



ABERDEEN  
CITY COUNCIL

Aberdeen City Council  
**PLANNING  
PERFORMANCE  
FRAMEWORK**  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2017–2018





## Contents

	Page
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part 1: Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Quality of Outcomes	11
1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement	25
1.3 Governance	31
1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement	34
<b>Part 2: Supporting Evidence</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Part 3: Service Improvements</b>	<b>39</b>
3.1 Service Improvements for 2017-2018	39
3.2 Service Improvement Actions for 2018-2019	41
<b>Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Part 5: Official Statistics</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Part 6: Workforce Information</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Part 7: Planning Committee Information</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Annex 1: Performance Markers Checklist</b>	<b>48</b>





## FOREWORD

I am very pleased to introduce Aberdeen City Council's seventh Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report which demonstrates the impressive breadth and scope of work carried out by the planning service of the Council in 2017-18. This has been a challenging and exciting year during which the service carried out an in depth service review and identified a number of improvements which will maintain our performance going forward. This aligns the planning service with the transformational change of the entire Council as it moves towards implementing its new Target Operating Model.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Marie Boulton'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Councillor Marie Boulton**

Convenor: Planning Development  
Management Committee



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This is Aberdeen City Council's seventh Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Annual Report. It highlights the achievements from April 2017 to March 2018 in delivering improved performance and a high-quality planning service.

## Target Operating Model

The Transformation Programme, known as the **Target Operating Model (TOM)**, is illustrated to the right and identifies six key areas that will help delivery of services in a more collaborative, joined-up way.

To support the Transformational Programme in 2017-18 the planning service commissioned an independent Service Review. The Service Review recommendations have informed a suite of prioritised performance improvements some of which have been carried out, initiated in the reporting year, or are set out in a schedule of actions to be undertaken in 2018-19. This is the start of a journey of service redesign and performance improvement based on detailed customer feedback. The customer groups that provided feedback to inform the review included the Chief Executive, elected members, community councils, the development industry, other Council service areas, consultees, colleagues, peers and stakeholders. Further detail is provided in Sections 1:2 and 1:4.

The start of the transformational change involved moving to a new interim functional structure. The Planning and Sustainable Development Service has become 'Strategic Place Planning' and operates alongside 'City Growth', formerly known as Economic Development. The Chief Officers of both services are part of the 'Place' function, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and will work in tandem to deliver the sustainable economic development of the city.



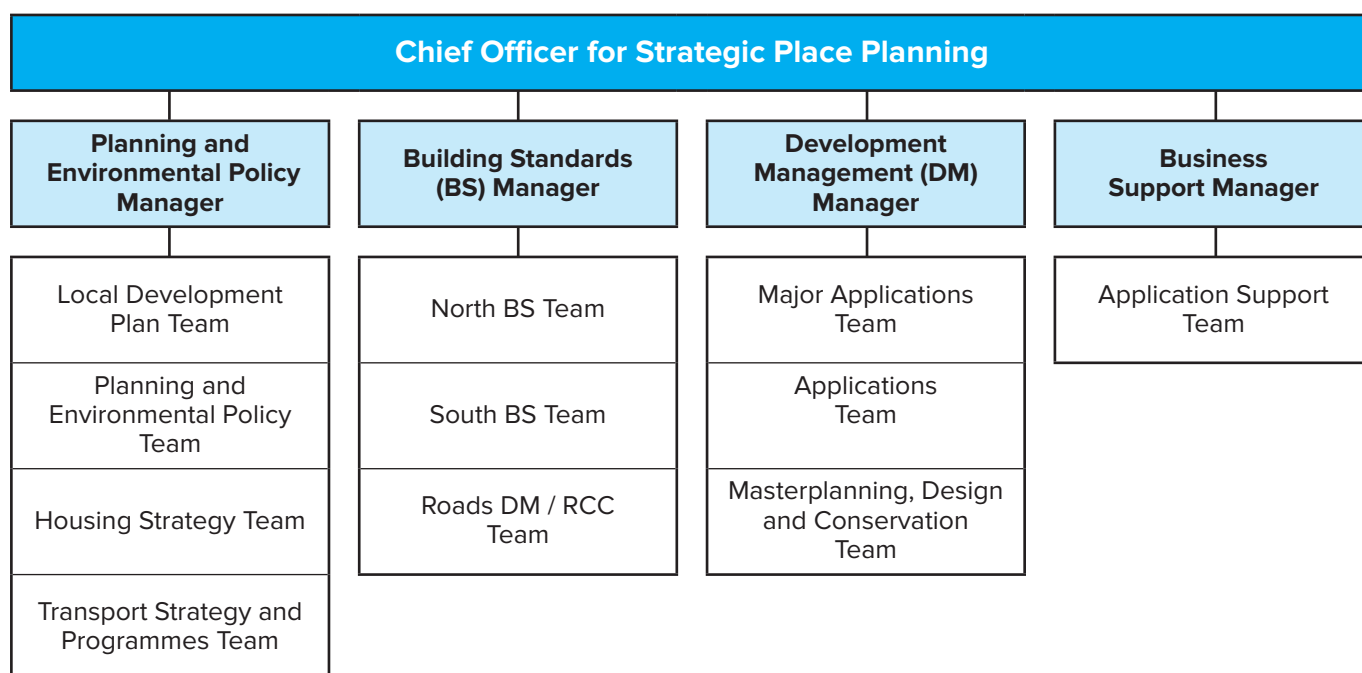
## Council Transformation

During this reporting year Aberdeen City Council started upon a significant Transformation Programme to embrace more effective and efficient ways of working, aiming to change:

- 1 The way the Council uses technology to deliver services to the people and place of Aberdeen,
- 2 The way the Council works together and with partners such as Police, Fire, NHS and the 3rd Sector,
- 3 The way the Council engages communities to deliver outcomes for the city.

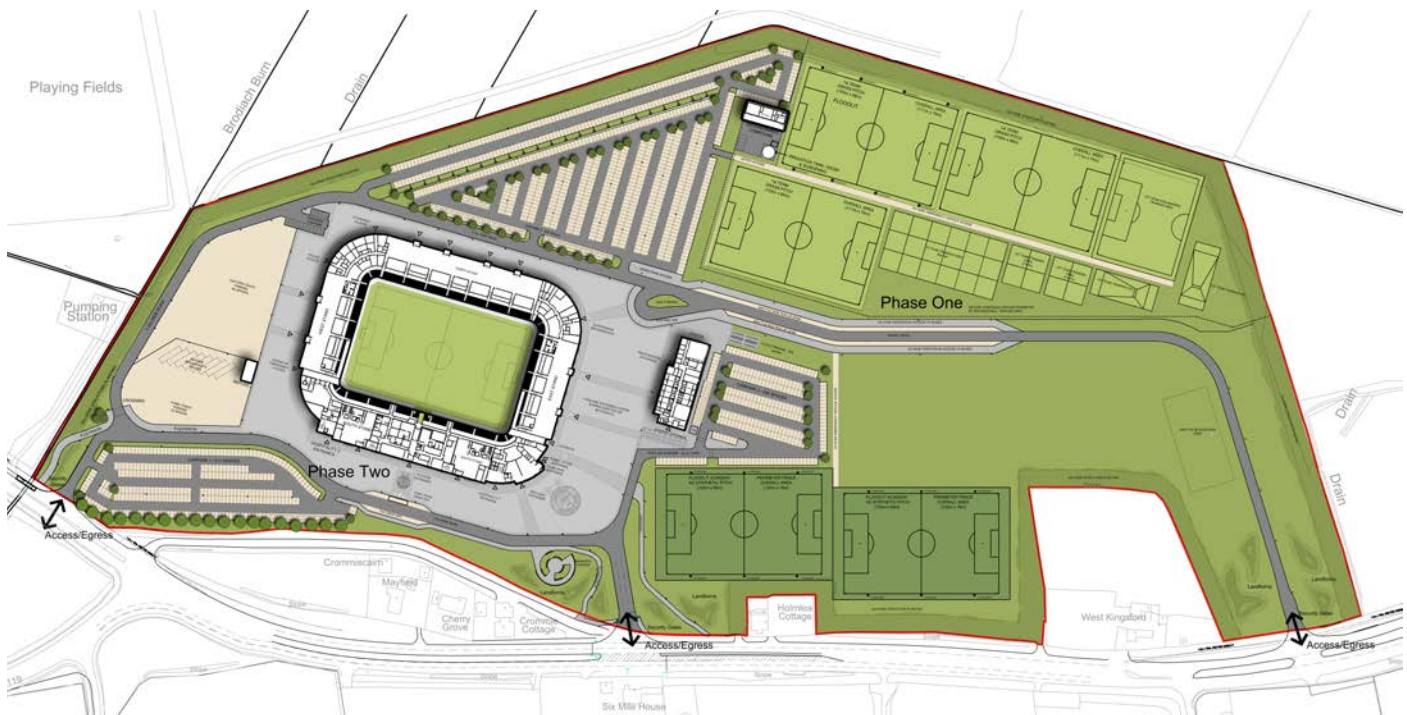


The structure of the new service is shown below:



*Proposed transformation of Broadford Works – Scotland's largest concentration of Category A Listed Buildings at risk*





Proposed new stadium for Aberdeen Football Club

Plan of proposed new stadium © Halliday Fraser Munro

## Development on the Ground

There has been a modest recovery in the local economy, but the oil and gas downturn and an oversupply of commercial and office space has meant that fewer major developments were approved this year.

The focus of work has shifted towards oversight and delivery of masterplanned communities through planning approvals for major residentially-led mixed use schemes at Craibstone and Maidencraig (each for 700 homes) and continued development at new communities at Countesswells, Mugiemoss, Oldfold and Grandholm.

Other notable projects that have involved significant work include applications for a new football stadium for Aberdeen Football Club and the transformation of Union Terrace Gardens in the City Centre. The service has also been actively engaged at pre-application stage in shaping the regeneration of Broadford Works, the largest collection of Category A listed

buildings at risk in Scotland, into a city centre urban village of 900 homes.

In the next year completion of a number of much anticipated major projects which have been shaped by the planning service is anticipated to provide a healthy boost to both the image of the City and the local economy. These include the comprehensive transformation of the City's Art Gallery and Music Hall, the creation of Provost Skene's House Museum together with the opening of the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (AECC). Meanwhile development of the new South Harbour for the City, located at Bay of Nigg continues apace.

City centre regeneration, coordinated through the City Centre Masterplan, has started to show results, with the opening of the flagship Marischal Square project: a vibrant mixed-use quarter of restaurants, cafes and offices, which won several awards including being named 'Development of the Year 2018' at the Scottish Property Awards.



## Performance

Planning performance in terms of speed of determination times for applications has continued to improve across the full range of planning application types and all the main indicators are now below the last recorded annual Scottish average for 2016-17.

Meanwhile the next Local Development Plan is at Main Issues stage and the Council is on target to replace the 2017 plan with a new plan in February 2022.

This report focuses on improvements and new developments in the planning service since the

submission of PPF6. Unless otherwise stated it should be read that all the activities/ service actions detailed in the PPF6 are still being undertaken.

Heads of Planning Scotland has identified 15 key performance markers (PMs) that indicate a high performing planning service. With this in mind, where actions or initiatives specified in this report demonstrate alignment with the key performance markers, this has been clearly cross-referenced in the text (e.g. PM1) and in more detail in Annex 1.

Some of the key achievements of the last year are highlighted below:

## Highlights

### Major Development

average weeks to decision  
From 43.9 down to 26.1 weeks



### Service Review Completed

transformational service  
improvement underway



### The Customer Service Excellence

Award reaccreditation achieved in  
October 2017



### Householder Development

average weeks to decision  
From 8.7 down to 7.2 weeks

### Decision Making

application approval rate  
Up from 84.7% to 90.5%



### Food Growing Strategy

Pioneering collaborative  
cross-sector project underway



### Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme

programme funded & progressing

**£430K external funding secured**  
for open space/outdoor access  
improvements



### Local Development (non-householder)

average weeks to decision  
From 13 down to 9.8 weeks





# PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK 2016/17

The feedback from the Scottish Government on the Planning Performance Framework Report for 2016-17 is summarised below against the relevant performance marker (PM) and compared against the previous year. For the second time Aberdeen City did not receive a red RAG grading. The Council did however move from three amber markers up to five in this reporting year.

No	Performance Marker	RAG 2016/17	Comments	RAG 2015/16
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1-Q4]	Amber	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Timescales of 43.9 weeks are slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 37.1 weeks. <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p><b>Local Non-Householder Applications</b> Timescales of 13 weeks have improved but are slower than the Scottish average of 11.1 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Timescales of 8.7 weeks have improved but are slower than the Scottish average of 7.3 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Amber</b></p>	Amber
2	<b>Processing agreements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer all prospective applicants for major applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	<p>Processing agreements offered for major developments and complex local developments and recently updated template. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Availability advertised on website. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>	Green
3	<b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information	Green	<p>Pre-application discussions are available for all applications. These are promoted on the website and through agent forums. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Feedback from the forum recognises their value and clarity and the need for early engagement on what supporting information might be required. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>	Green
4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Amber	<p>Average timescale for determining major applications with legal agreements has increased by almost 28 weeks to 68.4 week, slower than the Scottish average. You have reduced the timescale considerably to 29.5 weeks for local applications, however, this remains slower than the Scottish average.</p> <p>Noted that it is hoped to complete the review of the developer obligations process and appoint an officer in the coming year.</p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Amber</b></p>	Amber
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated in last 2 years	Green	<p>Enforcement charter was 15 months old at the time of reporting. <b>RAG = Green</b></p>	Green



<b>6</b>	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and</li> <li>• progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	<b>Amber</b>	<p>Some improvement to decision making timescales but they remain slower than the Scottish average, LDP is new and enforcement charter remains up to date. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p>A number of improvement commitments have been progressed although a number are still ongoing. Some service improvements for the coming year reflect core business, not service improvements. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Amber</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	<b>Green</b>	<p>LDP was 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and</li> <li>• project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	<b>Green</b>	<p>Your LDP was adopted in January 2017.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Published a Development Plan Scheme in January 2017 which sets out how it is intended to progress consultations over the next 3 years.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>9 and 10 not applicable</b>				
<b>11</b>	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications	<b>Green</b>	<p>It is clear that pre-application advice provides certainty about the information required to support applications.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>12</b>	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	<b>Green</b>	<p>Protocols remain in place with all consultees, however, new ones have been agreed with Environmental Policy and Roads teams. Templates for applications with legal agreements have been created to help legal services and planning develop a consistency of approach. Continue to hold an Agent's forum.</p> <p>Also continue to operate a shared Archaeology and Developer Obligation service with Aberdeenshire. <b>RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	<b>Green</b>	<p>You share an LDP lessons learned log with Aberdeenshire Council. You have provided evidence of the peer review process undertaken with your last PPF.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	<b>Amber</b>	<p>Reduced the number of cases although it's clear a number of new legacy cases have been created.</p> <p><b>RAG = Amber</b></p>	<b>Amber</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>• in pre-application</li> </ul>	<b>Amber</b>	<p>Supplementary Guidance on Developer Obligations sets out clearly expectations around this. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Little evidence provided of how the expectation of developer contributions are set out in pre-application discussions. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Amber</b></p>	<b>Green</b>





*Aberdeen in Colour Masterplan project*

## Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

The case studies throughout the report give examples of how best practice has been achieved and reflect a high-quality planning service which continues to help deliver the sustainable economic growth of the city. The headings for the case studies are as follows:

- Quality of Outcomes
- Quality of Service and Engagement
- Governance
- Culture of Continuous Improvement



# 1.1 Quality of Outcomes

**1.1.1** A high performing planning service is one that adds value to development proposals and delivers well designed sustainable development on the ground. It is development on the ground that forms the focus of this year's case studies. Although the case studies below have been led, or co-ordinated, by either the Masterplanning Design and Conservation or the Planning and Environmental Policy teams, all four planning teams 1) Local Development Plan, 2) Planning and Environmental Policy, 3) Applications and 4) Masterplanning, Design and Conservation have worked collaboratively to achieve these outcomes.

**1.1.2** As well as the case studies detailed during 2017-18 the Development Management Masterplanning Design and Conservation Team has worked collaboratively with colleagues in the Council (PM13) to:

- produce the [Aberdeen in Colour Lighting Strategy](#) as part of City Centre Masterplan delivery
- complete the [Rosemount and Westburn Conservation Area Character Appraisal](#), including public engagement.
- complete the Phase One 3D data capture of the City Centre in partnership with Robert Gordon University.
- collaborate once again with the applications team and Aberdeen Inspired to deliver [NuArt planning consents](#)
- give major design input into [Broad Street public realm](#) as part of the [Marischal Square](#) project that is currently nearing completion, including extensive public engagement, working collaboratively with Disability Equity Partnership, elected members and roads design colleagues (PM13)



*Nuart 2018*





## CASE STUDY: MASTERPLANNING

## Mugiemoss Development Framework Review

### Location and Dates

Mugiemoss, Bucksburn, Aberdeen,  
28 November 2017

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

- ✓ Quality of Outcomes
- ✓ Quality of service and engagement
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers

- 1 Decision making
- 2 Project management
- 3 Early collaboration
- 6 Continuous improvement
- 11 Production of regular and proportionate policy advice
- 13 Sharing good practice
- 15 Developer contributions

### Stakeholders Involved

- Authority Planning & Transportation Staff

### Key Areas of Work

- Design
- Regeneration
- Environment
- Greenspace
- Town Centres
- Masterplanning
- Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Housing Supply
- Affordable Housing
- Economic Development
- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking
- Performance Monitoring
- Process Improvement
- Project Management
- Skills Sharing
- Staff Training
- Transport
- Active Travel



## Overview

The **Mugiemoss Development Framework** for a 900 home mixed use community, prepared by OPEN on behalf of a private developer in collaboration with the Council's planning service, was formally adopted as supplementary guidance to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan in December 2012. It covers the first of 4 phases of development for the former Davidson's Paper Mill site which is situated on the banks of the River Don.

In late 2017 a placemaking review was undertaken to analyse the development on the ground, comparing it with the vision of the Phase 1 Masterplan and to:

- determine the value the Masterplanning process has in placemaking;
- examine whether the development vision is carried through in terms of the consents granted; and question if the place-making vision is translated into a valued sense of place.

The review<sup>1</sup> – involving site visit, open discussion, recording and feedback – brought into focus that, although the Council has an established process to produce regular and proportionate placemaking advice and guidance, when it comes to development on the ground the guidance and policy is not always followed through in applications or indeed their assessment to ensure quality placemaking.

The masterplan review process brings colleagues from various disciplines together to openly share thoughts on development on the ground, analyse and develop good practice for change to ensure that the Council's thinking and advice is current, relevant and consistent. Lead officers compiled all the findings as a Planning and Roads Review document which will be used as a benchmark and manual for continuous improvement.

Two or three Masterplanning reviews to take place annually ensuring reflection and increasingly accountability and continuous improvement is part of our practice.



## Goals:

- Reflection and continuous improvement
- Raising awareness of relevant processes involving timely and extensive masterplan production
- Improving collaborative interdisciplinary working
- Aiming for better development quality
- Understanding where policy emphasis and change should take place
- A potential route to better engagement with developers and sharing perspectives

## Outcomes

The outcome of the review was not only in measuring how successful Mugiemoss is as a new place but as a built result of a planning process that has focussed on Masterplanning. The review was successful in shaping interdisciplinary understanding, roles and responsibilities and importantly as a benchmark for future Masterplanning.

In the coming year we will extend the masterplan review process to incorporate active participation from developers to maximise cross- sector learning and the ability to facilitate positive improvements to outcomes.

## Name of key officers

**Nigel McDowell** – Senior Planner  
**Alex Ferguson & Rebecca Kerr** – Planners





## CASE STUDY: MASTERPLANNING

## Union Terrace Gardens

### Location and Dates

July 2016 – ongoing

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

- ✓ Quality of Outcomes
- ✓ Quality of service and engagement
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers

- 12 Corporate working

### Stakeholders Involved

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff and Other Staff

### Key Areas of Work

- Design and Conservation
- Regeneration
- Environment and Greenspace
- Town Centres
- Economic Development
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Placemaking
- Process Improvement
- Project Management
- Skills Sharing



## Overview

This Council led project aims to regenerate **Union Terrace Gardens** – the City Centre’s most iconic green space – and improve access for all abilities and age groups. The planning service has been closely involved throughout: from inception through procurement, to pre- application advice and detailed design discussions and negotiation as part of project development.

Engaging with the architect and elected members (as clients for a City Council project) was challenging as full consideration had not been given to the setting of the listed statues or the buildability of the structures. There were challenges with land ownership, Network Rail safeguarded land and a large sewer that has to remain accessible. The project involved extensive collaboration: working with the Council’s economic development team, external partners and elected members. A number of interdisciplinary workshops took place which facilitated the process, ensuring decisions could be made quickly and efficiently.

The project was subject to the planning service’s new internal weekly case review process (see section 1.4) at each stage to ensure resolution of blockages and quick decisions on key issues at management level.

Once submitted, the application required significant changes to the design. The planning service encouraged a change in architect and full reconsideration of the design. The revised proposal was negotiated with the new architectural design team to ensure reduced impact on the listed buildings and important views, deliverability, full integration of the listed Victorian toilets and no impact on reserved Network Rail land.

## Goals

- To work collaboratively with internal services and external agents/designers to ensure successful project delivery, demonstrating positive influence and leadership on place, design and project delivery.
- Project creates conditions for 24-hour use, gardens improvement, redevelopment and reuse of the historic assets with modern



interventions of a high quality and appropriate design.

- Delivery of one of the key objectives of the City Centre Masterplan and encourage collaborative working with other services and sectors.

## Outcomes

- Input from the planning service has improved the quality of design and ensured sensitive treatment and preservation of built heritage
- Improved inter-service relationships arising from strong collaboration with economic development to deliver a corporate project.
- Consistency of decision making: project knowledge and understanding maintained with key members of staff being involved from inception.
- Project has recently been granted **planning consent**, and the place-based outcomes include rejuvenated, fully accessible gardens, reuse of historic assets and the removal of the Victorian toilets from Buildings at Risk Register
- Planning officers will continue to be involved throughout the construction procurement and on-site delivery to ensure quality of outcomes.

## Name of key officers

Sepideh Hajisoltani – Planning Trainee and  
Laura Robertson – Senior Planner





## CASE STUDY: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme

### Location and Dates

Union Street 2017-2022

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

- ✓ Quality of Outcomes
- ✓ Quality of service and engagement
- ✓ Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers

- 2 Project management
- 3 Early collaboration
- 6 Continuous improvement
- 10 Cross-sector stakeholders
- 12 Corporate working

### Stakeholders Involved

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Local Developers and Key Agencies
- Planning Committee
- Planning and Other Staff
- Other (local contractors)

### Key Areas of Work

- Design, Conservation and Regeneration
- Environment
- Economic Development
- Enforcement
- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Staff Training and Skills Sharing
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Town Centres
- Placemaking and Place Standard
- Performance Monitoring
- Process Improvement
- Project Management
- Procurement and contract management



## Overview

A £2.4 million building conservation scheme for Aberdeen's Union Street was launched in November 2017. Grants to restore and enhance historic properties are being offered to owners through a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS), subject to meeting eligibility criteria.

The five-year programme is being rolled out by a dedicated project officer in the planning service's MDC Team after it was successfully awarded £1,177,104 by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) earlier this year. The Council matched this sum. A further £50,000 is being provided by Aberdeen Inspired (the local Business Improvement District), bringing the total pot to £2,404,208.

The scheme encourages restoration work, ranging from shopfront improvements to the reinstatement of architectural features, employing traditional materials and methods. Union Street CARS marks Phase 2 of Operation Union Street Rejuvenation, a City Centre Masterplan objective to transform Aberdeen's main thoroughfare.

## Goals

- Positive engagement with multiple internal stakeholders including planning case officers, legal, finance, communications and elected members.
- Pro-active engagement with external stakeholders including local building professionals, contractors, Historic Environment Scotland, Aberdeen City Heritage Trust (AHT) and Aberdeen Inspired (AI).
- Working with local building professionals and contractors to deliver high-quality repair and reinstatement of original architectural features.
- Continue to work with both professional and contractors to progress further building survey work and develop projects.

## Outcomes

- Bringing vacant buildings on Union Street back into use and contribute to the wider regeneration of the city as set out in the City Centre Masterplan.
- Early engagement has resulted in close partnership working between the Council, AHT and AI to deliver the scheme.
- Key high and medium buildings identified as part of the bid to be regenerated.
- Engagement with property owners to promote the small grants scheme (<£25,000)
- Engagement with commercial and shopfront owners to promote shopfront regeneration
- Offer a range of traditional building training programmes to various stakeholders
- Offer education and awareness courses to various stakeholders
- Placement of an apprentice with a local heritage contractor

## Name of key officer

Jamie McNamara – CARS Project Officer







## CASE STUDY: LISTED BUILDING CONVERSION

## Bank to retail unit and flats

### Location and Dates

148 Union Street – December 2016 to June 2017

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

- ✓ Quality of Outcomes
- ✓ Culture of continuous improvement
- ✓ Governance

### Key Markers

- 6 Continuous improvement
- 12 Corporate working across services

### Stakeholders Involved

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff (Environmental Health & Building Standards)

### Key Areas of Work

- Design and Conservation
- Regeneration
- Town Centres
- Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Housing Supply
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Process Improvement
- Skills Sharing and Staff Training
- Planning Applications
- Development Management Processes



## Overview:

Planning and listed building consent applications were submitted in December 2016 for the refurbishment and conversion of the Category B-Listed building at 148 Union Street from a vacant former bank to a retail unit at ground floor (complete with new traditional shopfront) and flats on the upper floors.

The planning service liaised with the Council's Conservation, Environmental Health and Building Standards teams for the duration of the applications in order to find a satisfactory resolution to issues that arose due to conflicting interests and requirements (e.g. retention and reinstatement of cornicing versus suspended ceilings for ventilation / fire separation). In the end, compromises were found to satisfy all relevant stakeholders and the applications were approved in June 2017.

## Goals

- The replacement shopfront and interior of the flats is completed to a very high standard and is an excellent case study for the type of residential conversion in the city centre that the Council and local developers alike should aspire to.
- Whilst a good product has eventually been achieved, the case study is not without its flaws as there was a significant amount of delay brought about by the planning service not being aware at the time of how best to manage the competing interests of various stakeholders. This case study highlights the requirement for increased and improved collaborative working and outlines how the



Before



After

Council is dedicated to a culture of continuous improvement.

## Outcomes

As one of the first conversions of a vacant listed building's upper floors back into residential use following the downturn in the oil industry this case study has highlighted the previously poor understanding of how to manage the conflicting requirements of different stakeholders for such a project: mainly those of Conservation, Environmental Health and Building Standards. A lack of any consolidated Council Planning guidance on how best to balance these competing interests led to confusion and delays in the application process (for both planning and listed building consent). As a result of the lessons learnt and with city centre residential conversions on the rise, the planning authority has improved its working relationship with the Environmental Health and Building Standards teams. Furthermore, the aim is to produce a supplementary

guidance document in the near future to provide advice on the most appropriate way to convert historic buildings in the city centre for residential use. The first stage of this will be a workshop facilitated by the Masterplanning Design and Conservation team in summer 2018 to highlight key issues, lessons learned and determine the smoothest course for handling future applications of a similar nature in the City Centre.

## Name of key officer

Alex Ferguson – Planner





## CASE STUDY: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

## Aberdeen Landscape Study (ALS)

### Location and Dates

Aberdeen City and specific areas of Aberdeenshire along the two local authority boundaries. 2016-2018

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers

- 12 Corporate working
- 13 Sharing good practice

### Stakeholders Involved

- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff
- Consultants

### Key Areas of Work

- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Project Management
- Skills Sharing
- Staff Training





## Overview

Aberdeen's landscapes are recognised as having an important role in the setting, quality and character of the city and supporting inward investment and wellbeing. These landscapes have changed significantly since the production of the 1996 Aberdeen Landscape Character Assessment (ALCA), including major expansion of the city, changes in development patterns, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, and the extension to Aberdeen Harbour. Individually and in combination these pressures have, and will, affect the landscapes of Aberdeen. A refreshed ALCA and additional landscape studies – the ALS – will provide an up to date and robust evidence base to inform the consideration of landscape in Council policies, strategies, plans and projects. The ALS is also an important opportunity to fill in gaps in the current data for areas undergoing significant change – Aberdeen's coastal and peri-urban areas.

The project is being delivered through collaboration between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan Teams, and Scottish Natural Heritage. A consultant team, comprising of four individuals, was appointed in 2016.

The elements of the ALS, and work to date comprise of:

- **A review and update of the existing 1996 Aberdeen Landscape Character Assessment;**
- **A Coastal Character Assessment for Aberdeen City;**
- **A Peri-Urban Study for Aberdeen City;**
- **A Sensitivity Study for Aberdeen City and specific areas of Aberdeenshire;**
- **A Training Manual for officers; and**

- **A report outlining recommendations for updating the existing Aberdeen City Landscape Strategy.**

All fieldwork has been completed and the majority of reports are finalised or at the final draft stage.

Collaborative working and regular meetings have taken place between the primary/lead consultant and steering group members (comprising of planners / environmental planners from Aberdeen City Local Development Plan Team and Environmental Policy Team; Manager from Scottish Natural Heritage; planner/team leader from Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan Team.) A significant feature of this work has been the testing and development of methodologies tailored to meet the particular local landscape and development issues of the area, and to meet the objectives of project partners.

A wider stakeholder group was engaged in progress meetings and reviewing draft and final documents.

Two training days with the consultants and local authority staff have been delivered, to raise awareness and understanding of landscape character and its use in practice.

## Goals

To provide an up to date evidence base and advice to ensure quicker, higher quality decisions are made. This will lead to an increase in customer satisfaction and service and have a positive impact on staff time and Council resource. The baseline will also enable ongoing management and monitoring of landscape change in order to deliver the objectives of the European Landscape Convention.





The ALS will influence plans, strategies and actions, including:

- the Local Development Plan – to assess potential site allocations and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and will inform policy;
- planning decisions – to give a basis for advice on proposals, and for use by consultants in preparing Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs):
- open space strategy – proposals to enhance peri-urban open space and Green Space Network,
- tree and woodland strategy – assist in identifying areas for planting in rural and peri-urban areas and informing the design of new woodlands.

### Outcomes

The project is still underway. A cross checking and review exercise is looking for contradictions

or anomalies within and between the different documents.

Two parts of the ALS are to be completed – a Sustainability Mapping Report, and a Document Overview.

The lessons learned to date for this case study, have proven;

- the existing ALCA 1996 has been working well. The areas already developed or identified for development with Aberdeen are, in the main those which are less sensitive to change,
- the requirement for one lead officer throughout the lifetime of the project to ensure consistency,
- day to day work needs to be modified to allow for sufficient time to manage and complete the project,
- the importance of testing methodologies and ground truthing of assessments,
- the need to assess landscapes at a relevant scale, and to produce peri-urban studies at a 1:10,000 scale
- collaborative working between multi-organisations has produced robust documents, and strong working relationships

### Name of key officers

Donna Laing – Senior Planner

Deb Munro – Senior Environmental Planner

Claire McArthur – Team Leader of the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan Authority





Before



After



## CASE STUDY: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

## Outdoor access through the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR)

### Location and Dates

Bucksburn Valley, Core Path 42 – design 2017 and construction 2018

Newhills Church path – design 2017 and construction 2018

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

✓ Governance

### Key Markers

15 Developer Contributions

### Stakeholders Involved

- General Public
- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff – Environmental Policy
- Authority Other Staff – Environmental Services, Flooding and Structures, Transport Strategy and Programmes

### Key Areas of Work

- Environment and Greenspace
- Transport and Active Travel





## Overview

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Scotland and a long-awaited transport improvement project for Aberdeen City Region. The new road will be 58km long and is expected to open in 2019. Delivering a significant linear intervention in the landscape of the region presents a wide range of challenges, including potential fragmentation of habitats and outdoor access routes / public rights of way.

To offset the potential effects of this fragmentation on non-motorised users, a legal agreement was negotiated between Aberdeen Roads Ltd (construction joint venture) and Aberdeen City Council. The agreement secured financial contributions to the Council towards work to ensure public access routes, following specific criteria, could be maintained despite the development.

Several paths were identified as fitting the criteria for AWPR off-set mitigation funding. Two of these were designed in 2017 and constructed in 2018.

## Goals

The goals of Aberdeen City Council and partners for this agreement and subsequent improvements focus on ensuring outcomes across a range of agendas.

- **Physical and mental health; Recreation; Education; Economic development; Social inclusion;**

- **Community development; Sustainable transport; and Tourism.**

The specific path goals / criteria set out in the legal agreement are:

- **To upgrade/provide new paths to allow safe, improved access between local communities and recreational areas;**
- **To enable opportunities for a range of different users to undertake commuter, recreational and utility trips; and**
- **Increase the amenity value by better access to cultural heritage sites and the countryside.**

## Outcomes

In addition to playing a part in securing wider policy outcomes, this approach has also considerably improved access for local people between communities and open spaces potentially severed by the AWPR.

Specifically, an existing core path and upgraded aspirational core path have been delivered for the benefit of all.

Core Path 42, Bucksburn Valley (boardwalk section) was selected as the previous boardwalk was becoming rotten and a safety concern. The path links several communities and provides an attractive countryside walk. It links Northfield, Bucksburn, Newhills and Kingswells and crosses the AWPR to Brimmond Hill. The path beyond the boardwalk had become increasingly waterlogged and muddy, so the boardwalk was replaced and extended, and new steps and granite dust path constructed.

The Newhills Church path forms part of an aspirational core path. The previous path had been built over 20 years ago and was in a very muddy condition. A granite dust path was built between the Newhills Church and the churchyard. The design, procurement and supervision of the contract was done by the Council's Flooding and Structures Team.

The path and boardwalk are now complete. The quality of the outputs can be seen in the before and after photos.

## Name of key officer

Karen van Eeden – Environmental Planner



## 1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement



*AEECC under construction 2018*

### Service-wide Engagement

**1.2.1** The Service has continued to actively participate in Heads of Scotland, Development Management and Development Planning Sub-Groups and regular liaison has occurred between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City planning managers to share best practice. (PM13)

**1.2.2** The Trinity Group<sup>2</sup> continues to provide a high-level partnership between the Council planning and economic development officers, elected members, public and private sector leaders – meeting formally three times in 2017-18 including a high level forum with Scottish Water.

**1.2.3** The Development Management (DM) and Building Standards (BS) teams successfully achieved re-accreditation for the Customer Service Excellence Award Customer Service Excellence Award (CSE). First time accreditation was also achieved for the four Transportation Teams and the Local Development Plan and Environmental Policy Teams during January 2017. Following this both CSE awards were assessed together and service-wide CSE accreditation was achieved for the first time in October 2017.

**1.2.4** The independent Service Review has provided a timely opportunity to capture detailed feedback from a wide spectrum of

customers extending from developers, through to elected members, Community Councils, consultees and Senior Council officials. This feedback has been collated into an action plan<sup>3</sup> for service improvement and includes a review of policies, opportunities for digitalisation, a review of committee procedures and promotion of Development Management and the suggestion of a change to the structure. These improvements will be combined into the CSE action plan, shared with stakeholders and incorporated into the PPF improvements proposed for the next year (see Part 3).

Regular [Planning and Building Standards](#) and [Local Development Plan](#) Newsletters published on the website and sent by email to agents and developers alongside [application determination time performance](#) to publicise the achievements and work of the service and raise awareness of new initiatives.

### Development Management

**1.2.5** [Processing agreements](#) are actively promoted and publicised on the Council website (PM2) and offered to all applicants at the pre-application stage (at the latest upon acknowledgement of all proposal of application notices). There was been a renewed focus on project management of applications in 2017-18 which is partially responsible for improved performance figures. More specifically the





*Marischal Square courtyard and Provost Skene's House*

processing agreement [template](#) has been reviewed and streamlined to make it easier to use and more proportionate, and the percentage of applications subject to processing agreements has increased from 11.7% in 2016-17 to 42.5% in 2017-18. All other significant applications are subject to a project plan.

**1.2.6** Aberdeenshire Council continue to provide a shared Developer Obligation and Archaeology Service for Aberdeen City (PM13) within a framework provided by the adopted [Supplementary Guidance on Planning Obligations](#). (PM15). To further enhance joint working the developer obligations officer now works in the development management team one day a week increasing collaborative working.

**1.2.7** In 2018-19 the recruitment of an in-house Developer Obligations officer to work within the Local Development Team and the incorporation of the Housing Strategy Team into the same team as part of Council restructuring, will ensure closer and more joined up working with relevant Council Services (e.g. education, housing) to

deliver the essential infrastructure to support development and reduce strain on the other Council budgets.

**1.2.8** The Council's formal [Pre-Application Advice](#) service and [Validation Guidance](#) (PM11) have been in place since the middle of last year and both are published and publicised online (PM3). The formal pre-application advice service has been well received by developers and agents – helping to front load discussion and negotiation on applications. The requirement for prospective developers to address the expectation for developer obligations is now clearly specified in the pre-application advice note (PM15).

**1.2.9** The [Enforcement Charter](#) has been refreshed this year and is up to date (PM5). The [Development Management Charter](#) will be updated in the coming year to take into account the changes introduced following the Service Review.

**1.2.10** Protocols remain in place with all key development management consultees to give



clarity and focus on roles, responsibilities, target response times and service standards – including roads, legal services, environmental policy and environmental health teams, key agencies and Community Councils (PM12).

**1.2.11** Re-engagement of the development management team with Community Councils through the Community Council Forum is an action for the coming year. As the first step in this engagement process a Development Management Team Leader attended a meeting of Old Aberdeen Community Council within whose area there have been a number of recent controversial planning applications. Discussion focussed on the relationship and engagement between the planning service and local communities, how decision making worked in Aberdeen, covering both the Scheme of Delegation and a refresh of the joint Community Council Planning Protocol (PM12). The primacy of the Development Plan was explained and the need to account for

material considerations which may influence decision making. Suggestions were made on a more focused route of engagement with the Council's Planning Teams, such as a single point of contact and early discussions on any issues. The selective and proportionate use of Freedom of Information requests was also touched upon, with a suggestion that relationship and trust building could reduce the use of this tool, to the benefit of all parties.

**1.2.12** Electronic workflow was fully implemented in Summer 2017 with Development Management and Building Standards utilising tablets for on-site/mobile working. Case officers can now access all application information on one single device while on site, as well as email and electronic diaries. The tablets allow for photographs/video to be taken and easily uploaded to the application file. Data can also be input into the Idox Uniform casework system via the tablets, saving officer time and double working.

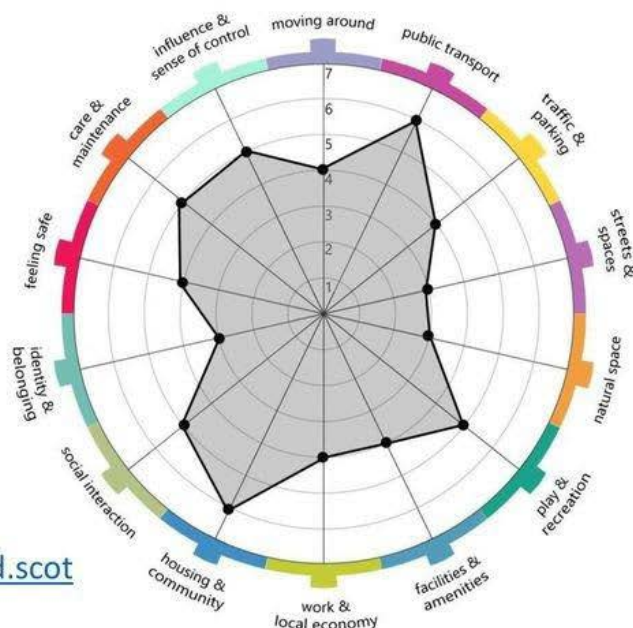




## Place Standard

*How Good is Our Place?*

[www.placestandard.scot](http://www.placestandard.scot)



## CASE STUDY: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Community Council Engagement – Place Standard Consultation Events

### Location and Dates

Town House Aberdeen – evenings between 6 March 2018 and 21 March 2018

### Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to

✓ Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers

10 Cross-sector stakeholders

### Stakeholders Involved

- General Public, Authority Planning Staff and community councils

### Key Areas of Work

- Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Community Engagement, Placemaking and Place Standard



## Overview

Each Community Council in Aberdeen has a planning officer who is responsible for commenting and liaising with the planning authority. They have monthly meetings which, over the last year, have also been attended by a member of staff from the Council's Local Development Plan Team. This has helped to build relationships and understanding between Council planning staff and the community councils. In the course of these meetings it became clear that Community Councils were keen to be more directly engaged in the review of the Aberdeen Local Development plan, and various means to do this were discussed.

## Goals

We decided to use the Place Standard tool to try and help community councils identify as broad a range of local issues as possible. This was done at the Pre-Main Issues Stage in order to help identify the broad topics to be discussed at the Main Issues stage.

Events were carried out in the evenings and comprised of an introduction of the LDP process, question and answer session, followed by groups utilising the Place Standard tool. We tried to keep groups in distinct geographical areas to see if there were any area specific issues or differences (although this was not compulsory). We also asked Community Councils to encourage other community groups and individuals to attend the events and/or to use the tool.

## Outcomes

Feedback on the events has generally been positive. However, attendance was not as high as hoped, particularly in respect of other community groups and members of the public. In terms of lessons learned, it may be that carrying out events in the communities themselves, rather than in a central location, may encourage attendance. The issues raised will nevertheless be used to inform the content of the Main Issues Report and liaison with the Community Council planning officers will continue.

## Name of key officer

**Andrew Brownrigg** – Local Development Plan Team Leader







## Compliments from Customers

“ Thank you for sending through and for working with us on this project, your help has been appreciated throughout. Look forward to working together in the future ”

“ Can I please place on record my thanks to ... Application Support Officer... I was extremely pleased with the very quick response to the issue and the manner in which she contacted me and explained very fully and professionally all the issues. I consider it an exemplar of how Council personnel communicate with members of the public ”

“ I just wanted to say a quick thank you for all your assistance in dealing with the two applications for change of use at Denburn House. I very much appreciate the pre-app meetings and discussions that we had as that helped us secure a degree of certainty but also to fully understand and appreciate key issues to be addressed early in the process, and the formal application processes undoubtedly ran more smoothly as a result ”

“ ... your presentation on the Morkeu, Craigton Road application at today's PDMC was one of the clearest I've seen since joining the committee... I generally regard the papers and presentations we get from planning officers at PDMC as being better, clearer and more understandable than those at many other committees... ”

**Member of Planning Development Management Committee**

“ I would like to thank you and your colleagues for the excellent and extraordinarily fast service you have provided for my application. The speed, efficiency and helpfulness was splendid, thank you ”

“ I just wanted to send a quick message to say thank you for the work you and your contractor have done on the recently completed Kingswells to Bucksburn Valley path. The new boardwalk installation is fantastic and has vastly improved a section which had become near impassable due to mud and the natural water course. This will now allow the vegetation and wildlife to recover on either side of the path. Now even more people can access, what was already a well used outdoor space, which connected the two communities ”





## 1.3 Governance



*Proposed new community at Countesswells*

*Image provided courtesy of Countesswells Development Ltd*

### Scheme of Delegation

**1.3.1** A Scheme of Delegation (under the Local Government Act) including planning powers was adopted by Full Council in March 2018 and the Scheme of Delegation for Local Development Applications was subsequently amended (and approved by the Scottish Government). Care was taken to ensure that the two schemes are totally aligned. The new schemes will help make planning decision making more efficient by give greater powers to officers to make decisions on non-controversial applications - notably including power to determine applications that have been given a willingness to approve subject to a legal agreement where there has been no substantive progress on the legal agreement within a six-month period (PM4). For ease of use by the general public and applicants a consolidated version of the two schemes has been published on the Council's website.

### Peer Review

**1.3.2** Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with other planning authorities is important to gain fresh perspectives and ideas for service development and improvement. With that in mind the Service participated in a collaborative peer review exercise with this year's PPF twinning authority, Edinburgh City Council (PM13). Reciprocal exchange visits by a representative cross section of staff were undertaken. Findings were captured to document learning and to inform future service development.





evolving masterplanned mixed use community of 3,000 homes, schools, infrastructure and services to the west of the City. Stewart Milne Home's project manager gave a brief outline of the site and comprehensive planned approach that has been adopted including the **Countesswells Development Framework** and subsequent two phased Masterplans. Extensive consultation and community engagement was carried out by SMH in close collaboration with the planning service to allow its adoption as Supplementary Guidance to the new Local Development Plan. A drone fly through demonstrated how the build was developing on site.

**1.3.5** The initial phase of the Cults Burn corridor, the main green space threading through the site, has been laid out ensuring that a meaningful open space area is available from the outset (image to left). Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, planted with wildflowers, have been integrated successfully into the Corridor. The evolving settlement subsequently picked up the **RICS award** for best residential development in Scotland for 2018.

**1.3.3** The Aberdeen visit was split into a workshop and site visit. The workshop covered the following subjects:

1. Community engagement/communications/training
2. Roads Construction Consent/Planning Application alignment progress
3. Customer/service improvement
4. Planning application performance: processing and legal agreements, Idox Uniform performance, application numbers per officer
5. Street naming and numbering

**1.3.4** The site visit was to **Countesswells**; an

**1.3.6** The return visit to City of Edinburgh Council included a visit to the **Craigmillar** regeneration area in the South East of the City comprising of housing, a community café, river restoration, active travel route, biomedical centre for work and study, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Craigmillar Castle park. Afternoon workshops covered conservation and heritage, legal agreements, local development planning, biodiversity, green infrastructure and training.

**1.3.7** Both visits proved to be immensely valuable to share ideas, ways of working and best practice. A similar exercise is underway with this year's twinning partner and officers visited Glasgow on the first leg in May 2018.





## South Florida University

**1.3.8** For the third year Aberdeen City Council hosted a two week visit by a number of students from University of South Florida (School of Architecture and Community Design), The Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and International College at Robert Gordon University for an urban regeneration workshop – **Collaborative Urban Path** (PM13).

**1.3.9** This annual event is part of a long-term vision for a partnership approach between the Development Management Team and academic institutions to produce good practice in effective collaboration between local and international partners and make the most of scarce resources

through innovative joint working. Three teams of students together with a number of local facilitators and planning officers generated spatial ideas for Queen's Square which is one of key interventions forming Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan.





# 1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement

## Service Review

**1.4.1** In September 2017 the Planning and Sustainable Development Service selected the Planning Advisory Service to carry out an independent service review (PM6). The Service Review was split into three stages:

**Stage 1:** November 2017: Strategic Review and peer challenge of the whole Service.

**Stage 2:** January 2018: Review of structure and scenario testing against the Council's new Target Operating Model (TOM) and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

**Stage 3:** January 2018: "Deep Dive" review of the Transportation Section (4 teams) and a light touch review of the Planning and Environmental Policy Section (2 teams) with a roadmap of

recommendations on investment requirements, workforce and succession planning.

**February 2018:** Deep dive of the Planning Section (3 teams) with recommendations on using the improvement methodology, a number of quick wins to improve productivity and a roadmap of recommendations on delivery of digital transformation.

**1.4.2** An action plan has been drafted based on the Service Review with some actions completed and others underway that will be included as improvements intended to conclude in the next PPF reporting year.

**1.4.3** Specific actions that are already completed and operational include introduction, or more rigorous programming, of:

- (i) **Weekly "Heads Up" Meetings** between the Chief Officer, Managers and Team Leaders to discuss and resolve forthcoming, and current key issues and "blockages" related to development proposals, complaints and enquiries.
- (ii) **Weekly Case Review Meetings** involving all Team Leaders and relevant specialists (e.g. tree officer, flooding team) for in depth discussion and decision making in relation to problematic and significant development proposals, if possible at the pre-application stage.
- (iii) **A "buddy system"** whereby Senior Planners are partnered with Planners/Trainees and Technicians to provide support and mentoring, supervision of application caseload and annual performance review and development throughout the year.

**1.4.4** Specific actions that have been put in train and are ongoing include:

- (i) The reconfiguration of the Development Management (Applications) Team from an area-based team structure (North/South) to two teams specifically focused on Major and Local Applications (Figure 1) (PM6). This

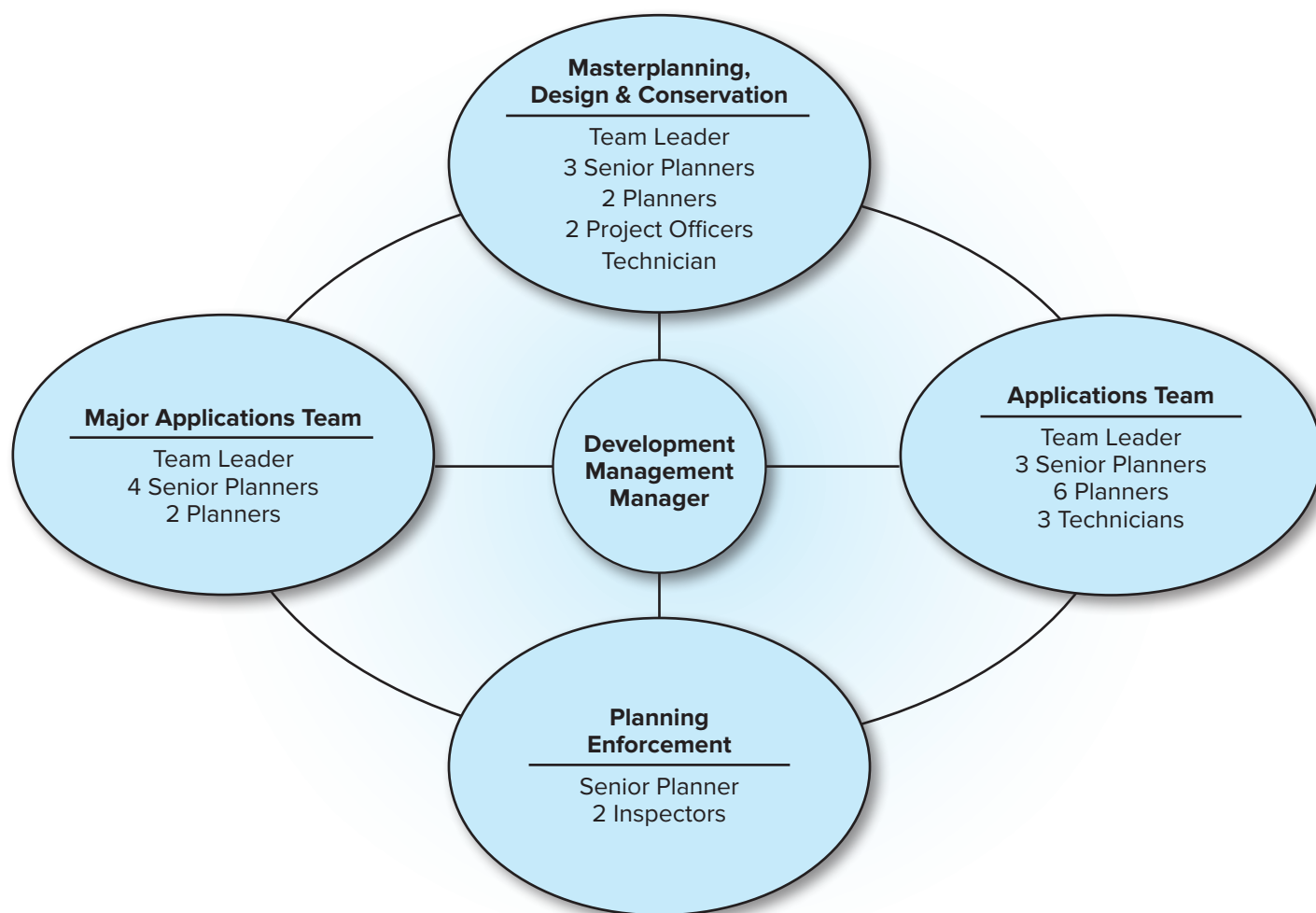


**Strategic Peer Challenge**  
**Aberdeen City Council**  
**On site 20-22 November 2017**

First draft report 05/01/2018



**Figure 1: Proposed Development Management Operating Model**



reflects the importance to the Council of ensuring the effective project management of applications for strategically important, politically sensitive or economically significant or complex developments and ensures best fit with the new Target Operating Model. Appointment of team leaders and case officers to the two new teams is scheduled for completion by July 2018.

Thereafter, one chance will be offered for applicants to amend plans, and one meeting offered to discuss the application, prior to determination on the basis of the information available within the statutory timescales. The result should be even faster, more certain decision making which will benefit all parties. Active engagement with developers/agents, including discussion at an Agents Forum meeting on this formalised approach will precede implementation.

- (ii) As a logical extension to the emphasis on the pre-application phase the intention this year is to consult on a Customer Charter/ Applications Processing Protocol that will build on current practice to set an expectation for applicants to have entered into processing agreements and engaged in pre-application advice so that applications can be validated first time with a complete suite of supporting information.

- (iii) Improvements to Planning Committee meetings including the introduction of a second large display screen to facilitate viewing of plans by Elected Members and the general public, and reconvening in the Committee Room after all site visits to debate and make decisions rather than making decision on site.

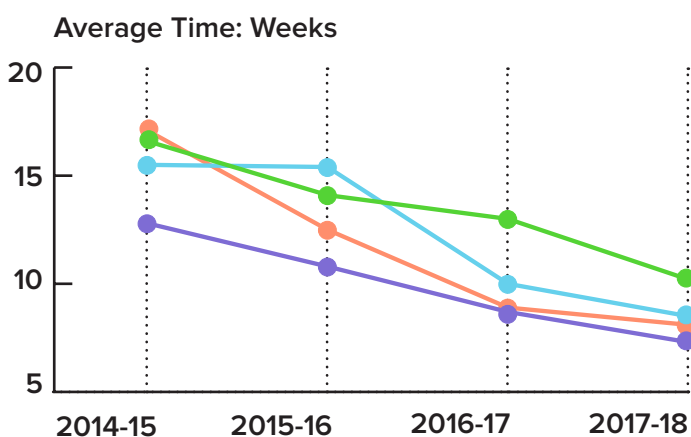
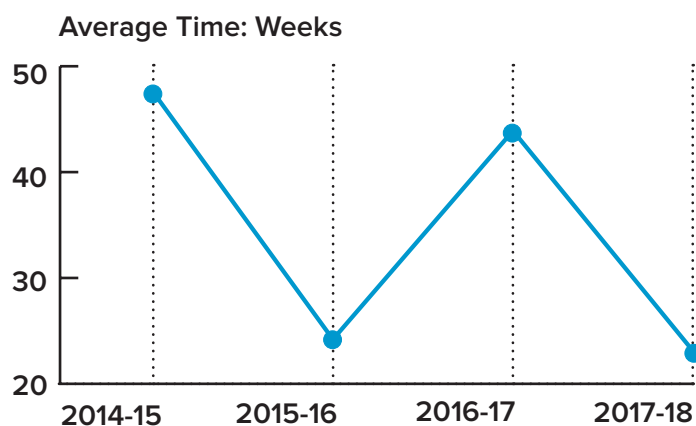




*Prime Four – Aberdeen’s premier business park*

## Decision Making Timescales

**1.4.5** There has been an across the board improvement in decision making timescales in 2017-18 as illustrated in the table below (PM1)



- Major Developments
- Local Developments (non-householder)
- Other Consents
- Local Business and Industry
- Householder Developments

**1.4.6** The Local (Business and Industry) figure is included here because it is Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicator for Economic Development – which at 8.5 weeks was below the Scottish average of 9.3 weeks for 2016-17.

**1.4.7** The speed of determination of major applications is particularly noteworthy given the importance of such development to the sustainable economic growth of the City.

**1.4.8** These improved determination times have been achieved by continuing the systematic use of project planning, success in promoting uptake of processing agreements by applicants (up from 11.7% in 2016-17 to 42.5% in 2017-18) and accurate use of “stop the clock” where delays in determination have been outside the control of the planning authority (PM1, PM6)

**1.4.9** This is set against a backdrop of a decline in the total number of applications of just less than 10 percent from 1173 to 1122. Some categories of application have fallen more significantly (e.g. Major – 18%, Local Non-Householder – 17% Householder – 26%). There were 3-4 case officers less in the Development Management Applications Team for the 2017-18 year compared to the previous year so the number of applications per case officer did not fall significantly.

**1.4.10** Further streamlining of procedures, whilst also speeding up processing time will assist in resetting the relationship with the development industry; developing a flexible solutions-based approach to service delivery, integrated into the new strategic vision of the senior leadership of the Council.



## Training

**1.4.11** All Members of the Planning Development Management Committee have received planning training given by managers/team leaders in the planning service. 27 out of the full complement of 40 Councillors received planning training and 13 received focused Local Review Body Training in 2017-18.

**1.4.12** A full programme of in-house staff training, workshops and seminars has continued (PM6) including:

- Local Authority Urban Design Forum round table on streetscape: 25/5/17
- Workshop on “What to look for in Landscape Schemes” 30/05/17
- EIA Regulations Update – 13/06/17
- Collaborative visit by urban design students from South Florida University June 2017 (PM13)

- Expert talk from Ian Davidson about Conservation philosophy: 1/8/17
- Visit to 20 The Chanonry to meet the architect/craftsmen involved in conservation work and learn about their skills, including opportunities to ‘have a go’: 22/9/17
- Hosting Austrian students for a presentation on Aberdeen and Austria with available colleagues across planning: September 2017
- Talk from the Lord Provost on Aberdeen’s historic cinemas 31/10/18
- Mugiemooss in-house masterplan review: 29/11/18
- Talk from Craig Wilson (Robert Gordons University) about conservation and regeneration in Newcastle
- Application workshop with the Director of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation: 9/1/18
- Regeneration lunch time talk from Jamie McNamara: 13/2/18





## Part 2: Supporting Evidence

Supporting evidence is contained throughout this report in the form of hyperlinks to websites.

<b>Union Terrace Gardens</b>	Pre-application advice
<b>Broadford Works</b>	Validation Guidance
<b>Provost Skene's House Museum</b>	LDP Planning Review
<b>Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre</b>	LDP Action Plan
<b>South Harbour – Bay of Nigg</b>	LDP Development Plan Scheme
<b>Marischal Square</b>	LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance
<b>Aberdeen in Colour lighting Strategy</b>	Scheme of delegation
<b>Rosemount and Westburn Conservation Area Character Appraisal</b>	Scheme of delegation Scottish Government Approval
<b>NuArt Planning Consent</b>	Countesswells
<b>Broad Street Public Realm</b>	Countesswells Development Framework
<b>Mugiemoss Development Framework</b>	RICS award
<b>Planning Consent</b>	Craigmillar
<b>Processing Agreement</b>	Collaborative Urban Path
<b>Process Agreement Template</b>	Planning Advisory Service
<b>Supplementary Guidance on planning obligations</b>	Aberdeen Food Growing Strategy

Documents from the following sources.

<sup>1</sup> Mugiemoss Development Framework review

<sup>2</sup> Trinity Group Minutes

<sup>3</sup> Service Review Action Plan

*New development at Mugiemoss: Davidsons Mill*





# Part 3: Service Improvements 2017-18

## 3.1 Delivery of our service improvement actions

Service-Wide	
Scope and undertake a Planning and Sustainable Development Service Review	<b>Review Achieved Actions Underway</b> As detailed in Section 1.2.4 and 1.4.1 of this report
Review and refresh Customer Charters, consultation strategy, survey methods and website text working towards re-accreditation of the Customer Service Excellence Award Service-wide Oct 2017	<b>Achieved and ongoing</b> As detailed in Section 1.2.3 and 1.2.9 of this report
Continue to support development and knowledge sharing for staff, Members and external parties	<b>Achieved and ongoing</b> As detailed in Sections 1.4.11 and 1.4.12 of this report
Local Development Plan Team	
<p>Tailor the review of the next LDP in anticipation of changes practices emerging from the planning review, including;</p> <p>(i) Foster closer working with community organisations</p> <p>(ii) Explore hybrid Main Issues Report/Draft Plan</p> <p>(iii) Rationalise supplementary guidance by April 2018</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>(i) The Local Development Plan Team now attends regular Community Council planning officer meetings. This will continue on an ongoing basis. The Community Council place standard events were used as part of the Pre-Main Issues engagement</p> <p>(ii) Officers are continuing to redraft policies in a way which will allow us to rationalise Supplementary Guidance aiming to ensure we retain the statutory status of the most important policy elements of SG. The remaining guidance and technical advice will become Local Planning Guidance.</p> <p>(iii) A similar process is taking place with Masterplans whereby key diagrams and text will be included in the next LDP</p>
Environmental Policy Team	
Implement an updated EIA Regulations, including audit of organisation's competencies. End of 2017/18	<b>Nearing Completion</b> The authority is in the process of defining locally what is meant by "competent experts" and "sufficient expertise" in the <b>EU Directive</b> and associated <b>Regulations</b> and ensuring adequate expertise is in place or available to ensure compliance
Complete the Landscape Study, including review of the Landscape Strategy. End of 017/18	<b>Nearing completion – expected June 2018</b> See Case Study on page 20 of this Report
Develop a Food Growing Strategy, including a map of food growing land. End of 2017/18. Governance Review by July – Dec 2017	<p><b>In progress – completion expected 2019</b></p> <p>The <b>Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act</b> came into force on 1st April 2018, and requires local authorities to prepare a food growing strategy to identify land that could be used to grow food and describe how provision for community growing, especially in areas of disadvantage, can be increased.</p> <p>Development of <b>Aberdeen's first Food Growing Strategy, 'Granite City Growing'</b> is well underway. A formal project development partnership was established with national urban greenspace charity <b>Greenspace Scotland</b>. Together we engaged with stakeholders on the framework of the strategy and are currently working to gather information about how people are already growing food in the city.</p>



<b>Development Management Team</b>	
Implement the pre-application protocol by July/Aug 2017	<b>Completed</b> Reported on in last year's PPF and now fully implemented and operational. See Section 1.2.5 of this Report.
Draft, consult and adopt an application processing protocol by August 2017	<b>Ongoing</b> This was put on hold pending the outcomes of the Service Review and will be rolled out in 2018-19. See Section 1.2.10 of this Report
Review and refinement of the Scheme of Delegation and Local Review Body as part of City Council-wide Governance Review by July – Dec 2017	<b>Completed</b> A new Scheme of Delegation (Local Government Act) was adopted by the Council in March See section 1.3.1 of this report.

<b>Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team</b>	
Complete Aberdeen Streetscape Manual and develop urban realm project delivery programme by March 2018	<b>Final draft complete</b> First Urban Realm project (Broad Street) due for completion summer 2018. Second project (Schoolhill) Phase One agreed and design underway. Delivery expected January 2019. Stage Two to be presented to Council for authority to design autumn 2018
Prepare and publish Technical Advice, including Mews Developments Along lanes by October 2017	<b>Final draft complete</b>

<b>Local Development Plan and Development Management Teams</b>	
Appoint an in-house Developer Obligations Officer. Complete the review of the developer obligation process and introduce improvements. By the end of 2017	<b>Ongoing</b> The first attempt at recruitment in 2017-18 was unsuccessful in attracting a suitable candidate and the job will be re-advertised in early Summer 2018. Other actions will follow in 2018/19.

<b>Development Management and Roads Teams</b>	
Implement an action plan to align Planning and the Roads Construction Consent (RCC) processes.	<b>Partly complete</b> The Transportation Team prioritise a review of the working practices and processes of the RCC team. This included two stakeholder workshops and subsequent implementation of the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New 5-day validation procedure for RCCs</li> <li>• All Section 56 applications not granted actioned reducing figure from 40 to 8</li> <li>• agreement with developers on the Local Variations to the National Roads Development Guide.</li> </ul>



## 3.2 : Our Planned Service Improvements for 2018-19

### Service-Wide

- Complete the remaining Service Review Actions
- Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Award Service-wide
- Continue to support development and knowledge sharing for staff, Members and external parties

### Local Development Plan Team

- Continue to foster closer working arrangements with community organisations
- Develop and use Citizen's Space for future Local Development Plan consultation periods
- Tailor working practices in anticipation of changes emerging from the national Planning Review, particularly in relation to community planning
- Appoint an in-house developer obligations officer. Complete the review of the developer obligations process and introduce improvements.

### Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

- Produce an Action Plan for Station Gateway development by March 2019
- Carry out a masterplan review with developers by March 2019
- Carry out a place making workshop with new corporate management team by summer 2018

### Environmental Policy Team

- Update Aberdeen's Integrated Habitat Mapping data from 2005 to help to inform current and future planning matters
- Continue to develop a Food Growing Strategy, including a map of food growing land
- Complete the landscape study including review of the Landscape Strategy.

### Development Management (Applications) Team

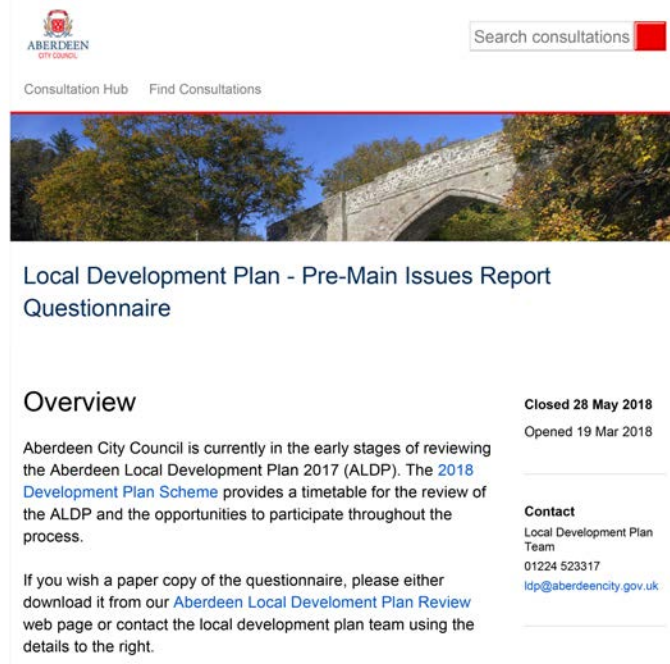
- Complete reconfiguration of the team to a Major and Applications Team structure
- Consult on and adopt a Customer Charter/ Applications Processing Protocol
- Halve the number of legacy cases currently remaining

### Application Support Team

- Reduce the number applications not valid first time
- Integrate geographical plotting of applications into team

### Development Management and Roads Teams

- Complete the work underway to align the Roads Construction Consent (RCC) and planning processes.



The screenshot shows the Aberdeen City Council Consultation Hub interface. At the top, there is a search bar labeled 'Search consultations' and a 'Find Consultations' link. Below this is a banner image of a stone bridge. The main heading is 'Local Development Plan - Pre-Main Issues Report Questionnaire'. Underneath, there is an 'Overview' section with text stating that Aberdeen City Council is reviewing the 2017 ALDP and that the 2018 Development Plan Scheme provides a timetable for the review. It also mentions opportunities to participate throughout the process. A contact section on the right provides the Local Development Plan Team's details, including a phone number (01224 523317) and an email address (ldp@aberdeencity.gov.uk). The consultation is marked as 'Closed 28 May 2018' and 'Opened 19 Mar 2018'. At the bottom, there is a note about downloading a paper copy of the questionnaire.



## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)

Development Planning: Key Outcomes	2017-18	2016-17
<b>Local and Strategic Development Planning:</b>		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. Requirement: less than 5 years	<b>1 year 3 months</b>	<b>3 Months</b>
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers changed over the past year?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</b>		
Effective housing land supply (City only)	<b>23,509 units</b>	<b>22,120 units</b>
5-year effective land supply programming (Aberdeen Housing Market Area)	<b>12,142 units</b>	<b>10,753 units</b>
5-year effective land supply total capacity	<b>12142 units</b>	<b>10753 units</b>
5-year housing supply target	<b>7509 units</b>	<b>7509 units</b>
5-year effective housing land supply	<b>8.1 years</b>	<b>7.2 years</b>
Housing approvals	<b>804 units</b>	<b>2034 units</b>
Housing completions over the last 5 years	<b>4390 units</b>	<b>3993 units</b>
Marketable employment land supply	<b>223 ha</b>	<b>205 ha</b>
Employment land take-up during reporting year	<b>12 ha</b>	<b>27 ha</b>

### Commentary

The review of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP) is progressing on time (PM7) in full accordance the [Development Plan Scheme](#) (PM8).

A [Pre-Main Issues Consultation](#) is now complete and responses and development bids will be examined over the coming weeks. As part of the preparation of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022, and associated Supplementary Guidance, we have tried to anticipate as far as possible, changes emerging from the [Planning Review](#). A lessons learned log was set up in relation to the 2017 LDP and regular contact maintained with Aberdeenshire Council (who were at a similar stage of plan preparation) and the Strategic Development Planning Authority (PM13). This has helped to ensure a process of continuous improvement.

The LDP [Action Programme](#) is up to date. The latest update was completed and submitted to Scottish Government in April 2017, within 3 months of the 2017 LDP adoption. The Action

Programme will continue to be updated 3 or 4 times a year to provide a more responsive update.

The [Development Plan Scheme](#) for the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022 was published in January 2017 (PM8). The Participation Programme shows that consultations will be carried out at various stages of the development plan process over the next two years. (PM10)

Member involvement (through member briefings) has begun already as preparation for when the Main Issues Report commences (PM9). These will continue and will take place at key stages.

The existing comprehensive suite of [Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) to the LDP is being reviewed by cross-service inter-disciplinary teams with a view to incorporating key policies of the existing guidance into the new LDP supported by new proportionate non-statutory planning guidance and technical advice (PM11).



Development Management: Key Outcomes	2017-18	2016-17
<b>Project Planning</b>		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	<b>28.6% (322)</b>	<b>36.1%</b>
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	<b>42.5 % (6)</b>	<b>11.7 % (2)</b>
<b>Decision Making</b>		
Application approval rate	<b>92.3%</b>	<b>84.7%</b>
Delegation rate	<b>95.9%</b>	<b>93.4%</b>
Percentage of applications Valid on receipt	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>39.3%</b>
<b>Decision-making Timescales</b>		
Major Developments	<b>23.1 weeks</b>	<b>43.9 weeks</b>
Local developments (non-householder)	<b>10.2 weeks</b>	<b>13.0 weeks</b>
Householder developments	<b>7.3 weeks</b>	<b>8.7 weeks</b>
<b>Legacy Tables</b>		
Number cleared during reporting period	<b>59</b>	<b>21</b>
Number remaining	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>

## Commentary

This year the timescales across the board have improved for all application types.

These improved determination times have been achieved by continuing the systematic use of project planning, success in promoting uptake of processing agreements by applicants (up from 11.7% in 2016-17 to 42.5% in 2017-18) and accurate use of “stop the clock” where delays in determination have been outside the control of the planning authority (PM1, PM6)

This is set against a backdrop of a decline in the total number of applications of just less than 10 percent from 1173 to 1122. Some categories of application have fallen more significantly (e.g. Major – 18%, Local Non-Householder – 17%, Householder – 26%). There were 3-4 case officers less in the Development Management Applications Team for the 2017-18 year compared to the previous year so the number of applications per case officer did not fall significantly.

Regular legacy case review meetings, coordinated by a designated Senior Planner, are now held between relevant case officers and the management team. This has enabled key issues to be resolved and progress to be expedited on long standing applications with withdrawal secured in most cases. As a result, 59 legacy cases have been cleared in 2017-18, compared to 21 in 2016-17 (PM14) However, the number of legacy cases remaining has reduced by only 5 (from 29 to 24). An unacceptable number of new legacy cases are being created and, with that in mind, addressing this issue will be a focus for further effort and improvement in 2018-19.

The percentage of applications valid on receipt has declined due to a more rigorous checking of applications against newly established and publicised validation criteria. It is expected that this figure will improve over the coming year as applicants and agents adapt to the new requirements. This is a service action for 2018-19.





Enforcement activity	2017-18	2016-17
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed Requirement: review every 2 years	<b>9 months</b>	<b>15 months</b>
Complaints lodged and investigated	<b>288</b>	<b>Not available</b>
Breaches identified – no further action taken	<b>161</b>	<b>176</b>
Cases closed	<b>112</b>	<b>117</b>
Notices served	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>
Direct Action	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Prosecutions	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Commentary

The Enforcement Charter was reviewed this year. Although slightly down in number, the number of recorded Breaches identified/ investigated & Cases Closed is on par with the previous year.

The rise in the number of Notices served is due to an increase in both the Section 33 Notices (requiring submission of a Planning Application) and Breach of Condition Notices issued during the period.



## Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

Timescales	2017-18 Number or %	2017-18 Average weeks	2016-17 Average weeks
<b>Overall</b>			
<b>Major developments</b>	8	23.1 weeks	43.9 weeks
<b>Local developments (non-householder)</b>	319	10.2	13.0
• Local: less than 2 months	64.3%	6.2	6.1
• Local: more than 2 months	35.7%	17.3	18.5
<b>Householder developments</b>	369	7.3	8.7
• Local: less than 2 months	93.0%	6.9	6.2
• Local: more than 2 months	7.0%	13.2	12.1
<b>Housing Developments</b>			
<b>Major</b>	2	28.5	77.0
<b>Local housing developments</b>	60	13.1	18.2
• Local: less than 2 months	53.3%	6.5	6.1
• Local: more than 2 months	46.7%	20.6	20.7
<b>Business and Industry</b>			
<b>Major</b>	2	30.3	16.2
<b>Local business and industry developments</b>	46	8.5	10.0
• Local: less than 2 months	65.2%	5.6	5.8
• Local: more than 2 months	34.8%	13.8	15.2
<b>EIA Developments</b>	0	0	0
<b>Other Consents</b>	222	8.1	8.9
<b>Planning/legal agreements</b>			
• Major: average time	3	26.8	68.4
• Local: average time	7	50.1	29.5

Local Review and Appeals	Original decision upheld				
	Total number of decisions	2017-18		2016-17	
Local reviews	28	14	50.0%	16	50.0%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	14	9	64.3%	4	57.1%

### Commentary

Major developments timescale almost halved from 43.9 weeks to 23.1 weeks, largely due to a focus on improving caseload project management and an increase in the percentage of planning applications subject to a processing

agreement. There has been an improvement in speed of determination of major developments subject to a legal agreement but the timescale for determination of local applications with a legal agreement has lengthened this will be a focus for improvement next year.





*Proposed new stadium for Aberdeen Football Club*

Visualisation of proposed new stadium © Halliday Fraser Munro

Timescales for determination for almost all application types and all three key performance indicators have improved (PM1).

The application approval percentage has improved reflecting the introduction of formal pre-application process giving guidance and certainty resulting in higher quality submissions.

The number of local reviews upheld against recommendation has held steady at 50 percent but the number of appeals where the original decision was upheld has shown a slight increase from 57 to 64 percent. Enforcement activity has stepped up with more than double the number of notices served in 2017-18 compared to 2016-17.



## Part 6: Workforce Information

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Head of Planning Service			1	

RTPI Qualified Staff	Headcount	FTE
Development Management	19	16.5
Development Planning	8	8
Enforcement	3	3
Specialists	5	5
Other (including staff not RTPI eligible)	5	5

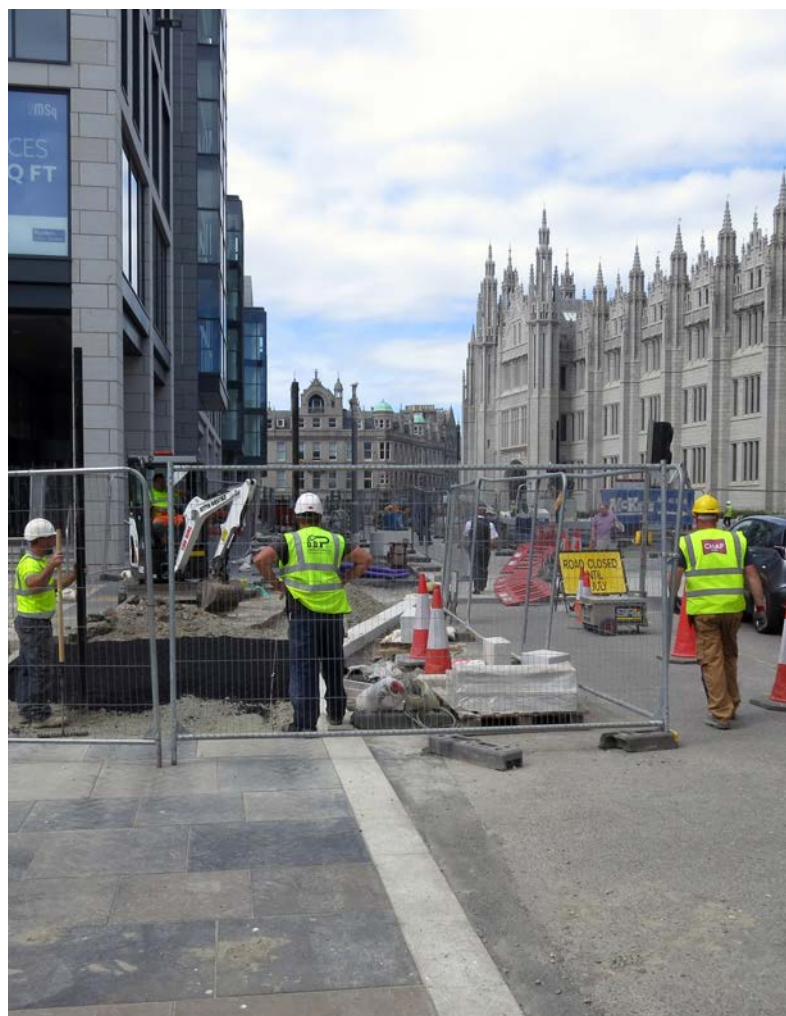
Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	5
30-39	16
40-49	5
50 and over	14

There has been a small reduction in staffing levels over the last twelve months in all staff categories. As part of the Transformation programme staffing levels across the whole

Council have also decreased and it is expected that there will be further reductions in posts over the coming year.

## Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full council meetings	9
Planning committees	13
Area committees	N/A
Committee site visits	4
Local Review Body	13
LRB site visits	1





# Annex 1 - Performance Markers

Performance Marker		Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
<b>DRIVING IMPROVED PERFORMANCE</b>				
<b>1</b>	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	TBC	Official Statistics and PPF reports	NHI Scottish Government Official Statistics
<b>2</b>	Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications <u>and</u> availability publicised on planning authority website	Y/N	Modernising the Planning System (Audit Scotland); SG website / template	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement;
<b>3</b>	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications</li> <li>• clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Y/N Examples	White Paper; Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement
<b>4</b>	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant	Reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from same time last year)	Official statistics; PPF reports; evidence of delays to major developments	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
<b>5</b>	Enforcement charter updated / re-published	Within 2 years	Planning Act (s158A)	NHI
<b>6</b>	Continuous improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• show progress/ improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators</li> <li>• progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Progress on all commitments	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report	Culture of Continuous Improvement Service Improvement Plan



Performance Marker	Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
<b>PROMOTING THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM</b>			
<b>7</b>	LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption	Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
<b>8</b>	Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on course for adoption within 5-year cycle</li> <li>project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Y/N Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
<b>9</b>	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
<b>10</b>	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
<b>11</b>	Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications	Evidence of activity	Quality of Service and Engagement
<b>SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING</b>			
<b>12</b>	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)	Examples from the year	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
<b>13</b>	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Evidence of activity to pass on and adopt good practice	Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps Culture of continuous improvement
<b>DELIVERING DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>14</b>	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	Reducing number of applications more than one-year-old (from same time last year)	Governance
<b>15</b>	Developer contributions: clear expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and</li> <li>in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Y/N Examples	Quality of service and engagement