

# Aberdeen

city centre masterplan and delivery programme

Issue 2 : June 2015 (Final Version)

**Masterplan Report**



**Shaping  
Aberdeen**

**BDP.**

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**Sharp, precise, crystalline, the Granite City of Aberdeen exudes permanence, resolute in the face of occasional easterly gales. Sparkling in sunshine or rain, Aberdeen's granite townscapes are an internationally recognisable and distinctive signature.**

Far from grey, Aberdeen's townscape is in fact punctuated with colour; from the imposing bulk and primary colours of the rig supply vessels seemingly parked on Market Street itself, to the deep greens of the formal squares and gardens, the blue of the big skies and the ever changing colour matrix of people bustling about the city centre. But there could be more colour and indeed the architecture of the city is a perfect canvas for creative and colourful lighting.

The granite architecture is however primarily a setting for the life of the city, and it is people that make a city. Aberdonians are steeped in the history of their city and have an understated pride and passion for the place that can surprise a visitor conditioned to expect a more reserved response. And there is a lot to celebrate; from the living maritime history of the city manifest in the harbour that nestles within the city centre, to the admired architecture and townscapes of Union Street and the underlying medieval streets and kirks.

But after the striking and world class built environment becomes merely the accepted normality of being in Aberdeen, the thing that strikes the visitor to Aberdeen is the sense of entrepreneurship, commerce and industriousness. The impact of an operational harbour, the presence of so many businesses engaged in the science and physical graft of oil and gas extraction, the vitality and expertise of the universities and the many independent and cutting edge small businesses, café bars and services bubbling up across the city centre, all serve to project a confidence and purpose that is infectious.

There is no doubt that this is also an international city. From the airport to the roll call of global energy companies, and from the voices of a cosmopolitan student and working population to the staging of global conferences, this is a city that welcomes the world and is a key player in global economies. The modest scale of the city itself makes this an unusually dominant and important aspect of the city centre, a city successfully punching above the weight its scale might suggest.

If that is Aberdeen today then the future offers great opportunities. Taken together, Aberdeen City and Shire have great potential. Investment in the infrastructure of the area will help to create the platform for further growth and the Aberdeen Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) has identified the key infrastructure projects. The growth of energy related and new economic sectors such as life sciences and tourism, to take advantage of the considerable skills and talent pool adds up to a considerable economic potential and this is reflected in the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Futures (ACSEF) report. Both the SIP and the ACSEF reports highlight the importance of the city centre to the realisation of the full potential of the City and Shire and it is in that context that this city centre Masterplan and Delivery Programme sits.

# 1 Introduction

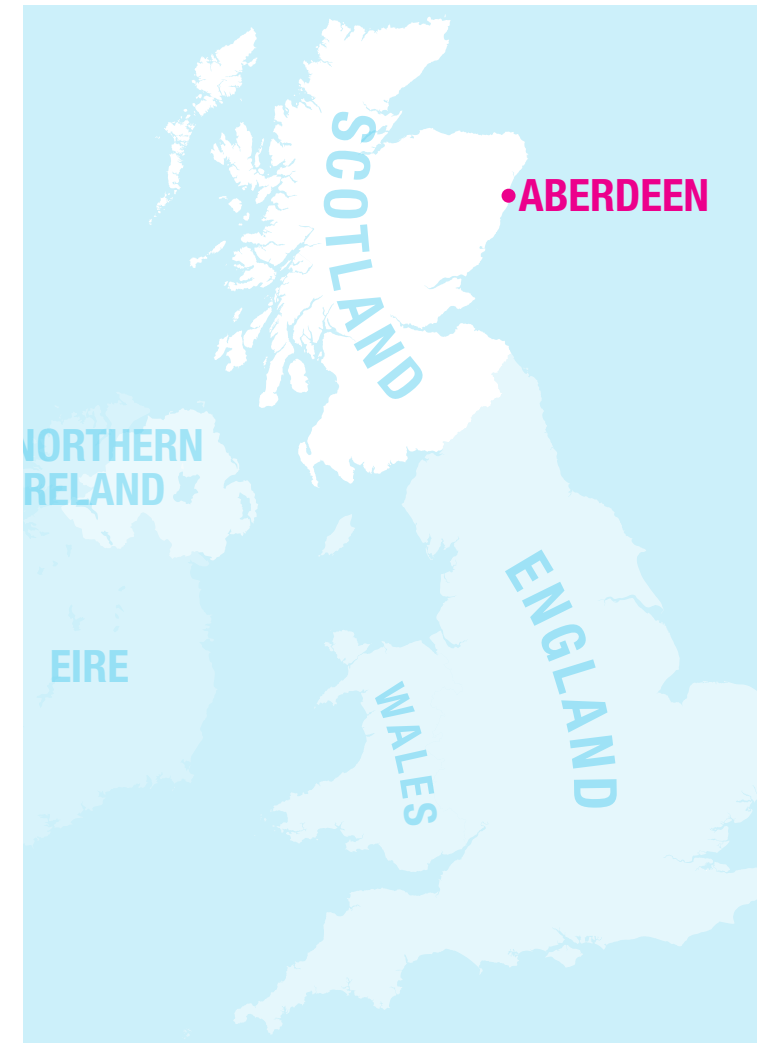
**This masterplan report outlines a 20 year development strategy for Aberdeen City Centre. It identifies a series of ambitious but deliverable projects that will support future economic growth and will secure more benefits and opportunities for the communities of Aberdeen City and Shire. The projects are complemented by a robust, costed and achievable delivery programme and together these provide a framework for managing city centre development up to 2035.**

The suite of documents that together comprise the masterplan and delivery programme includes:

- Masterplan Report – describes the overall vision and objectives for Aberdeen City Centre and a detailed description of strategies, projects and areas of intervention.
- Executive Summary – a concise summary of the masterplan and delivery programme.
- Appendix A: Stakeholder Consultation

Report – description of the three stages of stakeholder engagement and the associated findings and conclusions.

- Appendix B: Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) - further information related to the transportation aspects contained within the masterplan, providing a multi-modal strategy that identifies how transport will develop within the city centre over the lifespan of the masterplan.
- Appendix C: Delivery Plan – an explanation of how the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan projects will be delivered, including the project outputs and the key actions required to ensure delivery.
- Appendix D: Business Case –detailed scoping of the masterplan strategy and projects, providing decision makers, stakeholders and the public with a management tool for evidence-based and transparent decision making.
- Appendix E: Delivery Structures – a review of potential masterplan delivery models.



## The need for a city centre masterplan

Cities are constantly reassessing themselves, searching for new ways to address local challenges and to remain competitive in global markets and economies. Experience from across the world demonstrates the importance of thriving, productive, attractive and prosperous city centres for their wider regions. City centres are where investment impact can often be maximised, where returns in terms of economic impact and community benefit are the greatest and where momentum is built. A more attractive, prosperous and resilient Aberdeen city centre can provide the basis for a more successful City, Shire and North East Scotland region.

With renewed international focus on cities and city centres as drivers of growth there is a need to provide Aberdeen city centre with strategic direction to ensure it regains its position as a remarkable destination for citizens, visitors and businesses. The masterplan provides policy makers, landowners, employers, residents, investors and developers with a clear direction for future development and growth and helps unite decision makers towards a common goal. The Economic Action Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire 2013-2018, 'Building on Success' (ACSEF, 2013) espouses a vision for the delivery of economic growth and an improved quality of life by,

'Creating an inclusive, energised and sustainable future for Aberdeen City and Shire'. City centre regeneration is a key facet of this vision and is a priority project of the Aberdeen Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP), which identifies the enabling infrastructure needed to realise the city's aspirations. The city centre masterplan (and accompanying delivery plan) sets out in more detail the physical development projects and non-physical initiatives related to city centre regeneration.

## The status of the masterplan

The masterplan has been approved by Aberdeen City Council and the principles outlined herein will be used to inform future decisions by the council and other stakeholders undertaking development in the city centre. The masterplan will be embedded in future planning policy and control of development through the revised Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2016) and where more detailed guidance is necessary, this will be provided through Supplementary Planning Guidance. An amount of design work has been carried out to date in order to engage with stakeholders and test the overall viability of the masterplan proposals and it is expected that more detailed masterplanning and feasibility studies will follow as individual projects are implemented.

## A collaborative process

The masterplan has been developed through a collaborative process of engagement with key stakeholders, including the local community, and is underpinned by a detailed evidence base contained in the following documents:

- Market review – analysis of the Aberdeen City Centre property market.
- Peer cities review – a review of comparable and competitive World Cities to illustrate alternative approaches to managing and securing new city development.
- Socio-economic review – analysis of the current socio economic conditions within Aberdeen City Centre.
- Townscape review – analysis of the value and quality of the built environment in Aberdeen City Centre.
- Transport review – analysis of the current transport network and the challenges facing Aberdeen City Centre.
- Culture, tourism and visitor economy review – analysis of the issues and opportunities relating to culture, tourism and the visitor economy in Aberdeen City Centre.
- Flood risk and drainage assessment – analysis of flood risk and in Aberdeen City Centre.

Engagement with local residents and stakeholders was undertaken in three stages as the masterplan was progressed. During the final stage over 1,000 people visited the consultation exhibition. In total over 1,500 people left feedback at the exhibition and online. A separate report detailing the results of the three consultation exercises is available (Appendix A: Stakeholder Consultation Report).

The consultation process has informed the development of the Masterplan in diverse, but distinct ways:

- (1) By contributing issues as part of the analysis (both from open community and targeted sectoral sessions)
- (2) By influencing the vision and thematic objectives (which had high levels of support in the feedback)
- (3) By contributing to the projects and proposals (many of which had come from the community directly - even though many also came from the team too, as a logical part of shared analysis – leading to strong support levels of between 72 and 94%)

It is clear from analysis of the inputs that there is not a singular, consistent community (or business) view - that would be an illogical and unrealistic expectation of most cities. We cannot therefore present it as a purely bottom-up 'community plan' as some people clearly depart from specific parts of it, and the consultant team have had

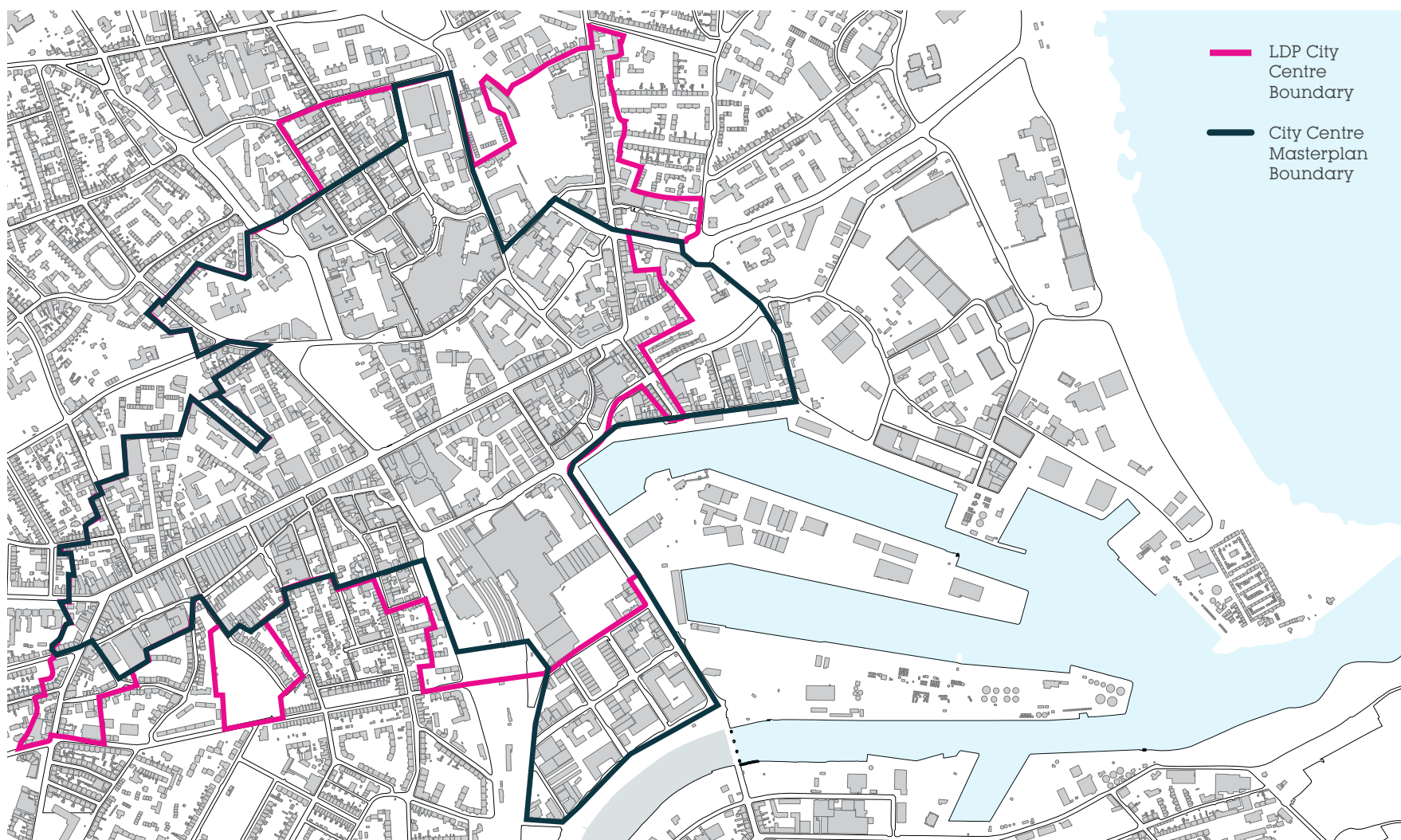
to add their professional insight and judgement.

However, we can say that it is a community and business shaped plan, with diverse inputs from local people and organisations, old and young, showing strong support for the direction of the plan – and indeed for the very importance of having a long term plan. Key community supported themes and projects have included:

- Shift towards people-friendly centre – spaces, buildings and accessibility
- Shift in bias from vehicles towards pedestrians, cyclists and mobility impaired
- Push for more variety, choice, activity and reasons to be in the centre
- Making more of the heritage and special identity of the place, with particular emphasis on Union Street
- Further developing activities such as culture and leisure – in tandem with improving the retail and commercial offer.

## The extent of the masterplan

The masterplan focuses on areas of opportunity within and close to the city centre and as a consequence, the masterplan area does not mirror (or replace) the city centre boundary as defined in the adopted Local Development Plan (2012).





## 2 The Story of Aberdeen City Centre

### Layers of history

**Aberdeen city centre has constantly adapted to address the needs, aspirations and economic opportunities of the day. The urban form of present day Aberdeen is composed of distinct layers that bear witness to these periods of the city's past. Understanding some of the events that have influenced the development of the city centre and identifying the characteristics of Aberdeen, help inform future plans.**

### Early settlement

Human occupation of present day Aberdeen can be traced back to the Stone Age. The Dee and the Don provided a source of food and shelter and a route inland, which attracted early colonisers to the area.

### Medieval urbanisation

The juxtaposition of the sea to the east and south, a loch to the north-west and surrounding marshes provided a defensible and attractive position for establishing the township of 'New' Aberdeen at the western base of St Katherine's Hill in 1136. The medieval township formed around Ship Row, Netherkirkgate, Correction Wynd, Back Wynd, Flourmill Lane and Carnegie's Brae with six ports, or payable entrances into the town, established at Justice, Gallowgate, Futtie, Upperkirkgate, Netherkirkgate and Shiprow.

During this period the growing influence of the town both economically and socially led to the development of Castlegate as Aberdeen's market place and administrative centre. The regional significance of the town was also expressed in one of the largest burgh kirks in Scotland (Kirk of St Nicholas) and the establishment of King's College in Old Aberdeen and latterly Marischal College on Broad Street.



**Map of Aberdeen - 1661**

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## Planned expansion

New trade connections with Scandinavia and the Baltic during the Middle Ages lead to the growth and development of the city of Aberdeen and its international standing. The chief export prior to the eighteenth century was stockings, which was succeeded by cloth and later granite.

Expansion of the port brought rapid population growth and the restrictions of the medieval street network lead to the first planned street, Marischal Street, which enhanced linkages between the port and Castlegate. Other streets were added to keep pace, the most significant being Union Street, which entailed the removal of the top section of St Katherine's Hill and the construction of a bridge and series of vaults on which the level street was laid. The confidence and status of the city was also expressed in the first major civic buildings including the Trinity Hall, the Music Hall and an enclosed market.

## Densification

The coming of the railway to Aberdeen resulted in the creation of the Denburn and Rosemount Viaducts (enabling the further development of land at Schoolhill), as well as the culverting of the River Denburn. The latter led to the creation of a new park in the heart of the city centre - Union Terrace Gardens.

The railway and increased trade from the port (due to the tea trade and trawl fishing industry) led to further city densification. A tram system was developed along the key arterial routes into the city and dense residential and commercial development clustered along these routes. Union Street was by now established as the City's principal street and retail centre, comprising a mix of grand Georgian, Victorian and Art Deco buildings.

## Redevelopment

Following the arrival of the offshore oil and gas industry in the 1970s, the port was virtually rebuilt. However, the economic and population growth associated with this industry was mainly concentrated on the periphery of the city in new industrial estates and suburban communities, often only accessible by car. Growing car ownership and congestion led to various road building projects in the city centre. Other areas of the city were demolished and reconfigured to meet the need for new public housing (e.g. Marischal Court) or to reflect the trend for covered shopping centres.

Concern at the detrimental impact of post war development on the character of the city centre resulted in the designation of the Union Street Conservation Area and various projects to rehabilitate the historic core through refurbishment and

improved public realm (e.g. Merchant Quarter Townscape Heritage Initiative, Marischal College refurbishment and public realm works on Belmont Street).

## Conclusion

Aberdeen city centre has steadily established itself as a spiritual, intellectual and trading centre over the course of a thousand years. By exerting itself as the dominant centre of the region and applying its influence overseas, the City generated the wealth and confidence to invest in grand projects that have contributed to the status and majesty of the city centre seen today.

In more recent times investment in the city centre has not kept pace with the periphery of the city. There is now a renewed appreciation of the social, cultural and economic value of city centres, Aberdeen city centre needs to reassert itself with a clear vision that establishes future priorities. However, this should be achieved in a way which reflects the unique history of the city so that Aberdeen remains distinctive and rooted in place and culture.

### 3 Aberdeen Today

**Around 225,000 people live within the Aberdeen City Council area, but as the main urban centre for North East Scotland, Aberdeen city centre has a wider catchment of around 700,000 people. Aberdeen city centre will experience both major growth opportunities and significant challenges to its development over the next 25 years, as the city continues to compete for economic growth and a higher quality of life, as the energy sector continues to develop, other business sectors grow, and the city centre reasserts itself as a major economic asset to the benefit of residents, business and visitors. The following highlights from the masterplan evidence base, illustrate some of the key opportunities and challenges for Aberdeen city centre.**

**Energy will remain the primary driver of Aberdeen's economic prosperity for the next 25 years.**

The masterplan needs to ensure that the energy sector is sustained and remains at the core of Aberdeen's economy including the transition in coming years to a low carbon economy, enabling skills and knowledge in the oil and gas sector to transfer to the renewable energy sector. Despite the oil price fall in 2015 there are signs that the energy sector will continue to grow, and Aberdeen along with it, but there is no room for complacency as the supply and innovation chain that grew up on the back of North Sea oil and gas reserves is a more footloose global industry. There is a need to identify other economic sectors that will ensure economic resilience over the longer term. Aberdeen's position as the 5th most innovative city in the UK with the highest business start up rate in the UK outside London, is a positive sign for future economic diversity and resilience.

**Aberdeen's status as a global energy hub strongly influences high demand for property in the City and Shire.**

The office market is particularly strong. Prime office rents are the highest of all UK regional centres (£31-50 - cost /sq ft) and there has been an annual take up of 800,000 sq ft over the last 5 years. Substantial speculative development is

taking place but there has been a move of employers out of the city centre in recent years (7,000 jobs lost in the city centre between 2008-2012) to new business parks at the city periphery. In many respects, the city centre is no longer the commercial heart of the functional economic area and the masterplan must recast the city centre's role to respond to this.

**Aberdeen is Scotland's least deprived city.**

Aberdeen has the 2nd lowest claimant rate in the UK for Job Seekers Allowance but it is notable that unemployment is higher within the central areas of Aberdeen. The movement of jobs from the city centre to the city edges in recent years, potentially exacerbates this situation. Skills gaps are also emerging, particularly in service industries. The city needs to ensure it can attract skilled people to fill these skills gaps, and the future skills needs of key industries, in order to be successful. 1 in 7 people in Aberdeen is a university student and 43% of graduates remain in the city. Affordability of housing is a significant economic challenge, which could be hindering labour market activity, as lower paid workers are priced out of the housing market; house prices have increased by 99% in the last 10 years (3 times the Scottish average, 40% more than in London).



## Aberdeen city centre's character





Aberdeen city centre's challenges





**Growing populations in both Aberdeen City and Shire result in high demand for housing, which is exacerbated by low levels of housing completions within the past 20 years, particularly in the city centre.**

On the basis that the market for new residential development in Aberdeen and Shire is so strong (2,364 new houses are required every year until 2031), there is clear scope to increase the residential population in the heart of the city centre, in a way that adds to the vibrancy of the city centre, and that does not impact on the commercial attractiveness of the city centre.

**Aberdeen is Scotland's fastest growing business tourism destination but Aberdeen is significantly underperforming as a short break holiday destination despite possessing many of the required attributes.**

1.1 million tourists came to Aberdeen in 2013, spending £340 million – ¾ of visits were for business and 1 in 5 were from outside the UK. There is a reasonable mix of hotels, attractions, shops and restaurants for a city of its size and Aberdeen is a top performing UK retail centre (the city centre serves a retail catchment of 330,000 and has a 7% vacancy rate compared to the UK average of 12%), however, there is a need to improve hotel choice and deliver more district retail and leisure attractions

to complement weekday focused business visits with more leisure visitors.

**Aberdeen has a multilayered, historic urban fabric with many positive characteristics.**

The city centre's waterfronts, its varied topography, historic skyline, the underlying medieval fabric, the consistent use of granite and the magnificent urban set piece of Union Street form a very distinctive sense of place. Modern interventions over the past 40 years have proved less rewarding, however, and have often negatively impacted on the design, accessibility and vibrancy of the city centre and its historic fabric.

**Access and connectivity is perceived to be poor, with a movement network biased towards vehicles.**

The walking environment throughout the city centre is generally secondary to vehicular movement, which limits the potential of the public realm as a space for people to inhabit and enjoy. Cycling is relatively popular in Aberdeen but cycling access is constrained by a wider lack of coherence and appropriate connections to cycle parking facilities within the city centre. There is a perception that bus travel is unreliable and therefore an unattractive option to access the city centre. Aberdeen has the lowest bus modal split of the four main

Scottish cities, according to the 2011 Census (14.06%).

**Aberdeen is a city rich in natural assets which are integral to the look, feel and culture of the city.**

Amongst the urban granite, the city centre boasts a number of green spaces and a waterside setting, which together provide natural space and vistas that fulfil a vital role in health and wellbeing in a busy urban environment. There is also a growing evidence base to highlight the value of green and blue infrastructure from climate change resilience to recreation use, biodiversity enhancement and land value. Therefore, the maintenance and enhancement of Aberdeen's natural assets will play a contributing factor to the future success of the city. In a space-limited urban environment, realising the potential of Aberdeen's natural assets will require a focus on existing green and blue infrastructure so as to reap multiple benefits for the city now and in a changing economic and environmental climate.

**Aberdeen ranks highly for quality of life but this is not reflected in the quality of the city centre environment.**

Part of the city centre has been declared an Air Quality Management Zone and other environmental issues such as the quality and upkeep of streets and shop

fronts, the limited quality of green space and green infrastructure and nuisance caused by an evening economy dominated by alcohol have a negative impact on quality of life. The Masterplan must be a means of improving the quality of the environment to both encourage investment and improve the quality of life for all Aberdeen residents. Environmental improvements must be considered with a view to not only the immediate need, but also future environmental stresses. The Masterplan must build in resilience to allow the city to adapt and flourish in future climate conditions and ensure the longevity of the liveable city.

## 4 The Vision for Aberdeen City Centre

**The Economic Action Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire 2013-2018 'Building on Success' (ACSEF, 2013) promotes a vision for the delivery of economic growth and an improved quality of life based on; 'Creating an inclusive, energised and sustainable future for Aberdeen City and Shire'. City centre regeneration is a key facet of this vision.**

### **The international character of Aberdeen**

Access to the sea and relative remoteness from the capitals of London and Edinburgh allowed Aberdeen to forge its own path over the centuries and develop international trading links. Proximity to North Sea oil and gas reserves further boosted Aberdeen's global standing. Today Aberdeen is one of the most influential energy cities in the world, recognised by its title as the Energy Capital of Europe.

In Aberdeen there is a major concentration of international energy related businesses, agencies, government bodies and research institutes and this is undoubtedly reflected in the population of the City and Shire. The demand for specialist skills and expertise draws on a global pool of talent and Aberdeen has the highest population share of non UK born residents (16%) in Scotland. There is a particular socio-economic profile that displays significant characteristics of prosperity, from rates of economic activity to levels of car ownership. There is also a significant degree of transience, driven by high student numbers, contract employment, movement of staff of international firms between locations and the logistics of transferring personnel to and from offshore installations.

Aberdeen's rich history, visible in the built environment, also lends a unique, distinctive and globally recognisable image to the city. The combination of the urban planning set-piece of Union Street, the crystalline granite architecture, and the immediate maritime relationship, sets Aberdeen apart. In pure townscape terms, this is an internationally distinctive place.

Notwithstanding the above, it is apparent that the wider global significance of Aberdeen is not benefitting or reflected in the city centre. Despite the wealth of the wider area, there are significant pockets of deprivation in the city. Despite an international population that might be expected to show a strong tendency for urban living and making good use of city centre services, the city centre does not have a particularly cosmopolitan retail and leisure offer or animated and well-used public spaces. Despite world class built heritage, more recent developments have failed to deliver world class design.

**In summary, Aberdeen has a strong international economy, workforce, history and outlook. The city centre should reflect this international character.**

## Energy for change

The masterplan engagement process harnessed local people's passions for their city centre. A consensus formed among stakeholders and the local community that for a city of Aberdeen's international economic and historical significance, the city centre is not meeting people's aspirations for a city centre.

Local people commonly expressed the need for the city centre to 'attract,' suggesting that people are seeking more and stronger reasons to visit and participate in the life of the city centre.

## The vision

There are two driving forces to the vision for the city centre:

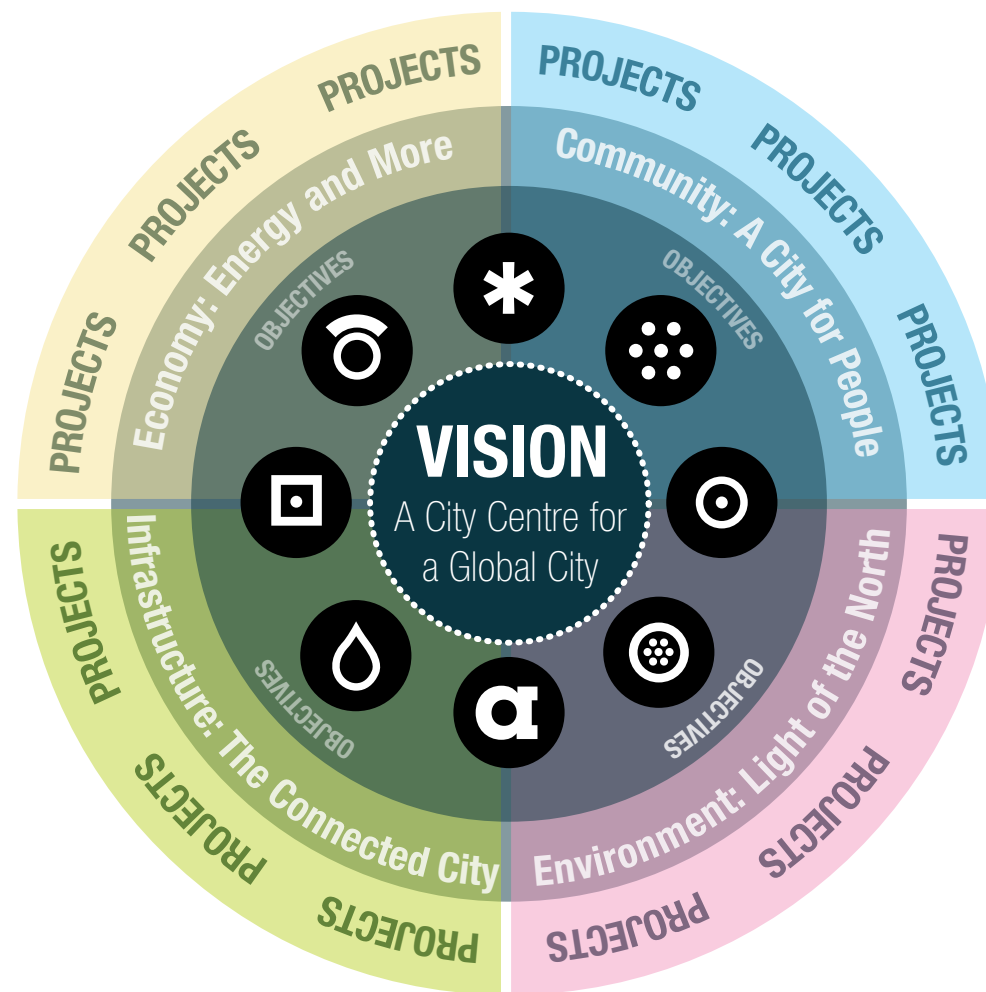
- A globally significant economic role, continuing to build on expertise in energy but looking beyond to new economic sectors.
- A population with a strong desire to see positive change in their city centre.

So the vision for Aberdeen city centre is as follows:

**Aberdeen:**  
A city centre for  
a global city

And the summary of the masterplan and delivery programme purpose is:

**Energising the city  
centre to deliver  
prosperity and  
better quality of life  
for all.**



### The masterplan framework comprises:

Vision: The aspiration for the city centre.  
 Objectives: The measureable challenges.  
 Themes: Overarching policies.  
 Projects: The means of achieving the vision.



## 5 Masterplan Objectives

**The eight masterplan objectives provide a framework for addressing the individual challenges facing the city centre and delivering the vision. The objectives are the reference points for benchmarking the success of the city centre masterplan as implementation proceeds. The projects and proposals that form the masterplan that should meet and fulfil these cross-cutting objectives.**

### Changing perceptions

Over the last 40 years Aberdeen has transformed into one of the most influential energy cities in the world and is rightly considered to be a global energy hub. With more than 1,000 businesses in the oil and gas sector and 38 billion barrels of oil having been produced from the UK Continental Shelf, this sector has had a significant impact on the economy of Aberdeen.

Not surprisingly perceptions of Aberdeen have largely been shaped around the oil and gas sectors. These perceptions of Aberdeen as the 'oil capital of Europe' can give rise to the negative connotations of pollution, congestion, remoteness, an expensive city, a lack of cultural activity and a dominance of one sector to the detriment of others. These perceptions can combine to have a negative effect on Aberdeen's ability to attract investment (public and private), tourists, students and residents.

Aberdeen will position itself as more than an energy city. It will become known as an international business hub with a cosmopolitan and vibrant city centre that displays real distinctiveness and colour. Aberdeen's inherent energy and creativity will be showcased to potential investors and visitors to the city. By re-energising Aberdeen city centre, the aim is to create a city centre that people are proud to live and work in, that people want to visit and a city centre where there is always something happening or something to see, be it music, food, events, sport or art.



## Growing the city centre employment base

In recent years the number of jobs in Aberdeen city centre has decreased and whilst oil and gas employment is still important (about one in ten jobs within the city centre), there is evidence of a reorientation towards the service sector (70% of jobs) and specifically retail (20% of jobs). With the negative trends in employment generally and uncertainty in both the oil and gas and retail sectors, there is a danger of further job losses and the city centre losing its function in the wider region.

For many, Aberdeen is the commercial shop window for the region; less employment and commercial activity will have an impact upon perceptions of the city that could ultimately have a negative impact upon the wider region. Conversely, a thriving, dynamic commercial centre will better reflect the prosperity and opportunity that already exists in the area and will contribute to growth in North East Scotland and the UK as a whole. The city centre needs to re-emerge as a centre for business, trade, innovation and enterprise, doing what it already does better; and encouraging new activities that broaden the economic base and create a more successful and resilient location.

Additional economic activities need to be accommodated within the centre.

Some of these will be directly related to energy activities, whilst others will be in new target sectors such as life-sciences, tourism and creative industries. Links to the knowledge and creative economy should also be exploited in order to maximise the potential for supply chain growth in sectors such as legal, financial and technology as well as cross-sectoral collaboration.

The masterplan must support activities that drive enterprise and entrepreneurialism, as well as innovation. This will require new networks and modern spaces to encourage knowledge transfer and collaboration as well as a radical change in perception, with Aberdeen being seen as a modern commercial centre. New workspaces and infrastructure are required to facilitate the needs of employers and entrepreneurs and to create the quality of environment that would be expected in a successful commercial centre.

The service sector (particularly in terms of retail and hospitality) should not be overlooked, as it will play a fundamental role in Aberdeen's future success. Increasing the breadth and depth of this offer alongside a step-change in quality, is critical to delivering the vision. Creating the skills and capacity to support the economy and to enhance local people's access to job opportunities is vitally important.







**A metropolitan outlook**

The 'City and Shire' is a term frequently used to denote the wider metropolitan area of Aberdeen and its hinterland. The interrelationship of issues and interests in the City and Shire is obvious and already results in a high degree of joint working and collaboration, around economic strategy, transport infrastructure and housing, for example.

ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future) is the public private partnership set up to drive economic development in the region. It brings together Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, Scottish Enterprise, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland and Visit Scotland with representatives from business and academia to ensure a collaborative approach to growing the economy and enhancing quality of life. The significance of the city centre in serving these wider interests is recognised by the partnership, indeed, city centre regeneration is identified as a key priority.

The setting of the objective of a metropolitan outlook is recognition of the fact that proposals for the city centre have a wider metropolitan context. This means recognising local needs but also ensuring that the city centre meets the needs of the wider population, including business interests, of the City, Shire and beyond, by developing appropriate business, entertainment and transport infrastructure and programmes. This will require a collaborative approach, allied to strong governance, which reflects the interests and responsibilities of stakeholders, public sector business and community.





## A living city for everyone

Housing is a key issue in Aberdeen with demand outstripping supply. Taken with the expected 28% increase in the population of Aberdeen over the next 25 years, there is a requirement for the construction of 2,364 new homes a year until 2031 (across City and Shire). Increasing the amount of housing available in the city centre is an obvious way to address the high demand for housing whilst also harnessing the increased levels of vibrancy that a resident population can bring to the city centre.

Demand for city centre housing is also on the increase, with more people aspiring to live and work in the urban core. This 'urban tendency' follows a pattern emerging in many European and American cities, where urban living and lifestyles are increasingly popular amongst young professional workers and families. Widening the choice of housing so that a more diverse population in terms of age, income and lifestyle can enjoy an urban lifestyle will ensure the development of sustainable, mixed communities.

There is also a need to create a more 'liveable' environment so that city centre living is an attractive choice. This requires provision of a more exciting range of housing options, tackling a range of environmental issues; (e.g. air quality, walkability, day / night vibrancy and safety) and enhancing accessibility to local amenities such as childcare, greenspace and community facilities.

Aberdeen's natural assets, the parks, green spaces and waterfront, are key to creating a livable environment and can safeguard against future climate events (e.g. drought, flooding). Improving the quality and accessibility of natural assets will yield multi-functional benefits including health and wellbeing, biodiversity, flood defence, recreation and sustainable transport.





## Made in Aberdeen

Aberdeen has a rich heritage and strong local traditions. As it evolves in the 21st century the city centre needs to retain its distinctiveness and avoid becoming an 'anywhere' place that has a standard and mainstream offer in terms of businesses, buildings, retail and corporate identity.

The city centre masterplan needs to foster the local character and distinctiveness of Aberdeen, exploiting the unique identity of the city in terms of its fine granite architecture, local produce (agricultural, seafood and whisky), literary connections, musical creativity, art and design. The approach should also be outward looking with regard to the increasingly international nature of the city and the potential for cross cultural outputs. There is much to celebrate and promote, both in terms of revealing unknown layers and experiences, making international connections and providing new confidence with layers of civic narrative.

The Made in Aberdeen objective recognises the need to develop a range of distinctive experiences so that Aberdeen city centre is like no other place. There should be a degree of innovation and experimentation, within reason, that encourages people to try things out, in a can-do fashion, rather than inhibiting ideas, creativity and exchange. This means creating the environment for new business opportunities to grow (particularly in the non-corporate SME sector), engaging with independent retailers, food producers, the catering and hotel sector, cultural and creative industries and the media. It also means articulating in both new buildings and external spaces distinctiveness in character and streetscape expression.







## Revealing waterfronts

Aberdeen city centre is relatively unique in being within comfortable walking distance of an active harbour, a beach and two major rivers. Despite the presence of these unique waterfront assets, however, the city centre looks inland and is divorced from its waterside setting by traffic dominated roads and poor walking routes and spaces. Revealing Waterfronts is as much about reconnecting the city centre with the history of the city, from the medieval occupation of the Denburn Valley to the contemporary maritime economy, as it is about making the most of the almost universal and timeless attraction of water as a setting for the development and enjoyment of cities.

Waterfronts can offer a distinctive setting for new and existing development as well as spaces to experience distinctive and diverse leisure and recreation activities. There is significant potential to enhance the city centre through projects that reveal Aberdeen's varied waterfronts; the aim is to raise awareness of these assets through enhanced public realm and new development that opens up and exploits views to water. Creating stronger pedestrian linkages to Aberdeen's waterfronts and establishing these diverse environments as unique destinations for new development and activity generating uses will contribute to the overall experience of Aberdeen city centre for residents and visitors alike.





### Technologically advanced and environmentally responsible

As the energy capital of Europe, Aberdeen has real potential to become a leading city in environmental sustainability, the drive towards a low carbon economy and resilience to future climate change. The inherent expertise of Aberdeen's energy sector lends itself to the development of sustainable and low carbon technology innovation. The regeneration of the city centre also provides an excellent test bed for these emerging technologies to improve the functionality and resilience of the city as Scotland moves towards a zero carbon economy.

Low carbon innovation is already evident in prominent initiatives including the European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre, Energetica and Aberdeen's award winning Heat Network, signalling a significant step change. The city should continue to explore means of growing its presence at the forefront of the sustainable energy market and attracting inward investment. As Aberdeen becomes established as a green energy city, negative connotations often associated with oil and gas begin to be erased and Aberdeen becomes more attractive as a prospective place to live and work.

The city centre should develop its credentials so that 'green' refers not only to the energy industry it is home to, but its character as a place that is clean, resource efficient, well connected by sustainable transport and rich in green infrastructure – environmentally responsible. The scope to improve the environmental credentials of existing buildings should not be overlooked; circa 80% of Aberdeen's building stock will still be in existence in 2030 and there are plentiful opportunities for improving the environmental performance of the aging building stock with regard to energy use and water conservation. Whilst this may seem radical, Aberdeen can benefit from the experiences of similar global port cities that have re-emerged as sustainable, liveable cities; Portland and Copenhagen being two such examples.

A sustainable city centre is also one which is resilient and adaptable to future climate and conditions. This may be achieved by maximising permeable green infrastructure to minimise flood risk and securing the city's energy supply through off-grid, local and sustainable sources. As well as safeguarding the city's assets, an environmentally resilient city will attract investors and international business seeking a low risk location for their global operations.







## Culturally distinctive

Aberdeen offers excellent access to the dramatic countryside and landscapes but the city centre falls short of that which is on offer in many other cities of comparable international standing. Aberdeen's cultural venues do not have many high profile events that draw people from beyond the immediate catchment area and the profile of Aberdeen's unique character in food, music, literature, poetry and art that is not sufficiently strong.

The centre of any city should be the showcase of its distinctiveness as Belfast, Manchester, Bilbao and Glasgow have all shown in their different ways. Cultural venues and programming, the contemporary use of key heritage areas, open spaces and a high profile major events programme are all important elements in celebrating cultural identity and creating appealing environments for residents, workers and visitors alike.

The city centre should also become 'major-event ready' capable of transforming with relative ease into traffic-free venues for street parties or high profile sporting events. A creative and well-funded events programme, which exploits the strength and character of the city's public spaces and buildings from major civic spaces such as Union Street, the Union Terrace Gardens and Castlegate to more intimate spaces such as Golden Square and the Merchant Quarter should bring Aberdeen to life year round with street festivals, Christmas markets, sporting events and other animation activity.

As successfully regenerated cities have shown, achieving genuine cultural distinctiveness brings many benefits. Most obviously it allows cities to compete effectively for the growing number of international and domestic short break visitors. Perhaps more importantly for Aberdeen, it will also encourage existing residents living in the City and Shire to use and support the city centre more frequently, encourage inward investment from a broader business base, increase the appeal of its universities and improve the graduate retention rate.



## Summary of objectives

The eight masterplan objectives reflect the challenges facing Aberdeen city centre but also the forward looking vision of a resilient global city. A range of physical developments and non-physical initiatives aimed at addressing these objectives form the basis of the masterplan as described in the following sections of this document.

## 6 The Masterplan

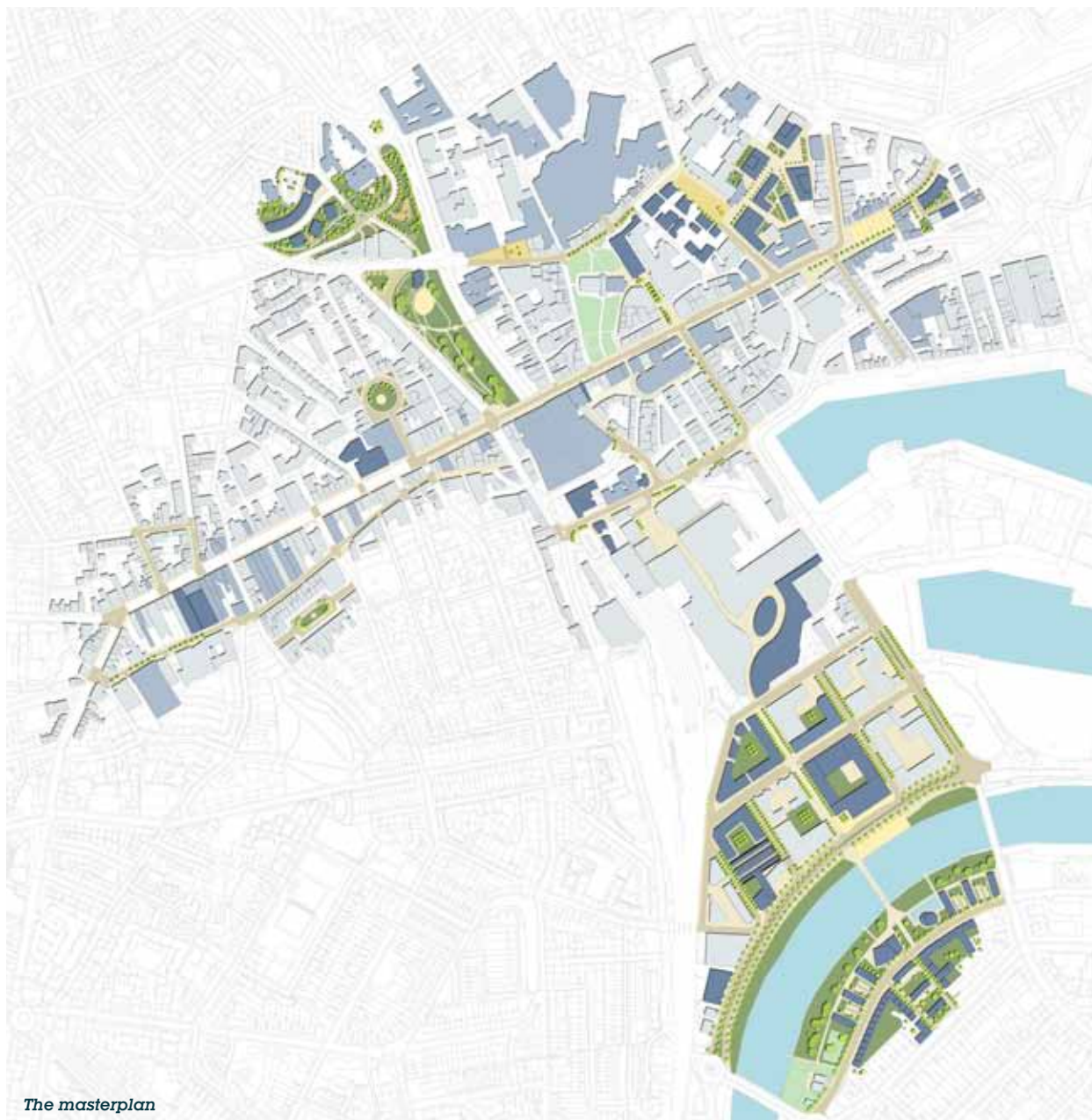
**The masterplan strategy is focused on reviving the historic core and incorporating areas of growth between the rivers Denburn and Dee. This acknowledges the need to enrich Union Street as the central east – west spine through the city centre and to better connect an extended north – south axis that crosses the heart of the city centre. As a physical reflection of the vision, there is an emphasis on defining the uses, activities, buildings and spaces that will enhance the prosperity of the city centre and improve the quality of life of those that work, live and visit the city centre.**

Over the next 25 years the city centre will reassert itself as the confident hub of a prosperous and liveable metropolitan city region. The number of city centre jobs will grow year on year with Union Street West and North Dee Business Quarter established as distinctive office quarters, the Heart of the City stitching together a distinctive retail offer that enhances the role of the city centre as the dominant regional shopping centre and the creative, cultural and leisure offer of the city centre raised to the extent that Aberdeen City Centre is considered a 'happening' place to visit, enlivened by a high profile calendar of events that animate the city centre's buildings and spaces.

The special interest of the inherited city including the majestic streetscape of Union Street, historic open spaces such as Castlegate and heritage buildings such as the St. Nicholas Kirk will shine brighter with new activities propelling the continual upgrade and use of these assets and a dramatic lighting programme that brings the city to life as daylight fades. The confidence of the contemporary city will be further articulated in new cutting edge architecture, including the City Rooms on Union Street, the Denburn / Woolmanhill neighbourhood and the new business and residential quarters alongside the River Dee with the Global Energy Hub showcasing Aberdeen's status as a leading light in environmental sustainability.

A dramatic reorganisation of road infrastructure will have reduced the current dominance of the car in the city centre and empowered residents and visitors to make sustainable travel choices. Citizens will be provided with new spaces to linger and dwell including cafe spill outs on Union Street, music and theatre in Golden Square and an enhanced welcome to the city from the train station. Cycling and bus transport will be popular forms of transport, as will the train, served by Aberdeen's own suburban rail network and airport rail link.

The enhanced vibrancy, upkeep and overall attractiveness of the city centre will encourage more people to call the city centre 'home.' The city centre residential population will increase in proportion to other areas of the city with high quality housing developments (including affordable housing) delivered at Woolmanhill, Queen Street and Torry Waterfront. These developments will also widen the provision of quality open space and green infrastructure in the city centre. The extended Union Terrace Gardens and River Dee waterside will become destination open spaces full of different activities and interest, meeting the social needs of the city whilst also serving important regulatory functions in terms of biodiversity enhancement, flood defence and pollution mitigation.



*The masterplan*



*Union Street*



*River Dee*



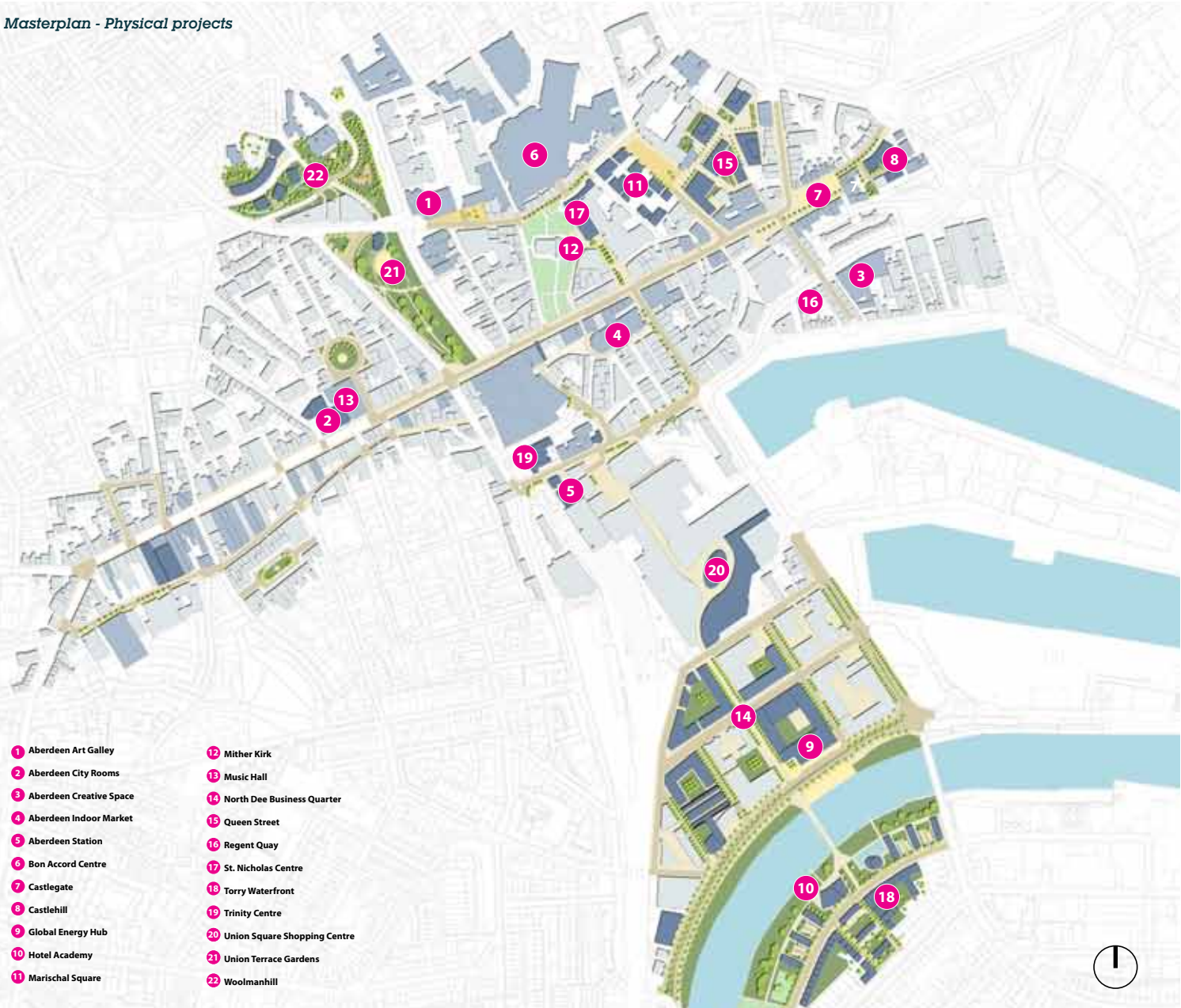
### Masterplan Projects Summary

In total, 49 physical development and infrastructure projects and non-physical initiatives form the masterplan strategy. The projects are arranged and described under four thematic strategies, which address the key facets of urban development– economy, community, environment and infrastructure.

Theme
<b>1: Energy and More</b> A city centre that is the economic hub of a prosperous city region.
<b>2: A City for People</b> A city centre that is alive with energy, meets everyone's needs and aspirations, wherever they come from and however long they stay.
<b>3: Light of the North</b> A city centre environment that makes for a unique and interesting experience.
<b>4: The Connected City</b> A city centre that is accessible and wired.

The plan opposite locates the main physical development projects and the table on the opposite page illustrates how the 49 masterplan projects relate to the masterplan objectives, demonstrating that these projects will be effective in delivering the vision for the city centre.

Masterplan - Physical projects







## 7 Economic Strategy: Energy and More

**Despite the recent slump in oil prices, the oil and gas sector remains the defining feature and success factor of the economy of Aberdeen and its surrounding area. In addition to core jobs, the sector also supports a wider supply chain (accountants, lawyers and estate agents), as well as providing the city with a clear role on the global stage. There are, however, unintended consequences of this success, not least the considerable influence it has on the city's property market.**

This relates not only to demand for offices, but also for housing, hotel, retail and leisure services, which often means there is a lack of capacity to enable other activities and diversification, particularly in the city centre. The fact that this masterplan is also being produced at a time when lower oil prices are putting pressure on the sector generally, serves to illustrate Aberdeen's exposure to external economic forces and the fact that nothing can be taken for granted.

Ensuring the city centre becomes a driver of commerce, innovation and diversification is fundamental to the sustainable economic growth. Successful, resilient and sustainable, prosperous cities need to have a diverse range of economic activities - from retail and leisure to serve the local population, through to a range of businesses that take up office and other commercial space. An economic strategy founded on widening the economic role of the city centre, exploiting what makes Aberdeen distinctive and special, will also help to change perceptions and create a more liveable city centre.

As the metropolitan centre of a globally significant economic region, Aberdeen city centre's importance to the economy of the region and the nation should not be underestimated. The city centre should be the heart of the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire economy; a hub where people come together to work, learn, collaborate, trade, invent and promote – this is clearly not currently the case and the city centre needs (for the good of the region as a whole) to reinvent itself as the metropolitan and commercial heart of the wider Aberdeen economic region.

## Energy sector

Whilst diversification, innovation and reinvention are fundamental to the future success of Aberdeen, the masterplan recognises that the energy sector will remain a key driver of growth. Despite recent challenges, it is still expected that the employment and investment renaissance in the city centre will be led by the sector (and its supply chain) and the value it creates will drive the demand that will ultimately support other sectors and activities.

It is important to recognise that it is impossible to accurately predict the future of the energy sector. It is, however, fair to assume that renewable energy will become an increasingly important component and Aberdeen is well placed to capitalise upon this.

A priority of the masterplan is to recognise the role the city centre plays in accommodating office based jobs in the energy sector. Business owners in the City and Shire have identified the need for an enhanced city centre that supports their companies and provide a better place for their employees. It involves the city becoming an acknowledged international centre for innovation and collaboration as well as a great place, where some of the brightest people in the world want to live and work.

The established business quarter in the west end of the city centre is continuing to expand through redevelopment and intensification. A number of significant office developments are currently under construction including The Capitol (72,600 sq ft) and Silver Finn (132,600 sq ft). Additional capacity to serve the energy sector is identified in the following projects.

- **Project EC01 Marischal Square:** Planning permission has been approved for the development of 173,500 sq ft (office), a 4 star hotel and other leisure uses on the site of the former St. Nicholas House, Broad Street. The project is being delivered by Muse and Aviva Investors in partnership with Aberdeen City Council.
- **Project EC02 North Dee Business Quarter:** In recent years a number of large floor plate office buildings serving corporate firms working in the energy sector (e.g. GDF Suez, EnQuest) have been developed within the fish packing district south of Union Square shopping centre. This project entails the full redevelopment of this area to create a highly desirable central business district set within a network of attractive streets and open spaces, along with other complementary uses (e.g. retail and leisure), which make for a desirable urban business district.

## Innovation and smart specialisation

Aberdeen's role in the global energy sector (and its importance to the UK economy) is currently undersold and is subsequently misunderstood; celebrating this and the unique position it places Aberdeen is crucial. The city has the opportunity to develop globally significant centres of excellence in enhanced oil recovery, decommissioning and renewable energy. Being at the cutting edge of these growing industries will ensure that Aberdeen remains on one of the UK's economic power houses.

The skills base and academic capacity of city and wider region also provide strong foundation for diversification into new emerging sub-sectors (many with strong transferable links to the Oil and Gas sector), such as Microbiology and Life Sciences. Through strong partnerships between public, private and academic partners, this opportunity will provide the diversity that not only supports economic growth, but also resilience in the local economy. This masterplan supports the creation of new spaces to encourage collaboration and innovation in Aberdeen's existing and opportunity sectors. The following projects will be the physical embodiment of Aberdeen's efforts to become one of Europe's most innovative cities.

- Project EC03 Aberdeen City Rooms:**  
 The City Rooms is a public meeting space (comprising a gallery and meeting rooms) where local people can debate the future development of the city and view the evolving story of how the city has changed through a programme of exhibitions, workshops and seminars. The City Rooms would be the place to find out about the changing city centre and to get involved in shaping the future. The building will also contain a business centre to support local entrepreneurs and provide a central workspace location for businesses new to the city and the established community of microbusinesses, start-ups and local firms. The building will include on-site business support and advice services, a suite of shared conference and meeting rooms and an open access, digitally enabled co-workers café where entrepreneurs, home workers and people just seeking an informal networking space can eat, meet and work.
- Project EC04 Global Energy Hub:** The Global Energy Hub will be the embodiment of Aberdeen's expertise in the energy sector, which has developed from the North Sea oil and gas industry. It will be an applied science and innovation centre providing spaces and associated facilities to support collaboration and innovation, creating an interface between new and existing companies, research and education bodies. As the centrepiece of the North Dee Business Quarter it will be a building of some significance, containing high specification office space, as well as hub spaces and break out areas to stimulate innovation and enterprise.

## Creative industries

The creative sector is currently not a driver of value or significant employment for Aberdeen. However, the presence of Grays School of Art, Peacock Visual Arts and more recently Make Aberdeen, alongside a large student population, suggests that an opportunity exists to develop a genuinely valuable creative sector, which not only supports jobs and businesses, but improves perceptions of Aberdeen. This may take the form of new performance arts, but also innovative 'maker' activities such as digital design and industrial crafts, which are now being supported at 17 Belmont Street. Distinctive activity within these sectors will draw people back to the centre of Aberdeen and provide the foundation for other activities within the masterplan.

- **Project EC05 Aberdeen Creative Space:** The Shore Porter's warehouses on Virginia Street are identified to provide highly flexible and affordable accommodation for desk-based digital and high tech businesses (possibly having graduated from the new Elevator recently opened ENET at Bridge of Don) and studio space for makers and artists (representing a scaling up of activities currently taking place at 17 Belmont Street).



**Culture and tourism**

Business tourism is already an important economic sector in Aberdeen and the city has good connectivity and links with the rest of the UK and Northern Europe. The strength of this market and excellent mid week hotel occupancy rates has caused a degree of complacency, however, which is preventing the city from realising its potential as a leisure break destination. Research suggests that Aberdeen fails to appeal strongly to the under 35 market, a key demographic in the city break market; and it is the lack of a strong urban offer which is preventing the city from registering as a short break 'must visit' destination.





Conversely, for a city of its size and relative remoteness, Aberdeen is well served with 'things to do,' including an exceptional art gallery, an excellent Maritime Museum, two notable theatres and a good programme of events. Other international cities may have more in the way of culture and visitor attractions but such venues rely on less frequent patterns of consumption and are simply not viable given Aberdeen's small population catchment. Instead the opportunity lies in embracing upcoming investments in existing cultural attractions (e.g. The Music Hall and Art Gallery), being more flexible with the use of the city's built fabric and public realm, promoting a more diverse and distinctive retail and leisure offer (shops, eateries and hotels) and expanding the city centre's events programme to include more high profile cultural and sporting events and festivals that encourage people to travel to the city.

- **Project EC06 Aberdeen 365 Events Programme:** The city centre events programme will aim to increase year round activity and reposition the city centre as a 'happening' place. The focus will be on curating a lively and distinctive destination through a number of high profile events, as well as a programme of animation and activity throughout the year (e.g. walking tours, bus tours, street theatre) that utilises city centre spaces for cultural offerings. In addition to coordination of the programme itself, enhanced arrangements to assist with the planning, delivery and management of events including road closures, marketing, policing and licensing will be identified to enable the city centre to be more 'event ready.'
- **Project EC07 Aberdeen Art Gallery:** The Art Gallery, Cowdray Hall and Memorial Court are currently undergoing a major refurbishment and expansion. The plans include the creation of additional gallery spaces, including new galleries for international art and community activities. The project also includes new educational facilities and an upgrade of the Cowdray Hall.
- **Project EC08 New hotel development:** Aberdeen's appeal as a leisure visitor destination requires a wider choice of accommodation in the city centre to meet broader needs and budgets. Particular need has been identified for more leisure based hotels; independent boutique hotels; urban hostels catering for the international backpacker market and apart hotels for project workers. New hotels in the current pipeline includes the refurbishment of the former RGU buildings on Schoolhill and St. Andrew's Street, redevelopment of the former Bruce Millers on Union Street, the refurbishment of the former Eslemont department store and the Marischal Square development.
- **Project EC09 Mithers Kirk:** The Open Space Trust has aspirations to reutilise the eastern wing of the St. Nicholas Kirk as a flexible public space. The trust are now progressing a business plan, which will include plans to create a new structure within the existing shell that could incorporate a range of uses (e.g. galleries, a small concert hall and / or heritage centre).
- **Project EC10 Music Hall:** The Music Hall is currently being refurbished as part of a £7 million project to create a new studio and a creative learning space, to restore and renovate the Music Hall auditorium, improve artist accommodation and create a new box office created.

### Skills training and employment

Despite a strong skills base and labour market, evidence of growing polarisation and some clear concentrations of deprivation in proximity of the city centre present a clear need for intervention. In addition to this need within the residential population, business consultation and research carried out by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, also outline some deficits within the existing workforce which, if addressed, will help Aberdeen to become a more competitive and prosperous location.

The masterplan sets an ambitious vision for transformation, with potential benefits that will stretch into North East Scotland and ultimately, across the UK as a whole. It is important that the masterplan is a conduit to the ongoing improvement of Aberdeen's performance in terms of inclusion and acts as a stimulus to broad improvements in the skills base across the city, utilising existing mechanisms and providing new focused programmes to directly meet the specific issues and opportunities that exist within Aberdeen.



There are a number of projects in the masterplan that will serve to support a more skilled population within the city centre. For instance, new housing and new tenure models will encourage a broader range of people to live in the city centre, in particular graduates. In addition to this, where people choose not to live in the centre, improved transport linkages will enable more residents to easily get into the city centre and access new opportunities for employment and training. Recognising these and other broad outcomes of all of the masterplan proposals is a key element of the business case for investment.

- **Project EC11 Aberdeen works:** New developments proposed in the masterplan will help deliver a wide variety of opportunities for Aberdonians to access new skills and jobs. It is important that new job opportunities are linked to local people as part of a high impact, complementary programme of activity. This will initially be a pre-cursor to the masterplan, ensuring that everyone is as ready as they can be for the opportunities presented by future developments. These include new skills in digital technology (including design and coding) as part of the evolution of 17 Belmont Street; creative and artistic skills through direct interface with the creative communities being supported to locate and grow in the city centre and 'game changing' access to science related skills and careers as part of the broader innovation and smart specialisation agenda. The Aberdeen Works programme will aim to link local people to the opportunities identified in the masterplan. For example, new employment clauses should be negotiated into retail leases and construction contracts let as part of the masterplan delivery. A clearer, strongly branded programme of communication will also be required if people are to engage with these newly created opportunities.
- **Project EC12 Hotel academy:** A key objective is to increase visitor numbers and realise the city centre's potential as a tourist destination. Alongside the physical offer, good customer service and a reputation for quality is imperative to achieving visitor economy objectives. The proposed Hotel Academy is a high quality (4 star at least) training hotel in the city centre that will also double as a centre for excellence. It would not only offer a first class environment and product, it will provide real life experience for local people and existing professionals to firm up their talents and seek new opportunities in the hospitality sector.
- **Project EC13 Retail academy:** With over 6,000 jobs, retail is the city centre's biggest employer. The retail academy would provide a hub for training and career development in the retail sector, aiming to help people develop the skills and experience required to make them 'job ready' for a career in retail. This could include a full training programme for future and current staff at all levels, dummy shop facilities and classrooms.



## 8 Community Strategy: A City for People

**A city for people is one where people choose to live, to shop and spend their free time. It is a place that engenders civic pride amongst its citizens, as well as a sense of interest and envy for others. A city for people has quality housing, great shopping and local amenities and the kind of 'buzz' that acts as a draw.**

The community strategy will benefit people, by creating a liveable and socially cohesive city centre with a mix of good quality housing and excellent facilities. This will be supported by other projects that run through the masterplan such as the public realm strategy, which will treat key streets less as thoroughfares and more as appealing and versatile pedestrian friendly spaces, as well as improvements to public transport and cycling infrastructure and enhancement of the city centre's cultural offer.

The strategy will aim to enhance the quality of life for existing residents and the ability of the city centre to attract the best talent, entrepreneurs and new business so that it can become a stronger metropolitan node for the wider regional catchment. This is especially important with regard to sustaining Aberdeen's status as a world energy hub, ensuring the city can compete with other energy cities that offer high quality of life.



## City centre living

There is currently a limited amount of housing in the city centre, partly due to competing land uses such as offices but also through a perceived lack of attractive sites. In order to promote the city centre as a desirable proposition to prospective buyers, occupiers and developers there is a need to create new and distinctive housing opportunities in terms of setting and scale. Therefore, whilst there are opportunities for new housing across the city centre, locations that can offer a critical mass of development have been specifically identified in the masterplan.

These larger sites create the capacity to provide the uplift in amenity and setting that will make city centre living a more

attractive proposition and also respond to the strong demand for housing. Given the shortage of developable land in the city centre, these new neighbourhoods are envisioned as dense mixed use communities. Quality in design and diversity (uses, housing type and tenure) is crucial to creating a broader demographic and a more stable, less transient, city centre residential population. The scale of these quarters also provides more scope to introduce those amenities that support a sustainable living community, such as quality open space, shops and community uses.

New housing development should recognise the extensive proven benefits of green infrastructure and seek to provide this within new housing schemes wherever possible.

- **Project CM01 Castlehill:** The enhancement of the existing community at Castlehill through the refurbishment of the existing Marischal Court and Virginia Court tower blocks, provision of new housing behind the Citadel and enhancement of local open space and community facilities.
- **Project CM02 Queen Street:** A new residential led mixed use development opportunity created by the relocation of existing public sector land uses (town house extension, police and courts) potentially to the Marischal College eastern annex or elsewhere in the city centre. The redevelopment of these buildings creates the scope for new city centre housing, ground floor commercial uses and a network of public spaces.
- **Project CM03 Torry Waterfront:** A new riverside housing development on the south bank of the River Dee at Torry facilitated by the relocation of existing industrial uses. The development would expand and complement the existing community of Torry, providing new housing, enhanced access to the city centre through a new pedestrian bridge, a much improved riverside park and promenade and new retail and leisure uses.
- **Project CM04 Regent Quay:** There is potential to exploit the historic character of the Regent Quay area and its central location by introducing a more urban mix of uses. A number of sites offer scope for residential conversion or new build but the area will retain a mix of uses. The Shore Porters warehouses at Weigh-House Square are identified as a particular opportunity for new housing in addition to new creative space on Virginia Street (Project EC05).
- **Project CM05 Woolmanhill:** The buildings associated with the former Woolmanhill Hospital present an attractive opportunity for a character residential development. The redevelopment of the adjacent Denburn Health Centre and car park provides further scope for high quality housing, which would be complemented by the refurbishment of Denburn Court.

## Improving the retail environment

There has been a notable 'flight to quality' in recent years, with both retailers and investors focussing their efforts on the top performing UK retail centres. Fortunately Aberdeen falls into this category, helped by its dominant role in a large shopping catchment area, but the offer is bland in both range of shops and shopping environments. Whilst it is recognised that there is un-met retail capacity and scope to expand the Bon Accord and Union Square shopping centres, the opportunity to create diversity and distinctiveness in Aberdeen's retail offer lies in those areas that connect these anchors.

In this respect a range of projects linked to economy, environment and infrastructure aim to enhance the attractiveness and viability of the city centre core centred on Union Street, St. Nicholas and the Merchant Quarter. More specifically is the identification of the Aberdeen Indoor Market, St. Nicholas Centre, Trinity Centre and Union Street as opportunities to create stronger complementary nodes that piece together a higher quality retail circuit, not only in terms of overall retail provision per se, but through an enhanced experience in terms of the diversity of retail (e.g. independents), other complementary uses (e.g. food and drink) and improved public realm.

- Project CM06 Aberdeen Indoor Market:** The Brutalist design of the market building is not particularly in keeping with the historic Merchant Quarter and this building is becoming increasingly tired through lack of investment. The site presents a significant opportunity to introduce a mix of uses including retail that better addresses The Green and enhances the overall vibrancy and attractiveness of this area including other uses such as residential.
- Project CM07 Bon Accord Centre:** Plans are already in place to expand areas of the shopping centre by introducing a cinema and more food and beverage units. Longer term there is scope for further expansion and rejuvenation of the George Street area to the north, which currently feels remote on account of the limited permeability of the shopping centre. Any proposals that come forward for infill or redevelopment on George Street should retain an open grid of streets and improve the pedestrian environment in terms of natural surveillance and animation at street level, particularly on Loch Street, Crooked Lane and Harriett Street.







- **Project CM08 Independent Aberdeen:** Independent Aberdeen is about promoting the identity and distinctiveness of the city centre and the endeavours of local people in sustaining and creating new home grown retail businesses. The scheme will aim to improve the city centre's retail offer by offering incentives and assistance for existing and new independent retailers.
- **Project CM09 St. Nicholas Centre:** The St. Nicholas Centre is an important thoroughfare at street level but it is a barrier after closing time and the upper level spaces are poorly occupied. Being in such a unique position to the St. Nicholas Kirk and on a key desire line, the opportunity is to open up the space as a covered street or arcade with an expanded first floor level winter garden providing additional commercial space.
- **Project CM10 Trinity Centre:** Enhancements to the existing shopping centre and the redevelopment of Atholl House are identified as short term opportunities to improve linkages between the station and Union Street and create a much enhanced gateway to the city centre. In the longer term (most likely beyond the tenure of this 20 year masterplan) a comprehensive enhancement and development programme will seek to better integrate the site into its historic townscape surroundings.
- **Project CM11 Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme:** The aim of the scheme is to promote the conservation and enhancement of the special historic and architectural heritage of Union Street and to maximise its economic and social value. The scheme will aim to enhance the condition and accelerate the repair of historic buildings; establish new sustainable uses for under occupied historic buildings (e.g. residential to upper floors) and improve the management of heritage townscape.
- **Project CM12 Union Square:** It is recognised that there exists scope to expand the shopping centre on the site of the existing surface car park. This development needs to respond to its wider urban context so that the permeability of the city centre and scope to grow areas to the south is not compromised. This requires establishing a strong north – south pedestrian linkage through the development to link North Dee and Torry Waterfront with the rest of the city centre as well as creating a good relationship to Market Street and the harbourside. A development model based on a grid of open streets, potentially incorporating residential, hotel or offices above would most successfully aid this aspiration.

## 9 Public Realm Strategy: Light of the North

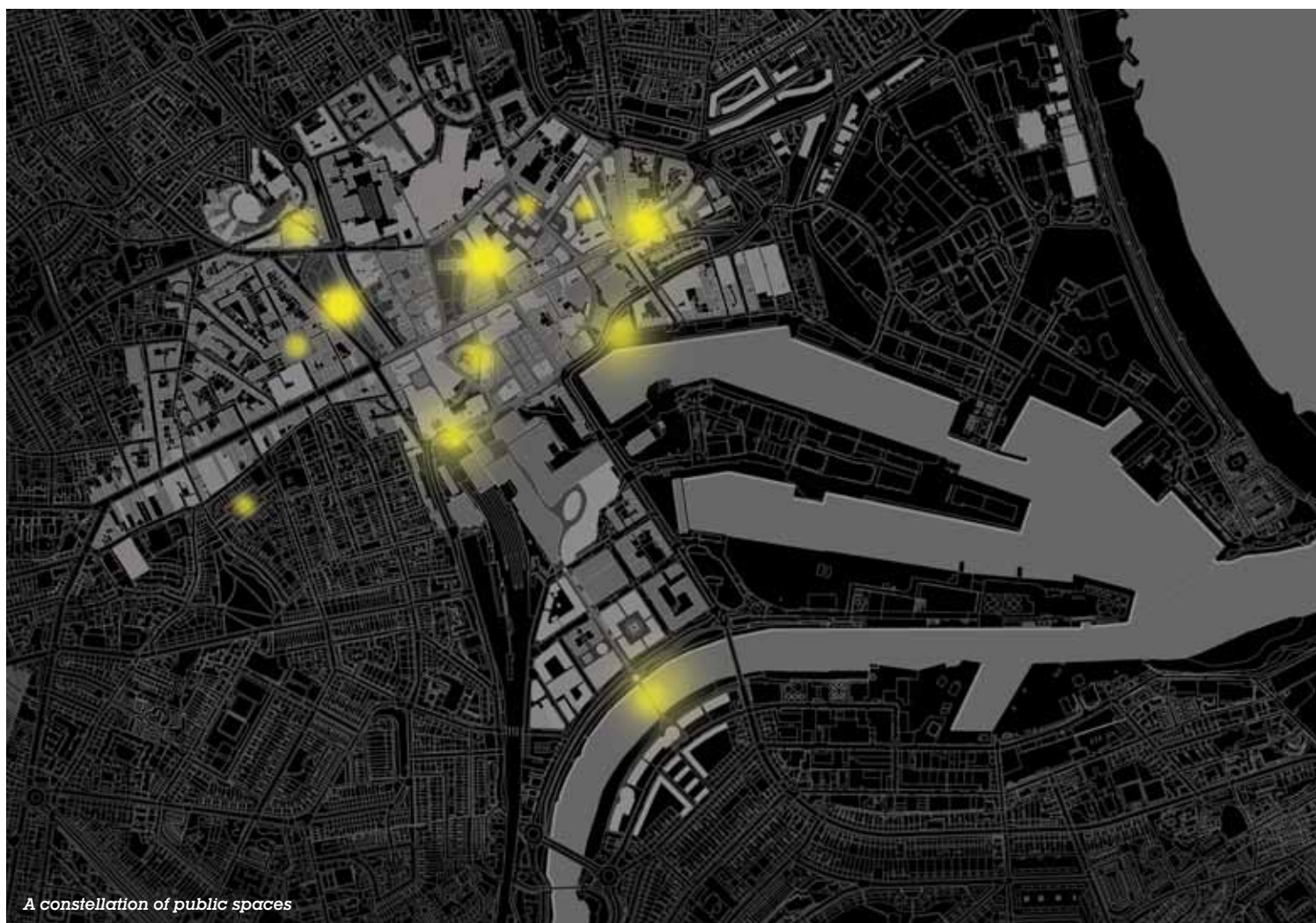
**The city of Aberdeen starts from a rich base, with a distinct and unique built form and heritage. The public realm strategy aims to promote this uniqueness to a wider audience, and use the environment of the city centre to foster more activity and use. The dominance of car movement over people in Aberdeen is well documented and has led to the erosion of the quality and the perception of the open spaces and streets as less attractive for the pedestrian to negotiate. Natural assets, whilst relatively well provided often lack quality and accessibility and consequently do not yield their full potential. The public realm strategy identifies projects that raise the**

**bar beyond just the functional needs of the city centre and make for a distinctive city centre experience.**

The strategy acknowledges the geographic position and microclimate of Aberdeen, making a virtue of this and positioning the city alongside other established cultural and visitor destination cities in the northern latitudes. The Light of the North theme alludes to the use of stars and light as maritime guides. The public realm will provide new attractions to draw people into the city and create a new 'constellation' of well connected spaces that present shining examples of what good public realm can do for the confidence and future of Aberdeen. Moreover the strategy captures the need for appropriate and distinctive public realm interventions to create a comfortable and inclusive place year round.







*A constellation of public spaces*

The public realm strategy will enhance the setting of buildings and spaces in order to encourage people to live work and visit the city centre. This will help change perceptions of Aberdeen to a living city for everyone, which will thereby encourage business and trade to grow in the city centre. Projects related to this strategy will promote a culturally distinctive Aberdeen, building on the city's Georgian and medieval characteristics and waterside position (Revealing Waterfronts) to create a stronger contemporary city with a confident metropolitan outlook. The public realm strategy provides a framework for examining programmes and activities that:

- Enhance Aberdeen's built heritage;
- Create a more dynamic, contemporary vision of the city centre;
- Create a more vibrant public realm;
- Maximise Aberdeen's waterfront; and
- Protect and enhance the value of Aberdeen's natural assets.

## Places for people

### Connections and Movement

Connectivity will be improved to facilitate a constant flow of pedestrians and cyclists around the city centre. Attractive places need to feel safe and require the appropriate navigation tools such as good lighting, even surfacing, attention to visual contrast and clear way-finding. An improved public realm network and linked constellation of spaces will incorporate the substantial widening of footways on streets where flows do not presently meet capacity as well as the implementation of pedestrian priority and pedestrian only streetscapes to create a more inclusive environment; expanding on the potential offered by existing schemes already in place on Belmont Street and the Merchant Quarter.

The distinctive topography which clearly identifies the city centre provides an obstacle to movement. There remains untapped historic character in the city centre in areas such as The Green, Correction Wynd, Windmill Brae and Langstane Place, which are generally more amenable in terms of gradient from key city centre nodes but are underutilised as thoroughfares. These could form a key part of connecting the city centre, directing pedestrians towards more pleasant and traversable routes that create a positive arrival experience and welcoming gateway to the city.





### Quality and identity

It is important that improvements to the urban realm are designed to create a distinctive visual environment that is clearly of Aberdeen and references its history and culture. This visual language should be based on the key periods of change that the city has seen and involve the following layers of history- the Medieval, the 19th century that embraces Georgian and Victorian and finally a new, contemporary style. The tapestry of Aberdeen streets can be seen as a layering from the mediaeval street pattern of narrow, twisting wynds that follow the topography and link the harbour to the city, to the bold Georgian axes that cross this city with another layer and a more formal structure. And finally what of future Aberdeen? A palette can be developed that relates to current culture, art and environmentally responsible issues.

A bold planting strategy for the city streets and spaces will extend the greening of the city and also follow the historical layering:

- **Medieval** – the hunting forest and native trees abound. Species to include Alder, Willow, Oak, Ash with Scots Pine and Birch on the higher ground.
- **19th Century** – the plant hunters and new introductions. Species to include conifers such as Monkey Puzzle, Douglas Fir as well as Horse Chestnut and Lime.

- **Contemporary** – planting for wildlife habitat and improved microclimate with rain gardens and productive planting. Species to include Gean, Rowan, Hawthorn, Oak and Maple and Hazel along with domesticated stone fruit species.

The historical layers could also be used in reference to public art. Reference material for medieval Aberdeen, for example, could look to The Aberdeen Bestiary. This document, held by the University of Aberdeen is a world class example of an illustrated medieval text of animals, both real and imagined. This could be used in paving / artworks / lighting or signage to signal and link the medieval town and make way-finding and discovery of the town something for residents and visitors to explore. Nineteenth century decorations and contemporary local art can inform other layers.

Quality will be expressed in local materials such as Granite and Caithness where appropriate or contemporary materials that are sympathetic to their setting. The existing pattern of granite setted roadways and Caithness footways will be followed but expressed with variations that relate to the historical layers. There is also opportunity to introduce colour through the use of warmer shades of Corrennie granites against the predominantly grey palette of the Kemnay types of granite.



### Activity

A change in user hierarchy with regard to the reprioritisation of pedestrians in many of the city centre's streets and spaces creates the opportunity to design more engaging and comfortable spaces that encourage people to linger and dwell. The space between buildings will be re-appropriated to encourage new activities including markets, cafe spill outs, sports, leisure, arts and entertainment. Shelter in the form of canopies and planting will need to be incorporated to ensure that these activities extend across the seasons. A temporary greening event is proposed for Union Street to initiate the Light of the North public realm improvements and would also form part of the Aberdeen 365 events programme.

Investment in the public realm will also seek to encourage better utilisation, upkeep and maintenance of adjacent buildings by increasing investor confidence through enhanced setting and improved connectivity. Finally as a city perched on the North Sea and founded on this resource, there is limited access to the river, sea and harbour. There are opportunities to encourage change by creating new destinations and improving the routes to access these areas.

- **EN01 Broad Street:** The space between Marischal College and the Marischal Square development will retain bus movements on a day to day basis but will be designed in a manner so that it can be transformed into an event ready space on special occasions.
- **EN02 Guild Street:** The experience of the city when arriving and departing from the train station will be vastly improved with the removal of car traffic and the reduction of bus traffic to one way only on Guild Street. This allows the existing plaza to the north of Union Square to be extended to create a more comfortable meeting place and an enhanced pedestrian linkage through the Merchant Quarter.
- **EN03 Langstane Place / Justice Mill Lane / Windmill Brae:** This key area for evening economy activities will be enhanced as a pedestrian priority area with new cycle routes, improved streetscape and lighting.
- **EN04 Rose / Thistle / Chapel Street:** A high quality streetscape scheme to enhance customer experience and the vitality and viability of this independent retail area.
- **EN05 Union Street:** Removal of private vehicular traffic (bus, taxi and access only) from the section of Union Street between Bridge Street and the Castlegate brings the focus back on to the people of Aberdeen with wider pavements, improved air quality and fewer obstacles to movement. Works will include the upgrade of the Back Wynd Steps to include a lift.
- **EN06 Upperkirkgate / Schoolhill:** The removal of all traffic from the central area of Upperkirkgate and a considerable reduction in traffic elsewhere creates the opportunity to enhance north / south connectivity and the retail environment.





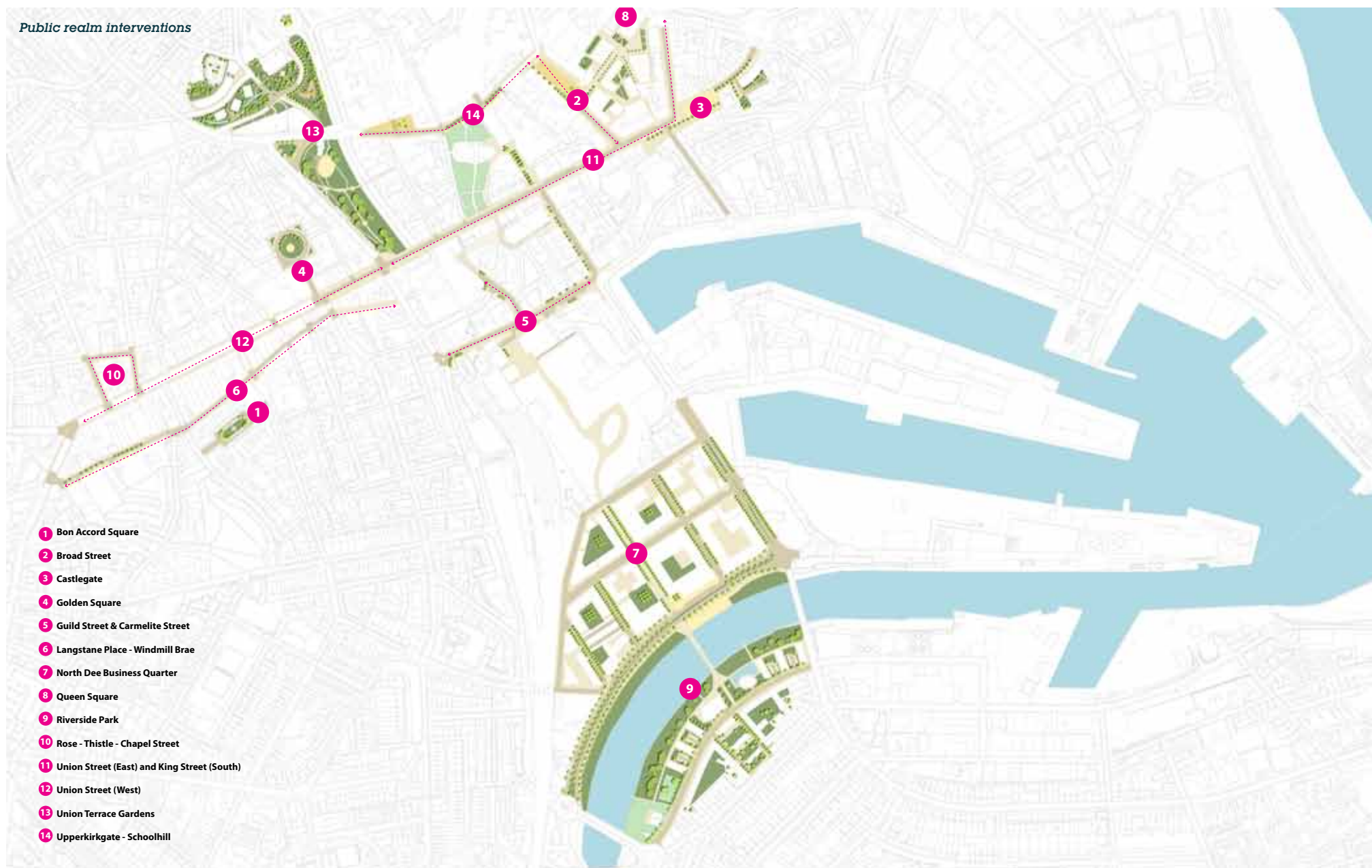
### Public spaces

The city centre must be a place where people of all ages want to spend time out and about, seeing and being seen, socialising, strolling and soaking up the atmosphere. Projects and programmes will aim to reinvigorate the city fabric with a series of high quality public realm interventions and new attractions. Through a series of interlinked projects the people of Aberdeen will be encouraged to see these spaces anew. By providing an appropriate setting, opportunities for improvement can be seen in the success of areas such as Belmont Street where a high quality streetscape improvement has encouraged street markets, pavement life and a vibrant independent retail and business offer.

The public realm will be expanded and softened, with more green spaces and places for play and activity. Key open spaces, such as Castlegate, Union Street and Union Terrace Gardens, will be made 'event ready', capable of hosting a range of events and entertainments that will provide a much needed sense of vibrancy and animation. In suitable places, hotels, cafes, restaurants and bars will be encouraged to provide outdoor eating and drinking that will add to a sense of life in the evenings.

- Project EN07 Castlegate:** Castlegate will be presented as the 'central civic space' for Aberdeen, providing a strong focus and identity for the city centre. This will be a high quality space that responds to the rich architecture and strong urban design structure, forming a desired destination at the end of Union Street. The design approach will be minimalist and defined, adding clarity to the geometry of the space with high quality natural stone materials and lighting.
- Project EN08 Union Terrace Gardens:** This project will enhance the quality of the gardens as the city centre's main green space resource and will seek to improve access, visibility and animation of the gardens. Improvements will include a new performance amphitheatre with stepped seating; a focal point building to provide a hub for the performance space with cafe and gallery and reuse of the existing arches to provide further space for new attractions in the park and the possibility of retail, catering and studio space along the edge of the existing routes. The existing Victorian toilets will be refurbished and access improved through the building to link Union Street and the Park. This proposal will also expand the gardens to the north, including re-providing a natural water feature with walkways and planting and creating a new 'wilderness' play area. Changes in levels will be improved by creating new accessible bridges and paths between Union Terrace and Belmont Street with easy walking surfaces and gradients as well as escalators and lifts. Aside from social benefits green space improvements will also maintain and enhance Aberdeen's resilience to future climate change; providing shade and cooling during heat waves and allowing natural filtration of surface water during storm events.
- Project EN09 Golden Square:** Re-engineering of this space from a vehicle dominated car park towards to a public square and events space associated with the Music Hall.
- Project EN10 Bon Accord Square:** Removal of some car parking and enhanced greening of this square.



*Public realm interventions*

## Lighting

Currently, the character and identity of the city is lost as daylight fades. There is a lack of a strategic approach to lighting – a missed opportunity to focus attention on the city's many splendid buildings and spaces and the associated benefits for the evening economy. Cold, anonymous facades can be transformed into warm and colourful spaces giving city a whole new perspective as well as creating new and attractive outdoor event venues. Appropriate lighting will work in harmony with the landscape materials palette through a designed hierarchy that considers luminaire aesthetics, colour temperature and colour rendering.

- **Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour:**

A comprehensive lighting masterplan will be commissioned with the aim of identifying lighting proposals that enhance night time safety and energy conservation, reduce light pollution and improve the vibrancy and attractiveness of the night time environment. The lighting masterplan will consider energy efficient lighting as a key contribution to the city's 20% greenhouse gas emissions target (2020) as set out in Aberdeen's Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP). The masterplan will also need to consider city landmarks and key spaces, gateways to the city centre and provide an associated programme of delivery to re-establish the 'Aberdeen floodlit trail.' The identity of the Medieval, 19th Century and contemporary layers of the city will be emphasised by specific street lighting for each of these typologies. New landmark buildings will benefit from dynamic and interactive façade lighting whilst the historic facades will be treated in a more traditional way.



*Gateways and buildings that could potentially be expressed in a future lighting masterplan*





## 10 Infrastructure Strategy: The Connected City

**New and improved infrastructure plays an essential role in the overall masterplan strategy, creating the additional capacity required to deliver a range of projects linked to economic, community and environmental themes. A connected city centre with high quality transportation and utilities infrastructure can catalyse urban growth and attract inward investment. This will assist in growing the city centre employment base and ensure Aberdeen realises its potential as a global city.**

Enhancing multi-modal accessibility and ensuring resilient utilities infrastructure will improve the city centre's standing as the metropolitan node of the regional economy. The delivery of targeted transport and utilities infrastructure improvements will also play a leading role in the reprioritisation of the city centre network to favour technically advanced and environmentally sustainable practices.

Transport improvements can also enhance multi-modal accessibility to the beach, harbour and rivers (Revealing Waterfronts). The programme of public realm works tied to the infrastructure strategy will together help in changing perceptions of Aberdeen city centre, so that people consider it a safe, comfortable and reliable place to live, work and visit.

The transport improvements set out herein have been organised to take cognisance of the national street user hierarchy, which considers pedestrians first, followed by cyclists, public transport users, specialist service vehicles and other motor traffic. The vehicular strategy is initially outlined given it is a critical enabling mechanism to allow improvements for sustainable modes within the city centre core to be made. Further detail on the transport strategy is discussed in the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), which forms a complementary document to the





## Relocating car movement

The conclusions of the transport baseline review and the masterplan public consultation exercise highlighted the fact that vehicles dominate many of the city centre's streets and the unrestricted nature of these vehicle movements is to the detriment of creating an attractive and liveable environment for all. This negatively impacts on the quality and nature of activities that can be accommodated within the city centre as well as the attractiveness, safety and reliability of walking, cycling and bus travel. In addition to this, due to the concentration of motorised vehicles, much of the city centre is assigned as an Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) due to the harmful levels of nitrous oxide and particulates and additionally there are a number of Candidate Noise Management Areas (CNMAs) where noise from road and rail (mostly road) is most likely to cause annoyance.

Although traffic modelling indicates that the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) will reduce traffic levels by 5% within the city centre (including a 15% reduction on Market Street), a transformational alteration in travel behaviour away from the private car towards walking, cycling and public transport, along with improvements to make these transport modes more attractive, is necessary. Within the context of the limited road space that is available this can only be achieved by imposing limitations on the movement of private vehicles within the city centre core.

The realisation of the committed Berryden Corridor Improvement scheme along with an upgrade of city centre road junctions around the perimeter of the city centre core will provide the mechanism for directing traffic on to an Urban Relief Road that bypasses the city centre core. The route will provide access to city centre off street car parks and will permit strategic freight movement but will restrict traffic movements through the core. The relief road will have good connectivity to city wide arterial routes, which will be further progressed as part of the

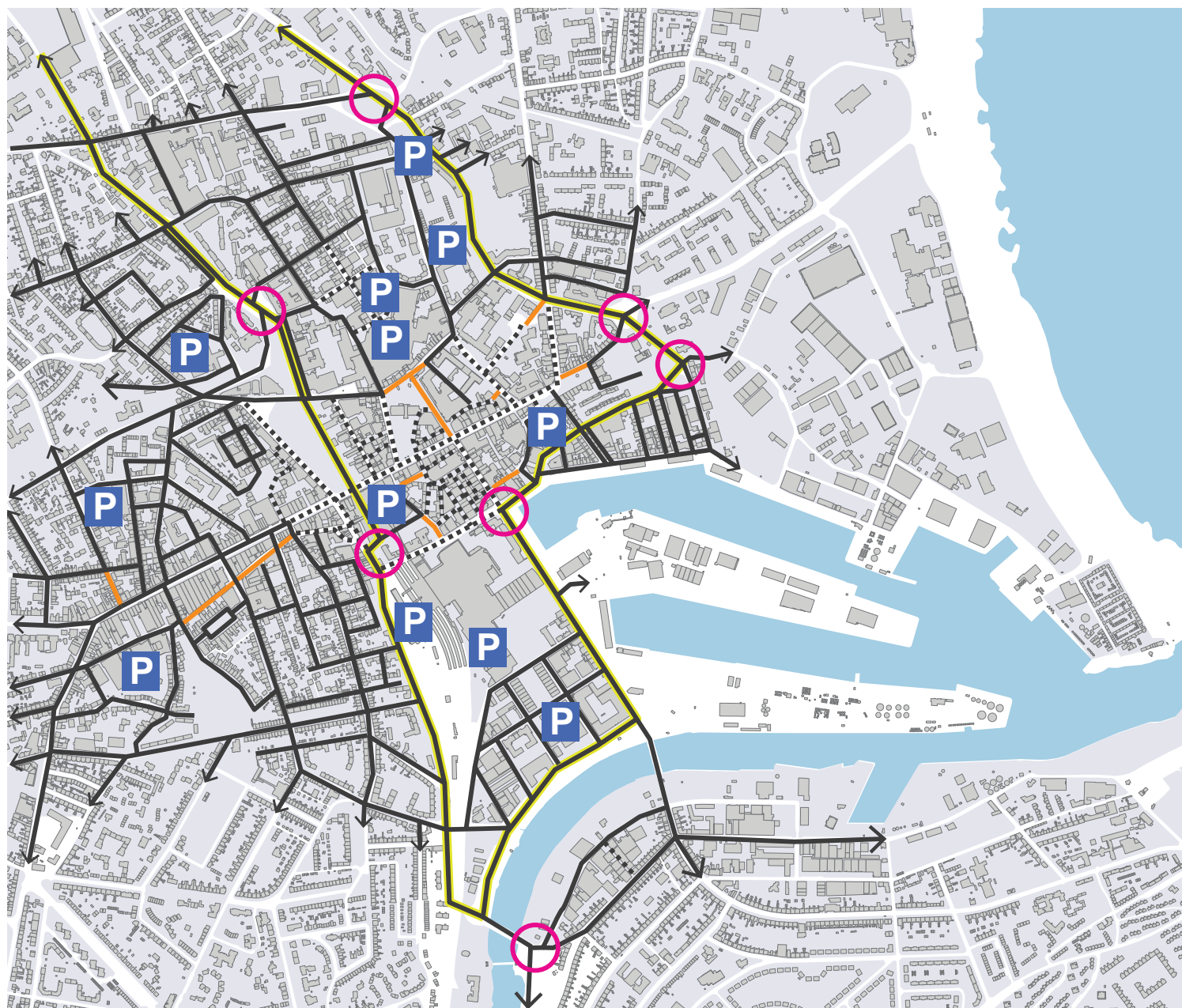
forthcoming Nestrans roads hierarchy study. Greater use of park and choose sites located at the periphery of the city will also be promoted to encourage a switch to sustainable modes at this point. There are already proposals for a new park and ride site at Dyce as well as improvements and expansion works to be undertaken at existing sites at Kingswells and Bridge of Don. Further to this, Aberdeenshire Council are also progressing a new facility at the Schoolhill junction in Portlethen. Notwithstanding this, expansion and greater promotion of the car club (both conventional and electric vehicles) will allow for incidental car use amongst residents and businesses located within the city centre core.

The relocation of car movement is in-keeping with the Consultative Draft of the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) (2015) which states that there is a requirement to "minimise through traffic in the city centre" to allow the "reorganisation and reprioritisation of the network to ensure that the safety of non-motorised users and the connectivity of communities is prioritised ahead of traffic flow."

It is envisaged that the identification of a vehicle focused route around the city centre will bring benefits to Aberdeen in terms of a healthier and safer population, by encouraging more active forms of travel and reducing the likelihood of a pedestrian or cyclist being involved in a collision. There should also be a knock-on improvement in local air quality and levels of noise within certain part of the city centre, particularly on Aberdeen's main thoroughfare, Union Street, which is currently assigned an air quality management area (AQMA). Aberdeen City Council are currently undertaking studies to explore ways to improve air quality within the city centre, and are considering the implementation of a low emissions zone (LEZ) which would further support the vision and objectives of the masterplan and complement the proposed projects. It would also permit the creation of a city centre that is more easily navigable by those with mobility impairments; through the provision of wider footways and the removal of unnecessary street furniture which presently detrimentally impacts upon movement. Finally on a city scale, a modal shift away from private car travel will contribute positively to Aberdeen's 2020 20% greenhouse emissions reduction target.

- **Project IN01 Walkable Aberdeen:** Creating a safer and more attractive city centre for pedestrians and other sustainable modes by rerouting non-essential traffic from the city centre core towards a signed Urban Relief Road around the heart of the city centre.
- **Project IN02 City centre car parking:** Proposals for city centre car parking include:
  - Park and Ride: Maximise the potential offered by existing and proposed park and ride sites in order to reduce the overall number of vehicles entering the city centre.
  - Off-street parking - Maximise the potential offered by existing car park capacity by promoting a ring of car parks around the Urban Relief Route.
  - New development parking: Apply stricter parking standards within the city centre boundary to enforce 'zero parking' for new development.
  - Aberdeen Car Club: The number of conventional as well as electric city centre car club locations would be increased in order to allow for incidental car use for residents and businesses without the need for car ownership.

### Proposed vehicular access



#### Vehicles

- Urban Relief Road
- Road which allows for all traffic
- Bus, taxi, cyclist and local access only
- Part time servicing only (pedestrianised streets)

**P** Off-street car park

**○** Junction to be upgraded - requirements unknown at present, further design work to be carried out to determine actual requirements

### A cycling city

The conclusions of the transport baseline review and the masterplan public consultation exercise also highlighted that cycling within the city centre is presently inhibited by heavily trafficked roads given that cycling infrastructure and national cycle routes within the city centre are largely served by advisory on-street lanes shared with buses, taxis and private vehicles on Union Street. This serves to create an unattractive environment which detracts from its appeal as a feasible mode by which to access the city centre. Further to the concentration of heavily trafficked roads, cycling within the city centre is also disrupted by a general lack of connectivity with adequate cycle parking facilities as well as city wide routes.

Enabled by the overall reduction in traffic within the city centre core, the aim is to create a safe cycling environment that is free of traffic as far as is practically possible. This will serve desire lines to and from key nodes, particularly shopping centres, Union Street and the railway and bus stations. Where road space allows, and subject to the necessary traffic management and traffic regulation orders required to remove on street parking and implement a series of one way streets, cyclists will be served by segregated two way cycleways through the heart of the city centre on streets such as Crown Street, Guild Street, Market

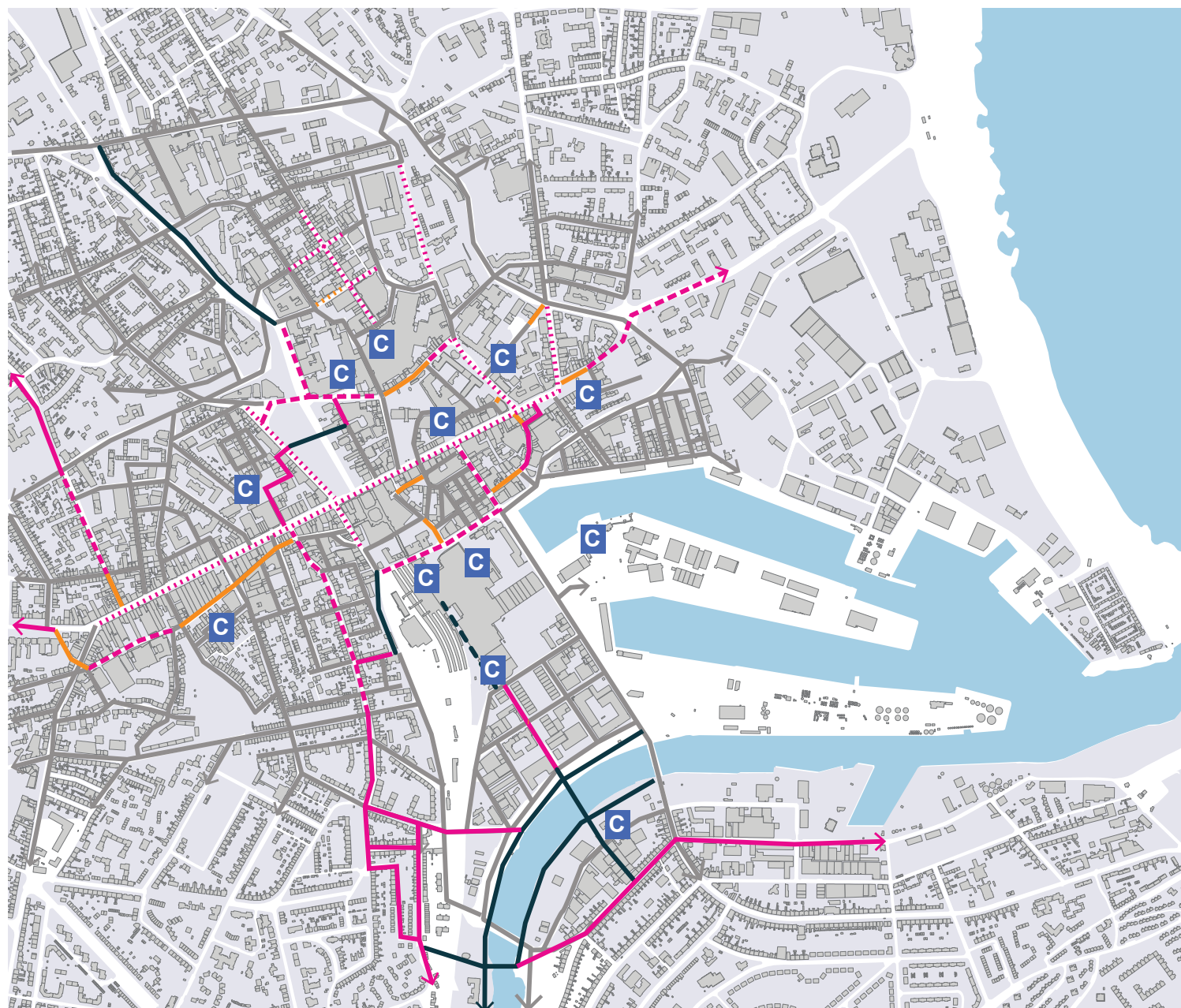
Street and Schoolhill. This is necessary in order to provide the safest possible environment that is attractive by the most vulnerable users, including families and young children. Routes will be well integrated with city wide routes including National Cycle Route 1, National Cycle Route 195 (Deeside Way) and the Beach Promenade as well as good quality stock cycle parking facilities. Following such improvements, the feasibility of implementing a cycle hire scheme, similar to that seen in Glasgow and Stirling, would be undertaken.

This is considered to be in keeping with the aims of the consultative draft of the LTS (2015), which aspires to “improve cycling conditions for cycling in Aberdeen and engender a culture change so that cycling becomes an everyday, safe mode of transport for all” as well as the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy Refresh (2014) which emphasises the requirement for a “step change” with regards to cycling. Improving the ability by which the city centre can be accessed by bicycle would be conducive to encouraging healthier lifestyles through a reduction in the incidence of obesity and long term illnesses. It would also have additional economic benefits in terms of improved workforce productivity and the likelihood for increased pass-by trips for retail businesses that would be located along the route’s extent.

- Project IN03 Cycle highways:**  
 Implementation of traffic free cycle highways within the city centre to connect with NCR 195, NCR 1 and the beach promenade. These would be complemented by cycle priority measures at signalised junctions, and a programme of cycle friendly street improvements.
- Project IN04 Cycle hire scheme:**  
 Roll out of a cycle hire scheme similar to that in Glasgow to capture the transient nature of those working and visiting Aberdeen city centre. Bikes would be constructed to be resilient to vandalism and equipped with GPS tracking.
- Project IN05 Cycle hubs:**  
 Creation of cycle hubs in key areas of the city centre in order to provide high quality secure cycle parking. These hubs will be covered and equipped with easily identifiable branding in areas of high footfall to ensure a sense of community surveillance.



## Proposed cycling network



## Cycles

- On road signed route (no segregation)
- ⋯ On road route shared with buses and taxis only
- Shared use path
- Pedestrian and cyclist area only
- - - Segregated two way cycle lane
- On road route (no cycle lane)
- - - Potential future link
- C Cycle hub / cycle hire

### Prioritising the bus

The popularity of accessing and travelling by bus is hindered by the absence of comprehensive bus priority measures within and on the approach to the city centre, as identified in the transport baseline review and the masterplan public consultation exercise. This introduces unreliability within bus schedules that serves to reduce the competitive advantage of the bus and is likely to be a contributing factor to Aberdeen having the lowest bus patronage figure of the four major Scottish cities for journeys made to and from work (2011 census). It is clear that intervention is required to make bus travel more appealing.

Through collaboration with the city wide bus operators, First Bus Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird, the focus will be to improve bus journey reliability to and from the city centre in order to create a dependable mode that is as competitive as the car. In turn, this will provide a catalyst for changes to bus pricing and routing.

Subject to the necessary traffic regulation orders, some streets within the city centre core will be assigned as bus, cyclist and taxi use only (the layout of which would be identified within future detailed design works). Further to this, bus gates (similar to that already proposed at the junction between George Street and Powis Place) would be installed at key intersections on the periphery of the city centre to ensure

buses are not impacted by congestion during weekday peak hours.

In order to provide a more enjoyable and attractive experience, improved waiting facilities will be installed at selected city centre bus stops. This will form part of the forthcoming re-tendering of the existing bus stop advertising contract. Improvements would include enhanced inclusive access, sheltered wheelchair space and improved real time passenger information. Additionally there exists the opportunity to upgrade the bus station as part of the expansion of the Union Square Shopping Centre.

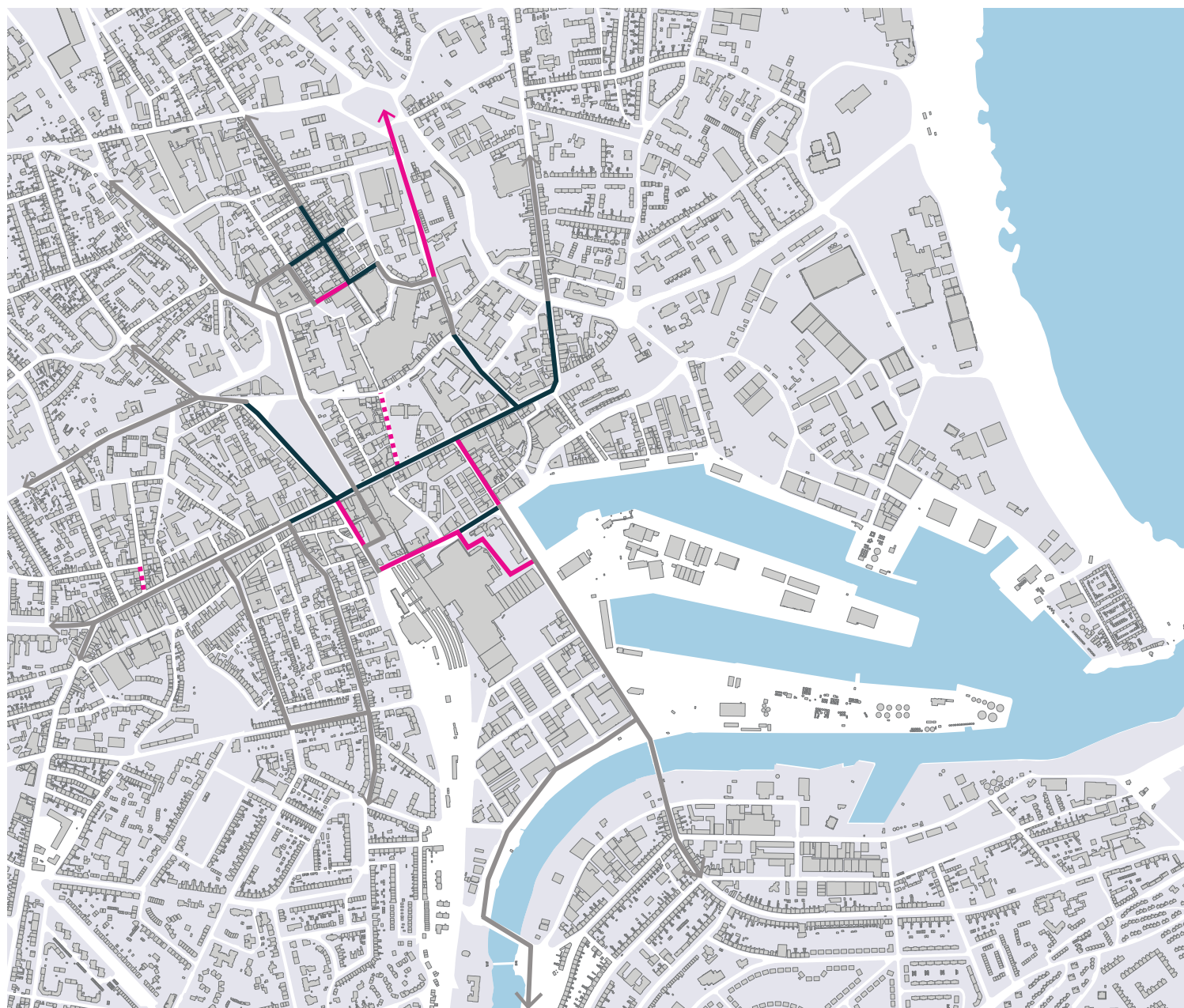
The overall approach is considered to be in accordance with the aims of the consultative draft LTS (2015) that states that there is a requirement to "increase public transport patronage by making bus travel an attractive option to all users and competitive with the car in terms of speed and cost." It specifies that "the efficient and effective operation of buses require competitive journey times which are reliable and consistent."

An improvement in the overall bus journey experience and journey time reliability will assist in making bus travel a more attractive proposition in comparison to using the car (especially in the context of the relocation of traffic that is being proposed). This will help retain existing passengers but more importantly will attract additional passengers;

- **Project IN06 Bus Priority Infrastructure: Implement bus only streets on key city centre corridors and introduce bus gates on the approach to city centre junctions in order to annul the impact of congestion on journey times.**
- **Project IN07 Bus stop infrastructure and bus station: In order to provide a more enjoyable and attractive overall bus travel experience for all, mobility inclusive and significantly improved bus stop infrastructure will be installed. There also exists an opportunity to enhance the existing bus station as part of the expansion of Union Square shopping centre.**



### Proposed bus network



#### Buses

- Buses and taxis only (one direction)
- - - Taxis only (one direction)
- Buses, taxis and cyclists only
- Non segregated bus route



particularly time critical commuters. This has economic benefits to city centre businesses in terms of increased workplace productivity, making the city centre a more attractive proposition for inward investment. Improving bus travel also tackles social exclusion by improving the level of accessibility to the labour market for those without access to a car. By retaining Union Street as a key bus corridor and assuming an increase in bus patronage, local retail businesses can be bolstered by the increase in footfall. This aligns with one of the key aspects of the strategy, namely, to retain Union Street as Aberdeen's primary thoroughfare.

### Improving rail linkage

The conclusions of the transport baseline review and the masterplan public consultation exercise identified that rail travel into the city centre is inhibited by poor linkages from the main railway station due to the severance caused by the heavily trafficked environment on Guild Street and Carmelite Street as well as the lack of an appropriately safe, attractive and direct walking route that is available for use 24 hours a day. This contributes to creating an unsatisfactory arrival experience for visitors to the city centre.

As part of measures to enhance walking, cycling and bus patronage, the railway station is identified as a critical node in the movement network

and there remains further scope to encourage rail travel through improved interchange and station facilities. A key enabling mechanism of this would be to relocate taxi drop off facilities to a dedicated off College Street to enable the redevelopment and expansion of the station concourse (discussed in further detail within the Station Gateway element of the Masterplan). Cohesive walking routes from the railway station would be delivered by means of a new pedestrian entrance on to Guild Street and the pedestrianisation of Carmelite Street to provide a more attractive walking route via upgraded Back Wynd steps towards Union Street.

Over the longer term, in line with other European cities of a comparative size (Bergen, Malmo and Trondheim for example), Aberdeen would also benefit from its own suburban railway network. By harnessing the spare capacity offered by the committed Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Improvement Programme that will see twin tracking between Aberdeen and Inverurie by 2019, historic stations could be reopened or new stations provided.

Rail improvements are in keeping with the consultative draft of the LTS (2015) which aspires to "work with partners to increase opportunities for rail travel to, from and within Aberdeen" as well as the Nestrans Rail Action Plan (2010) which acknowledges that "issues remain regarding the opportunity for passengers

- **Project IN08 Aberdeen Station:** Following the relocation of the existing taxi drop off facility to South College Street, refurbishment and expansion of the station concourse to create enhanced linkage for pedestrian and cyclists to the city centre.
- **Project IN09 Airport rail link:** An airport rail link would significantly reduce journey times and provide a more welcoming arrival experience into the city centre.
- **Project IN10 Aberdeen suburban railway network:** As part of the committed Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Improvement Programme, which will dual the track from Aberdeen to Inverurie, there exists an opportunity to investigate and promote a local Aberdeen based rail service, as well as potential new rail halt locations.

to access the station.” Ensuring the railway station becomes a central node within the city centre would provide for an enhanced arrival experience for visitors on foot to the city centre as well as improve interchange to other modes, most notably cycles, buses located on Union Street as well as the Ferry Terminal. The realisation of a suburban rail network would be a transformational sign of intent that would substantially reduce the number of vehicles accessing the city centre; having the obvious effect of improving air quality and journey time reliability for time critical modes such as buses and harbour freight.

### Resilient utilities infrastructure

There is a need to ensure that the city centre's utilities infrastructure can keep pace with modern demands and any additional demands on the network created by the development programme. There is a particular need to enhance the city's broadband network, as a slower rate in deploying broadband infrastructure will have an adverse impact on economic growth and social cohesion. The regeneration of the city centre also provides an excellent test bed for emerging technologies to improve the functionality and resilience of the city as Scotland moves towards a low carbon economy. Aberdeen is well placed to lead innovation within the renewable energy sector and showcase technologies within new and existing developments across the city.

- **Project IN11 Accelerate Aberdeen:** This programme was a successful winner of UK Government Urban Broadband Fund to become a 'Super Connected City' (£5.5 million). It will enable exchanges and cabinets in Aberdeen to deliver superfast broadband services and a concessionary next generation wireless network will improve connectivity in the city centre and facilitate rapid deployment of 4G services. This will be supplemented by Wi-Fi in public buildings (e.g. Marischal College, Maritime Museum, library).
- **Project IN12 District Heat Network:** The district heat network currently extends to the Town House from the Queen's Links. There are real opportunities to provide low cost, low carbon heating and hot water to the city centre by expanding CHP generating capability in the city centre and extending the network through a presumption in favour of the heating and hot water for redevelopment sites in the city centre being provided from district heating. This will be co-ordinated with public realm works where connections are identified to expand the network (e.g. Upperkirkgate / Schoolhill link between the Town House and Woolmanhill).
- **Project IN13 Underground bin storage:** The city council through its supplementary waste guidance recommends that new development proposals incorporate recycling and waste collection in a more efficient and aesthetically pleasing manner through the use of underground bin storage. A business case is currently being advanced to extend the same benefits to existing areas of the city centre, particularly Union Street and the Merchant Quarter.

# 11 Intervention Areas

In delivering a city centre for a global city, it is recognised that there is not the same scope for physical change and development in all areas of the city centre. This is because many areas are already performing very well, or plans are already in place and in the process of being delivered.

The focus of physical change and development is therefore in areas that are less well utilised or failing to deliver the quality and scale of activity that is expected in a thriving and successful city centre. These are also areas where a number of sites coincide or the scale of the development opportunity creates a critical mass, where a combination of

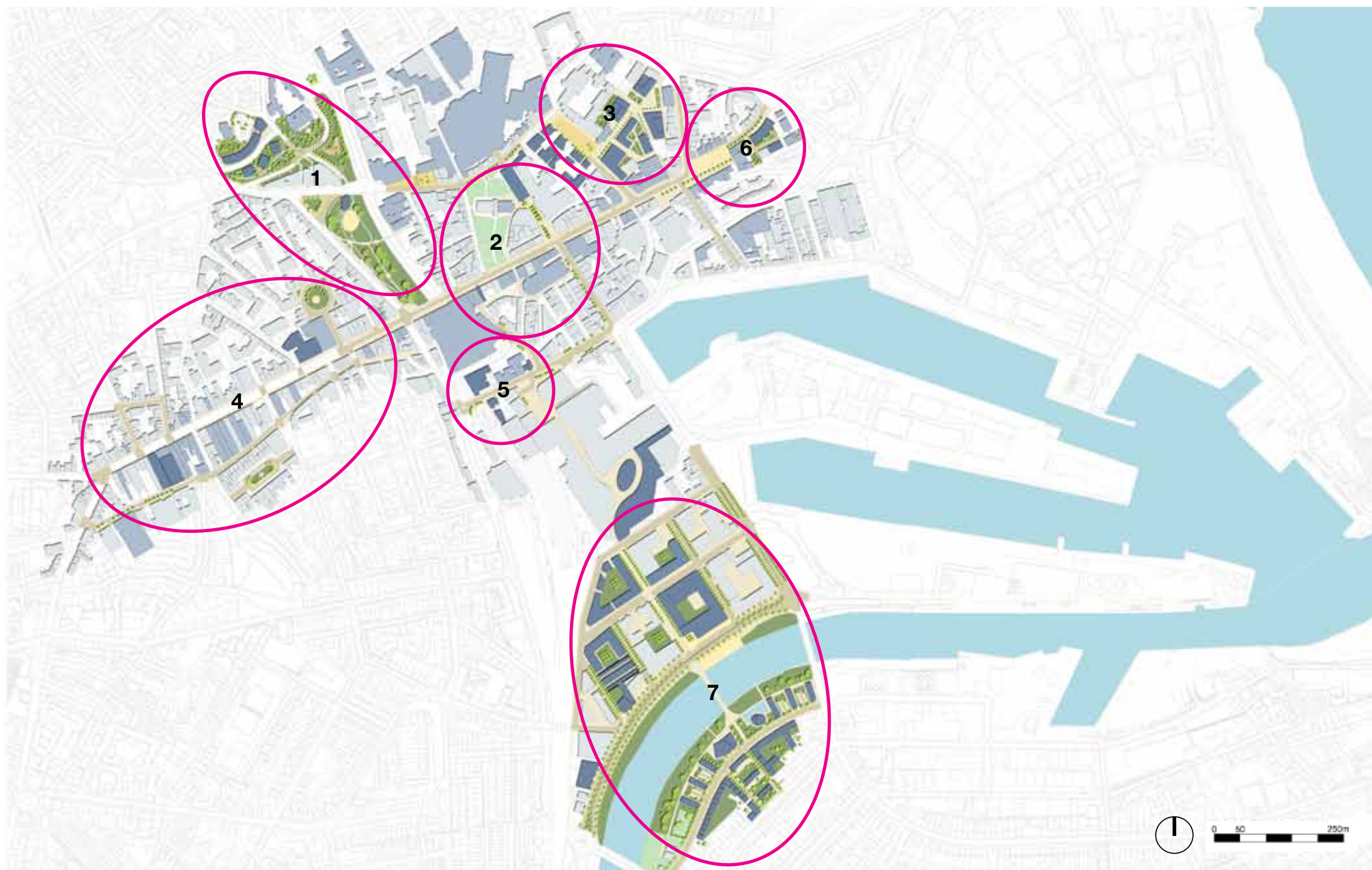
individual projects can deliver transformational change. These areas are described here as the Areas of Intervention. For the most part these areas lie within the currently designated city centre but some of these areas lie outside the city centre boundary, but are considered to have a particularly strong influence on the success of the city centre as a whole.

Intervention Areas

	Area of intervention	Masterplan focus
1	Denburn Valley	A revitalised Union Terrace Gardens establishes itself as a key destination and the linking thread to a new residential quarter.
2	Heart of the City	Reinstating the central role of Union Street in the life of the city, establishing stronger retail linkages north and south and creating a destination not just for shopping but for many city activities.
3	Queen's Square	A new city centre neighbourhood with a strong urban character. An exemplar of the best of urban living in a sensitive historic context.
4	Union Street West	A focus for the wider business sector, from new businesses with a Made in Aberdeen focus, to spin-outs from the energy sector. Union Street West emerges as a much stronger business address.
5	Station Gateway	The critical remodelling of the key gateway to the city centre, with new business and commercial developments, providing city centre users and visitors with a radically transformed arrival experience, leading seamlessly northwards to Union Street.
6	Castlegate /Castlehill	A focus for visitors and tourists, taking in the best of Aberdeen's townscape, including Castlegate, Union Street and links to the harbour to the south and the beach to the east.
7	North Dee / Torry Waterfront	New riverside quarters connected by a pedestrian bridge and a much improved riverside park and promenade. To the north, an urban business district; to the south, a residential neighbourhood that maximises its relationship to the river.



### Intervention areas



## Denburn Valley

### Vision

The Denburn Valley will come alive through the revitalisation and expansion of the Union Terrace Gardens and a new urban quarter at the head of the valley. Redevelopment of the Denburn Health Centre / car park and refurbishment of the historic Woolmanhill Hospital create the capacity for a new mixed use neighbourhood, set within an attractive green setting, commanding south facing views of the city.





## The opportunity

Enhanced connections to the Union Terrace Gardens, restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions will create a more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination. The redevelopment of the Denburn car park and refurbishment and reuse of the historic Woolmanhill hospital create the opportunity to substantially revitalise the area to the north of the gardens for a mix of housing and local amenities, which integrate into a legible network of green space that acts as a thread through the Denburn corridor. The enhanced urban green space will provide multi-functional benefits; strengthening urban wildlife corridors, encouraging sustainable transport choices through this enhanced green corridor and equipping Aberdeen to be more resilient to climate change effects.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project EN10 Union Terrace Gardens
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour
- Project CM05 Woolmanhill
- Project EC06 365 Events Programme
- Project EC08 New hotel development
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project IN01 City centre car parking
- Project IN12 District Heat Network

### Other project linkages:

- Project EC07 Aberdeen Art Gallery



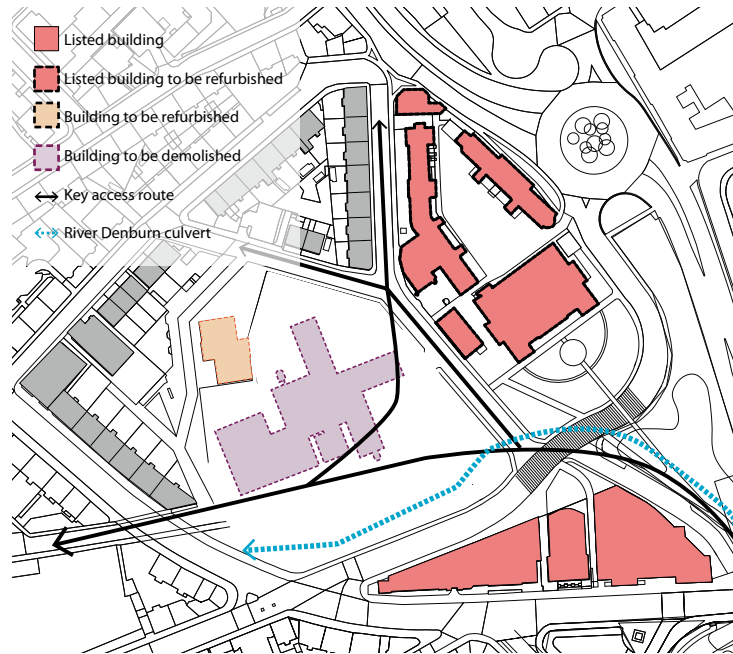


## Development objectives

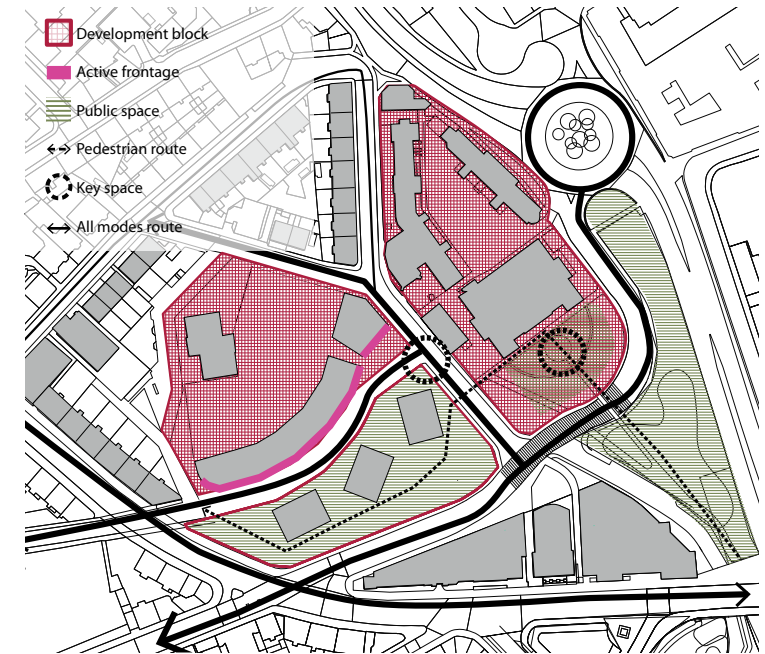
The preferred development approach should deliver:

- Improved pedestrian access to the Union Terrace Gardens, including a new high level bridge that links Belmont Street and Union Terrace (with stairs and lift access into the gardens), lift / stair access from Union Street and Rosemount Viaduct and enhanced pathways through the gardens, including linkages to Skene Street and beyond.
- Enhanced soft and hard landscaping within the Union Terrace Gardens including new planting, better tree management (to reduce excessive shading) and high quality street furniture.
- Repair of the historic balustrades on Union Terrace, reuse of the arches below for new community and commercial uses and restoration of the Union Terrace Gardens toilets.
- New attractions within the Union Terrace Gardens including a new natural play area that enhances the experience of wilderness in an urban context (the medieval history of beasts and wildlife in Aberdeen could be reinterpreted in the context of play) and an outdoor amphitheatre with stepped seating and a focal point building to provide a hub for the performance space and cafe.
- Provision of a flexible events space in the Union Terrace Gardens and the necessary infrastructure and management arrangements in place to enable year round use.

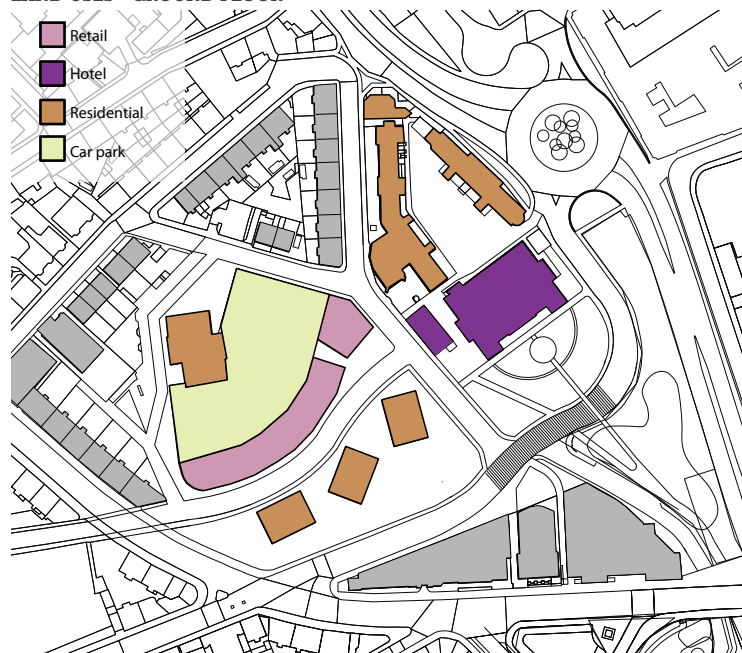
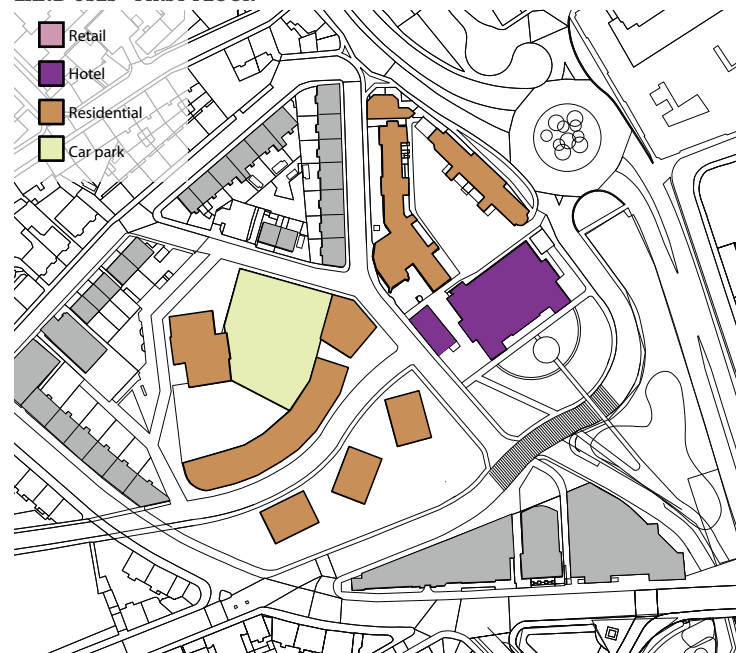
### EXISTING CONTEXT



### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



- Potential to reveal the currently culverted Denburn water course or interpret the 'memory' of the Denburn as a landscape feature.
- Expansion of the gardens on land alongside Her Majesty's Theatre and Skene Street, including high quality hard and soft landscape, whilst also retaining appropriate access and servicing arrangements to Her Majesty's Theatre.
- Redevelopment of the Denburn car park and health centre to provide new street connecting Gilcomston Park with the Upper Denburn, retail and community uses at street level and housing above, as well as additional housing provision within the Denburn Valley.
- Sensitive refurbishment of the historic Woolmanhill hospital for hotel and residential accommodation.
- Replacement car parking provision to be included as part of the Denburn car park redevelopment in order to service city attractions (including Her Majesty's Theatre and Art Gallery), with access from Denburn Road.

**LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR****LAND USES - FIRST FLOOR****Development summary**

- New ground floor uses circa 1,788 sq m (19,000 sq ft). Appropriate uses: Use class 1 (Retail); use class 2 (Financial, Professional and other services), use class 3 (Food and Drink) and use class 11 (assembly and leisure).
- New upper floor uses circa 22,602 (243,000 sq ft). Appropriate uses: Use class 9 (Houses) - approximately 260 apartments.
- Refurbishment of former Woolmanhill hospital buildings circa 12,302 sq m (132,000 sq m). Suitable uses (pavilion) class 7 (Hotels and Hostels) or use class 9 (Houses). Other remaining buildings suitable for use class 9 (Houses).
- Refurbishment of Denburn Court.
- Upgrade and expansion of Union Terrace Gardens including outdoor amphitheatre, new soft landscaping and high level bridge access.

**Sustainability Principles**

- Refurbishment of Denburn Court tower block to enhance thermal performance and energy efficiency with BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment Very Good rating sought to improve occupant comfort and reduce fuel poverty.
- Residential development should be designed to BRE's Home Quality Mark standard to ensure provision of environmentally sound and comfortable dwellings.
- Provision of renewable energy sources and CHP generating capacity (re-use of existing boiler house at Woolmanhill Hospital) and expansion of the district energy network to serve this part of the city centre.
- Local and sustainably sourced materials to retain the historic character and demonstrate good environmental credentials.
- Specification of materials with low embodied energy; Green Guide to Specification A+ or A rated.
- Provision of underground bin storage.
- Enhance quality and accessibility of green and blue infrastructure to maximise climate change resilience (flood risk mitigation), leisure and health opportunities and urban biodiversity habitat creation.
- Sustainable urban drainage including source control measures such as swales, retention / detention ponds, permeable paving and green roofs.



Ladywell Fields, London. (BDP)



# Heart of the city

## Vision

The heart of the city will be reinvigorated with internal and external spaces that knit together the medieval and Georgian city. Union Street gets the space it deserves for people to inhabit and enjoy with cars removed and footways widened. Better enforcement and maintenance of historic properties allows Union Street to shine with improved shop fronts and greater encouragement for higher quality businesses. Connections to Union Street are enhanced from the south with new steps at Back Wynd and improved routes through the Trinity Centre. The St. Nicholas Centre and Indoor Market will be remodelled to create more permeable and attractive spaces and a wider offer of uses.





## The opportunity

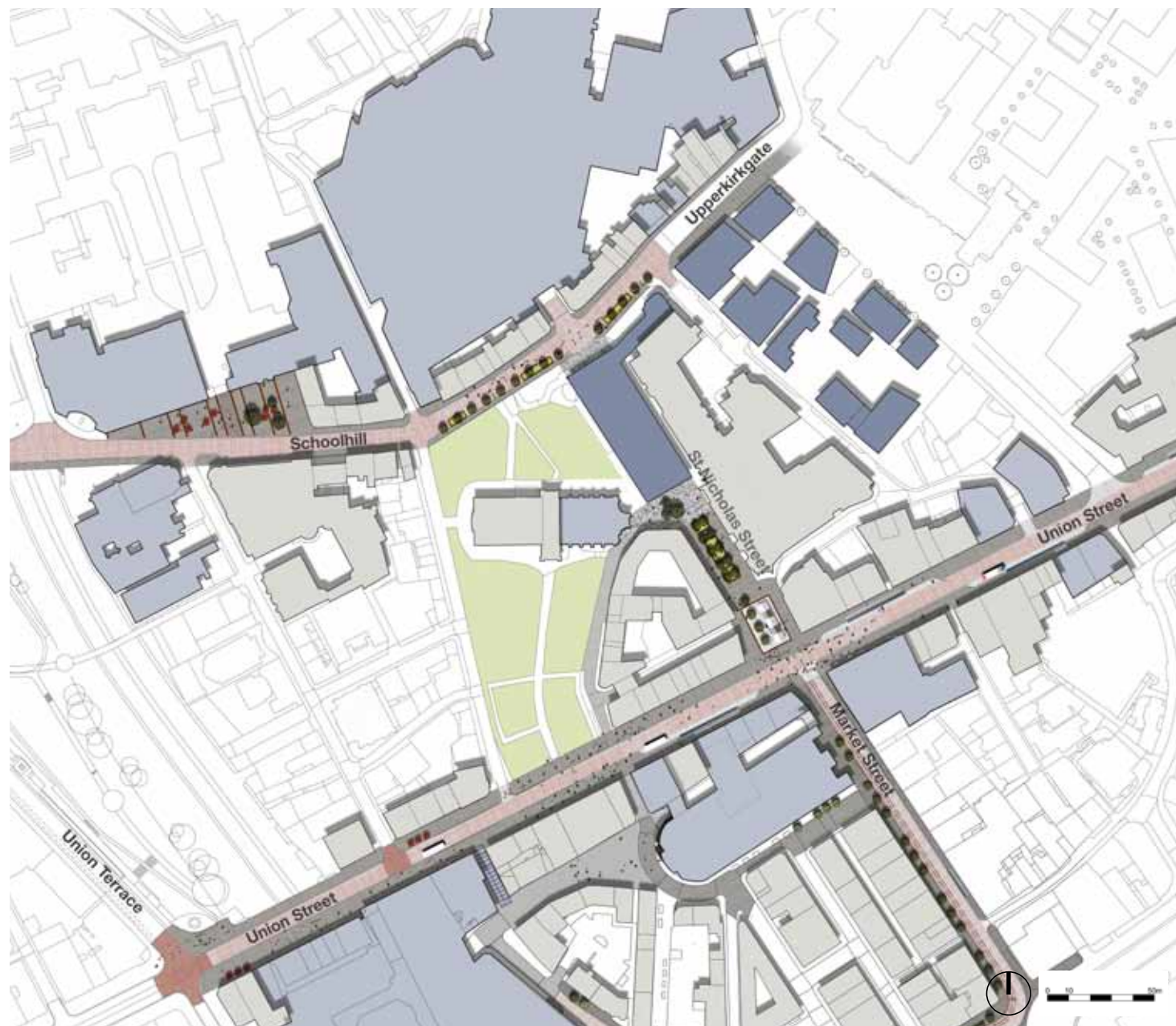
Car borne traffic will be removed from Union Street, which will be restricted to bicycles, buses and taxis only. Bus related infrastructure can then be rationalised and the streetscape re engineered with wider footways, lower kerb lines and enhanced surfacing and street furniture. Encouraged by the Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme the historic fabric of Union Street will be enhanced with repairs undertaken to facades and insensitive shop fronts and signage replaced with more sensitive colours and materials. Refurbishment and repairs will also aim to enhance the energy efficiency of the existing building stock through air tightness improvements, services upgrades and renewable technology retrofits. The aging market and St. Nicholas buildings are targeted as significant development opportunities that capitalise on the heart of the city as a key destination and city centre node of activity.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project CM06 Aberdeen Indoor Market
- Project CM09 St. Nicholas Centre
- Project CM11 Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme
- Project EC09 Mithers Kirk
- Project EC07 Aberdeen Art Gallery
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project EM05 Union Street
- Project EN06 Upperkirkgate / Schoolhill

### Other project linkages:

- Project CM07 Bon Accord Centre
- Project CM08 Independent Aberdeen
- Project CM12 Union Square
- Project IN08 Aberdeen Station
- Project EN02 Guild Street
- Project EC05 Aberdeen Creative Space
- Project EC06 365 Events Programme
- Project EC13 Retail academy
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour

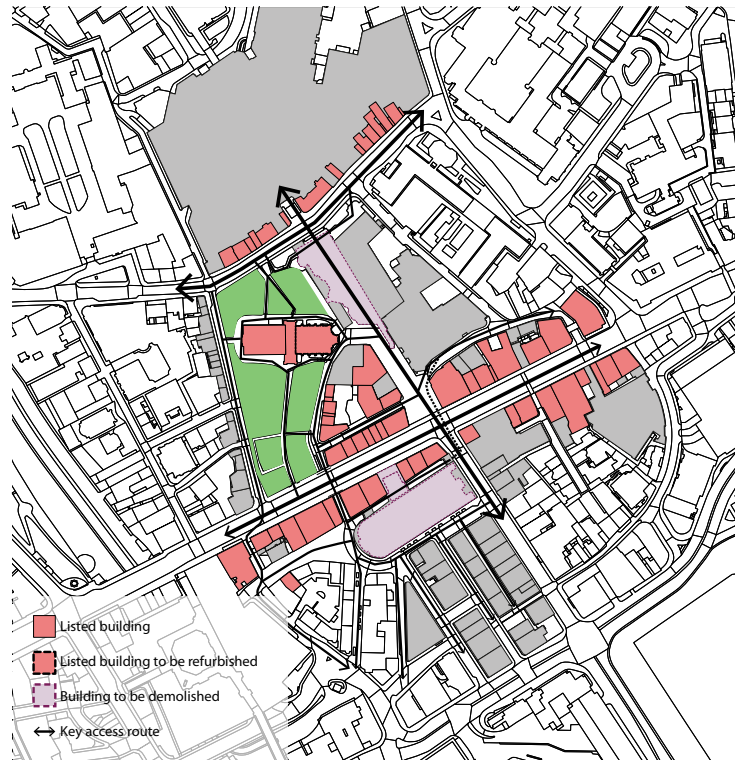


## Development objectives

The preferred development approach should deliver:

- Removal of cars on Union Street and rationalisation of bus infrastructure to expand pedestrian footways.
- A high quality public realm scheme on Union Street and Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate that complements the fine granite architecture with high quality materials and simple unfussy designs and creates comfortable places for people to linger and enjoy retail and leisure opportunities.
- Redesign of the Back Wynd Steps to include better provision for mobility impaired people, enhanced lighting and signage.
- Sympathetic enhancement of buildings on Union Street including quality of shop front materials, colours and design; repairs to historic buildings; measures to improve air tightness and energy efficiency (reducing energy costs and improving thermal comfort) and promotion of proposals that maximise the quality of ground floor uses and utilisation of basement and upper level floors for residential uses.
- Enhanced north – south permeability through the St. Nicholas Centre in order to reinstate St. Nicholas Street as a 24 hour publicly accessible thoroughfare.
- New public realm to blend St. Nicholas Street, the arcade and Upperkirkgate into a high quality streetscape.
- Remodelling of the St. Nicholas Centre to include removing the roof over the enclosed centre and forming a new

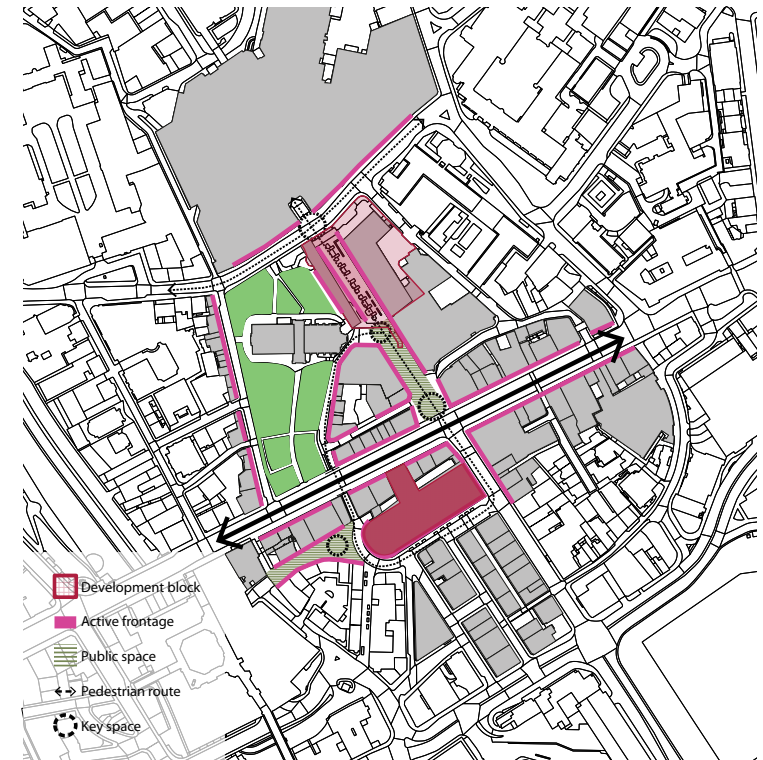
### EXISTING CONTEXT



glass roof above the upper level of the centre to form a winter garden with expanded upper floor accommodation. Works should also include reducing the negative appearance of the loading bay on the historic character of Correction Wynd, improving retail facades at ground level, enhancing circulation between levels and forming a complementary relationship to the St. Nicholas Kirk (and yard) and the Marischal Square development.

- A new sympathetically designed multi-use public building within the historic structure of the Mithers Kirk.

### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



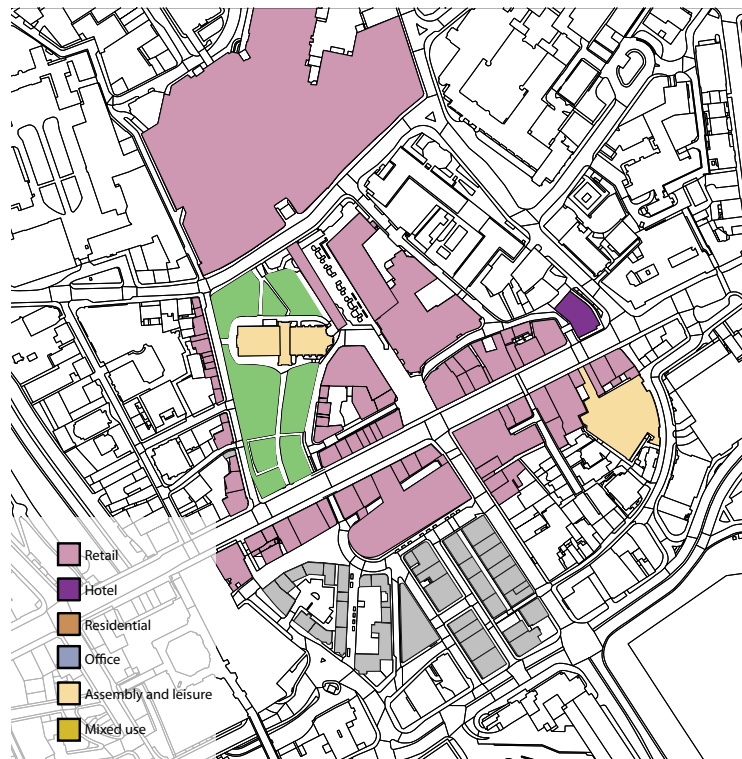
- Redevelopment of the Aberdeen Indoor Market to be replaced by a more contextually appropriate development of buildings and spaces. Key criteria for any redevelopment of the market includes:
  - Enhanced active frontages on Union Street, Market Street, Hadden Street and The Green.
  - Continued retail use at Union Street level and a mix of retail, food and drink and leisure uses at Hadden Street level.
  - Appropriate scale and quality of design given the site's conservation area setting and Union Street setting.

## Sustainability Principles

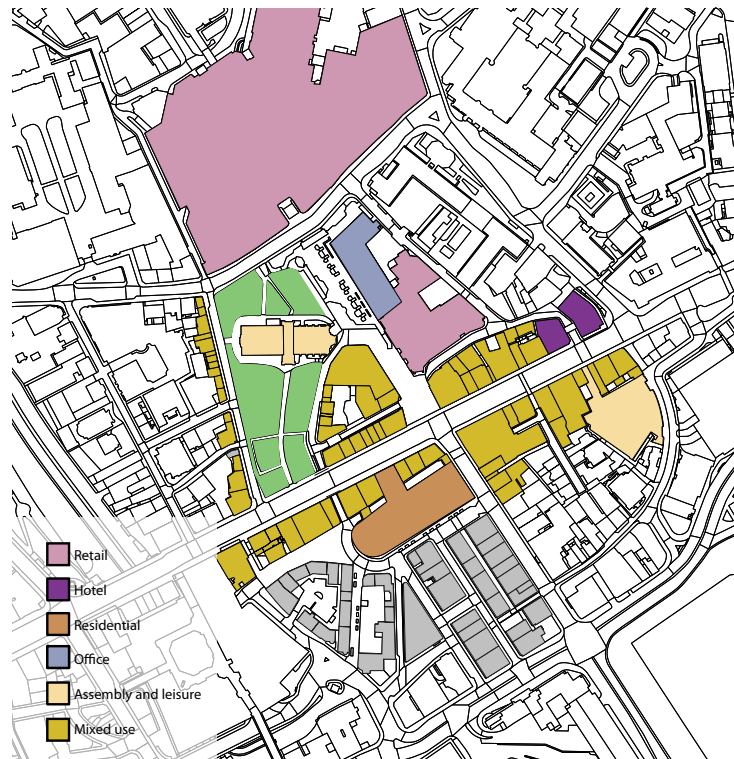
- Energy efficiency audits and grant access for improvements to energy efficiency of building stock.
- Connection into district energy network at Upperkirkgate if a link should be formed between Woolmanhill and the Town House.
- Underground bin storage to service Union Street properties.
- Provision of a cycle hub on St. Nicholas Street to service the wider area.



## LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR



## LAND USES - UPPER FLOOR



## Development summary

- Refurbishment and remodelling of buildings on Union Street. Negligible increase in overall accommodation but increased utilisation of existing floor space. Appropriate uses (ground floors): Use class 1 (Retail), use class 2 (Financial, Professional and other services) and use class 3 (Food and Drink). Appropriate uses (upper and lower floors): use class 4 (Business); use class 7 (Hotels and Hostels); use class 9 (Houses); use class 10 (Non-residential Institutions); use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure).
- Remodelling of the St. Nicholas Centre. Negligible increase in retail floor space but potential for expansion of office accommodation by 3,336 sq m (36,000 sq ft).
- Refurbishment of Mithar Kirk circa 2,620 sq m (28,000 sq ft). Use class 10 (non-residential institution) and use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure).
- Redevelopment of Aberdeen Indoor Market circa 6,149 sq m (66,000 sq ft) use class 1 (Retail), use class 3 (Food and Drink) and use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure), circa 9,500 sq m (103,000 sq ft) use class 6 (residential) and 3,500 sq m (38,000 sq ft) use class 7 (Hotels and Hostels).



VIEW OF NEW ST. NICHOLAS FOOD GALLERY



The Rock, Bury (BDP)



## Queen's Square

### The Vision

Queen's Square is the transformation of the Queen Street area into a new mixed used urban quarter. Cafes and shops spill out onto pedestrian friendly streets and public spaces. Apartments above provide a desirable residential address. Together with Marischal College, the Lemon Tree and the Arts Centre the proposed mix of uses forms a vibrant urban quarter that is active through the day and into the evening. It becomes a pleasant spot for city workers to take time out during the day, for culture vultures to extend their visit to the Lemon Tree or Arts Centre and for residents to enjoy convenient access to the city centre's employment and leisure opportunities.



## The opportunity

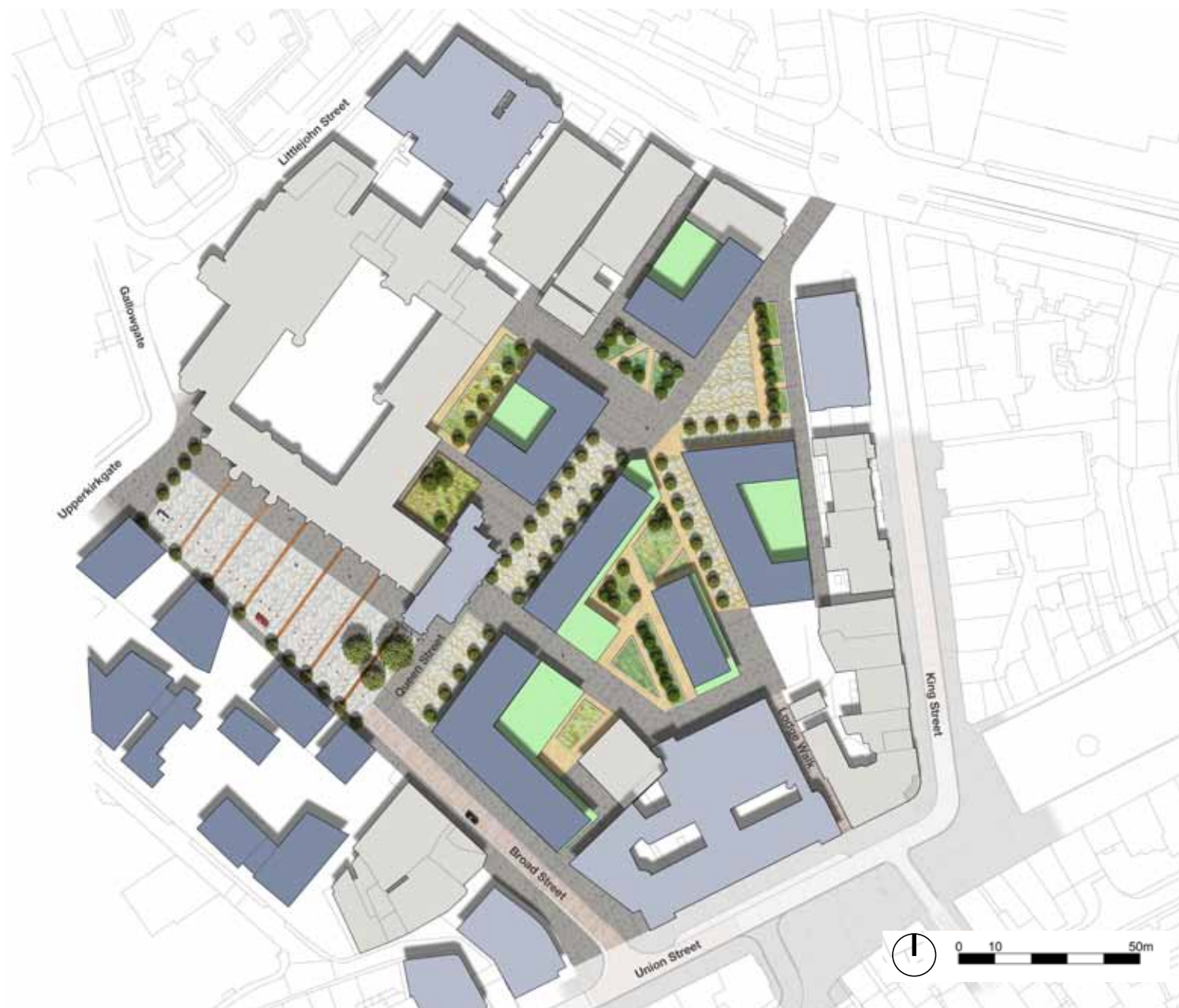
With the Council interested in consolidating public service provision in the presently vacant eastern annex of Marischal College and Police Scotland's aspirations to downsize to alternative accommodation, there is potential to redevelop the Town House extension and former Grampian Police headquarters along with other buildings and under used spaces within the Queen Street area. The location within the historic city centre core provides an opportunity for mixed use development comprising ground floor commercial uses (use class 1 and 3) and residential apartments to upper floors.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project CM02 Queen Street
- Project EN01 Broad Street
- Project IN12 District Heat Network

### Other project linkages:

- Project EC01 Marischal Square
- Project EC06 365 Events **Programme**
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project IN02 Inner Ring Road
- Project IN05 Cycle hubs
- Project IN06 Bus priority measures
- Project IN11 Accelerate Aberdeen
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour



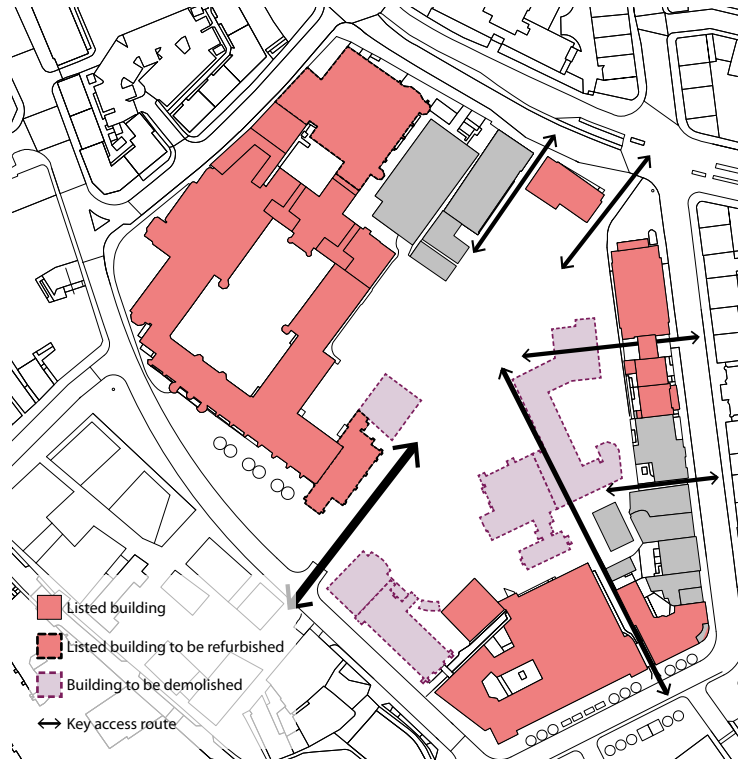


## Development objectives

The preferred development approach should deliver:

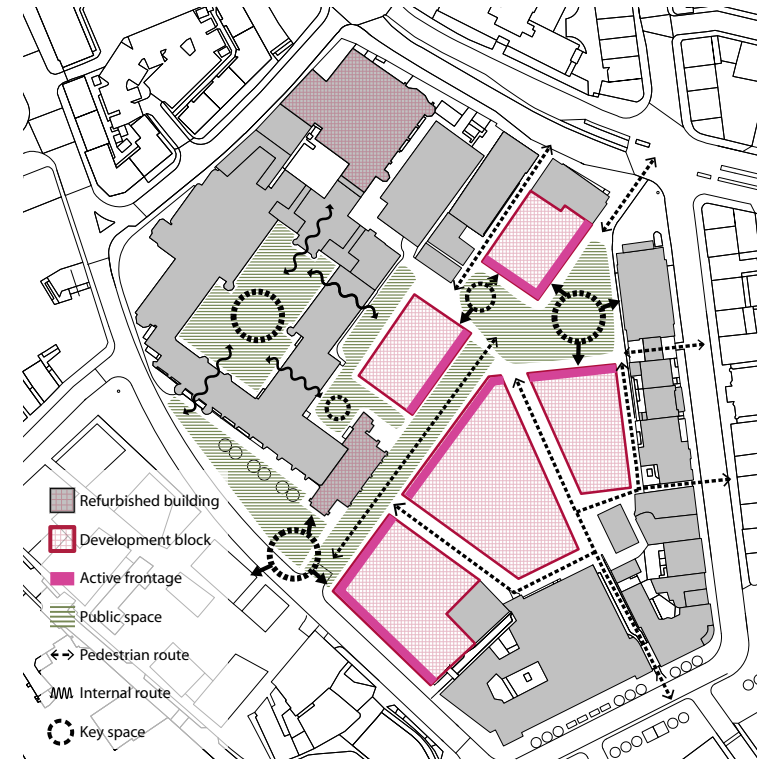
- Refurbishment of the Marischal College eastern annex and Greyfriars John Knox Church.
- Redevelopment of the Town House extension and former Grampian Police headquarters with flexibility to redevelop the courts over the longer term.
- A development layout based on a permeable grid of pedestrian priority streets, linked courtyards and wynds to include the extension of Lodge Walk as a pedestrian link from Union Street and a new central square adjacent to Aberdeen Arts Centre.
- Attractive and coherent contemporary architecture that respects the setting and key views of Marischal College, Greyfriars John Knox Church, Town House, Aberdeen Arts Centre (tower) and Queen Street Church Scotland.
- Active ground floor uses (retail and food and drink) to address frontages on Broad Street, Queen Street and the new square.
- Vehicular movement restricted on Queen Street with access maintained to service the Lemon Tree, Arts Centre, Town House and properties on King Street and for access to the Marischal College car park.
- High quality public realm on Queen Street, Broad Street and in other public areas.

### EXISTING CONTEXT



- Broad Street re-engineered to a bus / taxi / access only street but designed as a high quality space that can be used for temporary events.

### PROPOSED STRUCTURE

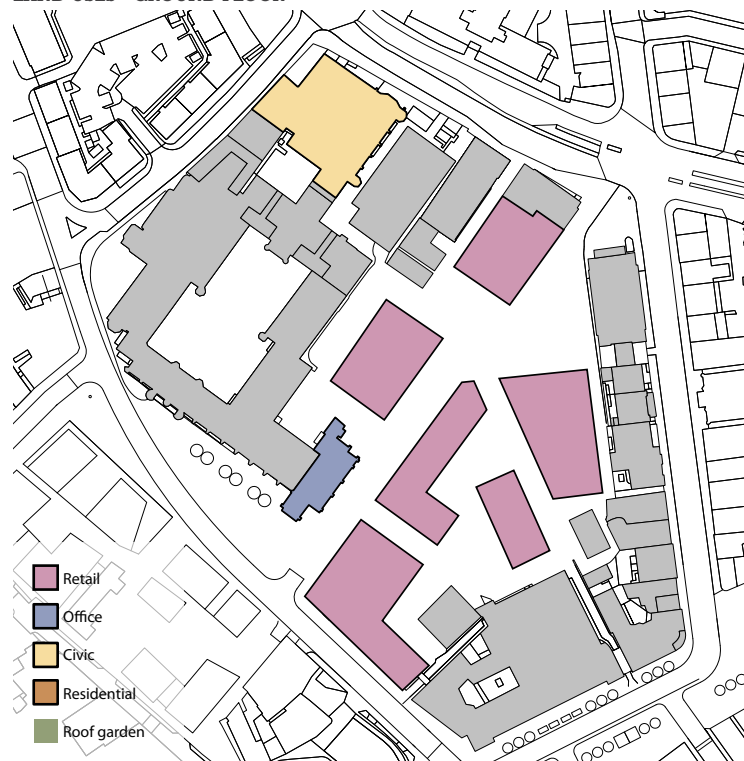


## Sustainability Principles

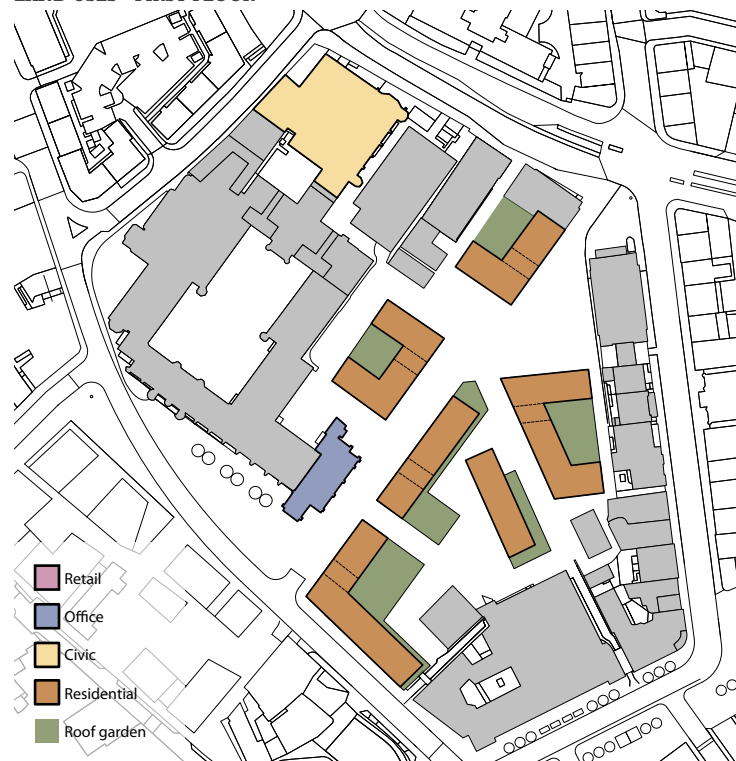
- Residential development should be designed to BRE's Home Quality Mark standard to ensure provision of environmentally sound and comfortable dwellings.
- Provision of renewable energy sources and expansion of district energy network (infrastructure and plant) to connect to existing infrastructure at the Town House.
- Local and sustainably sourced materials to retain the historic character and demonstrate good environmental credentials.
- Provision of underground bin storage.
- Increase ecological value through the planting of native street trees and new areas of greenspace.
- New car parking provision limited to spaces / charging points for electric vehicles, car clubs and disabled spaces.
- Provision of a cycle hub on Queen Street to service the wider area.



## LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR



## LAND USES - FIRST FLOOR



## Development summary

- Refurbishment of the eastern annex of Marischal College: Use class 4 (Offices) and use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure).
- Refurbishment of Greyfriars John Knox Church circa 1,436 sq m (15,000 sq ft). Appropriate uses: Use class 3 (Food and Drink); use class 4 (Business); use class 7 (Hotels and Hostels); use class 10 (Non-residential Institutions); use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure).
- New ground floor uses circa 7,686 sq m (83,000 sq ft). Appropriate uses: Use class 1 (Retail); use class 2 (Financial, Professional and other services) and use class 3 (Food and Drink).
- New upper floor uses circa 25,735 sq m (277,000 sq ft). Appropriate uses: Use class 9 (Houses) - approximately 330 apartments.



Oslo, Norway



Oslo, Norway



The Rock, Bury (BDP)

## Union Street West

### Vision

Union Street West will reaffirm itself as an elegant city quarter, home to a sizable business community, a growing residential community and a vibrant mix of retail and leisure uses. The environment of the area will be much improved with extensive public realm works on Union Street and surrounding streets and key spaces such as Golden Square and Bon Accord Square. The refurbished Music Hall and new City Rooms will elevate the cultural, civic and commercial status of Union Street, channelling more footfall through the day and into the evening and serving to reinforce opportunities for sympathetic restoration and infilling of the heritage townscape.





## The opportunity

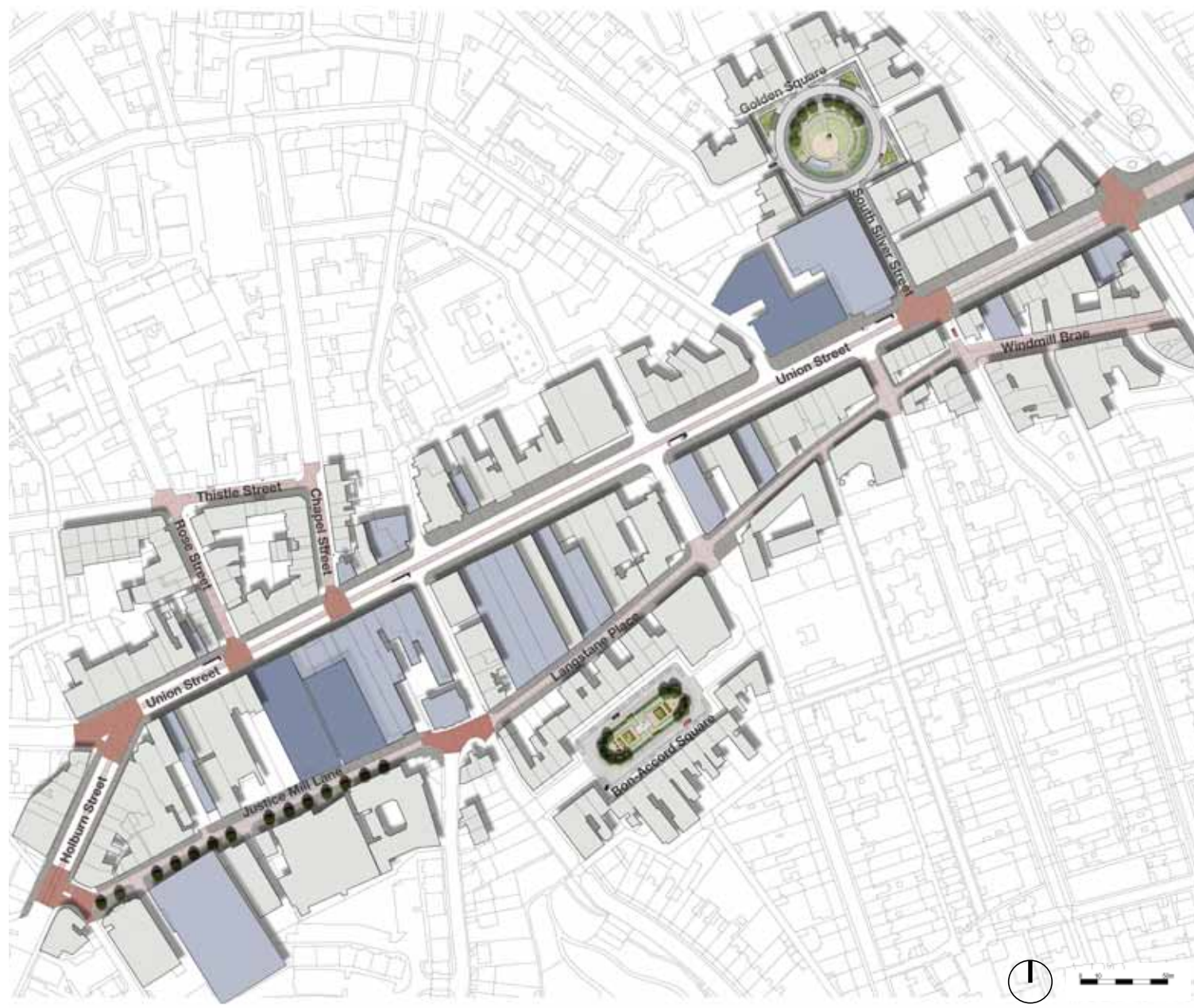
The west end of Union Street is blessed with a consistent and well mannered historic townscape, which would benefit from better upkeep and use through sensitive refurbishment. In some cases there may be scope to intensify activity through redevelopment and intensification of this townscape, as established in recent proposals for The Capitol and Silver Finn. Future proposals for demolition and redevelopment will be considered on their individual merits and their impact on the character of Union Street and individual heritage assets. A particular opportunity is 198 Union Street, which is identified for a range of public and commercial uses. There also exists scope to redefine a number of key spaces between buildings to create better places for city life to flourish.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project EC03 Aberdeen City Rooms
- Project EC10 Music Hall
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project CM08 Independent Aberdeen
- Project CM11 Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme
- Project EN03 Langstane Place / Justice Mill Lane / Windmill Brae
- Project EN04 Rose / Thistle / Chapel Street
- Project EN05 Union Street
- Project EN07 Bon Accord Square
- Project EN09 Golden Square
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour

### Other project linkages:

- Project EC06 Aberdeen 365 Events Programme





## Development objectives

The preferred development approach should deliver:

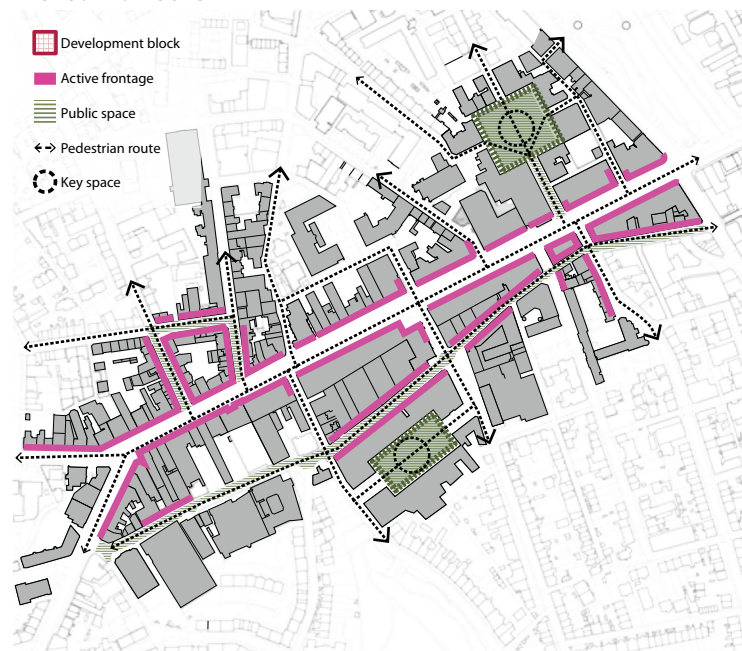
- Reduction in the carriageway width of Union Street to two lanes, as well as de-cluttering of street furniture and rationalisation of refuse storage and delivery in order to create more places for people to linger and enjoy retail and leisure opportunities.
- Restricted vehicular movement on Justice Mill Lane, Langstane Place and Windmill Brae for servicing only in order to allow priority for pedestrians and cyclists.
- A high quality public realm schemes on Union Street, Chapel Street, Thistle Street, Rose Street, Justice Mill Lane, Langstane Place and Windmill Brae that complement the fine granite architecture with high quality materials and simple unfussy designs.
- Sympathetic enhancement of buildings on Union Street including quality of shop front materials, colours and design; repairs to historic buildings; measures to improve air tightness and energy efficiency (reducing energy costs and improving thermal comfort) and promotion of proposals that maximise the quality of ground floor uses and utilisation of basement and upper level floors for residential uses.
- Promotion of independent retail and food and drink businesses and
- Redevelopment of the former YMCA building next to the Music Hall for a building of the highest design quality, housing assembly and leisure uses and a business centre (City Rooms).
- Redesign of Golden Square to remove most of the car parking (future car parking provision to be limited to spaces / charging points for electric vehicles, car clubs and disabled spaces) and to create a new outdoor performance space linked to the Music Hall. The design to include redefinition of South Silver Street as pedestrian priority zone but to retain necessary servicing and access arrangements for the operation of the Music Hall.
- Redesign of Bon Accord Square to create a local garden space with improved perimeter planting for colour and biodiversity and raised beds and seating areas to encourage casual meetings and contemplation. A new ramped access and new paving where there were once cars will create a more attractive and accessible pocket park.

## EXISTING CONTEXT



## Sustainability Principles

- Energy efficiency audits and grant access for improvements to energy efficiency of building stock.
- Aberdeen City Rooms to maximise glazing and solar shading to optimise natural daylight and passive solar gain whilst minimising glare and overheating risk; to provide high standards of air tightness in excess of building regulations; to integrate renewable energy sources
- Provision of cycle hubs on Golden Square and Bon Accord Square.

**PROPOSED STRUCTURE****LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR****Development summary**

- New Aberdeen City Rooms circa 10,239 sq m (1110,000 sq ft). Ground floor cafe, multi-purpose foyer and gallery (use class 11) with offices (use class 4) above and rooftop restaurant (use class 3).
- Refurbishment of Music Hall.
- Redesign of Golden Square.
- Redesign of Bon Accord Square.



Perth Concert Hall



Elizabeth Street, Belgravia, London



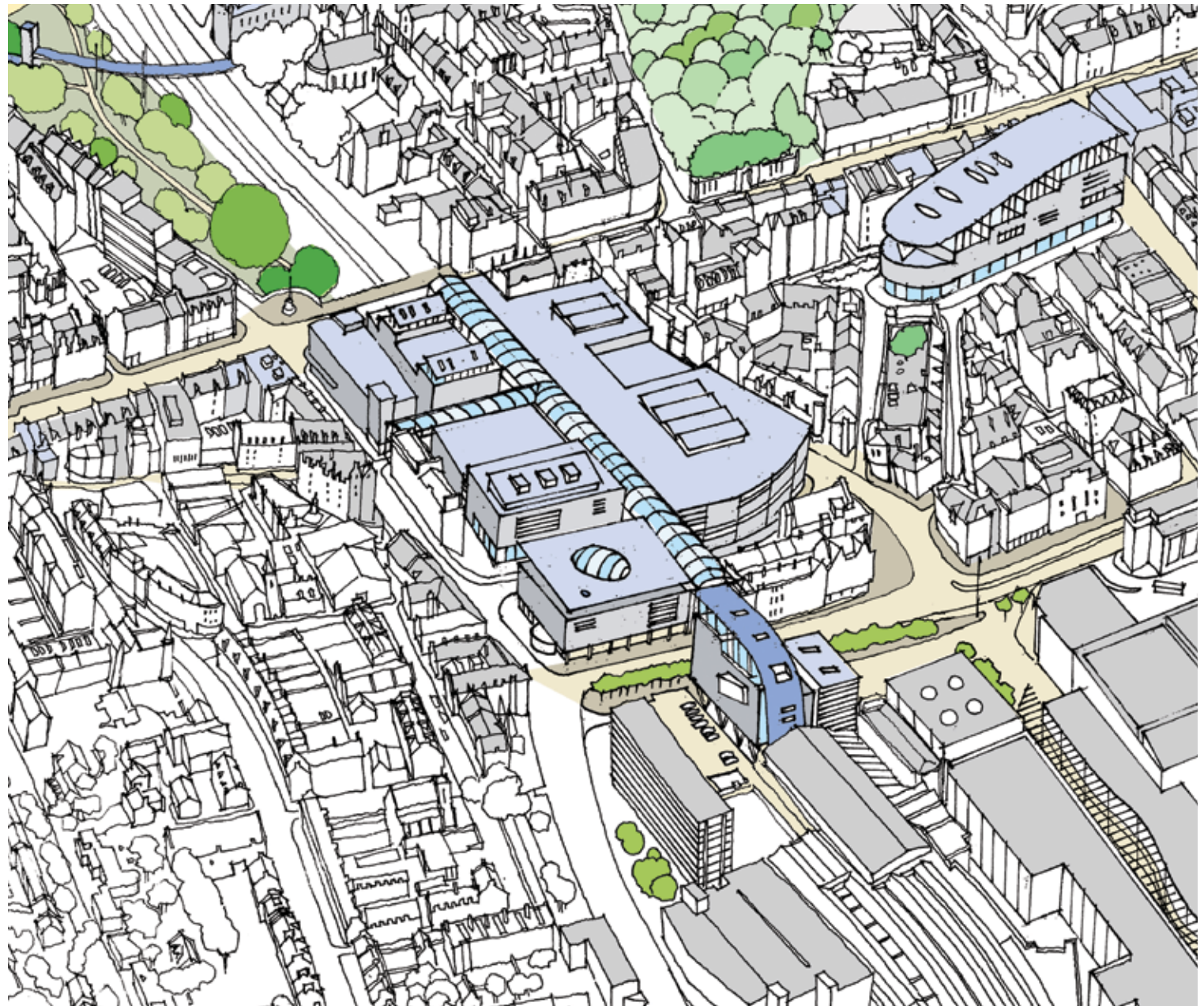
Belgravia, London



## Station Gateway

### Vision

A much enhanced gateway experience and better pedestrian routes between Union Street and the station will radically improve first impressions of Aberdeen and the attraction of access by rail. When emerging from the train station, people will be greeted with a more welcoming city. More generous public realm will create more space for people to meet and linger with new hotels and retail facilities helping to animate and enliven this important entrance to the city centre.



POTENTIAL VISION FOR THE LONGER TERM REDEVELOPMENT OF STATION GATEWAY AND SURROUNDING AREA



## The opportunity

The removal of car borne traffic on Guild Street necessitates the relocation of the station taxi rank and vehicular drop off area, creating the opportunity to expand and enhance the station concourse. This along with the redevelopment of Atholl House would provide a better gateway and enhanced connections to the Trinity Centre and Union Street beyond. The Trinity Centre itself will be subject to an enhancement programme that will seek to improve access and entrance arrangements.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project CM10 Trinity Centre
- Project CM11 Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme
- Project EC08 New hotel development
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project IN01 City centre car parking
- Project IN02 Urban Relief Road
- Project IN06 Bus priority measures
- Project IN08 Aberdeen Station
- Project EN02 Guild Street

### Other project linkages:

- Project EN05 Union Street
- Project CM12 Union Square
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour



## Development objectives

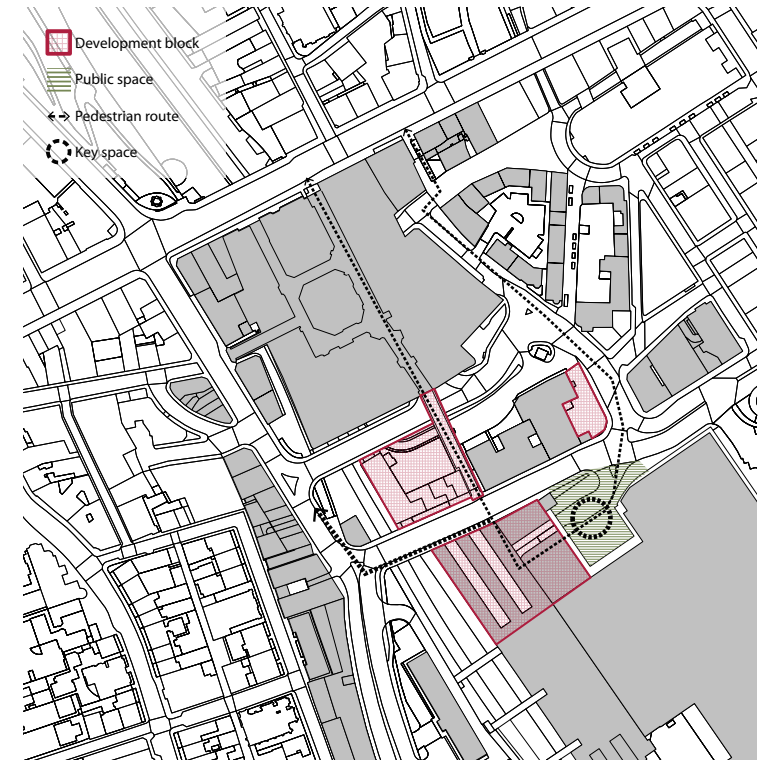
The preferred development approach should deliver:

- Removal of cars on Guild Street and sections of Carmelite Street and Wapping Street, creating the opportunity to expand pedestrian footways and Union Square as a pedestrian friendly space and form a seamless pedestrian route through the Merchant Quarter.
- A high quality public realm scheme on Guild Street with high quality materials and simple unfussy designs that creates comfortable places for people to linger and enjoy.
- Relocation of station drop off and taxi functions to College Street.
- Redevelopment of the existing taxi / drop off area to create an expanded station concourse with associated retail uses at station level and a hotel above.
- Redevelopment of Atholl House and the Trinity Centre entrance, to be replaced with a high quality foyer / atrium space with escalator and lift access and new bridge link to the Trinity Centre. Upper floors suitable for hotel and residential accommodation.
- Programme of enhancement and improvement works to the Trinity Centre.

### EXISTING CONTEXT



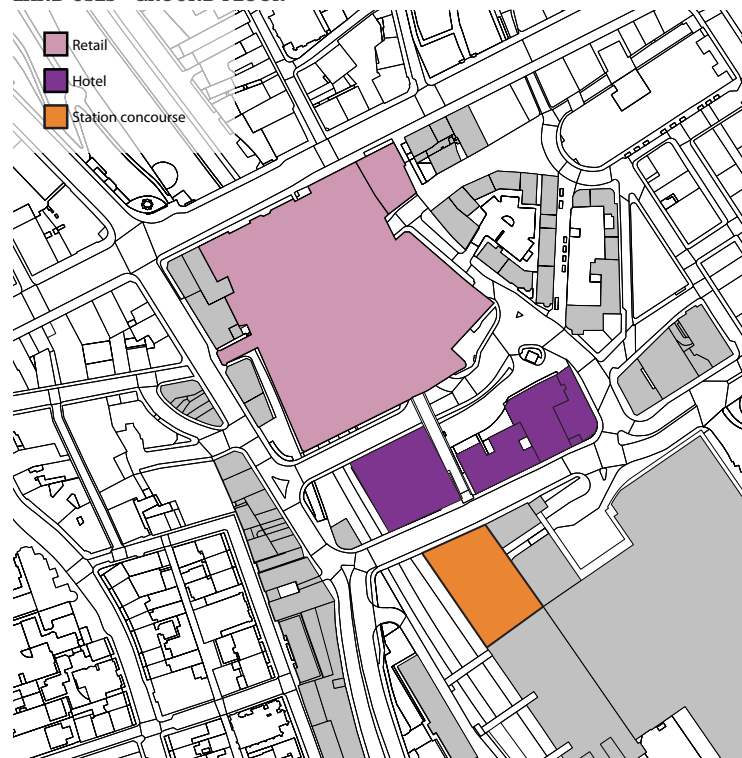
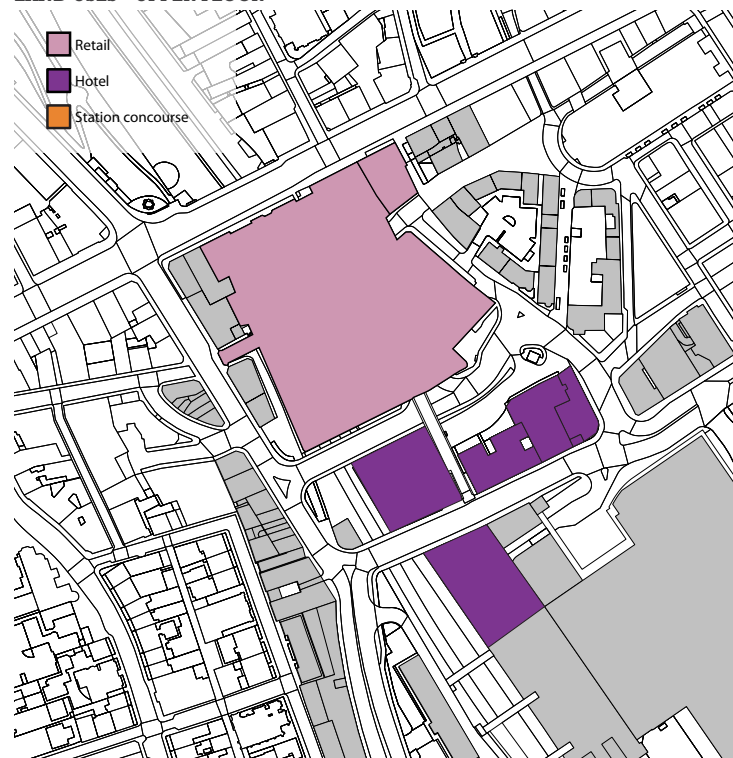
### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



## Sustainability Principles

- As a prominent gateway the Atholl House redevelopment and station expansion should promote sustainable design and innovative energy technologies, announcing arrival to the energy city.
- Provision of a cycle hub on Guild Street to service the wider area.



**LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR****LAND USES - UPPER FLOOR****Development summary**

- Expanded station concourse circa 2,700 sq m (29,000 sq ft) across two levels to include use class 1 (retail) and 3 (food and drink).
- New station hotel above concourse circa 10,000 sq m (108,000 sq ft).
- New Trinity Centre entrance and bridge links.
- Hotel / serviced apartments on Atholl House site circa 8,600 sq m (93,000 sq ft), use class 7 (hotels).



Manchester Piccadilly (BDP)



Manchester Piccadilly (BDP)



Queen Street Station, Glasgow, UK (BDP)



# Castlegate/Castlehill

## Vision

Castlegate will be reinvigorated as Aberdeen city centre's main civic square. This historic space that for centuries was enlivened with people and activity has lost a sense of focus in recent years and the intention is to seek a new role for Castlegate that brings it back to life. Forming a crossroads between Union Street, the harbourside and the beach, Castlegate forms an important orientation point for visitors and should once again become a popular place to enjoy city life. There is also scope to enhance the wider setting of Castlegate through the enhancement of the neighbourhood at Castlehill, which comprises the Virginia Court and Marischal Court towers.



## The Opportunity

Substantial repaving of Castlegate along with measures to improve microclimate and the ability to host events will be implemented to create a more comfortable and event ready space. This along with a varied programme of markets, concerts and events will create a buzzing, people friendly space. It is assumed that the changing nature of activity within the Castlegate will stimulate interest from building owners and new businesses to invest in new leisure uses around the square but it is also considered that a more interventionist approach may be required to fully maximise the presently untapped potential of Castlegate.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project EN08 Castlegate
- Project CM01 Castlehill
- Project EC06 365 Events Programme
- Project EC08 Hotels
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project CM08 Independent Aberdeen
- Project CM11 Union Street Conservation Area Improvement Scheme
- Project IN12 District Heat Network
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour



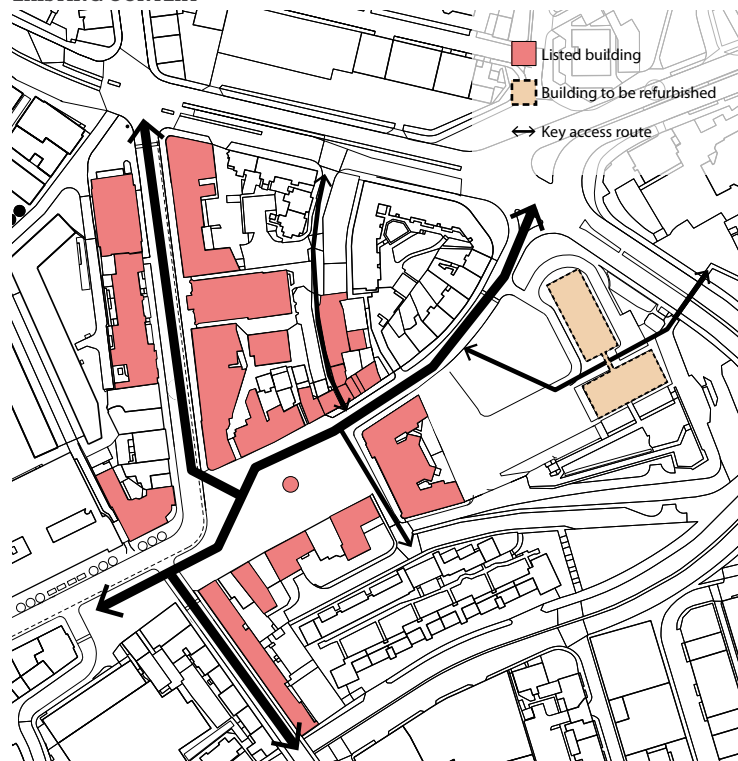


## Development objectives

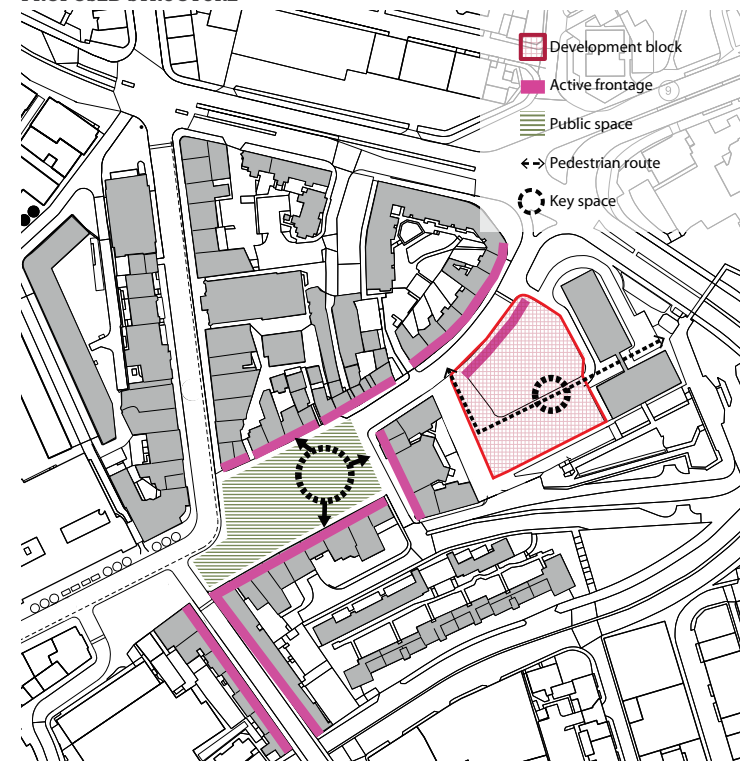
The preferred development approach should deliver:

- An enhanced paving surface on Castlegate and Justice Street that reinforces and simplifies the space, taking a lead from the existing built edges to reacquaint the street threshold with surrounding facades and a rich design narrative accommodated within paving detailing, public art and street furniture.
- A landmark lighting scheme through either a permanent or annually changing lighting installation in Castlegate.
- Provision for enhanced protection from inclement weather in Castlegate.
- The necessary infrastructure (e.g. power, water, servicing) and management arrangements in place to enable year round use.
- Enhanced shop fronts and ground floor uses on Castlegate, which should be limited in the future to use class 1 (Retail), use class 3 (Food and Drink) and use class 11 (Assembly and leisure).
- Enhanced maintenance and occupation of upper floors on Castlegate for use class 4 (business), use class 7 (Hotels and Hostels) and use class 9 (residential).
- Redevelopment of land behind the citadel for new housing.
- Enhanced public realm and play space at Castlehill, including making more of the fantastic view points over the beach and harbour.
- Better utilisation of ground floor accommodation within the base of the tower blocks for community uses.
- Replacement of the existing roundabout at Commerce Street / East North Street and Beach Boulevard with a crossroads junction to provide enhanced connectivity to the city centre for pedestrians and cyclists and better links to the beach from the city centre.

### EXISTING CONTEXT



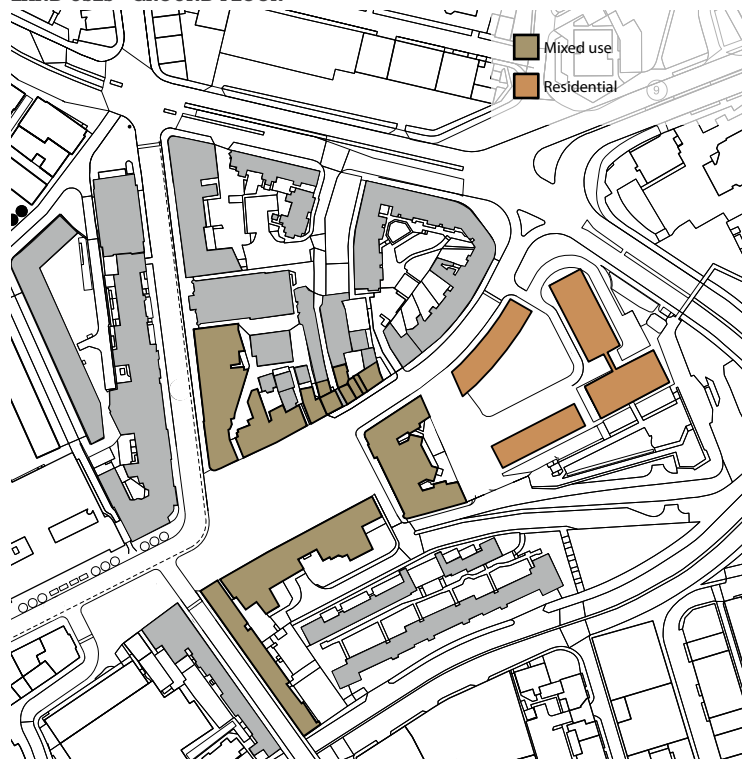
### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



## Sustainability Principles

- Sympathetic refurbishment of the modernist tower blocks to enhance thermal performance and energy efficiency with BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment Very Good rating sought to improve occupant comfort and reduce fuel poverty.
- Residential development should be designed to BRE's Home Quality Mark standard to ensure provision of environmentally sound and comfortable dwellings.
- Provision of renewable energy sources and expansion of district energy network (infrastructure and plant) to connect to existing spur on Beach Boulevard.
- Provision of a cycle hub on Castlegate to service the wider area.



**LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR****Development summary**

- Refurbishment of properties on Castlegate and Justice Street. Appropriate ground floor uses: Use class 1 (retail), Use class 3 (Food and Drink); and use class 11 (Assembly and Leisure). Appropriate upper floor uses: Use class 4 (Offices), use class 7 (Hotels and Hostels) and use class 9 (residential).
- Refurbishment of Marischal and Virginia Court (use class 9 -Houses), potential for use class 1 (Retail); use class 3 (Food and Drink) and use class 11 (assembly and leisure) at street level.
- New residential circa 3,800 sq m (40,000 sq ft) - approximately 46 apartments.

**Brown Hart Gardens, London****Music Boxes, Salford**

# North Dee

## Vision

A new office district located at North Dee provides increased capacity for large office based employers to locate in the city centre. Less of a business park and more of an urban scaled business quarter, the district sits within a well designed urban landscape that emphasises pedestrian connectivity, a mix of spaces to inhabit and dwell and a range of local shops and eateries. Occupying a high profile position on North Esplanade overlooking the river, the centre piece of the development is the Global Energy Hub, which provides a range of spaces designed to support collaboration and innovation.





## The opportunity

The proposal is based on an already established process of change, which has seen the land use character of North Dee shift from industry to offices. The aim is to capture the growing momentum to consolidate the area as a high quality business quarter, setting a framework for the development of the remaining plots for office use and establishing a network of high quality streets and spaces, linking from the remodelled Union Square shopping centre to the new footbridge over the Dee. The Global Energy Hub will embody its function as a centre for innovation in future renewable energy and sustainable design. The building will be designed to BREAM 'Outstanding' standards, utilising innovative sustainable design solutions to reduce embodied energy and minimise its ecological footprint.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project EC02 North Dee Business Quarter
- Project EC04 Global Energy Hub
- Project CM12 Union Square
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project IN01 City centre car parking
- Project IN07 Bus stop infrastructure and bus station
- Project IN12 District Heat Network

### Other project linkages:

- Project EC13 Retail academy
- Project CM03 Torry Waterfront
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour



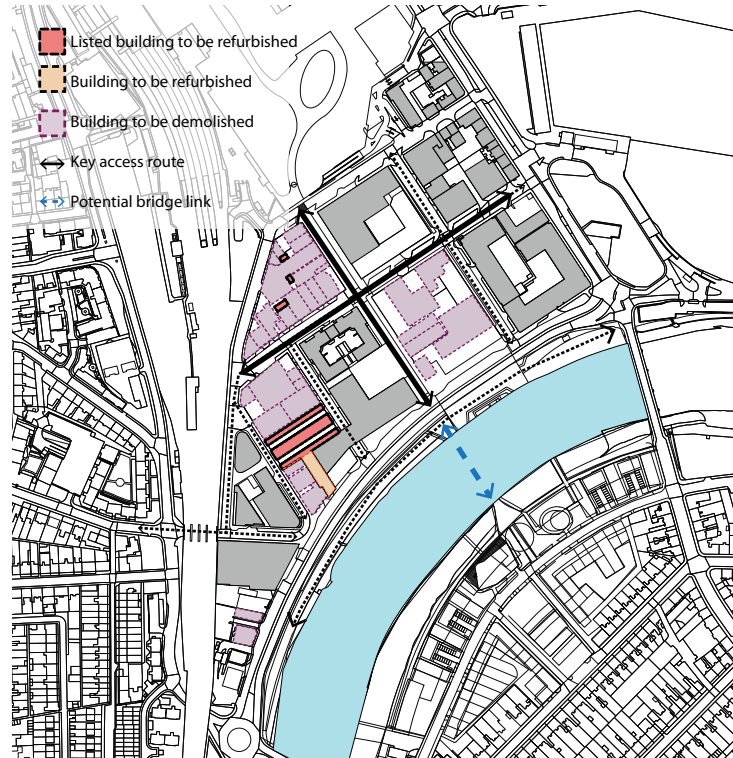


## Development objectives

The preferred development approach should deliver:

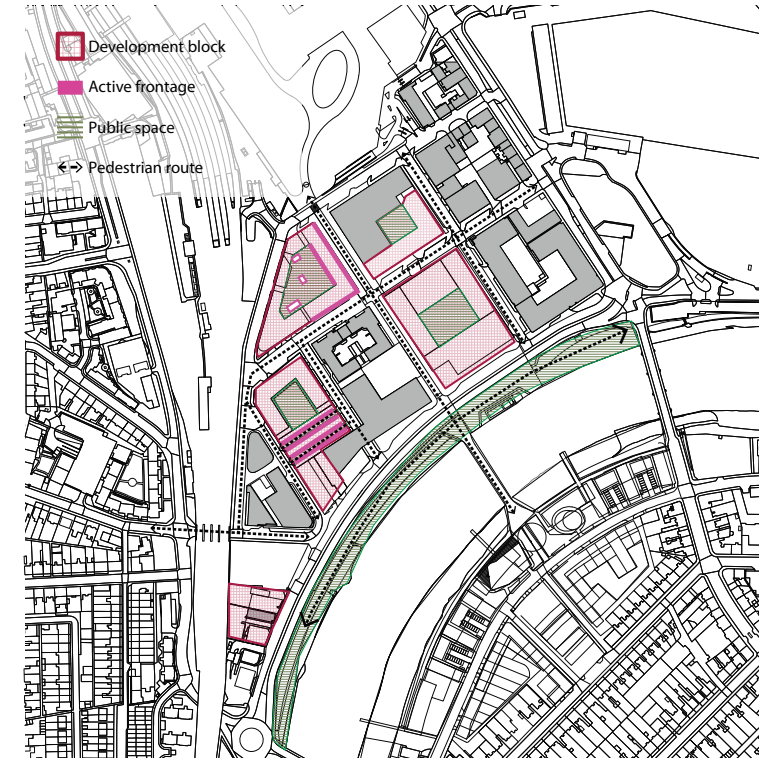
- Relocation of remaining industrial uses to suitable accommodation elsewhere in the city and / or Shire.
- Grade A office accommodation (use class 4), potentially with active ground floor uses (use class 1, 2 and 3).
- The Global Energy Hub, a landmark building of scale and significance on North Esplanade West, which physically embodies its function as a centre for innovation and collaboration.
- Retention and refurbishment of listed smoke houses and other industrial heritage for retail, business or assembly and leisure uses.
- A development layout based on the existing grid of streets in order to form a series of perimeter blocks that address and enclose the established street network and enclosed public or semi-public courtyards within the centre of the blocks.
- High quality contemporary architecture to distinguish the area as a highly desirable corporate business district.
- High quality public realm to include replacement paving, street furniture and landscaping on Palmerston Road, Poyrnook Road, Old Ford Road, Russell Road, Raik Road and Stell Road, including delineation of Raik Road as the main pedestrian spine through the development.

### EXISTING CONTEXT



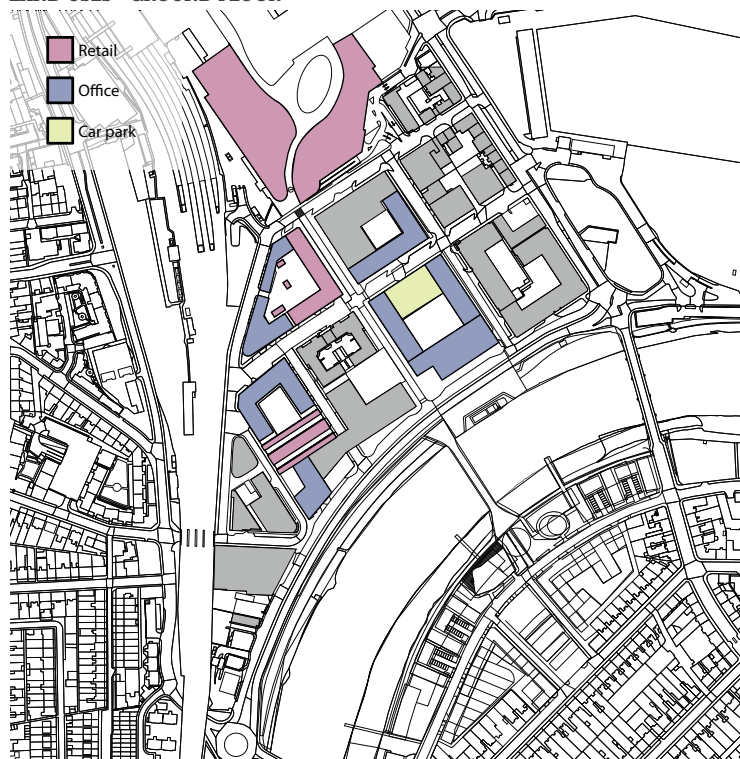
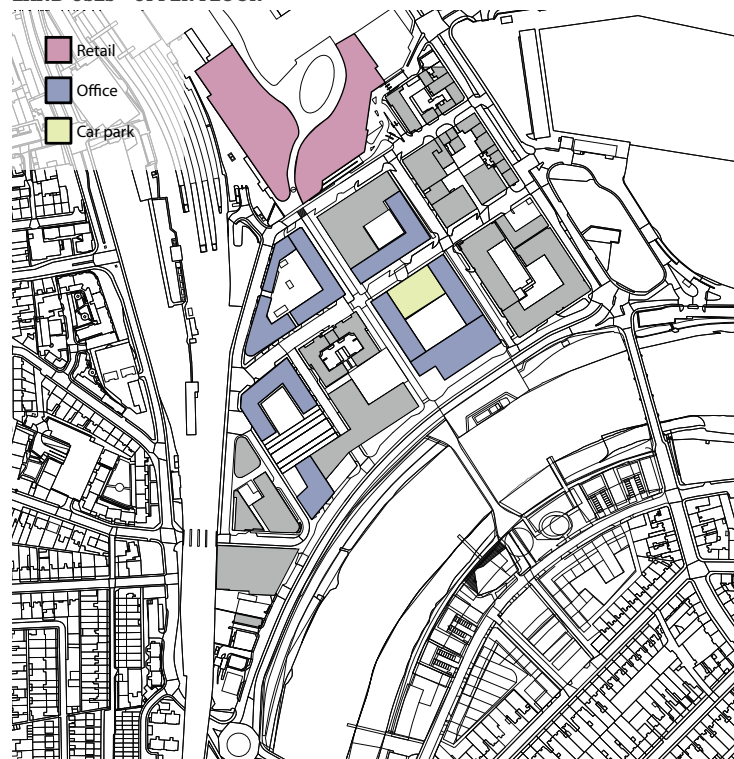
- A new pedestrian / cycle bridge linking Raik Road with Torry.
- A new toucan crossing on North Esplanade West between Raik Road and proposed bridge.
- A multi-storey car park to serve all users in North Dee rather than separate car parks associated with individual buildings.
- Enhancement of the North Esplanade promenade.

### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



## Sustainability Principles

- Designed to BREEAM Excellent (Global Energy Hub – Outstanding) for environmental credentials, occupant comfort and increased rental value potential.
- (Near) carbon neutral: High efficiency and air tightness above Building Regulation standards
- Showcase and test bed for emerging innovative sustainable technology solutions designed / manufactured in Aberdeen.
- Global Energy Hub building as a learning resource: Visible and informative display of the building's sustainable technologies.
- Provision of renewable energy sources and expansion of district energy network (infrastructure and plant).
- Sustainable urban drainage including source control measures such as swales, retention / detention ponds, permeable paving and green roofs.
- Specification of materials with low embodied energy; Green Guide to Specification A+ or A rated.

**LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR****LAND USES - UPPER FLOOR****Development summary**

- Global Energy Hub (use class 4) circa 17,352 sq m (187,000 sq ft).
- New office development (use class 4) circa 107,000 sq m (1,150,000 sq ft).
- New ground floor uses and refurbishment of listed smoke houses circa 3,590 sq m (38,000 sq ft) use class 1 (Retail); use class 2 (Financial, Professional and other services), use class 3 (Food and Drink) and use class (business).
- New multi-storey car park (approximately 450 spaces).



Strathclyde University



Brown Hart Gardens, London



Spinningfields, Manchester



## Torry Waterfront

### Vision

A new residential community like no other in Aberdeen. Torry Waterfront is a high density urban neighbourhood overlooking the River Dee, enjoying a pleasant green setting but easy access to the city centre. Linked to the city with a new pedestrian bridge, an enhanced riverside promenade is animated by a riverside park, a new high quality hotel (that is also a Hotel Academy) and residential apartments that enjoy spectacular views out over the city and harbour.





## The Opportunity

Significant redevelopment of existing industrial land uses to create a new riverside district that integrates with and enhances the community of Torry and connects with the emerging business quarter at North Dee. Formed around an expanded riverside park, the development will include a mix of uses that maximise the relationship to the water including a Hotel Academy.

### Key projects related to this intervention area:

- Project CM03 Torry Waterfront
- Project EC12 Hotel academy
- Project EC08 Hotels
- Project EC11 Aberdeen works
- Project IN12 District Heat Network

### Other project linkages:

- Project EC02 North Dee Business Quarter
- Project EC06 365 Events Programme
- Project EN11 Aberdeen in colour

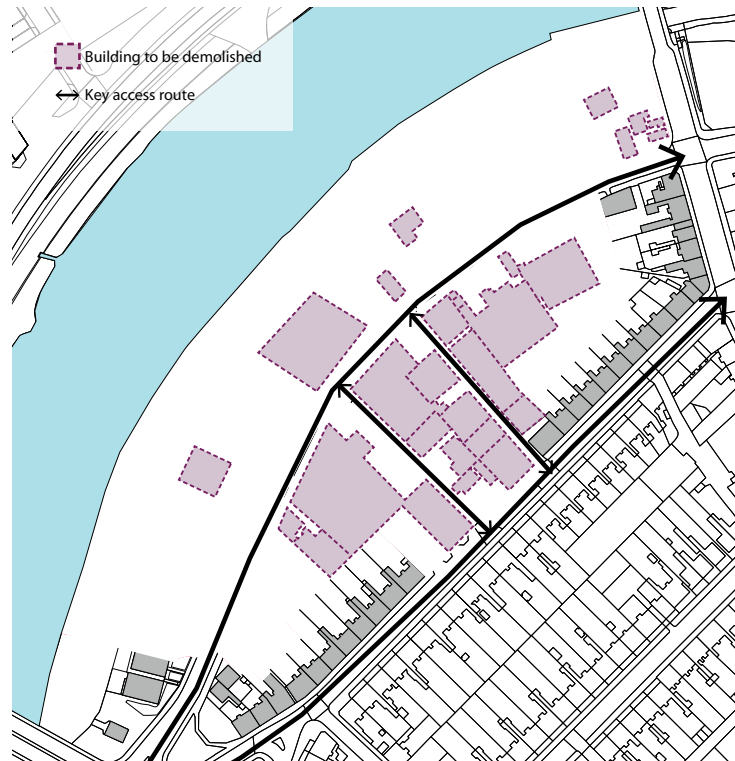


## Development objectives

The preferred development approach should deliver:

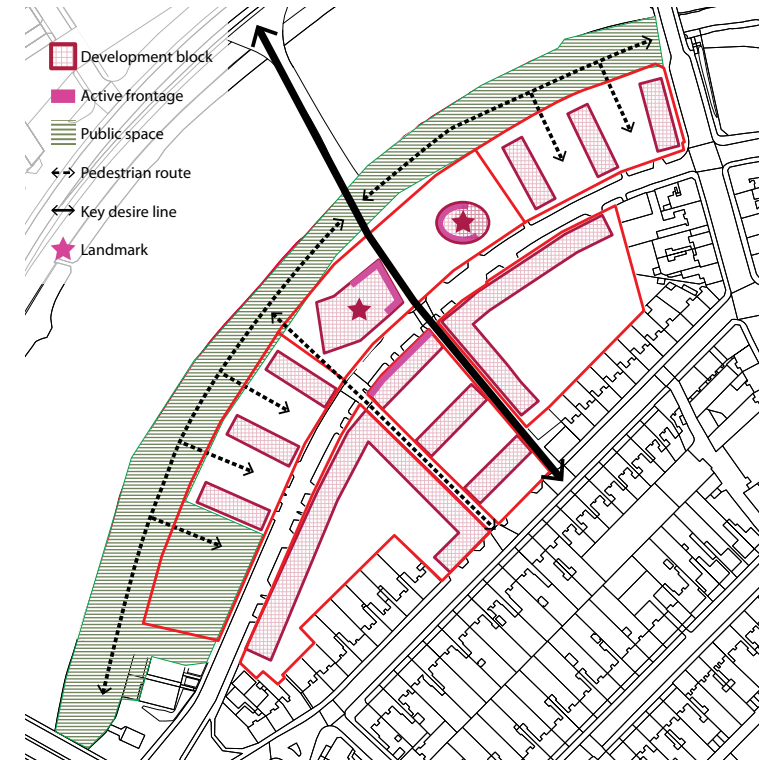
- Relocation of remaining industrial uses to suitable accommodation elsewhere in the city and / or Shire.
- New housing, comprising riverside apartments and a mix of tenement apartment blocks and town houses.
- The Hotel Academy - a fully functioning high class hotel housed within a landmark building.
- A development layout based on retaining the existing grid of streets and creating a strong desire line from Cabel's Lane to the new pedestrian bridge.
- Attractive and coherent contemporary architecture that maximises views out and views into the development, including a perpendicular arrangement of riverside blocks and potentially a landmark tower building.
- Active ground floor uses (use class 1 and 3) to address the riverside promenade and South Esplanade West.
- Traffic calming and public realm improvements on South Esplanade West, Cabel's Lane, Murray's Lane and Menzies Road.
- Car parking provision to have limited visual impact on the riverside (i.e. basement, undercroft).

### EXISTING CONTEXT



- Expansion of the riverside park towards Victoria Road, including children's play areas, the university rowing clubs, a walking / cycle promenade, naturalistic habitat friendly planting and riverside pontoons that bring people closer to the water.
- CHP plant and district heating capability.

### PROPOSED STRUCTURE



## Sustainability Principles

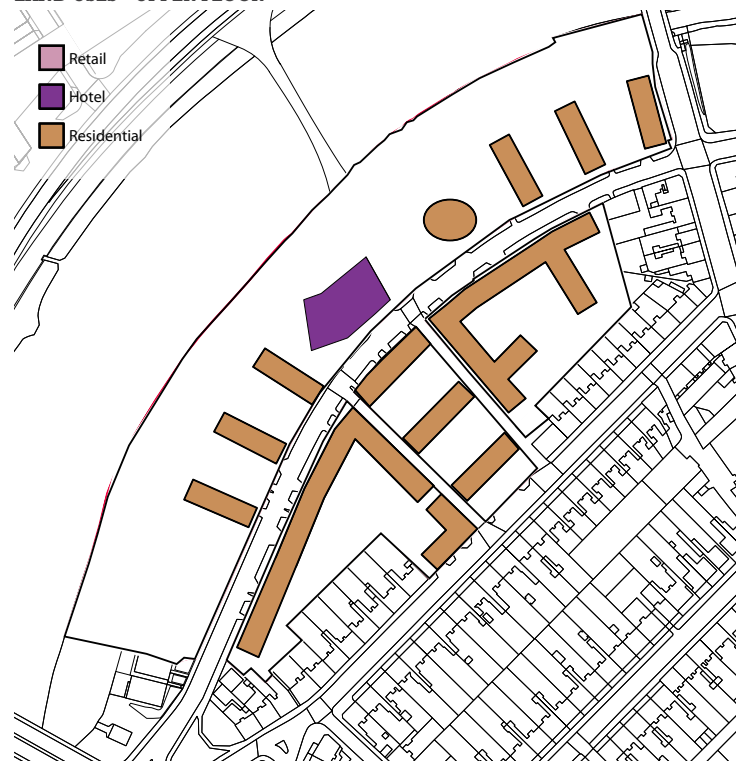
- Residential development should be designed to BRE's Home Quality Mark standard to ensure provision of environmentally sound and comfortable dwellings.
- Provision of renewable energy sources and expansion of district energy network (infrastructure and plant).
- Provision of underground bin storage.
- Enhance quality and accessibility of green and blue infrastructure to maximise climate change resilience (flood risk mitigation), leisure and health opportunities and urban biodiversity habitat creation.
- Sustainable urban drainage including source control measures such as swales, retention / detention ponds, permeable paving and green roofs.



## LAND USES - GROUND FLOOR



## LAND USES - UPPER FLOOR



## Development summary

- New residential, circa 56,681 sq m (610,000 sq ft). Approximately 730 dwellings.
- New ground floor uses circa 2,350 sq m (25,000 sq ft) use class 1 (Retail) and use class 3 (Food and Drink).
- Hotel Academy (use class 7) circa 5,016 sqm (54,000 sq ft).



Armada housing, Den Bosch, Netherlands



Abito, Salford Quays



Oslo, Norway



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