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# **Aberdeen Beachfront Masterplan**

Strategic Outline Case

February 2022



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# Executive summary

The contents of this report have been largely reproduced from Stantec Strategic Case Framework Report Ref. 332010630 Rev 4 dated November 2021 prepared for Aberdeen City Council. This information has been reproduced with the permission of Aberdeen City Council. This report reflects the February 2022 design team masterplan, associated costs, and Outline Business Case work undertaken by Mott MacDonald during the period since the Stantec Report was issued in November 2021.

## Introduction

The vision and objectives for improving the Beachfront and the associated facilities have been developed by the Council. This was initially developed and set out in the 2015 Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP). The CCMP is a regeneration blueprint that is transforming the city centre while conserving its proud heritage. Eight objectives feed through the masterplan: to change perceptions, grow the city centre employment base, introduce a metropolitan outlook, create a living city for everyone, made in Aberdeen, reveal the waterfronts, become technologically advanced and environmentally responsible, and be culturally distinctive. In all the Council has 50 projects that range from delivering enhanced civic space to helping support exciting new events like the Great Aberdeen Run. The City Centre Masterplan is targeted at making Aberdeen an even better place to live, work, visit and do business. This paper sets out the business case for proposed developments at Beachfront.

## Project Principles and Objectives

The core principles that form the basis for the Beach Masterplan proposals and embody the essence of the initiative for the Beachfront regeneration are:

- The importance of the re-imagined Beach Ballroom, including a desire to return it to its former glory when it was known as the 'People's Ballroom'. This needs to recognise the buildings heritage and historic significance whilst equipping it for the future as a modern events venue.
- The potential to share / link facilities associated with the new Stadium and Leisure facilities to support joint funding with the Stadium Anchor tenant and realise economies of scale.
- A desire for a dynamic waterfront making the most of the Beach Boulevard and considering support facilities such as changing accommodation / beach huts and a potential pier structure.
- Excellent, high quality public realm.
- Leisure activities that are inclusive and accessible to all income groups that may visit the Beachfront.
- Access and Connectivity between the Beachfront and City Centre.
- Infrastructure, including traffic management that reduces the impact of the existing road network to promote alternative forms of travel, including cycling, whilst improving public realm.
- Co-ordination with potential flood and/or sea defence works planned for the area.

The SMART objectives of the beachfront project are as follows:

Objective	SMART performance measure
Increased footfall and revenue at the Beach Ballroom and other Beach Leisure Facilities	Footfall and revenue increases
Creation of free public realm and open park/play space	In line with Planning policy
Increased journeys by walking and cycling activity	38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026
Reduction in car journeys per annum	In line with Net Zero policy
Reduction in CO2 emissions	In line with Net Zero policy
Creation of Construction jobs over the build period	60+ new Construction jobs
Creation of new jobs directly associated with new Leisure offering at the Beach	New leisure jobs
Materials sourced from the local area	Target 70% use of local SMEs
Contractors labour from the local area	70% local labour

## Strategic case

The project aligns with the strategic vision for the city set out in the City Centre Masterplan and Beachfront Masterplan, and to the ambitions for a post-covid economy identified in the Aberdeen Economic Policy Panel's report. It also supports the ambitions of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan to create a distinctive, welcoming, safe & pleasant, easy to get to & move around, adaptable, and resource efficient city.

## Potential Economic Impacts

The proposed interventions in Aberdeen's City Centre and Beachfront have the potential to change the way that current and potential future residents and visitors experience and view the city. They can deliver a series of event and experience spaces that can give people reasons to visit the areas, and to stay in the area for longer than they would otherwise. This in turn can serve as a catalyst to increase visitor spend in the City Centre's existing retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, and could encourage more people to live in and invest in the city.

Capital investment to deliver the infrastructure will also support short-term construction employment and associated gross value added (GVA), while the enhancements made to the public realm will support increased levels of active travel, such as walking and cycling, which promote healthier lifestyles and lower levels of emissions. These will have health and wellbeing benefits to those who choose active travel but will also benefit the entire community through the overall reduction in pollution and emissions.

As the investment proposition develops, the individual projects within the City Centre programme will be subject to their own business cases. At this stage, a more comprehensive and rigorous quantitative assessment of project benefits will be possible as there will be more clarity and robustness about project costs, private sector co-funding opportunities and timescales.

## Cost of delivery

Developing capital costs with any degree of accuracy at this stage has proved challenging with the current difficulties with supply chains, energy costs, and construction inflation. The

estimated capital cost of delivery will continue to be developed during the next stage and presented as part of the FBC in June 2022 following engagement with the market.

Aberdeen City Council has agreed a capital programme plan of £214m for 2021/22, including an investment of £150m to regenerate the city centre and link it to the beach area. It is anticipated that a proportion of project funding will be drawn from that £150m commitment to the City Centre and Beach regeneration over the period 2021-26 (evidenced in the decisions related to the Council's 2021-22 budget report). The Council will continue to seek contributions from other stakeholders and partners, including through future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund and through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in relation to capital and future operational spend requirements of these projects.

No assessment has yet been undertaken around project revenue costs and delivery models, however these will be considered at the Outline Business Case stage.

The project is expected to be procured through the Hub model, and conversations are still taking place to establish the commercial & operation delivery models for the proposed interventions.

### Commercial & Management Approach

Hub North Scotland Ltd (HNSL) will deliver the Beachfront projects and are supported by an established and experienced project team and professional property consultants.

A comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan is in the process of being developed by the PMO for agreement with the Council Communications Team. Once this has been prepared in draft format, it will be shared and reviewed with Council Team members and the Council Communications Team. Stakeholder engagement on all projects is an important facet of the work through the development of the various feasibility stages and beyond.



# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 This Strategic Outline Case is seeking to provide justification for the investment required to deliver the Beachfront Masterplan. The investment would be committed from the Non-housing Capital Programme.
- 1.1.2 This project forms a key part of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) and aligns with the Aberdeen Economic Policy Panel Report (November 2020) and other key strategic ACC documents including the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). The CCMP was initially developed and set out in 2015 then revised and updated during a workshop in November 2021. The update was driven by political expectation for a 'refresh' of the 2015 CCMP and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, supporting the continued diversification from oil and gas-based industries to green infrastructure, emerging technologies, and renewables, as well as optimising residual off-shore opportunities.
- 1.1.3 This Business Case sets out the vision and rationale for a programme of investment into projects into the Beachfront area as part of the Beachfront Masterplan, including:
- New Play Park
  - Events Area
  - Enhanced Public Realm
  - Energy Centre
  - Beach Boulevard

## 1.2 Approach

- 1.2.1 This Business Case Framework aligns with HM Treasury's Five Case Model approach, as outlined in the HM Treasury Green Book to provide decision makers and stakeholders with a proven framework for structured thinking and assurances.
- 1.2.2 In following the Five Case Model, this document will establish the following:
- **Strategic fit** – this section will focus on business/project planning and set out a compelling case for change and rationale for investment
  - **Value** – this section will detail the social value to the community and stakeholders through the selection of the optimal combination of projects and related activities
  - **Viability** – This section will examine procurement and confirm that the programme will be an attractive opportunity to delivery partners and that there is sufficient supply side capacity to deliver the projects
  - **Affordability** – This section will outline the funding arrangements and whole life costs of the programme to confirm that the proposed interventions will be affordable within identified funding commitments and budgets

- **Deliverability** – this section will outline the governance and management arrangements for the programme to demonstrate the experience and capability of the team.

1.2.3 As the investment proposition is developed and refined at later stages, each project will be the subject of a dedicated business case (Options Appraisal, Outline Business Case and Full Business Case)

## 1.3 Structure

1.3.1 The remaining sections of this Strategic Business Case will be as follows:

- Section 2 explains Aberdeen City Council's City Vision and the context within which the project are being delivered
- Section 3 introduces the projects in the Beachfront and provides detail on the investments sought
- Section 4 sets out the strategic case for the proposed investment, including how it aligns with existing Council vision, objectives and strategy, the evidence of market failure, and details of why it has been identified as the preferred way forward, and the level of economic benefit it is expected to bring
- Section 5 explores issues around project deliverability, including how it will be funded, how financial self-sustainability can be secured, how it will be procured, and how it will be managed.

## 2 Aberdeen City Council Vision

### 2.1 Strategic Concept

- 2.1.1 The vision and objectives for improving the Beachfront and the associated facilities have been developed by the Council. This was initially developed and set out in the 2015 Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP). The CCMP is a regeneration blueprint that is transforming the city centre while conserving its proud heritage. Eight objectives feed through the masterplan: to change perceptions, grow the city centre employment base, introduce a metropolitan outlook, create a living city for everyone, made in Aberdeen, reveal the waterfronts, become technologically advanced and environmentally responsible, and be culturally distinctive. The City Centre Masterplan is targeted at making Aberdeen an even better place to live, work, visit and do business.
- 2.1.2 The review of the CCMP builds on the original masterplan, ensuring that the proposals remain appropriate in a post Covid-19 landscape, expanding the area of focus in exploiting opportunities to better connect Aberdeen's City Centre and Beachfront, and identifying a number of priority interventions with a focus on the quality of place and ability to stimulate a green economic recovery and improve the economic performance of the city.
- 2.1.3 The Beachfront Masterplan, which is now part of the overall CCMP, presents a unique opportunity to create a transformational new waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen. The principle of improving access to both formal and informal leisure and recreational offer along the City's Beachfront has been supported by national and strategic planning and associated policy for a number of years.

### 2.2 Core Principles

- 2.2.1 The core principles that form the basis for the Beach Masterplan proposals and embody the essence of the initiative for the Beachfront regeneration are:
- The importance of the re-imagined Beach Ballroom, including a desire to return it to its former glory when it was known as the 'People's Ballroom'. This needs to recognise the buildings heritage and historic significance whilst equipping it for the future as a modern events venue.
  - The potential to share / link facilities associated with the new Stadium and Leisure facilities to support joint funding with the Stadium Anchor tenant and realise economies of scale.
  - A desire for a dynamic waterfront making the most of the Beach Boulevard and considering support facilities such as changing accommodation / beach huts and a potential pier structure.
  - Excellent, high quality public realm.
  - Leisure activities that are inclusive and accessible to all income groups that may visit the Beachfront.
  - Access and Connectivity between the Beachfront and City Centre.
  - Infrastructure, including traffic management that reduces the impact of the existing road network to promote alternative forms of travel, including cycling, whilst improving public realm.
  - Co-ordination with potential flood and/or sea defence works planned for the area.

## 2.3 The Post Covid City

- 2.3.1 Across the UK, cities have been adjusting their strategic approach to development and economic growth to ensure that they are fit for a post-Covid world, and Aberdeen is no different.
- 2.3.2 Aberdeen City Council, business leaders and city stakeholders recognise the need to plan for the future of the city and ensure sustainable and clean economic growth.
- 2.3.3 In November 2020, The Aberdeen Economic Policy Panel set out a series of recommendations to support a post-Covid recovery, including the development of a Net Zero Vision focused on transport & mobility; circular economy, hydrogen and the built environment; the implementation of a new financial strategy, and the implementation of the Council's socio-economic rescue plan.

## 2.4 Objectives

- 2.4.1 The proposed objectives of the CCMP review are:
- To facilitate the city's short term economic recovery from the shock created by Covid-19. This will be achieved through re-opening of existing CCMP projects. The acceleration of the completion of existing projects under construction and continued exploration of how regulatory powers can be used to facilitate business investment in the city
  - To capitalise on the city's new and developing tourism and cultural attractions and supporting exhibition and events programmes
  - To build on existing mechanisms for engaging with the public and businesses in the short-, medium-, and long-term changes required to maintain sustainable economic growth
  - To consider the implications on City Centre footfall as a result of the significant changes to multi-channel retail offer beyond 'physical presence' alone, and the anticipated increased levels of sustained hybrid working by employers going forward
  - To consider how the policy environment and regulatory system across planning, compulsory purchase and licensing can facilitate the re-purposing of buildings to enable increased City Centre living and flexibility in how businesses in the hospitality or food & drink sectors operate
  - To integrate environmental thinking (from a place and economy perspective) into the prioritisation of planning of the next wave of CCMP projects over the medium and long term
  - To integrate SMART city thinking more deliberately within the prioritisation and planning of future CCMP projects over the medium and long term
  - Exploiting the varied waterscapes of Aberdeen city centre, creating attractive settings and opportunities for interest and activity.

## 2.5 Place Principles

- 2.5.1 The Aberdeen Beachfront Masterplan presents an exciting opportunity to re-envision the Beachfront and create a new waterfront destination which connects back to the centre of the city.
- 2.5.2 In its current form the Beachfront lacks a clear sense of place and character and is underutilised. The approach from Beach Boulevard is mundane and there is no clear focal point for activity to cluster around.

2.5.3 The creation of a transformational new waterfront destination will rely on progressive and forward-thinking design complimented by a sympathetic understanding of the site's heritage. In combination, the new design and the celebration of heritage will enhance the sense of place. The aspiration for the Beachfront Masterplan is to create a connected, world-class waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.

2.5.4 The Beachfront has a unique relationship with the City Centre by virtue of its proximity, and all key elements of the wider CCMP are able to be reached within 15 minutes by foot. By focusing on enhancing footpaths, cycleways, and desire routes, the Beachfront Masterplan can help create an environment which is designed for people rather than vehicles, supporting greater levels of activity and engagement within the area.

2.5.5 The Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) sets out six qualities which contribute to successful placemaking. These qualities are summarised below:

- **Distinctive** – Development which: responds to the site context and is designed with due consideration to both site features and the surrounding local environment; is well planned with high quality design, materials, and craftsmanship; reinforces established patterns of development; reflects local styles and urban forms; retains and re-uses built or natural assets as features of the site; protects and enhances the city's important views and creates new views; complements local features;
- **Welcoming** – development which: is well detailed, where materials, colour, texture and proportion are considered; creates an attractive and defined entrance to the development or local area; is easy to navigate through a well ordered and inclusive layout with a hierarchy for transportation and recreation; has an attractive and active street frontage; includes appropriate signage and distinctive lighting to improve safety and highlight attractive buildings
- **Safe and pleasant** – development which: is design with pedestrian movement as the priority; avoids unacceptable impacts on adjoining uses; enables natural surveillance of public spaces through active frontages and does not create spaces which are unsafe or likely to encourage or facilitate crime; distinguishes between private and public spaces; is inclusive in its design; incorporates appropriate lighting; is not an unacceptable risk of flooding or increases flood risk elsewhere
- **Easy to get to / move around** – development which: prioritises sustainable and active travel; provides well connected links within the development and connects to adjacent existing, and proposed, core path networks and public transport facilities; places the movement of pedestrians and cyclists above motor vehicles; provides cycle and motor bike storage facilities;
- **Adaptable** – development which: is constructed in a manner which is suitable for a range of future uses; is designed to accommodate future internal alteration to sustain reconfiguration as required by the needs of future occupiers; contains a mix of building tenures, densities and typologies; supports climate change mitigation and adaption
- **Resource efficient** – development which: reuses existing buildings and brownfield sites; maximises efficiency of the use of resource through natural or technological means such as low or zero carbon energy-generating technologies; increases densification and enables sharing of infrastructure and amenities with adjacent sites; minimises energy use and loss; makes use of available sources of heat and power; uses building materials from local or sustainable sources; creates higher density in town centres and areas with convenient access to good public transport services; provides space for the separation, storage, and efficient collection of recycling and waste.

2.5.6 All development is expected to contribute towards creating successful places.

## 2.6 Inclusive City

- 2.6.1 An inclusive city is one where people choose to live, to shop, and to spend their free time. An inclusive city has quality housing, good shopping, and an exciting atmosphere which acts as a draw to both residents and visitors.
- 2.6.2 The Aberdeen Community Planning Board approved a refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan in summer 2021 (LOIP) 2016-26. At the core of this is a collective vision “A place where all people can prosper“. The LOIP sets out the means of achieving this with focus being that everyone in the city should enjoy the same opportunities to flourish as an individual.
- 2.6.3 The LOIP reflects the desire to help all people, families, businesses and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect. To achieve this vision, the Community Planning Board is committed to tackling the issues that exist in Aberdeen’s society which prevent equal opportunity for all to lead a happy and fulfilling life.
- 2.6.4 Greenspace is important for a range of reasons, including health and wellbeing, social interaction, and environmental protection. While Aberdeen has a diverse mix of greenspace for people and wildlife, the types, quantities, quality and accessibility of these are not evenly distributed across the city.
- 2.6.5 Aberdeen citizens are engaged in their community. In City Voice 44 (2020) 55.8% of respondents reported that they would like to be involved in decisions which affect their community, however only 26% indicated that they felt they knew how to be involved. Despite the uncertainty expressed by some, Aberdeen boasts a high number of residents who volunteer in the city. In response to Covid-19, over 7,000 volunteers were recruited between March and July 2020, in addition to the 80,000 people already engaged in some form of volunteering.

## 2.7 Digital & Smart Cities

- 2.7.1 The Aberdeen City Region is a global leader in research, development and innovation. It is increasingly seen as a hub for digital & technology expertise, attracted by the opportunity to work alongside world renowned energy sector organisations who are based in the area. In 2019 there were 6,120 people employed within the creative industries (including digital) in Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire, across 1,640 business sites. This shows there has been a 12.7% growth in employment in this sector from 2017.
- 2.7.2 Organisations locating to the Aberdeen City Region can benefit from excellent network opportunities, in addition to a high calibre talent pool. The region is home to two outstanding universities, the Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen, both have over 95% success rates for graduates going into work or further education within 6 months.
- GVA per head for professional, scientific and technical activities industries in Aberdeenshire was 31% higher than the Scottish average
  - Over 49% of the workforce in the Aberdeen City Region are educated to degree level – fourth highest in the UK
  - Aberdeen is set to be Scotland’s first (2nd in UK) Gigabit City supported by a £40m investment through CityFibre

- Aberdeen City expenditure on private sector business enterprise research and development is 80% higher per head than Scottish average<sup>1</sup>

2.7.3 Aberdeen City is also a member of the Scottish Cities Alliance, which has an ambitious programme to deliver data and digital technology projects through the Smart City Programme. The 8th City Programme seeks to enhance Smart City activity to accelerate and transform the delivery of city services and make Scotland's cities more attractive, liveable and resilient. With cities generating an ever-increasing quantity of data, making full use of this data is a key component of making cities more resilient and liveable. In particular, the publication of open data, data that is freely usable for any purpose, has the opportunity to generate new services and opportunities.

2.7.4 While there are obvious connectivity benefits for people and businesses there are also benefits for the 'Internet of Things'. Key to this will be the deployment of sensors across the region to collate data on traffic flows and environmental issues, this is already evident in the 'intelligent street lighting' project.

2.7.5 At a project level and in line with the 'Building Checklist' compiled by the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure team, it is part of the Environmental Policy to ensure that digital connectivity is critically important along with the ability to install cabling infrastructure / Wi-Fi in the internal and external environment. Further detail from the checklist below:

- All developments are to be connected to the fibre network (FTTP) where available or be fibre ready through provision of local ducting and to building connections.
- Consider installation of cabling or Wi-Fi infrastructure to the internal developments and external environment.
- Have double-duct system for digital infrastructure, where feasible. Potential for leasing this in future.
- Consider provision of cabling internal to the development to support sensor networks and effective building management systems.
- Consider the efficacy of providing external solutions to monitor environmental conditions in the proximity of the development supporting roads and building maintenance, environmental and health service provisions.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.8 SMART<sup>3</sup> Objectives

2.8.1 The objectives of the beachfront project are as follows:

Objective	SMART performance measure
Increased footfall and revenue at the Beach Ballroom and other Beach Leisure Facilities	Footfall and revenue increases
Creation of free public realm and open park/play space	In line with Planning policy
Increased journeys by walking and cycling activity	38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026
Reduction in car journeys per annum	In line with Net Zero policy

<sup>1</sup> Source – Invest Aberdeen Digital Technology 2020

<sup>2</sup> Source – Communities, Housing and Infrastructure 'Building Checklist'

<sup>3</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited

<b>Objective</b>	<b>SMART performance measure</b>
Reduction in Co2 emissions	In line with Net Zero policy
Creation of Construction jobs over the build period	60+ new Construction jobs
Creation of new jobs directly associated with new Leisure offering at the Beach	New leisure jobs
Materials sourced from the local area	Target 70% use of local SMEs
Contractors labour from the local area	70% local labour



## 2.9 Deliveries to date

2.9.1 Numerous capital projects have been delivered in Aberdeen over recent years. This signals that there is a substantial level of activity occurring in Aberdeen and the CCMP projects will fit into a larger pattern of investment and regeneration, contributing to economic resilience, and supporting sustainable growth for the future. Notable projects completed in Aberdeen in recent years include:

- **Aberdeen Art Gallery:** This project created additional gallery space and increased the size available to accommodate international exhibitions.
- **Aberdeen Football Club Cormack Park (phase 1):** This project created a new community sports hub and world class football training facilities.
- **Aberdeen International Airport:** This project delivered a transformation of passenger facilities, including a new reclaim area, passport control, executive lounges, shops and more departure lounge space.
- **Aberdeen Railway Station glass roof:**<sup>4</sup> Replacement of the glass roof with modern glazing and access system for future maintenance of the listed structure.
- **Aberdeen Music Hall:** Renovation to develop new studio and opportunities for creative learning, renovation of auditorium and delivery of new box office.
- **Aberdeen to Inverurie Rail Improvements:** Dualling of rail track between Aberdeen and Inverurie to enable half-hourly service and cross-Aberdeen local rail
- **South Harbour:** The largest marine infrastructure project in the UK, including four new quays. Due for completion in October 2022.
- **The Event Complex Aberdeen (P&J Live):** Construction of a new arena.
- **Marischal Square:** Mixed use office, hotel and leisure development on Broad Street.
- **Provost Skenes House Museum:** Refurbishment of the historic landmark building and museum, including the installation of a new Hall of Heroes.
- **Union Terrace Gardens:** Refurbishment of park, including construction of three new pavilions and the restoration of original features.

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<sup>4</sup> Further £8m phase to follow

## 3 Programme Overview

### 3.1 Concept Masterplan

- 3.1.1 The Concept Masterplan is centred around a re-imagined Urban Parkland setting, creating a transformational and vibrant new Beachfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.
- 3.1.2 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.
- 3.1.3 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.
- 3.1.4 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.

#### Rope Works Concept Masterplan



Figure 3.1.1 Concept Masterplan

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

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

- New Amphitheatre
- New Events Field
- New Urban Park Areas
- New Sports Areas
- Pump Track
- Landscaped Mounding Features
- Reconfiguration Works / Beach Landscaping
- Interventions / Upgrades Along Beach
- Broadhill (Public Realm / Landscape)
- Gateway Building
- Hub Building
- New Canopy Features
- New Amphitheatre (Canopy Structure)
- Broadhill (Structures)
- Beach Boulevard
- Justice Street Roundabout

#### Key Features of Rope Works Concept Masterplan



Figure 3.1.2 Key Features of Rope Works Masterplan

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

## 3.2 Development Opportunities

- 3.2.1 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:
- 3.2.2 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.
- 3.2.3 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.
- 3.2.4 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.
- 3.2.5 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.
- 3.2.6 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.
- 3.2.7 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.



### 3.3 Short Term Development

#### New Amphitheatre

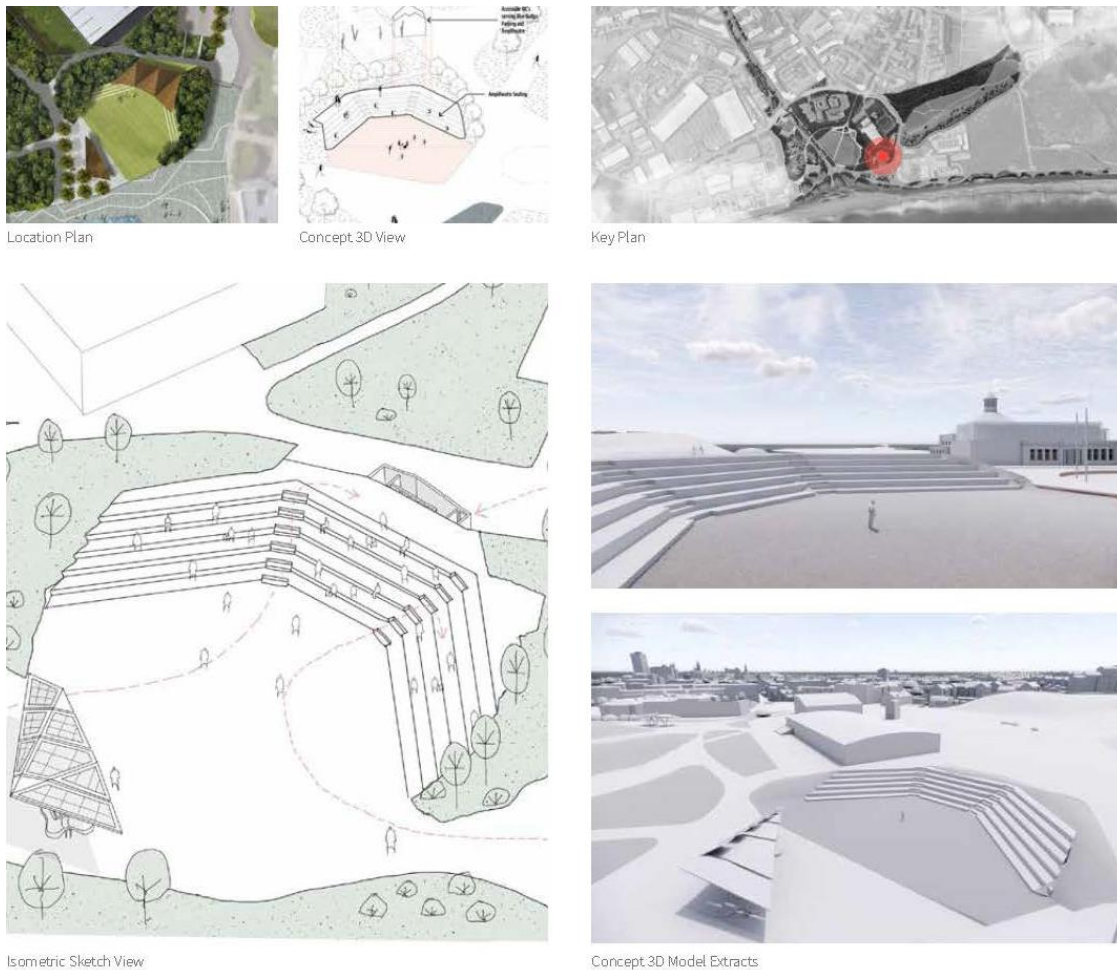


Figure 3.3.1 Amphitheatre Concept

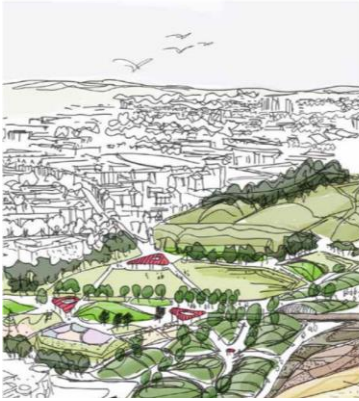
Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.3.1 Within the Urban Park the opportunity to create a more intimate outdoor venue, suitable for music, theatre, outdoor cinema or screenings is provided with the creation of a small external Amphitheatre located adjacent to the existing Beach Ballroom.
- 3.3.2 The vision for this space is to create a flexible, intimate external events space with the potential to tie in with larger events hosted within the Urban Park.
- 3.3.3 Taking advantage of the existing site topography/ levels, the location for the Amphitheatre naturally shields the adjacent buildings to the West, whilst the orientation of this space provides natural screening and acoustic benefits which can be enhanced with strategic planting to provide an additional level of privacy to the space.
- 3.3.4 The amphitheatre also creates the opportunity to integrate localised accessible toilet facilities into the mounding, adjacent to the proposed accessible parking on the West part of the site.

## New Events Field

The events field has been designed as a flexible space capable of holding events, festivals, larger concerts etc. but also to provide a large grassed area for day to day use including informal sports and games such as football, touch rugby, ultimate frisbee, and passive recreation such as picnicking.

The field covers an area of circa 8,800m<sup>2</sup> however additional space is also provided by the adjacent hard landscaped public spaces.



### CONCERT

The below plan illustrates a possible arrangement of a larger concert/festival within the park.



### FIREWORKS

The below plan illustrates a possible arrangement of a fireworks event within the park.



### CHRISTMAS MARKET

The below plan illustrates a possible arrangement of a large Christmas market within the park.



Figure 3.3.1 Events Field Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.3.5 The events field has been designed as a flexible space capable of holding events, festivals, larger concerts etc. but also to provide a large, grassed area for day to day use including informal sports and games such as football, touch rugby, ultimate frisbee, and passive recreation such as picnicking.

3.3.6 The field covers an area of circa 8,800m<sup>2</sup> however additional space is also provided by the adjacent hard landscaped public spaces.



## New Urban Park Areas

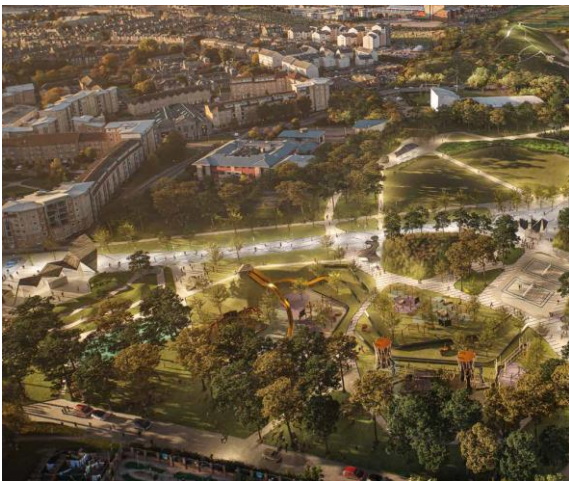


Figure 3.3.2 Urban Park Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.3.7 The proposed Urban Park is a tremendous opportunity to create an outdoor destination for the city in a unique context. The Urban Park is part of the wider landscape Masterplan that glues together many of the proposed and existing buildings and uses in the area, and importantly facilitates connections back to the City Centre.
- 3.3.8 The potential of this Beachfront Urban Park will not only be on a city and regional level but should also be seen as distinctive in a national and international context.

3.3.9 The Urban Park can be seen in several ways, perhaps as a gift to the city and from the city in equal parts. Hence, its perception as a public park for all is a key aspect of the overall process.

3.3.10 Successful public parks from around the world, are by their very nature invariably designed with the public. The exercise of mutual understanding and design is in fact the start of the actual project. There has been initial consultation with various youth groups to date, and this needs to continue, and wider public consultation needs to happen. Out of this process a truly rich and varied design can be developed, full of 'indigenous' character, working with the inherent natural characteristics of the site and the aspirations of the people of Aberdeen.

3.3.11 A public park must be accessible for everyone, such is the egalitarian existence of true public spaces. The richness of the park will come in its form and uses. Play and games are an obvious part of this mix and creating the physical environment for this to flourish is key. The whole park should be seen as incorporating elements of play opportunity, with areas that are more focused and defined along with the more natural and incidental play integrated throughout the park. To ensure this engagement with the youth groups of Aberdeen needs to continue.

3.3.12 There are many other uses to be considered, and careful analysis of what is best is important as flexibility will be key in the evolution of a public park along with its functionality and flexibility to cater for yet unforeseen city uses. Being considerate not to over prescribe space is a restraint that needs to be exercised. Let people evolve with the structure of a good space – that is what will make it a place to be proud of and allow for the citizens of the city to take ownership.

### New Sports Areas







Legend

1. Pump track/skate park (total area illustrated 1,190m<sup>2</sup>)
2. Basketball Court
3. Lookout dune with slides
4. Low seating/parkour walls
5. Seating
6. Older children/youth play area (total area illustrated 2,620 m<sup>2</sup>)
7. Small children's play area (total area illustrated 2,770 m<sup>2</sup>)
8. Shelter
9. Volley ball sand pit
10. Climbing boulder sand pit
11. Table tennis
12. Chess tables
13. Spinning boulder
14. Lookout binoculars



Figure 3.3.3 Play & Game Zone Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.3.13 Although this area has been termed the play and games zone it is not intended that opportunities for play will be constrained to this area of the site. The intention is that informal play opportunities will be present throughout the park. Equally the intention is that this area is a fully integrated part of the park landscape and is permeable and able to be explored as part of a visit to the park.

3.3.14 The play park has been enclosed to some degree by landform/tree planting in order to help create a suitable micro-climate and provide a comfortable year round space. Equally the aim has been to provide some shelter from the wind which is particularly important for games such as table tennis and volleyball.

3.3.15 A structure for the play and games zone is being developed which can accommodate a variety of play. At this point the content of the play parks is still being developed however approximate areas have been set aside for separate younger and older children's play areas. Recently undertaken consultation with children and young people is helping to inform this process and refine the types of play which should be included within these areas.

3.3.16 Other uses with a larger footprint have been included within the development of the plan to ensure space is allowed for these uses within the plan, these included a pump track/skate park, a basketball court and volleyball courts all of which were raised during youth engagement.

3.3.17 Other smaller uses have been indicated on the plan such as chess tables, table tennis tables etc. the final location of these elements is more flexible due to their smaller size.

3.3.18 The content of the play parks is still being developed however a recently undertaken consultation with children and young people is helping to inform this process and refine the types of play which should be included within these areas.

### Pump Track

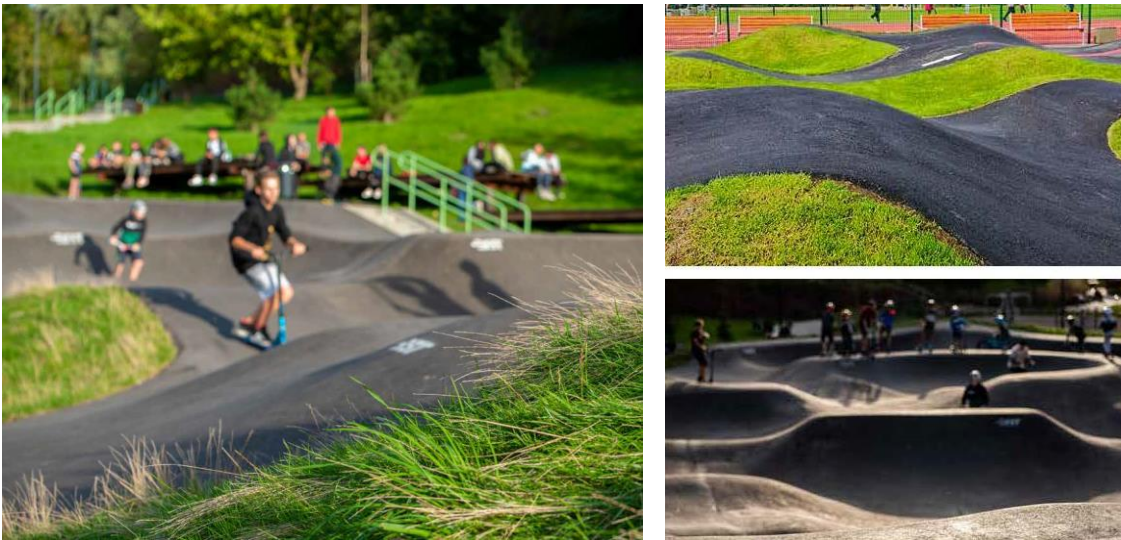


Figure 3.3.4 Pump Track Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.3.19 The desire for a bike, skate or pump track within the park was one element which emerged strongly from the engagement with Children and Young People.

3.3.20 At their best, pump tracks can be incredibly inclusive play elements which can be used by all ages and abilities. They can be used by many different types of equipment including scooters, roller blades, roller skates, skate boards, bicycles of all types and wheel chairs. They can help build a vibrant community, encourage social interaction and build respect for others. They can provide a valuable source of exercise and can be a gateway into other sports such as bmx or mountain biking. Having this as a free to use element within the park could be a valuable resource for the community.

3.3.21 The design of this element should be undertaken by a specialist company to ensure the design is both accessible to all, where a toddler supervised by an adult could roll around, a visitor in a wheelchair could get around, and that also has collections of features which are engaging to more experienced users.



## Landscaped Mounding Features



Play can be incorporated into the landscaped mounds.



The landscaped mounds can help create dramatic views to the sea.



Informal play opportunities are provided by landscaped mounds.



The landscaped mounds can incorporate viewing points.



Informal play opportunities are provided by landscaped mounds.

Figure 3.3.5 Landscaped Mounding Features Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.3.22 A key aim of proposed landscape mounding features is to create shelter and help improve the microclimate of spaces across the site, increasing the comfort of visitors and increasing dwell time. These mound features will also help to define and enclose spaces within the park, creating 'rooms' of different sizes which can accommodate the various programs of use.
- 3.3.23 The landforms will be carefully sited to frame and create views. This could be creating choreographed views to the sea from the esplanade level in the park or setting up vistas to sculptures or interventions within the park. Through revealing and blocking views the mounds will also provide increased opportunities for exploration and discovery within the park.
- 3.3.24 Some of the landforms may be developed to contribute directly to the play value of the site, this may vary from informal elements such as mounds to run up and roll down or more formal elements such as the incorporation of slides or viewing points.

## Reconfiguration Works / Beach Landscaping



Figure 3.3.6 Reconfiguration Works / Beach Landscaping Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.3.25 The intention at the beachfront is to modify the beach edge, pulling this back into the site and creating better visual and physical connectivity between the park and the sea. Behind this modified edge, dune landforms will help provide shelter to the park and will frame views out to sea.

3.3.26 The modification of the landform in this area will play a key role in heightening the relationship between the beach, the park and the city. It is important that the humanising of this interface is a priority, while maintaining the necessary coastal defences by investigating more natural flood defence systems which can afford to utilise a greater area therefore introducing a distinctive and unique environment. One of the out turn aims will be making the beach bigger and more accessible.

### Interventions / Upgrades Along Beach

3.3.27 The following sets out proposed interventions at the Promenade/Esplanade at Aberdeen Beachfront which were identified in the November Committee Report and identifies progress on these items where appropriate.

3.3.28 The items were organised under the following headings:

- Immediate (i.e. action between Nov – Feb CGR Committee, reporting back to Feb CGR on progress)

- Short Term (i.e. report back to Feb CGR Committee with indicative brief/designs/costs)
- Medium Term (i.e. part of wider Masterplan design activities / may require longer term input from design team/consultants/user groups etc)

### Broadhill (Public Realm/Landscape)

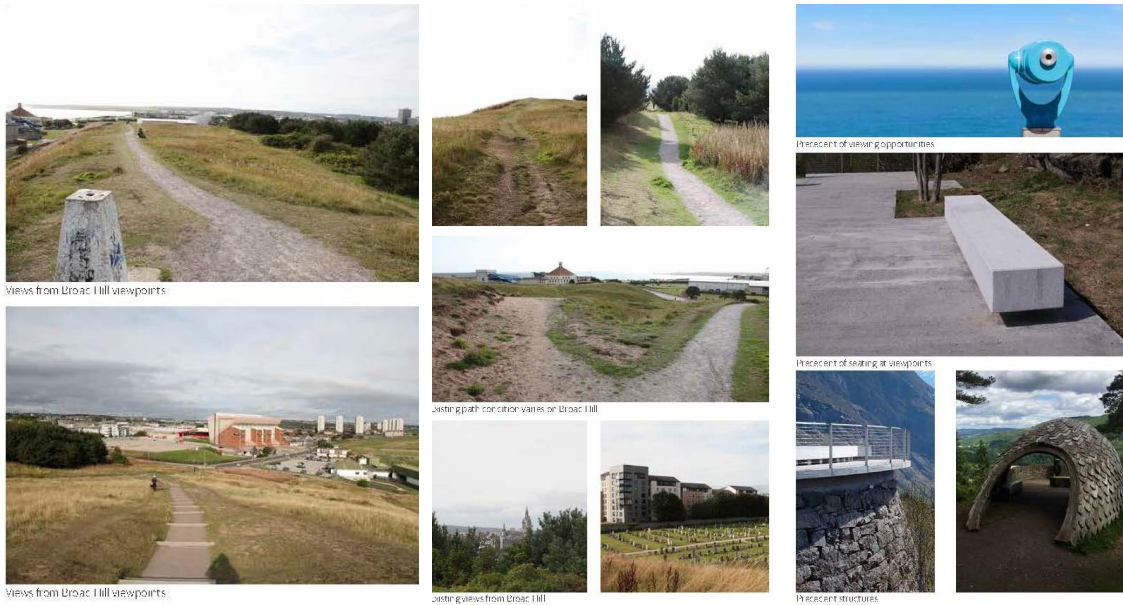


Figure 3.3.6 Broadhill Public realm/Landscape Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.3.29 A relatively light touch of intervention is proposed for Broad Hill. This could include the improvement of the existing path network, additional tree/scrub planting and up to two new viewpoints/sculptural interventions taking advantage of the expansive views available and providing opportunities for seating and interpretation.



### 3.4 Medium Term Development

#### Gateway Building



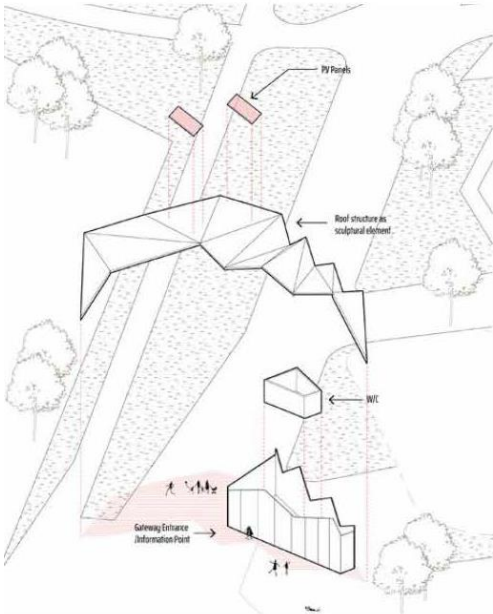
Location Plan



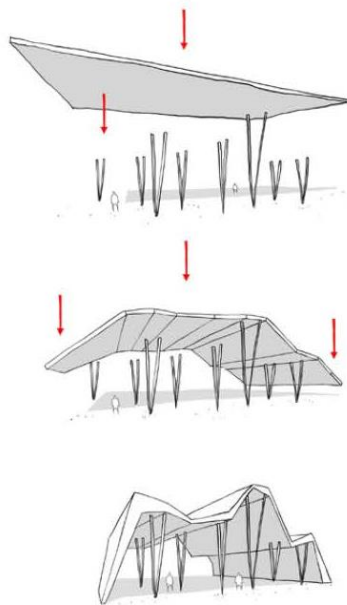
Concept 3D View



Key Plan



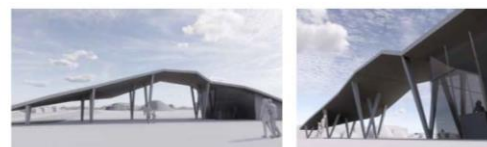
Concept Isometric View



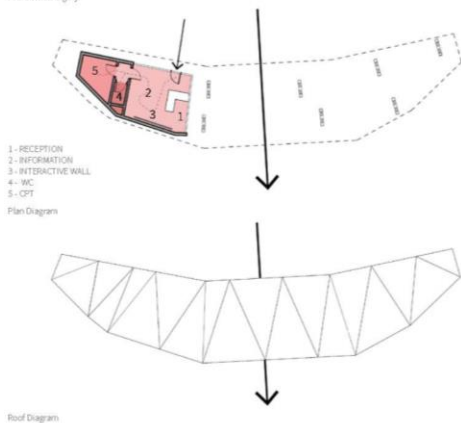
Concept Diagram



Precedent Imagery



Concept 3D Model Extracts



Roof Diagram



Isometric Sketch View

Figure 3.4.1 Gateway Building Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.1 The Gateway Building acts as a sculptural landmark at the entrance to the Urban Park, offering an enhanced sense of arrival at the Gateway to the Beachfront. The flexible building footprint is set within a complementary lightweight structure which spans across the main desire route, increasing visibility from Beach Boulevard and drawing people down towards the new waterfront destination from the City Centre approach.
- 3.4.2 An integrated Information Booth and Reception area is proposed to assist with orientation within the new Urban Park, with enhanced directional and digital signage. The Gateway proposal offers potential to explore more sculptural elements, feature lighting and opportunities for public art within the design, adding the wow factor upon arrival to the Beachfront.
- 3.4.3 Accessible/Toilet/Changing facilities will be housed within the proposed structure which will be clad in durable, natural timber cladding, with an angular roof formation to echo the other lightweight architectural interventions within the wider Park. The height of the Gateway canopy will be designed to accommodate vehicular access onto a shared surface if required for managed events.

### Hub Building



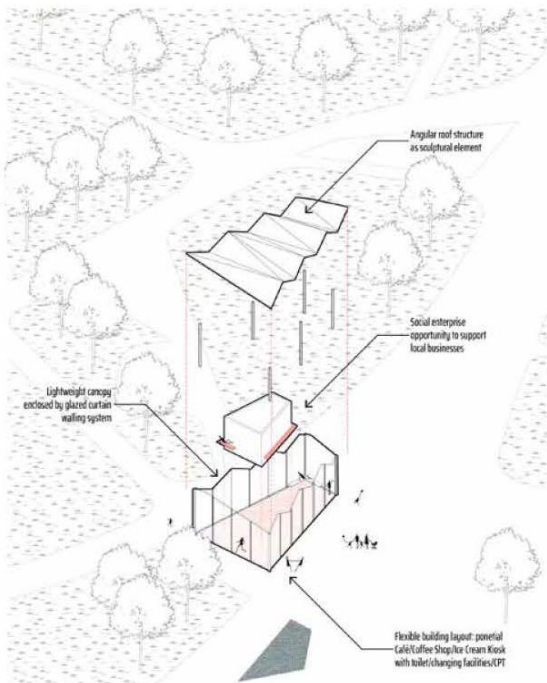
Location Plan



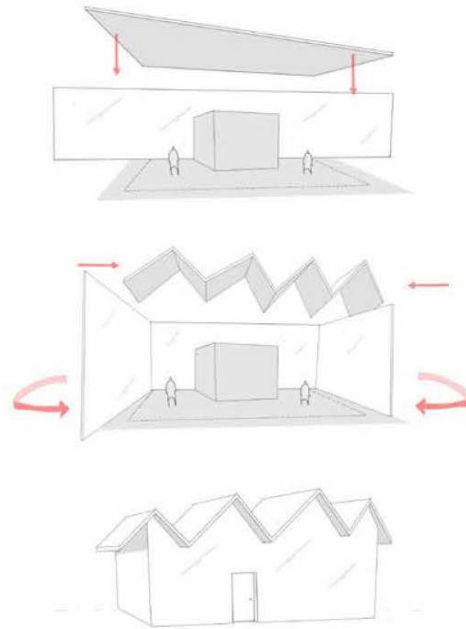
Concept 3D View



Key Plan



Concept Isometric View



Concept Diagram

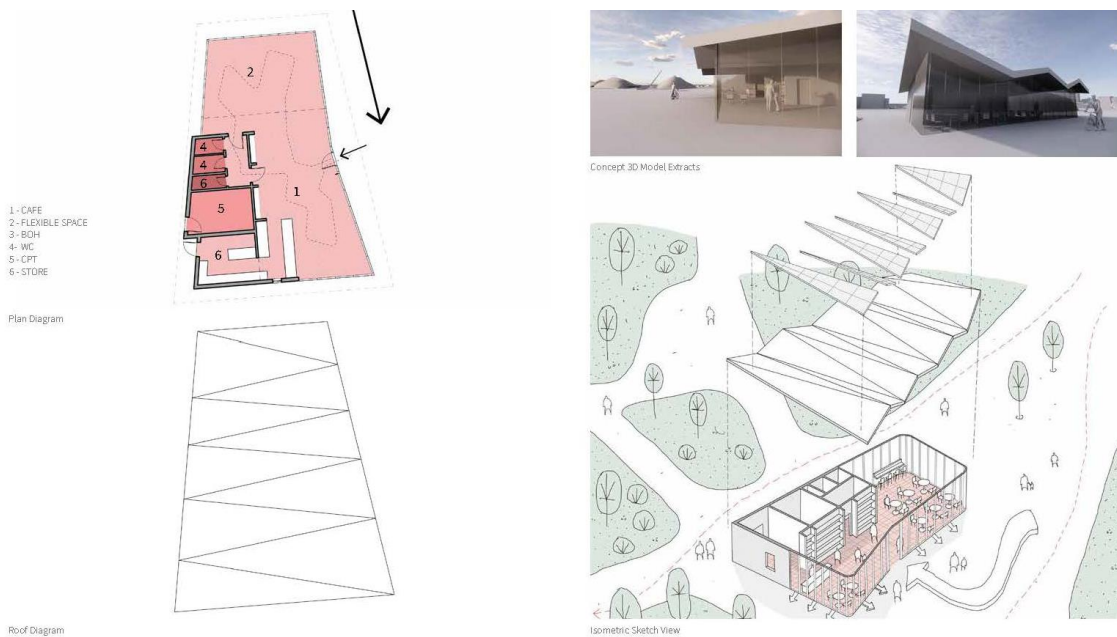


Figure 3.4.2 Hub Building Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.4 The Hub Building is located in the central plaza area, creating a focal point at the heart of the new Urban Park. Positioned at a key nodal point junction on the main Avenue, the building will capitalise on footfall sweeping down from Beach Boulevard, offering a place to pause, engage and refresh on the primary desire route.
- 3.4.5 The flexible building footprint could support a variety of uses, with opportunity for Social Enterprise and supporting local business with a potential Coffee Shop/Ice Cream Kiosk offering light refreshments. Toilet and Changing facilities would be provided including centrally located accessible facilities/CPT. The proposed Hub will incorporate a sculptural angular roof structure, aligned with the wider family of lightweight structures located throughout the Urban Park.



### New Canopy Features



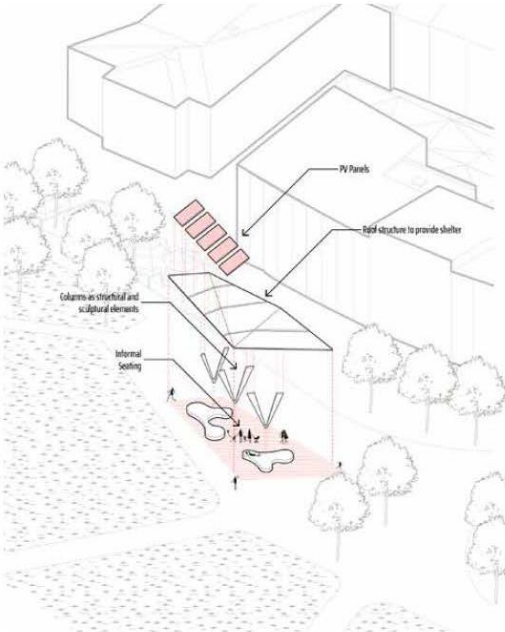
Location Plan



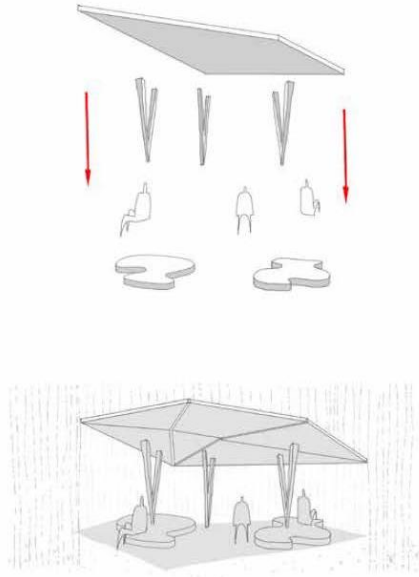
Concept 3D View



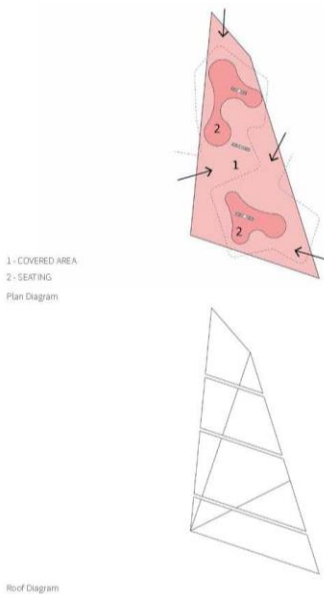
Key Plan



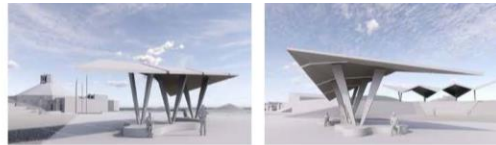
Concept Isometric View



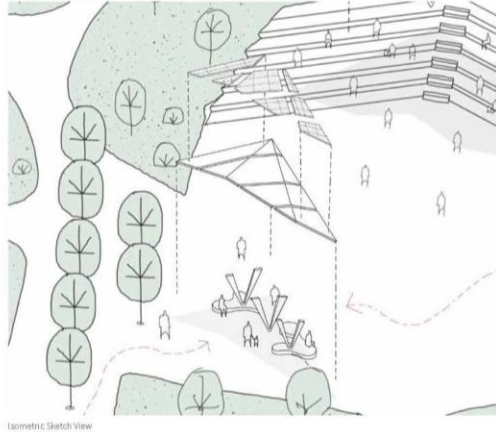
Concept Diagram



Roof Diagram



Concept 3D Model Extracts



Isometric Sketch View

Figure 3.4.3 Canopy Features Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.6 A number of canopy structures are proposed at key nodal points within the Urban Park to aid orientation on the Beachfront journey. The angular roof structures proposed will provide shelter from the elements and seating areas for rest and reflection.
- 3.4.7 A variety of seating, including back and arm rests will be provided, as well as accessible spaces for wheelchair users. These flexible structures offer opportunity for social/meeting points, picnic areas, recycling points, individual seating and quiet areas.
- 3.4.8 Feature structural columns are proposed as sculptural elements, supporting an angular roof form with opportunities for integrated PV panels to provide solar energy to potentially illuminate the public realm areas, with feature up-lighting of the canopy forms.
- 3.4.9 Durable, locally sourced, sustainable materials have been suggested, creating a family of structures which follow a common architectural language and materiality to tie through with wider Masterplan interventions.

### New Amphitheatre (Canopy Structure)



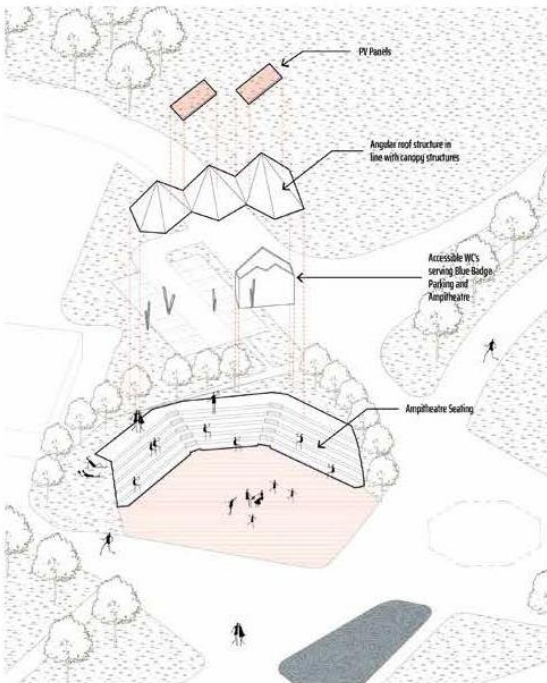
Location Plan



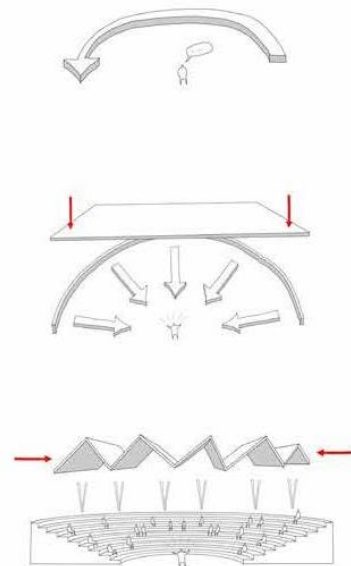
Concept 3D View



Key Plan



Concept Isometric View



Concept Diagram

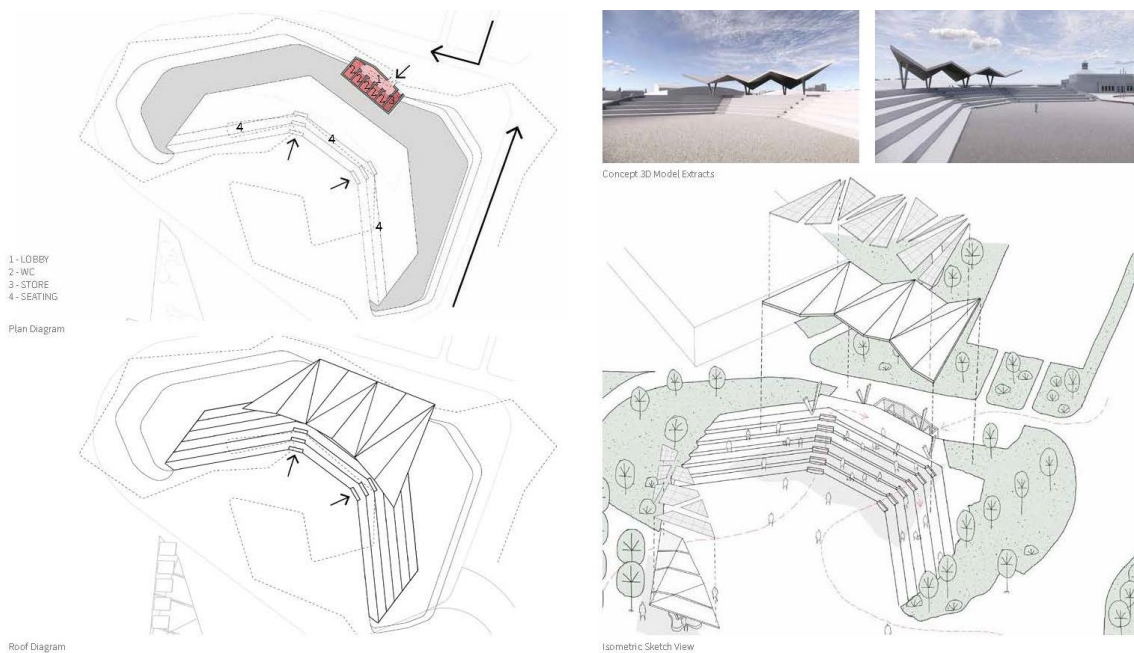


Figure 3.4.4 New Amphitheatre Canopy Structure Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.10 Within the Urban Park the opportunity to create a more intimate outdoor venue, suitable for music, theatre, outdoor cinema or screenings is provided with the creation of a small external amphitheatre located adjacent to the existing Beach Ballroom.
- 3.4.11 The proposed Amphitheatre is supported with a lightweight angular canopy structure, tying in with the sculptural roof forms of the wider Masterplan, providing an element of shelter to the seating area and simultaneously offering opportunity for localised accessible toilet facilities adjacent to the accessible parking on the West part of the site.
- 3.4.12 Taking advantage of the existing site topography/ levels, the location for the Amphitheatre naturally shields the adjacent buildings to the West, whilst the orientation of this space provides natural screening and acoustic benefits which can be enhanced with strategic planting to provide an additional level of privacy to the space.
- 3.4.13 The vision for this space is to create a flexible, intimate external events space with the potential to tie in with larger events hosted within the Urban Park.
- 3.4.14

## Broadhill (Structures)



Figure 3.4.5 Broadhill Structures Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.15 2 no. geometric viewing platform structures are proposed on Broadhill, taking advantage of spectacular panoramic views across the Beachfront.
- 3.4.16 The indicative material palette explored consists of a concrete base slab structure with integrated timber seating areas to pause, rest and reflect along the popular walking route.
- 3.4.17 To coincide with other Masterplan interventions and create a common aesthetic throughout the Urban Park, proposed timber finishes will be locally sourced Scottish larch, suitable for a marine environment. To offer shelter from the elements, integrated timber canopy structures are also proposed.
- 3.4.18 Informative directional signage and/or sculptures pointing to specific landmarks are proposed, with accompanying observational stand binoculars.
- 3.4.19 There are also opportunities for public art installations in collaboration with local artists, potentially being integrated within the hexagonal concrete structures, subject to artist's detail design.

## Beach Boulevard / Connectivity

- 3.4.19 The interventions illustrated on Beach Boulevard and the alterations to the roundabout connection to Justice Street have still to be tested in relation to geometries and traffic modelling. The aim here however is to illustrate an aspiration for how these spaces could be transformed with the following aims:
  - Increasing pedestrian and cycle connectivity between the City and the Beach
  - Improving the appearance and experience of walking or cycling to the beach
  - Improving legibility of the journey
  - Providing a segregated cycle route
  - Increasing soft landscape and biodiversity
  - Accommodating SUDS



## BEACH BOULEVARD

The alternatives to Beach Boulevard in relation to the reduction of carriageway width have still to be tested in relation to traffic modelling. The aim here however is to illustrate in a general way how a narrower road can be dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists and public realm, transforming the experience of going to the beach.

### Legend

1. New segregated cycleway
2. Reduced carriageway
3. Parking
4. Seating opportunities
5. Artwork interventions: creating interest on the trail from the city to the beach
6. Sidewalk with continuous footways and pedestrian/cycle priority
7. Bus stop (station etc.)



Active travel and new planting replacing existing road infrastructure, Glasgow.



Active travel, new planting and artwork replacing existing road infrastructure, Sheffield. Image courtesy of Sheffield City Council.



Active travel, new planting and seating replacing existing road infrastructure, Sheffield. Image courtesy of Sheffield City Council.



Figure 3.4.6 Beach Boulevard Connectivity Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.4.20 The diagram below illustrates the current pedestrian crossing opportunities around the roundabout and highlights how the road infrastructure dominates how this part of the city is experienced.

## ROUNDBABOUT

The diagram below illustrates the current pedestrian crossing opportunities around the roundabout and highlights how the road infrastructure connects to the rest of the city in general.



Existing crossing points are at adjacent uses.

Several different concept options have been investigated in order to determine how best to improve the connection from the City to the Beach. Of the options developed it is believed that an 'At Grade' solution has the potential to create the most effective solution.

The options illustrate two different potential reconfigurations of the roundabout for further exploration. These concept options have not been tested in relation to geometries or traffic modelling however aim to illustrate an aspiration for how the roundabout could be transformed improving pedestrian and cycle connectivity, extending the character of the City centre and creating a new into a new public space.



A potential new civic space, brings the City centre closer to the Beach and by doing so, creating a direct pedestrian and cycle route onto Beach Boulevard.

Figure 3.4.7 Roundabout Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

- 3.4.21 Several different concept options have been investigated in order to determine how best to improve the connection from the City to the Beach. Of the options developed it is believed that an 'At Grade' solution has the potential to create the most effective solution.
- 3.4.22 The options illustrate two different potential reconfigurations of the roundabout for further exploration. These concept options have not been tested in relation to geometries or traffic modelling however aim to illustrate an aspiration for how the roundabout could be transformed improving pedestrian and cycle connectivity, extending the character of the City centre and creating a new into a new public space.
- 3.4.23 The alterations to Beach Boulevard in relation to the reduction of carriageway width have still to be tested in relation to traffic modelling. The aim here however is to illustrate an aspiration for how carriageway space can be reallocated to pedestrians and cyclists and public realm, transforming the experience of going to the beach.





**BEACH BOULEVARD**

The alterations to Beach Boulevard in relation to the reduction of carriageway width have had to be taken in addition to traffic realignment. The new here however is to allocate an opportunity for how carriageway space can be reallocated to pedestrians, end cyclists and public realm, transforming the segment of going to the beach.

- Legend
- 1. New segregated cycleway
  - 2. Reduced carriageway
  - 3. Parking
  - 4. Seating opportunities
  - 5. Artwork interventions creating interest on the trail for the city to the beach
  - 6. Seating with continuous footways and pedestrian/cycle priority
  - 7. Bus stop (station 102)



Aerial perspective view of Beach Boulevard with a new segregated cycleway and soft landscape.

Figure 3.4.8 Beach Boulevard Concept  
Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004



Figure 3.4.9 Beach Boulevard Carriageway Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

3.4.24 At the bottom of Beach Boulevard the space widens. This could be an opportunity to create community gardens with a smaller, more intimate scale than within the main body of the park. These gardens could include, sensory elements such as herb gardens, coloured light and sound features and promote use and enjoyment of the gardens by all. They could incorporate small elements of play and interaction. They could provide social seating arrangements and quieter areas to relax. They could include community growing and fruit trees.







Figure 3.4.10 Community Gardens Concept

Source: Keppie WIP February 2022, ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852004

## 4 Case for Investment

### 4.1 Strategic Case

- 4.1.1 The principle of improving access to both formal and informal leisure and recreational offer along the city's Beachfront area is supported by national and strategic planning and associate policy, with Covid-19 adding further to the demand for public open space.
- 4.1.2 The updated CCMP and Beachfront Masterplan commits ACC to delivering its holistic City Vision to support and enhance economic recovery and growth post pandemic and support the continuing diversification from oil and gas-based industries to renewables, emerging technologies and green infrastructure.
- 4.1.3 Masterplans which cover a scope as ambitious as the one for the City Centre and Beachfront, with long-term visions for investment and regeneration, are dynamic and create a framework for responding to local priorities, demand, market conditions and trends. The Beachfront Masterplan presents a unique opportunity to create transformational new spaces and destinations at Aberdeen's waterfront.
- 4.1.4 The Beachfront Masterplan projects are strategically aligned with:
- Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) – the proposals comply with: Policy NC9 – Beach and Leisure, as any such development will be beach and leisure related and of appropriate scale; Policy NE1 – Green Space Network, as the proposed works will ensure that linkages to, from and throughout the greenspace network are maintained and improved where possible; Policy NE3 – Urban Green Space, as the stadium and leisure oriented projects will constitute a recreation and sport use and will compliment other green spaces in the city; Policy NE7 – Coastal Planning, as the proposed projects are in locations which are not notably susceptible to coastal flooding.
  - Scottish Planning Policy – sets out the Scottish Government's planning policy on a range of types of development and environmental issues. The Beachfront projects respond to key points including: responding to economic issues, challenges and opportunities; supporting delivery of infrastructure; supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation; improving health and wellbeing by offering opportunities for social interaction and physical activity, including sport and recreation; protecting, enhancing and promoting access to cultural and natural heritage.
- 4.1.5 The rationale for investment is driven by longstanding market failures. Market failure is a situation whereby there is an inefficient distribution of goods and services which is unable to be corrected through free market forces alone, requiring public sector intervention to incentivise actions which will overcome barriers to delivery.
- 4.1.6 The Beachfront is a new area of intervention which has been identified as a priority for investment in the review of the 2015 City Centre Masterplan. Public sector investment is required to redevelop and reconfigure primary access routes which connect the City Centre to the Beachfront, as well as regenerate and re-imagine key assets to create a new destination and hub of economic activity in the city. Directing funds into key Beachfront projects will stimulate new economic activity and attract further private sector investment which will be leveraged to deliver new development for Aberdeen.

## 4.2 Economic Case

- 4.2.1 Aberdeen's economy is changing at a rapid rate, as the economy responds to the combined effects of the global transformation from oil & gas to renewables, and the transformation to a post Covid-19 economy.
- 4.2.2 These changes are causing significant short to medium term challenges for the city's economy, and recent research from Savills indicates that:
- GVA fell by 2.4% per annum from £11.2 billion in 2015 to £10.2 billion in 2019, with employment falling by 1.5% per annum over the same period.
  - Figures from PwC estimate that the city's economy contracted by a further 9.2% in 2021
  - The city's population fell by 8% between 2015 and 2019
- 4.2.3 The City is also currently managing an over-supply of office and general retail space following a period of significant investment in the run up to the down-turn. For example, recent research shows that:
- The city has a significant over-supply of general retail space, including Union Street, one of Europe's longest principal shopping streets, and the Bon Accord and Union Square shopping centres, with Union Street and the Bon Accord Centre currently experiencing very high void rates
  - Three recent office developments (The Capitol, The Silver Fin and Marischal Square) have space available to let, however, recent lettings to Shell (c 100,000 sq ft in Silverfin), shows some confidence returning to the market
- 4.2.4 However, the foundations for future growth are strong, with strong opportunities for the city to reinvent itself as a successful visitor, renewable energy and food and drink economy.
- 4.2.5 Aberdeen's expertise and infrastructure in the oil and gas sector will provide a wealth of skills and knowledge which can facilitate the transition to renewable energy. This will enable the retention and continued attraction of highly skilled workers into the city, supporting other economic sectors, and helping to achieve climate change and net zero ambitions for the city and country.
- 4.2.6 In March 2021, the UK Government pledged £27million to Aberdeen's Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), and this funding was matched by the Scottish Government to help facilitate the transition to net zero and embrace the low-carbon future.
- 4.2.7 The ETZ and the £6.3million Global Underwater Hub supported by the Chancellor of the Exchequer are part of the first stage in delivering the UK Government's North Sea Transition Deal. The investment is an acknowledgement of Aberdeen's key role to play in this transition and demonstration of support from Government. The North Sea Transition Deal is a transformative partnership which aims to leverage up to £16 billion in investment over the coming decade to harness the power of the UK offshore oil and gas industry to meet the UK's net zero target.
- 4.2.8 The Aberdeen region has recognised strengths in food & drink manufacturing, accounting for a fifth of Scotland's output in the sector. Growing this industry further presents an opportunity to diversify the economy and create new processes, technologies, and products. While tourism has been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, Aberdeen can capitalise on the region's natural assets to develop the visitor economy as travel returns to normal. The food & drink offer is a key component

the city and region's character and can be influential in supporting the visitor and tourism sector.

- 4.2.9 Even before the Covid-19 pandemic the UK retail market was already experiencing significant challenges and undergoing dramatic change. The pandemic has accelerated the rise of online shopping and the result has been a decline in physical retailing, placing huge pressures on the commercial real estate market as traditional and conventional economic systems are being replaced. However, some forms of retail are likely to be more heavily impacted by this than others, and recent research suggests that investment in experience-based retail<sup>5</sup>, offering services and experiences that cannot be replicated online, can act as a driver for city centre visits and can generate additional visits, dwell times and spend for the city centre as a whole.
- 4.2.10 The proposed interventions in Aberdeen's City Centre and Beachfront have the potential to change the way that current and potential future residents and visitors experience and view the city. They can deliver a series of event and experience spaces that can give people reasons to visit the areas, and to stay in the area for longer than they would otherwise. This in turn can serve as a catalyst to increase visitor spend in the City Centre's existing retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, and could encourage more people to live in and invest in the city.
- 4.2.11 Capital investment to deliver the infrastructure will also support short-term construction employment and associated gross value added (GVA), while the enhancements made to the public realm will support increased levels of active travel, such as walking and cycling, which promote healthier lifestyles and lower levels of emissions. These will have health and wellbeing benefits to those who choose active travel but will also benefit the entire community through the overall reduction in pollution and emissions.
- 4.2.12 As the investment proposition develops, the individual projects within the City Centre programme will be subject to their own business cases. At this stage, a more comprehensive and rigorous quantitative assessment of project benefits will be possible as there will be more clarity and robustness about project costs, private sector co-funding opportunities and timescales.

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<sup>5</sup> *Experience will drive footfall in shopping centres, not brands, Katapult, 2021*

## 5 Deliverability

### 5.1 Financial Case

- 5.1.1 Developing capital costs with any degree of accuracy at this stage has proved challenging with the current difficulties with supply chains, energy costs, and construction inflation. The estimated capital cost of delivery will continue to be developed during the next stage and presented as part of the FBC in June 2022 following engagement with the market.
- 5.1.2 The current working assumptions on phasing are presented below. However, phasing will be further developed during the Full Business Case through market testing:
- Phasing Options dated 11 February 2022
  - Construction Programme:
    - Phase 1 New Play Park – Q4 2022 with a Construction Period of 12 months
    - Phase 2 Events Park – Q2 2023 with a Construction Period of 12 months
    - Phase 3 Temporary Landscape – Q2 2023 with a Construction Period of 6 months
    - Phase 4 Pedestrian Spine – Q2 2023 with a Construction Period of 12 months
    - Phase 7 Broad Hill – Q4 2022 with a Construction Period of 6 months
    - Phase 8 Beach Boulevard – Q4 2024 with a Construction Period of 12 months
- 5.1.3 Aberdeen City Council has agreed a capital programme plan of £214m for 2021/22, including an investment of £150m to regenerate the city centre and link it to the beach area. It is anticipated that a proportion of project funding will be drawn from that £150m commitment to the City Centre and Beach regeneration over the period 2021-26 (evidenced in the decisions related to the Council's 2021-22 budget report). The Council will continue to seek contributions from other stakeholders and partners, including through future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund and through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in relation to capital and future operational spend requirements of these projects.
- 5.1.4 No assessment has yet been undertaken around project revenue costs and delivery models, however these will be considered at the Full Business Case stage.
- 5.1.5 The project is expected to be procured through the Hub model, and conversations are still taking place to establish the commercial & operation delivery models for the proposed interventions.

