

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	24 May 2011
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/11/147

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report fulfils the Committee's instructions of 7 September 2010 (item 14) and presents the Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework for approval as per the recommendation below. The Development Framework is a large document and can therefore be viewed at:

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

A hard copy of the 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 Approve the Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework as interim planning advice, pending adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, at which time it will be formally adopted as supplementary guidance to the Plan.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no known legal or equipment implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 There are a number of Council owned properties and sites within the City Centre, proposals for which will be subject to assessment in line with the key principles of the Development Framework.
- 4.3 The City Centre Development Framework will help reduce the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development. The efficient use of public

space and brownfield development opportunities will contribute towards the Council's aim of promoting sustainable development.

- 4.4 Approving the development framework will contribute to efficiencies in determining future planning applications made in accordance with the plan. Encouraging acceptable uses, forms of new development and the contribution they make to the public realm, and agreeing them publicly allows more informed decision making to be made earlier, saving time and resources for staff, applicants and the public.
- 4.5 A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken as part of the preparation for the forthcoming Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Background and Policy

- 5.1 The Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework (CCDF) was reported to Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee on 7 September 2010 (item 14) at which the Committee – (a) approved the final draft City Centre Development Framework Supplementary Guidance for public consultation as part of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) Proposed Plan consultation, the results of which to be reported back to Committee in due course; and; (b) to include and consider Councillor Hunter's comments regarding the Castlegate Quarter as part of the consultation. The comments received at the Committee were included in the framework prior to consultation commencing.
- 5.2 Once adopted, the Development Framework will have statutory status as supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and will be a significant material consideration in the determination of all future planning applications within the City Centre. It is listed in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan (September 2010) as Policy C1 – City Centre Development – Regional Centre.
- 5.3 The Development Framework will remain as a live document to be underpinned by an action and delivery programme for planning matters. That programme will be reviewed annually to ensure relevance, manage deliverability and respond efficiently to the needs of the City and its partners. The Framework itself will be reviewed as part of the ongoing local development plan process.

Public Consultation

- 5.4 As part of the emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan a series of consultation events about the Main Issues Report were held in different neighbourhoods across the City. There were 54 sources of comment on the City Centre and Retailing topic. Comments recognised the importance of the City Centre and the need for a plan-

led response. There was general support for a City Centre Development Framework and/or masterplan to guide development, with emphasis on taking a joined up approach which looked at the City Centre as a whole.

- 5.5 As the draft Development Framework is expected to form supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, public consultation relating to the Framework was carried out as part of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan consultation programme in the final quarter of 2010 as agreed by Council on 18 August 2010. This initially took place over a 12 week period from 24 September to 17 December 2010. The consultation period was extended to 17 January 2011.
- 5.6 The City Centre Development Framework (CCDF) was initially considered by Council on 19 May 2010 at which time it became a public document. Council approved the key planning and design principles contained in section 5.3 of the CCDF (relating to the proposed Cultural Quarter and Denburn Valley) and agreed that the final draft CCDF be reported to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee for approval for public consultation as Supplementary Guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan - Proposed Plan.
- 5.7 The Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee, at their meeting on 7 September 2010, approved the CCDF for consultation with the ALDP Proposed Plan. It is important that the CCDF is not seen as a standalone document and should be read as supplementary guidance to the ALDP, which is why it has been consulted on this way.
- 5.8 A total of 17 responses were received specific to the Development Framework. Feedback from the public consultation is incorporated in the final Development Framework presented to Committee today. The diagrams, illustrations, photographs and text within the document have been formatted for publication.
- 5.9 Various groups have attended meetings or presentations relating to the Framework, including Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Futures, Aberdeen City Centre Association, Aberdeen Federation of Small Businesses, George Street Community Council, Castlehill and Pittodrie Community Council, Rosemount and Mile End Community Council, the Robert Gordon University and Aberdeen University, amongst others. The list of Stakeholder Groups consulted on the Aberdeen Local Development Plan - Proposed Plan and the City Centre Development Framework is extensive and includes all Community Councils, Challenge Forums and Communities of Interest Forums. In addition there are almost 1,000 other interested parties who received newsletter updates and reminders.

Summary of Issues Raised and Responses

Issue	Response
<p>The long term vision for the city centre is good and necessary. However it needs to show short term actions so that people can begin to see changes and improvements taking place.</p>	<p><i>A prioritised action plan and next step section has been detailed in the CCDF. This will identify areas that can be addressed quickly to allow for changes to be apparent. The support for the long term vision is noted.</i></p>
<p>The CCDF fails to apply the key principles of accessibility and connectivity for cycling. It needs to address how we can make the city centre attractive and welcoming for cyclists. The framework should highlight every pedestrian route as being suitable for cyclists. Market Street is especially poor for cycling.</p>	<p><i>The CCDF takes its information on cycling from the approved Local Transport Strategy. Text has been updated to include cycling in pedestrian routes.</i></p>
<p>Union Terrace Gardens should be excluded from the framework.</p>	<p><i>As the central focus of debate in the City Centre, it is essential that planning guidance is included to guide any potential future intervention in the Gardens to reflect the aspirations of multi level access and improving connections within the City Centre as a whole.</i></p>
<p>There needs to be greater detail and flesh on the bones of the framework regarding deliverables and programming. There is need for further work to develop the key themes and develop it into a more complete form. Concern was also raised that the CCDF should have been put out to consultation on its own and not part of the LDP consultation. Welcome the encouragement of tall buildings within the City Centre. Concern has been raised with the references to Union Street pedestrianisation because it is not mentioned within the Local Development Plan. There is a need for further investigation into the pedestrianisation; there is no evidence that traffic will be reduced. Possible partial pedestrianisation first; i.e. still allow buses.</p>	<p><i>This document is a development framework It is not intended to be a detailed masterplan, which would create a snapshot of development in time, but rather it provides the framework upon which future masterplans could be created for specific character areas to ensure they are not considered in isolation. A prioritised action plan and next step section has been detailed in the CCDF.</i></p> <p><i>The Proposed Plan makes explicit reference to the CCDF as supplementary guidance. This process is clear, open and promoting the CCDF through the ALDP and adopting as supplementary guidance affords the most robust status in planning terms. It is absolutely necessary from a proper planning perspective to ensure that these documents are considered in the correct hierarchy. Supplementary guidance should always be considered firmly in the policy context of the Local Development Plan to which it applies which is why consultation was carried out this way. Detail on the methods and extent of consultation are detailed in 5.2 above.</i></p> <p><i>Pedestrianisation of part of Union Street is a specific proposal in the approved Structure Plan 2009.</i></p>

<p>The Business Improvement District (BID) can contribute to the public realm improvements within the CCDF. Care should be taken with the pedestrianisation, we need to preserve the economic and access integrity of the city. There is a need to develop a plan for the poor quality upper floors, there needs to be enforcement action and a clean up of them. The SG is statute and a part of this could be transferred to the LDP to beef up the Vision of the city.</p>	<p><i>The contribution to public realm improvements is noted. The CCDF notes the need for a strategy to address the issue of vacant upper floors on Union Street, it is important to get these back into use and cleaned up. A successful city centre requires co-operation from all stakeholders and users to maintain and manage buildings and open spaces between, the Development Framework will not achieve that on its own.</i></p>
<p>Aberdeen has to become a 'must visit' destination, we need to encourage bold ambitious plans that will transform the city and city centre. There is a need to improve access to and from the city centre. The CCDF provides a clear picture of the many and rich constituent parts which collectively make up the very fabric of the city centre.</p>	<p><i>These issues are an implicit part of the CCDF. Access to, from and around the city centre is essential for the framework to be successful. A number of proposals within the framework will be developed to begin to address this.</i></p>
<p>The civic quarter does not go far enough and omits significant parts of the Bon Accord Masterplan (BAM). There is a need to either expand the opportunities section of the civic quarter to better reflect the key components of the BAM or add another quarter to reflect it. Welcome discussions to improve signage and would be happy to be involved in a joint initiative.</p>	<p><i>Further reference has been added to the Civic Quarter of the CCDF being more explicit about the different aspirations of the Bon Accord Masterplan. A diagram from the Masterplan has also been added to demonstrate its importance. The offer to be involved in improvement to signage within the city centre is welcomed.</i></p>
<p>Need to include the Merchant Quarter in the CCDF.</p>	<p><i>The Green Quarter has been renamed to 'The Merchant Quarter and The Green' to reflect the aims and aspirations within this area. This is reflected in the diagrams and the paragraphs on this quarter.</i></p>

6. IMPACT

6.1 The City Centre Development Framework relates to the following Single Outcome Agreement objectives: 1- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe; 2- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people; 10- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need; 12- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations; 13- We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity; and 15- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

- 6.2 The City Centre Development Framework meets the vision of the Community Plan in promoting a strong image of the city and a sense of civic pride. The Framework will promote the redevelopment of the City Centre which is one of the main priorities for the Community Plan and The Single Outcome Agreement.
- 6.3 The City Centre Development Framework supports the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan aims and objectives and meets the specific target of completion of a City Centre Masterplan.
- 6.4 The City Centre Development Framework supports the Council's 5 year Business Plan in terms of protecting and enhancing the built environment, attracting visitors, workers and investment to protect the economic future of the city, and, to facilitate new development projects to improve Aberdeen's living and working environment.
- 6.5 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, to which this proposed supplementary guidance relates. In addition an EHRIA specific to the Development Framework has been completed which highlights that it will have positive benefits for equality target groups; for example: disability, older people, race and younger people. This will be achieved by such initiative proposed in the Development Framework as improved street/public realm quality, improved access and connectivity, improved signage and wayfinding, improved lighting and security, promoting a variety of cultural uses in the City Centre and encouraging City Centre living.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework

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

Minute of EP&I Committee on 7 September 2010 (item 14)

<http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=1562&T=1>

Minute of Council meeting 19 May 2010 (item 13)

[http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Published/C00000122/M00000371/\\$\\$\\$Minutes.doc.pdf](http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Published/C00000122/M00000371/$$$Minutes.doc.pdf)

Available on the Aberdeen City Council website or on request

Aberdeen Masterplanning Process

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

Aberdeen Local Plan 2008

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Planning/pla/pla_LocalPlan_home.asp

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009

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

"Building on Energy" – The Economic Manifesto for Aberdeen City and Shire

www.munroconsulting.com/aberdeencitycouncil/pdf/ACSEFManifesto.pdf

Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan 2006

<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=7731&sID=2991>


North Castlegate Design Brief

<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=900&sID=2991>

West End Study

Chapel Street Car Park Planning Brief
Denburn and Woolmanhill Planning Brief

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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