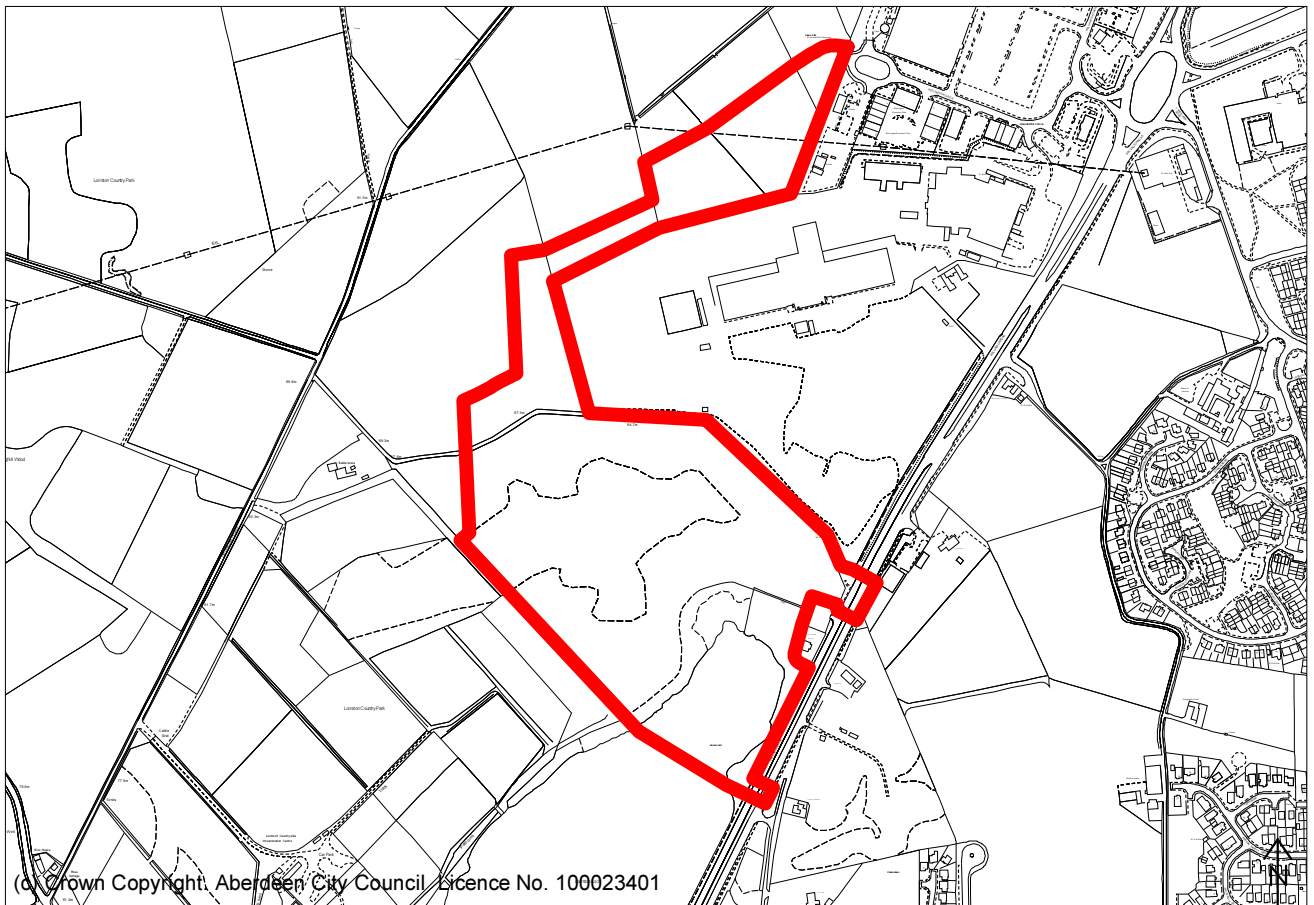


LAND AT, LOIRSTON LOCH,  
WELLINGTON ROAD, ABERDEEN

PROPOSAL FOR 21,000 CAPACITY  
SPORTS & LEISURE STADIUM,  
INCLUDING ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING,  
ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND  
LANDSCAPING

For: Aberdeen Football Club

Application Ref.	: P101299	Advert	: Dev. Plan Departure
Application Date	: 12/08/2010	Advertised on	: 18/08/2010
Officer	: Garfield Prentice	Hearing Date	: 14/01/2011
Ward: Kincorth/Loirston (N Cooney/K Dean/C McCaig)		Community Council	: Comments



## **INTRODUCTION**

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 plan by virtue of it being a major development located on an undeveloped site within the Green Belt wherein Policy 28 'Green Belt' of the Aberdeen Local Plan applies. The proposal was subject to an environmental impact assessment as a "Schedule 2 Development" by virtue of its scale and location, in terms of Schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (as amended), in that the proposal falls within Table 10 Infrastructure Projects, sub-section (b) Urban development projects, specifically sports stadiums and it exceeds the specified site area threshold. An Environmental Statement (ES) was submitted with the planning application.

Under Regulation 27 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 there is a requirement to hold a Pre-determination Hearing where the development is classed as a 'major development' in terms of the new Hierarchy of Developments and is considered to be significantly contrary to the development plan. The purpose of the hearing is to give all those who have made written representations objecting to or supporting the planning application the opportunity to present their views on the proposal in person directly to Elected Members. The applicant is also afforded the opportunity to present their case in support of the proposal.

Under new legislation introduced in August 2009 as part of the Scottish Government's modernisation of the planning system, an application subject to a pre-determination hearing requires to be determined by the Full Council. Accordingly, following the hearing the application will be assessed in terms of planning policy, the details of the proposal and the economic, environmental, amenity and traffic impacts. This will be reflected in a subsequent report which will be prepared for consideration by the Council in due course. No evaluation of the proposal or recommendation is made in this report.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The site is located on the west side of Wellington Road (A956) at the northern end of Loirston Loch and to the south of the roundabout junction with Wellington Circle, Langdykes Road and Souterhead Road. It is approximately 1.3 km from the Charleston junction with the A90 (Aberdeen to Stonehaven) trunk road. The site extends westwards and northwards, wrapping round the business premises of The Balmoral Group, to join with the western extremity of Wellington Circle. It has an area of approximately 16 hectares and sits at between 80 and 90 metres above sea level. The general topography of the main part of the site is of a very shallow bowl, dipping down by some 3 metres towards the centre. The northern part of the site rises initially quite steeply from the shallow bowl before levelling out towards Calder Park, the difference in levels from the lowest to the highest part being some 10 metres. The site includes part of Loirston Loch and a number of gently undulating fields of low intensity agricultural and informal recreational use. A line of trees delineate the south west boundary of the site, while the west and north west boundaries are not defined. A chainlink fence runs along most of

the east and north east boundaries, separating the site from the adjacent business premises. A short section of the east boundary adjoins Wellington Road.

Approximately 3 hectares of the application site (19% of the total site area) falls within the locally designated Loirston Loch District Wildlife Site (DWS), specifically the northern part of the loch and the ground immediately adjacent to it. The eastern part of the site is also identified as a Site of Interest to Natural Science (SINS). It covers approximately 7.5 hectares, or just over 45% of the application site. A right of way extends roughly east-west through the site from Wellington Road to Redmoss Road. The path follows a line close to the boundary with the industrial premises immediately to the north and then a field boundary taking it to Redmoss Road. The application site and surrounding area supports a number of informal recreational activities based around the loch, including walking, fishing and bird watching. The Aberdeen City Council Ranger Service currently operates from the nearby Lochinch Interpretation Centre, which is located some 400 metres to the south west.

The Cove residential area is located some 300 metres to the east of the site on the opposite side of Wellington Road. Approximately 1 km to the north east lies Altons industrial area, while to the north is the mixed use commercial area on Wellington Circle and the recreational area of Calder Park. The nearest business premises, which are located immediately to the north east of the site, contain extensive areas of external storage and a number of industrial buildings. To the west and north west are agricultural fields and the recreational area of Kincorth Hill, beyond which and some 750 metres at the nearest point, is the residential area of Kincorth. At the nearest point, the application site is 150 metres from Redmoss Road. To the south is Loirston Loch and to south west are agricultural fields and a number of small areas of woodland.

## **PROPOSAL**

Detailed planning permission is sought for the construction of a 21,000 seat sports and leisure stadium, associated car parking and access arrangements and the provision of landscaping. In summary, the proposal comprises the following –

- 21,000 spectator capacity all-seated football stadium, which would include changing rooms, training facilities, gymnasium, office facilities for Aberdeen FC, an Aberdeen FC shop, museum, classroom, café, 1,000 capacity home supporters bar and mixed use commercial space
- 1,400 car and coach parking facilities
- A new signalised junction at the site access to Wellington Road and an access to Wellington Circle
- Ground maintenance accommodation
- Landscaped grounds with footpaths

Due to the topography of the site, existing ground levels would be altered in order to form a level surface on which the stadium would be constructed. This would involve raising ground levels on part of the site by up to 3.5 metres. On some other parts of the site, in particular close to west boundary, ground levels would

be reduced by 2-3 metres in order to form the internal road and car parking areas.

## **The stadium**

The proposed 21,000 spectator all-seated stadium has been designed to meet the UEFA Category 3 requirements. The grading system is specified in UEFA's Stadium Infrastructure Regulations: Edition 2010 – there are four categories, 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest category (a minimum covered capacity of 30,000). The stadium category classification governs the level of sport that can be played. The proposed stadium would be suitable for holding International Football matches and Club and International Rugby matches. It could also host concerts. The applicant has indicated that it would be possible in the future to increase capacity of the stadium.

The stadium would be located approximately 160 metres from Wellington Road and 55 metres at the nearest point from the edge of Loirston Loch. The stadium would measure some 195 metres by 160 metres and attain a height of 24 metres. The pitch would be orientated east-west, which minimises low sun hampering the views from the main South stand. The stadium would have a footprint of approximately 26,000sqm. The stands would encircle the whole of the pitch, including the four corners, providing a fully enclosed arena and would be finished externally in a mix of materials. The stadium would generally be finished in grey smooth faced brick at the lower level, white cladding and polycarbonate cladding. Red cladding would also be used at three of the corners and on part of the south elevation. The south elevation would include substantial areas of glazing. The south west corner would comprise the main entrance to the stadium. It would be 5 storeys and finished predominantly in glass curtain walling. Polished granite panels would also be used. The club badge would be placed on the south east and north west corners. The west, north and east elevations would lean back at an angle of approximately 10 degrees from the vertical. The south elevation would be vertical, except for the top section which would be angled. A metal and polycarbonate clad cantilevered roof would cover all of the seating. The floodlights would be provided on the leading edge of roof on the South and North stands, designed to meet the UEFA standard of 1400 lux. The lights would focus down onto the pitch to avoid light spill. At night, there would be a red glow behind the polycarbonate cladding at the top of each elevation of the stadium.

The South stand would be the main stand, housing all of the club and hospitality facilities. It would include office and boardroom facilities for the football club, changing rooms, hospitality/function suites, 26 hospitality boxes offering accommodation for between 6 and 14 people and concourse areas. There would also be space for community uses and/or commercial uses (approximately 5,000sqm). The West, North and East stands would include concourse and toilet facilities. A 1,000 capacity supporters bar would be provided in the north west corner (It would be for home supporters only and managed as a 'club' for members only. It would operate before and after match and would also be available for function hire). Police and stewards' facilities would be placed within the north east corner. The south west corner, which would be the main entrance to the stadium, would contain the club shop, club museum, café, ticket office, gymnasium, club offices and a classroom. Single tiered seating would be provided in all four stands; 40 rows of seats in the West, North and East stands and 29 rows in the South stand. It is proposed that the hospitality boxes and suites could

be hired out for dinners, weddings, conferences and private meetings on non-match days. The unheated ground floor concourse would also be offered for hire or community use on non-match days. In addition to those uses, it is proposed that the stadium would be used to host rugby matches and to hold concerts (subject to obtaining the relevant licences).

The stadium has been designed as far as possible to facilitate access by disabled spectators. Space would be provided for 74 wheelchairs located at various points around the stadium. Many of these spaces would be at a high level while others would be at the side of the pitch. Dedicated parking spaces would also be provided as close as possible to the external pedestrian circulation area.

It is proposed to include a range of measures in the design of the stadium to reduce carbon emissions. This would be a mix of energy efficiency measures to reduce the demand for energy and the use of low and zero carbon generating technologies. It is indicated in the Carbon Reduction Measures Report submitted by the applicant that the measures could potentially include air or ground heat pumps, combined heat and power plant, solar thermal hot water and high efficiency lighting.

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

It is proposed to provide 1,400 car parking spaces within the site, mainly to the south and west of the stadium (256 and 636 parking spaces respectively) and in the northern part of the site next to the business premises on Wellington Circle (319 parking spaces). A further 43 parking spaces (including 23 disabled parking spaces) would be provided to the north of the stadium. The balance of the total parking provision would double up with the coach parking area, which would be located to the east of the stadium. That area could accommodate up to 81 coaches for away supporters. The car and coach parking is summarised below.

<b>Car Park</b>	<b>Non Old Firm Matches</b>	<b>Old Firm Matches</b>
Car Park 1	<b>256</b> car spaces	<b>256</b> car spaces
Car Park 2	<b>35</b> car spaces	<b>35</b> car spaces
Car Park 3	<b>427</b> car spaces	<b>427</b> car spaces
Car Park 4	<b>174</b> car spaces	<b>174</b> car spaces
Car Park 5	<b>319</b> car spaces	<b>319</b> car spaces
Car Park 6	<b>22</b> coach spaces	<b>22</b> coach spaces
Car Park 7	<b>20</b> car spaces & <b>8</b> lorries	<b>20</b> car spaces & <b>8</b> lorries
Car Park 8	<b>12</b> coach & <b>146</b> car spaces	<b>81</b> coach spaces
Car Park 9	<b>23</b> disabled spaces	<b>23</b> disabled spaces
Car Park 10	<b>2</b> police/ambulance spaces	<b>2</b> police/ambulance spaces
<b>Total car spaces</b>	<b>1,400 spaces</b>	<b>1,254 spaces</b>
<b>Total coaches</b>	<b>34 spaces</b>	<b>103 spaces</b>

Aberdeen FC has advised that the full coach parking capacity would be required only for 'Old Firm' football matches. Significantly fewer coaches for away supporters are required for non 'Old Firm' games and thus a substantial part of

that area could be used for car parking. Parking for 22 coaches for home supporters would be provided in the northern part of the site, close to the access from Wellington Circle. A drop-off and pick-up area for the 'football specials' would be provided within the site. A TV compound, which would have a capacity for 8 lorries, would be located to the north of the stadium. It is proposed that all car parking spaces would be either pre-booked or allocated spaces and would be managed by Aberdeen FC. It is stated in the Transport Assessment Addendum Report that 690 parking spaces would be allocated for corporate fans, club directors, staff, officials and players, press and photographers and visiting clubs. The balance, 710 spaces, would be available for fans.

It is proposed to construct two accesses into the site, one from Wellington Road and one from Wellington Circle. A new road junction would be formed on Wellington Road between the dwellinghouse known as Lochhead House and the premises of The Balmoral Group in order to provide access to the stadium and associated car and coach parking. The position and alignment of the road would be such that it could be extended, if required, to facilitate possible future development to the south of the application site. The junction would be controlled by traffic signals. Within the site a road would be constructed around the edge of the pedestrian concourse that would surround the stadium. The road would extend into the northern part of the site, linking to the existing roundabout at the western extremity of Wellington Circle. The road would provide access to all car and coach parking areas.

It is proposed to provide covered cycle parking for up to 60 cycles spread across three locations; two locations close to the main entrance to the stadium and one location on the north side of the stadium. A shared path for cyclists and pedestrians would be constructed within the site to provide safe access to the cycle parking facilities.

Pedestrian access would be via the two main access points on Wellington Road and Wellington Circle and from Redmoss Road along an existing right of way that runs east-west through the site. It would also be possible to access the development from the existing paths around Loirston Loch. A new footpath would be formed along most of the line of the right of way through the site. A minor deviation to the right of way would be required in order to construct the car park on the west side of the stadium. A new shared footway/cycleway would be constructed on the west side of Wellington Road from the site access northwards to the Souterhead Road roundabout.

The cornerstone of the transport strategy proposed by Aberdeen FC is large-scale bus provision between the stadium and the City Centre. First Aberdeen has agreed to take on the role of bus coordinator, organising the provision of buses, drivers and on-site management. The bus strategy includes the provision of up to 80 coaches on matchdays (up to 120 coaches for special events, such as 'Old Firm' and European games) and 5 pick-up/drop-off locations within the City. The suggested locations are College Street, Shiprow, Rose Street, Bridge of Don Park & Ride site and Kingswells Park & Ride site, with services provided from 1.30 pm onwards. The estimated journey time from College Street, for example, is estimated at 15 minutes. Passengers would be dropped-off and picked-up within the site, close to the stadium.

In order to protect the amenity of the surrounding residential areas, in terms of vehicle parking and to minimise the impacts of unrestricted car access within the area, it is proposed to implement a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) around the stadium. Aberdeen FC has suggested that the scheme would be in the form of parking permits issued to residents within the zone and has agreed to fund the implementation of the CPZ. The extent of the CPZ would be based on a 30-minute walk time from the stadium. It would include the majority of the Cove and Altens residential areas. It would also cover Nigg and the southern part of Kincorth. Some of the streets within Altens Industrial Estate and the whole of Redmoss Road would also fall within the zone.

### **Ground maintenance accommodation**

It is proposed to construct ground maintenance accommodation at the northern extremity of the site, adjacent to the access from Wellington Circle. The facility would be a L-shaped single storey building with a concrete service yard and 5 parking spaces. The building would be 21.5 metres and 37 metres respectively on the short and long axes and would attain a height of 4.5 metres. It would be finished mostly in a mix of profiled metal cladding and painted blockwork on the walls and aluminium sheeting on the mono-pitched roof. The building would include a store, a covered machine storage area and an accommodation area (office, store, lockers and kitchen).

### **Landscaping**

The application is supported by a Landscape Design Statement, drawings showing areas of soft and hard landscaping and an indicative planting list. The largest area of soft landscaping would be at the main entrance from Wellington Road and in the area around Loirston Loch that falls within the application site. The landscaped area around that part of the loch would be between 40 and 100 metres wide. The proposals would retain as much of the existing vegetation as possible, with at least a 30 metres protected zone around the loch ensuring minimal intervention and disturbance. New landform/mounding up to 3.5 metres high and planting would be included to provide screening to the car park areas from Wellington Road across the loch. The treatment of the site boundaries would, in the main, be a hedge comprising native species such as beech, hawthorn and blackthorn, with native trees in informal groups. Post and wire fencing would delineate most of the west and north west boundaries of the site. The landscaping would vary in width from approximately 6 to 20 metres. Avenues of trees would be located to denote the key pedestrian routes and to separate the car parking areas. The landscape proposals would also incorporate a Memorial Garden, the centre-piece being the relocated Merkland Road entrance gates, supported by a garden with ornamental lawn, shrub planting and feature trees. It is proposed to provide a number of seats at the Memorial Garden, the plaza next to the main entrance into the stadium and around the northern part of Loirston Loch.

In total, it is proposed to plant 432 trees (including 58 semi-mature trees) within the site. Over 2,000 linear metres of hedging would also be planted, mostly along the site boundaries. Some 12,000sqm of shrubs and ground cover planting would be provided at various places on the site. Almost 10,000sqm of grass would also be sown.

The hard landscaping (roads, car parking and circulation area around the stadium) would comprise of asphalt or tarmac on the roads, permeable concrete pavements on the car parking areas and 'Tegula' blocks (a manmade concrete paving block) on the pedestrian area around the stadium. The entrance plaza would be finished in similar material, but of a different colour. A proportion of the plaza would initially be landscaped. If further development takes place in the areas to the south and south west of the site following completion of the stadium, the plaza would then be extended in order to permit integration with that development.

## **Environmental Statement (ES)**

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: Land Use, Access & Recreation, Landscape Character & Visual Amenity, Cultural Heritage & Archeology, Ecology & Nature Conservation, Water Quality & Drainage, Geology, Hydrogeology & Contamination, Air Quality and Noise & Vibration. The ES also contains a description of the planning policy context and a brief account and assessment of alternative sites considered by the applicant, namely King's Links, Calder Park and Bridge of Don. The ES also includes a description of the proposed mitigation measures.

The ES is supplemented by an Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which sets out 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.

## **Supporting documents**

In addition to the ES and EMP, the application is supported by the following documents: Pre-Application Consultation Report, Transport Assessment and Addendum (TA), Design and Access Statement, Landscape Design Statement (including indicative plant list and maintenance schedule), Planning Statement and Addendum and Carbon Reductions Measures Report.

### **Pre-Application Consultation Report**

The application was the subject of pre-application consultation between the applicant and the local community as required for applications falling within the category of major developments in the hierarchy of applications. This consultation involved meetings with Nigg and Cove & Altens Community Council, public exhibitions, "drop-in" sessions at the Thistle Altens and Pitoddrie Stadium, and displays at the central and Cove libraries as well as the Mall Trinity shopping centre.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Nigg Community Council**

- The Community Council objects to the application.



- The Community Council is dissatisfied with the manner in which the application has been registered by the Council. It was registered prior to the submission of several key documents which form part of the application. Several of those documents have only recently been available for public inspection on the Council's website.
- As a result of registering an incomplete application, the proper consultative process has been compromised and curtailed. It is suggested the Council reconsiders its decision to register the application, resolve that it was not properly registered and only consider the re-registration of the application when it has been submitted in a complete fashion so as to enable proper consultation within an appropriate time scale. If the Council does not adopt this course of action, an application for judicial review will be advanced on the basis of procedural deficiencies in the handling of the consultation.
- The pre-application consultation exercise is inadequate in a number of material respects. In particular, the "Feedback" form was drafted in such a way that it did not properly facilitate expressions of the opinion as to whether the proposed development is appropriate in this specific location. The opportunity for individuals to submit any view, other than to the specific questions, was limited to the generality of "any further comments". *(Note: the feedback form was produced by the applicant's agent and was used during the pre-application consultation process to gain the views of those who attended the public exhibitions.)*
- It is abundantly clear that there is no significant support for this proposal in this location. A very significant proportion of feedback form responses were opposed to the development (29.1%) and a significant proportion of those who objected did so on the basis of location. A further 32.6% of feedback forms were undecided. The consultation report wholly fails to justify and address the issue of location, despite acknowledging that there were many objections based upon location. In this material respect, the consultation exercise was inadequate.
- Consultation with the community councils consisted of an abbreviated and condensed exercise, without any real engagement in the actual issues. The inadequacies of the consultation should not be endorsed by the grant of planning permission.
- The proposed development is contrary to the adopted local plan in fundamental and widespread respects.
- The site is designated as green belt, the significance of which cannot be understated. The Reporter at the local plan inquiry made clear the importance of preserving this "effective wedge of green belt".
- The adopted local plan identifies the King's Links site as the only location for a community arena. Common Good issues are not a real obstacle.
- Whilst it is accepted that the structure plan identifies the Loirston site as a "potential community stadium" location, such development would conflict with other policies in the plan, for example sustainable development and the quality of the environment. The structure plan also identifies the King's Links site for a community stadium. It is this site that is more in keeping with development plan policy.
- There are no very special circumstances which have been identified that would support the proposed development at Loirston. Proper analysis of the SIAS Transport Feasibility Study reveals that King's Links is a better location for the stadium in transport terms. The SIAS report makes clear the Loirston site is remote, it has a significantly lower catchment, it will

place additional stress on the already congested and polluted Wellington Road, it depends on the construction of the AWPR and it will require significantly greater public transport investment.

- Analysis of the environmental appraisal (March 2009) demonstrates that the Loirston site is less appropriate than King's Links. Loirston involves the permanent loss of rural green belt land. Loirston is more sensitive in terms of landscape and visual impact, ecology and nature conservation, cultural heritage and archaeology, water quality, drainage, flooding, noise and air quality.
- The consideration of alternative sites is "unforgivingly brief", wholly inadequate and misleading. There is no reference to King's Links being identified in the adopted local plan and no reference to Opportunity Site OP51. The omission of a robust consideration of alternative sites is so significant as to render the ES incompetent.
- The ES gives inadequate attention to bats that frequent the Loirston Loch area and the mitigation measures are inadequate to address the harm that will occur.
- If an edge of city site is considered appropriate, why has consideration not been given to more appropriate locations in Aberdeenshire?
- The ES contains very little detail in relation to cumulative impacts.
- The ES makes clear that the landscape impact will be in the 'Moderate to Major Adverse' category and thus would be harmful in terms of landscape impact. The visual impact will be equally bleak.
- There has been no noise analysis with regard to the impact on existing farming activities in proximity to the stadium, including Parkhead Farm.
- The TA is deficient in a number of significant respects. It is posited on the basis that the AWPR will be built. It is advanced on the basis there will need to be an unrealistic modal change – 26% of supporters arriving by car compared to 72% who currently travel to Pittodrie by car. Comparative data for similar stadia should be examined. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence from around the UK of private companies letting out their car parks to car-borne sports fans (for example, cricket matches at Edgbaston, Birmingham). The Council will have little control over such adhoc private parking. The TA does not consider this issue. The model used to determine the projected traffic is inadequate, in particular it takes no account of the effect of committed future developments in the vicinity. The impact on the Bridge of Dee has been ignored, being described as "sufficiently remote" from the proposed development. This is fatuous and is at odds with the applicant's own data on the place of residence of fans, a large proportion of which live to the north of the City. It is wholly incredible that there will be a 20 fold increase use of Park and Ride facilities. The TA is based on four sites which are not in existence, which may not be developed in time for the opening of the stadium. There are significant concerns about the use of Kincorth Hill by young fans attempting to get to the stadium from Kincorth, which will involve them trespassing on private property (Parkhead Farm). An extremely widespread area of parking restriction is proposed, which will be difficult to enforce and will cause widespread inconvenience. The walk times have been significantly overstated with the consequences that the likelihood that a number of fans driving to areas that will not be subject to parking restrictions, such as Torry, before walking the rest of the way has been significantly understated.

- The location of the stadium should be determined in the context of the ongoing emerging local plan process. It is at an important stage and is soon to be the subject of examination. Approval of the current application would be 'premature' to the finalisation of the local development plan and would prejudice the legitimate rights of landowners and local residents in the determination of the site selection of the new stadium. There are possible alternative sites.
- The application should be "called-in" by the Scottish Ministers in accordance with Circular 3/2009 – the Council retains an interest in the development site and the proposal amounts to a significant departure from the development plan.

**Cove and Altens Community Council** – *(Note: although the application site lies wholly within the area covered by Nigg Community Council, given the close proximity to Cove and Altens and potential impacts of the development on the wider area Cove and Altens Community Council was formally consulted on the application.)*

- The Community Council objects to the application.
- The period allowed for the Community Council and the public to submit their comments is wholly inadequate considering the amount of plans and documents submitted in support of the application, which has seriously disadvantaged lay people wishing to make comments.
- The site is part of the Loirston Recreational Area, a District Wildlife Site and designated as green belt.
- The current proposals are totally different from that considered in the feasibility study which identified the area at Loirston Loch as the preferred site. This means its findings are invalid and it needs to be repeated based on the current stadium design.
- Public consultation was very limited and wholly inadequate. It appeared rushed to accommodate the developers self-imposed deadlines and was more of a tick box exercise rather than a genuine attempt to gauge public opinion.
- There is a dearth of facilities for supporters at Cove unlike the City Centre.
- It is unacceptable that a valuable green belt site will be lost to accommodate a private company profitably selling off its existing facility. It is the only natural landscape location within this area and of immense benefit to wildlife and local residents. The loch is a haven for wildlife, a regular overnight roost for migratory geese and is frequented by local residents and anglers. There is no analysis of the invertebrates living on the site or on their habitat.
- The development will result in the loss of a valuable community recreational amenity area and educational facility.
- There is a strong feeling that the Council has already given the nod to this scheme. The Council as owner of the land and also the planning authority should not have been promoting this scheme.
- A public inquiry, or at the very least a Departure Hearing, should be held.
- The ES must be impartial and this can only be achieved if carried out by an independent body. The statement submitted was paid for by the developer and in consequence is heavily biased in his favour. No proof has been provided for statements such as "minor impact", "not significant" and "will be covered by the mitigation measures".

- The natural land drainage to the loch will be totally destroyed, which will have a detrimental impact on the ecological balance. The surface water runoff will have a detrimental impact on water quality. Pollution of the loch will arise from the major earthworks.
- Noise generated from the development will have a detrimental effect on both existing and proposed housing.
- It is wholly unacceptable for the community to be subjected to parking restrictions and its inherent charges.
- The parking for the stadium is totally inadequate.
- The TA is aspirational, but it is unlikely to be practicable in real life. There is no indication of parking availability at the City Centre hub. There is no guarantee that First Bus will be able to provide all the services outlined. There is no control over public transport as it is run by a private company. There does not appear to any origin and destination data for supporters other than season ticket holders.
- The change in travel patterns will increase congestion in the City Centre, at the River Dee crossings and on Wellington Road.
- It is environmentally undesirable to increase the distance that supporters will have to travel.
- Aberdeen FC will have little control over match times as these will be dictated by TV companies and football authorities.

It should be noted that the Community Councils were the only statutory consultees to object to the application. The comments received by the other consultees are detailed below;

**City Council Roads Service** – The Roads Officer will present his comments and observations at the Pre-determination Hearing.

**Transport Scotland (comments on the TA)** – Transport Scotland has been consulted on the potential impact on the A90 trunk road. Finalised comments and observations have yet to be provided.

#### **Transport Scotland (comments on the ES)**

- Noise modelling has been undertaken to assess the potential noise impacts at the operational phase of the development. It is accepted that there will be no significant adverse impacts due to changes in road traffic on the A90.
- With regard to air quality, it is noted that all receptors are predicted to experience a detrimental impact due to the development at the construction and operational stages. However, it is agreed that the magnitude of these impacts can be considered to be imperceptible and can be described as being of negligible significance overall. Therefore, it is anticipated that the proposed development will have a negligible effect on air quality associated with the trunk road network.

#### **Historic Scotland**

- Content with the findings of the ES which show that there are no scheduled monuments and their settings, Category A listed buildings and their settings or designed landscapes within the vicinity of the development which would be significantly affected by the proposals. Consequently, there is no objection to the proposal.

### **Scottish Government Rural and Environment Directorate**

- In relation to the Scottish Ministers' responsibilities for air quality and noise, on the basis of the information available there are no comments on the ES.

### **Sportscotland**

- There is no objection to the proposed development. It is noted that the redevelopment of the existing Pittodrie Stadium is necessary for the football club to further develop. It is also noted that there will be a loss of informal recreation ground in the area.
- The ES outlines mitigation measures and it is for the Council to be satisfied that these are appropriate mitigation for the development proposed.

### **Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)**

- It is unlikely that the proposal will have a significant effect on any qualifying interests of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation either directly or indirectly. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required. With regard to the potential impacts on bats and otters, provided the development is carried out strictly in accordance with the mitigation proposed in Chapter 8 of the ES, the proposal is unlikely to result in an offence under Regulations 39/43 of the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended).
- The development site drains into Lorston Loch which eventually discharges via an un-named burn into the River Dee, approximately 1.6km away. Provided the systems and guidelines set out in the ES are implemented and maintained, SNH is satisfied that runoff and sedimentation during construction and operation will not enter the River Dee and therefore there is unlikely to be any significant impacts to the qualifying interests of the site. Surveys carried out to inform the ES found evidence of otters and bats, which are both European Protected Species. Mitigation measures to prevent disturbance of otters include the removal and realignment of proposed footpaths to ensure a minimum 30 metre buffer zone from suitable resting habitat. The ES indicates that pre-construction surveys will be required.
- No bat roosts were found within the development site. However, the loch and surrounding scrub habitats provide good foraging habitat. Lighting during construction and operation of the development could potentially impact upon foraging behaviour and mitigation to reduce disturbance caused by artificial lighting will be required. The detailed design of the lighting system will need to take bats into account.
- The development of additional footpaths around Loirston Loch and the surrounding area is welcomed, provided that the paths are kept at least 30 metres from suitable otter resting areas to prevent disturbance.

### **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)**

- There is no objection to the application provided the recommended conditions are applied to any planning permission granted. The conditions recommended by SEPA relate to the submission of (i) detailed Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) calculations and the suitability of ground conditions prior to the commencement of the

- development, (ii) an appropriate gas risk assessment relating to the gas produced by the nearby closed landfill site, including any required mitigation and remediation measures deemed as necessary which shall be implemented prior to the commencement of the development and (iii) a full site specific Construction Environmental Management Document.
- Foul drainage from the site must be discharged to a public sewerage system. From a water quality perspective the proposed levels of SUDS treatment are acceptable to SEPA. Charleston Landfill is located within 250 metres of the proposal. The Waste Management Licence for the site has not yet been surrendered and the site is still producing gas. Therefore, the recommended condition noted above is required.
  - In accordance with Scottish Planning Policy and the Aberdeen Local Plan, space for collection, segregation, storage and possibly treatment of waste (eg bin stores, composting facilities and waste treatment facilities) should be allocated within the site layout.
  - Large scale development such as this has the potential to generate large volumes of traffic with associated impacts on air quality. Consideration should be given to such impacts and to any potential interactions with the adjacent Air Quality Management Areas.
  - The applicant's consideration of environmental management, pollution prevention and construction methods within the submitted information is welcomed.

#### **Scottish Water**

- A review of records indicates that there are Scottish Water wastewater and water assets in the area that may be affected by the proposed development. It is therefore essential that these assets are protected from the risk of contamination and damage. This also applies to watercourses that feed into reservoirs.
- Technical advice is also given on the precautions that should be taken to ensure that the aforementioned does not occur.

#### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

- HSE's principal concerns are the health and safety of people affected by work activities and has no comments to make on the ES.

#### **Grampian Police**

- From a policing point of view, the primary areas of interest are - (i) the safety of all those making their way to and from the proposed stadium, (ii) the safety of all persons within the proposed stadium, (iii) the management of traffic in the vicinity of the proposed stadium and in the surrounding area, and (iv) the minimising of disruption and inconvenience to those who live and work in the vicinity of the stadium.
- Grampian Police have concerns in respect of the safety of pedestrians making their way to and from the proposed site of the new stadium. In particular, the interaction of pedestrians, some of whom may be under the influence of alcohol, with traffic travelling on the A956 (Wellington Road) dual carriageway causes a significant concern. Whilst the transport plans of Aberdeen FC rely heavily on buses and cars dropping off spectators in proposed drop-off areas to the north and east of the stadium, it is anticipated that considerable numbers of fans will make their way to the stadium on foot. There is a need for footpaths on both sides of the A956

and those footpaths should be separated from the roadway by pedestrian barriers and suitable crossing points should be provided, controlled by traffic signals. These measures should reduce the likelihood of fans attempting to cross the road at other points. Experience shows that fans on their way to/from a football match may have scant regard for the dangers caused by moving vehicles. Even at 40 mph, a pedestrian struck by a vehicle travelling at that speed is likely to have fatal consequences. It is suggested that consideration be given to the imposition of a temporary speed limit for times immediately before and after an event at the stadium of 30 mph. This would considerably reduce the severity of any injury in the event of a collision with a pedestrian.

- A City Centre location must be identified from which shuttle buses would operate to the stadium. An early suggestion of the Northlink Ferries terminal would be a safety concern. Fans would have to cross Market Street (a dual carriageway) from the west side to the ferry terminal and would be required to wait for the buses in proximity of the deep water of the harbour. An alternative suggestion of South College Street, adjacent to the multi-storey car park appears at first examination to be more suitable.
- Grampian Police will require adequate facilities (for example, a control room and CCTV facilities) at the stadium to ensure an efficient and effective policing operation can take place.
- The management of traffic moving around the internal road is critical, as any obstruction to the roadway would cause very significant disruption to vehicular and pedestrian traffic flows. Such management must be the responsibility of Aberdeen FC and will require significant, effective stewarding. Any lapse in the smooth flow of traffic could cause large traffic accumulations on the A956 and could result in home and away fans coming into closer contact with another, with the potential for resulting disorder.
- Grampian Police consider the proposed away-support bus park with a capacity for 81 coaches should be adequate. The bus park is well located adjacent to the away-support section of the stadium and close to the proposed traffic light junction with the A956. The management of these traffic signals will be a significant consideration at a high category event and it is important that the signals are assigned an 'automatic' event setting with the 'SCOOT' traffic management system for days when an event is to take place. It is equally important that manual override control of the traffic signals can be established if this is required.
- The provision of 1,400 parking spaces appears to be a low parking allocation. Grampian Police believe the number of parking spaces on the site should be increased. The relative lack of parking facilities, in particular the absence of any parking facilities for away-support fans, is likely to have a knock-on effect for residents and businesses in the surrounding area. Unless this is managed effectively, it will cause disruption and disturbance to the local community, resulting in an increase on demand for policing services and adversely impacting on the reputation of Aberdeen FC. A temporary parking restriction, similar to that at Pittodrie Stadium, will be required and will need to include a wide area around the proposed stadium. Consideration must be given as to whether residents will be permitted to park their vehicles on-street subject to residents' permits, or whether all on-street parking should be prohibited. Local businesses may need to take steps to prevent their car parks being used by fans on the

day of an event and those who are most enterprising may seek to capitalise on a potential revenue-generating opportunity. The possibility that the facilities may cause disruption at times other than when major events are taking place cannot be discounted. For example, the proposed roadway and associated car parks may attract anti-social drivers.

- Grampian Police have concerns regarding the park and ride scheme. It is unknown what the uptake of such schemes might be and if fans decide not to make use of the facilities provided, traffic congestion and irresponsible parking is very likely to result. Considerable marketing of the park and ride facilities will be required.
- The effects of other future developments in the area are unknown. Grampian Police have already expressed some concerns to Aberdeen FC with regard to the possibility of Cove Rangers and Aberdeen football matches taking place on the same day, something which would be undesirable from a policing perspective.
- The proposed route of the AWPR is nearby and it seems likely that such close proximity would be a positive development in terms of assisting traffic flow.
- Whilst it is a matter for the Council's Licensing Committee, the opening times and management of the proposed 1,000 person capacity bar is a significant consideration. It is Grampian Police's understanding that the facility would only be available to home support fans.

#### **Grampian Fire and Rescue**

- There are no comments at this stage in the process.

#### **Aberdeenshire Council** *(comments agreed by the Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee)*

- It is appreciated that the maximum car parking standard has been applied to minimise reliance on the private car, in line with the objectives of Scottish Planning Policy. However, more detailed and accurate bus information, including enhancements should be provided. The ability of the public bus service to cater adequately for its primary customers on a Saturday afternoon (or around match times) could be prejudiced. Some of Aberdeenshire's settlements to the south of Aberdeen are within cycling distance of the site and therefore should be included in the TA. Aberdeenshire Council raises concerns on the basis that the TA fails to fully take account of areas to the south of the site, fails to take account of the increase in journey time from Aberdeen to Aberdeenshire of peak use of the development and fails to fully assess the impact on Aberdeenshire residents who use public transport during times of peak use of the development.
- The proposal is potentially supported through the structure plan and Aberdeenshire Council recognises the lasting benefit of having a major sporting venue in the area.
- The findings of the ES are acceptable to Aberdeenshire Council in that only short term impacts are anticipated. The site, layout and design of the proposal is unlikely to pose any impact to Aberdeenshire or its residents. There will likely be significant environmental, landscape and visual impacts in the immediate vicinity of the site, however, it is not anticipated that these shall be experienced in Aberdeenshire. The ES identifies a



- major adverse impact on the existing landscape character and visual amenity. Impacts on ecology and nature conservation will be localised.
- The proposal will result in the creation of jobs and due to the location of the site, this will likely provide job opportunities to residents in Aberdeenshire, which is something Aberdeenshire Council supports.
  - The previous application in 2002 at Kingswells included various community facilities. It is disappointing that these elements do not form part of this proposal as the benefits to the wider community would have been well received.

### **BAA Airports**

- The proposed development has been examined from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective and there is no objection to the proposal provided any planning permission granted is subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Bird Hazard Management Plan (BHMP) prior to the commencement of the development. The BHMP is necessary to manage the site in order to minimise its attractiveness to birds which could endanger the safe movement of aircraft and the operation of Aberdeen Airport.

### **City Council Environmental Health Service**

- Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed development is currently good and there would be no risk of exceedance of national air quality objectives at this location. Additionally, there are a minimal number of sensitive receptors close to the proposed development. Buses, coaches and cars associated with football matches and other events have the potential to impact on residential properties on the routes to and from the stadium. However, the impacts are classed to have negligible significance on air quality. Nevertheless, any deterioration in air quality should be discouraged. There will be an increase in traffic within the Wellington Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) during event days. Although it is predicted that air quality will be affected, the impact is not significant. However, there will still be an impact on areas of existing poor air quality. The assessment makes no reference to the removal of the existing Pittodrie Stadium and the positive impact on air quality in the City Centre AQMA and King Street. However, there is potential for some additional traffic travelling through the city centre. Depending on the use of the Pittodrie site, there is potential for an improvement in air quality in these areas.
- Having regard to the intermittent nature of the facility for its primary purpose and to the low density of the local population, it is considered that the potential for disturbance arising from noise and vibration is not significant.
- The ES mentions the potential impact on wildlife from artificial lighting associated with the proposal, but there is no assessment in relation to disturbance of local residents. The Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008 now allows impact from artificial lighting to be considered as a statutory nuisance. However, with careful design this matter should not be a significant concern.
- Preliminary ground investigations reveal no significant contamination on the site. However, it would be prudent for controls to be put in place to

- ensure monitoring and disposal of material showing significant contamination during the construction phase.
- In summary, there will be no significant impacts in relation to air quality, noise, lighting and contamination resulting from the proposed development. Any planning permission granted should be subject to conditions relating to mitigating the environmental impacts during construction, an assessment of noise from plant and machinery, an assessment of the impact of artificial lighting, a detailed site investigation and remediation strategy to deal with any contaminated material and controlling the hours of construction. If possible a condition/Section 75 Agreement should also be applied requiring the use of only Euro 3 emission buses and construction vehicles.

### **City Council Education, Culture and Sport (Archaeology)**

- A condition should be applied to any planning permission granted requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Council prior to development commencing.

### **Strategic Development Plan Authority**

- The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2009 and forms part of the development plan for Aberdeen City. Six aims of the structure plan are promoted; including the need to provide a strong framework for investment decisions, protect and improve our valued assets, help create sustainable mixed communities and make the most efficient use of the transport network.
- A new community stadium is one of the proposals set out in the structure plan. It is seen as a regionally important facility which will bring economic, social and cultural benefits. Two possible locations are shown on the key diagram, reflecting their ongoing consideration at the time the structure plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers. Proposals identified in the plan were selected on the basis of their importance in helping achieve the vision for the North-East and implementing the plan's strategy.
- The structure plan is action orientated and delivery driven, it aims to work with developers to ensure that developments are realistic and viable and that proposals and projects identified make a real contribution to the region. The provision of a community stadium is such a project.
- This proposal is identified as a key project in the structure plan, recognising the positive impact it will have on Aberdeen Football Club and as an asset for community use. There must also be recognition of the significant potential a new stadium, built to modern standards, will offer to attract other sporting events and tournaments, and as a venue for alternative uses.
- As the structure plan identifies two potential locations for such a stadium and for the reasons above, in principle the proposal is supported. However, the structure plan must be read in its entirety and each proposal judged on its merits against the objectives and targets contained within it.
- The planning statement submitted by the applicant does not address why the decision to choose Loirston over Kings Links is preferable in planning terms. It may be that this justification can be found in the 2009 Business Case considered by the Policy & Strategy Committee and Council in 2009.

- This being the case, there remains a number of potential conflicts with the objectives of the structure plan; particularly the accessibility and quality of the environment objectives. The location appears less sustainable in terms of the potential options for public transport use (bus and rail), walking and cycling. Despite the laudable predictions for a 46% modal shift from private car to public transport, patronage of the shuttle bus from a central hub and other components of the bus strategy contained in the TA, this concern must be raised. The developer must satisfy the council that the proposed measures are realistic and can be sustained over the long-term.
- The reports presented to the Policy & Strategy Committee and Full Council in 2009 “underlined the need for Aberdeen Football Club to resolve the significant transport and environmental issues associated with the Loirston site, as part of the process of producing a detailed design and planning application.” As with transportation above, the advice of relevant environment experts must inform the determination of this application. It may be that the mitigation of these two issues can be achieved through the use of planning conditions and / or developer contributions.
- Several sustainability issues are highlighted in the ‘Design and Access Statement’, but it is unclear what consideration has been given to the use of renewable energy sources on the site. This could potentially be a significant source of income as well as address the climate change impact of heating and lighting the stadium.
- The structure plan provides strong support for the development of a new community stadium and the benefits this will bring to the north-east. In terms of the current proposal, the Council should balance the importance to be given to each aim of the structure plan in the decision-making process. It is important that the Council is satisfied that the proposal meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future and that appropriate mitigation measures (for example, addressing transport and environmental impacts) are put in place to ensure the proposed development is acceptable.

### **Architecture & Design Scotland (A+DS)**

- The A+DS Design Review Panel considered an earlier draft of the proposals for the Arena. The Panel acknowledges the design of a new sports arena for Aberdeen Football Club presents an exciting development opportunity for the City and focus for a new neighbourhood.
- The Panel considers the Arena to be a significant project for Aberdeen, with the potential to act as a catalyst for further development. The Council has a key role to play in initiating and co-ordinating an overarching vision for the wider area. The project benefits from a fabulous landscape setting and careful consideration should be given to the conceptual approach to the siting and location of the stadium in order to fully exploit the natural assets of the site.
- The Panel considers it critical that a strong vision for this area be established to exploit the area's inherent natural qualities and to allow for a coherent masterplan to be developed for the stadium site and the adjacent future neighbourhood. The Panel encourages the Council and the respective design teams to work together to establish a context for this

and other future development. This led to two workshops taking place in February and March 2010.

- The workshops, independently facilitated by A+DS, involved Council officers, landowners and their respective agents, and resulted in establishing key principles to inform future development of the area. These included setting out agreed principles for a future development framework for the area to be developed as supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.
- The principles included the relationship of the Arena to the future new neighbourhood, the relationship to the natural environment, design and accessibility in order to ensure that the Arena contributes positively to potential future development of a new neighbourhood at Loirston Loch.

### **Aberdeen City and Shire Design Review Panel**

- The Panel considers the proposed stadium design to be iconic and to make a positive impression as a gateway to the City, celebrating monumentality and simplicity in design through a limited palette of materials. The impact of the proposal from Wellington Road is an important consideration and 3D images of this would be useful in understanding how the gateway will be reinforced, whilst screening the parking areas.
- The panel welcomed the boldness of the proposal and that landscaping was integrated with the scheme rather than trying to hide it. It was noted that there is a large area of parking to the east of the stadium which could be unsightly. The landscaping around this area must be carefully considered to minimise the visual impact of parking in order not to detract from the positive, bold statement of the stadium, particularly as viewed from Wellington Road. The panel noted that there is a large slope on site. How the building and site layout deals with topography and the relationship with the future new community must be clearly demonstrated.
- The design of the stadium building itself is an iconic and strong statement. The simplicity of the stadium roofline is considered a very positive aspect but the purity of form may be compromised by breaking this in an effort to integrate with potential future development. The perception of a floating roof is commendable and will be particularly effective at night, when illuminated. The different treatment to the principle entrance may erode the purity of the design and consideration should be given to the roof continuing around the whole stadium. It is acknowledged that this corner was designed to aid integration with the future development of the adjacent community. It is recognised that the proposal has developed significantly and positively since the first A+DS review.
- The panel questions the relationship between the stadium and adjacent future housing development. It was confirmed that the plaza will link into the potential new community to the south, west and north of the site.
- The panel recommends that the relationship of future development adjacent to the stadium will have to demonstrate how and where it is best situated in further masterplanning work for the Loirston Loch area.
- The Panel reiterates that they consider the stadium to be a thoughtful building and a successful response to the given brief. The stadium has the potential to strike a balance between achieving both Aberdeen Football

Club's vision and the wider vision for the future development of the south side of Aberdeen City.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

144 letters of objections have been received, including from Aberdeen and District Angling Association, Aberdeen Friends of the Earth and Transform Scotland.

A letter has also been received from Brian Adam MSP (Aberdeen North). He states the stadium will be an important and well used facility in the region. However, he highlights the issue of insufficient on-site parking, indicating that the Government's maximum parking standards should be adapted to meet local circumstances and parking should be based on the full capacity of the stadium and not against average attendances. He also raises a concern about relying on public transport and Park and Ride schemes.

The objections and concerns raised by the representations can be summarised as set out below under the following headings.

### Pre-application consultation, registration of application and procedure matters

- The planning application should not have been registered – it was incomplete and was registered prior to several key documents being available and being on the Council's website
- Proper consultative process has been compromised and curtailed by registering an incomplete application and thus was unlawful
- The pre-application consultation was inadequate/"a sham" – there was no real engagement with the community councils, there was a severe lack of consultation with local people, the "feedback" form did not facilitate expression of opinion and the Pre-consultation Report fails to address the issue of location, despite there being many objections based upon location
- Pre-consultation exercise demonstrated there is no significant support for the proposal
- Difficulty in finding information on the proposal on the Council's website
- The planning application should be "called-in" in accordance with Circular 3/2009 – there is a local authority interest in the site
- The project will go ahead no matter what objections are raised as "the decision has already been made"
- The project "does not have the support of the full Council" as evidenced by the recent meeting on the Local Development Plan
- Cove Rangers' planning permission has lapsed – the proposal should not be determined in isolation of a new application for Cove Rangers
- The proposal is a breach of human rights (right for clean air, freedom to access green space, quality of life) and the decision will be appealed to the highest UK and European levels.

### Planning policy

- The proposal is premature pending the proper examination/ adoption of the Local Development Plan

- The proposal is contrary to the structure plan – although identified as a possible site (for a stadium only), it would be contrary to the sustainable development and quality of environment objectives/ policies
- The proposal is contrary to the local plan - the land is green belt and Green Space Network and should be preserved (“the last green space in the south of the City” which was described by the Reporter as “an effective wedge of green belt” in his recommendations on the 2008 local plan)
- The loss of farmland
- The proposal is contrary to national planning guidance – SPP (168), SPP3: Planning for Housing Consultative Draft and SPP21: Green Belts
- There is no overall vision for developing the area which has resulted in over development of the south part of Aberdeen
- Approval would set a precedent which would “open the floodgates” for more development in the area.

### Site selection

- Loirston is “the wrong location” for a new stadium. The site selection report shows no clear reason why Loirston is the preferred site - there are better alternative sites for the stadium. The suggestions made are remaining at and refurbishing/rebuilding Pittodrie, a site to the south of Loirston Loch, in the city centre, at Kings’ Links, to the north of the City, at Cults, at Bielside, at Dyce, at Duff’s Hill, at Portlethen, at Westhill)
- Loirston has been chosen for financial reasons only, it is about making money for developers
- Very few people in the area want the stadium
- AFC has not made a compelling case for a new stadium
- The adopted local plan identifies King’s Links for a community stadium
- SIAS Transport Feasibility Study reveals that King’s Links is a better location in transport terms and the Environmental Appraisal (2009) also demonstrates that that King’s Links is preferable
- The proposal is radically different to that in the feasibility study in 2009
- There is no legal difficulty in using Common Good land at King’s Links
- AFC and Cove Rangers could share a stadium
- Two stadia (i.e. Aberdeen FC and Cove Rangers FC) should not be built in the same part of town.

### The environmental statement and environmental impacts

- Deficiencies in the ES – it is not comprehensive, it is inaccurate and misleading, it does not refer to Opportunity Site OP51, it does not deal with the cumulative impacts (emerging local plan designations), the comparison of sites in ES is “unforgivably brief” and misleading and thus any decision based on it would be unlawful.
- The proposal is not compatible with and will destroy the District Wildlife Site, Kincorth Hill Nature Reserve and “Loirston Country Park”, which has a high amenity value and is an important educational resource. It will destroy wildlife and endanger bird life
- The proposal is contrary to the ‘conservation strategy’
- Impact on fishing at Loirston Loch (no proposal to compensate Aberdeen & District Angling Association for possible loss or disruption to fishing)
- Impact on the flight path of bats

- A significant part of Loirston Loch will be built over
- The proposal would contaminate the loch and cause pollution
- The proposal would cause light pollution, in particular from the “red glow at night”
- Litter, bottles etc will be thrown into the loch
- Impact on air quality
- Impact on drainage and sewage systems
- Redeveloping Pittodrie would cause less CO2 emissions
- Loss of a tranquil area.

### Visual impact

- The loch is “an iconic emblem to the gateway to Aberdeen for visitors”
- The “soft edge” of the proposed adjacent business park should be retained with an open aspect to the loch
- The proposal would be harmful to the landscape
- Visual intrusion – loss of view across the Dee valley and beyond, floodlight pylons, height of stadium.

### Transport and accessibility

- Concerns regarding the TA – it may not be accurate, the traffic model used is outdated, it takes no account of the effect of committed future significant developments in the vicinity and it states Bridge of Dee is “sufficiently remote” and thus impact will be “ignored”
- The impact on road safety and public safety due to additional traffic
- The impact on the already congested local road network (new junction will seriously interrupt traffic flows on Wellington Road) and the wider road network (Bridge of Dee, Wellington Road, Charleston flyover, Redmoss Road)
- The developer should have to pay for all infrastructure / road improvement costs
- Local transport links are inadequate (bus, walking, cycling and rail) and thus will be inaccessible for many supporters
- First Bus cannot provide enough buses
- Additional travel to the site would cause greenhouse gas emissions
- AWPR should be built before consideration is given to a stadium on this site
- Staff buses should be provided
- During match times access for emergency vehicles will be impeded
- The suggested modal shift away from the car is utterly unrealistic (comparative data for other similar stadia should be examined)
- Insufficient on-site car parking
- There will be overspill car parking into adjacent residential areas
- How could the extensive parking control zone be enforced?
- Parking restrictions should not be imposed on residents – inconvenience to residents
- The proposed on-site car parking layout is contrived – the remote area to the north should be omitted (it could encourage fans to take a direct route across the Balmoral Group premises – health and safety risk)
- The use of Park & Ride sites would be at the expense of others

- The TA depends upon four Park & Ride sites that are not in existence
- The industrial estates could be used for car parking
- Threatens a public right of way and core paths
- Fans going from Kincorth via Kincorth Hill and trespassing on Parkhead Farm.

### Residential amenity

- Impact on residential amenity due to noise disturbance from concerts, anti-social behaviour, violence and drunkenness of football fans/concerts goers, increased traffic, overspill parking and litter
- The stadium would be too close to houses
- Security concerns
- Operators of mobile catering facilities would come into the neighbouring residential areas, “drawing the trouble to our very doorsteps”.

### Design and size of stadium

- Over development of the small site
- The stadium is a “monstrosity”, a “blot on the landscape”
- The size and height of the development
- The bright colour of the façade
- A 21,000 seat stadium is too small – a larger stadium 30,000 to 40,000 would provide the City and North East with a facility to host major events
- The stadium should include a running track
- Insufficient on-site facilities for fans
- There should be no external lighting or under pitch heating in order to reduce carbon footprint.

### Other matters

- Difficulties of policing fans in and around the stadium for concerts
- The social aspects of a stadium in City Centre will be lost
- Detrimental impact on city centre shopping
- The term “community stadium” is misleading – it will not be a community facility, but a commercial enterprise for Aberdeen FC
- Possible conference and other events would compete with AECC
- Public money should not be used to fund the stadium, which would go against Government competition principles
- No analysis of the noise impact on farming (Parkhead Farm)
- Insufficient infrastructure (water and sewer) to serve the development
- Proximity to recently approved Balmoral Park – it would adversely affect the “attractiveness and operation of the business park”, additional events will impact on the business park due to noise, nuisance and traffic congestion.

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### **National Policy and Guidance**



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

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is the statement of Government policy on land use planning and includes the Government's core principles for the operation of the planning system and concise subject planning policies. The general policies on sustainable economic growth and sustainable development and the subject policies relating to economic development, landscape and natural heritage, open space and physical activity, green belts, transport and flooding are relevant material considerations.

Designing Places is the statement that sets out the Government's expectations of the planning system to deliver high standards of design in development projects and is a relevant material consideration.

### **Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan**

The structure plan sets out the following key objectives:

Economic growth – to provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment in a range of areas that are both appropriate for and attractive to the needs of different industries

Quality of the environment – to make sure new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets

Sustainable mixed communities – to make sure that new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and businesses to move to.

Accessibility – to make sure that all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport by making these attractive choices.

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

### **Aberdeen Local Plan**

Clearly with a project of this scale a significant number of local plan policies are relevant in the consideration of the proposal. The most relevant policies are set out below.

Policy 1 'Design' – To ensure high standards of design, new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting. Factors such as scale, massing, colour, materials,

details, the proportions of building elements and landscaping will be considered in assessing this.

Policy 2 'Landscape Design' - The City Council will require details of a landscape design scheme compatible with the scale and character of the overall development to be submitted as part of any planning application.

Policy 8 'Design and Policy Guidance' - All development is expected to be designed with regard to any of the City Council's published supplementary guidance which is relevant to it.

Policy 20 'Waste Facilities in New Development' - Planning permission will not be granted for developments unless proper provision has been made within or close to the application site for source segregation for recyclables, compostible matter and residual waste and adequate access thereto.

Policy 23 'Eco Development' - In assessing planning applications for new developments the City Council will give favourable weight according to the degree to which they further the interests of sustainable development.

Policy 27 'Air Quality' - Air quality assessments shall be required for proposed developments which could have significant effects on local air quality. The requirement will be assessed on a case-by-case basis throughout the City but will apply particularly to major developments on or adjacent to the streets which form the Air Quality Management Area, or which would not be adjacent to that area but could generate additional motor vehicle traffic passing through it. There shall be a presumption against developments which would have significantly adverse impacts on air quality in the Air Quality Standards.

Policy 28 'Green Belt' - No development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, forestry, recreation, mineral extraction or restoration or land renewal. 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 green belt should have regard to other policies of the local plan in respect of protection of landscape, trees and woodlands, natural heritage and pipelines and control of major accident hazards.

Policy 29 'Green Space Network' – The City Council will protect and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of the green space network. Proposals for development that is likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the green space network will not be permitted.

Policy 31 'Landscape Protection' - One of the objectives of planning for future development will be to maintain and manage aspects of Aberdeen's unique landscape setting. Development will not be acceptable unless it avoids: (i) adversely affecting landscape character and elements which contribute to, or provide, a distinct 'sense of place' which point to being either in or around "Aberdeen" or a particular part of it; (ii) obstructing views of the City's townscape, landmarks and features when seen from publicly accessible vantage points such as roads, railways, recreation areas and pathways and particularly from the main city approaches or 'gateways'; (iii) disturbance, loss or damage to recognised recreation, wildlife or woodland resources or to the physical links between them; or (iv) sprawling onto green spaces or buffers between places or communities

with individual identities and those which can provide opportunities for countryside activities. All developments shall respect the quality of the local landscape character and contribute towards its maintenance and enhancement in terms of siting, scale, massing, colour, design, density, orientation, materials, planting/landscaping and boundary treatment. They should otherwise be capable of being absorbed within sites without significant adverse impacts upon existing landscape elements, including linear and boundary features or other components, which contribute to local amenity, and provide opportunities for conserving, restoring or enhancing them.

Policy 34 'Natural Heritage' - Development that has a significant adverse impact on a local or regional designation will not be permitted unless its public interest at a regional level clearly outweighs the ecological value of the area and that no alternative area can be found for the development by means of a sequential approach. Development will not be permitted if it causes significant damage to species and habitats identified as national priorities for conservation as summarised in the North East Biodiversity Audit or those included in the North East Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The only exception is where the public interest of a proposal clearly outweighs any adverse impacts on nature conservation interests and where it is demonstrated that no suitable alternative areas are available. In all cases, satisfactory steps must be taken to mitigate negative development impacts on designated areas and priority habitats and species. Outwith areas hosting these priority species and habitats and where potentially damaging impacts are identified, developers will be required to modify their proposals in terms of location, design or layout in order to minimise damage or in order to enhance the management regime for the relevant area to support the aims of the LBAP. The landscaping of new developments shall incorporate a proportion of native species to maintain and enhance wildlife interest, and provide habitats for wildlife that might otherwise be disturbed as a result of development activity.

Policy 35 'Access and Recreation Areas' - The City Council will protect and enhance access to the green space within and around Aberdeen through the protection and improvement of footpaths, cycle paths and bridle-ways. The City Council will designate a Core Path Network and protect it and other informal routes from development. Development around the edge of Aberdeen must ensure that links between rural and urban areas are maintained. New development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreation areas. Where development is proposed, every opportunity should be taken to improve pathway access and links to green space.

Policy 48 'Sports Facilities' - Sport and recreational facilities will be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that: (i) they are not detrimental to the natural or built environment or to residential amenity; (ii) locations are accessible to the catchment population, giving priority to walking, cycling and public transport; (iii) public access arrangements can be maintained, enhanced or, where appropriate, provided in a convenient location in the vicinity of the development; and (iv) the impact of floodlighting and appearance of any associated structures would not adversely affect the amenity of nearby residential properties or the character of the area.

Policy 72 'Use of Appropriate Transport Modes' - There shall be a presumption against developments, including transport developments not required for urgent

safety reasons, which would be likely to increase the proportion of trips made in the City by private car. In assessing likely modal split account must be taken of the quality of linkages of a site to all parts of the City by public transport, cycling and walking, and not just of the physical possibility of access to a site by other means than the private car.

Policy 73a 'Vehicular Access to New Development' - Applicants will be required to mitigate adverse impacts that are created by traffic accessing new developments. Mitigating measures may include green transport plans and other traffic-reducing measures. Applicants will require to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that new developments will not compromise road safety or unduly disrupt the flow of traffic, particularly on trunk roads and primary distributor routes.

Policy 75 'Transport Provision within Development' - Non residential development should provide up to the maximum number of parking spaces permitted in the Supplementary Guidance on Transport. Developers will be required to mitigate adverse effects outwith the development that will arise as a result of providing fewer spaces than the maximum permitted. Developers must provide secure bicycle and motorcycle storage and goods vehicle delivery space in line with the standards set down in the supplementary guidance on transport. Walk and cycle routes within a development should be direct, attractive, safe and secure.

Policy 77 'Green Transport Plans' - A green transport plan must be submitted with all proposals for major development and with other proposals where such a plan is likely to be particularly beneficial. Green transport plans will include targets for minimization of travel and reduction in reliance on private car trips.

### **Aberdeen Local Development Plan - Proposed Plan**

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan - Proposed Plan was published for consultation on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2010, with comments on the plan being invited until 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan is a material planning consideration. In accordance with Circular 1/2009: Development Planning, the Proposed Plan should represent the Council's settled view as to what should be the final adopted content of the plan.

The application site forms part of Opportunity Site OP77: Loirston. The Proposed Plan states *"Loirston is considered suitable for a new community stadium and a site has been identified to accommodate this as part of a mixed use area. The site can also accommodate 1,500 homes and 11ha of employment land."*

The following policies are relevant to the consideration of the proposal.

Policy LR1 – Land Release Policy

Policy I1 – Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions

Policy T2 – Managing the Transport Impact of the Development

Policy D1 – Architecture and Placemaking

Policy D3 – Sustainable and Active Travel

Policy D6 – Landscape

Policy CF2 – New Community Facilities

Policy RT1 – Sequential Approach and Retail Impact

Policy RT2 – Out of Centre Proposals

Policy NE6 – Flooding and Drainage  
Policy NE8 – Natural Heritage  
Policy NE9 – Access and Informal Recreation  
Policy NE10 - Air Quality  
Policy R7 – Low and Zero Carbon Buildings

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

The following SPGs are relevant material considerations – “Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015”, “Reducing Carbon Emissions in New Development”, “Landscape Strategy Part 2 – Landscape Guidelines”, “Supplementary Guidance on Transport” and “Local Transport Strategy”.

### **THE NEXT STEPS**

Following the hearing the application will be assessed rigorously in terms of planning policy, the details of the proposal and the economic, environmental, amenity and traffic impacts. This will be reflected in a subsequent report which will be prepared for consideration by the Council in due course. The report will also take into account all written comments made by the consultation bodies and members of the public and all matters raised at the hearing.

If the Council supports the application then the application will require to be notified to the Scottish Ministers as the Council has an interest in the site and the proposed development is a significant departure from the development plan. On the other hand if the Council resolves to refuse permission then the applicants have a right of appeal to the Scottish Ministers.

**Dr Margaret Bochel**

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development