

ABERDEEN
CITY GARDEN
PROJECT

COMPETITION BRIEF - PART ONE

JULY 2011

ABERDEEN CITY GARDEN PROJECT

COMPETITION BRIEF

The brief has been informed by Aberdeen City Council's decision of 19th May 2010 which required the brief to take into account the following points;

- » Feedback from the consultation process (2009)
- » The engineering feasibility study, (2009, see appendices)
- » Be able to deliver a project between £120-140m
- » That the design brief take account of, but not be constrained by, the existing planning permission (Submitted in 2008 by Peacock Visual Arts, see appendices)
- » Include walk on/walk off access from all sides (Section 4.3)
- » Demonstrate how the project complies with the principals of the City Centre Development Framework (Detailed in section 4.2)

Management of the Competition

The entire competition process is being managed, on behalf of the Aberdeen City Garden Project Management Board by Malcolm Reading Consultants, an independent architectural consultancy with over 15 years' experience of running competitions internationally and with extensive experience of preparing client briefs and feasibility studies.

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APPENDICES

All appendices to the brief are provided in electronic form. These will be issued in an accompanying CD-ROM and are also available on the competition website at

<http://www.malcolmreading.co.uk/architecturalcompetitions/citygarden/downloads>

Appendix and title

- A** Project Management Board (PMB) members
- B** Planning permission for contemporary arts centre
- C** Proposed structure for future decked scheme
- D** Site plan
- E** Feasibility study prepared by Scottish Enterprise
- F** Listed buildings and structures
- G** Services plan
- H** Archaeological information
- J** List of internet links for policy documents
- K** Nestrans: Union Terrace Gardens / Denburn Valley: Transport issues, constraints and opportunities
- L** Design Quality Workshop on 1 June 2011

Foreword by *Charles Landry*

ABERDEEN: A CITY OF ENERGY

Aberdeen is one of the world’s key energy capitals. Energy cities make our world go round. They are crucial global hubs. Without them our machines would not work, planes could not fly; cars would be stationary and our houses too cold or too hot. The basis of our existence depends on them, stripped of their fuels – oil and gas - we would not be able to pursue the lives we lead. These cities play a crucial role in the development of our global community.

Looking into the future Aberdeen knows that to keep its best people and to attract others from elsewhere it needs a new level of ambition for the city. It is determined to build on what it has achieved. It wants to remain a player that is visible on the global radar screen. Aberdeen needs to be seen as a place of quality, verve and style with a city centre that provides a rich multi layered experience.

Clustered in Aberdeen is a sophisticated, globally connected knowledge infrastructure. Aberdeen’s talents are in global demand and those working in Aberdeen come from all over the world. It is innovation-driven as it has responded over time to the complex demands of extracting oil and gas from hostile conditions. Imagine the difficulties of discovering and extracting resources deep down on the sea bed of the North Sea and managing oil platforms: it requires high precision machinery able to withstand tremendous forces and advanced monitoring devices and software programmes to guide a perplexing logistical process.

Oil and gas reserves will run out over time, perhaps 30 years, and Aberdeen is looking ahead. It knows it needs to adapt its industrial base and reexamine how it creates wealth and prosperity. Aberdeen is confident it can do so. The city is at ►



FIG 1: View from Union Terrace looking northeast.

the edge geographically, but has through time been at the cutting edge in the way it has used its collective imagination. This has confounded expectations and kept Aberdeen at the centre of affairs. So Aberdeen views these challenges as an opportunity.

Aberdeen has a long tradition of enterprise, ingenuity and inventiveness and it has been blessed with natural resources and developed

industries around them - textiles, granite, food and agriculture, fishing, paper making and oil and gas.

It has a rich tradition in medical research and life sciences, such as the innovations in the development of the MRI scanner and pre-war research into safe pregnancies and control of labour pain.

Aberdeen's vitality comes from its skills and talents. Aberdeen, is a world leader in many fields and an innovative engineering thread runs through it all, such as subsea marine technology, offshore operations, integrity management and safety, expertise in renewables and deepwater offshore windfarms. This expertise will remain desirable the world over and the capabilities that go with it can be applied and migrate into other fields.

Charles Landry, author of City Making and The Creative City, helps cities reach their potential, transforming them for the better. He is an adviser to ACSEF.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The City Garden Project seeks to demonstrate Aberdeen’s new level of aspiration and desire. It is an emblematic initiative that speaks to the local community yet resonates internationally. It should trigger a transformational process in the city involving many other projects which will form a mosaic helping Aberdeen to make the most of its potential and to maintain its profile as a great city.

The City Garden Project represents a scheme of both regional and national significance. As Scotland’s third city, Aberdeen has a GDP that is 43% higher than the Scottish average, is home to 400 internationally owned companies and five of Scotland’s top ten businesses (who have a collective turnover of £14 billion). It is the centre of the UK’s oil and gas industry. Aberdeen plays a vital role in the country’s economic performance. Arguably the most significant contribution to that economy comes from the international energy sector. To build on Aberdeen’s reputation and role as Europe’s energy capital, new investment in the city’s infrastructure is vital and the City Garden Project represents an important contribution to this.

The vision is to create an accessible space which will become the green heart of the city, integrating Union Street retail and business thoroughfare with the cultural heart of His Majesty’s Theatre and the art gallery whilst providing the context for a new international cultural arts centre. It should connect Union Terrace at street level to Belmont Street and in doing so there is an opportunity to create a new garden space combining 21st Century design with inspiring planting and landscape architecture that reflects Aberdeen’s success and its international status.

Expectations are considerable. This is a once-in-a-century opportunity to repair and revitalise a key open space in Aberdeen’s historic centre. ►



FIG 2: View from centre of competition site looking southwest.



FIG 3: View from Union Terrace arches looking northwest.

This brief explains the City Garden Project’s objectives and provides supporting background information for the teams entering the international design competition.

It draws together technical information from previous studies of the site, incorporating the outcomes of design quality workshops and stakeholder interviews.

The finalists’ designs will be based on the following principles: effective place-making, respect for the existing historic environment, use of the topography and landscape, connectivity, accessibility, enhancement of the cultural sustainability.

The new design will promote the benefits of physical activity in everyday life, increasing opportunities for walking and outdoor recreation and encouraging pedestrian movement across the city centre. Encouraging access to public transportation and providing barrier-free access will make a huge difference to the quality and use of the space.

Finalists’ designs should stay within the parameters of the site as these have been tested through extensive feasibility and design exercises. However finalists are encouraged to consider connectivity and links to the key attractions and centres of activity outside the site.

1.2 A Fresh Start

Some of the technical information included in the brief was established in previous studies of the site. A technical feasibility study was commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, and presented in June 2009. This provided the first detailed technical appraisal of the site and developed concepts to demonstrate the possible options for a new civic space and gardens. This is still available as a public document:

<http://www.acsef.co.uk/infoPageMS.cfm?pageID=10&MSID=14>

The promoter of the competition and client for the project is the Project Management Board (PMB) which is made up of representatives from Aberdeen City Council and key stakeholders. See *Appendix A* for details. ACGT Enterprises Ltd is funding the design competition on behalf of the PMB. Significant funds for the project are already pledged and the stakeholders are convinced of the scheme's viability. Accordingly, the concept must be able to be built within the cost limitations set out in this document. It is of core importance that competitors are able to demonstrate how they will approach controlling project costs to the client body.

It should be noted that the stakeholders do not endorse any of the previous design studies for the site: ***this is a fresh start.***

Competitors are encouraged to reflect on the brief and make suggestions where relevant. They should aim to surpass client expectations, whilst being mindful of the parameters that have already been tested.

2. AIMS

2.1 Project Objective

The objective is to transform this space and create safe, all-year-round garden and civic space for the people of Aberdeen. The garden should reflect the city's economic status and performance of the city and create a vibrant new heart for it.

This “grand project” located in the heart of Aberdeen, has been mooted for a number of years including as far back as the Dobson, *Chapman and Riley Granite City Plan* of 1952, which proposed extending the Gardens to cover the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line.

The project proposes to radically transform a strategic central location by raising the inaccessible, underused Union Terrace Gardens and covering over the unsightly Denburn dual carriageway and adjacent railway line to create the following¹:

- » Street level access to internationally recognised gardens, equivalent in size to the existing gardens, designed and landscaped with trees, grass and plants for all seasons, animated with water and light features
- » Opportunities to maximise pedestrian connections and well-being, and encourage accessibility for public transportation
- » An open public space that makes use of the natural topography to follow the level changes from Union Terrace to Belmont Street with stepped and sweeping landscaping
- » A natural amphitheatre to provide a civic space for major outdoor events, gatherings, festivals and concerts
- » An international cultural destination, including a centre for contemporary arts
- » A project which brings economic sustainability to the site through revenue generated for the project's maintenance
- » A cosmopolitan city centre café quarter
- » A covered, all-weather concourse level providing access through to the bus and railway stations, the Green and Union Square

Overall, the project will contribute to making a more attractive, greener, safer and better connected, city centre, and attract and retain people, businesses and investment.

¹Please note reference should be made to section 4 of this brief for specific requirements and objectives.



FIG 4: View from northern part of gardens looking southeast.



FIG 5: Aerial view of site and surrounding context.

3. SITE AND CONTEXT

3.1 Overview

Union Terrace Gardens is a Victorian public park owned and managed by Aberdeen City Council. Set in the Denburn Valley, the Gardens are overlooked by the city's traditional retail thoroughfare, Union Street (including Union Bridge) and prominent historical buildings to the north such as His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's Church, Aberdeen Public Library, Triple Kirks and the Cowdray Hall. At the lower valley level, the Gardens run parallel with the railway line and Denburn dual carriageway. The Gardens are bound by three elevated civil structures, namely Denburn Viaduct to the north, Union Bridge to the south and the elevated Union Terrace to the west, all of which are Category B listed structures. In addition there are several Category A and B listed buildings facing the Gardens from Union Terrace itself and the rear of Belmont Street to the east.

3.2 Union Terrace Gardens

The Gardens comprise green space, mature trees, public paths and landscaping. There is an arcade formed by a series of granite arches to the west of the Gardens which support Union Terrace. At the Union Terrace level there are a series of granite balustrades. These arches, balustrades and a public toilet to the south are listed Category B. Various listed statues, including Robert Burns and William Wallace, are situated adjacent to the Gardens.

The Gardens are currently accessed via public stairs from the north-east and south-west. The southerly entrance comprises former Victorian public toilets which are no longer in use and run-down but largely preserved in their original condition. The northerly entrance from the Denburn Viaduct is more prominent and located in a stunning setting opposite His Majesty's Theatre and the William Wallace Statue. There is limited vehicular access to the Gardens with the exception of an access route for maintenance vehicles at the lower valley level from Skene Street under the Denburn Viaduct.

Planning permission was granted in 2008 for a contemporary arts centre. See *Appendix B* for details.



3.3 Denburn Valley

The Denburn Valley comprises two major civil engineering structures, namely the main Aberdeen to Inverness railway line and the Denburn dual carriageway constructed circa 1996. Both run north-to-south parallel with each other and the Gardens. The railway is owned and operated by Network Rail and the Denburn dual carriageway adopted by Aberdeen City Council. With appropriate title and consents,

earlier proposals for the development of the Gardens have involved decking over the Denburn Valley railway line and dual carriageway to create decked levels of commercial space and car parking within the void, including a levelled access and public space from Belmont Street/ Union Street and Denburn Viaduct across the Gardens.

In 1996 proposals were so advanced that Grampian Enterprise Ltd (part of Scottish Enterprise) and Grampian Regional Council funded £1.65m to build reinforced structural piling into the central reservation of the Denburn dual carriageway, to support a future decked scheme. See *Appendix C* for details.



FIG 7: View from neighbouring garden to east of dual carriageway looking west.

3.4 Rear of Belmont Street

Belmont Street runs parallel with the Denburn Valley and is accessed from Union Street and Schoolhill. The buildings on the east of Belmont Street are constructed deep into the valley. As such, the rear of the buildings form a prominent feature on the west of the Denburn Valley. The buildings are all in multiple third party ownerships. Notably, to the north is the Triple Kirks Development Site which is a group of former churches with a Category A listing including the steeple and former East Free Church. The steeple and surroundings have lain derelict for a number of decades, although various proposals have been granted for planning consent over the years, including development of office space. Situated in a key location adjacent to Schoolhill, the site is now in single ownership with aspirations for a prominent + 5,500 m² office led scheme. There is currently a live planning application for this site, available at:

www.planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?ref=110303

Belmont Street itself has been subject to successful public realm improvements, private investment and development, particularly for licensed and leisure uses. Some of these bar and restaurant developments have created open terraces that take advantage of their south westerly aspect overlooking the Denburn Valley. Belmont Street has excellent public access to the city's prime retail shopping centres, namely Bon Accord, St Nicholas, Trinity Mall and Academy Shopping Centres.

There is a narrow stepped public right of way from Belmont Street to the Denburn Valley called Patagonian Court, but no direct vehicular access. Importantly, there is no pedestrian access direct from Belmont Street to the Gardens, creating a divide between the city's main retail zone and the Gardens; and ultimately a disjointed city centre. Access will be required across third party property interests and airspace rights over the dual carriageway and railway.

The aspiration is for the new Garden to provide a link to buildings at the rear of Belmont Street to enable businesses to expand cafes and restaurants into the scheme. The current site boundary is shown on Plan *Appendix D*. Discussions are underway with business owners to realise this ambition, however, teams should be able to demonstrate how they would treat this edge condition if the links to Belmont Street were limited to existing rights of way between buildings.

3.5 Site boundaries, covenants & easements

Plan *Appendix D* shows the current site boundaries, ownership and rights of way / easements over the site.

3.6 Existing ground conditions

The Feasibility Study prepared for Scottish Enterprise contains an assessment of the ground conditions. This can be found in *Appendix E*.

3.7 Listed buildings & structures

Plan *Appendix D* shows the listed buildings and structures on or adjacent to the site. See appendices for details of listings. See *Appendix F* for listing information.

3.8 Services below ground

Plan *Appendix G* shows the services identified on the site including the culvert which runs adjacent to the railway line.

3.9 Archaeology

It is unlikely that there are significant archaeological deposits on the site as no known historic sites or monuments are recorded with this area. See *Appendix H* for further information.

3.10 Policy context

There are a number of relevant policy documents that cover the site, including the City and Shire Structure Plan, the Local Development Plan, Local Transport Strategy and the City Centre Development Framework. A list of internet links is provided in *Appendix J*.

3.11 Additional information

Nestrans, the transport partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, has carried out a scoping study of the transport issues and impact of the objective to develop the City Garden site. Their report is provided in *Appendix K*.

4. KEY DESIGN AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

4.1 Overview

The Gardens are currently under-performing as a public space. They are underused and the large changes in level across the site provide barriers to its use as a thoroughfare. The City Garden Project aims to change the site into a vital place in the city. The Garden should be a destination with purpose, delivering a clearly defined, green, urban park with a cultural focus.

There are three main parts to this section of the brief.

Section

4.2 // sets out the wider planning context for the site.

4.3 // provides the criteria which will need to be met as a condition of the funding for the development of the site.

4.7 // explains the key design principles and ambitions for the site.

Teams will need to demonstrate that their proposal satisfies the criteria set out in 4.2 and 4.3. The principles in 4.7 will be used by the Jury when assessing the submissions providing they comply with the criteria in section 4.2 and section 4.3.

Proposals for the site should embrace the six quality of place standards identified in Aberdeen City Council's City Centre Development Framework (referenced to national policies *Designing Places* and *Designing Streets*):

1. Distinct identity
2. Safe and pleasant environment
3. Easy to move around
4. Welcoming
5. Adaptable
6. Sustainable

4.2 Aberdeen City Council: City Centre Development Framework

The documents listed below set the framework for the future development of Aberdeen, including the City Centre. The Structure Plan and Local Plan constitute the statutory development plan against which any planning application will be assessed. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan Proposed Plan, which updates the Local Plan to comply with the current Structure Plan, was published in September 2010 and is currently with the Scottish Government Reporters for an Examination in Public. The Council hopes to adopt the new Local Development Plan in Spring 2012.

- » Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, 2009
- » Aberdeen Local Plan, 2008
- » Aberdeen Local Development Plan Proposed Plan, 2010
- » Aberdeen City Council: City Centre Development Framework, 2011

A summary of the key points of the City Centre Development Framework is below.

In 2010, Aberdeen City Council developed the City Centre Development Framework. This has been adopted as Interim Planning Guidance with the intention that it will become Supplementary Planning Guidance. It contains five principles for the city centre;

- » The main focus of the Framework is Union Street; as the most important and identifiable street in the city it should be promoted as the commercial, vibrant heart of the city centre;
- » Character areas and urban quarters are to be developed to capitalise on the distinctive merits of their surroundings and reinforce Aberdeen's unique identity;
- » Legible transport hubs are proposed for the central area with car parks on the approaches to ensure an efficient and understandable relationship between character areas, Union Street and public access to facilities in the city centre;
- » Street surfaces are to be of a high quality at first points of contact with the city centre (public transport hubs, rail station, car parks and around important public and historic buildings;
- » A range of vibrant connected squares are to be developed to ensure the best use of space to enhance city life.

The Framework proposes that the unique identity of the city centre be enhanced and reinforced through the clear definition of a number of urban quarters and character areas. Each of these has a distinct character and purpose and the Framework explores their context, identity and connection, along with a number of key issues and opportunities that must be considered when developing these Quarters with the key characteristics of each area summarised.

The City Garden is within the city's Cultural Quarter and is bounded by the library, theatre and art gallery.

Key issues for the Cultural Quarter are how to:

- » create a sense of place
- » use topography to add interest and character
- » enhance urban green environment
- » undertake more landscaping
- » improve connectivity
- » ensure access and safety
- » enhance multi-level connections
- » redevelop Triple Kirks
- » attract visitors
- » cultural focus
- » improve streetscape and access around key public buildings



FIG 8: View from northern part of competition site looking southeast

4.3 Aberdeen City Garden Project Parameters

The Project Parameters below describe the criteria that the designs need to meet as a condition of the funding currently pledged for the project as agreed by Aberdeen City Council in May 2010.

- » A civic space built across the area of Union Terrace Gardens and the Denburn Valley with sympathetic use of relief incorporated into the design in the form of sloping, sweeping stepped areas to accommodate level changes in the adjacent street level (primarily from west to east).
- » Walk-on/walk-off access from the four access sides to the garden - Union Terrace, Belmont Street, Union Bridge and Rosemount Viaduct.
- » A minimum of 2.5 acres of green, landscaped and planted garden space. (Hard and soft landscaping incorporated into the overall design.)
- » Space to be available for a significant contemporary arts centre of iconic design forming an integral part of the Garden.
- » Concourse covered level (beneath the street level surface) providing access through to Aberdeen Rail and Bus station, the Green and Union Square with natural light wells designed into the street level surface.
- » Full access for wheelchairs, prams and people with limited mobility.
- » Open spaces for major public gatherings.
- » No intrusive 'building' in the garden in order to retain the vista from the south to north of the Square (Union Street/Bridge across to Rosemount Viaduct).



FIG 9: View from Union Terrace looking southeast.

4.4 Existing Historic Environment

The topography of the site is a key aspect for this project. The bridges at either end of the site, reveal the historic development of the city and should be embraced within the scheme. The Denburn Valley created a barrier to the city’s development until the construction of Union Street Bridge in the 1870’s. The site is one of the few places remaining in the city where the relationship with the Denburn is still evident.

A condition of the funding for the development of the site is for walk-on/walk-off access from the four sides to the surroundings streets. Teams should demonstrate how they will provide this whilst still allowing the topography of the site to be legible.

There are many listed structures bordering and close to the site which need to be integrated into the new scheme to give the garden a distinct character and identity in the city.

The character of buildings to the rear of Belmont Street is also an important feature. The aspiration is for the businesses to embrace the new frontage onto the site and the views into the gardens. The current rights of way from Belmont Street to the site could be enhanced allowing a pedestrian connection between the two areas.



FIG 10: View from Union Street looking northeast.

4.5 Topography & Landscape

The site is primarily a garden, a public space for Aberdeen. One of the parameters of the site is for there to be no intrusive buildings on the Garden to prevent the vista from Rosemount Viaduct to the south to Union Street and Union Street Bridge to the north of the site to be significantly impeded. Any built forms on the site should be subservient to the views across the site and need to celebrate the site’s topography. The schemes should respect the current skyline and scale of the adjacent buildings.

The proposals should celebrate the concept of the Victorian Gardens and include formal gardens as part of the site but should reinterpret the idea for a 21st Century city. The landscape should include distinct areas united through a garden space in the centre of the city. Consideration should be given to noise levels in the site - proposals should provide some quieter areas for contemplation and relaxation and other dynamic areas for socialising.

The scheme will need to be sympathetic to Aberdeen’s microclimate, providing shelter from the wind and using plants which will thrive in the northeast of Scotland. Schemes should also seek to include mature trees with the proposals and detail how conditions will be created to sustain them.

4.6 Design Quality Workshop Process

A group of stakeholder organisations identified by the Project Management Board were asked to participate in a Design Quality workshop on the 1st June 2011. A record of the workshop can be found in the *Appendix L*.

The stakeholders were asked a series of 70 questions which were grouped together under the following headings; Functionality, Build Quality and Impact.

Three themes came out of the workshop as areas that stakeholders would like to see in the development of the site;

- » The gardens should enhance Aberdeen’s reputation as an international city
- » The gardens should be widely acclaimed for their quality
- » The gardens should be publicly accessible, and the layout should provide convenient access for pedestrians

Previous consultation on the proposal to raise the gardens was carried out in the first quarter of 2010. There is a summary of what participants in the consultation felt was important for any proposal on the site in the appendices. The project website contains further details of the findings of the consultation;

<http://www.thecitygardenproject.com/background.asp>



FIG 11: View from Rosemount Viaduct looking southeast.

4.7 Design Themes

Teams should address the themes below in their proposals. These headings will be used by the Jury to assess your submission.

A / Place-making & Social Sustainability

Place-making is the over-arching design principle for the project. The City Garden should be a destination in Aberdeen: a social hub which is used by all members of the community, and visitors to the city, and which reflects Aberdeen's identity. Teams will need to demonstrate that they understand the wider city context. They need to identify activities which will draw the community to the site. The scheme should provide distinct areas for relaxing, socialising and eating. There also should be space for recreation and walking.

Proposals should include ideas of how public art or small design interventions could help to define areas of the site, helping give the area a distinct identity.

The proposals should encourage usage of the site throughout the year and throughout the day responding to a 24 hour economy with three distinct phases; daytime, evening and night-time.

All users of the space should feel welcome and secure. The scheme needs to appeal to both residents and visitors offering something of relevance to the following groups;

- » families with young children
- » teenagers
- » students
- » young professionals
- » city centre workers
- » weekend leisure users
- » retired people
- » those with mobility impairments
- » tourists
- » business visitors to Aberdeen

The ambition for the site is to create a unique experience for visitors and one that will instil a sense of pride in its citizens.



FIG 12: View from corner of Union Terrace and Union Street looking north.



FIG 13: View from southern end of Union Terrace looking north.

B / Connectivity & Accessibility

The site occupies a key point in the city and provides an opportunity not only to connect to the rail station and bus routes but to link up the city's green spaces. Connection to and from the Garden and the opportunity to link to the surrounding urban fabric at a variety of levels is as important as the Garden itself. By linking the valley to a wider network of enhanced squares and spaces, particularly around key public buildings, the full potential of this considerable asset can be achieved.

Covering over the existing road and dual carriageway, allows the Garden to become an integral part of the city; a site that residents and visitors are drawn to and naturally pass through as they explore the city without the barrier of a large level change.

The key principles to be addressed are:

- » accessibility from major thoroughfares
- » multi-level connection
- » direct link from Union Street
- » relationship to collegiate Aberdeen, to include Marischal College and Robert Gordon College and the network of streets around the city centre
- » development of and from the rear of the buildings of Belmont Street

Aberdeen City Council's Local Transport Strategy 2008 - 2012, and Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, 2008 set out the Council's expectations in terms of transport in the City and the policies and interventions to achieve that. Designs should aim to comply with these policies and demonstrate prioritisation of pedestrian, cyclist and users of public transport routes as set out in the hierarchy contained in the Local Transport Strategy. They should examine internal and external connectivity within the city and the surrounding area.

From the south, consideration should be given to direct access from Union Street. The opportunity also exists to connect at lower levels to the Green and the rail station. All the approaches should form part of the experience of City life and movement.

Linking to the urban space to the north of His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library is desirable. This would allow the Denburn and Woolmanhill opportunity sites to be integrated with the central area.

The ambition is for the site to become a venue for events in the city centre and thought should be given to how large numbers of visitors would be able to arrive and exit the site safely after a performance or event.

C / Accessibility & Public Transport

A major criticism of the current Gardens is that they are difficult to access especially for those with mobility impairments. Any new scheme should provide full access for wheelchairs, prams and people with limited mobility and level access from the four access sides to the garden - Union Terrace, Belmont Street, Union Bridge and Rosemount Viaduct. Opportunities to encourage ease of access to public transportation should also be considered.

D / Culture / Arts / Civic Destination

The City Garden lies at the heart of the proposed Cultural Quarter of the city and the ambition is for it to become an international cultural destination. A contemporary arts centre will be a focus for the site, and will enhance Aberdeen's cultural offer. The Council and Trust are currently negotiating with potential cultural partners and as a result the type of cultural offer may change. For the purposes of the competition however, teams should assume that site will contain a contemporary arts centre.

The site provides a setting for His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's and the Central Library. Developing the northern edge of the site should allow better servicing for the theatre.

There are proposals under development to extend the Art Gallery to house the combined collections of the Museums and Galleries Service and propose an integrated solution, which will deliver greater potential benefits to the City. Work is on-going to discuss and secure funding opportunities to redevelop the Music Hall into a centre for excellence in music practice in the North East. The proposal includes new rehearsal space, recital space, and space for composers and community orchestras.

This also offers an opportunity for public art in the centre of Aberdeen to create a cultural focus and help to define areas within the gardens.

E / Environmental Sustainability

Proposals should follow best practice in terms of environmental sustainability for projects of this scale. Teams should explain how their scheme will approach sustainability, minimising the amount of waste in construction and the energy demands of the site when in use. Teams should highlight the environmental standards that the scheme is likely to reach within the budget set in this brief.

F / Economic Sustainability

It is essential that sustainability is a key consideration in the future of the Denburn Valley and Union Terrace Gardens. The cultural and social needs of the City need to be clearly understood along with the implications of construction, maintenance and lifetime costs.

A priority for the project is to create a place which attracts large numbers of people to the park throughout the year. This would be enhanced through a programme of events, including outdoor performances and markets. Encouraging visitors to the site to linger enjoy a meal or a drink or meet with friends will bring benefits to the surrounding businesses and increase the desirability of property adjacent to the site.



FIG 14: View from eastern end of Rosemount Viaduct looking south



FIG 15: View from centre of Union Terrace looking northeast.



FIG 15: View from corner of Union Street and Bridge Street looking north.

5. AREA REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Summary

The feasibility study identified that accommodation could be provided over four levels on the site with the total area provided being just over 56,000m², 29,000m² of this space at street level. Schemes proposed should explore this area provision and demonstrate how this can be achieved and delivered. However, teams should not be constrained by the layout proposed by the feasibility study.

There are areas of the site where the use has yet to be fully defined. These uses will be informed by the business planning work currently commissioned by the ACGT Enterprises Ltd or client, therefore designs should be flexible. Whilst the public realm is of vital importance to the project, careful consideration should also be given to providing high quality spaces and connections throughout the project.

5.2 Gross Areas

Contemporary garden	
A minimum of 11,000m ² of gardens	This level should be a contemporary 21 st century garden, demonstrating excellence in landscape design. It should provide an entrance to a contemporary arts and cultural centre.

Outdoor performance space	
	The scheme should cater for a range of spaces from small scale poetry readings to events for 5000 people. Spaces need to be able to be adapted to hold events / concerts for up to 10,000. Infrastructure for large scale events should be permanent.

Contemporary arts / cultural centre	
6000m²	The aim is to attract a potential arts partner to locate to the site and it is expected that the partner will require changes to the winning design therefore the design for this part of the project will need to remain conceptual.
	To contain a Permanent Collection Gallery, Temporary Exhibition Gallery and appropriate back-of-house facilities linked to restaurants, cafe, shops etc.
	A significant entrance capable of handling up to 2000 visitors per day. The entrance should also have the ability to form a semi-sheltered space for performances.
	2500m² of gallery space, one larger gallery and three smaller galleries.
	1000m² of social space to include a main hall, space for catering facilities and a bar.
	1000m² of learning spaces to allow areas for teaching and lectures.
	The remaining 1500m² is to allow for back-of-house support rooms, services / plant and circulation.
	As stated in section 4, there should be no intrusive buildings on the site which significantly impede views across the site.

Conference, meeting and flexible leisure space.	
	A flexible area for performing arts, conferences, exhibitions, meeting and events with appropriate back-of-house facilities.
	This function will be most heavily informed by the business planning work which is currently underway and will need to provide some revenue generation for the maintenance of the site.
Service area / Plant	
	Car parking should be sufficient to service the site, but it should not be seen as a new city-wide facility.
	Delivery and loading bays for His Majesty's Theatre and for the new contemporary arts centre should be provided.
Connections	
	The scheme should provide access to the rail and bus station, Union Square, Trinity Mall and the Green, shown on Plan(ref).
	Consideration should also be given to the potential of linking the businesses on Union Terrace via the arches under the road.



FIG 16: View from northern part of gardens looking north.

Image no.	Image caption	Page number
1	View from Union Terrace looking northeast	2-3
2	View from centre of competition site looking southwest	4
3	View from Union Terrace arches looking northwest	6-7
4	View from northern part of gardens looking southeast	10
n/a	Aerial view of site and surrounding context	12
6	View from Union Street looking northwest	14-15
7	View from neighbouring garden to east of dual carriageway looking west	16
8	View from northern part of competition site looking southeast	22-23
9	View from Union Terrace looking southeast	24
10	View from Union Street looking northeast	24
11	View from Rosemount Viaduct looking southeast	26
12	View from corner of Union Terrace and Union Street looking north	28
13	View from southern end of Union Terrace looking north	30-31
14	View from eastern end of Rosemount Viaduct looking south	34
15	View from centre of Union Terrace looking northeast	36-37
16	View from corner of Union Street and Bridge Street looking north	38
17	View from northern part of gardens looking north	42-43



