

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	24 th May 2011
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Former Davidson's Mill Development Framework
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/11/121

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines the Former Davidson's Mill Development Framework, prepared as a guide for the future development of a brownfield regeneration site at Mugiemoos Road, Bucksburn, identified as opportunity site OP107 in the adopted Aberdeen Local Plan 2008.

1.2 The Former Davidson's Mill Development Framework is a large document containing a lot of illustrative material and can be viewed by accessing the following link:

http://aberdeencitydev/Planning/pla/pla_masterplan_Davidsons_Mill.asp

A summary of the Development Framework is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A hard copy of the full Development Framework is available in the Members' Library or at the Planning and Sustainable Development Service reception on the 8th Floor of St Nicholas House.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee:

2.1 Adopt the Davidson's Mill Development Framework as supplementary planning guidance to the Adopted Aberdeen Local Plan (2008), pending adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP), at which time it will be adopted as supplementary guidance to that plan.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report outwith normal officer time to evaluate the development framework. The developers have met the cost of preparation of the development framework including all consultation and engagement work. The proposals will result in efficiencies in the determination of future planning applications related to the development framework and masterplan, leading to a reduction in Council staff time.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no known property, legal and equipment implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 The development framework reduces the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development in the area. Mixed use development and the efficient use of land will contribute towards the Council's aim of promoting sustainable development on a brownfield site.
- 4.3 Approving the development framework will contribute to efficiencies in determining future planning applications. By encouraging acceptable forms and uses of new development to be agreed publicly, it allows more informed decision making to be made earlier, saving time and resources for staff, applicants and the public.
- 4.4 The development framework seeks to contribute towards a higher rate of new house building in the City, including 10% affordable housing provision in accordance with the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008).
- 4.5 In accordance with Policy 83 of the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008), developer contributions will be sought, including, but not limited to, education, community facilities, drainage, recreational and amenity open space, sports facilities and providing for a choice of transport modes.
- 4.6 Aberdeen City Council determined that a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be submitted with any application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) on the site.

5. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES

Site Description

- 5.1 The Davidson's Mill site is a 29.5 hectare Brownfield site, much of which was home to a former paper mill. It is bounded to the north by the River Don, to the south by the railway line and Mugiemoos Road cuts across the site from east to west. It is largely derelict and the buildings are in poor condition with limited development potential. In addition to the River Don the site includes key landscape features such as Dander's Hill and the Bucks Burn.
- 5.2 Stewart Milne Group Ltd, Manse (Aberdeen) Ltd and Westhouse Estates Ltd are the developers who have commissioned the preparation of the Development Framework. The developers consider the Framework demonstrates that the site is both deliverable and can meet the aspirations for good place making embedded in National and Local Policy.

Policy Summary

- 5.3 The Development Framework has been prepared following the Council's adopted Aberdeen Masterplanning Process and contributes to the Scottish Government and Aberdeen Local Plan policy aims of raising design quality in new development, through the 6 key qualities of creating successful places, namely – distinctive, welcoming, safe and pleasant, adaptable, easy to get to and move around, and resource efficient.
- 5.4 The site is identified as opportunity site (OP107) in the adopted Aberdeen Local Plan (2008) and is covered by policy M41: Mixed Use. In 2007, the Mugiemoos Road Planning Brief was prepared, which proposed creating a new urban community which would be principally residential with an element of local employment, retail and community facilities. The brief was approved by the Council in July 2007 as supplementary planning guidance. The Former Davidson's Mill Development Framework incorporates key themes contained in the Mugiemoos Road Planning Brief and is intended to supercede that brief.
- 5.5 The allocation of the former Davidson's Mill site as a mixed use area has been carried forward into the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (September 2010) where it is identified as Opportunity Site OP22.
- 5.6 Although no official housing allocations have been made for the site in either the Local Plan (2008) or Proposed Local Development Plan (2010), the Aberdeen City Council "2009-Based School Roll Forecast" has based its future allocation figures on 400 new residential units being built at Mugiemoos.
- 5.7 The Former Davidson's Mill, Bucksburn Development Framework: March 2011, if approved, will provide supplementary planning guidance to the adopted Aberdeen Local Plan 2008 and, subsequently, supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The guidance will provide the framework for any future planning application for a residential led mixed use development of between approximately 700 and 900 residential units and around 2000sqm of supporting retail, service and community uses.
- 5.8 As the proposed redevelopment of the Davidson's Mill site is classed as a Major Development in the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations a Proposal of Application notice for a sustainable mixed use community was submitted and registered for the site (App Ref 101842) in November 2010.

Key Issues

5.9 Site Constraints

The topography of the site is challenging with some steep slopes towards the river and some marked level changes, many of which are hidden within the current buildings. Topographical studies indicate that regrading of the site is necessary to allow access and create suitable developable areas.

5.10 Given its industrial past, a Geo-environmental investigation for soil contamination of the site was carried out in 2009. This concluded that appropriate measures will be required to enable future residential development.

5.11 Both the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008) and the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (September 2010) identify a flood risk for part of the site and because of this a Flood Risk Assessment is required. Initial investigations have taken place and the developer has confirmed that, to minimise risk, all development will be located above the 21.5m contour.

5.12 Housing

The proposals for the Former Davidson's Mill site include a range of housing types and sizes ranging from low to high density across the site. Maximum building heights have been set for each block within the site. However, not all buildings will reach these heights. Building heights range from 2 to 6 storeys generally.

5.13 Community Facilities

A primary civic space has been identified for a mixed use centre for its ability to promote walkable neighbourhoods. The amount of retail and service provision will depend on market forces; however these areas will have flexible ground floor units to allow adaption in the future. It is proposed that the Former Davidson's Mill could accommodate around 2000sqm of supporting uses. Potential uses include, but are not exclusive to:

- Local Shops
- Class 2 Uses (financial, professional or other services)
- Café/Bistro
- Business Starter Units
- Care Home
- Community Facilities
- Leisure/Recreational Uses.

5.14 Education provision

At present, allocations of school places for the site are based on 400 residential units. If this number increases to 700-900, the Council believes that there is insufficient capacity at the nearest primary schools to which the sites is currently zoned to accommodate this. The Council, through its Education, Culture and Sport service, has

commissioned a study to examine the implications of potential future developments at both the former Davidson's Mill and Stoneywood (OP24 in the ALDP) for education provision in the Bucksburn area. The Study will recommend a range of options for meeting the primary school educational needs generated by these developments. This study will provide viable solution(s) for accommodating primary school provision in the area, and if the need for a primary school is identified it does not necessarily need to be located within either of the potential application sites. The results of the Study will be reported to the appropriate committee in due course and will be used to inform appropriate developer contributions for education provision for the former Davidson's Mill site.

Design Principles

5.15 As stated in the policy summary (5.3 above) the Development Framework follows the key principles outlined in the Aberdeen City Council Masterplanning Process. The Development Framework sets out a vision and a spatial framework for the development of the former Davidson's Mill. It aims to:

- Establish a clear and exciting future vision for the former Davidson's Mill;
- Provide a clear and comprehensive spatial framework that describes how the site is intended to be developed;
- Describe and explain the integrated land-use, landscape and transport proposals;
- Set out a clear phasing and delivery strategy.

The Development Framework has been prepared to a high standard, meeting the local and national criteria for new developments and aiming to create a place with a sense of identity that links well with its surroundings.

5.16 Streets are designed in accordance with the national "Designing Streets" guidance, which considers place function above movement and aims to promote pedestrian, cycling and public transport movements before the car. A clear street hierarchy is presented for the site with a main spine road providing a public transport corridor through it and secondary, tertiary and minor routes promoted as shared pedestrian-friendly spaces. Street trees are in abundance and parking provision is a mixture of on-road and off road within the development.

5.17 The form of the development is a grid-based layout with no cul-de-sacs, enabling easy movement and good connectivity. The development will be arranged over 18 blocks, divided by streets, squares and open space with paths linking through the blocks and into the wider path network. A proposed new pedestrian bridge crossing the Don provides a pedestrian and cycle link to the development as part of the proposed Core Path AP6. This will improve access to the river and beyond and is proposed to be developed in conjunction with the site owners at the Grandhome Estate. A variety of building types and

tenures ensures that frontages vary across the development which will add to the character of the development and create identity.

- 5.18 Although much work is required to address level changes, the development integrates with the landscape. Natural features such as the River Don and Bucks Burn are enhanced by the proposals with parkland, open space and paths created around them and overlooked by properties. Features such as Danders Hill to the north of the site have been retained while other features which are part of the site's industrial heritage, such as the mill lades and brick chimney are also preserved. Development on the site will not be located any closer to the River Don than present.
- 5.19 The development will contain between 700 and 900 residential units with a mixture of flats, townhouses, terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings. Densities will vary across the site, averaging between 35-45 units/hectare. Proposed building heights will vary mainly between 2 and 5 stories, with one 6 story and one 9 storey block. However, the quoted figures in the Development Framework are maximum standards and it is not envisaged that every, or indeed any, of the buildings in the blocks must reach these heights. Higher density development is envisaged in high movement areas, such as at squares, major routes and around the river area. Supporting the development is a proposed 2000 sqm of retail, leisure and community uses located at key nodal points and around proposed bus stops. A potential location for business starter units has been included too.

Public Involvement

- 5.20 Consultation has been carried out following the best practice guidelines as set out in Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 81, "Community Engagement" and Aberdeen City Council's Guidelines for Community Engagement. The following events were held:
- A special meeting with Bucksburn and Newhills Community Council on 10 January 2011.
 - The first public consultation event at Bucksburn Stoneywood church on 12th January 2011. Around 100 people attended and 30 comments forms/letters were returned.
 - A second meeting with Bucksburn and Newhills Community Council on 24 February 2011. They were updated on the public consultation event that took place on 12 January 2011 and progress on the Draft Development Framework for the site.
 - A second public consultation event at Bucksburn Stoneywood church took place on 1st March 2011. Around 80 people attended and 20 comments forms/ letters were received.
 - Meetings have been held at regular intervals throughout the process to ensure the proposals were designed to meet the aspirations for the site, align with Council plans/policies/supplementary guidance, and keep up to date with the evolving design.

- 5.21 The two public consultation events ran from 1pm to 8pm with staff from the design and development teams on hand to explain the plans and discuss emerging ideas. Adverts giving notification of the exhibition were placed prior to the event in the Aberdeen Citizen, the Aberdeen Press and Journal and the Aberdeen Evening Express. Posters were also distributed in key locations within the area and personal invites sent out or delivered by hand to organisations and local residents. These went to over 150 locations for the first event and over 200 for the second.
- 5.22 A further chance to comment on the proposals will be given when the application for Planning Permission in Principle is submitted (expected to be in early June 2011).
- 5.23 All the details, comments and responses from the consultation events can be found in Section 1.4 “Community Consultation and Engagement” in the Development Framework. Some of the key points and comments are listed below.

Issue	Response
<p>Traffic and Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern over extra traffic on Mugiemooss Road and the Haudagain roundabout and desire to provide decent public transport links to the site by bus and rail. • Support for improved public access to the river for walking and cycling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bus route through the site has been identified to improve access • Part of the site has been safeguarded as a potential future rail halt • Footpaths will be provided throughout the site and, thanks to the new pedestrian bridge, will link into the wider path network.
<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a mix of housing with a variety in housing design. • Provide affordable housing • Higher development should be located away from the riverfront 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a range of housing densities, building heights and housing mix across the site. • Affordable housing will be provided in accordance with the adopted Aberdeen Local Plan (2008). • This has been reviewed in association with other important considerations and has resulted in a mix of heights along the riverfront which relate to their position in the overall framework and are felt to be appropriate. These considerations have included ensuring a public and permeable edge to the riverfront, allowing riverside living to be enjoyed by as many residents as possible, creating a vibrant riverfront that can

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A preference was expressed for building heights to be restricted and predominantly low rise. 	<p>support appropriate leisure uses and avoiding overshadowing by locating taller buildings towards the north of the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Development Framework provides a maximum height for development blocks. It is not envisaged that every, or indeed any building within the blocks must reach these stated heights, however no building will exceed it.
<p>Community / Recreational Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to provide a range of facilities to support the development • Desire to see a medical centre provided on the site. 	<p>Community / Recreational Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several areas are identified for mixed use (retail, leisure, community and commercial functions) within the development, with the key locations being a central square and an area beside the river. • There are no plans to provide a new medical centre on site as it is understood that new medical facilities, which are identified in the Proposed Local Development Plan, are to be provided within development proposed at Stoneywood Estate
<p>Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support expressed for naming streets after the former Davidson's Mill 	<p>Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets and squares will be named to reflect the industrial heritage of the site.
<p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full consideration needs to be taken of any impact the development will have on fishing interests in the River Don and Bucks Burn. • Wildlife issues and mitigation measures will be considered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment to be submitted in support of the application for Planning Permission in Principle. 	<p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue has begun and will continue with the various fishing bodies regarding their interests in the area. • There is a need to protect wildlife, maintain and enhance existing open space areas and control Invasive Non-Native species within the site.

Conclusion

5.24 Following approval of the former Davidson's Mill Development Framework, the developers aim to submit a Planning Permission in Principle application. This will comply with the guidance set out in the

approved development framework. Following this, detailed planning applications for the first phase of the development will be submitted.

6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The Design Framework supports the Community Plan (2008) vision, which states that Aberdeen will be
- an attractive, clean, healthy and safe place to live and work.
 - a City that promotes high expectations and meets those through the genuine involvement of its people.
 - a forward looking City which values its heritage and its internationally recognised institutions and services.
- 6.2 The Design Framework supports the following Single Outcome Agreements:
10. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
- 6.3 The Design Framework meets the following strategic priority in the 5 year business plan
- Encourage the building of new affordable housing
- 6.4 The proposal is consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan in particular with regard to delivering high levels of design from all development, maintaining an up-to-date planning framework, sustainable development and open space provision.
- 6.5 The proposal is consistent with the Planning and Sustainable Service plan, in particular engaging the community in the planning process, and the delivery of masterplans/development frameworks in line with The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process.
- 6.6 An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been prepared. In summary, many of the aims of the proposal will have positive benefits, including;
- Housing – greater provision of affordable housing in Aberdeen as a result of development.
 - Health – improved access to the River Don for leisure pursuits and opportunities for walking/cycling/exercise.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Former Davidson's Mill Development Framework: March 2011.

http://aberdeencitydev/Planning/pla/pla_masterplan_Davidsons_Mill.asp

Aberdeen Local Plan 2008

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning/.../pla_localplan_home.asp

Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan September 2010

<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=31978&SID=14413>

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009

<http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=423&SID=38>

Mugiemoss Road, Bucksburn Planning Brief, July 2007

<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=10902&SID=2991>


Aberdeen Masterplanning Process. A Guide for Developers, November 2008


http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/web/files/LocalPlan/spg_aberdeencity_masterplanning_process.pdf

8. REPORT AUTHOR(S) DETAILS

Sandy Beattie


Team Leader – Masterplanning and Design

 01224 (52) 2155

 sbeattie@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Alan Simpson

Planning Trainee – Masterplanning and Design

 01224 (52) 2756

 AlanSimpson@aberdeencity.gov.uk