

PROPOSED ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 RESPONSE FORM

As part of the production of the Local Development Plan, a 'Main Issues Report' was published in January 2019. The responses from these consultations have helped to inform the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan ("the Proposed Plan").

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan will direct decision-making on land-use planning issues and planning applications in Aberdeenshire for the 10-year period from 2021 to 2031. The Proposed Plan was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2020 as the settled view of the Council. However, the Proposed Plan will be subjected to an independent examination and is now open for public comment.

This is your opportunity to tell us if anything should be changed in the Proposed Plan, and why.

When writing a response to the Proposed Plan it is important to specifically state the modification(s) that you would wish to see to the Plan.

This is the only remaining opportunity to comment on the Proposed Plan. The reasons for any requested changes will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person known as a Reporter to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on any unresolved issues and the changes sought.

Ministers expect representations (or responses) to be concise (no more than 2000 words) and accompanied by limited supporting documents. It is important to ensure that all of the information that you wish to be considered is submitted during this consultation period as there is no further opportunity to provide information, unless specifically asked.

Please email comments to ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or send this form to reach us by 31 July 2020*.

We recommend that you keep a copy of your representation for your own records.

**UPDATE 16 June 2020: Consultation period was extended from 17 July 2020 for a further two-week period.*



ACCESSIBILITY

If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone 01467 536230.

Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti 01467 536230.

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la 01467 536230.

Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer 01467 536230.

Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz 01467 536230.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan
Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

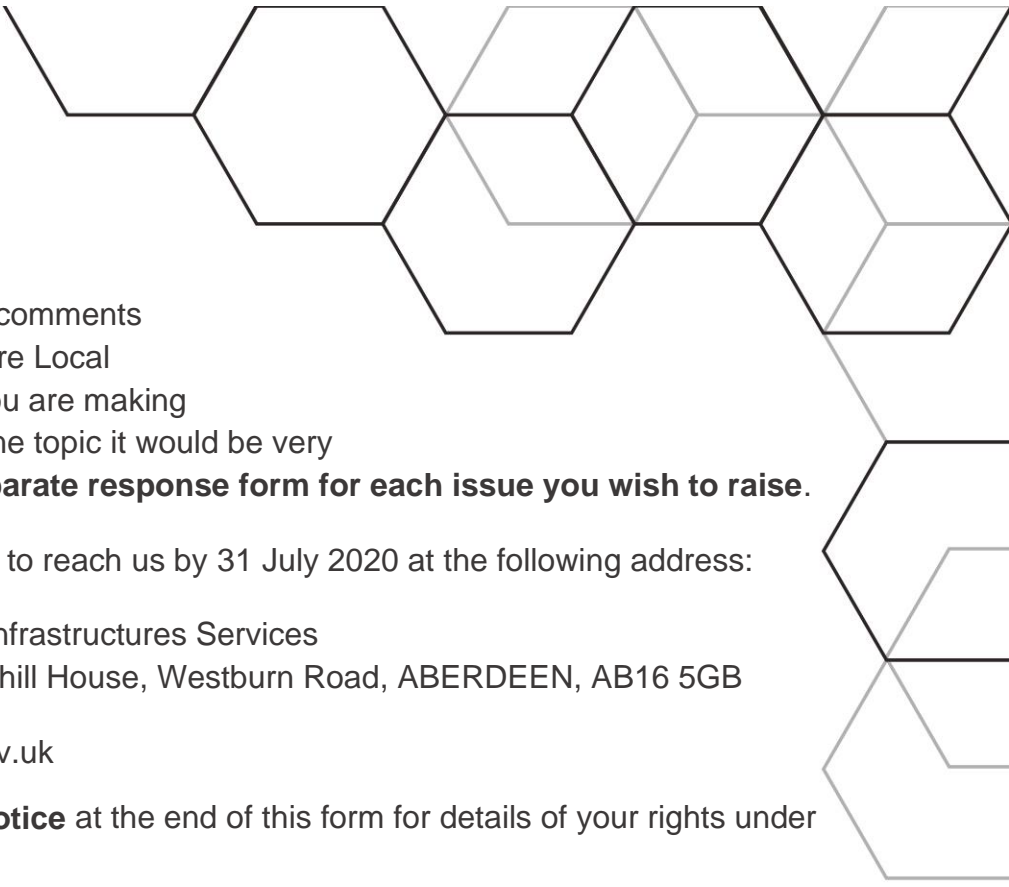
Tel: 01467 536230

Email: ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Web: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp

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If you wish to contact one of the area planning offices, please call 01467 534333 and ask for the relevant planning office or email planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.



Please use this form to make comments on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020. If you are making comments about more than one topic it would be very helpful if you could fill in a **separate response form for each issue you wish to raise**.

Please email or send the form to reach us by 31 July 2020 at the following address:

Post: Planning Policy Team, Infrastructures Services
Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, ABERDEEN, AB16 5GB

Email: ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Please refer to our **Privacy Notice** at the end of this form for details of your rights under the Data Protection Act.

YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Mr
First Name:	Robin
Surname:	Holder
Date:	
Postal Address:	██
Postcode:	████████
Telephone Number:	████████████████
Email:	██

Are you happy to receive future correspondence only by email? Yes No

Are you responding on behalf of another person? Yes No

If yes who are you representing?

Tick the box if you would like to subscribe to the Aberdeenshire LDP eNewsletter:

An acknowledgement will be sent to this address soon after the close of consultation.

YOUR COMMENTS

Please provide us with your comments below. We will summarise comments and in our analysis will consider every point that is made. Once we have done this we will write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the submissions made. We will publish your name as the author of the comment, but will not make your address public.

Modification that you wish to see (please make specific reference to the section of the Proposed Plan you wish to see modified if possible, for example Section 9, paragraph E1.1):

The Westhill Settlement Statement and Keymap should be modified to include a housing allocation of approximately 70 homes and adjacent golf practice area at Soutarhill (see site plan and Soutarhill Masterplan). Appropriate references elsewhere in the LDP should be made to reflect this change.

Reason for change:

As explained in our submission on housing supply matters, there is an insufficient supply of effective housing sites identified in the Proposed LDP to meet the housing allowance identified in the Aberdeen & Shire Strategic Development Plan. Notwithstanding this point, there is also a need to allocate additional housing in Westhill to meet ongoing need and demand within that community and for those wishing to relocate there because of its employment opportunities.

As explained below, the Soutarhill site is particularly suited for housing development, both in terms of its local and wider context.

CALA Homes have made detailed and comprehensive submissions to the Council at the 'Development Bids' and Main Issues Report stages, which we have attached with this representation.

The second paragraph of the Westhill Settlement Statement states:

"Westhill benefits from a good network of open spaces, including Arnhall Moss and Carnie Woods which are both particularly important features. There are a number of physical constraints to further expansion within the settlement, including the presence of pipelines, topography that slopes steeply to the north, and the need to avoid coalescence with Kirkton of Skene to the east of the settlement. The eastern part of Westhill is surrounded by green belt. Significant traffic congestion also remains an issue, particularly along Hay's Way and around the town centre. These constraints mean that development within the Plan period will be focussed primarily on meeting local needs and maintaining Westhill's function as a successful employment centre."

None of these constrains the development of the Soutarhill site.

Moreover, the Proposed LDP does not reflect the Strategic Development Plan and is at odds with the Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014 (attached). On page 23 of the SDP there is a section entitled 'Local Growth and Diversification Area', and paragraph 3.45 states:

"Encouraging sustainable mixed communities and sustainable economic growth will be an essential part of making sure the Local Growth and Diversification Areas continue to contribute

positively to the wider City Region. The scale and level of opportunities for new growth will vary from place to place, with larger towns such as Fraserburgh, Alford, Turriff, Banchory and Westhill being the main focus for new investment. Levels of growth in individual settlements should relate to local needs, with different places having different potential.”

In our view, the absence of any new proposed private housing sites in Westhill does not reflect what is said here, and could be argued to be contrary to the SDP.

This point should be considered in the context Westhill Capacity Study commissioned by the Council in 2014, one purpose of which was to inform future planning policy. It assessed the suitability of 24 sites around the town for development and ranked these in order of suitability/sustainability. **Notably, the Soutarhill site is included within the nine “most suitable and sustainable” sites based on this assessment.** Five of these nine sites are to the south of the town, south of business and industrial allocations and more obviously suited to an extension of those uses. A further 3 sites are to the east of the town, adjacent to residential areas, but currently within the designated Green Belt. The only remaining “most suitable” site is Soutarhill, to the north of the town and which is not in the Green Belt.

The issue of the Westhill Capacity Study was mentioned in CALA Homes’ submission to the Main Issues Report but this was dismissed by the planning officer in his report to the Garioch Area Committee on the matter, as follows:

“In supporting a number of these bids, respondents make reference to the Westhill Capacity Study, updated in 2014. Whilst it is recognised that many bids lie within areas identified as being “most suitable” or “suitable” for potential development, the study does not identify the timeline of when it would be suitable, or most suitable in terms of delivery. Additionally, the Study identified that in order to facilitate development it would be necessary to undertake a number of significant improvements to the transport network around Westhill. The Study also recommends that a number of further studies should be undertaken to consider the more sustainable way for Westhill to develop in the future. These studies include a Transport Infrastructure Feasibility Study, a review of the green belt and a Westhill Strategic Masterplan, amongst others. Issue 7 Shaping Development in the Countryside addresses the need to review the green belt and makes commitment to delivering this by the mid-term review of the LDP. Other studies could be undertaken during the early part of the Plan period to establish exactly what sites should be allocated to facilitate future growth of the settlement, ensuring an infrastructure led approach to delivery. This would be undertaken in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that development is located in the right place.”

We find this explanation difficult to accept for a number of reasons, as follows:

- Although the study does not identify a timeline for delivery of sites, clearly the production of an LDP six years later provides the appropriate opportunity to consider application of some of its recommendations.
- The Study makes it clear that the significant improvements to the transport network would be required if several of the recommended sites were to be developed. The development of the relatively small Soutarhill site in isolation would have a negligible impact on the network.
- The Study does recommend that various studies are undertaken, and we are not clear why, 6 years after the Study’s publication, none of this work has been done yet. However,

so far as the Soutarhill site is concerned, given its small scale and location outwith the Green Belt, there is no need for these specific studies in order to understand the site's suitability for development. CALA Homes have undertaken their own detailed assessment of the site which is described in the attached documents.

Our concerns regarding the Council's lack of full consideration of the development opportunities in Westhill are exacerbated by a number of clear errors in its site-specific assessment of the Soutarhill site in responding to CALA's detailed and comprehensive submission at the 'Development Bids' stage of the LDP in 2018. These errors, contained in the Council's handling report in support of the Main Issues Report, were as follows:

1. The Council described the site as being able to accommodate 49 houses, when CALA's bid document had described in detail a proposal of 70 houses at a density compliant with the Council's aspirations.
2. The Council stated that the site is within the Green Belt, **when in fact it is not.**
3. The Council stated that the site is constrained by the Health and Safety Executive's pipeline consultation zone. However, this is misleading given that the proposals are unconstrained by the pipeline, which CALA have confirmed with the pipeline operator and made clear in their submissions to the Council.
4. The Council stated that the site is constrained by a Core Path running through the site. Although a Core Path runs through the site, CALA's proposals take full account of it, and it does not present any constraint whatsoever.
5. The Council stated that the site represents a largely disjointed addition to the settlement. This conclusion completely contradicts the findings of the Westhill Capacity Study, which concluded that the site would avoid the creation of areas of development which are detached from Westhill. We agree with this. The site is well connected to development to the south and extends the developed area of the settlement no further north than existing development on the opposite side of the road. The site would be accessed from Blacklaws Brae, an existing development. A 20m wide tree belt to the north of the site provides a defined boundary to the north of the settlement.
6. The Council stated that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment would be required given the potential visual impacts. CALA's submissions to the Council contained a comprehensive appraisal of landscape impact, which demonstrate a good fit into the landscape.
7. The Council stated that the site relies on an unclassified road for access that would require to be brought up to adoptable standards. **This is wrong.** It is proposed to access the site from Blacklaws Brae, which is a 5.5m wide adopted road with a 20mph speed limit.

All of these matters were addressed in CALA's development bid documents, and it appears to us that little or no attention has been paid by the Council to what was a comprehensive analysis undertaken at considerable expense. That is very frustrating for CALA given that the Council encouraged this bid and appear to have ignored it.

CALA's frustration has unfortunately been compounded by the fact that, in preparing the Proposed LDP and the supporting Garioch Area Committee Report, there was no recognition by the Council of the errors which CALA had raised with the Council in their MIR representation.

CALA Homes recognises that the Council's planning officers have a massive task in assimilating all of the information they receive from those making submissions through the LDP process, as well as ensuring the LDP's compliance with regional and national planning policies. We would not raise these criticisms, but there is a genuine sense that the Council's assessment of Westhill as a location for development and its assessment of the Soutarhill site specifically, have serious flaws.

Summary of the Soutarhill Proposals

These are described in detail in the documents submitted with this representation, and the key points are summarised as follows:

- The site, for which 70 homes is proposed, is contiguous with the existing Westhill settlement boundary and will deliver an appropriate extension to the north of the existing residential development. The existing tree belt, which will be enhanced as part of this proposal forms a defensible northern boundary to the settlement. The site offers substantial benefit by promoting new recreational areas, paths and enhancement of the existing core path. The site is located in a sustainable location, being only a 10 minute walk from the town centre and a bus stop within 160m of the site. The site rounds off the settlement from the northern approach and provides additional connectivity and access to open space.
- Westhill has a large number of subsea engineering businesses, earning it the status of 'Global subsea centre excellence'. This is in addition to other industries and services which are located across the towns four business parks; Westhill Business Park; Arnall Business Park; Silvertrees; and Kingshill Commercial Park. The Westhill Capacity Study explains that *"there is a critical lack of diversity and choice in terms of housing tenure and type in Westhill"*. The document also puts forward a vision for Westhill to fully exploit its position as a world centre of excellence, which to do so will require attracting skilled workers. A key aspect of this is being able to offer high quality residential accommodation. One of the strategic objectives of the report is to meet specific housing needs of workers associated with the subsea engineering sector. The Report also states on page 89 that:

"mixed use development should be encouraged as an appropriate way of achieving the overall vision for Westhill of creating a sustainable mixed community which balances residential, commercial and employment related development in such a way as to reduce the need to travel and create a vibrant place."

- The site is well connected to the existing settlement, it sits adjacent to existing development, and does not extend the settlement any further north than existing development at Meadowlands to the east. In relation to views, the masterplan document includes a visual appraisal of the site within the 'Appraisal' section of the document on pages 11-21. The site is not readily visible from the south and west as intervening development or the landform blocks views of the site. From the north, the shoulder of the hill obscures the higher sections of the site, meaning that any visual impact is more local and restricted to lower slopes. These areas would be seen as an extension to the

settlement in any case, but the 20m wide tree belt mitigates any further impact. This also provides a defensible boundary to the north of the site. The proposed development site does not extend the visibility of housing into areas where housing is not currently visible and therefore has little additional impact.

- A Transport Statement prepared by Fairhurst is summarised in the attached MIR submission. The site will be accessed from Blacklaws Brae which is a residential street subject to a 20mph speed limit. An indicative layout has been prepared for the site which makes allowance for designing streets, parking and servicing requirements. In addition to the actual street design, Fairhurst have indicated that the proposal will have an 'insignificant traffic impact on the surrounding road network'. The site is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. There is an existing core path on the site, and the site will connect into the existing pedestrian network. The site is only a 10 minute walk from Westhill centre. There is a bus stop only 150metres from the site (at Blacklaws Brae) which is served by the 220 Stagecoach service. Westhill is located only one mile from the recently opened Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) which significantly improves accessibility to the north and south of the city.
- In respect to education facilities, it is expected that the 3 primary schools within walking distance of the site can accommodate the children arising within their projected capacities.
- Nine hectares of this site is proposed as open space (see figure 14 below), which equates to 72% of the site. A large public park is proposed to the west of the site, which would offer opportunities for additional woodland planting, picnic areas, an informal path network and could provide a children's play area. To the west of this and adjacent to Westhill Golf Club, golf practice facilities are proposed. CALA have been in discussion with Westhill Golf Club over a period of time and we understand that the golf practice area is needed by Westhill Golf Club in order to sustain the club.
- Westhill has historically suffered from under provision of affordable housing. This site would deliver 17 affordable units, making a significant contribution towards improving housing waiting lists. If the site was allocated, CALA would envisage being on site by 2022/2023, with affordable housing to be delivered in the early stages of the development.
- The site has no particular biodiversity value, and the various landscape enhancements proposed would add to its wildlife value.

PRIVACY NOTICE

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENT

The Data Controller of the information being collected is Aberdeenshire Council.

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at Town House, 34 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY.

Email: dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Your information is being collected to use for the following purposes:

- To provide public comment on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The data on the form will be used to inform Scottish Ministers and individual(s) appointed to examine the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. It will inform the content of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021.

Your information is:

Being collected by Aberdeenshire Council	X
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The Legal Basis for collecting the information is:

Personal Data	
Legal Obligations	X

Where the Legal Basis for processing is either Performance of a Contract or Legal Obligation, please note the following consequences of failure to provide the information:

It is a Statutory Obligation under Section 18 of the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, for Aberdeenshire Council to prepare and publish a Proposed Local Development plan on which representations must be made to the planning authority within a prescribed period of time. Failure to provide details requested in the 'Your Details' section of this form will result in Aberdeenshire Council being unable to accept your representation.

Your information will be shared with the following recipients or categories of recipient:

Members of the public are being given this final opportunity to comment on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The reasons for any changes that the Council receives will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on the unresolved issues raised and the changes sought.

Your name and respondent identification number (provided to you by Aberdeenshire Council on receipt of your

submission) will be published alongside a copy of your completed response on the Proposed Local Development Plan website (contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive will not be made available to the public).

In accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 where the appointed person determines that further representations should be made or further information should be provided by any person in connection with the examination of the Proposed Plan the appointed person may by notice request that person to make such further representations or to provide such further information.

Your information will be transferred to or stored in the following countries and the following safeguards are in place:

Not applicable.

The retention period for the data is:

Aberdeenshire Council will only keep your personal data for as long as is needed. Aberdeenshire Council will retain your response and personal data for a retention period of 5 years from the date upon which it was collected. After 5 years Aberdeenshire Council will review whether it is necessary to continue to retain your information for a longer period. A redacted copy of your submission will be retained for 5 years beyond the life of the Local Development Plan 2021, possibly until 2037.

The following automated decision-making, including profiling, will be undertaken:

Not applicable.

Please note that you have the following rights:

- to withdraw consent at any time, where the Legal Basis specified above is Consent;
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (after raising the issue with the Data Protection Officer first);
- to request access to your personal data;
- to data portability, where the legal basis specified above is:
 - (i) Consent; or
 - (ii) Performance of a Contract;
- to request rectification or erasure of your personal data, as so far as the legislation permits.



4. Site Details

Name of the site (Please use the LDP name if the site is already allocated)	Soutarhill, Westhill
Site address	Land at Soutarhill Farm, to the north of Westhill
OS grid reference (if available)	NJ827082
Site area/size	Total site area 31.2 acres (housing site 14.6 acres, new park 6.2 acres, golf practice area 10.4 acres)
Current land use	Agricultural
Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield
Please include an Ordnance Survey map (1:1250 or 1:2500 base for larger sites, e.g. over 2ha) showing the location and extent of the site, points of access, means of drainage etc.	

5. Ownership/Market Interest

Ownership (Please list the owners in question 3 above)	Sole Owner
Is the site under option to a developer?	Yes
	The site is under option to CALA Homes (North) Ltd
Is the site being marketed?	n/a

6. Legal Issues

Are there any legal provisions in the title deeds that may prevent or restrict development? (e.g. way leave for utility providers, restriction on use of land, right of way etc.)	No
Are there any other legal factors that might prevent or restrict development? (e.g. ransom strips/issues with accessing the site etc.)	No

7. Planning History

Have you had any formal/informal pre-application discussions with the Planning Service and what was the response?	No
	<i>If yes, please give details</i>
Previous planning applications	APP/2005/0672 – officer recommendation for delegated grant, only refused following Aberdeenshire Local Plan (ALP) Inquiry in 2006 and non-allocation of site.
Previous 'Call for sites' history. See Main Issues Report 2013 at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp	<i>Please provide Previous 'Call for sites'/'Bid' reference number:</i> Ga054
Local Development Plan status www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp	<i>Is the site currently allocated for any specific use in the existing LDP?</i> No
	<i>If yes, do you wish to change the site description and or</i>

	allocation? N/A
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8. Proposed Use

Proposed use		Housing, public park and practice area for Westhill Golf Club
Housing	Approx. no of units	70
	Proposed mix of house types	Number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detached: 60 % • Semi-detached: 30% • Flats: • Terrace: 10% • Other (e.g. Bungalows):
		Number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 bedroom homes: • 2 bedroom homes: • 3 bedroom homes: • 4 or more bedroom homes: TBC – mix of house sizes to meet market conditions
	Tenure (Delete as appropriate)	Private / Low Cost Home Ownership, Mid-Market Rent or Affordable Rented (RSL)
	Affordable housing proportion	25 %
Employment	Business and offices	n/a
	General industrial	n/a
	Storage and distribution	n/a
	Do you have a specific occupier for the site?	n/a
Other	Proposed use (please specify) and floor space	New park and golf practice area over and above open space requirements for the development site.
	Do you have a specific occupier for the site?	n/a
Is the area of each proposed use noted in the OS site plan?		Yes

9. Delivery Timescales

We expect to adopt the new LDP in 2021. How many years after this date would you expect development to begin? (please tick)	0-5 years	Commence years 1-2
	6-10 years	
	10+ years	
When would you expect the development to be finished? (please tick)	0-5 years	Completed years 2-4
	6-10 years	
	+ 10years	
Have discussions taken place with financiers? Will funding be in place to cover all the costs of development within these timescales	Yes	
	If yes, please give details (e.g. bank facility, grant funding, secured loan etc.) No impediment to development, fully owned by █████ one of biggest companies in UK with full support to build.	
Are there any other risk or threats (other	No	

than finance) to you delivering your proposed development	<i>If yes, please give details and indicate how you might overcome them:</i>
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10. Natural Heritage

<p>Is the site located in or within 500m of a nature conservation site, or affect a protected species?</p> <p>Please tick any that apply and provide details.</p> <p>You can find details of these designations at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.environment.gov.scot/ • EU priority habitats at http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/index.jsp • UK or Local priority habitats at http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/advice-and-resources/habitat-definitions/priority/ • Local Nature Conservation Sites in the LDP's Supplementary Guidance No. 5 at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp 	RAMSAR Site	No
	Special Area of Conservation	No
	Special Protection Area	No
	Priority habitat (Annex I)	No
	European Protected Species	No
	Other protected species	No
	Site of Special Scientific Interest	No
	National Nature Reserve	No
	Ancient Woodland	No
	Trees, hedgerows and woodland (including trees with a Tree Preservation Order)	No – trees to be retained
	Priority habitat (UK or Local Biodiversity Action Plan)	No
	Local Nature Conservation Site	No
	Local Nature Reserve	No
If yes, please give details of how you plan to mitigate the impact of the proposed development:		
Biodiversity enhancement		
<p>Please state what benefits for biodiversity this proposal will bring (as per paragraph 194 in Scottish Planning Policy), http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00453827.pdf) by ticking all that apply. Please provide details.</p> <p>See Planning Advice 5/2015 on Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement at: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/19598/2015_05-opportunities-for-biodiversity-enhancement-in-new-development.pdf</p> <p>Advice is also available from Scottish Natural Heritage at: https://www.snh.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/natural-heritage-advice-planners-and-developers and http://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/.</p>	Restoration of habitats	Yes – tree belts retained
	Habitat creation in public open space	Yes
	Avoids fragmentation or isolation of habitats	Yes
	Provides bird/bat/insect boxes/Swift bricks (internal or external)	n/a
	Native tree planting	Yes
	Drystone wall	Retained where existing
	Living roofs	No
	Ponds and soakaways	Yes
	Habitat walls/fences	
	Wildflowers in verges	Where applicable
	Use of nectar rich plant species	Where applicable
	Buffer strips along watercourses	Where applicable

	Show home demonstration area	Yes
	Other (please state):	
	If yes, please provide details:	

11. Historic environment

Historic environment enhancement		
Please state if there will be benefits for the historic environment.	No If yes, please give details:	
Does the site contain/is within/can affect any of the following historic environment assets? Please tick any that apply and provide details. You can find details of these designations at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> http://historicscotland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/ https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/default.aspx?Authority=Aberdeenshire 	Scheduled Monument or their setting	No
	Locally important archaeological site held on the Sites and Monuments Record	No
	Listed Building and/or their setting	No
	Conservation Area (e.g. will it result in the demolition of any buildings)	No
	Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes	No
	Inventory Historic Battlefields	No
	<i>If yes, please give details of how you plan to mitigate the impact of the proposed development</i>	

12. Landscape Impact

Is the site within a Special Landscape Area (SLA)? (You can find details in Supplementary Guidance 9 at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp)	No <i>If yes, please state which SLA your site is located within and provide details of how you plan to mitigate the impact of the proposed development:</i>	
SLAs include the consideration of landscape character elements/features. The characteristics of landscapes are defined in the Landscape Character Assessments produced by Scottish Natural Heritage (see below) or have been identified as Special Landscape Areas of local importance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNH: Landscape Character Assessments https://www.snh.scot/professional-advice/landscape-change/landscape-character-assessment SNH (1996) Cairngorms landscape assessment http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/review/075.pdf SNH (1997) National programme of landscape character assessment: Banff and Buchan 	<i>If your site is not within an SLA, please use this space to describe the effects of the site's scale, location or design on key natural landscape elements/features, historic features or the composition or quality of the landscape character:</i> The site is within the Agricultural heartlands landscape character, and specifically within the 'Central Wooded Estates' character type, as outlined in the SNH Landscape Character Assessment. The site is agricultural in nature, with woodlands and shelter belts a key component of the landscape setting. The woodland a landscape setting, and clear boundary to the north of the site. Whilst the site is on a slope, the landscape setting of woodland to the north and west	

<p>http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/review/037.pdf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNH (1998) South and Central Aberdeenshire landscape character assessment http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/review/102.pdf 	<p>encloses the site. It is also seen in a context of residential development.</p> <p>Views to the site are limited, the site sits within a woodland framework, and with residential development to the east and south. Its development would not result in a significant landscape impact.</p>
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13. Flood Risk

<p>Is any part of the site identified as being at risk of river or surface water flooding within SEPA flood maps, and/or has any part of the site previously flooded?</p> <p>(You can view the SEPA flood maps at http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm)</p>	<p>No</p> <p><i>If yes, please specify and explain how you intend to mitigate this risk:</i> n/a</p>
<p>Could development on the site result in additional flood risk elsewhere?</p>	<p>No</p> <p><i>If yes, please specify and explain how you intend to mitigate or avoid this risk:</i> n/a</p>
<p>Could development of the site help alleviate any existing flooding problems in the area?</p>	<p>No</p> <p><i>If yes, please provide details:</i> n/a</p>

14. Infrastructure

<p>a. Water / Drainage</p>		
<p>Is there water/waste water capacity for the proposed development (based on Scottish Water asset capacity search tool http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/Connections/Connecting-your-property/Asset-Capacity-Search)?</p>	<p>Water Invercarnie and Mannofield WTW</p>	<p>Yes Storage tank in Westhill undergoing planned investment 2015-2021. The existing water main in Blacklaws Brae will be extended to serve the development.</p>
	<p>Waste water Nigg WWTW</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Has contact been made with Scottish Water?</p>	<p>Yes If yes, please give details of outcome: Awaiting response</p>	
<p>Will your SUDS scheme include rain gardens? http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/campaigns/greener-gardens</p>	<p>Yes <i>Please specify:</i> Yes - advice will be taken from landscape architect, but 'greener gardens' could be incorporated.</p>	
<p>b. Education – housing proposals only</p>		
<p>Education capacity/constraints</p>	<p><i>Please provide details of any known education</i></p>	

https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/parts-carers/school-info/school-roll-forecasts/	<p><i>constraints. Is additional capacity needed to serve the development?</i></p> <p>Westhill Academy has capacity to serve the development (forecast to be at 79% in 2022 with capacity for 210 pupils (2016 School Roll Forecast)</p> <p>The site is zoned to Westhill Primary School, which is forecast to be at 86% capacity in 2022 according to the 2016 School Roll Forecast with capacity for up to 46 pupils.</p> <p>There is therefore educational capacity for the development.</p>
<p>Has contact been made with the Local Authority's Education Department?</p>	<p>No <i>If yes, please give details of outcome:</i></p>
<p>c. Transport</p>	
<p>If direct access is required onto a Trunk Road (A90 and A96), or the proposal will impact on traffic on a Trunk Road, has contact been made with Transport Scotland?</p>	<p>No <i>If yes, please give details of outcome:</i> n/a</p>
<p>Has contact been made with the Local Authority's Transportation Service? They can be contacted at transportation.consultation@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Yes <i>If yes, please give details of outcome:</i> Attached Transport statement indicates that its scope was agreed with Aberdeenshire Council and includes correspondence in Appendix A .</p>
<p>Public transport</p>	<p><i>Please provide details of how the site is or could be served by public transport:</i></p> <p>There is a bus stop within 150m of the site. This is served by the Stagecoach 220 Kirkton of Skene to Aberdeen service (which runs approximately every 30 minutes).</p> <p>The 777 Oldmeldrum to Dyce services the bus stop, this is a peak service.</p> <p>A bus stop with access to the X17 Westhill to Aberdeen Service is approximately 800m from the site on Hay's Way.</p>
<p>Active travel (i.e. internal connectivity and links externally)</p>	<p><i>Please provide details of how the site can or could be accessed by walking and cycling:</i></p> <p>There is a core path to the south of the site,</p>

	<p>which connects to Hill of Keir, and onwards to Kirkton of Skene. The proposed development prioritises pedestrian linkages, and connectivity. The site will connect to Westhill Drive which has pavement provision.</p> <p>CALA will prepare marketing material on opportunities for walking / active travel which is to be provided to purchasers of properties, recognising the importance of active lifestyles.</p>
d. Gas/Electricity/Heat/Broadband	
Has contact been made with the relevant utilities providers?	<p>Gas: Yes <i>If yes, please give details of outcome(s)</i> To be confirmed with the utility providers.</p>
	<p>Electricity: Yes <i>If yes, please give details of outcome(s):</i> To be confirmed with the utility providers.</p>
	<p>Heat: No <i>If yes, please give details of outcome(s):</i></p>
	<p>Broadband: Yes <i>If yes, please give details of outcome(s):</i></p> <p>Fibre Broadband is available from Kingswells exchange. Other ADSL broadband available locally.</p>
Have any feasibility studies been undertaken to understand and inform capacity issues?	<p>Yes Please specify:</p> <p>During previous planning application, no capacity issues expected.</p>
Is there capacity within the existing network(s) and a viable connection to the network(s)?	<p>See above Please specify:</p>
<p>Will renewable energy be installed and used on the site? For example, heat pump (air, ground or water), biomass, hydro, solar (photovoltaic (electricity) or thermal), or a wind turbine (freestanding/integrated into the building)</p>	<p>Yes <i>If yes, please specify the type of renewable energy technology(s), if it is to provide electricity and/or heating (i.e. space heating and/or hot water), and the scale of provision (To supplement off-site connection all the way to 100% energy provision (off-grid)):</i></p> <p>Current appropriate technology at the time of construction.</p>
e. Public open space	
Will the site provide the opportunity to enhance the green network? (These are	Yes

<p>the linked areas of open space in settlements, which can be enhanced through amalgamating existing green networks or providing onsite green infrastructure)</p> <p>You can find the boundary of existing green networks in the settlement profiles in the LDP</p>	<p><i>Please specify:</i></p> <p>There is no green space network near the site, but a significant area of public open space, and a golf practice area is proposed. Along with the golf course to the south west of the site, this creates a significant green network around the north of Westhill.</p>
<p>Will the site meet the open space standards, as set out in Appendix 2 in the Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Spaces Strategy? https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6077/approvedpandospacesstrategy.pdf</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p><i>Please specify:</i></p> <p>The indicative layout prepared shows that the site will include 68% open space. The proposed space aligns with the hierarchy of open space as follows:</p> <p>Community Play Areas: ✓ - within 600m Neighbourhood Greenspace: proposed Community Woodlands: ✓ - woodland on site Blue-green Corridors: proposed Neighbourhood Streets: proposed (home zone)</p>
<p>Will the site deliver any of the shortfalls identified in the Open Space Audit for specific settlements? https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy-audit/</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p><i>Please specify:</i></p> <p>The development would contribute to onsite play equipment.</p>
f. Resource use	
<p>Will the site re-use existing structure(s) or recycle or recover existing on-site materials/resources?</p>	<p>No</p> <p><i>If yes, please specify:</i></p> <p>There is one existing property on the site which would need to be demolished given its ruinous condition.</p>
<p>Will the site have a direct impact on the water environment and result in the need for watercourse crossings, large scale abstraction and/or culverting of a watercourse?</p>	<p>No</p> <p><i>If yes, please provide details:</i></p> <p>No watercourses.</p>

15. Other potential constraints

Please identify whether the site is affected by any of the following potential constraints:

<p>Aberdeen Green Belt https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/20555/appendix-3-boundaries-of-the-greenbelt.pdf</p>	No
<p>Carbon-rich soils and peatland http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soils-and-development/cpp/</p>	No Mineral podzols
<p>Coastal Zone https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/20176/4-the-coastal-zone.pdf</p>	No
Contaminated land	No
Ground instability	No

Hazardous site/HSE exclusion zone (You can find the boundary of these zones in Planning Advice 1/2017 Pipeline and Hazardous Development Consultation Zones at https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/planning-advice/ and advice at http://www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/developers.htm)	Part - Gas pipeline consultation zone affects the north western corner of the site. Outer Zone – so some development can be accommodated. HSE did not advise against previous application so not considered to be of any impediment to development.
Minerals – safeguarded or area of search https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/6_Area_of_search_and_safeguard_for_minerals.pdf	No
Overhead lines or underground cables	No
Physical access into the site due to topography or geography	No
Prime agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3.1) on all or part of the site. http://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil_maps/?layer=6	No
‘Protected’ open space in the LDP (i.e. P sites) www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp and choose from Appendix 8a to 8f	No
Rights of way/core paths/recreation uses	Yes- There is a core path on the farm track through the site. This will be retained, and provision of a park enhances
Topography (e.g. steep slopes)	No
Other	Yes/No (please specify)
<p>If you have identified any of the potential constraints above, please use this space to identify how you will mitigate this in order to achieve a viable development:</p> <p>Core Path The core path runs along the farm track to the south of the site. The core path would be retained through the site, but would be slightly re-routed by the proposed development. Enhanced linkages, including access to a new proposed community park are also proposed.</p> <p>HSE Exclusion Zone A small part of the site is within the outer zone of the pipeline consultation zone. Within this zone some development is permitted under PADHI guidelines. There is no conflict with the development proposed and the pipeline.</p> <p>During the 2005 planning application HSE did not advise against the development of this site and as circumstances haven’t altered this should be the case for the proposed development.</p>	

16. Proximity to facilities

How close is the site to a range of facilities?	Local shops	400m-1km
	Community facilities (e.g. school, public hall)	400m-1km
	Sports facilities (e.g. playing fields)	400m-1km
	Employment areas	>1km
	Residential areas	400m
	Bus stop or bus route	400m
	Train station	>1km
	Other, e.g. dentist, pub (please specify)	>1km

17. Community engagement

Has the local community been given the opportunity to influence/partake in the design and specification of the development proposal?	Yes
	<i>If yes, please specify the way it was carried out and how it influenced your proposals:</i> Bidder has discussed this with the golf club and has also taken on board community comments from previous plans with bigger buffer around existing Blacklaws Braes properties. They intend to speak with the community council in next few months.
	<i>If not yet, please detail how you will do so in the future:</i> Engagement with Community Council and local community following publication of Main Issues Report.

18. Residual value and deliverability

Please confirm that you have considered the 'residual value' of your site and you are confident that the site is viable when infrastructure and all other costs, such as constraints and mitigation are taken into account.	I have considered the likely 'residual value' of the site, as described above, and fully expect the site to be viable: Please tick: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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If you have any further information to help demonstrate the deliverability of your proposal, please provide details.

CALA Homes (North) Ltd are a leading housebuilder, and have a track record of delivering high quality developments. CALA have fully considered the deliverability of this proposal, considering potential developer obligations, abnormal costs and development costs when negotiating land value. There is no issue with site viability and construction can take place as soon as the requisite consents are in place.

19. Other information

Please provide any other information that you would like us to consider in support of your proposed development (please include details of any up-to-date supporting studies that have been undertaken and attach copies e.g. Transport Appraisal, Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Impact Assessment, Peat/Soil Survey, Habitat/Biodiversity Assessment etc.)

Masterplan / Design Statement

A supporting masterplan has been prepared in support of this site, showing the commitment of CALA to the proposal. A fully designed layout plan has been developed, based on a full analysis of the site, including topographical survey, and engineering input has informed the roads layout. This is not far from full planning application information.

A summary of supporting technical information has been included within the masterplan document, however, full copies of the following information has also been submitted:

- Topographical survey
- Constraints plan
- Transport Review

Other Relevant information

Housing Need

The draft Aberdeen city and Shire Strategic Development Plan Main Issues Report 2018 identifies a housing allowance for 5500 new homes up to year 2030 and 16,200 houses from 2031-2040. There is also a target to deliver 2190 homes per annum over the next 25 years. Additional sites therefore need to be allocated to meet this need.

There is one site in Westhill (site OPI for 10 homes) from the 2017 Local Development Plan which has not been built out, but has planning permission and is part of the effective housing supply. There is therefore a clear need for additional housing to serve the settlement.

(2014) Update to Westhill Capacity Study 2008

The Westhill Capacity Study (WCS) recognises that in order to maintain Westhill's place as a global centre for excellence for subsea engineering, a high growth option is required. It is noted that there are transport pressures in the area, but the need to maintain Westhill's position outweighs these concerns.

The WCS identifies the site as 'most suitable', and as a potential development area for Westhill. The site was assessed in the WCS as part of 'site 8', scoring 74% in an assessment against a Goal Achievement matrix (GAM).

Landscape

As summarised in Section 12 above, the site has minimal landscape impact. The site is enclosed by woodland to the north and west, and sits in a location surrounded by existing residential development on two sides. There is a maturing tree belt to the north of the site which provides a logical settlement boundary, and rounds off the settlement of Westhill. This housing proposal would not impact significantly on any sight lines or appear any more visible than housing already built. Westhill Heights is higher than this already.

Delivery

Westhill is a desirable location that people want to locate in. House building completions

demonstrate this, with completions averaging 66 units over the past six years. Almost all sites allocated in the 2017 ALDP in Westhill have been built out, which is a situation unique to Westhill, and demonstrates there is a need for additional housing land in the settlement. Westhill is the subsea capital of Europe, and in order to keep pace with economic development, housing land is required to ensure that Westhill remains vibrant, and a place that both businesses and people want to locate. This is as outlined in the Westhill Capacity Study Update in 2014.

This site is readily available and CALA have already undertaken a substantial amount of background work on the site, meaning that the site could be delivered within 1-2 years of allocation. A planning application for the site has been prepared and is ready for submission at the earliest opportunity. There are no constraints to the delivery of the site. The size of the site and scale of development proposed mean that the site can come forward utilising existing infrastructure capacity.

Please tick to confirm your agreement to the following statement:



By completing this form I agree that Aberdeenshire Council can use the information provided in this form for the purposes of identifying possible land for allocation in the next Local Development Plan. I also agree that the information provided, other than contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive (questions 1 to 3), can be made available to the public.



CALA
HOMES

CITY OF ABERDEEN
LAND ASSOCIATION 1875

MASTERPLAN FOR LAND AT SOUTARHILL, WESTHILL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN BID
MARCH 2018

CALA HOMES (NORTH) LIMITED
PREPARED BY HALLIDAY FRASER MUNRO



“The vision for Soutarhill is to unlock a deliverable, small scale housing site on this final infill site north east of Westhill”

VISION

The purpose of this document is to support the Local Development Plan bid submission for Land at Soutarhill, which has been prepared on behalf of CALA Homes (North) Limited by Halliday Fraser Munro Architects and Planning Consultants.

The site at Soutarhill offers an excellent opportunity to provide a high quality residential development, which is immediately deliverable. The site is ideally located to meet the local housing needs of Westhill, and offers substantial community benefits.

The site is being promoted by CALA, who are a premium house builder with its heritage firmly placed in Aberdeen, having been established in the city in 1875 as the City of Aberdeen Land Association. 140 years on CALA are focused on delivering high quality developments in the best locations. The principle focus being sourcing the best land opportunities and optimising value through high quality design and sought after living environments.

Over the past five years, under the ownership of Patron Capital Partners and Legal & General Group (L&G), CALA has reached new heights. CALA have doubled the size of the business in terms of new home volumes over this period and become one of the fastest growing housebuilders in the UK today, which is testament to the strength and ambition of the team, the quality of our homes and our first class approach to customer service.

In March 2018, it was announced that L&G has increased its shareholding in the CALA business to 100%, acquiring the 52.1% which it did not previously own. This marks an exciting new chapter for CALA, ensuring both consistency and stability of our operations through the continued backing of L&G; one of the most highly-respected, blue-chip investors in the UK, who share our long-term vision for the business. Working together, we will build on the strong momentum we have achieved in recent years while strengthening our position as the UK's most upmarket major homebuilder.

This strong backing builds upon and allows the delivery of fantastic new communities and quality family homes ensuring proposals are viable, deliverable and will be acted upon.

CALA have a strong track record of developing sites similar to Soutarhill throughout Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Scotland and the UK and have conducted in depth investigations on this proposal.

This document outlines how the design process has developed following a thorough analysis of the site and its unique opportunities and constraints. It is split in two halves — 'Analysis' and 'Proposals' — and is intended to take the reader through the design process, in chronological order.

The 'Analysis' section concentrates on existing site features, opportunities and constraints which helped inform the proposals, including a visual appraisal, drainage, utilities, transportation and topographical studies.

The second part of the document, titled 'Proposals' outlines the design concept, site layout, character areas and project delivery.

Client: CALA Homes (North) Limited
Architect: Halliday Fraser Munro
Civil / Structural Engineer: Fairhurst

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PART 1 | ANALYSIS



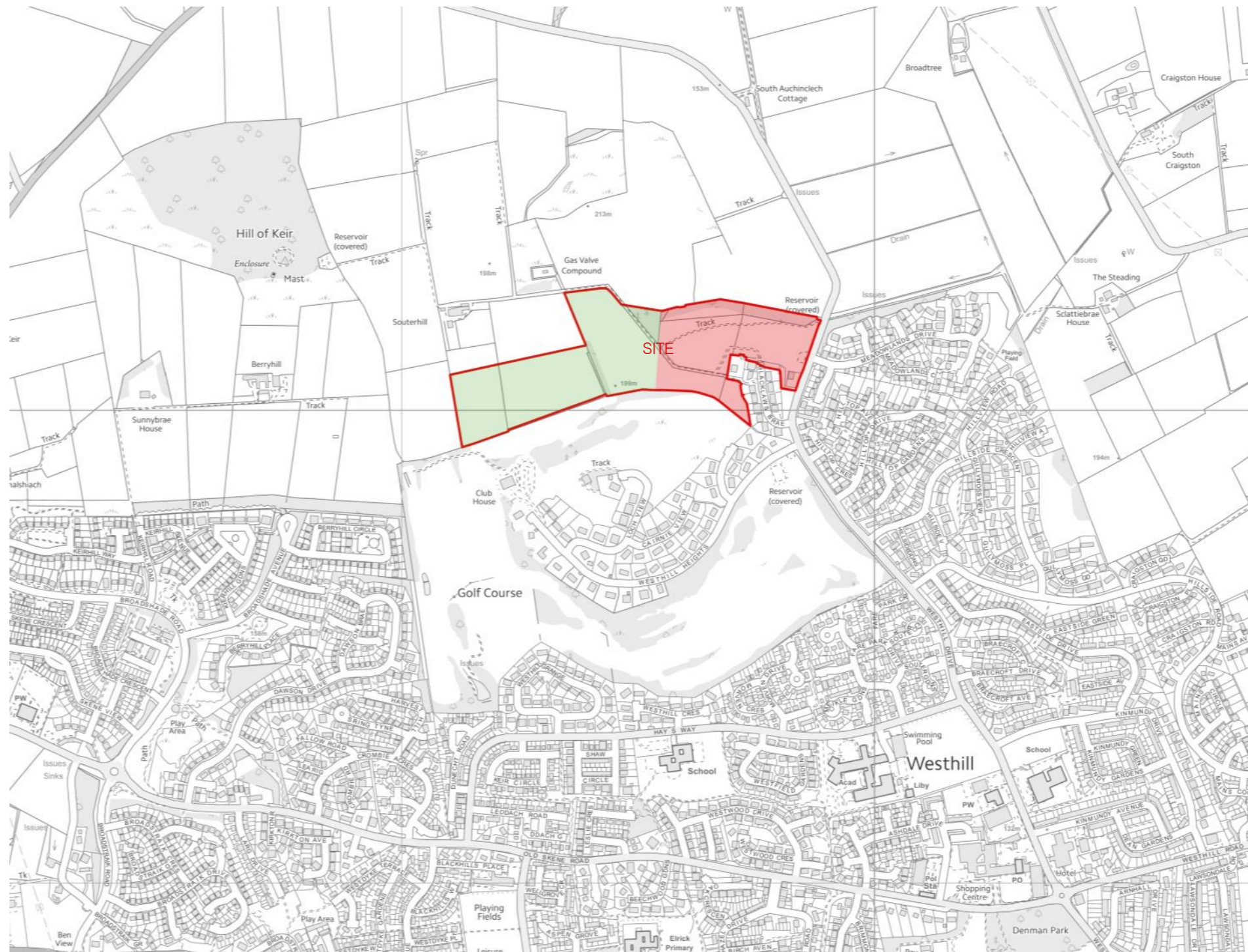
SITE DESCRIPTION

Location

The site, which in total extends to approximately 31.3 acres, is located on the northern edge of Westhill, located approximately 10km west of Aberdeen.

Site Boundary

The site is bound to the north by an existing tree belt and agricultural land, to the east by an existing residential neighbourhood, to the south by Westhill Golf Course and existing house (Westhill Heights and Blacklaws Brae) and to the west by agricultural land. Access to the site is taken via Westhill Drive and Blacklaws Brae.



Proposed housing Proposed green space

Location Plan

GROWTH OF WESTHILL

Growth of Westhill

Westhill was first constructed around the historic village of Elrick. Since construction of the first houses in the 1960's, Westhill has undergone rapid expansion. Initially, development took advantage of south facing slopes and expanded northwards, but more recent years has seen the town expand to the south, west and north.

The diagrams opposite illustrate the pattern of growth over the past 10 years.

Planning Opportunities

The proposed site at Soutarhill offers a logical extension of Westhill.

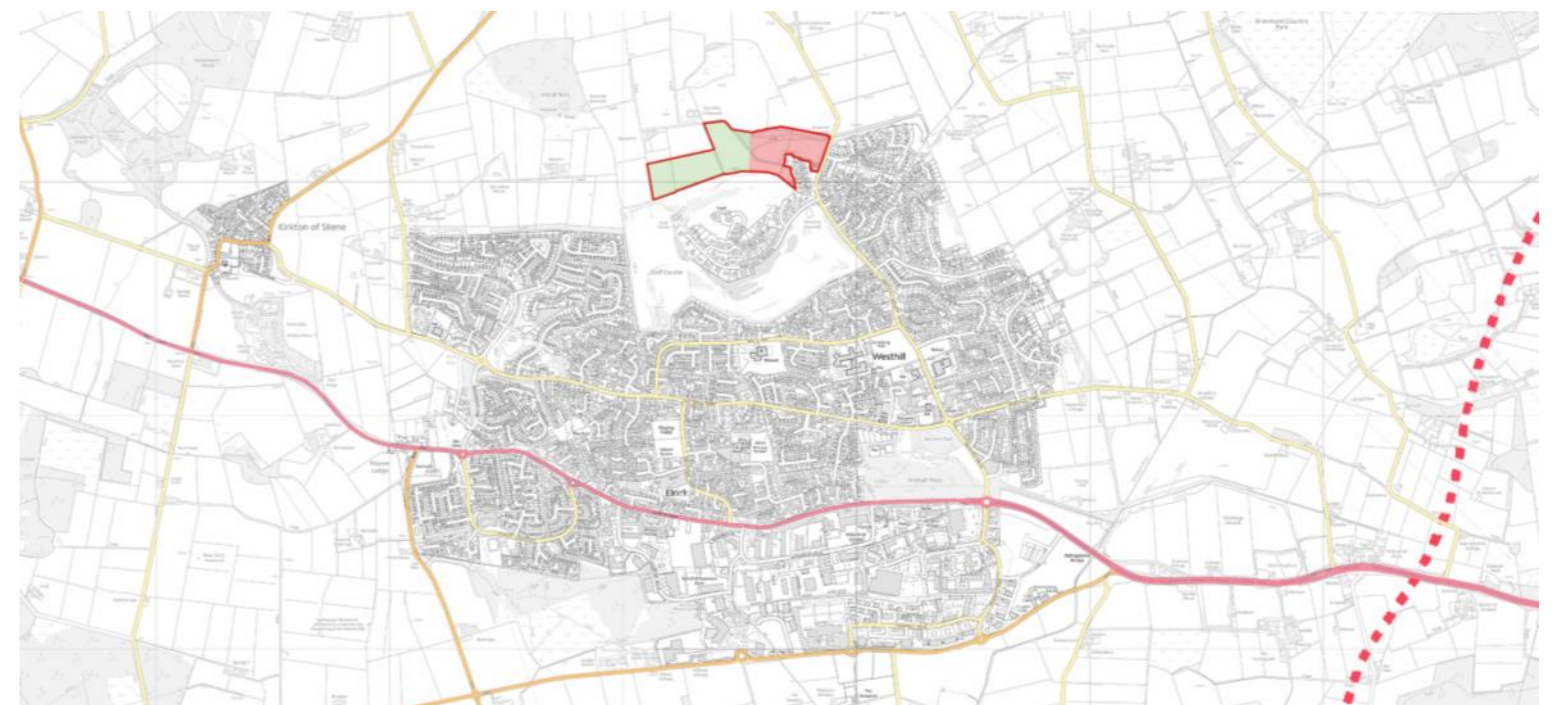
The site is well enclosed by woodland to the north and west, particularly given the establishment of the woodland belt (planted in 2006) on the northern boundary of the site.

It does not extend the developed area of the settlement beyond the existing built up area to the east and rounds off the settlement boundary, providing a defined edge to this part of Westhill.

The site represents one of the final infill opportunities in this part of the town.



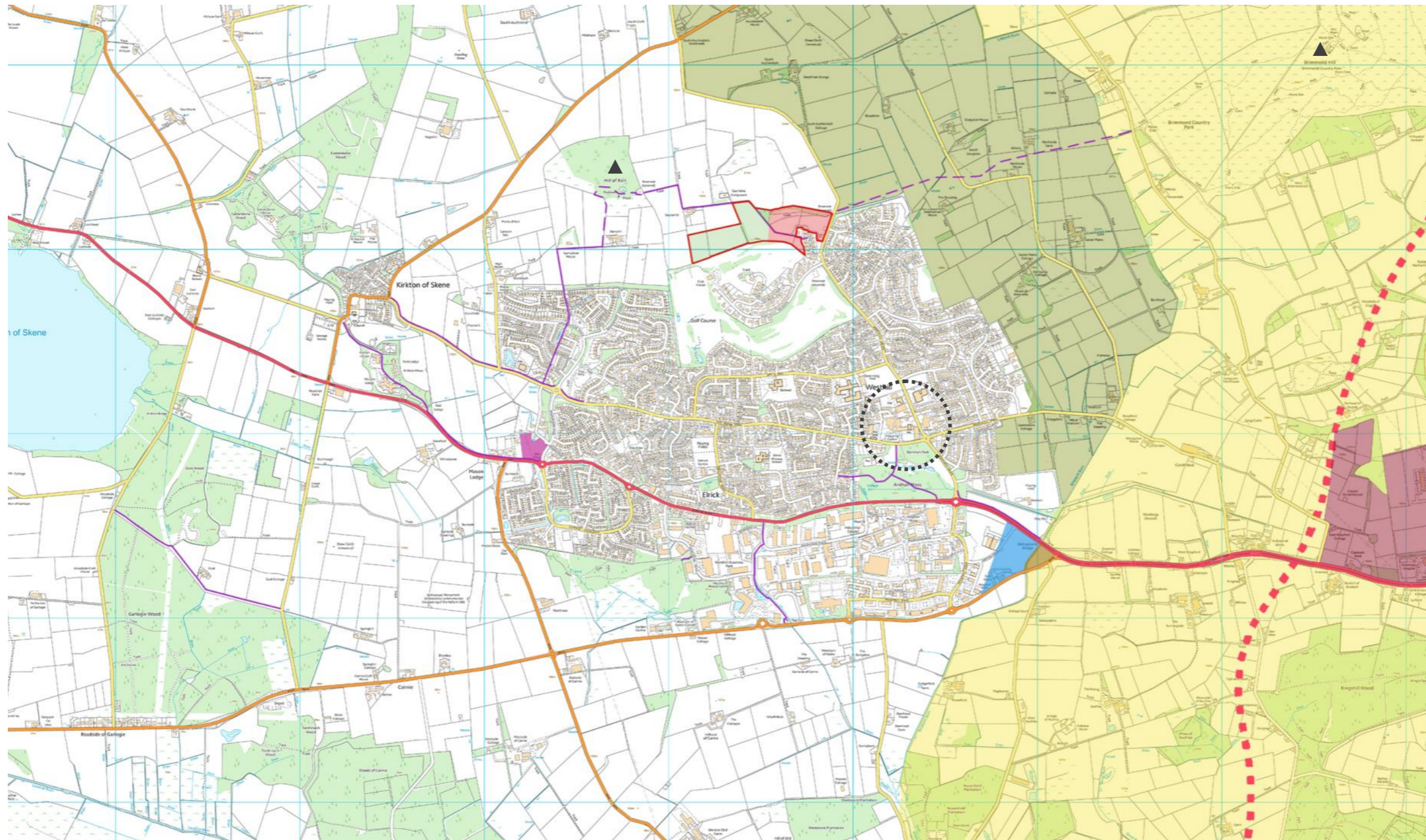
Westhill in 2008 (approx.)



Proposed housing Proposed green space

Westhill in 2018

SETTLEMENT ANALYSIS



Key

- Proposed housing
- Proposed green space
- A road
- B road
- C road
- Core path
- Aspirational Core path
- AWPR
- Tree belt / Parkland
- Green Belt—Aberdeenshire Council
- Green Belt—Aberdeen City Council
- OP Site (Housing) Aberdeenshire Council
- OP Site (Employ.) Aberdeenshire Council
- OP Site (Employ.) Aberdeen City
- OP Site (Employ.) Aberdeen City
- Town Centre

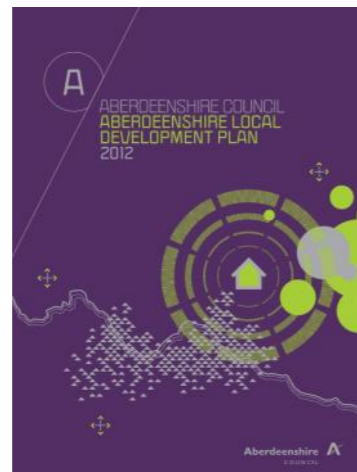
Settlement Analysis Map

PLANNING CONTEXT

Planning History

The site was first recommended for allocation in the Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2002. A subsequent planning application for development of the site was recommended for approval by officers in 2005 who found that the site was acceptable in terms of overall scale, layout, design and landscaping. That planning application was also supported by local Councillors but, as a result of the timing and outcome of the then Local Plan review, that positive recommendation was not carried forward for procedural reasons. Nonetheless the site remains a development opportunity with a history of planning authority support.

Development bids for the site were lodged for the 2012 and 2017 LDP's, but were not carried forward, favouring alternative sites instead. The Reporter in the 2016 ALDP Examination found that there was no need for additional housing land in Westhill at that time. This is no longer the case as the supply of housing land in Westhill is now significantly less.



Planning Justification

Westhill is located in a local growth and diversification area as identified by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2014. However the draft Strategic Development Plan Main Issues Report (2017) recognises the attractiveness of Westhill and presents an option for a Westhill / Banchory Strategic Growth Area. The SDP MIR is presently out for consultation and we expect that the idea of Westhill forming part of a western growth corridor will garner some support. Regardless, Westhill remains a strategic settlement in Garioch. We note that education and transport provision for a major development in Westhill would need a full review but there is capacity for small to medium scale development within the existing schools and road network. This is considered in the attached transport statement.

Housing Need

The Aberdeen city and Shire Strategic Development Plan Main Issues Report 2017 (Draft) identifies a housing allowance for 5500 new homes up to year 2030 and 16,200 houses from 2031-2040. There is also a target to deliver 2190 homes per annum over the next 25 years and a recognition that existing allocated sites are not delivering. Additional sites therefore need to be allocated to meet this need and fill the gaps in historic housing delivery. The most appropriate sites are those in identified settlements. Westhill has an advantage over most other settlement in terms of available services, substantial local employment opportunities and its strategic location in the AHMA.

Demand

Westhill is a popular location where people want to live and work. Since 2012, there have been 397 housing completions in Westhill, although given the allocations are now almost built out, completions are tailing off, and only 4 houses were built in 2017.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
59	110	62	134	28	4	397

Housing Completions, Westhill (source: Housing Land Audit)

Since 2008, completions have averaged 83 per year, which is significantly higher than comparable settlements with similar allocations, such as Banchory which has an annual average completion rate of 38 dwellings, despite significant allocations in the 2012 and 2017 Local Development Plans.

There is only one site allocated for residential development in Westhill in the current Local Development Plan – site OP1 for 10 units. All previous allocations from the 2012 LDP have been built out. There is therefore now a need for additional housing land, and this site offers an excellent opportunity for development.

Community Benefits

The site would deliver 25% affordable housing, for which there is a significant demand in Westhill. In addition, the site offers a community park, which would be available for all the community, and is located on the existing core path, meaning it is widely accessible. Land is also being made available to Westhill Golf Club for a new practice area, a facility which is key to the club's continued success. The development would include biodiversity enhancements, including blue-green corridors, and over 40% open space.

The site is within 10 minutes walk of the town centre, and is closer in proximity to the town centre than most other sites that are available for development.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Infrastructure Capacity

There are no infrastructure constraints to the delivery of this site. The scale of development proposed means that there are no infrastructure capacity issues and the site can progress quickly. The infrastructure capacity is summarised below:

Education

The 2016 School Roll Forecast shows capacity within Westhill Academy (210 pupil capacity at 2022) and Westhill Primary School (46 pupils at 2022) , to which the site is zoned. The development of this site is therefore unlikely to create any serious concerns for these schools.

Transportation and Roads

The site is well located for public transport, with a bus stop only 150metres from the site (at Blacklaws Brae) served by the 220 Stagecoach service. The road network has been reviewed by Fairhurst and can accommodate this scale of development. See Transport Statement lodged with this bid.

Water and Waste Water

Invercannie and Mannofield WTW has capacity for the development. Nigg WWTW has capacity for the development.

Electricity / Gas

It is anticipated that there is an available capacity in the existing gas and electricity network. No issues are foreseen.

The delivery of this site is discussed in more detail later in this report, but in summary the site is readily available, with no constraints to development. A planning application for the site has been prepared demonstrating the deliverability of the site. An application could essentially be lodged immediately as soon as the LDP review process allows.

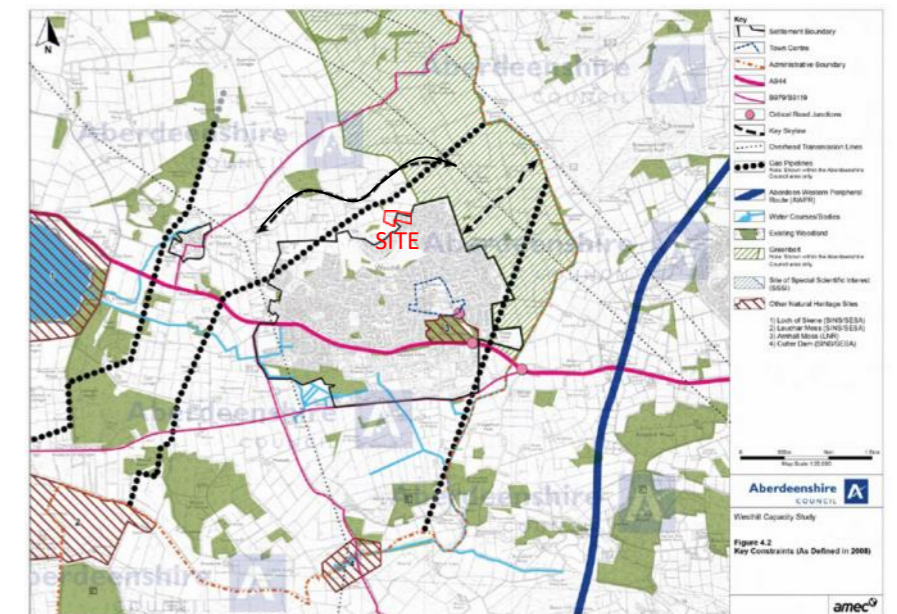
Westhill Capacity Study

The Westhill Capacity Study (WCS, prepared for Aberdeenshire Council by AMEC) document was updated in 2014, due to the time since the original capacity study was undertaken and the increasing pressure from businesses and developers. That document considers the future of Westhill over the next 20-25 years, and identifies capacity for development.

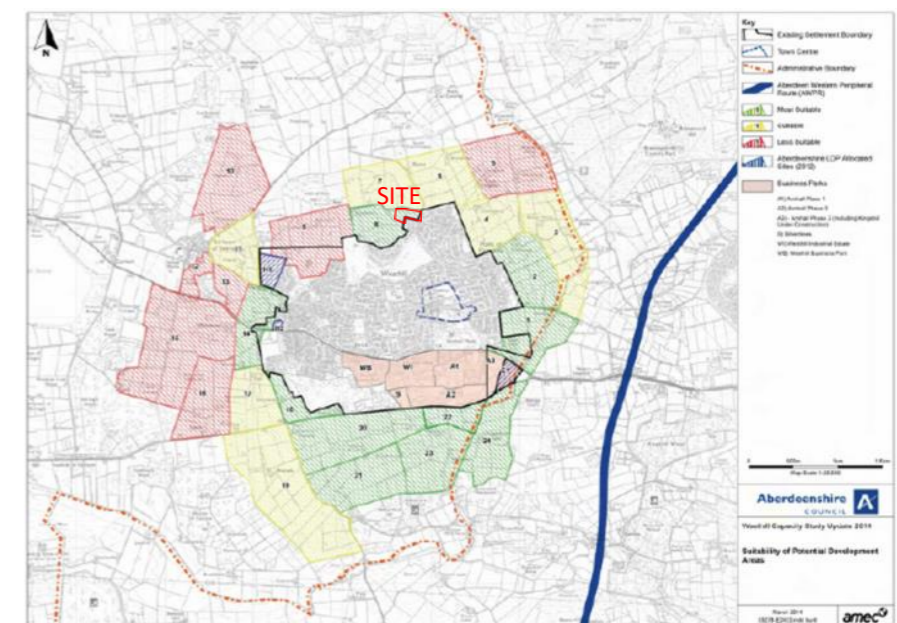
The study identifies key constraints, one of which is the key skyline. This site sits well within the skyline extents, as shown by the diagram opposite. The site is free from constraints.

The Capacity Study also identifies options for the future growth of Westhill. Potential development areas have been assessed against a Goal Achievement Matrix. The site at Soutarhill is identified as a 'most suitable' site in the capacity study. The site was assessed in the WCS as part of 'site 8', scoring 74% in an assessment against a Goal Achievement matrix (GAM), one of the best scores for Westhill.

The development areas identified as 'most suitable' have been so due to 'their proximity to employment and retail nodes, the capacity of nearby roads and their potential ability to enhance the spatial structure of Westhill'. This site, therefore, falls within that category and should be supported as an obvious preferred development site.



'Key Constraints' Fig 4.2, page 43 of Westhill Capacity Study 2014



'Suitability of potential development areas' Fig 10.1, page 79

TOPOGRAPHY

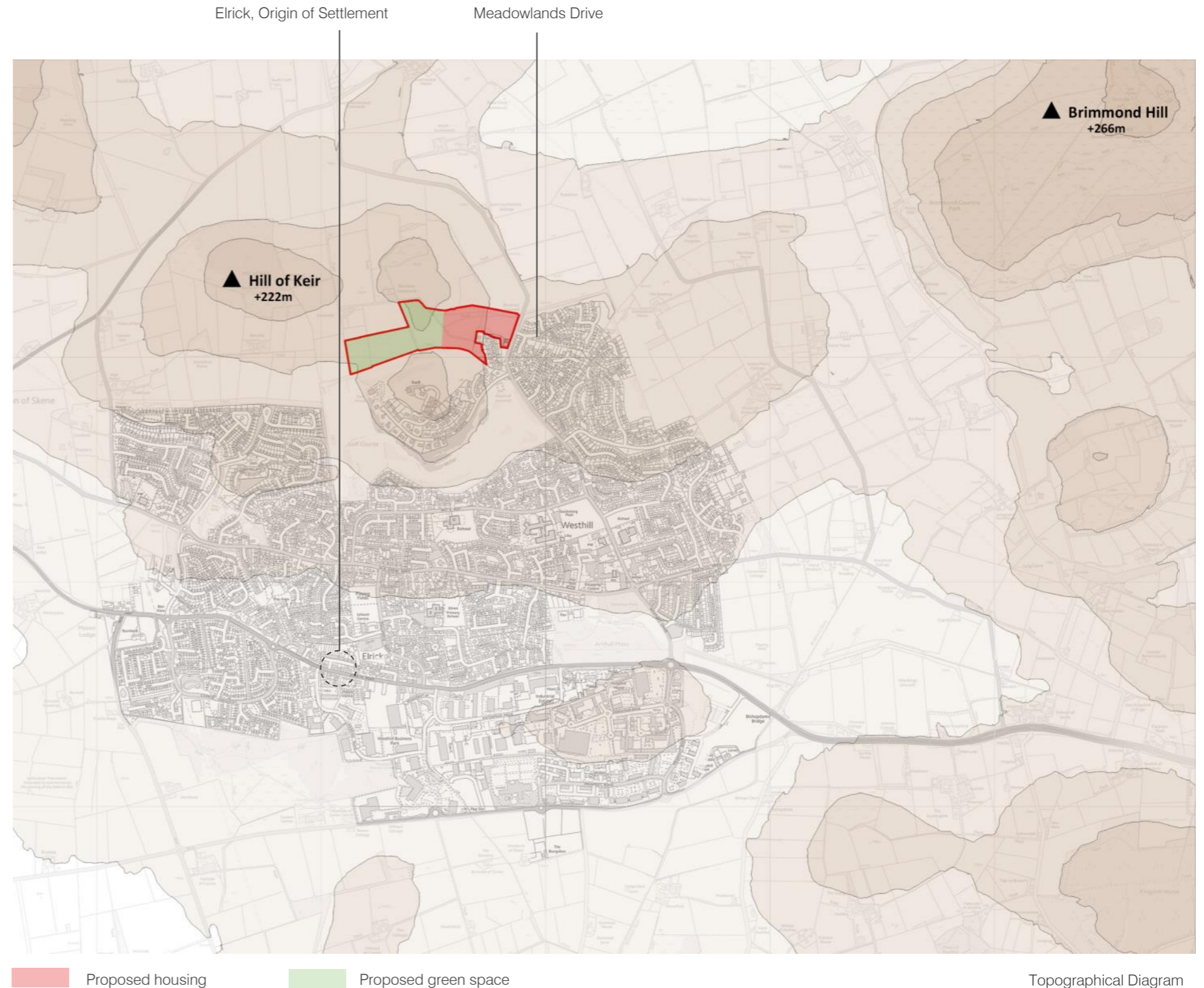
Topography

The local landform has led to a distinctive settlement pattern, having developed mainly on several south facing slopes which form part of the surrounding low rolling hills. The origins of the town around the village of Elrick lie in the low lying areas to the south of Westhill, but over time the town has expanded into more elevated positions on the hillside, for example at Mains of Kinmundy and on Westhill Heights. The Soutarhill site sits on the northern edge of Westhill.

The predominant land use of the area surrounding the town is agricultural pasture and the landform is generally rolling, rising to relatively low, rounded hills, such as Auchronie Hill (223m AOD), Hill of Keir (222m AOD) and the most pronounced, Brimmond Hill (266m AOD).

As shown in the adjacent illustration, a broad ridgeline extending from east of Kirkton of Skene over Hill of Keir to Westhill Drive, which was identified as a key skyline in the Aberdeenshire Council Landscape Capacity study (see previous page), offers excellent enclosure to the site from the north.

The housing site (identified within a red shade) slopes down to the east from a secondary high point (213m AOD) on the aforementioned ridgeline and is very similar therefore, in terms of enclosure and visibility, to the existing housing at Meadowlands Drive.



VISUAL APPRAISAL

Views

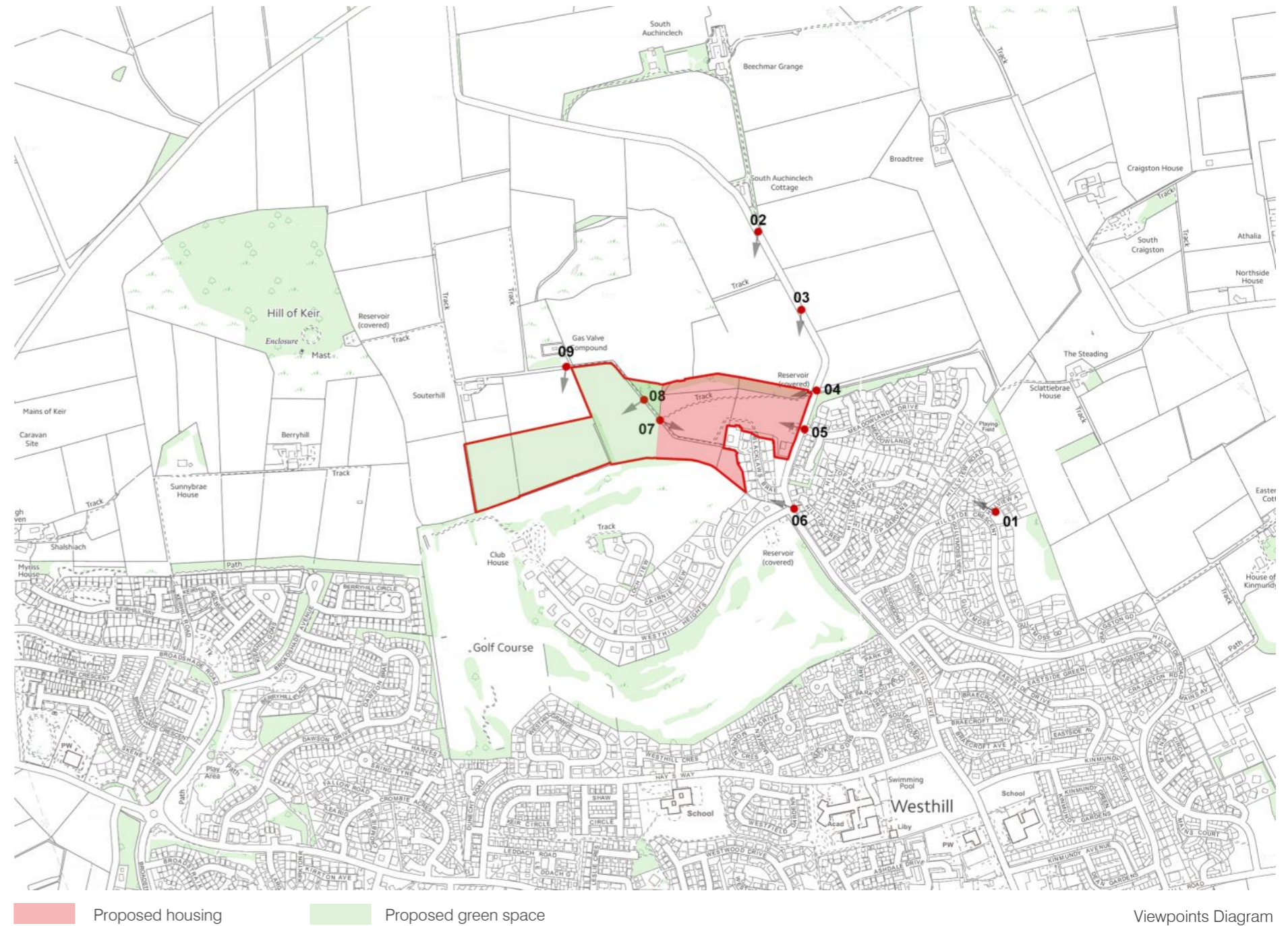
Viewpoints have been selected for the following purpose:

- To illustrate the existing site character and surrounding context.
- To allow a visual appraisal of the potential impacts of the development on the surrounding area
- To guide the proposed layout for the site

The photographs of the site contained within this document correspond with the viewpoint locations indicated on the adjacent plan.

Specific viewpoints were chosen based on the following criteria. Firstly viewpoints from close to the site were chosen to illustrate the existing site character in detail. Distance viewpoints were chosen to illustrate the surrounding context and the site's existing and potential impact on the area.

A summary of findings is included at the end of this section.



Housing Site



Site Photo taken March 2018

Viewpoint 01 — View to site from open space on Hillview avenue

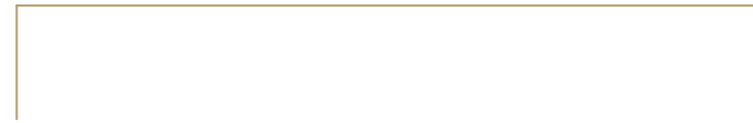
This viewpoint is situated in the area of open space on Hillview Avenue. The ridgeline at the centre of the site, upon which the mature planting is located, screens the majority of views to the western half of the site. The viewpoint location is at a very similar elevation to that of the highest, visible part of the site. It is apparent that the landform to the north and south of the site is more elevated than the visible parts of the site. The strip of structure planting on the northern boundary of the site is visible. The combination of this structure planting and the elevated landform north and south will assist in enclosing the site. As a result of the housing around Meadowlands Drive, to the right of the view, the proposed development would not appear to extend the settlement boundary of this edge of Westhill.

The proposals are explained later in the document, however, to summarise, the visual impact of the Soutarhill housing site will be minimal, in the context of the existing housing neighbourhoods to the south and east.



Site Photo taken August 2013

Housing Site



Housing on Hillside Crescent

North eastern edge of Westhill

Structure planting on Northern edge of Westhill

Shoulder of hill obscures site

Tops of mature planting around Sunnyhill Cottage



Site Photo taken March 2018

Viewpoint 02—View towards site on approach to Westhill from North, as Westhill Drive turns to run south

This viewpoint is taken from Westhill Drive, the main vehicular approach to Westhill from the north, close to the bend in the road at which it turns to run south towards the town. The housing to the north-east of Westhill around Meadowlands Drive is visible beyond the structure planting that has been introduced on this edge. To the right of the view the site is obscured by the shoulder of the hill to the north of the site. Only the tops of the trees on the site are visible.

In summary, the proposed housing site has minimal visual impact on the approach from the north.



Site Photo taken August 2013

Housing Site

Structure planting on northern edge of Westhill

Northern site boundary formed by structural planting

Mature planting on ridge



Site Photo taken March 2018

Viewpoint 03—View towards site on approach to Westhill from North, as Westhill Drive approaches town

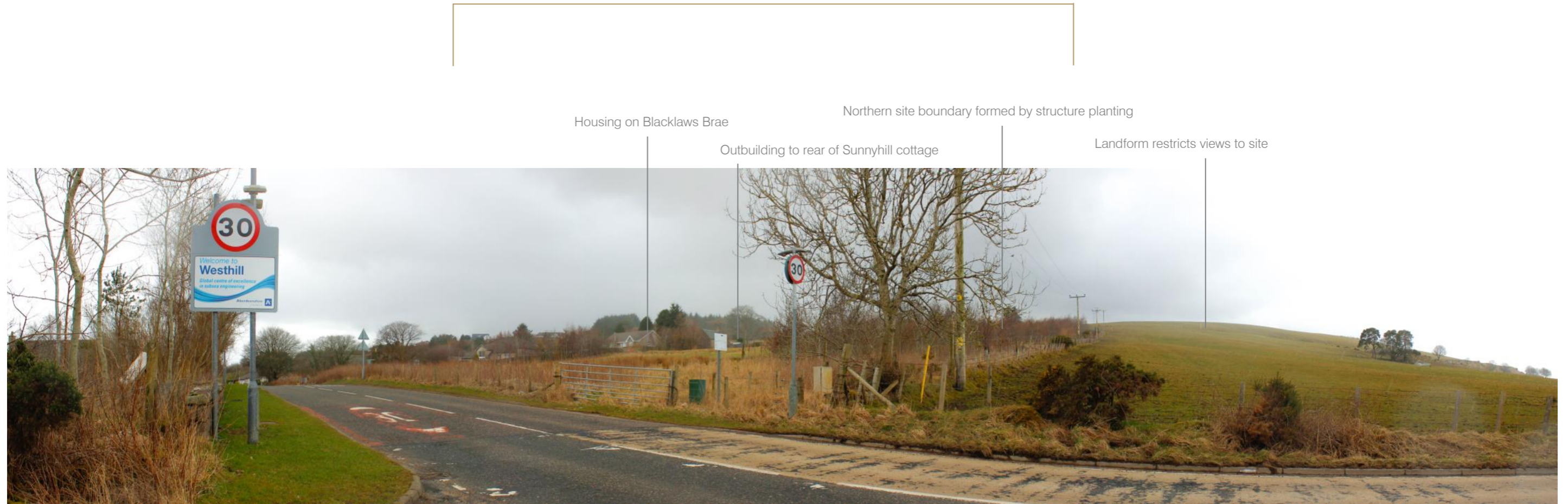
As with the previous viewpoint, this view is taken from Westhill Drive, the main vehicular approach to Westhill from the north. This location is taken closer to the northern edge of the town (approximately 150 metres). The housing to the north-east of the town around Meadowlands Drive is again visible, although the proximity to the structure planting on this edge results in more restricted views than those from Viewpoint 02. To the right of the view, the mature planting at the centre of the site is visible. The existing strip of structure planting extends east from this, down the slope towards the road. While this northern edge of the site is visible, the landform restricts views to the southern and western parts of the site. This screening effect will be increased as the structure planting on the northern site boundary matures (a photo from 2013 demonstrates tree growth over a 5 year period).

In summary, the proposed housing site has minimal visual impact on the approach from the north.



Site Photo taken August 2013

Housing Site



Site Photo taken March 2018

Viewpoint 04—View into site at Northern extent of Westhill, on Westhill Drive

This view looks into the site from the northern settlement boundary of Westhill. To the right of the view the elevated landform that screens the site in Viewpoints 02 and 03 is visible. The existing strip of structure planting sits at the centre of the view and rises up the site towards the mature planting on the ridgeline. This ridge screens views to the remainder of the site to the west. To the south of the site Westhill Golf Club is just visible between the properties on Blacklaws Brae.

In summary, the site is more visible as one moves past the settlement boundary. The topography, edge condition and neighbouring housing to the east establish a key opportunity to create a new positive entrance to Westhill.



Site Photo taken August 2013

Housing Site

Outbuilding to rear of Sunnyhill Cottage

Northern site boundary formed by existing structure planting

Housing on Blacklaws Brae

Mature planting on ridge

Landform restricts views to site from further to north



Site Photo taken March 2018

Viewpoint 05—View west across site from uncton of Meadowlands Drive and Westhill Drive

This viewpoint was chosen to describe the character of the site. Note the maturing tree belt in each photo from 2013 (below) and 2018 (above).

This location on Meadowlands Drive offers a view west into the site, across Westhill Drive. The mature planting is visible on the ridgeline at the centre of the site, which screens views to the western half of the site beyond. Extending from this, down the slope towards the road, is a maturing strip of structure planting. Beyond this, the landform rises to the hill that restricts views to the site from the north. On the southern boundary of the site several properties on Blacklaws Brae are visible. The mature planting around the boundary of Sunnyside cottage rises above the housing, obscuring views to the west.



Site Photo taken August 2013



Viewpoint 06—View towards site from junction of Westhill Drive and Westhill Heights

This viewpoint was chosen to describe the character of the surrounding area.

This viewpoint is situated to the south of the site on Westhill Drive as the road turns to face the site. The properties on Westhill Heights and Blacklaws Brae restrict views towards the site, with only the tops of the trees on the southern boundary visible.



Site Photo taken August 2013



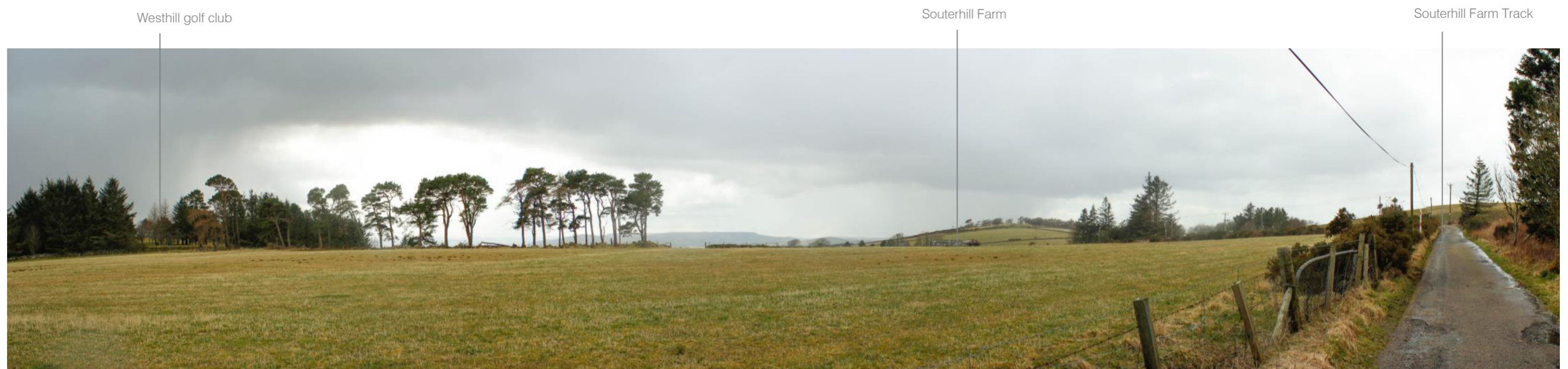
Viewpoint 07—View from minor road leading to Soutarhill Farm, looking into North-Eastern section of site

This viewpoint was chosen to describe the character of the site.

This view is taken from the ridgeline at the centre of the site, adjacent to the mature planting that was evident in a number of previous viewpoints. The viewpoint is located on the minor road that leads to Soutarhill Farm. To the right of the view the mature planting around Westhill Golf Club restricts views to the south. At the centre of the view the housing around Hillview Avenue rises to a very similar elevation as the height of the viewpoint. To the north-east relatively open views are offered towards Brimmond Hill.



Site Photo taken August 2013



Viewpoint 08—View across elevated western section of site, from minor road to Soutarhill Farm

This viewpoint was chosen to describe the character of the site.

Glimpse views are offered to Westhill Golf Course from the top of the hill at the centre of the site. Distant land forms are seen in the distance with very little built form in view.

Due to the open and relatively undisturbed views in this part of the site, opportunities exist to locate the site's open space contribution in this location.



Site Photo taken August 2013



Viewpoint 09—View across Western section of site, from minor road to Souterhill Farm

This viewpoint was chosen to describe the character of the site.

This location offers a view of the western section of the site. The mature planting at the centre of the site and around the golf course partially restrict views to the south and east. To the west, expansive views are offered across the wider town and landscape.

Due to the open and relatively undisturbed views in this part of the site, opportunities exist to locate the site’s open space contribution in this location.



Site Photo taken August 2013

VISUAL APPRAISAL SUMMARY

The visual amenity of a site is an important consideration for any new development.

In general, distant views to the Soutarhill site are not possible from the south and west by either the intervening development of the town of Westhill or by the landform surrounding the site.

To the north the site views are limited by the ridgeline (identified in Aberdeenshire Council Landscape Capacity study) as it falls towards Westhill Drive. As a result, the site is not seen from positions to the north along Westhill Drive, until relatively close to the site beyond the shoulder of the hill. This landform helps to restrict views of the proposed housing site.

From the north, the north-eastern edge of the town is visible from a greater distance. This is a result of the existing development around Meadowlands having already extended over a secondary ridge to the south-east, which otherwise contains Westhill. Therefore the proposed development site does not extend the visibility of housing into areas where housing is not currently visible. In other words, it does not extend the extent of visibility of the town into new areas and therefore has little additional impact.

The screening offered by this landform to the north is further reinforced by the 20 metre wide maturing belt of structure planting on the northern site boundary, which was planted in 2006. This shelter belt will continue to mature over the coming years offering a similar degree of screening to the housing site as already exists on the north eastern boundary of Westhill.

In summary, due to the surrounding natural landforms, boundary tree planting, mature tree groups and surrounding residential neighbourhoods, the visual impact of the proposed site on the surrounding area is minimised and in keeping with existing residential neighbourhoods in this part of Westhill.

SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Key Opportunities

1. Structure Planting

Existing tree planting provides visual screening on approach from the north and creates a strong landscape edge to this part of Westhill.

2. Westhill Golf Club House and Golf Course

The golf club represents an important amenity within close proximity of the site. An opportunity exists to enhance existing sports and social facilities.

3. Bus Stop

A bus stop on Westhill Drive provides regular public transportations link to Kirkton of Skene, Aberdeen, Oldmeldrum and Dyce.

4. Hill of Keir Viewpoint and Core Path

An existing core path exists between Westhill Drive, the Hill of Keir Viewpoint and western residential neighbourhoods (Keirhill Road), providing views over the landscape. Opportunities exist to design in this core path link into a proposed residential street pattern.

5. Existing Road Connections

Westhill Drive provides a direct link to the town centre and provides access to the site via Blacklaws Brae.

6. Views Over Landscape

The site opens up to the west, offering panoramic views over the landscape. Views to Brimmond Hill are possible from the eastern half of the site, where the land slopes down towards Westhill Drive.

7. Housing Site

A natural split in the site exists at the top of the ridge in line with the group of mature trees. An opportunity exists to contain housing within the eastern slopes and green space to the west.



Opportunities Diagram

SITE CONSTRAINTS

Key Constraints

1. Gas Pipeline

The existing Leuchar Moss to Craibstone high pressure gas pipeline crosses the north west corner of the site. SGN have confirmed no work, stockpiling or crossings are permitted within a 30m exclusion zone and no building is permitted within 38m of the pipeline. As illustrated, this pipeline does not affect the proposed housing site.

2. Utilities

There is an existing gas main, electricity cables, water main and BT cables passing through the site, will be diverted.

3. Existing Dwellings

The site contains one existing dwelling and is located within close proximity to an existing cluster of housing on Blacklaws Brae.

4. Topography

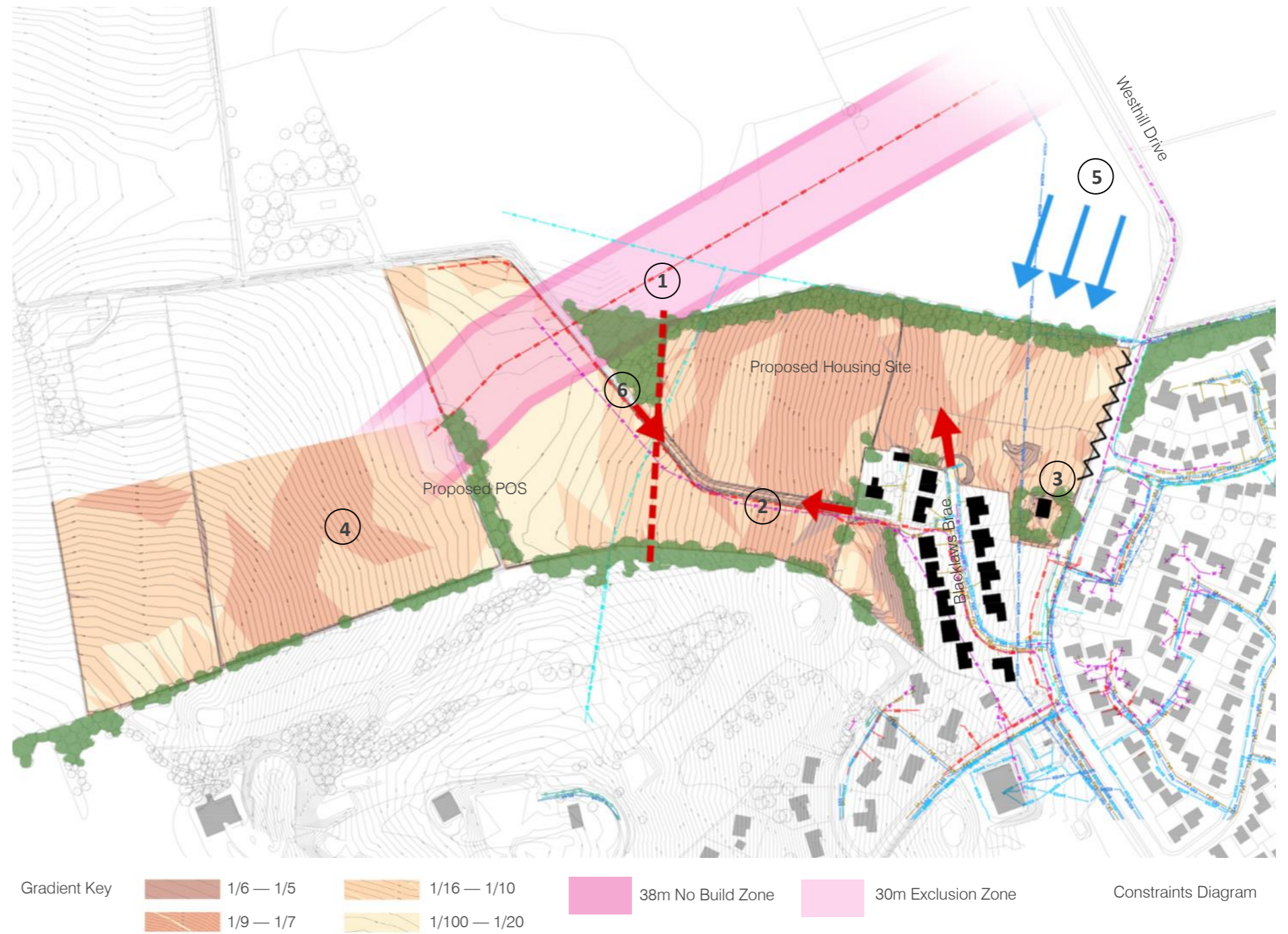
The land sits highest in the centre of the site and falls east, towards Westhill Drive and west towards Westhill Golf Club House. Steep gradients (for example 1 in 10) will influence street design.

5. Views into Site

The site is visible, however, partially screened by maturing tree planting along the northern boundary. This is in keeping with the established character of this northern edge of Westhill, including the existing residential neighbourhood at Meadowlands Drive.

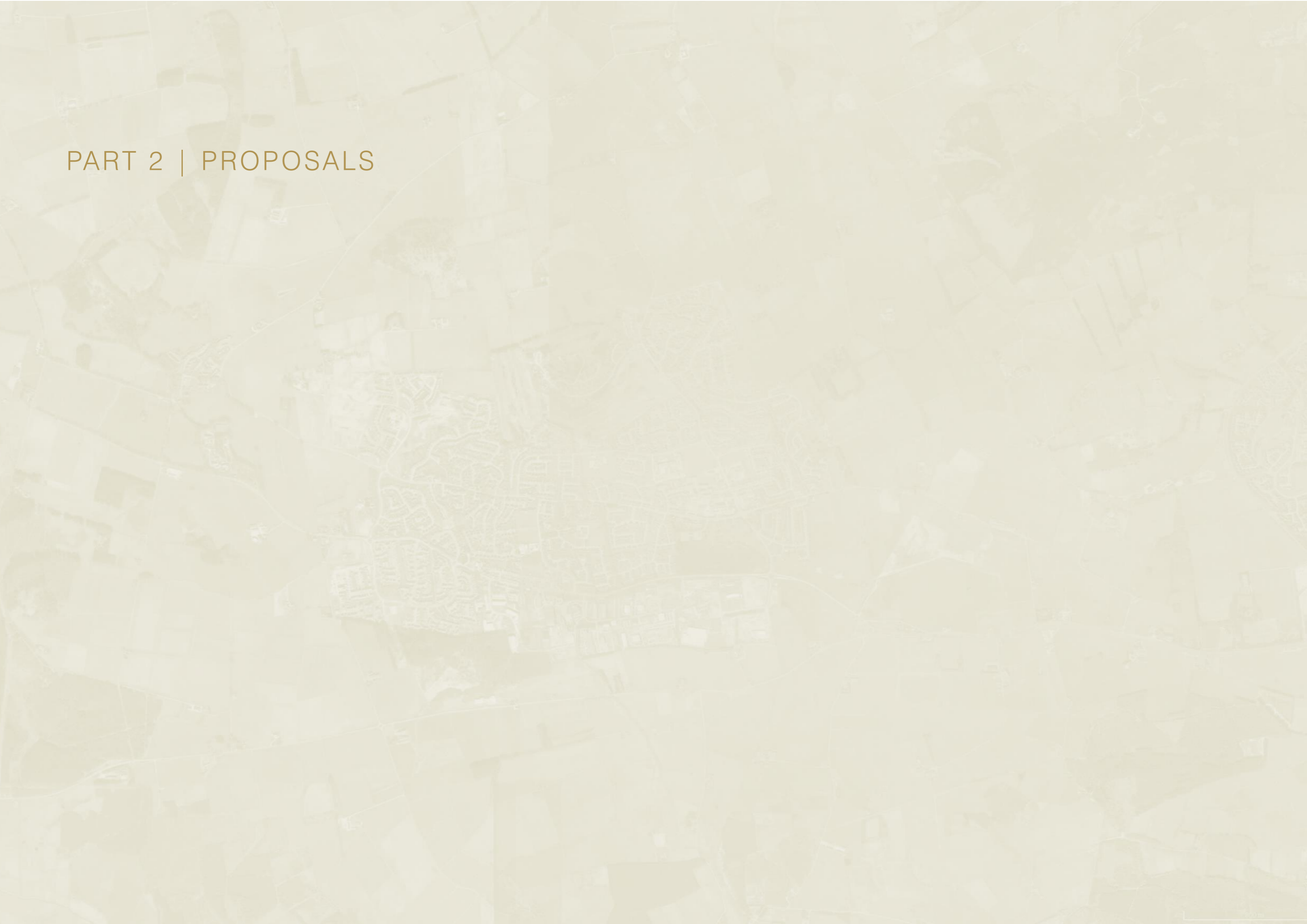
6. Existing Access Points

Existing access points exist off Blacklaws Brae, Westhill Drive Farm Access and Souterhill Farm Road.





PART 2 | PROPOSALS



CONCEPT

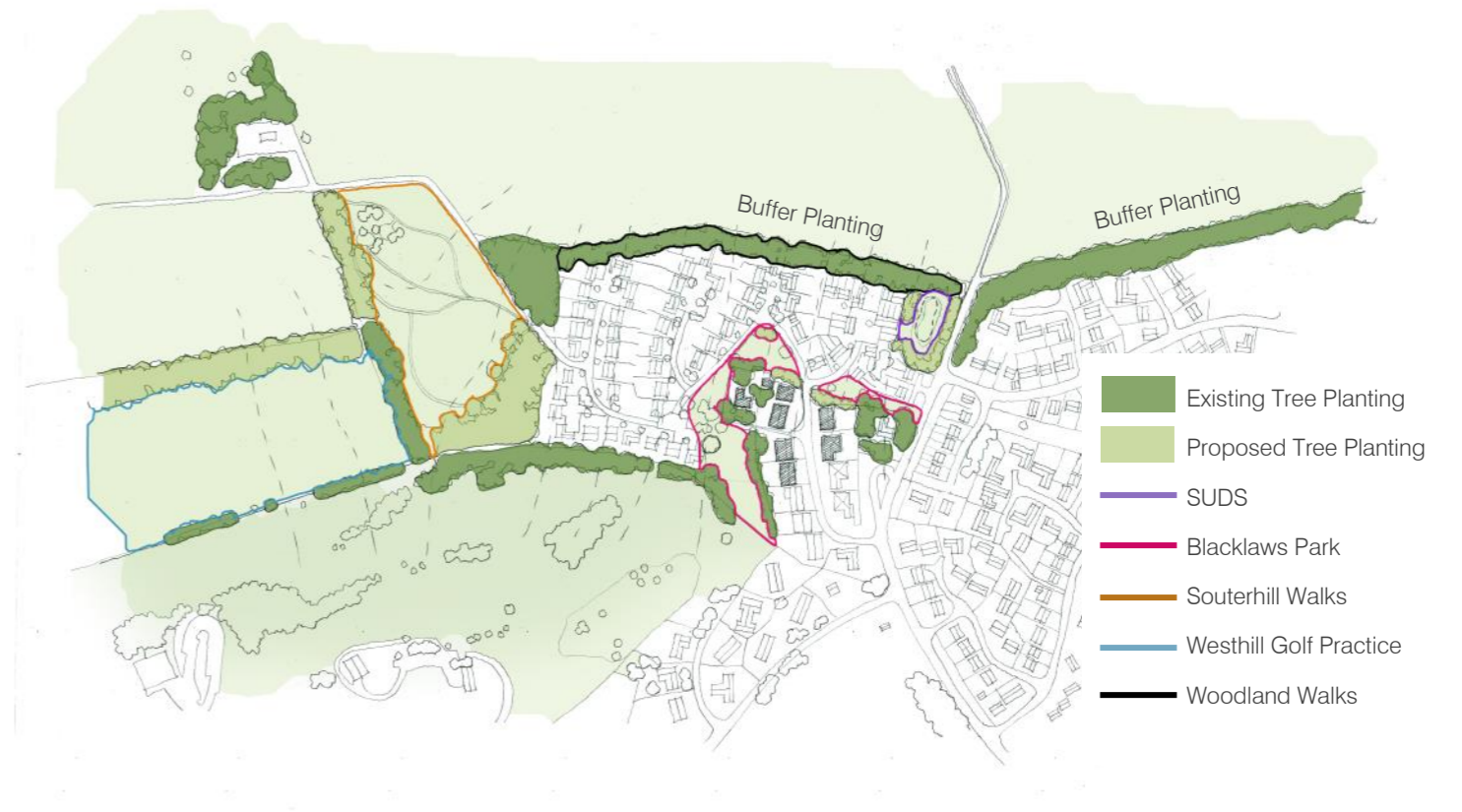


Character Areas

The site can be categorised into three distinct character areas—namely 'Blacklaws Heights', Souterhill Walks' and 'Westhill Golf Practice'.

'Blacklaws Heights' marks the eastern section of the site, which rises from approximately 165m AOD on Westhill Drive to the mature planting at the centre of the site around 195m AOD. This area has a clear relationship with the town as a result of the adjacent development on its southern and eastern sides and the urban character they exert over the site. The cluster of mature trees (*) sit at a low point on a ridge (but a high point in the site) that links the prominent Hill of Keir ridge to the landform on which Westhill Golf Club is located. The combination of the ridge and the planting upon it, forms a logical extent to built development on the site.

The remaining two areas of the site, 'Souterhill Walks' and 'Westhill Golf Practice', are dedicated to recreational use, providing high quality green space for residents and the wider Westhill community.



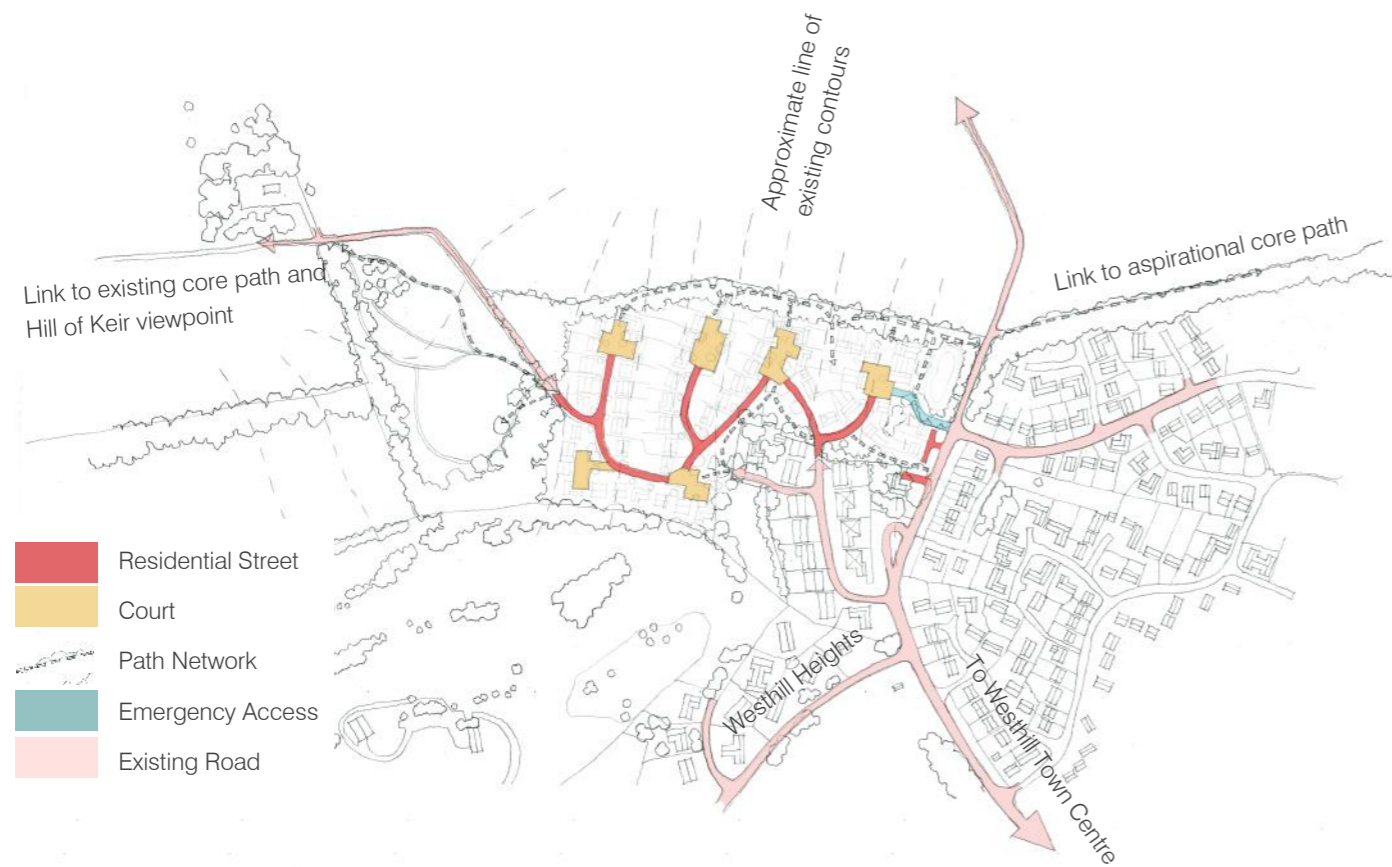
Landscape

Existing tree belts to the north and south of the proposed development provide visual screening on approach from the north of Westhill and from the Golf Course. Proposed strategic planting to east and west boundaries provide additional screening and shelter, and encourage the growth of future wildlife corridors.

The 'Souterhill Walks' and 'Westhill Golf Practice' character areas provide a significant contribution to public open space, amounting to approximately 50% of the total gross area of the site.

'Blacklaws Park' creates a green buffer around the existing cluster of buildings at Sunnyhill Cottage and affords room to wind the main street up the hill, carefully following the existing topography.

A SUDS basin is located at the lowest point of the site and is formed within its own landscaped area. Surface water run-off will be treated and attenuated (in accordance to latest SUDS Manual CIRIA C753) and discharged to the existing watercourse to the east of the site.



Street Hierarchy and Connectivity

A winding street pattern, echoing that of nearby Westhill Heights, follows existing contours and minimises the physical impact of the development on the land.

A series of informal 'Courts' create shared spaces for informal play and provide room for service vehicles to turn. Courts along the northern boundary play an important role in the site wide pedestrian path network, ensuring connectivity between residential streets. With some minor adjustments, the existing core path through the site is maintained and additional pedestrian links are added in the form of 'Woodland Walks', 'Soutarhill Walks' and 'Blacklaws Park'.

The main vehicle access to the site is taken from Blacklaws Brae with a small number of plots and an emergency route taking access directly from Westhill Drive. It is envisaged that some minor improvements may be required to Westhill Drive in the vicinity of the site.



Built Form and Key Buildings

Buildings follow the pattern of the surrounding area, with a mix of detached and semi-detached properties closely following street lines.

A small number of plots take access from Westhill Drive, ensuring the development has an active street frontage and a positive outlook on this prominent route north through Westhill.

Key buildings have been identified within the masterplan, offering opportunities for either dual or prominent frontages to complete vistas and turn corners.

Houses form clusters around 'Courts' with frontages on all sides to ensure overlooking and to encourage a sense of enclosure.

MASTERPLAN

Accommodation Schedule

Gross Site Area 31.3 acres

Public Open Space 22.5 acres (72%)

(includes Woodland Walks, Soutarhill Walks and Blacklaws Park and Westhill Golf Practice)

Total unit no. 70

53 Private Units (mix of 2-5 bed houses)

17 Affordable Units (2 bed houses, based on 25% provision)

Parking based on Aberdeenshire Parking Standards 2001.

Key Design Principles

- The site can accommodate approximately 70 residential units, consisting of a mix of housing tenures and types, including terraced, semi-detached and detached;
- The retention and bolstering of the existing structural planting on the northern edge of the site, assists in the screening of the development and forms a considered urban / rural transition to the northern edge of the town, which echoes that of the Meadowlands development to the east. This belt of planting, in addition to new north / south planting belts, assist with screening, wind shelter and the growth of existing habitat corridors;
- The street pattern carefully follows the existing topography and ties into existing access locations on Blacklaws Brae and Soutarhill Farm Lane. Pedestrian links have been carefully designed to maximise connectivity throughout the site, with networks extending along the wooded north boundary, parkland to the south and community space to the west;
- The layout is designed to ensure houses proposed adjacent to those on Blacklaws Brae or Sunnyhill Cottage are positioned back or side-on to respect the amenity of these existing properties to prevent them feeling overlooked with a buffer between 20—40m. Due to the topographical characteristics of the site, the majority of houses benefit from a good solar aspect and views to Brimmond Hill;
- A significant and valuable area of community woodland and parkland to the west of the site offers benefits to the wider community. This area could include a network of paths, a picnic area, seating, woodland, children's play area and wildflower areas. It has been designed to maximise potential views to the wider landscape to the west and path links could form part of the core path network. A smaller park is located within Blacklaws Heights.
- Vehicular access to the site is provided via Blacklaws Brae, with a secondary / emergency access also opening onto Westhill Drive;
- The SUDS pond is determined by landform and offers functional treatment, ecological and aesthetic value;
- New foul sewers will installed within the development discharging to the existing sewers in Westhill Drive.



Westhill Drive

Existing Planting

Woodland Walks

SUDS

'Soutarhill Walks'

Blacklaws Heights

'Westhill Golf Practice'

Westhill Golf Club

To Town Centre

CHARACTER AREA: BLACKLAWS HEIGHTS

1. Courts

Courts create a welcoming shared spaces for children's play.

2. Woodland Walks

The 'Woodland Walks' area plays a vital role in connecting streets, which would otherwise not be possible due to topographical constraints. The tree belt contributes to the wider visual screening of the site and echo's the existing character of the settlement boundary at Meadowlands Drive.

3. Street Pattern

The street pattern carefully follows existing contours, which contributes to this site's unique and distinctive character. Cut/fill requirements are minimised, helping to ensure a resource efficient development.

4. Sunny Gardens

The majority of plots are east-west orientated, with a tiered arrangement, maximising sunny back gardens and views to Brimmond Hill.

5. Existing Access

An extensive path network is proposed throughout the site, taking advantage of existing vehicular and core path routes to ensure connectivity both within and out with the site.

6. Core Path Connection

An existing path connection will be retained through the development, via Blacklaws Park (the park also forms a landscape buffer around several existing dwellings).



Masterplan Extract



Impression of Residential Street

CHARACTER AREA: SOUTARHILL WALKS

1. Picnic Spots

Dedicated picnic spots create a valuable amenity for neighbouring residents and the wider Westhill community.

2. Planting

Additional woodland planting, informal grassland and wildflower meadows help to establish Soutarhill Walks as a valuable recreational and ecological resource.

3. Paths

A network of informal paths is proposed providing valuable walking and cycling loops. It is envisaged that the core path network could be rerouted through this area, rather than following the minor farm road.

4. Children's Play Area

Play equipment could be located within Soutarhill Walks, providing an additional amenity for young families in Westhill.



Masterplan Extract



3D Visualisation of the Proposals



Existing View

CHARACTER AREA: WESTHILL GOLF PRACTICE

1. Golf Practice

The site at Soutarhill offers an excellent opportunity for a golf practice area to support the existing Westhill Golf Club.

It is widely known that golf is in decline across Scotland, with less young people becoming club members and participating in local competitions. Between 2015 and 2016, for example, the number of registered golfers fell by more than 6,000. One of the reasons cited is the extensive time and effort required to learn to play. Former Scottish Golf CEO █████ █████ argued that 'golf clubs must reinvent themselves or they could face oblivion, in the face of falling memberships and an apparent decline in interest in the game.'

A dedicated golf practice area, such as that proposed at Soutarhill, offers a local solution to this problem. Westhill Golf Practice could provide a space for players to learn and develop specific skills, without the need to play a full round of golf. By improving the Golf Club's resources, the practice area could potentially attract new members or players to Westhill, in particular those who are looking for more flexibility (for example, the ability to play for half an hour after work or after school).

The key message is that golf clubs across Scotland need to diversify and become more accessible. At Westhill Golf Practice, there are many more opportunities for leisure use, which could attract a wider market. Activities such as disc or football golf are growing in popularity and require minimal alterations to standard course design.

The benefits are wide ranging – a golf practice range could help bring the Golf Club in to the heart of the Westhill community. In conjunction with Soutarhill Walks, the area could become a new centre for outdoor recreation with woodland trails, cycle paths, a golf course, practice area, children's' play areas and picnic spots.

The proposals follow discussions with Westhill Golf Club, who are fully supportive of the proposals.

2. Planting

The northern boundary will be planted to provide wind shelter. Occasional tree planting on the southern boundary offers glimpse views to Westhill Golf Club.

3. Views to West

Views open up to the west boundary towards to rest of Westhill and beyond to Kirkton of Skene.



View of Westhill Golf Club



Young Golfers



Disc Golf



Football Golf



Masterplan Extract

PHASING

Site Delivery

- Delivery of approximately 25 units per year
- Planning Application is ready for submission now
- CALA are ready to begin as soon as Planning is in place
- Funding is in place

Phasing

- The phasing strategy will start at the front of site, on Westhill Drive. See diagram adjacent for approximate stages.
- Site Start in 2022 or earlier as determined by the Local Development Plan process.
- 2 sales expected per month



Phasing Plan

SUMMARY

CALA Homes (North) Limited are a leading housebuilder, not only in the North East of Scotland, but nationally. CALA consistently deliver high quality homes, and in the last 12/24 months have developed across 5 sites in Aberdeen City and have added a further three sites to this portfolio in 2018. The fact there is a developer behind this site with a track record of delivering housing, emphasises the deliverability of the site.

The combination of this site located in a desirable location, with no infrastructure constraints and a housebuilder with a commitment to deliver the site also reiterates the clear deliverability of the site.

The site is immediately deliverable. CALA have all the relevant technical information prepared to inform a planning application, and should the site be allocated, a planning application is ready to be submitted immediately. Given the scale of the site, it would be anticipated to be built out over 2-3 years. As outlined, there are no infrastructure capacity issues to the development of the site.

The development of this site would assist in maintaining land supply in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area. The housing completions in Westhill evidence that this is a desirable location that people want to live in, and there is significant demand for additional development in Westhill. The site would also contribute 25% affordable housing and extensive new outdoor amenity space, for which there is significant demand for in the local area.

Soutarhill brings the following key benefits:

- ***Small scale***
- ***Immediately deliverable***
- ***Infill development***
- ***Desirable location***
- ***25% affordable homes***
- ***70% public open space***
- ***High quality homes***
- ***Golf practice range to support Westhill Golf Club***
- ***Wider community benefits***



Souterhill Farm Residential Development, Westhill, Aberdeenshire

Transport Statement

March 2018



CONTROL SHEET

CLIENT: CALA Homes

PROJECT TITLE: Souterhill Farm Development, Westhill, Aberdeenshire

REPORT TITLE: Transport Statement

PROJECT REFERENCE: 124001 / TS01

Issue & Approval Schedule	ISSUE 1	Name	Signature	Date	
	Prepared by	██████████	████████████████████	27/03/18	
	Checked by	██████████	████████████████████	27/03/18	
	Approved by	██████████	████████████████████	27/03/18	
Revision Record	Rev.			Signature	
	2			By	
				Checked	
				Approved	
	3			By	
				Checked	
Approved					

This document has been prepared in accordance with procedure OP/P02 of the
Fairhurst Quality and Environmental Management System

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Appendices

APPENDIX A	Scoping Correspondence
APPENDIX B	Accessibility Maps
APPENDIX C	Site Layout Plan - Halliday Fraser Munro Drawing No. 10986 SK (00)03_C

1 Introduction

1.1 General

1.1.1 This Transport Statement has been prepared on behalf of CALA Homes in support of a Local Development Plan bid proposal for a 68 unit residential development at Souterhill Farm, Westhill. The proposal comprises 51 private and 17 affordable dwellings.

1.1.2 This report will consider the access proposals as well as considering the accessibility of the site with priority given to sustainable forms of travel, including walking, cycling, public transport and then vehicle use.

1.2 Existing Site

1.2.1 The site is located to on the north edge of the Westhill settlement, bounded to the east by Westhill Drive and existing residential units along Blacklaws Brae. Further east of Westhill Drive lies existing residential development at Meadowlands Drive and Hilltop Drive. The Westhill Golf Club forms the southern boundary, whilst western and northern boundaries are characterised by open fields and agricultural land. The site is currently vacant shrub land with trees along the west and south sides. The existing site's location is illustrated by Figure 1-1.

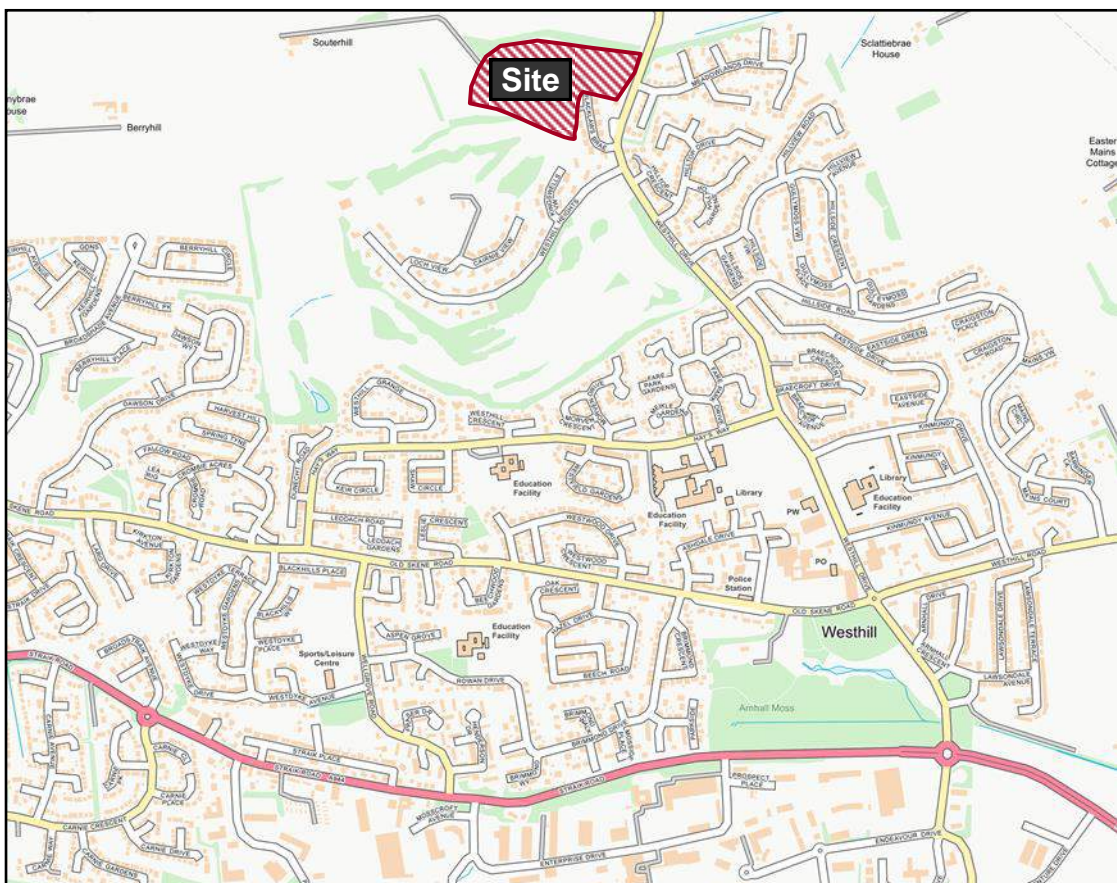


Figure 1-1: Site Location Plan

1.3 **Scoping Discussions**

1.3.1 Fairhurst has agreed scoping of the TS with Aberdeenshire Council in advance of preparing this report in order to agree the content, methodology and certain parameters to be adopted. All relevant scoping correspondence is contained within Appendix A.

1.4 **Planning Policy Context and Guidance**

1.4.1 The TS has been undertaken giving recognition to appropriate national, regional and local planning policies including the Scottish Government documents 'Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)', 'Planning Advice Note 75 (PAN 75)', and 'Transport Assessment Guidance'.

1.5 **Transport Statement Structure**

1.5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the 'Transport Assessment Guidance' document issued by Transport Scotland, and will be structured as follows:

- Transport Planning Policy
- Site Accessibility
- Development Proposals & Access Arrangements
- Trip Generation & Traffic Impact
- Residential Travel Plan Framework
- Summary & Conclusions

2 Planning Policy Context

2.1 National Planning Policy

2.1.1 The National Policy Context is principally defined by 'Scottish Planning Policy' (SPP), and Scottish Planning Advice Note 75 (PAN 75) 'Planning for Transport'. The Scottish Government documents 'Transport Assessment Guidance' and 'Designing Streets' are also of relevance.

2.1.2 The Scottish Government's 'Scottish Planning Policy' (SPP) issued in June 2014 identifies the Scottish Government's overarching aim to increase sustainable economic growth within Scotland.

2.1.3 SPP revolves around the principal policies – sustainability and placemaking. In considering how planning should support the vision, the document outlines the key outcomes that developments need to contribute to:

- 'A successful, sustainable place – supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and creation of well-designed, sustainable places.'
- 'A low carbon place – reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.'
- 'A natural, resilient place – helping to protect and enhance our natural and cultural assets, and facilitating their use.'
- 'A more connected place – supporting better transport and digital connectivity.'

2.1.4 The 'Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel' section of SPP stresses the importance of efficient transport connections within Scotland and to international markets, and the crucial role that planning plays to improving such infrastructure. The section goes on to identify within paragraph 270 that the planning system should support developments that:

- 'optimise the use of existing infrastructure;
- reduce the need to travel;
- provide safe and convenient opportunities for walking and cycling for both active travel and recreation, and facilitate travel by public transport; and
- enable the integration of transport modes'.

2.1.5 Paragraph 273 notes that 'the spatial strategies set out in plans should support development in locations that allow walkable access to local amenities and are also accessible by cycling and public transport. Plans should identify active travel networks and promote opportunities for travel by more sustainable modes in the following order of priority: walking, cycling, public transport, cars.'

- 2.1.6 SPP notes in paragraph 287 that ‘Planning permission should not be granted for significant travel-generating uses at locations which would increase reliance on the car and where:
- direct links to local facilities via walking and cycling networks are not available or cannot be made available; and
 - access to local facilities via public transport networks would involve walking more than 400m.’
- 2.1.7 SPP identifies that the accessibility criteria relates to ‘*significant travel-generating uses*’. The proposal is not considered to be a significant travel generating use. SPP notes at paragraph 286 that a Transport Assessment should be carried out for proposals that will generate a ‘significant’ level of trips. For smaller developments that will not generate a significant level of trips, a simplified Transport Statement is required to support a planning application, which is the case in this instance. This is in line with guidance contained within Transport Scotland’s document ‘Transport Assessment Guidance’.
- 2.1.8 SPP also indicates at paragraph 279 that the public transport accessibility criteria for developments that will generate a significant level of trips should be considered differently from smaller developments that will not generate a significant travel demand. Nonetheless, the accessibility criteria are recognised as good practice guidance for smaller developments.
- 2.1.9 PAN 75 identifies the need for the integration of land use planning with transport, taking into account policies on economic growth, education, health and the objective of a more inclusive society.
- 2.1.10 PAN 75 identifies in Annex B the undernoted thresholds:
- ‘For accessibility of public transport the recommended guidelines are less than 400m to bus services;
 - A maximum threshold of 1600m for walking is broadly in line with observed travel behaviour.’
- 2.1.11 Whilst the accessibility criteria noted within PAN 75 represents good practice, the proposal will not generate a significant level of trips and should be considered differently from larger proposals that do generate significant trip levels.
- 2.1.12 When discussing Travel Plans, SPP paragraph 279 notes that ‘Development Plans should indicate when a Travel Plan will be required to accompany a proposal for a development which will generate significant travel’. This indicates that developments that do not generate significant levels of trips may not require a Travel Plan.
- 2.1.13 PAN 75 indicates that ‘Travel Plans are documents that set out a package of positive and complementary measures, for the overall delivery of more sustainable travel patterns for a specific development.’ It further states that ‘their ability and success in influencing travel patterns is dependent upon the commitment of the developer and occupier of a development.’ For residential land uses, PAN 75 notes at paragraph 43

that ‘travel plans may set out measures which will be used as an incentive to house purchasers to use non-car travel modes, but setting targets is generally not practicable for this land use. Sustainability in housing should come through design in relation to walking, cycling and public transport networks.’

- 2.1.14 Transport Assessment Guidance (TAG) has been published by Transport Scotland to guide the preparation of Transport Assessments (TA) for development proposals in Scotland. Paragraph 1.8 notes that the TA process “*is directed towards successful delivery of development-related transport measures aimed at achieving sustainable transport outcomes.*” It further notes that the “*process incorporates scoping, transport assessment and implementation including travel plans and monitoring.*” Paragraph 2.2 provides some guidance on the principles of the assessment and states “*the TA deals with person-trips, not car trips.*”
- 2.1.15 Paragraph 3.2 of TAG states that “In the case of local developments or changes of use where transport impacts are likely to be insignificant, a detailed assessment will not be necessary. At the next level, a simple Transport Statement can help inform decision makers.” Paragraph 4.1 continues by stating that “A Transport Statement (TS) should identify the main transport issues relating to a proposed development. This will normally include details of the existing conditions and for the proposed development. The TS will identify the existing transport infrastructure, travel characteristics associated with the site and the proposed measures to improve the infrastructure and services to encourage sustainable travel to the site. Detailed accessibility analysis and assessment of the traffic impacts will not be required.”
- 2.1.16 ‘Designing Streets’ sets out Scottish Government policy to be followed in designing and approving the layout of settlements. The Scottish Government’s policy emphasises that street design should meet the six qualities of successful places, as set out in Designing Places. The six qualities and key considerations are summarised as follows:
- Distinctive – street design should respond to local context to deliver places that are distinctive
 - Safe and pleasant – streets should be designed to be safe and attractive places
 - Easy to move around – streets should be easy to move around for all users and connect well to existing networks
 - Welcoming – streets layout and detail should encourage positive interaction for all members of the community
 - Adaptable – street networks should be designed to accommodate future adaptation
 - Resource efficient – street design should consider orientation, the integration of sustainable drainage and use attractive, durable materials that can be easily maintained.

2.2 Regional Policy

2.2.1 Regional Policy for the proposed development is largely defined by:

- Approved Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (March 2014)
- NESTRANS Regional Transport Strategy *Refresh* 2035 (Jan 2014)

2.2.2 The Approved Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (SDP) identifies 'four strategic growth areas' (SGA) which will be the focus of development in the area up to 2035. The SDP notes, "*The strategic growth areas are centred on Aberdeen and the main public transport routes.*" The SDP also aims to "*make the most efficient use of the transport network, reducing the need for people to travel and making sure that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive choices.*"

2.2.3 The Strategic Development Plan identifies the undernoted objectives:-

- 'To be a city region which takes the lead in reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air, adapts to the effects of climate change and limits the amount of non-renewable resources it uses;
- To make sure that new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future, and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and business to move to;
- To make sure that all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport by making these attractive choices'.

2.2.4 The SDP endorses the role of 'Sustainable mixed communities' in making sure that 'new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future, and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and businesses to move to'.

2.2.5 The NESTRANS Regional Transport Strategy *Refresh* 2035 (RTS) identifies within its four Strategic Objectives the requirements to:

- 'to enhance and exploit the North East's competitive economic advantages, and to reduce the impacts of peripherality;
- enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport for all in the north east, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited; and
- support transport integration and a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.'

2.3 Local Policy

2.3.1 Local Policy is defined in:

- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP) 2017;

- Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2012.
- 2.3.2 The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP) 2017 sets out the ground rules for the development of land under the land use planning acts. The proposed plan sets out the Council's statement of policies that will guide the assessment of planning applications while also confirming the principle of development on sites across Aberdeenshire. The ALDP sets out the Council's land use planning and development policies from the date of approval until 2026.
- 2.3.3 The Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy 2012 (LTS) sets out the transportation vision and objectives of the Council and provides a three-year implementation plan for meeting local changes and needs.
- 2.3.4 To deliver its aim, the LTS embraces a simple guiding principle which is to *'encourage businesses and individuals to consider ways to travel less, travel more actively and, where vehicular travel is necessary, how journeys could be made more effectively.'*
- 2.3.5 The five broad objectives sets out in the LTS are 'promote sustainable economy growth, promote social inclusion and accessibility, protect the environment, improve safety and improve integration.'

3 Site Accessibility

3.1 Local Area Summary

- 3.1.1 The site is located at the northern boundary of Westhill, adjacent to existing residential neighbourhoods at Blacklaws Brae, Westhill Heights, Meadowlands Drive and Hilltop Drive. The proposed development will form an extension to an existing residential zone.
- 3.1.2 Westhill is a sub-regional centre accommodating mixed-use development comprising residential, retail and employment uses. The areas to the south of the A944 are predominantly employment uses with some retail elements.

3.2 Walking and Cycling Accessibility

- 3.2.1 Walking is the most sustainable mode of transport and it promotes good health and has significant environmental benefits when compared to similar journeys made by car. It is recognised that thirty minutes of brisk walking per day can make a significant difference to a person's health, which should be encouraged.
- 3.2.2 A walking catchment of 1600 metres is recognised in PAN 75 as being broadly in line with observed travel behaviour. PAN 75 also notes that the quality of walking and cycling networks within 800 metres of a development can influence accessibility on foot. Figure 3-1 in Appendix B presents walking isochrones 800 and 1600 metres, representing walking times of approximately 10 and 20 minutes respectively, measured along formal footway connections to and from the proposed development. Figure 3-1 illustrates that the 1600m walking catchment encompasses all key local amenities in the town, including Aldi supermarket, Westhill Shopping Centre, Westhill Primary and Academy, Westhill Library, Community Centre and Swimming Pool.
- 3.2.3 The majority of pedestrian movement from the site is expected to be southbound as a result of the site's location with regards to the rest of Westhill.
- 3.2.4 Blacklaws Brae will provide access into the development from the external network. It accommodates 1.8m wide footways on both side of the carriageway. In the easterly direction, the footways connect with the footway on the west side of Westhill Drive. Blacklaws Brae is subject to a 20mph speed limited, which is complemented by speed tables along its length. Presently, it provides direct frontage access to existing driveways along its length. Footways on Blacklaws Brae are well lit and facilitate links to the wider pedestrian network within Westhill.
- 3.2.5 Westhill Drive to the south forms a direct route to Westhill town centre, where local facilities can be accessed and are all within an acceptable walking distance of the proposed site. Westhill Drive is subject to a 30mph speed limit and the footways are well lit. It facilitates links to key routes within Westhill, including Hay's Way, Hillside Road, Westhill Road, Old Skene Road and the A944.

- 3.2.6 Figure 3-1 within Appendix B illustrates the local facilities located within Westhill, which includes the Westhill Shopping Centre where there are convenience shops, restaurants, pharmacy, coffee shop and post office.
- 3.2.7 Westhill and Arnhall Business Parks, located to the south of Westhill, form part of the core employment zone within the area. Given their function as a major employment centre, the Business Parks have a good network of pedestrian footways facilitating access to business/commercial areas within the business park.
- 3.2.8 There are a number of designated pedestrian crossing points on the A944 Straik Road which provide safe crossing for north-south pedestrian movements between the residential areas to the north and commercial/business areas to the south.
- 3.2.9 The proposed development site is between 30 to 40 minutes walking distance from the employment areas within the business park.
- 3.2.10 Like walking, cycling has an important part to play in reducing congestion, improving accessibility and reducing pollution. A further benefit of cycling is linked to increased general health and fitness which has personal benefits as well as economic benefits for the nation in terms of health service costs. The bicycle is generally more affordable than the car and hence there are social equity benefits to the promotion of cycling. Cycling can also allow people without cars to reach destinations that they may otherwise be unable to reach on foot.
- 3.2.11 The nearest cycle facility is on road cycle lanes on Westhill Drive, approximately 70 metres south of the Blacklaws Brae junction. Westhill has an extensive network of cycle facilities forming the Westhill 'No Excuse Zone'. The zone covers a 12 minute cycling catchment within Westhill and the facilities comprises designated on-road cycle routes, off road paths and quiet or traffic-calmed routes. The existing facilities also afford links to the 'Westhill to Aberdeen' dual use path which runs along the A944. The extent of the 'No Excuse Zone' and designated crossing points are illustrated in Figure 3-2 in Appendix B. The site lies within close proximity to Westhill's 12 minutes 'No Excuse Zone'.
- 3.2.12 Cycling provides a realistic opportunity as an alternative mode of travel between the predominantly residential neighbourhood to the north and the employment and retail land uses to the south.
- 3.2.13 A journey time of 30 to 40 minutes (8km) is generally considered to be appropriate for cycling. Prime Four Business Park, another major employment centre, is within 20 minutes cycling distance from the development. Further east along the A944 Lang Stracht, Whitemyres Industrial Estate is also within within 40 minutes cycling distance from the development. Cycling accessibility to the east of Westhill, incorporates the use of the dual use path along the A944.

3.3 Public Transport Accessibility

- 3.3.1 The closest bus stop is the Blacklaws Brae bus terminal located on Westhill Drive approximately 160 metres from the site's boundary on Blacklaws Brae. It should be noted that the majority of the development would be within 400 meters walking distance from the Westhill Drive bus stop.

- 3.3.2 The exiting bus stop comprises a bus shelter with timetable information boards and raised kerbing. The bus stop is served by Stagecoach Service 220, which provides a circular service through Westhill and further connections to Aberdeen. Bains Coaches Service 777 also routes through the bus stop providing connections to Kingswells, Dyce Airport / Kirkhill Industrial Estate, Inverurie and Oldmeldrum.
- 3.3.3 Aberdeenshire Council has published the 'Westhill Public Transport Guide August 2017', which provides bus routes and fare information for existing services within the settlement. A copy of the publication is contained in Appendix B. Table 3-1 summarises the service frequencies of the main bus services that pass the site.

Operator	Service	Route	Running Frequency		
			Monday to Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Stagecoach	220	Forresthill Hospital – Kingswells – Westhill Interchange – Hilltop Turning Circle – Kirkton of Skene	9 return services daily	No Service	No Service
Bains Coaches	777	Oldmeldrum – Inverurie – Kemnay – Westhill – Kingswells – Newhills – Aberdeen Airport	2 Services at: 07:30 and 17:28	No Service	No Service

Table 3-1: Local Bus Service Information

- 3.3.4 It is noteworthy that the Service 220 routes through the Arnhall Business Park providing a link between the site and the key employment hub in Westhill. Within the Westhill Town Centre, there are opportunities for travel on other regular services such as Stagecoach Service X17, which provides a 15 minutes regular service between Westhill and Aberdeen.
- 3.3.5 With the level of bus service provided in Westhill and within an acceptable walking distance, it is considered that the site is accessible by public transport.

3.4 Local Road Network

- 3.4.1 Vehicular access will be provided from Blacklaws Brae, which in turn connects with Westhill Drive. Blacklaws Brae is a residential street subject to a 20mph speed limit.
- 3.4.2 Westhill Drive, which partly borders the site to the east, is a local distributor road that provides connections to the residential areas to the east and west along its length. Westhill Drive runs north from the A944, through Westhill Town Centre, facilitating links to the Westhill Road, Old Skene Road, Hay's Way, Kinmundy Drive, Hillside Road and other residential streets. In the northerly direction, outside the Westhill settlement boundary connects with the B979 and the U100C Auchronie Road via a crossroad priority junction. The speed limit on Westhill Drive changes from national speed limit of 60mph to 30mph on entering the settlement boundary from the north. The existing speed limit boundary coincides with the site's north boundary. Therefore the site's boundary along Westhill Drive is within the 30mph limit.

3.4.3 The B979 in the north-westerly direction provides a link to the A96(T) Aberdeen to Inverness Trunk Road. The A96(T) in turn facilitates links to Aberdeen, Aberdeen Airport (and surrounding employment areas), Blackburn, Kintore and Inverurie.

3.4.4 The A944 in the easterly direction provides a link in to Aberdeen and a link to the B9119 Westhill to Tarland Road. In the westerly direction, the A944 facilitates links to Dunecht and Alford.

3.5 **Safe Routes to School**

3.5.1 The proposed residential development will fall within the catchment of Westhill Primary School and Westhill Academy. Figure 3-3 included within Appendix B illustrates the safe routes to Westhill Primary School and Westhill Academy.

3.5.2 Westhill Primary School is located to the south, approximately 1100m (13 minutes) walking distance from the site's boundary on Blacklaws Brae. The school's access is located on Westhill Drive.

3.5.3 A good walking route exists between the site and the school, with the desired route comprising footways along Blacklaws Brea and Westhill Drive. From the site, existing footways along Blacklaws Brea provide a continuous link to the footway on the west side of Westhill Drive. Traveling southbound along the Westhill Drive footway will route to the pedestrian crossing adjacent to the school's pedestrian access to the south. The route requires crossing of Westhill Heights, Hay's Way and the accesses into Ashdale Hall and Trinity Church. There are dropped kerb crossings provided at the above locations.

3.5.4 Westhill Academy is located on the south side of Hay's Way, approximately 1000m (12 minutes) walking distance from the site. Pedestrian access is via a similar route to the primary school. However at the Hay's Way junction, pupils would turn left utilising the footway on the south side which in turn provides a link to the pedestrian access into the school. Alternatively, from Westhill Drive pupils can utilise the footpath on the south side of the golf course boundary through the residential street on the north side of Hay's Way. Access is via Fare Park Crescent, Fare Park Drive and Meikle Gardens, all of which are subject to a 20mph speed limit. There is a dropped kerb crossing on Hay's Road which provides access into the school.

3.5.5 The existing routes to both Westhill Primary School and Westhill Academy are well lit.

4 Development Proposal & Access Arrangements

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The development proposal is for 68 dwellings comprising 51 private and 17 affordable with an overall accommodation schedule as follows:

- 2-bed Affordable Dwellings = 17
- 2-bed Dwellings = 9
- 4-bed Dwellings = 2
- 5-bed Dwellings = 40

4.1.2 The proposed development has been designed in line with Designing Streets, including shared use surfaces. The existing 20mph speed limit on Blacklaws Brae would be extended to encompass the development's internal road network.

4.1.3 The site layout plan is shown by Halliday Fraser Munro (HFM) Drawing No. 10986sk(003)03_C contained within Appendix C and includes a full Accommodation Schedule of the proposal.

4.2 Vehicle Access

4.2.1 Presently, Blacklaws Brae terminates on the site's boundary adjacent to Number 17. The development's access proposal incorporates extending Blacklaws Brae north into the development. The main access road comprises a 5.5m wide residential street to be designed to the similar standard as the existing section of Blacklaws Brae.

4.2.2 The new internal road would route through the development providing links to two new side roads and direct access to driveways of dwellings along its length. Internally, it would provide access to a number of courtyards serving some dwelling within the new development. On the site's western boundary, it would provide access to the Souterhill Farm via an existing farm track.

4.2.3 The proposal also incorporates 5 private dwellings with direct access from Westhill Drive, which includes a group of 4 and a single dwelling with separate accesses.

4.2.4 The remaining development and adjacent existing development on Blacklaws Brae would have one point of access from the external road network. Therefore, AC has confirmed that an emergency access would be required. As part of the development, a 3m wide emergency access, with demountable bollards, will be provided from Westhill Drive on the south side of the proposed SUDS basin.

4.3 Pedestrian Access

- 4.3.1 There will be two points of access for pedestrians from the external network along Westhill Drive. Firstly, access from the existing footways on Blacklaws Brae, which provides links to Westhill Drive. A second pedestrian access is proposed from Westhill Drive via a footpath to the north of the bus terminal.
- 4.3.2 Internally, there will be a network of footways / paths permeating through the development, which in turn will facilitate links to the external network.
- 4.3.3 Pedestrian access to the north of the site is also provided, facilitating pedestrian links through the existing tree belt along the northern boundary.

4.4 Parking

- 4.4.1 The parking proposed will be provided in accordance with Aberdeenshire Council Parking Standards with parking for the private dwellings generally in the form of in-curtilage parking provided via driveways and garages. A summary of the parking proposals is provided below, with a full parking schedule included on the site layout plan contained in Appendix C.

- 26 x 2-bed (including affordable) @ 2 spaces per unit = 52 spaces.
- 2 x 4-bed @ 3 spaces per dwelling = 6 spaces
- 40 x 5-bed @ 3 spaces per dwelling = 120 spaces
- Visitor Parking @ 1 space per 4 dwellings = 17 spaces
- TOTAL Parking = 195 spaces

- 4.4.2 As discussed with AC, car parking for the affordable housing element would be provided at a rate of 2 spaces per dwelling.
- 4.4.3 The parking comprises off-street using both marked out bays and driveways.
- 4.4.4 Given the nature of the development, cycle parking will generally be accommodated within the dwellings.

4.5 Servicing

- 4.5.1 The internal road network would be designed to accommodate service vehicles including refuse collection vehicles.

5 Trip Generation & Traffic Impact

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 Specifics of the trip generation were discussed and agreed following submission of the scoping note. Details of the Trip Generation are re-produced below.

5.2 Trip Generation

5.2.1 The TRICS Online database has been used to derive comparable trip estimates for the proposed development.

5.2.2 The category 'RESIDENTIAL M – MIXED PRIVATE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING' in an 'EDGE OF TOWN' location was selected to obtain 'MULTI_MODAL' trip rates. As per usual selections, 'GREATER LONDON' and 'SOUTH EAST' Regions were removed. A date range of 01/01/07 to 16/11/16 was selected and included for a range of dwellings up to 100 units.

5.2.3 The agreed people trip assessment established for the AM and PM peak hours of 08:00 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 18:00 are summarised in Table 5-1, which also includes the resulting percentage mode share for the proposed development.

68 Units	Mode Share	Weekday AM Peak (08:00 – 09:00)				Weekday PM Peak (17:00 – 18:00)			
		Trip Rates		Trips		Trip Rates		Trips	
		In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
Pedestrian	22%	0.047	0.205	3	14	0.276	0.252	19	17
Cycling	3%	0.016	0.016	1	1	0.047	0.039	3	3
Public Transport	3%	0	0.039	0	3	0.031	0.031	2	2
Car Passenger	35%	0.118	0.417	8	28	0.229	0.481	16	33
Car Driver	37%	0.197	0.323	13	22	0.362	0.409	25	28
Total People	100%	0.378	1	26	68	0.945	1.213	64	82

Table 5-1: Development Trip Rates & Trip Generation

5.2.4 The trip generation for the proposed development will result in only 35 and 53 two-way vehicle trips during the AM and PM peak hours respectively.

5.2.5 It is considered that this level of vehicle generation will have an insignificant impact on the local road network and as agreed with AC during scoping discussions there is no requirement to undertake any traffic impact analysis.

6 Residential Travel Plan Framework

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Paragraph 279 of SPP comments that 'Development plans should indicate when a travel plan will be required to accompany a proposal for a development which will generate significant travel'.

6.1.2 Travel Plans for Residential Developments require to be tailored to the needs, location and scale of the development. In line with best practice, it is envisaged that the practical implementation of the Travel Plan would require the preparation of a Residential Travel Pack.

6.2 Residential Travel Pack Aims and Objectives

6.2.1 The site would be developed in a manner to afford easy access to local facilities within the existing settlement area. The site is suitably located to take advantage of existing sustainable transport links to the town centre, primary and secondary schools, which are all within 15 minutes walking distance from the site. The aim of the emerging Residential Travel Pack would be to promote and encourage use of more sustainable travel options rather than single occupier car journeys to and from the proposed development.

6.2.2 The Residential Travel Pack would need to be reviewed, monitored and updated regularly. Objectives of the emerging Residential Travel Pack would be to address the following;

- Increase awareness among residents of travel choices and implications;
- Facilitate and promote more active forms of travel;
- Increase the share of residents travelling to work by walking, cycling or public transport;
- Promote the personal health benefits of active travel; and
- Reduce single car occupancy trips by promoting car sharing.

6.3 Framework for the preparation of the Residential Travel Pack

6.3.1 The Residential Travel Pack would be completed and presented to AC for approval prior to occupation of the first unit. It is the intention of the developer to liaise with the Council during preparation of the Residential Travel Pack. The undernoted general headings would form the framework for developing the Residential Travel Pack.

- Clear statement of objectives of the Pack in relation to key features of the development to promote and encourage sustainable travel;
- Walking and cycling maps showing existing provisions;

- Walking, cycling and public transport travel times;
- Public transport information – service times at nearest stops;
- Local taxi contact information;
- Car sharing / Car Club scheme information including details of Getabout – a free online car sharing scheme; and
- Relevant website / contacts including local groups such as – www.cyclestreets.net, www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/aberdeen, www.stagecoachbus.com/aberdeen, www.getbout.liftshare.com and www.travelinescotland.com

6.3.2 The Travel Pack will contain information on the health benefits of active travel, directing residents to websites such as www.sustrans.org.uk and www.healthyliving.gov.uk. Tips for active travel include:

- Think “healthy living” before you travel – every time you use your legs it does you good;
- If your trip is less than a mile or so, try walking – or walk some of the way if it is too far;
- Start your active lifestyle gently, by walking part of the way, or taking a bus home;
- If you are thinking about cycling, try out your route at the weekend first; and
- Try walking or cycling to work every day and see how much fitter you feel.

6.3.3 The Travel Pack should also contain information on the environmental damage of CO2 emissions resulting from car use. Hints for reducing environmental damage created by car use could include:

- Try to avoid using a car for short journeys – use public transport, cycle or walk;
- Plan ahead – choose uncongested routes, combine trips or car share;
- Cold starts – drive away as soon as possible after starting;
- Drive smoothly and efficiently – harsh acceleration and heavy braking have a very significant effect on fuel consumption, driving more smoothly saves fuel;
- Slow down – driving at high speeds significantly increases fuel consumption;
- Use higher gears as soon as traffic conditions allow;
- Switch off – sitting stationary is zero miles per gallon, switch off the engine whenever it is safe to do so
- Lose weight – don’t carry unnecessary weight, remove roof racks when not in use.

7 Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Summary

7.1.1 This Transport Statement has been prepared on behalf of CALA Homes in support of a Local Development Plan bid proposal for a 68 unit residential development at Souterhill Farm, Westhill. The proposal comprises 51 private and 17 affordable dwellings.

7.1.2 The site is located on the northern edge of Westhill, bounded to the east by Westhill Drive. The proposal would form a natural extension to the existing residential neighbourhood.

Site Accessibility

7.1.3 The existing site has good accessibility by sustainable transport modes including; walking, cycling and bus. There are good pedestrian links to the adjacent bus stop and local facilities in the town centre as well as Westhill Primary School and Westhill Academy.

7.1.4 Westhill has a network of dedicated cycle routes and facilities which provides excellent cycling accessibility within the settlement and beyond. The majority of the settlement, including key employment centres to the south of the A944, are within 12 minutes cycling distance from the site. There are further cycling opportunities to the east and into Aberdeen using the dual use path along the A944 Westhill to Aberdeen Road.

7.1.5 The closest bus stop is located about 160 metres from the site's boundary on Blacklaws Brae. The majority of the development would be within 400 metres walking distance from the bus stop. Services from the bus stop route through the town centre offering opportunities for onward travel using other services. With the level of bus service provided within an acceptable walking distance of the site, the site can be considered to be accessible by public transport in accordance with planning policy.

7.1.6 Westhill Academy is located within a 1000 metres (12 minutes) walk from the proposed site and Westhill Primary School is located within 1100 metres (13 minutes) walk. It can therefore be concluded that the majority of children who will be generated from the proposed development will either walk or cycle to school, which again highlights the proposed development sites sustainable and accessible credentials.

Proposed Development & Access Arrangements

7.1.7 The proposal comprises both private and affordable housing to ensure all housing needs are met.

7.1.8 The proposed development has been designed in line with Designing Streets. The proposals will include shared surfaces and traffic calming features that would encourage low vehicular speeds within the development.

- 7.1.9 Parking would be provided in accordance with Aberdeenshire Councils parking standards.

Trip Generation & Traffic Impact

- 7.1.10 Specifics of the trip generation were discussed and agreed following submission of the scoping note to Aberdeenshire Council.
- 7.1.11 The trip generation for the proposed development will result in 35 and 53 two-way vehicle trips during the AM and PM peak hours respectively. This level of vehicle generation will have an insignificant impact on the local road network and as agreed with AC during scoping discussions there is no requirement to undertake any traffic impact analysis.

Residential Travel Plan Framework

- 7.1.12 A Residential Travel Plan Framework has been included which will form the basis of the development of a Residential Travel Pack to be made available for future occupants.

7.2 Conclusion

- 7.2.1 The site is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport modes in accordance with planning policy and will have an insignificant traffic impact on the surrounding road network.
- 7.2.2 The site layout makes appropriate allowance for parking and can accommodate servicing requirements.
- 7.2.3 The TS concludes that the proposed development is suitably located and can integrate well with the existing transport networks in Westhill. There will be no detrimental traffic or transport impacts.

Appendix A
Scoping Correspondence

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 January 2018 17:22
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: 124001: Souterhill Farm, Westhill - Transportation Scoping

Hi [REDACTED]

Fairhurst have been commissioned to provide Transport Planning support for a residential development at Souterhill Farm, Westhill. The site location is shown below and is located on vacant land to the north of the existing residential development served by Blacklaws Brae. The proposed development will form an extension of the existing development.



The proposed development will consist of 68 units containing a mix of 42 private and 26 affordable units and will be served via an extension of Blacklaws Brae. The total number of units being served by Blacklaws Brae will be circa 84 which includes the existing 12 houses accessed directly from Blacklaws Brae and the 4 houses to the west accessed from the private road that routes from Blacklaws Brae. Can you (or [REDACTED] copied in) advise whether there would be a need to provide an Emergency Access?

An indicative site layout plan is attached which details the current proposals, although this still may be subject to minor changes.

The parking proposed will be in accordance with Aberdeenshire Councils 'Car Parking Standards for Development Control in Aberdeenshire'. The final site layout shall therefore adhere to the following parking standards:

- Private Housing: 2 allocated spaces per dwelling up to 3 bedrooms. 3 allocated spaces per dwelling 4 or more bedrooms
- Affordable Housing: 1 space / dwelling

The site layout drawing indicates that each unit shall be provided with its own private drive way.

Trip Generation- Proposed site

The TRICS Online database has been interrogated to establish comparable trip estimates for the proposed development.

The category '03 - RESIDENTIAL M - MIXED PRIVATE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING' in an 'EDGE OF TOWN' location was selected to obtain 'MULTI_MODAL' trip rates. Sites in 'GREATER LONDON' and 'SOUTH EAST' Regions have been removed. A date range of 01/01/07 to 16/11/16 was selected and included for a range of dwellings up to 100 units. The relevant TRICS Report is attached.

The People Trip Assessment has been established for the AM and PM peak hours of 08:00 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 18:00 and is summarised in Table 1 which includes the resulting trip generations associated with the proposed development. The resulting percentage mode share is also included.

68 Units	Weekday AM 08:00 – 09:00				Weekday PM 17:00 – 18:00				Mode Share
	Trip Rates		Trips		Trip Rates		Trips		
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	
Pedestrian	0.047	0.205	3	14	0.276	0.252	19	17	22%
Cycling	0.016	0.016	1	1	0.047	0.039	3	3	3%
Public Transport	0	0.039	0	3	0.031	0.031	2	2	3%
Car Passenger	0.118	0.417	8	28	0.229	0.481	16	33	35%
Car Driver	0.197	0.323	13	22	0.362	0.409	25	28	37%
<i>Vehicle Occupants</i>	<i>0.315</i>	<i>0.74</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>0.591</i>	<i>0.89</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>72%</i>
Total People Trips	0.378	1	26	68	0.945	1.213	64	82	100%

Table 1: Trip Generation & Mode Share

The trip generation for the proposed development will result in 35 and 53 two-way vehicle trips during the AM and PM peak hours respectively. It is considered that this level of vehicle generation will not have an adverse impact on the local road network and as such we do not consider it necessary to include any traffic impact analysis. We therefore propose to undertake a Transport Statement that will consider the following matters:

- Transport Planning Policy
- Development Proposals
- Site Accessibility for all modes
- Safe Routes to Schools
- Trip Generation
- Parking & Access Requirements
- Service Vehicle Access
- Residential Travel Plan Framework

I would appreciate if you could confirm that the above methodology and parameters to be included in the Transport Statement is acceptable, however if you require any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thanks and best regards

[Redacted]
Principal Engineer - Transportation

Fairhurst
engineering solutions, delivering results

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Website: <http://www.fairhurst.co.uk>

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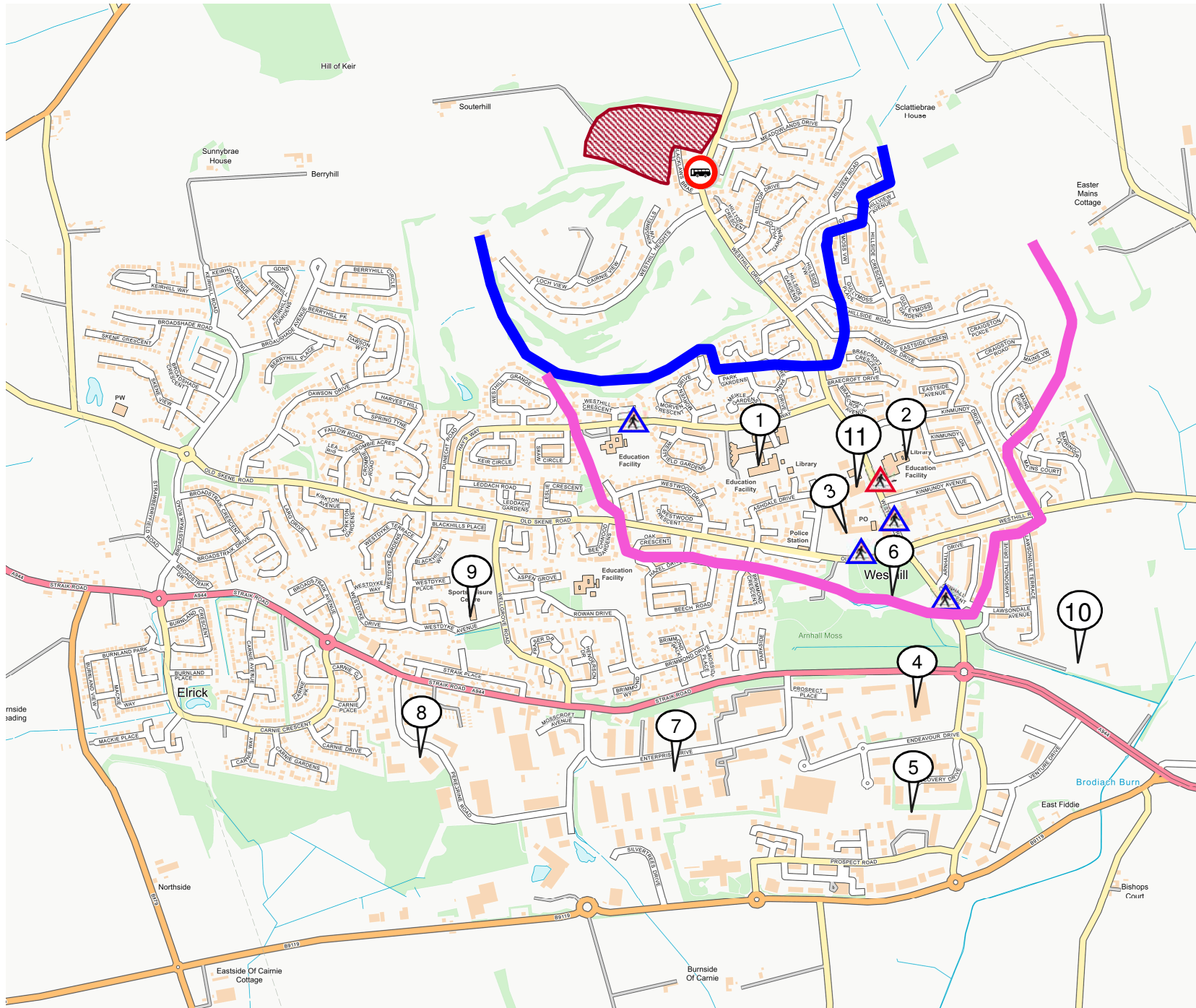
Appendix B
Accessibility Maps

Project Title:
124001, Souterhill Farm, Westhill,
Aberdeenshire

Drawing Title:
Figure 3-1: Pedestrian Accessibility

KEY:

-  Development Site
-  Westhill Academy & Westhill Swimming Pool
-  Westhill Primary School
-  Westhill Shopping Centre
-  Tesco Supermarket
-  Arnhall Business Park
-  Denman Park
-  Westhill Business Park
-  Westhill Industrial Estate
-  Westdyke Leisure Centre
-  Lawsonsdaie Playing Fields
-  Aldi Supermarket
-  800m Walking Isochrone
-  1600m Walking Isochrone



Client:

Drawn by:

Date: 14/02/18



Bus Stop



Signal Controlled Pedestrian Crossing Point








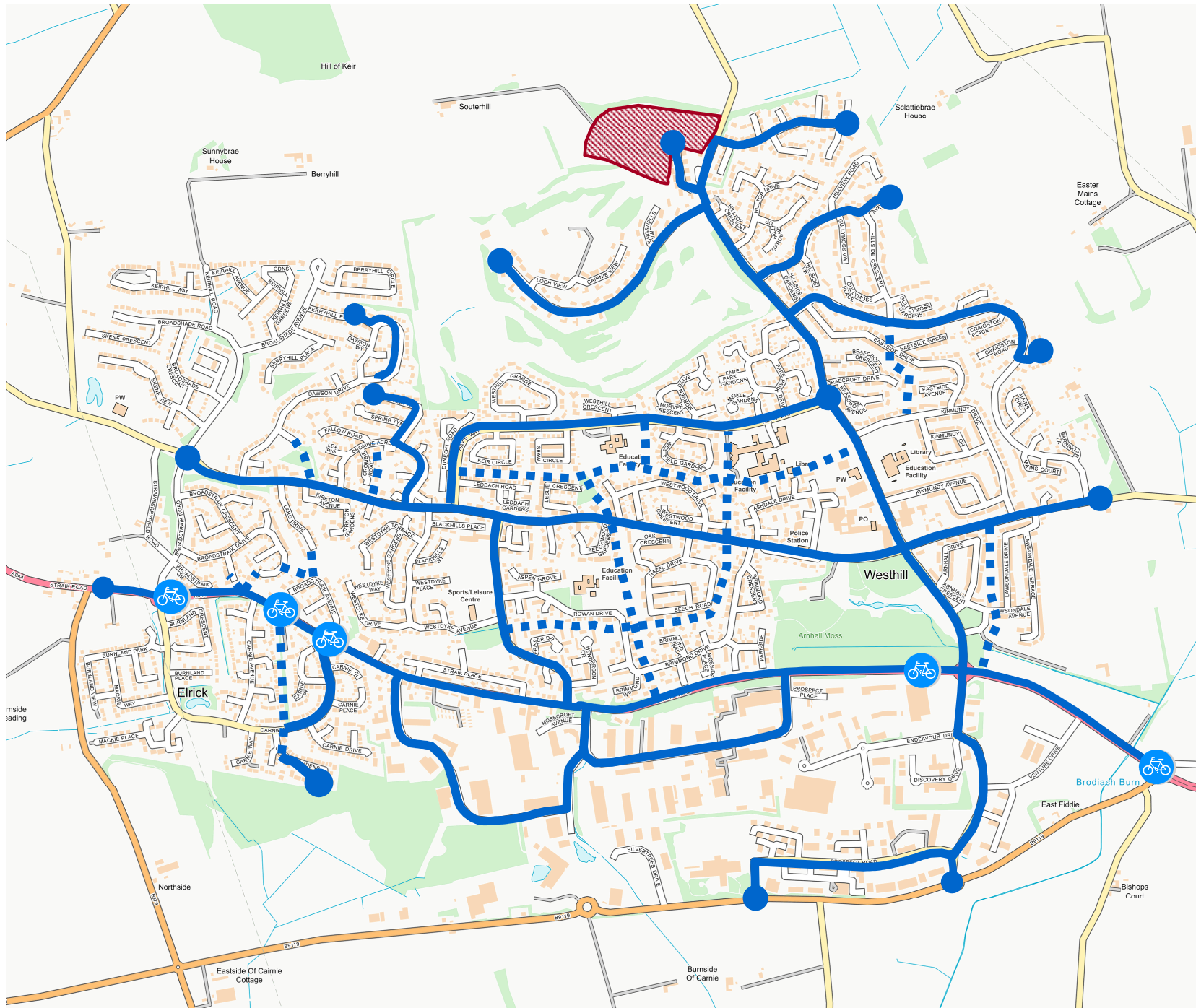
Zebra Crossing Point

Project Title:
124001, Souterhill Farm, Westhill,
Aberdeenshire

Drawing Title:
Figure 3-2: Cycling Accessibility and
Facilities

KEY:

-  Development Site
-  On Road Route
-  Off Road Path
-  Extent of Zone
-  Toucan Crossing



Client: [REDACTED]








Drawn by: [REDACTED]

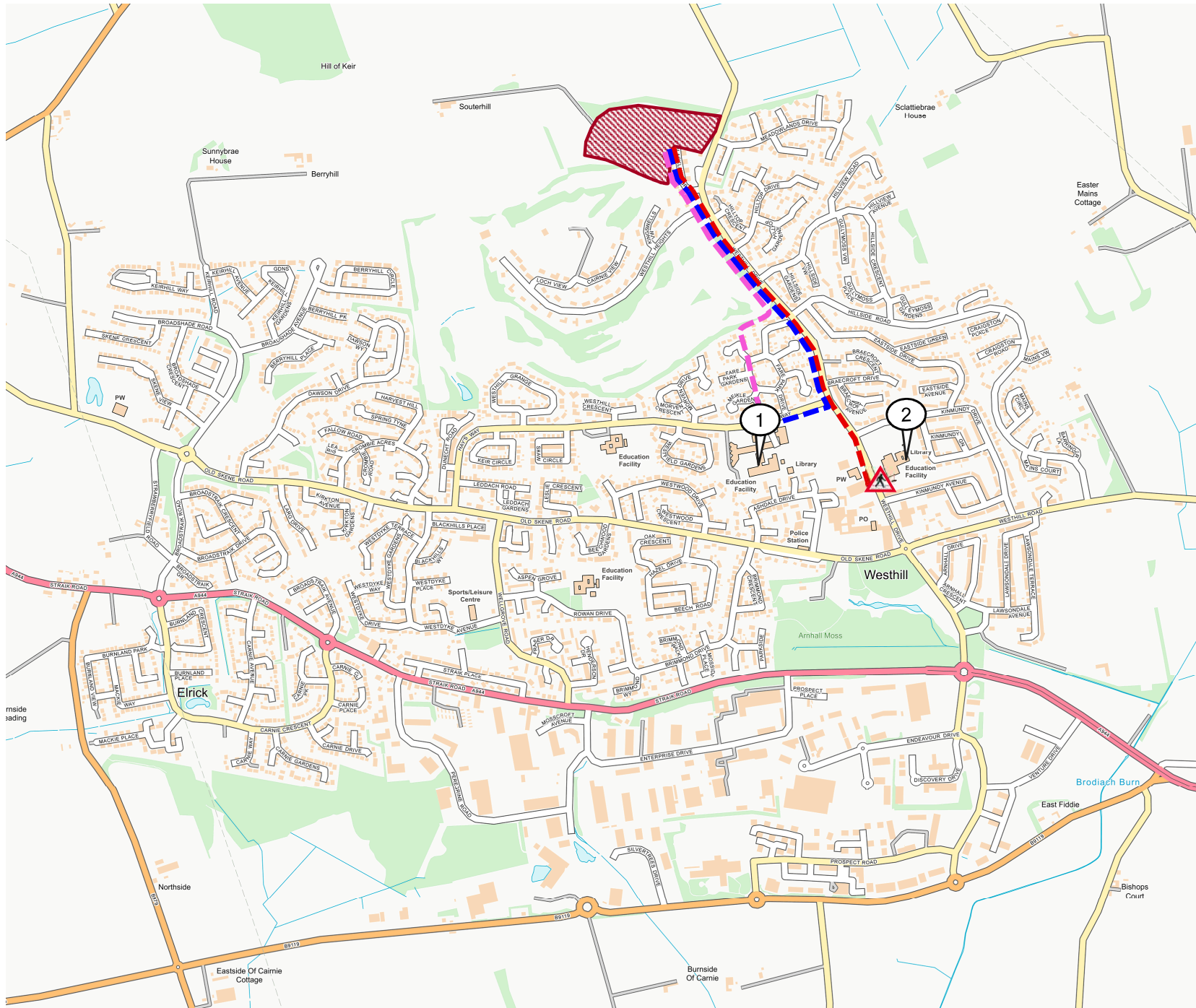
Date: 14/02/18


[REDACTED]

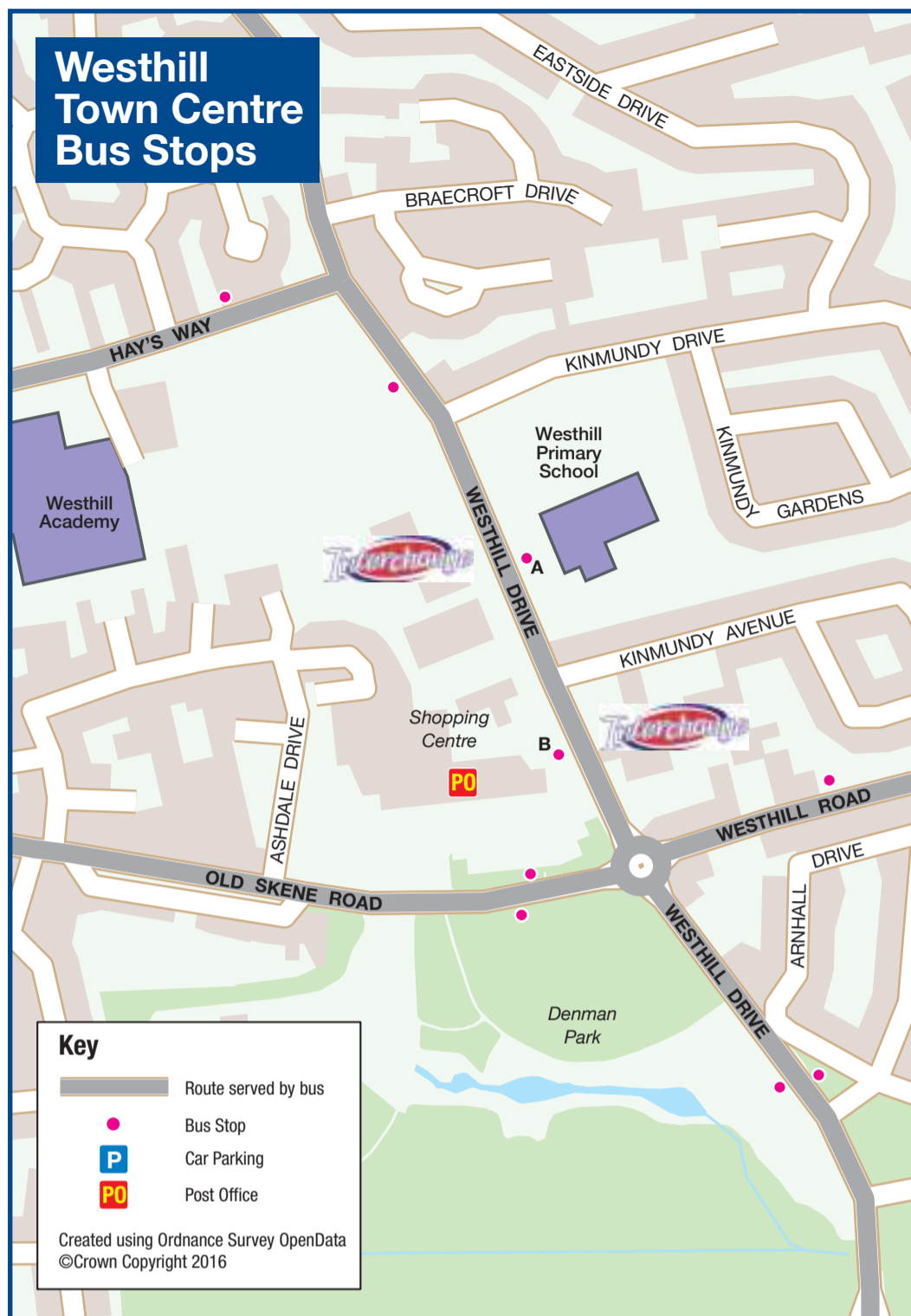
Project Title:
124001, Souterhill Farm, Westhill,
Aberdeenshire

Drawing Title:
Figure 3-3: Safe Routes to School

- KEY:**
-  Development Site
 -  Westhill Academy
 -  Westhill Primary School
 -  Route to Westhill Primary School
 -  Route 1 to Westhill Academy
 -  Route 2 to Westhill Academy
 -  Signal Controlled Pedestrian Crossing



Client:  Drawn by: 
Date: 14/02/18



Westhill A2B dial-a-bus

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Central Taxis (Aberdeen) Ltd

Saturdays: 0930 - 1245 hours
Stagecoach Bluebird

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Option 1 for Bookings
Option 2 for Cancellations
Option 3 for General Enquiries

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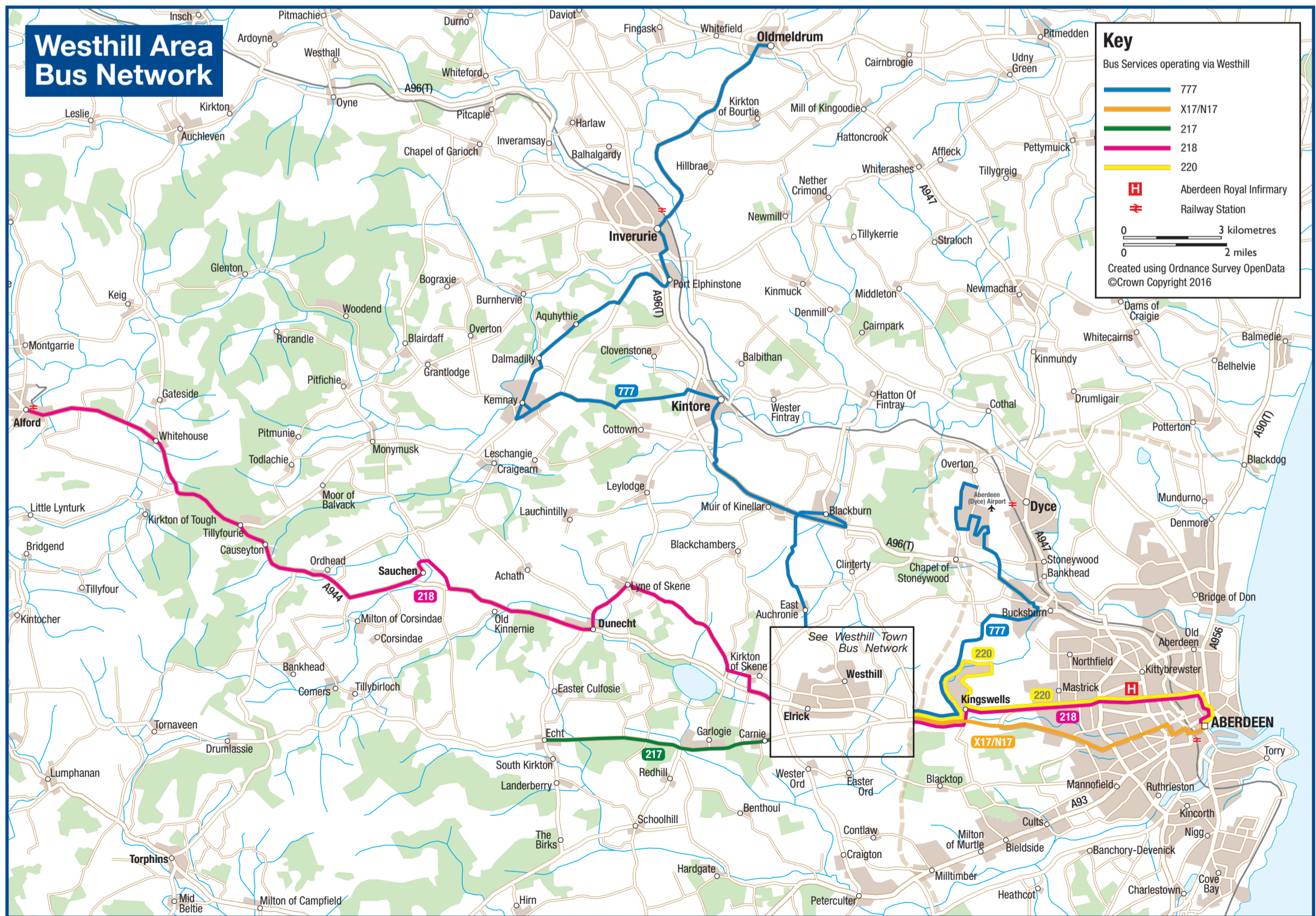
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*Subject to terms and conditions. See website for details.

Westhill Public Transport Guide August 2017



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We have equipped all bus stops in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City with QR Codes. This will allow you to look up bus times from your stop in seconds using your Smartphone*

Look for symbol like this at the bus stop

Just scan the QR Code, like the example below. If you have a Smartphone hold it over the area indicated by the symbol below and it will take you to a page showing the departure times from your stop.

Departures from this stop

Scan with phone

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

* Requires a QR Code Reader application to be installed on your device and for an internet connection to be available. This service requires information to be retrieved from the internet, as such depending on your tariff there may be a charge for the data used.

Enquiries

Union Square Bus Station All Enquiries	
0800-1845 (Monday to Friday).....	01224 597590
0900-1700 (Saturday).....	01224 212266
Elgin Depot	01343 540928
0900-1700 (Monday to Friday)	
Fraserburgh Bus Station	01346 517000
0900-1630 (Monday to Thursday)	
0900-1600 (Friday)	
Peterhead Interchange	01779 470077
0900-1900 (Monday)	
0900-1700 (Tuesday to Friday)	
0900-1200 (Saturday)	

Local Operators

Bains Coaches Oldmeldrum - 01651 872825

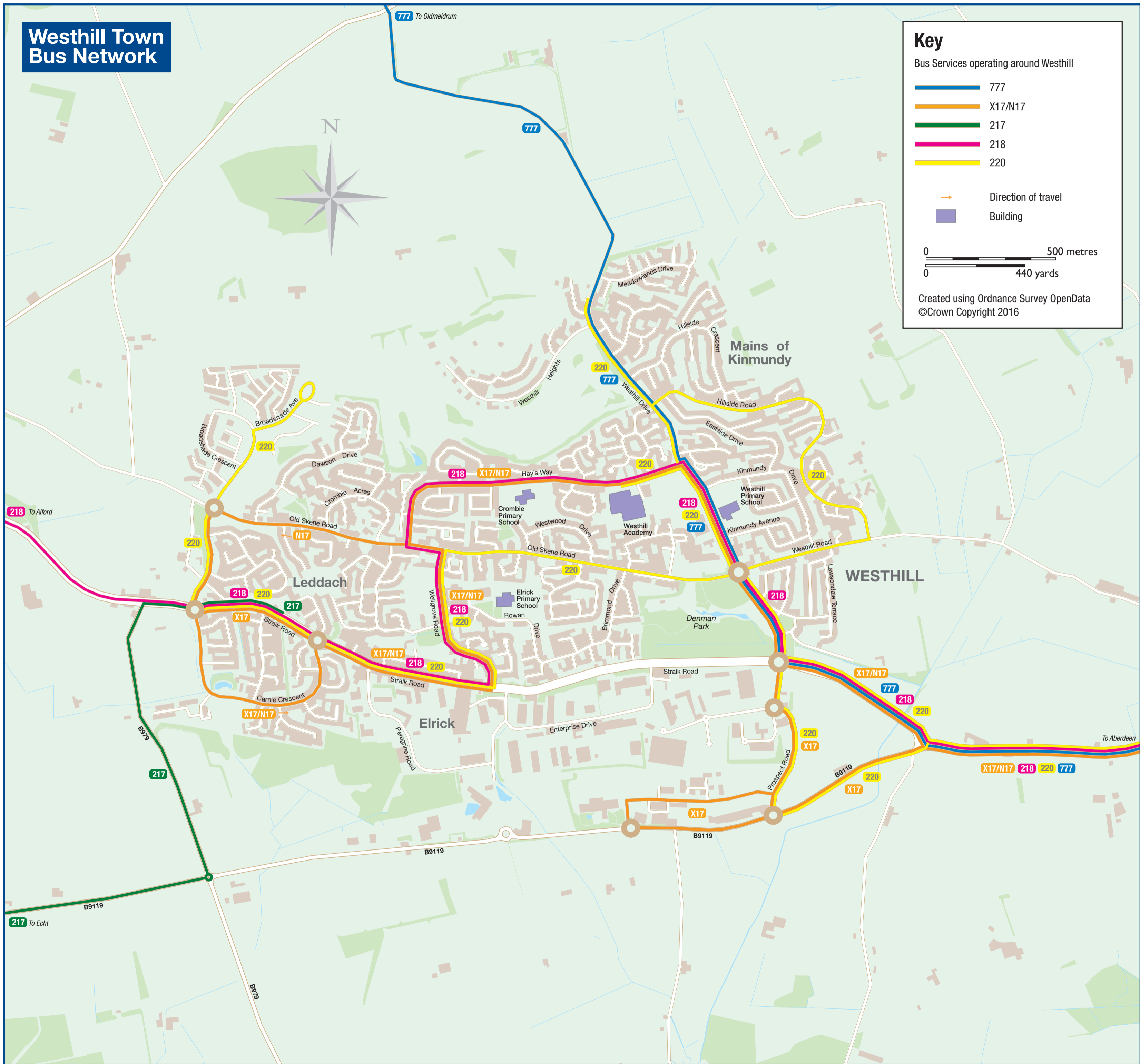
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Whilst every effort has been made to ensure complete accuracy of this information, The Public Transport Unit cannot be held responsible for any problems arising from errors in, or changes to, the information given in this guide. We would welcome notifications of any errors so that they can be corrected. Passengers are advised to check details with the relevant bus operator prior to travel. Correct at time of print July 2017

Produced by Location Maps Ltd. www.locationmaps.com 01428 684500



Bus Information

Service Number	Operator	Route	Operation
777	Bains Coaches	Oldmeldrum-Inverurie-Westhill-Kingswells-Dyce Airport/Kirkhill	M-F
X17/N17	Stagecoach Bluebird	Aberdeen-Woodend-Westhill-Elrick (Circular)	M-F, S, Su
217	Stagecoach Bluebird	Elrick-Echt	M-F, S
218	Stagecoach Bluebird	Aberdeen-Alford	M-F, S
220	Stagecoach Bluebird	Aberdeen-Westhill	M-F, S

Key: M-F - Monday to Friday S - Saturday Su - Sunday

Bus fare information

Ticket type	
Single	For a one-way journey, available on the bus.
Return	For two trips - One outward and one return. Provides a discount on the cost of 2 singles. Available on the bus
Day tickets	Unlimited travel in a specified zone during one day. Available on most services or multi-operator (GrassHOPPER). Available on the bus.
Weekly	Unlimited travel in a specified zone for 7 days. Available on most services or multi-operator (GrassHOPPER). Available on the bus.
Longer term tickets	Options vary so contact the operator for details.
Children under 5	Free travel when accompanied by an adult.
Child fares	Half price travel for those aged under 16.
Student tickets	Available on most services. Day, 4-week and 13-week tickets available.
Concessionary Travel	1/3 off single fares for cardholders aged 16-18. Free travel for cardholders aged 60 and over, or eligible disabled people.



Buying your ticket

Depending on how often you travel and the type of ticket you need, there are a number of different ways you can purchase your ticket:

- On the bus**
Many tickets can be purchased directly from the driver when you board the bus, including standard single and return tickets, day passes and family saver tickets. Change given by driver.
- Online**
Buy 4-weekly or monthly (recurring) tickets for Stagecoach from their website.
- Travel Shops**
Stagecoach Bluebird Travel Shops located in Union Square Bus Station, Fraserburgh Bus Station and Peterhead Interchange.

Planning your journey

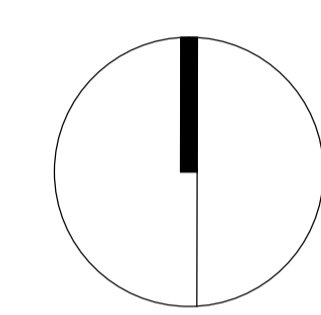
For help planning your journey, including bus times and live departure information, contact Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.travelinescotland.com If you would like to receive bus times direct to your mobile download the Traveline Scotland App from your App Store with your smartphone. You can also visit the Aberdeenshire Council website at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk for local bus departure information.

Bus maps and timetables

If you're looking for a particular bus timetable or for the Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide please contact Aberdeenshire Council on 01467 539525. Further information is available at <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/public-transport/>

Appendix C
Site Layout Plan - HFM Drawing No. 10986SK(00) 03_C





Accommodation Schedule

House Type	Beds	No.	Parking
Belford (affordable)	2	17	34
Belford (private)	2	9	18
Cleland	4	2	6
Crichton	5	5	15
Garvie	5	3	9
Kennedy	5	6	18
Lowther	5	4	12
Lewis	5	7	21
Melville	5	5	15
Macrae	5	4	12
Moncrief	5	6	18
Total No.		68	178

Gross Site Area (red line)	31.3 acres
Housing Site Area	14.6 acres
POS - Within Housing Site	5.9 acres
POS - Golf Range Site Area	10.4 acres
POS - Woodland Walks	6.2 acres
Total POS	22.5 acres (72%)
Net Site Area	8.8 acres

Affordable provision based on Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 @ 25% of total unit no.
A = Affordable types.

Open space provision based on Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 @ 40% for Major Development.

Private parking based on Aberdeenshire Parking Standards 2001 @ 2 per 1-3 bed house, 3 per 4+ bed house, 1.5 per 1-2 bed flat.

Private parking provided in the form of 2 no. spaces on minimum 5.5m x 6m driveway and 1 no. space within internal garage dimension of minimum 6mx3m.

Affordable parking based on expected future parking standards of 2 per HA house and 1 per 1-2 bed HA flat.

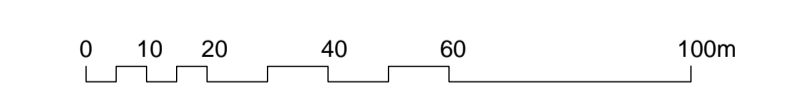
Visitor parking based on 1 per 4 dwellings = 17 spaces.

Notes

Layout based on OS information and topographical survey by others.

Refer to engineer information for roads, SUDS, proposed levels and proposed and existing services (including details of existing gas main).

Revision C	27-03-18	Layer type changes. Parking schedule added.
Revision B	28-02-18	Design development.
Revision A	05-02-18	Red line amended, design development.



Masterplan at Souterhill, Westhill
CALA Homes (North) Limited

Sketch Layout

Scale: 1:1250 @ A1
Date: January 2018
Dwg No: 10986 SK(00)03_C

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Aberdeen	Leeds
Bristol	London
Dundee	Manchester
Edinburgh	Newcastle upon Tyne
Elgin	Sheffield
Glasgow	Watford
Inverness	Wellesbourne



HALLIDAY FRASER MUNRO

CHARTERED ARCHITECTS & PLANNING CONSULTANTS

**ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
RESPONSE TO MAIN ISSUES REPORT
SOUTARHILL, WESTHILL
GN133**

MARCH 2019

On behalf of
CALA Homes (North) Ltd



HALLIDAY FRASER MUNRO
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS & PLANNING CONSULTANTS



HALLIDAY FRASER MUNRO

CHARTERED ARCHITECTS & PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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 - 2.3 Economic Development in Westhill
3. Settlement Statement: Westhill
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 - 3.2 Table 1: Officers Comments & Reasoning
 - 3.3 Greenbelt
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 - 3.7 Westhill Capacity Study
 - 3.8 Road Network
 - 3.9 Other Infrastructure
 - 3.10 Community Benefit
 - 3.11 Affordable Housing
4. Strategic Environmental Assessment
5. Conclusion



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1.0 Introduction

This response to the Main Issues Report (MIR) has been prepared by Halliday Fraser Munro on behalf of CALA Homes (North) Ltd, to support the allocation of land at Soutarhill in Westhill. The site was submitted as a bid for development and is identified as site GR133 in the MIR. The site, which extends to 12.6 hectares, is proposed for 70 residential dwellings (3.6ha), a community park and practice facilities for the golf course (9ha). The site is immediately deliverable with no constraints or impediments to delivery.

The site is contiguous with the existing Westhill settlement boundary and will deliver an appropriate extension to the north of the existing residential development. The existing tree belt, which will be enhanced as part of this proposal forms a defensible northern boundary to the settlement. The site offers substantial benefit by promoting new recreational areas, paths and enhancement of the existing core path. The site is located in an eminently sustainable location, being only a 10 minute walk from the town centre, and a bus stop within 160m of the site. The site rounds off the settlement from the northern approach, and provides additional connectivity and access to open space.

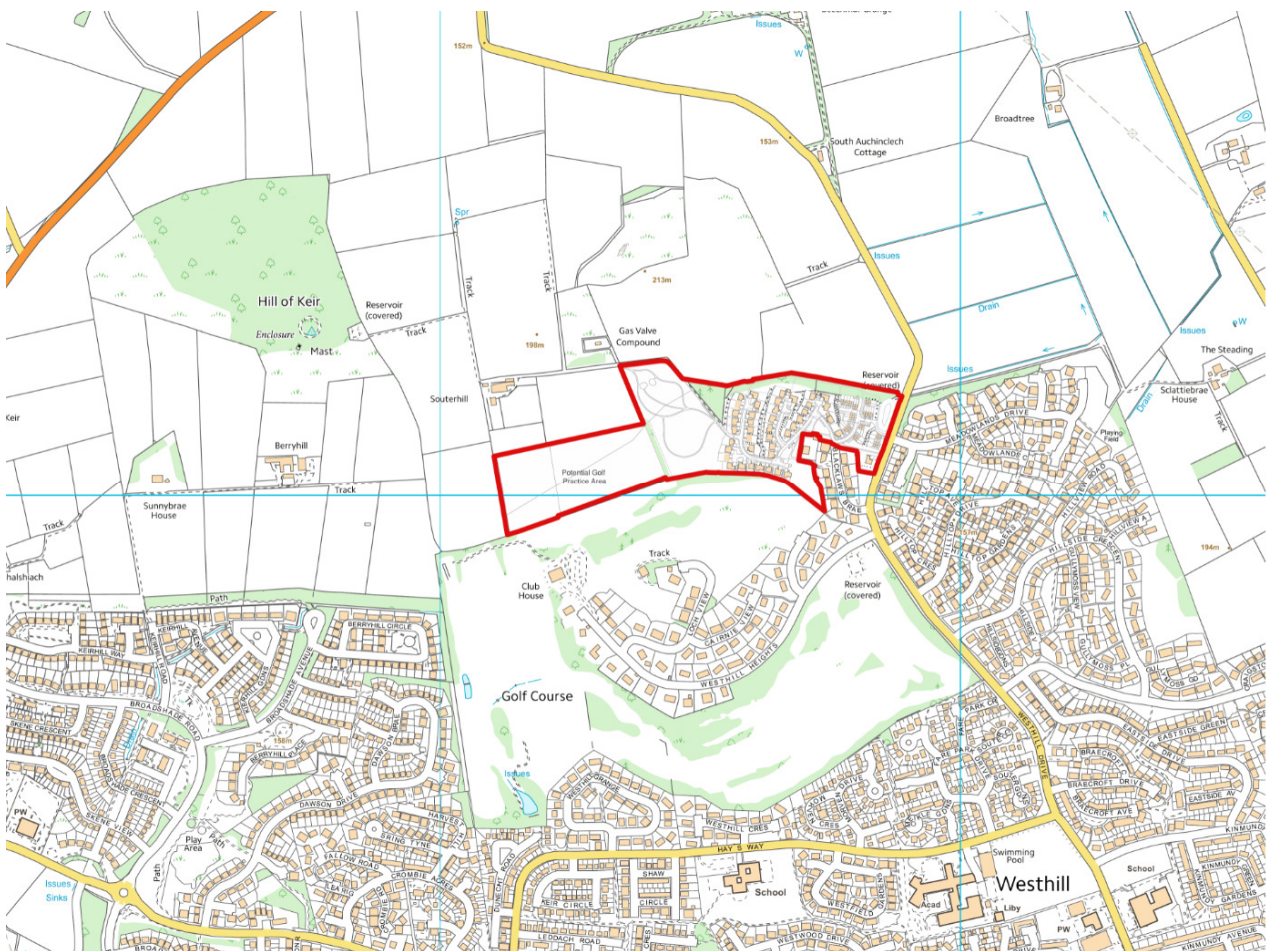


Figure 1: Site Location

Additional housing is needed to sustain supply in Westhill, all substantive allocations made in the last Local Development Plan (LDP) have been built out. If no additional allocations are made, there will be limited new development until 2026 at the earliest, when the LDP is reviewed. There are no 'reserved' or future



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opportunity sites identified in Westhill which are sites that could come forward when the plan is reviewed. Minimal affordable housing will also result with no new allocations. Westhill is an extremely important town to Aberdeenshire economically, and is in a strategic location. The lack of allocations will give housebuilders no confidence to invest in the area, particularly at a time when the majority of housing allocations are taken up by a few large allocations which are not delivering. The lack of new allocations and the reliance on existing large sites is unlikely to deliver the level of housing required to meet the targets set by the Strategic Development Plan.

CALA are a premium housebuilder, with their heritage placed firmly in Aberdeen having been established in the city in 1875. CALA deliver high quality developments focussing on sourcing the best land opportunities and delivering high quality design in sought after living environments. CALA have a record of delivering development in this area and are currently on site in six locations across the city and shire, as demonstrated by table 1 below. CALA are therefore committed to investing in the area, taking sites to the market, and delivering homes to meet the demand in the area.

Site Name	Site First Allocated	PPiP Approval	First Phase Approval	First Unit Completed	Site Completed
Oldfold, Aberdeen (OP48)	2012	2015	2015	2016	Ongoing
Friarsfield, Aberdeen (OP41)	2012	2012	2012	2013	Ongoing
Grandhome, Aberdeen	2012	2015	2017	2018	Ongoing
Dubford, Aberdeen (OP10)	2012	2013	2014	2015	Completed
Balgownie Road, Aberdeen	2012	N/A	2014	2015	Completed
Craibstone, Aberdeen (OP20)	2012	2017	2018	2019	Ongoing
Woodside (Persley Den), Aberdeen (OP25)	2012	2015	2018	2019	Ongoing
Conglass, Inverurie (OP1)	2012	N/A	2018	2019	Ongoing

Table 1: CALA developments in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire



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2.0 Settlement Strategy

2.1 Housing Strategy

A separate representation on strategy and housing need has been submitted, but the key issues in relation to Westhill are summarised below.

CALA object to the failure to specifically reference Westhill in the Settlement Strategy, and the failure to identify Westhill as a Strategic location within the MIR. Separate representation has been made to the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) on the need to identify Westhill within a Strategic Growth Area, but we would still maintain that the Proposed Local Development Plan needs to give Westhill the recognition it deserves. Westhill is extremely important to Aberdeenshire's economy, and is the fifth largest settlement in Aberdeenshire (by population), as shown by figure 2 below.

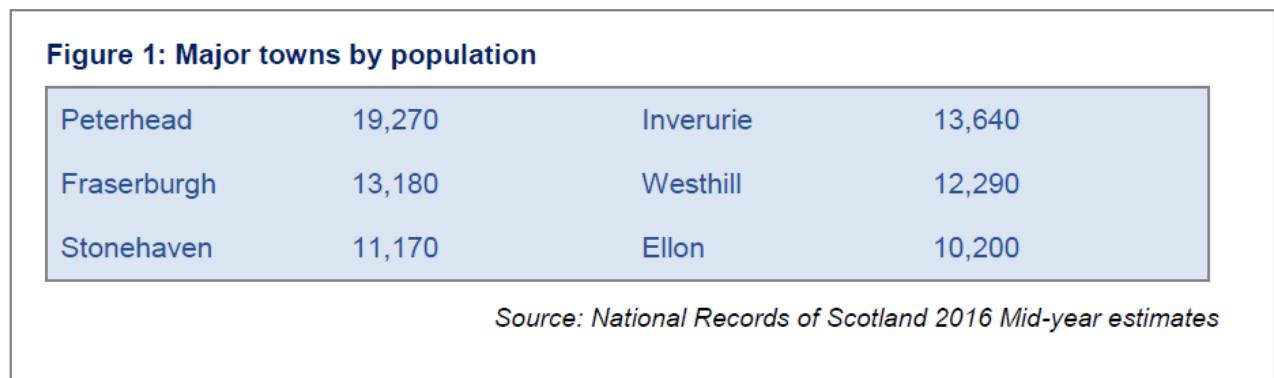


Figure 2: Extract from Aberdeenshire Council's Statistics Profile (source: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/23280/aberdeenshire-profile-2018.pdf>)

The proposed 'Settlement Strategy' in the draft Proposed Plan document does not even mention Westhill, which we suggest completely diminishes its importance to the area. The Main Issues Report notes that further major expansion of Westhill needs to be carefully considered given it is not within a Strategic Growth Area (SGA) along with the constraints of the town. CALA would strongly object to the failure to include Westhill as an SGA, and representations have been made to the Strategic Development Plan on this issue. Westhill is a strategic town, it is a global subsea centre of excellence which accounted for 6000 of the region's subsea employees in 2012 (Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014). There are few other towns in Aberdeenshire which offer the level of employment of Westhill. The town is soon to be home to a major new football stadium and training complex which emphasises the towns importance as a strategic location. CALA would suggest that it is therefore imperative that there are sufficient new housing allocations made to recognise the towns strategic importance and enable those working in the town to also live there and support a sustainable pattern of development.

2.2 Housing Need in Westhill

Westhill is a desirable location where people want to live. Housebuilding completions demonstrate this. From 2008-2017, completions have averaged 75.5 homes per year, which is significantly higher than comparable settlements with similar allocations, such as Banchory which has an annual average completion rate of 38 dwellings (even with significant allocations in the 2012 and 2017 Local Development Plans). Housing completions in Westhill are now tailing off as there are no new housing allocated. There is also clearly demand in Westhill for further development, with almost all allocations made in the 2016 LDP built out with the exception of one small site for 10 units, and a windfall site of 3 units (see figure 3 below).



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Site Ref	Location	Main Developer	Status	Type											
G/WH/H/041a	Burnland, Adj Broadstraik Farm	Gladedale	Full Planning Permission	G											
Year Ent.	2006	Total Capacity	266	Post 5 Year Effective	0										
Curr. LDP		Remaining Capacity (1st Jan)	38	Constrained	38										
				2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 +
				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prev. LDP		5 Year Effective	0	Constraints	Ownership										
Site Ref	Location	Main Developer	Status	Type											
G/WH/H/043	Strawberry Field Road	Private	Planning Permission in Principle	G											
Year Ent.	2011	Total Capacity	10	Post 5 Year Effective	0										
Curr. LDP	OP1	Remaining Capacity (1st Jan)	10	Constrained	0										
				2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 +
				0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prev. LDP	H2	5 Year Effective	10	Constraints											
Site Ref	Location	Main Developer	Status	Type											
G/WH/H/046	Westhill Golf Club "Westhill Heights"	Dan More Developments Ltd	Under Construction	G											
Year Ent.	2016	Total Capacity	8	Post 5 Year Effective	0										
Curr. LDP		Remaining Capacity (1st Jan)	3	Constrained	0										
				2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 +
				0	2	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prev. LDP		5 Year Effective	3	Constraints											

Figure 3: Aberdeen City and Shire Housing Land Audit 2018 Extract showing only 13 houses in the effective supply for Westhill

Figure 4 below shows that previously, housing completions have been steadily over 60 houses per year in Westhill. However, due to all housing allocations being built out, completions are forecast to drop to only three houses in 2019.

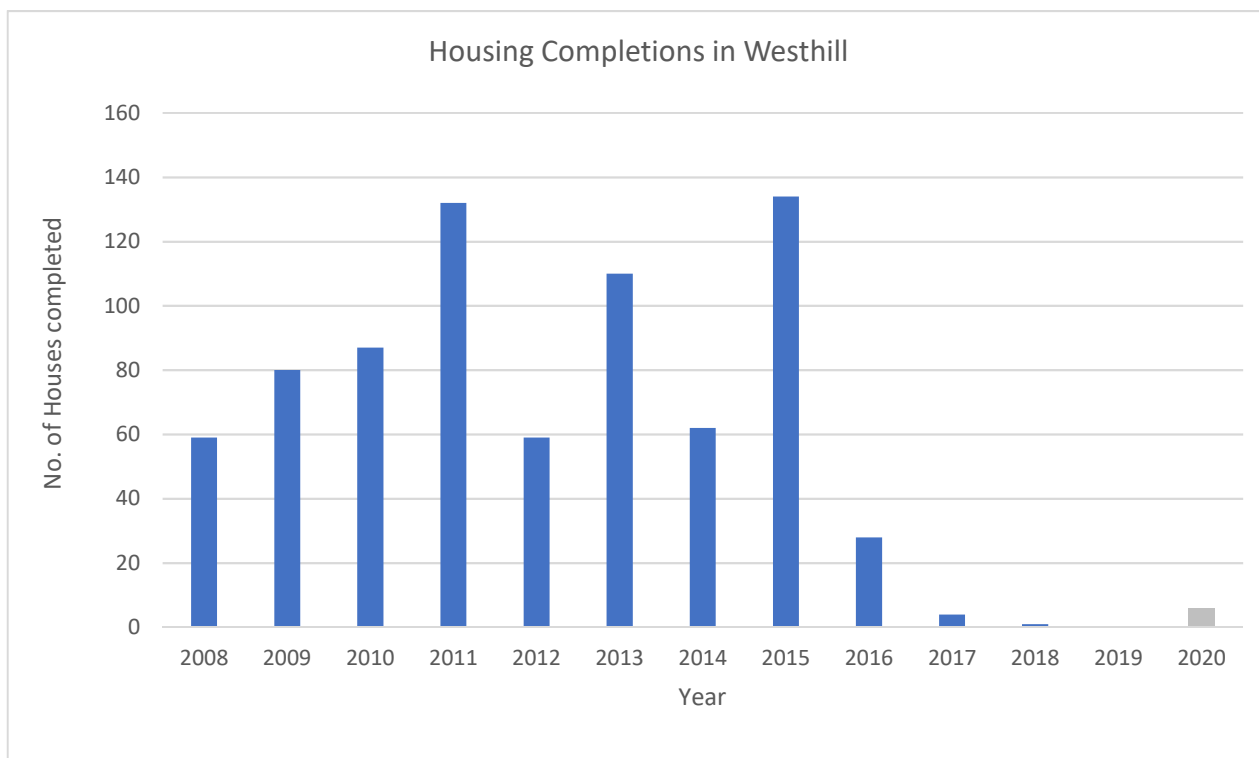


Figure 4: Housing Completions in Westhill (source: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22980/final-housing-land-audit-2018.pdf>)



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Aberdeenshire Council’s ‘Westhill Profile’ sheet from 2017 (see figure 5 below) emphasises the lack of housing completions over recent years and also shows that the average housing price in Westhill is almost £70,000 above the Aberdeenshire average (based on 2015 average prices). The affordability of homes in Westhill is a key concern for the community, and one which is only going to be exacerbated if there is not additional housing supply.

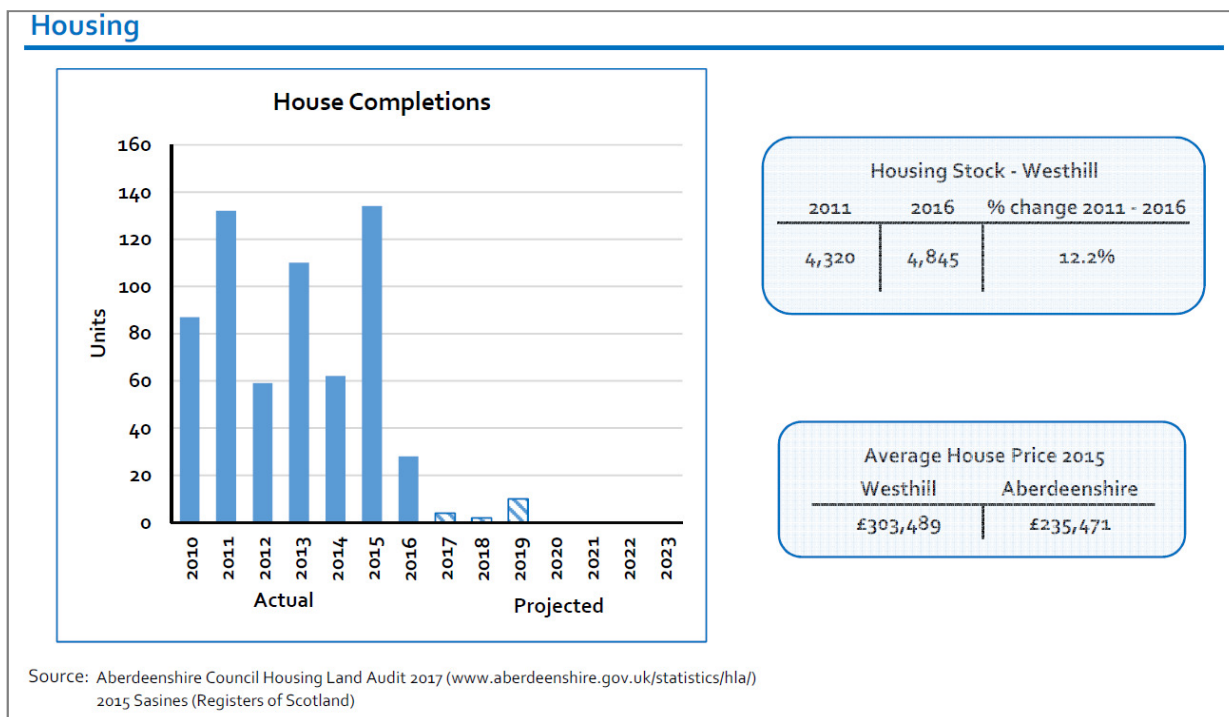


Figure 5: Source: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22105/westhill-profile-september-2017.pdf>

Westhill needs additional development to sustain its role as a key employment centre and sustain local shops and services. The vision for Westhill also notes that lack of affordable housing is an issue for the settlement. The main method of delivering affordable housing in the current climate is as part of allocated housing sites which are required to deliver 25% of the site as affordable housing. If no additional housing land is made available, there will be no additional affordable housing by this approach. Site GR133 at Soutarhill could deliver seventeen affordable homes within phase 1 of the development. Development could commence on the site in 2022 if the site is allocated.

The Proposed Strategic Development Plan (PSDP) requires that allocations should be small scale in nature and not extensions to existing strategic development sites’ (para 4.19). Additionally, Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires LDPs to allocate a range of sites which are effective, and in which there is confidence that the land will be brought forward for development. Site GR133 fits the requirements of the Proposed SDP and SPP precisely. This site is immediately deliverable, with no constraints to its delivery.

Large housing sites are not delivering in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area part of Aberdeenshire. Of the four large allocations over 500 units made in Aberdeenshire in the AHMA (Chapelton OP1, Ellon OP1,



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Inverurie OP4 and Kintore OP1) only 126 homes have been delivered to date. Persistently relying on these large sites to deliver will simply exacerbate under delivery of housing.

CALA have all the relevant technical information prepared to inform a planning application, and should the site be allocated, are ready to submit a planning application. Given the scale of the site, it would be anticipated to be built out over 2-3 years.

2.3 Economic Development in Westhill

Westhill is home to a large number of subsea engineering businesses, earning it the status of 'Global subsea centre excellence'. This is in addition to other industries and services which are located across the towns four business parks; Westhill Business Park; Arnall Business Park; Silvertrees; and Kingshill Commercial Park. Business land take up has been steady in Westhill over the past 10 years.

The attraction of Westhill is further demonstrated by the fact it is one of the few locations where speculative industrial development is taking place. [REDACTED] are currently developing five units at Kingshill Commercial Park ([REDACTED]).

The Westhill Capacity Study Update (Aberdeenshire Council 2014) also outlines that "there is a critical lack of diversity and choice in terms of housing tenure and type in Westhill". The document also puts forward a vision for Westhill to fully exploit its position as a world centre of excellence, which to do so will require attracting skilled workers. A key aspect of this is being able to offer high quality residential accommodation. One of the strategic objectives of the report is to meet specific housing needs of workers associated with the subsea engineering sector. The Report also states on page 89 that:

*"mixed use development should be encouraged as an appropriate way of achieving the overall vision for Westhill of **creating a sustainable mixed community** which balances **residential**, commercial and employment related development in such a way as to reduce the need to travel and **create a vibrant place.**"*

The Capacity Study is a document agreed by the Council, and should be taken into account in consideration the bid submissions in Westhill.

A key principle of sustainable development is ensuring that people can live and work in the same place, reducing need to travel. Additional housing allocations should be made in Westhill to enable fully sustainable development, and enable residents in Westhill to live and work in the same place.



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3.0 Settlement Statement: Westhill

3.1 Officers Reasoning

This site (GN133) has not been preferred by Officers in the Main Issues Report (MIR). However, this is based on a number of errors within the assessment of the site and the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the site. Notably, the site has been described as being within the greenbelt, which it is not. This is a key oversight and calls into question the reliability of the whole assessment.

Table 1 below provides a summary of the comments raised in respect of site GR133 and a brief response to these. These points are expanded upon in sections 3.3-3.10 below. The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the site is reviewed in section 4 of the report.

3.2 Table 1 Officers Comments against site GR133

Officers Reasoning / Comments	Response
<i>"Mixed use – 49 homes, public Park and Golf Practice Area"</i>	<p>The bid submitted is for 70 homes, a public park and golf practice area. Significant effort has been put into masterplanning the site, with the supporting masterplan document showing how the site layout has developed, and that the site can clearly accommodate 70 dwellings.</p> <p>Given that densities have been increased on most other sites it is unclear why officers have suggested that this site should only be developed for 49 dwellings.</p>
<i>"The site is constrained by its situation within the green belt"</i>	<p>The site is not located within the greenbelt. The greenbelt is on the opposite side of Westhill Drive. See fig. 6 below.</p> <p>Green Belt is not an issue in respect of this site.</p> <p>See section 3.3 below for more detail.</p>
<i>"The site is constrained by the Health and Safety Executive's pipeline consultation zone"</i>	<p>A small part of the site is within the consultation zone, but this affects a small part of the developable area, as the majority of the bid site is proposed for open space.</p> <p>A housing layout has been developed for the site which takes cognisance of the pipeline, based on advice from the operator. The development proposed complies with the pipeline operator's guidelines.</p> <p>Pipeline consultation zones are therefore not an issue for this site.</p>



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	<p>See section 3.4 below for more detail.</p>
<p><i>“The site is constrained by a core path running through the site.”</i></p>	<p>The core path currently runs along the farm track through the site. It is proposed that this would be re-routed through the site. The existing path is on a single-track farm road with no separation for pedestrians. The core path would be enhanced to provide separation from traffic, and also additional paths would also be provided to the north of the site. This would comply with Policy P2.</p> <p>This is not a constraint to development.</p> <p>See section 3.5 below for more detail.</p>
<p><i>“The site represents a largely disjointed addition to the settlement”</i></p>	<p>The site is well connected to development to the south and extends the developed area of the settlement no further north than existing development on the opposite side of the road. The site would be accessed from Blacklaws Brae, an existing development.</p> <p>A 20m wide tree belt to the north of the site provides a defined boundary to the north of the settlement. The tree belt will be retained.</p> <p>The site is a preferred site within the Council’s Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014 reflecting their assessment that it would avoid the creation of areas of development which are detached from Westhill.</p> <p>The site is therefore a clear extension of existing development with a defined boundary to the north.</p> <p>See section 3.6 and 3.7 below for more detail.</p>
<p><i>“A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment would be required given the potential visual impacts. Development on this site could have on the surrounding landscape character. The site occupies a relatively high elevation in relation to the majority of local urban development and this also has potential to affect the perceived landscape character of the locality and district. The visual effect of</i></p>	<p>The site fits within the landscape. The site is no higher than existing development, it sits below the skyline and sits within an established tree line. The site would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding landscape character. The proposed public open space to the west would enhance the landscape setting.</p> <p>A landscape appraisal was carried out by ██████████ in 2009. This was updated in 2013 by Halliday Fraser Munro. The masterplan document supporting the bid also includes a detailed visual appraisal, see pages 11-21. This concludes</p>



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<p><i>development on this site particularly on receptors to the north of the site needs to be assessed."</i></p>	<p>that due to the surrounding landforms, tree planting and surrounding residential development, the visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding area is minimised.</p> <p>We do not believe that a full LVIA would be warranted for this site, where the landscape impact has been shown to be minimal.</p> <p>See section 3.6 and 3.7 below for more detail.</p>
<p><i>"The site relies on an unclassified road for access that would require to be brought up to adoptable standards."</i></p>	<p>The site does not rely on an unclassified road for access. It is proposed to access the site from Blacklaws Brae, which is a 5.5m wide adopted road with a 20mph speed limit. The roads within the site would be designed in accordance with Designing Streets to adoptable standards.</p> <p>More detail is available in the transport statement which was submitted in support of the development bid. This document is attached to this submission for reference.</p> <p>See section 3.8 below for more detail.</p>

Table1: Response to the Officer's assessment of the site as contained within the MIR



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3.3 Greenbelt

The site is **not** located within the greenbelt, as shown by figure 6 below. The proposed site is located within the skyline of Westhill, and its development would not impact on the setting or character of the town. The site would also offer improved access to open space.

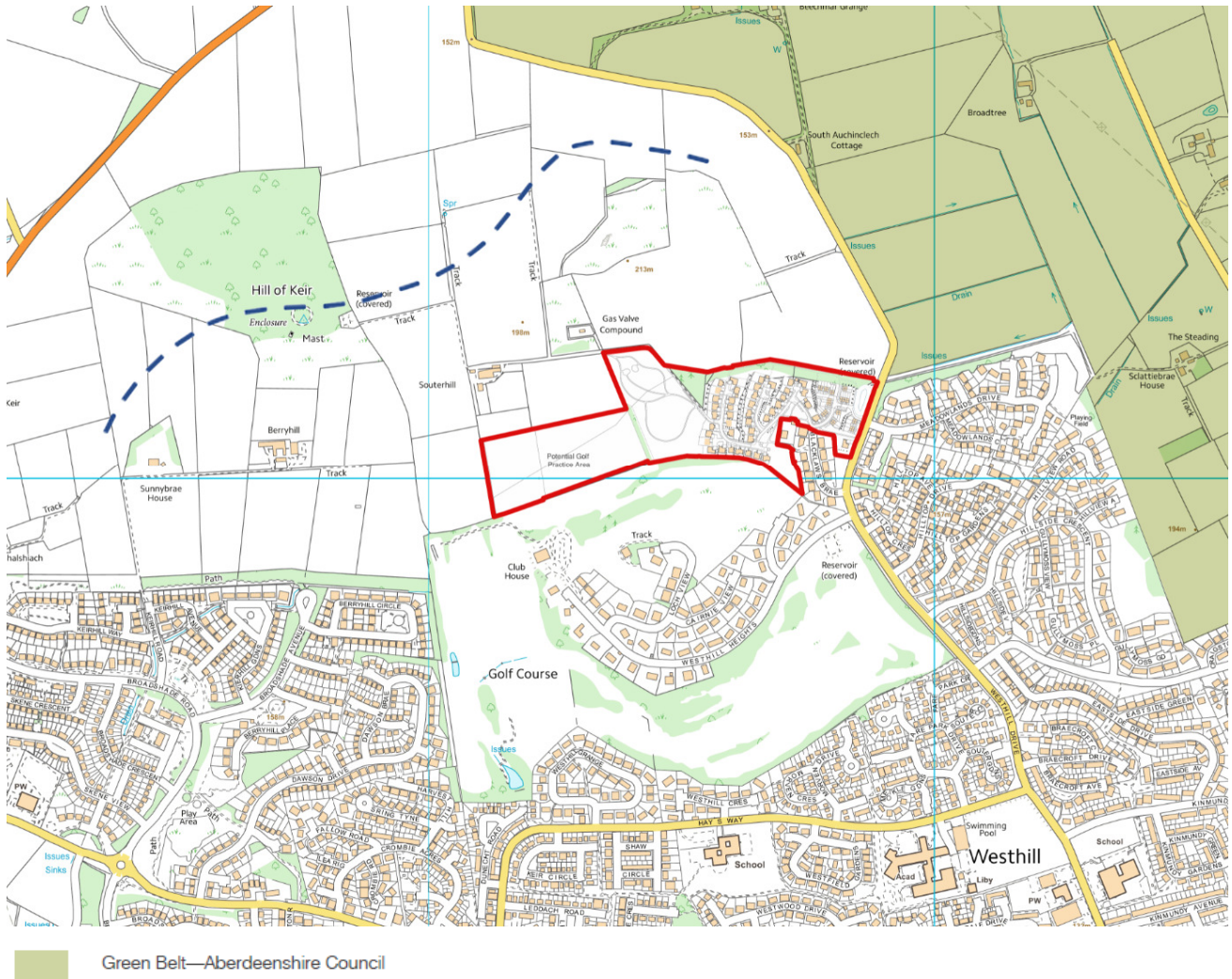


Figure 6: Extract from Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 with key skyline shown. The site boundary is shown by the red line, with indicative housing layout shown.



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3.4 Pipeline Consultation Zone

The existing Leuchar Moss to Craibstone gas pipeline crosses the north west corner of the site. Contact has been made with the pipeline operator who have confirmed no work, stockpiling or crossings are permitted within a 30m exclusion zone and no building is permitted within 38m of the pipeline. These exclusion zones are illustrated on figure 7 below. The layout has been developed to comply with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'Land Use Planning Methodology' guidance. The pipeline is therefore not a constraint to development.

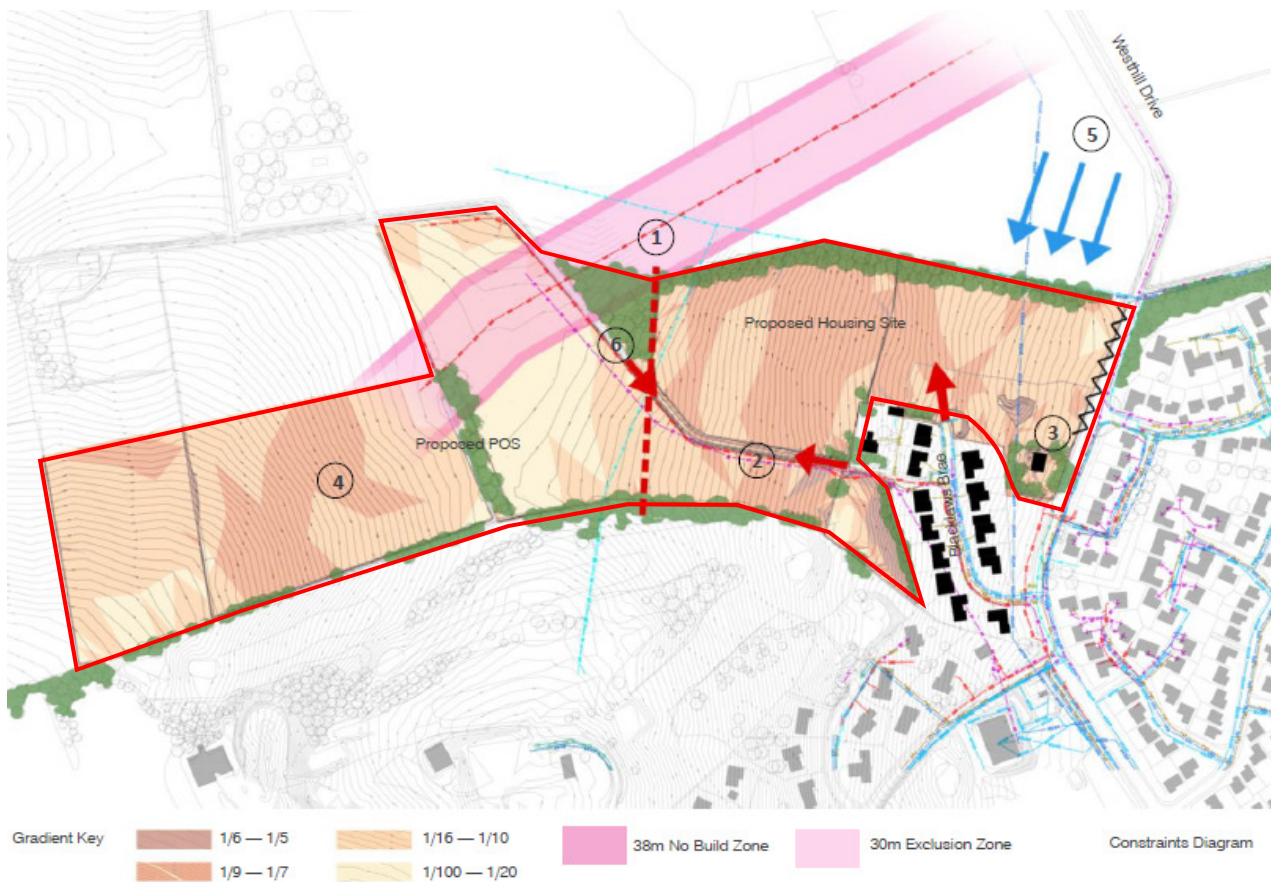


Figure 7: Extract from masterplan document - Constraints

3.5 Core Path

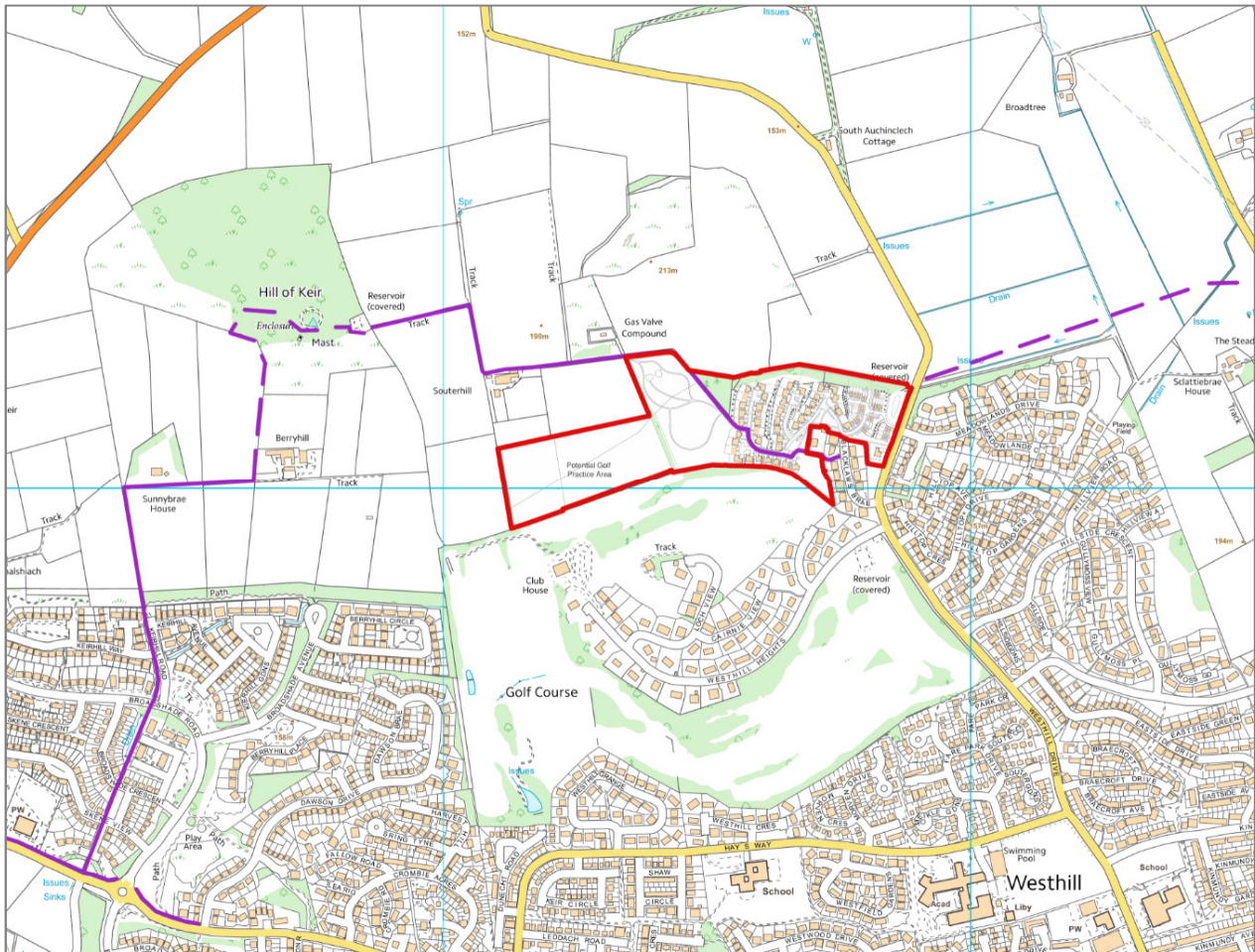
There is an existing core path currently running along the farm track within the proposed site (see figure 8 below). The intention is to reroute this track, through the development site as shown by the indicative layout at Figure 9 below. The path would also be enhanced through additional paths to the north of the site, and an additional connection onto Westhill Drive to the north of the current Blacklaws Brae. The pedestrian provision within the site would be in the form of a pavement next to the adopted road through the site. This would offer safer and segregated core path provision over the current informal route which is on a single track road shared with farm traffic.



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CALA are increasingly aware of the importance of recreational paths to their purchasers and would prepare marketing material on walking or active travel opportunities in the arrival pack for new home owners. Being able to enhance the provision available at this site is therefore an important part of the proposed development.



— Core path

Figure 8: Extract from Aberdeenshire Council's Core Path Plan. The site boundary is shown by the red line, with indicative housing layout shown.



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Figure 9: Indicative site layout with indicative route of core path shown by purple line.

3.6 Visual Impact

The site is well connected to the existing settlement, it sits adjacent to existing development, and does not extend the settlement any further north than existing development at Meadowlands to the east. In relation to views, the masterplan document includes a visual appraisal of the site within the 'Appraisal' section of the document on pages 11-21. We would urge Officers to revisit this document which was submitted with the bid, and has been re-submitted with this response.

The site is not readily visible from the south and west as intervening development or the landform blocks views of the site. From the north, the shoulder of the hill obscures the higher sections of the site, meaning that any visual impact is more local and restricted to lower slopes (see figure 10 below). These areas would be seen as an extension to the settlement in any case, but the 20 meter wide tree belt mitigates any further impact. This maturing tree belt was planted along the northern boundary of the site in 2006 and now provides a mature landscape backdrop to the site. This also provides a defensible boundary to the north of the site. We would also note that the early provision of strategic landscaping is the preferred approach for Issue 13 (Open Space) in the Main Issues Report.

The site sits within the key skyline and so views from further afield are minimised. The proposed development site does not extend the visibility of housing into areas where housing is not currently visible and therefore has little additional impact.

A previous landscape appraisal carried out by [REDACTED] in 2009 also supports this assessment. It notes that the site is not visible until at close range, and that it would not extend the visibility of the town any further than existing development. This assessment recommended that the screening of the site would be further reinforced by structure planting. This is proving to be the case as the tree belt to the north of the site is now maturing and providing a defined landscape backdrop.



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Figure 10: Extract from masterplan document, viewpoint of site on approach from the north (see page 13 of the masterplan document for larger image).

The proposed development on the site is no higher than existing development in Westhill as shown by figure 11 below. The housing slopes down to the east from a high point of 213m AOD and is very similar in terms of enclosure and visibility to the existing housing at Meadowlands Drive. Housing at Meadowlands Drive.

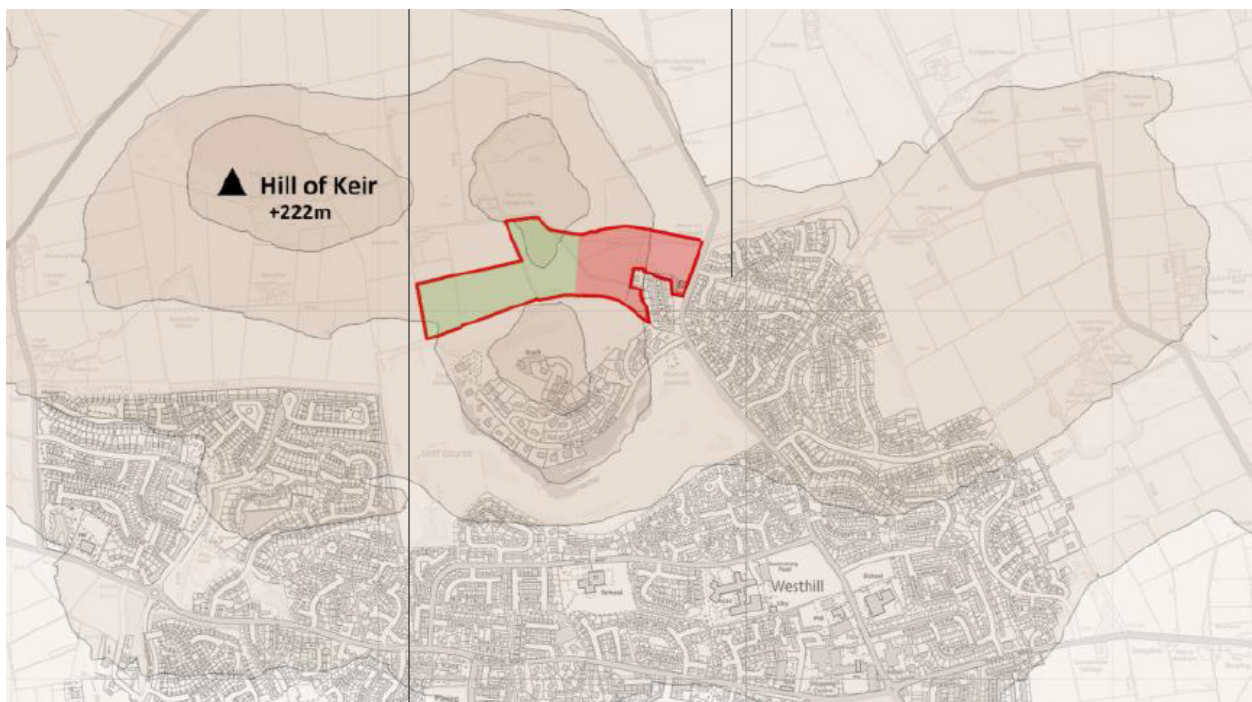


Figure 11: Extract from masterplan document showing Topography (see page 10 of masterplan). Note that only the area shaded red is to be developed. The green shading is open space.



A broad ridgeline extending from east of Kirkton of Skene over Hill of Keir to Westhill Drive, which was identified as a key skyline in the Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014 (Aberdeenshire Council), offers excellent enclosure of the site from the north. This is shown in figure 12 below.

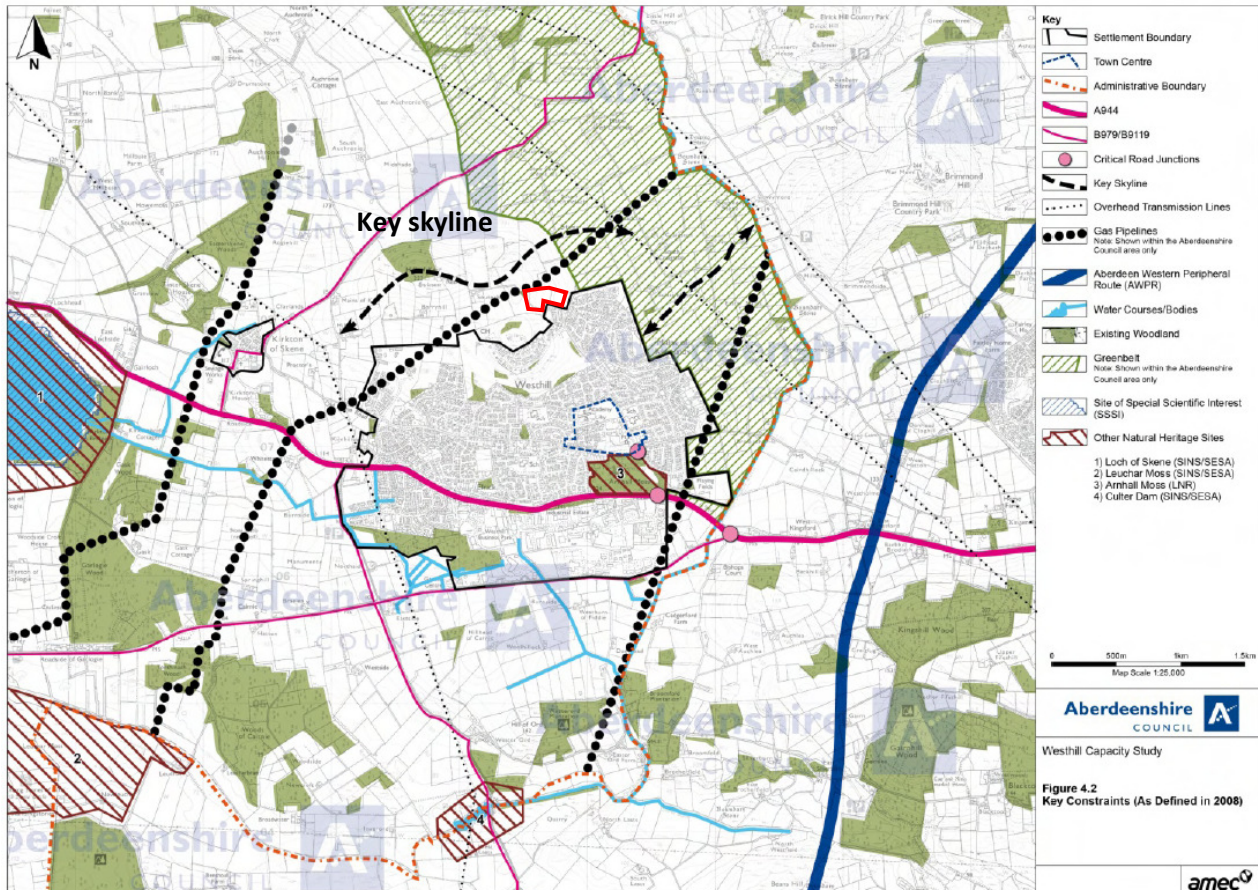


Figure 12: Constraints diagram as shown in Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014 (Aberdeenshire Council) (indicative site location shown by red line)

3.7 Westhill Capacity Study

The Westhill Capacity Study Update was agreed by Garioch Area Committee in June 2014. The Garioch Area Committee noted the findings of the study subject to comments being considered in relation to the acute need for affordable housing in Westhill, and specific note that the study should be used to inform the preparation of the future LDP.

The Council's Westhill Capacity Study Update also identifies the site as a 'most suitable site' for development. This is shown in figure 13 below. This is one of the few sites which could deliver housing without impacting on landscape; causing coalescence with Kirkton of Skene; or expanding Westhill to the south beyond the current boundary of the B9119. The Capacity Study identifies on page 82 that "development the most suitable areas...would minimise the impacts of the site specific constraints upon development and avoid the creation of areas of development which are detached from Westhill". This is



entirely at odds with the Officers suggestion in the MIR that the site is ‘a disjointed addition to the settlement’.

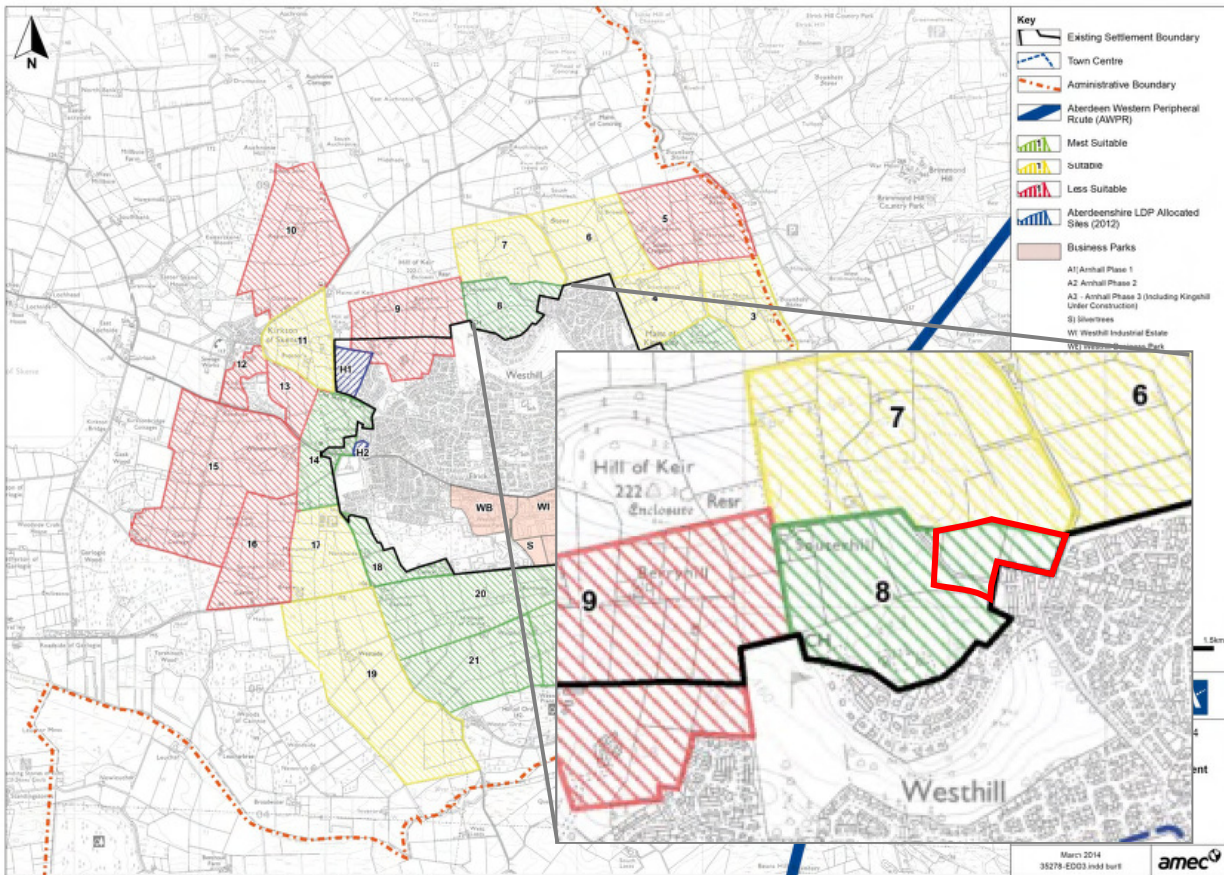


Figure 13: Extract from Westhill Capacity Study Update 2014 (indicative site location shown by red line)

3.8 Road Network

The road network has been reviewed by Fairhurst, and a Transport Statement prepared by Fairhurst supported the bid. This document has also been re-submitted with this response. The site does not rely on an unclassified road for access, as shown on pages 27-29 of the supporting masterplan document. The site will be accessed from Blacklaws Brae which is a residential street subject to a 20mph speed limit. An indicative layout has been prepared for the site which makes allowance for designing streets, parking and servicing requirements.

In addition to the actual street design, Fairhurst have indicated that the proposal will have an ‘insignificant traffic impact on the surrounding road network’. The site is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. There is an existing core path on the site, and the site will connect into the existing pedestrian network. The site is only a 10 minute walk from Westhill centre. There is a bus stop only 150metres from the site (at Blacklaws Brae) which is served by the 220 Stagecoach service.



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Westhill is located only one mile from the recently opened Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) which significantly improves accessibility to the north and south of the city.

3.9 Other Infrastructure

In relation to education, updated School Roll forecasts were published for 2018 in January 2019. The updated forecast indicates that there will be capacity in Westhill Academy (operating at 84% in 2023 with capacity for 162 pupils). Westhill Academy has the most capacity of all academies within the AHMA, as shown by table 2 below. School rolls will begin to drop if additional development is not allocated in Westhill.

	SCHOOL	Area	Current Capacity	Capacity 2023	Current Capacity %	Capacity 2023 %	Available Capacity 2023 (No.)
AHMA	Banchory Academy	Marr	900	887	91%	99%	13
	Ellon Academy	Formartine	1300	1240	83%	95%	60
	Inverurie Academy	Garioch	1100	1194	80%	109%	-94
	Kemnay Academy	Garioch	700	1122	125%	160%	-422
	Meldrum Academy	Formartine	980	1105	101%	113%	-125
	Portlethen Academy	K&M	970	1050	84%	108%	-80
	Mackie Academy	K&M	1290	1228	91%	95%	62
	Westhill Academy	Garioch	1000	838	75%	84%	162

Table 2: Aberdeenshire School Roll Forecast 2018

Westhill Primary School is forecast to be operating at 97% capacity in 2023 with capacity for 10 pupils. However, both Crombie Primary School and Elrick Primary School are forecast to have capacity for 87 pupils between them. The development would be phased over two to three years and using a multiplier of 0.4 pupils per house, the development would generate around 10 pupils per year. It is envisaged that there is therefore likely to be a solution within existing school capacities. All three primary schools in Westhill are within walking distance of the site.

SCHOOL	Current Capacity	Capacity 2023	Current Capacity %	Capacity 2023 %	Available Capacity 2023 (No.)
Crombie PS	342	299	90%	88%	43
Elrick PS	442	398	94%	90%	44
Westhill PS	342	332	84%	97%	10

Table 3: Aberdeenshire School Roll Forecast 2018

In relation to water and waste water, there is capacity within both the water and waste water network for the development. Invercarnie and Mannofield water treatment works (WTW) has capacity for the development and Nigg waste water treatment works (WWTW) has capacity for the development.



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3.10 Community Benefit

Nine hectares of this site is proposed as open space (see figure 14 below), which equates to 72% of the site. A large public park is proposed to the west of the site, which would offer opportunities for additional woodland planting, picnic areas, an informal path network and could provide a children's play area. To the west of this and adjacent to Westhill Golf Club, golf practice facilities are proposed. CALA have been in discussion with Westhill Golf Club over a period of time and we understand that the golf practice area is needed by Westhill Golf Club in order to sustain the club. Golf clubs in general are struggling across Scotland and a dedicated practice area would improve the offering by the club. It offers extra flexibility for people wishing to partake in golf, and also opportunities for the club to diversify their offering in terms of disc or football golf.

In addition to the benefit of providing extra homes for Westhill, the proposed recreational benefits also offer substantial public benefit.



Figure 14: Proposed Open space and golf practice facilities (extract from masterplan document, pages 32-35)



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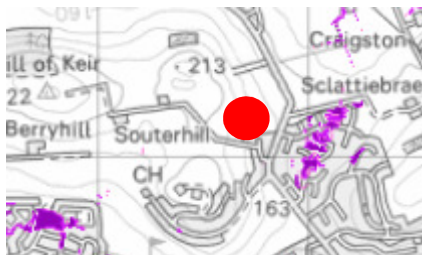
3.11 Affordable Housing

Westhill has historically suffered from under provision of affordable housing. This site would deliver **17** affordable units, making a significant contribution towards improving housing waiting lists. If the site was allocated, CALA would envisage being on site by 2022, with affordable housing to be delivered in early phases, so there could be affordable housing on this suite by 2022/2023.

We understand that delivery of affordable homes is a key concern for local residents and Councillors’, and with budgets stretched across local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s), the key delivery method has to be linked to mainstream housing.

4.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SEA of the plan is undertaken by the Planning Authority to address the effects that the plan is likely to have on the environment. The proposed bid sites have been assessed against ten topics to consider their effect on the environment. Table 4 below provides a response to the comments made by Officers in the SEA assessment of site GR133.

Officers Comments by SEA Topic	Response
<p>Air: “development would increase traffic flow through Westhill. The site is near a busy bus route which could reduce commuter traffic”</p>	<p>The site would have a minimal increase on traffic through Westhill. The site is in a sustainable location, close to the town centre and bus routes.</p> <p>Agree that the effect would be neutral (0)</p>
<p>Water: there is capacity in WWTW and WTW. Some localised impacts during development but short term impact</p>	<p>Agree that the effect would be neutral (0)</p>
<p>Climatic: “The site is near to a busy bus route and there is a railway station in the town, which could reduce commuter traffic</p> <p>The development is in an area identified at risk from surface water flooding and is likely to have a long-term effect on climate and the water environment. Part mitigated through of the site found to be at risk from flooding will not be included within an allocation. A flood risk assessment (FRA) may be required.”</p>	<p>There is no railway station in Westhill, but we support the comments that the site is near to a busy bus route. The site is also walkable to Westhill town centre.</p> <p>The site is not at risk of flooding. The extract below from SEPA flood map confirms this (the site location is shown by the red dot):</p> 



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	<p>SEPA Flood Map extract (source: http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm)</p> <p>Suggest the effect should be slightly positive (0/+)</p>
Soil: short term adverse effect on soil during construction	Agree that the effect would be neutral (0)
Biodiversity: long-term irreversible adverse impact on biodiversity through loss of habitat	Agree that the effect would be neutral (0)
<p>Landscape: "The scale and location of the proposal will have a negative impact on the landscape character, and the effect is likely to be long-term.</p> <p>Significant scale development that would further alter the character of the area. The impact could be mitigated by strategic landscaping, and if allocated, this will be stated as part of the development requirements for the site or designated as protected land. If necessary, a landscape and visual impact assessment will be required and will be stated in the development requirements for the site."</p>	<p>The impact on the landscape is negligible. The issue is considered in detail on pages 11-21 of the supporting masterplan document, and in section 3.7 below.</p> <p>Strategic landscaping has already been planted along the northern boundary of the site. This was planted 12 years ago and has matured.</p> <p>There is no need for an LVIA for this site given the information submitted in support of the bid.</p> <p>Suggest that the effect would be neutral (0)</p>
<p>Material Assets: The quality of new asset, created through the development of this site, depends on the availability of and its conformity with other assets in Aberdeenshire. These include social infrastructure (schools, housing, healthcare facilities); transport infrastructure (road, paths, and pipelines); water-delivery infrastructure; sewerage infrastructure; energy infrastructure (pylons, power cables, wind turbines and pipelines); waste management infrastructure (waste collection, transfer stations and composting facilities).</p> <p>o Consultation with relevant infrastructure providers will be required to identify mitigation measures, and if allocated, the settlement statement will specify how to mitigate against these effects.</p>	<p>The proposed development would create high quality assets, both housing and its associated infrastructure, and also a golf practice area and park which would be of significant benefit to the population of Westhill.</p> <p>There is not significant investment required in sewage or energy infrastructure and the site access utilises an existing road for access.</p> <p>Suggest that the effect would be slightly positive (0/+)</p>
Population: "The mix of house types proposed will result in a range of housing choice for all groups of the population."	Agree that the effect would be slightly positive (+/0)



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<p>Human Health: "It would not result in loss of open space / core paths. Provision of new housing in conformity with new building standards can enhance good health and social justice for people with no previous access to housing. Development is within the Health and Safety pipeline consultation zone."</p>	<p>The site would provide additional open space and enhance core paths. The site would deliver affordable housing.</p> <p>The limited development proposed within the pipeline consultation zone is permitted under HSE's 'Planning Land Use Methodology'.</p> <p>Disagree that the site would have a positive / negative effect (+/--). Suggest that the effect would be slightly positive (0/+)</p>
<p>Cultural: "Unlikely to have any effects on the historic environment."</p>	<p>Agree that the effect would be neutral (0).</p>

Table 4: Response to the Officer's Strategic Environmental Assessment of the site.

Given the analysis in the table above, it is suggested that the site would have an overall natural / positive effect, particularly in relation to climate, material assets, population and human health. We would disagree with the Officers consideration of the effect in relation to climate, human health and landscape. There are no environmental impacts in allocating the site, supporting the earlier analysis in this response that site GR133 should be allocated.

5.0 Conclusion

The Planning Authority are required to allocate an additional 4168 homes to meet the requirements of the Proposed Strategic Development Plan. We would also argue that there is a need to deliver housing in Westhill to meet both demand and the needs of the area. There will be very few sites that are more ready to deliver high quality homes in a sustainable and desirable location than this site.

There are no impediments to the delivery of the site, it is immediately deliverable. CALA, a leading housebuilder have all the relevant technical information prepared to inform a planning application, and should the site be allocated, are ready to submit a planning application. Given the scale of the site, it would be anticipated to be built out over 2-3 years. As outlined, there are no infrastructure capacity issues to the development of the site. The following information has been prepared to support a planning application:

- Site layout
- Street design
- House design
- Transport statement
- Drainage assessment



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The site would deliver much needed market and affordable housing for Westhill. 25% of the site would be delivered as affordable housing, helping to address a key issue for the community.

As demonstrated above, this site does not impact adversely on the skyline to the north of Westhill and does not have an adverse landscape impact. The site is in a highly sustainable location, within close proximity to a bus stop, walkable to Westhill town centre and also to both the primary and secondary school.

The site offers substantial public benefit in the form of the proposed park and golf practice facilities, which would help to sustain a vital local facility.

The deliverability of this site cannot be overstated, not only are there no infrastructure constraints, the track record of CALA in delivering housing in the north east speaks for itself. CALA homes are currently on site in six locations across Aberdeen city and shire. Once sites are allocated, CALA have delivered these sites quickly and effectively, creating popular housing locations that provide both high quality housing and a high amenity development. Soutarhill would follow that pattern if allocated.

We are concerned that the site review of bid GR133 contains a number of errors and is factually incorrect. This is misleading for those reading and commenting on the Report and could adversely affect the outcome of this site. There are very few sites within the town that can come forward to deliver much needed housing, and we would reiterate that this site is extremely well placed to meet the needs of Westhill.

Aberdeenshire Council

Update to 2008 Westhill Capacity Study

Final Report



AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited

May 2014

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Document Revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Draft Baseline Report for Client Comment	31.01.14
2	Interim Report	03.03.14
3	Interim Report and client comments	12.03.14
4	Draft Final Report for Client Comment	25.03.14
5	Final Report	21.05.2014

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Update to 2008 Westhill Capacity Study

Final Report

AMEC Environment & Infrastructure
UK Limited

May 2014

Executive Summary

Purpose of this Report

AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Ltd (AMEC E&I) was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council in December 2013 to update the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study. Entec UK Ltd (now part of AMEC E&I) was previously commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2007 to undertake the initial capacity study of the town. The requirement for the initial capacity study was identified in a report to the Aberdeenshire Council Infrastructure Services Committee on the 3rd October 2002 that highlighted the need to take a view of the capacities, potential and thresholds for development in Westhill and similar towns in Aberdeenshire over the much longer term. In Westhill the initial study looked at a 50% housing growth scenario for the settlement. One of the key differences between this update and the 2008 study is that this updated study considers the capacity for future growth of the town over a period of 20-25 years, rather than 50% physical growth of the settlement.

Since the 2008 Capacity Study a new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 has been adopted. It allocates two sites for housing development totalling 105 units in the first phase of the Plan (2007-16) and 95 units in the second phase (2017-23), as well as an area of employment land (4.4 hectares) during the period 2007-2023. Westhill also has an 'extraordinary affordable housing target' of 40%, whereby all housing developments in the town are to contribute to meeting this target; the 'normal' affordable housing target across Aberdeenshire is 25%. Westhill is also identified as having affordable housing 'pressured area status'. A new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2016 is being prepared and the Main Issues Report (MIR) was subject to public consultation between 28th October 2013 and 1st February 2014. The MIR does not identify any preferred housing land to be taken forward into the Aberdeenshire LDP 2016, but land has been identified for commercial/employment uses to support Westhill's role as a world renowned location for subsea expertise associated with the oil and gas industry.

Due to the time that has lapsed since the initial capacity study, and the increasing pressure from businesses and developers regarding Westhill, this updated capacity study is required to understand the future growth potential of the settlement. The preparation of this updated Capacity Study has been informed by the latest available statistical and planning data, a workshop comprising Aberdeenshire Council officers from Transportation and Economic Development, and regular correspondence between members of the Project Delivery client group.

A Draft Baseline report, a subsequent Workshop and an Interim Report were prepared in advance of this Final Report to collate relevant data and to identify the spatial objectives which would underpin the site assessment stage of the study. The Interim Report integrated the content of the Draft Baseline Report with the outcomes of the Workshop and included an analysis of current characteristics and predicted trends in Westhill, together with the identification of key development constraints and a high level assessment of the key drivers of change, including an analysis of the policy context for Westhill. The Interim Report also identified key issues which are likely to affect the future development of Westhill and outlined a vision and set of strategic objectives to underpin Westhill's future development. In addition the Interim Report detailed three potential growth trajectories for Westhill, and

following instructions from Aberdeenshire Council officers it was decided to progress a ‘maximised growth option’ within the final (site assessment) stage of the study.

This Final Report includes the complete contents of the Interim Report, together with the results of the site assessment stage of the study and a number of recommendations for actions and further work to maximise sustainable economic growth in Westhill. The main report is accompanied by a series of appendices detailing the criteria used to assess the suitability of sites for development, the detailed results for each of the 22 areas which were assessed in the study, and the key diagrams from the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study.

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1. Introduction

This report presents the final output from a programme of work to update a previous capacity study for the town of Westhill, Aberdeenshire, which was prepared by Entec UK Ltd (now part of AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Ltd) in 2008. This report includes: an analysis of the baseline and predicted future characteristics of Westhill; the identification of key development constraints; an overview of the local and regional spatial planning policy context, the identification of key issues which are likely to influence the town's development, the establishment of a vision around which potential options for the growth can be framed; and the results of 22 site appraisals around the periphery of Westhill. The concluding section of this report also sets out a number of recommendations which are designed to maximise sustainable economic growth within Westhill over the next 20-25 years.

This section firstly outlines the background to this updated study, clarifies its purpose and status, as well as its key assumptions and limitations. The approach undertaken in preparing this updated study is subsequently outlined, and the key members of the project/client team and key stakeholders are then identified.

1.1 Background

Entec UK Ltd was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2007 to undertake a capacity study of the town of Westhill, and the resulting Westhill Capacity Study report was published in October 2008. The need for the capacity study was identified in a report to the Aberdeenshire Council Infrastructure Services Committee on 3rd October 2002 which highlighted the need to assess the capacities, potential and thresholds for future development in Westhill and similar towns in Aberdeenshire over the long term. Consequently the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study considered the spatial implications of a 50% housing growth scenario.

A significant amount of time has elapsed since the 2008 Capacity Study was prepared, during which development pressures from businesses within Westhill have significantly increased. Therefore, Aberdeenshire Council identified a need for an updated capacity study in order to understand the future growth potential of Westhill, and to inform the development of future planning policies, potentially including the preparation of a strategic masterplan for Westhill.

1.2 Purpose & Status

The overall purpose of this study is to update an earlier capacity study which was prepared for Westhill in 2008, taking account of the key assumptions noted below in section 1.3. The rationale for the updated capacity study is the need to support economic development within Westhill, and in particular to accommodate the growing and world leading subsea engineering cluster which has developed in the town over recent years.

The finalised updated capacity study has a similar status to the Westhill Capacity Study 2008, in that the document will not itself become part of the development plan for Aberdeenshire. However, it does form part of the body of knowledge from which will inform future development plans and planning applications.

1.3 Key Assumptions & Limitations

The 2008 Westhill Capacity Study was underpinned by an assumption that the housing stock within Westhill would increase by 50% (from a predicted baseline of 4,628 dwellings in 2008) due to a significant population increase. Therefore, it sought to understand what land use changes and developments would be needed to accommodate a 50% increase in housing. This updated capacity study continues to assume that the population of Westhill will increase. However, it does not impose a predicted growth rate of 50% in the housing stock. The scope of this capacity study therefore differs from the scope of the 2008 Capacity Study, in that the aim here is to identify the future growth potential of Westhill over a 20 to 25 year period, without focusing on the specific need to accommodate a 50% increase in its housing stock.

This capacity study assumes that development pressures recently experienced in Westhill will continue, at least in the short-medium term, particularly in relation to employment land and the development of business parks. A related assumption is that, providing suitable development opportunities exist, subsea engineering firms will continue to choose to locate in the established subsea cluster within Westhill, at least in the short-medium term.

It is assumed that the Aberdeen Western Periphery Route (AWPR), which at its nearest point is situated 1km east of Westhill, will be fully operational within the 20-25 year timeframe of this capacity study. The AWPR currently has a three year build programme scheduled for 2015-2018. A further assumption is that the vast majority of potential development in Westhill over the next 25 years will be funded by the private sector, although limited public sector funding may become available for infrastructure interventions.

The study area for this study is identical to the study area used in the 2008 Capacity Study. In terms of geographic limitations, the study area extends as far east as the administrative boundary with Aberdeen City, south also as far as the administrative boundary, west as far as Kirkton of Skene and north to include Berryhill and Souterhill.

1.4 Methodology

The preparation of this report has involved the following stages:

1) Inception Meeting & Site Visit (December 2013)

AMEC's Project Director met key staff from Aberdeenshire Council to discuss issues including the scope of work, data requirements, the Council's expectations regarding outputs, project logistics and the intended work programme. An accompanied site visit was undertaken in advance of the inception meeting.

2) Review of 2008 Westhill Capacity Study (January 2014)

An early task in this project was to review the previous study prepared by Entec UK Ltd to identify sections where a similar approach should be taken in this study, or where a different approach would be required.

3) Familiarisation with Key Issues and Documents (January 2014)

This stage involved a review of current and historical Ordnance Survey maps, photography, secondary data and policy documents to familiarise the project team with relevant aspects of Westhill.

4) Collation of Baseline Information, High Level Policy Analysis & Preparation of Draft Baseline Report (January 2014)

Building upon the data collected and reviewed in stage three, this stage involved a detailed analysis of relevant data and policy documents to collate a comprehensive baseline and policy context for Westhill. This **Baseline Report** represents the key output from this stage of the project.

5) Workshop (3rd February 2014)

A Workshop was undertaken to inform the update of the Capacity Study. The purpose of the Workshop was:

- To agree on the **approach** in undertaking the Study;
- To consider, reflect and agree on the **baseline** findings in terms of current characteristics, recent trends and predicted future trends;
- To consider the absolute and relative geographical, infrastructure and environmental & cultural heritage **constraints**;
- To consider the **key drivers of change** that will condition the development of Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years;
- To give preliminary consideration to the **vision and strategic objectives** for Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years; and
- To consider the **potential growth options** for Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years.

6) Preparation of Interim Report (February 2014)

The **Interim Report** integrated the content of the Draft Baseline Report with the outcomes of the Workshop, including the identification of a vision statement and strategic objectives for Westhill.

7) Assessment of Potential Development Areas (March 2014)

Following agreement between AMEC E&I and Aberdeenshire Council officers regarding the methodology which would be used to assess potential development areas around the periphery of Westhill, these areas were subject to high level site appraisals to determine their relative suitability for development.

8) Preparation of Final Report (March 2014)

This **Final Report** integrated the full contents of the Interim Report with the assessment results obtained in stage seven. To conclude the study a number of recommendations relating to the spatial development of Westhill and the future work programme of Aberdeenshire Council were also devised.

1.5 Project Team & Key Stakeholders

AMEC's key project team comprises:

- ████████████████████ – Technical Director (Planning & Design)
- ████████████████████ – Assistant Consultant (Planning & Design)
- ████████████████████ – Senior Consultant (Planning & Design)

Key staff from Aberdeenshire Council:

- ██████████ – Aberdeenshire Council, Project Delivery
- ██████████ - Aberdeenshire Council, Project Delivery
- ██████████ - Aberdeenshire Council, Economic Development
- ██████████ – Aberdeenshire Council, Transportation

1.6 Report Structure

This update to the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study is structured around multiple, distinct but fundamentally related sections:

- Section 1 Introduction outlining the background, purpose, status and approach of the updated Study.
- Section 2 Outlines the Site & Surroundings of Westhill.
- Section 3 Baseline provides a comprehensive analysis of the recent historical, current and predicted future characteristics of Westhill.
- Section 4 Identifies the key development constraints.
- Section 5 Considers the key drivers of change, including a high level analysis of the current and emerging policy context for Westhill, which will inform the growth options.
- Section 6 Summarises the findings of a SWOT analysis which was undertaken for Westhill, taking account of the data collated in Sections 2-5.

- Section 7 Identifies the key issues which must be considered in identifying potential options for growth within Westhill.
- Section 8 Presents a vision and a number of strategic aims and objectives which potential options for growth must be aligned with.
- Section 9 Outlines the methodology used to assess the suitability of potential development areas around the periphery of Westhill.
- Section 10 Summarises the results of the assessment of potential development areas. The detailed results from this assessment are contained in Appendix B.
- Section 11 Sets out some concluding remarks and a series of recommendations based on sections 1-10 which should be implemented to maximise sustainable economic growth within Westhill.
- Appendix A Details the strategic and technical criteria which were used to assess the suitability of potential development areas for development.
- Appendix B Contains the detailed results of the individual assessments of potential development areas.
- Appendix C Includes the key figures from the Westhill Capacity Study 2008 final report to enable comparison with the results of this updated study.

2. Strategic Context

The town of Westhill lies approximately 6.5 km west of Aberdeen at its closest point and is situated at the eastern extremity of Aberdeenshire Council's land area on the A944 Aberdeen to Alford road. The town is surrounded on all sides by open countryside, with the smaller settlement of Kirkton of Skene situated approximately 1.3 km directly west of Westhill and the slightly larger settlement of Kingswells located 2.8 km to the east, within the boundary of Aberdeen City. A number of farmsteads are located both north and south of Westhill on sloping ground towards Hill of Keir and Hill of Ord respectively, and the village of Blackburn is located approximately 5.2 km to the north.

Figure 2.1 Location Plan shows the existing layout of Westhill and Figure 2.2 Site Plan identifies the town's wider geographical situation.

Figure 2.1 Location Plan

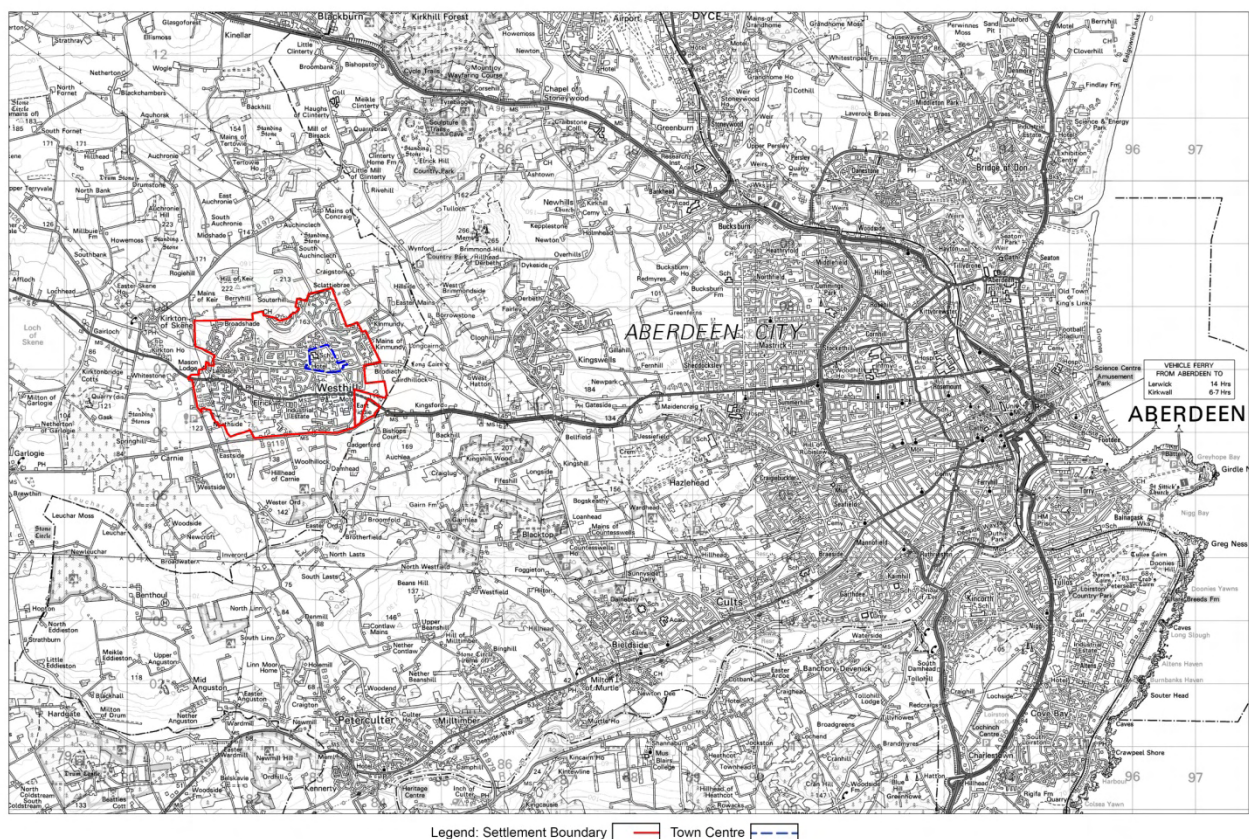
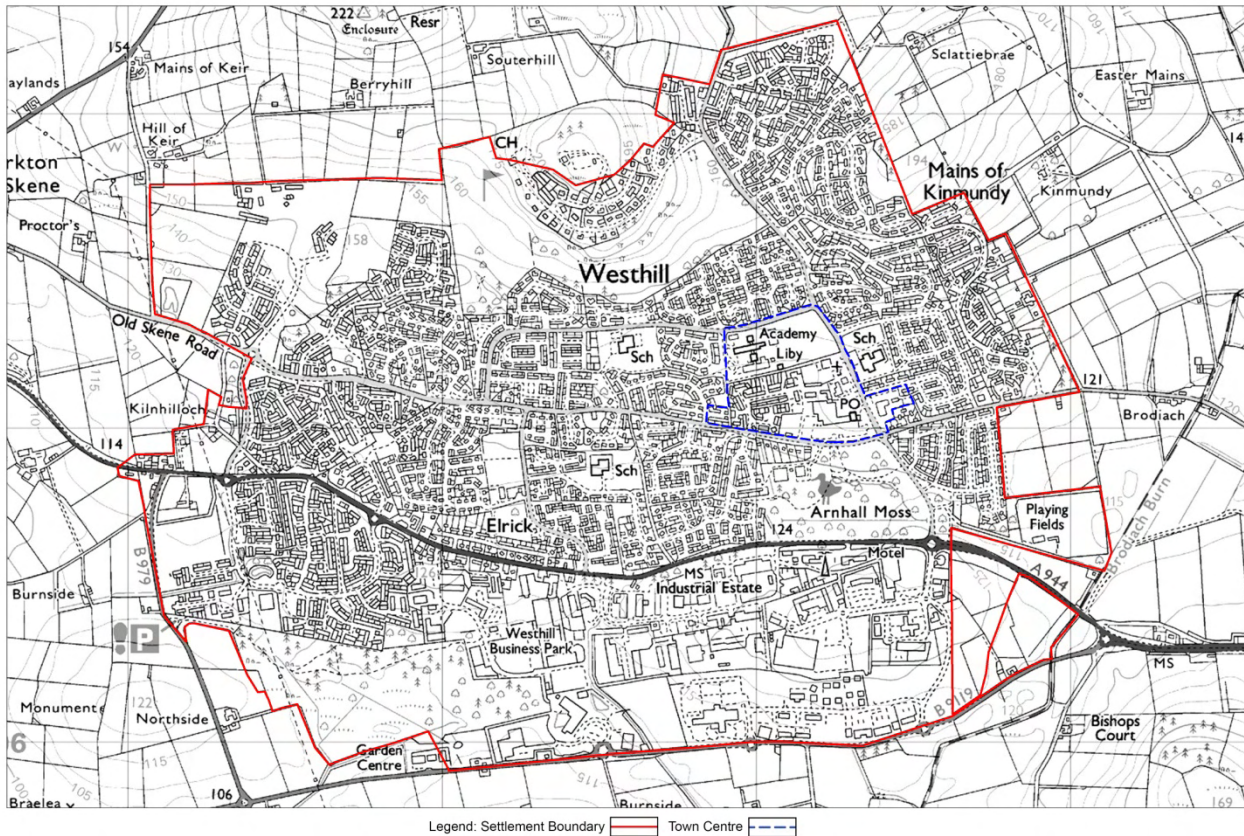


Figure 2.2 Site Plan



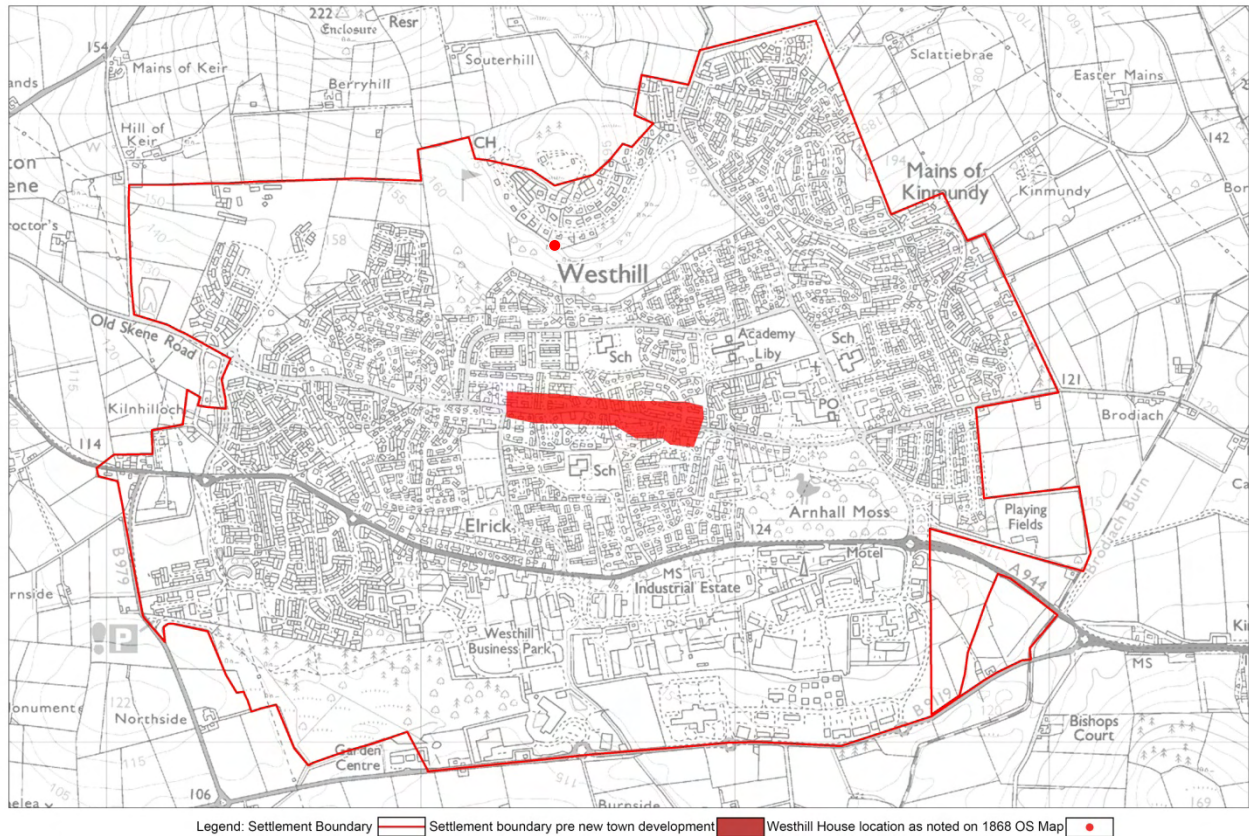
2.1 Historic Development of Westhill

Westhill is in effect the only planned new town in Aberdeenshire, having been created in 1968 as an overspill town for Aberdeen out of the existing villages of Westhill and Elrick. The former Aberdeen solicitor, [REDACTED], backed by the former Aberdeen District Council, Secretary of State for Scotland and supported financially by [REDACTED], created Westhill in 1963.

A review of historic Ordnance Survey maps reveals that the land on which Westhill now sits was previously the Western Kimmundy and Elrick farming areas, comprising of agricultural land interspersed with small farmhouses and barns. Some of these agricultural buildings remain today on the peripheries of Westhill, contributing to the rural character of the town, and the surrounding land largely remains in active agricultural use.

The town of Westhill has undergone rapid expansion since its inception in 1963, linked strongly to the growth of the North East oil and gas economy. Figure 2.3 Westhill Historical Growth details the overall expansion in the extent of the town which has occurred since 1963.

Figure 2.3 Westhill Historical Growth



Today the town continues to be a popular place to live, largely because of its proximity to Aberdeen City, but also due to the number of local amenities it has to offer, including a shopping centre, schools, park and golf course.

2.2 Settlement Character

Due to the relatively new and deliberate development of Westhill, the character and townscape are quite uniform and distinct. The town has no historic core, the overall settlement structure is atypical of other towns in Aberdeenshire and the style of residential development is rather consistent: small, curvilinear developments made up of cul-de-sacs and crescents dominated by bungalows and two-storey semi-detached and detached houses. The settlement has some open spaces and other green areas acting as buffers between housing developments, and clusters of employment uses exists somewhat independently to the south of the A944. There is a large amount of traffic in Westhill, much of which is associated with the Arnhall Business Park.

3. Baseline

This section aims to present a comprehensive baseline scenario regarding the current state of Westhill in order to help identify key issues facing Westhill, and to define a vision for Westhill's future development. Therefore, while the information presented here represents a baseline position, it also informs the potential options for the future growth of Westhill.

3.1 Population

The demographic trends reported below are sourced from 2011 Census results and the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website. The predicted trends are taken from the General Register of Scotland's Population Projections for Scottish Areas (2010-based) suite of statistics released in February 2012.

Westhill is defined according to the boundaries of the 'Westhill Locality' 2010 unit, which is an aggregation of smaller Output Areas covering the approximate land area of the settlement. Where available, statistics are also reported for the output areas and data zones which make up the continuously developed land area of Westhill.

3.1.1 Current Characteristics

Results from the 2011 census show that the total population of Westhill in 2011 was 10,984, representing 4.3% of the total recorded population of Aberdeenshire (252,973). Table 3.1 shows the age distribution of populations within Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland, as recorded in the 2011 census.

Table 3.1 Age Distribution of Population in Westhill (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
Percentage 0 to 4 years old	6	6	5.5
Percentage 5 to 15 years old	14	12.7	11.8
Percentage 16 to 29 years old	15.8	15.2	18.5
Percentage 30 to 44 years old	22.1	20.6	20
Percentage 45 to 59 years old	24.1	22.5	21.1
Percentage 60 to 74 years old	13.1	15.9	15.5
Percentage 75 and over	5	7.2	7.7

Table 3.1 indicates that the population of Westhill currently has a relatively balanced age structure, not dissimilar to the age structure of Scotland. People aged 45-59 represent the largest age cohort throughout Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland, but Westhill contains a higher percentage of people in this age category. People aged 45-59 are currently of working age. However, it should be noted that within the 25 year period of this study they

will enter the retirement age group, which may necessitate changes in public service provision within Westhill, particularly in relation to healthcare. Table 3.1 also shows that there is a higher percentage of people aged 44 or younger within Westhill compared with Aberdeenshire as a whole, which can be explained by the fact that the dominant type of housing within Westhill is family oriented, low density, private dwellings with gardens set back from street edges.

Table 3.2 shows the gender distribution of populations within Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland, as recorded in the 2011 census. This indicates that the gender structure of the population in Westhill is very similar to that of Scotland, although Aberdeenshire as a whole has a higher percentage of male residents than Scotland does overall.

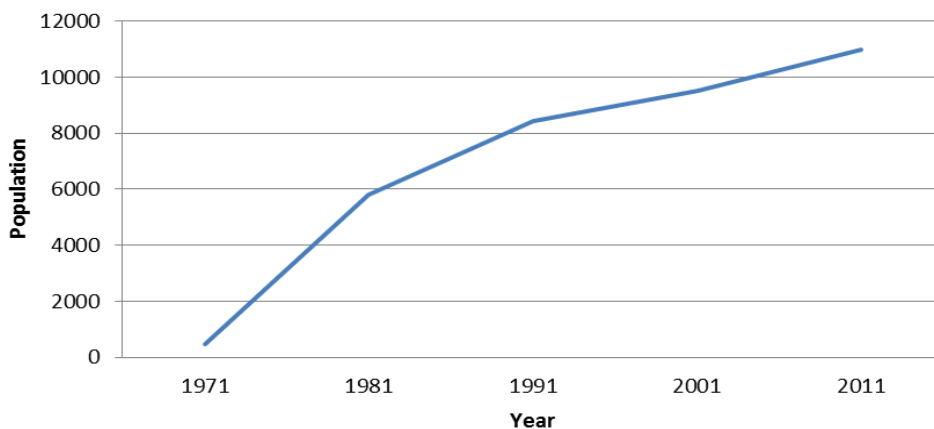
Table 3.2 Gender Distribution of Population in Westhill (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
Percentage males	48.6	49.5	48.5
Percentage females	51.4	50.5	51.5

3.1.2 Recent Trends

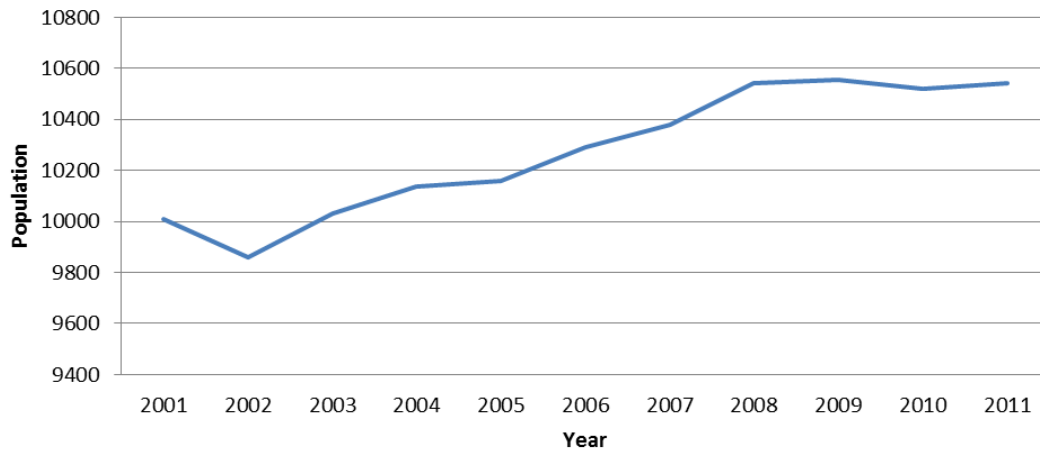
The census results plotted in Figure 3.1 indicate that the population of Westhill increased from a baseline of 470 in 1971 to 5,788 in 1981, from 8,449 in 1991 to 9,498 in the 2001 census, and most recently to 10,984 in the 2011 census.

Figure 3.1 Population Growth in Westhill: 1971-2011



Mid-year estimates published by Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics indicate that after a slight decline between 2001 and 2002 the town’s population has increased steadily over recent years, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Mid Year Population Estimates for Westhill: 2001-2011 (Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2014)



3.1.3 Predicted Future Trends

Table 3.1 above (regarding age distribution) indicates that the population structure of Westhill in 2011 was younger than in the country as a whole. 57.9% of the population were below 44 years whereas this figure was 55.8% across Scotland. This means that providing net outmigration does not occur, the population of Westhill has the potential to increase substantially as the younger population ages and reaches childbearing age.

Figure 3.3 and Table 3.3 show the latest available strategic population forecasts produced by the General Register Officer for Scotland (2014) for Aberdeenshire up to 2035 in terms of expected changes in overall population numbers and up to 2037 in terms of age structure. These statistics clearly indicate that the population of Aberdeenshire is expected to experience significant growth over the next two decades, which will need to be accommodated through infrastructure investments and a substantial increase in the region's housing stock.

Figure 3.3 2012 Based Aberdeenshire Population Projections (GROS, 2014)

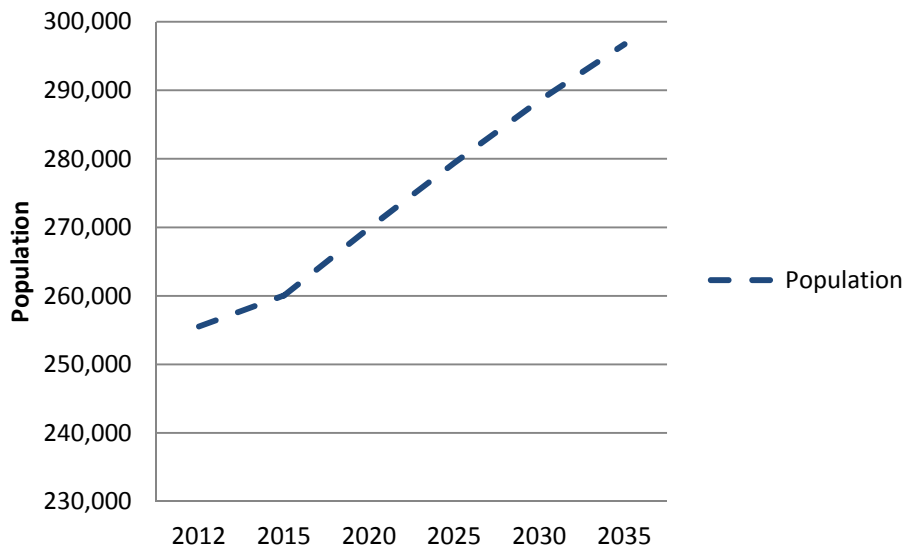


Table 3.3 2012 Based Aberdeenshire Population Projections to 2037 (000's) (GROS, 2014)¹

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2037
All Ages	260.6	269.9	279.4	288.5	299.8
0-15	47.8	49.8	51.0	52.3	54.3
16-29	40.1	40.2	40.2	41.1	43.5
30-49	70.3	68.9	70.6	73.6	75.3
50-64	55.0	57.6	57.6	54.3	51.7
65-74	27.1	30.0	30.3	33.2	35.0
75+	20.1	23.3	29.4	34.0	40.0

The projected age structure for Aberdeenshire up to the year 2037 indicates that:

- The number of school children (age 0 to 15 years) is forecast to increase, although in percentage terms this will fall from 18.7% in the 2011 Census to 18.1% in 2037;
- The number of working age people (age 16 to 64 years) is expected to increase sharply;
- The number of people of retirement age (age 65 and older) is expected to experience the largest growth, with the number of people aged 75 or over expected to double by 2037.

¹ All figures in Table 3.3 are rounded to 1 decimal place

The projected population increase across Aberdeenshire is expected to result from a combination of factors, including increased life expectancy, net immigration and an increase in the birth rate. Population projections are not available specifically for Westhill; however this analysis has not identified any factors which suggest that population projections for Westhill would differ materially from the Aberdeenshire projections reported above.

3.2 Housing

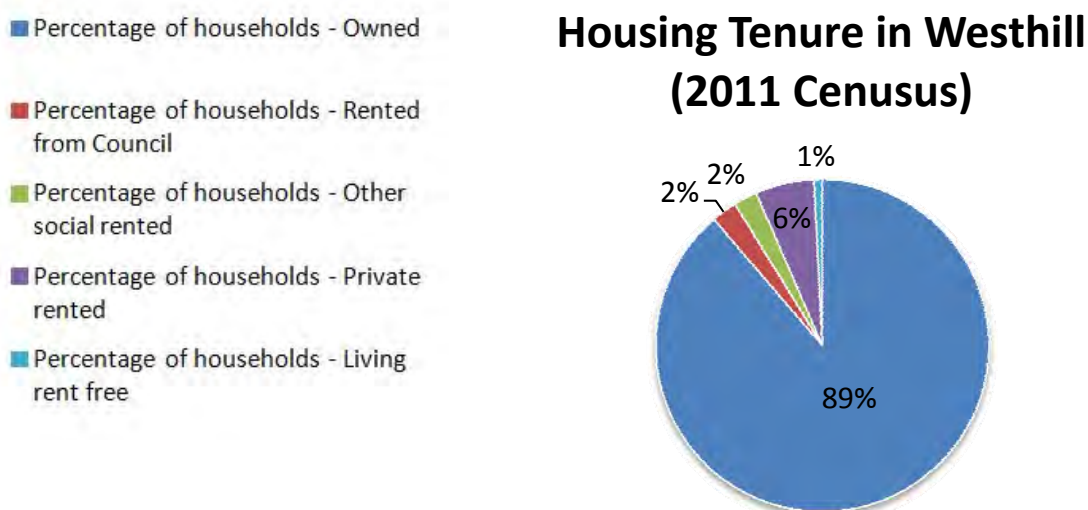
3.2.1 Current Characteristics

According to the 2011 census there were 4,256 occupied households and a total of 4,320 dwellings within Westhill in 2011. The housing stock comprises largely of semi-detached and detached houses which have been developed in small estate groupings since the inception of Westhill in 1963. The newest housing stock is located on the western fringe of Westhill within the Broadshade development, and the oldest dwellings are clustered in central and north eastern areas of the town. There are very few flatted developments within Westhill. Figures 3.4 to 3.6 provide details of local, regional and national tenure breakdown and indicate that there is a high percentage of privately owned homes and a low percentage of socially rented dwellings within Westhill. The lack of socially rented housing is confirmed within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012), which notes that there is currently a waiting list of over 1200 people for council housing in the town and states that Westhill is afforded ‘Pressured Area Status’. This allows Aberdeenshire Council to set a 40% affordable housing target for Westhill, instead of the 25% standard target.

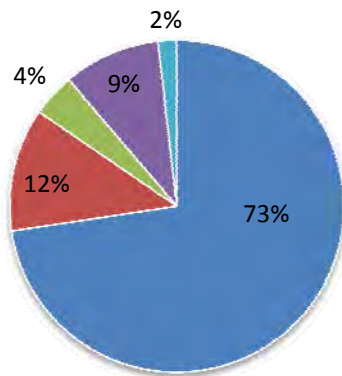
Figure 3.4 Housing Tenure in Westhill (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

Figure 3.5 Housing Tenure in Aberdeenshire (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

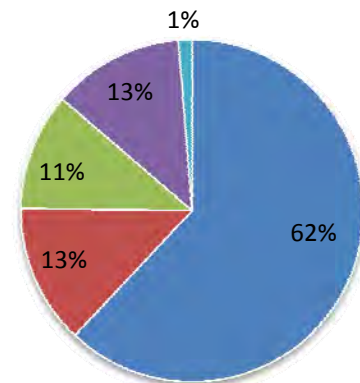
Figure 3.6 Housing Tenure across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)



Housing Tenure in Aberdeenshire (2011 Census)



Housing Tenure Across Scotland (2011 Census)



3.2.2 Recent Trends

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show the level of increase in Westhill's housing stock between 2001 and 2013.

Table 3.4 Change in Westhill's Housing Stock between 2001 and 2013 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Housing Stock	2001	2013	Change
No. of Units	3,424	4588	34%

Table 3.5 Recent Completions in Westhill (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)

Past Completions	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
No. of Units	59	80	87	132	59	110	527

Table 3.5 shows that between 2008 and the end of 2013 527 additional dwellings were constructed in Westhill. A significant amount of this recent housebuilding activity has occurred immediately to the west of Westhill within the Broadshade site; by 2012 this site had delivered 274 new dwellings, with an additional 31 dwellings expected to be built out during 2014 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014). It should be noted that all of the land within Westhill that was allocated for housing development within the previous Aberdeenshire Local Plan (2006) has now been built out.

Notable housing related planning applications within Westhill which have been determined between 1st January 2011 and 15th May 2014 are listed in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Recently Determined Notable Housing Related Planning Applications (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description	Decision
APP/2013/2156	Land at Westhill Golf Club, Westhill Heights, Westhill, AB32 6RY	Erection of 7 No. Dwellinghouses	Withdrawn
APP/2013/1692	Area H1, Broadshade, Westhill, AB32 6AS	Residential Development and Associated Works	Granted
APP/2013/0478	Berryhill, Broadshade, Westhill	Erection of 41 Dwellinghouses with Associated Infrastructure (Compliance with Conditions 3 (Siting, Design, External Appearance, Landscaping & Means of Access); 4 (Compliance with Development Brief); 6 (Landscaping); 7 (Golf Course Buffer); 9 (Wildlife Survey) and 12 (Energy Efficiency Statement) of Outline Planning Permission Reference APP/2005/2608 for Residential Development, Church, Retail Facility, Access Road and Landscaping)	Granted

3.2.3 Predicted Future Trends

Short Term Trends

The adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012) includes two land allocations for housing development within Westhill, as detailed in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Housing Land Allocations within Adopted Aberdeenshire LDP (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)

Site Name	Location	NGR (Approximate)	Allocated Capacity	Developer
H1	North West of Westhill - accessed from Broadshade Road off Old Skene Road	(E)381293 (N)807605	190 houses (95 houses in the first phase and 95 houses in the second phase of the plan)	Stewart Milne Homes
H2	Strawberry Field Road, Elrick	(E)381299 (N)806901	10 houses in the first phase of the plan	Private

The 2014 Draft Housing Land Audit for Aberdeenshire states that 4 sites within Westhill have been identified as forming part of Aberdeenshire's effective housing land supply to 2017, including the two sites allocated in the LDP as noted above. Taken together the four identified sites have the potential to contribute 231 units towards Aberdeenshire Council's 5 year effective land supply. Table 3.8 details the expected build programme to 2018 at each potential housing site.

Table 3.8 Westhill Sites within 2013 Draft Housing Land Audit (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)

Site Reference	Location	Remaining Capacity	5 Year Effective	Developer	Status	Anticipated Build Programme				
						2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
G/WH/H/040	Broadshade	31	31	Stewart Milne Homes	Allocated Under Construction	31	0	0	0	0
G/WH/H/041a	Burnland, Adj Broadstraik Farm	38	0	Gladedale	Full Planning Permission	30	0	0	0	0
G/WH/H/044	West of Broadshade	190	190	Stewart Milne Homes	Full Planning Permission	70	25	35	70	25
G/WH/H/043	Strawberry Field Road, Elrick	10 houses in the first phase of the plan	10	Private	Allocated	0	10	0	0	0

In reference to the aforementioned 40% affordable housing target for Westhill, it should be noted that the Broadshade development complies with this under the terms of planning permission APP/2013/1692. As such affordable housing units will be provided as part of the programmed 190 units coming forward on this site.

Notable housing related planning applications within Westhill which are currently pending consideration (15th May 2014) are listed in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Notable Housing Related Planning Applications Currently Pending Consideration (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description
APP/2014/0146	Land at Westhill Golf Club Westhill Heights Westhill Aberdeen AB32 6RY	Erection of 7 Dwellinghouses
APP/2010/0289	Land to the South of Strawberry Field Road Westhill	Erection of 10 Houses and Associated Infrastructure

In view of the identified shortage of affordable housing within Westhill, Aberdeenshire Council have established a target of securing 40% affordable housing over the period of the LDP.

Long Term Trends

Between 2010 and 2035 the number of households in Scotland is projected to increase by 23 per cent to 2.89 million – an average of 21,230 additional households per year. Over the same period, Scotland's population is

projected to increase by 10 per cent. Most of the projected increase in households is therefore the result of more people living alone or in smaller households. The average household size is projected to decrease from 2.17 people in 2010 to 1.95 people in 2035 (GROS, June 2012).

3.3 Employment

3.3.1 Current Characteristics

Overview

Employment sites within Westhill are concentrated around the Arnhall and Westhill Business Parks located south of the A944, although some service based employment is associated with the three main retail sites detailed in Section 2.7. Arnhall and Westhill Business Parks comprise of office blocks interspersed with workshops and storage yards, with spacious parking and landscaped grounds positioned around most of the office blocks. Westhill Business Park is owned by Aberdeenshire Council whereas Arnhall Business Park is owned privately.

Employment Land

Data extracted from the 2012 Aberdeenshire Employment Land Audit and shown in Table 3.10 indicates that the established supply of employment land in Westhill is 7.42 hectares split across four sites, three of which are located to the south of the town within the Arnhall and Westhill Business Parks. All of the sites identified in the land audit are considered as marketable and indeed all are currently under construction.

Table 3.10 Employment Land Allocations within Adopted Aberdeenshire LDP (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Location	Established Land Supply (ha)	Developer
Arnhall Business Park	0.34	Westhill Development Co
Westhill Business Park	0.68	Stewart Milne
Arnhall Phase 2	2.46	Private
Westhill ALDP E1	9.60	N/A
Total	13.08	

Economic Activity, Employment & Unemployment

Table 3.11 shows the percentage of people within Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland who are economically active, as recorded by the 2011 Census. The data for Westhill is reproduced in Figure 3.7 (pie chart).

Table 3.11 Rates of Economic Activity (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
All persons 16 to 74	8244	187492	3970530
Percentage economically active	78.3	74.9	69
Percentage Employees - part-time	15.3	15.2	13.3
Percentage Employees - full-time	48.8	44.1	39.6
Percentage self-employed	7.9	10.2	7.5
Percentage unemployed	1.8	2.5	4.8
Percentage full-time student - employed	4.2	2.5	2.9
Percentage full-time student - unemployed	0.3	0.4	0.8
Percentage economically inactive	21.7	25.1	31
Percentage retired	11.6	13.6	14.9
Percentage student	3.7	3.1	5.5
Percentage looking after home or family	4.3	4.2	3.6
Percentage long-term sick or disabled	1.3	2.7	5.1
Percentage Other	0.8	1.4	1.9

Figure 3.7 Rates of Economic Activity within Westhill (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

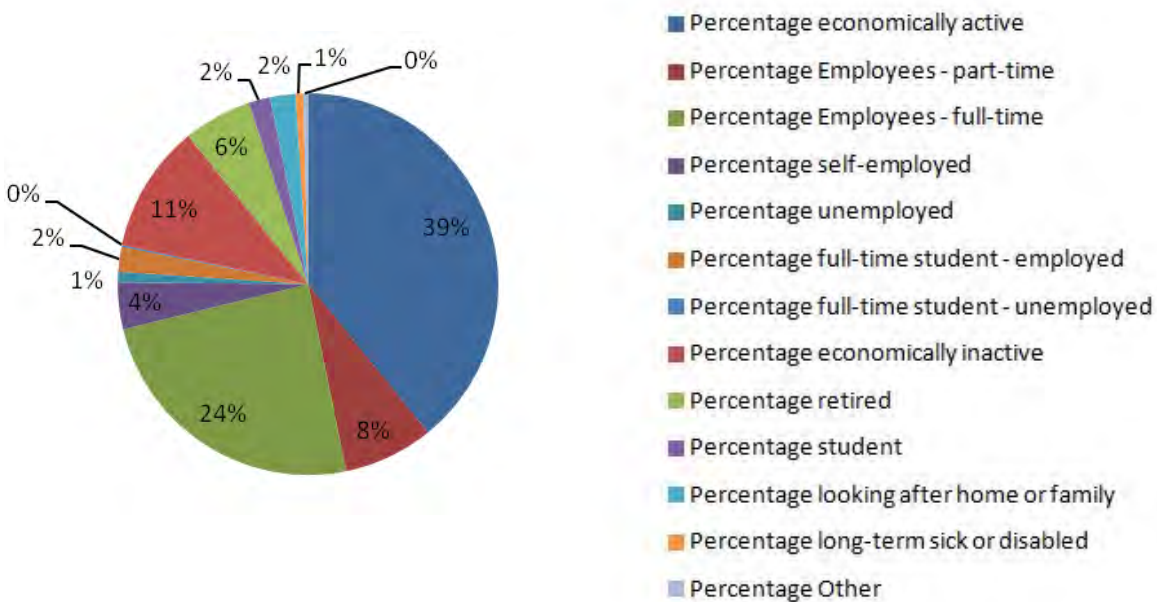


Table 3.11 indicates that Westhill has a significantly higher percentage of economically active residents compared with Aberdeenshire and Scotland. The data also shows that a significantly higher percentage of the population of Westhill is in full-time employment compared with Aberdeenshire, although the town has a lower percentage of students than across Scotland as a whole. The unemployment statistics included in Table 3.11 are not considered representative of official unemployment rates. However, their relative scale suggests that Westhill is highly prosperous and has very low unemployment. This is confirmed within Table 3.12, which provides details of the official unemployment rate during 2012 across Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland.

Table 3.12 Unemployment Statistics (NOMIS, 2013)

Unemployment (2012 Monthly Average)	Male	Female	Total	Rate (%)
Westhill	12	10	22	0.4
Aberdeenshire	1,420	731	2,151	1.3
Scotland	98,153	44,304	142,457	4

Westhill is defined as 2003 CAS (Census Area Statistic) Wards of Westhill Central and Elrick. Information is aggregated from ward data

Separate statistics published by Aberdeenshire Council (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013) indicate that as of September 2013 Aberdeenshire had the second lowest unemployment rate as measured by the Job Seekers Allowance Claimant Count (0.9%) of the 32 Scottish local authorities after the Shetland Isles (0.8%). This compares extremely favourably to the average rate for Scotland of 3.3% and the UK average of 3.2%. The number of claimants of Jobseekers Allowance within Aberdeenshire stood at 1,453 in September 2013.

Travel to Work

Westhill falls within the Aberdeen Travel to Work area, which covers all of Aberdeen City and the majority of land within Aberdeenshire, except northern parts of the Council area. Table 3.13 shows the breakdown of commuting modes for employed residents of Westhill.

Table 3.13 Travel to Work Modes (Scottish Government, 2011 Census)

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
% Car (including passengers car pools and taxis)	77.4	71	62.4
% Train	0.2	1	3.7
% Bus	5.1	3.5	10
% On foot	5.6	7.8	9.9
% Other	4.5	4.6	3.1
% Works mainly at or from home	7.2	12.1	10.8

The data in Table 3.13 shows that a high percentage of residents within Westhill commute by car, and in contrast, lower than average percentages of workers commute by bus or on foot. These findings raise a number of potential implications, including:

- The high dependency on car commuting implies that the road network within and around Westhill is likely to experience significant pressures, especially during peak periods.
- The low percentage of residents who commute on foot could be explained by the clear separation of residential and employment land uses within Westhill, in that only a small percentage of Westhill's employed workforce may live within walking distance of their employment location. Alternatively a higher percentage of the population may live within walking distance of their employment location but are prevented or discouraged from walking to work by physical and other constraints. Such constraints could include vehicle-dominated street layouts and limited road crossing points for pedestrians.
- The low percentage of residents who commute by bus could imply that the bus routes which pass through Westhill and the Park & Ride facility located in Kingswells (approximately 3 km east of Westhill) have only a limited influence on the commuting patterns of Westhill's residents. See section 3.5.1 of this report for additional details regarding the Kingswells Park & Ride Facility.
- Taken together the high dependency on car commuting and the low percentages of commuting by bus or on foot, suggest that the majority of employed residents are likely to commute relatively long distances, and thus may not work within Westhill, despite the significant employment opportunities which exist within the town.

Employment Sectors

The sectoral breakdown of employment held by residents of Westhill, Aberdeenshire and Scotland as a whole is detailed in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14 Employees by Employment Sector (2011 Census)

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
% all in employment who work in agriculture and fishing	0.5	4.7	2
% all in employment who work in mining and quarrying	10.8	7.4	1.4
% all in employment who work in manufacturing	6.4	9.9	7.7
% all in employment who work in electricity gas steam and air conditioning	0.4	0.5	0.8
% all in employment who work in water supply, sewage waste management and remediation activities	0.2	0.6	0.8
% all in employment who work in construction	6.3	8.8	8.0
% all in employment who work in wholesale and retail trade, including repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	13.6	14.4	15.0

	Westhill	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
% all in employment who work in transport and storage	4.4	5.1	5.0
% all in employment who work in accommodation and food service activities	4.4	4.8	6.3
% all in employment who work in information and communication	2.6	1.6	2.7
% all in employment who work in financial and insurance activities	2.5	1.3	4.5
% all in employment who work in real estate activities	1.2	1.0	1.2
% all in employment who work in professional scientific and technical activities	12.7	8.3	5.2
% all in employment who work in administrative and support service activities	3.4	3.7	4.3
% all in employment who work in public administration and defence - compulsory social security	4.7	4.3	7.0
% all in employment who work in education	9.7	8.1	8.4
% all in employment who work in human health and social work activities	12.9	11.8	15.0
% all in employment who work in other industries	3.3	3.8	4.9

Table 3.14 emphasises the diverse employment sectors which residents of Westhill are employed in. However, it should be noted that this data does not represent the breakdown of employment within Westhill. The data shows that some economic sectors are particularly important employment providers; in particular a relatively high percentage of employed residents in Westhill work in “professional scientific and technical activities”. This could relate to the cluster of subsea-engineering firms located within Westhill, or alternatively this could be explained by the dominance of the oil and gas sector across the North East region, most particularly within Aberdeen City. It should also be noted that a significant number of firms from the renewable energy sector are located within Westhill.

Table 3.15 lists Westhill’s main employers, as identified within Aberdeenshire Council’s Westhill Profile Factsheet 2013.

Table 3.15 Main Westhill Employers

Baker Hughes	Mi Swaco
Bibby Offshore	NCS Survey
Cameron	Nessco Group
Central Insurance Services	Proserv
Chap (Holdings)	Prospect Hallin

Clydesdale Bank	Red Spider
Cooperative Insurance Society	Schlumberger Oilfield Services
Costco Wholesale UK	Scottish Water
Divex	Skene Medical Centre
Elmar Services	Stewart Milne Group
Helix RDS	Subsea 7
Holiday Inn	TAQA Bratani
Instalec Networking	Technip Offshore
Marks and Spencer	Tesco Stores
McIntosh Plant Hire	Tritech International

As evidenced by Table 3.15, subsea engineering is a key growth sector and major employer within Westhill. There are around 290 subsea companies located in Aberdeen City and Shire, with the companies located in Westhill alone accounting for over 6,000 employees. Aberdeenshire Council declared in May 2012 that Westhill is a global subsea centre of excellence, and they have committed to supporting the growth of the Westhill subsea cluster, including through releasing additional employment land where necessary and appropriate.

3.3.2 Recent Trends

Table 3.16 shows the level of industrial land supply within Westhill over the period 2005-2011:

Table 3.16 Industrial Land Supply (Aberdeenshire Council, 2012)

Industrial Land	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Build Rate (ha)	0.9	4.1	0.6	14.7	3.1	0.3	2.5

As shown in Table 3.15, Westhill experienced low employment land take-up in 2010. A similar situation occurred across Aberdeen City and Shire due to the high risk in lending in the current financial climate, compounded by a historic lack of serviced and ready to be developed, commercial development land. However, take up of employment land increased in Westhill and across Aberdeenshire in 2011.

Notable planning applications regarding proposed retail and other town centre developments within Westhill which were determined between 1st January 2011 and 15th May 2014 are detailed in Table 3.17:

Table 3.17 Recently Determined Notable Employment Related Planning Applications (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description	Decision
APP/2013/3963	Bibby Offshore Ltd Peregrine Road Westhill	Erection of Industrial Unit and Associated Ancillary Office Space, External Compound Area and Parking without Complying with Condition 2 (Office Space to not exceed 545 square metres) and Condition 3 (Gross Floor Area to not exceed 2,109 square metres) of Planning Permission Reference APP/2012/4120	Granted
APP/2013/3963	Peregrine House Peregrine Road Westhill Business Park Westhill AB32 6JL	Alterations and Extension to Office	Granted
APP/2013/4060	Site C Peregrine Road Westhill Aberdeen	Erection of Warehouse Unit and Associated Ancillary Office Space, External Compound Area and Parking. Use of Classes 4, 5 and 6	Granted
APP/2013/4098	Site at Silvertrees Drive Silvertrees Business Park Westhill AB32 6BH	Conditions 3 (Siting, Design, External Appearance, Landscaping, Means of Access, Finished Levels, Drainage), 4 (Landscaping), 5 (Drainage) and 9 (Loading, Turning and Parking) of Planning Permission in Principle Reference G/APP/2010/2456	Granted
APP/2013/2476	Site C Peregrine Road Westhill Business Park Westhill	Erection of Warehouse and Ancillary Office Space, External Compound Area and Parking (Use Classes 4, 5 and 6)	Refused
APP/2013/2529	Site at Silvertrees Drive Silvertrees Business Park Westhill AB32 6BH	Erection of Workshop and Office (Class 5) with Associated Services, Yard and Car Parking	Granted
APP/2013/2371	Subsea 7 Prospect Road Arnhall Business Park Westhill AB32 6FE	Extension to Office Building and Erection of Raised Parking Area	Granted
APP/2013/0772	Site at Peregrine Road Westhill	Erection of Industrial Unit and associated Ancillary Office Space with External Compound Area and Parking	Granted
APP/2013/1166	East Lochside Steading Skene Westhill AB32 6YJ	Conversion and Extension to Steading to form Offices with Associated Car Parking and Footpath	Withdrawn
APP/2013/0813	Schlumberger Oilfield (Uk) Plc Enterprise Drive Westhill Industrial Estate Westhill AB32 6TQ	Extension to Lab Building	Granted
APP/2013/0677	Phase 2/3 Arnhall Business Park Prospect Road Westhill AB32 6UF	Erection of 6 no. 2 Storey Office Buildings	Granted

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description	Decision
APP/2013/0617	Sub-drill Endeavour Drive Arnhall Business Park Westhill AB32 6UF	Extension to Warehouse and Redevelopment of Car Park	Granted
APP/2012/4120	Warehouse Unit Peregrine Road Westhill	Erection of Industrial Unit and Associated Ancillary Office Space, External Compound Area and Parking	Granted
APP/2012/3569	Site at Peregrine Road Westhill	Erection of Warehouse Unit and Associated Ancillary Office Space, External Compound Area and Parking	Granted
APP/2012/1030	Vacant Site North East of Prospect Road Arnhall Business Park Westhill AB32 6FE	Erection of 2 Office Buildings and Cafe	Granted
APP/2012/1016	Site at Prospect Road Westhill	Erection of Office Accommodation and Car Parking	Granted
APP/2012/0755	Technip Uk Ltd Enterprise Drive Westhill Industrial Estate Westhill AB32 6TQ	Erection of Building for Use as High Pressure Test Facility	Granted
APP/2012/0654	Site at Prospect Road Westhill	Erection of Office Accommodation and Car Parking	Withdrawn
APP/2012/0247	Prospect Point Prospect Road Arnhall Business Park Westhill	Erection of 2 Office Buildings and Cafe	Withdrawn
APP/2011/3134	Silvertrees Tarland Road Westhill	Erection of Warehouse/Workshop and Offices with Associated Services, Yard and Parking	Granted
APP/2011/2294	Technip UK Ltd (Aberdeen) Enterprise Drive Westhill Industrial Estate Westhill AB32 6TQ	Demolish Existing Buildings and Erection of New Office Development, Multi-Storey Car Park and Covered Walkway	Granted

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description	Decision
APP/2011/0747	Site 7 Prospect Road Arnhall Business Park Westhill AB32 6FE	Erection of Office Building and Associated Car Parking	Granted
APP/2009/0318	Land at Enterprise Drive Westhill Industrial Estate Westhill AB32 6TQ	Erection of 2 no Office Units, Associated Parking and Site Landscaping	Granted

3.3.3 Predicted Future Trends

The adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012) includes one land allocation for employment uses within Westhill; Area E1. This site is situated south of the A944 on the south eastern fringe of the town and currently has planning permission in principle for the construction of Arnhall Business Park Phase 3. In addition, two sites within Arnhall and Westhill Business Parks are allocated as existing employment land which requires to be safeguarded for future employment uses.

Notable employment related planning applications within Westhill which are currently pending consideration (as of 15th May 2014) are listed in Table 3.18.

Table 3.18 Employment Related Planning Applications Currently Pending Consideration (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description
APP/2014/1419	Plots 1 & 2 Kingshill Park Venture Drive Westhill AB32 6FL	Erection of 2 No. 2-Storey Office Buildings (Revised Layout of Plots E & F)
APP/2014/1384	Site At Silvertrees Drive Silvertrees Business Park Westhill Aberdeenshire AB32 6BH	Conditions: 3 (Siting, Design, External Appearance, Landscaping, Means of Access, Finished Levels and Drainage); 4 Landscaping 5: External Drainage and 9: Loading and Parking of Planning Permission in Principle Reference G/APP/2010/2456
APP/2014/1356	Land To The East Of Arnhall Business Park Bound To The North By A944 And To The South By B9119 (Tarland Road), Westhill (Arnhall Phase 3).	Variation of Conditions on Planning Permission Reference: APP/2006/2551: Condition 1: Extend Time Limit for Submission of Matters Specified and Condition 14: Adjust Floorspace in Accordance with Revised Transport Assessment

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description
APP/2013/3560	Phase 2/3 Arnhall Business Park Prospect Road Westhill AB32 6UF	Erection of 5 Office Buildings (Revised Scheme)
: APP/2013/3019	Arnhall Phase 3 Arnhall Business Park Westhill	Conditions 3 (Phasing), 4 (Design Statement), 5 (Strategic Landscaping), 7 (Travel Plan), 8 (Tree Management Scheme), 9 (Waste Management Scheme), 10 (Construction Method Statement), 11 (Noise Assessment), 12 (Archaeological Investigation) and 13 (details of ground preparation works phase only) of Planning Permission in Principle (Ref: APP/2006/2551) (Revised Scheme)
APP/2014/0385	Holiday Inn Westhill Drive Westhill AB32 6TT	Alterations and Extension to Hotel to Form 43 Additional Rooms

3.4 Retail & Town Centre

3.4.1 Current Characteristics

The retail landscape of Westhill is dominated by a small number of sites: two supermarkets, a Costco warehouse store, a garden centre and Westhill Shopping Centre.

Westhill Shopping Centre, an indoor complex located at the junction of Old Skene Road and Westhill Drive, was planned in the mid 1970s for completion in five phases to suit the towns growing population. Work started with an arcade of nine shop units plus associated offices above which was completed in 1980; phase two then included the bank at the eastern end of the centre, plus a return leg of seven more shop units; phase three marked the construction of a supermarket, with four additional shop units, and associated car parking; and phases four and five subsequently added small extensions. The centre was designed in the prevailing rationalised vernacular style of the 1970's using concrete block work walls with concrete interlocking tiles on monopitch roofs. The shopping centre currently houses a range of convenience and comparison retail shops including Marks & Spencers.

The Aberdeenshire LDP 2012 designates a town centre area for planning purposes, which is situated around the Westhill Shopping Centre at the junction of Old Skene Road and Westhill Drive. However, Westhill does not have an identifiable high street and convenience retail outlets are dispersed throughout the town, with notable clusters located along Westhill Drive.

3.4.2 Recent Trends

Local level retail statistics are not available for Westhill. However, Aberdeenshire Council has collated statistics regarding the provision of shops across the Garioch Committee Area of Aberdeenshire, which Westhill is situated within. Figure 3.8 shows that the number of shops in the Garioch area decreased by 18% from 1981 to 2013. However, against a backdrop of national economic recession commencing in 2008, no shops within the Garioch area are recorded as closing between 2008 and 2013. This indicates that the retail sector within Garioch is

relatively resilient, which is perhaps due to the dominance of convenience retail outlets and the dependency of the population across this largely rural area on these.

Figure 3.8 Retail Trends across Garioch (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)

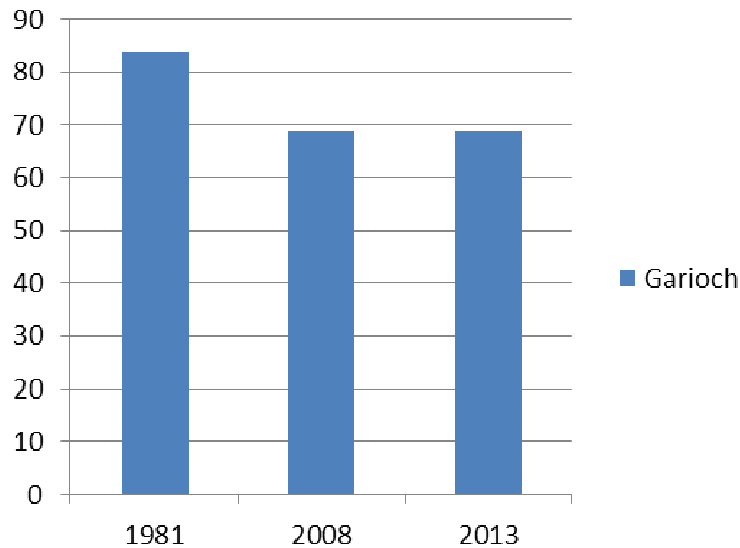
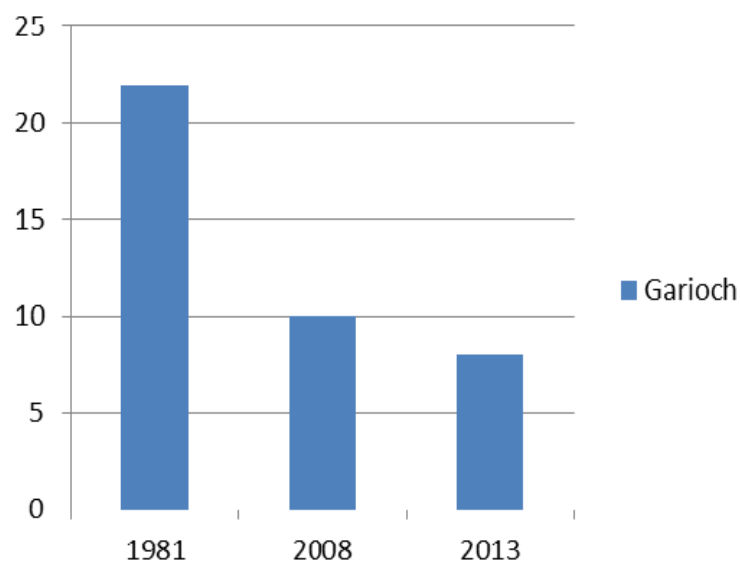


Figure 3.9 indicates that the number of post offices across Garioch fell by 64% from 1981 to 2013, including a 20% fall between 2008 and 2013. Despite this decline Westhill has retained its post office, which is located within Westhill Shopping Centre on Old Skene Road.

Figure 3.9 Levels of Economic Activity within Westhill (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)



Notable planning applications regarding proposed retail and other town centre developments within Westhill which have been determined since 1st January 2009 are detailed in Table 3.19:

Table 3.19 Recent Retail Planning Applications (Aberdeenshire Council, 2014)

Reference Number	Site Address	Development Description	Decision
Westhill Shopping Centre Old Skene Road Skene Westhill AB32 6LR	APP/2012/2154	Erection of Retail Development, Alterations to Shopping Centre, Car Park Reconfiguration, Landscaping and Access	Granted

3.4.3 Predicted Future Trends

No specific retail projections are available for Westhill or Aberdeenshire. However, if the population growth projections reported in the baseline report materialise this would significantly increase demand for retail and service industries within the town. Therefore there is likely to be a need for the current level of retail provision to be enhanced over the 25 year period of this study.

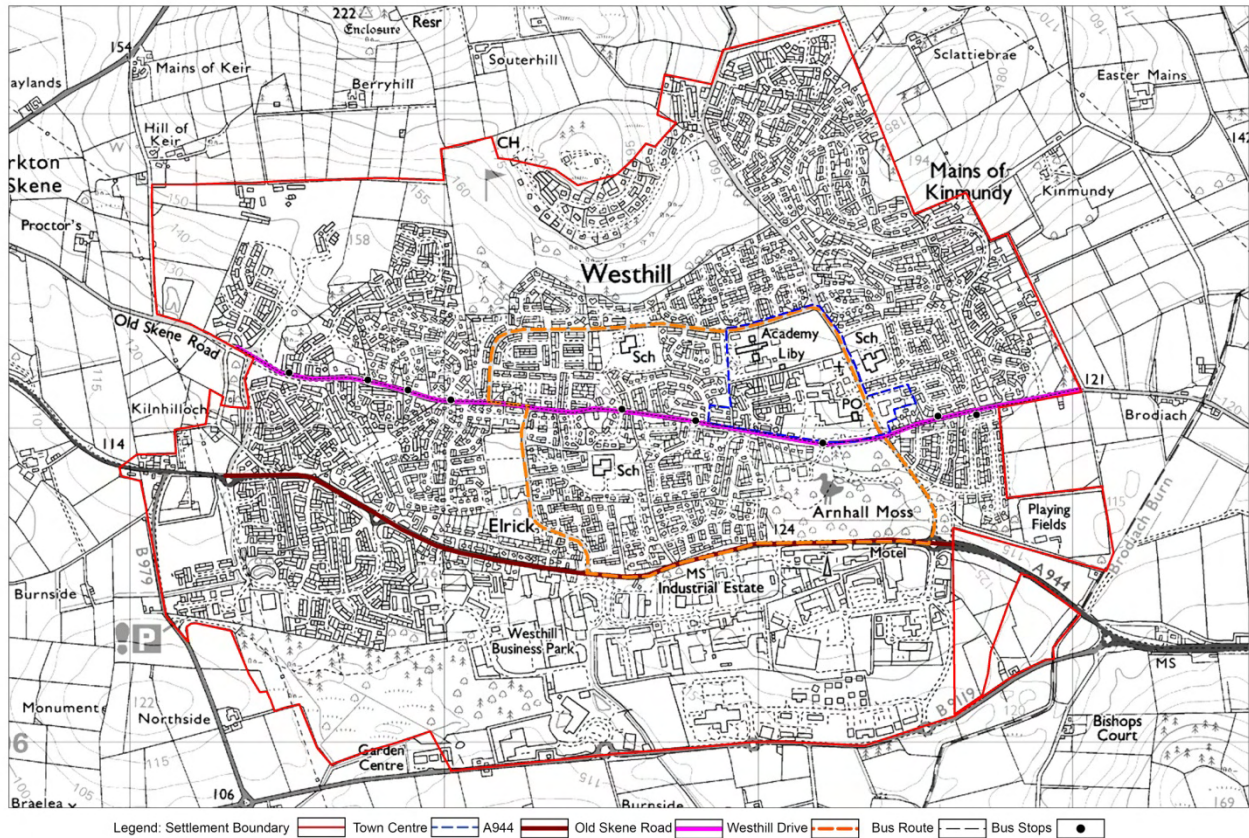
3.5 Transport

Numerous reports including the Westhill Capacity Study (2008) and the Aberdeenshire LDP MIR (2013) have identified transport as a key issue likely to affect the future growth of Westhill. Consequently issues related to transport have been afforded dedicated subsections throughout this report.

3.5.1 Current Characteristics

Figure 3.10 provides an overview of the current road network within Westhill.

Figure 3.10 Main Roads in Westhill



Road Network

Westhill lies approximately 6.5 km west of Aberdeen at its nearest point and is situated on the A944 Aberdeen to Alford road. The A944 provides access to Westhill from the east and west, with minor roads, including the B979, providing access to the north and south. The A944 is constrained by speed restrictions and a number of roundabouts, including Six Mile Roundabout at NGR 384123 806316 which currently serves as a gateway feature on the eastern approach to Westhill.

Two road characters are present: main streets, which aim to move large volumes of traffic through Westhill efficiently; and local streets, which provide connectivity around neighbourhoods and access to properties. Due to the fact that many of the industrial/commercial and residential estates in Westhill have been individually planned and developed, some parts of the road network are inefficient and hinder permeability, particularly for non-vehicular transport modes.

Public Transport

Data obtained from Aberdeenshire Council indicates that 6 bus routes operating from Aberdeen currently serve Westhill, passing along Old Skene Road and/or Westhill Drive:

218 Alford - Dunecht - Elrick - Westhill - Aberdeen

N17 Aberdeen - Westhill - Elrick (Night Service)

X17 Aberdeen - Woodend - Westhill - Elrick (Circular)

210 Aberdeen - Westhill - Torphins - Aboyne - Ballater

402A Elgin - Rothes - Rhynie – Aberdeen

777 Oldmeldrum - Inverurie - Westhill - Kingswells - Aberdeen Airport Kirkhills Industrial Estate

In addition, a local Dial-a-bus provides internal transport within Westhill and a Park & Ride facility provides bus regular transport from Kingswells, approximately 3 km east of Westhill, to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen City Centre, Bridge of Don Park & Ride and Dubford. This Park & Ride facility includes an indoor heated and lit waiting room, accessible toilets and a covered outdoor cycle canopy.

The nearest train station to Westhill is located approximately 6 km north east in Dyce on the mainline line between Inverurie and Aberdeen. This railway offers direct links to major cities including Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Cycle Network

Westhill benefits from an established network of cycle routes within and around the town. A largely off road cycle route links Westhill with Aberdeen via the A944 and Old Skene Road. This route was partially funded by Nestrans. In addition, within the settlement of Westhill there a number of off-road cycle paths and on-road cycle lanes which connect almost all of the town's main streets. In recognition of this cycle network Aberdeenshire Council have designated Westhill as a 'No Excuse Zone' for cycling.

3.5.2 Recent Trends

The street network within Westhill has expanded southwards and westwards in recent years to accommodate housing developments and Arnhall Business Park, linked to the growth of the subsea sector within the town.

To enable development of Arnhall Business Park Phase 3 to proceed, work is currently ongoing to convert the Six Mile Roundabout on the A944 immediately east of Westhill into a controlled junction. This should help to alleviate traffic congestion, particularly at peak periods, and may enable limited further development on the eastern edge of Westhill.

3.5.3 Predicted Future Trends

The most significant planned change to the transport infrastructure around Westhill is the forthcoming construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), which is scheduled to begin in 2015 and be completed by 2018. The AWPR will pass east of Westhill in a north-south orientation, with a new junction being created to connect the AWPR to the A944 east of Westhill. In addition, Transport Scotland has committed to a phased programme of dualing the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness. The A96 is approximately 4 km north of Westhill at its closest point and can be accessed via the A944 and B979.

Although no specific plans have yet been devised, officers from Aberdeenshire Council have indicated that the Council is eager to expand the cycle network within and around Westhill. If the cycle network was substantially upgraded Aberdeenshire Council could submit a bid for Westhill to be recognised nationally as a 'Cycle Town', in line with provisions within the NPF3 Proposed Plan (see section 5.1.3 of this report).

3.6 Education

Numerous reports including the Westhill Capacity Study (2008) and the Aberdeenshire LDP Main Issues Report (2013) have identified education provision as a key issue likely to affect the future growth of Westhill. Consequently issues related to education have been afforded dedicated subsections throughout this report.

3.6.1 Current Characteristics & Predicted Future Trends

Primary School rolls are forecasted to increase by 14.2% and academies by 5.0% across Aberdeenshire between 2012 and 2018. Overall, it is forecast that there will be a considerable increase in pupil numbers – of the order of 10% - across most of Aberdeenshire up to 2018. Westhill is identified as one of the educational clusters likely to see significant growth in rolls, and projected school roll increases across Garioch account for half of the total forecasted net increase in school rolls within Aberdeenshire to 2018.

Table 3.20 details the capacities, current rolls and forecasted rolls at each of the five schools within Westhill. The catchment area of each school is shown on Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11 School Catchments serving Westhill

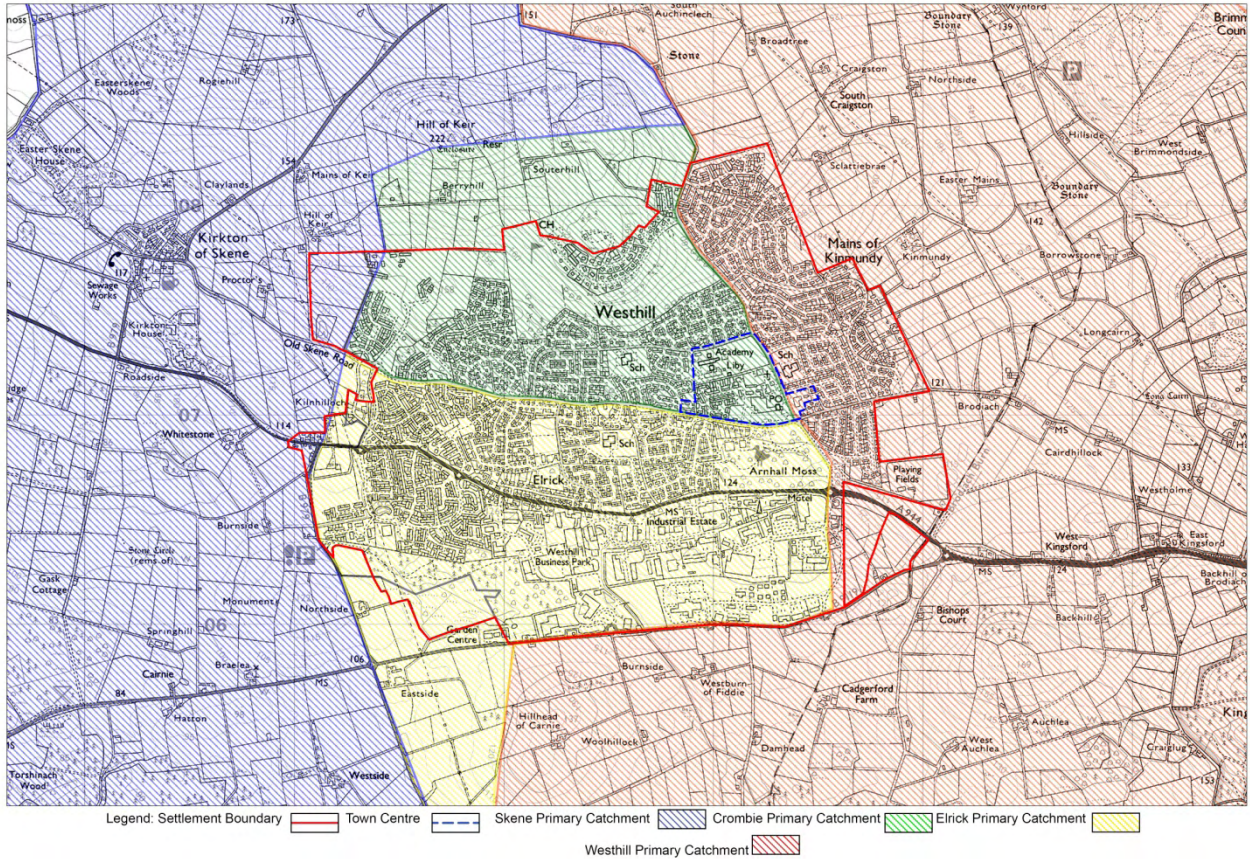


Table 3.20 School Capacities & Forecasted Rolls

	Predicted Pupils per Household (2013+)	2012 (Actual Role)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Westhill Academy	0.25							
Forecasted Roll		897	889	907	890	887	868	839
Capacity		970	970	970	970	970	970	970
Crombie Primary School	0.4							
Forecasted Roll		295	307	305	307	306	303	297
Capacity		333	333	333	333	333	333	333
Elrick Primary School								
Forecasted Roll		398	421 actual roll, forecasted roll was 405	411	416	408	394	386
Capacity		387	387	387	387	387	387	387
Working Capacity			415	469	469	469	469	469
Skene Primary School	0.4							
Forecasted Roll		25	39 actual roll, forecasted roll was 54	87	117	140	164	188
Capacity		71	71	71	71	71	71	71
Working Capacity			96	96	96	96	96	96
Westhill Primary School	0.4							
Forecasted Roll		249	256	237	235	211	202	195
Capacity		333	333	333	333	333	333	333
Total Primary Roll		967	1,022	1,040	1,074	1,066	1,064	1,066
Capacity – Primary ()		1,124	1,177	1,1231	1,231	1,231	1,231	1,231

Table 3.20 indicates that although Westhill Academy, Crombie Primary and Westhill Primary are expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the forecasted pupil roll to 2018 and beyond, Elrick Primary is already operating above normal capacity levels and the roll at Skene Primary is forecasted to exceed ‘working capacity’ in 2015. However, a report to the Garioch Area Committee of Aberdeenshire Council in January 2014 regarding school accommodation management noted that “*pupils expected from the Skene development (the Broadshade site) are currently presenting at Elrick (Primary Schools) which has caused the greater than expected roll whilst Skene is presenting as lower than (previously) forecast*”. To address capacity issues at Elrick Primary School an additional classroom has been created, giving an interim working capacity of 415, and two additional classrooms are planned to be completed within the school’s existing buildings by August 2014. No immediate capacity management measures are planned for Skene School, as the aforementioned school accommodation management report states that “*owing to the roll being lower than that which is predicted officers shall monitor this on a monthly basis and action further accommodation when appropriate to meet the demands*”.

Table 3.20 demonstrates that despite capacity issues arising at Elrick and Skene schools, overall the school estate within Westhill should be capable of accommodating forecasted rolls until 2018 and beyond. However, it should be noted that Aberdeenshire Council plan to undertake a catchment rezoning exercise in Westhill late in 2014 to address short term capacity issues at individual schools. In terms of any new school provision beyond 2018, Aberdeenshire Council Education Service standards suggest that any proposed new site for a primary school should be capable of taking up to 462 pupils, even if a school is not initially built of that size. Any potential new primary school site should be rectangular in shape, reasonably level and be at least 3.0 ha; with an upper limit of 5ha. Aberdeenshire Council Education Service has also indicated that a rezoning exercise may be undertaken towards the end of 2014.

3.7 Community Infrastructure (excluding Transport & Education)

3.7.1 Current Characteristics

Existing public services and leisure facilities within Westhill include²:

- Free standing swimming pool on Westhill Academy campus (Hays Way)
- Westhill Community Centre (Hays Way)
- Westhill Library (Westhill Drive)
- Westhill Golf Course (Westhill Heights)
- Ashdale Hall: multi-purpose community hall (Westhill Road)
- Denmen Park: bowling green, tennis court, Pavilion function room & kitchen (Old Skene Road)
- Lawsondale Pavilion: two meeting rooms and outdoor pitches (Arnhall Crescent)

² Access point/location denoted in brackets.

- Peter Nicol Squash & Fitness Centre: private gym (Straik Road.A944)
- Skene Health Centre. This incorporates Skene Medical Group GP practice, Westhill Clinic (providing District Nurses, Health Visitors, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapy, Podiatrist and Speech Therapist, Community Psychiatric Nurse), the Westhill Social Work Department and an NHS Dental Practice. Visiting Consultants also hold clinics in Skene Healthcare Centre. (Discovery Drive)
- Westdyke Leisure Centre (Westdyke Avenue)
- Carnie all-weather pitch (Carnie Crescent)
- Westhill Men's Shed (Hays Way)

3.7.2 Predicted Future Trends

In the short term, the Garioch area Community Planning Group (part of the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership) is currently undertaking feasibility work regarding the provision of additional community facilities, potentially including the establishment of a youth cafe, within Westhill.

In the longer term, changes in the age profile of Westhill, and in particular an increase in the proportion of the population over 60 will likely result in an increased demand for healthcare within the town. Coupled with the population projections this may necessitate increased provision of GP and other primary care services.

3.8 Public Open Space & Public Realm

3.8.1 Current Characteristics

Open spaces serve a variety of functions including the provision of formal and informal recreation, shelter and natural habitat. The following areas of natural heritage significance contribute to the setting and character of Westhill:

- Arnhall Moss;
- Hill of Keir;
- Denman Park;
- Carnie Woods.

3.9 Utilities & Services

3.9.1 Current Characteristics

The 2008 capacity study stated that combined drainage from Westhill is pumped into the Aberdeen trunk sewer system, and while there are no capacity issues with the treatment works in Aberdeen City the trunk sewer system has limited capacity to cope with further flows. The 2008 capacity study also noted that due to current and planned development some of the sewage pumping stations in the area are at capacity and some of the water service reservoirs are close to capacity.

In terms of electricity infrastructure, a review of Ordnance Survey maps indicates that a high voltage overhead transmission line (OHL) passes immediately west of Westhill. This OHL crosses the A944 at (E)381268 (N)806849 and runs directly south through the recently constructed Burnland housing development. The location and capacities of substations serving Westhill are not known to AMEC E&I at the time of writing this report.

3.9.2 Recent Trends

Available information suggests that no significant upgrades of the water and sewerage network which serves Westhill have taken place since the previous capacity study was prepared. However, the Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 Main Issues Report (2012) indicates that there is sufficient water treatment capacity available to support growth within the town.

3.9.3 Predicted Future Trends

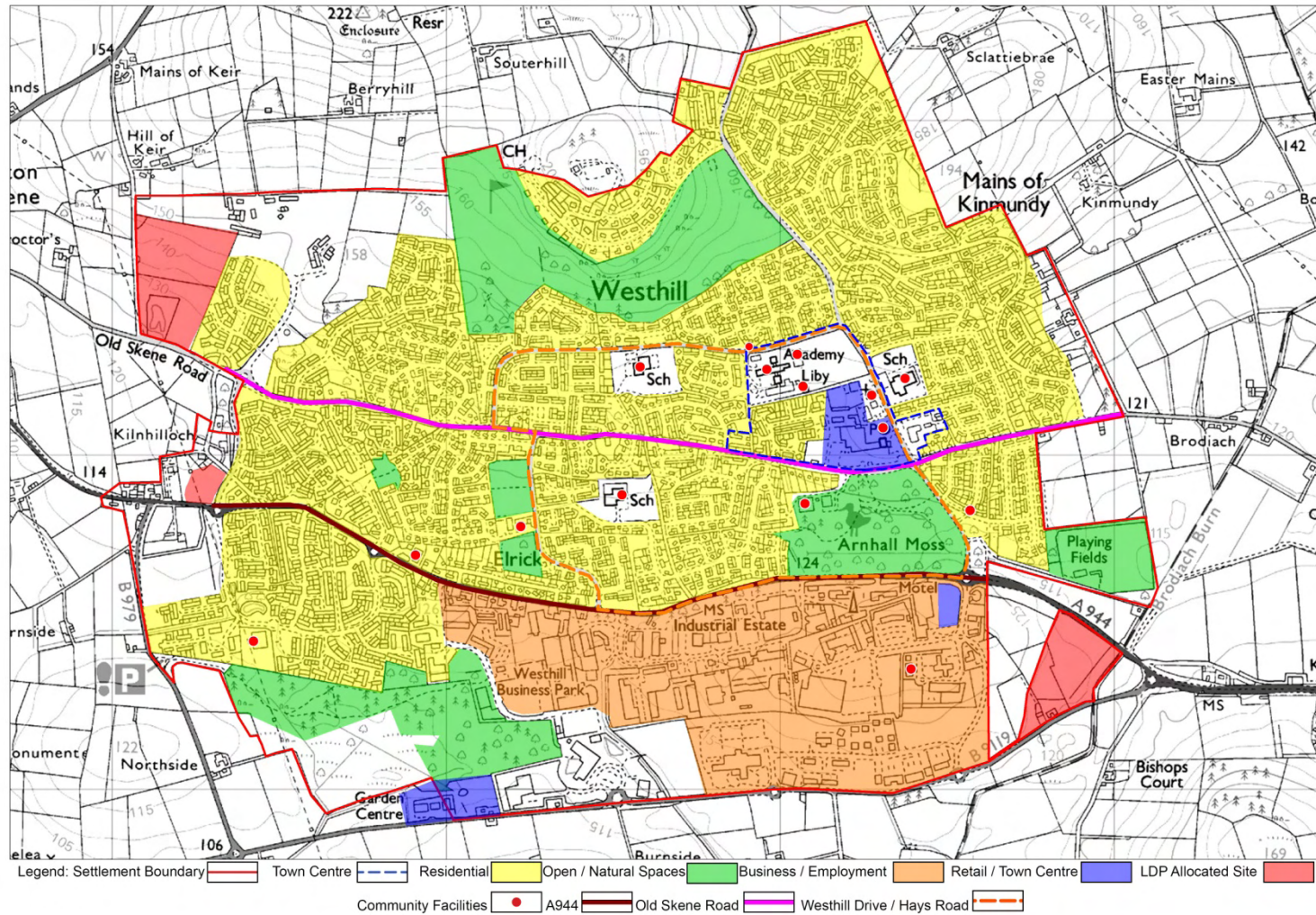
Significant future development in Westhill will require the construction of a new wastewater pumping station to take flows from the site to the main pumping station. In addition to upgrading of the pumping system and improvements to the offsite sewers, such as the existing trunk sewer to Aberdeen, part of the receiving sewer network within Aberdeen may possibly require improvements. Under Scottish Water's funding arrangements, new investment in drainage to service the level of expansion of Westhill envisaged in this study would have to be met by developers.

It should be noted that the provision of water and electricity infrastructure is inherently demand-led. Scottish Water and SSE Power Distribution have statutory obligations to provide connections to new development, although the cost of this must be met in full by developers.

3.10 Baseline Summary

Figure 3.12 identifies the main blocks of land use, the transport network and key facilities within Westhill, and also identifies sites in Westhill which are allocated within the Aberdeenshire LDP.

Figure 3.12 Baseline Summary Map



4. Constraints

Two broad magnitudes of geographical, technical and infrastructure constraints have been identified:

- **Absolute Constraints** - issues which cannot be overcome due to cost or technical reasons within the 20 to 25 year period of this study and therefore require no further consideration; and;
- **Relative Constraints** – issues which present difficulties but which could be tolerated or resolved within reasonable limits of cost and timescales. There is therefore merit in considering options to resolve these constraints within this study.

4.1 Geographic Constraints

4.1.1 Absolute Constraints

- **Topography:** Steep slopes at Berryhill and Kiers Hill constrain development opportunities to the north of Westhill, while Hill of Ord constrains potential development south of Westhill.

4.1.2 Relative Constraints

- **The town's rural setting and current greenbelt boundaries.** Within the context of a planning application the Greenbelt land which surrounds Westhill would be considered as an absolute constraint, depending on the nature of the proposed development. The Aberdeen Green Belt was first established in 1958 and has largely remained in its present form since the last major review in 1986, although a technical review of Greenbelt land in Aberdeenshire was most undertaken in 2010 during the early stages of preparation for the Aberdeenshire LDP 2012. This confirmed that land to the east of Westhill should remain within the Greenbelt on the basis of the need to prevent coalescence between Westhill and Kingswells. However, given that this study is not concerned with individual developments and is predicated on the need to facilitate the growth of Westhill over a 20 to 25 year period, during which further Greenbelt reviews could occur, it is considered reasonable to categorise the current greenbelt boundary to the east of Westhill as a relative constraint.
- **Aberdeen City Boundary.** Located approximately 0.5 km east of Westhill this political constraint does not itself prevent development from occurring south and east of Westhill. However, it limits the land area able to be planned by Aberdeenshire Council through its LDP. Any proposals to comprehensively develop land transcending the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council boundaries would be likely to generate significant cross boundary impacts and therefore should be considered within the next iteration of the Aberdeen City & Shire SDP.

4.2 Infrastructure Constraints

4.2.1 Absolute Constraints

- **The current alignment of the A944:** this arterial route passes through central areas of Westhill in an east-west alignment and results in significant severance between housing land uses north of the A944, and predominantly employment land uses south of the A944. The land along either side of the A944 has been built on thereby restricting the opportunity to feasibly realign the A944.
- **Safeguarded areas for major gas and oil pipelines to the east and west of Westhill:** these restrict development activity within the consultation distances³ of the pipelines to the outer zone and constrain opportunities to create a coherent settlement structure which integrates new development into the existing settlement pattern. The BP Forties oil pipeline runs to the east of Westhill and has an overall consultation distance of 485 metres either side of it. The consultation distance is subdivided into three zones:

Inner Zone: 0 – 110 metres;

Middle Zone: 110 – 380 metres;

Outer Zone 380 – 485 metres

The natural gas pipeline Leuchars Moss to Craibstone runs to the west of Westhill and has an overall consultation distance of 150 metres either side of the pipeline. Again, the consultation distance is subdivided into three zones:

Inner Zone: 0 – 32 metres;

Middle Zone: 32 – 105 metres;

Outer Zone 105 – 150 metres.

The consultation zones around these oil and gas pipelines restrict the amount and type of development which can take place in specific locations around Westhill. To remove this constraint it would be necessary to explore the possibility of relaying the pipelines in thicker walled pipe, which may reduce the overall consultation distance. Relaying the pipes would entail considerable expense and interruption to the supply of materials from the North Sea. If this was considered a viable option then sufficient pipe would need to be replaced to take account of further future development of Westhill beyond the scope of this Study.

- **Main electricity pylons to the west of Westhill.** Similar to the gas and oil pipelines, a corridor around electricity pylons is subject to development constraints, particularly in terms of residential development.

³ The consultation distances listed in this section (4.2.1) are taken from the Westhill Capacity Study 2008. Research undertaken by AMEC E&I has not identified any evidence to indicate that these consultation distances have subsequently been altered by the UK Health & Safety Executive.

4.2.2 Relative Constraints

- The lack of capacity in the **existing local road network** within Westhill. Congestion is a significant issue in Westhill. Problem junctions include the ‘six mile’ and Tarland junctions. Improvements to the ‘six mile’ junction are being delivered in conjunction with development at the Arnhall Business Park. However, a strategic solution to current congestion issues that would allow the long term expansion of Westhill has not yet been identified.
- The lack of **capacity of the education infrastructure** within Westhill. According to the latest available school roll data Westhill Academy is projected to be at 91% capacity in 2016 and Skene Primary School is projected to be over capacity by 2015. However, it should be noted that the actual roll presented at Skene Primary School in 2013 (39 pupils) is significantly lower than projected roll (54 pupils), which implies that capacity constraints may not arise until after 2015.

4.3 Environmental & Cultural Heritage Constraints

Land covered by international, national or local environmental and cultural heritage designations requires to be protected from significant negative impacts which may arise from development. Therefore sites designated for their environmental or archaeological significance may constitute both absolute and relative constraints for the purposes of this study, depending upon the importance of the site and the scale of potential impacts.

Any new development within Westhill should address the following criteria:

- protecting existing semi-natural areas,
- developing habitat networks,
- protecting water courses and wetlands, and
- providing natural space within new development areas.

Following this process will ensure that existing open space is not fragmented by development and any new development itself can contribute to nature conservation and open space provision.

4.3.1 Statutory Designations

There are no statutory designated sites within the settlement boundary of Westhill, however protected sites within the wider study area include:

- Loch of Skene SSSI and Special Protection Area – located approximately 2.3 km west of Westhill
- Catchment of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation – located approximately 6.2 km south east of Westhill

4.3.2 Non Statutory Designations

Table 4.1 Non-statutory designated sites within close proximity of Westhill:

Site Name	Location	Designation Type
Arnhall Moss	Eastern Westhill, north of A944 Straik Road	Local Nature Reserve
Carnie Woods	South West of Westhill	Local Nature Reserve

In addition to the sites listed in Table 4.1 it should be noted that the points raised in Section 4.1 ‘Geographic Constraints’, notably in relation to existing Greenbelt land east of Westhill, could also be considered as non-statutory environmental constraints.

Ancient & Native Woodland

One area of ancient woodland is located approximately 0.9 km east of Westhill. A review of the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (2014) indicates that small clusters of native woodland are located in multiple areas around the periphery of Westhill. Individual clusters of native woodland have been considered within the assessments of individual potential development areas detailed in Appendix B of this report.

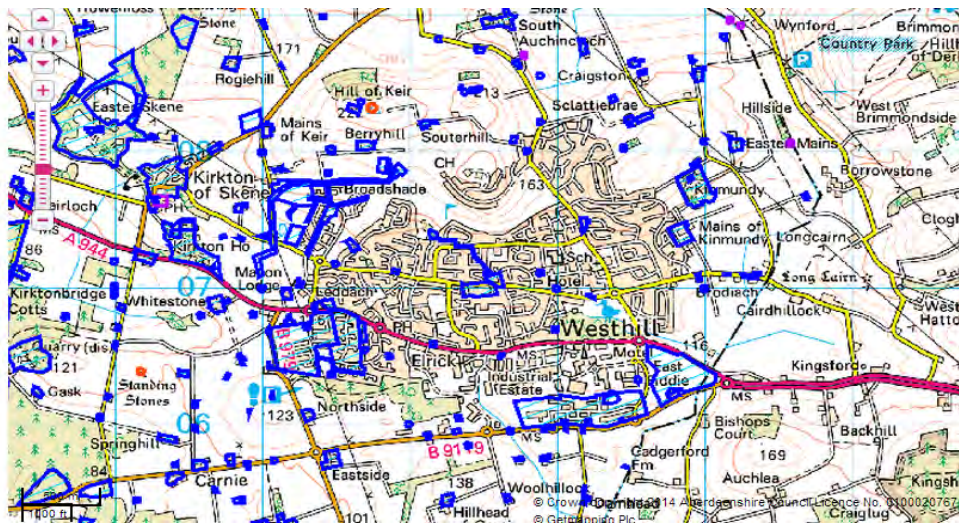
Flooding

Indicative flood maps published by SEPA (2014) indicate that Brodiach Burn, which is situated immediately east of Westhill, is liable to flood downstream of the town.

Archaeology

A review of the Aberdeenshire SMR indicates that there is a relatively high concentration of archaeological finds within Westhill, particularly towards the north western extent of the town. The nearest Scheduled Monument is located north of Westhill at Hill of Keir.

Figure 4.1 Aberdeenshire SMR



Listed Buildings

A review of PastMap suggests that there is only one listed building within Westhill: Hopeman Cottage (Old Toll House), an early 19th century category B listed building located on the A944 in the central area of Westhill.

4.4 Other Constraints

4.4.1 The need to avoid coalescence between Westhill and Kirkton of Skene

Kirkton of Skene is a small rural village located 1km west of Westhill. The village has grown around the village square and 'B' listed church, the latter of which provides an attractive entrance feature to the village when approaching from the west. The surrounding landscape is characterised by open farmland interspersed with areas of dense woodland. Kirkton of Skene has been subject to significant development pressures in recent years because of its attractive environment and proximity to Westhill and Aberdeen. A planning objective for the settlement, which may be a relative constraint to the western development of Westhill, may be the preservation of the character and setting of the village, including the countryside between Kirkton of Skene and Westhill.

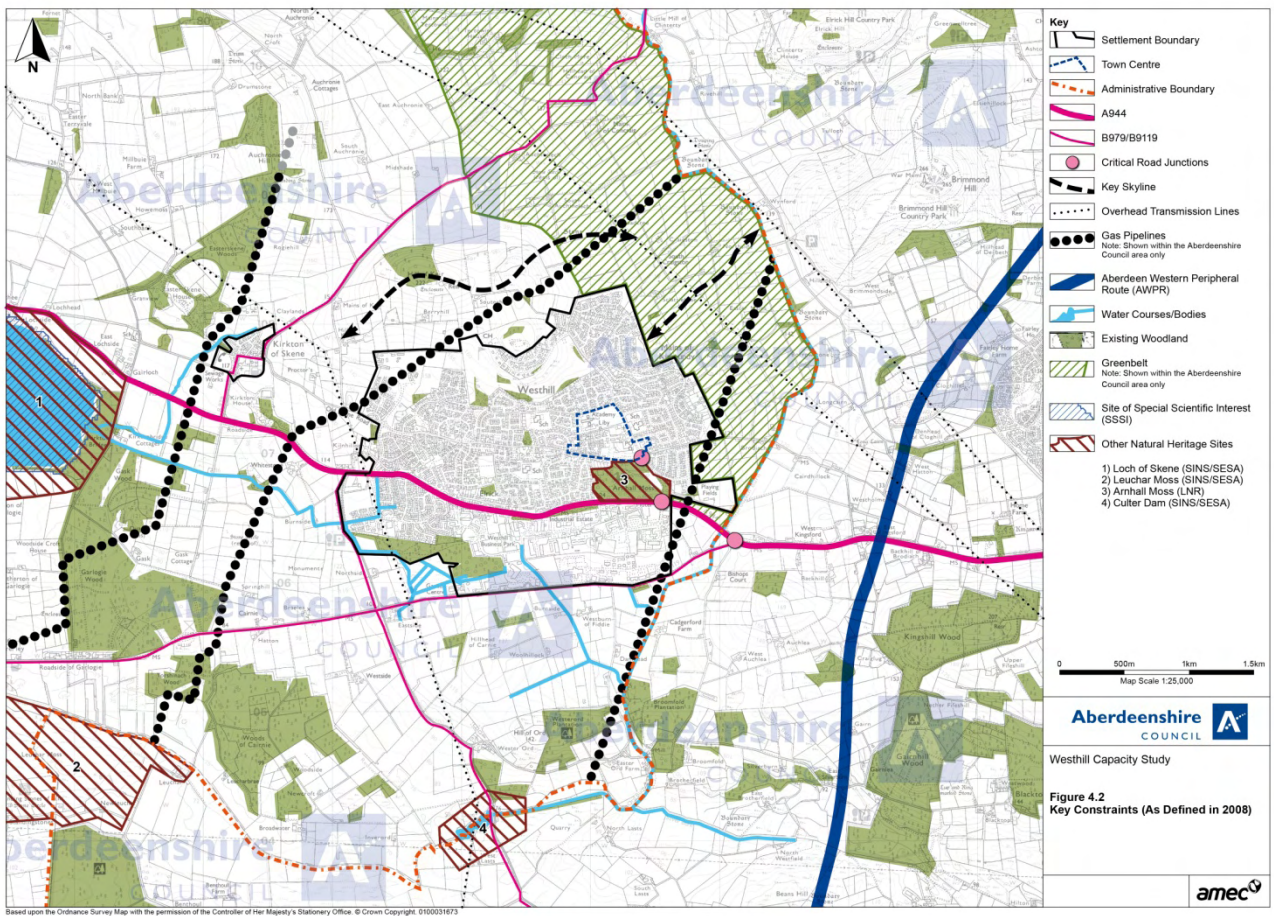
4.4.2 Land ownership

The willingness of land owners to permit the current use of their land to change is evidently a potential development constraint. However, given that land ownership may be subject to change over the relatively long period of this study, the current land ownership of a particular site has not been considered as a specific development constraint within the site appraisal process conducted as part of this study.

4.5 Constraints Summary

Figure 4.2 below summarises the key constraints which are likely to affect potential development opportunities around the periphery of Westhill. It should be noted that these constraints are identical to those illustrated on Diagram B – Key Constraints of the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study (see Appendix C).

Figure 4.2 Key Constraints Map



5. Key Drivers of Change

5.1 Policy

National, regional and local planning policies as well as strategies in respect of economic and social development all have a significant influence on the current and future development of Westhill. To successfully implement the growth strategy which will be set out in Section 6 of this study there is a need to closely consider this policy context, therefore this section of the report provides a brief overview of relevant current and emerging policy documents.

5.1.1 Development Plan

The statutory development plan for Westhill currently comprises the approved Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014) and the adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) (2012).

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014)

The Aberdeen City and Shire SDP (2014) sets out a high level spatial strategy for the development of the region up to 2035, thus the document covers the entirety of the period which this study is concerned with. The document is underpinned by an over arching vision statement:

“Aberdeen City and Shire will be an even more attractive, prosperous and sustainable European city region and an excellent place to live, visit and do business. We will be recognised for: our enterprise and inventiveness, particularly in the knowledge economy and in high-value markets; the unique qualities of our environment; and our high quality of life. We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable, including dealing with climate change and creating a more inclusive society.”

To implement this vision the introduction section of the SDP identifies two “main aims” and four “supporting aims”: The main aims of the plan are to:

- *“provide a strong framework for investment decisions which help to grow and diversify the regional economy, supported by promoting the need to use resources more efficiently and effectively; and*
- *take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change”.*

To support these main aims the plan also aims to:

- *“make sure the area has enough people, homes and jobs to support the level of services and facilities needed to maintain and improve the quality of life;*
- *protect and improve our valued assets and resources, including the built and natural environment and our cultural heritage;*
- *help create sustainable mixed communities, and the associated infrastructure, which meet the highest standards of urban and rural design and cater for the needs of the whole population; and*
- *make the most efficient use of the transport network, reducing the need for people to travel and making sure that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive choices”.*

All of these aims are relevant to this study given that it seeks to identify potential options for the sustainable growth of Westhill, including the identification of infrastructure requirements and measures to protect important natural and cultural heritage resources.

It should be noted that the vision and aims of the SDP summarised above are identical to those which were contained within the approved Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan which the SDP supersedes. This signifies that the SDP intends to continue along the established development trajectory, focusing in particular on exploiting opportunities for widespread economic growth as well as population growth within key settlements.

The SDP identifies that Westhill is located in a Local Growth and Diversification Area (LGDA) (rather than a Strategic Growth Area). The SDP includes a target that *“at least 75% of all homes built, and employment land developed should be in the strategic growth areas”*, which implies that all other areas of Aberdeenshire, including Westhill, should only be subject to limited growth. As such there is a clear requirement to closely relate the options for the growth of Westhill which is set out in Section 6 of this Study to the needs of the existing settlement. One implication of Westhill being located within a LGDA is that the SDP does not impose specific targets for the allocation of employment land within the settlement.

The “Objectives” section of the SDP identifies the importance of the oil and gas industry across North East Scotland and the need to support its future development, as well as the need to support traditional primary industries. This is important to Westhill given that the local economy is currently dominated by subsea engineering, which largely forms part of the wider oil and gas sector, and that a significant amount of the land which surrounds the existing settlement is in active agricultural use.

The SDP notes that Westhill is situated within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (HMA) and notes that the adopted Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City LDP’s currently allocate land for 1,000 dwellings within the LGDAs of the HMA up to 2016. The SDP identifies a further need to allocate land within the LGDAs of the Aberdeen HMA through a two phased approach: 1,350 dwellings from 2017-2026 and 1,350 dwellings from 2027-2035.

Schedule 2 of the SDP sets out a number of proposed infrastructure improvements which will help to implement the vision and aims of the plan. This includes reference to the Aberdeen Western Periphery Route. However, the SDP does not include any specific references, proposals or allocations which directly affect Westhill.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan

Adopted in 2012, the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out a detailed spatial strategy for the development of the Council area to 2023, together with a number of development management policies which all development proposals must be assessed against.

The introduction to the LDP explains how each of the five objectives contained within the Structure Plan (and SDP) will be achieved through this document. There is a clear focus on ensuring that development supports the existing rural character of the majority of Aberdeenshire, including areas around Westhill. The document states that while Westhill is not located within a Strategic Growth Area Aberdeenshire Council propose “significant development” within the town. The LDP makes clear that Aberdeenshire Council wish to support the growth and prosperity of Westhill in line with the stated aims of the Strategic Development Plan.

The LDP includes fourteen subject specific policies, each of which relates directly to supporting policies which are detailed in a separate Supplementary Guidance document. A number of these policies, notably those relating to business development, greenbelt protection, housing land supply and developer contributions are of particular importance to this study. However, the relevance of individual policies to specific development opportunities within and around Westhill depends largely on the detailed characteristics of individual development proposals; therefore a detailed policy analysis of specific LDP policies would not be appropriate within this updated capacity study.

The LDP sets out a high level spatial strategy for Westhill, which is orientated around the following objectives:

- *“Meet the need for housing in the settlement, and the Aberdeen Housing Market Area.*
- *Sustain existing services in a sub-regional centre.*
- *Provide affordable housing in the settlement.*
- *Maintain function as a successful employment centre.*
- *Allow scale of development which does not cause problems for current infrastructure”*

These objectives set out Aberdeenshire Council’s aspirations for Westhill and are therefore important to this study.

Overall the Aberdeenshire LDP promotes an ‘open for business’ approach and considers the development of business as being important to the economic health of the region. It supports the development of business and sustainable economic growth in all areas by taking account of the economic benefits of proposed development when making decisions in development management. Within the context of Westhill and the LDP this commitment to supporting economic growth is currently demonstrated through the allocation of employment land on the south eastern fringe of the town (site E1). The commissioning of this study with a specific remit to focus on opportunities for the expansion of employment land, provides further evidence of the commitment of Aberdeenshire Council to supporting sustainable economic growth within Westhill.

As detailed within earlier sections of this report, the LDP includes a number of land allocations within Westhill, in order to achieve the objectives noted above. These are summarised in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Summary of LDP Allocations in Westhill (Aberdeenshire Council, 2013)

Allocation/Proposal	Details
Protected Land	Development should not detrimentally affect these sites and their existing land uses.
P1	Site P1 is protected to conserve the nature reserve and provide land for access improvements.
P2	Site P2 is protected to conserve the Arnhall Moss Local Nature Reserve
P3	Site P3 is protected to conserve the playing fields.
P4	Site P4 is protected to conserve the playing fields.
P5	Site P5 is protected to conserve the playing fields.
P6	Site P6 is protected to conserve the playing fields.
P7	Site P7 is protected to conserve the amenity area
P8	Site P8 is protected to conserve the playing fields
P9	Site P9 is protected to conserve the play area.
P10	Site P10 is protected to conserve the golf course.
BUS	Site BUS is safeguarded for employment uses.
TC	The proposals map defines the extent of Westhill Town Centre.
Proposed Sites	
H1	Site H1 is allocated for up to 190 houses (95 houses in the first phase and 95 houses in the second phase of the plan). A masterplan which details integration with the adjoining existing housing site is required. A recycling point should be provided on the site
H2	Site H2 is allocated for up to 10 houses in the first phase of the plan.
E1	Site E1 is allocated for employment land.
Infrastructure Requirements	
There is need for 40% affordable housing on new housing developments within Westhill	
H1	Developer contributions are required towards the provision of a replacement Household Waste Recycling Centre in Westhill. A recycling point is required within site H1.
Development Constraints	
Pipelines	There are various pipeline consultation zones in Westhill which must inform development proposals on existing and new sites.
Flood Risk	A small watercourse runs alongside site E1.

5.1.2 Emerging Development Plan

Aberdeenshire LDP 2016

Despite Aberdeenshire Council only having adopted their first LDP in 2012, work has commenced on the next iteration of the LDP. The Main Issues Report (MIR) for the next LDP was subject to consultation until 1st February 2014. Question 18 and paragraphs 6.52-6.60 within the MIR relates to the provision of employment land specifically to support the growth of the subsea sector within Westhill. After setting out the recent history of Westhill's housing and employment land allocations, the MIR notes the importance of the subsea sector and suggests that there may be a need to allocate additional employment land specifically to support the retention and expansion of subsea industries in Westhill. This Capacity Study responds to the MIR by examining potential development areas around Westhill which may be suitable for future employment land allocations.

1822 responses were received during the MIR consultation period, raising in excess of 5,000 individual issues. These will be reported to Aberdeenshire Council's Area Committees and Infrastructure Services Committee during May and June 2014. Once all responses have been considered the LDP Proposed Plan will be prepared and published for consultation, which as of May 2014 is currently programmed for late Autumn 2014. The LDP Proposed Plan will then undergo a public examination process, expected to commence in winter 2015/2016, before being adopted. Aberdeenshire Council intend that the new LDP will be adopted for use at the beginning of 2017.

5.1.3 National Strategies, Plans & Policies

Government Economic Strategy (Scottish Government, 2011)

The SNP government's first Government Economic Strategy (2007) identified the achievement of sustainable economic growth as the core purpose of the Scottish Government and this updated strategy re-confirms the importance of this central objective. The document gives clear priority to accelerating economic recovery, with a range of measures to tackle unemployment and promote employability. Actions are grouped around six strategic priorities which will drive sustainable economic growth and develop a more resilient and adaptable economy:

- **Supportive Business Environment** –focused around supporting key growth sectors and growth companies and enabling Scottish firms to exploit international growth markets. This is directly relevant to Westhill given that the town's subsea engineering sector has recently experienced significant growth, and although subsea engineering is not identified as one of six national growth sectors the document does identify "*significant opportunities from Scotland's science, technology and advanced engineering assets across sectors*". This provides high level policy support for the development of plans and strategies to facilitate sustainable growth of the subsea sector in Westhill.
- **Transition to a Low Carbon Economy** – focused around a shift to renewable energy as well as resource and energy efficiency to reduce Scotland's carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. This priority is relevant to Westhill given that offshore renewables is a potential growth sector for the subsea engineering industry, which has historically been dependant on oil and gas related work. In addition there is a need to ensure that the development of Westhill maximises resource efficiency, including in relation to the use of land, and supports sustainable travel options.

- **Learning, Skills and Well-being** – focused around ensuring that Scotland’s population is equipped with the skills necessary to maximise their contribution to economic growth. This priority is relevant to Westhill given that the town’s main economic sector, subsea engineering, is dependent upon a highly skilled labour force. The priority is also relevant in terms of closing the spatial mismatch which currently exists between available jobs and the skills of the population in Westhill.
- **Infrastructure Development and Place** – focused around ensuring adequate provision of physical and electronic infrastructures in order to maximise opportunities for economic growth, as well as enhancing the quality of areas as places to work and live. Enhanced infrastructure provision, notably in the local transport network, may be required in order to facilitate the enlargement of employment areas and the predicted growth in Westhill’s population. A focus on placemaking is of relevance to Westhill given that the settlement is home to a significant residential population yet arguably does not currently have a legible spatial structure.
- **Effective Government** – focused around increasing the speed of decision making and enhancing co-ordination between public bodies. This priority is of relevance to Westhill given its close proximity to the Aberdeen City boundary and the fact that the majority of workers based in Westhill currently commute from Aberdeen. As such there is a clear need for Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council to work together to enhance the integration of housing and labour markets and transport networks across the two areas.
- **Equity** – focused on providing opportunities for the most disadvantaged areas and people in society to prosper. Although recent economic statistics indicate that Westhill is a prosperous area the long waiting list for council housing in the town points to This priority is also relevant in terms of ensuring that the community of Westhill is able to gain from the rapid growth of the subsea engineering economic sector in the town through enhancing opportunities for local employment and securing developer contributions towards infrastructure provision.

SPP (Scottish Government, 2010)

This document sets out the Scottish Government’s objectives, aspirations and expectations for the Scottish Planning System. In doing so the SPP aims to contribute to the achievement of the Scottish Government’s overarching purpose of realising sustainable economic growth, and the document is an important material consideration in all planning decisions.

The SPP aims to contribute to the achievement of the Scottish Government’s overarching purpose, sustainable economic growth. Paragraph 35 defines sustainable development in accordance with the five guiding principles contained within the UK Shared Framework for Sustainable Development (2005) and states that “*the fundamental principle of sustainable development is that it integrates economic, social and environmental objectives*”.

The significance of planning for achieving sustainable development is highlighted in paragraph 37, which states that “*the planning system has an important role in supporting the achievement of sustainable development through its influence on the location, layout and design of new development*”. In addition paragraph 37 notes that planning decisions should “*contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with the commitment to reduce emissions by 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, contribute to reducing energy consumption and to the development of renewable energy generation opportunities*”.

Paragraph 45 identifies 5 ways in which the planning system should support economic development:

- *“Taking account of the economic benefits of proposed development in development plans and development management decisions,*
- *Promoting development in sustainable locations, particularly in terms of accessibility,*
- *Promoting regeneration and the full and appropriate use of land, buildings and infrastructure,*
- *Supporting development which will provide new employment opportunities and enhance local competitiveness, and*
- *Promoting the integration of employment generation opportunities with supporting infrastructure and housing development.”*

Paragraph 46 states that *“planning authorities should ensure that there is a range and choice of marketable sites and locations for businesses allocated in development plans, including opportunities for mixed use development, to meet anticipated requirements and a variety of size and quality requirements. Marketable land should meet business requirements, be serviced or serviceable within 5 years, be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, and have a secure planning status”*. The need to identify and allocate suitable land to meet business requirements provides a key rationale for this study.

Paragraphs 47 and 48 discuss the relationship between accommodating business development, supporting other land uses and protecting the environment. The SPP therefore prioritises development on brownfield land and states that *“development plans should support small business development and growth and promote opportunities for low impact industrial, business and service uses which can co-exist with housing and other sensitive uses without eroding amenity”*.

The SPP also includes a wide range of other subject specific policies, the following of which are considered to be of particular relevance to this study:

- Rural Development;
- Historic Environment;
- Landscape and Natural Heritage;
- Housing
- Transport; and
- Flooding and Drainage.

Draft Revised SPP (Scottish Government, April 2013)

This draft document sets out proposed changes to national planning policies in order to more clearly reflect Scottish Ministers’ priorities for the development and use of land. A position statement issued in January 2014 outlines the

current thinking of the Scottish Government in relation to proposed key changes to the SPP and confirms that the Scottish Government expect to publish the finalised version of the SPP in June 2014.

Paragraphs 15-23 of the draft SPP explain how the planning system should contribute towards achieving the Scottish Government's core purpose of achieving sustainable economic growth, and paragraphs 24-27 provides policies regarding how planning should contribute to sustainable development. It should be noted that since the publication of the draft SPP in April 2013 the Scottish Government has consulted on replacing these draft policies regarding sustainable development and sustainable economic growth with a revised 'sustainability & planning' section; this would establish a presumption in favour of sustainable development and define the concept of sustainable development in accordance with the recognised Brundtland definition.

Paragraph 17 of the draft SPP identifies four roles for the Scottish planning system in achieving sustainable economic growth, all of which are relevant to this study:

“The planning system should:

- *through the development plan, set out a spatial strategy to deliver sustainable economic growth. This should harness the strengths and qualities of cities, towns and rural areas;*
- *foster a business environment which is supportive to new investment across Scotland while protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and built environments as assets of national importance;*
- *attach significant weight to economic benefit of proposed development as a material consideration, particularly the creation of new jobs, recognising and responding to economic and financial conditions; and*
- *support infrastructure delivery and innovation in the energy, transport, construction, digital, waste, water and environmental management sectors to support the transition to a low carbon economy”*

The weight to be afforded to economic development considerations in planning decisions is clarified in paragraph 23, which states that *“decision makers should give full consideration to the need for planning to support sustainable economic growth”*.

The draft revised SPP sets out a number of principle and subject policies which are relevant to specific development types and cross-sectoral planning issues. In relation to business and employment provisions, the draft revised SPP at paragraph 106 states that development plans *“should meet the needs and opportunities of indigenous firms and inward investors”*, and in this regard paragraph 110 requires LDPs to allocate and regularly review a range of marketable sites for business uses. In relation to the protection of town centres, the draft revised SPP at paragraph 55 advises that regular town centre health checks should be undertaken by local authorities, while paragraph 56 lists a number of actions which should be undertaken to support town centres, including the preparation of town centre strategies and the establishment of Business Improvement District.

NPF 2

Scotland's Second National Planning Framework (NPF2) provides a national spatial vision around which to orientate socio-economic development and highlights the spatial planning implications arising from other Scottish Government policy documents, including the updated Government Economic Strategy (2011). Paragraph 12 of NPF2 explains that the NPF2 *"takes forward the spatial aspects of the Government Economic Strategy, to ensure that each part of the country is able to play to its strengths in building a Scotland that is wealthier and fairer, smarter and greener, healthier, safer and stronger"*.

NPF2 identifies several key challenges which currently influence Scotland's socio-economic development and are likely to develop over the lifetime of the framework, before providing a spatial strategy to address these issues. Identified key challenges of relevance to this study include:

- The importance of placemaking to attract and retain both investment from firms and a highly skilled workforce;
- The need to tackle climate change through reducing carbon emissions and adapting to a changing environment. In particular there is a need to *"improve the accessibility of education, employment and services and encourage a shift to more active and sustainable modes of travel and transport"*. The planning system can contribute to this by promoting *"compact settlements, mixed use development, effective active travel networks and efficient public transport systems"*.
- Ensuring that housing, transport and community facility provision reflects Scotland's demography, in particular the ageing population.

Four key aims underpin the spatial strategy contained within NPF2. These aims are:

- *"to contribute to a wealthier and fairer Scotland by supporting sustainable economic growth and improved competitiveness and connectivity;*
- *to promote a greener Scotland by contributing to the achievement of climate change targets and protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and built environments;*
- *to help build safer, stronger and healthier communities, by promoting improved opportunities and a better quality of life; and*
- *to contribute to a smarter Scotland by supporting the development of the knowledge economy"*.

To achieve these key aims NPF2 identifies the need to:

- Create a knowledge driven economy with a highly skilled labour force. This requires Scotland to be *"well connected economically, physically, digitally and intellectually to the rest of the world"*.
- Maximise energy efficiency and opportunities for the exploitation of Scotland's renewable energy resources. In relation to climate change paragraph 48 states that *"planning and transport policies can make an important contribution by promoting more sustainable patterns of land use and travel"*.
- Integrate economic development with environmental protection and sustainable resource management.

Paragraph 53 summarises the development strategy contained within the NPF2. Pertinent aspects of the strategy for the purposes of this study include the need to:

- *“Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of Scotland;*
- *promote development which helps to reduce Scotland’s carbon footprint and facilitates adaptation to climate change;*
- *support sustainable growth in the rural economy;*
- *conserve and enhance Scotland’s distinctive natural and cultural heritage, and continue to safeguard internationally protected sites, habitats and species;*
- *expand opportunities for communities and businesses by promoting environmental quality and good connectivity;*
- *promote more sustainable patterns of travel, transport and land use;*
- *realise the potential of Scotland’s renewable energy resources and facilitate the generation of power and heat from all clean, low carbon sources; and,*
- *encourage a sufficient supply of homes which are affordable in places where people want to live.*

NPF3 Proposed Plan

As required under the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, the NPF3 Proposed Plan was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 14th January 2014 for its formal consideration. It is expected that following a period of parliamentary scrutiny the finalised version of the NPF3 will be published in June 2014.

The NPF3 Proposed Plan confirms the Scottish Government’s commitment to increasing sustainable economic growth and therefore orientates the efforts of Scotland’s planning system towards this purpose. The document sets out a national spatial strategy structured around four key themes:

- **A successful, sustainable place:** This theme is underpinned by the objective of creating *“high quality, diverse and sustainable places that promote well-being and attract investment”*. The document calls for a renewed focus on exploiting the Scotland’s natural resources and a focus on emerging growth sectors. This is of critical importance to this study given that Westhill has recently become a subsea engineering centre of excellence yet and surrounded by agricultural land. Page 12 of the NPF3 Proposed Plan sets out a detailed spatial strategy for Aberdeen and North East Scotland which acknowledges the importance of supporting energy related industries and identifies a particular need to provide additional affordable housing across the region.
- **A low carbon place:** This theme relates to the legally binding target of reducing Scotland’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 compared with 1990 levels, as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The document notes that the Scottish Government has adopted several renewable energy targets including the aim of generating *“at least 30% of overall energy demand from renewables by 2020 – this includes generating the equivalent of at least 100% of gross electricity consumption from renewables, with an interim target of 50% by 2015”*. The Scottish Government’s

support for the deployment of renewable energy is indirectly of relevance to this study given that the offshore renewables industry is an emerging growth market for the subsea engineering sector which has established itself in Westhill.

- **A natural, resilient place:** This theme is concerned with environmental protection and the sustainable use of Scotland's natural resources. It is noted that Scotland's principal asset is the land, which must be managed sustainably as both an economic resource and environmental asset. In addition the document states that "*water management and flooding issues will become increasingly important*" due to the effects of climate change, and it identifies the need to manage tensions between accommodating development pressures and protecting productive agricultural land which surrounds urban areas. This issue is of critical importance for Westhill given that any potential growth of the settlement is likely to encroach upon active agricultural and/or greenbelt land.
- **A connected place:** This theme is orientated around maximising physical and digital connectivity around Scotland and between Scotland and the rest of the world. In relation to Aberdeen the consented Aberdeen Periphery Route and the proposed dualing of the A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty are cited as key infrastructure projects, and the document notes the overall need to improve the accessibility of rural areas through improvements to digital and transport infrastructure. Of specific relevance is that the NPF3 Proposed Plan at paragraph 5. 26 encourages local authorities to "*identify one walking- and cycling-friendly settlement where accessibility will be significantly improved by 2030*". Given that an extensive cycle network already exists within and around Westhill, potential future upgrades to the network could enable Westhill to bid for national recognition as a 'Sustainable Transport Town' or 'Cycle Town'.

The NPF3 Proposed Plan identifies 14 proposed National Developments, none of which are in close proximity to Westhill. Therefore they are not expected to directly affect the settlement's development. However, a National Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network is identified as the 7th proposed National Development, and despite Westhill not being identified within the scope of this proposed National Development, this designation could still provide indirect policy support for future improvements to long distance walking and cycle routes close to Westhill.

5.1.4 Regional and Local Plans & Strategies

This section identifies key points within current regional and local policy documents which have the potential to influence the development of Westhill. It should be noted that this section does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Aberdeenshire or North East Scotland policy environments. As such a range of other policy documents not addressed within this section may also influence the development of Westhill over the next 25 years.

The Economic Manifesto for Aberdeen City and Shire (ACSEF, 2007)

This document sets out a vision and strategic priorities for the region to work towards by 2025. It identifies eight priorities, the first being for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire to be the top of the Quality of Life "league table", making it a place where people choose to work, live study and visit. The remaining seven are:-

- Deliver a fully integrated transport network
- Maximise our intellectual capital - people and expertise

- Deliver city centre redevelopment
- Anchor the oil and gas industry
- Attract and develop skilled people
- Improve the efficiency of planning decision making
- Aberdeen City and Shire as the location of choice for company headquarters

Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy Refresh 2013

The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Aberdeen City and Shire was first adopted as a statutory document in 2008 following approval by Scottish Ministers. This RTS built on the previous strategy to 2011, referred to as the Modern Transport Strategy or MTS. In 2013 Nestrans undertook a review of the RTS to take account of a number of changes in policy, in particular to better align the document with the approved Structure Plan and emerging Strategic Development Plan. This resulted in the publication of this refreshed RTS, which was approved by Scottish Ministers on 16th January 2014.

The refreshed RTS is underpinned by the vision of creating:

“A transport system for the north east of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable and socially inclusive society”

To implement this vision the document identifies four strategic objectives and a number of constituent aims. The strategic objectives are to:

- *“To enhance and exploit the north east’s competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.*
- *To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport for all in the north east, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.*
- *To conserve and enhance the north east’s natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate, noise and air quality.*
- *To support transport integration and a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east”.*

The RTS sets out a strategic framework of integrated measures and interventions in order to achieve these strategic objectives and the overall vision. Table 5.1 within the RTS identifies routes where strategic transport infrastructure improvements are required to cope with the cumulative impact of development; the ‘A944 corridor’ is identified as one such route where upgrades to key junctions are needed in order to improve safety and increase capacity. However, this high level strategy does not detail the characteristics of potential upgrades to the A944, as it states that *“a full appraisal and assessment, detailed engineering design and environmental assessment of each location will be required in order to progress these interventions and identify the most appropriate solution for each”.*

In addition to infrastructure improvements required to alleviate cumulative development pressures the RTS focuses on:

- reducing congestion on strategic roads,
- reducing journey times using rail transport,
- creating transport interchanges to facilitate connections between local and regional bus services
- undertaking quality bus corridor improvements to improve bus service frequencies and reliability
- undertaking urban realm improvements to improve pedestrian environments
- implement measures to increase safety and security of walking

These themes emphasise the importance of improving the performance of existing transport infrastructure. Due to the limited public transport network around Westhill and its lack of proximity to strategic roads and the rail network many of these themes are of limited relevance to Westhill. However, in line with the RTS measures could be taken to increase patronage on bus services which pass through Westhill by upgrading interchange points.

It should be noted that although the RTS does refer to the consented Aberdeen Western Periphery Route this project is considered to be part of the “reference case” (i.e. the baseline position) for the future development of the region’s transport network and therefore the merits and potential impacts of the AWPR are not discussed within this document.

Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy 2012

In January 2012 Aberdeenshire Council adopted its new Local Transport Strategy (LTS) which outlines the key transport issues affecting Aberdeenshire and sets out a series of actions to support delivery of a transport vision for the area. The overall aim of the LTS is to “*to encourage individuals and businesses to consider ways to travel less, travel more actively and, where vehicular travel is necessary, how journeys could be made more effectively*”. The LTS identifies five main issues which require to be addressed:

- Economic issues – there is a need to “to support the traffic growth associated with economic development while ensuring that network capacity is safeguarded”. An associated challenge is providing adequate public transport across rural areas of Aberdeenshire at a time when bus/rail fares are rising rapidly. Both of these issues are of direct relevance to Westhill due to the existing road capacity constraints which exist in the town and the relatively limited availability of public transport.
- Environmental issues – there is a need to reduce the environmental impact of transportation within Aberdeenshire, particularly in terms of carbon emissions. This is challenging given the rural nature of Aberdeenshire.
- Safety issues – there is a need to ensure the safety of all users of the transport network in Aberdeenshire, including through reducing road casualty rates. The LTS supports the delivery of the Joint Road Safety Plan for Aberdeen City & Shire 2011-2015.

- Integration issues –to enhance accessibility and encourage sustainable modal shifts there is a need to achieve greater inter-modality and seamlessness within local transport networks.

To respond to these main issues the LTS is underpinned by five objectives:

- Promote Sustainable Economic Growth – maximise the effectiveness of the transport network, services and facilities;
- Promote Social Inclusion and Accessibility – improve connections within and between communities, increasing accessibility of the transport network;
- Protect the Environment – remove barriers to active and sustainable travel helping to improve health and reduce emissions.
- Improve Safety – enhance the safety of all users of the transport network.
- Improve Integration – develop and improve integration between all forms of transport and improve connectivity within and beyond Aberdeenshire.

It should be noted that whilst the LTS is an important document it does not include any specific references or proposals in relation to Westhill.

5.2 Other Drivers of Change

Local & Regional Governance Interactions

The geographical situation of Westhill, located within the Aberdeenshire Council area but adjacent to the eastern boundary with Aberdeen City, necessitates that the future development of Westhill should involve at least a degree of collaboration between relevant governance bodies. This study has not undertaken a full mapping exercise to comprehensively identify all governance bodies of relevance to Westhill; however it is evident that relevant governance bodies include Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership, Aberdeen City Council, Nestrans, the Aberdeen City & Shire Economic Forum and the Aberdeen City & Shire SDPA. All of these bodies effectively control at least one aspect of the policy environment which will influence change in Westhill over the next 25 years, so any coherent strategy to facilitate the future development of Westhill should be informed by the priorities and aspiration of these different governance bodies and ideally should be co-ordinated between them.

Long Term Drivers

In addition to the influence of national, regional and local policies the development of Westhill will be conditioned by a large number of external factors which cannot be considered in detail within this study. These factors include: constitutional change, volatility in the North Sea oil and gas economy and the international and national economy more widely, climate change, technological innovation, changes in consumer behaviour and lifestyle shifts. Although all of these factors could have a significant influence on the future development of Westhill, fluctuations in oil and gas prices are particularly important given the dominance of the oil and gas sector in the north east

economy. Major shifts in oil prices have a direct impact on the oil and gas supply chain, including the subsea engineering sector, and therefore can influence companies' aspirations and appetite for expansion in Westhill.

6. Spatial Analysis

This section seeks to identify the key issues which a growth oriented spatial strategy should address. The key issues detailed in section 4.2 are closely informed by the information contained within sections 2-5 of this report, as well as the analysis of current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in Westhill which is outlined below.

6.1 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis was undertaken to identify issues of potential relevance within Westhill and to help identify the key issues (section 4.2) which should be considered in the options for growth detailed in Section 8.

6.1.1 Strengths

Population

- Westhill has experienced significant population growth since its inception and this is projected to continue, indicating that the settlement is a popular place to live. Coupled with the recent surge of employment related development this provides opportunities to promote mixed use development and to create a 'liveable' settlement, whereby the majority of the population live, work and relax within Westhill.
- The significant and rising population provides a potential labour pool for businesses within Westhill.

Housing

- Recent housing developments in Westhill at the Broadshade and Burnland sites indicate that the town has a thriving housing market. Major housebuilders appear eager to invest in new development sites, with several having headquarter/regional offices in Westhill. Such investment will contribute to the development of the town's infrastructure through planning agreements or other developer contributions.
- The dominance of family housing within Westhill supports the retention of a mixed age community within the town.

Economy & Retail

- Westhill is demonstrably able to attract inward investment from world leading firms, particularly in the subsea engineering sector.
- Much of subsea sector's work in Westhill currently revolves around the oil and gas industry. However, some activity does take place in the growth sector of renewables; Technip Offshore Wind moved its world offshore wind HQ from Paris to Westhill. Thus the subsea cluster in Westhill has a diverse range of clients and is relatively resilient to changes in the circumstances of individual clients.

- Although fossil fuel recovery rates in the North Sea are declining, conservative estimates suggest that a further 40 years of activity is expected and the value of unrecovered oil and gas is estimated at £1 trillion. Subsea technologies are likely to become more important for increasing extraction rates in brownfield wells and for extracting oil and gas from hard to reach new fields.
- Engineering design and project management work is undertaken in Westhill for projects around the world, indicating that the subsea engineering cluster in Westhill is not solely reliant on North Sea oil and gas industries.
- A number of public sector bodies including Scottish Water have an employment presence within Westhill.
- The growing subsea engineering sector within Westhill induces an unknown economic multiplier effect, particularly for 'local' service based industries and the associated workforce.
- The Westhill Shopping Centre acts as the designated Town Centre for Westhill, providing a focus in the settlement, comprising a reasonable range of convenience and comparison retail units. Planning permission for an extension to the centre was granted in 2013; this indicates that it is performing well financially and that the range of shops & services is expected to increase.
- There is a retail presence within the Arnhall Business Park area of Westhill, in the form of large Tesco and Costco outlets. In particular the Tesco store provides a source of low order convenience goods for employees based within the Westhill and Arnhall Business Parks.

Open Space

- Despite experiencing significant housing and employment related growth Westhill has managed to retain important open spaces, including playing fields and the Arnhall Moss Local Nature Reserve.
- Westhill is almost entirely surrounded by open countryside, much of which is in active agricultural use. Agriculture is a historically important industry across Aberdeenshire and the sector continues to thrive.
- The land which surrounds Westhill is largely undeveloped (although in active agricultural use), therefore providing a range of potential development sites.

Infrastructure

- The A944 provides a direct route from Westhill to Aberdeen, thereby facilitating cross-commuting.
- Work is ongoing to reconfigure the Six Mile Roundabout on the A944 into a controlled junction, which should help to alleviate traffic congestion on the eastern approach to Westhill.
- The forthcoming AWPR will be located east of Westhill and will include a junction with the A944. The new road is intended to alleviate current pressures on the A944 and will provide a direct and quick link from Westhill to many areas of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City.

- The creation of the AWPR within the Greenbelt east of Westhill provides an opportunity to review the effectiveness of current Green Belt boundaries, and potentially facilitate limited development of appropriate land uses on suitable sites immediately east of the existing settlement.
- Although the A944 provides the main access road into Westhill there are a number of 'B' class roads which connect northern and southern areas of the town to the wider area. The capacity of these roads is likely to be of critical importance for determining suitable options for new development on land around Westhill.
- Westhill has relatively good bus connectivity, considering the size and semi-rural situation of the settlement, and good pedestrian and cycle links to the east.
- The existing and planned future transport network provides good connectivity between Westhill and Aberdeen, which acts as an important investment driver for firms locating in the town.

Community Facilities

- The total primary and secondary school capacities are predicted to exceed forecasted roles from at least 2018. This provides an opportunity to facilitate limited additional housing development in Westhill over the short term if required in order to support employment related growth.
- Skene Health Centre provides a comprehensive range of health services in a modern and reasonably centrally located building to residents of Westhill. This removes the need to travel outwith the town for many medical appointments.
- Westhill is served by a relatively wide range of public and private leisure facilities, including a community swimming pool and a new library. The provision of high quality amenities within Westhill helps to attract businesses and people to live, work and invest in the town.

6.1.2 Weaknesses

Population

- Like many parts of Scotland the population of Westhill, is expected to undergo significant ageing over the next 25 years, which could result in increased pressure on health and social care services within the town. This is potentially of concern given that the existing GP practice, Skene Medical Group, which currently serves a large population and is operating at near capacity. Population ageing is likely to reduce mobility and therefore constrain access to important high order services located in Aberdeen for elderly residents of Westhill.

Housing

- Although absolute numbers of housing in Westhill are currently adequate there is a lack of diversity and choice in housing provision, in terms of both housing tenure and type. Westhill is dominated by owner occupied private family dwellings and currently has a very low percentage of council and socially rented housing. In addition the town has limited provision of flatted dwellings and small homes suitable either for young professionals without families or older residents who wish to downsize.

- Housing and employment land uses are relatively detached and homogenous, with little evidence of true mixed use development within Westhill. This undermines the spatial identity and sense of place within the town.

Economy & Retail

- The rapid take up of allocated employment land in 2012/2013 means that the only site allocated for employment in the 2012 LDP is now under construction. Therefore there is effectively no established employment land supply in Westhill. Therefore, to respond to development pressures and support economic growth new areas of suitable land should be allocated for employment uses.
- Economic growth and employment in Westhill is currently underpinned by a small number of key economic sectors, notably subsea engineering which is largely reliant on work related to oil and gas extraction. This lack of economic diversity is arguably a weakness as it undermines the economic resilience of the town. Without the subsea engineering sector it is likely that Westhill would not have experienced the recent employment related growth that has occurred.
- The majority of the office developments which house Westhill's subsea engineering cluster are owned by commercial landlords rather than subsea engineering firms. Therefore the subsea engineering sector is not physically tied to Westhill and these firms could choose to relocate to (lower cost) locations outside of Westhill at the end of their leases. If this was to occur it would significantly reduce the growth potential of Westhill, at least in the short term, due to the current dominance of the subsea sector within the town.
- Housing and employment land uses are relatively detached and homogenous, with little evidence of true mixed use development within Westhill. This undermines the spatial identity and sense of place within the town.
- Although the Westhill Shopping Centre and surrounding land is designated a Town Centre, in reality this area is currently unable to fulfil some important Town Centre functions. In particular the poor quality of public realm around the shopping centre prevents it from being a well frequented meeting point and social space, despite its relatively central location.
- There is currently no provision for high order retail shops or services within Westhill. This necessitates travelling to Aberdeen City for specialist purchases.

Open Space

- Carnie Woods Local Nature Conservation Site, located on the south west fringe of Westhill, is now enclosed by development on several sides.
- There are a limited number of footpaths running from Westhill into the surrounding area.

Infrastructure

- A key weakness is that there is only one arterial route into and through Westhill, the A944. This road is subject to significant congestion during peak periods, as well as air pollution (nitrogen oxide and particulate matter) and carbon emissions associated with high volumes of traffic.

- Capacity issues on the B9119 and B979 and at junctions on the A944 currently constrain development opportunities immediately south of Westhill.
- Traffic congestion affects local distributor roads within Westhill, as well as on the A944.
- There is lack of connectivity between the A944 and B9119.
- Due to separate street design processes for each development poor connectivity exists within and between areas of the Westhill Business Park and the Arnhall Business Park.
- Some utilities infrastructure within Westhill may be operating near to capacity and thus may require to be upgraded in order to facilitate development.
- Oil and gas pipeline infrastructure means that particular corridors within Westhill simply cannot be built on. As well as preventing development of specific sites this restricts opportunities to create a coherent and integrated spatial structure across Westhill.

Community Facilities

- The population of Westhill is expected to grow however capacity issues already exist at several primary schools. This could impede future housing or mixed use development within the town.
- Existing public service provision is predominately on the eastern side of Westhill. Any strategy to develop Westhill should address this imbalance by providing additional community facilities in western areas of the town. This is particularly important given that the west of Westhill has recently experienced substantial housing growth through the Burnland and Broadshade developments.

6.1.3 Opportunities

- Westhill has clearly seen significant growth in recent years
- Westhill provides a mix of housing and employment opportunities and there appears to be demand for further such provision
- There is considerable opportunity for development of a sub-sea centre of excellence in Westhill, building on its existing strengths
- The AWPR, when developed, will be in close proximity to Westhill and will considerably improve accessibility.
- Westhill is an important strategic town in the City and Shire area and this is demonstrated by the demand for housing and employment in the town.
- Scottish Planning Policy advises (para.46) that development plans should provide a range and choice of marketable employment sites to meet anticipated requirements.
- The sub-sea sector is a key driver of economic growth of Westhill, as well as the sub-regional, regional and national economies. In this context, there is the opportunity to specifically recognise Westhill's status and contribution to the economic growth of the area

- The land immediately south of Westhill & Arnhall Business Parks may represent a logical extension to the established employment land supply, particularly if new sites are to be tailored to the needs of the subsea cluster which is located within the Business Parks. However, to accommodate new development on land south of Westhill significant infrastructure would be required to address capacity issues on the B9119 and B979.
- Despite the presence of the Greenbelt and Aberdeen City boundaries there may be scope to develop mixed use areas immediately east and north east of Westhill.
- A sufficient and growing population base (together with the homes and jobs that that entails) provides the opportunity, and is required, to support services and facilities at a level appropriate to improve the quality of life.
- Given current and anticipated economic activity it is prudent to plan for growth and ensure sufficient land is available to satisfy market demand.
- The faster the level of population growth inevitably means that business also requires a more generous supply of land to be made available, which will in turn provide sufficient confidence to encourage continued inward investment
- Economic activity west of Aberdeen City has increased significantly since 2009 (e.g. Westhill), despite the Strategic Growth Areas designation not including this area. The A944 is of strategic importance to Westhill/Aberdeen; opportunity for more housing development west of the City so that housing is close to employment opportunities at Westhill. Opportunity to develop and deliver accessible transport links.
- Housing diversity and choice in Westhill could be enhanced by integrating relatively high density flats with areas of office blocks and low order retail in order to provide housing for young professionals and create mixed use, 'livable' neighbourhoods.
- Westhill Business Park is owned by Aberdeenshire Council, which may facilitate the reconfiguration of the Business Park and improve its efficiency.

6.1.4

Threats

- Although Westhill is expected to retain a sizeable working age population over the next 20 to 25 years, a rapidly ageing population combined with low levels of immigration could reduce the town's labour pool.
- If the identified lack of housing diversity and choice is left unresolved this could cause a blockage in the local housing market and present difficulties for attracting and retaining the highly skilled labour force required to service the growing subsea engineering sector.
- A lack of planned new land for housing may encourage speculative applications for residential development, which may exacerbate rather than improve issues related to housing tenure/type, with a commensurate impact on infrastructure capacity. Speculative housing development could also exacerbate existing deficiencies in Westhill's overall spatial structure.

- If educational capacity issues are not resolved this may constrain future housing development in Westhill, which could have a knock-on effect on the town's labour market.
- If sufficient employment land is not provided to meet local needs, this may prevent economic development from occurring. Specifically, if suitable sites are not identified for the growing subsea cluster this would constrain the sector's growth and could ultimately lead to the relocation of one or more subsea firms out of Westhill. If this were to happen it could threaten the viability of the Westhill subsea cluster, as the main reason why the subsea industry has developed a centre of excellence in the town relates to the economic benefits generated through agglomeration.
- Potentially increasing competition from outwith Aberdeenshire to attract the sub-sea market sector. The Employment Land Audit 2012 (published May 2013) states, for example, that in recent years take up of land has been much higher in Aberdeenshire, partly as a result of the shortage of suitable sites in Aberdeen, but there are indications that take up in both areas is increasing.
- The Reporter of the Proposed ACSSDP Examination Report (p.132 para.15) supported the contention of the SDP Authority that the significant expansion of Westhill took place at a time when such development opportunities within Aberdeen itself were limited. This is no longer the case, with significant allocations being brought forward within the A944 corridor at Kingswells and at Countesswells. The reporter concluded *'that significant expansion at those locations would represent a better fit with the spatial strategy and sustainability objectives of the plan than would be the case at Westhill.'*
- If Westhill depends upon the subsea engineering sector for its prosperity this could limit local employment opportunities, as only a limited number of potential employees who reside in Westhill are likely to have appropriate skills and qualifications for the subsea industry. One consequence of this would be a need for increased commuting, which would generate significant negative social and environmental impacts.
- If Westhill depends upon the subsea engineering sector for its prosperity and the sector experiences rapid decline, the socio-economic prosperity of the town would also sharply decline.
- Historically poor recognition to the role of community facilities in supporting growth, and the ability of the existing public facilities to support existing, new and expanded communities. Need to ensure that future growth is not constrained by lack of infrastructure (e.g. health care, community and leisure facilities); the local communities should benefit/gain from growth.
- Development without appropriate infrastructure could lead to under capacity on the road network and result in significant social, economic and environmental impacts. If development continues without appropriate and reasonable infrastructure improvements this could weaken the attractiveness of Westhill to employers/investors.
- Increased traffic on the A944 as a result of new development could exacerbate existing severance issues.

6.2 Key Issues

The contextual information, spatial analysis and sustainability objectives reported earlier in this report highlights multiple key issues which are of key importance to the future development of Westhill. Of particular importance

and relevance to the framework for the future growth of Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years is the **spatial strategy** and **sustainability objectives** contained within the approved Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014) which identifies Westhill as being located within a **Local Growth and Diversification (LGD) area**. This means that any further development should be integrated with and compliment the existing settlement. Paragraph 3.11-3.15 identifies specific requirements for the development of LGD areas:

- *“There is a need for **diversification and growth in the economy** in this area to meet local needs”*
- ***Employment related development** will be encouraged to help diversify the economy*
- *Levels of growth in individual settlements should relate to **local needs** rather than be driven by external pressures*
- ***Mixed use development** should be prioritised*
- *Development must “**respect the character of the landscape and local identity**”*

The spatial strategy and sustainability objectives in the adopted **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) (2012)**, which is in conformity with the approved Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014), , outlines a spatial strategy for the development of the Council area to 2023. The LDP sets out a high level spatial strategy for Westhill, which is orientated around the following objectives:

- *“Meet the **need for housing** in the settlement, and the Aberdeen Housing Market Area.*
- ***Sustain existing services** in a sub-regional centre.*
- *Provide **affordable housing** in the settlement.*
- *Maintain function as a successful **employment centre**.*
- *Allow **scale of development** which does not cause problems for **current infrastructure**”*

The Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014) is important in shaping the development framework for Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years, as it sets out a high level spatial strategy for the development of the region up to 2035. The vision and aims of the SDP focuses in particular on exploiting opportunities for widespread economic growth, as well as population growth within key settlements.

As such these key issues should be fully addressed within any proposals to expand Westhill.

6.2.1 Supporting Economic Growth in Westhill

There are two strands to this key issue:

Facilitating the Growth of Westhill Subsea Cluster

The rapid expansion of the subsea engineering sector in Westhill over recent years has eroded the established land supply to the extent that new employment land is urgently required, yet few vacant and suitable sites currently exist within the town. This presents difficulties for all economic sectors, but in particular the lack of suitable employment sites currently acts as a major constraint to the continued development of the highly successful subsea engineering cluster. Thus there is a need to propose new employment land allocations which are suitable for general employment use, but also reflect the specific needs of the subsea sector. These requirements are likely to include adequate land for demonstration/testing facilities and equipment storage yards alongside the provision of grade A office space and ancillary development. In addition, subsea sector firms locating in Westhill may demand sites close to the existing subsea industries cluster within the Westhill, Arnhall and Silvertrees Business Parks, in order to maximise the agglomeration benefits which can be derived from locating within the town.

Economic Diversification & Resilience

Economic growth and employment in Westhill is currently underpinned by a small number of key economic sectors, notably subsea engineering. The subsea engineering sector's involvement with renewables industries is expanding - as evidenced by the recent development of Technip Offshore Wind Ltd's headquarters in Westhill. However, subsea engineering is currently largely reliant on work related to oil and gas extraction. This lack of economic diversity undermines the economic resilience of the town because it ties the prosperity of Westhill to the success of individual subsea engineering firms and the performance of the global oil and gas economy, particularly in terms of oil price volatility. The current dependency of Westhill and the wider North East economy on the oil and gas sector also raises environmental sustainability concerns, given that fossil fuels are finite natural resources and that their extraction and consumption contribute to anthropogenically enhanced global climate change. Therefore while there is a clear need for this study to identify potential options for the growth of the Westhill subsea cluster, there is also a need to develop other sectors of the local economy to provide mixed use development.

6.2.2 Housing Provision

There is a critical lack of diversity and choice in terms of housing tenure and type in Westhill. Residential areas of Westhill are dominated by owner occupied private family dwellings, resulting in there being a low percentage of council and socially rented housing. In addition, the town has limited provision of flatted dwellings and small homes suitable either for young professionals without families or for older residents who wish to downsize. If left unresolved the lack of housing choice could eventually cause a blockage in the local housing market and present difficulties for attracting and retaining the highly skilled labour force required to service the town's growing subsea engineering sector.

To alleviate the current shortage of affordable housing in Westhill, Aberdeenshire Council have designated the settlement as having 'Pressured Area Status' and established a 40% affordable housing target for new developments. At present this approach is successfully delivering affordable housing units within the Broadshade development. However, the ability of Aberdeenshire Council to continue to require high percentages of affordable housing in the future could potentially be undermined by the statement within paragraph 97 of the Draft Revised

SPP that “the level of affordable housing requirement should generally be no more than 25%”. If the finalised version of the new SPP identifies a general 25% affordable requirement and provides less flexibility for local variations, as compared within the wording of the current SPP, this policy shift would need to be factored into the emerging Aberdeenshire LDP 2016, and alternative approaches to delivering affordable housing in Westhill would need to be found. Therefore, while increasing overall housing provision is not necessarily a priority for this study, there is a need to develop proposals to increase the diversity of housing tenure and type, potentially through the creation of high density mixed use developments.

6.2.3 Accessibility & Sustainability

There are two strands to this key issue:

Connectivity, Congestion & Emissions

The economy and population of Westhill are growing simultaneously. However, the specialist nature of the dominant economic sector, subsea engineering, means that the majority of residents do not work in the town and the majority of the workforce do not live in Westhill. This necessitates significant cross-commuting between Westhill and other settlements, principally Aberdeen, which presently results in congestion as well as carbon emissions. Congestion is exacerbated by the fact that the A944 is the only strategic route into and out of the town. Therefore, there is a need to understand the traffic flows and infrastructure requirements within Westhill and devise a strategy for development which resolves, or at the very least, does not exacerbate existing congestion problems on the A944. Any strategy to tackle congestion could involve measures to increase the relative attractiveness of bus transport compared with car travel for commuters, and actions could also be taken to more fully exploit the use of existing cycle networks located east of Westhill. It should be noted that the effectiveness and efficiency of any major infrastructure improvements would likely be maximised through being co-ordinated with a small number of large development proposals, as opposed to a larger number of individual proposals for development sites.

Severance & Permeability

The A944 runs east to west through the central area of Westhill, creating physical severance points and significantly affecting the spatial structure of the town. The dominance of the A944 also impedes non-vehicle permeability between housing areas north of the A944 and employment areas/business park to the south. The A944 cannot feasibly be realigned. However, there is a need to consider what measures could be taken to reduce severance and increase permeability within Westhill. In terms of non-vehicular transport routes an existing cycle route runs to the east of Westhill. However, there is a need to consider whether this route could be better integrated with the street network within Westhill.

6.2.4 Community Infrastructure Provision

There are two strands to this key issue:

Education Capacity

It is considered likely that additional employment related growth in Westhill would, at least in the medium term, require to be supported by new housing provision, which would likely generate additional pupils and therefore exacerbate existing education capacity constraints within the Westhill school estate.

Maximising Local Gains from Economic Growth

Related to efforts to better integrate land uses within Westhill, there is a need to assess the quantity, quality and distribution of community facilities across the town and to determine how employment-led development could be leveraged in order to enhance these facilities. Without this partnership approach there is the potential that employment land uses will continue to be relatively detached and poorly integrated with the rest of Westhill.

6.2.5 Enhancing Westhill's Spatial Identity

There are two strands to this key issue:

Develop a Coherent Internal Spatial Structure:

To enhance Westhill's spatial and socio-cultural identity there is a need to address severance issues caused by the route of the A944 and to improve the relationship between currently detached housing, retail and employment land uses. The public realm is a key component of the built environment which physically connects disparate land uses, therefore opportunities should be examined to improve public realm, particularly in central areas of Westhill.

The Relationship between Westhill and Surrounding Areas

The eastern and western approaches to Westhill from the A944 are poorly defined, with roundabouts at each end of the town serving purely functional roles rather than also symbolic ones. As a result there is a lack of visual clarity over the boundaries of the Westhill, particularly in relation to Green Belt land to the east, and if left unchecked this could encourage the proliferation of inappropriate development in semi-rural areas. Therefore, there is a need to improve the delineation of Westhill's settlement boundaries and to provide distinctive gateway features at appropriate entrance points. Consideration could also be given to reviewing the Green Belt east of Westhill to release limited land for development and to improve the legibility of this boundary, thereby increasing protection against inappropriate development on the fringes of Westhill.

7. A Vision for Westhill

This section outlines a vision for Westhill and identifies Strategic Objectives in order to respond to the key issues identified in Section 6.2 and frame potential options for growth. The vision and objectives provide the rationale for the 'Options for Growth' outlined in Section 8 and for the assessment of potential development areas which will be included in the final report of this capacity study. The visioning section outlined below is intentionally brief and high level in nature given that a detailed visioning chapter would be more appropriate in a potential future masterplan for Westhill.

7.1 Vision Statement

The Options for Growth (see Section 8) and the subsequent assessment of potential development areas are underpinned by the following vision:

Westhill will continue to be a place where people choose to live, work, visit and invest in. The town will fully exploit its position as the world centre of excellence for subsea engineering, and it will seek to attract a wide range of businesses and skilled workers. Westhill will develop a distinctive spatial character and a high quality physical environment, with enhanced provision of services for residents and businesses. This will be achieved through creating a sustainable mixed community, balancing residential, commercial and employment related development in such a way as to reduce the need to travel and create a vibrant place.

7.2 Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives for the development of Westhill comprise:

- Strategic Objective 1 - To enhance its function as a successful employment centre;
- Strategic Objective 2 - To enhance services and the role of Westhill as one of Aberdeenshire's Main Towns;
- Strategic Objective 3 - To meet the need for housing in Westhill and the Aberdeen Housing Market Area, including the specific housing needs of workers associated with the subsea engineering sector and of the town's ageing population;
- Strategic Objective 4 - To enhance connectivity and permeability through reducing traffic congestion and severance impacts;
- Strategic Objective 5 - To integrate land uses within Westhill and enhance the town's spatial identity; and,
- Strategic Objective 6 - To maintain the separate identities of Kirkton of Skene and Westhill through preventing the coalescence of these settlements.

8. Options for Growth

This section outlines the three potential high level options for growth which were identified by AMEC E&I and discussed with Aberdeenshire Council officers before proceeding to the final stage of the study.

8.1 Possible Growth Options

8.1.1 Option 1 – Maximise Growth

In order to maintain Westhill's place as a global centre of excellence for subsea engineering this option would seek to identify land for significant employment related development, and measures would also be proposed to address the key issues identified in section 6.2 of this report. This option would therefore address current specific challenges within Westhill, including those related to accommodation and transport pressures, whilst allowing the subsea sector to expand on or close to the cluster's existing sites.

Despite the disadvantages of additional development in Westhill, such as congestion, these are arguably outweighed by the need to maintain the success of Westhill as a centre of sub-sea engineering excellence. Albeit the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Plan Examination Report and subsequent approved Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan does not identify Westhill as a Strategic Growth Area (SGA), and therefore not an area expected to contribute to strategic growth, however the current objectives of the approved SDP and adopted LDP include objectives regarding economic growth and diversification. The approved SDP makes specific reference to stimulating the wider economic growth where a need can be identified, and Policy 1 of the SDP requires that the locational requirements of different business sectors should be met.

8.1.2 Option 2 – Limited Growth

This option would consider limited employment land development specifically to support the 'sub-sea cluster' at Westhill. The option would also consider other measures that could be taken to support this international success. The main aim of this option would be to maintain Westhill's function as a successful employment centre.

8.1.3 Option 3 – No Growth

Given the current and emerging planning policy context an option is to disregard concerns regarding the relocation of the sub-sea sector away from Westhill, on the basis that sufficient land has already been allocated, or could be made available through the development of previously developed sites to accommodate the expansion of the subsea cluster. This could potentially be achieved through the rationalisation and reconfiguration of existing industrial estates within Westhill to maximise their development capacity, rather than seeking to allocate new land for employment related development.

This option trades on the reputation of Aberdeenshire as an acknowledged high quality place to live and with a skills base transferable to the sub-sea sector. It questions whether the sub-sea sector is specifically dependant on Westhill, or could be accommodated on a range of sites within the wider region, including the Aberdeen City area, with no diminution of the advantages of clustering or through the redevelopment of existing land within Westhill. The conclusion of this option would be to make no additional land allocations in Westhill.

9. Assessment Process

Following feedback from Council officers on the findings discussed in the Interim Report it was decided to progress **Option 1 – Maximum Growth** to the final stage of this study. This involved reviewing and revising the Goal Achievement Matrix (GAM) detailed in the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study to take account of:

- Physical development which has occurred in Westhill since the publication of the 2008 Capacity Study;
- The vision statement and six strategic objectives set out within the Interim Report;
- Each of the Development Bid Sites for Westhill and Kirkton of Skene which were submitted in response to the Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 Main Issues Report consultation;
- The implications for Westhill of the forthcoming AWPR; and,
- Other potential development opportunities, constraints and associated infrastructure requirements.

This exercise generated a %age GAM score for each site, allowing them to be ranked in terms of development suitability.

The assessment process is underpinned by the following vision:

Westhill will continue to be a place where people choose to live, work, visit and invest in. The town will fully exploit its position as the world centre of excellence for subsea engineering, and it will seek to attract a wide range of businesses and skilled workers. Westhill will develop a distinctive spatial character and a high quality physical environment, with enhanced provision of services for residents and businesses. This will be achieved through creating a sustainable mixed community, balancing residential, commercial and employment related development in such a way as to reduce the need to travel and create a vibrant place.

In addition, the assessment will be framed around the achievement of six strategic objectives, each of which has been built into the proposed assessment criteria. These strategic objectives are:

- Strategic Objective 1 - To enhance its function as a successful employment centre;
- Strategic Objective 2 - To enhance services and the role of Westhill as one of Aberdeenshire's Main Towns;
- Strategic Objective 3 - To meet the need for housing in Westhill and the Aberdeen Housing Market Area, including the specific housing needs of workers associated with the subsea engineering sector and of the town's ageing population;
- Strategic Objective 4 - To enhance connectivity and permeability through reducing traffic congestion and severance impacts;

- Strategic Objective 5 - To integrate land uses within Westhill and enhance the town's spatial identity; and,
- Strategic Objective 6 - To maintain the separate identities of Kirkton of Skene and Westhill through preventing the coalescence of these settlements.

9.1 Assessment Methodology

9.1.1 Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria which were used in the GAM review exercise are detailed in Appendix A. These criteria included eight strategic assessment criteria, relating directly to the aforementioned strategic objectives, and 32 technical assessment criteria, relating to site specific constraints.

The assessment criteria were devised based on:

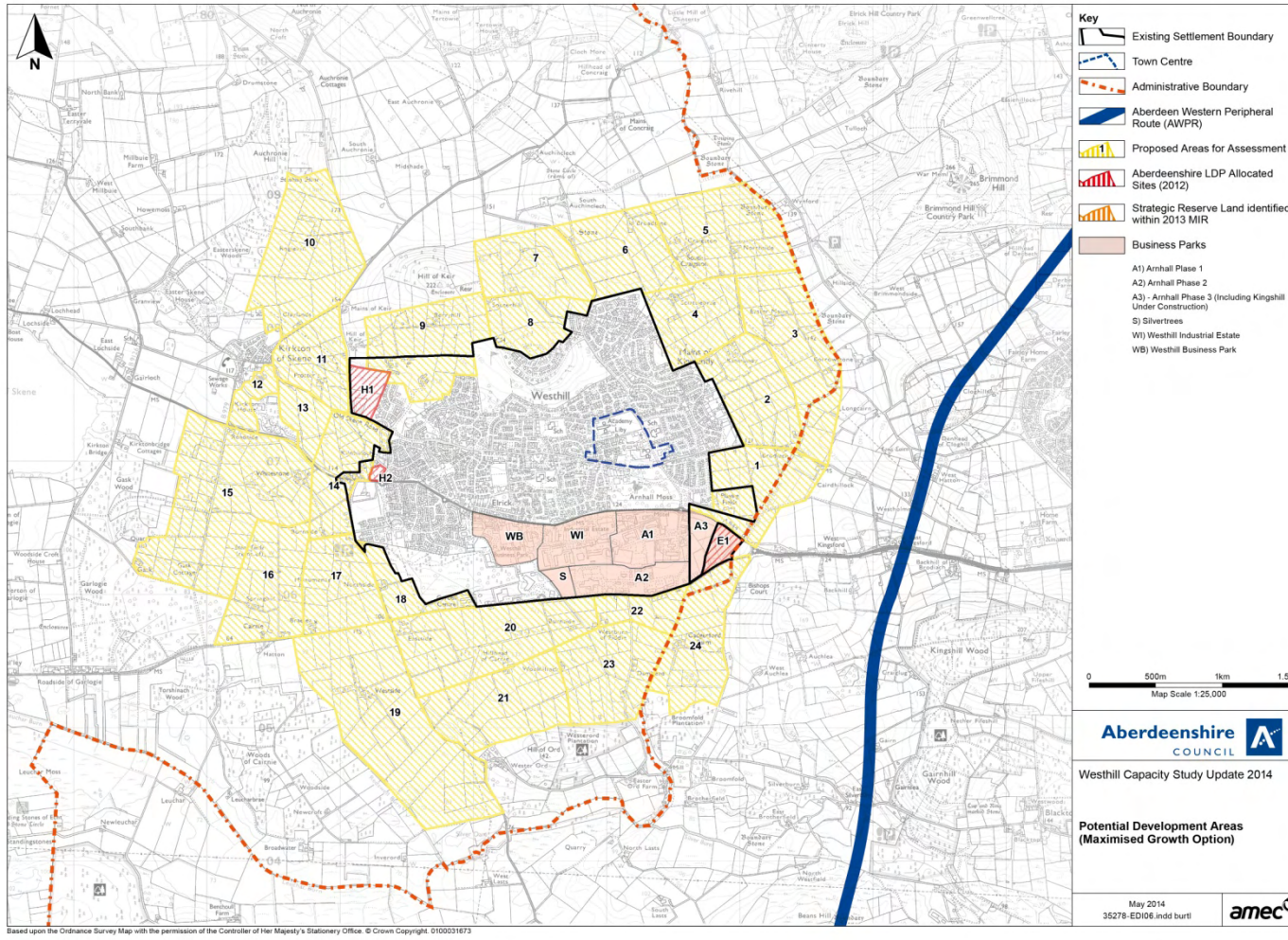
- The assessment criteria used in the Westhill Capacity Study 2008;
- The vision statement and six strategic objectives set out above;
- The criteria which were used by Aberdeenshire Council in their mini-GAM exercise undertaken in 2013 to appraise Development Bid Sites for the purposes of the Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 Main Issues Report;
- Index 21, a joint research project between Aberdeenshire Council and Robert Gordon University which informed the assessment criteria used in the 2008 Capacity Study; and,
- Relevant policy considerations which have emerged since 2008, notably the Scottish Government's Designing Streets Planning Policy.

9.1.2 Assessment Areas

The areas which were subject to assessment are shown below on Figure 9.1. These areas were selected for assessment based on:

- The areas identified for assessment in the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study;
- Each of the Development Bid Sites for Westhill and Kirkton of Skene which were submitted in response to the Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 Main Issues Report consultation;
- Other potential development opportunities, constraints and associated infrastructure requirements, taking into account the 25 year period of this study. In particular, the existing Greenbelt boundary and administrative boundary between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City have been considered as relative rather than absolute constraints.

Figure 9.1 Potential Development Areas



9.1.3 Assessment Criteria Weighting & Thresholds

To reflect the importance of the strategic objectives a 43% (rounded to no decimal places) weighting was applied to the strategic assessment criteria aggregate score by multiplying this aggregate score by three. The weighted strategic assessment criteria aggregate score was then aggregated with the technical assessment aggregate score to generate a final score for each assessment area, which was then converted into a percentage score and ranked against all other assessed areas.

It should be noted that this updated capacity study has assessed different land areas from those assessed in the 2008 Westhill Capacity Study. However, to enable a degree of consistency between the studies the same thresholds were used to categorise areas as either 'most suitable', 'suitable' or 'less suitable' for development. These thresholds are:

- 'Most Suitable' = 70% or over
- 'Suitable' = 61-69%
- 'Less Suitable' = Lower than 60%

References within Section 10 and 11 of this report to 'most suitable', 'suitable' and 'less suitable' areas relate solely to the scoring of assessed areas against the above quantitative threshold, rather than to any qualitative judgement.

10. Assessment Results

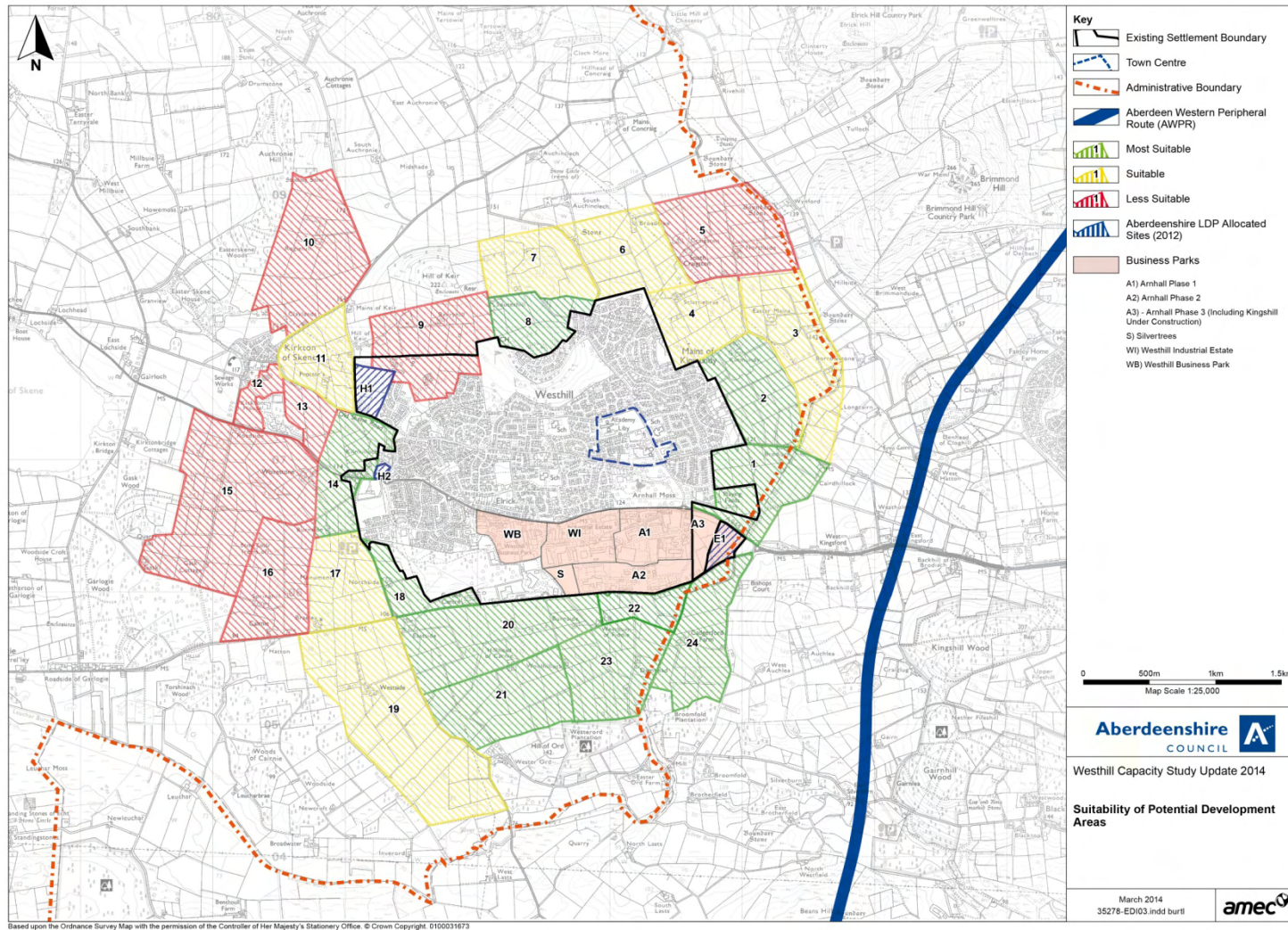
The full results of individual assessments of all potential development areas are detailed in Appendix B, while the ranking and final score achieved by each area is detailed below in Table 10.1. Areas highlighted in green achieved a score of 70% or greater and therefore are considered to be ‘most suitable’ for development; areas highlighted in yellow achieved a score of 60-69% and are therefore considered to be ‘suitable’ for development; and areas highlighted in red achieved a score of less than 60% and are therefore considered to be ‘less suitable’ for development.

Table 10.1 Summary Results of Potential Development Areas Assessment

Ranking	Area	% Score
1	1	81%
2	22	78%
3	14	77%
4	18	77%
5	20	77%
6	23	74%
7	21	74%
8	2	74%
9	8	74%
10	24	73%
11	6	67%
12	4	67%
13	17	67%
14	7	63%
15	19	63%
16	3	61%
17	11	61%
18	12	58%
19	9	57%
20	13	56%
21	16	54%
22	15	54%
23	5	53%
24	10	49%

The results detailed in Table 10.1 are illustrated in Figure 10.1 below. This shows that in general the 'most suitable' sites are located to the south and east of Westhill, while the 'less suitable sites' generally lie to the west of Westhill.

Figure 10.1 Suitability of Potential Development Areas



These results indicate that 10 potential development areas are categorised as ‘most suitable’, due to their proximity to employment and retail nodes, the capacity of nearby roads and their potential ability to enhance the spatial structure of Westhill. Areas that scored lower did so primarily because of their location relative to employment and other built up land uses, access constraints, and due to the presence of pipelines or high voltage power lines in particular areas. It should be noted that in many cases the difference between the scores of potential development areas is minimal, which implies that other considerations, notably economic and policy drivers, will play a key role in determining the suitability of specific areas for development.

11. Recommendations

This concluding section of the study outlines a number of recommendations which Aberdeenshire Council should consider in order to maximise sustainable economic growth within and around Westhill. These recommendations have been informed by various aspects of this study, including: the analysis of contextual and baseline data (Sections 2-3), the identification of key constraints (Section 4), consideration of relevant plans & policies (Section 5), the identification of key spatial issues within Westhill (Sections 6 and 7), the formulation of a vision statement and strategic objectives for Westhill (Section 8) and the assessment of the development potential of land around the periphery of Westhill (Section 10).

11.1 Potential Development Areas

The study has identified 10 potential development areas as ‘most suitable’ for development to meet the desired spatial objectives for Westhill. In order of their ranking within the quantitative assessment exercise, these are:

- Area 1
- Area 22
- Area 14
- Area 18
- Area 20
- Area 23
- Area 21
- Area 2
- Area 8
- Area 24

11.2 Phasing of Development

To ensure that development around the periphery of Westhill contributes to the delivery of the vision statement articulated within this capacity study, the phasing and type of development within each of the ‘most suitable’ and ‘suitable’ areas should be considered carefully.

Overall there is a strong preference for ‘most suitable’ areas to be developed first, as these have been proven to be the ‘most sustainable’. Developing the ‘most suitable’ areas before considering development within the ‘suitable’

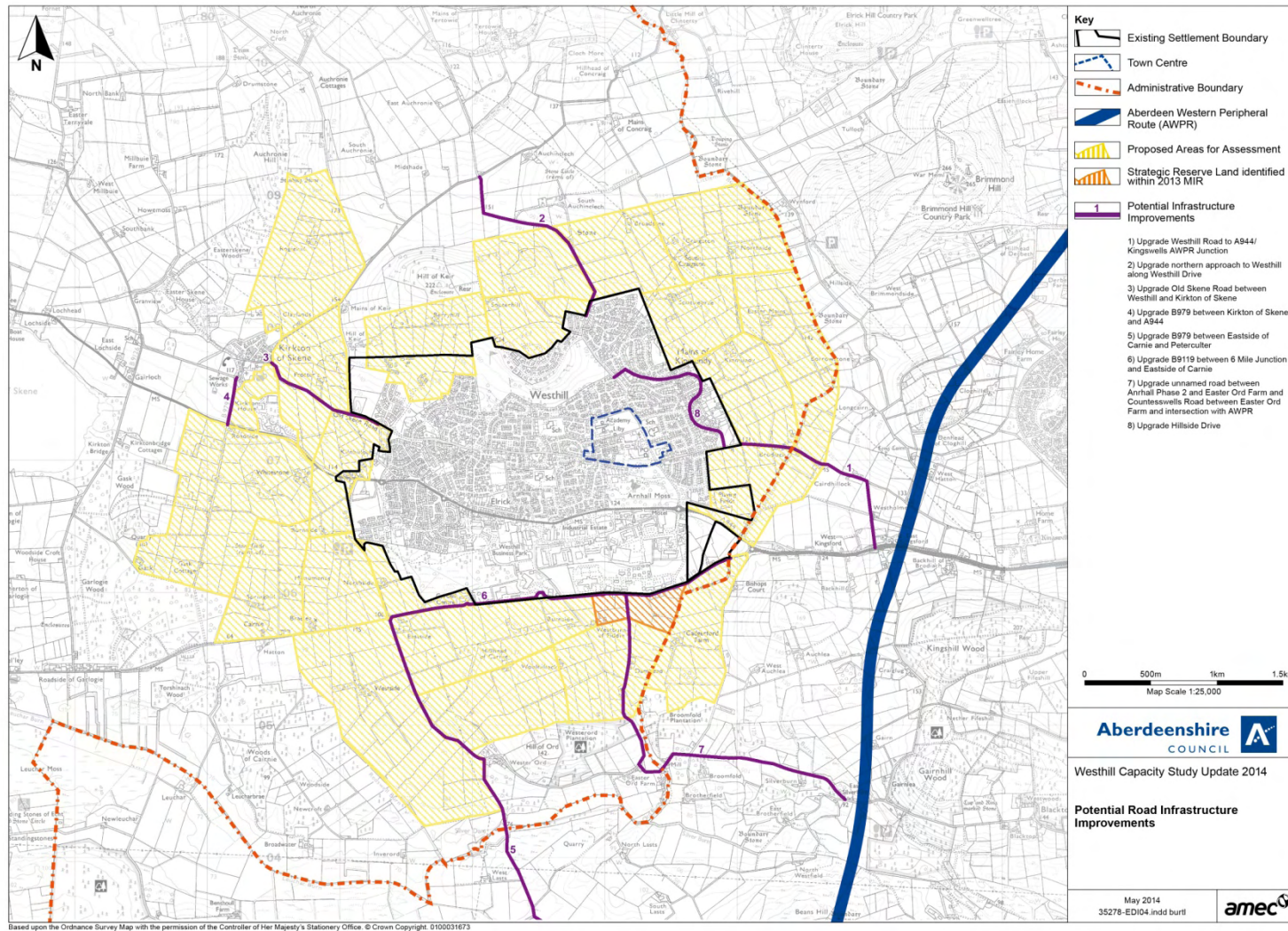
areas would minimise the impacts of site specific constraints upon development and avoid the creation of areas of development which are detached from Westhill. Once the ‘most suitable’ areas of land have been built, the ‘suitable’ areas may then become ‘more suitable’, given that these will be located closer to transport networks and services, thereby increasing their sustainability. However, even in the long term some of the ‘suitable’ areas for development will not become ‘most suitable’ areas due to the persistence of significant site specific constraints, notably pipeline infrastructure, as well as potentially landownership.

The ‘less suitable’ areas are generally considered to be inappropriate locations for development due to the presence of significant constraints, to the extent that it is unlikely that these areas will become suitable for significant development over the period of this study. However, this updated capacity study has avoided describing these areas as ‘unsuitable’ for development, as it is important not to prejudge the merits of any individual planning applications which may be submitted in these areas over the period of this study. Several of the development bids submitted to Aberdeenshire in advance of the publication of the Main Issues Report 2013 suggest that several of these ‘less suitable’ sites may be subject to future planning applications.

11.3 **Transport Infrastructure requirements**

To facilitate development within several of the ‘most suitable’ and ‘suitable’ potential development areas it would be necessary to undertake a number of significant improvements to the transport network around Westhill, as identified on Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1 Potential Infrastructure Improvements



The potential infrastructure improvements identified on Figure 11.1 are:

- Upgrade Westhill Road to A944/Kingswells AWPR Junction
- Upgrade northern approach to Westhill along Westhill Drive
- Upgrade Old Skene Road between Westhill and Kirkton of Skene
- Upgrade B979 between Kirkton of Skene and A944
- Upgrade B979 between Eastside of Carnie and Peterculter
- Upgrade B9119 between 6 Mile Junction and Eastside of Carnie
- Upgrade unnamed road between Anrhall Phase 2 and Easter Ord Farm and Countesswells Road between Easter Ord Farm and intersection with AWPR
- Upgrade Hillside Drive

This study has not considered the detailed specification, potential cost and prioritisation of individual possible road infrastructure improvements. However, any improvement projects would be expected to include the provision of footpaths, segregated cycle routes and safe crossing points. In addition, potential improvements to approach roads around the periphery of Westhill should consider the feasibility of road widening and junction realignments where appropriate. Given all of these considerations it would be prudent to undertake S-Paramics modelling and detailed feasibility studies for each potential road upgrade.

In addition, during the Stakeholder Workshop held on 3rd February 2014 initial consideration was given to the merits of relocating the existing Park & Ride facility from the western edge of Kingswells to Westhill. It should be noted that relocating this facility to Westhill would require the reconfiguration of bus routes and the identification of land within Westhill for dedicated car parking, and such relocation could also potentially affect traffic flows on the A944.

11.4 Establishment of Westhill Business Improvement District

National policy documents including the Town Centre Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013) and the draft revised SPP encourage local authorities to support the vitality of town centres through measures including the establishment of Business Improvement Districts (BID). Therefore, it is recommended that Aberdeenshire Council should seek to establish a BID for Westhill. The main purpose of the Westhill BID should be to co-ordinate actions which aim to simultaneously enhance the vitality of the 'town centre' of Westhill (as defined in the Aberdeenshire LDP 2012), the business parks located south of the A944 and potential future development areas around the town's periphery.

11.5 Further Studies

This update of the Westhill Development Capacity Study has identified the optimal pattern of development within Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years. However, it has not been possible within the bounds of this study to consider detailed site specific or design related issues, nor has it been feasible to develop detailed options for the reconfiguration of land within the existing settlement boundary of Westhill. All of these factors should be considered in detail to maximise the sustainability of future development. Therefore, it is recommended that a series of further studies be undertaken:

- **Transport Infrastructure Feasibility Study:** The potential road infrastructure improvements identified in Figure 11.1 should be subject to detailed examination through an engineering based feasibility study. The study should also consider the possible benefits and implications of relocating the Kingswells Park & Ride facility to Westhill. This study should seek to incorporate the models of traffic flows around Westhill which are presently in an advanced state of preparation by Aberdeenshire Council Transportation Services.
- **Greenbelt Review:** In the context of the forthcoming construction of the AWPR it is recommended that Aberdeenshire Council re-examine the current policy of providing a ‘belt’ of Greenbelt between settlements and the AWPR route, on the basis that maintaining this position could significantly constrain the economic opportunities which would otherwise be delivered to Aberdeenshire by the AWPR. It should also be noted that the construction of the AWPR is likely to alter the character of existing rural landscapes, and the AWPR route itself may act as a buffer between settlements. Therefore, it is recommended that an independent review of Greenbelt land in close proximity to the AWPR route be undertaken, most particularly land east of Westhill, in order to assess whether any of this land should be released in the short, medium or long term.
- **Community Asset Review:** It is recommended that a detailed study of existing community assets within Westhill be undertaken, to identify existing and potential future gaps in the provision of public services and community facilities in Westhill. The findings from this study suggest that western areas of Westhill have a relative deficit of community facilities and services, and this issue should be probed further within a detailed review of community assets. Given that many of the existing community assets in Westhill are owned and operated by Aberdeenshire Council this review may be relatively straightforward to be undertaken.
- **Town Centre Urban Design Strategy:** It is recommended that an urban design strategy for Westhill Town Centre (as defined in the 2012 LDP) is undertaken, to identify options for improving connectivity between the Town Centre and other areas of Westhill, and to explore the feasibility of reconfiguring spaces within the Town Centre, notably the Westhill Shopping Centre car park. The overarching objective of this design led strategy should be to improve the vibrancy of the Town Centre.
- **Westhill Strategic Masterplan:** It is recommended that a ‘strategic masterplan’ of Westhill (to include the existing settlement and the areas deemed to be ‘most suitable’ and ‘suitable’ within this study) be undertaken. The focus of this study should consider the longer term vision of Greenfield sites, brownfield sites/opportunities, town centre issues, community/recreation facilities, effective and efficient travel options and strategies for ensuring compatibility between different land uses. Consideration should be given to identifying specific sites and routes for the provision of new or upgraded community facilities, public services, public open space and publicly funded infrastructure, and the strategic masterplan should consider the spatial relationship between all of these assets. This

strategic masterplan could usefully be informed by the Transport Infrastructure Feasibility Study, Greenbelt Review, Community Asset Review and the Town Centre Urban Design Strategy work streams which are also recommended to be undertaken.

- **Preparation of Site Specific Masterplans:** In line with the guidance contained within Planning Advice: Number 7 /2012, developers intending to submit planning applications to Aberdeenshire Council for proposals which would constitute ‘major development’ are required to produce site masterplans. It is strongly recommended that proposals for ‘major’ development on any of the potential development areas identified within this updated capacity study should fully consider all of the site specific issues, constraints and opportunities which this study has identified. Proposals for development on the periphery of Westhill – in particular on sites that are bounded by the approach roads to the town (i.e. the A944, Old Skene Road, Westhill Drive, the B9119 and the B979) - should consider how appropriate gateway features could be incorporated into the development.
- **Rationalisation studies of existing industrial estates within Westhill:** To undertake feasibility studies to examine the opportunities to maximise the development capacity of the existing industrial estates within Westhill, and consider the physical and spatial requirements of potential inward investors and sectors.

11.6 Summary & Conclusion

This update to the Westhill Capacity Study (2008) has considered the capacity for future growth of the town over a period of 20-25 years. This differs from the target of achieving 50% growth in housing stock which underpinned the initial 2008 Study; therefore the findings and recommendations arising from this updated study differ significantly from the conclusions reached by the 2008 study.

Due to the time that has lapsed since the initial capacity study, and the increasing pressure from businesses and developers regarding Westhill, this updated capacity study has been undertaken to understand the future growth potential of the settlement. The preparation of this updated Capacity Study has been informed by the latest available statistical and planning data, a workshop comprising AMEC E&I staff and Aberdeenshire Council officers from the Transportation and Economic Development, and regular correspondence between members of the Project Delivery client group.

A Draft Baseline report and an Interim Report were prepared in advance of this Final Report to collate relevant data and to identify the spatial objectives which would underpin the site assessment stage of the study. The Interim Report included an analysis of current characteristics and predicted trends in Westhill, together with the identification of key development constraints and a high level assessment of the key drivers of change, including an analysis of the policy context for Westhill. The Interim Report also identified key issues which are likely to affect the future development of Westhill and outlined a vision and set of strategic objectives to underpin Westhill’s future development. In addition the Interim Report detailed three potential growth trajectories for Westhill, and following instructions from Aberdeenshire Council officers it was decided to progress a ‘maximised growth option’ within the final (site assessment) stage of the study.

This Final Report includes the complete contents of the Interim Report, together with the results of the site assessment stage of the study and a number of recommendations for further work which should be undertaken to maximise sustainable economic growth in Westhill.

Of particular importance and relevance to the framework for the future growth of Westhill over the next 20 to 25 years is the **spatial strategy** and **sustainability objectives** contained within the approved Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014), which identifies Westhill as being located within a **Local Growth and Diversification (LGD)** area. Consequently, any further development in Westhill should be integrated with and complement the existing settlement. Specific requirements for the development of LGD areas include:

- *“There is a need for **diversification and growth in the economy** in this area to meet local needs”*
- ***Employment related development** will be encouraged to help diversify the economy*
- *Levels of growth in individual settlements should relate to local needs rather than be driven by external pressures*
- ***Mixed use development** should be prioritised*
- *Development must “**respect the character of the landscape and local identity**”*

The spatial strategy and sustainability objectives in the adopted **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) (2012)**, which is in conformity with the approved Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan (2014) which outlines a spatial strategy for the development of the Council area to 2035.. The LDP sets out a high level spatial strategy for Westhill, which is orientated around the following objectives:

- *“Meet the **need for housing** in the settlement, and the Aberdeen Housing Market Area.*
- ***Sustain existing services** in a sub-regional centre.*
- *Provide **affordable housing** in the settlement.*
- *Maintain function as a **successful employment centre**.*
- *Allow **scale of development** which does not cause problems for **current infrastructure**”*

The vision and aims of the SDP focuses in particular on exploiting opportunities for widespread economic growth as well as population growth within key settlements. The approved SDP identifies that Westhill is located in a LGD area rather than a Strategic Growth Area.

This capacity study is underpinned by the assumption that development pressures recently experienced in Westhill will continue, at least in the short-medium term, particularly in relation to employment land and the development of business parks. A related assumption is that, providing suitable development opportunities exist, subsea engineering firms will continue to choose to locate in the established subsea cluster within Westhill, at least in the short-medium term. It is assumed that the Aberdeen Western Periphery Route (AWPR), which at its nearest point is situated approximately 1km east of Westhill, will be fully operational within the 20-25 year timeframe of this

capacity study. The AWPR currently has a three year build programme scheduled for 2015-2018. A further assumption is that the vast majority of potential development in Westhill over the next 25 years will be funded by the private sector, although limited public sector funding may become available for infrastructure interventions.

The areas assessed for potential development within this study differ from the areas assessed in the 2008 study. However, the overall study area used within both studies is identical. In terms of geographic limitations this area extends as far east as the administrative boundary with Aberdeen City, south also as far as the administrative boundary, west as far as Kirkton of Skene and north to include Berryhill and Souterhill.

Two broad magnitudes of geographical, technical and infrastructure constraints have been identified:

- **Absolute Constraints** - issues which cannot be overcome due to cost or technical reasons within the 20 to 25 year period of this study and therefore require no further consideration; and;
- **Relative Constraints** – issues which present difficulties but which could be tolerated or resolved within reasonable limits of cost and timescales. There is therefore merit in considering options to resolve these constraints within this study.

Specific constraints identified within this study include topography, the town's rural setting, current greenbelt boundaries and the Aberdeen City Boundary. Of key importance is that these vary between absolute and relative constraint. For example, in terms of topography, while there is a need to avoid development spilling over ridgelines into valleys separate from Westhill, the whole of the north of Westhill is not necessarily absolutely constrained as there are potentially less steep slopes which may have some development capacity. Similarly, with regard to green belt, the form and function of the green belt may have changed over time, most recently as a result of the approved AWPR, to the extent that a future green belt review could potentially identify some development capacity within current Greenbelt areas. In addition, recent examples of transboundary developments along the boundary between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City demonstrate that this administrative boundary should only be considered as a relative constraint to development, subject to appropriate collaboration and partnership working between the Shire and the City.

To unlock potential development areas significant investment in the transport infrastructure would inevitably be required. However, the potential infrastructure enhancements identified in this study focus upon improving existing linkages rather than constructing substantially new infrastructure and roads, as this may simply result in capacity issues further along the existing road network. The funding of such improvements would be sought through developer contributions based on infrastructure requirements that are fairly and reasonably related to development, and as such the phasing of new development and land releases around Westhill are of key importance.

Key issues emanating from this updated Westhill Capacity Study can be considered by policy-makers through the emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2016, as well as through other development planning activities. Such key issues include the identified six Strategic Objectives, including the desire to maintain the character of Kirkton of Skene by resisting development (and ultimately coalescence) between Kirkton of Skene and Westhill. Other objectives which have been identified within this study include the need to enhance Westhill's spatial structure and the need to address existing pressures on the transport network through the provision of upgraded road infrastructure.

This study has focused on opportunities to provide extensive employment land in order to sustain Westhill as a centre of excellence in subsea engineering, in addition to providing opportunities to diversify the local economy. Significant provision of employment land in Westhill would clearly have a positive impact on sustainability objectives. However, this should be achieved alongside suitable allocations for other land uses. Due to the high level nature of this study it has not been possible to consider detailed site specific issues or design related issues. Nevertheless, this study does suggest that mixed use development should be encouraged as an appropriate way of achieving the overall vision for Westhill of creating a sustainable mixed community which balances residential, commercial and employment related development in such a way as to reduce the need to travel and create a vibrant place.

12. Information Sources

This section lists all of the key information sourced which are cited in this report. For ease of use all references are allocated against relevant subheadings from the report. In addition it should be noted that the original Westhill Capacity Study (ENTEC UK, 2008) and current Ordnance Survey maps at multiple scales have informed all sections of this report.

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