

Planning Development Management Committee

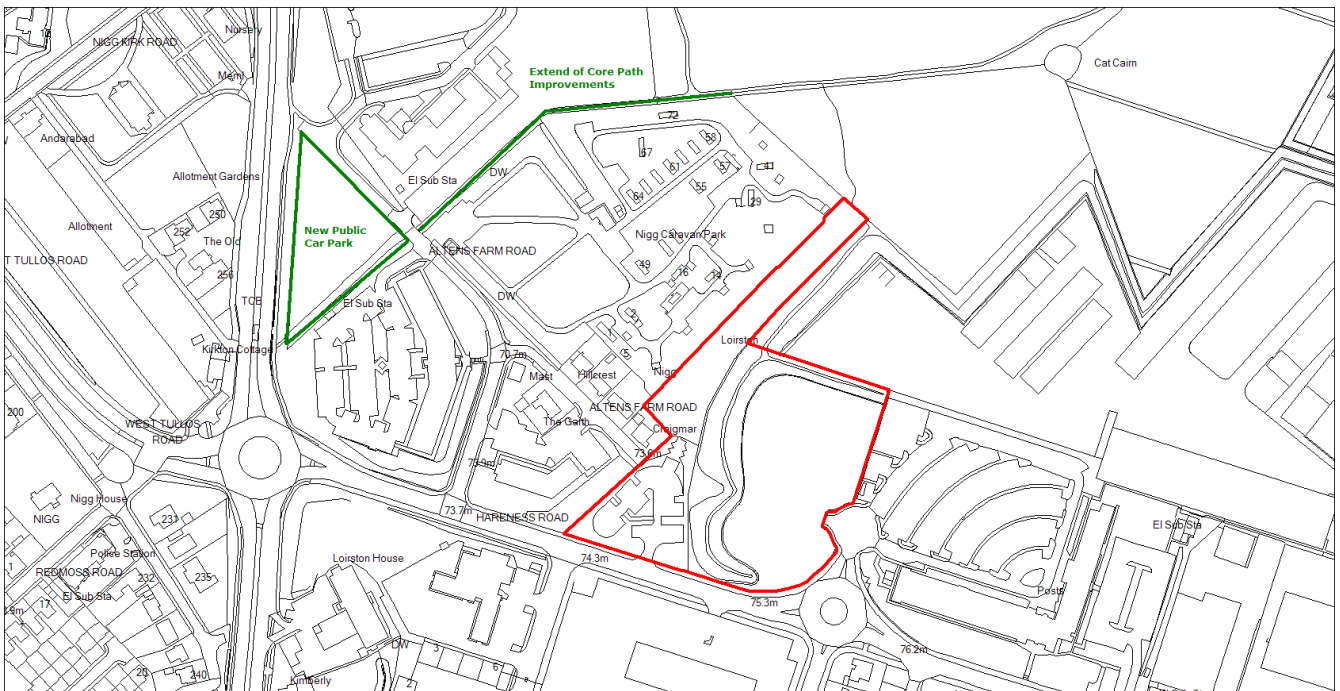
LAND ADJACENT TO SCOTT HOUSE, SITE 38
HARENESS ROAD, ALTENS INDUSTRIAL

ERECTION OF 4 STOREY OFFICE BUILDING
(CLASS 4-BUSINESS) INCORPORATING
BASEMENT CAR PARKING AND
LANDSCAPING

For: Argon Developments (North) Ltd.

Application Type : Detailed Planning Permission
Application Ref. : P131312
Application Date: 06/09/2013
Officer: Matthew Easton
Ward : Kincorth/Nigg/Cove (N Cooney/C
Mccaig/A Finlayson)

Advert : Section 34 -Proj. Pub.
Concern
Advertised on: 18/09/2013
Committee Date: 28/11/13
Community Council : Objection



RECOMMENDATION: Willingness to approve, subject to conditions, but to withhold the issue of the consent document until –

1. the applicant has entered into a memorandum of agreement to secure the provision of –
 - a) a new public car park on land between Wellington Road and Altens Farm Road; and
 - b) improvements to the section of Core Path 103 between Wellington Road and Tullos Hill

2. the applicant has entered into a section 75 legal agreement to secure a financial contributions towards the Strategic Transport Fund.

DESCRIPTION

The site comprises some 1.84 hectares of vacant land within Altens Industrial Estate. It is located on the north side of Hareness Road, approximately 150m east of the junction with Wellington Road and adjacent to the junction with Crawpeel Road.

There are no structures on the site and it comprises overgrown grassland and vegetation and shrubbery. There is a bund which runs through the centre of the site and along the northern boundary which is approximately 2.5m in height. Otherwise the site is relatively flat, with a slight slope down from west to east.

Access to the site is from an existing mini-roundabout shared with Scott and Trafalgar House which is immediately north of the Hareness Road / Crawpeel Road roundabout.

There is a public car park in the south west corner of the site which is accessed from Hareness Road. However the car park has been closed for several years and fallen into a state of disrepair.

Approximately 115m to the north east of the site is a scheduled monument known as 'Cat Cairn', part of a series of cairns found on Tullos Hill. The monument is of national importance as the remains of a prehistoric funerary monument of probably Bronze Age date, which may form part of a relict prehistoric landscape.

The site is predominately surrounded by business and industrial uses. To the east are Scott House and Trafalgar House, two modern four storey office buildings and associated car parking which date from 1990 and 1985 respectively Scott House is occupied by Nexen Petroleum and Trafalgar House by Wood Group Engineering.

To the south, across Hareness Road are premises occupied by John R. Weir commercial vehicle centre. Along the west boundary, close to Hareness Road is an area of soft landscaping and trees beyond which is a two storey office building occupied by AMEC Group. Further north along this boundary is the end of Altens Farm Road and an unoccupied house. Beyond this is the former Nigg Caravan Park which has recently been acquired by the developer. To the north of the site is an industrial yard used which is occupied by Peterson SBS and used for the storage of pipes and other offshore equipment. Beyond this is open green space forming Tullos Hill.

RELEVANT HISTORY

The site has been subject of several applications for office development over recent years; however the current application is not connected to any of the previous proposals.

- Outline planning permission (A4/1864) for 6000m² of class 4 (office) space spread across five 2 storey pavilions was granted by the Planning Committee in June 2005. Provision was made for a footpath and public car park (31 spaces) which would provide recreational access to Tullos Hill. The planning permission was released in January 2006 after the signing of a legal agreement to secure financial contributions towards improvements on Wellington Road and the provision of the land for the public car park in perpetuity.
- Reserved matters (A6/0829) associated with the above outline planning permission was approved in June 2006.
- Detailed planning permission (A7/2453) for 8121m² of class 4 (office) space, associated parking and re-configuration of the public car park was granted by delegated powers in May 2008. The proposed development featured two 3 storey buildings and one 2 storey building arranged around a central car park of 237 spaces. The buildings had a contemporary design and would have been predominately glazed. The existing public car park was to be re-configured with 31 spaces still being provided.
- Two variations (P090437 and P121468) to the layout of the public car park were submitted and approved in May 2009 and December 2012 respectively.

The car park in the south west corner of the site and an access path north leading to Tullos Hill was provided through a section 75 legal agreement related to planning application A4/1864. The legal agreement requires the car park and access to be made available to the Council in perpetuity for the purpose of car parking and recreational access by the public to Tullos Hill. Access to the car park however has been blocked-off by the previous site owner to prevent unauthorised encampments at the site and the area has become overgrown and fallen into disrepair.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed to erect a four office building which would provide 19,233m² (gross) / 16,996m² (net) of class 4 office space.

The applicant has agreed terms to lease the completed development to a substantial Aberdeen oil & gas company. The development would enable the co-location of a number of existing facilities within Aberdeen together with the creation of expansion space to meet the occupier's continued growth. The total number of existing and new jobs will be approximately 1,800.

Proposed Building

The building would be L-shaped with the main elevations facing south onto Hareness Road and west towards Altens Farm Road. The shorter wing of the building would be positioned along the southern boundary of the site, facing onto Hareness Road. It would be 66m long and 33m wide. The second wing would be 73m long and 33m wide and face west towards Altens Farm Road and the former Nigg Caravan Park.

The main roof of the building would be flat and have a height of 18m. A plant room would be included on part of the building which would result in a maximum height of 20.1m.

The building would be constructed using a steel frame and clad in curtain wall glazing and grey rainscreen panelling. The central core of the building which includes stairwells, lifts and service risers would be located on the west elevation and would protrude 10m from the main face of the building. Two smaller cores would be located on the north and east elevations, extending slightly over the main roof line of the building, giving the impression of 'book-ends'. Each core would be finished predominately in mid to dark grey powder coated metal cladding with areas of glazing. The central core would also feature silver cladding panels.

The entrance would feature frameless glazing and a small flat metal panel canopy coloured dark grey. The plant room on the roof would be finished in silver vertical metal plank cladding. The curtain wall glazing would have silver frames and feature an irregular pattern of protruding mullions. The external cladding at the building cores towards the end would be powder coated varying shades of grey.

A proposed electricity substation and gas governor enclosure would be constructed alongside the west elevation of the building, behind the central core. It would be rectangular in shape, being 10.8m long and 4.5m wide and 3.4m high. It would be finished in silver flat rigid sheet metal cladding and silver louvered doors.

Proposed Access, Car Parking and Landscaping

Vehicular access to the site would continue to be taken from the existing mini-roundabout shared with Scott and Trafalgar House which is immediately north of the Hareness Road/Crawpeel Road roundabout.

A total of 641 car parking spaces, (including 18 accessible), 18 motorcycle spaces and 73 bicycle spaces would be provided for the proposed office development, which would be distributed over three separate car parks.

- 169 spaces (including 15 accessible) would be provided immediately adjacent to the proposed building. Provision for 14 motorcycle spaces and 4 visitor bicycle spaces would be provided.

- 163 spaces (including 3 accessible) would be provided within a basement car park below the building. Parking for 7 motorcycles and 69 bicycles would also be provided within the basement.

309 spaces and 4 spaces for motorcycles would be provided in a new car park to be built on the adjacent Nigg Caravan Park site. This car park is subject of a separate planning application (P131497). At present it is intended that these parking spaces would be accessed through the main car park, although a new access from Altens Farm Road could be created if necessary.

Public Car Park and Access to Tullos Hill

As part of the development it is proposed to close off and remove the existing public car park and access to Tullos Hill.

In order to compensate for this loss the developer has offered to provide a new car park on Council owned ground situated between Altens Farm Road and Wellington Road, some 240m north west of the application site. The ground comprises a triangular area of grass approximately 0.4 hectares in size and is immediately adjacent to Core Path 103 (North Balnagask Road to Wellington Road) which provides the main point of access to the east side of Tullos Hill.

The proposed car park would feature a single loop road with 18 car parking spaces located around it set out in pairs set in a landscaped area feature mounds.

Approximately 320m of the core path would be upgraded and a formal entrance created adjacent to Wellington Road.

Supporting Documents

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this application can be viewed on the Council's website at – <http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?131312>. On accepting the disclaimer, enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

In support of the application the following documents have been submitted –

- Landscape and visual appraisal which analyses the visual impact of the development from eight points generally around the south of the city where the development could potentially be viewed from.
- Transport assessment which assesses the traffic impact of the development and identifies mitigation measures.
- Air quality assessment which assess the potential impact on local air quality due to the increase in road traffic generated by the development.
- Pre-application consultation report which summaries the public consultation undertaken.

- Site investigation report which reviews ground conditions across the site through a phase 1 desktop study and phase 2 intrusive site investigation.
- Sustainability statement and an energy strategy statement which has been prepared to demonstrate compliance with Policy R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings).
- Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) strategy which explains how surface and foul drainage would be dealt with.
- Archaeological written scheme of investigation and evaluation of subsequent trench excavations at the site.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The proposed development was the subject to pre-application consultation between the applicant and the local community, as required for applications falling within the category of major developments as defined in the 'Hierarchy of Development' Regulations. The consultation involved a public consultation event on 14th August 2013 at the Thistle Hotel between 2pm and 7pm. Two members of the public and the owner of the Nigg Caravan Park attended the event. No adverse comments were discussed at the event.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Sub-committee because Cove and Altens Community Council have raised concerns with the application. Accordingly, the application falls out with the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

CONSULTATIONS

Roads Project Team –

- The proposals submitted which aim to benefit the operation of the Hareness Road / Wellington Road roundabout as a result of the proposed developments additional traffic are acceptable in principle. The geometries and vehicle input data used in the roundabout modelling software has been checked and verified at various stages in this process and it is considered that a robust assessment has been carried out. The increased deflection and effective flare length at the entry to the roundabout on Hareness Road has increased the predicted flow rate through the roundabout which shows no net detriment of traffic impact on the roundabout as a result of the proposed developments traffic.
- It is noted that the traffic surveys undertaken and the modelling results submitted show that a slight increase in vehicles travelling east on Hareness Road will occur however this is negligible and the majority of development traffic is shown to be accessing and exiting the development via the Hareness Road or Souter Head Road roundabouts.

- Walking, cycling and public transport provision access to the proposed site is acceptable.
- Satisfied with the access ramp width and design, the level of parking and with the number and positioning of cycle and motorcycle parking.
- The number of accessible spaces provided is in line with Aberdeen City Council parking standards.
- A Travel Plan (TP) framework has been submitted. It should be conditioned that a draft finalised TP should be submitted prior to occupation of the proposed development. This should include a draft staff survey which is currently not included in the TP framework.
- As the proposed development gross floor space is greater than 2,500m² Class 4, a contribution will be required to the Strategic Transport Fund (STF). As the site has previously been consented in the 2008 Local Plan this contribution has been adjusted to reflect the transport impact associated with the site's current or most recent operational use. The granting of planning approval should be conditional on an appropriate legal agreement with the applicant being in place, in regards to payment of the STF contribution.

Environmental Health – The proposed development will generate approximately 1000 additional vehicle movements within the Wellington Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The air quality assessment predicted the magnitude of impact would be 'small' at residential properties within the AQMA resulting in a 'slightly adverse' impact in 2015, the proposed year of opening. With the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) operational concentrations are predicted to fall below current levels due to the traffic flow reduction and improved vehicle emissions, although concentrations are still predicted to exceed the national and European Union annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide.

There are also a number of other committed developments in the vicinity of the southern section of Wellington Road that will further increase the traffic volume within the AQMA. These developments were also considered in the air quality assessment.

The overall significance of the proposed development would not warrant objection to the planning application due to predicted air quality impacts. However, it should be noted that the cumulative impact of this development, in conjunction with other committed and proposed developments in the wider area, will have a detrimental effect on air quality in the AQMA, particularly in the period 2015-2018 prior to the opening of the AWPR.

Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure (Flooding) – The SUDS strategy for the development has been reviewed and it is noted surface water drainage will discharge to a surface water sewer owned by Aberdeen City Council.

A condition should be attached requiring provision of full surface water drainage proposals, detailing the proposed method of discharge of surface water. Any proposed SUDS techniques should include design calculations and drawings for approval. A full Drainage Impact Assessment, including proposed SUDS techniques, full examination of all watercourses within the vicinity of the site and the impact which the development shall have on the drainage network should be submitted.

Community Council – Concern was initially raised by Cove and Altens Community Council with the following matters –

- This application provides 599 vehicle parking spaces. The resulting increase into the surrounding road network will only add to the already gridlocked and congested roads. Traffic implications would need to be studied.
- The building itself appears to be higher than those round about and would be out of keeping.
- Preservation of access onto Tullos Hill should be maintained.

The Community Council have since advised that they are now satisfied with the issues relating to the height and access to Tullos Hill, however the concern over traffic are maintained.

Education, Culture and Sport (Archaeology) – The archaeological written scheme of investigation and archaeological evaluation report are acceptable.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) – Request that a condition is attached to any consent requiring the submission of a site specific construction and environmental management plan. If the condition is not applied the SEPA's representation should be considered as an objection.

It is noted that the applicant has submitted a SUDS strategy, which is welcomed and that waste water is proposed to go to the combined sewer. Therefore SEPA have no objection to the planning application on the grounds of drainage.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received from Colin Fraser, owner (at the time) of the Nigg Caravan Park. The letter is submitted as a holding objection with potential concerns raised regarding the relationship of the proposed development with the green belt and access and parking issues. No further correspondence has been received to confirm the objection.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) – Planning authorities should respond to the diverse needs and locational requirements of different sectors and sizes of businesses and take a flexible approach to ensure that changing circumstances can be accommodated and new economic opportunities realised.

The planning system should also be responsive and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the requirements of inward investment and growing indigenous firms.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Policy I1 (Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions) – Where development either individually or cumulatively will place additional demands on community facilities or infrastructure that would necessitate new facilities or exacerbate deficiencies in existing provision, the Council will require the developer to meet or contribute to the cost of providing or improving such infrastructure or facilities.

Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking) – To ensure high standards of design, new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting. Factors such as siting, scale, massing, colour, materials, orientation, details, the proportions of building elements, together with the spaces around buildings, including streets, squares, open space, landscaping and boundary treatments, will be considered in assessing

Landmark or high buildings should respect the height and scale of their surroundings, the urban topography, the City's skyline and aim to preserve or enhance important views.

Policy D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel) – New development will be designed in order to minimise travel by private car, improve access to services and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging active travel. Development will maintain and enhance permeability, ensuring that opportunities for sustainable and active travel are both protected and improved.

Existing access rights, including core paths, rights of way and paths within the wider network will be protected and enhanced. Where development proposals impact on the access network, the principle of the access must be maintained through the provision of suitable alternative routes.

Policy D6 (Landscape) – Development will not be acceptable unless it avoids:

- significantly adversely affecting landscape character and elements which contribute to, or provide, a distinct 'sense of place' which point to being either in or around Aberdeen or a particular part of it;
- obstructing important views of the City's townscape, landmarks and features when seen from busy and important publicly accessible vantage

- points such as roads, railways, recreation areas and pathways and particularly from the main city approaches;
- disturbance, loss or damage to important recreation, wildlife or woodland resources or to the physical links between them;
 - sprawling onto important or necessary green spaces or buffers between places or communities with individual identities, and those which can provide opportunities for countryside activities.

Policy BI1 (Business and Industrial Land) – Aberdeen City Council will support the development of the business and industrial land allocations set out in this Plan. Industrial and business uses (Class 4 Business, Class 5 General Industrial and Class 6 Storage or Distribution) in these areas, including already developed land, shall be retained. The expansion of existing concerns and development of new business and industrial uses will be permitted in principle within areas zoned for this purpose.

New business and industrial land proposals shall make provision for areas of recreational and amenity open space, areas of strategic landscaping, areas of wildlife value and footpaths, in accordance with the Council's Open Space Strategy.

Policy NE1 (Green Space Network) – Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted. Where major infrastructure projects or other developments necessitate crossing the Green Space Network, such developments shall take into account the coherence of the network. In doing so measures shall be taken to allow access across roads for wildlife and for access and outdoor recreation purposes.

Development which has any impact on existing wildlife habitats, or connections between them, or other features of value to natural heritage, open space, landscape and recreation must be mitigated through enhancement of Green Space Network.

Policy NE6 (Flooding and Drainage) – Surface water drainage associated with development must be the most appropriate available in terms of SUDS and avoid flooding and pollution both during and after construction. Connection to the public sewer will be a pre-requisite of all development where this is not already provided. Private wastewater treatment systems in sewered areas will not be permitted.

Policy NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation) – New development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreational opportunities including access rights, core paths, other paths and rights of way. Wherever appropriate, developments should include new or improved provision for public access, permeability and/or links to green space for recreation and active travel.

Policy NE10 (Air Quality) – Planning applications for development which has the potential to have a detrimental impact on air quality will not be permitted unless measures to mitigate the impact of air pollutants are proposed and can be agreed with the Planning Authority.

Policy R2 (Degraded and Contaminated Land) – The City Council will require that all land that is degraded or contaminated, including visually, is either restored, reclaimed or remediated to a level suitable for its proposed use.

Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development) – Details of storage facilities and means of collection must be included as part of any planning application for development which would generate waste.

Policy R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings) – All new buildings, in meeting building regulations energy requirements, must install low and zero-carbon generating technology to reduce the predicted carbon dioxide emissions by at least 15% below 2007 building standards.

Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development) – New developments will need to demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise the traffic generated.

Maximum car parking standards are set out in Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility and detail the standards that different types of development should provide.

EVALUATION

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle of Development

The site is zoned as business and industrial land in the adopted local development plan where Policy BI1 applies. The policy supports the principle of new business and industrial development within such areas. The use of a vacant site within the existing urban area is also welcomed as it reduces pressure for additional land to be allocated on greenfield sites.

The planning history of the site, which includes two approvals for office developments in largely the same policy and physical context, albeit for considerably less floor space, further demonstrates that the site is suitable for office use in principle.

Nearly 20,000m² of office floor space is proposed which represents a significant investment in the city. The applicant has advised that they have agreed terms to lease the completed development to a major local oil and gas company who would occupy the building with over 1800 staff, which would be a combination of relocated staff from existing sites in the city and new staff hired through growth in the company. This level of investment demonstrates confidence in the local economy and supports one of the overarching aims of the local development plan which is to maintain Aberdeen as a competitive and sustainable business

location. It is important the modern fit for purpose office space is provided in the city to meet demand.

Such developments are also supported by Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which requires planning authorities be responsive and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the requirements of inward investment and growing indigenous firms.

Surrounding Amenity

The site is predominately surrounded by business and industrial uses; however there are properties in residential use which are located on Altens Farm Road, immediately to the west of the site.

In order of proximity to the application site, the first house has been acquired by the applicant who has indicated that it is intended to demolish the house and incorporate the land into the landscaping for the proposed development; the second house has been converted to a hairdresser; the third house is currently occupied and the fourth and fifth houses are derelict.

Given this context and the nature of the proposed use it is considered that there would be no adverse impact upon the amenity of neighbouring uses.

Design and Layout

Hareness Road is characterised by industrial and commercial buildings, many of which have little architectural merit and are largely utilitarian in appearance. Scott House, which is a four storey office building is the exception and dominates views along Hareness Road. Although there is no formal building line along much of Hareness Road, there is along the stretch which includes the application site. A common theme along the west end of Hareness Road is the space which is present between the edge of the pavement and the buildings within the adjacent sites. These spaces often include areas of landscaping.

The proposed position of the L-shaped building on the site would result in the building presenting a public face to Hareness Road and a private face to the car park and entrance courtyard. This would mirror the layout of Scott and Trafalgar House opposite and would also assist in maintaining a consistency in the street scape along Hareness Road. It also permits the surface car parking to be located away from public view, rather than between the building and street, which is welcomed.

Initial concern was raised with the position of the building in relation to the boundary with Hareness Road and how this may affect the open nature of the Hareness Road streetscape. Given that the building would be four storeys high the concern was that the building would look uncomfortably close to the boundary with Hareness Road. Since the original submission however, the building has been repositioned 2m further back into the site to address this issue and bring it in line with the adjacent Scott House. The extent of the roof plant enclosure has also been reduced in size from the initial designs presented, in order to reduce

the apparent bulk of the building. The highest part of the building as proposed would be 2.24m lower than the heights part of Scott House.

Taking the foregoing into account, although the building would be undeniably large, it is considered that it would sit comfortably in the streetscene.

The design and materials proposed to finish the building would be of a high standard, being typical of modern office developments found within the city and throughout the UK. The use of a limited palette of materials would result in a clean and minimalist exterior. The high quality of the building and bold statement which it would make on one of the main routes into Altens Industrial Estate is welcomed. Taking the foregoing into account, it is considered that due consideration has been given to the provisions of Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking).

Air source heat pumps would be installed in order to meet the requirements of Policy R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings). The submitted energy statement demonstrates that a 31.5% improvement over the 2010 Building Standards requirement would be provided which is in accordance with Policy R7.

New business and industrial land proposals are required to make provision for areas of recreational and amenity open space, areas of strategic landscaping, areas of wildlife value and footpaths. An indicative landscape plan has been submitted which shows that a line of formal tree planting would be provided along the Hareness Road frontage of the site. Native woodland and thicket planting would be planted along the western boundary of the site, reinforcing the existing planting between the site and neighbouring AMEC building. Public access between Hareness Road and Altens Farm Road would be maintained via a path through the landscaping.

The proposed landscaping scheme would help soften the appearance of the building and is considered acceptable. A condition has been attached requiring a detailed scheme including species to be included. The proposal is considered to comply with the relevant part of Policy BI1 (Business and Industrial Land).

Skyline

Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking) requires high buildings to respect the height and scale of their surroundings, the urban topography, the City's skyline and aim to preserve or enhance important views.

Tullos Hill and Altens Industrial Estate are on relatively high ground in the city and there therefore is the potential for the proposed building, which would be four storeys in height, to adversely affect the skyline. Planning officers raised issue with this aspect of the development at an early stage during pre-application discussions.

The applicant commissioned a visual appraisal of the development in order to support the proposal and demonstrate that the impact of the development from significant viewpoints around the city would be minimal. Each of the eight viewpoints considered were agreed with planning officers on the basis that the

building was likely to be most prominent from these particular locations. The visual assessment considers the change in view which would be experienced at each point and categorises it as being negligible, minor, moderate or substantial. The viewpoints can be grouped into being distant, medium or close.

The first distant viewpoint is located at Anderson Drive / Queens Road roundabout where the Aberdeen Grammar School sport pitches allow open views to the south towards the site. At a distance of 4.3km away, Scott House is visible and slightly breaches the skyline; the nearby Peterson SBS warehouse buildings are also visible as well as several communication masts. The introduction of the building would result in a minor change to this view, with the building partially obscuring Scott House and extending the existing mass of buildings by a third.

A similar minor change would be experienced from Foresterhill Road (5.9km away). In both cases the addition of the proposed building is unlikely to be noticeable unless it is specifically being sought out.

Medium distance views from South College Street (2.8km away) and the northern end of Great Southern Road (2.7km away) would be effected to a minor degree. The Shell building and Scott House are already prominent and the proposed building would reinforce this character. Intervening vegetation and buildings also restrict views from certain angles. From the King George IV Bridge (1.83km away) open views towards Kincorth and Tullos are available; nevertheless the building would not be visible due to vegetation.

From Duthie Park (1.9km away), views of Kincorth, the Shell building and Scott House can be observed along the skyline. The proposed building would be visible alongside Scott House, which it would partially obscure. However due to its closer proximity from most angles, the Shell building would appear higher on the skyline, as would buildings within Kincorth. Therefore the impact is classed as minor.

In the view from Torry (1.75km away), the building would appear slightly above the woodland on the slopes of Tullos Hill, similar to buildings and masts towards Nigg. However the building would not be the highest form on the skyline, which would remain as the top of Tullos Hill. Therefore the impact is considered to be minor.

The viewpoint where the most significant change would occur is at the Wellington Road roundabout, which is the closest view point. The change in view is considered moderate, however the building would be seen in the context of the built up area within which it is located and therefore its presence is unlikely to appear out of character.

It is considered that a robust assessment of the buildings visual impact has been carried out. The visual appraisal demonstrates that the impact on significant view points from around the city where the building could be seen, would generally be minor. Although the building does from certain views breach the typical skyline to a small degree, this is more often than not seen in the context of Scott House, the Shell building or Tullos Hill which are either at a similar height as the proposed building or are in fact more prominent.

Similar concerns with building height were raised with the developments which were ultimately approved on the site in 2006 and 2008. As a result, building heights were limited to two storeys in 2006 and three storeys in 2008. Although a visual appraisal was submitted for the 2006 application, it lacked the comprehensiveness of the current appraisal.

The visual appraisal has demonstrated that the proposed building would have minimal visual impact and confirmed that the existing southern skyline of the city and landscape character of Tullos Hill would be preserved. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking) and Policy D6 (Landscape).

Public Access to Tullos Hill

There is a disused public car park in the south west corner of the site which is accessed from Hareness Road. The land upon which it was built was provided to the Council initially through an informal agreement and then later through a section 75 legal agreement established through the granting of a previous planning permission at the site. The legal agreement requires the car park and an access track leading to Tullos Hill to be made available to the Council in perpetuity for the purpose of car parking and recreational access by the public to Tullos Hill.

It would appear that in recent years the Council have failed to maintain the car park and that the previous owners of the land have restricted access in order to stop unauthorised encampments from occupying the land. This has resulted in the car parking falling into disrepair and access to the hill becoming overgrown, although it is still possible to walk from the car park onto the hill.

Although the public car park is within the business and industrial zoning, there is a corridor comprising approximately 0.9 hectares of the site, which includes the access track, zoned as green space network.

In such areas Policy NE1 requires proposals to protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of the Green Space Network. Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted. Where major infrastructure projects or other developments necessitate crossing the Green Space Network, such developments shall take into account the coherence of the network. In doing so measures shall be taken to allow access across roads for wildlife and for access and outdoor recreation purposes. Similarly Policy D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel) requires development to maintain and enhance permeability, ensuring that opportunities for sustainable and active travel are both protected and improved

Whilst the proposed office building could be constructed and site laid out with the existing public car park remaining in place, the applicant has expressed a desire to have the car park removed, in order to allow more extensive landscaping to be provided around the development.

Although the existing car park is not currently in use, its removal and the fragmentation of the green space network by the access road would be contrary to Policy NE1 as it would remove an opportunity for access to Tullos Hill. The access road between the main application site and the proposed car park in the former Nigg Caravan Park would also cross this green space network corridor.

There is a second access to Tullos Hill from the south, which is located off Altens Farm Road, some 240m to the north west. Whilst this path is unmade, overgrown, suffers drainage problems and is under the ownership of Shell, it does in fact form Core Path 103 (North Balnagask Road to Wellington Road). This route is now the primary access from the south to Tullos Hill.

In order to mitigate against the potential loss of the existing public car park on the application site and the poor condition of existing access to Tullos Hill, the applicant has offered to provide a new car park on Council owned open space situated between Altens Farm Road and Wellington Road, immediately adjacent to Core Path 103.

The proposed car park would feature a single loop road with eighteen car parking spaces located around it, set out in pairs within a landscaped area. The existing track between Wellington Road and Altens Farm Road would be upgraded to a surface path and a formal pedestrian access created on Wellington Road. Thereafter, approximately 320m of the core path which leads from Altens Farm Road up onto Tullos Hill would be upgraded.

The proposed scheme for the car park and core path is welcomed by the officers within the Council's Environment Service who have worked alongside planning officers to ensure a suitable scheme is agreed. There are several benefits to relocating the car park from the application site to the proposed site on Altens Farm Road –

- Rather than continuing with two poor accesses to the southern side of Tullos Hill, one access can be provided which would be upgraded to a suitable standard and would link directly into upper part of the core path which has recently been upgraded by the Council.
- The enhanced pedestrian entrance from Wellington Road to what would become the public car park site would be seen by a large number of people using Wellington Road each day. This would provide the car park and core path with a higher profile and has the potential to increase the number of people using the area for recreation.
- The pedestrian access to the core path would be directly opposite the pedestrian crossing on Wellington Road, providing convenient access from the residential areas of Nigg and Kincorth to the west.
- Unlike the car park on the application site, the new car park would be located on Council land rather than land under the ownership of a third party. It is intended that the Council grant a license to the applicant to carry out the works on the Council's land and once complete, full control of the car park would remain with the Council.

In summary, the proposed new car park and enhancement of the existing core path network is considered to more than adequately mitigate against the loss of the existing car park and access. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy NE1 (Green Space Network) and Policy D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel).

In order to secure the delivery of the new car park and core path works, it is intended that the Council and the applicant enter into a memorandum of agreement which will require and allow the applicant to carry out the work on the Council's land. Whilst it is intended to seek agreement from Shell to carry out the work to the track, should this not be forthcoming or cannot be achieved within 6 months from signing of the agreement, the applicant would construct a new path within former Nigg Caravan Park which is under the applicant's control and is alongside the existing track.

Cycle paths and lanes are available in the surrounding area and provide access to Altens both from the west and east.

The applicant would also have to submit an application under section 75A in order to discharge the obligation within the existing section 75 legal agreement which applies to the application site.

Access and Transportation

Vehicular access to the site would be taken from the existing mini-roundabout shared with Scott and Trafalgar House, which is immediately north of the Hareness Road / Crawpeel Road roundabout. This access would serve a surface car parking adjacent to the building (169 spaces), the basement car park (163 spaces) and the 309 spaces proposed within the former Nigg Caravan Park which are subject of a separate application.

Other proposed and under construction developments in the area such as the new residential developments a Cove, Balmoral Business Park and Maersk office building at Crawpeel Road have been taken into account in the assessments.

Three junctions have been assessed as part of the transport assessment –

- The Hareness Road / Crawpeel Road roundabout, which includes the site access, is estimated to perform marginally over capacity in the morning peak. A slip lane providing direct access into the site would be formed as mitigation.
- The Crawpeel Road /Souter Head Road roundabout would continue to perform within capacity with the addition of traffic from the development.
- Wellington Road (A956) / Hareness Road / East Tullos Road roundabout will require alterations to the geometry of the approach from Hareness Road. The impact of these modifications identifies a minor increase in overall queues in the morning peak however there would be a significant improvement in the evening peak on Hareness Road.

The Roads Projects Team have reviewed the assessment and conclude that the mitigation measures are acceptable in principle. The geometries and vehicle input data used in the roundabout modelling software has been checked and verified at various stages in this process and are considered satisfactory. The increased deflection and effective flare length at the entry to the roundabout on Hareness Road has increased the predicted flow rate through the roundabout which shows no net detriment of traffic impact on the roundabout as a result of the proposed developments traffic.

The traffic surveys undertaken and the modelling results submitted show that a slight increase in vehicles travelling east on Hareness Road would occur however this is negligible and the majority of development traffic is shown to be accessing and exiting the development via the Hareness Road or Souter Head Road roundabouts.

The site is within walking distances of residential areas in Cove, Altens, Nigg and Kincorth. The site is also served by regular public transport at bus stops on Wellington Road as well as within Altens Industrial Estate during peak times. Therefore, although the site is relatively isolated from parts of the city, it is possible to reach the site by a variety of transport modes.

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development).

Air Quality

The site is approximately 1.4km from the Wellington Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which has been identified as an area with poor air quality. Policy NE10 (Air Quality) specifies that planning applications for development which has the potential to have a detrimental impact on air quality will not be permitted unless measures to mitigate the impact of air pollutants are proposed and can be agreed with the Planning Authority.

An air quality assessment has been submitted by the applicant which assess the potential impact on local air quality due to the increase in road traffic generated by the development.

The conclusion of the assessment is that the forecast concentrations of annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulates (PM₁₀) in 2015 exceed the air quality objectives at several of the assessed locations along Wellington Road. However, the proposed development would not result in any exceedences of the annual nitrogen dioxide or PM₁₀ air quality objections where there weren't any without the proposed development.

The results also find that the modelled concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in 2018 are mostly within the air quality objective value of 40 µg/m³. With the opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), potentially significant reductions are forecast at some receptors within the Wellington Road AQMA. In 2018, with the proposed development and all assessed committed developments fully operational, the air quality objectives will only be exceeded at one small area in the vicinity of the Wellington Road / Grampian Road junction.

The Council's Environmental Health service have reviewed the air quality assessment and determined that the overall significance of the proposed development would not warrant objection to the planning application due to predicted air quality impacts. However, it should be noted that the cumulative impact of this development, in conjunction with other committed and proposed developments in the wider area, will have a detrimental effect on air quality in the AQMA, particularly in the period 2015-2018 prior to the opening of the AWPR.

The air quality assessment predicted the magnitude of impact would be 'small' at residential properties within the AQMA resulting in a 'slightly adverse' impact in 2015, the proposed year of opening.

With the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) operational concentrations are predicted to fall below current levels due to the traffic flow reduction and improved vehicle emissions, although concentrations are still predicted to exceed the national and European Union annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide.

Mitigation measures are proposed by the applicant which have the potential to reduce reliance on the private car and thus emissions –

- the number of parking spaces proposed is at the maximum permitted by the Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance. Therefore no overprovision of parking spaces would exist which encourages staff and visitors to use more sustainable modes of transport.
- a condition has been attached requiring submission of a green travel plan to encourage modal shift away from the private car.
- long stay covered and secure cycle parking would be provided on site for staff.

In the light of the small impact predicted in terms of air quality and the measures proposed to encourage more sustainable modes of transport, it is considered that the proposal has taken the provisions of Policy NE10 (Air Quality) into account satisfactorily.

Developer Contributions

The proposed development has a gross floor space greater than 2,500m² and therefore a contribution is required to the Strategic Transport Fund (STF).

The site has previously been allocated in the 2008 Aberdeen Local Plan and previous consents existed on the site which would have been taken into account in the cumulative transport appraisal. The contribution has therefore been adjusted to reflect the transport impact associated with the site's current or most recent operational use.

The applicant has expressed a willingness to pay the required contribution and a section 75 legal agreement has been drafted in order to secure it's payment prior to occupation of the building.

Archaeology

Tullos Hill has long been known as an important archaeological landscape because of several Bronze Age burial cairns located there. Cat Cairn; Baron's Cairn; Crab's Cairn; and Tullos Cairn are scheduled as monuments of national significance. Tullos Hill was also the location of an anti-aircraft battery and later a prisoner of war camp in World War II.

Therefore due to the rich history of the area and in order to secure any archaeological remains which may be on the site, the developer undertook an archaeological evaluation. Eight trenches were excavated over the site on 24 August 2013 and each trench revealed that the topsoil had been previously stripped and the whole site prepared for development by laying down layers of sand and stones and then recovering with up to 0.5m topsoil. No archaeological deposits were recorded and the report recommends that no further archaeological work is required during the development. This has been accepted by the Council's Keeper of Archaeology. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with the requirement of Policy D5 (Built Heritage).

Drainage

A sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) strategy which explains how surface and foul drainage would be dealt with has been submitted by the applicant.

The strategy explains that foul drainage from the site would be discharged to the existing Scottish Water combined sewer, which is in accordance with Policy NE6 (Flooding and Drainage).

Surface water drainage would be dealt with in accordance with SUDS principles. Roof water would be discharged into filter trenches located in the soft landscaping areas providing one level of treatment before being collected in an attenuation storage system. Car park surface water would be discharged into bio-filtration units located around the edge of the car park and would provide two levels of treatment. The water from these units would be discharged into a collector system before also being transferred to the attenuation storage system, which ultimately discharges to the public surface water sewer.

The drainage proposals have been examined by SEPA, the Council's Flood Prevention Unit and Roads Projects Team and appear acceptable in principle. A condition has been attached which requires full details and calculations to be submitted prior to development commencing, to ensure that the system is suitably designed and in accordance with Policy NE6 (Flooding and Drainage).

Land Contamination

The site investigation states that Intrusive investigations found that all contaminants were within the relevant screening criteria for the proposed end

use. Therefore the site is suitable for the proposed use without any remedial action being required.

The report has been reviewed by the Contaminated Land Unit who are satisfied that there are no significant risks in relation to contamination at this site other than low levels of ground gas which will effectively be mitigated by the installation of mechanical ventilation for the underground car park. The proposal is in accordance with Policy R2 (Degraded and Contaminated Land).

Relevant Planning matters raised by the Community Council

The matters raised by the Community Council have been addressed in the sections of this report relating to access and transportation, skyline and access to Tullos Hill.

Relevant Planning Matters Raised in Written Representations

One letter of representation has been received from Colin Fraser, owner of the Nigg Caravan Park. The caravan park has since been sold to the applicant.

The letter is submitted as a holding objection with potential concerns raised regarding the relationship of the proposed development with the green belt and access and parking issues. No further correspondence has been received to confirm the objection.

The application site nor its surroundings are located within or near the green belt. Access and parking issues have been addressed in the access and transportation part of the report.

RECOMMENDATION: Willingness to approve subject to conditions, but to withhold the issue of the consent document until –

- 1. the applicant has entered into a memorandum of agreement to secure the provision of –**
 - a) a new public car park on land between Wellington Road and Altens Farm Road; and**
 - a) improvements to the section of Core Path 103 between Wellington Road and Tullos Hill**
- 2. the applicant has entered into a section 75 legal agreement to secure a financial contributions towards the Strategic Transport Fund.**

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The principle of new business and industrial development at the site is acceptable and in accordance with Policy BI1 (Business and Industrial Land). The use of a vacant urban site is welcomed as is the significant investment in the city which supports the overarching aims of the local development plan which is to maintain Aberdeen as a competitive and sustainable business location. Such developments are also supported by Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which requires planning authorities be responsive and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the requirements of inward investment and growing indigenous firms.

Given this context and the nature of the proposed use it is considered that there would be no adverse impact upon the amenity of neighbouring uses.

The high quality of the proposed building and bold statement which it would make on one of the main routes into Altens Industrial Estate is welcomed. Despite the buildings size, it would sit comfortably within the streetscape and be commensurate in terms of scale with the adjacent Scott House. A robust assessment of the buildings visual impact has been carried out which demonstrates the minimal visual impact the building would have and confirms that the proposed building would preserve the existing southern skyline of the city and landscape character of Tullos Hill. The proposal is considered satisfactory in term of Policy D1 (Architecture and Placemaking) and would make a positive contribution to the surrounding area.

A proposed new car public park at Altens Farm Road and enhancement of the existing core path network onto Tullos Hill is considered to more than adequately mitigate against the loss of the existing car park and access within the application site. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy NE1 (Green Space Network) and Policy D3 (Sustainable and Active Travel).

A suitable level of car, bicycle and motorcycle parking would be provided on site. The transport assessment has been reviewed and proposed mitigation measures proposed are considered acceptable and in accordance with Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development).

A minor impact is predicted in terms of air quality and the measures proposed to encourage more sustainable modes of transport are considered to satisfactorily fulfil the requirements of Policy NE10 (Air Quality).

Matters relating to archaeology, drainage and contamination have been satisfactorily addressed or have been made subject of condition.

CONDITIONS

it is recommended that approval is granted subject to the following conditions:-

(1) that no development shall take place unless a scheme of all drainage works (including calculations as necessary) designed to meet the requirements of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems has been submitted to and approved in

writing by the planning authority. Thereafter no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the drainage has been installed in complete accordance with the said scheme, unless a written variation has been granted by the planning authority – in order to safeguard water qualities in adjacent watercourses and to ensure that the development can be adequately drained.

(2) that no development (other than site preparation and ground works) shall take place unless a scheme for all proposed external lighting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the external lighting has been installed in complete accordance with the said scheme, unless a written variation has been granted by the planning authority - in order to ensure the site is adequately illuminated and to ensure public safety.

(3) that no development (other than site preparation and ground works) shall take place unless a scheme for the relocation of the stone rubble wall which currently is located along the south east boundary of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the wall has been rebuilt in accordance with the said scheme, unless a written variation has been granted by the planning authority - in order to maintain the visual amenity of the area.

(4) that no development (other than site preparation and ground works) shall take place unless a scheme of all external finishing materials to the roof and walls of the development hereby approved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so agreed - in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

(5) that no development shall take place unless a site specific construction environmental management plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority in consultation with SEPA. The CEMP must address the following issues (i) surface water management, (ii) site waste management, (iii) watercourse engineering, and (iv) borrow pits. Thereafter all works on site must be undertaken in accordance with the approved CEMP unless otherwise agreed in writing by the planning authority - in order to minimise the impacts of construction works on the environment.

(6) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless there has been submitted to and approved in writing a detailed occupier specific green travel plan which (a) shall be in general accordance with the travel plan framework included within Transport Assessment 100924/ED/T/R01 dated September 2013 and produced by Fairhurst and (b) must outline sustainable measures to deter the use of the private car, in particular single occupant trips and provides detailed monitoring arrangements, modal split targets and associated penalties for not meeting targets - in order to encourage more sustainable forms of travel to the development.

(7) that no development (other than site preparation and ground works) shall take place unless a further detailed scheme for the landscaping for the site (which shall include (i) indications of all existing trees and landscaped areas on

the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development, (ii) tree/shrub planting including details of numbers, densities, locations, species, sizes and stage of maturity at planting and (iii) the proposed materials to be used to surface areas of hard landscaping) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority - in order to satisfactorily integrate the development into its surroundings and maintain the visual amenity of the area.

(8) that all planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting season following the completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a size and species similar to those originally required to be planted, or in accordance with such other scheme as may be submitted to and approved in writing for the purpose by the planning authority - in order to satisfactorily integrate the development into its surroundings and maintain the visual amenity of the area.

(9) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the mitigation works to the A956 Wellington Road / Hareness Road junction have been completed in accordance with the proposals shown on Fairhurst drawing 100924/003C, or such other drawings as may subsequently be approved in writing the planning authority - in order to mitigate against the impact which would occur on the local road network as a result of the development.

(10) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the proposed public car park on the Council owned land at Altens Farm Road has been completed in accordance with the details shown on Hirst Landscape Architects drawing 1283 03C, or such other drawings as may subsequently be approved in writing the planning authority - in order to compensate for the loss of the public car park on the development site.

(11) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the proposed improvements to Core Path 103 (Wellington Road to Balnagask) have been completed in accordance with the details shown either on (i) Hirst Landscape Architects drawing 1283 02B; or as the case may be (ii) Hirst Landscape Architects drawing 1283 06A, or such other drawings as may subsequently be approved in writing the planning authority - in order to compensate for the loss of the public recreational access to Tullos Hill through the development site.

(12) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the vehicle and motorcycle parking approved under planning application P131497 has been constructed, drained, laid-out and demarcated in accordance with Michael Laird Architects drawing ADH1.AR(PL)003_B, or such other drawings as may subsequently be approved in writing the planning authority. Thereafter such areas shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking of vehicles, cycles and motorcycles ancillary to the approved office development - in order to provide a suitable level of vehicle parking for the proposed office building, ensure the free flow of traffic in surrounding streets and encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

(13) that no part of the office building shall be occupied unless the surface and basement vehicle, cycle and motorcycle parking has been constructed, drained, laid-out and demarcated in accordance with Michael Laird Architects drawings ADH.AR(PL)003_C and ADH.AR.(PL)004_B or such other drawing approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter such areas shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking of vehicles, bicycles and motorcycles ancillary to the approved office development - in order to provide a suitable level of vehicle parking for the proposed office building, ensure the free flow of traffic in surrounding streets and encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development