



Laurencekirk

Proposed Strategic
Development Area

Kirkwood Homes Ltd

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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Planning Strategy

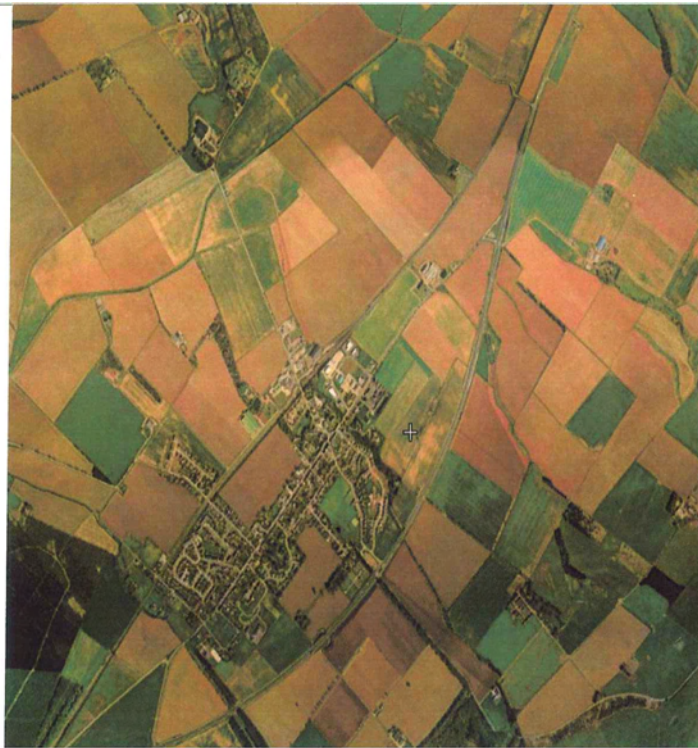
- 3.0 Study Area Location
- 4.0 Context
- 5.0 Study Area Issues
- 6.0 Study Area Character

- 7.0 Town Structure
- 8.0 Planned Growth
- 9.0 Future Growth

- 10.0 Concepts for Growth
- 11.0 Summary
- 12.0 Conclusions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been prepared by Ryden LLP on the instruction of Kirkwood Homes Limited following an interest being secured in approximately 360 acres of land which lies to the north of the main settlement of Laurencekirk and forms the study area. It outlines Kirkwood Homes proposals to secure the opportunity to work with Aberdeenshire Council in developing a high quality and deliverable urban extension to the north of Laurencekirk.



1.2 This document will focus on three key parts;

- Laurencekirk and its urban form;
- The option site, its character and opportunities; and
- Opportunities for future growth of Laurencekirk.

It comprises:

- A planning strategy to secure planning permission;
- A description of the site in its local and strategic context;
- A preliminary site analysis which summarises the key site influences that will shape the layout and character of any development in this location;

- An overview of the historic growth of Laurencekirk and existing structure of the town;
- A description of the proposed development opportunities being explored within the Laurencekirk area;
- A development concept for developing a high quality and deliverable urban extension to the north of Laurencekirk. This will highlight the major design and regeneration opportunities that are likely to form the basis of a masterplan and application to secure planning permission for a significant and sustainable community extension.

The approach that Kirkwood Homes will follow will be driven by Aberdeenshire Council's development plan. Achieving high quality design and mixed use development that 'fits' the location and is carefully integrated and connected with the surroundings is Kirkwood Homes primary objective.

2.0 PLANNING STRATEGY

2.1 The intention is to develop the proposals in tandem with the ongoing Development Plan Review. The provisional strategy for the Structure Plan included six strands, three of which are considered to be particularly relevant for the future development of Laurencekirk:

- Rates of growth in excess of that seen in the area over the recent past;
- An element of front-loading of the development opportunities towards the start of the Structure Plan period; and
- Significant development allowed for within the Huntly to Laurencekirk road and rail corridor.

2.2 Laurencekirk is ideally placed in relation to the road and rail network, with excellent linkages to both the north, south, and to the coast. In respect of the rail connection it is anticipated that the railway station shall re-open shortly, after originally closing back in 1968. It is considered that the settlement could accommodate significant expansion without detriment to the wider landscape character.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN BACKGROUND

2.3 It is important to consider these proposals against Scottish Planning Policy, and the Approved Structure Plan, as well as the emerging strategy of the replacement Structure Plan, or as it is more likely to be known, the Strategic Plan. The extant Structure Plan states in the core objectives that it aims to create a long term sustainable framework of settlements in a hierarchy, which focuses major development on the main settlements in the North East. A further objective is to integrate land use and transportation to ensure that development is well related to public transport, especially on the main communication corridors. Within the Strategic Area Roles and Function Table, Laurencekirk is identified as a Main Service Centre which is for a balance of rural services, population and employment, and a driving force of the local economy.

2.4 The Consultative Draft of Scottish Planning Policy 3 (Planning for Housing) highlights that SPP3 reflects the provisions of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, particularly the strengthening of the plan-led system. Furthermore, it also accords with the commitment of 'Firm Foundations' the Scottish Governments consultation paper on the future of housing in Scotland, in the identified goal of increasing the rate of new housing supply to at least 35,000 houses each year by the middle of the next decade. Key objectives of SPP3 are to identify housing need and demand on a more aspirational, but consistent and robust basis; and allocate sufficient land to meet

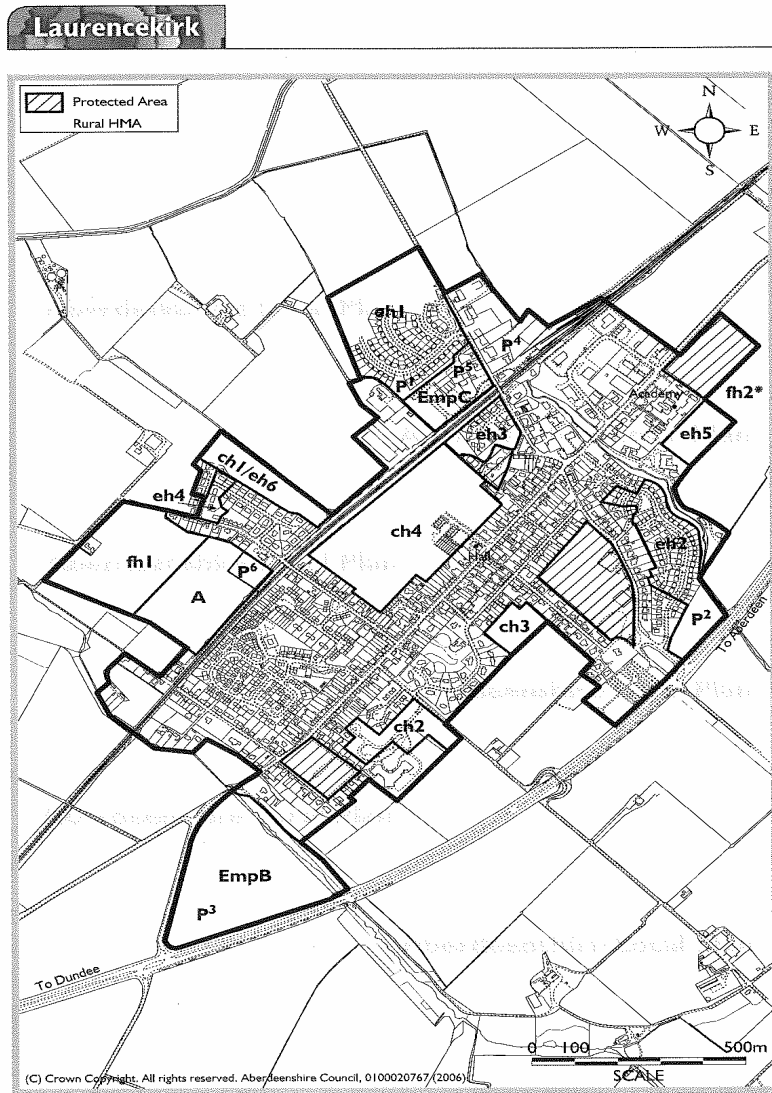
identified need and demand for housing, including affordable housing, across all tenures. Accordingly, the Policy document identifies that local authorities are encouraged to adopt a more proactive approach to managing the supply of land for housing to achieve identified requirements.

2.5 The Approved Structure Plan highlights that Aberdeenshire Council may accommodate up to 5 hectares of marketable land at any one time in settlements such as Laurencekirk. Turning to the housing allocations for Laurencekirk, Policy 8 (January 2000 to December 2005) allocates 60 dwellings, while Policy 9 (January 2006 to December 2010) allocates a further 150 dwellings. Table 4b (Effective Housing Land Supply (Aberdeenshire Rural Housing Market Area) confirms the land supply position at June 2002 as follows:

- Effective Land Supply in Jan 2000: 192 units
- Allocations for Jan 2000 to Dec 2005: 60 units
- Allocations for Jan 2006 to Dec 2010: 150 units
- Constrained Sites in Jan 2000: 99 units.

Policy 10 (Indicative Housing Distribution for 2011 to 2015) stated that Local Plans may where possible indicate where housing can be accommodated in line with the same broad proportions as set out on Policy 9 (Housing Allocations Jan 2006 to Dec 2010) i.e. 150 units for Laurencekirk.

2.6 The Adopted Local Plan seeks to conform to the Approved Structure Plan. The settlement map is shown below.



- Please see this settlement's introductory page for an explanation of the letters on this map.
- Please see the Glossary for a full explanation of the allocations on this map and relevant policies.

2.7 The Local Plan identifies a total of 12 development sites for Laurencekirk which include:

- 191 existing housing units;
- 129 constrained housing units;
- 60 proposed housing units; and
- Two sites for appropriate employment uses.

The 60 proposed units (Site A) satisfy Structure Plan Policy 8 for the period between January 2000 and December 2005 whilst site fh1 (150 units) is identified to meet the Structure Plan Policy 9 of 150 units. An area of future search (fh2*) incorporating land under the control of Kirkwood Homes is identified, for the period from 2011 to 2016 in accordance with Structure Plan Policy 10. Other specific projects identified include the re-opening of the railway station (anticipated December 2008), a car park for such, and a replacement Health Centre which is already underway.



Laurencekirk Railway Station

2.8 Turning to the Housing Land Audit 2007, it identifies a total of 7 housing sites for Laurencekirk, with a total capacity of 409 units at 1 January 2007, with a remaining capacity of 374 units. The Draft Housing Land Audit 2008 indicates 418 units, and 326 respectively. In terms of completions, the Draft Housing Land Audit 2008 identifies that there were a total of 267 completions between 2001 and 2007, averaging out at approximately 38 per annum. In terms of anticipated completions for the forthcoming five years, a total of 326 houses would be built, averaging out at approximately 65 units per annum. However, development rates beyond this period do not yet take account of the emerging strategy of the replacement Structure Plan.

2.9 Having referred to the Employment Land Audit 2007, it identifies the following figures for Laurencekirk:

- Established Employment Land Supply: 9.1 hectares (across 4 sites);
- Constrained Employment Land Supply: 8.2 hectares (two sites);
- Marketable Employment Land Supply: 0.9 hectares (two sites), of which all is immediately available.

In terms of the historical development rate for Laurencekirk, a total of 5.8 hectares were provided prior to 1997. In the following nine years to 2007, only 0.5 hectares of employment land was developed, which on average equates to some 0.056 hectares per year (560 square metres a year). In light of the functions and role of the settlement, and its location adjacent to one of the main communication corridors, this is considered to be particularly low and may reflect the constrained nature of the supply.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

2.10 As highlighted above, a review of the Development Plan is currently underway. Consideration was given to the Provisional Strategy for the replacement Structure Plan at a meeting of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee on 28 September 2007. A Provisional Draft of the Structure Plan was released to Elected Members of Aberdeenshire Council on 2 April 2008. Subsequently, a formal Draft was released for Public Consultation on 27 June 2008. This Draft highlights that the plan represents a radical departure from previous structure plans, and that it has also been influenced by the National Planning Framework (NPF) and draft National Planning Framework 2. These frameworks have already identified the importance of the east coast corridor between Aberdeen and Newcastle in offering opportunities to develop knowledge economy links associated with the energy and offshore industries and the Universities along the route. Further emphasis is also placed in the NPF to potential investment in transport infrastructure to reduce road and rail journey times.

2.11 In terms of detail, the Draft Structure Plan aims to: “deliver a robust framework for investment decisions which facilitates economic growth and diversification of the regional economy, supported by promoting the more efficient use of resources; and, address the substantial and urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change”.

2.12 The Draft also identifies three spatial perspectives which include:

- 'Three Strategic Growth Areas', one of which focuses on the 66 mile long corridor between Laurencekirk and Huntly. A focus is to be established on delivering sustainable mixed communities with the services, facilities and infrastructure for the 21st century. The strategy also highlights the importance of ensuring an increase in the frequency of rail and other public transport journeys, as well as the requirement to build two secondary schools (and associated primary schools) over the defined corridor. Specific targets are also set for the provision of no less than 75% of all homes and employment floorspace to have been built in the Strategic Growth Areas by 2030;
- 'Local Growth and Diversification' generally in more rural and remote area; and
- 'Regeneration Priority Areas' including consideration of the potential to further develop coastal tourism related roles to the east and south east of Laurencekirk.

2.13 The Draft Structure Plan also indicates that Local Development Plans will be expected to allocate a minimum of 40 hectares of marketable employment land in the Laurencekirk to Huntly corridor, with 105 hectares for the period between 2011 and 2020. There is also a requirement to identify Strategic Reserve Land of 70 hectares for employment uses.

2.14 The need to provide sustainable development while also addressing climate change is a key theme of the new plan. The Draft Plan emphasises that new developments will have to be constructed with and use resources more efficiently in order to reduce their vulnerability to climate change. This requires that due consideration be given to the risk of flooding and servicing, among a number of other issues.

2.15 In respect of population growth, the Draft Structure Plan is looking to increase the population of the City Region to 480,000 by 2030 (a rise of 9% on 2006 levels), with house completions of 2500 p.a by 2014, and 3000 p.a by 2020. This shall require the quick release of land at the start of the Structure Plan period. Schedule 2 (Housing Allowances) currently indicates that the area South of Drumlithie to Marykirk (which includes Laurencekirk) has an effective land supply of 235 units in 2007. A total of 180 units are identified as being constrained. Over and above these figures, development is then envisaged at the following rates:

- 2007 – 2016: 500 units;
- 2017 – 2023: 400 units; and
- 2024 – 2030: 100 units.

- 2.16 The fifth objective of the Draft Structure Plan is in respect of the creation of sustainable mixed communities to make areas more attractive as choices for residential or business relocation. One of the targets identified is to ensure that all housing over 1 hectare in Strategic Growth Areas, of which Laurencekirk is one, should be delivered in accordance with Masterplans at an average density of no less than 30 dwellings per hectare (12.14 dwellings per acre). This could follow the example of the Essex design guide where a majority of housing is developed at a high density, with a smaller proportion at a lower density in order to cater for all markets/tenures.
- 2.17 The provision of new development is also closely linked to accessibility, and the requirement to ensure that all new development contribute towards reducing the need to travel by being highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. This highlights that the effective integration of land use with transport helps to reduce the need to travel and encourage modal shift. Accordingly, the proposals to develop the land under the control of Kirkwood Homes would ensure that the pattern of development improves the accessibility of the settlement locally, and in the wider regional context. An emphasis is placed upon the use of Masterplans to incorporate layouts and design that shall deliver new developments.
- 2.18 Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Aberdeenshire Council are currently undertaking a settlement capacity study for Laurencekirk. The aim of this document is to consider the ability of the settlement to accommodate a theoretical level of growth and consider sustainable options for future growth. Accordingly, the Council are considering the potential for 100 % growth from that existing and programmed until 2011. This would result in an additional 1275 households, additional employment land, and associated community facilities adjoining the existing settlement. The preparation of this study is considered to highlight the regard in which Laurencekirk is currently held by the local authority in that they consider the settlement has significant potential for expansion in the near future.

PLANNING STRATEGY

- 2.19 Kirkwood Homes Limited wishes to work with Aberdeenshire Council to promote this development through the Development Plan Review process. A development bid, for part of the identified land was submitted in December 2006.
- 2.20 This updated document seeks to promote debate on the northern expansion of Laurencekirk. The intention is that a preferred masterplan will evolve through that debate with Aberdeenshire Council and also, importantly through community

involvement. As highlighted above, the Consultative Draft of the Structure Plan was released for public consultation on 27 June 2008 following consideration at the Infrastructure Services Committee on 8 May 2008. Following the likely requirement for an Examination in Public (EIP) it is understood that Approval of the replacement Structure Plan by Scottish Ministers would take place by the end of 2009. As the proposals evolve, an expanded development bid will be submitted at the appropriate time to secure inclusion of the site within the Local Development Plan or Local Plan Review. Again Kirkwood Homes Ltd intend to fully participate in that process.

- 2.21 The submission of a planning application is not considered appropriate at this time. However, this will be kept under review in discussion with Aberdeenshire Council and will be reconsidered in light of any significant shortfall in the five year housing land supply or following any interim guidance which may emerge from Aberdeenshire Council.

3.0 STUDY AREA LOCATION

3.1 Laurencekirk is a town located 29 miles south of Aberdeen, and 36.6 miles north of Dundee, on the A90 and main east coast rail line. Laurencekirk originally developed along the trunk road heading north/south, although more recently it has developed predominantly between the main arterial routes of the railway line and the A90 which now sweeps along the edge of the settlement. There has been more recent expansion to the west in the form of residential development. Laurencekirk forms one of the main service centres in the southern part of Kincardine and Mearns, and had a population of 1,971 in 2004.

3.2 The land to which this appraisal relates is predominantly in agricultural use. The land levels on the western side of the railway are between 55 and 65 metres AOD, over a large area. To the east, the land rises up from the railway and Aberdeen Road towards the A90 which is at approximately 90 metres AOD. Outwith the study area, and beyond the A90 to the east, the land rises up further towards the Hill of Garvock at 229 metres AOD. To the west the land rises gradually towards Fettercairn and the Mearns, which is approximately 5 miles away.



View of Laurencekirk from Mains of Haulkerton

3.3 The overall study area of approximately 360 acres (145.7 hectares) lies to the north and north west of Laurencekirk. The land is essentially split into three main parts:

- 1) Land located between the A90 and Aberdeen Road;
- 2) Land located between Aberdeen Road and the railway; and
- 3) Land to the west of the Railway.

Also included in the study area is Conveth Mains farm, and a small number of privately owned dwellings.

4.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 4.1 Laurencekirk was founded in 1701, after previously comprising two settlements (Kirkton of Conveth and Haulkerton Castle) within the parish of Conveth. The original population of 54, then rose to 500 by around 1779, when the settlement became a Burgh of Barony. The settlement grew further following the establishment of various home industries by Lord Gardenstoun, which included linen weaving and box making. He also influenced the general structure of the town which is characterised by the long and relatively narrow High Street by selling off one mile of feus in the street formation. Since then, agriculture and its offshoots have always been one of the main employers in Laurencekirk.
- 4.2 In respect of the wider Mearns area, the population in 2001 was 12,446, with continued growth expected to 13,443 in 2011 and 13,487 by 2016 (Source: Population Estimates and Forecasts 2007 Update, Aberdeenshire Council) representing an overall growth of 8.4 %. This is understood not to include any projected growth as part of significant land allocations for the settlement through the emerging development plan.
- 4.3 Modern Laurencekirk has developed principally between the High Street and the railway line, which came in 1849. Expansion from the centre of the settlement has also occurred alongside the roads leading into the rural area, and in the vicinity of the railway station. More recently, housing allocations have seen expansion to the west of the railway line, at the south west and north west of the settlement. A relatively large industrial expansion (7.8 hectares) is also shown to the south of the settlement at 'Scrapehard', adjacent to the A90. However, it is understood that this land is currently constrained due to drainage infrastructure.
- 4.4 The proposed site to the north and north west of Laurencekirk is considered to be in a strategically important location. The development opportunities to the south of the settlement are already constrained by the current physical boundary formed by the A90. Development beyond the A90 would not only be a considerable distance from the heart of the settlement, but would also be difficult due to the rising topography and the associated landscape impact. The Denlethen Wood is located to the south west of Laurencekirk. In light of the policies of the local authority to protect and retain trees and woodland areas, development is likely to be restricted towards this area, and the open countryside beyond. Therefore consideration must be given to the expansion of

the settlement in line with the emerging Structure Plan. The incorporation of Laurencekirk within one of the Strategic Growth Areas of the Draft replacement Structure Plan, together with the identification of some of the land under the control of Kirkwood Homes Ltd within the area of future search (fh2*) in the extant Local Plan illustrates the wider potential of the land to the north and north west of the settlement. The study area is ideally placed in the transportation corridor running between Aberdeen and Dundee. Furthermore, there are also considered to be excellent linkages to Montrose on the coast. By undertaking a significant expansion of Laurencekirk, there would also be the opportunity to assist in the provision of significant junction improvements (which could include the provision of a grade separated junction) to the north of the town which would help to improve safety as well as improving journey times on the road network. This would also have the further benefit of unlocking the development potential of land around Laurencekirk, and ensure its identification as a place where people would want to live and work.

- 4.5 The Adopted Local Plan highlights the main planning issues affecting Laurencekirk as being the demand for new housing, and the need to protect and enhance the role and attractiveness of the central area. It is considered that the development of a masterplan associated with the study area could help realise these aims. In line with the emerging Structure Plan and the Council's own Capacity Study, it is considered that the study area could accommodate significant growth of a range of uses including residential, business/industrial, and community uses. The later could also include the delivery of a small supermarket, to meet the expanded demand through development in Laurencekirk, given the limitations within the existing settlement itself. Furthermore, it is understood that there is a lack of visitor accommodation which could also be accommodated for within the overall proposals. Such improvements to the balance of uses within the town, may lead to the release of traffic pressures particularly along the High Street. This in turn could provide the opportunity to enhance the attractiveness of the central area, which is currently dominated by the throughput of vehicles. This could include provision of pedestrian and streetscape improvements to enhance the existing amenity and character of the town centre.
- 4.6 In terms of development, the land under the control of Kirkwood Homes Limited would allow for the northern expansion of the town in line with previous development extending to the eastern boundary of the settlement with the A90. Further opportunities could also be made of the land located between Aberdeen Road and the railway, with potential to increase accessibility to the station once re-opened. This would also help in creating an extended community which is extremely accessible, where sustainable transportation methods such as walking and cycling into the existing and potentially new centres would be possible. As highlighted above, some

expansion has also taken place to the west of the railway line, therefore further land releases could also be accommodated in a manner which would help to complete the urban form, when compared to the existing situation which appears somewhat imbalanced. This could allow the creation of a more central hub located close to the centre of the town and the railway station which is scheduled to re-open in December 2008.

- 4.7 The expansion of the settlement for a mix of residential, employment and community uses would help in the delivery of a balanced and sustainable community, and help attract people to the main service centre of Laurencekirk as identified in the extant Structure Plan. This would also meet the objectives of the emerging development plan.

5.0 THE STUDY AREA ISSUES

- 5.1 Preliminary site analysis identified the key site influences that will determine the location, shape and character of any development in this area.

- 5.2 The primary elements that will shape the location and nature of the development are;

- The topography, the area in general rises up to the east from the settlement, a vast plain exists to the north and west before the Howe of Mearns;
- The relationship with the A90, access and interface;
- The relationship with the railway, and current bridging points/crossings;
- The 'Luther Water' burn that forms the western boundary;
- The requirement for services and infrastructure;
- Transportation flows through the existing settlement;
- Access and links to Laurencekirk from the site area; and
- The relationship with the existing uses to the north of the settlement.

- 5.3 The elements within the site that must be considered and will potentially inform the shape and character of any development are;

- The landscape quality and pattern that makes the site distinctive and which landscape features if any should be considered as features to be retained;
- The existing buildings on site;
- Field boundaries. Some may be intrinsic to the character of the area and should be incorporated into any development within the area; and
- The hydrology of the site.

- 5.4 The elements described above must be understood and respected when considering development on this site. The elements not only direct the shape of any development in this area, if respected they will allow the site to be developed in a unique character and 'sense of place'.

6.0 STUDY AREA CHARACTER

- 6.1 Initial analysis of the site identifies 3 distinct landscape character types that will shape and inform any proposed development within this area.
- 6.2 As highlighted above in paragraph 3.3, the land is essentially split into three main parts:
- 1) Land located between the A90 and Aberdeen Road;
 - 2) Land located between Aberdeen Road and the railway; and
 - 3) Land to the west of the Railway.

In terms of area 1, it is considered that this land has good potential for development. At present, the land directly to the south is utilised for predominantly residential and educational uses, therefore there are opportunities for complimentary uses, such as a community and leisure facilities. The potential junction improvements would be located towards the north of area 1, at the existing junction with the A90, and would also encompass land on the opposite side of the A90 which would be made available for that purpose.

Area 2, located between Aberdeen Road and the railway, falls gradually from east to west. At the southern edge of the site is the Laurencekirk Business Park. Accordingly, the land under the control of Kirkwood Homes Limited could be utilised for an expansion of the Business Park, or uses that would utilise the advantages of the proximity to the railway station. This would also be the recommended location for the supermarket for Laurencekirk given the level of accessibility to both the existing and expanded settlement.

- 6.3 Lastly, area 3 comprises an open area that extends some distance from the existing settlement boundary. The 'Luther Water' burn is located at the western edge, and is highlighted as an area of potential flooding on SEPA's Indicative River and Coastal Flooding Map, which may place a constraint on the extent of development in this area. However, in light of the current issues regarding the flow of traffic along the existing High Street, there are opportunities to alleviate traffic issues through the provision of a distributor road to the west of the settlement. This would also help to access and service development in the wider area. In addition, careful consideration must be

given to the treatment of development towards the rural edge, thus allowing development to be accommodated into the landscape without being over-prominent. It is envisaged that the distributor road would be accommodated through areas 2 and 3 respectively.

7.0 TOWN STRUCTURE

7.1 Laurencekirk's location 29 miles south of Aberdeen and 36.6 miles north of Dundee, provides relative ease of access to both cities by road (and soon to be reconnected to the rail network), thus ensuring good connectivity with the two closest cities. The town also has linkages to the Port of Montrose which is only 10.5 miles away.

7.2 The town has retained and developed some of its core amenities and facilities as it has grown;

- The High Street comprising a range of uses;
- 1 secondary and 1 primary school;
- A leisure centre and other community facilities;
- A medical centre; and
- An industrial park.

8.0 PLANNED GROWTH

- 8.1 Laurencekirk is continuing to develop and grow. There are a number of planned developments around Laurencekirk that will see the town develop further. Land has also already been identified for future housing (as part of the Adopted Local Plan) on part of the land under the control of Kirkwood Homes Ltd at Conveth Mains.
- 8.2 The main issues affecting Laurencekirk as identified in the Adopted Aberdeenshire Local Plan are;
- Demand for new housing; and
 - Protection and enhancement of the role and attractiveness of the central area.
- 8.3 To address these issues, there have been allocations of land through the Aberdeenshire Local Plan within the Laurencekirk Area. This has included significant land releases to the west of the settlement for housing, as well as the identification of 7.8 hectares for employment uses towards the south.



View South towards Laurencekirk from Northern Boundary of Study Area

- 8.4 In planning further growth it is important to understand how these developments relate to the town. Kirkwood Homes Ltd is committed to the creation of a sustainable community with a unique identity. Accordingly, it is essential to secure the integration of land uses to reduce the need to travel and encourage modal shift in line with SPP17 (Planning for Transport) and the emerging strategy of the replacement structure plan.
- 8.5 On the theme of transportation, consideration must also be given to the Regional Transport Strategy produced by Nestrans for the period up to 2021. The vision is to provide 'a transport system for the north east of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable, and socially inclusive society'. Further key issues that were identified included: improving connectivity; increasing public transport

usage; and, supporting vibrant Aberdeenshire towns. Direct reference is also made to the project to re-open Laurencekirk Railway Station as being underway. With further reference specifically to Laurencekirk, the 'Proposals for Action' Map highlights the railway station re-opening as strategic road improvements to the A90 corridor around Laurencekirk.

- 8.6 In terms of current education provision in the town, there is Laurencekirk Primary and Mearns Academy. Aberdeenshire Council's current school roll forecasts (2007 based) highlight the following:

School	Total Capacity	Actual Roll ' 07	Forecast Roll 2011	Forecast Roll 2016
Laurencekirk Primary	300	302 (100.6 %)	323 (107.6%)	298 (99.3 %)
Mearns Academy	540	628 (116%)	613 (113.5 %)	627 (116.1%)

As highlighted in paragraph 2.10, the Provisional Draft Structure Plan has identified that due to the strategy to develop along the A90 and A96 corridors, there will be a requirement for additional schools to be provided. Therefore the identification of further land for development would help to ensure that such educational facilities are delivered in due course. Consideration has already been given to the replacement of Mearns Academy, parts of which date back to 1895. The 21st Century Schools programme has indicated two potential options for the replacement of the Academy with a new building on the existing playing fields.

- 8.7 While previous development rates for employment uses may not have been regarded as particularly successful, the undertaking of a comprehensive masterplan to deliver development would help to assist in providing a balanced community with the right mix of housing, employment and community facilities. The benefits of connectivity to the north, east, and south are considered paramount to establishing Laurencekirk as one of the key settlements in Aberdeenshire. In relation to employment uses, it is considered that there are opportunities to expand upon the existing freight sidings adjacent to Laurencekirk Railway Station. This would allow for the intensification of rail freight movements which is supported through SPP17.
- 8.8 Turning to the water asset capacity, currently Laurencekirk is identified as having limited capacity at the water treatment works, with a poor water pressure level for properties in the settlement. In addition, there is limited availability for further development which would connect into the waste water treatment works, therefore

significant investment shall be required to alleviate these constraints. This investment could be triggered through the release of land for development.

- 8.9 One further distinct advantage of the future expansion of Laurencekirk is that it is considered that development can be successfully integrated into the landscape without any detriment to its character. Policy 19 (Wildlife, Landscape and Land Resources) of the Approved Structure Plan stipulates the requirements for ensuring that development avoids adverse impacts, and takes into consideration a wide range of issues including scale, siting, form and design. In this instance, it is understood that Laurencekirk is not located within an area of landscape significance, or is covered by any other national, regional or local designations, therefore this would highlight that the settlement could accommodate sympathetic expansion. Regardless, Kirkwood Homes Limited are committed to the provision of a high quality co-ordinated expansion of Laurencekirk in order to enhance and improve the area overall.

9.0 FUTURE GROWTH

- 9.1 The identified study area to the north and north west of Laurencekirk provides a significant opportunity to create a sustainable expansion to the existing town of Laurencekirk, as well as making much needed improvements to local infrastructure in terms of connectivity and accessibility to the road network, and to drainage. Furthermore improvements could also be made to ensure that the town benefits from the right balance of homes, employment and community facilities.
- 9.2 When considering the future growth of Laurencekirk, and in particular in relation to the study area, consideration must also be given to how that may affect the existing town, and the current planned expansion. The main issues include:
- Methods of integrating new development areas with Laurencekirk (including current expansion areas);
 - How to provide connection to the A90;
 - Maximising opportunities to connect with the railway station;
 - How to retain the unique identity of Laurencekirk; and
 - How and where to provide community facilities and services to meet the needs of the expanded settlement.
- 9.3 A clear development framework is required to ensure that the study area identified secures the opportunity for Laurencekirk to expand whilst addressing the issues above. The concept plan aims to address the above issues whilst providing land for new housing, and other appropriate uses in a sustainable and attractive setting.
- 9.4 As highlighted above, there is a requirement to ensure that improvements are made to local infrastructure to maximise the opportunities to create a sustainable expansion to Laurencekirk. One critical aspect is considered to be the connectivity with the A90 trunk road. At present, the only section between Aberdeen and Dundee that is subject to a reduced speed limit is in the vicinity of Laurencekirk where a 50 mph applies towards the south of the town. The assistance with the provision of a significant junction improvements to the north of the town may help to alleviate safety implications for traffic crossing the trunk road carriageway, as well as assisting with the Scottish Government targets to reduce journey times between the major cities of Scotland. In time, this along with the closure of gaps in the central reservation may add to the A90 being upgraded to motorway standard.
- 9.5 The way in which development in Laurencekirk is phased is of prime importance to the successful expansion of the existing settlement. As has been witnessed with the expansion of Portlethen at Schoolhill, the provision of major infrastructure in the form

of a grade separated junction to the north of the settlement was paramount to the wider masterplan area. This ensured that the land could be accessed and serviced in advance of the delivery of major housing and business/industrial land, which tie into the A90 Trunk Road. As such, similarities can be drawn with the study area, where a strategic development area is planned.

9.6 Accordingly, it is envisaged that the phasing could be as follows:

Phase 1

It is accepted that assistance with significant improvements to the roads infrastructure and local distributor road would require to be provided at an early stage to be agreed with the local authority, given the strategic importance to the overall development, and to the connectivity of the settlement to the trunk road network. However there shall be the requirement to ensure that a large element of housing is delivered in line with the demand for new homes illustrated in the development plan, and also through the draft SPP3 (Planning for Housing). The expansion of the residential area adjacent to the existing settlement boundary to the north (currently highlighted as the future search area for 2011 and beyond), could commence immediately with further development in line with the capacity of the road network.

Phase 2

After the commencement of development above the expansion of the existing industrial areas could take place on both sides of the railway line. This may include the exploitation of the opportunity to enhance the freight facilities in Laurencekirk. This could also include the provision of a supermarket to enhance retailing opportunities for the community. The expansion of residential, employment and community uses in tandem helps to ensure that homes, jobs and services are located in scale with each other as required by the extant structure plan. This would further integrate land use and transportation in order to prevent the need to travel.

Phase 3

As the developed area of the settlement extends, the sites alongside the distributor road could be developed. It shall be essential to ensure the timeous development of the settlement so that the levels of connectivity between the existing and planned settlement are maintained. The third phase would also be likely to incorporate the establishment of community recreational areas, in line with the growth of the settlement, and to encourage recreational pursuits.

10.0 CONCEPT FOR GROWTH

10.1 In general, the expansion of Laurencekirk requires to acknowledge the history of the settlement, together with the current and planned town area. There is also a need to appreciate the existing balance between uses in the town. Recent and planned expansion has seen the town expand to the south and west, with little development occurring towards the north of Laurencekirk. As highlighted above, the potential expansion of the settlement has also been considered for land outwith the study area, albeit it is considered that the other land should be discounted on the basis of the impact upon landscape character, the topography, and the linkages to the existing settlement. Therefore consideration has been given to the way that the proposed expansion can relate to the existing town in order to achieve a sustainable form for the settlement.

10.2 The concept for growth is based around maximising the opportunities for potential growth with the set physical boundaries that exist. Development would be bound by the A90 to the east, as is the case at present. The 'Aberdeen Road' and Railway line would act as main veins running through the heart of the town, with balanced development located on either side. While the lower lying land at 'Luther Water' would act as the western boundary for the expansion.

10.3 The concept is based around :

- Significant junction improvements to the north of Laurencekirk – this would allow improved access, together with improving the free flow and safety of existing traffic;
- Improving permeability through the town which is significantly constrained due to the historic layout – this would be likely to be in the form of a new link/distributor road towards the west of the town;
- Providing enhanced community facilities, which could include modern sporting facilities ranging from sports pitches, to a network of public paths and recreational areas around Laurencekirk;
- Providing a small supermarket, as part of a neighbourhood centre, to improve the availability of retailing choice within the settlement as opposed to residents travelling further afield; and
- The provision of visitor / tourist accommodation to meet with existing and envisaged demand.

10.4 The development would be located around the new distributor road, with its siting in areas capable of accommodating development which would not impact upon the existing landscape character. The distributor road would provide an opportunity to

create one or more new railway crossings to further improve connectivity through the settlement. Many of the existing railway crossings in the vicinity of Laurencekirk utilise ageing structures which were not built to cope with current levels of road traffic, nor modern design standards. Therefore, a new road bridging over the railway line would assist in improving safety when compared to narrow, often blind, crossings, as well as unlocking the development potential of surrounding land. Community facilities would be provided in locations that best serve the population of Laurencekirk, and which are also accessible by foot, bicycle and public transportation. This would be likely to be in the vicinity of the newly built school, and the railway station, which is expected to re-open in the near future. In addition, the provision of a small supermarket would help Laurencekirk to be more sustainable through preventing the need for residents to use the private car for convenience retailing to other settlements such as Montrose, Brechin, or beyond. The lower lying areas towards the 'Luther Water' while less suitable for wider built development, offer potential for the provision of recreational areas/public open space for the town to enjoy.

- 10.5 Overall, the concept offers the opportunity to expand Laurencekirk whilst offering strong links to the existing settlement and its population. The concept provides options for the provision of a much needed junction improvements with the A90, local infrastructure improvements, as well as a mix of residential, employment and community uses within the identified study area.

11.0 SUMMARY

11.1 The concept for the expansion of Laurencekirk is intended to stimulate debate regarding the future growth and development potential of the town as a growth model. The Study represents the first step in the overall process, and should be carried through in conjunction with the ongoing review of the development plan, and the capacity study initiated by Aberdeenshire Council. Kirkwood Homes Limited believe that the option tabled represents a unique opportunity to provide a sustainable urban expansion to Laurencekirk.

12.0 CONCLUSIONS

12.1 It is the intention of Kirkwood Homes Limited to promote the site through the development plan review, which has already begun. It is therefore essential that in light of the acquirement of control over a much wider area of land, that a comprehensive development bid be prepared in order to demonstrate the potential for and justify the overall development proposals for the site.

12.2 National, Structure and Local Plan policies highlight the requirement to provide land allocations in areas where there is sufficient demand, and in order to allow continued growth. In particular SPP1 requires the identification of land of a suitable quantity and quality in the right locations, and that development is well related to the transportation network and the population. In this regard, the proposals offer the opportunity to provide a sustainable expansion of Laurencekirk. The towns location 29 miles south of Aberdeen and 36 miles north of Dundee, with relative ease of access to both cities by road (and soon to the rail), highlights the connectivity of the town. It is considered that such a factor has been key in the identification of Laurencekirk as part of one of the Strategic Growth Areas identified in the Draft Replacement Structure Plan.

12.3 The initial development concept proposed by this report satisfies the above criteria and accordingly are capable of implementation in the medium term. Kirkwood Homes Limited are committed to pursuing these proposals through the development plan process and through a close working relationship with Aberdeenshire Council, and the community of Laurencekirk in the development of a masterplan to ensure its future inclusion in the emerging development plan.

Mr Piers Blaxter
Planning and Environmental Services
Aberdeenshire Council
Woodhill House
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

29 July 2008

Our Ref: PW/03A60412
Your Ref:P/LP/NEXTPLAN/RVD
DDI: 01224 569675
Email: paul.williamson@ryden.co.uk

Dear Mr Blaxter

**UPDATED DEVELOPMENT BID / PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT
AREA IN LAURENCEKIRK FOR KIRKWOOD HOMES**

Further to the submission of a development bid on behalf of our client, Kirkwood Homes, on 7 December 2006, I wish to provide an update on the potential for additional development at Laurencekirk.

In our previous submission, you may note that our client had control of six parcels of land towards the north of the settlement, which straddled the Old Aberdeen Road. Subsequently, our client has obtained control of additional land, and their landholding now extends to approximately 360 acres.

As you are aware, part of the current strategy of the Draft Replacement Structure Plan includes the creation of three Strategic Growth Areas, one of which includes the 66 mile corridor between Huntly and Laurencekirk. In addition, work has now commenced to re-open the railway station in the settlement, which may further justify the additional land releases in Laurencekirk due to increased public transport linkages both to the north and south.

On the basis of the above, we have prepared a Strategic Development Area Report for your consideration, a copy of which is attached. Accordingly we would envisage working alongside the Council and the local community in order to promote this development bid. This would seek to ensure the allocation of adequate housing, employment and commercial land requirements through the ongoing Structure Plan review and the subsequent inclusion of the aforementioned land within the review of the Adopted Local Plan. It is considered that such a

range of uses would assist in creating a more sustainable community in line with the objectives of the Scottish Planning Policy and the Emerging Structure Plan.

I look forward to receiving your reply. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01224 588866.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williamson
Senior Planning Consultant

Enc.

Cc Niall MacLeod, Kirkwood Homes

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2008

Proposal for a site to be included in the Main Issues Report

Please use this form to provide details of the site that you would wish to have included in the Main Issues Report for consideration as a proposal for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

One of the purposes of this form is to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed. All information submitted will therefore be made available to the public to promote a transparent and open process.

Please feel free to provide any further information you feel appropriate to support your submission. Please ensure your proposal is with us by 6 November 2008.

N1

Name of proposer:	KIRKWOOD HOMES LTD	Date:	05-11-08
Postal Address:	c/o RYDEN LLP 25 ALBYN PLACE ABERDEEN AB10 1YL		

N2

Name of landowner (if known)	✓
Postal address of landowner	

To comply with the data protection Act 1998 this information will not be made public

The site and your proposals

S1

Under what name would you like the site to be identified?	'NORTH LAURENCEKIRK'
Have you any information on the internet which promotes your aspirations for the site? If so please provide the URL :	

The site name could be descriptive ("Site north of") or an address (Site at Westburn Road , Aberdeen)

S2

Have you provided a map showing the exact boundaries of the site you would like considered?
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

S3

Please provide the National Grid reference of the site
NO 720 724 GB

S4 What is the current use of the site? AGRICULTURAL

Has the land been built upon before (Brownfield Land)? Yes No

Is there any suspicion that the land is contaminated? Yes No

If yes Please provide a statement of the nature and extent of the contamination suspected
Statement attached

S5 What use(s) do you propose for your site? MIXED USE

If you are proposing a mix of uses on your site please ensure that the area of each is noted on the site plan

S6 Are you proposing to phase your development? Yes No

If you are proposing phasing your development please provide additional details of what is anticipated to be built, and when.

IN LIGHT OF THE AREA OF IDENTIFIED LAND BEING IN EXCESS OF 360 ACRES IT IS ENVISAGED THAT IT HAS A SUBSTANTIAL CAPACITY FOR A MIX OF USES. ACCORDINGLY IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT DEVELOPMENT WOULD TAKE PLACE OVER A NUMBER OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PERIODS

S7 If you are proposing housing on the site please provide us with details of what you think would be appropriate, both in terms of the number of dwellings, and their form (Flats, detached houses etc).

IT IS CONSIDERED THE SITE WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR A MIX OF DWELLING TYPES. SMALL DWELLINGS OR FLATS WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE CLOSE TO THE EXISTING CENTRE / RAILWAY STATION, WHILE LARGER DETACHED DWELLINGS COULD BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE OUTLYING AREAS

If you have a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it.

S8 If you are proposing business land please provide us with details of what you would market the land for?

Businesses and offices (Use class 4)

General industrial land (Use Class 5)

Storage and distribution (Use Class 6)

Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site? Yes No

Please make sure the area of land proposed for business use shown on the site plan.

S9

If you are proposing uses other than housing or business please provide us with as much detail as possible on what you propose.

IT IS CONSIDERED THAT AREAS OF LAND WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY USES AS WELL AS PROVISION OF RETAIL. THE REQUIREMENT FOR TOURIST ACCOMMODATION (I.E. HOTEL) HAS ALSO BEEN IDENTIFIED. LAND IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR RECREATIONAL / OPEN SPACE USES, AND IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT LAND MAY HAVE TO BE PROVIDED SOMEWHERE IN THE SETTLEMENT TO ACCOMMODATE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Please continue on additional sheets as required.

The wider area

A1

Please provide a statement on the siting and design of your proposal (how will the development fit in with the wider landscape, or complement the urban design of the area?)

THE LAND IS CONSIDERED SUITABLE AS A SUSTAINABLE EXTENSION ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING SITE BOUNDARY. DEVELOPMENT WOULD ALSO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EXISTING BOUNDARIES SUCH AS THE A90, AND WOULD UTILISE THE TOPOGRAPHY AND STRATEGIC LANDSCAPING TO INTEGRATE DEVELOPMENT INTO THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

SEE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA REPORT ATTACHED

If you have a landscape statement, a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it. *Statement attached*

A2

If you have prepared any frameworks or masterplans showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form. *Framework attached*

A3

Have you applied principles of sustainable siting and design to your site? Yes

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE WOULD BE A SUSTAINABLE EXTENSION TO AN EXISTING SETTLEMENT WHICH BENEFITS FROM EXCELLENT TRANSPORTATION LINKAGES, AND WOULD ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT IS WELL CONNECTED TO EXISTING FACILITIES IN LAURENCEKIRK

If you have undertaken a site assessment please provide details *Statement attached*

The Code for Sustainable homes or www.index21.org.uk provides guidance on this issue

Effect on the community

C1

Has there been any opportunity for local people to influence what you propose through local engagement? Yes
No

PRESENTATION TO AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION WITH THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL *Not Yet*

If you have undertaken any community consultation please provide details of the ways in which engagement was conducted, its effectiveness and the way in which it has influenced your proposals. Please provide details of any engagement you may propose to undertake.

C2 At least 25% of all housing is likely to be required to be affordable. If applicable, are you considering providing more or less than this? More 25% or Less

C3 What community benefits arise from your proposals? What would the nature of these be, and how would they be delivered?

THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS THAT WOULD ARISE FROM THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE THE PROVISION OF A SUSTAINABLE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN A RURAL LOCATION. THE PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO HELP TO SUSTAIN THE EXISTING PRIMARY SCHOOL, AND WOULD ALSO CATER FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPROVE BOTH SAFETY AND ACCESS AROUND THE VILLAGE. THE RANGE OF LOCAL FACILITIES WOULD ALSO BE ENHANCED.

Community benefits may be material, such as community facilities, or intangible, such as affordable housing or the ability to live locally. Include elements which you anticipate may be required as developer contributions from the development (although specifics will have to be negotiated with the Council on the basis of the development proposed)

C4 How easy is it for people using or living in the development you propose to access services? Are the following facilities within:

	400m	400m-1k	>1km
Local Shops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community facilities (eg Hall)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports facilities (eg playing fields)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residential areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Transport networks	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick appropriate box

If you propose to provide any of these as a component of the development itself then please answer "yes". NA=Not Applicable

Servicing the site

C5 Have you undertaken any of the following studies to determine whether your site is capable of being developed, or what might be required by you to make it developable?

Flood Risk Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic Impact Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Drainage Impact Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Habitat / biodiversity Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Other as applicable (eg noise, dust, smell Retail impact etc)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>

Rather than full studies it may be appropriate to undertake initial assessments to identify the scale of any works that might be required, as this will impact on the deliverability of the proposal. This assessment may be no more than an exchange of letters with appropriate agencies. Information on water and sewage capacity is available online at : http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/portal/page/portal/SWE_PGP_CONNECTIONS/SWE_CORP_CONNECTIONS/ASSET_CAPACITY_SEARCH

C6 What are the access arrangements you propose for the site. Does your site plan clearly show where you propose to access the road network? Yes No

Other information

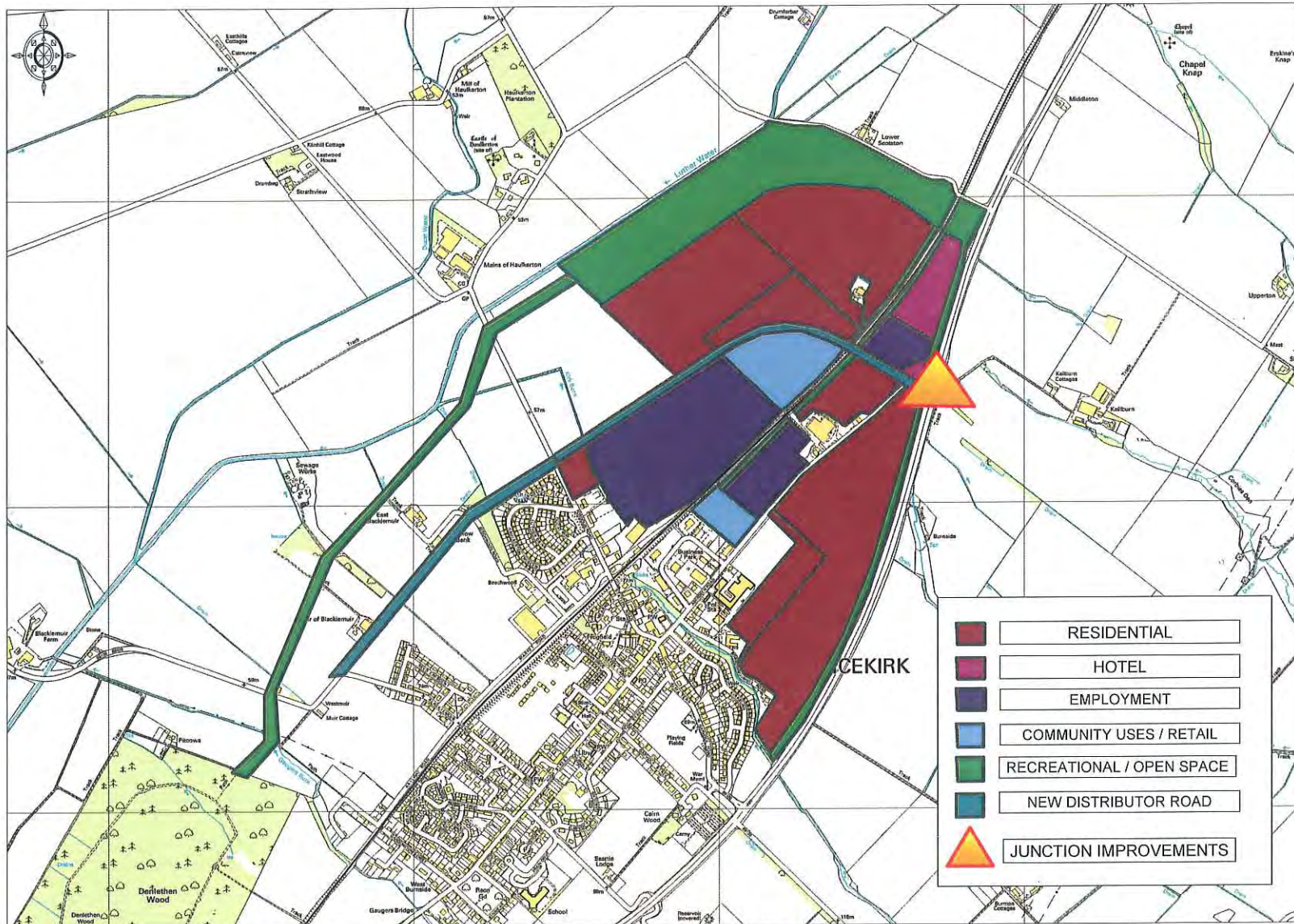
O1 What other information would you like to be considered in support of your proposal? In order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 please do not include any personal information

SEE ATTACHED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA REPORT

Please return the completed form to the Policy Planning Team, Planning Policy and Environment Service , Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB or e-mail to ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

Fair Processing Notice

- The Data Controller for this information is Aberdeenshire Council.
- The data will be used for the following purposes:
 - 1) to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed,
 - 2) to evaluate submitted bids
- This data will potentially be disclosed worldwide (via publication on Internet)



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PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA