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To: All members of Council.

Town House,  
ABERDEEN 09 January 2018

## **PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – SECOND PRE DETERMINATION HEARING**

The Members of the **PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in the Council Chamber - Town House on **WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018 at 9.30 am.**

FRASER BELL  
HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

### **B U S I N E S S**

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 1 Members please intimate any declarations of interest

#### **MINUTE**

- 2 Minute of the Previous Pre Determination Hearing of 13 September 2017 - for information (Pages 3 - 56)

#### **GENERAL**

- 3 Proposed Community and Sports Facilities, Football Academy, (comprising outdoor pitches, pavilion, ancillary buildings), Stadium (20,000 capacity), ancillary uses, formation of access roads, parking and associated landscaping and engineering works - 170021 (Pages 57 - 110)

Please note that all documents associated with this application including letters of representations can be viewed at the following link. Please enter reference number 170021.

<https://publicaccess.aberdeency.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=OJMF3EBZIED00&activeTab=summary>

To access the Service Updates for this Committee please use the following link:

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## PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-DETERMINATION HEARING

ABERDEEN, 13 September 2017. Minute of Meeting of the PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE DETERMINATION HEARING. Present:- Councillor Boulton, Convener; Councillor Jennifer Stewart, Vice Convener; Councillor Donnelly, the Depute Provost and Councillors Alphonse, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Greig, Hutchison, John, Malik, McLellan, Sandy Stuart and Wheeler.

Also in attendance: Councillors Allard, Bell, Delaney, Jackie Dunbar, Duncan, Flynn, Grant, Henrickson, Houghton, Hunt, Imrie, John, Laing, Lumsden, MacGregor, Avril MacKenzie, McRae, Nicoll, Noble, Samarai, Townson and Yuill.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest in respect of the item on today's agenda, thereafter, the following declarations of interest were intimated:-

- (a) Councillor Henrickson declared an interest by virtue of him being a season ticket holder with Aberdeen Football Club (the applicant) and also a shareholder for Aberdeen Football Club. Councillor Henrickson left the hearing and took no part in the consideration of the item;
- (b) Councillor Alphonse declared an interest by virtue of her having business dealings with Stewart Milne, Chairman of Aberdeen Football Club. Councillor Alphonse left the hearing and took no part in the consideration of the item;
- (c) Councillor Cooke declared an interest by virtue of him being a member of Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and also as a member of Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA);
- (d) Councillors Jackie Dunbar, McLellan and McRae declared an interest by virtue of their employment with Kevin Stewart MSP who had publicly supported the approval of the stadium;
- (e) Councillors Bell, Grant and Yuill declared an interest by virtue of being a member of SDPA;
- (f) Councillors Allard and Delaney declared an interest by virtue of them knowing some of the respondents who were due to address the committee;
- (g) Councillor Samarai declared an interest by virtue of her employment with Mark McDonald MSP who had publicly supported the approval of the stadium;
- (h) Councillor Hutchison declared an interest by virtue of (i) his employment with Kevin Stewart MSP who had publicly supported the approval of the stadium, (ii) his employment with the British Army regarding Gordon Barracks agreement with Aberdeen Football Club for the use of the training facilities at Gordon Barracks, (iii) his membership of Foundations of Hearts who partly owned Hearts of Midlothian Football Club, who had

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- commented on the application and (iv) his small personal shareholding in Hearts of Midlothian FC who had commented on the application;
- (i) Councillors Copland and Donnelly declared an interest by virtue of them being substitute members on SDPA; and
  - (j) Councillor Boulton declared an interest by virtue of her being the Chairperson for SDPA.

All Councillors remained in the hearing with the exception of Councillors Alphonse and Henrickson who left before any consideration was given to the application.

### SITE VISIT

2. The Committee conducted a site visit prior to the Hearing on Monday 11 September. The Committee was addressed by Mr Gavin Evans, Senior Planner, who summarised the proposal for the overall site.

The Convener explained that the Committee would reconvene at the Town House to commence the Hearing on Wednesday 13 September at 9.30am.

### **PROPOSED COMMUNITY AND SPORTS FACILITIES, FOOTBALL ACADEMY, ANCILLARY USES, FORMATION OF ACCESS ROADS, PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND ENGINEERING WORKS - 170021**

3. The Committee heard from the Convener who opened up the Hearing by welcoming those present and providing information on the running order of the hearing. She explained that the first person to address the Hearing would be Mr Gavin Evans and asked that speakers adhere to their allocated time in order for the hearing to run smoothly and in a timely manner.

The Committee then heard from Gavin Evans, Senior Planner, Aberdeen City Council who addressed the Committee in the following terms:-

Mr Evans explained that the site extended to 24.5 hectares and was located at West Kingsford, on the north side of the A944 dual carriageway, between Kingswells and Westhill – the A944 ran along there, to the south of the site. Westhill lay approximately 500m to the west, whilst the Prime Four Business Park was around 1km to the east, with Kingswells immediately beyond.

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) was currently under construction approximately 450m to the east of the site, with a grade-separated junction formed where it met the A944. The western edge of the site abuts the Brodiach Burn, which at that point represented the boundary between Aberdeen City and Shire.

To the south of the site were six houses, four of which were clustered together along Old Skene Road, directly to the south of the proposed stadium, and the remaining two –

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Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford – sat apart, accessed via the A944 directly. The site was zoned as Green Belt land in the Local Development Plan.

Mr Evans went on to advise that the proposal involved the following:

- construction of a 20,000 capacity, all-seated stadium, to the western part of the site. As noted on site, the stadium sat due north of the residential properties on Old Skene Road. The South stand lay between 65 and 80m away from the 4 residential properties at the nearest point;
- training facilities for the first-team would include 3 full-size grass pitches, one of which would be floodlit; an additional half-size goalkeeper training area and various smaller drill areas. These were located to the north-eastern section of the site;
- 2 all-weather 4G pitches, both of which would be floodlit. These were located to the north of the Holmlea Cottage property, which sat just to the east of Old Skene Road, on the other side of the main vehicular access junction to the site. The darker green shown on the plan between Holmlea Cottage and those pitches reflected a 12m deep landscape planting belt;
- A 'fanzone' area was immediately adjacent to the east stand, comprising a hard landscaped area between the stadium and the adjacent changing facilities, intended to act as a focal point for supporters on arrival to the site. The applicants envisaged this as a flexible space, with opportunities for pre-match entertainment, with potential for live music, DJ's or community music projects;
- A single-storey pavilion building incorporating office space and changing facilities, which would later be vacated by the professional staff to allow use by the AFC Community Trust and other community groups;
- 1392 car parking spaces within the site were contained within 3 main car parks;
- A visitors' coach parking area, to the west of the stadium, could accommodate up to 60 coaches for away supporters; 32 home coaches and 8 outside broadcast trucks;

Mr Evans also provided details on the strategic landscaping along the site frontage to the A944, to screen the southern edge of Car Park 1, adjacent to the west stadium access. Structure planting was also proposed along the southern boundary, between academy pitches and the adjacent residential properties at Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford. This planting would involve a landscaped belt of at least 10m depth. Similar planting belts were proposed along the eastern and northern boundaries. Along the western edge of the site, adjacent to the Brodiach Burn, a woodland planting belt was proposed. Cut and fill would be used to provide undulating landforms at the eastern and main accesses.

Mr Evans then highlighted the images for the exterior face of the south stand, which would act as the main stand, with boardroom, hospitality and main players' entrance. In terms of materials, dark grey facing brick would be used at low level, with coloured polycarbonate cladding to walls above. It was noted that this would be seen at either end of the South stand, with silver/grey aluminium rainscreen cladding surrounding an

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extensively glazed face, framed by a darker grey cladding. The south-east corner, would house the club shop at ground floor level.

In regards to planning policies, Mr Evans explained that the relevant policies were contained within the report.

Mr Evans also explained that aside from detailed consideration of the merits of the design and specific impacts of the proposal, there were matters of principle that must be considered in the planning authority's assessment. The site's location within an area designated as Green Belt meant that there were restrictions on development, with only certain specified types permitted by the applicable policy NE2.

The Local Development Plan identified two potential sites for a new community stadium: at King's Links and Loirston respectively.

SPP and the Aberdeen LDP set out a requirement that significant footfall-generating uses would be located in accordance with a sequential test which promoted a town centre first approach. As the proposed site was outwith any identified centres, the sequential test required sites which might otherwise be more preferable to be ruled out.

In regards to consultation responses, a number of consultees stated no objection or did not respond.

In regards to representations, Mr Evans advised that a total of 10,147 valid and timeously made representations had been received in relation to the application. Of those representations, 5,330 (52.5%) were in favour of the proposals, 4,797 (47.3%) stated an objection, and 20 (less than 0.2%) were neutral in content.

Finally Mr Evans advised that Members should be conscious that the number of representations received for and against any proposal was of less significance than the material planning considerations that were raised within any representations. The planning authority was required to have regard to the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. It followed that a representation which did not refer to any material planning considerations would have nothing for the planning authority to have regard to in its assessment.

The Convener then invited **Mr Mark Wilkie, Team Leader, Planning and Sustainable Development**, to address the Committee.

Mr Wilkie advised that Roads Development Management had made several technical comments in respect of the application and the original Transport Assessment (TA) based much of its traffic generation and mode split figures on the contents of a survey of supporters completed by Dons Supports Together. There was also a survey carried out by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Roads Development Management considered that the return rate and sample size of both surveys was sufficient to be statistically representative of the base.

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Mr Wilkie went on to advise that notwithstanding the above, there were concerns in respect of the methodology employed in conducting both surveys and the principal question relating to the establishment of mode share asked what supporters preferred method of travel would be, and this was without providing any information in respect of what public and sustainable travel options would be available to Kingsford. Mr Wilkie also highlighted that the Chamber of Commerce survey in terms of questions about mode choice, related entirely to travel to Pittodrie and there were no questions relating to travel choice to Kingsford and no information about travel choices to Kingsford.

Mr Wilkie then went on to speak about the various modes of transport including walking cycling, public transport and parking. In regards to walking he advised that due to the location, direct pedestrian access was limited however it was considered that pedestrians would walk further to a football match than they might for other reasons. Westhill would be in walking distance, as well as the southern parts of Kingswells. It was highlighted that the applicant had offered to widen the footway between the site and Westhill Drive and securing provision would require agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. Mr Wilkie explained that improvements to the carriageway and the proposed removal of the Five Mile garage layby should be conditioned which would improve the safety of the route for walkers.

In regards to public transport, Mr Wilkie advised that the site had no public transport provision within recognized walking distances and a high frequency bus route passed the site, however at present none stopped on the A944. He explained that a combination of an increase in frequency of the existing bus service was proposed, along with site-specific shuttle buses. The applicant also proposed a footbridge to be installed which in principal was acceptable, though the details would need to be agreed, which could be done by condition to the application. Mr Wilkie explained that it was proposed that shuttle buses would be used from the city centre, and both Kingswells and Dyce Park and Rides to the proposed stadium. The shuttle bus from the city centre would pick up individuals from various points throughout the city centre, including the main bus station. He advised that a condition be added prior to the commencement of the construction of the stadium, that the capacity/deliverability of the proposed pick up points be demonstrated. Mr Wilkie also highlighted that a condition should be added in regards to additional pick-ups for the shuttle bus, as there would be no pick-ups apart from the city centre and no public transport to the stadium from Aberdeenshire. Mr Wilkie also explained that in response to comments made by Roads, the applicants transport consultants had calculated the number of buses that would be needed to serve their predicted requirements and Roads had concerns with respect to these numbers. They relied on full capacity and this would include 27 standing on a First Aberdeen double decker bus and 73 standing on an articulated bus.

In regards to parking, Mr Wilkie advised that the development would include parking within the site to meet the current parking standards and in addition, the applicant had proposed to secure additional parking using existing spaces in the Arnhall Business Park. These spaces would be sold or allocated in advance. Mr Wilkie also advised that the applicant had proposed a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Westhill to remove

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parking on street, with residents entitled to permits at the applicants' expense. The scheme would be enforced by Police Scotland.

Members then asked questions of Mr Evans and Mr Wilkie and the following information was noted:

- The amount of car parking spaces would be confirmed in the final report;
- It was a concern that a lot of pedestrians could use the allocated cycle path;
- The Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Westhill would be a condition to the application;
- The applicant would pay for residents' permits who would be affected by the CPZ;
- A condition could be added in regard to the structure planting of trees;
- In regards to the spaces at the Park and Ride facilities, up to 1200 spaces could be available and 600 spaces are proposed at the Arnhall business park;
- The footbridge cost would be met by the applicant and this would be conditioned;
- The implementation of the CPZ was critical to the viability of the proposal;
- There would be an annual review regarding the shuttle bus service and this would investigate whether additional stops were required;
- Light pollution had been looked at by the Environmental Health department;
- The Park and Ride service would not be compromised for users not going to the stadium as the usage was quite low at present; and
- There had been no discussions at present with Police Scotland in regards to segregation.

Eric Owens, Interim Head of Planning and Sustainable Development addressed the hearing and clarified the position in regards to Roads Development Management (RDM). Mr Owens explained that there remained an outstanding concern with the proposed application; however these were not significant enough to warrant a recommendation for refusal from RDM. Instead, RDM specified that certain conditions would be required before the application could progress. Mr Owens also advised that the most important facets of this pertained to the implementation of both the CPZ and the pedestrian footbridge. Should either of these elements be undeliverable, RDM's stance would change to a position of recommending refusal as these were critical to the viability of the proposal. A condition would be required which stipulated that the deliverability of the footbridge (and associated bus laybys) and the CPZ would need to be demonstrated by the applicant prior to the commencement of any construction of the stadium. Additionally, the implementation of these two items would be required prior to the opening of the stadium.

The Convener then invited the applicant to address the Committee, and the speakers consisted of **Elaine Farquharson-Black, Partner at Burness Paull; Ally Prockter, Chief Executive of AFC Community Trust; and Derek McInnes, Team Manager of Aberdeen Football Club.**

Mrs Farquharson-Black began and advised that in determining this application, Members would require to assess whether the development accorded with the relevant



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provisions of the Development Plan and if not, whether there were material considerations which justified approval. She added that it should be borne in mind that the Development Plan required to be considered as a whole and a judgement made about the weight to be given to conflicting policies. Mrs Farquharson-Black explained that, the key issues were (a) the need for a new stadium, (b) the need for co-location, (c) Green Belt versus Economic policies, (d) site specific environmental issues, (e) transport implications and (f) material considerations.

Mrs Farquharson-Black advised that Aberdeen Football Club had a proud history and aside from its on pitch successes, the Club had also been at the forefront of stadium design. It was the first club to introduce the dugout in the 1920s and in 1978, Pittodrie became only the second all seated stadium in Britain, which was 10 years before the Government outlawed standing in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster. Over the years, piecemeal developments had taken place at Pittodrie, such as the erection of the Richard Donald Stand, but as footballing and health and safety regulations had evolved, and redevelopment had taken place in the surrounding area, Pittodrie Stadium had become increasingly constrained and going forward there was no certainty that the Club would be permitted to continue to host European football matches at Pittodrie as it failed to meet UEFA criteria. With annual maintenance costs running at £700,000, it was also becoming increasingly uneconomic to operate a facility which dated back to 1903.

Mrs Farquharson-Black noted that in 2000, after a review of many potential sites across the City, the Club came forward with proposals to construct a new community stadium in the Green Belt in Kingswells. The plans were supported by the Council. When the proposals fell through because Scotland failed in its bid to host Euro 2008, the Council and the Club started to work together to bring forward a new stadium. The Council said it had to be more than just a football stadium. It had to act as an educational training, social, recreational, employment and community hub for the benefit of the north east area. More sites were reviewed by the Club and the Council. The choice at that time was narrowed down to Kings Links and Loirston, with the latter being considered the best option for a variety of reasons. Situated outwith the city centre, in the Green Belt, the new stadium and training facility would have been built at Loirston, but for the construction of the new City South Academy. However, the need for a new community stadium to serve the north east remained and the Strategic Development Plan identified its delivery as a regionally significant project. Mrs Farquharson-Black advised there was no doubting that there was an over-riding need and policy support for the construction of a new stadium.

Mrs Farquharson-Black explained that the Club required 25 hectares to provide all the facilities which combined to make up the community and youth development facilities, modern stadium and professional training pitches. The Club assessed numerous sites across the City, but none would accommodate a development of this scale. It was suggested that there was no need to co-locate the stadium and the pitches and as such two, or indeed more, smaller sites, remote from each other, could be found. It was important to note that from a legal point of view, there was no requirement for the Club to subdivide the different elements of the development and see whether parts can be

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shoe horned into different sites dotted around the City. She added that what Members must assess was whether the development as proposed was acceptable on the application site. The Council's vision for the new stadium was a hub of different, but complementary uses. The SDPA's response on the application confirmed that the Strategic Development Plan also envisaged multiple usage of the stadium. This could not be achieved with split locations.

Mrs Farquharson-Black advised that Kingsford was located within the Green Belt. While the pitches may be considered to be recreational facilities which were acceptable in the Green Belt, it was acknowledged that the built development was contrary to the Green Belt policy. In considering the Green Belt location, Mrs Farquharson-Black noted that the 2017 Local Development Plan did not earmark any sites for a community stadium. The work done by the Club had demonstrated that in light of the size of the site required, and land acquisition costs, there was no viable location within the existing urban area, hence the need to explore sites within the Green Belt. The SDP recognised that the Green Belt around Aberdeen would need to change to meet the growth which the Plan sought to achieve. The 2017 LDP acknowledged that the City needed to expand beyond its existing developed edges. While the Green Belt policy sought to protect the character and landscape setting of the City, the Development Plan was founded on a vision of economic growth. The Plan considered that construction of a new stadium would bring economic, social and cultural benefits to the city region. While the proposal would be a departure from the Green Belt policy, it was felt that it was supported by the economic policies of the Plan, as was the case at Loirston. At Loirston, the Council concluded that the economic, social, sports and cultural benefits for the whole community of Aberdeen that would arise from the development, justified approving the application contrary to the Green Belt Policy and Mrs Farquharson explained that Kingsford was no different.

In regards to environmental impact assessment, Mrs Farquharson-Black highlighted that (a) the site was previously a landfill, (b) there was no historic or archaeological value; (c) the EIA had shown that the site had no environmental or ecological value; and (d) given its location, next to the A944, adjacent to the built up area of Westhill and the nearby AWPR junction, the development would not have an unacceptable impact on the setting of the City. There were no objections from consultees on environmental matters. The layout, siting and design of the stadium was worked up in collaboration with the Council's masterplan and design team. Mrs Farquharson explained that there were no site specific environmental issues which would justify refusing the application.

In regards to traffic issues, Mrs Farquharson-Black advised that detailed assessment work had taken place and the Council's roads officers and Transport Scotland were satisfied that the network could safely accommodate match day traffic. In line with the Council's sustainable transport policies, the Club put in place a bus strategy to take supporters to the stadium from the City centre and back on match days. The strategy was in line with what was agreed with the Council at Loirston and had the support of local bus operators. A major concern for local residents was the potential for parking on the streets in Westhill. Parking was provided on site, in accordance with the Council's parking standards for a stadium facility.

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There was also parking available in the nearby Business Parks and it had been agreed that the Club would provide a footbridge across the A944 to facilitate safe pedestrian access to the stadium. These parking options would reduce the likelihood of on street parking in Westhill. However, the Club had agreed to enter into discussions about the delivery of a controlled parking zone in the streets closest to the stadium.

In regards to material considerations, Mrs Farquharson-Black advised that the economic, social and cultural benefits of the proposed stadium were material considerations in the determination of the application. Scottish Government Guidance advised that the planning system should facilitate positive change and promote development which increased economic activity. Mrs Farquharson-Black explained that the proposal was for £50M of private investment which would provide the opportunity for the City to host international football, rugby and other sporting events.

Through the work in the community, the stadium would bring health and social benefits, consistent with the Scottish Government's guiding principle for planning of improving health and well-being through social interaction, physical activity, sport and recreation. Objectors had suggested that moving away from Pittodrie would detrimentally impact on the city centre. They had put forward no evidence to support this proposition. The Chamber of Commerce had advised that the approximate spend by football fans in the city centre on match days was less than 1% of the north east's annual retail spend. There was nothing to indicate that this spend would be lost with the move to Kingsford.

The Committee was then addressed by **Ally Proctor, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Community Trust.**

Mr Proctor explained that from a Community Trust perspective, the application was about helping People. The Trust was a standalone charity, overseen by the Scottish Charity Regulator and was required to work towards clearly defined charitable objectives that benefitted other people. The fully inclusive community initiatives were delivered to people aged 3 to over 100 years of age. The Trust delivered 160,000 participations each year, a 500% increase in just 4 years.

It was noted that very recently, the Trust won their first European Award for Best Community & Social Responsibility Programme in relation to the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative. Mr Proctor highlighted they had no dedicated community facilities. He indicated that there was a disproportionate amount of their resource spent seeking and securing suitable facilities. He indicated that due to the age and design of Pittodrie, many areas were restricted for community use for example, internal areas used regularly during the summer months were insufficiently heated and became redundant during winter. Disability access was limited to many areas of the stadium, which reduced the inclusive nature of some activities. New co-located facilities would bring positive opportunities and benefits and additional high-quality sporting and community facilities would be made available for use by people across the North East. Use of these facilities would provide increased employment and volunteering opportunities with the Trust. Being adjacent to the AWPR would also allow the Trust to extend its reach more broadly and to be even more inclusive. Access to the sports

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facilities and the stadium, would enable them to combine class based activities with physical activity, at the same location. Staff and management on site, in fit for purpose accommodation, would allow for optimum communication for all. Iconic facilities would significantly increase what could be used to positively publicise activities, and increase participation and retention, particularly in relation to harder to reach groups.

In a similar way to the successful Aberdeen Sports Village, this complex would serve as an inspirational community environment all year round. There would be capacity to make facilities available for use by the public including the gymnasium; table tennis; aerobics; badminton; athletics and more. This could generate income for the Trust, which would then be used to benefit the local communities. The Trust was already addressing many local & national priorities including Social Care & integration, obesity, educational attainment, employability and mental health.

The Committee was then addressed by **Derek McInnes** and he advised that he wanted to talk about how important the new stadium and training pitches were to himself and all the players of Aberdeen Football Club. On his first day as manager, he had the realisation of just how poor the training conditions and facilities were. Within five minutes he had noted that the surface was in such a state that a simple passing drill was almost impossible to achieve. He explained that the club regarded themselves as a major player in Scottish football and it was totally unacceptable to be playing on such conditions.

Mr McInnes explained that they faced daily challenges in regards to training facilities and provided various examples of challenges he faced as manager with such poor training facilities. He advised that the frustration of this scenario was clear, but also advised it was embarrassing. He highlighted that looking at the league table for facilities, Aberdeen were down at the very bottom. Everyday clubs who Aberdeen were judged against had an advantage over them.

He intimated that youth teams from those clubs were currently training in better conditions than the Aberdeen first team squad, yet despite that, they were consistently second through the league campaign and had been in 3 cup finals in the last 4 years. He noted that this was due to them working harder in other areas and having a great team spirit within the club. He highlighted that other clubs were so fortunate to have what they had and he believed that with the desired facilities Aberdeen would be even stronger. He also advised that the performance and results would drop due to being unable to attract good players and this would inevitably lead to smaller crowds. Their level of success of late would be unsustainable and they needed help to continue that. The exciting prospect of a training ground and stadium alongside each other would be of huge importance and significance to everyone. Not only for all the practicalities, but Aberdeen would be the envy of all teams in Scotland. He noted that it would be a real game changer for the club and was a fantastic opportunity for them to strengthen their aims and desire to be a top 100 rated club in Europe - to be respected and admired for having such a dual facility, but also reinforcing their commitment to be a club for all, promoting togetherness, unity and a shared collective of all aspects of the club and the community. To relocate any portion to another site would immediately put physical

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barriers in their way and make achieving their goals far more difficult. He highlighted that they wanted to instil in the younger players the aspiration, the idea of training and practising with the motivation of one day playing for the Aberdeen first team inside the stadium in which shadow they would develop.

Mr McInnes questioned how did the Council want Aberdeen to be represented and regarded, and asked how did the Council want others to perceive what Aberdeen was and what it stood for.

Mr McInnes concluded by highlighting that the decision being asked of Elected Members on the planning application was the single biggest decision for the football club and noted that it was important not to be here in 10 years' time in the same position. He noted that the whole of Aberdeen and the north east region were deserving of top class facilities of which they could be proud and intimated that the supporters were deserving of a full match day experience in a modern stadium catering for all. He indicated that all of the players, and future generations of youngsters, were deserving of conditions conducive to learning, and developing the skills to be the best they could be.

Members then asked questions of the applicant, the three presenters and also the various speakers who were present to answer questions. The extra speakers were noted as:-

- Stewart Milne – Chairman, Aberdeen Football Club
- George Yule – Vice Chairman, Aberdeen Football Club
- Scott Leitch – Associate Planning Consultant, Halliday Fraser Munro
- Graham Martin – Design Director, Halliday Fraser Munro
- Alastair Scott-Kiddie – Partner, Fairhurst
- Mark Peters – Principal Transportation Engineer – Fairhurst
- Ross Wilkie – Director, Brindley Associates
- Ian Thomson – Thomson Management Consultants/McLeod & Aitken

The following information was noted:-

- In regard to extra events such as concerts, there may be one event once a year;
- To have the training facilities and the stadium at the same location would bring many benefits which would include financial aspects, less staff required and would stop crossover within many areas. Separate facilities had been problematic for other clubs and it was noted that co-location would be beneficial;
- UEFA had very strict guidelines which changed annually and as a result Aberdeen might have to play European games in either Glasgow or Edinburgh to meet the requirements, as at present Pittodrie did not meet various criteria;
- There were no facilities at present for the Community Trust;
- When benchmarking, the applicant asked other clubs if the separation of their stadium and training facilities operated well and the feedback determined that co-location was beneficial to clubs and should it have been available to them at the time they would have opted for a co-location;

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- The CPZ would be in operation on match days and would be enforced by Police Scotland and the majority of away supporters would travel by buses, which would go directly to the stadium;
- The Community Trust would continue to work within the geographical areas in which they presently worked and would build on the success of the Trust to expand and aim to work in other areas;
- There would be major implications should AFC continue to play at Pittodrie, with financial burdens and an ageing stadium. The applicant could continue to play domestic games but European matches might have to be played in the central belt;
- There would be 340 non-match days in which the Community Trust could use the facilities and this had been taken into consideration with the transport study; and
- The Community Trust would ensure youngsters were dropped off where they were picked up at and not allow individuals to get off at other destinations.

The Committee then heard from **Audrey Findlay, Westhill and Elrick Community Council (WECC)**, who advised that the application did not fit the City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2014 or the Council's Local Development Plan which was only adopted in January 2017. She noted that the application was significantly contrary to several fundamental planning policies.

Mrs Findlay went on to explain that Westhill and Elrick Community Council would be the community most affected by the proposals and they had remained neutral for some time. The site was right up against the boundary between Aberdeen City and Shire and Mrs Findlay highlighted that this was the last piece of green space between the two settlements, one in the City and one in the Shire which would be lost and the landscape of the area would be changed forever.

Mrs Findlay explained that green belt policy was very clearly laid out however it had been swept aside by the applicant as being a total irrelevance in the application. She indicated that comments made by local people against the development were often dismissed as unimportant and such comments were seen as also being unsupportive of the whole North East economy. However Mrs Findlay advised that this was not the case and those speaking against the development felt that Kingsford was not the right site for the development, but they cared as much about the whole economy as all those supporting it.

Mrs Findlay explained that one of the main issues that individuals had raised concerns about to the Community Council was on roads and transport issues. Mrs Findlay advised that whilst many felt that the bottlenecks would only be experienced with home games at weekends, WECC felt that this would not be the case. Mid-week games could impact on rush hour traffic and would only add to the problems already experienced on the A944. She highlighted that even once the AWPR was complete and in operation, it had been recorded that the A944 was the one route unlikely to

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benefit from the completion of the bypass. The bypass had also been designed on 2008 road usage, which was very different to what was being experienced.

Mrs Findlay went on to question about future plans at the proposed stadium, and different activities which might take place. Travel plans for such events would be very different to match days and the car would remain the main model of travel. Mrs Findlay felt that the stadium would not sit empty when not required by AFC.

Mrs Findlay went on to speak about the community facilities and noted that the City and Shire Strategic Development Plan did not allow for a Community Stadium and she felt that there were a lot of unanswered questions still to be resolved if the development did go ahead.

The major concern for residents of Westhill and Elrick would be the parking problem and Mrs Findlay advised that they understood the changes in the reduction of the on-site car parking spaces and green sustainable travel plans were being sought. However Mrs Findlay advised that the promise of 600 to 800 car parking spaces within Arnhall/Kingshill Business park was only a statement of intent by AFC and no real evidence supported that.

She highlighted there were many concerns and serious doubts expressed regarding the contents of the traffic impact statement and figures used in it about how people would travel to the stadium and the numbers of busses available were both being questioned. Mrs Findlay felt that in reality it would be almost impossible to have a sustainable travel plan in that location when trying to move over 2000 people across a busy dual carriageway.

Mrs Findlay also spoke about the over-bridge to allow pedestrians to get access to the stadium. She questioned whether it would be safe to use, would it be DDA compliant and asked what it would look like, stating that the suggested proposal had to be bordering on a material change to the original application lodged some nine months ago.

In regards to the parking in Westhill, Mrs Findlay highlighted the need for a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and how this would need to be implemented by Police Scotland and she felt that this could be a big issue to sort out.

Mrs Findlay concluded by thanking the Committee and advised that this was a planning application and the already agreed planning policies must be taken into account.

Members then asked Mrs Findlay a number of questions and the following was noted.

- The car parking on site was not enough and within Aberdeenshire there were not good transport links to the stadium which would add to the pressure on the A944;
- The land was not currently in use and was owned by a farmer;

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- The facility would be expensive to build and maintain and Mrs Findlay raised concerns that it would be more than once a year that the stadium would be used for an event such as a concert; and
- Mrs Findlay did not think the stadium would benefit Westhill and noted concerns raised from voluntary groups and also the Westhill shopping centre.

The Committee was then addressed by **Mr Ian Cox, Secretary of Kingswells Community Council**. He advised that they had taken the views shared by the people in Kingswells who had raised concerns with the planning application and also with the applicant at their pre-application consultations. He also said that a proportion of residents were in support of the application.

Mr Cox explained that they recognised the need for the club to get new facilities and also recognised the good work of the Community Trust and that there were benefits to having the facilities on the doorstep. However he advised that the applicant had not properly considered alternative sites and insistence on co-location had resulted in one outcome; the selection of the Kingsford site. He stated that it was questionable that the financial benefits to the club could justify the need to disregard so many planning policies. He highlighted that the stadium could provide the same benefits to the north east wherever it was built and there was nothing special about the Kingsford site except the ability to co-locate the two components of the development.

In regards to the proposed application extension at Prime Four Kingswells, Mr Cox explained that the Community Council had worked well with the developer and as a result of the work undertaken with Drum Group on Prime Four, all of the suitable greenbelt along the A944 had been used. Mr Cox advised that the area of greenbelt being proposed prevented coalescence of two communities who wanted to maintain their own identities and avoid ribbon development along the A944. The development site would use up most of the greenbelt and the remaining area would be ineffective in achieving its primary purpose.

Mr Cox explained that the applicant was imposing itself upon 5000 residents in Kingswells and 12000 in Westhill who knew nothing about a stadium before moving to a semi-rural location and this did not apply to the two locations identified in the Local Development Plan.

Some of the outstanding issues Mr Cox identified were:-

- Breaches of many planning policies designed to ensure development was located in the right place and did not result in coalescence; ribbon development along the A944 or urban sprawl;
- Quality of life issues include (a) peak time congestion during leisure time, (b) rogue parking in public car parks in Westhill which would affect leisure and social activities and the ability to go about normal daily activities such as shopping;
- That a CPZ had been proposed for Westhill but not Kingswells and the possibility of fans parking in Kingswells streets and walking to the Park and Ride to catch a shuttle bus had not been considered.



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Mr Cox highlighted his concern at fans walking from the site and wandering onto the busy A944, which would also be narrower to accommodate the wider footpath. He also highlighted that the area around Kingsford lacked the extensive CCTV coverage used to monitor crowds around Pittodrie.

He highlighted that the latest changes to the traffic assessment had identified the need for an over bridge and felt that this was not the best solution. The stairs would be hazardous to crowds of fans and a push or stumble could have serious consequences. He also questioned whether fans would queue to use the bridge or simply cross the busy A944. Mr Cox intimated that an underpass that was gated outside match times would be the best solution.

Mr Cox advised that the whole traffic assessment (TA) was justified by showing that traffic from the stadium would be no worse than at peak times and it was assumed that Prime Four would pay for mitigating the effects of peak time travel. All work had now stopped on Prime Four and the provision of the mitigation measures for the stadium had to be in doubt. Without mitigation, some parts of the AWPR roundabout would operate at three times the capacity and he intimated that this was not accounted for in the TA.

In regards to the visuals, he explained that the red and grey stripes were the second attempt at making the building more appealing; however there would still be a significant visual impact which would be worse when the structure was lit. He advised that the fan zone would generate noise that was not mitigated and would be heard over a significant distance and this could be demonstrated by previous events held adjacent to the area.

Mr Cox noted that the applicant claimed that the adverse impact from the stadium would only occur 26 times a year; however the visual impact and the loss of a sense of place, the impact from additional traffic control on the A944 and the impact of narrowing a busy route into the city centre would be imposed permanently.

In conclusion, Mr Cox encouraged members to ignore the hype surrounding the application and decide based on planning policies. He intimated that there were too many breaches in planning policy and the consequences of ignoring them may set precedence in the future. He highlighted that should the application be approved, there were a host of issues that needed to be mitigated and he felt that as the club were the main beneficiary, they should pay for all of these mitigations.

Members then asked a number of questions of Mr Cox and the following was noted.

- At a previous event held in Westhill, the noise could be heard in Westhill but not in Kingswells;
- The width of the bridge at 3m was a concern, as well as concern at people pushing and queueing to get on the footbridge;

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- Mr Cox could see a benefit to Kingswells for the stadium however added only if the stadium and training facilities were separate and not on the same site;
- Controlling the CPZ would be low priority for Police Scotland;
- The land was the last piece of greenbelt between the two communities;
- There was no parking problem at present in Kingswells however should the 2.9 people per car not be realised then it could be significantly different; and
- The red building which was being proposed was not suitable and a more subtle look should be looked at in order to merge into the skyline.

The Committee was then addressed by **Mr Jim McKay and Ms Susan Haslam, SEPA**, who advised that SEPA was a statutory consultee on large planning applications and provided advice to applicants and the planning authority in relation to issues within their remit.

In regards to the proposed application, Mr McKay explained that SEPA's main issues were:-

- (a) ensuring that the former landfill site that lay below part of the site could be remediated to be suitable for the proposed use;
- (b) that buildings would be free from flood risk and not result in increased flood risk elsewhere;
- (c) that the site was drained appropriately and that local burns were protected; and
- (d) ensuring that construction works were managed in a way that protected the environment from pollution.

SEPA had considered all these issues very closely during the pre-application and Environmental Impact Assessment processes, and sought further information from the applicant to make sure they were adequately addressed, and involved the Council's own specialists as necessary, such as those covering contaminated land.

SEPA were content that, in so far as the former landfill was concerned, the proposals for site restoration and use were capable of being authorised by SEPA, and the impact on the environment could be addressed.

In regard to flooding, SEPA were content that the buildings themselves would be located in areas that were not at risk of flooding and that the landscaping on the site would not result in additional flood risk elsewhere.

With regards to drainage, SEPA advised that the drainage proposals outlined were suitable and should ensure adequate treatment. Foul drainage would connect to the public sewer which they considered to be the best environmental option. Surface water would be treated using Sustainable Drainage Systems.

In relation to the protection of burns, SPE welcomed that the site had been designed to integrate the burn within it as a positive feature of the development. They were satisfied that a proposed buffer area beside the burn had been identified and had asked that

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details of the proposals in this area be worked up further so that additional environmental benefits could be gained.

Finally with regard to ensuring the construction works would not cause pollution, they welcomed the offer by the developer to produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan to set out in detail how the works would be carried out in a way that did not pollute the environment. SEPA also requested that this be ensured by condition.

In summary, Mr McKay advised that SEPA were content that all of their issues could either be directly controlled by them satisfactorily via regulations administered by SEPA or could be controlled by attaching suitable planning conditions to the consent, and that there would not be an unacceptable impact on the environmental issues within their remit.

The Committee then asked a number of questions of Mr McKay and Ms Haslam and the following information was noted:-

- In regard to be being satisfied about flooding issues, SEPA had liaised with the applicant on various issues and were now content;
- In regard to surface water, a condition could be added with the application; and
- SEPA were content with the foul drainage and surface water as well as the car park being on the flood plain.

The Committee was then addressed by **Katherine Sneed, Jigsaw Planning and Diane Reid who were speaking on behalf of No to Kingsford Stadium group (NKS)**. Ms Sneed began by advising that planning decisions in Scotland should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there were material considerations of significant weight to indicate otherwise. She explained that Aberdeen had a very up to date development plan, only adopted in January 2017. The proposed development was significantly contrary to this development plan and the debate therefore should be on whether the justification set out by the applicants was sufficiently material and had sufficient weight to warrant planning policy being set aside.

Ms Sneed highlighted that the applicant's response to various policies seemed to be that "it was not relevant", "that the strict application of policy was not appropriate" and that policy was not "significantly material to the Kingsford application", all quotes taken from their documentation. Ms Sneed highlighted that the proposal was not one which the planning department would see every week, but would be the sort of development that had been planned for through the allocation of sites within the Strategic Development Plan.

In regards to the principles that Elected Members should take into consideration, Ms Sneed highlighted that the site was within the Green Belt and the aim of Aberdeen Green Belt was clearly set out in the Local Development Plan:-

- to maintain the distinct identity of Aberdeen and the communities within and around the city, by defining their physical boundaries clearly;

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- to avoid coalescence of settlements and sprawling development on the edge of the city;
- to maintain Aberdeen's landscape setting and provide access to open space; and
- the Green Belt directed planned growth to the most appropriate locations and supported regeneration.

Ms Sneedan highlighted that the removal of the Green Belt was something that was done through the preparation of a new Local Development Plan if the Council felt it would be justified and appropriate. NKS believed that it would be highly unlikely that the Council would be seeking to remove this area of Green Belt via the normal development plan process. The application was seeking to bypass that process and set aside Green Belt policy entirely.

Regardless of whether the site was allocated as Green Belt, Policy NC5 required a sequential assessment of sites to be undertaken for a use which would attract significant numbers of people and was in an out of centre location.

Ms Sneedan advised that the sequential approach did not prohibit the development of out of centre sites but it stated they would only be allowed when all the criteria was met and she highlighted the criteria as:-

- that there was a proven deficiency in provision of the kind of development proposed;
- that the proposed development would be easily and safely accessible by a choice of means of transport;
- that the proposed development would have no significant adverse effect on travel patterns and air pollution; and
- that there would be no adverse effect on the vitality or viability of any centre

Ms Sneedan also explained that the applicant's assessment was based on the requirement of AFC to co-locate all of their facilities. AFC had sought comment from other clubs, and relied on this to say that all clubs would like to have their facilities in one place. NKS were of the view that this was clearly a desire from all clubs, but what the letters highlighted was that there were alternative solutions which other clubs had embraced due to a lack of available land. An adaptive response clearly worked for other clubs and therefore the strong reliance on co-location of facilities by AFC did not equate to an automatic right to remove land from the Green Belt. Ms Sneedan explained that it was worth noting that as recently as 2015, AFC were looking to create training facilities at Balgownie in partnership with Aberdeen University which suggested that separate training facilities was a viable option. NKS fully noted the desire for AFC to be successful and stated that of course this should be supported and encouraged, but this was about whether this site was the right location to do that.

In conclusion, Ms Sneedan urged Members to stand firm on the planning policy position of the Council which was only adopted in January and continue to protect Aberdeen through the retention of the Green Belt. As such, she added that NKS respectfully requested that they refuse the planning application.

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Diane Reid, No Kingsford Stadium, also advised that the Local Development Plan provided the vision for how communities would grow and develop in the future and the intention was that they provided certainty for communities where development should take place and where it should not.

Ms Reid also explained that LDPs were the result of many years of collaboration between the Council and the residents of the communities they serve and they set out what both the Council and the residents had agreed was the best plan for the area.

Finally Ms Reid highlighted that it was not acceptable that a development of this magnitude could ride rough-shod over the work that the communities and the Council put into the creation of the LDP, especially when it did not meet the criteria set out for deviation.

The Committee was then addressed by **Mr Gary Walker and Mr Mark Wylie, residents of Aberdeen and supporters of Aberdeen Football Club**. Mr Walker advised that he was fully supportive of the proposed development and there was a need for change within Aberdeen Football Club in order to survive the future. He intimated that there needed to be support for the new facilities and it would give out the wrong signal if the development was to be refused. He felt that the present manager and top players would relocate to other clubs if the proposal did not go ahead.

Mr Wylie explained that he grew up in Aberdeen and felt that the proposed stadium would make such a huge difference to the city as a whole. He advised that Aberdonians should be proud of the city and noted that a lot of other developments were underway which included the extension to Aberdeen International airport, the new AECC and Marsichal Square. He explained that there was a momentum at present with developments in the city and the proposed development at Kingsford should be added.

The Committee then asked questions of Mr Walker and Mr Wylie and the following was noted:-

- They felt that should the stadium be rejected, that it would be a huge problem for Aberdeen;
- The whole of Aberdeen would benefit from the proposed stadium and the facilities and it would be a good statement to make to show investment; and
- There was a need for new training facilities as the current facilities been in use since the 1970s.

The Committee was then addressed by **Ms Heather Cook, Westhill resident**, who advised that there was great controversy over whether a new stadium should be built on the Kingsford site and noted that there was a need for Aberdeen Football Club to get a new stadium, however explained that Kingsford was the wrong site. Ms Cook advised that Westhill had a wide range of social and fitness facilities to benefit all and there was plenty to offer in Westhill which included badminton, senior citizens groups

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and martial arts. She highlighted that the applicant was trying to convince the public that the proposal would offer great community facilities but intimated that plenty facilities were already available to residents in Westhill.

Ms Cook explained that there were no community use sporting facilities apart from the two 4G football pitches in the plans which would be available for hire. Ms Cook intimated that after the football academy use and possibly use by other clubs too, there would be very little opportunity for true public use. Ms Cook highlighted that a small multi-use/dining room was shown on the plans and there was a blank space in the middle of the site which was a space for potential future community use. There was no detail on the plans for this, or in the supporting application and Ms Cook questioned if this would be the sports hub.

Ms Cook questioned whether separate planning permission would be required at a later date for the sports hub and highlighted that there was no guarantee this would be granted especially as she noted that it was sited in the middle zone of a pipeline restriction. Ms Cook explained that the Community Sports Hub was not as the name suggested and the plans offered no sporting facilities for those not interested in football.

Ms Cook stated that in her opinion, any benefits to the local community would be vastly outweighed by the impact on the community and highlighted that 20,000 at full capacity was more than double the whole population of Westhill and questioned how the town and local area would cope with all of the extra vehicles and people.

Ms Cook highlighted that the shuttle bus strategy which relied on so many buses would not work and questioned whether supporters would actually use it, and could revert back to car usage which would impact on even more car users searching for spaces outwith the Controlled Parking Zone, which would further increase the risk to road safety within the residential streets where children played.

In conclusion, Ms Cook encouraged Members to pay close attention to what all the professionals in the Council and other agencies were saying and intimated she could not see how the proposals could be passed given all the policies that it contravened and the multiple concerns that were being raised.

The Committee then heard from **Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Cornerstone**, who advised that Cornerstone provided care and support to over 2,500 children, adults and families across the whole of Scotland and were proud to be the only Aberdeen based national third sector organisation in the country. Ms Harris advised that she was a Director of Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust and was excited by the prospect of the potential to do so much more if the right conditions were to be created. Ms Harris outlined that she was very much in favour of the creation of the new facility, primarily so that the Trust, through the creation of additional community facilities, could extend the reach of the charity which provided much needed support to a wide range of communities and people across the region. The Trust, through the medium of football had the opportunity with the building of the new stadium to improve overall health and wellbeing, social inclusion and participation for many people who would otherwise be

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excluded due to lack of facilities and restricted programme delivery. Ms Harris advised that many disadvantaged or more vulnerable people living in the City and further afield came together through the language of football. Whether it be to help people with Dementia through the football memories initiative or helping others lose weight and improve their health by taking part in walking football, the common language and interest in the sport motivated and inspired people to get involved. Ms Harris highlighted that the Trust had a lot of support from generous individuals and businesses who donated funds to assist with the expansion of their charitable activities, expansion that was currently limited by the facilities that were available. The potential to attract further funding, particularly from major grant makers and Trusts and Foundations was huge. Cornerstone and some of the children and adults they supported already benefitted from the work of the charitable trust with season tickets, access to the box on match days, disability football and volunteering opportunities for disadvantaged young people to name but a few. However Ms Harris explained that there were so many others who could benefit, and also of many other community and voluntary groups in the city who would love to be involved in some way. This was currently limited by both the lack of facilities and the operating capacity of the Trust and these issues could be addressed by the creation of the site at Kingsford.

Ms Harris went on to advise that accessibility was a key issue for those with a disability, and the current stadium and associated facilities, although they met statutory requirements, were not designed to today's expected standards. The new stadium and associated facilities would mean that everyone who had a disability or other similar need would have an equal opportunity to participate. Ms Harris noted that as someone who represented the voice of people with disabilities, families crying out for respite, people with Dementia and others, she was excited about the possibility of having access to the new gymnasium, the football pitches, to play table tennis, to do aerobics; to play badminton, to participate in evening classes and most importantly to feel part of something that through the medium of football would have the opportunity to enhance lives.

Ms Harris concluded that the new facility would put the Trust and its activities on another level and would ensure that even more people could benefit from a first class community hub.

The Committee asked various questions of Ms Harris and the following was noted:-

- There was a huge potential for more charitable donations for the Community Trust, should the right facilities be there; and
- 17000 people were presently supported and benefitted from the Community Trust however with new facilities they hoped this figure would double.

The Committee then heard from **Mr Mike Forbes, Westhill for Kingsford Group, and Mr Keith Sinclair, Kingswells Yes to Kingsford Group**. Mr Forbes was supportive of the application and advised that he represented the people in the town closest to Kingsford who supported the proposed development and noted that this was a

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significant number of people who recognised the benefits to the local area and the greater Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Mr Forbes explained that the reason he formed group was because he was aware of the 'No Kingsford Stadium' (NKS) group and that they were well organised and very vocal. He also learned that the Westhill and Elrick Community Council (WECC) intended to remain neutral on the subject; however some of the comments that followed from a meeting he attended had given a different and negative impression.

Mr Forbes advised that one of the roles of a Community Council was to represent the views of the community; however he felt that this had not been undertaken as there had been no consultation with the wider community. It stated in the minutes from the Community Council meeting held in January 2017 that an independent survey should be conducted as this would be the only way to gauge public opinion. Mr Forbes intimated that this survey was never conducted, and as such he could not accept that their stance was representative of the community viewpoint.

Mr Forbes advised that the No Kingsford Group had painted a picture that the development was all bad, with no willingness to accept that there would be any positive aspects and much of their communication had been scaremongering. Mr Forbes highlighted he felt their approach was driven primarily through the fear of change and not wanting a stadium near to their houses.

Mr Sinclair then addressed the Committee and explained that Aberdeen FC were a hugely respected sporting institution not only within Scotland and the UK but throughout Europe and as a city, he found it embarrassing that in 2017 the club was still lacking in the proper infrastructure and facilities befitting of an institution held in such high regard.

Mr Sinclair explained that when Derek McInnes was appointed Manager, the first thing he said was that the city had fallen out of love with the football club and the hard work, time, dedication and honesty he and his team had put into rekindling that love was never more evident than walking out at Parkhead with 43,000 Aberdeen fans making the stadium awash with red for the first cup final in 14 years. He advised that a total of 87,000 fans represented the city and did that with the colour and respect that was now to be expected from the impeccably behaved support.

Mr Sinclair highlighted the many benefits the facilities could bring to Aberdeen and what it would do for the local economy and the positive impact it would have on the surrounding areas and business. Should the application be approved, Mr Sinclair noted that the stadium and training facilities would leave a legacy that would live on and continue to contribute positively for future generations and would provide children with the best possible chance of becoming the best in class sporting athletes.

Mr Sinclair explained that not only would Kingsford provide the foundations for the future success of the club but it would also help to attract some of the UK's finest talent to a club bereft for so long of being able to offer these modern facilities that were a given to most successful sporting institutions. In recent times he advised that Aberdeen



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had to watch own home grown talent depart the city in search of these facilities to aid their development in return for international recognition. If Aberdeen had those facilities in place they would be able to hold on to that young talent and help nurture their own dedication and skills thereby ensuring that when those players reached the peak of their talents AFC could reap the rewards of a significant fee for their efforts in producing this talent. The money would stay within the club/city thereby allowing the club/city to continue to prosper with the feel good factor being the best it had been in many a year.

In conclusion, Mr Sinclair explained that there had been a dark cloud hanging over the city due to the unfortunate and prolonged downturn within the oil & gas industry. But with the construction underway of the impressive new AECC and the potential Kingsford would bring, allied to the near completion of the AWPR, the city could once again regenerate itself from a period of degeneration and could look forward to fresh investment as the city of Aberdeen regained its appeal within the UK and beyond. Mr Sinclair encouraged Members not to waste yet another opportunity to invest through lack of foresight and show proper leadership in giving something back.

The Committee asked various questions of Mr Forbes and Mr Sinclair and the following was noted:-

- Mr Forbes felt that there would only be a minor inconvenience to the residents and these could be overcome to bring the potential benefits; and
- Local businesses would benefit from increased trade on match days.

The Committee then watched a video from **Russell Borthwick, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce**, in which Mr Borthwick advised that \$27 oil brought our region to a key crossroads, and businesses of all shapes and sizes were adjusting to a new norm. Mr Borthwick explained that Aberdeen should not lose sight of the fact that the economy was one that was still the envy of many places in the UK and there was a clear and ambitious plan in place to shape the future. The Regional Economic Strategy, the City Region Deal, sectoral diversification, the City Centre masterplan – all of these were starting to be delivered and he intimated that most importantly, there was some confidence and ambition again in the area.

Mr Borthwick explained that there were early signs of an economic upturn but the momentum that had been built had to be continued in order to deliver the legacy for future generation, and he advised that there should be no slipping back into complacency.

Mr Borthwick advised that to enable the economic renaissance vision to be realised, it was important for people and organisations to bring investment, innovation, skills and jobs to Aberdeen. The Chamber believed that Aberdeen Football Club's community, training and stadium plan was one of the major infrastructure projects that was key to the future of the Aberdeen economy.

Mr Borthwick highlighted that the scheme would be privately funded, economically viable and could help support the delivery of the economic renaissance in the North-

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east. He outlined that although many fans would love to be able to continue watching the Dons playing at a new stadium within walking distance of Union Street, no viable city centre sites appeared to exist. It was therefore vital that the club was in a position to understand and demonstrate the impact on trade of moving away from the city centre.

Mr Borthwick advised that earlier this year the Chamber conducted an independent piece of research into supporters' typical match day behaviour which included a wide range of factors such as method of transport, size of group, time of arrival, parking location (if travelling by car) and other activities undertaken while in the vicinity of Pittodrie or the wider area. Over 5000 people responded with 53% of these being season ticket holders. 61% of respondents travelled by car with around two thirds of these parking a ten-minute walk or less from the stadium. 65% of respondents arrived in Aberdeen between 0 and 60 minutes before kick-off. Just 10% arrived in the city centre first before then walking or taking other transport to the stadium. Only 8% travelled with people who were not attending the match.

Mr Borthwick explained that some retailers advised that, across the UK, shoppers would tend to stay away from city centres on match days. What this analysis showed, was that the financial impact on retailers and other businesses in Aberdeen city centre would be limited although he understood there would be specific exceptions. However, Mr Borthwick felt that the net benefit to the Aberdeen City area of delivering the stadium would more than offset this.

Mr Borthwick advised that should planning permission be granted, it would just be the first step and it was vital that the club explored, understood and incorporated best practice from other new sports stadia projects into the final design. It was also important that it worked with all of its communities and stakeholders, listening and acting to ensure that the facilities really did deliver the experience that people want, not just on match days but throughout the year. Only by doing this would supporters and the wider community buy into and actively support the vision and the Chamber thought that this could be achieved.

In conclusion, Mr Borthwick highlighted that alongside the progress being made on other Masterplan projects, the Chamber believed that the club's proposals would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the city centre and as a region, it was important to continue to deliver progress at pace. He outlined that the city could not afford delays that would slow the momentum that had been built recently. Not proceeding with this high-profile project would create confusion and reduced confidence among residents and the investor community, sending out the message once again that the region was not progressive or open for business.

The Committee then asked questions of Mr James Bream, who was in attendance to answer any questions, and the following information was noted:-

- In regards to the survey carried out, the Chamber canvassed their members and Mr Bream advised that it was clear that the development of infrastructure was key;

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- The chamber estimated that there would be 190 net jobs create and £75m generated over 25 years which would be inclusive growth; and
- They did not survey individual business in the city centre but sent a survey to their members.

The Committee then heard from **Andrew McKinlay, Chief Operating Officer, Scottish Football Association**, who advised that he would outline what he saw as the positives of the proposed development but also some of the significant issues facing Aberdeen Football Club in its current home at Pittodrie Stadium.

He explained that it was important to make it clear that the Scottish FA were fully supportive of Aberdeen FC's modernisation strategy which they saw as a huge positive for Scottish football.

He indicated that Aberdeen Football Club was one of Scotland's most prominent and successful clubs and that it was his view that Aberdeen was in a privileged position compared to the other largest Scottish cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee in that, at senior football level, this was a one team city which allowed the whole city to get behind it.

He explained that not only would a new stadium provide a significantly improved experience for an increased number of Aberdeen fans, it would have far wider benefits for the game in Scotland. On Aberdeen match days it would enhance the game day environment for both the home team and the away team and its supporters providing a best in class ultra-modern stadium . At a time when other countries throughout Europe were investing in and building new stadia (in particular south of the border) it would be a major boost for Scottish football to have one of the biggest clubs doing the same.

He advised that as well as hosting Aberdeen games, the new facilities would become a major national sporting asset for Aberdeen and would greatly enhance Aberdeen's ability to host international games in the future.

He explained that traditionally over the last few years, the Scottish FA had taken the Scotland men's "A" team games to Easter Road and to Pittodrie. The redevelopment of Tynecastle would offer another attractive alternative in this regard and, from Aberdeen's perspective, it was important that it kept pace with those other stadia. It was also vitally important to the game in Scotland that the SFA were able to bring games to places other than Glasgow and Edinburgh. He indicated that there was a possibility that in the future, more games might be played away from Hampden and, if this was to be the case, it was important for Aberdeen and for Scotland that there was an appropriate stadium in Aberdeen that could host its fair share of those games.

He intimated that Pittodrie faced significant challenges not only at UEFA level but also at a domestic level. The Scottish FA had a club licensing regime which measured a number of criteria including facilities. Clubs that were granted a licence which was a

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condition of Scottish FA membership were ranked at Entry, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum level. There were a number of reasons why Aberdeen was not able to gain any more than a Silver level licence which included field dimensions (in particular the restricted width (currently 65.8m with Gold requiring 68m), something that was not easily remedied given the requirement for safe run off areas at the side of pitch), dressing room dimensions, uncovered spectator areas, the provision for disabled spectators and the media facilities. He indicated that a club of Aberdeen's stature should aspire to at least Gold level and, given its current constraints it was only now able to apply at silver level.

He explained that the UEFA issue was possibly starker. At domestic level, Aberdeen had performed exceptionally on the field in recent years and it was a clear and realistic ambition of the club (given how close they have been in recent years) to qualify for the Europa League group stages. The issues already highlighted (in particular the 68m width issue which was also part of the UEFA regulations) together with other issues such as floodlighting lux levels and the fact that UEFA were tightening up on their criteria meant that, were Aberdeen in the wonderful position of having qualified for the group stages of the Europa League, they would face significant and possibly insurmountable challenges to host their matches at Pittodrie.

He advised that the thought of Aberdeen having to play these games in the central belt was one that was rightly unthinkable to the thousands of Aberdeen fans who would want to attend these games. Indeed there would be a significant loss of revenue to the club and the city of Aberdeen and it went without saying that neither the club nor the city would want to send out this message to the rest of the footballing world.

Mr McKinlay indicated that Aberdeen FC was an award winning case study in best practice for its youth development and community engagement. A new stadium with complementary training and community facilities would underpin its commitment to the wider community as well as being a home befitting the rejuvenation of the team in recent seasons.

He intimated that the Kingsford stadium and community proposals would enable the AFC Community Trust to raise the bar and set a new benchmark for their already exemplary work in Aberdeen and would also offer an aspirational future destination for future Aberdeen sportsmen and women.

He concluded by advising that he had worked in Scottish football for the last 5 years and, added that it was fair to say that during that period, the Scottish FA had had some significant issues to deal with. However, it was a great pleasure to be talking about something so positive to Scottish football and, as it strived to set an exciting new path, the Scottish FA would encourage all stakeholders to be mindful of the wider benefits of the exciting proposal for Aberdeen its one club, the future prosperity of the national game and, above all, providing the City of Aberdeen with a community focal point of which it could rightly be proud.

Mr McKinlay answered a number of questions from Members noting the following:-

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- that in relation to concerns with segregation of home and away supporters, there would normally be a Pre-Operations meeting with club and police involvement prior to any match, with the vast majority of matches having no problems;
- that it was important that away supporters were catered for in terms of facilities;
- that due to Pittodrie Stadium's pitch size, it would be very difficult to achieve gold standard;
- that the Scottish FA would be interested in helping the development of any ideas in relation to working with children which this proposed development may generate; and
- that Pittodrie Stadium would be unable to host Scotland's national A-team games, however the proposed new stadium and facilities if approved, would be able to host games of a similar stature.

The Committee then heard from **Diane Priestley**, a resident of Westhill, who advised that the proposed plans to build a football stadium at the Kingsford site was only 350 metres from the residential area of Westhill.

She made reference to two previous planning applications proposed on the land in the past ten years, one a golf driving range in 2004 was proposed but was rejected on several grounds, mainly transportation and lack of infrastructure, the decision of which was agreed by the Scottish Office. The last application had been a new housing estate consisting of 25 houses which was rejected on the grounds of separation between Westhill and Kingswells, green belt and flooding issues. She explained that if the two aforementioned planning applications were rejected, then Aberdeen City Council should not even consider giving approval for a vast football stadium on green belt land.

She indicated that the proposed 20,000 seater stadium was over 20 metres (65 foot) high which was the equivalent to a 6 or 7 storey building and approximately 180 metres by 145 metres wide fronting on to the A944. She intimated that it was clear from the published pictures with its enhanced subtle red glow and its added Fanzone that the stadium would dominate the town of Westhill by towering above the existing properties surrounding the site. No amount of landscaping or trees would disguise the vast red concrete structure and the landscape around Westhill would change forever.

She advised that Aberdeen City Council had worked closely with Aberdeen Football club over a long period of time to establish a suitable site for the stadium and it was reported that a feasibility study costing £180,000 was carried out to assess the most suitable location. Two viable sites were recommended (Loirston Loch and King's Links) and by 2011 the planning application for the Loirston Loch site had been approved, however in 2016, the club had announced plans to seek planning approval to build a new stadium with training facilities at Kingsford despite the fact that the land was dedicated as green belt.

She intimated that transport management and parking issues had also been raised as major concerns, particularly as the proposed stadium would be situated seven miles

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from Aberdeen City. Access would have to be along the busy A944 either by bus or car as it was the only route in and out of Westhill. Private shuttle buses had been proposed to bring the fans in, however there was a recognition that fans would also travel to the site by car, but as there was only limited parking at the stadium, this would inevitably cause problems in both Westhill and the surrounding areas on match or event days.

She explained that to deal with this issue, there was a proposal to introduce a controlled parking zone, which if implemented would cover most of Westhill meaning that there will be no parking in this area on match or event days without a resident's permit, however it was not clear how this would be managed, who would pay for the administration of the scheme and how it would be enforced as there were no traffic wardens in Westhill or CCTV cameras. She asked whether it could actually be delivered or whether parking would just be a free for all.

She advised that the reasons why the proposed development should not be built at Kingsford were as follows:-

- the stadium was against Policies NE2 – Green belt, NC5 - Out of Centre proposals, D3 - Big Buildings, NC1 - City Centre Development;
- the existing Green Belt acted as a buffer between Westhill and Kingswells;
- the Kingsford site was not allocated or zoned for development, nor was it part of the Local Development Plan;
- there were viable sites already identified in the Strategic Development Plan at Loirston and King's Links;
- Pittodrie had the potential for redevelopment, many Scottish clubs had done this - Dundee redeveloped Dens Park, Hearts were currently redeveloping Tynecastle Stadium and Hibernian had redeveloped Easter Road;
- the visual impact of such an imposing structure in a semi-rural area would dominate the whole area and change the rural landscape;
- transportation chaos due to unresolved transport and parking issues;
- noise levels before, during and after the match particularly with the added introduction of a Fanzone which would operate three hours before and after the game or when hosting live music; and
- loss of revenue in Aberdeen city as stated by the Economic Department of Aberdeen City Council, with a stadium seven miles from the city centre it would potentially see a decline of £1.78m.

In summing up, Diane Priestley intimated that the proposed stadium at Kingsford would be in the wrong location and more importantly, it was a significant departure from the Local Development Plan 2017, therefore the planning application should be rejected.

In a response to a question from Members, Diane Priestley advised that following previous developments in the Westhill area including Prime Four, the AWPR and

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housing schemes, their impact had left only farmland and a part of the Kingswells and Westhill corridor which had also been eroded.

The Committee then heard from **Ian Armstrong, Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI)**, who advised that it was SCDI's view that the proposed training, community and stadium facilities at Kingsford were a great opportunity for Aberdeen to once again demonstrate leadership in driving economic growth, a principal aim of both the UK and Scottish Governments, and something that was strongly supported by his own organisation.

He indicated that in pursuit of that common economic goal, when developing the recent and well received Blueprint for Scotland's Economy, "From Fragile to Agile", they promoted the need for regulation in Scotland to be flexible and agile to support growth.

He explained that no site would ever be perfect for such a new development, nor be free from legitimate concerns, however, given the prolonged and unsuccessful efforts by the Football Club to identify a suitable city centre location, it was SCDI's view that at such a vitally important time in the development and diversification of the North East's economy, that the Local Authority needed to place greater importance than ever on the need for flexibility of policy thinking to attract and retain investment in the area. SCDI would strongly support such an agile application of policy to the development of new facilities at Kingsford.

He advised that the potential development of a sports stadium and accompanying suite of high quality community sports facilities, wholly funded by the private sector, was a great opportunity for Aberdeen and could play a significant role in boosting investment in the area by heightening its positive profile, representing another major vote of confidence in the region's long-term future. However, to reject this application would send negative signals to the wider investment community at a critical time when the city and region needed to be as open as it had ever been to new and diversified income streams not directly linked to the energy sector.

He intimated that there was a lot for the City Council to consider when looking at the detailed proposals and SCDI were conscious there would be further dialogue with the Football Club and Community Trust prior to the final determination scheduled for next month. Amidst all of that though, SCDI believed that the central guiding objective must be to facilitate development which enhanced the area and by doing so acted as a catalyst for the attraction of further hard cash and ultimately jobs into the City. A clear focus on that objective had led SCDI to support this application and they would urge the Council to do likewise.

In summary, Mr Armstrong advised that SCDI considered the opportunity afforded the City and wider Region by the Kingsford plans was one that was too good to miss. The nature and longevity of the current downturn in the oil and gas sector must focus the minds of the planners and politicians in the City. Whilst there would be recovery, the peak days of investment and employment from that industry were over and it was

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essential that Aberdeen got on with speeding up the economic diversification of the area, and its offering, to future investors and citizens.

He indicated that there was much to be positive about in the area, with long awaited transport infrastructure now being delivered, a new Exhibition Centre rapidly emerging from the ground and the refreshed “Events 365” strategy helping change external perceptions of the City.

He advised that change was always difficult and often seemed to be particularly difficult in the North East. The incomes derived from the oil and gas industry had undoubtedly benefited many businesses in the North East and many individuals. It could not be right however that communities and individuals who benefited from the region’s past economic success regularly tried to block the investment which would enable future prosperity and growth, whether that be the AWPR, Marischal Square or Kingsford.

He intimated that Aberdeen could not preserve our surrounds and environment in aspic, instead Aberdeen needed to embrace and accelerate the process of change which the City and Region would need to ensure future generations would have the same opportunities as many of his generation and older had had.

In conclusion he advised that on behalf of SCDI, the Council should not be afraid of change, but to ‘give it a bosie’ and keep the foot to the pedal of progress and approve the major investment in training, community and stadium facilities.

In a response to a question from Members, Ian Armstrong advised that investment would breed further investment, therefore a refusal of the development would be less attractive.

The Committee then heard from **Ferdinand Von Prondzynski, Principal of Robert Gordon University (RGU)** who advised that the university was an educational institution, with a core mission of providing students with core skills and life chances. It also supported economic, social and cultural development in the Aberdeen and the region.

He indicated that RGU was also an international university, with students from over 130 countries. He explained that for the purposes of student recruitment, it was of real importance that RGU could demonstrate that Aberdeen boasted facilities and attractions that were of very high quality. Football played a very important role and the recent successes of Aberdeen Football Club had contributed significantly to the attractiveness of the city as a location in which to study.

He intimated that RGU was also strongly committed to support the drive for economic development and regeneration, and again this required the city to have a sense of confidence and forward looking creativity. The plans put forward by AFC would make a very considerable contribution to this objective.



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He advised that RGU had a strong partnership with AFC, particularly through sports science expertise. The new facilities would create a new dimension to this collaboration.

He concluded by indicating that best practice, as evidenced by the recent stadium development by Manchester City Football Club, suggested that the stadium and training facilities should be co-located and of a very high standard. This was the case with the proposals from AFC. He intimated that he strongly supported them.

The Committee then heard from **Reverend Scott M Rennie, Queen's Cross Church** who advised that it was only rarely in life and in the life of a community, that an opportunity presented itself to take a decision that would have a positive and lasting impact on the whole life of that community, both from an economic and social perspective. He indicated that this application was one of those rare opportunities.

He advised that along with many other citizens, he welcomed the efforts and significant decisions the City Council had been taking, with support from across parties and communities for the reinvigoration of the life of the city, from the new AECC to the City Centre masterplan.

He intimated that support for Aberdeen FC's new stadium and training facilities was another of those critical opportunities to help the city move forward to the future, and he urged the Council to support the club's plan.

He explained that he was a football fan, and since boyhood had been supporting his hometown team, and the club had been a fantastic ambassador in his lifetime, not just for football, or its fans but for the city. He advised that people all over Europe had heard of Aberdeen in relation to football. As a football fan he indicated that he had been saddened by the discussion around Kingsford, by the sometime characterisation of football fans as near hooligans who were set to go on the rampage at any football match. He indicated that if not always said outright, he felt that in some of the objections, the inference had been there which was both unfair and untrue.

He explained that football clubs had a great opportunity to make a difference in a community and none had embraced that opportunity in greater fashion than the city's club. He advised that he knew first hand through his involvement in partnership with the Community Trust and Club the difference they had made in the voluntary sector to date, but also how limited they were, and would be in the future, without a new stadium and community facilities, side by side at Kingsford.

He intimated that two years ago, the club through the Community Trust contacted him to try and commence some outreach work with the LGBT community in the city, not simply around supporting the team, but also with a view to offering opportunities in coaching and health promotion. That work was ongoing, and AFC deserved credit for being the first club to take its responsibilities in this area seriously, reaching out to the LGBT community in the north east when it was still untested in Scottish Football and

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unfashionable. Their efforts were only now, some years later, being followed by other clubs in Scotland.

He advised that one huge restriction in bringing people together as a voluntary group was the club's woeful lack of accommodation at Pittodrie, meaning for example that the group had to meet in a pub environment, which was fine in one sense, but was actually difficult to find dedicated accommodation for the fan group especially on a Saturday. He indicated that the group currently met in a crowded pub, where it was difficult for people to find them, and was a place that was certainly not discrete for anyone who was wanting to come for the first time, or who might be on a difficult personal journey of coming out, and looking for new LGBT friends who also shared a love of football. He explained that he knew many people who were not LGBT and found it difficult to understand, but when someone was on the journey of coming out, particularly if they felt isolated, the value of community groups who share common interests, whatever they were, were critically important. It was more than a get together; it provided one more space for people to come, make friends and be themselves in a safe space.

He advised that for their opening function the club found them a space in the centre of town, in a pub where they still met, but it was far from ideal, and from all the good practice he knew from England, clubs there with their superior facilities had been able to host fans groups like theirs in their stadium itself. He advised that he knew from the Community Trust's work that this was a constant frustration for them.

He intimated that they were far from the only community group to suffer from the Club and Trust's lack of good facilities. The Kingsford application would provide a dedicated solution for what he said was the magnificent work of the Community Trust. The difference the Trust had made in the life of the third sector in this city could not be overstated. They deserved more than European awards, or kind column inches in newspapers, they deserved from the city itself a foundation at Kingsford to take forward their work.

He explained that Kingsford commended itself both from its accessibility next to the AWPR and critically because on that site the Trust and Club had the possibility to have the best possible combination of accommodation and open space for their work. He indicated that they were one small group, among many beneficiaries of the Club's community work across the Aberdeen and Shire community. What the Club were trying to give to the community through the Trust was remarkable, and it deserved the Council's support. The nature of a development like Kingsford was that it would attract fears and concerns from whoever happened to live beside it, wherever it was placed.

He made reference to the subsequent failures to develop at Belford, and most recently Loirston and advised that many of these fears would in time, (given the Club's strenuous attempts to respond generously to them) pass. He intimated that he believed that the development as proposed would be of benefit not only to the locality in the west of the city, but for the entire city, third sector and voluntary groups.

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He concluded by urging the Council to look to the wider needs and ambitions of the city and to request that they determine in favour of the Kingsford application.

The Committee then heard from **Bruce Cruickshank and Jyll Skinner, Aberdeen Cycle Forum** who advised that the Aberdeen Cycle Forum existed to promote cycling in Aberdeen City and Shire.

Mr Cruickshank advised that putting people on bikes, particularly for short journeys benefitted the physical and mental health of those cycling and had a positive effect on everyone via reduced emissions and fewer cars on busy roads.

He explained that the Westhill Cycle Path/Core Path 91 was one of the busiest routes for cycle commuters and was one of three hot routes into the city, which was very busy, and would get busier with the relocation of the Total Headquarters to Westhill in October which would add a potential further 60 to 80 daily cycle journeys on the path.

He advised that the path was utilised not only by cyclists but also by cyclists with disabilities on adapted bikes, recumbent cycles, young families cycling, disability users on mobility scooters, joggers and equestrians - exactly those it was created for.

He explained that the Council's Active Travel Plan 2017 – 2021 stated that the A944 Aberdeen to Westhill route was a popular and well used off road route with issues.

He intimated that the applicants' traffic assessment paragraph 4.3.10 stated that background use of the path was low and additional pedestrian use would be of minimal consequence to the small number of cycle users on the Core path and further stated that it was generally 2 to 3 metres wide, which it was not. She explained that it was 2.5 metres for a short distance at its widest between the 5 Mile Garage and Ardene Vets and only 1.2 metres wide from there to the Prime 4 entrance, just wide enough for two persons to pass. She indicated that nowhere was it 3 metres wide and nowhere did the assessment address the problem areas at the 5 Mile Garage or west of Prime Four.

Further, he advised that the City Council's Active Travel Action Plan 2017-2021 had identified, alongside the Cycle Forum, that the A944 corridor was a specific route requiring improvement and that Aberdeen City Council would not permit developments to proceed, if they were to the detriment of active travel or severed existing active travel links.

He indicated that all infrastructures put in place as part of the development would impact upon users of Core Path 91 whether during game time or not.

He advised that the Forum had previously petitioned the Council about 'hot spots' on the route that let down the route as a whole and would consider it a massive step in the wrong direction to add another problem point if the cycle infrastructure was not planned carefully and executed exactly as those careful plans specified.

He indicated that those problem points on the path would be exacerbated by the

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development of the Aberdeen Football Club stadium. Much had also been made, in the planning documents as well as on the materials distributed by the Club itself of the volume of bus users that would access the site via shuttle bus or public transport. Game day crowds walking would only be able to access the Stadium along Core Path 91. There was potential that crowds would conflict with the regular users where the facility was not wide enough and fit for purpose especially if a “fanzone” was being mooted, where alcohol would likely be being served.

He explained that in paragraph 4.4.4 the application stated that the 2 metre path would sufficiently accommodate this level of footfall, however if so there would be a high likelihood that a pedestrian or cyclist would be knocked onto the carriageway and in to the traffic.

He indicated that Sustrans, Cycle Scotland, and Cycling by Design engineers with whom she had spoken, recommended a minimum width of 3 metres but a preferred width of 4 metres for the potential footfall. There would be a high degree of potential conflict with current users and supporters on the existing path widths which presented a danger that experienced cyclists would take to the carriageway to make progress which was counter-productive to having the path there in the first place. He intimated that a greater danger was that intermediate or novice cyclists would also be forced onto the carriageway.

He advised that the A944 was an extremely busy and fast road with no physical barriers between the carriageway and users of the core path, while the speed limit was 40 mph, vehicles regularly travel at double that speed. The Local Transport Strategy stated that all new developments should seek to minimise travel by private car, this proposal appeared to promote the polar opposite to that. He indicated that this proposal was reliant on car travel, more vehicles on the road, more pollution being created, and more danger for those choosing active travel.

He intimated that the application stated in paragraph 4.3.12, that Police Scotland could control the movement of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists as part of the Traffic Management Plan, but they could not as it was a Core path and covered by legislation under the Land Reform Act. It would be unlawful based on legislation regarding Core Paths for stewards/Police to block the Core Path. He advised that Aberdeen City Council had a duty under the Act to provide assured access therefore a Core path which should not be automatically closed, unless by order granted for a period of six days or less, repeated closures totaling more than 6 days must have formal consultation, and could only be granted by Government ministers only when an alternative was provided.

He explained that current Police practice was to close Golf Road outside Pittodrie 10 minutes prior to the end of a match to vehicles, then all pedestrians on the match concluding. This meant Golf Road could be closed to all traffic for 30 minutes or more to allow the away support to leave. Police Scotland did not have the authority under the Act to do this to a core path. Additionally, any re-routing for cyclists blocked from other routes during game times could not be expected to use miles-long diversions to

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continue their journeys. The Local Authority had a duty under the act to assert, protect, keep open and free of obstruction, and they also had a duty of care of users of the path.

He advised that a survey conducted by the Club indicated that 55% want to drive to reach Kingsford. Fairhurst estimated an average of three people per car, a more realistic figure was two per car meaning that if 55% of supporters arrived by car, over 3600 car parking spaces would be needed. The proposal assumed that most users who currently walk would use the bus; but that this could not be concluded with certainty. Regardless of numbers, which would be high in one motorised mode or another, there would be increased traffic on the A944. This further highlighted the dangers of the problem points along the route for non-motorised users.

He concluded by explaining that Aberdeen Cycle Forum had highlighted the potential for death or serious injury if the path was not widened, as required by Cycling by Design. It was extremely disappointing to members of the Forum, that the Council would potentially pass this as part of the package of works for the stadium's traffic, which was not in everyday use, but not as part of a measure to ensure the safety of the numerous non-motorised users of the path who had, and did, use it daily, past and present.

Bruce Cruikshank and Jyll Skinner answered a number of questions from Members, and the following was noted:-

- that the core path was very well used on Saturdays by cycling clubs;
- that there was no data obtained on near misses, although there had been two major accidents; and
- that the main reason people did not cycle was due to safety issues.

The Committee then heard from **Martin Watt** who advised that he was a resident of Angusfield Avenue, which was one of the main routes from Kingsford in and out of the city centre.

He indicated that he was fortunate enough to have visited football stadiums in over 40 countries across Europe. He made reference to the club which had an all seated stadium which was the envy of many of Europe's top clubs back in the 80s. He advised that the majority of their peers were now streets ahead of AFC in terms of the facilities they now had at their disposal.

He intimated that he concurred with AFC's view that a new stadium with associated facilities was now long overdue if they were to try and keep pace with their competitors across Europe. He explained that last month he was in the German city of Dresden and advised that a handful of years ago, they were playing and training in a ground that made the old Chris Anderson Stadium look ultra-modern. With support from their local municipality they were now playing out of a 30,000 all-seater stadium with associated community and training facilities. This was achieved in a very short space of time, with significant financial and non-financial assistance coming from the local authority and its residents.

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He indicated that having seen first-hand this story being replicated all over Europe, it seemed illogical to him that 20 years on, AFC and the City Council had not been able to work together to deliver a solution. He explained that the proposed site at Kingsford would not necessarily have been his first choice, but there now appeared to be a widespread exasperation that a new home for AFC needed to be built somewhere and therefore, why not Kingsford.

He advised that he was therefore pleased when the plans for Kingsford were first announced, but he was subsequently a little worried about how supporters would access the stadium. In particular, how traffic would be affected in and around where he lived in Angusfield Avenue. He intimated that his logical approach to this, as a layperson not an expert roads engineer, was to think about how traffic currently affected the streets in and around Pittodrie Stadium and to also reflect upon how traffic was dealt with at other sporting facilities across Europe. He advised for Aberdeen's last two matches at Pittodrie Stadium, he arrived by taxi around one hour before kick-off and departed by taxi around one hour after full-time. In both cases he explained that there were no delays whatsoever. Both those games had above average attendances for games at Pittodrie.

Further he advised that at Murrayfield Stadium on Saturday, which was essentially in the middle of a residential area, simple Police stewarding saw Aberdeen supporters buses escorted away from the stadium and out of the city in less than 15 minutes. The same practice applied at other grounds in Scotland, including Celtic Park and at Motherwell. At a push therefore, he intimated that the roads would perhaps be busy for between 45 minutes and 90 minutes either side of an event at the new stadium. Based on an average of 22 home fixtures for AFC at the new stadium, this would equate to the roads being busy for between 33 and 66 hours per year, or on average, a mere 0.006% of the time. He advised that this seemed nothing to him, particularly compared to the minor delays caused on a daily basis as a result of the industrial/commercial development that had already taken place on previously green belt areas of Kingswells and Westhill. On that basis, he advised that he had no issue with the proposed new stadium being built at Kingsford and did not believe that traffic would be adversely affected as long as an appropriate plan was put in place to ensure timely arrival and dispersal of traffic ahead of events. He intimated that as such, plans were already in place at other sporting facilities across Scotland and envisaged that putting such a plan in place should not be problematic.

The Committee then heard from **Gordon Ballantyne** who voiced concerns about safety to the public by building a 20,000-person capacity stadium between two major accident hazard pipelines. He explained that there seemed to be so many questions unanswered relating to the proposal and had not heard much about the security issues that the proposal raised. He indicated that he found it perplexing that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) posed no objection to the proposal on safety grounds, so he had reviewed the process conveniently outlined by Gerry Adderly of the HSE.

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He advised that he saw no mention of terrorism or security in the hazards considered to set the consultation distances, but explained that it was interesting to note that the distances were established by estimating the risk to a single household which must be about 10 people as opposed to the 20,000 in the proposal. He indicated that the HSE did not comment on any developments outside the consultation distances, irrespective of size. Neither did he see any mention of security or terrorism hazards in the Land Use Planning Methodology.

He explained that if the HSE assessment factored security into their Land Use QRA model, there would undoubtedly be a different outcome. Building a stadium near these pipelines changed the dynamics of any risk assessment with security/terrorism factored in.

He advised that he also looked at the responses by BP & Shell which acknowledged integrity and servitude, and in other words meant "don't dig up our pipelines". He questioned whether Shell and BP evaluated the increased security risk to these pipelines.

He made reference to the publicity in the press about the proposal, and suggested that AFC must have moved themselves up the list of potential terrorist targets. He queried whether the Council had asked themselves what they would do if terrorists targeted this proposed stadium, nestled between these signposted pipelines. He advised that a terrorist bomb attack could damage either or both of the pipelines, which would cause a catastrophe of Grenfell proportions. He explained that there was nothing in the planning application to address this real hazard, bearing in mind that the current UK security level was 'severe'.

Mr Ballantyne proceeded to show a video of a pipeline explosion in West Virginia.

Mr Ballantyne advised that he had not seen a plan to protect the AFC supporters from a terrorist vehicle attack, similar to the ones that had already happened in other parts of the country. He asked how the AFC supporters walking along the A944 to Kingswells park and ride would be protected and similarly with the fans walking along the A944 from the Arnhall offsite parking.

He indicated that there was a solution, that being there was a protocol in safety, also used by the HSE called the Hierarchy of Controls where the first and most effective action to minimise risk was elimination. He explained that AFC had a fixation on co-located training facilities with the stadium, while many other successful clubs did not have this model and concluded that elimination or rejection of the planning application would lead to a better course of action.

The Committee then heard from **Heather Brock** a resident from Westhill, who advised that this development was a departure from the recently adopted Local Development Plan.

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She indicated that there had been propaganda and misleading statements made by Aberdeen FC and others in support of this application. Since early 2000, there had been tales at hearings - tales that AFC would cease to exist; that European football would stop; and that there was no plan B, although those things had not come to pass. She indicated that those statements were inventions, designed to push an emotional case for the application rather than one based on the truth and planning policies.

She intimated that the club had options should the application be refused, as there was an allotted site in the Local Development Plan, a site for which the club previously had consent. Should that location no longer be available, then a partnership with the Council to deliver the Kings Links site would be an appropriate way forward, in keeping with the ambition of the City Centre Masterplan, and the opportunity to develop club facilities to compliment the fantastic Sports Village and Aquatics Centre.

She intimated that a Kings Links site would continue to support the many businesses in the area that depended on AFC to survive, businesses that were unlikely to be viable should the club move eight miles from its historic home.

She made reference to a quote from Mr Stewart Milne in January 2011 at the Pre-Determination Hearing for Loirston regarding a potential failed bid, highlighting the severe consequences the club would face, that the negative impact to the region would be very substantial with the club facing a bleak future and the loss of opportunity to develop football in the region. She advised that AFC was the second most successful club in the land, the bleak future foretold over six years ago had not appeared and there had been no negative impact on the region.

She indicated that AFC had in their supporting documents claimed that attendances at Pittodrie would drop to 8500 should the application be refused, however this statement was scaremongering - the club's average attendance over the last ten years was almost 14000. Even when the club's performances had been at their poorest, it had never dropped as low as 8500. There was no evidence that remaining at Pittodrie would see any kind of decline.

She advised that she had read in the press that the Manager Derek McInnes would leave if he did not get new training facilities, but explained that Mr McInnes would leave as that was the nature of football, managers come and go. Building a stadium and facilities to placate a manager was hardly the best basis for such a major deviation from the development plan.

She indicated that AFC had promoted this development as a 'community stadium'. A community stadium conjured up the vision that there was something for everyone, but there was not. This proposal was a single sport facility, and there was no grand 'Community Sports Hub' and nothing in the application which would deliver this. She intimated that the notion of a community stadium was ridiculous, it was a football stadium, nothing more.



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She advised that Mr Milne had claimed that Aberdeen would become a backwater should the application be refused. Others have claimed that refusing the application would show the city was not open for business, however Aberdeen City was open for business with the focus on the City Centre Masterplan, the new AECC and the harbour developments showing that the city was prepared to deliver key projects that would benefit the area.

She indicated that the Kingsford stadium plans, as detailed by the Council's Economic Development report would not deliver any significant benefit for the city, in fact it might result in a significant loss of income for the city centre. She advised that granting the application would not deliver regeneration for the North East, but would make many of the businesses in Seaton and King Street no longer viable.

She explained that the alleged overwhelming support that AFC claimed, was a product of their imagination. AFC had a following of 100,000 people on social media, they had 10,000 season ticket holders, yet after a major campaign during the consultation phase, only 5000 fans offered their support. She intimated that there was no silent majority; there were those for and those against.

She concluded by requesting that Councillors refuse the application for the benefit of the communities and then work with AFC to deliver the sites identified in the Strategic Development Plan.

The Committee then heard from **Dr Nicola Seal** a resident in Westhill who advised that she was opposed to the proposed development.

She explained that when she moved to Westhill five years ago, she chose to live on the eastern edge of the town because she wanted to be close to green space which felt like living in a semi-rural setting. She advised that she wanted to step outside her door and be in the countryside in minutes, and knew that her house was bordered by greenbelt and as such, this space would be protected from further development.

She indicated that she walked her dog daily on land adjacent to the stadium site, and as an ecologist and outdoor enthusiast, she took great pleasure in the natural world and these fields were very important to her mental and physical health.

She advised that greenbelt was not just an abstract concept on a boring planning document, but actually meant something to the people who lived near it. She explained that she could see otters and fish in the Brodiach Burn, skylarks in the fields and deer all around. She indicated that the loss of this habitat was a loss to the people who enjoy this wildlife as well as to the wildlife itself.

She made reference to the 2010 Aberdeen City Greenbelt Review which indicated that the proposed site was considered unsuitable for development and that Cairdhillock acted as a buffer between Kingswells and Westhill.

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She also made reference to a planning application for 25 houses on the Aberdeenshire side of the boundary, which was refused in 2010 and also an application for a golf driving range on the City side of the boundary in 2005, which was also refused, with the Planners indicating that the Council needed to be particularly careful regarding the precedent that the development might set, and of the implications of this on the greenbelt designation in both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. They also stated that if the development would not meet the tests for inclusion in the Aberdeen City Local Plan as an opportunity site, nor provided a meaningful landscape enhancement, it should not be supported. She explained that Planners went on to say that to do otherwise, lowered the bar against which developments in the greenbelt must be tested and had a direct impact on what was defensible within Aberdeenshire. In this respect the proposal was clearly against the public interest of Aberdeenshire.

She outlined the reasons why the City Council refused the driving range as follows:-

“It would lead to the erosion of greenbelt; would adversely affect the landscape setting; would prove to be visually intrusive and discordant in the low lying landscape and would adversely affect the visual setting; would be detrimental to the residential amenity of the adjacent properties by reason of the associated noise, light pollution, increase in traffic, location of associated structures and overall increase in levels of activity not normally associated with the existing rural location; that the proposed development, if approved, would set an undesirable precedent for applications of a similar nature.”

She advised that the negative impacts from a stadium would be far greater than for a golf driving range, so there was a clear precedent for refusal. She explained that very recently, in 2016, the City Council approved a retrospective application for land infilling and levelling just behind the stadium site and the Planners indicated that approval would enable restoration of the site and its productive use for agricultural purposes, thereby according with green belt and landscape policy objectives of preservation and enhancement of landscape character. She indicated that they also said it should be seeded and landscaped in the interests of protection of the visual amenity and ecological value of the green belt area.

She advised that if piles of dumped soil, houses and a golf driving range were not acceptable developments here, then a huge stadium complex clearly was not either.

She intimated that from her garden, she could hear individual words from players on the Lawsonsdale playing fields. Noise carried to this area of Westhill and the site was in a shallow valley with nothing to baffle the noise. She made reference to the proposed fanzone outside the stadium where there would be nothing to contain the noise, which had not been considered in the Club's noise assessment at all.

She explained that noise from a stadium would mean that her children would struggle to sleep and that she wouldn't be able to enjoy peace and quiet in her garden. She insisted that even inside her house, she wouldn't be able to escape the noise entirely. She explained that she was in recovery from a long term, neurological Lyme disease, a severe illness which had taken her eight years to recover from, and lack of sleep and

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stress would very badly impact on her health and she feared that this development could trigger a relapse. She indicated that if this happened, she would be unable to properly care for her children aged two and six.

She advised that in 2002, an objection had been raised about houses being built near Pittodrie, the objector said:-

“On match days, householders would be subjected to an unacceptable level of noise during matches itself, from crowds arriving and departing and from the PA system. Many people regard the evenings and weekend when matches are played as a time for relaxation. Significant noise at this time could be regarded as particularly intrusive and annoying. The noise from the stadium is not constant and anonymous like much traffic noise. It is intermittent and irregular. It comes in surges and is likely to be more disturbing than constant noise.”

She indicated that the objector was Aberdeen Football Club.

She advised that currently the police did a great job of keeping any trouble on match days to a minimum, thanks partly to a large network of CCTV cameras in the city centre which were monitored by a central control room who directed officers on the ground. She indicated that Westhill or the routes leading in and out did not have CCTV and there were no plans to put them in. Recent coverage of some old firm games had shown that a large police operation had been needed to contain troublemakers at these matches, therefore how would police manage without CCTV.

She concluded by requesting that the Council refuse the plans.

The Committee then heard from **Kathleen North** who advised that a few years ago a local businessman commented that, when Aberdeen Football Club were doing well, the atmosphere in the city was different, more positive and lively. She explained that she agreed with this view.

She indicated that this effect was noticeable earlier this year in the weeks leading up to the Cup Final. She intimated that she had mentioned this because she believed that this planning application was much more than just a request to build a new football stadium and training pitches and, should it go ahead, it would not only be the fans of the football club who would enjoy its benefits, but there would also be a positive impact on those living and working in the City and the North-East.

She advised that given the economic difficulties experienced over the past few years, to have such a development would show to all that Aberdeen was a confident and forward thinking city. This could then create a confidence in the city and increase the potential of attracting investments from other businesses and organisations.

She indicated that Aberdeen Football Club Trust had provided support and opportunities over the past few years for individuals and groups who live in the community, children as well as adults who were vulnerable or disadvantaged due to difficulties such as poor health, isolation or lack of opportunities. She explained that

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she worked with vulnerable adults and could vouch for the work this charity was doing with people with dementia. Their work was innovative and had a positive impact on those with dementia who were now able to participate in purposeful activities which then enhanced their feelings of self-worth and also expanded their social network. She advised that this then had a knock on positive effect on their health and the AFC Trust fitted very well with other charities in the city and for an organisation which had only been active for a few years, the impact they had made in that time was quite remarkable. This was recognised recently by a European award.

She concluded by insisting that the AFC Trust was a local gem, indicating that, for the Trust to continue developing its activities and thereby increase the number of people it could support, it required appropriate facilities. She advised that this would be provided within the Kingsford development as described in the planning application. She explained that the stadium, training pitches and the Aberdeen Football Club Trust were meaningfully interconnected and it was vital that they were located on the one site.

She questioned whether the Council would consider this planning application holistically taking account of all the aspects as mentioned.

The Committee then heard from **James Yule**, who advised that he had lived in Westhill for forty years and had objected to the application.

He made reference to the refusal of a planning application for a golf driving range in a field adjacent to his property, which had been upheld by the Scottish Government following an appeal. He explained that he had the pleasure of addressing the Committee at that time.

He advised that the present proposal for a football stadium immediately south of the rejected golf driving range application had taken him by surprise and he was a little shocked. The citizens of Aberdeen relied on the Council to make a correct decision with regard to planning and he hoped that there was some foresight into the future development of the city and its amenities.

He queried why Aberdeen FC wanted to build a stadium on this green field site which was on the boundary with the shire and a stone's throw from the rural town of Westhill which would have an impact on the community.

He queried whether the Council had met with AFC to discuss mutually beneficial relocation plans for Pittodrie and how the proposal squared with the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan.

He intimated that he was not a strong football supporter but understood the passion and desire the football club and its fans had to develop their support, however he thought that many supporters just wanted a new stadium wherever the location.

He indicated that proper planning was important to meet the needs of all parties, however this proposal fell short of the mark.

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He explained that Mr Milne had found a farmer willing to sell and had latched on to the proximity of the new peripheral route to justify the location of the stadium and believed that further development on adjoining land would occur if the stadium was approved.

He requested that the Council reject the proposal and find a solution that would work for the city, its citizens and the football club. He explained that if the plans were approved, it would feel like the developers were shaping the future and not the city planners, therefore Members should rise above any temptation to bow to the developer's wishes in the commercial development.

He concluded by insisting that the Members were custodians of the green belt land and should not vote it away because when it was gone it was gone forever.

Mr Yule responded to a question from Members by advising that the traffic was very busy in the area at rush hour.

The Committee then heard from **Claire Davidson** who advised that she was a resident of Westhill and had submitted a comprehensive objection to the proposed development of the Kingsford site for many reasons.

She explained that currently the land at Kingsford was green belt and AFC's proposal did not meet any of the criteria listed as exceptions to the green belt policy.

She indicated that Kingsford represented the last section of green belt between Westhill and Kingswells and once the green belt was gone it was gone forever.

She advised that AFC had in their application claimed that the Council had previously supported the principle of using greenbelt land for a stadium and quoted supporting documents which indicated that the move to a greenbelt site had previously been supported by City Council Members and officials through successful planning applications at Bellfield and Loirston.

She explained that the acceptance of previous applications should be seen in the light of the importance of each development. The Bellfield Farm proposal was given approval subject to a successful bid for the world's third largest sporting event, namely the UEFA European Championships 2008, however approval was withdrawn when the competition was awarded to another bid.

She indicated that the development at Loirston was progressed following a feasibility study by the Council and Aberdeen FC. The site at Loirston was selected and developed through the Loirston Development Framework and the wider Aberdeen City Local Development Plan. The site was identified for development and planning approval was in place and the application to build on this site was withdrawn by Aberdeen FC.

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She explained that in contrast, the proposed site at Kingsford was not zoned for development, was not part of any wider strategic or local plan and was not linked to any major sporting bid of national importance.

She made reference to AFC's supporting documentation which stated that newer Scottish football stadia, such as Inverness Caledonian Thistle's stadium was not located within Inverness City centre and St Johnstone's McDiarmid Park was not sited within Perth City centre. Furthermore, Pittodrie was not located within Aberdeen City centre, which in her opinion was misleading as these stadia in Inverness and Perth predated the current Scottish Planning Policy guidance and the stronger focus on preserving the function of city centres. She explained that each of these developments were also of a significantly smaller scale than that proposed at Kingsford as follows:-

- Caledonian Stadium (Inverness) had a capacity of 7800 with an average attendance of just under 4000; was only 1.5 miles from Inverness City centre and was easily within walking distance for fans;
- McDiarmid Park in Perth had a capacity of 10,700 with an average attendance of just under 4500; and was located just over 2 miles from Perth City centre.

She advised that each of these stadiums, therefore, represented a significantly smaller footfall than that proposed for Kingsford and the stadia were significantly smaller and much closer to their respective cities than the proposed Kingsford site which was 7 miles from the city with a capacity of 20,000.

She indicated that she thought everyone from the North East of Scotland appreciated that Pittodrie Stadium was within the confines of the wider Aberdeen City centre, being 1.1 miles from the east end of Union Street, a walk undertaken by many supporters when attending.

She made reference to the application, which she advised claimed that policy should not be applied to their proposals, stating that due to the nature and timing patterns of the proposed usage of the Kingsford football stadium and training facilities and suggested that it should not be assessed as a significant footfall generating use.

She explained that the very large number of people moving to and from the proposed location represented a significant footfall at any time of the day and therefore must be considered as such. She indicated that there was a greater need to consider the development as such given the unsustainable location and poor transport links available to access the Kingsford site.

She advised that the movement of large numbers of people through the city generated income and supported local communities. The current stadium was located in one of Scotland's most deprived communities and supported a number of businesses in the area. She indicated that without this trade, many of these businesses would not be viable, and the assessments carried out by the applicant made no mention of the impact on the economic wellbeing of the immediately surrounding community of the current stadium location.

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She intimated that approval of the development would clearly set a precedent for development adjacent to the AWPR which would lead to the coalescence of communities along the A944 corridor and more widely which would be contrary to the aims of Policy NE2 – Green Belt.

She advised that, in addition, approval for the development would be used as a precedent to grant approval for the Prime Four change of use which would further undermine the Council's investment and focus on rejuvenating the city centre.

She requested that the Council refuse the application and work with Aberdeen FC to develop the identified site at Loirston or the proposed site at Kings Links.

She responded to a question from Members in relation to traffic issues by advising that there was an increase in traffic and parked cars when there were events on at Lawsondale pitches and that the football stadium would significantly add to this as the bus strategy was unsustainable.

The Committee then heard from **Alan Cowie** who advised that his family had lived in Westhill for 32 years, his surviving parents also lived there, that he had brought his children up there and now his grandchildren were growing up there.

He explained that they chose to live in Westhill because of its character, its semi-rural location and were proud to have been part of Westhill's growth and development over these years. He indicated that he was representing his family to strongly object to the proposed development of a stadium at Kingsford, which although technically in Aberdeen, was realistically in Westhill.

He indicated that he understood that planning decisions should be defined by policy and be decided on the suitability of a particular development in a particular place taking into account the effect on the area and the views of the local communities. He advised that the financial position or need or desire of a football club for a new stadium should have no bearing on the planning decision. He intimated that planning policy and guidelines were there to protect the area and community from unsuitable and unwanted inappropriate developments being imposed on them. He questioned what would be the point in debating and adopting a local development plan to then ignore it.

He advised that it had been widely publicised that there were concerns around safety, policing, parking, traffic congestion, noise, light and pollution as well as the actual structure itself being situated on green belt. He explained that he shared all these concerns and believed that if this development was to go ahead it would place an unacceptable burden on local residents and fundamentally change the semi-rural character of the area.

He intimated that the massive increase in road and pedestrian traffic resulting from this development would introduce such safety concerns for children, and that residents would be forced to essentially change their way of life.

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He indicated that relocating Aberdeen Football Club's stadium to Kingsford would bring no economic benefit to the area, rather the opposite, having a detrimental effect on both local and city businesses on match and event days.

He advised that he appreciated the emotions surrounding the support of a football team and its fortunes and would wish to see Aberdeen Football Club do well and prosper, but this should not be at the expense of agreed planning policy.

He sought assurances from Councillors that the decision on the application would be made adhering to the policies and plans already in place for this type of development rather than driven by the emotion surrounding a football team, celebrity and media endorsements or the financial aspirations of a developer.

He advised that he hoped that the Council would agree that there needed to be a carefully considered planning decision on whether it was the right development in the right place and not develop into a vote on whether Aberdeen Football Club should build a new football stadium or not.

The Committee then heard from **Graham Wildgoose**, a resident of Westhill who advised that he was also a supporter of Aberdeen FC.

He advised that as stated by AFC, the Kingsford Stadium site had insufficient car parking spaces for the expected number of vehicles likely to use the stadium on each and every occasion. He indicated that AFC had not identified where the alleged 600 spaces were within Arnhall Industrial Estate within their transport assessment and it was assumed that these spaces had not yet been confirmed, therefore the only car park that could be confirmed for overspill of Kingsford was the Park and Ride at Kingswells. He advised that it should be noted that the industrial estate was linked to leased premises therefore had no fixed lifespan.

He explained that Kingswells Park and Ride had a total of 900 spaces and if it was assumed that 200 of these would be used by Aberdeen City Centre commuters, this would leave 700 spaces for the use of Aberdeen FC.

He advised that the standard national/international average of persons per car for building projects (1 car = 1.7 persons) would give a figure of 1190 people, however AFC within its transport assessment, was attempting to keep the predicted car numbers down and used a different ration (1 car = 2.9 persons) so the higher number of 2030 people arriving in Kingswells Park and Ride should be used.

He indicated that his safety concern was how those people would get from Kingswells Park and Ride to Kingsford. The pathway/cycle path from Kingswells to Westhill was created in 2007 as a safety measure to keep the many cycling commuters, individual cyclists and cycle club members off the busy A944 and onto their own dedicated cycle path which had been a great success and featured on the Council's website under cycle maps.



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He explained that the AFC transport assessment made a statement that only a small number of people would use this pathway given its 1.4 mile distance from Kingsford, however this was a flawed assumption in his opinion given that this was no further than Aberdeen rail/bus station to Pittodrie and the pathway was relatively flat in comparison. He indicated that the Park and Ride was well within the 30 minute walking zone and a reasonable option for supporters going to Kingsford. He intimated that if it was assumed that only three quarters of the people parking at the Park and Ride were walking, this still equated to just over 1500 pedestrians using the pathway which would render the cycle path completely unusable by cyclists, forcing them onto the A944.

He advised that AFC also expected this path to be used by cyclists as they had installed a 220 cycle bay park within the Kingsford Stadium plans. Currently pedestrians had a myriad of roads and pavements, some as wide as 3 metres with no cycle traffic to reach Pittodrie, but if the stadium was approved, pedestrians would be forced to share one unlit pathway as narrow as 1.5 metres in parts with the chance of meeting cyclists coming in the opposite direction.

He intimated that AFC had made an assumption that the pathway between Kingswells Park and Ride, Westhill and the proposed stadium was for their use - it was not, it was built for the use of minimal pedestrians and cyclists for commuting and leisurely pursuits as featured on the Council's website. The markings painted on the pathway supported this.

He advised that there was no provision made to negate the safety hazard of pedestrians using the pathway other than the supply of over 100 coaches. He explained that AFC's traffic assessment relied heavily on the use of private hire coaches, up to 60, for the use of shuttling supporters from various Park and Ride sites, along with a request to Stagecoach for an increase of up to ten additional X17 buses per hour for the two hours before the match and two hours after. He indicated that this could lead to an additional 100+ coaches including AFC and visitor supporter coaches on the road infrastructure all having to access the A944. He indicated that apart from this working against the Council's Emissions Management Programme which concentrated on getting CO2 emissions down, this would cause massive road congestion on the A944.

He indicated that the excessive additional numbers of buses and coaches increased the probability that two coaches would be adjacent to one another in the traffic queues on the A944 during the build up to matches.

He explained that a basic risk assessment for the access of Emergency Service vehicles would highlight the following:-

- 3 x 2.85m wide vehicles could not fit into the 6.6m westbound carriageway of the A944 which had no hard shoulder. The grass verge on the southern side of the carriageway was minimal and was used for snow piling during winter. The central reservation was protected by a high kerb and was soft ground; and

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- The westbound carriageway of the A944 was the main and quickest route for the SFRS and SAS to access emergencies/RTAs in Westhill and the surrounding area.

He advised that in these cases, and the inability of the vehicles to move out of the way, this would lead to a negative effect on the response time of the emergency service which could have a direct effect on the victims of RTAs or fires, and therefore had to be unacceptable. He indicated that should there be a major incident at Kingsford Stadium at 2pm on a match day, the emergency services may not be able to respond due to the inability to get through the traffic trying to get to Kingsford.

He closed by providing a summary and advised that one prolonged incident or fatality caused by a delayed emergency service vehicle was unacceptable.

The Committee then heard from **John Thornton**, a resident of Westhill for 34 years.

He advised that he did not oppose the development just because he liked living in Westhill and wanted it to stay that way, but explained that there were so many flaws in the application, although one stood out and that was the seriously flawed transport plan.

He explained that he noticed that within the public document pack, transport, accessibility and sustainability had the highest number of representations at 45, of which the negative representations were also the highest at 41.

He indicated that to conform to the Transport Policy an application of this scale must increase the number of people using public transport and active travel, reduce the need to travel and reduce dependence on the private car, improve air quality and environment and improve road safety. He advised that this application appeared to only address one of these, but it actually did not.

He advised that the Bus strategy was unsustainable and undeliverable as follows:-

- It relied on a patchwork of bus companies;
- There were not enough buses to meet need;
- Buses in the plan were 100% full, virtually 100% of the time;
- It relied on buses being loaded and unloaded in unrealistic times (90 seater bus with 17 more standing, fully loaded and departing the stadium in two minutes; and
- Every seat in every bus from every location occupied, plus people standing – city centre and the Park and Rides at Kingswells, Dyce and Bridge of Don.

He indicated that at a public meeting, he personally asked a manager of a major bus operator in Aberdeen, how long it would take to load a bus of 60 people and after consideration, he replied and said 10 minutes. On that basis, it would take five times the number of buses or five times as long to clear the stadium. He explained that five

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times the number of buses would create even more traffic chaos and AFC could not source that number. He advised that five times as long turned 45 minutes into 2 hrs15 minutes which skewed all the carefully calculated times.

He indicated that shuttle bus volumes had been significantly understated. A more common sense, realistic average would be two or three or 66% loading. He intimated that he had carried out sensitivity tests which suggested around 50% more buses would be required most of the time, and this would be a further problem for AFC with limited bus resources and the timings are so tight. He explained that at the Kingswells Park and Ride, buses could still be ferrying fans to the stadium 20 or 30 minutes after kick-off.

He advised that AFC proposals underestimated the use of private cars as follows:-

- the site was seven miles out of town with limited public transport;
- estimates were based on 2.9 people per car when the national and international figure for sporting events was 1.7 people per car; and
- currently 72% of people took the car to Pittodrie, and AFC proposed a reduction to 52% for Kingsford, by trying to change supporter habits.

He intimated that the proposed controlled parking zone was not big enough and should be based on 30 minutes walking distance from the stadium. He warned that fans would just park outside the controlled parking zone in Westhill, Arnhall and Kingswells and plenty of parking opportunities would simply encourage car use.

He advised that it was proposed that Westhill would have controlled parking zone signs, double yellow lines and be used by permit holders only, however there were no traffic wardens and the police would be too busy dealing with the crowds.

He queried whether the AWPR would solve the traffic problems as it was designed North to South but not East to West and explained that there would be serious issues at the Kingswells south junction and the back roads around Westhill. He also made reference to the Arnhall parking, claiming that the extent of the overspill was grossly understated and the proposed overbridge would be unsightly and poorly thought through in respect of those with disabilities, the infirm and the elderly and fans would ignore it.

He indicated that the transport plan was ridiculous and had been constructed as a result of the stadium being in the wrong location. He concluded by advising that the transport model was the Achilles heel of the application as it was unsustainable, ridiculous and would not work. He requested that the Council refuse the application.

The Committee then heard from **Gary Atkinson, Carmelite Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association** who advised that he was speaking on behalf of the association of independently operated hotels and conference venues.

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He indicated that their task was to promote the region and to influence decisions which benefited the region and their 48 hotel members across the City and Shire, explaining that he also owned a local city centre business – the Carmelite in the Merchant Quarter.

He advised that the hotel and hospitality sector had been badly affected by the downturn in oil and gas over the past few years, therefore, he and the Association fully supported any plans which would assist diversification of the over-reliance on this industry and help other key sectors, such as sports, tourism and leisure, thrive and grow, ensuring a sustainable North East economy.

He intimated that AFC played a significant role in raising the profile of the region, only needing to look at recent European games to see how the Aberdeen brand had been promoted across Europe and the impact this had had.

He explained that the Club had been seeking a new home for far too long and Kingsford represented their third attempt at securing permission for a suitable site. Neither the Club nor the region should wait any longer for these new facilities to be delivered, offering improved facilities for the match-day and non-match-day visitor experience.

He indicated that prior to owning Carmelite, he was Divisional Managing Director of two large Global contract catering companies, and was responsible for Match-day & Non Match-day Catering Activities at over 25 UK sports facilities including Chelsea, Reading, Hampden Park, Murrayfield, Celtic, Hearts and Pittodrie (some years ago), however since owning Carmelite, he did not have any commercial dealings with AFC or any Directors associated with the business.

He advised that he was directly and personally involved full time in the design, build, mobilisation and operations of three new Stadia, namely Huddersfield Town FC, Bolton Wanderers FC and Coventry City FC, the latter following UEFA Guidelines enabling them to facilitate European Games. He intimated that he could confidently confirm what the recent research points outlined, namely all three projects developed a significant boost to local economies across cities where new stadium and sports facilities had been constructed.

He indicated that the local economy definitely benefitted, and that local residents' pride grew, creating jobs within and alongside the stadium, and a 'good feel factor' amongst residents across the region.

He advised that the proposals at Kingsford represented a £50m private sector investment in the region at a time when it was urgently needed to demonstrate that the region was still capable of attracting investment and when it badly needed every economic stimulus it could secure.

He explained that as Chairman of ACSHA, he regularly met with existing and potential investors, and they needed to demonstrate Aberdeen City Council was bold, open for business and a good place to do business, as well as a place to visit.

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He indicated that approving the plans would send out a strong signal that the region was open for business and had confidence in its future. That much-needed confidence would spill over into other sectors, including hospitality and tourism, both of which were vital to the future sustainability of the area and its ability to attract incomers.

He advised that improving the sports, leisure and recreation provision in the region was key to future success and Members only had to look at the recent Tour Series and the Great Aberdeen Run to see what sporting events could bring to the city. The facilities at Kingsford, when combined with existing indoor sports and aquatics facilities already in place in Aberdeen at the Sports Village, would greatly enhance the North-east's position, not only as a Scottish sporting powerhouse, but one which could compete with the best across Europe.

He explained that there was an over-whelming support for these proposals and ignoring this support and the economic benefits to the region would, in their view be highly damaging at this juncture. He indicated that the profile and knock-on effect of the plans for Kingsford must be embraced by a community, as in other Stadium Developments he had personally witnessed, which would provide benefits to residents and visitors as the area offered further diversity which hopefully softened future economic downturns within the energy sector.

He made reference to attending a Guild of Burgess Lunch, advising that during the lunch break, the Lord Dean and Lord Provost announced a Guild of Burgess Initiative to be launched in February, namely "This is our City". He intimated that this was Aberdeen's Football Club, and the City Council had the opportunity to allow a substantial £50million privately funded development to take place for "Our City" and therefore requested that Council recommend approval for this application.

Gary Atkinson answered a number of questions from Members, noting the following:-

- that there was concern that hoteliers were not developing in the city at the present time and it was a challenging situation to obtain funding;
- that if the application was refused, it would have a negative impact in the city which would send out the wrong message;
- that there was no concern if the stadium moved out with the city centre, as any development would be attractive for hoteliers;
- that similar out of city stadia (Coventry City FC and Bolton Wanderers FC) had had a positive impact each having economic benefits, where people would spend money in the city then travel to the stadium;
- that a majority of the association supported the development at Kingsford, it was not unanimous; and
- that a new stadium with modern facilities would attract tourism and benefit hotels.

**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
13 September 2017

The Convener closed the hearing by thanking all those in attendance and for the presentations received.

- **Councillor Marie Boulton**, Convener

**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
18 January 2017

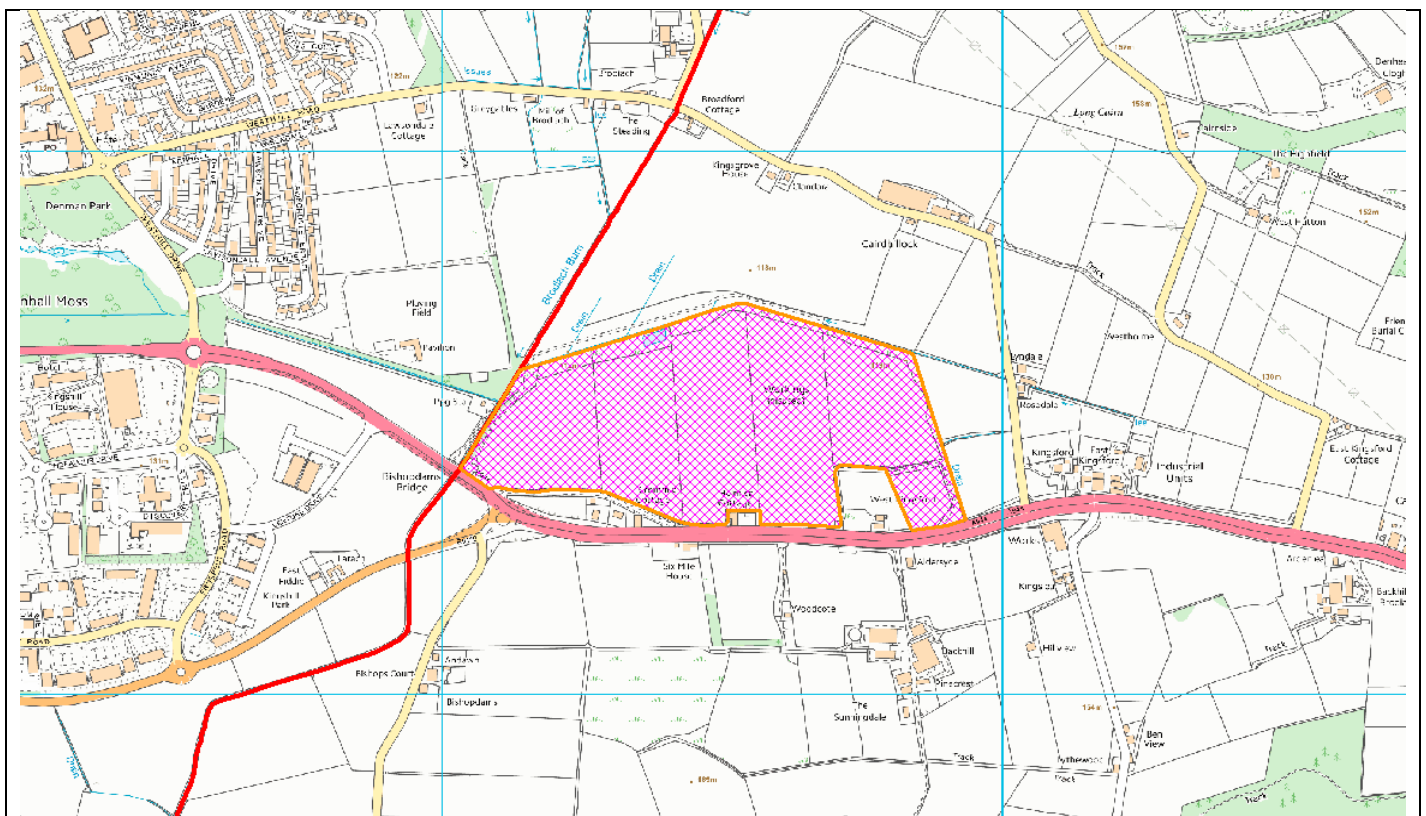
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# Agenda Item 3

	<b>Pre-Determination Hearing (Full Council)</b>
	Report by Development Management Manager
	<b>Date: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018</b>

<b>Site Address:</b>	Land At West Kingsford (North Of The A944 Road), Skene Road, Aberdeen, AB15 8QR
<b>Application Description:</b>	Proposed Community and Sports Facilities, Football Academy, (comprising outdoor pitches, pavilion, ancillary buildings), Stadium (20,000 capacity), ancillary uses, formation of access roads, parking and associated landscaping and engineering works
<b>Application Reference:</b>	170021/DPP
<b>Application Type</b>	Detailed Planning Permission
<b>Application Date:</b>	11 January 2017
<b>Applicant:</b>	Aberdeen FC Community Trust & Aberdeen Football Club Plc
<b>Ward:</b>	Kingswells/Sheddocksley/Summerhill
<b>Community Council</b>	Kingswells
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Gavin Evans



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## APPLICATION BACKGROUND

### Purpose of Report

Under section 38A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ('the Act'), the opportunity to attend pre-determination hearings must be provided in respect of applications for major developments which are considered to be significantly contrary to the vision or wider spatial

strategy of the 'development plan'. At the time of writing, the Development Plan comprises the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2014.

This report provides information for the second pre-determination hearing required in relation to this planning application for a major development (comprising 'Community and Sports Facilities, Football Academy, (comprising outdoor pitches, pavilion, ancillary buildings), Stadium (20,000 capacity), ancillary uses, formation of access roads, parking and associated landscaping and engineering works') which is considered to be significantly contrary to the strategic development plan and the adopted local development plan. This report concentrates on the additional supporting information submitted by the applicants on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, and the representations and consultation responses received in relation to those submissions – on the basis that these additional submissions are the reason for and primary focus of this second pre-determination hearing. However, it is important to point out that this second pre-determination hearing report has to be read in the context of the earlier report for the first pre-determination hearing, which provides important planning policy background and detail of the representations made and consultation responses received up until that point. The first report is attached at Appendix 1.

No assessment of the merits or failings of the proposal is made in this report.

### **Site Description**

The site is located on land at West Kingsford, which lies on the north side of the A944 dual carriageway, between Kingswells and Westhill. It extends to an area of some 24.5 hectares. The existing settlement of Westhill lies approximately 500m to the west, whilst the Prime Four Business Park is located around 1km to the east, with the residential suburb of Kingswells immediately beyond. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is currently under construction approximately 450m to the east of the site, with a grade-separated junction formed where it meets the A944. The western edge of the site abuts the Brodiach Burn, which at this location forms the boundary between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council's respective administrative areas.

The site sits in a natural bowl. The land to the north east, south, south east and north west, in particular, rises up quite significantly – some 50m to the south, 80m to the north west, 80m to the north east and 90m to the south east. There is about a 10m drop from south to north across the site. The site largely comprises a number of agricultural fields, divided internally with post and wire fencing running north/south. It is understood that the western portion of the site includes 2 historic landfill sites, and there is evidence of historic sand and gravel extraction.

To the south of the site are six houses. Four of these are clustered together along Old Skene Road, directly to the south of the proposed stadium location, and the remaining two – Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford – sit apart, accessed via the A944 directly. In the context of the proposed development, which is described more fully below, Holmlea Cottage would be immediately to the south of 2no academy training pitches, while West Kingsford would lie in a larger curtilage to the east of those same pitches, with a vehicular access to the south-eastern corner of the application site lying some 45m further to the east. To the north of the application site is open ground, while to the east and south across the dual carriageway is agricultural land. To the west are 'Lawsondale' playing fields and an area of open ground. An access track from the A944 runs northwards through the site, close to the western boundary and leads to land beyond the application site.

### **Relevant Planning History**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

## **APPLICATION DESCRIPTION**

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### **Description of Proposal**

This application seeks detailed planning permission (DPP) for 'Community and Sport Facilities, Football Academy And Stadium (Circa 20,000 Capacity), Formation Of Access And All Associated Parking, Landscaping And Engineering Works' on land at West Kingsford (north of the A944 Road), Skene Road, Aberdeen.

### **Stadium**

The proposed 20,000 capacity, all-seated stadium would be located to the western part of the site, approximately 50m from its southern boundary and 100m from its western boundary respectively. The stadium itself would measure approximately 180 metres by 145 metres, achieving a height of just over 20m and an overall footprint of approximately 24,250sqm. The stadium would be sited approximately 17 degrees off an east-west orientation, with its stands encircling the pitch completely, including the four corners. Seating within the stadium would be laid out in a single-tier 'bowl' arrangement.

The stadium's exterior would be finished in dark grey facing brick at low level, set slightly back from the coloured polycarbonate cladding to walls above. These vertical cladding panels, in shades of red through to white, are translucent and would create a subtle red glow from within the internally lit concourse areas at night. This translucency would also allow for diffuse natural light to illuminate the concourse during hours of daylight.

Externally, the south stand incorporates silver/grey aluminium rainscreen cladding which is extruded out from the face of the remainder of that elevation to surround an extensively glazed face, framed by a darker grey cladding. This glazed frontage takes advantage of the southern elevation and allows light in to hospitality suites and other internal spaces.

The south-east corner of the stadium includes a projecting section, clad in the same polycarbonate vertical cladding in shades of red and white. This extruded corner identifies the club shop at ground floor level, and its outer face above is identified as a potential location for signage, with the club crest embossed into the cladding panels and softly illuminated from within.

Floodlighting to illuminate the playing surface is incorporated within the design of the stadium roof, angled downwards to reduce light spillage outwith the arena. The roof itself is angled at 11 degrees, achieving a height of 21m from the pitch to the underside of the roof cladding material. It would be finished with a silver aluminium cladding panel, with exposed steelwork above and below to be painted white. To the rear of the seated tier a translucent polycarbonate panelling would be used to allow in diffuse light. The seating within the single-tier stand would comprise three 'rakes', with seating becoming steeper from pitchside to the rear of the stand incrementally, at 25, 28 and 29 degrees respectively.

Internally, the ground floor areas of the North, East and West sections of the stadium are largely given over to the necessary turnstile and concourse spaces, along with toilets and concessions stands. The North-East and North-West corners incorporate back-of-house facilities including staff/groundspersons/stewards changing areas and toilets; first aid room; plant rooms and maintenance workshops; various stores and facilities for match-day police at ground floor level, with a supporters' bar (215sqm) incorporated at first floor level in the NE corner, with views out onto the pitch.

The South Stand would act as the 'main stand' and, alongside concourse and concessions areas, it would incorporate a centralised catering space; home, away and match officials changing

facilities; warm-up, medical, physio and testing areas; kit storage and laundry facilities; manager's office and press conference room at ground floor level. The SE corner of the stadium would include a 'Red Café' coffee shop; AFC club shop; hospitality reception area; and ticket office. The players' entrance is located at a central point in this south stand, with access for Police and stewards to the north-western corner.

Hospitality Suites (totalling circa 1355sqm) and associated toilets and kitchen facilities would be located in the south stand's first floor, with a club museum and staff canteen/players' lounge housed in the SE corner.

At second floor level the south stand would incorporate the Club Boardroom; 24no. hospitality boxes (each with a notional capacity of 10 persons); Club and Match Sponsors' lounges; along with associated kitchen and toilet facilities. The SE corner would house the Club/Community offices, along with match control, PA room and TV studio facilities.

### **Training, Academy and Community Facilities**

On-site training facilities would include 3no full-size grass training pitches for first-team use, one of which would be floodlit, along with associated smaller training spaces, groundsman's compound, all of which sits to the north of the access road running east-to-west through the site. The professional training pitches would match the orientation of the stadium playing surface, with the aim that conditions on a match day can be replicated during training sessions.

A single-storey pavilion building, located to the south of these facilities, would provide changing facilities for both the professional training facilities and 2no floodlit synthetic '4G' pitches to the south, which would be for youth academy and community use.

The pavilion building would be finished with a combination of dark grey facing brick and silver/grey aluminium rainscreen cladding panels, with brick sections set back from the cladding to provide some articulation to the façade. High-level, horizontally proportioned windows are used to bring light and ventilation to changing spaces. It is envisaged that AFC professional staff would use office and changing facilities within the pavilion prior to construction of the stadium, after which they would relocate to facilities within the stadium itself and vacate these spaces for use by the AFC Community Trust and other community groups. 42no car parking spaces are shown adjacent to the pavilion building.

### **Fanzone**

A 'fanzone' area is proposed between the east stand and the pavilion building. This would extend across the hard landscaped area between these buildings, and is conveniently positioned relative to the supporters' bar, club shop and Red Café facilities within the east stand. Bus turning and shuttle-bus pick-up facilities are located immediately nearby to the north of this area. The submitted Design and Access statement and later addendum refer to this area becoming a focal point for supporters on arrival to the site, highlighting opportunities for a large screen to provide pre-match entertainment or club information to supporters and enhancing the match-day experience. This will be a traffic-free zone, incorporating colourful club branding. Opportunities for a well-integrated lighting strategy within this space are identified. An external power source is identified as being necessary to allow temporary stage set-up, with potential use for live music, DJ's or community music projects. This is intended as a flexible space which relates well to the surrounding facilities.

### **Car, Coach & Cycle Parking; Bus provision & Access**

It is proposed to provide 1,350 car parking spaces within the site for supporters. These are contained within three main car parks, located to the north, east, and south-west of the stadium respectively (*car park 1 to SW: 311 spaces; car park 2 to N: 805 spaces; and car park 3 to E: 234 spaces*). A further 22 spaces are provided within the training pavilion car park; 16 unspecified

'service' spaces; and 4 spaces for groundspersons, for a cumulative on-site total of 1392 spaces. Outwith the application site, the applicant has intimated that a further 600 spaces will be made available via commercial arrangement with third parties at Arnhall Business Park. The TA Addendum highlights that 250 spaces at Kingsford would be set aside for hospitality guests, with the remaining 1100 available to supporters, with tickets purchased in advance – cars will not be able to arrive on a match-day and park without a pre-purchased permit.

A visitors' coach parking area, to the west of the stadium, could accommodate up to 60 coaches for away supporters. Home coaches would park immediately to the south of this, with capacity for 32 coaches and 8 outside broadcast trucks.

The match-day transport strategy proposed is based upon a 'predict and provide' model, whereby surveys of existing travel behaviours and preferences have been used as the basis for establishing mode share, and then transport interventions are proposed in order to meet those identified requirements. Surveys undertaken by Dons Supporters Together (DST) and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) have been used as the basis for the Transport Assessment and associated strategy. It is proposed to address travel demand through a combination of increased frequency of existing bus services and the provision of site-specific shuttle buses, operating from the City Centre and from existing Park and Ride (P&R) sites at Kingswells and Dyce, with Bridge of Don utilised in addition for European matches. The bus strategy predicts a requirement for the provision of up to 52 shuttle bus services on non-Old-Firm match-days; up to 63 for Old Firm matches; and up to 69 for European games. Shuttle services would utilise various routes to Kingsford, but would not allow for pick up along their respective routes. Central Coaches, who have a fleet of 52 buses, have confirmed that they would act as transport coordinators and could provide the required number of buses by co-ordinating resources with other bus operators. All AFC match-day bus services will drop-off and pick-up from the dedicated shuttle bus area within the Kingsford site. The suggested collection points are College Street, Shiprow, Rose Street, Southerhead Road and various stops on King Street, as well as the shuttle services from the Dyce and Kingswells Park and Ride sites, with city centre services provided from Midday onwards for matches kicking off at 3pm.

It is proposed to construct three accesses into the site, one each at the eastern and western ends of the site, onto the A944, and a main access at a central point immediately south of the stadium, east of Crommie Cottage and the junction of Old Skene Road and the A944. The eastern and western accesses would be connected by the internal road network, which loops around the back/northern face of the stadium. Both of these accesses would operate on a 'left-in/left-out' basis, whereas the main central access would be a permanently signal-controlled junction, incorporating at least one right-turn lane off the A944.

The Fanzone described above is expected to have a role in spreading out the arrivals to the site, by offering entertainment/activity in the period before matches. This is anticipated to reduce the impact of arrival peaks immediately before kick-off times.

The main junction would be permanently controlled by traffic signals and would allow for at least one right-turning lane off the A944. Within the site the main access would split to serve the Pavilion Car Park/Car Park 3, to the north, and head westwards, skirting around the front of the stadium's main stand and joining up with the road from the western access to loop around the west and north of the stadium before joining the spine road through the site from the eastern access. This internal road layout would enclose the hard-surfaced pedestrian concourse surrounding the stadium.

It is proposed to provide secure cycle parking for up to 220 cycles in a single location, to the east of the stadium and associated Fanzone, just north of the Pavilion building. Footpath links would be

formed between the stadium and the A944, adjacent to the main stadium access and the eastern access.

In order to prevent supporters from parking within residential areas around the stadium it is proposed in the TA to implement a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) for areas located within an agreed walking catchment of the stadium. It is proposed that parking controls apply during event times only, with resident permit holders being exempt from those controls. The submitted TA refers to typical hours of operation of 11am to 3pm; 1pm to 5.15pm or 6pm to 10pm, depending on event time/kick-off. Enforcement of any such CPZ would fall within the jurisdiction of Police Scotland, as parking is not decriminalised in Aberdeenshire. Separate processes exist for the promotion of a CPZ, which would require the approval of Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Landscaping**

The application is supported by a Landscape Framework, which indicates areas of strategic landscaping along the site frontage to the A944, with hedgerows and tree planting used to screen the southern edge of Car Park 1, adjacent to the west stadium access. Structure planting is also proposed along the southern boundary, between academy pitches and the adjacent residential properties at Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford. This planting would involve a landscaped belt of at least 10m depth. A similar 10m structure belt is proposed along the eastern and northern boundaries, comprising a mix of birch and pine. Within the site, trees and other soft landscaping would be used to soften the appearance of Car Park 2 and its associated structure, to the north of the stadium. Along the western edge of the site, adjacent to the Brodiach Burn, a riparian woodland planting belt is proposed. Cut and fill would be used to provide undulating landforms at the eastern and main accesses. These would also be used to provide a degree of enclosure to a memorial garden adjacent to the main access, and would serve to separate it from the main pedestrian footpath.

### **Phasing of delivery**

The applicants anticipate delivering the proposed development in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on the formation of an access junction from the A944 to the centre of the site, providing access to the professional training facilities described above, along with groundsman's store, single-storey pavilion building with 42no car parking spaces and 2no synthetic pitches for use by the AFC youth academy and Community Trust. This first phase would also involve initial site preparation and earthworks within the application boundary. Phase 2 comprises the remainder of the development, including the stadium itself, parking areas, access points and completion of the internal road network. Once completed, professional staff would vacate office and changing facilities within the pavilion building, moving to facilities within the stadium. The Community Trust would then utilise the space vacated within the pavilion.

### **Supporting Documents**

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=OJMF3EBZIED00>.

The following documents have been submitted in support of the application –

- Pre-Application Consultation Report
- Environmental Statement and associated Non-Technical Summary
- Design & Access Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment

- Site Investigation Report
- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
- Drainage Assessment
- Processing Agreement
- Coloured visualisations
- Statement on Co-Location, Site Selection & Sequential Test
- Travel Plan Framework
- Transport Assessment Addendum
- Road Safety Audit Report
- Technical Note: Updated Shuttle Bus Strategy
- Economic Impact response
- FRA Technical Note: Hydrology
- Design and Access Statement Addendum
- Planning Policy Statement (City Centre Impacts)
- Supporter Bus Travel & Shuttle Bus Strategies (post-hearing, dated 21<sup>st</sup> Sept 2017);
- Letter from SFA Chief Operating Officer, Andrew McKinlay, relating to benefits of co-location;
- Training Facilities User Schedule
- Halliday Fraser Munro Supporting Statement (with appendices A-P)

## **Pre-Application Consultation**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

## **Requirement for a Pre-Determination Hearing**

The proposed development is classed a 'major development' in terms of The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The proposal is considered to be a significant departure from the Development Plan by virtue of it being a major development located on an undeveloped and unallocated site within the Green Belt, wherein Policy NE2 'Green Belt' of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan applies, but does not allow for development of this type.

Under Regulation 27 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 there is a requirement to hold a Pre-determination Hearing before such applications may be determined. Thereafter, this planning application requires to be determined by the Full Council due to the provisions of Section 14(2) of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, which amends the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to the effect that any planning application which has been the subject of a statutory Pre-Determination Hearing under section 38A of the 2006 Act must be decided by the Full Council. Regulation 27 of the Town and Country (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations specifies that major developments which are significantly contrary to the development plan will require such a Pre-Determination Hearing.

A Hearing site visit was undertaken by the Planning Development Management Committee, with invitation extended to all Councillors, on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September to familiarise members with geographical context of the site and the positioning, appearance and scale of, and means of access to, the proposed development.

A previous Pre-Determination Hearing (PDH1) took place on Wednesday 13th September 2017. The Hearing afforded the applicant and those people who submitted written representations on the proposed development the opportunity to present verbally their arguments/case directly to the Planning Development Management Committee, which on this occasion, was open to all Members of the Council. The minute from that hearing can be found on the Council website along with the agenda pack –

<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=348&MId=5831&Ver=4>

This further hearing (PDH2) is required as a result of further supporting information being submitted by the applicants. The planning authority has considered it necessary to allow a further opportunity for written representations to be made in relation to that additional supporting information. In order to satisfy the regulatory requirement for all those making representations to be afforded an opportunity to be heard, it has been necessary to hold this further hearing.

The purpose of this hearing is to afford both the applicant and those who have made written representation on the proposed development the opportunity to present state their views directly to the members of the Council.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

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Below is a summary of new/additional consultation responses in the period since the earlier Pre-Determination Hearing. These should be read in conjunction with the responses summarised in the attached PDH1 report.

**ACC - Roads Development Management Team** – In relation to the proposed pedestrian footbridge, further information was provided by the applicants to demonstrate adequate capacity. ACC Roads DM considers that the applicant has adequately justified the methodology used to calculate capacity, and has shown that a 3m wide footbridge is sufficient to accommodate up to 4,320 pedestrians in the 30 minute period following a match. The submitted Transport Assessment estimates that 3,380 supporters will use the bridge within this period. On this basis, it is concluded that the proposed pedestrian bridge has sufficient capacity to serve the development.

**ACC – Economic Development** - Further supporting information was provided, which raised queries relating to assumptions made about reduced attendances in the ‘remain at Pittodrie’ scenario; an uplift in the number of functions that is assumed at the proposed site; and other assumptions relating to city centre spending and population estimates.

Following further clarification from the applicants, ACC’s Economic Development team made the following comments in relation to the applicants’ assessment of economic benefit as follows:

- Notes that the proposed development would provide a centre of excellence for sport, complementing the success of Aberdeen Sports Village.
- Notes that the Regional Economic Strategy identifies tourism and leisure as a priority sector, aiming to increase visitor spend in the North-East.
- States that the Kingsford proposal contributes to the overall ambition to diversity the city and regional economy and lever in additional investment into the region. It would offer opportunities to attract new sporting events to the city, maximising economic benefits that may not be possible under a ‘do-nothing’ scenario.



- As well as the potential to provide further events infrastructure to the north east, the development has potential to promote the north-east as a sporting destination. If these additional sporting events materialise, there is an opportunity, through the VisitAberdeenshire partnership, to maximise the opportunities for event-related and overnight/weekend business.
- Notes that, without a new stadium, AFC's European matches would have to be played in Dundee, whilst the ability to compete for friendly or underage football events, or rugby-related events, could be undermined.
- Recognises that the quantitative analysis presented by AFC assumes (i) higher attendances at Kingsford; (ii) attracting additional sporting events and music concerts at Kingsford; and (iii) the new stadium would attract additional functions and corporate events. A range of 'activity scenarios' have been considered to calculate and compare Gross Value Added (GVA) impacts.
- Notes that estimates of economic impact are in line with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book on Economic Appraisal of projects.
- The total additional economic contribution of delivering the Kingsford stadium compared with remaining at Pittodrie (assuming average 8,500 crowd) ranges from £8.535m to £9.529m of GVA per annum, equivalent to between 347 to 408 Full Time Equivalent additional jobs. These economic impacts are at the Aberdeen City and Shire spatial area.
- There are also 443 net additional construction jobs associated with the Kingsford option. While these jobs will provide a benefit to the regional economy, they are restricted to a 'one-off' impact and therefore they are not included in the total jobs contribution.
- The applicant has estimated a range of £0.51m to £1.78m per annum of spend in the city centre from being at Pittodrie according to assumptions made of the nature of spend by those who travel by car. This range is estimated to be the maximum potential loss of spend in the City Centre, as a result of moving to Kingsford.
- The applicant suggests that the loss is at the lower end of this range as many of those who currently travel by car are unlikely to spend in the City Centre while attending games at Pittodrie so will not constitute a loss to the City Centre in the Kingsford scenario. Further, many fans that do not currently travel by car are likely to get bus transport to Kingsford from the City Centre, and thus continue spending in the city centre as they currently do. The applicant's transport consultant forecasts bus capacity for around 2,500 fans travelling from the city centre to Kingsford, roughly in line with the number of supporters who do not currently rely on car travel to Pittodrie. Express satisfaction that the impact on the city centre is likely to be around the lower end of the range at around £0.51m per annum.
- Remaining at Pittodrie could present significant economic challenges in terms of the increased refurbishment costs this would involve and the difficulty in attracting additional major sporting events to the stadium. If this materialised, in turn it would have a negative impact on the reputation of Aberdeen city to compete for new and large scale events to the region that in turn contribute to the tourism/ leisure objectives in the regional economic strategy.
- For the club itself, the increased costs and any deterioration in terms of the stadium and/ or playing staff, under do-nothing scenarios, could in turn reduce the funds available to the

AFC playing budget which could result in lower attendances and lower economic benefits.

- The likely scale of economic benefit at Kingsford is predicated on a range of activity scenarios driven by attendance volumes. In turn, attendance relies on the success of the team and the club. Therefore there is some uncertainty around the likely scale of the economic benefit of the Kingsford option. Similarly the ability of the club to convert opportunities for new and additional football or other sporting activity is not yet known and would form part of the club's business planning,
- The analysis does show however that in the context of the scale of challenges in operating the club under a 'do nothing' scenario, the net benefit under the Kingsford option does offer a significant economic benefit of the project.

**Aberdeen City/Shire Developer Obligations Team** – Contributions are required in relation to anticipated increased usage of the Core Path Network – specifically Core Path 91.

No financial contribution towards Open Space provision is required, as adequate provision is made within the development.

Any Strategic and Local Transportation requirements are identified and confirmed direct by Aberdeen City Council's Transportation Team.

**Aberdeen City Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA)** – Restates earlier position that the development in its current form and location does not accord with the Strategic Development Plan (SDP), would result in the loss of 25ha of Green Belt land and the coalescence of urban areas. The development be inappropriately sited, giving rise to unsustainable travel patterns in a manner contrary to the modal shift sought by the SDP. Further, there would be a negative impact on the city centre.

The following specific points are also made within the SDPA's most recent response:

- It has not been demonstrated that co-location is necessary. Whilst the additional information highlights issues of deliverability with sequentially preferable sites, the consideration of alternatives has been undertaken on the basis of fixed requirements for a certain size of site, rather than on the basis of site suitability. SDPA reiterates its view that the sequential test should be carried out on the basis of separating the stadium and training facilities.
- It is demonstrated that there is not a suitable allocated site of 25ha within Aberdeen City.
- Submissions contend that there is insufficient developable land available at Loirston to build stadium and required parking – agree that this seems to be the case.
- Suggests it is unlikely that the pedestrian footbridge will be sufficient. Notes that design shows no disabled access, but assumes this could be addressed through assessment of a specific planning application for the bridge.
- Previously raised concerns regarding loss of jobs in Seaton and impact on City Centre from lost revenue. Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) new material suggests more jobs would be created than envisaged by the earlier EKOS report. Notes

that this more optimistic view is based on a series of assumptions. Job losses and loss of revenue is presented as low in context of overall North East economy, but these are still potentially significant to small enterprises. Discussion of benefits focuses on Kingsford and for AFC, but given the increased focus on the regeneration of Aberdeen city centre and recognition of its value as a regional asset, the loss of employment and business revenue seems to undermine such efforts.

- The assumptions made in relation to additional events suggest a greater intensity of use, and would appear to contradict the applicants' assertion that it would be an intermittently used facility,

**Aberdeenshire Council** – Aberdeenshire Council maintains its objection to the development for the reason given below:

*Aberdeenshire Council object to the application on the grounds that the proposal in its current composition and location would be contrary to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014) which was up-to-date and relevant to the application. The proposal would result in the loss of greenbelt land, the coalescence of urban areas, inappropriately located development giving rise to unsustainable travel patterns and have a negative impact on the City Centre in terms of its mix of uses and lost revenue. The application is contrary to the development plan and it is not considered that sufficient material considerations have been demonstrated that indicates the application should be supported.*

The following comments are made in relation to matters raised by the new supporting statement (November 2017):

- Notes that the Supporting Statement asserts that the stadium and training facilities would each require at least 12.5ha, which appears excessive compared to the requirements of other clubs;
- Notes further information provided to evidence issues with the delivery of the development at Loirston and King's Links, and highlights that it will be for Aberdeen City Council to assess the merits of the case put forward.
- Highlights that the work of the AFC Community Trust must be recognised and commended. Notes however that access to facilities for community use unrelated to the AFC Trust is unclear (e.g. access for residents and local community or sports groups).
- The new economic analysis prepared by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) suggests that substantially more jobs would be supported by the proposed development than had been anticipated in the earlier EKOS report. This appears to be based on some major assumptions around the ability of AFC to attract major events on an annual basis. Recognises that opportunities would arise from a new stadium development, but notes that other scenarios are possible. Whilst the AGCC analysis is more attractive and if realised would create many more jobs, some assumptions made are optimistic. Conversely, notes that the 'do nothing' scenario appears to predict a steady decline in attendance from the current base of 13,083 to 8,500-10,000, with a consequent effect on figures quoted for jobs sustained and GVA (Gross Value Added).
- Aberdeenshire Council does not agree that the pedestrian capacity of the proposed footbridge over the A944 has been demonstrated to be sufficient. Assumptions within the Transport Assessment with regards to the level of traffic generation do not fully reflect the

potential traffic levels or resulting pedestrian flows associated with the full extent of available parking in Arnhall or a lack of delivery/enforcement of a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Westhill. Notes also that there is no form of crowd control designed into the layout of the footbridge, and that its current design demonstrates a lack of compliance with national standards, which would present a real disincentive to many users, especially those with reduced mobility and similar disabilities.

- Previously states concerns in relation to traffic impact, controlled parking zone, impact of a pedestrian overbridge as an entrance to Westhill, and the potential negative impact on Westhill town centre on match days remain applicable.

**Community Council: Kingswells** – Object and recommend that the application be refused.

In response to the most recent submissions (**November 2017**), KCC makes the following points:

- Acknowledges a range of differing views held within the local community, and states that the KCC response does not represent the views of all within the community or within KCC.
- The KCC retains its position of objection.
- Reiterates conflict with Green Belt policy NE2 and expresses concern regarding a precedent being set for Green Belt development. Considers that there is no mitigation possible for the loss of this Green Belt land. States that the Green Belt land remaining after the proposed development would not be able to fulfil the intended function of Green Belts.
- Fixed 25ha land requirement – Queries AFC's stated requirement for 25ha of land which, if separated would require 2no separate sites of 12.5ha. Suggests that the area of land required for any given development is dependent on site layout, and that it may well be possible to accommodate either the stadium or training complex on a site of less than 12.5ha. There is no evidence that smaller sites have been considered, and it appears that the site selection process was carried out retrospectively using the area of the Kingsford site as a fixed requirement.
- Pedestrian bridge – note that the walking speed for crowded situations which is used by AFC is specifically and explicitly intended for scenarios where walking on level ground, but has been applied inappropriately to a scenario involving stairs. This serves to overstate the capacity of the bridge. Suggests that a lower walking speed would require a wider stair of circa 8m to provide adequate capacity. Suggests that an underpass may be a better solution. If a bridge it to be progressed, options for the use of a ramp should be considered.
- Economic Benefit – the evidence base for this assessment is not transparent. Highlights perceived discrepancies in the statements of economic benefit made by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC). Suggests that the figures quoted for jobs are unlikely to be realised, and that there would be minimal job creation directly associated with the development. Highlights that the statement of economic benefit does not account for the cost to the local community, including travel delays. KCC considers that the economic benefits are largely to AFC itself, and the benefits of the development do not outweigh the loss of Green Belt land.
- Transport Assessment – reiterates concerns relating to the Transport Assessment and the development's reliance on car-borne travel. Highlights the potential for additional use of off-site parking to further increase congestion. Notes that AFC make reference to concerts in their economic benefits assessment, but there are not factored in to the transport assessment or pedestrian overbridge design.
- KCC accepts that the proposed development would be of benefit to the local community in providing public access to those new facilities;
- Oil and gas pipelines – highlights the recent leak from a pipeline near Netherly, which has required road closures and house evacuations. Acknowledges that the likelihood of a leak

is very small, but the potential harm could be catastrophic. Suggests that the proximity of the stadium to existing pipelines warrants review in this context.

**Community Council: Cults, Bieldside And Milltimber**– No further response to consultation.

**Community Council: Westhill and Elrick** – Do not believe that the proposed site at Kingsford is suitable.

In response to the most recent submissions (**November 2017**), the W&ECC stated that whilst this additional information adds detail to issues such as wildlife and flooding, it does not address the fundamental flaws in the application, nor the main planning policy issues outlined in W&ECC's previous objection. The further response raises the following matters:

- Retain significant concern over the loss of Green Belt land. With respect to the Dundee Tesco case cited in AFC's submissions, W&ECC highlights that the Asda development was on a large derelict site, and therefore is not directly comparable to Kingsford.
- AFC has not demonstrated a flexible approach, relying on an argument that 25ha is needed and that co-location of the stadium and training facilities is a necessity as the basis for discounting sequentially preferable sites.
- Highlights that Pittodrie is a 5.8ha site, and that a new stadium requires much less land than stated by AFC. Similarly, a training complex is estimated to require much less land than claimed. The 25ha (or 2 x 12.5ha) stated by AFC is considered to be a vast overstatement of the land-take required.
- Queries whether Aberdeen City Council would be entitled to break the existing lease (Golf centre/driving range) at King's Links.
- New documents suggest that AFC has selected Green Belt land on the basis that it is cheaper to purchase, which is not adequate justification for the loss of Green Belt land.
- Reiterates concerns regarding ribbon development along the AWPR corridor as a result of this application being approved.
- Reiterates concerns regarding noise, light and the impact on nearby housing. Emphasises that the character of the local area would be transformed from open green space to being dominated by an illuminated stadium.
- In terms of the stated economic benefits, W&ECC highlights that the GVA and FTE figures states within Appendix P do not have verifiable sources, nor are they accompanied by calculations or tables which would allow these claims to be substantiated.
- Express concerns regarding severe negative visual impact arising from a pedestrian footbridge being erected at the entrance to Westhill, on the A944.
- Indicates that the technical data provided in support of this crossing applies to ground-level pedestrian crossings, and are not relevant to the proposed footbridge and the large pedestrian volumes associated with use of a stadium. Draws distinctions between the SECC Hydro example cited and the proposed footbridge at Kingsford.

## REPRESENTATIONS

1422 valid and timeously made representations were made in relation to the additional information lodged in November 2017. A proportion of those came from respondents who had already made representation in relation to the application. In such instances all comments from the same respondent will be counted as a single representation, in accordance with the Council's established practices.

The updated total of valid and timeously made representations received in relation to this application, including accounting for multiple submissions by a single respondent, is 10,705. Of these, 5,693 (53.2%) are in support of the proposal, 4,992 (46.6%) state objection, and 20 (less than 0.2%) are neutral in content.

A consolidated list of the matters raised in representations will be provided in a future report to Full Council, which will address those matters raised. The appended hearing report from 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (PDH1) includes a summary of matters raised up to that point, many of which are reiterated in the current batch of representations. New matters raised, over and above those already summarised in the PDH1 report, can be categorised into a series of general topics and summarised as follows:

### **National, Regional and Local planning policy**

- *Contrary to the majority of policies contained within the current Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP), which is up to date having been adopted in January 2017;*
- *The proposal fails to embrace the function of the green belt to provide a buffer between communities and would result in continuous ribbon development along the north side of the A944*
- *The proposal is contrary to Policy NC5 of the LDP as suitable alternative sites are identified in the development plan (King's Links and Loirston), there would be an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Westhill, there is no proven qualitative or quantitative deficiency of this kind of development, it is in an unsustainable location and would result in local economic losses*

### **Co-location, site selection and sequential test**

- *The 2008 Aberdeen Community Arena Full Business Case did not see the King's Links lease as an insurmountable barrier – it made proposals for the relocation of the golf driving range as part of site acquisition;*
- *A review of any contract between ACC and Craig Group should be carried out to explore the opportunity for ACC to cancel the lease of the driving range area for the "greater good" in order for a King's Links development to take place;*
- *The justification for site selection appears to be financial;*
- *AFC has adequately demonstrated that that King's Links and Loriston cannot be delivered;*
- *In terms of impact on the greenbelt, co-location is the preferred option rather than having two separate greenbelt sites;*
- *12.5 hectares for each element of the proposal (i.e. stadium and training facilities) is based purely on 'want' rather than 'need' - a review of stadia across Europe shows that a site of 8 hectares is more than sufficient for a stadium, for example Bristol City (27,000 capacity) sits in 3.8 hectares, Chelsea (41,663 capacity) 3.3 hectares, Rangers FC (50,817 capacity) 6.6 hectares, Arsenal (59,817 capacity) 8.0 hectares, Real Madrid (81,044 capacity) 7.2 hectares;*
- *The justification for site selection appears to be mainly financial rather than based on the most appropriate location – a site that is 'financially' lucrative/ available site does make it sequentially preferable;*
- *The cost to purchase land identified for development is not a material consideration*
- *No data has been presented to determine the impact on communities and businesses around Pittodrie;*
- *The assertion that AFC cannot afford to build on the designated areas (Kings Links or Loirston) is not a justification to remove the last area of greenbelt between Westhill and Kingswells or for discounting other more sequentially preferable sites;*

- *The added value of co-location is grossly over stated by the club and it is clear that most other greater clubs operate successfully across separate sites;*
- *The "benefits" of co-location are presented as an emotional sales-pitch rather than having demonstrably positive impact on the community;*
- *Co-location of the training facilities and the stadium is extremely beneficial as transportation costs and time will be greatly reduced compared to a split site facility.*
- *AFC has not demonstrated sufficient flexibility (as required by Scottish Planning Policy) and no due consideration of alternative sites and that the case for colocation of facilities is not successfully justified;*
- *The validity of statements by applicant that Pittodrie does meet UEFA requirements is questioned – the pitch size exceeds the minimum UEFA requirement for domestic play. Many teams across Europe have pitches that do not fully meet the International play requirements (e.g. Liverpool, Chelsea, Hearts, Dundee and Dundee United) yet they regularly accommodate European football*

### **Transport, accessibility and sustainability**

- *Unsustainable location – car-reliant development. The transport strategy does not offer the sustainable transport arrangements that would be needed to support a development in the Green Belt;*
- *Whilst the applicant may have applied the HM treasury Green book Appraisal and Evaluation to the economic assessment, they did not apply the relevant guidelines to their supporter travel and shuttle bus strategy tables, which is a serious omission, as any significant variations in the numbers using shuttle buses will likely have direct and adverse impact on the number of supports seeking to park at Kingsford;*
- *AFC's baseline figures for supporters seeking on-site or off-site parking sets an inordinately low expectation of the numbers who will travel by car. For an average match attendance, the number of cars seeking a parking space over and above planned is likely to at least 1,000 cars. For a full capacity match, additional parking is likely to 4,000-6,000 cars;*
- *It is remiss of the club to not apply a sensitivity analysis to the number of supporters either estimated or assumed to be driving to matches – sensitivity analyses carried out by NKS indicate that the number of cars for which parking has been provided could range between 1,000 and 3,500;*
- *It is human nature to seek to park as close as possible to the end destination and thus supports may not try to use the Bridge of Don and Dyce P&R facilities;*
- *The CPZ is unenforceable;*
- *A 30 minute walk-to-me CPZ would result in restrictions being placed on 43.9km (27.2 miles) of streets in Westhill – it would take at least 2.2 police officers walking non-stop for 4 hours each to cover the required ground;*
- *The applicant has not committed to operate the CPZ in perpetuity (only a 5 year commitment is offered);*
- *The proposed shuttle bus system will not be the first choice for most travelling fans. Many reasons why supporters would not use shuttle buses – waiting in the cold, sitting on a shuttle bus in slow traffic for anything from perhaps 60min to 90min, people not happy with behaviour of other passengers, the large number of supporters having to wait at end of game for a shuttle bus;*
- *The supporter survey has not sought the opinions of visiting teams' supporters;*
- *The proposed pedestrian footbridge will not be used, instead, visiting fans will just run across the road;*
- *An underpass should be built instead of a pedestrian footbridge;*
- *The proposed bridge over the A944 at entrance of Westhill is intended to support unsustainable transportation provision/parking;*

- *The pedestrian bridge design is not fit for purpose (lack of disabled access);*
- *A new bridge will need to be of very high architectural standards, aesthetically pleasing and provide some built landscape merit;*
- *The bridge is not enclosed and would pose a threat to traffic passing below (throwing or dropping of objects);*
- *What is the contingency if planning permission is not granted for the bridge?;*
- *Who would maintain the bridge?*
- *The TA addresses only traffic arising from its own matches and not for other event at the stadium;*
- *Westhill does not have the infrastructure to cope with the volume of cars and other stadium road traffic which would add to the high traffic volumes that already exist. The influx of supporters would more than double the population of Westhill.*

### **Design, size and scale**

- *The proposed footbridge would be an 'eyesore' and would create an opportunity for 'over-road' advertising space, to the detriment of visual amenity;*
- *The application claims that the footbridge will only be used for a minority of the games that would take place at the stadium. A permanent bridge would be put into place for little use, having would have an aesthetic impact on Westhill;*
- *The proposed 3m footbridge width is not sufficient to cater for the number of fans likely to use it;*
- *The claim that 12.5 hectares is required to develop a professional training facility is incorrect. Many clubs within the SPL operate successfully with training facilities of a smaller size.*

### **Economic and social benefits/ impacts**

- *Any economic benefit attributable to the development is not site specific, and would likely be realised in any location within the city;*
- *Figures presented discount the potential spending of the majority of those attending football events, which significantly undervalue the spend of those attending Pittodrie and the income generated in the wider-city centre and Pittodrie area. The assessment is flawed and lacks clarity;*
- *A great deal is made of the requirement of the charitable trust to be located at the stadium and training facilities. The idea of the trust is to reach out to disadvantaged areas. Kingsford is located between two communities in the most advantaged 20% of the population;*
- *There is no credible evidence to support the claimed economic benefits of the stadium and therefore these do not represent sufficient justification to deviate from the LDP and established green belt policy*
- *AFC has significantly underestimated the volume of private car usage - the resultant impact will negatively affect the vitality and viability of Westhill as a Town Centre, diverting trade activity to other areas which would not be offset by any activity generated by the proposal*
- *There has been a gross overestimation of the economic benefit and that the data used by AGCC is weak. The local economic losses as a result of construction activity and match day traffic may be greater than any possible gains*
- *There is no specific reference to the guidance used in carrying out the economic assessment, the full economic model has not been made available, the assessment is confusing and is flawed as it does not take account of 'deadweight', it does not review the options required by HM Treasury Green Book, the economic impact is overestimated at a city level, the projected 35% drop in attendances at Pittodrie is challenged, the vast majority of the benefits would*



occur anyway and the 'Do nothing' scenario should be a 'Do minimum' as a worst case scenario, which would ensure the stadium is fit for purpose, meets regulations etc.;

- A £1.1M per annum GVA injection cannot be deemed to be significant;
- The economic benefits are based on the aspiration of the new stadium hosting 6 significant new events per year;
- The claims relating to public benefit are spurious given the out-of-centre location and the difficulty in accessing the site, especially for those in Aberdeen's most disadvantaged communities.

### **Other matters**

- Details of the proposed pedestrian footbridge have not been submitted with the application;
- Planning permission is required for the proposed footbridge and has not been sought.

## **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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### **Legislative Requirements**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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### **National Planning Policy and Guidance**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

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### **Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

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### **Other Material Considerations**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

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### **Environmental Statement**

*Per PDH1 report (appended).*

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## **NEXT STEPS**

A report will be prepared by officers for Full Council with a recommendation assessing the proposed development and making a recommendation to members.

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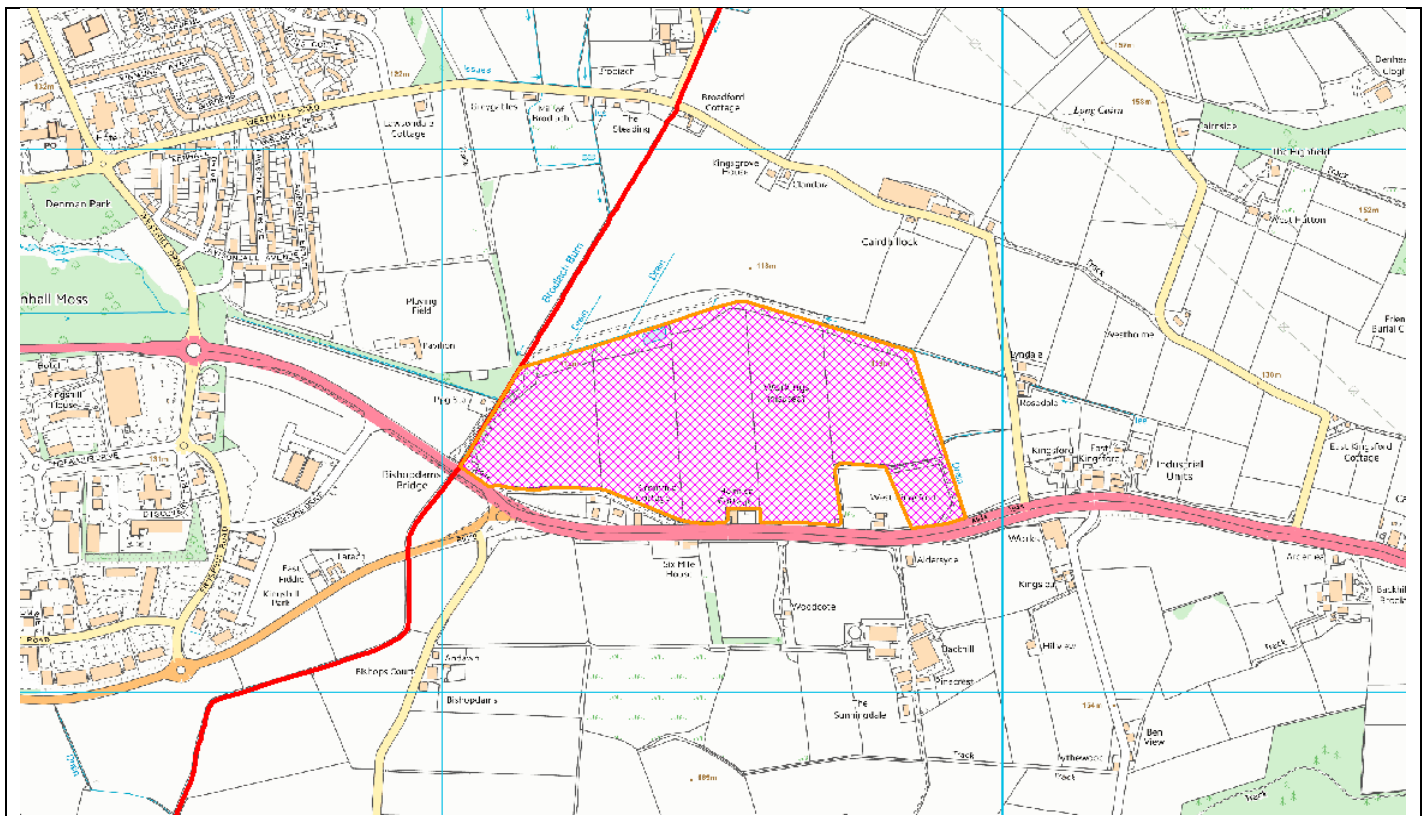


# Pre-Determination Hearing (Full Council)

Report by Development Management Manager

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (Site visit Monday 11<sup>th</sup>)

<b>Site Address:</b>	Land At West Kingsford (North Of The A944 Road), Skene Road, Aberdeen, AB15 8QR
<b>Application Description:</b>	Proposed Community and Sports Facilities, Football Academy, (comprising outdoor pitches, pavilion, ancillary buildings), Stadium (20,000 capacity), ancillary uses, formation of access roads, parking and associated landscaping and engineering works
<b>Application Reference:</b>	170021/DPP
<b>Application Type</b>	Detailed Planning Permission
<b>Application Date:</b>	11 January 2017
<b>Applicant:</b>	Aberdeen FC Community Trust & Aberdeen Football Club Plc
<b>Ward:</b>	Kingswells/Sheddocksley/Summerhill
<b>Community Council</b>	Kingswells
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Gavin Evans



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## APPLICATION BACKGROUND

### Purpose of Report

Under section 38A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ('the Act'), the opportunity to attend pre-determination hearings must be provided in respect of applications for major developments which are considered to be significantly contrary to the vision or wider spatial strategy of the 'development

plan'. At the time of writing, the Development Plan comprises the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2014.

This report provides information for the pre-determination hearing required in relation to this planning application for a major development (*comprising 'Community and Sports Facilities, Football Academy, (comprising outdoor pitches, pavilion, ancillary buildings), Stadium (20,000 capacity), ancillary uses, formation of access roads, parking and associated landscaping and engineering works'*) which is considered to be significantly contrary to the strategic development plan and the adopted local development plan.

No assessment of the merits or failings of the proposal is made in this report.

### Site Description

The site is located on land at West Kingsford, which lies on the north side of the A944 dual carriageway, between Kingswells and Westhill. It extends to an area of some 24.5 hectares. The existing settlement of Westhill lies approximately 500m to the west, whilst the Prime Four Business Park is located around 1km to the east, with the residential suburb of Kingswells immediately beyond. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is currently under construction approximately 450m to the east of the site, with a grade-separated junction formed where it meets the A944. The western edge of the site abuts the Brodiach Burn, which at this location forms the boundary between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council's respective administrative areas.

The site sits in a natural bowl. The land to the north east, south, south east and north west, in particular, rises up quite significantly – some 50m to the south, 80m to the north west, 80m to the north east and 90m to the south east. There is about a 10m drop from south to north across the site. The site largely comprises a number of agricultural fields, divided internally with post and wire fencing running north/south. It is understood that the western portion of the site includes 2 historic landfill sites, and there is evidence of historic sand and gravel extraction.

To the south of the site are six houses. Four of these are clustered together along Old Skene Road, directly to the south of the proposed stadium location, and the remaining two – Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford – sit apart, accessed via the A944 directly. In the context of the proposed development, which is described more fully below, Holmlea Cottage would be immediately to the south of 2no academy training pitches, while West Kingsford would lie in a larger curtilage to the east of those same pitches, with a vehicular access to the south-eastern corner of the application site lying some 45m further to the east. To the north of the application site is open ground, while to the east and south across the dual carriageway is agricultural land. To the west are 'Lawsondale' playing fields and an area of open ground. An access track from the A944 runs northwards through the site, close to the western boundary and leads to land beyond the application site.

### Relevant Planning History

Application Number	Proposal	Decision Date
161224/ESC	Request for EIA Scoping Opinion in relation to community and sport campus, football academy and stadium at Kingsford	22.09.2016 Status: EIA Scoping Opinion issued
160828	Request for EIA Screening Opinion in relation to community and sport campus, football academy and stadium at Kingsford	04.07.2016 Status: EIA Required
160853	Proposals of Application Notice – setting consultation proposals for a Major Development comprising Community and sport campus, football academy and stadium (Circa 20,000 capacity), formation of access and all associated parking, landscaping and engineering works. at Land at West Kingsford (North of the A944 road)	04.07.2016 Status: Further Consultation Not Required

## APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

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### Description of Proposal

This application seeks detailed planning permission (DPP) for 'Community and Sport Facilities, Football Academy And Stadium (Circa 20,000 Capacity), Formation Of Access And All Associated Parking, Landscaping And Engineering Works' on land at West Kingsford (north of the A944 Road), Skene Road, Aberdeen.

### Stadium

The proposed 20,000 capacity, all-seated stadium would be located to the western part of the site, approximately 50m from its southern boundary and 100m from its western boundary respectively. The stadium itself would measure approximately 180 metres by 145 metres, achieving a height of just over 20m and an overall footprint of approximately 24,250sqm. The stadium would be sited approximately 17 degrees off an east-west orientation, with its stands encircling the pitch completely, including the four corners. Seating within the stadium would be laid out in a single-tier 'bowl' arrangement.

The stadium's exterior would be finished in dark grey facing brick at low level, set slightly back from the coloured polycarbonate cladding to walls above. These vertical cladding panels, in shades of red through to white, are translucent and would create a subtle red glow from within the internally lit concourse areas at night. This translucency would also allow for diffuse natural light to illuminate the concourse during hours of daylight.

Externally, the south stand incorporates silver/grey aluminium rainscreen cladding which is extruded out from the face of the remainder of that elevation to surround an extensively glazed face, framed by a darker grey cladding. This glazed frontage takes advantage of the southern elevation and allows light in to hospitality suites and other internal spaces.

The south-east corner of the stadium includes a projecting section, clad in the same polycarbonate vertical cladding in shades of red and white. This extruded corner identifies the club shop at ground floor level, and its outer face above is identifies as a potential location for signage, with the club crest embossed into the cladding panels and softly illuminated from within.

Floodlighting to illuminate the playing surface is incorporated within the design of the stadium roof, angled downwards to reduce light spillage outwith the arena. The roof itself is angled at 11 degrees, achieving a height of 21m from the pitch to the underside of the roof cladding material. It would be finished with a silver aluminium cladding panel, with exposed steelwork above and below to be painted white. To the rear of the seated tier a translucent polycarbonate panelling would be used to allow in diffuse light. The seating within the single-tier stand would comprise three 'rakes', with seating becoming steeper from pitchside to the rear of the stand incrementally, at 25, 28 and 29 degrees respectively.

Internally, the ground floor areas of the North, East and West sections of the stadium are largely given over to the necessary turnstile and concourse spaces, along with toilets and concessions stands. The North-East and North-West corners incorporate back-of-house facilities including staff/groundspersons/stewards changing areas and toilets; first aid room; plant rooms and maintenance workshops; various stores and facilities for match-day police at ground floor level, with a supporters' bar (215sqm) incorporated at first floor level in the NE corner, with views out onto the pitch.

The South Stand would act as the 'main stand' and, alongside concourse and concessions areas, it would incorporate a centralised catering space; home, away and match officials changing facilities; warm-up, medical, physio and testing areas; kit storage and laundry facilities; manager's office and press conference room at ground floor level. The SE corner of the stadium would include a 'Red Café' coffee shop; AFC club shop; hospitality reception area; and ticket office. The players' entrance is located at a central point in this south stand, with access for Police and stewards to the north-western corner.

Hospitality Suites (totalling circa 1355sqm) and associated toilets and kitchen facilities would be located in the south stand's first floor, with a club museum and staff canteen/players' lounge housed in the SE corner.

At second floor level the south stand would incorporate the Club Boardroom; 24no. hospitality boxes (each with a notional capacity of 10 persons); Club and Match Sponsors' lounges; along with associated kitchen and toilet facilities. The SE corner would house the Club/Community offices, along with match control, PA room and TV studio facilities.

### **Training, Academy and Community Facilities**

On-site training facilities would include 3no full-size grass training pitches for first-team use, one of which would be floodlit, along with associated smaller training spaces, groundsman's compound, all of which sits to the north of the access road running east-to-west through the site. The professional training pitches would match the orientation of the stadium playing surface, with the aim that conditions on a match day can be replicated during training sessions.

A single-storey pavilion building, located to the south of these facilities, would provide changing facilities for both the professional training facilities and 2no floodlit synthetic '4G' pitches to the south, which would be for youth academy and community use.

The pavilion building would be finished with a combination of dark grey facing brick and silver/grey aluminium rainscreen cladding panels, with brick sections set back from the cladding to provide some articulation to the façade. High-level, horizontally proportioned windows are used to bring light and ventilation to changing spaces. It is envisaged that AFC professional staff would use office and changing facilities within the pavilion prior to construction of the stadium, after which they would relocate to facilities within the stadium itself and vacate these spaces for use by the AFC Community Trust and other community groups. 42no car parking spaces are shown adjacent to the pavilion building.

### **Fanzone**

A 'fanzone' area is proposed between the east stand and the pavilion building. This would extend across the hard landscaped area between these buildings, and is conveniently positioned relative to the supporters' bar, club shop and Red Café facilities within the east stand. Bus turning and shuttle-bus pick-up facilities are located immediately nearby to the north of this area. The submitted Design and Access statement and later addendum refer to this area becoming a focal point for supporters on arrival to the site, highlighting opportunities for a large screen to provide pre-match entertainment or club information to supporters and enhancing the match-day experience. This will be a traffic-free zone, incorporating colourful club branding. Opportunities for a well-integrated lighting strategy within this space are identified. An external power source is identified as being necessary to allow temporary stage set-up, with potential use for live music, DJ's or community music projects. This is intended as a flexible space which relates well to the surrounding facilities.

### **Car, Coach & Cycle Parking; Bus provision & Access**

It is proposed to provide 1,350 car parking spaces within the site for supporters. These are contained within three main car parks, located to the north, east, and south-west of the stadium respectively (*car park 1 to SW: 311 spaces; car park 2 to N: 805 spaces; and car park 3 to E: 234 spaces*). A further 22 spaces are provided within the training pavilion car park; 16 unspecified 'service' spaces; and 4 spaces for groundspersons, for a cumulative on-site total of 1392 spaces. Outwith the application site, the applicant has intimated that a further 600 spaces will be made available via commercial arrangement with third parties at Arnhall Business Park. The TA Addendum highlights that 250 spaces at Kingsford would be set aside for hospitality guests, with the remaining 1100 available to supporters, with tickets purchased in advance – cars will not be able to arrive on a match-day and park without a pre-purchased permit.

A visitors' coach parking area, to the west of the stadium, could accommodate up to 60 coaches for away supporters. Home coaches would park immediately to the south of this, with capacity for 32 coaches and 8 outside broadcast trucks.

The match-day transport strategy proposed is based upon a 'predict and provide' model, whereby surveys of existing travel behaviours and preferences have been used as the basis for establishing mode share, and then transport interventions are proposed in order to meet those identified requirements. Surveys undertaken by Dons Supporters Together (DST) and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) have been used as the basis for the Transport Assessment and associated strategy. It is proposed to address travel demand through a combination of increased frequency of existing bus services and the

provision of site-specific shuttle buses, operating from the City Centre and from existing Park and Ride (P&R) sites at Kingswells and Dyce, with Bridge of Don utilised in addition for European matches. The bus strategy predicts a requirement for the provision of up to 52 shuttle bus services on non Old-Firm match-days; up to 63 for Old Firm matches; and up to 69 for European games. Shuttle services would utilise various routes to Kingsford, but would not allow for pick up along their respective routes. Central Coaches, who have a fleet of 52 buses, have confirmed that they would act as transport coordinators and could provide the required number of buses by co-ordinating resources with other bus operators. All AFC match-day bus services will drop-off and pick-up from the dedicated shuttle bus area within the Kingsford site. The suggested collection points are College Street, Shiprow, Rose Street, Souterhead Road and various stops on King Street, as well as the shuttle services from the Dyce and Kingswells Park and Ride sites, with city centre services provided from Midday onwards for matches kicking off at 3pm.

It is proposed to construct three accesses into the site, one each at the eastern and western ends of the site, onto the A944, and a main access at a central point immediately south of the stadium, east of Crommie Cottage and the junction of Old Skene Road and the A944. The eastern and western accesses would be connected by the internal road network, which loops around the back/northern face of the stadium. Both of these accesses would operate on a 'left-in/left-out' basis, whereas the main central access would be a permanently signal-controlled junction, incorporating at least one right-turn lane off the A944.

The Fanzone described above is expected to have a role in spreading out the arrivals to the site, by offering entertainment/activity in the period before matches. This is anticipated to reduce the impact of arrival peaks immediately before kick-off times.

The main junction would be permanently controlled by traffic signals and would allow for at least one right-turning lane off the A944. Within the site the main access would split to serve the Pavilion Car Park/Car Park 3, to the north, and head westwards, skirting around the front of the stadium's main stand and joining up with the road from the western access to loop around the west and north of the stadium before joining the spine road through the site from the eastern access. This internal road layout would enclose the hard-surfaced pedestrian concourse surrounding the stadium.

It is proposed to provide secure cycle parking for up to 220 cycles in a single location, to the east of the stadium and associated Fanzone, just north of the Pavilion building. Footpath links would be formed between the stadium and the A944, adjacent to the main stadium access and the eastern access.

In order to prevent supporters from parking within residential areas around the stadium it is proposed in the TA to implement a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) for areas located within an agreed walking catchment of the stadium. It is proposed that parking controls apply during event times only, with resident permit holders being exempt from those controls. The submitted TA refers to typical hours of operation of 11am to 3pm; 1pm to 5.15pm or 6pm to 10pm, depending on event time/kick-off. Enforcement of any such CPZ would fall within the jurisdiction of Police Scotland, as parking is not decriminalised in Aberdeenshire. Separate processes exist for the promotion of a CPZ, which would require the approval of Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Landscaping**

The application is supported by a Landscape Framework, which indicates areas of strategic landscaping along the site frontage to the A944, with hedgerows and tree planting used to screen the southern edge of Car Park 1, adjacent to the west stadium access. Structure planting is also proposed along the southern boundary, between academy pitches and the adjacent residential properties at Holmlea Cottage and West Kingsford. This planting would involve a landscaped belt of at least 10m depth. A similar 10m structure belt is proposed along the eastern and northern boundaries, comprising a mix of birch and pine. Within the site, trees and other soft landscaping would be used to soften the appearance of Car Park 2 and its associated structure, to the north of the stadium. Along the western edge of the site, adjacent to the Brodiach Burn, a riparian woodland planting belt is proposed. Cut and fill would be used to provide undulating landforms at the eastern and main accesses. These would also be used to provide a degree of enclosure to a memorial garden adjacent to the main access, and would serve to separate it from the main pedestrian footpath.

### **Phasing of delivery**

The applicants anticipate delivering the proposed development in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on the formation of an access junction from the A944 to the centre of the site, providing access to the professional training facilities described above, along with groundsman's store, single-storey pavilion building with 42no

car parking spaces and 2no synthetic pitches for use by the AFC youth academy and Community Trust. This first phase would also involve initial site preparation and earthworks within the application boundary. Phase 2 comprises the remainder of the development, including the stadium itself, parking areas, access points and completion of the internal road network. Once completed, professional staff would vacate office and changing facilities within the pavilion building, moving to facilities within the stadium. The Community Trust would then utilise the space vacated within the pavilion.

## Supporting Documents

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=OJMF3EBZIED00>.

The following documents have been submitted in support of the application –

- Pre-Application Consultation Report
- Environmental Statement and associated Non-Technical Summary
- Design & Access Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Site Investigation Report
- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
- Drainage Assessment
- Processing Agreement
- Coloured visualisations
- Statement on Co-Location, Site Selection & Sequential Test
- Travel Plan Framework
- Transport Assessment Addendum
- Road Safety Audit Report
- Technical Note: Updated Shuttle Bus Strategy
- Economic Impact response
- FRA Technical Note: Hydrology
- Design and Access Statement Addendum
- Planning Policy Statement (City Centre Impacts)

## Pre-Application Consultation

Public events were held by the applicant between the hours of 1pm and 8pm, as follows:

- Kingswells: Four Mile House, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016
- Westhill: Holiday Inn hotel, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016
- Aberdeen: Pittodrie Stadium, Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016

These sessions were staffed by members of the applicants' project team. Display boards demonstrated the location of the site, background to the Pre-Application Consultation process, initial design/masterplanning and elements of the proposal, access and transportation matters, environmental considerations, and next steps in the process of developing the scheme and seeking planning permission. Members of the applicants' project team were in attendance to answer questions, and a dedicated email address was set up to collate feedback. In addition to these events, three further 'pop-up' events were held, using the same display materials, as follows:

- Trinity Shopping Centre, Union Street: Weds 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, 12 noon-6pm
- Aberdeen Central Library, Rosemount Viaduct: Fri 5<sup>th</sup> August 2016, 12 noon-5pm
- Pittodrie Stadium, Pittodrie Street: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1pm-8pm (unstaffed event)



A fourth staffed public event was held between 1pm-5pm at the Holiday Inn hotel, Westhill on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2016, following a request from Westhill & Elrick Community Council. Lastly, a 'feedback' event was held to exhibit the developed design proposals that would be submitted as part of the formal application for planning permission. This event was held at Pittodrie Stadium on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016, running between 3pm and 9pm. Kingswells, Westhill & Elrick, and Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Councils were invited to attend a preview session the evening before (Weds 23<sup>rd</sup> November). This event was again staffed by members of the project team, who were available to answer questions, and the display materials were made available on the Aberdeen FC website.

The submitted Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report states that the events were well-attended, with over 1000 attendees across the 4 main events. The PAC report includes a detailed breakdown of the comments received at these events, both verbally and via comment forms, and also of those comments subsequently received via post and email before the 26<sup>th</sup> August cut-off. The PAC report states that the most commonly raised areas of concern related to access and transportation, including: arrangements for car parking and potential impact on nearby residential streets; public transport and provision for match-day travel generally; and the implications for the surrounding road network at peak times.

Other commonly raised concerns related to: the green belt status of the application site land; potential ecological and environmental impacts of the development; associated impacts on residential amenity by virtue of visual impact, noise and light; and queries regarding the location and implications of the Shell and BP Forties underground pipelines. A detailed breakdown of the matters raised in feedback to these PAC events is contained in Appendix 11 to the PAC report - [https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/files/4B38E4152D26DD3BEC29C42DB862E812/pdf/170021\\_DPP-PAC\\_Report-1439745.pdf](https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/files/4B38E4152D26DD3BEC29C42DB862E812/pdf/170021_DPP-PAC_Report-1439745.pdf)

### **Requirement for a Pre-Determination Hearing**

The proposed development is classed a 'major development' in terms of The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The proposal is considered to be a significant departure from the Development Plan by virtue of it being a major development located on an undeveloped and unallocated site within the Green Belt, wherein Policy NE2 'Green Belt' of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan applies, but does not allow for development of this type.

Under Regulation 27 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 there is a requirement to hold a Pre-determination Hearing before such applications may be determined.

Thereafter, this planning application requires to be determined by the Full Council due to the provisions of Section 14(2) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, which amends the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to the effect that any planning application which has been the subject of a statutory Pre-Determination Hearing under section 38A of the 2006 Act must be decided by the Full Council. Regulation 27 of the Town and Country (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations specifies that major developments which are significantly contrary to the development plan will require such a Pre-Determination Hearing.

The purpose of this hearing is to afford both the applicant and those who have made written representation on the proposed development the opportunity to present state their views directly to the members of the Council.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

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**ACC - Roads Development Management Team** – Expresses the following statements and concerns.

- The methodology used in travel surveys underpinning the relevant Transport Assessments (TA) is questioned, as these are based on supporters' preferred method of travel, without information on the public transport/sustainable travel options relating to the Kingsford site. The Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) survey relates entirely to travel to the existing Pittodrie site, which is fundamentally different in terms of its location in relation to public transport services accessible from the city centre, which include services throughout Aberdeen and extensively into

Aberdeenshire, and also its context in relation to existing housing.

- The TA addendum underestimates the proportion of car users in its modal shares by counting users of the Kingswells and Dyce 'Park and Ride' (P&R) sites as public transport users. In many cases, it is anticipated that the bus journey from these P&R facilities would represent only a small proportion of the overall journey, the majority of which would be undertaken by car. On that basis, the use of the P&R facilities would have limited benefit in removing traffic from the local network at the end destination, which is their intended purpose, and would essentially act as satellite car parks for the stadium.
- Pedestrian access from Westhill is acceptable, subject to widening of the footway between the application site and Westhill (Westhill Drive).
- Pedestrian access from the East is not presently sufficient to accommodate the volume of pedestrians that would be anticipated to travel to and from the P&R site at Kingswells. Initial discussions have identified the potential for the removal of a historic layby at the 5 mile garage (between the proposed stadium and the Prime Four business park), which ACC agree would be beneficial. However, the larger issue is that there are several areas of narrow footway where the surrounding land is outwith the hands of both ACC and the applicant. As such, the only possible improvement would be to narrow the existing 7.3m carriageway to 6.6m over the ~650m stretch of road between the Five Mile Garage and where the footway adjacent to Prime Four widens to 3m. The 0.7m of carriageway that would be reclaimed could be allocated to the existing ~2.3m footway, bringing it up to the desirable minimum 3m.
  - It is likely that the route (as it stands) would be able to safely accommodate the volume of people that would walk to and from Kingswells. However, when taking into account the likely pedestrian traffic associated with the Park and Ride, discussed below, RDM has concerns that the facility would not safely be able to accommodate all pedestrians. As such, the above improvements to the carriageway and Five Mile Garage layby should be conditioned which, in turn, would improve the safety of this route.
- The TA predicts that cycle trips will be few, and it has been agreed that cycle parking provision can be accepted at a reduced rate. Cyclists on the Kingswells to Westhill cycle route must be safely accommodated at the access junctions, and details of this may be obtained and negotiated via an appropriate.
- To serve events at the proposed stadium, a combination of (i) an increase in frequency of the existing bus service; and (ii) site-specific shuttle buses is proposed.
  - It is proposed that the existing service would drop off and collect at the Arnhall Business Park, on the opposite side of the A944. The volume of supporters travelling across the A944 necessitates a pedestrian footbridge, and the proposal could not be accepted otherwise on road safety grounds. RDM would also like to see bus laybys installed adjacent to the proposed footbridge, and secured by conditions. It is felt that the 800m walk to Arnhall is excessive for the thousands of people that are anticipated to travel by bus, and also for the staff who will travel to the stadium on a much more regular basis. The provision of laybys was previously deemed impractical due to the requirement of pedestrians having to cross the dual carriageway; however this concern is nullified as a result of the pedestrian footbridge.
  - Shuttle bus services would operate from the city centre and both Kingswells and Dyce P&R sites. As noted above, these sites are close enough to the site to suggest that they would operate akin to remote car parks, rather than as a means of removing traffic from the local network around the stadium/destination. It is proposed that these services would be augmented by a service from the Bridge of Don P&R facility for European matches. Provision for travel to non-football events has not been made clear.
- Shuttle bus services from various locations in the city centre (including the bus station) to Kingsford

have been proposed. Concern is expressed that the bus station is operating near to capacity, and assurance is required that there is sufficient capacity to provide these services. Correspondence from the bus station's commercial manager indicates that there is capacity to accommodate 10 additional X17 services per hour, but there is no mention of capacity to accommodate shuttle buses at the bus station.

- Services from different pick-up points would use slightly different routes to Kingsford, however it has been clarified that initially none of these shuttle services would pick up on route to Kingsford, meaning that users would be required to travel into the city centre before changing buses and travelling to Kingsford. Service buses will continue to pick up on route as long as they have capacity to do so. This results in a scenario where shuttle services will travel along the Lang Stracht, but residents of Mastrick and Sheddocksley would be required to travel into the city centre to get a shuttle service back out past these areas to reach the stadium site. There will be no public transport services from wider areas of the city, nor from Aberdeenshire. This is not considered to be suitably attractive to encourage supporters to make use of bus services and encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of travel. Annual surveys of use can feed into the Transport Management Plan for review and addition/removal of stops as necessary.
- The predictions made regarding the number of buses required give rise to some concern as these appear to rely upon full capacity (including standing) of all buses. This includes 27 standing on a double-decker bus and 73 standing on an articulated bus.
- It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of those travelling to the Kingswells P&R site would be quicker to walk back their vehicle than to wait for the shuttle bus, due to the lack of bus priority measures on the A944. It is considered likely that large queues for this shuttle service would discourage supporters from waiting and result in higher rates of pedestrian movement to Kingswells than have been accounted for. This in turn raises concerns about the aforementioned inadequacy of the pedestrian route to Kingswells, and therefore Roads DM has serious safety concerns over the relationship between pedestrians and high volumes of traffic at this point of the A944. It is understood that Toucan crossings are proposed for the on and off slips of the AWPR. This level of pedestrian movement causes further concerns in terms of the build-up of pedestrians on the footway, the availability of space and the implications of the surge of movement at the start of the pedestrian phase. Getting that surge of pedestrian movement to stop is difficult and has implications for the safe and efficient operation of the vehicular junction.
- On-site parking is marginally in excess of the current standards, but is considered to be acceptable.
- The use of additional parking provision at Arnhall Business Park is an arrangement that would not normally be permitted. There is uncertainty over long term retention of any such arrangement, and concern also that there may be potential for a great number of additional spaces to be secured at Arnhall through similar arrangements, undermining aims to promote sustainable travel.
- The applicants propose a Controlled Parking Zone in Westhill to remove parking on street, with residents entitled to permits at the applicants' expense. It is noted that Police Scotland would be responsible for the enforcement of any such scheme as parking has not been decriminalised in Aberdeenshire. Police Scotland have thus far committed to enforcement on a priority basis, which raises concerns given the potentially resource intensive nature of enforcement. Without adequate enforcement, a CPZ may prove to be ineffective in deterring on-street parking by supporters in Westhill. In the event the permission is to be granted, it will be necessary to use a condition to ensure that the CPZ can be delivered. This would need to be demonstrated prior to works commencing, with implementation prior to operation/use of the stadium. The applicant would be responsible for associated implementation costs and the provision of residents' permits.
- The eastern and western access arrangements are satisfactory in principle, subject to the usual Roads Construction Consent (RCC) procedures. There are concerns over the main access, principally in terms of road safety. It has been agreed that the principal access will be a permanent traffic signalised junction, operational at all times. The exact nature of signal timings and whether it is linked to neighbouring junctions should be established at a later date – this should be established by condition. The layout of the junction has yet to be finalised given the late agreement

for permanently operational signals; it may require four lanes westbound (two turning right into the development and two ahead towards Westhill) in order to operate safely. It may be possible to operate a three lane westbound approach with the central lane being marked as ahead and right. The east and west access should operate as left in left out priority junctions. Adequate segregation for buses and away support is made. Access arrangements of any description will likely place a burden on Police Scotland.

- The original TA presented an assessment that showed extensive queuing onto the AWPR from the A944 slip roads north and south for several hundred metres as well as indicating congestion and delay on the local road network. In order to resolve a number of issues, further calculations and analysis were carried out for the TAA. RDM raised a number of queries in respect to this. These centred on the use of the base data, which we acknowledge was used at the request of Transport Scotland, but which we know is flawed and appears to be the lowest prediction of post AWPR flow. With the reduction of parking on site to maximum standards, 250 vehicles were moved to the Dyce Park and Ride, and therefore out of the analysed network which we disagree with. The profiling was altered to extend arrivals over a longer period before a game reflecting the fanzone. The proposed signalisation of the AWPR/ A944 roundabout could remove any potential queue back onto the AWPR mainline, but to the detriment of the operation of the local road network.
- The internal road network is broadly acceptable, subject to the provision of stewards at pedestrian/vehicle conflict points during events.
- A framework Travel Plan has been submitted, and this is appropriate for this stage in the process. A Travel Plan condition would need to be applied, to ensure that satisfactory match-day travel arrangements would be in place, prior to the stadium becoming operational.
- In conclusion, should either the CPZ or pedestrian footbridge be undeliverable, this response should be treated as a formal objection as these are critical to the viability of the proposal. The deliverability of these elements must be demonstrated prior to works commencing, and they must subsequently be implemented prior to use of the stadium. The deliverability of pedestrian improvements to the east of the site also remains of concern.

**ACC - Flooding And Coastal Protection** – No objection to the proposal following submission of requested information relating to flood extents and provision of updated modelling work in line with most recent Flood Estimation Handbook (FEH 13). Queries relating to the effective use of porous paving within floodplain areas have also been resolved.

**ACC - Environmental Health** – Reviewed the application and associated Environmental Statement (ES) in relation to noise and air quality.

#### Noise

*Construction Noise and Vibration* – insufficient details available to assess noise and vibration. If approved, need to secure a noise and vibration management plan in accordance with BS5228-1:2009

*Operational* – ES identifies several operational noise sources that have varying magnitudes of impact on the surrounding noise sensitive receptors depending on the noise level, location and time of occurrence.

*Road Traffic Noise* – The greatest magnitude of impact is ‘major adverse’ impact at receptor 4 and ‘major adverse’ impact at receptor 2 and 3 during weekday evening matches during a 1 hour peak period. The ES indicates that noise mitigation is not feasible due to property location in relation to the roads. It is acknowledged that the level of impact occurring during weekday evening matches is likely to be infrequent.

*Noise egress from Stadium* – Main source from crowd and PA system noise, but this is sporadic and variable in nature. Major adverse impact identified to the nearest house (receptor 2) during an evening weekday match. Moderate adverse impact to same receptor from a Saturday afternoon match. Impacts will be limited to the number of matches held each year.

*Building Service Noise* – details of services not yet confirmed. All building services not to exceed Noise Rating curve 25 in the nearest dwellings (windows open).

*Noise from outwith stadium* – ‘Minor adverse’ impact to nearest receptor in evening. Fast food units have been identified as possible noise sources. To mitigate noise from such units it is advised that they are not located within 150 meters of the nearest residential property unless details of effective acoustic screening have first been agreed.

*Deliveries* – moderate adverse impact to properties to the south from deliveries. To minimise impact, it is recommended that deliveries are restricted to 7am-7pm, and that ‘large’ delivery vehicles use the SW access.

*Car parking Noise* – no noise identified.

*Training Pitches* – recommend that pitches closes to residential property are restricted so as to preclude use after 9pm.

#### Air Quality

Air quality in the area is currently good. Modelling was undertaken to predict the impact of the proposed development, based on opening in 2023 and taking account of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and other committed developments. Scenarios for 2023 with and without the proposed stadium development were modelled. In both scenarios (with and without stadium proposal) nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate (PM<sub>10</sub>) concentrations would remain well below national air quality objectives of 40ugm-3 and 18ugm-3 respectively. The impact of the development on annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations at all receptors was considered negligible.

Should permission be granted, it is recommended that traffic management conditions are used to reduce the impact of traffic associated with the development on air quality, for example through the use of the nearby park and ride, additional public and private bus services, measures to reduce car dependency and promote active travel.

There may be an impact arising from dust emissions during the construction phase. Should the proposals be granted it is recommended that a dust risk assessment and dust mitigation plan are provided, to be agreed with the Planning Authority, in consultation with Environmental Health colleagues, prior to the commencement of works.

#### Lighting

All external lighting to be installed shall be sufficiently screened and aligned so as to ensure that there is no direct illumination of neighbouring land and that light spillage beyond the boundaries of the site is minimised.

**ACC - Environmental Health (Contamination)** - No objection to approval of this application.

As the site has a history of use for landfilling, it is recommended that the following conditions are attached to any approval:

#### **Condition A**

*No development shall take place unless it is carried out in full accordance with a scheme to address any significant risks from contamination on the site that has been approved in writing by the planning authority.*

*The scheme shall follow the procedures outlined in “Planning Advice Note 33 Development of Contaminated Land” and shall be conducted by a suitably qualified person in accordance with best practice as detailed in “BS10175 Investigation of Potentially Contaminated Sites - Code of Practice” and other best practice guidance and shall include:*

*1. an investigation to determine the nature and extent of contamination*

2. a site-specific risk assessment, including a gas risk assessment that considers both onsite and offsite receptors
3. a remediation plan to address any significant risks and ensure the site is fit for the use proposed
4. verification protocols to demonstrate compliance with the remediation plan
5. a site-specific working plan detailing protocols to control/mitigate risks that may arise as a result of the remedial activities

#### **Condition B**

The facility shall not be brought into use unless:

1. any long term monitoring and reporting that may be required by the approved scheme of contamination or remediation plan or that otherwise has been required in writing by the planning authority is being undertaken  
and
2. a report has been submitted and approved in writing by the planning authority that verifies that the remedial works have been carried out in full accordance with the remediation plan,  
unless the planning authority has given written consent for a variation.

- reason: to ensure that the site is suitable for use and fit for human occupation

#### **ACC – Economic Development**

Initial consultation response highlighted a lack of data and methodology to substantiate findings. Significantly, the net impact of the development was not considered to constitute a substantial growth or employment opportunity at an Aberdeen level, and the benefits to the Kingsford area were not considered compelling in terms of economic benefit. Whilst there are clear benefits from the construction phase of the project, net off-site benefits to the city would be marginal.

Further supporting information was provided, which raised queries relating to assumptions made about reduced attendances in the 'remain at Pittodrie' scenario; an uplift in the number of functions that is assumed at the proposed site; and other assumptions relating to city centre spending and population estimates.

Following further clarification from the applicants, ACC's Economic Development team made the following comments in relation to the applicants' assessment of economic benefit as follows:

- The likelihood of the loss of any European football from Pittodrie has not been presented.
- Any increased maintenance costs need to be set against the total running costs of remaining at Pittodrie. Similarly, the total running costs including the servicing of any debt at Kingsford need to be presented. This would allow the assertion that increased maintenance costs would reduce the playing budgets at Pittodrie to be reduced when compared with moving to Kingsford.
- If the likelihood of and the full economic impact of losing European football had been presented as well as the impact of maintenance costs on the total Pittodrie running costs then an assessment could be made of their impact on crowds at Pittodrie. However, the reduction to 8,500 at Pittodrie is not justified in detail. Similarly, without details of the total running costs of Kingsford, the assumption that crowds will remain at 13,476 cannot be appraised.
- Economic Development thus does not have a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the crowd estimates at the two sites which underpin the net benefit calculations.
- Economic Development consider a city centre spend estimate only including those cars that park more than 20 minutes from Pittodrie as one end of a spectrum of estimates of the amount of revenue that fans and non-fans spend in the city centre from attending Pittodrie.
- A broader estimate would include the spend of all those who drive by car. Economic Development

thus requested an additional calculation of the city centre spend including all those who drive by car to Pittodrie as well as the example already provided.

- Using the EKOS analysis in table 5.8 if all the spend was of all those who drive by car to Pittodrie was included the city centre spend would be £1.78m. This gives a range of £0.51m to £1.78m of spend in the city centre from being at Pittodrie depending on the assumptions made of the spend of those who travel by car to Pittodrie.

**ACC - Waste Strategy Team** – Notes that this is a commercial development, where there are other commercial waster service contractors besides Aberdeen City Council. Advice is therefore general in nature, but highlights the following general needs:

- An area of hard standing at storage and collections point(s)
- Dropped kerb at proposed bin collection point
- Yellow lines in front of bin collection point
- Bin storage areas to ideally be provided with a gulley and wash down facility for the interest of hygiene

**ACC - City Centre Masterplan Team** – No response.

**Aberdeen City/Shire Developer Obligations Team** – Contributions may be required for implementing or linking to the Core Path Network.

If sufficient open space provision cannot be provided on site in line with policy requirements, then a contribution towards off site open space provision may be required under the Open Space Supplementary Guidance.

Any Strategic and Local Transportation requirements are identified and confirmed direct by Aberdeen City Council's Transportation Team.

**Aberdeen City Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority** – Restates earlier position that the development does not accord with the aims and objectives of the SDP.

- Highlights that the Development Plan applicable is up-to-date and notes the purpose of the SDP to focus the right development in the right places and to prevent inappropriate and poorly located development.
- The plan explicitly supports the principle of the development of “a new community stadium, a regionally important facility which will bring economic, social and cultural benefits” (para 3.24, Diagram – p13 and Schedule 2). Two possible locations are identified – on and around the current stadium site at Pittodrie / Kings Links and to the south of the city as part of the Loirston development.
- Improving and modernising the facilities of Aberdeen Football Club are supported by the SDP, as is the provision of community facilities.
- The application is clearly a high footfall generating use. The sequential approach to site selection and associated policy framework are therefore key to determination of the application.
- Attempts at justifying the necessity of co-locating the stadium, training pitches and academy are particularly weak, based on assertions rather than justification and based in some cases on information a decade old. No attempt has been made in the economic impact assessment to assess the impact of relocating the stadium away from a regeneration priority area as would be required in line with draft Scottish Government advice on assessing net economic benefit.

- Comparisons are made to green belt designations at Bellfield Farm and Loirston, however it should be clarified that Bellfield was approved under Structure Plan policy at that time which explicitly allowed an exception to the greenbelt policy (if there were to be a successful Scottish bid to co-host the Euro 2008 football tournament), while the Loirston site was approved in the context of an allocation in a proposed LDP as a material consideration. No equivalent policy provision or emerging allocation exists in this instance.
- Highlights that evidence of benefits to the club from co-location in no way justifies the need to have co-location but merely that it is preferable for the club. In light of this, the sequential test should be approached on the basis of separating the stadium from the training facilities. The applicant has not effectively discounted the availability of alternative and sequentially preferable sites if the different uses proposed were to be provided for separately. As a consequence it does not follow the sequential 'town centre first' approach of SPP or accord with the aims and objectives of the SDP.
- Scottish Planning Policy states that uses which generate significant levels of footfall should use a sequential test to demonstrate that sequentially preferable sites are not available. The necessity of a footbridge over the A944 to cope with the scale of fans seeking to cross the road is an indication of the footfall generated. No indication is given as to its potential visual impact on this important entrance to Westhill.
- Notes that the introduction of a new pedestrian bridge as mitigation for access issues further complicates the assessment process, as this has not been assessed in terms of its capacity, visual impact or deliverability as part of this application.
- The application is contrary to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. The proposal will result in the loss of 25Ha of greenbelt, the coalescence of urban areas (Westhill and Kingswells), is an inappropriately located development giving rise to unsustainable travel patterns (it has a very small catchment in terms of access by walking, cycling and public transport compared to other sequentially preferable sites) and is likely to have a negative impact on the City Centre.

**Aberdeen International Airport** – No objection to the proposal, having examined on the basis of aerodrome safeguarding criteria.

**Aberdeenshire Council** – Maintains its initial objection to the application on the grounds that *'the proposal in its current composition and location would be contrary to the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014), which is up-to-date and relevant to this application. The proposal will result in the loss of greenbelt land, the coalescence of urban areas, inappropriately located development giving rise to unsustainable travel patterns and have a negative impact on the City Centre in terms of its mix of uses and lost revenue. The application is not in one of the two locations identified in the SDP and the applicant has not adequately justified why the stadium and training pitches etc. need to be co-located or why sequentially preferable sites have been dismissed as unsuitable.'*

In relation to the further information submitted, the following comments are added to supplement the initial objection:

- The statement submitted in relation to 'Co-location, Site Selection & Sequential Test' focuses on benefits of co-location, and the over-riding justification appears financial. The scale of unallocated site required for co-location is extensive and the justification put forward is not persuasive.
- The submitted Transportation Response; Travel Plan Framework; and Technical Note: Updated Shuttle Bus Strategy do not address the underlying reasons for Aberdeenshire Council's earlier objection.
- Specifically, the proposed Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) lies wholly within Aberdeenshire, and its promotion would therefore require the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) under the relevant Roads legislation in order to be legally enforceable. Those Orders can only be promoted



and implemented by Aberdeenshire Council and would require statutory consultation and committee approval. It is the view of Aberdeenshire Council that, should Aberdeen City Council be minded to grant planning permission, the identified impact must be mitigated through a legally enforceable CPZ that remains in perpetuity and is funded by the applicant. The arrangements for this would need to be demonstrated and considered acceptable by Aberdeenshire Council.

- The proposed footbridge over the A944 lies partly within Aberdeenshire and partly within Aberdeen City. Aberdeenshire Council has concerns about this element of the project, and highlights that such a structure would require planning permission in its own right and could not simply be conditioned. In the event that the City is minded to grant permission, this could only be possible if the bridge can be delivered. Aberdeenshire Council would have a role in determining any application, but has not had the opportunity to fully consider the acceptability of such a bridge in this location. The deliverability of both the CPZ and the pedestrian bridge is questioned, and the risk of significant adverse impacts to the Aberdeenshire transport network remains too great for the proposal to be accepted.
- Restates position that the economic impact on Aberdeenshire is likely to be fairly modest. Notes that there is no specific consideration of the impact on Westhill town centre, and highlights that negative impact due to loss of trade from customers avoiding or being unable to enjoy the existing level of convenience is an area of concern.

**Archaeology Service (Aberdeenshire Council) – No objection.**

Highlights earlier pre-application discussions with the appointed archaeological contractor. Notes that a review of Ground Investigations and known activity within the development site has established that significant soil moving and dumping has occurred across the site in the past (in places up to 7.2m in depth) and that this negates any requirement for archaeological evaluation, as reflected in the recommendations of the submitted Environmental Statement. On that basis, no further archaeological mitigation is required and no conditions relating to archaeology are recommended in this instance. This position was reaffirmed on 24.5.17, following re-consultation.

**BP Exploration Operating Company (North Sea Infrastructure) – No comment on the proposal.** Note that the safety and engineering integrity of the BP Forties Pipeline will not be affected. Highlights that any service routing should take account of the pipeline servitude. On subsequent re-consultation, position remained unchanged from that previously stated.

**Community Council: Kingswells**– Object and recommend that the application be refused. Initial response highlighted the following areas of concern:

- Breach of planning policy and creates a legal precedent for other future departures from the agreed SDP and ALDP
- Coalescence between Westhill and Kingswells
- Visual impact – stadium not suited to a semi-rural area
- Site selection process is flawed and does not adopt sequential approach or adequately consider alternatives
- Necessity of co-location has not been established
- Contrary to principles of City Centre Masterplan
- TA makes sweeping assumptions that favour the development, uses questionable sources and appears reliant

- Highlights that the majority of fans will drive if the opportunity exists and bus services are not sufficiently frequent or convenient
- Notes that AFC would be the main beneficiary of the development, with detrimental impact on the local communities involved.

Following the submission of additional information, Kingswells Community Council stated that there was nothing within these documents that altered the views expressed in the initial submission. The following further points were also raised:

- Conflict with the Development Plan was reiterated.
- Huge visual impact of the development within a semi-rural landscape, along with associated 'sky-glow' impact
- Disturbance arising from the Fanzone, particularly if audio-visual or live performances were held in this area. Lack of adequate mitigation proposals for any such noise disturbance. Noise impact may also arise from use of training facilities.
- Acknowledge that biodiversity impacts are likely to be small, with some benefits from planting proposals.
- Queries the assumptions made about the implications of remaining at Pittodrie, and notes lack of convincing evidence that co-location of training facilities is essential.
- Queries the applicants' statements that the city centre would not suffer economically and highlights the limited job-creation associated with the proposal.
- Queries the rationale for moving Community Trust facilities outwith Aberdeen.
- Queries the methodology used in the submitted Transport Assessment, which may have included development that is no longer proceeding.
- Highlights that the fan survey was based on travel to Pittodrie, rather than Kingsford, and that the Transport Assessment is based on 2.9 persons per vehicle, which seems to unrealistic and results in vehicles being understated.
- Concerns that streets within Kingswells, close to the Park and Ride site, would be affected by supporter parking.
- Remain unconvinced that an outdoor Fanzone will be effective in extending fans' arrival/departure times, particularly during bad weather and mid-week fixtures.
- Reiterate concerns about the number of pedestrians crossing the A944, and highlight the need for an overbridge or underpass to address this.
- States that AFC should be responsible for any costs associated with the modification of the A944, including pedestrian crossing points.

**Community Council: Cults, Bieldside And Milltimber**– Identifies potential impacts around Noise, Air Quality and Transportation during the construction phase, followed by Noise, Air Quality, Transportation and parking associated with the day to day use of the Stadium and its associated facilities thereafter. In addition there will be the impact of Match Days.

Air Quality - proposed mitigation measures are satisfactory providing they are strictly followed and monitored during the construction phase. Subsequent to construction heavy traffic at Match days could potentially affect air quality and we would recommend that an air monitoring station or stations are installed in appropriate positions to provide ongoing information.

Noise and Vibration – Agree that noise and vibration during construction will be minor adverse. Also agree

that noise levels during ongoing future operation of the Stadium will be major adverse particularly during match days and other activities in the Stadium. This will include crowd, PA noise and traffic noise, which will have a major impact at weekends. Traffic noise will we believe affect large areas of Westhill as drivers seek Parking places on residential streets. Feel that there is no satisfactory answer to this and if the Stadium Project is approved this will be a major source of complaint for future years.

Traffic - Agree that during Construction, if properly managed, the effects of traffic will not be excessive. Express concern however about traffic, transportation and access during future operation of the Stadium. Consider that the predicted traffic volumes are based on a road traffic survey carried out at the depth of the oil industry downturn, which is therefore not representative of the traffic that can be expected in future years around Westhill.

Traffic volumes will be high on match-days and parking for private vehicles will cause serious issues, particularly at weekends. Unless the police and Local Authorities strictly control it, the roads around Westhill will become heavily congested. Additional bus services will be required. High traffic volumes may also result in increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists.

Highlight the importance of a robust traffic management system, with key roles for both police and local authorities. A further option maybe to consider building another park and ride facility close to the stadium to serve it and Prime 4 & 5 projects.

Planning – Identifies conflicts with Policy NC5 Out of Centre Proposals in relation to accessibility via sustainable transport and adverse impact on travel patterns and air pollution.

Notes the limited information available within the submitted ES in terms of transport strategy, specifically in relation to the delivery of public transport services sufficient to meet match day requirements. Potential conflict with Policy T2 Managing the Transport Impact of Development.

Policy NE2 Green Belt – Green space will be lost to the development so an exception to this policy would be required. If the proposed development were limited to the establishment of training pitches and associated facilities, with the existing stadium at Pittodrie being retained and redeveloped, then there would be less concern over loss of Green Belt. A redevelopment at Pittodrie would probably remove many of the concerns raised by Westhill residents and provide a better solution for all.

A second response following the submission of additional information raised the following further points:

No objection to the construction of a new stadium in principle. Note proposed traffic management proposals and suggest conditions relating to the following matters:

1. Seating design – all the terraced seating in the stadium should have a C value of at least 120 mm. It seems completely illogical to design a brand new stadium with sub-optimal viewing (optimal viewing standard 120mm) for what looks like nearly half the total number of spectators. If Aberdeen Football Club (AFC) is going to be allowed to build the stadium, make sure they do it to a standard that reflects well on the city.

2. Spectator Transport – any planning permission granted should include the condition that requires AFC to demonstrate that bus transport contracts which are capable of transporting spectators as set out in the Transport Assessment Addendum May 2017 are in place before the stadium can be used for matches. The suitability of the bus arrangements should be monitored at regular intervals.

3. Traffic Management - any planning permission granted should include the condition that AFC fund any required traffic management measures, either new traffic signals at junctions or police support at key junctions on match days, to minimise traffic queues and waiting times. The traffic assessment suggests the potential queues and waiting times at some junctions would be excessive and unacceptable without traffic management.

4. Bus Lanes – the traffic assessment makes it clear that the creation of bus lanes will severely impact traffic movement and bus lanes should not be introduced on the roads around the new stadium.

**Community Council: Westhill and Elrick** – Do not believe that the proposed site at Kingsford is suitable.

Main concerns include loss of green belt land; impact of high car numbers on local infrastructure including both the A944 and roads and streets within Westhill, the lack of adequate community facilities within the proposal, and the economic impact on both Westhill and the City Centre

Overall, WECC believe that:

- Green belt land should be protected, and therefore not built upon under any circumstances. The proposed site currently protects the boundary of Westhill, ensuring no coalescence of Westhill and Kingswells.
- Any building on this site would encourage further ribbon development along the A944, setting a dangerous precedent for the future.
- Any building on this site may increase the risk of flooding to nearby residential properties.
- Nearby properties would also be hugely affected by both noise and light.
- Alternative sites have not been suitably considered, and do not see any reason why the stadium and training facilities must be co-located.
- This site is not appropriate for this development.
- The Transport Assessment for this planning application is highly inadequate.
- The large increase in traffic that this development would bring would lead to extreme congestion both on the already busy A944 and the AWPR.
- Access for emergency service vehicles is extremely unclear.
- Parking is another huge concern, with insufficient guaranteed spaces provided.
- The proposed addition of off-site spaces leads to further concerns over sustainability and pedestrian safety.
- This proposal is contrary to the National Transport Strategy, and would rely heavily on car usage rather than sustainable transport.
- The impact of such high levels of traffic on the surrounding inadequate infrastructure causes WECC great concerns, especially regarding congestion.
- Overall, WECC believe that:
- The detail of this application shows limited facilities for community use, and a lack of facilities for anything other than football.
- There are major concerns regarding accessibility and affordability of the proposed facilities for community use.
- The AFCCT have done a lot of good work throughout Aberdeen City and Shire, however could be located anywhere, and may benefit from being in a more accessible location nearer the city centre.
- Whilst this proposal could create jobs in the construction phase, but the long term net gain of 30 part time or seasonal jobs is extremely disappointing.
- The detrimental impact that this development would have both on our local businesses in Westhill and many city centre businesses is highly concerning, and goes against the City Centre Master Plan.
- On the general economic impact, WECC hope that these facts will be taken into consideration when a decision is reached regarding this application.

In response to additional information, the Community Council added the following comments:

*Car parking as a whole is a huge concern to WECC, especially as the proposed off-site car parking has still not been guaranteed. The survey of fans quoted in the additional information states that 90% of those who drive to the stadium will park within a 20 minute walk. These issues create an even greater danger that streets and public car parking in Westhill and Kingswells will be used by large numbers of fans attending the stadium on match days, creating further concerns for both communities. No matter what public transport is available to fans, there will always be a high percentage who choose to use private cars for their own convenience.*

*In the survey by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (A&GCC), it was stated that 61% declared*

*their preferred method of transport was by car, confirming what we had suspected. We do not agree with encouraging the use of the nearby park and ride facilities for private car parking, as this disadvantages other members of the public who are not attending the matches. Whilst this stadium would be located close to the AWPR, this new road is not designed to facilitate development, but rather to alleviate the already congested roads around Aberdeen. Even high numbers of buses would add a large volume of traffic to these roads, which would be detrimental to Westhill, Elrick and other communities further West. We also wish to note concern raised by some of our Community Council members regarding the 'independence' of the survey carried out by A&GCC due to the close working relationships between Aberdeen Football Club, the Community Trust & Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.*

*Westhill & Elrick Community Council do not agree with the claim that this development would be beneficial for our local community on a socio-economic level. These claims are greatly exaggerated. Whilst we appreciate the great work done by the Community Trust, we do not believe the assertions that our local community will benefit in a significant way. In our previous objection, we noted our disappointment with the low number of part-time or seasonal jobs which would be created after the completion of this development. In addition to this, the owners of our local shopping centre previously submitted an objection to this application due to their concerns of the impact on our local retailers and businesses. The creation of a Fanzone within the development only adds to these concerns, as fans would be encouraged to spend their time and money within the site, and therefore would be of no economic benefit to our local businesses. On a social level, there would be huge disruption to our community every match day, especially as a match day capacity crowd would be significantly larger than the population of Westhill & Elrick. This could be even more so with special events such as concerts or other events with large attendance.*

**Dee District Salmon Fishery Board (DDSFB) – No objection.** Offers the following advice:

Initial consultation highlighted the absence of a survey relating to fish species and density as part of the EIA. This was identified as being necessary to allow assessment of likely impacts. Upon being re-consulted in relation to additional information, the DDSFB notes that, since installation of a fish pass in 2014, salmon have established a juvenile population along 13km of the upstream tributaries of the Culter Burn, therefore such upstream areas shall be treated as if part of the SAC. A preliminary assessment of the Brodiach Burn found no spawning habitat and little quality habitat to support salmonoids. Suitable habitat for juvenile lamprey was observed. The DDSFB suspects that the Brodiach Burn may have brown trout, lamprey and possibly eel, however this would require an electric fishing survey to confirm. DDSFB agrees with the fish survey's assessment that the watercourses are not high quality habitats, but stresses that any pollution (such as excessive sediment input from the development) may impact not only the small number of fish in the immediate area but also could damage species and habitats downstream. On that basis, effective sediment and pollution control measures are essential. No adverse impact on the water quality of the River Dee SAC should be permitted. Notes past failures in mitigation measures intended to prevent sediment pollution issues, and would welcome opportunity to work with the planning authority in ensuring that any potential impacts are effectively managed and mitigated.

**Health And Safety Executive – No objection,** on safety grounds, against the granting of permission.

Note the presence of two major accident hazard pipelines: the BP Forties Cruden Bay Terminal/Kinneil Terminal pipeline and the Shell Expro St Fergus to Mossmorran NGL Pipeline. The stadium itself is outwith the consultation distance of both pipelines. Other elements of the proposal lie wholly or partly within the consultation distance, as follows: training facilities; pitches for academy and community facilities; shuttle bus facilities; outside broadcast area; coach and car park areas; and access roads.

Of these, the only element that gave rise to any concern from HSE relates to queuing arrangements for shuttle buses serving Aberdeen City Centre and the various P&R sites. Following discussion between HSE and the applicants' consultant, these concerns have been addressed and the revised site layout plan shows that the area for pedestrian access to these buses will not extend within the middle zone of the Shell pipeline.

**Historic Environment Scotland (HES)** – No objection. HES considers that the proposals do not raise historic environment issues of national significance. Highlights that this should not be taken as an expression of support, and that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy on development affecting the historic environment. On re-consultation on additional information, HES reiterated that position without further comment.

**Police Scotland** – No objection to the proposal, but offer detailed advice on measures to prevent crime through careful design and ongoing management, including the following key areas.

- the general layout of the site appears generally to be good from a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED) perspective
- A clear boundary between public and private space would be effective in deterring or preventing intrusion. Boundary treatments should be well defined and fencing is clearly a consideration for these developments.
- Recommend the use of different road surface treatments within the development which can act as psychological boundaries between different areas, as well as being used as traffic calming measures.
- Recommend that access to designated parking areas for staff, visitors and business-related vehicles should be restricted.
- Footpaths should, as far as possible, be straight, wide and well-lit which will promote the feeling of personal safety whilst discouraging anti-social behaviour. Likewise, signage directing pedestrians and vehicles should be clear and uncluttered thereby directing them via the most appropriate route and assisting in prohibiting unauthorised persons from entering private or non-public areas.
- Planting/landscaping should not impede the opportunity for natural surveillance.
- Location and design of seating areas should be carefully considered to avoid promoting congregating in inappropriate areas – e.g. car parks.
- Recommend use of CCTV system, with coverage focused on seating areas, congregation points, parking areas and access points. Such a system should be designed in conjunction with lighting proposals for the site, which should provide uniform spread of white lighting and avoid dark spots to deter crime and anti-social behaviour.
- The external façade of buildings should avoid creating hiding places or aids to climbing.
- Storage for cycles and motorcycles should be either within a secured area or positioned so that they are in full view and subject to natural surveillance and passing foot traffic.
- Operational policing of football matches or events should be considered and the applicants are encouraged to involve Police Scotland to develop an appropriate model.
- Crime reduction/prevention measures during the construction phase should be considered by the applicants.
- The applicants are encouraged to attain the ‘Secured By Design’ award.

**Royal Society For The Protection Of Birds Scotland** – No objection to this proposal, providing that the breeding bird surveys were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance.

Submitted breeding bird report does not contain information on timings of surveys and weather

encountered. It was assumed that standard methodology was followed and, provided that was the case, the RSPB is satisfied that the proposed site is not of significant importance to breeding or wintering bird populations. Retain concerns regarding the use of green belt land, but recognise the efforts made to enhance biodiversity and blending the development into the landscape. The provision of various nest boxes would be welcomed by a variety of species, including bats, starlings, swifts and kestrels, as well as smaller woodland birds.

The species composition of the wildflower meadow should be chosen carefully to thrive under any anticipated shade of the trees and hedges, which are to be planted along the southern edge of the development. We also suggest that the area of wild flowers could be increased significantly by creating “flowering lawns”, in place of a monoculture of separate amenity grassland. Such low-growing plants can be mown when required, and would be attractive to wildlife and human visitors alike.

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency** – Recommend that conditions are attached to any grant of planning permission as follows:

- condition requiring no land raising of any part of the car park area above the levels identified in plan 111644/2002 Rev B.
- Welcome the proposal to connect to public foul drainage and to avoid any doubt, ask that this be ensured by suitable condition.
- Note that under CAR we cannot control quantity of discharge of surface water and hence you will need to consider conditioning this aspect
- we note that the proposals are described as “conceptual” and as a result you may wish to apply a condition to ensure that the design of any final detail is acceptable to you
- We are generally content with the construction pollution prevention and environmental management principles outlined in the submission. We ask that a condition is applied requiring all works to be carried out in line with the submitted Schedule of Mitigation (Chapter 14 of the ES).
- condition to ensure Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submission for each phase of the development. For the avoidance of doubt this should cover elements such as construction SUDS and any waterbody engineering works which do not relate directly to making the site fit for its proposed use (as those relating directly to making the site fit for its proposed use will be directly controlled by us via the waste management licence).
- condition requiring the submission of a finalised Energy Strategy which demonstrate how the development complies with Policy R7 of the Local Development Plan, the related Supplementary Guidance and the Online Scottish Government “Planning and Heat” guidance (2015). If the planning authority considers it reasonable to do so they could request this submission prior to determination as it could affect layout.
- We are supportive of the 12 m wide buffer which is proposed to protect the water features and the related provisional planting proposals. We ask that a condition is applied requiring full details of the finalised riparian habitat proposals to be agreed with the planning authority in consultation with SEPA. The submission should include clear plans and details for morphological improvements (i.e. measures to restore the watercourse to a more natural form), riparian planting (including of wetlands) and management proposals (including for, for example, control of non-native invasive species). This requirement will help compensate for the loss of the man-made pond and MG9 and MG10 wetland habitats on the site.

Should the planning authority be minded to grant permission without any of these conditions, SEPA’s comments should be treated as an objection.

**Scottish Fire And Rescue Service** – No response.

**Scottish Natural Heritage** – No objection. Make the following comments:

- Note that the proposal could affect the River Dee SAC designated for its freshwater pearl mussels, Atlantic salmon and otter. The site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the "Habitats Regulations") apply. Consequently, Aberdeen City Council is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SAC before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal).
- Given the undertaking within the ES to install a construction phase SuDS, our view is that this proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on either freshwater pearl mussels or salmon. The absence of signs of otter during the initial species walkover survey suggests that it is also unlikely that the proposal will have a significant effect on this species.
- Note the results of the wintering bird survey. Agree with conclusions and recommendations set out in the survey report. The proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on wintering populations of greylag geese and no further consideration in relation to the SPA is required.
- Note the results of the breeding bird survey. Standard breeding bird survey guidance indicates that the second of the two visits should be carried out between mid-May and late June, and at least 4 weeks after the initial visit. In this case the second visit was carried out on 12 May and three and half weeks after the initial visit. In addition, no details are given in the survey report as to weather conditions or the times of day at which the survey was carried out. You may wish to clarify with the applicant that survey visits were carried out in appropriate weather conditions and at the optimum time of day, in order to increase confidence in the surveys conclusions.
- Note conclusions of the invertebrate survey report. We are not aware of any particular sensitivities associated with the site.
- The reptile survey was carried out between early and mid-May. While this is within the 'active period' for reptiles, we note that weather conditions during survey visits, particularly temperature, were marginal in terms of being suitable to find reptiles. However, provided the approach outlined in the ES to dismantle possible refuges 'by hand where possible or slowly by machine' then adverse impacts on reptiles are likely to be minimal. As set out in our earlier letter, we advise that where possible refuges are to be dismantled 'slowly by machine' this should be done in the presence of an observer who is in a position to see any reptiles exposed by the work.
- Suitably designed SUDS will ensure the protection of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC). We do not wish to comment on the proposed SUDS; we are content that the Council satisfy itself that it is adequate, with advice from SEPA, if required. SUDS features can contribute to the biodiversity interest of a site. We therefore recommend, for example, the use of native species in swales.

**Scottish Water** – No objection to the application. Notes that there is currently capacity in the Invercarnie Water Treatment Works to service the proposed development, however there may be insufficient capacity in the Nigg PFI Waste Water Treatment Works to service the development. Highlights that capacity cannot be reserved prior to planning permission being granted.

**Sport Scotland** – No comments to make on the proposal, on the basis that there are no existing uses on the site in respect of which Sport Scotland is a statutory consultee.

**Shell UK Exploration And Production** – No objection.



Note that development is outside the Shell pipeline servitude, and will have no impact on the pipeline. Note that construction works and any service routing should take account of the Shell pipeline. That position is restated in later response.

**Transport Scotland** – Recommends that any permission granted by the planning authority is subject to the following conditions:

1. (a) The proposed development shall not become operational until a Travel Plan / Transport Management Strategy, which addresses inter alia, access by walking and cycling, public transport provision, car parking management and traffic management, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, following consultation with Transport Scotland and Police Scotland.

The Transport Management Strategy shall incorporate a monitoring and review process to be undertaken for each match day / event held at the Stadium. Where this review process identifies issues with the existing Transport Management Strategy, the applicant shall submit proposals to address these issues to the Planning Authority who, in consultation with the relevant Roads Authorities (Transport Scotland, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council) and Police Scotland, shall approve amendments to the Transport Management Strategy for subsequent events.

(b) Specifically, with regards to the trunk road network, the Transport Management Strategy shall identify the procedures for managing queues before and after matches on the A90 slip roads at the AWPR / A944 Kingswells South Junction, for example, through traffic signal control or manual control by Police Scotland. Where permanent traffic signal control is proposed, the layout design and specification shall all be approved in writing by the Planning Authority, following consultation with Transport Scotland and Police Scotland, and thereafter installed to the agreed plans prior to the development becoming operational.

Reason: To minimise interference with the safety and free flow of traffic on the trunk road network.

2. No part of the development shall become operational until details of match day advanced directional and warning signage have been submitted to, and approved by, the Planning Authority, following consultation with Transport Scotland, and thereafter erected in accordance with the agreed plans.

Reason: To minimise interference with the safety and free flow of traffic on the trunk road network.

## REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 10,147 valid and timeously made representations have been received in relation to this application. Of these representations, 5,330 (53.5%) are in support of the proposal, 4,797 (47.3%) state objection, and 20 (less than 0.2%) are neutral in content.

Representations in support include those from:

- *Stewart Regan, Chief Executive SFA*
- *Alan McRae, President SFA*
- *Neil Doncaster, Chief Executive SPFL*
- *Colin Parker, Chair of Scottish Council for Development and Industry, North-East Committee*
- *Gary Atkinson, Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels Association*
- *Duncan Skinner, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Aberdeen FC Community Trust*
- *Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce*
- *Prof. Ferdinand von Prondzynski, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Robert Gordon University*
- *Mr Graeme Mackay, Club Secretary, Inverness Reds Aberdeen FC Supporters Club*

- *Sir Ian Wood GBE, Chairman, Opportunity North East (ONE)*

Objections to the proposal include submissions from:

- *Katherine Sneedan, Jigsaw planning on behalf of No Kingsford Stadium (NKS) community group*
- *Chris Finnen, Group Scout Leader on behalf of Trustees, 1<sup>st</sup> Westhill Scout Group*
- *Colin Howden, director, Transform Scotland (campaign for sustainable transport)*

The matters raised in representations can be categorised into a series of general topics and summarised as follows.

### **National, Regional and Local planning policy**

- *Contrary to Scottish Planning Policy (SPP);*
- *Contrary to the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) – it would be contrary to the sustainable development and quality of environment objectives/ policies;*
- *Contrary to the majority of policies contained within the current Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP);*
- *The site is not allocated for development, represents a significant departure from the LDP and is contrary to greenbelt policy by failing to meet any of the requirements identified therein;*
- *The refusal of two previous planning applications (golf driving range and housing development) adjacent to the application site has set a precedent;*
- *The loss of farmland;*
- *The proposal is contrary to the ‘town centre first principle’ in National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) and SPP;*
- *An out-of-town ‘significant footfall generating development’ is contrary to the aims of the City Centre Masterplan to regenerate Aberdeen city centre;*
- *The site will unlikely remain as green belt in the future;*
- *The site is not green belt but ‘brownfield’, and should be re-classified as such;*
- *The unique nature of the proposal is such that it would not set a precedent;*
- *The Council has shown with previous planning applications that they can make the case to “be flexible”, where they deem it necessary;*

### **Co-location, site selection and sequential test**

- *The applicant has concentrated on co-location of a stadium with training facilities, making the search for a 25 hectare site their goal, rather than two separate sites;*
- *A compelling case for the co-location of a stadium and training facilities has not been made;*
- *Kingsford is “the wrong location” for a new stadium. The site selection report shows no clear reason why Kingsford is the preferred site;*
- *The site been chosen for financial reasons only, it is about making money for developers;*
- *Very few people in the local area want the stadium;*
- *The adopted, and up to date local plan identifies Loirston for a community stadium;*
- *There is no legal difficulty in using Common Good land at King’s Links;*
- *Co-location of training facilities, youth academy, community facilities and stadium is essential to the Club’s future on and off the pitch;*
- *Nowhere in the city centre is large enough to accommodate a stadium;*
- *The need for co-location is a matter for AFC alone and should not be scrutinised by the Council;*

### **The Environmental Statement (ES) and environmental impacts**

- *Deficiencies in the ES – it is not comprehensive, it is inaccurate and misleading;*
- *Significant impacts to local wildlife and protected species – loss of wildlife habitat through reduction in biodiversity;*
- *Impact on the flight path of geese;*

- *The proposal would cause light pollution;*
- *Negative impact on air quality;*
- *Impact on the Local Nature Reserve;*
- *Impact on water courses & water quality;*
- *Impact on the flora & fauna within Denman Park;*
- *The surface water drainage proposals are unrealistic;*
- *The foul drainage proposals are unclear, there appear to be different proposals for this within the Drainage Assessment and Environmental Statement;*
- *The ES is comprehensive and proposes suitable mitigation to deal with any adverse impacts;*

### **Transport, accessibility and sustainability**

- *Unsustainable location – car reliant development;*
- *Local transport links are inadequate (bus, walking, cycling and rail) and thus will be inaccessible for many supporters;*
- *The proposed development is contrary to the Aberdeen City Council Local Transport Strategy and the NESTRAN's Transport Strategy;*
- *Major traffic holdups on the A944 as a result of queuing traffic waiting to enter/ exit the development site;*
- *Potential for significant tailbacks at the AWPR junction, its slip roads and carriageway at peak times;*
- *The purpose of the AWPR is to alleviate traffic congestion in the City Centre, not to facilitate further development;*
- *Concerns regarding the TA – it may not be accurate, it takes no account of the effect of committed future significant developments in the vicinity;*
- *The impact on road safety and public safety due to additional traffic;*
- *The developer should have to pay for all infrastructure / road improvement costs;*
- *There are not enough local buses to cater for the proposed transport strategy;*
- *Additional vehicular journeys to the site would cause greenhouse gas emissions;*
- *During match times access for emergency vehicles will be impeded;*
- *The suggested modal shift away from the car is unrealistic;*
- *Insufficient on-site car parking;*
- *There will be significant overspill car parking into adjacent residential areas;*
- *Parking restrictions should not be imposed on residents;*
- *The implementation/ management of a future Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) has not been adequately addressed/ explained;*
- *No guarantees from Police Scotland that indiscriminate parking would be adequately policed;*
- *No practical and manageable transport strategy that could cope with the number of fans attending games given the site geography and possible traffic flows;*
- *There are already 13 sets of traffic lights between the Kingsford and Anderson Drive;*
- *Thousands of vehicles would require parking spaces out with the stadium, resulting in indiscriminate parking within shopping centre car parks and residential streets;*
- *Residential property would be inaccessible from the A944 due to increased traffic associated with the development;*
- *Westhill would be “gridlocked”;*
- *Additional traffic will cause further disintegration of road surface and potholes;*
- *Reduced accessibility as Park and Ride buses to Kingswells/ Aberdeen are going to be stopped;*
- *Overspill parking within Arnhall would restrict the number of spaces available to employees;*
- *Limited number of bus stops along the A944;*
- *Amenities afforded by the Core Paths network in the area would be negatively affected;*
- *The proposed shuttle bus system will not be the first choice for most travelling fans;*
- *No transport strategy for “other events” has been provided;*
- *Concern about access to Hazelhead Crematorium during match days;*
- *The new AWPR will provide excellent accessibility for both home and away fans coming from areas to the North, South and West;*
- *Proposed stadium will remove congestion from city centre on match days;*

- *Traffic matters would prevail no matter where the development is located;*
- *Impacts would be limited to match days to match days/ events “a handful” of events throughout the year;*
- *The submitted TA and TAA fails to comply with planning policy; does not demonstrate a sustainable and accessible development; underestimates the traffic generation through the applied methodology; breaches maximum parking standards and is confusing, contradictory and lacking in detail*
- *Corporate and hospitality figures are “vague”*
- *Arrangements surrounding parking provision at Arnhall have not been adequately detailed or explained, including pre-match drop-offs*
- *No direct or related away-support coach data is present within the TA model*
- *The TA takes no account of weather patterns and how these may impact on traffic*
- *The Prime Four “retail complex” application has not been properly considered within the TA*
- *It is unclear why a figure of ‘3 persons per car’ has been used*
- *Network disruption during both planned construction phases*
- *The submitted TAA presents a travel pattern for supporters which places an over reliance on early arrival and use of buses at capacity or greater*
- *The Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) Supporter Survey was not independent*

### **Residential amenity**

- *Loss of a tranquil area;*
- *Noise generated from the stadium and ancillary activities before, during and after matches/ events would be heard across the wider area – insufficient evidence that noise generated from the development could be sufficiently mitigated;*
- *Light pollution emanating from the stadium and training pitches;*
- *Antisocial behaviour and increased crime within nearby residential areas before and after matches;*
- *Westhill town centre will become a “no-go” during match day for residents;*
- *Loss of a view and outlook from residential properties;*
- *Other events such as concerts will probably be given permission in future causing additional “mayhem” to residential property;*
- *The current studies do not take into account the impact of the AWPR on the community of Kingswells or Westhill;*
- *The applicant has introduced an outdoor ‘Fanzone’ within which noise generating activities would be held – no assessment to establish the impact on surrounding property has been carried out i.e. noise assessment;*
- *Litter;*
- *The stadium would be suitably distant from adjacent residential buildings;*

### **Design, size and scale**

- *Over development of the site;*
- *The stadium is a “carbuncle”, a “blot on the landscape”;*
- *The size and height of the development;*
- *The bright colour of the façade;*
- *Overbearing and incongruous development;*
- *Red cladding would be “garish” and is ill-suited to a rural landscape setting;*
- *At the Pre-Application Forum, assurances were given by AFC representatives that the proposed stadium would not be “lit up red”;*
- *The proposed stadium would cast a “big shadow” over Westhill;*
- *No effort made to make the development sympathetic to its surroundings;*

- *A 20,000 seat stadium is too small – a larger stadium would provide the City and North East with a facility to host major events;*
- *A red clad stadium of the size and scale proposed would dramatically affect landscape character and would be a “blot on the landscape”;*
- *The development will lead to the coalescence of the Kingswells and Westhill settlements;*
- *The proposed landscaping scheme would not provide adequate screening of the development;*
- *The design of the stadium is in keeping with nearby commercial developments;*
- *The training facilities are complementary to, and wholly compatible with a green belt setting;*
- *The proposal is an individual development that will integrate into the wide open landscape;*

### **Economic and social benefits/ impacts**

- *There would be little or no benefit to the local economy through job creation, as there are no plans to significantly increase AFC staffing numbers;*
- *Proposal is contrary to City Centre Masterplan because it would remove a large amount of expenditure within the city;*
- *Undesirable shopping/ retail environment will restrict shoppers and impact on local businesses;*
- *Loss of city centre spend and negative impact on local business adjacent to Pittodrie;*
- *Few jobs would be created - likely part-time/ minimum wage/ zero hour contracts which are of little economic benefit to a community;*
- *City centre businesses, pubs and restaurants would suffer as a result;*
- *The development would be located in an area where there is little/ no social deprivation – disadvantaging communities that need it most;*
- *The social aspects of a stadium in City Centre will be lost;*
- *The creation of suitable community facilities is vital to extend the reach of the charity (AFCCT);*
- *AFC generates money for the city as well as goodwill and feel-good factor;*
- *This facility will provide extensive business and social benefit to the City and Shire, with additional off-shoot economic benefits to the local area through employment during and following construction;*
- *The development will bring confidence to region at the current economic challenging times and will enhance the region's position as a sporting centre of excellence;*
- *Approval of the application will send a clear message that Aberdeen is “open for business”;*
- *The development represents a much-needed boost for the City in the recent downturn in the region;*
- *The proposal would result in an enhancement of facilities in NE Scotland and increase access for children and young adults to adequate football training facilities;*
- *The proposal would be more economically efficient & environmentally friendly than Pittodrie;*
- *Good for the local and regional economy in terms of job creation and revenue;*
- *Increase in programs that centre around positive activity, health & wellbeing, equality & inclusion, good citizenship and learning;*
- *Knock on benefits for the retail, leisure, hotel and hospitality sectors;*
- *Numerous opportunities for sport and will attract other events into area;*
- *A much-needed source of investment for the whole region;*
- *Would result in a significant increase in footfall within the surrounding area;*

### **Safety matters**

- *The location of the development between BP Forties Oil Pipeline and the Shell Condensate pipeline represents a significant safety issue in respect of potential incidents (accidental or intentional i.e. terrorism) – T in the Park was re-located due to similar issues;*
- *The combined pavement and cycle path (Core Path 91) would be unable to cope with “potentially thousands” of supporters and conflict with existing Core Path users, resulting in safety issues associated with fast moving vehicular traffic;*
- *Safety concerns of the number of fans walking on/around a busy dual carriageway before and after the match;*
- *Lack of access/ egress points to and from stadium presents serious threat to public safety;*

- Concerns about the capability of Police Scotland to sufficiently deploy enough officers for matches/ events at the stadium;
- Safety of children on matchdays;
- Stadium built on a previous landfill site is a concern for safety for the public;
- Doctors and nurses who live in Westhill would be held up on a congested network;
- There is no existing CCTV within Westhill – a secure CCTV system would require to be extended at a substantial cost. The application provides no information on this, or who would bear the cost;
- The lack of local amenities would mean that fans would be inclined to travel straight to the site and straight home following an event, alleviating potential nuisance;

### Other matters

- The pre-application consultation was inadequate;
- ACC should address ‘false and fraudulent’ representations in support of the application;
- The project will go ahead no matter what objections are raised as “the decision has already been made”;
- Application is being considered by Aberdeen City Council yet major impact will be on residents of in Westhill;
- The success of AFC results in a “feel good factor” to the City and region;
- Many of the objections are based on “fear of the unknown”, rather than on a factual and objective basis;
- Many people that disagree with the building of the stadium are fans of other clubs and non-football fans, which should not be taken in to consideration;
- Those submitting support to the application are doing so on the basis of being football supporters;
- The term “community stadium” is misleading – it will not be a community facility, but a commercial enterprise for AFC;
- Adjacent commercial units have been built within the area with little local resistance;
- Westhill is not part of the city as it is in Aberdeenshire, and has no right to interfere with Aberdeen City planning decisions;
- Increase in house prices;
- Development will increase localised flooding within and around the site;
- The stadium should be located within Aberdeen and not Aberdeenshire;
- Little or no public facilities within Westhill to cope with hundreds of fans;
- Archaeological sites like the Long Cairn and the Quakers Graveyard will be affected;
- Impact on water resources for the area to facilitate aspects of the development;
- Doubts that local clubs would be able to book and use the pitch in the stadium;
- The facilities would be limited to football only, precluding all other sports;
- A new Stadium will severely undermine the historical identity, foundations and fabric of AFC;
- The local Council should therefore be looking to maintain, promote, redevelop and harness this historical identity of Pittodrie;
- The development should not be allowed to proceed until AFC can evidence that they have a financial resources to deliver such a “mammoth” concept;
- The city of Aberdeen should not be giving public money/ funding to a stadium;
- Reduction in attendances as a result of proposed location/ proximity from city centre;
- If Heart of Midlothian can redevelop their stadium, why can AFC redevelop Pittodrie?;
- The club has manufactured a justification for relocation by deliberately withholding routine maintenance expenditure on existing stadium;
- AFC is integral to the identity and reputation of the city;
- Without the development, AFC would cease to exist;
- New housing is badly needed in the centre of Aberdeen and the stadium move will open up a new area for development which will help boost the city;

### **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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## Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

## National Planning Policy and Guidance

### National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)

NPF3 is a long-term strategy for the development of Scotland - the spatial expression of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, with a focus on supporting sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low-carbon economy. A series of national developments is identified across Scotland to deliver the strategy. NPF3's section on Aberdeen and the North East states that the city centre will be a focus for regeneration efforts.

NPF3 also highlights that city centres are key assets for attracting investment and providing services. Quality of place is fundamental to the success of Scotland's cities, in particular city centres. The Scottish Government wishes to see ambitious, up-to-date frameworks for city centre development. These should focus on the quality, sustainability and resilience of the built environment and wider public realm, and on improving accessibility by public and sustainable transport modes, such as cycling. An aspiration of NPF3 is for more sustainable cities, which utilise greater population density and shared infrastructure as well as fostering better connections between our cities. The scheduled opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is anticipated to significantly improve transport in and around Aberdeen, and the strategic location of park and ride facilities is highlighted as having an important role in providing public transport access to Scotland's city centres.

Reducing the impact of the car on city and town centres is seen as make a significant contribution to realising their potential as sustainable places to live and invest by addressing congestion, air pollution and noise and improving the public realm. Significant health benefits could be achieved by substantially increasing active travel within our most densely populated areas.

### Scottish Planning Policy (SPP - 2014)

Scottish Ministers, through SPP, expect the planning system, amongst other things, to focus on outcomes, maximising benefits and balancing competing interests; play a key role in facilitating sustainable economic growth, particularly the creation of new jobs and the strengthening of economic capacity and resilience within communities; and be plan-led, with plans being up-to-date and relevant.

SPP's identified outcomes include achieving 1. *'A successful, sustainable place – supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and the creation of well-designed, sustainable places'*; 2. *'A low carbon place – reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to climate change'*; and 3. *'A natural, resilient place – helping to protect and enhance our natural and cultural assets, and facilitating their sustainable use.'* Para. 15 highlights the role of SPP to set out how these outcomes should be delivered on the ground. By locating the right development in the right place planning can provide opportunities for people to make sustainable choices and improve their quality of life.

Para. 28 states that the planning system should *'support economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places by enabling development that balances the costs and benefits of a proposal over the longer term. The aim is to achieve the right development in the right place; it is not to allow development at any cost'*.

SPP states that it is important that planning supports the role of town centres (*which includes city centres*), to thrive and meet the needs of their residents, businesses and visitors for the 21st century. The 'town centre first' principle, stemming from the Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan, promotes an approach to wider decision-making that considers the health and vibrancy of town centres.

The section of Promoting Town Centres states that out-of-centre locations should only be considered for uses which generate significant footfall where:

- all town centre (*including city centre*), edge of town centre and other commercial centre options have been assessed and discounted as unsuitable or unavailable;
- the scale of development proposed is appropriate, and it has been shown that the proposal cannot reasonably be altered or reduced in scale to allow it to be accommodated at a sequentially preferable location;
- the proposal will help to meet qualitative or quantitative deficiencies; and
- there will be no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of existing town/city centres.

Planning authorities, developers, owners and occupiers should be flexible and realistic in applying the sequential approach, to ensure that different uses are developed in the most appropriate locations.

In its section on ‘Supporting Business and Employment’, SPP identifies policy principles to:

- promote business and industrial development that increases economic activity while safeguarding and enhancing the natural and built environments as national assets;
- locate sites that meet the diverse needs of the different sectors and sizes of business which are important to the plan area in a way which is flexible enough to accommodate changing circumstances and allow the realisation of new opportunities; and
- give due weight to net economic benefit of proposed development.

Paras 193 & 202-204 are of particular relevance in terms of ‘Valuing the Natural Environment’. These sections underline the importance of planning in *‘protecting, enhancing and promoting access to our key environmental resources, whilst supporting their sustainable use’*. It is noted that *‘the siting and design of development should take account of local landscape character’*, also that *‘developers should seek to minimise adverse impacts through careful planning and design, considering the services that the natural environment is providing and maximising the potential for enhancement’*. Para. 203 states that *‘planning permission should be refused where the nature or scale of proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment’*. Paragraph 207 sets out obligations in relation to sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), including the requirement for ‘appropriate assessment’ of the implications for conservation objectives where development is likely to have a significant impact.

In terms of promoting sustainable transport and active travel, paragraph 287 of SPP states in relation to Development Management functions that *‘planning permission should not be granted for significant travel-generating uses at locations which would increase reliance on the car and where:*

- *direct links to local facilities via walking and cycling networks are not available or cannot be made available;*
- *access to local facilities via public transport networks would involve walking more than 400m; or*
- *the transport assessment does not identify satisfactory ways of meeting sustainable transport requirements.’*

## **Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)**

### D1: Quality Placemaking by Design

All development must ensure high standards of design and have a strong and distinctive sense of place which is a result of context appraisal, detailed planning, quality architecture, craftsmanship and materials. Proposals will be considered against six essential qualities: distinctive; welcoming; safe and pleasant; easy to move around; adaptable; resource efficient.

### D2: Landscape

Developments will have a strong landscape framework which improves and enhances the setting and visual impact of the development, unifies urban form, provides shelter, creates local identity and promotes biodiversity. Quality development will:

- be informed by the existing landscape character, topography and existing features to sustain local diversity and distinctiveness, including natural and built features such as existing boundary walls, hedges, copses and other features of interest;



- conserve, enhance or restore existing landscape features and should incorporate them into a spatial landscape design hierarchy that provides structure to the site layout;
- create new landscapes where none exist and where there are few existing features;
- protect and enhance important views of the City's townscape, landmarks and features when seen from busy and important publicly accessible vantage points such as roads, railways, recreation areas and pathways and particularly from the main city approaches;
- provide hard and soft landscape proposals that is appropriate to the scale and character of the overall development.

### D3: Big Buildings

The most appropriate location for big buildings is within the city centre and its immediate periphery. Big buildings must be of a high quality design which complements or improves the existing site context.

### NC1: City Centre Dev - Regional Centre

The city centre is the preferred location for retail, office, hotel, commercial leisure, community, cultural and other significant footfall generating development serving a city-wide or regional market. Proposals for new retail, office, hotel, commercial leisure, community, cultural and other significant footfall generating development (unless on sites allocated for that use in this plan) shall be located in accordance with the sequential approach referred to in this section of the Plan and in Supplementary Guidance.

### NC4: Sequential Approach and Impact

All significant footfall generating development appropriate to town centres (unless on sites allocated for that use in this plan) should be located in accordance with the hierarchy and sequential approach as set out below and detailed in Supplementary Guidance:

Tier 1 : Regional Centre

Tier 2 : Town Centres

Tier 3 : District Centres

Tier 4 : Neighbourhood Centres

Tier 5 : Commercial Centres

In these circumstances, proposals serving a catchment area that is city-wide or larger shall be located in the city centre if possible.

### NC5 - Out of Centre Proposals

All significant footfall generating development appropriate to designated centres, when proposed on a site that is out-of-centre, will be refused planning permission if it does not satisfy all of the following requirements (unless on sites allocated for that use in this plan):

1. No other suitable site in a location that is acceptable in terms of Policy NC4 is available or likely to become available in a reasonable time.
2. There will be no adverse effect on the vitality or viability of any centre listed in Supplementary Guidance.
3. There is in qualitative and quantitative terms, a proven deficiency in provision of the kind of development that is proposed.
4. The proposed development would be easily and safely accessible by a choice of means of transport using a network of walking, cycling and public transport routes which link with the catchment population. In particular, the proposed development would be easily accessible by regular, frequent and convenient public transport services and would not be dependent solely on access by private car.
5. The proposed development would have no significantly adverse effect on travel patterns and air pollution.

### I1: Infrastructure Delivery & Planning Obligations

Development must be accompanied by the infrastructure, services and facilities required to support new or expanded communities and the scale and type of developments proposed. Where development either individually or cumulatively will place additional demands on community facilities or infrastructure that would necessitate new facilities or exacerbate deficiencies in existing provision, the Council will require the developer to meet or contribute to the cost of providing or improving such infrastructure or facilities.

T2: Managing the Transport Impact of Dev

Commensurate with the scale and anticipated impact, new developments must demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise traffic generated and to maximise opportunities for sustainable and active travel. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans will be required for developments which exceed the thresholds set out in Supplementary Guidance. The development of new communities should be accompanied by an increase in local services and employment opportunities that reduce the need to travel and include integrated walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure to ensure that, where travel is necessary, sustainable modes are prioritised. Where sufficient sustainable transport links to and from new developments are not in place, developers will be required to provide such facilities or a suitable contribution towards implementation. Further information is contained in the relevant Supplementary Guidance which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

T3: Sustainable and Active Travel

New developments must be accessible by a range of transport modes, with an emphasis on active and sustainable transport, and the internal layout of developments must prioritise walking, cycling and public transport penetration. Links between residential, employment, recreation and other facilities must be protected or improved for non-motorised transport users, making it quick, convenient and safe for people to travel by walking and cycling. Existing access rights, including core paths, rights of way and paths within the wider network will be protected and enhanced. Recognising that there will still be instances in which people will require to travel by car, initiatives such as like car sharing, alternative fuel vehicles and Car Clubs will also be supported where appropriate.

T4: Air Quality

Development proposals which may have a detrimental impact on air quality will not be permitted unless measures to mitigate the impact of air pollutants are proposed and agreed with the Planning Authority.

T5: Noise

In cases where significant exposure to noise is likely to arise from development, a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) will be required as part of a planning application. There will be a presumption against noise generating developments, as identified by a NIA, being located close to noise sensitive developments, such as existing or proposed housing, while housing and other noise sensitive developments will not normally be permitted close to existing noisy land uses without suitable mitigation measures in place to reduce the impact of noise.

B6: Pipelines, Major Hazards and Explosives storage sites

Where certain types of new development are proposed within the consultation zones of pipelines, major hazards and explosive storage sites, the Council will be required to consult the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to determine the potential risk to public safety. The Council will take full account of the advice from the HSE in determining planning applications. In addition to consultation with the HSE, the Council will consult the operators of pipelines where development proposals fall within these zones. Pipeline consultation zones are shown on the LDP Constraints Map.

NE2: Green Belt

No development will be permitted in the Green Belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture; woodland and forestry; recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting; mineral extraction/quarry restoration; or landscape renewal. The following exceptions apply to this policy:

1. Proposals for development associated with existing activities in the green belt will be permitted but only if all of the following criteria are met:
  - a. The development is within the boundary of the existing activity;
  - b. The development is small-scale;
  - c. The intensity of activity is not significantly increased; and
  - d. Any proposed built construction is ancillary to what exists.
2. Essential infrastructure (such as electronic communications infrastructure, electricity grid connections, transport proposals identified in the LDP or roads planned through the masterplanning of opportunity sites) will only be permitted if it cannot be accommodated anywhere other than the Green Belt.

3. Buildings in the Green Belt which have a historic or architectural interest, or a valuable traditional character, will be permitted to undergo an appropriate change of use which makes a worthwhile contribution to the visual character of the Green Belt. Please see relevant Supplementary Guidance for detailed requirements.
4. Proposals for extensions of existing buildings, as part of a conversion or rehabilitation scheme, will be permitted in the Green Belt provided:
  - a. The original building remains visually dominant;
  - b. The design of the extension is sympathetic to the original building in terms of massing, detailing and materials, and
  - c. The siting of the extension relates well to the setting of the original building.
5. Replacement on a one-for-one basis of existing permanent houses currently in occupation will normally be permitted provided:
  - a. It can be demonstrated to the Council that they have been in continuous occupation for at least 5 of the seven years immediately prior to the date of the application;
  - b. The replacement house, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to improve a dangerous access), occupies the same site as the building it would replace. Where replacement houses are permitted on sites different from the original site, the original house will require to be removed;
  - c. Replacement houses should be of a scale, design and external appearance that contributes to the visual character of the Green Belt.

All proposals for development in the Green Belt must be of the highest quality in terms of siting, scale, design and materials. All developments in the Green Belt should have regard to other policies of the Local Development Plan in respect of landscape, trees and woodlands, natural heritage and pipelines and control of major accident hazards.

#### NE5: Trees and Woodland

There is a presumption against all activities and development that will result in the loss of, or damage to, trees and woodlands that contribute to nature conservation, landscape character, local amenity or climate change adaptation and mitigation. Buildings and services should be sited so as to minimise adverse impacts on existing and future trees.

#### NE6: Flooding, Drainage & Water Quality

Development will not be permitted if:

1. It would increase the risk of flooding: a) by reducing the ability of the functional flood plain to store and convey water; b) through the discharge of additional surface water; or c) by harming flood defences.
2. It would be at risk itself from flooding;
3. Adequate provision is not made for access to waterbodies for maintenance; or
4. It would require the construction of new or strengthened flood defences that would have a significantly damaging effect on the natural heritage interests within or adjacent to a watercourse.

#### NE8: Natural Heritage

Sites protected by natural heritage designations are an important consideration in the planning process. Notes the requirement for Habitats Regulations assessment in specified circumstances, and sets out that development that would have an adverse impact on designated sites will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, and compensatory measures are provided.

Highlights requirement surveys, protection plans and necessary mitigation measures where there is a likelihood of protected species being present.

#### NE9: Access and Informal Recreation

New development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreational opportunities including general access rights to land and water, Core Paths, other paths and rights of way. This includes any impacts on access during the construction phase of a development. Wherever possible, developments should include new or improved provision for public access, permeability and/or links to green space for recreation and active travel.

#### R2: Degraded & Contaminated Land

The City Council will require that all land that is degraded or contaminated, including visually, is either restored, reclaimed or remediated to a level suitable for its proposed use. This may involve undertaking site investigations and risk assessments to identify any actual or possible significant risk to public health or safety, or to the environment, including possible pollution of the water environment, that could arise from the proposals. Where there is potential for pollution of the water environment the City Council will liaise with SEPA. The significance of the benefits of remediating a contaminated site, and the viability of funding this, will be taken into account when considering proposals for the alternative use of such sites.

#### R6: Waste Management Requirements for New Development

All new developments should have sufficient space for the storage of general waste, recyclable materials and compostable wastes where appropriate. Recycling facilities should be provided in all new superstores or large supermarkets and in other developments where appropriate. Details of storage facilities and means of collection must be included as part of a planning application for any development which would generate waste.

#### R7: Low & Zero Carbon Buildings & Water Efficiency

All new buildings, must meet at least 20% of the building regulations carbon dioxide emissions reduction target applicable at the time of the application through the installation of low and zero carbon generating technology.

To reduce the pressure on water abstraction from the River Dee, and the pressure on water infrastructure, all new buildings are required to use water saving technologies and techniques.

#### CI1: Digital Infrastructure

All new residential and commercial development will be expected to have access to modern, up-to-date high-speed communications infrastructure.

### **Supplementary Guidance and Technical Advice Notes**

#### Supplementary Guidance

Planning Obligations  
Resources for New Development  
Trees and Woodlands  
Air Quality  
Big Buildings  
Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality  
Landscape  
Hierarchy of Centres  
Natural Heritage  
Noise  
Transport and Accessibility  
Planning Obligations

#### Technical Advice Note

Natural Heritage

### **Other Material Considerations**

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014) (SDP)

The SDP sets out a series of key objectives for the growth of the City and Aberdeenshire. It is framed around a vision, spatial strategy and a series of aims and objectives; with those relating to economic growth, sustainable mixed communities, quality of environment and accessibility being the most relevant to this application. The SDP sets a strong framework for investment decisions, and its purpose is to focus the right development in the right places and to prevent inappropriate and poorly located development.

In terms of the plan's spatial strategy (p8- 23), the proposed stadium falls within the outer edge of the Aberdeen City "Strategic Growth Area" (p12-14). The plan explicitly supports the principle of the development of "a new community stadium, a regionally important facility which will bring economic, social and cultural benefits" (para 3.24, Diagram – p13 and Schedule 2). Two possible locations are identified – on and around the current stadium site at Pittodrie / Kings Links and to the south of the city as part of the Loirston development.

The SDP acknowledges the importance of Aberdeen City Centre as being vital to the economic future of the area (SDP para 3.21). The regeneration of the City Centre and a number of city communities is vital to reduce inequality (paras 3.47 and 3.48). A key facet of this is acknowledging that a varied mix of uses must be maintained and expanded in order to have a successful city which is attractive to business, residents and tourists. The importance of reducing travel distances and making walking, cycling and public transport more attractive is also highlighted as vital for the future (para 3.16). This again focuses attention on the City Centre or sites that are well connected to existing or planned communities.

#### Local Transport Strategy (2016-2021)

The vision for the Local Transport Strategy is to develop "A sustainable transport system that is fit for the 21st Century, accessible to all, supports a vibrant economy, facilitates healthy living and minimises the impact on our environment". Its five associated high-level aims are:

1. A transport system that enables the efficient movement of people and goods.
2. A safe and more secure transport system.
3. A cleaner, greener transport system.
4. An integrated, accessible and socially inclusive transport system.
5. A transport system that facilitates healthy and sustainable living.

These are underpinned by five identified outcomes. By 2021 Aberdeen's transport system should have:

- A. Increased modal share for public transport and active travel;
- B. Reduced the need to travel and reduced dependence on the private car;
- C. Improved journey time reliability for all modes;
- D. Improved road safety within the City;
- E. Improved air quality and the environment; and,
- F. Improved accessibility to transport for all.

#### Strategic Infrastructure Plan

Aberdeen City Council's Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) focuses on the delivery of Strategic and Local Development Plans and also identifies five key infrastructure goals, as follows:

- A step change in the supply of housing;
- High quality digital connectivity at home and at work;
- Better local transport;
- The skills and labour that Aberdeen needs to thrive;
- A better image for Aberdeen.

Specifically in relation to a new football stadium, the SIP states that the city council will be continuing negotiations with Aberdeen Football Club and others on the establishment of a new stadium at Loirston.

#### Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP)

Approved by the Full Council in June 2015, the CCMP outlines a 20 year development strategy for Aberdeen City Centre. It identifies a series of ambitious but deliverable projects that will support future economic growth and will secure more benefits and opportunities for the communities of Aberdeen City and Shire. The projects are complemented by a robust, costed and achievable delivery programme and together these provide a framework for managing city centre development up to 2035. The strategy for the CCMP is focused on reviving the historic core and incorporating areas of growth between the Denburn and the River Dee.

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### **Environmental Statement**

This proposal was subject to Environmental Impact Assessment as a “Schedule 2 Development”, by virtue of the characteristics of the proposed development and its potential impacts. This was established via a process of EIA Screening and confirmed via a Screening Opinion issued by Aberdeen City Council, which identified that the project falls within Schedule 2 Class 10(b) of the EIA Regulations, relating to Infrastructure Projects. An Environmental Statement (ES) was submitted with the planning application.

The ES reports on the findings of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the proposed development. EIA is the process of compiling, evaluating and presenting all of the significant environmental impacts of the proposed development, leading to the identification and incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures. The range of potential impacts considered in the ES fall under the following chapter headings: Planning Policy and Alternative Sites Considered; Ecology, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation; Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Historic Environment; Water Resources, Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage; Ground Conditions, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils; Traffic, Transportation and Access; Air Quality; Noise and Vibration; Socioeconomics. Having set out the impacts of the development in each of these areas, the EIA subsequently sets out a consolidated Schedule of Mitigation.

The EIA, dated January 2017, was supplemented by further information sought by the planning authority under Regulation 23 of the relevant EIA Regulations (dated 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

The ES includes a Schedule of Mitigation (at Chapter 14), which summarises the proposed environmental mitigation measures that would be undertaken by the applicant/contractor, or other parties, to avoid, reduce or offset environmental effects before, during and after construction and during the operation of the development.

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### **NEXT STEPS**

A report will be prepared by officers for Full Council with a recommendation assessing the proposed development and making a recommendation to members.