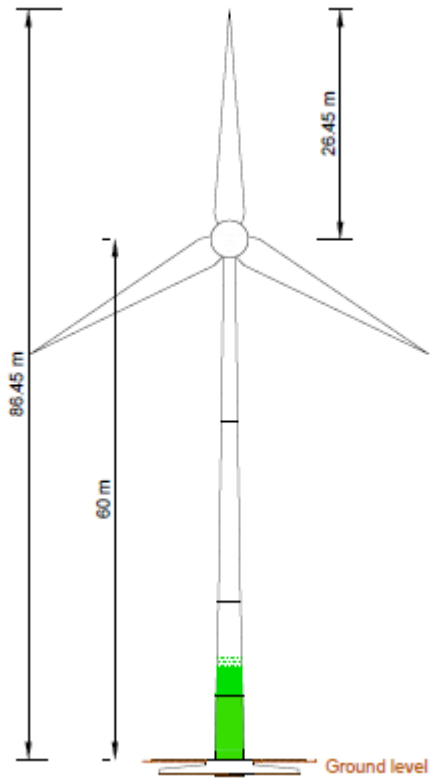


# Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022

## Onshore Wind Spatial Framework

### December 2019



## Introduction and background

The purpose of this document is to identify if there are any areas suitable for onshore wind farm developments in compliance with the criteria set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).

SPP (paragraph 161) states that planning authorities should set out in the development plan a spatial framework for onshore wind farms. The spatial framework should identify areas where wind farms will not be acceptable (Group 1), areas which require significant protection (Group 2) and areas with potential for wind farm development (Group 3). It also requires Local Authorities to set out in their Spatial Framework the minimum scale of onshore wind development that the Spatial Framework applies to. Due to the urban nature of Aberdeen and the proximity of the cities administrative boundary to the urban core, it has been determined that large scale commercial turbines for which this spatial framework will apply will be defined as:-

- Developments of more than one turbine and over 25m in height.

This spatial framework makes an assessment of the local characteristics that must be taken into account in the siting of wind turbines. The purpose of this spatial framework is to identify areas that require safeguarding and areas where there is strategic capacity. This framework is based on the criteria contained in SPP and does not impose additional zones of protection around areas designated for their landscape or natural heritage value. In all cases a proposed wind farm will still be subject to the standard planning application process and will be required to comply with development plan policies. To draw overall conclusions the framework is supported by a single map which consolidates information on capacity and constraints. To assist in reaching this point more detailed maps of the factors that make up each of the groupings has been included in this document.

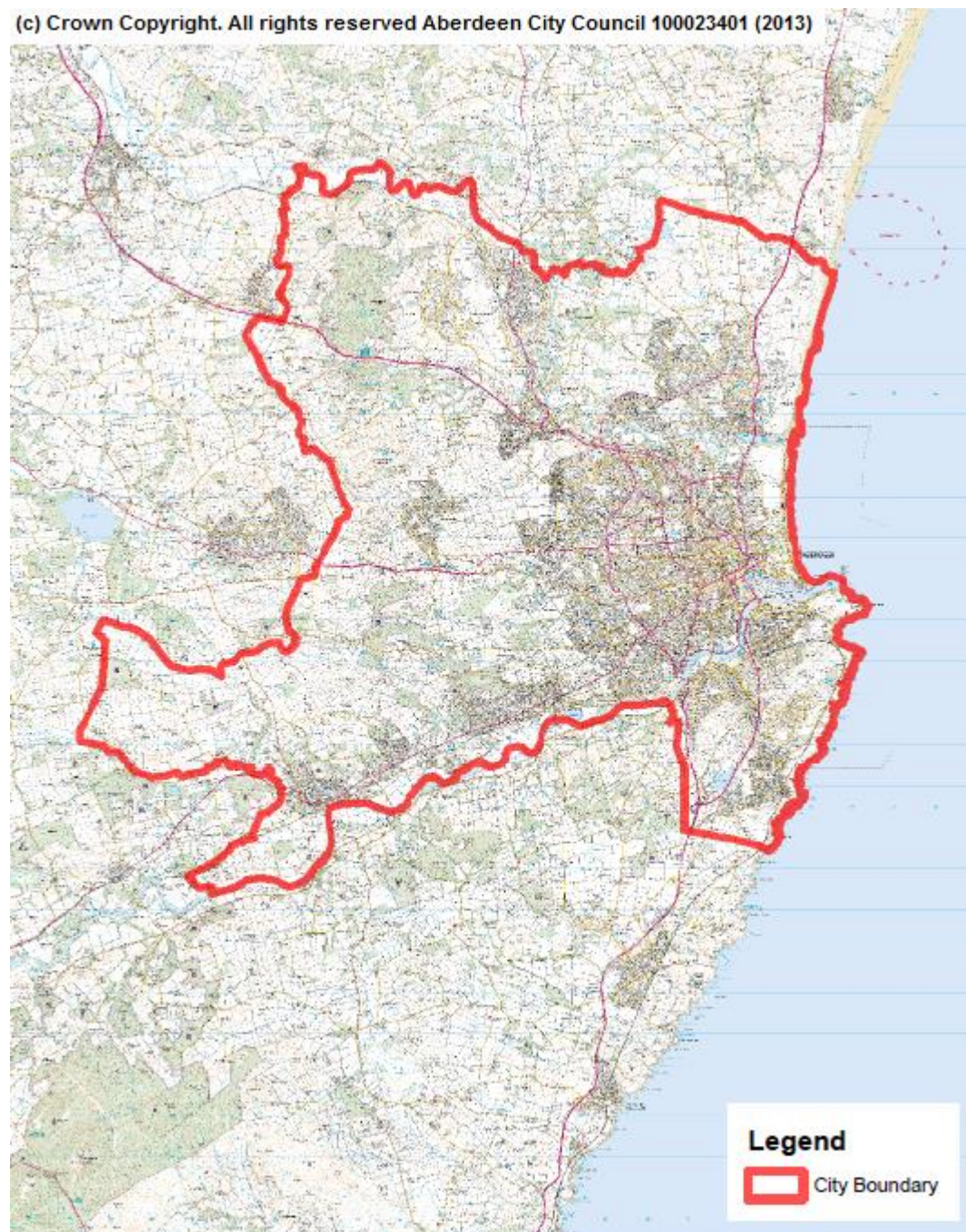
SPP identifies three area types, or Groups, which determine what, if any, wind farm development can take place. Table 1 below is taken from SPP and identifies the constraints for each group.

<b>SPP Table 1: Spatial Frameworks</b>		
<b>Group 1: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable:</b> National Parks and National Scenic Areas.		
<b>Group 2: Areas of significant protection:</b> Recognising the need for significant protection, in these areas wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.		
<b>National and international designations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Heritage Sites;</li> <li>• Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites;</li> <li>• Sites of Special Scientific Interest;</li> <li>• National Nature Reserves;</li> <li>• Sites identified in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes;</li> <li>• Sites identified in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.</li> </ul>	<b>Other nationally important mapped environmental interests:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of wild land as shown on the 2014 SNH map of wild land areas;</li> <li>• carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat.</li> </ul>	<b>Community separation for consideration of visual impact:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an area not exceeding 2km around cities, towns and villages identified on the local development plan with an identified settlement envelope or edge. The extent of the area will be determined by the planning authority based on landform and other features which restrict views out from the settlement.</li> </ul>
<b>Group 3: Areas with potential for wind farm development:</b> Beyond groups 1 and 2, wind farms are likely to be acceptable, subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.		

## 1. Group 1 - Areas that are not suitable for wind turbines of any scale

SPP identifies areas where wind farms will not be acceptable in Group 1, which protects National Parks and National Scenic Areas. In Aberdeen there are no areas with either of these designations therefore the whole of the City is an area that wind turbine development, with careful design could take place. The next section will examine whether it is possible to identify any areas that can be identified for wind turbine development.

Figure 1. Area for Consideration for Wind Turbines



## **2. Group 2 - Areas with significant protection**

SPP identifies environmental constraints in Group 2 that require significant protection. These areas are not suitable for the identification in the Local Development Plan as areas of search. Wind farms will only be appropriate in these areas where it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities for which the area is identified can be substantially overcome by siting, design or mitigation and this can only be determined with the detail available with a planning application.

### **Community separation**

SPP recommends a separation distance of 2km around communities. This is designed to form a buffer between wind farms and cities, towns and villages identified in the local development plan. This is to reduce visual impact but decisions on individual developments should take into account specific local circumstances and geography. In identifying areas of search a buffer of 2km has been used, but as suggested in SPP there may be individual circumstances that may suggest that a reduced distance is acceptable. This judgement will have to be made on a case by case basis to take into account the landscape, turbine height, number of turbines and cumulative impact. Therefore, these areas should not be identified as areas of search but assessed using a policy approach.

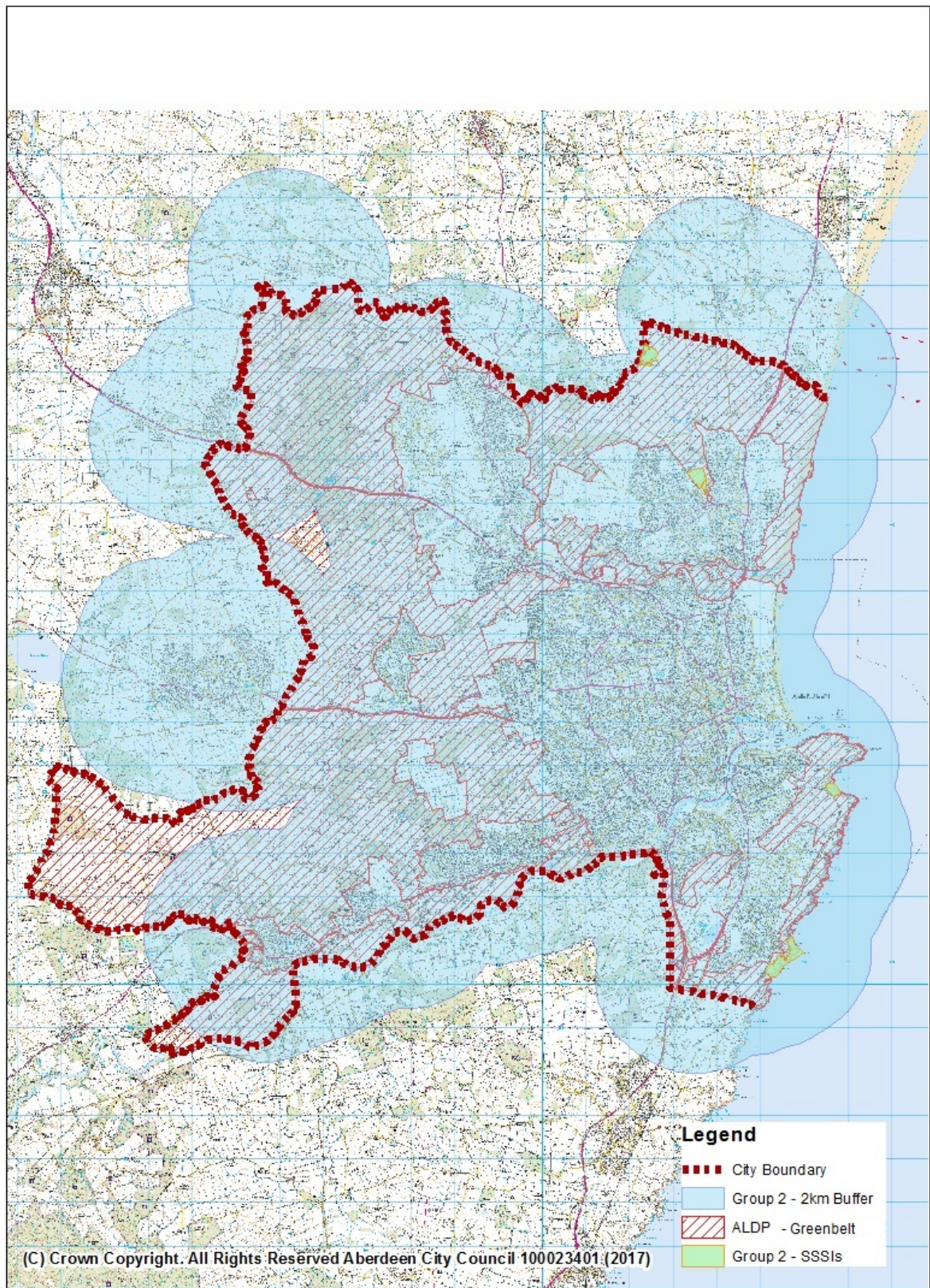
In identifying a buffer the existing residential areas of Aberdeen have been supplemented by the allocations for new development in the Local Development Plan and settlements identified in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan that are within 2km of the boundary between the two authorities. Figure 2 identifies the areas that would be covered by a 2km buffer and indicates that there is only a small area between Peterculter and Garlogie that would be 2km from any identified settlement.

In addition to the recommended 2km separation distance the entire surrounding area of Aberdeen is identified as Green Belt. The Aberdeen Green Belt is important to maintain the integrity of the landscape setting of Aberdeen. While the green belt is not a Group 2 constraint and has not been included as such, it is important for clarity to point out the relevance of the green belt policy with Figure 2 showing this graphically.

In compliance with Paragraph 52 of SPP which states "*Local development plans should describe the types and scales of development which would be appropriate within a green belt*", wind turbine development has not been identified as a suitable use in green belt policy in the local development plan. As such there is a presumption against such developments in the Aberdeen green belt except where a small turbine can be appropriately sited and designed.



Figure 2. 2km Buffer from Urban Areas with green belt zoning





**National and international designations and other nationally important mapped environmental interests:**

SPP identifies the environmental interests and planning policy constraints. Where present in Aberdeen, these are identified in Figures 3, 4 and 5.

Map 3 – Landscape and Environmental Constraints

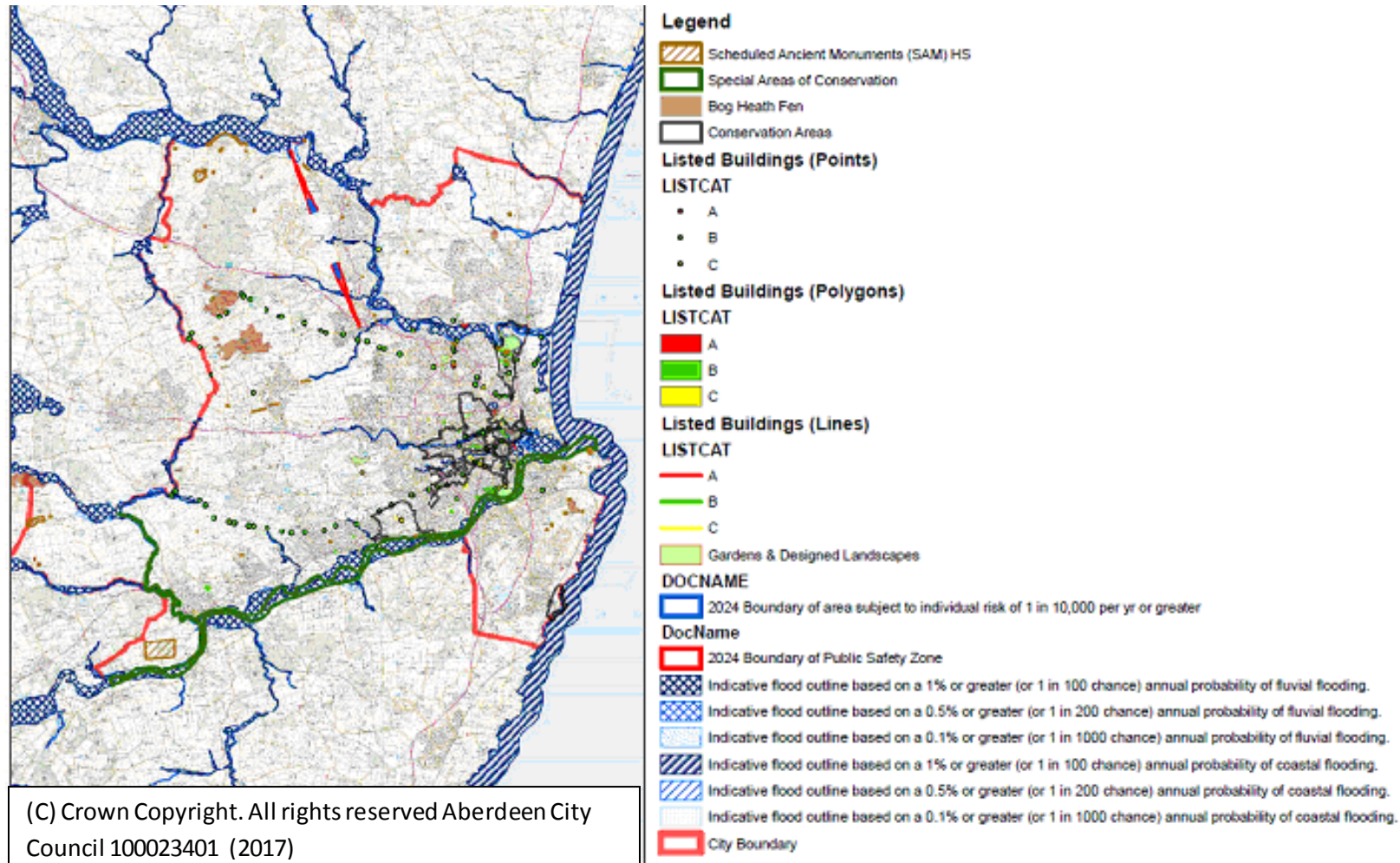


Figure 4 – Landscape and Environmental Constraints

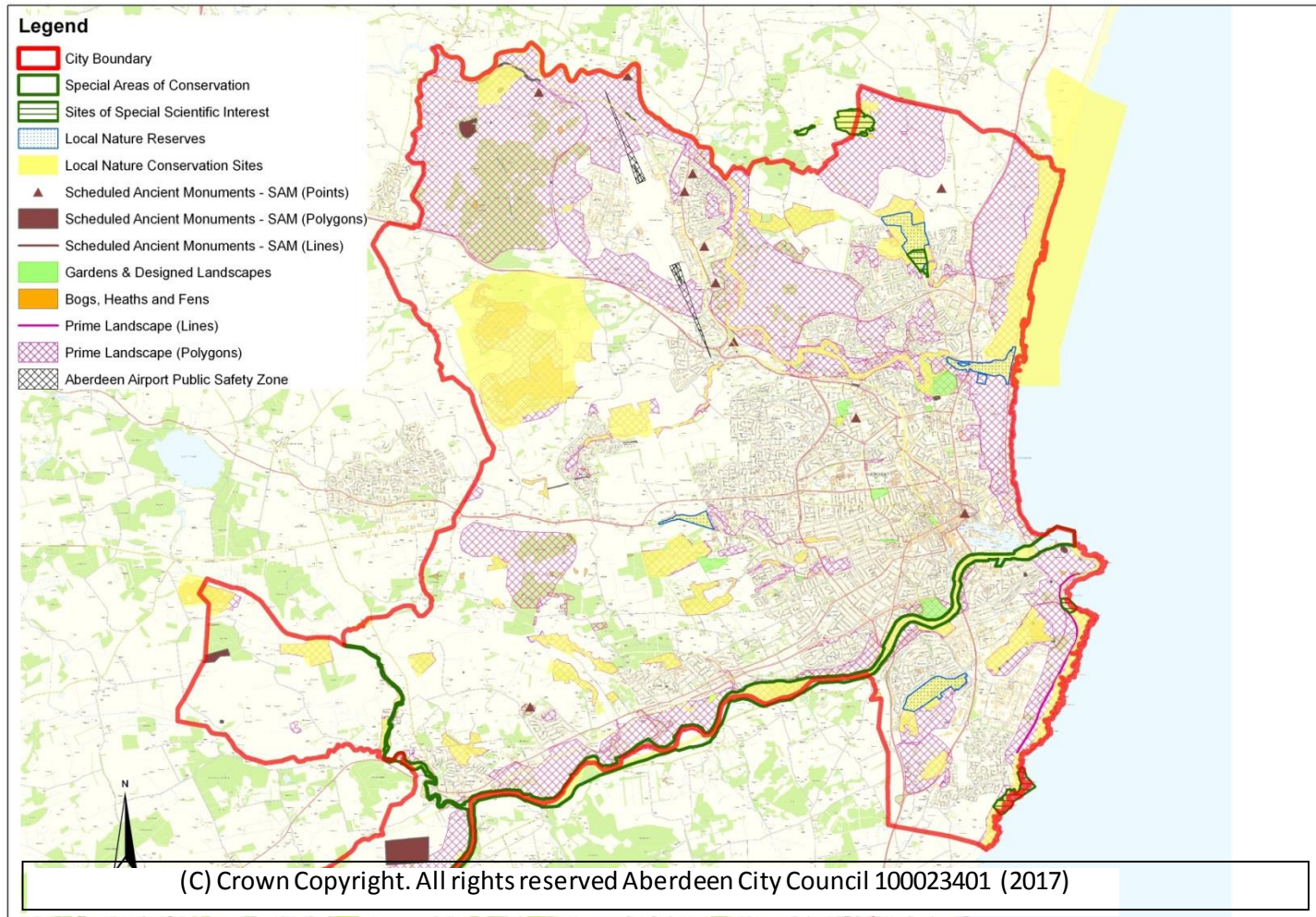
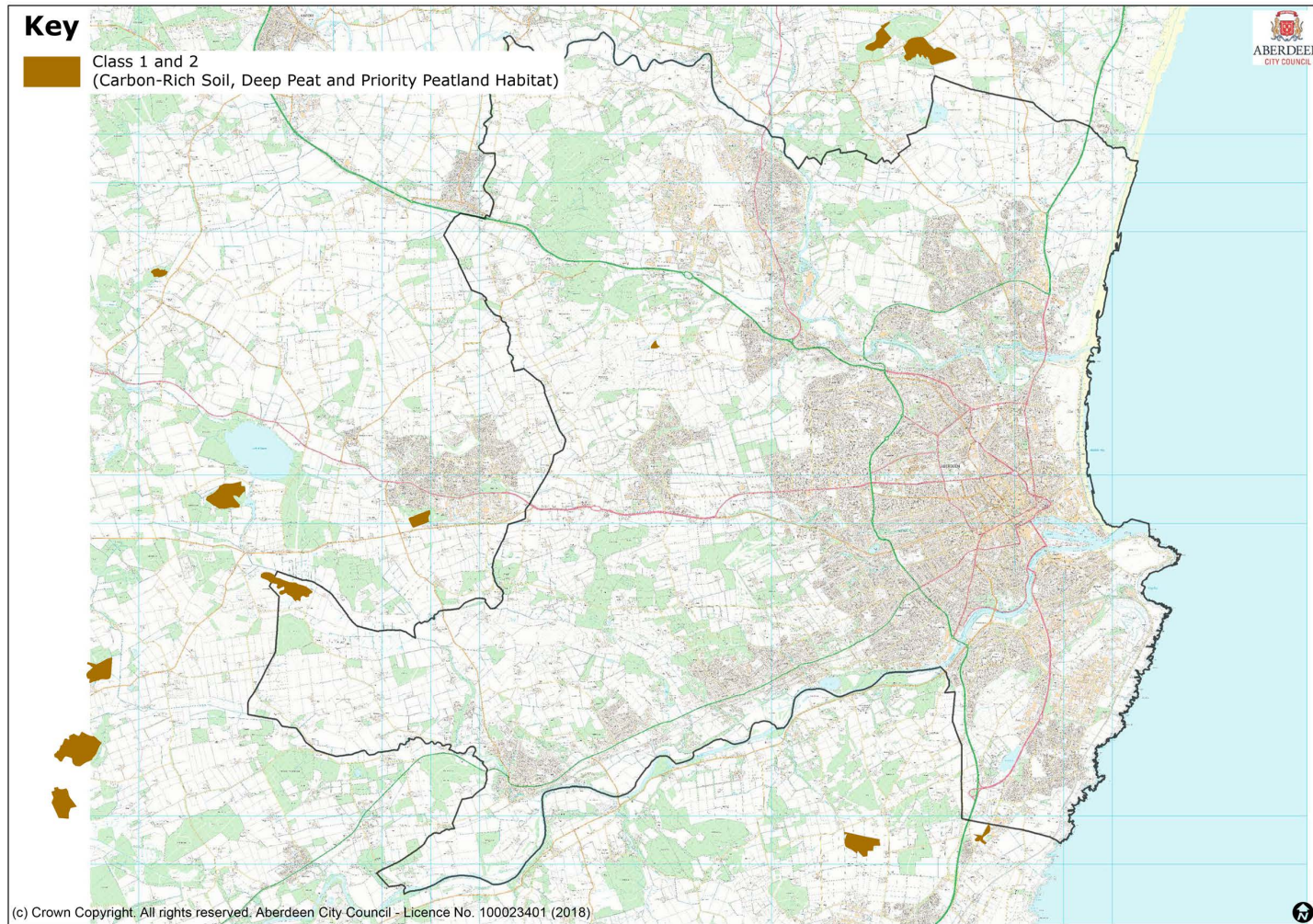




Figure 5: Environmental Interests



Acknowledgment: The Carbon and Peatland 2016 map is based on soil and land cover map data produced by the James Hutton Institute. Used with the permission of The James Hutton Institute. All rights reserved. Contains SNH information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.



### 3. Conclusion

Using the guidance contained in SPP there are no Group 1 constraints in Aberdeen and there should be no areas identified where development will not be permitted. However, the limited land within the authority boundary for Aberdeen does not cater particularly well for medium to large wind farm developments. Figure 5 below shows, using the guidance in SPP there are only a few Group 3 areas with potential for wind farm development. These areas are, however, also covered by local development plan green belt policy. This sets out the councils policy on acceptable uses in the Aberdeen green belt and has not identified it as a suitable location for wind turbine development.

As such there is a presumption against such developments in the Aberdeen green belt except where a small turbine can be appropriately sited and designed.

Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Wind Turbine Developments has been prepared as a guide to the consideration of planning permissions for Wind Turbines. This guidance considers all of the factors within Group 2 of SPP, local factors and guidance from SNH.

Figure 5. Group 3 area and green belt constraint.

