

# DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY MAY 2022 REV P01 ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL ABERDEEN BEACHFRONT

DRAFT



# INTRODUCTION



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Please refer to 'Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework - May 2022' for detailed documentation of Development Framework proposals.

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted just how important accessible and good quality public space is to people's physical and mental health. During this time, the citizens of Aberdeen rediscovered and fell back in love with the city's outdoor spaces and in particular the Beachfront area, understanding its importance as a key public space for the city and wider area. The principle of the Development Framework is to set a vision and key design principles for a world class sport, leisure and tourism destination which would revitalise the Beachfront area and reconnect it to the city centre.



Location Plan with Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework Area

-  Beachfront Development Framework Boundary
-  City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) Boundary



Concept Visualisation of Urban Park

## OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- Provides an overall vision for the area whilst also allowing for flexibility and differing approaches;
- Establishes a clear and coherent spatial structure which can accommodate change in the long term as detailed proposals emerge;
- Describes character areas and areas of potential intervention;
- Sets out strategic transport proposals in terms of access and connectivity; and
- Illustrates the general directions and phasing of development within the area.

## VISION

The Beachfront offers a unique opportunity to create a transformational new waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen. At the heart of the proposals is the redevelopment of the iconic Beach Ballroom – the 'jewel in the crown' of the Beachfront redevelopment. An enhanced public realm setting for the re-imagined Ballroom, integrated with a potential new Stadium and Leisure complex, will create a dynamic new Urban Park which connects back into the City Centre. This people-focused environment will be inclusive for all, creating a real community asset and bringing the 'Wow' factor back to the Beachfront.

**THE SITE**



## 2.0 THE SITE

Aberdeen is a city with a close bond to the sea, and the beachfront area has served the people of Aberdeen and beyond as a key leisure and recreation space for decades. Although still popular today, it was once a thriving tourist destination in the early 1900s, drawing visitors from across the country. Picture postcards from that era term Aberdeen 'The Silver City by the Sea' and describe the beachfront itself as 'The Finest Beach and Most Beautiful Holiday Resort in Britain'. The beachfront also housed several well utilised leisure facilities and recreational activities, such as a bathing station, tennis courts, lawn bowls, in addition to the Beach Ballroom which serves as the last remnant of this thriving time.

The Ballroom is to be considered as a primary focal point in the new beachfront development, due to its central position but also because of its cultural significance. The venue is category B-listed and recognised for its Art Deco styling and its octagonal ballroom with set-back pan tiled pyramidal roof which is crowned by an arcaded lantern.

The Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework Area is located to the north-east of the city centre connected by the primary route of Beach Boulevard which links the Beachfront to Justice Street and on to the Castlegate. The site is bounded to the east by the North Sea; to the south is Codona's amusement park and a mixture of commercial, hospitality and retail uses; to the west of the site there are existing hotel and leisure units with a mix of residential typologies beyond; and to the north is the Kings Links Golf Course. The area of the proposed red line boundary is approximately 30 hectares.



Development Framework Area



Aberdeen Beach Historic Postcard



The Dance Hall (Ballroom) and Promenade

# VISION & DESIGN PRINCIPLES



## 3.0 VISION & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### DETAILED VISION

#### A Dynamic Waterfront

The current area is lacking in the character and distinctiveness which would be expected of such a unique location. The proposals will seek to create a dynamic waterfront destination which the city can be proud of, and which will reconnect the city with the beach. The main route from the city via Beach Boulevard will be renewed with a focus on public transport, pedestrians, and cyclists. The Beachfront itself will be activated through potential dedicated play and events spaces, improved accessibility, a potential stadium, and leisure facility as well as supporting facilities such as changing accommodation / beach huts and a potential landmark pier structure, all connected by an enhanced green infrastructure network.

#### Beach Ballroom

The importance of the re-imagined Beach Ballroom is key to the proposals, with a desire to return this architecturally and culturally significant building to its former glory when it was known as the 'People's Ballroom'. Any renovation proposals will recognise the buildings heritage and historic significance whilst equipping it for the future as a modern events venue. This, coupled with an improved public realm, will make this a key focal point of the redevelopment of the area.

#### Connecting the Beach and the City

Currently the beach suffers from a lack of connection with the city centre, with the key route from the city being one which is car dominated and unattractive. With the potential renewal of Beach Boulevard and works to the major roundabout to the southwest end of this route, the proposals will reconnect the city and beachfront through an attractive pedestrian and cycle focussed public realm. Proposed pedestrian and cycle routes will also seek to connect into the wider travel network to ensure viable and sustainable connections between the beach and the city are created.

#### High Quality Public Realm

The site as it exists is car dominated and suffers from a lack of good quality public space. The Beachfront proposals will invest the area with a well-considered and high-quality public realm scheme which prioritises pedestrians and cyclists. The public realm approach will allow for public spaces to flow and reconnect the beach with the wider beachfront area ensuring that the design is accessible and inclusive.



Aspirational CGI Image of Potential Development

#### Developed Infrastructure

Proposed infrastructure, including traffic management would be introduced that reduces the impact of the existing road network to promote alternative forms of travel, including cycling, whilst improving public realm. Furthermore, infrastructural works which would be co-ordinated with potential flood/sea defence works planned for the area would ensure the longevity of the Beachfront.

#### Potential New Stadium and Leisure Facilities

A potential new stadium and leisure facility could form part of the Beachfront Development Framework. Noted as a preferred option within this document, these world class facilities would become another key element to the revitalisation of the area. The potential stadium would provide a new home to Aberdeen FC and would share common facilities with a potential new state of the art leisure centre which would replace the existing Beach Leisure Centre and Linx Ice Arena.

## ROPE WORKS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

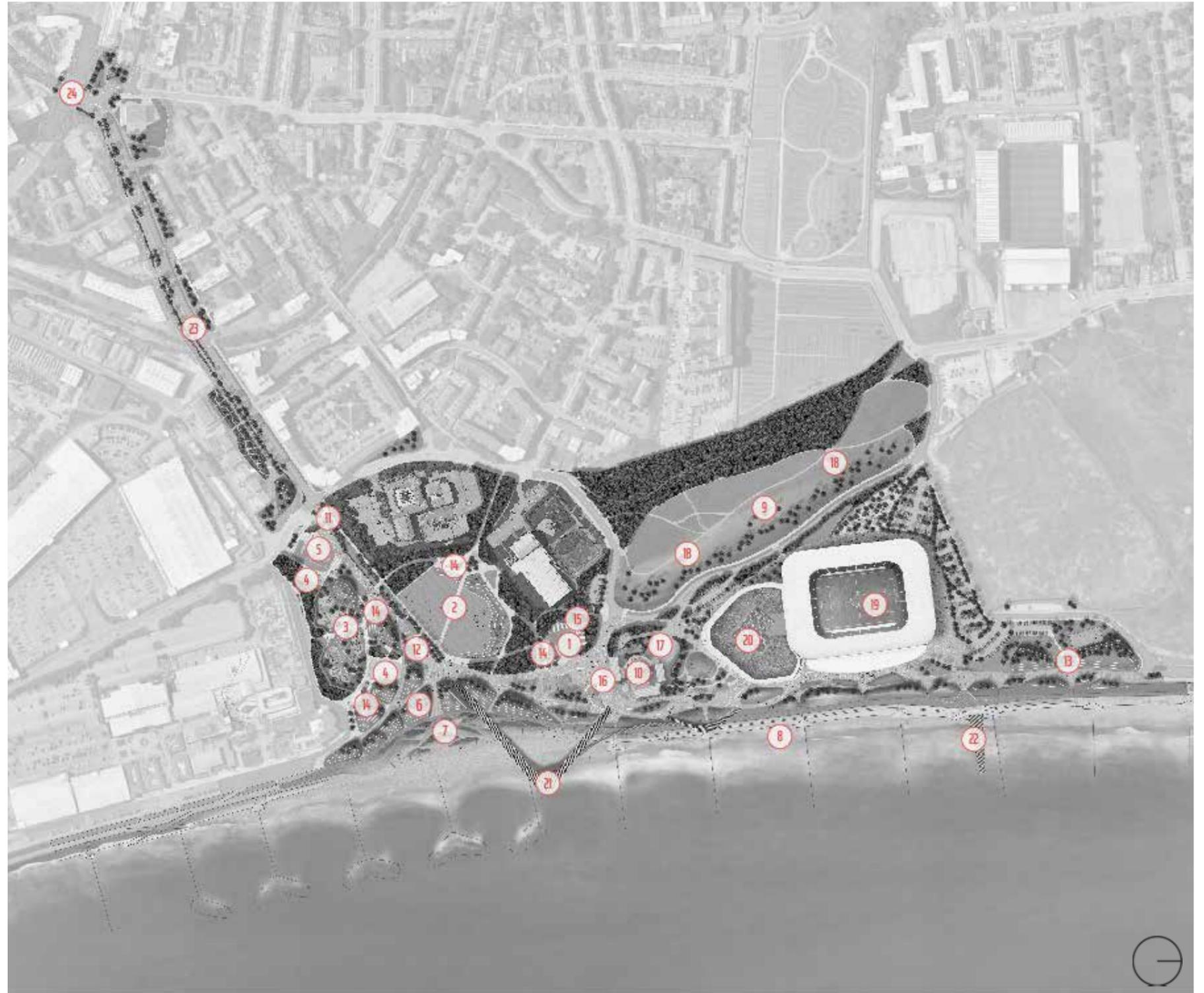
The concept masterplan is centred around the re-imagining of the iconic Beach Ballroom, integrated with state-of-the-art Sport and Leisure facilities within an Urban Parkland setting, creating a transformational and vibrant new Beachfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.

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

- An organic network of pedestrian-focussed desire routes and meandering pathways.
- An outdoor gathering area for large scale events (such as fireworks)
- Potential water features
- Relocated & upgraded play park
- Potential canopy features with opportunities for PV panels for solar power.
- A potential Reflection pool to create a grand setting for the re-imagined Beach Ballroom.
- Potential integrated Stadium, Leisure & outdoor sports facilities.
- Upgraded Esplanade with active frontage along the beach
- High quality hard/soft landscape opportunities.
- Natural landforms to offer protection from the elements, with proposed dune formations providing shelter from north easterly winds.
- Integration with Broad Hill and links to existing footpaths.

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

1. New Amphitheatre
2. New Events Field
3. New Urban Park Areas
4. New Sports Areas
5. Pump Track
6. Landscaped Mounding Features
7. Reconfiguration Works / Beach Landscaping
8. Interventions / Upgrades Along Beach
9. Broadhill (Public Realm / Landscape)
10. The Beach Ballroom
11. Gateway Building
12. Hub Building
13. Beach Pavilion Building
14. New Canopy Features
15. New Amphitheatre (Canopy Structure)
16. Beach Ballroom Plaza
17. Secret Garden
18. Broadhill (Structures)
19. New Stadium
20. New Leisure Facility
21. Boardwalk
22. New Slipway
23. Beach Boulevard
24. Justice Street Roundabout



Key Features of Rope Works Masterplan

# THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



# 4.0 THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Beachfront Development is a landscape led approach to setting a framework and structure for a re-organisation of the beach area, allowing existing and new buildings, structures, infrastructure, and spaces to come together within a new framework. When complete, this area will be a unique and world leading leisure destination and as such it's important strategic location, with relation to the emerging development of a city centre masterplan (CCMP), must be considered and a long-term vision for the area created.

The image opposite sets out an aspiration, allowing more detailed proposals to be tested and come forward in the future. The following pages set out the key principles of the development framework structure which in turn will be further explored later in the document.

As identified earlier in Section 6.0, the proposed reconfiguration of the Development Framework area has resulted in a reorganisation of the open space provision within the masterplan area, reflecting the new priority of uses both in terms of open space and built. This has resulted in the definition of a new series of distinct character areas across the Development Framework area which reflect a variety of anticipated approaches and identities. These will be progressed and refined at subsequent masterplan phases. The following character areas have been established:

- 1. Beach Ballroom
  - 2. Events Park + Field
  - 3. Core Play Park
  - 4. Esplanade and Beach
  - 5. Beach Boulevard
  - 6. Broad Hill
  - 7. Potential Stadium and Leisure
  - 8. Beach Village
1. Beach Ballroom  
2. Events Park + Field } Queens Links Urban Park  
3. Core Play Park }

Each character area is set out in the following sub sections, in order to describe the key attributes of each in terms of design principles and approaches giving definition to the spaces whilst retaining flexibility to allow for the brief of each area to evolve with any future refinement or adaptation of the Development Framework document.

Through this refinement of the character areas, it is important to acknowledge that the overall Development Framework area has an overriding aim of being cohesive and a joined-up piece of urban and landscape design delivering an identifiable and exciting new place of the city of Aberdeen and the wider region.



Development Framework Plan

## BEACH BALLROOM CHARACTER AREA

The Beach Ballroom is to be considered as a primary focal point in the new Development Framework proposals, due to its central position and its cultural significance.

## BEACH BALLROOM CONCEPT

The proposals for the ballroom aim to identify opportunities for development; from interventions such as upgrades to internal fitouts to high level re-imaginings of current and proposed revenue generating spaces, both inside and out.

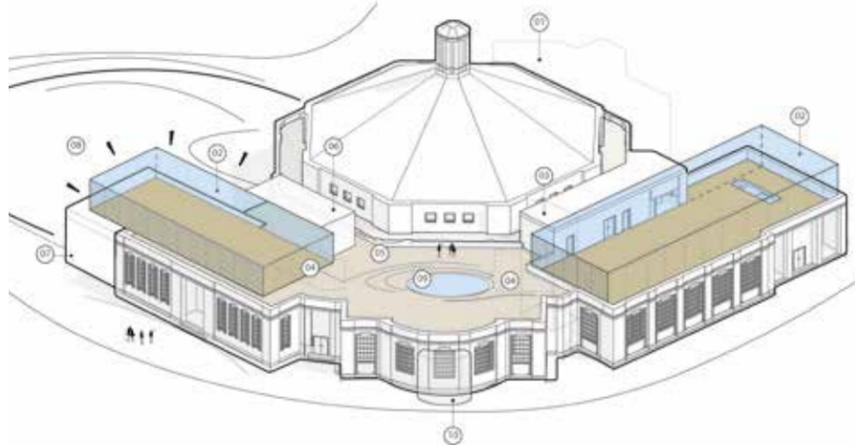
The proposed renovation and extension of the B-listed Beach Ballroom will seek to respect the heritage and memories defined by this iconic space to ensure to can continue to contribute to the lives of those who visit it. Those historic aspects of the interior and exterior of the building will be retained and revitalised through an extensive programme of renovation. As part of this renovation, an interior design strategy which promotes the buildings Art Deco heritage will bring a sense of grandeur back to the property. Potential new extensions to the building will be considerate and of an appropriate scale and style to compliment the Ballroom.

In addition to the renovation and reworking of the ballroom, there is the potential to create improved public spaces in the immediate vicinity, for example:

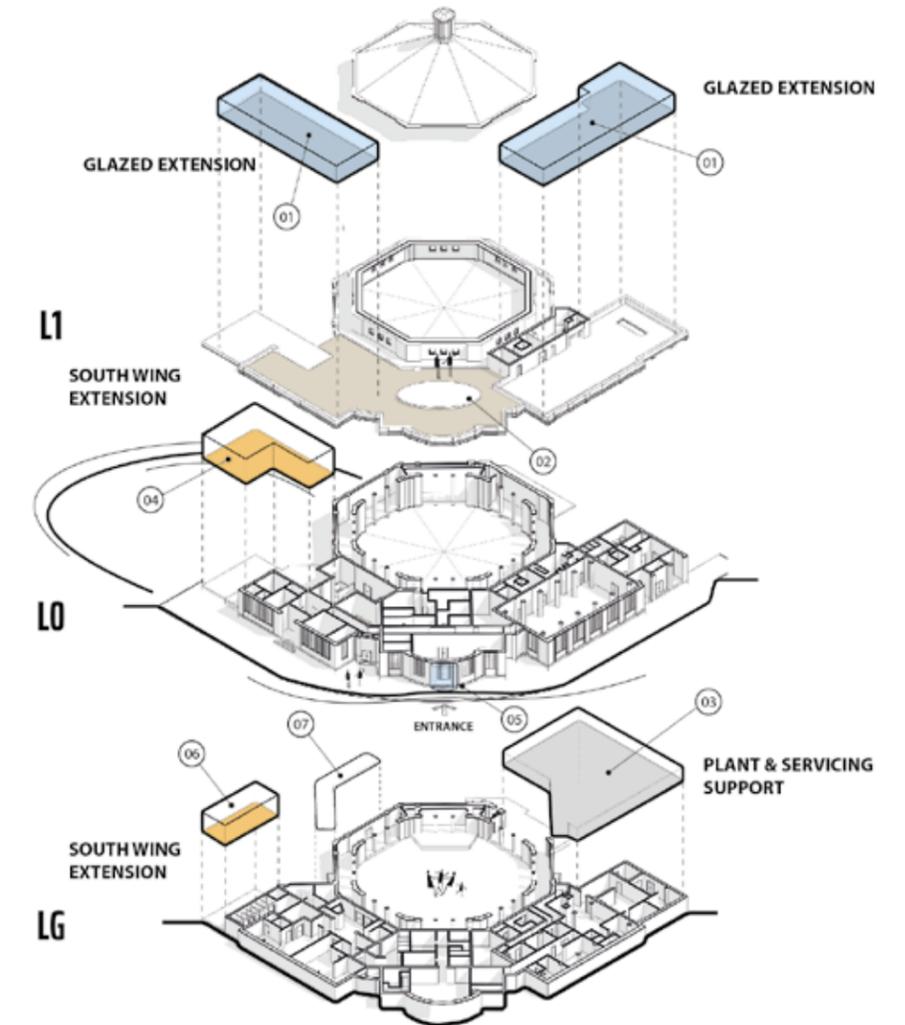
- a potential plaza space with water features forming a grand setting for the building and ensuring the buildings prominence on the main pedestrianised route through the site from Beach Boulevard to Esplanade.
- a potential sunken garden area to the rear of the ballroom which would provide a dedicated external space for use by the ballroom and serve to link the wider public space between the ballroom and a potential leisure facility adjacent.



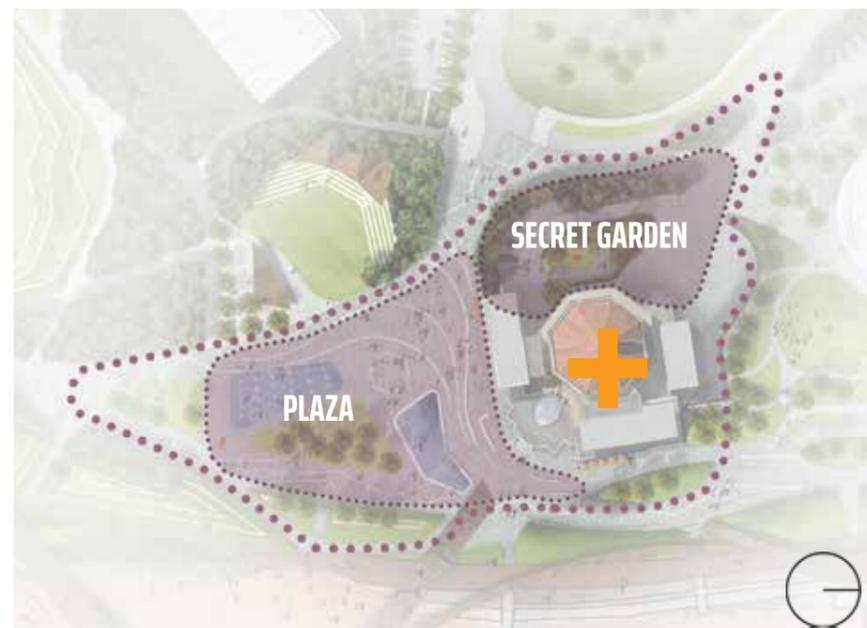
Aspirational CGI Image of Ballroom Vision



Re-imagined Ballroom Concept



Concept Axonometric - Beach Ballroom



Concept Plan - Ballroom, External Plaza, Secret Garden



Ballroom External Aspirational Image



Ballroom Internal Aspirational Image



Ballroom Extensions Aspirational Image

## QUEENS LINKS URBAN PARK CHARACTER AREA

The heart of the open space provision within the Development Framework is focussed on the urban park, a central landscape space, approximately 5.5ha, designed to accommodate multiple uses. The Urban Park is composed of two main character areas, the Core Play, Park and the Events Park + Field, joined by the Pedestrian Spine (former Beach Boulevard east).

## QUEENS LINKS PARK URBAN CONCEPT

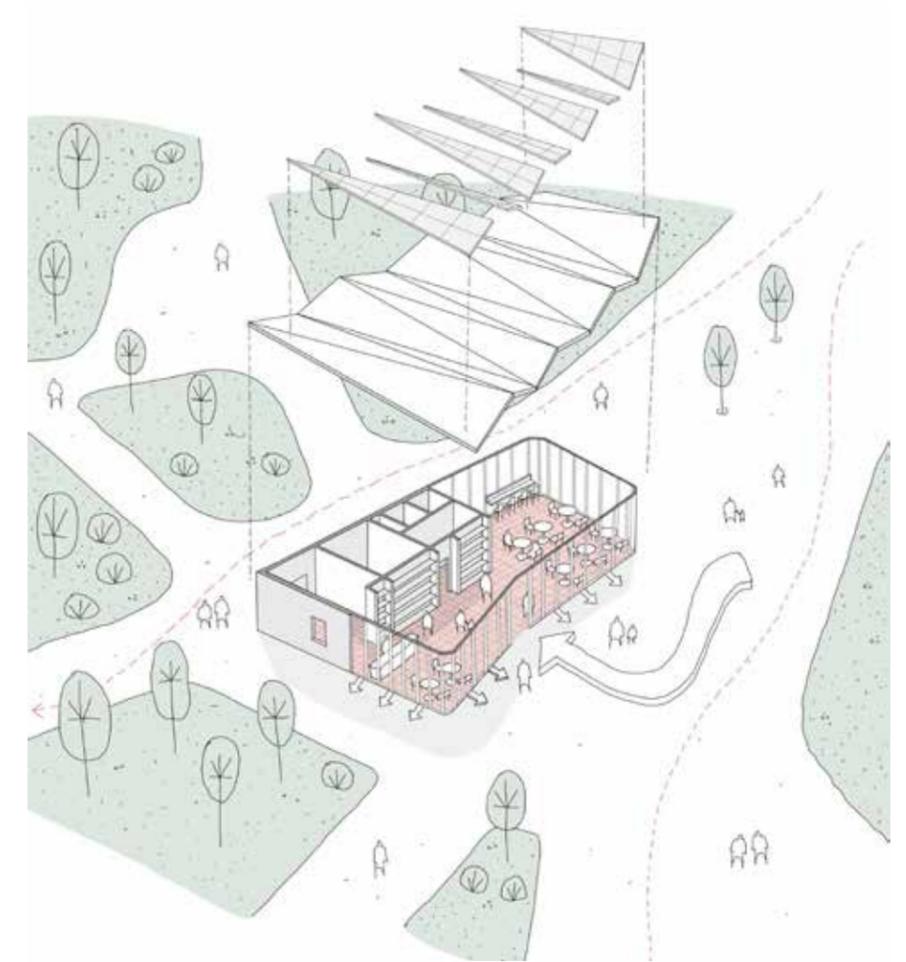
A public park must be accessible for everyone, such is the egalitarian existence of true public spaces. The richness of the park will come in its form and uses. Play and games are an obvious part of this mix and creating the physical environment for this to flourish is key. The whole park should be seen 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. Potential insertions within the urban park space include:

- An external Amphitheatre with canopy located adjacent to the Beach Ballroom.
- A large events field capable of hosting events and day-to-day use.
- A gateway building located at entrance to Beachfront area giving sense of arrival.
- A hub building located at centre of site offering a place to engage and refresh.
- Canopy features offering shelter and seating across the site.
- Water features to bring drama and animation to spaces.

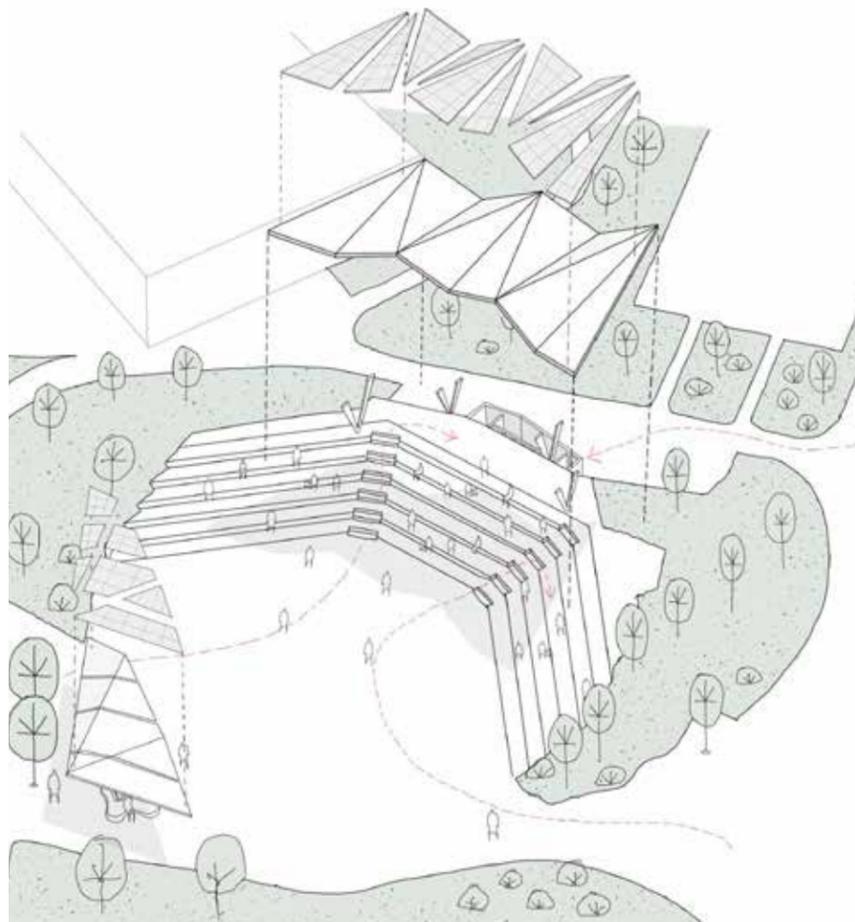
There are many other uses to be considered, and careful analysis of what is best is important as flexibility will be key in the evolution of a public park along with its functionality and flexibility to cater for yet unforeseen city uses.



Concept Plan - Play Park



Hub building Sketch Concept



Amphitheatre Sketch Concept



Concept Plan - Urban Park



Concept Plan - Events Park & Field

## BEACH & ESPLANADE CHARACTER AREA

A key aspiration of the Development Framework is the removal of vehicles (except maintenance/ emergency/ permitted vehicles) along a section of the Esplanade between Codona's and Accommodation Road. This would seek to create a people-focussed environment and would allow the park to connect directly with the beach and to improve the association between the two.

## BEACH & ESPLANADE CONCEPT

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. The modification of the landform in this area, due to the removal of the road, 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 aims will be making access down to the beach easier and convenient enhancing the perception of access to the sand and beach environment.

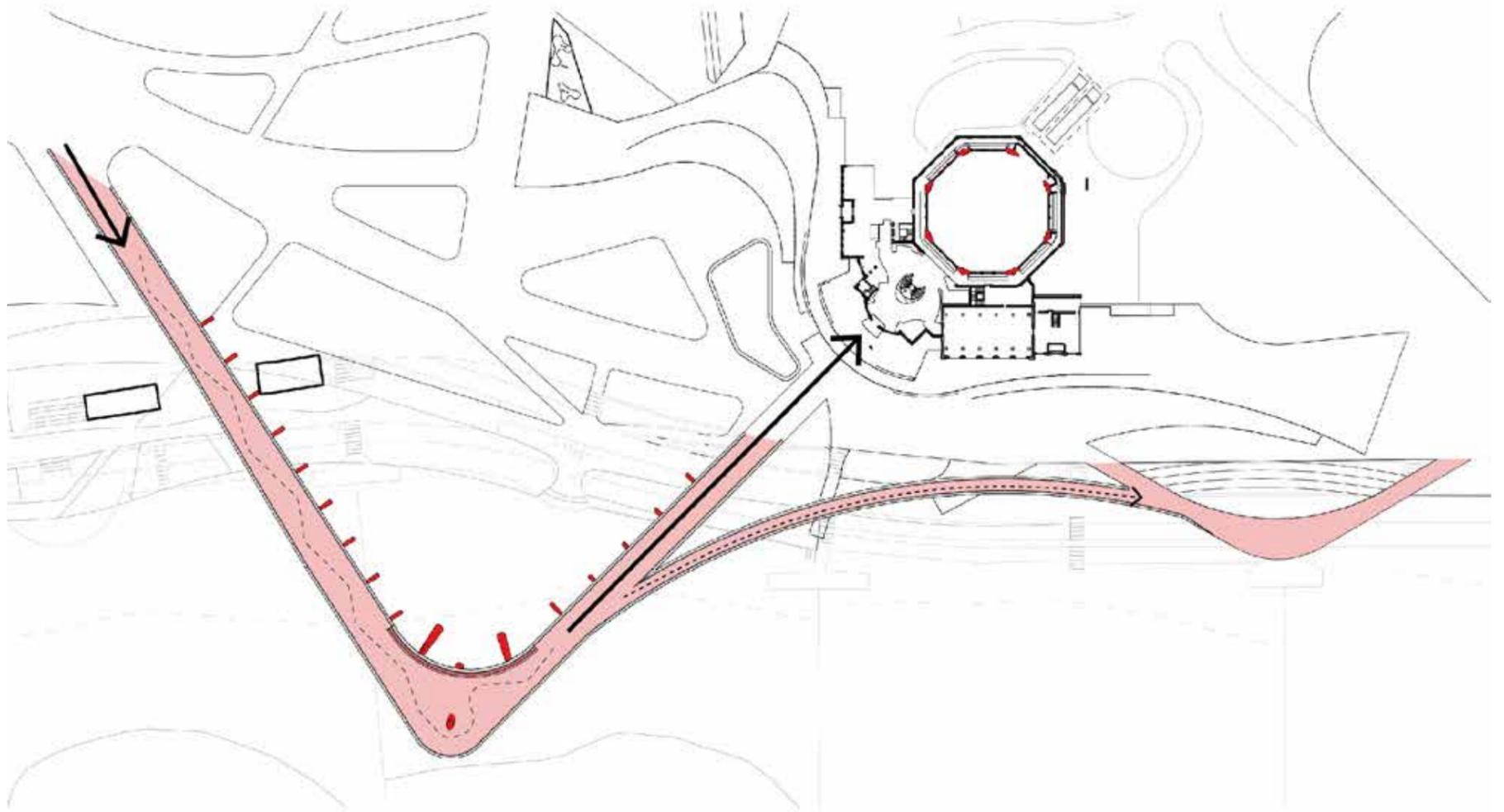
A potential Boardwalk/Pier structure could allow for the creation of an enhanced beach frontage with opportunities for views towards the sea and back to the city. The Boardwalk would become a focal point on the area's periphery, forming a new key public space and creating a threshold between Beach Boulevard, the Esplanade, and the North Sea. The form of the Boardwalk would align with the Rope Works Concept to create an organic and intuitive journey, linking the key elements within the Urban Park to the new activate frontage of the Esplanade.



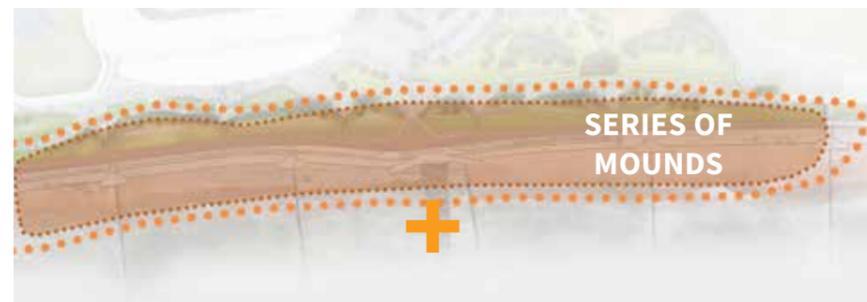
Potential Boardwalk Pier Structure (Photo courtesy of Wilkinson Eyre)



3D Sketch Concept



Plan Diagram



Concept Plan - Esplanade North - Existing esplanade and sea wall are enhanced with planting and landform



Concept Plan - Esplanade South - Reshaped Beach and Sea Wall

**BEACH BOULEVARD CHARACTER AREA**

The Beach Boulevard main character area runs from Links Road to the roundabout on the A956/Commerce Street and will be reconfigured to provide the main active travel between the beach and the city centre, prioritising pedestrian, and cycle movement, while incorporating vehicles.

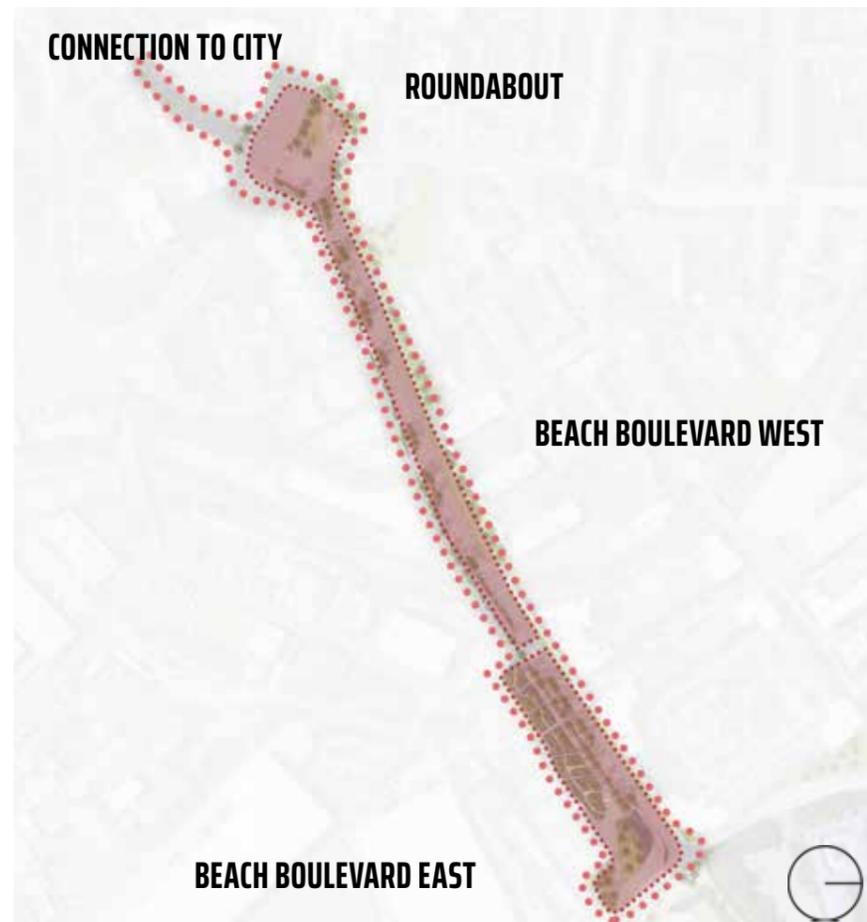
**BEACH BOULEVARD CONCEPT**

This section of Beach Boulevard is approximately 500m long and is approximately 27.5m wide. Roughly 67% of this is currently dedicated to vehicles therefore reconfiguration is a key aim within the Development Framework to allow the redistribution of available space to increase the allocation for pedestrians, cycles, SUDS, planting, and seating whilst maintaining vehicle and public transport access. The reallocation of space along Beach Boulevard would improve both the ease and the quality of the journey between the city centre and the beach area, making it more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists and would provide environmental improvements through increased planting and improved water and air quality.

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



Proposed Streetscape works to Beach Boulevard



Concept Plan - Beach Boulevard



Potential Justice Street Roundabout Reconfiguration



Potential Community Garden Space at east end of Beach Boulevard



Aspirational Beach Boulevard CGI

### BROAD HILL CHARACTER AREA

Broad Hill is approximately 5ha of green natural space, and one of the most distinctive landscape features within the Development Framework area and indeed along this stretch of coastline. A network of formal and informal paths criss-crosses this natural character area, illustrating that it is a popular spot in the coastal area, with a viewpoint at its summit. Recent tree planting (pine trees) on the leeward side (west), has been partially successful in adding further character and shelter to this area and offering a buffer to the Trinity Cemetery.

### BROAD HILL CONCEPT

The conceptual approach to Broad Hill is one that looks to conserve the natural form and condition of this environment. This could be described as a lighter touch nature-based intervention approach. It is likely that Broad Hill is already the most biodiverse part of the Development Framework area, however the aim will be to further look for ecological enhancements through additional tree planting especially along the leeward side of the hill, expanding the pine woodland, grassland management and providing a nature led stabilisation program for the steeper eroding east slopes. This enhancement of the ecological resource will offer a key biodiverse catalyst and generator for the rest of the Development Framework area and the creation of wider green networks.

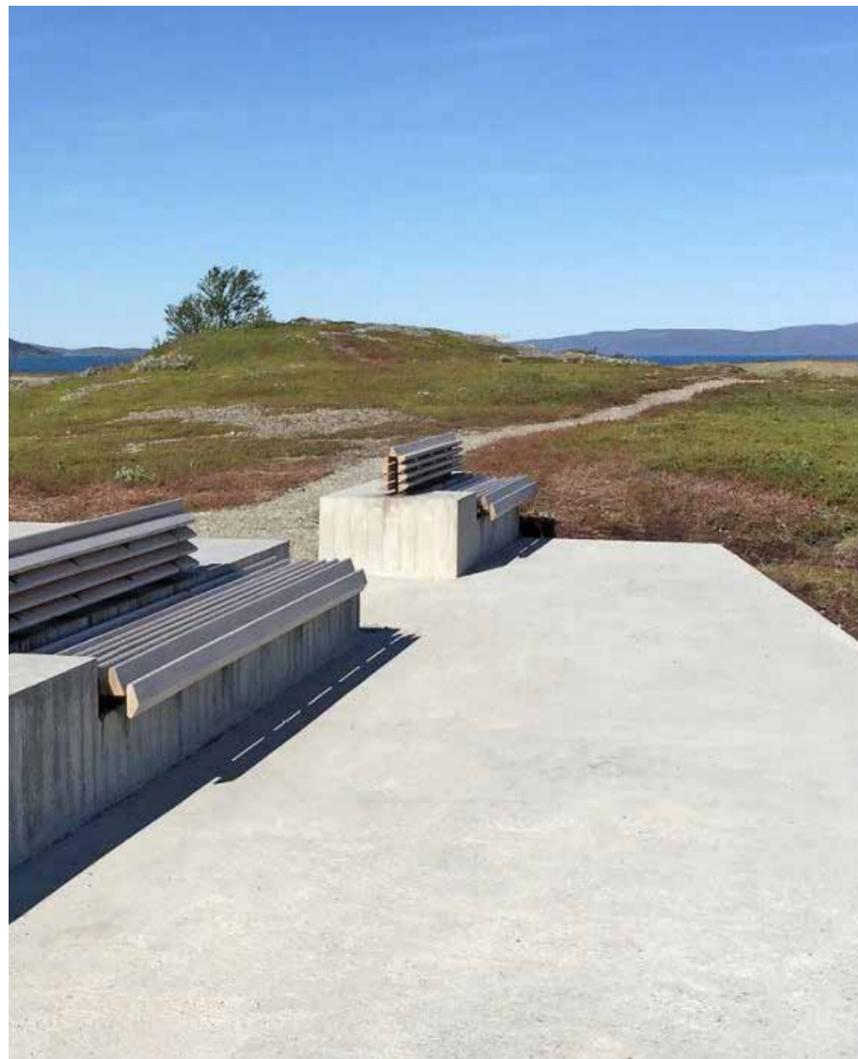
Other interventions on Broad Hill will look to be light touch, with improvements to the existing path network that criss-crosses the hill at present, with 2 or 3 opportunities explored for viewpoints/resting places possibly sculptural in form but with minimal impact on the land. These interventions will maximise the expansive views available to the sea and city, as well as commanding views of the new beachfront park, leisure, and stadium, offering opportunities for wayfinding and educational interpretation.



Precedent Imagery



Canopy Shelter Concept



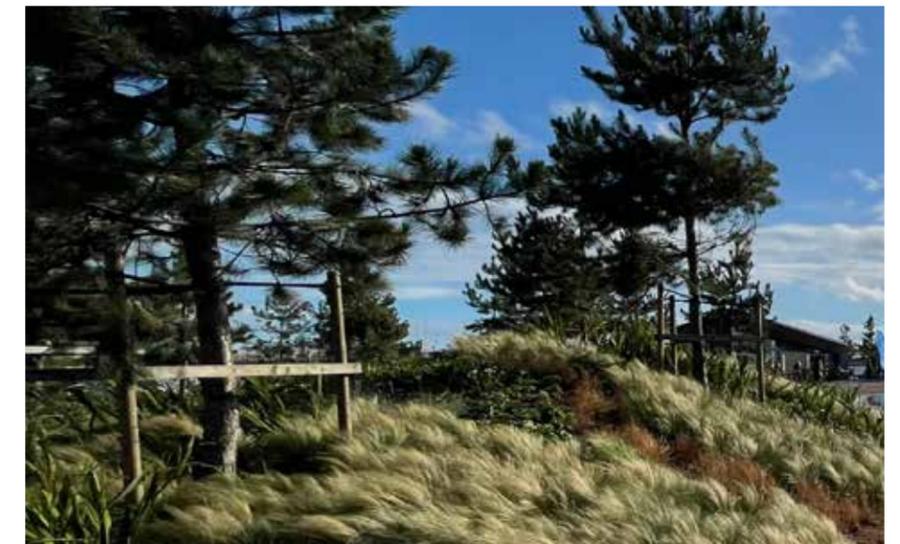
Materiality



Wildflower planting



Concept Plan - Beach Boulevard



Tree planting

### POTENTIAL STADIUM & LEISURE CHARACTER AREA

Aberdeen City Council will require the Beachfront developments to become a new destination in their own right, be of exceptional architectural quality and have the 'wow factor'.

### POTENTIAL STADIUM & LEISURE CONCEPT

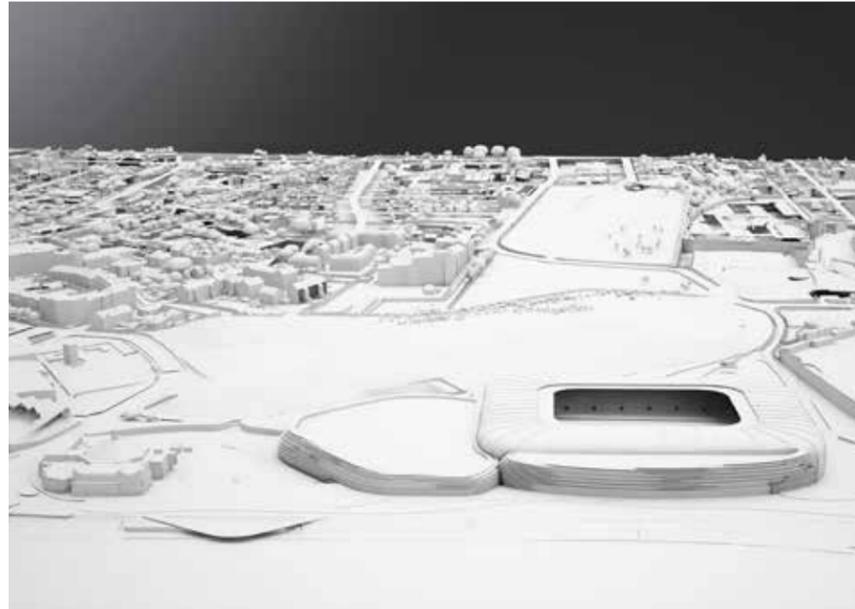
The proposals will also embrace the principles of active design that promote activity, health, and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities.

There are three key functions to be provided within the Stadium and Leisure Character Area:

- Leisure facility
- Ice Arena
- Stadium

The aims and objectives of the potential stadium and sport and leisure facility are to place sport, physical activity, health, and wellbeing at the very heart of the community in Aberdeen. Each facility would help activate the city, increase opportunities for people to participate in physical activity and sport, invest in the City's infrastructure of people and places and be inclusive to provide the opportunity to become and stay active, as well as helping to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

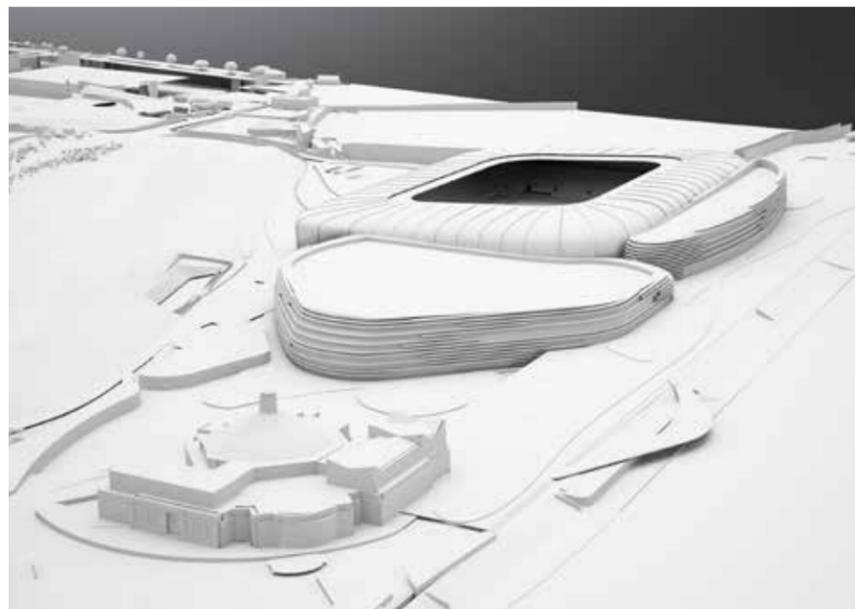
The potential new facilities would offer the opportunity to participate in sport, leisure, recreation, and community activities within a comfortable, modern, and safe environment. The potential leisure facility would be open to casual visitors to the beach area who simply wish to enjoy the seafront and observe rather than participate in the wide range of activities. The facility would be an attraction in its own right and act as a hub for visiting other parts of the beach area.



Conceptual South East aerial view



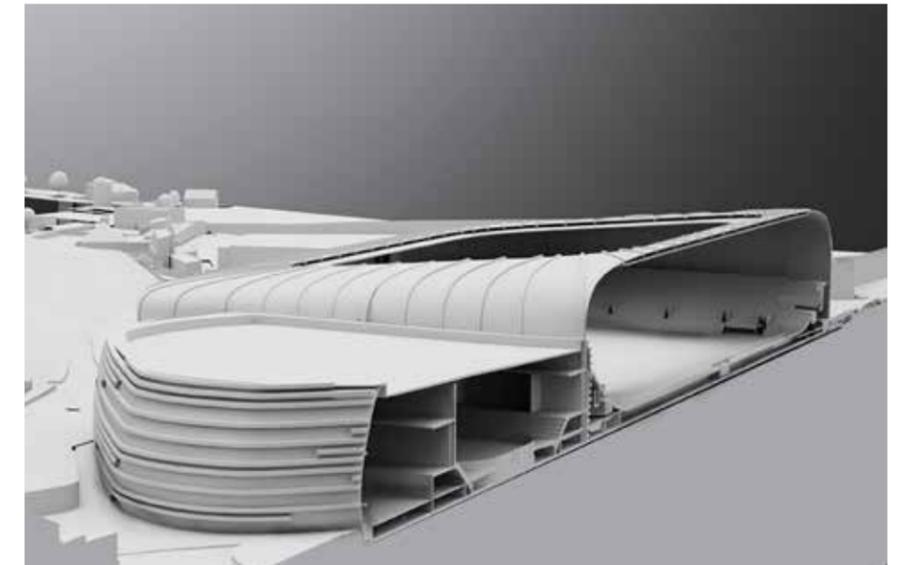
Potential Stadium Internal (Photo courtesy of UK News Group)



Conceptual South West Aerial View



Potential Stadium Facade (Photo courtesy of White Arkitekter)



Conceptual South East aerial - sectional view



Potential Stadium as Landmark (Photo courtesy of Mies Architects)



Concept Plan - Potential Stadium & Leisure

**BEACH VILLAGE CHARACTER AREA**

The potential Beach Village is envisaged as an area which can form a centre for a variety of beachfront activities, such as surfing, wild swimming, sailing, and kayaking, by providing facilities for hire, changing, general welfare and include areas for parking.

**BEACH VILLAGE CONCEPT**

A potential Beach Pavilion building would offer a flexible layout that can be used to support these different beachfront activities. The building could also potentially house a Surf Pavilion, Sports Clubhouse, and other complementary uses such as retail, Beach Café or Juice Bar. Changing/ Toilet Facilities would also be accommodated alongside First Aid provision and equipment storage areas. Suggested accessible parking would be located in close proximity to the building and would be fully accessible with ramped access integrated into the landscape design.

An associated Slipway to assist in facilitating a wide range of uses within the Beach Village, would be accessible via the existing underpass route which would be maintained and enhanced, giving direct access to the Beach. The slipway proposal will require to be assessed in relation to its impact on the natural coastal processes and beach development.

The Beach Village could also serve as an extension of the potential Stadium and Leisure proposals to allow an expanded offer of activities to be developed.



Beach Village Plan



Beach Pavilion Precedent (Photo courtesy of Ben Williams)



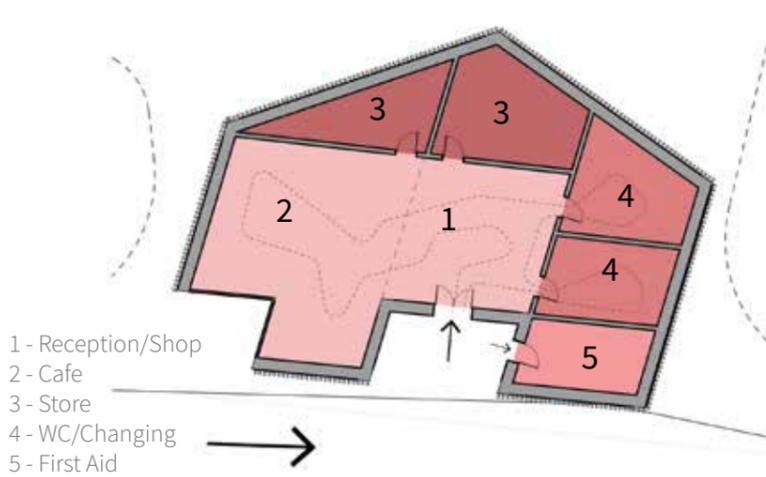
Slipway Materiality



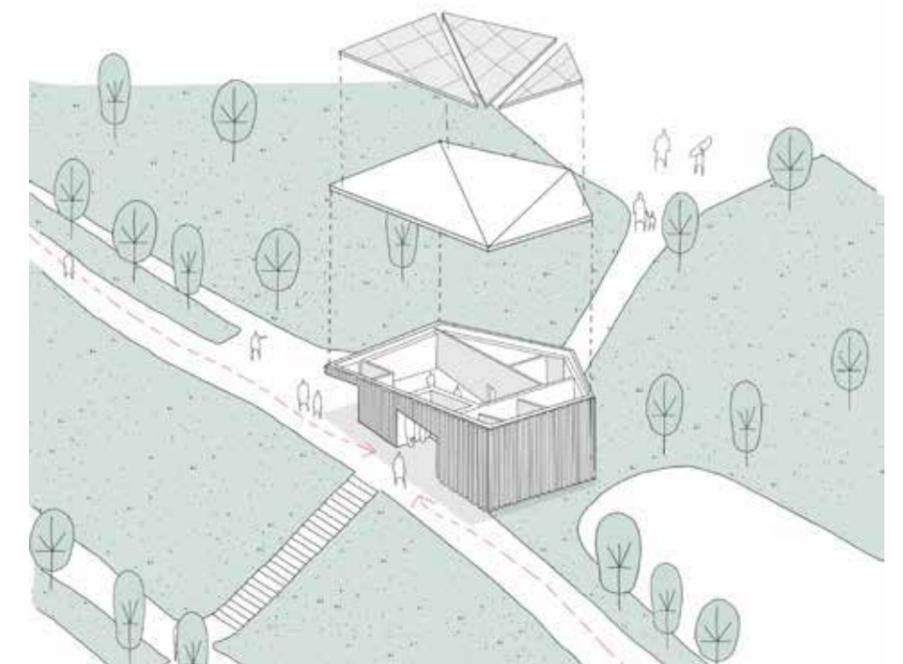
Beach Pavilion Concept 3D Model Extracts



Concept Plan - Beach Village



Beach Pavilion Concept Diagram



Beach Pavilion Isometric Sketch View

# PHASING & DELIVERY



# 5.0 PHASING & DELIVERY

The proposals documented within the Development Framework are still at an indicative stage however the adjacent phasing diagrams illustrate the desired direction of growth as currently envisaged. As advised in the Introduction, there are elements of the Development Framework proposals that can be progressed by the Council under their statutory ‘permitted development’ powers, mainly the public realm and urban park areas. That is because these are works which are for the maintenance, improvement and alteration of Council land for the existing purposes of function of that land, namely existing public parks and open recreational spaces. However, any buildings within these areas would likely still require planning and associated permissions. As such, it is anticipated that the public realm-related developments will be the items to come forward first.

- Phase 1 - Queens Links Urban Park
- Phase 2 - Broad Hill
- Phase 3 - Beach Boulevard
- Phase 4 - Beach Ballroom
- Phase 5 - The Beach & Esplanade
- Phase 6 - Potential Stadium and Leisure
- Phase 7 - Beach Village

This phasing is only indicative and there are likely to be elements of work, be that Character Area-specific or across a number of Character Areas, which will be carried out concurrently or to enable certain other works to be undertaken.



Phase 1 - Queens Links Urban Park



Phase 2 - Broad Hill



Phase 3 - Beach Boulevard



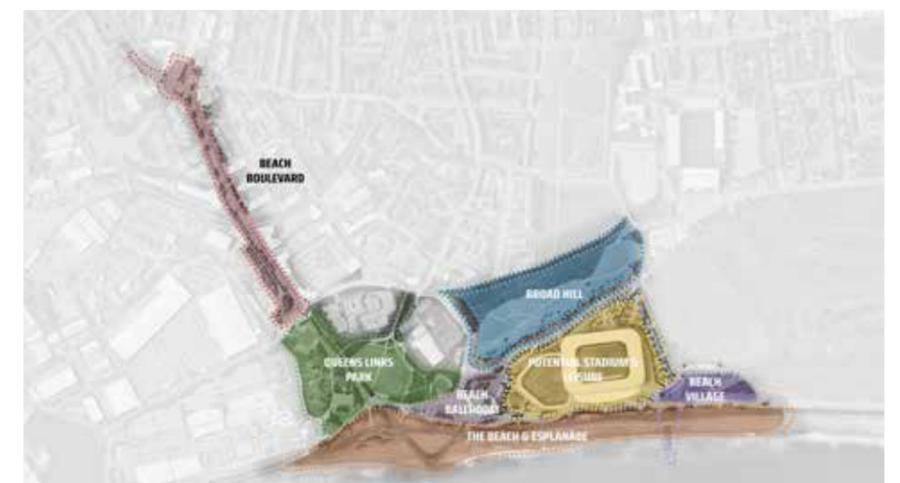
Phase 4 - Beach Ballroom



Phase 5 - The Beach & Esplanade



Phase 6 - Potential Stadium & Leisure



Phase 7 - Beach Village

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