both the development and its associated infrastructure requirements.

It is intended that this Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan will be approved and adopted by Aberdeen City Council as formal Supplementary Guidance to the Local Development Plan.

## 1.3 The Countesswells Consortium

The Countesswells Consortium is comprised of three experienced property development companies.

<b>Stewart Milne Homes:</b>	<b>Heron Property:</b>	<b>Ian Suttie:</b>
One of the UK's leading independent home builders and construction companies.	A long established, family owned property group.	Trading as IDJ Properties.

## 1.4 The Design Team

The Countesswells Consortium has assembled a multi-disciplinary team to produce this Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan.

<b>Masterplanners:</b>	OPEN (Optimised Environments Ltd)
<b>Planning Consultants:</b>	Ryden
<b>Engineering Consultants:</b>	Fairhurst
<b>Transportation Consultants:</b>	Fairhurst
<b>Environmental Consultants:</b>	Ironside Farrar
<b>Educational Consultants:</b>	TPS
<b>Public Relations Consultants:</b>	Orbit Communications

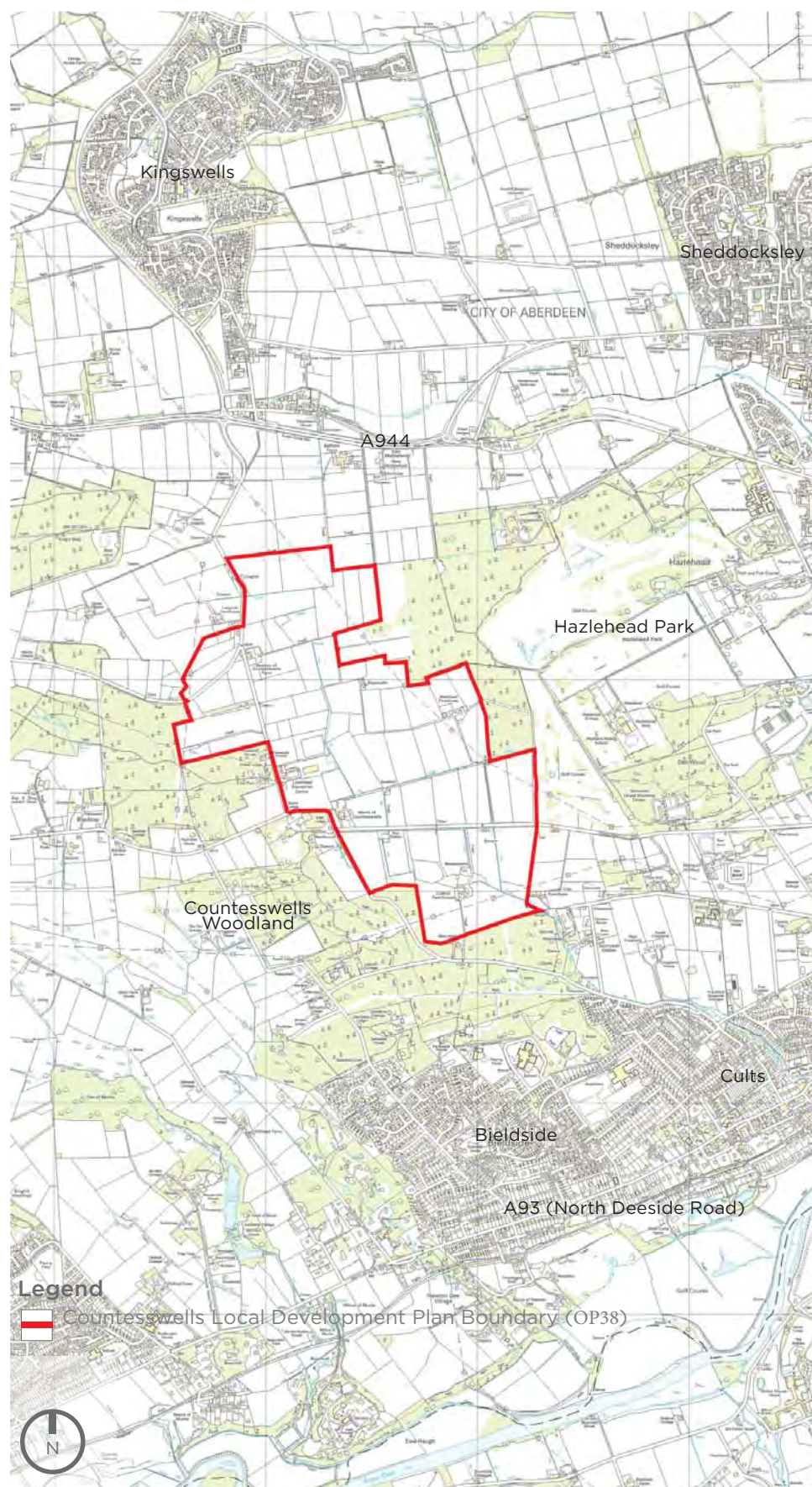


fig. 1: OS map and ALDP boundary

## 1.5 Supporting information

A number of technical studies and surveys have been produced to support the production of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan. These include:

- Planning Statement
- Consultation Report
- Environmental Statement
- Traffic Impact Assessment (full Transport Assessment to be agreed with ACC)
- Drainage Impact Assessment
- Education Strategy
- Outline tree survey

# 2. Planning Context and Masterplan Process



## 2.1 Planning context

Countesswells has been identified by the Aberdeen Local Development Plan as an opportunity site for the development of 3,000 homes and 10 hectares of employment land. It is a key element of the Plan's spatial strategy to address the housing requirements of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan approved in March 2014. The Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan has been prepared having regard to guidance from a wide variety of sources.

### 2.1.1 National Planning Framework

The Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan will follow National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) (2014). The Vision set out in NPF3 is for a Scotland which is:

- » a successful, sustainable place.
- » a low carbon place
- » a natural, resilient place
- » a connected place

### 2.1.2 Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy is Scotland's national land use Policy Statement and provides high level development advice and guidance. A range of policy documents, circulars and planning advice notes set out an approach to achieving these objectives.

National planning policies of relevance to this site, and to be followed in the design proposals for the site, are set out in Scottish Planning Policy. Best practice is set out in Planning Advice Notes.

Reference to these and other Policy documents is provided in more detail throughout the Development Framework.

### 2.1.3 Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan

The Vision set within the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan is for Aberdeen City and Shire to be "an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European city region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business." It will be recognised for:

- » enterprise and inventiveness;
- » the unique quality of environment; and,
- » high quality of life.

The Plan aims to increase the population of the city, specifically promoting the construction of 21,000 homes on Greenfield homes in Aberdeen City up to 2035. The development of the Countesswells site will help in achieving this target. For sites in the Strategic Growth Areas which are more than one hectare, the SDP requires development to generally have no less than 30 dwellings per hectare. Development proposals for Countesswells will comply with this policy.

### 2.1.4 Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The ALDP supports the aims and objectives of the Strategic Development Plan. Its objective is to set out a spatial framework to meet city development needs over the next 10-20 years and promoting sustainable growth of the city over this period. The Plan refers to Scottish Government Planning Policies including Designing Streets.

The ALDP identifies desired directions for growth throughout the city and identifies a number of Masterplan Zones. Policy H4 - Housing Mix requires a Masterplan to be prepared for developments larger than 50 dwellings. Masterplanning of large sites such as Countesswells will be required to ensure that individual development in specific areas are co-ordinated and holistically address infrastructure requirements.

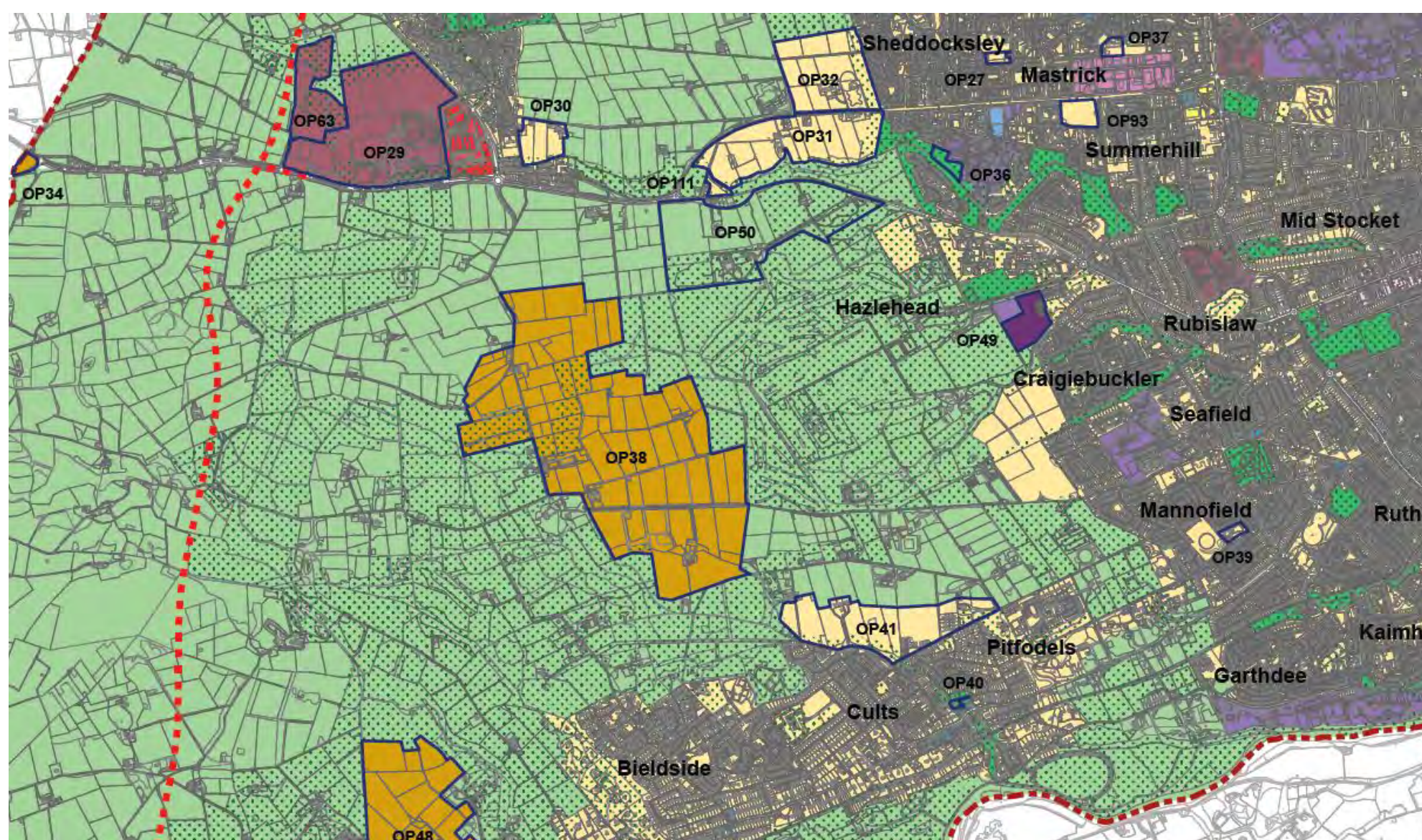


fig. 2: Aberdeen Local Development Plan Extract

## 2.2 The planning process

A scoping exercise was undertaken in consultation with Aberdeen City Council and it was agreed that a Development Framework would be prepared for the overall site, along with a Masterplan for Phase 1. This Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan, once approved by the Council's Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee, will form Supplementary Guidance which future Planning Applications will require to address.

A formal screening opinion was also sought from the Council under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (as amended). The requirement for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment was confirmed by the City Council on 7 July 2011. This Environmental Assessment has helped inform the preparation of the Development Framework.

## 2.3 The masterplanning process

The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process is a guide for developers. It reflects current national design guidance and seeks to enable the delivery of sustainable places. The process identifies the need to consider an integrated approach to site planning, urban design, sustainable transport, ecology, landscape, and community involvement. It recognises the need to raise the quality of design for new developments in Aberdeen, from the largest and most significant areas of change to smaller individual sites.

Through the initial site analysis and concept development the client and design team have worked closely with Aberdeen City Council. A number of meetings and design workshops have helped inform the proposals, focusing on masterplanning, placemaking, transportation, environment and education. These were designed to:

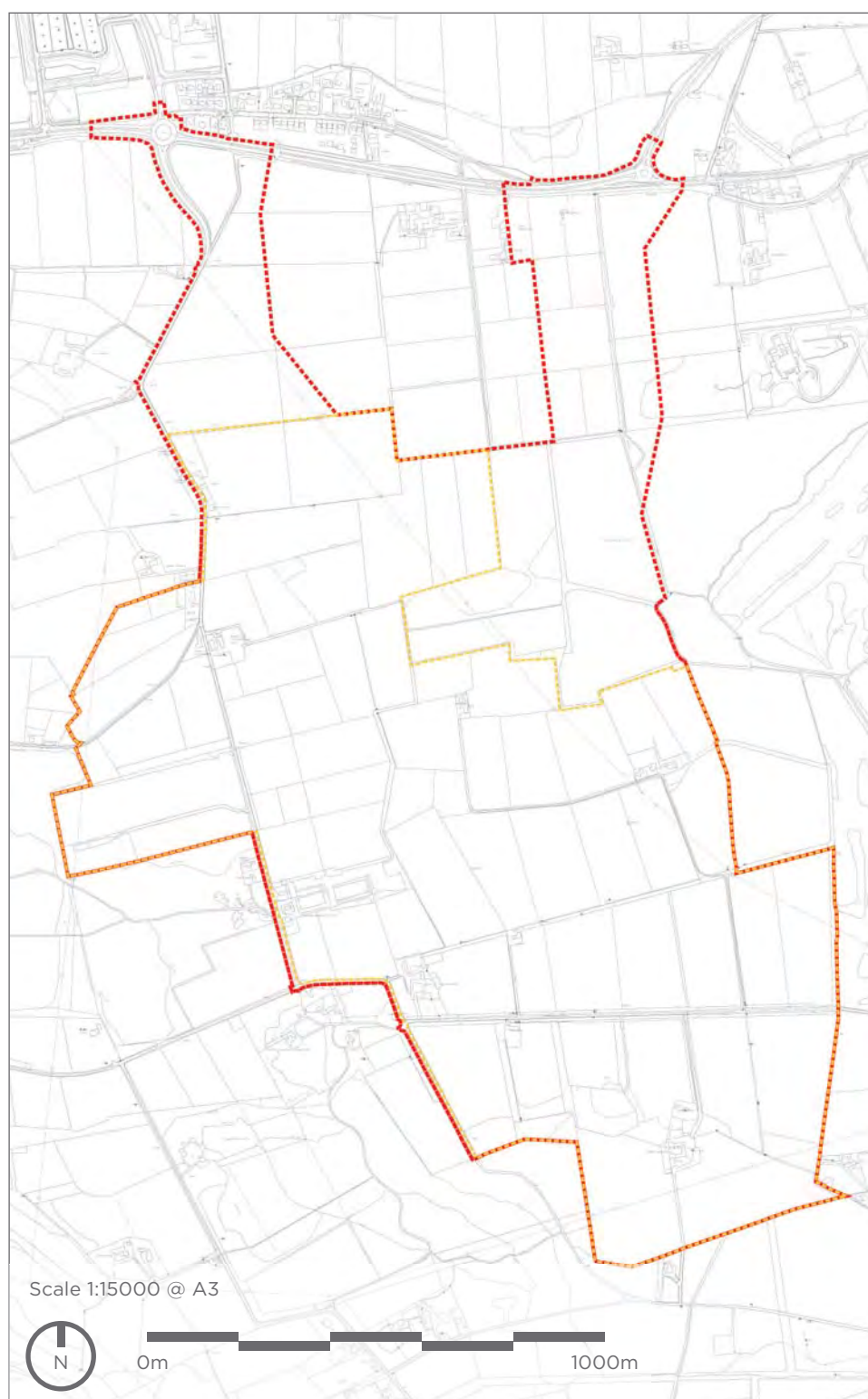
- Help ensure the aspirations for the site are compatible and complementary with Aberdeen City Council's plans for the City.
- Discuss thoughts and keep Aberdeen City Council up to date with the evolving principles and aspirations for the site.
- Ensure the proposals fit within Aberdeen City Council's Development Plan Process and Masterplan Process.
- Explore opportunities to promote exemplary design and sustainability.
- Discuss in detail specific issues relating to transport and environmental issues.

Throughout the design process, the Consortium has also been committed to thorough engagement with the local community, the wider public and elected representatives at all levels. This is reflected in the fact that the engagement process commenced well in advance of the formal submission of the statutory Proposal of Application Notice required for the PPIp application.

## 2.4 Application for planning permission in principle

In 2012 the Consortium submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) for the development of 3,000 homes and 10 hectares of employment land with associated infrastructure and appropriate community facilities, all in accordance with the adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan Opportunity Site OP38, Countesswells.

The proposal constitutes a major development, as defined by the Town & Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, requiring a statutory minimum level of consultation. The PoAN was submitted to Aberdeen City Council on the 10th August 2012 and confirmation was received from the Council that the pre-application consultation proposed to be undertaken was satisfactory and met the statutory requirements. Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council, Craigiebuckler and Seafeld Community Council and Kingswells Community Council were all provided with copies of the PoAN.



- Countesswells Local Development Plan Boundary (OP38)
- Countesswells Proposal of Application Notification Boundary
- Boundary

fig. 3: Site boundaries  
Aberdeen Local Development Plan Boundary and Countesswells Proposal of Application Notification Boundary.

The PoAN set down the details of the public consultation. The public consultation for the Development Framework, Masterplan and PPIp which were run in tandem to avoid duplication and confusion. Details of the public consultation are set down in the PoAN and will be included in the Pre-Application Consultation Report. A summary of the consultation is provided on the following pages.

The relevant supporting documentation will be submitted along with future planning applications.

## 2.5 Consultation - A collaborative approach

The Masterplan process has been committed to involving local people and stakeholders at all stages in the design and development process at Countesswells. The design team believes the Development Framework and Masterplan have benefited greatly from meaningful consultation and involvement with the local community and stakeholders. Consultation has been carried out following the best practice guidelines as set out in Planning Advice Note 81, Community Engagement, Circular 3/2010 Community Engagement and Aberdeen City Council's Guidelines for Community Engagement.

The community consultation and engagement approach adopted for Countesswells has been specifically designed to:

- Ensure awareness of the Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan aspirations, creating 'knowledgeable communities' which can then contribute purposefully at all stages of the development process;
- Ensure events are well publicised and easy to get to;
- Ensure engaging and inspiring consultation materials which present information clearly and in an accessible format;
- Ensure that members of the design team are available at consultation events to answer questions and engage in dialogue;
- Provide opportunities to comment and become involved;
- Keep people informed of progress; and
- Give confidence and assurance that comments are being heard and issues dealt with.

## 2.6 Consultation to date

In preparing the Development Framework the Consortium has been committed to involving the local community, the wider public, local Councillors and the Community Councils within or adjacent to the proposal site. At the outset, the Consortium took the decision to hold a minimum of two public consultation events in each of the three Community Council areas. This was to be complemented by meetings with the respective Community Councils, locally elected Members, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament within whose area the site fell. A specific Liaison Group was established comprising members of the Community Councils, a member of the Aberdeen Youth Council and nominated residents within and adjoining the site, in order to facilitate discussion and an ongoing involvement in the preparation of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan. A number of residents workshops have also been held and a website was also established, [www.countesswells.com](http://www.countesswells.com) in an effort to disseminate information and gather as much feedback as possible.

The initial round of public engagement focused on the provision of information relative to the scale of the development proposed and the nature of uses likely to be included in the development. All parties were encouraged to provide feedback on their vision for Countesswells. This information subsequently helped to form the initial Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan.

A full Environmental Statement commissioned by the Consortium and the ongoing Transport Assessment process have both fed into the Masterplanning process and informed the evolution of the initial Development Framework. Armed with that information a further round of public consultation was held to obtain feedback on the emerging development proposals.

In addition to the public engagement undertaken by the Design Team on behalf of the Consortium, Stewart Milne Homes, as a key member of the Consortium, undertook extensive market research on the Countesswells proposals. Focus Groups primarily made up of people who would be likely to purchase a dwelling in the near future and a widely distributed questionnaire were used to establish the wider public's general perception of development at Countesswells and to seek their views on the form of that development and the services and facilities it should provide.

### 2.6.1 Arrangements

As a pre-cursor to the initial public engagement events, meetings were held with Kingswells Community Council on 14th May 2012, Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council on 24th May 2012 and Craigiebuckler and Seafield Community Council on 5th June 2012. MPs, MSPs and Councillors within whose area the site falls were also briefed in individual meetings. The first round of public consultation events were thereafter held in each of the Community Councils' areas on 14th, 15th and 16th June 2012 at Craigiebuckler, Kingswells and Cults respectively. These comprised exhibitions over a period of 6 hours each day where representatives of the Consortium were on hand to provide information on the proposals and encourage public comment. Information leaflets were available at each venue along with a feedback form.

Subsequent to the initial round of public consultation, the Community Liaison Group had an inception meeting in the Cults Hotel on Monday 2nd July 2012 and a series of further workshops were planned. The first workshop with the Liaison Group was held on 29th August 2012 in advance of preparation of the draft Development Framework and the second round of public consultation. Further meetings were also held with the respective Community Councils to update them on progress and address issues raised at the initial consultation events. Meetings took place with Kingswells Community Council on 13th August 2012, Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council on 23rd August 2012 and Craigiebuckler and Seafield Community Council on 4th September 2012.

Meetings were also held with the Aberdeen Cycle Forum on 4 September 2012 and with the Aberdeen City Youth Council on 25 September 2012.

The emerging Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan were presented to the local community and wider public at the second round of public exhibitions held on the 6th, 7th and 8th of September 2012 at the Four Mile House, Kingswells, Airyhall Community Centre and Cults Academy respectively. Following refinement of the development proposals a further round of briefing meetings was held with the Community Councils. These meetings took place on 2 October 2012 at Craigiebuckler and Seafield Community Council, on 8 October 2012 with Kingswells Community Council and on 25 October 2012 with Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council. A further meeting of the Liaison Group took place on 9th October and meetings were held with local residents on 26th and 27th of September.

More recently a further meeting was held with the Liaison Group on 3 February 2014 to update them on refinements to the design and layout of the site following the consultation process and discussions with ACC, and progress with regard to education, traffic and transport matters.

### 2.6.2 Publicity

In an effort to generate as much interest as possible in the proposals a number of measures were utilised in addition to the statutory press notices, copies of which are attached in the Consultation Report. This included information leaflets being distributed to over 10,000 homes lying to the west of Aberdeen, targeted letters and widespread press and media coverage. A copy of the information leaflet is attached at Consultation Report.

The website also raised the profile of the development consultation and provided information on the proposals including all the exhibition material. Public feedback was also facilitated through the website.



fig. 4: Countesswells consultation event

## 2.7 First round of consultation

### 2.7.1 Community Council meetings

A number of issues were raised by Community Council members, including:

- The development should include facilities for future residents and avoid becoming merely a large suburb,
- The development should draw on local examples of good practice in other developments such as good connectivity and access to the countryside,
- Members expressed concern regarding primary education provision and urged the Design Team to satisfy demand created by new housing early in the phasing strategy,
- Concerns were raised regarding local traffic pressures on the existing road network through the area and the need for a cohesive strategy to resolve these issues,
- Queries were made regarding the existing properties, particularly the equestrian centre currently located in the area,
- Queries were made regarding the inclusion of places of worship.

### 2.7.2 Public exhibitions

A total of 244 people attended over the three days with 96 on day one, 62 on day two and 86 on day three. 42 feedback comments were subsequently received, plus 1 noted interest from a Church regarding relocation and a letter from Cults Medical Practice seeking discussions on the opportunities for locating within the site. The feedback form distributed at the event encouraged comments on specific issues. A summary of the responses are set out below.

#### Question 1: What are the best and worst aspects of the Countesswells area now?

26 of the respondents felt the best aspect of Countesswells was the open green spaces and woodland areas. 18 considered the worst aspect to be the poor condition of the roads and the vehicular congestion in the area.

#### Question 2: What do you think are the key opportunities for a new community at Countesswells?

8 of the respondents felt there was no requirement for a new community at Countesswells; 6 considered it an opportunity to improve roads in the area; and, 7 highlighted the importance of getting the plans right at this stage. The importance of integrating the development with the countryside was highlighted along with the opportunity to provide a development based on the best of current European Community Planning – self contained and provided with a full range of community services. Emphasis was placed on the formation of a modern community with community facilities provided early in the phasing.

#### Question 3: What do you think are the key issues for the Design Team to consider with regard to development at Countesswells?

The importance of upgrading the roads and improving the infrastructure in the area were highlighted by 18 respondents. 7 intimated that retaining the green space and wildlife was important – maximising greens space linked by green corridors, footpaths, cycle ways and bridle ways. The importance of having regard to best practice again featured with emphasis on making it an attractive place to live.

#### Question 4: What key environmental considerations do you think are important for the site?

25 respondents highlighted the importance of retaining the woodland, green spaces and wildlife whilst making sure development was environmentally friendly, energy efficient, protected from noise from the adjoining road networks. Green corridors linking countryside to the east and west was again highlighted. 3 commented on the importance of good public transport links and 3 suggested the requirement for cycle paths through the development.

#### Question 5: What transportation considerations do you think are important for the site, particularly in relation to public access and public transport?

25 suggested the provision of good public transport throughout the development and to surrounding towns, not just direct to Aberdeen. Cycle paths and alternative forms of transport were also suggested. 9 commented on the need to upgrade the roads in order to accommodate increased traffic and suggested provision of a new link road to the roundabout with the A944 and Lang Stracht.

#### Question 6: What form of housing would be appropriate for the site and how should it look and feel?

14 respondents suggested the housing should be mixed and 8 mentioned that the affordable and sheltered housing should be indistinguishable from other homes. The importance of environmentally friendly and energy efficient homes was stressed by 4 respondents. 5 commented on the importance of getting the design right, preferably not high rise and not looking like other developments in the area. High quality detached properties were sought with decent sized gardens in an effort to create a community, possibly with a “feature” building.



fig. 5: Exhibition boards for first public consultation event

#### Question 7: With the aim of creating a new community at Countesswells, what facilities or amenities do you think should be included to support homes?

Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents mentioned the need for schools, shops (locally owned, not chains), health facilities, sport/leisure facilities, community centre, parks, children's play areas and recycling facilities. The requirement for a place of worship was also mentioned.

#### Question 8: What facilities and amenities should be located within the community core to help ensure Countesswells is an attractive place to live and visit?

In addition to the above, respondents also highlighted the requirement for pubs, restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, parking for visitors, and the provision of office space.

#### Question 9: Would you consider living at Countesswells, if it were developed following the Consortium's aspirations?

8 respondents considered that they would consider living at Countesswells, 7 were undecided whilst 18 highlighted that they would not consider living at Countesswells.

#### Question 10: Do you have views on our initial ideas for the site or any further comments you wish to make?

A number of respondents liked the suggested access corridors and the green swaths crossing the site linking Hazlehead and Countesswells Wood. Others, continue to oppose the principle of development at Countesswells preferring to leave it as an area of countryside. One party criticised the initial ideas as conservative and too traditional, preferring to look towards alternative transport facilities and cycle links. Innovation and design was considered important. Community facilities should be in the core of the settlement and not peripheral to it.

#### Question 11: Have you found the exhibition useful?

25 respondents considered the exhibition to be useful whilst 2 felt it lacked detail and was unhelpful.

## 2.7.3 Community Liaison Group meetings

The inception meeting of the Community Liaison Group took place in the Cults Hotel on 2 July 2012. A number of issues were raised, including;

- Uncertainty regarding education provision. Concerns were expressed that a number of existing schools were at capacity and refurbishment works were required at Milltimber and Cults' Primary Schools;
- The arrangements for the transition period between the commencement of the development and the opening of new schools to serve the development;
- Recognition that the schools' provision could, and should, be an essential element in realising the potential of the importance of place;
- Generally, concerns were expressed over the infrastructure and education provision, requesting that the next community engagement event outline how these were to be funded and when facilities would start coming on stream;
- Concerns were expressed regarding traffic and the impact on the local road network. Again, further details were sought at future engagement events;
- The position regarding the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route was queried, should it not proceed, and general concern was expressed at the cumulative impact of new developments proposed throughout the City; and
- The extent of affordable housing was raised and comment made that it should be to a similar standard as the private housing.

At the Liaison Group Workshop on 29th August 2012 representatives were provided with an update on progress with the preparation of the Development Framework and ongoing work assessing traffic impacts and mitigation measures. As well as presentations on the above, discussions took place on a broad range of issues and in particular considered the services and facilities which should be contained within the settlement and the form the development should take.

Local residents raised specific issues regarding the direct impacts on their properties but were generally constructive in their views as to how the settlement should evolve. Given some of the issues raised it was decided that residents only meetings should be arranged during the second round of public consultation. These were subsequently held on the 20th and 27th September.

Community Council representatives, as well as actively contributing to the debate on the form and content of the settlement, raised concerns regarding impacts on the wider area. These included, traffic impacts, education provision, particularly in the short term, the cumulative impact of development throughout the City and the limited opportunity to comment on the finalised Development Framework once submitted to the Council.

A further Liaison Group meeting was held on 3rd February 2014 to provide an update on progress with the proposals. Specific matters focused on were the provision of a road link from the A944 and the current strategy for education provision, particularly in the initial stages of the development.

Concern was had with regard to impact on the existing local road network south of the Framework area as a result of increased traffic from the Countesswells development. Extensive junction modelling work has been carried out to identify any potential impacts on junctions to the south. This work highlighted that Kirk Brae (C189) / Kirk Terrace / Friarsfield Road priority junction currently operates within capacity. With the addition of development traffic, however, this junction appears to operate beyond acceptable capacity and therefore appropriate mitigation will be required.

In addition modelling work at the existing Countesswells Road / Springfield Road signalised crossroads was undertaken. Junction analysis predicts that this junction currently performs satisfactorily, with reserve capacity and acceptable queuing levels. Previous proposals for residential development at Pinewood / Hazeldene within the vicinity of this junction identified improvements to be made to this junction and modelling these improvements with the addition of development traffic shows it to perform satisfactorily.

The Craigton Road signalised junction was modelled with development traffic and was shown to operate within acceptable capacity as were the Kirk Brae (C189) / North Deeside Road and Baillieswells Road / North Deeside Road signalised junctions.



fig. 6: Countesswells consultation event.



fig. 7: Countesswells consultation event.

## 2.7.4 Response to consultation issues

### Principle of Development

A number of participants questioned the principle of development at Countesswells and the need to provide so many houses in what is a predominantly rural area. Concerns were expressed regarding the loss of agricultural land and the impacts on local amenity and the landscape setting of the City.

In response to these concerns, the Design Team highlighted the fact that the site is allocated in the statutory local development plan to deliver 3,000 houses and 10 hectares of employment land. The process of creating this plan established the requirement for development on this site through a rigorous land audit and site assessment process. The Main Issues Report (MIR) and proposed Local Development Plan was also open to public consultation and comment as well as scrutiny by elected members and Scottish Government reporters. This process has given the plan a democratic rigour on top of the technical processes that confirms the site's suitability for development.

### Transportation

The Design Team are aware of the issues posed by the local transportation network and its capacity to cope with the inevitable increase in car journeys created by the development. This was emphasised by the local community who identified a number of issues relating to traffic, including the poor quality of the existing roads, the use of country roads as 'rat runs' for commuters and safety issues relating to local schools and access to existing properties.

In preparation of the Development Framework, Phase 1 Masterplan and application for Planning Permission in Principle, the Design Team undertook a transportation scoping report and are conducting a Transport Assessment (TA) to look at the strategic impacts and local network impacts of the development on the existing road network.

The concerns raised by the local community have been addressed through the access strategy which looks to encourage alternative forms of transport. An additional access onto the A944 relieves pressure on the Kingswells roundabout, whilst the road network and street hierarchy provide a variety of routes through and around the settlement in an effort to reduce speeds and minimise 'rat-running'.

Previous transport appraisals produced during the local development plan submission and the recent transportation scoping report and TA have shown the majority of trip journeys would move towards the A944 corridor. Existing congestion on the roundabout at Kingswells was identified by the local community as a major issue. The Design Team have responded by investigating a number of potential options with regard to access and egress from the site. Studies have demonstrated that the development can be expected to require two connections to the A944 to the north of the site to provide efficient transport connections for all users between the various development blocks and the existing road network surrounding the site.

It is proposed that the western connection will be a public transport only link, utilising the Kirk Brae (C189) access onto the existing signal controlled Kingswells roundabout junction. This will require a bus gate to be installed on Kirk Brae (C189) to prevent the through flow of non-permitted traffic. The precise location and operation of the bus gate will be finalised following further detailed analysis and liaison with local residents.

A new, all vehicle, junction is proposed to the east and will require substantial modification and upgrade of the existing roundabout at Jessiefield. The final junction layout will be formulated following further detailed analysis and design. Traffic modelling demonstrates that this will also improve east west flows on the A944.

In order to reduce the need for car based travel, sustainable transport is a key element of the Development Framework. Local communities stressed the need to improve public transport provision as well as increased options for walking and cycling through the development. In response, the Design Team is in discussion with local bus operators to ensure a regular service is available to link the settlement with surrounding destinations. A strategic path network has been designed into the settlement which encourages walking and cycling through the settlement and out to the surrounding area.

A number of participants have sought to retain a direct route running north - south around the periphery of the new settlement. However, this runs counter to the ethos of 'Designing Streets' and is likely to exacerbate existing problems suffered by local residents. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) lying to the west, will address the major north - south traffic movements and traffic would gravitate to that route rather than travel via the street network through Countesswells.

### Environment

The quality of the environment and the landscape setting of Countesswells were repeatedly identified as a major asset by the local community. The opportunities for forest walks, outdoor activities and exercise provided by the natural landscape of the area should not be threatened by the development. In response, the Design Team have incorporated the surrounding woodland areas of Hazlehead Wood and Countesswells Wood linked by a clear route for Core Path 57.

The landscape strategy of the Development Framework responds to the local community's wish to retain green spaces, by creating green corridors between the two areas that preserve the rural amenity of the area and its wildlife. The development takes advantage of the opportunities provided by the landscape setting by forming core spaces along the east-west axis that provide space for informal recreation, circular walks and important connections through the development.

A prominent feature of the proposed new settlement at Countesswells is the creation of a new central park. This space will provide a meeting and gathering place for the community adjacent to local shops and community facilities. This green space at the heart of the settlement will contribute towards a more cohesive community, provide for an attractive destination for local residents and create a sense of place vital to sustainable communities. The central park would form part of the first phase of development which demonstrates the importance the Consortium places on this aspect of the design.

### Education

Another major topic that emerged through the consultation process was the importance of school provision at an early stage in the development. Many respondents felt current schools would be unable to support even a modest number of new homes in the area. In response, the Design Team has planned for a new primary school to form part of the first phase of development, which again shows the importance the consortium places on education facilities.

As the development progresses through to phase 2, the first phase of the secondary school campus will emerge to create secondary education capacity and form part of the Community Core. The campus will provide sports facilities, a library and meeting rooms to be shared between the school faculty and local community. This campus will also accommodate a second primary school to meet demand as the development progresses.

Education provision within the new settlement is designed as a fundamental element of the development of Countesswells. This is a direct response not only to the local community concerns around school capacity, but also a desire to see a balanced community that is self-sustaining, vibrant and represents the best of current European community planning.

### Other

Concern was expressed by some respondents about the location and quality of affordable housing through the development. Specifically, people were worried that the affordable housing requirement would be met with sub-standard housing that would be developed separately from the main development. Local residents insist that affordable housing should be indistinguishable from the rest of the development. As the Consortium is looking to create a balanced and sustainable new settlement, the provision of affordable housing, along with a wider mixture of housing types, styles, densities and tenures is seen as essential to achieving this aim.

Concern was also raised about the size of the development and whether this was deliverable given current depressed market activity and restricted access to credit. The economics of the development were questioned by some as was the viability of the various non-residential land use elements. These concerns are addressed in the development's phasing strategy which demonstrates delivery of the development over a significant period of time. This phasing and delivery strategy over the long term ensures the development can progress through market cycles. Furthermore, a range of services and facilities will be provided in each stage of the development to ensure the emerging settlement is sustainable and properly integrated.

The issue of drainage across the site was raised by local members and the impacts on surface water movements the development would cause. The Development Framework has incorporated these concerns and includes a drainage system that integrates conveyance swales and detention basins into the core areas of open space. SUDs will integrate with existing watercourses, ditches and field drains which will be incorporated into the design of open space and amenity areas.



fig. 8: Exhibition boards for second public consultation event

## 2.8 Second round of consultation

### 2.8.1 Public exhibitions

Three further public exhibitions were held, the exhibitions on the 6th and 7th of September ran from 3pm – 8pm and the event on the 8th ran from 10am – 4pm. All events were well attended with 53 people at Kingswells, 105 at Airyhall Community Centre and 70 at Cults Academy. Local Members were also fully briefed ahead of each event.

A questionnaire was available for attendees to complete. It was stressed to all that the results of the questionnaire would form part of the completed submission and inform the Development Framework and Masterplan. They were also made aware of the fact that they still had an opportunity to submit comments to the planning authority as part of the statutory determination process once an application was submitted.

A total number of 14 responses were received (by 18/09/12) and a summary of these responses is provided below.

**Question 1: The centre of the development is proposed to be the core of the community, containing the primary civic, commercial and community facilities, and the Central Park. What facilities would help create a sustainable community?**

Responses to this question were wide-ranging with a number of suggestions including a cinema, health centre, a church and schools. The most popular answers were youth centre and improved roads.

**Question 2: Strong attention is being paid to the delivery of public spaces, including civic spaces. What would you like to see contained in these areas? How would you like to see the public space utilised within Countesswells?**

Three respondents to this question suggested keeping the area as it is currently with a further three respondents incorporating outdoor activities (i.e. skate park, cycling) within a large area of green space. One respondent suggested the key issue was maintenance of public space and the long term management of this space.

**Question 3: Countesswells is focused around the development of a mixed use core and distinct neighbourhood. These focal points could contain a primary school and may also contain small scale local facilities such as local shops and community facilities. What facilities do you think would be suitable for the core and what perhaps should be located elsewhere in the settlement?**

At the core respondents suggested a health/community/youth centre. Respondents suggested play areas and small shops should be located elsewhere. Mentioned in both contexts were doctors, dentists, chemists, library and post office.

**Question 4: We are aiming to develop Countesswells as a “destination” place i.e. a place to come home to and to visit rather than a place to pass through. What is your view on this and is Countesswells somewhere you think you would visit and if so why?**

The consensus among respondents was that Countesswells would not be a destination to visit and simply would be somewhere to pass through – a suburb.

Other respondents thought Countesswells as a destination to visit would be unlikely due to high volumes of traffic.

**Question 5: Would you consider living as Countesswells, if it were developed following the Consortium's aspirations?**

One respondent already lived in the area and a further individual stated they would consider moving to Countesswells. Four respondents stated they would not like to live in the new development without giving any reasons.

**Question 6: Do you have views on these ideas for the site or are there any further comments you would like to make?**

Eight respondents were concerned about future road congestion. Connected to this, one respondent was concerned with road safety, and another was concerned with the effect increased congestion would have on wildlife. One respondent stated that facilities for children are of paramount importance whilst another said that linking Countesswells and Hazlehead woods with a green corridor was vital. Another respondent wanted only a small number of houses built on the site.

**Question 7: Which aspect of the exhibition have you found most useful and in which way could we improve the explanation of a project of this scale?**

Three respondents stated that issues existed around maps, suggesting larger maps which showed more reference points and the wider context within which the development sits, particularly to the south onto North Deeside Road and the south – east along Countesswells Road. Another believed the maps displayed were outdated. Two respondents believed a better explanation of the road network would be an improvement. One respondent welcomed the demonstration of the education provision in the development whilst another suggested scrapping the entire project.

## 2.8.2 Community Meetings

Workshop sessions were held with local residents over two evenings on 26th and 27th September where a range of issues were discussed. As well as addressing general issues impacting on the wider area, many of which had already been raised, it provided an opportunity to focus on specific issues relative to individual properties. Where requested, subsequent meetings were held with individual residents in an effort to address their concerns and the Consortium is committed to continuing that dialogue throughout the planning application process.

A further Liaison Group meeting was held on 9 October to specifically explore traffic and transport issues. As well as the Consortium, Council representatives were in attendance to explain how the cumulative impact of development within the City would be addressed through the Strategic Transport Fund. Impacts on the local road network are addressed through the Traffic Impact Assessment and mitigation measures, and their timing, are highlighted later in this Framework document.

On 6th November 2012 a meeting was held with the Airyhall Primary School Parent Council to explore education issues and potential impacts arising as a consequence of the development. These are fully addressed later in the Development Framework under the education strategy. This strategy has been developed in liaison with the Council as education authority.

## 2.8.3 Response to consultation issues

The Design Team received broad support for the proposals with many solutions to the issues raised welcomed by participants. Several suggestions arose from this round of consultation which the Design Team considered before finalising the Development Framework and Planning Permission in Principle application. A lot of the issues discussed were similar to those raised in earlier rounds, with issues surrounding local traffic congestion prevailing. A summary of the emerging points discussed is given below.

### Existing property owners

Residents of properties within the site boundary expressed concerns relative to the impacts on their homes. Specifically, they wanted to see how the development would affect their access, views and amenity. Several owners had concerns around the compulsory purchase of their properties and whether or not they would be forced to leave the area to make way for the development.

The Design Team's response was to reassure existing owners that there is no intention to force any residents out of the area and that a key design principle of the development was to build upon the amenity of the local area and not to destroy it. As a further element of this consultation exercise, the Design Team undertook to engage directly with existing property owners on the issues that affect their properties. A number of meetings have already taken place and this will evolve as the development progresses. The Design Team will continue to work with existing property owners to try to overcome issues in relation to the setting of their properties.

### Traffic

Existing residents also expressed concerns surrounding current and potential use of the area as a 'rat-run' to and from Kingswells and Dyce. Presently, this is a problem along Kirk Brae (C189), which is a road lined with vegetation where cars regularly speed. The impact this has on road safety, particularly relating to the access of existing properties is a concern to existing residents.

The response from the Design Team has been to create a network of new streets running through the development which is guided by the principles set out in the Scottish Government's Designing Streets policy. The aim is to take speeding traffic off the currently rural part of Kirk Brae (C189) and accommodate this within a network of urban streets where speed and movement are controlled and cars can travel through in safety. Not only is the connectivity and permeability of the area greatly improved by the new network of streets, but with Kirk Brae (C189) retained as a public transport only link it will see a significant reduction in the speed and volume of traffic which will benefit the residents of existing properties that use this road for access.

### Education

Despite some scepticism around the delivery of new schools within the development, the Design Team received encouragement from participants for plans for provision of a primary school early in the development phasing. Local residents were satisfied the development would be self-sufficient in terms of education provision and asked questions on catchment areas and accommodation for pupils living in surrounding areas.

Participants were also encouraged by the secondary school campus and the plans to feature this facility at the centre of the settlement. Broad support was given to plans to incorporate community facilities on campus as part of a wider town centre retail, healthcare and leisure offer. However, concerns were expressed about local resident access to these community facilities on the secondary school campus and questions raised about ensuring these are available to local residents even when the school is closed.

The Design Team were questioned on proposals to site the secondary school next to the main road network. Concerns were raised about road safety and the mixing of school pupils and traffic heading from Countesswells road to Kingswells. The response to these concerns is contained within the access strategy which, having been informed by Scottish Government policy Designing Streets, provides for a pedestrian-friendly environment where traffic speeds are managed to maximise safety.

## Environment

Participants were encouraged by the Design Team's landscape strategy which proposes usable, well-designed green spaces that encourage biodiversity, creates a sense of place and contributes to the amenity of the area. Support was received for the core path link between Hazlehead and Countesswells Woods, although questions were raised as how this path would interact with the proposed road network.

## Local Services

Most participants agreed a crucial element of the development would be the community facilities located in the centre of the new settlement. Participants broadly agreed these should include healthcare, leisure and retail facilities. Other suggestions included places of worship, a theatre, a skate park and a sports centre. The Design Team will take these into consideration. Broadly, it was agreed that to make the settlement a destination, adequate provision of services was required and those located in the centre should be of a type that encourages visitors.

## Cumulative impacts of LDP allocations

Much of the dialogue with the Community Councils and visitors to the public exhibitions surrounded the cumulative impacts of all the local development plan allocations around the city on the local road network. They are concerned that the net effect of developing these sites would be to further exacerbate congestion on the roads in and out of the City. Various 'pinch points' would restrict easy flow of traffic and lead to queues and heavy delays, made worse by conflicts of movement between north - south and east - west.

The Design Team are aware of these concerns however the solutions to these wider scale transportation issues is most appropriately addressed by Aberdeen City Council which can address the concerns through a City-wide overview. The Design Team highlighted the initiatives taken by NESTRANS and the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils to address transport at the strategic level leading to the creation of a Strategic Transport Fund. It is anticipated that this fund will enable Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils to implement an appropriate plan that delivers an improved road network which will accommodate all the Local Development Plan allocations and ease the movement of traffic around the City for the benefit of all.

## 2.9 Conclusions

A broad range of issues were considered by the Design Team and presented to the public in an extensive series of consultations with local interest groups, representatives and residents of surrounding neighbourhoods. Many of the concerns expressed by participants have been addressed by the Design Team in the formation of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan.

The main issues raised by this consultation series have been the local road network, the environmental quality of the area and the provision of education facilities for future residents. The Development Framework has addressed these concerns and produced a series of strategies to engage these main issues and provide solutions as far as practicable and appropriate at this time. A more detailed study of these transportation issues is in the Transport Assessment being produced to support the masterplan process and application for Planning Permission in Principle.



fig. 9: Countesswells consultation event.

# 3. Site Analysis





## 3.1 Size and Location

### 3.1.1 Strategic context

The site at Countesswells is different from all the other opportunity sites identified in the ALDP (shown on Figure 10 opposite) in that it is set on its own. It is distinct from any existing settlement and does not form an extension to an existing place. It is located in an attractive landscape setting, bounded by Den Wood, Hazlehead Park, Countesswells and Foggieton woodlands. In addition to the attractive rural setting, the site benefits from its close proximity to the city and surrounding communities to the north and south. The site will also benefit from good access to the existing road network including the A944, North Deeside Road (A93), Countesswells Road, C189 and Kirk Brae (C189) and in due course the AWPR.

The location provides a unique opportunity to create a new place, distinct within the Aberdeen area, a place that can benefit from the attractive rural setting but also allows good links to any other part of the City and surrounding communities.

### 3.1.2 Site location

The site at Countesswells occupies a 'greenfield' location within the city boundary to the west of the city centre.

The Countesswells site lies out with the built up area of the City of Aberdeen, approximately 7km west from the city centre. The site lies to the south of the A944 and Kingswells and to the north of the villages of Bielside and Cults. The site is located approximately 1km south of Kingswells and 0.5km north of Cults. The site area is distinct from both of the existing communities which are connected via the C189 (Kirk Brae (C189)) – running along the western edge of the site.

To the west of the Countesswells site area is the AWPR alignment, with new junctions on the A93 between Milltimber and Peterculter and on the A944 between Kingswells and Westhill.

### 3.1.3 Scale

The site area at Countesswells (ALDP boundary) is 165.9ha (410 acres). It measures 1.22 miles north to south at its longest point and 0.88 miles east to west at its widest.

To understand the scale of the site and the potential opportunities and issues that this may present the design team have compared the site area to a variety of existing settlements. For reference some of the comparison diagrams are shown below.

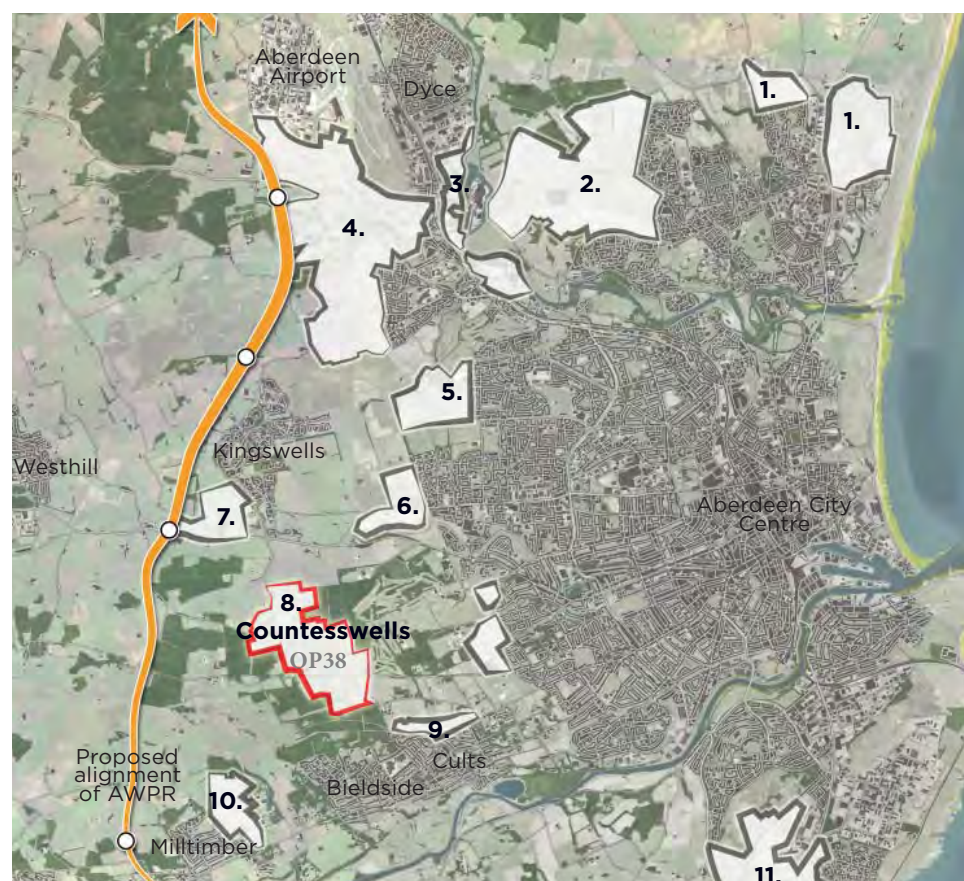


fig. 10: Countesswells in the context of City wide development

#### Aberdeen Local Development Plan Masterplan Zones

As identified on Figure 10 above.

- |                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Dubford and Murcar                | 7. Friarsfield |
| 2. Grandhome                         | 8. Loirston    |
| 3. Newhills Expansion and Dyce Drive |                |
| 4. Greenferns                        |                |
| 5. Maidencraig                       |                |
| 6. Countesswells                     |                |

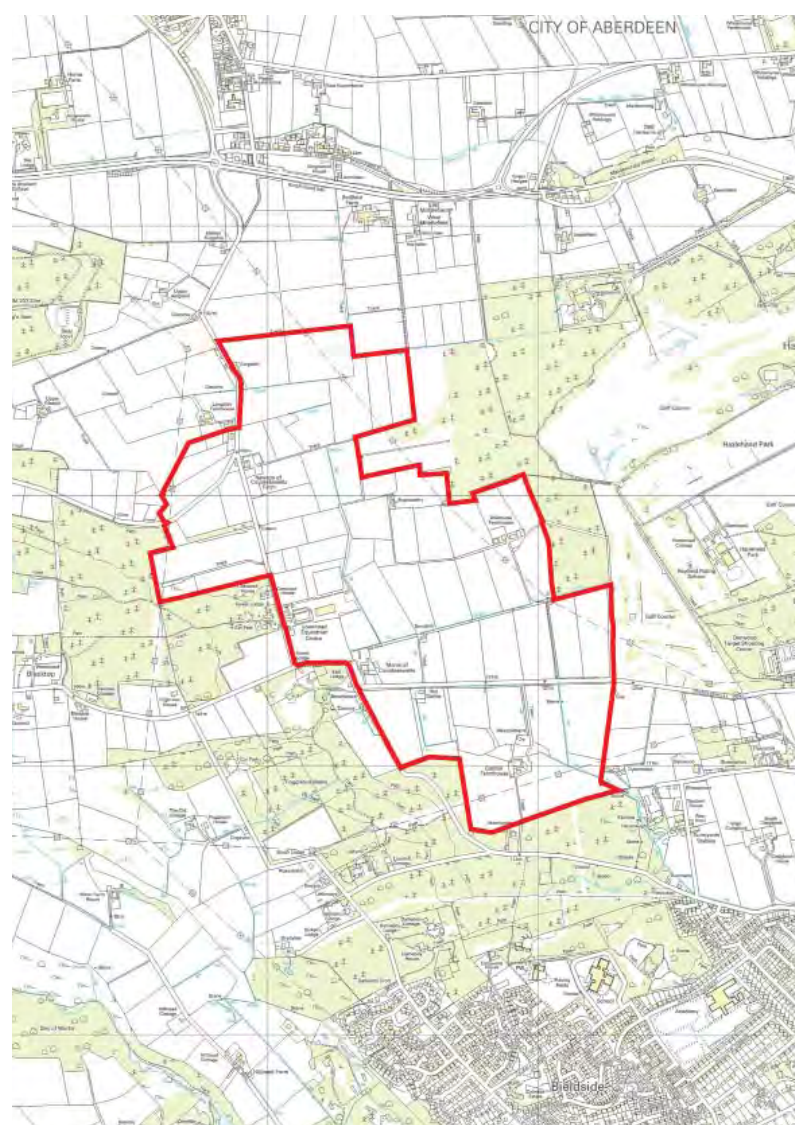


fig. 11: Aberdeen Local Development Plan Boundary.



fig. 12: Countesswells scale comparison with Huntly



fig. 13: Countesswells scale comparison with Kingswells



fig. 14: Countesswells scale comparison with Stonehaven



fig. 15: Countesswells scale comparison with Creiff

## 3.2 History, landuse and ownership

### 3.2.1 Site history

The site at Countesswells has remained relatively unchanged for the past 100 years or more. With the exception of some small scattered developments, the land has primarily been used for agricultural purposes. The site is bounded by, or in close proximity to several areas of Ancient Woodland in the form of Countesswells and Kingshill Wood to the west, Foggieton Wood to the south and Hazlehead and Denwood to the east, indicating the continuous presence of woodland since the Roy maps of 1750.

Countesswells House is a Grade B listed building located to the west of the site. Its historic influence on the landscape is represented by the avenue planting lining Countesswells Road and some of the associated field boundary planting in this vicinity. The importance of the House in relation to the once formal avenue approach has been diminished through alterations to road and access arrangements around the house over time however its influence on the landscape remains and Countesswells Road is one of the key existing features of the site.

### 3.2.2 Existing landuse

There are currently two main land uses on site; agriculture and equestrian, with some individual dwellings and farmhouses.

Countesswells Road dissects the southern half of the site running east to west, while Kirk Brae (C189) Road crosses the far western boundary from north to south.

The eastern edge is bound by Hazlehead Golf Course and wood, north by agricultural land, while to the west and south the site is bound by existing woodland, predominantly commercial forestry.

Loanhead Equestrian Centre sits midway along the western side of the site. Much of the land surrounding the equestrian centre to the north, east and south is used for grazing horses. Loanhead Equestrian Centre will not be retained as part of the proposals, however, the historical use of the site and surrounding area for equestrian uses has been important in informing the proposals.

Most other land on site is used for arable farming. There are a number of individual residential properties scattered throughout the site and several areas of plantation woodland, tree belts and an area of felled woodland to the east of the site.

### 3.2.3 Statutory designated sites

The proposed development site does not contain any sites statutorily designated for nature conservation.

The River Dee located approximately 3km south of the Countesswells site is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive). The SAC was designated in March 2005 based on the following qualifying interests:

- Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)
- Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera Margaritifera*); and
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

The Environmental Statement (prepared to support the Development Framework and Masterplan) includes a 'Report to inform Appropriate Assessment' as an appendix to the ecology chapter - see section 4.8.4.

### 3.2.4 Non - statutory designated sites

There are 80 Local Nature Conservation Sites within the Aberdeen City Council area which includes both District Wildlife Sites and Sites of Interest to Natural Science (Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010 - 2015).

No Local Nature Conservation Sites exist within the site boundaries, however there are a number of non-statutory designated sites (LNCS) within the surrounding area including Den Wood, Den of Maidenraig and Hazlehead Park to the east, Cults quarry to the south and Foggieton, moss of Auchlea and Rotten of Gairn to the west.

### 3.2.5 Existing properties

There are a number of existing properties on the site. Many of these, including Mains of Countesswells, Newton of Countesswells, Loanhead, Wardhead, Kingshill, Colthill and Bogskethy, have all existed on or around the site area as far back as the late 19th century, while records suggest that Countesswells House was built during the early 18th century.

All existing properties within the site area (ALDP boundary) are proposed to be retained and are identified on Figure 20, opposite.

### 3.2.6 Land ownership

Of the total site area the Consortium land interest at Countesswells is 159.9 hectares (395.11 acres).



fig. 16: Properties at Colthill Farm and Meadowbank.



fig. 17: Mains of Countesswells.



fig. 18: Wardhead.

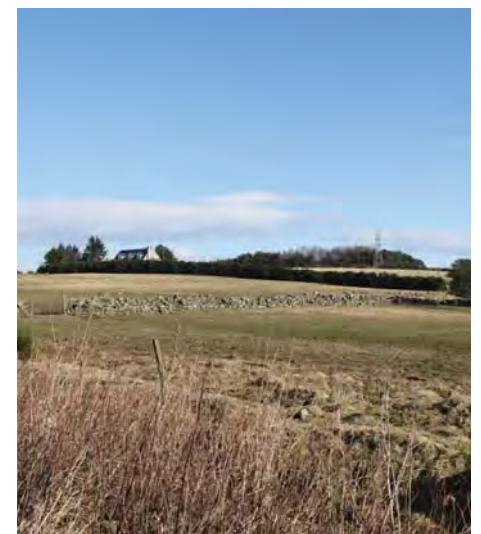


fig. 19: Bogskethy.

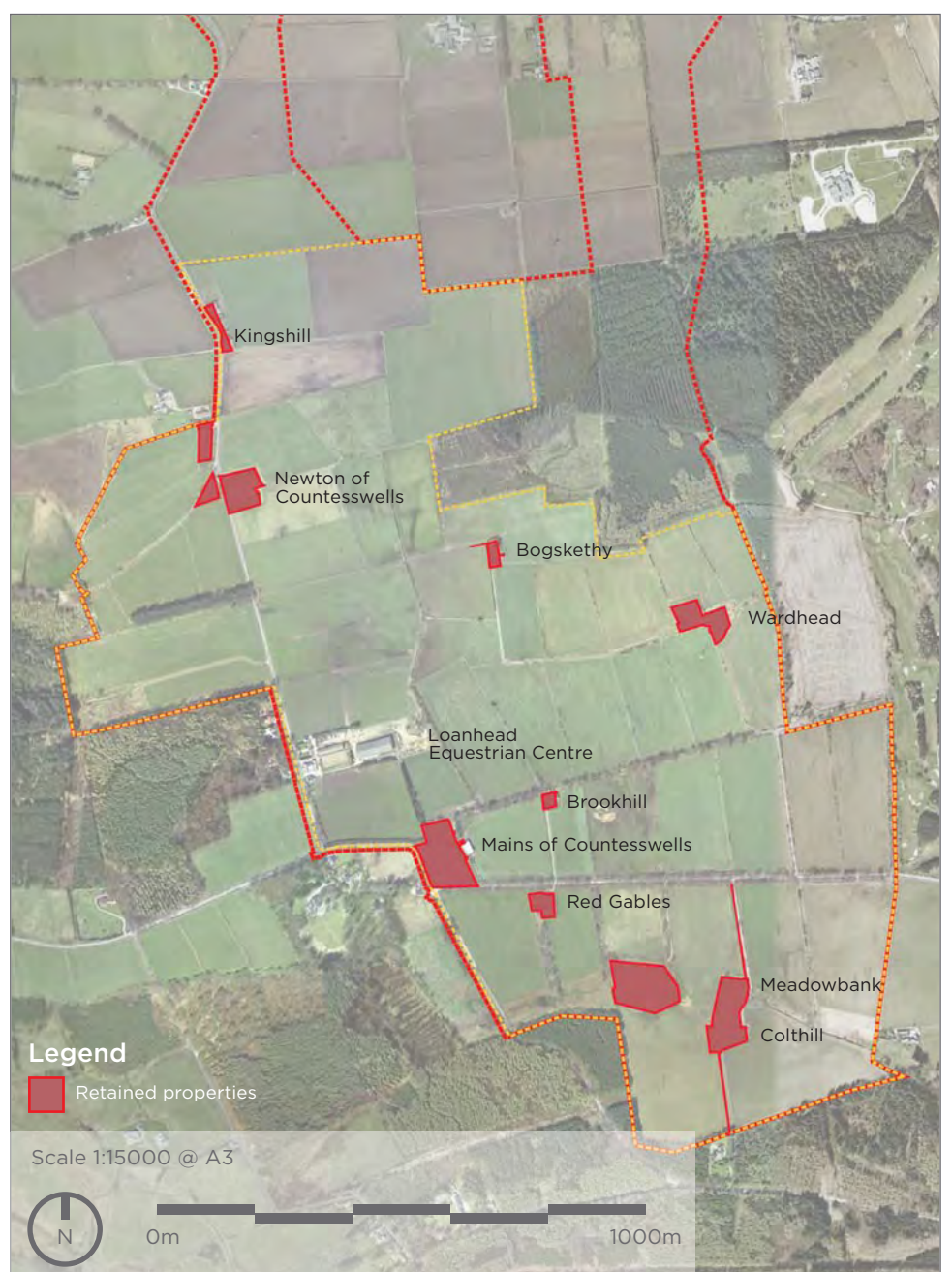


fig. 20: Retained properties

### 3.3 Landscape setting

The site is contained within a natural 'bowl' in the landscape, therefore is not readily visible from the surrounding settlements of Kingswells, Cults and Craigiebuckler. Overall the site is well contained, the lower lying areas to the south, which are contained by woodland blocks, are less prominent than the more elevated northern area.

Development at Countesswells will be sensitively integrated with the existing site characteristics. Specific issues such as wildlife, landscape, nature conservation and protection of amenity have been taken into account from the outset. This will be further addressed in the detailed design of the development through the progression of the Development Framework, the Masterplan, phasing and production of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The photographs on this page and the following pages give an impression of the landscape setting of the Countesswells site. The photographs also illustrate some of the key site features and characteristics.

#### Green Belt

The purpose of the green belt is to maintain the identity of Aberdeen and surrounding suburban and rural communities by defining their physical boundaries. The designation of a green belt avoids coalescence and urban sprawl, maintains a high quality landscape setting and ensures an adequate provision of high quality open space.

Prior to being designated as an Opportunity site within the ALDP, the proposed site formed part of the Aberdeen City Green Belt. Land surrounding the site is designated as Green Belt and the design and approach to the Countesswells development has, through the landscape strategy and development layouts, considered how the proposed development will successfully link with the surrounding landscape and Green Belt features.

#### Green Space Network

See Figure 2.

The Green Space Network (GSN, ALDP Policy NE1) defines a strategic network of woodland/habitats, pedestrian, cycle and equestrian routes, greenspace connections and watercourses. The GSN promotes high quality settings for future development and improved opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature conservation and landscape enhancement. The GSN includes Open Space, Green Belt, Natural Heritage and other policies and indicates areas within the City where greenspace enhancement projects could be focused.

The ALDP identifies a central band within the site between Hazlehead Park and Gairnhill Wood as part of the Green Space Network and this has been incorporated as part of the Cults Burn Corridor network providing high quality open space and connectivity and permeability between existing woodland habitats in terms of biodiversity.

#### OP50 Allocation - Skene Road, Hazlehead for Phased Cemetery Development

See Figure 2.

The access to the OP38 site is adjacent to the OP50 allocation for a phased cemetery development at the Aberdeen Crematorium. The alignment and landscape design for the new road link will seek to minimise the impact of the road on the setting and amenity of the Memorial Garden

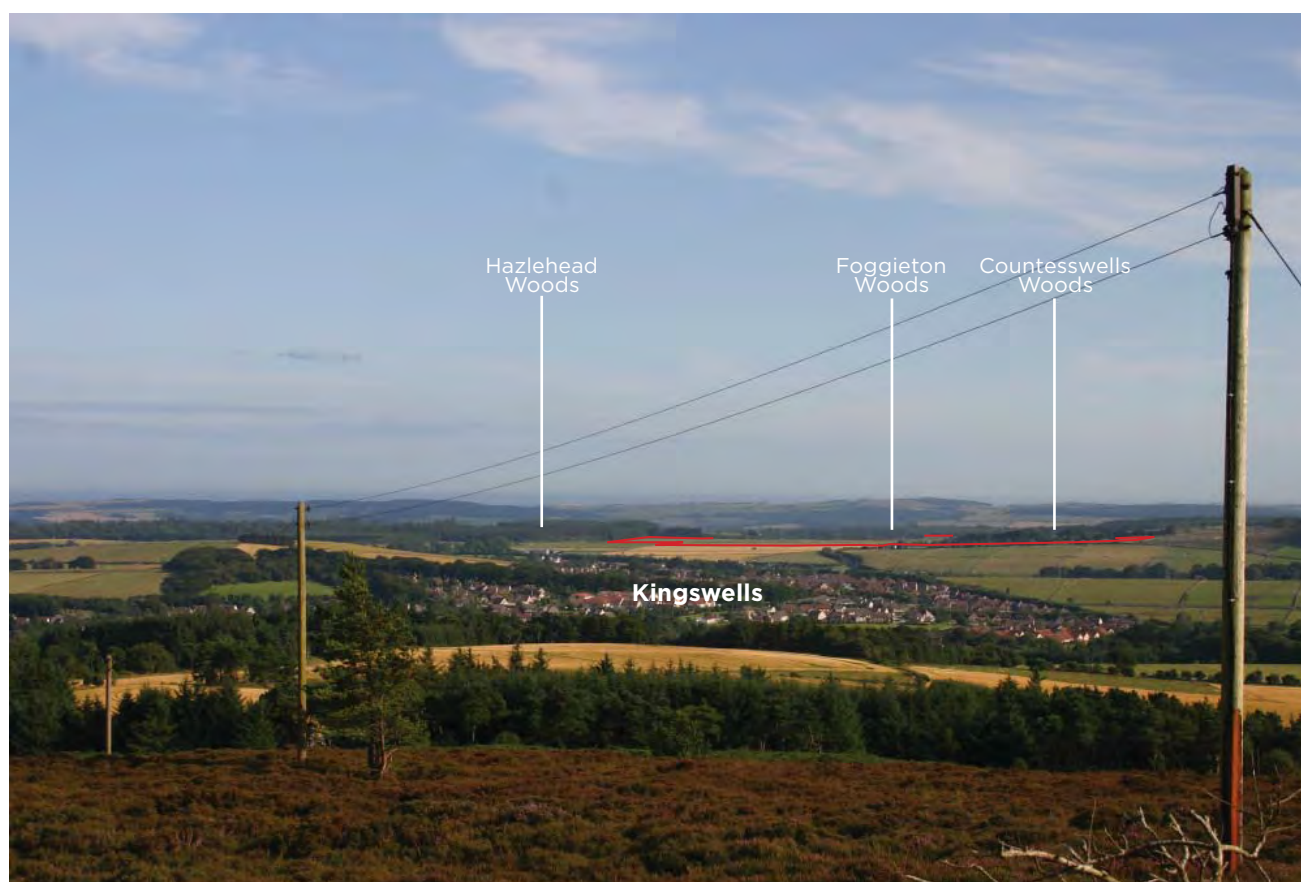


fig. 21: View from Brimmond Hill

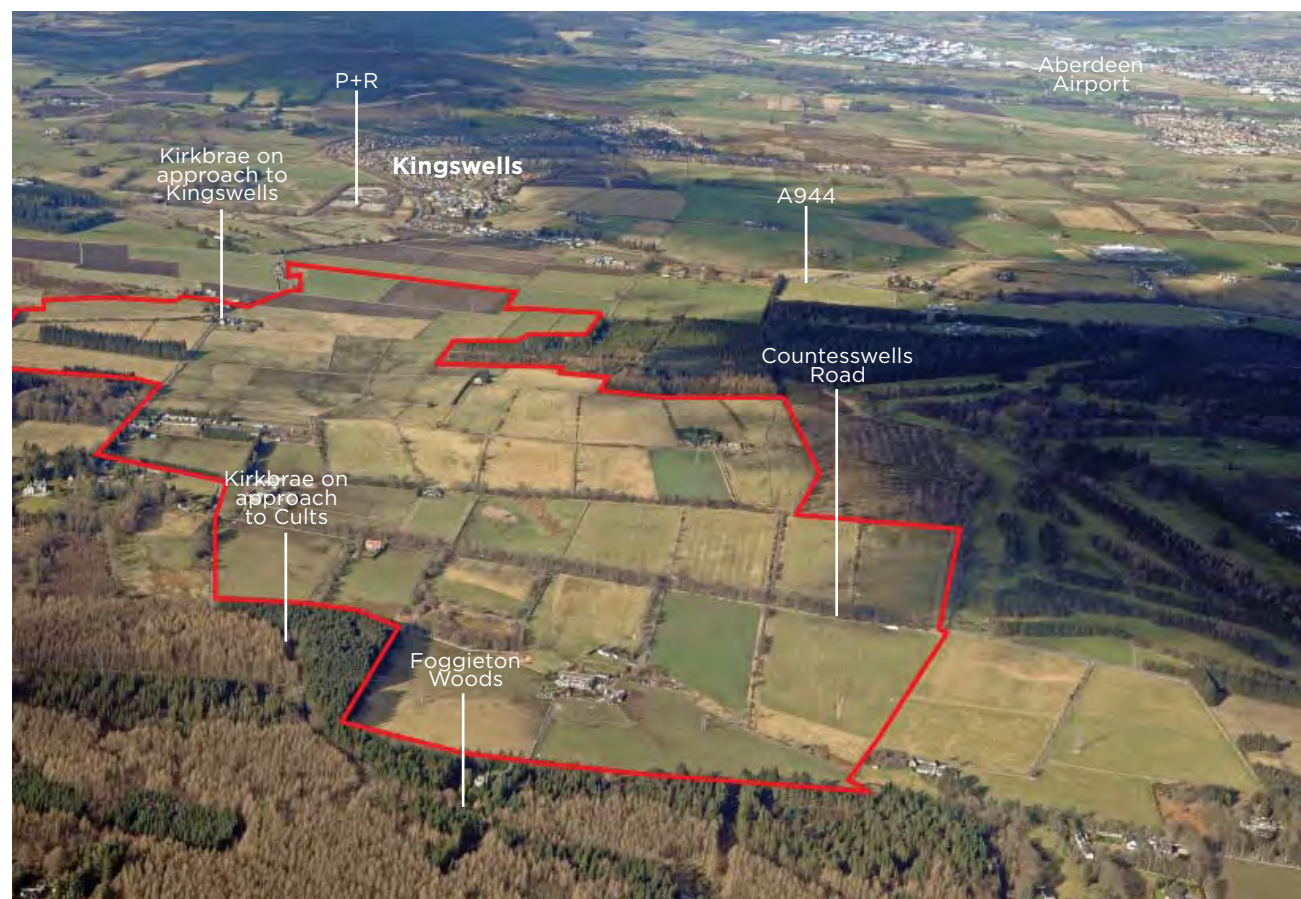


fig. 22: Aerial view looking north



fig. 23: Aerial view looking south east





### 3.3.1 Selected site views

Specific panoramas from within the site have been selected to illustrate site characteristics and views out of the site where relevant.

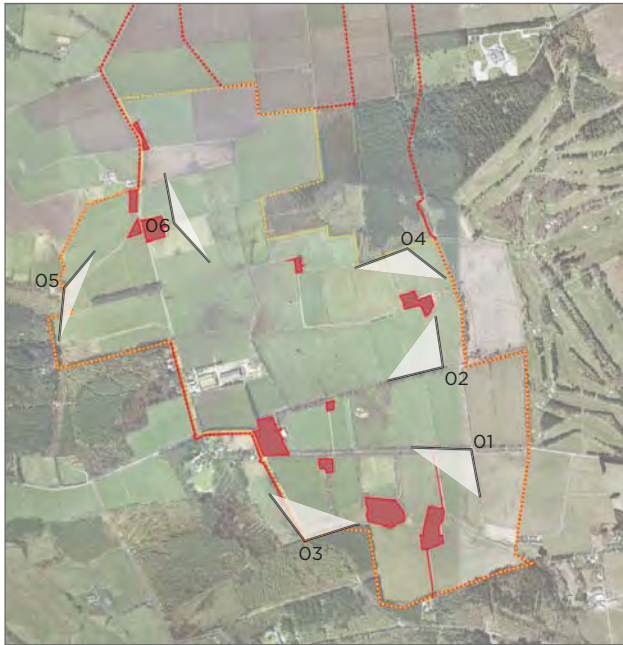


fig. 24: Viewpoint location plan.



fig. 25: View 01:  
Looking south from Countesswells Road



fig. 26: View 02:  
Looking north west to Kingshill Wood in background between Countesswells Wood and the prominent slope adjacent Wardhead Farmhouse



fig. 27: View 03:  
Looking north along Kirk Brae (C189) from where the road exits Foggieton Woods

Meadowbank and Colthill

Countesswells Road



Newton of Countesswells

Bogskethy

Wardhead



Former reservoir



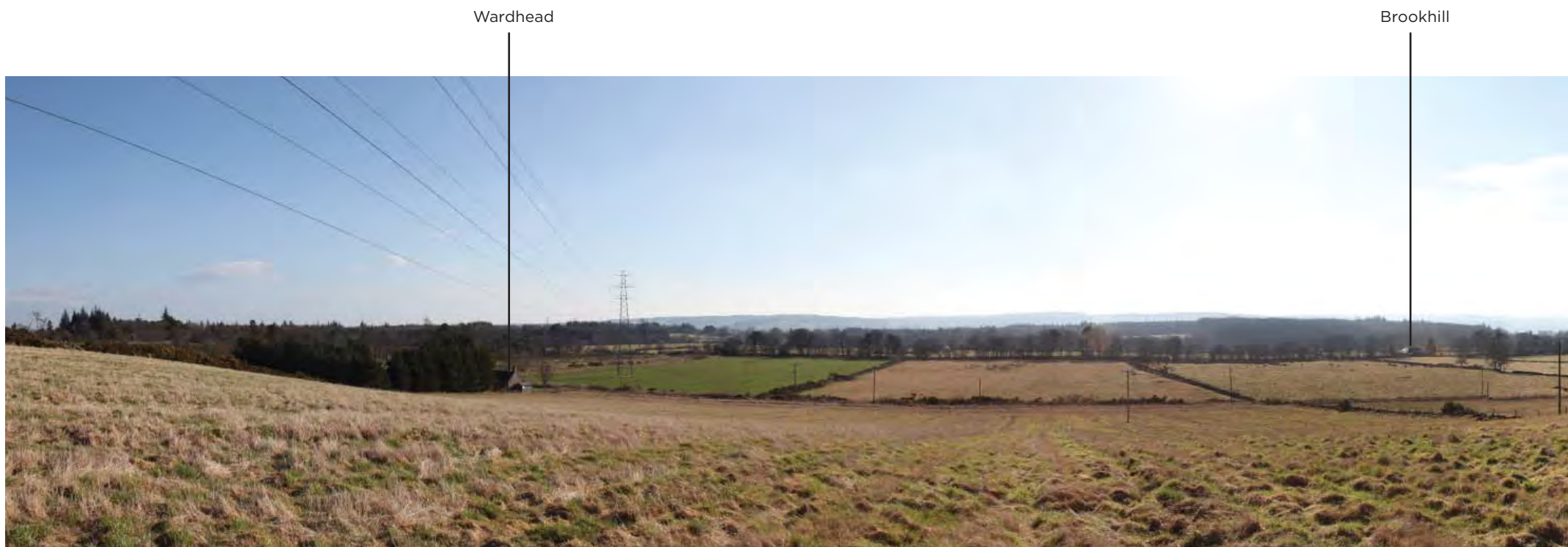


fig. 28: View 04:  
Looking south over the site and towards the Dee Valley from the top of the slope above Wardhead Farmhouse



View taken from the high point on the western boundary of the site looking south and east over the site and to the North Sea beyond.



fig. 30: View 06  
View from existing right of way off Kirk Brae (C189).



Loanhead Equestrian Centre



Bogskethy



Bogskethy

Loanhead Equestrian Centre



### 3.4 Topography

The landform generally falls from north to south. Land close to the northern boundary of the site is around 170 metres AOD and falls to approximately 110 metres on the southern boundary. The slopes are in general between 1 in 20 to 1 in 30. There are locally more steeply sloping areas with gradients steeper than 1 in 10, around a low hilltop in the central section of the site, an area close to the north western boundary, and within clearings on the western edge of the site.

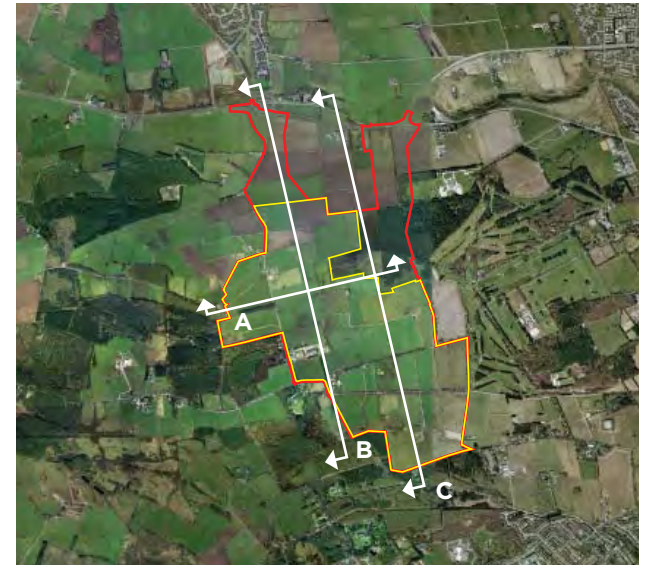


fig. 31: Section locations

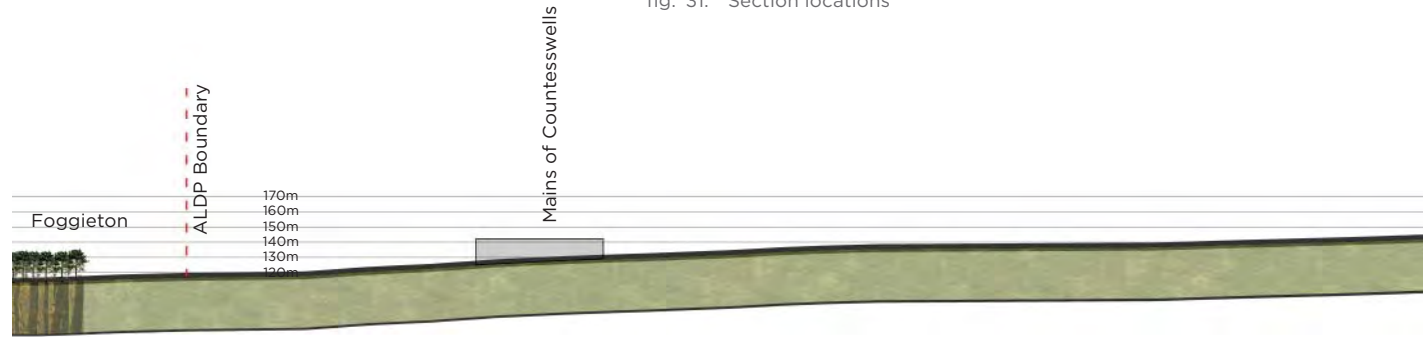


fig. 32: Section B

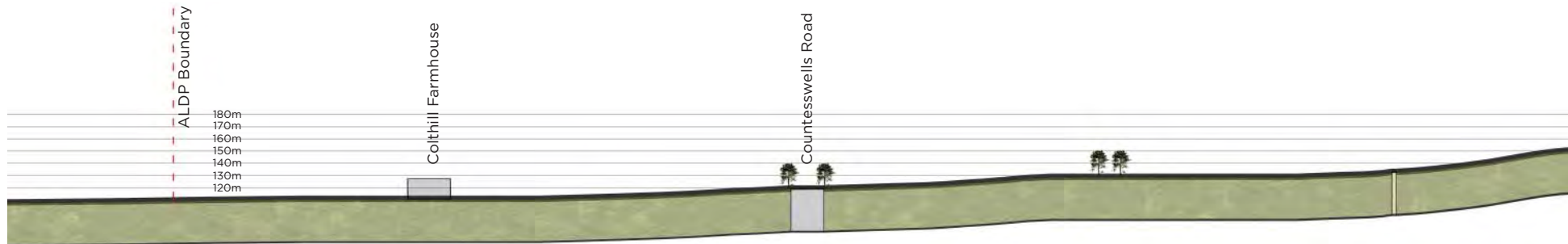


fig. 33: Section C

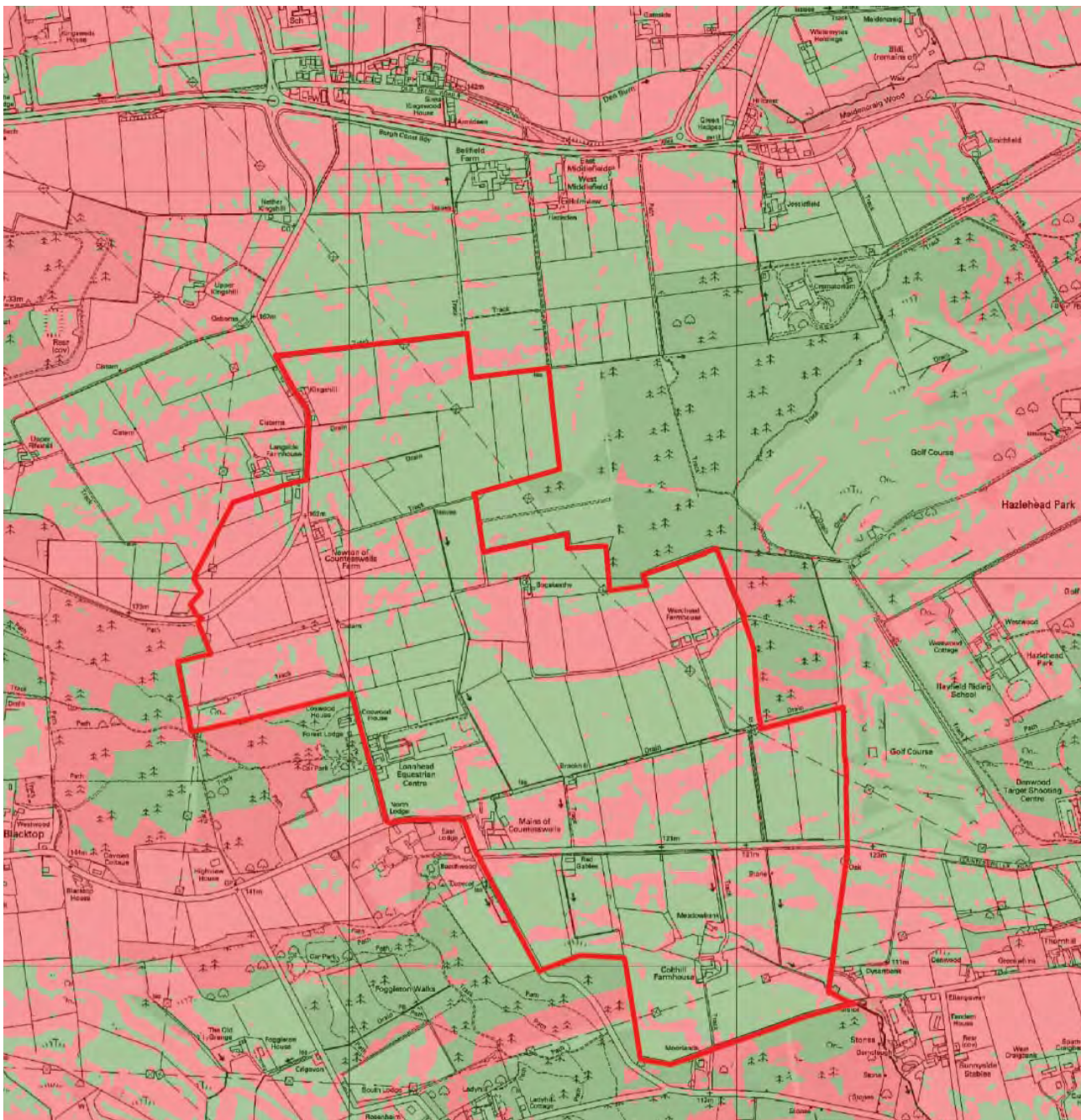
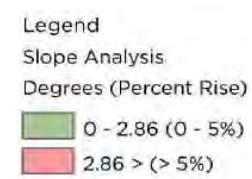


fig. 34: Slope analysis

### Slope analysis



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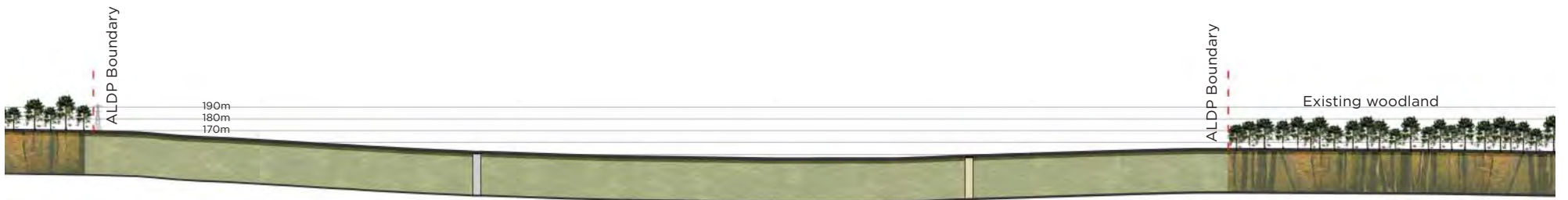
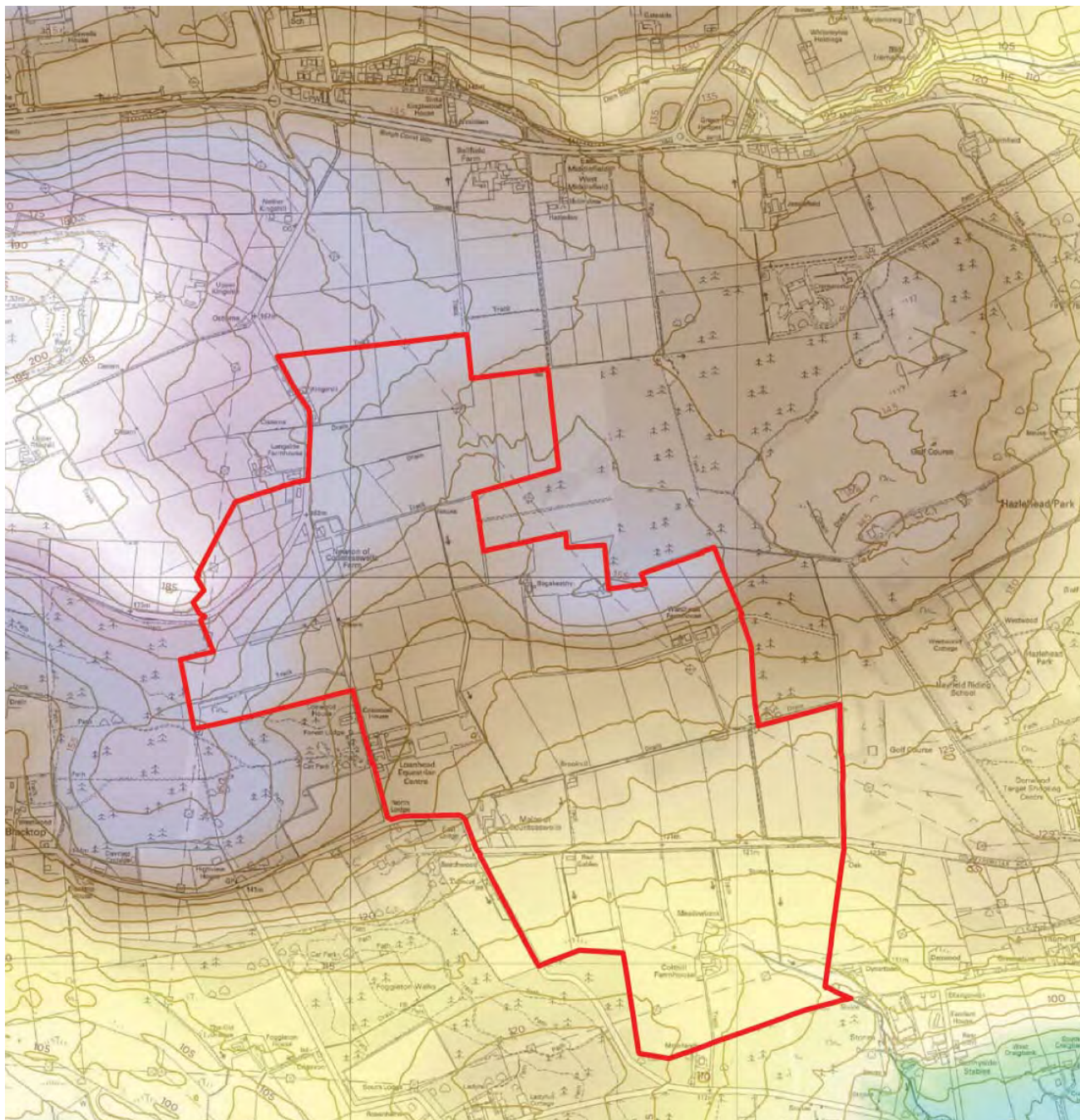


fig. 35: Section A



## Elevation



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fig. 36: Elevation

## 3.5 Hydrology

### 3.5.1 Surface water

There are no significant watercourses on site. A number of drainage ditches exist in the northern part of the site, with a culverted ditch in the most southern area. The main water course within the site is Cults Burn, a modest watercourse gathering natural drainage from the site and flowing from the south-east corner of the site in a generally southern direction, to outfall in the River Dee. The existing water courses on the site are identified on Figure 41 opposite.

Soils information from the Geo-Environmental desk study and evidence from the site walk over indicate relatively poorly draining soils, with an absence of natural sands and gravels, thus indicating poor infiltration characteristics.

There are no Scottish Water surface water sewers on or close to the site. The Cults to Kingswells unclassified road has a road drainage system, suitable for this road alone, but with no capacity for additional development.

### 3.5.2 Flood risk

There are no indicative flood risks on the SEPA flood map affecting any part of the proposed development site. Local overtopping of some of the minor bodies noted on site is a possibility, but very local to the water flow. No mitigation would be required for any such incidents prior to development. Cults Burn is not identified as a flood risk. The other minor water bodies currently on site appear to be part of an agricultural drainage system.

The minor unnamed watercourses and ditches on the site do not feature on SEPA's flood map. The map does indicate potential flooding from surface water however the areas affected are to be developed and will therefore be incorporated into the drainage design. A Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment, which will consider any existing risk will be carried out as part of the detailed drainage design. As the watercourses are minor and are not represented on the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale maps, site observations and reference to the topographical survey must be made to assess flood risk on a high level basis.

A Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment, will be carried out as part of the planning application process. It should include a model of the existing drainage network and should extend fully downstream to include all culverts along the Cults Burn.



fig. 37: Existing field drainage ditches



fig. 38: Existing drainage ditch adjacent Countesswells Road



fig. 39: Existing drainage ditch adjacent Countesswells Road



fig. 40: Existing low lying wetland area to south of site

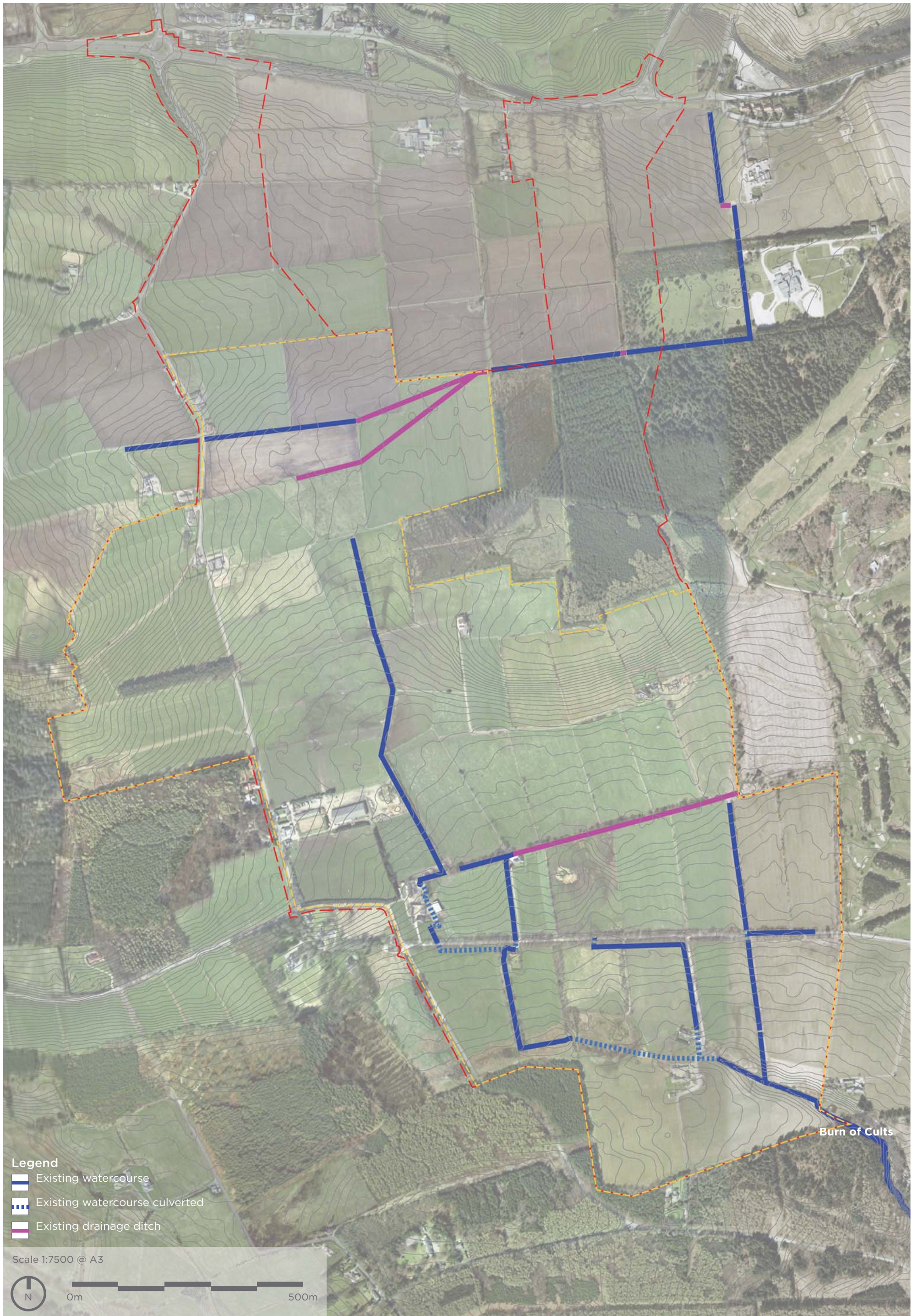


fig. 41: Existing site drainage

## 3.6 Existing trees and woodland

Existing woodland within the ALDP OP38 boundary itself is relatively limited. However there is considerable woodland planting adjoining the site boundaries, much of which is classified as Ancient Woodland. A Tree and Woodland Survey Report Countesswells March 2012 has been produced by Struan Dalgleish Arboriculture.

### 3.6.1 Significant groups of trees

Significant groups of trees are located at the north eastern corner of the site where substantial areas of coniferous plantation (G10 and G12 to G16) were recorded. These areas of trees adjoin the woodlands of Hazlehead Park.

A substantial shelterbelt of mature Sitka spruce (G18) was recorded near the western boundary of the site.

Strips of mature trees occur as an avenue of mixed broadleaf's along Countesswells Road (G21) and lining adjacent field boundaries within the southern portion of the site (G6 and G20 to G25 and G27).

Elsewhere, trees were often recorded around farm buildings and houses or as small scattered trees growing from stone dykes at field boundaries. This includes G1 to G3, T4, G5, G7, G8, G9, G11, G17, and G19.

### 3.6.2 Summary of management issues

#### Lodgepole Pine

Where lodgepole pine occurred within the coniferous plantations G13, G14 and G15 the trees appeared to be unhealthy and of low vigour with sparse crowns and prone to wind damage.

Within these groups the lodgepole pine is considered to be of very limited long term potential and will required to be removed within the next 10 years.

#### Wind damage

The effects of high winds uprooting and snapping trees was noted to be a particular issue within G12, G13 and G15 with lodgepole pine the most prone to damage as mentioned above.

Where windblown trees overhang paths these should be removed as soon as possible. Due to the unpredictable nature of severe storms there is a degree of uncertainty in quantifying the future likelihood of wind damage within the other coniferous species present, namely Sitka spruce, larch, Scots pine and Norway spruce. It is however generally considered likely that due to the even aged structure of these stands that as the trees increase in height the likelihood of further and severe wind damage occurring will increase.

Appropriate management of the plantation woodland could create a more diverse and robust woodland improving the conditions for the retention of trees in the long term.

#### Dutch Elm Disease

The disease, which is becoming increasingly common in the area, appears to have been responsible for the death of a number of trees throughout the site. Dead elm trees were noted within G5, G21 and G24.

At present there remain a good number of apparently unaffected and healthy elm trees throughout the site, and further spread of the disease would have serious implications for the tree cover. The elm population should therefore be closely monitored for signs of infection and where noted prompt action taken in an attempt to limit the spread.



fig. 42: Woodland edge of Hazlehead Wood

### 3.6.3 Trees and development

#### No-build Zones

A recommended 'no-build' distance has been provided for each woodland group. These distances are based on ultimate tree height and take into consideration factors such as shading and the concerns often expressed by home owners with regard to the presence of large and mature trees in close proximity to their houses. Recommended no-build zones are given in the tree survey schedule. These distance as are measured from the base of the trunk of the edge trees.

This is therefore intended to be a zone where construction of houses, light structures and gardens are excluded however roads and paths to provide access would be permitted provided their construction does not negatively impact on root protection zones.

All development will be considered in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' and should be discussed with the ACC Arboriculture Officer.

#### Root Protection Zones

Root Protection Zone's (RPZ's) are areas surrounding the tree that contains sufficient rooting volume to ensure the survival of the tree. Within this zone no ground works should be undertaken to avoid soil compaction, root severance, changes in level or soil contamination which could reduce the trees health or stability.

In-accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' the protective distance can be calculated by multiplying the stem diameter by 12, or by 10 in the case of a multistemmed tree. This distance is measured from the base of the trunk and provides a RPZ. In setting out an RPZ it should not be presumed that roots can spread uninhibited in all directions, consideration should be given to the morphology and potential disposition of the roots. External factors may require the RPZ to be off-set or non-circular.

For the purpose of this report where individual tree diameters have not been recorded and to provide general guidance for site layout RPZ should be considered to be equivalent to the drip line of the canopy as found at the time of survey. This is not an accurate methodology and the actual RPZ should be established as part of the Tree Protection Plans produced to support future applications.

Following construction sufficient space around the trees to be retained must be provided to ensure their long term retention/survival. This should be based on tree species and habit rather than the RPZ.

A detailed Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' and Scottish Government policy 'Control of Woodland Removal' following the detailing of site layout design proposals.



fig. 43: Existing ancient woodland to South of site



fig. 44: Tree avenue along Countesswells Road

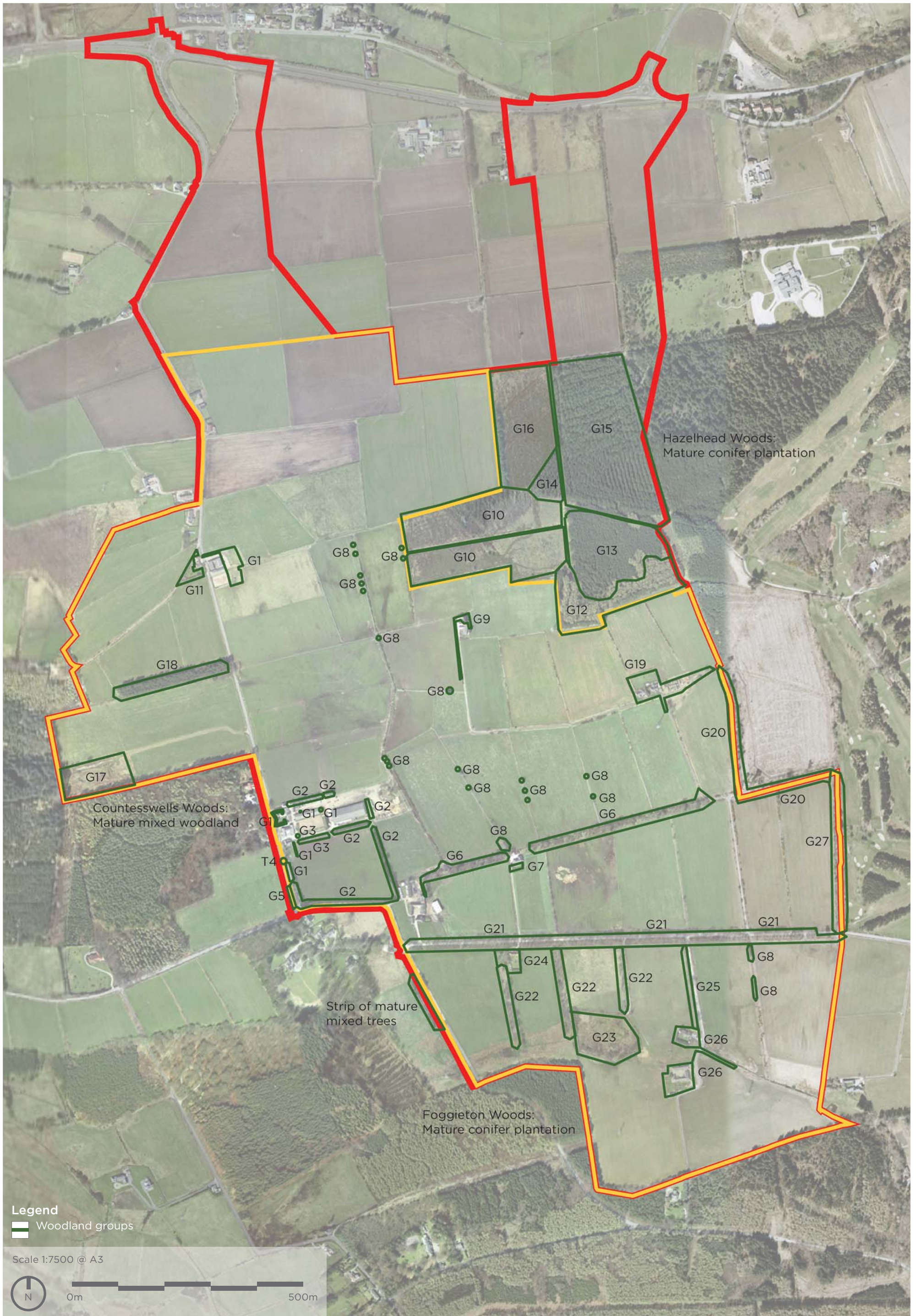


fig. 45: Existing Trees

## 3.7 Access and connectivity

### 3.7.1 Pedestrian and cycle access

Located 2km west of Craigiebuckler, 1.5km north of Cults and 2km south of Kingswells the principal existing walking routes in the vicinity of the Countesswells site are generally for leisure purposes and in particular horse riding with a number of countryside and forest trails formed in the areas surrounding the proposed site. Publication of the City Council's Core Paths Plan in April 2009 has formalised the status of these existing routes, see Figure 47 below. Apart from a potential link to Hazlehead Academy (currently the nearest secondary school) there are no other existing significant attractions which are accessible within a conventional 1600m walking distance from the site by the existing path network.

In order to improve the potential for cycle commuting Aberdeen City Council and NESTRANS implemented a Westhill-Aberdeen cycle route along the A944 corridor to the north of the site. This has led to the implementation of significant improvements to the route as an off road route, eastwards from Kingswells towards the city.

Whilst some of the existing cycle provisions around the site are off-road routes and dual-use paths the majority are on-road via either cycle lanes or 'recommended routes' along more lightly trafficked roads. Some of the lightly trafficked roads however do not form the most direct routes likely to maximise cycling potential. Much of the existing local road network serving the area carries significant volumes of orbital traffic movements around Aberdeen particularly at peak hours impacting on its attractiveness for cyclists.

Following completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) it is envisaged that substantial proportions of existing traffic movements will divert to the new route thereby significantly improving the attractiveness of the existing network for cyclists and facilitating the development of priority routes for cyclists, with many employment and other attractions in the city and surrounding areas within convenient cycling distance.

The Established Access Route identified on the plan below has been utilised for both pedestrian and equestrian recreational activity in excess of 20 years. This link through the site will be maintained, diverted slightly in order to link up to the proposed network of footpaths and streets, allowing for better connectivity and fluidity through the development. A wider path network is proposed with routes that will be able to accommodate equestrian users and allow movement between Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead woodland.



fig. 46: Signpost in Hazlehead Woods

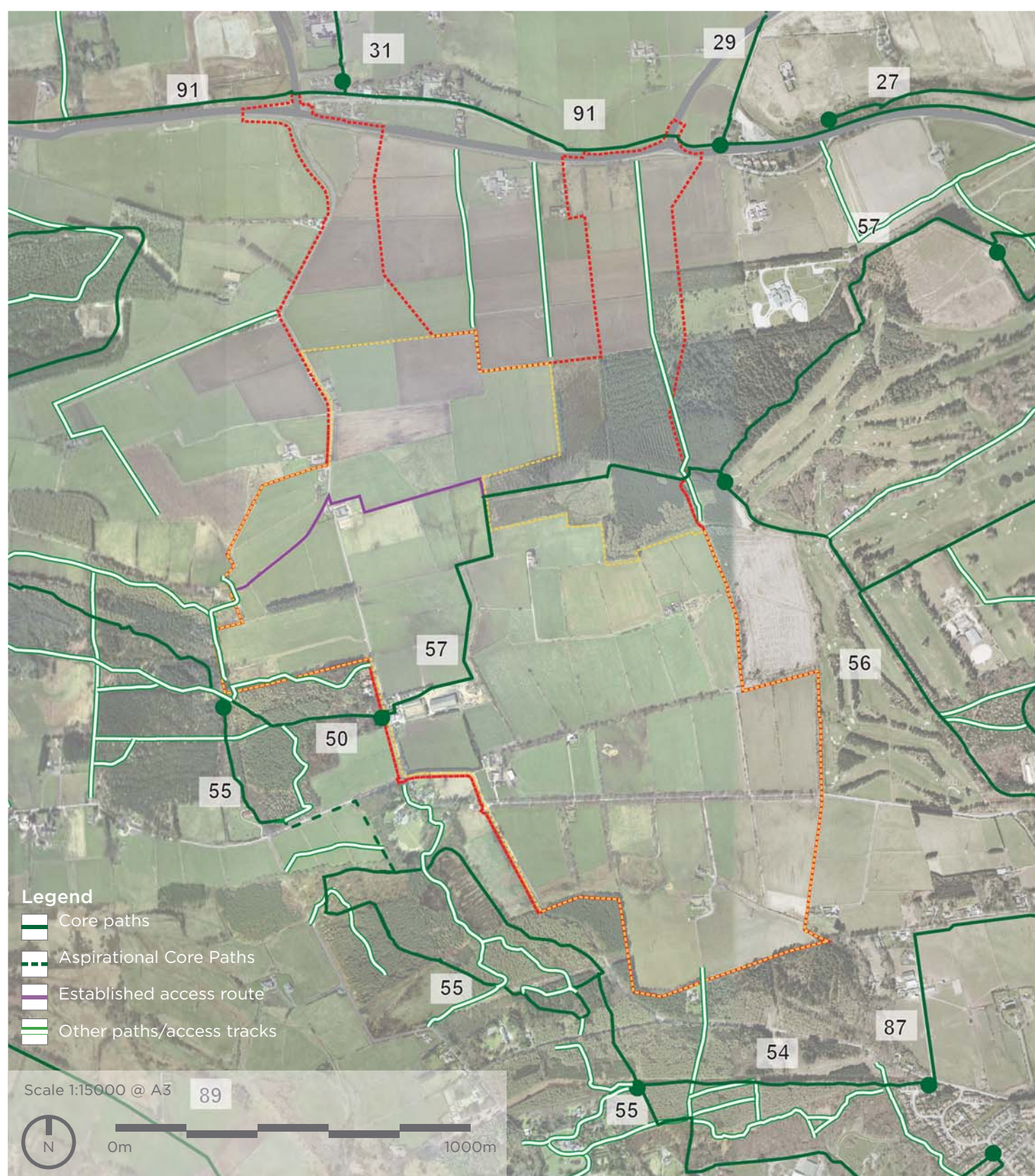


fig. 47: Existing path network



fig. 48: Walking in Countesswells Woods



fig. 49: Horse riding along the core path 57



### 3.7.2 Public transport

The site does not currently have access to public transport within the conventional 400m walk threshold due to its location on the fringe of the existing urban area. The A944, which runs along the northern boundary of the proposed site, is a designated bus priority corridor and the park & ride at Kingswells located some 800m to the north west of the OP58 boundary will provide a focus for the identification of future bus services, both to/from the city centre and other peripheral destinations via the AWPR.

Existing public transport to the south is approximately 3km from the centre of the site. This is beyond desirable walk distance but within an easy cycle distance or car journey. Links to accommodate these modes will be provided where feasible. The Development Framework has been designed so that public transport can be accommodated from the south should operators wish to do so in the future.

### 3.7.3 Local road network

The site lies between two of the main radial traffic routes into Aberdeen City Centre from the West with the A944 to the north and A93 (North Deeside Road) to the south.

As a key route into Aberdeen, the A944 accommodates significant traffic volumes in excess of 1500 vehicles (one-way) during the peak hours. The A944 is dual carriageway between Jessiefield roundabout and Westhill to accommodate the high traffic volumes which comprise principally commuters but also high proportions of heavy goods vehicles serving the offshore business park area in Westhill and bus traffic serving both Westhill-Aberdeen and the Kingswells Park and Ride site. Despite its rural context it has street lighting between Aberdeen and Westhill and urban speed limits. Key junctions along the A944 are the Six Mile Fork (at Westhill), the Kingswells roundabout (at Kingswells) and the Jessefield roundabout (Switchback) linking the A944 with Skene Road and Lang Stracht. These junctions are roundabout junctions but the Kingswells and the Switchback roundabouts have partial signal control. The significant traffic volumes commuting along the A944 and negotiating these junctions leads to congestion, queuing and delay during the morning and evening peaks.

The A93 North Deeside Road provides a parallel commuter corridor linking North Deeside communities to the city centre. Tidal traffic flows are observed along this route as the majority of traffic travels towards the city centre during the AM peak and away from it during the PM peak. As it passes through Peterculter and Milltimber towards Aberdeen the route passes contiguous built up frontages with 30/40 mph speed limits and signalised junctions with key side routes such as Baillieswells Road and Kirk Brae (C189).

Principal routes off North Deeside Road at present giving access to the Countesswells site are Baillieswells Road and Kirk Brae (C189). The junction of Baillieswells Road with North Deeside Road is a signalised crossroads. Baillieswells Road beyond the residential areas to the north of North Deeside Road is a relatively narrow two way rural route providing access to Blacktop and links with Kirk Brae (C189) / Countesswells Road.

The junction of Kirk Brae (C189) with North Deeside Road is also a signalised crossroads providing access for residential areas within Cults to the north of North Deeside Road. Kirk Brae (C189) then routes northwards through rural areas, past the proposed development area and its northern end links to the A944 at the part time signalised Kingswells roundabout.

Friarsfield Road also links with Kirk Brae (C189), via a priority junction, to the north of North Deeside Road and continues eastwards on a parallel alignment. It becomes Craighton Road which continues east to a junction with Springfield Road. Countesswells Road is another rural route to the north of and parallel with Craighton Road running between Springfield Road in the east, across the site as a tree lined avenue to link at its western end with Kirk Brae (C189).

Baillieswells Road, to the west of Kirk Brae (C189), connects between Blacktop Road and North Deeside Road. To its northern end it is a narrow rural road but it passes through residential areas of Cults to link at a signal controlled junction with North Deeside Road.

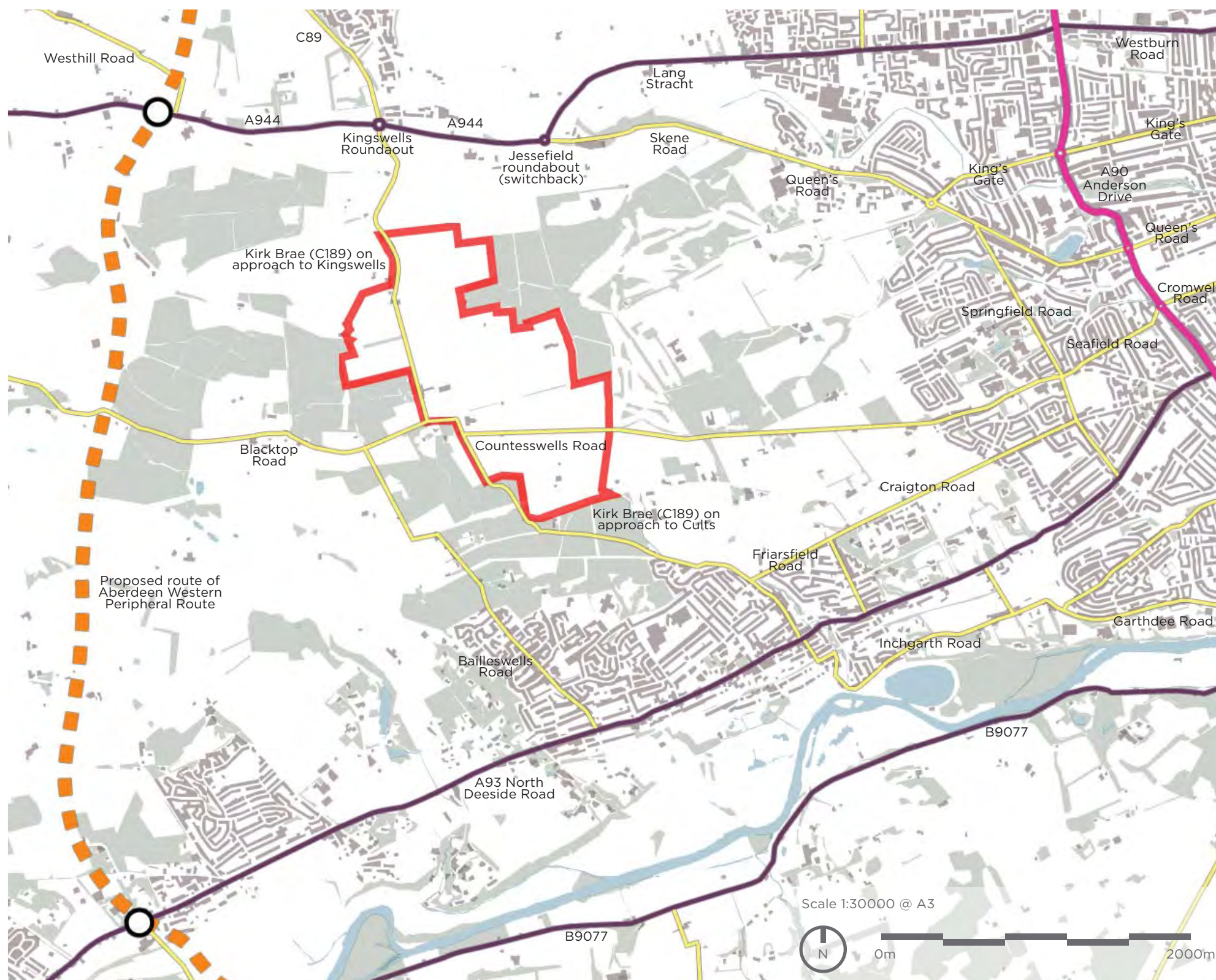


fig. 50: Existing roads

To the west of the area is the AWPR alignment, with new junctions on the A93 between Milltimber and Peterculter and on the A944 between Kingswells and Westhill.

The principal existing route from the Countesswells site to the south is currently an unclassified road which runs north / south past the western side of the proposed site as a single carriageway road subject to a national speed limit; current proposals by ACC will reduce the speed limit on this route to 40 mph. At its southern end, just south of Countesswells Wood, a priority junction is formed with routes signed to the west to Wester Ord and to the east towards Cults. Blacktop Road continues as a national speed limit route to the west and provides access to Easter Ord and Wester Ord.

A second priority junction links with Countesswells Road running east with a national speed limit to link with Springfield Road at a signalised cross roads junction providing access to south west Aberdeen. Kirk Brae (C189) continues east then south after the junction and becomes more urbanised at its southern end, with the speed limit reducing to 30mph. Just prior to entering the urban area Kirk Brae (C189) links, via a priority junction with Friarsfield Road which continues eastwards to Springfield Road. Kirk Brae (C189) continues south to link with North Deeside Road at a signalised cross roads junction and thereby provides access to the majority of residential areas within east Cults to North Deeside Road.

The A93, North Deeside Road, provides a commuter corridor parallel to the A944 linking communities along North Deeside with the city centre. Tidal traffic flows are observed along this route with the majority of traffic travelling towards the city centre during the AM peak and away from it during the PM peak. Peterculter and Milltimber have continuous built up frontages with 30/40 mph

speed limits and signalised cross road junctions with key side routes such as Kirk Brae (C189) and Baillieswells Road.

Junction modelling work has been undertaken to model the effects of the development on junctions to the south. This work highlighted that Kirk Brae (C189) / Kirk Terrace / Friarsfield Road priority junction currently operates within capacity. With the addition of development traffic, however, this junction appears to operate beyond acceptable capacity and therefore mitigation will be required.

Countesswells Road / Springfield Road is a four arm signalised cross roads with the addition of a left turn bypass lane on the Countesswells Road (Eastbound) approach. Junction analysis predicts that this junction demonstrated that it currently performs satisfactorily, with reserve capacity and acceptable queuing levels. Previous proposals for residential development at Pinewood / Hazeldene within the vicinity of this junction identified improvements to be made to this junction and modelling these improvements with the addition of development traffic shows it to perform satisfactorily.

The Craighton Road signalised junction was modelled with development traffic and was shown to operate within acceptable capacity as were the Kirk Brae (C189) / North Deeside Road and Baillieswells Road / North Deeside Road signalised junctions.

All proposals will be finalised and agreed via the Transport Assessment process which will be required to support any future Applications. The Transport Assessment must determine whether the currently proposed mitigation is adequate and identify any further mitigation that is required as a result of the development.

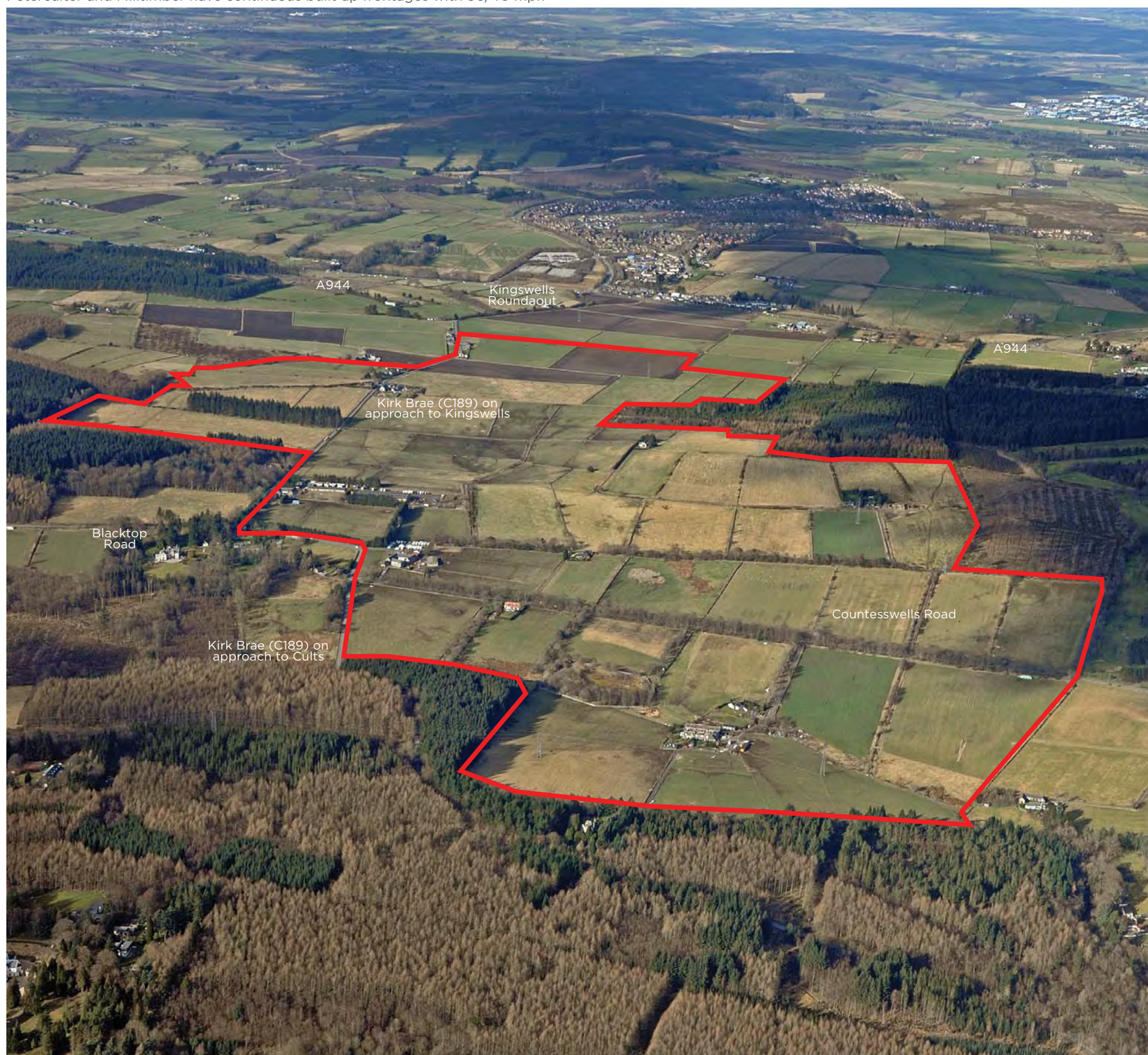


fig. 51: Aerial view looking north

## 3.8 Environment

### 3.8.1 Protection of Environmental Assets

The Countesswells site benefits from a range of environmental assets that will be protected and enhanced through the development process. The Development Framework and Masterplan design process has been informed by environmental and ecological baseline surveys and consultation advanced with a number of consultees and stakeholders.

#### Environmental work undertaken to date includes:

- Initial Environmental Risk Assessment and walkover survey to identify potential issues and opportunities associated with environmental assets.
- Completion of suite of Ecological Surveys spring/summer 2012 to inform the detail of the Development Framework and to provide baseline for subsequent Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Environmental Workshop with officers from Aberdeen City Council and statutory consultees provided the opportunity to advance discussions with Aberdeen City Council Environment Team, potential opportunities and constraints presented by the site.
- Preparation of a Scoping Report and submission of a formal scoping request to Aberdeen City Council in June 2012. This follows a screening determination (July 2011) from Aberdeen City Council that EIA was required to support the PPIP.
- Review of the Scoping Responses received to ensure recommendations and suggestions for assessment are addressed within the Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Statement
- Undertaking surveys and assessment associated with the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Statement which will be submitted with the PPIP.

### 3.8.2 Design Response to Environment

The Design Team have considered the influencing factors posed by existing site features, including watercourses, mature trees, topography and built heritage in parallel with existing sensitivities and constraints. Iterations of the preferred development included analysis of the most optimal locations for the built and landscaped elements, so as to avoid impacts on natural and cultural heritage features of interest and value and any potential neighbouring receptors.

This exercise has included review of a range of alternative layouts informed by an environmental 'constraints' plan and advice from specialists relative to ecology, water environment and cultural heritage. A Tree Survey informed the retention and protection of high quality trees and advised relative to management of trees in poor quality.

#### Key Environmental Design Considerations:

- The Greenspace Network within the site and in the surrounding areas containing a range of habitat types (Source: Aberdeen City Council 'In My Area' GIS Resource).
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity capital on the site e.g. tree belts, hedgerows and habitat relative to protected species interest and landscape features including Cults Burn
- Protecting and enhancing the landscape and visual amenity of the site and surrounding area. Particular consideration of retention, where possible, features of the site that contribute to the local landscape, character and quality of the site including hedgerows, tree avenues and boundary planting.
- The development enhances the greenspace by promoting a network of woodland corridors through the site linking Hazlehead and Countesswells woods.

### 3.8.3 Environmental Impact Assessment

A Regulation 6 (1) request for a Screening Determination in terms of the 2011 EIA Regulations was lodged with Aberdeen City Council by Stewart Milne Homes on behalf of the Countesswells Consortium on the 14th June 2011 with regard to proposed development of the Countesswells site. Aberdeen City Council determined that Statutory EIA was required. A subsequent scoping request was submitted on behalf of the Countesswells Consortium to Aberdeen City Council in June 2012 with responses received from statutory consultees, planning officers and other key consultees.

Consultation responses received from the Council and key statutory consultees (SNH, SEPA) were reviewed and comments taken into consideration during the preparation of the Environmental Statement and further development of the design proposals.

This scoping exercise facilitates the progression of design and an EIA on the basis of a full understanding of the constraints relating to environmental sensitivity and statutory agency/ planning authority requirements. Pre-scoping consultation has been advanced with key consultees to discuss specific topic areas (for example Ecology and Environmental Designations) and this consultation has continued to inform the design which the subsequent EIA will assess.

In addition to statutory EIA scoping, the Consortium have also engaged in a series of pre-application consultation events, inviting members of the public and the local community councils to view and discuss the proposed Development Framework for the Countesswells site. Environmental issues and opportunities raised have been addressed through survey, assessment and design iteration.

The environmental assessment is being progressed in accordance with EIA best practice.

#### EIA Assessment Methodology

Planning Advice Note 1/2013 Environmental Impact Assessment provides guidance on the determination of significance of potential environmental impacts of developments based on the following criteria:

- The sensitivity of the receptor
- The likelihood of the potential impact occurring
- The potential magnitude of any impact
- Initial recommendations for mitigation/measures to address these potential impacts

Some specialist EIA topic areas such as Landscape and Visual Impacts and Ecology use a slight variation on the assessment approach described above as they follow best practice guidance - these chapters will define the specific assessment methodology and how significance of impacts has been assessed. The Environmental Assessment will clearly identify any mitigation to be implemented as part of construction and/or operation of the scheme.

The site layout has been developed around a drainage network located within landscape corridors to provide a comprehensive visible drainage system across the site that will manage surface water and improve water quality. In order to protect the existing water environment and prevent run-off and sediment impacting on watercourses, including the River Dee, a method statement, detailing how surface water arising during construction is to be dealt with, will be prepared by the contractor for approval prior to commencement of works on site. During the development of the site a surface water management strategy will be prepared for each individual construction phase. A Construction Environmental Management Plan for each phase of development will be submitted to the Planning Authority.

### 3.8.4 Habitats Regulation Appraisal

European Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 requires competent authorities to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of projects that, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely to have a significant effect on European designated sites.

The River Dee has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for populations of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*). The proposed development at Countesswells is located approximately 3.5km north of the River Dee.

A Report to Inform the Habitats Regulation Appraisal was prepared as part of the Environmental Statement. This report concludes that, subject to the mitigation proposals identified, the development will have no likely significant environmental effects on the integrity of the River Dee SAC. Mitigation includes production and implementation of Construction Environmental Management Plan(s) and implementation of SUDS and water saving technologies. In accordance with SNH advice.

### Environmental Statement

Aberdeen City Council determined that a Statutory EIA is required and should be submitted with the application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP). Work on the EIA is currently underway. The EIA will cover OP58 and includes the road corridors connecting north to the A944.

Work undertaken on the EIA to date has identified no significant environmental issues that Masterplanning, Environmental Mitigation and appropriate Environmental Management has/will not successfully address.

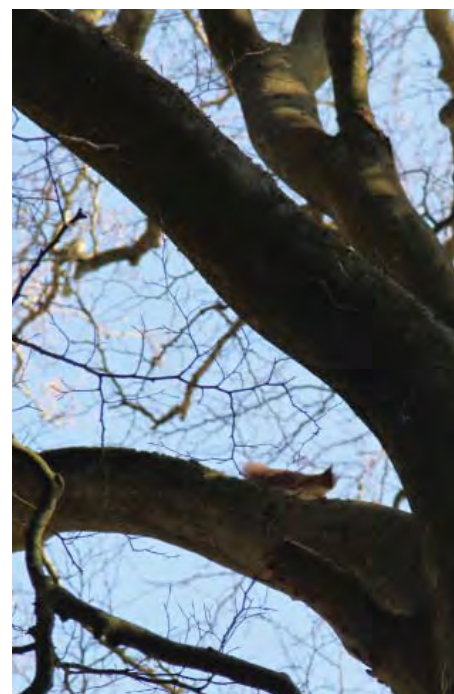


fig. 52: Red squirell in Countesswells woods



fig. 53: Deer adjacent Countesswells woods

## Land Use

The development proposal represents a land use change from low grade agricultural land (agricultural fields and grassland) to a Mixed Use Sustainable Community. Key landscape features have been incorporated into the design proposals and full consideration given to landscaping, green networks and corridors in the design of the development.

## Hydrology, Drainage and Water Quality

Surface water bodies include Cults Burn and tributaries which drain in to the River Dee which lies 3km south of the Countesswells site. The site contains a number of field drains which have been incorporated into the drainage strategy for the site and potential impacts will be discussed within the EIA. Comprehensive Sustainable Urban Drainage systems according to best practice, will ensure run off, and water quality are adequately accounted for the design parameters. On completion of the works, the overall changes in hydrology and morphology are anticipated to be beneficial for Cults Burn and the field drains.

The River Dee is a European Designated site (Special Area of Conservation, SAC) for the species that it supports and therefore any discharges will need to be carefully management as part of surface water drainage strategy and design (SUDS). The EIA will assess potential impacts of the proposals on the water environment and will recommend appropriate mitigation measures where required. A Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will seek to outline key actions for pollution prevention and control measures including those to protect the water environment.

## Ecology, Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

### Approach and Surveys

The ecology assessment collates and evaluates the available wildlife information for the proposed development at Countesswells, Aberdeen. Extensive and wide-ranging consultations were held with interested parties and members of the public, local organisations and statutory consultees including Scottish Natural Heritage.

Ecological surveys were undertaken over the period February 2012 – November 2013 and were to national standards using recognised methods and covered, habitats, trees, breeding and wintering birds, bats, otter, badger, red squirrel and higher plants. This established baseline was evaluated and features assigned values from local to international importance.

- Desk-top data collation from SNHi, National Biodiversity Network, North East Scotland Biological Records Centre, Grampian Badger Surveys, Saving Scotland's Squirrels Project
- Consultation with SNH, and Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Site specific surveys, all to standard methods, to provide a baseline
  - i. Phase 1 Habitat survey
  - ii. Breeding bird survey
  - iii. Otter, badger, red squirrel and water vole surveys
  - iv. Specialist bat survey
  - v. Higher plant species listing
- Data evaluation and assessment according to current guidelines as defined in: SNH (2010). A Handbook on Environmental Assessment; and Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2006) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK . IEEM.

### Ecological Evaluation, Assessment and Design

The Countesswells site is of lower nature conservation interest due to a long history of agricultural use combined with local plantations dominated by non-native tree species. It lacks large features such water courses and waterbodies as well as any significant semi-natural habitat. The foregoing is reflected in the absence of any statutory nature conservation designations. Main species level interest is limited to a few farmland bird species in low numbers. There are no known protected mammal species constraints on the site as breeding bats, breeding badgers and breeding red squirrel are absent. The few residual impacts are in the range positive to slight. The EIA will include a detailed Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA).

Iterative design has been informed by ecological information. The development enhances the greenspace by promoting a network of woodland corridors through the site linking Hazlehead and Countesswells woods. Biodiversity has been addressed through the Landscape Strategy and will be further developed through detailed design.

## Landscape and Visual

The development sits within the open and wooded farmland landscapes to the west of Aberdeen. Open farmland is characterised by gently rolling landform of open character containing scattered farmsteads, while wooded farmland is characterised by diverse, undulating and rural landscape containing woodland plantations, shelterbelts and clumps and scattered traditional style buildings.

A landscape and visual impact assessment is required as part of the assessment of environmental impacts, in order to determine the effects of the proposed development on the existing landscape and on visual receptors with views of the site

An assessment in accordance with guidance given in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition) (2002) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management as well as guidance on the assessment of landscape character (Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002), Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency).

## Cultural Heritage

Baseline studies for the proposed development area comprised a desk-based assessment and field survey (in the form of a walk-over survey) of all known sites within the development area and a 100 m buffer zone surrounding it. A further 1 km buffer zone was established within which all statutory and non-statutory designated sites were recorded, researched and the impact of the proposed development assessed. Surveys and assessment have been undertaken by GUARD Archaeology Ltd. Study of this surrounding landscape provides the local archaeological and historical context of the development area giving a broader understanding of the historical development of the area and the potential for as-yet-unidentified archaeological remains within that area.

The walk-over survey of the proposed development area was undertaken on 22nd - 24th February 2012 in dry conditions. A Global Positioning System (GPS) was available to record the locations of any features identified; any such features were also to be recorded by written description and, if appropriate, measured sketches and photographs. Previously recorded sites noted through the desk-based assessment were visited to assess their current condition Interest

A total of 37 cultural heritage sites were recorded within the study area. The proposed development area itself contains 19 sites of cultural heritage interest. A further 6 sites were recorded within 100 m of the development area boundary and another 12 sites recorded within 1 km of the development area boundary.

### Summary of Key Findings

While there are 19 known cultural heritage sites within the proposed development area, only eight of these, none of which are particularly significant, will be directly impacted. Aberdeen City Council may nevertheless require a limited programme of targeted survey and evaluation prior to the ground-breaking works.

Given that the development will have negligible indirect effects upon the settings of thirteen statutory designated sites within the surrounding study area, we do not anticipate that any mitigation of setting effects will be required by Historic Scotland or Aberdeen City Council.

Site	Site name	Site sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Magnitude of Effect
12	Kingshill Farmstead	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
14	Newton of Countesswells Farm	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
16	Colthill Boundary Stone	Low	Substantial	Minor/Moderate
17	Colthill Oak Tree	Lesser	Substantial	Minor/Unknown
18	Countesswells Reservoir	Lesser	Negligible / No Change	None
19	Mains of Countesswells Consumption dyke	Low	Substantial	Minor/Moderate
21	Bogskeathy Farm	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
22	Bloomfield Farmstead	Lesser	Substantial	Minor/Unknown
23	Loanhead farm	Low	Substantial	Minor/Moderate
24	Wardhead Farmhouse Cairn	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
25	Colthill Farmhouse	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
26	Mains of Countesswells Farmhouse	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
27	Mains of Countesswells Cottages (Broomhill)	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
28	Newton Cottage	Unknown	Negligible / No Change	None
29	Wardhead Rig	Low	Negligible / No Change	None
30	Wardhead Farmhouse	Low	Substantial	Minor/Moderate
31	Wardhead Boundary Stone	Unknown	Substantial	Minor/Unknown
33	Woodside Croft	Lesser	Negligible / No Change	None
34	East Middlefield Boundary Stone	Unknown	Substantial	Minor/Unknown

## Noise & Vibration

A noise assessment is being produced for the EIA - the main objective of the assessment is to identify the key environmental noise and vibration issues in relation to the proposed development

Traffic flows will inevitably increase as a result of the new development on the existing local road network. However it is considered that there will be no significant increase in noise levels (greater than 33 dB), as result of the scheme. Impacts on existing dwellings will be buffered by the new development which will screen noise pollution. The assessment will be presented within the EIA.

It is inevitable that there will be noise disturbance during the construction phase; however this will be a localized phenomenon and will be temporary in nature. Existing residential properties will be most affected by this impact; however the Construction Environmental Method Statement will provide measures to reduce the impacts of noise and vibration.

Any planning application will require to ensure the protection of Hazlehead Park from increased transportation noise associated with the development. This is in accordance with its designation as a Candidate Quiet Area in accordance with the Council's Draft Noise Action Plan.

## Air Quality

The aims of the air quality assessment are to establish the baseline pollutant concentrations at representative locations in the vicinity of the site, assess the impacts associated with the proposed development; and consider the air quality impacts of traffic emissions arising from predicted changes in traffic flow from the completed development. Current concentrations of air pollution in the area are well within the Government's air quality objectives, the main source of which is road traffic. During the operational phase of the development, there will be local impacts on air pollution likely from increased traffic, particularly on properties 1km north, adjacent to the A944, however concentrations of these are anticipated to remain below government targets - detailed assessment will be presented within the EIA.

There may be short periods during the development process when some local properties experience minor levels of nuisance from dust deposition. Potential construction impacts will be assessed in accord with 'Guidance on the Assessment of the Impacts of Construction on Air Quality and the Determination of their Significance', 2010. Mitigation of potential impacts during construction will be addressed within the Draft Construction Environmental management Plan incorporating a Draft Dust Mitigation Plan.

## Pedestrians, Cyclists and Community Effects

Hazlehead Park (LNCS) and Denwood LNCS to the east of the site and existing woodland areas to the west including Blacktop LNCS and Foggieton LNCS are all locally/regionally important for formal/informal recreation by local residents e.g. dog walking/cycling/horse riding etc. Footpath networks and greenspace areas/corridors have been integrated within the development proposals and footpath network / links will improve links with these wider areas to maximise connectivity within and outwith the site.

## Traffic and Transport

Potential environmental impacts arising from increased traffic flows presented during both construction and operation have been identified. With mitigation, where required it is anticipated that environmental impacts can be minimised to an acceptable level. Traffic impacts relative to Noise and Air Quality are assessed within relevant specialist chapters.

The proposed development will result in significant travel demand, where a significant amount of that demand will be retained on site. Significant demand will be put on public transport resulting in a radical overhaul of the current provision in conjunction with connections to the Kingswells Park and Ride.

## Construction Impacts

A Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) incorporating a Draft Dust Mitigation Plan will be produced for the site. This will include a review of potential construction phase impacts, phasing, and key actions that may be required to protect environmental assets through to completion. There will be a Construction Environmental Management Plan submitted as part of the planning application process.

## 3.9 Aberdeen airport

Countesswells is within the 13km safeguarding radius of the Aberdeen Aerodrome indicating the need for consultation with the aerodrome regarding the development. The SUDS Strategy and Landscape proposals have been informed by BAA Guidance on Aerodrome Safety including

- BAA Advice Note 2: Lighting
- BAA Advice Note 3: Potential Bird Hazards and Landscaping
- BAA Advice Note 4: Cranes
- BAA Advice Note 6: Potential Bird Hazards and SUDS
- BAA Advice Note 8: Potential Bird Hazards from Building Design

## 3.10 Existing utilities

### Electricity Transmission Lines

The site is traversed by several high voltage transmission lines with a maximum rating of 132 kV on the main north-south transmission line which runs into Craigiebuckler Substation. This line is pylon mounted, as is the overhead line running east-west and roughly parallel to the south boundary. There are also lesser rated local high voltage lines which serve properties within the site and traverse the site to serve other areas.

The very high voltage overheads are to be left unaltered, with a corridor provided for the usual safety clearances between the live overhead cables and future built development.

Lesser high voltage lines may be utilised in the new supply network, abandoned or diverted, according to the overall servicing strategy agreed with SSE plc.

### Electricity

Whilst transmission lines exist across the site, these lines cannot directly supply electricity without going via a substation with transformers to alter the voltage to usable levels.

Therefore, for a new electricity supply, 11 kV cables will be brought to site, most likely from Craigiebuckler, and these will feed a series of local substations which supply 440 V low voltage to blocks of properties. These small substations will be strategically located to suit phased development and to minimise voltage drop in the supply.

It is envisaged that perhaps six such substations will be located within the development, each occupying a small footprint of approximately 25 m .

### Gas

There are no existing mains gas supplies on site. Enquiries to Scottish Gas Networks (SGN) confirm that new mains to serve the development may be run from Kingswells or the Countesswells area, or both. These will be in public roads and will then distribute throughout the development.

### Water

A Water Impact Assessment has been undertaken, in order to assess capacity of one existing main which serves the site area at present, and to assess additional requirements for new mains and storage reservoir capacity.

The assessment confirms that up to 300 houses may be served from an existing main on the west side of the site.

Thereafter, new mains are required to provide greater pipe capacity in the water network. In addition, after the 600th house, the nearby Kingshill Reservoir from which all supplies will be taken, requires additional water storage capacity. This capacity can be provided within Scottish Water land at the reservoir and, for the whole development, requires to be 2 M litres of water storage. The full reservoir size for this maximum capacity upgrade will be designed and constructed to Scottish Water's specification, for adoption and future operation by the Water Authority.

Diversion or protection of the existing 600mm diameter main crossing the north of the site will be required to accommodate the new distributor road proposed to connect to A944.

### Foul Drainage

No foul drainage other than local to existing properties is available within the proposed development area.

A Development Impact Assessment has been undertaken in order to determine the most suitable point of connection to the existing sewer network and to identify any constraints requiring upgrading on the network.

The DIA concludes that the proposed development can connect to existing sewers on Countesswells Road. There is capacity in the network at this point and downstream to the Treatment Works, except for one very short section of sewer at the junction of Countesswells Road and Springfield Road. This requires upgrading to overcome a local surcharge problem. That is the only off-site requirement on the sewer network.

The DIA has been agreed with Scottish Water and its output will be the foul drainage strategy for the development. The foul sewer linking the site to the existing network will be pumped from a new pumping station located within the site.

All new sewers and associated works will be to Scottish Water's specification for adoption by the Authority as future public sewerage.

## 3.11 Summary of analysis and considerations for design

The plan opposite illustrates the key opportunities and constraints that have shaped the form and layout of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan at Countesswells. Below the key opportunities and constraints have been listed with the design approach and response to these factors noted.

### Existing properties

All of the existing properties identified on the plan opposite are to be retained and will remain within the context of the Development Framework. Access has been maintained to each of the properties in accordance with the title deeds. The location, access and setting of each of the properties has been considered as an important part of the consultation and design process.

### Existing trees and woodland

Where trees are proposed to be retained on site or where the site is adjacent to existing trees, root protection, fall distances and daylighting are all important considerations for the Development Framework. To achieve the successful retention of these features appropriate space should be provided. Equally important for the longevity and safety of these features is long term management and maintenance.

### Countesswells Woods

Countesswells woodland is a significant area of ancient woodland enclosing much of the western boundary of the site and providing an important ecological and recreational resource. Development at Countesswells should look to protect the setting of the woodland whilst providing enhanced pedestrian links to the area to further realise the area as a key recreational asset.

### Hazlehead Woods

Hazlehead Park and woodland areas provides a major recreational resource within this area. Development at Countesswells should seek to provide a number of pedestrian links to the Hazlehead Park area as part of the landscape strategy for the new community.

A strategic area of open space should be provided to connect Countesswells Woodland to Hazlehead Woodland in lines with the aims of the ALDP 'Green Space Network', providing a recreational and ecological corridor connecting these two significant landscape areas.

### Ecology / Nature Conservation

A suite of ecological surveys and ongoing assessment has informed the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan. The site is of low ecological sensitivity as a result of past and current land uses - Iterative design has been informed by ecological information. The development enhances the greenspace by promoting a network of woodland corridors through the site linking Hazlehead and Countesswells woods. Biodiversity has been addressed through the Landscape Strategy and will be further developed through detailed design.

### Pylons

There are no proposals to divert or underground the existing 132 KV power lines, so they will be treated as a constraint around which development can be configured. Generally to ensure required clearances are preserved under the transmission lines, only limited earthworks should be undertaken in these locations. Where proposed streets pass under transmission lines this should generally occur as close to pylons as possible to allow maximum clearance. The impact of pylons on views and vistas should also be a key consideration of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan.

### Existing watercourses and ditches

The existing watercourses/drainage ditches currently on the site appear to have all been artificially modified and straightened in the past. It is therefore understood that there is potential to realign these as part of the development proposals.

Wherever possible watercourses should be naturalised and deculverted. Providing buffers of riparian vegetation to watercourses (at least 6 m from top of the bank) following ACC Supplementary Guidance and naturalising artificially modified watercourses are all specific requirements of the plan. Any stretches of watercourse that have existing good banks should be preserved to avoid disturbance

### Slopes and topography

The site generally slopes to the south which allows opportunities for development to benefit from both a good aspect and also on the areas of higher ground to benefit from views out to the south over the River Dee valley. Views eastward towards the City and North Sea can also be gained from the higher ground to the west.

The Development Framework will be set out to minimise the requirement for major earthworks, avoiding the steepest slopes and aligning roads and development areas to take account of the landform.

Within the development taller buildings should be located on the areas of lower ground located at the centre of the site. The visual impact of new buildings on the areas of higher ground should be carefully considered as part of the Development Framework. The Development Framework will take on board the findings of the Landscape and Visual Assessment in considering the setting of buildings.

### Existing Roads

Existing roads within the site should be considered in the whole context of the proposed new development. Design solutions and layouts should aim to:

- Retain character forming elements such as the tree lined avenue of Countesswells Road;
- Improve road safety and reduce traffic speeds; and
- Maintain access to existing properties.

### Existing paths

A route for Core Path 57 which provides an important link between Hazlehead and Countesswells Woods must be provided for within the Development Framework.

The Established Access Route identified on the plan below has been utilised for both pedestrian and equestrian recreational activity in excess of 20 years. This link through the site will be maintained, diverted slightly in order to link up to the proposed network of footpaths and streets, allowing for better connectivity and fluidity through the development. A wider path network is proposed with routes that will be able to accommodate equestrian users and allow movement between Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead woodland.

In addition to the recognised routes described above the Development Framework will also aim to provide connections to existing paths and routes adjacent to the site area to ensure good connectivity.



fig. 54: Opportunities and constraints

# 4. The Opportunity and Vision

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape, showing a grid of agricultural fields and roads. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter, which is the same color as the background of the slide. The text "4. The Opportunity and Vision" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper left corner.



## 4.1 The opportunity and vision

The site at Countesswells offers a unique opportunity within Aberdeen City for the creation of a new settlement in an attractive and well contained landscape setting, close to the city centre. The quantum of proposed development allows the creation of a deliverable mixed use community complete with supporting infrastructure and increased opportunities for sustainable solutions. The key opportunities which set Countesswells apart are:

### Rural setting on the edge of the city

Countesswells is a rural site in one of the most accessible parts of the City area. It has the capacity to create a mixed use sustainable community that fits within the attractive landscape setting in a way that will make it one of the preeminent places to live in the City region and provide new opportunities for employment, education and recreation.

This high amenity location, set between the woodland at Countesswells and Hazlehead Park is one of the key assets of the site. The site is well situated for easy access to recreational opportunities, utilising the wide range of existing path networks surrounding the site and also provides the opportunity to create enhanced links between these recreational resources, expanding and connecting the path network.



### A place in itself

Countesswells presents a unique opportunity for the creation of a new place with its own character and identity. The opportunity is distinct from all the other strategic development opportunities within the City area which predominantly represent the expansion of existing large communities.

The site has the capability to deliver a successful mixed-use development that will play a crucial role in delivering Aberdeen's development targets. The key opportunity exists in defining the form and character of the place. Countesswells should be distinct within the Aberdeen area and provide a high quality destination not only for people to live but also to visit and work.

A clear identity will be communicated initially through the urban form, architecture and open space.



### Scale of development

Countesswells has the potential, whilst respecting the quality of the landscape and surrounding woodland areas, to accommodate a wide range of uses that not only contribute to the immediate housing requirements, but helps fulfil the Structure Plan aims "to grow and diversify the regional economy".

The number of proposed properties will help support a self-sustaining community and deliver the City's wider structure plan objectives. The number of new residents will provide a critical mass of population to help support the requirement for schools, businesses, shops, community facilities, public transport and other local amenities that will in turn create a highly desirable place for people to live, work and play.

The proximity and accessibility to the City is a further attractor when thinking about land use options within Countesswells.



### Integrated approach to design

Countesswells will not happen overnight, it will be planned to grow and evolve as a new community with the required facilities in place to create an attractive settlement at all stages of its evolution. It will be planned to be grown in a manner that ensures it presents an attractive proposition not only to future residents, but also to prospective commercial investors, further enriching it as a highly desirable place to live and work.

As a result of the location and scale of development the opportunity exists for Countesswells to be planned as a viable mixed use community. Employment opportunities, education facilities, retail and leisure can be planned alongside residential development as an integrated mix of uses.



### A place for everyone

Countesswells presents the opportunity to create an inclusive and mixed community in which people can live throughout their life. Countesswells will be a place for everyone.

Creating an identity and sense of place will be central to the new community's success. At the heart of this vision will be the desire to create opportunities for residents to live more sustainable lifestyles, benefiting from local employment opportunities, involvement and stewardship opportunities in site governance. Countesswells will cater to a diverse range of people, ensuring that the development is accessible and meets a full range of housing need and demand. The development will provide 25% affordable housing across the site.



fig. 55: Opportunity and vision

## 4.2 Strategic Concept

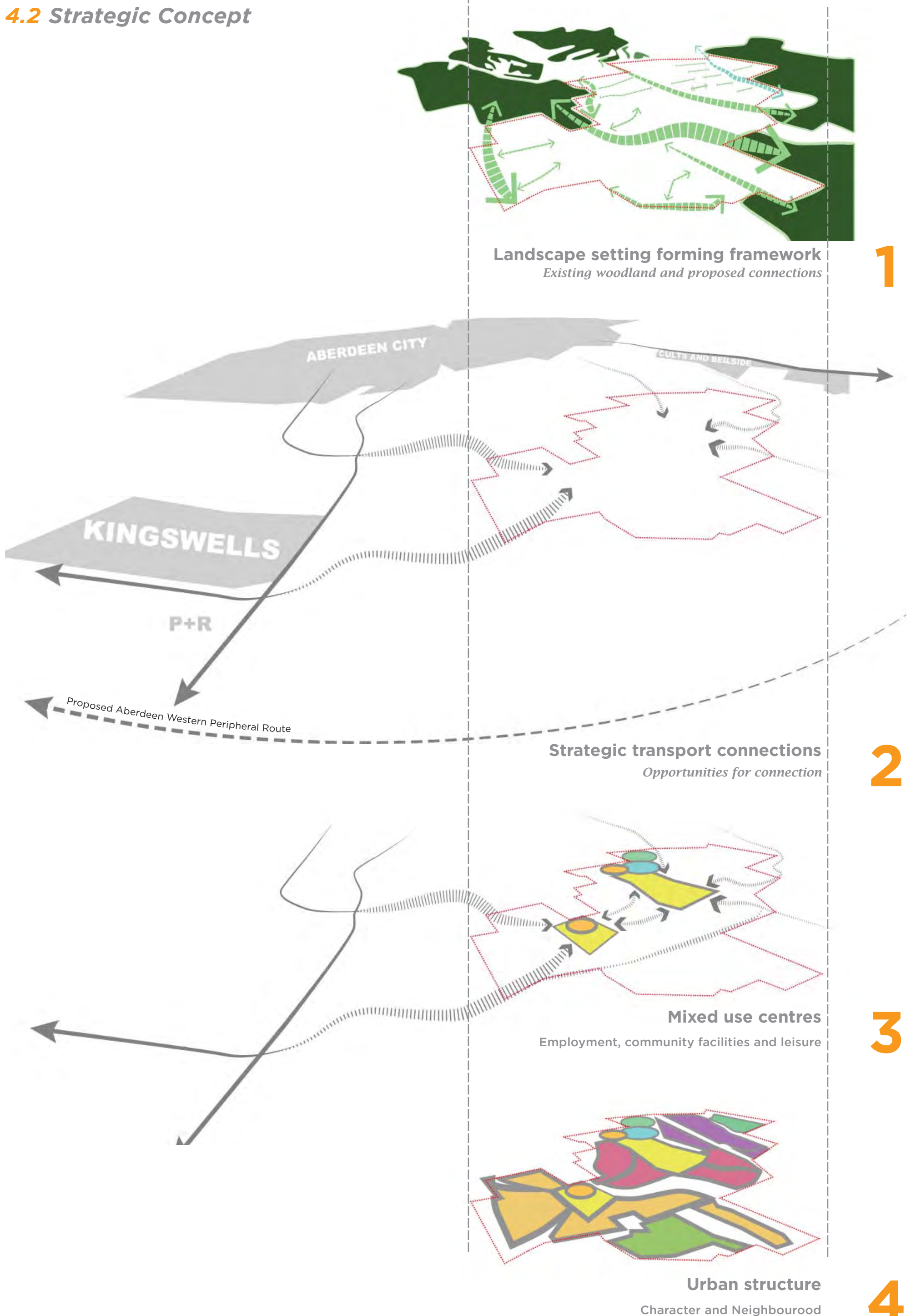


fig. 56: Concept diagram



fig. 57: Concept diagram

## 1 - Landscape setting forming framework

### Existing woodland and proposed connections

A key aim of the development is to connect the areas of woodland at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape corridors within the development. These corridors could be either areas of open space or woodland planting and will include parts of the core path network and drainage network set within the development. They will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological and recreational networks in the area.

## 2 - Strategic transport connections

### Opportunities for connection

Countesswells will aim to create a place where people can live and work without relying on private transport. For those things that cannot be provided by the site, the proximity to the wider urban area of Aberdeen will be supported by efficient public transport and cycleways, allowing residents and workers to benefit from the proximity to the City and the surrounding communities at Westhill, Kingswells and those along Deeside and up to Dyce. The development will also provide connections to surrounding areas of open space amenities, and employment such as Hazlehead Park, Countesswells Woodland, Kingswells Park and Ride and Prime Four business park.

The street network will be based around connecting all the existing roads (Kirk Brae (C189), Blacktop Road, A944, A93 and Countesswells Road) through the new development to allow good access and efficient transport links.

All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and follow the principles set out in 'Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland'.

## 3 - Mixed use centres

### Employment, community facilities and leisure

Due to the location and setting it is proposed that Countesswells be designed as a 'destination' and not simply a place to pass through. It should become 'a place to come home to' and 'a place to visit'. The centre of the development is proposed to be the core of the community containing the primary civic, commercial and community facilities creating a focus. The street network should provide good access from all the existing roads to and around all parts of the development.

## 4 - Urban structure

### Character and Neighbourhood

Countesswells is focused around the development of a mixed use core, a neighbourhood centre to the north and a number of distinct neighbourhoods. The mixed use centre will be located at the centre of the community, accessible to all with a smaller neighbourhood centre to the north providing local facilities to those in that area. The neighbourhood centre will contain a primary school and may also contain small scale local facilities such as local shops and community facilities as well as opportunities for some commercial development.

The residential neighbourhoods within Countesswells will be designed to have a unique identity, drawing from their location and setting. A number of distinct character areas will be designed within the development in response to the landscape context and the location within the development.

## 4.3 Design exploration

### Setting



fig. 58: Concept development - setting

### Green links

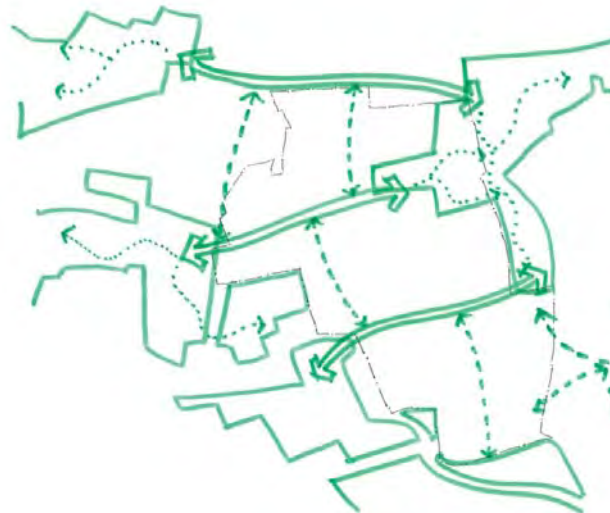


fig. 59: Concept development - green links

### Connections

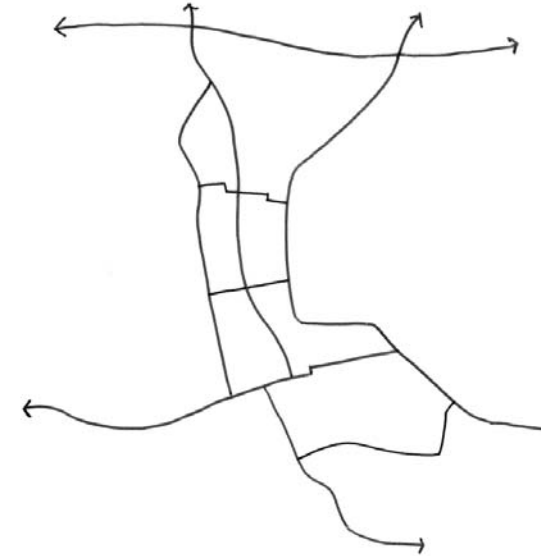


fig. 60: Concept development - connections

### 4.3.1 Design evolution

The Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan presented in this document have evolved over the course of the design process. The way in which the plan has changed has been as a direct result of increased technical understanding of the site, design input from the client and design team, consultation with Aberdeen City Council, statutory consultees and the community.

A multi-disciplinary design team including masterplanners, architects, education specialists, transport specialists, engineers and environmental experts has ensured the viability and robustness of the proposals.

By utilising in-house expertise in housing construction and place making a robust approach to all aspects of sustainability, from the vision and framework stage through to eventual delivery has been developed.

The approach to planning Countesswells has been design led, considering various levels of detail and aspects of design at the same time to ensure the development of an attractive and technically robust proposal.

The buildings, streets and spaces will all be designed taking account of the local environment, the setting and context in order to forge a clear identity for the built environment.

At the same time as considering the architecture and urban form, the design team have explored how the site can be developed into a well-balanced mixed use development. A balance of commercial, community, educational, retail uses and residential mix within the site will allow the creation of a varied and interesting urban form with residents moving around the town and further supporting the creation of a viable mixed use place.

The plans and diagrams opposite reflect some of this process and how it has approached sustainable design in its widest sense. Good design testing at this stage, taking a holistic view of sustainability issues, allows the Framework to create a robust guide for sustainable development.

True sustainability arises from a comprehensive understanding of the natural, social and economic aspects of a place. It means getting the right mixture of tenures and house types and offering a distinct character that gives an area its own identity - Building places, spaces and houses that excite; places that people are proud of and take ownership of.

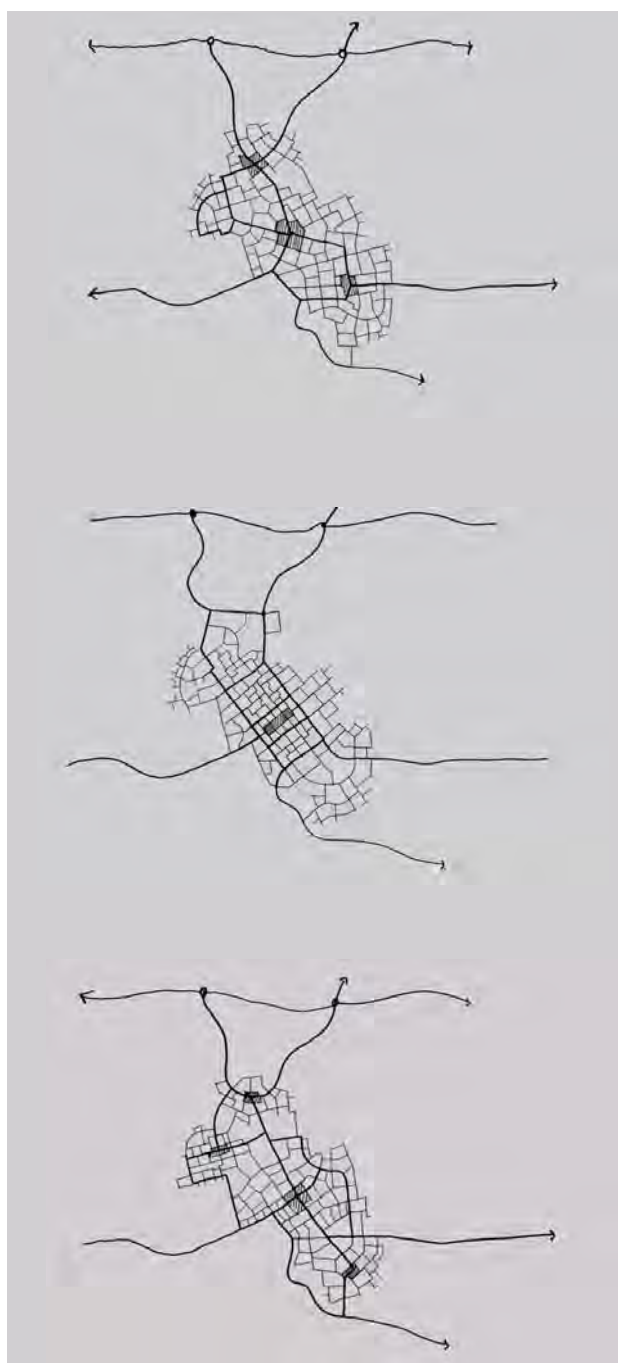


fig. 61: Exploring development form



fig. 62: Community consultation



fig. 63: Community consultation

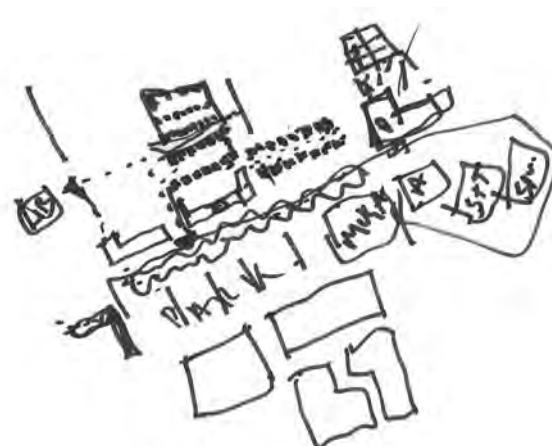


fig. 64: Developing urban form



fig. 65: Initial 3d studies

## Development blocks

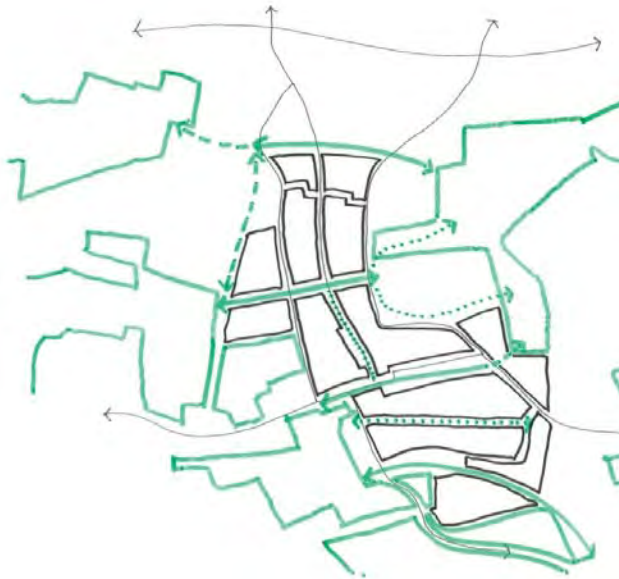


fig. 66: Concept development - blocks

## Street blocks



fig. 67: Concept development - Evolving street blocks

## Development form



fig. 68: Evolving development form



fig. 69: Exploring block structure



fig. 70: Exploring town centre form



fig. 71: Exploring town centre form



fig. 72: Exploring early development concept

### 4.3.2 Influences and ideas

Planning for a new community is not a new process. There is a rich history of planning new settlements in Scotland, particularly in the North East.

Successful places are characterful places with a distinctive identity. A Scottish character is a combination of several elements. It is not just about the architecture but all the components of a place. The physical characteristics of a town play a significant part in the social fabric of a place influencing the behaviour of residents and thereby the general feel of a town. It is therefore important to design places at a home scale, imagining how it would be to walk around.

The extract opposite identifies some of the planned towns in Scotland and in the north east developed during the eighteenth century. Primarily conceived by landowners as ways of engineering social, economic and architectural change in their area. As part of the masterplan process the design team have visited some of these planned towns including Granttown on Spey, Dufftown, Fochabers and Huntly, to try and identify what makes a successful and attractive place and what does not work so well.

As well as the historic planned towns the design team have also visited more recent new towns and new developments within Scotland and England to further understand and learn what aspects work in creating successful places that people want to live.

In looking at all the places that we consider successful communities and attractive places to live, one thing that is consistent and clear is that planning the small details well is as important as the large scale planning decisions. The design of the buildings, the streets, the path networks, parks, the locations of bus stops, local shops and schools all combine to create the places that are distinctive and attractive and importantly are comfortable in which to live.

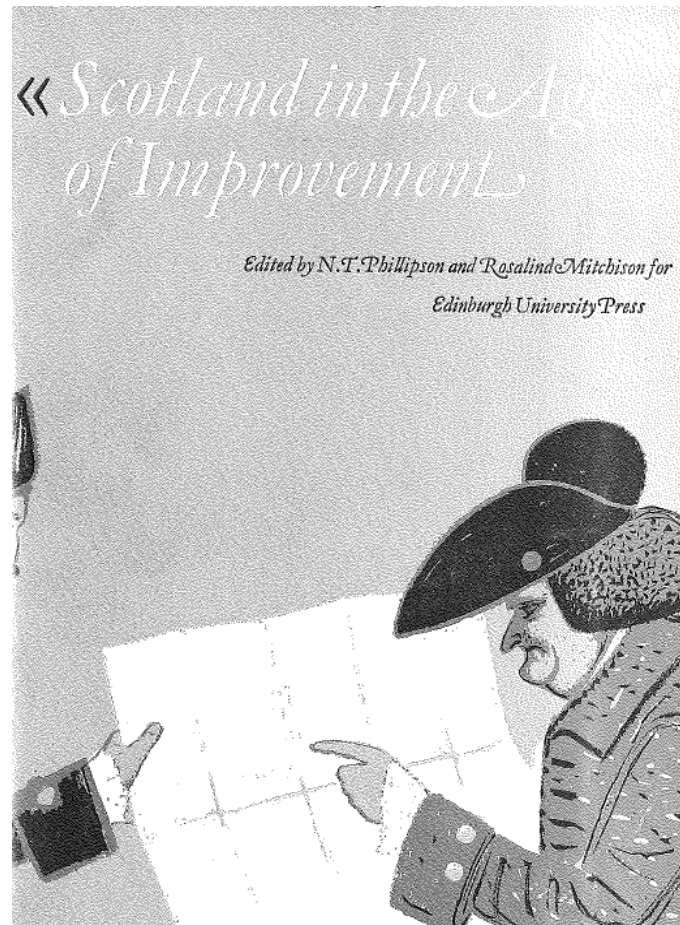
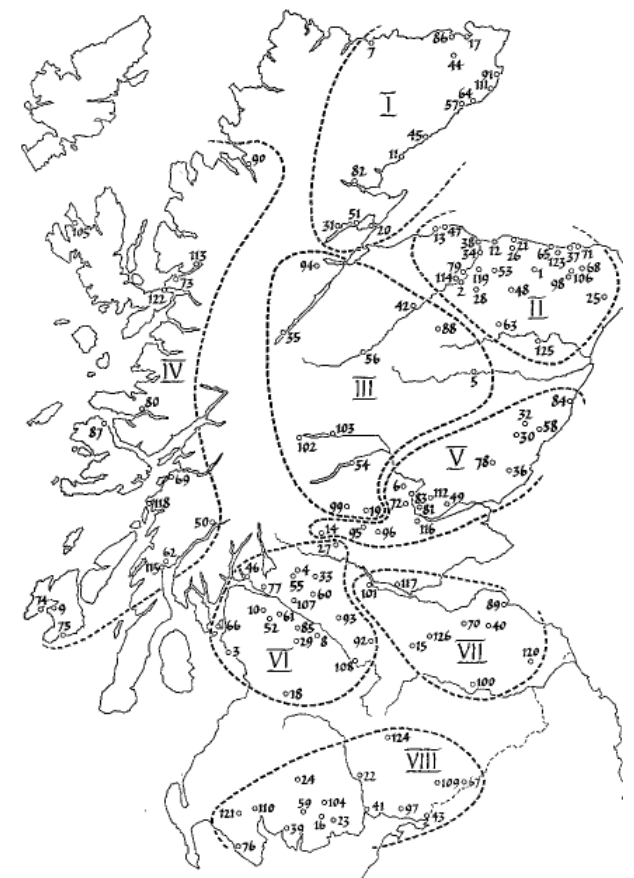


fig. 73: Extract from: Scotland in the Age of Improvements by Lord Monboddo.



The Planned Village in Scotland, 1730-1830



fig. 74: Aerial photo - Ballater



fig. 75: Aerial photo - Dufftown



fig. 76: Aerial photo - Fochabers



fig. 77: Aerial photo - Granttown on Spey



fig. 78: Aerial photo - Stonehaven



fig. 79: Aerial photo - Tomintoul

## Traditional precedents



fig. 80: Buildings overlooking public space - Granttown on Spey



fig. 81: Variety in building height - Tomintoul



fig. 83: Variety in building line - Granttown on Spey



fig. 84: Landmark buildings - Dufftown



fig. 86: Mixed use development - Fochabers



fig. 87: Civic spaces - Huntly



fig. 89: Residential street - Turriff



fig. 90: Corner building - Fochabers



fig. 92: Civic buildings in the street - Fochabers



fig. 93: Single sided street - Granttown on Spey

## Contemporary precedents



fig. 82: Buildings overlooking public space, Upton, Northampton.



fig. 85: Pedestrian routes - Greenhithe



fig. 88: Residential street - Accordia, Cambridge



fig. 91: Residential street - Upton, Northampton



fig. 94: Buildings overlooking public space - Harlow

# 5. The Development Framework



## 5.1 Introduction and purpose

The Development Framework has evolved from a careful and detailed study and analysis of the Countesswells site and its strategic context to the west of the City. It has taken into account the prime strategic nature of the site and the potential for it to develop as a place in its own right. Following Aberdeen City Council's 'Masterplanning Guidance' it establishes a flexible structure for development, in line with the timing and allocations set out within the ALDP while allowing more detailed proposals to come forward in due course.



fig. 95: Early Development Framework sketch

## 5.1.1 Aims of the Development Framework

In order to guarantee the design proposals are relevant throughout the project life-cycle they have to be flexible and capable of responding to changes in people's lifestyles and environment as well as commercial and economic circumstances. This is particularly relevant at Countesswells as due to the scale and complexity of the project the development will be planned and constructed over a number of years. The Consortium, in consultation with Aberdeen City Council will direct and manage the quality of design and development at Countesswells, ensuring that the vision presented in the Phase 1 Masterplan is delivered and appropriately informs future phases.

The purpose of this chapter is to set out a Development Framework which will describe the concept for the site and how the main aims will be realised through site wide design principles. The Framework has been supported by a number of studies, providing technical and environmental robustness.

In line with the Aberdeen City Council 'Masterplanning Process' the Development Framework sets out a vision and a spatial framework for the way in which the Countesswells area will be developed. It creates a co-ordinating structure which sets a robust and viable vision for Countesswells from which more detailed design can follow.

It aims to:

- Establish a clear and exciting future vision for Countesswells;
- Describe and explain the integrated land-use, landscape and transport proposals; and
- Set out a clear phasing strategy.

## 5.1.2 Layers of the Development Framework

The Countesswells Development Framework illustrated opposite is described in detail through its component layers in the next section of this document.

The key layers of the Development Framework described are:

- Landscape strategy
- Drainage strategy
- Access and connectivity strategy
- Land use strategy
- Phasing strategy

## 5.1.3 Sustainability

In relation to sustainability, the aim of the Development Framework has been to support and promote the design of a development which is efficient, with low-energy demands and can function as a community without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As buildings utilise around 50% of total global energy use, the ability to minimise this demand in the first instance can have dramatic impacts on on-going energy demand. At Framework stage, this can best be addressed through consideration of the location of specific landuses to take advantage of good orientation.

Transportation accounts for a further 25% of global energy use and therefore offers a powerful incentive to create a walkable community through the establishment of a settlement structure which promotes walking and cycling above vehicular movements, whilst ensuring that public transport can be efficiently and effectively provided. Aside from the sustainable use of energy in built form and transport, sustainability in relation to healthy communities, lifestyles and landscapes also underlies the Development Framework. These are demonstrated through a diversity of uses, provision of community services and the integration of open space throughout the settlement promoting the stewardship of the natural environment.

It is an aim that all homes and businesses should have easy access to high-speed, fibre optic broadband from the outset. Fibre optic services are planned for the development and BT have provided the option of full fibre connectivity. In addition the option of a high speed open access network offering all homeowners market choice and 1Gb service is being explored.

### Development Framework

-  Residential development blocks
-  Primary school
-  Secondary school campus
-  Identified employment areas
-  Areas of mixed use containing opportunities for employment and supporting infrastructure
-  Public open space
-  Core Path 57
-  Area of existing property

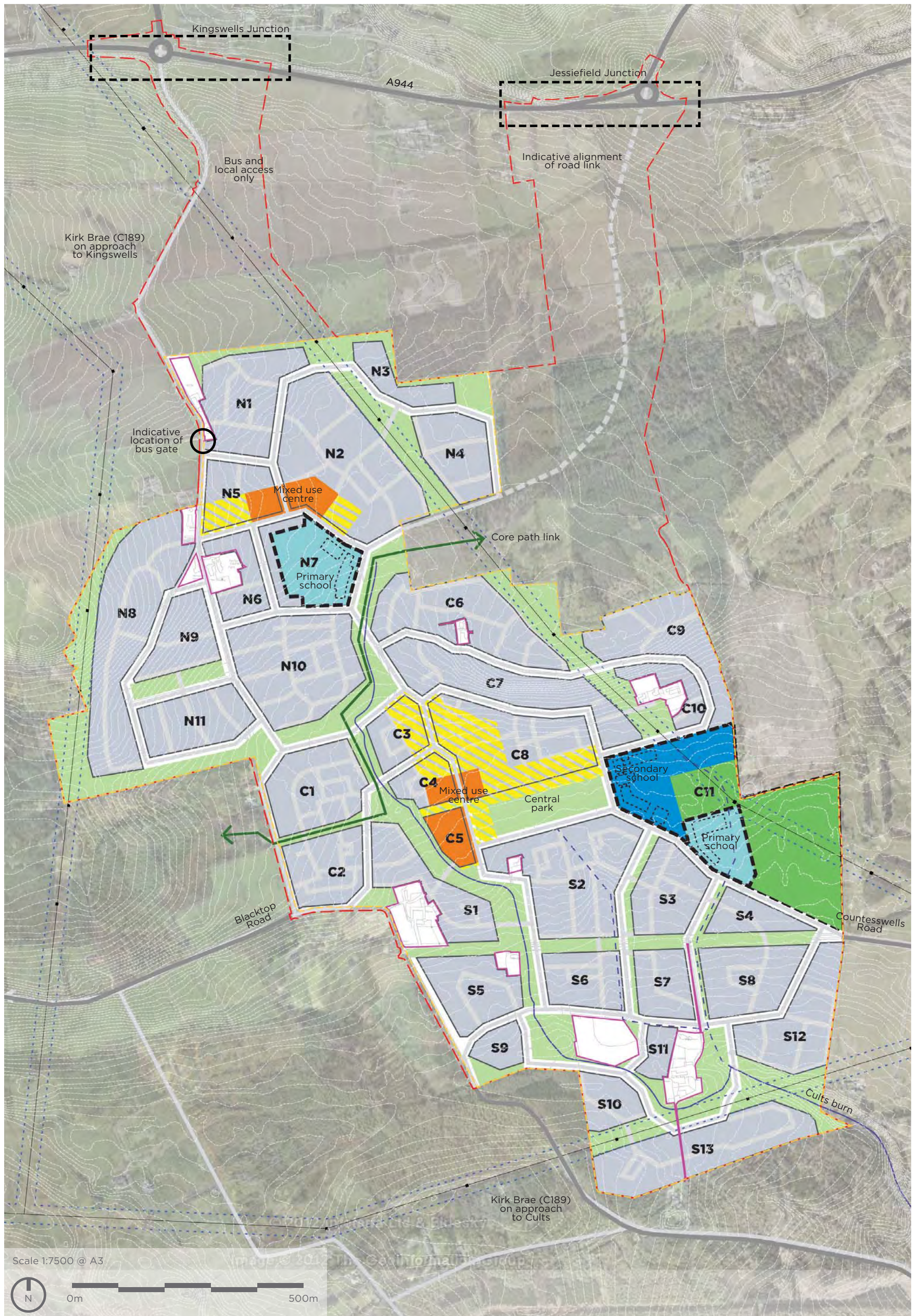


fig. 96: Composite development framework plan

## 5.1.4 Development Framework structure

The following section will describe the various layers of the Development Framework that will combine to provide the basis for the creation of a new community at Countesswells. The diagrams on the following two pages describe the rationale behind the block structure which provides the basis for the creation of a legible and clear urban form that has a unique sense of place and is highly attractive and pleasant as a community to live in.



fig. 97: Development Framework - Landform and block structure.

### Landform

Countesswells is located on predominantly south and east-facing slopes allowing for a structure that will allow any residential development to take best advantage of good aspect and orientation and therefore benefit from good passive solar energy gain.

The slopes across the site are generally quite shallow and most areas of the sites will be able to accommodate development with minimal requirement of earthworks. There are a number of areas within the site where the slopes are steeper and this has been taken account of in the block structure. To the south of the site the steep slopes to the side of Cults Burn have been kept free from development to protect the water course and allow for environmental enhancement along the corridor. In the steeper areas adjacent to Countesswells and Hazlehead woodland the block structure has been designed to allow for development to benefit from the good views east to Aberdeen and south to Deeside. Where development is located on areas of steeper slopes the street form, plots and architecture must seek to maximise the benefit from the aspect and views.



fig. 98: Development Framework - Landscape structure.

### Landscape structure

The landscape setting at Countesswells has been the key influence in defining the layout, it provides a major asset bringing many environmental and recreational benefits to the new development.

A key principle of the development has been to connect the large areas of public open space at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape links within the development. These links will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological, hydrological and recreational networks within the development. The plan above illustrates how the structure contains a number of east - west landscape links through Countesswells, connecting the existing surrounding landscape areas through a series of core areas of open space.

In addition to the east - west landscape links the block structure also accommodates the Cults burn in an enhanced landscape corridor connecting a series of spaces through the site from north to south.

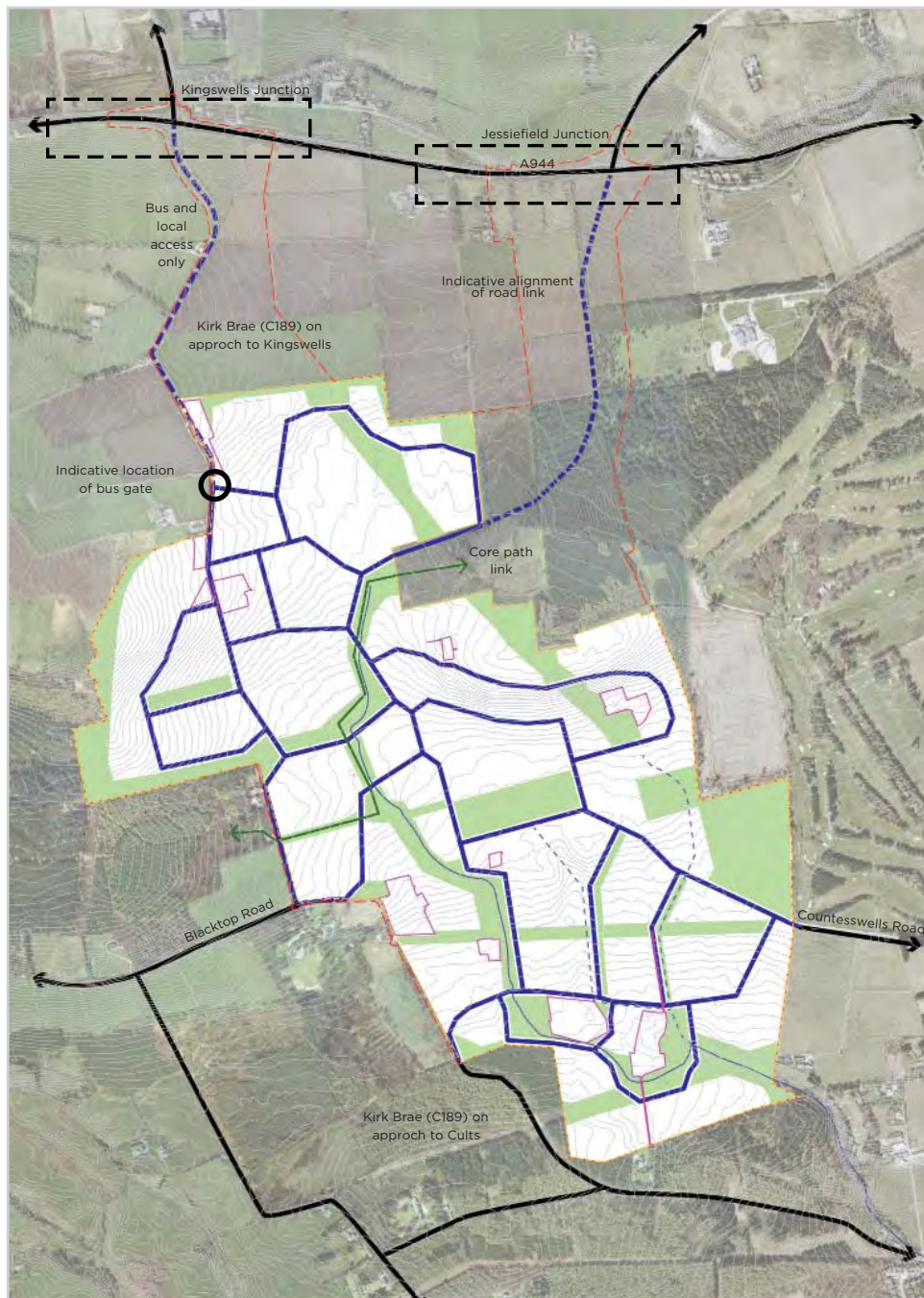


fig. 99: Development Framework - Connections and core path link.

## Connections

The street network will connect with existing roads (Kirk Brae (C189), Blacktop Road, A944 and Countesswells Road) to allow good access for all and efficient transport links in all directions. All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and following the principles set out in 'Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland'.

Two connections to the A944 to the north of the site will provide efficient transport connections for all users between the various development blocks and the existing road network surrounding the site. It is proposed that the western connection will be a public transport only link, a new, all vehicle, junction is proposed to the east and will involve substantial modification of the existing roundabout junction.

A key aim of the structure has been to ensure all streets pass through the development helping create a fully integrated and vibrant mixed use development and not a series of dormitory suburbs off a 'distributor road' severing the community.

Further the street network has been developed through an iterative design process with the Transport Assessment work, ensuring the structure, hierarchy and phasing of connections will provide sufficient capacity at all times.

## Core Path 57

The development includes a wide network of strategic paths including a specific area of public open space connecting Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead as a route for the Core Path 57.

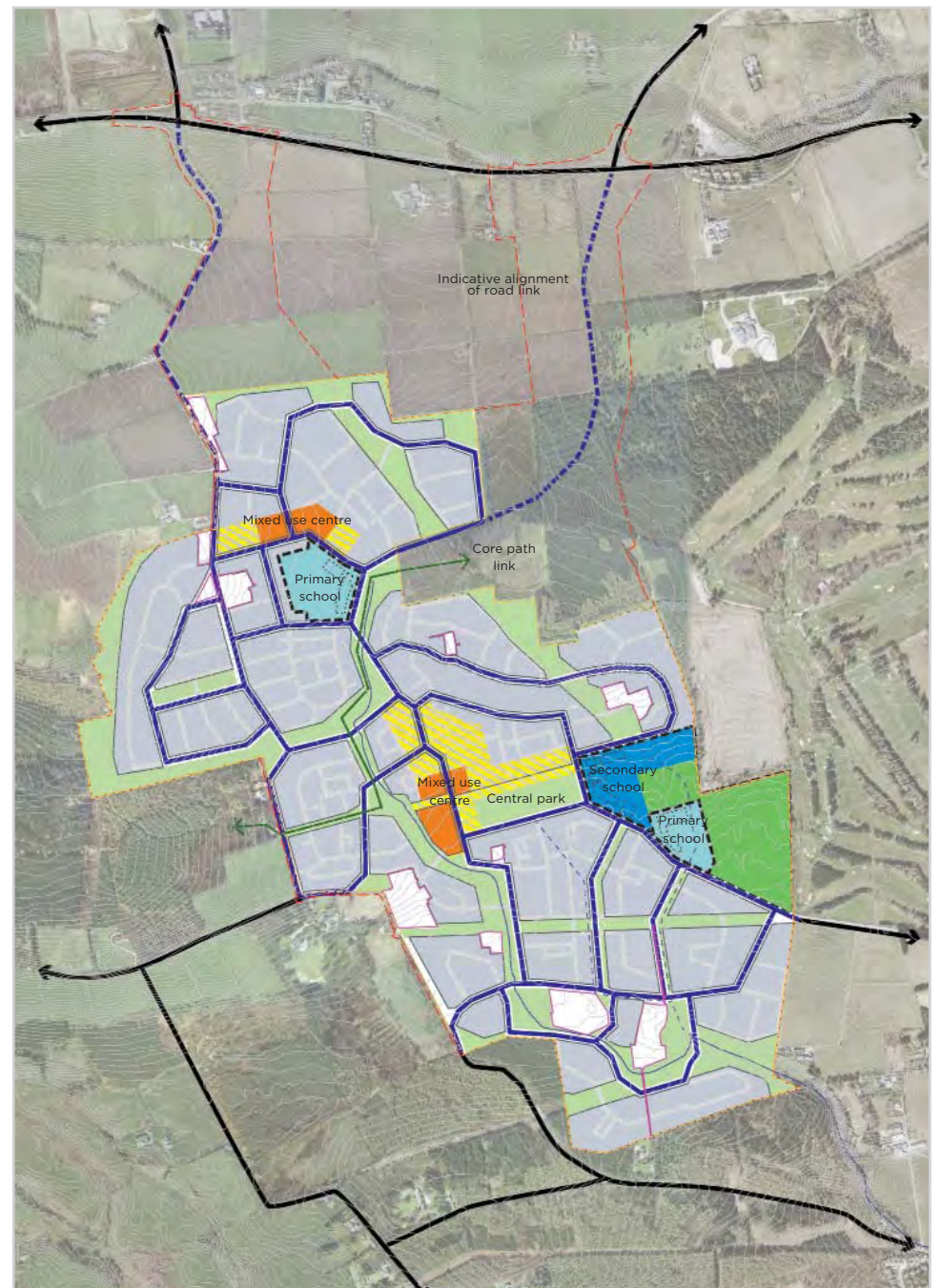


fig. 100: Development Framework - Town structure.

## Structure

The layout of Countesswells has considered land use as an integral part of the design of the street network and block structure. Countesswells incorporates a wide range of opportunities for mixed use development at the core of the community with further opportunities for mixed use development provided in a smaller 'neighbourhood' centre to the north of Countesswells.

The mixed use community core is located at the physical centre of Countesswells on a flatter part of the site overlooking the large Central park. A choice of streets passing around the centre will ensure it is an accessible location for pedestrians and vehicles. The block structure will provide a flexible urban form for a mix of uses to be located within the centre and further ensure some of the educational requirement provides a central part of the cores structure.

A secondary 'neighbourhood centre' is proposed in an easily accessible location further north within Countesswells at a key junction on the core street network, with good public transport connections. This smaller mixed use centre should be located adjacent to the primary school and provide the opportunity for a number of local services such as local shops around a civic space with some office space and a mix of commercial space integrated within the surrounding area.

## 5.2 Landscape strategy

Usable, well-designed open space is recognised as creating opportunities for communities to interact, promoting a sense of place and helping to promote healthy active lifestyles. This section describes how and where this open space will be provided at Countesswells and how this meets Aberdeen City Council standards.

### 5.2.1 Open space concept

The landscape setting at Countesswells has been the key influence in defining the layout, it provides a major asset bringing many environmental and recreational benefits to the new development.

A key principle of the development has been to connect the large areas of public open space at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape corridors and connected spaces within the development. These areas of open space will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological, hydrological and recreational networks within the development. Further smaller neighbourhood and local areas of open space will be located throughout the development connecting these strategic spaces providing further variety in open space within Countesswells.

This section will explain how the landscape concept has been realised and how the Landscape Framework meets the aims of the Council's Open Space Audit and Green Space Network.

### 5.2.2 ACC Open Space Audit

The findings from the Open Space Audit have been used to develop the revised standards for the provision of new open space. These are designed to encourage more useful, relevant and efficiently managed open spaces, of the right type and in the right place.

The Landscape Framework has been specifically developed with consideration of the proximity of Hazlehead Park and Countesswells Woodland both of which are identified as 'Major Open Space' attractions within the City. Providing some of the highest quality and quantity of public open space within the city these spaces are located either side of the Countesswells development meeting the accessibility criteria of the ACC standards for most types of open space required. Therefore the Landscape Framework focuses on providing good connections to these existing high quality areas of open space for the proposed community and visitors alike, contributing to their improvement. Given the proximity and good connections provided to Hazlehead Park and Countesswells Woodland there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site.

### 5.2.3 ACC Green Space Network

Aberdeen's Green Space Network is identified in the Local Development Plan (Policy NE1) to protect, promote and enhance designated natural heritage sites, connectivity between habitats, open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors.

The site at Countesswells benefits from a quality Greenspace Network in the surrounding areas containing a range of habitat types (Source: Aberdeen City Council 'In My Area' GIS Resource).

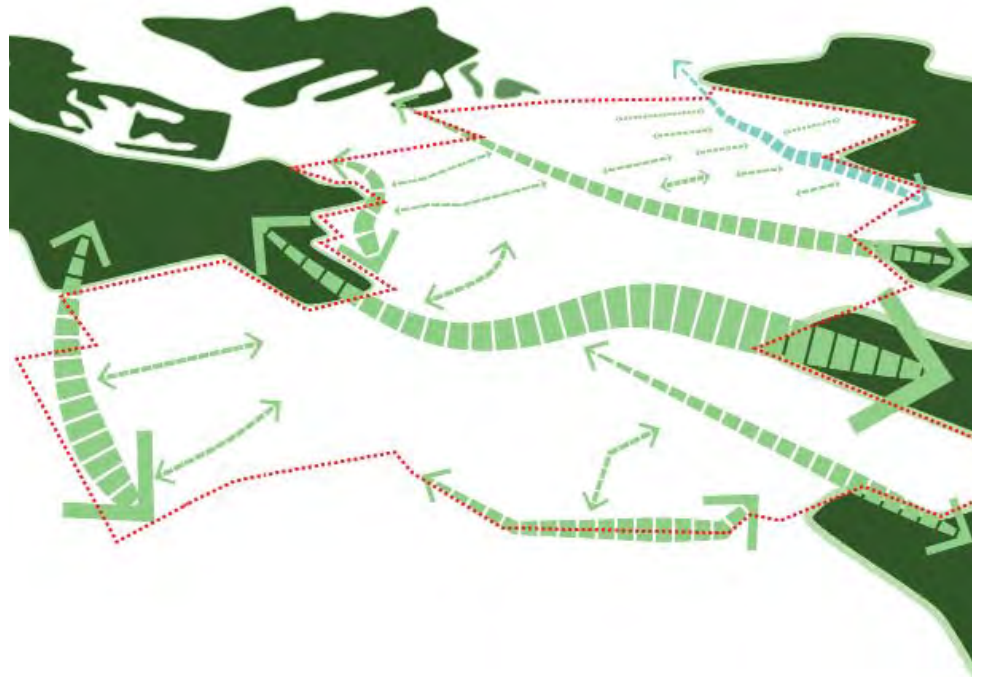


fig. 101: Open space concept - connections of context and definition of edges.

GSN Code	Green Space Network Area Name	GSN Purpose/ Category	Description of Habitat (from Integrated Habitat Survey - NESBReC)
32	Hazlehead	Core GSN site with link to 41 (Countesswells Woods)	The major habitats types are upland birch, coniferous and other broadleaved woodlands and European dry heath (priority habitat).
41	Gairnhill / Countesswells Woods	Core GSN site	Mixed pine, broadleaved and scrub woodlands, locally important habitat
35	Foggieton Woods	Core GSN site with link to 41 (Countesswells Woods)	This site has a variety of habitats comprising upland birch woodland, other broadleaved woodland, wet woodland, scrub woodland, a small area of upland oak woodland, mixed woodland, pine woodland, rush pasture, acid grassland, heath, bracken, neutral grassland.
36	Denwood / Westfield	Core GSN site with links to River Dee and Countesswells	Woodland, Open-semi natural woodland
37	Kingshills Wood	Core GSN site	Native pine with other coniferous woodland / priority habitat

Hazlehead Park and Den Wood are both designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) and fall within GSN 32 with Cults Quarry LNCS part of GSN 35 and Foggieton LNCS part of GSN 36.

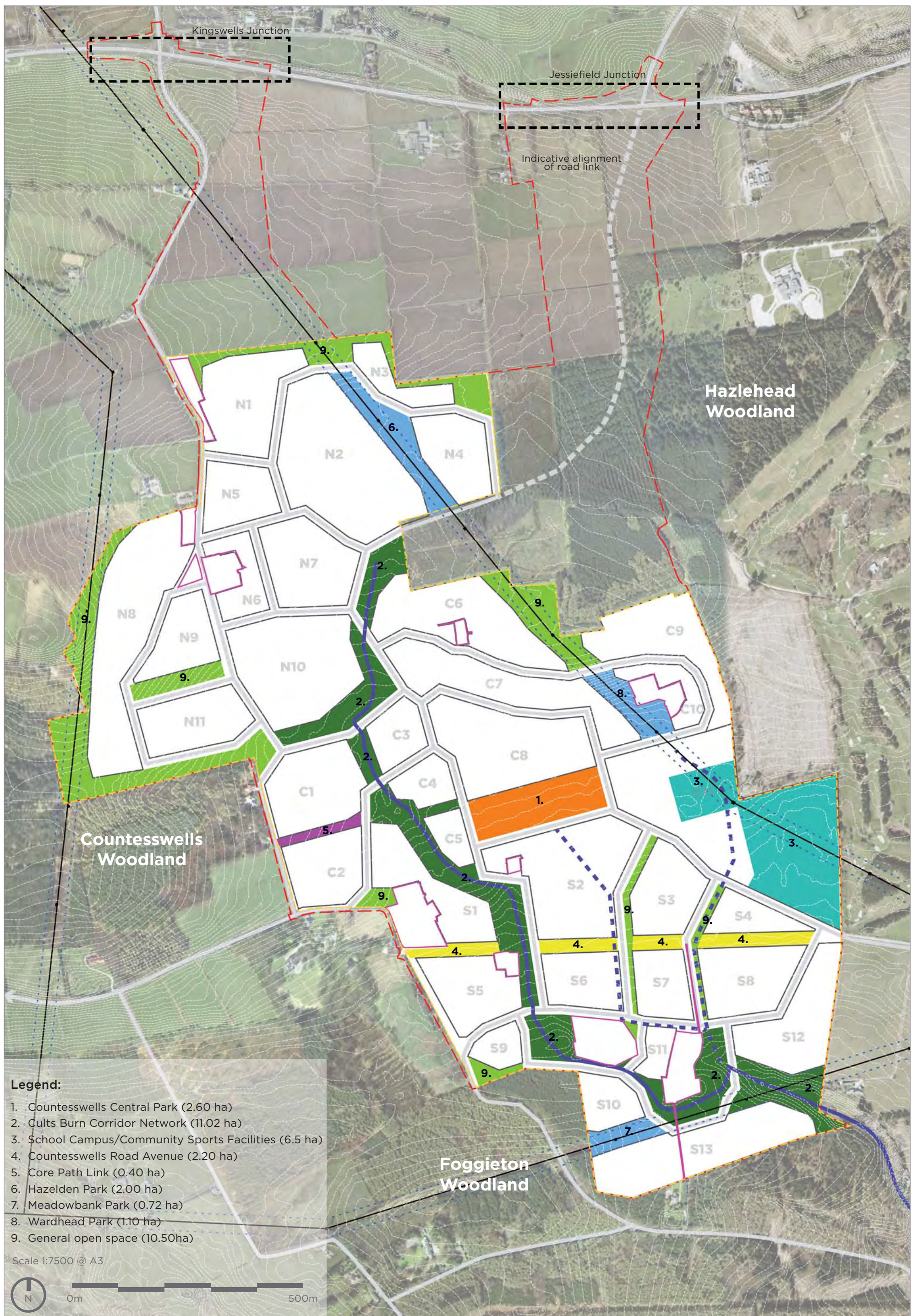


fig. 102: Proposed strategic open space provision

## Opportunities for Enhancement

Landscape and Greenspace Networks can facilitate movement of species and promote habitat connectivity. Development can act as a barrier to these natural flows and therefore it is important that development proposals incorporate linkages.

Riparian planting proposed should also consider the species which would help in improving the aquatic habitats and water quality as well. It will help in meeting the River Basin Management Plan for the Scotland River Basin District and Dee Catchment Management Plan objectives.

Existing habitats are retained and new diverse habitats will be planted achieving site wide biodiversity enhancement. Alongside the physical habitat benefits are education and awareness opportunities which are delivered through the public facilities, including paths, play spaces and greenspace / openspace areas.

This approach to Countesswells will continue to encourage members of the local community and visitors alike to engage in outdoor activities, use existing natural and semi-natural habitats for leisure and help develop an understanding within the community of the importance of the biodiversity.

The Landscape Strategy will inform future detailed design. Biodiversity will be a key consideration across the entire Countesswells site as in addition to the key habitat linkages detailed above. Measures will include:

- Close liaison between the Landscape Architect and an appointed ecologist to maximise the biodiversity benefits during reinstatement and longer term management of the site through management and maintenance
- When planting trees or scrub, the aim will be to maximise the area planted to enhance attractiveness to insects, birds and red squirrel;
- Ensure that tree stock is native where possible and, where possible, is of local seed provenance; and
- When selecting a seed mix for any sowing, ensure that it is compatible with the local soils before commencement of the works.

A detailed landscape strategy will determine the exact species and layout of trees and planting. It is agreed that where possible replacement trees should be of indigenous species.

Biodiversity improvements should be considered across the site area as part of any future Landscape Strategies and Landscape Management Strategies required as part of any future planning application process.

Connection	Description	Enhancement Opportunity
Cults Burn Corridor - North South	The Cults Burn Corridor Network runs in a north south direction and connects Hazlehead (GSN 32) with Denwood / Westfield (GSN 35) and Foggieton (GSN 36) to the south.	Will include SUDs, areas of riparian planting and trees. Low intensity management to provide more natural corridor. Riparian planting re-connects fragmented woodland blocks and provides cover as well as connectivity and permeability between existing woodland habitats. Riparian planting includes flowering and fruiting species to provide food source for pollinating insects (spring / summer) and birds (summer / autumn). Species mix will be determined as part of the Landscape Strategy.
Cults Burn Corridor - East West	Connections across the site in an east west direction includes Core Path 57. Woodland connections ensure habitat connectivity which benefit species including red squirrel, bats and birds	As above. Traffic speeds on existing road network will be reduced which will benefit wildlife moving between Hazlehead and Countesswells across the site. The SUDs proposed will help in improving the water quality as well and not just the providing connectivity to wildlife species.
Hazelden Park - NW to SE connection to existing natural greenspace	This diagonal connection links existing natural greenspace, Hazlehead Park and Hazelden Park running along the line of overhead power lines. Area for recreation and sports and will include a play area.	Grassland areas provide foraging opportunities for range of species. Potential for inclusion of some wildflower areas / diversity. Species mix will be determined as part of the Landscape Strategy.

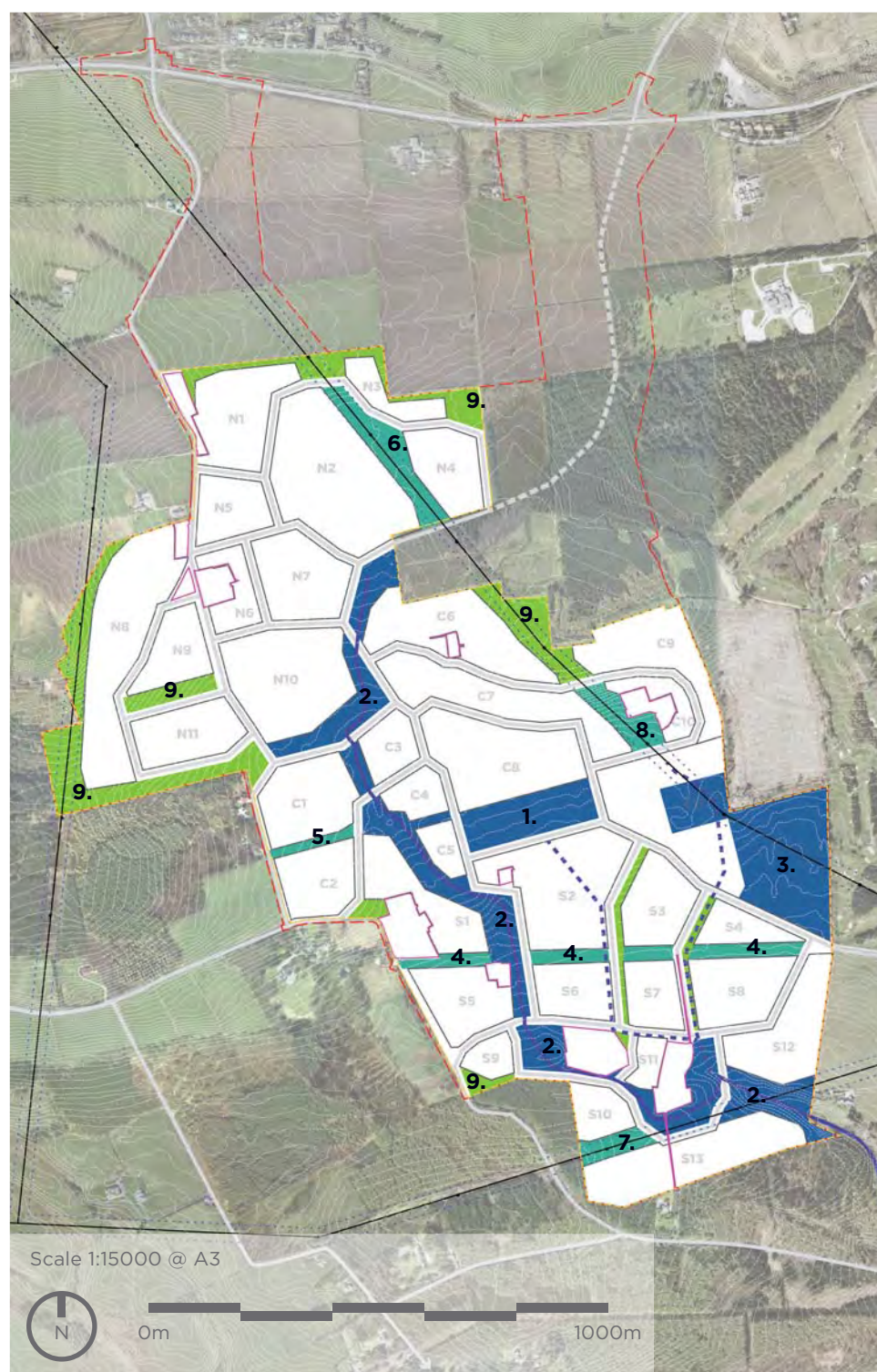


fig. 103: Open space provision by type

### Legend

- Neighbourhood Open Space
- Local Open Space
- General open space

### Legend

- Civic spaces
- Play zones
- Large scale play zone
- Outdoor sports area
- Allotments/community gardens
- Natural greenspace + green corridors





fig. 104: Open space provision by category

## 5.2.4 ACC open space requirements

The Countesswells Development Framework has been designed with reference to ACC's Open Space Supplementary Guidance (SG), which sets out the type, quantity, accessibility and quality of open space to be provided by new developments

Spaces are assigned a type according to scale:

- Major;
- Neighbourhood; and
- Local.

and a category according to use:

- Play zone/Other play areas and Large Scale Play Zones;
- Outdoor Sports Areas;
- Natural Greenspace and Green corridors; and
- Allotments or Community Gardens.

The guidance requires the provision of at least 2.8 hectares per 1000 people of meaningful and useful public open space in residential development. Using a people/household ratio of 2.27/unit generates an indicative population of 6,810 for the proposed 3,000 residential units at Countesswells equating to an open space requirement of approximately 19.10ha.

The plans and summary tables below and opposite identify the hierarchy of 'core spaces' and their functions at Countesswells. Over 30 ha of open space is provided within the Development Framework (6.5ha of this total is provided as shared community sports provision within the School Campus).

Given that every proposed residence will be within 1500m of Hazlehead Park there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site. There must however be sufficient, meaningful neighbourhood open spaces provided, which meet the criteria for the Open Space Strategy.

Across the site SUDs have been included within the provision of open space and as such the facilities should be designed as integral to the open space.

### Core spaces

The location, size and type of 'core spaces' varies across the site to ensure appropriate levels of good quality and accessible open space provision for all members of the community. In a number of circumstances the 'core spaces' combine to provide a network connecting to the wider context.

### General open space

The areas of public open space identified as General open space have not been categorised by type (following ACC standards). These spaces have been created in response to the landscape setting, development form and to further aid the development of character within Countesswells. These spaces will generally provide Natural Greenspaces within Countesswells. The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, leisure and environmental education.

### Countesswells provision of open space by type (following ACC standards)

ACC requirement				Countesswells provision	
Type	Description	Size (ha)	Accessibility	Name	Area (ha)
Neighbourhood Open Spaces	Open spaces that provide a range of recreational uses, attracting users from more than one neighbourhood. These spaces could include equipped Play Zones, natural areas, green corridors, seating, paths/ access, community event space, some formal landscape features, car park, dog waste / litter bins etc. Receives regular maintenance. May include Green Space Network cores, stepping stones or links.	2 - 5	All residents within 600 metres (around 10 minutes walk) of a Neighbourhood Open Space.	1. Countesswells Central Park	2.60
				2. Cults Burn Corridor Network (series of spaces)	11.02
				3. School Campus/Community Sports facilities	6.50
Local Open Spaces	Smaller spaces that provide a more limited range of local recreation uses, and are spread throughout a local area. As most users will reach them on foot, they are well connected by paths to community facilities and surrounding areas. Receives regular maintenance.	0.4 - 2.0	All residents within 400 metres (around 5 minutes walk) of a Local Open Space.	4. Countesswells Road Avenue	2.20
				5. Core path link	0.40
				6. Hazleden Park	2.00
				7. Meadowbank Park	0.72
				8. Wardhead Park	1.10

Note: Given that every proposed residence will be within 1500m of Hazlehead Park there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site.

### Civic spaces

In addition to the 'core spaces' key 'civic spaces' have also been identified. These are either contained within the 'core spaces' or located in adjacent development blocks. These more formal civic spaces have been purposefully located within the development structure at key nodal points and gateways and in association with areas of mixed use development. Where streets pass through or adjacent to civic spaces they do so in a sensitive manner, adding to the sense of place and integrating with the space rather than cutting through it.

### Residential spaces

The diagrams below indicate strategic open space provision within the development. Smaller local open spaces may be incorporated within the detailed design of development blocks where appropriate.

Where areas of open space are located below power lines any activity should be determined on the height difference from ground to the underside of the wires. A health and safety assessment would be required to support the Planning Application process this will involve the transmission company requirements. It is not unusual for playing grounds to be near pylons and this is evident from the Robert Gordon Playing fields further along Countesswells Road.

## 5.2.5 Landscape strategy

A Landscape Strategy will be produced to support the Development Framework and Masterplans, providing more detail on the areas of open space. This will be developed at the appropriate time to support future detail applications.

The landscape strategies associated with any detailed planning application will provide the exact detail of the type, location and extent of planting including where any screen planting may be necessary. A Landscape Management Strategy is also required as part of any future planning application process.

## 5.2.6 Management Principles

Due to the wide variety of spaces of varying scale proposed within Countesswells different forms and levels of management are likely to be required including private management companies or other such arrangement documented through the S75 agreement which will be established by the developers on behalf of residents. Water courses and SUDs will be adopted by the relevant authorities where possible.

The spaces in the development should be designed and maintained to meet the criteria specified in the council's Supplementary Guidance.

Countesswells provision of open space by category (following ACC standards)

Open space category	Description	Indicative Site Size	Equivalent size required for Countesswells	Accessibility standard	Countesswells provision
Play Zone/ Other play zone	Unsupervised areas dedicated to use by, and equipped for children and young people. Other Play Areas may include ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard areas, teenage shelters.	0.3ha per 1000 population Minimum size 1500m <sup>2</sup>	c2.6 hectares	All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone  Suitable for ages 3 - 13  Suitable for ages 3 - 18	Six play zone areas have been identified in the Framework which between them will measure over 2.6 hectares to meet the requirement. They are distributed evenly throughout the development and are generally within or directly adjacent to residential neighbourhoods to help with natural surveillance. A natural play approach will be developed through the masterplan stage, ensuring that the zones are connected to the landscape and encourage exploration and challenge. Further detail on functions and character will be set out at that time when more information is understood about surrounding residential areas. The vast majority of residents are within 400m of a play zone identified within the framework.
Large Scale Play Zone	Larger play zones likely to attract children from a larger area. These sites should include a larger range of play functions.	Minimum size 2500m <sup>2</sup>	c5000m <sup>2</sup>	All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone  Suitable for ages 3 - 13  Suitable for ages 3 - 1  Large Scale Play Zones maintain accessibility to play in key locations.	Two large scale play zones have been identified in the Framework. An area within Countesswells Central Park (1) and an area within Hazelden Park (6). It is envisaged that the larger scale play zone in Countesswells Central Park will function as an attraction to the wider area with visitors helping support the other non residential uses within the Town Core. This may include attractions such as a skate park.
Outdoor sports areas	Natural or artificial surfaces used for sport and recreation. E.g. Playing fields, pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks, water sports facilities.	1.6ha per 1000 population	c14 hectares	All residents within 1200 metres of Outdoor Sports facilities.	The School Campus (3) (for use by community out with school hours), the Central Park (1) and Hazelden Park (6) provide a total area of c11ha which can accommodate a variety of outdoor sports.  It is envisaged the Town park will contain space and facilities for sports appropriate to this location such as tennis courts or a bowling green.  Importantly all of the development at Countesswells is within 1200m of Hazlehead Park which contains a number of formal sports facilities including golf courses, tennis courts, horse riding and sports pitches. In line with the aims of the Open Space Audit the Development Framework focuses on providing good connections to these existing resources and provide alternative types of open space for residents within the development.
Natural greenspace and Green Corridors	Includes woodland, heathland, scrub, grassland, wetland, coastal areas, riverbanks, streambanks, disused railway lines, green access routes and open water. Also includes designated areas such as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, watersports, leisure, non-motorised travel, environmental education.	1ha minimum Natural Greenspace per 1000 population	c.8.7 hectares	All residents within 400 metres of a natural greenspace >2ha and 2000 metres of a natural greenspace >5ha	Countesswells provides a variety of areas of natural greenspace and green corridors totalling around 19ha. All of the residents within Countesswells will be within 400m of an area of natural greenspace.
Allotments or Community Gardens	Areas or plots which are mainly cultivated by the occupier or community group for the purpose of producing fruit or vegetables for personal consumption.	0.3 hectares per 1000 properties with less than 60m <sup>2</sup> private green spaces, cultivatable according to the health quality standards.	Whilst many of the properties will fulfil the criteria for private green space, for the purposes of the Framework two areas totalling c0.5 hectares have been identified which can fulfil this function.	Allotments should be no more than 800m from peoples' homes, and that the (minimum) size/ number of plots at a site will be determined through a mix of the quality standards below and the number of people within the allotment catchment area.	Two sites have been identified which total around 0.50 hectares.  The allotments/community gardens will adhere to the relevant quality standards as set out in the SG. Detail of these areas will be further expanded in the appropriate masterplan phases.

## 5.3 Drainage strategy

Countesswells provides an excellent opportunity to create a comprehensive drainage system across the site, improving water quality and managing the flow of water from the site. The ambition of the drainage strategy is to create a visible and legible system which reveals the process to residents, allowing them to understand the function of these elements. To achieve this drainage features have been given prominence within open space and street design. Given the prominence of these features it is therefore essential that the elements of the drainage system are designed to maximise their aesthetic and ecological value, creating truly sustainable elements that are fully integrated with other urban design features within the development. Engineered solutions to drainage which do not fulfil aesthetic or ecological functions will not be acceptable at Countesswells.

### 5.3.1 Surface Water Drainage

Through the Development Framework the opportunity has been taken to enhance the existing watercourses, de-culverting where possible and fully incorporate them within the landscape structure. Further the network of sustainable urban drainage system (SUDs) should also be integrated into the design of the landscape structure.

Most of the watercourses have been previously artificially modified and straightened or culverted. These will be realigned and de-culverted where possible to incorporate them into the development layout and re-naturalise them for the benefit of biodiversity. All watercourses should be protected within a suitable area of open space in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

Consideration must be given to the design of SUDs, existing watercourses and wetland areas (specifically to the south of the site around Block S9) as part of the Masterplans and open space strategies for future phases. Detailed design any requirements of the SUDs will be determined through the planning application process.

The existing minor watercourses do not feature on SEPA's indicative flood map, however the site design incorporates the watercourses within landscape corridors which will accommodate flows from large 200 year, plus climate change, rainfall events, without impacting on the development areas.

Any existing land drainage encountered during the development works will be reinstated or re-routed as appropriate.

In accordance with the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and to meet the guidance of CIRIA 697 - the SUDS Manual, a Surface Water Management Strategy has been undertaken.

The Development Framework focuses on the site control and regional control elements, ensuring that these are appropriately placed and considered in an integrated manner together with other masterplanning and urban design considerations.

All the SUDs features and existing watercourses should all be designed as integral parts of the core space network. Section 6 of this document, Core Space Design Principles, describes how the SUDs features identified on the plan opposite should be designed as part of the spaces in which they are located.

In general, the site falls from north to south. Drainage will follow the same pattern, with an eventual destination in the south-east corner, where the Burn of Cults acts as the receiving watercourse.

The surface water drainage system will be appropriately designed in line with the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). The surface water system will mimic the natural drainage of the catchment and mitigate many of the adverse effects of surface water run-off from urban development on the environment by:-

- Managing and restricting run-off rates to reduce the risk of downstream flooding;
- Encouraging natural groundwater recharge (where appropriate);
- Reducing pollutant concentrations in the run-off and acting as protection to the receiving waters;
- Contributing to the enhanced amenity and aesthetic value of developed areas;
- Providing habitats for wildlife in urban areas and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

It should be noted that no existing watercourses are proposed to be culverted, apart from where they pass below proposed roads.

The drainage corridor passing through S2 and S6 is not an existing water course it will be an outflow from the SUDs within the town park, the design and character of which will be established through detail design either as an open 'landscaped' channel or may be piped in whole or in part.

The existing watercourse passing through C11 is similar to the water course to the west and will be designed in a similar manner. The water course is currently little more than an engineered field drain. The detail proposals will seek to design this watercourse as part of the block, street and open space structure (sensitively routed around the Primary School) from source to where it connects to the Cults Burn to the south. Like the Cults Burn corridor, the final design will follow the ACC Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

The enhancement, de-culverting and design of watercourses and the surrounding areas of open space will be influenced by the Phase 1 flood risk assessment and in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

Surface water run-off from the proposed development will be drained to a new surface water system which will respect the existing topography as far as practicable. The site will be divided into multiple drainage catchments with each catchment being provided with a surface water drainage system which will incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage measures (SUDS) in order to provide treatment and attenuation of surface water flows. The SUDS features will be located into the open space and interlinked where possible by the watercourses with the drainage requirements being an integral feature of the overall design. Figure 105 shows how these are inter-linked and incorporated into the core areas of open space.

The proposed SUDS measures will provide treatment of the run-off in accordance of the requirements of the SUDS manual. The SUDS solutions proposed will also require to satisfy the adoption and maintenance requirements of Scottish Water and Aberdeen City Council. Early engagement with Scottish Water is recommended.

In accordance with the Drainage Assessment guide, the rate and volume of surface water run-off from the post development situation should not exceed the surface water run-off from the existing greenfield site. Attenuation volume will be provided within the SUDS features in order to contain the run-off volumes and restrict the discharges to the greenfield run-off rates. In more detailed design and approvals a discharge rate in litres/second/hectare will be agreed with Aberdeen City Council, as the rate at which surface water can be discharged to existing minor water features and to the Burn of Cults.

As part of the detailed drainage design, sensitivity tests to assess flood risk will be carried out for rainfall events up to and including the 200 year event and site levels will be set in order to prevent water entering properties or restricting access for emergency vehicles.

Where appropriate "at source" surface water treatment will be provided within the individual development areas. These will be either porous paving, grass swales, grass filter strips or stone filled filter trenches or a combination of these where required.

The surface water drainage system will be designed and installed in accordance with Sewers for Scotland, Second Edition, November 2007 (or any future revisions of Sewers for Scotland) and will be adopted by Scottish Water.

Rainwater harvesting will not form part of main drainage strategy. It would be expected that rainwater harvesting will be part of the internal plot drainage for individual houses. It is envisaged that water saving technologies and water efficiency will be incorporated within each of the residential development areas. Each developer will therefore require to give a commitment to this. Rainwater harvesting, water saving technologies and measures to promote water efficiency will be incorporated within the detailed design for the scheme and a Water Efficiency Statement will be submitted with each detailed application to demonstrate that the proposals will not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the River Dee SAC.

The Environmental Statement includes a 'Report to inform Appropriate Assessment' as an appendix to the ecology chapter. The Report to inform Appropriate Assessment addresses potential for likely significant impacts (construction and operation) on the River Dee which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SUDS Strategy and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the development will ensure that there are no issues related to discharges to the River Dee during construction or operation.

In line with the findings of the HRA carried out for the SDP we advise that if a statement encouraging water saving technologies and water efficiency is included within the development framework and masterplan then this significant effect can be avoided and an appropriate assessment will not be required. A Water Efficiency Statement will be required in each subsequent planning application detailing the measures employed to demonstrate that they would not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests. These could be to achieve the standard for water use efficiency for domestic buildings in accordance with the standards identified in the Resources for New Development Supplementary Guidance. The Ciria publication 'Water sensitive urban design in the UK: Ideas for built environment practitioners', 2013, may also provide helpful guidance.

For all the drainage works a construction method statement will be submitted as part of a planning application to avoid run off/sediment impacting on the River Dee.

### 5.3.2 Foul Drainage

Foul flows from Countesswells are to be pumped to the existing Scottish Water sewer network in Countesswells Roads at the west edge of Aberdeen, some 2 kilometres to the east of the site.

New foul sewers and pumping stations will be provided to within the development, designed and installed in accordance with Sewers for Scotland, Second Edition, November 2007 (or any future revisions).



fig. 105: Drainage strategy

## 5.4 Access and connectivity strategy

Countesswells has been designed to be a well connected and permeable place. It has a legible network of streets and paths which connect the entire community with both key destinations within the site and also the wider recreational opportunities and destinations of the area.

### 5.4.1 Pedestrian and cyclist connectivity

The ability for pedestrians and cyclists to move through Countesswells using a permeable network of paths is at the core of the design of the Development Framework. The path network has been designed to actively encourage walking and cycling as both a viable transport option and also as a recreational pursuit.

Cycle connections from Countesswells are facilitated via the Westhill-Aberdeen cycle route along the A944 corridor to the north of the site. This route runs eastwards from Kingswells towards the city, as an off road route and will enhance access to a number of the aforementioned opportunities in conjunction with crossing opportunities on the A944. Cycle connections to the Deeside line to the south can be made via existing routes.

#### Strategic path network

For pedestrians and cyclists the Strategic path network identified will offer many routes and across Countesswells the combination of segregated pathways and roadside footways will create an interconnected network of direct and convenient links between destinations. Attractive linkages to the external facilities in the vicinity of the site are required to offer future residents the opportunity to make a sustainable travel mode choice.

The plan opposite and on those on the following pages identify the strategic path network which must be provided at Countesswells as part of the Development Framework. It is expected that this network will be further supplemented by additional pedestrian pathways and routes as appropriate through the masterplanning and detailed design of areas. It is proposed that with the exception of the routes identified in the strategic path network opposite, cyclists will be generally accommodated on the street network. The paths should all be cyclable i.e. dropped kerbs etc even if not designed to 'strategic standards'.

The paths illustrated in the strategic path network must be designed to provide routes for use by both pedestrians and cyclists. These must be designed to:

- be safe for both pedestrians and cyclists;
- be pleasant and attractive;
- be appropriately lit; and
- have appropriate crossing facilities at all street crossings.

At key points where walking and cycling routes intersect with vehicular routes safe pedestrian crossing facilities will be provided.

The connection from the Kingshill Wood to Hazlehead woodland that the customary access route to the north of the site provides will be incorporated as part of the strategic path network.

#### Core path provision

The strategic path network incorporates Core Path 57 through a strategic area of open space connecting Countesswells Woodland and Hazlehead Park. The plan opposite highlights the proposed alignment of Core Path 57 and the core area of open space connect existing areas of woodland on either side of the site. The alignment through Countesswells will connect to the existing paths to the east and west allowing for some minor variation in alignment through Countesswells to accommodate improvements such as crossing points.

At key points where the Core Path intersects with vehicular routes, appropriate safe crossing facilities should be provided.

#### Strategic walking/cycling routes

Strategic walking/cycling routes will offer dual-use pavements to ensure direct and convenient links in both an east-west direction and a north-south direction. These have been positioned to align with onward strategic connections such as the dual-use pavement associated with the A944, providing links to Kingswells, employment areas and other existing roads. Additional streets in the development will be identified in the appropriate masterplans which are suitable for combined foot and cycle paths on one side of the carriageway with a footway on the other.

Additionally, routes or paths off set from streets will be provided which are suitable for walking, cycling and equestrians. These are predominantly located within areas of open space to provide opportunities to cross Countesswells at a number of locations in a traffic free environment.

At key points where these routes intersect with vehicular routes, appropriate safe crossing facilities will be provided.

#### Aspirational path links

The plan on the following page also identifies a number of aspirational path links which are outside the Countesswells site boundary and out with the control of the Countesswells Consortium and as such consultation with adjoining landowners should be considered at an early stage to help facilitate the delivery of these connections. These would benefit the wider area in forming a connected network of paths and improving recreational opportunities, notably providing links to the A93 and Countesswells Road.

#### Cycle links

In line with the national and local policy to promote sustainable methods of travel, particularly for shorter trips, the development has been designed around 'Walkable Neighbourhoods' to encourage the opportunities for residents to choose to walk or cycle instead of using private cars for shorter journeys.

An investigation of requirements to accommodate commuting cycle trips was carried out considering likely desire lines for future cycle trips. As required by the ALDP Action Programme strategic routes will provide north - south cycle connections to Access Path 91, which runs to the north of the site along the northern side of the A944. This provides easy direct access to Westhill to the west, Kingswells, the new employment areas to the north and Aberdeen to the east.

Opportunities for commuting by bike will be provided through dual use path connections to both the east and the west connecting to the cycleway along the A944 (Access Path 91). The exact location and type of crossing points providing access to the Access Path will be determined through the TA process and in discussion with ACC.

Specific crossing facilities for cyclists and pedestrians will be provided at the upgraded Jessiefield / Bellfield access junction and crossing of the A944 will be encouraged via these facilities.

To the west, the proposed and existing paths will provide access to the existing crossing facilities adjacent to Kingswells roundabout to ensure a safe crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists to Kingswells and the new employment sites to the north of the road.

Along the eastern boundary a link will be formed with Aberdeen Cycle Path Network (ACPN) 56 to connect to lightly trafficked routes around Hazlehead Golf Course. From here a number of recommended routes towards the city centre can be utilised.

As ACPN 87 passes the south eastern corner of the site it is proposed to provide a connection with path 63 to access on road cycle lanes along North Deeside Road which provide access to south Aberdeen.

Further dialogue with cycling groups will inform the identification of additional connections to appropriate routes and connections.

#### Equestrian Routes

Core Path 57 and the other paths identified will provide a variety of suitable routes for equestrian use. These paths will provide a choice of routes across Countesswells connecting to the existing path network, existing roads and the proposed street network to provide complete access across the site.

The Established Access Route identified on the plan below has been utilised for both pedestrian and equestrian recreational activity in excess of 20 years. This link through the site will be maintained, diverted slightly in order to link up to the proposed network of footpaths and streets, allowing for better connectivity and fluidity through the development. A wider path network is proposed with routes that will be able to accommodate equestrian users and allow movement between Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead woodland.

In the two locations where the path designed to accommodate equestrian users crosses vehicular routes, appropriate crossings facilities should be provided.

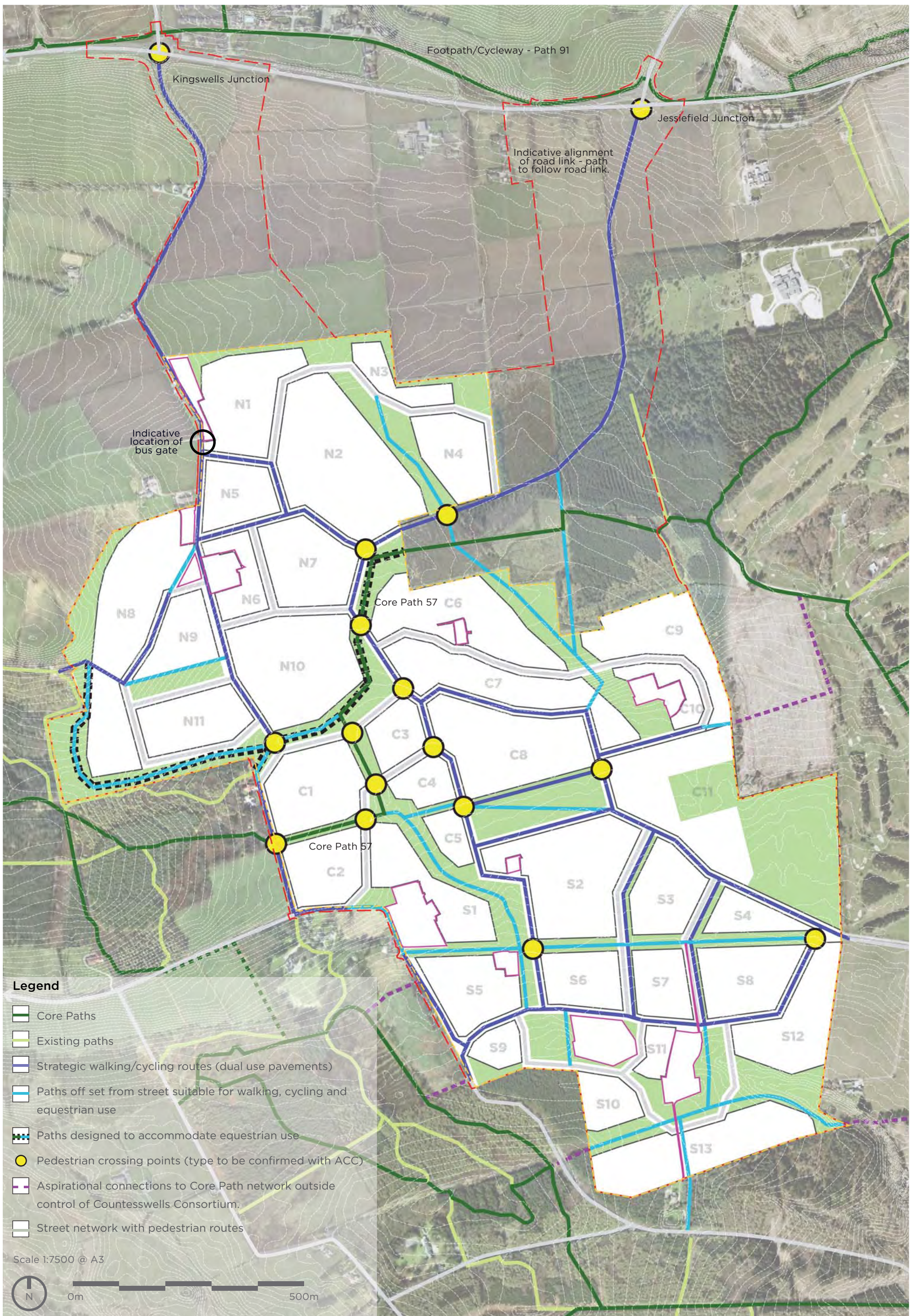


fig. 106: Strategic pedestrian and cycle links

## 5.4.2 Public transport

Existing frequent bus services provided by the principal operators in the Aberdeen area, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird, operate via the A944 corridor approximately 600m to the north of the site. First service 11 and Stagecoach service X17 combine to provide a total of seven services per hour to Aberdeen City Centre, with all services serving Union Street, and Stagecoach X17 connecting to regional and long distance bus services at Union Square Bus Station, and rail services at the adjacent Aberdeen Railway Station.

Existing public transport routes to the south are approximately 3km from the centre of the site. This is beyond desirable walk distance but within an easy cycle distance or car journey. Links to accommodate these modes will be provided where feasible. Further, the Development Framework has been designed so that public transport can be accommodated from the south should operators wish to do so in the future.

Since there are no existing bus routes through the site area, initial discussions held with local bus operators indicate that currently the main bus corridor accessible from the site is the A944 to the north it is therefore appropriate to promote extended and additional services to this corridor. Alterations to existing First services to the south of the development site are not envisaged to be appropriate at this time, as journey times via these extended routes are anticipated to be longer than those via A944, and therefore less attractive. The development of links via the A944 corridor also provides the opportunity to connect with existing or enhanced services accessing the Park and Ride site at Kingswells. As the development progresses opportunities for expanding or enhancing routes will be reconsidered.

Potential routes for buses are indicated on the plan on the following page, providing two connections to the existing network on the A944.

It is proposed that the western connection to the A944 will be a public transport only link utilising the Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells access onto the existing Kingswells roundabout junction.

Kingswells Park and Ride is located within 1km of Countesswells site and is easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists via the strategic path network.

The specific location of the bus stops has not been identified however these should be located to correspond with proposed civic spaces, schools and the strategic path network identified. Pedestrian connectivity to these stops should be considered as a priority. From the indicative bus routes and stops shown all residential properties would be within a 400m walk distance of a bus stop (see Figure 107).

Discussions are on-going with bus operators and the developers are pursuing the early delivery of public transport provision within the site. The infrastructure will be in place to allow bus routes and links to the A944 within the first phase of development as outlined in section 5.6.4.

## 5.4.3 The street structure

An interconnected network of streets throughout the development will provide efficient and effective routes for all modes of transport to access both the internal facilities within the development and to the wider strategic network including connections to Kirk Brae (C189), the A944 and Countesswells Road.

The street network will be based around connecting all the existing roads through the new development to allow good access for all and efficient transport links in all directions.

The development layout has been designed with due cognisance of the principles and approach set out within Designing Streets. As a result the layout lengthens the existing routes through the site in both an east/west and north/south direction. Furthermore the nature of these routes will change from rural lanes to urban, built up roads with associated tight geometry and reduced vehicle speeds thus significantly reducing the attractiveness of these for 'rat running' traffic. In addition the layout includes 2 traffic signal controlled junctions and a Pegasus crossing (to allow users to cross on horseback) which will further break up traffic flows through the site and reduce vehicle speeds. The other consideration to bear in mind is that the AWPR is only a short distance to the west of the site and will provide a link between the A93 and A944.

Vehicular access to the north will be to the A944 via a public transport only connection to Kingswells junction and a link to a new junction at Jessiefield. Connections will also be made with Countesswells Road, Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults and Blacktop Road to integrate the proposed development street structure with the surrounding existing network. Connection to the North Deeside Road (A93) will be provided via Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults. The TA has investigated the likely impact of the development traffic on these extended links and suggest mitigation where appropriate.

The internal layout of the site has been designed to take full cognisance of 'Designing Streets', around the premise that 'Good street design should derive from an intelligent response to location, rather than the rigid application of standards, regardless of context'. In order to achieve this the layout will be 'Distinctive', 'Safe & pleasant', 'Easy to move around', 'Welcoming', 'Adaptable' and 'Resource efficient'.

Key to this objective is the provision of a dense network of lightly trafficked streets, especially around central areas of high pedestrian activity. The focus is on providing an attractive sense of place and a permeable network for access by all road users. Junction arrangements both internally and connecting with external road links are in the form of T junctions, staggered junctions and a minimum number of cross roads rather than roundabouts, prioritising safe crossing movements by pedestrians.

Within residential areas and surrounding the schools the speed limit should be restricted to 20mph. These streets should be designed so as to enforce 20mph through the design of the infrastructure and not be reliant on a speed limit. Safe and attractive environments will be achieved through maintaining low vehicle speeds through use of a combination of design measures including width restrictions, reductions in forward visibility, changes in priority, physical features and the use of textured surfaces (not vertical deflection).

The Transport Assessment process has informed the production of the Development Framework and will support the Planning Applications which examines in detail the travel demand of the proposed settlement and the impact such development will have on all modes of transport. The TA analyses in detail the estimated impact on the surrounding network and suggests relevant measures to promote sustainable transport choice where appropriate, identifying infrastructure improvements to mitigate against the traffic impact on existing junctions and links.

The Transport Assessment must determine whether the currently proposed mitigation is adequate and identify any further mitigation that is required as a result of the development.

## 5.4.4 Junctions to A944

Initial studies have demonstrated that the development can be expected to require two connections to the A944 to the north of the site to provide efficient transport connections for all users between the various development blocks and the existing road network surrounding the site.

It is proposed that the western connection will be a public transport only link utilising the Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells access onto the existing signal controlled Kingswells roundabout junction. This will necessitate a bus gate to be installed on Kirk Brae (C189) to prevent the through flow of non permitted traffic. The precise location and operation of the bus gate will be finalised following further detailed analysis.

Whilst the existing link from the South to the Kingswells roundabout will be maintained as a public transport only route, general access to all modes will be maintained to private property south of the roundabout and north of the development.

A new, all vehicle, junction is proposed to the east and will involve substantial modification of the existing roundabout junction at Jessiefield. The final junction layout, design and type will be determined following further detailed analysis and design through the TA process.

The eastern road from the site boundary to the A944 as shown on Figure 107 opposite is indicative and the final alignment will be subject to detailed discussions, site assessments and agreement as part of the planning application process.

The junction layouts have been subject to full analysis to assess future operational capacity and performance as well as the appropriateness of the design to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The process is summarised in the TA.

## 5.4.5 Existing roads

The street structure designed and phased with recognition of existing roads and travel patterns (informed by the TA process). The street structure will be subject to detail design and analysis through the TA process prior to agreement with the Council at the appropriate time.

Access to all existing properties will be maintained. The detail of this will be determined through the planning application process and the Countesswells Consortium will liaise with residents as part of this process.



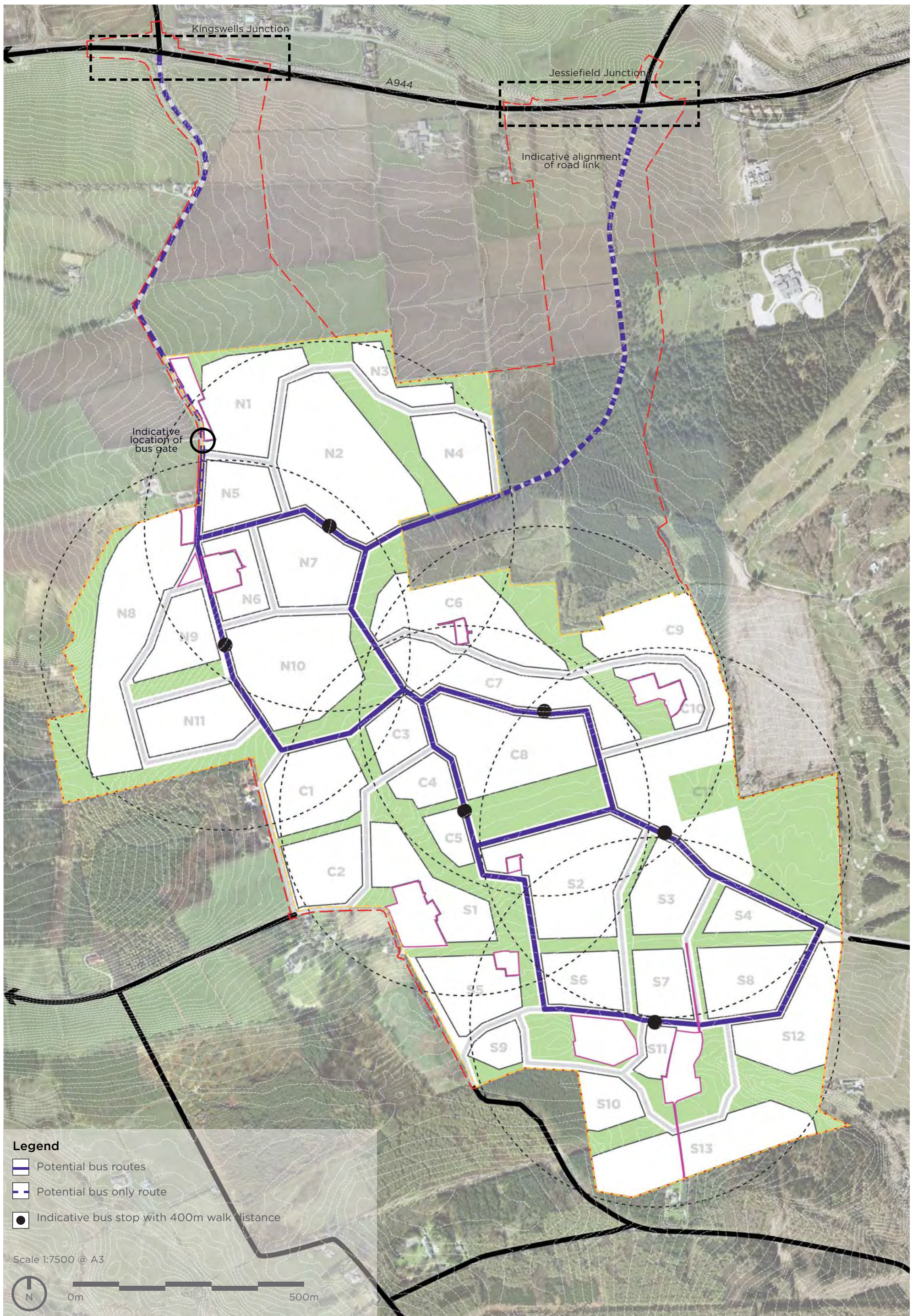


fig. 107: Strategic pedestrian and cycle links

### Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells will provide a public transport only connection between Countesswells and the A944.

To the south of the proposed bus gate it will be designed to pass through Countesswells as part of the proposed street network, realigned in specific locations to control traffic speed and better integrate as part of the urban form.

Access to the A944 will be maintained during the early construction periods and any utility works will be programmed to ensure minimum disruption to the public.

### Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults will provide the principal route from the Countesswells site to the south and the A93, North Deeside Road. The road continues south to link with the A93, North Deeside Road at a signalised cross roads junction and thereby provides access to the majority of residential areas within east Cults to North Deeside Road.

The A93, North Deeside Road, provides a commuter corridor parallel to the A944 linking communities along North Deeside with the city centre. Tidal traffic flows are observed along this route with the majority of traffic travelling towards the city centre during the AM peak and away from it during the PM peak. Peterculter and Milltimber have continuous built up frontages with 30/40 mph speed limits and signalised cross road junctions with key side routes such as Kirk Brae (C189) and Baillieswells Road.

### Countesswells Road

The plan opposite and on the following page illustrates Countesswells Road within the site area being retained as part of the strategic path network and not the street network. By retaining Countesswells Road as part of the path network the structure of the existing tree avenue can be protected and enhanced as part of the landscape framework.

Countesswells Road will remain a principal route into the site from the east. Within the site, Countesswells Road will be closed and re-routed as part of the proposed street network the implications of this have been considered as part of the TA process.

### Blacktop Road

Blacktop Road will provide a vehicular connection to the west. Beyond the site boundary the road will continue as a national speed limit route to the west and provides access to Easter Ord and Wester Ord.

Baillieswells Road, to the west of Kirk Brae (C189), connects between Blacktop Road and the A93, North Deeside Road. To its northern end it is a narrow rural road but it passes through residential areas of Cults to link at a signal controlled junction with North Deeside Road.

## 5.4.6 Street hierarchy

All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and following the principles set out in 'Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland'.

The proposed street structure, illustrated opposite and described below, has been designed in response to the site context, the landuse structure and the desire to provide a choice of routes through the settlement. The street structure also ensures good connections are provided to the existing network. The proposed streets will be designed and phased with recognition of existing and proposed travel patterns (informed by the TA).

The hierarchy of streets has been defined, which deal with various pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle parameters. The street structure will be subject to detail design and agreement with the Council at the appropriate time.

In general, following decreasing volume of vehicular traffic the key principles that should inform the design of the streets identified in the hierarchy are described below:

#### Primary street

A core route through the site on which there should be no frontage access and no on street parking.

- These streets will be designed to accommodate public transport.
- A 3m combined foot and cycleway will be required to one side of the street and a 2m wide footway to the other.
- Residential frontage access must not be taken from these routes.
- In addition, one metre wide separation strips will be required on parts of the primary street network.

### Secondary Streets

These streets will connect the primary streets whilst providing strategic access to all residential areas.

- These streets will be designed to accommodate public transport on the routes identified for buses.
- Frontage access and on street parking would generally be acceptable on these routes (designed so not to conflict with public transport use).
- The secondary streets should provide a segregated 3m wide foot and cycleway to one side of the carriageway with a 2m wide footway on bus routes and where they connect key destinations and connect to the external path network.
- In residential areas where the street does not connect points of a strategic nature 2m footways to either side of the carriageway would be appropriate.

### Tertiary Street

These streets will ensure clear, connected access streets to residential areas.

- Direct frontage access and on street parking allowed on all streets.
- 2m footways provided on either side of the street.

### Other Streets

In addition to the core streets identified and described there will be the need for further streets, lanes and shared surface areas within Development Blocks which must be designed following 'Designing Streets' guidance.

These clearly defined types combine to provide a clear structure to the development and are a critical part of creating an identity and sense of place. All carriageways will be designed as 'streets', rather than 'roads', there dimensions appropriate to function, character and overall street layout. By altering elements such as width of street (building to building), tree planting, pathway and cycleway integration the development can ensure the design of the streets within the development create characterful, comfortable, distinct and legible places to be.

Within a development of this scale individual streets will change in character as they pass through different parts of the development. The main mechanism for allowing this to happen will be the consideration of the following elements, which are as follows;

- Building to building width
- Boundary treatments
- Carriageway width
- Location and width of footways/cycleways
- Frontage access
- Parking
- Street trees
- Lighting
- Street furniture
- Geometry
- Visibility
- Materiality

Following the above guidance the detail design of the streets should be carried out at the appropriate stage, it should be informed by the TA and agreed with the Council.

## 5.4.7 Parking standards

Car parking provision will be provided in accordance with Aberdeen City Council policy and Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility.

The policy will be taken cognisance of in laying out parking levels for residential areas, however at this stage it is not possible to be prescriptive about parking provision as the exact mix and location of housing typologies have not yet been finally determined. It is recognised that Council policy provides guidelines rather than maximum parking allowance, however, through detail design and with the aim of creating a sustainable place effort will be made to reduce the parking standards in conjunction with suitable sustainable transport alternatives and locations of other mixed uses.

Parking standards extend to cycle and motorcycle parking as well, and any flatted or communal residential areas will have to provide cycle and motorcycle parking to comply with policy.

For non-residential land uses the Council parking standards will apply.

The opportunity for car clubs or other car sharing schemes should be considered as part of any future detailed applications or masterplans for the site and its different phases. Parking bays for shared cars could be provided.

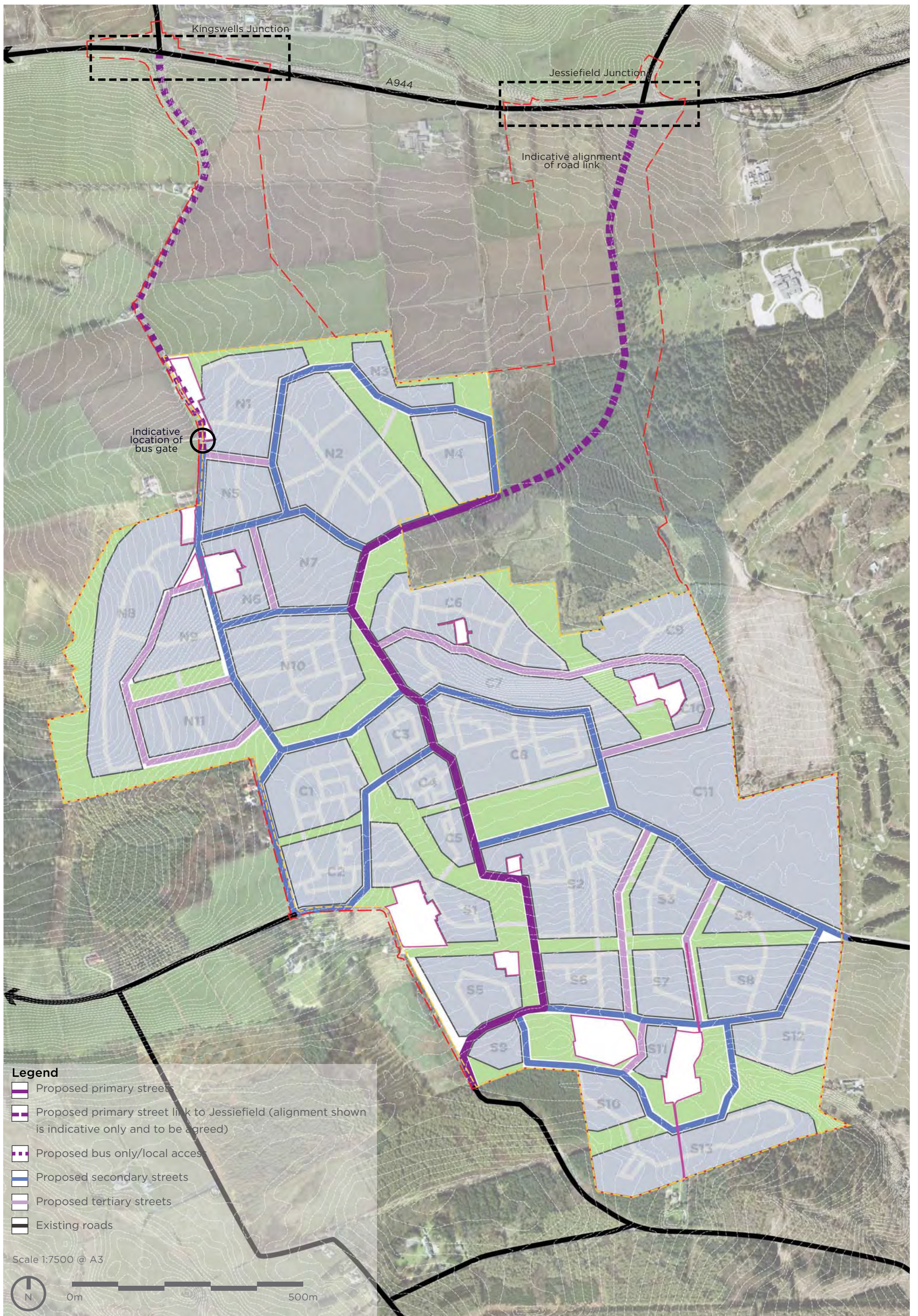


fig. 108: Proposed street hierarchy

## 5.5 Land use strategy

**The Aberdeen Local Development Plan allocates Countesswells for 3000 houses and 10 hectares of employment land plus appropriate community facilities. It is anticipated these community facilities will include a Secondary School and two triple stream primary schools. The Development Framework is designed to be flexible and responsive to change in market conditions and as such provides what is considered the maximum potential developable land take to provide the appropriate scale of uses in relation to what is identified within the ALDP.**

Countesswells will provide 3000 new homes, consisting of a full range of building typologies and tenures creating a diverse and inclusive community structure across the site area. This will offer housing choice and opportunities for people at all stages of the housing lifecycle, with an emphasis on family housing and will include affordable housing.

Educational uses form a key part of the land use strategy. Schools provide a key focus for both the community core where the community campus including a primary and secondary school is located and for the 'Neighbourhood Centre' where a further primary school is located.

Community uses also form an important part of the land use strategy. The provision of community uses such as doctors and dentists surgeries, nurseries and day-care facilities requires further engagement with potential operators and public service providers. These uses are essential to a new community to ensure local services are provided at resident's convenience and for this reason these uses should be focused in appropriate locations within the community core or Neighbourhood Centre.

The overriding aim for a place of the scale of Countesswells is to create a sustainable community in the widest sense, and the most appropriate way of achieving this is by creating areas of mixed land use, which would incorporate employment opportunities. Therefore on the plan opposite specific employment areas and areas of mixed use are identified measuring up to approximately 10ha, which will offer opportunities for employment in keeping with the ALDP aims and the scale and character of the place. Areas of mixed use will also include allowance for supporting infrastructure such as access, drainage, open space etc... These areas will necessitate a vertical mix of uses as well as opportunities for solely employment uses. Together with the other uses within the mixed use areas, this approach will create an identifiable multi-use destination for Countesswells.

The Development Framework aims to provide employment land as a component of mixed use development strategically located around the primary community core at the centre of the site and a secondary 'Neighbourhood Centre' lying in the northern half of the site and closely linked to the dedicated public transport only corridor which connects to A944, the park and ride, and Prime Four. Both mixed use areas are located at key nodal points within the plan, whereby the clustering of employment uses with other principal requirements such as residential and education, will give a more significant community core than purely isolating different land uses around the site. They are well connected to the open space network, strategic path links and potential bus routes aiming to promote sustainable modes of transport within the site and to connections outwith. Further description of the land uses anticipated within areas denoted as mixed use are provided in the following text.

### 5.5.1 Employment land

The plan opposite and tables 1 and 2 on page 70 sets out an indication of how, where and in what amount potential uses could be incorporated.

Within the blocks allocated as mixed use - civic, retail, leisure and office space should address primary streets or core spaces. A varied vertical mix is to be promoted with potential for upper floor residential development. Single storey/ single use shop or office units are generally not acceptable. Any supermarket proposed within a mixed use area should present an active frontage to streets and spaces in keeping with the required character. Consideration should be given to providing residential uses or office above any proposed supermarket.

In terms of the scale of retail development within Countesswells, a Supermarket is proposed within the settlement core to meet the needs of the new community and satisfy the requirements highlighted in the 2013 Retail Study and emerging Local Development Plan.

Any retail development over 2500sqm would require a Retail Impact Assessment to be submitted as part of the planning process. Any other retail development would require a retail statement.

Other uses which are less reliant upon a regular footfall, such as business starter units and workshops should be located off the main streets and spaces but typically located within the same block or facing block. The location and design of these should be considered in more detail within future masterplans to ensure they fit the character as set out in the Development Framework and do not detract from the amenity of adjacent residential properties.

### Employment land provision

To support the principle for providing up to 10ha of land with employment potential within the mixed use format, an Employment Land and Property Market Review Study has been completed by Ryden as part of the masterplanning process. This study has been provided to support this Development Framework and Masterplan and should be referred to in conjunction with this Development Framework and Masterplan document. However the key findings of the study are outlined in the following text.

Unlike other Local Development Plan allocations Countesswells is the only "stand alone" site identified within the City. As such, Countesswells presents a unique opportunity to deliver an exemplar development. Key to the successful delivery of this allocation is an adherence to the principles of sustainable development within commercial parameters.

One of the key aims of delivering a sustainable development at Countesswells is economic resilience, whereby the mix of land and property, are diverse, independent and adaptable, and as such they encourage the development of a lively local economy, with the potential to provide jobs for local residents.

It is therefore important to recognise that employment is derived from a broad range of sectors and, in the establishment of a new mixed use community, should not be solely dependent upon traditional business, general industrial and storage and distribution uses.

### Key points arising from the review identify the following:

- The location is strongly linked to the economic fortunes of the region's oil and gas industry.
- The City benefits from a healthy supply of employment land with a marketable supply of approximately 35 years.
- That the Strategic Development Plan requirement for a 60 ha supply of immediately available land is close to being met and will be augmented as constraints on the established supply are lifted.
- Countesswells is unlikely to attract major Class 5 and 6 uses nor large scale office uses due to provision elsewhere and in particular Prime Four Business park located within 1km of Countesswells to the north.
- Countesswells provides a high quality setting for residential led mixed use development and this is likely to be reflected in the employment uses attracted to the new community.
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) seeks to promote economic development by supporting development which will provide new employment opportunities through different sectors and the integration of employment generation opportunities with supporting infrastructure and housing development.
- Demand is likely to be for smaller business units up to 500 sq m and represents an opportunity for Countesswells.
- Retail, services and community facilities have the potential to contribute to attractive mixed use employment areas within the new Countesswells community.
- The mixed use areas have the potential to create higher employment densities than traditional business and industrial parks.

### Summary of Employment Land and Property Market Review

Countesswells provides a high amenity setting for residential led mixed use development and this is likely to be reflected in the employment uses attracted to the new community. The employment land requirement was not identified in the Local Development Plan as a 'stand alone' land use unlike other allocations. Rather, it was to form part of an integrated development in accordance with the principles of SPP. Policy seeks to promote economic development which will provide new employment opportunities through different sectors and the integration of employment generation opportunities with supporting infrastructure and housing development. A key component of this is town centres which provide employment and services for the local community.

The particular land uses considered likely to be attracted to Countesswells are set out in Table 2 and offer the potential for higher development densities and higher employment densities than traditional industrial estates and business parks. The land uses are also configured to support a sustainable community with a comparatively dense "central business district" and are therefore more appropriate for Countesswells in urban design terms than extensive low density employment uses.

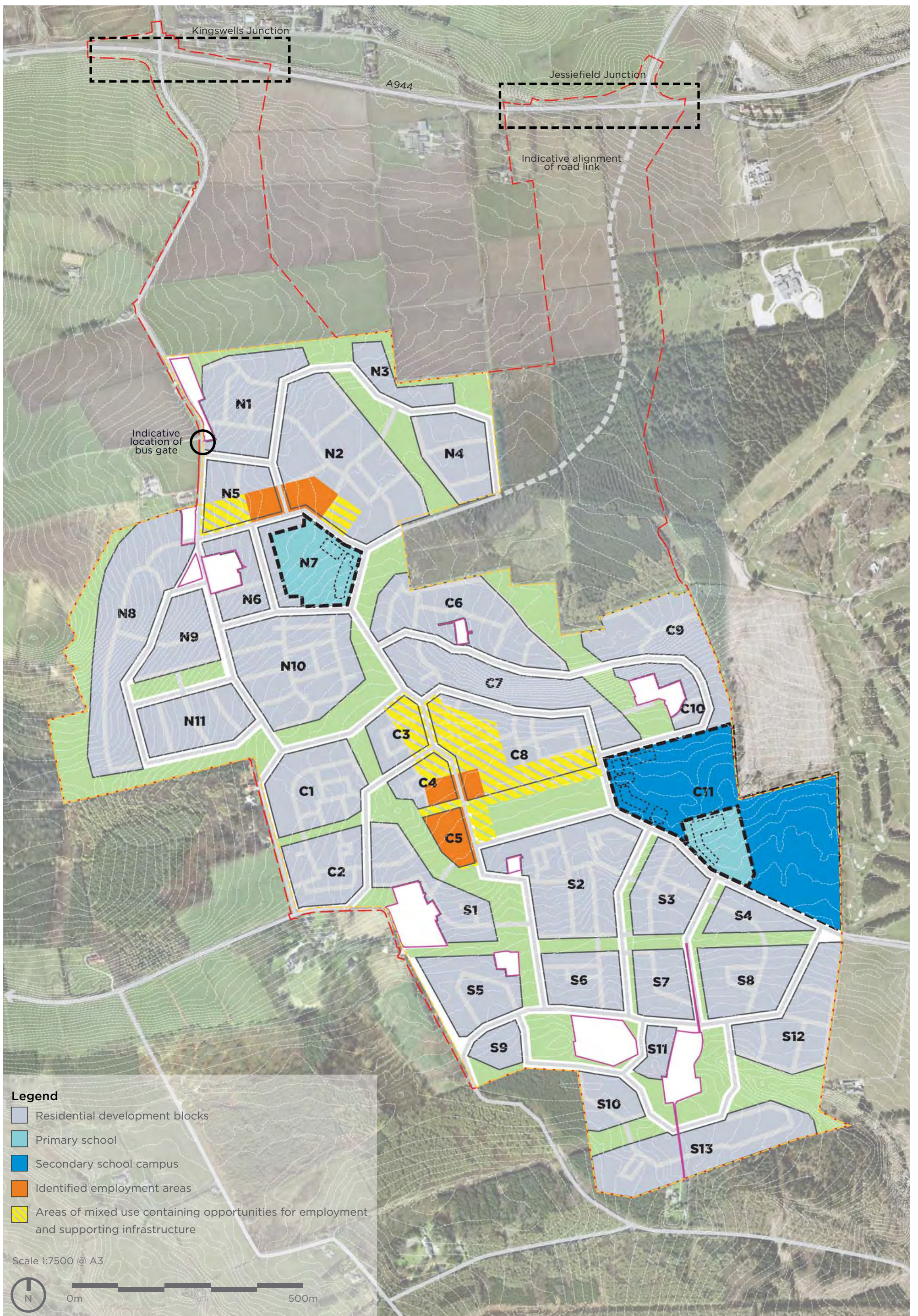


fig. 109: Proposed land use plan

**Table 1 - Schedule of indicative areas and land uses**

Development Block	Total Block Net Developable Area (Ha)	Residential Net Developable Area (Ha)	Areas of mixed use containing opportunities for employment including supporting infrastructure (Ha)	Education Areas (Ha)	Non Residential Uses	Proposed Residential Density Range (Units/Ha)	Approximate no of Units
N1	3.94	3.94				30-40	127
N2	7.87	7.12	1.18		Office, small business and retail.	30-40	244
N3	1.48	1.48				20-30	31
N4	2.73	2.73				20-30	86
N5	2.56	1.81	1.28		Office, small business and retail.	>50	99
N6	1.87	1.87				<20	36
N7	3.77	0.77		3.00	Primary School	30-40	24
N8	6.75	6.75				<20	112
N9	2.53	2.53				>50	131
N10	5.89	5.89				30-40	215
N11	3.28	3.28				20-30	89
C1	3.67	3.67				30-40	114
C2	2.77	2.77				20-30	74
C3	1.58	1.58	0.86		Office, small business and retail.	>50	87
C4	1.23	0.83	0.82		Office, small business and retail.	>50	52
C5	0.82		1.16		Hotel, office and small business.		
C6	4.76	4.76				20-30	110
C7	5.05	5.05				<20	99
C8	5.52	4.02	4.46		Retail, office and small business.	40-50	192
C9	3.84	3.84				<20	62
C10	1.35	1.35				20-30	30
C11	12.51			12.51	Community Campus, Academy, Primary School and playing fields		
S1	2.89	2.89				>50	183
S2	6.06	6.06				20-30	126
S3	2.73	2.73				20-30	63
S4	1.48	1.48				20-30	36
S5	2.75	2.75				30-40	106
S6	2.27	2.27				20-30	49
S7	1.99	1.99				20-30	39
S8	3.13	3.13				20-30	64
S9	0.92	0.92				>50	51
S10	1.50	1.50				20-30	37
S11	0.84	0.84				20-30	18
S12	3.68	3.68				<20	70
S13	4.78	4.78				20-30	144
Total	120.78	101.06	9.76	15.51			3000

**Table 2 - Summary of non residential uses within mixed use areas**

Mixed use components	Comments
<b>Office</b>	Sustained lack of quality office space in the city centre has pushed much of the area's supply out to peripheral locations and established business clusters where most recent take-up has happened. High demand for office space at the smaller end of the scale from companies operating further down the supply chain could be satisfied at Countesswells, if solutions over funding difficulties are found.
<b>Small Business Space</b>	Analysis of take-up and supply for commercial property demonstrates a shortage of small business space of under 200 sq.m. Economic development policy generally encourages a variety of sizes of business space with the flexibility and affordability needed to foster new businesses and entrepreneurs. Aberdeen's lack of small business space could be an inhibitor to growth, especially within the creative industries, enabling technologies and companies working further down the energy and business services supply chain. Aberdeen's economy has been very resilient during the economic downturn with the only positive business churn rate in the UK in 2010. These new businesses need a variety of accommodation to meet their ever-changing needs.
<b>Retail - Convenience</b>	The analysis of retail expenditure demonstrates expenditure generated in a fully-developed Countesswells can support a supermarket to meet the needs of the new community and in line with the aims of the Council (2013 Retail Study). This local provision would be essential for a new residential-led development to ensure unnecessary car journeys are kept to minimum and residents are able to purchase every day items locally and also be able to access a small range of non-food items. Similarly a local retail centre with variety of small shops, café's and fast food outlets would be viable within the new community.
<b>Hotel Use</b>	Aberdeen's hotels have recently outperformed much of Europe in terms of occupancy and revenue per room indicators. The analysis above has shown that many reasons for staying in a hotel in Aberdeen are for business which gives hotels in the city consistently high year-round occupancy rates where the effects of seasonality are limited. A wide variety of operators working in different markets could be attracted to Countesswells. However, our analysis would suggest that a mid-high quality operator would be most attracted to the rural setting of Countesswells, as the demand for budget rooms is met elsewhere.

## 5.5.2 Residential development

Table 1 on the previous page sets out an indicative density range for all residential areas, these densities have been set to respond to design aims and existing constraints however allow appropriate flexibility for future masterplans and detail design.

Within the areas identified as mixed use on the land use plan, it is anticipated that these areas will include residential development in a form appropriate to the location and in accordance with the proposed density range.

### Residential Mix

The development will consist of a full range of building typologies and tenures creating a diverse and inclusive community structure. This will offer housing choice and opportunities for all sectors of the community and at all stages of the housing lifecycle from first time buyers, to housing to meet the needs of older generations with an emphasis on family housing. The provision of housing appropriate for the elderly and disabled people (not necessarily single storey houses) should be considered in future masterplans and applications. As a result the development will cover all market sectors, the anticipated mix will include:

- Flats/Apartments
- Terrace
- Semi detached
- Detached

The final mix will be developed as an appropriate response to the place making aims of the Development Framework, market demand and future masterplans and detailed design aiming to create a strong sense of place following the design guidance within this document.

### Residential Density

Table 1 on the previous page illustrates the indicative residential density and illustrative housing numbers across the site. While the proposed average density is approximately 30 dwellings per hectare, densities will vary across the settlement to provide variety in the built form and create a range of distinctive areas.

### Affordable Housing

The development will provide 25% affordable housing in line with the Local Development Plan policy. Affordable housing will be integrated within the phasing of the development and designed as part of each relevant development parcel. Affordable housing will be predominantly located in areas which are:

- Well connected in terms of footpath and cycle networks.
- Well connected to the proposed public transport network.
- Accessible to the proposed mixed use centres.

The exact details of the affordable housing design will be determined via the planning application process.

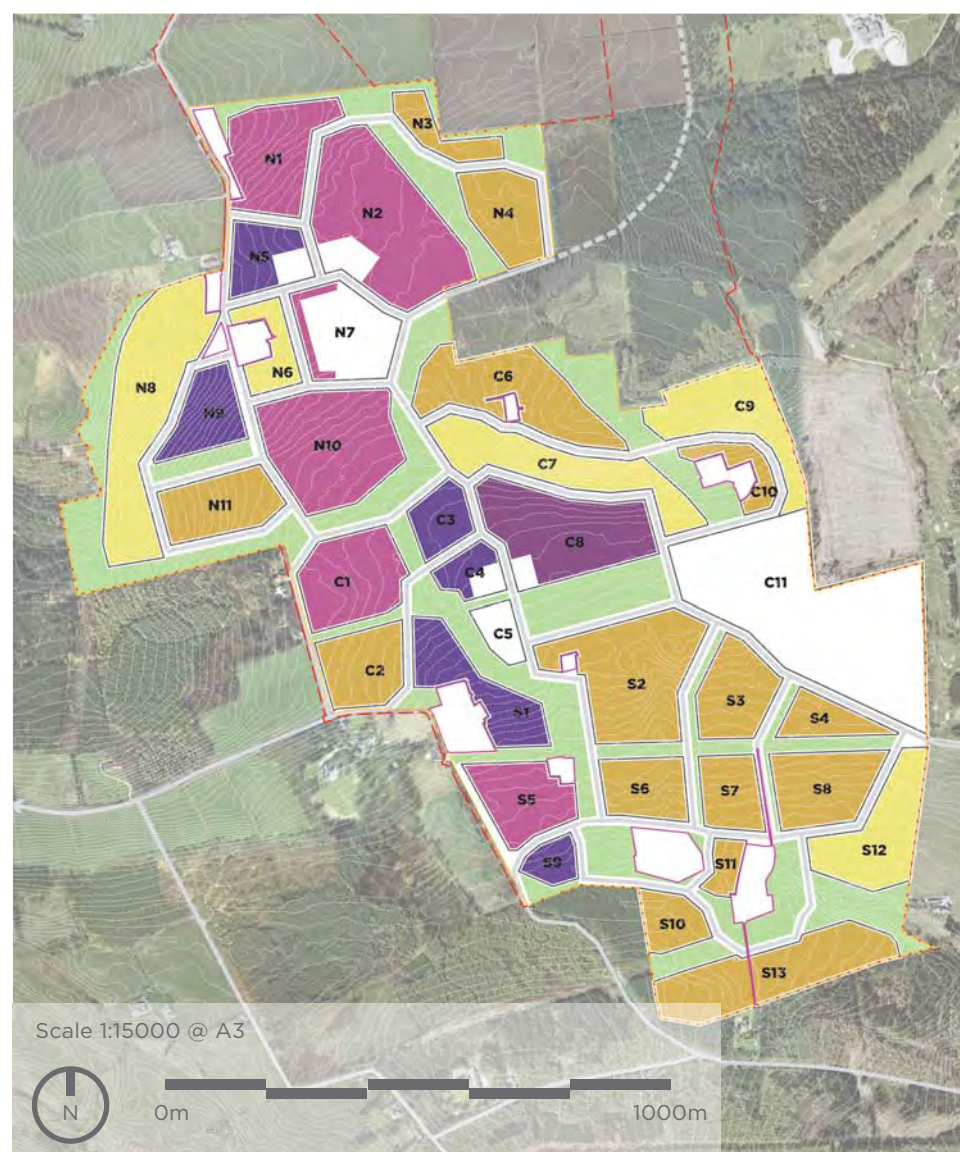


fig. 110: Proposed block densities

### < Legend

#### Indicative density range

- < 20 units per hectare
- 20 - 30 units per hectare
- 30 - 40 units per hectare
- 40 - 50 units per hectare
- > 50 units per hectare

### 5.5.3 Education strategy

**The creation of a new community at Countesswells within the Aberdeen City boundary presents an exciting opportunity to design education provision into the fabric of the place, recognising the central role which schools and learning play in the life of a community.**

#### Education strategy

The approach to place-making at Countesswells, with the education estate placed at its heart will provide the basis for the sustainable development, where the relationship between people and place starts strong and then continues to develop as the community itself grows.

A cornerstone of our approach is to ensure, through multi- functionality, that all of the community's educational assets are available for all of the community. These expensive community assets will be designed in such a way to ensure they are available for community use. The Countesswells schools will strive to play a central role in the life of the community, enabling a range of non-school activities to take place.

The Countesswells Academy located within the community campus will be fully integrated into the core area, affording the opportunity for shared functionality of its facilities, with complementary public uses, at agreed times. The hall, library/learning resource centre, gymnasium, and pitches (both all weather and grass) will be designed for dual school/community management and use.

#### Delivery of education requirements

The Aberdeen City Council school role forecast show that many schools in the area have some surplus capacity. It is our intention to meet with the Council to agree the best way of utilising this spare accommodation in the short term to the mutual benefit of existing and projected school pupils.

Through discussion with ACC and the local communities, we aim to achieve schools in Countesswells which are truly places to be proud of.

In the initial phases, provision will be made for the establishment, construction and operation of a new primary school (PS01).

Discussions are underway with the Education Authority to agree a phasing strategy to ensure that school places are available for incoming catchment secondary pupils. These discussions are working towards the determination of the level of critical mass required, in terms of pupil numbers being generated from the housing development, to sustainably open a new primary school and ensure that its character and ethos can be shaped from day one. These discussions also involve the more difficult logistical challenge of ascertaining the most appropriate pattern of school provision to deal with the transition period, before the new school opens.

A number of options for temporarily accommodating the initial pupils arising from the Countesswells site are being discussed with the Council, including the possible use of existing available accommodation in the surrounding local schools.

Sportscotland good practice guidance regarding the appropriate level of sports provision for primary and secondary schools should be used when design principles and proposals are being developed.

#### Location of schools

The Development Framework proposes locations for two primary school sites and a site for the proposed Countesswells Academy to serve the new community at Countesswells. It is proposed that the Academy and one of the primary schools are located in a community campus within the community core incorporating other sports and community facilities.

The primary schools are located to be easily accessible to all residents with all properties located within 800m (approx 10mins walk) one of the school sites.

Both the area in the community campus allocated to primary provision (PS02) and the site allocated for the first primary school (PS01) are big enough to support either a triple stream primary school or two double stream primary schools. We do not envisage the primary schools having community wings, libraries or police offices, as these are more sensibly housed on the community campus. They will, however, have nursery wings. This flexibility will allow anything between four and eight primary streams to be taught between the two primary school sites. The actual arrangement will be subject to negotiation with the Education authority.

The provision for and layout of any drop off provision associated with each of the new schools will be addressed within the Transport Assessment.

#### Primary School 01 (PS01)

The first Primary School (PS01) will be located as part of the neighbourhood centre to the north of Countesswells overlooking the Cults Burn network park. Serving the northern part of the community it will be provided in the first phase of development. In this location the school has a prominent and accessible location within the community.

#### Countesswells Community Campus

The Countesswells community campus (Block C11) should provide a location for both the Academy and a primary school site as well as sports and other community facilities. The campus is located within the mixed use core, with a prominent location at the eastern end of the Central Park. In this location the community campus can best fulfil its role as a fully integrated resource for the wider community.

Any necessary community facilities such as a library that is likely to be required should be provided within the Community Campus subject to detail design and access arrangements.

#### Countesswells Academy (CA)

Countesswells Academy will be located within the community campus. The school buildings should be located to overlook the Central Park. The central location provides good access to the core road network and strategic path network to ensure it can be safely and easily accessed by pedestrians, buses and other vehicles.

The existing Hazlehead golf course is adjacent to the proposed school sports pitches, this will have to be taken in to consideration at the detail design stage and the relevant mitigation provided on the boundary of the school to ensure no conflict between land uses. However, given the location of the holes and tees this is unlikely to be significant.

Within the proposed Campus site where any activity is proposed under the overhead power lines a health and safety assessment would be required and this will involve the transmission company requirements. A health and safety assessment will be required as part of the Planning Application process.

#### Primary School 02 (PS02)

The second primary school (PS02) will also be located within the community campus area. This central location is accessible to residents living in the centre and to the south of Countesswells. Located adjacent to the secondary school the primary school will have its own grounds and facilities but will benefit from sharing the facilities available within the campus.

#### Safe Routes to School

A significant proportion of movements within any new community will be trips to and from schools. The proposed new community at Countesswells proposes high quality education facilities for residents as well as children from the surrounding areas.

'Safe Routes to Schools' is a strategy that promotes safety and aims to encourage children's trips to school by 'sustainable' forms of transport, such as walking & cycling or by Public Transport. These trips should be undertaken in a planned way to promote child safety and with the ultimate aims of reducing the amount of vehicular traffic to schools and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

The developers are committed to promoting Safe Routes to Schools which will be provided within the development and will implement a number of initiatives to ensure this is successful. Safe Routes to Schools has already been promoted initially through considered design of the development layout and provisions provided for pedestrians and cycles.

Within the design of the development layout the developers have taken specific cognisance of requirements to accommodate child access to the schools, ensuring, where practical, specified routes are overlooked and well lit, there are appropriate and safe crossings across roads and routes are well signed in a uniformly recognisable form for children to follow. Schools will be integrated with main residential areas to avoid the need for children to travel long distances to school.

Schools will prioritise access to children who are walking and cycling by methods such as ensuring pedestrian / cycle accesses are located at the easiest points of access to the school ground and a short distance from school buildings. Secure cycle parking will be provided near the main entrances and away from car parking areas to avoid potential conflicts.

Through ongoing liaison, working with ACC's School Travel Coordinator, each school will create a School Travel Plan specific to that school. In addition to the Council's School Travel planning team there will be a number of other interested parties consulted including local police, local health authorities, parents & children and the local community. The schools will then work with the parents and children to implement relevant measures to encourage safe and sustainable travel to school.

The School Travel Plans will not only include information on the benefits of children travelling to school sustainably, be it on foot, bicycle or bus, but also highlight the provisions incorporated within the new development overall to accommodate these trips and highlight the most direct and safest routes.

Interim transport for school access will be provided prior to the opening of the first primary school.





fig. 111: Proposed location of schools

## 5.7 Development Character

There are seven main character areas within Countesswells. The plan opposite identifies the location of the character areas at a Development Framework level. These character areas have been informed by the existing landscape, the topography and the location within the development and should inform and influence the ongoing design of any subsequent masterplans, detail layouts, parks and open space design and architecture.

### 5.6.7 Creating Character

Site analysis and design development has led to the identification of the character areas. A description of the desired character and key character forming aspects for each area is provided on the following pages. The purpose of this is to inform the development and future design of buildings, streets and spaces within each character area, to create distinctiveness across the site and avoid a homogenous built environment.

#### Landscape Character

The distinctive woodland setting, existing topography and landscape structure of open spaces established at Countesswells provides the key character forming elements that tie the whole development structure together, offering a consistent and coherent identity across the site.

As has been set out elsewhere in the document, the existing landscape setting of Countesswells, in particular the surrounding woodland areas of Countesswells, Hazlehead and Foggieton present significant factors in defining the character at Countesswells. The ecological, hydrological and recreational systems associated with these woodland areas and the farmland between have had a tremendous impact on the evolution of the Framework and have also influenced the identification of various character areas illustrated opposite. The sensitive treatment and successful integration of the existing features that define the Countesswells landscape is critical to the success of development and the proposed landscape structure has been defined to ensure they are respected in the layout. The landscape strategy has sought to provide a structure of public park and spaces that incorporates and connects these features within the proposed development structure. Through incorporating these features in the core spaces the users can appreciate the existing landscape character and understand the landscape as part of Countesswells.

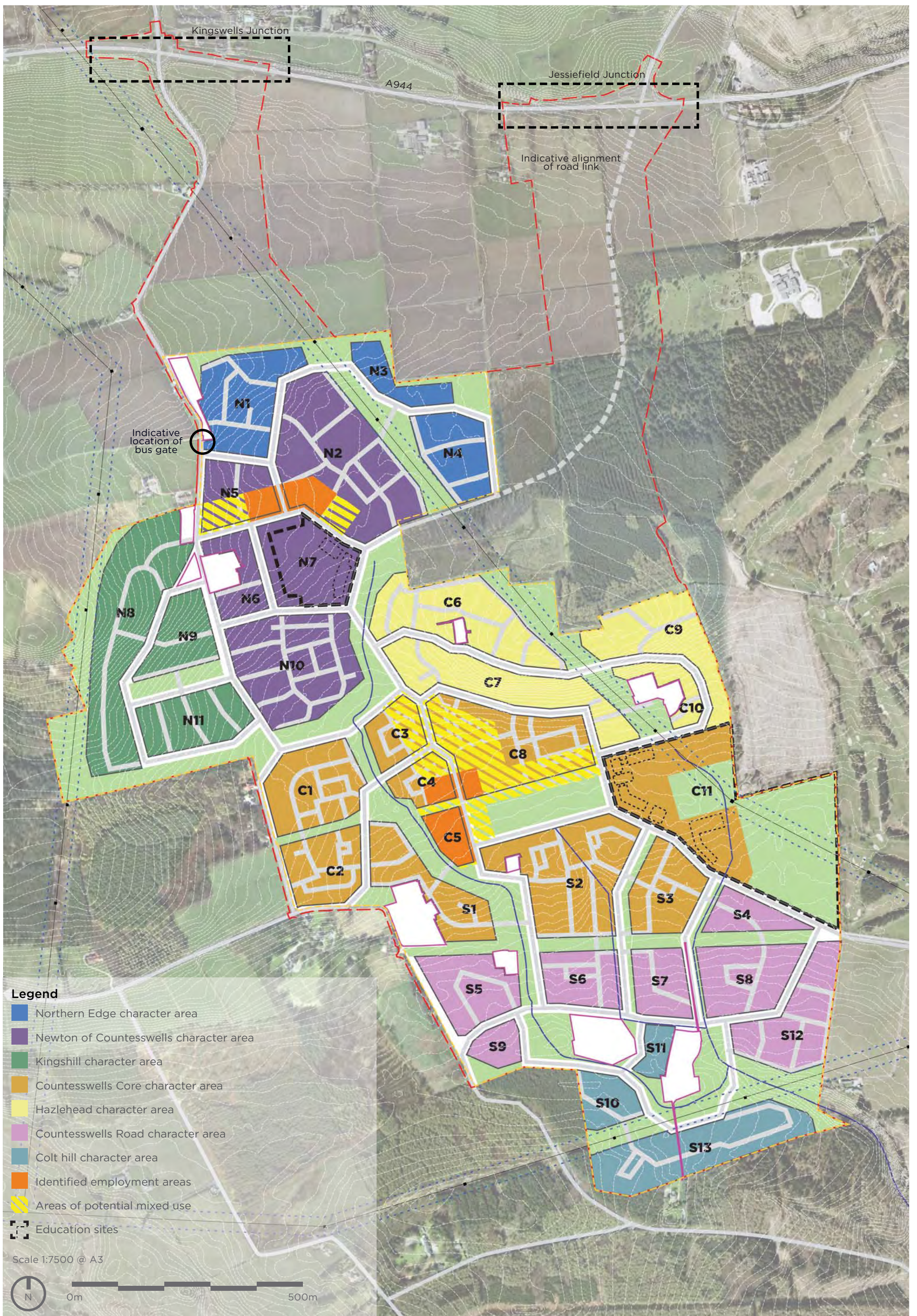
These core spaces are valuable environments not only for ecological and hydrological improvement, but for recreation and as a setting to the new urban area. Framework blocks have been defined by the desire to respect the existing landscape structure and the character descriptions on the following pages will describe how this could be achieved.

#### Built Form

As a new community set on its own, architecture and urban form will have a crucial role in defining a specific character for Countesswells. The character areas set out in this section should not only influence the character of the respective public realm and urban form, but also drive the architectural identity through material selection, form and detailing to provide variety. These styles should strive to provide an identity that is particular to the character areas identified whilst also demonstrating a forward-looking cohesive vision for Countesswells.



fig. 115: Aerial view of Countesswells site area from south east



### 5.7.1 Northern Edge character area

The character of this area is made up of the development blocks at the north of the site. A key character defining element of this area is the existing and proposed areas of structural woodland that should enclose and wrap around development in this location. These new areas of mixed woodland should connect with the existing Hazlehead woodland. The woodland should provide a setting for development in this area, restricting views to Countesswells from the north and providing shelter to development.

#### Key character aspects:

- Hazlehead woodland provides a soft edge to development;
- The eastern edge of this area where it addresses the existing woodland should be designed accordingly taking account of the sensitive nature of this location;
- Structural woodland planting along the ridge provides an attractive edge to the north;
- This structural planting proposed along the Northern Edge should have soft and varied edges so that it appears naturalistic from all directions and adds aesthetic value;
- The western edge of this area should be designed accordingly to the location adjacent to the existing road and in keeping with the existing properties that surround these areas;
- The woodland areas should be accessible to the public and include path connections to Hazlehead;
- Predominantly detached and semi-detached properties;
- Tree lined streets;
- Large front gardens well defined by hedges or walls to street frontages; and
- The woodland character should be carried through the streets and spaces within the block to create a rural edge feel that is appropriate to the location on the edge of the development.



### 5.7.2 Newton of Countesswells character area

The character of the Newton of Countesswells area should reflect the more central location within the development, providing some more higher density development in a more formal arrangement. The area located between Kirk Brae (C189) and the primary north - south street link including the Cults Burn corridor should be permeable with clear links between adjacent areas. The character of the area will be defined by the streets and spaces that form its edges.

This area should have a more urban character focused around the area identified for mixed uses and employment land to the north of the primary school and extending to meet the primary street which runs alongside the open space of the Cults Burn Corridor.

#### Key character aspects:

- The area should contain a variety of buildings types increasing in density towards the mixed use centre;
- The primary school building should provide a landmark within this area, overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor;
- South of the primary school the edge to the Cults Burn Corridor should be defined by a formal built edge, with buildings overlooking the space;
- The western edge of the area should reflect the existing character of Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells with larger detached properties fronting the street;
- The development form should be permeable providing a number of street and pedestrian connections from Kirk Brae (C189) to the Cults Burn Corridor;
- Buildings distinctive through height or form should provide landmarks on the corners of the block addressing areas of open space;
- Cults Burn Corridor should provide an area of public open space incorporating the watercourse in a linear park and a setting for the primary school;
- The Cults Burn Corridor should provide a core area of open space connecting Countesswells and Hazlehead woodland and should have the feel of a more 'upland' park reflected in the soft landscape species palette and future management regime;
- The primary street approaching the site from the A944 to the east should be designed appropriately as an approach to Countesswells with buildings addressing the street; and
- Hazledean Park. A public space defined by adjacent buildings and streets should follow the alignment of the pylons and include allotments and play areas where feasible.



### 5.7.3 Kingshill character area

The surrounding woodland and topography of this area will be the biggest factor in defining the character of the area. To the north, the slopes are steeper with an open aspect allowing good views east and south. The character should be less formal with large residential plots and streets aligned to respond to the topography. The layout should be more varied and flexible to allow larger detached properties to benefit from the aspect and elevated views east over Countesswells to the City and in some areas to the North Sea.

To the south of the existing woodland belt the surrounding woodland is the key character defining feature, enclosing the development area.

#### Key character aspects:

- The street pattern should work with the topography where possible - running along the contours;
- On the steeper slopes low density development should be set within the slopes appropriate for split level buildings and large gardens to minimise the impact;
- On the higher areas streets and buildings should be orientated to benefit from the southerly aspect and views;
- Development should predominantly be made up of detached and semi-detached properties with some terraced properties adjacent to Kirk Brae (C189);
- Kirk Brae (C189) should be integrated as a street with buildings addressing it and gaining direct access from it;
- Existing properties and the accesses to existing properties to the west should be integrated within the layout;
- The existing belt of woodland should be retained to form distinct development areas, provide shelter and adding character;
- Countesswells woodland should be respected and protected through the provision of an area of public open space along the edge; and
- The spaces next to the woodland must be overlooked by adjacent housing and should contain footpath links to the existing path network within the woodland.



### 5.7.4 Hazlehead

This area should be characterised by the lower density residential development set on the south facing slopes with the backdrop of the adjacent Hazlehead woodland. With views over Countesswells centre to the Dee valley this area should be predominantly detached family homes that will allow for development on the steeper slopes.

#### Key character aspects:

- Buildings and streets should be aligned to benefit from the south facing slope with views over Countesswells to the River Dee valley;
- The backdrop to Hazlehead woodland should be protected and enhanced as part of the open space structure with some buildings overlooking the space;
- The eastern edge adjacent to Hazlehead woodland should be designed accordingly taking account of the sensitive nature of this edge;
- The streets should follow the contours to minimise cut and fill;
- The topography offers the opportunity to promote split level buildings within this zone;
- Areas of higher density development should be located on areas of flatter ground, adjacent to the community core, primary streets and overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor;
- The layout should incorporate direct footpath connections to the community core; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties at Bogskethy and Wardhead should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.



## 5.7.5 Countesswells Core character area

A distinctively urban area, the town centre will be clearly recognisable within Countesswells. The density, mix, variety and height of the built form will combine to create a legible centre to the development. As well as higher density residential development the area will include a variety of non-residential uses including the Academy, sports facilities, shops, office space and community buildings.

### Key character aspects:

- The area will be defined by higher density residential development set around the Central Park and primary streets;
- Where non-residential uses are included they should generally be on the ground floor with offices or residential uses above;
- Development in this area should generally take the form of perimeter blocks with courtyard parking;
- Appropriate retail to meet the local need could be integrated into the block structure with its car parking wrapped by residential properties. In terms of the scale of retail development within Countesswells, a Supermarket is proposed within the settlement core to meet the needs of the new community and satisfy the requirements highlighted in the 2013 Retail Study.
- The Central Park should be the most distinctive and well used space within Countesswells incorporating formal play, sports, civic spaces, open parkland, opportunities for pavilions and SUDs in a formal arrangement;
- The building frontage to the north overlooking the park should be composed of three and four storey buildings creating a strong urban facade characterised by its south facing aspect;
- A high quality civic space should be included at the western end of the park. The buildings surrounding the space should provide opportunities for shops and other non-residential uses with no set back to activate and bring vibrancy to the space;
- The community campus should be located to the eastern end of the park with the Academy building forming a landmark;
- To the south of the park the character should be more residential with buildings set behind the street overlooking the park;
- The primary north - south street should have an distinctly urban character through this area. Buildings should front directly on to the street with opportunities for non-residential uses on the ground floor;
- The Cults Burn Corridor should form a distinct area of informal open space through this area, incorporating the re-aligned watercourse and SUDs within a naturalistic public space;
- To the west, Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells should be realigned in line with the Development Framework to form a street within Countesswells with detached properties gaining direct access from the street;
- Development to the west of the Cults Burn Corridor should generally be of a lower density than that to the east surrounding the Central Park;
- The provision of an open space corridor for Core Path 57 should form a key aspect of this character area with clear and direct pedestrian links to Countesswells Woodland identified; and
- The design of Blacktop Road as it enters Countesswells should provide a direct route to the centre of Countesswells and reflect the rural to urban transition through the built form.



### 5.7.6 Countesswells Road character area

The Countesswells Road character area relates to the development areas that address Countesswells Road and to the south of this key route through the site. This area will be characterised by the Countesswells Road and the existing field boundaries walls that provide distinctive features in the area and will be retained as part of core spaces within the development.

#### Key character aspects:

- Countesswells Road should be closed as a road when alternative streets within the development are completed. The existing roads surface will be redesigned appropriately as an area open space incorporating a pedestrian path.
- Countesswells Road and associated walls and tree planting will be retained as a strategic path link;
- A new road link must be provided connecting Countesswells Road to the Central Park;
- A variety of access lanes, areas of open space and large gardens should be used along the length of the Countesswells Road to allow adjacent buildings to address the space to ensure it feels safe and attractive to users;
- Where streets cross Countesswells Road the built form and space should define the intersection;
- Existing field boundaries, woodland strips and watercourses should be retained and integrated into the block structure north and south of Countesswells Road;
- SUDs and watercourses should be incorporated into the structure of existing field boundaries;
- Where the eastern edge is open to views from the east it should not be designed as a 'screened edge' but should provide a positive outward looking built edge to the development on approach from Countesswells Road.
- Cults Burn Corridor should provide a feature as it passes through this area; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties accessed from and adjacent to Countesswells Road should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.



### 5.7.7 Colthill character area

A lower density residential areas on the southern edge of Countesswells. This area should be characterised by the rural edge location, the plantation woodland to the south, existing field boundaries and the Cults Burn Corridor.

#### Key character aspects:

- Existing wetland areas and watercourses retained within strategic open space structure;
- The relationship of the built areas with the woodland to the south;
- To the eastern end of the Cults Burn park area the adjacent properties should be located at the top of the slope overlooking the park area;
- The Cults Burn park should incorporate SUDs and have a semi natural wetland character in this area with limited public access restricted to paths and walkways;
- Meadowbank Park should provide a more formal park area incorporating an equipped play area and allotments;
- Properties north and south of the park should overlook the areas of open space;
- An access track to Meadowbank from Kirk Brae (C189) through to Countesswells Road must be maintained through the development and areas of open space; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties at Meadowbank should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.



# 6. Phase 1 Masterplan





## 6.1 Phase 1 Masterplan

### 6.1.1 Introduction and Purpose

The following section provides specific design guidance for the Phase 1 Masterplan Area, which expands upon the general principles set out for the Development Framework. Masterplan guidance for the remainder of the Development Framework area will be produced at the appropriate time.

The Phase 1 Masterplan area identified on Figure 116 opposite is approximately 48ha. The area represents the first phase of development, around 1,000 homes, mixed use and employment areas as identified in the Development Framework.

### 6.1.2 The Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan

The Development Framework for Countesswells has been designed to offer a strong, flexible and comprehensive layout, to guide the type and location of development, while providing key development principles.

Design Guidance for the phase 1 Masterplan is provided in the following sections and has been prepared, working within the parameters set out in the Development Framework. This guidance will therefore assist developers and their designers, in preparing future detailed applications at later stages in the development process.

The guidance is written to focus on the key generators of character, which include key routes, corners, buildings, edges, spaces, uses, and articulate the main design intent.

### 6.1.3 Masterplan Guidance

The following sections provide specific design guidance for the Masterplan area, which expands upon the general principles set out for the Development Framework.

#### 01 Layers of the Masterplan

This section describes the aims and parameters of the Masterplan. These layers illustrate key concepts and how they respond to and integrate with the existing site context, the Development Framework and future phases.

#### 02 The Illustrative Masterplan

This is not a definitive plan, however it illustrates one possible interpretation of the Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan principles and acts as a guide to how the spirit of the guidance could be interpreted.

#### 03 Design Principles

In order to ensure that Phase 1 is made up of a variety of areas of distinct character the design principles of the development blocks and core areas of open space are described in more detail. This is done through plans, sketches, diagrams and sections, identifying the scale of space and design treatments that will differentiate the areas and create areas of distinct character.



fig. 116: Phase 1 Masterplan area - Illustrative Masterplan.

## 6.2 Phase 1 - Layers of the Masterplan

This section describes the aims and parameters of the Masterplan by breaking it down into a number of layers, these include:

- The street network
- Pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian connections
- Public transport
- Car parking
- Built form and landuse
- Building heights
- Key frontages
- Key buildings
- Open space

### 6.2.1 The Masterplan area

The location and block structure of the Phase 1 Masterplan is illustrated in Figures 117 and 118 opposite and below. The location and form of the development blocks, main streets and areas of core open space follow the layout and principles set in the Development Framework.

The Masterplan area includes the following Development Blocks:

Development Block	Approximate number of units	Notes
N6	36	
N7	24	Includes Primary School. Timing and exact requirements of delivery to be agreed with ACC.
N10	215	
C1	114	
C2	74	
C3	87	Timing of mixed use development opportunities provided within the blocks will be dependent on market demand.
C4	52	
C5		
C6	110	
C7	99	
C8	192	Timing of mixed use development opportunities provided within the blocks will be dependent on market demand.

Total	1003
Overall	1003

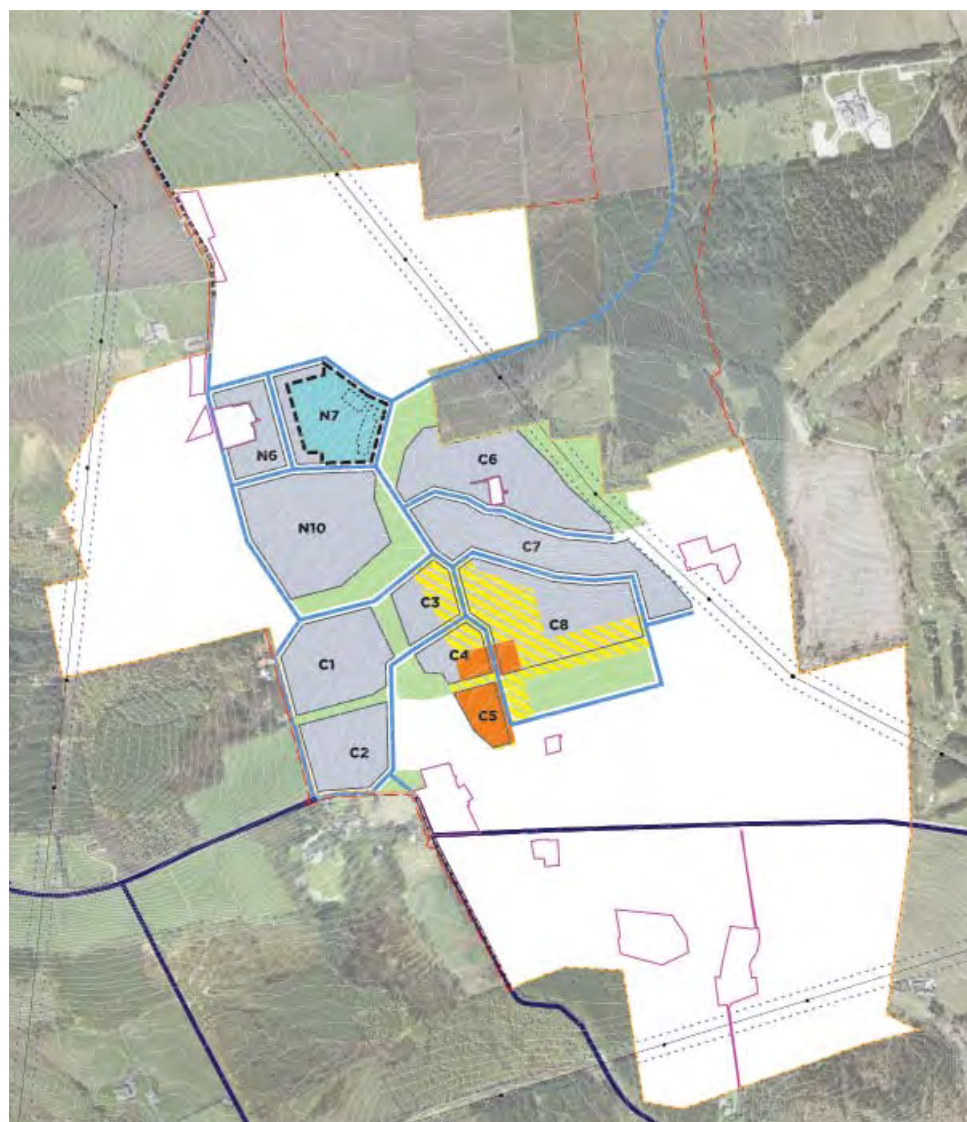


fig. 117: Phase 1



fig. 118: Phase 1 Masterplan area in context










## 6.2.2 The Street Network

The street block structure within Phase 1 creates a permeable structure maintaining access between the A93 and the A944. A preference for east-west orientated streets allows good linkages between Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells and the principal north-south primary street. The east-west structure also supports good pedestrian access to existing woodland at Countesswells and Hazlehead and supports the benefits of good orientation for solar gain.

The hierarchy of streets and routes indicated will help create character and a legible structure to the development, assisting way finding and orientation for pedestrians and vehicles.

The street pattern around the mixed use centre has been designed to allow larger perimeter blocks helping accommodate parking within inner courtyards or car parks where appropriate.

### Legend

-  Development Framework - Proposed primary streets
-  Development Framework - Proposed secondary streets
-  Development Framework - Proposed tertiary streets
-  Masterplan - Proposed tertiary streets
-  Masterplan - Indicative lane
-  Masterplan - Indicative homezone
-  Masterplan - Indicative courtyard
-  Masterplan - Indicative carpark
-  Masterplan - Existing roads

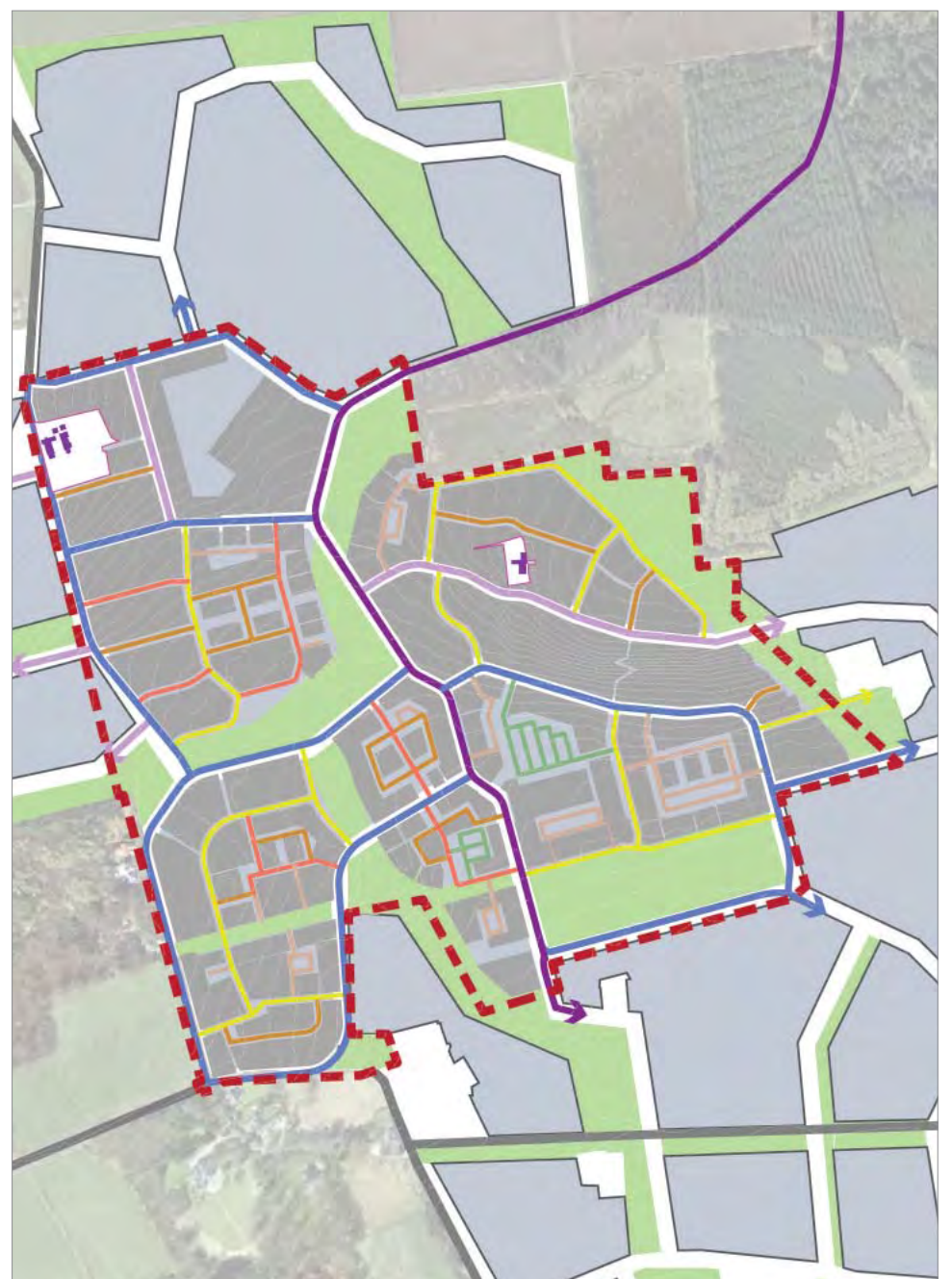













fig. 119: Phase 1 Masterplan - Street network

## 6.2.3 Pedestrian/cycle and equestrian connections

Pedestrian and cycle links identified in the Masterplan layout will be critical to the success of the new development, ensuring there are a number of choices in how people can move around, creating routes that are safe and clear. The new development will be clearly linked to existing and proposed future routes, including Core Path 57 and new pedestrian and cycle links to Kingswells and the Cycle Route 91 to the north of the A944.

Safe routes to school must be provided within the Masterplan area. See Development Framework, 5.5.3.

### Legend

-  Development Framework - Core Paths
-  Development Framework - Strategic walking/cycling routes (dual use pavements)
-  Paths designed to accommodate equestrian use
-  Development Framework - Paths off set from street suitable for walking, cycling and equestrian use
-  Masterplan - General street network
-  Masterplan - Required pedestrian link
-  Masterplan - Suggested pedestrian links to residential areas
-  Masterplan - Suggested access points to primary school
-  Pedestrian crossing points (type to be confirmed with ACC)
-  Existing paths
-  Existing roads

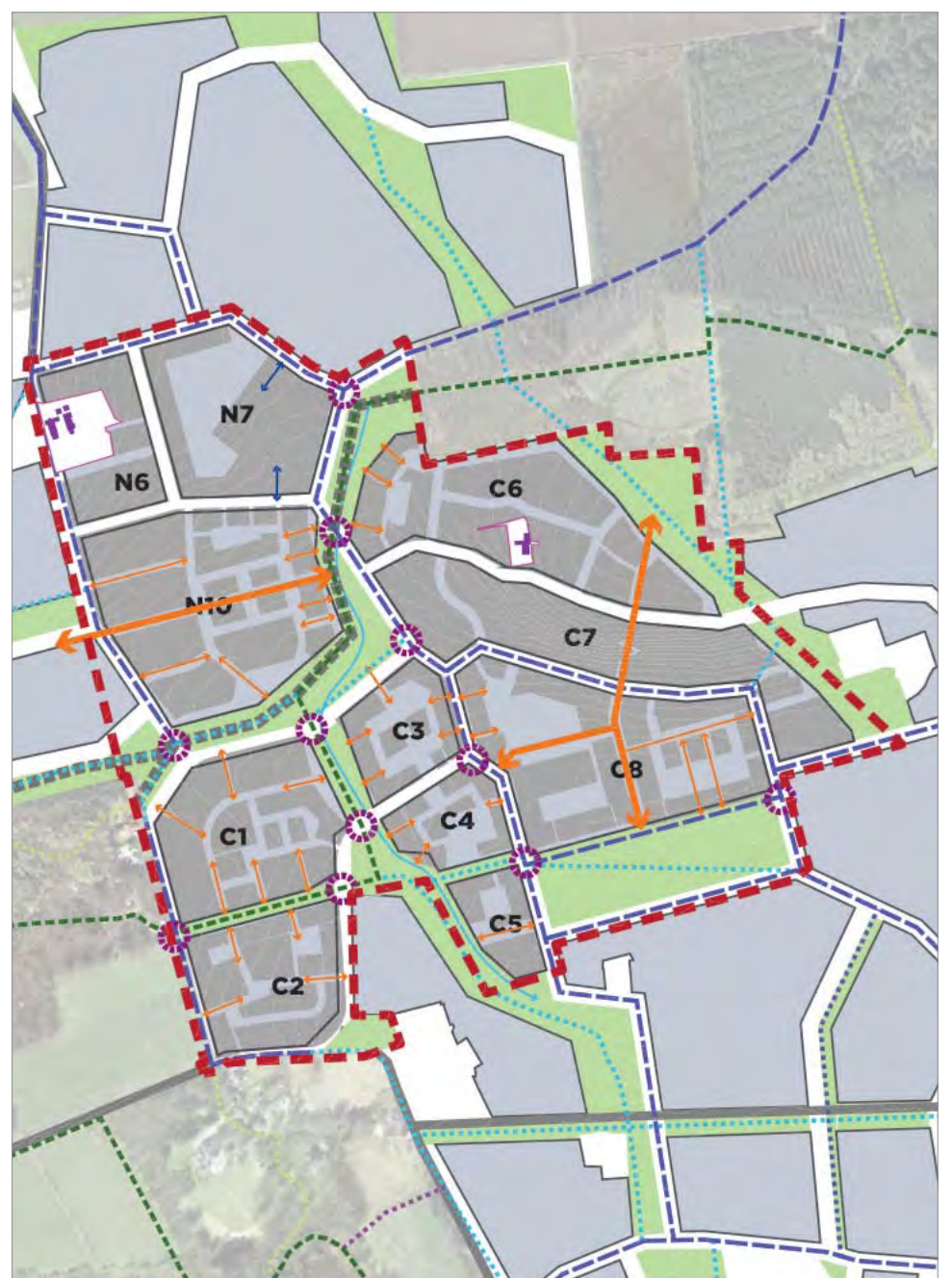





fig. 120: Phase 1 Masterplan - Path network

## 6.2.4 Public transport

The potential public transport routes illustrated must be designed to facilitate bus movements. Bus stops should be located at desirable destinations which are well connected by paths and streets to the wider site and to ensure all residents are within a 400m walk of a bus stop. Indicative locations are identified on the plan opposite. The exact location of bus stops will be determined at the detail design stage.

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells will remain open to all vehicles until the new road link to the east is completed at which point the bus gate will be implemented and the route will be restricted to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists only.

### Legend

-  Phase 1 potential bus route
-  Future phases potential bus route
-  Indicative bus stop location with 400m walk distances illustrated

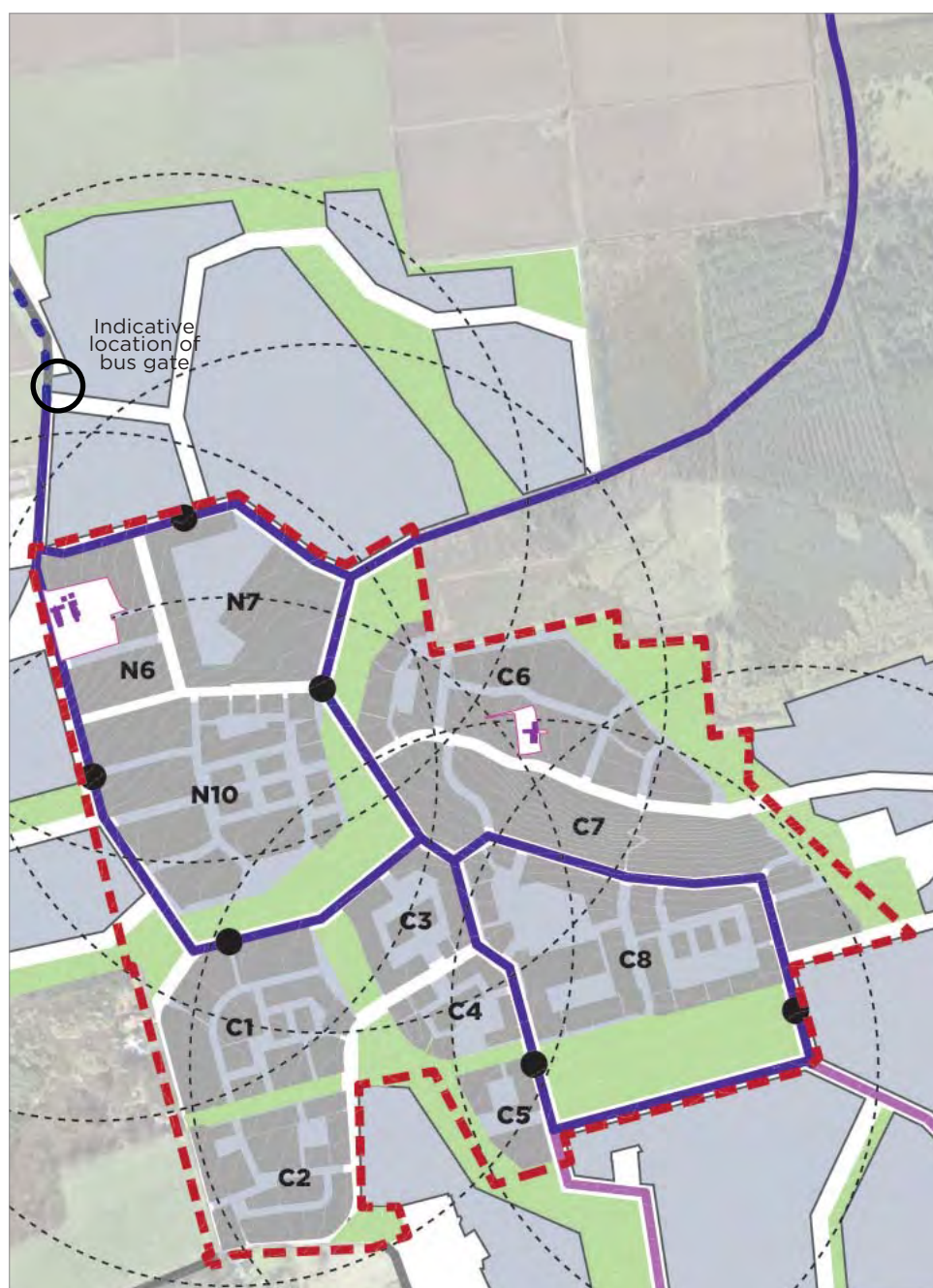


fig. 121: Phase 1 Masterplan - Public transport

## 6.2.5 Car parking

The design of all the residential streets and courtyards should be planned as places and not roads, this will create a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around. Within these opportunities for parking may be provided.

### Design Principles - Car parking

- Car parking provision will be provided in accordance with Aberdeen City Council policy and Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility.
- The Primary streets will facilitate the principal connections through Countesswells and to the existing road network. These provide the core route through the site on which there should be no residential frontage access and no on street parking. The primary street must be designed to accommodate public transport. A 3m combined foot and cycleway will be required to one side of the street and a 2m wide footway to the other.
- Secondary streets will connect the primary streets whilst providing strategic access to all residential areas. These streets will be designed to accommodate public transport on the routes identified for buses. Frontage access and street parking would generally be acceptable on these routes (designed so not to conflict with public transport use). The secondary streets should provide a segregated 3m wide foot and cycleway to one side of the carriageway with a 2m wide footway where they connect key destinations and connect to the external path network. In residential areas where the street does not connect points of a strategic nature 2m footways to either side of the carriageway would be appropriate.
- Tertiary streets should ensure appropriate access to each of the development areas. These streets should have direct frontage access to allow in curtilage car parking. These streets should allow areas for on-street parking and must be overlooked by adjacent buildings, defining the street or behind strong plot boundaries of walls or hedges.
- Within residential areas a home-zone approach may be used to connect residential streets and provide variety.
- Within the core area blocks the streets should be well defined by buildings with parking located in courtyards to the rear to help define a more urban form and minimise the impact of parking on the streets and civic spaces. Courtyard parking should generally have more than one connection to the adjoining street network to ensure permeable movement. Additional pedestrian connections should also be provided.
- Parking should be broken up by landscaping where possible.
- Parking standards extend to cycle and motorcycle parking as well, and any flatted or communal residential areas will have to provide cycle and motorcycle parking to comply with policy.
- For non-residential land uses the Council parking standards will apply.

### Legend





-  Car parking within courtyard
-  Built form screening car parking from street with pedestrian/vehicular connections to courtyard
-  Car parking within street/lane/homezone
-  Opportunities for visitor parking within open spaces, located within in bays adjacent to carriageway.



fig. 122: Phase 1 Masterplan - Car parking

## 6.2.6 Built form

The aim of the Masterplan is for the development to provide a varied and attractive built form that will define spaces and streets, creating an interesting urban character. The buildings should provide a range of house types and tenures mixed through the development area, whilst creating a clear and legible structure.

### Design Principles - Built form

- The residential density ranges identified in the Development Framework are intended as a guide to the desired urban form and it is envisaged there will be a range within the blocks to provide variety.
- The urban form of Block C8 should vary from a high density continuous frontage overlooking the town park to a lower density residential form overlooking the secondary street to the north.
- A supermarket and associated parking could be integrated within the form of Block C8, wrapped as much as possible by surrounding development with an entrance to the street.
- Block N7 will contain a primary school building that must address the park.
- The urban form and density range within Blocks C6 and C7 should reflect the importance of defining the streets before reducing in density in response to the topography back from the streets.
- Elevations of the Primary street through the mixed use core should be predominantly continuous in nature using the building frontages, gable ends and walls to maintain this discipline. Parking should be located to the rear.
- All streets, spaces and areas of open space must be well defined by appropriately scaled buildings to ensure a strong degree of containment and avoid ill-defined or unwanted spaces. All streets and spaces must be overlooked by buildings. Building fronts – not backs should face streets and areas of open space.
- The civic spaces must be defined by buildings with zero set-back or well defined plot boundaries. Buildings defining street corners must have windows on both facades facing the street. Interesting details on the street corner buildings may be appropriate along with windows.
- Generally gardens should be arranged to be south facing where possible. This results in buildings on the south side of streets having reduced or minimal set back whilst buildings on the north sides of the streets have gardens with well-defined plot boundaries.
- The treatment of boundaries will significantly influence the legibility and character of the Masterplan area, helping enclose and define streets and spaces. Generally, plot boundaries along the principal spaces and adjacent to the primary and secondary streets must be formed by walls to reflect the desired urban character. Elsewhere, plot boundaries may be formed by walls or hedges.

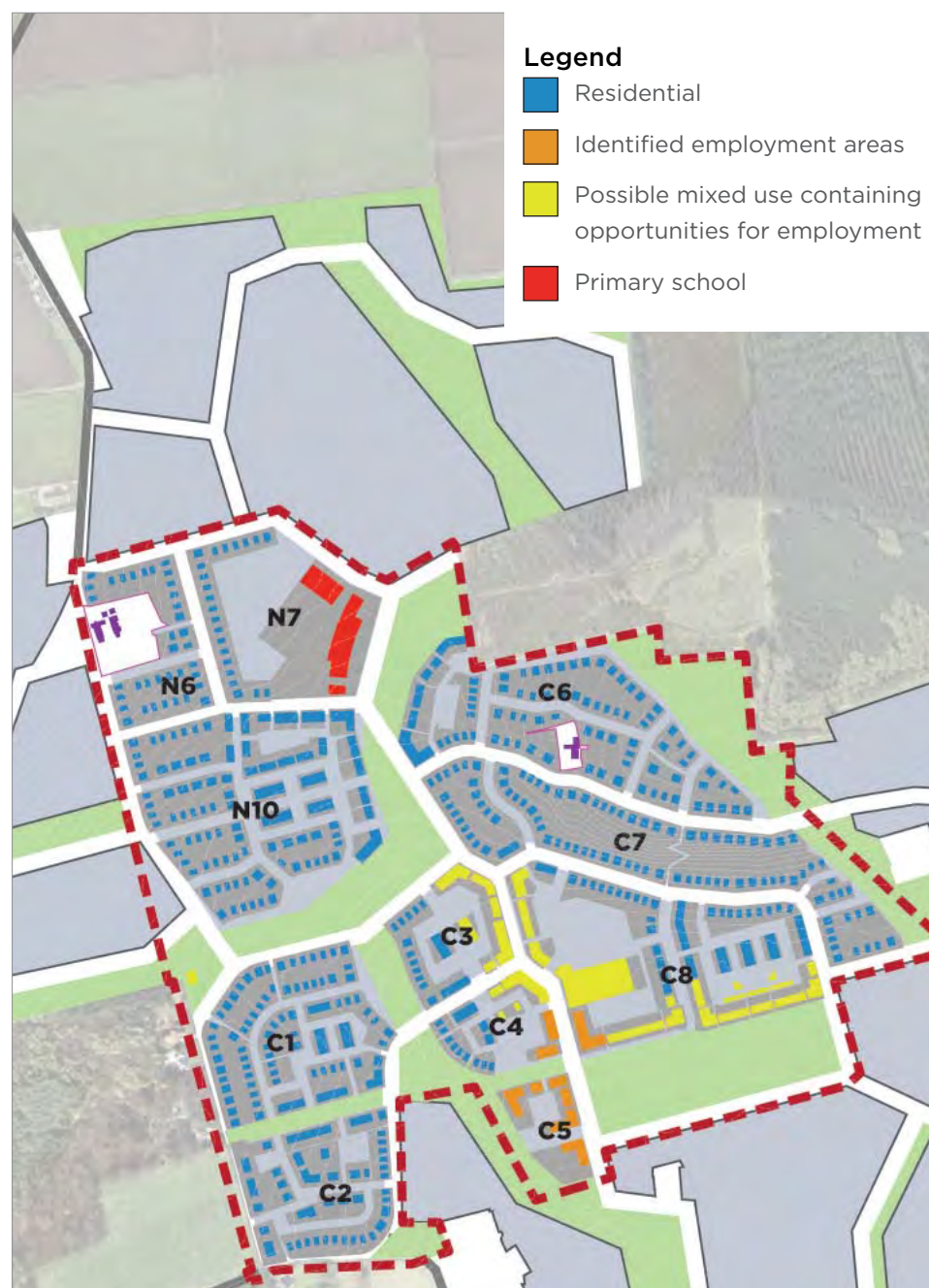


fig. 124: Phase 1 Masterplan - Built form and landuse

## 6.2.7 Building heights

The Masterplan should allow and encourage variety in building types and heights to help create and define interesting streets and spaces, create landmark buildings and also respond to areas where lower building heights would be more suitable.

### Design Principles - Building height

- The height of all the buildings proposed varies and should predominantly be composed of two and four storey buildings. Within this range there is considerable scope for variety. By virtue of good architecture and urban design, opportunity for key corners or focal point buildings to be higher than four storeys should be considered.
- Buildings overlooking Countesswells Central Park should consist of predominantly three and four storey town houses, apartments and non-residential blocks. Along this key elevation buildings higher than four storey could be specifically located on the corners to help define the civic spaces at either end.
- The Primary street through the core area should be well defined by predominantly three storey buildings with key entrances, corners and junctions defined by four storey buildings.
- Generally core spaces and civic spaces within the Masterplan should be defined by buildings higher than those in the surrounding area.
- The primary school to the north should provide a landmark on the street through the architectural form and location on the edge of the park.
- The supermarket building should allow the opportunity for other uses above although the retail element shall be contained to a single storey.
- Across the Masterplan a change in the building height should also be used to signal junctions, routes and for focal points to help orientate people. Access to the home zone areas and residential streets should be defined by character buildings.
- Taller buildings should be used to help provide better natural surveillance in key locations, such as the Central Park, Cults Burn corridor and overlooking to rear courtyards.
- Split level buildings should be used on the sloping sites within Blocks C6 and C7 to maximise the opportunity for south facing aspect and views south.

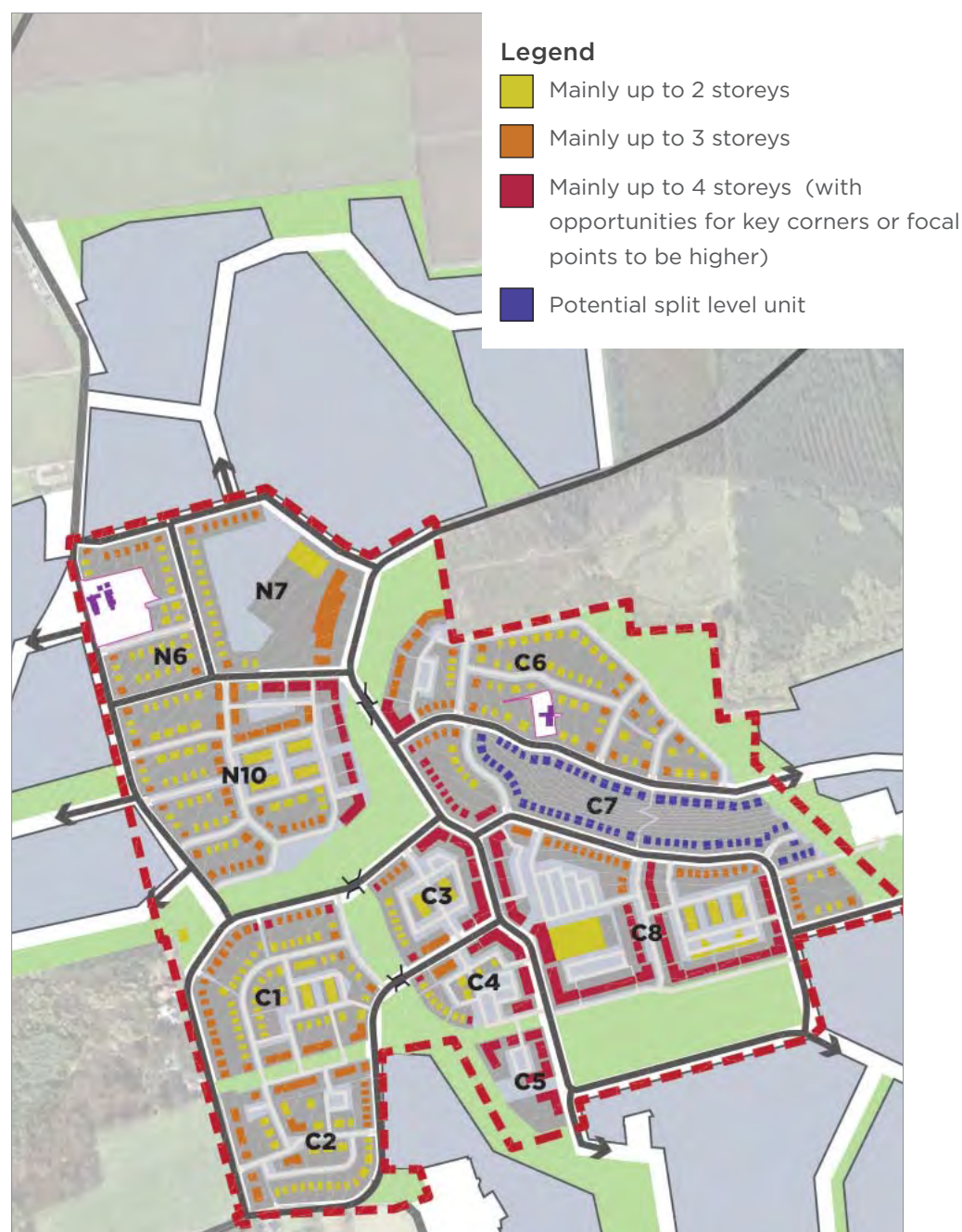


fig. 123: Phase 1 Masterplan - Building height guidance

## 6.2.8 Key frontages

The key frontages identified here will contribute greatly to the character of the Masterplan area and ultimately to the character of Countesswells. These will be visually prominent and define key spaces, streets and routes. These frontages should all respond to their specific context and settings.

### Design Principles - Key frontages

- **Kirk Brae (C189)** - The frontage on to Kirk Brae (C189) should be generally two and three storey buildings with local landmarks providing variety and announcing junctions.
- **Cults burn corridor north** - The frontage overlooking Cults burn corridor in this location is of particular importance as it also addresses the primary street on approach to the core area. The frontage should be continuous with little variation in the building line or heights. It is the intention that all the buildings are of a residential scale and when viewed together form a strong frontage to the park. The primary school should provide a landmark building within this frontage.
- **Core area primary street** - The buildings along either side of the primary street should be designed to work together to create a varied and interesting streetscape with incidental spaces. Buildings and walls should combine to define the street, with taller buildings defining corners, junctions and civic spaces.
- **Northern Core - Design of this elevation should be undertaken** with thought to its relationship with Phase 2 and the mixed use area identified in the Development Framework.
- **Cults burn corridor central** - The frontage along either side of this area should address the open space and be of a scale which helps to define the space. The buildings to the north could be higher and of a different form to those on the south but the language and boundary treatments of both should read together.
- **Core path link** - This area should be defined by a formal predominantly continuous elevation with little variation in building height or line.
- **Cults burn corridor east** - In contrast to the irregular western edge the frontage to the east should be formal in comparison.
- **Cults burn corridor west** - The frontage to the west of the corridor should be irregular and varied to contrast with the more formal character of the town centre to the east. Variation in building line will allow a varied streetscape and the inclusion of windows which look down the street and can help improve natural policing of the space. The irregular frontage will also help the park to be integrate within the residential structure through streets and spaces.
- **Countesswells Central park** - The scale and form of the elevation must be such that it will define the park to the south and define the character of the core area. The frontage should combine three and four storey buildings with minimal or zero setback, overlooking the park. Taller and architecturally distinct buildings should define the entrance to the primary street, corners of the blocks and the civic space to the west of the frontage.
- **Blacktop Road** - A key approach to the town centre from the west, the frontage of this street should define the importance of the route. The street front should be relatively simple with taller buildings up to three storey, strong plot boundaries and street tree planting combining to define the street.

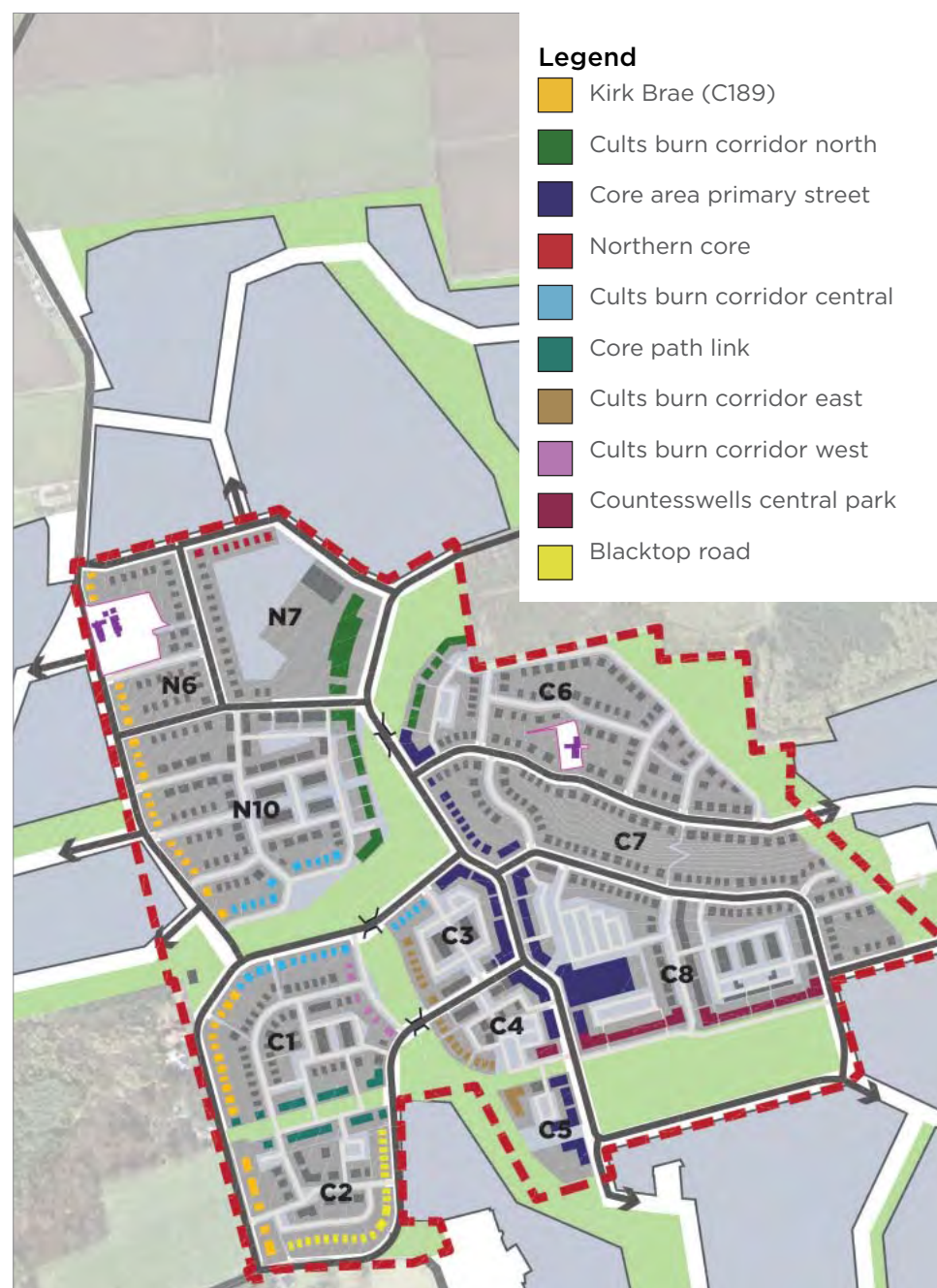


fig. 125: Phase 1 Masterplan - Key frontages

## 6.2.9 Key buildings

Particular locations will lend themselves to the introduction of special architectural features such as gateway or corner buildings, gable ends or landmark buildings creating a focal point. These should specifically be included within the key frontages identified.

1. The contribution of the primary school to the entrance sequence on approach to Countesswells from the north east and as the head of the Cults Burn park is crucial. Detail design must ensure a strong architectural presence on the park and street, whether the building is set on the street edge or set back to all the park to cross over the Primary street.
2. A key corner building should be located on the south east corner of Block N10 overlooking the Cults Burn park.
3. On the south east corner of Block C1 a distinct building should be located to define the corner of the open space and provide a landmark on approach from the west.
4. A group of buildings should be specifically designed to respond to the important junction where the route from the east meets the Primary streets between C3, C4 and C8. Further these buildings might define a civic space and entrance to the supermarket.
5. Along the frontage to the Central Park, key buildings should be located at the ends of blocks and on corners to add variety to this key frontage.
6. The buildings within Block C5 should be designed to provide a key elevation and strong architectural presence at the western end of the Central Park.
7. The School building(s) within blocks C11 (outwith the Masterplan area) must be designed to provide a key elevation and strong architectural presence at the eastern end of the Central Park.
8. The Countesswells visitor centre should be a distinctive building, providing a landmark on Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells and set within the Cults Burn Park. It does not need to be a large building but should be distinctive within the development area.

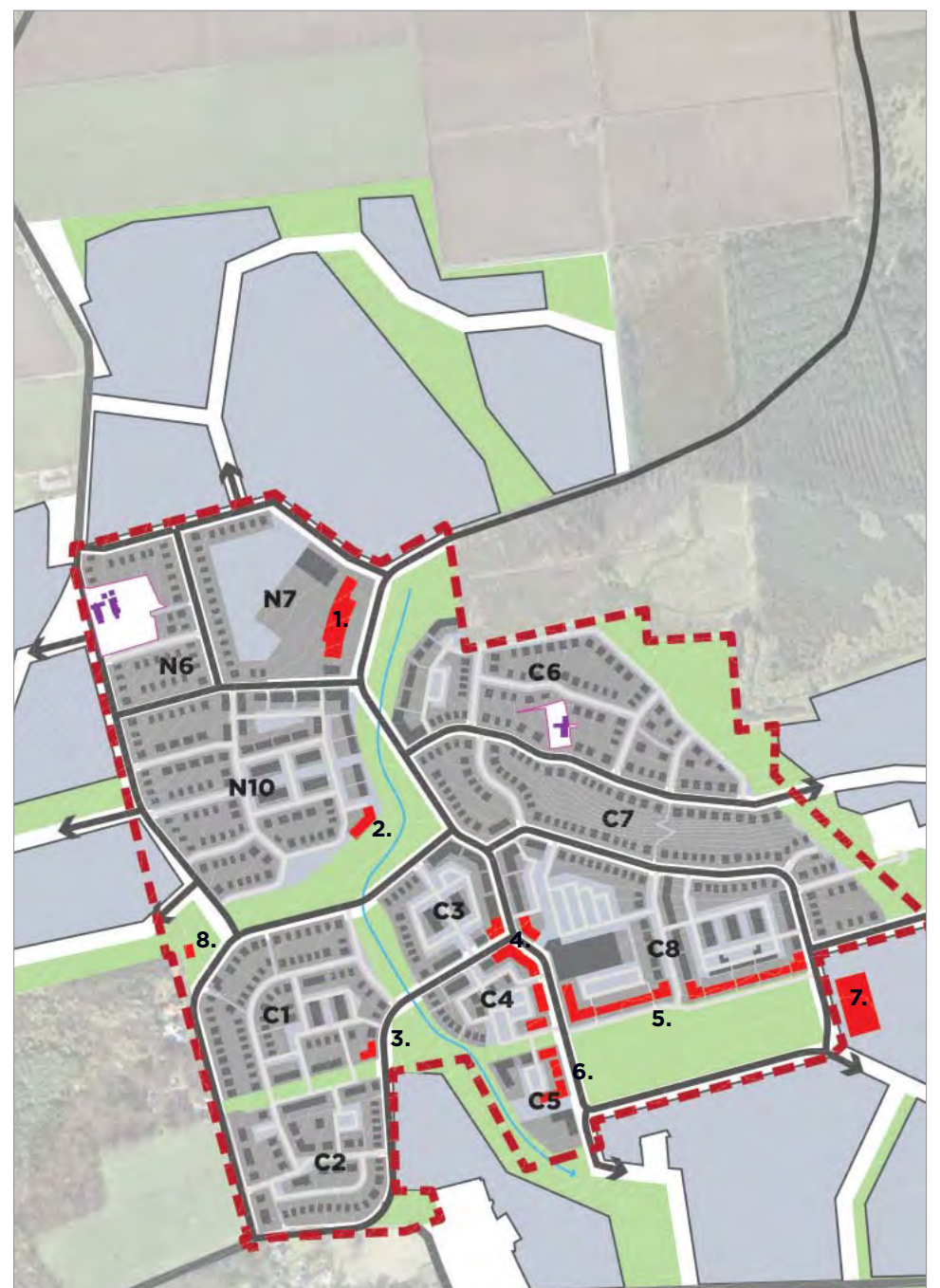


fig. 126: Phase 1 Masterplan - Key buildings.

## 6.2.10 Core Open Spaces

The core spaces of the Masterplan provide a strong network that connects with the wider landscape context and aim to provide a high quality setting at Countesswells as well as opportunities for recreation and ecological enhancement.

### Design Principles - Open space

- Refer to information contained later within this document for design principles of individual spaces.



fig. 127: Phase 1 Masterplan - Open space.

## 6.3 Phase 1 - Illustrative Masterplan

This section of the document consists of an 'Illustrative Masterplan' for the Phase 1 area. This has been prepared working within the parameters set out in the Development Framework. This is not a definitive plan for the site however it illustrates one possible interpretation of the Development Framework and acts as a guide to how the spirit of the guidance should be interpreted.

The illustrative masterplan has been produced to describe in more detail key design principles for the 'Development blocks' and 'Core landscape areas' previously set out. The guidance aims to ensure that these are developed with a strong identity that responds to both their context and setting and also to their relationship with the wider site.

Some of the key areas and elements of the Phase 1 Masterplan are listed below and labelled on the plan opposite.

1. Countesswells woodland.
2. Countesswell woodland - car park.
3. Hazlehead woodland.
4. Countesswells Road.
5. Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells
6. Blacktop Road.
7. Existing Property - Newton of Countesswells.
8. Existing Property - Bogskethy.
9. Existing Property - Wardhead.
10. Existing Property - Brookhill.
11. Existing Property - Mains of Countesswells.
12. Primary Street - Connection to A944 at Jessiefield.
13. Indicative location for bus gate on Kirk Brae (C189)
14. Countesswells Core Area (mixed use area).
15. Countesswells Academy (Community campus).
16. Countesswells Primary School (PS01).
17. Supermarket store.
18. Central Park.
19. Play Area (large equipped play areas).
20. Central Park - Civic space.
21. Cults Burn (realigned water course).
22. Core Path 57 - proposed alignment of path through Countesswells.
23. SUDs - Indicative locations for core SUDs facilities.
24. Core Path link, linear park linking Countesswells woodland to the centre of the site.
25. Countesswells visitor centre.



fig. 129: Phase 1 Illustrative Masterplan.





## 6.4 Phase 1 - Block Design Principles

This section describes the design principles for the development blocks and core spaces within the Phase 1 Masterplan area.

The guidance on this page covers general development block guidance which could be applied across Countesswells. The following pages illustrate how these principles transfer to the individual development blocks and also describe specific design principles for each.



fig. 130: Phase 1, Development Blocks and Core Spaces.

### Development Blocks

The blocks are described in the following groups which reflect the location and desire to create areas of similar character;

1. N6, N7 and N10
2. C1 and C2
3. C3, C4, C5 and C8 - Mixed use core area
4. C6 and C7

### Core Spaces

5. Countesswells Central Park.
6. Cults Burn Corridor (part)
7. Core Path link.

### Residential streets

Streets should be designed following guidance within 'Designing Streets' considering place before movement. Parking should be integrated into the street design to avoid it becoming over dominant. Adequate access for service vehicles must be provided.

### Spaces

A variety of informal spaces should also be created within development blocks at key locations, such as where streets meet. These should be created through variety in the building line creating interesting streets. All spaces should be overlooked, benefiting from passive surveillance. Appropriate civic spaces should be provided in the mixed-use areas identified on the Development Framework. These should have zero or minimal setback to ensure an active frontage and encourage people to use the outdoor space.

### Architecture

Architecture has an important role to play in creating and defining character at Countesswells. Well designed, high quality architecture with close attention paid to detail and material selection will play an essential part in the creation of an attractive and desirable place to live. Architecture should also strive for strong environmental standards, reducing energy consumption and helping Countesswells meet its sustainable aspirations.

Guidance relating to architectural typologies and form is provided throughout this document, presented through a combination of proposals relating to density, building height, indicative housing mix and design. Generally however architectural form should respond to the proposed hierarchy of streets and spaces and maximise opportunities for passive solar energy gain through a south facing aspect. Terraced development running east-west and detached units running north-south allow a larger proportion of buildings to benefit from solar gain. Consideration should be given to both building height and existing trees to minimise overshadowing of properties and spaces.

### Architectural Style

Within a development of this size there should be a variety of architectural styles across the site which respond to the existing context, proposed hierarchy of streets and spaces and other influences such as existing woodland and the topography. Generally a simplicity of detail should be aimed for, avoiding unnecessary 'decorative' frills and add ons. Further guidance on architectural style is given in relation to each development block later in this document.

### Architectural Materials

The selection of materials across the development should aim to convey a sense of quality, robustness and permanence. Materials should also be chosen which achieve relevant targets for sustainability. Materials should respond to both their existing context, and location within the proposed site layout. Palettes of materials should not be homogeneously applied across the site however care should be taken to ensure co-ordination. Generally use of one colour/material for a large area will be allowed however localised variation along streets and in building clusters is encouraged.

### Architectural variation

Variation of adjacent building heights, styles and typologies can provide interest within the urban form, creating distinctive streets and attractive roofscapes. Applying homogenous building styles or heights across the site should be avoided. Particular locations will lend themselves to the introduction of special architectural features such as gateway or corner buildings or gable ends creating a focal point.

### Gardens

Where possible gardens should be arranged to benefit from a southerly aspect. Generally gardens on the south facing, northern side of streets should be larger than those on the south of the street, providing a set back from the street to the public rooms of the house.

### Boundary treatments

Gardens should be suitably enclosed and well defined. Garden walls and hedges should also help define streets and spaces, becoming an important part of the streetscape. A limited palette of materials should be selected that complement the architecture and provide cohesiveness to the development.

### Woodland

Generally across all development blocks buildings should address the woodland where possible, helping enhance the character of Countesswells and foster a positive relationship between the community and the woodland setting.

### Design standards

The Countesswells Consortium will ensure the quality of architectural and public open space design is controlled through the issue of design guidance as part of future sales agreements with third parties. This will support the information contained within this Masterplan and help to add a further level of detail guidance.

### Sustainability

In establishing design principles and an illustrative layout for the Phase 1 masterplan, sustainability has been a key consideration, ensuring that decisions made at this early stage can have maximum impact in relation to design decisions made in subsequent applications. The aim is to allow a truly low-energy, efficient community to emerge which can flourish without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. These principles supplement and support the earliest aims of the overarching Development Framework which sets out how a sustainable community, with excellent sustainable transport connections is to be established. Sustainability principles which have the most impact at masterplan level include consideration of orientation and aspect; whilst building fabric can be upgraded over time, the layout and orientation of a building is fixed once it is built. The street hierarchy and illustrative layout therefore maximises opportunities for passive solar energy gain and reduced lighting loads through the use of natural daylight through south-facing orientation. The layout of streets and positioning of built form have been informed by principles of windbreak and shelter, helping to prevent direct passage of wind and limit exposure.

### Low and Zero Carbon Buildings

Whilst the masterplan instils high level sustainable principles, it is subsequent planning applications which will require to demonstrate compliance with the ACC SG "Resources for New Development". The SG sets out the methodology for demonstrating how Aberdeen Local Development Plan policy R7 has been addressed.

### Waste and recycling

Subsequent detail applications will demonstrate compliance with ACC Supplementary Guidance "Resources for New Developments" to ensure adequate internal and external storage is provided.



Indicative  
alignment of  
road link

fig. 131: Phase 1 Illustrative Masterplan.

### 6.4.1 N6, N7 and N10 Design Principles

**Block N7 provides a location for the primary school overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor with some detached houses to the rear of the school site addressing surrounding streets. Block N6 should be predominantly detached properties and should address Kirk Brae (C189) to the west with development sensitive to and in keeping with the existing adjacent existing properties. Within Block N10 the street structure follows a more formal east - west block alignment to provide good permeability through the block and connecting Kirk Brae (C189) and the Cults Burn corridor.**



fig. 132: N6, N7 and N10 Development Blocks - design principles.



Development Block location diagram

Number of units (mid density range)	Typology mix	Design notes
N6 - 36 N7 - 24 N10 - 215	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N6 - Detached properties only.</li> <li>N7 - Detached properties only. Includes site for Primary School.</li> <li>N10 - Detached, semi-detached, terraced properties and could include some apartments overlooking open space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Properties must address Cults Burn corridor. No properties to back onto the park.</li> <li>General east-west street structure should be followed within Block N10 providing connections between Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells and the Cults Burn corridor.</li> <li>A secondary street must provide a north - south link through block N10 connecting to Kirk Brae (C189).</li> <li>Local access streets and shared spaces should connect the north south links, providing a clear permeable structure.</li> <li>The street structure must be designed to allow a continuous pedestrian connection between Kirk Brae (C189) and Cults Burn corridor.</li> <li>Streets to be designed following principles set out in 'Designing Streets'.</li> <li>Design of streets must take account requirements of emergency and service vehicles.</li> <li>Permeable well-connected layout, streets should end in streets and cul-de-sacs should be avoided.</li> <li>Plot boundaries must be well defined by either the building or by walls or hedges.</li> <li>Within the home-zone areas on street parking areas will be required. Marked visitor bays must be identified in suitable areas, so not to conflict with community areas or free movement of vehicles or pedestrians.</li> <li>Properties should generally have south facing gardens and incorporate in curtilage parking within the garden either behind the plot boundary or to the side of the building so not to dominate the street.</li> <li>Shared spaces should be designed following home-zone principles, with a shared surface space acting to reduce vehicle speeds and provide an attractive and safe space for pedestrians. Street furniture and planting should be used to further reduce the clear vehicle route.</li> </ul>



fig. 133: Diagram highlighting the Cults Burn corridor frontage.

### Eastern edge of N10 and N7

A key part in defining the character of Block N7 and N10 will be the frontage to the Cults Burn corridor, the area of open space connecting the primary school and northern neighbourhood centre to the core area.

The frontage of Block N7 to the public space should be defined by the primary school building and the school boundary. The building should be designed to form a landmark within the primary street corridor and should address both the Cults Burn corridor to the east and a neighbourhood civic space to the north in phase 2. Vehicular access, parking and play areas should be located to the rear of the school building.

The edge of Block N10 to the Cults Burn corridor should be defined by a formal built frontage of two and three storey terraced properties. The buildings should be organised to provide a continuous formal built elevation along the edge of the park with landmark buildings defining corners and junctions. The building line should be broken at regular intervals to allow access to parking and service areas located to the rear.

The buildings must overlook the burn corridor with minimal or no set back to help define the space. In areas where small front gardens are located the plots must be well defined by low walls, railings or hedges. A path must provide pedestrian access to all the properties with regular connections to rear parking areas and strategic paths within the Cults Burn Corridor.



fig. 134: Formal built frontage overlooking SUDs, Upton.



fig. 135: Indicative section through Cults Burn corridor.



fig. 136: Diagram highlighting key east -west connections through Block N10.

### East - West connections

Clear and regular connection should be provided from Kirk Brae (C189) to the Cults Burn corridor through the residential area of block N10. These should ensure the block structure is permeable to allow easy access to the strategic path links and areas of open space. These connections should be designed as an integral part of the urban form, passing through streets, home zone spaces and small public spaces. Where streets do not connect through to the Cults Burn corridor, pedestrian connections should be provided to ensure the direct pedestrian links between the park space and the residential area.

A principal connection should be provided at the centre of the block connecting Cults Burn corridor to Kirk Brae (C189). This connection should be distinct from other pedestrian links, broader and defined by avenue planting through the spaces and streets.



fig. 137: Direct pedestrian links through residential areas, Cambridge.



fig. 138: Diagram highlighting the northern part of Cults Burn Corridor.

### Southern edge of Block N10

The southern edge of Block N10 should be designed to ensure adjacent properties benefit from the south facing aspect overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor. The open space should be addressed by large detached houses, two or three storey buildings with south facing gardens with an open outlook. The plot boundaries must combine to form a well-defined edge to the public space predominantly walls and hedges set against an access lane or path. Locally distinct buildings should define the junctions and corners. The properties fronting on to the space could either be accessed from a shared surface lane to the front or via a secondary street to the rear.



fig. 139: Buildings overlooking public open space, Wellyn.



fig. 142: Detached south facing properties, Granttown on Spey

### Frontage to Kirk Brae (C189)

The design of all the blocks that address Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells, including N6 and N10, should seek to integrate the existing road into the Countesswells development as a residential street. Detached and semi-detached properties should align the street with direct frontage access from the street with parking located in curtilage set behind plot boundaries defined by walls or hedges.

Some buildings should be set back to create a varied building line along this street with buildings on corners and junction set forward as landmarks.



fig. 140: Existing photo of Kirk Brae (C189).



fig. 141: Detached property with well defined plot boundary, North Berwick.

## 6.4.2 C1 and C2 Design Principles

The character of Blocks C1 and C2, will take direct reference from its proximity to Countesswells Woodland and Cults Burn corridor to the east. A fine grain of minor streets, lanes, incidental spaces and links to core areas of open space should combine to create a rich and varied character area. The character of this area should have the feel of a high quality residential rural edge. Likely to be one of the first areas to be developed it should set the standard for what is to come.



fig. 143: C1 and C2 Development Blocks - design principles.



Development Block location diagram

Number of units (mid density range)	Typology mix	Design notes
C1 - 114 C2 - 74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C1 - Primarily detached properties with some semi-detached and terraced properties to variety to the urban form.</li> <li>C2 - Primarily detached properties with some semi-detached and terraced properties to variety to the urban form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Properties must address Kirk Brae (C189) with direct frontage access in Block C1 and where possible in Block C2.</li> <li>Predominantly detached properties should address Kirk Brae (C189) with plot boundaries formed by walls, reusing the existing stone wall fields boundaries where possible.</li> <li>A residential street must connect Block C1 and C2. This should connect Kirk Brae (C189) and Blacktop Road to the Secondary street to the north of C1.</li> <li>Local access streets should generally connect the Secondary and Tertiary streets to the north and south of the blocks with shared surface homezone areas should connecting east to west.</li> <li>Streets to be designed following principles set out in 'Designing Streets'.</li> <li>Design of streets must take account requirements of emergency and service vehicles.</li> <li>Permeable well-connected layout, streets should end in streets and cul-de-sacs should be avoided.</li> <li>Plot boundaries must be well defined by either the building or by walls or hedges.</li> <li>Within the home-zone areas on street parking areas will be required. Marked visitor bays must be identified in suitable areas, so not to conflict with community areas or free movement of vehicles or pedestrians.</li> <li>Shared spaces should be designed following home-zone principles, with a shared surface space acting to reduce vehicle speeds and provide an attractive and safe space for pedestrians. Furniture and planting should be used to further reduce the clear vehicle route.</li> <li>A variety of house types and sizes must be used to create distinctive streetscapes with identity.</li> <li>Walls and hedges must be used to define areas of private space from public space along the burn corridor.</li> <li>Most resident parking must be provided through integrated parking within the property or to the side or behind buildings.</li> <li>Where courtyard parking is required it should generally be located to the rear of properties.</li> <li>Streets must be overlooked to provide natural surveillance and excessive lengths of blank walls will not be permitted.</li> </ul>



## Core Path Link

Blocks C1 and C2 should be separated by an area of open space connecting the Cults Burn corridor to the car park and entrance to Countesswells woodland. The space between the blocks should be vehicle free along its length with the exception of north/south street links. The space should be designed to accommodate both active and passive activities as well as the Core Path and incorporate areas of high quality soft and hard landscape design.

The northern edge of the street should primarily consist of terraced properties, the front gardens should be defined by low walls and hedges to maintain a continuous vertical boundary treatment. The buildings should be organised to provide a continuous, yet varied, building elevation along the street with landmark buildings defining corners and junctions. Parking should be to the rear in courtyards or larger south facing back gardens.

The buildings along the southern edge of the space should generally be 2-3 storeys and should all address the avenue space with minimal set back or small front gardens. The properties should generally be terraced or semi-detached to help provide a continuous frontage overlooking the space. Parking should be to the rear in courtyards or larger south facing back gardens.

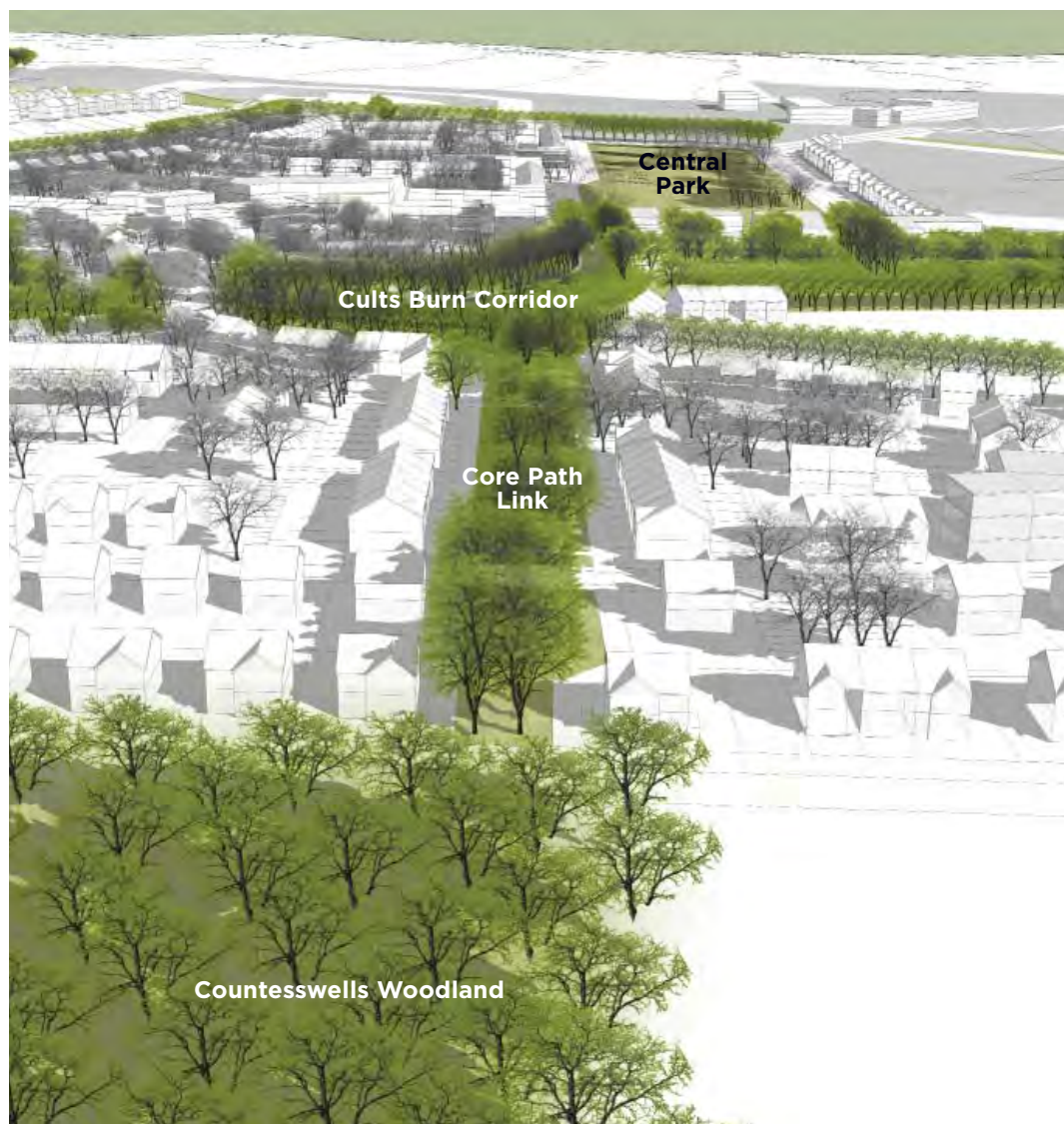


fig. 144: Diagram highlighting Core Path link.

## Shared surface residential streets

Internally within Blocks C1 and C2 the minor residential streets could be formed by a series of small lanes and courtyards following a shared surface approach. This would allow pedestrians and cyclists the same priority through the shared surface streets as vehicles.

Some of the key principles with regard to these residential streets (and similar areas within Countesswells) are listed below:

- There should be no vertical deflection of carriageways through these areas, although they must be designed to accommodate vehicles including emergency and service vehicles.
- All the residential lanes and home-zone areas should be designed to achieve typical speeds of no more than 10mph. Lower speeds should be achieved through the overall design of the street environment rather than through overt traffic calming devices.
- Shared surface areas will normally have a minimum of two connection points to the core road network and provide enough access through the street blocks to ensure they are sufficiently permeable.
- The entrances to these areas must be clearly defined so that all road users understand the change in the street environment. Design features such as a change in material must be used to create a gateway.
- The design of the urban structure must ensure that the building layout creates a sequence of distinctive public spaces designed to a human scale, and creating an attractive sequence of public spaces and views. A variety of house types and sizes should be used to create distinctive streetscapes with identity.
- Appropriate boundary treatments should be used to define areas of private space from public space. Boundaries should be minimised to ensure active frontage to public space. Any walls should be designed to complement the materials used on buildings.
- Street tree, shrub planting and street furniture should be positioned where appropriate within streets to help reduce vehicle speeds and create pleasant environment.
- All of the materials must be agreed within the Council if they are to be adopted.
- The dominance of cars in the residential areas, both in terms of public space and visibility will be reduced to ensure the attractiveness of the area. Most resident parking must be provided through integrated parking within the property or to the side or behind buildings.

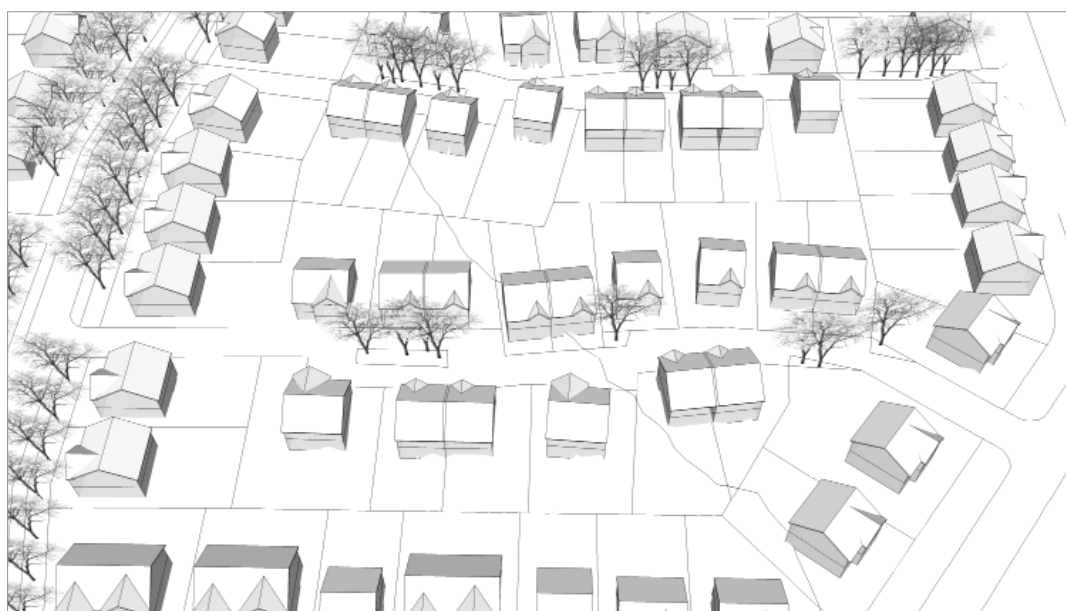


fig. 145: Diagram illustrating indicative form of shared surface street.



fig. 146: Shared surface street, Upton.



fig. 147: Diagram highlighting Cults Burn corridor edge.

## Eastern edge of C1

The built edges on either side of the Cults Burn corridor should be quite different to each other, reflecting the areas in which they are located. To the east (Block C3 and C4) the character should be more formal, higher density and urban relating to the core area.

The eastern edge to the burn corridor (Block C1) should be less formal, comprising a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties overlooking the open space. The buildings should be primarily two storey with three storey buildings on the corners and junctions. The building edge should be permeable, connecting the residential area and Cults Burn Corridor. Importantly all streets, spaces and paths must be well defined by the proposed buildings or plot boundaries. Buildings must overlook the space to provide natural surveillance. Where corner units are located, these must address both the space and street.

In addition to the formal Core Path link the layout should incorporate a number of other path links connecting the residential area to the burn corridor and the core area.



fig. 148: Informal built edge to open space, Poundbury

## Blacktop Road

Blacktop Road forming the southern edge of Block C2 will be re-aligned to form a secondary street linking to the core area. The character of the street should announce the transition from rural edge to urban area, with the Block C2 section forming a high quality rural edge character area. In keeping with the rural edge character the street should be broad enough to incorporate street tree planting and footpaths with plot boundaries set behind of walls or hedges.

Predominantly detached properties should address the street, with south facing gardens. Where possible properties should gain direct frontage access from the street with parking located in curtilage. Where frontage access is not possible, buildings must still front the street with access gained from a residential street within the Block. Some buildings should be set back to create a varied, yet regular, building line along this street with buildings on corners and junction set forward as landmarks.



fig. 149: Detached villa overlooking street.



fig. 150: Detached properties overlooking street, Turriff



fig. 151: Artists impression of the of the Cults Burn Corridor.

## Northern edge of C1

The northern edge of Block C1 is an important frontage within Countesswells, it will form an edge to one of the first phases of development and is a key interface between the northern and southern parts of the development.

As a north facing street the buildings should be predominantly two storey detached properties fronting the street with minimal setback and larger south facing gardens. The plots must incorporate in-curtilage parking within the garden either behind the plot boundary or to the side of the building so not to dominate the street. As an important frontage within Countesswells the plot boundaries should be well defined by a low wall or hedging in keeping with the character of the area. Three storey buildings, distinct within the street elevation should define the junction and corner to the Cults Burn corridor.

Minor residential streets and path links should be considered to connect the Cults Burn Corridor park to the residential area within Block C1 along the frontage.



fig. 152: Housing overlooking adjacent area of public open space, Harlow



fig. 153: Housing overlooking adjacent area of public open space, Cambourne

### 6.4.3 C3, C4, C5 and C8 Design Principles

**A distinctively urban centre, the core area will be clearly recognisable within Countesswells. The density, mix, variety and height of the built form will combine to create a legible centre to the development. As well as high density residential development the area will include a variety of non-residential uses including the Academy, sports facilities, shops, office space and community buildings.**



fig. 154: C3, C4, C5 and C8 Development Blocks - design principles.



Number of units (mid density range)	Typology mix	Design notes
C3 - 87 C4 - 52 C5 - na C8 - 192	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C3 - Predominantly terraced properties with apartments and limited number of detached homes.</li> <li>C4 - Predominantly terraced properties with apartments and limited number of semi detached and detached homes.</li> <li>C5 - Employment uses only.</li> <li>C8 - A mix of detached, semi detached, terraced and apartments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Block C3 and C4 must contain space for some office, small business, retail and community uses. This could be located on the ground floor with residential development above.</li> <li>Blocks C3 and C4 should contain higher density residential development, defined by predominantly terraced blocks and apartment buildings forming perimeter blocks with courtyard parking.</li> <li>Block C8 is the main mixed use block within Countesswells. Most of the retail, civic and office uses should be located to the front of the block overlooking the civic space within the Central Park.</li> <li>A tertiary street should provide access to Block C8 and allow some parking adjacent to the park, located in bays. A change of surface material should define the civic space.</li> <li>If required, the supermarket building and parking should be located within Block C8.</li> <li>Retail and civic uses should be located on the ground floor overlooking streets or civic spaces with office or residential uses on upper floors.</li> <li>Within the town centre, where appropriate and by virtue of good architecture and urban design buildings taller than 4 storeys may be considered to provide focal buildings and enhance the townscape.</li> <li>Mixed use development and higher density development should be located overlooking the Central Park with lower density residential development located along the secondary street to the north.</li> <li>Stand-alone office blocks could be located within Blocks C5 and C8 as feature buildings.</li> <li>The buildings within Block C5 (such as office buildings or a hotel) should be designed to form a landmark at the western end of the park.</li> <li>Pedestrian controlled crossings of the primary and secondary streets must be provided within the core area to provide safe access to the community campus.</li> <li>The ground floors of the mixed use blocks should provide active frontages overlooking the adjacent streets and spaces.</li> <li>Streets to be designed following principles set out in 'Designing Streets'. The character of streets within the core area should be more urban with no verges (separation strips) and parking generally located to the rear.</li> <li>The design of the urban structure must ensure that the building layout creates a sequence of distinctive public spaces designed to a human scale, and creating an attractive sequence of public spaces and views.</li> <li>Mixed use buildings should have zero set back and should define the public space, providing active frontages to the public space.</li> <li>A variety of house types and sizes must be used to create distinctive streetscapes with identity.</li> <li>Appropriate boundary treatments, including, walls, railings and hedges on primary street frontage must be used to define areas of private space from public space.</li> <li>Most resident parking must be provided through integrated parking within the property or to the side or behind buildings.</li> <li>Parking for the mixed use centre and higher density development should be provided in rear courtyard parking areas.</li> <li>Streets must be overlooked to provide natural surveillance and excessive lengths of blank walls would not be permitted.</li> </ul>



fig. 155: Artists illustration of mixed buildings overlooking Central Park.

### Mix of uses in the core area

Blocks C3, C4, C5 and C8 must provide the principal location for mixed use development within Countesswells, containing opportunities for employment and commercial development at the centre of the community.

Within the blocks allocated to contain employment and uses such as office space, retail and leisure uses the buildings containing these uses address prominent streets or core spaces. A varied vertical mix is to be promoted including provision for residential uses above. Single storey shop or office units would not be acceptable.

Civic, community and retail uses, such as the GP surgery, dentists and pharmacy should be focused around the main civic spaces, easily accessible with areas identified for parking nearby. These spaces must be designed as flexible high quality urban spaces that will encourage the non-residential uses to spill out and activate the spaces for a variety of uses throughout the year.



fig. 156: Active ground floor uses, Edinburgh



fig. 157: Office space.

### A Supermarket

If a supermarket is proposed within the mixed use area, it should be located within Block C8. The scale of a supermarket should meet the needs of the community and in line with the aims of the Council Development Plan (2013 Retail Study). It will be subject to a Retail Impact Assessment at the appropriate stage.

The supermarket building should present an active frontage to the adjacent street and entrance space in keeping with the required character. Consideration should be given to providing residential uses above any proposed supermarket.

Figure 154 illustrates how a supermarket could be integrated within a street block. The store entrance should address both the car park and the primary street. Blank walls to the primary street should be avoided. Servicing and car parking should be wrapped within the development blocks.



fig. 158: Example of a supermarket building integrated within a street block, Wellyn Garden City.







### Countesswells Town Centre

The artist illustration of an aerial view of the town centre area, describes the desired character of the area and highlights the location of some of the key features within Countesswells core area.

fig. 159: Artists illustration of Countesswells Town Centre.



fig. 160: Diagram highlighting the built frontage to Central Park and civic space.

## Central Park civic space

On the south west corner of Block C8 a high quality civic space should be designed as part of the Central Park adjacent to the main mixed use area created as a focal point and meeting place for the community. The space should be designed to function day to day as the main retail, commercial and community focus within Countesswells. It must also accommodate a wide variety of other uses central to the wider community and visitors such as markets, festivals and parades.

The space should provide a usable interface between the active fronts of shops, cafes, bars, offices and other civic buildings and the main park space. It should be designed to allow the surrounding uses to spill out and activate the space with broad pavements and areas of hard standing. The space should be designed to accommodate a minor street link off the primary street providing local access and service access. Visitor parking areas and cycle stands should be located within the space (in bays adjacent to the street) and bus stops should be located on the primary street.

The importance of the space at the centre of the community should be reflected in the design and use of high quality materials, lighting and public art to create a vibrant and attractive space that will help establish the heart of the community.



fig. 161: Active ground floor frontage to civic space, Edinburgh





fig. 162: Indicative illustration of mixed frontage to Countesswells Central Park



fig. 163: Mixed use frontage, Granttown on Spey



fig. 164: Architectural precedent, Fochabers



fig. 165: Mixed use frontage to civic space, Copenhagen

## Frontage to Central Park

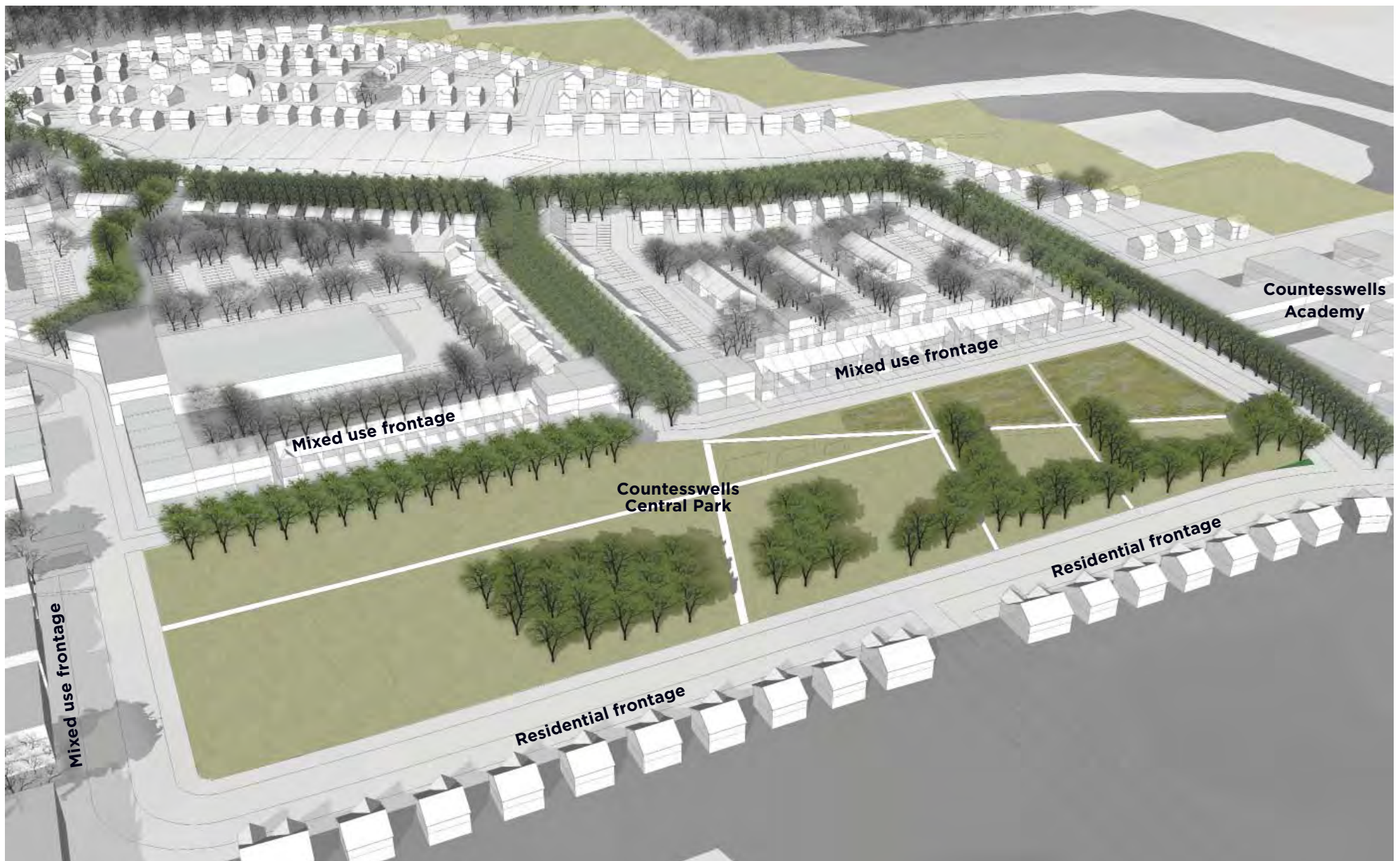


fig. 166: Diagram highlighting the built frontage to Central Park and civic space.

## Frontage to Central Park

The built frontage to the Central Park, southern edge of C8, should be the most distinctive built aspect of the development at Countesswells. South facing overlooking the Central Park, it offers a unique opportunity to create a piece of built form that will be recognisable and respected. The frontage should incorporate a mix of building styles, heights, materials and uses in a form designed to read together as a single considered elevation.

All the buildings should be designed to overlook the park and benefit from the south facing aspect and open outlook. The frontage should combine a mix of building heights. Three storey town houses and four storey mixed use blocks to provide variety in the elevation. Buildings taller than four storeys may be considered to provide focal buildings and enhance the townscape. Higher office and mixed use blocks should define the civic space and provide landmarks on the corners where they could be formed by residential apartment blocks. The mixed use buildings including civic, office and commercial buildings should have zero or minimal set back to the streets or spaces they address. The town houses should have a small set back to the street, with front gardens defined by low walls and railings. The majority of parking should be located within courtyards to the rear with some parking located in bays adjacent to the street overlooking the park for visitors.



fig. 167: Indicative illustration of residential frontage to Countesswells Central Park



fig. 168: Residential frontage to street, Granttown on Spey



fig. 169: Architectural precedent, Granttown on Spey



fig. 170: Mixed use frontage to open space, Noordijk

## Town Centre - Exploring Identity



fig. 174: Built frontage to open space, Granttown on Spey



fig. 175: Built frontage to open space, Granttown on Spey



fig. 176: Built frontage to open space, Tomintoul

## Central Park elevation



fig. 171: Elevation overlooking Central Park - 1

## Mixed Use elevation options



fig. 172: Elevation overlooking Central Park - 2



fig. 173: Diagram highlighting the built frontage to Countesswells Central Park.



fig. 180: Architectural precedent, Fochabers.



fig. 181: Built frontage to open space, Upton



### Residential elevation options



fig. 177: Elevation overlooking Central Park - 3



fig. 178: Elevation overlooking Central Park - 4



fig. 179: Elevation overlooking Central Park - 5



fig. 182: Artists impression of Primary Street through core area.

## Primary Street

Where the primary street passes between blocks C3, C4, C5 and C8 it must be distinctly urban in character with all buildings directly addressing the street with minimal or zero set back. No residential frontage access is permitted along the Primary street.

The buildings on either side of the street should form continuous frontage with a variety in building heights from two to four storey adding character and defining corners and spaces along the route. The building line should be varied and tight to the street to create informal public spaces, add interest in the urban form and help slow vehicle speeds through restricting forward visibility (in line with the aims of the Development Framework).

Where variation in the building lines create locally wider areas or public spaces trees should be incorporated within the street.



fig. 184: Active mixed use street, Turriff.

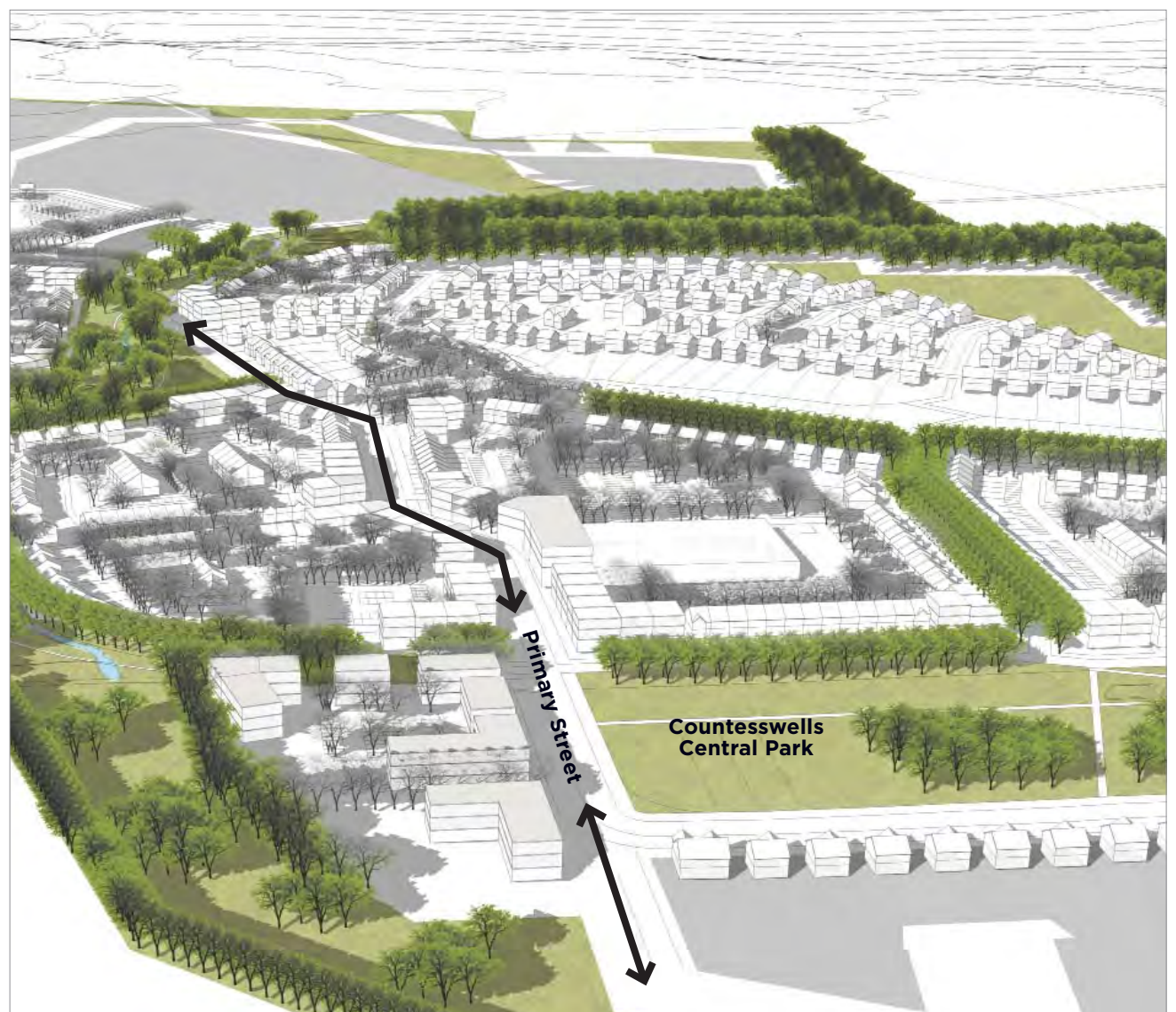


fig. 183: Diagram highlighting the alignment of the Primary Street through the core area

## Edge of C3 and C4 to Cults Burn corridor

To the east of the Cults Burn corridor, the edges of Blocks C3 and C4, the character should be formal, higher density and urban relating to the core area. The built edge should be defined by predominantly two storey detached properties with corners and junctions defined by three storey key buildings brought forward to add variety and create a distinctive urban form. The more prominent buildings along the elevation could be town houses or apartment blocks.

The buildings should all overlook the space with parking to the rear and small front gardens providing some privacy. A public path should run parallel to the plots with regular breaks in the building line to provide access to parking and service areas located to the rear.

On the northern edge the buildings on the corner of the block, at the junction with the Primary street, could define a civic space, they should be, at four storeys, higher than those surrounding and could contain some non-residential uses such as local shops or a cafe on the ground floor overlooking the space.

Where these key routes cross roads priority crossing points should be provided. A change of surface material should define the crossing point and assist traffic calming and could be integrated into the design of the adjacent public spaces. All of the materials within spaces must be agreed within the Council if they are to be adopted.



fig. 185: Artists impression of Cults Burn corridor and northern edge of C3.



fig. 186: Diagram highlighting eastern edge to Cults Burn corridor.

### 6.4.4 C6 and C7 Design Principles

Located on the south facing slopes to the north of the town centre with Hazlehead woodland as a backdrop these two Blocks represent a transition from edge of the core area to a lower density residential neighbourhood on the edge of Countesswells. With views over Countesswells to the Dee valley this area should be predominantly detached family homes set in larger gardens that will allow for a form of development that could be sensitively accommodated on the south facing slope.

Core Path 57. An open space must be provided to protect and integrate the Hazlehead woodland with the development and should be overlooked by adjacent properties.

Cults Burn Corridor.

Where buildings overlook the Cults Burn Corridor parking should be located to the rear.

Higher density development including terraced and apartment blocks should be located adjacent to the primary street overlooking the Cults Burn corridor.

The existing property at Bogskethy must be carefully integrated into the layout.

Opportunities for split level properties to be located benefiting from south facing aspect and views to the south.

Where properties cannot gain frontage access from the Primary street the buildings must still front the street with parking to the rear.

A pedestrian link should be provided for a more direct connection between the residential areas and the mixed use core.

Primary street



Woodland edge. An informal area of open space should provide an interface between the residential areas and the existing woodland. Overlooked by adjacent properties it should contain a series of path connections and be semi natural in character.

Detached properties overlooking open space accessed via minor streets, lanes and areas of shared surface.

Strategic path connection to Core Path 57.

Buildings should where possible be sited to best benefit from the southerly aspect and views to the south.

Access streets should follow the existing topography to minimise the need for earth works.

South facing gardens and split level properties should be used to accommodate changes in level and minimise the need for earth works.

The secondary street should have a residential character, fronted by predominantly detached houses on either side.

The built form and planting should combine to ensure town centre car parking is wrapped within a block and not prominent in the views from the residential areas to the north.

fig. 187: C6 and C7 Development Blocks - design principles.



Development Block location diagram

Number of units (mid density range)	Typology mix	Design notes
C6 - 110 C7 - 99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C6 - Predominantly detached properties within some terraced properties and apartments overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor.</li> <li>C6 - Predominantly detached properties with some terraced properties adjacent to the primary streets.</li> <li>C6 and C7 Should include split level properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Properties to the north must address the areas of woodland and adjacent areas of open space.</li> <li>The secondary street between Blocks C6 and C7 must have direct frontage access.</li> <li>Access streets with Block C6 should be aligned to follow the topography.</li> <li>C6 and C7 should generally be lower density and comprise predominantly of detached properties with gardens which will allow flexibility to accommodate the existing slopes and minimise the need for engineering works.</li> <li>Properties should generally have large south facing gardens and incorporate in-curtilage parking.</li> <li>The buildings must address the access streets whilst also being orientated to benefit from the southerly aspect and views to the south.</li> <li>A direct path link must be provided connecting Hazlehead woodland through Blocks C6 and C7 to Block C8 and the Central Park.</li> <li>The existing property at Bogskethy must be carefully integrated into the layout. The views south and west from the existing property should be maintained and buffer planting to north and east considered.</li> <li>Streets to be designed following principles set out in 'Designing Streets'.</li> <li>Design of streets must take account requirements of emergency and service vehicles.</li> <li>Permeable well-connected layout, streets should end in streets and cul-de-sacs should be avoided.</li> <li>Plot boundaries must be well defined by either the building or by walls or hedges.</li> <li>A variety of house types and sizes must be used to create distinctive streetscapes with identity.</li> <li>Most resident parking can be provided through integrated parking within the property or to the side or behind buildings.</li> <li>Where courtyard parking is required it should generally be located to the rear of properties.</li> <li>Streets must be overlooked to provide natural surveillance and excessive lengths of blank walls will not be permitted.</li> </ul>



fig. 188: Indicative section through Blocks C6 and C7 from Hazlehead woodland.





fig. 189: Diagram highlighting the Primary Street edge to Block C6 and C7.

### Southern edge of C7 to street

The southern edge of C7 is defined by a secondary street. This should be distinctly residential in character with detached and semi-detached properties overlooking the street and gaining direct access from the street where possible. The buildings should be set to the front of the plots to overlook the street with plot boundaries defined by walls or hedges concealing in curtilage parking. The street corridor should also allow for some on street parking and street trees.

To the west, of the Block C7, the urban form could include some higher density development, including terraced properties or apartments focused around the junction of the primary and secondary streets. Where properties cannot gain direct frontage access they should still overlook the Cults Burn Corridor. Some three and four storey apartment blocks and terraced rows could provide distinct buildings on the corner and junction with a continuous building line helping define the street edge. Where terraced properties or apartments are included parking must be located to the rear.

To the west of C7 detached properties should address the street overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor with parking to the rear. The plots cannot gain direct frontage access from the Primary street. The buildings must still front the street with plot boundaries well defined by walls or hedges.

Where the western edge of Block C6 is defined by the Cults Burn Corridor the development should include some higher density development adjacent to the Primary Street. The opportunity exists to include terraced properties and potentially apartments in key locations overlooking the park. Where the buildings overlook the park, the boundaries must be well defined by walls or hedges and parking must be provided to the rear.

### Building on the slopes

The street form and plot layout within C6 and C7 should follow the existing topography as closely as possible to minimise the need for earth works.

Split level properties and the location of properties within plots should all be considered within the layout to ensure all properties benefit from the south facing aspect and views to the south.

All the buildings in this area should be orientated to benefit from the south facing aspect and excellent views south over Countesswells to the Dee valley. The location of the buildings within the plots and the architecture of the buildings should relate specifically to this location with Countesswells.





Hazlehead Woodland

Primary School

Cults Burn Corridor

Cults Burn Corridor

Cults Burn Corridor

Core Path Link

Counterpoint Woodlands



### ***6.5 Core Spaces Design Principles***

**This section describes the intended character, function and key design principles for the 'Core Spaces' as set out in the Development Framework. The names of the spaces are indicative only at this time for reference. There may be opportunities for local input in selecting appropriate names at a later date.**

fig. 190: Diagram highlighting the Core Spaces within the Masterplan.

## 6.5.1 Countesswells Central Park

Countesswells Central Park located at the core of the development is intended to provide a focus for both residents and visitors. It should be a destination for people with facilities to attract a wide range of users. The park has been located at the core of the development adjacent to the community campus where the space could be best utilised by the community.

The park is of a scale that it could accommodate a wide range of uses all within the core area. The park must include space for formal and informal sports and play activities. It should include a high quality civic space where organised events could take place and people could meet and sit outside.



fig. 193: Diagram highlighting location and setting of Countesswells Central Park.

### Function

- Principal civic space for Countesswells.
- Large equipped children's play space(s).
- Area for formal sports.
- Skate park.
- Informal play/amenity open space.
- Natural green space.
- Visitor parking areas.
- SUDs.



fig. 191: The Central Park should contain equipped areas for play and areas for formal sports.



fig. 192: Central Park should provide the key meeting and event space for the community.

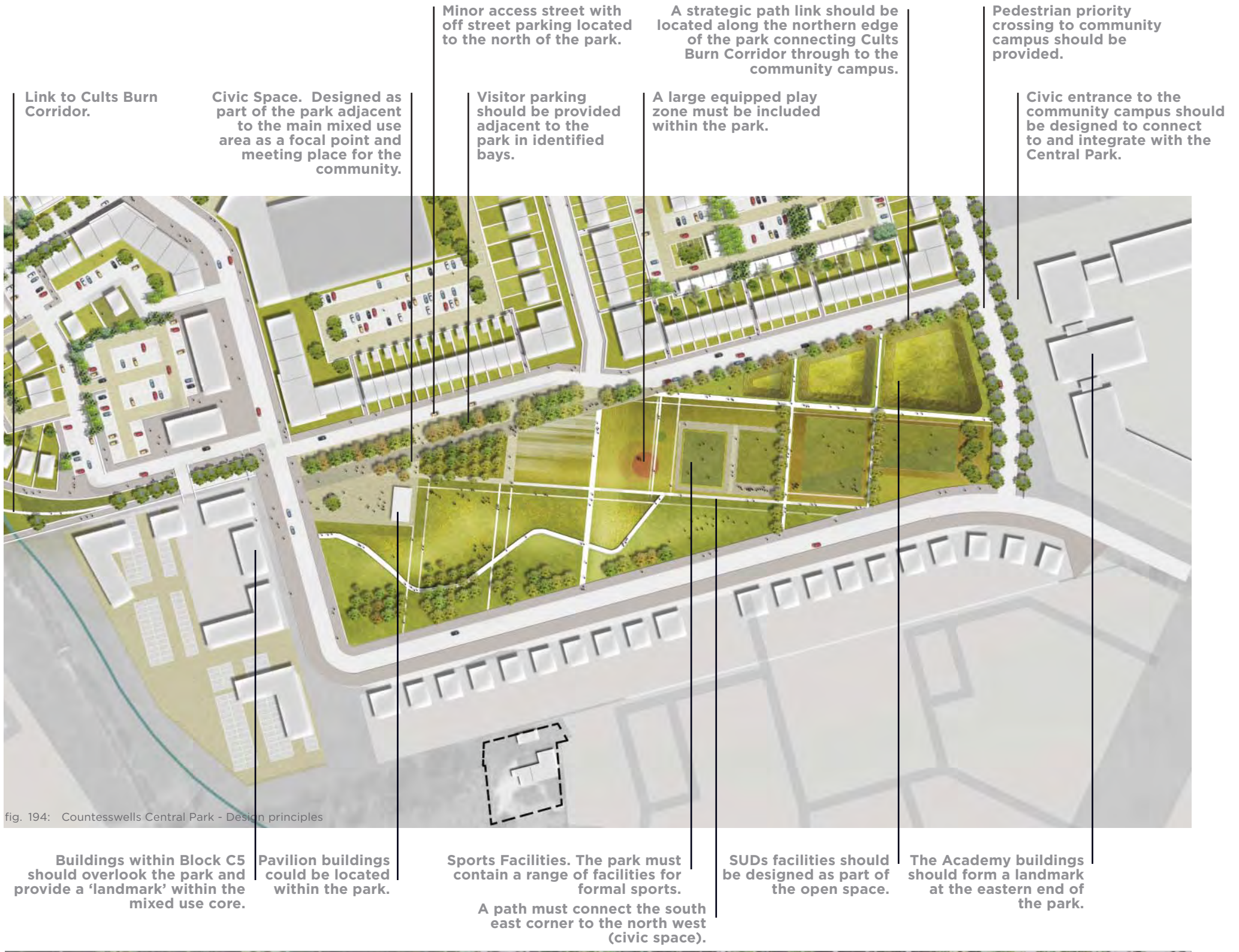


fig. 194: Countesswells Central Park - Design principles



fig. 195: Artists impression of strategic path link along the northern edge of Countesswells Central Park.

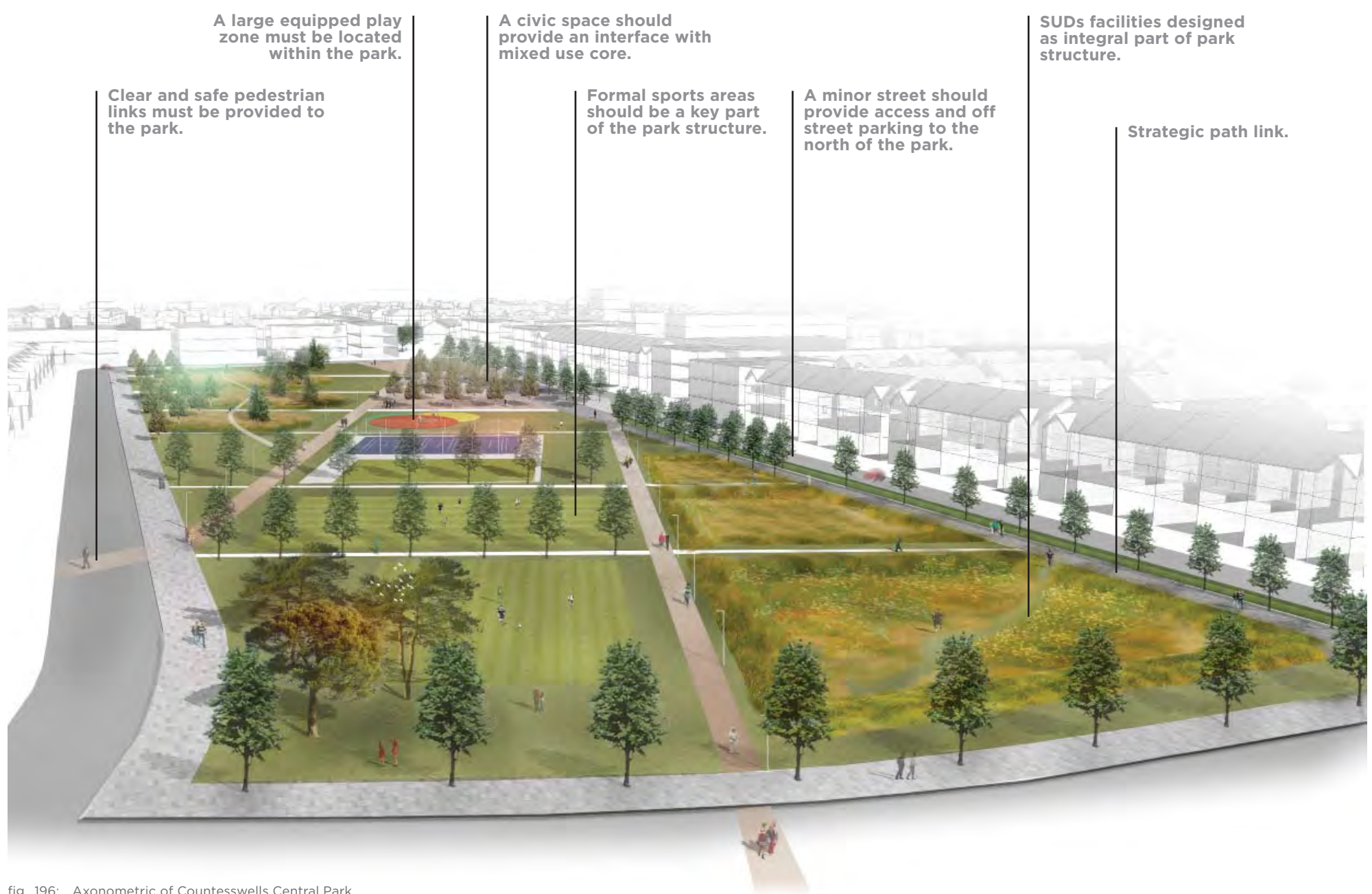


fig. 196: Axonometric of Countesswells Central Park.

## Countesswells Central Park - Design principles

The information listed below provides the elements that should be considered when detail design of the park is developed.

- The park will be formal in its layout to define a range of smaller spaces, designed as a whole, that can accommodate a wide variety of uses;
- The core civic space should be designed as part of the Central Park, providing an interface between the main mixed use area and the park itself.
- The civic space should contain a flexible meeting and performance space as part of the park. It should be designed to be lit and used at all times of the day;
- The park will contain a variety of facilities to encourage use at all times of the day and throughout the year;
- A strategic path link should be located along the northern edge of the park connecting Cults Burn Corridor to the community campus;
- A path must connect the south east corner of the park to the north west corner (civic space);
- A civic space should be designed as part of the community campus connecting to the park. A pedestrian priority crossing will be provided at the civic entrance to the community campus to provide safe and clear connections between the schools and the park. This could include a change in surface material physically connecting the spaces;
- Other paths must pass through the park connecting the adjacent community campus and residential areas to the mixed use core, these path links should be lit to provide safe and attractive routes;
- Good street crossing facilities must be designed in association with the park, providing easy access from adjacent areas;
- Pavilion buildings could be located within the park;
- Areas for seating must be provided throughout the park;
- All properties on the edge of the Park will address and overlook the space, providing an element of natural surveillance and policing;
- The principal Academy buildings should be located as landmark buildings at the eastern end of the park;
- The buildings within Block C5 (such as office buildings or a hotel) should be designed to form a landmark at the western end of the park;
- Visitor parking must be provided in bays adjacent to the street to the north and south of the park;
- Avenues and lines of tree planting should define the edges and separate areas of the park;
- A large equipped play zone must be provided within the park an appropriate distance from adjacent residential areas;
- A skate park could be located in an appropriate location away from adjacent residential areas;
- Areas for formal sports such as tennis courts, basketball courts and bowling greens will be provided, designed as part of the space;
- In determining the type of sports facilities to be provided, due regard should be given to the specific needs of the new community and SportsScotland's published design guidance;
- The SUDs facilities must be designed as an integral part of the park structure; and
- The park should be designed in such a way that it can be delivered through a number of phases, providing appropriate facilities such as play zones and SUDs as required.

## 6.5.2 Cults Burn Corridor

The sensitive treatment and successful integration of existing features such as Cults Burn (re-aligned and re-naturalised as a feature) will help define the Countesswells landscape structure. The proposed landscape structure has been defined to ensure the existing water course can be accommodated and respected in the layout. The park should incorporate the SUDs facilities and the Cults Burn as part of the design, exposing and integrating the natural hydrological systems as part of the public space adding to the character and diversity within the space.

The Cults Burn Corridor passes through the centre of Countesswells, connecting Hazlehead woodland in the north east, through the core area to the south east. This section is focused on the section of the space which is located within the Masterplan area.

The Cults Burn corridor provides a structure of connected public spaces throughout Countesswells that incorporate the water course within the proposed development structure. Through incorporating these features in the public spaces the users can appreciate the existing landscape character and understand the landscape as part of Countesswells.



fig. 197: Cults Burn Corridor - Design principles

## Character of Cults Burn Corridor

It is proposed that there should be a variety of different public spaces along the length of the Cults Burn Corridor as it passes through Countesswells, providing a range of character areas and spaces with different functions. Generally the Corridor should have a naturalistic and informal character surrounding the water course with more formal areas located adjacent to residential areas for play and recreation. All the spaces will provide valuable environments not only for ecological and hydrological improvement, but for recreation and as a setting to the adjacent urban areas.

The enhancement, de-culverting and design of watercourses and the surrounding areas of open space will be influenced by the Phase 1 flood risk assessment and in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Natural Environment Supplementary Guidance documents.



fig. 198: Illustration of Cults Burn Corridor through the Phase 1 area.

### Function

- Provide an open space corridor through which the existing Cults Burn can be re-naturalised and enhanced as a feature within the development adding ecological value and adding interest;
- Provide an open space corridor to connect Hazlehead woodland to Countesswells woodland, integrating the Burn Corridor. The burn corridor will be provided early in the development phasing with a connection maintained between Hazlehead and Countesswells throughout the development;
- The burn corridor should connect a variety of areas of open space including the Central Park, informal corridors and linear park areas;
- Provide an alignment for Core Path 57;
- Provide alignments for other strategic paths in line with the Development Framework, including a route that could accommodate equestrian users connecting Countesswells woodland to Hazlehead;
- The corridor should provide areas of open space through which strategic paths, including Core Path 57, can pass through Countesswells;
- Incorporate areas for two equipped play zones (identified in the Development Framework) in an areas of open space overlooked by adjacent houses;
- Create an attractive entrance space to the first phase of development and to the core area on approach from the north; and
- Provide a location for SUDs to be integrated into the strategic open space structure.



fig. 199: The Cults Burn corridor should have a focus on ecological and hydrological improvements.

### Design principles

- The Cults Burn should be re-naturalised and integrated within the design of corridor in line with SEPA and ACC guidelines;
- The Cults Burn Corridor should be designed as an informal area of open space and should incorporate areas of woodland planting and wetland managed with an ecological bias;
- The space should be designed to provide ecological benefit in connecting the existing woodland areas to the east and west of the site;
- The space should contain priority species of conservation importance and would benefit from areas of woodland planting;
- The Burn Corridor should contain large areas of undisturbed habitat increasing its ecological value;
- The public space should generally be informal in character however it may change in places in response to the character of the adjacent housing areas or the uses to be located within it, such as equipped play zones;
- Park areas near the primary school should be designed to promote and encourage access to the water course to provide education opportunities;
- Bridges and crossing points must be provided at appropriate intervals along the burn so that it does not become a barrier to movement. The exact location and details for crossing points should be determined at the time of detail design and subsequent planning application process;
- Core Path 57 must form a continuous off road path connection between Hazlehead and Countesswells woodland. Where the path crosses primary and secondary streets pedestrian controlled crossings should be provided;
- Where the Core Path and other strategic paths cross streets appropriate pedestrian crossing facilities should be considered;
- Good links should be provided between the residential areas and the park with specific connections to Core Path 57;
- The primary school site should be associated with the park with safe and direct linkages provided between the two functions;
- Properties on the edge of the park must address and overlook the space, providing an element of natural surveillance and policing;
- Within the area located within Phase 1 the park must include two equipped children's play zones in accordance with Aberdeen City Council Standards;
- SUDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage systems) facilities should be designed as an integral part of the core space;
- Areas for visitor car parking should be provided in bays adjacent to the park; and
- The park should be designed in such a way that it can be delivered through a number of phases, providing appropriate facilities such as play zones and SUDs as required.



### 6.5.3 Core Path link.

Between Blocks C1 and C2 a local area of open space must be provided connecting Countesswells Woodland to the Cults Burn Corridor, as identified in the Development Framework. The space will provide a link through which Core Path 57 can connect the entrance space (car park) to Countesswells Woodland to the Cults Burn Corridor, through which it can continue to the north connecting to Hazlehead Woodland. The space also provides a direct connection from Countesswells Woodland and the residential areas through to the mixed use core area, the Community Campus and Central Park.

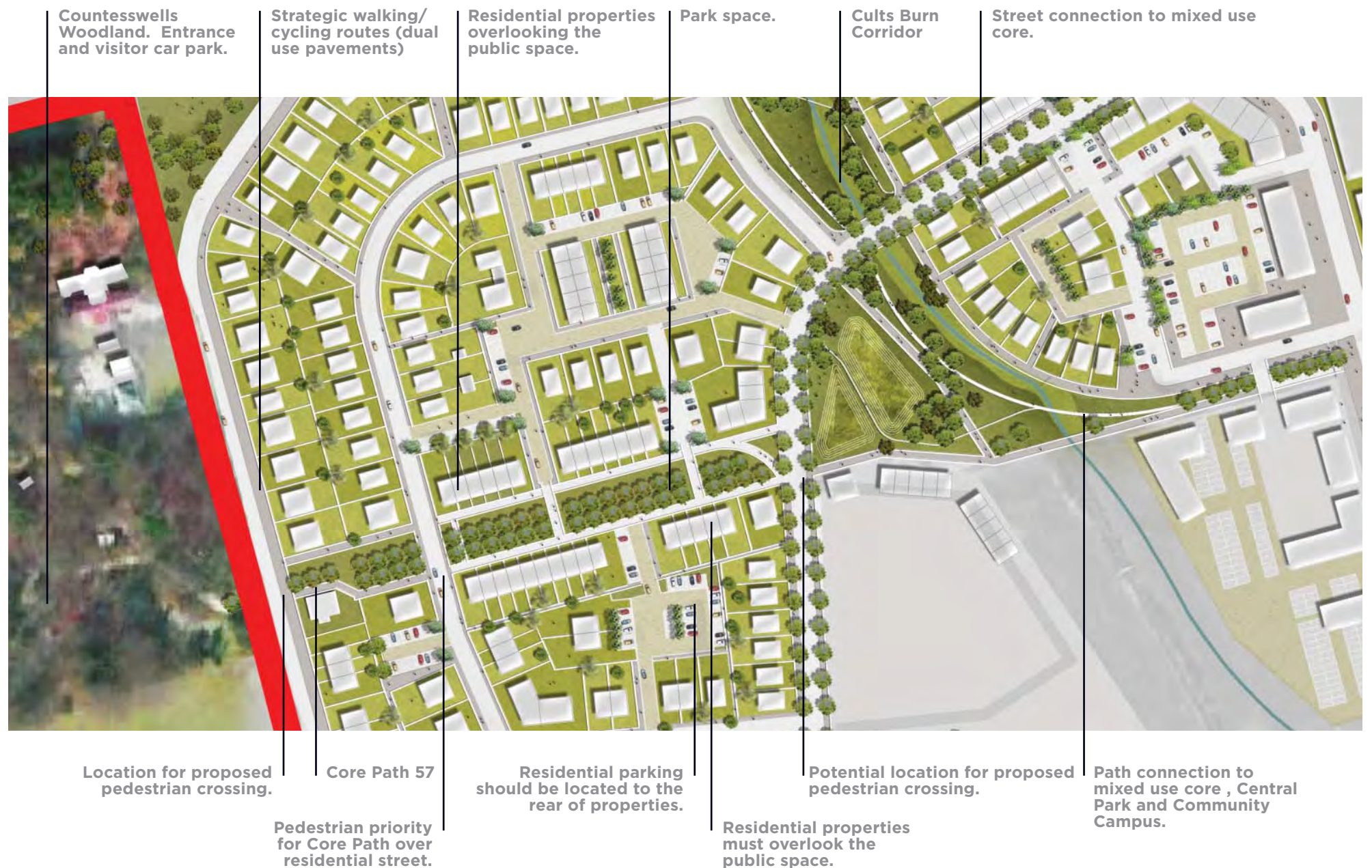


fig. 200: Core Path link - Design principles

### Function

- The space should provide a Local Area of open space, providing an area of open space for the adjacent residential areas (early phases).
- Provide a space through which Core Path 57 can connect Countesswells woodland to the Cults Burn Corridor and wider Countesswells.

### Design principles

- The space should be designed to incorporate the alignment of Core Path 57, it should be predominantly a soft landscape area with some areas for children's play and seating;
- The space between the blocks should be vehicle free along its length with the exception of north/south street links;
- The space should be designed to accommodate both active and passive activities as well as the Core Path and incorporate areas of high quality soft and hard landscape design;
- Where the Core Path crosses Kirk Brae (C189) to the west and the primary street to the east appropriate pedestrian crossing facilities should be provided;
- Where the Core Path crosses residential streets, the priority should be given to the Core Path;
- Buildings on either side must overlook the space;
- Clear plot boundaries of walls, hedges or railings should provide a clear definition between private gardens and the public space; and
- Parking for adjacent properties should be to the rear of the buildings.



fig. 201: Illustration of Core Path link.