

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Council
DATE:	19 May 2010
REPORT BY:	Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team
TITLE OF REPORT:	Aberdeen City Centre – Developing a Vision for the future
REPORT NUMBER:	OCE/10/010

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present a vision for the future development of Aberdeen City Centre. The structure of the report is as follows:

1. The background and economic context.
2. A summary of the City Centre Development Framework.
3. Union Terrace Gardens and Denburn Valley.
4. Recommendations.

1. BACKGROUND AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- 1.1 In developing a strategic vision for the future it is useful to reflect on the past to help inform future decisions. Aberdeen City has an outstanding and well chronicled history, known by the Romans as Devana and referred to in the Norse Chronicles as Apardion. There is evidence of organised Local Government dating back to 1272 and by the end of the thirteenth century Aberdeen was an established trading centre. In gratitude for the support given to Robert the Bruce in his defeat of the English Garrison, he granted several charters of rights to Aberdeen, not the least of which is the Great Charter of 1319 which established Aberdeen's political existence and originated the funds which have become the Common Good.
- 1.2 This brief reference to Aberdeen's great history is a signpost to the elements which represent our heritage but which will also influence City Centre development in the future.

- 1.3 The dilemmas which face elected members now in determining how best to respect Aberdeen's heritage whilst ensuring that the city is a place for the future are not new.
- 1.4 A reference point is the 1952 'Granite City – A plan for Aberdeen' in which the former Secretary of State for Scotland and Freeman of the City and Royal Burgh of Aberdeen, the Rt Hon. Thomas Johnston wrote on his foreword " The alternative to planning is no planning: it is chaos and waste"...Aberdeen is the cleanest of our Scots cities – cleanest in appearance because of its situation and its atmosphere, and because of its granite stone buildings." "... her City Council is approaching its planning problems with zeal and vision and now there is laid before us a master plan, to which this and succeeding generations can align their changes and improvements, so that in the days that are to be there will not only emerge the City Beautiful, but the city with its resources, not sprawled over and wasted, but utilised to the full for the common good."
- 1.5 More recently, in 2009, Scottish Ministers approved the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan which sets out an ambitious vision for a successful and sustainable future for the north east. That vision is for Aberdeen City and Shire by 2030 to "be an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European city region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business. We will be recognised for: our enterprise and inventiveness, particularly in the knowledge economy and high-value markets; the unique qualities of our environment; and our high quality of life." Importantly the vision states that we will have acted confidently and taken courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable. The Structure Plan identifies a range of projects that are essential to helping to achieve that vision, including the need for a city centre masterplan.
- 1.6 The Local Development Plan sets out how the Council will implement the Structure Plan and the Proposed Plan to be presented to Members in September will include a number of challenging decisions for the future development of the City. The Main Issues Report recognises that access to an attractive and vibrant city centre is vital to achieving a sustainable economic future for the City and region and refers to the role of the emerging City Centre Development Framework in setting out the principles to guide and co-ordinate development and investment.
- 1.7 This report is the first stage in the process of developing that Framework. It emphasises the relevance of a renewed vision for the city centre and highlights the necessity of understanding our heritage whilst meeting the needs and aspirations for our citizens to live, work and visit the city centre in the 21st century.

- 1.8 This report brings forward for consideration the development of a modern strategic vision for the City Centre and of a Development Framework for the City Centre to facilitate the delivery of the vision.
- 1.9 There now exists an opportunity to develop a seminal Vision and Development Framework for the City Centre which could endorse Aberdeen's heritage and its place as a global commercial hub.
- 1.10 The oil and gas Industry has put Aberdeen in a privileged position since the discovery of the first North Sea oil field in 1969. Aberdeen has seen itself as a leading City in a truly global industry and its businesses have increasingly seen opportunities to export their innovative products and services around the world. But peak oil production is now in the distant past and current predictions suggest that as much as 25 billion barrels of oil might still be able to be produced with most of that being in the next 10 years. The current position is that there are 6 years of proven reserves.
- 1.11 If there are favourable fiscal conditions going forward then we may see all of that 25 billion barrels produced. If, on the other hand, a future Government decides to develop a less favourable fiscal regime, then many operators could well transfer their future investments into lower cost development areas overseas.
- 1.12 The position is clear, we have only a short time, whatever happens, to try and anchor many of our international service companies here in Aberdeen and make it a world energy hub for the future. The Structure Plan is ambitious and focuses on development but recognises that the area's future is heavily dependent on investment in infrastructure.
- 1.13 Yet we find ourselves in the midst of worldwide economic difficulties. Cash for investment is at a low ebb just at the time when it is needed most to support the areas ambitions to prolong the oil and gas industry's life here and diversify into new industries. Indeed, Aberdeen finds itself in a position where it will have to compete with Cities worldwide like never before for prominence as an International centre able to retain and attract the best companies and jobs.
- 1.14 Critical to all of this and recognised throughout the world as such is the success of a competing City's central area.
- 1.15 The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of our City Centre in ensuring that Aberdeen is seen as a competitive and attractive place to people who use it to live, work or visit.

- 1.16 The ensuing section is a summary of the proposed City Centre Development Framework which will help guide the future economic wealth of our City Centre.

2. SUMMARY OF THE CITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 As stated previously, both the Structure Plan and emerging Local Development Plan make reference to the need for a City Centre Development Framework to help achieve the vision for the future of the city and the north east. The purpose of the Framework (which is included in full in Appendix I) is to set out the development principles to guide and co-ordinate development and investment in the city centre. It identifies key projects and opportunities and will set out a programme to monitor the delivery of agreed priorities for the city centre.
- 2.2 The Framework is informed by a number of national, regional and local documents, including Scottish Government's "Designing Places - A Policy Statement for Scotland". This states that successful spaces have a distinct identity and are also safe, pleasant, easy to move around and welcoming to visitors. Added to this, successful places must be adaptable and sustainable. These themes underpin the Development Framework.
- 2.3 The Development Framework seeks to:
- Complement and enhance Aberdeen's unique identity
 - Develop clearly defined character areas
 - Ensure future development understands the existing context
 - Complement the wealth of existing urban design qualities
 - Celebrate the quality of architecture present in the city centre
 - Ensure a co-ordinated and integrated approach to the future development of the city centre.
- 2.4 In doing that the Framework is consistent with the guiding principles of the Council's Masterplanning Process (adopted in November 2008). These concentrate on understanding the key themes of context, identity and connection.
- 2.4.1 **Context** - is about understanding of the historic development of the city centre, appreciating what is valuable and identifying opportunities to enhance that. This includes consideration of the medieval street pattern, the development of Union Street, the topography of the city centre, the variety of building periods and styles, the existence of landmarks, the relationship with the sea and the rivers. But context is also about the policy framework, including the Development Plan, the Union Street Conservation Area Appraisal, the Urban Realm Strategy and the Local Transport

Strategy, all of which have informed the principles of the Development Framework.

2.4.2 **Identity** - explores what makes the city centre definable and recognisable. This includes a wide range of factors such as the planning and design principles, visual references through landmarks and the character of the spaces (public squares, streets, gardens) between buildings and gateways and approaches to the city centre, materials (specifically for Aberdeen the use of granite), the importance of corners, lighting, street furniture, signage and trees and landscape.

2.4.3 **Connection** - underpins many of the themes within context and identity in terms of the emphasis on the importance of the quality of the public realm and connections within the city centre, but is it also about transportation and as such will be informed by the Council's Local Transport Strategy. Connection includes issues relating to the role of the city centre as a transport hub, reducing the need to travel, promoting pedestrian priority, ensuring an accessible urban core (including consideration of car parking, cycle paths, desire lines) and servicing requirements for city centre homes and businesses.

2.5 Based on an analysis of the factors outlined above, the Development Framework is founded on five key objectives. These are that:

- The principal focus of the Framework is Union Street; as the most important and identifiable street in the city it should be promoted as the commercial, vibrant heart of the city centre
- Character areas and urban quarters are developed to capitalise on the distinctive merits of their surroundings and to reinforce Aberdeen's unique identity
- Legible transport hubs are introduced to the central area with car parks on the approaches to ensure an efficient and understandable relationship between character areas, Union Street and public access to facilities in the city centre
- Street surfaces are of a high quality at first points of contact with the city centre (public transport hubs, rail station, car parks and around important public and historic buildings
- A range of vibrant connected squares are developed to ensure the best use of space to enhance city life

- 2.6 Whilst very much focused on planning and urban design principles it is important that the City Centre Development Framework embraces the Council's wider vision for the future of the city and for the Council. As such the Framework considers a number of other issues including the need for a retail strategy to deal with the relationship between certain types of retail use, the potential grouping of similar retail providers and the relationship of the type of retail or commercial activity appropriate to the setting of urban spaces. It is proposed that this be developed for inclusion as part of the final draft Framework. The contribution of other Council Services will be incorporated in due course.
- 2.7 As stated above, the Framework proposes that the unique identity of the city centre be enhanced and reinforced through the clear definition of a number of urban quarters and character areas. Each of these has a distinct character and purpose and the Framework explores the context, identity, connections and opportunities for each. The key characteristics of each area are summarised below.
- 2.7.1 **Union Street** - the city's principle thoroughfare and the grandest street in Scotland plays a major strategic role in the future development of the city centre, including potentially through pedestrianisation which will enhance the retail opportunity of Union Street as well as improving the quality of the public realm and air quality.
- 2.7.2 **Civic Quarter** - relates to the area around Broad Street, the St Nicholas and Bon Accord shopping centres and St Nicholas Kirk. The strategy for the future development of this area is based on the Bon Accord Masterplan approved by the Council in 2006. The Council's occupation of Marischal College, the redevelopment of St Nicholas House and the creation of a civic square with linkages to the shopping centres and green space at St Nicholas Kirk is fundamental to reinforcing the character of this area.
- 2.7.3 **The Green** - is of national importance as it evidences the development of Aberdeen from its earliest origins. The historic streetscape is a major element of the character of this area and it plays an important role as a gateway from the bus and rail stations to the rest of the city centre. The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a conservation led programme to protect and enhance the unique character of this area.
- 2.7.4 **Castlegate Quarter** - this area currently acts as the termination of a grand procession through the city from east to west. It is a prime urban space with a key strategic position in the city. Its future development should enhance its historical character and the public

realm of the area and maximise the opportunities arising from adjacent development sites and the benefits of its location as a potential transportation hub to encourage its role as a gathering point in the City. Proposals in the Draft Beach Masterplan suggested that Union Street and the Beach Boulevard be physically reconnected via the Castlegate and Justice Street.

2.7.5 **Crown Street** - is a predominantly residential area which presents an austere architectural image in the City. There is scope for general upgrading and enhancement of the public realm in this area, retaining its inherent character, but no major development opportunities are envisaged.

2.7.6 **The West End** - relates to the area north of Union Street from Huntly Street west. This is a transitional zone between business and retail and currently offers a variety of uses, including speciality retail, housing, business, hotel and entertainment. Many of the streets have their own distinct character and uses contributing to their success and this should continue to be enhanced in line with The West End Study and Chapel Street Car Park brief.

2.7.7 **Bon Accord** – this area currently functions as an entertainment zone. Its future development should build on recent high quality developments in the area as well as addressing the vehicle-pedestrian conflict on Justice Mill Lane.

2.7.8 **Riverside** – embraces the south Dee area and has recently been the focus for new business and commercial development. This area should exploit and enhance its riverside location, its close proximity to the city centre and its excellent public transport links to build on its role as a central business district. Links to the Harbour will be significant for this area.

2.7.9 The urban quarter of particular relevance to the decision that members are asked to take in relation to the next section of this report is the Cultural Quarter, which relates to the Denburn Valley and its surroundings. Section 5.3 of the Development Framework has been reproduced in full in section 2.7.10 of this report for ease of reference.

2.7.10 **The Cultural Quarter (5.3)**

The Cultural Quarter relates to the Denburn Valley and its surroundings. A wealth of cultural activity exists with His Majesty's Theatre, Central Library, Art Gallery, Belmont Cinema and Music Hall all within a short distance of Union Terrace Gardens, the main landscaped green space focus of the City Centre.

Union Terrace Gardens and its surroundings provide key elements of the City Centre, providing valuable green space and marking the extent of the medieval core of the City. Bridges, buildings and balustraded terraces are significant, and, together with the topography of the area, are important in terms of the legibility of the City.

Union Terrace Gardens (5.3.1)

The Gardens are currently the subject of much debate on the principles of appropriate development. A 3,200 m² centre for contemporary arts was granted planning consent in 2008 through the statutory planning process. Shortly afterwards, an announcement was made that a donation of £50m from Sir Ian Wood may contribute to a proposal that could raise the level of the Gardens to that of the surrounding streets. Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) undertook a City wide consultation on that concept. The results indicated that the majority (55%) of those consulted were against the concept.

Intervention with the Gardens has been under discussion since the Dobson, Chapman and Riley Granite City Plan of 1952, which proposed extending the Gardens to cover the railway line. There has been much iteration since, including the unsuccessful Millennium Square project of the late 1990s. Many earlier proposals regarded Union Terrace Gardens as a development site and failed to appreciate its positive characteristics and its very special role in the City Centre. Union Terrace Gardens should be used as a focus for broader regeneration of the surrounding area and implementation of the Development Framework.

Perceptions (5.3.2)

There are negative issues related to the Denburn Valley. The lack of focussed cultural activity reduces the number of potential users. Access to the Gardens is challenging with no obvious or enticing link from the main pedestrian flow on Union Street. The historic setting, quality and drama of many of the buildings to the rear of Belmont Street are diluted by the continued dereliction of the Triple Kirks site.

Despite its key strategic location in the heart of the City, Union Terrace Gardens lacks some connectivity linking the area to its surrounding urban fabric. What is clear is that in any proposal for Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley, there are several key themes that must be addressed. These are discussed in the following sections.

Future of the Denburn Valley (5.3.3)

Prior to any proposal being developed for the Denburn Valley a detailed assessment of the historic environment is necessary to determine its contribution to townscape, proposed interaction of buildings and space and to ensure that key views and vistas are identified to inform the design stage.

Triple Kirks is an essential component of any future proposals for the area. Failure to imaginatively develop this site will detract from the ambition to develop quality urban space in the area. Triple Kirks, and Archibald Simpson's spire particularly, is an important landmark in the City Centre and must be incorporated into any new development.

Context

The Denburn Valley and the wider Cultural Quarter provides the setting for a number of important public buildings in the City.

Union Terrace Gardens has many qualities to be exploited and enhanced including:

- topography which provides a unique and dramatic setting for the surrounding historic townscape and bridges and an essential component of the identity of the City Centre
- character of buildings to the rear of Belmont Street
- setting for His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library
- Denburn Viaduct and Union Bridge
- green space and mature trees
- one of the last locations where the historic relationship of Union Street to the old city can be appreciated

Identity

Any proposal for Denburn Valley must ensure a sense of place in the City Centre. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring the Gardens themselves are a destination with purpose
- addressing dereliction, particularly at Triple Kirks
- delivering a clearly defined "green" urban park
- providing a cultural focus in the central gardens area

Connection

Connection to and from the Gardens and the opportunity to link to the surrounding urban fabric at a variety of levels is as important as the Gardens themselves. By linking the valley to a wider network of enhanced squares and spaces, particularly around key public

buildings, the full potential of this considerable asset can be achieved. The key principles to be addressed are:

- accessibility from major thoroughfares
- multi-level connection
- direct link from Union Street
- relationship to collegiate Aberdeen
- development of and from the rear of the buildings of Belmont Street.

Opportunities

Buildings and terraces could be added to the rear of Belmont Street which could exploit the proximity and views of the Gardens. Terraces could extend over the Denburn dual carriageway and one or more pedestrian bridges could directly link Belmont Street to the Gardens.

From the west, Union Terrace Gardens should be seen as the culmination of a series of squares and spaces that comprise the essential urban fabric of the City.

From the north, the approach from Schoolhill should be incorporated within any proposal to redevelop the Triple Kirks site. In addition, linking to the urban space to the north of His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library is desirable. This would allow the Denburn and Woolmanhill opportunity sites to be integrated with the central area. From the south, consideration should be given to direct access from Union Street. The opportunity also exists to connect at lower levels to the Green and the rail station. All the approaches should form part of the experience of City life and movement.

Proposals are under development to extend the Art Gallery to house the combined collections of the Museums and Galleries Service and propose an integrated solution, which will deliver greater potential benefits to the City.

Work is ongoing to discuss and secure funding opportunities to redevelop the Music Hall into a centre for excellence in music practice in the North East. The proposal includes new rehearsal space, recital space, space for composers and community orchestras.

Sustainability

It is essential that sustainability is a key consideration in the future of the Denburn Valley and Union Terrace Gardens. The cultural and social needs of the City need to be clearly understood along

with the implications of construction, maintenance and life time costs.

The variety of cultural uses around the Denburn Valley demands that Union Terrace Gardens provides a focus of cultural activity that enhances that vibrancy. A proposal for a contemporary arts centre is welcome, but it must not be seen as the solution to all the perceived problems of the Gardens. There are still issues relating to access, safety and connection to the wider urban fabric of the City.

The pocket park in front of His Majesty's should be incorporated into the Gardens. This makes use of the elevated topography available to capture sunlight.

Key Issues for the Cultural Quarter

- create a sense of place
- use topography to add interest and character
- enhance urban green environment
- undertake more landscaping
- improve connectivity
- ensure access and safety
- enhance multi level connections
- redevelop Triple Kirks
- attract visitors
- cultural focus
- improve streetscape and access around key public buildings

2.7.11 Any proposal for development within these urban quarters and character areas must appreciate the positive characteristics of the site and its special role within the city centre. The six principal qualities of any successful place set out above, namely distinct identity, safe and pleasant environment, easy to move around, welcoming, adaptable and sustainable must be applied in the preparation and consideration of such proposals.

3 UNION TERRACE GARDENS AND DENBURN VALLEY

- 3.1 The purpose of this part of the report is to ask Members to consider a proposal to raise Union Terrace Gardens and take them to an international design competition and onwards to a full planning application.
- 3.2 The initial proposals set out in relation to raising the gardens together with the revised position developed in December 2009, can be seen at Appendix 2. The history of the reports relating to both Peacock Visual Arts and the Sir Ian Wood/ACSEF Proposals can be seen at Appendix 3.
- 3.3 Members will recall that proposals for the redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens stretch back at least until the early 1950s and in the 1990s there were two separate proposals to raise the gardens to street level. In November 2008 Sir Ian Wood approached the Council with regard to a new proposal in relation to Union Terrace Gardens. An engineering feasibility study was carried out and in June 2009 the Council agreed that the project continue to the next stage that being a public consultation to gauge what level of support there might be for the project and also be canvass views on what might be incorporated into any new space created should the project go ahead.
- 3.4 Weber Shandwick, an international communications consultancy with a specialism in community consultation including, locally in Aberdeen, the consultation process for the Bon Accord Masterplan in 2006, were appointed by Scottish Enterprise to design, develop and deliver the public consultation programme into ACSEF's City Square Proposals.
- 3.5 Subsequently an eight week public consultation programme was delivered by Weber Shandwick ran from 11 January 2010 to 5 March 2010 and consisted of six major elements, namely:
- Promotion and information;
 - Feedback opportunities;
 - Focus groups;
 - Opinion polling;
 - Engagement with schools and young people; and,
 - Publication of the consultation report outcomes.
- 3.6 The results of the consultation were published on 13th April 2010. The results clearly indicated a wish for change and, in particular, identified green space and culture as the two main areas of interest of the public in any future use of the space. The results also indicated that 55% of those that voted were against the proposal and 44% were for it, with 11,943 formal submissions received during the period of the consultation.

- 3.7 In response, Sir Ian Wood has requested that Aberdeen City Council consider whether or not to support his plans.

PEACOCK VISUAL ARTS LTD

- 3.8 Peacock Visual Arts is a long established print making and Arts Centre widely considered to be the main contemporary visual arts organisation in Aberdeen and the North-east of Scotland. Peacock has been trying to establish itself in new premises for over 10 years and have developed a number of proposals before receiving planning permission for new premises in Union Terrace Gardens for a 3,200 m² public Centre for Contemporary Arts on 5th March 2008.
- 3.9 Peacock Visual Arts whilst having planning permission have yet to enter into negotiations for a lease and require to produce a finalised business plan demonstrating the ongoing viability of the organisation before commencing work on the site.
- 3.10 It is understood that Peacocks' landlord has indicated a long term desire to redevelop the site currently occupied but, there are no imminent plans to do so.

PROPOSED PROJECT FUNDING – SIR IAN WOOD/ACSEF

- 3.11 As outlined by Sir Ian Wood in his public statement of 11th November 2008, a figure of £50M is available as a personal contribution towards the creation of a new civic heart for Aberdeen City. This leaves a balance estimated at £90M to be realised to achieve the fullest extent of the options under consideration.
- 3.12 The report to Elected Members of Aberdeen City Council's Policy & Strategy Committee of 9th June 2009 clearly stated that Aberdeen City Council, in common with many other Scottish local authorities, that to contribute funding through conventional routes would be challenging given public sector financial constraints in the current economic climate.
- 3.13 Nevertheless, the past year has demonstrated that there is an appetite for greater use of public/private partnerships and innovative local funding mechanisms or tools to provide new ways of raising finance for capital infrastructure developments, notably for those projects which require significant related investment in enabling infrastructure such as the proposals mooted for Union Terrace Gardens and Denburn Valley.
- 3.14 Examples of innovative funding mechanisms include Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Accelerated Development Zones (ADZs) utilising Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funding principles and Local Asset

Backed Vehicles (LABV) alongside hypothecation of localised revenue streams for infrastructure development. Examination by officers has determined that an Accelerated Development Zone (ADZ) utilising Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funding principles forms the most appropriate local funding mechanism in this instance.

- 3.15 Tax Increment Financing (TIF), pioneered in the United States, is designed to allow cities to 'participate in the growth dividend' – or, in other words, allow local authorities to capture incremental value in the form of tax revenues generated from new development.
- 3.16 TIF works on the principle that the supply of new or improved infrastructure usually leads both to new development and to an increase in the value of surrounding property, both of which serve to increase the level of property taxation in the area. Within a designated TIF district (in UK parlance, an Accelerated Development Zone or ADZ), this anticipated increased taxation (the 'tax increment') is captured and used to fund the infrastructure that has been provided.
- 3.17 In order to do this, local authorities require the power, which they currently do not enjoy, to retain over a long term period local tax revenues such as business rates allowing funds to be raised for investment through securitisation of those revenues. Financing debt issued to pay for the project by utilising increased tax revenues can take up to 20-25 years, but in some cases the timeframe can be much shorter. TIF therefore creates funding for public infrastructure projects within defined Accelerated Development Zones that are otherwise unaffordable to local authorities in the current economic climate.
- 3.18 Aberdeen City Council alongside other Scottish Cities, notably Edinburgh, Glasgow and North Lanarkshire, is actively engaging with The Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise with a view to establishing a pathfinder project using Tax Increment Financing principles for the Union Terrace Gardens and Denburn Valley project.
- 3.19 A part of this engagement process has included the commissioning by Scottish Enterprise in February 2010 of a feasibility study to be undertaken by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) and CBRE. The purpose of the commission was to investigate whether the Union Terrace Gardens project would be suitable for a Tax Increment Financial project and how much it might reasonably be able to support by way of capital borrowing with any uplift in non domestic rates being 'captured' by the Council and use it to service borrowings against the costs of prudential borrowing.
- 3.20 The feasibility study indicated a cost of between £120m and £140m for the project with the Wood Family Trust providing £50m, other private sector

partners providing £20m and the balance of £70m being provided through a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) pathfinder project. The interim findings of PwC/CBRE's work are shown at Appendix 4. The interim findings do however suggest that the beneficial effects of the project on non-domestic rates would cover the £70m of borrowings required.

<u>Funding Statement</u>		£	£
		m	m
Total Project Cost			<u>140</u>
To be funded by			
-	Sir Ian Wood	50	
-	Private Sector donations	20	
-	Tax Increment Funding	<u>70</u>	<u>140</u>

PROPOSED PROJECT FUNDING – PEACOCK VISUAL ARTS

3.21 As reported to Elected Members of the Policy & Strategy Committee of 9th June 2009, Peacock Visual Arts Ltd has secured £9.3m against a total project cost of £13.5m. There is, however, some doubt over the £4.3m of funding committed by the Scottish Arts Council who have given a date in June 2010 to review the commitment to the project. In addition, there has been an erosion of the amount approved by Scottish Enterprise for the project, due to ongoing interim support.

<u>Funding Statement</u>		£	£
		m	m
Total Project Cost			<u>13.5</u>
To be funded by			
-	Scottish Arts Council	4.5	
-	Aberdeen City Council	3.0	
-	Scottish Enterprise	2.0	
-	GAP	<u>4.0</u>	<u>13.5</u>

POSITION OF SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE

3.22 Scottish Enterprise has supported the City Square Project throughout the initial stages by providing funding and project management for the technical feasibility study, public consultation and the Tax Increment Financing feasibility work.

- 3.23 Scottish Enterprise believes that this project will be a catalyst for further city centre redevelopment within Aberdeen and it will have a major role to play in achieving the region's ambition to be a global energy hub.
- 3.24 Scottish Enterprise will continue its commitment to this major project should Aberdeen City Council agree to provide the leadership and support to take it forward alongside other ACSEF partners and Sir Ian Wood.

ROLE AND POSITION OF ACSEF

- 3.25 As Members will be aware, ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Futures) is the economic development partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire developed from the Economic Forum network created by the Scottish Government in 2001, jointly funded and supported by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and Scottish Enterprise.
- 3.26 ACSEF brings together the public and private sectors to realise the ambition for the future of the Region and to shape delivery of economic development in Aberdeen City and Shire, in partnership with the business community, community planning partners and the voluntary sector to ensure there is a shared vision for creating the right conditions in which businesses can flourish and people can enjoy a high quality of life.
- 3.27 The ACSEF Economic Action Plan - launched in June 2008 – following consultation with 1,600 representatives of business community, community planning partners and others identified seven strategic priorities for sustainable economic growth which have been accepted by the ACSEF partners, approved by Committee at Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and now adopted in the ACSEF as outlined below:-
- Deliver a fully integrated transport network
 - Maximise our intellectual capital
 - Deliver city centre re-development
 - Anchor the oil and gas industry
 - Attract and develop skilled people
 - Improve the efficiency of planning decision making
 - Aberdeen City and Shire as the location of choice for company headquarters.
- 3.28 In particular, ACSEF stated that The City Square Project offers an opportunity to significantly improve the city centre as a fundamental plank of what needs to be delivered to transform the economy over the next five to ten years, thus delivering what the public private partnership describes as “more jobs, more business and more tourists.”

- 3.29 Following the publication of the consultation programme's findings on 13th April 2010 ACSEF has urged Aberdeen City Council to "take leadership of the project" by providing the necessary support and commitment to take it to an international design competition, incorporating the public's responses to ACSEF's consultation.
- 3.30 Whilst acknowledging the lack of agreement in public opinion over the relative merits of the two current proposals for Union Terrace Gardens and Denburn Valley, ACSEF believes there is, nevertheless, support for major transformation in Aberdeen city centre – making it safer and greener, with a contemporary arts or cultural hub at its heart.
- 3.31 ACSEF chairman, Tom Smith, said in a press release dated 13th April 2010 that: "The public have said they want change. They believe the gardens are under-used and inaccessible. Significant new green space and a cultural centre must be part of this change that would give us a more attractive and safer city centre and kick-start the wider regeneration of the city centre."
- 3.32 Members will be aware that much has been made of the competition between two projects especially in the press. It is clear however that there is a much bigger prize to be won or lost. Strenuous efforts have been made to deliver a proposal whereby both projects can proceed and produce a "win/win" scenario, and this will continue until all options have been rendered impossible.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 A structure for a development framework for the City Centre has been presented in Part 2 of this overall paper. Against that background, the Council is asked to debate a proposal from Sir Ian Wood and ACSEF to deliver what they believe to be a transformational project that can help take a first big step to achieving the kind of city centre required to help Aberdeen's ambitions as set out in the recently approved structure plan.
- 4.2 The recommendations which follow relate to three aspects of the report:
- i) The approval of the principles of the City Centre Development Framework
 - ii) The approval in principle of the Union Terrace Gardens and Denburn Valley development proposal and the related conditions
 - iii) The implications and next steps with respect to the proposal being refused

RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be stressed that any decisions related to this report are made without prejudice to the Council's consideration of any potential future planning application.

4.3 It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Approve the key planning and design principles contained in section 5.3 of the City Centre Development Framework and highlighted in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.7.10 of this report as the basis for the Framework
- (b) Agree that the final draft City Centre Development Framework be reported to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee for approval for public consultation as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the new Local Development Plan
- (c) It is recommended that members approve Sir Ian Wood's offer of £50m based on ACSEF proposals, to go to the next steps in the process, subject to the following conditions being met:
 - (i) That the costs of an international design competition be met up to 50% by Sir Ian Wood up to a maximum of £400,000, with the balance of the resource required to be met by the private sector through ACSEF.
 - (ii) That the design brief for the competition take account of the following:
 - Feedback from the consultation process
 - The engineering feasibility study
 - Be able to deliver a project between £120-140m
 - That the design brief take account of, but not be constrained by, the existing planning permission
 - Include walk on/walk off access from all sides
 - Demonstrate how the project complies with the principals of the City Centre Framework
 - (iii) That the project provides at least £15m for a new cultural arts centre for Peacock Visual Arts (including £8.2m from the Project Funding, £4.3m from the Scottish Arts Council and £3m from Aberdeen City

Council), to be incorporated as part of the overall development in an iconic building.

- 4.4 Should Members vote against ACSEF's proposals and Sir Ian Wood's offer of £50m then to instruct Officers to do the following:-

To enter into discussions with Peacock Visual Arts to:-

- (a) negotiate a lease for a site for their proposed development
- (b) seek the development and presentation of a business plan and a project plan by Peacock Visual Arts indicating
 - (i) sources of the funding required to deliver their proposals and that these are in place
 - (ii) cash flow forecasts and profit and loss forecasts proving that a viable business can be established on an ongoing basis
 - (iii) professional delivery of their new build project

- 4.5 In either case a further report should be brought back to the next Council meeting, clearly setting out the detailed next steps as soon as possible.

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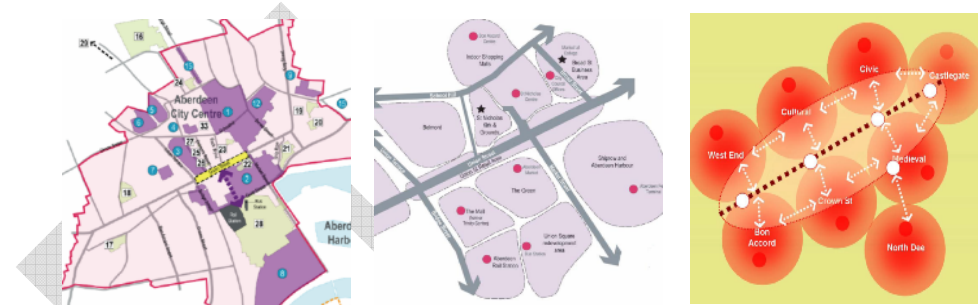
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – City Centre Development Framework
Appendix 2 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood
Appendix 3 – History of Committee decisions
Appendix 4 – PwC/CBRE Tax Increment Financing (TIF) study



Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework

Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
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May 2010

Aberdeen City Centre Development Framework

Contents

Vision

Development Framework Principles

Objectives for Aberdeen City Centre

1. **Introduction**
 - 1.1 What is a Development Framework?
 - 1.2 Why do we need one?
 - 1.3 What has happened to get to this point?
 - 1.4 Where do we want to go?
2. **Context**
 - 2.1 What is Context?
 - 2.2 Site
 - 2.3 Historic Context
 - 2.4 Setting
 - 2.5 Policy
3. **Identity**
 - 3.1 What is Identity?
 - 3.2 Planning and Design Principles
 - 3.3 Gateways and Approaches
 - 3.4 Landmarks
 - 3.5 Tall or Large Buildings and the City's Skyline
 - 3.6 Public Realm
 - 3.6.1 Queen's and Rubislaw Terrace Gardens
 - 3.6.2 Bon Accord Crescent Gardens
 - 3.6.3 Bon Accord Square
 - 3.6.4 Bon Accord Street
 - 3.6.5 Huntly Street/St Mary's Cathedral
 - 3.6.6 Golden Square
 - 3.6.7 Union Terrace Gardens
 - 3.6.8 Robert Gordon Quadrangle
 - 3.6.9 The Green
 - 3.6.10 St Nicholas Kirkyard
 - 3.6.11 St Nicholas Street
 - 3.6.12 Broad Street
 - 3.6.13 Plainstones
 - 3.6.14 Castlegate
 - 3.7 Streets
 - 3.8 Granite
 - 3.9 Corners
 - 3.10 Lighting
 - 3.11 Street Furniture
 - 3.12 Signage and Street Letter Tiles
 - 3.13 Access for All

4. **Connection**
 - 4.1 Strategic Context
 - 4.2 Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2008
5. **Urban Quarters and Character Areas**
 - 5.1 Union Street
 - 5.2 Civic Quarter
 - 5.3 Cultural Quarter
 - 5.4 The Green
 - 5.5 Castlegate Quarter
 - 5.6 Crown Street
 - 5.7 The West End
 - 5.8 Bon Accord
 - 5.9 Riverside
6. **Retail Strategy**
 - 6.1 Development Plan
 - 6.2 Further Work
7. **Economic Development Strategy**
 - 7.1 Context
 - 7.2 Objectives
8. **Council Services (to be completed)**
 - 8.1 Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure
 - 8.2 Education Culture and Sport
 - 8.3 Social Care and Wellbeing
 - 8.4 Housing and Environment
 - 8.5 Corporate Governance
 - 8.6 Office of the Chief Executive
9. **Programme and Next Steps (to be completed)**
 - 9.1 Programme
 - 9.2 Next Steps
10. **Appendices**
 - 10.1 Appendix 1: Policy Summary
 - 10.2 Table of existing supplementary planning guidance and briefs (to be completed)
 - 10.3 Table of opportunities (to be completed)
 - 10.4 Council owned property (to be completed)

Vision

Successful places have distinct identity. The Scottish Government's "Designing Places – A Policy Statement for Scotland" sets the national policy context for creating places. The Policy states that successful places are safe, pleasant, easy to move around and welcoming to visitors. Successful places are sustainable and adaptable to changing circumstances in social, economic and environmental conditions, in other words *dynamic*.

Regional and local planning policy highlights the importance of Aberdeen City Centre being a successful place.

The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) sets an ambitious vision for a successful and sustainable future for the north east. It specifically recognises the importance of the completion of a city centre masterplan, which includes proposals to make part of Union Street an area for pedestrians only, to help achieve that vision.

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (2009) sets out how the Council will implement the Structure Plan. It recognises that access to an attractive and vibrant city centre is vital to achieving a sustainable economic future for the city and region. It refers to the emerging City Centre Development Framework's role in setting out the development principles to guide and co-ordinate development and infrastructure investment in the city centre, identifying key projects and opportunities needed to achieve the vision and setting a programme to monitor the delivery of agreed priorities in the city centre.

Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future's Economic Manifesto states that the City Centre must act as a key business location, retail centre, major tourist destination, historical and cultural centre, leisure and entertainment centre, key transport node, and a place where people live and feel safe.

This Development Framework is informed by and responds to that national, regional and local policy. Understanding the key themes highlighted in these policies that make a successful place has been instrumental in preparing this Framework. It has also been prepared following the Council's Masterplanning Process which sets out a process for achieving a sense of place.

The Development Framework promotes a strategy to complement and enhance the features of the City Centre that make Aberdeen unique. By developing clearly defined character areas, reinforcing their identity and ensuring their accessibility and connectivity, the Framework will ensure that the right projects will be developed in the right places and in appropriate ways to ensure the social, economic and environmental futures of the City Centre will thrive. The Framework will ensure that the City Centre becomes a successful place that encourages liveliness, diversity and activity to leave a positive legacy of the first half of the 21st Century.

The Development Framework seeks to:

- complement and enhance Aberdeen's unique identity;
- develop clearly defined character areas;
- ensure future development understands the existing context;
- complement the wealth of urban design;
- celebrate the architectural quality present in the City Centre; and
- ensure a co-ordinated and integrated approach to future development.

The Development Framework identifies 9 character areas and urban quarters focussed on **Union Street** as the spine of the City Centre and the main thoroughfare that connects the urban neighbourhoods of the **Civic, Cultural, Green and Castlegate Quarters**. In addition, the Framework includes **Crown Street**, the **West End, Bon Accord** and **Riverside** areas as important components to the central urban core of the City Centre. Each of the character areas or urban quarters will be well connected to the central spine and to each other. The principal focus will be on the enjoyment of the City Centre by the pedestrian, allowing and encouraging people to spend time in a vibrant urban environment. Each area will have its own distinct identity and purpose, gateway, landmarks and opportunities contributing to the definition of the overall character. These are discussed in more detail in section 5 of the Framework.

Public transport provision in the City Centre will be critical to its success, as well as cycling, car parking strategy and servicing. The Development Framework proposes public transport hubs to improve legibility and understanding of the public transports system. Locating hubs in and around urban squares presents opportunities to free up valuable space on footways and provide facilities in buildings around the space to support those waiting for transport. Issues of connectivity are outlined in more detail in section 4 and referred to throughout section 5.

Once adopted, the Development Framework will have statutory status as supplementary guidance to the new development plan. It sets out the strategy for future development of the City Centre and will be a significant material consideration in the determination of all future planning applications within the City Centre.

The Development Framework will remain as a live document to be underpinned by an action and delivery programme. That programme will be reviewed annually to ensure relevance,

manage deliverability and respond efficiently to the needs of the City and its partners. The Framework itself will be reviewed as part of the ongoing local development planning process.

The City Centre Development Framework is presented in draft form. Further work is required to develop each of the key themes and principles contained within the document and develop an action programme to support the delivery of the Framework.

Development Framework Principles

The Development Framework will create and maintain a “**sense of place**” in Aberdeen City Centre informed by understanding the historical and cultural **context** of the City as it moves forward. This will be supported by a series of overarching planning and design principles that seek to enhance Aberdeen’s unique **identity** and ensure that appropriate **connection** is made to and throughout the City Centre. These principles include those qualities outlined in the vision above that make a successful place, namely:

- **Distinct identity**
- **Safe and pleasant environment**
- **Easy to move around**
- **Welcoming**
- **Adaptable**
- **Sustainable**

These overarching principles include specific objectives for Aberdeen City Centre:

- **Union Street Focus**
- **Development of Urban Quarters and Character Areas**
- **Improved accessibility**
- **High quality public realm**
- **Connected spaces, squares and landmarks**

These will be applied to each of the character areas along with more detailed specific themes contained in the Development Framework.

Objectives for Aberdeen City Centre

▪ Union Street Focus

The principal focus of the framework is Union Street. The most important and identifiable street in the City, Union Street is to be promoted as the commercial, vibrant heart of the City Centre.

▪ Urban Quarters/Character Areas

Developing character areas and urban quarters that capitalise on the distinctive merits of their surroundings will reinforce Aberdeen's identity.

▪ Access/Public Transport

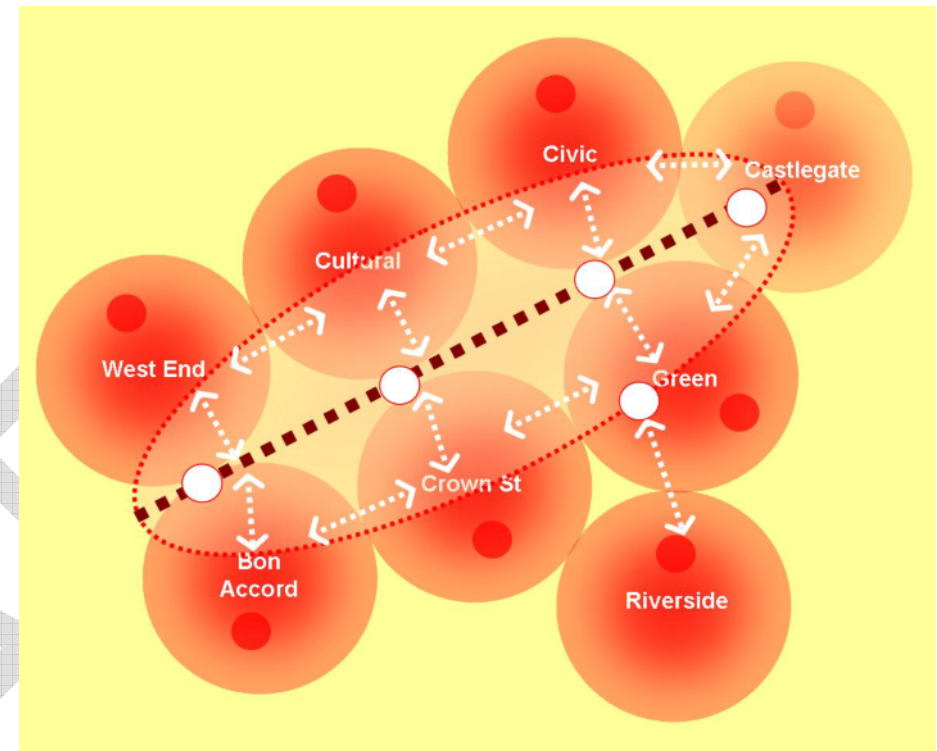
Introduce legible public transport hubs in the central area and car parks on the approaches to ensure an efficient and understandable relationship between character areas, Union Street and public access to facilities in the City Centre.

▪ High Quality Public Realm

Ensure that street surfaces are of suitable high quality at first points of contact with the City Centre, i.e. at public transport hubs, rail station, car parks, and around important public and historic buildings.

▪ Connected Spaces, Squares and Landmarks

Develop a range of vibrant connected squares to ensure best use of space to enhance City life.



Introduction

1.1 What is a development framework?

A development framework is a form of masterplan, referred to in the Aberdeen Local Plan 2008 and Designing Places – A Policy Statement for Scotland. The City Centre Development Framework sets out a baseline spatial plan for the way in which Aberdeen City Centre should evolve. It is not intended to be a detailed masterplan, which would create a snapshot of development in time, but rather it provides the framework upon which future masterplans could be created for specific character areas to ensure they are not considered in isolation.

1.2 Why do we need one?

1.2.1 *Combine a variety of planning guidance into a single vision*

Aberdeen City Centre has been the subject of numerous studies, planning briefs and masterplans, including the Heart of Aberdeen, the Urban Realm Strategy and Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan. This Development Framework brings many of the issues already explored in those studies together in a cohesive urban strategy for the City Centre.

1.2.2 *Perception of disparate projects*

The City Centre is subject to much investment through major projects such as Union Square, the refurbished Bon Accord and St Nicholas Centres, Union Plaza, together with current issues relating to the Denburn Valley. These all contribute to Aberdeen's role as a regional centre, but are perceived to be delivered individually without adherence to a co-ordinated strategy for the future. The Development Framework will set these, and future projects, within that defined strategic context.

1.2.3 *Identify important links*

As a result of this disparate approach, many areas and sites in the City Centre have been developed without due consideration of their affect on context, potential links with each other and the existing historic fabric of the City. The Framework seeks to address this.

1.2.4 *Public realm strategy*

The Development Framework will provide a clear public realm strategy for the City Centre to enhance the historic network of streets, squares and spaces, how these should look, how they are connected and how they are used in the future.

1.3 What has happened to get to this point?

As stated previously, the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report highlight the need for a co-ordinated City Centre Masterplan. The Development Framework is seen as the most appropriate form of masterplan to cover the whole City Centre as this will set a series of planning and design principles that should be applied to all new development over the next 25 years.

Various workshops and presentations involving key stakeholder groups were held during 2007-09 and these have informed the format and content of the Framework. The 2009 Aberdeen Summer School, run by Robert Gordon University and the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, examined the City Centre. Robert Gordon University Masters in Architecture year 6 students at the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture have also examined masterplanning opportunities.

1.4 Where do we want to go?

The City Centre has a strong character with uniformity of materials and styles, reflected in its granite buildings, the grand nature of Union Street and smaller intimate streets and public spaces just off the main thoroughfare. Much of the City Centre falls within designated Conservation Areas and it has a large concentration of listed buildings. Understanding what is of value, protecting and improving the built fabric is vital within the City Centre. The City needs quality design solutions. All development must make a contribution to the wider context of the City.

The Development Framework explores indicative concepts and proposals that can help to ensure that the City Centre is a successful place. As the urban core of Aberdeen, the City Centre has to manage a number of conflicting issues. Making the City Centre accessible, whilst at the same time ensuring the quality of public realm, encourages pedestrians to linger and use the area is challenging.

The planning and design principles that form the backbone of the City Centre Development Framework are informed by the principal themes of **context**, **identity** and **connection** outlined in the Aberdeen Masterplanning Process.

The strategy contained in this Framework concentrates on defining a high quality urban core of the City Centre, ensuring that users can be encouraged to use public transport to directly access that core. Users are encouraged to leave their cars at the edges with a clear hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets, spaces and squares contributing to a vibrant civic structure of urban life. Urban quarters and character areas are identified by understanding the recognisable assets in the City Centre and reinforcing their roles and functions. Union Street

connects all of these together and presents a unifying spine to the central core of the City.

The Development Framework will create:

“A shared vision of urban quality and city life which builds on Aberdeen’s outstanding setting and architectural heritage”

2. Context

2.1 What is Context?

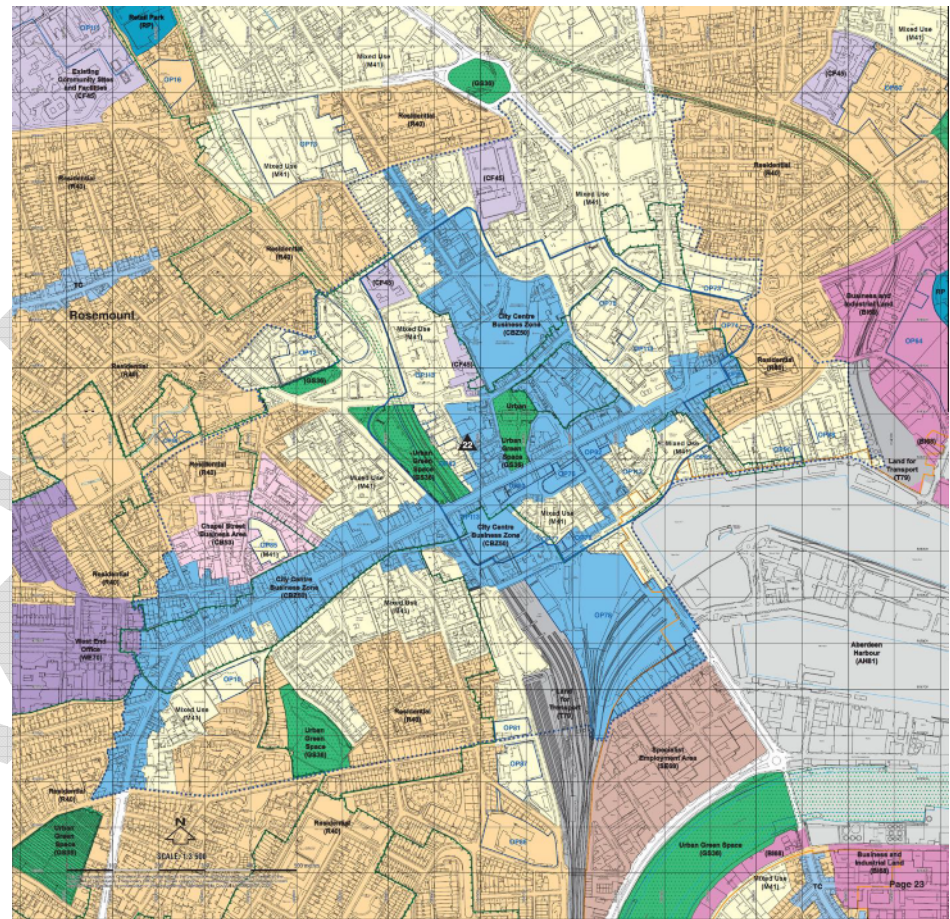
Understanding historic development is essential in determining the future vision for any place. An appraisal, understanding and appreciation of what is valuable and should be conserved is necessary to identify opportunities for appropriate development and enhancement. Coupled with policy review, this allows for an informed strategy to be developed that creates a realistic, sustainable and deliverable vision for the future.

2.2 Site

The City Centre area is defined by the Aberdeen Local Plan 2008. The Development Framework uses the existing boundary as a guide but does not preclude opportunities that lie outside that boundary.

Areas such as Poynerook between the River Dee and Union Square offer the opportunity to become a better connected, complementary component of the City Centre, recognising the close relationship between surrounding sites and the City Centre itself.

The Development Framework will also link to other strategies and initiatives around the periphery of the City Centre, such as conservation area appraisals and the prospective Aberdeen Harbour Masterplan.



2.3 Historic Context

2.3.1 Medieval Street Pattern

Aberdeen developed around St Katherine's, Castle and Gallowgate Hills. Evidence of the medieval core of Aberdeen around St Katherine's Hill can still be seen today at Ship Row, Netherkirkgate, Correction Wynd, Back Wynd, Flourmill Lane and Carnegie's Brae. Founded in the mid 12th century, The Kirk of St Nicholas (or Mither Kirk), was one of the largest medieval burgh Kirks in Scotland. The Trinitarian Friary stood south-west of St Katherine's Hill from as early as 1273 and existed until the mid-sixteenth century. The Carmelite Friary bounded the Green, with Blackfriars settling to the north at Schoolhill.

2.3.2 Urbanisation

Although Aberdeen was still tightly confined to the streets around the base of St Katherine's Hill, the 18th century experienced urban growth. Marischal Street demonstrated pioneering urban planning and engineering in providing a direct route from the town centre to the quayside, signifying the start of a new era of modern planned growth.

2.3.3 Union Street

The early 19th century saw the City expand westwards. A bridge with a series of vaults was built to allow Union Street to be formed from the Castlegate across the Denburn Valley to the undeveloped land beyond the west bank of the Denburn. The expansion was pioneering and visionary, but costly and led to the City's bankruptcy in 1817.

The decision to provide the City Centre with wide streets on a system of viaducts over the valleys below had far reaching effects. The street width allowed buildings to be of a scale and quality which firmly established Union Street as the City's principal street. New buildings were generally

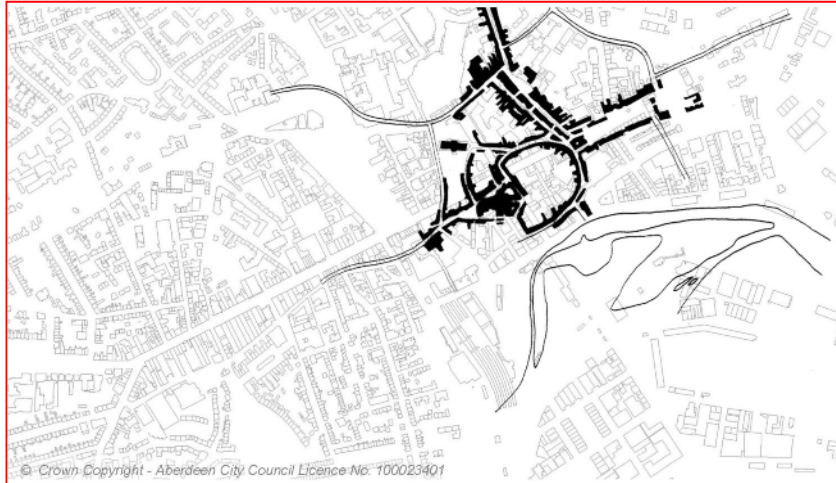
permitted to be four storeys of highly dressed granite. Although originally residential houses, it was not long before the first shops appeared. Union Bridge (1805) was seen as the architectural centrepiece of Union Street.

The one piece of open ground left undeveloped was the Denburn Valley, which later became Union Terrace Gardens. This marks the western extent of the medieval town. Development to the west had been slow, apart from Golden Square (1810). Major public buildings such as Trinity Hall, the Smith's screen in front of St Nicholas Kirk and the Music Hall were built during the 1820s. Market Street was laid out on a grid pattern with Exchange and Hadden Streets, connecting Union Street to Guild Street and Trinity Quay.

The introduction of the railway over the culverted Denburn transformed the surrounding industrial area into an urban park; Union Terrace Gardens. Denburn and Rosemount Viaducts enabled further development of land at Schoolhill.

2.3.4 The City Centre Today

The fundamental shape of Union Street and the surrounding area has remained. The urban layout of the 19th century and much of the architecture has survived, with the exception of areas impacted by recent development such as St Nicholas House, The Mall (Trinity Centre), Bon Accord and St Nicholas Centres and development of John Lewis. All of these have had a major effect on the urban form, connectivity, movement and the transport system within the City Centre. Economic and commercial pressures continue to affect Union Street. The Union Street Conservation Area was designated in 1968, with a Conservation Appraisal completed in 2007. The historic analysis outlined above is extracted from that Appraisal.



1660
The City Centre area as we know it today originally concentrated around St Katherine's, Gallowgate and Castle Hills.



1770
The 18th Century shows the first urban expansion of Aberdeen, developing better links to the harbour.



1863
The Industrial Revolution meant bold interventions such as Union Street were possible, shaping the City to a form recognisable today.



2010
21st Century Aberdeen needs to recognise that the spaces between the buildings are not being used to their full potential.

2.4 Setting

2.4.1 Topography

The topography of Aberdeen constrained the expansion of the town up until the beginning of the 19th century. This relationship becomes less apparent over time as advances in engineering enabled early town planners to break free of topographical constraints but still nevertheless gives the City much of its unique character.

Union Street is positioned over the undulating ground of three hills and the Denburn valley. The land comprises gently sloping ground from the edge of the City to the coast. There is a drop in height generally across the City Centre from west to east, from 35m at Alford Place to 15m at the Castlegate. Union Street is immediately surrounded by relatively high-density development, resulting in long-distance views of the Street and an awareness of setting not always being apparent, but all the more dramatic where this occurs.

There are many important strategic views in the City Centre, including Marischal Street to the harbour; from Union Street over the Denburn Valley; and from Rosemount Viaduct towards Union Street, Union Terrace and Belmont Street. Important views also exist along the length of Union Street from either end with definite, but understated, visual terminations at the Salvation Army Citadel and The College buildings. These views define the City Centre's relationship to the landscape.

Future development within the City Centre should address and respect the multiple layers of the City Centre. Bold interventions of the past, like Marischal Street, Bridge Street, Market Street, Union Street and Rosemount Viaduct, are there to be celebrated. Back Wynd stairs to

the Green dramatically shows this historic relationship, as does Union Street down into Correction Wynd.

Main approaches are also crucial to understanding the topography of the City Centre. The view from Wellington Road, for example, and then closer to the City Centre from Market Street alongside the harbour looking north towards St Katherine's Hill and Castlegate are examples of this.

2.4.2 Street Pattern

Unusually for historic Scottish towns, no high street was formed in Aberdeen until the development of Union Street in 1800. Development encompassed geographical features and Aberdeen evolved as a series of important 'areas' such as the Green, Castlegate and St Nicholas Kirk. Union Street had a major effect on the street pattern and formed an important spine. The changes in level around Union Street and its elevated position are still evident, even though they are not always obvious. There is a clear distinction between the bold geometry of Union Street (and the post-Union Street new town west of the Denburn) and the intricate and organic street pattern of the medieval heart of the original town.

2.4.3 Buildings

A variety of building periods and styles contribute to the character of the City Centre, ranging from St Nicholas Kirk, 16th century Provost Ross and Skene's houses to 20th century shopping centres and civic buildings. The 19th century planned streets are lined in the main by fine granite buildings of 4 or 5 storeys. A variety of public buildings, from St Nicholas Kirk through to St Nicholas House punctuate the skyline. The dominant architectural style can be described broadly as classical or neo-classical.

Notable landmark buildings include the Town House, the Salvation Army Citadel and the spires of Marischal College, St Nicholas Kirk, and Triple Kirks, as well as the Schoolhill domes of the Art Gallery, His Majesty's Theatre, City Library and St Marks. These landmarks contribute to the legibility to the City Centre and aid navigation. They are often seen as a visual symbol of Aberdeen.

2.4.4 Water

Aberdeen's relationship with the sea is demonstrated throughout its history, yet the City Centre has little or no relationship to the water. The River Dee to the south is isolated from the City Centre by the inner ring road and the Poynerook/Palmerston area. The Harbour extends right into the heart of the City - the vista looking south down Marischal Street presents one of the few opportunities to see just how close that relationship is. Equally, the Beach is divorced from the City Centre by the same inner ring road and the roundabout at the top of the Beach Boulevard and the lack of a through route from the Castlegate.

2.5 Policy

Both the City Centre Development Framework and any proposals for future development within the City Centre must take account of, and be informed by, existing and emerging policy. Reference has already been made to national policy, the Structure Plan and the emerging Local Development Plan but there are other, more specific documents that must also be considered including a variety of projects, briefs, masterplans and other guidance prepared over the last 20 years. The current policy context is summarised in Appendix 1.

2.5.1 Aberdeen Local Plan 2008

The current adopted Local Plan contains the policy context for retail, employment, housing, transport/access, public

realm and design in the City Centre. Key policy issues are summarised in the table in Appendix 1. This will ultimately be superseded by the new Local Development Plan.

2.5.2 Conservation Areas

The majority of the City Centre is covered by two conservation areas, Union Street and Bon-Accord/Crown Street. In addition, the Rosemount, Albyn Place/Rubislaw, Ferryhill, Marine Terrace and Great Western Road Conservation Areas lie immediately adjacent to and on important strategic routes leading into the City Centre. As such, much of the historic environment in the City Centre is deemed to be of national importance. Care of the country's heritage is a fundamental element of environmental stewardship and sustainable development which is at the heart of Government and Council policy.

2.5.3 Union Street Conservation Area Appraisal 2007

The Union Street Conservation Area Appraisal was published to:

- justify the designation of the conservation area and review the existing boundaries;
- identify important characteristics of the area in terms of townscape, architecture and history;
- identify important issues that affect the conservation area;
- identify opportunities for development and enhancement schemes;
- encourage interest and participation in conservation issues amongst people living and working in conservation areas; and
- produce a useful tool in conservation area management.

The Appraisal details the historical development of the conservation area, highlighting key stages in its development. It describes the components that make up the character of Union Street. The Appraisal presents the

conservation area strategy, which includes the development and enhancement opportunities within the area, proposed boundary alterations, planning policy, development restrictions, availability of grants and funding, as well as proposals for the monitoring and review process.

2.5.4 Listed Buildings

In addition to the general conservation area designations, there are a great many buildings statutorily protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 in the City Centre. Many are concentrated around Union Street, the Denburn Valley, the southern end of King Street, Golden Square and the Crown Street areas. The listings in the City Centre include many important buildings, landmarks and structures, such as Union Bridge, the vaults on Union Street itself, balustrades and arcades of Union Terrace.

Most of the principal public buildings in the City Centre are listed. These form public face of the City and are of a quality and architectural excellence that contributes to civic pride and a strong sense of place, reinforcing Aberdeen's identity.

2.5.5 Aberdeen Urban Realm Strategy 2001

Published by the former Aberdeen City Centre Partnership, the Urban Realm Strategy focused on a compact civic heart with leading institutions, civic presence and cultural drama surrounded by a series of vibrant mixed use business, retail and residential areas, within a policy context of enterprise and development. Five strategic themes were identified:

Union Street - the Boulevard of the North, aims to reassert the axial elegance of the grandest street in Scotland, by

upgrading environmental quality and redressing the balance of movement along the street in favour of the pedestrian, and encouraging an improvement in the quality of retail on offer.

Broad Street - the Civic Heart, consolidates civic uses, including the Council's corporate headquarters, in and around Broad Street.

Guild Street and the Green - aims to connect the new rail and bus station developments and the harbour with Union Street and the Civic Heart through improved streetscape

Denburn Valley - seeks to maximise the potential of Union Terrace Gardens by providing access from the surrounding streets, introducing uses to promote better activity and a perception of safety, extending the gardens to the north to link with the development opportunities presented by the Denburn Clinic and Woolmanhill Hospital.

Castlegate and Castlehill - promotes the revitalisation of the Castlegate and the refurbishment of the Citadel to create a cultural quarter to reflect the importance of this area at the eastern termination of Union Street.

In addition, the thematic project **Collegiate Aberdeen** recognised the inherent and intricate qualities of Aberdeen's public spaces.

Much of the Urban Realm Strategy remains relevant and the Development Framework builds on the themes and concepts set out within the Strategy.

2.5.6 Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2008

The LTS recognises the significant impact transport has on the environs of the City Centre. It also acknowledges that

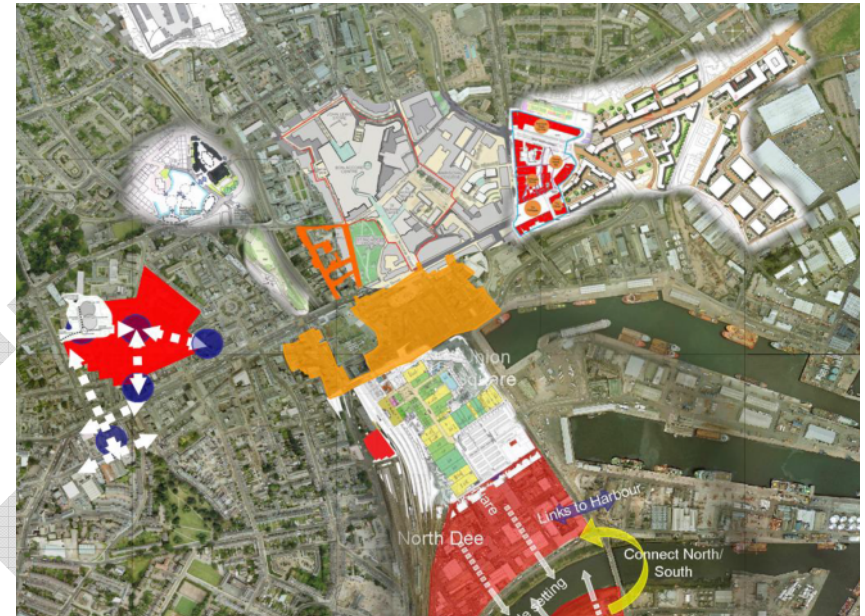
the requirement to access the City Centre is not only as a result of shopping, business and access to local and regional public transport but is compounded by the lack of non-car options for circumferential and non-radial journeys. The City Centre transport network provides a thoroughfare for all types of journeys. Transport is the major cause of air quality problems within the City Centre. The LTS sets out a strategy and a range of actions to address how the network is accessed and used in order to ensure the City Centre maintains its vitality. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.

2.5.7 **Masterplans, planning briefs and projects**

In addition to the above high level strategies and policies, there have been a number of more detailed masterplans and planning briefs prepared for parts of the City Centre, some of which have been implemented either fully or in part. These include Masterplans for the Broad Street area and the Beach, planning briefs for the Denburn and Bon Accord Baths and the West End Study.

There have also been many major projects and proposals delivered or currently underway within the City Centre, consistent with the Urban Realm Strategy and Local Plan policies. These include the development of Union Square and the Green Townscape Heritage Initiative.

The plan below illustrates the extent of the coverage of these across the City Centre.



3. Identity

3.1 What is Identity?

Identity is what makes a place definable and recognisable. Aberdeen has to present itself well in terms of quality, heritage and competitiveness. The City Centre must capitalise on its unique character, welcome visitors and leave them with a lasting positive impression of a distinctive vibrant place with a clear and unique identity.

3.2 Planning and Design Principles

The planning and design principles explore indicative concepts and proposals that can help to ensure that the City Centre is a successful place. As the urban core of Aberdeen, the City Centre has to manage a number of conflicting issues. Making the City Centre accessible, whilst at the same time ensuring the quality of public realm, encourages pedestrians to linger and use the area is challenging.

The strategy contained in this Framework concentrates on defining a high quality urban core of the City Centre, ensuring that users can be encouraged to use public transport to directly access that core. Users are encouraged to leave their cars at the edges with a clear hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets, spaces and squares contributing to a vibrant civic structure of urban life. Urban quarters and character areas are identified by understanding the recognisable assets in the City Centre and reinforcing their roles and functions. Union Street connects all of these together and presents a unifying spine to the central core of the City.

3.3 Gateways and Approaches

Approaches to the City Centre are extremely important in setting the scene for arrival. The grand procession from the west leading towards the City Centre along Queen's Road is an approach to be celebrated. The grand tree lined avenue with fine granite villas leads into Albyn Place, with the formality of Queens Gardens signifying the immediate approach to the City Centre and arrival at Union Street. The journey along Union Street (walking the mat), leads to the Castlegate, where a dilemma is reached. The Castlegate currently satisfies neither the need to project beyond to meet the Beach Boulevard and proceed on to the coast, nor does it adequately form an axial stop to Union Street.

Each of the other main approaches from the north (King Street), north-west (from Rosemount), south-west (Holburn Street, Bon Accord Street) and south (Crown Street, South College Street, Market Street) need to offer a similarly considered approach to that of Queen's Road. Developing a clear strategy for all approaches, incorporating signage (which supports the existing Variable Message Signs), landscaping, strategic planting, lighting and branding, coupled with a high quality of public realm, will set the City Centre apart. It is acknowledged that existing infrastructure will not always be capable of sustaining mature street trees on all of these approaches, but they must be readily identifiable as leading to the quality urban core of Aberdeen. Current approaches, such as that on Market Street, offer little inspiration or encouragement. Low rose bushes collect litter easily and appear unsightly for much of the year. Solutions which require little maintenance, but remain good looking should be encouraged.

Historically there were six city gates or “ports” leading into Aberdeen; two in the Castlegate - Justice Port (now Justice Street) and Futtie’s Port (leading from Castlehill to Footdee), Trinity, Netherkirkgate, Upperkirkgate and Gallowgate. These should be highlighted and celebrated with contemporary interpretation of ports to the City Centre developed.

3.4 Landmarks

Visual references in the City Centre are important to help movement and legibility. Landmarks help define important destinations and provide orientation points. It is essential that historic landmarks are given due care and attention when new development is planned, to allow important vistas and views to be maintained.

The City Centre is characterised by a number of distinctive landmarks, ranging from traditional spires and steeples to modern landmarks such as residential tower blocks. More recently, the major shopping centres have developed as landmarks, synonymous with how people access and use the City Centre.

Equally important is the quality of space around these City Centre landmarks. Achieving a high quality, well connected network of public realm spaces, related to existing landmarks, increases legibility and way finding.

3.5 Tall or Large Buildings and the City’s Skyline

Tall or large scale buildings can add to and positively enhance the identity of the City and its skyline if well designed. However, they can have a detrimental effect if due consideration is not given to their context. The definition of a “tall building” is one that exceeds the general height of its surrounding context. A “large building” may

not breach the skyline, but may be viewed as bulky and at odds with its surroundings from strategic locations.

In certain circumstances as little as an additional storey height may set a development proposal out of context. It is not expected that there will be a presumption against tall buildings, indeed the City Centre is the right place for such buildings, but they should respect the height and scale of their surroundings, the urban topography and the City’s skyline and aim to preserve or enhance important vistas. Further Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared as part of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan to support a Tall or Large Buildings Policy.

3.6 Public Realm

Public realm is the space between buildings, including streets, footways, squares, gardens and landscaping. High quality public realm is essential to the future success of the City Centre; if it looks good, is easy, comfortable and safe to walk around, it will attract more visitors. Public spaces become a source of local pride generating a positive image of the City. The quality of environment and approach to public buildings and public spaces in particular must be integrated with new development to promote a well functioning and attractive city centre.

Successful city centres consist of a network of well connected public spaces and a series of linked squares. Aberdeen should be no different. Aberdeen has a wealth of public realm in the City Centre. Many of these have become bleak pockets of inactivity which present an impression of neglect, not one of wealth and prosperity. Spaces have been invaded by vehicles, displacing any positive spatial qualities and diluting the pedestrian, cycling and public transport experience of the City.

Public realm presents a valuable opportunity for modest intervention which will improve the perception of the City Centre. As stated previously, the Urban Realm Strategy proposed that a series of interconnected urban squares and spaces be developed to enrich the character and quality of the City Centre urban environment. The principle aim is to develop an interesting and exciting pedestrian experience throughout the City Centre, and introduce places to 'pause'.

Creating a network of clearly defined pedestrian priority spaces will reinforce the distinct character areas promoted in the following section of the Development Framework and complement the landmarks in maintaining legibility of space to aid orientation and movement in the City Centre.

The choice of materials, combined with construction methods, for public realm contribute significantly to improving the appearance of the streetscape. A by-product of using appropriate natural materials is durability, demonstrated by the relatively low level of maintenance required in Belmont Street and Back Wynd, despite the area's intensive use.

A streetscape manual should be developed to guide future public realm projects and demonstrate how this approach applied in Belmont Street can be repeated across the rest of the City Centre.

In addition to the quality of public realm, one of the main issues for the City Centre is the future efficient use of these spaces. Some, such as Golden and Bon Accord Squares, are currently devoted to car parking, others, including the Castlegate and the Green are pedestrianised but not offering their full potential. Whilst others still, such as

Broad Street, are simply road dominant. Green spaces in the City are at a premium, with only St Nicholas Kirkyard, Bon Accord Park and Union Terrace Gardens offering respite from the hard edges of the Granite City. How the City intends to make best use of these important spaces and link them to the rest of the urban structure is critical to the future success of the City Centre. Equally important will be the pedestrian paths which connect the spaces together.

A number of proposals promote the removal of car parking areas from the public realm, for example at Golden Square, to enable environmental enhancement to take place. Although parking is to be removed from these squares, it is not intended to reduce the balance of car parking provision throughout the City Centre.

Several terraces exist in the City Centre, each with their own formal landscape setting; Queen's/Rubislaw, Bon Accord and Union Terraces. These give the opportunity to maintain mature trees in the City Centre where there is little conflict with services and infrastructure. These urban green spaces should be strategically linked to each other and the urban spine of Union Street. The development of an architectural trail could celebrate the history and culture of these connected spaces.

There are several factors which are important for successful public realm. These are:

- **sense of place** – creating a distinct identity
- **safety** – ensuring comfort in the space
- **access** – easy to get to
- **connection** – linked to other spaces
- **signage and wayfinding** – to ease movement

- **best use of the space** – activity encourages social interaction
- **lighting** – improving safety, better use of space at night, celebrating landmarks
- **landscaping** – counteracting hard surfaces
- **public art** – stimulating cultural interest
- **street furniture** – reducing clutter and maintenance and presenting a unified appearance
- **quality of surface materials** – increasing attractiveness and reducing maintenance?

Each of these have all been taken into account in assessing the existing public realm and identifying opportunities to enhance those areas as discussed below.

3.6.1 Queen's Terrace and Rubislaw Terrace Gardens

Forming the setting to Queen's and Rubislaw Terraces, this formal garden was originally laid out with the Terrace to be shared with the villas opposite in Albyn Place. Now in Council ownership, open to the public and with cast iron railings reinstated, this important green space with mature trees marks the transition from the West End to the City Centre.

3.6.2 Bon Accord Crescent Gardens

To the south of the City Centre Bon Accord Crescent Gardens is laid out in the valley of Justice Glen. The large open green space provides the setting for Bon Accord Crescent. The dramatic changes in level offer extensive views south-west. The space has great potential but needs comprehensive redesign and re-landscaping rather than cosmetic improvements. The existing listed terrace could be restored and combined with information on the site celebrating the location of the mustering of troops and the ultimatum preceding the Battle of Justice Mill 1644.

Accessibility could be increased by introducing a series of connected viewing platforms which accommodate and celebrate the dramatic changes of level and complement the listed terrace. These terraces could be used as a basis for a public art project. Walking and cycle paths could be upgraded and promote external links to encourage use. A lighting scheme should be developed to increase the safety of the park at night. Activity could be encouraged by introducing areas for seating, picnics, and informal active uses.

3.6.3 Bon Accord Square

Bon Accord Square, designed by Archibald Simpson and dating from 1823, is clean, austere and has elegant proportions. The central space is dominated by a raised rectangular green space, but parking around this detracts from its spatial quality. Alternative layouts for parking to facilitate a more pedestrian dominant environment should be developed. Enhancing the green 'haven', improving and encouraging pedestrian access to it, and introducing further seating would enhance the use of the space. The statue, in memory of Archibald Simpson, could be supplemented with interpretation to celebrate his story. As with all other spaces there is potential for further public art. Additional tree planting and landscaping could be considered.

3.6.4 Bon Accord Street

As project funded by the former Aberdeen City Centre Partnership made this is an example of enhanced use of the footpath, with art work in the public space.

3.6.5 Huntly Street/St Mary's Cathedral

Currently a car and motorcycle park and refuse zone, with telephone boxes on the street frontage, this space in front of an important landmark is well protected from the wind

and has a good aspect which catches the sun. It is visible from Union Street, links to an attractive 'green' street and connects to other squares. This area could be developed as a small plaza/courtyard which serves as a place to 'rest'. Possible interventions include removing the car parking, rationalising the street furniture to include seating in sheltered, sunny locations, and encouraging live frontages to ensure activity in the space. Lighting should be introduced, not only to illuminate the space, but also direct movement through to Golden Square.

3.6.6 Golden Square

Golden Square was built as part of Abercrombie's 'Further Improvements' (1810-1821) and became a centre for business from Edwardian times. Business uses remain but the classical character of the Square has been destroyed with an over dominance of parking. Golden Square should be developed into a space that focuses on pedestrian movement and activity, celebrating the statue of George 5th whilst balancing the needs of vehicular movement.

Better use of Golden Square could be achieved by:

- Removing cars from the central space
- Comprehensively redesigning the surrounding historic streets approaching the Square
- Removing ventilation ducts and general refurbishment of the rear elevations of the buildings in surrounding streets, including rationalisation of car parking
- Improving maintenance and de-cluttering of street surface treatment, including street furniture
- Holding informal gatherings, market stalls, events, buskers and public art projects
- Introducing greenery, formal planting and seating into the central space

- Widening the pedestrian pavement around the edges of the square
- Introducing signage, and developing of views along the four street axes to aid pedestrian way finding
- Introducing an intimate lighting scheme for the central space
- Introducing interpretative historical material adjacent to the statue
- Encouraging restaurant uses in the basements

3.6.7 Union Terrace Gardens

Discussed more fully in the Cultural Quarter section, the Gardens provide the only public park in the heart of the City Centre. The Gardens and their surroundings provide some of the key landmarks of the City Centre.

3.6.8 Robert Gordon Quadrangle

This square is shared by Robert Gordon University, the Art Gallery and Robert Gordon College. This mixture of uses creates a well used space with a procession of school children crossing the central section of the quad each day between the college and Schoolhill. The integrity of the quad is compromised by parking areas and carriageway which are concentrated around its edge. Buildings are separated from the central section by asphalt bays, and thus the architectural setting is not appreciated.

The Quadrangle is currently inaccessible, impermeable and does not connect well to its surroundings. Additional means of access to this space should be considered if the Art Gallery and other buildings come forward for redevelopment, possibly through to Crooked Lane and St Andrew Street.

Reference can be drawn from Old Aberdeen, as well as cities such as Oxford and Cambridge, and more locally the

town of St Andrews, where the presence of the colleges is celebrated in the character of the City.

The Robert Gordon Quadrangle should be developed into a space which promotes the architecture of the buildings surrounding the square, allows for seating, and informal lunchtime gathering and could be used for temporary outdoor exhibitions for the Art Gallery i.e. sculpture; for school fetes and open day of the college; or for graduation and university events of the Institute.

The triangle 'pocket park' to the front of the Art Gallery and entrance to the quadrangle could offer better pedestrian space if associated with future redevelopment of the Robert Gordon University building.

3.6.9 The Green

The Green is located in the medieval core of the City, and would once have been a well-used thoroughfare between the former Castle and Justice Mill Lane. This through-route has been severed by the Trinity Centre, compounded by the introduction of Denburn Road.

The character of this historic area has been undermined by long term economic and structural decline. This is a central but underused area that is pivotal in linking the harbour, railway and bus stations and the new Union Square shopping centre to the traditional shopping centres of the City. The dark East Green and monolithic, impermeable facade of the indoor market enclose the space to the east. Connections to Union Street are uninviting. These could be improved by making them brighter, easier to use, cleaner and with safer more obvious routes.

The surrounding area is in the midst of being revitalised with The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative, this is explained in more detail in section 4.4 The Green.

The Green should be developed into a space which:

- reasserts its place in the urban fabric of the City
- makes reference to its medieval context
- celebrates the different layers of the City
- allows for markets, and encourages cafe outlets and pubs
- is an attractive destination as well as an important space 'en route'
- promotes its pedestrian scale

The Green could be improved by refurbishing the façade of the Trinity Centre and the layout of the market building. Demolition and sensitive redevelopment or refurbishment of the market building should be encouraged with shop frontages and activity facing the Green rather than a blank wall which is viewed as a stop.

Ensuring that the Green is used during both the day and into the night by encouraging pubs, restaurants, shops and other activities within this space is essential for a vibrant space. Uses such as outdoor market stalls or the introduction of kiosk style units (i.e. news-seller, florist) promotes use and in turn the perception of safety. These would be most successful on the listed Back Wynd Steps from the Green leading to Union Street if they were sufficiently widened.

There needs to be improved signalling of the presence of the 'Green' from Union Street through, for example, signage, a glazed canopy out into the street, or a suspended art piece above the steps. The new shopping centre at Union Square has to some extent increased the

footfall through the Green but further work is required to encourage people to move through and stay in the space.

There are tunnels linking the Green to the wider City Centre. Tunnels such as this are a result of the changes in level brought about by the bridging of the historic core, and represent a unique part of the character of Aberdeen. Unfortunately these tunnels are underused and perceived as dangerous. An opportunity exists to celebrate these 'lost' spaces and re-establish pedestrian links which are now avoided or are unknown. Improved innovative lighting, introducing art work and cleaning up these areas would all improve the use and vibrancy of them. The introduction of uses into the arched vaults, such as cafes, restaurants and wine bars, would encourage activity and exploration of the historic City.

Improving the links to and from the Green with the wider City Centre would bring life back into this area. These improvements, along with those already happening through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, will help to improve this space and make it a successful area within the City Centre.

3.6.10 St Nicholas Kirkyard

St Nicholas Kirk and Kirkyard comprise two churches, East and West, united by a central tower and spire, surrounded by a graveyard with mature trees. St Nicholas Kirkyard is located within and helps create the identity of the Civic Quarter (see below). The roof top of the adjacent St Nicholas Centre suffers from poor connections, poor quality public realm and empty tenancies which front onto this space and affect St Nicholas Kirkyard (see also St Nicholas Street section). St Nicholas Kirkyard should become a pocket of accessible urban green space, offering a break from the busier surrounding streets.

Better use of St Nicholas Kirkyard could be achieved by:

- Reinforcing the linkages between the surrounding retail areas
- Enhancing seating opportunities within the Kirkyard
- Creating a meeting place at the centre of St Nicholas Street where St Nicholas Church's eastern façade meets the street
- Enhancing views of and to St Nicholas Church, particularly with reference to the tower of Marischal College, and ensuring that development considers, and where possible enhances, such views
- Removing bus stops from the Union Street boundary wall – Smith's screen, and providing architectural lighting
- Potentially linking the Kirkyard with a second floor glazed extension to the St Nicholas Centre featuring food and beverage uses, as detailed in the Bon Accord Masterplan

3.6.11 St Nicholas Street

St Nicholas Street is a lively hub of activity, a popular meeting place and one of the busiest public spaces in Aberdeen. St Nicholas Street consists of the public space which approaches the St Nicholas Shopping Centre from Union Street and the area on the roof of the same shopping centre. It provides links from Union Street to School Hill, all be it, not the most direct.

St Nicholas Street originally connected to George Street, but this link was lost with the construction of the St Nicholas and Bon Accord Shopping Centres. The upper level of the St Nicholas Shopping Centre is an unattractive, hard, bland space, exacerbated by empty shop units. What should be active frontage instead produces dead space. These areas could be improved by adding an additional level to the St Nicholas Centre. The additional

level will not increase the height of the building as it would be redeveloping the existing upper units and making the space more usable. The upper area could be fully glazed providing interesting aspects over the St Nicholas Kirkyard. Reintroducing uses into this upper space will attract people and improve the vitality of the area. Improvements in this area are further detailed within the Bon Accord Masterplan but include:

- Improving the upper area of the St Nicholas Shopping centre with an additional floor (a lightweight, glazed structure ensuring it does not dominate the Churchyard)
- Including eating and drinking establishments at the upper level
- Retaining a green heart adjacent to the Churchyard on the roof of the Centre where people can relax and enjoy a bite to eat
- Adding public art and information to allow better orientation within the City Centre
- Further tree and landscaping on the external area at the top of the Shopping Centre
- Emphasising traditional landscape materials without indulging in historical reproductions
- Creating a meeting place at the centre of St Nicholas Street, where the St Nicholas Church's eastern facade meets the street
- Providing new connections through to Marischal College and the proposed Civic Square
- Improving links through the Kirk Yard
- Providing a light link between the upper level of the St Nicholas Centre and the Bon Accord Centre

3.6.12 Broad Street

Broad Street is flanked by the contrasting forms of Marischal College to the east, and the tower block of St Nicholas House to its west. The Bon Accord Masterplan considered this area to be the civic heart of the City with the redevelopment of St Nicholas House site, the formation of a civic square in front of Marischal College, a new courtyard to the north of Provost Skene's house and new pedestrian linkages between Marischal College and St Nicholas Kirk being key to improving the potential of this area. Further information on this can be found in section 4.2 the Civic Quarter. The formation of a civic square is crucial in providing an appropriate setting for the new City Council Headquarters at Marischal College. Uses around the square would include retail, restaurants, offices, residential, hotel, cultural and civic, creating a genuine, economically sustainable mixed use neighbourhood within the City Centre. These uses around the square must create live frontages and activities at all times of the day and evening, resulting in a successful, positive and usable public space.

3.6.13 Plainstones

Located at the corner of Marischal Street and Castle Street, the area is currently used as a traffic island with a bus stop. It is currently a busy space segmented into pedestrian and vehicle zones. The public realm should offer a more appropriate setting for surrounding buildings of architectural note such as the Athenaeum and Court buildings.

Better use of Plainstones could be achieved by:

- Creating a pedestrian zone
- Extending surface treatment across Marischal Street to develop a strong pedestrian link with Castlegate
- Introducing seating and street trees

- Introducing signage to direct pedestrians to Shiprow and the Harbour along Marischal Street
- Celebrating the 'Mannie' statue that has been relocated from the Green

3.6.14 Castlegate

The Castlegate, the historic market place and heart of pre-Union Street Aberdeen, has in recent years suffered from its peripheral location within the modern City Centre. The square has been pedestrianised and paved in granite, but there has been no corresponding success in attracting people back into the Castlegate. This major civic urban space, of outstanding historic and townscape character, remains obviously underused.

The Castlegate is the eastern termination of Union Street, yet its high visual importance in the street scene is not reflected in its use. It has low environmental quality and this must be addressed if this space is to become inviting and well used. It is a strategic location and is also the physical connection between the Beach Boulevard and Union Street. The Castlegate is an important axial stop on Union Street, but should connect to the Beach Boulevard as part of the grand procession through the City. The space is not well used as either a thoroughfare or a place to spend time in. The links to the wider City Centre are weak and not very clear.

The most significant building within the Castlegate is the Citadel, this building is the terminal of Union Street and an important landmark of the City Centre. Reuse of the ground floor for café use will help to bring people back into the area. There must be a reason for people to visit the Castlegate and make them want to stay in it.

Reintroducing market stalls in the Castlegate has been tried but not been successful on its own. Coupled with other interventions this may be an initiative that could be reviewed.

Better use of the Castlegate could be achieved by:

- Improving the through route to the Beach.
- Introducing a transport hub
- Improving shop frontages
- Rationalising street furniture
- Increasing in soft landscaping
- Improving the ground surface treatments
- Extending the use café, restaurant and bar outdoor seating.
- Encouraging market or stall activity and other events

3.7 Streets

A pleasant street environment and street activity is especially important in the City Centre where the street is often the only form of open space available. Well designed and managed streets offer opportunities to provide a better quality urban environment and experience, including interaction with people and enjoyment of a sense of place.

Belmont Street, Little Belmont Street and Back Wynd visibly demonstrate how a positive change in street character can create a more appropriate civic presence and enhanced pedestrian use of space. Concentrating on developing a streetscape that puts the pedestrian first has generated an atmosphere that allows comfortable use of all of the space between the buildings, rather than being restricted to narrow pavements. Kerb heights kept to a minimum ensure that a consistent walking surface is achieved, whilst strong colour, shading and use of natural materials helps to complement the surrounding architecture and enable easy navigation.

Similar approaches have been taken to other areas such as St Nicholas Street, Shiprow, the Green and pocket parks around the City Centre.

Understanding of the types of street that exist in the City Centre is crucial to determining the type and quality of finish expected in the street, together with the appropriate approach to street furniture and the use of space. A matrix is currently being developed which responds to the key issues raised by 'Designing Streets – A Policy Statement for Scotland'. The matrix will set out guidelines for the whole City, defined streets as having a 'place' function or a 'movement' function, or a combination of both. The 'place' function relates to the amount of pedestrian activity, variety of uses and quality of space that occur in the street. The

'movement' function corresponds to the level of traffic, mainly vehicular, that occurs in the street. In relation to the City Centre there are four clear themes:

- **Squares** - have a high 'place' function and little or low movement function. Predominantly pedestrian spaces, squares may be hard or soft landscaped.
- **Residential Streets** - are lightly trafficked streets with low vehicular movement but a high place value.
- **Main High Streets** - are streets in the City Centre which combine a high place value with medium level movement patterns.
- **Major Urban Streets** - in the City Centre have to combine a high place value with serving the need for major movement patterns.

A clear strategy for the treatment of each typology will be developed.

3.8 Granite

Aberdeen is known as the Granite City. The use of granite unifies many periods and styles of building and gives the City its unique character. For many decades, due to cost and changing building construction, the use of granite has declined. As a consequence it is essential that:

- the existing granite heritage should be conserved;
- the use of granite in new development should be encouraged; and
- where it is not practicable to use granite in new development then materials should be used that complement granite.

This means avoiding imitation granite, the examples of which used to date have turned out to offend rather than compliment the real granite. The Local Plan contains policies relating to the retention of granite buildings and granite streets and pavements to ensure that the indigenous material of the City continues to contribute significantly to the sense of place. There are, however, areas of the City Centre that the use granite may not be considered necessary, for example, the Riverside (see section 5).

3.9 Corners

Turning a corner on urban blocks in the City Centre has often been seen as a cause for architectural celebration. Whether flamboyant turrets or simple chamfers, corners have traditionally been a focus for finely detailed masonry work, interesting and unique features. Successful contemporary examples of this are few and far between, but should be encouraged to promote a sense of identity in any new development.

3.10 Lighting

Appropriate lighting can contribute positively to the vitality, ambiance and identity of the City Centre. Flood lighting of important buildings enhances their architectural and historical merit and stimulates interest. Buildings, including St Nicholas Kirk, Provost Skene's House, His Majesty's Theatre and the Art Gallery, are already lit at night time. Flood lighting is also successfully used on bridges, public art and gardens within the City Centre. As well as enhancing important buildings, lighting also helps to make the City Centre a friendlier and safer place, making it more attractive to visitors and residents alike. But additional floodlighting should not intrude or have a detrimental impact on character, merit or integrity of the building or area, nor impact on residential amenity.

A lighting strategy will identify opportunities to:

- enliven night time views in a coherent and interesting manner;
- encourage creative thinking in the use of street, building and advertisement lighting;
- ensure streets and spaces are sufficiently well lit to promote personal safety;
- encourage appropriate use of decorative and seasonal lighting;
- employ lighting which is appropriate for pedestrian spaces;
- develop solutions that can accommodate Christmas lighting schemes;
- continue to floodlight the City's landmark buildings.

3.11 Street Furniture

Street furniture is the collective name for the variety of fixtures and fittings that are found in urban spaces in the City Centre. This includes:

seats and benches
planters
information pillars
signs
traffic signal poles
finger posts
bollards
railings
cycle racks
lockers

bins/recycling facilities
flags
banners
lighting columns
canopies
bus stops and shelters
kiosks
traffic signal boxes
tree grilles
telephone and post boxes

Poorly placed street furniture impedes pedestrian movement around the City Centre and should be removed or replaced to provide maximum effect with the minimum intrusion.

Street furniture in the City Centre, and particularly the central core, should be considered as a family of items with a unified approach to style, materials, colour and design in seats. It should add to the character and build on the identity of the City Centre while contributing a more attractive high quality street environment.

Design should be modern, distinctive and stylish, drawing reference from surrounding features and meeting the specific needs of the function intended. Use of natural materials is promoted. Location, surrounding context, orientation, pedestrian movement, potential vandalism or misuse, ease of repair and maintenance requirements must be considered when designing and selecting materials for street furniture.

3.12 Signage and Street Letter Tiles

Signage and way-finding in the City Centre should capitalise on existing unique features, such as the distinctive street letter tiles used to name streets in the City. These individual fired clay tiles with white lettering on a black background do not occur elsewhere in Scotland and could form the basis of a unique signage strategy distinguishing Aberdeen from its competitors.

3.13 Access for All

Successful city centres create the right balance between the vehicle and all pedestrian users with pedestrian routes which are safe and pleasant both day and night. In a multi level city such as Aberdeen, accessibility for the elderly and disabled needs to be addressed whilst retaining essential historic urban characteristics such as steps and bridges. Further development of the Framework will take place in full consultation with the Disability Advisory Group.

3.14 Trees and Landscape

Trees make an important contribution to the quality and attractiveness of streets and the urban environment. Attractive tree lined streets or avenues are associated with a high quality of life and affluence. In addition to aesthetic value, existing trees in the City Centre, especially those that are mature and semi-mature, have a positive contribution to make to air quality. The aesthetic value can be seen at locations such as the Art Gallery and His Majesty's Theatre, St Nicholas Kirkyard, Union Terrace Gardens and the Squares and Gardens across the City Centre.

The introduction of large canopy street trees into other parts of the City Centre will enhance the quality and experience of using the public realm. Increased tree cover helps to frame views and vistas of important City Centre landmarks, provides an increased sense of place and can add to the visual connectivity through the City Centre. The retention of the existing street trees and trees in the urban green space is fundamental to the continued greening and enhancement of the City Centre.

There are challenges associated with the establishment and maintenance of street trees. These are often further compounded by competition with the installation and maintenance of underground services, CCTV requirements and the use of inappropriate surfacing. Open dialogue between urban managers, considered urban design and the use of appropriate techniques can overcome these challenges.

Continued greening of the City Centre will enhance biodiversity, provide shade and shelter, reduce pollution and noise and increase the absorption of carbon dioxide. It will further enhance the feel and experience of the City

Centre and create a positive environment. This can be further supplemented by the introduction of green roofs on existing and new buildings when opportunities arise. Where safe access is provided green roofs can be a positive asset for employees and residents alike and contribute to biodiversity.

Tree planting cannot be separated out from the comprehensive re-design of the streetscape and public realm, including hard and soft landscaping, how this relates to the use of the space and the context set by surrounding buildings.

4. Connection

4.1 Strategic context

4.1.1 Aberdeen City Centre is the gateway to the North East and the Northern Isles. A strategic transportation hub, the public transport system converges on the City Centre. It is essential that it is efficient and meets the needs of users in Aberdeen City and Shire and beyond. Many of the key themes relating to connection are implicit in the preceding chapters which emphasis the importance of a high quality of public realm and accessibility and connection within the City Centre. Creating quality space to encourage pedestrian activity must be supported by an efficient public transport and managing the transport network without unduly disadvantaging any particular user.

4.1.2 The Structure Plan includes an objective to reduce the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport. It also supports proposals to make part of Union Street an area for pedestrians only. The Aberdeen Local Plan 2008 promotes pedestrian priority measures and the use of appropriate transport modes. Creating a City Centre to allow this to happen, as well as ensuring that the benefits arising from such a development and fully realised, is critical to the future success of Aberdeen.

4.2 Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2008

Whilst the Structure Plan and Local Plan provide high level objectives and policies relating to transport the Council's LTS sets the vision for the City to develop "**A sustainable transport system that is fit for the 21st Century, accessible to all, supports a vibrant economy and minimises the impact on our environment**".

There are five **high level aims**, as follows:

- 1 Support and contribute to a thriving economy for Aberdeen City and its region.
- 2 Ensure a safe and secure transport system.
- 3 Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world.
- 4 Ensure that the transport system is integrated and accessible to all.
- 5 Ensure that our transport policies integrate with and support sustainable development, health and social inclusion policies.

Completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road will provide a range of opportunities to reorganise the use of the City's road network. A key justification for the project is that it will free up capacity on the City's existing road network, thereby reducing congestion, pollution and journey times. However, without further intervention, it is highly likely that these benefits would be quickly eroded due to ongoing traffic growth. Measures are need that preserve, or "lock-in" the congestion, pollution and journey time benefits of the new road. This can be achieved by using available road capacity to provide additional priority to sustainable modes of transport.

The LTS outlines some of these measures in more detail along with other policies and proposals which will influence the City Centre. These include the implementation of Park and Ride and improvements to the bottlenecks around the City. Initiatives that directly affect the City Centre include:

- revising parking charge levels and structures so that they favour shorter stay, business, shopping and visitor trips, whilst protecting residents' ability to park near their homes and supporting the vitality of the city centre;

- ensuring land use plans and development management support sustainable travel and do not encourage car dependency;
- encouraging the development of travel plans for all major employers within the City.

The LTS promotes the need to “think global, act local” and highlights the need to address local air quality and noise pollution problems; and supports initiatives that make our outdoor public realm more attractive (for walking, cycling, shopping etc).

4.2.3 Pedestrian Priority

Scottish Planning Policy promotes a hierarchy of users of streets which places the pedestrian first, followed by cyclist, public transport, servicing and finally the private car. The Development Framework reflects that hierarchy by promoting a clear understanding that the pedestrian should be treated as the most important user in the City Centre.

4.2.4 Other vehicles should not be excluded from the City Centre, but should use it in a respectful manner. This will be combined with promotion of car parking at the ‘edges’ of the City Centre, in association with the urban quarters that they serve, concentrating on improving the links between each area and Union Street.

4.2.5 The critical arrival points in the City Centre are where first impressions are formed by visitors, residents and other users. Ensuring that the public realm around the rail and bus stations, bus hubs and car parks is developed with high quality materials, signage and landscaping, appropriate to the context and setting of the area, will encourage people to walk around. Connecting all the major public spaces together in a cohesive pedestrian

priority network will contribute significantly to the vitality and vibrancy of the City Centre.

4.2.6 Public transport

The Development Framework proposes rationalising bus stops, particularly on Union Street, to develop public transport ‘hubs’ at strategic locations in the City Centre. It is essential that such a proposal has a positive impact on timetables and accessibility of the public transport system. The relationship of public transport hubs to squares and spaces in the City Centre must be defined to determine where the hubs are best located, achieving best connection to character areas and Union Street.

Close liaison is required with bus operators, building on existing relationships, such as the Quality Bus Partnership to increase efficiency and effectiveness of public transport services in the City.

4.2.7 Servicing

Efficient servicing provision in the central core is essential to allow business to thrive. Initiatives such as Belmont Street and Back Wynd have demonstrated how pedestrian priority need not have an adverse impact on servicing. There does, however, require to be a review of how servicing can operate generally, particularly in relation to Union Street. Collectively ensuring the efficient use of space and connection will contribute to the success of the City Centre as a premier retail and business destination.

4.2.8 Future initiatives

Issues such as:

- proposed public transport ‘hubs’;
- the provision of a shuttle bus linking key City Centre sites;

- improving access to the bus and rail stations and the ferry terminal;
- improving air quality;
- providing tourism pick up and drop off points;
- increasing the use of park and ride;
- extending? The night time transport zone;
- the pedestrianisation of appropriate area;
- the promotion of cycling;

all require to be further developed in line with transportation policies and the City's Masterplanning Process in the Final Draft Development Framework.

5. Urban Quarters and Character Areas

5.1 Union Street

5.1.1 Challenges

As the principle thoroughfare in the City, Union Street has a major strategic role to play in the future of the City Centre. Recent development has altered the focus from the more traditional east-west orientation to a north-south emphasis. Economic circumstances and modern retail trends have led to the shopping mall becoming the dominant focus of retail activity in the City compromising the integrity of Union Street. Footways in the central area are generally restricted creating pedestrian congestion, particularly where bus stops are located.

5.1.2 The pedestrian environment

Key pedestrian movements are concentrated along Union Street, in particular between the major shopping centres. Pedestrian movement is generated by institutions, businesses, retail activity, attractions and venues. The concentration of use and the highest pedestrian movement

takes place between Golden Square and St Nicholas Street.

Pedestrianising the central portion of Union Street between Market Street and Bridge Street is a key element of the Urban Realm Strategy, Local Transport Strategy, Structure Plan and Local Plan and improving the pedestrian experience in the City Centre. This will:

- contribute to improvements of the visual and physical quality of the streetscape;
- substantially increase the available space dedicated to pedestrians;
- provide a strategic link between the north and south shopping areas;
- enhance the retail opportunity on Union Street itself;
- be used for special events including street entertainment;
- contribute to air quality improvements;
- reduce pedestrian related accidents;
- support the economic vibrancy of the City Centre.

Consideration should be given to a specific retail policy for this area to encourage a retail offer that will create a unique identity to this section of Union Street. The relationship of public transport to this space should also be further explored.

Work is already well underway to improve the efficiency of the surrounding road network and the continuation of this improvement programme, together with the benefits achieved in the City Centre by the construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, will enable the pedestrianisation of Union Street to be successfully introduced, whilst still maintaining traffic flow through the City Centre and ensuring public transport reliability. As the

traffic flows are altered in the City Centre, there is a predicted reduction in through traffic on Union Street allowing the footways to the east and west of the proposed pedestrianised area to be widened.

Simple, high quality finishes on the ground, using natural materials complementary to the surrounding architecture should be used to resurface the proposed pedestrianised area. Quality standards in Belmont Street and Back Wynd set the benchmark for the future of Union Street. The streetscape treatment should be extended in the short, medium or longer term to the adjacent historic streets such as Crown Street, Dee Street, Bon Accord Street, Holburn Street, Alford Place, Chapel Street, Thistle Street, Huntly Street, Silver Street, Union Terrace and the key squares as indicated in section 3.5 above.

Street furniture must be limited to maximise the space available for pedestrians. Redundant fixtures and fittings should be removed and signage rationalised.

5.1.3 The retail environment

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan will contain a retail strategy that deals with the land use allocation for retail activity in and around the City Centre. To complement this it is proposed that a retail strategy is promoted for the City Centre, with objectives to clearly identify the types of retail that should be grouped together, particularly in the proposed pedestrian area, West End and the rest of Union Street itself. This strategy will be scoped as part of the completion of the Final Draft Development Framework. This is highlighted in section 5

5.1.4 Occupancy

This needs to be supported with a strategy for the use of the upper floors of buildings, particularly on Union Street

itself, which will ensure that opportunities to maximise occupancy and activity can be realised and delivered.

Context

- Union Street is the central spine and focus of activity in the City Centre.
- Union Street must remain as a commercial thoroughfare.
- Vacant units and upper floors must be addressed.

Identity

- pedestrian priority along the length of Union Street to help reinforce identity
- address upper floor vacancies, living above the shop
- strategy to group types retail together in distinct zones to improve legibility
- air quality improvements
- strategic link between major retail centres and green space
- lighting
- service access
- celebrate landmarks
- improve the setting of and public realm around important buildings

Connection

- widen footways on Union Street
- develop public transport hubs at strategic locations to free up space on footways
- other urban quarters and character areas must be connected to Union Street with high quality public realm
- establish a direct link from Union Street to Union Terrace Gardens
- reinstate “Walking the Mat”
- link Union Street to urban spaces and squares identified in section 3.5

Opportunities

- 91-93 Union Street (BHS) and links to Market building. These buildings provide the opportunity to achieve very large retail floor plates with direct access from Union Street and the Green.
- 26-38 Union Street (former Esslemont & Macintosh). This has planning permission for mixed use including an hotel
- 131½-141 Union Street (former Boots/Zavvi) could provide a strategic indoor link to the Green
- 1-13 Union Bridge
- 196-206 Union Street (former YMCA)
- retail strategy (as outlined above).

Walking the Mat

Aberdonians fondly reminisce of 'walking the mat' on the main avenue, Union Street. It is only about a mile in length, and on a Saturday night, all the young lads and lassies would put on their 'finery', and stroll its length socializing and 'chatting each other up.' Even young people from the surrounding areas would catch a bus into Aberdeen, to 'walk the mat'. It was a happy and cheerful way to meet people, and the tradition was known to be responsible for a large number of marriages in the town, and the surrounding areas as well!

5.2 Civic Quarter

Based on the strategy developed in the Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan (2006), the Civic Quarter relates to the area around Broad Street, including major landmarks such as Marischal College, the Town House, the Bon Accord and St Nicholas Shopping Centres and St Nicholas Kirk. The future of Marischal College as a major and identifiable landmark in the area has been secured, due to become the headquarters of Aberdeen City Council by 2011.

A significant development opportunity exists in the heart of this area at St Nicholas House. The City Council's current headquarters will become vacant during 2011 as occupancy of Marischal College takes place. Further detailed guidance for the redevelopment of the area is contained in the Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan and concentrates on delivering the following key issues:

Context

- Refurbishment of Marischal College as the new City Council HQ, consolidating civic functions in the area.
- Celebrate landmarks in the area – Marischal, Town House, Provost Skene's, St Nicholas Kirk.

Identity

- Retention of Marischal College and celebration of visual landmarks and links between Mitchell Tower and the spire of St Nicholas Kirk.
- Future development must improve the setting of and respect Marischal College and Provost Skene's House as important historic buildings.
- Redevelop former Esslemont & Macintosh buildings.
- St Nicholas Centre: redevelop and enhance public space on upper levels as outlined in the Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan.

Connection

- Broad Street to be treated as an urban square to improve the setting for Marischal College. Connected to this will be a smaller, more intimate square at Provost Skene's, appropriate to the scale of the building. Each square will have live frontage to encourage activity in the space.
- Improve the relationship and interaction of the Bon Accord Centre with its surroundings as outlined in the Bon Accord Quarter Masterplan, particularly in relation to the public realm at entrances.
- Maintain and enhance links on the upper level of the St Nicholas Centre.
- resolve pedestrian – vehicular conflict on Upperkirkgate.

Opportunities

- St Nicholas House redevelopment
- 26-38 Union Street (former Esslemont & Macintosh)
- civic square with live frontage at Broad Street
- interaction between shopping centres and surroundings
- redevelop the upper levels of St Nicholas Centre
- strategic link between retail centres and green space
- resolve pedestrian – vehicular conflict on Upperkirkgate

5.3 The Cultural Quarter

The Cultural Quarter relates to the Denburn Valley and its surroundings. A wealth of cultural activity exists with His Majesty's Theatre, Central Library, Art Gallery, Belmont Cinema and Music Hall all within a short distance of Union Terrace Gardens, the main landscaped green space focus of the City Centre.

Union Terrace Gardens and its surroundings provide key elements of the City Centre, providing valuable green space and marking the extent of the medieval core of the City. Bridges, buildings and balustraded terraces are significant, and, together with the topography of the area, are important in terms of the legibility of the City.

5.3.1 Union Terrace Gardens

The Gardens are currently the subject of much debate on the principles of appropriate development. A 3,200 m² centre for contemporary arts was granted planning consent in 2008 through the statutory planning process. Shortly afterwards, an announcement was made that a donation of £50m from Sir Ian Wood may contribute to a proposal that could raise the level of the Gardens to that of the surrounding streets. Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) undertook a City wide consultation on that concept. The results indicated that the majority (55%) of those consulted were against the concept.

Intervention with the Gardens has been under discussion since the Dobson, Chapman and Riley Granite City Plan of 1952, which proposed extending the Gardens to cover the railway line. There has been much iteration since, including the unsuccessful Millennium Square project of the late 1990s. Many earlier proposals regarded Union Terrace Gardens as a development site and failed to appreciate its positive characteristics and its very special

role in the City Centre. Union Terrace Gardens should be used as a focus for broader regeneration of the surrounding area and implementation of the Development Framework.

5.3.2 Perceptions

There are negative issues related to the Denburn Valley. The lack of focussed cultural activity reduces the number of potential users. Access to the Gardens is challenging with no obvious or enticing link from the main pedestrian flow on Union Street. The historic setting, quality and drama of many of the buildings to the rear of Belmont Street are diluted by the continued dereliction of the Triple Kirks site.

Despite its key strategic location in the heart of the City, Union Terrace Gardens lacks some connectivity linking the area to its surrounding urban fabric. What is clear is that in any proposal for Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley, there are several key themes that must be addressed. These are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.3 Future of the Denburn Valley

Prior to any proposal being developed for the Denburn Valley a detailed assessment of the historic environment is necessary to determine its contribution to townscape, proposed interaction of buildings and space and to ensure that key views and vistas are identified to inform the design stage.

Triple Kirks is an essential component of any future proposals for the area. Failure to imaginatively develop this site will detract from the ambition to develop quality urban space in the area. Triple Kirks, and Archibald Simpson's spire particularly, is an important landmark in

the City Centre and must be incorporated into any new development.

Context

The Denburn Valley and the wider Cultural Quarter provides the setting for a number of important public buildings in the City.

Union Terrace Gardens has many qualities to be exploited and enhanced including:

- Topography which provides a unique and dramatic setting for the surrounding historic townscape and bridges and an essential component of the identity of the City Centre
- character of buildings to the rear of Belmont Street
- setting for His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library
- Denburn Viaduct and Union Bridge
- green space and mature trees
- one of the last locations where the historic relationship of Union Street to the old city can be appreciated

Identity

Any proposal for Denburn Valley must ensure a sense of place in the City Centre. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring the Gardens themselves are a destination with purpose
- addressing dereliction, particularly at Triple Kirks
- delivering a clearly defined "green" urban park
- providing a cultural focus in the central gardens area

Connection

Connection to and from the Gardens and the opportunity to link to the surrounding urban fabric at a variety of levels is as important as the Gardens themselves. By linking the valley to a wider network of enhanced squares and spaces,

particularly around key public buildings, the full potential of this considerable asset can be achieved. The key principles to be addressed are:

- accessibility from major thoroughfares
- multi-level connection
- direct link from Union Street
- relationship to collegiate Aberdeen
- development of and from the rear of the buildings of Belmont Street.

Opportunities

Buildings and terraces could be added to the rear of Belmont Street which could exploit the proximity and views of the Gardens. Terraces could extend over the Denburn dual carriageway and one or more pedestrian bridges could directly link Belmont Street to the Gardens.

From the west, Union Terrace Gardens should be seen as the culmination of a series of squares and spaces that comprise the essential urban fabric of the City.

From the north, the approach from Schoolhill should be incorporated within any proposal to redevelop the Triple Kirks site. In addition, linking to the urban space to the north of His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library is desirable. This would allow the Denburn and Woolmanhill opportunity sites to be integrated with the central area. From the south, consideration should be given to direct access from Union Street. The opportunity also exists to connect at lower levels to the Green and the rail station. All the approaches should form part of the experience of City life and movement.

Proposals are under development to extend the Art Gallery to house the combined collections of the Museums and

Galleries Service and propose an integrated solution, which will deliver greater potential benefits to the City.

Work is ongoing to discuss and secure funding opportunities to redevelop the Music Hall into a centre for excellence in music practice in the North East. The proposal includes new rehearsal space, recital space, space for composers and community orchestras.

Sustainability

It is essential that sustainability is a key consideration in the future of the Denburn Valley and Union Terrace Gardens. The cultural and social needs of the City need to be clearly understood along with the implications of construction, maintenance and life time costs.

The variety of cultural uses around the Denburn Valley demands that Union Terrace Gardens provides a focus of cultural activity that enhances that vibrancy. A proposal for a contemporary arts centre is welcome, but it must not be seen as the solution to all the perceived problems of the Gardens. There are still issues relating to access, safety and connection to the wider urban fabric of the City.

The pocket park in front of His Majesty's should be incorporated into the Gardens. This makes use of the elevated topography available to capture sunlight.

Key Issues for the Cultural Quarter

- create a sense of place
- use topography to add interest and character
- enhance urban green environment
- undertake more landscaping
- improve connectivity
- ensure access and safety
- enhance multi level connections
- redevelop Triple Kirks
- attract visitors
- cultural focus
- improve streetscape and access around key public buildings

5.4 The Green

The Green area is of national importance as it evidences the development of Aberdeen from its earliest origins. The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is a major conservation led programme set up to address run down historic buildings and streetscape in the area. The THI offers support to drive forward building repair, re-instatement of architectural detail, re-use of vacant floorspace and public realm streetscape works.

The historic streetscape is a major element of the character of this area: it is the largest surviving area of granite streets and pavements in the city. The repair and upgrading of this unique granite streetscape which is currently underway, supported by the THI, will do much to address the need to connect the harbour, rail station and Union Square to the City Centre.

The Merchant Quarter is an initiative promoted by independent businesses based in the Green area. The key themes of the Merchant Quarter include promoting the area as a new vibrant cultural area for Aberdeen that is centred around brasserie style food and drink, live music, life style businesses and independent shopping - supplemented periodically, by a range of festivals e.g. food, drink and entertainment. The initiative also promotes an artistic gateway for visitors arriving in the city via the harbour, train station and bus station with themed lighting, art, sculptures and street furniture.

Ultimately the Green could develop as a distinctive tourist offer including promotion as

- an area of Aberdeen where alcohol is only one aspect of the entertainment offer;

- a better connected area where the participating groups use their combined strength to further improve access routes, street infrastructure and policing.

Context

- Historic core of the city
- Urban space

Identity

- First impressions of Aberdeen for those arriving from the station
- Celebrate level changes
- Implement the Green Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Support the initiatives of the Merchant Quarter
- Enhance public use of Green urban square
- Ensure wayfinding

Connection

- Address Guild Street and the link between the rail and bus stations and Union Square and the City Centre
- Develop links to Union Street (Back Wynd Steps)

Opportunity

- The Market building has the potential to provide the necessary vertical linkage between the Green and Union Street and a new live frontage onto the Green.
- Direct link between the rail station and Trinity Mall.

Key Issues for the Green

- connect south side to City Centre
- deliver The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative
- redevelop Aberdeen Market
- ensure wayfinding
- celebrate level changes
- possible link to Union Terrace Gardens

5.5 Castlegate Quarter

The grand procession through the City from the west along Queen's Road, Albyn Place and through Union Street terminates at the Castlegate. At present, continued pedestrian movement is severely hindered by the inner ring road and roundabout where Virginia Street, East North Street, Park Road and the Beach Boulevard converge. Vehicular movement is deflected through King Street from Union Street.

Castlegate should connect to the Beach Boulevard and ultimately provide a link directly to the Beach to enhance the City's relationship with the water that surrounds it. The view down Marischal Street should be celebrated and enhanced and could link to future pedestrian and landscaping initiatives related to Aberdeen Harbour, including a viewing and information point.

Castlegate is a prime urban space in the city, with the Citadel terminating the axis of Union Street at its eastern end. However, the square is poor in quality and underused, and the sites surrounding this area are degraded. There is a great potential to enhance the urban fabric of Castlegate into a quarter of strong identity. The adjacent sites present

development opportunities that, if realised, could revitalise this area and strengthen its place in the cityscape once again.

Several studies have been carried out to review options for regenerating the Castlegate, including the Castlegate Study (Gillespies 1998), Urban Realm Strategy (2001), North Castlegate Brief (2002) and the draft Beach Masterplan (2005). Each proposed a variety of measures to enhance and stimulate the area.

The most ambitious is that proposed in the Draft Beach Masterplan which suggested that the Union Street and the Beach Boulevard should be physically reconnected via the Castlegate and Justice Street. This would involve radically reorganising the roundabout as a development opportunity with a street running through and connecting to the Beach Boulevard as a street with activity on either side. The Castlegate should become a transportation hub once more to encourage its role as a gathering point in the City. The Beach Boulevard would have a lively street character, rather than the open, sometimes inhospitable space it is at present. Hanover Street School would then become a central focus in an urbanised area. Whilst the dual carriageway from the harbour is maintained, traffic movement could be controlled allowing the flow of east/west pedestrian and traffic movement. Issues of visibility, roads safety and pedestrian vehicular conflict would require to be carefully managed.

Context

- Celebrate historic significance of Castlehill
- Grand axis termination of Union Street
- Well proportioned but underused public square
- Good quality natural materials, but poorly laid, uneven surface

Identity

- Refurbish Citadel
- Mixed use residential quarter
- Introduce soft landscaping features in the square, including trees
- develop a coherent urban quarter focused on leisure and tourism
- St Andrew's Cathedral

Connection

- connect Castlegate, through Justice Street to Beach Boulevard
- consider reorganisation of the space around the roundabout
- create transportation hub to encourage meeting, gathering
- reinforce the townscape value of the Castlegate Wynds

Opportunity

- connect Castlegate, through Justice Street to Beach Boulevard
- East North Street Car Park
- Frederick Street Car Park
- Beach Boulevard
- Timmer Market (on site as at 2010)
- Peacock's

5.6 Crown Street

Predominantly a residential area with small private hotels and guest houses, the Crown Street area presents an austere architectural image in the City. There is scope for general upgrading and enhancement of public realm, but no major development opportunities are envisaged. It is envisaged that this area will retain its inherent character. Successful intervention has occurred with New Century House adjacent to the former General Post Office a good example of contemporary tenement style.

Context

- Predominantly residential uses
- Small private hotels and guest houses

Identity

- Highlight former General Post Office. 23-35 Crown Street (Prudential Building), 85 Crown Street (Masonic Temple)
- Promote maintaining simple clean lines of neo-classical townscape

Connection

- Level changes in Windmill Brae
- Crown Terrace/Bridge Street steps
- Servicing near Union Street
- Relationship to Golden Square

Opportunity

- Enhance public realm on immediate approaches to Union Street
- Explore linkages and levels with other quarters and character areas
- Lighting scheme incorporating notable buildings

5.7 The West End

The West End of the City Centre relates to the area to the north of Union Street from Huntly street west, including Chapel Street, Summer Street, Rose Street, Thistle Street connecting to Union Street.

The West End is a transitional zone between the business orientated Albyn Place and the more retail focused City Centre. The area currently offers a variety of uses including speciality retail, housing, business, hotel and entertainment. There are a number of small shop units and businesses within the West End. Many of the Streets also have their own distinct character and uses contributing to their success.

There are a number of points of conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Many pavements are narrow and create an inhospitable environment for comfortable pedestrian use. Further to this the Chapel Street multi storey car park is uninviting, feels unsafe with unclear entrance and exits, dissects the area and is an unattractive building. A planning brief has been prepared for this site, with a business use and a reduced capacity replacement considered appropriate.

This area lacks legibility along with a relatively poor quality public realm. Planters along with randomly placed, limited street furniture contribute to the lack of a sense of place. There are no real spaces to sit comfortably, wait and relax.

The built environment in the City Centre must to be of high quality capable of providing a major attraction for forward investment. Good architecture raises company profile and enhances corporate identity. Good building design, avoiding the pastiche of grey mock-granite and dry-dash roughcast, has a key role to play in the success of

businesses and industries. This is particularly relevant in the West End, where high quality, innovative contemporary architecture must be produced to encourage meaningful business development in the area.

Successes in this area include the Union Plaza office development at Union Row, which locates its parking in the basement out of public sight. Maintaining business uses in the City Centre contributes to enhancing the diversity and vitality of the area.

The West end of Union Street has developed into a hub for high level national shops such as Boss and Cruise. The smaller streets off Union Street such as Rose Street have smaller more niche shops. Further encouragement should be given to local shops and businesses operating in this area.

The key objectives for the West End are:

- Maintaining and enhancing the vitality, vibrancy and viability of the West End;
- Creating better urban spaces for residents, employees and visitors;
- Maximising opportunity for development.

Context

- Encourage the development of the smaller shop units.
- Good example of Mixed Use

Identity

- Small niche shop units
- Consistent use of materials and better landscaping.
- Use select limited palette of materials to improve the streetscape.
- Positive areas for outdoor seating.

Connection

- Improve connections from Huntly Street to Golden Square
- Wider pavements to maximise positive pedestrian experience.
- Uniform carriageway treatments, ie stud demarcation to parking bays.

Opportunity

- Redevelopment of Chapel Street Car Park.
- Improve public realm adjacent to St Mary's Cathedral on Huntly Street.
- Small gap site on Chapel Street.
- Public realm improvements to Rose Street, Thistle Street, Chapel Street.
- Remove redundant street furniture

5.8 Bon Accord

The Bon Accord area is one of potential conflict in the City Centre. The area is both a popular "entertainment zone", with many bars, clubs and restaurants, and a residential area.

Management of public realm is critical to reducing that conflict. Proposals are currently under consultation for the management of traffic in Justice Mill Lane. This could be an opportunity to review pedestrianised options for evenings and night time use to encourage civilised use of the space.

In conjunction with recent redevelopment of the new hotel on Justice Mill Lane, important opportunities exist in the area, particularly at Bon Accord Baths. A planning brief (2009) has been prepared for this building promoting use as a performance arts or gallery space, or opportunities for conferencing, retail and/or catering.

Further consideration should be given to the principles contained in the West End Study (2002) which promoted improving direct links with Union Street.

Formal public spaces in the area include Bon Accord Square by Aberdeen's most notable architect Archibald Simpson.

Particular successes in the area include Langstane Kirk (now Soul Bar) on Union Street, which demonstrates re-use of a redundant landmark listed building. This is well designed and includes an area of external seating making best use of space on Union Street.

Context

- Celebrate architecture of Archibald Simpson
- Management of conflict of users in the area

Identity

- Enhance green space in Bon Accord Square
- Public art for Square and Gardens
- Lighting scheme

Connection

- Potential for connection to Union Street

Opportunity

- Justice Mill Lane public realm improvements
- Bon Accord Baths

5.9 Riverside

The Riverside area has the potential to be enhanced as a sustainable central business district. The area between the Dee and Union Square has excellent public transport links being immediately adjacent to the Joint Station. Access from the inner ring road is relatively straightforward, but analysis is required to assess the capacity of the existing road network to determine whether the balance of car parking in the area could, or should, be increased and to what level. In any event the proximity of public transport links should be an advantage.

The key issues affecting the Riverside area include ensuring that new development takes advantage of the existing urban grain. Maintaining the grid street pattern will create the best opportunities for internal connectivity. New development must make a positive contribution to urban design in the area. Development must contribute to increasing the quality of the public realm. Development opportunities exist within the established blocks and there may be a case here for a significant increase in scale if it can be demonstrated that strategic views of the City and central area are not compromised. This could maximise opportunities for views to the river. There should be a direct pedestrian through the centre of the area connecting the site to Union Square to the north and the riverside to the south.

New development should take advantage of the south facing riverside setting. Consideration should also be given to providing complementary mixed uses to ensure that the area does not become sterile in the evening.

The Riverside Quarter will have essential links to be developed in relation to the central core, the south side of the River Dee and crucially to Aberdeen Harbour. The

relationship of the character areas to the future strategies of the Harbour should be interlaced.

Context

- Close proximity to the central core
- Riverside setting
- Southerly aspect for north bank

Identity

- Reinforce riverside setting
- Promote as central business district
- Introduce tall buildings, dependent on further analysis
- Urban landscape must connect to riverside green space

Connection

- Good public transport links
- Grid street pattern will maximise internal connections
- Promote 'boulevard' approach to central core
- Pedestrian bridge to south side

Opportunity

- Aberdeen Seafood Park
- Other industrial sites to be identified
- Introduce street trees
- Links to a future Harbour Quarter

6. Retail Strategy

6.1 Development Plan

The Development Framework will support the emerging Local Development Plan. The Plan recognises that the City Centre plays a major role in the commercial, economic, social, civic and cultural life of Aberdeen and the wider north east. It is an important regional centre providing a focus for employment and business interaction, it offers access to a wide range of goods and services, and it is a place where many people meet socially and choose to live and visit.

The Proposed Plan will reinforce the importance of the City Centre as a regional centre. Retailing is a key component of this function and policies highlighted in the Main Issues Report focus on where different types of retailing should be encouraged. The City Centre Business Zone contains most of the centre's shopping floorspace and this is where most new development of this nature is to be directed. Primary and secondary shopping frontage areas are also identified to give further guidance, and a specific policy for Union Street seeks to enhance its vitality and viability in recognition of its key location at the heart of the City Centre.

6.2 Further work

The Local Development Plan will set the land use policies in relation to retail provision in the City Centre and beyond. It will not, however, deal with the relationship between certain types of retail use, the potential grouping of similar retail providers, nor the relationship of the type of retail or commercial activity appropriate to the setting of urban spaces as identified in the preceding chapters. This needs

to be scoped and developed for inclusion as a strategy to supplement the Final Draft Development Framework.

7. Economic Development Strategy

7.1 Context

The strategy is driven by three themes:

- Implementing city development projects and supporting key partnerships and subsidiaries that have the potential to generate substantial economic impact.
- Promoting Aberdeen City and Shire as a place to invest, live, visit, work and learn.
- Encouraging local business growth and economic participation.

7.2 Objectives

7.2.1 *Attract aspirational, private sector investment of £400m into new development projects and physical regeneration, by 31 December 2012.*

- Support activities designed to realise other development opportunities that comply with, and are related to, the introduction of the new Local Development Plan
- Work with all partner bodies to ensure that they understand and fully support major City development projects
- Identify potential sources of property development investment and work with other teams to produce an action plan for attracting such investment

7.2.2 *Attract aspirational, new commercial investment of £100m into Aberdeen by 31 December 2012*

- Promote investment opportunities in international markets

7.2.3 Maintain employment in the Oil and Gas sector and increase employment in the Renewable Energy and Life Sciences sectors

7.2.4 Increase visitor spend in the city by 20% by 31 Dec 2012

- Develop an updated 'place marketing strategy' for Aberdeen City and Shire
- Continue to develop the Aberdeen City and Shire brand with a focus on attracting investors, new workers, visitors, and students.
- Run a targeted series of campaigns to increase investment (in partnership with SDI) and visitor numbers (in partnership with Visit Scotland).

7.2.5 Work with Planning and Sustainable Development and Nestrans to encourage and support initiatives to strengthen the connectivity of the city region nationally and internationally.

- Support Planning and Infrastructure and Nestrans in their efforts to encourage the alignment of sustainability and productivity by encouraging integrated public transport systems and home working

7.2.6 Contribute to the economic regeneration of the city.

- Establishing a City Development Company to make best use of Aberdeen City Council's land and property assets.
- Support the production of acceptable proposals for developing the Denburn Valley, in accordance with the Local Development Plan
- Development of vacant land South of the River Dee, in Torry, as a catalyst for wider regeneration of the Torry area
- Supporting the creation of a Business Improvement

District in the City Centre

7.2.7 Attract at least two major city events per annum that project Aberdeen on a local, national and international basis.

- Determine the economic impact of each major event and the potential to repeat them in subsequent years
- Produce an International Events Strategy for attracting and hosting national/international events in Aberdeen

8. Council Services

- 8.1** Although the Development Framework is very much focussed on planning and design principles it is intended to also serve as a strategy for the future development and delivery of all Council functions within the City Centre. It will, therefore, ultimately include sections relating to each Council service.

9. Programme and Next Steps

9.1 Programme

Identify the range of work required to complement and inform the delivery of the Development Framework. This will require to be fully scoped, resourced and programmed for inclusion in the report on the Final Draft Development Framework. This will include input from all Council Services on how their service will support and contribute to the delivery of the key principles of the City Centre Development Framework.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Policy Summary

	Retail	Employment	Housing	Transport/ Access	Tourism/ Culture/ Leisure	Public Realm/ Environment/ Safety	Design
Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan – August 2009	Support Aberdeen city centre to improve regional shopping facilities	Create new employment in a range of areas	Increase the range and quality of housing	Make sure that all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel, enhance alternatives and Union Street part pedestrianisation	Retail and all forms of tourism, including business tourism, will have an important role to play in creating a strong service sector		Improve the quality of design
Aberdeen Local Plan 2008	Enhance vitality and viability of city centre and improve quality and format of retail offer	Promote development opportunities for retail, leisure, office, tourism and business services	Residential development must ensure suitable residential amenity	Pedestrian priority measures required for new development		Developments affecting streets and open spaces must ensure high quality design where buildings and streetscape interface	New developments must be designed with due consideration to surrounding context
Scottish Planning Policy 2009	Diverse mix and range of uses	Focus for range of uses including businesses	Homes within the City Centre should be included with the mix of uses	High level of accessibility	Promote leisure, entertainment, recreation, cultural and community facilities in the City Centre	High quality, inclusive environment and, high quality public realm	Promote new opportunities for development, using masterplanning and design exercises
PAN 59	Good range of shops is critical to the ongoing health of town centres	Utilise development opportunities and promote economic viability	Importance of encouraging residential development in or near town centres is recognised	Improvements to accessibility through effective parking, public transport and efficient sign posting	Promoting arts and culture activities, such as street theatre and music, community activities and public art	Improve pedestrian environment Promote safety through good design Effective maintenance	Use of good design to improve safety and improve town centre appeal
ACSEF	Enhance the city's	Greater diversity	Adequate supply	Improve	Promote the city	Improve safety for	Encourage high

Manifesto	reputation as a retail destination	of employment opportunities	of land for housing	accessibility within, to and from city centre	centre as a historical and cultural centre	residents and visitors Create high quality urban realm	quality architecture
Strategic Priorities for the NEJPSG		Attract new business and provide opportunity to attract new skills	Support new housing including affordable housing	Support integrated transport mainly from Aberdeen to rest of Scotland and UK		Improvements to living environment	
Aberdeen Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement	Support private sector led retail development to increase population growth prospects	Support and welcome new business	Increasing levels of affordable housing in new housing developments Availability and quality also important	Deliver a fully integrated transport network Improve sustainable transport options	Promote city's heritage and internationally recognised institutions and services	Make the city a more attractive, clean, healthy and safe place to live/work/visit	Improve quality and sustainability in the design of new developments
Transport Strategies	Creation of a strong centre with more concentrated retail	Improve accessibility for job opportunities through improved transport connections	Promote city centre housing developments to reduce need to travel	Promote accessibility and the city centre as a key transport interchange Support investment in green transport Reduce congestion	Promote tourism and leisure travel through better connected places Support cultural activities and cultural development of the city	Improve transport safety and awareness Promote a pedestrian friendly city centre	Improve streetscape design for pedestrian safety
Urban Realm Strategy 2001	Promote retail centre status by enhancing retail environment for shoppers	Promote place competitiveness to attract new investment	Encourage city centre living by improving amenities and living environment	Promote sustainable balance between private vehicles and green transport modes	Attract more visitors and tourists through urban realm improvements	Improve environmental quality Improve pedestrian environment	Protect and enhance character of the urban environment

The City Square Project

Parameters for an integrated development incorporating PVA Contemporary Arts centre.

- A civic space built across the area of Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley with sympathetic use of relief incorporated into the design in the form of sloping, sweeping stepped areas to accommodate level changes in the adjacent street level (primarily from West to East).
- Walk on walk off access from the four access sides to the City Square - Union Terrace, Belmont Street, Union Bridge and Rosemount Viaduct.
- A **minimum** of 2.5 acres of green landscaped and planted garden space. (Hard and soft landscaping incorporated into the overall design.)
- Space to be available for a significant Contemporary Arts Centre of iconic design forming an integral part of the street access square. The aim would be to preserve the floor space and quality of natural light provided by the existing Brisac Gonzales design.
- Concourse covered level (beneath the street level surface) providing access through to Aberdeen Rail and Bus station, the Green and Union Square with natural light wells designed into the street level surface.
- Full access for wheelchairs, prams and people with limited mobility.
- Open spaces for major public gatherings.
- No intrusive 'building' on the Square in order to retain the vista from the South to North of the Square (Union Street/Bridge across to Rosemount Viaduct).

4 May 2010

Appendix 2, Section 2 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

ACHIEVING AN INTEGRATED SOLUTION

Principles

The City Square project is designed to create a focal point for the city centre, to make a tangible contribution to social, cultural and economic activity. To achieve this, a number of important parameters were agreed at the outset of the process – and these provide the context for the technical appraisal study. Essentially these included:

- A civic space built across the area of Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley with sympathetic use of relief incorporated into the design in the form of sloping, sweeping stepped areas to accommodate level changes in the adjacent street level
- Walk-on/walk-off access from the four access sides of the space i.e. from Union Terrace, Belmont Street, Union Bridge and Rosemount Viaduct
- A covered concourse beneath the street level surface providing access through to Aberdeen Rail and Bus stations, the Green and Union Square - with natural light wells designed into the street level surface.
- Full access for wheelchairs, prams and people with limited mobility
- Open spaces for major public gatherings
- Hard and soft landscaping incorporated into the overall design
- No visually intrusive 'building' that would block the view from Union Street Rosemount Viaduct
- A minimum of 2.5 acres of green landscaped (and planted) garden space
- Space to be available for a significant Contemporary Arts Centre of iconic design forming an integral part of the design aiming to at least retain the floor space and quality of natural light provided by the existing design.

The Brisac Gonzales building, like all good architecture, was designed for a particular purpose and a specific site. In this case, the building was designed to be part of its landscape setting. Edgar Gonzales recognises that a different site within the Gardens, or within the City Square project, would result in a different building design.

Integration

The lead authors of the technical appraisal, Halliday Fraser Munro, met with Edgar Gonzales of Brisac Gonzales to explore how, or indeed if, the two proposals could be integrated without losing the overriding principles of both. This meeting was facilitated by Scottish Enterprise. A positive discussion concluded that the existing Brisac Gonzales design could not be incorporated into a project based on the parameters regarded by ACSEF as being important to achieve the aspirations for the city centre. The only way that the existing design could be accommodated would be to alter the key parameters resulting in the road/railway not being fully covered preventing full walk-on/walk-off access from Belmont Street in particular.

The discussion did conclude that an iconic contemporary arts centre, if it was to be located within City Square, would best be accommodated in the area closest to the theatre and library – making best use of the topography to create a multi-level building with outdoor performance space. This is the basis upon which the public consultation proceeded.

Appendix 2, Section 3 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

UTG & DENBURN VALLEY INTEGRATION MEETING	
PAPER 009: NOTE OF MEETING, 9 DECEMBER 2009	
Halliday Fraser Munro, 8 Victoria Street, Aberdeen	Agenda Item 5

Attendees

David Littlejohn, Scottish Enterprise (DL) Chairman
 Nicola Moore, Scottish Enterprise (NM)
 Iain Fraser, HFM (IF)
 David Halliday, HFM (DH)
 Edgar Gonzalez, Brisac Gonzalez (EG)

1.	Introductions and objectives of the day	ACTION
	<p>DL provided an overview of the project, the desired outcome of the meeting and a summary of the questions to be answered.</p> <p>IF expressed concern that the architects were being asked to resolve issues within the scheme that are not in their power to resolve, EG agreed.</p> <p>IF also stated that Halliday Fraser Munro were not ACSEF's architects for the larger scheme and were at the meeting in their capacity as ACSEF's technical experts.</p>	
2.	Background and work completed to date	
	<p>EG provided a brief overview of his design –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally instructed in 2005 to design a scheme for the Castlegate, which was not progressed • Contacted in 2007 regarding a potential scheme at Triple Kirks • When discussion faltered, Lindsay Gordon suggested investigating the potential to locate a building in the Union Terrace Gardens • Building in the Gardens would include City Moves and Arts Development • Building was designed to respect the existing contours of the gardens, the pathway network and the visual pathways from The Trinity Centre to HMT • Building has 3 levels – 1st and 3rd open to the public and the middle floor providing admin/storage/TV studio • The existing stairs leading into the gardens from under the Robbie Burns statue would be incorporated into the scheme and provide access directly from Union Terrace into the building and when the building was open the gardens could be accessed via 	

Appendix 2, Section 3 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

	<p>these steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lift within the building would allow disabled people access into the lower levels of the gardens but only when the building was open • The Arches would be incorporated into the scheme as part of a phase 2 to provide workspace/studios • Providing a crossing over the gardens, the dual carriageway and the railway line were not part of EG's brief <p>IF provided a brief summary of the technical feasibility study –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 options for Union Terrace Gardens were considered in the context of which would most improve Aberdeen City Centre. The options were 1. Full deck 2. Partial deck 3. Enhancement of the existing gardens • Report began by reviewing previous studies, Gordon Cullen 1985, Aberdeen Beyond 2000 and the Millennium Project • Study then assessed the challenges Aberdeen City Centre currently faces • Previous studies attempted to 'open up' Belmont Street but didn't address connectivity or the technical feasibility required to do so • Aberdeen has the highest income per head of population compared to other Scottish cities but the poorest quality of Public Realm` • IF listed the benefits any scheme need to provide (HFM report P 4), these were used as a check list against the viability of the three options • IF ran through the report and the findings – Partial and enhancing the existing gardens resolved some issues but not all, fully decked scheme was the only option that answered all the points in the check list <p>DL confirmed that the ACSEF board had reviewed the report and concluded earlier in the year that it wished to progress options 1 & 2.</p>	
3.	Questions	
	<p>Having reviewed the background and context DL suggested answering question 2 first as this seemed a more logical to address the existing proposal and gardens before discussing the potential methods of integrating an iconic contemporary arts centre into the larger scheme. EG & IF agreed.</p> <p><i>Question 2</i></p> <p><i>Within the parameters of the major scheme (see attached document), how much of the existing Gardens and how much of the existing Peacock Visual Arts Contemporary Arts Centre design can be retained.</i></p>	

Appendix 2, Section 3 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

<p>Following an in depth and lengthy discussion between IF and EG the conclusion was reached that within the parameters of the major scheme the design currently proposed by EG could not be integrated without the design completely losing its integrity. The building was designed for that specific location within the gardens to complement the topography of the site. If there are no gardens there is no design as the design is based on the contours of the gardens and network of pathways.</p> <p>EG when on to suggest that if the parameters of the larger scheme were reinterpreted and the gardens retained then the existing design could be included in the larger scheme.</p> <p>EG made a presentation to support this suggestion, key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aberdeen is too small for such a large space with a regional, population of only 400,000 people• Underground connections can often become flash points for anti –social behaviour/graffiti/crime• Larger scheme ‘erases’ Union Terrace Gardens• A village has a town square; cosmopolitan cities have several centres.• EG proposed decking over the road/railway from the Belmont Street side line as Gordon Cullen suggested and retaining Union Terrace Gardens (attached for reference Brisac scheme with walkway/NO walkway)• He suggested that Union Terrace could become a pedestrian zone EG then tabled several models of schemes that partially decked over the dual carriageway/railway line and retained the gardens. One model included a bridge/walkway between Union Terrace and Belmont Street <p>IF suggested that the models proposed by EG did not answer all the parameters in the brief - specifically connectivity, walk on walk off access from all 4 sides and open space for major public gatherings.</p> <p>EG disagreed suggesting that the existing grassed area at below HMT in the gardens could host major public gatherings, IF disagreed.</p> <p>Further discussion followed, however the conclusion initially reached remained unchanged. For EG’s design to ‘work’ a large proportion of the gardens needs to be retained and integration could only be achieved by altering the parameters. In all the Brisac Gonzalez proposals it was assumed that the dual carriageway and railroad tracks would be covered.</p> <p>The discussion then moved on to discuss question 1.</p> <p><i>Question 1</i></p>	
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Appendix 2, Section 3 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

	<p><i>Investigate possible methods of integrating an iconic contemporary arts centre within the major scheme for Union Terrace Gardens/Denburn Valley.</i></p> <p>DL asked EG to accept, for the purposes of answering the question, that a fully decked scheme would proceed. IF tabled a drawing of the proposed major scheme and asked EG to state where he would ideally locate an iconic contemporary arts centre if delivery/ownership issues were not a concern.</p> <p>EG ranked his preferred locations as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Triple Kirks – location has good natural light and is completely above ground, the prominent location that could support a ‘significant/iconic’ building connected to the City Square, benefits from high footfall due to a site opposite Art Museum, the RGU student union, and HMT within Aberdeen’s ‘arts hub’ 2. Rear of Belmont Street (behind Belmont Cinema) – South facing position offers high levels of natural light, good location that could support a ‘significant/iconic’ building, high levels of footfall from Belmont Street, close to ‘arts hub’ 3. North East Corner currently home to William Wallace statue – Above ground prominent location that that could support a ‘significant/iconic’ building, high levels of footfall opposite HMT and close to Art Gallery <p>EG stressed that a building above ground, will be the best solution as it will maximise access and daylight.</p>	
4.	<p>Other potential integration proposals</p>	
	<p>IF tabled several interim drawings from the feasibility study. One drawing in particular showed a marked similarity to the existing Peacock building (attached for reference, interim drawing 1&2). EG was less opposed to this proposal as the building was more iconic; however he was still concerned that any contemporary arts centre incorporated into this scheme would be partially below ground.</p> <p>IF and DH stated that this was not a final design, simply a visual representation of what a alternative scheme still incorporating all the parameters of the larger scheme could look like.</p> <p>DH stated that in this proposal there is potentially 12m of height above ground due to the drop in level from Union Terrace to Belmont Street. This would allowing 2-3 storeys, all of which could have natural light coming in from several sides.</p>	
5.	<p>Conclusion</p>	
	<p>The meeting concluded by DL summarising the discussion and agreeing to circulate the note to both architects prior to it being forwarded to the Steering Group.</p> <p>In summary, on the basis of the parameters not being re-interpreted the existing Brisac Gonzalez scheme in its landscape setting could not be</p>	

Appendix 2, Section 3 – Parameters from Sir Ian Wood

	<p>incorporated into the major scheme.</p> <p>However, leaving aside a difference of opinion over the actual site of an arts centre within the major scheme, the conceptual drawings of the major scheme could be amended to show a more significant space for a contemporary arts centre that resonated with the Brisac Gonzalez design, and which could ultimately be the centrepiece of a design competition for the major scheme.</p>	
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Appendix 3 – History of Committee Decisions

- 1.1 Peacock Visual Arts (PVA) Ltd was granted detailed planning permission by Aberdeen City Council (Ref: A7/1415) on 5th March 2008 for a new public Centre for Contemporary Arts of approximately 3,200 m² following approval subject to conditions by Members of the Planning Committee of 6th December 2007 (Article 2 refers). The proposed facility will incorporate Peacock Visual Arts Ltd and incorporate accommodation and facilities for Aberdeen City Council's Arts Development and Education teams in addition to dance space facilities for CityMoves.
- 1.2 Resources Management Committee of 30th September 2008 (Article 37 refers) approved a capped £3million capital grant by Aberdeen City Council to the Peacock Visual Arts Northern Light contemporary arts centre project, thereby matching a grant allocation of £4.3m from the Scottish Arts Council and a £2m grant from Scottish Enterprise (subsequently transferred to Aberdeen City Council's control as part of The Scottish Government's realignment of Scottish Enterprise's strategic role).
- 1.3 As outlined in a report to Council of 17th December 2008 (Article 24 refers) by the Corporate Director for Strategic Leadership, Sir Ian Wood made public on 11th November 2008 his offer of up to £50m towards a proposal to re-develop Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley - incorporating the adjacent railway line and Denburn dual carriageway.
- 1.4 In response Scottish Enterprise, on behalf of Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF), appointed Halliday Fraser Munro (HFM) to undertake a technical appraisal and feasibility study. Based on the outcome of the study, the ACSEF Board recommended to ACSEF partners, including Aberdeen City Council that the project be progressed to the next development stage.
- 1.5 Following receipt of a report from the Corporate Director of Strategic Leadership, Elected Members of Aberdeen City Council's Policy & Strategy Committee (9th June 2009, Article 16 refers) resolved to note the outcome of the feasibility study and agree that the project proceed to the next stage, without prejudice to the determination of any future planning applications.
- 1.6 Elected Members of the Resources Management Committee (16th June 2009, Article 6 refers) approved revenue spend of £1,520 per month for PVA campaign team costs over a 9 month period, plus a one-off capital payment of £1,584 for the Northern Light Project to ensure the project continued to be supported until December 2009. Elected Members of the Finance & Resources Committee (28th January 2010, Article 18 refers) resolved to continue the Council's support of £3,040 per month

to the end of May 2010, pending the outcome of the City Square public consultation.

Union Terrace Gardens & Denburn Valley Development

Tax Increment Finance Feasibility Study: Phase A Final Report

6th May 2010

DRAFT

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 

CBRE
CB RICHARD ELLIS

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1.1 Introduction

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (“PwC”), with the support of CB Richard Ellis (“CBRE”), have been appointed by Scottish Enterprise (“SE”) to undertake a feasibility study into the potential role of Tax Increment Finance (“TIF”) in meeting the likely funding gap for the proposed City Square Project at Union Terrace Gardens (“the Project”), Aberdeen.

TIF is a way for the public sector to fund investment in infrastructure, to drive regeneration and unlock economic growth, by borrowing against the future **additional** tax revenues which the infrastructure investment unlocks. In simple terms “paying for growth with growth”.

The key principals and stages of TIF can be summarised as follows:

1. Identification of an area which is in need of regeneration, suffering from market failure or lack of private sector investment;
2. Public sector intervention in terms of “enabling infrastructure” (e.g. roads, public transport, public realm) is identified which would kick-start or enable regeneration;
3. Assessment of the gross incremental public sector revenues that could be unlocked by delivering the infrastructure (e.g. tax income from new developments in the areas benefiting from the infrastructure);
4. Economic impact assessment assesses the net additionality of the incremental public sector revenues identified (i.e. consideration of factors such as displacement of existing activities from elsewhere in the area and levels of development that ‘would have happened anyway’);
5. Public sector borrows to invest in the enabling infrastructure;
6. Private sector investment results, bringing increased economic activity, and therefore taxation revenues, to the area (and potentially other revenues e.g. transport fares, car park charges);
7. The public sector authority is able to keep the incremental (additional) tax revenue; and,
8. The increase in tax revenues is used by the public sector to service and repay the initial debt incurred to finance the enabling infrastructure.

This discussion paper represents an initial summary of the findings of Phase A of our study which comprises:

- An initial assessment by property specialists CBRE of the gross incremental revenues that could be unlocked by the Project;
- Financial modelling by PwC of the potential level of debt that such gross incremental revenues could support;
- Consideration of the ability of this level of debt to finance the level of infrastructure investment required; and
- Estimation of the minimum level of net additionality that would be required to repay the debt over a 25 year period.

It should be noted that a full economic impact assessment is proposed as part of future phases of work but is outwith the scope of this report.

1.2 Context

The Project envisages the creation of a new civic space in the heart of Aberdeen city centre by raising Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley to the surrounding street level and covering over the existing railway line and dual carriageway. The expectation is that this new public space will enhance the appeal of Aberdeen as a commercial and business centre and will help secure the regeneration of Union Street and the wider city centre. It is intended to act as the first step to a phased programme of redevelopment that will re-position Aberdeen post-oil as a sustainable and attractive investment location.

Total project costs are expected to be up to £140m (excluding indexation) depending on the scheme chosen; for example, the exclusion of the car parking element is expected to reduce project costs by around £20m. Sir Ian Wood has indicated to Scottish Enterprise that he has a figure of up to £50m available to invest in the Project however a significant funding gap would remain. Scottish Enterprise have asked us to consider a range of scenarios in relation to the funding gap requiring to be filled by a potential TIF mechanism and these are summarised at Table 1.2.1 below¹.

Table 1.2.1 – Funding Gap Scenarios (Real values as at 01 April 2010)

Item	Scenario			
	A	B	C	D
Base Construction Costs ²	£140,000,000	£140,000,000	£140,000,000	£140,000,000
Cost Reduction for Exclusion of Car Park	(£20,000,000)	(£20,000,000)	-	(£20,000,000)
Contribution from Sir Ian Wood	(£50,000,000)	(£50,000,000)	(£50,000,000)	-
Other Private Sector Contributions	(£20,000,000)	-	-	-
Total Funding Gap	£50,000,000	£70,000,000	£90,000,000	£120,000,000

Successful delivery of the Project is expected to have a positive impact on levels of development in the surrounding area and across the city centre. As such the Project is expected to enable new development to take place with a subsequent uplift in non-domestic rates, these are considered in more detail at Section 1.3.

1.3 Identifying Gross Uplifts in Development & Revenues

CBRE were instructed to advise on the potential for the Project to generate incremental business rate income. In recent years a number of development opportunities across the city have stalled, been delayed, or face a reduction in scale as a result of the economic downturn and uncertainty about the future of the Aberdeen economy post-oil. Consequently CBRE are of the view that, over a number of years, the Project will act as a catalyst and enable:

- Existing development opportunities to be delivered over a shorter time scale (i.e. allowing stalled projects to restart);
- Existing development opportunities to be delivered to a greater extent and/or quality than currently envisaged and might otherwise have been the case;

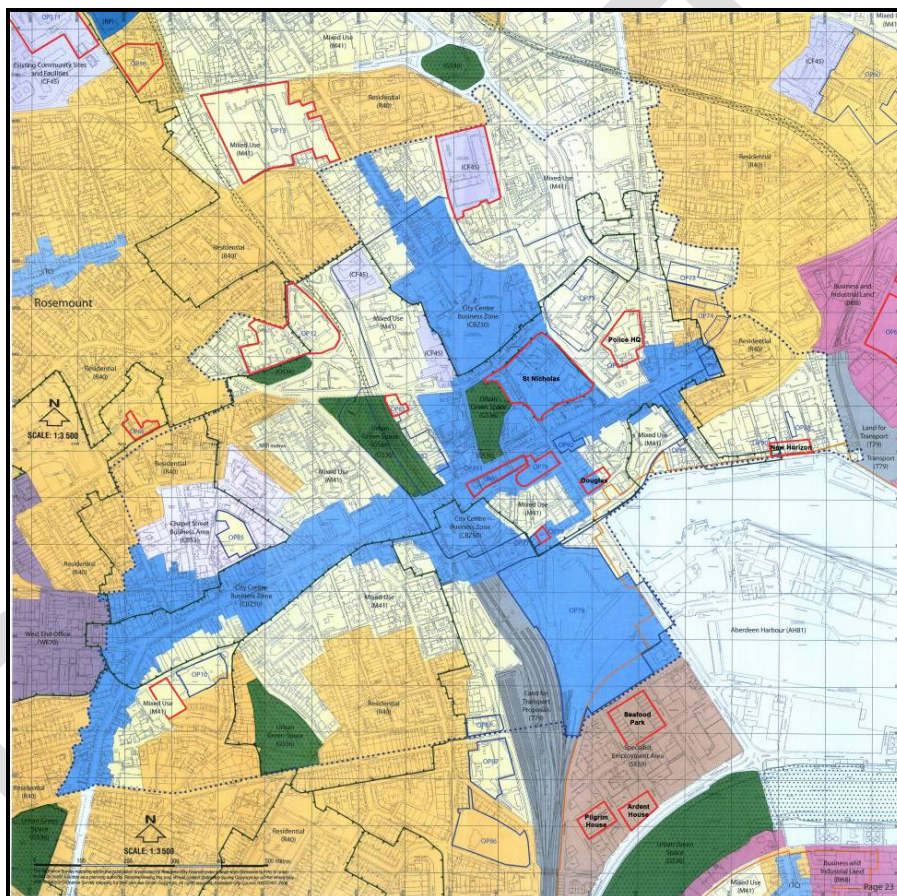
¹ Source: Scottish Enterprise (2010). Davis Langdon (2009), Union Terrace Gardens Technical Appraisal. Note that these figures do not include, at this stage, any land acquisition costs which are still to be finalised.

² This figure does not include the impact of indexation over the duration of the construction timetable. However, the impact of indexation is considered as part of the financial assessment at sections 1.4 & 1.5.

- A number of new development opportunities to come to the market; and,
- Improvements in the quality, attractiveness and value of a number of existing properties in the city centre.

Likely sites are illustrated at Figure 1.3.1 below³ and CBRE have identified in red where they believe levels of new development would most likely arise as a direct result of the Project. Whilst it may reasonably be expected that these developments will be impacted by the Project, the net additionality or likely levels of development uplift attributable to the Project will need to be assessed through primary market research undertaken as part of the proposed economic impact study at Phase B.

Fig 1.3.1 – Indication of Potential Development Sites



The maximum impact is considered to be on those schemes which are in closest proximity to the Project and for this reason CBRE have kept the area of influence to a relatively small “red-line” geographical area. In-turn they believe that the Project will have a catalytic “ripple effect”, in other words the schemes closest to Union Terrace will be developed first and others will follow. As each scheme and area is improved this is expected to act as a catalyst to the development of the next area and so on.

³ Figure is extracted from the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008).

In total approximately 22 new commercial development projects have been identified, many of which are already highlighted in the Aberdeen Local Plan as Opportunity Sites, but also others CBRE are aware of through their knowledge of the local property market. Where an existing planning consent is in place CBRE have used the floor areas and accommodation from these consents. Where there is no existing consent they have referred to the allocation for use in the Local Plan and have estimated the potential net development areas based on other sites of a comparable size in similar locations.

On the basis of the most recent re-valuation exercise⁴, CBRE, as indicated at Table 1.3.1 overleaf, have estimated that there could be a net increase in rateable values of around £17.4m once (and if) all the developments identified are delivered (or £17.1m if the car parking element of the Project is excluded). On the basis of current business rates this could yield additional gross tax revenues of around £7.2m per annum (or £7.1m if the car park is excluded).

Table 1.3.1 – CBRE Estimation of Gross Additional Tax Revenue (per annum)

Estimated incremental increase in Rateable Values as a result of new development (incl UTG car park)	£17,355,640	@ £0.414	UBR =	£7,185,235
Increase in Council Tax Revenue Income				£1,966,163
Incremental increase in Rateable Values of Surrounding Properties	£3,053,575	@ £0.414	UBR =	£1,264,180
TOTAL				£10,415,578
Rental income from scheme				<u>£400,000</u>
TOTAL				<u>£10,815,578</u>

In addition to the impact of new developments CBRE have assessed the potential increase in the rateable value of the properties immediately adjacent to the Project (comprising Union Street, Union Terrace, Belmont Street, Little Belmont Street, Back Wynd, Gaelic Lane and parts of Schoolhill) which are expected to benefit significantly from delivery of the Project and subsequent regeneration of the city centre. It is has been assumed that these properties could experience an average increase in rateable value of between 10% and 20% depending on their proximity to the Project with a small number of properties on Union Terrace increasing in rateable value by up to 50%. CBRE have estimated that the net increase in the rateable value of these properties could be approximately £3.0m yielding, as illustrated at Table 1.3.1 above, approximately £1.2m per annum in business rate revenue.

While business rates are expected to be the primary source of incremental tax revenue the anticipated levels of new development are expected to make the city centre a more attractive location for residential developments also. An uplift in Council Tax receipts from new residential properties could therefore be expected and CBRE has estimated that this could be in the region of

⁴ Note the re-valuation is still subject to appeal and as a result the figures used may be overstated if appeals are successful.

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£2m per annum. Furthermore the Project itself is likely to accommodate rent generating developments which could yield an income of up to £400,000 p.a.⁵ to the Project.

CBRE have held initial discussions with representatives from the Assessor's Department and have agreed appropriate rates and methodologies to be applied in assessing the likely rateable value for the projects identified. CBRE are further awaiting discussions with local planners in order to obtain their views on the profile of development identified. As a result these figures may be subject to some future revision depending on the outcome of these discussions.

1.4 Financial Modelling Assumptions

Table 1.4.1 overleaf summarises the assumptions we have used in undertaking an initial review of potential TIF funding streams. The potential incremental tax revenues are derived from the work undertaken by CBRE and, where required, we have made some further assumptions regarding the timing, build up and indexation of these revenues.

⁵ Note that this currently relates only to rental income from assumed retail/food uses on the site and excludes at this stage any rental income from Peacocks or other Civic Uses.

Table 1.4.1: Key Assumptions for Initial Financial Model

Item	Value	Source/Comment
Project Costs		
Capital Expenditure		
Base cost	£140,000,000	Source: Scottish Enterprise/Davis Langdon.
Base cost reduction for exclusion of car park	£20,000,000	Source: Scottish Enterprise/Davis Langdon. See Table 1.2.1 for applicable scenarios.
Timing	-	Pro rata between 01 Jan 2012 & 31 Dec 2014 (Source: Scottish Enterprise)
Indexation	2% p.a.	PwC have assumed that costs will be subject to annual inflation of 2% in line with the Bank of England's stated target.
Project Revenues		
Contribution from Sir Ian Wood		
Total	£50,000,000	Scottish Enterprise. See Table 1.2.1 for applicable scenarios.
Timing	-	Assumed to be drawn in equal instalments over construction period (i.e. reduces up-front borrowing requirement). Non-indexed.
Other Private Sector Contributions		
Total	£20,000,000	Scottish Enterprise. See Table 1.2.1 for applicable scenarios.
Timing	-	Assumed to be drawn in equal instalments over construction period (i.e. reduces up-front borrowing requirement). Non-indexed.
New Developments		
Net increase in Rateable Value	£17,355,640	CBRE analysis - excluding car park
UBR	£0.414	CBRE analysis
Steady-state Business Rates (per annum)	£7,185,235	Net increase multiplied by UBR. Note that this amount falls to £7,083,805 in scenarios where the car park is excluded.
Timing	-	Project revenues build up to 100% (steady state) on a pro-rata basis over a period of 5 years following completion of the Project
Indexation	2% p.a.	We have assumed that revenues will increase in line with annual inflation of 2% reflecting the Bank of England's stated target.
Uplift in Surrounding Property Rateable Values		
Net increase in Rateable Value	£3,053,575	CBRE analysis
UBR	£0.414	CBRE analysis
Steady-state Business Rates (per annum)	£1,264,180	Net increase multiplied by UBR
Build up to steady-state	-	Project revenues build up to 100% (Steady State) on a pro-rata basis over a period of 5 years following completion of the Project
Indexation	2% p.a.	We have assumed that revenues will increase in line with annual inflation of 2% reflecting the Bank of England's stated target.
Rental Income from Scheme (per annum)		
Rental income	£400,000	CBRE analysis. Assumed to be an income to the Project available for debt repayment.
Build up to steady-state (years)	-	Commencing on project completion
Indexation	2% p.a.	PwC

It is important to note that we have not modelled the contributions from Council Tax income as it has been our experience elsewhere that the sponsoring Council will wish to retain this revenue in order to provide the public services that residents moving into the area will require.

1.5 Financial Modelling Results

On the basis of the above assumptions and the Scenarios outlined at Table 1.2.1 we undertook a review of funding implications in order to understand the:

- Approximate gross incremental tax revenue anticipated as a result of the development over a 25 year period;
- Level of debt that this revenue stream could support;
- Sufficiency of this debt profile to cover the expected funding gap;
- Period of time over which the debt needed to deliver the assets could be repaid if **all** the gross incremental tax revenue were used to service the debt; and
- Level of net additionality that would still allow the debt to be paid off in a period of 25 years (in terms of economic impact after taking factors such as displacement into account).

The results are outlined at Table 1.5.1 below and for each Scenario we have considered a:

- **Gross Case** scenario where 100% of the gross revenues identified are estimated to be net additional; and
- **Breakeven Case** scenario where net additional tax revenues are just sufficient to cover the up front debt required (rental income from the Project is assumed to be 100% additional).

Table 1.5.1: Key Outputs from Initial Financial Model

Outcome	Best Case	Breakeven Case
	Scenario A (real terms £50m funding gap)	
Percentage of revenue assumed to be net additional	100%	41%
Outturn net additional tax revenue over 25 yrs	£252.0m	£110.6m
Level of up-front debt that could be supported over 25 yrs	£129.8m	£57.4m
Repayment period required to cover 100% of funding gap	12 years	25 years
Max percentage of funding gap coverable by TIF over 25 yrs	157%	100%
	Scenario B (real terms £70m funding gap)	
Percentage of revenue assumed to be net additional	100%	57%
Outturn net additional tax revenue over 25 yrs	£252.0m	£149.9m
Level of up-front debt that could be supported over 25 yrs	£129.8m	£77.4m
Repayment period required to cover 100% of funding gap	15.5 years	25 years
Max percentage of funding gap coverable by TIF over 25 yrs	141%	100%

Outcome	Best Case	Breakeven Case
	Scenario C (real terms £90m funding gap)	
Percentage of revenue assumed to be net additional	100%	75%
Outturn net additional tax revenue over 25 yrs	£252.0m	£191.2m
Level of up-front debt that could be supported over 25 yrs	£129.8m	£98.6m
Repayment period required to cover 100% of funding gap	19 years	25 years
Max percentage of funding gap coverable by TIF over 25 yrs	121%	100%
	Scenario D (real terms £120m funding gap)	
Percentage of revenue assumed to be net additional	100%	In this scenario there is insufficient net additional tax revenue to cover 100% of the upfront debt requirement within a 25 year period.
Outturn net additional tax revenue over 25 yrs	£252.0m	
Level of up-front debt that could be supported over 25 yrs	£129.8m	
Repayment period required to cover 100% of funding gap	29.5 years	
Max percentage of funding gap coverable by TIF over 25 yrs	87%	

It is important to stress that the above figures are dependant on the assumptions outlined at section 1.4 above and consequently are subject to more detailed discussion and review.

While we cannot pre-empt the outcome of any economic impact assessment undertaken in relation to the project, based upon other similar studies we have completed previously, our initial view would be that any such assessment would be unlikely to support levels of net additionality much beyond 60%. We therefore suggest that scenarios A & B form the basis of further discussion, development and appraisal until such time as a full economic impact assessment has been completed.

In addition, under each of the four Scenarios there is an early years interest gap where the project revenues are insufficient to meet the interest payments due. For the purposes of our modelling exercise we have assumed that this interest is 'rolled up' into the existing debt and paid off over time. In reality the prudential borrowing framework does not allow for interest to be rolled up in this way and future consideration will therefore have to be given to how this early years interest gap is covered.

1.6 Next Steps

This initial feasibility report suggests that TIF could provide a feasible means of meeting the funding gap associated with the Project. We propose that subsequent phases of this study would:

- refine and further develop the assumptions underlying the Project including the quantum and timing of construction costs and project revenues;
- undertake an economic impact assessment to verify the levels of additionality that can be associated with the Project and to assess whether net additional revenues are still able to meet the level of borrowing required; and,
- begin to explore with stakeholders (including the Council and appropriate Scottish Government officials) the risks and processes that would need to be considered as part of a fully worked-up business case.