

Aberdeen Planning Guidance 2023: Aberdeen Placemaking Process - Guidance for the Preparation of Masterplans, Development Frameworks and Development Briefs (DRAFT)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Status of Aberdeen Planning Guidance

This Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) supports the Development Plan and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

This APG expands upon the following Aberdeen Local Development Plan policies:

Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design

Policy LR1 – Land Release Policy

Policy LR2 – Delivery of Mixed Use Communities

Policy I1 – Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations

Policy H4 – Housing Mix and Need

1.2 Introduction to Topic / Background

This document outlines the Council's **Aberdeen Placemaking and Masterplanning Process**, which was formerly known as the 'Aberdeen Masterplanning Process'. It contains guidance and information on the production of development frameworks, masterplans and development briefs – known collectively as 'placemaking guidance' and details the expectations of the Council for such documents.

The guidance is structured around the '5 Ws' project research questions – who, what, when, where, why – following with a 'how to guide' for the contents of placemaking guidance, which includes links to supporting planning policy, associated guidance and advice.

1.3 Climate Change

The production of placemaking documents allows for a holistic and all encompassing approach to the development of a site. A coordinated approach to development will assist and meet the criteria set out in Aberdeen Adapts, in particular Goal 2: Resilient travel and infrastructure, Goal 3: Secure utilities and communication networks, Goal 4: Managing and minimising flooding, Goal 6: Protecting watercourses and coastlines. Connection to Net Zero Aberdeen can be met through the Building and Heat themes, as

sites will have lower energy demand, and improved energy efficiency due to considered placement, orientation and density. The mobility strategy of Net Zero Aberdeen will also be achieved as sites will prioritise sustainable transport. The document connects to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 3: Good Health and wellbeing.

Aberdeen Planning Guidance

2 Who produces placemaking guidance?

- 2.1 Placemaking guidance will usually be prepared by design agents on behalf of landowners and developers. It will also be prepared by Aberdeen City Council where it has an interest in the land. Irrespective of the author, all guidance must promote the most appropriate form of development in full consideration of the site and planning policy.
- 2.2 We expect client commitment to produce quality places, the success of which involves multi-disciplinary teams. Design teams must show an appreciation for planning policies and collaborative working with communities, organisations and stakeholders.
- 2.3 Given the necessary level of commitment and investment required in the production and implementation of guidance, early consultation with Council officers will establish the scale of placemaking guidance required and to establish key contacts.
- 2.4 We are committed to aiding the committee reporting, consultation and approval process with the ultimate aim of providing a consensus view of development opportunities which are represented in placemaking guidance documents.

3 What is placemaking guidance?

- 3.1 Aberdeen has several large masterplan areas and with these new settlements and urban extensions also come significant infrastructure requirements. The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed to adopt the ['Place Principle'](#) to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries, to encourage better collaboration and community involvement, and improve the impact of combined energy, resources and investment. In addition, Section 14 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces a new right for communities to produce Local Plan Plans to help shape the future development and use of land in their communities.

- 3.2 The production of 'placemaking guidance' is a process of bringing together all visionary and practical aspects of the development process to help guide and create better places, embedding the 'Place Principle' in all planning decision-making.
- 3.3 Guidance emphasises the importance of good urban design to create well-designed, sustainable and successful places. Helping to deliver new housing and communities of the right type, in the right places, and which stand the test of time.
- 3.4 There are 3 types of placemaking guidance with established use in Aberdeen, outlined in detail on the following page.

1. **Development Framework**
2. **Masterplan**
3. **Development Brief**

- 3.5 The webpage below contains a list of the currently adopted placemaking guidance documents:

Current Adopted Placemaking Guidance

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building/local-development-plan/aberdeen-local-development-plan/supplementary-guidance-and-technical-advice>

Effective masterplanning can make a positive contribution to the creation of well-designed, sustainable and successful places.

1. Development Framework

Undertaken at the very beginning of the development identification process to co-ordinate strategic issues for large sites – such as ownership, phasing, delivery and other complex needs.

Development Frameworks offer the greatest opportunity to flexibly scope out the vision, broad principles and feasibility of developments, testing and knowing the opportunities and constraints of a site without becoming a rigid blueprint.



2. Masterplan

Advancing the detail of a development framework, or as a standalone document dependent on the specific site, a masterplan contains detailed guidance on land use, design principles and development programme.

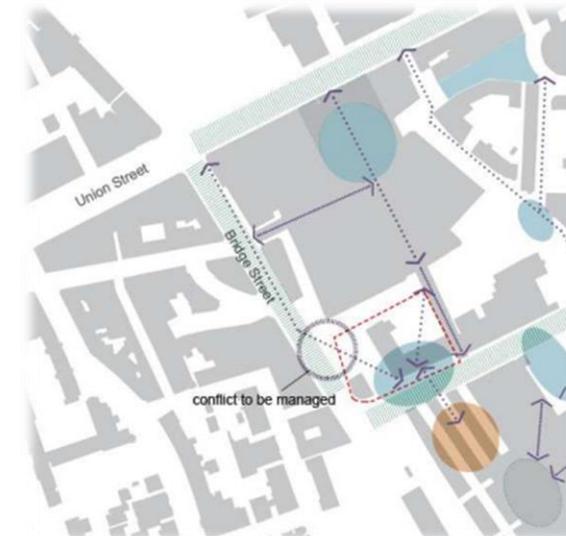
Masterplans will be developed for sites of circa 10 hectares and/or around 50 dwellings or more (in line with Policy H4).



3. Development Brief

Provide detailed specific guidance based on an appraisal of the site, its broader context and planning policy to give clarity and stimulate appropriate development.

A range of site types may require briefs including, for example, within conservation areas, prominent and/or sensitive locations, where there are often complex issues, differences in agendas or significant environmental considerations.



4 When is placemaking guidance required?

- 4.1 Guidance can be prepared for any site, but there are certain types of sites or circumstances where it is most appropriate. Following [Planning Advice Note 83 Masterplanning](#), some form of masterplan or placemaking guidance is generally required for areas of large-scale change, such as urban extensions, regeneration projects, town and city centres and housing developments where there is significant level of environmental and/or ecological assets requiring protection. There will also be occasions when the cumulative effect of many small developments may be significant and impact on the setting of existing development.
- 4.2 The type and level of detail for when placemaking guidance is required will be commensurate to the size, scale, sensitivity and complexity of the proposed development site – and at the discretion of the Council.
- 4.3 For certain sites, the Local Development Plan may have explicitly referenced when a masterplan or other form of placemaking guidance is required.
- 4.4 It is advisable to periodically update placemaking guidance, for example where there are significant changes to proposals, or a substantial amount of time has passed. In addition, where large areas of sites have been successfully built out, the guidance may no longer be required and therefore cease to be identified as Aberdeen Planning Guidance.
- 4.5 Early engagement between design teams and the Council must be undertaken at the start of any project to confirm the full scope of work for placemaking guidance, together with a comprehensive communication plan. The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team will co-ordinate the Council's input into the preparation of placemaking guidance, the assessment therefore and agree subsequent committee reporting schedules.

5 Where will placemaking guidance be used in decision-making process?

- 5.1 It is the intention that all placemaking guidance produced will be adopted as Aberdeen Planning Guidance to support the Local Development Plan and all levels of planning decision making. In certain circumstances, placemaking guidance may be considered and assessed alongside a relevant planning application.

- 5.2 Placemaking guidance is a strong **material consideration** in the determination of planning applications, which means that it's established planning parameters will be adhered to during all stages of the development process. Often placemaking guidance forms the basis of the requirements for Design Statements ([PAN 68](#)).
- 5.3 Once the Council is in agreement with the content of the draft placemaking guidance, it will be reported to the relevant Council committee(s) for approval and adoption. All placemaking guidance intended for adoption as APG will be subject to a minimum 4-week statutory public consultation, led by the Council. The results of this exercise will also be reported to the relevant committee(s).
- 5.4 All placemaking guidance will be assessed under the national planning policy framework, associated planning advice notes and guidance, and this Aberdeen Placemaking and Masterplanning Process – with particular emphasis on the [6 qualities of successful places](#).

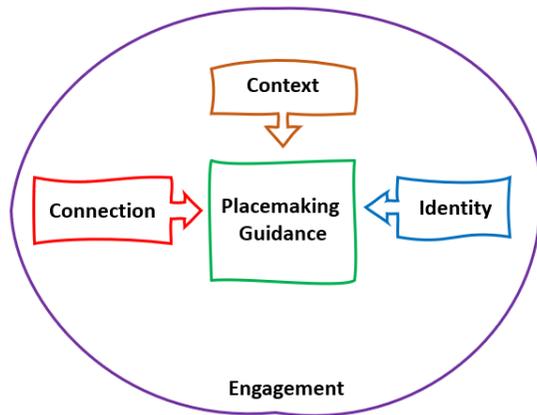
6 Why prepare placemaking guidance?

- 6.1 Placemaking guidance can help to raise standards of urban design and create quality places, which are both sustainable and successful. Such places have the physical environment which has been designed in a way to promote strong and resilient communities, enhance quality of life, provide ease of movement and with a strong sense of place, belonging and identity.
- 6.2 The masterplanning process and delivery of placemaking guidance provides a structured approach and framework to assess a wide range of complex issues, whilst at the same time embedding the 'Place Principle' in all the work we do.
- 6.3 Successful placemaking guidance promotes a shared understanding of place, emphasising the need to work collaboratively, in partnership and engage with wide range of interests to understand and look after the assets in a place, to achieve better outcomes for people and communities. We want to ensure we:
- Deliver places people are proud to call home – ensure place vision, design quality, appropriate uses and connectivity all work together to deliver sustainable places
 - Create places where people want to live – create high-quality and distinctive places which support resilient communities
 - Reduce the risk of piecemeal and inappropriate development
 - Shape development through open and inclusive engagement with all interested parties
 - Frontload planning matters in the process, contributing towards efficiencies in determining planning applications

Effective masterplanning can deliver places where people want to live.

7 Working together – Local Place Plans and Locality Planning

- 7.1 Local Place Plans are defined by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 as community-led plans developed by local communities which have a focus on **development and use of land** and **community aspirations** for its future development. This may include new buildings, changes to the use/appearance of existing buildings, and other changes in the way land is used. Local place planning is part of a suite of tools by the Government's work on planning reform and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which includes steps to reduce conflict, improve community engagement and build public trust in planning matters.
- 7.2 Local Place Plans must be prepared by a Community Council, established in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, or a Community Body as defined by section 19 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and fulfil the legal requirements set out in the 1997 Act and the 2021 Regulations.
- 7.3 [Circular 1/2022 Local Place Plans \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot) provides detailed guidance on preparing, submitting and registering a Local Place Plan, however many of the topics presented here in the **Aberdeen Placemaking Process** will offer ideas for things to consider and thinking about local place planning.
- 7.4 In preparing Local Place Plans a community body must have regard to the Local Development Plan, the National Planning Framework and other relevant local planning guidance or consented proposals. In addition, they must have regard to Locality Plans prepared by Community Planning Partnerships.
- 7.5 Significant work has already been undertaken by Community Planning Aberdeen on the development of Locality Plans as a tool to unify and strengthen community collaboration across Aberdeen. Part of the key evolution of these Locality Plans in the future will be developing the 'Place' themes within the plans to incorporate areas which community bodies may wish to see developed (as per Local Place Plans). Aberdeen City Council support a holistic approach to local place planning, promoting interaction and active engagement in the creation of effective Locality Plans, with a focused section on 'Place'. Local place planning should relate to a recognisable area or community, such as the 3 areas 'North', 'South', and 'Central' of our Locality Plans. As local place planning issues develop over time, we may move to identify specific 'neighbourhoods' within the 'Place' themes of our Locality Plans.



7.6 The Council strongly believe that linking Locality Plans with Local Place Plans is the best way to assist community bodies and empower communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places within a wider framework of strategies and outcomes, creates efficiencies, reduces duplication and ensures resources are prioritised to areas where there could be significant benefits for communities to grow.

7.7 Moving forward, we encourage community bodies to work through our Locality Planning framework, however, a community group may nevertheless wish to work independently. If this is the case, then the planning authority would encourage

production of a plan which focuses on or acts as the delivery mechanism for the Locality Plan.

8 Content of Placemaking Guidance

8.1 All placemaking guidance, irrespective of which type, must include illustrated plans, accurate imagery and a structured well written content which adequately addresses the 4 key themes of **Context**, **Identity**, **Connection**, and **Engagement** – which has been informed by Scottish Government PAN 83: Master Planning’.

Context	
Clear understanding of place, the site and surrounding area	
Local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Location of site, development boundaries – including land ownership/control ▪ Appraisal of context, land use and site allocations, including relationship to adjacent land uses and/or proposals
Site description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning and site history, having regard to National Planning Framework NPF3 and emerging NPF4, Scottish Planning Policy and guidance, including relevant Planning Advice Notes and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant site features – trees, woodland, structure planting, Tree Preservation Orders, woodland, historic assets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecology, nature conservation areas / wildlife habitats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Site constraints and opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ground conditions, including contaminated land
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Views into and across the site / vistas / focal points and landmarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topography / contours and microclimate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hydrology / surface water / flood risk
Existing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access, road and public transport
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local public facilities, including schools

Identity

Establish planning and design principles for the place to be created

Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly outline how the proposal will create a place with distinctive character, sense of identity and promote positive health and well-being – based on a thorough understanding of the site and development brief. ▪ Aims and objectives of what the development hopes to achieve – clearly illustrate how the proposal will deliver the place vision and addresses relevant planning policy (including planning obligations) ▪ Proposed land use – including mix of uses, density, open space and affordable housing ▪ Detail how the project is supported by strong leadership, project management, a multidisciplinary team, and is committed to partnership working
Urban Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indicative design concepts and principles, illustrating development characteristics and character areas ▪ Inclusive design and designing safer places (PAN 77) ▪ Well defined spaces, including communal, private and semi-private amenity provision ▪ Use of design codes or design manuals – from a group of buildings, a street or a whole area – and whether to form part of planning permission or future land sales
Built form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illustrate how key features of the proposed site layout contribute towards good urban design – building lines, grids or blocks, orientation, scale, massing, heights (including illustration of principle elevations and active frontages) ▪ Architecture and how it responds to the neighbourhood, city and region

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Range of housing types, sizes and tenures which reflects local needs ▪ Materials, details and finishes which enhance sense of place and are of high quality (PAN 67) ▪ Building adaptability, future-proof design, live-work dwellings etc.
Townscape analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Views/vistas and visual impact assessment ▪ Successful integration of landform and natural/historic features ▪ How the development relates to existing topography, with minimal land-forming
Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard landscaping – materials, finishes, details and maintenance ▪ Spaces between building including, public/private, how people them, safety and security considerations ▪ Street furniture, including bin storage, cycle facilities and use of public art ▪ Boundary treatments
Environment and landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landscape and open space strategy (including management, ecological enhancements and incorporation of greenspace network) in accordance with Green Infrastructure and Placemaking guidance ▪ Individual Strategic Environmental Assessment screening reports will be required for each proposal. Habitat Regulation Appraisal and Environmental Impact Assessment may also be required depending on the site. Further guidance is provided in PAN51: planning, environmental protection and regulation. ▪ Open spaces – clear form, function and use (PAN 65 and ACC Greenspace Network and Open Space) ▪ Incorporation of historic assets and adaptive reuse of existing buildings ▪ Measure to improve air quality and reduce pollution ▪ Consideration and integration of local and natural hydrology features ▪ Enhance biodiversity and natural heritage (PAN 60) ▪ Encourage recreation and physical activity ▪ Community food growing and allotment provision ▪ Proposals for long-term landscape management proposals (factoring)

Connection

Define linkages and infrastructure delivery

Place Movement

- Key access points which are integrated with the surrounding network
- Street hierarchy and routes (all users) which is easy to navigate
- Illustrate connections to surrounding community and wider strategic networks

Sustainable travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legible and well-connected path network which give a range of sustainable travel options, including active travel, pedestrian priority, Core Paths and desire lines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public transport provision with bus stops located within 400m walkable distances, higher densities next to public transport corridors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access for all, including minimising barriers to access and avoiding areas of vehicular/pedestrian conflict
Street design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate a coherent and well-structured layout in accordance with Designing Streets policy and toolkit where streets are not dominated by vehicles
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External spaces and car parking which are well integrated into the streetscape
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Servicing arrangements considered, positioned to the rear wherever possible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street surfacing materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streets and routes which are overlooked and safe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic management design measures are well integrated into street design
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Net-zero carbon development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities for Combined Heat & Power
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Energy efficiency measure through design (including orientation, shelter)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water saving technologies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of local, sustainable and recycled materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration of material and resource whole lifecycle
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities and locations for green roofs and solar voltaic technology
Delivery of '20 Minute Neighbourhood' and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How the place contributes towards the delivery of a '20 Minute Neighbourhood'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education, health, retail, community facilities, play area, employment etc. the development will provide (or be close to)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commercial viability and market analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drainage, including Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (PAN 61)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilities, including high speed broadband
Phasing and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear phasing strategy, including diagram
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Infrastructure and delivery strategy, including 'trigger points' clearly indicating how, when and who is responsible for delivering development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding considerations

Engagement			
Putting people at the heart of the process			
Consultation & engagement planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact should be made with the Team Leader for Masterplanning, Design and Conservation who will identify a lead officer to co-ordinate masterplanning response and communications. To ensure a collaborative approach to planning, officers from various Council Services will be available and consulted as proposals progress. 		
Identify stakeholders and consultees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council expects the authors of placemaking guidance to actively engage key agencies and stakeholders throughout the preparation of placemaking guidance. All stakeholders and consultees must be involved as early as possible in order to determine key issues and ensure engagement is inclusive and transparent. The following list (which is not exhaustive) provides key statutory consultees and their involvement will vary depending on the scope of the site. 		
	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aberdeen Outdoor Access Forum Aberdeen Cycle Forum Aberdeen International Airport Community Councils Community and Locality Planning (ACC) Developer Obligations Officer (ACC) Disability Advisory Forum Elected Members* Emergency services Flooding Team (ACC) Historic Environment Scotland Landowners and tenants Local communities and groups </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NatureScot Neighbourhood Capacity Officers NHS Grampian NESTRANS Police Scotland Architectural Liaison Officer Public transport operators Roads Development Management (ACC) Scottish Environment Protection Agency Service and utility providers Scottish Forestry Scottish Water Sport Scotland Transport Scotland </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aberdeen Outdoor Access Forum Aberdeen Cycle Forum Aberdeen International Airport Community Councils Community and Locality Planning (ACC) Developer Obligations Officer (ACC) Disability Advisory Forum Elected Members* Emergency services Flooding Team (ACC) Historic Environment Scotland Landowners and tenants Local communities and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NatureScot Neighbourhood Capacity Officers NHS Grampian NESTRANS Police Scotland Architectural Liaison Officer Public transport operators Roads Development Management (ACC) Scottish Environment Protection Agency Service and utility providers Scottish Forestry Scottish Water Sport Scotland Transport Scotland
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	<p><i>* Elected Members represent constituents in the community, have detailed knowledge of issues affecting their wards and should be involved in the placemaking process. This need not continue beyond information gathering and should not prejudice any Member's position in determining planning applications.</i></p>		

Clear engagement and communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Placemaking guidance must be supported by a clear programme of stakeholder and public consultation (at project inception stage). ▪ Mechanisms for involving the community, stakeholders and consultees must be identified at the start. ▪ Consideration for the use of skilled facilitators and use of single point of contact. ▪ How the community be notified and how will they be able to submit their feedback must be clearly communicated. ▪ An 'action note' must be circulated by the design team following public meetings, detailing concerns/issues raised (to be shared with the community, Council, developer and appropriate key stakeholders). ▪ A clear audit trail and review detailing how the design evolved as a result of comments made is an essential component for the assessment of placemaking guidance.
Collaboration with local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All placemaking guidance must actively engage with local communities and be based on a thorough understanding of the needs and priorities of the local areas. <p>Early engagement should capture local aspirations and utilise assets such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local community knowledge ▪ Community representatives ▪ Community-liaison officers ▪ Community projects ▪ Locality planning ▪ Local Place Plans
Community engagement events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The placemaking process normally requires a minimum of 2 public consultation events, which presents design concepts and tracks design evolution. The first public meeting will confirm key issues and present initial design options/concepts. Second meeting will confirm design concepts, including how the design has changed as a result of public input ▪ The required level of public events (including digital and virtual presentation of engagement materials) will be appropriate to the scale of development and determined in consultation with the Masterplanning, Design & Conservation Team ▪ For Major Developments this engagement can run alongside and be included within the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) process as per the Council's Pre-Application Advice Procedure.
Best practice guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure placemaking guidance is written in Plain English, with well explained and simple illustrations. ▪ Place Standard toolkit and Planning Aid for Scotland SP=EED ▪ Planning Advice Note 3/2010: Community Engagement and Planning Advice Note 47: Community Councils give further advice which should be followed.

9 Next Steps and Monitoring Success

- 9.1 The ultimate test of an effective piece of placemaking guidance will be how the outcome benefits the full range of people who use, and chose to stay in the place, often over decades or generations.
- 9.2 The implementation of placemaking guidance, design quality and success of developments in Aberdeen which have been informed by placemaking guidance will be monitored and reviewed by the Planning Service.
- 9.3 Results can feed directly into the Planning Performance Framework review process. There is also the intention to develop a suite of local case studies to illustrate best practice and good design.
- 9.4 In addition, any lessons learnt from early phases that could have a positive effect on future phases should be fed into revised and/or phased masterplans – such as changing economic circumstances, the availability of new products and materials, or changes in policy. This ensures placemaking guidance remains relevant, standards are kept high, and that the final development delivers the vision for the area, which is consistent with planning policy, design principles and aspirations.