

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	6 November 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Loirston Development Framework
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/200

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the Loirston Development Framework, prepared as a strategy for the future development of land identified in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) as OP77, OP80 and OP78.
- 1.2 A summary document of the Development Framework is appended to this Committee Report. The full Development Framework for Loirston (November 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
- 1.3 A hard copy of the full Development Framework is available in the Members' Library (Town House), within the Planning and Sustainable Development Service at Ground Floor North, Marischal College, or by contacting the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation team.
- 1.4 The Development Framework has been made available to the Nigg, Kincorth & Leggart and Cove & Altens community councils for information prior to this report being considered for public consultation.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - (a) Approve the Loirston Development Framework as interim planning advice; and
 - (b) Agree for officers to implement the process to ratify the Development Framework as Supplementary Guidance. This will include a 4 week public consultation with results reported to Committee prior to submission to Scottish Government.

2.2 Definitions

‘Interim Planning Advice’ – this specifies that the Development Framework is in the public domain and available for the purposes of a formal City-wide consultation. As such it becomes a material consideration in the determination of any planning application. The duration of consultation will typically be 4 weeks, given that public engagement has taken place throughout the preparation of the Framework. This allows responses to be collated and reported back in the next Committee cycle.

‘Supplementary Guidance’ (SG) – this is adopted and issued by a planning authority in connection with a Local Development Plan, as a result any such guidance will form part of the Development Plan. Before adoption, the SG must be publicised and a period for representations to be made specified, this includes the targeting of key consultees and stakeholders who may want the opportunity to comment. Following the specified consultation period and as a result of comments received, relevant changes will be made to the final document before reporting back to Committee and subsequent submission to Scottish Ministers. After 28 days have elapsed, the authority may then adopt the guidance unless Scottish Ministers have directed otherwise.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The site is in multiple ownership, however, the largest two landowners, Hermiston and Aberdeen City Council have worked together to involve all interested parties throughout the masterplanning process. A plan of the site ownership is shown in Section 2.2 (page 14) of the Development Framework. The Framework has been developed ‘landownership blind’ with regard to density, land use and character. However, where delivery of key infrastructure is critical, ownership has been considered to ensure proposals are pragmatic. As such the Council has a financial interest in the planning designation and future development of the site.
- 3.2 The developers have met the cost of preparing the Development Framework including all consultation and engagement work.

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Lochinch Farm Countryside Interpretation Centre is currently located within OP77. Any options for its future and potential relocation will be considered through close engagement with Aberdeen City Council’s Asset Management Service and during detailed masterplan and planning application stages.
- 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 economic development.

- 4.3 Approving the Development Framework will contribute to efficiencies in determining future planning applications and a reduction in Council staff time to assess future detailed proposals. 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 contributes towards a higher rate of new house building in the City, including 25% affordable housing provision in accordance with the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012).
- 4.5 In accordance with the Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Action Programme and the Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Manual, the Development Framework references how the development will seek to address requirements for cumulative and local transport infrastructure; public transport along with walking and cycling.
- 4.6 A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken on the Loirston site as part of the preparation for the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

5 BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The Development Framework has been produced by Optimised Environments Ltd. (OPEN) on behalf of Hermiston Securities and Aberdeen City Council and aims to produce a new residential community to the south of the City on land surrounding Loirston Loch. A multi disciplinary project team has contributed to the preparation of the Framework, consisting of:

OPEN (Optimised Environments Ltd.) – Masterplanners
Knight Frank – Planning Consultants
Ironside Farrar – Environmental Consultants
Transport Planning Ltd. - Transport Consultants
Fairhurst Ltd. – Engineering Consultants
Media House – Public Relations
TPS Planning – Education Consultants.

Site Description

- 5.2 The Loirston site lies to the south of Aberdeen and on the border between the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire boundaries. The A90 Aberdeen-Dundee Trunk Road forms a boundary on the west side, while A956 (Wellington Road) both bisects the area to the south and forms an eastern boundary.

The site area falls into or abuts three Community Council catchments of Nigg, Kincorth and Leggart, and, Cove and Altens. The nearest neighbourhood centre with retail and community facilities is located in Cove. The site occupies an important strategic position within the context of Aberdeen City both as a gateway site and as a resource for open spaces such as Loirston Loch and Kincorth Hill. The site covers a total area of 186 hectares.

Evolving Context

5.3 Section 2.3 (Page 15-16) of the Framework document details a number of existing proposals and consents are already in place within the masterplanning area. For the purposes of this Development Framework these have been considered as fixed.

- Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR)
- Aberdeen Football Club (AFC) stadium
- Cove Rangers stadium and training pitches
- Cove masterplan
- Aberdeen Gateway Site
- Balmoral Business Park

5.4 Framework options – due to current uncertainty regarding the final location for a new Secondary School and the delivery of various football clubs' proposals, a number of options to the 'Baseline' Framework have been developed which allow the Framework to accommodate various scenarios. As final decisions on these various components are not expected prior to the completion of the Development Framework, these options show flexibility and allow future decisions on these to be taken account of. Details of the options can be found in Section 5.20 (page 75-76) of the Framework document.

5.5 It should be noted that for the purposes of the 'Baseline Framework', a slightly altered scheme for the AFC is proposed which reflects the current land deal between AFC and the landowner. Although the Framework has suggested how elements could be altered for masterplanning the site as a whole, it is understood that such changes will have implications for planning permissions and legal agreements. An Option has been produced within Section 5.20 of the Framework illustrating how the baseline framework can be adjusted to accommodate the consented AFC layout with minor changes locally to specific development blocks.

Policy Summary

5.6 The Development Framework has been prepared following the Council's adopted Aberdeen Masterplanning Process and contributes towards the Scottish Government and Aberdeen Local Development Plan policy aims of raising design quality 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.

- 5.7 The Loirston site is identified in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012) as Opportunity Site (OP77) for 1500 homes, 11 hectares of employment land, with the potential to accommodate a football or Community Stadium, and a Gypsy / Traveller site. The housing provision is split into land release phases, 1100 homes proposed for the period up to 2016 and 400 homes up to 2023.
- 5.8 The Local Development Plan also identifies land at Charleston (OP78) to the south Wellington Road for 20.5 hectares of employment land for the period 2024-2030; a 2 hectare extension to the existing employment site OP69 Aberdeen Gateway; and land at Calder Park OP80 for a new stadium and sports facilities for Cove Rangers Football Club.
- 5.9 This proposal helps bring forward land for development in the early phases of the Local Development Plan and help meet the targets and objectives in the Structure Plan, including that development should generally be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare as an average across the whole site.

Opportunity and Vision

- 5.10 The vision is to create a highly desirable and sustainable mixed-use community which is built around a strong green space network and allows easy access to its surrounding resources. The Development Framework details how the existing natural resources at Loirston offer the opportunity for an integrated new neighbourhood of Aberdeen. There is potential for high quality waterside development which enhances the edge of the loch whilst acting as a highly visible gateway to the City of Aberdeen. The vision for Loirston is based around 5 key aspirations:
1. A place tied to the existing landscape
 2. A place of green spaces
 3. A place of safe and green streets
 4. A place with a core density
 5. A place of distinctive character

Design Principles

- 5.11 The Framework sets out a number of key **urban design principles**, which have in turn informed the detailed proposals for the various character areas.
1. Active frontages
 2. Internal block accessibility

3. Legible street layout
4. Civic activities
5. Relationship to open space
6. Use of key gateway and corner features
7. Integration with natural environment
8. Variety of architecture
9. Coherent public realm

Character Areas

5.12 The Framework identifies 8 'character areas', as named below. Within the document (pages 58-65) each area has a detailed set of 'key character aspects'; however a short description of each area has been provided in this Report. Integration of these character areas is critical to the success of the overall development – particularly community integration (existing and new) and delivery of functional open space.

Character Area	Description
Lochside	Predominantly higher density residential with some potential for community and commercial uses at ground floor level. Area includes some employment uses allocated in the southern plots.
Primary Street / Core Settlement	Area is composed of development blocks which primarily front the Primary Street or Redmoss Road. Medium-high density residential with some commercial and local retail uses on ground floors fronting the Primary Street.
Burnside	Development blocks and areas which front onto the watercourse which runs into and out of Loirston Loch. Primarily employment, local retail and some medium density residential uses.
Sports and buffer landscape	Contains football proposal land and associated buffer landscapes. Potential for shared facilities between the sports facilities and any educational facilities which are determined to be delivered within the site.
Hillside	Area is centred on the lower south-facing slopes of Kincorth Hill consisting of low-density residential. A secondary core is located at the junction of Redmoss Road and the Primary Street with the opportunity for local retail and commercial uses in this location.
A90	Area comprises the south-facing development blocks which face towards the A90. Predominantly low-density residential, plot for the Primary School, extensive SUDs and green space corridor.
Existing residential and employment	Adjacent to the A90 with existing residential and employment uses. Little significant residential development is expected in this area, although plans for individual dwellings are currently under

	development in a number of locations within this strip.
Charleston	Identified within the ALDP as OP78 and allocated for future employment use. Detailed development has not yet been explored, although indicative access points and development parcels have been illustrated for the purposes of the Framework.

Environment and Open Space

- 5.13 Loirston Loch is a man-made water feature and designated a Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS). The Loch and LNCS boundary are important for nature conservation, the buffer strips helps to protect the water environment and the LNCS designation, plus the site has high landscape value, and therefore, has been safe-guarded within the Framework, including opportunities for improved public access.
- 5.14 Whilst initial environmental studies suggest that potential environmental impacts can be avoided or minimised to an acceptable level through sensitive design, the proposed development requires that a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment is produced to support the Planning Permission in Principle application (PPiP), this will cover OP77 and part of OP80.
- 5.15 The agricultural history of the site means there are a number of landscape features which will be retained in the development layouts, including field patterns and consumption dykes. There is also the opportunity for landscape and channel improvements for the watercourses which enter and exit Loirston Loch.
- 5.16 The Framework has been designed with reference to ACC's Open Space Supplementary Guidance (March 2012). Section 5.4 of the Framework details how the key open spaces and their functions will be accommodated throughout the site. This includes:

Major Open Space	Loirston Loch and associated open space (c.17 ha)
Neighbourhood Open Space	Landscape strip along A90. Deculverted/improved stream corridor to the watercourse entering the Loch. Landscape buffer to the stadium and open space around power lines.
Local Open Spaces	Local areas have been identified where there are landscape features which are to be integrated and retained into the development (e.g. consumption dykes) and areas appropriate for civic or public functions.

Relationship with Loirston Loch

5.17 Loirston Loch is a significant part of the overall identity and landscape setting of the development. The LNCS boundary defines the buffer from the Loch into which development blocks should not encroach. Although views to Kincorth Hill from Wellington Road across the Loch are limited due to both the existing topography and the shelterbelt planting along Redmoss Road, the Framework document provides guidance and a series of '**design solutions**' for how the open space and built character should be considered. Section 5.18 and 5.19 of the Framework document provides further detail.

5.18 Design solutions

- High quality architecture to reflect the desire to create a dramatic new gateway to the City.
- Ensure sightlines to Loch are maintained.
- Gable ends to Loch punctuated by 'fingers' of open space.
- Limit development height beside the Loch and utilise a setback to upper floors.
- Public access and environmental improvements within the LNCS boundary, utilising and extending the existing path network
- Balance public access within sensitive areas.
- Consider use of undercroft parking solutions where topography and infrastructure requirements allow.

Housing

5.19 The proposals for Loirston include a full range of housing types and sizes including: apartments and flats, terraced units, townhouses, semi-detached and detached. All respective developers will work with the Council and the registered social landlords to provide the required level of **affordable housing** in accordance with the Aberdeen Local Development Plan – being no less than 25% of the total number of units.

5.20 There is a requirement for one Gypsy / Traveller site to be allocated in the Framework. Several potential sites have been identified within OP77 for a Gypsy / Traveller site of around 0.5 hectares, following guidance contained within ACC's Gypsy and Traveller Sites Supplementary Guidance (2010). Please refer to pages 49 and 52 of the Framework document for further detail. Such a site could be either transit or permanent, with detailed aspects of design, location, delivery and phasing to be agreed with ACC through the Phase 1 masterplanning process.

Access and Connectivity

5.21 Access to the Loirston site is primarily from Wellington Road with additional access from the proposed stadium junction, Redmoss Road and Wellington Circle. A full Transport Assessment (TA) Scoping

Report has been prepared to accompany the Development Framework and should be referred to for specific details relating to access and connectivity. A Transport Assessment Scoping Report has been submitted to Aberdeen City Council Roads and Transportation Officers for consideration and has informed the production of the Loirston Development Framework. A full Transport Assessment (TA) is currently being prepared by the developers transport consultants to support a future Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) which examines the current and future transport matters associated with the proposed development.

5.22 The Framework document and the resulting development at Loirston is designed to provide the following:

- Well-connected and permeable network of streets.
- Integration with Core Path and existing path network, including aiding delivery of an aspirational Core Path.
- Integration with surrounding cycle network and promote opportunities for cycling.
- A clear hierarchy of streets which responds to different transport users. In order of decreasing vehicular traffic this includes (1) Entrance boulevard (2) Primary Street (3) Secondary Streets (4) Minor Streets.
- A set of parameters and character for each street type (as mentioned above).
- Accommodate frequent public transport through the site along the primary street corridor.
- Two access points onto Wellington Road and explore the opportunity at Redmoss Road for a public transport/pedestrian/cycle connection. Although detailed vehicular access points are to be fully confirmed as part of the TA.
- Contribution to Strategic Transport Fund to mitigate cumulative impact of development.

Infrastructure

5.23 Education provision – the ALDP Action Programme details the requirement to provide one new Primary School and potential to provide one new Secondary School. The project team have marked provision for a Primary School within the Framework.

5.24 The current position which the Scottish Government have agreed in principle would provide 2/3 funding for a single replacement school for Torry and Kincorth Academies. The Council would identify a preferred site, considering all possible sites, before undertaking a statutory consultation exercise on any proposal. A potential site for a Secondary School has been identified as an option in the Development Framework and will be reserved until a decision is made by ACC about the provision of secondary education in this area.

- 5.25 The detail and exact phasing of the school requirements for Loirston will also be informed by the Education Study which is currently being carried out by TPS Planning on behalf of the developers.
- 5.26 Health care provision – the ALDP Action Programme details the requirement for an extension at Cove Bay Health Centre to support an additional 3 new GP’s, 2 new dental chairs, and 1 new Community Pharmacy within the new settlement. These requirements will be funded from developer contributions and the phasing agreed with NHS Grampian.
- 5.27 Water and drainage – a full list of requirements will be identified following completion of a detailed Drainage Impact Assessment and Scottish Water Development Impact Assessment which Hermiston Securities will commission. A Drainage Strategy will also be prepared and submitted as part of the application for Planning Permission in Principle.
- 5.28 Local retail, commercial and employment – the Framework identifies locations for local retail and commercial development along key routes and those which address civic spaces. Such uses are separate to other ‘Employment’ allocations and are intended to provide support services appropriate for the new residential community, for example an ‘express’ style local supermarket. Several development blocks are identified for Employment uses, specifically at the southern entrance from Wellington Road. These sites will provide a range of types from commercial, leisure and offices uses.
- 5.29 A detailed break down of the Infrastructure Requirements for the site can be found on pages 81-83 of the Development Framework.

Phasing

- 5.30 An indicative phasing strategy has been developed which details the delivery of the allocation in accordance with the ALDP 2012.

Phase 1 2007-2016	400 units, access from Wellington Road, range of residential densities along Primary Street and Lochside improvements.
Phase 2 2007-2016	400 units, landscape park along watercourse and primary school at end of phase.
Phase 3 2007-2016	300 units, southern side to Redmoss Road complete and associated buffer landscaping.
Phase 4 2017-2023	400 units, remaining plots to the north opened up.
Beyond 2020	Charleston employment area (OP78).

Public Consultation and Involvement

5.31 Throughout the design process for Loirston the project team have involved local people and stakeholders in the proposals. The public consultation for both the Development Framework and an application for Planning Permission in Principle have been run in tandem to avoid duplication and confusion. One major consultation event and separate meetings with the three Community Councils that represent the area (Nigg, Cove & Altens and Kincorth & Leggart) have taken place.

5.32 Design for the site has evolved with continued input from the community. Their input has been fundamental in shaping the proposals ensuring that they meet the aspirations for the site. Events that took place during the masterplanning process for the sites include:

- Local Development Plan: Development Options Consultation Event – 8 June 2009
- Local Development Plan: Main Issues Report Consultation Event – 18 November 2009
- Joint Community Council meeting - 7 June 2012
- Community Exhibition - 19 June 2012
- Joint Community Council meeting follow up - 23 August 2012

5.33 The main issues arising from consultation so far include:

- **Education, Community and Supporting Facilities**

Concerns were raised regarding provision of primary and secondary education and potential of joint campus on site should be considered. Comments were in favour of some form of retail provision and community facilities including leisure and open space, affordable and sheltered housing was considered essential, but the provision of a Gypsy/Traveller site was not favoured. The project team are currently producing an Education Study, this along with close consultation with Aberdeen City Council will inform the exact education provision.

- **Transport and Infrastructure**

Concerns were raised about the impact of the development and traffic on the surrounding road network. Use of Redmoss Road and Nigg Road as bus only routes, and causeway across Loirston Loch were not favoured. The need for a new access from the A90(T), safe pedestrian crossings of Wellington Road, better bus services and retention of existing path networks were also key concerns. The project team are currently undertaking a detailed Transport Assessment, which will inform a detailed road layout and identification of transport infrastructure requirements. The causeway proposal has been removed.

- **Environment and Loirston Loch**

Concerns were raised about the impact of the development on wildlife, flora and fauna, and green corridors which link surrounding open space resources. Concern was expressed regarding the visual impact of the development, impact on gateway to the City, the height and proximity of buildings on the edge of the Loch. The importance of balancing accessibility, angling and wildlife preservation whilst retaining and enhancing as much of the natural character of the Loch was another key concern. Support in principle was also raised for a community trust to be formed to help manage and protect the future of the Loch. The project team have included a detailed section within the Framework on the relationship to the Loch (Section 5.18 and 5.19) and they have begun an Environmental Impact Assessment process to cover environmental issues in detail.

- **Football Stadium**

Concerns were raised about potential parking problems on matchdays and existing permission for Aberdeen Football Club Stadium prejudicing the masterplanning of the wider Loirston area. Discussions are ongoing between the site developers and AFC regarding site acquisition and other details relating to provision of a stadium. Details of controlled parking and access arrangements will form part of the Transport Assessment.

5.34 Full details of the comments received for the engagement process and the responses made can be found on Pages 8-12 of the Development Framework.

5.35 Pending approval of this report, the Loirston Development Framework will be the subject of statutory consultation. The following list highlights those that will be consulted. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list:

- Nigg Community Council
- Cove & Altens Community Council
- Kincorth/Leggart Community Council
- Kincorth Nature Reserve Management Committee
- Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Authority
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Historic Scotland
- Scottish Enterprise Grampian
- Transport Scotland
- NHS Grampian

- NESTRANS
- Planning Gain

- 5.36 The results of the statutory consultation will be reported to the Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee in due course, including any recommended amendments to the Framework.
- 5.37 It is important to note that engagement will continue throughout the development process, during detailed masterplan stages and any subsequent planning applications.

6 IMPACT



- 6.1 The proposal 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.
- 6.2 The proposal contributes to the 5 Year Business Plan in terms of objective – Communication and Community Engagement; sharing our plans and aspirations for the city, – delivering an up-to-date plan, – facilitating new development projects to improve Aberdeen’s living environment and, – support open space initiatives.
- 6.3 The proposal contributes towards the Aberdeen City Council Administrations vision for Aberdeen: 2012 – 2017, particularly creating a City which is a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit. It specifically contributes to the follows objectives: Governance – encouraging citizens to participate in design and development; Living – improving opportunities for physical activity; Environment – energy efficient design and construction, attractive streetscapes and access to green space; Economy – improve access to range of affordable housing; Mobility – encourage cycling, walking and promoting a sustainable transport systems which reduce carbon emissions.
- 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;
- Race – the proposals include the provision of a Gypsy Traveller site to improve access to facilities.
 - Younger – the proposals include the provision of Play Spaces for children.
 - Other (Housing) – greater provision of housing to meet the housing demand and affordable housing to meeting housing needs.
 - Other (Health) – improved access useable open spaces for leisure pursuits and opportunities for walking/cycling/exercise.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The Loirston Development Framework (November 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 2012
<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=42278&slD=9484>
- 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

Rebecca Oakes
Planner – Masterplanning, Design and Conservation
 01224 (52) 2241
 roakes@aberdeencity.gov.uk