

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing & Infrastructure
DATE	19 May 2015
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	DRAFT ROWETT NORTH MASTERPLAN (Proposed site of new AECC and other uses)
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/14/056
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Draft Rowett North Masterplan to be issued for public consultation over a 6-week period; and
- 1.2 For the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure to be instructed to report to a subsequent Committee with the findings and any revisions proposed as a result of the public consultation.
- 1.3 The Draft Masterplan forms the appendix to this report and can be viewed by accessing the following link: - www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/masterplanning
- 1.4 A hard copy of the Draft Masterplan is available in the Members' Library (Town House), within the Planning and Sustainable Development Service at Ground Floor North, Marischal College.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - (a) Approves the Draft Rowett North Masterplan being issued for public consultation over a 6-week period, and;
 - (b) Instructs the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure to report the results of the public consultation and any proposed revisions on the Draft Masterplan to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from approval of this report as the costs associated with the 6-week public consultation will be met within existing budgets of the Planning and Sustainable Development Service.

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Approval for public consultation on the Draft Masterplan encourages further public involvement, support and ratification in its preparation with the intention that the finalised Masterplan becomes Supplementary Planning Guidance as a material consideration in determining planning applications for the site.
- 4.2 The finalised Masterplan, as Supplementary Guidance, in essence should reduce the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development on the site. It should ensure that development will be fully integrated into its surroundings and that the benchmarks of a high quality distinctive new place in Aberdeen are established.
- 4.3 Planning applications that follow the finalised Masterplan for the site should also lead to an increased public confidence and awareness in emerging development proposals and therefore a reduction in Council Officers' time to assess and negotiate.

5 BACKGROUND & MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Process and Site Requirements

- 5.2 The site is currently owned by Aberdeen University and the project is part of the Council's wider Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIP) programme to relocate the new Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre from the current Bridge of Don site.
- 5.3 The Council's strategic decision to relocate the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre to Rowett North is as a result of an evaluation of the age of the current AECC and its ability to host major events that are culturally and economically important to the city.
- 5.4 Through the SIP programme the Council has an agreement with Aberdeen University and Henry Boot Ltd. (developer) for the development of the site and therefore have a financial interest in forthcoming planning decisions. Through the mechanisms of the SIP programme the Council have indirectly met the cost of the preparation of the Draft Masterplan by external consultants including all consultation and engagement activities.
- 5.5 The Draft Masterplan aims to establish design-led planning guidance to inform a business and leisure led mixed-use development with the new Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre building as the centrepiece of the site.

- 5.6 Committee Report CHI.14.055 'Redevelopment of the AECC site, Bridge of Don Draft Development Framework' is also presented to this Committee for approval for public consultation on the Draft Development Framework to guide the redevelopment of the current AECC site.
- 5.7 Under the terms of the approved Aberdeen Masterplanning Process, the Draft Masterplan has been made available to the Dyce and Stoneywood Community Council & Bucksburn and Newhills Community Council for information 14 days prior to this report being considered for public consultation.
- 5.8 ***Site Description***
- 5.9 The site is the Rowett Institute which is principally accessed from Dyce Drive and Wellheads Avenue and lies between the airport and the A96 west of Bucksburn. The site extends to nearly 64 Ha and currently accommodates a number of buildings including the Reid Library and Strathcona House as well as greenfield and brownfield areas within a traditional agricultural area. The land-use of the wider area is in flux as increasing development needs of the city drive forward the planned redevelopment of significant sites for residential use.
- 5.10 ***Redevelopment Vision***
- 5.11 The relocation of the AECC presents the opportunity to capitalise on the redevelopment of a large and strategically important site with a shared vision that the new AECC building, associated infrastructure and other complementary uses are set within a high quality well connected landscape which is visually distinctive design exemplar easily recognisable to Aberdeen, Scotland and beyond.
- 5.12 The Draft Rowett North Masterplan has been prepared by Henry Boot Ltd. and their agents with acknowledgement to some of the parameters within the Scottish Government's place-making agenda, National Planning Policy objectives and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan policy aims. The purpose of a masterplan is to raise design quality in the built environment by applying the 6 key qualities of successful places: to be 1) distinctive, 2) welcoming, 3) safe and pleasant, 4) adaptable, 5) easy to get to and to move around, and 6) resource efficient.
- 5.13 The site is relatively large and has been designed around key areas each having distinctive design parameters and characteristics which will give a clear and welcoming sense of arrival as well as a logical sequence of events through the site.
- 5.14 The Draft Masterplan illustrates that the site must have a high quality, comprehensive and visually stimulating soft landscape structure that provides a setting to the new place as well as enhanced recreational opportunities for surrounding and future communities of the wider area.
- 5.15 ***Access and Connectivity***

- 5.16 The site is to be principally accessed from Dyce Drive, Wellheads Avenue and the A96 along which there are a number of significant future redevelopment sites for predominantly residential use. These sites are the subject of separate masterplans which will have a cumulative impact on the existing roads structure as these areas are redeveloped.
- 5.17 The recommendations of the transportation impact assessment, led by the Council and to conclude in the summer 2015, will be incorporated into the finalised masterplan. The transportation recommendations are unlikely to materially affect the principles of the draft masterplan, however, because any additional land take to the A96 will likely only reduce the width of the extensive 'Burn' landscape area to the immediate southern boundary of the site with the A96. The new AECC is not anticipated to complete until post 2018 following the opening of the AWPR.
- 5.18 ***Design Principles***
- 5.19 The Draft Masterplan site plan is organised into distinctive areas each with individual characteristics:
- a) *The Burn Parkland* – An area of informally designed soft-landscaping forming the east, south and west boundaries of the site whose principal feature will be the un-culverted burn and woodland setting and greenspace.
 - b) *The Plaza* - The new street formed with principally hotel development along the eastern edge and defining the entrance to the new AECC building.
 - c) *The Campus* – A physically distinct area in the north east corner designed for office accommodation around a courtyard enclosure. The form and location are guided by building height in proximity to the airport.
 - d) *The AECC* – The centre of the site where the new AECC building will command the landscape and whose subterranean exhibition hall will provide additional car parking whilst the green roofscape will provide a visually arresting green roof.
 - e) *The Central Area* – This area is formed by a series of architectural pavilions for office space looking onto the AECC Plaza and defining the northern edge of the site with additional car parking and landscaping. The central area also accommodates a large subterranean exhibition hall offering flexible internal space and enclosed car parking.
 - f) *Energy Centre* – The possible site of an energy centre to provide heating etc. for the complex as part of a wider Council strategy.

- g) *The Gateway* – forming one of the principal entrances to the site from the west with a broad avenue of trees defining the route to the AECC and enclosing sites for new office and business uses whose building line is directed from the new AECC. This site is prominent and should command future flag-ship development.
- 5.20 In accordance with local and national policies the reuse of buildings and materials onsite where possible is sought, however the Draft Masterplan does not detail the reuse of any existing building and does not provide as yet a comprehensive schedule on the reuse of materials on the site. Resource efficiency is to be addressed through new buildings with technologies that seek to reduce the demand for energy, use energy more effectively and provide low and zero carbon technologies on site. The new buildings' standards of construction will aim for British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) outstanding ratings and could be supported by a district heating system onsite.
- 5.21 ***Draft Masterplan Evolution***
- 5.22 As part of the evolution of design detail for the site the Draft Masterplan has been reviewed in design forums by Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS), as the national organisation for aesthetic matters in the built environment. A+DS support the principle of the proposal however are to yet conclude upon the content of the Draft Masterplan. The interim Design Forum reports are available to Council with A+DS's final review of the Draft Masterplan to take place on the 14 May 2015. The findings of A+DS will be referenced in the future Committee report on the public consultation and will form an appendix to that report.
- 5.23 The Draft Masterplan includes a summary of the brief to deliver the new AECC building and associated infrastructure, the parameters of the existing site, the evolution of the site layout, landscape and architectural vision. A phased delivery programme is included and the appendix providing detail on the planning context, public engagement and sustainable construction targets etc.
- 5.24 The Draft Masterplan proposes the demolition of Strathcona House which is one of, if not the largest, of Aberdeen's largest remaining sandstone buildings which should afford it a special place in Aberdeen's built context.
- 5.25 Henry Boot Ltd.'s initial design concept for the new AECC illustrated a proposed new conference building elegantly curving around a refurbished Strathcona House making the House an integral part of the project. Retention of the House would also have had the added benefit of shielding many of the large service doors from the main vista along the A96. The House itself was proposed for re-use as a complementary leisure function within a wider area of significant land use change for residential redevelopment.
- 5.26 Strathcona House was gifted to Aberdeen University by Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, a Scot who made his fortune in the

expansion of the Canadian railway system. As well as being potentially unique in Aberdeen's built heritage context, Strathcona House contains an original and largely complete high quality interior with oak panelling and stain glass windows etc.

- 5.27 As part of the procedures of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan Main Issues Report several interested parties stated that as part of the redevelopment of the site OP28 Strathcona House should be retained and re-used.
- 5.28 The draft masterplan's proposed removal of Strathcona House is, in planning terms, considered a significant loss to the historical layering and visual interest in the redevelopment of the site.
- 5.29 All future development proposals on the site will be the subject of separate planning applications, the detail of which should be informed by and assessed against the guidance of the finalised Masterplan.

6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The Council's approval of the Draft Masterplan for public consultation is a key stage in the development process to support the delivery of high quality place-making for the new AECC and complementary employment uses. The new AECC must be a transformational project of outstanding potential to the city as a local, national and global events destination, the impact of which to the city image, the cultural offering and further business opportunities of Aberdeen is significant.
- 6.2 The creation of the Draft Masterplan follows key priorities of the Council's Single Outcome Agreement, the Community Plan, the 5 Year Business Plan, the Aberdeen City Council Administration's Vision for Aberdeen: 2012-17 because the Draft Masterplan and its processes:
 - a) Aim to directly influence the quality of redevelopment for local and global business and leisure uses with distinctive high quality place-making architecture and landscaping supporting Aberdeen to remain as one of the most competitive and attractive places to do business in the UK;
 - b) Involves encouraging the citizens of Aberdeen to actively participate in design and development matters through public consultation and engagement events the findings of which will shape the content of the finalised masterplan;
 - c) Is a requirement of the procurement process for the new AECC which is one of the Council's current Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) projects, from the Corporate Plan. The Draft Masterplan front-loads high-level detail of this SIP project with key place-making parameters to guide redevelopment proposals and increase the efficiency of planning decision making, and thereby supports the Planning and Sustainable Development Service Plan;

- d) Proposes logical site layout that connects with its surrounding multi-modal transportation network in order to provide more opportunity for walking and cycling through the site enabling established and emerging communities to have greater choice and access to employment opportunities, greenspace and recreational amenities as well as better connectivity to new transportation networks.
- 6.3 This Report has been reviewed for Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) and it is considered that approval of the Draft Masterplan for public consultation does not negatively impact on Equality and Human Rights matters.

7 MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 7.1 Should the Committee be minded not to approve this Report the decision to delay public consultation will affect the development programme for the new AECC.
- 7.2 The process of public consultation is the penultimate procedure prior to formal adoption of the finalised Masterplan by Council as Supplementary Guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Proposed development that follows the Masterplan should significantly contribute to efficiencies in agent time to prepare planning applications and further supporting statements as well as officer time in determining future planning applications.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 New Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (AECC) CHI/14/045
- 8.2 Redevelopment of the AECC Site, Draft Bridge of Don Development Framework CHI/14/55
- 8.3 Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2016 CHI/14/001
- 8.4 Aberdeen Local Development Plan – Main Issues Report EPI/13/182
- 8.5 Aberdeen Masterplanning Process 2008 (article 22, Planning Committee Minute, 6/11/08)
- 8.6 Aberdeen Masterplanning Process: Update Report EPI/12/231 (agenda item 1.1, article 4)

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- **Appendix 1 – Draft Rowett North Masterplan**

