

Planning Development Management Committee

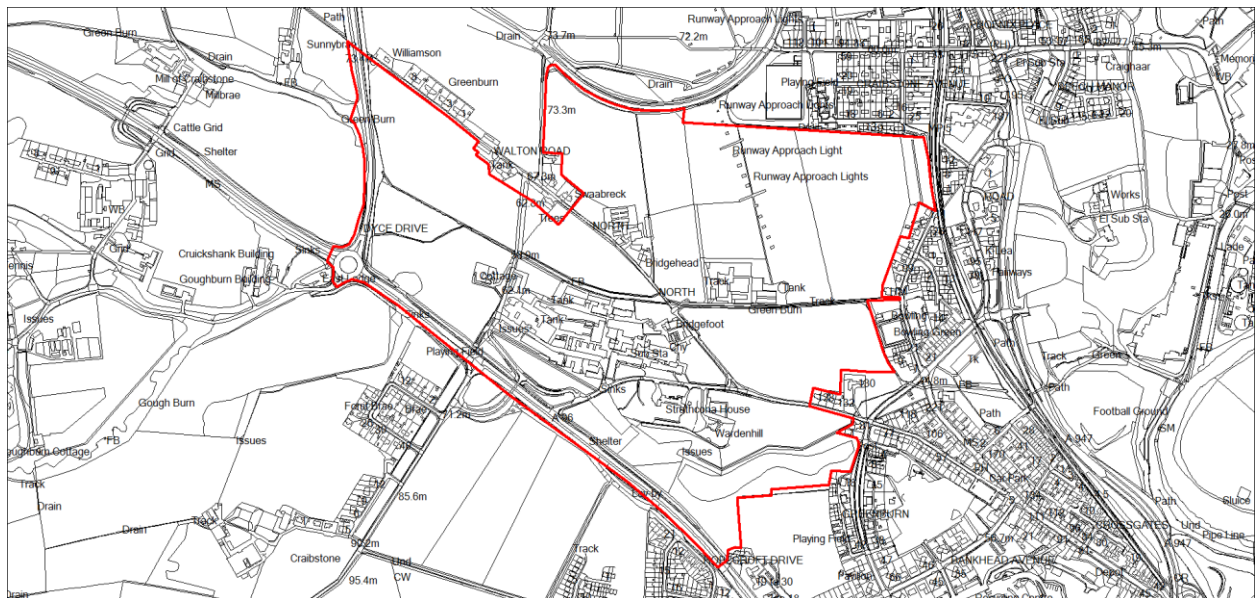
ROWETT RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
GREENBURN ROAD, BUCKSBURN

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS,
ERECTION OF EXHIBITION AND
CONFERENCE CENTRE INCLUDING
SUBTERRANEAN SPACE, ENERGY CENTRE,
HOTELS, OFFICES, LEISURE,
CAFE/RESTAURANTS AND ASSOCIATED
ACCESS, LANDSCAPING, ENGINEERING
WORKS (INCLUDING BURN DIVERSION) AND
CAR PARKING (INCLUDING TEMPORARY CAR
PARKING)

For: Henry Boot Developments Ltd

Application Type: Planning Permission in Principle
Application Ref. : P150826
Application Date: 22/05/2015
Officer: Matthew Easton
Ward : Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone(B Crockett/G
Lawrence/N MacGregor/G Samarai)

Advert: Dev. Plan Departure
Advertised on: 03/06/2015
Committee Date: 29/10/2015
Community Council : Comments



RECOMMENDATION: Defer – No Hearing

DESCRIPTION

The application site covers some 60 hectares of land located on the north west edge of Aberdeen, between Aberdeen International Airport and the A96 trunk road. It currently accommodates the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health which is part of the University of Aberdeen and comprises a complex of various buildings set within an agricultural landscape. Also present are a several residential properties and infrastructure associated with nearby Aberdeen International Airport. The landform is undulating and generally slopes from north to south towards the A96.

The buildings on the site range from three storey traditional granite and sandstone buildings dating from around 1920 to modular exposed concrete framed extensions from the 1960s and single storey agricultural buildings. Several buildings are worthy of note –

- Strathcona House (1929) comprises a three storey building constructed from red sandstone and pitched slate roof. The design and plan form of the building draws on historical academic sources, with strong references to the collegiate style. This is particularly evidenced in the large ground floor hall and the balustraded veranda that dominates the principal elevation. The use of red sandstone is unusual for a building of this scale in Aberdeen and is distinguished by its late use of Scots Baronial details, including the rock-faced stonework and the carved motifs to the dormerheads. The early 20th century interior decorative scheme largely survives and includes good-quality oak panelling to the principal public rooms, such as the large ground floor hall which also retains its stone fireplaces and stained glass.
- The Boyd Orr building (1922) is semi-detached and three storeys, with granite walls and a pitched asbestos roof. It was used as offices and laboratories.
- The Reid Library (1938) is semi-detached and two storeys in height, being constructed from granite with a pitched slate roof.
- Wardenhill House (1925) is a detached two storey house which was also constructed from granite with a slate roof.

None of the buildings on the site are listed or within a conservation area.

The undeveloped parts of the site comprise a mix of improved grassland, semi-improved grassland, bare ground and small areas of woodland. The Green Burn runs from west to east through the site towards the River Don.

Core Path No. 4 crosses the site and follows the route of Greenburn Road, which also acts as the boundary between the community council areas of Bucksburn & Newhills and Dyce & Stoneywood.

To the north is Wellheads Drive beyond which is Aberdeen International Airport and Bucksburn Cricket Club. The approach lights for runway 34 at the airport are located within the north east part of the site. To the immediate north east, east

and south east is the residential communities of Bankhead and Stoneywood with the closest streets being Waterton Road and Brimmond View. To the south east is southern boundary of the site is defined by the A96 with the land beyond currently being agricultural, but identified for 1700 homes and known as Rowett South. Existing residential properties exist at Forritt Brae. The western boundary comprises Dyce Drive, the opposite side of which is agricultural land which is identified as suitable for employment use. There are a number of residential properties in the north west, located around Greenburn Farm. The agricultural land in this area has been granted planning permission for phase two of ABZ Business Park.

RELEVANT HISTORY

- A proposal of application notice (P140606) for Demolition, erection of exhibition and conference centre, energy futures centre, hotels, offices, leisure, restaurants and access landscaping, engineering, car parking was submitted in April 2014.
- Public consultation was undertaken between April 2014 and April 2015 and is outlined in the 'Pre-Application Consultation' of the report.
- Historic Scotland (now Historic Environment Scotland) received a request to list Strathcona House in April 2015. The building was visited in May 2015 when the interior and exterior were inspected. Historic Environment Scotland's conclusion was that the building was considered to be of local importance and may meet the criteria for listed at category C. However due to the current proposals which would affect the character of the building, it will not be considered further for listing at this time. Should the planning situation change, this may be reconsidered.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission in principle is sought for the demolition of all buildings on the site and the construction of an exhibition and conference centre with supporting uses. The development would comprise –

- A new exhibition and conference centre (45,000sqm gross) with subterranean space (33,600sqm) including a concourse, retail, leisure, restaurant and public houses uses.
- A 200 bed hotel (14,600sqm) which would be integral with the exhibition and conference centre.
- Two further hotels with an estimated combined capacity of 300 beds.
- Office space with an estimated net floor space of 60,000sqm
- Leisure uses with an estimated net floor space 6,000sqm

- An energy centre incorporating an anaerobic digestion (AD) plant and associated plant and equipment for both generation and production.
- Access for both pedestrians and vehicles, including public transport. Car and coach parking including temporary car park.
- Open space, landscaping and public realm works including creation of a burn park and piazza. Groundworks, improvement and diversion of watercourses to a new alignment

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?ref=150826>.

- Drainage Impact Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Pre-Application Consultation Report
- Sustainability Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Tree Survey

Environmental Statement (ES)

The proposal is subject to environmental impact assessment as a schedule 2 development (table 10 infrastructure projects, sub section (b) urban development projects) by virtue of its scale and location, in terms of schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2011. An environmental statement (ES) has been submitted with the planning application.

The ES reports on the findings of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the proposed development. EIA is the process of compiling, evaluating and presenting all of the significant environmental impacts of the proposed development, leading to the identification and incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The proposed development was the subject to pre-application consultation between the applicant and the community, as required for applications falling within the category of major developments as defined in the 'Hierarchy of Development' Regulations. A Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) was submitted to the Council on 14th April 2014. This marked the commencement of public consultation which ran for a full year ending on 10th April 2015. There were three phases of consultation –

- The first consultation exhibitions were held in May 2014 at the Jesmond Centre in Bridge of Don, the Beacon Centre in Bucksburn and Aberdeen Art

Gallery. A postcard invitation was issued to 20,000 residents and the exhibitions widely publicised. Representatives from the project team were in attendance to provide information and discuss the emerging ideas for the future of the site. Attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire seeking their views on the proposals. Following the exhibitions two unmanned exhibitions took place at Marischal College reception from and the AECC main concourse in June 2014. Over 1,000 people attended the various events.

- A second round of consultation was undertaken in September 2014 and utilised the same venues and methods. Approximately 600 people attended the exhibitions over the 3 days the events were held. A further unmanned exhibition was also held in Marischal College.
- The third and final public consultation events were held in March 2015 in the upper mall of the Bon Accord Centre. The decision was made to host the exhibitions in a city centre venue as previous city centre venues had attracted a higher number of consultees. A further unmanned exhibition was also held in Marischal College during early April. A total of 327 written responses were submitted in response to the third round of consultation. The total written number of responses received over the course of the year was 500 with just over 4,000 participants.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

In June 2010 the former Development Management Sub-Committee established guidelines as to the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for the committee to hold a public hearing prior to determination of a planning application (where a pre-determination hearing is not required by legislation).

It was agreed that the criteria triggering a report to committee to seek a decision on whether or not a hearing should be when an application has been the subject of more than 20 objections and either the Council has a financial interest and/or the application is considered to be a departure from the development plan.

In this case more than 20 objections have been received, the Council have a financial interest due to being a development partner and the proposal represents a departure to the development plan.

CONSULTATIONS

ACC – Communities Housing and Infrastructure (Roads Development Management Team) – Awaiting formal response.

ACC – Communities Housing and Infrastructure (Environmental Health) –

Contamination – In terms of contaminated land there is no objection however it is recommended that a condition is attached requiring that a scheme to address

any significant risks from contamination on the site has been approved by the planning authority and implemented.

Air Quality – The air quality assessment predicted the potential impacts arising from the construction and operational phases of the development in 2018 and 2023, compared to the 2013 baseline, taking account of the other committed development in the area. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particles (PM₁₀) concentrations in the vicinity of the proposed development are currently below the annual mean air quality objectives and there is minimal risk of exceedance in this area. However the Anderson Drive/Haudagain roundabout/Auchmill Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is located along the A96 to the east, commencing at the junction with Howes Road. This AQMA was designated in 2009 due to measured exceedance of the annual mean NO₂ objective and predicted exceedances of the PM₁₀ objective, particularly around the Auchmill Road/Old Meldrum Road junction and Haudagain roundabout. Increased traffic associated with the proposed development has the potential to increase pollution in these areas.

The assessment predicted compliance with the air quality objectives in 2018 and a negligible impact on relevant receptors, including properties on Auchmill Road.

However, the size and nature of the committed developments in the wider area, including the AWPR, and the predicted increased traffic flows and potential congestion makes it difficult to accurately predict the air quality impacts. Furthermore, recent studies have suggested the emission factors currently used to predict future pollution levels significantly underestimate the contribution of diesel vehicles. This is because, among other factors, manufacturers require to demonstrate compliance with EU emission standards via test procedures and not in real world driving. Even new Euro VI diesel cars appear to emit higher concentrations of NO_x than manufacturer published data. The modelling used to predict the air quality impacts therefore may under predict actual emissions in 2018.

There is no objection to the application based on the air quality assessment. However as, stated above, the prediction of the cumulative impact of all the committed developments in the area is challenging and may under predict actual concentrations. It is recommended that the developer is required to submit details of mitigation measures to minimise traffic (particularly at peak times when congestion is most likely) and air quality impacts and encourage sustainable transport, for example through the provision of a detailed travel plan with provision to measure its implementation and effect.

The air quality assessment also considered the potential dust impacts during the demolition and construction phases. Should planning permission be granted a condition should be attached requiring a Dust Management Plan to be implemented.

ACC – Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (Flood Prevention Team) –
Consider the proposed drainage and flood prevention measures acceptable.

ACC – Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (Waste Strategy Team) – Due to the commercial nature of the development, it would receive a business waste collection.

Aberdeenshire Council (Infrastructure Services) – Aberdeenshire Council has no comments to make on the planning application and trusts that all relevant matters including transport/access arrangements will be fully considered when determining the application.

Aberdeenshire Council – Archaeology Service (Shared Service) – In terms of the overall development, the proposal for the demolition rather than re-use of Strathcona House is one of considerable detriment to the historic environment and as such means that, in this particular instance, it can only be recommended that the application is refused. The proposed demolition of this building will lead to the complete loss of one of Aberdeen's most recognised historic structures. It is accepted that there has to be flexibility within the design approach for a successful re-use of the development site as a whole, and with that in mind an objection is not raised to the other proposed demolitions. Strathcona House however, located towards the edge of the proposed development, must be considered for an alternative re-use in the first instance, with the accompanying draft Masterplan updated to reflect this.

The archaeological mitigation methodology as laid out in the Environmental Statement is acceptable. However, should the development be minded to proceed, it is recommended that a condition is applied requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works prior to development commencing.

Aberdeenshire Council – Developer Contributions Team (Shared Service) – Core Path 4 runs through the proposed site and the masterplan illustrates this has been incorporated into the design with improvements. The Developer will also be required to provide links into this path as part of the overall development. Future detailed applications should demonstrate these linkages.

Any Strategic and Local Transportation requirements are identified and confirmed direct by Aberdeen City Council's Transportation Team.

Aberdeen International Airport (AIA) – The proposed development has been examined from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective and does not conflict with safeguarding criteria subject to the following conditions –

- The proposal has been assessed against the potential future expansion of the southern runway which may be required in the period 2020 – 2040. The buildings are therefore subject to the maximum heights specified in the plans.
- The airport has been notified by NAT En-route Ltd (operator of the Perwiness Radar) that the development has the potential to affect the operation of the radar. A condition should be attached which requires any impact of be either discounted or addressed as detailed proposals come forward.

- A condition should be attached requiring a bird hazard management plan to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing.
- A condition should be attached requiring detailed drainage details, including bird deterrent measures, to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing.

Advice is also provided on the use of cranes in the vicinity of the airport, landscaping, lighting, signage and noise.

Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route Managing Agent – The submitted transport assessment indicates that the development has the potential to impact on the operation of the AWPR/A96 grade separated junction. There is a potentially significant level of queuing present on the northbound diverge slip road that block-backs onto the northbound carriageway of the AWPR. There is also a significant impact on the A96/Craibstone signalised roundabout, with significant queuing occurring on the A96 west approach.

Bucksburn and Newhills Community Council – The Community Council object to the application due to the proposed demolition of Strathcona House. Following a public meeting organised by the community council in May 2015 it was ascertained that there was a significant strength of feeling in relation to Strathcona House. Three main points were raised –

- Strathcona House is a unique building in Aberdeen terms and beyond, being, the community council are led to believe, the largest red sandstone building in Scotland. Inside there are magnificent features like oak panelling, stained glass windows and a beautiful staircase. It is strongly recommended that Councillors pay a visit to the building prior to making any decision.
- The second point relates to the people represented by Strathcona House – people such as Sir John Boyd Orr and Lord Strathcona who should be celebrated and lauded throughout Scotland, rather than being lost to future generations.
- All the initial discussions with the public indicated that Strathcona House was to remain. It appears quite concerning that the change to demolish the House is made at this very late stage in the proceedings.

The community council accept that the rest of the buildings making up the Rowett Institute can, reluctantly, be demolished, but that this one building which has to be incorporated into the new development rather than being demolished to accommodate this new construction. Although this new concert centre will be state of the art when it is constructed, that in twenty/thirty years time it will probably be ready to be taken down to make way for another one. Strathcona House on the other hand was constructed in the 1930's, still looks magnificent and will still be in this condition, if it is maintained and incorporated into the new conference centre.

Dyce and Stoneywood Community Council – Strongly object to the application, in particular the proposal to demolish Strathcona House. It is a

unique sandstone building in Aberdeen with a magnificent interior and its historical significance and connection with Lord Strathcona and Lord Boyd-Orr enhance its value to Aberdeen. The community council are surprised and disappointed that the developer previously stated that the building would be retained but now at the last moment it is apparently required for 'car parking'. This is a cynical plot from the developer which is condemned.

Energetica Development Manager – Energetica are content that this proposal seeking to establish the principle of development which is of a high quality and reflects the aims and aspirations of the Energetica programme. Energetica is supportive of the proposals at the Rowett Institute for the construction of a world class exhibition and conference centre which will attract local, national and international visitors providing a hub for major business and leisure related events. It is pleasing to note that in terms of sustainability the developer intends to go beyond the BREEAM requirements, which generally carries an environmental focus and will also consider other cumulative benefits through a wider set of indicators for the whole of the masterplan area.

The Environmental Statement describes the difficulties around access to the current site by public transport as part of the justification for the new project. To utilise the potential of the proposed site it is crucial that a clear, attractive and sustainable public transport strategy is developed. The statements contained within the draft Masterplan document around this topic are encouraging, but it is crucial that accessibility for visitors is addressed early and a clear travel plan is put in place to support the different phases of development. This should be for international visitors, but also for local and regional visitors from Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray. Opportunities associated with the planned park and choose site should be utilised.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) – There is no designations within HES's statutory remit (scheduled monuments and their setting, category A listed buildings and their setting, battlefields and gardens and designed landscapes) within or in the immediate vicinity of the site. In this regard there are no specific comments on the assessment and masterplan to offer.

HES recently received a request to consider Strathcona House for listing. As HES may not list a building which is subject to a current planning application which affects the character of the building, the site will not be considered further for listing at this time. HES has provided the appraisal of the building against listing criteria to the Council and it is hoped it will aid the consideration of this planning application and the draft masterplan. Should you not already have done so, a view should be sought from your Council's conservation and archaeology services.

NATS (En-Route) Plc. – Following a technical assessment, it has been determined that the development has the potential to affect the operation of the Perwinnes Secondary Surveillance Radar (SSR). While insufficient details are currently available in order to fully model and formally respond either supporting or objecting to the development, NATS respectfully requests that a condition is imposed on any consent in principle in order to ensure that any impact is either

discounted or addressed. As such, NATS has no objections to the granting of a Planning Permission in Principle to the application subject to the imposition of the planning condition and informative requiring detailed plans of the buildings showing that there would no impact or details of a scheme to mitigate any impact.

Police Scotland (Specialist Crime Division, Architectural Liaison Officer) –

- This area of Aberdeen currently has a very low crime profile, possibly due to the nature of its recent business. With a slightly wider focus applied, it can be seen that the majority of offences relate to motoring offences on the A96 or adjacent roads, thefts and minor vandalisms with no link to the development as it stands. Given the potential influx of large numbers of people to the development once it has been completed, the current crime profile is likely to change dramatically.
- Detailed design advice to limit the opportunities for crime to occur has been provided.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) –

Flood Risk and Burn Diversion – The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) submitted is designed to assess the current flood risk conditions at the site so that the baseline for assessing the impact of the proposed development and river diversion could be carried out. Pre and post-development flows have been calculated and pre and post-development model runs have been carried out. We note the modelled flood extents, that the flood extent is predicted to be reduced as a result of the diversion of the burn.

SEPA have reviewed the FRA submitted and find the methodology and estimated peak flows to be reasonable. It is noted from the information provided that the flood extents for the pre-development, and post-development with mitigation measures situations are largely consistent and therefore flood risk does not appear to be increased to these areas as a result of the diversion and bank works. It also shows a slight betterment compared to the pre-development situation in some areas. No development should take place within the 1 in 200 year plus climate change functional floodplain, It is requested that this is secured by condition to any grant of planning consent and used to inform the detailed design stage and site layout. If this will not be applied, then please consider this representation as an objection. The revised FRA recommends that further hydraulic modelling is undertaken during the detailed design stage. SEPA support this approach and look forward to providing additional comments when more detailed proposals are provided.

Surface Water – It is noted that roof water would be treated by one level of SUDS treatment and road and hardstanding areas by two. The SUDS measures would include porous paving with sub-base, swales with sub-base, filter drains and green roofs. The SUDS proposals are acceptable to SEPA from a water quality perspective.

Current SUDS proposals are based on no infiltration, however there is a strong desire to implement infiltration measures if feasible and appropriate for the location. This should be reviewed as part of the detailed design of the drainage once sufficient site investigations have been carried out. It is therefore requested that a condition is attached to any grant of planning consent requiring finalised details of the SUDS proposals. If this is not attached, then please consider this representation as an objection.

Foul Water – SEPA welcome the proposed foul water connection to the existing Scottish Water sewer and as such have no objection to this aspect of the proposal.

Contaminated Land – Within chapter 8 of the ES there is reference to radioactive contamination and burial pits that were used to store waste material. SEPA would highlight that there are two disposal sites possibly containing radioactive waste within the site and as such it is requested that a condition is attached to any grant of planning consent requiring the developer to undertake appropriate assessment at the site in relation to radioactive contamination along with details of any necessary remediation. Please note, it should not be assumed that remediation of the contaminated land is the most appropriate option.

SEPA would also take this opportunity to highlight that there is a Radioactive Substances Authorisation in place on the site. SEPA are liaising direct with the authorisation holder regarding the ongoing operation/revocation of this as the site is developed. As such it is highlighted that the above advice is given without prejudice to any decision made on elements of the proposal regulated by us, as such a decision may take into account factors not considered at the planning stage.

Advice on chemical land contamination issues should be sought from the local authority contaminated land specialists because the local authority is the lead authority on these matters.

Pollution Prevention and Environmental Management – SEPA welcome the submission of the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in Appendix 3.A and the Schedule of Mitigation within the ES. It is therefore requested that a condition is attached to the consent requiring the submission of a site specific finalised CEMP. If this is not attached, then please consider this representation as an objection.

Site Waste Management Plan – The proposal includes the demolition of the existing buildings and there will be extensive earth works on site. SEPA therefore requests that a condition is attached to any grant of planning consent requiring the submission of a site specific waste management plan. If this is not attached, then please consider this representation as an objection.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) – The proposal includes the demolition of several buildings, seven of which contain bat roosts, including a soprano pipistrelle maternity roost. The development also includes the diversion of part of the Green Burn which is used by otters. Several otter couches were identified

along the stretch of the Green Burn to be diverted. SNH advice with regard to bats and otters is that if you approve this application, even with the mitigation set out in EIA and bat survey report, a licence from SNH will still be required by the applicant before they can proceed with the development.

Bats and otters are European Protected Species. This means that if the Council are minded to approve this application it must satisfy itself, in line with statutory duties under the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended), that the licensing tests set out in those regulations are likely to be met before approving the application. If not, there is the risk that the applicant is unable to make practical use of the planning permission or commits an offence. Based on the information currently available to SNH, it is likely that the tests would be met and therefore that a licence would be granted. Please note that this advice is given without prejudice to any later consideration of an application for a licence.

Species protection plans will be required for otters and all bat species found on site. Within the ES, 'Table 10.12 EIA Summary' wrongly states that a bat licence has already been granted.

Scottish Water – No objection to the application. Invercannie Water Treatment Works and Persley PFI Waste Water Treatment Works currently have capacity to service the proposed development.

Sport Scotland – It is not expected that the development would have any impact on nearby sport pitches and therefore there is no objection from Sport Scotland.

Transport Scotland – With regards to the EIA –

- It is noted that these proposals are one of a number of proposed developments which are included within the Council's wider Dyce Corridor Study. This has identified a requirement for significant mitigation measures affecting both the trunk and local road network. As such, we are unable to comment on this development in isolation until such time as the Council's study has been concluded and the wider environmental impacts associated with increased traffic are understood.
- The EIA indicates that a new junction is proposed on the A96 in the form of a left in/ left out arrangement which will replace an existing junction. A signalised right turn facility will be incorporated into the junction to allow access for buses and signalised pedestrian crossing facilities will also be provided. The suitability of this arrangement in the situation where the A96 remains as part of the Trunk Road Network will require to be agreed with Transport Scotland through.
- Awaiting formal response on the planning application.

REPRESENTATIONS

71 letters of representations have been received. Many support the concept of redeveloping the site, however all but one raise strong objections to the

demolition of Strathcona House and to a lesser extent the Reid Library. The matters raised in relation to Strathcona House are summarised below –

1. The building is of significant historic importance due to its connection with internationally important and recognised scientific research, specifically in the fields of agriculture, food and nutrition. It is therefore of local, regional, national and international significance.
2. The demolition of the building would lead to the loss a heritage asset which should be retained in order to safeguard the history associated with the Rowett Institute and its founder Sir John Boyd Orr whose accomplishments included being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for scientific research on nutrition; holding the post of Director General of United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation; developing the system of rationing during World War II; and co-founding and holding the post of president of the World Academy of Art and Science.
3. Historic Environment Scotland has identified the building as being worthy of retention and would list it as category C if it had not been for the live planning application.
4. The building has a fine interior which is largely intact, with original features such as oak panelling, carvings and six stained glass windows, four of which were designed by Alexander Strachan, a renowned designer and brother of Douglas Strachan who glazed the King's College memorial window.
5. Aberdeen already has the unenviable reputation of '*being where architecture goes to die*' and allowing Strathcona House to be demolished would further compound this impression. It is an unfortunate trend that Aberdeen City Council appears to focus on new developments which tend to allow for dismissal of the city's heritage as if it is worthless.
6. The building is an important landmark alongside the A96 trunk road and there are few historic buildings of value left in Bucksburn so therefore it should be retained.
7. The building is perfectly useable and functioning and in an era where sustainability and reuse are important, it should not be demolished. It is suggested that the building could instead be used as a hotel, small conference facility, wedding venue, art gallery, museum, community facility or space to promote Scottish agriculture, food and drink.
8. The building should be retained as a gateway to the AECC development and could be used to showcase to visitors the achievements associated with the research carried out at the Rowett Institute.
9. The original plans for redeveloping the site showed the retention of Strathcona House whereas the revised plans show the building having been enlarged.

10. The demolition may not be allowed by the conditions of ownership of the site.

11. The demolition would be contrary to Policy Dx (Granite Buildings)

Other matters raised in relation to the wider development of the site are summarised as follows –

12. Concern with the loss of allotments in the north east of the site.

13. Concern with the loss of country walks.

14. Due to the many new developments in the area the character of Bucksburn is being affected and it is losing its 'village feel'.

15. The existing AECC site in Bridge of Don should be redeveloped rather than the AECC being moved to this site.

16. The development is too close to the airport which could cause safety issues.

17. There is an opportunity for the football stadium and AECC to be collocated at the Rowett South and Rowett North sites.

18. The scale of development can only have a significant impact upon local wildlife. The site could be more sensitively developed in order to accommodate existing trees and green space.

19. The Rowett Institute should not move to Foresterhill as the move could have a long term impact on services at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

20. The majority of traffic associated with the AECC would be going into the city so the AWPR would not alleviate traffic issues.

21. The money being spent on the new AECC would be better spent on roads or social care.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) – Revised in June 2014, SPP is the statement of Scottish Government Policy on land use planning, and includes the government's core principles for the operation of the planning system, subject planning policies, and how they should be exercised to contribute to the objective of sustainable development. The principle policies relating to sustainability and place making and subject policies relating to: a Successful, Sustainable Place; a low Carbon Place; a Natural, Resilient Place; and a Connected Place,

Creating Places (Scottish Government) – Scotland's new policy statement on architecture and place published in June 2013 sets out the comprehensive value good design can deliver. Successful places can unlock opportunities, build vibrant communities and contribute to a flourishing economy.

Designing Places (Scottish Government) – Launched in 2001, *Designing Places* sets out government aspirations for design and the role of the planning system in delivering these. The aim of the document is to demystify urban design and to demonstrate how the value of design can contribute to the quality of our lives. *Designing Places* is a material consideration in decisions in planning applications and appeals.

Designing Streets (Scottish Government) – Published in 2010 *Designing Streets* is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. It has been created to support the Scottish Government's place-making agenda and is intended to sit alongside *Designing Places*, which sets out government aspirations for design and the role of the planning system in delivering these.

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (March 2014)

The Strategic Development Plan sets out the following key objectives for the growth of the City and Aberdeenshire:

- Economic Growth – to provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment in a range of areas that are both appropriate for and attractive to the needs of different industries, while at the same time improving the essential strategic infrastructure necessary to allow the economy to grow over the long term.
- Population growth – to increase the population of the city region and achieve a balanced age range to help maintain and improve people's quality of life.
- Quality of the environment – to make sure new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets.
- Sustainable Mixed Communities – to make sure that new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and businesses to move to;
- Accessibility – to make sure that all new development contributes towards reducing the need to travel and encourages people to walk, cycle or use public transport by making attractive choices.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012)

Policy LR1 (Land Release Policy) – The site is identified in the local development plan (LDP) as opportunity site OP28 (Rowett North) which is allocated for 34.5 hectares of employment land in the period between 2007 and 2023.

A combined masterplan for OP28 and OP26 (Craibstone North and Walton Farm) is required.

Policy B11 (Aberdeen Airport and Harbour) – Public Safety Zones have been established for Aberdeen Airport (shown on the Proposals Map) where there is a general presumption against certain types of development. Due regard will be paid to the safety, amenity impacts on and efficiency of uses in the vicinity of the Airport and Harbour.

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. To ensure that there is a consistent approach to high quality development throughout the City with an emphasis on creating quality places, the Aberdeen Masterplanning Process Supplementary Guidance will be applied.

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. Access to, and movement within and between, new and existing developments will prioritise transport modes in the following order – walking, cycling, public transport, car and other motorised vehicles.

Street layouts will reflect the principles of Designing Streets and will meet the minimum distances to services as set out in Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility, helping to achieve maximum levels of accessibility for communities to employment, essential services and areas of recreation. 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; 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 D4 - Aberdeen’s Granite Heritage – The City Council will encourage the retention of granite buildings throughout the City, even if not listed or in a conservation area. Conversion and adaptation of redundant granite buildings will be favoured. Where a large or locally significant granite building that is not listed or in a conservation area is demolished, the City Council will expect the original granite to be used on the principal elevations of the replacement building.

Policy I1 (Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions) – Development must be accompanied by the infrastructure, services and facilities required to

support new or expanded communities and the scale and type of developments proposed. 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. The level of provision or contribution required will relate to the development proposed either directly or to the cumulative impact of development in the area and be commensurate to its scale and impact.

Policy NE1 (Green Space Network) – The City Council will 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. Masterplanning of new development should determine the location and extent of the Green Space Network within these areas.

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 NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) – There is a presumption against all activities and development that will result in the loss of or damage to established trees and woodlands that contribute significantly to nature conservation, landscape character or local amenity, including ancient and semi-natural woodland which is irreplaceable.

Appropriate measures should be taken for the protection and long term management of existing trees and new planting both during and after construction. Buildings and services should be sited so as to minimise adverse impacts on existing and future trees and tree cover. Native trees and woodlands should be planted in new development.

Policy NE6 (Flooding and Drainage) – Development will not be permitted if –

1. It would increase the risk of flooding;
2. It would be at risk itself from flooding;
3. Adequate provision is not made for access to water-bodies for maintenance; or
4. It would result in the construction of new or strengthened flood defences that would have a significantly damaging effect on the natural heritage interests within or adjacent to a watercourse.

Applicants will be required to provide an assessment of flood risk where a development is likely to result in a material increase in the number of buildings at risk from flooding.

Where more than 10 homes are proposed, the developer will be required to submit a drainage impact assessment. Surface Water Drainage associated with development must:

1. Be the most appropriate available in term so SUDS; and
2. 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.

Policy NE8 (Natural Heritage) – Development that, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, has an adverse effect on a protected species or an area designated because of its natural heritage value will only be permitted where it satisfies the relevant criteria in Scottish Planning Policy. In all cases of development at any location:-

1. Applicants should submit supporting evidence for any development that may have an adverse effect on a protected species demonstrating both the need for the development and that a full range of possible alternative courses of action has been properly examined and none found to acceptably meet the need identified;
2. An ecological assessment will be required for a development proposal on or likely to affect a nearby designated site or where there is evidence to suggest that a habitat or species of importance exists on the site;
3. No development will be permitted unless steps are taken to mitigate negative development impacts. All proposals that are likely to have a significant effect on the River Dee SAC will require an appropriate assessment which will include the assessment of a detailed construction method statement addressing possible impacts on Atlantic Salmon, Freshwater Pearl Mussel and Otter. Development proposals will only be approved where the appropriate assessment demonstrates that there will be no adverse effect on site integrity, except in situations of overriding public interest;
4. Natural heritage beyond the confines of designated sites should be protected and enhanced;
5. Where feasible, steps to prevent further fragmentation or isolation of habitats must be sought and opportunities to restore links which have been broken will be taken;
6. Measures will be taken, in proportion to the opportunities available, to enhance biodiversity through the creation and restoration of habitats and, where possible, incorporating existing habitats;
7. There will be a presumption against excessive engineering and culverting; natural treatments of floodplains and other water storage features will be preferred wherever possible; there will be a requirement to restore existing culverted or canalised water bodies where this is possible; and the inclusion of SUDS. Natural buffer strips will be created for the protection and enhancement of water bodies, including lochs, ponds, wetlands, rivers, tributaries, estuaries, and the sea.

Policy NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation) – New development should not compromise the integrity of existing or potential recreational opportunities

including access rights, core paths, and other paths and rights of way. Core Paths are shown on the proposals maps. 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. Such planning applications should be accompanied by an assessment of the likely impact of development on air quality and any mitigation measures proposed.

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 appropriate for its proposed use.

Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development) Housing developments should have sufficient space for the storage of residual, recyclable and compostable wastes. Flatted developments will require communal facilities that allow for the separate storage and collection of these materials. Recycling facilities should be provided in all new superstores or large supermarkets and on other developments where appropriate. Details of storage facilities and means of collection must be included as part of any 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 standards. This percentage requirement will be increased as specified in Supplementary Guidance.

Policy R8 - Renewable and low carbon energy developments

The development of renewable and low carbon energy schemes is supported and applications will be supported in principle if proposals:

- Do not cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas.
- Do not negatively impact on air quality.
- Do not negatively impact on tourism.
- Do not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.

Policy RT2 - Out of Centre Proposals

Retail, commercial, leisure and other development appropriate to town centres, when proposed on a site that is out-of-centre, will be refused planning permission if it does not satisfy all of the following requirements:

- No other suitable site in a location that is acceptable in terms of policy R1 is available or is likely to become available in a reasonable time.

- There will be no significant adverse effect on the vitality or viability of any retail location listed in Supplementary Guidance: Hierarchy of Retail Centres.
- There is, in qualitative or quantitative terms, a proven deficiency in provision of the kind of development that is proposed.
- The proposed development would be easily and safely accessible by a choice of means of transport using a network of walking, cycle and public transport routes which link with the catchment population. In particular, the proposed development would be easily accessible by regular, frequent and convenient public transport services and would not be dependent solely on access by private car.
- The proposed development would have no significantly adverse effect on travel patterns and air pollution.

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.

Transport Assessments and Travel Plans will be required for developments which exceed the thresholds set out in the Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance. Planning conditions and/or legal agreements may be imposed to bind the targets set out in the Travel Plan and set the arrangements for monitoring, enforcement and review.

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.

Supplementary Guidance (SG)

Draft Rowett North Masterplan (September 2015) – Approval was granted by the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (CHI) Committee on 19th May 2015 for a draft masterplan to be issued for a 6 week public consultation. 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. The masterplan includes the demolition of all buildings on site, including Strathcona House.

At the time of writing this report, the draft masterplan is subject of a separate report to the CHI Committee on 27th October. The report recommends that (i) the consultation findings are noted; (ii) the revisions made by the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure based upon the findings of the consultation are approved and (iii) the revised draft as the masterplan, is approved as interim planning advice to inform the redevelopment of the site.

Other Supplementary Guidance

The following supplementary guidance documents are material considerations in the evaluation of the application –

- Air Quality SG
- Archaeology and Planning SG
- Drainage Impact Assessments SG
- Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Manual
- Landscape Strategy Part 2 – Landscape Guidelines
- Low and Zero Carbon Buildings SG
- Transport and Accessibility SG
- Trees and Woodlands SG
- Waste Management Requirements in New Development SG

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2015)

In the proposed plan, published in March 2015, the site is re-zoned as a Specialist Employment Area, where Policy B2 applies. It states that in such areas, only class 4 (business) use shall be permitted, in order to maintain a high quality environment. Activities associated with research, design and development, knowledge-driven industries and related education and training will be encouraged. In relation to the Rowett North site specifically, the site is reserved for exhibition centre purposes and uses that support and are compatible with the exhibition centre, excluding large scale retail.

The site is also identified as Opportunity Site 19 (Rowett North) which indicates that the site is suitable for the new Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre and complimentary employment uses. It notes that a masterplan is in preparation and that the site may be at risk of flooding and will therefore require a flood risk assessment to be carried out.

The following policies are relevant and substantively reiterate existing policies in the adopted local development plan –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- Policy D2 (Landscape)
- Policy I1 (Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations)
- Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development)
- Policy T3 (Sustainable and Active Travel)
- Policy T4 (Air Quality)
- Policy NE1 (Green Space Network)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands)
- Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- Policy NE8 (Natural Heritage)
- Policy NE9 (Access and Informal Recreation)
- Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Developments)
- Policy R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings and Water Efficiency)

Newly introduced policies which are relevant are –

Policy T5 (Noise) – In cases where significant exposure to noise is likely to arise from development, a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) will be required as part of a planning application.

Development within or near to Candidate Noise Management Areas (CNMAs) and Candidate Quiet Areas (CQAs) will not be permitted where this is likely to contribute to a significant increase in exposure to noise or a deterioration of noise conditions in these areas, or where this will reduce the size of, or cause an increase in the noise level within, the CQA.

Policy CI1 (Digital Infrastructure) – All new residential and commercial development will be expected to have access to modern, up-to-date high-speed communications infrastructure.

EVALUATION

Under 38A(4) of the 1997 planning act, the planning authority may decide to hold a hearing for any development not covered by the mandatory requirements and to give the applicant and any other person an opportunity of appearing before and being heard by the committee. In June 2010 the Council agreed guidelines on the triggers for determining when the option of having a hearing would be considered and thereafter the issues which would determine whether such public hearings are held.

No recommendation is being made at this time in respect of the merits of the proposal. It is expected that a report will be presented to a future committee making such a recommendation on the determination of the application.

Triggers for Report

The criteria triggering a report to committee to seek a decision on whether or not a hearing is (i) when an application has been the subject of more than 20 objections and either (ii) the Council has a financial interest and/or (iii) the application is considered to be a departure from the development plan.

In this case 71 representations have been received the vast majority to which are objections, therefore meeting the first criterion. In terms of the second criterion, the Council has a financial interest due to being the development client partnership with Henry Boot Developments Ltd.

Lastly, the adopted LDP identifies the site for employment use through Policy LR1 (Land Release) but does not include the exhibition or conference centre or associated leisure and retail uses. Although employment uses will also be included, it is considered that there is a material difference between the local plan zoning of the site and what is now proposed. This, therefore, represents a departure from the development plan. Notwithstanding the foregoing and although the proposal includes uses which are different from the zoning, it is identified for development within the current plan period and a significant amount of employment use is still proposed as part of the development. The conclusion therefore is that the proposal does not meet the threshold to be considered as a significant departure from the LDP or the Council's spatial strategy for this part of the city.

Consideration of Existing Policy and Matters Raised

In order to determine whether a hearing is held, an assessment needs to be undertaken of whether the relevant development plan policies are up to date and relevant to the matters raised and whether these matters are material planning considerations.

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan, adopted in February of 2012, and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, which came into effect on 28th March 2014, collectively constitute the development plan against which applications for planning permission are considered.

The proposed local development was published in March 2014 and represents the Council's latest position on land use matters and the spatial strategy for the city. Formal consultation on the proposed LDP ended on 1st June 2015 and in relation to the Rowett North site no representations were received with regards to either its re-zoning or the proposal to accommodate the new AECC there. Therefore, the position in the proposed plan is the settled view of the Council on the matter, is very unlikely to change and is now a material planning consideration. In summary, the local development plan and proposed local development plan are considered at this time to provide an up-to-date and relevant policy framework for the determination of this planning application.

A total of 71 representations were received on the application. Only 2 do not object to the demolition of Strathcona House. Out of the remaining 69 representations, only 3 raise other matters in addition to those relating to Strathcona House. These predominately focus on the impact of traffic associated with the development, impact on green space & wildlife and flight safety. It was also suggested that the existing AECC site should be redeveloped and that the Rowett Institute should not be moving in the first place.

A significant level of consultation has taken place with the public, elected members and Council officers in relation to the proposed development. The matter of Strathcona House was not raised in earlier consultations on the masterplan, as the initial intention was to retain the building. With the subsequent change to the proposal, it is now apparent that there is a strong sentiment that Strathcona House should remain and be integrated into the proposed development.

Notwithstanding this, the substantial body of objection received on this application relates to a single issue (demolition of Strathcona House) and there are relevant policies within both the adopted LDP and the proposed LDP against which this single issue can be considered.

The majority of issues raised are relevant planning considerations and relate to issues which are covered by the development plan. It is felt that these issues can be assessed adequately against these policies and via discussion at a meeting of the Planning Development Management Committee. Extensive pre-application consultation has ensured that there is a good level of awareness about the proposals and issues surrounding it. Furthermore, the draft masterplan discusses

the issue of Strathcona House and if adopted at the CHI committee on 27th October, will become interim planning guidance and reflect the Council's current view on the matter.

On that basis, it is considered that a public hearing would not be warranted in this particular case and it is recommended that members defer consideration of this application to a later meeting of this committee, where a report on the merits of the proposal with a recommendation from officers can be presented and discussed.

RECOMMENDATION

Defer – No Hearing

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

This application relates to a development which Aberdeen City Council has an interest and has attracted a significant level of representation from within the local community. The proposal also represents a departure from the development plan. A substantial body of the objections relate predominately to the demolition of Strathcona House, rather than a wide range of different matters.

There are relevant policies in the development plan which cover the matters raised, most of which relate to a single issue (demolition of Statcona House). It is felt that these issues can be assessed adequately on this basis and in conjunction with the detailed representations received. The draft masterplan discusses the issue and if adopted at the CHI committee on 27th October, will become interim planning guidance and reflect the Council's current view on the matter. Therefore it is considered that a non-statutory public hearing is not required or add value to the decision making process in this instance.