

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>	Countesswells Settlement Expansion
5.2	Site Address	Land Adjacent to Countesswells New Settlement Local Development Plan Allocation OP38 Aberdeen
5.3	Postcode	AB15 8QD
5.4	<p>Have you any information for the site on the internet? If so please provide the web address:</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Details: www.countesswells.com</p>
5.5	Is the site currently being marketed?	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Details:</p>
5.6	<p>Site Location Map</p> <p>(Please include an OS Map with the Boundary of the site clearly marked)</p>	<p>Details:</p> <p>Please refer to OS Site Plan</p>
5.7	Please provide the National Grid reference of the site.	NJ8604SE
5.8	What is the current use of the site?	Agricultural land
5.9	Has there been any previous development on the site? If yes please provide details	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Details: Substantial development has however taken place in respect of adjacent new Countesswells Settlement</p>

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: All of the land subject to this bid is either owned or under option to Stewart Milne Group Ltd	
6.3	Is the proposed site included in the ALDP2017?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details:	
6.4	Is the proposed site included in the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details: Site is outwith the City Centre	
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: Site has previously been promoted through the 2017 LDP	
6.6	Has the site been subject of previous Planning Applications? (Please provide a planning reference)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Details: N/A	
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: See attached Paper Apart	
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: N/A	
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: N/A	

7.	Your Proposal (Please provide as much detail as possible on your site proposal)		
7.1	Proposed Use	Housing	✓
		Employment	
		Mixed Use	
		Retail	
		Other (Please Specify)	
7.2	Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: The proposed housing would provide market and affordable homes for prospective new residents.	
7.3	Site Area (hectares)	ha	33.2ha
	Housing		
7.4	Approx. no of units.	Approximately 545 units delivered on a phased basis	
7.5	Proposed Mix and Number (Number of Flats / Terraced / Semi-detached / detached etc.)	See attached Paper Apart	
7.6	Affordable Housing Percentage	%	25%
7.7	Affordable Housing Partner (Details of any partner organisation, Registered Social Landlord etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	
7.8	Tenure (Details of tenure type, Private Rental Sector / private sale / Housing for the elderly etc.)	Affordable and Private Housing (see attached Paper Apart)	
	Employment		
		N/A	
7.9	Business and Office	m ²	
7.10	General Industrial	m ²	
7.11	Storage and distribution	m ²	
7.12	Other Please specify	m ²	
	Mixed Use (Please provide as much detail as possible on each use class) N/A		
7.13	Housing	No of units and type:-	
7.14	Employment	m ²	
7.15	Retail	m ²	
	Retail		
7.16	Approx. floor area	m ²	

	Other (Please Specify examples could include retailing, tourism, renewable energy, sports, leisure and recreation, institutions and education.)	
7.17	Details of proposal	N/A
7.18	Approx. floor area	m ²

8.	Engagement and Delivery	
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>Yes / No Details: Not yet (see attached Paper Apart)</p>
8.2	Will the proposed development be phased?	<p>Yes / No Details: See attached Paper Apart</p>
8.3	Expected development start post adoption of the plan in 2022	Year, 0-5, 6-10, 10+
8.4	Expected development completion	Year, 0-5, 6-10, 10+
8.5	Is finance in place and if so what form? (Secured Loan, Grant Funding etc.)	<p>Yes / No Details: See attached Paper Apart</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 / No Details: The site is free from constraints and would be delivered post grant of necessary consents.</p>

9.	Sustainable Development and Design		
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 www.aberdeencity.gov.uk . 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 http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm)	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 %)	<5%
		No	
9.6	Has a flooding strategy been developed for the site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	
9.7	Have discussions been had with the Council's flooding team?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	
9.8	Have discussion been had with Scottish Water?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	
9.9	Is there waste water capacity for the proposed development? http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	
9.10	Is there water capacity for the proposed development?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: See attached Paper Apart	

	http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search)?		
	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	✓
		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	✓
		No loss or disturbance	
9.14	Landscape fit (would the development be intrusive into the surrounding landscape?)	Significant intrusion	
		Slight intrusion	✓
		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: No impact to any watercourses			
9.19	Does the development site contain carbon-rich soils or peatland? http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soils-and-development/cpp/	Yes / No Details: N/A			
9.20	Is the development site within the airport safety exclusion zone?	Yes / No Details: Site is outwith airport exclusion zone			
9.21	Is the development site within the airport 57dB LAeq noise contours?	Yes / No Details: Site well outwith Noise Contours			
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: N/A			
Transport and Accessibility					
9.24	Has contact been made with the Council's transport team?	Yes / No Details: See attached Paper Apart			
9.25	Is access required onto a Trunk road and if so has contact been made with Transport Scotland?	Yes / No Details: N/A			
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 https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/environment/core-paths-plan)	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	✓
	Infrastructure		
9.30	Physical Infrastructure (does the site have connections to the following utilities?)	Electricity	✓
		Gas	✓
9.31	Does the development have access to high speed broadband?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: All new development at Countesswells is provided with high speed broadband	
9.32	Does the development include a Heat Network/District Heating Scheme?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:	
9.33	How is the development proposing to satisfy the Councils Low and Zero Carbon Policy?	Details: Please see attached Paper Apart	
9.34	Are there any further physical or service infrastructure issues affecting the site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: There are no physical barriers to the development of the areas proposed for expansion.	
	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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Please see attached 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: Please see attached Paper Apart	

10.	Education	
10.1	Have discussions been had with the Council's Education Department?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:
10.2	Is there currently education capacity for the proposed development? https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/schools-and-education/schools-pupil-roll-forecasts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Countesswells will provide a new community campus for both primary and secondary schools, as well as an additional primary school within the site, thus providing sufficient capacity for pupils generated by the existing development and proposed expansion. (See attached Paper Apart)

11.	Community benefits	
	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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Please see attached Paper Apart.

12.	Masterplan Development Framework	
12.1	If you have prepared a framework or masterplan showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No Details: Please refer to attached development framework illustrating indicative development blocks. The expansion sites will be subject to an appropriate masterplan process to ensure conformity and cognisance of existing development framework and masterplans for the new Countesswells community.



13.	Additional attachments		
	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		✓

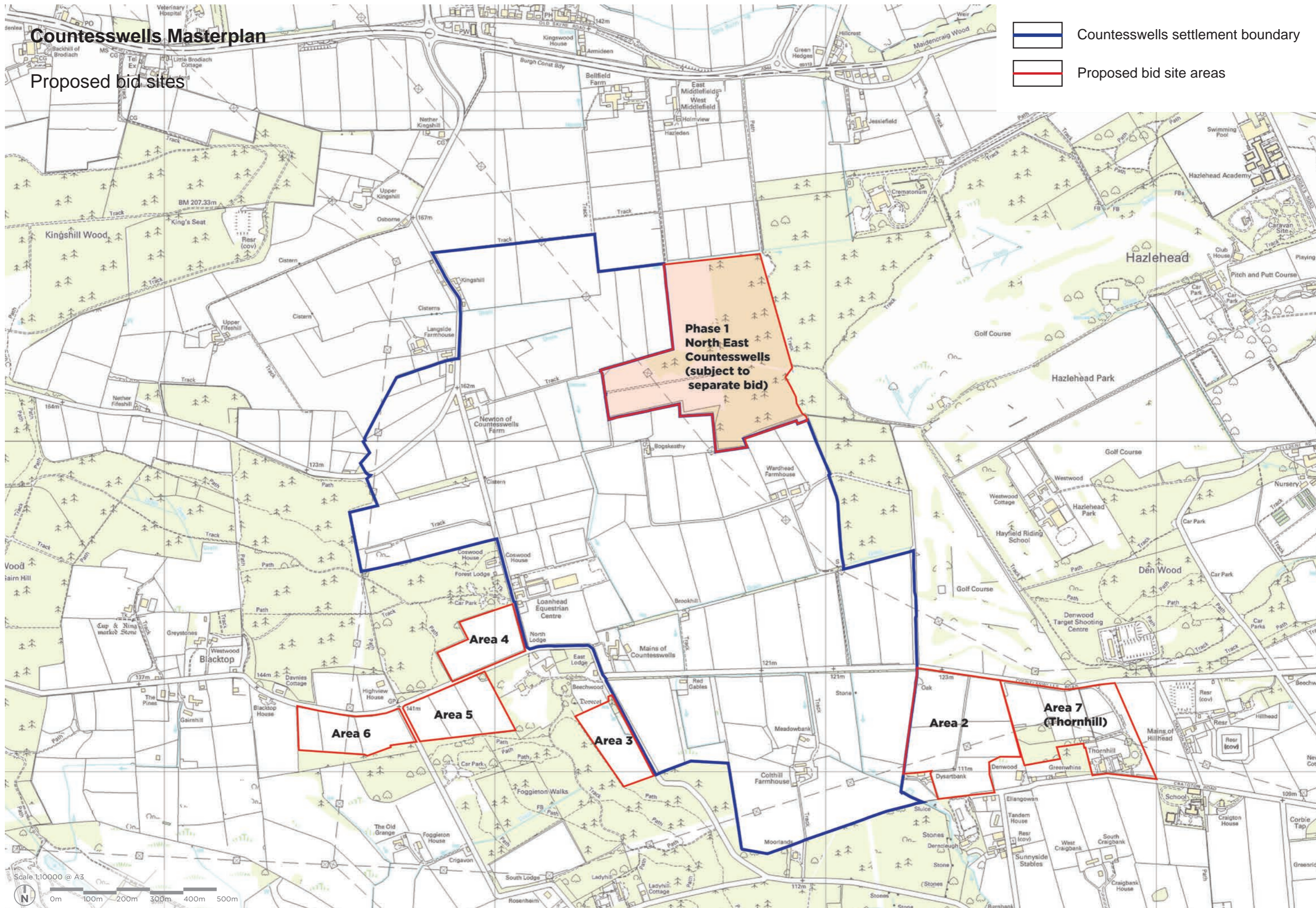
13.5	Landscape Assessment		✓
13.6	Transport Assessment		✓
13.7	Other as applicable (e.g. trees, noise, dust, smell, retail impact assessment etc. please state)		

14.	Development Viability		
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: Please see attached Paper Apart.	

Countesswells Masterplan

Proposed bid sites

-  Countesswells settlement boundary
-  Proposed bid site areas



**ABERDEEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW
PRE-MAIN ISSUES REPORT 2018: DEVELOPMENT BID**

PAPER APART: COUNTESSWELLS SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

Stewart Milne Group (SMG), founded in 1975 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.

Countesswells is a planned new settlement within the boundary of the City of Aberdeen, and lies approximately four miles west of Aberdeen City Centre on the A944, between Kingswells to the north and Cults to the south. Countesswells was first allocated as a planned major expansion area within the 2012 Aberdeen Local Development Plan and has been a design and infrastructure led project, subject to an approved Development Framework and Masterplan, Planning Permission in Principle, detailed phase 1 infrastructure application and more recently a number of further applications dealing with Matters Specified in Conditions which have secured the delivery of approximately 146 new homes on site, as initial development phases of the planned 3000 home sustainable new settlement, with circa 10ha of employment land.

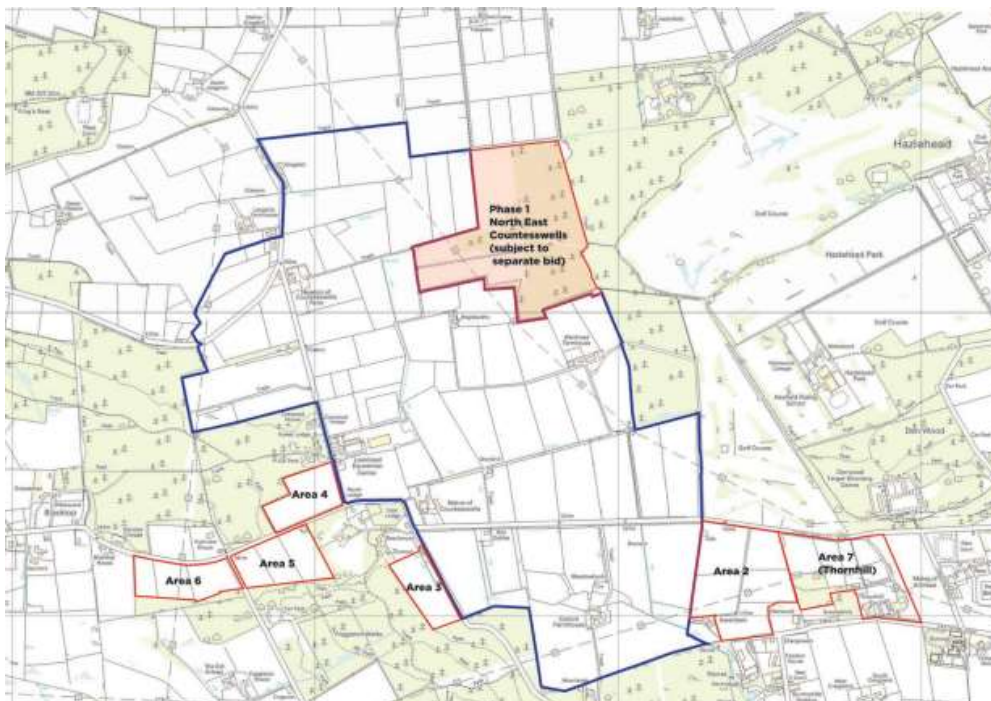
The site lies within a strategic location, close to the City and major new AWPR transport link due for completion in late 2018. Given the investment and opportunities surrounding the new settlement, and the social, environmental and economic benefits resulting from it, SMG wish to expand the allocated settlement boundary to include those parcels of land identified on figure 1 as future growth sites, including the site at Thornhill. They also propose to extend the boundary of the development to include part of Hazlehead Wood towards the north east of the development site. This expansion of the development site will make the maximum use of the planned investment in infrastructure for Countesswells and underpin the economic viability of the whole project.

In recognition of the significant progress currently being made in the delivery of a sustainable new community at Countesswells, this overarching development bid seeks the removal these 6 land parcels from the current LDP Green Belt and Green Space Network designations and include them within a revised allocation within the next LDP, as an organic expansion to the existing OP38 boundary. The development strategy will look to incorporate residential units to support the viability of the new settlement, add significant ecological value to the surrounding environment and enhance the social and economic benefits of the development as a whole for the local community.

SITE PLAN

The development bid encompasses 6 land parcels, equating to approximately 33.2 ha, located adjacent to the existing OP38 Countesswells LDP allocation. The attached OS Site boundary plan (NTS extract below), clearly identifies the 6 areas of land in relation to wider Countesswells boundary. All 6 parcels of land are currently designated in the adopted Local Development Plan as Green Belt and land parcels 3, 4, 5, and 6 also fall within the Greenspace Network. This bid proposes that these designations are removed and the land incorporated as an organic expansion to the new Countesswells community, associated services and infrastructure that is currently being delivered on site. A detailed description of each of the land parcels is provided below. Area 1, identified on the plan below to the North East of Countesswells is subject to a separate but related bid.

Figure 1 – Proposed Bid Sites (Not To Scale)



Site 2

Site 2 comprises some 9.88ha and sits on the boundary of Countesswells to the south and east. It is currently agricultural land, generally flat, with a gradual sloping gradient to the south, providing good southerly aspect and solar gain opportunities for future housing development, as well as positive drainage opportunities, tying in with common low lying areas leading to the Burn of Cults. The land parcel has well defined stone walled field boundaries and an access track to a collection of farm buildings. It is bound to the north by Countesswells Road and in turn Hazelhead Golf Course and as a result sits on a prominent access to Countesswells with the capacity to deliver around 175 units as part of the phased expansion of Countesswells.

Site 3

Site 3 lies directly on the south western boundary of Countesswells, comprising approximately 2.97ha. It is currently agricultural land, generally flat, with a gradual gradient to the south providing positive drainage to common low lying areas and opportunities for south facing aspects to the proposed development of approximately 54 homes. The site is well contained, bound to the west and south by Foggieton Wood, the east by Kirk Brae and to the north by an existing field boundary. The site sits on

a prominent access to Countesswells, offering the opportunity to strengthen the new community on approach from the west.

Site 4

Site 4 is situated on the western boundary of Countesswells OP38 allocation boundary. It currently comprises approximately 3.31ha of agricultural land, sloping gently from north to south toward Blacktop Road and is well contained in landscape terms, benefiting from established woodland cover to the north and west offered by Countesswells Wood and also via the realigned Kirk Brae and associated development blocks C1 and C2 which are currently under construction. The site benefits from a southerly aspect, sitting on a prominent entrance to Countesswells and offers the opportunity to deliver approximately 75 new homes.

Site 5

Land Parcel 5, comprises approximately 4.34ha of agricultural land situated to the south of Blacktop Road at a key gateway to Countesswells, providing the opportunity to deliver approximately 84 new homes. The site is well defined by Blacktop Road which runs parallel to the northern boundary with Development Site 4 forming a slight overlap beyond the road to the north. Baillieswells Road lies to the west and Foggieton Ancient woodland is situated to the south. Similar to the land parcels listed above, site 5 has a good southerly aspect offering excellent views eastward toward the Dee Valley. There are a number of stone dykes which form existing field boundaries typical to the local area.

Site 6

Land parcel 6 extends to the west beyond parcel 5, on the opposite side of Bailliewells Road, with Foggieton Wood forming a definitive woodland boundary to the south. The site comprises approximately 3.90ha of land which slopes gradually from north to south, providing good southerly aspect and some expansive views out over the Dee Valley. There are also number of internal stone walled field boundaries which are typical of the immediate locale. The site has the capacity to deliver approximately 76 new homes.

Site 7

Site 7, also known as “Thornhill”, comprises approximately 8.80ha of agricultural land located to the south east of the allocated Countesswells site (OP38), capable of delivering approximately 80 units. Countesswells Road defines the northern edge of the site area which is located on land surrounding Thornhill stables. The southern edge of the site, at Thornhill House and stables is bounded by Craigton Road to the east and large private residential plots set within woodland to the west. The eastern edge of the site is defined by a mature woodland belt separating the site from the neighbouring grass fields. The western edge of the site is open to the neighbouring Countesswells development site and adjacent land parcel 2.

Q6. Legal and Planning History

Sites 1, 4 & 5 were previously considered as part of a bid for the wider Countesswells New Settlement during the preparation of the 2012 LDP, but the Reporter considered that the now established OP38 LDP boundaries of the Countesswells site were more appropriate at the time.

During the preparation of the 2017 LDP, a similar bid for 5 of the proposed 6 land parcels was submitted as a development bid by Stewart Milne Homes. Site 1 to the north east was also promoted through that bid. Site no.7, “Thornhill” which lies to the immediate east of site 2 (as per Figure 1 above and attached OS Map and Concept Framework Plan) was also pursued by another housebuilder

at that time. Thornhill is now under option to SMG and forms an additional bid to the current preparation of the next LDP. Within the Main Issues Report, the sites were given the reference B0918. However, they were not favoured for development at that time due to a perceived loss of woodland, disturbance to designated species and impact on the surrounding landscape.

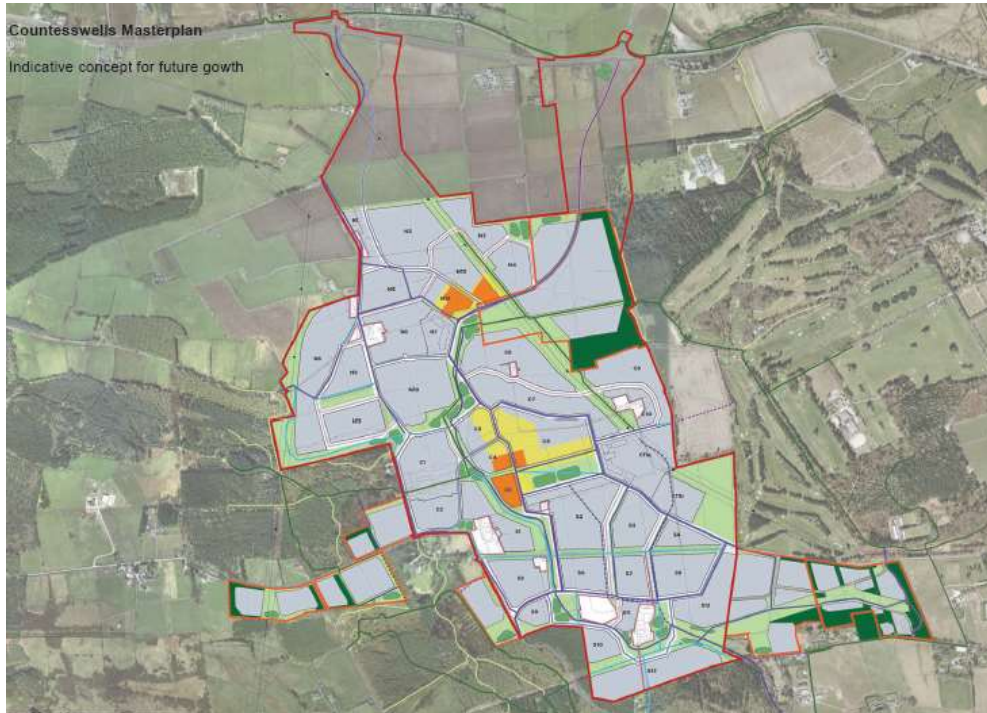
At examination into the plan, the Reporter did however accept that sites 3 and 4 were well screened by trees and made for a credible enlargement of the site. The Reporter went on to conclude that, if a need to expand the allocation arose, sites 3 and 4 would offer opportunities worthy of further consideration. However, at that time it was considered that there was no such need, therefore no modifications were proposed to the existing boundaries.

The wider allocated Countesswells Development has a detailed planning history and the new community has gathered significant momentum since the previous LDP review processes. This process has included the preparation and submission of a Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan, which coordinates the planning and delivery of the development and associated infrastructure requirements. This was approved by the Council's Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure Committee on 13 March 2014 and subsequently adopted as formal Supplementary Guidance to the extant Aberdeen Local development Plan 2012 (LDP). In addition, Aberdeen City Council expressed a "willingness to grant" an application for Planning Permission in Principle for the entire LDP Countesswells allocation at Full Council on 8th October 2014, and subsequent signing of the Section 75 Agreement allowing release of consent on 1 April 2016.

A detailed application for phase one infrastructure works was approved on 7th November 2014, unlock the initial phases of development of an area comprising approximately 48ha, for around 1000 homes, mixed use and employment areas, as identified within the adopted Phase 1 Masterplan Supplementary Guidance

Since approval of the above consents, a number of further applications seeking detailed approval of Matters Specified in Conditions application have been granted for circa 560 units to be delivered within development blocks N10, C1, C2, C4, and N6. Figure 2 below illustrates the approved Development Framework in relation to the proposed expansion sites sought through this bid. Approval of the aforementioned MSC applications means that Phase 1a of the Countesswells development is now almost complete with 150 properties now completed and over 100 occupied. Approximately 20ha of public open space has also been created through the delivery of Cults Burn Park. The next phases of residential development and of open space are already being planned and will be on site within the next year. In addition to the residential development which is planned the first new road link to the A944, the first primary school and neighbourhood centre are also planned for the next phase of development.

Figure 2 – Framework Plan Illustrating Proposed Expansion Bid Sites



Q7. Proposal

The six land parcels which form this bid are proposed for residential development and have the capacity to deliver approximately 545 new homes, as well as appropriate access, infrastructure, landscaping and open space provision. The housing would include detached, semi-detached and terraced, 2 – 5 bedroomed properties and an exact mix would be provided in due course taking account of the prevailing market conditions, affordable housing requirements and taking cognisance of the range and quality of house designs and mix which has already been established at Countesswells. Affordable Housing will be provided in line with developer obligations requirements at the time of development. Affordable housing partnerships have already been established as part of Countesswells Development, therefore demonstrating the success of delivering affordable homes within the early phases of development. Stewart Milne Group would seek to build on these successfully established partnerships going forward to secure the delivery of future affordable homes as part of a sustainable housing mix across the land parcels associated with this bid.

The following paragraphs provide a planning justification for each individual land parcels which has been utilised to inform the assessment against the relevant criteria set out in respect of Q.9 below.

Site 2

The benefits of this development site include the southerly aspect for future residential development, presenting opportunities for passive solar gain and high quality residential amenity. The site is also ideally placed to link into the proposed SUDS system for Countesswells, enhancing the drainage system and making the best use of strategic infrastructure requirements which are currently being delivered, thereby utilising the residential development potential of this particular site in a sustainable

manner. Lying immediately adjacent to the existing allocation, the site also allows excellent connections between neighbourhoods existing and proposed development blocks.

The site provides strong frontage onto Countesswells Road, with the potential to provide good access for future public transport links. A key asset of the site is the extensive network of path 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 site with Cults to the south, Countesswells as well as more strategic connections to Aberdeen to the east. This would strengthen the sustainability of development in this location and reduce the need for residents to rely on the private car.

Site 3

The boundaries of the site adjoin both Kirk Brae and the Countesswells site which presents the opportunity to enhance connections through the whole development. With extensive woodland cover offered to the west and south by Foggieton, there are potential connections into this outdoor recreational resource and in turn further connections to new neighbourhood developments in sites 4, 5 and 6. Due to its proximity to the settlement centre it represents a key location on arrival to the development from the south. Opportunities also exist to enhance the core path network that links the residents of Countesswells to the outdoor recreation opportunities in the surrounding rural areas. This connection to the woodland, which includes Ancient Woodland remnants and extensive path networks, provides a positive connection for the rest of Countesswells, which was not readily available before. Combine this with the lower lying nature of the southern portion of the site, the creation of an enhanced open space network starts to emerge.

The benefits of this site as an expansion to the existing Countesswells boundary were recognised at examination into the 2017 LDP, whereby the Reporter accepted that sites 3 and 4 were well screened by trees and made for a credible enlargement of the site, concluding that, if a need to expand the allocation arose, sites 3 and 4 would offer opportunities worthy of further consideration.

Site 4

Similar to site 3, this site is bound on the north by Countesswells Wood which includes Ancient Woodland remnants and extensive path networks. This presents excellent opportunities for residential development integrated with existing outdoor recreational pursuits. This network of paths connects well into the Countesswells neighbourhoods that bound the northern edge of Countesswells Woodland and, in turn, facilitates a better connected place and resource.

Its southerly aspect provides views out over the wider Dee Valley, and with its location on the junction of Blacktop Road and Kirk Brae, provides a key gateway site to the Countesswells Community. The key location of the site in close proximity to the centre of Countesswells, on a key arrival sequence from the west and on gently sloping land presents the opportunity to allow an increasing density of residential development towards the settlement core, while allowing excellent access to the existing recreational opportunities in Countesswells Woods. As highlighted above, site 4 was favoured by the Reporter at previous examination should an extension to Countesswells be considered.

Site 5

The proximity of this site to Foggieton Wood allows for new residential development to be connected to the extensive path network that exists and wider surrounding outdoor recreational pursuits. The key location of the site in close proximity to the centre of Countesswells, on a key arrival sequence from the west and on gently sloping land presents the opportunity to allow an increasing density of residential development moving toward the settlement core, while allowing excellent access to the

existing recreational opportunities in Foggieton Woods. Together with development site 4 there is an opportunity to create a meaningful and attractive settlement entrance sequence and a strong emphasis on this would be provided within any associated masterplan.

Site 6

This site shares many of the benefits as listed within site 5 above, with the addition of expansive views out over the Dee Valley. Its connection to Foggieton Wood allows for the potential for a new residential neighbourhood link in to the wider network of footpaths and outdoor pursuits, as well as good connections to the other development sites and the Countesswells Community. Sites 4 and 5 offer a tremendous opportunity to create a gradually increasing density of development when arriving from the west, typical of many traditional Scottish places which evolve over time and create attractive rural to urban arrival sequences providing memorable gateways to distinctive places. Path connections would be created to link the area with the development sites 4 & 5 as well as the other areas of Countesswells beyond.

Site 7

Site 7, “Thornhill” could become a distinctive and sustainable extension to Countesswells offering new residential neighbourhood within easy reach of local facilities, the town centre and schools. Responding to the existing qualities of the site and providing a good range of housing will create a characterful, vibrant and well-connected neighbourhood and a highly desirable place to live within Countesswells. The Thornhill site will have a minimal impact on the surrounding landscape as, like the Countesswells site it is well contained and screened. The site is free from constraints such as steep slopes and flood risk and would be an ideal location to accommodate residential development as part of the organic growth of Countesswells.

The site at Thornhill could be designed to integrate and connect into the wider Countesswells development, linking with path routes, bus routes and street connections, whilst maintaining strong frontage onto Countesswells Road and south facing aspects for solar gain opportunities.

To inform the inclusion of the Thornhill Site as part of this overarching development Bid, a development Strategy has been prepared by Optimised Environments which sets out a detailed account of the effectiveness of land at Thornhill, Aberdeen as an attractive site for mixed use development as part of a future phase of the Countesswells development. This document is attached as an appendix and should be referred to in the consideration of this Bid.

Q8. Engagement and Delivery

The local community and Community Councils have been involved in the previous LDP bid and consultation process involved through that process. Additionally, intensive pre-application public consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders was undertaken in respect of the preparation of the Countesswells Development Framework and related Planning Permission in Principle. Whilst no specific public consultation has yet taken place in respect of the additional sites, the local community and community councils will again be extensively consulted if these expansion sites are identified for development in the next plan. This would likely take the form of public exhibitions/ drop in sessions and feedback would be utilised to inform future planning application submissions.

As can be seen with the significant progress being made at Countesswells, Stewart Milne Group is committed to delivering a sustainable new community to the west of Aberdeen. This bid demonstrates their continued commitment to the future growth of the site, seeking additional land to plan for the

natural organic growth of the new community. Should the sites be allocated, appropriate community engagement would be undertaken and informed planning applications would be lodged soon thereafter. As the bid proposes 6 additional land parcels as part of an expansion bid for Countesswells, these would be appropriately phased, to tie in with the established phased development of the new settlement. The remaining 6 sites could be identified for development. Failing that, the sites could be identified as “Strategic Reserve” for delivery post 2026.

Q9. Sustainable Development and Design

Exposure - The bid sites offers good shelter from northerly winds due to their containment within the landscape, being protected by existing trees / landscaping as well as established housing within the Countesswells development.

Slope – In general the 6 pockets of land proposed through this bid have some varying degrees of slope, however these are relatively gentle and would not pose any constraint to development, rather the housing would be designed to respect the naturally undulating landform, providing each site with its own distinctive characteristics.

Flooding - SEPA’s Flood Risk maps show that there is no risk of flooding on the site from any river, however, there a minor number instances of surface water flooding identified within the map, however these likely reflect the pre-countesswells development scenario. Significant drainage infrastructure is currently being delivered as part of the wider Countesswells development, thereby mitigating any potential surface water flooding through the provision of SUDs and open space.

Waste Water and Water - In terms of waste water and water, connections would be available in the vicinity of the site and drainage infrastructure currently being put in place to serve the Countesswells development, an extension to these would be required and new foul and surface water sewers would be provided to service the development. It is likely that these will be located within the new roads and areas of open space where necessary. There is capacity in the waste water and water network, to serve the Countesswells development and should the proposed sites for expansion be allocated, suitable capacity would be made available to serve the additional housing.

Natural Conservation – The proposed land parcels are currently designated as green belt and are also designated within the Greenspace Network, with the exception sites 3 & 7 which fall outwith. These sites will therefore have minimal impact on any associated habitats or designated species.

To the south west , proposed land parcels 3,4, 5 & 6 are located within smaller land parcels enveloped by the existing woodland associated with Foggieton and Countesswells woods. These sites are characterised by the surrounding woodland and present an excellent opportunity for linkage to the existing path networks which exist there for recreational activities, as well as the opportunity for community education on native species and habitats. Sites 3 and 4 were noted by the Reporter as having substantial development potential during the examination into the 2017 LDP.

Overall, access through these expansion sites would link in with the high levels of access and fluid movement being promoted at Countesswells, providing opportunities for recreation, community access and ecological enhancement through the creation of landscaping and wildlife corridors, seeking to link habitats.

The challenge for the local authority is to accommodate sustainable growth, whilst protecting environmentally sensitive locations. The proposed expansion sites present an opportunity to satisfy growth demands in a location with established capacity to accommodate development , without harming the natural environment.

Landscape features – The expansion sites are characterised by agricultural fields surrounded by mature trees, associated with Hazlehead, Foggieton and Countesswells woods, providing context and setting for the proposed new housing. Shelterbelts and stone walls are also commonplace marking the field boundaries and will be retained as far as practicable, or re-used as part of the materials palette within the development.

Landscape fit - There will be slight intrusion into the surrounding landscape, given that the site is currently undeveloped. The sites require to be considered in relation to the ongoing development of the new urban community at Countesswells, which has fundamentally altered the landscape to the west of the City, and these changes were accepted as part of the formulation of the 2012 LDP. The presence of existing mature trees and the new Countesswells development will ensure that these sites can be appropriately absorbed into the evolving landscape as part of a modest expansion to the existing urban form and setting of the new community. The sites would remain well screened from major approaches into Aberdeen from the A944 and A93. Additionally, the sites are well screened from wider views from the city and would therefore pose no significant intrusion to the landscape setting of Aberdeen.

Relationship to Existing Settlements - The site forms a natural expansion of the new Countesswells settlement, being immediately adjacent to existing LDP boundary which is currently under construction. Development of these sites will form a logical expansion of the new community, providing context and the opportunity for a gradual build of housing densities on approach to Countesswells, particularly when travelling towards the new mixed use neighbourhood centre.

During preparation of both the 2012 and 2017 LDPs, both Reporters appointed by the Scottish Government recognised that there is scope to extend the development area at Countesswells, however it was deemed at the time that the existing boundary should be the focus. As development is now well underway and housing and a sustainable mix of employment and supplementary uses are being rolled out across the site, consideration should be given to allow for an appropriate planned expansion of the settlement through inclusion of these sites within the next LDP.

The identification of these development sites will provide certainty and clarity regarding the future direction of sustainable growth within the area. A masterplanned approach will be taken forward to integrated with the Countesswells development, ensuring that supporting services, infrastructure and amenity areas are secured. Such certainty will reassure early residents who have recently invested in making Countesswells their home, that the community will have a positive and lasting legacy for the City.

Land Use Mix - The expansion sites will provide housing, open space, play parks, enhanced shelter belt planting and connectivity between the new community surrounding recreational areas and the countryside. It is proposed that the housing mix will offer a range of house styles, both market and affordable, catering for individual and family requirements and market conditions at the time.

Heating/Low Carbon - SMG, 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.

Physical Constraints - There are two sets of overhead lines which pass through the site area, the alignment of these are identified on figure 11. As with the Countesswells development there are no proposals to divert or underground the existing 132 KV power lines, so they will be treated as a

constraint around which development can be configured. The impact of pylons on views and vistas should also be a key consideration.

Open Space - The site will provide the required level of open space as per the current LDP and will build on the excellent open space and park provision which is at the heart of the wider Countesswells development. Cults Burn Park, which encompasses some 11 hectares and forms the largest of the four parks created within the new community, offering connection between Hazlehead and Countesswells Woods. The proposed expansion sites offer the potential to bring additional integration with the excellent network of open space provision currently being delivered as part of the existing allocation.

The findings from the Aberdeen City Council Open Space Audit and wider Countesswells proposals would then be used to develop and masterplan the Open Space provision associated with the additional Bid Sites 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 to complement those established in the surrounding areas. In addition to the usable greenspace there are significant areas of woodland, greenways and existing woodland areas surrounding the site.

Impact on Green Space Network – Aberdeen’s Green Space Network is identified in the Local Development Plan (Policy NE1) to protect, promote and enhance designated natural heritage sites, connectivity between habitats, open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors. The site at Thornhill benefits from a quality Greenspace Network in the surrounding areas containing a range of habitat types, including Hazlehead, Den Wood and Foggieton LNCS.

The proposed landscape structure for the Countesswells expansion sites, including existing and proposed woodland as well as areas of open space would help facilitate movement of species and promote habitat connectivity between the surrounding networks. The structure has been designed to integrate with the Countesswells landscape framework and in particular the Cults Burn Corridor which connects Hazlehead (GSN 32) with Denwood / Westfield (GSN 35) and Foggieton (GSN 36) to the south.

Q10. Education

Access to high quality education provision is crucial to the development of the Countesswells settlement, with a total of three new schools being delivered as part of the new community. This will see the delivery of a new community campus as part of the early phases of development encompassing the new village centre, offering provision for both primary and secondary education. A further primary school will also be delivered in the latter stages of the development, thus ensuring enough provision for both the 3,000 home community as well as future phased growth put forward through this development bid.

Q11. Community Benefits

The proposals provide significant benefits to the local community in the form of securing the long term and future growth of the Countesswells development, which would continue to provide a diverse range and mix of new housing, including affordable housing. Additionally, the proposed expansion will provide certainty for future residents, as well as open space, playparks, woodlands and connections to the excellent open space and parks strategy currently being delivered through the existing LDP allocation. Planning for future growth through additional housing, sends out a strong message to the community that continued investment is being made for the settlement. It is also likely to attract interest in the site from potential occupiers to service the existing Countesswells employment land allocation.

Q14. Development Viability

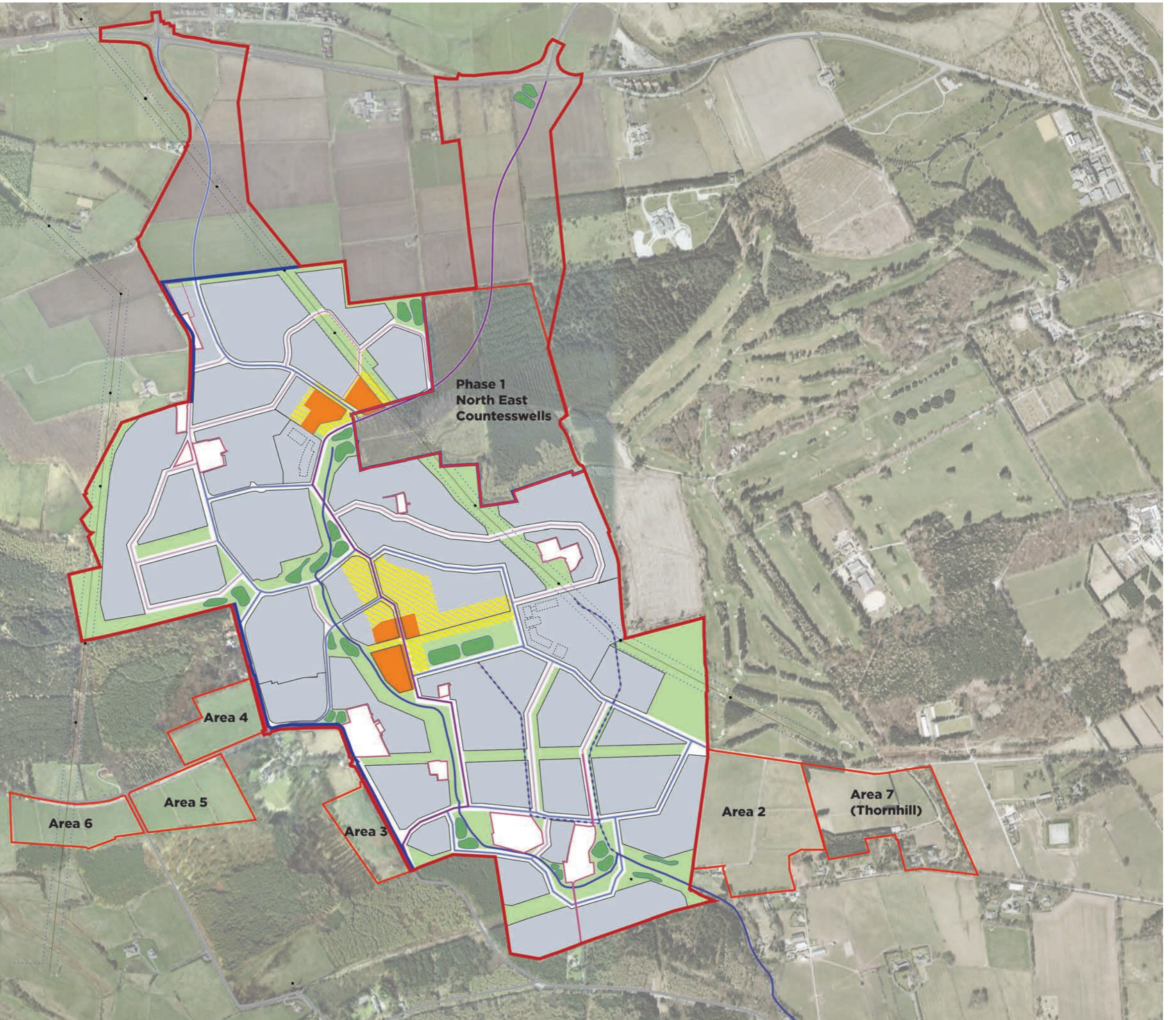
The principle of new housing at Countesswells is firmly established through its associated its former 2012 and current 2017 LDP allocation and has been subject to significant scrutiny, assessment and collaborative working between Stewart Milne Group, Aberdeen City Council and the wider community. Significant progress has been made since the site was first allocated for the delivery of a sustainable new community comprising 3,000 homes and 10 ha of employment land, with development commencing on site in 2016 and the initial phases of development are currently being rolled out across the site, with approximately 150 completions on site at the time of writing, as well as strong demand demonstrated by a substantial number of early occupations at 'Regency Place'. This is expected to continue, as a number of further phases of development have been unlocked through the sale of development parcels to a number of housebuilders, with delivery of those units expected in early course. This clearly establishes the viability of this location as a sustainable, high quality environment to live and work.

The proposals contained within this development bid and attached Framework Plan, demonstrate how a robust masterplanning exercise and sensitive development on these sites can benefit the wider area in terms of providing attractive open space, green linkages and connections, enhancing biodiversity and provide additional local facilities. As such SMG are fully committed to delivering a high quality development, complementary to the existing setting of Countesswells and the surrounding area and request the inclusion of these site within the emerging Local Development Plan for a residential expansion to the existing OP38 allocation. The attached Framework plan illustrates the site in the wider context of the approved Countesswells Development Framework, to illustrate how development of these 6 land parcels would ultimately integrate with the emerging new Countesswells community.

Stewart Milne Group are therefore confident that there is residual value following development of these expansion sites. The sites offer the opportunity to capitalise on significant levels of infrastructure that will be delivered and in place to coincide with allocation of these additional sites within the next LDP.

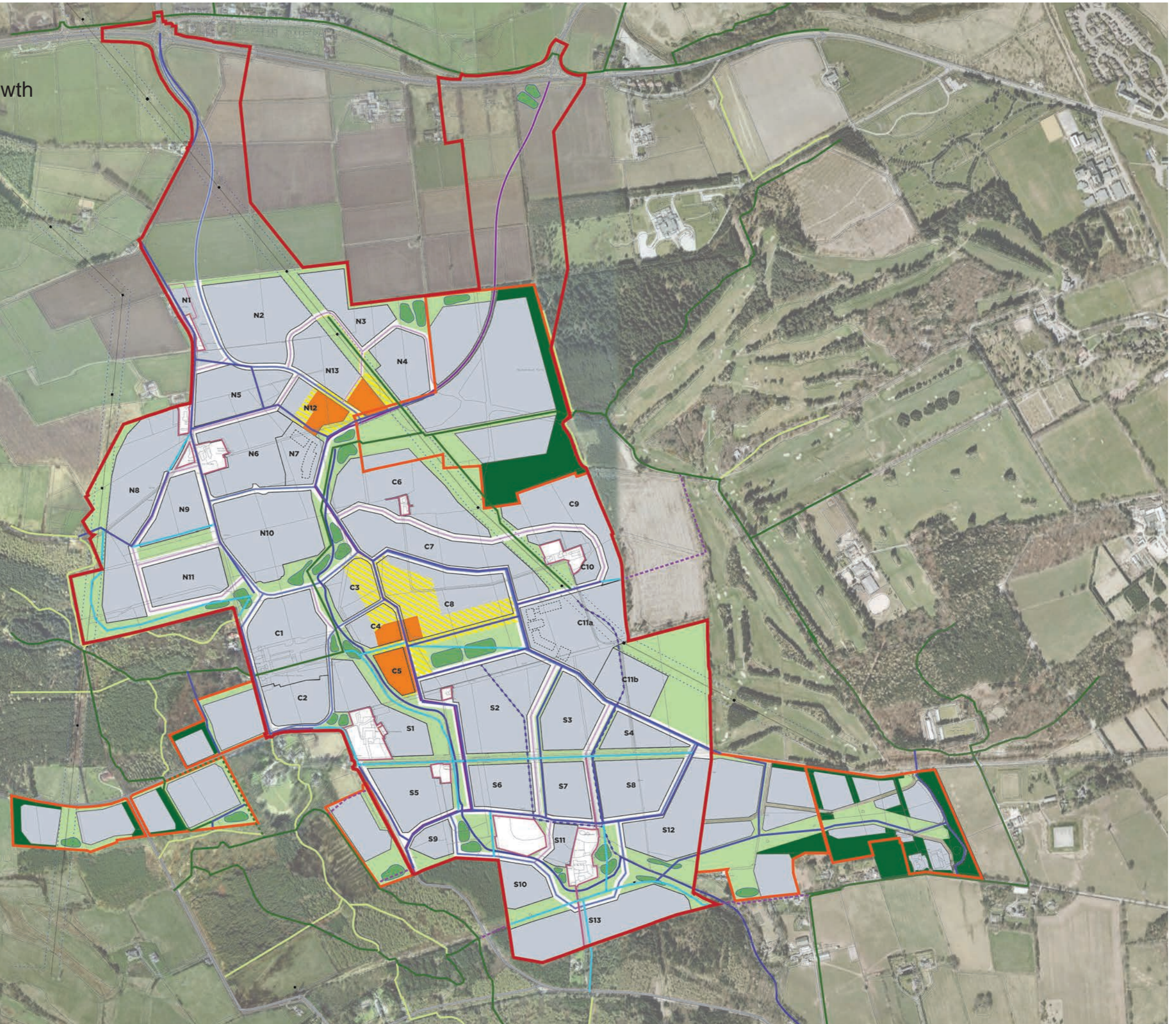
Countesswells Masterplan

Proposed bid sites



Countesswells Masterplan

Indicative concept for future growth

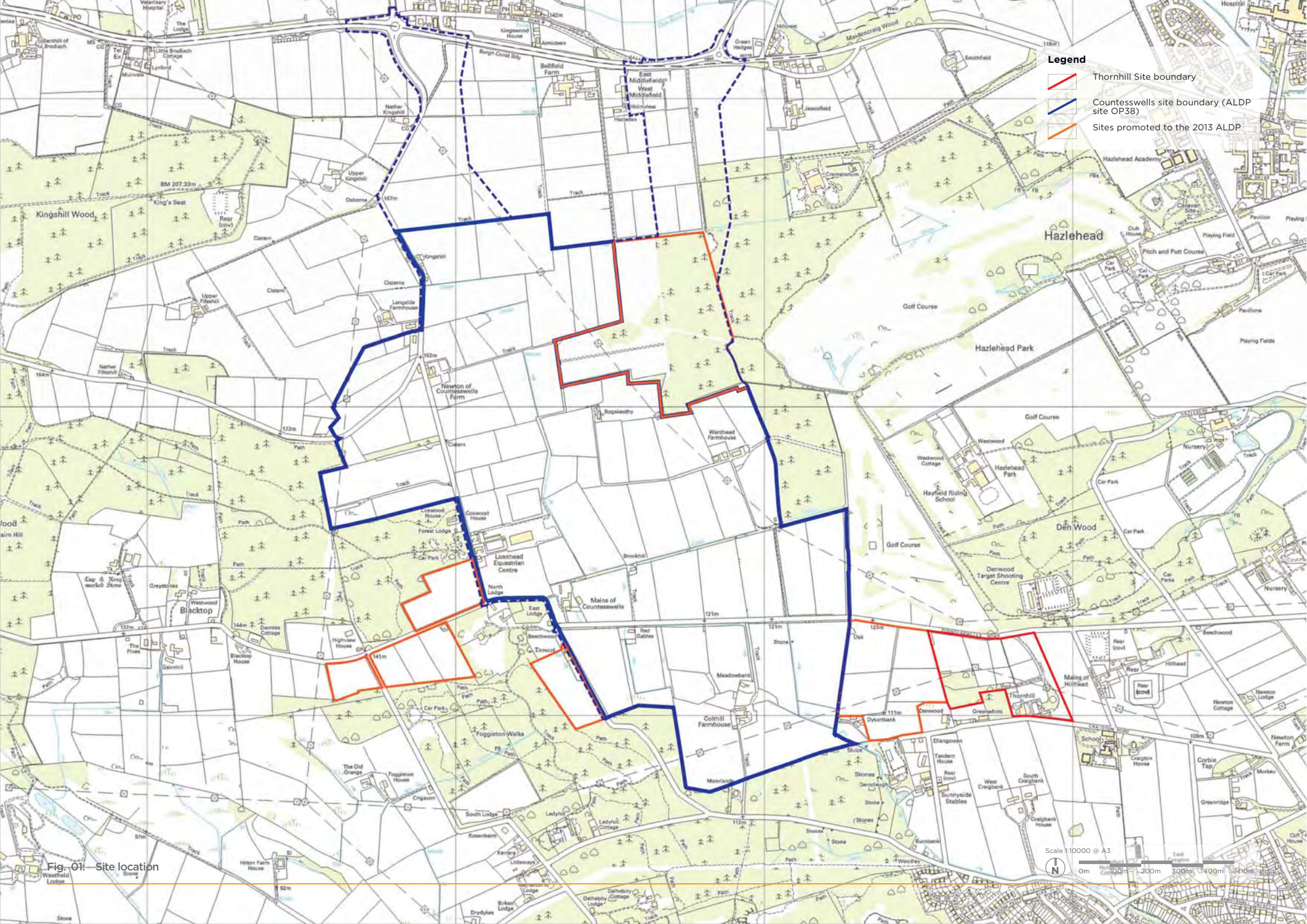




Thornhill, Countesswells

Development strategy

May 2018



- Legend**
- Thornhill Site boundary
 - Countesswells site boundary (ALDP site OP38)
 - Sites promoted to the 2013 ALDP

Fig. 01: Site location

Scale 1:100000 @ A3

0m 100m 200m 300m 400m 500m

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document describes the effectiveness of land at Thornhill, Aberdeen as an attractive site for mixed use development as part of a future phase of the Countesswells development. 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. This document has been prepared by Optimised Environments Limited, 'OPEN' on behalf of Stewart Milne Homes (SMH) land interest at Thornhill, Countesswells. 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 as a future phase of the Countesswells development.

Located to the south east of Countesswells SMH control the Thornhill site area as identified on Figure 1 opposite, 8.8 hectares (21.7 acres). SMH has appointed OPEN to explore the potential for development in this location and to inform its response to the Aberdeen Council MIR call for sites.

Following a study of the site area including a landscape analysis of the site area OPEN believes that the site at Thornhill could provide an opportunity for Countesswells to grow in an organic and logical manner with the capacity to accommodate 60 - 80 new homes. This representation has been prepared to demonstrate how development at Thornhill will allow for the sustainable growth of Countesswells and secure significant wider benefit in terms of provision of open space and green linkages integrated with sensitive and appropriate growth.

Importantly this document aims to convey the commitment by SMH to ensure a high quality of development which contributes positively to the built environment and will be physically well integrated as part of the Countesswells development.

1.2 Document structure

This document describes the proposed site location and its surrounding context, 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 Thornhill to form a future phase of Countesswells.

The document is structured as follows;

Introduction

Site context

The site

Development concept

Development strategy

Summary

The document demonstrates that the landscape character and quality of the setting of the Thornhill site 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 and the community facilities within Countesswells.

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 to the south east of the Countesswells development (OP38) and south of Countesswells Road. The site measures 8.8 hectares and comprises a number of agricultural grass fields surrounded by mixed woodland and grouped around Thornhill Farm. The fields are well defined by woodland belts and stone walls which are characteristic of the area.

The key factor in shaping the proposals for the site has been the relationship with the emerging Countesswells development. Countesswells is developing to become an exciting new community within Aberdeen. Once complete the community will comprise around 3,000 homes, with 10 hectares of employment land and associated uses such as schools, shops, various community facilities and a medical centre.

Given the investment and opportunities surrounding the new settlement, and the social, environmental and economic benefits resulting from it, SMH (including Countesswells Development Limited) wish to expand the allocated settlement boundary to include those parcels of land identified on figure 1 as future growth sites, including the site at Thornhill. They also propose to extend the boundary of the development to include part of Hazlehead Wood towards the north east of the development site. This expansion of the development site will make the maximum use of the planned investment in infrastructure for Countesswells and underpin the economic viability of the whole project.

This development bid wishes to remove this area of land from the current Green Space Network and Green Belt designations and include it within the site boundaries of the Countesswells settlement, allocated in the Local Development Plan as Opportunity site OP38. The development strategy will look to incorporate residential units to support the viability of the new settlement, add significant ecological value to the surrounding environment and enhance the social and economic benefits of the development as a whole for the local community.

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



Fig. 02: Aerial view of site from north.

2. Site context

2.1 Development context

Site location

The site is located to the south east of the allocated Countesswells site (OP38). Countesswells Road defines the northern edge of the site area which is located on land surrounding Thornhill stables. The southern edge of the site, at Thornhill House and stables is bounded by Craigton Road to the east and large private residential plots set within woodland to the west. The eastern edge of the site is defined by a mature woodland belt separating the site from the neighbouring grass fields. The western edge of the site is open to the neighbouring Countesswells development site and adjacent bid site.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017

Within the current ALDP 2017, the Thornhill site is identified as Green Space Network (NE1) and Green Belt (Policy NE2). An extract of the Local Plan is shown in Figure 3 opposite, which identifies the site area as Greenbelt, surrounded by areas designated as Green Network following the woodland to the north, west and south of the site. Current policy states that no development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, forestry, recreation, mineral extraction or restoration or land renewal. Green Space Network land consists of areas of land that are considered to have particular value in terms of public access, wildlife or landscape together with links between such areas.

The adopted Plan identifies sites to accommodate the approved Structure Plan aspirations. The land at Countesswells is identified as opportunity site OP38. Covering an area of approximately 165 hectares, it is to accommodate 3,000 homes and 10 hectares of employment land. The site is allocated for development in the period to 2023 over two phases, comprising 2,150 homes in the period up to 2016, with the remaining 850 in the period 2017-2023. The employment land allocation is spread over both periods. Development at Countesswells commenced in 2014 with the first properties occupied in 2016.

Development bid sites

There are five current development bid sites related to Countesswells, these are identified in orange on Figure 1. Three of these parcels are bounded by the existing Countesswells site, edged blue on the said Plan. The remaining two land parcels are located to the west of the Countesswells site and both lie to the south of the unclassified road leading from Countesswells Road towards Blacktop.

The development bid sites all proposes an extension to the boundary of the Countesswells development including land at the north east corner of the site, incorporating part of Hazlehead Wood. This area is also designated in the extant Local Development Plan as Green Space Network and Green Belt land. This bid proposes that this designation is removed and the land incorporated into the Countesswells allocation.

All five parcels of land to the south of Countesswells are currently in agricultural use. The extension to the north east is part of a commercial woodland plantation adjoining Hazlehead Park, which accommodates outdoor recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling, jogging and dog walking.

This site to the west of Thornhill is 9.87ha in size and sits on the boundary of Countesswells to the south and east. It is currently agricultural land, generally flat, with a gradual gradient to the south, providing good southerly aspect for future development, good positive drainage in to common low lying areas leading to the Burn of Cults. It has well defined stone walled field boundaries and an access track to a collection of farm buildings. It is bound to the north by Countesswells Road and in turn Hazlehead Golf Course and as a result sits on a prominent access to Countesswells. An overhead power line runs through the site.

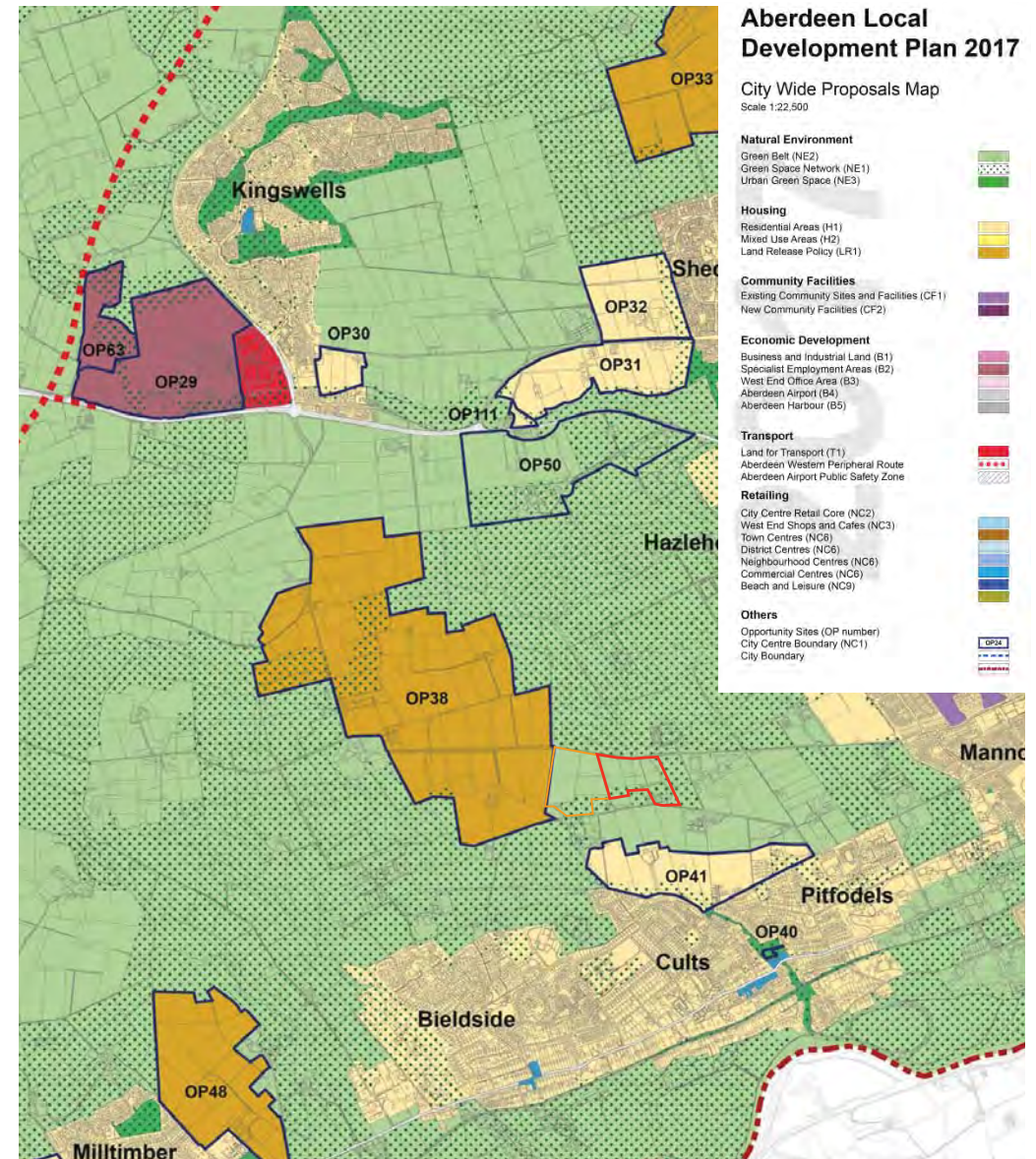


Fig. 03: Site location on ALDP (2017)



Fig. 04: Landscape context.

2.2 Landscape context

Site location

Thornhill is located to the south east of the Countesswells site within the city boundary to the west of the city centre. The site lies out with the built up area of the City of Aberdeen, approximately 7km west from the city centre. The site is located to the south of Countesswells Road and east of Craigton Road, approximately 1km north of north of Cults.

Figure 4 on the facing page identifies the site area within the landscape context, it also identifies the Countesswells site boundary which will significantly alter the character of the area once complete.

Context

The site at Countesswells is different from all the other opportunity sites identified in the ALDP (shown on Figure 3) in that it is set on its own. It is distinct from any existing settlement and does not form an extension to an existing place. It is located in an attractive landscape setting, bounded by Den Wood, Hazlehead Park, Countesswells and Foggieton woodlands. In addition to the attractive rural setting, the site benefits from its close proximity to the city and surrounding communities to the north and south. The site will also benefit from good access to the existing road network including the A944, North Deeside Road (A93), Countesswells Road, C189 and Kirk Brae (C189) and in due course the AWPR. The location provides a unique opportunity to create a new place, distinct within the Aberdeen area, a place that can benefit from the attractive rural setting but also allows good links to any other part of the City and surrounding communities.

The site at Thornhill is located within the established woodland structure to the south east of Countesswells. Enclosed by mature woodland on three sides, the site area is very well defined with good opportunities to connect back to Countesswells to the west where the boundary is not defined by woodland.

Landscape setting

Countesswells is contained within a natural 'bowl' in the landscape, therefore is not readily visible from the surrounding settlements of Kingswells, Cults and Craigiebuckler. The site is well contained, located on the lower lying areas to the south, which is well contained by woodland blocks, and is less prominent than the more elevated northern area. The site area slopes very gradually from the north east to the south west.

Low lying and surrounded by woodland the Thornhill site is very well contained in the landscape. The woodland within Hazlehead Park Golf Course located to the north of Countesswells Road combined with the woodland that defines the eastern and southern edges to almost fully enclose the site area. Due to the woodland the site is not visible from any surrounding communities or properties with the housing to the southern edge facing south away from the site area. Views into the site from Craigton Road and Countesswells Road limited to small breaks in the woodland. The western edge of the site, facing Countesswells, is not defined by woodland with views to the west possible.

Statutory designated sites

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

The River Dee located approximately 3km south of the Countesswells site is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive).

Non - statutory designated sites

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

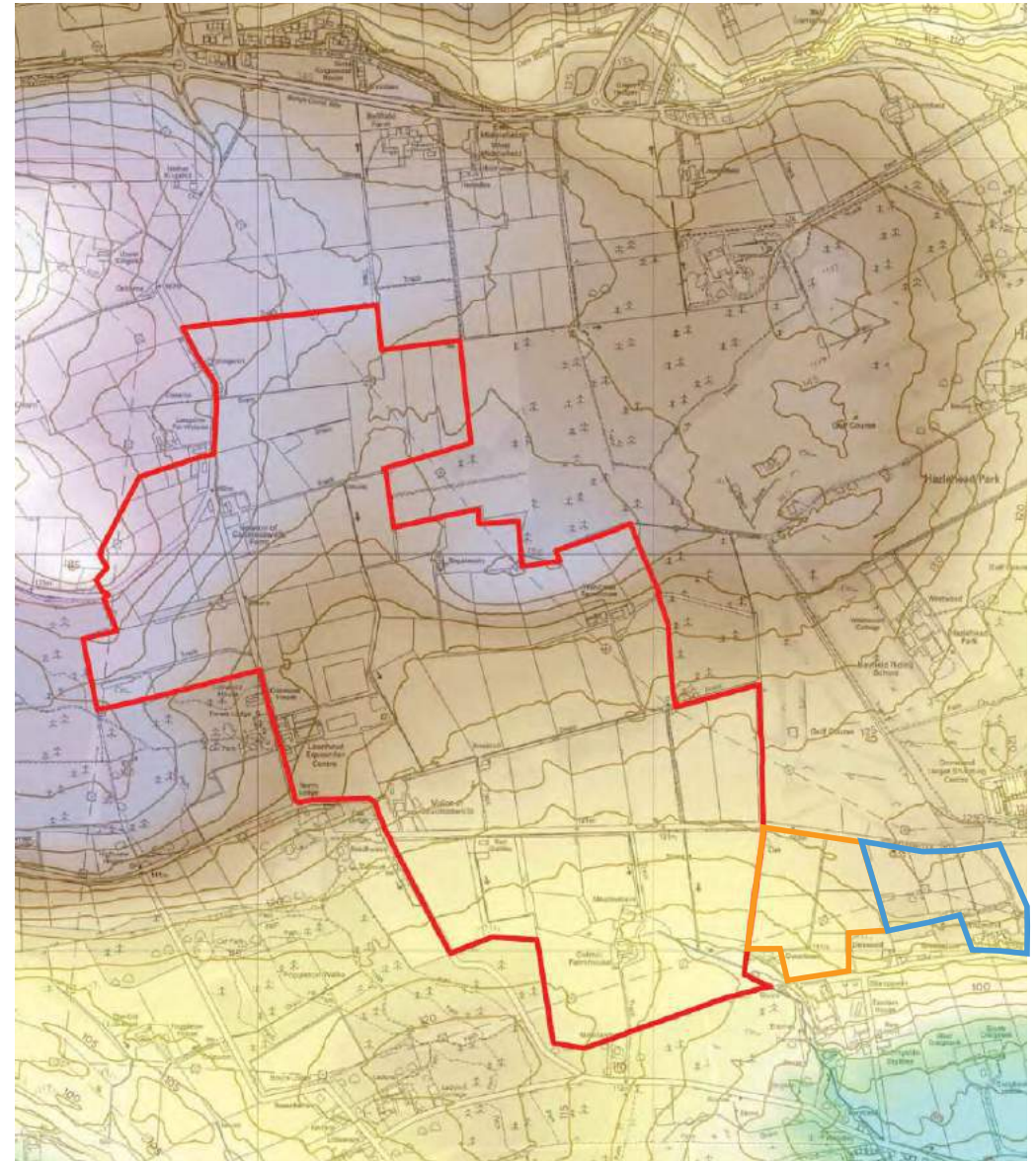


Fig. 05: Topography

2.3 Access and connectivity

At present the site could be considered rural and remote as development at Countesswells has only recently commenced and not yet extended to the south of Countesswells Road. However in due course the site at Thornhill could be designed to integrate and connect into the wider Countesswells development, linking with path routes, bus routes and street connections.

The text below provides a description of the existing pedestrian and vehicle networks surrounding the site area.

Pedestrian and cycle access

There currently exists a well-established network of footways and footpaths within the area surrounding the site. Located 2km west of Craigiebuckler, 1.5km north of Cults and 2km south of Kingswells the principal existing walking routes in the vicinity of the Countesswells site are generally for leisure purposes and in particular horse riding with a number of countryside and forest trails formed in the areas surrounding the proposed site.

As shown on Figure 6 opposite, there are a number of Core Path routes identified in and around the site area. Core Path 87 defines the southern edge of the site, providing a connection to Cults as does Core Path 63 which is located to the south east of the site. To the north of Countesswells Road there are a number of Core Path routes providing connections through Hazlehead Park to Countesswells and Aberdeen. There is not a footpath beside Countesswells Road.

Public transport

The site does not currently have access to public transport within the conventional 400m walk threshold due to its location on the fringe of the existing urban area.

Existing public transport is provided via a bus route approximately 1km to the south of the site on North Deeside Road. This is beyond desirable walk distance but within an easy cycle distance.

Local road network

Countesswells Road defines the northern edge of the site area, providing a main route in to Aberdeen. Countesswells road is rural in character with no footways and provides a direct connection into Aberdeen and the North Anderson Drive. To the west Countesswells Road connects to Kirk Brae (C189) which provides a route to Cults to the south and Kingswells to the north.

Craigton Road which defines the southern edge of the site is another rural route which provides another connection south to Cults.

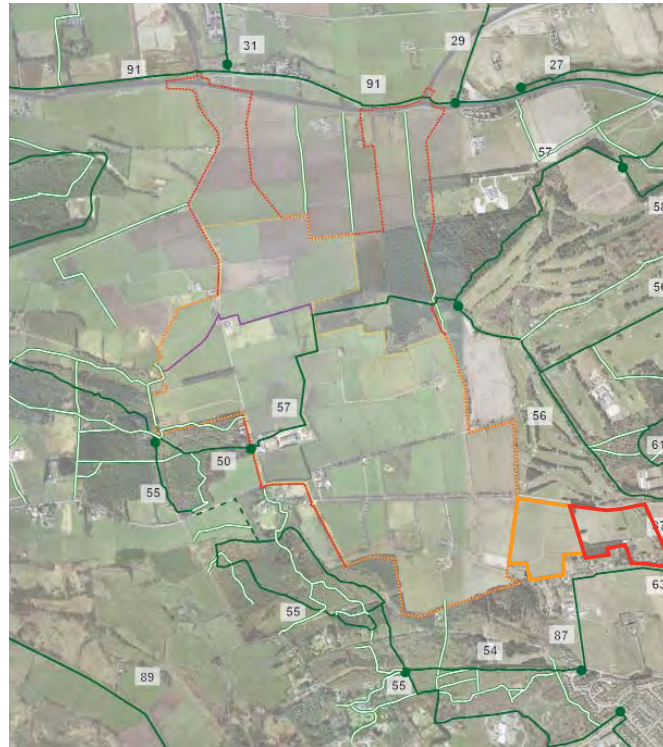


Fig. 06: Core path network.

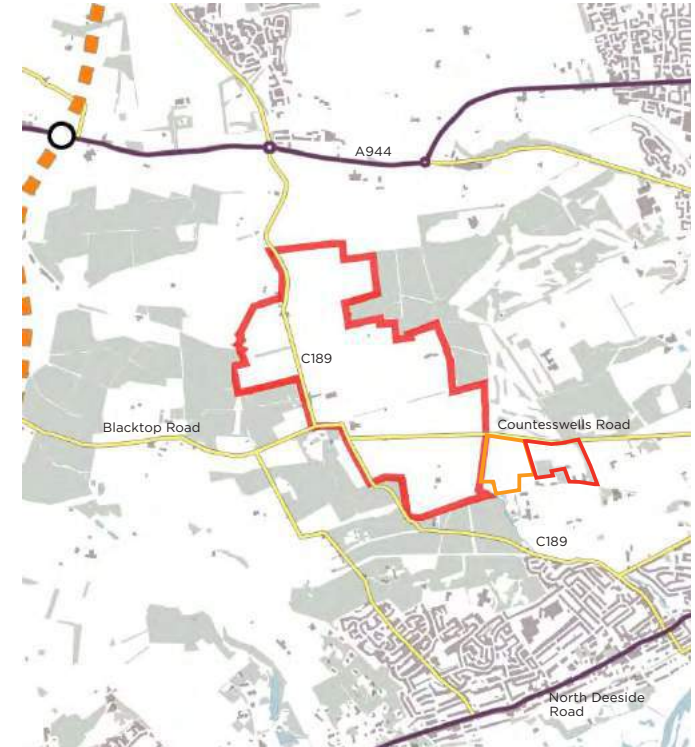


Fig. 07: Strategic road context.

2.4 Countesswells

The site at Thornhill is being promoted as a future phase of the Countesswells development and not as a standalone site and as such should be considered in that context rather than a remote development site. The following section provides a short description of the current Countesswells development context.

Development Framework and Masterplan

The Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan established principles for the creation of a residential-led mixed use development of approximately 3,000 residential units, supporting retail, service and community uses and employment land. The Development Framework and Masterplan have been formally Adopted as Supplementary Guidance to the ALDP.

A PPIp application was submitted in March 2014 for "Residential-led mixed use development including approximately 3000 homes, employment, education, retail, leisure and community uses and associated new and upgraded access roads, landscaping and ancillary engineering works". A willingness to approve conditionally (subject to legal conditions) was agreed in August 2014 and the consent was released in April 2016 following the execution of the Section 75 Agreement.

Following the PPIp approval, separate applications for Matters Specified in Conditions (MSC) have been submitted relating to the first phases of residential development, infrastructure works and landscape works. These subsequent applications have been approved where they are in accordance with the adopted Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan.

Current position

Phase 1a of the Countesswells development is now almost complete with over 100 properties now occupied and 20ha of the Cults Burn park now complete. The next phases of residential development and of open space are already being planned and will be on site within the next year. In addition to the residential development which is planned the first new road link to the A944, the first primary school and neighbourhood centre are also planned for the next phase of development.

Development to the south

The land to the south of Countesswells Road is identified for residential development with significant areas of public open space focused around the Cults Burn. Development here falls in to the Countesswells Road and Colthill character areas.

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

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

Proximity to town centre

The Thornhill site is located approximately 1km from the town centre. The town centre will contain a variety of civic, community and retail uses, such as the GP surgery, dentists and pharmacy should be focused around the main civic spaces such as the central park.

Proximity to schools

The Thornhill site is located within 800m of a primary school and the secondary school site with a strategic walking route providing a direct connection.

Access

The Thornhill site is located adjacent to Countesswells Road where good pedestrian and vehicle connection would be possible to the proposed street network. There are a number of on-street and off-street paths to the south east of Countesswells that could provide access points to the proposed network. The secondary street to the south would allow good opportunity for vehicle connection and also provide a potential bus route. A bus stop on this existing route would be within 800m of the Thornhill site and would also allow the opportunity of extending the bus route through the Thornhill site.

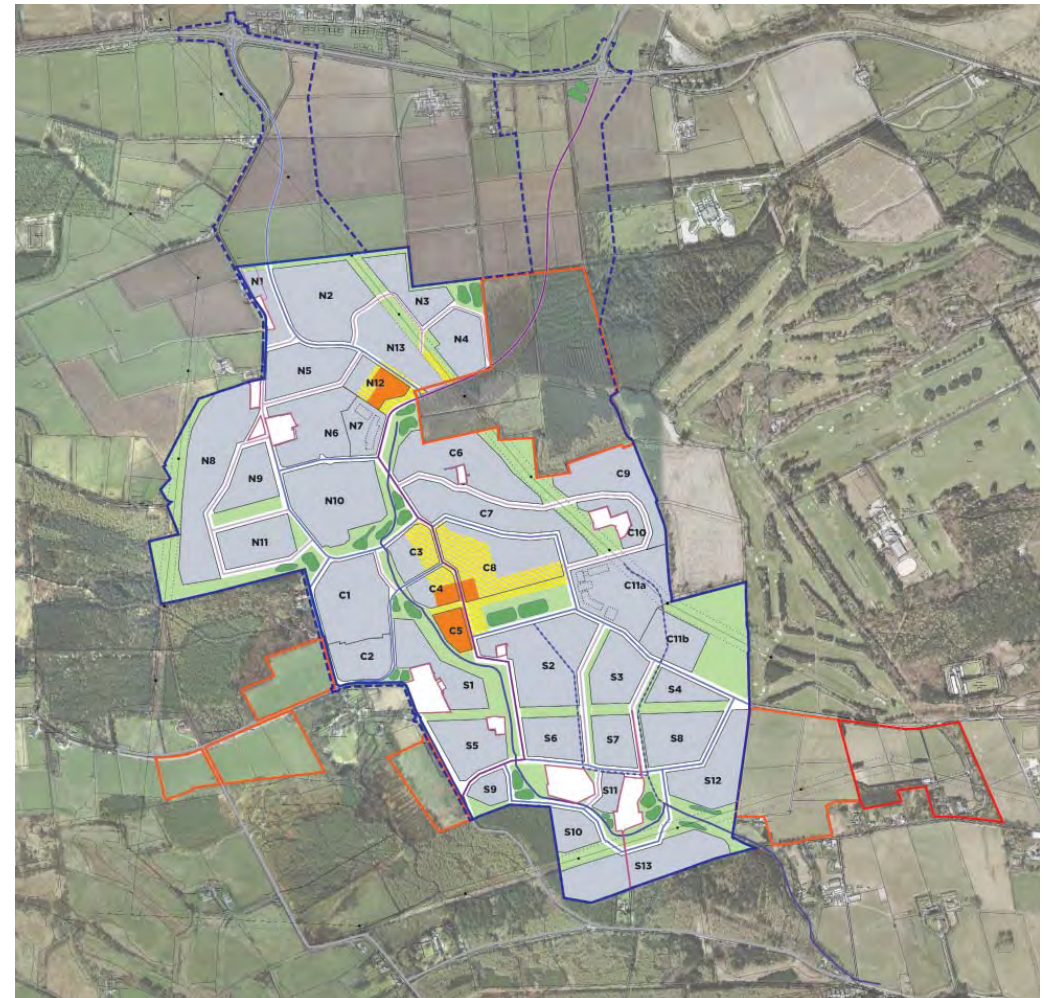


Fig. 08: Countesswells development framework

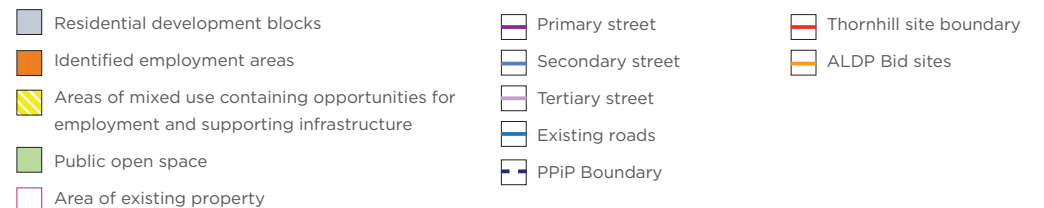




Fig. 09: The site area and viewpoints.

3. The site

3.1 The site

Site description

The site area is identified on figure 9 opposite. The site is currently retained for equestrian uses focused around Thornhill Farm. Thornhill Farm, encompassing Thornhill House and other farm buildings is located to the south east of the site with access taken from Craigton Road which defines the southern boundary. There is also a second access to the farm from Countesswells Road.

To the north of the farm the remainder of the site comprises a series of small fields, defined by stone wall boundaries and enclosed by surrounding woodland. A stable building is located at the centre of the site to the north of the farm. The main access to the site is via a tree and hedge lined driveway which connects to Countesswells Road to the north east.

The topography across the site is favourable to development, sloping gradually from north to south. The site falls from a high point of +125m at the centre of the northern boundary to a low point of +115m in the south east corner next to Craigton Road. The main part of the site have a southerly aspect and are well sheltered by the surrounding woodland providing a favourable environment for development.

The key features which influence the site are described in the following section which describes the site boundaries and identifies the key features within the site.

Site boundaries

The northern boundary, see viewpoint 2 and 6, is defined by coniferous planting adjacent to Countesswells Road. The age of the woodland planting varies however it all acts to provide a robust edge to the site, further defined by the inclusion of a stone wall. There is an existing junction providing access to the site from Countesswells Road however there is no footway adjacent to the road.

The western boundary, see figure 11, is defined by a broad mixed woodland belt which clearly defines and contains the site area.

The southern boundary is described in two parts, the eastern part around Thornhill Farm and the western part defined by woodland planting. To the south east Thornhill Farm is located off Craigton Road with the boundary defined by a combination of walls, hedges and woodland, see viewpoint 5. The south western boundary is defined by the northern edge of a coniferous woodland plantation, shown in viewpoint 7, which separates the site area from the residential properties to the south access from Craigton Road.

The western boundary, viewpoint 9 and 10, is defined by a stone wall which connects the woodland areas to the north and south of the site. There is a block of coniferous woodland at the centre of the boundary which is otherwise open to the land to the west. The western boundary is the only boundary of the site which allows views into the site area.



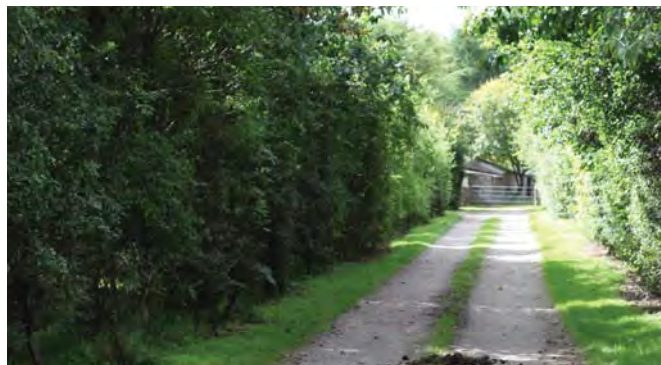
Viewpoint 01 - Fields to the north of the site.



Viewpoint 02 - Thornhill access on Countesswells Road.



Viewpoint 03 - Looking west across the northern fields.



Viewpoint 04 - Access drive from Countesswells Road.



Viewpoint 05 - Craigton Road.



Viewpoint 06 - View west across the northern fields.



Viewpoint 07 - View of the woodland which defines the south west boundary.



Viewpoint 08 - View of small field adjacent to Thornhill Farm.



Viewpoint 09 - View to western boundary.



Viewpoint 10 - View of western boundary from Countesswells Road.



Viewpoint 11 - View of eastern boundary at junction of Countesswells Road and Craigton Road.

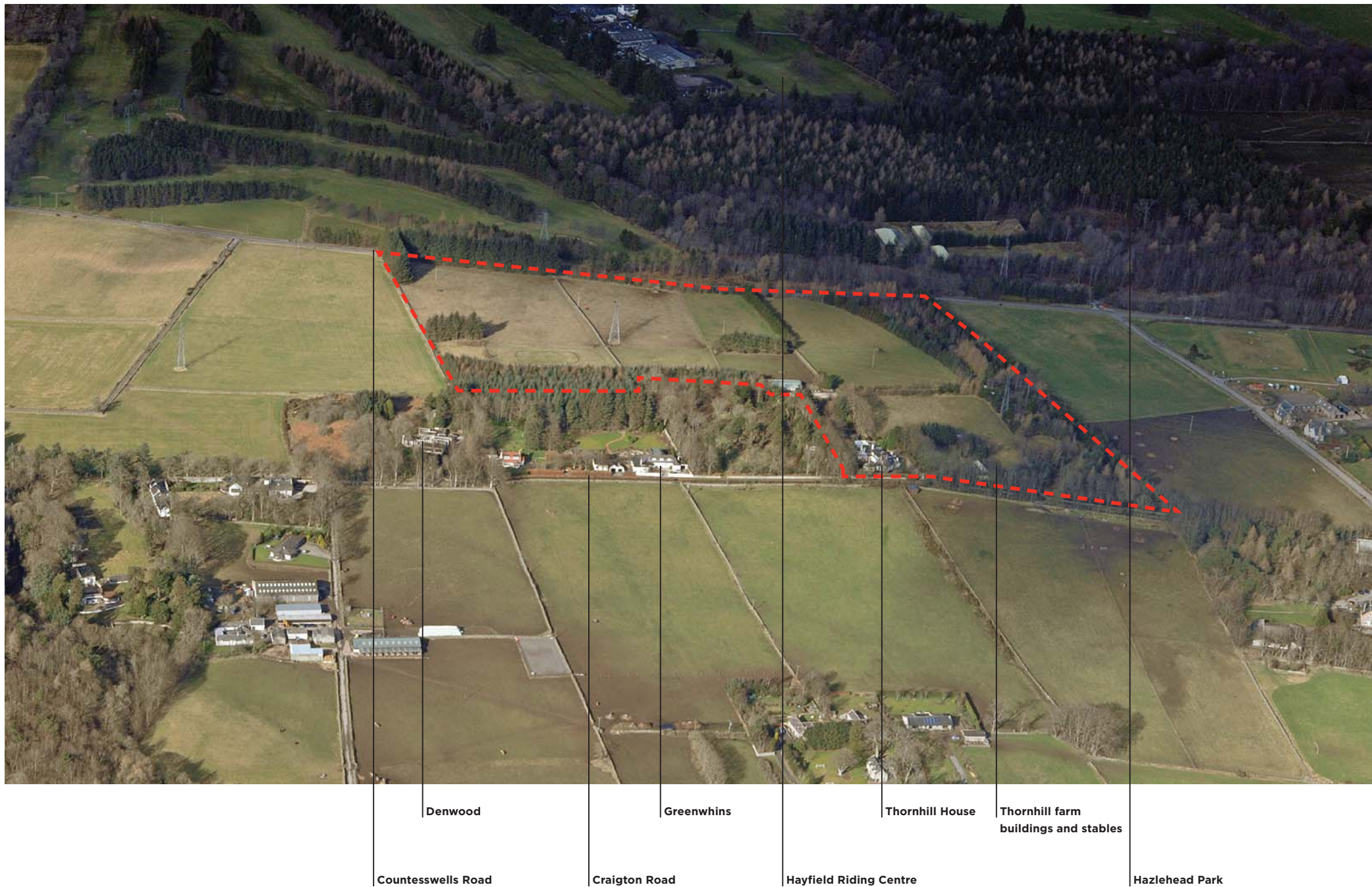


Fig. 10: Aerial view of site from south.

3.2 Key site features

Access

Vehicle access to the site is possible from both Countesswells Road to the north and Craighton Road to the south. There are existing junctions on both these roads which allow access to the site area.

Existing buildings

There are a number of existing buildings within the site area, including Thornhill House and a number of buildings relating to the equestrian use of the site. The house and its grounds including the walled garden to the north are within the site area and will be retained within any proposals for the site. The other buildings relating to equestrian uses will not be retained.

None of the buildings or structures are listed.

Overhead lines

There are two sets of overhead lines which pass through the site area, the alignment of these are identified on figure 11. The overhead lines to the north are smaller and it is assumed these would be diverted or placed underground.

As with the Countesswells development there are no proposals to divert or underground the existing 132 KV power lines, so they will be treated as a constraint around which development can be configured. The impact of pylons on views and vistas should also be a key consideration.

Flood risk

There are no watercourses within the site area, Cults Burn is outwith the site area, approximately 500m to the west. The SEPA flood risk map identifies no areas within the site which would be subject to river flooding or surface water flooding.

Woodland

The areas of woodland surrounding the site and within the site area are important to the character of the area. As a general principle the areas of woodland surrounding the site area should be retained and enhanced with additional planting as much of it is coniferous planting. Appropriate offsets and Root Protection Zones must be provided.

Within the site area the trees and areas of woodland are generally low quality coniferous planting and as such could be removed and replaced if desirable. A detailed Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements BS5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to Construction' and Scottish Government policy 'Control of Woodland Removal' following the detailing of site layout design proposals.

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.

Path network

A key asset of the site is the extensive network of path 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 site with Cults to the south, Countesswells as well as more strategic connections to Aberdeen to the east.



Stone walls are a key characteristic of the site and wider area.



Stable buildings within the site area.



Overhead lines pass across the site.

3.3 Character areas

The Thornhill site naturally falls into two character areas. To the north the character of the site is relatively open, with larger fields defined by stone walls surrounded by woodland.

To the south east the character of the site around Thornhill House and Farm is of a smaller scale and increasingly enclosed by hedges and woodland areas. The character of this area is reflected in the existing residential properties along Craighton Road. Large detached properties set within wooded plots looking south to the River Dee valley.



Open character of the northern part of the site area.



Craighton Road.

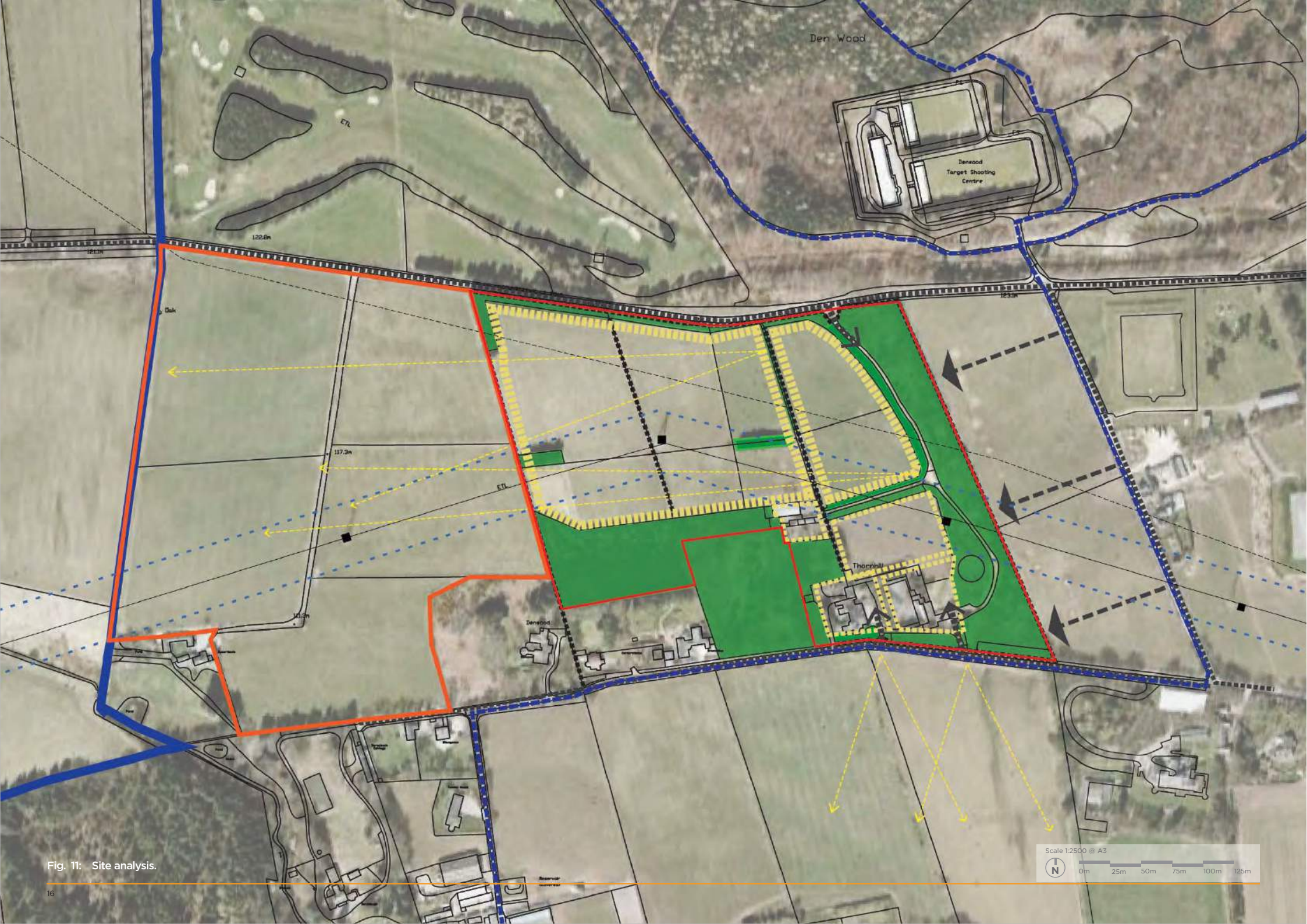


Fig. 11: Site analysis.

3.4 Site opportunities and constraints

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

- The site is well contained and is not visible from Countesswells Road or the surrounding area;
- The surrounding woodland is a key asset which ensures the site is not only well contained but also provides a sheltered environment;
- The western edge of the site is open allowing good opportunities to integrate with the development areas, streets and open spaces of Countesswells;
- As with the Countesswells development there are no proposals to divert or underground the existing 132 KV power lines, so they will be treated as a constraint around which development can be configured;
- The topography of the site does not provide a constraint to development and the southerly facing slope will provide a favourable aspect for development;
- Countesswells Road allows good access to the site as well as direct connection to Countesswells and Aberdeen;
- Craigton Road allows a second point of access to the site from the south. The existing residential character of Craigton Road also established a precedent for development in this area;
- The existing equestrian buildings and farm buildings will not be retained;
- Thornhill House and garden will be retained as a large residential plot within the site;
- Views south from Craigton Road over the River Dee valley are a key asset of the site;
- Attractive and regular pattern of stone field dykes dividing land into small fields;
- The site is bounded by the core path network to the north, east and south offering access to a network of existing connections to the existing residential areas to the south and west;

In considering the opportunity at Thornhill, cognisance must also be taken of its position within the evolving Countesswells context and the future demands and offer presented by the surrounding masterplan area highlighted at the start of the document.

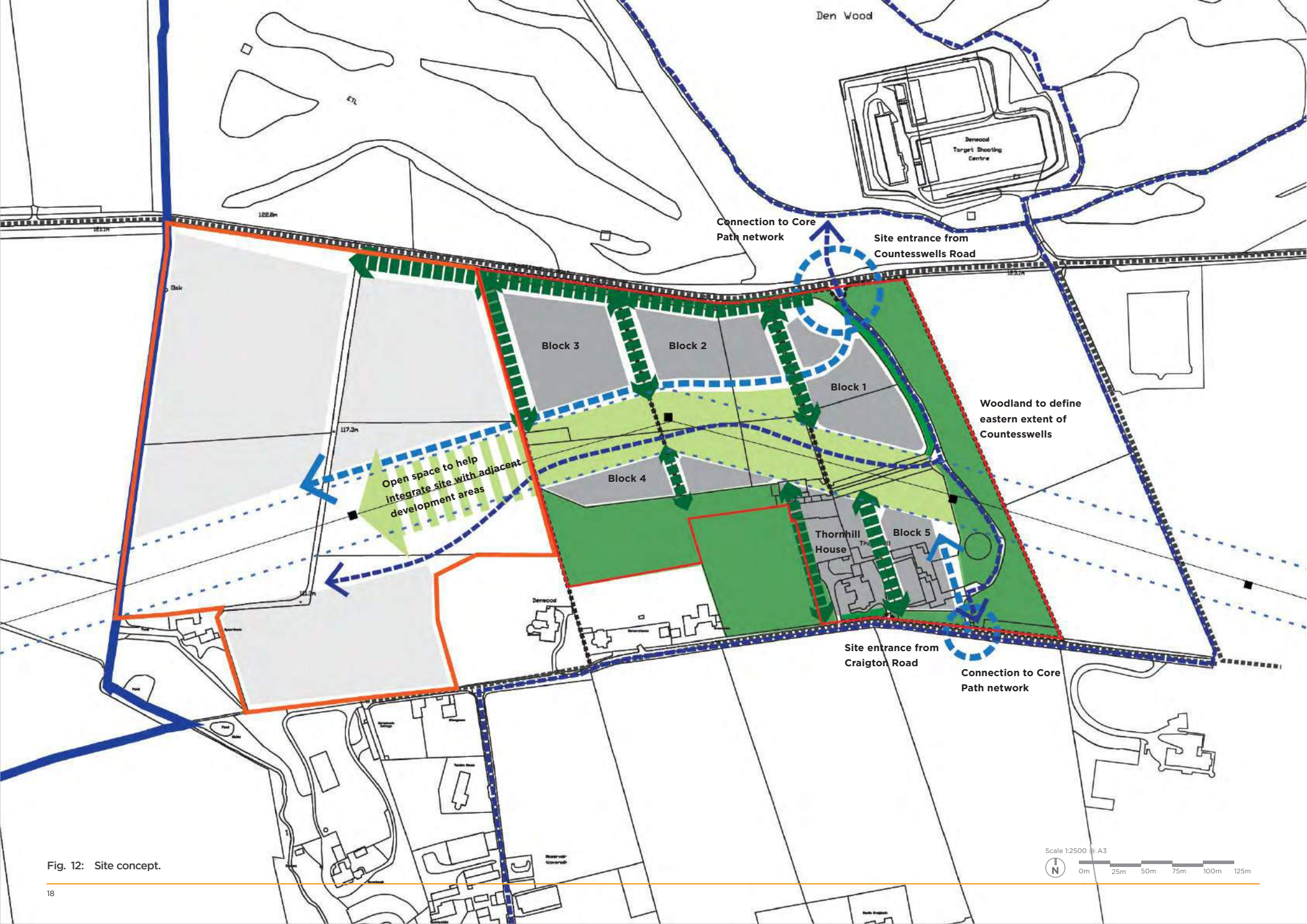


Fig. 12: Site concept.

4. Development concept

4.1 Site potential & vision

The development concept shown opposite and development strategy described in the following sections 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 framework diagrams are illustrated on the following pages. The physical characteristics of the site are such that it could provide a distinctive and logical expansion of Countesswells and could offer several benefits to the community:

- Development at Thornhill allows for the long term planned growth of Countesswells;
- Sustainable natural growth - maximising site potential and utilising infrastructure effectively;
- Support of schools and facilities within Countesswells;
- Help better define the eastern edge of Countesswells on approach from the east;
- Provide a logical and robust long term boundary to the east of Countesswells;
- The chance to provide a different housing choice thereby improving the social diversity of the area and help meet housing demand;
- Creation of distinctive neighbourhoods shaped by existing landscape features;
- Improvement and enhancement of footpaths connections and experience;
- Provide attractive areas of open spaces offering considerable recreation benefits.

4.2 Design concept

Thornhill should be considered as a new neighbourhood within the Countesswells development. Located on the edge of the development it will have a distinct rural edge character in keeping with the existing residential character of Craigton Road. The main connection to Countesswells will remain along Countesswells Road to the north with a new secondary street providing access to this residential area and allow good integration with the Countesswells development. The landscape structure will support the opportunity for integration with Countesswells, providing connections through paths and shared spaces. The landscape will also help define the development area, ensuring it has a distinct character with clear boundaries within the wider development.

The character of the site is defined by the surrounding woodland and field structure. These features coupled with the opportunities identified in the previous section lead to a simple and logical concept for the site layout .

Five principle elements define the concept for the development of the site:

1. Retain and enhance to woodland boundary to the north and west to ensure the site is well defined and enclosed;
2. Provide the main access to the site from Countesswells Road with a connection west to the main Countesswells development;
3. Follow the existing field pattern, using a combination of stone walls and woodland planting to define areas for development to the north of the site;
4. A landscape corridor will provide open space within the development, ensure good integration with the Countesswells development to the west and define the different character areas to the north and south;
5. To the south of the landscape corridor the woodland structure should be utilised to define large development plots focused around Thornhill House and a second access road in keeping with the existing character of Craigton Road.

These elements are linked by a network of paths which connect with the wider surroundings creating a legible site structure and a distinct sense of place. The key aspects of the concept are illustrated on the diagram opposite, identifying the main principles that underlie the initial development framework.

4.3 Design principles

The development blocks, woodland areas and open spaces have been arranged to ensure that an interesting spatial experience is created. Core spaces and a hierarchy of different streets will create a strong, varied and legible urban form. This basic structure can then be further articulated by additional requirements and guidance such as housing typologies and storey heights as design progresses.

With the framework identifying the development areas the following section provides a basic description and guide as to how each of the development areas should be developed at the next stage. The blocks described below are identified on figure 12 opposite.

Block 1 - This development area should provide an entrance to the Thornhill site, maintaining the existing track to the east and overlooking the open space to the south.

Block 2 - New woodland planting should define as residential area which would overlook the open space to the south. The existing woodland planting to the north adjacent to Countesswells Road should be enhanced to better contain development maintain the character of Countesswells Road.

Block 3 - Woodland planting should define this development area with opportunities to integrate with new development areas to the west following street and path links. Development should seek to benefit from the southerly aspect and overlook the adjacent open spaces.

Block 4 - These development areas should provide large plots set within the field structure, backing onto the woodland and overlooking the open space to the north.

Block 5 - Focused around the existing farm area, this site would be accessed from Craigton Road and should be developed in a manner in keeping with the character of Thornhill House and the existing properties to the west.

Thornhill House - The existing house must be retained and given sufficient space to ensure a respectful setting and privacy. A separate access to the house will be retained and the gardens will be clearly defined by boundaries and woodland planting.

The area of open space at the centre of the site will provide the feature which will connect all the surrounding development areas. With all the surrounding properties overlooking the space a network of paths, stone walls and tree planting should be designed in such a way as to define the neighbourhood character of the site, visually and physically connecting the separate development areas. The public open space at the centre will provide the unifying element of the site and further will help integrate the development with Countesswells to the west.



Fig. 13: Site development framework.



5. Development strategy

5.1 Development strategy

This section of the document sets out the development framework, demonstrating how development at Thornhill could be structured and form part of a wider Countesswells development. The framework is illustrated on figures 13 and 14 and described in the following sections which describe proposed land use strategy, landscape strategy and access strategy both for the site area and in the Countesswells context.

5.2 Land use strategy

Land use and density principles

The suggested proposal is that the site would provide a residential development of around 60-80 homes.

The Development Framework shown in figure 13 opposite has a total site area of 8.79ha of which 3.50ha is identified suitable for residential development and which excludes the land surrounding Thornhill House. Thornhill House will remain as a private house with large gardens in the area identified.

Appropriate density

Given the location and character of the site, the density range applied will in general be lower at less than 20 units per hectare in keeping with the residential density principles of the Countesswells development framework. Within the site the densities will vary, from low density, town edge conditions of around 20 units per hectare to the north to a lower density of around 10 units per hectare along the south reflecting the adjacent existing residential development along Craigton Road.

The density of development should respond to the scale of the development areas, the landscape setting, surrounding woodland, southerly aspect and existing character. Densities will generally fall across the site with higher densities to the north with larger development areas, closer to the site access and road network and lower towards the south and east of the site, in response to the transition to smaller development areas and the Craigton Road character. A range of housing types will ensure that uniform densities are avoided and that a varied urban form is created.

Affordable housing

The development will provide up to 25% affordable housing. Affordable housing will be integrated within the development and designed as part of the development layout.

Opportunities for community services / facilities

The proposals for the Thornhill site are for residential only development however the additional housing the site would provide within the wider Countesswells development would help support local shops, community facilities and schools with the increased population. The site is within walking distance of the town centre, including the primary school and secondary school site and as such would help support the non-residential uses within the community.



Fig. 14: Development framework in Countesswells context.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Thornhill site boundary | Proposed strategic paths |
| Secondary street | Proposed development areas |
| Tertiary street | Woodland areas |
| Existing roads | Proposed areas of open space |
| Existing Core Paths | Location for SUDS |

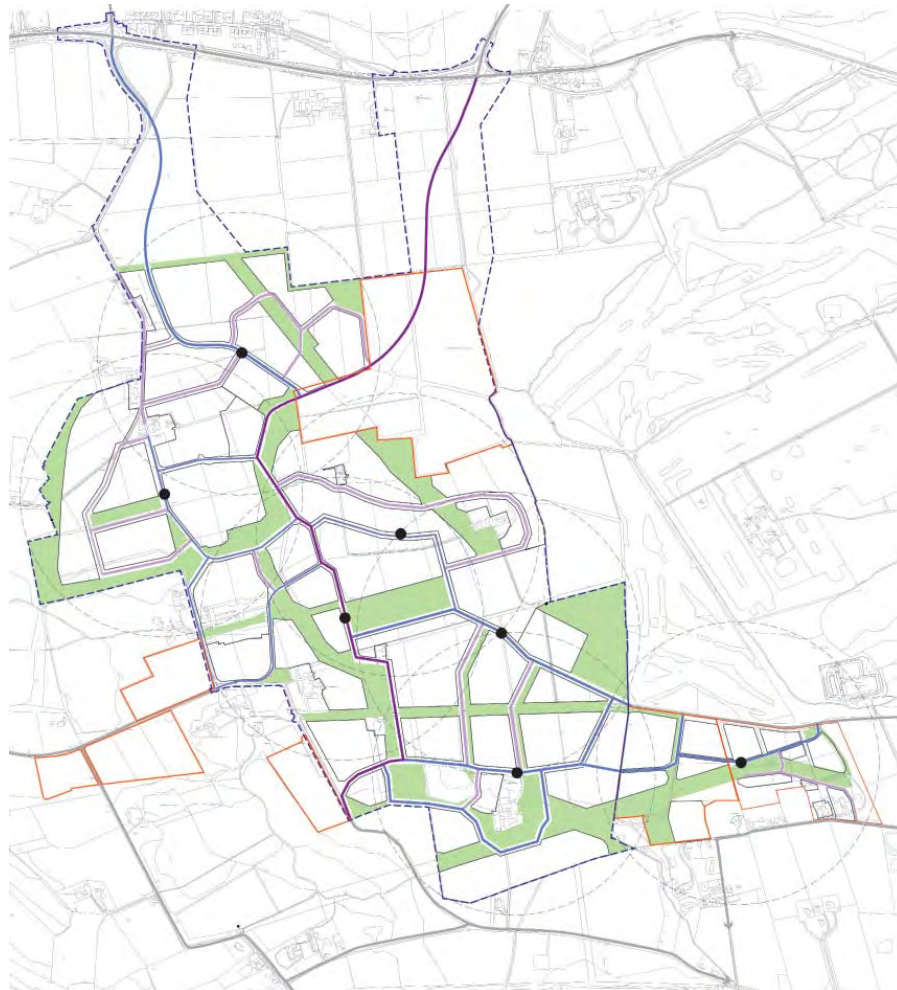


Fig. 15: Street network and location of indicative bus stops.

- Thornhill site boundary
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Tertiary street
- Existing roads
- Proposed location for bus stop with 400m radius

5.3 Access strategy

With a boundary to the main Countesswells site (including potential expansion area) this allows for good connections between the proposed neighbourhood of Thornhill and those already proposed within Countesswells both in terms of streets and open space.

The site should be a sustainable extension to Countesswells where people can live and visit without relying heavily on private transport. A network of paths would ensure good connections to the Core Path network and access to the main Countesswells site including the town centre and schools sites. A secondary street link would provide the main access to the site from Countesswells Road connecting to the street network including proposed bus routes within Countesswells.

Pedestrians

The pedestrian network is designed to actively encourage walking both as a means of getting around Countesswells and also as a recreational pursuit.

Pathways, pavements and shared surfaces will all combine to create the pedestrian network and are closely linked with areas of open spaces or follow tree lined routes to create pleasant walking experiences. The site connects well with the existing Core Path network to the north, south and west providing a variety of walking routes to Countesswells, Cults and Hazlehead Park. The path network proposed will provide a direct connection to the extensive network of paths proposed within Countesswells including clear and safe pedestrian routes to the town centre and schools which are within 800m of the site.

Cyclists

As with the wider Countesswells development cyclists will be generally be accommodated on the street network (on road) and strategic path network. For pedestrians and cyclists the Strategic path network identified will offer many routes and across Countesswells the combination of segregated pathways and roadside footways will create an interconnected network of direct and convenient links between destinations.

Good access to the Core Path network will provide a number of connections to the wider area, including Hazlehead Park, North Deeside Road, the Deeside line and the city centre.

Public transport

Since there are no existing bus routes through the Countesswells area, initial discussions held with local bus operators indicate that currently the main bus corridor accessible from the site is the A944 to the north it is therefore appropriate to promote extended and additional services to this corridor. Potential routes for buses (as set out in the Countesswells Development Framework) are identified on Figure 15, providing two connections to the existing network on the A944 and a network within the development following the streets.

The Thornhill site is currently out with 400m of any indicative bus stop, however, the Countesswells Masterplan states that as the development progresses opportunities for expanding or enhancing routes will be considered. This would allow the bus network to expand to the east and ensure that the expanded Countesswells community including Thornhill would fall within 400m of a proposed bus stop.

Vehicular access

The main vehicle access point to the site would be from Countesswells Road to the north from a junction located at or near the existing Thornhill access.

A secondary street would provide access through the site and connect to the Countesswells street network to the west. A tertiary street would provide access from Craighton Road to the south through the Thornhill farm site. The tertiary street would provide access to the development areas to the south and connect through to the secondary street to ensure a permeable layout and good integration with Countesswells.

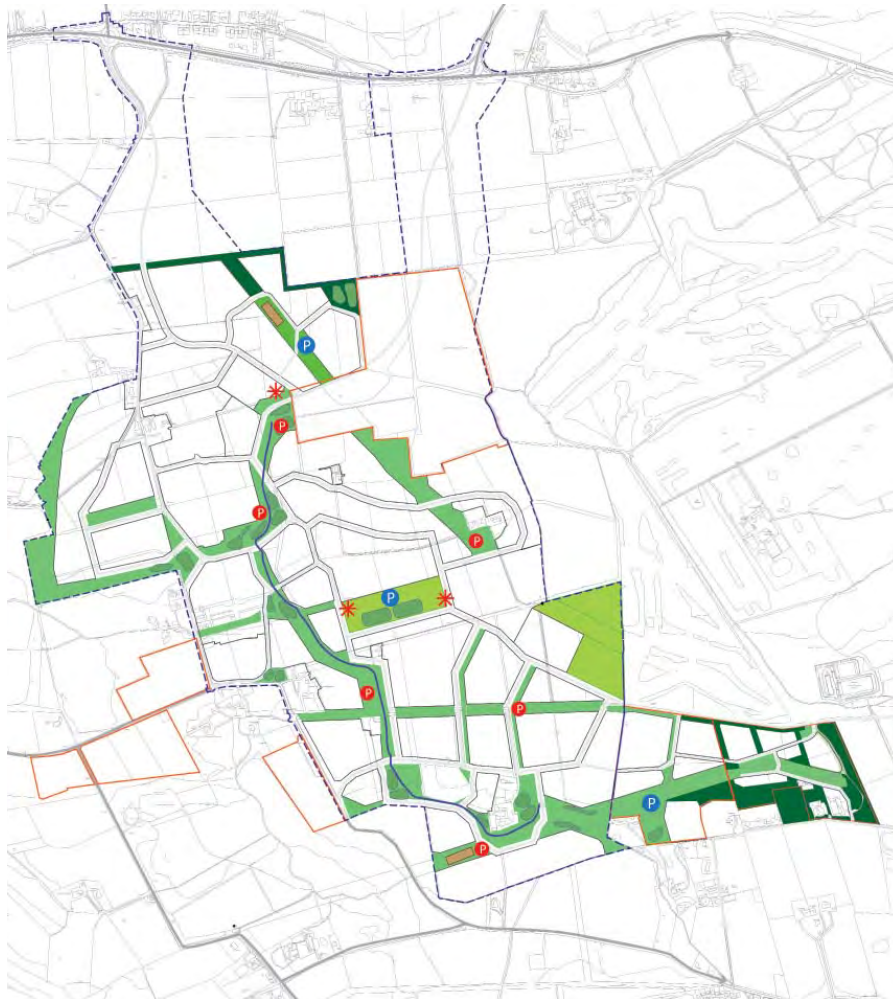


Fig. 16: Landscape strategy.

- Thornhill site boundary
- Structural woodland
- Natural greenspace/green corridors
- Outdoor sports area/formal open space
- Proposed location for SUDs
- Proposed location for play zone
- Proposed location for large play zone

5.4 Landscape strategy

As with the wider Countesswells setting the landscape setting has been the key influence in defining the layout, it provides a major asset bringing many environmental and recreational benefits to the proposed development at Thornhill.

A key principle of the development has been to connect the areas of woodland and public open space at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape corridors and connected spaces within the development. These areas of open space will add to the landscape setting, containing the development to the west and provide enhancement of the ecological, hydrological and recreational networks within the site. This section will explain how the Landscape Framework aligns with the Countesswells Development Framework and meets the aims of the Council's Open Space Audit and Green Space Network.

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 a residential population of 200 for the 80 homes given an average occupancy of 2.5 people per unit this would give a requirement for approximately 0.6 hectares of open space. The indicative development framework includes 1.6 hectares of usable open space. 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 and Countesswells proposals would then be used to develop the Thornhill 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 to complement those in the surrounding areas.

In addition to the usable greenspace there are significant areas of woodland, greenways and existing woodland areas surrounding the site which have not been included in the calculation of the formal open space provision.

Green Space Network

Aberdeen's Green Space Network is identified in the Local Development Plan (Policy NE1) to protect, promote and enhance designated natural heritage sites, connectivity between habitats, open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors. The site at Thornhill benefits from a quality Greenspace Network in the surrounding areas containing a range of habitat types, including Hazlehead, Den Wood and Foggieton LNCS.

The proposed landscape structure for Thornhill, including existing and proposed woodland as well as areas of open space would help facilitate movement of species and promote habitat connectivity between the surrounding networks. The structure has been designed to integrate with the Countesswells landscape framework and in particular the Cults Burn Corridor which connects Hazlehead (GSN 32) with Denwood / Westfield (GSN 35) and Foggieton (GSN 36) to the south.

Types of open space

Woodland

The existing woodland belts which bound the site to the north, west and within the site to the south, provide a backdrop for the development and create a setting and sense of place. A network of pathways should provide access through the woodland which will be managed with an environmental and habitat bias, ensuring appropriate regeneration of the woodland to maintain the site character. These woodland areas will be retained, enhanced and supplemented with additional planting to help define the structure of the site.

Core space

The core space at the centre of the site has been formed as a direct response to the existing landscape and as a larger scale strategic resources fulfilling recreation, hydrology and ecological functions. This space would likely be a parkland landscape and should be designed to be addressed by all the surrounding development, providing passive surveillance.

The space at the centre of the site would serve several functions as a Local Area of open space. It would provide an attractive arrival to the site with the secondary street running parallel to the northern edge of the space also providing an attractive outlook for all surrounding properties. The space would provide a location for play and recreational opportunities and facilitate connections to the wider landscape framework to the west and north which would allow residents access to a wide variety of spaces and recreational facilities

The careful design of the space will be essential to creating character at Thornhill and ensuring the overhead lines can be retained but do not dominate the site. The space should be well integrated with the street and path networks, and link with spaces and woodland to the west to help integrate the community with Countesswells.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

As with the Countesswells development SUDs will be included within the provision of open space and as such the facilities should be designed as integral to the open space. The Framework identifies an area for a SUDS facility to be located within the public open space to the west of the site which would connect back to the Cults Burn corridor and like Countesswells it is envisaged that the SUDs would form a key feature within the area of open space.

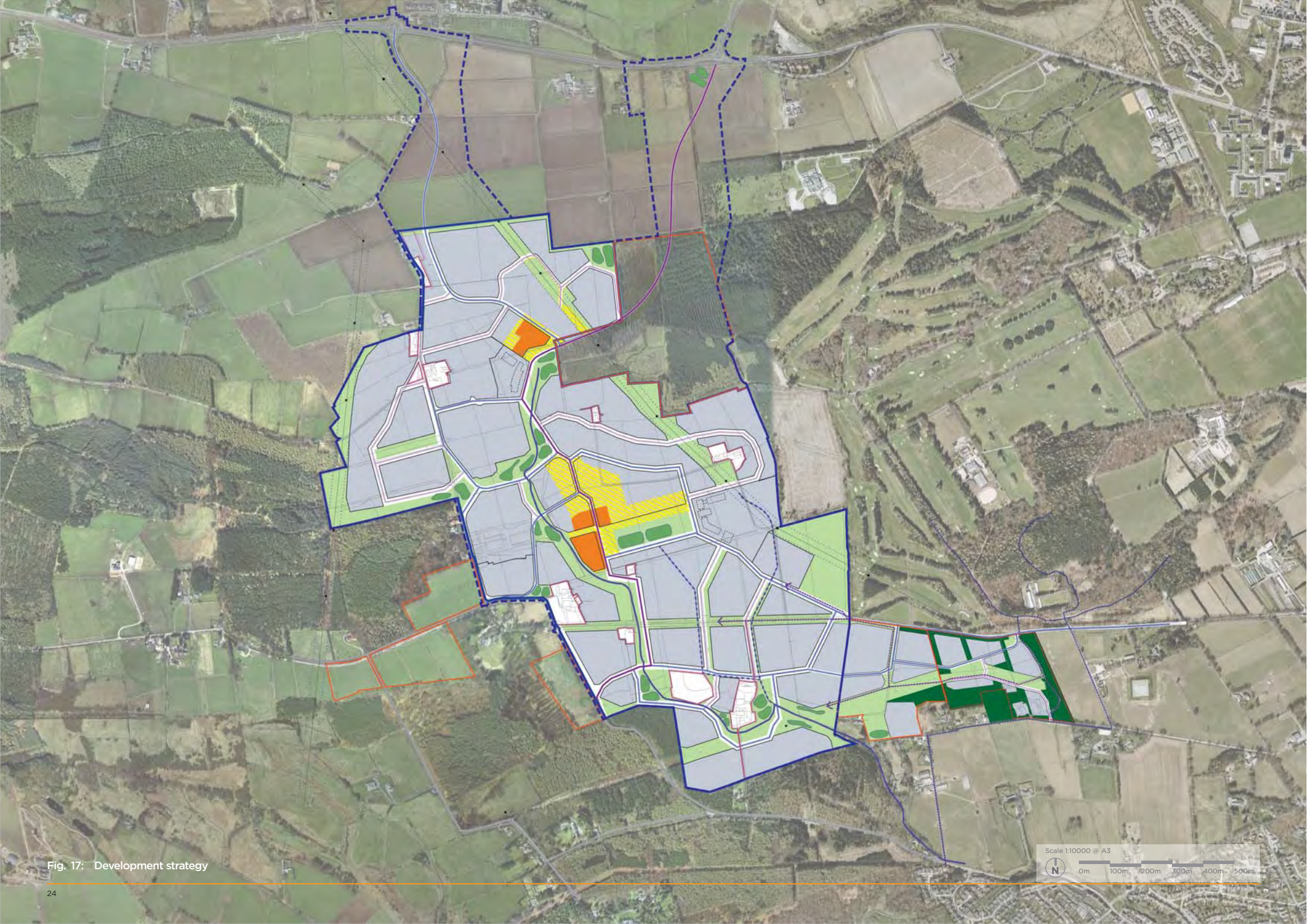


Fig. 17: Development strategy



6. Summary

6.1 The sustainable growth of Countesswells

Thornhill could become a distinctive and sustainable extension to Countesswells offering new residential neighbourhood within easy reach of local facilities, the town centre and schools. Responding to the existing qualities of the site and providing a good range of housing will create a characterful, vibrant and well-connected neighbourhood and a highly desirable place to live within Countesswells.

The Thornhill site will have a minimal impact on the surrounding landscape as, like the Countesswells site it is well contained and screened. The site is free from constraints such as steep slopes and flood risk and would be ideal locations to accommodate residential development as part of the organic growth of Countesswells.

Countesswells will accommodate a large range of services within its boundaries to provide day-to-day requirements of residents including employment, health, education, shopping and recreation. The expansion of the site's boundaries to include the additional parcels of land would ensure that these services remain viable, attractive and cost-effective.

The proposals for the Thornhill site include the removal from the Green Belt and inclusion within the current allocation at Countesswells site OP38, for 60-80 homes, in the Local Development Plan. The inclusion of this site will support the viability of this mixed use development and the services contained therein. Any development will incorporate excellent sustainability principles in its design in order to minimise any landscape impact and loss or disturbance to the natural environment. The designs will look to incorporate residential units to support the viability of the new settlements, add significant ecological value to the surrounding environment and enhance the social and economic benefits of the development as a whole for the local community.

The site at present forms part of the rural setting of the City of Aberdeen and contribute towards the attractive landscape which defines the urban area as it exists currently. However, this development bid should be assessed in relation to the planned creation of a new urban community at Countesswells which will alter the landscape fundamentally. The Green Belt should not artificially restrict growth but should ensure that growth is directed towards the best locations. The development of Countesswells has commenced and was established in the adopted Local Development Plan as a good location to accommodate growth. As such, the Thornhill development site would be more productive if they were added to the Countesswells boundary than they would be if they remained as Green Belt Land.

In terms of the Green Space Network designation, current policy aims to protect and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of these areas. Access through the expansion sites would link in with the current access strategy for Countesswells and provide opportunities for recreation, community access as well as contributing towards ecological improvements through the creation of wildlife corridors linking habitats with feeding grounds. These areas will provide a high level of amenity for existing and new residents and result in the creation of an attractive, sustainable and high quality place.

Additional housing on these site would also increase the viability of public transport provision within the settlement, enhancing the mass of population concentration that could support a range of services, that would improving the perception of convenience and, therefore, uptake of services. This modal shift away from private car transport is essential to secure the climate change objectives of the Local Development Plan's vision and spatial strategy. By increasing the allocation at Countesswells by adding the sites in this development bid, these objectives would be more easily obtainable.

The site at Thornhill present an opportunity to satisfy growth demands in a location that has an established capacity to accommodate development with minimal negative impact the natural environment. On the basis of the above, the Thornhill site should be considered favourably as a location for residential development within the review of the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan.

6.2 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 development at Thornhill could provide a sustainable expansion to Countesswells and make a unique and positive contribution to the wider development.

In summary Stewart Milne Homes (SMH) believes that the site at Thornhill has the capacity to accommodate around 60-80 new homes which will allow flexibility for the creation of an attractive and distinct new neighbourhood at Countesswells. 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 Countesswells.

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 residential development.

The plan opposite illustrates the site in the wider context to illustrate how development of the Thornhill site would ultimately form part of the Countesswells development.

optimised environments ltd.

Edinburgh

2nd Floor | Quartermile Two | 2 Lister Square | EH3 9GL
t 0131 221 5920 | w [optimisedenvironments.com](https://www.optimisedenvironments.com)

London

Warnford Court | 29 Throgmorton Street | London | EC2N 2AT
t 020 79474062 | w [optimisedenvironments.com](https://www.optimisedenvironments.com)

Optimised Environments Ltd. Registered in Scotland SC359690.
Registered address: 2nd Floor | Quartermile Two | 2 Lister Square | EH3 9GL