

# DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PHASE 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY APRIL 2023

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL ABERDEEN BEACHFRONT



# INTRODUCTION



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted just how important accessible and good quality public space is to people's physical and mental health - particularly the Beachfront. The Development Framework aims to revitalise the Beachfront as a world-class destination for sport, leisure and tourism. Phase 1 focusses on the areas around Queens Links and Kings Link, and links back to the City Centre Masterplan. A future Phase 2 will consider connections and potential improvements to both the north and south of the Phase 1 site.



Location Plan with Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework Area

-  Beachfront Development Framework Phase 1 Boundary
-  Beachfront Development Framework Phase 2 Boundary
-  City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) Boundary



CGI of Beachfront Aspirations

## 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 Development Framework offers a unique opportunity to create a transformational new waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.

**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 Beachfront Development Framework Phase 1 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 new stadium, and leisure facility as well as supporting facilities such as changing accommodation/satellite facilities and a potential landmark boardwalk 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 in 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 of Beachfront proposals

### 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.

### Leisure Facilities and Potential New Stadium

A leisure facility and potential new stadium 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 new stadium could provide a new home to Aberdeen F.C and could 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.



Rope Works conceptual masterplan

### Key:

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Pedestrian Boulevard   | 13. Leisure Facility      |
| 2. Urban Park             | 14. Esplanade             |
| 3. Public Space           | 15. Potential New Stadium |
| 4. Amphitheatre           | 16. Slipway               |
| 5. Landscaping Mounding   | 17. Beach Pavilion        |
| 6. Pavilion               |                           |
| 7. Water Feature          |                           |
| 8. Boardwalk              |                           |
| 9. Beach Ballroom         |                           |
| 10. Hidden Garden         |                           |
| 11. Public Plaza          |                           |
| 12. Existing Ice Facility |                           |

# THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



# 4.0 THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Based on the preferred options previously discussed, the design team produced an indicative Development Framework Plan which can be seen in the image opposite. This sets out an aspiration, allowing more detailed proposals to be tested and come forward in the future.

As previously mentioned, the spacial configuration exercise that was conducted for the proposed 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
- } Queens Links Urban 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. They also look at 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 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 civic 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. This civic plaza will provide a location for wider orientation, wayfinding and gathering within high quality public realm.
- 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.



Concept Plan - Ballroom, External Plaza, Secret Garden



1. Spanish City, Whitley Bay - precedent image



2. The Reel House, Glasgow - precedent image



3. Architecture and materiality precedents



4. Proposed new main entrance



5. Proposed exterior public realm



6. Proposed east Ballroom elevation

## 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), with nodes of key civic plazas providing locations of orientation, way-finding and gathering within high quality public realm areas.

## QUEENS LINKS PARK URBAN CONCEPT

A public park must be accessible for everyone. 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.

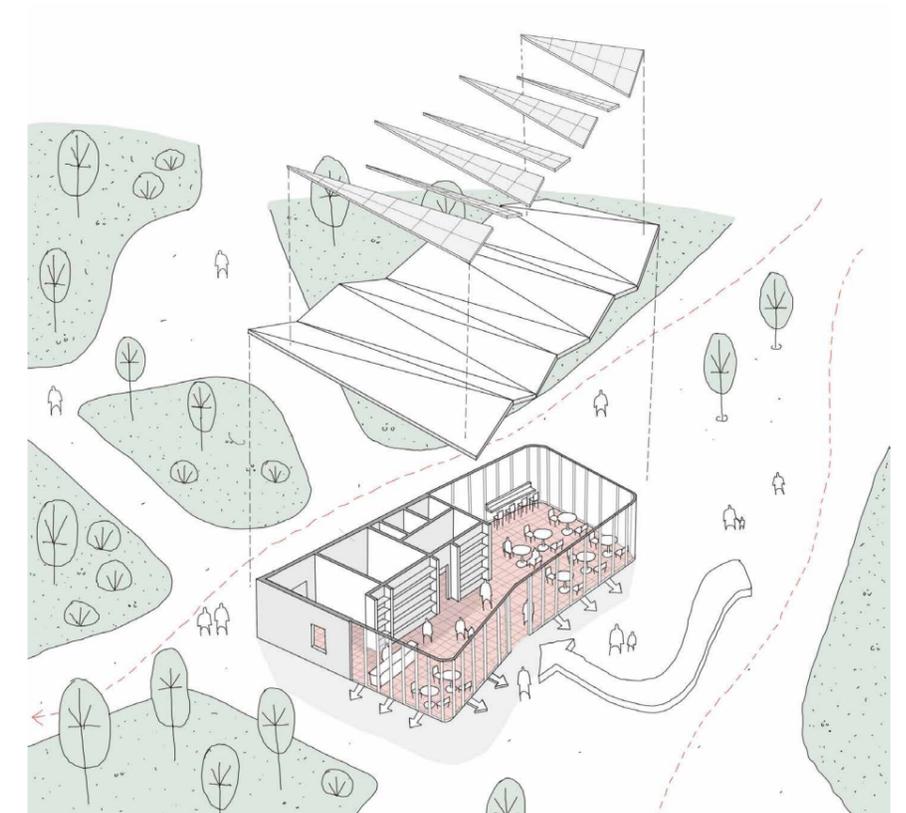
Potential insertions within the urban park space include:

- Civic plazas.
- 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.

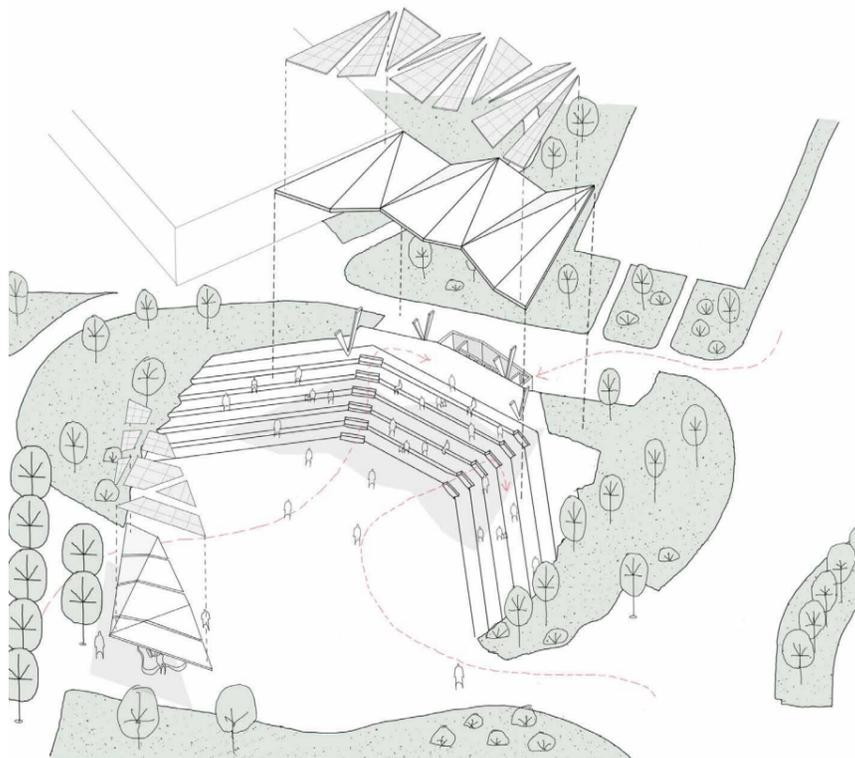
There are many other uses to be considered, and careful analysis of what is best is important as flexibility will be key in the evolution of a public park along with its functionality and flexibility to cater for yet unforeseen city uses.



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 enable a more accessible transition between the beachfront park and the beach. Initial ideas are to investigate modifying the levels across this transition area while maintaining the sea defences. The aim is to create better visual and physical connectivity between the park and the sea.

The modification of the landform in this 'upper' beach and esplanade area, facilitated by 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. Some early ideas include incorporation of the lower sea defences in the design, thereby leaving them intact, and designing a new series of physical components allowing easier access and interface with the beach. The improved access is also important for maintaining and improving the general amenity value of the beach.

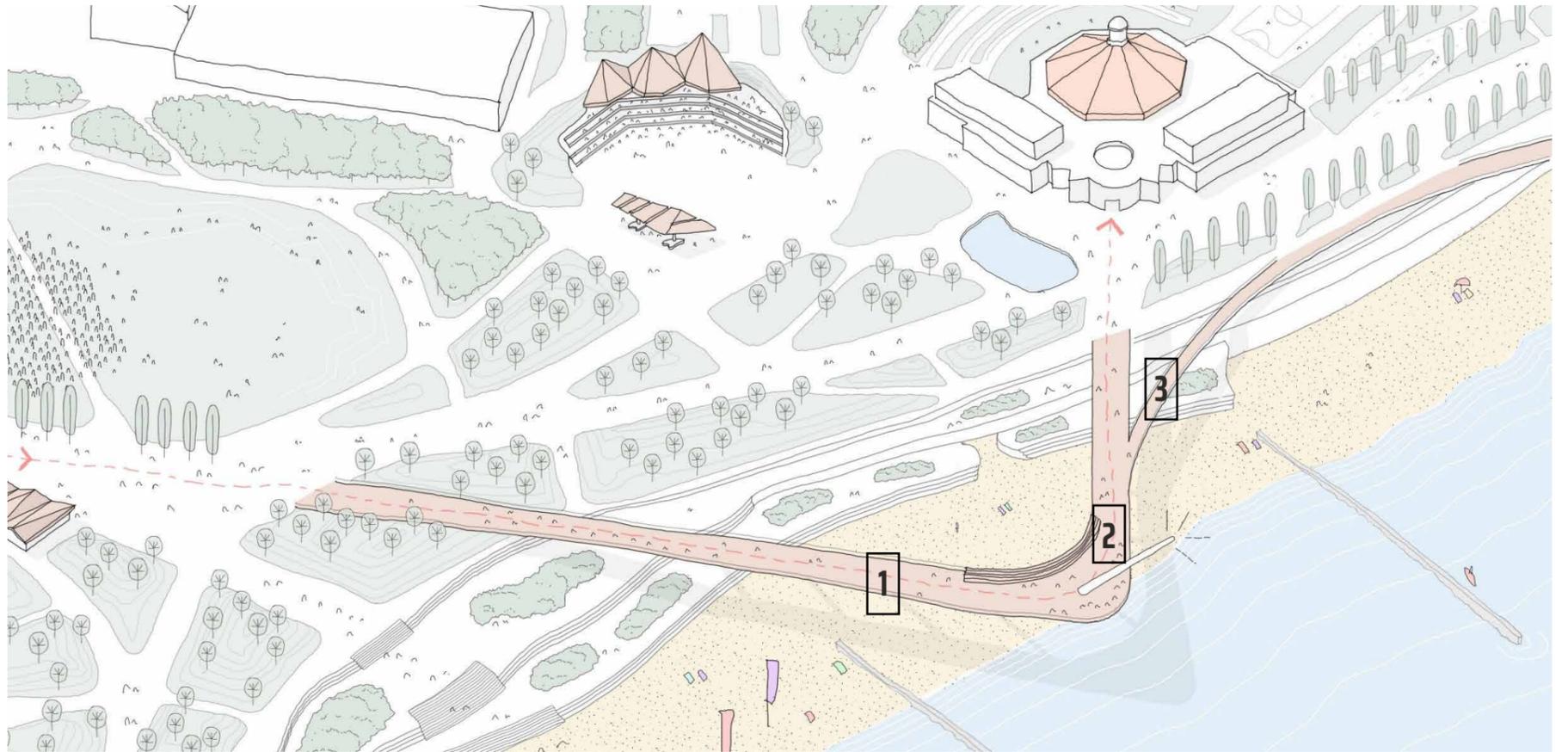
A potential Boardwalk/Pier structure could allow for the creation of an enhanced beach frontage with opportunities for views towards the sea and back to the city. The Boardwalk would become a focal point on the area's periphery, forming a new key public space and creating a threshold between Beach Boulevard, 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.



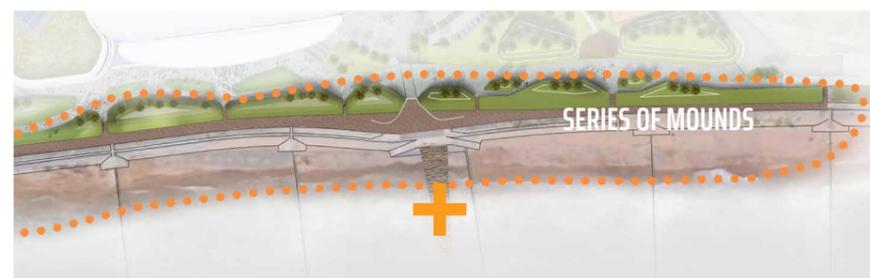
Potential Boardwalk Pier Structure (Photo courtesy of Wilkinson Eyre)



Aspirational image of Vancouver waterfront boardwalk



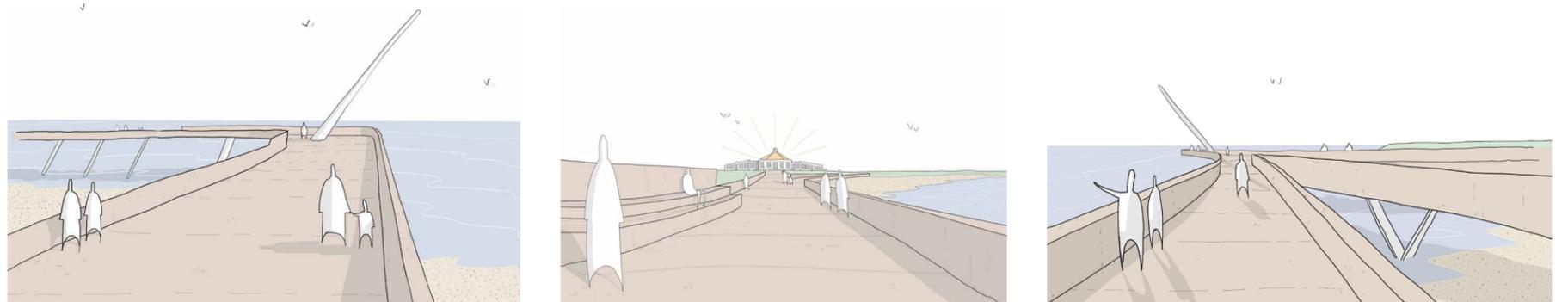
Isometric sketch view



Concept Plan - Esplanade North - Existing esplanade and sea wall



Concept Plan - Esplanade South - Reshaped Beach and Sea Wall



The images above provide visual inspiration for the Boardwalk and are indicative only. Boardwalk concept sketches

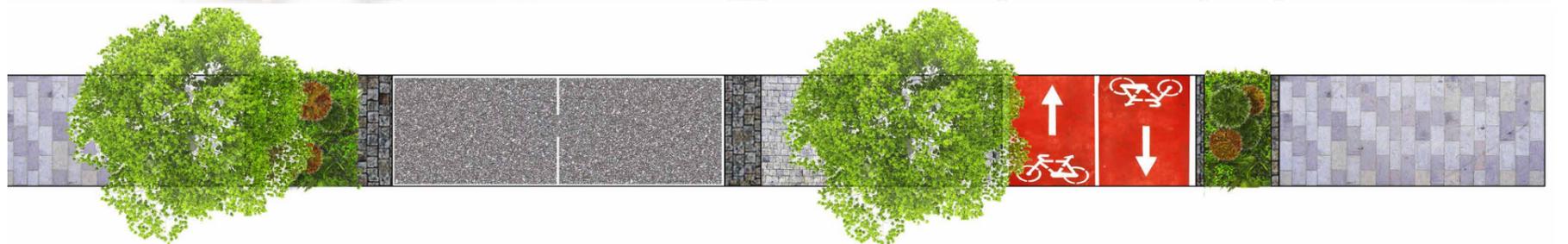
## BEACH BOULEVARD CHARACTER AREA

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.



Pedestrian Footpath

Planting

Reduced Carriageway

Bus Stop/  
Planting

New Segregated  
Cycle Lane

Pedestrian Footpath

Proposed Streetscape works to Beach Boulevard



Concept Plan - Beach Boulevard



Potential Community Garden space at east end of Beach Boulevard



Potential view of Beach Boulevard with segregated cycleway and soft landscape



Community garden with planting



Social seating arrangements



Mix of planting



Active streetscape

## BROAD HILL CHARACTER AREA

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. Any interventions must be respectful of this existing environment and comply with any stand-offs or restrictions necessitated by the presence of protected species on Broad Hill.

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 potential new Stadium, offering opportunities for wayfinding and educational interpretation.



Aspirational imagery of seating platform



Viewing platform/seating wall



Location plan



+ Potential Architectural Interventions

Concept Plan - Broad Hill

## LEISURE & POTENTIAL STADIUM CHARACTER AREA

The aims and objectives of the sport and leisure facility and potential Football Stadium and are to place sport, physical activity, health, and well-being at the very heart of the community in Aberdeen.

## LEISURE & POTENTIAL STADIUM CONCEPT

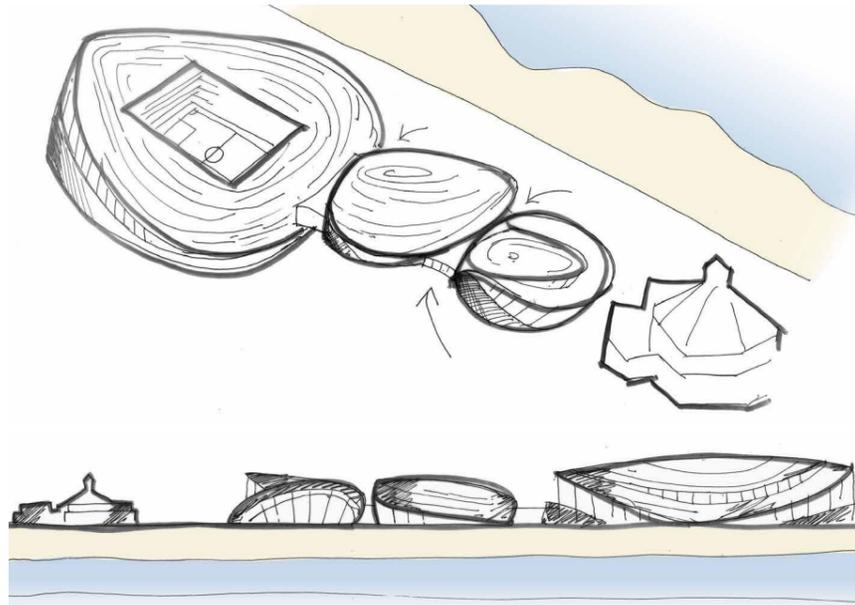
The proposals will also embrace the principles of active design that promote activity, health, and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities.

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

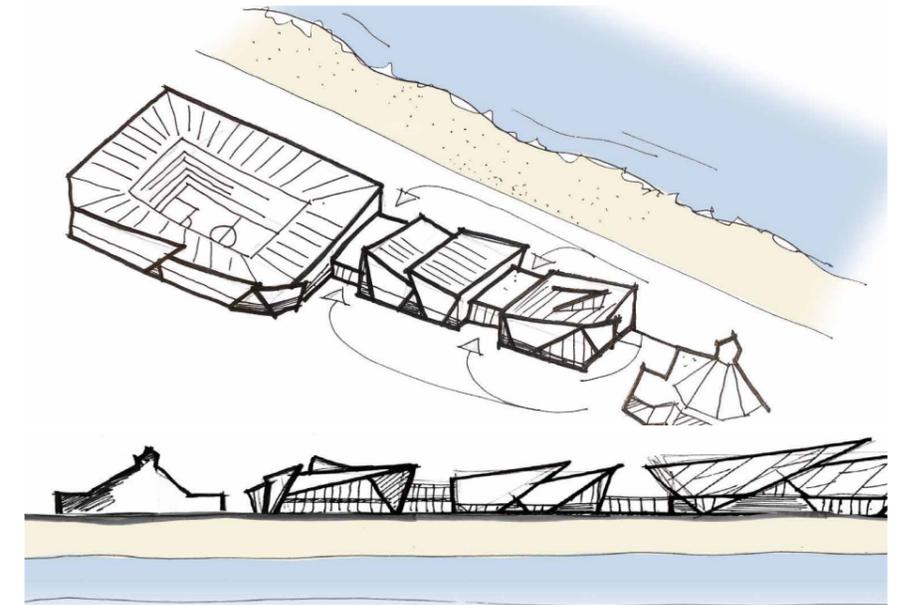
- Leisure facility
- Ice Arena
- Potential Stadium

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 well-being. 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.

Two design concepts have emerged for these facilities, which relate back to the Ropeworks concept of the Development Framework, and the Beachfront location. 'Shells' comes from the many shells found on the coastline. 'Sails' refers back to the city's shipbuilding past, and the historic rope works factory that was located at Queens Links.



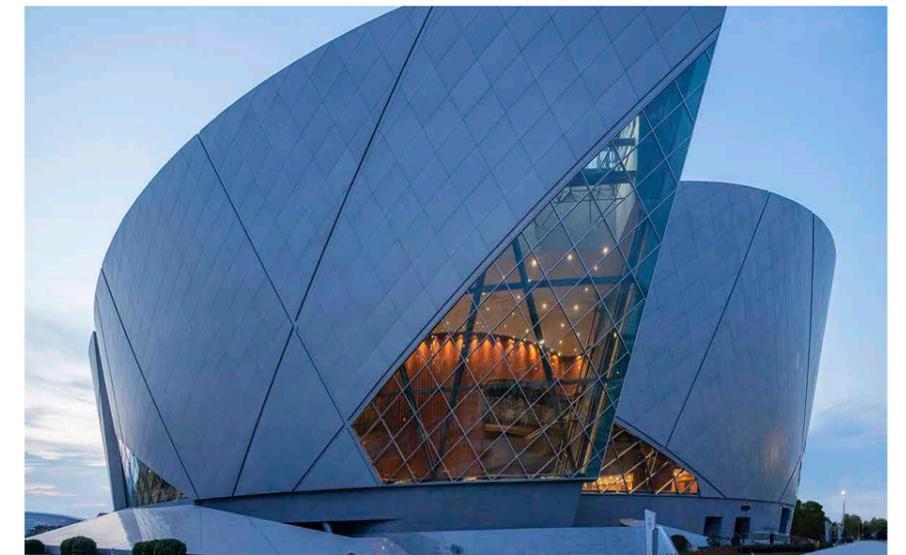
Shell concept sketches



Sails concept sketches



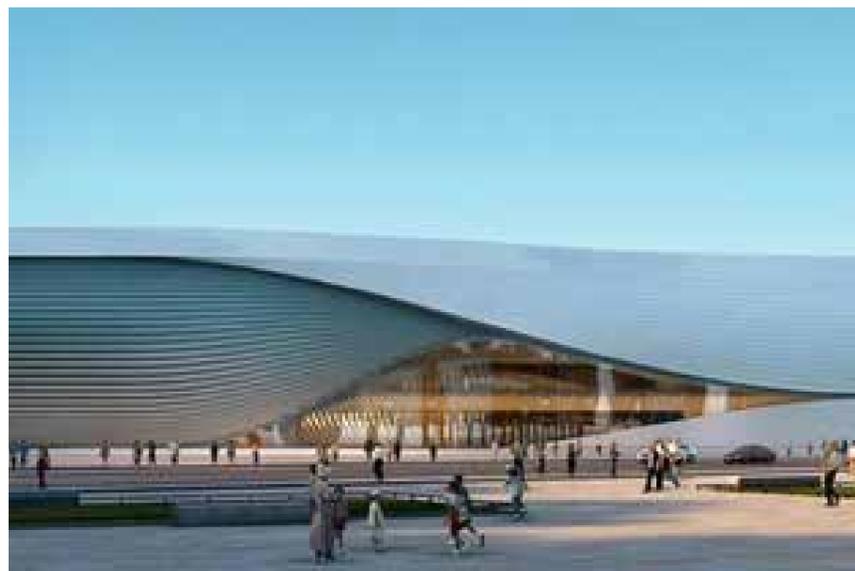
Public realm tied to Potential Stadium



Zhengzhou Grand Theatre, Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, China



Concept Plan - Leisure and potential new Stadium



Aspirational imagery of leisure facility concept



Kilden Performing Art Centre, Norway

## 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, wild swimming, sailing, and kayaking, by providing facilities for hire, changing, general welfare and include areas for parking.

Within the Development Framework Phase 2, locations are under consideration for an extension of the Beach Village character area to incorporate satellite intervention locations, for changing and W/C provisions, along with a potential Water Sports Club House located at Fittie.

## BEACH VILLAGE CONCEPT

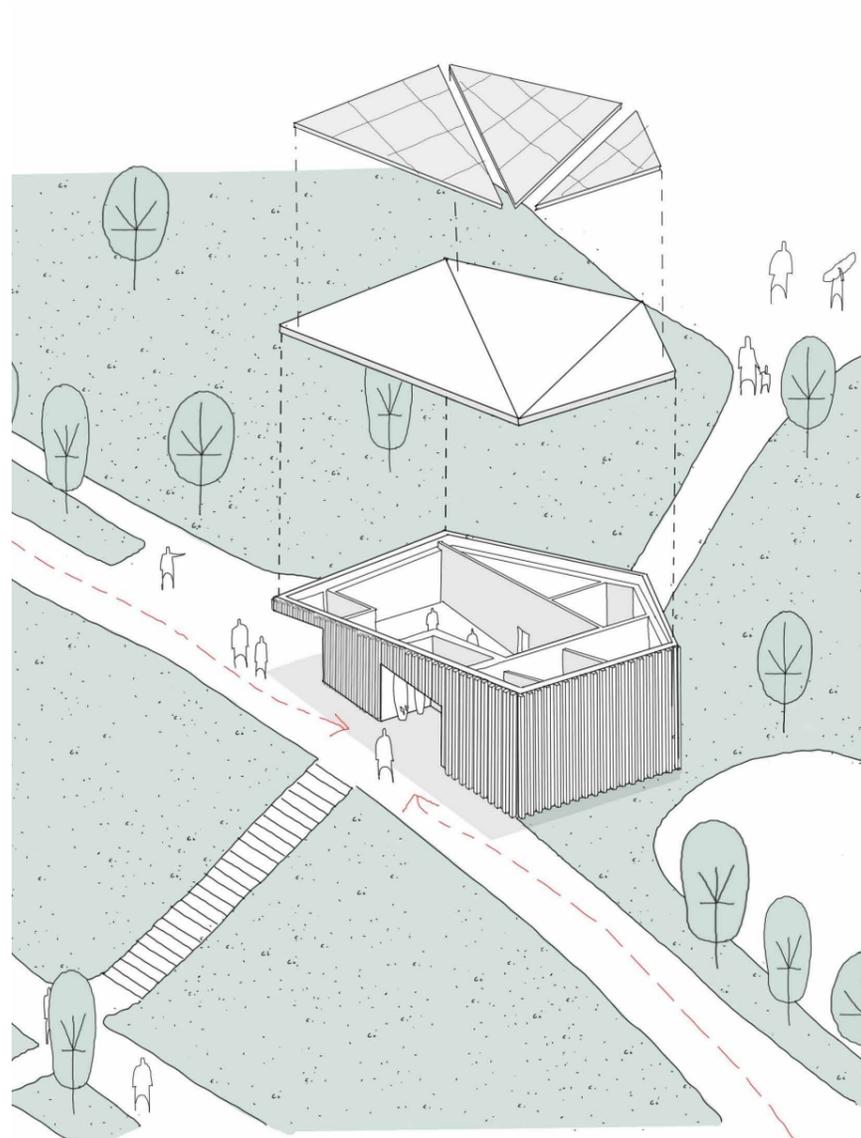
A potential Beach Pavilion building would offer a flexible layout that can be used to support these different Beachfront activities.

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 Leisure and Potential New Stadium proposals to allow an expanded offer of activities to be developed.

A future Phase 2 of the Development Framework may also bring forward additional facilities outwith the Phase 1 area which will similarly allow for an expanded offer of activities.

The adjacent images provide visual inspiration for the Beach Pavilion Building and are indicative only.



Aspirational isometric sketch view



Beach Village materiality precedent



West 8 – Governors Island: The Hills



Slipway materiality



Summer Island BUGA, Heilbronn

# PHASING & DELIVERY



# 5.0 PHASING & DELIVERY

## 7.0 PHASING & DELIVERY

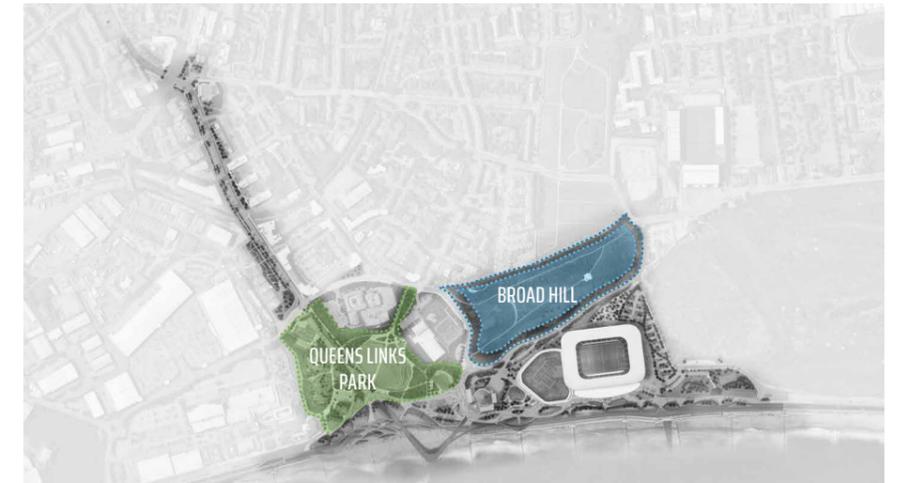
The proposals documented within the Development Framework are still at an indicative stage however the adjacent phasing diagrams illustrate the desired direction of growth as currently envisaged. As advised in the Introduction, there are elements of the Development Framework proposals that can be progressed 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 Park
- Phase 2 - Broad Hill
- Phase 3 - Beach Boulevard
- Phase 4 - Beach Ballroom
- Phase 5 - The Beach & Esplanade
- Phase 6 - Leisure & Potential New Stadium
- Phase 7 - Beach Village

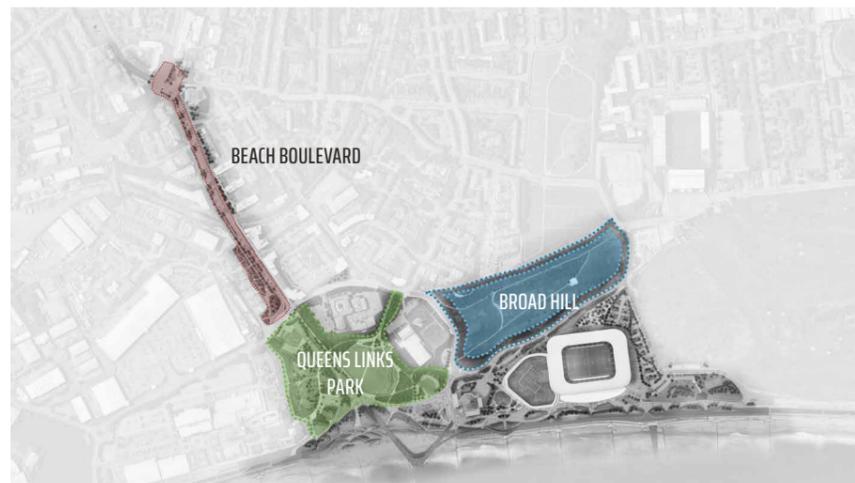
This phasing is only indicative and there are likely to be elements of work, be that Character Area-specific or across a number of Character Areas, which will be carried out concurrently or to enable certain other works to be undertaken.



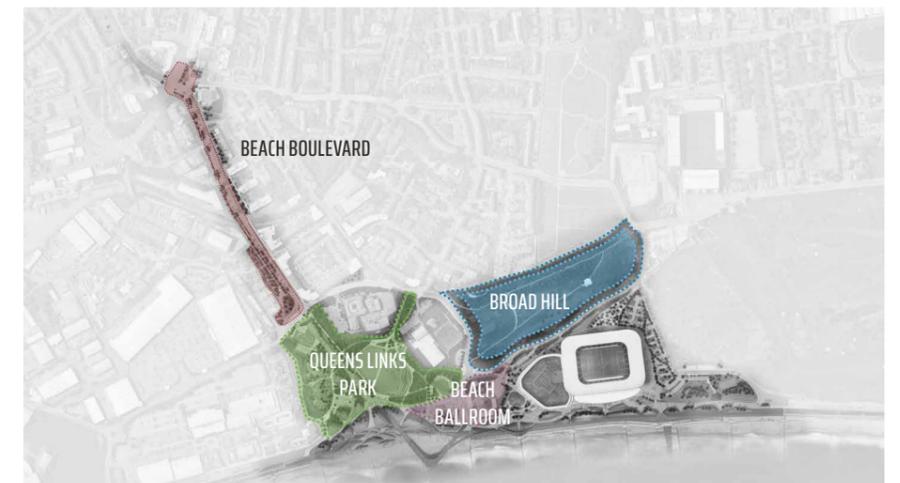
Phase 1 - Queens Links Urban Park



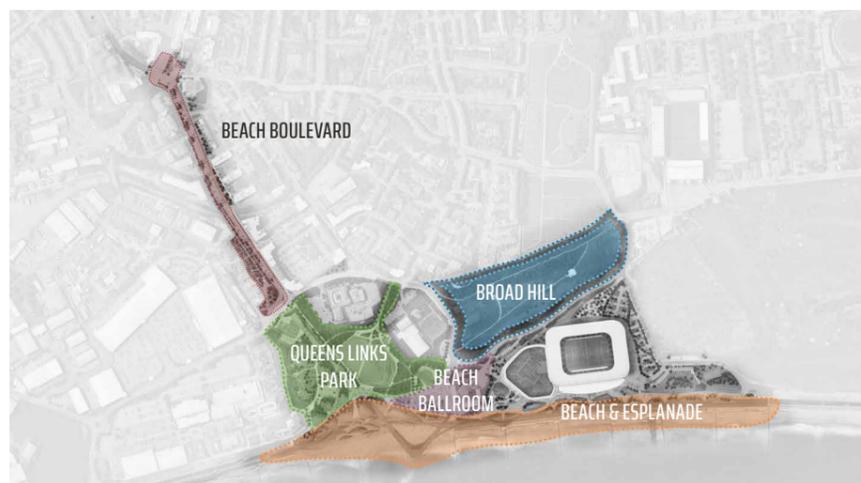
Phase 2 - Broad Hill



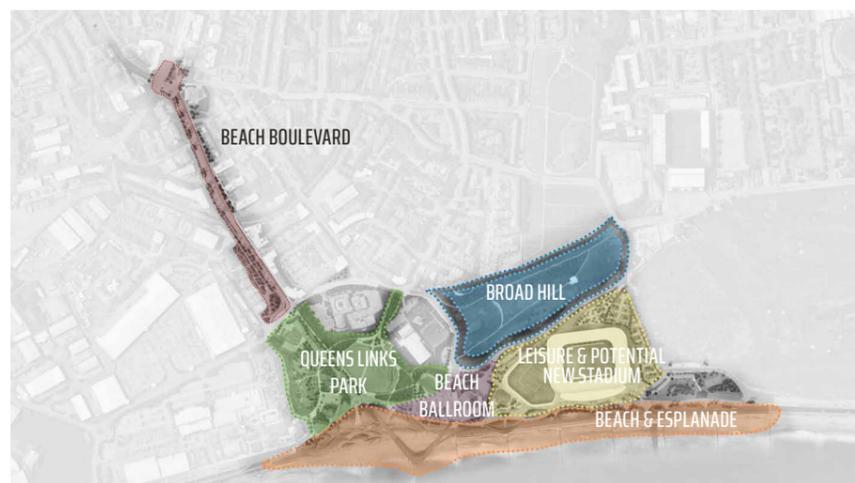
Phase 3 - Beach Boulevard



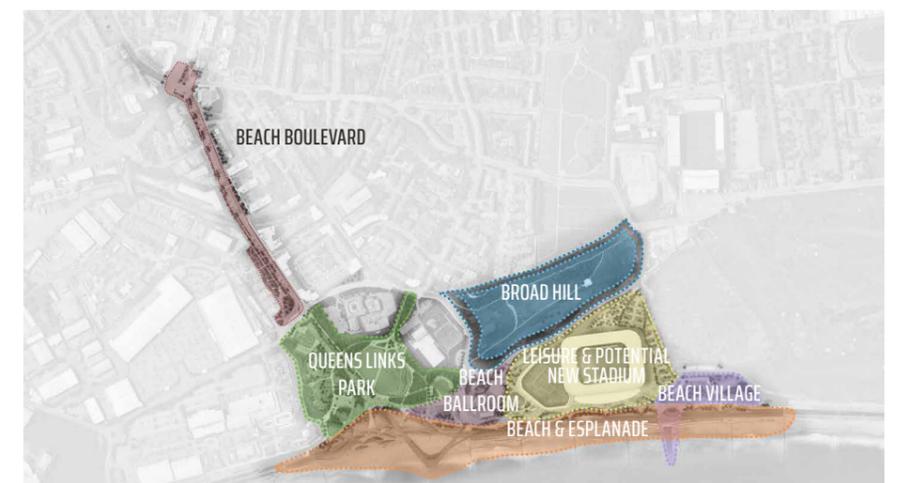
Phase 4 - Beach Ballroom



Phase 5 - The Beach & Esplanade



Phase 6 - Leisure and potential new Stadium



Phase 7 - Beach Village

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