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To: Councillor Henrickson, Convener; Councillor Bouse, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Alphonse, Blake, Boulton, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Crockett, Farquhar, Lawrence, McRae and Thomson.

Town House,
ABERDEEN 18 May 2023

PRE-APPLICATION FORUM

The Members of the **PRE-APPLICATION FORUM** are requested to meet in **Council Chamber - Town House** on **THURSDAY, 25 MAY 2023 at 2.00 pm**. This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website. <https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

JENNI LAWSON
INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER – GOVERNANCE (LEGAL)

BUSINESS

1. Introduction and Procedure Note (Pages 3 - 6)

MINUTES

2. Minute of Previous Meeting of 20 April 2023 - for approval (Pages 7 - 12)

PRE APPLICATION REPORTS

3. Proposal of Application Notice - proposed installation of a grid battery energy storage facility (up to 40MW) with associated development - land at Newton of Pitfodles Aberdeen - 230411 (Pages 13 - 20)

Planning Officer: Gavin Clark

4. Proposal of Application Notice - battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure - land at Persley Croft, Aberdeen - 230447 (Pages 21 - 30)

Planning Officer – Matthew Easton

To access the Service Updates for this Committee please click [here](#)

Website Address: aberdeencity.gov.uk

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Lynsey McBain, email lymcbain@aberdeencity.gov.uk or tel 01224 522123

PRE-APPLICATION FORUM **PROCEDURE NOTE AND GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS**

1. This procedure note will operate on a trial basis of the Forum and will be subject to review and amendment during this period.
2. Meetings of the Pre-Application Forum will be held in open public session to enable discussion of all national and major development proposals.
3. Forums will be held as soon as possible after the submission of a Proposal of Application Notice (POAN) for all national and major development proposals and, in all cases, prior to the lodging of any associated planning application (this allows a period of 12 weeks following submission of the POAN).
4. The members of the Planning Development Management Committee will constitute the members of the Pre-Application Forum.
5. Ward Members for the Ward in which a specific pre-application proposal under discussion is located will be invited to the Forum but will be allowed to participate in the Forum only in relation to the specific pre-application proposal in their ward.
6. The relevant Community Council for the prospective development proposal(s) to be discussed will be informed of the date and time of the Pre-Application Forum by Committee Services so that they have the opportunity to attend but will not be permitted to participate in the business of the Forum.
7. If a Forum is required it will take place after formal business of the Planning Development Management Committee is concluded - this will normally be 2pm on the same day as the Planning Development Management Committee. The Forum will be separate from the Committee to emphasise the clear differences in status, process and procedure between the two meetings.
8. The case officer for the pre-application proposal will produce a very brief report (maximum 2-3 sides of A4) for the Forum outlining the proposal and identifying the main planning policies, material considerations and issues associated with it and the key information that will be required to accompany any application. The report will not include any evaluation of the planning merits of the proposal.
9. Agents/applicants will be contacted by Committee Services immediately on receipt of a POAN (or before this date if notified by planning officers of the week that a forthcoming POAN is likely to be submitted) and offered the opportunity to give a 10 minute presentation of their development proposal to the members of the Forum. There will be an opportunity for Councillors to discuss these with the agents/applicants, to ask questions and indicate key issues they would like the applicants to consider and address in their eventual application(s). If an applicant/agent does not respond to this offer within 10 days, or declines the opportunity to give such a presentation, then their proposal will be considered by the Forum without a developer/applicant presentation. Committee Services will notify the case officer of the applicant's response.

10. Case officers (or Team Leader/Manager/Head of Planning) and, if considered necessary, other appropriate officers e.g. Roads Projects Officers, will be present at the Forum. The case officer will give a very brief presentation outlining the main planning considerations, policies and, if relevant and useful, procedures and supporting information that will have to be submitted. Officers will be available to answer questions on factual matters related to the proposal but will not give any opinion on, or evaluation of, the merits of the application as a whole.
11. Members, either individually or collectively, can express concerns about aspects of any proposal that comes before the Forum but (to comply with the terms of the Code of Conduct) should not express a final settled view of any sort on whether any such proposal is acceptable or unacceptable.
12. A minute of the meeting will be produced by Committee Services and made publicly available on the Council website.
13. Members should be aware that the proposal being discussed may be determined under delegated powers and may not come back before them for determination. Any report of handling on an application pursuant to a proposal considered by the Pre-Application Forum will contain a very brief synopsis of the comments made by the Forum but the report itself will be based on an independent professional evaluation of the application by planning officers.
14. Training sessions will be offered to Councillors to assist them in adjusting to their new role in relation to pre-application consultation and its relationship with the Code of Conduct.
15. The applicant/agent will be expected to report on how they have, or have not, been able to address any issues raised by the Pre-Application Forum in the Pre-Application Consultation Report that is required to be submitted with any subsequent planning application.

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

In relation to point 11 on the Procedure Note above, it might be helpful to outline a few points regarding the Councillors Code of Conduct and the Scottish Government's Guidance on the role of Councillors in Pre-Application procedures which will hopefully be helpful to the Members. These were discussed at the Training run by Burness Paull on the 28th of November, 2014.

So very briefly, The Code's provisions relate to the need to ensure a proper and fair hearing and to avoid any impression of bias in relation to statutory decision making processes. Having said that, in terms of the Scottish Government's Guidance on the role of Councillors in Pre-Application procedures:

- Councillors are entitled to express a provisional opinion in advance of a planning application being submitted but only as part of the Council's procedures (as detailed at item 1 to this agenda)

- No views may be expressed once the application has been submitted
- In terms of the role of the Forum, it meets to emphasise an outcome limited to the generation of a provisional view (on behalf of the Forum, rather than individual Members of the Forum) on the pre-application, this will allow:
 - Members to be better informed
 - An Early exchange of views
 - A greater certainty/more efficient processing of applications

Members of the Forum are entitled to express a provisional view, but should do so in a fair and impartial way, have an open mind and must not compromise determination of any subsequent planning application.

In terms of dealing with Pre-Applications, Members of the Forum should:

- Identify key issues
- Highlight concerns with the proposal/areas for change
- Identify areas for officers to discuss with applicants
- Identify documentation which will be required to support application

In terms of the Code of Conduct and any interest that Members of the Forum may have in a pre-application, it is worth reminding Members of the Forum that they must, however, always comply with the *objective test* which states “ *whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your discussion or decision making in your role as a councillor.*”

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PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM

ABERDEEN, 20 April 2023. Minute of Meeting of the PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM. Present:- Councillor Bouse, Convener; and Councillors Blake, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Henrickson, McRae, van Sweeden (as substitute for Councillor Alphonse) and Thomson.

Also present as local Members: Councillor Macdonald.

INTRODUCTION AND PROCEDURE NOTE

1. The Forum had before it the procedure note and guidance for members on the operation of Forum meetings.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the procedure note and guidance for members

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 9 FEBRUARY 2023

2. The Forum had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 9 February 2023, for approval.

The Forum resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

92-126 JOHN STREET ABERDEEN - 221511

3. The Forum had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, on a submission of a Proposal of Application Notice by Levelling Up Real Estate for a proposed major residential or quasi-residential (sui generis) use - potentially flats, build to rent private rented accommodation, student housing, serviced apartments or a mix of these plus supporting facilities and infrastructure, at 92-126 John Street Aberdeen, planning reference number 221511.

The report advised that the application site comprised a largely vacant plot of land at the western end of John Street, adjacent to the Woolmanhill Halls of Residence of Robert Gordon University. The site was previously occupied by now demolished tenement buildings, with commercial uses at ground floor and the former Ambassador Snooker Club. The site did not include the Lumsden Security Locksmith premises sited at the end of John Street. There was also a smaller separate part of the site adjacent to the turning area to the south of Woolmanhill Halls of Residence and the Inverness railway line, which sits at a lower level.

The surrounding area contained a mix of uses, with residential flats of mainly four storeys in height to the north and east, Woolmanhill Halls of Residence to the west (five storeys) and the Sandman Hotel located to the south. The southern edge of the

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application site borders the northern edge of the City Centre Conservation Area, but the site was largely out with it. The application site lies adjacent to the City Centre boundary as defined within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, the northern boundary of which is defined by the northern edge of the John Street roadway.

The report also indicated that the Proposal of Application Notice was submitted on the 14 December 2022, with the content of the document agreed with the Planning Service on the 4 January 2023. The first public consultation event was undertaken by the applicant's agents on 8 February 2023 within the Aberdeen Central Library Committee Room with the second consultation event taking place shortly afterwards. The details and results of this public consultation would require to be the subject of a Pre-Application Consultation Report to form part of any subsequent planning application.

The Committee heard from Mr Gavin Clark, Senior Planner, who addressed the Forum and provided details regarding the planning aspects of the application.

Mr Clark provided details on the relevant planning policies noting that the following policies were relevant to the proposed application:-

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

- WB2: Air Quality
- WB3: Noise
- D1: Quality Placemaking
- D2: Amenity
- D3: Big Buildings
- D4: Landscape
- D6: Historic Environment •
- R2: Degraded and Contaminated Land
- R5: Waste Management Requirements for New Development
- R6: Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency
- H2: Mixed Use Areas
- H3: Density
- H4: Housing Mix and Need
- H5: Affordable Housing
- H7: Student Accommodation Developments
- I1: Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations
- T2: Sustainable Transport
- T3: Parking
- CI1: Digital Infrastructure

The Forum then heard from Mr Steve Crawford and Mr Richard Woods, Halliday Fraser Munro, agents for the application. Mr Gordon Pirie and Mr Paul Gee, Levelling Up Real Estate were also present to answer questions from members.

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Mr Crawford began the presentation and advised that the site was the largest brownfield site in Aberdeen City Centre and the site had been vacant since 2014 and was in need of redevelopment to activate the street. Mr Crawford advised that in regards to National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan, there was an aim to reuse brownfield land and compact urban growth, to have local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods and to create sustainable places.

Mr Crawford explained that two previous consents for the site had not been implemented and they were for a proposal for 5–8 storey student accommodation with 374 beds and also a 5 storey hotel with 182 beds.

Mr Crawford provided details on the consultation events held and noted that since feedback was received they had made amendments to the application. The changes were namely:-

- The height of the northern section of the building –reduced storeys to the rear from the original proposal;
- In terms of car parking –this would now be limited;
- Bird management would be incorporated;
- Boundary treatments –1.8m boundary proposed to the north;
- Proximity to existing buildings –the proposal was slightly further away than previous consents;
- There would be no public access to the roof; and
- In relation to a mix of uses, the application had now moved away from a mix of private rented accommodation to solely student housing.

In terms of the project overview, Mr Crawford advised that the proposal was for student accommodation with 383 bedrooms, would be professionally managed with communal facilities including a TV/cinema room, study rooms, laundry rooms and reception desk. The building would be 4 to 7 storeys in height with a central private courtyard and landscaped grounds. Seven parking spaces would be allocated for disabled parking and also staff with 140 cycle spaces on offer. The development would also be energy efficient and a low carbon development.

Mr Woods then provided details on the design principles and highlighted the character of the local area and how the development would blend in with the local street scape. The upper levels of the development would be set back and would also incorporate distinct window groupings. There would also be a high reader element to compliment the Denburn View. Mr Woods also provided details in regards to the massing of the proposed buildings and elevation context.

Members then asked a number of questions of both the applicant and the case officer and the following information was noted:-

- Members queried if further cycle spaces could be added to the proposed development;
- Fibre broadband would be installed inside of the building;

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- The rooms would differ in size and there would be various options available to students, taking into consideration differing budgets for students. Some rooms would have en-suite facilities with more affordable options having shared bathroom facilities. All rooms would comply with technical standards;
- The tallest aspect of the building would be seven storey in height;
- In regards to accessibility, lifts would be available to all levels of the building;
- Discussions were ongoing with both of the Universities in the city and discussions had been very positive, with both welcoming the proposed development;
- In terms of overshadowing to the surrounding buildings and properties, it was noted that a number of analysis had been undertaken and would be within the guidelines;
- It was proposed that there would be two accessible parking spaces in the courtyard with seven spaces overall and after discussions with Road Development Management they were satisfied with this figure for the proposed development;
- In relation to disabled access units, 5% of the rooms would be fully accessible;
- At the back of the development, the height would be five storey high;
- In terms of student safety, there would be one single point of access and the courtyard entrances would be enclosed;
- The developer had been in consultation with Aberdeen Heat and Power and all facilities would be electric;
- In terms of only having a single point of access, the applicant indicated they would investigate this in regards to deliveries and loading bays;
- The applicant would discuss lighting with the mechanical engineer to look at accent lighting to tie in with the surrounding buildings; and
- It was noted that there would be one electric charging point and also wiring installed for future should further electric charging points be required.

The report recommended:-

that the Forum –

- (a) note the key issues identified;
- (b) if necessary, seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- (c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicant to consider and address in any future application.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to thank Mr Crawford and Mr Woods for their informative presentation as well as Mr Pirie and Mr Gee for answering questions in relation to the proposed application; and
 - (ii) to request that the applicant consider the points raised above.
- **COUNCILLOR DESMOND BOUSE, Convener**

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 <p>ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Pre-Application Forum</h2>
	<p>Report by Development Management Manager</p>
	<p>Meeting Date: 25th May 2023</p>

Site Address:	Land at Newton of Pitfodels, Aberdeen, AB15 7AL,
Description of Proposal:	Proposed installation of a grid battery energy storage facility (up to 40MW) with associated development
Notice Ref:	230411/PAN
Notice Type:	Proposal of Application Notice
Notice Date:	31 March 2023
Applicant:	Flexion Energy UK Storage
Ward:	Lower Deeside
Community Council:	Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber
Case Officer:	Gavin Clark



RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- a) note the key issues identified;
- b) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application site relates to an equestrian / agricultural field extending to approximately 2.1 hectares in size, located on the southern side of Countesswells Road. The site is bound by a number of trees to the north, east and west. The surrounding area is predominantly equestrian and agricultural in nature, but does include a number of residential dwellings, Robert Gordon's College playing fields and a garden centre and nursery to the north.

Relevant Planning History

- The applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (230411/PAN) in March 2023, notifying the planning authority of their intention to submit a planning application for the proposed development and seeking confirmation of the public consultation required. The Planning Service confirmed that some further consultation would be required, in addition to that proposed by the applicant.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

The proposals relate to a future application for planning permission for a battery energy storage system (BESS) facility and associated infrastructure. The applicants have advised that the potential electrical capacity would not be confirmed until a detailed design stage, but it is not expected to be more than 40MW. They have also indicated a development such as this would typically include:

- battery energy storage racks typically with indicative size of 2.73m high x 1.3m wide x 1.3m long.
- MV Skids (power conversion system, transformer and rig main unit together) with an indicative size of 3.35m high by 2.5m wide x 6.1m long.
- A switch room, control room and welfare container with an indicative height of 3.5m and indicative size of 5m x 15m for the switch room and 5m x 5m for the control room.
- Fencing around the site boundary, which would be 2.4m high "V" mesh security fence.
- Security lighting and infrared CCTV system columns with an indicative high of 4.5m; and
- Associated infrastructure, which would include an access onto Countesswells Road.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the

Development Plan; and, that any determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term spatial strategy for Scotland and contains a comprehensive set of national planning policies that form part of the statutory development plan. The relevant provisions of NPF4 that require consideration in terms of this application are –

- Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises)
- Policy 2 (Climate, Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Policy 3 (Biodiversity)
- Policy 4 (Natural Places)
- Policy 5 (Soils)
- Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees)
- Policy 11 (Energy)
- Policy 12 (Zero Waste)
- Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)
- Policy 23 (Health and Safety)

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)

Section 16 (1)(a)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that, where there is a current local development plan, a proposed local development plan must be submitted to Scottish Ministers within five years after the date on which the current plan was approved. The ALDP is beyond this five-year period.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- Policy D2 (Landscape)
- Policy NE1 (Green Space Network)
- Policy NE2 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)
- Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development)
- Policy T5 (Noise)

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

The Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 (PALDP) was received by the Council on 20 September 2022. All the recommendations within the Report have been accepted and the modifications made to the PALDP were agreed by Full Council on 14 December 2022. The PALDP constitutes the Council's settled view as to the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the PALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)

- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy D4 (Landscape)
- Policy D5 (Landscape Design)
- Policy NE1 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands)
- Policy R7 (Renewal and Low Energy Developments)
- Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy WB3 (Noise)

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

Policy 11 (Energy) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) expresses support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including battery energy storage systems. The Policy goes on to state that:

- Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated businesses and chain supply opportunities.
- In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:
 - impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker.
 - significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.
 - public access
 - impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording.
 - impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction.
 - effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk.
 - biodiversity including impacts on birds.
 - proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration.
 - the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans, and cumulative impacts.

In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Policy R8 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments) of the ALDP 2017 advises that *“the development of renewable and low carbon energy schemes where the technology can operate efficiently and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed will be supported in principle, if proposals: do not cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; do not negatively impact on air quality; do not negatively impact on tourism and do not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.”*

In addition to the above, Policy R7 (Renewable and Low Energy Developments) of the Proposed LDP (in which any likely application would be assessed) states that *“renewable and low carbon*

energy schemes will be encouraged and supported in principle, where the technology can operate efficiently, and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed". Of the relevant criteria that the policy contains, it goes on to explain that proposals are required "to not – cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; or have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwellinghouses".

In addition, Policy 1 (Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires decision makers to give significant weight to the global climate and nature crises when considering nature proposals. Battery storage would support Scotland's transition to renewable energy, a major part of addressing climate change. The proposal would therefore attract support from this policy.

Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation) requires development proposals to be designed and sited to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and to adapt to current and future risks from climate change and Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4 requires proposals for local development *"to include appropriate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. Measures should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development."*

Policy 4 (Natural Places) advises *"Development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported."* Policy 5 (Soils) advises that: *"Development proposals will only be supported if they are designed and constructed: In accordance with the mitigation hierarchy by first avoiding and then minimising the amount of disturbance to soils on undeveloped land; and in a manner that protects soil from damage including from compaction and erosion, and that minimises soil sealing."*

Land Use Zoning

The site is zoned as Green Belt in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and sits immediately adjacent to the Green Space Network. NPF4 Policy 8 (Green Belts) applies and has the aim of encouraging, promoting and facilitating compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably. More specifically, development proposals will only be supported if they fall into one of the categories listed and particular requirements are met. In the case of the current proposal, it would likely fall into the category of *"minerals developments and renewable energy developments"*. Given the emphasis placed on achieving net zero targets, it is accepted that battery storage could be considered as essential infrastructure or as a renewable energy development. That being said, it is not entirely clear it would not be definitively guaranteed that the energy stored at the site would be generated in a renewable way, rather than being generated in a renewable way, rather than being generated from traditional power stations. Further information should be submitted in regard to a supporting statement to determine whether this part of policy would support the development.

The second element of Policy 8 requires the following to be demonstrated –

1. why a green belt location is essential any why it cannot be located on an alternative site out with the green belt
2. the purpose of the green belt at this location is not undermined
3. the proposal is compatible with the surrounding established countryside and landscape character
4. the proposal has been designed to ensure it is on an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise visual impact on the green belt as far as possible; and
5. there will be no significant long-term impacts on the environmental quality of the green belt.

Policy NE2 (Green Belt) of the ALDP 2017 advises *“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.”* Policy NE2 does include the following exemption: *“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.”*

In addition to the above, Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan advises that *“development in areas defined as Green Belt on the Proposals Map will not be supported. Exceptions to this general presumption will only be supported where the proposal... is directly associated with essential infrastructure such as telecommunications, electricity grid connections, transport proposals identified in the Plan or roads planned through masterplanning of sites, if they cannot be accommodated anywhere other than the Green Belt”.*

Policy NE1 (Green Space Network) of the ALDP 2017 advises that *“The Council will protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, access, recreation, ecosystem services and landscape value of the Green Space Network”.* In addition, Policy NE2 (Green & Blue Infrastructure) of the Proposed LDP advises *“development proposals will seek to protect, support and enhance the Green Space Network (identified on the Proposals Map). This broadly encompasses the wildlife, biodiversity, ecosystem services & functions, access, recreation, landscape and townscape value of the Green Space Network. Development that does not achieve this will not be supported.”*

Layout, Siting and Design & Impact on Trees

In terms of design, Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed to improve the quality of an area whether in urban or rural locations and regardless of scale. Development proposals that are poorly designed, detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area or inconsistent with the six qualities of successful places, will not be supported.

In addition, issues of layout, scale and design will need to be considered against Policy D1 Quality Placemaking, D2: Amenity and D4: Landscape of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Policy D1 advises that all development must ensure high standards of design and have a strong and distinctive sense of place which takes into account the context of the surrounding area and will require to offer opportunities for connectivity which take account the character and the scale of development. Developments that contribute to placemaking will help sustain and enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural attractiveness of the city. Proposals will be considered against six essential qualities: distinctive, welcoming, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, adaptable and resource efficient.

Policy D2 (Amenity) (which is a new policy) of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan also seeks that *“development will be designed to: make the most of any opportunities offered by the site to optimise views and sunlight through appropriate siting, layout and orientation; ensure that occupiers are afforded adequate levels of amenity in relation to daylight, sunlight, noise, air quality and immediate outlook; ensure that occupiers are afforded adequate levels of amenity in relation to daylight, sunlight, noise, air quality and immediate outlook; have a public face to the street to ensure natural surveillance, and active street frontages; ensure that refuse and recycling facilities, cycle storage, low and zero carbon technology, plant and services are sensitively integrated into the design; ensure that external lighting minimises light spillage into adjoining areas and the sky.”*

Policy D4 (Landscape) outlines that new developments will have a strong landscape framework that improves and enhances the setting and visual impact of the development, unifies urban form, provides shelter, creates local identity, and promotes biodiversity. To secure high quality

development, new development should include a landscape strategy and management plan incorporating hard and soft landscaping design specifications. The level of detail required will be appropriate to the scale of development.

Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) of the ALDP 2017 advises that *“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.”* Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland) of the Proposed ALDP advises: *“development should not result in the loss of, or damage to, trees and woodlands. Development proposals will seek to increase tree and woodland cover and achieve the long-term retention of existing trees and woodlands that the planning authority consider worthy of retention. Where tree removal takes place or is necessary for good arboricultural reasons, replacement planting will be required to ensure an overall net gain in tree cover. Development that does not achieve this will not be supported”.*

Noise

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 indicates that *“Development proposals that are likely to raise unacceptable noise issues will not be supported. The agent of change principle applies to noise sensitive development. A Noise Impact Assessment may be required where the nature of the proposal or its location suggests that significant effects are likely.”*

Policy T5 (Noise) of the ALDP advises *“there will be a presumption against noise generating developments, as identified by a NIA, being located close to noise sensitive developments”.* Policy WB3 (Noise) of the PALDP requires that there will be a presumption against noise generating developments, being located to noise sensitive developments, such as existing or proposed housing, with suitable mitigation measures in place to reduce the impact of noise to an acceptable level.

Transport

Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development) of the ALDP 2017 advises that *“new developments must demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise traffic generated and to maximise opportunities for sustainable and active travel.”* Similar advice is provided by Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport) of the Proposed LDP.

Health and Safety

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 aims to protect people and places from environmental harm and mitigate risks arising from safety hazards. The Planning Service is aware of concern surrounding battery storage and their associated fire risk, as well as recent incidents with such facilities in the UK and abroad. Therefore, as part of any planning application the applicant has been asked to submit details of the measures which would be employed to mitigate such a risk.

Flooding and Drainage

Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4, Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality) of the ALDP 2017 and Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment) of the Proposed LDP relate surface water drainage and in summary require all new developments to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to manage surface water; presume no surface water connection to the combined sewer; and to minimise the area of impermeable surface.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The applicants proposed to undertake a drop in exhibition on the 11th May 2023 between the hours of 12pm and 7pm, followed by a second event on the 8th June 2023 between the hours of 12pm and 7pm at Airyhall Community Centre. Two Community Councils have received a copy of the Notice (Cults Bieldside and Milltimber and Craigiebuckler and Seafield) and local Councillors in both the Hazlehead and Lower Deeside wards have been notified of the events.

In addition, the applicants proposed a leaflet drop of approximately 750m around from the site, which included 656 properties plus Robert Gordon's College as a neighbouring landowner. A leaflet was also to be posted at Airyhall Community Centre two weeks prior to the consultation event and an advert would be placed in the Press and Journal at least 7 days prior to each public consultation event.

The results of the pre-application consultation will be included in the Pre-Application Consultation Report, which will form part of the planning application submission.

NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT ANY FUTURE APPLICATION

As part of any application, the applicant has been advised that the following information would need to accompany the formal submission –

- Arboricultural Survey and Assessment
- Design and Access Statement (statutory requirement)
- Drainage Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Phase 1 Ecological Survey
- Planning Statement
- Pre-Application Consultation Report (statutory requirement)

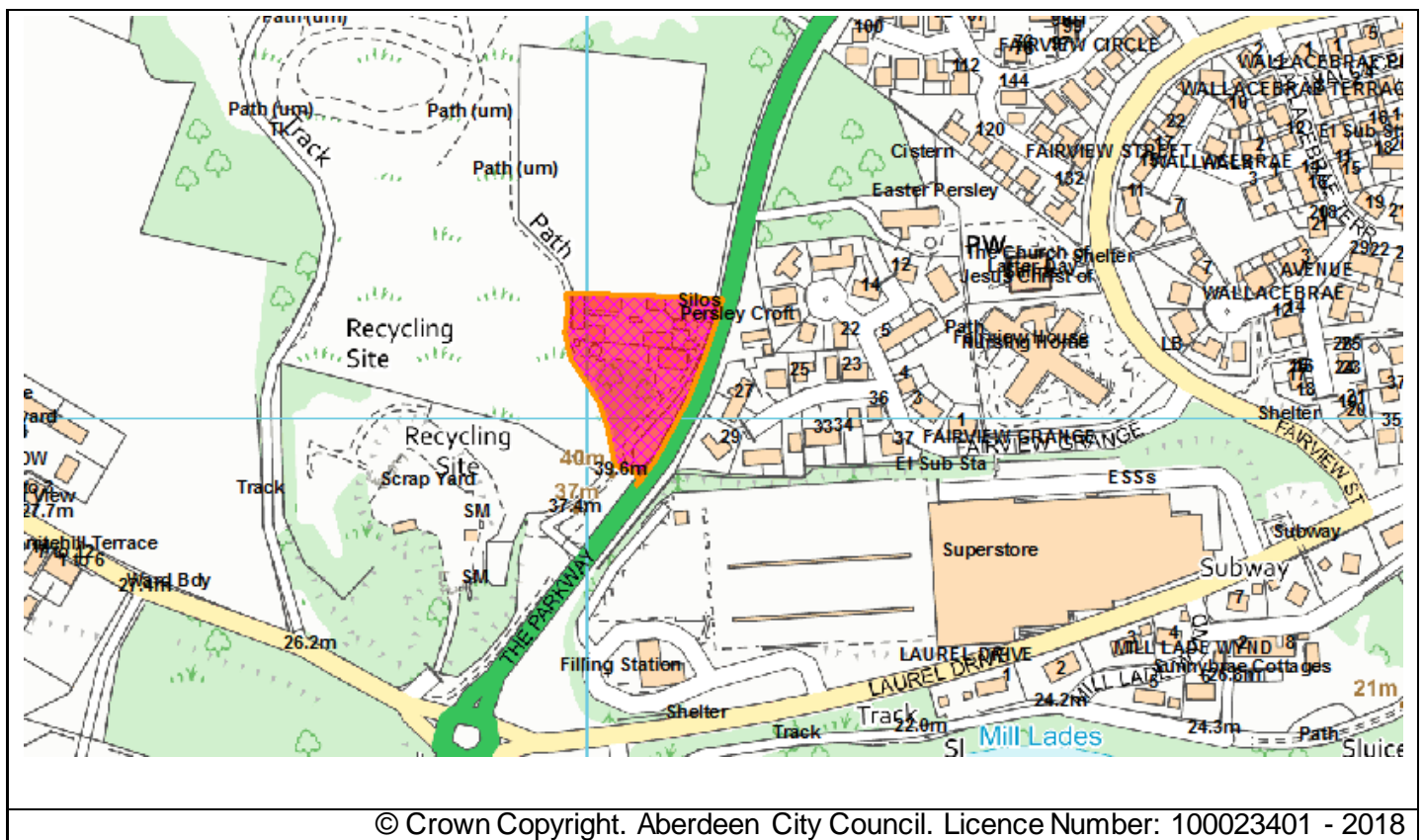
RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- a) note the key issues identified;
- b) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

Agenda Item 4

 <p>ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL</p>	<p>Pre-Application Forum</p>
	<p>Report by Development Management Manager</p>
	<p>Meeting Date: 25 May 2023</p>
<p>Site Address:</p>	<p>Land at Persley Croft, Aberdeen, AB22 8AN,</p>
<p>Description of Proposal:</p>	<p>Battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure</p>
<p>Notice Ref:</p>	<p>230447/PAN</p>
<p>Notice Type:</p>	<p>Proposal of Application Notice</p>
<p>Notice Date:</p>	<p>12 April 2023</p>
<p>Applicant:</p>	<p>RE Projects Development</p>
<p>Ward:</p>	<p>Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone</p>
<p>Community Council:</p>	<p>Danestone</p>
<p>Case Officer:</p>	<p>Matthew Easton</p>



RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- note the key issues identified;
- if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The site relates to a group of derelict agricultural buildings and associated land extending to around 0.7 hectares. It is located immediately west of the Parkway (A92) from where vehicular access to the site exists. The site slopes from north to south.

To the north is an agricultural field; to the west is an area of mixed woodland & improved grassland; to the south is a recycling/scrap yard; and to the east across the Parkway are residential properties and the Tesco supermarket forming part of the wider Danestone residential area.

Relevant Planning History

- The applicant submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion request (230453/ESC) in April 2023. The Planning Service determined that the proposal was not an EIA development and submission of an Environmental Report is therefore not required.
- The applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (230447/PAN) in April 2023, notifying the planning authority of their intention to submit a planning application for the proposed development and seeking confirmation of the public consultation required. The planning service confirmed that some further consultation would be required, in addition to that proposed by the applicant.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

The applicant intends to seek planning permission for the erection of a renewable battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure including access and landscaping.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

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

Development Plan

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term spatial strategy for Scotland and contains a comprehensive set of national planning policies that form part of the statutory development plan. The relevant provisions of NPF4 that require consideration in terms of this application are –

- Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises)
- Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Policy 3 (Biodiversity)

- Policy 4 (Natural Places)
- Policy 5 (Soils)
- Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees)
- Policy 7 (Historic Assets and Places)
- Policy 9 (Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings)
- Policy 11 (Energy)
- Policy 12 (Zero Waste)
- Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)
- Policy 23 (Health and Safety)

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)

Section 16 (1)(a)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that, where there is a current local development plan, a proposed local development plan must be submitted to Scottish Ministers within five years after the date on which the current plan was approved. The ALDP is beyond this five-year period.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- Policy D2 (Landscape)
- Policy D4 (Historic Environment)
- Policy NE1 (Green Space Network)
- Policy NE2 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)
- Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development)
- Policy T5 (Noise)

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

The Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 (PALDP) was received by the Council on 20 September 2022. All the recommendations within the Report have been accepted and the modifications made to the PALDP were agreed by Full Council on 14 December 2022. The PALDP constitutes the Council's settled view as to the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the PALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy D4 Landscape
- Policy D5 (Landscape Design)
- Policy D6 (Historic Environment)
- Policy NE1 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)

- Policy R7 (Renewable and Low Energy Developments)
- Policy WB3 (Noise)

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

Policy 11 (Energy) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) expresses support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including battery energy storage systems. The Policy goes on to say that –

- *Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.*
- *In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:*
 - *impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact and noise;*
 - *significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;*
 - *public access;*
 - *impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;*
 - *effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;*
 - *biodiversity including impacts on birds;*
 - *impacts on trees, woods and forests;*
 - *proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;*
 - *the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and*
 - *cumulative impacts.*

In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Most of the matters above are covered by other LDP and NPF4 policies in more detail, some of which are highlighted later the report.

Policy R8 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments) of the ALDP 2017 advises that “the development of renewable and low carbon energy schemes where the technology can operate efficiently and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed

will be supported in principle, if proposals: do not cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; do not negatively impact on air quality; do not negatively impact on tourism and do not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.”

Policy R7 (Renewable and Low Energy Developments) of the Proposed LDP states that “renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be encouraged and supported in principle, where the technology can operate efficiently, and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed.” Of the relevant criteria that the policy contains, it goes on to explain that proposals are required “to not –

- *cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; or*
- *have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.”*

Policy 1 (Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires decision makers to give significant weight to the global climate and nature crises when considering development proposals. Battery storage would support Scotland’s transition to renewable energy, a major part of addressing climate change.

Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed and sited to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and to adapt to current and future risks from climate change and Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4 requires proposals for local development “to include appropriate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. Measures should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development.”

Policy 4 (Natural Places) advises “Development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported.” Policy 5 (Soils) advises that: “Development proposals will only be supported if they are designed and constructed: In accordance with the mitigation hierarchy by first avoiding and then minimising the amount of disturbance to soils on undeveloped land; and in a manner that protects soil from damage including from compaction and erosion, and that minimises soil sealing.”

Land Use Zoning

The site is zoned as Green Belt where NPF Policy 8 (Green Belts) applies and has the aim of encouraging, promoting and facilitating compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably. A small part of the site is currently zoned as Green Space Network, however this is not considered material to the proposals. More specifically, development proposals will only be supported if they fall into one or more of the categories listed and particular requirements are met. In the case of the proposal, it could fall into the category of ‘minerals operations and renewable energy developments’.

The second element of Policy 8 requires the following to be demonstrated –

- why a green belt location is essential and why it cannot be located on an alternative site outwith the green belt;
- the purpose of the green belt at that location is not undermined;
- the proposal is compatible with the surrounding established countryside and landscape character;

- the proposal has been designed to ensure it is of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise visual impact on the green belt as far as possible; and
- there will be no significant long-term impacts on the environmental quality of the green belt.

Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of the Proposed ALDP contains similar criteria as Policy 8 of NPF4, stating that *“development in areas defined as Green Belt on the Proposals Map will not be supported. Exceptions to this general presumption will only be supported where the proposal... is directly associated with essential infrastructure such as telecommunications, electricity grid connections, transport proposals identified in the Plan or roads planned through masterplanning of sites, if they cannot be accommodated anywhere other than the Green Belt”*.

Therefore, the applicant would be required to demonstrate how the site selection process was undertaken and why a green belt site is required. Given the brownfield nature of most of the site, the desirability of removing the derelict buildings and any improvement in the landscape character of the area that would deliver, should also be considered, subject to assessment of the visual impact of the proposal itself.

Layout, Siting and Design

Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed to improve the quality of an area whether in urban or rural locations and regardless of scale. Development proposals that are poorly designed, detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area or inconsistent with the six qualities of successful places, will not be supported.

The site is fairly prominent from the adjacent A92 Parkway, especially when travelling southbound towards the site, although from this view it does benefit from sitting lower than the field immediately to the north. When immediately adjacent to the site or when travelling northbound on the Parkway, it is fully exposed with small areas of scrub providing a small degree of screening in parts. In the wider context, the site is relatively well contained within the landscape, due to the topography and areas of woodland to the north (beyond the field), south and west.

The design details of equipment & buildings and screening of the site will be important considerations in ensuring any visual impact is minimised.

It is also relevant that the existing derelict site adversely affects the character and amenity of the area, so through suitable design and landscaping, the introduction of the proposed use has the potential to actually enhance the visual appearance and character of the area. In this regard, Policy 9 (Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings) of NPF4 is relevant, which aims to encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, and to help reduce the need for greenfield development.

Policy D4 (Landscape) outlines that new developments will have a strong landscape framework that improves and enhances the setting and visual impact of the development, unifies urban form, provides shelter, creates local identity, and promotes biodiversity. To secure high quality development, new development should include a landscape strategy and management plan incorporating hard and soft landscaping design specifications. The level of detail required will be appropriate to the scale of development.

Noise

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 indicates that *“Development proposals that are likely to raise unacceptable noise issues will not be supported. The agent of change principle applies to noise sensitive development. A Noise Impact Assessment may be required where the nature of the proposal or its location suggests that significant effects are likely.”*

Policy WB3 (Noise) of the Proposed LDP requires that there will be a presumption against noise generating developments, being located close to noise sensitive developments, such as existing or proposed housing, without suitable mitigation measures in place to reduce the impact of noise to an acceptable level.

There is the potential for noise to be generated at the site from the proposed equipment. Therefore, the planning application would require to be supported by a site-specific noise impact assessment to consider the potential noise levels and any mitigation measures required. Any measures which are required, such as acoustic fencing or bunding, would need to be carefully considered for the impact they themselves may have, for example visually or upon trees.

Health and Safety

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 aims to protect people and places from environmental harm and mitigate risks arising from safety hazards. The Planning Service is aware of concern surrounding battery storage and their associated fire risk, as well as recent incidents with such facilities in the UK and abroad. Therefore, as part of any planning application the applicant has been asked to submit details of the measures which would be employed to mitigate such a risk.

Flooding and Drainage

Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4 and Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment) of the Proposed LDP relate surface water drainage and in summary require all new developments to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to manage surface water; presume no surface water connection to the combined sewer; and to minimise the area of impermeable surface.

Any application would therefore need to include a drainage impact assessment which explains how surface water drainage would be addressed, with details of any drainage features provided.

The site is not identified as being at any risk from flooding on the SEPA Flood Maps. However, the adjacent field to the north does have a noticeable slope towards the site so there is the potential for surface water from the field to be directed into the site. The applicant has been asked to explore this as part of the drainage proposals to ensure that the site is not adversely affected during heavy rain.

Other matters

The Council's archaeology advisor has considered the proposal and does not envisage any complicated archaeological mitigation requirements being required, in this instance. The buildings to be demolished are 20th century in date and therefore it is requested that a photographic survey (exterior elevations only) be taken of all structures prior to their demolition in order to ensure there is a record of them for the future.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The applicant has sent the proposal of application notice to Danestone Community Council, who have also been invited to the public event and offered a separate meeting with the project team should they wish.

The applicant proposes to hold two public consultations at Danestone Congregational Church on Fairview Street on Thursday 11th and Thursday 25th May between 3pm and 7pm. Newspaper notices will be published at least seven days before the events and leaflets will be distributed in the local community.

The planning service also required that –

- Councillors in the Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone ward and the adjacent Bridge of Don ward are sent the proposal of application notice and invited to the public events.
- MSPs for the Aberdeen Donside constituency and the MP for the Gordon constituency are notified on the proposal of application notice and invited to the public event.
- the list of streets and properties to be notified by leaflets to be agreed with the planning service prior to the leaflets being distributed.

The results of the pre-application consultation will be included in the Pre-Application Consultation Report, which will form part of the planning application submission.

NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT ANY FUTURE APPLICATION

As part of any application, the applicant has been advised that the following information would need to accompany the formal submission –

- Arboricultural Survey and Assessment
- Design and Access Statement (statutory requirement)
- Drainage Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Phase 1 Ecological Survey
- Planning Statement
- Pre-Application Consultation Report (statutory requirement)

The applicant has also indicated they are likely to submit –

- Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Earthworks Strategy
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Outline Battery Safety Management Plan
- Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment
- Transport and Access Statement

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- a) note the key issues identified;
- b) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and

- c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

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