

5. Site Details		
5.1	<p>What name would you like the site to be known by?</p> <p>(Please note if the site is currently included within the ALDP2017 please use the OP site number)</p>	Gillahill, Kingswells
5.2	Site Address	south of Kingswells Crescent Kingswells Aberdeen
5.3	Postcode	
5.4	Have you any information for the site on the internet? If so please provide the web address:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No Details: No
5.5	Is the site currently being marketed?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No Details: No
5.6	Site Location Map (Please include an OS Map with the Boundary of the site clearly marked)	Details:
5.7	Please provide the National Grid reference of the site.	NJ873074
5.8	What is the current use of the site?	Open fields
5.9	Has there been any previous development on the site? If yes please provide details	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No Details: No previous development, but the site was identified for development in previous Local Plans. It is as a logical location for additional housing in Kingswells.

6. Legal and Planning History			
6.1	Please indicate the relationship to the Proposer or Person / Organisation they are working on behalf of, has with the site.	Sole owner	
		Part owner	
		Option to purchase	✓
		No legal interest	
6.2	Is the site under option to a developer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Yes, under option to Stewart Milne Homes	
6.3	Is the proposed site included in the ALDP2017?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details: see paper apart	
6.4	Is the proposed site included in the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details:	
6.5	Has the site been subject of previous discussions with the Council or any agent there of?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: see paper apart	
6.6	Has the site been subject of previous Planning Applications? (Please provide a planning reference)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: 001887 - November 2000 - 200 houses 040511 - May 2004 - 170 houses	
6.7	Has the site been subject of a previous Bid to a previous LDP? (Please provide the bid reference number)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: B0303 Area B	
6.8	Are there any legal restrictions on the title deeds such as rights of way, way leaves etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details:	
6.9	Are there any other legal factors that might prevent or restrict development? (e.g. ransom strips / issues with accessing the site etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details:	

<b>7.</b>	<b>Your Proposal</b> (Please provide as much detail as possible on your site proposal)		
7.1	Proposed Use	Housing	✓
		Employment	
		Mixed Use	
		Retail	
		Other (Please Specify)	school and civic space
7.2	Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Aberdeen City Council	
7.3	Site Area (hectares)	<del>ha</del> 40.5 ha	
	Housing		
7.4	Approx. no of units.	650	
7.5	Proposed Mix and Number (Number of Flats / Terraced / Semi-detached / detached etc.)	A mix of terraced, semi detached and detached houses would be provided. The exact mix to be determined at the detailed design stage.	
7.6	Affordable Housing Percentage	% This would be provided in line with Local Development Plan Policy at the time of a planning application	
7.7	Affordable Housing Partner (Details of any partner organisation, Registered Social Landlord etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: This is unknown at this stage	
7.8	Tenure (Details of tenure type, Private Rental Sector / private sale / Housing for the elderly etc.)	This is unknown at this stage, but would be discussed at the detailed design stage.	
	Employment		
7.9	Business and Office	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
7.10	General Industrial	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
7.11	Storage and distribution	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
7.12	Other Please specify	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
	Mixed Use (Please provide as much detail as possible on each use class)		
7.13	Housing	No of units and type:- 650 homes	
7.14	Employment	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
7.15	Retail	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a
	Retail		
7.16	Approx. floor area	m <sup>2</sup>	n/a

	Other (Please Specify examples could include retailing, tourism, renewable energy, sports, leisure and recreation, institutions and education.)	
7.17	Details of proposal	Land for the potential relocation of the primary school and expanded playing fields, and scope for civic space with potential for a cafe or shop.
7.18	Approx. floor area	m <sup>2</sup> size to be determined

<b>8.</b>	<b>Engagement and Delivery</b>	
8.1	Has the local community been given the opportunity to influence/partake in the development proposal?	<p>If there has been any community engagement please provide details of the way in which it was carried out and how it has influenced your proposals. If no consultation has yet taken place please detail how you will do so in the future.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: see paper apart</p>
8.2	Will the proposed development be phased?	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: see paper apart</p>
8.3	Expected development <b>start</b> post adoption of the plan in 2022	<p>Year, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0-5, <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10, <input type="checkbox"/> 10+ See paper apart</p>
8.4	Expected development <b>completion</b>	<p>Year, 0-5, 6-10, 10+ See paper apart</p>
8.5	Is finance in place and if so what form? (Secured Loan, Grant Funding etc.)	<p>Yes / No Details: Finance will be available by the developer at the time of development.</p>
8.6	Are there any other issues with the delivery of the site that we should be made aware of? (These should include any issues which may prevent or impact on the deliverability of the site.)	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:</p>



<b>9.</b>	<b>Sustainable Development and Design</b>		
9.1	Have you applied principles of sustainable siting and design to your site? The City Council has produced a Sustainability Checklist which provides guidance on the principles of sustainable siting and design and other issues which can be found on <a href="http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk">www.aberdeencity.gov.uk</a> . Please provide the following information:		
	Orientation		
9.2	Exposure:- (does the site currently have)	Little shelter from northerly winds	
		Some shelter from northerly winds	
		Good shelter from northerly winds	✓
9.3	Aspect:- (is the site mainly)	North facing	
		East or west facing	
		South, south west or south east facing	✓
9.4	Slope:- (do any parts of the site have a gradient greater than 1 in 12?)	Yes	
		If yes approx. what area (hectares or %)	
		No	✓
	Flooding & Drainage		
9.5	Flooding (is any part of the site at risk of flooding or has it previous flooded, if so provide detail You can view the SEPA flood maps at <a href="http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm">http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm</a> )	Yes (If yes please use the SEPA flood maps to determine the risk)	
		Little or No Risk	
		Low to Medium Risk	
		Medium to High Risk	
		If yes approx. what area (hectares or %)	
		No	✓
9.6	Has a flooding strategy been developed for the site?	Yes / No	Details:
9.7	Have discussions been had with the Council's flooding team?	Yes / No	Details:
9.8	Have discussion been had with Scottish Water?	Yes / No	Details:
9.9	Is there <b>waste water</b> capacity for the proposed development? <a href="http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search">http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search</a> )?	Yes / No	Details: see paper apart
9.10	Is there <b>water</b> capacity for the proposed development?	Yes / No	Details: see paper apart

	<a href="http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search">http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search</a> )?		
	Land Use, Built and Cultural Heritage		
9.11	Built and Cultural Heritage (would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of archaeological sites or vernacular or listed buildings?)	Significant loss or disturbance	
		Some potential loss or disturbance	
		No loss or disturbance	✓
9.12	Natural conservation (would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of wildlife habitats or species?)	Significant loss or disturbance	
		Some potential loss or disturbance	see paper apart
		No loss or disturbance	
9.13	Landscape features (would the development of the site lead to the loss or disturbance of linear and group features of woods, tree belts, hedges and stone walls?)	Significant loss or disturbance	
		Some potential loss or disturbance	see paper apart
		No loss or disturbance	
9.14	Landscape fit (would the development be intrusive into the surrounding landscape?)	Significant intrusion	
		Slight intrusion	see paper apart
		No intrusion	
9.15	Relationship to existing settlements (how well related will the development be to existing settlements?)	Unrelated (essentially a new settlement)	
		Partially related	
		Well related to existing settlement	✓
9.16	Land use mix (will the development contribute to a balance of land uses, or provide the impetus for attracting new facilities?)	No contribution	
		Some contribution	
		Significant contribution	✓
9.17	Contamination (are there any contamination or waste tipping issues with the site?)	Significant contamination or tipping present	
		Some potential contamination or tipping present	
		No contamination or tipping present	✓

9.18	Will the site impact on any water courses?	Yes / No Details:			
9.19	Does the development site contain carbon-rich soils or peatland? <a href="http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soils-and-development/cpp/">http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soils-and-development/cpp/</a>	Yes / No Details:			
9.20	Is the development site within the airport safety exclusion zone?	Yes / No Details:			
9.21	Is the development site within the airport 57dB LAeq noise contours?	Yes / No Details:			
9.22	Land use conflict (would the development conflict with adjoining land uses or have any air quality or noise issues?)	Significant conflict			
		Some potential conflict			
		No conflict		✓	
9.23	If there are significant conflicts, what mitigation measures are proposed?	Details:			
Transport and Accessibility					
9.24	Has contact been made with the Council's transport team?	Yes / No Details: as part of historic planning application			
9.25	Is access required onto a Trunk road and if so has contact been made with Transport Scotland?	Yes / No Details: no access onto truck road required			
9.26	Accessibility (is the site currently accessible to bus, rail, or major road network?)		Bus Route	Rail Station	Major Road
		More than 800m		✓	✓
		Between 400-800m			
		Within 400m	✓		
9.27	Proximity to services and facilities (How close are any of the following?)		400m	400-800m	>800m
		Community facilities		✓	
		Local shops		✓	
		Sports facilities		✓	
		Public transport networks			✓
		Primary schools		✓	
9.28	Footpath and cycle connections (are there any existing direct footpath and cycle connections to	No available connections			
		Limited range of connections			

	community and recreation facilities or employment? Give the Core Path number if core path is present <a href="https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/environment/core-paths-plan">https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/environment/core-paths-plan</a> )	Good range of connections	✓
9.29	Proximity to employment opportunities (are there any existing employment opportunities within 1.6km for people using or living in the development you propose?)	None	
		Limited	
		Significant	✓ at Prime Four
	Infrastructure		
9.30	Physical Infrastructure (does the site have connections to the following utilities?)	Electricity	no, but these can be provided
		Gas	no, but these can be provided
9.31	Does the development have access to high speed broadband?	Yes / No Details:	
9.32	Does the development include a Heat Network/District Heating Scheme?	Yes / No Details: see paper apart	
9.33	How is the development proposing to satisfy the Councils Low and Zero Carbon Policy?	Details: see paper apart	
9.34	Are there any further physical or service infrastructure issues affecting the site?	Yes / No Details:	
	Public open space		
9.35	Will the site provide the required level of open space as per the current LDP (Please provide details of your calculations)	Yes / No Details: see paper apart	
9.36	What impact will the development have on the Green Space Network?	Enhance the Network	
		No impact on the Network	
		Negatively impact the Network	
		Please justify your response: see paper apart	

<b>10.</b>	<b>Education</b>	
10.1	Have discussions been had with the Council's Education Department?	Yes / No Details:
10.2	Is there currently education capacity for the proposed development? <a href="https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/schools-and-education/schools-pupil-roll-forecasts">https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/schools-and-education/schools-pupil-roll-forecasts</a>	Yes / No Details: see paper apart

<b>11.</b>	<b>Community benefits</b>	
	Community benefits can include new community facilities (such as local shops, health, education, leisure and community facilities), affordable housing, green transport links and open spaces. Include elements which you anticipate may be required as developer contributions from the development. (Please note, specific contributions will have to be negotiated with the Council on the basis of the proposal.)	
11.1	Does the development proposal give any benefits to the community? If so what benefits does the development bring, and how would they likely be delivered?	Yes / No Details: see paper apart

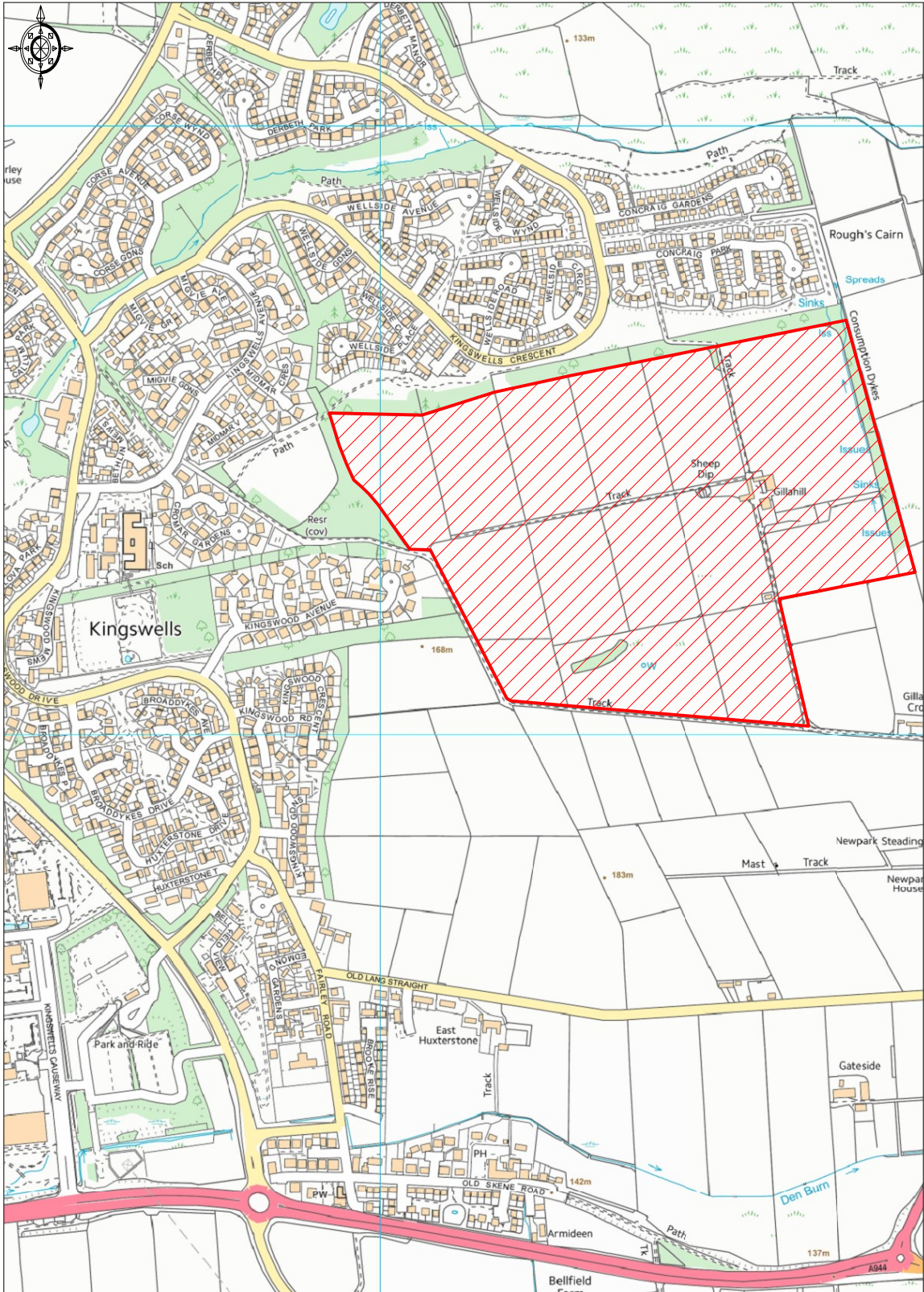
<b>12.</b>	<b>Masterplan Development Framework</b>	
12.1	If you have prepared a framework or masterplan showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form.	Yes / No Details: This development bid is accompanied by a Development Strategy report which provides an analysis of the site and indicative masterplan and layout.

<b>13.</b>	<b>Additional attachments</b>		
	No site is going to be perfect and the checklist above will inevitably raise some potential negative impacts from any development. Where negative impacts are identified, please provide details of their nature and extent and of any mitigation that may be undertaken. Listed below are examples of further information that may be included in your submission;		
		Included	Not Applicable
13.1	Contamination Report		
13.2	Flood Risk Assessment		
13.3	Drainage Impact Assessment		
13.4	Habitat/Biodiversity Assessment	✓	

13.5	Landscape Assessment	✓	
13.6	Transport Assessment		
13.7	Other as applicable (e.g. trees, noise, dust, smell, retail impact assessment etc. please state)		

<b>14.</b>	<b>Development Viability</b>		
14.1	Taking into account all the information provided above, and the requirements of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 and supporting Supplementary Guidance, please confirm that you have assessed the financial viability of your proposed development and found it to be viable for development in the timeframe set out above.	I confirm that I consider the site to be viable as per the details provided above.	✓
		Please provide details of viability: see paper apart	





**ABERDEEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW  
PRE-MAIN ISSUES  
PROPOSAL FOR A SITE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE MAIN ISSUES REPORT**

**FURTHER DETAILS IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE BID FORM**

**GILLAHILL, KINGSWELLS**

Stewart Milne Homes are part of the Stewart Milne Group, founded in 1975 and have grown to become one of the UK's leading privately owned housebuilders. They have a commitment to enterprise and innovation meshed with traditional value for quality product and services and currently have sites in central Scotland, Tayside, North West England as well as Grampian.

Kingswells is a planned village within the boundary of the City of Aberdeen, which lies four miles west of Aberdeen City Centre on the A944 arterial route into the city. The first phase of development in the village was completed in 1995 and included the provision of shops, a community centre and a primary school in the centre of the village. Additional shops, a health centre, dentist, nursing home and veterinary practice was developed as the village expanded. Included in the Phase I development was a western distributor road leading north from a roundabout junction on the A944 towards Newhills.

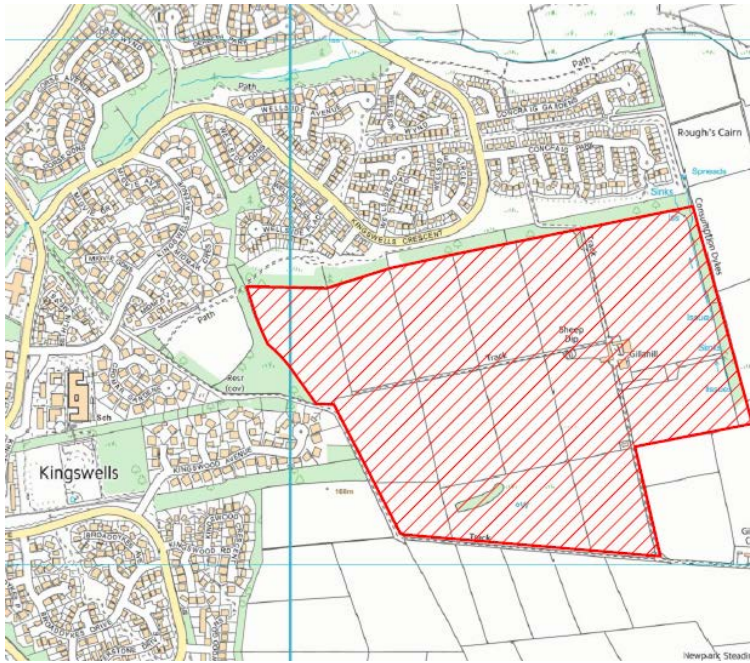
The settlement then extended to the north-east. A further section of the western bypass was upgraded to allow access to this phase. This expansion enjoyed good vehicular and pedestrian links to the village centre and also connected to the footpath network. Provision was made for open space, play areas and all weather facilities. Kingswells continued to attract significant investment from both residential and commercial property developers with Barratt Homes and Dandara building homes in the settlement. Stewart Milne Homes have also, more recently, invested heavily in the area with their West 1, Kingswood Drive, Huxterstone and Den View developments providing a range of house types that add to the established mix of housing to create a vibrant and sustainable community.

Drum Property Group's Prime Four commercial development is now well established after commencing in 2012, with major global energy firms locating there as well as the 150 bedroom "Village Urban Resort" with associated spa, conference, retail and leisure facilities. This level of developer interest demonstrates the success of Kingswells as an investment location, a place where people want to live, work and visit.

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route lies to the west of Kingswells with a half junction to the north and a full junction to the south. This is due to be completed by the end of 2018 and will improve accessibility to the settlement.

The site at Gillahill is located to the east of Kingswells and is bounded to the north and east by mature tree belt and beyond this, existing dwellinghouses; to the south by open fields and farm track; and to the west by woodland and housing. The site extends to approximately 40.5 hectares and is identified outlined and red on the map below.





## **Q6. Legal and Planning History**

There is considerable history surrounding the site at Gillahill. It has long been “earmarked” for development having emerged through historic Local Plans. The Aberdeen City District Wide Local Plan (1991) identified the site as falling within a GB2 “Countryside Around Towns” area. To protect the permanence of the Green Belt, these areas were identified to accommodate future development needs of the city and were generally identified because of their limited contribution to the landscape setting of the city. Previous expansion of Kingswells fell entirely within an area of “Countryside Around Towns” thereby setting a precedent for expansion into such areas.

The Finalised Aberdeen City Local Plan (September 1999) identified the site as falling within an area of “Strategic Reserve Land” in conformity with the superseded Grampian Structure Plan. Similar to “Countryside Around Towns” in the 1991 Plan, this was applied to land that may be required in the longer term for development and was again intended to protect the permanence of Green Belt boundaries. That plan was abandoned following the preparation and approval of the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016.

A modified Finalised Local Plan was published in August 2002. In that plan, the site reverted to Green Belt along with all the land lying in the Kingswells, Newhills corridor despite the Council’s own Green Belt review recommending that the site be removed from the Green Belt. That plan was also abandoned by the City Council. It was replaced by the Finalised Aberdeen Local Plan, Green Spaces-New Places, published in August 2004. The principle of the bid site for development was accepted in that document which identified the Kingswells North Phase I (north Part) of the site as an opportunity for residential development in the period 2000-2010, and the Kingswells North Phase II (southern part) as a Future New Community, suitable for 230 units post 2010. The aim of the opportunity site was to create a more sustainable community, which was capable of supporting its own community facilities and employment area.

Planning Officers made an indicative allocation for 170 homes against the Phase I site with a requirement for a joint Masterplan with Kingswells North Phase II and Kingswells South; access and junction improvements; an Infrastructure Trust to contribute to facilities; land set aside for school expansion; access to community woodland; and, the provision of affordable housing and 3% self-build

housing. Planning Officers then subsequently recommended that this site be re-designated as a Future New Community, along with Kingswells North Phase II, as suitable for development post 2010. However, these changes were resisted at the Public Inquiry into that Plan.

**6.6 Planning Applications** - The planning application history for the site dates back to November 2000 when an outline planning application was submitted for the first part (i) of a proposed Phase 3 residential development of 200 houses. The Council failed to determine that application within the statutory timescale and an appeal was lodged. A duplicate application was submitted in November 2000 (Ref: 001887) and discussions continued with the City Council. The appeal was initially sisted and eventually withdrawn following revisions to the emerging Local Plan at the time.

In May 2004, the undetermined application was amended (Ref: 040511) to reduce the site area and restrict Phase 3(1) to 170 units and an appeal was subsequently lodged against the failure of the Council to determine that application. That appeal was withdrawn when it became evident that the Local Plan was progressing towards a Public Local Inquiry.

A draft Design Brief was prepared for the site, at the request of the planning officers and, as at September 2005, was awaiting consideration by the Council. As a result of the planning application and Planning Brief, significant preparatory work was undertaken in the form of drainage, transport, landscape and visual impact assessments. These confirmed the development potential of the site and from them, the masterplan for the site evolved.

**6.7 Previous LDP Bids** - More recently, the site has been the subject of previous bids to Aberdeen City Council. At the request of the Council, a development bid was submitted by Stewart Milne Homes in March 2009 which covered a number of sites within Kingswells. Within the Main Issues Report, these sites were given the reference 3/05 with the Gillahill site specifically identified as Area B which was identified as a preferred option for development for 250 homes in the period 2007 to 2016 and a further 150 in the period 2017 to 2023. The proposed LDP was published for consultation in August 2010 however, due to school capacity figures the Council considered that the site at Gillahill was undeliverable and failed to carry it forward for development. In discussing development at Gillahill, the Reporter acknowledged that the site is readily deliverable and would contribute to the housing land supply and may also accommodate a new primary school however, did not consider there to be numerical justification with regards to the housing land supply to allocate further housing sites.

Through the 2017 LDP process, a new bid was submitted in June 2013 seeking land at Gillahill for the development of 600 dwellings and a primary school. This was part of a combined bid alongside two other sites at Derbeth and Huxterstone and was given the reference B0303 in the Main Issues Report. Gillahill was specified as 'Area 2', but was excluded by the MIR for reasons relating to proximity to Ancient Woodland which defines the western site boundary as well as the lack of primary school capacity within Kingswells. Concerns were also been raised relating to the landscape fit of the proposal owing to the site's topography. However, the Reporter concluded that the Gillahill site is much less prominent in the landscape due to the landform and existing tree belts and therefore has less of a role in the protection of the setting of Kingswells. Nevertheless, there was little scope to allocate additional greenfield land at that time.

## **Q7. Proposal**

The site is identified for a residential development and has the capacity to deliver around 650 houses as well as access, strategic landscaping and areas of open space. This would be a phased development, including a mix, including detached, semi-detached and terraced, 2 – 5 bedroomed properties. An exact mix would be provided in due course taking account of the prevailing market conditions and

affordable housing requirements. Affordable Housing will be provided in line with developer obligations requirements at the time of development. No affordable housing partner, or details of tenure have been identified at this stage and this would be clarified as the process progresses.

Land is set aside for a new Kingswells Primary School and playing fields for which the total area would be agreed through discussions with Aberdeen City Council. There is also potential to provide community use/civic space with opportunities for a café or shop. Subject to discussions with the Council, there may be scope to move the existing primary school to this site allowing that site to be utilised for a village centre expansion.

## **Q8. Engagement and Delivery**

**8.1** The local community and community council have been involved in the historic planning applications associated with the site as detailed in section 6 and the previous LDP bid processes. No public consultation has taken place in respect of this specific bid, however, the local community and community council will again be consulted if the site is identified for development. This would take the form of exhibitions as part of any major planning application or any consultation required by Aberdeen City Council through the LDP Review process.

**8.2** Given the size of the site and its capacity to deliver around 650 houses, it will be developed in phases. The exact phasing for the site has yet to be determined, but the developer is willing to work with Aberdeen City Council to provide an appropriate phasing plan for the site and the Development Strategy document provides an indicative phasing plan for the site.

**8.3** The developer is committed to submitting a planning application as soon as practicable after the site is allocated in the Local Development Plan. Development would commence as soon as a planning and other technical consents are issued and this is expected in year 0-5 post adoption of the plan. As the site can be delivered in two phases, the second phase would commence after the previous phase is complete. There is capacity of the site to deliver housing in the 6-10 year period, post adoption.

**8.4** The expected completion of Phase 1 would be in the 0-5 year period, with the second phase being delivered after this.

## **Q9. Sustainable Development and Design**

**9.2 Exposure** - The site has good shelter from northerly winds being protected to a degree from existing dwellings to the north.

**9.4 Slope** - The topography of the site is contained in the Development Strategy document. It varies from a low point of 130m AOD in the north east corner to a high point of 170 AOD to the west. No part of the site has a gradient greater than 1 in 12.

**9.5 Flooding** - SEPA's Flood Risk maps show that there is no risk of flooding on the site from any river, however, there may be some risk of surface water flooding to the south of the site, which will be alleviated through the use of SUDs.

**9.9/9.10 Water and Waste Water** - In terms of waste water and water, due to the proximity of housing, connections would be available in the vicinity of the site. An extension to these would be required and new foul and surface water sewers will be provided to service the development and these will be located within the new roads and areas of open space where necessary. It is believed that there is capacity in the waste water and water network. Further investigations will be done at the appropriate time and is not considered to be an impediment to development.

**9.11 Built and Cultural Heritage** - The Development Strategy Document prepared as an Appendix to this bid states that there are no built heritage designations within the bid area. The consumption dyke within the residential area to the north is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, however, this lies outwith the site boundary and development will not impact upon its setting.

**9.12 Natural Conservation** – The Development Strategy Document statement that there are no landscape designations within the site. The Bucksburn Local Nature Conservation Site is approximately 200m to the south and development will have no impact upon this.

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in 2005 and although this is out of date, it provides some information on species and details are included in the Development Strategy. Given the current green belt status of the site, there may be some loss or disturbance of wildlife habitats or species. However, this is not considered to be significant and there is merit in the removal of this land from the green belt which was previously accepted by Aberdeen City Council through its designation as Countryside Around Towns the Aberdeen City District Wide Local Plan and as an Opportunity Site in the Finalised Aberdeen City Local Plan.

The Green Space Network is designated to protect the most important wildlife sites in the City. This site is not identified as Green Space Network and therefore not particularly important in these terms, otherwise it would not have been identified for development in previous plans. A Network of open space throughout the site as well as the enhanced tree belts and woodland will provide ongoing opportunities for biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

**9.13 Landscape Features** – The Development Strategy Document provides details of landscape character, with this site identified in the 'Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen' as Wooded Farmland. Mature tree belts are located to the north and east, with ancient woodland located to the west of the site. Although a new road will require to be routed through the tree belts to the north, the impact will be minimal and the original plan for a roundabout was amended, after discussions with Aberdeen City Council, to reduce the impact on the existing tree belt. Of the 366 trees within the tree belt, only 8 were to be lost to the new road and this was acceptable to Aberdeen City Council. To mitigate this impact further, the remaining tree belts will be enhanced, therefore improving landscape features on the site. The landscape framework of the site is defined by the distinctive pattern of field boundaries formed by drystone dykes and these will be incorporated into the layout and design of the development to create a distinctive residential environment.

**9.14 Landscape Fit** - There will be slight intrusion into the surrounding landscape, given that the site is currently undeveloped. However, the principle of development has previously been accepted on the site. A landscape and visual assessment has been prepared as part of this bid submission, contained within the Development Strategy document. It concludes that the development is not as visible in the landscape as the existing settlement that makes up the current housing pattern in Kingswells, due to the surrounding landform which contain the area which is only viewed in its entirety from the edges of the site to the east which are isolated in nature, or from Brimmond Hill, where the development would be seen in the context of other parts of Kingswells.

The mature tree belts to the north and east will contain development and soften its visual impact. The woodland shelter belt to the north will partially screen development from close and distant views whilst the woodland to the west will act as a backdrop to development. Development would maintain the cohesion of Kingswells within minimal impact on the setting of the City and the site has considerable scope for any necessary landscape to minimise visual impact.

**9.15 Relationship to existing Settlements** - The site forms a natural expansion of Kingswells, which was previously promoted by Aberdeen City Council in their allocation of the site in historic draft local plans. It lies close to and would enjoy good pedestrian links with the centre of the village where a range of services can be found. Kingswells also has new employment opportunities at Prime Four, with this site being close to that, lying less than 1.6km from it. Core paths connect the site to the local centre, Sheddocksley and Bucksburn.

**9.16 Land use mix** - The site itself will provide a balance of land uses in the form of housing and open space, as well as the potential for a civic space with opportunities for a café or shop and land for a new primary school and expanded playing fields. This would result in opportunities for the existing site of the primary school to be utilised for new uses, providing an impetus for attracting new facilities in Kingswells. The previous bid was not taken forward for reasons relating to school capacity and these proposals would resolve that issue.

**9.28 Core Paths** – Core Paths connect the site to the local centre, Sheddocksley and Bucksburn, providing good accessibility to the wider area.

**9.32/9.33 Heating/Zero Carbon Policy** - Stewart Milne Homes, in common with the majority of housebuilders, advocate a fabric first approach to ensure energy conservation and thus minimise carbon footprint. Appropriate technologies available at the time will also be considered as a means to deliver reduced energy consumption and heat generation.

**9.35 Open Space** - The site will provide the required level of open space as per the current LDP. Significant areas of open space are proposed within the area including a proposed park providing for integration with existing open space to the west; enhanced shelter belts; enlarged school playing fields; school grounds; woodland walks as well as localised areas of open space throughout the site.

**9.36 Impact on Green Space Network** - Although the site is not included in the Green Space Network, the land to the north is included within the Green Space Network. A new road requires to pass through this to access the proposed development, however, this has been designed to minimise the impact on the Green Space Network. Of the 366 trees within this area, only 8 are to be lost directly to the new road and this was acceptable to Aberdeen City Council. Enhanced planting and shelterbelts within the site would enhance the network and mitigate the road impact.

## **Q10. Education**

No recent discussions have taken place with the Council's Education Department. The 2015 School Roll Forecasts state that Kingswells Primary School has a falling school roll which is forecast to be operating at 83% of capacity by 2023. The proposals provide land for a new primary school which would ensure that capacity can be provided for the development.

A new secondary school is proposed at Countesswells which the site would be zoned to. It has a 1100 pupil capacity, with the Countesswells development using approximately half of this. Pupils currently attend Bucksburn Academy which is forecast to be over capacity, however, with the spare capacity available at Countesswells, it is considered that there would be capacity available. If required, developer contributions would be agreed as part of a planning application and this is not an impediment to development.

#### **Q11. Community Benefits**

The proposals provide benefits to the local community in the form of new housing, including affordable housing and a new primary school with enlarged playing fields. In turn, this would enable the existing primary school to be re-used for additional community facilities or an expansion of the village centre. The bid site also provides the potential for civic space with opportunities for a café or shop.

#### **Q14. Development Viability**

Kingswells is a popular location for housing, given the recent housing developments. This is enhanced through the recent Prime Four development, providing employment and leisure facilities and the AWPR which will improve accessibility of the settlement. The developer has an option over this site and has invested in progressing the site through previous Local Development Plans and submitting planning applications. This demonstrates their commitment and the deliverability of the site in the next Local Development Plan.

Stewart Milne Homes are confident that there is residual value following development of the site and the provision of necessary infrastructure. The infrastructure constraints have been considered and Stewart Milne Homes are confident that they can be addressed and do not impose an impediment to development.



# Gillahill, Kingswells

Development Strategy, Response to the Aberdeen City Council

Local Development Plan - Call for Sites

Client: Stewart Milne Homes (SMH)

Revision: A

Date: May 2018





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this document

This document describes the opportunity that the site at Gillahill, presents for a well-located and deliverable expansion to Kingswells. This document has been prepared to support a formal response to Aberdeen City Council (ACC) Call for Sites and help inform the preparation of the new Aberdeen City Council Local Development Plan (ALDP) 2022.

In preparing the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2022), ACC are inviting people to submit comments and ideas for the Main Issues Report. These comments could be regarding new policy approaches for the LDP and/or land allocations for development. This process will take place between March and May 2018.

This document has been prepared by Optimised Environments Limited, 'OPEN' on behalf of Stewart Milne Home's (SMH) land interest at Gillahill, Kingswells. This development strategy document has been prepared to provide the justification and rationale for the allocation of land for a residentially-led mixed use development at this location.

SMH has control of 40.5 hectares (100 acres) of land to the east of Kingswells (the site area), shown on Figure 1 and has appointed OPEN to explore the potential for locating development in this location. OPEN has produced this development strategy to support a formal representation and help ACC to allocate the site for inclusion in the ALDP 2022.

Following a study of the site area including a landscape and visual analysis of the wider site area OPEN believes there is capacity within the site area to accommodate around 650 new homes as part of a new mixed use development including a site for a school, other community uses and areas of public open space.

This document has been prepared to demonstrate the rationale for locating development in this location, explain the landscape capacity opportunities, describe the proposed structure of development and outline the key benefits development in this location could offer Kingswells and ACC.

## 1.2 Document structure

This document describes the proposed site location and its surrounding context, and includes a visual and physical appraisal of the site and its environs providing an analysis of the landscape setting. Through this appraisal, the study then identifies the landscape capacity of the site to accommodate development and concludes with a development concept and Development Framework plan to demonstrate the opportunities and benefits of development on the site at Gillahill, Kingswells.

The document is structured as follows;

**Introduction**

**Site context**

**The site**

**Development strategy**

**Vision**

**Summary**

The document demonstrates that the landscape character and quality of the setting of Kingswells will not be unacceptably compromised through carefully sited and structured development and indeed that an opportunity exists to not only identify suitable development areas but also to enhance aspects such as access to open space, access routes and the provision of sites for new community facilities. Following a master planning approach, which considers the wider site area in a comprehensive manner, this approach emphasises landscape capacity, site appraisal, design quality, innovation and sustainability as the key factors which can achieve this objective.

## 1.3 Site overview


The site is located immediately to the east of the centre of Kingswells and south of the residential areas off Kingswells Crescent. The site measures 40.5 hectares and comprises a number of agricultural grassland fields grouped around Gillahill Farm. The fields are well defined by woodland belts and stone walls which are characteristic of the area.

The northern boundary is defined by a broad, deciduous, woodland belt which extends the length of the site area. This area of woodland forms part of the ALDP Green Space Network and contains a Core Path and numerous local path connections. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by further woodland planting contained by stone walls to the north. To the south the boundary is open to the countryside, following the access track to Gillahill Farm. The southern boundary is defined by a track, aligned by stone walls on either side which forms part of the Core Path network. The western boundary is defined by woodland which again forms part of the Green Space Network and contains a number of path links connecting the site area to the park, Primary School, Community Centre and local shops located to the west.

The site area is shown on figure 1 opposite within which the full site area is under the control of SMH.





 Site Boundary

**Local Facilities**

Figure 1 opposite identifies the local facilities in relation to the site area.

1. Primary school
2. Local shops
3. Post office
4. Takeaway
5. Community hall
6. Medical centre
7. Pharmacy
8. Public House and Restaurant
9. Nursery
10. Prime Four Business Park
11. Park and Ride
12. Park and play areas

Scale 1:10000 @ A3



fig. 1: Site location.



# 2. Site context

## 2.1 Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017

### Kingswells

Around 50 hectares of employment land allocations have been made to the west of the city at Prime Four Business Park (OP29 and OP63), Kingswells, which provides employment opportunities in a part of the city where there is little employment land. A further extension to this is proposed.

The main housing sites surrounding Kingswells are at Maidencraig (OP31 and OP32, 750 homes) on the A944 corridor and at Greenferns (OP33, 1,350 homes plus 10ha employment land). In addition OP30, West Huxterstone is planned to provide 120 homes.

The AWPR will provide benefits to this area with junctions proposed to the north and south-west of Kingswells.

### Gillahill site area

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) 2017 identifies the site area as Green Belt. Located to the west of the Kingswells, the site is separated from the surrounding residential areas by areas of woodland which form part of the Green Space Network.

Core Paths extending from the centre of Kingswells (next to the primary school site) follow the northern and southern boundaries of the site area providing good pedestrian connections east to Aberdeen.

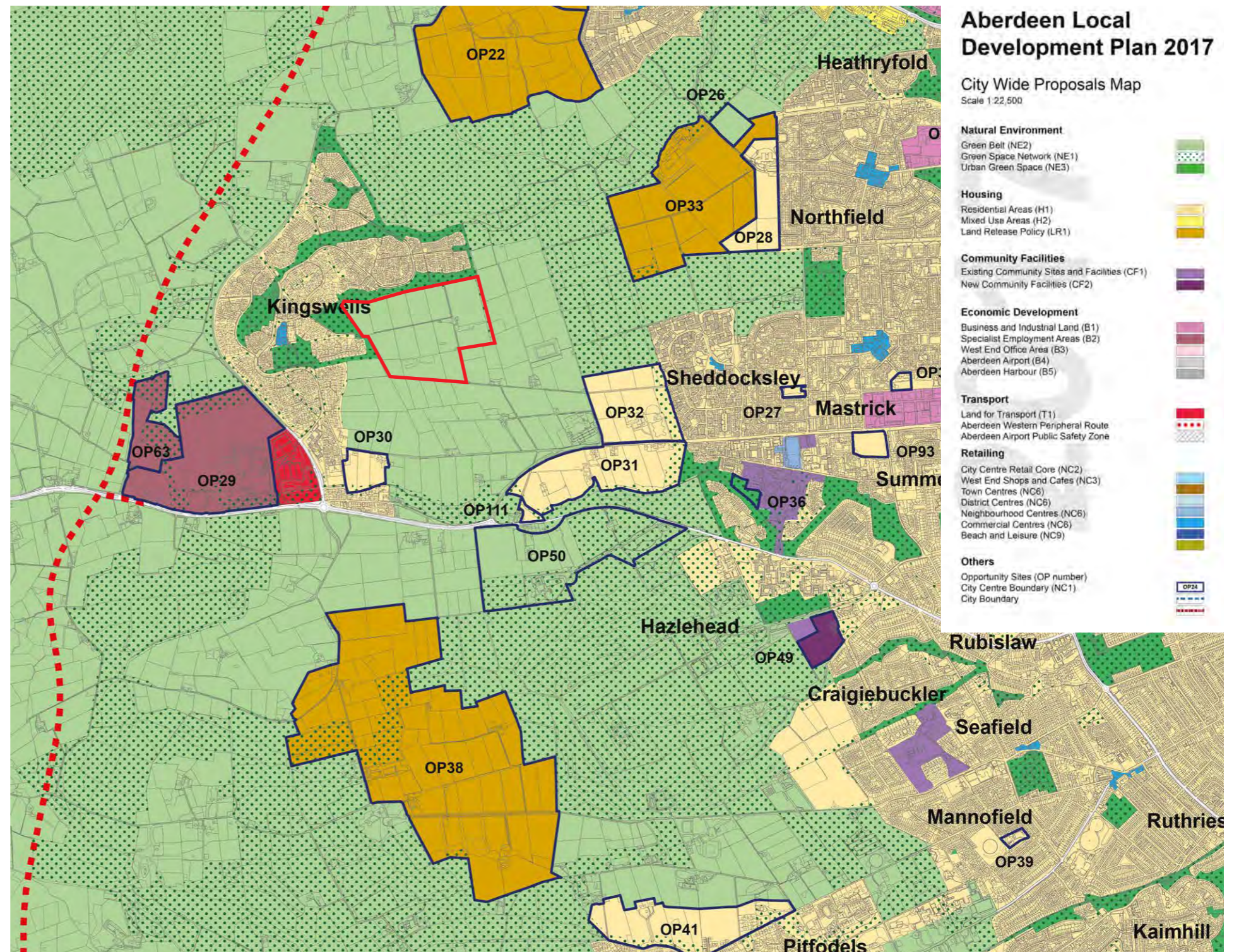


fig. 2: Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 - site context





fig. 3: Site context



## 2.2 Landscape designations

Figure 3 opposite illustrates the landscape designations that cover the site and surrounding area. The site is not within any areas designated for their international, national or local conservation importance. No built heritage designations are located within the site area.

The site is identified as Greenbelt and is currently in agricultural use.

The woodland to the west of the site is identified as Ancient Woodland and combined with the woodland to the north and east of the site forms part of the Urban Greenspace Network.

The site is located approximately 200m to the south of the Bucks Burn Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) which follows the Bucks Burn and connects Kingswells to Aberdeen.

Within the residential area to the north the consumption dyke is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). There are a number of similar stone walls within the surrounding area also designated as SAM's. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan lists drystone dykes as an important local feature in its principal objective to maintain all existing boundary habitats of value to wildlife.

The SEPA flood risk map identifies no areas within the site which would be subject to river flooding, however, there are small areas to the south of the site around the existing farm which have low and medium risk of surface water flooding.

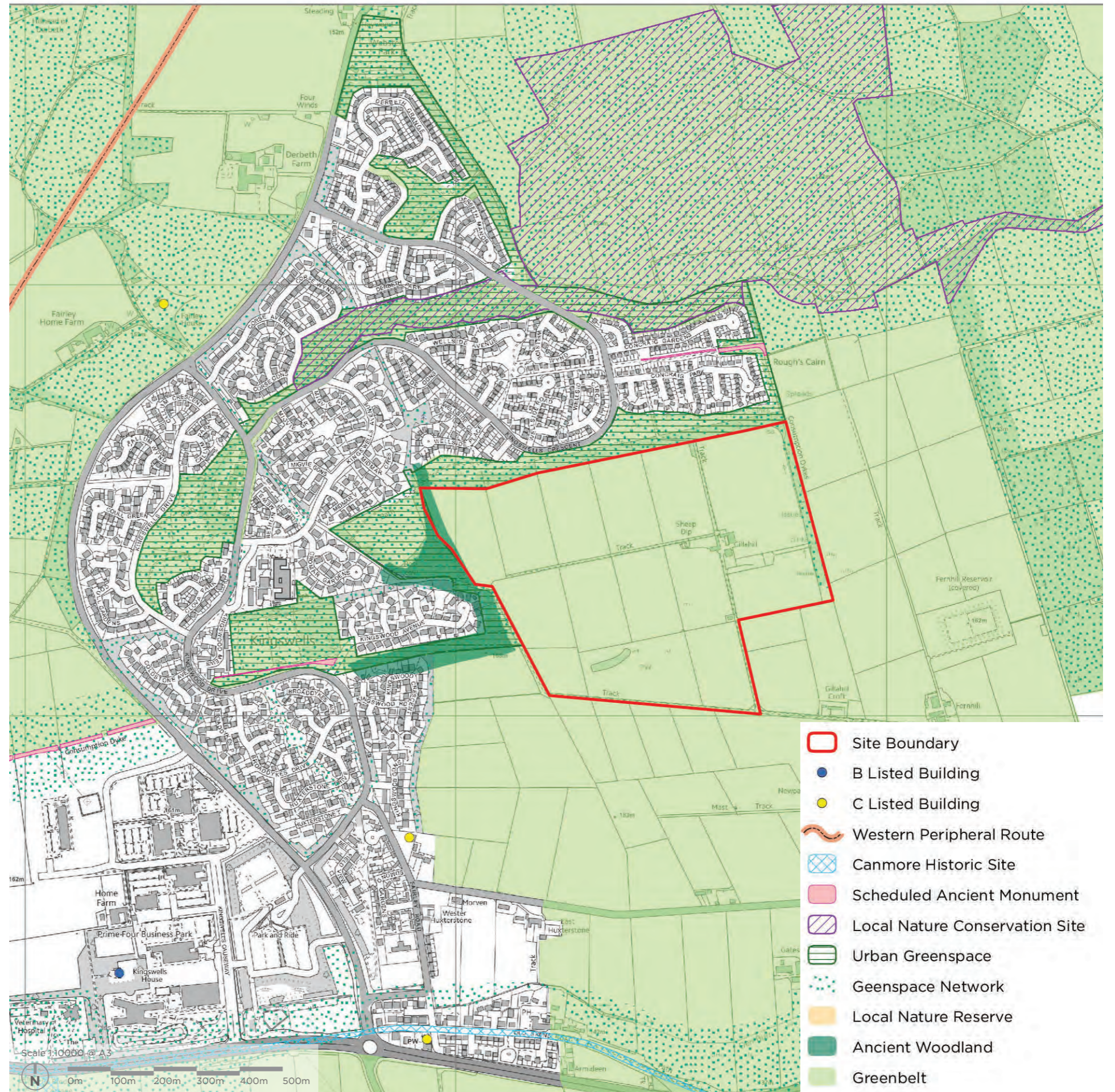


fig. 4: Site designations.



## 2.3 Landscape character

The landscape character of Aberdeen is recorded and classified in Scottish Natural Heritage's publication 'Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen', SNH Review No 80, (Nicol I, Johnston A and Campbell, L, 1996).

The majority of site lies across Landscape Character Area (LCA) 15 (Kingswells) of the Wooded Farmland landscape character typology with the eastern and southern edges of the site area sitting across LCA 14 (Newhills) and LCA 16 (Maidencraig) of the Open Farmland landscape character typology.

The western edges of the site area is defined as 'Urban' although at a more local level of characterisation, the boundary of the 'Urban' area would more closely follow the existing urban edges of Kingswells which would not include the western edges of the proposal site.

Key Characteristics of Wooded Farmland - LCA 15 (Kingswells), of relevance to the site area, include:

- Views are limited to the north, west, and south by the higher surrounding ground.
- Land use is varied, with agriculture, woodland and developed areas all occurring within or immediately adjacent to the area.
- The small to medium-sized fields, in which pasture is more common than arable crops, are bounded by dykes more often than fences.
- The boundaries are often reinforced by single trees and gorse. Several of the stone walls are notable examples of consumption dykes.
- The area is well-wooded, although this is due to the presence of tree clumps, boundary trees and shelterbelts rather than large areas of woodland. Tree species are both broadleaved and coniferous.
- The adjacent urban area of Kingswells visually dominates the area. The modern settlement has developed to the north of the original village.
- Distinctive Landscape Features, include: The varied topography; The amount and variety of woodland forms - shelterbelts, clumps and boundary trees; Stone dykes (including notable examples of consumption dykes) dividing farmland into small fields; Abrupt urban edge of parts of Kingswells immediately adjoining the character area; The degree of visual enclosure due to the surrounding landform; and Views to masts on Brimmond Hill.

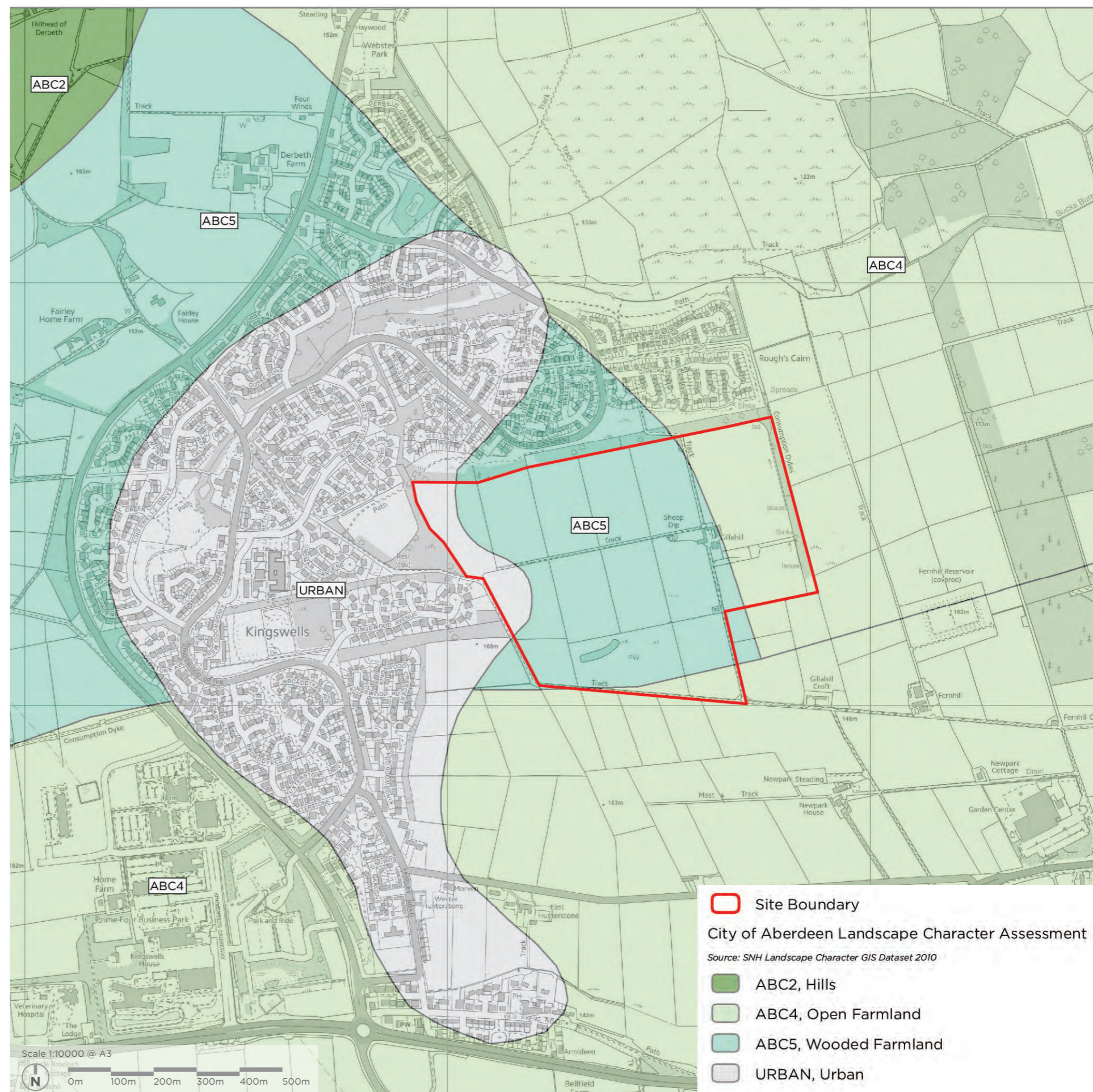


fig. 5: Landscape character.



## 2.4 Landscape setting and context

The topography is very important in the setting of the site within Kingswells. The site is located in the eastern side of the hill of which the majority of Kingswells is located on the western and northern slopes. From the western edge of the site the land slopes gradually into the town with development on the slopes. By contrast a sloping wooded bank defines the northern boundary of the site separating it from the residential areas to the north.

The topography varies from a low point of 130m AOD in the north east corner to a high point of 170m AOD at the woods adjacent to Kingswood Avenue within Kingswells. From the high point to the west a ridge runs east towards Gillahill Farm (following the alignment of the distinctive access track) roughly dividing the site to north east facing slopes and south east facing slopes.

Significant to the setting of the site the southern area of the site lower in elevation than the more elevated hill of Newpark further to the south.

Section 3.4 of this document contains a Landscape and Visual Appraisal which considers the landscape setting in more detail.

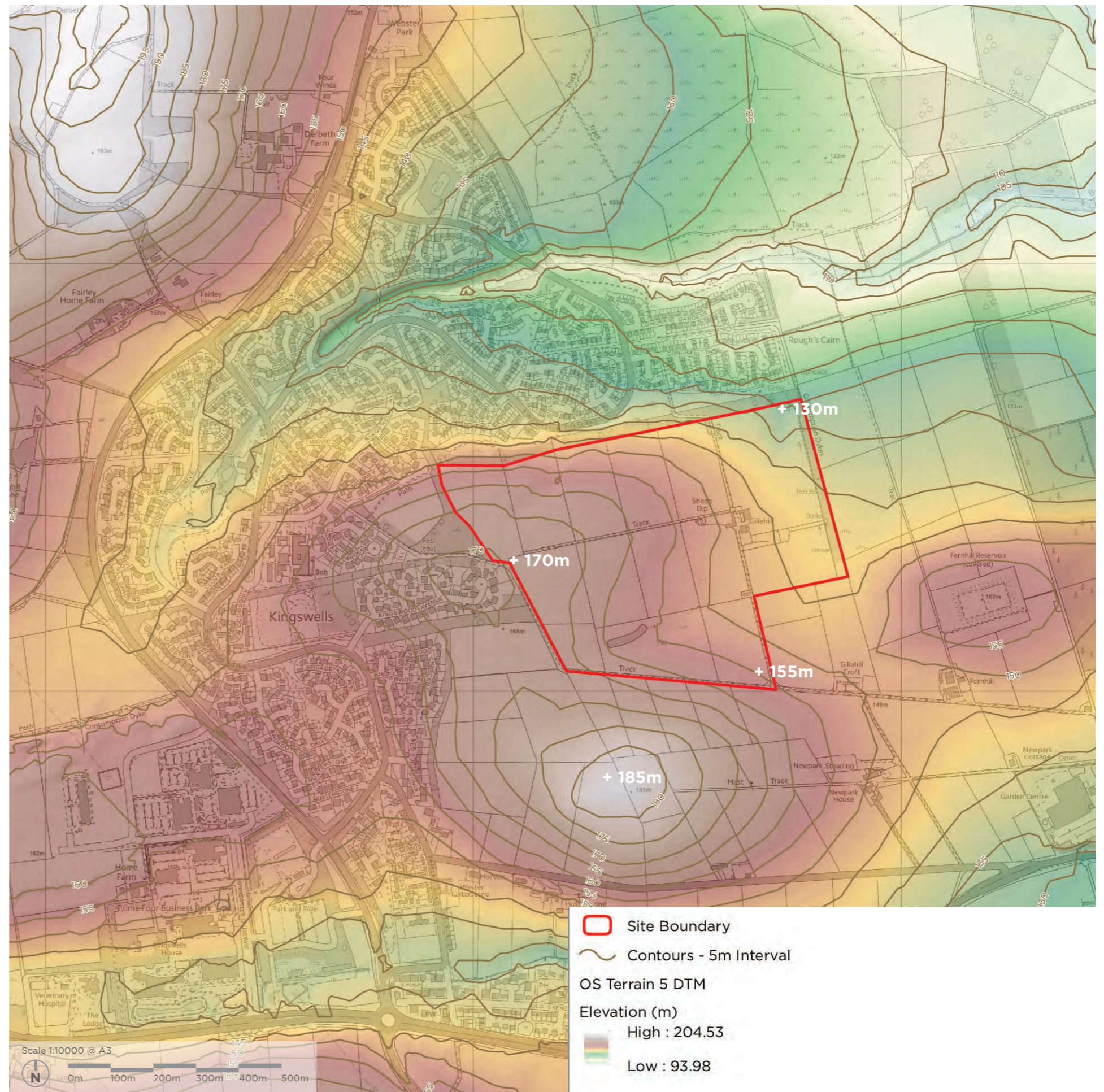


fig. 6: Site topography.





fig. 7: Landscape context.



## 2.5 Urban context

Kingswells has existed as a village for centuries, but only beginning in the 1980s did it expand greatly as a result of the boom in the oil industry. It has few amenities given its relatively large size, with no secondary school and a relative lack of shopping facilities, although it does have a primary school, convenience store, veterinary surgery, a Chinese takeaway, a pizza takeaway, a hairdresser, a cafe, a pharmacy, two nurseries, two community halls, a car garage and a restaurant/inn. Nearby there is also a business complex with a hotel containing a Starbucks and a gym.

The site is well located in relation to the few facilities available within Kingswells. The local centre containing most of the facilities including the school and local shops is located just over 800m (approximately 10mins walk) from the western edge of the site, with much of the site closer. The proximity and good pedestrian connections to the facilities is a key asset of the site. Further the location of the site at the centre of the town offers an opportunity to provide a location for new community facilities.

### Local Facilities

Figure 9 opposite identifies the local facilities in relation to the site area.

1. Primary school
2. Local shops
3. Post office
4. Takeaway
5. Community hall
6. Medical centre
7. Pharmacy
8. Public House and Restaurant
9. Nursery
10. Prime Four Business Park
11. Park and Ride
12. Park and play areas



Kingswells local centre.



Kingswells local centre.



Kingswells local centre.





fig. 9: Local facilities and walking distances.



## 2.6 Residential context

Whilst the site area is located at the centre of Kingswells, due to the urban nature and design of the town as a series of 'pockets' and cul de sacs separated by woodland there is little opportunity to integrate the site directly into these areas. The site may not be able to integrate directly through connected streets, however, as a result of the location and landscape setting there are good opportunities to integrate with the surrounding areas through woodland areas, areas of public open space and the very good path network.

The current situation is of homogenous housing set around a series of cul de sacs which have little or no relationship to their attractive landscape setting. It is only by virtue of the existing woodland belts that the abrupt urban edges are softened. Gillahill presents an opportunity to fulfil housing demand in this area along with enhanced facilities, whilst improving the current poor settlement edge through a sensitive design response to the existing landscape.

In addition Kingswells is currently finite with no opportunity for people to move upwards or downwards and remain in the area. The current housing choice is limited and the area would benefit greatly from a wider range of housing offer - both smaller and larger homes to appeal to a wider audience.



Concraig Park.



Concraig Park located immediately to the north of the site.



Concraig Park has opportunities to connect to the site through existing paths and woodland areas.



Houses within Kingswood Avenue to the west of the site are set within very large wooded plots.



Kingswells Crescent.



Wellside End, housing areas such as this have the opportunity to integrate with the site through shared areas of public open space.



## 2.7 Access and connectivity

The location close to the physical centre of Kingswells is within close proximity to good public transport links, the school and the local centre is a key asset of the site, illustrating why it would provide a sustainable location for the growth of the settlement.

Figure 9 on the previous page illustrates the location of the site and with 400m (approximately 5min walk) and 800m isochrones (approximate 10min walk) demonstrates the proximity of the key facilities and amenities to the site. The local centre including the school, local shops, bus stops and a variety of areas of public open space are all within 800m of the site area and easily accessible. These facilities can all be easily and safely accessed via the existing Core Path network as well as local paths and streets.

As illustrated on figure 10 opposite, the site is well connected to the existing network of paths and accessible to a number of bus stops. There is also the opportunity to connect to the existing street network. These opportunities are illustrated opposite and described in more detail below.

### Pedestrian

There currently exists a well-established network of footways and footpaths within the area surrounding the site, allowing easy access to the centre of Kingswells, local facilities and the wider path network.

As shown on Figure 10 opposite, there are a number of Core Path routes identified in and around the site area. Two different Core Path routes define the northern and southern edges of the site. These provide connection between Kingswells and Aberdeen.

### Public Transport

Figure 10 identifies the existing bus stops close to the site area and associated 400m walking distances. These bus stops provide a variety of connections to local and strategic bus network.

In addition to the local bus stops the Kingswells Park and Ride is approximately 1.5km to the south west of the site. The Park and Ride facility provides good access to Aberdeen and Westhill and provide a range of travel options.

### Vehicular

There are no direct road connections to the site area other than the private access to Gillahill Farm. A Transport Study has been carried out and access can be taken from Kingswells Crescent to provide two vehicle access points into the site area.

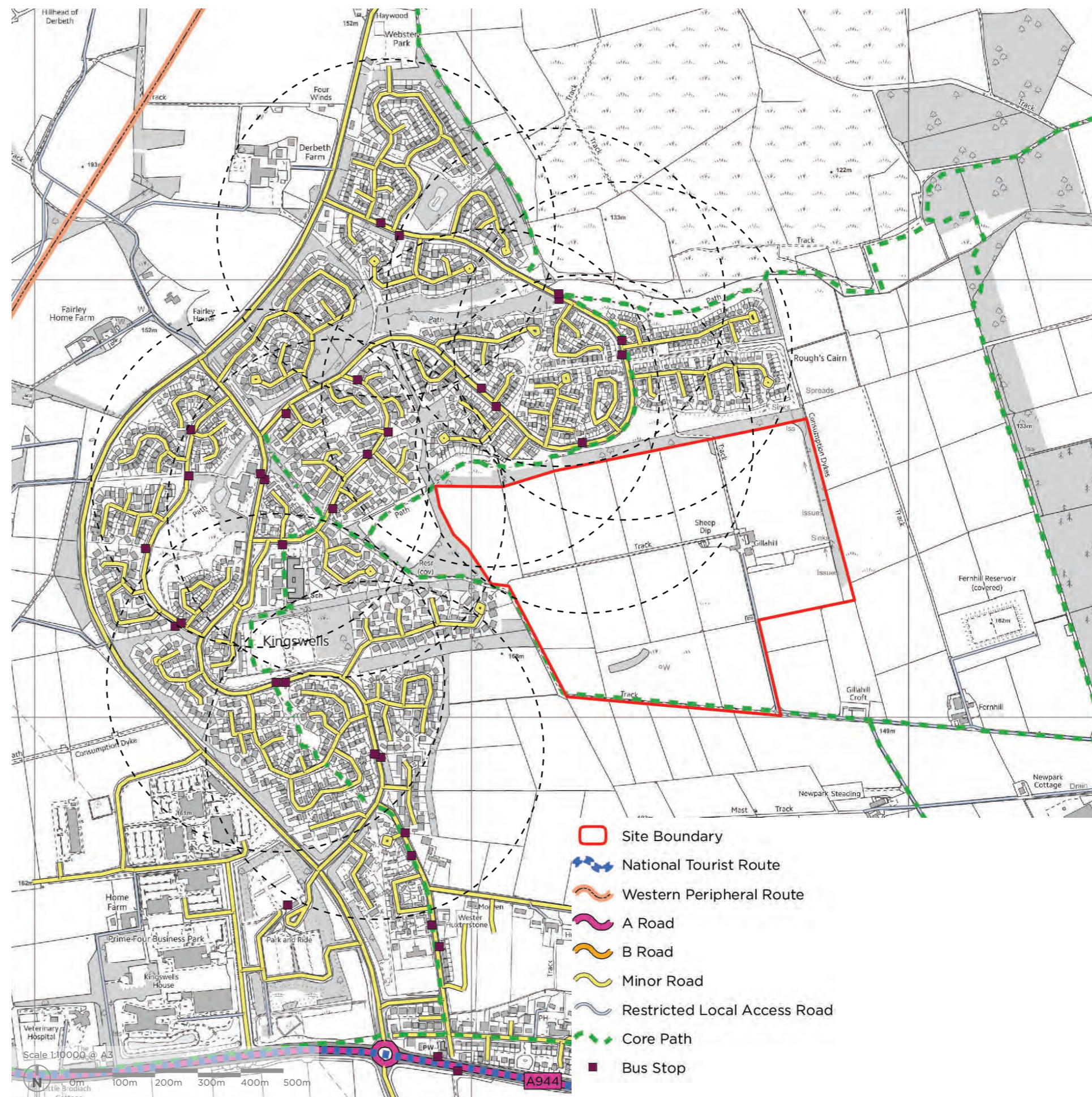


fig. 10: Existing transport routes and links.



# 3. The site

## 3.1 Site description

The site area is shown on figure 11 opposite, the site is agricultural and of rural character with a clearly defined and geometric field pattern separated by distinctive connecting drystone walling. The drystone walling fans out from a central spine created by a double wall with a narrow track that runs along the shoulder of the hill slope from Gillahill to a high point of landform at the woods adjacent to Kingswood Avenue within Kingswells. The site area itself is currently utilised for agricultural purposes and as such is free from any constraints.

The key features which influence the site are described in the following section, focusing on the site boundaries, the site habitats, landform and identifies the key features within the site.

### 3.1.1 Site boundaries

The following text and photos opposite describe the site boundaries which are important in defining the site character.

#### Northern edge

There are substantial woodland edges to the north, west and east sides of the site, some of which can be accessed through woodland paths and recreation areas that connect to the Kingswells settlement. The existing settlement of Kingswells wraps around the site along its northern and western boundaries, albeit separated by intervening wooded areas and linear woodland strips. The northern edge of the site has a steeper slope than other areas, most of which is wooded. These elements combine to create a degree of separation from north east Kingswells and the proposal site.

#### Eastern edge

The eastern boundary of the site is defined by woodland and a large stone wall. These features help contain the site and provide definition from the strategic landscape to the west. The southern part of the eastern boundary follows the farm access track and is not well defined.

#### Southern edge

The southern edge is defined by a farm track with stone walls on either side. The track forms part of the Core Path network.

#### Western edge

The full length of the western edge is well defined by substantial areas of mature woodland, designated as Ancient Woodland. The woodland has a series of paths within it which connect the Core Path to the residential areas and park which the woodland surrounds.



Ancient woodland defines the western edge of the site.



To the north the site is separated from adjacent residential areas by woodland along a steep embankment.



The western edge of the site is well defined by woodland with the southern edge defined by walls it is open and allows long views to the south east.



Kingswells Crescent is aligned to the south of the embankment with the woodland the follows the edge of the site at the top.



The southern boundary follows the Core Path.



The site is enclosed by woodland planting to the north and east.





fig. 11: Site area.



### 3.1.2 Site habitats

The plan opposite is an extract from the Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out by Macaulay Enterprises Ltd in 2005. Although the study would now be regarded as out of date with regard to species and fauna the location and types of habitats mapped remain unchanged and it is a useful reference to understand what is located within the site area.

The majority of the land is improved agricultural grassland of low conservation value, but there is also plantation and semi-natural broadleaved woodland surrounding much of the proposed site and a few other small areas of semi-natural vegetation. The majority of woodland vegetation sampled is of planted origin and did not conform to NVC categories. None of the NVC communities surveyed are considered priority habitats at a national or regional level, but on a local level there is a varied habitat structure which increases the value of the site in an otherwise largely agriculturally improved landscape. The presence of mature Wych Elm trees *Ulmus glabra* was noted just outside the boundary of the proposed development; this species is the subject of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The amenity grassland to the north west of the site is the local park outside the site area and surrounded by mature woodland.

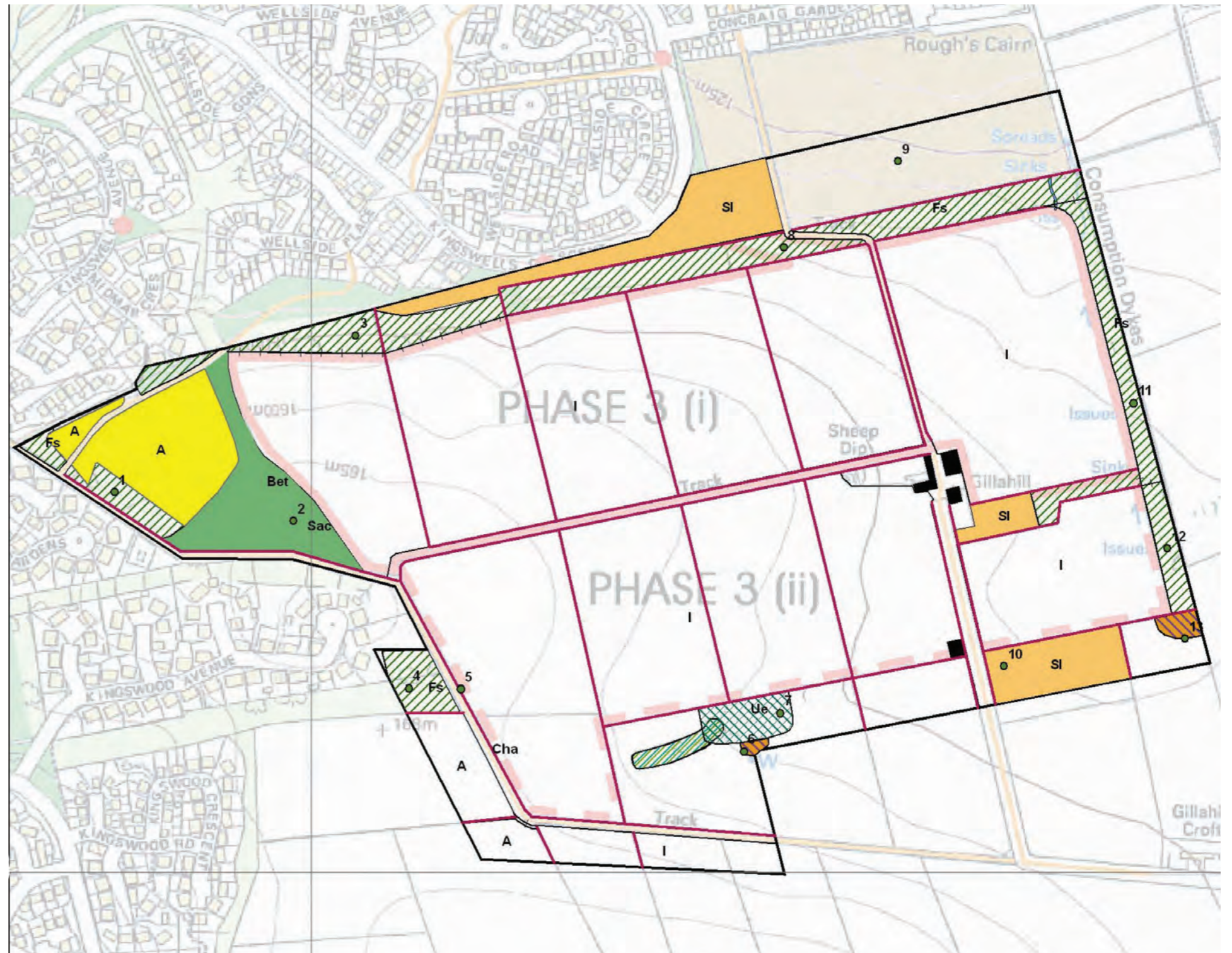


fig. 12: Extract from Phase 1 Habitat Survey.



## 3.2 Landform and aspect

### Topography

The topography across the site is favourable to development, sloping gradually from west to east. The site falls from a high point of +170m at the centre of the western boundary to a low point of +130m in the north east corner.

The site topography is broken by a ridge falling from the high point on the western edge to Gillahill Farm. From the ridge the land to the north falls gradually to the northern boundary where it then falls away steeply down through the wooded embankment. Within the site area the gradients on the northern side do not pose any constraint to development.

South of the ridge the land falls gradually at a relatively shallow and consistent gradient to a local valley where there is a stand of trees and gorse and where localised surface flooding is recorded. From the low point the land rises again to the southern boundary. The south facing site provides good opportunities to benefit from passive solar gain and sustainable design. On the southern side the only constraint to development is the localised flooding in the lower areas which should be kept free from development.

### Views

Views from the higher land within the site and over the site are a key asset and have been a consideration in the design development, in particular:

- View north over Kingswells towards Brimmond Hill;
- Views from the central ridge south east towards Aberdeen and the North Sea, and;
- Attractive views also exist eastward to the surrounding countryside.

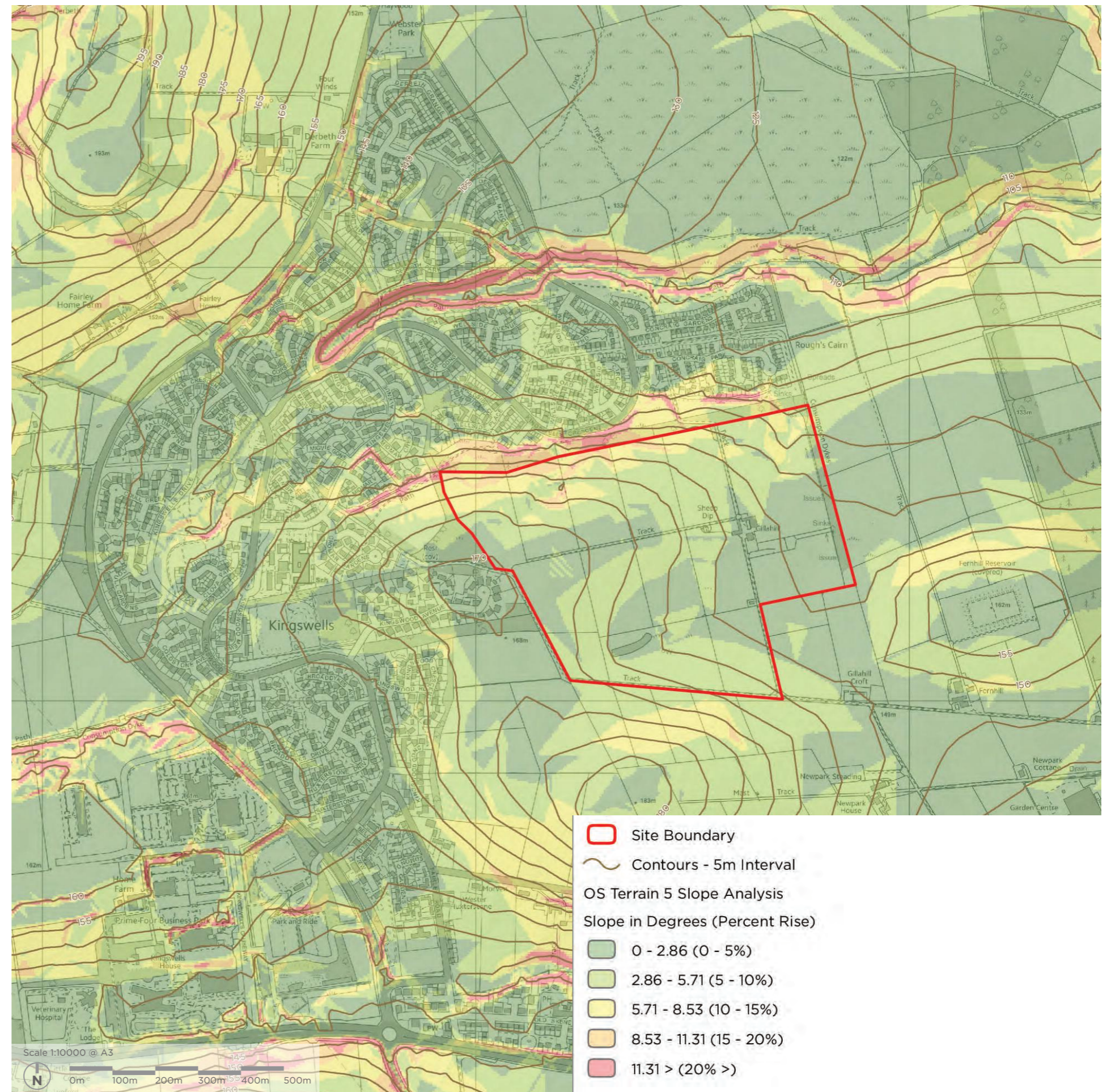


fig. 13: Site topography.



### 3.2.1 Key features

As a result of the long term agricultural use of the site it has remained relatively unchanged over the years as Kingswells has grown and surrounded it to the west and north. Figure 14 below, shows the site in 1869 when as now it was retained as a farm. The plan below and photo opposite illustrate how much Kingswells has grown to surround the site and allows the key features of the

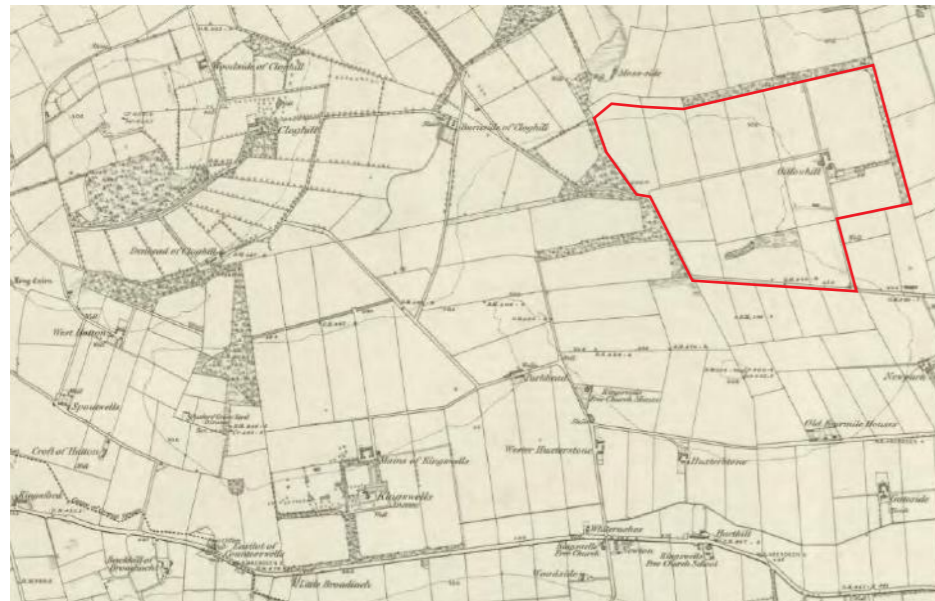


fig. 14: Approximate extent of site area in 1869

site to be identified. The site is identified within the Woodland Farmland LCA the key characteristics of relevance to the character, include:

- Views from the site;
- The small and regular pattern of fields divided by stone walls and tracks;
- Several of the stone walls are notable examples of consumption dykes such as eastern boundary of the site;
- The boundaries are often reinforced by single trees and gorse;
- The area is well-wooded, although this is due to the presence of tree clumps, boundary trees and shelterbelts rather than large areas of woodland;
- Gillahill Farm buildings form a distinctive landmark in the area;
- The number of double wall lined tracks across the area are also a feature which has led to a more recent network of Core Paths and local paths across the site area.

The features listed above and described on the following pages are all characteristic of the area and should be incorporated into any development where possible to add character and help define a sense of place.



fig. 15: Key site features.





The farm buildings at Gillahill are landmark within the site area.



The double walled lined track divides the site following the ridge from the western boundary to Gillahill Farm.



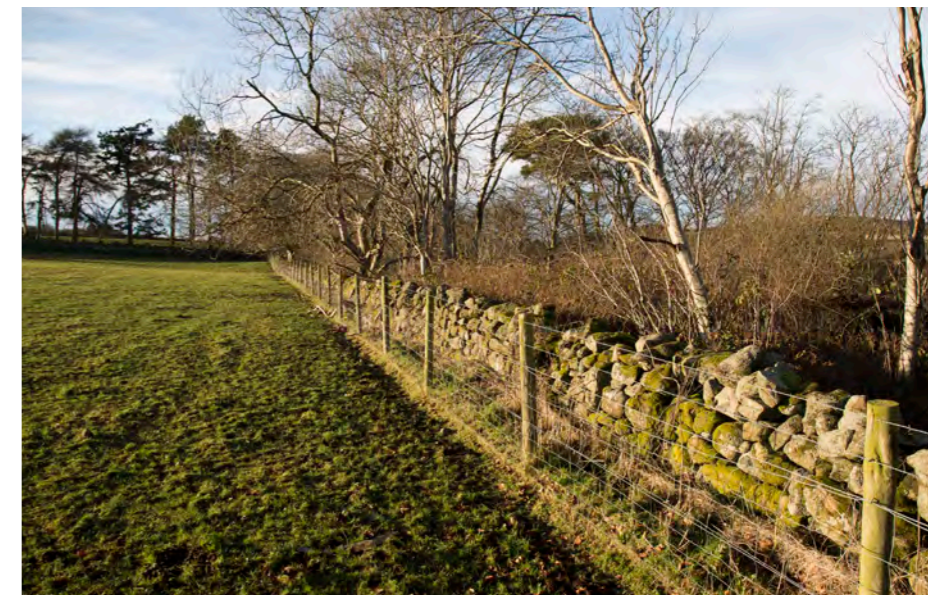
There are numerous stone walls across the site. These are a key character forming element of the area.



The farm buildings, house and surrounding small fields include trees and form a distinctive cluster to the east of the site.



Views from the track at higher points are a key site asset.



The stone walls are often combined with woodland planting and gorse to define edges and boundaries.

### Gillahill Farm buildings

The buildings at Gillahill farm, including the farm house and a number of out buildings form a small group around a yard and paddocks. The buildings are in varying condition but are typical stone built with slate roofs. The buildings are accessed via three different tracks and as such form a distinct feature within the site area.

None of the buildings or structures are listed.

### Central track

A key feature of the site, the central track, aligned with stone walls, connects the western edge of Kingswells to Gillahill Farm. The track bisects the site following the ridge from the high point to the west to the farm with a number of stone walls connecting along its length. As a result of the topography good views are available from the site long the length of the track. The track does not form part of the Core Path Network and is currently utilised for agricultural access only.

### Stone walls

Characteristic of the wider area, stone walls are a key feature within the site, These divide the fields and define all of the site boundaries. These should be retained as features of the area where possible.





Stand of mature trees surrounded by a wall to the south of the site form an attractive feature.



There are numerous path opportunities to connect to the local and Core Path network from the site area.



Views south east from the Core Path to the Aberdeen and the North Sea.



The surrounding woodland helps enclose the site and offers shelter and opportunities for path connections.



Opportunities exist to connect to the Core Path network to the north and south of the site.



Views existing north west over Kingswells to Brimmond Hill.

### Woodland edges

The western, northern and part of the eastern boundaries of the site are defined by existing woodland. The woodland is generally broad leaved and mature, helping to enclose the site and provide shelter to the area. The woodland forms part of the Green Space Network and in most areas incorporates the Core Path Network and local path links.

Aside from the surrounding woodland there is little woodland or tree cover within the site area itself which is limited to a stand of woodland to the south of the site surrounded by a wall and some trees around the farm.

### Path network

A key asset of the site is the extensive network of paths which surround and cross the site area including Core Path routes to the north and south. The paths provide a variety of local routes including connections to the school and Kingswells centre as well as more strategic connections to Aberdeen to the east.

### Views

From the high parts of the site to the west good views are afforded to the north and east across to Aberdeen and the North Sea. The views east are not possible from most of Kingswells due to the topography and as such an important aspect that should be retained.



### 3.3 Site photos

The following pages contain a number of photos of the site area both from distant viewpoints and the immediate surroundings with key features labelled to help describe the site and its context. The viewpoints are identified on figure 16 opposite.

Viewpoints 1 are not identified on the plan opposite as these are located out with the extents of the plan area and are identified on figure 3.

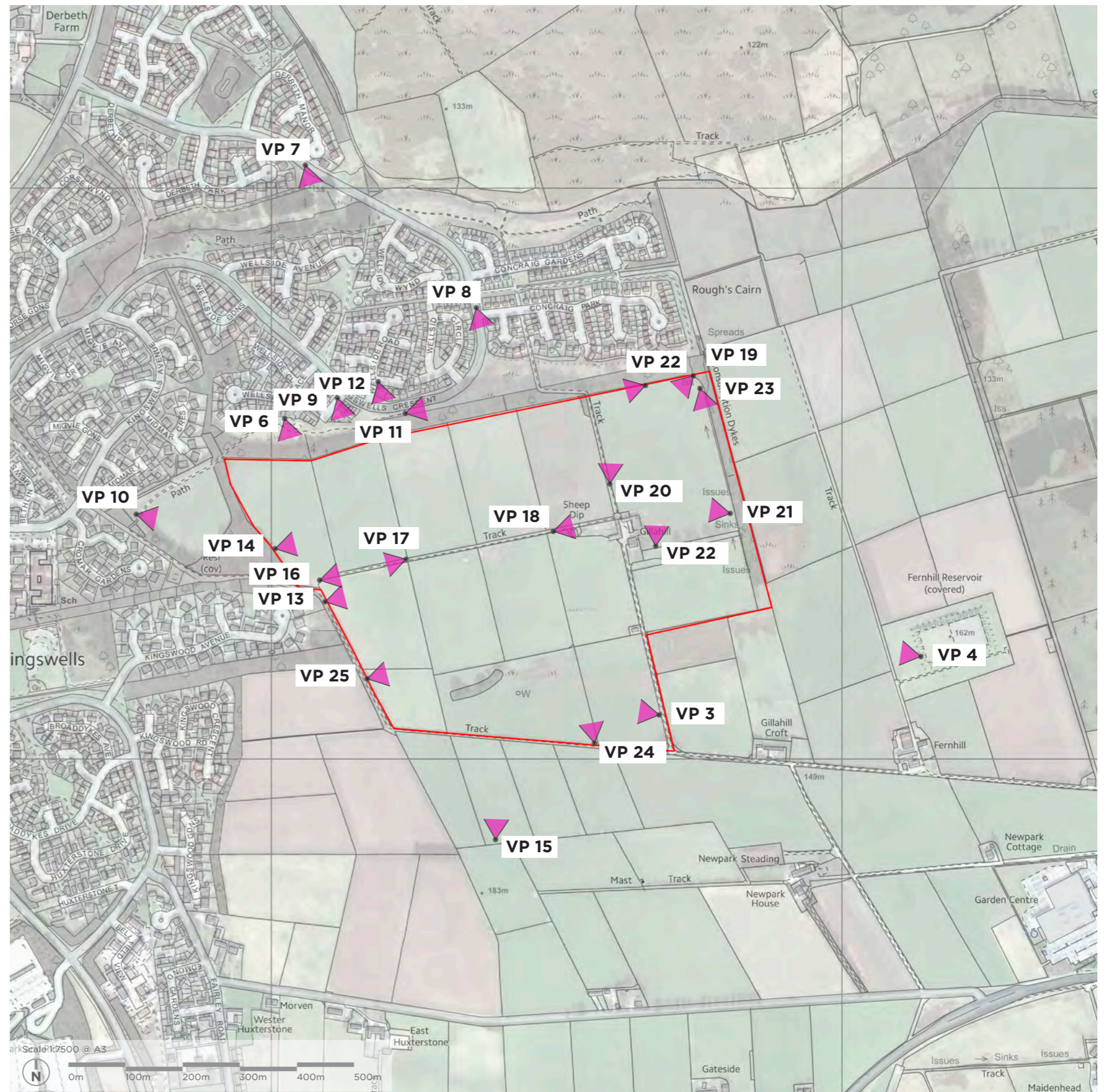


fig. 16: Viewpoint location plan.





Viewpoint 1 - View from Brimmond Hill towards Kingswells to show the site area in the wider context.



Viewpoint 2 - View south east from Newhills Church.

Gillahill, Kingswells





Wooded eastern edge of the site

Gillahill Farm

Wooded western edge of the site

Elevated hill of Newpark to the south of the site area

Kingswells local centre

Prime Four business park



Wooded eastern edge of site

Fernhill Reservoir

Gillahill Farm

Concraig Park

Elevated hill of Newpark to the south of the site area

Woodland on northern edge of the site





Southern boundary of the site/Core Path

Trees on the elevated hill of Newpark to the south of the site area

Roundel of woodland in southern part of the site

Central track and high point of the site area

Brimmond Hill

Viewpoint 3 - View west and north from the access track to Gillahill Farm.



Trees on the elevated hill of Newpark to the south of the site area

Southern boundary of the site/Core Path

Viewpoint 4 - View west from Fernhill Reservoir.  
Gillahill, Kingswells









Viewpoint 5 - View to Kingswells from Newhills Cemetery. This view illustrates how the site sits lower than the hill at Newpark to the south of the site area.



Viewpoint 6 - Existing play park at Wellside place on north west boundary of the site.  
Gillahill, Kingswells









Viewpoint 7 - View from Kingswells Crescent south at the Bucks Burn crossing.



Viewpoint 8 - View south from Kingswells Crescent junction to Concraig Gardens.



Viewpoint 9 - View south to the site from Wellside End. This view illustrates how the site is located on higher ground than the residential areas to the north.

Gillahill, Kingswells





Viewpoint 10 - View from the existing park to the west of the site towards the site. The photo illustrates how the existing woodland surrounds the western edge of the site.



Viewpoint 11 - View east on the Core Path that follows the northern boundary of the site. The photo illustrates the embankment and woodland on the northern edge of the site, separating it from the residential areas to the north.



Viewpoint 12 - View south from Kingswells Crescent to the northern boundary of the site. This photo highlights the change in level between Kingswells Crescent and the site.





Western woodland edge to the site

Brimmond Hill

Concraig Gardens

Bucks Burn LNCS

Viewpoint 13 -View north east along the central double dyke at Kingswood.



Kingswells

Newhills Cemetery

Northern woodland boundary to the site

Viewpoint 14 - Gillahill woodland edge looking north east.  
Gillahill, Kingswells





Northern boundary

Central track

Aberdeen

Gillahill Farm

Fernhill Reservoir

Southern boundary of the site

Stand of trees within the south of the site

Elevated land to the south of the site



North facing slopes of the site

Central track





Western woodland edge to the site

Southern boundary of the site/Core Path

Kingswells

Central track following the ridge

Woodland roundel to the south of the site area

South facing slopes of the site

Viewpoint 15 -View to the site from the elevated land to the south.



Western boundary

Kingswells

Typical stone wall

North facing slopes within the site

Wooded northern boundary

Viewpoint 16 - Gillahill woodland edge looking east along the central track. This photo shows how the site slopes to the north and south from the ridge which the track follows.

Gillahill, Kingswells



Low lying area to the south of the site with evidence of surface water flooding

Central track

Gillahill Farm

Gillahill Farm cottage

Gillahill Farm access track



Central track

Fernhill Reservoir

South facing slopes with views to Aberdeen

Roundel of trees to the south of the site

Trees on the elevated land at Newpark







Viewpoint 17 - View west along central track.



Viewpoint 18 - View from central track east to Gillahill Farm.

Gillahill Farm



Viewpoint 19 - View of woodland along northern boundary from north east corner of site.

Gillahill, Kingswells





Viewpoint 20 - View north from Gillahill Farm along the double walled track.



Viewpoint 21 - View west to Gillahill Farm from the eastern boundary. The photo shows the water course which follows the eastern boundary.



Viewpoint 22 - View north east from Gillahill Farm.





Viewpoint 23 - View of woodland along northern boundary.



Viewpoint 24 - View of eastern boundary.





Viewpoint 24 - View from Core Path on southern boundary looking north towards Brimmond Hill.



Viewpoint 25 - View from Core Path on the western boundary towards Gillahill Farm.



## 3.4 Gillahill Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Viewpoints 1 to 25 in section 3.3 of this report are representative of views into and from the potential site from the surrounding landscape and from the existing settlement at Kingswells. The landscape and visual analysis presented in this section of the report, whilst representing a cross section of receptor types and sensitivities in the area, is intended as a preliminary appraisal and does not constitute an LVIA.

### 3.4.1 Landscape Context

The site is agricultural and of rural character with a clearly defined and geometric field pattern separated by distinctive connecting drystone walling. The drystone walling fans out from a central spine created by a double wall with a narrow track that runs along the shoulder of the hill slope from Gillahill to a high point of landform at the woods adjacent to Kingswood Avenue within Kingswells. The topography of the site is dominated by this distinctive drystone wall topped feature with the southern area of the site lower in elevation than the more elevated hill of Newpark further to the south. Topography varies from 130m AOD in the north east corner to 170m AOD at the woods adjacent to Kingswood Avenue within Kingswells.

There are substantial woodland edges to the north, west and east sides of the site, some of which can be accessed through woodland paths and recreation areas that connect to the Kingswells settlement. The existing settlement of Kingswells wraps around the site along its northern and western boundaries, albeit separated by intervening wooded areas and linear woodland strips. The northern edge of the site has a steeper slope than other areas, most of which is wooded. These elements combine to create a degree of separation from north east Kingswells and the proposal site.

There are no scenic landscape designations on or close to the site. The site is in an area of Greenbelt land that covers the vast majority of the landscape that surrounds Aberdeen. In addition, the wooded area at the western edges of the site, adjacent to Kingswood Avenue within Kingswells, is designated as ancient woodland.

The landscape character of Aberdeen is recorded and classified in Scottish Natural Heritage's publication 'Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen', SNH Review No 80, (Nicol I, Johnston A and Campbell, L, 1996).

The majority of site lies across Landscape Character Area (LCA) 15 (Kingswells) of the Wooded Farmland landscape character typology with the eastern and southern edges of the site area sitting across LCA 14 (Newhills) and LCA 16 (Maidencraig) of the Open Farmland landscape character typology. In reviewing the character assessment, it is considered that although some landscape features are similar in the Open Farmland typology (such as dykes and agricultural land use), the characteristics of the site are most clearly aligned with Wooded Farmland - LCA 15 (Kingswells). The western edges of the site area is defined as 'Urban' although at a more local level of characterisation, the boundary of the 'Urban' area would more closely follow the existing urban edges of Kingswells which would not include the western edges of the proposal site.

Key Characteristics of Wooded Farmland - LCA 15 (Kingswells), of relevance to the site area, include:

- Views are limited to the north, west, and south by the higher surrounding ground.
- Landuse is varied, with agriculture, woodland and developed areas all occurring within or immediately adjacent to the area.
- The small to medium-sized fields, in which pasture is more common than arable crops, are bounded by dykes more often than fences.
- The boundaries are often reinforced by single trees and gorse. Several of the stone walls are notable examples of consumption dykes.
- The area is well-wooded, although this is due to the presence of tree clumps, boundary trees and shelterbelts rather than large areas of woodland. Tree species are both broadleaved and coniferous.
- The adjacent urban area of Kingswells visually dominates the area. The modern settlement has developed to the north of the original village.
- Distinctive Landscape Features, include: The varied topography; The amount and variety of woodland forms - shelterbelts, clumps and boundary trees; Stone dykes (including notable examples of consumption dykes) dividing farmland into small fields;
- Abrupt urban edge of parts of Kingswells immediately adjoining the character area; The degree of visual enclosure due to the surrounding landform; and
- Views to masts on Brimmond Hill.

Sensitivity to landscape change is described in the character assessment, it is evident that the majority of these considerations relate to the compartment of this LCA that lies to the west of Kingswells and that some aspects are now out of date (i.e. Presence of commercial development immediately south of the LCA). The construction of the AWPR through this LCA will also affect its sensitivity.

Specific landscape guidelines are also listed in the character assessment:

Conserve / Manage

- Maintain and manage the characteristic woodland;
- Maintain stone dykes.

Enhance

- Increase structure planting around settlement



### 3.4.2 Visual Context

Views from the site are dominated by the attractive panorama towards Aberdeen City and its context with the coast and surrounding hills. The proposal site has an overall easterly aspect as it is located on gently sloping land between Gillahill and the eastern edges of Kingswells, which is defined by a ridgeline that runs east – west across the site. The easterly aspect of the site (and views to the wider landscape) also varies therefore to the north or south of this ridgeline, focussing views either to the north east or to the south east.

Despite longer views from the site providing a noteworthy east facing panorama overlooking the Aberdeen urban coastline, views of the proposal site from urban Aberdeen are much less remarkable with the gradually increasing topography resulting in few opportunities for views above intervening vegetation or built up fabric within its own urban context. At greater distances intervisibility between the proposal site and urban areas of Aberdeen is limited to parts of Danestone & Middleton Park in north Aberdeen, high rises that are not visually obscured by the Fernhill Reservoir landform and small parts of Torry to the south. There are views from the edges of the Aberdeen urban area (Sheddocksley and Northfield) which have better opportunities to view the site area, but these are still limited as to the extent of the proposal site visible. Typically, in these views the proposal site appears narrow vertically and as it is surrounded by field boundary trees, its true size and form are indistinct as a series of glimpses through successive rows of intervening field boundary vegetation.

There are no views of the site area from the south or west due to the screening effect of intervening topography of Newpark Hill (184m AOD) and the developed Kingswells area which occupies the western slopes of Gillahill and is at higher elevation at the top of slope than any part of the proposal site.

The only locations where an overview of the majority of the site area can be taken in are from the minor track that leads up to Fernhill Reservoir to the east, or from Brimmond Hill to the north west. Fernhill Reservoir is not a particularly sensitive location although the view does allow a clearer view of Gillahill Farm and its relationship with the spine of drystone dykes that runs along the east-west ridgeline through the proposal site. The Brimmond Hill location is a popular walking destination and due to its prominent position offers 360 degree panoramic views across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. The view from Brimmond Hill towards the site is dominated by the existing Kingswells development which spreads around the north and west sides of the same landform of the proposal site. In this view, new housing development on the proposal site would appear to extend the northern area of Kingswells

southwards, retaining substantial wooded areas and open space between it and the larger settled area of Kingswells. Also evident in this view is that the proposal site contributes to a sense of rural separation, open in character, between the edges of Aberdeen and Kingswells. The openness of this rural character is emphasised by the wooded edges of Kingswells and the wooded nature of Greenferns and Hazelhead that appear to frame its edges.

Close up views of lower parts of the north facing slopes of the proposal site are possible from streets and properties within northern parts Kingswells as seen through gaps in the existing trees and woods that form the northern boundary to the site. There are other close views along the minor tracks to and from Gillahill Farm at the edges of the proposal site boundary. The distinctive drystone dykes are notable from these close views, contributing to rural character and providing additional visual interest in a simple structure of rectilinear compartments. These compartments are created by single dykes which appear to connect to the double dyke spine that follows the ridgeline through the centre of the site in an east to west orientation.

Newpark Hill is a quite distinctive landform in views from the surrounding area, more so due to the recognisable clump of conifer trees that tend to sit on the skyline from multiple view directions. The sloping ridgeline landform of Gillahill is only apparent in more distant views from the north. Whilst the drystone dykes that run the length of this ridgeline make this landform more apparent than it would be otherwise, it sits low in these views compared to the more distinctive tree topped Newpark Hill which forms a backdrop to the ridgeline of the proposal site.

### 3.4.3 Conclusion

The proposal site would add an area of development to the east of the existing Kingswells settlement. Although of a relatively large development footprint this addition is not as visible in the landscape as the existing settlement that makes up the current pattern of housing at Kingswells. This is largely due to the surrounding landforms which contain the area resulting in a visually discreet parcel of land which is only viewed in its entirety from the edges of the site to the east which are isolated in nature or from the elevated Brimmond Hill, which has views across much of urban Aberdeen and where the development would be seen in close visual context to other parts of Kingswells.

Where views are possible, sympathetically designed landscape structure and open space within the indicative development framework compliments the existing rectilinear pattern of dykes and this additional planting framework (that includes wooded strips, hedgerows and street trees), will further soften the appearance of built development.

A change in character would occur on the site itself affecting the immediate landscape context of the Wooded Farmland LCA 15 (Kingswells) extending to nearby enclosing hills such as Newpark and Fernhill. The open aspect of the rural landscape between wooded areas at Kingswells and the edges of Aberdeen would also be affected. The wooded edges that currently exist around the site would however help to accommodate future development by partly containing this character change at a local level particularly to the north and west.

The indicative development framework plan (figure 22, p49) draws on the existing rectilinear structure of the field compartments created by the pattern of drystone dykes with particular focus on the position and orientation of the double dyke central to the site. Whilst the character will change from rural to suburban, this design objective is sympathetic to the specific landscape guidelines listed in the Aberdeen Character Assessment for the Wooded Farmland - LCA 15 (Kingswells), in that the dykes would be maintained as a key landscape feature in acknowledgment of their original identity. It is considered that proposals as described in the 'Indicative Development Framework' for the site provide the potential to introduce a relatively large scale additional housing development within the context of the existing Kingswells development with potentially minimal landscape and visual effects, considered to be highly localised in extent.





fig. 17: Representative view of Kingswells from Brimmond Hill with the proposed development area highlighted.





fig. 18: Representative view to the site from Newhills Church with the proposed development area highlighted.



## 3.5 Site opportunities/constraints

The key physical opportunities and constraints which influence the site are as follows:

- Although of a relatively large development footprint the site is not as visible in the wider landscape as the existing settlement that makes up the current pattern of housing at Kingswells;
- Variety of woodland forms bounding and containing the site;
- Varied topography which allows views to Brimmond Hill and the sea whilst at the same time containing sections of the site;
- South facing fields with long distance views to the south east;
- Existing cluster of farm buildings;
- Attractive and regular pattern of stone field dykes dividing land into small fields;
- Distinctive linear farm tracks leading to the farm buildings. The more prominent of the two crosses the length of the site in an east-west alignment, bisecting the site and the other runs north-south. Both tracks are defined by attractive stone dykes;
- Distinctive stand of mature trees in the southern section of the site;
- Low lying area of the site which is subject to surface flooding must be considered;
- Close proximity to the centre of Kingswells and in particular the school, local shops and bus stops;
- Opportunity to integrate with the existing settlement with good street and path connections;
- Abrupt, incongruous urban edges adjoining the site;
- The site is bounded by the core path on all sides offering access to a network of existing connections to the existing residential areas to the north and west, and through open farmland to the south and east; and
- Proximity to the C89c Chapel of Stoneywood - Fairley Road, the AWPR and potential employment areas to the north.

In considering the opportunity at Gillahill, cognisance must also be taken of its position within an evolving urban context and the future demands and offer presented by the surrounding masterplans highlighted at the start of the document.





fig. 19: Site opportunities and constraints



# 4. The opportunity & vision

The vision for Gillahill is of a natural, sustainable extension to Kingswells. Sensitively designed development in a highly desirable location, offering a countryside setting with excellent connections to the city and other areas. Local facilities and walkable neighbourhoods, coupled with a range of housing typologies in a characterful setting, will bring a vibrancy to Kingswells whilst creating a new and distinctive community.



fig. 20: Sketch layout.







## 4.1 Site potential & vision

A vision sketch has been produced in response to the site opportunities and constraints and establishes the capacity of the site to accommodate development. The design approach and initial sketches are illustrated on the following pages. The physical characteristics of the site are such that it could provide a distinctive and attractive residentially led development.

Development at Gillahill would be a logical expansion of Kingswells and could offer several benefits to the immediate locale and to the wider city:

- Sustainable natural growth - maximising site potential without overdeveloping and utilising infrastructure effectively;
- Support of existing local facilities within Kingswells and creation of new facilities as appropriate, including the potential to accommodate a new school;
- The chance to provide a different housing choice thereby improving the social diversity of the area and help meet housing demand;
- The opportunity to improve the abrupt homogenous urban edges adjoining the site with a more appropriate response;
- Creation of distinctive neighbourhoods shaped by existing landscape features;
- Improvement and enhancement of footpaths connections and experience;
- As the site is currently comprised of agricultural fields, significant environmental benefits could be gained from provision of additional woodland cover, strengthening of existing tree belts, extensive tree planting, provision of open space linked to the wider path network and domestic gardens providing opportunities for enhanced biodiversity; and
- Attractive open spaces offering considerable recreation benefits.

### Integration with Kingswells

Every opportunity should be made to integrate the site with the existing settlement at Kingswells. There are significant opportunities to link the areas through connections, green linkages, open space and the design of buildings including new community buildings such as a new school that may be necessary.

### Well connected place

The site is well connected to the city and the countryside. Numerous opportunities exist for pedestrian and cycle connections to the existing network. Existing public transport routes and the Kingswells Park and Ride facility provide a viable alternative to car use. Proximity to the C89c Chapel of Stoneywood - Fairley Road, A944 and the AWPR gives easy access for car users. On a regional and international scale, the railway station and Aberdeen International Airport at Dyce allow for movement across the country and beyond.

### Facilities

Whilst largely residential in nature, Gillahill would provide for locally assessed needs, in the form of local small-scale community and commercial uses such as a cafe, and perhaps a new school.

### Countryside

Notwithstanding the benefits of proximity to the city, the site location on the western edge of the city offers the asset of being adjacent to the countryside with access to the Bucks Burn corridor very close by to the north and Brimmond Hill Country Park to the west.





Street connection to Kingswells Crescent

Street connection to Kingswells Crescent

Properties with large gardens to ensure suitable offset and protection of existing trees

Open space to provide sense of arrival

Proposed park space to allow integration with existing open space

Potential location for primary school in prominent and accessible location

Central track utilised as a pedestrian route with walls retained and enhanced with tree planting

Arrival space from Kingswells local centre on Core Path network and allow views from the high point

Stone walls retained as features within the street network

Area of open space focused around existing stand of trees and natural low point within the site  
Core Path

Large plots onto Core Path with proposed planting to better define the boundary

Provide a number of connections to the Core Path network

Space for SuDS overlooked by adjacent properties

Arrival space on primary street

Existing track with walls retained in design of a street

Primary street designed to provide clear route through development

Large plots adjacent to eastern boundary to ensure water course and woodland can be protected and retained

Streets and spaces aligned to allow views north east from higher ground

Farm buildings and surrounding fields retained as a feature within the site and provide an opportunity for non residential uses

Rectilinear street structure following the existing field pattern and incorporating existing walls

Properties to overlook park space to the south

SuDS space located in natural low point within the site forming part of a park network

Properties overlooking open space

Pedestrian/cycle links to core path



Scale: 1:3,500@A3

fig. 21: Development sketch layout with notes.



## 4.2 Design approach and concept

### Overall Approach

Gillahill is a particularly attractive site within Aberdeen, with a character defined by its landscape features - most notably the track that runs along the ridgeline east-west across the site and the stone dykes that hang perpendicular from it, while the strong surrounding woodland structure forms an important setting for the site.

This richness of landscape setting along with the existing buildings on the site provides an excellent opportunity for the creation of a new development with a diverse range of character areas which are connected by a clear set of spatial relationships and hierarchy. The approach to development at Gillahill is based on designing a development structure that fits with the landscape and retains and utilises these existing site features to best effect. The site layout aims to direct relevant uses, a wide range of housing types and open spaces to the most appropriate parts of the site, ensuring that the features are fully maximised to contribute to the creation of the place and that development is context driven.

The site features combined with the opportunities identified in the previous section lead to a simple and logical conceptual layout for the development of the site.

### Design evolution

The proposals described in this section take into account previous discussions with Aberdeen City Council (ACC) in 2004 relating to a previous submission. The site had previously been promoted for development and was supported by ACC following a design process in which Council Officers input to the design process. The proposals addresses the principle impacts, as identified in the agreement, as follows;

- i. The roundabout on Kingswells Crescent has been deleted.
- ii. The proposed access road has been realigned and now enters the site through an existing gap in the northern tree belt. In order to further protect the existing trees, planting buffer zones of 10m width are proposed. An area of open space is located to the south of the route of the access road, thereby minimising the visual impact of development on nearby properties.
- iii. Development is excluded from the steeper parts of the site to avoid excessive terracing and changes to landform.
- iv. A structure planting belt is located along the middle track to minimise the possibility of sky lining.

v. The extensive reinforcement of existing tree belts and the use of strategically placed areas of open space will ensure that privacy of the existing settlement is maintained.

vi. Amenity open space is located at both ends of the development and is linked to the existing and proposed path network.

Despite the previous proposals not advancing at that time the issues that were raised remain pertinent and have been incorporated into the design described in the following pages.

### A green spine with ribs of development

The key component to the conceptual layout is the existing track which runs along the ridge line from the western boundary to Gillahill Farm. This will be enhanced and become a green pedestrian spine through the centre of the site around which other elements are linked and arranged, within pockets defined by the stone dyke field boundaries which hang rib - like from the pedestrian spine.

The school site to the west and the potential mixed use hub around the farm cluster to the east anchor either end of this route, whilst residential pockets strung along the spine spread finger like or fan out to the edges of the site linking with areas of open space and woodland to create a connected green grid over the site.

Parcels of development are naturally defined by the existing stone dykes which divide the land into fields of an appropriate size for residential blocks. These offer a variety of opportunities for development which connects with the landscape in which it is set.

The relationships to the stone walls can vary as necessary; the key aim has been to retain them and minimise the amount of removal. In the majority of instances shown on the vision layout roads and footpaths have been positioned to run alongside them, however in some instance they have been incorporated into open space or gardens.

### Integration with Kingswells

Identifying opportunities to integrate with existing green space resources, utilise site features, connect with the green pedestrian spine and link the parcels of development suggests the creation of three main parks:

1. On the north- western edge - defined by the stone wall field boundary and topography and potentially easily connected to an existing park and play space by footpaths. This space has a direct relationship with the possible school site;
2. On the north-east corner of the site with good linkages to existing development and on to the Bucks burn corridor and offering opportunities for SUDs; and
3. Park to the south created around the existing stand of trees, stone walling and localised low wet point.

While the other parks to the north are on the periphery of the site close to existing development, this one separates the southern area of the site into a distinctly more rural feeling character area.

Two other spaces adjacent the school and the mixed use area will connect directly with the green corridor. The civic space adjacent the school has a strong visual and physical link to open space at the north-east corner of the site.

The key aspects of the concept are illustrated in the diagram opposite, identifying the main principles that underlie the initial development framework.





fig. 22: Development concept



# 5. Development Strategy

## 5.1 Site principles

This section of the document sets out an initial development framework, demonstrating how development at Gillahill could be structured. The framework is illustrated opposite and the structuring principles for the spatial strategy are defined in the following text.

### Landscape features

The site has a number of specific features which contribute to character, visual containment and landscape interest; these features should be retained and integrated within development proposals and include:

- Numerous distinctive stone dykes which divide the land into small fields;
- Existing tracks lined either side by stone dykes - one runs east-west across the ridge line and another running north-south;
- Stone walls associated with Gillahill Farm garden;
- Existing woodland belts and;
- Undulating landform which simultaneously encloses and reveals views from different parts of the site.

Additionally, the adjacent landscape resources of the Bucks Burn LNCS, open parkland and play space to the west and north of the site should be accessible to new residents at Gillahill by providing clear routes from within the site to existing connections on the boundary edge.

### Landform and orientation

The site has an overall easterly aspect as it is located on gently sloping land between Gillahill and the eastern edges of Kingswells, which is defined by a ridgeline that runs east - west across the site, dominating the topography. The ridgeline divides the site into northern and southern sections with varied topography. The southern area of the site is lower in elevation and flatter offering favourable conditions for the creation of interesting streets and spaces without the need for extensive earthworks. The northern edge of the site has a steeper slope than other areas.

The overriding strategy for the design of the development is to work in harmony with the natural topography and take advantage of the opportunities it affords in terms of aspect and orientation. Buildings should be arranged to maximise opportunities for passive solar gain.

Working with landform and existing features should drive design, ensuring best housing fit and that the site maximises its existing qualities to create a distinctive character.

### Connections and integration

The development should be readily accessible to residents, visitors and the existing population by providing clear routes from within the site to existing connections on the boundary edge. All spaces should be linked by an integrated network of streets and spaces.

Key connections have been shown to:

- Promote pedestrian movement between the site and the existing core path network;
- Promote integration with Kingswells;
- Ensure development overlooks and addresses open space;
- Provide a variety of connections to the existing network wherever reasonable in order to maximise the permeability of the site;
- Develop a clear street hierarchy and a permeable block structure and
- Promote pedestrian connections to existing bus stops.

### Views

The development blocks have been laid out to respond to the contours of the site and landscape features to ensure that key views to Brimmond Hill, the city and the sea are retained and created whilst protecting areas of the site from negative visual impact. These views will help create both a legible and attractive place. Excellent long views to the sea are offered from the higher ground on the central area to the west of the site from where residents will be able to enjoy them from a park setting and as they venture eastwards along the central footway/cycleway created on an existing track.

Arranging streets and buildings to filter views, terminate vistas and pass through sub spaces will help create a legible, attractive and interesting place. Open spaces should be designed to maximise and enhance this experience.

### Spatial experience

Development Blocks have been laid out to ensure that an interesting spatial experience is created. Core spaces, civic spaces and a hierarchy of different streets will create a varied and legible urban form. This basic structure can then be further articulated by additional requirements and guidance such as building heights, landmarks and building typologies as the design progresses.

The site arrangement must respond to the distinctive landscape features within it and both urban and rural boundary edge conditions.

The western and northern sections of the site must be designed to respond positively to the housing at Kingswells which backs on to the site and be responsive to the topography, woodland belts and stone walls. The western area containing the school and park will be a very active part of the site.

The school will be a large landmark building that by virtue of its requirements dictates an open character in the landscape in this area. Whilst the area of mixed use at Gillahill Farm would be also be vibrant and busy, the buildings are of a domestic scale, so it would feel more intimate in nature. Low density housing set against the woodland with path links on the eastern boundary denotes the edge of the settlement and transition to the countryside beyond.

The southern part of the site which bounds the core path and farmland will have a quieter more rural character than the rest of the development. The open space formed around the existing stand of mature trees and the stone wall bounding the main street edge, will physically separate this section of the site from other housing and render it as a distinct area, characterised by lower density housing in large plots. Pedestrian and cycle connection only is proposed to the core path track on the southern boundary, so whilst people will connect through the housing from the path to the site, vehicular traffic in this area will be almost solely for the housing here and therefore very low.

A brief description of the spatial experience for those arriving at the site and following the route around the primary street provides a snapshot of the interesting and diverse character that could be created on the site. The main entrance to the site at the north-west comes through a woodland belt and arrives at an area of open space to the west overlooked by housing on the opposite side of the street. The road climbs alongside an existing stone dyke with glimpses over to the large park beyond and arrives quickly at the school site. This is the highest point of the site where immediately south of the school visitors and residents can stop in the park and orientate themselves with views to the city. Cyclists and pedestrians can choose to continue directly along the long, linear tree lined path leading directly to the mixed use area where it terminates, or peel off into a pocket of housing. Those in a vehicle would continue following the boulevard primary street as it loops down and around the site, past the walled gardens of the mixed use area at Gillahill Farm to the west and low density housing against a woodland backdrop as it passes along the eastern edge. The road continues past a large park to the north-east containing suds and a smaller open space to the east. An important view westwards uphill from this point terminates with the civic space and school. The street then passes through the woodland belt to link with Kingswells Crescent.

**The following pages briefly describe and illustrate the framework under three main headings:**

- Land use strategy;
- Landscape strategy; and
- Access strategy.



**Legend**











-  Site Boundary
-  Development blocks
-  Primary street
-  Secondary street
-  Shared surface
-  Tree lined streets
-  Potential School
-  Open space
-  SUDS
-  Woodland



fig. 23: Indicative Development Framework



## 5.2 Land use strategy

### General land use and density principles

The suggested proposal is that the site would be suited to a residential led development of around 650 homes with supporting community uses such as a cafe/ shop and a school. The development capacity has been arrived at based on a number of factors - working with site features sympathetically, using land efficiently and a consideration of appropriate scale of development to different areas of the site.

The diagram on the opposite page shows an initial approach to land use and density for discussion and future testing purposes. Analysis and conceptual consideration of the 40.5 hectare site suggests an approximate total developable area of 25 hectares (including school site).

Development would aim to meet the current Aberdeen LDP target of 30 dwellings per hectare or above, as an average across the development plots of the site. Individually not all development plots will meet the 30 dwellings per hectare target, this is in recognition of the varied character of Gillahill where some areas, such as the southern edge call for very low density adjacent to the countryside, whilst others for example around the mixed use area require a higher density to create a vibrant atmosphere.

### Opportunities for community services / facilities

Within the development framework, a principal mixed use area which could accommodate support services for the new and existing communities, has been identified around Gillahill Farm. This area is located at an important node point where the two main cycleways/footways converge. It also contains an attractive south facing walled garden area for outdoor seating associated with a cafe. This could become an attractive destination for local residents to meet or a stopping point for those taking a longer walk, perhaps coming from Brimmond Hill Country Park.

At the opposite end of the main cycleway/footway a large area has been zoned as a potential site for a new school. A school would create an attractive landmark building in this location and is adjacent to the proposed large park immediately to the west with good path network connections provided to Kingswells, allowing children from the existing housing or new development to readily walk or cycle to school. The school would be accessed directly off the proposed primary street route and is close to an existing bus stop, although it is envisaged public transport will come through the site and a stop would be located immediately outside.

The amount of facilities provision actually provided will be dependant upon market research, however the sketch layout provides a starting point for further exploration.

### Approach to density

Residential densities should respond to existing topography and utilise layouts which avoid requirement for significant earth-modelling/platforming. The varied topography and features on the site require a carefully considered approach to density and will ensure that the application of homogeneous housing is prevented. Provision of a range of housing types and tenures will also ensure that uniform densities are avoided and that a varied urban form is created.

Densities will generally fall towards the southern and eastern edges of the site becoming very low at its boundaries where it adjoins farmland, in response to the transition to the countryside. Higher densities will be focussed around the school site and the facilities around the existing Gillahill Farm cluster, particularly in the northern half of the site.

Towards the northern edge where the site is separated from Kingswells Crescent by an existing woodland belt the ground has a fairly steep slope and lower density development would be appropriate.

The housing immediately around the cycleway/footway bisecting the site east-west may actually reduce in density slightly from that in the main body of the development to ensure views through and over housing are provided from the path. This would require detailed consideration at a later design stage.

### Appropriate density

Given the scale and character of the site, a wide range of residential densities will be used to further test the capacity of the site. These range from very low density, conditions of around 15 units per hectare up to higher density of 35 at certain points.

The surrounding density at Kingswells adjacent the site has been analysed to ascertain appropriate density in this area. Densities range from 22 - 27 per hectare. It should be noted that the range of existing housing is in the main composed of detached units. The aspiration for Gillahill is to provide a wide and varied range of housing types and therefore for the purpose of this document an average of 30 units per hectare as been used in line with LDP target.

### Affordable housing

The development will provide affordable housing at the level outlined in the LDP, currently 25%. This will be fully integrated into new development and be indistinguishable from other forms of housing.

### Gillahill Farm Buildings

Subject to detailed review at a later stage Gillahill Farmhouse and outbuildings may offers scope for conversion and renovation to residential and perhaps cafe/shop/ artisan workshops.

Regardless of whether the existing buildings are converted or not, this area which is located on the junction of the two main pedestrian cycle routes and with the asset of existing attractive and enclosed outdoor space lends itself to an area of mixed use.

### Phasing

A indicative phasing diagram below demonstrates that the site could readily be developed in two logical phases.

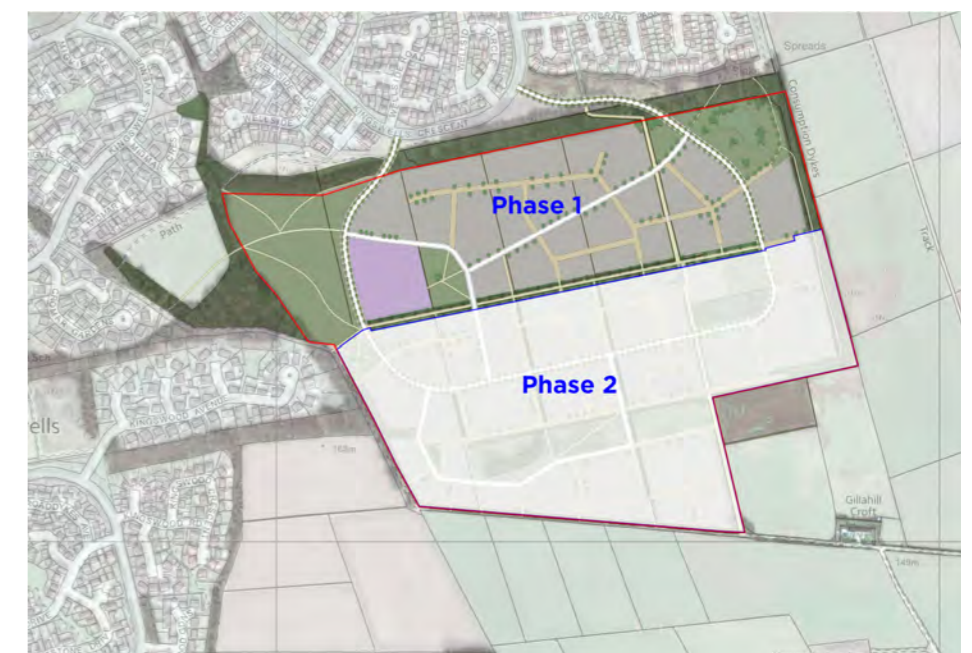


fig. 24: Indicative phasing plan.





fig. 25: Land use plan.



## 5.3 Landscape strategy

Usable, well-designed, public space is recognised as creating opportunities for communities to interact, promoting a sense of place and helping to promote healthy active lifestyles. This section briefly describes how and where this could be provided at Gillahill.

The existing landscape features - woodland, stone walling and topography along with existing buildings and the proposed access points from Kingwells Crescent are the principal organising elements for the structure of the site. These features determine the optimum locations and type of open space appropriate for the development.

### Provision of open space

#### Local open space

Local space is distributed throughout the framework area and generally associated with retained landscape features, at key junctions or other linking spaces which support pedestrian and cycle movements.

#### Woodland

The existing woodland belts which bound the site to the north, west and within the site to the east, provide a backdrop for the development and create a setting and sense of place. A network of pathways provides access through the woodland which will be managed with an environmental and habitat bias, ensuring appropriate regeneration of the woodland together with public safety.

A stand of mature trees bounded by a stone wall is a particularly attractive feature in the southern section of the site and as such it is suggested that open space be formed around this.

#### Core public spaces

Core spaces are formed as a direct response to the existing landscape and are larger scale strategic resources fulfilling recreation, hydrology and ecological functions. These spaces are predominantly soft and should be designed so that they are addressed by development, providing passive surveillance. There are several core spaces proposed on the site as follows:

1. A large park is located to the north-west on the higher ground of the site. Creation of this space would serve several functions - an attractive arrival at the western entrance to the site, enhancement of existing open space provision through direct and attractive connections to the existing park and provide a large open space for recreation which could be utilised by the school and residents.
2. This space will utilise the existing woodland belts to the north and west as attractive backdrops for the park and will be designed to work with an existing stone dyke. The southern section of the park abuts the Core Path and will command long views to the sea and would be designed with seating.

Gillahill, Kingswells

3. A large open space is proposed in the north-east corner of the site. This is the lowest point and suited to accommodating SUDS provision. The space will provide a welcome to the development from the entry on this part of the site and could facilitate direct path connections from the existing housing at Concraig Park.
4. A further area for SUDS has been identified in the southern section of the site on a localised area of low ground. This is linked to an open space which has been formed around a stand of mature trees bounded by a stone wall; a particularly attractive feature in this part of the site, and together they combine to create an informal linear woodland park. In addition this space will incorporate an existing stone dyke as its northern boundary. This space takes an east-west alignment and forms a natural transition from the main body of development to a lower density character area appropriate to the southern edge of the site and the surrounding rural landscape.

A key aim of these spaces will be ecological improvement and management. They could provide opportunities for formal and imaginative play and as educational resources for the school in line with the Curriculum for Excellence.

#### Civic spaces

Civic spaces have been located within the development structure at key nodal points and gateways and have been formed in conjunction with proposed land uses and existing site features. These spaces may be a combination of hard and soft landscape as appropriate and could provide opportunities for formal and imaginative play. There are two civic spaces within the development:

1. Adjacent to the school site, terminating the vista of the primary street and directly connected to the main pedestrian cycle route which leads to the facilities around the existing farm buildings. This space incorporates a stone dyke and could provide an outdoor area for school or other community functions and perhaps contain some art work;
2. Around the existing farm buildings where there is an existing walled garden. This space could be greatly enhanced to provide outdoor space for a cafe, gallery or a small market.

The careful design of these spaces will be essential to creating character at Gillahill. All spaces should be well integrated with the street and path networks, linking development together along with Kingswells, creating a cohesive community.

#### Spaces with development blocks

Opportunities for the creation of spaces within development blocks should be promoted. It is anticipated that a further network of small public spaces will be created within development blocks where appropriate. These should be located at nodal points within the layout, be of a usable size and overlooked by surrounding properties.

#### Play space

An equipped play area should be provided in the large park to the west of the site opposite the school. Informal play facilities would be appropriate within the open space at the area of mixed use around Gillahill Farm. Open and green spaces for play will be integrated, with elements of children's play being accommodated at the outset of each phased development. The detailed design of the spaces should embody the principles of education, adventure play, and interpretation of the natural environment.

#### Connecting green networks

The existing track which bisects the site will be enhanced by way of tree planting on either side of the stone dykes which define it. This will create a strong green spine extending through the middle of the site which connects directly to open spaces, tree lined streets and existing woodland belts creating a continuous green network around and through the site into Kingswells and the surrounding countryside. This will allow for the transit of wildlife and provide an extremely attractive environment in which to live or visit.

#### Open space standards

Following Policy NE4 (Open Space Provision in New Development) The Council will require the provision of at least 2.8ha per 1,000 people of meaningful and useful open space in new residential development.

Initial development figures for the site suggest an number of residential units of 1625 for 650 homes given an average occupancy of 2.5 people per unit this would give a requirement for approximately 4.5 hectares of open space.

The indicative development framework includes;

- 7.50 hectares of key useable open space.

In addition to the useable greenspace there are areas of woodland, Greenways and existing woodland areas surrounding the site which do not count towards the formal open space provision.

The development framework therefore provides an area of public open space which would exceed the Open Space standards. The findings from the Aberdeen City Council Open Space Audit would then be used to develop the proposals and ensure the spaces provided are designed to encourage more useful, relevant and efficiently managed open spaces, of the right type and in the right place.








- Legend**
-  Site Boundary
  -  Open space
  -  Proposed trees
  -  Woodland
  -  SUDS



fig. 26: Landscape structure.



## 5.4 Access strategy

At the core of the access and connectivity strategy is the ability for pedestrians and cyclists to move through Gillahill using a permeable network of paths.

Gillahill should aim to create a place where people can live and work without relying heavily on private transport - within a walkable neighbourhood. Access to the wider urban area of Aberdeen is supported by efficient public transport and cycleways, allowing residents and workers to benefit from the proximity to the city and the surrounding communities at Kingswells and Westhill and also to Prime Four, in addition to the forthcoming developments at Countesswells, and other areas in this part of the city.

### Pedestrians

The pedestrian network is designed to actively encourage walking as a viable transport option and also as a recreational pursuit. Pedestrian links should be developed to meet the needs of the new community, existing residents and visitors in terms of connecting to key destinations such as schools, local shops, community centres and existing outdoor amenities such as the Bucks Burn corridor and Brimmond Country Park.

Pathways, pavements and shared surfaces all combine to create the pedestrian network, and where they are closely linked with areas of existing woodland and stone walling to create pleasant walking experiences.

The site connects well with the existing core path and the experience along this popular walking route will be enhanced through landscape treatment and immediate access to well designed open space.

### Cyclists

The existing field tracks which run in an east-west alignment through the centre of the site and north-south will be enhanced and be solely for pedestrian and cycle use, offering completely traffic free routes through the site to Kingswells and the surrounding countryside. Otherwise cyclists will be accommodated on the street network (on road). The streets and cycleways will also allow a variety of cycle routes connecting the new community to the local and wider urban context and providing routes to significant destinations such as schools, employment and leisure facilities.

### Public transport

It is envisaged that the primary street will facilitate a bus route through the site ensuring that all development would be within 400m of a bus stop. Nevertheless, the route of current public transport provision in the area is illustrated on the plan opposite and demonstrates that half of the suggested area of development is within 400m of existing bus stops and the rest within 800m, with frequent services connecting the site to the city centre, Dyce, Cove, Elgin and other destinations in between. Pedestrian connectivity to existing stops should be considered as a priority.

### Vehicular access

Vehicular access to the site will be provided via two new junctions on to Kingswells Crescent. These have been positioned to minimise impact on existing trees. The road to the north-east has been aligned to work with a gap in the existing woodland. The indicative locations for the junctions are shown on the plan opposite. The exact locations of the junctions has not been determined at this stage but will be developed in due course through consultation with Aberdeen City Council. Providing more than one access point to the site ensures the development is permeable and well connected. Whilst the section of track that runs from the south-east of the site is wide enough to accommodate vehicles it has been considered as a pedestrian / cycle route and while houses will address it they will be accessed from the rear.

### Street network

The internal layout of the site has been designed to take full cognisance of 'Designing Streets'. The layout will be 'Distinctive', 'Safe & pleasant', 'Easy to move around', 'Welcoming', 'Adaptable' and 'Resource efficient'.

The primary street network should connect the new access points, through a simple loop around the site ensuring a clear and permeable structure.

Off the primary street network a simple connected network of secondary streets should provide a permeable structure through the site for access to residential areas.

Further to the primary and secondary network identified, vehicle access should look to utilise shared surface areas, courtyards and minor streets to provide access to properties to allow active frontages to houses addressing pedestrian routes and spaces. This will also assist in creating a varied and interesting urban form in the development.

Shared use surfacing should be introduced wherever possible and appropriate to ensure that suitable safe and direct pedestrian / cycle routes are available and help in providing a permeable layout where possible.

All parking should be designed to be accommodated within the development area so not to impact upon surrounding areas. It must also be integrated into the overall street design to ensure car parking does not dominate the streetscape.





fig. 27: Movement network



# 6. Vision

## 6.1 Illustrative plan

The illustrative plan opposite has been prepared working within the parameters set out in the development strategy and illustrates a layout of around 650 residential units of varying types and sizes. This is not a definitive plan for the site, however illustrates one possible interpretation of the development framework and is intended to show some of the key principles of form and layout envisaged for Gillahill.

The illustrative layout has been produced to describe some of the key design principles for the landscape and development blocks previously set out in the development framework. The plan illustrates how these could be developed with a strong identity that responds to both their context and setting and also to their relationship with Kingswells and the wider area. It is intended that this plan will give further assurance that development at Gillahill can be developed in a manner that is appropriate to the location and presents a logical expansion to Kingswells.

## 6.2 Potential benefits

The Gillahill site is in a prime location, ideally situated to take advantage of excellent transport connections to the city whilst offering an enviable countryside location.

The vision presented throughout this document is to make the most of the intrinsic site qualities, utilising them to establish a neighbourhood at Gillahill that is vibrant and rich in character

In summary the potential benefits to Kingswells and Aberdeen by creating a mixed use development at the Gillahill site are as follows:

- Sustainable, natural growth utilising existing infrastructure effectively;
- Access to new well designed open spaces and path networks offering enhanced recreational benefits;
- An attractive settlement edge;
- Opportunities for enhanced biodiversity;
- A different housing offer and the opportunity to help fulfil housing demand;
- The opportunity to provide enhanced facilities for the community including potentially relocating the school to open up the village centre or by providing an additional school;
- Creation of a destination and a further attractor to the area; and
- High quality development designed as a site specific response from SMH who have a proven track record in delivery of this type of development in Aberdeen. The ongoing delivery of Countesswells is a current example of residentially led mixed use development being implemented by SMH in a sensitive landscape setting.





fig. 28: Indicative Masterplan



# 7. Summary

## 7.1 Vision of Gillahill

Gillahill could become a distinctive and sustainable extension to Kingswells offering a choice of housing within easy reach of local facilities, the city centre and significant employment areas. Responding to the existing qualities of the site and providing a good range of housing will create a characterful, vibrant and well-connected community and a highly desirable place to live within Aberdeen.

## 7.2 Response to ACC call for sites

The response to the Aberdeen City Council call for sites set out in this document underpins SMH's view that appropriate development at Gillahill can be accommodated within the sensitive landscape setting and the parameters identified within the LDP.

Further, this development strategy presented in this document illustrates how development at Gillahill could provide a sustainable expansion to Kingswells and make a unique and positive contribution to housing choice within the local area.

In summary Stewart Milne Homes (SMH) believes that the site at Gillahill has the capacity to accommodate around 650 new homes which will allow flexibility for the creation of an attractive and distinct urban form. A variety of house types will offer choice for different sections of the community, including affordable housing; therefore providing real opportunity for proper sustainable growth of Kingswells.

The proposals also demonstrate how a robust masterplan and sensitive development on the site can benefit the wider area in terms of providing attractive open space, green linkages and connections, enhancing biodiversity on the site and providing local facilities.

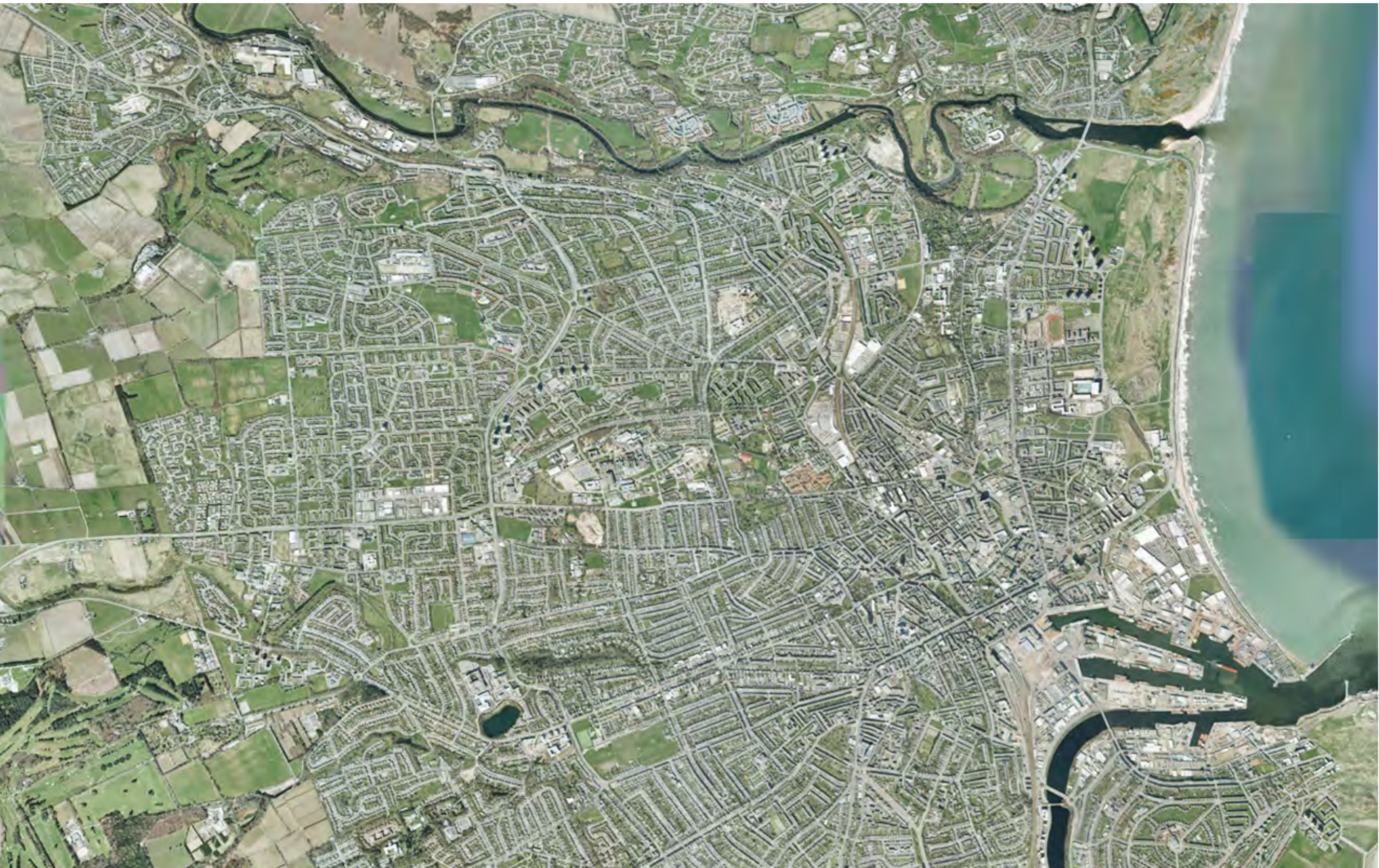
As such SMH are fully committed to delivering a high quality development, complementary to the existing setting and request the inclusion of the site within the emerging Local Development Plan for a residentially led mixed use development.

The plan opposite illustrates the site in the wider context to give a flavour of the potential character of the site and how it could respond to and benefit its surrounding context.



fig. 29: Indicative Masterplan in strategic context.







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