





# Supplementary Guidance Pinewood and Hazledene Countesswells Road

Opportunity Sites 57 and 52

January 2013

The Pinewood and Hazledene Planning Brief was first produced prior to the adoption of the Local Development Plan. However the document remains valid, and the guidance derived from this still informs the City Council's decisions on such development in Aberdeen. The new Local Development Plan calls for appraisals of such reports and as part of this process the policy references within the supplementary guidance has been reviewed and updated. Therefore any queries concerning the text of the Supplementary Guidance should be directed to Planning and Sustainable Development for possible clarification

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# Pinewood/Hazledene Planning Brief

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This planning brief has been initiated by Keppie Planning Ltd, Planning and Development Consultants on behalf of Ben Reid Nurseries who have already submitted a planning application for residential development on part of the land covered by this brief.

1.2 A draft of the planning brief was the subject of public consultation during November 2003. The text of the planning brief has been amended by Aberdeen City Council to reflect as many of the comments that have been made as is practicable. Further updates have been made to bring the guidance up to date with the latest changes in Planning Policy.

1.3 The planning brief is intended to provide advice and guidance on the key development standards that will require to be met in the submission of detailed housing proposals for the development of the existing 'greenfield' site known as Pinewood and Hazledene.

1.4 Aberdeen City Council encourages the production of design statements for all major applications, for all applications involving locations that are sensitive because of the historical, architectural or landscape context and for all applications on prominent or "landmark" sites. The essential aim is to demonstrate that the local context is appreciated and to explain how the design responds to this. Any development of the Pinewood and Hazledene site must be supported by a Design Statement.

1.5 Developers will also be expected to provide supporting information with any planning applications that are made on such matters as the site context, landscape or townscape character, landform, soils and drainage, vegetation, access, other features and services. Failure to provide satisfactory information may lead to delays in the processing of applications.

1.6 As part of any planning application lodged for the development site a Transportation Assessment (TA) will require to be submitted to support the application and will identify any mitigative measures and improvements necessary on the existing road network. The TA has to meet the requirements of SPP (para 168) and accord with the principals of sustainable development.

1.7 When detailed proposals for the site are submitted they will be expected to adhere to the principles of this Planning Brief.

# 2.0 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The purpose of this Planning Brief is to set out the planning framework that will guide the development process and help to deliver a development that makes best use of the location for the benefit of both the occupants and the community at large.

2.2 Please note that, as indicated in paragraphs 4.0 et seq., Aberdeen City Council has only agreed at this time to release a first phase of the overall site for a development of 150 houses as part of a review of interim land release measures to meet structure plan housing targets, until a new local plan has been adopted.

2.3 The major component of the Brief is the creation of a residential development but the proposals shall also incorporate community facilities, neighbourhood shopping and community open space, both active and passive, and a network of pedestrian and cycle paths to link these facilities with new housing areas and adjoining areas of existing housing and green space.

2.4 The brief sets out objectives in sufficient detail to amplify planning policy as set out in the adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan, with respect to this particular site.

#### 3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The site extends to approximately 27.1 hectares (66.9 acres) or there by and adjoins the western boundary of the urban edge of Aberdeen, this being demarcated by a row of trees containing a public footpath.

3.2 The proposed site is located on the western outskirts of Aberdeen City, to the west of the residential areas of Craigiebuckler and Hazlehead, which is demarcated by a row of trees and public footpath. In plan form the site between Countesswells Road and Hazledene Road forms an 'L' shaped plot of land.

3.3 The site is largely flat and low lying with the highest point approximately in the middle (90 AOD) and the land gently falling to the north (85 AOD). The site comprises fields partly used until recently for horticultural purposes and divided by a mixture of shrubby vegetation and trees along boundary stone walls, of which some are crumbling, and a mature cypress hedge.

3.4 The site is bounded as follows:

• To the east by a well used footpath along the southern section, and the residential area of Craigiebuckler beyond. A row of mature beech trees define the boundary to the existing residential development;

• To the south by Countesswells Road, the Robert Gordon Academy sports facility and playing fields;

• To the west by Ben Reid Nurseries and mature woodland, acting as a buffer between the proposed site and Dobbies Garden Centre. Den Wood is a District Wildlife Site (No 31) part of which adjoins the north-west of the proposed development. There is public access to Den Wood; and

• To the north by Hazledene Road and Hazlehead Park beyond.

3.5 The existing housing to the immediate east of the site comprises low-rise residential development, generally of one and one-and-a-half storeys in height.

#### 4.0 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

4.1 The development plan currently comprises the approved Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (September 2009) and the adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012. Under the current Local Development Plan the Pinewood and Hazledene site is zoned as policy H1 - Residential Areas, with policy NE1 - Green Space Network designated to parts of the site.

4.2 On 17th June 2003, Aberdeen City Council's Policy & Strategy Committee, in considering a report on Interim Housing Land Guidance, agreed to release a first phase of the site at Pinewood/ Hazledene for a housing development of 150 units.

4.3 The Committee instructed that subsequent layouts must ensure that:

a) There will be significant improvement in public transport in the area;

b) the existing network of paths will be enhanced and maintained;

c) the overspill car parking problem at the Robert Gordon College Playing Field site at Countesswells will be resolved: and

d) after school facilities in the area will be increased.

Developers will be required to demonstrate in their proposals that these matters have been appropriately dealt with.

4.4 The development of the land is to be split into two phases comprising a southern site (Pinewood) and northern site (Hazledene). In order that future construction and infrastructure is logical and practical the southern phase of 150 houses is to be completed first.

4.5 When the design brief was first published, consideration was only given for the release of up to 150 houses. It was envisaged that the development of the second phase would be subject to a review of the local plan. The local plan has now been reviewed with the production of the Local Development Plan. The Pinewood and Hazledene sites have been allocated as Opportunity Sites, OP57 and OP52 respectively, suitable for development.

4.6 The general development shall include both family and affordable housing which is a key target of the Community Plan.

4.7 Existing residents living in the area are concerned that the local area is already deficient in a range of convenient neighbourhood services. The merits of developing parts of the site for community facilities, health and shopping shall be evaluated and form part of any development.

4.8 All proposals shall be assessed against the policies of the development plan and relevant Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and Planning Advice Notes (PAN's) which are in force at the time of determination.

# 5.0 DESIGN GUIDANCE

5.1 The L-shaped area between Countesswells Road and Hazledene Road can most easily be subdivided into two parts or phases, the first of around 10.4 hectares comprising the southern three fields with a depth along the eastern boundary from Countesswells Road of just over 300 metres to coincide with the depth of the existing housing between Countesswells Crescent and Pinewood Road. Future development of the remaining second part of the L-shaped area may be considered for release at a later date as part of the new local plan.

5.2 The landscape character, physical features and biodiversity of the site and its surroundings require to be studied in bringing forward proposals for its development. The studies shall inform the process of layout and design to ensure that the development is compatible with its surroundings, and will not give rise to any adverse impacts. Where impacts are recognised the design process must demonstrate that they are capable of being adequately mitigated. In this respect, regard shall be given to available national planning guidance, including that contained within PAN44"Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape".

# Scale and Density

5.3 a) It is considered that given the rural location of the site, the need for compatibility with neighbouring housing, and the proximity to Hazlehead Park, an average density of around twelve houses per hectare would normally be suitable for this locality. The accommodation of significant areas of open space, structure planting, a footpath network and for the more efficient and sustainable use of land, however, point to the need to consider slightly higher densities for some of the built parts of the development. Proposals will need to be considered on individual merit but the contribution that the designs make to landscape, open space, and biodiversity will be critical factors that will be used to determine whether layouts are acceptable or not.

b) In this context, and given the scale of the Pinewood and Hazledene site and the need to create a diverse and interesting residential environment, it is not considered necessary to create a uniform housing density across the whole development. All designs, however, must ensure that that they fit the landscape and that any amenities currently enjoyed by existing residents are not eroded. Where a range of density and house type may be proposed therefore, developers must be able to demonstrate that layouts are compatible with existing housing areas to the east.

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c) To present a 'green image' on the western edge of the City and close to Hazlehead Park, the opportunity shall be taken of providing substantial open space, green footpath links and associated structural landscaping, along with larger house plots and gardens. Each development proposal will be dealt with by reference to the Local Development Plan and associated Supplementary Guidance and on the individual merits of any accompanying layout and design details.

#### Layout, Design and Materials

5.4 a) New housing development shall seek to enhance the individual identity of the Pinewood and Hazledene community. Developers will be required to examine opportunities for creating a sense of place with interest and character through an imaginative use of:

• open space and landscaping

• colour and texture of building materials

• range of house types and storey height

• the provision of distinctive features and landmarks at key viewpoints(e.g. public art, group of trees, areas of open space, etc).

A key objective will be the creation of a distinctive community which is well integrated into the larger neighbourhood.

b) One way in which distinctiveness may be emphasised is by creating a distinct sense of arrival at any point of entry into the development. Retention of the frontage area of trees and vegetation along Countesswells Road will form an important element in maintaining existing character and amenity of the main approaches, and will also help to screen any development activities from road users.

c) The layout will be also be designed to retain, restore and enhance as many of the other existing landscape features, field boundaries, including stone walls and associated trees and other vegetation as possible across the site, which will help to maintain an individual sense of place and character.

d) There may be some scope for the use of different types of materials in building design (eg. facing brick, render, stone block, etc). This variation of house design and materials across the site may create additional visual interest, but the development shall maintain an element of consistency in terms of building groupings, their massing, style and detailing.

e) Whilst innovative and distinctive designs that help to give a sense of place will be encouraged, at the same time some of the traditional forms and design characteristics which are familiar to the local Aberdeen area shall be reflected in the overall layout. All designs and materials shall otherwise be of high quality and shall be compatible with the local area.

# Affordable Housing

5.5 a) The Structure Plan, Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance contain policies which require affordable housing to be provided as part of new housing developments. The definition of affordable housing provided by the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan is:

"Housing which is made available at a cost below full market value to meet an identified need. It includes homes rented from the council and housing associations and, in some cases, homes sold or rented from the private sector."

b) On 29th February 2012 the Aberdeen Local Development Plan was adopted by Aberdeen City Council which includes reference to affordable housing (Policy H5 - Affordable Housing). This requires that for all developments of 5 units or more there is a requirement to contribute no less than 25% of the total number of units as affordable housing.

c) Supplementary Guidance on Affordable Housing should be consulted which sets out further guidance on the provision of affordable housing from new housing developments.

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### **Developer Contributions**

5.6 a) Developer contributions to mitigate any infrastructure costs arising from this development, will be required to address any identified educational constraint, deficiency of community facilities, or other deficiency which will arise as a result of the development proposed.

b) Developers cannot be expected to make good existing shortfalls but shall provide measures designed to address the consequences of their development.

c) The Council will expect planning applications for development to include proposals which:

• Address the infrastructural aspects of the development including open space and drainage;

• Ensure that a reasonable choice of types of transport will be available to and from the development; and

• Mitigate any adverse effects that travel demand generated by development will have on the transportation system in a way that reduces the need to travel by car.

# Sustainability

- 5.7 a) The design and layout of the buildings and other development shall demonstrate that it meets the standards of sustainability promoted by Aberdeen City Council. High performance building design shall allow for energy efficiency in both summer and winter conditions.
  - b) Key issues from sustainability can be summarised as:
    - (i) The use of building and landscape materials from sustainable sources;

(ii) Optimising energy efficiency by design, solar heating, solar shading and building orientation in relation to glass and solid areas;

(iii) The establishment and retention of trees, open spaces and other natural vegetation, as a means of attenuating climatic effect, and as a natural wildlife resource;

(iv) Minimising the use of hard surfacing with preference being given to more natural surfaces;

(v) Diverting run-off water in an acceptable way towards areas of vegetation, rather than capturing it in enclosed gullies and drains; and

(vi) Minimising traffic generation and movement.

# **Recycling Facility**

5.8 a) The opportunity will be taken for locating a mini or small-scale household recycling centre within the development. Detailed planning applications will clearly show where and how this facility will operate.

# Site Drainage

5.9 a) Existing natural or man-made drainage patterns across the site will be the subject of proper assessment. Developers will be required to show that any new development will not prevent or disturb natural drainage to the extent that it is likely to create water logging or flooding within, or in areas adjoining, the site. Where such assessment shows that existing open drains, water courses or springs, are likely to be impacted upon the layout will be adjusted to ensure that in the interests of maintaining existing, or new planting, and towards safeguarding wildlife habitat, existing drainage patterns will be accommodated.

b) The development proposals shall also ensure that the disposal of surface water run-off from hard surfaces in the new development, and for other forms of urban drainage, is managed by sustainable means. They shall incorporate Best Management Practice for surface water disposal. Advice and design guidance shall be obtained from SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) during the design stage.

c) SPP paragraph 77 states that a "key consideration is the protection and enhancement of landscape, natural, built and cultural heritage, biodiversity and the wider environment, including consideration of flood risk. PAN 61 Planning and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems contain further advice on this subject.

### **Boundary Treatment**

5.10 a) New development shall create a new edge to this part of Aberdeen, and great care will be required informing a new relationship with both the existing urban area and the countryside. It is inappropriate for the new (western, southern and northern) boundaries to be defined only by a line of rear garden fences.

b) Substantial structured planting will be required to help reduce the visual impact of the development and subdivide the site. The depths of these will vary but the main elements shall not be less than 20m wide and, where possible, shall tie in with existing woodland and drystane field boundaries to form blocks of indigenous and diverse habitats. The character of the surrounding landscape shall be carefully assessed in order to identify the form and species of new planting.

#### **Open Space, Play Areas, Landscaping, and Tree Issues**

- 5.11 a) The Council's Supplementary Guidelines on open space provision for greenfield sites requires the provision of 2.8ha of open space per 1,000 people and lists four main categories that can be provided, namely:
- Sports Pitches/Playing Fields 1.6ha per 1,000 population

• Equipped Children's Playspace 0.3 ha per 1,000 population

Informal Play/Amenity Open Space 0.5ha per 1,000 population

Natural Greenspace/Green Corridors 1ha per 1,000 population

b) The Guideline highlights that account shall always be taken of the individual needs of a development and local site conditions in deciding open space requirements.

c) In this regard, despite the proximity of Hazlehead Park to the application site, it is considered necessary to incorporate informal local open spaces, play areas and equipped playspaces, and natural greenspace/green corridors to the levels given above.

d) A high voltage electricity power line crosses the south of the site. A reasonable buffer between it and habitable buildings or recreational open space will be required in the interests of public health and safety. The ground under the power line will not be counted as contributing towards open space requirements.

e) Proposals for the establishment and long-term maintenance of all open space areas and structured planting within the site will be required. Proposals shall meet the council's' Open Space Development Guidelines for Greenfield Sites' including those for adoption, estate factoring or other means. The transfer of responsibility for open space maintenance to individual householders will not be acceptable.

f) Scottish Planning Policy paragraph 77 states that key considerations with new development must be "the protection and enhancement of landscape, natural, built and cultural heritage, biodiversity and the wider environment, including consideration of flood risk." SPP paragraph 147 continues that "...individual trees, especially veteran trees, may also have significant biodiversity value and make a significant contribution to landscape character and quality so should be protected from adverse impacts resulting from development. The Scottish Government's control of woodland removal policy includes a presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources. Woodland removal should only be allowed where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits. In appropriate cases compensatory planting may form part of the balance.

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Some trees in the area are already protected by a Tree Preservation Order made by the City Council.

g) Developers must demonstrate that layouts have been designed to minimise tree loss. Written justification for the removal of any existing tree or group of trees will be required. Moreover, proposals for future tree planting shall be included within each detailed planning permission.

h) A scheme for the physical protection of trees during the construction phase of any development, including those in close proximity but which may be growing in adjoining areas, will be required before building commences on the ground.

i) Areas of existing or proposed planting, open spaces, or those to be planted up as part of an approved landscape scheme, shall not be used for construction or storage activities whilst the scheme is being built. Planting will be carried out during the first available planting season following commencement of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing. A maintenance programme for landscaping works, and the means by which they will be put into effect, will also be required.

j) A plan will be required before development commences illustrating where on the site the storage of soil, spoil, building materials, workers parking and site offices will be located. The choice of location of these shall ensure that they do not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residential areas, users of Hazlehead Park, or traffic on Countesswells Road whether by vehicle movements, visual disturbance, noise, smoke or dust pollution.

k) Structural planting and any other landscaping shall comply with the Council's landscape guidelines. In particular landscaping shall be prepared with a clear design philosophy in mind and where it is not clear developers may be asked to provide a relevant landscape statement.

I) Soft landscaping treatments will be expected to provide a definite structure or theme for the development. Landscape plans shall show precisely how proposed trees and shrubs are to be distributed around the site, and clearly show whether it is proposed to retain, removes, or replace existing elements, with justifications where necessary.

m) Planting details shall include reference to specific species, their location, grouping arrangements, density or spacing, and planting sizes. Areas for planting need to be of sufficient size to hold species which will have some landscape impact, be in scale with adjacent buildings, and accommodate planting without affecting adjoining areas or vice versa.

# **Plot Considerations**

5.12 a) The overall pattern of development (plot ratios) shall generally respect the surrounding area.

b) Garden ground for all types of housing on the site (ie. detached, semi-detached, terraced and flats) shall provide adequate space for drying areas, refuse storage and sitting out.

#### Window-to-Window Distances

5.13 a) The new housing development shall ensure that no privacy or overlooking problems result, either within the site or to neighbouring properties adjoining the site.

b) The minimum distance between windows of directly facing habitable rooms shall be no less than 18m. This can be relaxed where such windows are at an angle from each other.

# Overshadowing

5.14 a) The height and positioning of houses shall not have an overpowering, overshadowing or visually intrusive impact on neighbouring properties.

#### Parking within the Plot

5.15 a) Residential parking shall comply with the standards set by and in consultation with the City Council, and will depend on the sizes of individual houses (ie. no. of bedrooms).

b) A minimum driveway length of 6m shall be provided at each plot to ensure that a car can be parked without overhanging the footway. All driveways will be appropriately surfaced and completed prior to the houses being occupied.

c) Detached garages will require to be finished in the same materials as used in the house. Running business from garages would not be permitted and integral garages would not be allowed to change use without the written permission of the planning authority (to ensure that adequate off-street parking is still provided).

#### Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation, Public Transport and Car Parking

5.16 a) The main access to Phase 1 of the site will be made off Countesswells Road, at the southern end of the site, by means of a new road junction. Future development of Phase 2 if approved by the Council will require that this access road be extended and looped around the site to connect with the northern end of Countesswells Avenue. Accommodation will be required for public transport access with convenient stopping, picking up or dropping off points.

b) When completed the main access road through the development will be to Local Distributor standard. There will be no frontage access to the dwellings from this road.

c) All other new Residential Roads will be designed to General Access Road standard. Measures will be incorporated to reduce speed limits to20mph, and traffic calming measures will be introduced where required to ensure that vehicles will not present safety risks to pedestrians or other road users.

d) Footpath widths will generally be 2m within the residential areas. However, as the width of footway relates to the scale of development and the anticipated demands by pedestrians and cyclists, this may be increased to 3m in places to ensure safety and the avoidance of conflicts.

e) The intention of the brief is to maintain and enhance the existing paths provision for walking and cycling, in line with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Irrespective of their legal status, any existing paths of long standing that the Council is aware of will be treated as rights of way to be protected.

f) Pedestrian movements shall be made as convenient, safe and pleasant as possible by careful attention to the design and layout of pedestrian routes. These pedestrian routes shall reflect the routes which people will wish to commonly take and shall be more direct and attractive to use than vehicular routes. Provision for cyclists will also be included.

g) The location of such amenities as neighbourhood shopping facilities, schools, bus services and local recreation areas will serve to determine the routes that pedestrian and cycle paths will take. Routes will be designed to coincide where possible with existing pathways or along former field boundaries and pass through attractively landscaped corridors which will vary in width but shall not be less than 10 metres wide. Existing vegetation, trees and walls shall be retained or restored to enhance these routes.

h) Any cycle paths provided within the development site, should be aimed at connecting with any wider city network and by design within the site be separated from vehicular and where possible pedestrian traffic.

i) Safe crossing points shall be provided for pedestrians and cyclists at roads with significant traffic flows. Cycle and footpath routes shall link into adjoining areas and the wider public network, and seek to safeguard the amenity of residents within and immediately outwith the area covered by this brief.

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j) The City Council has identified public transport minimum accessibility standards which require:

regular and frequent public transport, which is defined as a bus (and/or train) at least every 15 minutes, and
which is available within 400m of the site.

k) At present public transport in the immediate area does not operate to these standards particularly in the evenings and at weekends. Steps shall be taken in the design of any new development to ensure that all of the ways of making public transport more readily available, and to encourage its use, have been investigated and put in place before the development is completed. Developers will be required to demonstrate what measures have been taken.

I) With respect to the need to address the current overspill car parking problem at the Robert Gordon College Playing Field site at Countesswells. However this may be proposed to be resolved, the onus will be on the developer to demonstrate that any proposed scheme addresses the problem adequately, is environmentally friendly and will work safely.

# Accessibility for all

5.17 a) Access to the development shall be provided for all sections of the community. In this respect, the layout will be expected to incorporate the following:

• pedestrian routes of a sufficient width to allow prams, double pushchairs and wheelchairs to pass;

• dropped kerbs at all crossing points; and

• the provision of ramps (1:12 maximum gradient) in addition to steps, where appropriate.

# **Designing Out Crime**

5.18 a) The design and layout of the development shall aim to create a physical environment which makes crime more difficult and reduces people's fear of crime. Regard shall be given to PAN 46 "Planning for Crime Prevention". Contact should be made with the Grampian Police Architectural Liaison Officer at an early stage in the design of the development.

b) In this regard, the following measures will be considered:

• open space and play areas should be overlooked by houses to increase surveillance opportunities;

• traffic calming measures to slowdown the movement of vehicles and ensure that they are capable of being observed;

• the provision of pedestrian routes across the development site should be designed to allow residents to become aware of strangers and reduce the opportunities for unobserved or hidden access to areas in close proximity to houses;

• the use of deterrent or prickly shrub species in vulnerable areas and planting set back from the edges of paths, entrances and windows; and

• sufficient levels of street lighting to be provided throughout the site.

c) In general there will be a need to introduce design measures to reduce the likelihood of antisocial activity around houses, footpaths and cycleways and open spaces, including the use of such areas by motor-cyclists.

#### Services

5.19 a) The locations of services at the site will be thoroughly investigated and plotted on a plan(s) for submission with any detailed application for planning permission. Care must be taken that the proposed routes of new service tracks will not impact on existing areas of trees or other vegetation; or cross areas of proposed landscaping that may be disturbed during any subsequent maintenance work.

b) New telephone and electrical services shall be by means of underground supply. Electrical substations shall be located within suitably designed enclosures to reduce noise and improve safety. Where substations are readily visible consideration will also need to be given to softening their impact by appropriate landscaping.

Further detailed advice should be obtained from the Council's Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team.

For further information, please contact:

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