

# Aberdeen Planning Guidance

## River Don Corridor Framework





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.

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# **SURF Aberdeen**

## **River Don Corridor Framework**

Supplementary Guidance  
Prepared by LUC  
November 2012



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# 1 Introduction

## Project Context

- 1.1 The River Don flows east from the Highlands through rural Aberdeenshire before crossing the Aberdeen City boundary near Dyce and reaching the sea at Donmouth. While its neighbour, the River Dee, is well known for its rich cultural and natural heritage, the River Don Corridor (RDC) has a lower profile. This is partly a product of the river's industrial past, but it does not reflect the significant potential that the corridor presents for existing and planned communities along the river, and for the wider population and economy of Aberdeen. This framework sets out a vision and series of objectives designed to realise this potential.
- 1.2 The River Don Corridor cuts a blue / green swathe through the city of Aberdeen (see Figure 1.1). For centuries it has been a green artery linking Old Aberdeen near the coast to the rural hinterland to the west. It has powered industry and urban expansion as well as provided a range of aquatic and terrestrial habitats.
- 1.3 The last 100 years has seen significant industrial and housing expansion, and the implementation of significant road infrastructure. This has led to the fragmentation of the green infrastructure of the RDC. Despite this a number of high quality green spaces exist along the length of the river although they are currently somewhat isolated and underused.
- 1.4 The urban growth predicted for Aberdeen over the coming decades requires significant release of land for development, particularly to meet the City's housing needs. The RDC is located immediately adjacent to areas currently proposed for significant regeneration of industrial brownfield sites as well as development of previously undeveloped greenfield land. As such, the RDC forms a significant greenspace resource with potential to make an enhanced contribution to the quality of life and local environmental quality of future communities as well as existing communities.



River Don Corridor at Woodside



## About the Framework

- 1.5 This document is the SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes) Aberdeen, River Don Corridor Framework.
- 1.6 It is a strategic document that aims to establish a coordinated approach to open space planning for the River Don Corridor for the next 10-20 years.

### Purpose

- 1.7 The purpose of this Supplementary Guidance document is to provide further information and detail in respect of policies set out in the **Local Development Plan (LDP)**, in accordance with the Scottish Government's intention that the LDP itself focuses on vision, the spatial strategy, overarching and other key policies, and proposals.
- 1.8 The River Don Corridor Framework Supplementary Guidance is intended to support the **Green Space Network Policy NE1**, as contained in the LDP.
- 1.9 As this Policy makes clear, 'The natural environment and open spaces are important for landscape, natural heritage and wider social, health, economic and environmental reasons, such as adapting to climate change and helping to improve air and water quality.'

### Scope

- 1.10 This Framework is area-specific and integrates aspects of the Core Paths Plan, Open Space Strategy, Nature Conservation Strategy as well as other strategies, policies and plans that help deliver a high quality natural environment and access to good quality open spaces.
- 1.11 This will help to make the River Don Corridor a place where people want to live, work and invest.
- 1.12 It sets out the Vision, Aims, Objectives and Spatial Plan in relation to the access, recreational, landscape, cultural and historical, environmental, wildlife and community engagement aspects of the River Don Corridor.

### Status

- 1.13 As Supplementary Guidance to the LDP, the River Don Corridor Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 1.14 Developers are therefore expected to have regard to its provisions and proposals in bringing forward applications for planning permission.

The River Don Corridor Framework is one of a suite of Supplementary Guidance documents supporting the adopted Aberdeen City Local Development Plan. Developers should ensure that they consult all relevant guidance to inform their proposals. This will help to inform pre-application discussions, aid community consultation and streamline the planning process by enabling compliance with the LDP policy framework. Adopted and draft SG is available for reference on the Council website.



Figure 1.1 – River Don Corridor Location Plan

## Delivery

- 1.15 The Framework sets the context for the development of the River Don Corridor over the coming 10-20 years.
- 1.16 Its recommendations and proposals will be delivered over this period through a combination of publicly funded projects and private sector development. Rather than providing a rigid template for development, the Framework provides broad principles that proposals within the river corridor can draw inspiration from, and should aim to contribute to.

### Implementation plan

- 1.17 Within 6 months of this Framework being adopted by the Council, an Implementation Plan will be produced which will set out how the Strategic Objectives will be translated into action on the ground.
- 1.18 The Implementation Plan will be monitored and kept under review by the Council in line with LDP monitoring procedures. This will include updates to reflect any changes in the policy approach and implementation of the LDP Action Programme. It is anticipated that the LDP and accompanying Supplementary Guidance will be reviewed on a rolling 5 year timescale.

## Document structure

- 1.19 The remainder of the document comprises the following sections:
- Section 2: Baseline analysis of the existing environmental features and population characteristics;
  - Section 3: Analysis of the data on the greenspace resource;
  - Section 4: Vision, Aims and Strategic Objectives;
  - Section 5: Spatial Plan for the RDC;
  - Section 6: Implementation, Monitoring and Review.

### Appendices

- 1.20 Supplementary information is provided as a set of appendices including:
- Appendix A: Implementation Plan (stand-alone document)
- Appendix B: Consultation report (stand-alone document)

## Interreg North Sea Region Programme – Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF)

- 1.21 The SURF Aberdeen project is set within the context of the wider Interreg North Sea Region Programme Sustainable Urban Fringes project. This project aims to review urban fringe policies and develop a common approach and a set of policy guidelines to influence regional, national and EU policies in tackling issues of governance, spatial planning and exploring potential for economic growth in urban fringes and to contribute in a balanced way to city region competitiveness.
- 1.22 Across the North Sea Region, urban fringe areas are characterised by declining biodiversity, deteriorating water quality, low quality and often fragmented greenspaces and they often have poor accessibility, wide social inequalities and a lack of engagement with local communities. Urban fringes are often neglected and under threat from growth and expansion and inconsistent spatial planning policy, particularly where they cross administrative boundaries. Improving urban fringe greenspaces is recognised as a means of creating or enhancing sense of place, increase community ownership, enhancing environmental quality and conserving biodiversity. The aim is to create urban fringes where people want to live, work and do business.
- 1.23 The further aims of this Interreg project are:
- provide a common platform for EU experts and institutions to exchange their experiences, strategies, policies in dealing urban fringes and provide recommendations to test some of the innovative approaches to harness the potential of urban fringes and influence policy;
  - analyse the challenges faced by the urban fringes and the contribution it makes towards the city region development;
  - create a web based long term sustainable network of experts, practitioners, businesses, institutions, community development organisations and linking it into what is existing;
  - add value to the urban fringes and increase its importance to promote the environmental quality and highlight its benefits it brings to the communities;
  - improve community skills in urban fringes and empower them to develop rural services enabling them to take part in planning and decisions making.

## Project Background

- 1.24 The River Don Corridor Framework project was commissioned by Aberdeen City Council in April 2011. The commission was awarded to LUC (Land Use Consultants) supported by STAR (Small Town Regeneration Group).
- 1.25 The project is intended to:
- help understand the potential of the RDC at a strategic level;
  - identify key opportunities for enhancement; and
  - propose a range of solutions to add value for local people and the environment.
- 1.26 The specific aims of the SURF Aberdeen Project are to:
- develop an accessible Geographical Information Systems (GIS) tool to assist with spatial planning of open space;
  - conduct a participative programme of community engagement activities, using GIS, to improve local decision making;
  - develop a spatial plan, in collaboration with the community, to guide development & direct improvements to open space;
  - access funding and work with communities to implement several improvements to open spaces in line with the spatial plan.

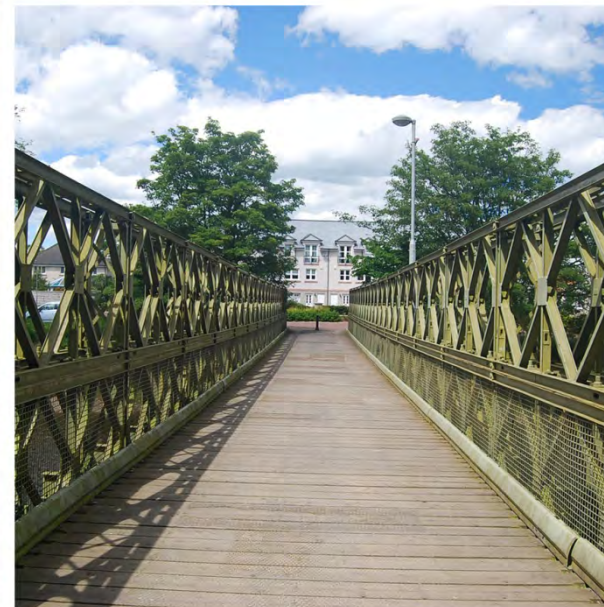
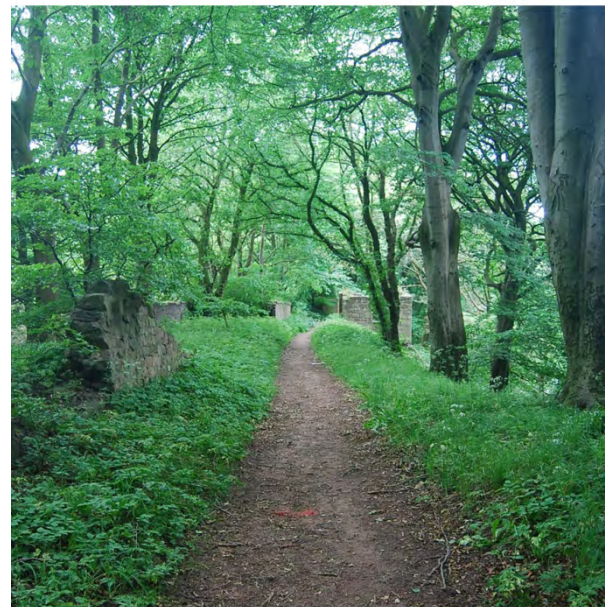
## Consultation

- 1.27 The River Don Corridor Framework project has been developed with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and community members.
- 1.28 The details of the consultation process and the summary of feedback received are included in Appendix B.

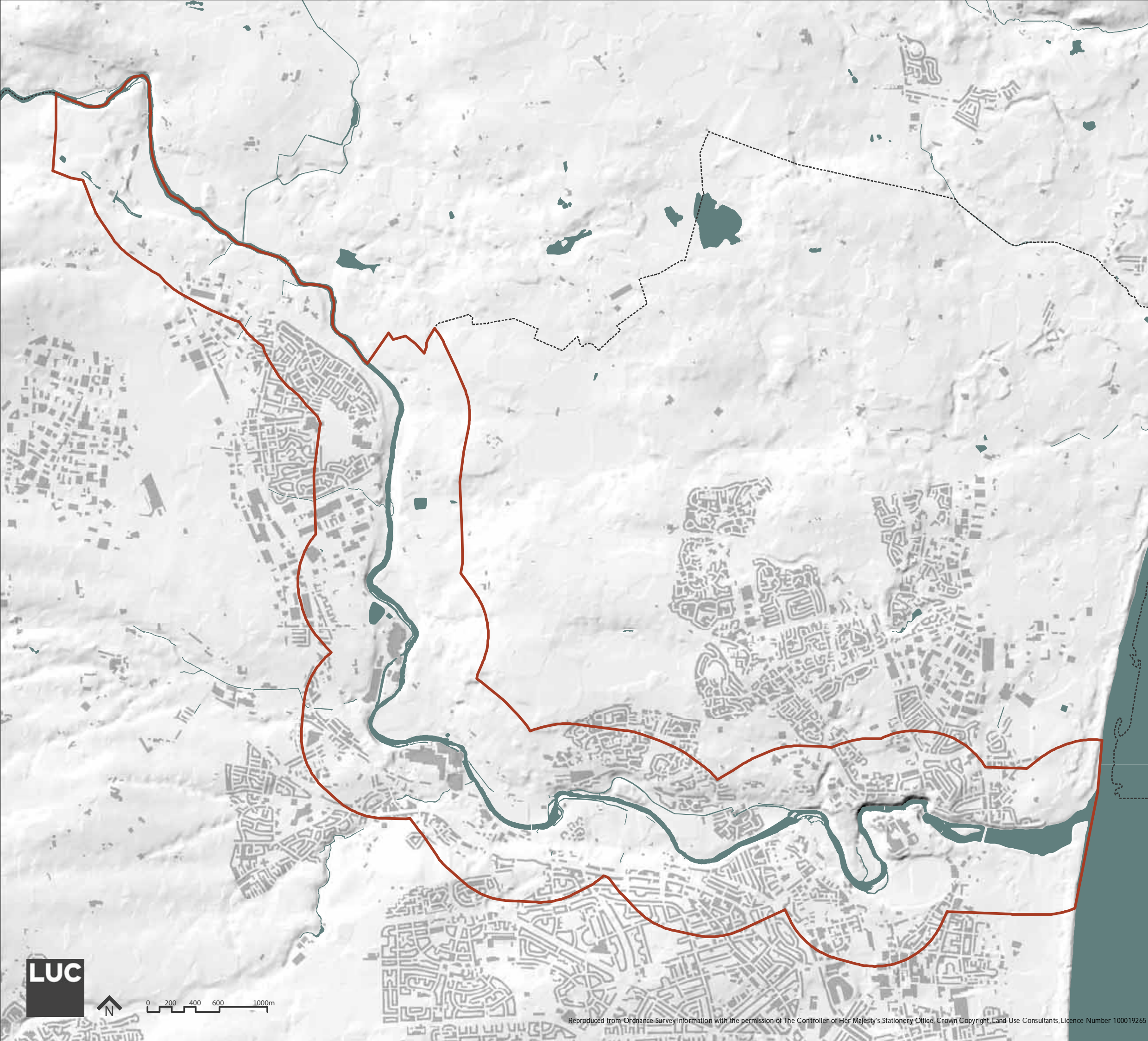



## Study Area


- 1.29 The study area for this project is contained within the Aberdeen City Council administrative boundary. It is defined by at 1.2km wide and 17km long corridor along the River Don from the coast to the Aberdeen City Council area boundary to the north of Dyce. The study area is shown in Figure 1.2.
- 1.30 The boundary of the RDC, whilst defined on maps throughout this document, is designed to be permeable, with proposals intended to integrate with community, economic and environmental initiatives across the wider city.
- 1.31 The area includes a diverse range of landscapes and townscape including:
- coastal estuary and sand dunes;
  - historic urban centres such as Old Aberdeen;
  - natural riparian woodlands;
  - historic Victorian parks;
  - deprived 20th century communities;
  - affluent 20th century communities;
  - recreational sports grounds and parks;
  - industrial sites;
  - historic estates and woodland policies;
  - agricultural open arable fields.







STUDY BOUNDARY 

ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY 

LUC



0 200 400 600 1000m

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FIGURE 1.2  
STUDY BOUNDARY



## 2 Baseline Analysis

## 2 Baseline Analysis

### Environment

#### Topography and Hydrology

- 2.1 The RDC study area is located on a low rolling plateau to the north and west of Aberdeen. The maximum height within the study area is approximately 100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) although much of the study area topography is between sea level and 50m AOD. There are no prominent or identifiable hill summits.
- 2.2 The River Don has carved a meandering course through the soft glacial deposits that form the low rolling plateau. In places towards the mouth of the river, the valley is relatively steep-sided, taking on a gorge-like character. This effect is heightened by the presence of mature and dense woodland cover on the steep sided slopes.
- 2.3 South of Dyce, the valley broadens and takes on the classic, increasingly sinuous course of a river in its lower reaches. Although the floodplain is relatively narrow – being constrained by more resilient substrate and, in places, development – it reflects the power and dynamism of the river. The channel is constantly evolving as sediments are eroded and deposited. Evidence of these processes are clearly visible at Woodside, in the form of a fossil river channel, and in Seaton Park which lies entirely within a fossil meander and gives the park its unique oval shape.
- 2.4 The tidal limit is reached at this point, and the river broadens into a relatively short estuary, bisecting the dune systems of King's Links and Balgownie Links.
- 2.5 There are few natural tributaries within the study area; Far Burn enters the River Don to the south of Dyce and Bucks Burn enters the River Don to the Former Davidson Mill. The majority of natural watercourses have been lost to improvements to agricultural drainage or the creation of artificial water channels to form weirs and mill lades.
- 2.6 The study area topography and hydrology are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

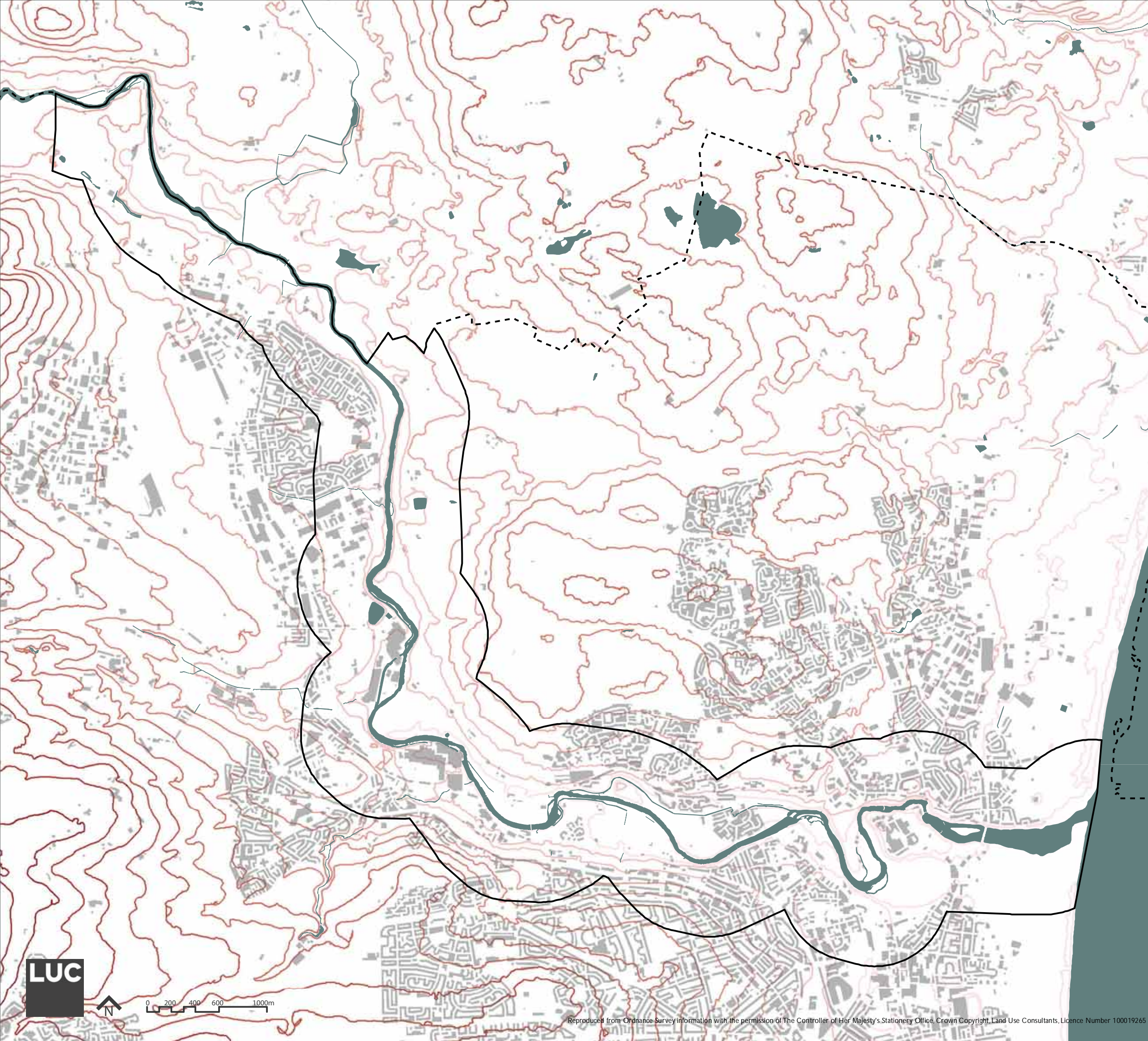
#### River Modifications












- 2.7 Below Dyce, the river has been extensively modified. Traditionally, the power of this section of the Don has been extensively harnessed – most notably for paper and woollen mills. A series of weirs, sluices and lades draw water from the main channel, diverting it to millponds (such as at Stoneywood) and through the mills themselves. The channel morphology is therefore compromised in a number of locations, including where banks have been reinforced to protect mill complexes and, in places, new housing development.
- 2.8 There are at least eight weirs between Grandhome House and the sea, substantially altering the flow rates, channel dynamics and permeability for migratory fish (although some weirs were almost certainly constructed to improve conditions for angling).
- 2.9 Changes to the river's morphology potentially reduce its potential to deliver a full range of ecosystem services, including biodiversity value and resilience to flood events. The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005, (commonly known as CARs) require authorisation from SEPA for works which may affect river morphology.

#### Water Quality

- 2.10 The Don upstream of Dyce is assessed as being at 'moderate' status in the North East Area Management Plan. It faces pressures from diffuse pollution derived from agriculture, and point-source pollution from sewage treatment works. This means that, as the river enters its lower reaches it is particularly vulnerable to additional pollution. Proposals which would result in new discharges or river pollution are regulated by SEPA under CARs.





- STUDY BOUNDARY 
- ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY 
- RIVER DON 
- CONTOURS
- 0-20m 
  - 21-40m 
  - 41-60m 
  - 61-80m 
  - 81-100m 
  - 101-120m 
  - 121-140m 
  - 141-160m 

**FIGURE 2.1**  
**TOPOGRAPHY + HYDROLOGY**



### Flood risk

- 2.11 The main floodplain of the River Don lies upstream of the study area, between Port Elphinstone and Cothall. However, the water retention capacity of this area is potentially constrained by the presence of limited flood defence protecting high quality arable land.
- 2.12 Within the study area, the lower-lying terraces adjacent to the river are at significant risk of flooding, as illustrated in Figure 2.2
- 2.13 Some recent development has intruded into the flood zone, for example at Grandholm Village, where the development is located between the main river channel and the lade system of the former Crombie Mills. The presence of flood defences to protect the village may increase risk of flooding downstream.
- 2.14 As noted above, Seaton Park's location within a fossil meander, and its low-lying position, means that it lies entirely within the flood risk area.





STUDY BOUNDARY



RIVER DON



1 IN 200 YEAR FLOOD LEVELS



0 200 400 600 1000m

FIGURE 2.2  
1 IN 200 YEAR FLOOD LEVELS



### Woodland cover

- 2.15 The study area has around 11% woodland cover<sup>1</sup>, as illustrated on Figure 2.3, relating largely to broadleaved riparian and policy woodlands. Policy woodlands and shelterbelts are located mainly in the western sections of the study area, associated with historic estate landscapes. These form an important part of the landscape character. Riparian woodlands along the river are less established here compared with eastern parts of the study area where riparian woodlands are located on steep sided slopes of the river and parkland areas such as Seaton Park and Woodside.
- 2.16 Although there is a good proportion of native species throughout the study area, non-native beech and sycamore form a significant part of the current woodland resource. This is common with many Scottish towns and cities. Non-native conifer blocks tend to be relatively small-scale and are not a dominant feature of the immediate landscape.
- 2.17 A significant proportion of the woodland resource is over-mature, increasing the vulnerability of individual trees to storm damage, pathogens and the effects of climate change. In turn, the potential lack of resilience represents a significant threat to health of the local environment. Similarly, relatively little management currently occurs, reducing woodland diversity and reinforcing issues relating to the skewed age structure of many woods.
- 2.18 In recent years, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) funding has specifically targeted managing woodlands in urban fringe area<sup>2</sup> has helped bring some of the resource into positive management and add to the benefits delivered to communities.
- 2.19 Aberdeen City Council in partnership with FCS is currently delivering woodland management and expansion proposals complementing the "Forest & Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City".
- 2.20 FCS funding has already improved access to woodland areas with the study area as well as provided areas of new woodland planting such as at Donmouth.
- 2.21 The RDC woodlands represent a significant component of regional habitat networks.



Mixed Woodland at Seaton Park



Dense riparian woodland



Mature Beech woodland at Stoneywood



Policy woodlands at Grandhome estate

<sup>1</sup> Based on FCS National Forest Inventory data

<sup>2</sup> Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT)





STUDY BOUNDARY



RIVER DON



NATIONAL FOREST INVENTORY



0 200 400 600 1000m

FIGURE 2.3  
WOODLAND COVER  
(DATA FROM NATIONAL FOREST INVENTORY)



## Biodiversity and Ecology

- 2.22 The study area has significant biodiversity value, and is also an important resource for urban communities – allowing easy access to and facilitating appreciation of our natural heritage.
- 2.23 As noted above, the River Don and its tributaries are important for breeding Atlantic salmon as well as supporting a range of other species. Although otters are widespread in the North East, water voles have experienced a major decline in the area since the 1990s as a result of habitat loss, pollution and predation by invasive American mink. However, the Scottish Mink Initiative is attempting to eradicate breeding mink from the North East to assist in the recovery of the water vole.
- 2.24 The river corridor and woodlands are important habitat and foraging sites for bats and provide a network of cover for typical woodland species including roe deer and badger.
- 2.25 At the mouth of the Don, both harbour and grey seals are frequently present – although neither breed in the area. The dune systems within the study area are largely stabilised within golf courses, with the exception of the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve.
- 2.26 Habitats that are recognised within the North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and are present within the study area, and offer opportunities for further habitat creation, expansion and improved connectivity include:
- Coastal Sand Dunes;
  - Estuarine and Intertidal Habitats;
  - Farmland;
  - Field Margins and Boundary Habitats;
  - Species Rich Grassland;
  - Broadleaved Woodland;
  - Wet and Riparian Woodland;
  - Wood pasture, Parkland and Wayside Trees;
  - Rivers and Burns;
  - Wetlands.
- 2.27 Figure 2.4 illustrates known natural heritage designations.



Dune landscape at Donmouth



Wetlands west of Seaton Park

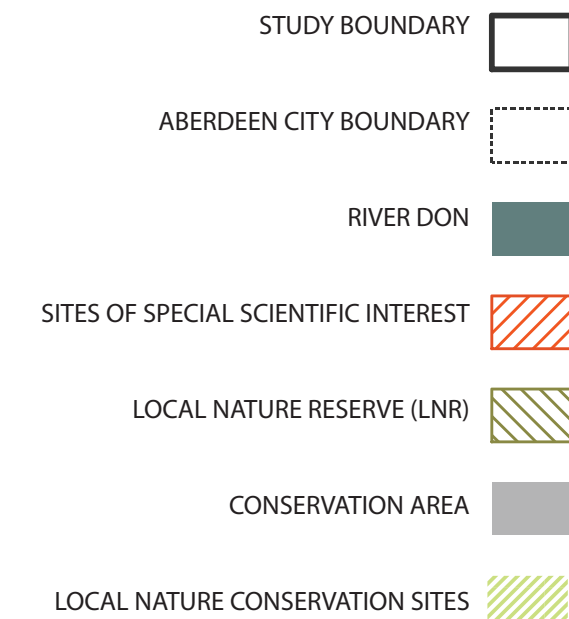
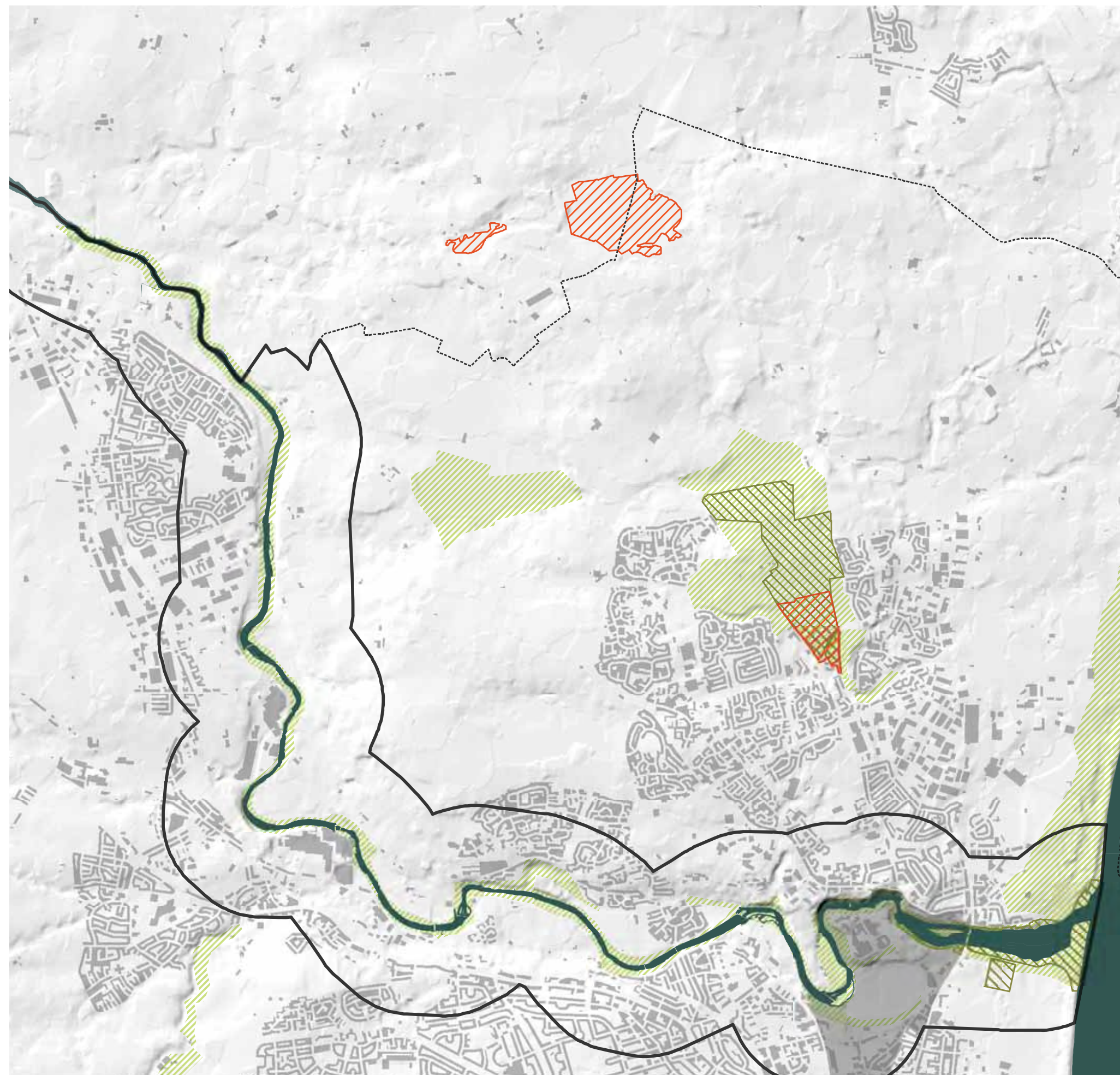


Wildflower meadows at Riverside Park, Dyce



Japanese Knotweed blocked the path near Tillydrone





## People

### History of the River Don Corridor

- 2.28 The name ‘Aberdeen’ is thought by some to have been derived from the words ‘Aber’ Don meaning ‘mouth of the river’ Don. People first began to settle on the land around the River Don in pre-history. Although there is little evidence of these early inhabitants within the study area evidence can be found in the wider Aberdeenshire region including stone circles and standing stones thought to be created by the Beaker people in around 2000BC.
- 2.29 A settlement at the location of Old Aberdeen on the south side of the River Don is believed to have existing since Roman times. The location was a strategically important river crossing, fishing and trading port. It was also a religious centre which included the establishment of St Machar’s cathedral in the 1130s, and also subsequently a centre of education.
- 2.30 The New Town of Aberdeen was established on the northern banks of the River Dee in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. “Old” Aberdeen and “New” Aberdeen continued to expand and function as 2 separate burghs until 1891 when the two towns were officially merged. Today Old & New Aberdeen are two of several burghs of the city of Aberdeen but the distinct characters of the separate towns can still be distinguished amongst the more recent urban form. The central area of Old Aberdeen is now classified as a conservation area with much of its heritage still evident including St Machar’s Cathedral, Kings College, Seaton Park and Brig o’Balgownie.
- 2.31 The River Don and River Dee, although of similar size, have very different characteristics largely as a result of their historical development. The banks of the River Don became populated with water-powered mills exploiting the steep fall in levels as the river approaches the sea. The River Dee, however, developed through fishing, trade and shipping, leading to the formation and expansion of a large harbour in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 2.32 In 1805 the Aberdeenshire canal was opened. It followed a route that ran parallel with the River Don on its south side. The canal was designed to connect Aberdeen harbour at the mouth of the River Dee with Port Elphinstone just South of Inverurie. The canal’s location close to the River Don contributed to the success of the Donside mills. However, within 50 years the canal had been closed and converted into a railway line to connect Aberdeen to Inverness.
- 2.33 Before completion of the Bridge of Don in 1827 the only river crossing was at Brig o’ Balgownie, a narrow buttressed stone bridge providing the only route to and from the North of Aberdeen. The Brig o’ Balgownie was built 1314-1318 and is still intact today providing a pedestrian and cyclist crossing.
- 2.34 By the early 19th century, many industries were prospering in Aberdeen including breweries, distilleries, ironworks for anchors and chains, rope manufacturers, ship builders and paper mills due to the city’s coastal & riverside location. Trade through the docks at the River Dee led to the exportation of many goods such as quarried Granite, food & leather.
- 2.35 Large paper mills developed on the River Don included Stoneywood Mill, Davidsons Mills and Gordons Mill.
- 2.36 Due to these thriving industries, the 19th century saw the considerable expansion of Aberdeen and its population, mostly in relation to “New” Aberdeen. From the 1880s, distinctive granite tenements spread throughout the city built around the garden city principles with wide, curved streets, play areas and parks. In the 1930s however, the urgent demand for housing led to much higher density housing schemes in attempts to clear slums from the centre of the city.
- 2.37 In contrast those who prospered during the industrial boom established large residences and estates to the north and west of the city so that they were no subject to city and harbour smells carried on the prevailing westerly winds. Some of these estates are still present today such as Grandhome Estate. Seaton Park lying to the north of Old Aberdeen on the Southern bank of the Don is one of the few estate landscapes in the city left undeveloped for industrial use or housing. Formerly part of Seaton House grounds it was purchased by the local authority in the mid-20th century and it is now one of the city’s largest parks. The mature woodlands and policies of the former estates provide much of the established landscape framework still evident along the River Don Corridor today.
- 2.38 The urban expansion continued in the post-war era. The local authority took over several estate grounds to provide council housing for the growing population. This development included the construction of high rise residential tower blocks and council housing estates such as Tillydrone, now regarded as one of the most deprived areas of Aberdeen.
- 2.39 At the same time many of the paper mills and industry became mothballed and many were demolished. The subsequent brownfield land was redeveloped for large industrial estates and in some cases, for example at Gordon’s Mills, used for council housing (although this site is currently being redeveloped again for affordable housing). The legacy of the Donside Mills are still evident along the River Don Corridor with the presence of several mill lades and weirs.
- 2.40 More recent developments within the River Don Corridor have seen the establishment of high quality business parks associated with Aberdeen’s Oil and Gas Industries. In recent years there has been the regeneration of some urban areas to provide new residential communities.



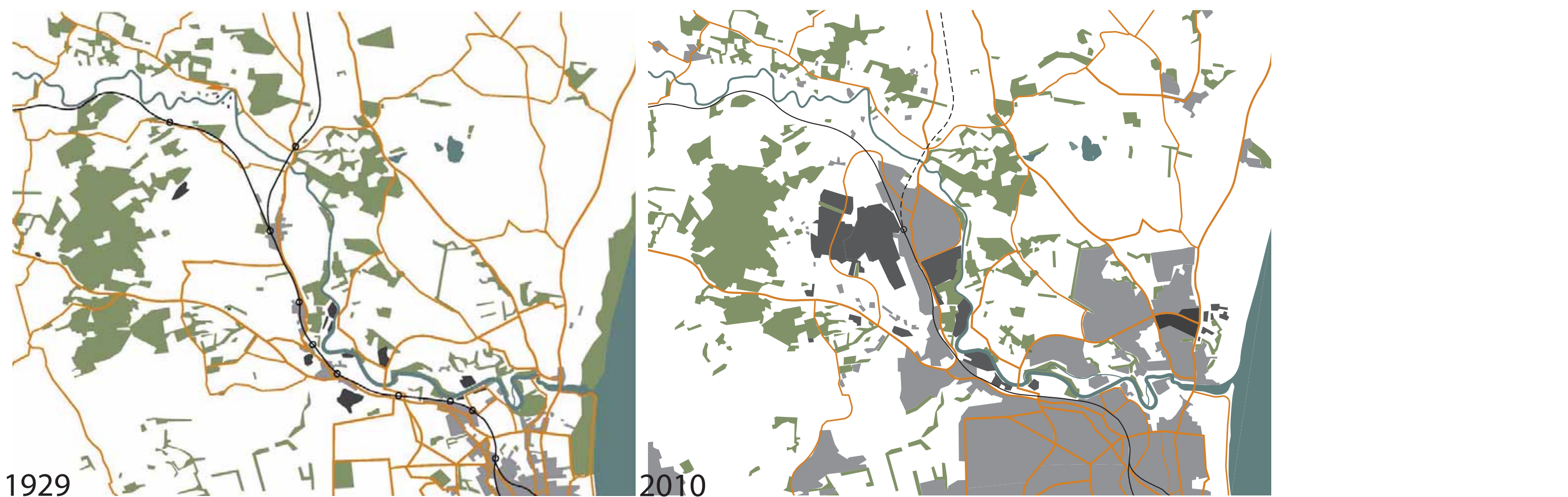
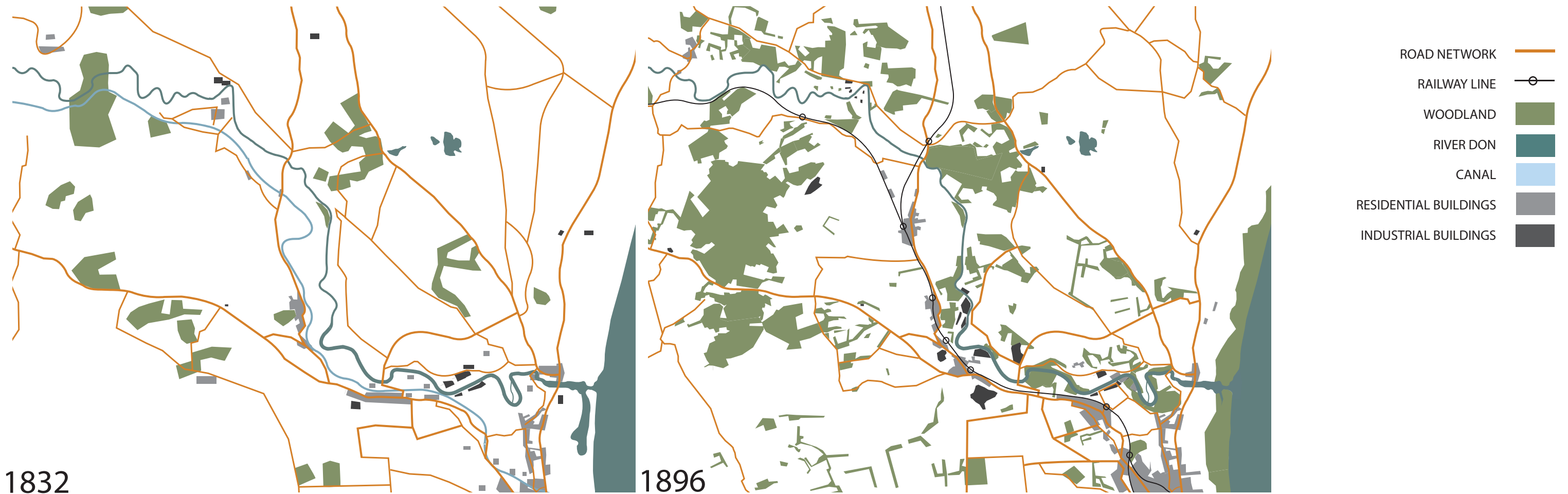


FIGURE 2.5  
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT



## Cultural heritage

- 2.41 As a result of the varied history along the RDC the study area has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, ranging from the historic core of medieval Aberdeen to the legacy of 19<sup>th</sup> century industry.
- 2.42 The most widespread and apparent aspect of the historic environment along the River Don Corridor are surviving and relict designed landscapes, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Seaton Park, sold to the local authority in 1947, formed part of the policies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Seaton House which was itself destroyed by fire in 1963. Similarly, the former policies of Woodside House survive as playing fields with the original pattern of woodland delineating the extent of the historic estate. The restored walled garden at Persley was part of the estate's kitchen garden. Similarly, the policy woodlands of Stoneywood House survive partly intact, but are squeezed between the railway, the A947, the Stoneywood paper mill and industrial estate.
- 2.43 On the north side of the river, the Grandhome and Parkhill policies stretch away from the Don, providing an important aspect of the river's landscape setting.
- 2.44 On the edge of Seaton Park, St. Machar's Cathedral is one of Aberdeen's iconic buildings. Although much of the current structure dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, there has been a church on the site since at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century – with legend suggesting a 6<sup>th</sup> century foundation.
- 2.45 The other most obvious aspect of the study area's cultural heritage is the presence of numerous mills of various dates. From the older, smaller rural mills – such as those at Cothall, north of Dyce – to the large-scale 19<sup>th</sup> century paper and textile<sup>3</sup> mills further downstream, water-powered industry is a major aspect of Aberdeen's heritage that is often overlooked. Historic mill buildings, such as the Category A-Listed Crombie Mills (now incorporated within Grandholm 'village') are an important part of the study area's character. Similarly, the network of disused mill lades that are found across the study area represent a potentially interesting avenue of community study and recording to ensure that the details of how the Don was reshaped and harnessed is not lost.
- 2.46 A rather shorter-lived relic of Aberdeen's industrial past is the scant remains of the Aberdeenshire Canal, constructed between 1796 and 1805 and originally running from Aberdeen up Strathdon to Port Elphinstone. The project was beset with financial and technical issues and was never well enough used to provide a return on the investment required for its construction. It was subsequently purchased by the Great North of Scotland Railway in 1845 and used as the basis of much of the route from Aberdeen to Inverness. However, traces of the canal survive adjacent to the railway line to the northwest of Dyce.
- 2.47 King's College, Aberdeen - The old buildings of King's College are perhaps the dominant structures of Old Aberdeen. The College itself now finds itself surrounded by the wider Old Aberdeen campus of the University of Aberdeen which, since the decline of Marischal College, is now the main focal point of the university.
- 2.48 The Old Town House was the original home of the Burgh's local government, completed in 1789. It was originally the centrepiece for trading in Old Aberdeen (still discernible in the widening of the street to accommodate trading booths), and the mercat cross (head late medieval shaft more recent) stands outside it. The building is built of granite and is of restrained but elegant early Georgian design, with a fine cupola above the façade. It was acquired by the university in recent years, and was renovated in 2005.
- 2.49 St Machar's Cathedral - The Cathedral Church of St Machar is the high kirk of the city of Aberdeen and following the Reformation lies in the hands of the Church of Scotland.

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<sup>3</sup> Large meal mills, such as Kettock's Mills on the promontory opposite Seaton Park were also established during this period. Although much smaller than the contemporary textile and paper mills, these sites reflect the need to significantly increase processing capacity as outputs increased as a result of the agricultural 'improvements' implemented during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries





Grandhome Estate



Seaton Park



Brig o'Balgownie



St Machar's Cathedral



Mill Lade



Persley Garden



## Settlement

- 2.50 The core of Old Aberdeen retains its distinctive medieval form, with tightly-packed low-rise buildings lining the High Street and newer insertions preserving the pattern of ‘backlands’ behind the original building line.
- 2.51 St. Machar’s and the bishop’s estate were gradually subsumed into the town as Old Aberdeen expanded to fill the space between the cathedral precinct and the townhouse. The founding of ‘New Aberdeen’ on the Dee in 1136 drew some of the focus away from Old Aberdeen as the importance of maritime trade grew. King’s College, founded by Papal Bull in 1495, established Aberdeen as a seat of learning and provides some of the city’s most famous landmarks. Marischal College (in ‘New Aberdeen’) founded in 1593.
- 2.52 William Roy’s map of 1747-55 indicates that, even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Old and New Aberdeen were still physically separate – matching their administrative status as separate burghs.
- 2.53 The development of larger scale industrial milling and quarrying during the 19<sup>th</sup> century also changed the predominantly rural settlement pattern on the fringes of the city. Planned villages, such as Woodside, were created by estate owners and industrialists to house workers close to the new sources of employment and adjacent to key transport routes, such as the canal and, later, the railway.
- 2.54 Although the city of Aberdeen expanded rapidly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Old Aberdeen retained its separate identity as the suburbs expanded out along the road network. On the north side of the Don however, the rural character persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until the Bridge of Don was built by Telford and Smith in 1827-30, the only public crossing was the steep, narrow medieval ‘Brig of Balgownie’ linking the hamlet of Whitehall (an important salmon fishing station during the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and Cottown of Balgownie<sup>4</sup> on the north bank.
- 2.55 The town of Bridge of Don did not begin develop until the 1930s. Following the Second World War, suburbanisation continued rapidly and new communities subsumed the smaller outlying settlements.
- 2.56 Today, the River Don corridor retains significant diversity in types of housing and urban form – from relict villages of picturesque cottages and Victorian villas to high-rise blocks and experimental ‘garden city’ planning. Regeneration of old industrial sites, such as Crombie Mills, and new housing development continue as a major pressure on the Don corridor – and also a major opportunity to retain heritage assets and contribute to the character of the area.

## Planned and proposed development

- 2.57 The River Don Corridor is an attractive focus for development and is a key location in delivering the necessary expansion to accommodate the projected increase in Aberdeen’s population over the coming decades.

### *LDP land allocations*

- 2.58 Significant areas of land in the wider environs of the River Don Corridor have been allocated for development in the adopted Aberdeen City Local Development Plan. These include:

- Stoneywood;
- Donside Paper Mills, Tillydrone;
- Mugiemooss Mills, Bucksburn;
- Grandhome;
- Woodside;
- Hillhead.

### *Committed development*

- 2.59 Redevelopment of Donside Mills is currently underway, through the creation of the ‘Donside Urban Village’.
- 2.60 The construction of the ‘3<sup>rd</sup> Don Crossing’ will improve vehicular and pedestrian access between Aberdeen and Bridge of Don. The necessary Compulsory Purchase Order was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2012.

## Demographics and Health

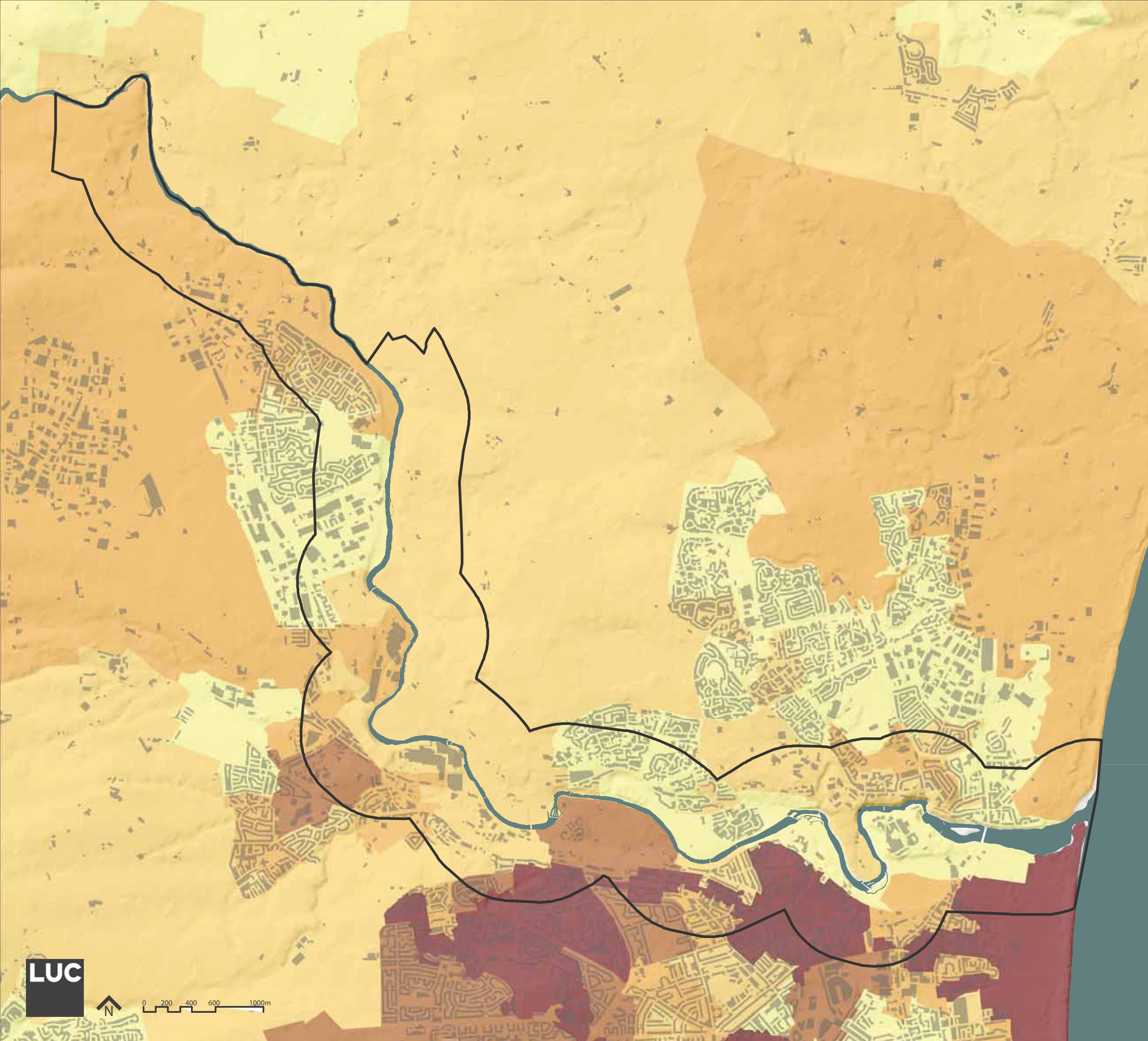
- 2.61 Viewed in the wider Scottish context, Aberdeen as a whole is relatively prosperous and in reasonably good health. Employment rates are higher than the national average, accompanied by much lower rates of benefits claiming. However, there are significant pockets of deprivation in and adjacent to the River Don Corridor. This is most notable in Tillydrone and Middlefield.
- 2.62 Aberdeen generally also has significantly higher rates of alcohol and drug misuse than the Scottish average.
- 2.63 Although the area’s population is currently growing, there is considerable uncertainty in the longer term, particularly in relation to likely changes to the main source of employment which is currently offshore oil and gas, and associated industries.

## Communities

- 2.64 Key communities within the study area include:
- Woodside;
  - Bridge of Don;
  - Tillydrone;
  - Cottown of Balgownie;
  - Danestone / Persley;
  - Dyce.
- 2.65 The consultation work undertaken by the project team indicates that the River Don Corridor is a highly-valued – if somewhat neglected – asset for people living close to it. They have a strong appreciation of its heritage and potential, and have been instrumental in shaping the recommendations of this report.

<sup>4</sup> Literally a town for ‘cottars’ on the Balgownie estate– cottars were the lowest tier of rural estate tenants. The ‘cottages’ only had a small garden attached, as cottars were largely employed as labourers on larger tenant farms or in other estate work.





STUDY BOUNDARY

RIVER DON

SCOTTISH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION  
HIGHER

LOWER



0 200 400 600 1000m

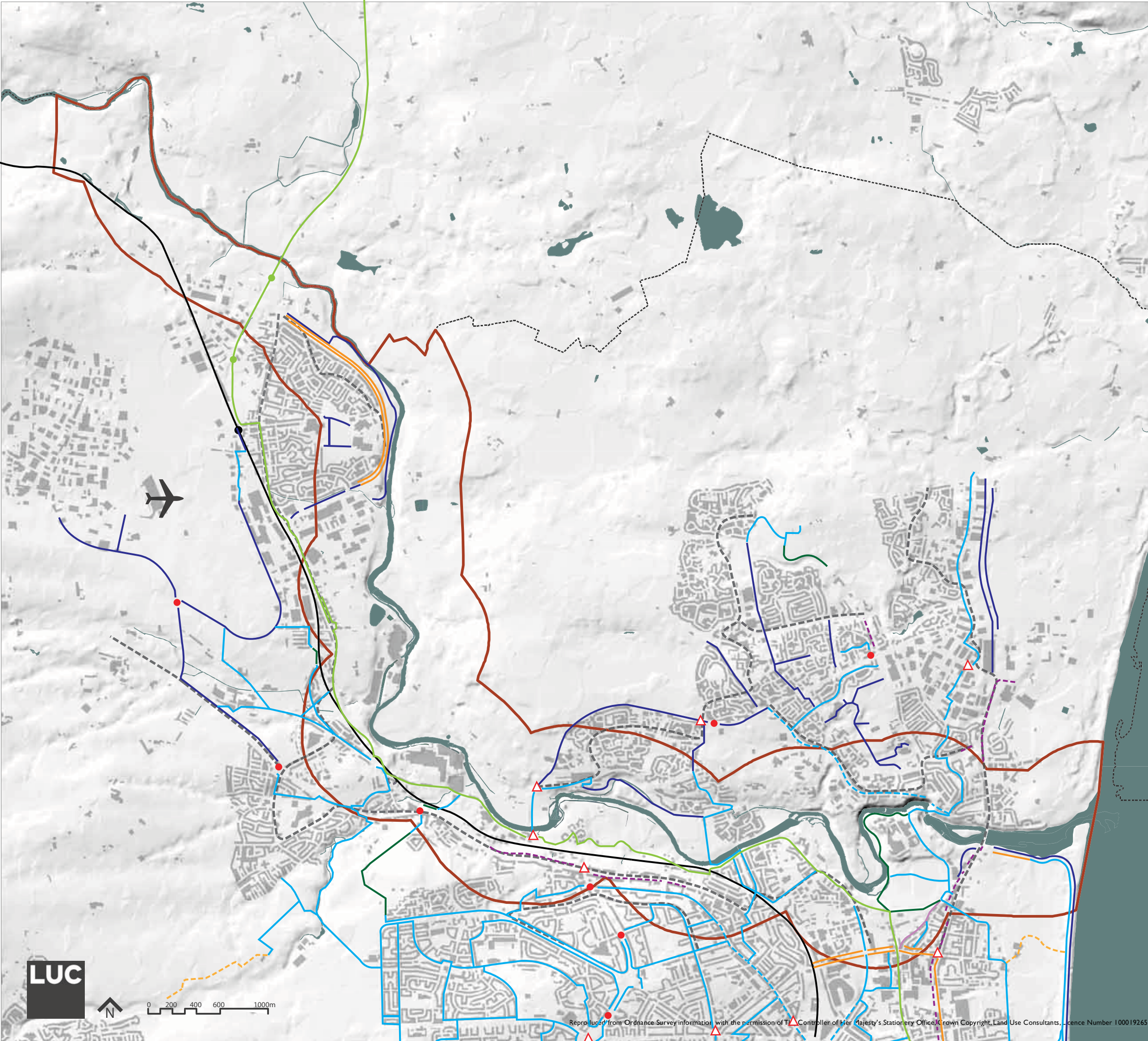
FIGURE 2.6  
SCOTTISH INDEX OF  
MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION



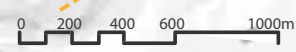
### Using the Don corridor

- 2.66 Local people use the Don and its surrounding area for a range of purposes, from the intensely active – such as kayaking and off-road cycling – to the relaxed and leisurely, including dog walking and enjoying the relative tranquillity of the riverside woodlands.
- 2.67 Aberdeen Cycle Forum launched their Aberdeen Cycle Map in 2004. The map provides information on a variety of different types of cycle route such as on road cycle lanes and dual use paths as well as other recommended roads. The map also provides a guide for cyclists towards safer road crossings and highlights busy junctions. The information from this Cycle map has been reflected in Figure 2.7.
- 2.68 An important element to this cycle network is the National Route 1 of the National Cycle Network adopted by the Scottish Government. This route connects Dover to the Shetlands, mostly along the east coast of the UK, and runs within the study boundary along a series of roads rather than using of the potential green route along the river corridor.
- 2.69 The area is generally well connected to the public transport network, with rail access from Dyce station, approximately 20 minutes walking distance to the greenspace of the River Don Corridor.
- 2.70 Numerous bus routes on the A96 and A947, in addition to local services, provide connections between the city centre as well as surrounding communities to the River Don Corridor.
- 2.71 However, there are currently barriers to many communities making more extensive use of the resource. These include:
- relatively poor connectivity to key settlements / communities;
  - Fragmented Core Paths – reducing potential for confident, unhindered access;
  - Opportunities to access the river itself are limited;
  - Main transport corridors (A96 and railway) can, in some instances, act as barriers to safe access. Although numerous crossing are already in place, it is recognised that additional provision is required;
  - Poor wayfinding and signage, especially in relation to transport hubs.





- STUDY BOUNDARY
- ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY
- BUS ROUTE
- RAILWAY
- CYCLE ROUTES**
- RECOMMENDED ROUTE
- ON ROAD CYCLE LANE
- BUS, CYCLE & TAXI LANE
- DUAL USE PATH
- BUSY BUT USEFUL ROAD
- SIGNED ROUTE
- OFF-ROAD RECREATIONAL ROUTE
- PATH WHERE CYCLISTS MAY HAVE TO DISMOUNT
- NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK
- CYCLE FRIENDLY ACCESS POINT
- CARE NEEDED
- TOUCAN CROSSING / USEFUL PEDESTRIAN CROSSING



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FIGURE 2.7  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT BASELINE







# 3 Greenspace analysis



## 3 Greenspace Analysis

### Introduction

- 3.1 This section of the report draws on the open space audit and strategy work undertaken by Aberdeen City Council. Following the guidance set out in Planning Advice Note 65 (PAN 65): Planning and Open Space, all of Aberdeen's open spaces over 0.4 hectares (excluding farmland and private gardens) have been audited, classified and their quality assessed against a range of criteria.
- 3.2 Using this information, and the key green network areas identified in the adopted Local Development Plan, the following analysis has been critical in understanding the key barriers and opportunities within the River Don Corridor.

### Aberdeen Open Space Audit

- 3.3 This Aberdeen Open Space Audit database, and associated mapping, provides a 'snapshot' of the quality, quantity and use of the open space resource in the study area. It has enabled detailed analysis of the distribution of good quality spaces, how easily people can reach them and where there are significant gaps in provision. In turn this has enabled the identification of opportunities for new spaces.

### Overview

- 3.4 The River Don Corridor is, on the whole, relatively well catered-for in terms of physical quantity of total open space. However, there are significant issues with the quality of much of the resource, and the ability of some communities to access good quality spaces and, in particular, key types of open space.

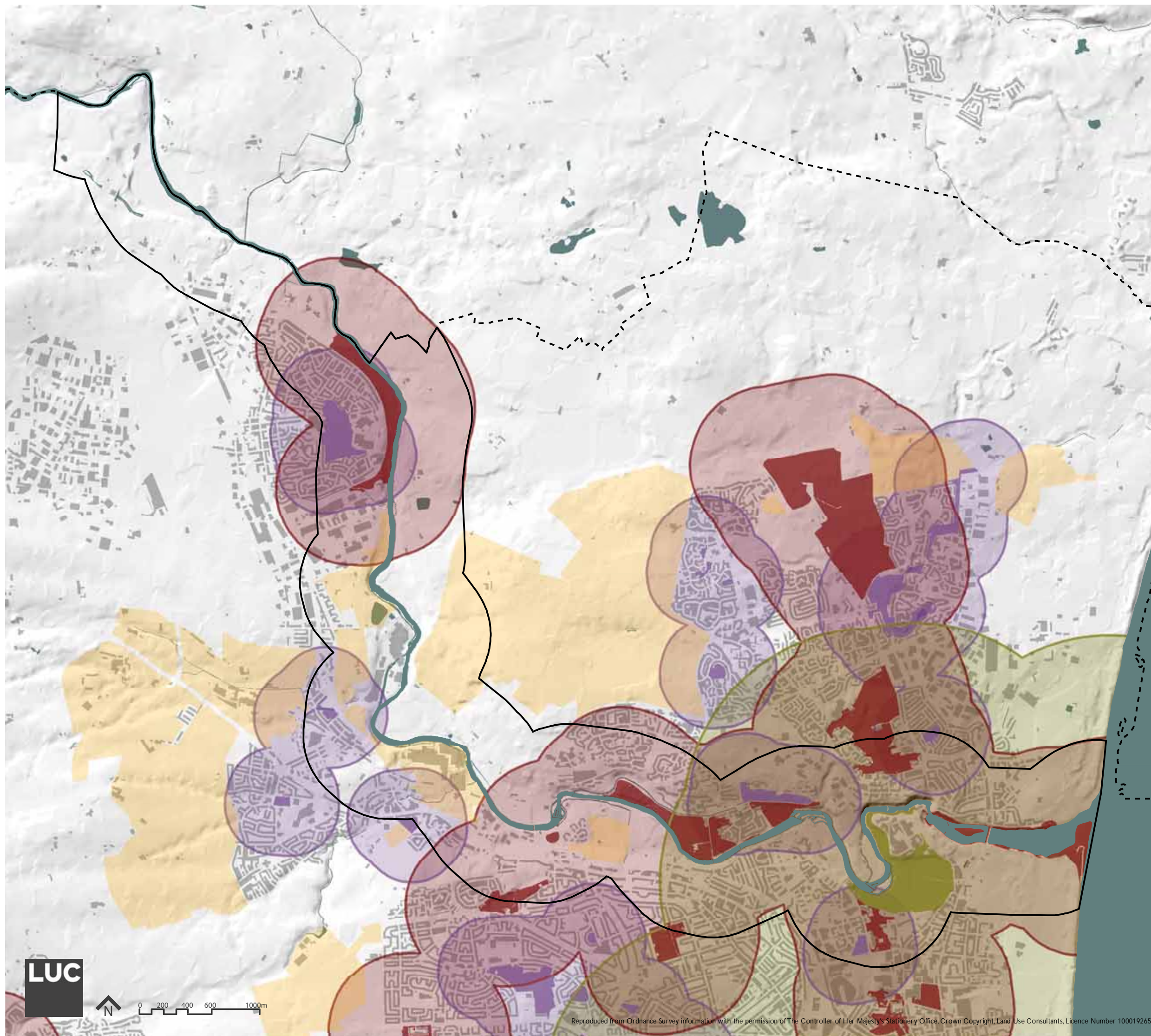
### Hierarchy of Open Spaces

- 3.5 The Open Space audit, in line with PAN65, establishes a hierarchy of open space. To assist with understanding how accessible open spaces falling within these categories are, the Open Space strategy sets maximum distances that people should have to travel to reach spaces of each type summarised as follows:
- major open space: large, multi-functional municipal spaces that offer a range of opportunities which people are willing to travel to access – all residents should be within 1500m of a major park;
  - neighbourhood open space: smaller, but locally significant resources that cater to a number of needs – all residents should be within 600m of a Neighbourhood open space;
  - local open space: smaller spaces that form part of the strategic open space network – all residents should be within 400m of a Local open space.
- 3.6 Figure 3.1 illustrates the location of each of the three main levels of open space as per the Open Space Audit and Strategy. The relative recommended distance from which an Aberdeen resident should be able to access an open space is also illustrated.
- 3.7 As clearly illustrated on Figure 3.1, a significant proportion of the study area lies beyond the maximum recommended distance from a major, neighbourhood or local open space. The following conclusions can be made:
- communities to the west of Woodside, are not within the recommended travelling distance to a major open space. Excluded communities include: Woodside, Danestone, Middlefield, Heathryfold, Bucksburn, Bankhead and Dyce;
  - there is a significant lack of Neighbourhood open space resource between Dyce and Persley Bridge. This is particularly stark when compared to the Local Development Plan development allocation areas;
  - neighbourhood open spaces on the north side of the river are larger and are located close to or within the River Don corridor, whereas Neighbourhood open spaces on the south side of the river are smaller, more isolated and less well connected to the river.

### Relationship with land allocations

- 3.8 The major development and regeneration proposals contained in the Local Development Plan (LDP) have the potential to create a number of new communities over the next 20 years. Grandhome, Davidson Mills (Mugiemoss) and Stoneywood in particular are situated within significant gaps in open space provision.
- 3.9 This highlights the need for high quality open spaces to be included and delivered within the masterplans for these areas. Those open spaces that are proposed as part of any development masterplan offer the opportunity to provide open spaces for existing communities as well as proposed.





- STUDY BOUNDARY
- ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY
- RIVER DON
- LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
LAND ALLOCATIONS
- MAJOR OPEN SPACE
- 1500m FROM MAJOR OPEN SPACE
- NEIGHBOURHOOD OPEN SPACE
- 600m FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD  
OPEN SPACE
- LOCAL OPEN SPACE
- 400m FROM LOCAL OPEN SPACE

FIGURE 3.1  
DISTANCES TO OPEN SPACE



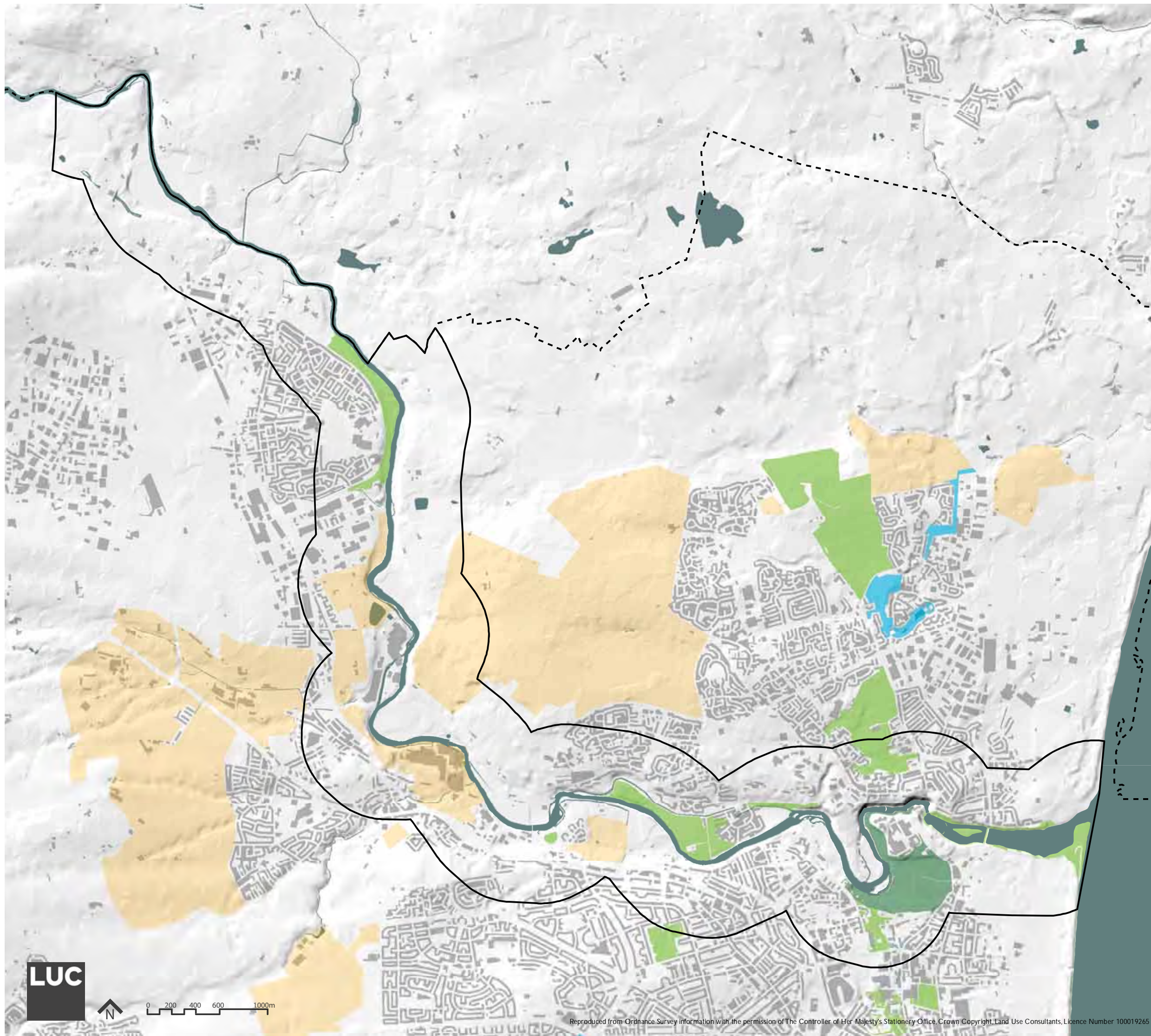
### Quality of Open Spaces

- 3.10 As noted above, each open space in Aberdeen has been assessed against a range of quality criteria through the 2010 Open Space Audit, namely:
- accessibility;
  - attractiveness;
  - value for healthy recreation;
  - importance to communities ; and
  - biodiversity value.
- 3.11 The open space resource along the river itself is assessed as being generally good quality (scoring above the median overall rating in the Open Space Strategy). Seaton Park, Donmouth and the woodlands adjacent to Woodside and Dyce perform well. However, the more formal open space provision falls some way below the ideal standards.
- 3.12 Accessibility is a particular issue, as noted above, with significant barriers to use from several adjacent communities. Figure 3.2 illustrates the relative distances of communities from spaces rated as being of good quality. Again the lack of access to quality greenspace is highlighted between Dyce and Persley Bridge.
- 3.13 For further information on the quality of open space, see the Aberdeen City Open Space Audit (2010) and Open Space Strategy 2011-2016 (2011).

### Planning and open space

- 3.14 Open space and greenspace are key community and environmental resources that make a critical contribution to quality of life, resilience to climate change and local character and distinctiveness.
- 3.15 They are therefore afforded significant protection through national policy (SPP) and in the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan (2012).
- 3.16 **Policy NE3 – Urban Greenspace** requires the protection of the resource and sets strict criteria against which development proposals will be assessed.





- STUDY BOUNDARY
- ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY
- RIVER DON
- LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
LAND ALLOCATIONS
- GOOD QUALITY OPEN SPACE
  - MAJOR OPEN SPACE
  - NEIGHBOURHOOD
  - LOCAL

FIGURE 3.2  
DISTANCES TO GOOD  
QUALITY OPEN SPACE



### Aberdeen greenspace network

- 3.17 A policy specifically requiring the protection and enhancement of Aberdeen's greenspace network is included within the Local Development Plan (2012). The plan recognises the River Don Corridor from Parkhill Woods to Persley as being a particularly important component of the Green Space Network.

- 3.18 **Policy NE1 – Green Space Network** states that:

*The City Council will protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of the Green Space Network. Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted. Where major infrastructure projects or other developments necessitate crossing the Green Space Network, such developments shall take into account the coherence of the network. In doing so measures shall be taken to allow access across roads for wildlife and for access and outdoor recreation purposes.*

*Masterplanning of new developments should determine the location and extent of the Green Space Network within these areas.*

*Development which has any impact on existing wildlife habitats, or connections between them, or other features of value to natural heritage, open space, landscape and recreation must be mitigated through enhancement of Green Space Network.*

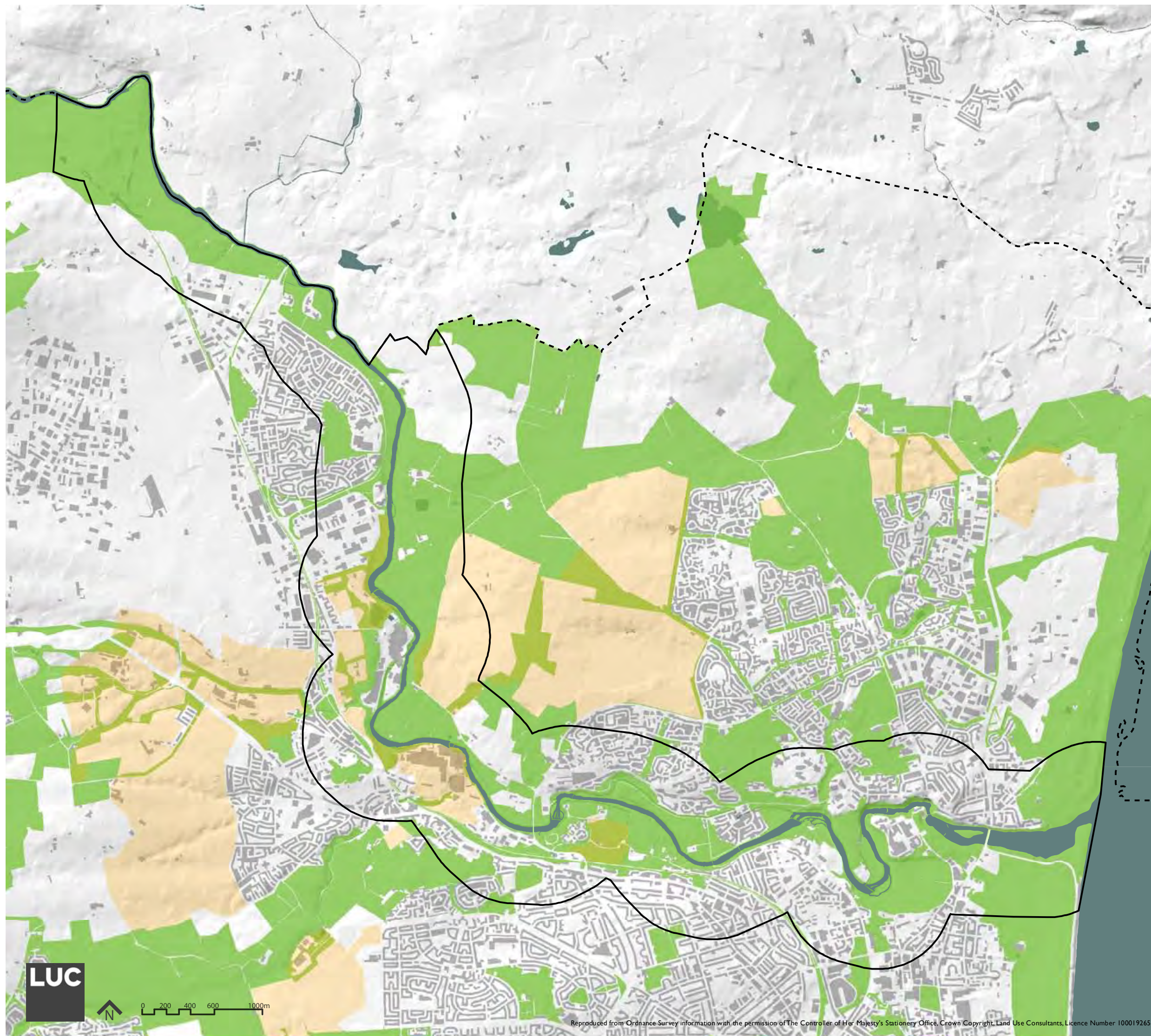
### Value of Green Networks






- 3.19 The 'green network' approach takes a more holistic view of the value of greenspace and highlights the importance of high quality links between assets rather than looking at individual spaces in isolation.
- 3.20 In addition to conveying significant benefits to local people through contributions to quality of life, opportunities for recreation and helping to define a sense of place, green networks provide a broad suite of less tangible benefits. They are critical in maintaining and enhancing habitat connectivity for sensitive species, enabling them to migrate and respond to threats in their environs, most notably the effects of climate change. Protecting existing resources, reinforcing connections and establishing new links is a key driver in Scotland's environmental policy.
- 3.21 Green networks, and woodland in particular, deliver 'ecosystem services' which can be defined as benefits that occur naturally as a result of the healthy function of ecosystems that most people take for granted. These range from assisting with soil and slope stability and helping attenuate the effects of severe weather, to providing shelter and shade for development and a potential fuel resource in the form of woody biomass.

### Key points

- 3.22 The River Don Corridor is a major component of the green network; it has near continuous riparian woodland from Donmouth to Persley. However, there are gaps on both banks of the river and there is a need to bring much of the woodland resource into positive management to overcome the issues of over maturity and selective thinning of non-native species to enrich the woodland habitats. It is vitally important that the woodland resource is health and resilient to the challenges of the coming century or so.
- 3.23 There is some connectivity with green network resources in the wider area, but in many instances these are relatively fragile and are potentially threatened by under-management and proposed development. The connectivity of the green network resource to the wider area on the south side of the river is particularly fragmented. This is in part natural given that the urban fabric is denser towards the city centre but it is also caused in part by physical barriers of the Parkway dual carriageway road and the railway.
- 3.24 As Figure 3.3 illustrates, there is a need to realise the opportunities indicated in the Green Network areas. These could help to establish much more resilient networks, with significant benefits for people and the environment – as well as helping to enhance the local economy by contributing to competitiveness and sense of place.
- 3.25 There is a particular opportunity to realise green network connectivity on the north and east sides of the river in the vicinity of Grandhome estate. The Grandhome area takes in a number of existing, if somewhat degraded, woodlands and undeveloped agricultural land. Similarly, the area allocated at Stoneywood contains a large proportion of former estate policy woodland. The former mill site at Mugiemooss, conversely, currently represents a barrier within the network.
- 3.26 The establishment of significant new greenspaces in keeping with the green network allocation with the LDP would provide a more robust green network in the wider area and at the same time providing a quality greenspace resource (and improved marketability) for proposed new development.





- STUDY BOUNDARY 
- ABERDEEN CITY BOUNDARY 
- RIVER DON 
- LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) LAND ALLOCATIONS 
- LDP GREEN SPACE NETWORK 



0 200 400 600 1000m

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FIGURE 3.3  
GREEN SPACE NETWORK







# 4

## Vision, Aims and Strategic Objectives



## 4 Vision, Aims and Strategic Objectives

### Where we are...

- 4.1 The River Don Corridor already makes an important contribution to the environmental quality, character and distinctiveness of the landscapes and communities in the surrounding area – but it could do much more.

#### Untapped potential

- 4.2 The greenspace resource along the River Don Corridor is variable in quality and is often undermanaged; reducing the range of benefits they can deliver to people and the environment. The ability of local people to access the resource is also limited by sparse connections to the wider path network and by a lack of connectivity across the river itself.
- 4.3 Although the area has a rich cultural heritage, ranging from medieval Old Aberdeen, the designed landscapes of Parkhill and Grandhome House and the industrial heritage of the former and existing mills, this is currently under-appreciated and provisions for access and interpretation are limited.
- 4.4 Similarly, the river corridor is a key component of the region's habitat networks. The Don itself is an important salmon river and supports a range of key aquatic species including otter. The riparian woodlands create an important link through the urban area to allow the movement and migration of species in response to the effects of climate change and other challenges. However, these networks also enable the movement of invasive species – such as American mink and Japanese knotweed – which can threaten the integrity of native habitats and adversely affect the success of important native species.
- 4.5 The threat of flooding from the Don is relatively low, compared to other rivers in the region. However, the increased winter rainfall predicted for the region – along with the increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events – is likely to increase this risk, causing problems for communities, business and the environment.
- 4.6 The Don corridor can therefore be considered as a major asset which is currently under-performing. The recommendations set out in this spatial plan seek to unlock this potential to benefit Aberdeen's people, environment and economy.

### Where we want to be...

#### Vision

***By 2022 the River Don Corridor is widely recognised as a regionally significant resource for people and the environment.***

***It is well integrated within Aberdeen's green network and makes a substantial contribution to local environmental quality and resilience to climate change. It provides a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and the appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.***

***The area's communities play an active role in managing their greenspace assets and are effective advocates for their value, significance and continued protection***

### How we're going to get there...

#### Aims

- 4.7 The SURF project aims to:
- improve the quality of the environment in the Don corridor;
  - enhance the biodiversity value of the area, reinforcing and expanding habitat networks;
  - safeguard and enhance the greenspace resource in and around new and existing development, adding to the quality of the built environment and providing a resource for recreation;
  - engage and empower communities to take an active role in planning and managing their local greenspace resources;
  - contribute to the resilience of local environments and communities to the effects of climate change;
  - enable improved non-motorised access along the length of the corridor and to create links to key assets; and
  - improve local and regional perceptions of the Don.
- 4.8 These aims reflect the potential of the River Don Corridor to add significant value to local biodiversity, enhance the provision of ecosystem services and act as a major asset for outdoor leisure and recreation.

#### Strategic Objectives

- 4.9 Under each aim, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, a number of strategic objectives are defined to guide the project's priorities and promote action 'on the ground.' These objectives are set out in Table 4.1, and were critical in informing the production of the spatial plan.
- 4.10 The policy context for each of the aims is set out in the following sections, followed by the individual strategic objectives and associated key considerations, issues and opportunities, and mapping of relevant features.



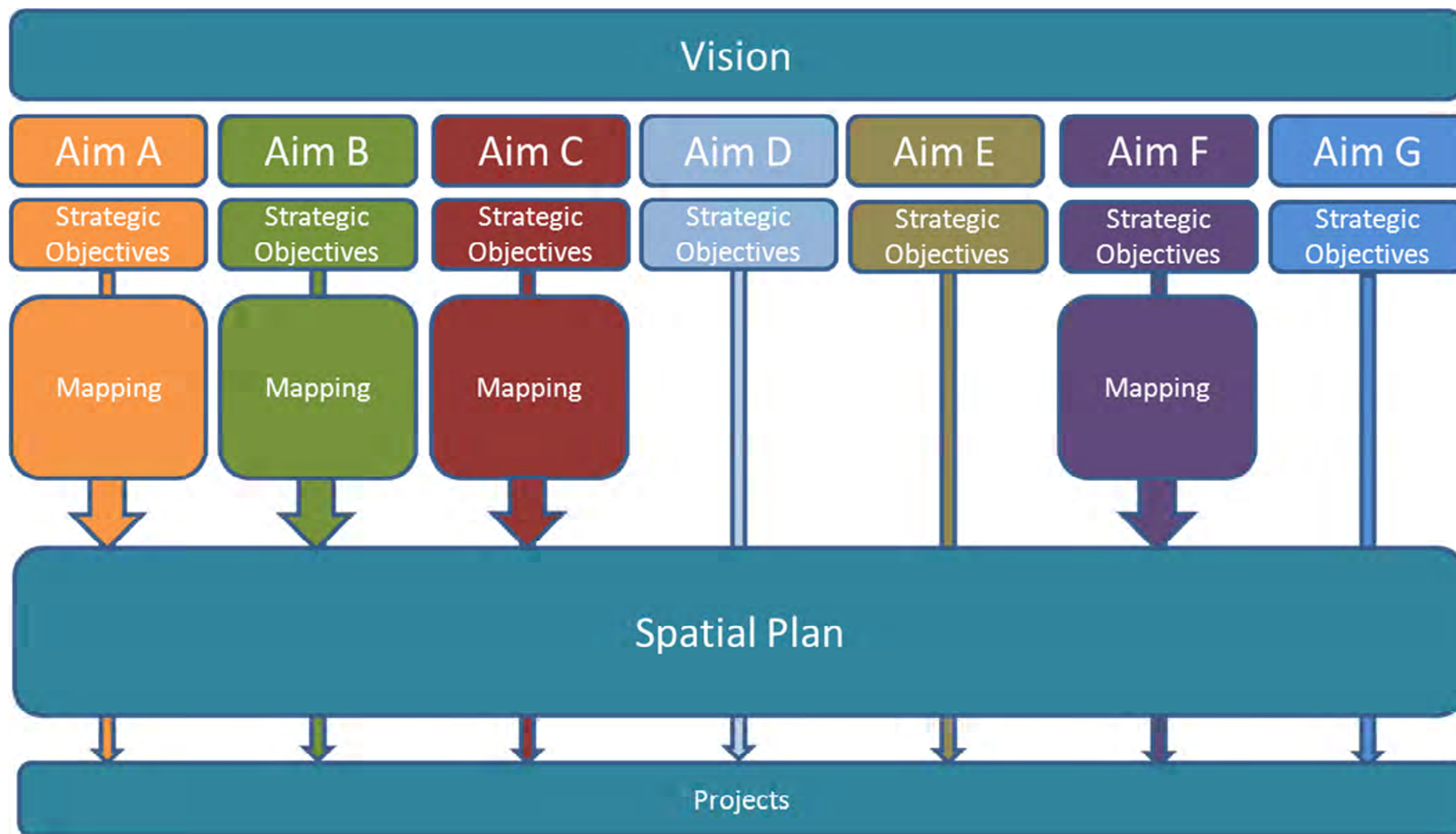


Figure 4.1 – Spatial Plan Vision, Aims and Objectives diagram



**Table 4.1: Aims and objectives**

SURF Aims	Strategic Objectives
<b>A. Improve the quality of the environment in the Don corridor</b>	1. Retain and enhance existing greenspaces and existing green network connections along the River Don Corridor.
	2. Respond to the River Don's cultural and historical past through the protection, restoration and interpretation of key heritage features along the River Don corridor.
<b>B. Enhance the biodiversity value of the area, reinforcing and expanding habitat networks</b>	3. Increase native tree and woodland cover along the River Don corridor.
	4. Improve biodiversity along the River Don Corridor
<b>C. Safeguard and enhance the greenspace resource in and around new and existing development, adding to the quality of the built environment and providing a resource for recreation</b>	5. Create significant areas of new greenspace and new green network connections for use by existing and future communities.
	6. Ensure that existing and proposed River Don corridor greenspaces and green network is fully integrated with future development proposals
	7. Minimise the visual impact of new development on the River Don corridor by ensuring proposed developments respond to their landscape setting and do not encroach on the landscape character of the river corridor.
<b>D. Engage and empower communities to take an active role in planning and managing their local greenspace resources</b>	8. To engage communities (residential / educational / business) in the creation and management of existing and new greenspaces.
<b>E. Contribute to the resilience of local environments and communities to the effects of climate change</b>	9. To support climate change mitigation and adaptation through the planning and management of the greenspace resource.
<b>F. Enable improved non-motorised access along the length of the corridor and to create links to key assets</b>	10. Complete a continuous and quality consistent non-motorised access route along the entire length of the River Don Corridor.
	11. Maximise non-motorised access along both sides of the River Don, taking cognisance of landownership and fishing rights.
	12. Improve the quality of existing River Don corridor access points and create new River Don Corridor access points including the creation of new strategic 'gateways'.
	13. Improve access permeability to and from the River Don corridor by overcoming pedestrian and cycling movement barriers in the wider urban context
	14. Promote and encourage the use of the River Don corridor as a sustainable transport route
	15. Improve pedestrian and cycling access between the River Don corridor and public transport routes and nodes.
	16. Provide additional non-motorised strategic river crossings to: improve strategic city connections; provide recreational loop routes; and improve access to significant future greenspaces.
<b>G. Improve local and regional perceptions of the Don</b>	17. To transform perceptions of the River Don corridor as a locally and regionally important greenspace resource and to promote the River Don corridor as a destination.



## ***SURF Aim A***

### ***Improve the quality of the environment in the River Don Corridor***

#### ***Strategic Objective 1***

***Retain and enhance existing greenspaces and existing green network connections along the River Don Corridor.***

#### ***Strategic Objective 2***

***Respond to the River Don's cultural and historical past through the protection, restoration and interpretation of key heritage features along the River Don Corridor.***

## **Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim A**

- 4.11 Improving environmental quality is a high level policy aim which brings a range of benefits in terms of biodiversity, landscape, community and economy. This is reflected through National Planning Framework 2 (2009), Scottish Planning Policy (2010) which supports the creation, protection and enhancement of open space, and Designing Places (2001) which identifies the need to improve the quality of urban and rural development.
- 4.12 Enhancing the quality of the water environment is a key national objective, required by the EU Water Framework Directive<sup>5</sup> and transposed into law by the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003. This places a range of duties on public bodies, including participation in the River Basin Management Planning process and achieving the aims established for individual water bodies in relevant Area Management Plans (for the Don, this is North East Scotland AMP).
- 4.13 Environmental quality also relates to the quality of individual elements and Scotland's climate change Adaptation Framework (2009), Water Environment and Resource Sector Action Plan identifies issues of flooding, sea level rise, erosion of river banks and periods of reduced rainfall, which also impact on water quality. The Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeen (2005) also recognises the need to support environmental quality through sustainable management of woodlands and maintaining water quality and enhancing river catchments.
- 4.14 The role of greenspace in supporting environmental quality is set out in Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) which recognises the importance of creating accessible greenspace to support a high quality environment.
- 4.15 The Aberdeen City Granite City Woodlands Creation Programme Phase 1, (2009) sets out a programme of new woodland creation including three sites located within or near the River Don corridor which will contribute to improvements in environmental quality.
- 4.16 Aberdeen Open Space Audit (2010) identifies that Aberdeen has many high quality, well used public parks and open spaces. The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy (2011) aims to ensure the city has enough accessible and good quality open space, which supports environmental quality. At a more detailed level the Open Space Supplementary Guidance (2011) aims to inspire those developing open space to create multifunctional valuable spaces.

- 4.17 Greenspace can also play an important role in helping to restore natural functions of rivers, including:
- making space for channel restoration / movement and morphological enhancement;
  - buffering watercourses from the effects of diffuse pollution; and,
  - improving riparian vegetation, contributing to the development of habitat networks.
- 4.18 As part of the region's 'green infrastructure' it can also make a substantial contribution to sustainable water and flood management by:
- improving the infiltration and water retention capacity of the catchment (as opposed to 'hard' infrastructure);
  - slowing flows and reducing the amount of surface water reaching rivers; and
  - providing safe space for restoration of natural floodplain processes, reducing the need for new 'hard' flood defences and attenuating downstream impacts of flood events.

<sup>5</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and Council



### ***Strategic Objective 1***

***Retain and enhance existing greenspaces and existing green network connections along the River Don Corridor.***

#### **Strategic Objective 1**

- 4.19 The first strategic objective recognises that there are a number of existing and important greenspaces along the RDC. The figure opposite illustrates the location of the key existing greenspaces within the RDC, and reflects those identified in Section 3 of this document. These include:
- Donmouth Local Nature Reserve;
  - Seaton Park;
  - Kettock's Mill greenspace;
  - Persley Walled Garden;
  - Woodside recreation area;
  - Dyce Riverside Park.
- 4.20 These existing greenspaces offer a variety of different functions and are well used by local communities for a variety of different reasons including:
- Sport;
  - Walking, cycling and general access;
  - Dog-walking;
  - Bird / wildlife interest;
  - Horticultural interest;
  - Play;
  - General recreational purposes.
- 4.21 The greenspaces also provide valuable natural / semi-natural habitat resources.
- 4.22 This strategic objective therefore acknowledges the importance of the existing greenspace resource along the RDC. It is recommended that these existing greenspaces are retained and protected against high levels of development pressure. These existing greenspaces require positive maintenance and management to ensure longevity of the existing greenspace resource within the RDC.
- 4.23 There are a number of improvements that could be made to the basic infrastructure and maintenance of existing greenspaces including:
- Woodland - Much of the woodland resource is over-mature, contains large quantities of non-native species and requires management. This will improve the longevity of the woodland resource as well as improve the biodiversity value;
  - Infrastructure - Improvements need to be made in the basic provision and management of basic infrastructure such as paths, furniture, boundary treatments and signage;
  - Connectivity – There is a need to improve physical, as well as habitat, connections between these key greenspace resources, as well as improving connections to the wider green network and communities. This is particularly relevant to current and future development allocation sites;

- Awareness and Brand –existing greenspaces are underutilised and there needs to be increased promotion of these important assets;
- Planning – developers should be aware of the advice provided in Supplementary Guidance on Buffer Strips Adjacent to Water Bodies, and the potential of well-planned greenspace to contribute to reduction of diffuse pollution, combatting erosion and as part of the wider green network.



Retain and enhance existing greenspaces and existing green network connections along the River Don Corridor.



DYCE RIVERSIDE PARK

WOODSIDE

PERSLEY WALLED GARDEN

KETTOCKS MILLS

SEATON PARK

DONMOUTH



0 200 400 600 1000m

1:20,000 @ A3

**FIGURE 4.2 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 01**



## **Strategic Objective 2**

***Respond to the River Don's cultural and historical past through the protection, restoration and interpretation of key heritage features along the River Don corridor.***

### **Strategic Objective 2**

- 4.24 The second strategic objective recognises that the RDC has an interesting social and industrial history as outlined in section 2 of this document including:
- river crossings and early urban settlement (e.g. Old Aberdeen and Brig o' Balgownie);
  - mills and river related industry;
  - education and religion (e.g. The University and St. Machars Cathedral);
  - transport development;
  - urban Victorian philanthropy (e.g. Seaton Park);
  - prosperous land owners and estates.
- 4.25 Historical remnants of the above are still evident throughout the RDC and provide a diverse suite of assets which are currently under-appreciated. The approximate locations for a number of key heritage features are illustrated on the figure opposite. These include:
- mill lades and weirs;
  - parkland and woodland policies of former estates;
  - industrial machinery;
  - historic buildings;
  - formal gardens;
  - historic infrastructure.
- 4.26 The interpretation of these heritage features and the understanding of the wider 'story' of the RDC could contribute positively to the sense of place and the distinctiveness of the area. They provide human stories, interest and connections associated to the 'place'. Interpretation would improve legibility of the landscape helping people to feel more comfortable in their surroundings. There is the potential for education through interpretation of historic sites through the RDC.
- 4.27 This objective therefore seeks to retain and protect the remnants of the historical past against loss to future development or decay. Interpretation should be provided to promote a better understanding of the RDC past.
- 4.28 There are a number of improvements that could be made to the basic infrastructure provision and maintenance including:
- Access – Improvements are required to enable access to these features. This may be in the form of physical path access to a specific feature, or the creation of viewpoints which enable a better understanding of the landscape and its history from a certain location;
  - Restoration – The full restoration of some heritage features is likely to be financially prohibitive. There may be a case for structure stabilisation where required. For example it may be possible to stabilise the existing walls of a mill lade and carry out vegetation clearance, and prevent further erosion;

- Interpretation – Interpretation is required along the River Don Corridor. Given the linear nature of the River Don Corridor, there is an opportunity to facilitate a narrative approach to presenting the heritage e.g. developing heritage trails in parallel with the creation and establishment of new access loops;
- Future development – Heritage features should be recognised and incorporated within future development proposals. This could range from very specific industrial features to estate woodland policies.



Respond to the River Don's cultural and historical past through the protection, restoration and interpretation of key heritage features along the River Don corridor.

✕ FORMARTINE + BUCHAN WAY

✕ PARKHILL ESTATE WOODLAND POLICIES

✕ GRANDHOME ESTATE WOODLAND POLICIES

✕ STONEYWOOD ESTATE WOODLAND POLICIES

✕ STONEYWOOD MILL INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

✕ MUGIEMOSS MILL INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

✕ PERSLEY CASTLE

✕ INDUSTRIAL REMNANTS

✕ MILL LADES

✕ BRIG O'BALGOWNIE

✕ PERSLEY WALLED GARDEN

✕ KETTOCKS MILL

✕ DONSIDE MILL INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

✕ SEATON PARK

✕ ST MACHARS CATHEDRAL

✕ OLD ABERDEEN



1:20,000 @ A3

FIGURE 4.3 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 02







## ***SURF Aim B***

***Enhance the biodiversity value of the area, reinforcing and expanding habitat networks***

### ***Strategic Objective 3***

***Increase native tree and woodland cover along the River Don Corridor***

### ***Strategic Objective 4***

***Improve biodiversity along the River Don Corridor***

## **Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim B**

- 4.29 Open spaces fulfil a number of functions, including providing an important role in contributing to the biodiversity value of the area. At a national level, National Planning Framework 2 (2009) includes the aim of enhancing urban and rural biodiversity. Scottish Planning Policy (2010) supports the development of a network of linked open spaces for nature conservation and biodiversity and requires development plans to identify and promote green networks.
- 4.30 In relation to climate change, Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2009) Biodiversity and Ecosystem resilience sector action plan identifies the need to expand habitat networks associated with woodland ecosystems to build resilience and increase dispersal networks. The Spatial Planning and Land Use Sector Action Plan also highlights the importance of conserving and enhancing ecological and habitat networks, and the role of natural floodplains and wetlands in flood management and as biodiversity resources.
- 4.31 Draft Energetica Placemaking Planning Advice (2011) includes reference to the creation of a network of green spaces for a range of benefits, in line with national policy.
- 4.32 Within Aberdeen, the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan (2012) includes Policy NE1: Green Space Network, which identifies the city's strategic network of woodland and other habitats, active travel and recreation routes, greenspace links, watercourses and waterways, providing an enhanced setting for development and other land uses and improved opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature conservation and landscape enhancement. The Green Space Network, which overlies Open Space, Green Belt, Natural Heritage and other policies, indicates where greenspace enhancement projects could be focused.
- 4.33 Woodland is an important element of the Don corridor and the Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeen (2005) promotes semi natural native species floodplain woodland; and protecting important open ground riverside habitats and species.

### ***Strategic Objective 3***

#### ***Increase native tree and woodland cover along the River Don corridor***

### **Strategic Objective 3**

- 4.34 This third strategic objective seeks to increase the native tree and woodland cover within the RDC. In part this relates to bringing the existing mature and in some cases over mature woodlands into positive management (in relation to Strategic Objective 1): thinning out non-native and over nature stock and replanting with native species.
- 4.35 There are opportunities to increase native woodland cover throughout the RDC, most notably in relation to the creation of new greenspaces (see Strategic Objective 5). The advantages of increased woodland cover include:
- the creation of a strong landscape framework to provide a setting for existing and future development;
  - the creation of habitats and wildlife corridors;
  - the improvement of biodiversity;
  - the creation of recreation areas;
  - climate change resilience;
  - potential for Biomass.
- 4.36 Several partners should be involved to realise this objective including:
- Aberdeen City Council;
  - Forestry Commission Scotland (an existing important partner delivering woodland expansion and management projects);
  - landowners.
- 4.37 The figure opposite provides indicative locations of where there may be potential to consider woodland expansion along the RDC.
- 4.38 There are a number of key issues and opportunities in relation to increasing native tree and woodland areas:
- Climate change – there is potential to deliver major benefits towards climate change mitigation – carbon sequestration, remediation of derelict land, green energy fuels, flooding etc.;
  - Development - There is potential for developers to deliver green infrastructure prior to development to ensure sites deliver benefits while awaiting construction (potential for income through management for biomass);
  - Management – There must be a balance between the management of existing woodland with an aspiration to expand new woodland areas. There is a need to understand management to deliver wider benefits (e.g. biomass);
  - Land Ownership – Importance of securing buy-in from woodland owners and managers, and tie in with ongoing local woodland;
  - Community Engagement – There is significant potential for community engagement and leadership in the management, planning and implementation of woodland areas.



Increase native tree and woodland cover along the River Don corridor

EXISTING WOODLAND  
ASPIRATIONAL WOODLAND



FIGURE 4.4 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 03

#### ***Strategic Objective 4***

#### ***Improve biodiversity along the River Don Corridor***

#### **Strategic Objective 4**

- 4.39 Further to Strategic Objective 3 this objective recognises that there is potential for habitat creation and improving biodiversity beyond trees and woodlands.
- 4.40 Ideally the RDC would comprise a variety of mixed semi-natural / native habitats contributing to a rich ecological mosaic on a strategic landscape scale. Priority should be given to those habitats identified within the North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan as identified in Section 2 of this document to ensure that priority species benefit from habitat creation. There should also be consideration of creating and improving habitats for protected species such as bats, otters and fish.
- 4.41 The Integrated Habitat Network dataset should also be consulted to build upon the existing habitat network
- 4.42 There is potential for the following habitat network improvements:
- native broadleaved woodlands (see Strategic Objective 2);
  - riparian woodlands;
  - species rich Grasslands and Wildflower meadows;
  - wetlands and river ecosystems;
  - field margins and Boundary Habitats;
- 4.43 There are a number of key issues and opportunities in relation to increasing native tree and woodland areas:
- Climate change – there is potential to deliver major benefits towards climate change mitigation – carbon sequestration, remediation of derelict land, green energy fuels, flooding etc.;
  - Community Engagement – there is potential for community engagement and leadership in management planning operations;
  - There is the potential for the project to act as an exemplar project of habitat creation delivered by and for communities.
- 4.44 As noted in Section 2, invasive non-native species – such as American mink, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed – are a significant issue in the Don corridor. The River Don Trust has prepared a Bio-security Plan for the area, which is available for reference at [www.riverdon.org.uk](http://www.riverdon.org.uk)



Improve biodiversity along the River Don Corridor

- EXISTING GREENSPACE
- PROPOSED GREENSPACE
- EXISTING WOODLAND
- ASPIRATIONAL WOODLAND
- AGRICULTURAL LAND







## ***SURF Aim C***

***Safeguard and enhance the greenspace resource in and around new and existing development, adding to the quality of the built environment and providing a resource for recreation***

### ***Strategic Objective 5***

***Create significant areas of new greenspace and new green network connections for use by existing and future communities.***

### ***Strategic Objective 6***

***Ensure that existing and proposed River Don Corridor greenspaces and green network is fully integrated with future development proposals***

### ***Strategic Objective 7***

***Minimise the visual impact of new development on the River Don Corridor by ensuring proposed developments respond to their landscape setting and do not encroach on the landscape character of the river corridor.***

## **Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim C**

- 4.45 Existing greenspaces are a valuable resource which is important to safeguard, and they provide key linkages for the development of new areas of greenspace. They are important for physical linkages for access and as part of the habitat network. PAN 65 Planning and Open Space (2008) sets out policy on the protection of valuable resources and ensuring appropriate new provision. A Land Use Strategy for Scotland (2011) supports the delivery of multiple benefits from land use, including facilitating outdoor recreation and providing accessible green space. The Aberdeen City Local Development Plan (2012) includes policies on protecting urban greenspace, protecting trees and woodlands and facilitating access and informal recreation.
- 4.46 Supplementary Guidance: Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Manual (2010) includes guidance for mitigation measures which includes the protection and enhancement of the Green Space Network.
- 4.47 Open Space Supplementary Guidance (2012) provides guidance based on the open space audit, strategy and green network which have been prepared for Aberdeen. The guidance aims to create useful, sustainable and well used places, which will benefit the wider community, the environment and support a healthy economy.
- a. The Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy (2010) aims to conserve Aberdeen City's natural heritage for the benefit of biodiversity, citizens and visitors, for current and future generations. The main purpose of the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy (2011) is to ensure the city has enough accessible and good quality open space.

### ***Strategic Objective 5***

***Create significant areas of new greenspace and new green network connections for use by existing and future communities.***

#### **Strategic Objective 5**

- 4.48 The greenspace analysis in Section 3 of this document clearly identifies a lack of greenspace in certain locations within the RDC. Whereas Strategic Objective 1 seeks to retain and protect existing greenspace resource, this objective seeks to create significant areas of new greenspace along the RDC.
- 4.49 Although future land allocations indicate significant areas of local and neighbourhood greenspace and access connections there should be access to significant areas of city greenspace and strategically important green network corridors. The proposal could deliver a major new city greenspace, addressing current shortages and catering to some of the more deprived areas of Aberdeen, in addition to new developments.
- 4.50 The figure opposite illustrates the possible location for significant new greenspace provision in relation to known development allocation areas. These proposed areas of greenspaces offer the potential to provide a variety of functions and uses such as:
- sport and recreation;
  - access to a strategically important green network corridor (The River Don);
  - urban agriculture (community gardens, allotments grow your own schemes etc.);
  - cross river access;
  - flood alleviation.
- 4.51 The new greenspaces also offer the potential to provide vital missing greenspace links along the River Don Corridor, completing the sequence of greenspace nodes.
- 4.52 There is strong support for this objective within the Local Development Plan Green Space Network Policy.
- 4.53 A key issue in the achievement of this objective is the need for communication and negotiation with existing landowners and developers in terms of cognisance of proposed development masterplan proposals. There is potential to add significant value to the new Grandhome communities (And improve marketability of development).
- 4.54 The implementation of new greenspaces will also require a robust planning approach and application of the Green Space Network Policy



Create significant areas of new greenspace and new green network connections for use by existing and future communities.

- EXISTING GREENSPACE
- PROPOSED GREENSPACE
- DEVELOPMENT AREAS

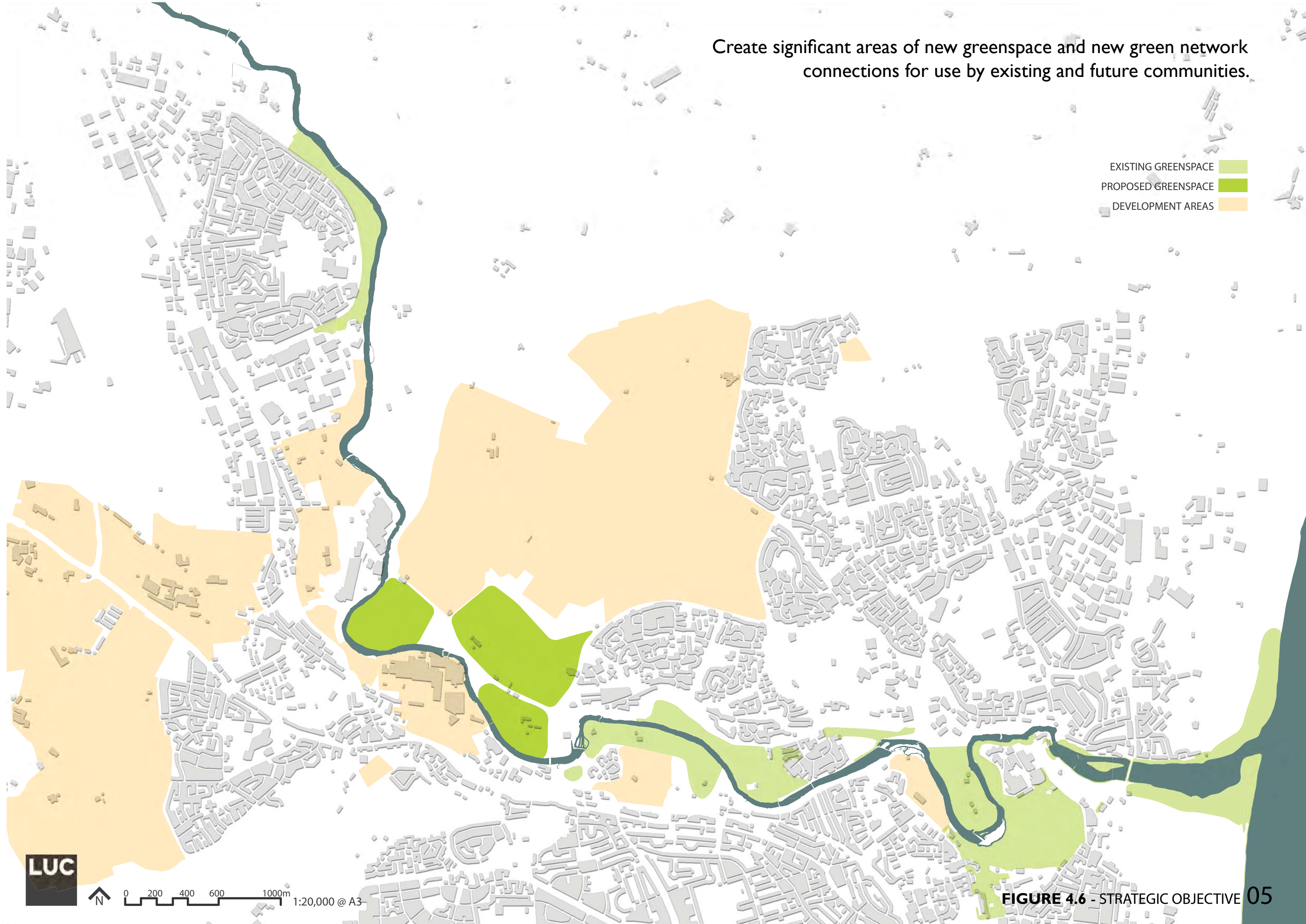


FIGURE 4.6 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 05

### ***Strategic Objective 6***

***Ensure that existing and proposed River Don corridor greenspaces and green network is fully integrated with future development proposals***

#### **Strategic Objective 6**

- 4.55 In parallel with Strategic Objective 5, this objective seeks to ensure that any significant new greenspace provision is fully integrated with existing and new developments.
- 4.56 This will be achieved through the protection of valuable existing greenspace resources in areas under pressure and ensuring there is clear communication between stakeholders, landowners and developers. Development Frameworks and masterplans should demonstrate how they respond to and integrate with new greenspaces.
- 4.57 There also has to be improved awareness with developers and landowners about the benefits of green networks to communities – and to their projects.
- 4.58 It is essential that there is a communication and negotiation with existing landowners and developers in terms of cognisance of proposed development masterplan proposals in order for this objective to be achieved. There is the potential to add significant value to the new Grandhome communities (and improve marketability of development) and there is a requirement for a long term approach to ensure consistent delivery over lifespan of development schemes.
- 4.59 At the same time, development offers a major opportunity to reinvigorate degraded greenspace and enhance links. There is the potential to tie in with sustainable water management on development sites which can contribute towards any developments carbon footprint reduction.
- 4.60 Consideration is also needed over the responsibility for maintenance of new / existing resources within developments needs to be agreed in advance to ensure they continue to deliver benefits.
- 4.61 Open Space Supplementary Guidance (2012) introduces the need to consider existing open spaces when identifying the requirements generated by new development. Where existing quantity of open space is assessed as being adequate, enhancing the quality of these spaces is prioritised over creation of additional resources.



Ensure that existing and proposed River Don corridor greenspaces and green network is fully integrated with future development proposals



FIGURE 4.7 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 06

**Strategic Objective 7**

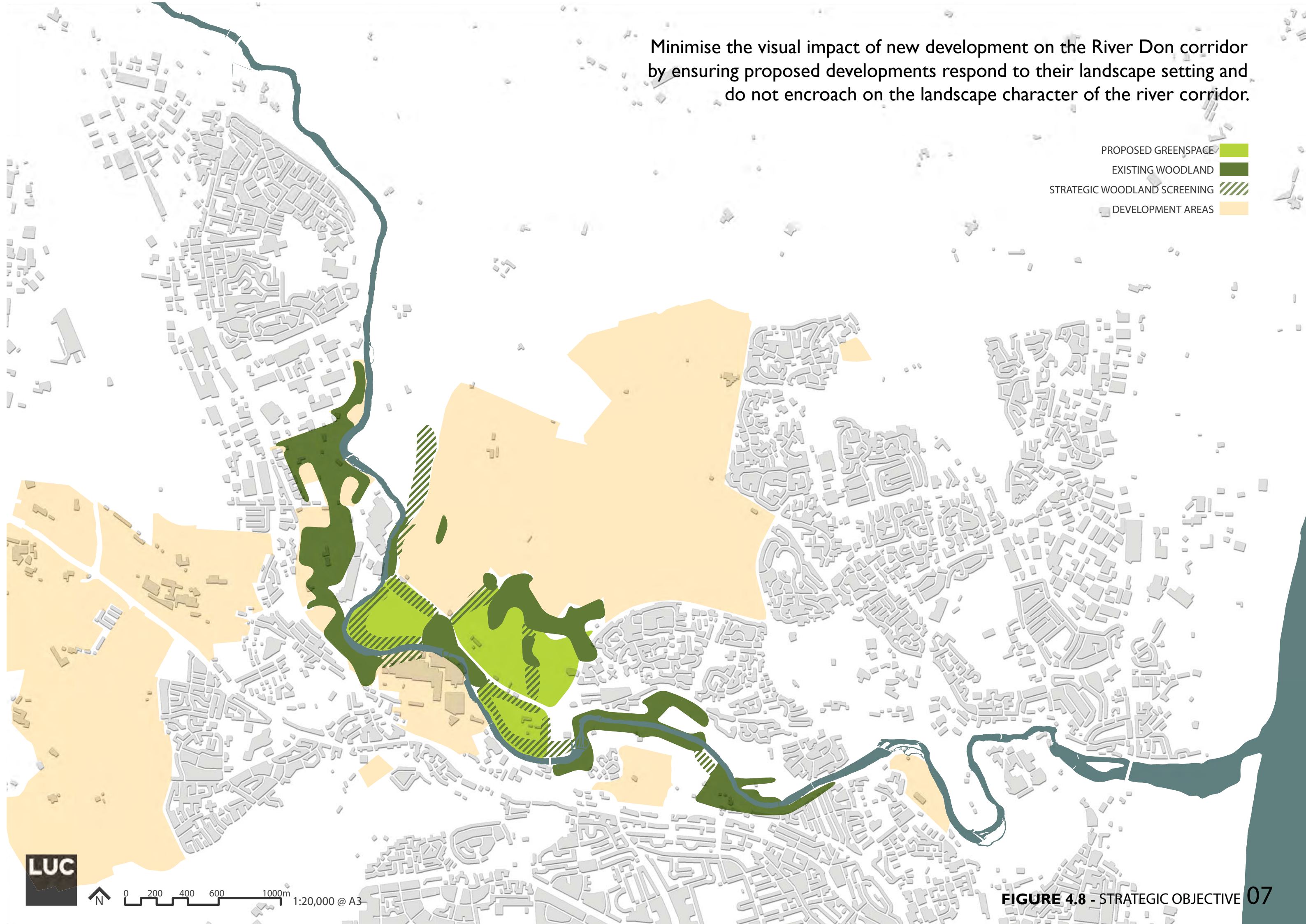
***Minimise the visual impact of new development on the River Don corridor by ensuring proposed developments respond to their landscape setting and do not encroach on the landscape character of the river corridor.***

**Strategic Objective 7**

- 4.56 In combination with Strategic Objective 3 this objective highlights the potential for built development to encroach onto the river corridor. The river corridor should be promoted as a green corridor and future development may become visually prominent especially from certain viewpoints on the river. This is especially relevant in some areas where there is a lack of trees and woodland areas, and for some areas currently under development pressure.
- 4.57 Therefore it is important to consider advance establishment of structural landscape framework planting (trees, woodlands and shelterbelts), and areas of greenspace to help minimise the visual effects of future development from within the River Don Corridor. This will assist in ensuring there is not further fragmentation of the RDC qualities.
- 4.58 With relation to Strategic Objective 2 there is potential to retain and enhance natural and cultural heritage features that reflect the evolution of the landscape.
- 4.59 It is important to ensure that development responds to its location within or adjacent to the river corridor – not turning its back on the river as in the past.



Minimise the visual impact of new development on the River Don corridor by ensuring proposed developments respond to their landscape setting and do not encroach on the landscape character of the river corridor.



- PROPOSED GREENSPACE
- EXISTING WOODLAND
- STRATEGIC WOODLAND SCREENING
- DEVELOPMENT AREAS





### ***SURF Aim D***

***Engage and empower communities to take an active role in the planning and managing their local greenspace resource***

### ***Strategic Objective 8***

***To engage communities (residential / educational / business) in the creation and management of existing and new greenspaces.***

### **Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim D**

- 4.60 Engaging communities with the planning and management of local greenspace resources provides a number of benefits from increasing awareness and use of the resources, to creating a sense of stewardship and ownership.
- 4.61 Engagement can include informing people about what is going on to securing their active involvement in using and managing spaces. The Draft Energetica Placemaking Planning Advice (2011) includes reference to providing opportunities for communities to create their own green spaces, and the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy (2011) includes an objective to support community involvement. The Community Plan Update – 2008 and Single Outcome Agreement 2008 – 2011 also supports engagement with local communities.

### ***Strategic Objective 8***

***To engage communities (residential / educational / business) in the creation and management of existing and new greenspaces.***

#### **Strategic Objective 8**

- 4.62 This objective aims to ensure that the local community is engaged in the planning, designing and on-going management of existing and proposed greenspaces.
- 4.63 Engaging communities with the planning and management of local greenspace resources provides a number of benefits from increasing awareness and use of the resources, to creating a sense of stewardship and ownership. There is a need to create a climate of community involvement within the RDC by making key links to communities.
- 4.64 There is a need to ensure new communities are engaged from the start. This may be achieved in several ways:
- the establishment of a RDC Community Network;
  - it may be possible to establish community orchards and community growing spaces within the RDC to promote the sense of community ownership;
  - to secure business involvement in the management of local greenspaces through sponsorship and volunteer time;
  - identify opportunities for volunteer involvement and create links with existing groups such as BTCV Green Gym;
  - involve school children in the changes taking place in the area for example through competitions to design a logo, or information boards;
  - develop links with local schools to use the space for outdoor learning.



To engage communities (residential / educational / business) in the creation and management of existing and new greenspaces.



V. Mitchell



A. Khan



M. Stephen



A. Coventry







## ***SURF Aim E***

***Contribute to the resilience of local environments and communities to the effects of climate change***

### ***Strategic Objective 9***

***To support climate change mitigation and adaption through the planning and management of the greenspace resource***

#### *Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim E*

- 4.65 Climate change has risen on the policy agenda in recent years and climate change mitigation and adaptation is becoming integrated within the policy framework. Significantly Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2009) provides a framework for co-ordinating adaptation and mitigation action in response to climate change and includes a series of sector action plans.
- 4.66 The Built Environment Sector Action Plan identifies the threats to infrastructure and the built environment including those from flooding and landslip, effects on building fabric, and loss or damage to the public estate which may include increased use of outdoor spaces. The Water Environment and Resource Sector Action Plan identifies issues of flooding, sea level rise, erosion of river banks and periods of reduced rainfall, which also impact on water quality.
- 4.67 Also at a strategic level the Land Use Strategy for Scotland, (2011) supports the delivery of multiple benefits from land use including reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 4.68 Recognition of climate change is provided in Aberdeen Futures Climate Change Action Plan, (2002) which sets out key actions on flooding and climate change and land use planning and climate change.
- 4.69 The high profile of climate change is also reflected in the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy (2011). The main purpose of the strategy is to ensure the city has enough accessible and good quality open space, and objectives include maximising opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change and further biodiversity.
- 4.70 Climate change is also noted in the Community Plan Update – 2008 and Single Outcome Agreement 2008 – 2011 which recognises the importance of protecting and enhancing the environment of Aberdeen whilst tackling climate change.

### ***Strategic Objective 9***

***To support climate change mitigation and adaption through the planning and management of the greenspace resource***

#### **Strategic Objective 9**

- 4.71 This objective acknowledges the role in which the RDC can play in combating climate change.
- 4.72 There will be key opportunities for the area, such as:
- flood management;
  - Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for new development (and the wider catchment area);
  - increase tree and woodland cover.
- 4.73 It will be important to understand the potential extent of future changes that will occur as a result of climate change, such as future flood risk and the need to plan for these changes.
- 4.74 It is therefore important to identify those resources which can be protected and enhanced, such as habitat networks.
- 4.75 There should be support for non-motorised travel, through providing new linkages to existing core routes
- 4.76 There is a need for the RDC to contribute to future development through the encouragement of non-motorised sustainable transport methods
- 4.77 There are a number of ways the RDC can support climate change mitigation such as:
- ensure management of riverside woodland to reduce flood risk downstream;
  - ensure new bridges or works adjacent to the river are 'future proofed' to reduce potential adverse impacts from climate change. For example ensure path surfaces are designed to cope with prolonged periods of heavy rainfall and bridges are designed to avoid compounding flood risk;
  - existing access network provides opportunity to facilitate non-motorised access and reduce transport emissions;
  - woodland planting for bank stabilisation;
  - identify opportunities for growing energy crops;
  - protect and enhance the habitat network.



To support climate change mitigation and adaption through the planning and management of the greenspace resource



Water levels on the Glashieburn watercourse in the Bridge of Don, August 2012, 30mins apart after heavy rainfall



E. McMaihin







## ***SURF Aim F***

***Enable improved non-motorised access along the length of the corridor and to create links to key assets***

### ***Strategic Objective 10***

***Complete a continuous and quality consistent non-motorised access route along the entire length of the River Don Corridor***

### ***Strategic Objective 11***

***Maximise non-motorised access along both sides of the River Don, taking cognisance of landownership and fishing rights.***

### ***Strategic Objective 12***

***Improve the quality of existing River Don Corridor access points and create new River Don Corridor access points including the creation of new strategic 'gateways'.***

### ***Strategic Objective 13***

***Improve access permeability to and from the River Don corridor by overcoming pedestrian and cycling movement barriers in the wider urban context***

### ***Strategic Objective 14***

***Promote and encourage the use of the River Don corridor as a sustainable transport route***

### ***Strategic Objective 15***

***Improve non-motorised access between the River Don corridor and public transport routes and nodes.***

### ***Strategic Objective 16***

***Provide additional non-motorised strategic river crossings to: improve strategic city connections; provide recreational loop routes; and improve access to significant future greenspaces.***

#### *Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim F*

- 4.78 There is wide ranging policy support for improving non-motorised access within the River Don corridor from national level down to local development frameworks and masterplans.
- 4.79 Scottish Planning Policy (2010) sets out clear support for recreation and physical activity and accessibility within settlements. The Aberdeen City Local Development Plan (2012) both include policies supporting access and recreation.
- 4.80 Access specific policy documents include the Local Transport Strategy (2008) supports the development of the Third Don Crossing which will increase walking, cycling and public transport opportunities from the north of the river to the city.
- 4.81 The Aberdeen City Cycling Strategy recognises the value of the River Don corridor as an open space asset and need to provide a continuous access route. Further recognition of the role of the Don for access is provided in Aberdeen's Strategy for Access to the Outdoors (2004) which supports the provision of access, including improving and promoting links along the River Don and homes or facilities. The Aberdeen City Core Paths Plan (2009) includes an objective to promote and improve links to greenspaces in Aberdeen. Fit for the Future A sport and physical activity strategy for Aberdeen City (2009) includes objectives to promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity.
- 4.82 The Draft Energetica Placemaking Supplementary Guidance (2011) sets out open space requirements to support active lifestyles, and Draft Energetica Placemaking Planning Advice (2011) includes reference to supporting a wide range of activities including recreation.
- 4.83 At the site specific level, the development frameworks for the Former Davidson's Mill, Bucksburn, (2011) and Stoneywood Estate (2011) support the development of key access links with and along the River Don.
- 4.84 Work is underway to develop the A96 Aberdeen to Blackburn cycle route, with improvements and associated promotion already in place for the section from Haudagain to Bucksburn.

### ***Strategic Objective 10***

***Complete a continuous and quality consistent non-motorised access route along the entire length of the River Don Corridor***

#### **Strategic Objective 10**

- 4.85 Currently there are sections of the path network within the RDC that form part of the existing Core Paths Plan. However they are currently not linked together to form a continuous route. There are also aspirational Core Paths identified within the Core Paths Plan that have yet to be realised.
- 4.86 This strategic objective supports the establishment of a continuous non-motorised transport route along the entire length of the RDC. This is primarily focused on the river corridor within the Aberdeen City Boundary between Donmouth on the coast to the Formartine and Buchan Way at Dyce. However consideration should also be given to extending this route along the River Don into Aberdeenshire, to neighbouring communities such as Bridge of Don, and also along the coast. This would in turn promote the idea of long distances walking routes within the region.
- 4.87 Some of the existing path network only supports pedestrian access and this objective supports the creation of joint pedestrian and cycling routes, and other means of non-motorised transport.
- 4.88 It also aims to improve 'Access for All' promoting access for the disabled and persons of low mobility to the RDC.
- 4.89 Future maintenance is an overarching issue and a priority should be to maintain existing key routes and deliver and maintain missing links associated with these.
- 4.90 There are a number of key considerations in relation to the above namely:
- development - need for private sector buy-in to deliver routes through proposed development sites;
  - major potential to create sustainable transport links from Old Aberdeen to employment sites (industrial estates and the airport);
  - there are currently a number of barriers in place;
  - need for private sector support – limitations on what can be secured through planning gain (economic climate and Scottish Government pressure);
  - existing path network requires significant upgrading;
  - potential for phased delivery over several years;
  - can be marketed as part of a wider sustainable transport network;
  - potential to deliver emissions reduction and opportunities to improve health and well-being;
  - considerable value to tourists and visitors to the area, as well as the population of wider Aberdeen.



Complete a continuous and quality consistent non-motorised access route along the entire length of the River Don Corridor

- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - EXISTING CORE PATHS
- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - ASPIRATIONAL CORE PATHS
- ADDITIONAL ASPIRATIONAL NON-MOTORISED ROUTES CURRENTLY NOT IDENTIFIED IN CORE PATH PLAN



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FIGURE 4.11 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 10

**Strategic Objective 11**

***Maximise non-motorised access along both sides of the River Don, taking cognisance of landownership and fishing rights.***

**Strategic Objective 11**

- 4.91 Further to Strategic Objective 10 this strategic objective seeks to complement the idea of creating one continuous non-motorised transport route within the RDC by establishing non-motorised transport on both sides of the river. This is noted as important as there is a need to link communities on both sides of the Don to the RDC, enabling access to different landscapes and environmental assets.
- 4.92 As with Strategic Objective 10 there are some existing paths and access routes in existence and noted on the Core Paths Plan as well as aspirational routes. There is however, more fragmentation of paths on the north side of the river.
- 4.93 There will have to be sensitive management of access where fishing beats depend on low levels of disturbance as well as access through existing agricultural areas.
- 4.94 In addition to the key issues identified in Strategic Objective 10 negotiation of potential routes through Grandhome Estate is required to optimise wider benefits and protect the estate's contribution to the local economy.



Maximise non-motorised access along both sides of the River Don, taking cognisance of landownership and fishing rights.

- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - EXISTING CORE PATHS
- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - ASPIRATIONAL CORE PATHS
- ADDITIONAL ASPIRATIONAL NON-MOTORISED ROUTES CURRENTLY NOT IDENTIFIED IN CORE PATH PLAN

## **Strategic Objective 12**

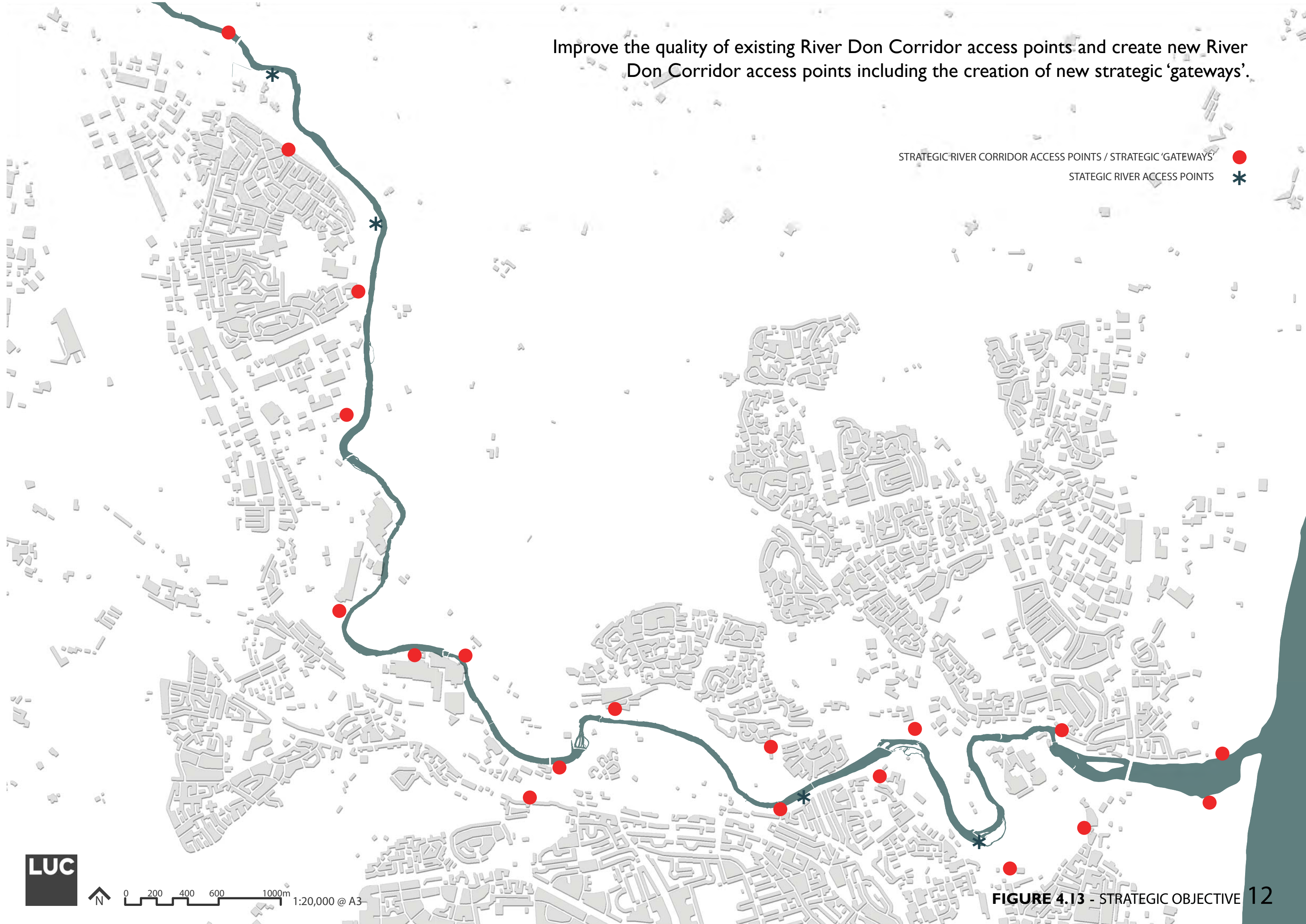
***Improve the quality of existing River Don Corridor access points and create new River Don Corridor access points including the creation of new strategic 'gateways'.***

### **Strategic Objective 12**

- 4.101 There is currently poor provision of access and egress points to the RDC. There are few clearly identifiable formal 'gateways' onto the RDC. There are many informal access points that are overgrown or in a state of disrepair.
- 4.102 This strategic objective seeks to improve access to the river don corridor. There should be a hierarchy of River Don Corridor access points including:
- primary gateways that could incorporate car parking, information / interpretation, street furniture such as picnic tables, litter bins, play equipment etc. These gateways could also provide water access points for kayakers, etc.;
  - secondary access points that are primarily non-motorised transport access points at strategic locations such as Seaton Park and proposed bridge locations;
  - water access points where there is provision for strategic river access points to enable the watercourse to be used for recreational purposes e.g. for kayakers and canoeists to gain access onto and off the river itself;
  - local access points serve local communities.
- 4.103 In parallel with Strategic Objective 17 this objective assists in raising the profile of the RDC as a single branded entity. It assists in orientation, way-finding and legibility of the greenspace resource. The creation or improvement of existing access points also help provide integration of the RDC with surrounding communities becoming part of the urban fabric.



Improve the quality of existing River Don Corridor access points and create new River Don Corridor access points including the creation of new strategic 'gateways'.



STRATEGIC RIVER CORRIDOR ACCESS POINTS / STRATEGIC 'GATEWAYS' ●  
STRATEGIC RIVER ACCESS POINTS \*

### **Strategic Objective 13**

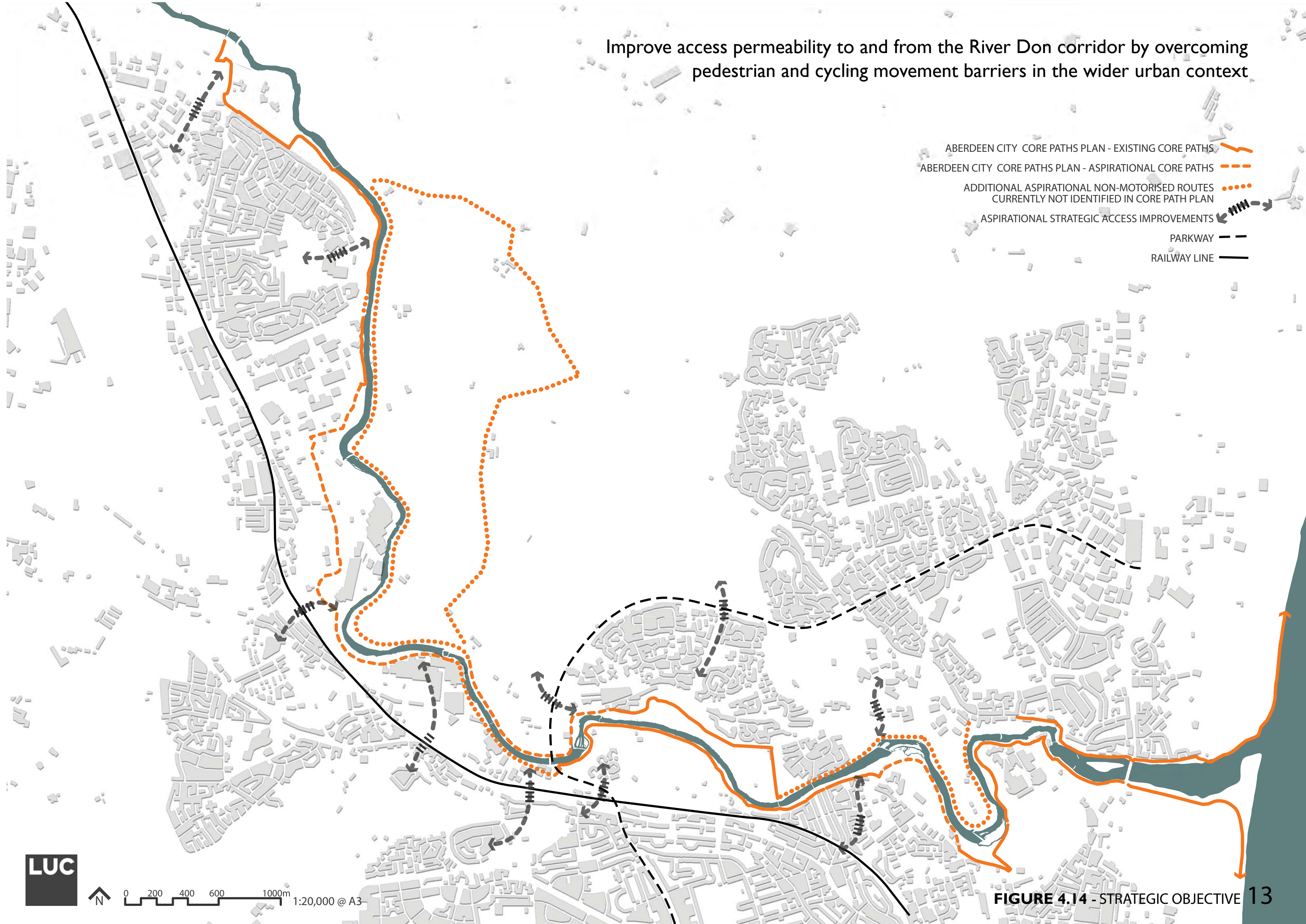
***Improve access permeability to and from the River Don corridor by overcoming pedestrian and cycling movement barriers in the wider urban context***

#### **Strategic Objective 13**

- 4.104 There are currently a number of barriers within the wider city fabric that impede access to and from the RDC. Notable barriers to movement include:
- The Aberdeen to Inverness Railway line;
  - The River Don;
  - The A96;
  - Riverview Drive at Dyce;
  - existing deprived communities;
  - industrial estates / business parks
  - topography;
  - urban form.
- 4.105 A number of improvements could be implemented to assist in overcoming these barriers such as:
- improved pedestrian environment on roads including improved road crossings;
  - feasibility of improving road and rail crossings – this is most likely to be achieved through the improvements of existing bridge and underpass infrastructure;
  - improvements to general way-finding in the wider urban fabric
  - improving gateways and access points in parallel with Strategic Objective 12
- 4.106 This objective fully supports the implementation of Aspirational Core Paths in the wider Core Paths Plan which would help facilitate improvements to wider access to the River Don Corridor.



Improve access permeability to and from the River Don corridor by overcoming pedestrian and cycling movement barriers in the wider urban context



#### ***Strategic Objective 14***

***Promote and encourage the use of the River Don corridor as a sustainable transport route***

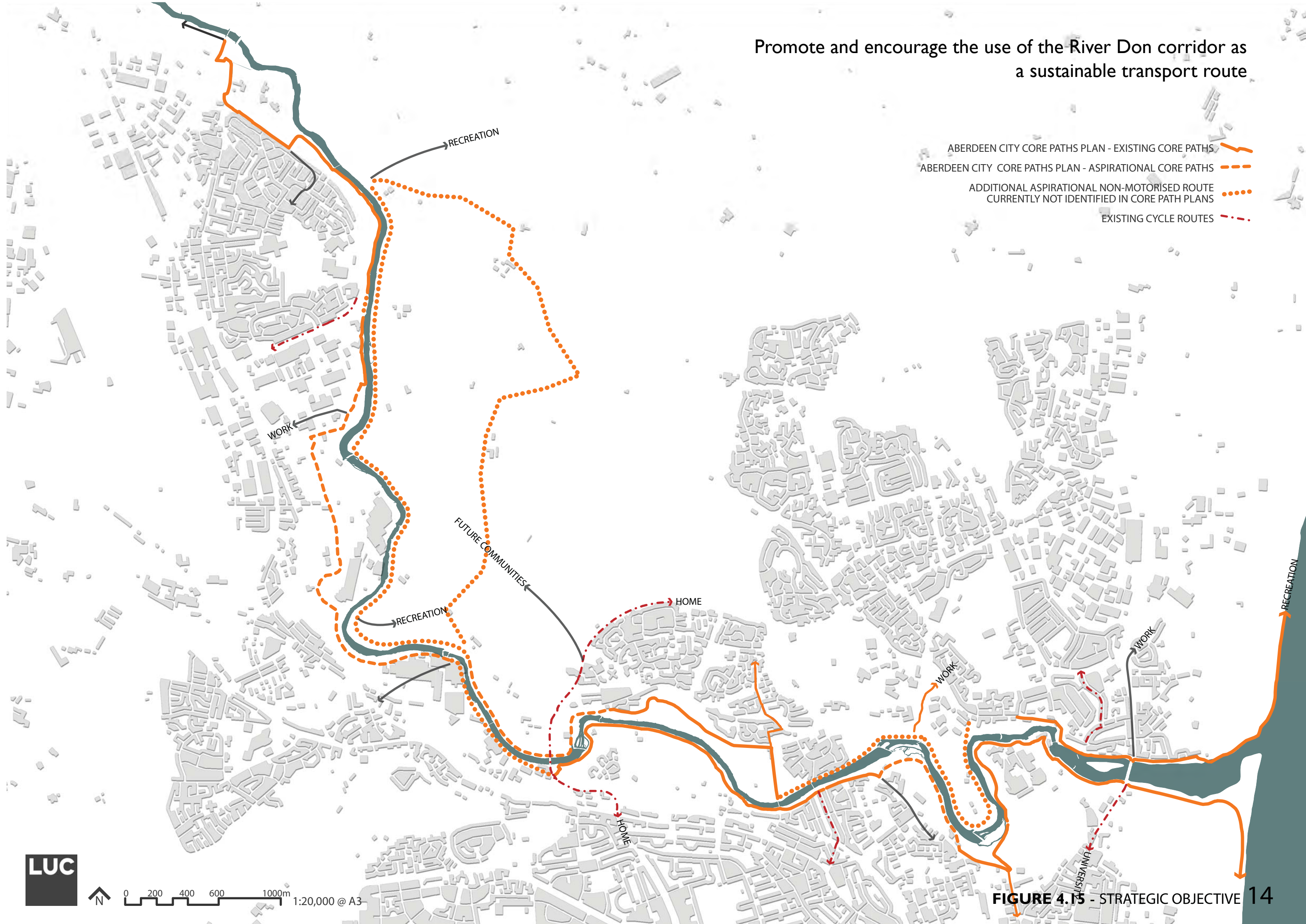
#### **Strategic Objective 14**

4.101 This strategic objective seeks to promote and encourage the use of the RDC as a sustainable transport corridor. This would entail the promotion of predominantly walking and cycling routes and access between various communities and community nodes including:

- residential areas;
- areas of employment (industrial estates and business parks);
- educational facilities such as the University and schools;
- recreational areas especially existing and proposed greenspaces;
- community centres and nodes as well as retail hubs.



Promote and encourage the use of the River Don corridor as  
a sustainable transport route



### ***Strategic Objective 15***

***Improve non-motorised access between the River Don Corridor and public transport routes and nodes.***

#### **Strategic Objective 15**

- 4.102 In keeping with Strategic Objective 14 above there is currently a lack of access to public transport from within the RDC.
- 4.103 This objective therefore seeks to improve access to public transport nodes such as bus routes and bus stops. Not only would this make the RDC more accessible but it would also facilitate looped access routes to be formed e.g. an Aberdeen resident could take the bus to Dyce and walk back along the corridor to their home or vice versa.
- 4.104 There is limited scope to make connections to public transport other than bus routes. However there may be opportunities to provide improved access from the corridor to Dyce railway station.
- 4.105 Although aspirational at this time there may also be a longer term opportunity to provide access to a new railway station between Dyce and Aberdeen. Any new station development would have to be proven to be financially viable and various feasibility studies undertaken. A possible location for a new train station would be the reopening of a railway station at Bucksburn.



Improve non-motorised access between the River Don Corridor and public transport routes and nodes.

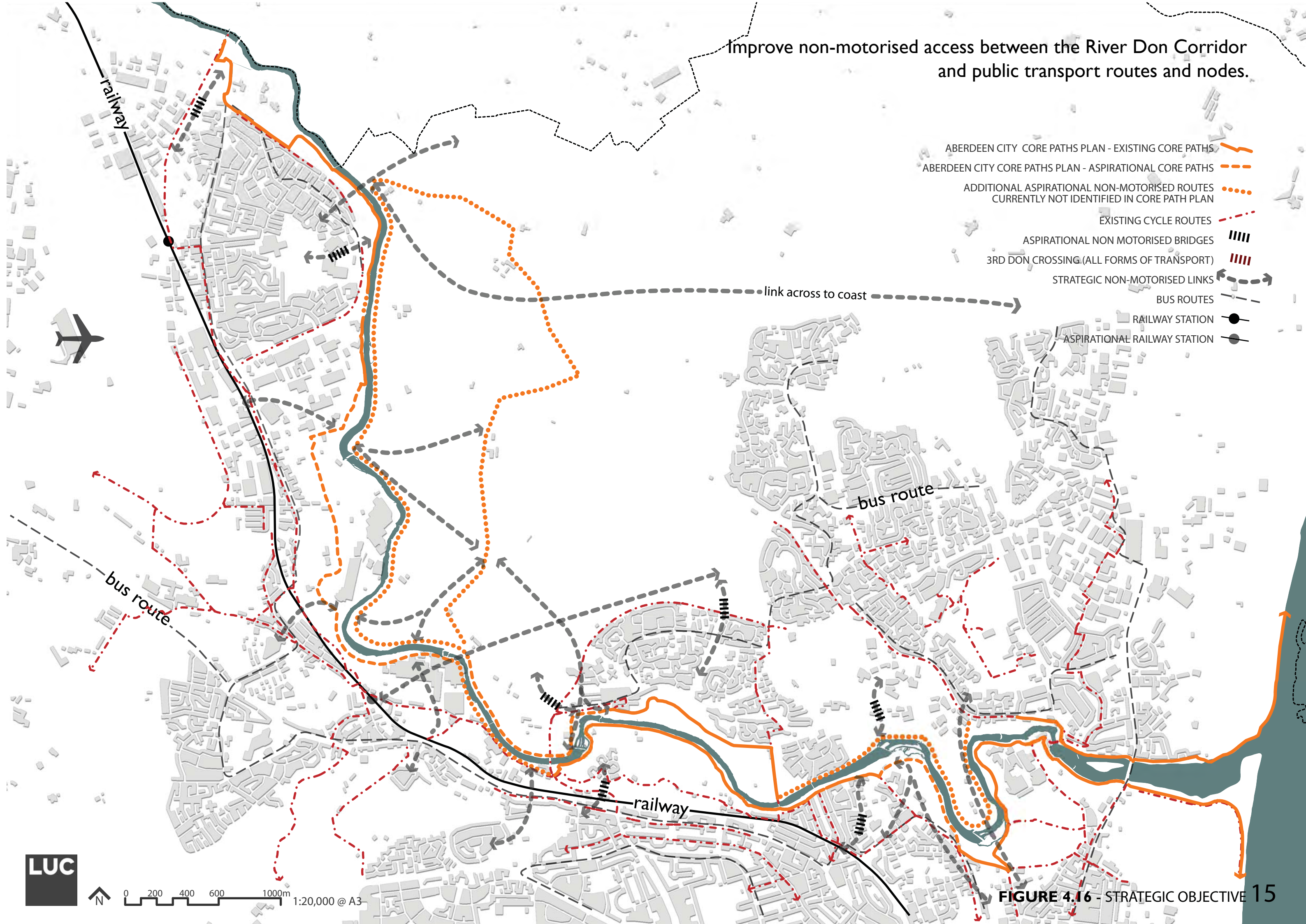


FIGURE 4.16 - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 15

### ***Strategic Objective 16***

***Provide additional non-motorised strategic river crossings to: improve strategic city connections; provide recreational loop routes; and improve access to significant future greenspaces.***

#### **Strategic Objective 16**

- 4.112 This strategic objective acknowledges that the River Don itself is a barrier to wider city movement. Therefore, in line with significant development proposals for the areas, there should be a long term goal to provide improved cross river access at strategic locations along the River Don Corridor. This would achieve the following:
- improve general connectivity across the northern part of the city;
  - improve connectivity between strategic cross river communities (existing and proposed);
  - accommodate recreational loop routes to be established;
  - accommodate and promote access to existing and proposed greenspace resource.
- 4.113 In terms of improving connectivity between strategic communities this should include:
- residential areas;
  - business centres and places of work;
  - educational facilities;
  - retail areas and community centres / hubs;
  - recreational areas and greenspaces.
- 4.114 It is important to note that with the exception of the “3<sup>rd</sup> Don Crossing” the proposed river crossings are aimed at non-motorised modes of transport, predominantly walking and cycling although equestrian use should also be considered.
- 4.115 The 3<sup>rd</sup> Don Crossing will accommodate non-motorised modes of transport in a safe, comfortable and easily accessible manner. There should be improved connectivity to the wider greenspace and access network from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Don crossing.
- 4.116 This objective supports the implementation of bridges currently proposed as part of new development frameworks, in particular the non-motorised bridge crossing at Davidson Mill (Mugiemoss). There needs to be more consideration of how these bridge crossings will serve a variety of new developments rather than single proposals.
- 4.117 There may be alternative means of achieving non-motorised river crossings at strategic locations such as small ferries operated by the community on a seasonal basis, or the maintenance of existing river infrastructure to accommodate river crossings such as repairs to existing weirs and / or utility infrastructure (pipe bridges).

4.118 A number of key issues and opportunities may be expected:

- for ongoing developments, there is a need to consult with all parties involved in current development proposals to ensure that non-motorised transport river crossings are fully considered, incorporated and integrated with the wider greenspace and access network;
- the aspiration for future river crossings needs to be established by the existing and future communities through important community engagement;
- any proposals for new river crossings need to come after or in parallel with improvements to the existing access network in order to improve the connectivity of the existing network;
- a number of environmental protection issues would need to be considered prior to implementation of new river crossings;
- reference to the Open Space Supplementary Guidance will be required in the planning and development of new open spaces in parallel with development.



Provide additional non-motorised strategic river crossings to:  
improve strategic city connections; provide recreational loop  
routes; and improve access to significant future greenspaces.

- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - EXISTING CORE PATHS
- ABERDEEN CITY CORE PATHS PLAN - ASPIRATIONAL CORE PATHS
- ADDITIONAL ASPIRATIONAL NON-MOTORISED ROUTES  
CURRENTLY NOT IDENTIFIED IN CORE PATH PLAN
- ASPIRATIONAL NON MOTORISED BRIDGES
- 3RD DON CROSSING (ALL FORMS OF TRANSPORT)





## **SURF Aim G**

### **Improve local and regional perceptions of the Don**

#### **Strategic Objective 17**

**To transform perceptions of the River Don corridor as a locally and regionally important greenspace resource and to promote the River Don corridor as a destination.**

#### **Planning Policy Context for SURF Aim G**

- 4.119 Supporting a high quality environment is a key aim which extends through many policy documents, and this is closely aligned with improving the quality of the Don corridor and from that people's perceptions of the Don.
- 4.120 Key policy messages include developing high quality open space and protecting the open space resource. This includes Vibrant, Dynamic and Looking Forward the Liberal Democrat and SNP Programme for Aberdeen Council (2007) which recognises the value of Aberdeen's environment in making the area unique and the importance of protecting green belt and green wedges.
- 4.121 Key policy messages include developing high quality open space and protecting the open space resource. This includes consistent Political commitments, despite changes in City Council Administrations: Liberal Democrat and SNP (2007) recognised the value of Aberdeen's environment in making the area unique and the importance of protecting green belt and green wedges, and the Labour led Coalition (2012) states, *"We will ... promote bio-diversity and nature conservation. We will encourage wider access to green space in our streets, parks and countryside."*
- 4.122 Supplementary Guidance: Trees and Woodlands (2010) seeks to protect and enhance the current tree cover within Aberdeen. It recognises that given the likely increase in development it is important that existing tree populations and new tree planting are successfully incorporated into new development to ensure the city continues to be an attractive place to live and work.
- 4.123 Open Space Supplementary Guidance (2012) draws together information and guidance from the Aberdeen open space audit and strategy and work to plan a green network for the city. It promotes the creation of useful, sustainable and well used places which will in turn deliver community, environmental and economic benefits.
- 4.124 Supplementary Guidance: Aberdeen Masterplanning Process, 2010, seeks to guide developers to enable the delivery of sustainable places. There are development documents for several development sites along the Don corridor which set out the role of open space within these, and how they will link with the existing access and green infrastructure:
- 4.125 Balgownie Centre, Bridge of Don Planning Brief Supplementary Guidance (2010) reflects the significant green space within the site which contributes to the amenity of the local area. The guidance states that this should be reflected in the layout of any new development on the site.
- 4.126 Charette Series Report, (Grandhome) identified that the Grandhome greenfield site will be developed to accommodate a new community and will include ample public space.
- 4.127 Development Framework and Masterplan Stoneywood Estate (2011) identifies that the development of the site for residential led mixed use development will support the estate woodland structure, and improve access along the River Don.
- 4.128 At Former Davidson's Mill, Bucksburn, the Development Framework (2011) supports the development of key access links with the River Don.

### ***Strategic Objective 17***

***To transform perceptions of the River Don corridor as a locally and regionally important greenspace resource and to promote the River Don Corridor as a destination.***

#### **Strategic Objective 17**

- 4.129 This strategic objective seeks to improve awareness of what the River Don Corridor can offer. Many local people value particular locations of the River Don Corridor. However, many people still associate the corridor with industry and pollution. There is also a lack of knowledge in terms of access, way-finding and connectivity. The significant ongoing and proposed development within the River Don Corridor contributes to confusion about the available greenspace resource.
- 4.130 This project provides an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of the River Don Corridor and ongoing improvements. In particular access routes and current available resources should be advertised and promoted.
- 4.131 There are a number of ways that improved promotion could be delivered including:
- establishment of a Community Group (e.g. a “Friends of...” group building on community outreach achieved during the consultation of this project);
  - the establishment of a River Don ‘brand’ to provide a consistent approach to all promotional material;
  - community engagement (residents, interest groups, businesses, schools, university etc.);
  - interpretation boards and improved way-finding;
  - leaflets and promotional material;
  - creation of a River Don Corridor / Community Website;
  - Social Media;
  - creation of nature / wildlife trails;
  - creation of heritage trails;
  - working with the local community establish a series of events e.g. markets, guided walks, temporary art installations, sporting events etc.
- 4.132 There is also a need to ensure sustained involvement of the local community to ensure local ownership of the area, and that new communities are involved as development takes place. The establishment of a committed River Don Community Group is essential.
- 4.133 In addition to general access and recreation there is an opportunity to develop the Don corridor as an exemplar of sustainable transport through the establishment of non-motorised transport routes.



To transform perceptions of the River Don corridor as a locally and regionally important greenspace resource and to promote the River Don Corridor as a destination.







# 5 Spatial Plan

# 5 Spatial Plan

- 5.1 Drawing together the outcomes of the consultation, research and analysis work, and collating the proposals outlined in the strategic objectives, a spatial plan has been developed that highlights the key opportunities across the project area. The Spatial Plan is illustrated in Figure 5.5.
- 5.2 The Spatial Plan pulls together the environmental and community-focussed objectives and illustrates the value of a multi-benefit approach to managing and enhancing the landscape.
- 5.3 Supporting the composite Spatial Plan (Figure 5.5) are three individual maps which illustrate existing resources, resources planned within policy and new proposals identified through the SURF project. These components are outlined in Figure 5.1.
- 5.4 **Figure 5.2 - Existing Baseline:** Existing greenspace, woodland, core paths, cycle networks, historic features and community nodes.
- 5.5 **Figure 5.3 - Planning Policy and Current Strategic Guidance:** Planned greenspace, woodland, core paths, cycle network, community nodes.
- 5.6 **Figure 5.4 - New Proposals:** Proposed greenspace, woodland, non-motorised routes, bridges, strategic connections, strategic river corridor access points, strategic access to water points.

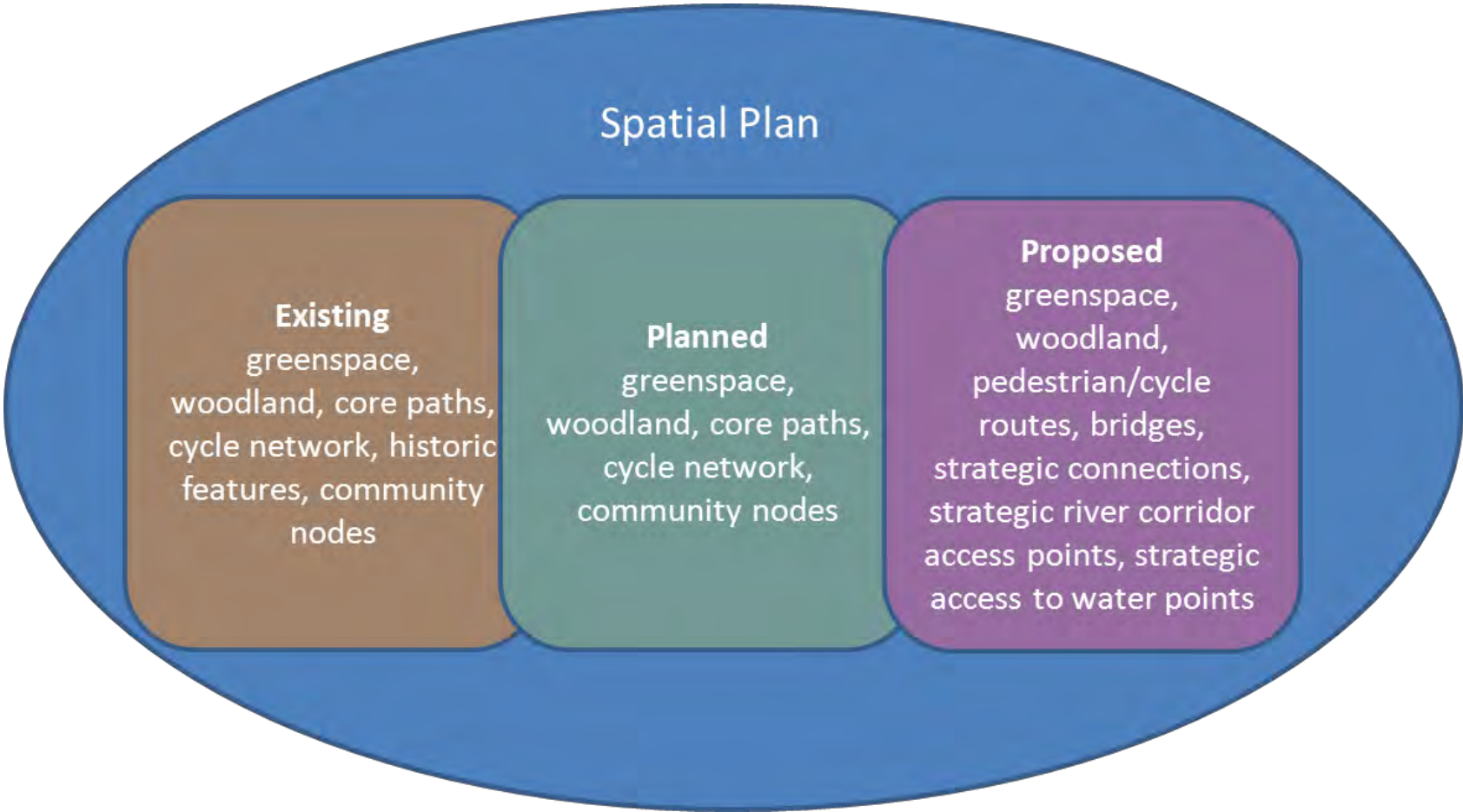
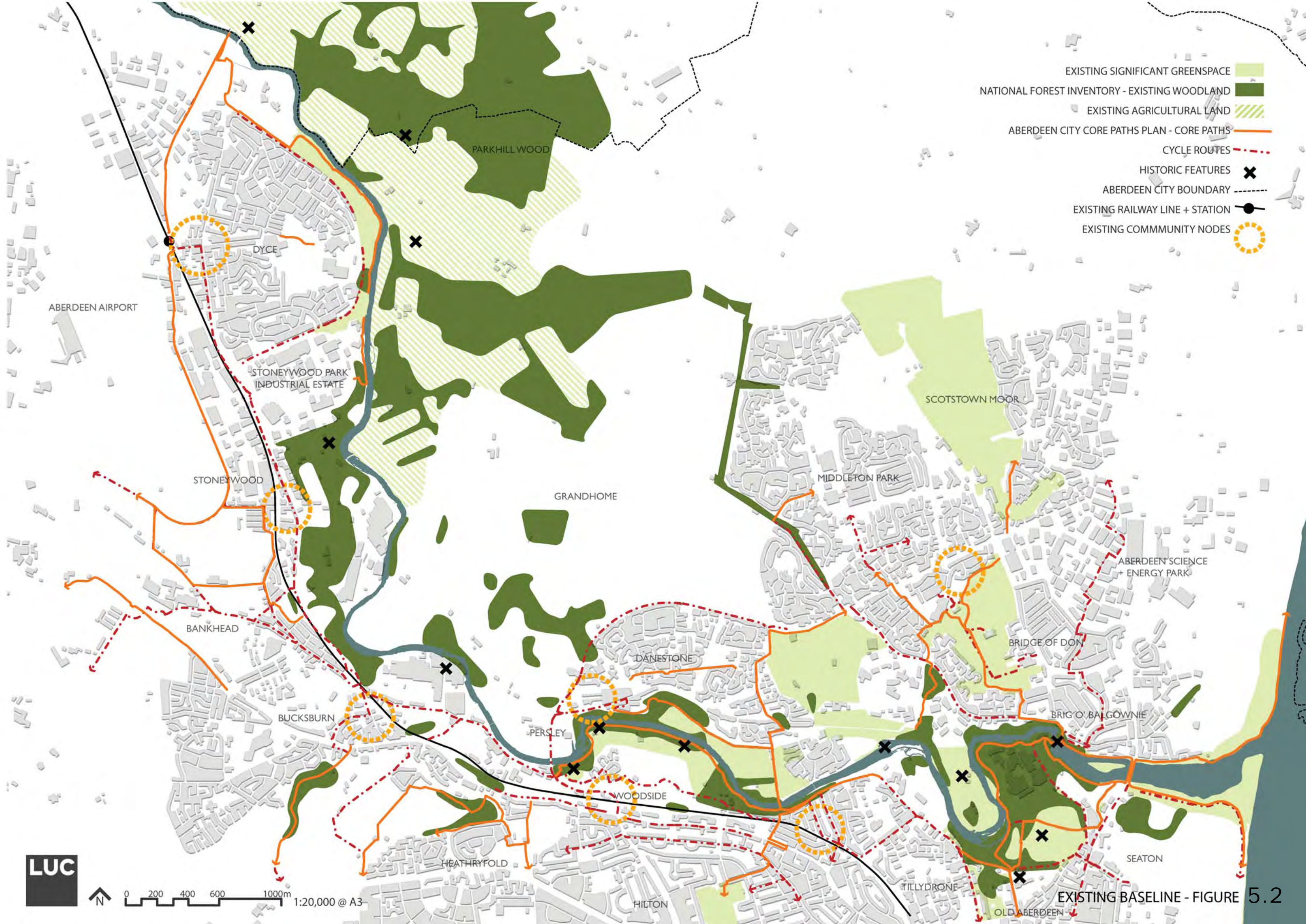


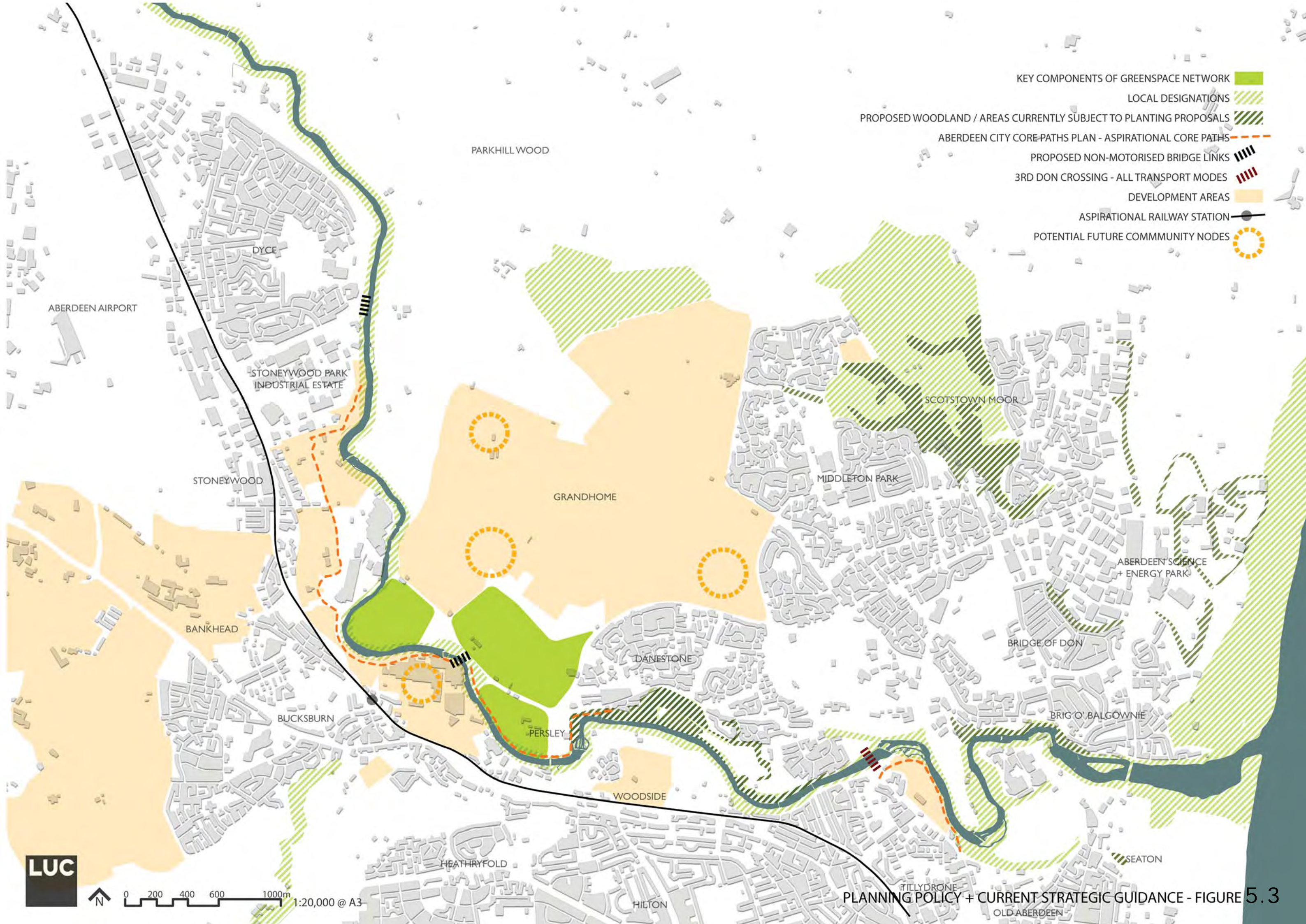
Figure 5.1 – Spatial Plan Components



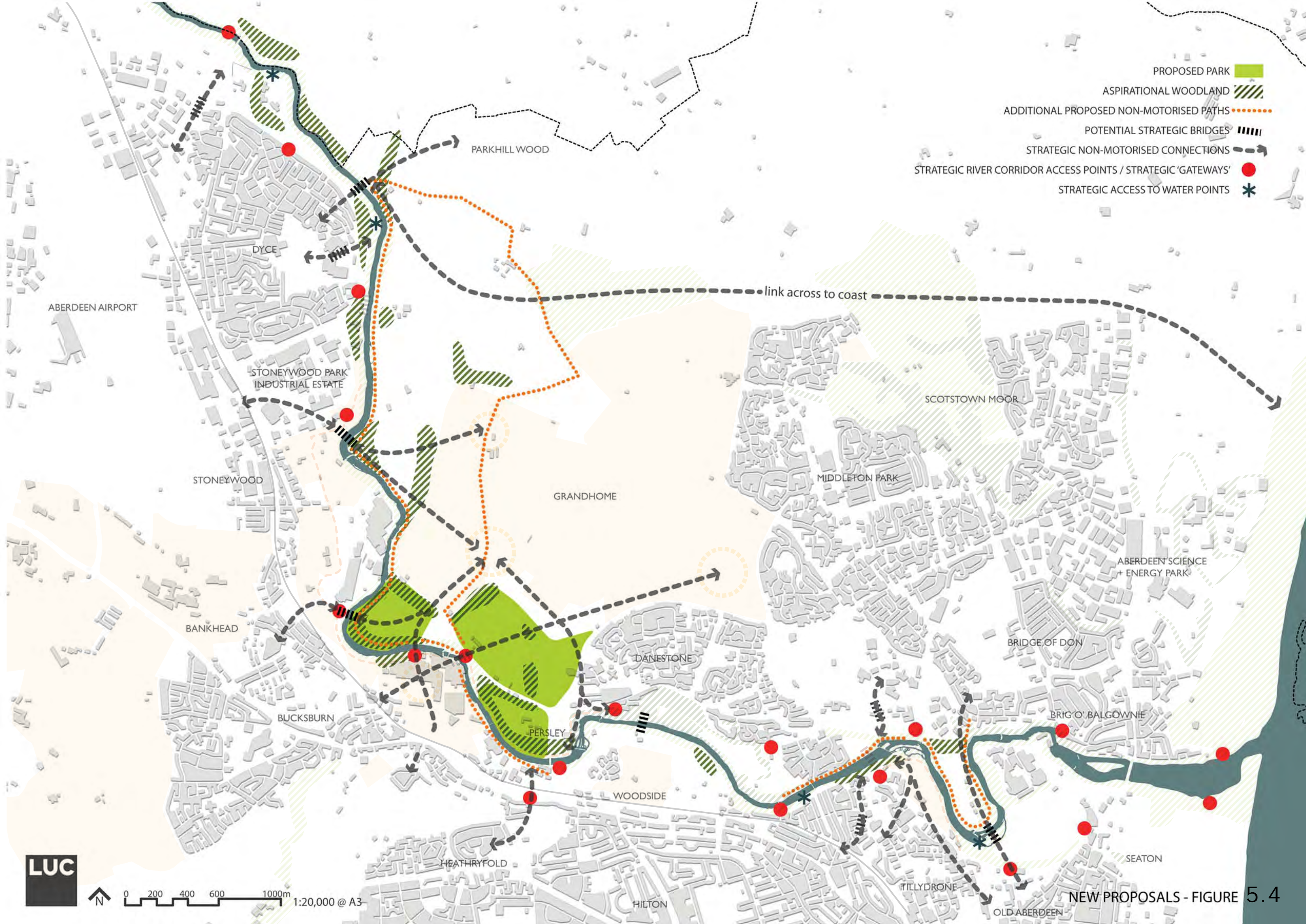


EXISTING BASELINE - FIGURE 5.2









PROPOSED PARK

ASPIRATIONAL WOODLAND

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED NON-MOTORISED PATHS

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC BRIDGES

STRATEGIC NON-MOTORISED CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC RIVER CORRIDOR ACCESS POINTS / STRATEGIC 'GATEWAYS'

STRATEGIC ACCESS TO WATER POINTS

ABERDEEN AIRPORT

DYCE

STONEWOOD PARK  
INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

STONEWOOD

BANKHEAD

BUCKSBURN

PERSLEY

WOODSIDE

HEATHRYFOLD

HILTON

PARKHILL WOOD

GRANDHOME

MIDDLETON PARK

SCOTSTOWN MOOR

ABERDEEN SCIENCE  
+ ENERGY PARK

BRIDGE OF DON

BRIG O' BALGOWNIE

SEATON

TILLYDRONE

OLD ABERDEEN

link across to coast

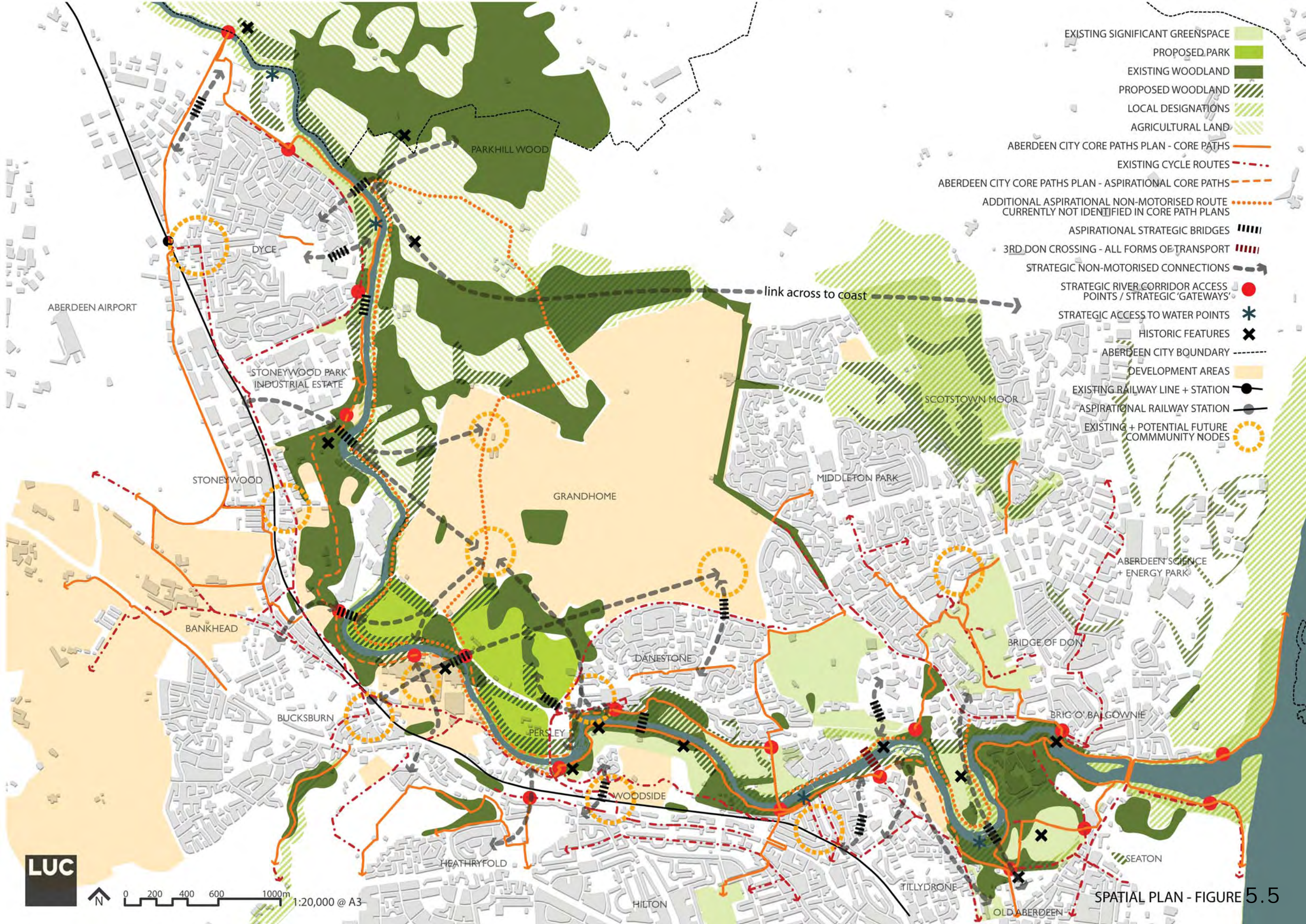
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NEW PROPOSALS - FIGURE 5.4





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SPATIAL PLAN - FIGURE 5.5



# 6 Implementation, monitoring and review

## 6 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This document provides strategic guidance for the development of the River Don Corridor over 10 -20 years. The Spatial Plan and associated Strategic Objectives are not a deliverable proposal in the immediate short-term.
- 6.2 The Implementation Plan for the River Don Corridor Framework Project highlights priority actions in terms of delivery and provides an indicative timescale for required action. The production of an Implementation Plan is a key deliverable that will be developed within 6 months of the approval of this Guidance document.
- 6.3 Monitoring and review of the this framework, and associated Implementation Plan will take place in line with the Local Development Plan monitoring and review process at a minimum.



