

Aberdeen Planning Guidance

Balgownie Centre Bridge of Don

Opportunity Site 7

January 2013

The guidance was first produced prior to the adoption of the Local Development Plan. However, the document remains valid and the guidance derived from this still informs the City Council's decisions on such development in Aberdeen. Therefore any queries concerning the text of the guidance should be directed to the Planning Authority for possible clarification.

Planning Brief

Balgownie Centre, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen

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Balgownie Centre

On behalf of Aberdeen College



Jenkins & Marr
September 2005

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Balgownie Centre is located in Bridge of Don to the North of Aberdeen. It is set within a predominantly residential area of suburban character. The Balgownie Centre has been declared surplus to requirements by Aberdeen College. The Centre is no longer in use and staff and students have been transferred to other campuses.

1.2 This planning brief has been produced by Jenkins & Marr on behalf of Aberdeen College, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council as guidance for the future development of the Balgownie Centre site. The guidelines contained in this brief will help utilise the site's full potential and promote high quality development.

2.0 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 The Balgownie Centre is located within the Bridge of Don area of Aberdeen, some 3 miles north of Aberdeen City Centre. The site is located immediately west of Ellon Road. Access to the site is currently taken from Hutcheon Gardens and Bellfield Road. The site is bounded by a chain link fence.



Figure 1
Site Location Plan and
Context

The surrounding land uses are mainly residential with part of the former Barracks site on the opposite side of Ellon Road being developed for housing.

2.2 The site extends to some 2.25 hectares and contains an undistinguished educational building, predominantly in granite, with car parking and grounds. The building is not listed by Historic Scotland and the site is not located within a designated conservation area. The site is, however, prominently visible from Ellon Road, which is one of the main traffic corridors of the approaches to the city.

2.3 The site is physically detached from Ellon Road by virtue of the difference in levels. A formal garden area is laid out to the south east of the site and there are some trees adjacent to this garden and on the north east corner. A few other trees are scattered around the site. None of the trees is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

2.4 The site was formerly The Bridge of Don Academy.



Figure 2
Site Photographs



3.0 DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

3.1 The former College site is now surplus to requirements. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan states that to ensure there is a consistent approach to high quality development throughout the City with an emphasis on creating quality places, the Aberdeen Masterplanning Process Supplementary Guidance will be applied. This planning brief sets out parameters for the site's possible future development.

3.2 The site is located within a residential area as defined in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan where the relevant policies seek to enhance the predominantly residential character and amenity of these areas. Proposals for development on redevelopment sites will be considered favourably subject to applications being acceptable in terms of siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, the means of access thereto, the landscaping of the site and on the further considerations of amenity, public safety and drainage. Other uses will not be permitted unless such uses are regarded as complementary to residential use, such as community facilities (non-residential institutions), schools, open space, churches, local shops etc. Other activities will not be permitted unless the Council can be satisfied that the use would cause no conflict with, or any nuisance to the enjoyment of the surrounding residential amenity.

3.3 The site has been identified as a development opportunity site OP7 in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, and falls within an H1 residential area.

3.4 The site has largely been previously developed, but contains significant green space. Scottish Planning Policy and the approved Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan supports and encourages the appropriate re-use of such brownfield sites.

3.5 The site is suitable for a number of uses but it is unlikely to be suitable for large scale retail or leisure use, as defined by SPP. Whilst a use for the site that most accords with the surrounding character of the area is residential use, any of the uses listed in section 3.6 below which were suggested by local residents accord in principle with planning policy, and would also be viewed favourably. Any residential use should preferably contain a mix of house and flat types of varying size and methods of tenure.

3.6 During a public consultation exercise carried out as part of production of this brief, the local community highlighted a number of favoured alternative uses for the site, which included:

• Health Centre
• Business Centre
• Nursing Home/Home for the elderly
• Day Centre for the elderly
• Community Centre
• Nursery/Playgroup facility
• Theatre/Arts Centre

3.7 A concern raised several times during the consultation was the possible loss of the school hall, which, it was considered, could provide a facility for local schools, not available elsewhere within the area. Subject to arrangements being agreed by the appropriate authorities for the use and maintenance of the building, any proposal that included the retention of the hall would likely be viewed favourably.

3.8 Whatever use or combination of uses is proposed by prospective developers, careful consideration will require to be given to its impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, in terms of traffic generation, noise, hours of operation and visual impact.

3.9 An important factor in the consideration of any type of proposal will be the level of traffic that it would generate. Many residents are concerned about the traffic that could be generated in particular by residential development. Any application for a residential or any other type of development however, would have to be supported by a traffic impact assessment that demonstrated that the development proposed, in conjunction with any associated road improvements, would not be detrimental to the free flow of vehicles and pedestrians on the road and footpath network around the site, and would not cause undue traffic congestion in the wider area.

3.10 Scottish Planning Policy and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan support and emphasise the value of good design in development. It is a material consideration in the assessment of any planning application. This will be given further consideration in Section 4.0 below.

3.11 The Planning Authority would have no objection to, and would support, the conversion of the existing buildings for appropriate uses. Should that prove impractical, it would be possible to demolish the existing buildings in order to redevelop the site. The City Council are likely however, to seek a good proportion of the granite from the existing building to be reused in significant locations in the new development. The site currently comprises a high degree of open space that contributes to its amenity and to the amenity of the surrounding area. This should be reflected in the layout of the new development.

4.0 DETAILED DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

4.1.1 Layout and Design

Overlooking the junction of Ellon Road and North Donside Road, the north eastern corner of the site is prominently elevated. In such a location, any development will incorporate design of the highest quality that will respect and enhance the setting of the group of trees on this corner. Development along the northern and eastern boundaries will, because of its location at the top of the embankments defining these boundaries, also require careful consideration. Flatted or terraced development may be acceptable in these locations, but the height of any building must have regard to the amenity of surrounding residential property. Development that conspicuously turns its back on Ellon Road or North Donside Road, would not be appropriate.

The urban grain and scale of development opposite both the western and southern boundaries is represented by typical pre-war and post-war residential layouts. The opportunity exists to provide low density development in these areas of the site, to reflect the character of the existing surrounding development. Fig 3 illustrates the preferred building lines in these locations. The southern boundary is marked by a pedestrian/cycle lane and the building line should be held back to allow the amenity of this route to be enhanced. Development along the southern and western site boundaries should be no greater than two storeys in height to respect existing, adjacent properties.

Height and density within the site can increase incrementally, giving a transition in scale and massing towards the interior of the site. The heights of the existing buildings on site may be used as a guide for new development, and consideration may be given to the positioning of higher elements in the current location of the higher College buildings. Any future planning application for the site should include cross-sections illustrating the relationship between the new buildings on site, and the adjoining residential properties to the north and west.

4.1.2 Design and Sustainability

Good design is considered to add value to a development, will have a timeless quality and will create places that have a distinct identity that people will use and value. Good design can be expected to reduce the costs of energy, maintenance, management and security.

Sustainable Development is defined in the approved Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan as “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

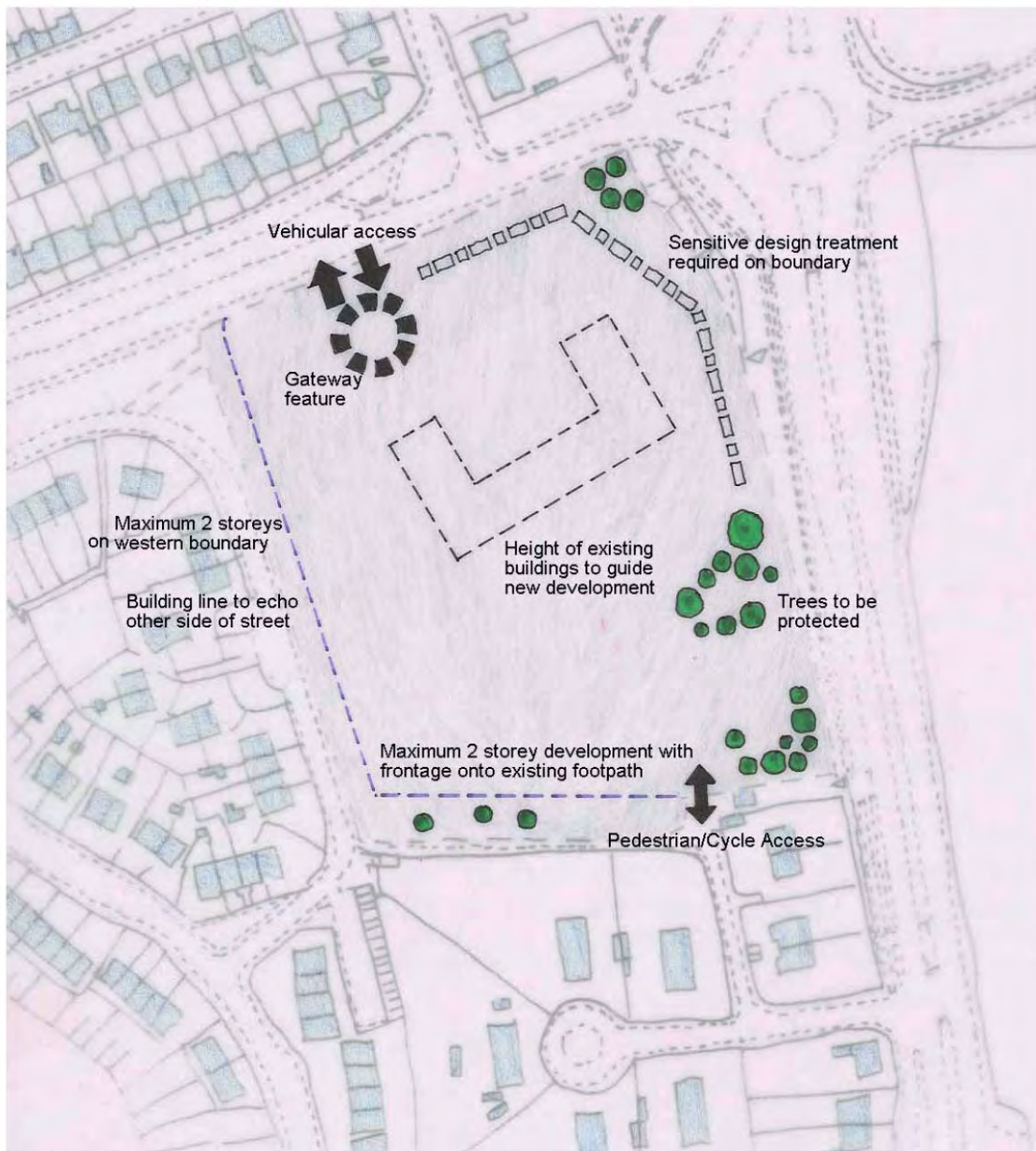
Any development of the site should be carried out in accordance with the requirements of PAN 77 – Designing Safer Places (2006). Further advice on this can be obtained from Grampian Police’s Architectural Liaison Officer.

4.1.3 Design Statement

A design statement will be required to be submitted in support of any planning application for the site. This should be in accordance with the guidance within Planning Advice Note – “Design Statements” [Pan 68] issued by the Scottish Executive Development Department in August 2003.

4.1.4 Developer Contributions

The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan sets the context within which the Planning Authority may seek developer contributions towards the cost of infrastructure, community facilities and other measures. Policy I1 – Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions state that contributions will relate to the scale and impact of the development, and will require to be the subject of discussion with the Planning Authority.

Figure 3
Development
Guidelines

4.1.5 Affordable Housing

Should residential development be included in any redevelopment of the site, it would be appropriate to have regard to the relevant guidance on the provision of affordable housing. PAN 2/2010 – Affordable Housing and Housing Land Audits, Scottish Planning Policy, and the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan set out the requirement to secure appropriate levels of affordable housing. Policy H5 – Affordable Housing of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, together with the Council's Supplementary Guidance on Affordable Housing, outline the means and general level of provision.

4.1.6 Open Space and Trees

A tree study should be undertaken at an early stage. Healthy trees should generally be retained, although the removal of a tree may be permitted if it can be demonstrated that its retention would unduly stifle the redevelopment of the site. Retained trees should be integrated into the development and areas of open space. Amenity space and landscaping should be considered as an integral part of the layout and should meet the standards of 2.8 hectares per 1000 bedspaces. Potential developers should ensure that mechanism for the ongoing maintenance of areas of public open space is implemented. Flatted housing should have private open space and should also relate to any areas of public open space, which could be a focal point to that part of the development. Consideration could also be given to the use of south or west facing balconies as private amenity areas in addition to public open space.

4.1.7 Car Parking

Car parking should be provided to meet Aberdeen City Council's adopted parking standards. Car parking should not dominate the site.

4.1.8 Boundaries and Gateways

Particular consideration should be given to site boundaries and entry points into the development. Well designed boundaries and entry points can contribute greatly to a development's sense of place.

4.2 Access, Movement and Drainage

4.2.1 The main vehicular access might be from North Donside Road via a suitable junction to be agreed with Aberdeen City Council's Roads Section (Fig 3). The precise location of such a junction would be determined through discussions with Aberdeen City Council's roads officials. Access from Simpson Road / Bellfield Road may also be considered. In either case, the most suitable point or points of access will be dependent on the type of development and traffic impact. Vehicular access from Ellon Road would not be supported in any circumstance.

4.2.2 Pedestrian and cycle access points to within the development, and links to public transport outwith the site should be provided as an integral part of the development. The Balgownie Centre is located next to a main transport artery.

4.2.3 A transport assessment will be required and should address the requirements of SPP, with the primary aim being the delivery of accessible and sustainable transport to the site. A "Scoping Study" should be agreed with Aberdeen City Council's roads officials prior to proceeding. As part of the study, it will be necessary to assess the capacity of the affected network, taking into account current and related developments that may affect capacity. The transport assessment should be developed in accordance with the Scottish Executive's guidance document (August 2005) on transport assessment in Scotland, that is considered to be a concise model for good practice. Any new roads / junctions etc., should be designed in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's own document, "Guidelines and Specifications for Roads within Residential and Industrial Developments." Parts of this are under review to reflect Designing Streets 2010.

4.2.4 A Drainage Impact Assessment will be required in support of any planning application. Surface water run-off should be dealt with using Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). This requires that surface water should be treated within the site using appropriate SUDS measures. The SUDS scheme must be approved by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA and Scottish Water. SUDS measures should be designed to have a natural form and appearance that can complement the general provision of open space and be integrated into the landscape.

4.2.5 There is sufficient capacity for the provision of water supply to the site.

4.3 Construction Arrangements

4.3.1 Any construction works should be carried out in such a way that no existing tree that is being retained within or immediately adjacent to the site is harmed. Trees should be protected in accordance with a scheme of fencing and other required measures based on British Standard 5837 (2005) and be agreed with Aberdeen City Council.

4.4 Purpose of Planning Briefs

4.4.1 Planning briefs are produced as supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Proposals that adhere to the principles of the Planning Brief will normally be considered favourably by the planning authority.

Further detailed advice should be obtained from the Council's Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team.

For further information, please contact:

**Masterplanning, Design and Conservation
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
Business Hub 4
Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1AB**

Phone: 01224 522155

Fax: 01224 523180

Email: pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk

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