

DESIGN PROGRESS

7.0



7.1 MASTERPLAN



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INTRODUCTION

The Masterplan is centred around the re-imagining of the iconic Beach Ballroom, integrated with state-of-the-art Sport and Leisure facilities within an Urban Parkland setting, creating a transformational and vibrant new Beachfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.

The preferred Rope Works concept, inspired by the organic form of the rope weave, unravels into strands to form a hierarchical network of sinuous footpaths and desire routes, extending down from Beach Boulevard and opening up towards the heart of the Masterplan.

The open strands shape the Masterplan framework to create the geometry of the key elements of the proposal, including areas of Arrival, Play, Parkland, Gathering and Shelter. Natural landforms offer protection from the elements, with proposed dune formations providing shelter from North Easterly winds.

The Rope Works concept allows the main desire route from Castlegate to flow down Beach Boulevard and transition from a formal character to more natural, softer and playful forms, as the pathways extend out organically to link the key features of the Masterplan, culminating in a dramatic Boardwalk structure and viewpoint which extends out towards the sea.

The main features of the Rope Works conceptual Masterplan are outlined below:

1. Beach Ballroom
2. Stadium
3. Leisure
4. Boardwalk
5. Ballroom Plaza
6. Secret Garden
7. Amphitheatre
8. Gateway
9. Hub
10. Event Field
11. Play & Games Zone
12. Dunes
13. Beach
14. Esplanade
15. Beach Pavilion
16. Slipway
17. Broadhill
18. The Valley
19. Beach Boulevard
20. Community Gardens
21. New City Square
22. Castlegate



Key Features of Rope Works Masterplan





CONNECTIVITY AND ARRIVAL

Getting to the park and improving connectivity to the City is a key aim of the Masterplan. The below sets out the strategy for arrival and movement to and through the park.

Justice Street, Beach Boulevard and the existing Roundabout

One of the key challenges of improving the connection between the City and the Beach for pedestrians and cyclists is the existing roundabout which has to be negotiated. The roundabout poses a challenge due to several factors. Firstly, it makes crossing the road a longer and more difficult task, and secondly, the large scale and character of the road infrastructure defines the edge of the City centre and therefore diminishes both the legibility and attractiveness of this route.

A key aspiration of the Masterplan is therefore to reconfigure this roundabout to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity between Justice Street and Beach Boulevard and to bring the character of the City centre across the A956, improving both the physical and psychological connectivity.

Traffic surveys and detailed layouts are required to develop and test these proposals further in relation to their possible impacts on the wider network.

Beach Boulevard

Beach Boulevard is approximately 27.5m wide and roughly 67% of this is currently dedicated to vehicles. The Masterplan seeks to redistribute the available space here to increase the allocation for pedestrians, cycles, SUDS, planting and seating whilst maintaining vehicle and public transport access.

This reallocation of space will improve both the ease and the quality of the journey making it more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists and will provide environmental improvements through increased planting and improved water and air quality.

As above, traffic surveys and detailed layouts are required to develop and test these proposals further in relation to their possible impacts on the wider network.

The Esplanade

Another key proposal of the Masterplan is the removal of vehicles (except maintenance/emergency/permitted vehicles) along the Esplanade. This has the advantages of allowing the park to connect directly with the beach and to improve the association between the two.

As above, traffic surveys and detailed layouts are required to develop and test these proposals further in relation to their possible impacts on the wider network.

Arrival

There are several key arrival points to the Queens Links Urban Park, these are:

- Beach Boulevard
- Urquhart Road
- Links Road (from the south)
- Esplanade (from the south)
- Esplanade (from the North)
- Accommodation Road



Arrival points

Pedestrian Movement

As described above improvements to Justice Street, the roundabout and Beach Boulevard aim to provide a direct, attractive and welcoming pedestrian environment from the City centre to the Beach. A key element of this will be the provision of appropriate controlled or priority crossings. Connections and crossings into the park from the other arrival points highlighted should also be a key consideration to ensure safe pedestrian access. Once within the main body of the park there is a connected network of paths that will allow movement and exploration. Depending on location and route the path network has been sized as appropriate to accommodate larger flows of people (for example on a match day) or to provide a more intimate scale for exploring the park.

Cycle movement and parking

Cycle movement is proposed as a bi-directional segregated route on the south side of Beach Boulevard. As with pedestrian connectivity, appropriate controlled or priority crossings should also be provided. The bi-directional arrangement has been considered appropriate for the following reasons:

- There are not a large number of side streets to connect the cycle network to along Beach Boulevard and so some of the disadvantages of Bi-directional versus Uni-directional are not as important here.
- It is more space efficient to provide Bi-directional and therefore increases the amount of space available for other uses.
- The concentration of new landscape and cycle lane on the south side of the street creates the opportunity to form a consolidated area of new public realm of up to 15m wide, giving the feeling of a linear park connecting the City to the Beach.

Once in the park it is proposed to locate cycle parking facilities at each of the key arrival points and destinations within the park. No segregated cycle routes are currently proposed within the park however the central route connecting to the Esplanade in both directions, together with connections to key arrival points are proposed as the cycle network. These routes range in width depending on location.

- Connected pedestrian network
- Primary cycle connections
- Cycle parking



Pedestrian/cycle network

Public Transport

Public transport routes and bus stops will be maintained around the perimeter of the site, however current stops outside the Beach Ballroom and along the Esplanade would require removal.

It is proposed that Beach Boulevard and Links Road will be designed to accommodate bus movements and that a new road is formed along the eastern edge of Broad Hill connecting to Accommodation Road. This route could have a bus gate through the central section to reduce its use by private vehicles.

Detailed discussions with the bus operator around routing and requirements will be required.

● Indicative bus stop locations



Bus stops

Taxi and drop off

Taxis would be able to use the vehicle network to access the perimeter of the site and drop off passengers. A dedicated drop off area is proposed to the north of the Beach Ballroom.

Private vehicles

It is proposed to remove private vehicles from the Queens links and the section of the Esplanade within the site. A new street would be created which connects from Links Road to the Esplanade along the southern edge of the Queens Links.

Three locations have been identified for the provision of accessible parking around the perimeter of the site.

■ Accessible parking locations

■ Taxi drop off

← Notional stadium access points



Vehicle network

Stadium coaches

Coaches for football matches would generally access the stadium from Accommodation Road. For games where player drop off is required to the front of the Stadium controlled access would be permitted to the south of the Beach Ballroom and along the Esplanade.

- ← Notional coach access/egress points
- ← Controlled coach access for player drop off when required



Coach access

Maintenance/ servicing and emergency vehicles

Controlled access into the park would be provided for maintenance, servicing, event set up and emergency vehicles. The primary routes anticipated for this are highlighted on the plan opposite.

- Controlled access points
- Controlled access routes for maintenance etc.
- Space for turning



Maintenance and emergency access



DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Rope Works strategy allows all individual elements of the Masterplan to flow together organically, while offering maximum flexibility for future design development.

The Design Team have explored a number of complementary architectural opportunities within the wider Masterplan area, with the potential for flexible structures to be integrated into the design:

1. Gateway Building
2. Hub Building
3. Beach Pavilion
4. Lightweight Canopy Structures
5. Amphitheatre Structure
6. Boardwalk

These flexible structures could be used for a variety of activities, with the ability to accommodate changes in use as the Masterplan design develops and evolves. Social Enterprise opportunities for supporting local business could be accommodated within a series of object buildings within the Urban Park, located at key junctions within the public realm network, offering opportunity to pause, engage and refresh on the Beachfront journey.

The **Gateway Building** acts as a sculptural landmark offering an enhanced sense of arrival to the Beachfront, with potential for an integrated Information Kiosk housed within a complementary lightweight structure. The **Hub Building** is located in the central plaza area at the heart of the new Urban Park. The flexible footprint could offer the opportunity to support local businesses with a potential Coffee Shop/Ice Cream Kiosk offering light refreshments.

The **Beach Pavilion** offers active frontage to the Beach Esplanade within a flexible structure which could be used for a variety of complementary activities, such as a Surf Village or Sports Clubhouse with integrated storage, retail, Beach Café or Juice Bar. A number of **Lightweight Canopy Structures** are located at key nodal points within the Urban Park, offering shelter, informal social and seating areas, with opportunities for integrated PV panels for solar energy collection.

The **Amphitheatre** offers a flexible external events space, with an integrated lightweight canopy structure which ties in with the sculptural roof forms of the wider Masterplan. This structure incorporates accessible facilities in close proximity to accessible parking. The **Boardwalk** structure follows the sinuous route of the Rope Works, flowing down from Beach Boulevard through the heart of the Masterplan and extending out into the sea, creating opportunity for a sculptural beacon with feature lighting at the focal view point. The elegant structure of the Boardwalk wraps round to tie in with the integrated Sports & Leisure complex.

The conceptual Masterplan encourages a common architectural language applied across all development opportunities within the wider Parkland area, creating a cohesive scheme that has been considered and designed as a whole. A palette of durable and sustainable natural materials will be considered, with the use of locally sourced timber species native to Aberdeen, where appropriate.



Architectural Development Opportunities

OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Spatial Hierarchy

The Masterplan has been developed to provide a clear and legible spatial hierarchy across the site. This responds to the access and key nodal points within the site to ensure that there are appropriate gathering and meeting spaces in key locations. Through this spatial hierarchy a series of spaces of different scales, character and uses has been developed.

Character

The open spaces within the Masterplan have been developed with the aim of creating different characters and opportunities for people to enjoy the site. Whether this be a relaxing walk along the promenade surrounded by grasses waving in the breeze on the proposed dune landforms, a visit to the vibrant, colourful and exciting play park or arriving at the grand and civic Beach Ballroom Plaza; the park will provide a variety of characters and experiences.

The character of the park will also change from day to day and at different times of year. Events or match days will change the character of some spaces, particularly spaces such as the Central Square, Beach Ballroom Plaza and Events field.



THE SPACES

The Event Field

A large flexible space suitable for an informal kickabout, picnic or large event.

The Amphitheatre

A more intimate outdoor venue, suitable for music, theatre, outdoor cinema or screenings.

Beach Ballroom Plaza

A grand and civic setting for the Beach Ballroom

Central Square

A key nodal point within the site, a gathering and meeting point.

Secret Garden

A hidden gem, providing opportunities for Beach Ballroom events to spill outside.

Arrival Squares

Spaces at key arrival and nodal points within the park, each with a unique character and feel.

Play and games zone

A large section of the park incorporating formal play and games

Esplanade

The esplanade to the front of the Stadium, modified to become less linear and to increase opportunities to sit and linger.

The Dunes

Landform providing shelter and spacial definition with a continuation of the Esplanade on a new alignment.

The Beachfront

A more gradual and accessible connection to the beach with improved visual connections.

The Boardwalk

A journey out to sea providing a new perspective of the coastline.

The Valley

The space between Broad Hill and the Stadium. This area will break down into three distinct sections, south, central and north. At the south and north the landform will be modified to provide access to the podium level of the stadium whilst the central section will remain lower to provide access to level 0 and a location for outside broadcast.

Broad Hill

Broad Hill will remain with improvements to paths and additional planting and interventions. Opportunities to link the hill to the podium level of the stadium are being explored, as well as feature 'lookout' space.



LANDFORM AND TOPOGRAPHY

Within the Masterplan it is proposed to generally work with the existing topography of the site however to make specific interventions in landform in some locations to achieve the following aims:

Micro-climate

A key aim of proposed landform is to create shelter and help improve the micro-climate of spaces across the site, increasing the comfort of visitors and increasing dwell time.

Accessibility

Another key aim of the manipulation of levels across the Masterplan is to achieve accessible routes. The two key areas where this applies are the proposed modifications to the line of the sea defences and access to the stadium podium from the 'valley' below Broad Hill. Within the main body of the park the sea defences have been pulled back into the site, allowing a more gradual gradient and approach to the beach from the park. Access to the podium level from the 'valley' below broad hill will also include landform modifications which will allow the ground to build up to the stadium podium level.

Definition of spaces

Landform will be used to help define and enclose spaces within the park, creating 'rooms' of different sizes which can accommodate the various programs of use.

Exploration, discovery and play

The introduction of landform has been designed with the intention of increasing the opportunities for exploration and discovery within the park. The landforms will also be developed so that these can contribute to the play value of the site.

Framing of views

The use of landform will be developed to frame and create views. This could be creating choreographed views to the sea from the esplanade level in the park, framing the view of the Beach Ballroom, adding extra drama to the view out along the pier or simply setting up vistas to sculptures or interventions within the park.

Connection to the beach

The modification of levels to allow better access to the beach has already been mentioned however the aim of modifying the levels here is also to allow a better visual connection between the park and the beach.

Detailed levels information has not yet been developed and to undertake this a topographic survey of the site will be required. Equally proposed alterations to the sea defences will require further exploration, discussion and study.





WORKING WITH NATURE

We are living in a time where public awareness of our natural environment is heightened like never before – and so it should be. Climate change is a very real threat to our planet. Around the world this is no more acute than in our coastal regions.

Aberdeen needs to lead by example.

The design of the overall beach Masterplan looks to harness the natural environment and enhance it. The aim of this is multiple and interlinked just like nature itself.

Firstly, we need to work with coastal influence in a more harmonious way, using natural systems to protect the beach area while allowing people to enjoy the unique environment.

Secondly, we need to create shelter and develop micro-climates that not only offer usable spaces but create conditions for a more naturally diverse landscape, allowing new species to colonise and enhance biodiversity. Shelter and adaptive micro-climates can be formed by natural topography and landform (much like the Hill does now), and by creating the right conditions for tree planting and in particular afforestation by pioneer species. As a whole for the betterment of our environment we need to plant more trees. The plan opposite highlights the planting structure proposed which will help create this micro-climate.

With enhanced landscape and increased biodiversity, we can start to respond to one of the toughest challenges we have in connection to our cities and development and that is flooding and drainage. With the ‘working with nature’ approach we can truly integrate sustainable drainage systems that become part of the landscape. ‘Working with nature’ will showcase the beachfront Masterplan as a working example of how to work harmoniously with our environment.



Planting for pollinators



Photograph by Göran Ekeberg, Addlight AB.
(Image courtesy of Karavan landskapsarkiter)



Sustainable drainage



Enhanced Natural Structure

