

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

### OPERATING BOARD

#### VISION FOR THE ESTATE: CREATING A WORLD-CLASS CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

##### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview of the University's strategic vision for the delivery of a world class **campus experience**, through the ongoing evolution and development of our Kings College location over the next 10 years. The detail articulated in this paper is illustrative of *an approach* to campus development; it is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is, however, intended as a broad and flexible framework, based on an overarching vision and central themes, within which the University can address future campus development needs. The envisaged developments combine evolutionary and transformational initiatives to create a work and study environment that supports delivery of the institutional Strategic Plan (2015-2020) and encourages further ambition. This strategy aligns with the University's existing Kings Campus Framework Plan (2013) and the related Framework Area Design Guidelines (2014). It also provides an overarching vision that compliments the 10-Year Capital Investment Programme, approved by Court at its meeting in December 2016.

##### 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 Universities in their traditional form, and the physical campus in particular, face increasing challenges from an external environment characterised by tighter funding, global competition and technological change. In paradox, the answers to these challenges lie, in-part at least, in the campus itself. Through innovative re-design and development of buildings and spaces, and the sympathetic and appropriate use of digital technology, the campus can become a critical component in attracting and retaining staff and students. In this regard, the creation of an enlivened, vibrant and diverse campus environment is essential to long-term institutional sustainability and an integral part in supporting the generation of the ultimate currency that will define institutional success and sustainability over time – ideas.
- 2.2 In an era where online learning and mobile technologies proliferate, strategies and initiatives to support digital transformation are an important pillar in the development of a modern campus environment. Students can choose to work anywhere at any time, thereby creating new competition, increased demands, and major challenges for the traditional campus. The *campus experience* must, therefore, offer more than simply a venue for students to receive – and staff to deliver - information via a menu of traditional learning spaces. To give the University the competitive advantage it needs, the campus must provide a technology-rich, vibrant and exemplary experience in which staff and students can excel, and through which we can showcase the University to prospective staff and students.

##### 3. VISION FOR A WORLD-CLASS CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

- 3.1 Given this strategic context, the University's **vision** for the campus will be *to deliver a world-class campus experience*. It will do so through its physical and digital infrastructure by seamlessly blending modern, flexible, technology-enhanced spaces for teaching, learning, and research with community and social spaces that support the range of services and facilities that the University and its wider community can benefit from.
- 3.2 An open and outward facing campus is envisaged that, from its historic core to its natural boundaries, attracts visitors and scholars by interacting with the world through its academic output and its community and cultural engagement. The campus will emphasise people, place-making and wayfinding. It will seek to prioritise pedestrians and will provide an environment to be enjoyed by all. It will be characterised by high quality green spaces, picturesque quads and public plazas, interlinked by improved formal routes and the many paths and lanes that lace through our network of historic, modernised and new build facilities.

##### 4. STRATEGIC THEMES FOR CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This vision for the campus is underpinned by seven key themes. These themes are international benchmarks that are seen as the foundations of a world-class campus environment. They are:

- I. **High Quality Teaching, Learning & Research Space:** the provision of high quality spaces for teaching, learning and research will facilitate growth and, through the integration of digital technologies, will encourage different ways of working, support innovative research and encourage new pedagogic approaches. This includes major transformational projects like the new Science Teaching Hub, but also includes the widespread use of evolutionary or adaptive projects geared towards re-configuring and repurposing existing spaces. The ability to transmit the on-campus experience to online and transnational students through the use of e.g. lecture capture and live streaming technologies will ensure the campus experience is available to all students.
- II. **Integration of Digital Technologies:** The provision of a technology-rich, digitally-enhanced campus environment is fundamental to the delivery of a world class staff and student experience. The integration of digital technology is key to connecting campuses and people, and will be at the heart of all future campus development plans. Ubiquitous high-speed wireless connectivity, digital wayfinding, and technology enhanced rooms that support both public and academic uses will help bring the campus seamlessly together. Full details of our digital ambitions are articulated in the University's Digital Transformation strategy, with examples of specific enhancements given in the zonal analysis below.
- III. **High Quality Public Realm:** this puts place-making and the creation of a vibrant, cohesive and fully integrated campus at the heart of the envisaged campus experience. This will be achieved through the enhancement and development of attractive, high-quality outdoor space, green zones and quads that support social and outdoor activities and learning. In addition, revitalisation of the campus edges, with improved identity and visitor-friendly entrances, will redefine and enhance the interface between the University and surrounding communities, making it more porous and welcoming. Improved public-facing spaces will bring the campus to life, with facilities that support our rich public engagement programme. Digital signage and electronic advertising will further enhance the visitor experience.
- IV. **Pedestrian Prioritisation and Wayfinding:** pedestrian movement and the creation of pedestrian-priority zones and improved wayfinding are critical elements of the University's vision for campus. The development of seamless pathways that bind together high-quality open spaces and the University's network of buildings, from the historic core to the campus edges are an integral part of the campus experience.
- V. **A Sustainable Campus:** social, economic and environmental stewardship are key considerations in all that we do on campus. Every campus development, whether new build or refurbishment, will emphasise energy efficiency and positive environmental performance and will contribute to the delivery of our institutional carbon management plan.
- VI. **Heritage:** our ancient campus and buildings embody the identity, soul and collective memory of the University. Heritage is expressed both physically in the architecture, and through our academic reputation and traditions. On King's Campus, the historic core exemplifies this heritage; it attracts visitors and is central to the institutional sense of place. It also plays a crucial role in supporting the University's global brand and reputation.
- VII. **University as Part of the City:** bringing together the prevailing trends in urban design, this theme has at its core an ethos to enliven the campus, by creating an open, productive and harmonious relationship with the surrounding community. It places emphasis on the University as a key part of its surroundings and, in the context of Aberdeen, links the explicit economic and intrinsic cultural value of the institution to the city and region.

4.2. In line with these themes, all developments will be taken forward in accordance with the University's Framework Area Design Guidelines. These set out three strategic objectives that should inform consideration of all future plans: (1) to build from the historic core; (2) to create direct links from the historic core into the adjacent development areas and to extend connectivity to the campus edge; and (3) to influence the character of the edge.

- 4.3. In parallel, the guidelines identify six principles or qualities which should be inherent in the creation and design of all successful spaces. They should be: distinctive; safe and pleasant; easy to move around; welcoming; adaptable; and resource efficient. These qualities are at the heart of our campus vision and will underpin all development including enhancement of the public realm. They will also help to ensure that a cohesive, consistent and measured approach is taken over time.

## 5 CAMPUS ASSESSMENT: ZONAL ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Building on work undertaken in developing the King's Campus Framework Plan, the opportunities and challenges presented by the campus are articulated below in the form of four distinct geographic zones that lend themselves to discrete analysis. These zones cluster around a central 'spine' formed by the High Street and should be considered together with the 'public realm'. This latter element takes account of the numerous lanes and walk-ways that criss-cross campus out to its edges, and the various interlinked open and green spaces available to the public.
- 5.2 Summary analysis of the four zones and the public realm are included below. Indicative imagery highlighting the types of campus intervention possible, supplemented with examples of previous projects, is enclosed under **Appendix A**. A map indicating the extent of the four zones is included under **Appendix B**.

### 5.2.1 South East: Historic Core

**What / Where.** Bounded by Regent Walk and College Bounds, this area includes the historic heart of the University at King's College, as well as King's Pavilion, New King's, and Butchart. It is the part of campus that Aberdonians and visitors most closely associate with the University.

**Challenges.** This zone includes a number of historic buildings that are difficult to repurpose. It also includes a number of facilities currently without a formal purpose (i.e. Butchart and King's Pavilion); areas that are being used inefficiently (e.g. the 'Stack' and former Special Collections); facilities that require substantial modernisation (e.g. teaching facilities in New King's and the south of King's Quad); and public facing facilities in need of modernisation and enhanced utilisation (e.g. James Mackay Hall and King's College Conference Centre).

**Opportunities.** This historic part of campus offers considerable scope to enhance the academic, cultural, community and student experience on campus. Core projects will include new front-line roles for the Butchart and King's Pavilion. The latter's adjacency to revitalised conferencing and public facing facilities in KCCC would enhance this zone's support for public outreach. The reinstatement of front-line academic activity into King's College (either as the home for a relocated academic discipline and/or as modernised teaching space) will benefit the area further.

With existing teaching facilities and academic accommodation in King's College to be systematically upgraded, there is a clear opportunity to bring a renewed vibrancy to this part of campus. In all cases digital enhancement will be the norm, with such intervention taken further in the transformation of New King's into premium teaching space for executive post-graduate study. These facilities will dramatically enhance the experience of those undertaking such programmes and will open up possibilities for collaborative programmes of the kind being developed with Curtin. Enhancing the internal quad and providing a welcoming external 'entrance' on the east of the Old Senate Rooms offers further scope for value-added intervention.

**Place.** The sense of place and wayfinding will be improved by opening a pedestrian corridor from Butchart past King's Pavilion and the Old Senate Rooms and through to a potentially pedestrianised Regent Walk. This simple intervention will improve campus inter-connectivity, while enhancing the sense of the area as a vibrant, public-facing, and welcoming destination.

### 5.2.2 South West: College Gardens

**What / Where.** Bounded by Meston Walk and College Bounds, this zone includes all of the Crombie & Johnstone facilities and a range of stand-alone buildings, some of considerable age and character (e.g. the Old Nursery, Powis Gate, 53 College Bounds and Humanity Manse).

**Challenges.** Among the priorities for this zone is the need to identify appropriate front-line academic uses for buildings currently lying dormant or under-utilised (e.g. the old Nursery and 53 College Bounds). With its status as an A-listed building, Crombie presents a considerable conversion challenge in an era where its long-term use as an accommodation block is under review. Johnstone (and its refectory) offer little scope in their current form, but retain some interim utility as decant venues until demolition can free this corner of campus for development.

**Opportunities.** With a tree-lined perimeter to the south-west, this zone provides significant potential for redevelopment. There is an exciting opportunity to create a tranquil campus-within-a-campus on the current Johnstone footprint, with one possibility being the development of a purpose-built Business School on a potentially accreditation friendly site. Meanwhile Crombie, despite limitations imposed by its status, could lend itself to conversion as a post-graduate study block. A long-awaited relocation of History to more appropriate accommodation (possibly as part of a co-location alongside its cognate disciplines in King's) would be among the key outcomes of this zone. This would free up the Crombie Annex as a development site or as further post-graduate study space. The stand-alone historic buildings in this area lend themselves to conversion as disciplinary hubs, with the adjacency of these buildings offering scope to 'cluster' related disciplines. This could allow individual disciplinary identities within a School to flourish while providing a coherence to several stand-alone buildings. Alternatively these could provide function specific venues e.g. for research institutes, a staff club, or (as with the current use of Powis Gate) stand-alone administrative roles.

**Place.** The principal amenity improvement in this area would be the enhancement of Meston Walk as a key east-west thoroughfare at the southern end of campus. Improved street lighting, signage and paving would improve safety and establish a more formal link between the historic core and facilities at the Library and Hub. Improved lighting and the creation of a pedestrian priority zone beyond the Powis Gate arch would further contribute to amenity improvement.

### 5.2.3 North West: Science Quarter

**What/Where.** Bounded by Bedford Road and Meston Walk, this zone extends north from Meston to include the University's Physical Science teaching spaces, the Sir Duncan Rice Library, and the Hub. Across St Machar Drive it incorporates Cruickshank, 23 St Machar Drive and Zoology. This zone also includes the site earmarked for the new Science Teaching Hub.

**Challenges.** The poor condition of much of the University's science teaching estate has been acknowledged and is being addressed in part through the new build project. The principal challenge thereafter will be how best to maintain sufficient quality laboratory space to support research and teaching, while also rationalising the University's science estate. To that end replacing or relocating facilities in Meston and St Mary's are acknowledged as priorities.

**Opportunities.** The new Science Teaching Hub represents the main short-term intervention in this zone, with scope for an adjacent sister building. Allowing for the development of state-of-the-art, digitally enabled science teaching accommodation, this building also provides an opportunity to develop public-facing digital infrastructure in the form of outward facing electronic signage (on St Machar Drive). Rationalisation of facilities at Meston, 23 St Machar Drive and St Mary's, with consolidation of some functions in Zoology will follow. Improved visibility of the Cruickshank Botanic Gardens is also envisaged, with this well-loved but under-utilised campus gem to be more fully showcased. The main development opportunity is around Meston which requires full (or major) redevelopment. The site has a number of potential uses – including as new research laboratories, teaching rooms and/or office space. As a prime site at the heart of campus it is essential that any project facilitates the eventual replacement of capacity elsewhere on campus. While façade retention to the front is an option, full redevelopment may offer scope for a highly ambitious multi-phase re-development of this site and would also support adjacent public realm improvements to the east.

**Place.** This zone showcases previous public realm development in the form of the academic plaza outside the Sir Duncan Rice Library (SDRL). The sense of 'place' will be further enhanced with an improved campus entrance from Bedford Road, enhanced signage at the St

Machar Drive junction, and further improvements to all site entrances on St Machar Drive. In terms of wayfinding, the new Science Teaching building will be oriented to articulate with the SDRL. Long-term improvements to Elphinstone Road will be possible as part of any future Meston redevelopment but in the meantime considerable amenity improvement is possible through enhanced landscaping, signage and lighting to improve wayfinding from the historic core at King's via Elphinstone Road (Meston) to SDRL, the Hub and beyond.

#### 5.2.4 North East: Regent Zone

**What/Where.** This zone, bounded by St Machar Drive and King Street, includes several major office buildings that accommodate numerous academic disciplines and much of the University's administrative activity. Architecturally it consists of once 'modern' but now ageing facilities built during the expansion of the 60s/70s e.g. Taylor, William Guild, Edward Wright and MacRobert.

**Challenges.** This zone is home to a number of buildings of little architectural note but which have workhorse roles. Refurbishment, such as that currently underway in the William Guild building, will extend the useful life of facilities but in due course more radical transformation will be necessary in most. With limits to the external interventions possible (beyond over-cladding), buildings such as Taylor, Edward Wright, Regent, William Guild and University Office will rely on internal modernisation to enhance the campus experience. Improvement in the campus experience is also possible through improved space management, clearer delineation between functions, and enhanced identity where administrative and academic functions are required to share a building (e.g. Edward Wright). The principal academic change in the medium-term is the envisaged relocation of the Business School, while the impending need to demolish the Edward Wright Annex and find alternate accommodation for its occupants is a pressing issue.

**Opportunities.** In the longer term many of these buildings will require more radical intervention. In the meantime, internal reconfiguration and well considered external accretions can breathe life and vitality back into these facilities. Plans are being drawn up for a revitalised Law School in Taylor, with a revamped Law Library optimised as a digital learning hub. Less extensive internal works will enhance William Guild and will, in due course, benefit Regent, Edward Wright and University Office. In the meantime the EWB Annex has reached the end of its useful life and will need to be removed, offering opportunity for a more ambitious development of the site in the longer term. While MacRobert requires no immediate intervention, the low lying buildings to the rear and the area currently designated a 'wild-flower meadow' to the east provide scope for a mix of new development and enhanced landscaping. The main elevation facing King Street offers further scope for electronic billboards showcasing the University and its events programme.

**Place.** The potential pedestrianisation of Regent Walk and closure of Dunbar Street to through traffic would provide an opportunity to create new public realm space around Taylor and New King's as well as seamlessly linking the proposed King's 'corridor' (to Butchart). The establishment of new public space outside Taylor would be enhanced through the establishment of the arches as a central information point and entry into the new Law facilities. Digital signage and public information in this area will improve the campus experience for visitors, students and staff alike. Additional access into the Law School through the Scott Brown quad will improve the identity of the Law School further and enhance the sense of this area as a tranquil gathering place. In the longer-term, redevelopment of this zone will allow for improvements in the warren of lanes between the existing 1960s buildings, further improving campus navigation. In the meantime consistent landscaping and paths through the public areas will lift this area. Better use of the 'green' space to the east of MacRobert can serve to further soften the campus edge, welcoming visitors rather than presenting a closed face.

#### 5.2.5 Public Realm: High Street to the Campus Edge

**What/Where.** The High Street is the main thorough-fare in Old Aberdeen and sees a number of smaller University buildings interwoven with private properties and local businesses. Key institutional buildings include the Old Town House, Chaplaincy and Confucius Institute, as well

as several minor facilities on the High Street. A series of properties linked to other zones also back onto the High Street (e.g. Taylor E, New King's, and St Mary's).

**Challenges.** The High Street is home to an eclectic mix of academic buildings, private residences and local businesses. With narrow lanes that meander east and west, this area is an integral part of the historic charm of Old Aberdeen. However, the impact of modern life is increasingly evident, from the congestion caused by cars, delivery traffic and buses, to the proliferation of waste bins. The lanes can be narrow and dark as well as presenting accessibility issues. Improvements would enhance the experience of this area for staff and students, but also for residents and visitors. Among the main challenge in this zone will be in securing support for more innovative solutions, notably any restriction on vehicular movement.

**Opportunities.** The most dramatic intervention would be to, with community support, establish the High Street as a pedestrian priority zone. The principal building project in this area is likely to be the transformation of the Chaplaincy into an Inter-Faith Centre. Consideration will be required as to whether the Old Town House remains the optimal venue in which to showcase the University's collections (with previous consideration given to the possibility of using St Mary's as a museum venue). The mothballed properties at 90 and 110 High Street offer potential for small scale developments, while ensuring that all its property along the High Street is well presented, will reinforce the importance of the High Street to the University's sense of place.

In addition to material improvement of buildings and public amenity spaces, *how* people experience and navigate Old Aberdeen will be transformed as part of the digital enhancement of the campus envisaged in our Digital Strategy. From wayfinding (e.g. through electronic signage and apps), enhanced promotion of the University and its events (e.g. through outward facing digital media on building façades such as at the new Science Teaching Hub, the Hub, and MacRobert), through to the provision of a robust, campus-wide, and publicly accessible Wi-Fi network that supports these technologies, digital infrastructure will go hand-in-hand with physical improvement and user experience. Enabling works that support this digital transformation will form part of all projects, supporting delivery of envisaged performance and ensuring campus-wide resilience.

**Place.** Improved wayfinding across campus is critical. The series of narrow lanes at the heart of the campus are hampered by poor lighting, poor under-foot conditions, fly-posting, and the prevalence of waste bins. Investment in improved paving, better lighting, enhanced signage and aesthetic improvements will make transiting campus more user-friendly. One key project would see the route from Taylor (between New King's and the Old Brewery) over the High Street to a redeveloped Meston, established as the main east-west route on campus. Enhancing the University's public spaces, quads and tranquil green spaces with improved seating, consistent planting, and attention to aesthetic detail will ensure that this network of spaces supports the wider sense of campus health and wellbeing. A stronger campus identity at all entrance points, welcoming visitors in from the edge to the heart of the campus, also forms part of the vision.

Angus Donaldson, Director of Estates

Appendix A - EVOLUTION AND TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES: EXAMPLES

Academic Plaza, Sir Duncan Rice Library



Public Realm. Transformation of the public realm (before / after).

Scott Brown Quadrangle



Green Spaces and Quads. Previously a single slab footpath through a rough green area. Transformed into an open and attractive social space.

Proposed Science Teaching Hub



Paths and Wayfinding. Pedestrian walkway linking new Science Teaching Hub to SDRL and Academic Plaza.

Narrow Lanes



East-West Navigation. Considerable scope to enhance cross-campus connectivity.

**Butchart**



*Asset Utilisation. Identify a suitable front-line use for Butchart*

**King's Corridor**



*Improved Connectivity. Opportunity to create new pedestrian corridor by connecting University Road (Butchart) to a pedestrianised Regent Walk.*

**Taylor Arches**



*Pedestrian Zones and Public Realm: proposed closure of Dunbar Street to be closed to through traffic.*

**Pedestrian Friendly Campus**



*Pedestrian Priority. Potential to transform Regent Walk.*



KING'S COLLEGE CAMPUS ZONES



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CAMPUS MAP

- 1 Zoology Building
- 2 Cruickshank Building
- 3 23 St Machar Drive
- 4 King's Museum (Old Town House)
- 5 The Hub
- 6 St Mary's
- 7 Fraser Noble Building
- 8 Elphinstone Road Halls
- 9 The Sir Duncan Rice Library
- 10 Meston Building
- 11 Chaplaincy Centre
- 12 Confucius Institute
- 13 Security Office/Mailroom
- 14 Counselling Service
- 15 Edward Wright Building
- 16 Edward Wright Annexe
- 17 MacRobert Building
- 18 William Guild Building
- 19 Arts Lecture Theatre
- 20 Taylor Building
- 21 Old Brewery
- 22 New King's
- 23 Regent Building
- 24 University Office
- 25 Elphinstone Hall
- 26 Linklater Rooms
- 27 King's College Chapel
- 28 King's College Centre
- 29 King's College
- 30 King's Pavilion
- 31 50-52 College Bounds
- 32 Butchart Centre
- 33 Crombie Annexe
- 34 Crombie Halls
- 35 Rocking Horse Nursery
- 36 King's Hall
- 37 Powis Gate/Muslim Prayer Room
- 38 Johnston Hall
- 39 Humanity Annexe
- 40 Humanity Manse
- 41 Bedford Road Workshops/CHP
- 42 Students' Association

Regulated Parking

