

## ZONAL ANALYSIS

### PART B: FORESTERHILL

Our vision for Foresterhill, shared with NHS Grampian, envisages the continued long-term regeneration of the campus with a view to the further integration of healthcare, education and research facilities. This process will consolidate and improve Aberdeen's international reputation for clinical teaching and research, and will in turn support the recruitment and retention of both students and the high quality clinical and teaching staff upon which our teaching, research and clinical reputation is built.

The challenges presented at Foresterhill are different to those in Old Aberdeen, not least because the site is shared with NHS Grampian and features a mix of University, NHS and collaborative facilities. While extensive investment in recent years has seen the University bring online a series of exemplary new facilities, older facilities and shared site use do present their own challenges and opportunities. For the purposes of this exercise, these are considered on a site-wide basis.

**What/Where.** A 56 hectare medical campus shared with NHS Grampian, this site is home to the University's medical education, medical research, and life science innovation facilities. University owned or operated buildings are located in three main clusters to the north, north-west, and east of the site (see map at **Appendix A**). Most of our medical teaching and research facilities are accessed via Ashgrove Road West, while two further entrances on Cornhill Road provide access to the Dental School and Polwarth.

**Challenges.** Across the Foresterhill site, incremental development by both the NHS and University has, over many years, embedded a number of issues in terms of site navigation, building orientation, and vehicular and pedestrian circulation. The Foresterhill Development Framework, produced jointly by NHS Grampian and the University, seeks to tackle these by setting out a vision for a revised clinical core, with a circulation and parking plan that aims to address the worst of these issues. The Framework also provides a shared vision of how future development of the site should be undertaken. Alongside agreements that govern the use and share of the site, there are clear parameters defining the scale and type of development possible in the future.

Strategic investment over the past 10 years has, however, transformed the University's facilities. Many are now of a very high standard e.g. Rowett, Suttie Centre, Institute of Medical Science (IMS), Life Science Innovation (LSI), and the Dental School. Older facilities do, however, require modernisation (e.g. Polwarth), while others would benefit from more dramatic intervention or redevelopment (e.g. Bio Medical Physics). Many of the teaching rooms in our older buildings will require investment to bring them up to a standard consistent with that experienced in more modern facilities across campus. This will include the need to embrace and embed the distributed digital infrastructure that is envisaged in the University's digital strategy. In order to improve the student experience, the Medical Library has also been singled out as requiring substantial modernisation.

**Opportunities.** While scope for major development of University facilities at Foresterhill is now limited, there are some possibilities for medium and longer term replacement or new build projects. The area to the south of the LSI building has previously been identified as a possible site for a second LSI unit, but could equally serve any medical research or teaching role. The relocation of the Maternity Hospital will free up a prime development site in an area currently zoned for use by the University. At the western end of Foresterhill, a University site has been earmarked for development by Opportunity North East (ONE) as a life sciences centre; this project that will be taken forward as part of the City Deal.

Among the University's existing building stock there is scope for the re-development or replacement of the Bio Medical Physics building, while the west wing of Polwarth offers scope for a substantial development to replace its mix of poor quality office and outdated teaching space. In both cases, better use of the available space, including more intensive use and improved orientation with adjacent buildings, is possible. While our newest buildings require limited intervention, older facilities (e.g.

Polwarth) will require substantial internal refurbishment. A key priority in this regard will be to bring teaching accommodation and the medical library up to a consistent, high-standard. Across all facilities, Foresterhill will benefit from improvements in institution-wide digital infrastructure. Through our plans for a digitally enabled campus, new ways of conducting teaching and research, improved student engagement, and the further facilitation of international linkages will all be integrated. One initial project in this field has seen Foresterhill's Medi-Chi Hall re-developed as one of the University's exemplar Digitally Enhanced Learning Spaces (DELS).

Alongside our own institutional projects, the NHS has ambitious plans for a series of major developments in which the University will have an academic interest. These include the new Baird Family Hospital, the Anchor Centre, a Clinical Research Facility, and a Simulation Centre. These projects are at various stages of development.

**Place.** The main priority on the Foresterhill campus is to improve way-finding and circulation. While the future road layout will be closely linked to the Development Framework, pedestrian links and appropriate signage to improve navigation between University buildings is seen as a priority.

Although pedestrian transit between the University clusters is limited, there remains a need for clearer way-finding across the Foresterhill site. University owned buildings need clearer and more consistent identities, with legacy signage that uses the old corporate identity to be replaced as part of an effort to reduce the currently confusing campus presence.

Improvements to the institutional identity signage at the main entrances that service University facilities from Ashgrove Road West and Cornhill Road should be introduced to more visibly identify these as University areas. Where the University logo features on shared signage, this should conform to the University's refreshed corporate identity and be an integral part of that signage.

Given the complexity of navigating the site, public mapping is required to improve the visitor, staff and student experience. Although there is scope for electronic mapping and apps, traditional mapping will also be needed. Such maps need to clearly indicate where building entrances are, as well as identifying inter-building transit routes. Where public mapping is provided, this should complement existing NHS maps to avoid visitor confusion. Working with the NHS to ensure a consistent approach to all directional signage will be required.

In terms of campus presence, there are a number of opportunities to improve the visibility and impact of University buildings. Prominent wall space e.g. at the front of Polwarth, provides further scope to showcase the University's presence on a site that many primarily associate with the NHS.

While our ability independently to improve green and public spaces is more limited, the NHS has developed a comprehensive strategy that reflects the impact of such public amenity spaces on the wellbeing of staff and patients. Public realm interventions in proximity to University facilities that can complement the intentions of this NHS plan would, therefore, be beneficial. Existing examples of what is possible include the outdoor space at the entrance to the Suttie building

FORESTERHILL MAP WITH UNIVERSITY CLUSTERS

