

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	31 January 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Friarsfield Development Framework
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/015

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the Friarsfield Development Framework, prepared as a guide for the future development of land safeguarded for development as Opportunity Site OP5 in the Aberdeen Local Plan 2008. The allocation has been carried forward as site OP51 in the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP).
- 1.2 The Development Framework has been produced by Ryden on behalf of Cala CALA Management Ltd and Stewart Milne Homes and aims to create an attractive, high quality and sustainable residential development of family homes.
- 1.3 A summary document of the Friarsfield Development Framework has been appended to this Committee Report. The Friarsfield 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 Member's Library and within the Planning and Sustainable Development Service at Ground Floor North, Marischal College.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- 2.2 (a) Approve the Friarsfield Development Framework as interim planning advice subject to additional detail being provided to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development to the following sections of the Framework:
- Transport and Accessibility
 - Planning and Design Principles

- Drainage and Water and
- Phasing and Delivery.

2.3 (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 developers have met the cost of preparation of the Development Framework, including all consultation and engagement. The proposals will result in efficiencies in the determination of future planning applications related to the Development Framework, leading to a reduction in Council staff time to assess future detailed proposals.

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no known property, legal or equipment implications arising from this report.

4.2 The Development Framework reduces the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development in the site area. Mixed use development and the efficient use of land will contribute towards the Council's aim of promoting sustainable development.

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 In accordance with the Proposed Local Development Plan, Appendix 4, the Proposed Action Programme and the Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Manual, the Development Framework references how the development will address requirements for cumulative and local transport infrastructure; public transport along with walking and cycling.

4.5 A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken on the Friarsfield site as part of the preparation for the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

4.6 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. A screening assessment for this process is currently being carried out.

5 BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Site Description

- 5.1 The site is located to the west of the City on the northern edge of Cults. The site is approximately 29.6 hectares in size. It is relatively contained being bound along the south by existing residential development, to the west by woodland, to the east by the woodland setting of Greenridge and to the north by the rising topography of the land.

Policy

- 5.2 The Friarsfield Development Framework is intended to act as interim planning advice, pending adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.
- 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 Development 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 allocated for 280 houses in the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan, this site has been carried forward from the Aberdeen Local Plan 2008. An affordable housing provision in accordance with the Approved Development Plan will be provided on site.
- 5.5 Proposal of Application Notices were submitted by Stewart Milne Homes and CALA on 5 August 2011. An area of land owned by Scotia Homes at the east end of the site has been granted planning permission for 10 houses.

Key Issues

Design Principles

- 5.6 The Development Framework strives to create a seamless expansion to the existing urban area of Cults. Housing should respect the established urban patterns of Cults. The buildings will be of a design

that is creative, sustainable and provides a good fit in the landscape. The development shall respond to the natural environment and create a residential area that will be a pleasure to live in and visit.

- 5.7 The development will respond to national policy “Designing Streets” in respect of pedestrian priorities and will include a lattice of streets and places connected by user- friendly pathways.
- 5.8 The topography of the site is key in shaping the design and layout of the development. The Development Framework respects the features of the site by retaining, where possible, stone walls which mark the field boundaries. Important groups of trees are retained within areas of landscaping as well as the Green Space Network to the south of the site in the Cults Burn corridor.

Key Principles

- 5.9 The design should respond to the local landscape context while addressing the lack of coherent design of the surrounding area by creating a sense of place.
- 5.10 The site will incorporate connected character areas with an integrated pedestrian, cycle and traffic network, intertwined with areas of existing and additional soft landscaping.
- 5.11 The vision highlights that the Development Framework aims to create –
- A high quality residential environment that meets a variety of housing needs while giving due consideration to the infrastructure and safety,
 - Integrate the site successfully into the surrounding area, ensuring new development fits well in the landscape as well as providing links from the site to the wider area,
 - Attractive open space and opportunities for continued recreation on the site while retaining access to the core path network,
 - Safeguard existing site features, enhance greenspace provision and include strategic landscaping, efficient connections to pedestrian and cycle paths and the public transport network.

Access and Connectivity

- 5.12 A network of paths through the site will be developed to ensure connectivity. The Core Paths number 63 and 87 cross the site then joins to the wider network at Core Path 66 the Deeside way. The internal footpath connections within the site will provide other paths for pedestrian and cycle movements. The site will be integrated within the existing area and core path network. Safe routes to school will also be incorporated into and through the site.
- 5.13 Bus stops are located on the A93 a ten minute walk from the edge of the site. Discussions have taken place with bus operators relating to

potential service provision along the link road from the east and turning into Kirk Brae and Friarsfield Road and through the site. The initial discussions have acknowledged that the principle of a route through the site is acceptable. The most regular buses into the city centre are located on the A93. Stagecoach Bluebird operate the Deeside service which is every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday and hourly on a Sunday.

- 5.14 Cults has a number of facilities available including shops, religious establishments and hotels. These are located in the District Shopping Centre within 10 minutes walk of the edge of the site.

Infrastructure

- 5.15 School role forecasts have included development potential on Friarsfield. It is understood that there is sufficient capacity within the existing Cults Primary and Secondary Schools to meet the needs of the proposed new housing. The Framework acknowledges that a school review is currently being undertaken that may have an impact on phased development on this site. The site will include safe routes to schools.
- 5.16 A Transport Assessment is required to support future planning applications relating to the site identifying areas of mitigation. The Transport Assessment will include the Friarsfield/Kirk Brae junction and the Friarsfield/ Abbotshall junction, as well as considering safety on Jacobs Ladder which was an area of concern during the consultation process. Initial development should be accessed from Friarsfield Road as this can be provided with minimum construction impact.
- 5.17 Section 6, page 42 of the Development Framework highlights the developer contributions and confirms at what time more detailed assessments are required.

Landscape Framework and Open Space

- 5.18 New strategic landscaping will be provided along the northern boundary of the site to provide a soft edge to development. Landscaping will also be provided along the link road, around Craighbank and around the sub station to mitigate visual impact.
- 5.19 Proposed landscaping aims to retain the local character and provide a sense of place for the development and an attractive, established feel to the development.
- 5.20 The main focus of open space is around the Cults Burn, to create a central focal point to the development and maintain the local character and village atmosphere. A flood risk assessment will be required for the Cults Burn. The burn will provide an area for informal recreation and will be kept as natural as possible. This area will also help mitigate

the visual effect of the new development from the existing community. Existing vegetation will be retained and enhanced where possible, which will also provide enhanced opportunities for wildlife.

- 5.21 The existing wooded knoll shown in view 19 in the Framework and the boundary wall will be retained, to create a focal point in the development. Linkages between the open space, the existing retained features and the Cults Burn will be provided. The knoll will be enhanced and will be part of the Green Space Network throughout the site. New areas of open space will retain and enhance the character of the area.

Urban Design and Layout

- 5.22 The development will consider with Scottish Government policy 'Designing Streets' and 'Designing Place.' Frontages are proposed along internal streets to encourage safe and active streets. A detailed design and access statement will be submitted along with any planning application. Planning applications will be required to comply with the Development Framework.
- 5.23 Building heights within the site will generally be two storeys high, as a reflection of the surrounding existing properties. House types will generally be detached and semi-detached.

Topography and Orientation

- 5.24 The layout responds to the natural topography to minimise earthworks and buildings will be orientated to maximise environmental benefits, taking advantage of the generally southerly aspect of the site. Bright and sunny streets can foster a positive sense of place and reduce heat and light requirements.

Drainage

- 5.25 Best practice techniques will be used with a Drainage Impact Assessment and a Sustainable Urban Drainage strategy being required as part of a future planning application. A construction method statement as part of a future planning application has been requested by SEPA to avoid any impact on the River Dee SAC.

Infrastructure Requirements

- 5.26 Page 42 of the Development Framework highlights the Infrastructure Requirements including health, education, transportation, water and core paths. These will require further investigation including Transport Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment as part of the planning application process.

Phasing and Delivery

5.27 The phasing for the site is demonstrated on pages 43 – 45 of the Development Framework document. First phase application is expected in early 2012, with construction expected to begin in spring 2013. The first phase largely relates to the essential on - site works, SUDs provision and forming access for the Craigbank Properties.

Phase two includes the central housing area and the majority of the link road. The provision of around 160 units is expected in this phase.

Phase three includes the balance of the housing and completion of the link road. It should be noted however that the appropriate time to complete the link road will be determined through the Transport Assessment.

Public consultation

5.28 The public consultation exercises for the Development Framework and the planning application have been run in parallel. Throughout the process the design team have been have been committed to involving members of the Community, Local Councillors and the Community Council.

5.29 The community consultation and engagement process for the development of the Framework has involved:

- Meeting with Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council – 2 August 2011 2pm to 8pm.
- First public consultation event - Cults Hotel 8 September 2011
- Meeting with Landowner – 17 October 2011 and 16 November 2011
- Second public consultation event – Cults hotel 1 November 2011 3pm to 8pm.

5.30 The meeting with the Community Council on the 2 August raised the main areas of concern as:

- Schooling,
- the impact of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and
- affordable housing provision.

A further meeting was held with the Community Council on the 25 August to advise them of the progress relating to the topics of:

- Transportation and linkages,
- education and
- house types and numbers.

5.31 For the first consultation event, around 125 people attended with 61 representations being made. A further 58 representations were also received requesting contributions to a link road at North Garthdee Farm. The feedback form from the event included 6 questions. The

full consultation responses can be seen on pages 5 – 12 of the Development Framework. The second consultation event took place on the 1 November 2011, around 80 people attended the event with around 40 responses being submitted, these can be seen on pages 10 - 12. The comments are summarised below with associated outcomes:

Key Points Raised	Outcome
Village and community atmosphere should be retained. Character could be continued by using greenery within the site. Walls and trees should be retained.	Endeavour to maintain village atmosphere. The character will be retained by introducing open spaces throughout the site and with the mix of high quality housing and retention of dykes and landscaping.
Properties should be in scale with the surroundings.	
Footpaths and cycle paths to and through the site, access to forestry commission land, good pedestrian access to Den of Cults.	The proposal identifies new routes, linking to existing path network.
Varied opinions relating to the importance of public transport provision - 20% though very important while 9% said it was not important. Positive – Important to support the development. Negative – adds another burden to the existing network.	Mixed response relating to the requirement of public transport provision. Initial discussions have been held with bus operators.
14% stated no houses should be built.	The site is allocated in the Development Plan therefore the principle of development is acceptable.
Mature trees, natural stone walls and Cults Burn are the main features.	Mature trees, Cults burn and stone walls where practicable will be retained.
Ensure suitable play areas and additional areas of open space.	Dedicated open space provision will be determined at the detailed application stage. The main open space provision is around the Cults Burn which will be retained and enhanced.
13% wanted additional open space	
A central open space was suggested, open space along the Cults Burn.	
Open spaces should not necessarily be squares and parks but it is important to have a mix. Recreational uses to the north of the site would be useful.	
Upgrades suggested for playground at Kirk Road/Drive, North side of Friarsfield and corner of Kirk Brae and Friarsfield Road.	Potential contribution through planning gain if deemed appropriate
Impact of development on	An indicative phasing plan

infrastructure, need confidence of delivery. A detailed phasing plan is required.	has been added to the development Framework
Concern of increase of traffic, adequacy of existing roads, safety, junctions and concern over Jacobs Ladder closure.	An initial Transport Assessment has been carried out which demonstrates there is capacity on the roads network for this site. A full transport assessment will be carried out as part of the planning application process.
Concern about school overcrowding.	Should school roles be an issue the developer will need to mitigate this through developer contributions at the appropriate time
Concern over flooding and drainage, in particular at Kirk Brae.	A drainage impact assessment will be required as part of any planning application to ensure it is dealt with appropriately on the site.
Concern over loss of greenbelt, no development needed.	This site is allocated in the Development Plan and is appropriate for development.
Buildings should be no more than two storeys high.	A range of house types will be provided and will not exceed 2 storeys.
Bats at Cults Burn.	Investigations are ongoing.
Concern over pollution and noise.	Any noise from the development would be controlled by conditions. A construction method statement is required as part of a planning application for the site and this will ensure no pollution enters the cults burn
Social housing not considered to be welcome and housing for ordinary people should be provided.	The development plan requires affordable housing provision.

5.32 Generally the Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council welcomed the Masterplanning Process and early community engagement, but expressed concern that infrastructure must be delivered to support development of Friarsfield.

Key Issues

6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The site includes access to walking and cycling networks.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The proposal contributes to the 5 year Business Plan in terms of working with our partners to attract visitors, workers and investment to protect the economic future of the city, encouraging the growth of local businesses through support of existing business sectors and development of new sectors and facilitating new development projects to improve Aberdeen's living and working environment.
- 6.4 The proposal is consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan, in particular 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 Development 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 and family housing in Aberdeen as a result of development.

Health – Improved walking and cycling access and play areas for children.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The Friarsfield Development Framework (December 2011 issue) is a large document containing a lot of illustrative material and can be viewed by accessing the following link:
http://thezone/PI/SL_stratlead_reports.asp
- 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
- 7.4 Aberdeen Local Plan 2008
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/planning_sustainable_development/pla_LocalPlan_home.asp

8 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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