

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	31 January 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/ 013

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework, prepared as a guide to explore how the relationship between the Harbour and the City can be developed over the next 20 years.
- 1.2 The Development Framework has been produced by Barton Wilmore on behalf of the Aberdeen Harbour Board to build on the work of the Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework and explore the connections between the Harbour and the City, both physical and visual. The document considers how these connections can be improved so that the Harbour can continue to complement and support Aberdeen's economic and cultural growth.
- 1.3 A summary document of the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework is attached to this Committee Report. The full Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework (January 2012) is a large document containing a lot of illustrative material and can be viewed by accessing the following link:

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/masterplanning
- 1.4 A hard copy of the Development Framework is available in the Members' Library or within the Planning and Sustainable Development Service at Ground Floor North, Marischal College.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 (a) Approve the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework as interim planning advice.

(b) Pending Council approval for adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, agree for officers to implement the process to ratify the framework as Supplementary Guidance by the Scottish Government. This will include results of an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, and the addition of any necessary mitigation measures.

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 Aberdeen Harbour Board has 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 area, leading to a reduction in Council staff time.
- 3.2 Although this report does not commit the Council financially, the Framework suggest possible public realm improvements which may require partnership contribution from the Council in future, although costs and delivery mechanisms are as yet unknown and would be reported to a future meeting of Finance & Resources Committee.

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A number of sites with the area identified for the Development Framework are in the ownership of the Council. These include operational assets, surplus properties, and investment/ common good properties, many of which are subject to long ground leases. Any future development of Council owned properties would be subject to the normal planning process and in turn would require to be compliant with both existing policies and the proposed Development Framework.
- 4.2 The Development Framework reduces the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development in the area. 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.
- 4.3 A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken on the Harbour, North Dee and South Dee area as part of the preparation for the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan and no further assessment is therefore required for this Framework.
- 4.4 According to Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) any formally adopted Supplementary Guidance which would be likely to have a significant effect on an identified European Site shall be subject to an 'appropriate assessment' of its implications, also known as a

Habitats Regulations Appraisal. The River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is identified as a European Site. As detailed later in section 5.14 of this report, a screening assessment for this process is currently being carried out.

5 BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

Site Description

- 5.1 Aberdeen Harbour extends to 153 hectares, of which 83 hectares is land and 70 hectares water. There are more than six kilometres of quays, including 12 deep water berths, and significant back up areas supporting the port's extensive cargo handling and shipping operations.
- 5.2 Aberdeen Harbour is a major component in the transport infrastructure of North East Scotland. The Harbour is the main commercial port for North East Scotland and the principal port in Europe for marine support of the North Sea's oil and gas industry. It also handles shipping services to Norway, and passenger ferries to the northern isles of Orkney and Shetland.
- 5.3 It is vital that the potential of Harbour land and property is optimised to ensure that facilities are available for operation, expansion and potential new business, and that its operation is effective and efficient.
- 5.4 The Development Framework covers the area of land which is directly associated with the Harbour, called 'Activity Zone 2'. Please refer to page 16 of the full document for a mapped representation of this zone.
- 5.5 The Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework is an aspirational document that aims to present a series of 'concepts' and strategic level proposals for ways to better connect to and improve the harbour area. This will be supported by an 'action plan' which will contain a list of projects, their relative priority and potential partners.

Policy Summary

- 5.6 The Development Framework has been prepared following the Council's adopted Aberdeen Masterplanning Process.
- 5.7 The National Planning Framework 2 acknowledges the importance of working to strengthen the City's role as Scotland's northern gateway, building on its considerable science and research expertise and broadening its economic base. This includes that there should be a focus on recognising the role of Aberdeen Harbour.
- 5.8 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Authority has recently published the Main Issues Report (MIR) for the next strategic plan to cover up to 2035. This identifies Aberdeen Harbour's existing role within the regional energy industry and that it has a future

role as a base for the manufacturing, maintenance or operations associated with the renewable energy industry.

- 5.9 The Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan (ALDP) states that in addition to the provision of new sites it is important to safeguard the supply of existing industrial and business land from other development pressures. This is particularly important for sites situated in strategic locations, i.e., close to or beside Aberdeen Harbour (including land suitable for harbour-related uses).
- 5.10 The Development Framework has been prepared in accordance with the ALDP: Proposed Plan which states that the Harbour Board Operational Area will be subject to a Masterplan which will provide detailed guidance in respect of land uses, policies, proposals, access and connectivity within it and the adjoining areas. However, any proposal must also be compliant with other policies and allocations within the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan.
- 5.11 Policy BI4 of the ALDP: Proposed Plan states that within the operational land applying to Aberdeen Harbour there will be a presumption in favour of uses associated with the Harbour.
- 5.12 The ALDP: Proposed Plan is supportive of redevelopment within the existing urban area which can play a part in regeneration. It also states that new development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreational opportunities, including rights of access, and that every opportunity is taken to improve public access, permeability and links to green space for recreation and active travel. The Framework promotes a variety of public access and public realm opportunities.
- 5.13 The Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework is intended to act as interim planning advice, pending adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Key Issues

- 5.14 **Habitats Regulations Appraisal** – as detailed in section 4.4 above, Supplementary Guidance such as the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework is subject to an ‘Appropriate Assessment Screening’ of the implications the plan has on European designated sites. The sites considered for this screening assessment are the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and the Moray Firth SAC due to the protected Bottlenose Dolphin population. Further consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage is required. The results of this consultation, the ‘Appropriate Assessment Screening’ and any necessary mitigation measures, will be incorporated into the final document before it is ratified as Supplementary Guidance.

- 5.15 **Transportation** – it should be noted that the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework is a high level aspirational document. Further work, including detailed Transport Assessments will need to be undertaken prior to any proposals being investigated in detail.
- 5.16 The **Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework** identifies a range of significant ‘views’, existing ‘character areas’ and ‘gateways’ into and around the Harbour. Character areas and gateways include:

Character Areas	Gateways
Footdee – residential	Footdee / St Clements
St Clements – Industrial	St Clements / Castlegate & Regent Quay
Castlegate – Mixed Use	Regent Quay / Castlegate
City Centre – Mixed Use	Harbour / City Centre
Union Square – Mixed Use	City Centre / Union Square
North Dee – Mixed Use	Union Square / North Dee
South Dee – Industrial	North Dee / South Dee
Torry – Residential	Torry / Balnagask
Balnagask – Green / Recreation	Water / Land

- 5.17 **Strategic proposals** – the Development Framework proposes a series of 6 significant strategic proposals in and around the Harbour, aimed at better integrating and connecting it to the City Centre.

- 1 **Market Street: A Place** – Proposals include mechanisms to manage pedestrian movement through the area.
- 2 **North Dee: A New Sustainable Urban District** – Proposals include the promotion of sustainable transport methods, and creation of a central pedestrian/cycle route that connects the River Dee and the North Dee area to Union Square and the City Centre.
- 3 **The Esplanades, the Riverpark and South Dee** – Proposals include enhancing the area as a riverside park due to its importance as a gateway to the City Centre. Potential for a boardwalk and enhanced recreation/leisure activities.
- 4 **Castlegate, Virginia Street and Regents Quay** – This area has a significant opportunity to reconnect the city to the Harbour, with close proximity to public transport infrastructure, the future redevelopment of this area forms a critical element in achieving better connections.
- 5 **St Clements and the Beach Connection** – Improving the public realm and wayfinding, as despite not being perhaps an area of destination, there is the desire to travel through.
- 6 **The Torry Gateways** – Provide a built form gateway at the eastern edge that celebrates its role as the coastal access point to the City, improvements to the coastal route and along Sinclair Road for pedestrians and cyclists.

Design Principles

- 5.18 The Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework details **3 key objectives** which form the basis of the '**development guidance**' for the different areas in and around the Harbour. Refer to summary document and pages 58-61 of the full Framework illustrations showing the relevant boundaries which the objectives relate to. These key objectives are designed to link closely with policies contained in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan.
- 1 Consideration of land use, policies, proposals, access and connectivity within the Harbour and adjoining areas must be aimed at safeguarding the supply of existing industrial and business land.
 - 2 Housing and mixed use development within this area must take account of the character of the surrounding area to avoid undue conflict with adjacent land uses. Specifically, residential and mixed use development proposals must be comprehensive, shaped by a consultative masterplan approach and must not impinge upon the viability or operation of existing business in the vicinity.
 - 3 Development proposals must seek to protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of the Green Space Network within the Development Framework area. Proposals must demonstrate how they improve public access, permeability and links to green space for recreation and active travel.
- 5.19 The '**action plan**' contained within the Development Framework details proposals required to fulfil the design guidance and produce a cohesive, integrated and high quality Harbour environment. Each action considers the 3 key themes of **orientation, viewpoints and movement**, in order to deliver the desired proposal. It should be noted that proposals contained within the 'action plan' require further project-specific work, including with relevant partners and stakeholders.
- Branding
 - Wayfinding
 - Public Realm
 - Public Art and Lighting

Public Involvement

- 5.20 The following table details the consultation and engagement which has been carried out to date on the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework. It should be noted that further consultation with the public, stakeholders and partners will continue to be necessary in the future in order to fully develop and implement the 'action plan'.

Event/Date	Description
23 May 2011	Newsletter 1 distributed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union Square • Aberdeen Maritime Museum • Hanover Community Centre • Torry Community Centre • Aberdeen Harbour Headquarters
28-29 May 2011	Public exhibition at Union Square
30 May 2011	Public exhibition at Hanover Community Centre
31 May 2011	Public exhibition at Torry Community Centre
6 June – 1 July 2011	Public exhibition at Aberdeen Maritime Museum
17 June 2011	Newsletter 1 distributed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torry Community Council • Castlhill/Pittodrie Community Council • Key Stakeholders
20 June 2011	Planning Stakeholder Workshop Environmental Stakeholder Workshop
15 December 2011	Planning Stakeholder Workshop 2
January 2012	Community Council Workshops

5.21 The following table provides a summary of the main comments which were received as part of the consultation process to date (as detailed above). Further detail can be found in the Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework document itself.

Issue / comment
Public Exhibition Comments
Understood the economic importance of the harbour and that the development framework should not undermine or negatively impact on the operation of the port.
Recognised the value of having a harbour in the heart of the City.
Most people recognised that a certain degree of noise from the harbour is to be expected if choosing to live in certain locations around the harbour.
Suggestions made as to ways access at some key points to the harbour could be improved.
Harbour could be opened up for a day or two every 10 years or so to celebrate with events such as the 'Tall Ships'.
Viewing platforms / areas at key points around the harbour.
Ferry terminal/arrival point highlighted as area that could be improved.
Need to make improvements to the environment, lighting and signage.
Views of the Harbour from elevated ground such as Castlegate and Torry Battery are some of the best views in the City.
Suggestion of planting along eastern harbour edge of Market Street to soften,

but not screen, the boundary.
Reintroduction of a fish market, although it was understood fish catches delivered to the harbour are not of same historic quantities.
Stakeholder Workshop Comments
Discussions for new development focussed on North Dee and the potential for a new sustainable hub for business which could be connected to the train/bus stations.
South Dee's river edge was discussed as an opportunity to increase leisure and recreation activities close to the City Centre.
Issues were raised regarding land ownership and parking issues in the North Dee area.
Potential for improvements to Torry Battery but understanding of power/infrastructure constraints.
Safeguarding and enhancing views on the Harbour, including signage to such viewing points.
Identification of important gateways.
Protection of Footdee as important attraction and linkages to it.
Rich variety of character areas across the Harbour area was identified.
Traffic and congestion on Market Street at peak times and weekends.
Potential to reduce car orientated travel in the area.
Pedestrian routes, signage, viewing points, way-finding and green space network around the Harbour could be improves.
Improvements to cycle routes.
Public realm improvements, public art and lighting to improve and define spaces, key points and buildings around the Harbour.
Public realm improvements on Market Street.

- 5.22 **Response** – changes to Development Framework document have been made in response to comments made at the public consultation and stakeholder workshop. These include proposals such as:
- The creation of viewing points and defined public spaces around the Harbour area.
 - Improvements to way-finding and the creation of a 'C' route which acts as a branding mechanism to identify key character areas around the Harbour.
 - Improvements to leisure activities and access to the River Dee park area.
 - Identification of important gateways.
 - The potential for public realm improvements, including on Market Street whilst still retaining the strategic transport importance of the route.

6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The Development Framework includes enhanced walking opportunities around the Harbour area, including access and connectivity improvements, and key viewing points.

- 6.2 The Development Framework contributes to the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives and Priorities, including:
- 'Safer and Stronger'; improved opportunities and quality of life.
 - 'Building a Greener Scotland'; continue to preserve our habitats and biodiversity, promote the active enjoyment of them for health and recreation, and improving the built environment and sustainable use of our natural resources.
- 6.3 The framework contributes to the following Single Outcome Priorities: 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 and enhance it for future generations.
- 6.4 The proposal contributes to the 5 year Business Plan in terms of the following objectives – Communication and Community Engagement; sharing our plans and aspirations for the city, – delivering an up-to-date development plan, – facilitating new development projects to improve Aberdeen's living environment, – support open space initiatives, – work with partners to attract visitors, workers and investment to protect the economic future of the city, and – encourage the growth of local businesses through support of existing business sectors and development of new sectors
- 6.5 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, green space enhancement, and delivering a clean and attractive public environment.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been prepared. In summary, many of the aims of the proposal will have positive benefits, including;
- Health – improved access to the River Dee and Harbour area for leisure pursuits and opportunities for walking/cycling/exercise.
 - Public Safety – the Development Framework promotes the use of way finding and appropriate viewing areas to ensure public safety is maintained within the vicinity of the Harbour.


7 BACKGROUND PAPERS


- 7.1 The Aberdeen Harbour Development Framework (January 2012) is a large document containing a lot of illustrative material and can be viewed by accessing the following link:
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/masterplanning
- 7.2 Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan (September 2010)
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Planning/ldp/pla_local_development_plan.asp
- 7.3 Aberdeen Masterplanning Process 2008 (article 22, Planning Committee Minute, 6/11/08)
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Planning/pla/pla_planningbriefs.asp

8 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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