



# The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process

## A Guide for Developers

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process has been prepared as a guide for developers. Reflecting current national design guidance, the Process seeks to enable the delivery of sustainable places.
- 1.2 Successful places are sustainable and have distinct identity. **Designing Places** and **Designing Streets**, policy statements for Scotland, set the context for creating places. Successful places are safe, pleasant, easy to move around and welcoming to visitors. They are sustainable and adaptable to changing circumstances in social, economic and environmental conditions. Good street design must consider place before movement and should meet the qualities set out in Designing Places.
- 1.3 These policies are supported by **PAN 83: Master Planning** which promotes the use of masterplanning to create better places,
- 1.4 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan sets out the Spatial Strategy up to 2030, promoting development of sustainable mixed communities. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan translates this into a settlement strategy for Aberdeen allocating appropriate sites for development and highlights masterplanning as means to achieve efficient and sustainable places.

## 2. Masterplanning

- 2.1 This process identifies the need to consider an integrated approach to site planning, urban design, sustainable transport, ecology, landscaping and community involvement. There is also a recognised 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. Under the umbrella heading of 'Masterplanning' Aberdeen City Council (ACC) proposes tackling this through three design tools –
  - A) **Development Frameworks** – setting out a baseline, or two dimensional spatial framework, for the way in which large areas that may be in multiple ownerships, are to be developed. This will involve –
    - appraising local context;
    - reviewing whatever policy, guidance and regulations apply;
    - conceiving a vision for the place;
    - determining feasibility;
    - establishing planning and design principles; and
    - agreement on the development process.

Where developers decide to submit a detailed planning application on the basis of a development framework rather than proceed to the preparation of a full Masterplan, visual assessment to demonstrate the three dimensional form of proposed development from at least three viewpoints located on public roads or places must be submitted to support two dimensional layout plans. Development

Frameworks can be prepared by ACC, landowners or developers.

- B) **Masterplans** – detailed guidance, in three dimensions, on design matters, specific topics, or land uses for sites in single ownership, or for buildings or external spaces within a larger development framework. For some sites a basic development framework may require to be developed into a more detailed three dimensional Masterplan, describing and illustrating the proposed urban form. The initial sites where this is expected are identified by the Local Development Plan. Masterplans may include Design Codes and will include a detailed timeline for delivery.

Masterplans will be developed for residential sites with an area over 2 hectares or 50 houses or more, for sites identified in the Local Development Plan, or other large scale sites deemed appropriate. Masterplans prepared in accordance with the Masterplanning Process will be recommended for adoption as Supplementary Guidance. Masterplans will be adopted before development will be considered for planning permission.

- C) **Planning Briefs** – site specific guidance highlighting planning policies, constraints and opportunities. A planning brief informs any planning application made for the site.

Planning Briefs can range from small sites in conservation areas up to the scale of a masterplan. Planning briefs will be prepared at the discretion of the City Council.

2.2 The City Council will produce development frameworks, masterplans or planning briefs for sites owned by the Council. For sites in other ownership, in order to make the most of limited staff resources, the City Council encourages the landowner or developer to commission consultants in co-operation with the planning authority. When the planning authority is in agreement with the content of the draft guidance it is reported to the relevant Committee

2.4 This hierarchy of design tools (supplementary guidance) will set out proposals for land use, buildings and external spaces, and the efficient means of moving around and between them. They must ensure that development fits the local context and creates a meaningful sense of place. Proposals will be accompanied by a reliable delivery strategy, and include a programme for stakeholder consultation.

2.5 The Local Development Plan has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, avoiding the need for further individual strategic environmental assessments for allocated sites. Some planning applications for large or sensitive sites may still require to be supported by individual Environmental Impact Assessment.

2.6 To aid the process of moving from initial conception towards implementation on the ground for each plan area, a lead officer within ACC will be identified to work directly with the landowner, developer or client's planning team. For this to work effectively initial contact should be made with the Team Leader for Masterplanning and Design.

### 3. Content of Supplementary Guidance

3.1 All guidance, irrespective of which of the above types it is, should consist of illustrative plans and a supporting written statement. The full scope of work, together with a robust communication plan, will be agreed between the planning authority and the developer at inception.

3.2 In mapped form a Development Framework, Masterplan or Planning Brief will illustrate –

- The site location, development boundaries and surrounding context
- Land ownership or control
- Significant site features and constraints (and how these are mitigated)
- Distribution and relationship of existing and proposed land uses, site plots
- Proposals for built form – e.g. massing, height, density, orientation, grids or blocks
- Movement routes (for both non-motorised and motorised use) and connection to wider strategic networks
- The framework and role of landscape and open space

3.3 The written part of a Development Framework, Masterplan or Planning Brief will be commensurate with the scale and complexity of the site and cover the following issues:

#### Context

- A) **Site Description** and appraisal (including the surrounding area) with a summary of baseline information
- B) **Planning Policy Review**
- C) **Vision Statement** - the stated aims and objectives of what the supplementary guidance will achieve
- D) **Feasibility Appraisal** - options appraisal and phasing diagram demonstrating how and when development will be delivered

#### Identity

- E) **Planning and Design Principles** –
  - (i) Description of the physical, economic and social elements of the area
  - (ii) Indicative design concepts and proposals that can help to create a successful place, and
  - (iii) the principles that can inform the more detailed stage including any sustainable design standards, e.g. –
    - Building design
    - Streets
    - Open spaces – parks, squares, civic, play

- Landscape, tree cover and structure planting
- Greenspace network
- Ecology / biodiversity
- Buildings
- Infrastructure and services
- Other facilities – e.g. education, employment, community facilities
- Sustainability issues
  - Energy efficiency (carbon + thermal)
  - Power generation
  - Renewable energy
  - Drainage
  - Materials
  - Waste disposal / pollution
  - Recycling
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Management
  - Green transport plans / travel planning

## Connection

### F) Accessibility

Footpaths, cycle paths, access to public transport and general access, areas of conflict, core paths and desire lines

### G) External Links

Connection to surrounding neighbourhoods  
 Access to services  
 Access to open space/green space network

### H) Infrastructure

Quantify impact on surrounding infrastructure  
 Define infrastructure requirements  
 Establish phasing and delivery

## Communication and Engagement

### I) General

- (i) It is essential that a communication and engagement plan is developed and agreed at inception to ensure appropriate levels of community involvement can be maintained throughout masterplan preparation.
- (ii) An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment must be carried out.
- (iii) All planning applications for national or major development must comply with the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) process outlined in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006. If PAC is required applicants must submit a Proposal of Application Notice at least 12 weeks prior to the submission of the planning application. As there is no upper time limit, it is recommended that Notice be submitted early in the masterplanning process to enable all engagement to contribute to the consultation process and avoid duplication. Exact details will be agreed with the planning authority at inception.

### J) Community

- (i) Local communities, community councils and other groups must be actively engaged throughout the Masterplan process.

- (ii) Neighbourhood Community Planning Officers maintain links to communities from the City Council and must be involved throughout the Masterplan process.

#### **K) Elected Members**

Elected Members represent constituents in the community, have detailed knowledge of issues affecting their wards and should be involved in the Process. This need not continue beyond information gathering and should not prejudice any Member's position in determining planning application.

#### **L) Transport**

Roads authorities, public transport operators (including bus and rail), NESTRANS and Transport Scotland must be involved as necessary throughout the development of the proposal.

#### **M) Agencies**

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage or other statutory or relevant consultees as appropriate will be involved in the early stages of planning to determine key issues. In addition, utilities, NHS Grampian, Grampian Police Architectural Liaison Officer, emergency and other services, should also be consulted.

#### **N) Other**

Landowners and tenants affected by proposals.

## **4. Post Preparation**

**4.1 Development Process** - the key steps for implementation must be submitted to support the masterplan, outlining the development process and delivery strategy in respect of –

- Stakeholder and public consultation
- measures for submitting and assessing detailed proposals and for changing the Masterplan if circumstances change (including a return to the community if significant changes are to be made)
- an indication of any critical elements such as costs, phasing, funding, timing, and
- delivery organisations - the key partners in the development and their respective roles: ACC, regeneration agencies, developers, funders, designers, the community, tenants, transport providers, etc.

**4.2** Commercially sensitive information relating to costs and funding will not be included in public documents, but will be necessary to assist in determining appropriate developer contributions. Information such as cost of development is normally included in planning applications.

#### **4.3 Reporting**

All supplementary guidance satisfying the criteria outlined above will be reported to the appropriate Council Committee(s), together with the results of full stakeholder and public engagement carried out by the client body.

Provided the Communication and Engagement process has been properly addressed throughout the development of

the masterplan and it is demonstrated that the community has been actively involved, and how their views have been taken into consideration in the final submission, the City Council will endeavour to adopt the masterplan without the need for further consultation.

However, if the City Council is not satisfied that adequate public engagement has taken place throughout the development of the masterplan, a 6 week consultation period will be required. A final draft masterplan will then be reported to Planning Committee detailing the consultation response.

Final Masterplans, once approved, will be adopted as supplementary guidance (SG) to the local development plan and will serve as material considerations in determination of planning applications.

#### **4.4 Timeline**

The length of time from inception to completion will depend on the size and complexity of the study area together with the resources the developer allocates to the project, particularly in terms of community engagement. The Masterplanning & Design Team of the Planning & Sustainable Development Service will co-ordinate the City Council's input into the preparation of masterplans and will agree reporting schedules with the developer at inception.

The progress of applications which conform to adopted supplementary guidance should be significantly shorter than those which do not. It should be noted that for those that do not, pre-application consultation reports for

significant developments are required to accompany planning applications under the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

Where the need for a Masterplan has been identified, planning applications affecting the area which are consistent with approved Masterplan guidance are likely to be considered favourably.

#### **4.5 Supplementary Guidance**

The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 (part 2 section 22) stipulates that for a document to become supplementary guidance to a Local Development Plan, the council, in their opinion, must be sure that:

- it has been adequately advertised within the City,
- those who are entitled to make representation, have been made aware of it and allowed to do so,
- those who have right to make representation have had sufficient time to do so.

All proposed supplementary Guidance must be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for a minimum of 28 days, once this time has elapsed the Council may adopt the supplementary unless advised otherwise.

## 5. Bibliography

The following publications and guidance will be used to inform and support the Masterplan Process:

Aberdeen Local Development Plan  
Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan Aug 2009  
NESTRANS Regional Transport Strategy/2021  
Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012  
Core Paths Plan 2009

Designing Places – A Policy Statement for Scotland  
Designing Streets  
Policy Statement on Architecture - Building Our Legacy  
SPP1 The Planning System  
Scottish Planning Policy  
PAN 59 Improving Town Centres  
PAN 65 Planning and Open Space  
PAN 67 Housing Quality  
PAN 68 Design Statements  
PAN 72 Housing in the Countryside  
PAN 74 Affordable Housing  
PAN 75 Planning for Transport  
PAN 77 Designing Safer Places  
PAN 78 Inclusive Design  
PAN 81 Community Engagement - Planning With People  
PAN 81 Summary Sheet - Examples of Community  
Engagement in Land Use Planning  
PAN 83 Masterplanning

## 6. Further Information

For further information please contact:

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Note – The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process is a revised version of the process adopted in November 2008, taking into account subsequently updated government guidance.