

# 4. The Opportunity and Vision

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape, showing a complex pattern of agricultural fields, roads, and some buildings. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. A thin white horizontal line is positioned near the bottom of the page.



## 4.1 The opportunity and vision

The site at Countesswells offers a unique opportunity within Aberdeen City for the creation of a new settlement in an attractive and well contained landscape setting, close to the city centre. The quantum of proposed development allows the creation of a deliverable mixed use community complete with supporting infrastructure and increased opportunities for sustainable solutions. The key opportunities which set Countesswells apart are:

### Rural setting on the edge of the city

Countesswells is a rural site in one of the most accessible parts of the City area. It has the capacity to create a mixed use sustainable community that fits within the attractive landscape setting in a way that will make it one of the preeminent places to live in the City region and provide new opportunities for employment, education and recreation.

This high amenity location, set between the woodland at Countesswells and Hazlehead Park is one of the key assets of the site. The site is well situated for easy access to recreational opportunities, utilising the wide range of existing path networks surrounding the site and also provides the opportunity to create enhanced links between these recreational resources, expanding and connecting the path network.



### A place in itself

Countesswells presents a unique opportunity for the creation of a new place with its own character and identity. The opportunity is distinct from all the other strategic development opportunities within the City area which predominantly represent the expansion of existing large communities.

The site has the capability to deliver a successful mixed-use development that will play a crucial role in delivering Aberdeen’s development targets. The key opportunity exists in defining the form and character of the place. Countesswells should be distinct within the Aberdeen area and provide a high quality destination not only for people to live but also to visit and work.

A clear identity will be communicated initially through the urban form, architecture and open space.



### Scale of development

Countesswells has the potential, whilst respecting the quality of the landscape and surrounding woodland areas, to accommodate a wide range of uses that not only contribute to the immediate housing requirements, but helps fulfil the Structure Plan aims “to grow and diversify the regional economy”.

The number of proposed properties will help support a self-sustaining community and deliver the City’s wider structure plan objectives. The number of new residents will provide a critical mass of population to help support the requirement for schools, businesses, shops, community facilities, public transport and other local amenities that will in turn create a highly desirable place for people to live, work and play.

The proximity and accessibility to the City is a further attractor when thinking about land use options within Countesswells.



### Integrated approach to design

Countesswells will not happen overnight, it will be planned to grow and evolve as a new community with the required facilities in place to create an attractive settlement at all stages of its evolution. It will be planned to be grown in a manner that ensures it presents an attractive proposition not only to future residents, but also to prospective commercial investors, further enriching it as a highly desirable place to live and work.

As a result of the location and scale of development the opportunity exists for Countesswells to be planned as a viable mixed use community. Employment opportunities, education facilities, retail and leisure can be planned alongside residential development as an integrated mix of uses.



### A place for everyone

Countesswells presents the opportunity to create an inclusive and mixed community in which people can live throughout their life. Countesswells will be a place for everyone.

Creating an identity and sense of place will be central to the new community’s success. At the heart of this vision will be the desire to create opportunities for residents to live more sustainable lifestyles, benefiting from local employment opportunities, involvement and stewardship opportunities in site governance. Countesswells will cater to a diverse range of people, ensuring that the development is accessible and meets a full range of housing need and demand. The development will provide 25% affordable housing across the site.



fig. 55: Opportunity and vision



4.2 Strategic Concept

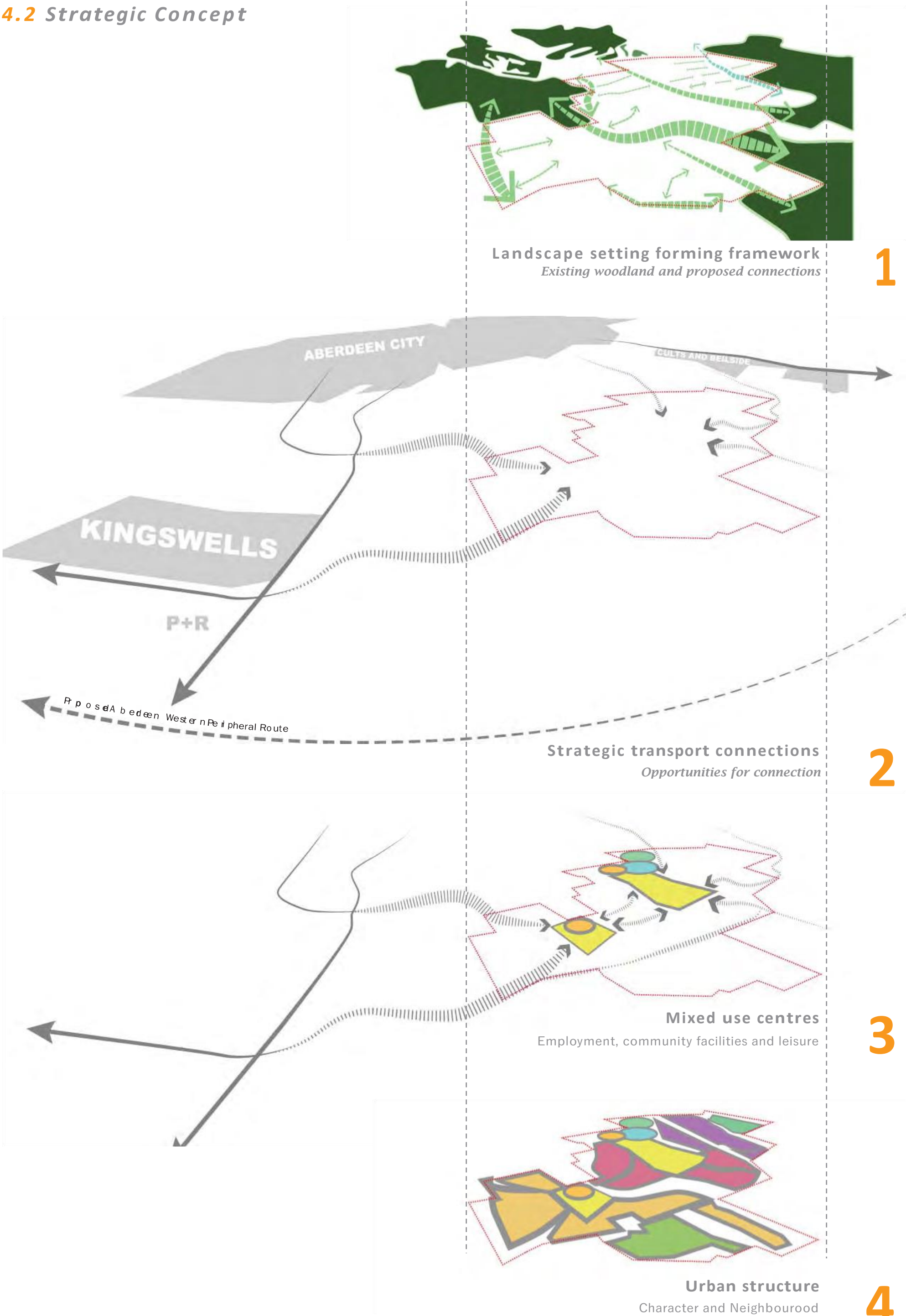


fig. 56: Concept diagram





fig. 57: Concept diagram

## 1 - Landscape setting forming framework

### Existing woodland and proposed connections

A key aim of the development is to connect the areas of woodland at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape corridors within the development. These corridors could be either areas of open space or woodland planting and will include parts of the core path network and drainage network set within the development. They will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological and recreational networks in the area.

## 2 - Strategic transport connections

### Opportunities for connection

Countesswells will aim to create a place where people can live and work without relying on private transport. For those things that cannot be provided by the site, the proximity to the wider urban area of Aberdeen will be supported by efficient public transport and cycleways, allowing residents and workers to benefit from the proximity to the City and the surrounding communities at Westhill, Kingswells and those along Deeside and up to Dyce. The development will also provide connections to surrounding areas of open space amenities, and employment such as Hazlehead Park, Countesswells Woodland, Kingswells Park and Ride and Prime Four business park.

The street network will be based around connecting all the existing roads (Kirk Brae (C189), Blacktop Road, A944, A93 and Countesswells Road) through the new development to allow good access and efficient transport links.

All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and follow the principles set out in 'Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland'.

## 3 - Mixed use centres

### Employment, community facilities and leisure

Due to the location and setting it is proposed that Countesswells be designed as a 'destination' and not simply a place to pass through. It should become 'a place to come home to' and 'a place to visit'. The centre of the development is proposed to be the core of the community containing the primary civic, commercial and community facilities creating a focus. The street network should provide good access from all the existing roads to and around all parts of the development.

## 4 - Urban structure

### Character and Neighbourhood

Countesswells is focused around the development of a mixed use core, a neighbourhood centre to the north and a number of distinct neighbourhoods. The mixed use centre will be located at the centre of the community, accessible to all with a smaller neighbourhood centre to the north providing local facilities to those in that area. The neighbourhood centre will contain a primary school and may also contain small scale local facilities such as local shops and community facilities as well as opportunities for some commercial development.

The residential neighbourhoods within Countesswells will be designed to have a unique identity, drawing from their location and setting. A number of distinct character areas will be designed within the development in response to the landscape context and the location within the development.



4.3 Design exploration

Setting

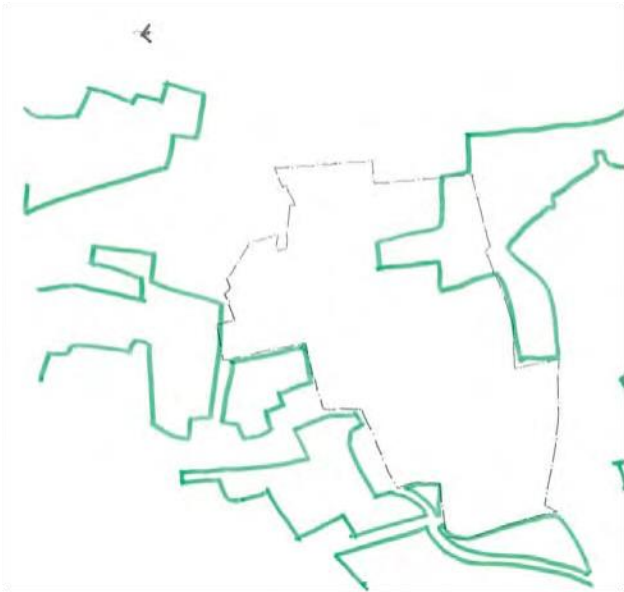


fig. 58: Concept development - setting

Green links

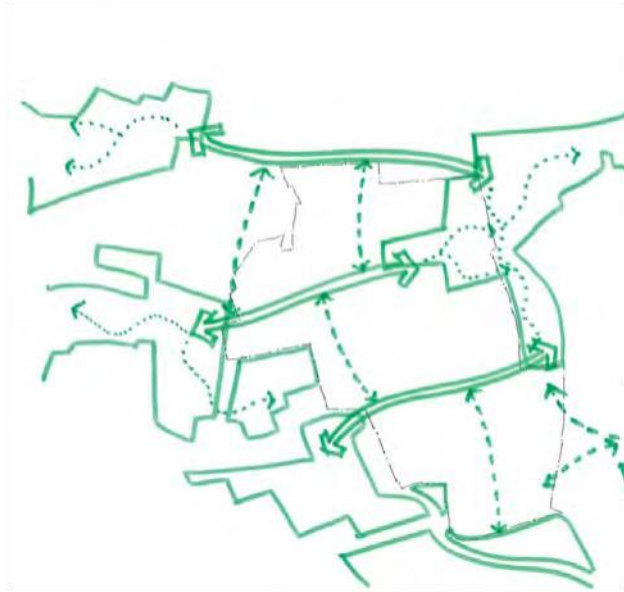


fig. 59: Concept development - green links

Connections

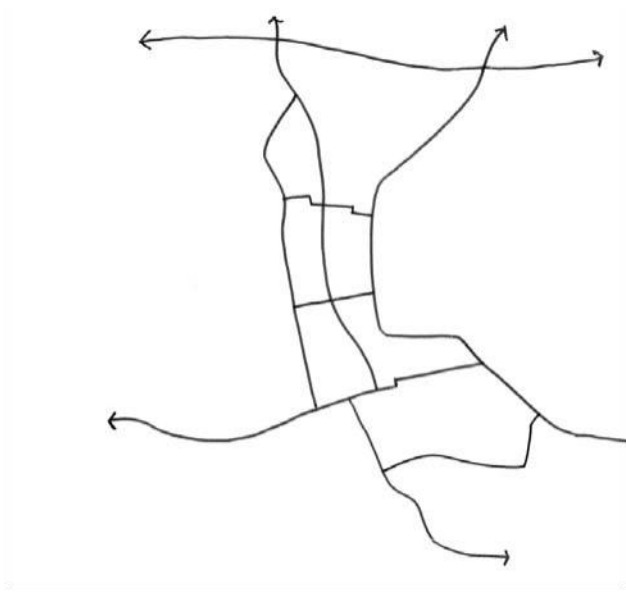


fig. 60: Concept development - connections

4.3.1 Design evolution

The Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan presented in this document have evolved over the course of the design process. The way in which the plan has changed has been as a direct result of increased technical understanding of the site, design input from the client and design team, consultation with Aberdeen City Council, statutory consultees and the community.

A multi-disciplinary design team including masterplanners, architects, education specialists, transport specialists, engineers and environmental experts has ensured the viability and robustness of the proposals.

By utilising in-house expertise in housing construction and place making a robust approach to all aspects of sustainability, from the vision and framework stage through to eventual delivery has been developed.

The approach to planning Countesswells has been design led, considering various levels of detail and aspects of design at the same time to ensure the development of an attractive and technically robust proposal.

The buildings, streets and spaces will all be designed taking account of the local environment, the setting and context in order to forge a clear identity for the built environment.

At the same time as considering the architecture and urban form, the design team have explored how the site can be developed into a well-balanced mixed use development. A balance of commercial, community, educational, retail uses and residential mix within the site will allow the creation of a varied and interesting urban form with residents moving around the town and further supporting the creation of a viable mixed use place.

The plans and diagrams opposite reflect some of this process and how it has approached sustainable design in its widest sense. Good design testing at this stage, taking a holistic view of sustainability issues, allows the Framework to create a robust guide for sustainable development.

True sustainability arises from a comprehensive understanding of the natural, social and economic aspects of a place. It means getting the right mixture of tenures and house types and offering a distinct character that gives an area its own identity - Building places, spaces and houses that excite; places that people are proud of and take ownership of.

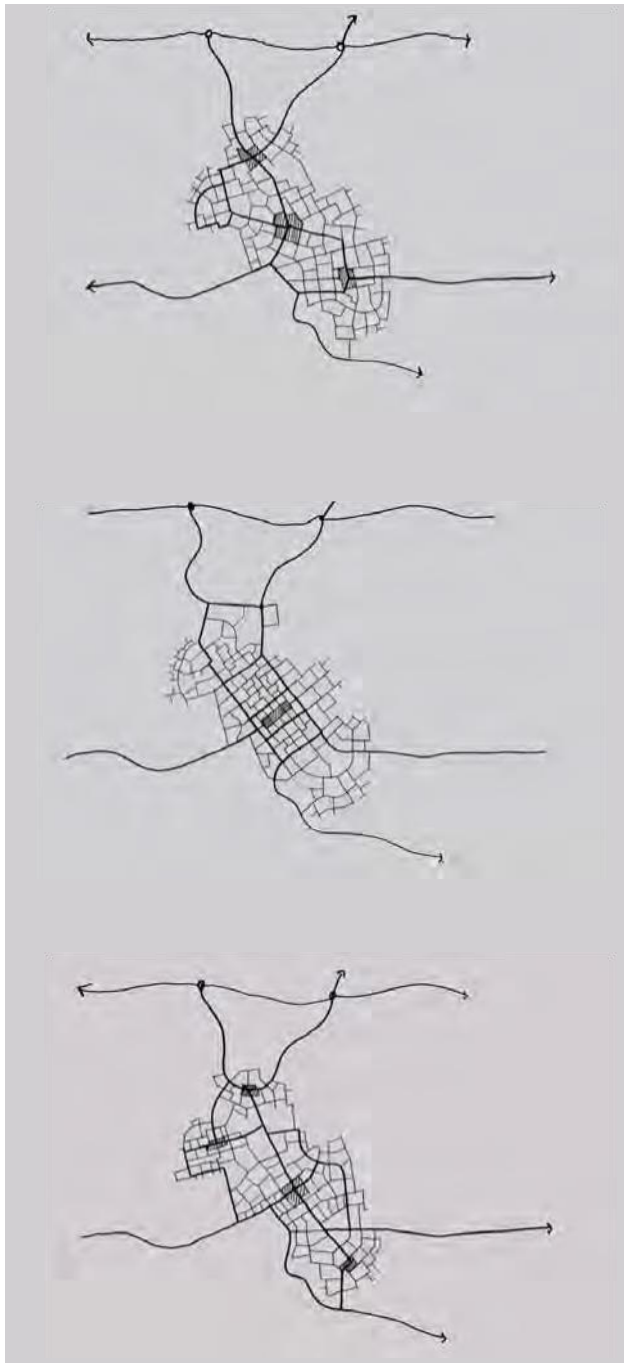


fig. 61: Exploring development form



fig. 62: Community consultation



fig. 63: Community consultation

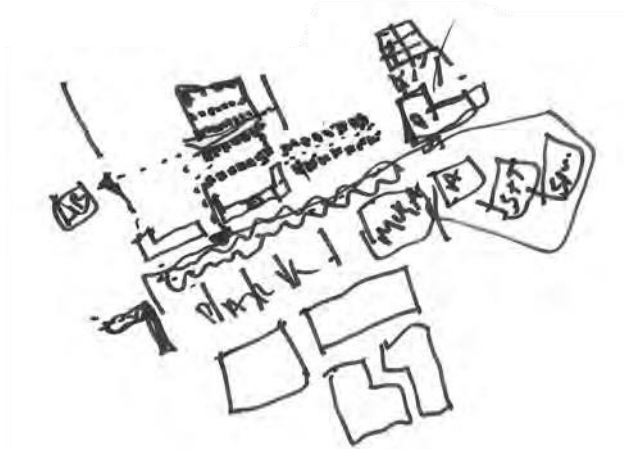


fig. 64: Developing urban form



fig. 65: Initial 3d studies



## Development blocks

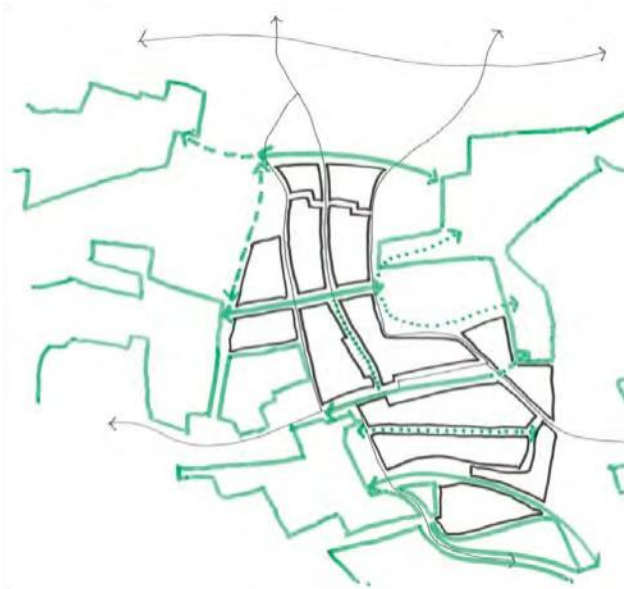


fig. 66: Concept development - blocks

## Street blocks

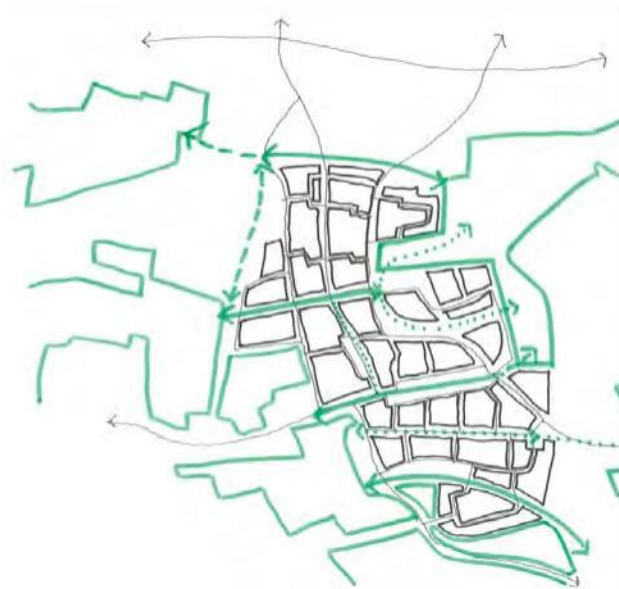


fig. 67: Concept development - Evolving street blocks

## Development form

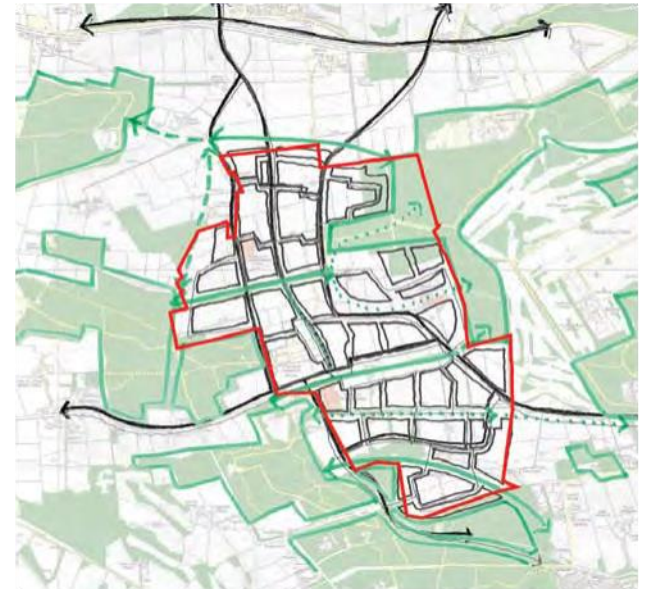


fig. 68: Evolving development form



fig. 69: Exploring block structure



fig. 70: Exploring town centre form

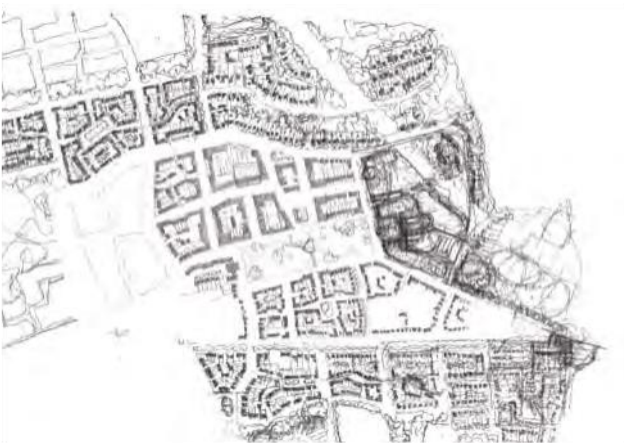


fig. 71: Exploring town centre form



fig. 72: Exploring early development concept



4.3.2 Influences and ideas

Planning for a new community is not a new process. There is a rich history of planning new settlements in Scotland, particularly in the North East.

Successful places are characterful places with a distinctive identity. A Scottish character is a combination of several elements. It is not just about the architecture but all the components of a place. The physical characteristics of a town play a significant part in the social fabric of a place influencing the behaviour of residents and thereby the general feel of a town. It is therefore important to design places at a home scale, imagining how it would be to walk around.

The extract opposite identifies some of the planned towns in Scotland and in the north east developed during the eighteenth century. Primarily conceived by landowners as ways of engineering social, economic and architectural change in their area. As part of the masterplan process the design team have visited some of these planned towns including Granttown on Spey, Dufftown, Fochabers and Huntly, to try and identify what makes a successful and attractive place and what does not work so well.

As well as the historic planned towns the design team have also visited more recent new towns and new developments within Scotland and England to further understand and learn what aspects work in creating successful places that people want to live.

In looking at all the places that we consider successful communities and attractive places to live, one thing that is consistent and clear is that planning the small details well is as important as the large scale planning decisions. The design of the buildings, the streets, the path networks, parks, the locations of bus stops, local shops and schools all combine to create the places that are distinctive and attractive and importantly are comfortable in which to live.

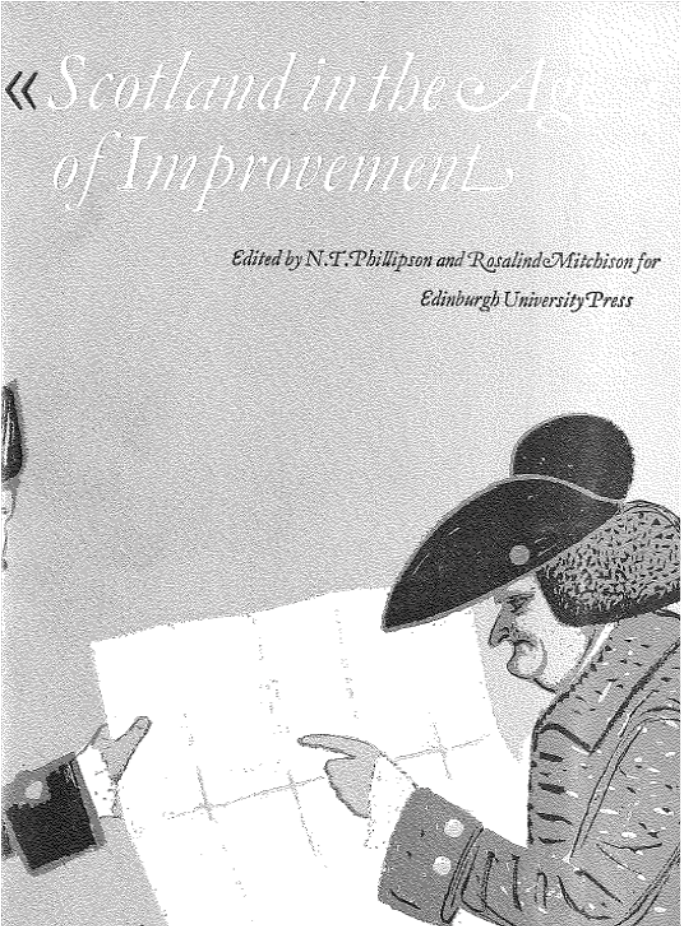
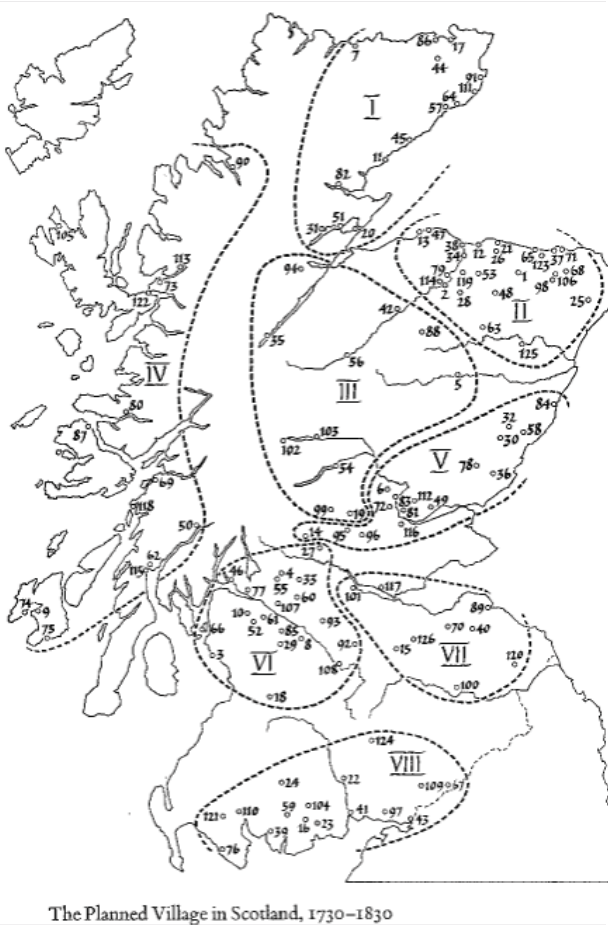


fig. 73: Extract from: Scotland in the Age of Improvements by Lord Monboddo.



The Planned Village in Scotland, 1730-1830



fig. 74: Aerial photo - Ballater



fig. 75: Aerial photo - Dufftown



fig. 76: Aerial photo - Fochabers



fig. 77: Aerial photo - Granttown on Spey



fig. 78: Aerial photo - Stonehaven



fig. 79: Aerial photo - Tomintoul



## Traditional precedents



fig. 80: Buildings overlooking public space - Grantown on Spey



fig. 81: Variety in building height - Tomintoul



fig. 83: Variety in building line - Grantown on Spey



fig. 84: Landmark buildings - Dufftown



fig. 86: Mixed use development - Fochabers



fig. 87: Civic spaces - Huntly



fig. 89: Residential street - Turriff



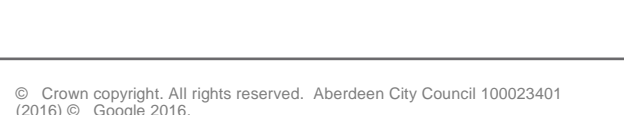
fig. 90: Corner building - Fochabers



fig. 92: Civic buildings in the street - Fochabers



fig. 93: Single sided street - Grantown on Spey



## Contemporary precedents



fig. 82: Buildings overlooking public space, Upton, Northampton.



fig. 85: Pedestrian routes - Greenhithe



fig. 88: Residential street - Accordia, Cambridge



fig. 91: Residential street - Upton, Northampton



fig. 94: Buildings overlooking public space - Harlow



# 5. The Development Framework



5.1 Introduction and purpose

The Development Framework has evolved from a careful and detailed study and analysis of the Countesswells site and its strategic context to the west of the City. It has taken into account the prime strategic nature of the site and the potential for it to develop as a place in its own right. Following Aberdeen City Council’s ‘Masterplanning Guidance’ it establishes a flexible structure for development, in line with the timing and allocations set out within the ALDP while allowing more detailed proposals to come forward in due course.



fig. 95: Early Development Framework sketch



5.1.1 Aims of the Development Framework

In order to guarantee the design proposals are relevant throughout the project life-cycle they have to be flexible and capable of responding to changes in people’s lifestyles and environment as well as commercial and economic circumstances. This is particularly relevant at Countesswells as due to the scale and complexity of the project the development will be planned and constructed over a number of years. The Consortium, in consultation with Aberdeen City Council will direct and manage the quality of design and development at Countesswells, ensuring that the vision presented in the Phase 1Masterplan is delivered and appropriately informs future phases.

The purpose of this chapter is to set out a Development Framework which will describe the concept for the site and how the main aims will be realised through site wide design principles. The Framework has been supported by a number of studies, providing technical and environmental robustness.

In line with the Aberdeen City Council ‘Masterplanning Process’ the Development Framework sets out a vision and a spatial framework for the way in which the Countesswells area will be developed. It creates a co-ordinating structure which sets a robust and viable vision for Countesswells from which more detailed design can follow.

It aims to:

- Establish a clear and exciting future vision for Countesswells;
- Describe and explain the integrated land-use, landscape and transport proposals; and
- Set out a clear phasing strategy.

5.1.2 Layers of the Development Framework

The Countesswells Development Framework illustrated opposite is described in detail through its component layers in the next section of this document.

The key layers of the Development Framework described are:

- Landscape strategy
- Drainage strategy
- Access and connectivity strategy
- Land use strategy
- Phasing strategy

5.1.3 Sustainability

In relation to sustainability, the aim of the Development Framework has been to support and promote the design of a development which is efficient, with low-energy demands and can function as a community without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As buildings utilise around 50% of total global energy use, the ability to minimise this demand in the first instance can have dramatic impacts on on-going energy demand. At Framework stage, this can best be addressed through consideration of the location of specific landuses to take advantage of good orientation.

Transportation accounts for a further 25% of global energy use and therefore offers a powerful incentive to create a walkable community through the establishment of a settlement structure which promotes walking and cycling above vehicular movements, whilst ensuring that public transport can be efficiently and effectively provided. Aside from the sustainable use of energy in built form and transport, sustainability in relation to healthy communities, lifestyles and landscapes also underlies the Development Framework. These are demonstrated through a diversity of uses, provision of community services and the integration of open space throughout the settlement promoting the stewardship of the natural environment.

It is an aim that all homes and businesses should have easy access to high-speed, fibre optic broadband from the outset. Fibre optic services are planned for the development and BT have provided the option of full fibre connectivity. In addition the option of a high speed open access network offering all homeowners market choice and 1Gb service is being explored.

Development Framework

-  Residential development blocks
-  Primary school
-  Secondary school campus
-  Identified employment areas
-  Areas of mixed use containing opportunities for employment and supporting infrastructure
-  Public open space
-  Core Path 57
-  Area of existing property





fig. 96: Composite development framework plan



5.1.4 Development Framework structure

The following section will describe the various layers of the Development Framework that will combine to provide the basis for the creation of a new community at Countesswells. The diagrams on the following two pages describe the rationale behind the block structure which provides the basis for the creation of a legible and clear urban form that has a unique sense of place and is highly attractive and pleasant as a community to live in.



fig. 97: Development Framework - Landform and block structure.

Landform

Countesswells is located on predominantly south and east-facing slopes allowing for a structure that will allow any residential development to take best advantage of good aspect and orientation and therefore benefit from good passive solar energy gain.

The slopes across the site are generally quite shallow and most areas of the sites will be able to accommodate development with minimal requirement of earthworks. There are a number of areas within the site where the slopes are steeper and this has been taken account of in the block structure. To the south of the site the steep slopes to the side of Cults Burn have been kept free from development to protect the water course and allow for environmental enhancement along the corridor. In the steeper areas adjacent to Countesswells and Hazlehead woodland the block structure has been designed to allow for development to benefit from the good views east to Aberdeen and south to Deeside. Where development is located on areas of steeper slopes the street form, plots and architecture must seek to maximise the benefit from the aspect and views.



fig. 98: Development Framework - Landscape structure.

Landscape structure

The landscape setting at Countesswells has been the key influence in defining the layout, it provides a major asset bringing many environmental and recreational benefits to the new development.

A key principle of the development has been to connect the large areas of public open space at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape links within the development. These links will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological, hydrological and recreational networks within the development. The plan above illustrates how the structure contains a number of east - west landscape links through Countesswells, connecting the existing surrounding landscape areas through a series of core areas of open space.

In addition to the east - west landscape links the block structure also accommodates the Cults burn in an enhanced landscape corridor connecting a series of spaces through the site from north to south.



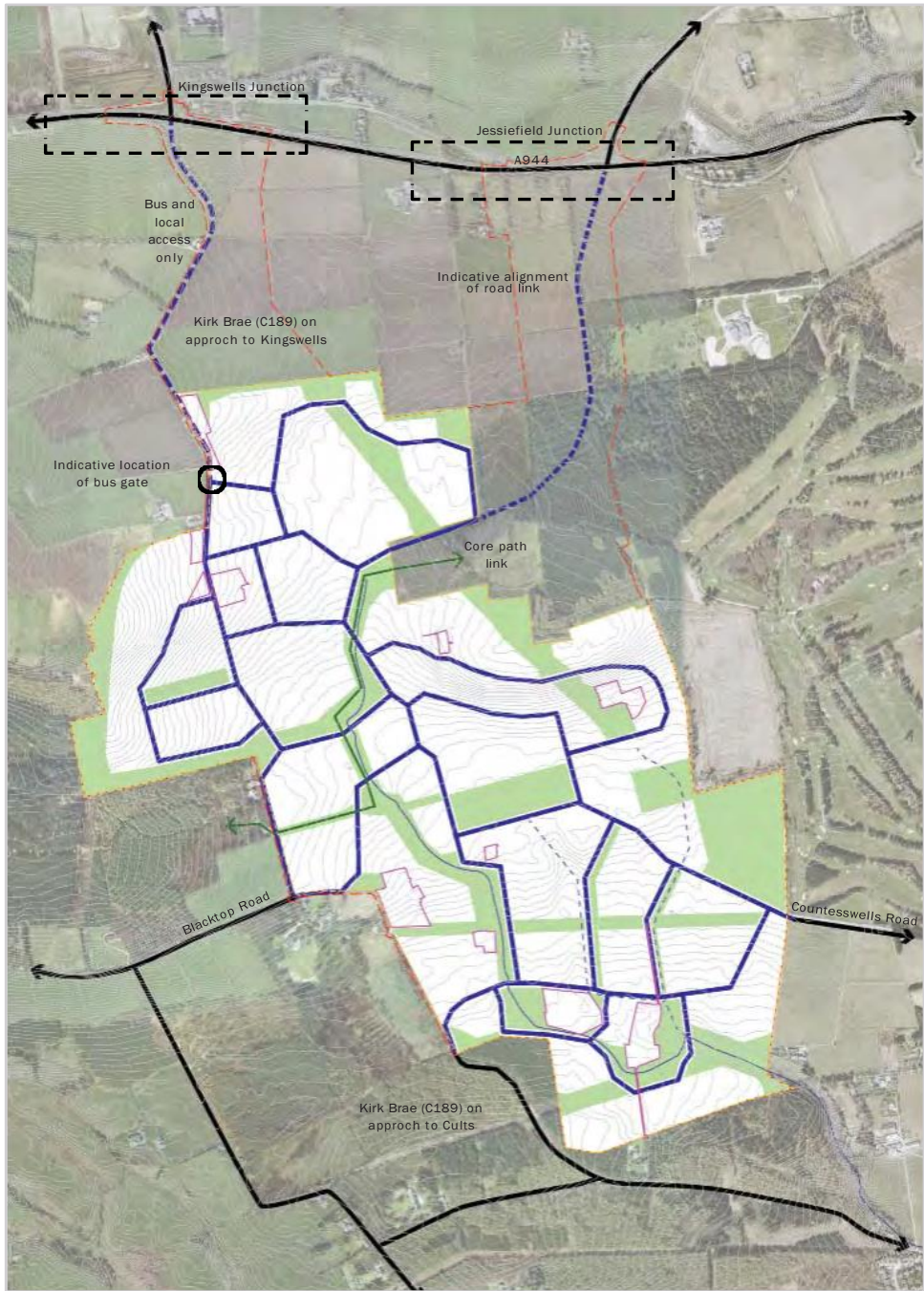


fig. 99: Development Framework - Connections and core path link.

## Connections

The street network will connect with existing roads (Kirk Brae (C189), Blacktop Road, A944 and Countesswells Road) to allow good access for all and efficient transport links in all directions. All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and following the principles set out in 'Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland'.

Two connections to the A944 to the north of the site will provide efficient transport connections for all users between the various development blocks and the existing road network surrounding the site. It is proposed that the western connection will be a public transport only link, a new, all vehicle, junction is proposed to the east and will involve substantial modification of the existing roundabout junction.

A key aim of the structure has been to ensure all streets pass through the development helping create a fully integrated and vibrant mixed use development and not a series of dormitory suburbs off a 'distributor road' severing the community.

Further the street network has been developed through an iterative design process with the Transport Assessment work, ensuring the structure, hierarchy and phasing of connections will provide sufficient capacity at all times.

## Core Path 57

The development includes a wide network of strategic paths including a specific area of public open space connecting Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead as a route for the Core Path 57.

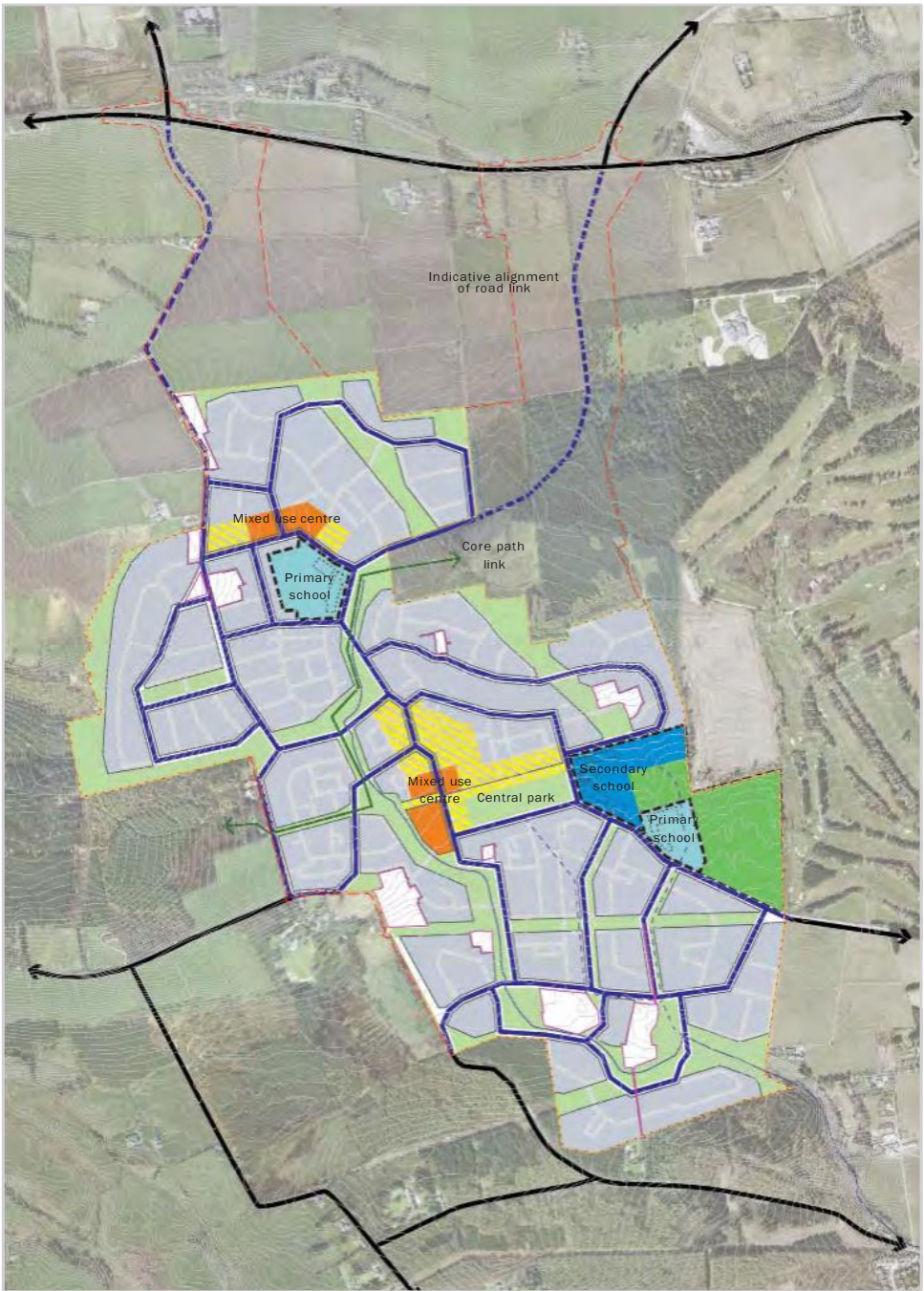


fig. 100: Development Framework - Town structure.

## Structure

The layout of Countesswells has considered land use as an integral part of the design of the street network and block structure. Countesswells incorporates a wide range of opportunities for mixed use development at the core of the community with further opportunities for mixed use development provided in a smaller 'neighbourhood' centre to the north of Countesswells.

The mixed use community core is located at the physical centre of Countesswells on a flatter part of the site overlooking the large Central park. A choice of streets passing around the centre will ensure it is an accessible location for pedestrians and vehicles. The block structure will provide a flexible urban form for a mix of uses to be located within the centre and further ensure some of the educational requirement provides a central part of the cores structure.

A secondary 'neighbourhood centre' is proposed in an easily accessible location further north within Countesswells at a key junction on the core street network, with good public transport connections. This smaller mixed use centre should be located adjacent to the primary school and provide the opportunity for a number of local services such as local shops around a civic space with some office space and a mix of commercial space integrated within the surrounding area.



5.2 Landscape strategy

Usable, well-designed open space is recognised as creating opportunities for communities to interact, promoting a sense of place and helping to promote healthy active lifestyles. This section describes how and where this open space will be provided at Countesswells and how this meets Aberdeen City Council standards.

5.2.1 Open space concept

The landscape setting at Countesswells has been the key influence in defining the layout, it provides a major asset bringing many environmental and recreational benefits to the new development.

A key principle of the development has been to connect the large areas of public open space at Hazlehead and Countesswells through the creation of landscape corridors and connected spaces within the development. These areas of open space will add to the landscape setting containing the development to the north and provide enhancement of the ecological, hydrological and recreational networks within the development. Further smaller neighbourhood and local areas of open space will be located throughout the development connecting these strategic spaces providing further variety in open space within Countesswells.

This section will explain how the landscape concept has been realised and how the Landscape Framework meets the aims of the Council’s Open Space Audit and Green Space Network.

5.2.2 ACC Open Space Audit

The findings from the Open Space Audit have been used to develop the revised standards for the provision of new open space. These are designed to encourage more useful, relevant and efficiently managed open spaces, of the right type and in the right place.

The Landscape Framework has been specifically developed with consideration of the proximity of Hazlehead Park and Countesswells Woodland both of which are identified as ‘Major Open Space’ attractions within the City. Providing some of the highest quality and quantity of public open space within the city these spaces are located either side of the Countesswells development meeting the accessibility criteria of the ACC standards for most types of open space required. Therefore the Landscape Framework focuses on providing good connections to these existing high quality areas of open space for the proposed community and visitors alike, contributing to their improvement. Given the proximity and good connections provided to Hazlehead Park and Countesswells Woodland there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site.

5.2.3 ACC Green Space Network

Aberdeen’s Green Space Network is identified in the Local Development Plan (Policy NE1) to protect, promote and enhance designated natural heritage sites, connectivity between habitats, open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors.

The site at Countesswells benefits from a quality Greenspace Network in the surrounding areas containing a range of habitat types (Source: Aberdeen City Council ‘In My Area’ GIS Resource).

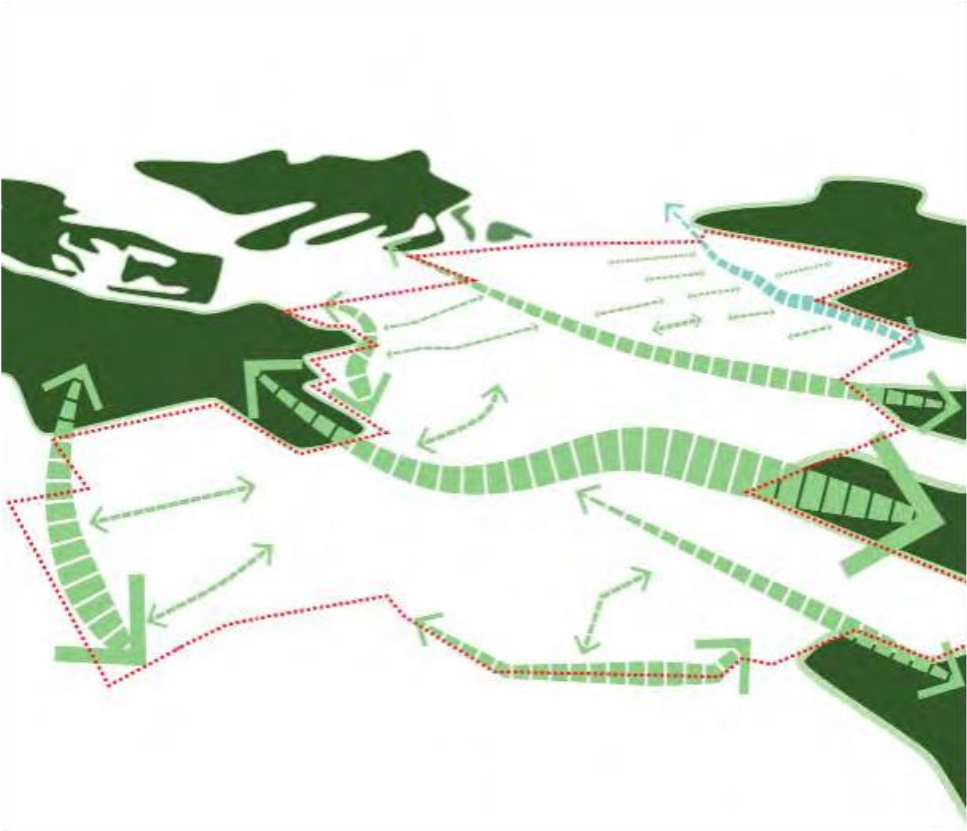


fig. 101: Open space concept - connections of context and definition of edges.

GSN Code	Green Space Network Area Name	GSN Purpose/ Category	Description of Habitat (from Integrated Habitat Survey - NESBReC)
32	Hazlehead	Core GSN site with link to 41 (Countesswells Woods)	The major habitats types are upland birch, coniferous and other broadleaved woodlands and European dry heath (priority habitat).
41	Gairnhill / Countesswells Woods	Core GSN site	Mixed pine, broadleaved and scrub woodlands, locally important habitat
35	Foggieton Woods	Core GSN site with link to 41 (Countesswells Woods)	This site has a variety of habitats comprising upland birch woodland, other broadleaved woodland, wet woodland, scrub woodland, a small area of upland oak woodland, mixed woodland, pine woodland, rush pasture, acid grassland, heath, bracken, neutral grassland.
36	Denwood / Westfield	Core GSN site with links to River Dee and Countesswells	Woodland, Open-semi natural woodland
37	Kingshills Wood	Core GSN site	Native pine with other coniferous woodland / priority habitat

Hazlehead Park and Den Wood are both designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) and fall within GSN 32 with Cults Quarry LNCS part of GSN 35 and Foggieton LNCS part of GSN 36.



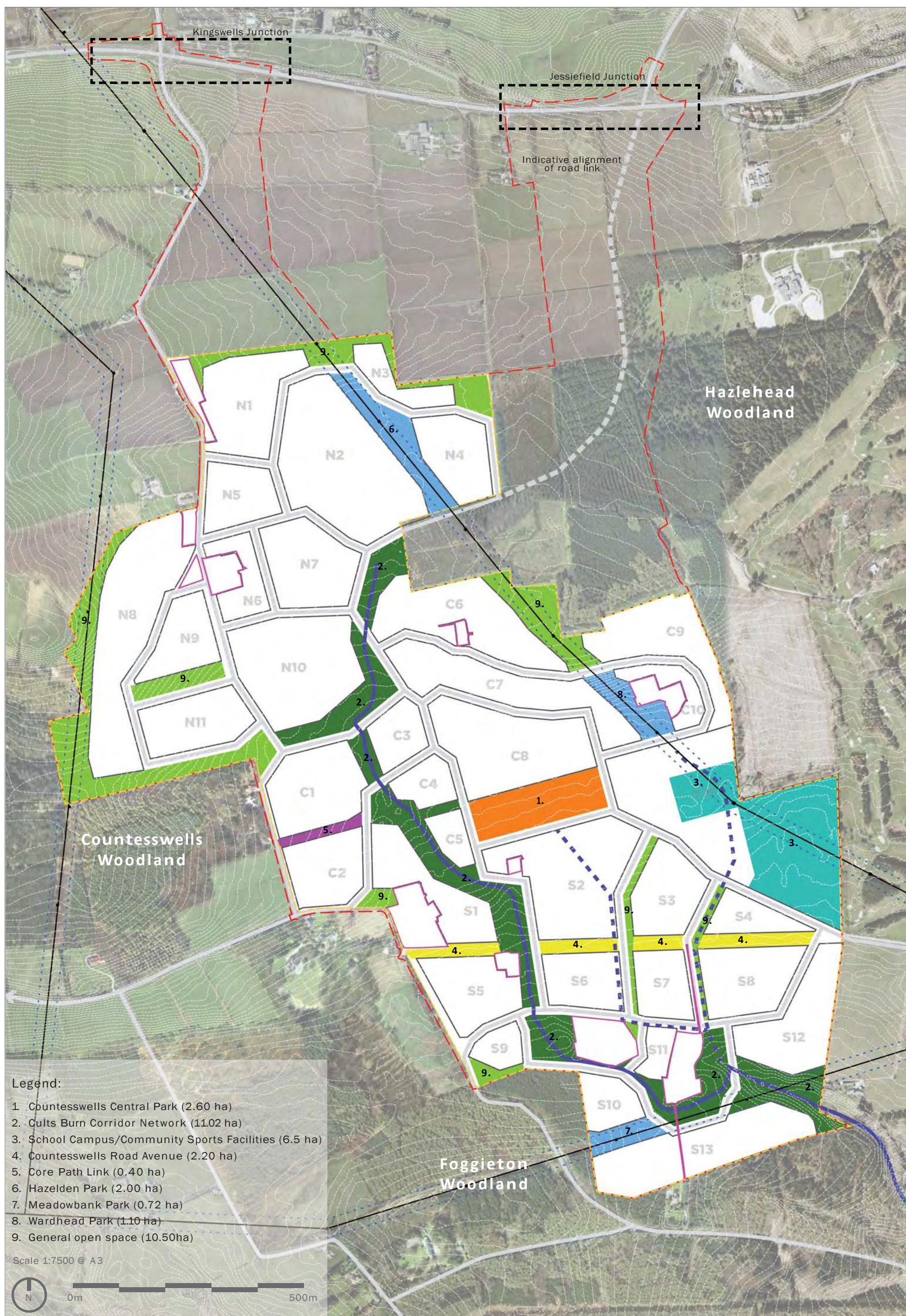


fig. 102: Proposed strategic open space provision



Opportunities for Enhancement

Landscape and Greenspace Networks can facilitate movent of species and promote habitat connectivity. Development can act as a barrier to these natural flows and therefore it is important that development proposals incorporate linkages.

Riparian planting proposed should also consider the species which would help in improving the aquatic habitats and water quality as well. It will help in meeting the River Basin Managmeent Plan for the Scotland River Basin District and Dee Catchment Management Plan objectives.

Existing habitats are retained and new diverse habitats will be planted achieving site wide biodiversity enhancement. Alongside the physical habitat benefits are education and awareness opportunities which are delivered through the public facilities, including paths, play spaces and greenspace / openspace areas.

This approach to Countesswells will continue to encourage members of the local community and visitors alike to engage in outdoor activities, use existing natural and semi-natural habitats for leisure and help develop an understanding within the community of the importance of the biodiversity.

The Landscape Strategy will inform future detailed design. Biodiversity will be a key consideration across the entire Countesswells site as in addition to the key habitat linkages detailed above. Measures will include:

- Close liaison between the Landscape Architect and an appointed ecologist to maximise the biodiversity benefits during reinstatement and longer term management of the site through management and maintenance
- When planting trees or scrub, the aim will be to maximise the area planted to enhance attractiveness to insects, birds and red squirrel;
- Ensure that tree stock is native where possible and, where possible, is of local seed provenance; and
- When selecting a seed mix for any sowing, ensure that it is compatible with the local soils before commencement of the works.

A detailed landscape strategy will determine the exact species and layout of trees and planting. It is agreed that where possible replacement trees should be of indigenous species.

Biodiversity improvements should be considered across the site area as part of any future Landscape Strategies and Landscape Management Strategies required as part of any future planning application process.

Connection	Description	Enhancement Opportunity
Cults Burn Corridor - North South	The Cults Burn Corridor Network runs in a north south direction and connects Hazlehead (GSN 32) with Denwood / Westfield (GSN 35) and Foggieton (GSN 36) to the south.	Will include SUDs, areas of riparian planting and trees. Low intensity management to provide more natural corridor. Riparian planting re-connects fragmented woodland blocks and provides cover as well as connectivity and permeability between existing woodland habitats. Riparian planting includes flowering and fruiting species to provide food source for pollinating insects (spring / summer) and birds (summer / autumn).Species mix will be determined as part of the Landscape Strategy.
Cults Burn Corridor - East West	Connections across the site in an east west direction includes Core Path 57. Woodland connections ensure habitat connectivity which benefit species including red squirrel, bats and birds	As above. Traffic speeds on existing road network will be reduced which will benefit wildlife moving between Hazlehead and Countesswells across the site. The SUDs proposed will help in improving the water quality as well and not just the providing connectivity to wildlife species.
Hazelden Park - NW to SE connection to existing natural greenspace	This diagonal connection links existing natural greenspace, Hazlehead Park and Hazelden Park running along the line of overhead power lines. Area for recreation and sports and will include a play area.	Grassland areas provide foraging opportunities for range of species. Potential for inclusion of some wildflower areas / diversity. Species mix will be determined as part of the Landscape Strategy.



fig. 103: Open space provision by type

Legend

- Neighbourhood Open Space
- Local Open Space
- General open space

Legend

- Civic spaces
- Play zones
- Large scale play zone
- Outdoor sports area
- Allotments/community gardens
- Natural greenspace + green corridors





fig. 104: Open space provision by category



5.2.4 ACC open space requirements

The Countesswells Development Framework has been designed with reference to ACC’s Open Space Supplementary Guidance (SG), which sets out the type, quantity, accessibility and quality of open space to be provided by new developments

Spaces are assigned a type according to scale:

- Major;
- Neighbourhood; and
- Local.

and a category according to use:

- Play zone/Other play areas and Large Scale Play Zones;
- Outdoor Sports Areas;
- Natural Greenspace and Green corridors; and
- Allotments or Community Gardens.

The guidance requires the provision of at least 2.8 hectares per 1000 people of meaningful and useful public open space in residential development. Using a people/household ratio of 2.27/unit generates an indicative population of 6,810 for the proposed 3,000 residential units at Countesswells equating to an open space requirement of approximately 19.10ha.

The plans and summary tables below and opposite identify the hierarchy of ‘core spaces’ and their functions at Countesswells. Over 30 ha of open space is provided within the Development Framework (6.5ha of this total is provided as shared community sports provision within the School Campus).

Given that every proposed residence will be within 1500m of Hazlehead Park there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site. There must however be sufficient, meaningful neighbourhood open spaces provided, which meet the criteria for the Open Space Strategy.

Across the site SUDs have been included within the provision of open space and as such the facilities should be designed as integral to the open space.

Core spaces

The location, size and type of ‘core spaces’ varies across the site to ensure appropriate levels of good quality and accessible open space provision for all members of the community. In a number of circumstances the ‘core spaces’ combine to provide a network connecting to the wider context.

General open space

The areas of public open space identified as General open space have not been categorised by type (following ACC standards). These spaces have been created in response to the landscape setting, development form and to further aid the development of character within Countesswells. These spaces will generally provide Natural Greenspaces within Countesswells. The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, leisure and environmental education.

Countesswells provision of open space by type (following ACC standards)

ACC requirement				Countesswells provision	
Type	Description	Size (ha)	Accessibility	Name	Area (ha)
Neighbourhood Open Spaces	Open spaces that provide a range of recreational uses, attracting users from more than one neighbourhood. These spaces could include equipped Play Zones, natural areas, green corridors, seating, paths/ access, community event space, some formal landscape features, car park, dog waste / litter bins etc. Receives regular maintenance. May include Green Space Network cores, stepping stones or links.	2 - 5	All residents within 600 metres (around 10 minutes walk) of a Neighbourhood Open Space.	1 Countesswells Central Park	2.60
				2. Cults Burn Corridor Network (series of spaces)	11.02
				3. School Campus/Community Sports facilities	6.50
Local Open Spaces	Smaller spaces that provide a more limited range of local recreation uses, and are spread throughout a local area. As most users will reach them on foot, they are well connected by paths to community facilities and surrounding areas. Receives regular maintenance.	0.4 - 2.0	All residents within 400 metres (around 5 minutes walk) of a Local Open Space.	4. Countesswells Road Avenue	2.20
				5. Core path link	0.40
				6. Hazleden Park	2.00
				7. Meadowbank Park	0.72
				8. Wardhead Park	1.10

Note: Given that every proposed residence will be within 1500m of Hazlehead Park there is no requirement to provide Major open space within the site.

Civic spaces

In addition to the ‘core spaces’ key ‘civic spaces’ have also been identified. These are either contained within the ‘core spaces’ or located in adjacent development blocks. These more formal civic spaces have been purposefully located within the development structure at key nodal points and gateways and in association with areas of mixed use development. Where streets pass through or adjacent to civic spaces they do so in a sensitive manner, adding to the sense of place and integrating with the space rather than cutting through it.

Residential spaces

The diagrams below indicate strategic open space provision within the development. Smaller local open spaces may be incorporated within the detailed design of development blocks where appropriate.

Where areas of open space are located below power lines any activity should be determined on the height difference from ground to the underside of the wires. A health and safety assessment would be required to support the Planning Application process this will involve the transmission company requirements. It is not unusual for playing grounds to be near pylons and this is evident from the Robert Gordon Playing fields further along Countesswells Road.

5.2.5 Landscape strategy

A Landscape Strategy will be produced to support the Development Framework and Masterplans, providing more detail on the areas of open space. This will be developed at the appropriate time to support future detail applications.

The landscape strategies associated with any detailed planning application will provide the exact detail of the type, location and extent of planting including where any screen planting may be necessary. A Landscape Management Strategy is also required as part of any future planning application process.

5.2.6 Management Principles

Due to the wide variety of spaces of varying scale proposed within Countesswells different forms and levels of management are likely to be required including private management companies or other such arrangement documented through the S75 agreement which will be established by the developers on behalf of residents. Water courses and SUDs will be adopted by the relevant authorities where possible.

The spaces in the development should be designed and maintained to meet the criteria specified in the council’s Supplementary Guidance.



Countesswells provision of open space by category (following ACC standards)

Open space category	Description	Indicative Site Size	Equivalent size required for Countesswells	Accessibility standard	Countesswells provision
Play Zone/ Other play zone	Unsupervised areas dedicated to use by, and equipped for children and young people. Other Play Areas may include ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard areas, teenage shelters.	0.3ha per 1000 population Minimum size 1500m2	c2.6 hectares	All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone  Suitable for ages 3 - 13  Suitable for ages 3 - 18	Six play zone areas have been identified in the Framework which between them will measure over 2.6 hectares to meet the requirement. They are distributed evenly throughout the development and are generally within or directly adjacent to residential neighbourhoods to help with natural surveillance. A natural play approach will be developed through the masterplan stage, ensuring that the zones are connected to the landscape and encourage exploration and challenge. Further detail on functions and character will be set out at that time when more information is understood about surrounding residential areas. The vast majority of residents are within 400m of a play zone identified within the framework.
Large Scale Play Zone	Larger play zones likely to attract children from a larger area. These sites should include a larger range of play functions.	Minimum size 2500m2	c5000m2	All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone  Suitable for ages 3 - 13  Suitable for ages 3 - 1  Large Scale Play Zones maintain accessibility to play in key locations.	Two large scale play zones have been identified in the Framework. An area within Countesswells Central Park (1) and an area within Hazelden Park (6). It is envisaged that the larger scale play zone in Countesswells Central Park will function as an attraction to the wider area with visitors helping support the other non residential uses within the Town Core. This may include attractions such as a skate park.
Outdoor sports areas	Natural or artificial surfaces used for sport and recreation. E.g. Playing fields, pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks, water sports facilities.	1.6ha per 1000 population	c14 hectares	All residents within 1200 metres of Outdoor Sports facilities.	The School Campus (3) (for use by community out with school hours), the Central Park (1) and Hazelden Park (6) provide a total area of c11ha which can accommodate a variety of outdoor sports.  It is envisaged the Town park will contain space and facilities for sports appropriate to this location such as tennis courts or a bowling green.  Importantly all of the development at Countesswells is within 1200m of Hazlehead Park which contains a number of formal sports facilities including golf courses, tennis courts, horse riding and sports pitches. In line with the aims of the Open Space Audit the Development Framework focuses on providing good connections to these existing resources and provide alternative types of open space for residents within the development.
Natural greenspace and Green Corridors	Includes woodland, heathland, scrub, grassland, wetland, coastal areas, riverbanks, streambanks, disused railway lines, green access routes and open water. Also includes designated areas such as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, watersports, leisure, non-motorised travel, environmental education.	1ha minimum Natural Greenspace per 1000 population	c.8.7 hectares	All residents within 400 metres of a natural greenspace >2ha and 2000 metres of a natural greenspace >5ha	Countesswells provides a variety of areas of natural greenspace and green corridors totalling around 19ha. All of the residents within Countesswells will be within 400m of an area of natural greenspace.
Allotments or Community Gardens	Areas or plots which are mainly cultivated by the occupier or community group for the purpose of producing fruit or vegetables for personal consumption.	0.3 hectares per 1000 properties with less than 60m2 private green spaces, cultivatable according to the health quality standards.	Whilst many of the properties will fulfil the criteria for private green space, for the purposes of the Framework two areas totalling c0.5 hectares have been identified which can fulfil this function.	Allotments should be no more than 800m from peoples' homes, and that the (minimum) size/ number of plots at a site will be determined through a mix of the quality standards below and the number of people within the allotment catchment area.	Two sites have been identified which total around 0.50 hectares.  The allotments/community gardens will adhere to the relevant quality standards as set out in the SG. Detail of these areas will be further expanded in the appropriate masterplan phases.



## 5.3 Drainage strategy

Countesswells provides an excellent opportunity to create a comprehensive drainage system across the site, improving water quality and managing the flow of water from the site. The ambition of the drainage strategy is to create a visible and legible system which reveals the process to residents, allowing them to understand the function of these elements. To achieve this drainage features have been given prominence within open space and street design. Given the prominence of these features it is therefore essential that the elements of the drainage system are designed to maximise their aesthetic and ecological value, creating truly sustainable elements that are fully integrated with other urban design features within the development. Engineered solutions to drainage which do not fulfil aesthetic or ecological functions will not be acceptable at Countesswells.

### 5.3.1 Surface Water Drainage

Through the Development Framework the opportunity has been taken to enhance the existing watercourses, de-culverting where possible and fully incorporate them within the landscape structure. Further the network of sustainable urban drainage system (SUDs) should also be integrated into the design of the landscape structure.

Most of the watercourses have been previously artificially modified and straightened or culverted. These will be realigned and de-culverted where possible to incorporate them into the development layout and re naturalise them for the benefit of biodiversity. All watercourses should be protected within a suitable area of open space in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

Consideration must be given to the design of SUDs, existing watercourses and wetland areas (specifically to the south of the site around Block S9) as part of the Masterplans and open space strategies for future phases. Detailed design any requirements of the SUDs will be determined through the planning application process.

The existing minor watercourses do not feature on SEPA's indicative flood map, however the site design incorporates the watercourses within landscape corridors which will accommodate flows from large 200 year, plus climate change, rainfall events, without impacting on the development areas.

Any existing land drainage encountered during the development works will be reinstated or re-routed as appropriate.

In accordance with the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and to meet the guidance of CIRIA 697 - the SUDS Manual, a Surface Water Management Strategy has been undertaken.

The Development Framework focuses on the site control and regional control elements, ensuring that these are appropriately placed and considered in an integrated manner together with other masterplanning and urban design considerations.

All the SUDs features and existing watercourses should all be designed as integral parts of the core space network. Section 6 of this document, Core Space Design Principles, describes how the SUDs features identified on the plan opposite should be designed as part of the spaces in which they are located.

In general, the site falls from north to south. Drainage will follow the same pattern, with an eventual destination in the south-east corner, where the Burn of Cults acts as the receiving watercourse.

The surface water drainage system will be appropriately designed in line with the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). The surface water system will mimic the natural drainage of the catchment and mitigate many of the adverse effects of surface water run-off from urban development on the environment by:-

- Managing and restricting run-off rates to reduce the risk of downstream flooding;
- Encouraging natural groundwater recharge (where appropriate);
- Reducing pollutant concentrations in the run-off and acting as protection to the receiving waters;
- Contributing to the enhanced amenity and aesthetic value of developed areas;
- Providing habitats for wildlife in urban areas and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

It should be noted that no existing watercourses are proposed to be culverted, apart from where they pass below proposed roads.

The drainage corridor passing through S2 and S6 is not an existing water course it will be an outflow from the SUDs within the town park, the design and character of which will be established through detail design either as an open 'landscaped' channel or may be piped in whole or in part.

The existing watercourse passing through C11 is similar to the water course to the west and will be designed in a similar manner. The water course is currently little more than an engineered field drain. The detail proposals will seek to design this watercourse as part of the block, street and open space structure (sensitively routed around the Primary School) from source to where it connects to the Cults Burn to the south. Like the Cults Burn corridor, the final design will follow the ACC Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

The enhancement, de-culverting and design of watercourses and the surrounding areas of open space will be influenced by the Phase 1 flood risk assessment and in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance documents.

Surface water run-off from the proposed development will be drained to a new surface water system which will respect the existing topography as far as practicable. The site will be divided into multiple drainage catchments with each catchment being provided with a surface water drainage system which will incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage measures (SUDS) in order to provide treatment and attenuation of surface water flows. The SUDS features will be located into the open space and interlinked where possible by the watercourses with the drainage requirements being an integral feature of the overall design. Figure 105 shows how these are inter-linked and incorporated into the core areas of open space.

The proposed SUDS measures will provide treatment of the run-off in accordance of the requirements of the SUDS manual. The SUDS solutions proposed will also require to satisfy the adoption and maintenance requirements of Scottish Water and Aberdeen City Council. Early engagement with Scottish Water is recommended.

In accordance with the Drainage Assessment guide, the rate and volume of surface water run-off from the post development situation should not exceed the surface water run-off from the existing greenfield site. Attenuation volume will be provided within the SUDS features in order to contain the run-off volumes and restrict the discharges to the greenfield run-off rates. In more detailed design and approvals a discharge rate in litres/second/hectare will be agreed with Aberdeen City Council, as the rate at which surface water can be discharged to existing minor water features and to the Burn of Cults.

As part of the detailed drainage design, sensitivity tests to assess flood risk will be carried out for rainfall events up to and including the 200 year event and site levels will be set in order to prevent water entering properties or restricting access for emergency vehicles.

Where appropriate "at source" surface water treatment will be provided within the individual development areas. These will be either porous paving, grass swales, grass filter strips or stone filled filter trenches or a combination of these where required.

The surface water drainage system will be designed and installed in accordance with Sewers for Scotland, Second Edition, November 2007 (or any future revisions of Sewers for Scotland) and will be adopted by Scottish Water.

Rainwater harvesting will not form part of main drainage strategy. It would be expected that rainwater harvesting will be part of the internal plot drainage for individual houses. It is envisaged that water saving technologies and water efficiency will be incorporated within each of the residential development areas. Each developer will therefore require to give a commitment to this. Rainwater harvesting, water saving technologies and measures to promote water efficiency will be incorporated within the detailed design for the scheme and a Water Efficiency Statement will be submitted with each detailed application to demonstrate that the proposals will not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the River Dee SAC.

The Environmental Statement includes a 'Report to inform Appropriate Assessment' as an appendix to the ecology chapter. The Report to inform Appropriate Assessment addresses potential for likely significant impacts (construction and operation) on the River Dee which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SUDS Strategy and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the development will ensure that there are no issues related to discharges to the River Dee during construction or operation.

In line with the findings of the HRA carried out for the SDP we advise that if a statement encouraging water saving technologies and water efficiency is included within the development framework and masterplan then this significant effect can be avoided and an appropriate assessment will not be required. A Water Efficiency Statement will be required in each subsequent planning application detailing the measures employed to demonstrate that they would not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests. These could be to achieve the standard for water use efficiency for domestic buildings in accordance with the standards identified in the Resources for New Development Supplementary Guidance. The Ciria publication 'Water sensitive urban design in the UK: Ideas for built environment practitioners', 2013, may also provide helpful guidance.

For all the drainage works a construction method statement will be submitted as part of a planning application to avoid run off/sediment impacting on the River Dee.

### 5.3.2 Foul Drainage

Foul flows from Countesswells are to be pumped to the existing Scottish Water sewer network in Countesswells Roads at the west edge of Aberdeen, some 2 kilometres to the east of the site.

New foul sewers and pumping stations will be provided to within the development, designed and installed in accordance with Sewers for Scotland, Second Edition, November 2007 (or any future revisions).





fig. 105: Drainage strategy



## 5.4 Access and connectivity strategy

Countesswells has been designed to be a well connected and permeable place. It has a legible network of streets and paths which connect the entire community with both key destinations within the site and also the wider recreational opportunities and destinations of the area.

### 5.4.1 Pedestrian and cyclist connectivity

The ability for pedestrians and cyclists to move through Countesswells using a permeable network of paths is at the core of the design of the Development Framework. The path network has been designed to actively encourage walking and cycling as both a viable transport option and also as a recreational pursuit.

Cycle connections from Countesswells are facilitated via the Westhill-Aberdeen cycle route along the A944 corridor to the north of the site. This route runs eastwards from Kingswells towards the city, as an off road route and will enhance access to a number of the aforementioned opportunities in conjunction with crossing opportunities on the A944. Cycle connections to the Deeside line to the south can be made via existing routes.

#### Strategic path network

For pedestrians and cyclists the Strategic path network identified will offer many routes and across Countesswells the combination of segregated pathways and roadside footways will create an interconnected network of direct and convenient links between destinations. Attractive linkages to the external facilities in the vicinity of the site are required to offer future residents the opportunity to make a sustainable travel mode choice.

The plan opposite and on those on the following pages identify the strategic path network which must be provided at Countesswells as part of the Development Framework. It is expected that this network will be further supplemented by additional pedestrian pathways and routes as appropriate through the masterplanning and detailed design of areas. It is proposed that with the exception of the routes identified in the strategic path network opposite, cyclists will be generally accommodated on the street network. The paths should all be cyclable i.e. dropped kerbs etc even if not designed to 'strategic standards'.

The paths illustrated in the strategic path network must be designed to provide routes for use by both pedestrians and cyclists. These must be designed to:

- be safe for both pedestrians and cyclists;
- be pleasant and attractive;
- be appropriately lit; and
- have appropriate crossing facilities at all street crossings.

At key points where walking and cycling routes intersect with vehicular routes safe pedestrians crossing facilities will be provided.

The connection from the Kingshill Wood to Hazlehead woodland that the customary access route to the north of the site provides will be incorporated as part of the strategic path network.

#### Core path provision

The strategic path network incorporates Core Path 57 through a strategic area of open space connecting Countesswells Woodland and Hazlehead Park. The plan opposite highlights the proposed alignment of Core Path 57 and the core area of open space connect existing areas of woodland on either side of the site. The alignment through Countesswells will connecting to the existing paths to the east and west allowing for some minor variation in alignment through Countesswells to accommodate improvements such as crossing points.

At key points where the Core Path intersects with vehicular routes, appropriate safe crossing facilities should be provided.

#### Strategic walking/cycling routes

Strategic walking/cycling routes will offer dual-use pavements to ensure direct and convenient links in both an east-west direction and a north-south direction. These have been positioned to align with onward strategic connections such as the dual-use pavement associated with the A944, providing links to Kingswells, employment areas and other existing roads. Additional streets in the development will be identified in the appropriate masterplans which are suitable for combined foot and cycle paths on one side of the carriageway with a footway on the other.

Additionally, routes or paths off set from streets will be provided which are suitable for walking, cycling and equestrians. These are predominantly located within areas of open space to provide opportunities to cross Countesswells at a number of locations in a traffic free environment.

At key points where these routes intersect with vehicular routes, appropriate safe crossing facilities will be provided.

#### Aspirational path links

The plan on the following page also identifies a number of aspirational path links which are outside the Countesswells site boundary and out with the control of the Countesswells Consortium and as such consultation with adjoining landowners should be considered at an early stage to help facilitate the delivery of these connections. These would benefit the wider area in forming a connected network of paths and improving recreational opportunities, notably providing links to the A93 and Countesswells Road.

#### Cycle links

In line with the national and local policy to promote sustainable methods of travel, particularly for shorter trips, the development has been designed around 'Walkable Neighbourhoods' to encourage the opportunities for residents to choose to walk or cycle instead of using private cars for shorter journeys.

An investigation of requirements to accommodate commuting cycle trips was carried out considering likely desire lines for future cycle trips. As required by the ALDP Action Programme strategic routes will provide north - south cycle connections to Access Path 91, which runs to the north of the site along the northern side of the A944. This provides easy direct access to Westhill to the west, Kingswells, the new employment areas to the north and Aberdeen to the east.

Opportunities for commuting by bike will be provided through dual use path connections to both the east and the west connecting to the cycleway along the A944 (Access Path 91). The exact location and type of crossing points providing access to the Access Path will be determined through the TA process and in discussion with ACC.

Specific crossing facilities for cyclists and pedestrians will be provided at the upgraded Jessiefield / Bellfield access junction and crossing of the A944 will be encouraged via these facilities.

To the west, the proposed and existing paths will provide access to the existing crossing facilities adjacent to Kingswells roundabout to ensure a safe crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists to Kingswells and the new employ-ment sites to the north of the road.

Along the eastern boundary a link will be formed with Aberdeen Cycle Path Network (ACPN) 56 to connect to lightly trafficked routes around Hazlehead Golf Course. From here a number of recommended routes towards the city centre can be utilised.

As ACPN 87 passes the south eastern corner of the site it is proposed to provide a connection with path 63 to access on road cycle lanes along North Deeside Road which provide access to south Aberdeen.

Further dialogue with cycling groups will inform the identification of additional connections to appropriate routes and connections.

#### Equestrian Routes

Core Path 57 and the other paths identified will provide a variety of suitable routes for equestrian use. These paths will provide a choice of routes across Countesswells connecting to the existing path network, existing roads and the proposed street network to provide complete access across the site.

The Established Access Route identified on the plan below has been utilised for both pedestrian and equestrian recreational activity in excess of 20 years. This link through the site will be maintained, diverted slightly in order to link up to the proposed network of footpaths and streets, allowing for better connectivity and fluidity through the development. A wider path network is proposed with routes that will be able to accommodate equestrian users and allow movement between Countesswells woodland and Hazlehead woodland.

In the two locations where the path designed to accommodate equestrian users crosses vehicular routes, appropriate crossings facilities should be provided.



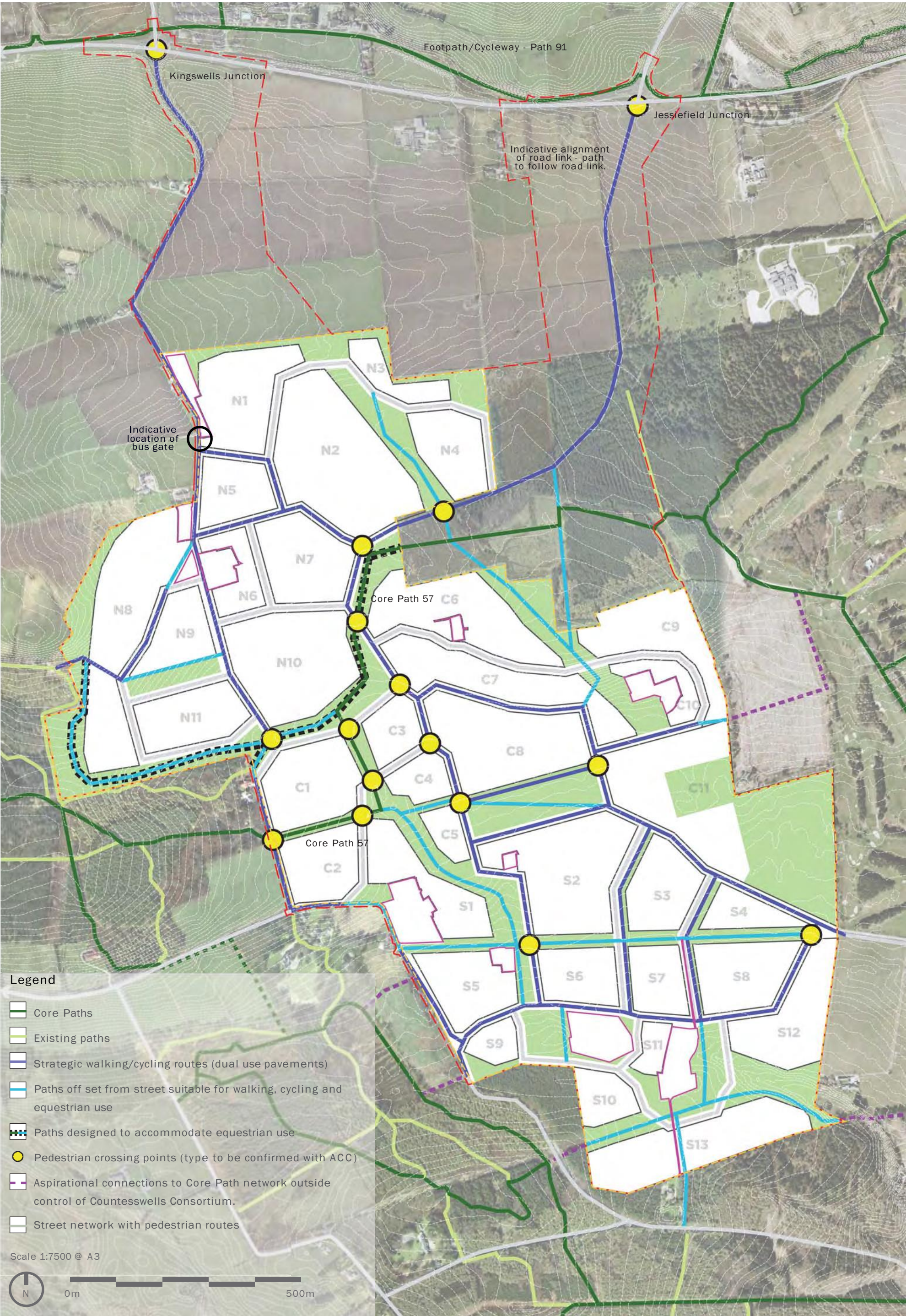


fig. 106: Strategic pedestrian and cycle links



5.4.2 Public transport

Existing frequent bus services provided by the principal operators in the Aberdeen area, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird, operate via the A944 corridor approximately 600m to the north of the site. First service 11 and Stagecoach service X17 combine to provide a total of seven services per hour to Aberdeen City Centre, with all services serving Union Street, and Stagecoach X17 connecting to regional and long distance bus services at Union Square Bus Station, and rail services at the adjacent Aberdeen Railway Station.

Existing public transport routes to the south are approximately 3km from the centre of the site. This is beyond desirable walk distance but within an easy cycle distance or car journey. Links to accommodate these modes will be provided where feasible. Further, the Development Framework has been designed so that public transport can be accommodated from the south should operators wish to do so in the future.

Since there are no existing bus routes through the site area, initial discussions held with local bus operators indicate that currently the main bus corridor accessible from the site is the A944 to the north it is therefore appropriate to promote extended and additional services to this corridor. Alterations to existing First services to the south of the development site are not envisaged to be appropriate at this time, as journey times via these extended routes are anticipated to be longer than those via A944, and therefore less attractive. The development of links via the A944 corridor also provides the opportunity to connect with existing or enhanced services accessing the Park and Ride site at Kingswells. As the development progresses opportunities for expanding or enhancing routes will be reconsidered.

Potential routes for buses are indicated on the plan on the following page, providing two connections to the existing network on the A944.

It is proposed that the western connection to the A944 will be a public transport only link utilising the Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells access onto the existing Kingswells roundabout junction.

Kingswells Park and Ride is located within 1km of Countesswells site and is easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists via the strategic path network.

The specific location of the bus stops has not been identified however these should be located to correspond with proposed civic spaces, schools and the strategic path network identified. Pedestrian connectivity to these stops should be considered as a priority. From the indicative bus routes and stops shown all residential properties would be within a 400m walk distance of a bus stop (see Figure 107).

Discussions are on-going with bus operators and the developers are pursuing the early delivery of public transport provision within the site. The infrastructure will be in place to allow bus routes and links to the A944 within the first phase of development as outlined in section 5.6.4.

5.4.3 The street structure

An interconnected network of streets throughout the development will provide efficient and effective routes for all modes of transport to access both the internal facilities within the development and to the wider strategic network including connections to Kirk Brae (C189), the A944 and Countesswells Road.

The street network will be based around connecting all the existing roads through the new development to allow good access for all and efficient transport links in all directions.

The development layout has been designed with due cognisance of the principles and approach set out within Designing Streets. As a result the layout lengthens the existing routes through the site in both an east/west and north/south direction. Furthermore the nature of these routes will change from rural lanes to urban, built up roads with associated tight geometry and reduced vehicle speeds thus significantly reducing the attractiveness of these for ‘rat running’ traffic. In addition the layout includes 2 traffic signal controlled junctions and a Pegasus crossing (to allow users to cross on horseback) which will further break up traffic flows through the site and reduce vehicle speeds. The other consideration to bear in mind is that the AWPR is only a short distance to the west of the site and will provide a link between the A93 and A944.

Vehicular access to the north will be to the A944 via a public transport only connection to Kingswells junction and a link to a new junction at Jessiefield. Connections will also be made with Countesswells Road, Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults and Blacktop Road to integrate the proposed development street structure with the surrounding existing network. Connection to the North Deeside Road (A93) will be provided via Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults. The TA has investigated the likely impact of the development traffic on these extended links and suggest mitigation where appropriate.

The internal layout of the site has been designed to take full cognisance of ‘Designing Streets’, around the premise that ‘Good street design should derive from an intelligent response to location, rather than the rigid application of standards, regardless of context’. In order to achieve this the layout will be ‘Distinctive’, ‘Safe & pleasant’, ‘Easy to move around’, ‘Welcoming’, ‘Adaptable’ and ‘Resource efficient’.

Key to this objective is the provision of a dense network of lightly trafficked streets, especially around central areas of high pedestrian activity. The focus is on providing an attractive sense of place and a permeable network for access by all road users. Junction arrangements both internally and connecting with external road links are in the form of T junctions, staggered junctions and a minimum number of cross roads rather than roundabouts, prioritising safe crossing movements by pedestrians.

Within residential areas and surrounding the schools the speed limit should be restricted to 20mph. These streets should be designed so as to enforce 20mph through the design of the infrastructure and not be reliant on a speed limit. Safe and attractive environments will be achieved through maintaining low vehicle speeds through use of a combination of design measures including width restrictions, reductions in forward visibility, changes in priority, physical features and the use of textured surfaces (not vertical deflection).

The Transport Assessment process has informed the production of the Development Framework and will support the Planning Applications which examines in detail the travel demand of the proposed settlement and the impact such development will have on all modes of transport. The TA analyses in detail the estimated impact on the surrounding network and suggests relevant measures to promote sustainable transport choice where appropriate, identifying infrastructure improvements to mitigate against the traffic impact on existing junctions and links.

The Transport Assessment must determine whether the currently proposed mitigation is adequate and identify any further mitigation that is required as a result of the development.

5.4.4 Junctions to A944

Initial studies have demonstrated that the development can be expected to require two connections to the A944 to the north of the site to provide efficient transport connections for all users between the various development blocks and the existing road network surrounding the site.

It is proposed that the western connection will be a public transport only link utilising the Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells access onto the existing signal controlled Kingswells roundabout junction. This will necessitate a bus gate to be installed on Kirk Brae (C189) to prevent the through flow of non permitted traffic. The precise location and operation of the bus gate will be finalised following further detailed analysis.

Whilst the existing link from the South to the Kingswells roundabout will be maintained as a public transport only route, general access to all modes will be maintained to private property south of the roundabout and north of the development.

A new, all vehicle, junction is proposed to the east and will involve substantial modification of the existing roundabout junction at Jessiefield. The final junction layout, design and type will be determined following further detailed analysis and design through the TA process.

The eastern road from the site boundary to the A944 as shown on Figure 107 opposite is indicative and the final alignment will be subject to detailed discussions, site assessments and agreement as part of the planning application process.

The junction layouts have been subject to full analysis to assess future operational capacity and performance as well as the appropriateness of the design to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The process is summarised in the TA.

5.4.5 Existing roads

The street structure designed and phased with recognition of existing roads and travel patterns (informed by the TA process). The street structure will be subject to detail design and analysis through the TA process prior to agreement with the Council at the appropriate time.

Access to all existing properties will be maintained. The detail of this will be determined through the planning application process and the Countesswells Consortium will liaise with residents as part of this process.



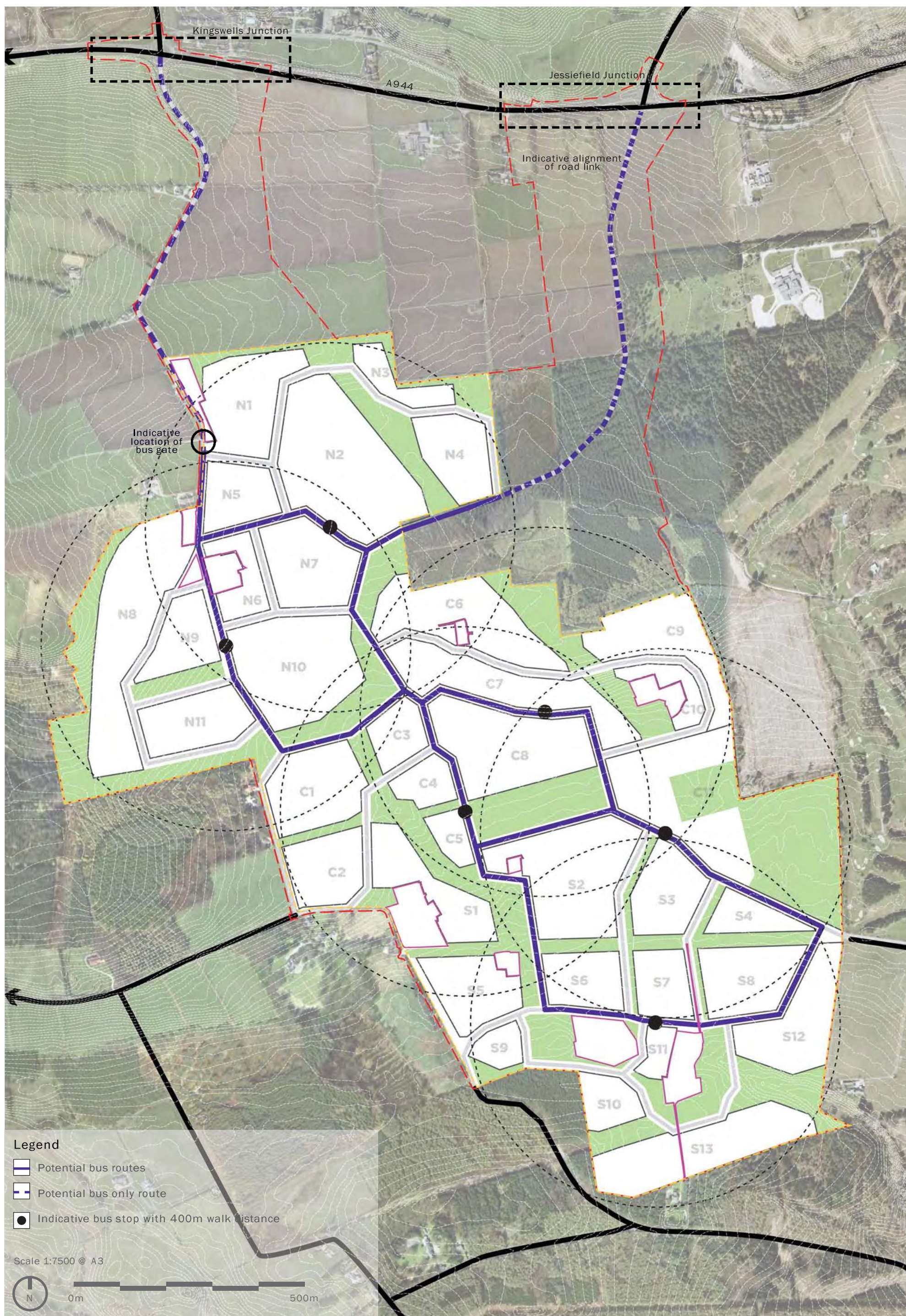


fig. 107: Strategic pedestrian and cycle links



Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells will provide a public transport only connection between Countesswells and the A944.

To the south of the proposed bus gate it will be designed to pass through Countesswells as part of the proposed street network, realigned in specific locations to control traffic speed and better integrate as part of the urban form.

Access to the A944 will be maintained during the early construction periods and any utility works will be programmed to ensure minimum disruption to the public.

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults

Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Cults will provide the principal route from the Countesswells site to the south and the A93, North Deeside Road. The road continues south to link with the A93, North Deeside Road at a signalised cross roads junction and thereby provides access to the majority of residential areas within east Cults to North Deeside Road.

The A93, North Deeside Road, provides a commuter corridor parallel to the A944 linking communities along North Deeside with the city centre. Tidal traffic flows are observed along this route with the majority of traffic travelling towards the city centre during the AM peak and away from it during the PM peak. Peterculter and Milltimber have continuous built up frontages with 30/40 mph speed limits and signalised cross road junctions with key side routes such as Kirk Brae (C189) and Baillieswells Road.

Countesswells Road

The plan opposite and on the following page illustrates Countesswells Road within the site area being retained as part of the strategic path network and not the street network. By retaining Countesswells Road as part of the path network the structure of the existing tree avenue can be protected and enhanced as part of the landscape framework.

Countesswells Road will remain a principal route into the site from the east. Within the site, Countesswells Road will be closed and re-routed as part of the proposed street network the implications of this have been considered as part of the TA process.

Blacktop Road

Blacktop Road will provide a vehicular connection to the west. Beyond the site boundary the road will continue as a national speed limit route to the west and provides access to Easter Ord and Wester Ord.

Baillieswells Road, to the west of Kirk Brae (C189), connects between Blacktop Road and the A93, North Deeside Road. To its northern end it is a narrow rural road but it passes through residential areas of Cults to link at a signal controlled junction with North Deeside Road.

5.4.6 Street hierarchy

All streets will be designed reflecting the relative importance of the routes, creating a legible hierarchy within the development. Streets will be designed firstly as places, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is easy and safe to move around in and following the principles set out in ‘Designing Streets, Policy Statement for Scotland’.

The proposed street structure, illustrated opposite and described below, has been designed in response to the site context, the landuse structure and the desire to provide a choice of routes through the settlement. The street structure also ensures good connections are provided to the existing network. The proposed streets will be designed and phased with recognition of existing and proposed travel patterns (informed by the TA).

The hierarchy of streets has been defined, which deal with various pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle parameters. The street structure will be subject to detail design and agreement with the Council at the appropriate time.

In general, following decreasing volume of vehicular traffic the key principles that should inform the design of the streets identified in the hierarchy are described below:

Primary street

A core route through the site on which there should be no frontage access and no on street parking.

- These streets will be designed to accommodate public transport.
- A 3m combined foot and cycleway will be required to one side of the street and a 2m wide footway to the other.
- Residential frontage access must not be taken from these routes.
- In addition, one metre wide separation strips will be required on parts of the primary street network.

Secondary Streets

These streets will connect the primary streets whilst providing strategic access to all residential areas.

- These streets will be designed to accommodate public transport on the routes identified for buses.
- Frontage access and on street parking would generally be acceptable on these routes (designed so not to conflict with public transport use).
- The secondary streets should provide a segregated 3m wide foot and cycleway to one side of the carriageway with a 2m wide footway on bus routes and where they connect key destinations and connect to the external path network.
- In residential areas where the street does not connect points of a strategic nature 2m footways to either side of the carriageway would be appropriate.

Tertiary Street

These streets will ensure clear, connected access streets to residential areas.

- Direct frontage access and on street parking allowed on all streets.
- 2m footways provided on either side of the street.

Other Streets

In addition to the core streets identified and described there will be the need for further streets, lanes and shared surface areas within Development Blocks which must be designed following ‘Designing Streets’ guidance.

These clearly defined types combine to provide a clear structure to the development and are a critical part of creating an identity and sense of place. All carriageways will be designed as ‘streets’, rather than ‘roads’, there dimensions appropriate to function, character and overall street layout. By altering elements such as width of street (building to building), tree planting, pathway and cycleway integration the development can ensure the design of the streets within the development create characterful, comfortable, distinct and legible places to be.

Within a development of this scale individual streets will change in character as they pass through different parts of the development. The main mechanism for allowing this to happen will be the consideration of the following elements, which are as follows;

- Building to building width
- Boundary treatments
- Carriageway width
- Location and width of footways/cycleways
- Frontage access
- Parking
- Street trees
- Lighting
- Street furniture
- Geometry
- Visibility
- Materiality

Following the above guidance the detail design of the streets should be carried out at the appropriate stage, it should be informed by the TA and agreed with the Council.

5.4.7 Parking standards

Car parking provision will be provided in accordance with Aberdeen City Council policy and Supplementary Guidance on Transport and Accessibility.

The policy will be taken cognisance of in laying out parking levels for residential areas, however at this stage it is not possible to be prescriptive about parking provision as the exact mix and location of housing typologies have not yet been finally determined. It is recognised that Council policy provides guidelines rather than maximum parking allowance, however, through detail design and with the aim of creating a sustainable place effort will be made to reduce the parking standards in conjunction with suitable sustainable transport alternatives and locations of other mixed uses.

Parking standards extend to cycle and motorcycle parking as well, and any flatted or communal residential areas will have to provide cycle and motorcycle parking to comply with policy.

For non-residential land uses the Council parking standards will apply.

The opportunity for car clubs or other car sharing schemes should be considered as part of any future detailed applications or masterplans for the site and its different phases. Parking bays for shared cars could be provided.



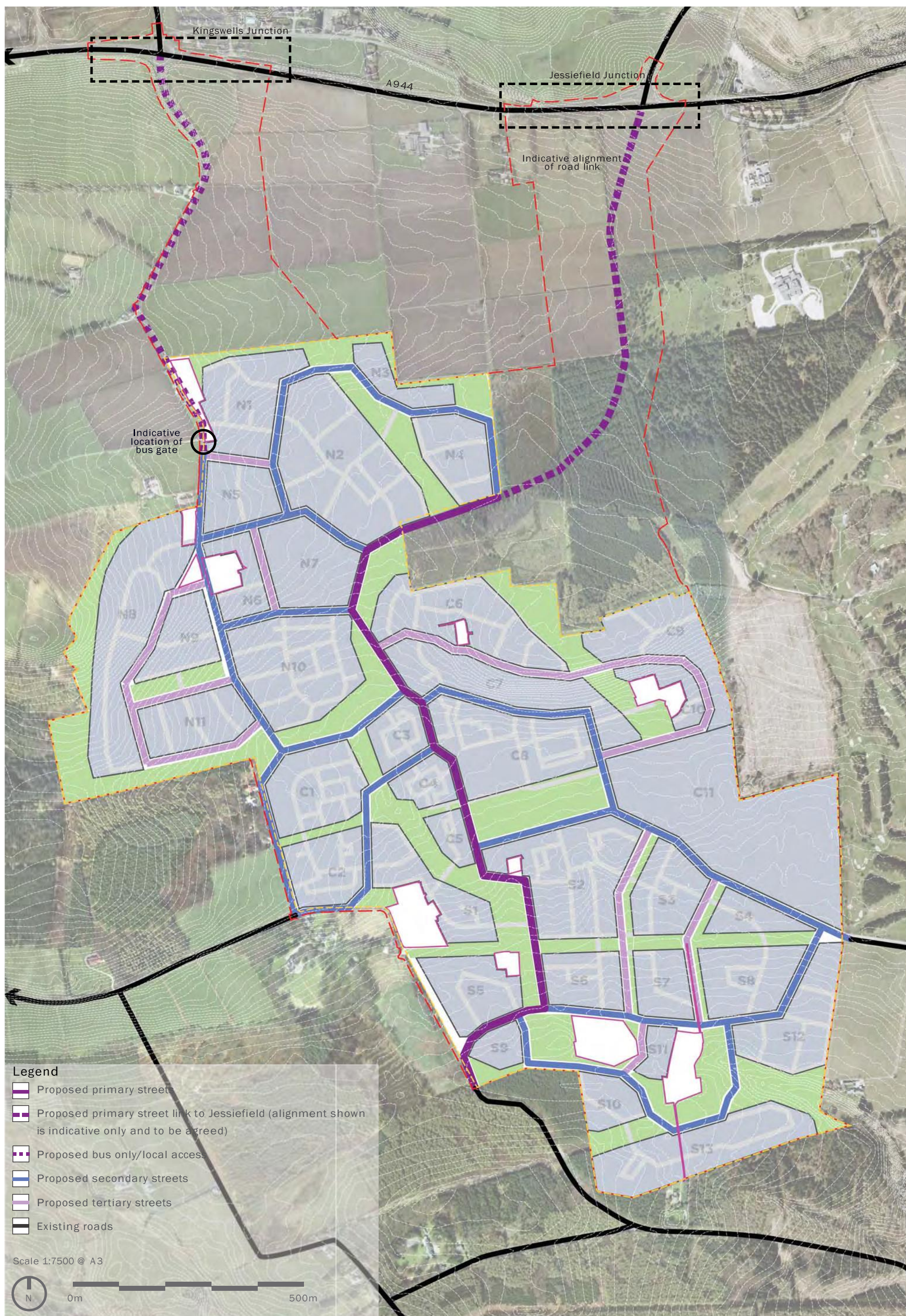


fig. 108: Proposed street hierarchy



# 5.5 Land use strategy

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan allocates Countesswells for 3000 houses and 10 hectares of employment land plus appropriate community facilities. It is anticipated these community facilities will include a Secondary School and two triple stream primary schools. The Development Framework is designed to be flexible and responsive to change in market conditions and as such provides what is considered the maximum potential developable land take to provide the appropriate scale of uses in relation to what is identified within the ALDP.

Countesswells will provide 3000 new homes, consisting of a full range of building typologies and tenures creating a diverse and inclusive community structure across the site area. This will offer housing choice and opportunities for people at all stages of the housing lifecycle, with an emphasis on family housing and will include affordable housing.

Educational uses form a key part of the land use strategy. Schools provide a key focus for both the community core where the community campus including a primary and secondary school is located and for the ‘Neighbourhood Centre’ where a further primary school is located.

Community uses also form an important part of the land use strategy. The provision of community uses such as doctors and dentists surgeries, nurseries and day-care facilities requires further engagement with potential operators and public service providers. These uses are essential to a new community to ensure local services are provided at resident’s convenience and for this reason these uses should be focused in appropriate locations within the community core or Neighbourhood Centre.

The overriding aim for a place of the scale of Countesswells is to create a sustainable community in the widest sense, and the most appropriate way of achieving this is by creating areas of mixed land use, which would incorporate employment opportunities. Therefore on the plan opposite specific employment areas and areas of mixed use are identified measuring up to approximately 10ha, which will offer opportunities for employment in keeping with the ALDP aims and the scale and character of the place. Areas of mixed use will also include allowance for supporting infrastructure such as access, drainage, open space etc... These areas will necessitate a vertical mix of uses as well as opportunities for solely employment uses. Together with the other uses within the mixed use areas, this approach will create an identifiable multi-use destination for Countesswells.

The Development Framework aims to provide employment land as a component of mixed use development strategically located around the primary community core at the centre of the site and a secondary ‘Neighbourhood Centre’ lying in the northern half of the site and closely linked to the dedicated public transport only corridor which connects to A944, the park and ride, and Prime Four. Both mixed use areas are located at key nodal points within the plan, whereby the clustering of employment uses with other principal requirements such as residential and education, will give a more significant community core than purely isolating different land uses around the site. They are well connected to the open space network, strategic path links and potential bus routes aiming to promote sustainable modes of transport within the site and to connections outwith. Further description of the land uses anticipated within areas denoted as mixed use are provided in the following text.

## 5.5.1 Employment land

The plan opposite and tables 1and 2 on page 70 sets out an indication of how, where and in what amount potential uses could be incorporated.

Within the blocks allocated as mixed use - civic, retail, leisure and office space should address primary streets or core spaces. A varied vertical mix is to be promoted with potential for upper floor residential development. Single storey/ single use shop or office units are generally not acceptable. Any supermarket proposed within a mixed use area should present an active frontage to streets and spaces in keeping with the required character. Consideration should be given to providing residential uses or office above any proposed supermarket.

In terms of the scale of retail development within Countesswells, a Supermarket is proposed within the settlement core to meet the needs of the new community and satisfy the requirements highlighted in the 2013 Retail Study and emerging Local Development Plan.

Any retail development over 2500sqm would require a Retail Impact Assessment to be submitted as part of the planning process. Any other retail development would require a retail statement.

Other uses which are less reliant upon a regular footfall, such as business starter units and workshops should be located off the main streets and spaces but typically located within the same block or facing block. The location and design of these should be considered in more detail within future masterplans to ensure they fit the character as set out in the Development Framework and do not detract from the amenity of adjacent residential properties.

## Employment land provision

To support the principle for providing up to 10ha of land with employment potential within the mixed use format, an Employment Land and Property Market Review Study has been completed by Ryden as part of the masterplanning process. This study has been provided to support this Development Framework and Masterplan and should be referred to in conjunction with this Development Framework and Masterplan document. However the key findings of the study are outlined in the following text.

Unlike other Local Development Plan allocations Countesswells is the only “stand alone” site identified within the City. As such, Countesswells presents a unique opportunity to deliver an exemplar development. Key to the successful delivery of this allocation is an adherence to the principles of sustainable development within commercial parameters.

One of the key aims of delivering a sustainable development at Countesswells is economic resilience, whereby the mix of land and property, are diverse, independent and adaptable, and as such they encourage the development of a lively local economy, with the potential to provide jobs for local residents.

It is therefore important to recognise that employment is derived from a broad range of sectors and, in the establishment of a new mixed use community, should not be solely dependent upon traditional business, general industrial and storage and distribution uses.

## Key points arising from the review identify the following:

- The location is strongly linked to the economic fortunes of the region’s oil and gas industry.
- The City benefits from a healthy supply of employment land with a marketable supply of approximately 35 years.
- That the Strategic Development Plan requirement for a 60 ha supply of immediately available land is close to being met and will be augmented as constraints on the established supply are lifted.
- Countesswells is unlikely to attract major Class 5 and 6 uses nor large scale office uses due to provision elsewhere and in particular Prime Four Business park located within 1km of Countesswells to the north.
- Countesswells provides a high quality setting for residential led mixed use development and this is likely to be reflected in the employment uses attracted to the new community.
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) seeks to promote economic development by supporting development which will provide new employment opportunities through different sectors and the integration of employment generation opportunities with supporting infrastructure and housing development.
- Demand is likely to be for smaller business units up to 500 sq m and represents an opportunity for Countesswells.
- Retail, services and community facilities have the potential to contribute to attractive mixed use employment areas within the new Countesswells community.
- The mixed use areas have the potential to create higher employment densities than traditional business and industrial parks.

## Summary of Employment Land and Property Market Review

Countesswells provides a high amenity setting for residential led mixed use development and this is likely to be reflected in the employment uses attracted to the new community. The employment land requirement was not identified in the Local Development Plan as a ‘stand alone’ land use unlike other allocations. Rather, it was to form part of an integrated development in accordance with the principles of SPP. Policy seeks to promote economic development which will provide new employment opportunities through different sectors and the integration of employment generation opportunities with supporting infrastructure and housing development. A key component of this is town centres which provide employment and services for the local community.

The particular land uses considered likely to be attracted to Countesswells are set out in Table 2 and offer the potential for higher development densities and higher employment densities than traditional industrial estates and business parks. The land uses are also configured to support a sustainable community with a comparatively dense “central business district” and are therefore more appropriate for Countesswells in urban design terms than extensive low density employment uses.





fig. 109: Proposed land use plan



Table 1 - Schedule of indicative areas and land uses

Development Block	Total Block Net Developable Area (Ha)	Residential Net Developable Area (Ha)	Areas of mixed use containing opportunities for employment including supporting infrastructure (Ha)	Education Areas (Ha)	Non Residential Uses	Proposed Residential Density Range (Units/Ha)	Approximate no of Units
N1	3.94	3.94				30-40	127
N2	7.87	7.12	118		Office, small business and retail.	30-40	244
N3	1.48	1.48				20-30	31
N4	2.73	2.73				20-30	86
N5	2.56	1.81	1.28		Office, small business and retail.	>50	99
N6	1.87	1.87				<20	36
N7	3.77	0.77		3.00	Primary School	30-40	24
N8	6.75	6.75				<20	112
N9	2.53	2.53				>50	131
N10	5.89	5.89				30-40	215
N11	3.28	3.28				20-30	89
C1	3.67	3.67				30-40	114
C2	2.77	2.77				20-30	74
C3	1.58	1.58	0.86		Office, small business and retail.	>50	87
C4	1.23	0.83	0.82		Office, small business and retail.	>50	52
C5	0.82		1.16		Hotel, office and small business.		
C6	4.76	4.76				20-30	110
C7	5.05	5.05				<20	99
C8	5.52	4.02	4.46		Retail, office and small business.	40-50	192
C9	3.84	3.84				<20	62
C10	1.35	1.35				20-30	30
C11	12.51			12.51	Community Campus, Academy, Primary School and playing fields		
S1	2.89	2.89				>50	183
S2	6.06	6.06				20-30	126
S3	2.73	2.73				20-30	63
S4	1.48	1.48				20-30	36
S5	2.75	2.75				30-40	106
S6	2.27	2.27				20-30	49
S7	1.99	1.99				20-30	39
S8	3.13	3.13				20-30	64
S9	0.92	0.92				>50	51
S10	1.50	1.50				20-30	37
S11	0.84	0.84				20-30	18
S12	3.68	3.68				<20	70
S13	4.78	4.78				20-30	144
Total	120.78	101.06	9.76	15.51			3000

Table 2 - Summary of non residential uses within mixed use areas

Mixed use components	Comments
Office	Sustained lack of quality office space in the city centre has pushed much of the area's supply out to peripheral locations and established business clusters where most recent take-up has happened. High demand for office space at the smaller end of the scale from companies operating further down the supply chain could be satisfied at Countesswells, if solutions over funding difficulties are found.
Small Business Space	Analysis of take-up and supply for commercial property demonstrates a shortage of small business space of under 200 sq.m. Economic development policy generally encourages a variety of sizes of business space with the flexibility and affordability needed to foster new businesses and entrepreneurs. Aberdeen's lack of small business space could be an inhibitor to growth, especially within the creative industries, enabling technologies and companies working further down the energy and business services supply chain. Aberdeen's economy has been very resilient during the economic downturn with the only positive business churn rate in the UK in 2010. These new businesses need a variety of accommodation to meet their ever-changing needs.
Retail – Convenience	The analysis of retail expenditure demonstrates expenditure generated in a fully-developed Countesswells can support a supermarket to meet the needs of the new community and in line with the aims of the Council (2013 Retail Study). This local provision would be essential for a new residential-led development to ensure unnecessary car journeys are kept to minimum and residents are able to purchase every day items locally and also be able to access a small range of non-food items. Similarly a local retail centre with variety of small shops, café's and fast food outlets would be viable within the new community.
Hotel Use	Aberdeen's hotels have recently outperformed much of Europe in terms of occupancy and revenue per room indicators. The analysis above has shown that many reasons for staying in a hotel in Aberdeen are for business which gives hotels in the city consistently high year-round occupancy rates where the effects of seasonality are limited. A wide variety of operators working in different markets could be attracted to Countesswells. However, our analysis would suggest that a mid-high quality operator would be most attracted to the rural setting of Countesswells, as the demand for budget rooms is met elsewhere.



5.5.2 Residential development

Table 1on the previous page sets out a indicative density range for all residential areas, these densities have been set to respond to design aims and existing constraints however allow appropriate flexibility for future masterplans and detail design.

Within the areas identified as mixed use on the land use plan, it is anticipated that these areas will include residential development in a form appropriate to the location and in accordance with the proposed density range.

Residential Mix

The development will consist of a full range of building typologies and tenures creating a diverse and inclusive community structure. This will offer housing choice and opportunities for all sectors of the community and at all stages of the housing lifecycle from first time buyers, to housing to meet the needs of older generations with an emphasis on family housing. The provision of housing appropriate for the elderly and disabled people (not necessarily single storey houses) should be considered in future masterplans and applications. As a result the development will cover all market sectors, the anticipated mix will include:

- Flats/Apartments
- Terrace
- Semi detached
- Detached

The final mix will be developed as an appropriate response to the place making aims of the Development Framework, market demand and future masterplans and detailed design aiming to create a strong sense of place following the design guidance within this document.

Residential Density

Table 1on the previous page illustrates the indicative residential density and illustrative housing numbers across the site. While the proposed average density is approximately 30 dwellings per hectare, densities will vary across the settlement to provide variety in the built form and create a range of distinctive areas.

Affordable Housing

The development will provide 25% affordable housing in line with the Local Development Plan policy. Affordable housing will be integrated within the phasing of the development and designed as part of each relevant development parcel. Affordable housing will be predominantly located in areas which are:

- Well connected in terms of footpath and cycle networks.
- Well connected to the proposed public transport network.
- Accessible to the proposed mixed use centres.

The exact details of the affordable housing design will be determined via the planning application process.

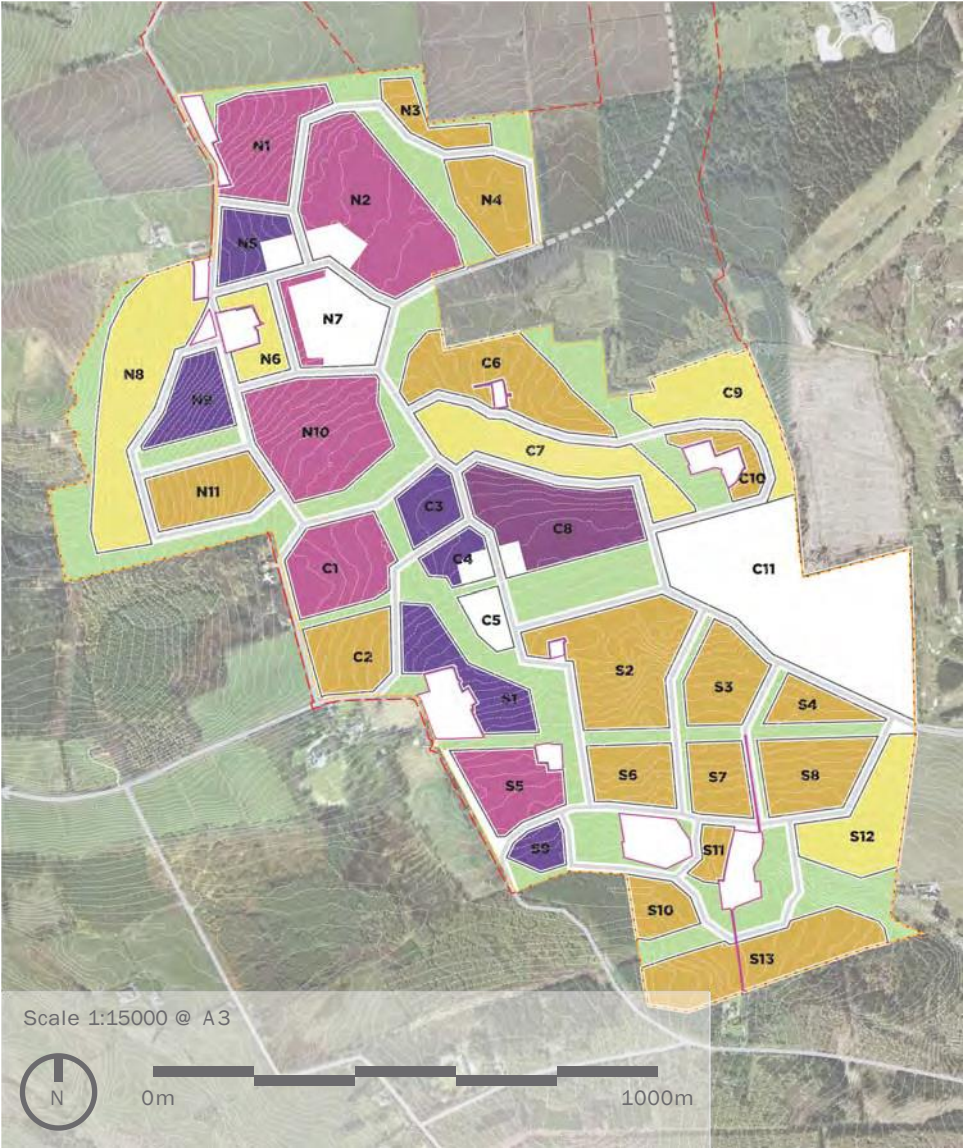


fig. 110: Proposed block densities

< Legend

Indicative density range

- < 20 units per hectare
- 20 - 30 units per hectare
- 30 - 40 units per hectare
- 40 - 50 units per hectare
- > 50 units per hectare



5.5.3 Education strategy

The creation of a new community at Countesswells within the Aberdeen City boundary presents an exciting opportunity to design education provision into the fabric of the place, recognising the central role which schools and learning play in the life of a community.

Education strategy

The approach to place-making at Countesswells, with the education estate placed at its heart will provide the basis for the sustainable development, where the relationship between people and place starts strong and then continues to develop as the community itself grows.

A cornerstone of our approach is to ensure, through multi- functionality, that all of the community's educational assets are available for all of the community. These expensive community assets will be designed in such a way to ensure they are available for community use. The Countesswells schools will strive to play a central role in the life of the community, enabling a range of non-school activities to take place.

The Countesswells Academy located within the community campus will be fully integrated into the core area, affording the opportunity for shared functionality of its facilities, with complementary public uses, at agreed times. The hall, library/learning resource centre, gymnasium, and pitches (both all weather and grass) will be designed for dual school/community management and use.

Delivery of education requirements

The Aberdeen City Council school role forecast show that many schools in the area have some surplus capacity. It is our intention to meet with the Council to agree the best way of utilising this spare accommodation in the short term to the mutual benefit of existing and projected school pupils.

Through discussion with ACC and the local communities, we aim to achieve schools in Countesswells which are truly places to be proud of.

In the initial phases, provision will made for the establishment, construction and operation of a new primary school (PS01).

Discussions are underway with the Education Authority to agree a phasing strategy to ensure that school places are available for incoming catchment secondary pupils. These discussions are working towards the determination of the level of critical mass required, in terms of pupil numbers being generated from the housing development, to sustainably open a new primary school and ensure that its character and ethos can be shaped from day one. These discussions also involve the more difficult logistical challenge of ascertaining the most appropriate pattern of school provision to deal with the transition period, before the new school opens.

A number of options for temporarily accommodating the initial pupils arising from the Countesswells site are being discussed with the Council, including the possible use of existing available accommodation in the surrounding local schools.

Sportscotland good practice guidance regarding the appropriate level of sports provision for primary and secondary schools should be used when design principles and proposals are being developed.

Location of schools

The Development Framework proposes locations for two primary school sites and a site for the proposed Countesswells Academy to serve the new community at Countesswells. It is proposed that the Academy and one of the primary schools are located in a community campus within the community core incorporating other sports and community facilities.

The primary schools are located to be easily accessible to all residents with all properties located within 800m (approx 10mins walk) one of the school sites.

Both the area in the community campus allocated to primary provision (PS02) and the site allocated for the first primary school (PS01) are big enough to support either a triple stream primary school or two double stream primary schools. We do not envisage the primary schools having community wings, libraries or police offices, as these are more sensibly housed on the community campus. They will, however, have nursery wings. This flexibility will allow anything between four and eight primary streams to be taught between the two primary school sites. The actual arrangement will be subject to negotiation with the Education authority.

The provision for and layout of any drop off provision associated with each of the new schools will be addressed within the Transport Assessment.

Primary School 01 (PS01)

The first Primary School (PS01) will be located as part of the neighbourhood centre to the north of Countesswells overlooking the Cults Burn network park. Serving the northern part of the community it will be provided in the first phase of development. In this location the school has a prominent and accessible location within the community.

Countesswells Community Campus

The Countesswells community campus (Block C11) should provide a location for both the Academy and a primary school site as well as sports and other community facilities. The campus is located within the mixed use core, with a prominent location at the eastern end of the Central Park. In this location the community campus can best fulfil its role as a fully integrated resource for the wider community.

Any necessary community facilities such as a library that is likely to be required should be provided within the Community Campus subject to detail design and access arrangements.

Countesswells Academy (CA)

Countesswells Academy will be located within the community campus. The school buildings should be located to overlook the Central Park. The central location provides good access to the core road network and strategic path network to ensure it can be safely and easily accessed by pedestrians, buses and other vehicles.

The existing Hazlehead golf course is adjacent to the proposed school sports pitches, this will have to be taken in to consideration at the detail design stage and the relevant mitigation provided on the boundary of the school to ensure no conflict between land uses. However, given the location of the holes and tees this is unlikely to be significant.

Within the proposed Campus site where any activity is proposed under the overhead power lines a health and safety assessment would be required and this will involve the transmission company requirements. A health and safety assessment will be required as part of the Planning Application process.

Primary School 02 (PS02)

The second primary school (PS02) will also be located within the community campus area. This central location is accessible to residents living in the centre and to the south of Countesswells. Located adjacent to the secondary school the primary school will have its own grounds and facilities but will benefit from sharing the facilities available within the campus.

Safe Routes to School

A significant proportion of movements within any new community will be trips to and from schools. The proposed new community at Countesswells proposes high quality education facilities for residents as well as children from the surrounding areas.

‘Safe Routes to Schools’ is a strategy that promotes safety and aims to encourage children’s trips to school by ‘sustainable’ forms of transport, such as walking & cycling or by Public Transport. These trips should be undertaken in a planned way to promote child safety and with the ultimate aims of reducing the amount of vehicular traffic to schools and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

The developers are committed to promoting Safe Routes to Schools which will be provided within the development and will implement a number of initiatives to ensure this is successful. Safe Routes to Schools has already been promoted initially through considered design of the development layout and provisions provided for pedestrians and cycles.

Within the design of the development layout the developers have taken specific cognisance of requirements to accommodate child access to the schools, ensuring, where practical, specified routes are overlooked and well lit, there are appropriate and safe crossings across roads and routes are well signed in a uniformly recognisable form for children to follow. Schools will be integrated with main residential areas to avoid the need for children to travel long distances to school.

Schools will prioritise access to children who are walking and cycling by methods such as ensuring pedestrian / cycle accesses are located at the easiest points of access to the school ground and a short distance from school buildings. Secure cycle parking will be provided near the main entrances and away from car parking areas to avoid potential conflicts.

Through ongoing liaison, working with ACC's School Travel Coordinator, each school will create a School Travel Plan specific to that school. In addition to the Council's School Travel planning team there will be a number of other interested parties consulted including local police, local health authorities, parents & children and the local community. The schools will then work with the parents and children to implement relevant measures to encourage safe and sustainable travel to school.

The School Travel Plans will not only include information on the benefits of children travelling to school sustainably, be it on foot, bicycle or bus, but also highlight the provisions incorporated within the new development overall to accommodate these trips and highlight the most direct and safest routes.

Interim transport for school access will be provided prior to the opening of the first primary school.





fig. 111: Proposed location of schools



## 5.7 Development Character

There are seven main character areas within Countesswells. The plan opposite identifies the location of the character areas at a Development Framework level. These character areas have been informed by the existing landscape, the topography and the location within the development and should inform and influence the ongoing design of any subsequent masterplans, detail layouts, parks and open space design and architecture.

### 5.6.7 Creating Character

Site analysis and design development has led to the identification of the character areas. A description of the desired character and key character forming aspects for each area is provided on the following pages. The purpose of this is to inform the development and future design of buildings, streets and spaces within each character area, to create distinctiveness across the site and avoid a homogenous built environment.

#### Landscape Character

The distinctive woodland setting, existing topography and landscape structure of open spaces established at Countesswells provides the key character forming elements that tie the whole development structure together, offering a consistent and coherent identity across the site.

As has been set out elsewhere in the document, the existing landscape setting of Countesswells, in particular the surrounding woodland areas of Countesswells, Hazlehead and Foggieton present significant factors in defining the character at Countesswells. The ecological, hydrological and recreational systems associated with these woodland areas and the farmland between have had a tremendous impact on the evolution of the Framework and have also influenced the identification of various character areas illustrated opposite. The sensitive treatment and successful integration of the existing features that define the Countesswells landscape is critical to the success of development and the proposed landscape structure has been defined to ensure they are respected in the layout. The landscape strategy has sought to provide a structure of public park and spaces that incorporates and connects these features within the proposed development structure. Through incorporating these features in the core spaces the users can appreciate the existing landscape character and understand the landscape as part of Countesswells.

These core spaces are valuable environments not only for ecological and hydrological improvement, but for recreation and as a setting to the new urban area. Framework blocks have been defined by the desire to respect the existing landscape structure and the character descriptions on the following pages will describe how this could be achieved.

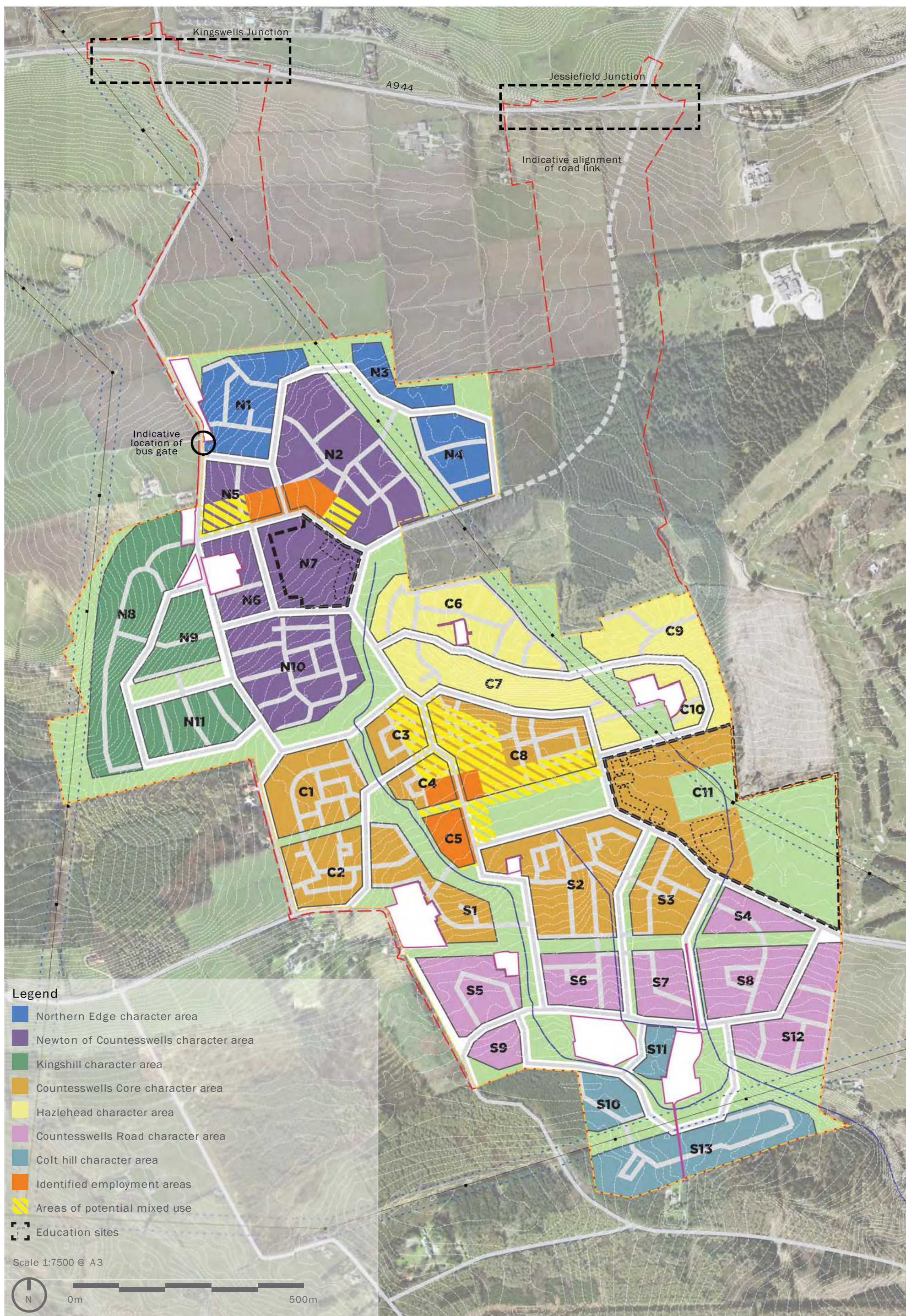
#### Built Form

As a new community set on its own, architecture and urban form will have a crucial role in defining a specific character for Countesswells. The character areas set out in this section should not only influence the character of the respective public realm and urban form, but also drive the architectural identity through material selection, form and detailing to provide variety. These styles should strive to provide an identity that is particular to the character areas identified whilst also demonstrating a forward-looking cohesive vision for Countesswells.



fig. 115: Aerial view of Countesswells site area from south east







5.7.1 Northern Edge character area

The character of this area is made up of the development blocks at the north of the site. A key character defining element of this area is the existing and proposed areas of structural woodland that should enclose and wrap around development in this location. These new areas of mixed woodland should connect with the existing Hazlehead woodland. The woodland should provide a setting for development in this area, restricting views to Countesswells from the north and providing shelter to development.

Key character aspects:

- Hazlehead woodland provides a soft edge to development;
- The eastern edge of this area where it addresses the existing woodland should be designed accordingly taking account of the sensitive nature of this location;
- Structural woodland planting along the ridge provides an attractive edge to the north;
- This structural planting proposed along the Northern Edge should have soft and varied edges so that it appears naturalistic from all directions and adds aesthetic value;
- The western edge of this area should be designed accordingly to the location adjacent to the existing road and in keeping with the existing properties that surround these areas;
- The woodland areas should be accessible to the public and include path connections to Hazlehead;
- Predominantly detached and semi-detached properties;
- Tree lined streets;
- Large front gardens well defined by hedges or walls to street frontages; and
- The woodland character should be carried through the streets and spaces within the block to create a rural edge feel that is appropriate to the location on the edge of the development.



5.7.2 Newton of Countesswells character area

The character of the Newton of Countesswells area should reflect the more central location within the development, providing some more higher density development in a more formal arrangement. The area located between Kirk Brae (C189) and the primary north - south street link including the Cults Burn corridor should be permeable with clear links between adjacent areas. The character of the area will be defined by the streets and spaces that form its edges.

This area should have a more urban character focused around the area identified for mixed uses and employment land to the north of the primary school and extending to meet the primary street which runs alongside the open space of the Cults Burn Corridor.

Key character aspects:

- The area should contain a variety of buildings types increasing in density towards the mixed use centre;
- The primary school building should provide a landmark within this area, overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor;
- South of the primary school the edge to the Cults Burn Corridor should be defined by a formal built edge, with buildings overlooking the space;
- The western edge of the area should reflect the existing character of Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells with larger detached properties fronting the street;
- The development form should be permeable providing a number of street and pedestrian connections from Kirk Brae (C189) to the Cults Burn Corridor;
- Buildings distinctive through height or form should provide landmarks on the corners of the block addressing areas of open space;
- Cults Burn Corridor should provide an area of public open space incorporating the watercourse in a linear park and a setting for the primary school;
- The Cults Burn Corridor should provide a core area of open space connecting Countesswells and Hazlehead woodland and should have the feel of a more 'upland' park reflected in the soft landscape species palette and future management regime;
- The primary street approaching the site from the A944 to the east should be designed appropriately as an approach to Countesswells with buildings addressing the street; and
- Hazledean Park. A public space defined by adjacent buildings and streets should follow the alignment of the pylons and include allotments and play areas where feasible.





5.7.3 Kingshill character area

The surrounding woodland and topography of this area will be the biggest factor in defining the character of the area. To the north, the slopes are steeper with an open aspect allowing good views east and south. The character should be less formal with large residential plots and streets aligned to respond to the topography. The layout should be more varied and flexible to allow larger detached properties to benefit from the aspect and elevated views east over Countesswells to the City and in some areas to the North Sea.

To the south of the existing woodland belt the surrounding woodland is the key character defining feature, enclosing the development area.

Key character aspects:

- The street pattern should work with the topography where possible - running along the contours;
- On the steeper slopes low density development should be set within the slopes appropriate for split level buildings and large gardens to minimise the impact;
- On the higher areas streets and buildings should be orientated to benefit from the southerly aspect and views;
- Development should predominantly be made up of detached and semi-detached properties with some terraced properties adjacent to Kirk Brae (C189);
- Kirk Brae (C189) should be integrated as a street with buildings addressing it and gaining direct access from it;
- Existing properties and the accesses to existing properties to the west should be integrated within the layout;
- The existing belt of woodland should be retained to form distinct development areas, provide shelter and adding character;
- Countesswells woodland should be respected and protected through the provision of an area of public open space along the edge; and
- The spaces next to the woodland must be overlooked by adjacent housing and should contain footpath links to the existing path network within the woodland.



5.7.4 Hazlehead

This area should be characterised by the lower density residential development set on the south facing slopes with the backdrop of the adjacent Hazlehead woodland. With views over Countesswells centre to the Dee valley this area should be predominantly detached family homes that will allow for development on the steeper slopes.

Key character aspects:

- Buildings and streets should be aligned to benefit from the south facing slope with views over Countesswells to the River Dee valley;
- The backdrop to Hazlehead woodland should be protected and enhanced as part of the open space structure with some buildings overlooking the space;
- The eastern edge adjacent to Hazlehead woodland should be designed accordingly taking account of the sensitive nature of this edge;
- The streets should follow the contours to minimise cut and fill;
- The topography offers the opportunity to promote split level buildings within this zone;
- Areas of higher density development should be located on areas of flatter ground, adjacent to the community core, primary streets and overlooking the Cults Burn Corridor;
- The layout should incorporate direct footpath connections to the community core; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties at Bogskethy and Wardhead should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.





5.7.5 Countesswells Core character area

A distinctively urban area, the town centre will be clearly recognisable within Countesswells. The density, mix, variety and height of the built form will combine to create a legible centre to the development. As well as higher density residential development the area will include a variety of non-residential uses including the Academy, sports facilities, shops, office space and community buildings.

Key character aspects:

- The area will be defined by higher density residential development set around the Central Park and primary streets;
- Where non-residential uses are included they should generally be on the ground floor with offices or residential uses above;
- Development in this area should generally take the form of perimeter blocks with courtyard parking;
- Appropriate retail to meet the local need could be integrated into the block structure with its car parking wrapped by residential properties. In terms of the scale of retail development within Countesswells, a Supermarket is proposed within the settlement core to meet the needs of the new community and satisfy the requirements highlighted in the 2013 Retail Study.
- The Central Park should be the most distinctive and well used space within Countesswells incorporating formal play, sports, civic spaces, open parkland, opportunities for pavilions and SUDs in a formal arrangement;
- The building frontage to the north overlooking the park should be composed of three and four storey buildings creating a strong urban facade characterised by its south facing aspect;
- A high quality civic space should be included at the western end of the park. The buildings surrounding the space should provide opportunities for shops and other non-residential uses with no set back to activate and bring vibrancy to the space;
- The community campus should be located to the eastern end of the park with the Academy building forming a landmark;
- To the south of the park the character should be more residential with buildings set behind the street overlooking the park;
- The primary north - south street should have an distinctly urban character through this area. Buildings should front directly on to the street with opportunities for non-residential uses on the ground floor;
- The Cults Burn Corridor should form a distinct area of informal open space through this area, incorporating the re-aligned watercourse and SUDs within a naturalistic public space;
- To the west, Kirk Brae (C189) on approach to Kingswells should be realigned in line with the Development Framework to form a street within Countesswells with detached properties gaining direct access from the street;
- Development to the west of the Cults Burn Corridor should generally be of a lower density than that to the east surrounding the Central Park;
- The provision of an open space corridor for Core Path 57 should form a key aspect of this character area with clear and direct pedestrian links to Countesswells Woodland identified; and
- The design of Blacktop Road as it enters Countesswells should provide a direct route to the centre of Countesswells and reflect the rural to urban transition through the built form.





5.7.6 Countesswells Road character area

The Countesswells Road character area relates to the development areas that address Countesswells Road and to the south of this key route through the site. This area will be characterised by the Countesswells Road and the existing field boundaries walls that provide distinctive features in the area and will be retained as part of core spaces within the development.

Key character aspects:

- Countesswells Road should be closed as a road when alternative streets within the development are completed. The existing roads surface will be redesigned appropriately as an area open space incorporating a pedestrian path.
- Countesswells Road and associated walls and tree planting will be retained as a strategic path link;
- A new road link must be provided connecting Countesswells Road to the Central Park;
- A variety of access lanes, areas of open space and large gardens should be used along the length of the Countesswells Road to allow adjacent buildings to address the space to ensure it feels safe and attractive to users;
- Where streets cross Countesswells Road the built form and space should define the intersection;
- Existing field boundaries, woodland strips and watercourses should be retained and integrated into the block structure north and south of Countesswells Road;
- SUDs and watercourses should be incorporated into the structure of existing field boundaries;
- Where the eastern edge is open to views from the east it should not be designed as a ‘screened edge’ but should provide a positive outward looking built edge to the development on approach from Countesswells Road.
- Cults Burn Corridor should provide a feature as it passes through this area; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties accessed from and adjacent to Countesswells Road should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.

5.7.7 Colthill character area

A lower density residential areas on the southern edge of Countesswells. This area should be characterised by the rural edge location, the plantation woodland to the south, existing field boundaries and the Cults Burn Corridor.

Key character aspects:

- Existing wetland areas and watercourses retained within strategic open space structure;
- The relationship of the built areas with the woodland to the south;
- To the eastern end of the Cults Burn park area the adjacent properties should be located at the top of the slope overlooking the park area;
- The Cults Burn park should incorporate SUDs and have a semi natural wetland character in this area with limited public access restricted to paths and walkways;
- Meadowbank Park should provide a more formal park area incorporating an equipped play area and allotments;
- Properties north and south of the park should overlook the areas of open space;
- An access track to Meadowbank from Kirk Brae (C189) through to Countesswells Road must be maintained through the development and areas of open space; and
- The setting and access of the existing properties at Meadowbank should be respected and carefully considered in the layout.

