

# DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PHASE 1 APRIL 2023

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL ABERDEEN BEACHFRONT

ACB-KEP-XX-XX-RP-A-852007



# PROJECT TEAM

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## ARCHITECT - BEACH INTERVENTIONS

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## ARCHITECT - BEACHFRONT STADIUM

AFL



## ARCHITECT - BEACHFRONT LEISURE

AFL



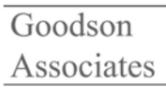
## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT - BEACHFRONT

Open



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# 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.

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 it's importance as a key public space for the city and wider area.

The aim of this 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.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Framework has been developed in accordance with the guidance contained within Aberdeen City Council's 'Masterplanning Process' document in order to ensure an appropriate process of consultation and feedback is developed and is incorporated as the document evolves.

Due to the nature of masterplanning and the scale of the proposals, the detail of the individual elements of the design will inevitably evolve over time, however by establishing a clear structure these changes can be accommodated whilst retaining an overall clarity and coherence to the place. The Framework provides the basis for more detailed proposals to come forward in the future.

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.



## 1.1 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A Development Framework is one of the tools under the Council’s ‘masterplanning’ umbrella and sets out a two-dimensional framework of development principles and parameters for the way in which the wider site is to be developed in the future. This Development Framework (both Phases 1 and 2) will serve as a strategy document used by Aberdeen City Council to guide the future development of the Beachfront. The Beachfront Development Framework will not be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, but rather will be a Council-approved strategy, and has been assimilated into a recalibrated City Centre and Beach Masterplan, which was approved by the Council in August 2022. These documents will be material considerations in the assessment of any future planning applications for development at the Beachfront.

It is proposed that, following the approval of the Development Framework Phase 1 by the Council, detailed planning applications for the new buildings at the Beachfront would be submitted in due course, while the public realm aspects will be progressed by the Council under statutory powers, as previously confirmed by Committees. It is important to stress that the Development Framework sets out principles and parameters to be followed and will not be ‘set in stone’ or represent a final design solution for the Beachfront or any of the constituent developments. The document outlines a potential phasing strategy for the prospective developments and interventions at the Beachfront.

In August 2022, the Council agreed to extend the Development Framework area to include the Footdee Conservation Area to the south and the area north to the River Don. As illustrated in the image adjacent, this extended area forms Phase 2 of the Beachfront Development Framework. This Phase 2 will come forward as a separate masterplanning exercise, linking back to this Phase 1 exercise and document. It will consider additional opportunities beyond those considered in Phase 1, including additional facilities to improve Beach and water access, and improving active travel and public transport connectivity, all while protecting the historic settlement of Footdee and its valuable natural habitat and open space.



Location plan with Aberdeen Beachfront Phase 1 Development Framework Area



Site plan with Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework Phase 1 area

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

## 1.2 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Development Framework is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). An SEA is a systematic review of plans, programmes, and strategies to ensure that environmental issues are considered throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and review of these key documents. The aim of SEA is to achieve better integration of environmental considerations at the heart of decision-making through a more rigorous and transparent planning process.

In this instance, the SEA seeks to ensure that, once adopted, the Beachfront Development Framework contributes positively to the high level of environmental protection now expected by the Scottish Government. The SEA seeks to ensure that potential significant effects on the environment of implementing the Beachfront Development Framework, and of reasonable alternatives, are identified, described, evaluated and taken into account.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report is available separately on the Council's website.

## 1.3 HABITAT REGULATION ASSESSMENT

Due to the location of the proposed works, in proximity to the Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch Special Protection Area (SPA) and River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a European designated (Natura 2000) site, a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) is also required.

The HRA will assess potential impacts to the sites' qualifying features associated with the proposed works, including identifying any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The assessment will be completed in accordance with the approach outlined in 'Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans Guidance for Plan-Making Bodies in Scotland'.

The HRA process has already commenced in relation to the Development Framework Phase 1, and it is anticipated that Appropriate Assessment will likely be required at the detailed design stage for those elements that have the greatest potential impact on the above-noted protected sites. This would include the Boardwalk, Slipway, the potential Stadium and any other works directly and physically impacting the beach. Given their nature and scale, it is not anticipated that an Appropriate Assessment will be required for the other development proposals that are included within the Development Framework Phase 1.



Aerial view looking west over the beachfront



View looking towards Beach Ballroom



View of the beachfront with Esplanade and groyne

## 1.4 SITE HISTORY

Aberdeen, Scotland's third city, developed over many generations as two separate burghs, Old Aberdeen at the mouth of the Don and New Aberdeen, a fishing and trading settlement where the Denburn entered the Dee estuary.

Port activities, trading links, fishing and shipbuilding saw the city and its harbour expand and develop. The first of Aberdeen's shipyards opened in the late 1700's concentrating initially on fishing and whaling boats then steamers, coal carriers and coasters. Aberdeen was also home to thriving industrial and commercial operations focussed on the maritime industry, these included sail-making, tanneries, nail factories, and rope works. One such rope works was located to the south of Queens Links. The 19th century was a time of considerable expansion; however, growth was organic and un-planned. By 1901 the population was 153,000 and the city covered more than 6,000 acres.

The discovery of North Sea Oil in 1969 marked a major and recent milestone in Aberdeen's evolution. Over the last three decades the city has become the Energy Capital of Europe, the focus of international investment and business enterprise, creating employment opportunities, attracting incoming population, and transforming the harbour from fishing port to a busy industrial hub supporting offshore oil and gas production.

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.

Capturing the nostalgia of that bygone era, the celebration of what has gone before provides inspiration for the future development of the Beachfront. The vision for the redevelopment of the area is to rejuvenate the Beachfront and return it to its former glory creating a major waterfront destination for future generations to enjoy.



Historic map - 1871



Historic map - 1932



Current map - 2023



The dance hall (Ballroom) and promenade



Aberdeen beach historic postcard

### 1.4.1 BEACH BALLROOM HISTORY

The Aberdeen Beach Ballroom, affectionately known as the finest dance hall in Scotland, adopts a prominent position along the City's Beachfront esplanade. Opened in 1929, this important Art Deco entertainment venue has experienced much change, not least the major development of the 1970s Star Ballroom which provided additional function space on the roof of the eastern side overlooking the coastline. The building boasts a wealth of cultural history, having hosted many of Scotland's leading bands over the decades and is held in high esteem amongst Aberdonians who share fond memories of their time at the venue.

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.

Over the years, the Ballroom has made attempts to adapt to new cultural and business trends, which has led to areas of inefficiencies within the interior fabric and planning of the building. This, combined with the harsh coastal environment, cultural changes and limited funding for refurbishment, has led to a Ballroom in need of a holistic strategy for renewal.

The emerging proposals identify opportunities for development, from interventions such as upgrades to internal fit outs to high level re-imaginings of current and proposed revenue generating spaces. It is accepted that any opportunity for redevelopment must and will respect the heritage and memories defined by the Beach Ballroom to ensure it can continue to contribute to the lives of those who visit it.



Beach Ballroom as existing



Historic image of Ballroom interior



Historic Illustration of Beach Ballroom and Esplanade



Aberdeen beach resort postcard: approach to the beach and dance hall



Historic image of Ballroom event

# POLICY CONTEXT



2.0



# 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The Development Framework area is covered by a number of relevant planning policies which have shaped the approach to the site. A summary of the policy context is outlined below:

## 2.1 LOCAL OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016-2026 (LOIP) (INCLUDING LOCALITY PLANS)

The LOIP sets out Community Planning Aberdeen’s plan for ensuring that everyone in Aberdeen, regardless of their background or circumstance, has access to the same opportunities.

The three key themes which are covered by the LOIP are: Economy, People and Place. The proposals within the Development Framework will:

- Contribute to the improvement of the ‘Economy’ through increasing employment opportunities.
- Provide a public focussed space which will aid in creating areas which have a positive impact on ‘People’s’ health and well-being, in particular for children and young people.
- Aim for a net-zero operational development with active travel at its core which will create a key sense of ‘Place’ to the Beachfront.
- Protect a significant natural asset within Aberdeen and promoting biodiversity further adding to the ‘Place’.



Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26

## 2.2 NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES

Aberdeen ‘Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap: Towards becoming a net zero emissions city by 2045’ sets out the approach, pathway, and actions towards net zero and climate resilient Council assets and operations, by 2045. Energy-efficient design proposals will require to be incorporated within any design proposals and concept masterplan alongside renewable and low carbon energy sources, with consideration necessary to understand how further decarbonisation could be achieved in the future. In addition to the energy approach the development will seek to promote biodiversity and the protection of the natural assets found within the Beachfront area. Any development will require to be cognisant of the recommendations of the suite of Aberdeen City Council guidance.



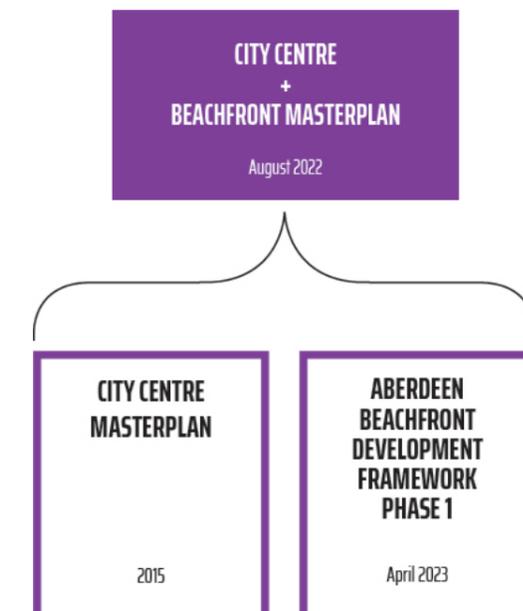
Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap

## 2.3 CITY CENTRE & BEACH MASTERPLAN CONTEXT (2022)

Aberdeen City Council updated and recalibrated the previous City Centre Masterplan of 2015 into a City Centre and Beach Masterplan, which was approved by the Council in August 2022. The City Centre and Beach Masterplan represents a strategic, place-led, project-focused, overview which sits above a suite of more site specific masterplan reports, including this Development Framework. This suite of documents focuses on the desire to develop a holistic Aberdeen City Vision to support economic recovery and growth (post-COVID) and to support the continuing diversification from oil and gas-based industries to green infrastructure, emerging technologies, and renewables alongside optimising the remaining off-shore opportunities.

Investment in skills, health and well-being and quality of life through the utilisation of “place based” strategies will also support the development of “Aberdeen the place” – a vibrant city where people choose to live, work, do business and invest.

The Beachfront Development Framework document will sit as a ‘sister’ document to Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan of 2015, under the overview of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan.



Aberdeen City Council - City Centre and Beach Masterplan organogram

## 2.4 ABERDEEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023, as currently proposed, identifies the majority of land within the Development Framework as Urban Green Space and Green Space Network (Policy NE2) and Beach & Leisure (Policy VC11). The Urban Green Space element of Policy NE2 aims to protect areas for recreation and sport, while Policy NE1: Green Space Network aims to “*protect, support, and enhance the City’s Urban Green Space*”, for example parks, playing fields, outdoor sports facilities, unless suitable alternative and equally-convenient and accessible public green space can be provided. In terms of the Green Space Network, the policy notes that “*Development proposals will seek to protect, support and enhance the Green Space Network...This broadly encompasses the wildlife, biodiversity, ecosystem services & functions, access, recreation, landscape and townscape value of the Green Space Network*”.

Within the Beach & Leisure areas of the city, the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 notes that proposals will be permitted provided they:

1. contribute to the range and quality of the existing uses, facilities, and activities of the wider beach area;
2. are of an appropriate scale;
3. do not have an unduly adverse effect on the character of the area, or cause negative visual or environmental impacts or affect the amenities of nearby residents; and
4. do not result in the significant generation of car borne journeys, nor additional pressure for car parking.

Provided below is a note of further policies from the ALDP 2023 which will need to be considered at future detailed design stages:

- Policy NE4 – Our Water Environment
- Policy WB1 – Healthy Developments
- Policy NE3 – Our Natural Heritage
- Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking
- Policy D3 – Big Buildings
- Policy D4 – Landscape
- Policy D6 - Historic Environment
- Policy R6 – Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency
- Policy I1 - Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations
- Policy T2 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy T3 – Parking
- Policy WB3 – Noise

## 2.5 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4

Following its adoption in February 2023, the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) became the Scottish Government’s new national planning policy document, and also now forms part of the statutory development plan, along with the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023. While NPF4 sets out 33 policies across three overarching themes (Sustainable Places, Liveable Places and Productive Places), Scottish Government guidance is NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. However, conflicts between policies are to be expected, and factors for and against development should be weighed up in the balance of planning judgement. While a number of NPF4 policies are relevant to the implementation of the Beachfront Development Framework, it is considered that the key policies are:

- Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crises;
- Policy 2 - Climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Policy 3 – Biodiversity;
- Policy 4 – Natural places;
- Policy 10 – Coastal development;
- Policy 13 – Sustainable transport;
- Policy 15 – Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods;
- Policy 21 – Play, recreation and sport.

## 2.6 OTHER KEY POLICIES, GUIDANCE & INFORMATION

Further key policies, guidance and information will be instrumental in developing the Beach area and assessing the suitability of development proposals as they come forward.

An outline of some of the key documents is noted below:

- Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG);
- Aberdeen Core Paths Plan (2009);
- Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016;
- Aberdeen Socio-Economic Rescue Plan 2020/21;
- Regional Economic Strategy: Action Plan (2018-2025);
- Healthy Cities Agenda;
- Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Tourism Strategy (2022-2030);
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS);
- Planning Advice Notes (PANs);
- Ellon to Garthdee Transport Corridor Study (2021).

In relation to a transport-specific policy framework, the following are also relevant to the delivery of the Development Framework:

- Climate Change Act (2019)- Scotland aspires to be a ‘net-zero’ country by 2045. In Aberdeen, targets have been set to reduce total car kilometres travelled by 20% by 2030, with a target that more than 50% of all journeys in the city by that time are made by non-car-based modes.
- National Transport Strategy 2;
- Aberdeen City Council Local Transport Strategy - Five high-level

objectives are set out in the 2016-2021 LTS; (1) the delivery of a transport system that enables the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, (2) a safe and more secure transport system, (3) a cleaner, greener transport system, (4) an integrated, accessible and socially inclusive transport system and, (5) a transport system that facilitates healthy and sustainable living.

- Aberdeen Active Travel Action Plan 2021-2026;
- A Low Emission Zone (LEZ), covering the city centre was introduced in 2022;
- Aberdeen Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP);
- City Centre and Beach Masterplan 2022;
- Go Abz Journey Planner: A freely available journey planning application which allows users to plan and price their local travel options;
- Park and Ride: A network of sites, providing more than 3,000 spaces, located to the north, west and south of the city centre served by a combination of high frequency local and express buses;
- Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART);
- Bridge of Don to City Centre Active Travel Corridor;
- Car Clubs: A city-wide pay-as-you-go car hire initiative;
- Sharebike (Big Issue) now in operation.

## 2.7 RELEVANT TRANSPORT PROJECTS

The Framework reflects relevant transport policies and is consistent with climate change-led traffic reduction targets. It recognises the importance of sustainable travel and measures proposed will facilitate necessary behavioural change.

The Framework is compatible with committed transport projects across the city and region, including:

- A944 Westhill to Aberdeen
- Ellon Park & Ride to Garthdee
- A96 Inverurie to Aberdeen
- A92 Bridge of Don to Bridge of Dee Multi-modal Corridor Study

# CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

**3.0**



# 3.0 CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

## 3.1 PROCESS

An Engagement Strategy for the overarching City Centre & Beach Masterplan has been prepared which will support ongoing design development and implementation of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan projects as they progress.

Engagement is an over-arching term and includes activity such as information giving, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. Public consultation and engagement with key consultees is an important contribution to the preparation and development of a Development Framework. The support of the local community, wider city, stakeholders, and other groups for the proposals set out within the Development Framework will be essential for its successful delivery.

FLOWERS  
 CYCLE LANES  
 PETTING ZOO  
 CINEMA  
**PIER**  
 MODERN WATER PARK  
 CLEAN BBQ AREA  
**SKATE PARK**  
 SUN LOUNGERS  
 FESTIVALS  
 FOOD TRUCKS  
 ARTWORK AND SCULPTURES  
 CHANGING ROOMS  
**FOUNTAINS**  
 TREES MORE BINS  
 CAFE AT ICE RINK  
 GRASS AND OPEN SPACE  
 LIGHTING  
 TELESCOPES

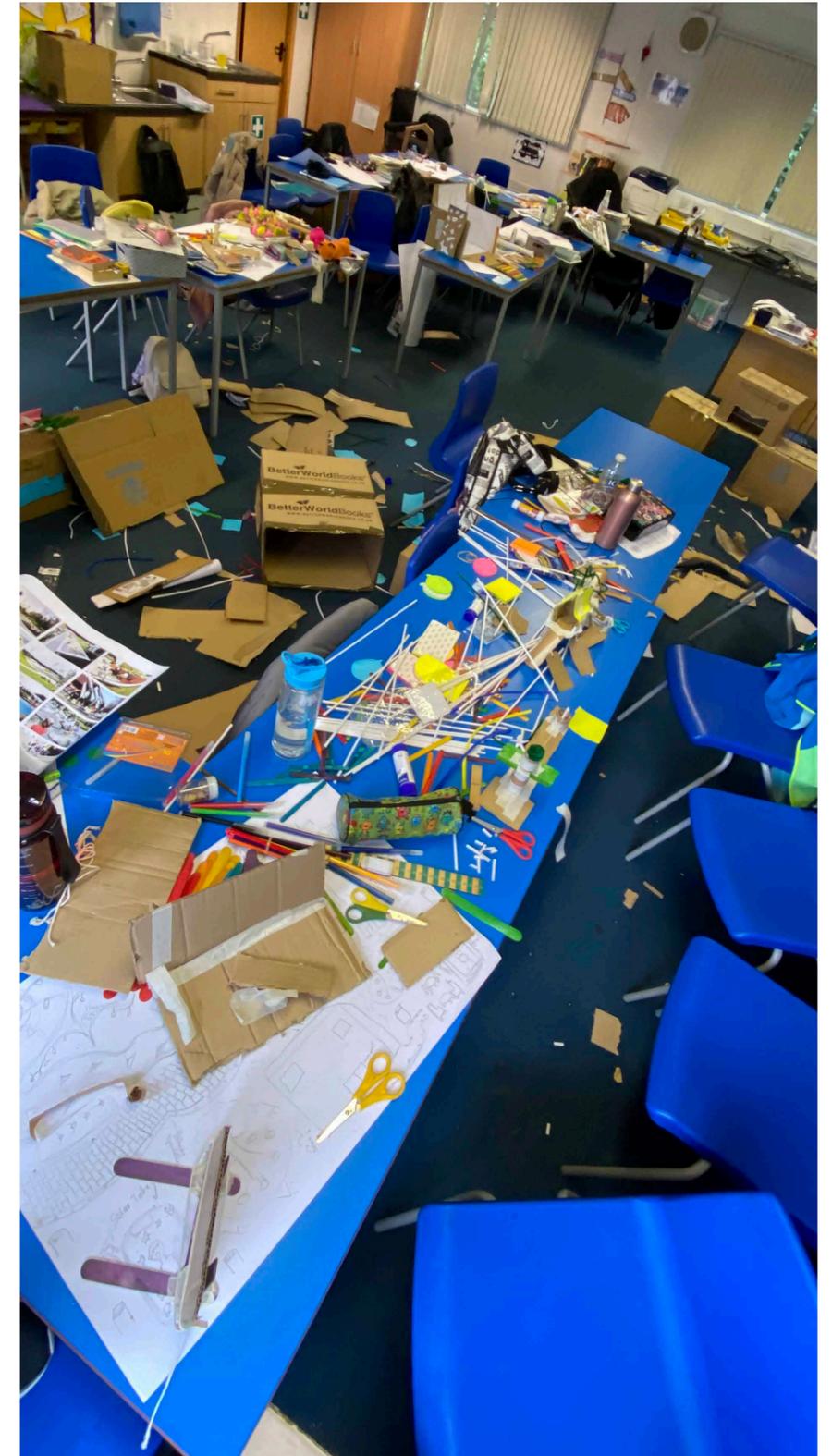
Engagement word map



Children and young people postcard engagement exercise



Collaborative Working



Model Making in Class - Exploring in 3 Dimensions



### 3.5 HOW HAVE WE RESPONDED?

Council officers and the design team have reviewed all comments and this final Development Framework document has been subsequently updated and amended. The document now accommodates and addresses the feedback received from the public and stakeholders, where possible. Key aspects that have been considered include:

- Traffic Management - City Wide / Local / Football Traffic.
- Waterfront safety, including access for emergency response.
- Parking.
- Public Transport.
- Accessibility for All / Inclusive Design.
- Key Buildings, including Beach Ballroom / Football Stadium / Ice Rink / Leisure Centre / Boardwalk
- Treatment of, and access to the Beachfront
- Economic and Deliverability

### 3.6 NEXT STEPS

Significant future engagement with key stakeholders will be key to ensuring a successful project. In the months ahead, the Council and design team will continue to undertake wider engagement with key stakeholders and end users of the Beachfront in order to have the discussions and ask the very questions which will make these projects the best they can be for all users of the Beach.



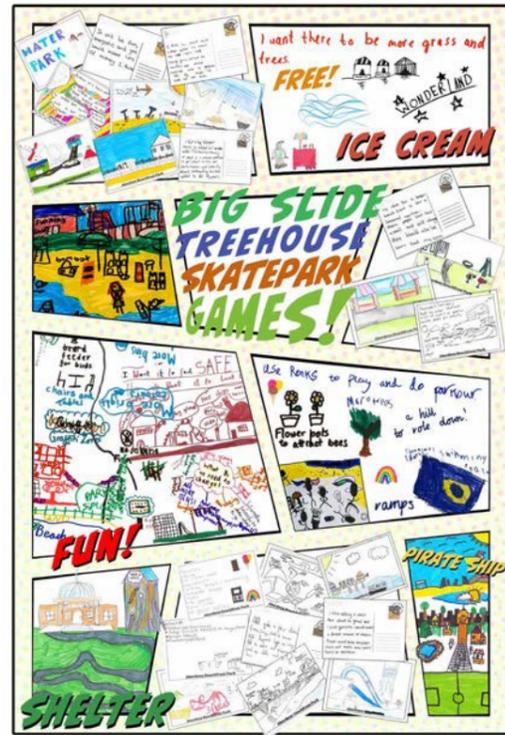
Community consultation event at Aberdeen's Beach Ballroom

**HELLO AGAIN!**

WE HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY OUR MEETINGS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH YOU ALL...

SOME OF YOUR FANTASTIC IDEAS!





WATER PARK

I want there to be more grass and trees! **FREE!**

**ICE CREAM**

**BIG SLIDE**

**TREEHOUSE**

**SKATEPARK**

**GAMES!**

**FUN!**

**SHELTER**

PIRATE SHIP

Use PONGS to play and do parkour

Flower beds to attract bees

ramps

WOODLAND

**YOUR IDEAS SHAPING OUR PLAN...**

FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH YOU AND TAKING SOME OF THE SUPER IDEAS THAT YOU'VE PUT IN OUR HEADS, WE HAVE STARTED TO DEVELOP NOT JUST ONE PLAY PARK, BUT SEVERAL PLAY ZONES WITHIN THE HEART OF THE NEW BEACHFRONT MASTERPLAN



**SPORTS ZONE**

**ADVENTURE ZONE**

**DUNE ZONE**

...NEW IDEAS FOR PLAY AT THE BEACH

**WHAT'S IN THE ZONES?**

**SPORTS!**

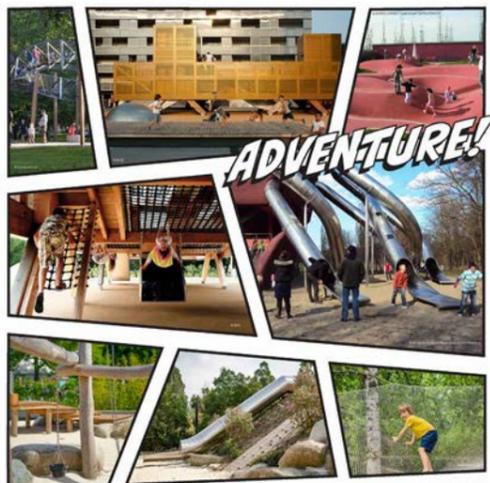


**WOODLAND!**



**WHAT'S IN THE ZONES?**

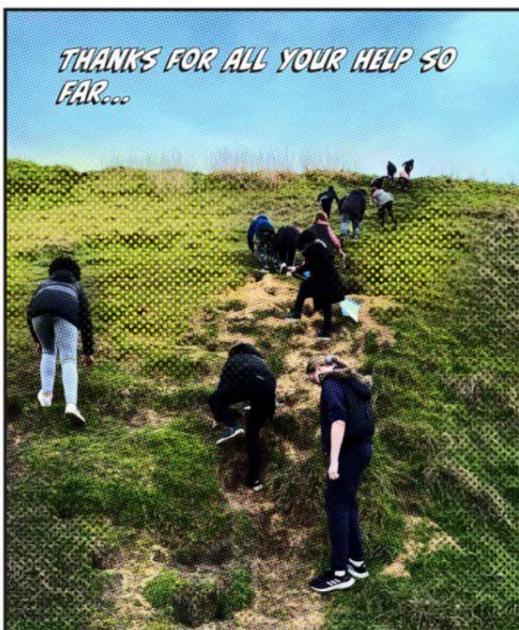
**ADVENTURE!**



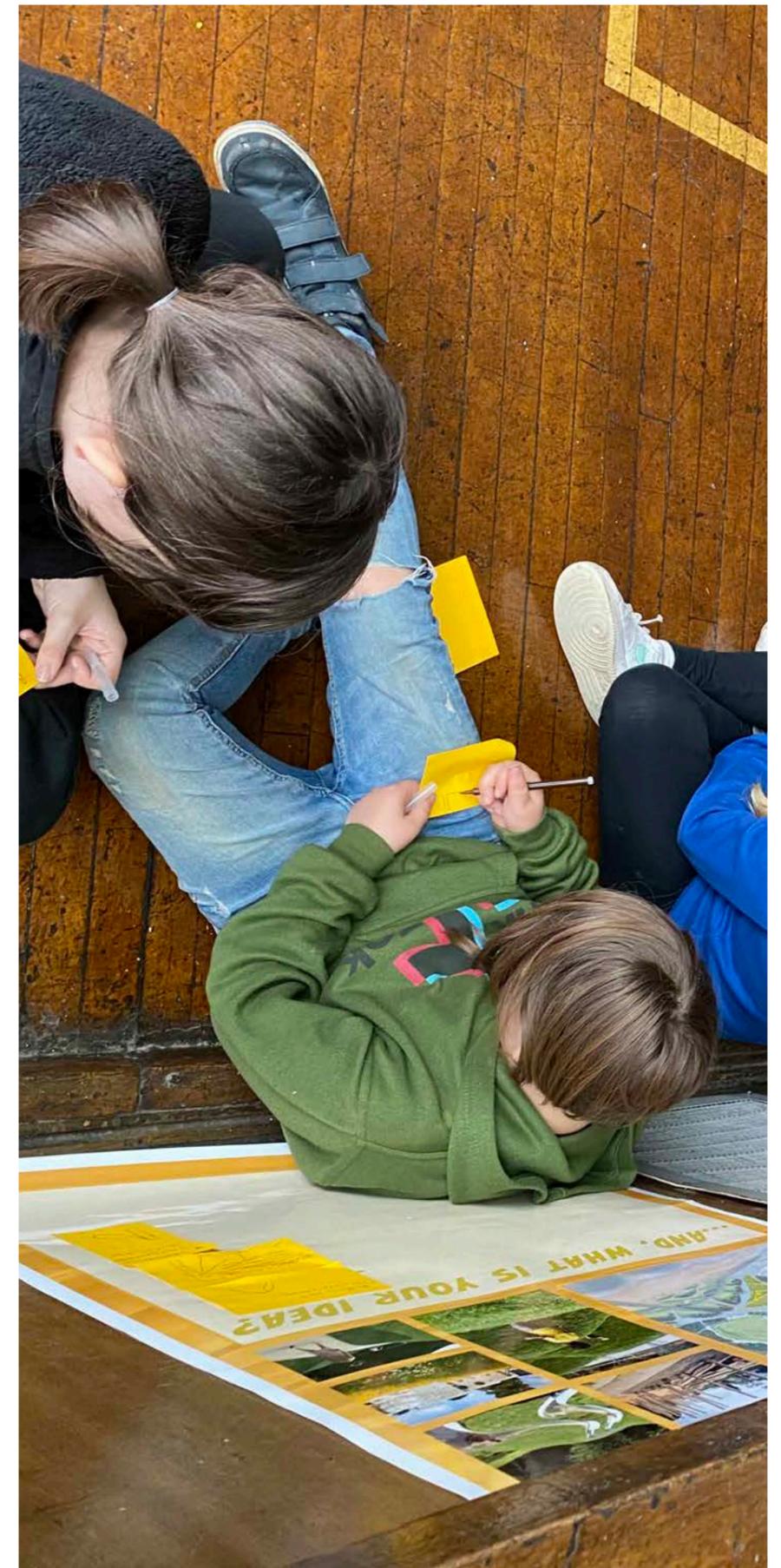
**DUNES!**



**THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP SO FAR...**



...WE WILL BE BACK FOR SOME MORE HELP SOON!!!



Young people and schools consultation boards

Busy with ideas





Models made by the young people to demonstrate their ideas for the Core Play Area



Post-it notes of ideas from the young people at school consultations



Models made by the young people to demonstrate their ideas for the Core Play Area

**THE SITE**



## 4.0 THE SITE

### 4.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

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.

The site is currently occupied by existing entertainment and leisure facilities, namely Aberdeen Beach Ballroom, Linx Ice Arena, the Beach Leisure Centre; the public space of Queens Links including Queens Links Play Park and Kings Links outdoor sports area; existing landscape features such as the beach and Broad Hill; and a series of existing vehicular routes including Beach Boulevard, Esplanade and Links Road.

There are a number of separate uses bordering the Development Framework area which will require consideration as part of the proposals: to the west of the area are two sites owned by Aberdeen City Council but on long term leases to a hotel operator and extreme sports venue; to the north is a site under separate ownership which is operating as golf driving range; to the south is an amusement park owned and operated by Codona's. There are a series of small-scale structures and pavilions situated across the Development Framework area which will also need to be considered as part of the proposals.

Aberdeen City Council's legal team has been instructed to undertake a full review of the defined Development Framework red line boundary to establish legal ownership of the areas included.



Phase 1 Development Framework Area

## 4.2 APPROACH TO SITE

The following images illustrate the journey from Aberdeen City Centre, down Beach Boulevard and around the Beachfront area. The images seek to provide a general overview of the existing site conditions and features.



1. View northeast along Justice Street towards Virginia Court



2. View northeast towards Justice Street roundabout



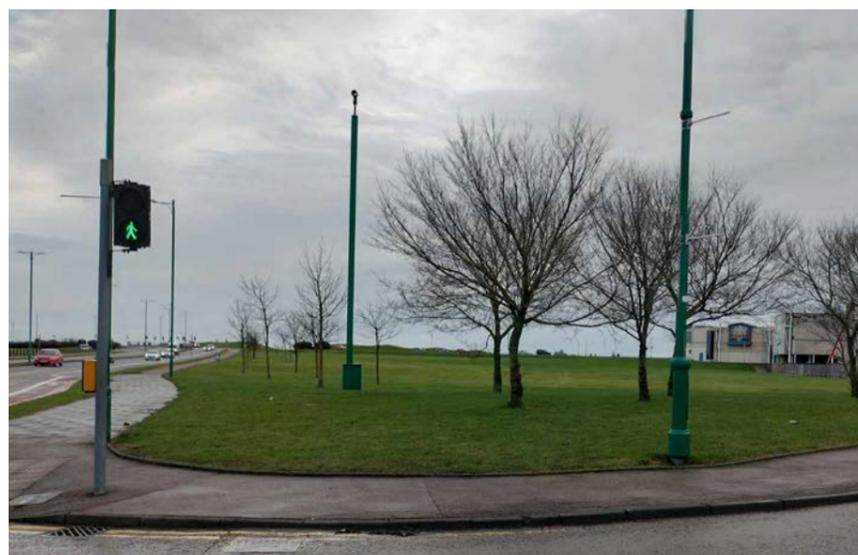
3. View east along Beach Boulevard



4. View east along beach Boulevard towards Queens Links



Key Plan



5.



Panoramic view of Queens Links looking east

### 4.3 SETTING & EXISTING LANDSCAPE AREAS

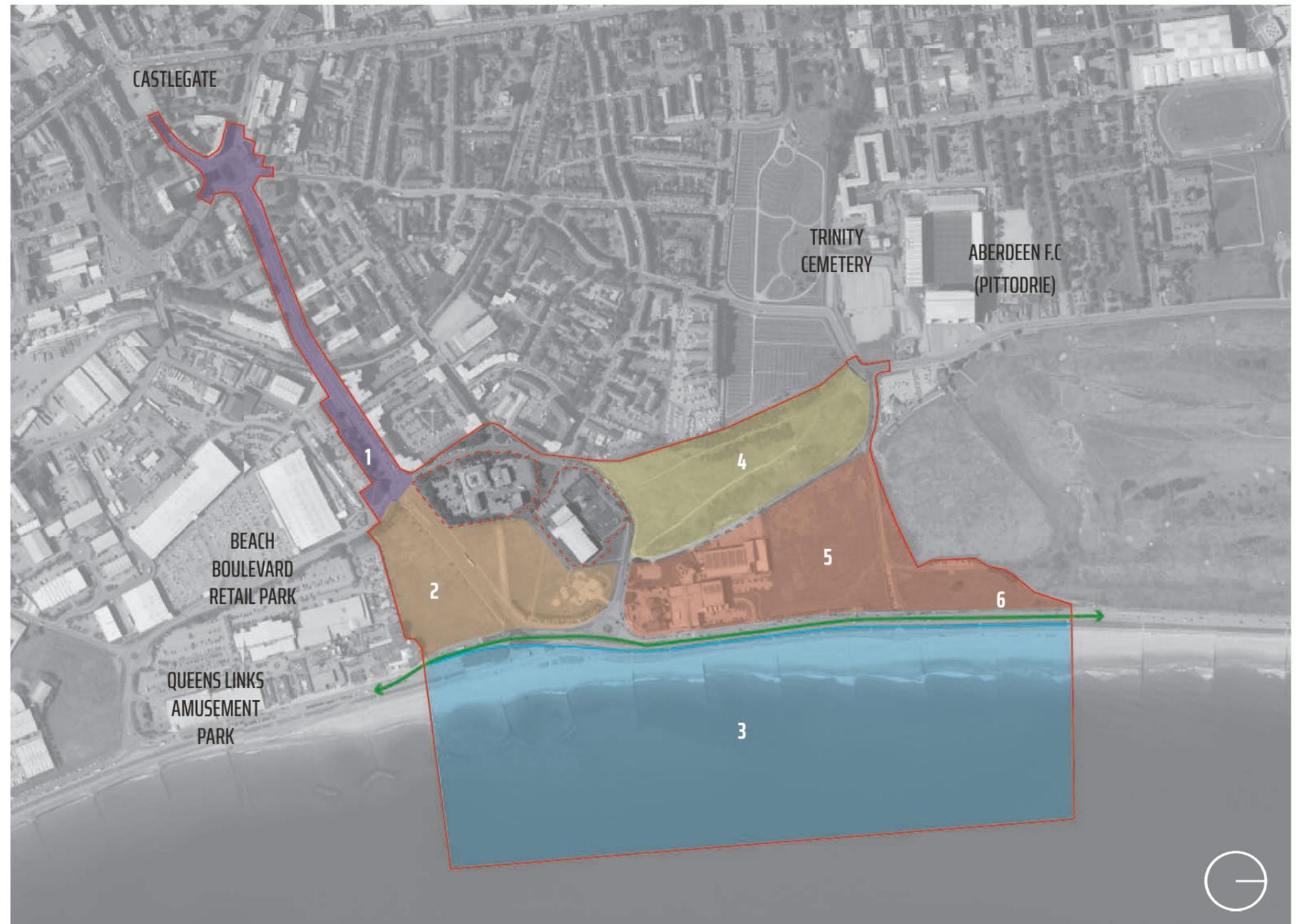
The site is noted within Nature Scot's 2019 Landscape Character Assessment, 'Aberdeen City Landscape Evolution and Influences', as being part of the 'Coastal Character Type' which is one of the five-character types noted in relation to Aberdeen. The character assessment notes that the coast, along with valleys of the Don and Dee rivers, is the most distinctive character type in the city. The assessment notes that "The high contrast between the sea and the land that occurs anywhere along the coast is heightened in Aberdeen by the inclusion of a sandy beach and dunes near to a harbour city."

The setting and character of the Development Framework area is as much defined by its context as by what exists on site. The Development Framework area is relatively well defined to the south, west and east by adjacent land uses and to the north it has an open aspect across a links landscape. The site is approximately 30ha, is largely public open amenity space with a few notable building uses, such as the Beach Ballroom, Beach Leisure Centre and Linx Ice Arena.

In assessing the site further, it is important to recognise that there are number of spatially distinct existing landscape areas that are evident, these are:

1. Beach Boulevard
2. Queens Links
3. The Beach
4. Broad Hill
5. Ballroom/Leisure/Kings Links
6. Esplanade

These areas are described in more detail in the following pages.



Existing Landscape Areas diagram

### 4.3 SETTING & EXISTING LANDSCAPE AREAS

#### Beach Boulevard

Beach Boulevard connects the beach to the city centre and is approximately 800m long in its entirety from the roundabout on Commerce Street/A956 to the Esplanade. On this route it passes through two main landscape areas; that from the roundabout to Links Road (500m) and from Links Road to the Esplanade (300m through Queens Links). It is the former section that is described in terms of setting and character here. Beach Boulevard is dominated by roadway and can essentially be described as a transport corridor, with two lanes in each direction although with some filter lanes and on street parking now taking up lane space. It is defined to the north by a range of mixed residential within the Constitution Street area, and some significant mature tree planting in places giving a green edge. To the south it is bound by a mixture of industrial type units generally backing on the street. The road area occupies most of the space between both sides of the street leaving little opportunity for a pedestrian friendly environment.

#### Queen's Links

The Queen's Links is the main green open space when arriving at the beach from the city centre via Beach Boulevard. It is approximately 5.5ha of relatively flat open amenity grass, bisected by the extensive roadway of Beach Boulevard. It is of open character and useful for large occasional events but with little other attraction other than an outdated play area to the north. It has a number of peripheral contextual uses that do not engage with the space – a hotel, Transition Extreme Sports and Codona's Amusements, all of which turn their back on the space. There is a limited amount of tree planting and earth mounding adjacent to some of the uses that adds to the separation. In areas where there are some level changes, such as around the current play area, there is a feeling of shelter. The Esplanade roadway and Links Road generally sit higher than the main open grass area which creates a distinct separation from the beach and historic Ballroom.

#### The Beach

The beach sits to the east of the Esplanade roadway, which in effect separates any direct connection to the Beachfront from the Queens Links. The beach itself has several distinctive features which give it a unique and well-defined character. The beach is characterised by large expanses of sand held in position from longshore drift by a regular rhythm of groynes and rock barriers set distinctively perpendicular to the coastline, at approximately 100m intervals. The composition of the setting gives a distinctive character to the whole beach front, providing some protection for bathing and other water activities within defined areas. The beach itself is separated from the Queen's Links by not only the infrastructure of the Esplanade but also by a height difference of approximately 6-8m. This is because of the engineered sea defences in this area of the city, as the presence of multi-level sea walls essentially maintain the level difference, providing challenges to accessibility down on to the beach itself. There are two hard landscaped pathways at varying levels which extend along the Beachfront defined by the sea walls with connections between the Esplanade and the beach being



Aerial view looking west over the Beachfront showing Existing Landscape Areas

generally via steps. However, close to the end of Beach Boulevard, around the interface with Queen's Links, a number of ramps systems allow easier access, but these are now dated and not compliant with modern accessibility standards. The natural dune back drop experienced elsewhere along the coastline, in particular north of the River Don (Donmouth), does not exist. It is noticeable that in areas between the two-layer sea wall, where sand has been allowed to collect, that primary grass species have colonised giving a glimpse of what would have been a more natural shoreline. The separation and isolation of this space created by the Esplanade roadway from the wider site is a key issue of the existing area.

### 4.3 SETTING & EXISTING LANDSCAPE AREAS

#### Broad Hill

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. The landforms, of a sand and gravel morainic type, creates a defined boundary to the north and western edge of the site. It also offers views out across the North Sea and back across the city as it rises from Links Road to a high point and plateau to the north-west of the site boundary. 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 successful in further character and shelter to this area and offering a buffer to the Trinity Cemetery. The eastern slope, down to the Kings Links outdoor sports area and leisure buildings, is prone to erosion, possibly due to adventurous public and the abundance of burrowing rabbits. This area requires remedial natural stabilisation.

#### Ballroom/Leisure Buildings/Kings Links

This area is the most spatially defined in terms of landform due to the presence of Broad Hill and the Esplanade which effectively enclose this space. It is occupied by a number of leisure buildings, notably the historic Category B listed Beach Ballroom, the Leisure Centre and Linx Ice Arena. These buildings represent the only major built development within the Development Framework area. To the north of these facilities is Kings Links outdoor sports area, a large open area (approximately 3.5ha) of flat ground laid to grass, to the north of which is Accommodation Road and an open aspect north along the links landscape. Although partially sheltered by the elevation of the Esplanade on the east and height of Broad Hill to the west, the northern aspect is somewhat exposed. The B listed Ballroom is the most architecturally significant of the buildings and sits prominently to the south overlooking the Queens Links and beach area although separated from both by road infrastructure. The overall spatial character of this area is somewhat disjointed with the collection of buildings, although it is the most spatially defined in terms of landform.

#### Esplanade

The Esplanade has been included as a landscape area since it principally provides a landscape (albeit urban) interface between the beach and the coastal links. Under a natural circumstance this area would have been more like the dune landscape that characterises the coast north of Donmouth, but with the introduction of the Esplanade roadway, engineering works in the form of the coastal sea defence wall have been necessary to protect the infrastructure and the encroaching development of the city over the years. The Esplanade is a broad roadway with an adjacent footway/cycleway, with much of the space dominated by vehicles. In total the 'hard' esplanade is approximately 20m in width which is almost the entire width of the Esplanade. The Esplanade offers uninterrupted views in all directions due to its elevated position, looking out to sea there is the offshore wind farm and numerous shipping vessels journeying in and out of Aberdeen Harbour, with contrasting views back to the city.

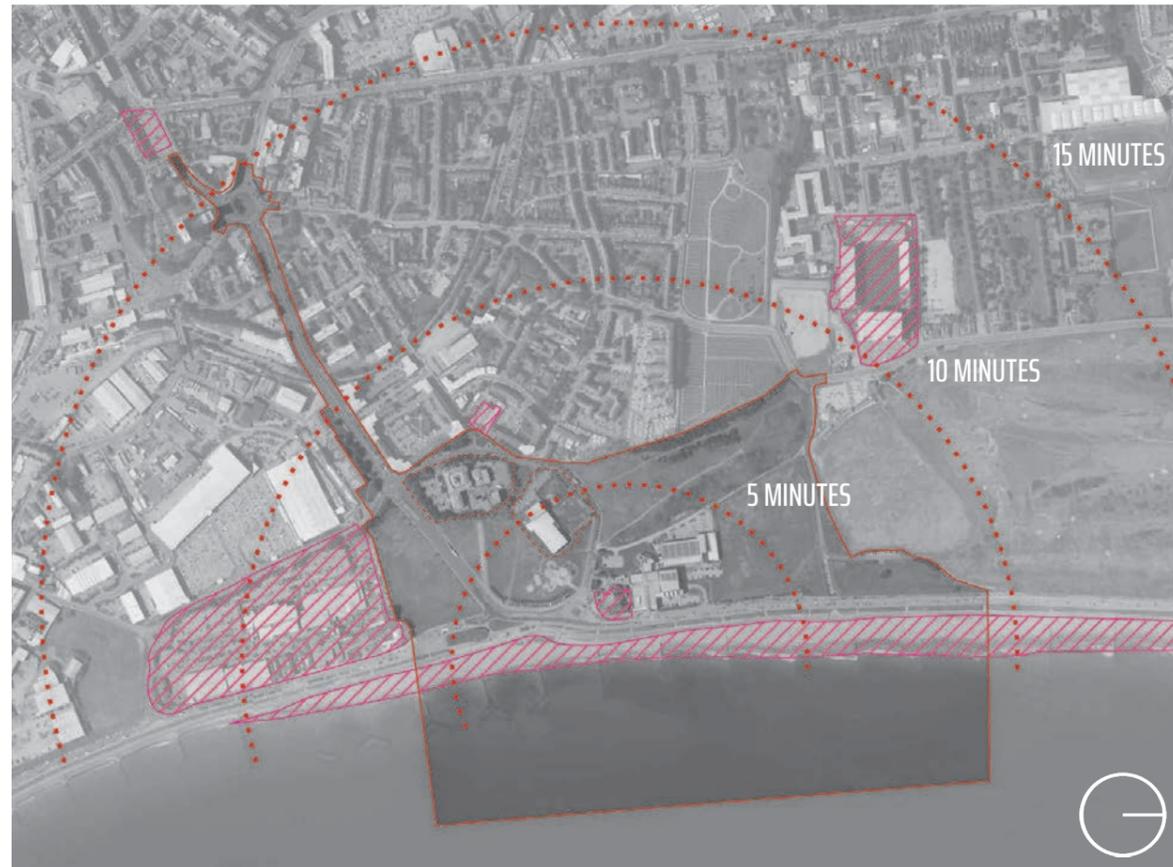


Aerial view looking south over the Beachfront

## 4.4 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Landmarks

There are a number of key landmark features on the site which help to orientate visitors to the area. Within the site itself these include the route of Beach Boulevard linking the city centre with the beach; the Beach Ballroom building and its distinctive roof form; the landscape form of Broad Hill. Prominent landmarks bordering the site include Codona's Amusement Park and it's iconic Grampian Eye Ferris wheel; h football stadium home to Aberdeen FC; and the towering forms of Virginia Court housing block located at the top of Beach Boulevard.

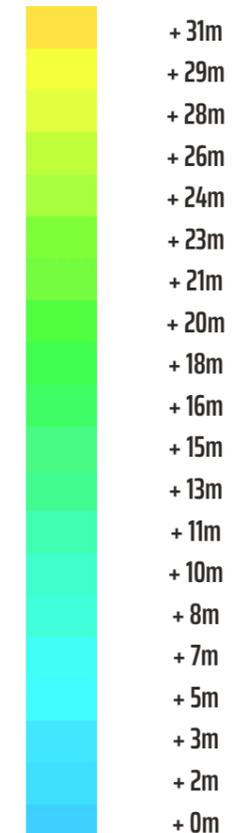


Site Inventory & Analysis - Landmarks

### Topography

Available data suggests that the existing topography can be considered in two parts. The Kings and Queens Links areas of the site are relatively level, except for some engineered bunds associated with the commercial land uses. Both areas can be considered basins which sit at a lower level than the roads that surround them.

The remainder of the site, known as Broad Hill, forms a localised high ridge running north/south at approx. 28m above sea level at the highest point.



Site Inventory & Analysis - Topography

## 4.4 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Building Heights

Beach Ballroom is three storeys in height with a semi-submerged lower ground floor level which sits below the street level. Its large roof structure extends beyond the general first floor roof level and provides a large domed space to the main ballroom space.

The Beach Leisure Centre and Linx Ice Arena are two to three storeys in height however due to their siting within a drop in the topography they sit lower than the Esplanade street level which reduces their visual impact in relation to the Beachfront.

The hotel and extreme sports venues are approximately three storeys in height.



Site inventory & Analysis - Building Heights

### Visual Analysis

Visual analysis of the site as part of the assessment and design process has been an ongoing task. The views highlighted opposite are just some of those considered through the process so far in gaining an understanding of the spatial configuration of the site. Further dialogue is ongoing as part of the in terms of determining and refining the key assessment views that will inform the emerging designs within the Development Framework area. It is likely that the discussion on visual impact will consider views from long distance both from the land and the sea. The final filtering of the view selection is being done as part of a dialogue with ACC, NatureScot and other key stakeholders.



- Views from Site**
- 1 - View west from Beach Boulevard
  - 2 - View south east across Queens Links towards North Sea
  - 3 - View east to North Sea from Esplanade
  - 4 - View east to North Sea from Beach Ballroom
  - 5 - View north along Esplanade
  - 6 - View west to City from Broad Hill
  - 7 - View north from Broad Hill
  - 8 - View east from Broad Hill
  - 9 - View east to North Sea from Esplanade
- Views to/within Site**
- A - View east down Beach Boulevard
  - B - View east down Queens Links
  - C - View north along Esplanade
  - D - View north to Beach Ballroom
  - E - View south from Broad Hill
  - F - View east from Broad Hill
  - G - View south along Esplanade
- Existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena**  
For more information on this area please refer to page 26.

Site Inventory & Analysis - Key Views

## 4.4 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Visual Analysis - Views from Site



1. View west from Beach Boulevard



2. View south east across Queens Links towards North Sea



3. View east to North Sea from Esplanade



4. View east to North Sea from Beach Ballroom



5. View north along Esplanade



6. View west to city from Broad Hill



7. View north from Broad Hill



8. View east from Broad Hill



9. View east to North Sea from Esplanade

## 4.4 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Visual Analysis - Views To / Within Site



A View east down Beach Boulevard



B View east down Queens Links



C View north along Esplanade



D View north to Beach Ballroom



E View south from Broad Hill



F View east from Broad Hill



G View south along Esplanade

#### 4.4 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

##### Existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena

The Aberdeen Beachfront proposals assume that both the Beach Leisure Centre and Linx Ice Arena are replaced on the basis that they are nearing the end of their life and that refurbishment would not offer a long-term, economically viable solution.

The Beach Leisure Centre opened in 1989 and is now 34 years old. In May 2022, Sport Aberdeen announced that the leisure pool would close in August 2022 as a cost saving measure due to high energy prices. In March 2023, Sport Aberdeen announced that the Leisure Centre would close permanently; that the centre was at the end of its lifecycle; and that, due to a combination of rising energy costs and problems with the pool plant infrastructure, it was simply uneconomical to carry on.

The Linx Ice Arena which opened in 1992 is of a similar age to the leisure centre and is now 31 years old. The current ice arena sits centrally within the area designated for a Leisure and potential new Stadium development and options are being explored in order to maintain continuity of ice provision for the City while replacement Leisure and Ice facilities are constructed.

Any demolitions that come forward as part of this strategy will be subject to all necessary statutory consents and warrants, and any opportunities to minimise the loss of embodied carbon, or the reuse of demolition materials, investigated.



Existing shower in swimming facility



Existing swimming facility



Existing entrance to Leisure Facility



Existing Ice Rink

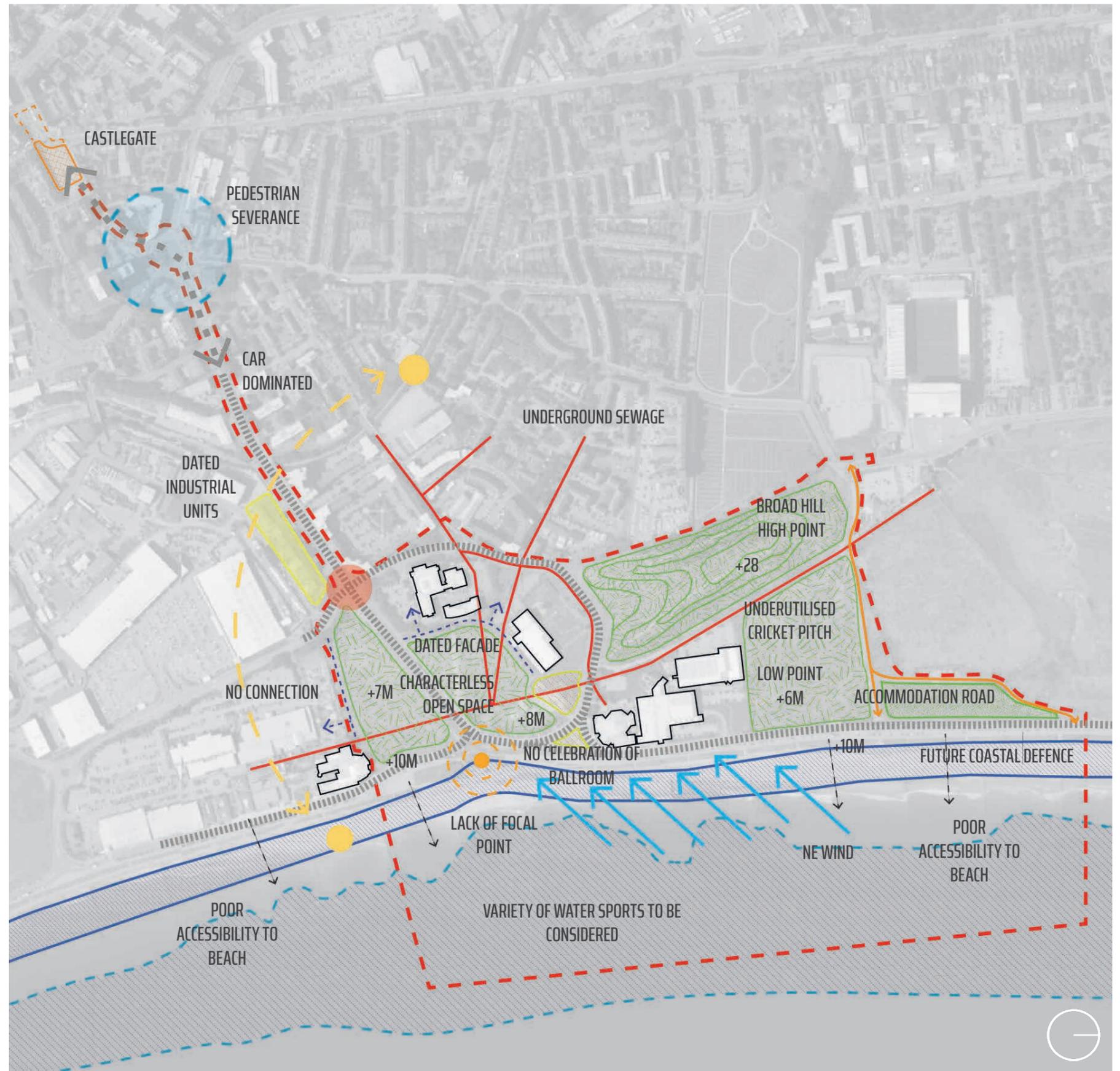


Exterior of existing Leisure Facility

## 4.5 CONSTRAINTS

Following the initial site walk-round and workshop session, the Design Team analysed the Beachfront Development Framework area as existing, identifying a number of additional site constraints and project challenges:

- Lack of sense of place
- Poor accessibility to beach
- Characterless open space
- Car dominated environment
- Lack of relationship of existing buildings with waterfront
- Lack of grand public realm setting for iconic ballroom
- No real sense of arrival
- Lack of focal point
- Exposure to the elements / lack of shelter
- Disconnect with Beachfront
- Uninviting / rear elevation of amusements / fairground
- Limited places to stop and rest
- Uninspiring approach from Beach Boulevard
- No celebration of entrance to Queens Links
- Dated industrial units / poor quality industrial architecture
- Underground sewage pipe running through centre of site
- Current and future coastal defences to be considered
- Variety of water sports to be considered
- Tired / dated Esplanade and uninspiring public realm
- Dated aesthetics of existing sport & Leisure elements
- Awkward relationship of existing Leisure to Ballroom
- Underutilised Kings Links area and golf driving range



Beachfront Constraints diagram

#### 4.6 EXISTING MOVEMENT NETWORK

The Beachfront is around one mile from the city centre. It can be accessed on foot, by bike, by bus and by car, and many users regularly visit the area. The area is close to residential catchments east and west of King Street and there are established retail and commercial uses nearby. The existing transport situation is summarised, as follows.

Beach Boulevard extends from East North Street towards the Esplanade. It is four-lanes wide over most of its length, but kerbside parking reduces the easternmost section to two lanes. Bus stops, cycle lanes and pedestrian facilities are provided on Beach Boulevard but these are defined by road geometry and vehicular traffic. There is no physical segregation for cyclists.

The south end of Beach Boulevard forms one arm of a five-arm roundabout junction where Commerce Street, Park Street, East North Street and Justice Street all meet. Traffic moving through this junction includes local and strategic movements, with strategic flows between King Street and Commerce Street dominating. The roundabout is not user-friendly for pedestrians or cyclists.

The Esplanade carries significant volumes of through and commuting vehicular movements. The road geometry and high traffic volumes make it hard for pedestrians and cyclists to access the beachfront promenade. Where crossing opportunities are provided, they are often dislocated from pedestrian desire lines.

Links Road serves as the primary traffic route for vehicles accessing the Beach Boulevard retail park and Queens Links leisure park.

There is a mix of on and off-street parking. Most on-street parking in the area is free, but there are some pay & display and permit bays on Beach Boulevard. Unauthorised parking frequently occurs on the wide pedestrian link to the east of Queens Links play park. Many users travel to the area by car to enjoy views of the waterfront, while others need to move equipment required for watersports and recreational activities.

Pedestrian and cycle links in the vicinity of the Esplanade, including the lower promenade, form part of the local Core Path network and are of generous width, albeit they can be hard to access. Access to the lower promenade for those with reduced mobility, or for those using wheelchairs and buggies, is limited. A combination of zebra and pelican crossings is provided throughout the area.

Recent cycle-friendly measures include painted lanes on Beach Boulevard and Esplanade, with limited protection in the way of temporary bollards. Cyclists report that the Beachfront is hard to access from other parts of the city and that when there, routes and spaces are not well defined.

Local bus services have declined in recent years. First Aberdeen service 13 connects Seaton to Scatterburn via the city centre (with less frequent extensions to Footdee). Buses are infrequent and no longer serve



Mapping highlighting Existing Severance and Constraints to Active Travel at Beachfront

stops at the Beach Ballroom or the Esplanade, increasing the walking distance to access the beachfront. There are no shelters at key bus stops, making it less appealing for waiting passengers. Two taxi bays are provided in the central section of the Esplanade, to the north of the Innoflate attraction. Users can make advance bookings by phone and using apps.

#### Beach Development Framework - Severance and Constraints

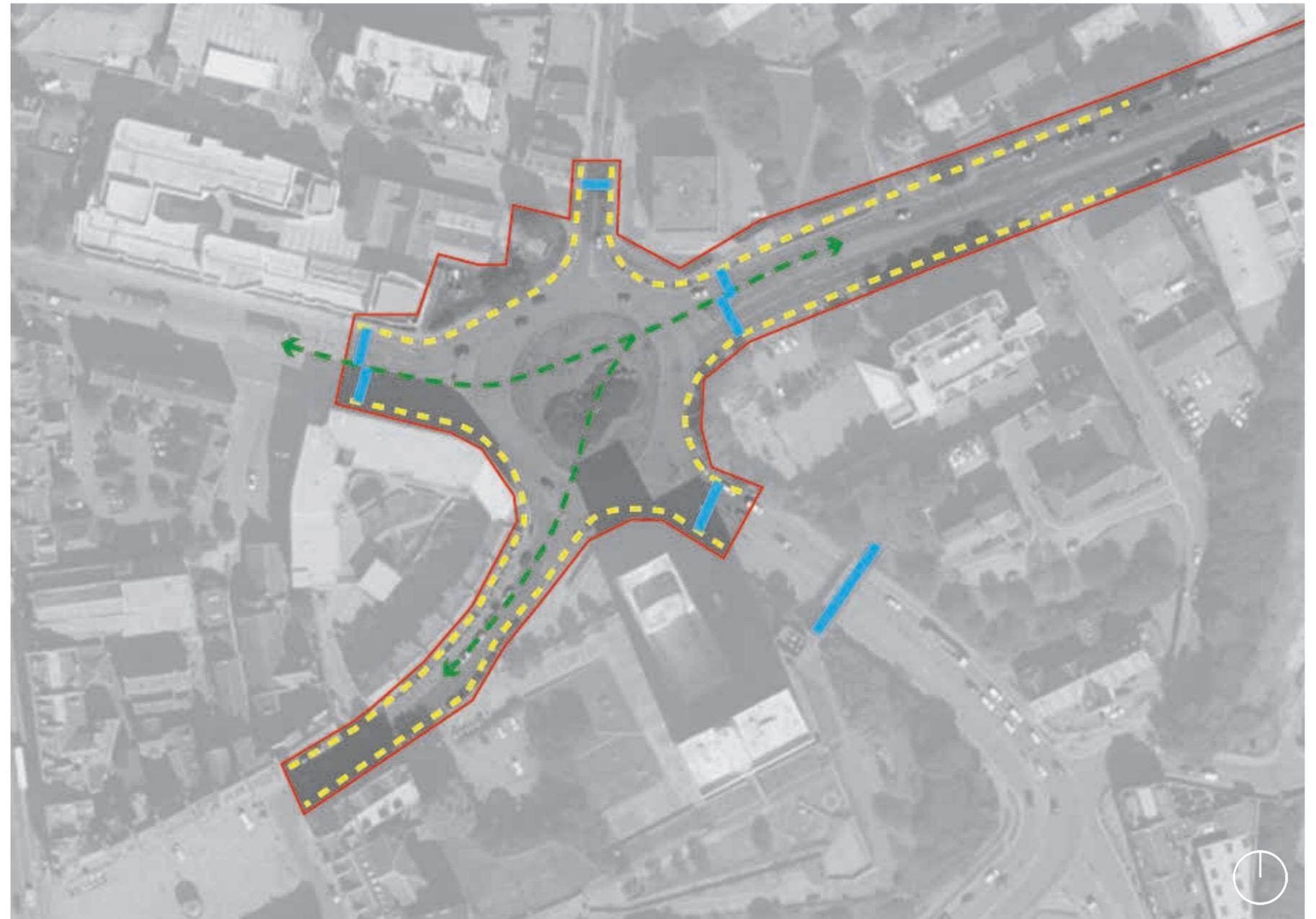
- - - Pedestrian and Cycle Desire Line
- Pedestrian Crossing Areas
- Formal Crossing Point

#### 4.6.1 EXISTING PEDESTRIAN SITUATIONS

Much of the existing pedestrian environment is shaped around traffic movements. Where formal crossings are provided, they often do not match pedestrian desire lines, increasing journey time and distance and adding to difficulties faced by users with reduced mobility. Street lighting and some limited way-finding signage is provided, but many users find that the environment is unattractive to pedestrians.

The beachfront is not physically distant from the city centre but traffic domination introduces a sense of severance which makes the Beach feel less accessible on foot. The existing pedestrian situation can be summarised, as follows:

- At-grade controlled pedestrian crossings between Justice Street and Beach Boulevard do not reflect pedestrian desire lines and safety fencing contributes towards a sense that pedestrians are constrained and channelled away from their preferred route.
- An alternative pedestrian link via Castlehill follows an indirect route which includes steps, a constrained overbridge and narrow fenced sections which contain blind corners.
- The pedestrian environment on Beach Boulevard is spacious, with wide links provided on both sides of the road. This section of the route is direct, with pedestrians required to cross over various side streets and site accesses. Over much of this section, street-lighting is mounted from the central verge, meaning the pedestrian spaces are not directly over-lit.
- Pedestrians can then travel north-eastwards on Links Road towards Broad Hill and the Beach Ballroom, to the south, via Links Road to the retail and leisure parks or directly east, via Beach Boulevard towards the Beachfront. Vehicular traffic movements at Links Road introduce further severance, albeit pedestrian crossings are provided at all arms of the junction.
- Pedestrian links at the Beach are defined by the expansive road geometry and heavy flows of vehicular traffic. This makes it hard for pedestrians to access the Promenade. The format of existing pedestrian crossings is varied, with zebra, pelican and raised table crossings used, several of which deviate from pedestrian desire lines.
- Pedestrian links on the Esplanade are wide and well-lit, with steps down towards the Promenade provided at regular intervals. Between the Beach Ballroom and Footdee, there are only four ramped accesses to the Promenade and none coincide with pedestrian crossings over the Esplanade.
- The current situation is not consistent with the road-user hierarchy and does not help to encourage a shift towards more sustainable travel patterns.



Existing Pedestrian Network - Justice Street Roundabout

#### Beach Development Framework - Severance and Constraints

- — — Pedestrian and Cycle Desire Line
- — — Existing Pedestrian Footway
- Formal Crossing Point

#### 4.6.2 EXISTING CYCLING SITUATION

The proposals seek to increase cycling for medium distance trips. Council monitoring between September 2020 and September 2021 looked at 41 sites across the city, with the Beach being the most popular location for cyclists.

The Beachfront is not physically remote from Aberdeen city centre. While some cycle facilities are incorporated into the local transport network, they generally take the form of in-carriageway links which are defined by the local road network. Aberdeen Cycle Forum has stressed that the area is not currently viewed as being attractive or safe.

Cycle links between the city centre and the beachfront are interrupted by strategic traffic links which pass through the Justice Street / Beach Boulevard roundabout junction. Justice Street, a recommended cycle route, leads cyclists towards this location which is not well-liked by users.

Recommended cycle routes between the city centre and the beachfront are indirect. They typically involve side streets where traffic flows are lighter, but where other hazards, such as parked cars, and priority junctions are present.

Beach Boulevard is the most direct route between the city centre and the Beachfront, yet cycle priority is limited to in-carriageway markings. Cyclists have to pass between general traffic and parked cars, and the link intersects various access roads and bus stop bays.

Advance cycle stop lines are incorporated to the traffic light junctions with Links Road and the Esplanade. Cycling activity east of Links Road generally takes place within a trafficked environment, where the wide road geometry which may appear intimidating to some users.

The spacious Esplanade forms part of the Core Path network, facilitating north to south cycle movements. While the Lower Promenade is separated from general traffic, there is potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Ramped accesses to the Promenade are concentrated in the central part of the Esplanade.

Several 'Spaces for People' initiatives emerged or were strengthened during lockdown periods of 2020/21. These routes appear temporary in nature and place cyclists directly alongside parked cars and traffic.

Secure cycle storage facilities are few in number. Some cycle lockers are located adjacent to the Linx Leisure Centre on the Esplanade and there is un-covered hoop storage provided in the vicinity of shop and café frontages on the central Esplanade.

Existing cycle provision does not meet with current guidance. Overall, facilities are shaped by the geometry of traffic links and suggested routes guide users to the area, but not within it. Significant opportunity exists to improve cycle access to the area by addressing severance, promoting segregation from other modes and incorporating routes and facilities which encourage recreational use.



Mapping highlighting Existing Cycling Situation

#### Beach Development Framework - Existing Cycling Situation

- Suitable for On-Street Cycling
- On-Road Cycle Lane
- ShareBike Parking Area
- Area of High Traffic Flow
- Bus / Cycle / Taxi Lane
- Dual-Use Path
- Formal Crossing Point

ShareBike, Aberdeen's public cycle rental scheme, offers access to a fleet of e-bikes from locations throughout the city. The scheme was launched in November 2022 with 450 bikes. By March 2023, bikes were available from more than 40 locations. Using a smartphone app, users can hire bikes on a pay-as-you-go basis. In addition to bike stations located throughout the city centre, bikes can be hired from the Beach Esplanade adjacent to Codonas Leisure and at Footdee. It is hoped that the scheme can be further expanded as demand grows, with there being opportunities to increase the number of bikes and stations in and around the Beachfront area.

#### 4.6.3 EXISTING PARKING SITUATION

The Beachfront is used by a wide range of groups, many of whom choose to travel to the area by car, either as a driver or a passenger. Car users include visitors who have travelled to the area from outside of the city, families with younger children, those whose use of the beach requires the transport of equipment and users with mobility limitations. For many of these users, trips on foot, by bike or by public transport are impractical, making it important that a suitable supply of parking is provided at the beachfront.

There is a good supply of on-street parking on Beach Boulevard, Links Road and on sections of the Esplanade, with the majority of capacity taking the form of unrestricted kerbside parking. Marked bays are provided within the central portion of the Esplanade adjacent to the leisure park and café outlets. Frequent unauthorised parking takes place in the pedestrian space which skirts the eastern edge of Queens Links play park. This area is not designated for parking and the kerb edge is clearly marked with double-yellow lines. Additional off-street parking is provided adjacent to the Beach Ballroom and Links Leisure centre.

Areas of accessible/blue badge parking are provided on the Esplanade adjacent to the cafes and Leisure Centre, respectively. Aberdeen City Council is currently working to increase the number of accessible bays at the waterfront, ensuring that users who have reduced mobility can have direct access.

With some minor exceptions, including the loss of the unauthorised parking area adjacent to Queens Links, the existing parking strategy will not be materially impacted by the Development Framework. Further details of future parking provision are provided in Section 6.3.5.



Existing Parking Situation

#### Beach Development Framework - Existing Parking Strategy

-  Accessible on-street Parking Bays
-  Private off-street Parking
-  Publicly Available off-street Parking
-  Publicly Available on-street Parking

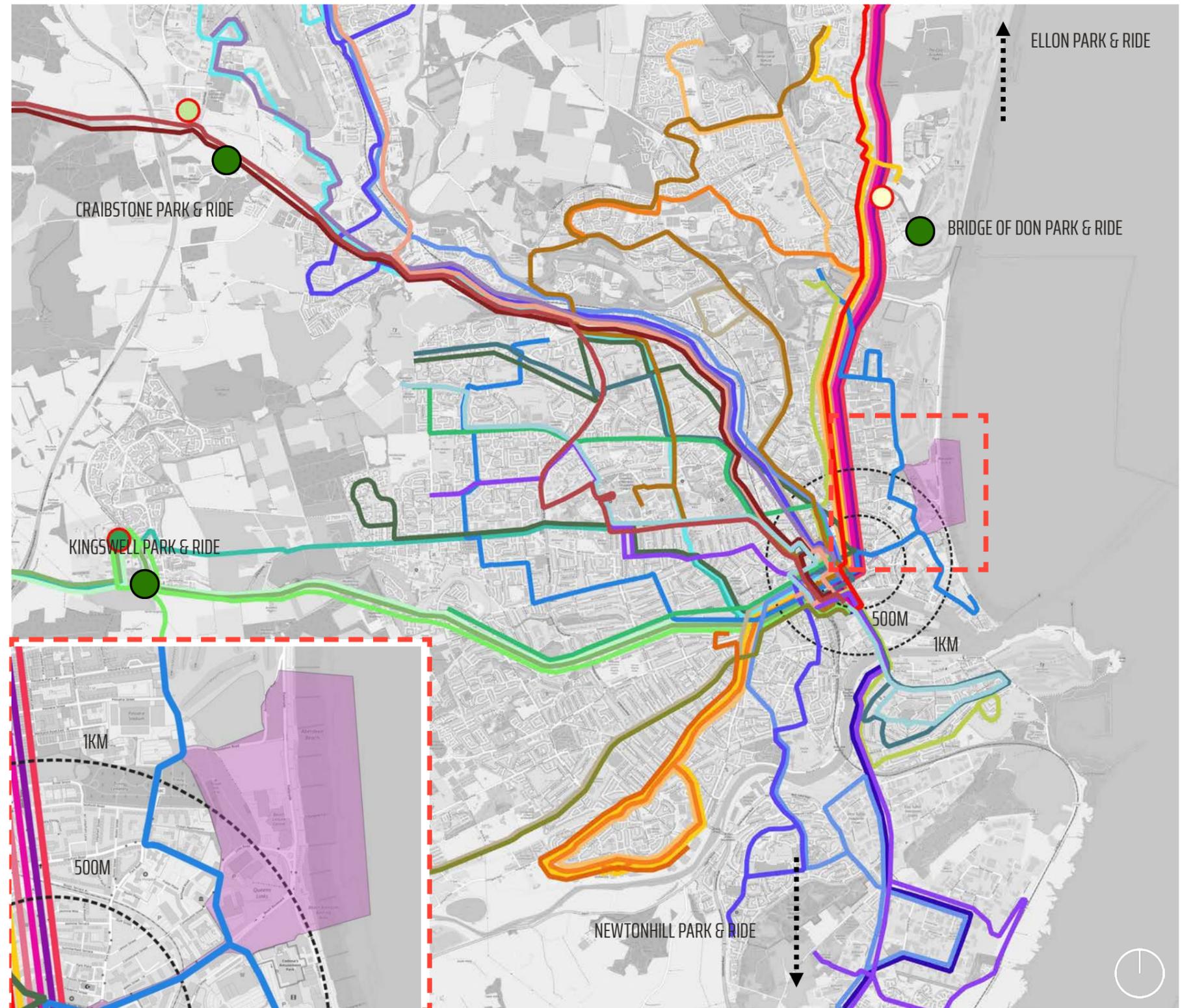
#### 4.6.4 EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES

The Beachfront is integrated into Aberdeen's local bus network, with bus stops located on Beach Boulevard, Links Road, York Street and at Footdee. Local stops are served by First Aberdeen service 13 which operates between Scatterburn via the city centre to Hillhead of Seaton. Buses operate every twenty minutes Monday to Saturday and every 30 minutes on a Sunday. As it passes through the Beachfront area, service 13 operates (in both directions) via Beach Boulevard, Links Road, Beach Retail and Leisure parks, and Park Road. Local buses stopped serving Footdee following a network revision in Summer 2022, however from November 2022, service 13 was extended on a trial basis to serve Footdee and York Street, with four buses operating to those stops each day.

While the area may be regarded as accessible by local bus services, the present-day level of service falls below that which might be regarded as 'frequent'. Historically, the Beachfront and Beach Boulevard formed a key part of Aberdeen's bus network but changes to travel behaviour and the availability of largely unrestricted car parking in the area have contributed to an overall decline in service provision, albeit the Beach remains a very popular attraction.

The masterplan vision provides significant potential to reverse this decline through the incorporation of new and improved services and facilities, including potential integration into Aberdeen Rapid Transit. The accompanying image shows the Beachfront in the context of key bus routes, including those that directly serve the King Street and Union Street corridors and those which provide a direct connection between Aberdeen's park and ride sites and the city centre. The image shows services which provide a direct connection to, or east of, the King Street corridor, to highlight the potential user catchment that can access the western part of the study area in a single bus journey, without the need for interchange. There is an overall sense that the Beachfront is detached, but not distant from the city centre. It can be accessed on foot within fifteen minutes of King Street, significantly broadening public transport opportunities from across the city.

The walking distance from Aberdeen bus and railway stations to the Beachfront is just over 1 mile - a walking time of approximately 25 minutes for most users. Mainline rail services, express coaches and regional bus services all serve these terminals, increasing the catchment that can be accessed using public transport. The public transport network includes park and ride facilities at Bridge of Don, Craibstone and Kingswells, with further sites located in Ellon and Newtonhill in Aberdeenshire. Combined, the park and ride sites provide capacity for nearly 3,000 cars. Given the potential for each of those spaces to accommodate a car with multiple occupants, the role that park and ride sites have to play, particularly in the context of large-scale events at the Beachfront, is significant.



Mapping highlighting Existing Public Transport, Services and Facilities

#### Beach Development Framework - Existing Public Transport, Services and Facilities

- Site Boundary
- Park & Ride Sites
- Bus Route 13 (Park Road - Golf Road - Seaton)

Note: Only bus routes considered relevant are shown on this diagram.

**VISION, OPPORTUNITIES**

**&**

**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**



# 5.0 VISION, OPPORTUNITIES & DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

## 5.1 VISION

The Beachfront proposals will seek to revitalise and renew the area to maximise the potential of this unique space and create an exceptional asset for the city of Aberdeen. Due to the special location of the site and its overall connection to the natural environment, the approach to design has been collaborative and landscape led in order to set an appropriate structure to accommodate a broad range of leisure uses, events and public spaces. This enhanced nature-based environment will be attuned to the needs of the local community whilst aiming to position the Beachfront as a prominent visitor location and reconnect the beach with the city centre.

### 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.



CGI of Beachfront Aspirations

### 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.

### 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.

## 5.2 APPROACH

The landscape led design approach to the Development Framework has been based on a careful assessment to understand the most appropriate means to renew and revitalise the Beachfront area. The key steps are set out below:

### Defined Character Areas

- Assess existing character areas to establish constraints and opportunities
- Identify clear character areas with design approach to establish quality and accessibility of spaces along with proposed uses.
- Highlight links between character areas and understanding of overall concept masterplan and how spaces interact.

### Key Building Development and Supporting Facilities

- Identify existing buildings and proposed development to understand what is key to retain and what buildings and facilities can be proposed which will support and enliven the Beachfront.
- Understand location of retained and proposed development in relation to character areas.
- Develop understanding of potential use and how retained and proposed buildings and facilities will contribute to the wider area.

### Revived Public Space

- Assess the limitations and challenges of the existing public space and public realm.
- Understand potential user requirements through extensive consultation to ensure public space and connections are fit for purpose and allow accessibility and usability for all.
- Propose public space and public realm approaches which enhance the public's experience of the Beachfront and create an asset for the city and wider communities.
- Renew and revitalise the beachfront experience through attractive design interventions and enhanced high-quality public realm.
- Development of a focal point for the beachfront in the form of a potential Boardwalk with accompanying art installation, creating a 'wow-factor' and attracting users from far afield.

### Access and Connectivity

- Undertake assessment of existing network and various travel routes between the beach, the city and wider Aberdeenshire area
- Propose a variety of connections to the existing network which promotes the use of public transport; are attractive to pedestrians and cyclists; and which reduce reliance on car use.

### Lighting Strategy

- Lighting strategy to be developed alongside emerging detailed design for each Character Area and associated details;
- Lighting proposals will utilise low energy, and design will be tailored to each element of the Character Areas, whether they are internal or external ;
- Lighting levels and timings will be tailored to each specific area, to ensure public safety while also minimising impact on local wildlife and habitats.

### Inclusive Design Approach

To ensure the Beachfront Development Framework meets the inclusive ethos detailed within Aberdeen City Council's brief, it is important that the internal and external environments meet the highest levels of accessible and inclusive design. The approach for the Beachfront Development Framework will start with the simple premise that inclusion, rather than just accessibility, is embedded in the design process from the outset.

Impactful inclusive design is about considering a range of abilities, age groups and community background. It reflects the different faiths, disabilities & hidden conditions, genders and addresses important issues that affect a neurodiverse population. People should be able to make effective, independent choices about how they use the Beachfront without experiencing undue effort or separation and be able to participate equally in the activities the area offers. True inclusive design benefits all of us, it aims to remove barriers from the environment that impact not only disabled people, but others such as families with children, people carrying heavy baggage, pregnant women, people with temporary injuries and older people.

No matter how physically accessible a space is the accessibility of the buildings and spaces will be compromised and over time, diminish. Therefore, criterion and practices must be established by the building management and end user operators, this will include the development of active management plans.

An inclusive design approach:

- Places people at the heart of the design process.
- Acknowledges human diversity and difference.
- Offers dignity, autonomy, choice and spontaneity.
- Provides for flexibility in use.
- Provides buildings and environments convenient, safe and enjoyable for everyone to use.
- Goes beyond just meeting minimum standards or legislative requirements, and;
- Recognises everyone benefits from improved accessibility.

Inclusive design is indivisible from good design. It goes beyond 'accessibility' and incorporates a broad range of design considerations:

- All gender toilets as well as separate sex toilet facilities
- Trans people changing facilities
- Menopause
- Nursing mothers and parental rooms
- Cultural and faith considerations
- Mental health and well-being in buildings
- Biophilic design
- Inclusive play equipment
- Neurodiversity

All of these design approaches and principles will form part of the design considerations as the details for each element of the Development Framework come forward in the future.



Inclusive design interventions

## 5.2 APPROACH

### Proposed Foul Drainage

It is proposed to collect all wastewater and foul discharges from the development into a traditional gravity system that discharges to the publicly adopted combined sewerage network.

The proposed foul water sewerage system is to be designed, in accordance with the latest edition of Sewers for Scotland, to operate without surcharge and achieve self-cleansing. It is anticipated that the foul sewerage system will be prospectively adoptable from the disconnecting manhole on each plot to the connection to the Scottish Water network. It should therefore be noted that the detailed design of any pumping station will have to be in accordance with the latest edition of Sewers for Scotland.

### Proposed Surface Water Drainage

A preliminary sewerage network has been developed using the masterplan developed by Keppie Architects and OPEN. It consists of a traditional gravity network to collect the storm water-run-off from the various development plots and convey it, via a new outfall, to the North Sea. It should be noted that the sewer connecting the site to the headwall would penetrate the existing sea wall. Consequently, it is anticipated that consultation with the Local Authority's Flood Control Officer will be required to finalise the construction details – including the number, location relative to the planned pier and non-return valve arrangement.

It is anticipated that the surface water sewerage system will be prospectively adoptable from the disconnecting manhole on each plot to the connection to the receiving watercourse. The design of the proposed system must therefore take account of the latest edition of Sewers for Scotland and the SUDS Design Manual (CIRIA C753).

### Proposed Utilities & Infrastructure

A high-level review of the utility services has been carried out to provide an outline strategy for the utility services to serve the site.

### District Heating

Depending on the outcome of the energy strategy appraisal then an option would be to serve the Beach Ballroom, Leisure facility and potential new Stadium from the established Aberdeen City Council's Heat and Power network. A new energy centre would need to be located for the provision of with a Gas fired CHP, Green Hydrogen CHP, or a Hybrid between Gas/Hydrogen. The connection to the district heating system with a new energy centre would assist to provide resilience back into the established network, particular during period where energy demand at the Beachfront was not high.

The overall heat demand on the existing would increase and a detailed appraisal would be required to review the capacity for connection on the district heating network.

Provision of an Energy centre with a CHP unit would provide electricity for connection to meet some of the buildings, with the option to either export and surplus to the grid or used to produce hydrogen.

### Electricity

At this stage it is too early to assess the electricity demand requirement for the buildings, however this would be developed as the design progresses, along with the energy strategy appraisal. New electricity connections will be required from the existing 11KV network to the energy centre and would be connected in parallel with the electricity produced by the CHP to serve the buildings.

### Natural Gas

Depending on the outcome of the energy strategy appraisal then an option would be to serve the Beach Ballroom, Leisure facility and potential new Stadium from an energy centre powered via a natural gas CHP that had the potential to be converted to a hydrogen fuel source in the future. The overall heat demand on the existing connection is unlikely to be suitable for the new energy centre load and a detailed appraisals would be required to review the capacity of the gas network to determine the connection point. It is worth noting that the main disadvantage of this option initially would be the heat and power is still derived from a fossil fuel.

### Public Street Lighting

Public street lighting shall be developed as the design progresses, however consideration at this stage should be given to the where the electricity is to be derived from and an option would be to provide power from the Combined Heat and Power Unit within the energy centre. Depending on the final energy strategy then this could be provided from green electricity.

### Telecommunications

Digital Connection would be key to the functionality of the Leisure Centre and potential new Stadium facilities, and it is vital the connectivity of the buildings exceed the current availability and is future proofed. Details and proposal would need to be appraised and discussed further with the providers; however, consideration would be given to serve the buildings with multiple providers from diverse routes to provide added resilience to the facilities. Connections are available locally to Openreach, City Fibre and or CSP networks.

Consideration should also be given to provide the facilities with a Wired Score Digital accreditation

### Water

At this stage it is too early to assess the water demand for the Beach Ballroom, Leisure, and potential new Stadium facilities. It is reasonable to assume that the service provided to the existing would meet most of the demand and a new connection is likely to be local, however a Predevelopment/Water impact assessment would need to be carried out to determine infrastructure upgrades and identify the likely

connection point on to the existing Scottish Water Network.

### Wastewater

The requirements of the foul and surface water drainage shall be carried out by the Civil and Structural Engineer.

### Energy Strategy

The energy strategy for the proposals still requires to be fully developed but is likely to include one Energy Centre located at the Leisure Centre to serve the entire development. Architectural interventions are proposed to adopt some Passivhaus style construction principles such as super insulated building envelopes, high performance glazing and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. They will also likely feature the use of smart controls, an off-site sourced 'green electricity' supply and some on-site renewable technologies including Photovoltaic Panels with associated battery storage. Distribution of heating & cooling is likely to be via an Ambient Loop system with water-to-water heat pumps connected to terminal units throughout. For added resilience back up heating & power could be sourced from the existing Aberdeen Heat & Power District Heating System which it is anticipated will switch to a green hydrogen fuel source in the future.

### Net Zero Carbon Aspirations

The project gives a platform to incorporate new & innovative technologies and systems, to provide a net zero carbon, electricity, heating, and cooling solution to serve the load demands of the development. Additionally, there is scope for a solution which aligns with Aberdeen City Council's hydrogen strategy, to generate demand and interest in hydrogen as a power source in order to achieve their climate goals and to capitalise on the unique skills-base of the region. Following a Net Zero workshop with the design team and ACC we understand the project is seeking to achieve Net Zero Carbon in Operation status.

### Futureproofing

The energy centre solution will need to meet the requirements of Aberdeen City Council Climate Change Plan 2021-25: Towards a Net Zero and Climate Resilient Council. The Plan sets out the approach, pathway, and actions towards net zero and climate resilient Council assets and operations, by 2045. As such, energy-efficient designs will be incorporated alongside renewable and low carbon energy sources, with consideration provided on how further decarbonisation could be achieved in the future.

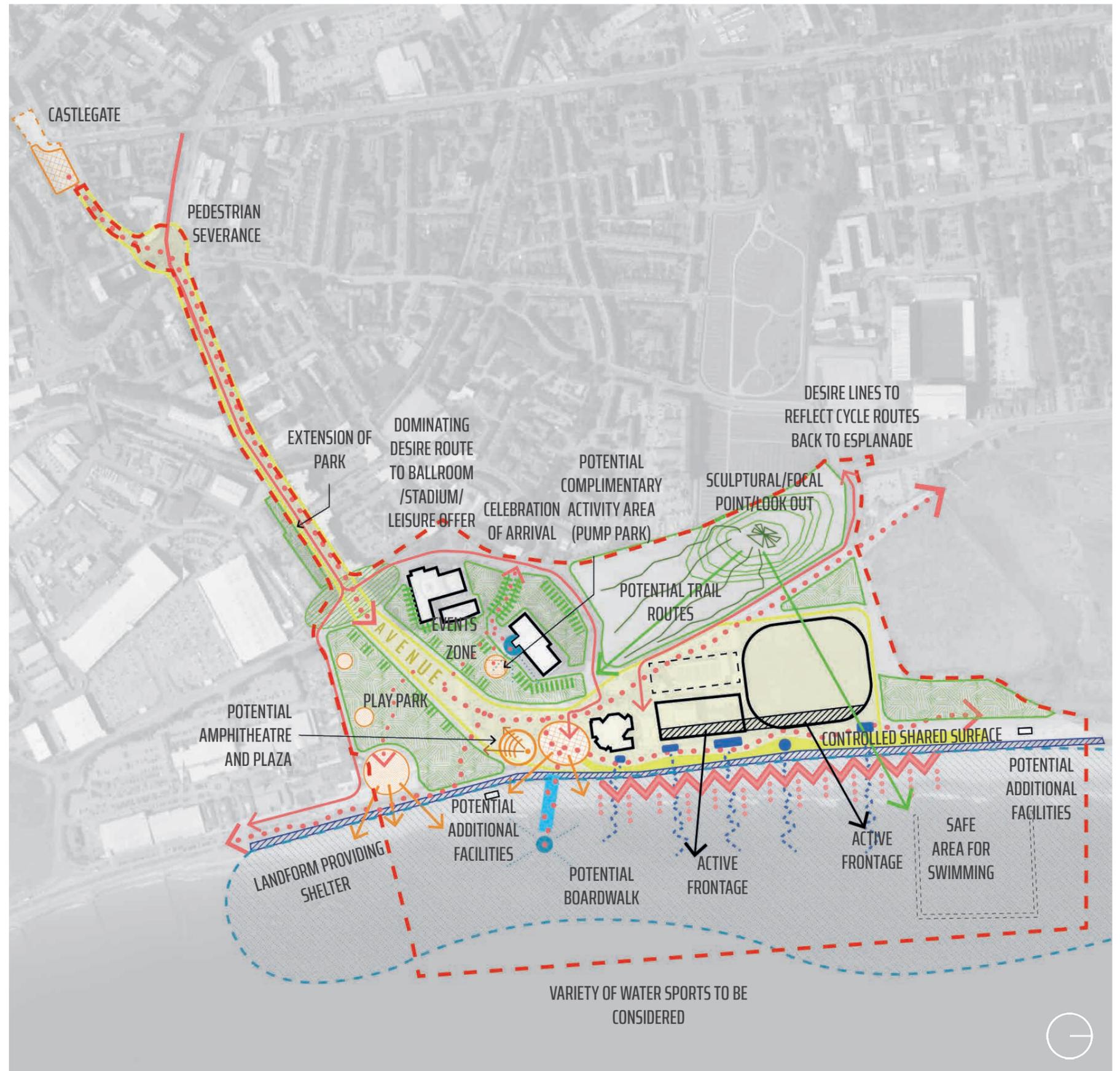
### Resilience

Given the scale and importance of the facilities planned within the development, the energy demands will be significant and critical to function. Consideration should therefore be given to added robustness and security of energy supplies so the energy centre solution should incorporate a degree of redundancy and back-up. This integrates smoothly with renewables-powered electrolysis or CHP (Combined Heat and Power) units adapted to support hydrogen, either partially or as the sole fuel source.

### 5.3 OPPORTUNITIES

Following on from the site analysis, the design team identified several opportunities which capture the initial ideas explored during early design workshops, these include:

- The potential for an attractive desire route from Beach Boulevard down towards the enhanced Ballroom/Potential Stadium/Leisure offer.
- Opportunity for celebration of arrival to the Beachfront / Queens Links.
- Creating an enhanced setting for the iconic Beach Ballroom with a more formal Public Plaza and grand entrance to the Ballroom.
- Potential for Integrated Stadium/Leisure complex with active frontage to the Beach esplanade.
- An enhanced public realm connecting Ballroom/Leisure/Potential Stadium elements.
- Utilising level changes for amphitheatre type spaces.
- Re-imagined play park for all ages including potential for water play.
- Facilitating a large capacity outdoor events zone with appropriate space and facilities.
- The creation of landforms to provide shelter from the elements.
- Consideration of integrated coastal defence opportunities.
- Harness water space activities and facilitate for WC/changing/showers, etc.
- Potential feature Boardwalk structure and focal viewing point to take advantage of spectacular beach views.
- Structure planting / screening opportunities/enhanced green networks.
- Extension of Castlegate/enhanced Public Realm towards Roundabout/potential new Civic Space.
- Extension of an enhanced Beach Boulevard towards the City Centre enhancing the active travel experience between the beach and the city centre.



Beachfront Opportunities diagram

#### 5.4 INITIAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

The creation of a transformational new Beachfront destination will rely on progressive and innovative design solutions, alongside a respectful acknowledgement to the heritage of the site. As the proposed Beachfront development will be centred around the iconic Beach Ballroom as the main focal point of the redevelopment, the history of the Beachfront is intrinsic to the character of the wider area.

The vision for the development is to rejuvenate the Beachfront back to its former glory as a major waterfront destination for future generations. The component parts of previous successes can be re-imagined to create a contemporary new design solution which establishes Aberdeen Beachfront as a world-class leisure destination once more.

Initial design concepts drew upon the history and heritage of the Beachfront in an innovative, forward-thinking way.

#### 5.5 EXPLORATION & TESTING

Given the scale and importance of the site, a number of options were developed to test out initial thoughts for the concept masterplanning approach for the Beachfront. This testing process has been crucial in allowing the development of a preferred Development Framework approach, along with alternative options, which is viable, deliverable and will maximise the potential of the area. This iterative process was undertaken by the design team alongside Aberdeen City Council to ensure the benefits and drawbacks of the potential design solutions were understood and the most appropriate proposal agreed amongst the design team.



Design Team collaboration workshop



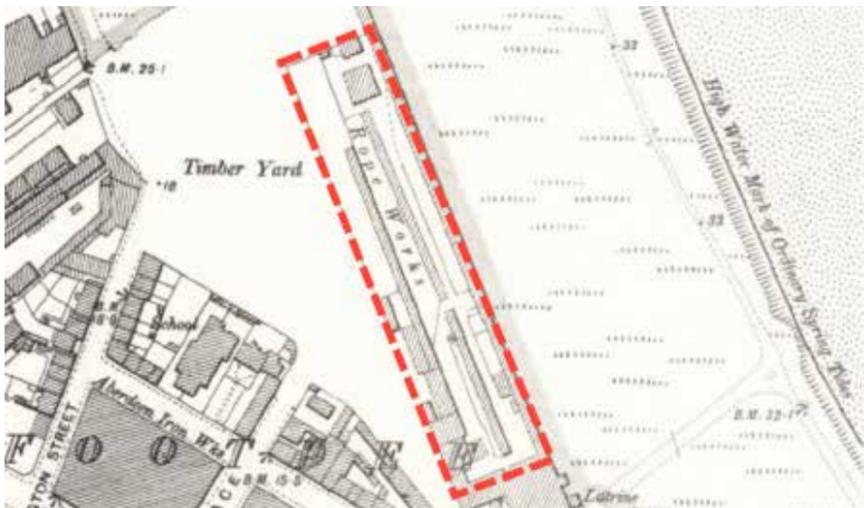
Design sketch for Rope Works Concept



Design sketch for Tram Lines Concept



Design sketch for the Groyne Concept



Historic map showing the location of the Rope Works near Queens Links



Historic image showing the former trams on the Beachfront



Image of the groyne structures which are positioned along Aberdeen Beach

### 5.5.1 OPTION 1: ROPE WORKS

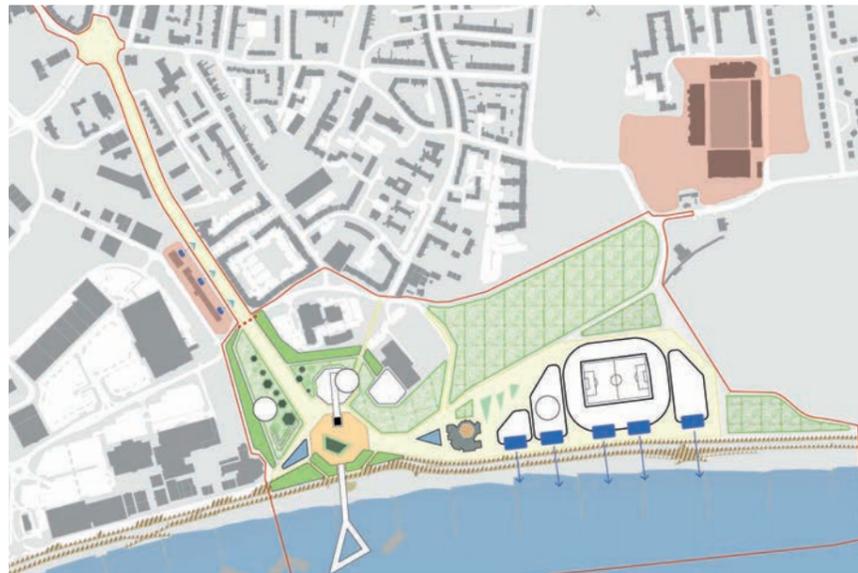
Rope Works is inspired by Aberdeen's shipbuilding industry. Historically, the Rope & Sail Making Works that were located on the site at the South of Queen's Links. The Rope Works concept uses the formation of the rope itself to inspire a masterplanning design approach for the main character area of the site. The Rope Works concept takes the organic form of the rope to create a network of footpaths and desire routes, extending down from Beach Boulevard and opening up towards the Beach Ballroom at the heart of the proposed design.



Rope Works conceptual masterplan

### 5.5.2 OPTION 2: TRAM LINES

Tram Lines uses the linearity of the historic tram routes to organise the central features of the concept masterplan, alongside influences such as the octagonal geometry of the Beach Ballroom and Bandstand. The Tram Lines concept is centred around the existing remnant of physical tram line located at the North of Queen's Links. The historic lines would be retained and enhanced to form an organising geometry from which to build a re-imagined Queens Links urban park, extending out into the sea to form a new pier structure which loops back round to create an amphitheatre-style external gathering space.



Tram Lines conceptual masterplan

### 5.5.3 OPTION 3: THE GROYNES

The Groynes concept is inspired by the existing shore protection structures built perpendicular to the shoreline of the Aberdeen coast. These linear structures are an integral part of the unique Aberdeen seascape, creating a strong organising geometry from which the concept masterplan builds. The 2 central Groynes form the basis of an overall design language for the Links character area, extending out into the sea to form a new pier structure which loops back round to create an amphitheatre-style external gathering space.



Groynes conceptual masterplan

## 5.6 ROPE WORKS DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The main features of the Rope Works concept are as follows:

### History & Heritage

This option celebrates the historical character of the site and the previous Rope Works which supported Aberdeen's Shipbuilding heritage.

### Free Play

This concept masterplan generates a multitude of zones and opportunities for free play for all ages. The child and young person focused areas drawing on Aberdeen's ambition to obtain UNICEF Child Friendly City status.

### Natural Environment

The organic design characteristics of Rope Works creates a natural geometry of sinuous footpaths and routes linking seamlessly with Broad Hill and appears in harmony with the topography of the site.

### Boardwalk

The design of the Rope Works Pier structure and associated Boardwalk has the potential to provide an affordable design solution and would greatly improve accessibility to various levels within the network of pathways on the beach.

Aberdeen City Council subsequently approved Option 1: 'Rope Works', as their preferred masterplan concept at the meeting of the City Growth & Resources Committee in November 2021.

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

## 5.8 ROPE WORKS - LEISURE AND POTENTIAL NEW STADIUM

Three options for the Leisure and potential new Stadium elements of the proposals have been identified within the Rope Works concept, one preferred and two alternatives.

### Preferred Leisure and Potential New Stadium Option

Potential new build Leisure Centre/Ice Arena with potential new build Football Stadium.

### Alternative Option A

Retain and refurbish existing Leisure Centre/Ice Arena with potential new build Football Stadium.

### Alternative Option B

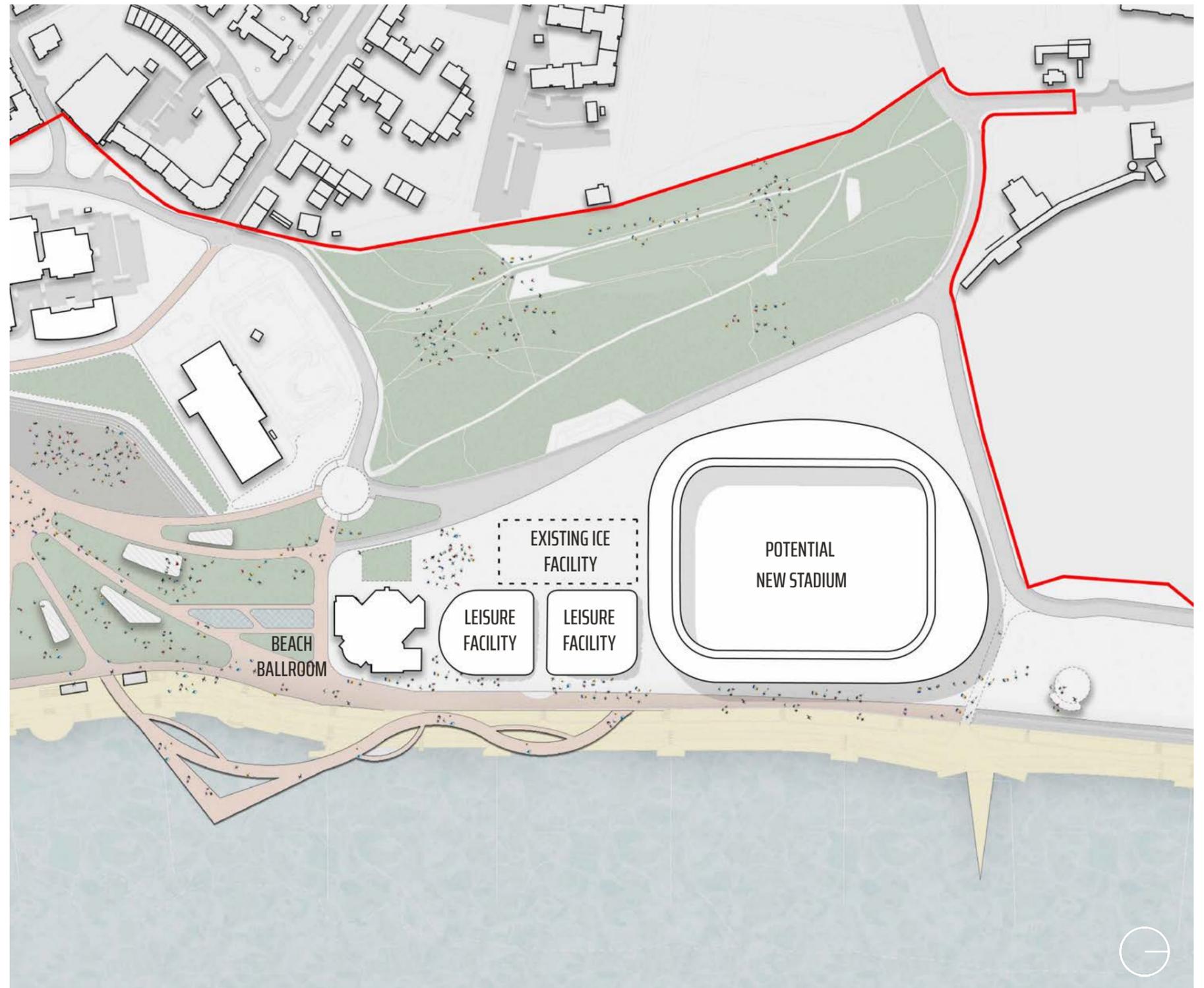
Potential new Leisure Centre/Ice Arena with Football Stadium excluded.

Further work has been undertaken by the design team on reviewing these options including their aims, objectives, and outline project brief. Feedback during public engagement, and ongoing discussions with end users, made it clear that continuity of Ice Rink facilities is extremely important. As such, options are being explored in order to maintain continuity of ice provision for the City while replacement Leisure and Ice facilities are constructed. Therefore, these design options have been revised to allow for the potential retention of the existing Ice Rink until such time as the new Ice Arena is available for use.

All options were evaluated against the same criteria as the concept masterplans under the headings of accessibility and social value, vision and culture, urban design, and planning, commercial, adaptability, and sustainability. The scoring favoured a potential new build Leisure Centre /Ice Arena with potential new build Football Stadium (Preferred Stadium & Leisure Option), principally due to the ability to deliver a coordinated and integrated sport and leisure development within a transformational new waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen.

### 5.8.1 PREFERRED LEISURE AND POTENTIAL NEW STADIUM OPTION

The preferred option assumes that the existing Leisure Centre and Ice arena are demolished (with existing Ice Rink being retained until the facility is opened) and would be replaced with a new facility that integrates leisure centre, ice arena, and football stadium uses as part of the development. The potential mix and integration of facilities would be in line with the Council's aspiration to make the most of the beach area as an opportunity and tourism asset as well as to generate new visits and spend. Furthermore, the potential to retain the stadium and its footfall close to Aberdeen city centre would be an ideal outcome for all concerned.



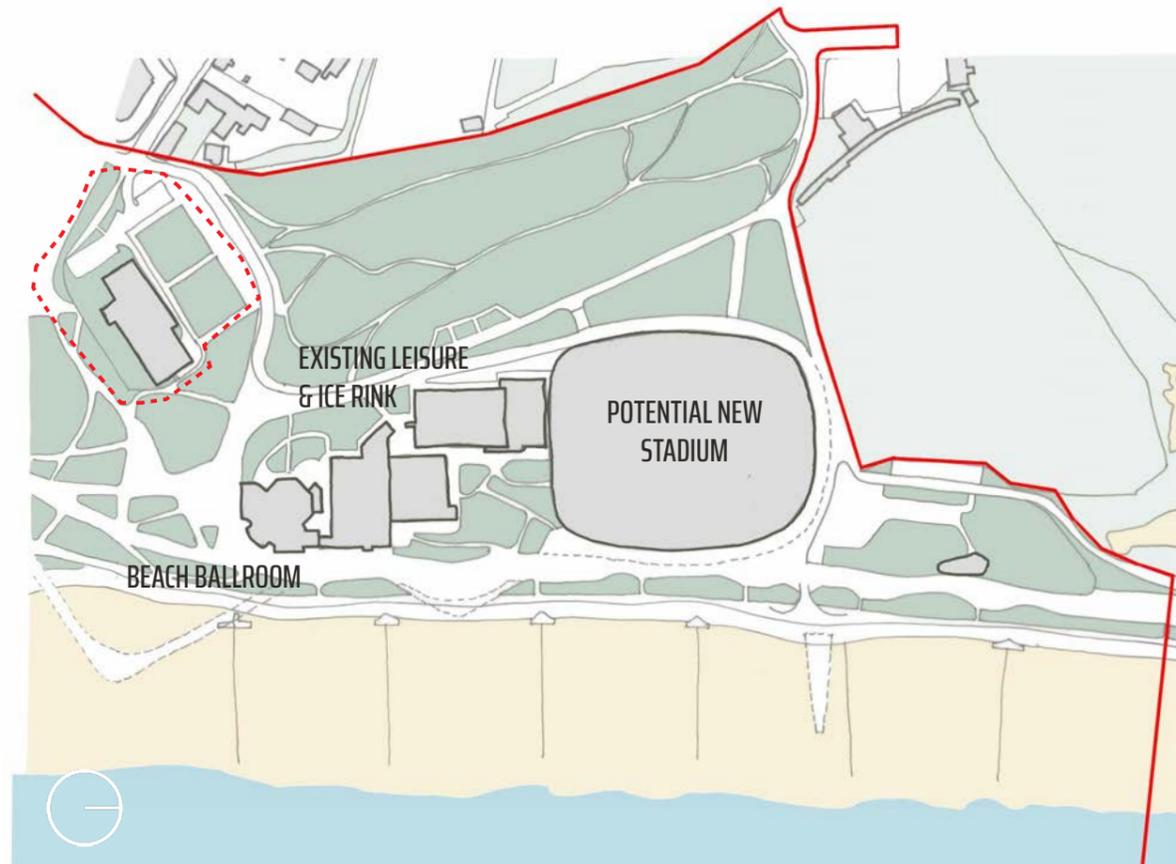
Preferred Leisure and potential new Stadium sketch

### 5.8.2 ALTERNATIVE OPTION A

Alternative Option A assumes that the existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena are retained and upgraded as part of the development alongside a potential standalone new Football Stadium.

The refurbishment of the existing Leisure Centre would be based on work already undertaken by Sport Aberdeen with the aim of improving the condition and utilisation of the facility, to increase participation, provide new revenue streams and to create a destination venue.

The refurbishment of the Ice Arena would be based on a light touch refresh focusing on redecoration, replacement of seats, fixtures, fittings, and dealing with outstanding maintenance to the building fabric and building services installations. The proposals do not seek to link the existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena.



Alternative Option A sketch

### 5.8.3 ALTERNATIVE OPTION B

Alternative Option B assumes that the existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena are demolished, however, the existing Ice Rink will be retained until such time as a replacement facility is completed. The existing Leisure facility would be replaced by an integrated facility that links a potential new Leisure Centre and Ice Arena but with that the potential new Football Stadium will not form part of the development and is re-provided elsewhere in the city. The aim of the integrated Leisure Centre and Ice Arena would be to provide an efficient building plan and form that can be operated as a single entity and avoid the duplication of café and management spaces that occurs at the existing Leisure Centre and Ice Arena.

The retention of the existing Ice Arena until the replacement is constructed allows facilities for local and regional ice skating and ice hockey maintained where they cannot be provided elsewhere in the city.

### 5.8.4 FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

As there will be future consultation and design development in relation to the Leisure facilities and potential New Stadium, the Development Framework allows for further alternative options to be explored and developed as required to respond to the evolving brief.



Alternative Option B sketch