

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 14 January, 2011 - Minute of PREDETERMINATION HEARING before the DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE in relation to the application for a Community Stadium, Land at Loirston Loch, Wellington Road, Aberdeen. Present:- Councillor Dean, Convener; Councillor John West, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Adam, Boulton, Cassie, Clark, Cooney, Cormack, Cormie, Dunbar, Farquharson, Jaffrey, Laing, McCaig, May, Milne and Penny. Afternoon attendance:- Councillors Donnelly and Kevin Stewart.

1 LAND AT LOIRSTON LOCH, WELLINGTON ROAD, ABERDEEN - PROPOSAL FOR 21,000 CAPACITY SPORTS AND LEISURE STADIUM, ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING, ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND LANDSCAPING

PRE-DETERMINATION HEARING

The Sub Committee met this day to conduct a predetermination hearing relative to the application (101299) by Aberdeen Football Club for planning permission in respect of the proposal for a 21,000 capacity sports and leisure stadium, associated car parking, access arrangements and landscaping at land at Loirston Loch, Wellington Road, Aberdeen.

The Convener opened the hearing by extending a welcome to all present. She explained that the Hearing was required because the application fell within the category of a major development and is considered to be significantly contrary to Policy 28 (Greenbelt) of the Aberdeen Local Plan.

The Convener made it clear that the purpose of the predetermination hearing was for Elected Members to listen to the representations made by all parties and for officers to take various points away with them for consideration as part of their final evaluation of the proposal. Reference was made to the new Code of Conduct for Councillors which came into effect on 21st December, 2010. In advance of detailed guidance on the Code of Conduct being issued, the Convener advised Members to continue with existing practices of not expressing opinions on the merits or otherwise of the proposal being discussed today. In addition, Members were advised not to express opinions on the proposal prior to the application being referred to Council at which a final decision on the application would be made. To do so would be to prejudge the final evaluation following consideration of the representations made today, as well as the responses of consultees and the written representations that have already been made. The Convener concluded her opening remarks by asking members of the public due to speak to group together where possible if they were raising the same issues, and explained the format of the hearing, following which, the merits of the proposed

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development would be assessed by officers, taking into account all issues raised in written representations and by those speaking today. A report with a full evaluation of the proposal would be put before the Council in due course.

At this point in the proceedings, the Sub Committee heard a statement from Mr. Alan Strachan, Nigg Community Council who raised a procedural point of order requesting that the Convener take no involvement in determination of the proposal due to the view of the Community Council that a conflict of interest existed. The Acting Senior Democratic Services Manager advised the Sub Committee that the decision to declare any interest is one solely for each individual Member; that advice had been sought on this occasion and that there was no impediment to the Convener chairing this hearing.

The Convener invited **Mr. Garfield Prentice, Senior Planner, Aberdeen City Council** as the first speaker to address the Sub Committee. He would describe the application proposal, advise with regard to the policy background and the main considerations arising, and identify the nature of the concerns expressed by consultees and objectors. His presentation to the Sub Committee was in the following terms:-

Introduction

This Pre-determination Hearing is required under Regulation 27 of the 'Development Management' Regulations* because the proposed development is classed as a major development in terms of the 'Hierarchy of Developments'** and is considered to be significantly contrary to Policy 28 of the Aberdeen Local Plan by virtue of being a major development on an undeveloped site within the Green Belt. It relates to the consideration of the planning application submitted by Aberdeen Football Club seeking detailed planning permission at Loirston Loch for the construction of 21,000 capacity sports and leisure stadium and the associated car parking, access roads and footpaths and the provision of landscaping. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which sets out the findings of the environmental impact assessment.

As part of the procedures for major developments, the applicant undertook extensive consultation with the local community prior to the planning application being lodged. This consultation involved meetings with Nigg and Cove & Altens Community Councils, public exhibitions, "drop-in" sessions and displays at the Central and Cove libraries as well as the Trinity shopping centre.

This presentation will contain a brief description of the application site and details of the proposed development. There will also be a brief comment on the consultation process and a summary of written representations by members of the public. I will then set out

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the main planning policies and national guidance that are directly relevant to this application, before concluding with a brief outline of the main considerations for the assessment of the application.

However, before addressing these issues I will comment briefly on how the site at Loirston was selected. The concept of a community stadium as a joint venture between the football club and the Council was first explored in the North Beach Planning Study in 2003. In 2006 three areas were selected for consideration – Bridge of Don, King's Links and Cove (two sites at Cove were considered). An Outline Business Case was carried out for each location. In December 2007 the Council agreed that both Loirston Loch and King's Links should be subject to further analysis. The detailed feasibility and business case concluded that the site at Loirston Loch was the only deliverable option and therefore the optimum location in Aberdeen for a new stadium. In May 2009 the Council noted the results of the feasibility study and agreed not to provide capital funding for a new stadium. As a result of this, the current planning application was lodged solely by Aberdeen Football Club. If granted planning permission, the stadium would be developed and funded by the football club.

* The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

** The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009

Site

A detailed description of the site is provided in the report in the agenda papers. In summary, the site is located to the west of the Wellington Road at the northern end of Loirston Loch. It extends westwards and northwards, wrapping round the business premises of The Balmoral Group, to join with the western extremity of Wellington Circle. The site is approximately 16 hectares. The general topography of the main part of the site is of a very shallow bowl, dipping down by some 3 metres towards the centre. The northern part of the site rises initially quite steeply from the shallow bowl before levelling out towards Calder Park, the difference in levels being some 10 metres. The site includes part of Loirston Loch and a number of gently undulating fields of low intensity agricultural and informal recreational use. Approximately 3 hectares of the site falls within the Loirston Loch District Wildlife Site. The eastern part is also identified as a Site of Interest to Natural Science. A right of way extends roughly east-west through the site from Wellington Road to Redmoss Road.

The area to the south supports a number of informal recreational activities based around the loch, including walking, fishing and bird watching. The Lochinch Interpretation Centre is located 400 metres to the south west. The Cove residential

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area is located 300 metres to the east on the opposite side of Wellington Road. Approximately 1 km to the north east lies Altens industrial area, while to the north is Calder Park and the commercial area on Wellington Circle. To the west and north west are agricultural fields and Kincorth Hill, beyond which is the residential area of Kincorth.

The Planning Application

A detailed description of the proposal is provided in the report in the agenda papers. In summary, the proposal comprises the following elements –

- A 21,000 spectator capacity all-seated football stadium 1,400 car and coach parking spaces
- A new signalised junction at the site access to Wellington Road and an access to Wellington Circle
- Ground maintenance accommodation
- Landscaped grounds with footpaths

Due to the topography of the site significant changes to ground levels would be required in order to form a level surface on which to construct the stadium and to form the internal road and car parking areas.

The Stadium

The proposed stadium has been designed to a standard that would be suitable for holding not only Aberdeen Football Club matches, but also International Football matches, Club and International Rugby games and concerts. It would be located approximately 160 metres from Wellington Road and 55 metres from the edge of Loirston Loch. It would measure 195 metres by 160 metres and attain a height of 24 metres. The stands would encircle the whole of the pitch, including the four corners, providing a fully enclosed arena and would be finished externally in a mix of materials - grey bricks, white and red coloured cladding and polycarbonate cladding. The south elevation would include substantial areas of glazing. The main entrance to the stadium would be at the south west corner and would be predominantly glazed. The west, north and east elevations would lean back at an angle of approximately 10 degrees from the vertical. A cantilevered roof would cover all of the seating. Floodlights would be provided on the leading edge of roof on the South and North stands.

The South stand would be the main stand, housing all of the club and hospitality facilities. It would include function suites and 26 hospitality boxes offering accommodation for between 6 and 14 people, which could be hired out on non-match

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days for conferences, meetings and weddings. There would also be space for community and commercial uses. The stadium would also include a bar for home supporters only, which would be managed as a members only 'club'. It would also be available for hire on non-match days. The main entrance area would contain the club shop, museum, café, ticket office and club offices. The stadium has been designed as far as possible to facilitate access by disabled spectators with space provided for 74 wheelchair users.

It is proposed to include a range of measures in the design of the stadium to reduce carbon emissions. This would be a mix of energy efficiency measures to reduce the demand for energy and the use of low and zero carbon generating technologies.

On-site car and coach parking, cycle parking, bus provision, access arrangements and off-site parking controls

Mr Smith, in his presentation, will explain in detail the proposed bus strategy, and the parking and access arrangements, but in summary, two new access roads would be built, one from Wellington Road and one from Wellington Circle. It is proposed to provide 1,400 car parking spaces within the site, mainly to the south and west of the stadium and in the northern part of the site next to Wellington Circle. For 'Old Firm' matches the number of car parking spaces would be reduced to approximately 1,250 to allow for additional coach parking to be provided. Approximately 100 coaches could be accommodated. It is proposed that about half of the parking spaces would be allocated for corporate fans, club directors, staff, players, officials and the media.

Covered stores for 60 cycles would be provided on the site, which would be accessed along a path segregated from other traffic. Pedestrian access would be via the two main entrances and from Redmoss Road along the existing right of way.

The cornerstone of the transport strategy is large-scale bus provision between the stadium and the City Centre. It is also proposed to implement a Controlled Parking Zone in the surrounding area, based on a 30-minute walk time from the stadium.

Landscape

It is proposed to provide extensive landscaping on the site. The landscape scheme would include new mounding to provide screening of the car park areas from Wellington Road, hedging along the site boundaries and avenues of trees at key pedestrian routes and in the car parking areas. There would also be a Memorial Garden, the centre-piece being the relocated Merkland Road entrance gates. In total, it is proposed to plant over

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430 trees, 2,000 linear metres of hedging and 12,000sqm of shrubs and ground cover planting.

Environmental Statement

The environmental statement reports on the findings of the environmental impact assessment of the proposed development. It presents and evaluates the significant environmental impacts and identifies appropriate mitigation measures. It covers several impacts including landscape character, visual impact, ecology and nature conservation, air quality, water quality and noise. It also considers and assesses a number of alternative sites. A comprehensive review of the environmental statement by officers has concluded that the main environmental effects of the development have been considered sufficiently and overall the environmental statement meets the requirements set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999.

In summary, the environmental statement concludes there would be a significant and permanent visual impact and a moderate to major impact on the landscape character of the locality. However, the effect on Loirston Loch and its habitat is predicted to be not significant, except for a potentially significant impact on all wintering waterfowl, such as geese. It is stated that the impacts relating to water quality, air quality and noise would not be significant. The environmental statement and Environmental Management Plan also sets out the mitigation measures to be implemented. These include extensive landscaping, the protection, where possible, of sensitive ecological features and habitats, measures to minimise any disturbance and a commitment to adhere to best practice guidance.

Consultations

Extensive consultation on the proposal and the Environmental Statement was carried out. The full list of the consultation bodies and their detailed responses are provided in the report included in the agenda papers. Nigg and Cove & Altens Community Councils were consulted. Both Community Councils have objected to the proposal. Their objections will be explained in the presentations later today by their respective representatives. The Community Councils are the only consultees to object the application.

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Representations

144 letters of objection have been received. The report in the agenda papers provides a full list of all the grounds of objection. As you will see, the list of objections is quite extensive. However, the main issues can be summarised as follows –

- Concerns with the pre-application consultation process and the way feedback from the public was handled by the applicant.
- The pre-application consultation demonstrated there is no significant support for the proposal
- The proposal is premature pending the proper examination and adoption of the new Local Development Plan
- The proposal is contrary to the structure plan, the current local plan and national planning guidance
- Loirston is considered to be the wrong location to the a new stadium, there being better alternative sites, in particular at King's Links, which is identified for that purpose in the adopted local plan
- Aberdeen Football Club has not made a compelling case for a new stadium
- The environmental statement is deficient in that it is not comprehensive or accurate and does not deal with the cumulative impacts of the development or adequately considers alternative locations
- The adverse impacts on the habitat of the District Wildlife Site and surrounding area
- Concerns regarding air quality, light pollution, contamination of Loirston Loch and CO2 emissions
- The visual impact of the stadium on the landscape character of the area
- The size, height, design and colour of the proposed stadium
- Concerns regarding accessibility for fans, congestion on the road network, road safety and car parking, in particular the potential for overspill parking into adjacent areas and the possibility of an extensive parking control zone being imposed
- The impact on residential amenity due to noise disturbance, anti-social behaviour, increased traffic and overspill parking

Brian Adam MSP has stated that the stadium would be an important and well used facility in the North East. However, he raises a concern that there would be insufficient on-site car parking and thus an over reliance on public transport.

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Planning Policy and Guidance

I will now set out briefly the planning policies and national planning guidance that are relevant to the assessment of the proposal.

The second National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF2) is a material consideration in determining planning applications. It recognises that Aberdeen has a key role as a driver of economic activity and says that the primary aim for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire is to grow and diversify the economy, making sure the region has enough people, homes, jobs and facilities to maintain and improve its quality of life. Scottish Planning Policy, which is the statement of Government policy on land use planning is also relevant material consideration.

The statutory development plan comprises the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and the Aberdeen Local Plan.

The structure plan sets out the following key objectives:

- to provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment in a range of areas that are both appropriate for and attractive to the needs of different industries
- to make sure new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets
- to make sure that new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and businesses to move to.
- to make sure that all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport by making these attractive choices.

The structure plan proposes a number of specific projects that will help achieve the vision for the North East. A new community stadium is one such project, being a regionally important facility which will bring economic, social and cultural benefits. Two potential sites are identified on the Key Diagram - one in the City Centre and one near to the southern edge of the City.

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Aberdeen Local Plan contains several policies that are directly relevant to the consideration of this proposal. In summary, the policies relate to the protection of the landscape character and amenity of the green belt, the protection and enhancement of the Green Space Network and recreational areas, ensuring development does not compromise the natural heritage of locally or regionally designated habitats, ensuring high standards of design, the provision of new sports and recreational facilities and various policies relating to transport and access matters.

The proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan was published for consultation on 24th September 2010, with comments on the plan being invited until 17th January 2011. The application site forms part of Opportunity Site OP77. The Proposed Plan states "*Loirston is considered suitable for a new community stadium and a site has been identified to accommodate this as part of a mixed use area. The site can also accommodate 1,500 homes and 11ha of employment land.*" There are also several policies that are relevant to the consideration of the proposal. These policies are listed in the report in the agenda papers. The Proposed Plan is a material consideration. In accordance with Circular 1/2009 "Development Planning", the Proposed Plan should represent the Council's settled view as to what should be the final adopted content of the plan.

Main Considerations

I will now outline the main planning considerations. Planning legislation requires that in determining a planning application the determination should be made in accordance with the development plan unless there are other material considerations that indicate otherwise. The proposal constitutes a 'major development' and represents a significant departure from the development plan. The application requires to be assessed against the policies and guidance mentioned previously and any other relevant material considerations, including the issues raised in the written representations and by those appearing at the hearing today. The completion of the assessment will determine whether or not there are sound reasons for approving the application contrary to the development plan.

Important issues to be taken into account include –

- How the proposal responds to the local plan policies
- The impact on the green belt and on the landscape character and amenity of the area,
- The siting, scale and design of the development,
- The visual impact,

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- The environmental impacts of the development on the habitat and ecology of the site and surrounding area
- The impact on the amenity of residents in the surrounding areas,
- The access and parking arrangements,
- The traffic impacts of the development, and
- The economic, social and cultural benefits of a new major sports facility in Aberdeen

Under new legislation introduced in August 2009 as part of the Scottish Government's modernisation of the planning system, an application subject to a pre-determination hearing requires to be determined by the Full Council. Accordingly, following the hearing the application will be assessed in terms of planning policy, the details of the proposal and the economic, environmental, amenity and traffic impacts. This will be reflected in a subsequent report which will be prepared for consideration by the Council in due course.

I will leave you with an image of how the proposed stadium would appear when viewed from Wellington Road across Loirston Loch.

Mr. Prentice and Dr. Bochel responded to questions from Members and the following information was noted:

- (1) that the Environmental Statement covered the main environmental impacts and contained extensive mitigation measures. Scottish National Heritage was consulted on the environmental impacts and was satisfied with the mitigation measures, raising no objection to the environmental impacts of the proposal.
- (2) that the Structure Plan supports a range of proposals to help achieve the vision for the North-East, including a new community stadium, with two locations currently being investigated; one of which being to the south of the city and in the vicinity of Loirston Loch;
- (3) that the proposed Local Development Plan is the Council's settled view on the content of the new Local Development Plan and a material consideration, with any weight attached to this considered on a case by case basis according to each proposal; and
- (4) in relation to the effects on wildlife, while the RSPB was not a statutory consultee, any individual or body could make comments on the proposal and no comments had been received from the RSPB.

Andrew Smith, Transport Engineer Manager, Aberdeen City Council was next to address the Sub Committee and he made the following statement regarding transportation and accessibility issues:-

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Location

The site lies on the southern periphery of the city, immediately to the north of Loirston Loch and is bounded to the east by the A956 Wellington Road and to the west by Redmoss Road.

Development Proposal

The planning application is for the construction of a 21000 capacity football stadium and a modest element of ancillary office development of 3682 m².

Whilst the emphasise of the proposed development is with regard to the use of the stadium for football and major events the planning application does include for a small element of general office development which will attract daily trips to the site. However this ancillary use is considered to be modest in scale and would not be seen to have a negative impact on the local network. Issues related to sustainable travel and accessibility by all modes to the office element is to a large extent supported by the stadium use and is discussed later.

Two principle points of access to the development site are proposed to be taken from the A956 Wellington Road. A new signalised junction is proposed some 650m south of the roundabout junction of the A956 with Souterhead Road and Langdykes Road and a second point of access is to be taken from an extension of the existing industrial access road of Wellington Circle, giving direct access to the A956 via its roundabout junction with Souterhead Road.

An internal road network linking the access junctions and serving the car parking is proposed and will be managed by the applicant on match days and will be subject to internal traffic management measures. The link road will support the necessary public transport uses with bus stops and lay-bys incorporated within the layout to meet the significant match day demands.

Pedestrian and cycle access is to be provided via a network of footway links with pedestrian / cycle priority integrated within the design layout.

An existing Core path / right of way traverses the development site from the proposed junction with the A956 to Redmoss Road providing links to Kincorth. The right of way is

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to be improved and maintained as a shared footway / cycle way and would address concerns raised with regard to the maintenance of the right of way.

Parking for 1400 cars is to be provided within the site and is supplemented by adequate parking for the disabled and cycle parking. An area of parking to the east of the site will be given over to coach parking for Old Firm matches and whilst reducing car parking to approximately 1200 spaces will accommodate some 80 coaches. A parking area for services and broadcasting units will also be accommodated within the site.

The development master plan for the wider Loirston area indicates that access for future housing development is to be taken through the site of the proposed stadium and a concern was raised by officers with regard to the future access provision for the proposed Loirston master plan area as it had not been incorporated within the stadium proposals. Following discussion with the applicant a revised internal road layout has been submitted that will accommodate the provision of an adopted road at a future date, providing access to the master plan area.

The proposed access arrangements from Wellington Circle will encroach and be in conflict with the approved application for the Calder Park site. Whilst it is appreciated that a working relationship exists between the applicant and Cove Rangers FC a suitable access arrangement that meets the needs of both parties will require to be submitted and agreed and form part of the application submission. It is understood that access arrangements are currently the subject of discussion between the football clubs.

Transportation Assessment

A Transportation Assessment (TA) has been submitted in support of the planning application and has considered the delivery of transport by all modes and included a detailed traffic analysis of both the local and wider network.

The application for a new stadium at Loirston presents significant challenges for the delivery of transportation by all modes. In particular, the delivery of a sustainable transport solution that supports the use whilst minimising the traffic impact on the road network and the impact on the immediate residential areas in terms of road safety, amenity and environment.

The TA has considered the impact of stadium to be for a maximum attendance of 21000 and whilst this maybe realised for major matches and events ie Old Firm / European matches , concerts, the anticipated attendance for general SPL matches is

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estimated is to be in the order of 14000 fans. The assessment is therefore considered to be robust and to provide for a worst case scenario.

The parking provision for the stadium has a major influence on the travel modes to the site and the way in which transport and accessibility requires to be delivered and supported. In line with both local and national parking standards a maximum of 1400 on site car parking spaces is to be provided for events at the stadium and will constrain the level of traffic generated on match days, provided it is supported by external parking controls on the local road network. On site parking will be pre booked for all matches or events and only those with allocated spaces will be given access to the car parks and this will, to a significant degree, influence car trips to the site. The car parking strategy is to include incentives for higher occupancy vehicles with parking costs reduced in line with occupancy and further incentives such as Car Share and Car Club are to be promoted. The details of the car park management would be related to a Green Transport Plan and be subject to condition or legal agreement should the application be approved.

In preparing the TA substantial data relating to the existing supporters fan base was analysed and used in the assessment and included the distribution and travel characteristics of the supporters. This detailed information formed the basis of the TA with emphasis placed on the public transport access strategy and detailed traffic modelling of the road network.

In the assessment and consideration of the accessibility and transport delivery needs for the stadium I would firstly discuss access by walking and cycling.

Walking and Cycling

Pedestrian access to the site from Wellington Road and the wider residential and industrial areas has been considered assuming a maximum walk threshold of 30 minutes.

The pedestrian infrastructure on the main corridor of the A956 Wellington Road is proposed to be improved with the provision of a combined footway / cycle way on the west side, from the proposed new junction on the A956 to the roundabout junction of Souterhead Road / Langdykes Road. The capacity of the footway links on the A956 has been assessed and been shown to cater for the volume of supporters that are anticipated to attend matches. It was requested by officers that the applicant investigate the possible widening of the eastern footway of the A956 from a nominally two metre wide shared pedestrian / cycle way to a three metre wide facility. On investigation it was

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acknowledged that the widening of the foot/cycle way would require land outwith the control of the applicant and has not been pursued as part of the application.

Concern has been raised by the Cycle Forum with regard to the shared use of the existing footway by cyclists and the difficulties of pedestrian /cycle conflicts. Whilst this concern has been noted it is recognised that there would be very limited occasions when conflicts may occur and that the applicant is not in a position to address this concern by way of the widening of the foot/cycle way. Given the low level of cycle movements and the frequency and duration of high pedestrian activity it is felt that the conflicting movements can be managed through due care and attention of the users with nominal delay to cyclists.

Signal controlled pedestrian / cycle crossing facilities are proposed to be incorporated within the new access junction and would be further supplemented by signal controlled crossings on the A956 immediately to the south of Langdykes Road and on Langdykes Road and Souterhead Road approaches to the A956 roundabout. The provision of the pedestrian/cycle facilities would be seen to provide safe and adequate access to the stadium by these modes from the main corridor of the A956.

Pedestrian safety with respect to vehicular / pedestrian conflict on the A956 has been raised by Grampian Police and the installation of pedestrian barriers over the section of the A956 from the proposed junction to the Souterhead Road / Langdykes Road roundabout has been requested. The applicant has indicated a willingness to install pedestrian barriers in recognition of the concern and in the interest of road safety.

Wellington Circle will also serve as a principle point of pedestrian access and the existing pedestrian infrastructure on this link is considered adequate to accommodate the likely pedestrian movements during match days.

A nominal percentage of pedestrian movements from the Kincorth area are likely to be generated and does raise a road safety concern, particularly for pedestrian movements along Redmoss Road. The applicant has indicated a willingness to contribute towards the Core Path network and the upgrade of paths to the south of Redmoss Road connecting the site to the residential area.

However I have a concern that pedestrian movements on Redmoss Road will potentially be in conflict with vehicular traffic on match days and that this could be addressed by the introduction of traffic management measures that would compliment and address existing traffic problems consistently raised by the community council. The applicant has indicated a willingness to support the introduction of traffic restrictions

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that would limit the use of Redmoss Road by through traffic and improve the local environment and safety.

The existing pedestrian infrastructure throughout the wider surrounding area is considered to be acceptable and would accommodate the proposed development.

Public Transport - Access Strategy

Access to the stadium by public transport on match days is anticipated to serve some 50% of all supporters and is vital to the delivery of a successful transportation strategy. A draft Bus Management plan was submitted within the TA and identified 20 routes city wide that would require dedicated match day services to meet supporter demands and was supplemented by frequent city centre shuttle services.

A revised Bus Management plan has been submitted that reduces the number of services that will be applied city wide and has indicated five principle pick up points – three centrally within the city centre with a further two at the park and ride sites of Kingswells and Bridge of Don. There is a concern that the revised bus management proposal will not meet the service demands appropriately and not be deliverable in its present form. Further discussions will be held with the applicant on this matter to resolve service provision and would ultimately be subject to condition and final approval of the planning authority should the application be approved at some future date.

For normal match attendances some 80 buses will be required with this increasing to a maximum of 120 for Old Firm matches. First Aberdeen Ltd has confirmed that they will take the role of the bus co-ordinator and will provide the necessary buses and drivers to fulfil the requirements of the Bus Management plan.

The internal road network at the stadium will operate on a one way system to allow efficient access and egress for buses prior to matches with designated bus stances provided and will be utilised for the storage of buses during matches. However a significant number of buses will be held externally and called up as required. It is anticipated it will take approximately 60 minutes to board and transport all of the supporters from site.

The bus management plan will be further supported by the existing services that operate within the Cove and Altens area and supporters coaches and will contribute to the delivery of the transport strategy of the stadium.

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With respect to the day to day uses of the proposed office development a shuttle bus, funded by the applicant, is to operate at peak periods between the local bus services and the site until a frequent service on the A956 is available.

The principle of public transport provision is acceptable, however, the Bus Management Plan requires to be agreed in further detail before the matter can be concluded. As noted earlier this matter would be subject to condition or legal agreement should the application be approved.

Parking Controls

The level of traffic that will be generated by the proposed stadium is directly related to parking controls both internal and external to the site. Whilst parking within the site can be controlled and regulated by the applicant the external public road network can only be managed by the Local Roads Authority.

The delivery of the proposed transport strategy for the stadium will require a match day controlled parking zone to be implemented over an area of the surrounding local road network approximating to a walk distance of some 30 minutes. This area would extend too and include all of the Cove / Altens and a southern portion of the Kincorth residential areas.

The implementation of the CPZ is critical, not only for the delivery of a sustainable transport solution, but also to ensure that traffic generation levels are maintained at a level that would not have a largely detrimental impact on the level of network congestion and delay that would otherwise occur.

Local issues must also be considered and from experience it is accepted that unrestricted roads will be utilised for parking by supporters and that significant local problems of obstruction, amenity and environment will occur were the application to proceed without a CPZ being in place.

The applicant has indicated agreement to fund the implementation, maintenance and enforcement of the CPZ which would be subject to the progression and approval of a Traffic Regulation Order out with the planning process. The legal procedure for the CPZ would take some 12-15 months to conclude. Should the application be approved the implementation of a CPZ should be subject to a condition or included within a legal agreement.

Traffic Impact Assessment

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A detailed traffic impact assessment has been carried out for the road network and considered the impact on the immediate and wider road network. The transportation consultant has utilised the council's "Access from the South" Paramics model in the assessment of the extended network and analysed the local network performance of the A956 between the proposed junction and the roundabout junction of Langdykes Road and Souterhead Road using a traditional modelling application.

The traffic analysis that has been carried out has examined an evening match or event with a capacity of 21000 that would start at 7pm. Existing network flows for a Saturday and evening event were compared and indicated the critical period to be that of the evening peak.

The Paramics modelling results have clearly indicated that some additional delays to journey times will occur on the A90 at the Bridge of Dee (southbound) and on Wellington Road (southbound) with additional delays in the order of 10 minutes and 45 seconds respectively. The additional delay on the A90 southbound approach to the Bridge of Dee indicated by the recent traffic modelling is considered to be excessive. However, in practical terms this level of additional delay is unlikely to be realised and is influenced by the lack of route choice due to its location at the perimeter of the model. Inversely some minor journey time improvements can be seen on opposing movements and will reflect junction turning proportions.

Whilst additional network delays are noted the modelling of both the wider and local network has indicated that queuing and congestion levels can be managed through the network.

The match / event scenario that has been subject to modelling and analysis would be considered to be robust and would have a maximum frequency of some 4 events per year. It is of note that the anticipated capacity of a standard SPL match would be 14000, 30% below the modelled scenario and will occur on average, some 20 matches per year. In this context it can reasonably be concluded that the traffic impact of a standard SPL match will be of a reduced scale with the additional journey time delays reduced accordingly.

A comparison of network flows between a Saturday and evening event has indicated that in general evening flows are significantly higher with the exception of the Bridge of Dee where flows are of a similar scale. In this context it can be assumed that the delay for Saturday events will be considerably less and that network capacity would more easily cater for the weekend matches that represent the majority of matches or events.

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For evening matches there remains a concern with respect to the additional journey time delay that has been indicated through the modelling process. The scenario considered is that for a 7pm kick off and in practical terms is unlikely to be realised as evening matches are in general scheduled for 8pm.

The later time would significantly reduce the traffic impact on the network and should the application be approved a condition or legal agreement should be attached such that evening matches do not commence prior to 7.45 pm but earlier events may be considered subject to an application and the consent of the planning authority.

The traffic modelling has considered the impact of the proposed stadium in isolation and has not taken into consideration the existing match day traffic that currently operates on the network, particularly the southern corridors of the A90 and A956 and traffic reductions within the city centre.

Whilst some technical matters relating to the traffic modelling assessment remain to be concluded it is acknowledged that the impact of the stadium can be accommodated and managed on the existing network.

Match Day / Event – Network Traffic management

Concern has been raised by both Grampian Police and Roads officers with regard to the management of the network on match days and in particular the ability to respond effectively to changing road conditions. The proposed junction on the A956 will be incorporated within the council's Urban Traffic Signal Control (UTC) system that will monitor and manage network changes. However the UTC system has difficulty in responding to immediate and dramatic flow changes that can occur on match days and particularly at the end of a match or event. Following discussions with the applicant it has been agreed that strategically placed CCTV cameras linked to the UTC operations room will be used by roads officers to monitor and prioritise movements to efficiently manage traffic. The applicant would be expected to fund the necessary infrastructure provision and meet any staff cost required to manage events. A legal agreement would be necessary to secure this provision and commitment.

This concludes the observations of the Roads section.

Mr. Smith responded to questions from Members and the following information was noted:

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- (1) that improvements to the A956 would enhance and improve the junction and the impact of the AWPR had not been included in traffic modelling but its implementation would provide further improvements;
- (2) that a permit system was suggested for the operation of a Controlled Parking Zone to restrict fans parking in Cove/Altens/Kincorth;
- (3) that bus operators would provide direct buses to the stadium as a supplement to the current provision from the city centre, with the operators indicating they had significant reserved capacity for the time when matches would take place;
- (4) options were being considered to address concerns regarding pedestrian safety and access in Redmoss Road including agreement with AFC to provide pedestrian barriers;
- (5) further discussion was required between First Bus and the applicant in respect of a public transport strategy – planning approval would be subject to the agreement of the Council on how the strategy would be implemented and managed;
- (6) the current proposal was based on the AWPR not being in place;
- (7) a legal agreement would be put into place to ensure the cost of any controlled parking zone for the area surrounding the proposed site would be met by the applicant, to include all on-going costs;
- (8) further discussion was needed between the Police, the bus operators and the applicant regarding the bus strategy and proposed pick-up and drop-off points;
- (9) the number of car parking spaces provided on site (1400) and the view that an integrated car parking strategy was required;
- (10) that taxi provision and drop off sites had been incorporated into traffic modelling;
- (11) in respect of pedestrian access for local people to the stadium, Mr. Smith suggested a pedestrian route from Kincorth, which would be included in the core path network;
- (12) in relation to the controlled parking zone, this would contain flexibility for when matches changed days, with restrictions also applying to major events;
- (13) that implications for the residents of Torry had been considered in traffic modelling;
- (14) that the signalised junction on the A956 would be demand led;
- (15) that CCTV was being rolled out to allow officers to intervene and control traffic as needed, with any requirement for further CCTV provision in respect of the proposal to be paid for by the applicant and secured through a legal agreement; and

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(16) that parking out with the site, making use of business car parks in the Altens area was a possibility, but ultimately a decision for businesses to take.

Andy Gilchrist, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Aberdeen City Council made the following comments in respect of the Environmental Statement produced by AECOM lodged in respect of the application:-

The concerns I have in relation to environmental impact are in regard to:

- (1) air quality
- (2) noise
- (3) lighting
- (4) contaminated land

These matters are assessed within the Environmental Statement and I can make the following comment as to the extent that they address these issues –

Air Quality

(1) Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed development is currently good and there would be no risk of exceedance of national air quality objectives at this location. Additionally there is a low number of sensitive receptors close to the proposed development.

(2) Traffic from buses, coaches and private cars attending football matches and other events has the potential to impact on residential properties on the commuter routes to and from the stadium e.g. Wellington Road, A90 and West Tullos Road. The air quality modelling predicted increases along these routes. These levels are classed to have negligible significance on air quality.

(3) It should be noted there will obviously be an increase in traffic flow within the existing Wellington Road AQMA during event days. Additionally the modelling predicted existing PM10 levels to exceed the annual mean objective at receptors on Wellington Road, north of the Harenness roundabout and parts of the A90. Although the increase in air quality is not significant, there is still an impact on areas of existing poor air quality.

(4) The assessment did not consider the potential for additional traffic generated at concerts or other events at the proposed development. However, the modelling was based on an average of 1 football match per week as a worst case scenario. It would

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be reasonable to consider that the impact of concerts would not cause additional deterioration in air quality from the model output results.

(5) Generation of dust during the construction phase is adequately assessed and I am satisfied that mitigation measures can be employed to control this.

Noise and vibration

The ES states that it will consider the potential impact from the following sources –

- road traffic
- car parking
- stadium events , specifically sport and music concerts
- sports training facilities
- fixed plant
- catering facilities
- stadium construction

I consider that the potential for noise and vibration disturbance has been adequately addressed in the assessment. Having regard to the intermittent nature of the facility for its primary purpose and to the low density of the local population, I am of the opinion that the potential for disturbance is not significant.

Lighting

The ES mentions potential impact on wildlife from artificial lighting associated with the proposal, but there is no assessment in relation to disturbance of local residents. The Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008 now allows impact from artificial lighting to be considered as a statutory nuisance. I am of the opinion that by careful design this should not be a significant concern.

Contaminated Land

Preliminary ground investigations on behalf of the applicant revealed no significant contamination. However it would be prudent for controls to be put in place to ensure monitoring and disposal of material showing significant contamination during the construction phase.

In summary, I am assured by the ES that there will no significant impacts resulting from these issues.

Mr. Gilchrist responded to questions, wherein it was noted that lighting from the stadium would have an impact on local wildlife and migratory birds. In addition, Mr. Prentice advised that Scottish National Heritage had commented on the impact on bats and were satisfied that the design of the lighting would minimise that impact. With regard to

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concerns on the noise impact from concerts, Mr. Gilchrist stated that the stadium would be built to current standards and mitigation measures would be taken into consideration, with further controls in place for bigger events.

Aberdeen Football Club, as applicants, were represented at the predetermination hearing by (a) **Stewart Milne, Chairman, Aberdeen Football Club**, (b) **Michael Halliday, Associate Director, CB Richard Ellis**, and (c) **Gareth Yule, Partner, The Miller Partnership**.

Mr. Milne commenced the applicants' address to the Sub-Committee in the following terms:-

Introduction

As is the case in any project of this magnitude, Aberdeen Football Club has had substantial challenges to address prior to reaching this stage in terms of planning issues, technical issues and design issues. It would be fair to say that there can be few projects that have ever been undertaken to such an acute level of detail and indeed such public scrutiny as this one.

So why does AFC need a new stadium? Firstly our current home is long past its sell by date and is a major burden in terms of ongoing maintenance and running costs. It is quite simply not fit for its purpose in the 21st century. It is not something that gives the right image for the Club or indeed the City. Given that redevelopment of Pittodrie is simply NOT an option, as Scotland's 3rd largest City we need a stadium that demonstrates that the Club and the City have real ambition - a modern outdoor stadium capable of attracting and staging major national and international events, and complementing existing indoor facilities. Something the North East can be justifiably proud of. It will be the largest new build stadium this country has seen built in over a century, and as such, by definition, will become a major visitor attraction for the area. It will be a platform to showcase more than 100 years of heritage and tradition and the Club's vital links with the City. Included in the design are a Club Museum, classrooms for educational opportunities for the region's youngsters, and other community facilities can be accommodated. But, as I said, there were many challenges to overcome, over a lengthy period, to arrive at where we are today.

I would now like to hand over to my colleagues Michael Halliday and Gareth Yule to explain in greater detail how these challenges were met.

(Michael Halliday)

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There are many challenges progressing a planning application as complex and sensitive as this through the planning system. Important issues to consider include choosing the location, assessing the environmental impact, addressing transport issues and taking account of the development plan.

The Structure Plan supports Loirston as a potential location for a new stadium. The full business case prepared jointly by Aberdeen Football Club and the Council identified Loirston as the most deliverable location.

The siting of the stadium has been influenced by discussions with Architecture and Design Scotland and other stakeholders. This was a comprehensive process which resulted in a development framework being prepared which fed into the proposed Local Development Plan.

There has been comprehensive public consultation and extensive pre-application discussions with the council, community and statutory consultees.

No objections have been received from any statutory consultees, excluding Nigg and Cove and Altens Community Councils.

The approach to mitigating any potential environmental impacts included the preparation of an Environmental Statement and an Environmental Management Plan. Measures adopted:

detailed landscape plans to address visual impacts particularly of the car and coach parking areas

retention of existing vegetation to ensure development is integrated into its surroundings

avoidance of sensitive ecological features

minimising the site footprint and to reduce the disturbance of land, flora and fauna

development of footpaths to increase accessibility to the site and aid recreational activities such as fishing and bird watching

use of a SUDS.

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We have worked with the Council to develop a transport strategy but there are still some details to work through.

Parking will be provided at maximum allowable standard - 1400 spaces for 21,000 capacity. Maximum standards contribute to national policy to reduce car use

There will be over twice the number of parking spaces than currently provided at Pittodrie (600).

There will be an extensive controlled parking zone based on residents permits throughout the local residential areas to protect residential amenity.

The current practice is largely to drive to the City then walk to Pittodrie. No significant change is anticipated in journey to the City, however the 'walk' element is replaced by shuttle bus to Loirston due to increased distance involved

First will co-ordinate the bus service, drawing on local providers. They have confirmed the numbers required can be delivered. Continuing consultation with AFC, First, ACC, Grampian Police to refine operational aspects of shuttle service - trial runs will be carried out during pre-season games and service will be monitored when operational

Traffic modelling shows that a weekday evening match kicking off at 7pm would induce around 10 minutes additional delay to the existing southbound traffic at Bridge of Dee. However, all weekday matches will be restricted to 7:45 so football traffic falls outwith the peak period and can be accommodated within the local road network.

The proposal is a departure from the Development Plan. This has to be balanced against the benefits that this development will bring to the area and the region. Not only will it be an iconic gateway development signalling the entrance to Aberdeen, it will also bring economic and social benefits. The local development plan is a significant material consideration. It states that Loirston is suitable for a new stadium as part of a larger mixed use development.

The need for Aberdeen Football Club to act now and progress plans for a new stadium has already been explained and is the reason that we are here today. The approved Structure Plan has set the scene by identifying Loirston as a potential location for a new stadium and for the significant growth planned for the south of the city, including the potential removal of land from the green belt. The proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan has moved this forward by identifying Loirston not only for a new

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stadium but also a large mixed use development in order to meet key Structure Plan aspirations and targets.

(Gareth Yule)

I would now like to talk about the design of the site and the building.

We have prepared a 3D animation of the Arena and still images which will be shown on the screen behind me.

Site

The site is located on the southern edge of the city and traffic entering the city from the south along Wellington Road will therefore pass close by.

It is bounded by industrial use to the north and east, (including several large buildings) and by the A956, Wellington Road to the east. Loirston Loch lies immediately south; land to the north and west of the site is currently farmland. Local communities include Cove to the east and Kincorth & Nigg to the north and west. The A90 Stonehaven Road lies to the west.

In line with the principles agreed in discussion with Architecture + Design Scotland and other stake holders, the Arena has been positioned on the site so that it is clearly visible from Wellington Road, across Loirston Loch.

As you approach along Wellington Road from the south, the Arena will be revealed from behind the screen of existing trees and will become a focal point in the distance which will draw the eye towards it.

This will ensure that it will form a Landmark Gateway, by marking the sense of arrival into Aberdeen from the south.

This location also means that the stadium is set away from the Loch, reducing the potential impact and so it has given the Arena greater prominence, maximising the opportunity to make it visible from Wellington Road and celebrating its design.

The building is orientated to exploit the views across the Loch; both to the building and from the building, while also addressing a potential future community development across a public plaza.

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The principal access to the Arena will be off Wellington Road to the east and there will be a secondary access from Wellington Circle to the north.

While the main entrance to the Arena building is at the south west corner; there are various spectator entrances and exits distributed around the perimeter of the building for match days, so that spectators are able to arrive and leave in comfort and safety.

Away support will be segregated and will be accommodated in the east end stand.

There is no car parking for away fans, only coach parking, home fan car parking will be subject to a careful management procedure developed by the Football Club.

Transport

Transport links to and from the site are critical as we have heard and the site has been laid out in line with the Transport Strategy that has been developed.

Environment / Ecology

We have carried out a detailed Environmental Assessment and the findings have been published in an Environmental Statement which has been submitted as part of our Planning Application.

We have used this work to ensure that our design has been integrated into the existing landscape setting; we have recognised existing features and retained them where possible.

We have also carefully considered the ecological value of the site and where significant impact is anticipated, we have proposed mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset it.

Landscape

Landscape design has been integrated into an overall landscape framework, which recognises the existing Core Path network, including the retention of the Public Right of Way, the Green Space network and the Loch, while retaining most of the existing planting where possible to do so.

Land art mounding has been included in the design and is used to screen car parking from the important views across the Loch from Wellington Road.

A Memorial Garden is proposed to the north of the Arena, using the existing Merkland Road end façade, relocated from Pittodrie.

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Summary

In summary then, careful consideration has therefore been given to access, siting, transport, relationship to future development, the core path network, green space network, landscaping around the loch and the principles of space, place and movement.

Stadium Design

Unique and inspirational!

The design of the Arena building itself is a fantastic opportunity to create something special for Aberdeen FC, the supporters, the City of Aberdeen and the Region.

We want to create a landmark building which is unique and inspirational.

We have used simple, bold shapes and colour to make a strong and bold statement and create a unique and inspirational design which will be instantly recognisable.

We want this design to become synonymous with the City of Aberdeen and with Aberdeen Football Club.

Our proposal of a continuous bowl and roof creates a pure shape. We have deliberately broken the continuity of the bowl visually in the South West corner where the main entrance to the Arena is located along with the Club Offices, Shop and Museum;

this will achieve two goals –

It will emphasise the principal entrance to the Arena making it clear to visitors

It will address a public square, which will in turn will assist with integrating the Arena with the potential future community

The roof and upper walls of the Arena will be constructed from polycarbonate (which is a glass like material) and so will be transparent, giving the impression that the roof floats.

This will allow daylight to penetrate to the pitch (helping the grass to grow) and at night this will be lit so that it glows red, making it visible from a distance.

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We propose a simple palette of materials, with colour used sparingly to highlight certain aspects of the building, including three main entrance points.

The principal entrance facing the public square sees a concentration in the quality of materials, using granite and glazed curtain walling and so celebrating monumentality.

The design will meet current standards and guidelines such as UEFA, The Green Guide (The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds) and of course, Scottish Building Standards.

As such it will deliver a significant improvement in facilities provided for fans.

For example –

The arena will be all seated and all seats will be covered.

The arena roof will be cantilevered so there will be no columns to obstructed sightlines.

Modern day standards mean that the levels of safety and comfort will be improved,

This will mean better legroom,

Quicker access and egress to and from your seat,

Safer and quicker escape in an emergency,

The quality and quantity of catering outlets will be better,

The quality and quantity of toilets will be better,

There will be many more and better quality toilets provided for ladies,

And in particular for wheelchair users, in line with current standards, the Arena will be fully accessible for disabled supporters with designated wheelchair platforms distributed around the Arena, designed to ensure the best views, unobstructed by fans in front standing up (“the super riser”).

Facilities such as the bars and hospitality suites will also allow the Arena to function out-with match days, providing opportunities for hosting events like Weddings and dinners.

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(Stewart Milne)

Sum up

Firstly, I must reiterate that I am here today as Chairman of AFC and not as a developer or house-builder, although faced with the understandable frustration of our fans at times, the perceived role of the big bad developer often might be more preferable! My passion for this Club is on a par with my passion in seeing this City and region achieve its real potential.

Our city region has ambitious plans for growth with a real success story in terms of the joined-up approach to developing the structure and local development plans. Also in terms of economic development and delivering the wider infrastructure and transport links the region needs. Through ACSEF we have a clear vision and ambitious plans but now we need to start delivering. The reality is there's not a great deal of projects at the tangible "spade in the ground" delivery phase. An inspirational stadium, with community facilities for the benefit of everyone in the city and region could be one of the first real outcomes of the city's ambition. It *can* be delivered, and in a way that has minimal cost and risk implications for the Council. In the face of spending cuts at national and regional level, potential closures of public facilities and all round general negativity, the region and the community really needs this kind of boost.

It is important to remember that this Stadium is much more than simply a new home for AFC. It can be a sign of Aberdeen's intent for the future in terms of a 21st century attraction at the gateway to the City. It is one that could help attract thousands of visitors to the area and will be the platform to host major national and international events, complementing existing facilities such as the AECC. Equally it offers greatly enhanced community facilities for the region.

The economic impact of a successful Football Club is substantial. A survey in 2006 demonstrated that the club contributes in the region of £8m to the local economy per annum and directly supports around 350 full time equivalent jobs. The new stadium would substantially increase this.

There is a natural pull towards Pittodrie among some fans. This is purely emotive which we can understand but it is not based on facts. The facts are we did consider the re-development of Pittodrie as an option. That was ruled out completely many years ago. We are bound on all sides so we start with a very restricted footprint. All new stadiums must be designed under the Green Code Guide. To meet these standards, we would end up with a capacity of around 12,000 with the cost to build close to the

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cost of a new stadium at Loirston. The build process over three or four years would cause major disruption to all the team and for television. To end up with a costly, compromised stadium with a capacity of around 12,000 and with limited corporate facilities would be totally wrong. In addition, the Club simply would not be viable with that set up.

Also how would we fund the redevelopment of Pittodrie? It would be virtually impossible. One of the major benefits of relocating is that we realise the development value out of Pittodrie. That value, the best part of £20m will simply be lost if we stay there, whereby investing it in a new stadium, not only do we get brand new, fantastic facilities for our fans and corporate support, but the whole move allows us to put the Club on sound financial footing for the long term and re-gain the feel good factor a strong football team brings.

If we look for a parallel here, the new Sports Village is a tremendous success, way beyond expectation. Through that, the city has the potential opportunity to participate in the Commonwealth Games. The City and Aberdeen University can take great credit for their vision and tenacity against the odds to fund and deliver the project. With the new stadium combined with the Calder Park Sports Centre we can put Aberdeen on the sporting map - as a city/region with one the best sporting facilities in the UK and a city/region with one the best soccer centres in Europe.

If this bid fails and we can't move, we face severe consequences for AFC. The negative impact to the region will be very substantial, and not only does the Club face a very bleak future, we also loose the opportunity to develop football in the region. The people of the region lose an opportunity to have a much needed world class community facility that not only plays a huge part in health and education, but also in attracting and anchoring people to the region.

The approved structure plan supports Loirston as being the right location for a new stadium as does the emerging Local Plan. A comprehensive approach to the development in respect of all the planning and technical issues has been adopted. There is a robust business case and there has been comprehensive consultation with less than 50 objections compared to over 4,000 for Bellfield.

In conclusion, this is a unique opportunity to demonstrate that the City has real ambition and is prepared to help deliver the world class facilities in spite of the harsh economic environment around us.

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This is much more than about securing the future of our football club. It's also about giving this city and region world-class facilities which can be shared by the whole community. As well as additional sports facilities, it's about promoting sport and physical activity in the region, providing a major Scottish attraction and enhancing civic pride. It is about delivering something special for the people of Aberdeen and the region, something the people of this region richly deserve.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to present our case.

The applicants responded to Members' questions and information was noted on the following:-

- (1) that a retractable roof was considered but rejected on a financial basis;
- (2) that redevelopment of Pittodrie was not an option, with the need to realise the asset at Pittodrie to fund the new stadium;
- (3) that Pittodrie is beyond its 'sell by date', with high maintenance costs and is no longer fit for purpose. Pittodrie could only accommodate a new stadium with a capacity of 12,000 and it would take 3-4 years to develop;
- (4) the issues concerning the development of a stadium at the Kings Links site;
- (5) mitigation proposed in the Environmental Statement to deal with the sensitive ecological site, including the wetland habitat;
- (6) that in terms of the design of the stadium, it was regarded as inspirational and to act as a landmark gateway to the city. The design of the stadium, use of curtain walling and granite; the unit cost per seat in the main stand would be around £3,500, compared to, for example, the Emirates Stadium in London which was in the region of £4,500 per seat. Thus, the proposed stadium would not be a cheap development.
- (7) that the stadium's orientation was chosen to accommodate and integrate with potential future developments and to create the best "footballing view";
- (8) in relation to transportation issues, to note that further detail on the shuttle bus service and pricing was still to be considered in consultation with supporters;
- (9) the definition of a corporate fan and information provided that the number of corporate members of AFC was higher than for other clubs in Scotland; and the view that AFC provides an opportunity to the business community to entertain clients and encourages business to the City;
- (10) with regard to likely parking charges, to note the requirement for a minimum occupancy rate for cars and the need to pre-book places;
- (11) an assurance from the applicant that if approved, the proposal would be completed and the project would not be abandoned due to technical or financial difficulties;

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- (12) the increase in corporate facilities would generate additional employment, in addition to wider use of the stadium's community facilities, for which 35,000 square feet have been set aside;
- (13) with reference to Police concerns regarding clashes with match schedules, note that there are never two SPL and Highland league games scheduled on the same day in Aberdeen;
- (14) in respect of transport issues, the option of linking transportation charges into the season ticket was being considered;
- (15) to note how parking spaces at the Pittodrie site were currently allocated; and the involvement of Architectural + Design Scotland and the Aberdeen City and Shire Design Review Panel in the design of the stadium;
- (16) the bar in the stadium would have a capacity for up to 1,000 people and would be for home supporters only; and
- (17) supporters using the bar prior to and after matches would spread the demand for buses from and back to the city centre over a longer period, thus allowing each bus to make more than one journey. The position of a bar would also encourage supporters to use the buses.

Next to address the Sub Committee was **Grampian Police**, represented by **Chief Inspector Keith Henderson** who advised that Grampian Police had submitted two letters containing observations and that his comments today would be confined to the content of those letters. He stated that Grampian Police were generally supportive of the proposal and from a policing point of view, the main areas of interest were (1) the safety of all those making their way to and from the proposed stadium; (2) the safety of those persons within the proposed stadium; (3) the management of traffic in the vicinity of the proposed stadium and in the surrounding area; and (4) the minimising of disruption and inconvenience to those who live and work in the vicinity of the stadium. There were concerns regarding the Bus Strategy and observations regarding proposed pick-up points. The view of the police being that the number of parking spaces appeared to be a low allocation and therefore the parking spaces on-site should be increased. He expressed concern regarding a gap in the transport assessment wherein there was a lack of emphasis on rail travel and concluded by indicating that the affects of other future developments in the area were unknown and that the police have already expressed concerns regarding the possibility of Cove Rangers and Aberdeen football matches taking place on the same day, whereby segregation and safety were a further consideration.

Chief Inspector Henderson was asked questions about the level of policing required at Pittodrie; whether or not there was a dedicated force for football; how policing at Loirston would compare with policing Pittodrie; whether the majority of their concerns

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related to transport and whether any consideration had been given to alternative strategies for decanting fans from, for example, Portlethen. He stated that the police focus was on concerns regarding the transportation strategy, and in general, the police welcomed the opportunity to develop plans as required and further consultation.

Following a break for lunch, the next presentation to the Sub Committee was made by **Mr Alan Strachan** on behalf of Nigg Community Council. His statement to the Sub Committee was in the following terms:-

The pre-application consultation exercise.

The pre-application consultation exercise is inadequate in a number of material respects. It is very far from being the “*comprehensive consultation exercise*” which is referred to in the “Aberdeen Community Arena - Options Appraisal and Site Selection” report (“the site selection report”) at section 3.3.

In particular, the “Feedback” form, which has been distributed to members of the public and is available to download, has been constructed in such a way that it does not properly facilitate expressions of the opinion as to whether proposed development is appropriate in this specific location. Rather, the Feedback form sets out a series of specific questions which are peripheral to the core issues with regard to this proposed development. The opportunity for individuals to submit any view which might be contrary to the interests of the developer is limited to the generality of “any further comments” at the end of the Feedback form. The Feedback form does not enable a true and accurate reflection of the public opinion to be expressed.

Further, the consultation exercise with the local community councils consisted, in our opinion, of an abbreviated and condensed exercise which sought to give the appearance that proper consultation had been undertaken, but without any real engagement in the actual issues. The forum with Nigg Community Council was abbreviated at short notice because of double booking of a similar session with the Cove Community Council. This is not an appropriate way in which to conduct community consultation.

These inadequacies are all the more worrying when one considers that this a major proposed development on green belt land, and thereby constitutes a very significant departure from existing development plan policy. For experienced advisers to consider that this is an appropriate way in which to conduct a consultation exercise in relation to such a development is a worrying state of affairs. It is a matter that we intend to bring to the attention of both the local planning authority and to Scottish Ministers. It is also relevant both to any future determination of the proposed planning application by the

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City Council and the issue of whether this application should be called in by Scottish Ministers.

In light of what we submit has been a self-evident failure to engage in the real issues with regard to this proposed development, it is our view that this proposed application will fail to have any, or any proper regard, to the relevant views of local residents and the wider population of Aberdeen.

The proposed development - contrary to the development plan.

The proposed development is contrary to existing adopted local plan 'Green Spaces - New Places' 2008 in fundamental and widespread respects. We do not propose to list every relevant policy which the development is contrary to, save to observe that it is contrary to a raft of relevant policies. For present purposes it is sufficient to observe that the site is currently designated as green belt. The significance of this designation cannot be understated. Indeed, the conclusions of the Reporter at the previous development plan inquiry made clear the importance of preserving this "*effective wedge of green belt*".

The adopted local development plan identifies the King's Links site the only location for a community arena. It is a site that "*received significant public support*". In development plan terms, there is a clear preference for the community stadium to be located at this alternative site.

Whilst it is accepted the Structure Plan identifies the Loirston site as a "potential community stadium" location, such development would conflict with other policies in the Structure Plan which are designed, for example, to ensure sustainable development and the quality of the environment. Consistent with the adopted local development plan, the Structure Plan also identifies the King's Links site for a community stadium. The Structure Plan is specifically silent as to which of the two sites is the preferred location. It is our considered view that when the alternative potential sites are considered by reference to Structure Plan Policy, the site which is clearly more in keeping with development plan policy is the King's Links site.

In summary, if the proposed application is to be properly determined in accordance with the development plan, it should be refused. There are no, or no sufficient, material considerations which militate in favour of this development so as to displace the clear infringement of policy and obvious harm that this development would cause.

There are no very special circumstances which have been identified which would support proposed development at Loirston. Indeed, the "Aberdeen Community Arena -

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Options Appraisal and Site Selection" is singularly lacking in any clear evidential basis for preferring Loirston to any other potential site.

In fact, a proper analysis of both the SIAS Transport Feasibility Study reveals that the King's Links is a better location for the stadium in transport terms. This is the case, even without taking account of certain failures in the SIAS report e.g. the overstatement of number of people within walking distance of the Loirston site (which includes large sections of Kincorth with no suitable pedestrian access across the privately owned farm land on the south side of Kincorth Hill).

In any event, as the SIAS report makes clear that when compared with the King's Links site, the Loirston site is remote; it has a significantly lower catchment in material categories; it will place additional stress on the already congested Wellington Road; it depends upon the construction of the AWPR, which is presently far from assured in light of existing and lengthy legal proceedings; and it will require significantly greater public transport investment.

Of course, there is the further point that location of the site at the King's Links is a known quantity (in that there will be little difference in transport terms between the current use of Pittodrie and that which would transpire if the nearby site King's Links site were developed). The Loirston site, on the other hand, is very much an unknown quantity, and there is no guarantee that the current transport assessment is sufficiently accurate to provide assurance that the transport implications of this proposal might not be worse than is presently predicted. There are, of course, good recent examples of development within the city where the transport consequences have proved to be far worse than were originally predicted at the time planning permission was granted.

An analysis of the Environmental Appraisal (March 2009) also demonstrates that the Loirston site is less appropriate for the proposed development than the King's Link site. In terms of existing land uses, development of Loirston will result in the permanent loss of rural green belt land. The existing uses at the King's Links can be accommodated elsewhere (at the very least it has not been demonstrated that they cannot be accommodated elsewhere). In terms of landscape and visual assessment, the importance of the Loirston green belt area has already been referred to above, and was confirmed by the Reporter at the local plan inquiry. By contrast, the King's Links site has already been designated as appropriate for stadium development. In terms of ecology and nature conservation, the balance against development lies firmly in favour of the Loirston site, for the reasons set out in para 7.6 of the Appraisal. The Loirston site is also more sensitive in terms of cultural heritage and archaeology, water quality, drainage and flooding. In terms of noise impact, there will inevitably be a greater

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impact upon the Loirston site and its surroundings when compared with the existing uses at both sites. In terms of air quality, the Appraisal concludes that the King's Links is the preferred site for development of a stadium.

In summary, upon examination of all of the separate criteria by which to judge the relative environmental acceptability of the proposed stadium development, there is not one criterion in which the Loirston site emerges as the preferred location. Indeed, in all material respects, the Appraisal demonstrates that the King's Links site would be less environmentally harmful.

In relation to other considerations, no clear case for the Loirston site has been demonstrated. In terms of land assembly, the King's Links site may be more problematic, but there is no evidence to suggest that any problems would be insuperable. Advice from leading counsel has not suggested that Common Good issues are a real obstacle. No case had been made to suggest that the existing uses at the King's Links site could not be relocated elsewhere. Even if the development of the King's Links would be more prolonged than the development of the Loirston site, there is not evidence to suggest that the differential would be significant (the Aberdeen Community Arena - Options Appraisal and Site Selection suggests that it would take an extra year to complete the King's Links site - see para 12.0). In terms of site costs, the difference between the costs of the two sites is marginal (circa 10%); it has not been demonstrated that the extra expense of the King's Links site makes it impossible to deliver. Nor has it been demonstrated that the present site at Pittodrie is on the verge of imminent collapse - it has a lifespan of at least another 5 years.

Further, whilst it is clear that the applicants propose an edge of city stadium development, it does not appear that the logical consequence of this approach has been fully analysed. If it is considered that an edge of city site is appropriate, it is difficult to see why consideration should not be given to more appropriate locations in Aberdeenshire. It appears that the developer invites fundamental conflict with existing green belt policy without exploring more suitable sites which are, in real terms, no worse in terms of their location and environmental impact.

In summary, when proper consideration is given to the available evidence contained within the appraisals and elsewhere, there are no very special circumstances which militate in favour of development in Loirston.

Finally on this issue, it is appropriate to note that a number of new stadia have been held up by the developer as examples of development which is said to be similar to the Loirston proposal. It is submitted that those analogies are wholly inappropriate. By

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way of demonstration, the Aberdeen Community Arena - Options Appraisal and Site Selection contains reference to the following stadia:

KC Stadium, Hull - built on a previous athletic track within walking of the city centre and the mainline city station.

Ricoh Aren, Coventry - built on a former gasworks.

Liberty Stadium, Swansea - built on a former copper works.

Madejski Stadium, Reading - built on a former household waste dump.

Patently, the planning history for none of these stadia provides any support for what is proposed at Loirston. On the contrary, they demonstrate the obvious:

that a green belt site is wholly inappropriate for development of this type, when other options are available.

Finally, it is not unreasonable to observe that the developer should know this, given that their professional advisers were involved of the development of at least one these other stadia which are referred to in the Appraisal document.

Prematurity.

The emerging local development plan is at an important stage and is soon to be the subject of examination. The submission of this proposed application at this stage in the emerging local plan process will run the risk of pre-empting the proper consideration of the possible location of Aberdeen community arena as part of the local development plan process (especially when the existing local plan identifies the King's Links site as the appropriate location for this development).

There have been a series of local 'drop in' sessions held around the city, including Cove, to which local residents were invited and positively encouraged by the City Council to express their views on various developer bids. Residents and representatives of Cove CC and Nigg CC participated in that process and made representations to the City Council in relation to various development bids within their areas. Those representations - which were generally hostile to any form of development in the Loch Loirston area - have been assessed and evaluated by planning officials at the City Council.

Approval of the current planning application would be 'premature' to the finalisation of the local development plan in that it would prejudice the legitimate rights of land owners, local residents and other affected parties in the determination of the site selection for the new community football stadium. It is understood that there are a

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number of possible alternatives for a community football stadium, including land at Duff's Hill to the south of the City boundary, as well as the King's Links site identified in the current local plan (OPS1).

It is clear from the various appraisals referred to above comparing the suitability of the Links site and Loch Loirston sites that, at the very least, no definite conclusions were arrived at regarding the relative merits of the sites.

It is an essential element of natural justice that local residents and other affected parties, including any competitor land owners, should have the opportunity to present their case for and against various potential sites within the context of a local plan 'examination'.

It is clear that the proposed application in this case would have the effect, if it were permitted, of pre-determining the outcome of the local plan process in relation to one of the single most significant site specific issues which will need to be (and should properly be) addressed as part of the local plan process. For that reason alone it should be refused on the grounds of prematurity.

It was evident from the initial Transport Assessment submitted with the application, that little or no explanation was given, on how the additional volume of traffic going to, or coming from the stadium would affect pinch-point areas such as the Bridge of Dee, Great Southern Road and Wellington Road. It was to be expected or assumed that their suggestion, to introduce a dedicated bus service, to ferry supporters to / from various Park and Ride sites around the city would be accepted, thus reducing the number of fans using cars to travel to the stadium. Following a debate, an Addendum Traffic report was submitted, which indicated several areas (within 10 / 20 / 30 minutes walking distance of the stadium), which would be suitable for off-street parking. The Addendum Report, completely reverses the original suggestion that fans would travel by bus, rather than by car to the venue. This confusion gives rise to suggest that a proper transport assessment had not been undertaken and that the application should be refused on the grounds of inconsistency.

In conclusion, it is our belief, that Loirston Loch, and the surrounding area, (with all the wildlife which use it) is one of the crown jewels of the city which should be treasured, preserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy, not destroyed forever, for the sake of a football Stadium.

Nigg Community Council recommends refusal of this application

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In response to a question raised by a member about actions taken to gauge public opinion, it was noted that several public meetings had been held by Nigg Community Council together with Cove and Altens Community Council to gather the opinion of residents, and that fliers had been distributed in the area. It was noted that the Community Council believed that people were wrong if they thought that the stadium wouldn't affect them.

Again, in response to a question, Dr. Bochel confirmed that economic development is a relative material planning consideration, as is the proposed Local Development Plan. She also clarified that officers and the Council are required to consider whether or not the current application is an appropriate use of this site, not to give a view on whether or not another site might be better.

Mr Andrew Findlayson representing **Cove and Altens Community Council** was next to address the Sub Committee and his statement to the Sub Committee was in the following terms-

There is concern at the way this whole matter been handled, pressure through media praising and supporting proposals and the general public perception that it's a done deal.

Site

This site is designated as Green Belt in the current Local Plan. It is part of Loirston Recreation Area and a District Wildlife Site haven for a wide range different habitat types. Loirston Loch is the only natural freshwater loch available to the public and wildlife within city and is a recreational area popular with anglers and an important migratory roost for pink footed / grey lag goose.

The development would have a deleterious effect on indigenous and migratory wildlife and affect Kincorth Nature Reserve. The area provides not only valuable recreational area but is also an important educational resource. It maintains the landscaping setting of the city.

The application contravenes the following sections of the current local plan -

- 3.3 - Protection of Urban Green Space
- 3.22.3 - Air Quality
- 3.23 - Green Belt
- 3.24 - The Green Space Network
- 3.26 - Landscape Protection
- 3.28 - Natural Heritage
- 3.29 - Access and Recreational Areas

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Policy 28 - Green Belt
 Policy 29 - Landscape Protection
 Policy 35 - Access and Recreation Areas

The Council must reject this application as to approve it would flagrantly breach their own guidelines.

Environmental Impact Assessment

This was provided by the developer so must be treated with caution as it is in support of his application and it may be economic with the truth. Described in environmental statement as "redevelopment of a major area of dereliction leading to establishment of new and attractive landscape". The proposals significantly enhance the form and pattern of the landscape/further national objectives to regenerate degraded landscape. The EIA accepts that increased noise and floodlighting will deter use of the loch by geese and wildfowl

The natural land drainage to the loch will be destroyed and its loss coupled with runoff from the development, notwithstanding Suds ponds, will have a detrimental effect on the water quality in the loch.

Despite claims of mitigation measures there is every likelihood the loch will be contaminated by dust or contaminated water runoff during construction. Air quality would be affected by traffic attempting to reach the football ground.

All in, there is very real potential for an environmental disaster and the Application should be rejected

Business Case Study

This needs to be revisited because:
 The current footprint has been reduced from that considered in the study
 There was no community involvement in the study
 More in depth consideration should be given to renovating Pittodrie / King's Links / Exhibition Centre / Duff's Hill

Transportation

From a transport point of view Loirston is a nightmare waiting to happen. Why?
 New and existing junctions with traffic entering / leaving proposed stadium will cause serious congestion on this already busy road particularly for evening games / concerts. Congestion will be caused in the city centre and Wellington Road by traffic coming and going from the football. There is no timescale for the Western Peripheral Route and the

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Bridge of Dee upgrade. The majority of fans travel by car are very unlikely to be willing to go by bus considering the extra time and cost involved and the unreliability of the service. First Bus is a private company and gives no guarantee they will run the services proposed if they are unprofitable. Opposing fans milling around the stadium or city centre looking for transport could come into conflict. Pedestrians entering / leaving stadium will come into conflict with traffic on Wellington Road, causing congestion and potential for accidents.

The provision of only 700 out of 1400 parking spaces for the general public is unbelievable and the suggestion of using company car parks on the industrial estates unworkable. The suggestion to prevent supporters parking in residential areas that the whole community will be made a controlled parking area with residents having to apply for a permit to park at their own house is unacceptable.

The whole transportation strategy is untenable and on this point alone the application should be rejected.

Footnote

In America, where the out of town developments were promoted appears to have had a rethink and are now advocating in-town developments, benefiting local businesses and utilising existing infrastructure. Maybe we should be thinking along these lines rather than an out of town development devoid of facilities when we have the city centre with its transport hub and many businesses would benefit from trade generated by football supporters

We query the right of Aberdeen City Council to determine the application - as the site is promoted by the Council and promoted in the Local Development Plan, it is not impartial.

Mr Findlayson responded to a number of questions from members in respect of (1) steps taken by the Community Council to gauge opinion regarding the proposal in response to which made reference to their website and community magazine; (2) whether the Community Council had a preference for a controlled parking zone or not, to which he responded that the community should not be imposed upon to accommodate the stadium; (3) whether the Community Council had evidence to support their view that people would not use public transport to travel to the stadium to which he responded by citing current car use to Pittodrie and the fact that people would need to take more than one bus; and (4) the Community Council's view that the journey to Pittodrie was more pleasant than it would be travelling to the proposed site at Loirston; (5) the Community Council's view that although Wellington Road would be

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quieter on a Saturday there would still be traffic pressures; (6) whether 144 letters of objection from a community of 7,500 was a fair reflection of public opinion, the response to which being that people were apathetic; and (7) the Community Council's view in respect of the landscaped setting and its view on the stadium as a landmark gateway to the City, to which the response was that it was an attractive stadium in the wrong location, and that landscape setting was a more important consideration.

The next speaker to address the Sub Committee was **Ms Catherine Thornhill** representing **Balmoral Park Limited** in the following terms:-

Introduction

- On behalf of Balmoral Park Ltd, Ryden have submitted representations to the Proposed Plan and have submitted objection in respect of this planning application. Wish to re-emphasise the main points of these objections.
- Balmoral Park Ltd do not oppose the principle of the stadium proposals, however their support for the stadium was predicated on the fact that it was initially proposed to the south west of Loirston Loch taking access from the Wellington Road south of Loirston Loch.
- It is understood that the Options Appraisal and Feasibility Studies, upon which Aberdeen City Council based their support, also showed the stadium located to the south west.
- Balmoral Park Ltd recently secured Planning Permission for a high quality business park on 14.6 hectares of land, immediately to the east of the application site.
- the application site wraps around and encloses Balmoral Business Park in its entirety and Balmoral Park Ltd have major concerns regarding the proximity of the proposed stadium to their recently approved development.
- AND to the proximity of the access to the stadium from Wellington Road to the access to the Business Park.
- As currently positioned, both the stadium and associated access and parking infrastructure will adversely impact on both the attractiveness and operation of the business park. And will also significantly impact upon the setting of Loirston Loch.

Balmoral Park Limited

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- In securing that Planning Permission for Balmoral Business Park the environmental sensitivities of Loirston Loch and its immediate environs were consistently highlighted by Aberdeen City Council.
- Significant emphasis was placed on the fact that this area was considered as a “gateway” to the city.
- The importance of Wellington Road as an arterial route serving the city was also heavily emphasised with the Council wishing to minimise any interruption to traffic flows on Wellington Road.
- It was noted that Balmoral Park Ltd. were “lucky” to secure an access from Wellington Road between Altens and the flyover. It was also commented that for the above reasons of maintaining traffic flows, that “no further accesses would be permitted in this location.”

Access

- The introduction of a further major junction at this location, in such close proximity to the recently approved Balmoral Business Park junction, would seriously interrupt traffic flows on Wellington Road to the detriment of the proposed business park and the wider area.
- However, siting of the stadium to the south west of the Loch with access taken from the south of the Loch which would alleviate these concerns and also provide an opportunity to reconfigure the currently proposed convoluted parking arrangements - particularly the remote parking areas to the north should be omitted.
- The frequency and scale of the events proposed at the arena is likely to have a significant impact on the proposed Business Park by way of noise, nuisance and traffic congestion.
- Overall, the stadium proposals entirely enclose the Balmoral Business Park development with the second access to the stadium and parking areas being taken from the Wellington Circle roundabout. Access to a major commercial development through an existing busy employment area is highly undesirable.
- Furthermore, this could encourage spectators to take a direct route between the car park and the arena, through our client's existing business operations. This would

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pose a very significant health & safety risk; as would the inevitable unauthorised use of the private business and industrial areas for overspill car parking.

- The relocation of the stadium to the south west could help address these concerns, whilst also protecting the integrity of the loch and retaining an open aspect on a major approach to the City.

Premature

- Consultation on the Aberdeen Proposed Local Development Plan is currently ongoing. The plan identifies land lying immediately to the south and west of Balmoral Business Park as an opportunity site, OP77, for major residential and employment development over the lifetime of the plan.
- The proposals for a new community stadium are referred to in the text for Loirston and Cove – no specific site for the stadium is outlined within the plan. Site OP77 is to be developed in accordance with a masterplan which considers these uses in context.
- Significant impacts in terms of landscape, ecology, wildlife and traffic are likely to arise from the stadium development – thus the stadium proposals should be addressed more fully in the Local Development Plan.
- Determination of individual elements of the significant mixed development proposed for site OP77, prior to the production of a high-level overview document for the area and the major development proposed within is premature.
- The stadium should thus be considered within the context of the wider development of the site, as proposed in the Proposed Aberdeen Local Plan, the content of which has been approved by Councillors.

Summary

- In summary, whilst the application conflicts with the policies of the current Aberdeen Local Plan, the proposed development would prejudice the outcome of any Examination in Public into the Aberdeen Local Development Plan; consultation on the Proposed Plan is not yet closed.
- The Proposed Plan does not identify specific locations within OP77 for major residential, employment and stadium development. This entire site requires to be

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subject to a masterplan to consider all these uses and their requisite infrastructure requirements in context.

- Whilst premature to the LDP process, any masterplan would be the responsibility of the developer(s) and thus work on its preparation is not restricted by Council timescales.
- The development, as sited would adversely impact upon Balmoral Business Park. Whilst Balmoral Park Ltd does not oppose the principle of development in this area, but for the reasons highlighted above, would request that the arena and associated access and parking infrastructure be refused planning permission and encouragement given to their relocation to the south west of the existing site.
- Re-location to the south west of the site would also deter unauthorised parking in the adjoining private commercial and industrial areas; which in the current proposal are accessed directly from the stadium car park. The introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone would not deter unauthorised parking on private land.

Ms. Thornhill was asked questions regarding (1) whether the proximity of the junction to the stadium would be mitigated by the timing of traffic lights, to which she responded that the Roads department was not keen on an additional junction; (2) access through Wellington Circle, to which she advised that this would be via the northern car park and conflict with the level of traffic and (3) whether or not spectators crossing the Business Park could be potential customers, to which she stated that the Business Park was not a retail park and it was not desirable that it be used as a through-fare.

The next objector to address the Sub Committee was **Mr George Urquhart, local resident**, who made his statement in the following terms:-

Having been Convener of Arts & Recreation when Loirston Recreation Area was set up some twenty years ago, I make no apologies for fighting tooth & nail to save this wonderful area from development.

It is enjoyed by nature lovers, dog walkers, ramblers & children who love the play area. It is home to the award winning Ranger Service who do such a great job teaching our young people about climate change and the importance of caring for the environment and highly commended by Britain in Bloom Judges, it must be saved from the threat of development. I will refer you to your own notice board; it states a number of reasons for protecting this area among them; wildlife, rare plants and animals live there, it offers attractive & peaceful walks away from the hustle & bustle of the city and concludes for

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these reasons it is, important to protect this area of countryside from being built upon. It bears the logos of ACC; the Forestry Commission; Scottish National Heritage; Grampian Enterprise and Community Woodlands Scotland. Add to that, it is a district wildlife site of scientific interest and in the recent Nature Conservancy audit requested by the Scottish government, met all the criteria to be classed as a nature conservancy area.

I would respectfully remind elected members & officials that the council has a civic duty to protect and safeguard the rights of its citizens to countryside access to public footpath etc. The Community Woodlands part of the woodland in and around town project must be left for the enjoyment of all citizens. All in all, an overwhelming case to say 'no' to this unwanted environmental disaster.

Ten very good reasons to refuse this stadium

This is greenbelt/green space in the local plan which runs until 2012 at least.

It is a district wildlife site of scientific interest.

It would damage Loirston Loch, a very important migration stopover for all sorts of birds a haven for birdwatchers who have used the bird bides for many years.

It would threaten the very existence of both Loirston recreation area and the Ranger Service based at Lochinch Interpretive Centre built by volunteers with large grants of public money.

It is not wanted by local people in the area.

It would destroy Community woodland/Drystane Dykes and vital wetlands it is the only wildlife corridor between Cove and Kincorth Local Nature Reserve.

It is completely at odds with aims of nature conservancy areas.

Destroy wildlife habitat - the home to protected species such as bats.

A great many supporters do not want to leave Pittodrie and their traditional watering holes.

There are far less environmentally sensitive sites such as Duff's Hill or the Links.

APPLICATIONS AND APPLICANTS

Having allowed Pittodrie to deteriorate over many years in spite of receiving a large grant from the football trust towards the building of the Richard Donald Stand and showing a complete disregard for the planning process by submitting an application for Pittodrie before this one is even considered. Having been a die hard supporter myself for 70yrs and seen the steady decline of this once great club and a procession of under funded managers, I would say the dwindling support do not support this move away from Pittodrie.

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For a start, this is not the site that the council approved in the survey, it could obstruct a public right of way and wildlife corridor. Then the much vaunted bridge was dropped when they found that a legal condition prevented any development within 50m of the loch. The office element is also speculative. There have been offices lying empty for years on Wellington Road and Altens, throwing in a bar for 1,000 people, seemingly ignorant of the problems alcohol has caused football in the past. Even the applicant has realised that parking is totally inadequate and this latest attempt by Farehurst just makes things worse. It is a work of pure fiction; it is difficult to get a parking place at Macro on a Saturday, oil firms need their parking 24/7 and there is no way an operational fire station would allow supporters to use their car park. Governments, local authorities and many others have tried to get people out of cars and on to public transport - all have failed miserably. Supporters, especially those from outside the town, will stick with their cars. The residents of Cove, Redmoss, and Kincorth are well aware of the parking problems this will cause in their areas, which strengthens the opposition to the stadium.

ROAD ISSUES

As a former councillor for this area and having sat on the Roads Committees over nearly 30yrs I feel qualified to comment on this application. Two bottlenecks stand out straight away at Wellington Road and at Wellington Circle. Wellington Road is one of the busiest roads in the city the main artery to the harbour and inner ring road crowded with LGV oil related traffic. It is an urban clearway from the prison to Macro roundabout. When the long awaited duelled extension was finally completed it was the intention to speed traffic out of the city, I clearly recall the Balmoral Group being refused an access on to it for this very reason. That being the case it is plain crazy to allow this application for a main access to a 21,000 capacity stadium on Wellington Road, the applicant is very well aware of this, that was the reason for the bridge across the Loch, only to discover a legal condition to prevent it being built. The only other access at Wellington Circle is even worse, a very sharp bend around Macro and a junction before you can access the roundabout made even more difficult by the siting of a permanent hot food van outside Macro.

Given the near traffic gridlock at the Bridge of Dee, Market Street and Torry at peak times, this whole application should be deferred until the WPR is completed. As with any major development, AFC should pay for all costs for pavements, road improvements; traffic lights etc.

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Members of the Sub Committee sought Mr Urquhart's views in respect of evidence as to supporters' dissatisfaction with the proposal, and what evidence there was that they wouldn't attend matches to Loirston, in response to which, he stated that he wouldn't go himself; whether migratory birds would stop coming to the loch, to which he responded that his friends, who were members of the RSPB, gave the impression that the stadium will have an impact on birds passing through; whether the loch was stocked with trout, to which he advised that as there was no long term lease it wasn't stocked; the impact on other wildlife; traffic issues relating to bottlenecks around Pittodrie and the impact of the AWPR, to which he responded that the same difficulties exist as Pittodrie, that the AWPR was bound to have a positive impact, and that the development shouldn't be considered before the AWPR is in place, but even with the AWPR, he wouldn't support this application; and further information regarding the legal condition preventing any development within 50 metres of Loch Loirston; and whether Duff's Hill would be better from a transport point of view, to which he replied that it wasn't as environmentally sensitive and had a better road system.

After returning from a break in the proceedings, The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development clarified that in view of the Council's land interest in the proposal and the fact that it is a major development, which is a significant departure from Policy 28 of the Local Plan, the Council is required to notify the Scottish Government, having taken a view on the application. Following this, Scottish Ministers would decide whether they would call in the application or allow the Council to determine it. This provided checks and balances within the planning process.

In regard to the legal conditions on building within 50 metres of the loch as mentioned in the previous presentation, the applicants advised that an early proposal for a bridge to be built over the loch was abandoned following public consultation. The reference to 50 metres was contained within the environmental impact assessment, wherein consultants made a recommendation not to build within 50 metres of the loch and there was no mention of a 50 metre restriction prohibiting building within any of the land deeds.

The next speaker was **Mr. Bernard Smart**, local resident who advised that he strongly objected to the application. He had lived in the area for 60 years and loved the quiet surroundings. As a member of the Aberdeen District Angling Association, he fishes in the loch and stated that he would hate to lose it. He commented that 2000 fish had been added to the loch and it was his view that the stadium should be built on brownfield land at Kings Links as opposed to Greenbelt land.

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Mr. Smart was asked questions about why the Angling Association would be defunct if the development went ahead, to which he responded that fish didn't like light and the environment would be lost, so people wouldn't want to go there; whether or not the loch had been restocked this year, to which he advised that it had; and whether or not the light really affected fish and if that was highlighted in the Environmental Statement, to which the answer (from Mr. Prentice) was that there was nothing in the Environmental Statement to say that fish were affected by light.

Next to speak was **Mr. Andy Dalziel**, local resident who addressed the Sub Committee in the following terms:-

I am a local resident and also a member of Cove and Altens Community Council and bring knowledge and background from my role as a Community Councillor. I have several reasons for objecting to this proposal, but before going into them in any detail I would like to raise a more general point that I have grave doubts on the independence of Aberdeen City Council as one of the landowners and in theory stands to gain from the sale of the land to AFC so it is in the interests of ACC to ensure that this development goes ahead. Secondly and more seriously some members of this committee have publicly stated their support of this proposal on many occasions. Indeed representatives from AFC stated at a joint meeting of Nigg and Cove and Altens Community Councils' on 5th July 2010 that they had been steered in the direction of Loirston as a possible site for a replacement for Pittodrie by 3 Councillors including at least one from this committee. I have reservations on consultations we have on planning matters in Aberdeen – there is a concern that decisions have already have been made. The whole planning process in Aberdeen is in my opinion developer-led and the electorate have very little influence over the process.

As to my objections to the proposal they are as follows.

1) Over development of the area.

The Cove area is already over developed with no overall master-plan of what the area should be like once all developments have finished. All we get is a random approach to development with master-planning done only within each development rather than looking into how all the developments fit together. This development is one too far in my opinion and will only be made even worse once the rest of the developments which are in the new LDP go ahead.

2) Loss of green space.

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One of the good things about living in Cove used to be that despite it being part of a city it still felt relatively rural with open countryside not too far away. This provided easy access for people like me who want to walk in the countryside and enjoy the wildlife, farm livestock etc. This development removes a substantial tract of open space which is well used by local residents for exercise, bird-watching, dog walking, fishing etc. Once this development goes ahead this green space will be lost and will never be adequately replaced. ACC's view of open space is very different from what I regard as usable open space.

3) Environmental Impact

This development along with what is proposed in the Local Development Plan will totally destroy a unique set of habitats at or near Loirston Loch. There are 5 distinct habitat types in that area. They are; the loch itself; the surrounding wetland; the rough grassland; smooth grassland and the mixed woodlands which were deliberately planted to enhance wildlife. Since the Council stopped Doonies Farm from grazing the fields at Loch Inch we have already lost the smooth grassland habitat. It is very unusual to find 5 such habitat types all together in close proximity within a city boundary and it shows remarkable foresight by those involved in creating this resource in the first place. This is something which the city should be proud of and making the most of rather than seeking to destroy. These habitat types all together in the one place provide a unique educational resource as well and provide a fantastic opportunity to educate future generations about how the environment works. One of the greatest ironies in all of this is that parking at the site will be limited in an attempt to reduce car use, presumably to reduce CO2 emissions. Yet one of the most highly polluting human activities in terms of CO2 emissions is the production of cement for the construction industry. (burning limestone to drive off CO2). If you want to limit CO2 emissions then you need to limit development. Some developments are needed, I'm not anti development per se, but this is not one of them.

4) Road/Traffic issues

A representative of ACC planning department has already admitted that the Cove/Altens area is already at saturation point with regard to traffic management at peak times. This development will only make things worse, particularly for evening kick off games. Although there will only be parking for 1400 cars at the new stadium that still means an extra 1400 cars on already over-congested roads. The idea that public transport/cycling/walking will be the main way for fans to get to the stadium is laughable. The public transport provision for Cove is already pretty pathetic with crowded, dirty over-priced and unpunctual buses so adding in a lot of football

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supporters to the equation is a recipe for disaster. Despite the fact that special services will be laid on I believe there will be pressure on existing services. Having thousands of spectators walking from town along Wellington Road is also a recipe for disaster. As for the idea that a significant number of them will use bikes, that is ridiculous and dangerous. Wellington Road is not suitable for bikes. Not only is it a busy road, but it is especially busy with LGV's. Having been behind the wheel of an LGV in the past I know how much of a problem it is when these vehicles are mixed with cyclists. To have a lot of extra bikes mixing with 44 tonne trucks is downright dangerous.

5) Parking

It is inevitable that most spectators will try to get to the match by car. They will then have to park somewhere nearby as there will only be limited parking at the stadium, in order to discourage car use. When representatives of AFC were asked about this they said they anticipated that they would park in the adjacent industrial areas. When it was pointed out that residential areas were in fact closer to the proposed stadium than the industrial areas they said they would get ACC to put parking restrictions on all the local streets. When pressed on how this would affect local residents, they stated that they could then go and apply for parking permits from the council like everyone else. This attitude is breathtakingly arrogant. Why should people have to suddenly have their lives disrupted in such a way because of this proposal. Worse still, what is to stop supporters from parking in peoples drive-ways. I doubt if the authorities would be interested in having them removed as it would be a civil matter.

6) Noise and visual pollution

There will inevitably be noise from this stadium and I do not believe this will be dealt with by mitigation measures. It is simply too close to residential areas, both existing and proposed. The idea to have the stadium lit up at night by a red glow will turn it into even more of an eyesore than it will be already. How a dirty great concrete monstrosity lit up and glowing red at night is a visual enhancement to the southern approaches to the city is a mystery to me. The red glow will also be a waste of electricity at a time when we need to be conserving energy.

7) Money

I think this development has nothing to do with making Aberdeen a better place to live or enhancing the southern approach to the city. It has everything to do with money. AFC is a commercial organisation and that should not be forgotten. This development has everything to do with releasing the existing stadium for redevelopment into high

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value housing. Somebody will make a big financial gain from this development at the expense of the environment and the quality of life of local residents. That is simply not fair.

Summary

We have heard from AFC about all the problems they have with the existing stadium. However I believe that their proposed solution will simply create more problems than it solves. Not only that, the new problems will be foisted onto the residents of Cove, Altens, Nigg and Kincorth. This is simply unfair. Far too much will have to be taken on trust as far as mitigation of the likely problems is concerned. I don't trust the developers to do what they say they will and I certainly don't trust ACC's ability or willingness to hold them to account.

Mr. Dalziel answered questions relating to the difference in people walking along Wellington Road and King Street, to which his response was the speed at which traffic went and the mix of cyclists; and whether or not in commenting on the independence of the process and statements allegedly made by members in support of the application he takes the same view of members who have expressed support for the development.

The next speaker was **Ms. Suzanne Kelly**, local resident who addressed the Sub Committee in the following terms:-

Thank you.

I speak as an opponent to any proposed building at the Loirston site, particularly of such an overwhelming size, in what is most definitely a catchment of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation, or SAC. "SACs are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the habitat types and species." For some reason, this is not being taken seriously by some of our representatives and developers. It is clearly 'contrary to the protection the SAC status is meant to confer to build this stadium, and it is definitely against the wishes of the local communities, at whose expense this development would be.

First I will present some of my specific objections and noise issues regarding some of the documents produced, namely Aberdeen Arena Environmental Statement Volume 2, Chapters 8 - Ecology & Nature Conservation, and Chapter 13 Summary of Assessment. I also have some serious-concerns concerning the Aberdeen City Council

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Development Management Sub Committee Pre Determination Hearing report dated 21 December 2010 signed by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. Some of these concerns I consider warrant further investigation, and I will, be sending my findings to the appropriate governmental authorities in due course. I have found what I believe to be omissions, inaccuracies and unfounded conclusions, all of which are favourable to the project's approval.

Chapter 8

Table 8.1 is meant to be a “summary of consultation responses”. It should be noted, as one of the community councils points out in its objection, that the Environmental Statement was paid for by Aberdeen Football Club, and was not an independent scientific study. The Summary response made for the SNH excludes the point made clear in the SNH letter to the City Council that this development falls in the River Dee SAC and “the site’s status means that the requirements of the conservation Natural Habitats & Regulations 1994 apply. The SNH also recommends viewing their website for legislative guidance. I would have thought that saying the site is protected by legislation would be among the most important summary points. The summary points do manage to say how important the site is for overwintering birds, but omits the SNH’s point headed in the SNH letter ‘European protected species’ that “Surveys carried out to inform the ES found evidence of otters and bats, which are both European Protected Species”.

In the same table the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds’ opinion is summarised as being “advised on locating the development as far from the loch margins as possible and to reduce disturbance to the water body”. When I contacted the RSPB, their representative replied and I quote “When this development was being proposed initially, we responded very clearly to Aberdeen City Council at an early stage that the Loirston Loch site was sensitive, that the impact of proposed development would be adverse on bird and wildlife interest of the area, and the Kings Links site was a far better location for the AFC stadium development”. The RSPB also wrote to me saying “it would be hard to see how any sensible person could favour this scheme and “it’s obvious from the application that there is no realistic mitigation or compensation which could alter the main impacts of the proposed development”. I suggest that the summary table does not remotely reflect the RSPB position of rejecting the site and I am concerned by this.

Chapter 18 Page 8-9 does admit that otters, a legally protected species are most definitely in the area. Curiously, the ES also admits badger setts, but says “... none of the setts will be negatively influenced by the site development and the loss of potential foraging habitat is not expected to have any detrimental impact on the sustainability of the adjoining badger populations”. Perhaps it is because I am not a scientist, but I

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would have concluded differently, that to build a 21,000 seat stadium and 1400 parking spaces where there are animals and which removes foraging areas will have a detrimental effect. I do not see any scientific method quoted to support this conclusion. This page also states "There are no records of bats on the NBN Gateway within 1 kilometre of the site". This is directly at odds with the SNH letter which states there are indeed bats in the area.

Concerning birdlife, covered in 8.4.5, it is admitted that the site is important for a variety of overwintering birds. Various surveys are quoted in the report, but not the 2003 RSPB Farmer's alliance survey which lists 11 species, about half of which were red and half amber. If indeed we have lost important species since 2003, this is a sign that there has already been too much construction in the area, and is not a go-ahead for more environmental damage. I also question the report's assertion that only one barn owl siting and one red species bird were reported and that back in 2006; I have spoken to rangers who have seen owls and red listed species, and I believe this is reflected in records.

The Chapter also notes on page 8-13 that the proposals include part of the Loirston Loch District Wildlife site within its site boundary. It should be noted that such wildlife sites may not have as much protection in law as SACs do - but they are recognised. In the Habitats and flora section, this chapter advises there will be a drainage pipe into the loch: I do not understand how any type of drainage into the loch could be anything but harmful and I look forward to clarification. This section also says there are no notable species of flora "observed on the day". In my experience, a day's observation is immaterial to determining what plants are present on a site. If you look at the records, you will find that orchids are present for a start. There are one or two fields which are no longer used as grazing, and experts I spoke to expect that this means a potential renaissance of plants that would have otherwise been eaten by grazing livestock now possibly returning to the area, and this is of potential benefit in terms of biodiversity. I might remind the Council that it is party to a number of biodiversity initiatives, and this is not limited to giving habitat only to the most endangered species, but is also intended to ensure that populations can continue. The section also states that clearance of surface vegetation and soils may lead to increased soil erosion and damage to the water body, which would affect both flora and fauna for a considerable distance downstream of the works.

I am curious to read on Page 8-14 in the protected species section that the report preparers expect the otters, bats, owls and birds to basically 'commute' during construction. I see no basis for this presumption, no mention of the animals' return, or

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further disruption to them during the stadium's operation. It is known that such interruptions to habitat are detrimental to populations and breeding.

In 8.6.2 'Potential Operational effects' are listed; they are: permanent land take and loss of habitat, increased surface water run-off and potential pollution risk of Loirston Loch, increased lighting, and increased noise and disturbance. Biodiversity loss is also admittedly going to happen. I wonder that the obvious threat of air pollution is somehow glossed over. I suppose we are meant to believe these are small prices to pay for football and events. Which, of course, could simply continue in the existing facilities at Pittodrie - which aren't exactly filled to capacity, and at the AECC, which the taxpayer subsidises.

The Chapter mentions light in several areas, in terms of the construction phase and inside the stadium. There is no mention at all of the proposed red glowing light, but we do know that night time light of any kind disrupts the living patterns of all the animals we have so far mentioned.

Somehow at 8.7 'Mitigation' we have changed tone from a generally scientific list of what exists and what cause and effect may mean for the site to what sounds to me like a sales pitch. The report says that the following mitigation measures WILL be taken - not should be taken. The conclusion has been made by the Environmental Statement writers that the stadium will be built, and the builders will follow best practice and the law on a dozen points of conservation in doing this. I suggest the Environment Survey is overreaching its remit. It would have us believe that construction workers, for instance, will dutifully look for badgers and stop work if they are encountered. How on earth can an environment summary make a promise as to what an as yet unnamed construction company will do? Could the assertions be related to the AFC's commissioning of the report, I wonder.

There is mention towards the end of this chapter about positives (there are three very minor ones) - such as creating a wildlife corridor. If I take an existing large wildlife ecosystem and put a stadium on it, I am not creating a new corridor - I am squeezing wildlife into a bottleneck.

Section 8.8.1 entitled Habitats and Notable Flora says 'The majority of these habitats are low ecological value with only fragments of habitats which contain a level of value.' This statement is not supported and is indeed contradicted by the RSPB, by the site's falling in the SAC area, and by the SNH who are keen that the protected species be, well, protected.

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The closing few paragraphs of this Chapter are amazing. Despite ranger records and sightings, the chapter concludes there are NO barn owls. It concludes that habitats and notable flora are not predicted to be significantly adversely affected. Aquatic habitats and species are not predicted to be significantly adversely affected. Residual effect on otters and bats are predicted to be not significant. In all seriousness - are these the conclusions you yourselves would now reach, or would you agree this is a SAC area which will be irreversibly damaged by a 21,000 seater stadium and 1400 car park spaces? Or do you agree with SNH that this is part of a legally protected SAC with protected species, and the RSPB who say 'no sensible person' would build here? Somehow, air pollution and the carbon footprint aspects are barely mentioned. Where is the analysis?

I now turn to Chapter 13 - Summary of Assessment. If you add the adverse temporary impacts it lists, there are no fewer than 22. And for the permanent negative effects? Just over 40. These include loss of habitat, land take, possible pollution, and all the negatives I have previously mentioned. Ladies and Gentlemen, Councillors: Why are you even thinking about it?

I turn then to the City Council's report issued for the pre-determination hearing on 21st December. I have mentioned previously the rather serious omission of the important SNH points in the Environmental Summary. SNH wrote to the Planning & Sustainable development, enterprise planning and infrastructure committee on 10 September 2010 saying "that this development falls in the River Dee SAC and "the site's status means that the requirements of the conservation Natural Habitats & Regulations 1994 apply. The SNH recommends viewing their website for legislative guidance." and "there are evidence of otters and bats, which are both European Protected Species". It is worrying enough that the paid environmental surveyors neglected these important points from their summary. It is to me inexcusable that in summarising this letter, in the pre-determination report, the City Council left out these two points, which most definitely cast a huge shadow on the suitability of Loirston. I will be asking for a formal explanation of how this happened. Thankfully the Council's document at least reports that this is a significant departure from the plan by virtue of it being a major development located on an undeveloped site within the Greenbelt where policy 28 Green belt of the Aberdeen Local plan applies. Is this in itself not enough reason to halt this scheme? I had also objected and cited Scottish Planning Policy issues including "Efficient Use of Land and Buildings" issues – these points do not seem to appear to be addressed by the Council.

The City Council report goes on to quote the virtues of the stadium from its design to its potential for holding international events. As to the design elements, it is subjective to

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praise them but moreover, a good design respects its environment. The architectural praise is irrelevant to the location of the site in the greenbelt land; it could be built elsewhere. As to hosting international tournaments, there are more than a few UK cities which have lost millions in trying to get events - look at London's bid for World Cup 2018 - and lost even more by hosting them - Birmingham I recall lost a small fortune when hosting events some years back.

Perhaps the most blatantly untrue, unworkable aspect as we have seen today is the scheme to bring viewers to the stadium by bus. If the 1400 car spaces are used by cars with 4 people each, as a very generous allowance, then if the stadium were running at capacity, a further 15,400 people need to get to holds to Loirston. If a bus holds 80 people, then you need about, oh 192 dedicated buses or coaches to get them there. The plan is for 80 buses which is still a huge amount. And how much time do the planners say buses will need to get from College Street to Loirston? Fifteen Minutes. Perhaps it's just me, but it can take 15 minutes to get from the Nigg roundabout to the Cove Bay Roundabout. I would like to ask for the figures supporting that there is a suitable transportation plan in place. The details are needed. We heard today that only 710 spaces would be for fans. Where is the train transport analysis? Are all away supporters coming by coach?

Let's say that getting just 10,000 people there is the issue. Looking at this report, apparently the Council's Environmental Health Services say and I quote "Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed development is currently good and there would be no risk of exceedance of national air quality objectives at this location...although it is predicted that air quality will be affected, the impact is not" I would at this point like to relate my personal experience. I lived in New York for 20 years; I lived in London for 20 years. After 3 years of living in Aberdeen, I had a severe asthma attack on Wellington Road, and was diagnosed with asthma. I do not smoke. My research tells me that exhaust fumes not only damage the atmosphere, but the small particles are a recognised, real health risk, acknowledged by the EU and BMA. But what angers me about this assertion that the air is fine is that the City knows this is not the case. You may want to search for Wellington Road and air pollution on the ACC website, and you will see the Council knows there is an air pollution issue at present. Wellington Road has poor air quality. Asthma is only one health disease associated with the exhaust on this heavily travelled road. But for the City's authorities to tell me that transporting 21,000 people to this stadium where there was once greenbelt 'will not have a significant impact' is an extreme insult to everyone's intelligence. The councillors favouring the development might want to think on this.

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Speakers and the report state only Nigg has objected. I put it to you that had the reporting been done without crucial omissions, perhaps there would have been more observations.

Please listen to the Community Councils', respect the SNH and RSPB experts and leave this site alone. There is a line between progress and urban sprawl - we are crossing it.

Following Ms Kelly's address, Members sought clarification on the role of the RSPB and Mr. Prentice explained that the RSPB was not a statutory consultee, with consultation undertaken with Scottish National Heritage and SEPA to cover the environmental issues. The RSPB did, however, have the opportunity to make representations and they have not raised any objections. A question was also asked of the historical cairns, to which Dr. Bochel replied that Historic Scotland were a statutory consultee and they had not raised any objections. It was also asked whether any of the statutory consultees had objected, the answer to which was only the two community councils.

Mr. Eric Witton, local resident, was next to address the Sub Committee in the following terms:-

I am a resident of Redmoss Terrace and Operations Manager for a company with premises in Altens Industrial Estate. My reasons for objection are as follows:

1. Need for a Stadium:

Firstly, I would question the move from Pittodrie at all. AFC have not made a compelling case for the need for a new stadium. The official capacity of Pittodrie is 22,199 and AFC have not come close to that figure on a single occasion in recent seasons! Examination of AFC's own website reveals the following statistics for the past five seasons:

The largest crowd for any fixture was 20,500 for a pre-season friendly against Manchester Utd on 12/07/2008.

The largest crowd for a competitive fixture was 20,446 for a UEFA Cup match against FC Copenhagen on 20/12/2007

For SPL matches there have only been three crowds over 20,000, all vs Rangers.

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The only SPL matches attracting crowds of over 15,000 are vs Rangers and Celtic, with one match v's Hearts also exceeding that figure.

The remaining SPL fixtures predominantly attract crowds of less than 12,000 with many less than 10,000.

The average SPL attendance at Pittodrie for the 2010/11 season so far is just over 10,300.

I am a football supporter myself and my team, Norwich City has a ground in a similar geographic situation to AFC with a busy road on two sides, housing on the third and club car parks with housing behind on the fourth side. Over a period of several years, Carrow Road was re-developed one side at a time and three of the four corners between the new stands also had infills constructed. The result is a modern 27,000 all seater stadium, which unlike Pittodrie, has had average crowds of 25,000+ for the last several seasons. During the redevelopment, the ground capacity was significantly reduced, although as much of the work as possible was carried out during the close season periods.

There is no reason whatsoever, why AFC cannot do something similar to Pittodrie. Even if the eventual capacity is somewhat reduced from the present, they won't fill the stadium anyway. Dundee Utd have managed it, so what is preventing AFC? It is a complete red herring to talk about the pitch size and 'run offs' as AFC do. If space is limited, just make the new stands steeper, as they boast they are going to do with the proposed new stadium anyway. The £30M cost of redeveloping Pittodrie is significantly less than that of the proposed stadium.

Everyone knows that this is all about Milne Homes or a similar umbrella company (not AFC) making millions of pounds from the redevelopment of Pittodrie - we are not fools! And do Aberdeen City Council really want another concert venue to rival the AECC, which is in financial trouble already and having to be bailed out as we all know?

2. Environmental:

The proposed site for the new stadium is on part of the only piece of 'green belt' land left on the South side of Aberdeen. Should the project be approved, Both AFC and ACC will be guilty of environmental vandalism of the worst kind!

3. Noise and Annoyance:

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My property backs on to the rear of the Gordon Hotel on Wellington Road, which if the stadium goes ahead, will be full of fans (many drunk) on match days, as it is the only licensed premises in the locality. The previous owners of the hotel have already made a planning application to extend the premises and build a large new rear car park adjacent to my garden.

4. Access & Parking:

I am told by many AFC supporters who I know and work with, that the majority of home supporters travelling to AFC matches from out with Aberdeen City, come from the North rather than from the South. Why then force these supporters to travel right across the city from one side to the other? It makes no sense, at least not until the Western Peripheral Route is constructed and open to traffic, whenever that may be. Please don't tell me there will be a 'Park and Ride' scheme - nobody uses them!

The proposed stadium can only be accessed by vehicular traffic from Wellington Road, which is already one of Aberdeen's busiest arterial routes. The section passing Loirston loch has only recently been upgraded to dual carriageway at a cost of several million pounds and now the proposal is to put traffic light junctions on the dualled section to access the stadium. Ludicrous - this was certainly not planned by anyone who has to use these roads on a regular basis. The only alternative is to access the proposed car parks via Wellington Circle past Balmoral and Makro. However, exiting via this route on match days would be a nightmare, causing huge congestion to through and local traffic negotiating the Altens Thistle roundabout.

From visiting the exhibition at the Altens Thistle Hotel, I noted that there is a planned pedestrian access to the proposed stadium from Redmoss Road. Given that AFC will doubtless charge for parking in the stadium car parks and the inevitable congestion around the ground, it is highly likely that people will park either on Redmoss Road or in other parts of the Redmoss area and walk to the stadium. I am sure that I speak for the vast majority of Redmoss residents when I say that this is totally unacceptable!

5. Future Development:

We know from the consultation exhibitions that the proposed AFC stadium is just 'the thin end of the wedge' for Loirston Loch. If the main stadium is approved, there are already draft plans for a stadium for Cove Rangers and a large housing development to the West of the AFC stadium. Of course, once the stadium is approved, the following developments have a fair greater chance of being approved too. If Cove Rangers need

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a new ground, build it in Cove, not on the Calder Park, unless of course they plan a name change to Redmoss Rangers?!

In summary, the local people don't want the stadium development and in my view the majority of AFC's own fans don't want it either! It won't significantly benefit the city in the longer term. It may benefit the football club in the longer term, but their chairman (or one of his companies) will make a huge financial gain as a result and it's about time that both he and the football club admitted that fact and that ACC removed their blinkers and grasped reality!

Following his address, a Member of the Sub Committee sought his views on why he thought football supporters would not use the in-house bar to which he responded that traditional football supporters did not like drinking on the stadium grounds; whether closing off Redmoss Road would help solve problems, to which the response was yes, and whether the Controlled Parking Zone would be welcome without the stadium, to which he replied he had no objection if there was no cost to residents.

The next speaker was **Mrs. Moira Hay**, local resident who explained that she lived in Redmoss Road and her biggest concern was that football fans from Kincorth would come across the hill, causing disturbance to farm animals on her farm. Mrs. Hay then withdrew.

In response to questions, Mrs. Hay clarified that there was a core path from Kincorth Hill through to Redmoss Road.

The next speaker was **Mr. Alexander Elrick**, local resident who addressed the Sub Committee in the following terms:-

As a local resident in the area, I wish to register my objection to the building of the new Aberdeen Football Stadium at Loirston Loch, Wellington Road, Aberdeen. My objection is in regard to the Transport Assessment and also to the lack of amenities in the local area which will be required to cater for large gatherings of people. I believe I can offer an objective view as I have lived and travelled from Edinburgh, Fife and Moray by rail, coach and car to support Aberdeen Football Club in years gone by. I have also driven coaches/buses in Aberdeen and the surrounding area over the last 16 years.

Transport - Stadium Car Parking

I understand that only 1400 car parking spaces will be available and will be reduced to 1200 car parking spaces for Rangers and Celtic matches. A proportion of the car parking spaces will be allocated for 1650 hospitality guests occupying corporate boxes,

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catering for 2 - 3 parking spaces per hospitality box. Therefore, there is little or no parking arrangement for the average football supporter who travels by car. As currently 72% of 'home' supporters travel to Pittodrie by car, parking will be a requirement for those supporters visiting the new stadium.

On other occasions when the new stadium is likely to have up to 21000 people attending, such as a concert, international rugby match or international football matches, as does occur at Pittodrie Stadium, 1400 parking spaces once again will not be enough to cater for the crowd.

The industrial sites of Altens and the Gateway Business Park may be a solution for car-parking away from the residential streets of Cove, Charleston, Redmoss and Kincorth, which will undoubtedly be areas where supporters will attempt to park, with all the inconvenience to local residents and any visiting relatives and friends. Public transport in the area can also be seriously delayed because of inconsiderate parking, so to state in the future development plans that parking restrictions will be determined in consultation with Aberdeen City Council prior to the opening of the stadium, without actually having worked out a plan showing the residents in the area the effect the restrictions will have on their lives for 10 months of the year, is in my opinion treating the residents with contempt. I believe Wellington Road currently an Urban Clearway from Monday to Friday between Hareness Road and Makro roundabout should be extended to include Saturdays and Sundays and to continue along Wellington Road until at least the Charleston Flyover Junction to allow travellers not visiting the stadium to pass relatively freely on their journeys.

Travel

As I stated, currently 72% of "home" supporters travel to Pittodrie by car. In an era when people will not get out of their cars to travel by public transport and with rising costs on travel by public transport, no evidence that this will change has been shown and this appears to be a flaw in the fundamental changes to travel behaviour envisaged. First Group had no buses running on New Years Day, a match day when Aberdeen hosted Dundee United. Over 12,000 fans turned out for this game, the vast majority travelling to the game by car. People will make their own choices on methods of travel.

I wish to consider the various traffic routes. Traffic getting to the stadium from the south should have little trouble arriving whether by coach or car, however traffic coming from the north, west or even east of the new stadium have only two access roads ie Wellington Road or Great Southern Road. The old Bridge of Dee is a key trouble spot with well known traffic problems at South Anderson Drive with the retail park congested

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at weekends and no consideration seems to have been given to the additional traffic that comes in to the city from October to December for Christmas Shopping, the same period that the football stadium will be active. In October I travelled from Hazlehead to Charleston. I got to the roundabout at Broomhill Road/Anderson Drive at 2.15pm on Saturday afternoon around the same time that the majority of supporters would be travelling to the new stadium. No home game was being played that day and yet it took 25 minutes to travel from Broomhill Road to the roundabout at the Bridge of Dee. I can only envisage the delays that will be likely in that area if the Stadium development is approved.

Closer to the new stadium the Makro store on Wellington Circle will also be extremely busy during the same Christmas Shopping Period giving additional traffic and parking problems in the area close to the access area to the new stadium.

The Charleston flyover is an accident black spot, particularly in the darker days of winter. The immediate turnoff to the left of the flyover on to the old A92 (by Fedex) leading to Redmoss Road and the rear of the new stadium is an accident problem area as cars come off the flyover from the south and cut across vehicles that have come up the slip road from the Bridge of Dee.

If there is an accident at the Charleston flyover, and a diversion is required, traffic from the south would likely be routed in the first instance along the A90 to the Bridge of Dee and then via West Tullos to the Stadium. This would cause even further traffic chaos at the Bridge of Dee.

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) appears to be a significant change to the transport plan if it ever gets off the ground. However, the area of the Charleston flyover will remain a problem area for traffic to the stadium as travellers from the North and West may use it, but they will link with the travellers from the South and the city supporters who will still be travelling via the Bridge of Dee and who are not affected by the AWPR. All will join Wellington Road at Charleston, so making a three way junction, where they will also likely meet queuing traffic going to the stadium.

Take two other routes. Travelling from King George VI Bridge via West Tullos Road and also city centre traffic coming via Queen Elizabeth II Bridge via Wellington Road (ie Nigg Brae), both will join at a bottleneck at Harenness Road Roundabout and from there to the stadium more traffic congestion can be expected. The impact with all the additional traffic will seriously inconvenience residents living in the area who wish to travel to/from the city centre, or other parts of the city, whether by car or by public transport, due to the traffic congestion in the area. Public transport users will be

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inconvenienced with overcrowded buses and rowdy fans. Segregation of fans on public transport would be required for those visiting fans arriving at the Railway Station and travelling to the game, as well as away team supporters who live within the city. Without segregation trouble can easily break out anywhere, as was experienced at the Gordon Hotel after an Aberdeen/Celtic match as recently as I believe, the year 2009. Any outbreak of trouble is more than likely to affect the innocent local residents in the area when it occurs.

With an additional 3000 or so homes being built on either side of Wellington Road by Scotia and Stewart Mime Homes in the West Cove and Redmoss Areas, additional traffic from those homes also requires to be brought into the equation when considering future traffic trends. The average home in the Cove Area appears to have at least 2 cars per household, therefore an additional 6000 cars could be anticipated within the area of the new build homes.

For future developments in the Cove area, the Local Plan proposes a Rail Station in Cove. If this is the case then football supporters will be walking through the housing estates of Altens, Cove and Charleston to reach the new stadium. Currently at Pittodrie, strong policing of visiting supporters being escorted from the Joint Railway Station to the football ground, segregating them from home supporters has been successful. It is not that long ago away supporters walked along King Street smashing windows etc and business's having to board up premises until the games were over. These lessons must be remembered if a railhead is to be built at Cove or disgruntled away supporters could cause a great deal of damage to houses and other properties in the area.

Local Amenities

A great number of travelling supporters who may have been on the road for up to 4 hours will require on arrival, the use of local amenities whether these be restaurants, fast food outlets, public houses and of course toilet facilities. In the area around the planned stadium there are few facilities of this nature and certainly not enough to cater for a large football crowd or concert audience.

Alternatives

From a travel perspective, Pittodrie Stadium is like a hub. Traffic comes in from the North along King Street or the Beach Promenade; from the West along various routes such as Great Northern Road, Clifton Road, Cairncry Road, Lang Stracht, Queen's Road, North Deeside Road/ Great Western Road, Garthdee/Broomhill Road, then from the south along Great Southern Road and Wellington Road, splitting traffic throughout the city, in comparison to the new stadium development with only two main access

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roads linking on Wellington Road. Parking is also available near Pittodrie along the Beach Promenade and City Centre parking areas from where people do walk to the stadium.

The city centre has an abundance of amenities required for all supporters, ie restaurants, fast food outlets, public houses, toilet facilities and a public transport service which is already established and runs from all areas around the city into the centre.

On a totally separate issue, I do have some concerns with regard to the area surrounding the Loch of Loirston. I am one who daily walks my dog around the Cove and Kincorth Hill Areas. The one thing which is of concern is the amount of water always lying on paths or in fields and never draining away. I know of two houses which are relatively close to the Loch and which have both suffered from subsidence. With such a large development as the AFC Stadium being proposed close to the Loch, if subsidence is an issue in the area, has a risk assessment been carried out regarding future safety of a capacity crowd within the stadium.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I do not believe the Loirston site to be the appropriate site from either a travel or local amenities perspective. Commercial Quay to be the hub for public transport to the Stadium in an area off Market Street which became a traffic disaster area during the period prior to and up to Christmas with traffic attempting to get into the Union Square parking area hardly appears to be an ideal new hub for travel to the stadium. A football stadium in a venue near to the current Pittodrie Stadium would be more advantageous and is the stronger option when comparing travel requirements and amenity availability.

There are too many uncertainties in the Loirston travel plan which relies on fundamental and yet unproven changes in travel behaviour and I believe the residents of Cove will be greatly inconvenienced with parking restrictions and travel congestion and for those reasons I am opposed to the AFC Development at Loirston.

There were no questions for Mr. Elrick.

Mr. Gene Abel, local resident was next to address the Sub Committee wherein he explained that he had been a resident in the area since 1971. He expressed his view that most objectors to the proposal having seen plans submitted for the Pittodrie site assumed that a decision on the new stadium had already been taken, therefore the total number of objectors recorded was not an accurate reflection of the total number of

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objectors to the stadium. He stated his view that the area had become a dumping ground for various projects over the years and expressed his disbelief at wildlife being destroyed to allow a stadium in its place. He referred to the types of geese in the area. He believed that with the building of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route the stadium would be better positioned nearer to the road. He appealed to the Sub Committee to consider that decisions taken in respect of the application would affect the lives of the residents in the area and gave his opinion that the younger generation need to see wildlife. He referred to Loirston Park as being suitable for families and provided the example of the lady who donated the Duthie Park to the city, referring to her foresight in doing so. He concluded by expressing his strong objection to the proposal and urged the Sub Committee to reflect on the proposal before it was too late to change after the stadium was built.

Mr. Abel was asked the justification for his statement that the area was used as a dumping ground for planning issues and that people didn't engage because the Council didn't listen to them when he cited examples of developments not progressed; if the developments were to go ahead, what would make it less of an evil, to which he replied that the Council were contravening the rules to even be considering the proposal at that. It is even worse that Councillors were not listening to what residents were saying. In responding to a question about raising awareness of the development in the community, he stated that people had seen the application submitted for Pittodrie and were of the view that it would be progressed regardless of what they said, therefore they had not objected.

Next to address the Sub Committee were **Mr. Carlo Crolla** and **Ms. Natasha Crolla**. Mr. Carlo Crolla, local resident commenced by advising that he agreed with the comments made by both Nigg Community Council and Cove Community Council and stated that he had the same concerns. With reference to the size and location of the stadium, he expressed his concern regarding noise levels during a football match and during concerts. He referred to an Elton John concert held at Pittodrie (June 2004) which could be heard in Cove. He indicated that he chose to live in the area which was near both town and the country. However, his choice would be taken away by the proposed application. Mr. Crolla agreed with the comments made by Mr. Abel in relation to ongoing issues and projects for the area. He concluded by expressing his concern that the stadium proposal would alter the character of the area and was therefore undesirable.

Ms. Natasha Crolla continued by expressing her view that the proposed stadium would ruin greenbelt and questioned why the proposal could not be built on brownfield land. She highlighted transportation problems and stated that the transport details had not

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yet been thought through, which should be the case prior to any application being decided. She questioned the evidence that Scottish National Heritage had no objections to the application and concluded by stating that the benefit would mainly be to the developer.

In response, Mr. Prentice clarified that each organisation listed in the report had been consulted in August, 2010, and their responses were available for public inspection. It was also clarified that the Council as planning authority can impose conditions on any planning application.

Ms. Crolla was asked whether or not the Balmoral Group had a junk yard, to which she responded that it was not a tidy operation.

Mrs. June Wemyss, local resident, was next to address the Sub Committee. She expressed her support for comments previously raised regarding the area for the proposed development being a greenbelt site with a wealth of wildlife including young deer who appeared in her front garden during December when there was an abundance of snow. She expressed her view that she would like to keep the area as it was and to continue enjoying the wildlife.

In relation to traffic issues, she referred to the traffic chaos which would be created along Wellington Road and questioned whether the bus service would improve. She also referred to the impact of the proposal on the railway station and the bus station at Guild Street. It was her view that traffic congestion would contribute to the traffic bottlenecks at the Bridge of Dee and at the Haudagain roundabout, and stated that there would be parking problems for residents, particularly if a controlled parking zone was in place. In addition, the stadium should remain at the Beach, there being no benefits of a move from Pittodrie to the Loirston site. There was a lack of concern for residents in the area for the stadium to be lit up with a red light at night and also to the creation of noise pollution. Further, was the issue of the stadium competing with the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre. She concluded by referring to the proposal's carbon footprint and environmental pollution and highlighted her concern regarding the health and safety risk of exiting onto Wellington Road in an emergency situation.

There were no questions for Mrs. Wemyss.

Next to address the Sub Committee was **Mr. James Brownhill**, who commenced his presentation by advising of his family background in the area and as a football supporter and claimed that he represented the whole population of Aberdeen.

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He stated the reasons for opposing the proposal, advising that the area was greenbelt as stated in the existing Local Development Plan. This should drive the land use and the application was, in his view, premature in light of the consultation currently on the developing Local Development Plan. He referred to the feasibility study wherein there was reference to the capital costs of a stadium at Kings Links and at Loirston. In referring to the transport assessment and the extended road network, he suggested that the modelling was insufficient and shows traffic delays of only ten minutes at Bridge of Dee. He questioned the issues contained within the traffic modelling in that the shift of the mode of transport was a reversal of the current situation and suggested there were gaps in the transport assessment.

In referring to the environmental assessment, he expressed surprise that otters had not been mentioned earlier and questioned the detail concerning the number of birds around the loch contained within that statement.

Mr. Brownhill advised that he attended the site visit to the loch prior to the hearing and in relation to the lie of the land, the base site needed 3.5m of landfill to bring the height up to the level of the loch. The stadium would be half the height of St. Nicholas House and the proposed mitigation measures of planting 400 trees in addition to a large number of bushes would not hide the stadium.

He referred to a survey undertaken in 2009 of Aberdeen Football Club fans and gave statistics on the fans' views on a preferred site of a stadium. He also provided statistics regarding transport usage.

In referring to the community meeting held last night, he advised that no one attending supported the proposal. He concluded by showing various pictures of the loch and the surrounding areas and expressed his view that any development should enhance the natural aspects in the area. He hoped that the Council would make the right decision and allow the sun to continue setting over the loch.

Mr. Brown was asked to clarify how many of the photos he had shown were of the actual development site, rather than the loch, to which the response was that most were taken from the northern end of the loch; and how this would change things for ospreys and otters.

There being no further presentations to be made to the Sub Committee, the Convener invited anyone present who had not previously spoken to come forward if they felt that a concern which they had or a matter which they felt should be aired had not been

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raised. There being no other speakers, the Convener thanked everyone for their contributions and for raising the points made. She appreciated that many of the speakers were not used to addressing the Sub Committee and indicated her thanks for their efforts in providing their views today.

She advised that the next step in the process was for officers to fully assess the merits of the proposal taking into account all the written representations and the issues raised today.

Under new legislation introduced in 2009 as part of the Scottish Government's Modernisation of the Planning System, a planning application that has been subject to a predetermination hearing required to be determined by the full Council. Officers would endeavour to complete their assessment and report to the Council meeting in February, 2011.

Elected Members were reminded not to express opinions on the proposal prior to the application being referred to Council, at which, a final decision on the application would be made.

It was clarified that submissions for consultees could still be contributed prior to the stage where a decision would be taken on the application.

- **KATHARINE DEAN, Convener.**