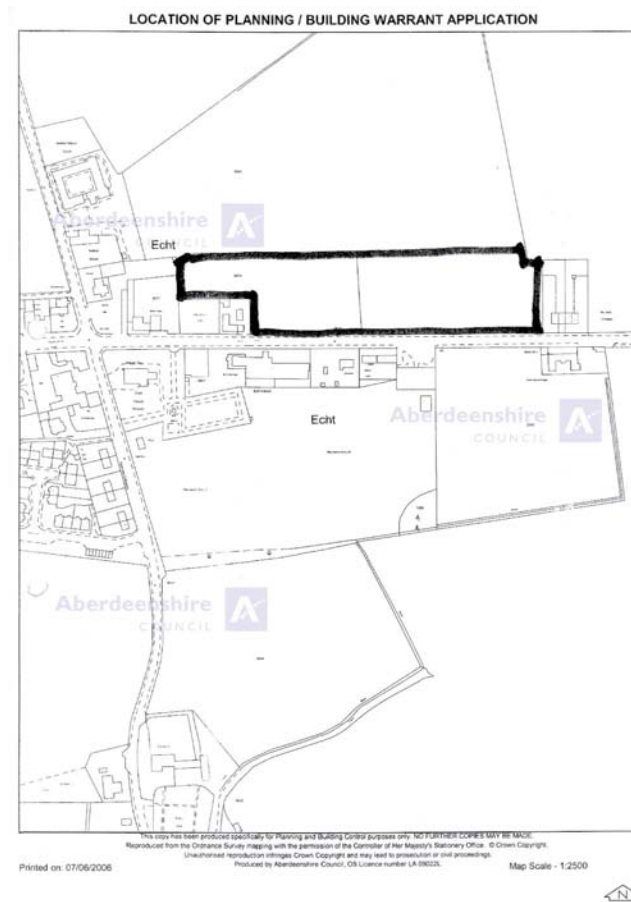




**PLANNING BRIEF  
FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT ECHT  
AUGUST 2006**



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0100020767

Developers must have regard to the contents of this Brief in preparing their scheme. Where differences do occur, justification by the developer is required.

## **Purpose**

### ***1.1 Type of development preferred***

- The Brief site is allocated 25 Phase 2 (2006 – 2010) houses in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan, and no other land use is considered.

### ***1.2 Constraints and limitations***

- An area of search for further Phase 3 (2011 – 2016) housing identified immediately to the north of the site, and the development should allow for access thereto.
- The development should reflect the settlement's mixed nature, and a range of housing types, providing for all segments of the market, from affordable housing and starter homes including homes for families, older people, and people with special housing needs should be provided, which mix should be in favour of smaller units
- The site is located within the Echt Proposed Conservation Area, (PCA) and care should be taken to ensure that the grounds on which PCA status was awarded are not compromised.

### ***1.3 Relevant development plan policies***

- ***NEST***

Policy 8: Housing Allocations 2000-2005  
Policy 9: Housing Allocations 2006-2010  
Policy 11: General Housing Considerations  
Policy 13: Developer Contributions  
Policy 14: Affordable and Special Needs Housing  
Policy 19: Wildlife, Landscape and Land Resources  
Policy 21: Design

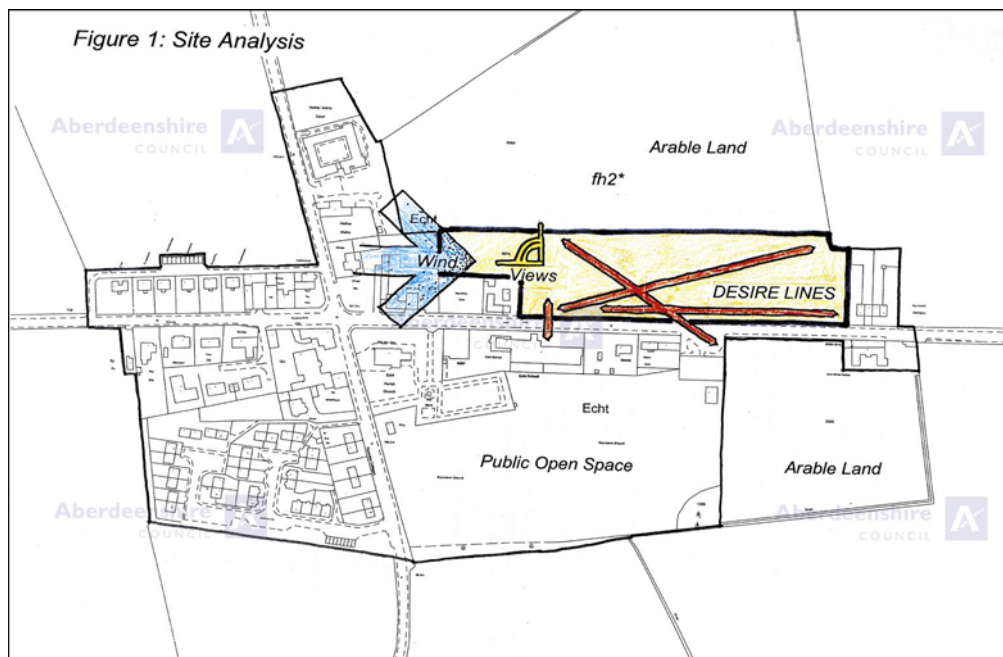
- ***ALP***

Policy Env\5: National Scenic Areas and Areas of Landscape Sig.  
Policy Env\17: Conservation Areas  
Policy Hou\2: Future Housing Land 2006-2015  
Policy Hou\8: Affordable Housing  
Policy Hou\13: Public Open Space for Housing  
Policy Inf\1: Roads & Access  
Policy Inf\4: Drainage & Water Standards  
Policy Inf\5: Drainage Standards: SUDS  
Policy Gen\2: The Layout, Siting & Design of New Development  
Policy Gen\3: Developer Contributions  
Policy Gen\5: Landscaping Standards

- **Supplementary** Housing Land Release 2006 - 2010 **Guidance**
- **SPG** Scottish Planning Policy 3: Planning for Housing
- **Circulars** Circular 12/1996: Planning Agreements

### 1.3 Site Analysis

- The following is not an exhaustive site description, but a list of the key issues that lead to the site requirements in the next section.



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### 2.1 Location / setting / views

- Echt lies at the edge of the arc of high ground centred on Aberdeen which defines the eastern boundary of the Grampians. It is set in open countryside dominated by the Hill of Fare to the south, with the prehistoric hillfort at Barmekin, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument a little under two kilometres to the northwest. The settlement has grown up around the crossroads formed by the intersection of the Aberdeen/Tarland (B9119) and Brathens/Dunecht (B977) Roads, and is 12 miles from Aberdeen.
- The site is flat, c.1.75h in area, fronts onto the Aberdeen/Tarland Road, and cannot really be described as a gap site as is generally understood by the term in that the B9119 frontage extends for over 230 metres.
- It faces the primary school, three dwellinghouses with the recreation ground beyond, and part of a field across the road. It is bounded by a terrace of 4 x 2-storey houses to the east (Myriewell

Cottages) and a 1½-storey building, part house, part shop to the west (Post Office Croft)

- There are attractive views to the west, and to the east, the countryside, though less dramatic, is not without charm.

## **2.2 Climatic Considerations**

- The site is located well inland from the North Sea. Existing development to the west of the site will shelter the western end of it to some extent, but going east exposure will progressively increase, because of the settlement itself is exposed, and set in largely featureless fields. There will be no problems with overshadowing.

## **2.3 Potential hazards**

- The present and historical use of the site has been agricultural. There are no records of any land use or activity which might constitute a hazard.

## **2.4 Ecological Considerations**

- The site lies within the catchment of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation. It is designated as such under EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna Register for important populations of Atlantic salmon, otter and freshwater pearl mussels. The developers of the site are expected to ensure that mechanisms are implemented to avoid any impact on the catchment from the proposed development. This could include the integration of an appropriate SUDs scheme and the production of a construction method statement.
- The site is presently in agricultural use, for grazing and cropping purposes and as such there are no trees within the site boundary that would require to be felled to accommodate any proposed development.
- Part of the site is designated in the Scottish Wildlife Trust Phase 1 Survey (1995) as 'Improved Grassland'. The land to the north is designated as 'Arable'. Neither of these designations would present a problem to the development of the site.
- There are no areas of wetland on the site, nor does its topography present a problem in implementing suitable measures to drain surface water from the development.
- It is likely that an assessment of the implications of the proposal will have to be undertaken before any development commences. Works should be undertaken in accordance with SEPA's Pollution, Prevention Guidelines.
- There are no features on the site that require to be retained.

## 2.5 Urban Context

- 1) There is no known archaeological value to the site. However, the site forms part of a settled area of long standing, which being the case an archaeological evaluation should be conducted prior to the commencement of site works.
- 2) There has been a settlement of sorts at the crossroads for several hundred years, but the predominant impression is that of an estate village dating from the 1930s, with an attractively robust core around the crossroads comprising the village hall, Cowdray Arms Hotel, Parish Church and several houses. It should also be noted that there is a degree of asymmetry in the relationship between the buildings and the crossroads, which is itself a skewed cross, and that they are completed in a quasi-traditional vernacular style, Cowdry Arms, Old school House, Bank House and the Parish Church excepted.



*Old Schoolhouse and Cowdray Arms*

- 3) The other noteworthy feature is Bennet's Terrace, which is a row of 6 detached cottages rather than a terrace (which term implies party-walling) that define the western extremity of the village north of the B9119. While this row is also vernacular in style, it is more ornate.



*Bennet's Terrace*

- These buildings justify the settlement's status as a PCA and development should be in sympathy with them and its traditional character generally, the single most important consideration in this regard being that new development should be in scale with what exists already.
- 25 houses are allocated in ALP, and this would give a gross density of 15dph which accords well with the density of the village as a whole, which is c.16 dph.
- The site currently represents a logical extension of, or consolidation to, the village, given the development on the opposite side of the B9119, and Myriewell Cottages abutting it to the east. The dominant impression one receives of the village as a whole is, as intended, that of a traditional rural Aberdeenshire estate village, and this should be maintained.

## **2.6 Access**

- Two access roads will be required, one to serve the brief site, and the other the as yet undecided fh2\* site.
- The four desire lines which should be accommodated are from the brief site/crossroads, brief site/recreation ground, back and forth along the B9119, and across the B9119 to the school
- The needs of a wide range of users should be considered.
- Echt is well served by buses.

## **2.7 Utilities**

- water or sewage connections are unavailable.
- There is no gas provision.
- No provision is made for renewable energy in the village.
- Broadband coverage is available.

## **2.8 Services and Community Facilities**

- Parish Church
- Village hall (recently upgraded; also a room is allocated as a part-time doctor's surgery.
- Recreational ground including a play park, football pitches, a flood-lit all weather training area and a pavilion with changing facilities.
- The nearest libraries are located in Westhill and Banchory, but a mobile library is operated by Aberdeenshire Council and visits the village fortnightly on Mondays.
- Hairdresser.
- Public house
- Shop and post office.

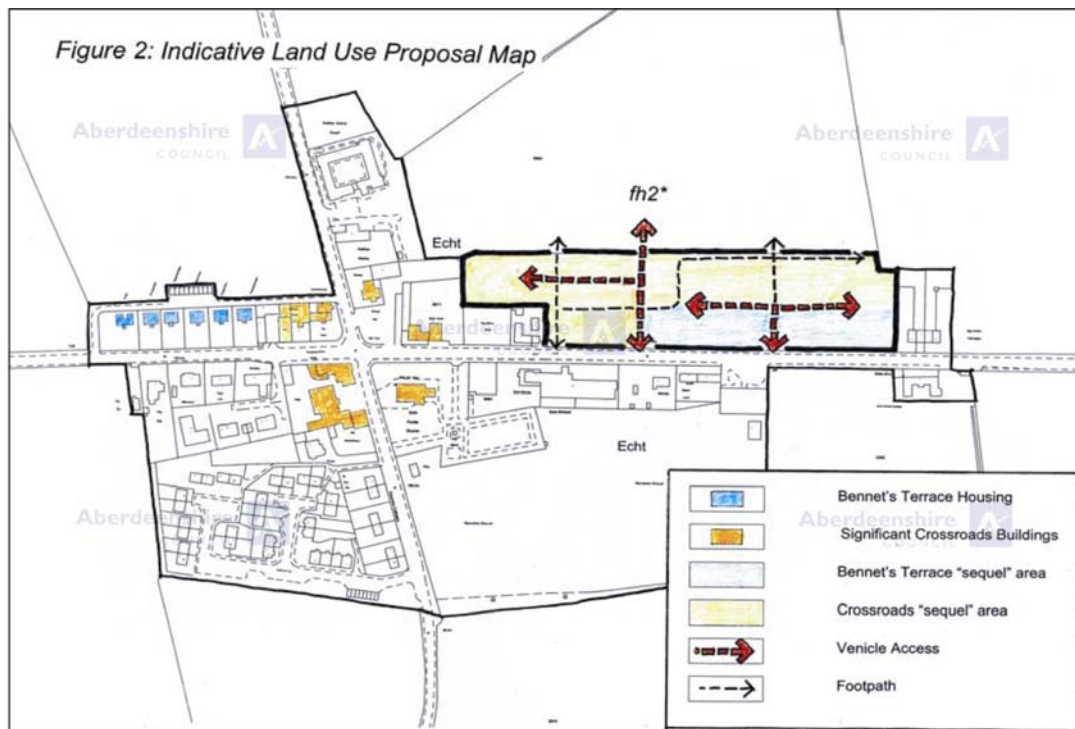
## **2.9 Ownership**

- The brief site is presently in the ownership of the Dickinson Trust (Trustee of the Barmekin Trust) and can be developed subject to the necessary planning permission.

## **2.9 Conclusions**

- The development of this site will support existing facilities including the existing primary school, and encourage new, or resurrect previous, initiatives.
- As this site will be located within a PCA on the main through-route a high standard of design is to be expected. Care should be taken to ensure that development is compatible with the traditional character of the PCA in which the development site is located.

### 3.0 Site Requirements



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### 3.1 General Approach

#### 3.1 General approach

- Development of the site's layout should reflect the approach set out by the 5 Indicators listed in "Index 21" \*

**\*Note** Index 21 is a method of assessment that essentially does two things: it identifies a set of key issues that affect the "environment-friendliness" of housing layouts; and integrates them in a framework that gives each element its proper status. It is based on the assessment of five Indicators: climate, energy, resources, biodiversity and social aspects. Crucially it has developed as a *process* by which the quality of layouts can be assessed rather than as a *prescriptive* guide to good and bad ones. However, this development brief also identifies some aspects from Index 21 that will be crucial for this particular site in any circumstances. For more detail see the website at [www.index21.org.uk](http://www.index21.org.uk).

### 3.3 Layout

- *General.*
  - The development should provide a sense of enclosure to counteract the flat, featureless land which surrounds the village, and where practical present views of the high ground to the west.

- It will be necessary to reconcile the need for shelter from the predominantly westerly wind with the views to the west, which it would obstruct.
- There would be two vehicle accesses to the site. The access road for the fh2\* development should be seen as precisely this, although houses may front onto it. The main fh1 access road may form a curve or ogee, but should basically parallel to the B9119. To maintain the traditional feel of the settlement properties between the development site and the B9119 should face the main road, and would all be erected on the same building line to the B9119. Vehicle access would be via the main fh1 and fh2\* access roads, and there would be no direct vehicle access onto the B9119.
- *Emergency Road Accesses:* These will be accommodated by the internal access roads to be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the Fire Officer and Roads Authority. Car parking must accord with the Council's adopted 'Car parking Standards for Development Control'.
- *Energy:* A substantial amount of everyday energy use should be derived from micrenewables. The Scottish Ministers have set a target of generating 40% of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020 (SPP6: Consultation Draft) It is accepted that a like split would be unrealistic in terms of the average household and today's sustainable options, but it is not as unrealistic as might be supposed, given the continuing improvement in insulating materials and building techniques. As of this moment, however, it remains aspirational. A statement on renewable energy technologies considered must be submitted with the proposals and justifiable reasons given for any rejected. A series of flow-charts is attached to aid this consideration (Appendix 1). The advice of 'SCARF' may also be useful in this respect and any available grants can be discussed with them.
- *Resource Efficiency:* Effort should be made to minimise construction needs (e.g. ratio of road length to number of houses) No buildings currently exist on site for the reuse of materials. All surface water should be disposed of using SUDS.
- *Biodiversity:*
  - The site is bounded to north by featureless arable land, and to the south by the B9119, the school, 3 houses, the entrance to the recreation ground and a field. Beyond that more open arable land obtains. In other words, no special provision need be made for any particular animal or plant species, although, nature conservancy remains a central issue. Planting should be in scale with the development, within which properly and sympathetically designed open space and strategic landscaping will be required. Further advice for landscape design guidance is provided in Appendix 5 of The Aberdeenshire Local Plan.

- These elements, and others, are described in detail in the document 'Development Within Nature' published by Aberdeenshire Council, which is used to assess the environmental friendliness of new developments. Developers are strongly recommended to refer to this.
- *Respect for users:* The development should create a sense of place, privacy and defensible space within the settlement as a whole.
- *Open space:* Notwithstanding the recreation ground across the B9119 provision should be made for open space within the development. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of younger children for whom the B9119 will constitute a significant hazard. Appendix 6 of The Aberdeenshire Local Plan provides further guidance on the provision of public open space in new developments.
- *Landscaping:* A carefully designed landscaping scheme for the site will be required.
- *Lighting:* An element of low-level lighting may be appropriate in some areas of public open space.
- *Maintenance:* The creation of public open space within this development will result in those requiring adoption by the Landscape Services section of Aberdeenshire Council. Evidence as to the arrangements made for the long term maintenance of any paths, landscaped areas and open space will be required.

### 3.4 Access

- As this site is not of any substantial size, it will not require a large network of footpaths. Consideration should be given to the creation of (a) footpath(s) that will link to the fh2\* future housing designation to the north of the site with the fh1 site and the surrounding area, and effort should be made to make the site accessible for those with sensory or physical difficulties as well as cyclists and pedestrians.
- No alteration to the public transport provision would be required to serve the development as the nearest bus stop is located along the southern boundary of the site. Daily public transport services 210, 216, 217 and 415 utilise the B9119.

### 3.5 Infrastructure

- *Supply and distribution of water and drainage.* Scottish Water will pay for necessary upgrades to part 4 assets (water treatment and waste water treatment works) to provide capacity for growth and developers will no longer be required to pay to increase capacity at Scottish Water assets. It is the responsibility of the developer to pay for the upgrading if required of part 3 asset sewers and water mains required to service new homes. In other words, the responsibility for paying for water and wastewater infrastructure is divided between Scottish Water and the developer. Scottish

Water is responsible for increasing capacity at their strategic assets (water treatment and wastewater treatment works) while the developer is responsible for all lower-level infrastructure (including pumping stations, service reservoirs and all pipework.)

- *Gas*: Gas is unavailable.
- *Electricity*. This will be supplied from the nearest connection and the developer should check with the service provider.
- *Education facilities*. The development of this site for housing will help sustain the local primary school, where the school roll is forecast to fall from 38% capacity in 2006 and 34% in 2011. Alford Academy is also forecast to have a falling school roll from 99% capacity at 2006 to only 89% capacity at 2011. The development of the site would also help sustain secondary schooling at Alford.
- *Medical Facilities*. The hall serves as a part time Doctor's Surgery. There are dental practices in Alford and Westhill.

### 3.6 Design

- 4) Inclusion in a Conservation Area means that development should be in sympathy with what already exists. In Echt's case new development over the last twenty or thirty years has followed the trend to national uniformity. No consideration has been given to the settlement's singular status as an estate village, and the time has come when the original village will become an adjunct to just another (or any other) late 20<sup>th</sup>/early 21<sup>st</sup> Century commuter settlement with a suburban ambience unless something is done.
- 5) The architect should develop two distinct approaches, drawing on the variation in approach between the crossroads and Bennet's Terrace. The two approaches should be grouped, like with like, to form two distinct components in the development as a whole (see Fig. 3) No attempt should be made to mix approaches within the separate groups or individual buildings because it never works.
- 6) A "sequel" to Bennet's Terrace should be incorporated into the development to reinforce the formalised estate village image Bennet's Terrace presents, and provide continuity. This would comprise a row of ten or so detached dwellings, which will incorporate such colour, form and detailing as to make the "family resemblance" to Bennet's Terrace clear and unequivocal.



*New housing in Dunecht showing “family resemblance”*

- 7) The sequel will form the greater part of the B9119 frontage, and will face onto the B9119 with a break for an access road as appropriate, the second access road defining the interface between “crossroads” and “sequel” development (Fig. 3) This is because one approach along the entire 230m. B9119 frontage would be somewhat repetitive. “Sequel” apart the rest of the development would be completed in the “crossroads” style.
- 8) All the sequel houses fronting the B9119 must be constructed on the same building line from the heel of the B9119 pavement.
- 9) Crossroads development fronting the B9119 must also be constructed on a single building line from the B9119, although this should differ from the sequel building line to vary the line over the B9119 frontage as a whole.
- 10) It is noteworthy that the attraction of traditional vernacular developments is due in large part to their asymmetry. Development that would echo the asymmetry of the crossroads would be positively viewed.



*Asymmetrical development: Back Wynd, Oldmeldrum*

- 11) The non-suburban approach offers scope for the creation of semi-enclosed/secure areas in addition to private garden ground that would give shelter, offer vantage points to appreciate views, and provide opportunity for hard and soft landscaping.
  - 12) All windows should have a vertical emphasis and under no circumstances should sequel or crossroads styled buildings exceed the terrace of 4 houses comprising Myriewell Cottages in height. Particular care should be taken to utilise, or at least approximate, local materials.
- It should be noted that an asymmetric approach naturally lends itself to higher densities than the suburban. ALP allocations are indicative rather than prescriptive and the Council wishes to see a change from the suburban model, and will consider housing provision in excess of the allocation, in which regard it should be noted that an increase in unit numbers over and above the allocation should be reflected in an increased provision of affordable housing. The determining factor will be whether or not the essential character of the PCA is compromised.
  - *Other design details:*
    - A detailed Design Statement explaining the design principles of the development and how these have emerged in relation to the site and its wider context will be required.
    - Housing and Space Standards. Housing on the site must meet the current requirements as set out in the Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan, specifically Appendix 1 (The Design of New Development in Aberdeenshire) and Appendix 6 (Provision of Public Open Space).
    - Aberdeenshire Local Plan Policy gives guidance on new development within Conservation Areas. Developers must also have regard to the Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.
    - Guidance on the design of new developments can be found in the Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan, under Policy Gen\2 (The Layout, Siting & Design of New Development) and Appendix 1 (The Design of New Development in Aberdeenshire). Further guidance can be found in PAN 67 (Housing Quality). Consultation with the Development Control service is recommended on this matter.

### **3.7 Other Considerations**

- Circular 12/1996: Planning Agreements states that planning agreements should be related in scale and kind to the proposed development. Developers may, for example, reasonably be expected to pay for or contribute to the cost of infrastructure, which would not have been necessary but for the development. The effect of such infrastructure investment may be to confer

some wider benefit, but payments should be consistent with the scale of the proposed development.

- The subject of developer contributions should be discussed with Aberdeenshire Council's Planning Gain Co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity. The agreement may contain contributions in cash or kind in line with policy requirements. The Aberdeenshire Local Plan states that in Echt, developer contributions may be required for strategic landscaping and open space provision within the settlement as identified in the plan; transportation infrastructure and services, including sustainable travel options within the settlement or at Westhill; sports facilities serving the settlement for which the development will create or add to an identified unmet demand; health care facilities serving the settlement; additional public library facilities serving the development; and secondary schooling at Alford. There is a requirement for affordable housing.

### **3.8 Further Information**

- Developers are encouraged to contact the Planning Service of Aberdeenshire Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss details of any application. Any application will be dealt with primarily by the Garioch Area Development Control Team, based at the following address:

Planning & Environmental Services  
Gordon House  
Blackhall Road  
Inverurie  
Aberdeenshire  
AB51 3WA

Tel: 01467 620981  
Fax: 01467 628469

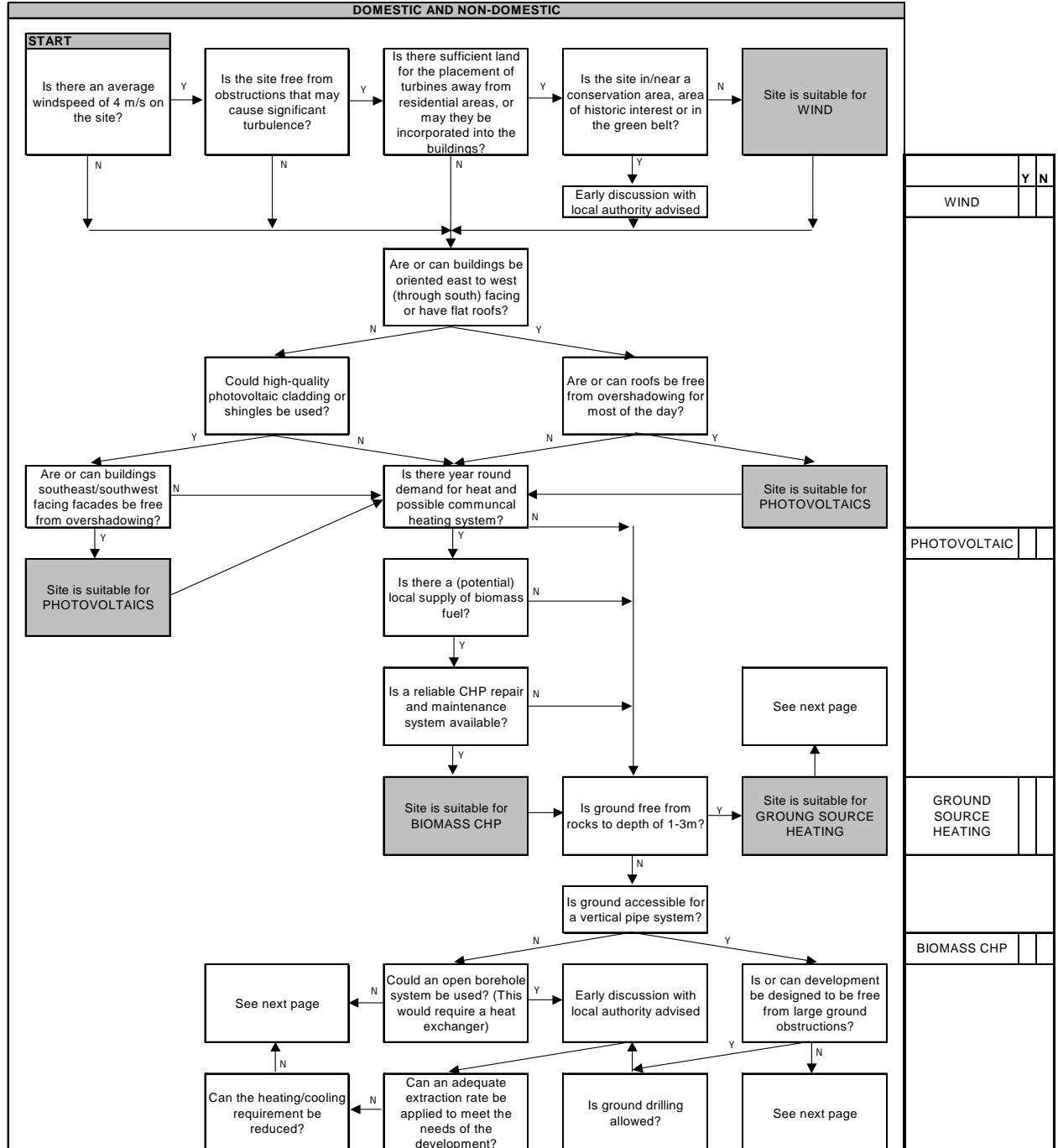
### **3.9 Other useful numbers:**

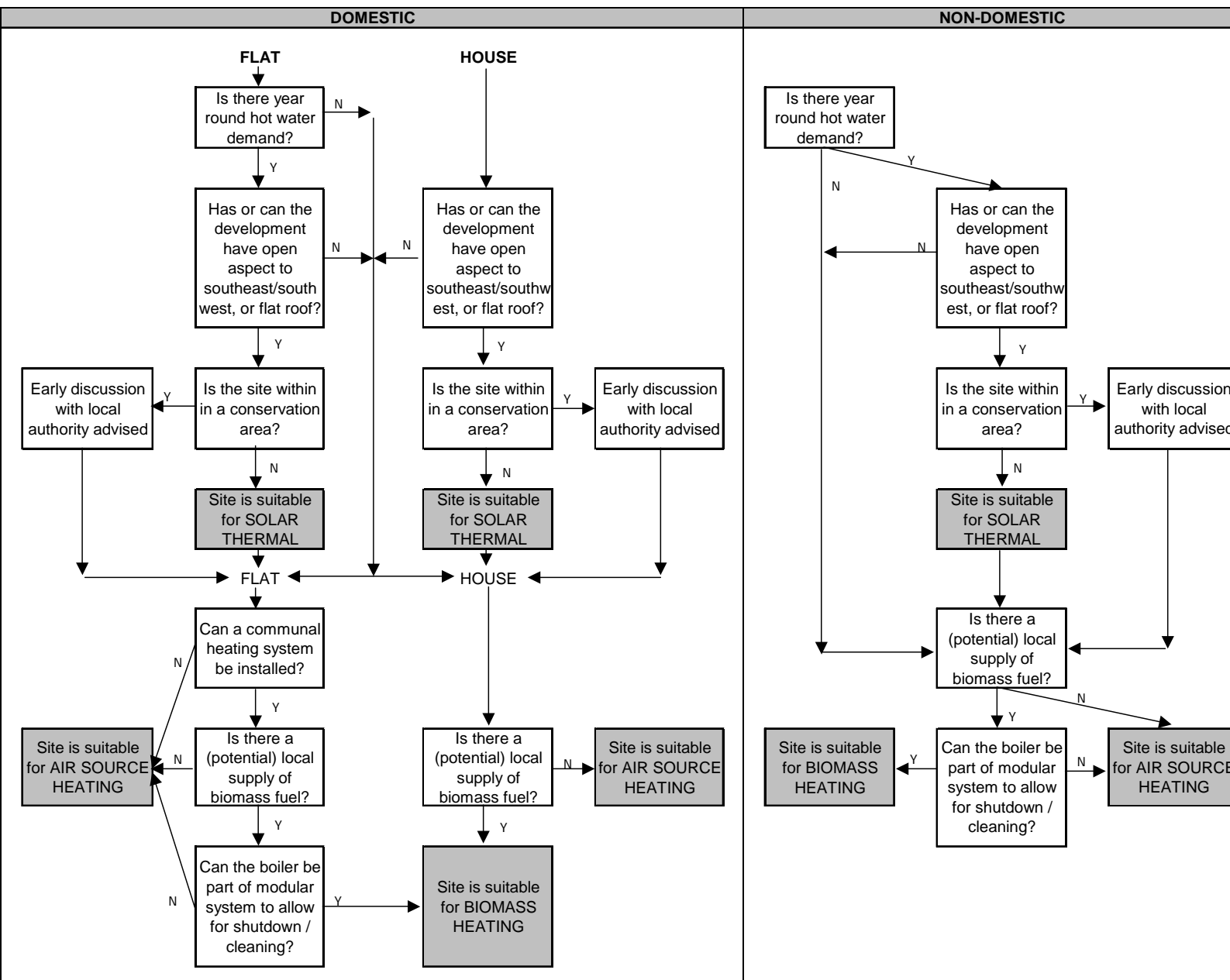
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| • Aberdeenshire Council's Planning Gain Co-ordinator | 01330 825518 |
| • Transportation and Infrastructure                  | 01467 620981 |
| • Scottish Water                                     | 01224 675000 |
| • SEPA   | 01224 248338 |
| • SCARF  | 01224 213005 |

# Appendix 1

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. The flowchart below has been designed to lead you through various types of renewable energy technologies. By answering these questions, potentially suitable sources of renewable energy will be identified.
2. Start at the top left corner ('START') and answer the questions as 'yes' or 'no' and follow the appropriate arrow.
3. The columns on the right should be used for your reference to highlight technologies that should be examined further.
4. The first page highlights energy sources that are relevant to houses, flats and other developments, such as retail or industrial and should always be completed.
5. The second page is split between domestic and non-domestic i.e. houses/flats and other developments. You may need to consider the charts more than once depending on your proposal (e.g. a mixed-use development of houses, flats and retail will need to consider the charts for each use
6. These energy sources should then be discussed in a statement submitted as part of the proposal outlining which sources are to be incorporated in a development, or why they have been rejected.





**SCARF** (Save Cash and Reduce Fuel) a company limited by guarantee (No. 94819) and registered charity. It was established in 1985 as an Urban Aid funded project in Aberdeen SCARF now delivers front line services in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dundee, Moray and Perth & Kinross. SCARF has 45 employees (44.5 WTE) and provides 18 New Deal training for work places. SCARF is registered as both City & Guilds Examination

SCARF provides householders, businesses and organisations with independent, free and impartial advice on sustainable use of energy that will not only reduce the amount of energy they use or save them money on fuel bills, but give them a warm, dry environment that puts less strain on natural resources and combats climate change. Centre and a NVQ Assessment Centre for energy efficiency services.

