

Major Development mixed use commercial (up to 30,000m²) including retail (class 1) , food and drink (class 3), other ancillary uses (such as offices) and associated landscaping, infrastructure and access works

Site OP40 Prime Four Business Park Kingswells Aberdeen Ref. No: 161429/PPP

Kingswells Community Council (KCC) is in general agreement that retail is a suitable use on the development site. However, we have some concerns that would need to be addressed.

KCC has the following observations on the above PPIp:

Framework

The following is an extract from the Design Statement

4.1 Key Objectives

The key objectives of the OP40 Development Framework are as follows:

- **Create a landscape which reflects the rural character of Aberdeenshire; relates to the surrounding area and takes its references from the natural heritage**
- **Create settings for buildings which are sympathetic, balanced and mitigate their visual impact on the landscape.**
- **Create external environments which enhance the daily living experience (e.g. spaces for outdoor socialising and exercise)**
- Create a high quality environment by the considered design of external features such as footpaths, street furniture, woodland belts and boundary walls.
- Provide multiple connections and maximum choices for people to use sustainable travel modes to travel to work, e.g. walk, cycle, or bus.
- Create opportunities for ecological enhancements, biodiversity and nature conservation.

The following is a comment inserted by the Design Team

Whilst the challenges of working with a different programme are recognised there is no reason why these key objectives as envisioned for the OP40 Framework cannot equally apply to a retail development on the same site.

KCC contends that the items highlighted in bold are less likely in a 30,000 sq.m retail development than could be achieved with an office development similar to that provided on the Prime Four site.

The applicant has indicated the intention to provide the maximum amount of car parking space for a retail development. Based on the floor areas quoted, KCC has calculated the following car parking requirement.

Non-residential car parking spaces – all maximum amounts

1: RETAIL			
Land Use	City Centre	Inner City	Outer City
Food retail outlets (>1000m ² GFA)	1 per 40m ²	1 per 22m ²	1 per 14m ²
Non-food retail outlets (>1000m ² GFA)	1 per 50m ²	1 per 30m ²	1 per 20m ²
Food/non-food retail outlets (<1000m ² GFA)	1 per 70m ²	1 per 40m ²	1 per 30m ²

Extract from Aberdeen City Council's 'Transport and Accessibility' Supplementary Guidance

Type of Retail	Area Sq. m.	Floor Area per Car Provided for Outer City	Cars
Food	3,716	14	265
Non Food	26,013	20	1,300
Total	29,732		1,565

Calculation of Maximum Car Parking Spaces

The maximum car parking provision for the proposed retail development represents a car park approximately 1.7 times the size of the Kingswells Park & Ride. The design document suggests that the entrance will include an avenue similar to the existing Prime Four Boulevard and that the visual impact of the car park will be reduced by the use of 'rooms' and landscaping. The resulting design will require car parking with a much larger area than a 'standard' carpark.

KCC has concerns about the potential visual impact of such a large carpark. For commercial reasons, Drum Group will clearly want to make the whole retail site as visible as possible. However, KCC considers that the height of the buildings alone as well as a new road junction will make the site perfectly visible to passing traffic. Effective screening of the carpark from the A944 should be a key requirement.

Considering the areas identified for development it is unlikely that a design of 30,000 sq.m of high-class retail and the associated car parking and landscaping could be facilitated on this site in a manner that complies with the key objectives identified in the Framework, and a smaller development should be considered.

Traffic Assessment

KCC is concerned about the cumulative impact of additional traffic on the A944 and would like to raise the following points in relation to the traffic assessment (TA).

The TA shows that the new AWPR roundabout is severely under pressure from increases in traffic levels. The applicant plans to provide an additional lane to the roundabout and its approach roads.

As the Prime Four development is more than 50% complete and is part of a masterplan, KCC considers that the TA should be performed for the whole development to ensure that as the various phases come on stream there is a schedule of improvements required to provide adequate access to the site. Each new phase identifies new surprises and this defeats the primary role of a masterplan. This will allow the best possible solutions to be found for the TA, rather than the incremental upgrades that are currently proposed.

The A944 may be subject to large increases in traffic from Phase 4 and Phase 5 of the Prime Four development and a 20,000 seat football stadium. All of these developments will be proposed at the same time and they all should be included in a TA. It is noted that Transport Scotland made a similar comment in their response to the TA.

The TA may have underestimated the traffic flows and KCC asks that ACC confirm that the TA addresses the following:

- The design statement suggests that there will be a future link from the Boulevard forming the access to the proposed retail park through the Prime Four site. This will generate additional traffic that has not been included in the current TA.
- The TA for the Prime Four site has been approved for a floor area up to 91,769 sq.m. It is unclear if this area includes the Phase 4 OP63 site.
- Section 7.4.1 describes the traffic from the Ardene House office development. KCC has been advised by Drum Group that the vet will not be vacating the site and the Phase 5 footprint includes the previously approved office development. The office development will not now take place. It is not clear if the traffic from this development is included in the TA.
- KCC appreciates that the TA should account for all the peak time traffic. The current TA makes a reduction in the traffic generated by the proposed retail park during the morning peak to account for 'pass-by' traffic. KCC think this would result in an underestimate of the traffic flow. Any shoppers at that time would be on the road for the sole purpose of shopping and would add to the existing flow

figures. It is very unlikely the pass-by traffic at morning peak would have time to shop, and would be focused on getting to work. KCC concedes that pass-by shoppers exist for evening peak.

- The provision for multiple modes of transport is admirable, but retail units generate shopping that needs to be taken back to the purchaser's home. This would generally require a car. The use of walking, public transport and cycling are not suited to the transfer of bulky purchases. Consequently, the TA should reflect this in increased traffic flows.
- The design team suggest that the Retail Development would employ 1,500 people. Are these journeys included in the TA?

Alternative Design of Access to the Proposed Retail Park

As an alternative to additional signalised junction on the A944, KCC would like the following options to be considered:

- to access the site from the existing Prime Four Boulevard.
- A roundabout (possibly with part time traffic lights) as an alternative to a full time signalised junction.
- an upgraded spur off the AWPR roundabout.

Prime Four has a network of internal roads and they should be used more to assist the distribution of Prime Four traffic. Direct access off the A944 is an ideal solution for Prime Four, but is not necessarily the best solution for the wider road network.

The TA concentrates on mitigating the effects of peak time traffic, but the effect of having an additional signalised junction on the A944 at off-peak times causes delays and more inconvenience for the community on a 24 / 7 basis. Having too many junctions on the A944 creates a stop/start journey as there is often no coordination between sets of traffic lights. More natural traffic flows can be obtained using a roundabout.

An option to access the Prime Four site off the AWPR roundabout would be a natural flow off the roundabout. It is not the same as the study included in the TA, as there would be no U-turn and resulting issues with stacking vehicles.

KCC asks that all the possible access solutions are investigated and that the selected option addresses the needs of the community during off peak times as well as the needs of commuters during peak times. We also ask that the TA considers all the traffic from all phases from Prime Four development and all other known developments. All future upgrades should be considered to avoid a piecemeal approach.

Out-of-Centre Retail Development

KCC is aware that having out of centre retail could have an impact on the city centre and nearby settlements including Kingswells, Newhills, Countesswells and Westhill. KCC asks that ACC considers the impact of the proposed development and how it fits with the requirements of the ALDP.

It is for ACC to determine the effect that an out-of-centre retail development will have on the city.

Conclusion

KCC concludes that a 30,000 sq.m retail park will be difficult to provide in compliance with the Framework, and will have 'massing' issues. Further evidence is required to ensure that the application can be provided in compliance with the planning criteria set out in the Framework document.

The TA should consider the concerns raised by KCC and alternative means of accessing the site should be investigated.

ACC should consider the city wide implications of the proposed development.

KCC considers that the provision of retail on this development site is an appropriate use of the site if we receive a satisfactory and convincing response to our concerns.

Regards,

Ian Cox,
Secretary,
Kingswells Community Council