



REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE – 14 JANUARY 2025

ENQ/2024/1343 - Residential Led Mixed Use Development Including Local Centre and Land for a Primary School with Associated Infrastructure (Including Roads, Parking, Landscaping, Open Space, Allotments, Park and Choose Facility and Suds) at Land to West of A96 Between Thainstone and Port Elphinstone Roundabouts (B993) - LDP Allocated Sites OP5, OP6 and the northernmost parcel SR1 (in part)

1. Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 The preparation of a Masterplan is a requirement under Policy P1 Layout, Siting and Design of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (LDP 2023). Policy P1 requires that all major housing developments (over 50 homes) are required to prepare a Masterplan, which has been subject to public consultation, and agreed by the Local Area Committee. The Masterplan requires to be agreed in advance of the submission of a planning application, which should then adhere to the agreed Masterplan. The aim of the masterplanning process is to promote good place-making, and ensure future developments are designed to the highest standard, encompassing social, environmental, and economic requirements to create sustainable communities of the future. Once agreed a Masterplan shall remain valid for a period of 5 years, unless planning permission for the development has been granted and implemented.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1. **agree the Masterplan for Sites OP5, OP6 and the northernmost parcel of SR1 at Crichtie as the context for the general layout and approach for subsequent planning applications, and**
2. **agree the Masterplan for Sites OP5, OP6 and the northernmost parcel of SR1 to be used as non-statutory supplementary guidance which will be a material consideration in the determination of any subsequent planning applications.**

2. Decision Making Route

2.1 Masterplans are to be considered by the relevant Area Committee under terms of Section B.8.1 of Part 2A List of Committee Powers and Section C.5.3 of Part 2C Planning Delegations of the Scheme of Governance. The Masterplan is directly linked to the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (LDP 2023) as a requirement of Policy P1 Layout, siting and design. This policy requires that a Masterplan that has been subject to public

consultation must be prepared for all major housing and mixed-use developments.

2.2 At its meeting on 12 November 2024, the Garioch Area Committee deferred consideration of the masterplan for further details on the following matters to be submitted:

- Connectivity between the proposed housing development and the access to the underpass;
- Vehicular traffic connectivity and mitigation;
- Details on phasing of the additional/community facilities; and
- Open space provision.

The developer has now submitted an updated Masterplan which includes a revised phasing plan (see Appendix 2) with Addendum Report (see Appendix 3) which provides clarification on the above matters. In order to incorporate the submitted details, this report has now been updated at paras. 3.4, 3.17, 3.19, 3.21, 3.23, 3.24, 3.25 and 3.31 to reflect the revised submission. In addition, paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 have been revised to include reference to both public consultation events.

3 Discussion

Background

3.1 Mixed use development at Crichton has been in the Local Development Plan since 2012 and is one of the largest sites for residential development in Garioch. The site will contribute to the housing land supply as well as deliver affordable units and land for a new primary school. Delivery of the Crichton development is supported by both ALDP 2023 Policy H1 (Housing Land) and NPF 4 Policy 16 Quality Homes. A key factor with this site is that there is extensive planning history which is a material consideration in respect of both the Masterplan presented and for future planning applications. The relevant history is summarised below:

- A Development Framework for the site was approved in February 2013
- A Masterplan for the site was subsequently approved at Garioch Area Committee in June 2013
- Planning permission in Principle under APP/2013/0267 was approved in December 2018 for 737 homes, a local centre, land for business park (Class 4, 5 and 6) and transport infrastructure upgrade. This application was subsequently superseded by a Section 42 application under APP/2021/0525 which was approved on 26 January 2023 (subject to 7-year Direction).
- A Matters Specified in Conditions (MSC) application under APP/2019/1489 which covers matters including (but not limited to) phasing, strategic landscaping, habitat, flooding and archaeology is currently pending consideration. The MSC was reported at Garioch Area Committee on 28 June 2022 with a recommendation of delegated grant subject to submission of a number of matters including Street Engineering Review,

Public Transport Strategy, Public Access Plan, Woodland Management Plan, Tree protection Plan and subject to conditions. The matters referred have not been provided to date.

- Full planning permission for erection of underpass was approved subject to conditions under APP/2020/0819 on 30 June 2022 (subject to 5-year Direction).

- 3.2 The developers advise that *the previous MSC has not been progressed due to the challenges associated with the delivering the significant transport infrastructure upgrades* and it confirms *that this undermined the viability and deliverability of the site with land ownership and the cost of infrastructure posing the greatest challenges. Dandara seek an alternative mitigation solution to overcome technical, legal and viability challenges presented by the previously approved proposals.* As such, a number of changes to the original scheme were necessary. Under the current submission, the developers confirm that the Masterplan submitted has been heavily informed by the existing analysis already undertaken as part of the previous Masterplan and applications. The revised Masterplan incorporates a different transport solution, (backed up by Transport Assessment and design mitigation) that has been agreed in principle with Transport Scotland.
- 3.3 The developers have also reviewed the density of and mix of housing on site, affordable homes provision and provision of community infrastructure which brings the development more up to date and incorporates the requirements of NPF 4 relative to active travel, biodiversity, drainage and density. Notwithstanding the changes, the developers have stated that the development area and balance of green and built space remain the same as that previously proposed.
- 3.4 This report provides an overview of the Masterplan which has been prepared for **Sites OP5 and OP6** in Inverurie. The Masterplan site plan is appended to this report as **Appendix 1**, the full Masterplan document is appended to this report as **Appendix 2** and the Addendum Report is attached as **Appendix 3**. The purpose of the Masterplan document is to set out a clear idea for the future, and demonstrate an integrated approach to community participation, site planning, sustainable transport, servicing, community facilities, design, ecology and landscaping. Masterplanning plays an important role in ensuring that neighbourhoods work well for the communities they comprise. The exact content of a Masterplan will vary on a site by site basis, but broadly they are intended to be succinct documents to convey key principles that future development will need to incorporate. That is not to say they should not be supported by detailed supporting information, but that information should sit in the background and inform. It is also noted that in PA2023-09 Planning Advice Masterplanning that Masterplans are not necessarily required to detail the specific solution to certain technical issues, but rather confirm that a solution exists, and that the finer detail shall come forward with future planning applications and supporting documents. The Masterplan when agreed will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development on the site.

- 3.5 The requirement for a Masterplan for **Sites OP5 and OP6** is contained within Policy P1 Layout, Siting and Design of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (ALDP 23). The form of the Masterplan is guided by Planning Advice PA2023-09 'Masterplanning'. Masterplans should also be developed in accordance with Planning Advice Note 83: Masterplanning and Designing Streets. NPF4 Policies 14 (Design, quality and place) and 15 (Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods) are relevant to design, but do not specifically require masterplans to be prepared. Masterplans should be prepared in line with the principles of the six qualities of successful places and 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Land Allocation

- 3.6 In terms of allocations within the current ALDP 23, OP5 which covers the majority of the site area is allocated for a mix of uses including 737 homes, community facilities and a primary school. OP6 is allocated for 23.7HA of employment land. OP11 lies immediately east of the OP5 site and is bisected by the B993 public road and is allocated for 54 homes. The OP11 site does not form part of the masterplan as it lies outwith the land ownership of the developers. The site statements within the ALDP 23 highlight that the current Masterplan will require to be reviewed if the extant permission is not implemented. The main considerations are:

- Infrastructure requirements should be provided as agreed through the PPP
- Cycling and pedestrian permeability both within the site and linking to wider network in Inverurie and Port Elphinstone
- Maintenance and enhancement of wildlife corridors
- Retention and enhancement of existing woodland
- Northern part of the site will require to be supported by Flood Risk assessment along with SUDS implementation and buffer strip provision
- Scottish Water require both Water impact and Drainage Impact assessments.
- Contribution to affordable housing in accordance with LDP2023 Policy H2 Affordable Housing to be delivered as part of the early phases of development
- Formal footway/ cycleway connections across the A96 and into Port Elphinstone and Inverurie.
- Access and permeability to integrate with OP11 is required
- On the employment site (OP6), development must make provision of 5HA for high quality business use and provision of public transport strategy and Travel Plan

Process

- 3.7 In relation to the approach to the Masterplan, the applicant has largely followed the approach set out in Masterplanning Planning Advice. The applicant engaged early with the Planning Service, and discussion has taken place with consultees in relation to technical requirements. The applicant has also undertaken public engagement on the proposed Masterplan.

3.8 The Masterplanning Advice outlines a suggested content masterplans should follow, which this Masterplan generally adheres to. The Masterplan document is split into four sections, 1 – Introduction and Background, 2 -Engagement and Consultation, 3 -Finalised Masterplan, 4- Phasing Strategy and 5 – Next Steps and Conclusion. Section 2 provides details of community engagement which is discussed further below. Given that the site analysis has been undertaken both for the previous Masterplan and applications, the focus of the Masterplan is more on the changes between the previous and proposed Masterplans and the additional factors incorporated to fit with the requirements of NPF 4. Members should note that the layout follows the pattern of development previously proposed under the PPP application. The developers have highlighted that the Masterplan amendment process has been heavily informed by existing analysis and the emerging findings on transport, ecology, biodiversity, agricultural land and drainage. Notwithstanding the previous site investigations that have been undertaken, the developer has advised of its commitment to revisit all matters by full and detailed investigation at the planning application stage. Notwithstanding this, the Masterplan demonstrates that the site context has been considered in respect of constraints and also considers how the site would relate to the existing settlement.

Site Context

3.9 The Masterplan site area covers 99ha in total but members should note that this figure includes land for the proposed development as well as land for the associated drainage and transport infrastructure. The allocated sites are located southwest of Port Elphinstone. The masterplan site is bound to the east by the A96 trunk road, to the north by the River Don; to the west by Shaw Hill and to the south by Thainstone House Hotel. Crichtie Farm and associated buildings lie over the western site boundary. Land to the north of the Kemnay Road also forms part of the site and incorporates agricultural land, the embankment down to the River Don and part of the river bank that leads under the A96 to Davidson Park. In terms of topography, the site lies on the lower northern and eastern slopes of Shaw Hill. To the east, the hill falls in a wide concave bowl with the A96 running along the toe of the hill. The eastern half of the site, below the farm is open agricultural land. The land closest to the river bank forms the lowest parts of the site and the land rises steeply southwards up to the B993. The north and west parts of the site form the highest areas of the site and are generally more enclosed, having a strong woodland framework with broad deciduous shelterbelts and tree clusters. There are two scheduled monuments close to but outwith the site boundary. Bruce's Camp is the remains of the hill fort on top of Shaw Hill. The other is Broomend of Crichtie (standing stones and symbol stone) which is located on the opposite side of the A96. There are no listed buildings on the site. Thainstone House (located over the south boundary) is B listed and is largely screened from the site by trees within its curtilage.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

3.10 The developers submitted a pre application enquiry for this site in December 2023 and as part of that consultations were undertaken by the planning service to all relevant internal and external consultees. Notwithstanding the Masterplan being an overarching document, the feedback provided from this process has been both incorporated into the revised masterplan and will be used to inform forthcoming planning applications. The main changes that have been incorporated as a result of this process are summarised on pages 13-14 of the Masterplan and include the following:

- Transport Scotland required an updated Transport Assessment that requires to be prepared in accordance with its 'Transport Assessment Guidance'. The Transport Assessment should clearly demonstrate that the proposed development is, or can be made, accessible by sustainable travel modes as required by local and national planning policies. The developers confirm that a modified transport mitigation strategy has been agreed in principle with Transport Scotland.
- On the back of comments from Housing, the area for the affordable housing has been restructured to better integrate the affordable housing with the open market housing.
- Roads Development highlighted a need to provide cycleways on the B993 and provide a bus route that will serve all parts of the development. In response, an active travel route (comprising both cycleway and bus route has been provided along the principal streets and a network of pedestrian connections throughout. In addition, the developers highlight that safe walking routes to the school and active travel connections to Port Elphinstone have been incorporated with the principal connection via the under pass (approved under APP/2020/0819).
- Given the need to protect and enhance existing blue-green networks and maximise habitat enhancement opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, the developers advise that in developing the masterplan, great consideration was given to maintaining woodland and enhancing biodiversity. It confirms that further tree and ecological surveys will inform mitigation strategy. In addition, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and associated ecological management plan and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (to be assessed using a metric) was highlighted as a requirement by Natural Heritage.
- The amount of useable open space has been increased to meet with the standards for Open Space provision and pedestrian routes have been improved and it assures that housing will front onto pedestrian routes and key spaces. Tree belts will be retained and woodland spaces will be enhanced throughout with the layout taking account of topographical constraints.
- It confirms that further investigations will be undertaken in respect of archaeology, contaminated land and flood risk and SEPA requirements in relation to reinstating a diverted watercourse (south of Crichton Cottages).

- 3.11 Members should note that the developers have confirmed their commitment to provide detailed up to date surveys as required by consultees to ensure that any issues can be adequately addressed and appropriate mitigation implemented where required.

Public Consultation

- 3.12 Policy P1 of the LDP2023 outlines that a Masterplan must be subject to public consultation. The responsibility to undertake public consultation lies with the applicant/developer. Two public events were held.
- 3.13 The first public consultation event took place on 23 May 2024 and the second event on 20 August 2024. The report notes that the events were reasonably well attended and a summary of the consultation feedback along with the developer's response is provided on page 24 of the report. These are summarised below with the developer's response in italics:
- Resultant congestion at Port Elphinstone and Thainstone roundabouts and along the B993 – *Revised Transport Assessment will address and inform mitigation requirements*
 - Impacts on sewerage and drainage facilities and flood risk – *Flood Risk assessment and Drainage Impact assessment will address*
 - Retention of Woodland and expansion of play and recreational areas – *Woodland retained and enhanced and amenity spaces provided throughout*
 - Increased pressure on local amenities such as healthcare provision – *opportunity to provide local amenities and NHS medical facility as part of the local centre depending on demand*
 - Queries over primary school capacity – *ongoing consultation with Education and local community group regarding sports pitch provision*
 - Density of housing and resultant visual impact – *layout and density has been carefully considered in response to topography and to respect surrounding area and a mix of house types are proposed.*
- 3.14 The planning authority consider that most of the matters raised will be considered in subsequent PPP and MSC applications but that the response provided by the developers to the concerns have been responded to and the developers have addressed the issues raised by the community within the Masterplan as far as reasonably practical considering that it is an overarching plan that does not go into the finer details of addressing constraints at this stage.
- 3.15 Overall, the Planning Service is of the view that through the Masterplan process, the views of the community have been sought, and taken on board. The public engagement carried out with the community meets the requirements of Policy P1 and the associated Masterplanning advice (PA 2023-09).

Proposed Masterplan – proposed changes

- 3.16 The Masterplan site plan (enclosed as **Appendix 1** or also shown on page 28 of the Masterplan) illustrates the key principles of the site. As detailed above, the layout broadly follows the same layout as per the PPP and live MSC application. However, there are some key changes which are split into relevant section headings below.

Residential Area

- 3.17 The most notable change in terms of the residential area is the uplift in numbers from the allocated number of dwellings (737) to circa 900. Members will be aware that the figures as detailed within the settlement statements are indicative only and in the case of this site, the 737 stipulated was as a result of the figure presented within the original approved PPP application and the approved Development Framework. However, and given the fairly substantial increment in this case, the developers were asked to provide further justification, and it confirms *the uplift in housing units on site aims to create a wider variety of housing types, tenures and sizing compared to the previously approved MP which includes a range of 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes including detached, semi – detached, terraced units and flats*. The increase in housing numbers will further support economic development on site through construction and operation as well residential expenditure in the Local Centre and Council revenue benefits (Council Tax, Business rates). The increase in housing will attract more residents for employment in the proposed business areas. More importantly, the uplift will mean an overall increase in affordable homes and the developer has confirmed its commitment to delivering the required 25% affordable housing on site. It confirms that its commitment is driven by the urgent need to address the complex housing crisis, which is marked by a significant shortage of affordable housing options and by prioritising the delivery of these homes, the developer aims to create more accessible living opportunities for locals. This will support those in need of affordable housing and contribute to a sustainable community. The detailed housing density will take into account various factors, including the overall layout of the development and viability, to ensure that the housing development is well integrated.
- 3.18 Notwithstanding the fact that the developers have advised that the final unit numbers will be determined through the scoping of technical information to inform the planning application, the acceptability of the 900 units would require to be addressed as part of any planning application by submission of a justification statement providing full reasoning behind the increment. Sight should not be lost of the fact that the Planning Service want to see this site come forward for mixed use development, but this should not be at the expense of compromising the quality of the site layout. Members should note that as part of the assessment of any subsequent application, the planning service would seek to ensure that all standards in relation to open space, privacy, parking etc. are met and the layout of the housing would not be compromised as a result of the extra units proposed.

Improvements to A96

- 3.19 One of the main reasons behind the need for the developers to undertake the Masterplan process again (in addition to the passage of time) is the removal of the previous conditioned requirement for a Grade Separate Interchange (GSI) on the A96. This would be removed in favour of various upgrades to the Port Elphinstone roundabout along with access and egress off both the A96 and B993 which is all subject to a detailed and updated Transport Assessment (TA). Transport Scotland in its consultation response to the Masterplan has confirmed its agreement of both the revised scoping report and trunk road mitigation package and also confirms that it will continue to liaise with the applicant through the preparation of the finalised Transport Assessment and the required Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. Members expressed concern over the removal of the GSI and sought clarification of what transport mitigation is to be provided in its place. In response to this, the developers have provided a fairly detailed explanation which is contained within paragraphs 2.2 – 2.30 of the Addendum Report (**Appendix 3**) and this is summarised below:

The need for a GSI was identified off the back of the previous TA that was prepared in 2013. Since that time, there has been notable changes in the committed development, traffic growth and road infrastructure which was impacted by the economic downturn in 2014 which meant businesses reduced staffing levels and changed the way in which they operated and more significantly, the Covid Pandemic which resulted in a notable shift towards home, hybrid and flexible working patterns all leading to reductions in traffic levels during AM and PM peak hours. The 2013 TA was based on 2012 traffic data and projections to 2021 based on Aberdeenshire Council's Paramics Traffic Model allowing for traffic growth and full build-out of committed developments. The report also contains base data for 2017 and the information submitted indicates that the 2023 traffic volumes are less than both the 2017 and 2012 figures. As an example, the 2023 base data is significantly less than the 2021 projected traffic volume figures, with 1,115 and 1,266 less vehicles during the AM and PM peak hours respectively. The previous assumptions for future traffic growth have not materialised and the figures presented in the 2013 TA are outdated and it is not appropriate to base any trigger points on the 2013 TA for the limit of development at Crichton or for when any additional infrastructure should be provided. Given that the 2013 overestimates future traffic growth, both Transport Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Roads Development agreed that a new TA is required based on the up to date (2023) traffic survey data. The new TA has been scoped in order to agree the methodology and parameters for assessment. This includes allowing for all committed developments and infrastructure associated with developments at Uryside, Portstown, Thainstone and Kirkwood Commercial Park (former Paper Mill).

A number of scenarios were presented as part of the scoping process which revealed that both the A96 north and B993 west approaches operate over capacity at peak times and as such the mitigation proposed as part of the Crichton development is the provision of a 2-lane approach on the A96 north

arm for approximately 150m and the B993 west approach arm is also to be widened, creating a 3-lane approach for approximately 100m. The roundabout itself will remain the same other than the realignment of lane guidance road studs and road markings (spiral markings). The junction analysis for the proposed roundabout confirms that with the addition of the proposed A96 north mitigation, the A96 north approach operates within capacity under all Crichton Development Scenarios in the PM peak hour. During the AM peak hour, the A96 north approach operates with reduced capacity under certain Development Scenarios but the report highlights that it demonstrates no net detriment. With the addition of the proposed B993 west mitigation, the B993 west approach operates within capacity under all Crichton Development Scenarios in both the AM and PM peak hours. Members should note that as part of the committed developments, it is understood that upgrades are proposed to the B993 east and A96 south approaches. The analysis concludes that there is no requirement for a GSI and instead a much improved at grade roundabout junction can accommodate the predicted traffic generation from Crichton. The roundabout proposals essentially expand on the committed designs being progressed by Malcolm Allan / Barratt, and the applicant has engaged with both developers in order to work together with a view to delivering the overall required infrastructure at one time to minimise disruption on the A96.

- 3.20 Other than the uplift in numbers and the changes to the transport mitigation, the Masterplan broadly follows the same underlying principles as that previously agreed under the consented scheme. However, there are some key elements that have been amended both to enhance the development bring is more in line with the requirements of NPF 4.

Pedestrian underpass to be delivered from outset

- 3.21 A further key change is that the developers have identified that the pedestrian underpass will be delivered from the outset (previously it was to be provided prior to occupation of the 151st house). The report highlights that better integrated pedestrian and active travel routes are to be provided and all houses are within 10 minutes' walk of the proposed local centre which accords with the concept of the 20-minute neighbourhood. The site for the primary school and local centre has not changed from the previous consented scheme but a key change is that main route through the development (capable of accommodating buses) will link the B993 in the north and the west and south sides of the development to the local centre as compared to the previous scheme where the bus route did not run through the local centre. Similar to the consented scheme, a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces will be created. Members highlighted concerns on connectivity from the residential areas to the A96 underpass across the B993 and pedestrian safety. The addendum highlights that in the previous scheme, the A96 underpass was for vehicular traffic (with both Port Elphinstone and Thainstone roundabouts removed). Under the revised proposal there is a separate distinct pedestrian

and cycle A96 underpass which is facilitated by a shared 3m pedestrian and cycle path which will create active travel propriety and provide a safe connection to the settlement. The addendum highlights provision of an accessible crossing point on the B993 which leads to the underpass and in general, shared paths will follow the primary movement routes within the development.

Park and Choose facility

- 3.22 A Park and Choose facility has been incorporated in the Masterplan. Given this is a new feature, the developers were asked to provide justification for its inclusion. The developers advise of their commitment to encourage active travel and the use of public transport across the site and surrounding settlements, and it confirms that the Park and Choose as a central hub for the entire public transport system for Crichton will enhance the aim of creating a sustainable community in line with the aims of a 20-minute neighbourhood. The principal bus route proposed, which will run through the Local Centre, employment areas and residential streets will have a main connection point at the Park and Choose Facility and the feature will facilitate safe travel to the Kintore railway station, Port Elphinstone and Inverurie. The developers confirm that Stagecoach has acknowledged the opportunity that this proposal brings and welcomes the inclusion of the Park and Choose facility. Transportation has raised some concern over both the need for the facility and also over the location given that it is remote from the bulk of the housing. Given the site's location, public transport is particularly important at Crichton, and as such, any application would require to be supported by a Public Transport Strategy which should set out how public transport provision is to be delivered, including any phasing and agreements with bus operators on providing services which may include the need for up front funding where these are not commercially viable. The Planning Service acknowledges that the Park and Choose is a positive feature and fits with the overall concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods. However, taking account of the comments from Transportation, the Park and Choose will require to be justified in any subsequent application including its location. The Planning Service considers that its inclusion as part of the Masterplan is acceptable subject to further detailed consideration as part of a planning application.

Open space

- 3.23 In relation to open space provision and notwithstanding that this is a Masterplan which is indicative in nature, the developers were asked to provide an indication of the open space. It confirmed in its response that in terms of the developable area (75HA) (i.e. not including the land for infrastructure provision incorporated within the application site boundary), that the proposed open space area is 32HA (43%) which meets with the Council's standard of 40%. This figure includes the woodland block to the west side that lies outwith the allocated site boundary. When this area of land is discounted, the open space provision amounts to 37%. Members expressed some concern on the shortfall. In response, the developers highlight within the addendum report that under the previous Masterplan, that the woodland area to the west was

included in the total open space calculation even though it was outside the site boundary and it was highlighted in the committee report at that time of “the desire to retain and enhance the mature woodland framework.” The planning service acknowledge this fact and agree that the shortfall in this case is likely to be conceded on the basis that it is not uncommon for Masterplans to incorporate areas of landscaping and woodland that lies outwith the site boundary. The western woodland block has always formed a key part of the development at Crichie and the inclusion of this area and its integration with the proposed woodland park and amenity space provides a desirable recreational area which can serve the residential site at Crichie and the planning service would seek to ensure both the protection of the existing woodland alongside biodiversity enhancement. The developers confirm that the woodland would be included within the red line boundary of any subsequent application as it forms a key part of the landscape led masterplan. Notwithstanding this, and in the event of any shortfall, a justification statement will be sought at the planning application stage as appropriate.

Inclusion of SR1

- 3.24 The northernmost parcel of the land allocated in the LDP for strategic reserve employment land (defined as SR1) has been detailed within the masterplan for community/ recreational facilities. The Masterplan states that the employment allocation should be considered in the context of the changing planning policy position as a result of the adoption of NPF 4 and removal of strategic development plans from the planning system. It is also stated that the removal of this land will not have an adverse impact on the availability of employment land within the A96 corridor. Whilst the proposed use does not align with the employment land allocation within the settlement statement, the formal consideration of such an alternative use would need to be carefully assessed as part of a subsequent application. How this is viewed by the Planning Authority will be dependent on the justification put forward at the time of the application in respect of available employment land in the settlement. The Masterplan report indicates of the developer’s intention to deliver sports pitches and a community hall on this site to enhance the open space offering on site compared to the previous masterplan. Members should note that the proposed community and leisure facilities on the SR1 land is in addition to play and sports provision (comprising 2G sports pitch) that would be provided within the primary school site. The developers advise that “...in the context of local living principles advocated in NPF4, the provision of community facilities is seen as key to providing sports and leisure opportunities for existing and future residents”. In the addendum, it is highlighted that within the previously approved Masterplan the proposals did not fully align with the allocations in that some of the residential development, a community growing area and some of the proposed employment development was proposed on part of the SR 1 land. The planning service concur with this statement and noted the previous encroachment. Notwithstanding this, the developers have confirmed that a full policy justification for the alternative development on SR land will clearly be set out as part of the planning application submission.

Primary school

- 3.25 In relation to the primary school site, the developers confirm that the area safeguarded for the primary school is 2.5HA which is slightly reduced in area as compared to the previous scheme. The reason cited for the reduction in area is to accommodate the Park and Choose facility to the east. However, it notes that the size of the site is based on a recent planning application in Edinburgh for a replacement school for Newcraighall Primary School. Members queried the provision of the primary school and whether the allocation referred to the delivery of the school or simply providing land for such. Having consulted with the Education service, it confirms that it would not be standard practice for the developer to deliver the school and that in any scenario of a school being required, the Council would deliver it according to brief at that time. Education confirms that there is no allocation within the capital plan for a Primary School. It also advises that pupils from the first phase (up to 275 houses) can be accommodated within the existing Port Elphinstone Primary without requiring mitigation. It indicates that subsequent phases exceed the school roll forecasts. Developer Obligations has highlighted that the development will extend beyond the five-year education forecast period where capacity still exists. In this regard, a review clause will be required within an associated Section 75 agreement to determine the education calculations after this five year period and then subsequent five year periods beyond. This will ensure that transparent and fair contributions are applied depending on the circumstances pertaining to the time for any identified mitigation. On this basis, the provision of a primary school by the developers is unlikely but as per the settlement statement, land is identified for one and the provision of such will be determined as the development progresses and will be accounted for in the developer obligations package as part of a detailed planning application.

Affordable housing

- 3.26 In relation to affordable housing, further clarification (tenures and house type) on the 3 blocks of affordable housing was sought and Dandara advised that it agrees in principle with the requirements set by AC Housing Service and that the Masterplan has identified areas for affordable housing to ensure that this is located in a number of areas throughout the site, however, it is happy to engage further with the Council on its preference. The developers confirm that the proposed development will look to create affordable housing through a range of house types and sizes, including 1 to 4 bedroom terraced, detached and semi-detached homes. A mix of tenures will also be available including social rent, mid-market rent and low-cost shared equity, in line with the AC Housing Service's response to the initial enquiry. However, and fundamentally, the developers are committed to engaging with the Housing Service further in relation to the provision and delivery of affordable housing at a detailed design stage to meet the identified housing need.

Placemaking and biodiversity

- 3.27 The Masterplan identifies four key design principles which aim to improve placemaking and incorporate useable amenity space and enhance biodiversity. These are defined as: -
1. The Wall - a feature wall that presently exists within the site will be retained and will border a main pedestrian linkage (running north – south). The developers have cited that this will act as a gateway and wayfinding feature that will connect the 2 woodland areas.
 2. Woodland Park – The two main woodland corridors (as per the previous scheme), will be retained (running north - south and east – west) but under the proposal, a linear woodland Park will be created on the north – south axis and will incorporate active frontages and activity areas improving accessibility and safety. Details of these amenity areas including play park infrastructure will be established once the proposed development reaches the detailed design stage. Woodland paths will be created within the wooded spaces with additional woodland and native species plantings to enhance biodiversity and amenity.
 3. Internal Connections and Local Centre – as detailed above, connections to the local centre have been improved. Cycleways are located along the principal route and the B993 to link the north and south sections of the development. Affordable apartments have been relocated to create a gateway from the employment land to the south.
 4. External Connections and Woodland routes – The site has good connections to the existing woodland landscape and to the existing path network which will offer recreational routes benefiting dog walkers and new and existing residents. The northern parcel will have an activity space which will be overlooked by the nearest dwellings to make it more welcoming and safer.
- 3.28 The Masterplan indicates enhanced SUDS and blue green infrastructure and as part of this the developers have confirmed the number of SUDS facilities has increased to 3 in total which includes a further SUDS area within the central portion of the site and including SUDS serving the business land to the south. This will not only serve the essential site drainage but will add to the biodiversity by creating micro rich wetlands for wildlife.
- 3.29 Further detailed investigations have been undertaken in relation to Sewerage and Drainage Infrastructure. The developer advises that it has provisionally agreed with Scottish Water on the infrastructure provision to ensure that the development can be adequately served by the upgraded and improved public systems. This includes provision of additional foul storage in the vicinity of Inverurie treatment works and upsizing the existing Scottish Water potable mains.
- 3.30 Taking account of the above, the principles illustrated in the masterplan align with the NPF4 Policy 15 (Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods) and given the extensive woodland network and open space areas, there is

significant potential for the revised layout to accommodate biodiversity enhancement to accord with NPF 4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity).

Phasing

- 3.31 Given that Members raised concerns on the proposed phasing, specifically in relation to community facilities, a revised illustrative phasing plan has now been submitted which is included both within the addendum Report and the Masterplan. The revised phasing now shows the community facilities (comprising sports pitches within the designated SR land) are to be delivered no later than phase 2 (as compared to the previous phase 4). The overall site is still to be developed over 4 phases with the northern portion of the site (north of the B993) being within the first phase and thereafter progressing southwards with the southernmost area of residential alongside the business land proposed to be developed within phase 4. The developers advise that community facilities chosen within the development have been provided as a response to discussions held during community engagement and consultation with Colony Park Juvenile Football Club who requested that the club be involved in discussions regarding the football pitches within the proposed development.

Whilst the phasing is only indicative at this stage and is subject to change, the developers confirm that the green space, amenity woodland and new connections will be delivered alongside the new housing and not at the end of the process.

Consultees

- 3.32 The Masterplan has been subject to discussion with internal Council services, and also external services such as SEPA, Scottish Water and the NHS. In the main consultees raised no substantive comments in relation to the proposed Masterplan. As detailed above, at the planning application stage, justification for the uplift in numbers, the inclusion of and location of the Park and Choose facility, shortfall in open space and the Strategic Reserve land for community facilities is required. As the development moves forward from the Masterplan to planning application stage, further discussions with consultees will continue to take place to shape the final design and layout as well as finalising Affordable Housing and Developer Obligations.

Summary

- 3.33 In conclusion, the Planning Service is satisfied with the structure, detail and content of the Masterplan. The Masterplan has followed due process, and the public engagement carried out meets the expectations of the Service. The Masterplan provides a suitable context for the progression of sites OP5 and 6. Masterplans should set the overall context and not go into too much detail. As future planning applications come forward, they will be required to comply with the principles set out in the Masterplan, in order to accord with Policy P1 of the LDP 2023.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 The Masterplan will help to deliver an allocated site in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, which will ultimately help to deliver the Strategic Priorities 'Our Environment' in contributing to resilient communities, and 'Our Economy' in contributing to Economic Growth.
- 4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X
Climate Change and Sustainability			X
Health and Wellbeing			X
Town Centre First			X

- 4.3 The financial and staffing implications in assessing masterplans are covered within the existing Planning and Economy budget. No risks or implications are anticipated as no exceptional cost are anticipated.
- 4.4 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is not required. The Masterplan is simply setting out the context for future development proposals on these allocated sites and will not itself have a differential impact on those with protected characteristics.
- 4.5 There are no risks identified in respect of this matter in terms of the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers as the Committee is considering the Masterplan as the Planning Authority in a quasi-judicial role as the Masterplan has been identified as a requirement through the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023.

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B.8.1 of Part 2A List of Committee Powers and Section C.5.3 of Part 2C Planning Delegations of the Scheme of Governance.

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Report Date: 16 December 2024

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Masterplan Site Plan

Appendix 2 – Masterplan Report

Appendix 3 – Crichton Masterplan – Addendum Report dated December 2024