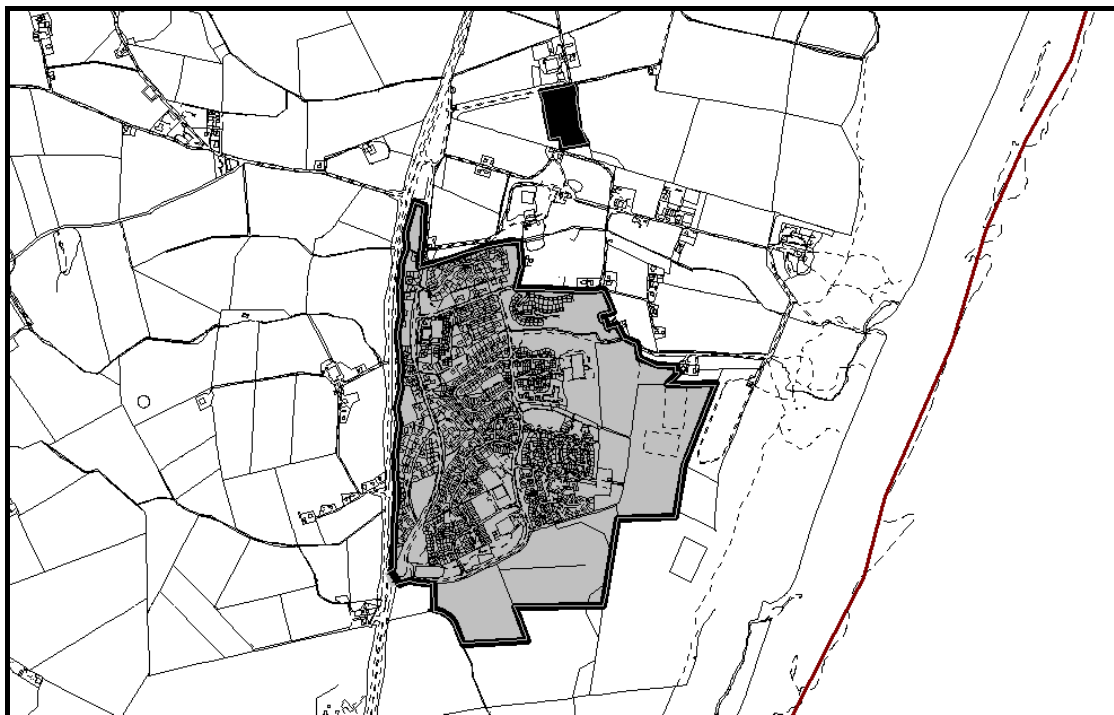


**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
FOR MIXED USE SITE,
SHADY NEUK BALMEDIE**

SEPTEMBER 2004



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



1. Purpose

- 1.1 This brief aims to analyse a site known as 'Shady Neuk', at Balmedie and shall seek to ensure that the development of this site is well structured, appropriate to its surroundings and makes a positive contribution to the area.
- 1.2 The site is allocated in the Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan (ALP) as EmpE, 'suitable for mixed use: employment and residential (maximum of 6) in equal proportions by site area. An adjacent 'project area' P1 (access improvements) is shown to the south-east of the site.
- 1.3 Developers must have regard to the contents of this Brief in preparing their scheme. Where differences do occur, justification by the developer is required.

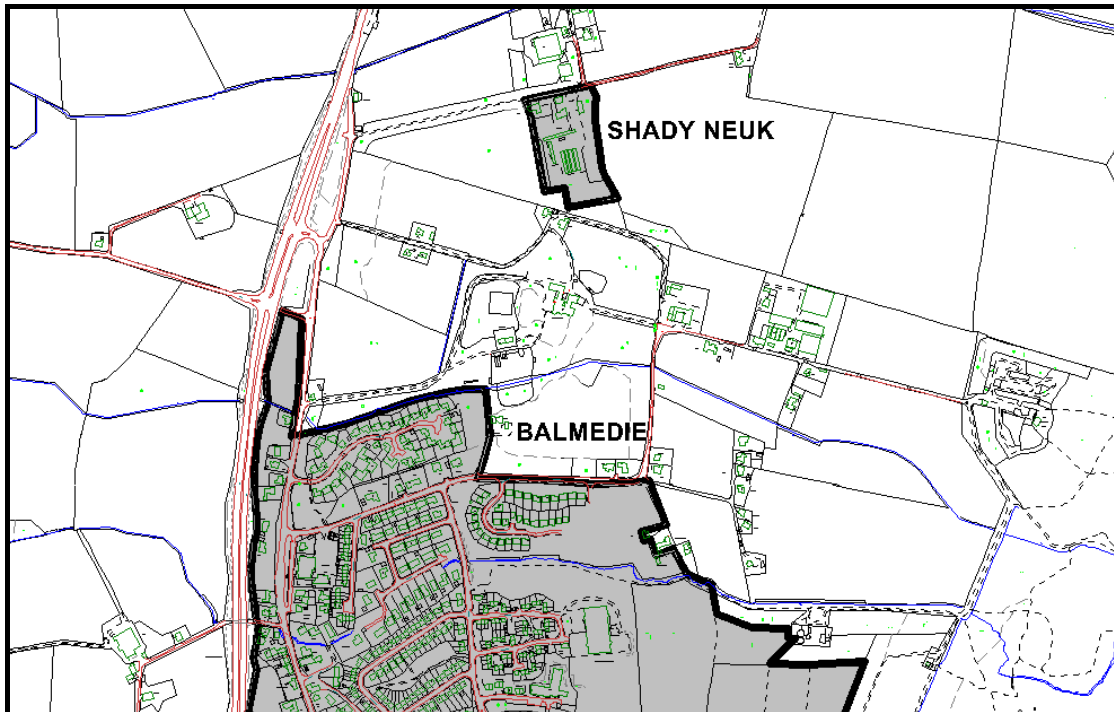


Figure 1 – Site Boundary and wider area

2. Planning Policies

- 2.1 The approved Structure Plan is the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001–2016 (also known as NEST). NEST Policy 1 on employment land encourages land to be identified in “deliverable, attractive and sustainable business locations”. It also requires that sites identified through the local plan process are realistic and that satisfy demand. NEST Policy 2 allows Balmedie to accommodate up to 5 hectares of marketable land at any one time.
- 2.2 NEST Policy 11 requires housing developments to make a positive contribution to sustaining the local community through good quality design, sensitive siting and appropriate densities; offer a choice of

residential environments and house types; take account of the availability of infrastructure, services and facilities; and direct housing to brownfield sites within settlements.

- 2.3 Policy Env\6 will also apply as the site is within the 'undeveloped coast'. In particular, this states the need for social and economic benefits to outweigh any adverse environmental impact and for any development to respect the character and amenity of the surrounding area.
- 2.4 Within ALP, Policy Env\8 protects existing trees of significant ecological, recreational, historical, shelter or landscape value. Policy Hou\13 requires that open space provided conforms to Appendix 6 and Policy Emp\1 indicates that employment uses will be approved in principle on allocated employment land.
- 2.5 Policy Env\22 highlights the need for alternative access provision that must be no less attractive and is safe and convenient for public use. Inf\1 details the treatment of roads and accesses required as a result of new development.
- 2.6 Policy Gen\2 allows for new development where it can be laid out to fit successfully within the site, respecting the character and amenity of the surrounding area and with: appropriate scale, massing and density. Policy Gen\5 requires that the provision of landscaping within new development accord with Appendix 5. Gen\11 allows for mixed-use development where it complies with a development brief, reflects the requirements of the proposals map and does not jeopardise the ability of the site to be redeveloped successfully or mixed use to be achieved. Gen\12 states that development must not prejudice the implementation of a specific project.

3. Site Analysis

The site analysis has been undertaken to identify the site's main features and constraints. The following issues will determine the key site requirements to achieve a suitable development in this location.

3.1 Setting: location and views

The proposed development site occupies a 1.4ha area to the north east of the village of Balmedie. The site is enclosed by mature woodland on three sides, and an access track on the fourth. Blairton Farm lies to the north of the access road, with a number of sizeable recent agricultural buildings fronting the access.

Many of the mature trees are outwith the site, but with a number of mature canopies over-hanging. The views from the site are generally blocked by the trees, but with one opening looking east to Balmedie Country Park, this view should be maximised.

3.2 Contours / landform / slope

The site is fairly flat, with only a gentle south-facing slope. Most of the ground is grass and rough marsh.

3.3 Wind chill

The site is less than 1.5km from the coast, and the cold easterly winds that blow from that direction. However, the site greatly benefits from the shelter provided by the trees and the relatively low-lying topography of the site in relation to its surroundings.

3.4 Natural sun-traps

The site will benefit from its south-facing slope, although the height of surrounding trees may limit the potential for solar gain to certain extents of the site.

3.5 Flooding

There may be a history of flooding on the lowest, southern section of the site. This situation must be confirmed and measures taken to ensure any proposed development is not at risk from flooding.

3.6 Burns / wet-land / natural drainage

There are no adjacent burns, but general drainage ditches have been made in recent past to accommodate the garden-centre use. Parts of the ground are rather marshy.

3.7 SSSI's / nature reserves / areas of ecological diversity

There are no such designations affecting the development of the site. However, within a short distance the coast has a range of environmental designations including Part Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Site of Interest to Natural Science (SINS) and Site of Environmentally Sensitive Area (SESA).

3.8 Trees / hedges / boundaries

The site is bordered by mature woodland and some trees exist on the site itself. Generally, however the site in question was cleared of trees for the garden centre development. Canopies do overhang the site on three sides and mature trees border the access road. Approval has recently been agreed for implementation of a tree preservation order for the area around the site.

3.9 Archaeological aspects

There is no known archaeological value to the site, although the Council's archaeologist has advised that crop marks exist in an adjacent field.

3.10 Urban form or grain / density

The site is somewhat distant from the village and as such there is no specific precedence set for the urban density and form. Balmedie itself is not visible from the site and is some 850metres away by a minor road. However, Balmedie offers a number of differing housing layouts and densities from large detached houses facing onto distributor roads or set within novel layouts to smaller housing units (detached and semi-detached) set within courtyard schemes or layouts determined by modern road standards.

3.11 Conservation Area / Listed buildings

There is no conservation area in Balmedie, however there are two listed buildings in the close vicinity; Balmedie House (now the Eventide Nursing Home) and its gate lodge, both C(s) listed.

3.12 Other elements that give the site character

The character of the site is largely defined by its position within a mature landscape setting. The single-track lane and treed access, along with occasional open views to the countryside beyond result in a semi-rural feel which is added to further by being physically separated from the main village.

3.13 Known hazards

Much of the site has been used as a commercial garden centre, although it is unclear what the use was prior to this. It is not believed that any contamination exists on the site, but further studies shall be required to prove this in due course.

3.14 Location or direction of local services

Most available local services are located within the village to the south of the site. The proposed pedestrian / cycle link (identified as the project area P1) from the south of the site to Balmedie itself will greatly facilitate opportunities for walking / cycling.

3.15 Rights of way / wayleaves / pedestrian desire lines

No official rights of way or wayleaves are known to cross the site. Investigations are required to establish and / or secure a route for the P1 access improvements.

3.16 Existing Road Pattern

The existing access to the site is single track with passing places along a tree-lined avenue. Otherwise, roads onsite consist mainly of those leading to existing houses, the old garden centre or Blairton Farm.

3.17 Public Transport

A regular bus service is available within half a mile of the site. Service routes entering the village at Old Road continue north towards Peterhead and Fraserburgh, south to Aberdeen, or onwards to Dyce.

3.18 Water supply / public drainage

There is a water supply and foul sewer available nearby.

3.19 Electricity / gas / renewable energy

An electricity supply is available and mains gas supply may also be present. No renewable energy provision is currently made, but the incorporation of renewable energy supplies are encouraged for both elements of the site.

3.20 ICT / Broadband availability

The Balmedie Exchange is already enabled for Broadband connection. However, BT advises that a further test would be required to confirm lines are suitable, and for what speed of service.

3.21 Recent history of the site

The majority of the site has most recently been used at a garden centre, but most ancillary buildings have now been removed and only the main house, outbuildings and a house in the north-west corner of the site have been retained.

3.22 Ownership of the site

The site is in single ownership can be readily developed subject to the necessary planning permission.

4 Site requirements

The allocation of this site for mixed use, employment and residential, provides the opportunity for a sustainable development, to the economic benefit of the settlement. The development must respect the 50:50 split (by site area) indicated in ALP.

4.1 General approach

The Council wishes to encourage all new development in Aberdeenshire to add to the quality of the built and natural environment, whilst providing economic and social benefits wherever possible. These principles are carried forward in current work on development and sustainability indicators in the form of the Index 21 project, with new emphasis on 'scoring' proposed projects and determining their sustainability. There are six basic principles that prospective developers must consider:

- Working with the climate
- Energy efficiency
- Optimising resources
- Respect for users
- Respect for the site
- The Complete Approach

4.1.1 Response to climate

There are two main issues when considering how a site should respond to the climate, these are:

- Solar considerations: the site occupies a gradual south-facing slope and can therefore take advantage of any available solar radiation in proposed buildings. The height of the trees and overshadowing will reduce the opportunities in certain areas of the site.
- Wind considerations: the presence or absence of wind may have a greater impact than solar gain in the heating of buildings, particularly during colder months. The use of strategic planting is perhaps the most effective method of reducing the impact of wind and this site will benefit from the surrounding mature landscaping.

4.1.2 Energy efficiency

Any development will be encouraged to maximise energy conservation within the structure of the building through insulation and minimisation of energy use, and also in efficiency of heating and ventilation systems.

4.1.3 Resource efficiency

The development of this site will require the creation of new roads and possibly car parking; this must be minimised to that which is necessary. Where there is the possibility of reuse of existing structures, this is a favoured option over demolition. The use of energy efficient, low maintenance and sustainable materials will be encouraged whenever practicable.

4.1.4 Social sustainability

The site is located fairly close to the village of Balmedie. The semi-rural location lends itself to easy access to the countryside for leisure and recreation purposes. As a mixed use site there is the potential to create a sustainable entity, minimising the need for travel between work and home. It has opportunities for being an attractive place for living, working and visiting alike.

4.1.5 Biodiversity

The site itself may prove an attractive habitat for a number of species, but is of little specific biodiversity value. The surrounding mature woodland is of significance locally and is part of a recently approved tree preservation order. The wet areas of the site should be treated in a

positive way with a view to enhancing the overall biodiversity value of this site and wider area.

Many of these elements, and others, are described in detail in the council document 'Development within Nature' published by the former Gordon District Council and Robert Gordon University.

4.2 Distribution of land-uses

The key land uses proposed for this site are employment and residential. Car-parking / hard standing and open spaces with strategic landscaping will also be required. The correct mix and layout for these uses will significantly determine the success or otherwise of any development.

4.2.1 Employment and residential

The need to allow for equal proportions of employment and residential land (by site area) may be achieved in a number of ways. There is an opportunity on this site to facilitate innovative and sustainable solutions to modern provision for employment and housing. As a result, the possibility of co-locating business and residential uses, with a single owner, on single plots in the form of 'workshop homes' should be encouraged.

In order to realise a true mixed use development, developers must put forward proposals for the balanced development of each element of the site. One possibility is the development of a separate employment area, with a number of units that may be tied by a legal agreement if necessary to each new house. Any remaining units in this scenario would be made available on the open market for small-scale operations.

Due to the character of 'Shady Neuk' and the close proximity between uses that will result from the development of this site, all the employment use(s) will have to fall within a Use Class compatible with neighbouring housing (i.e. Use Class 4 or other similar operations 'sui generis').

4.2.2 Car-parking / hard-standing

Depending on the eventual layout chosen and employment uses to locate there, a number of parking spaces are likely to be required. The number and allocation of parking spaces to serve new development must accord with the adopted 'Car Parking Standards for Development Control', unless other standards associated with a 'novel' scheme are agreed by the Councils Roads Authority. It will be important to restrict, as much as practicable, the need for employment traffic to pass through any residential element of the site.

4.2.3 Other uses

Outside storage should be avoided, but if this is essential then the treatment of any outside storage for the employment units should be given due consideration and efforts must be made to locate these as close as possible to the employment use(s) whilst avoiding prominent locations. Such areas should be fenced, with planting to screen storage from housing where possible.

The development of employment uses on this site is likely to result in the production of controlled waste. The storage and collection of these materials must be managed effectively within the site and provision made for a properly designed storage area for wheeled bins etc.

4.2.4 Open space

The open space within the site needs to be well thought out, have a clear purpose and not simply be areas left over after development. The best opportunities for open space may lie at the southern part of the site but it would also be wise to consider the utilisation of the open views to the sea at a part of the east of the site. Open space to the south would allow for the creation of the access improvements proposed in ALP. Such space can also be used to incorporate the SuDS detention pond. Additional open space can be used as a buffer between separate employment and residential uses and with strategic planting as an attractive gateway or feature. The incorporation of open space within the site should also mitigate biodiversity concerns and provide opportunities for wildlife corridors.

4.2.5 Strategic landscaping

The site already benefits from significant screening and mature landscaping. However, there will be a requirement for a properly designed landscaping scheme that enhances the proposed development and provides opportunities for additional screening and informal planting. Precise locations will depend on the layout chosen, although extensive use of planting in public areas such as the site entrance, buffer between land uses and amenity area would be envisaged. In addition, planting within individual plots shall be encouraged to integrate all new development within the mature landscape setting as quickly as possible.

Advice from the Environment section of the Council suggests that a selection of native species such as Common Alder, Hawthorn, Hornbeam and Field Maple as the most suitable species to be planted, with larger examples of Ash and Wych Elm in appropriate locations.

4.3 Access

The site has previously been heavily accessed when in use as a garden centre. At this time, passing places were provided along the tarred single-width access road, ideally this situation should remain. The advice of the T&I service of the Council should be sought. Where possible, there should be no detriment to the mature trees that line the access road. Having a footpath detached from the roadway could assist in this regard (see 4.3.1 below).

4.3.1 Footpath access into site

Large numbers of pedestrians are not anticipated, but can be accommodated along the existing access route. An informal footpath between the trees leading out onto the main road should be incorporated which could be used both for access and recreational walking. The possibility of linking the site to Balmedie from the southern boundary and creation of a foot / cycle path via P¹ (as shown in ALP) should also be fully investigated.

4.3.2 Road access into the site

There may be a requirement for heavy good vehicles to visit the site, in particular the employment use(s), which may be accommodated within site. Vehicular access will be via the existing access road. New development should incorporate and upgrade this access route if necessary, in as sensitive a manner as possible, to avoid damage to the trees and to reach an adoptable standard.

4.3.3 Access links into development land

The site is self-contained and there would be no requirement to form any access to surrounding land. It is not envisaged that further development will take place in this area within the lifetime of ALP.

4.3.4 General road layout requirements

The road layout within the site will be determined mostly by the choice of mix between the key uses as discussed in section 4.2 above. If necessary, it may prove beneficial to provide separate access to each use, or to ensure employment traffic does not enter the residential element of the site. Whichever design is chosen, roads and turning heads must be so designed as not to over-dominate the streetscape.

4.3.5 Traffic calming and other standards

Some form of traffic calming will be required as a result of this development. The incorporation of a 'home zone' should also be given full consideration.

4.3.6 Public transport needs

There would be no need for additional public transport being required to serve this site provided pedestrian links to the nearby halts at the northern edge of Balmedie village can be ensured.

4.3.7 Emergency service needs

All emergency and service access needs will be accommodated by internal access roads and areas to be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the Fire Officer and the Council's T&I service.

4.3.8 Parking requirements

The number of parking bays required for the employment use(s) onsite must accord with the adopted 'Car parking standards for Development Control' and will be determined by the eventual use (see section 4.2.2 above). Provision may also be required for a small number of visitor spaces, which along with disabled allocations should be allocated near to the main employment uses.

4.4 Infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure shall be required for the servicing of the entire site irrespective of the eventual development solution chosen.

4.4.1 Outside storage / waste management

The presence of outside storage associated with the employment use is recognised, but this must be limited to what is essential, be suitably screened and removed when no longer required. Where an employment use is likely to produce controlled waste, the storage and collection of this must be managed effectively within a single designated area or areas. It will not be suitable for bins to be introduced at a later stage and placed in car parking or other open areas. It is unlikely that a dedicated recycling facility will be required as a result of this development, but this should be confirmed.

4.4.2 Drainage

Foul public drainage is currently available to the south of the site, and a sewer extension will be required. Recent changes to the system may mean that capacity is available at Eventide home waste water pumping station 450m to the south. However this may involve some investigation to determine remaining capacity for the pumps. Failing this, a connection is available to a new foul gravity sewer adjacent to Rivendell, 60m to the south of the site. A final option would be to connect to sewers for the new Stewart Milne site adjacent by the Lodge 650m to the south, but these sewers are not yet adopted by Scottish Water.

Disposal of surface water as a result of any development on this site will require a separate drainage system. The use of a 'sustainable drainage system' (SuDS) will be required. A sewer extension will be required only if an outlet from SuDS is proven to be necessary, with this to the adjacent watercourse. This needs to be in consultation with SEPA and Scottish Water.

4.4.3 Supply and distribution of water

In terms of public water supply, a connection is available to the existing distribution main located at the south west corner of the site. An offsite mains extension may be required if a route cannot be found through the trees.

4.4.4 Electricity

This will be supplied from the nearest connection, check with service provider.

4.4.5 ICT / Broadband technology

Broadband is now available in Balmedie, subscription to this service will be up to individual home-owners or employers.

4.4.6 Lighting

The provision of additional street lighting will be necessary due to the development of this site; this should be limited to what is necessary and make use of recent designs to limit light pollution. An element of additional lighting will also be appropriate at any new footpath link to the village, a preference has been expressed for these to be motion-sensor activated, and this should be considered.

4.4.7 Education and Community facilities

The development will likely have a modest affect on schools in the catchment area as family-sized dwellings will be likely. No significant impact on community facilities is anticipated.

4.4.8 Maintenance

The creation of areas of public open space within this development will result in these requiring adoption by the Landscape Services section of the Council. Evidence as to the arrangements made for the long-term maintenance of the paths, landscaped areas and open spaces will be required.

4.5 Developer Contributions

The subject of developer contributions should be discussed with the council's planning Gain Co-ordinator. A section 75 agreement between developer and the council may be required, in line with policy requirements for a development of this nature. The agreement may be for contributions in cash or kind.

5. Design

The successful redevelopment of this site will depend upon the correct layout, appropriate scale and suitable mix to satisfy both employment and residential uses. The design of buildings constructed on this site is of key importance. The site is sensitive and unusual and any design should relate to and respect the surrounding environment.

5.1 Building heights

Nearby buildings often give the clearest indication of the most appropriate height of new development. In the case of this site, few such examples are present. However, considering the two uses proposed, it would be reasonable to restrict the height of both uses to a maximum of two storeys. Due to the slope present, two storey buildings will be more acceptable when located on the southern part of the site, with single or possibly 1½ storey buildings permitted nearest existing dwellings. These measures should result in uniformity in roof levels across the site. All buildings must be designed and located to fit well within the site, respect the character of the surroundings and minimise intrusion on their neighbours and existing properties.

In terms of massing, techniques should be employed to minimise the impact of the buildings on their surroundings. The arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings are key in this respect.

Given the recent tree preservation order approved for the area, every effort must be made during construction to ensure the protection of tree canopies and roots.

5.2 Housing and open space standards

Houses on the site must exceed the minimum current requirements as set out in the Local Plan, specifically Appendix 1 (The design of new development in Aberdeenshire) and Appendix 6 (Provision of public open space).

The density of the development and the mix to be achieved shall be the subject of detailed discussions through the planning application process. ALP sets the number of homes at no more than six and specifies equal areas for employment and residential uses must be provided.

5.3 Other design details

Buildings should be designed and situated in a manner that creates an entrance to the site and respects the topography. Novel or innovative design features may be incorporated, including textures, colours, patterns or materials, but must all be done sensitively. It is important that the design and use of materials throughout the site displays a high degree of consistency for both the housing and employment elements of any development. The advice of Development Control is recommended on this matter and the approach laid down in the Scottish Executive's Policy on architecture, *Designing Places: A Policy Statement for Scotland* should be observed. Attention should also be paid to PAN 67 (Housing Quality) when considering the design of homes on the site.

The development of this site for appropriate mixed use may necessitate the construction of some form of fencing in places or other security features, all of which must be sensitively treated. Any security lighting needs to be specifically sited to reduce negative impact on the residential portion of the site, whilst avoiding light pollution.

Further Information

- Jenkins & Marr : 01224-586277

- Development Services : 01358-726429
- Transportation & Infrastructure : 01467-620981
- Landscape Services : 01467-627622

- Scottish Water : 01224-675237

- SEPA : 01224-424609