

Freelands Road Ratho

May 2008

Development Brief

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Freelands Road, Ratho site is identified as a 'strategic housing allocation' in the adopted Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan 2006. The proposed uses are housing and a canal basin. The information contained in this brief is intended to supplement guidance provided in the local plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of this brief is to set out the main planning and urban design principles that need to be taken into account by developers when preparing proposals for the site.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, a screening report was prepared by the Council to determine whether or not the Freelands Road Development Brief requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken. The Council's view was that an SEA was not needed in this instance, a decision with which SEPA, Historic Scotland and SNH have agreed.

2.0 Description of the Area

- 2.1 The area included in the development brief covers approximately 10 ha. It is within the village of Ratho which has a population of around 1,500 and is 9 miles to the west of Edinburgh city centre. (see Figure 1)
- 2.2 The site is bounded to the west by Baird Road and to the south by the Union Canal (see Figure 2). To the east, it adjoins further land in agricultural use, the boundary of which is identified by a 3m tree belt. There is a marked break in slope at the boundary in the south-east corner of the site resulting from previous landfill activity. The northern boundary of the site is less well defined. Part of it adjoins Freelands Road itself; the remainder abuts an area of land (Glebe Land) currently owned by the Church of Scotland which, though referred to in the brief, is not part of the local plan proposal.
- 2.3 The site is higher than the original level due to its former landfill use. While there are distinct changes in level at the west end of the site, the ground flattens out to the east.
- 2.4 With the exception of those which are listed, most of the buildings on Baird Road, on or near the western boundary of the site, are older single-storey stone buildings. There is also some pre-existing 1970s housing on the south side of the Union Canal, opposite the site.
- 2.5 Views from the site include to the east, towards the centre of Edinburgh, where Arthur's Seat is clearly visible, and to the south, towards the Pentland Hills.
- 2.6 The area is served by a well-developed road network with good access to motorways and other major routes. Edinburgh International Airport is

within 2 miles of the site. There are park and ride facilities at Ingliston and Hermiston, both of which are within a short driving distance. The village benefits from good public transport links to Edinburgh city centre via the park and ride service operated by Lothian Buses.

3.0 Policy Context

3.1 The strategic policy context for the development of the Freelands Road site is Policy HOU3 of the Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2004 which supports the development of 1,000 new houses in the Newbridge/Kirkliston/Ratho area. (www.elsp.gov.uk)

3.2 The relevant local plan is the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan which was adopted in 2006. Freelands Road is included as a 'strategic housing land allocation' in Policy H2 and is identified on the Proposals Map as HSP7. The local plan includes a number of policies of relevance to the development of this site, for example in relation to the Conservation Area, the canal, nature conservation, open space and the quality of development.
(http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Environment/Planning_buildings_i_i/Planning/Planning_policies/CEC_rural_west_edinburgh_local_plan)

3.3 In addition to local plan policies, there is a range of relevant non-statutory guidance. This includes the Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design, Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building and development quality guidelines on matters such as affordable housing, parking standards, open space and developer contributions. Proposals will also be required to be assessed against the forthcoming Edinburgh Standards for Housing.

4.0 Environment and Infrastructure Considerations (see Figure 3)

Architectural and Archaeological Interest

4.1 The most westerly part of the site is in the Ratho Conservation Area which was designated on 13 July 1971. There are a number of listed buildings which are not located within the site but lie close to its boundary to the north and west. The following are of particular note:

- St Mary's Parish Church complex (Category A Listed)
- former Manse on Freelands Road (Category B Listed)
- Bridge Inn (including bridge) (Category B Listed)

4.2 Kirkton Farm to the west of Baird Road, though recently converted to residential, is considered to be of historical and architectural significance. There is also a war memorial adjacent to the public car park on Baird Road (opposite the parish church).

- 4.3 The site adjoins part of the Union Canal which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Historic Scotland should be consulted on any planning application affecting this designation in accordance with Schedule 15 (1) (j) (v) of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1992.
- 4.4 As most of the site is underlain by landfill, it is unlikely that a detailed archaeological evaluation will have to be undertaken prior to the submission of any detailed planning application. However, developers are advised to contact the Council's Archaeologist at an early stage.

Education

- 4.5 The site lies within the catchment area of Balerno High School. While the local plan notes that additional secondary school provision may be required, the Council's Children and Families Department has since said that a development of 100 houses could be accommodated without the need for a developer contribution. There is also capacity at Ratho Primary School for the development.
- 4.6 Ratho falls within the denominational school catchment area of West Lothian Council where new strategic housing proposals will require additional primary and secondary school provision. Developers should therefore refer to West Lothian Council's guidance on this. Discussions are underway to establish a formal agreement between the City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council on the collection of developer contributions for these schools.

Landfill

- 4.7 Freeland's Road, Ratho comprises for the most part a closed licensed landfill site for which planning permission was granted in 1988. Due to the potential for landfill gas and other contaminants on the site, any prospective developer must prove that the site is, or can be made suitable for, the proposed use. An adequate site investigation, risk assessment and remediation strategy must be prepared in consultation with the Council's Environmental Assessment function to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning. This must be submitted to the Head of Planning prior to the determination of any planning application for the development of the site. The remediation strategy should be sufficient so as to prevent unacceptable risk to human health and the wider environment. In the absence of a satisfactory site investigation, risk assessment and remediation strategy, planning permission will not be granted.

Landscape and Natural Heritage

- 4.8 There is a cluster of trees, a number of which are mature, and shrubs located immediately to the east of Baird Road, near the Union Canal. A high hedge runs along part of the southern boundary of the site

adjoining the canal towpath. A number of young saplings have been planted on the site itself.

- 4.9 The Union Canal to the south of the site is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and this should be taken into account when developing the site.
- 4.10 SNH are aware of the presence of otters, water voles and badgers adjacent to the Freelands Road site. They also consider it likely that the site will support bats, given the type of habitat within and adjacent to the site, although this is yet to be confirmed. Recent changes in legislation mean that a mammal expert is required to undertake a survey of otters and bats, both of which are 'European Protected Species'. Additionally, surveys of badgers and water voles, both of which are protected by legislation, are required. The Council will ensure that these and any more detailed follow-up surveys requiring a license are completed prior to determining any planning application.
- 4.11 In relation to water voles, mitigation measures must be put in place to avoid disturbance or damage to 'structures' or 'places' used by them.
- 4.12 Where possible, the opportunity should be taken to promote habitat enhancement throughout the development. For example, the planting of berry bearing trees and shrubs alongside the canal to support wildlife, is encouraged.

Telecommunications

- 4.13 Developers should consult with the main telecommunications operators prior to developing the site in order to arrive at a co-ordinated view on the need for, and location of, new equipment. Ways of minimising environmental impact through measures such as mast sharing is encouraged. The Council's DM Guideline 'Radio Telecommunications' should be referred to for advice on the siting and design of masts.

Transport

- 4.14 It is envisaged that the existing Lothian Bus X48 service, which operates every 30 minutes from Waverley Bridge in Edinburgh city centre via the Ingliston Park and Ride, will serve the new development. There will be a requirement for developer contributions in relation to the provision of public transport services. These could include funding improvements to existing bus stopping facilities in the form of road carriageway markings, bus boarders, where appropriate, and shelters, lighting and real time information.
- 4.15 The existing road network can accommodate the additional vehicular traffic resulting from housing development on this site, subject to road and traffic management improvements. The latter will include the introduction of a 'speed junction' where Baird Road, Main Street and

Ratho Park Road converge, incorporating safety measures on the bend and a safe crossing point for school children as part of the Safer Routes to School programme. The introduction of passing places on the north side of Main Street, thus encouraging single traffic flow will also help to reduce the speed of traffic. The developer will be required to fund the upgrading of local roads and junctions that will be affected by the development through a condition of planning consent. Contributions will also be sought for 'safer routes to school' and cycle and footpath improvements. Any proposals must comply with the Council's 'Movement and Development Guidelines.'

- 4.16 In terms of road improvements, a new junction will be required off Baird Road, opposite the war memorial, to accommodate the western part of Freelands Road, which is to be diverted through the site. The final position of this will depend on the visibility available at this point. Its proximity to the canal bridge, which because of its narrowness operates on a traffic light system, means that the number of cars exiting the site in a southerly direction, the main direction of traffic flow, is likely to be restricted.
- 4.17 The creation of a new road through the site will alter the role of the existing section of Freelands Road between its junction with Baird Road and the site entrance. It is proposed to close this section of road to general traffic.
- 4.18 Pedestrian access from the site to the majority of facilities in the village is across the canal bridge on Baird Road. The existing narrow footway does not meet Council guidelines but it cannot be widened. The prospective developer is required to resolve the issue of accessibility across the canal to local services and road safety before the submission of a planning application. Such a solution is to be approved by the planning authority and implemented at no cost to the Council. In addition, it is proposed that a controlled pedestrian-only crossing, utilising existing signalling arrangements, be installed as a means of improving pedestrian safety on the bridge. A condition will be attached to the relevant planning consent requiring this work to be undertaken.

Water and Drainage

- 4.19 Scottish Water state that both a water and wastewater impact assessment will be required in advance of the development taking place. As the Quality and Standards III Investment Programme does not cover part 3 assets i.e. the network, the developer will be expected to meet all costs associated with any upgrades. This extends to the trunks and main sewers, intermittent discharges, service reservoirs and pumping stations.

- 4.20 The site is not a functional flood plain and does not appear to have a high risk of flooding. However, there is a culverted watercourse running through the site and therefore any flood risk will depend on whether or not this becomes blocked.
- 4.21 Consideration was given to whether the burn should be de-culverted in accordance with general best practice advice from SEPA. However, following consultation with all relevant parties, it is considered that the benefits of this approach are outweighed by technical difficulties and other potential problems.
- 4.22 A new culvert will be required to replace the existing one beneath the site with a capacity for a 1 in 200 year flood. This should be accessible to enable inspections and repairs to take place. If the dimensions of the culvert are less than would be required to work safely within it, a number of manholes should be inserted. These should be located at the start and end of the culvert, at each change in its direction, and at centres of no more than 100m apart throughout its length. If the culvert dimensions are greater than the minimum required to work within it, at least one manhole should be provided between safe access points. The culvert, associated manholes and other structures or features should be built to the same technical standards as a sewer.
- 4.23 The culvert should be located in such a way that, if required, the ground surrounding it can be dug up safely and without damage to buildings within the site. It is expected that any buildings should be a suitable distance from the culvert, subject to further discussion with the Council's flood officer.
- 4.24 A legal agreement will be required to confirm that ownership and maintenance of the culvert, its manholes, manhole covers and any other associated structures or features will be the responsibility of the owners of the site and not the Council.
- 4.25 A sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) for the attenuation and treatment of surface water will have to be implemented as part of the development. The Council's Flooding Officer recommends discharge rates as follows: peak discharge not to exceed the 2 year greenfield run-off from the site or 4.5 litre/sec/ha, whichever is the lower flow with storage, to accommodate a 30 year flow in the drainage system.

Waste and Energy

- 4.26 Proposals should make adequate provision for facilities for the separation and recycling of waste. Opportunities to incorporate technology relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy in the design of buildings should be taken up, wherever possible.

5.0 Potential Uses

- 5.1 The predominant use on the site is housing. This should be aimed primarily at families, comprising detached, semi-detached, and a small amount of terraced housing.
- 5.2 At least 15% of the housing units provided should be affordable, a minimum of 70% of which should be social rented housing. The affordable housing should be a well-integrated component of the development, provided in at least 2 locations on the site. The type of affordable housing provided should be in accordance with the Council's New Build Target Standards, i.e. 10% wheelchair accessible standard and 10% for older people. The same proportion of the affordable housing should be suitable for families (at least 3 bedrooms with access to private outdoor space) as the proportion of family housing in the wider site. Additional information is provided in the Council's DM Guideline 'Affordable Housing' June 2006 and 'Affordable Housing (appendix) Practice Note.
- 5.3 The western part of the site will be developed as a marina or 'canal basin' (see Figure 4), the design and capacity of which should be agreed in consultation with British Waterways and the Council. It is envisaged that this will accommodate between 20-30 boats, most of which will be 'long term moorings' with a smaller number of 'visitor moorings'. However, the capacity of the canal basin at any given time will vary according to the mix of boats and their resulting space requirements. A bridge will have to be constructed across the entrance to the canal basin to allow continued access to the canal towpath by walkers, cyclists, the disabled and those pushing prams. The form and design of the bridge should be acceptable to the Council and Historic Scotland. The applicant and agent should contact SEPA's local Environmental Protection and Improvement Team regarding the construction of the basin and footbridge. A small 'facilities block,' comprising toilets and storage, should be well integrated with the development and not detract from the overall quality of the design. An appropriate amount of parking will be required to be provided within the site.
- 5.4 The Council's DM Guideline 'Open Space and Ancillary Facilities in New Housing Developments' (August 2004) indicates that, as a general rule, 20% of the overall housing site area should be provided as usable open space. Proposals should make provision for areas of amenity landscaping and space, and should conserve existing landscape features. Developers should discuss responsibilities for the future management and maintenance of the areas of open space with the Council's Services for Communities Department.

6.0 Development Principles

- 6.1 The objective of this brief is to ensure a high quality, sustainable development, which in terms of its layout and design, is well integrated with the village of Ratho. A relatively low density development is

considered appropriate given the site's rural location. The brief identifies measures aimed at mitigating any potentially adverse environmental effects of the development on the site and its surrounding area. Any new development should be sensitive to the historic core in and around the conservation area and the edges of the site, including alongside the Union Canal.

- 6.2 In order to meet the overall objectives of the development brief, proposals should incorporate the following components (see Figure 4 also).

Buildings

- 6.3 New buildings in the conservation area should integrate well with existing historic buildings which are generally small-scale and constructed of natural materials, including stone and slate. As a guideline, development should be no higher than 2 storeys and building depths no greater than 10m. Pastiche should be avoided. Natural rather than reconstituted stone should feature prominently within the conservation area and where modern materials are used elsewhere, these should be of the highest quality with regard to visual appearance, sustainability and durability. Similar sensitivity should be shown to the design of boundary features.
- 6.4 Active frontages, whereby windows and front doors are faced towards streets, public spaces and the canal, should be created, wherever possible. This will help to contribute towards making the development open, yet at the same time secure.
- 6.5 Throughout the site, the development should be designed to maintain and enhance existing views, where possible. This should be achieved by the careful design and positioning of buildings and trees, road and path alignments, and ensuring that appropriate site levels are achieved. Figure 4 illustrates key views. These are of: 1) Edinburgh Castle, 2) Edinburgh Castle and Arthur's Seat, 3) Forth Bridge, 4) Air traffic control tower, Edinburgh Airport 5) St Mary's Parish Church, 6) Pentland Hills and 7) Bridge Inn. Applicants will be required to produce a visual analysis to show which views can be achieved and, if necessary, to explain why it is not possible to maintain others.
- 6.6 While only part of the proposal lies within the current boundary of the conservation area, a high standard of development should be maintained throughout the site. In addition, ways of achieving continuity of design, thus creating a strong sense of place, should be explored. For example, the same type of roof materials may be used throughout the site.
- 6.7 A range of house types, including terraced, semi-detached, and detached, and sizes should be provided to address differing needs. While a smaller amount of flatted development will be acceptable, this

should be no more than 2 storeys high, as larger building forms are unlikely to relate well to the surrounding built context.

- 6.8 Affordable housing should be fully integrated into the design and layout of the site. The design of the affordable housing should match that of general housing on the site.
- 6.9 Biodiversity features such as swift bricks and bat boxes should be incorporated into buildings.
- 6.10 The development must conform to the current Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building which are currently subject to change. At present, the Council demands that 10% of the energy requirements for the site are supplied by on site renewable energy and that the development will reduce predicted CO2 emissions by a Buildings Emissions Rating (BER) which attains a Target Emissions Rating (TER) minus 5%.
- 6.11 Sustainability features, such as space for composting, recycling bins, on site renewable energy generation, and cycle parking should be incorporated into the design from an early stage in the design process. The buildings should be set out to maximise passive design potential. It is also recommended that at least 10% of dwellings be built to lifetime home standards.

Environment

- 6.12 Public open space should take the form of a transitional zone between the proposed housing and the canal and open countryside beyond. The main area is shown as a park in the south-east corner of the site, with a narrower strip of open space between the proposed housing and the canal further west. The open space should be available to the community as a whole for use by a variety of age groups. Within the park, key elements should include a play area for children of different ages, picnic seating areas and amenity/woodland planting. Sufficient space should be provided for an informal 'kick about' area which should be located as far away from the canal as possible. Parts of the open space, in particular the grassed areas, will require regular maintenance. Smaller areas of open space should also form part of the home zones elsewhere on the site.
- 6.13 The canal basin will form an important public space and its location, in the conservation area and close proximity to the canal, demands use of the highest quality materials i.e. natural stone. In addition, seating areas and tree planting should be incorporated.
- 6.14 In order to create an attractive setting for the church, war memorial and other listed buildings in the conservation area, particular attention should be given to the position of the buildings and landscape elements, the choice of ground materials e.g. setts and the type of

planting in this location. Additional landscaping will help to minimise the visual impact of the proposed new road junction on Baird Road.

- 6.15 Existing trees and hedges should be retained, where possible. These contribute to landscape quality and amenity and form valuable wildlife habitats. New tree planting should be provided as a range of native species in the proposed car parks, along the southern (adjacent to the canal) and eastern boundaries of the site, and as street trees within the development. For example, an avenue of trees could be incorporated along the newly aligned Freelands Road, off Baird Road. This is in order to minimise the visual impact of the development on the surrounding countryside, which is Green Belt, and to create a range of habitats for wildlife. It should, however, be interrupted to allow views to be maintained to the east, as illustrated in Figure 4.
- 6.16 The 'cliff face' effect which forms part of the eastern boundary of the site, which has been created by the previous landfill activity, should be re-designed to reduce its adverse visual impact. This is in order to provide a more natural appearance and to address differences in levels.
- 6.17 A Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) should be an integral part of the development. This should take the form of surface attenuation ponds rather than underground storage tanks. The edges of the ponds should be of such a gradient as to allow the growth of semi-aquatic plant species.

Movement

- 6.18 The development will be served by a new vehicular route which will require new junctions at Baird Road in the centre of the village and at Freelands Road. This will be configured in such a way as to reduce traffic speeds through the development. In accordance with the views of local residents, it is proposed to close the section of Freelands Road to the west of the new junction to through traffic. This option is acceptable to the Council and is illustrated in Figure 4.
- 6.19 A package of improvements to the existing road network will be required to off-set the increase in traffic resulting from the development. This is principally in order to reduce congestion and address road safety issues. The Council's 'safer routes to school' programme should also be implemented.
- 6.20 To allow maximum pedestrian accessibility the site should be laid out on the basis of the 'home zone' principle in which pedestrians have priority over vehicles across a shared surface. Individual home zones should include no more than 50 houses so that car numbers do not exceed acceptable levels at peak times. Streets should be designed to be accessible by all members of the community, such as the elderly

and disabled. New pedestrian and cycle connections should, where possible, be linked to existing routes, in particular the canal tow path.

- 6.21 To allow continued pedestrian movement (including by cyclists, wheelchair and pram users) along the canal towpath, it is proposed that a bridge be installed at the entrance to the new canal basin. The Council's preference is for an 'openable' structure, the design of which should be of a high quality and compatible with its location in the conservation area and adjacent to the Union Canal. This is viewed as being less detrimental to the canal, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, in terms of visual impact than alternative design solutions. The bridge offers the opportunity to provide a structure of innovative design which could become a focal point of the development. The final design should be agreed with the Council in conjunction with Historic Scotland at the planning application stage. The use of innovative, high quality designs is positively encouraged. The Paddington Basin Rolling Bridge in London is considered a good model.
- 6.22 In order to encourage public transport use, a new bus stop and lay-by should be created close to the church, canal basin and car park. Sufficient space should also be provided for use by a school bus.
- 6.23 New public car parking should be created near the church and canal basin which will serve users of both facilities. This must be constructed from high quality surface materials such as setts, and include structural planting such as beech hedging and trees. A management plan will require to be agreed with the Council to cover its use and maintenance.
- 6.24 The road layout and other infrastructure provision, including water and drainage, should reflect the fact that the 'Glebe land' to the north-west of the site may be developed in the future.

7.0 Implementation

- 7.1 The Freelands Road development brief forms supplementary planning guidance which will be a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications on the site. Where planning consent is granted, the necessary transport improvements, affordable housing and education contributions will be secured through appropriate conditions and legal agreements, as necessary.
- 7.2 This development brief focuses on the development of the Freelands Road site, as identified in the local plan. However, the settlement boundary for Ratho includes a small area of agricultural land between the north-west boundary of the site and Freelands Road, known as the 'Glebe land'. While identified on the layout plan, this site does not form part of this brief. That it may be developed at some time in the future, however, is acknowledged.

- 7.3 The development principles set out in this brief will also apply to any future planning proposals for the 'Glebe land'. Proposals for this should ensure that views to the south from Freelands Road are possible, that the daylighting, sunlight and privacy of neighbouring properties is not adversely affected and that the 1.2m high verge on Freelands Road is retained, where possible.

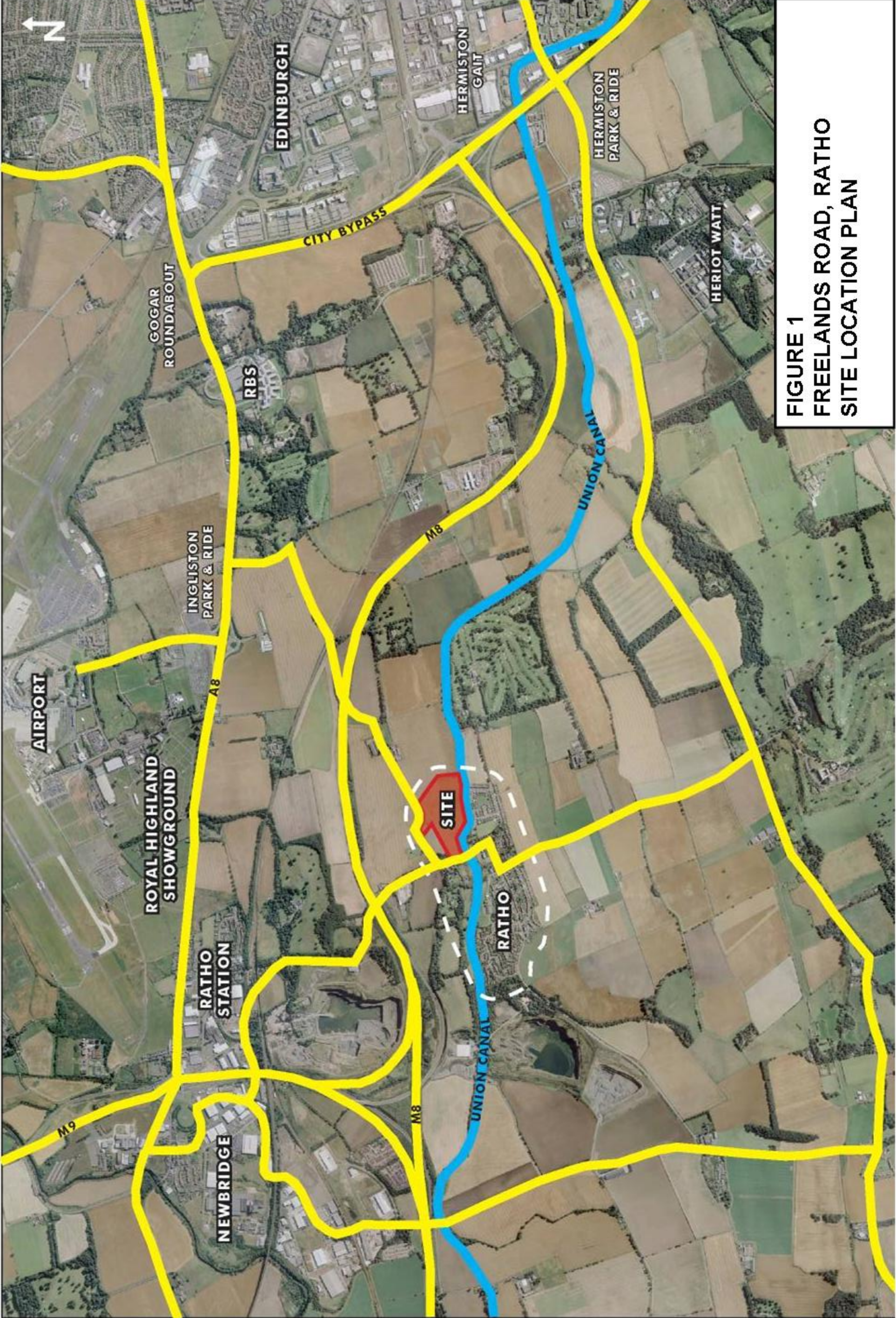



FIGURE 1
FREELANDS ROAD, RATHO
SITE LOCATION PLAN

KEY

-  Site Boundary

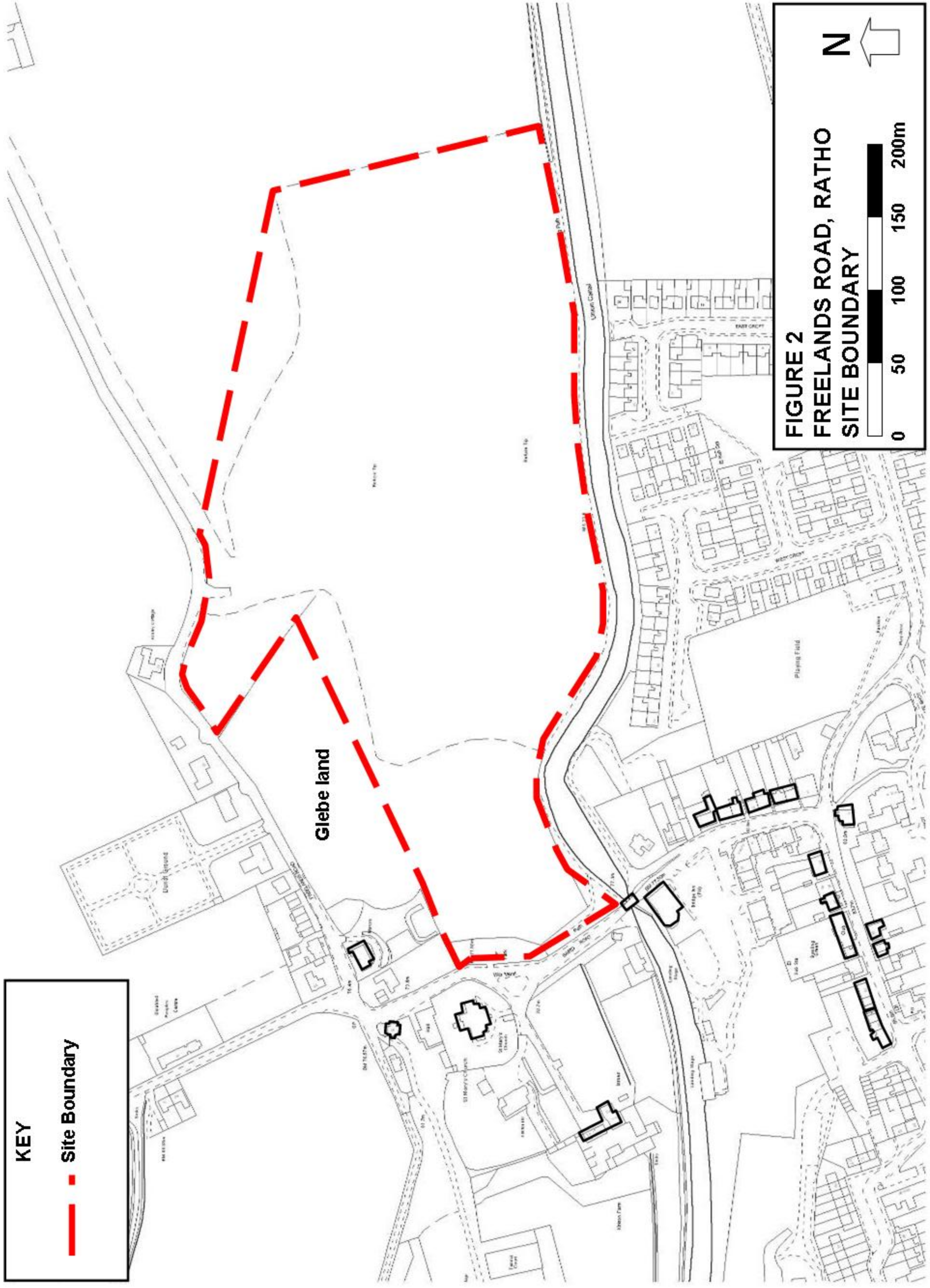


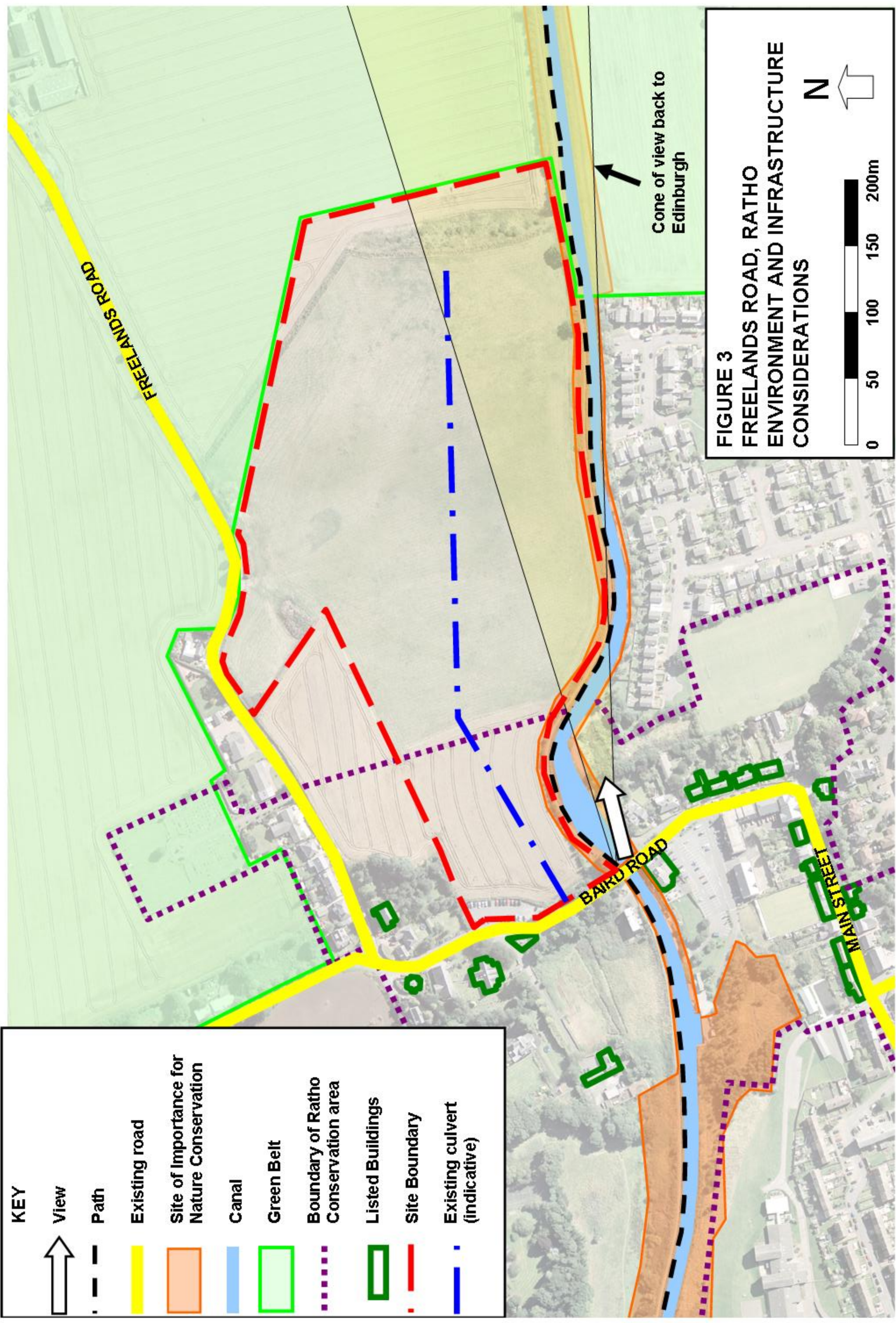


FIGURE 2
FREELANDS ROAD, RATHO
SITE BOUNDARY


N

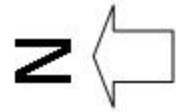
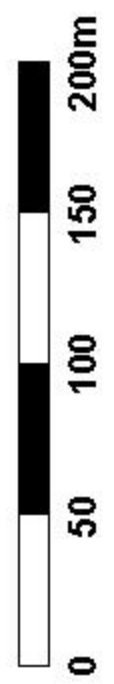

0 50 100 150 200m



KEY

- View
- Path
- Existing road
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Canal
- Green Belt
- Boundary of Ratho Conservation area
- Listed Buildings
- Site Boundary
- Existing culvert (indicative)

**FIGURE 3
 FREELANDS ROAD, RATHO
 ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
 CONSIDERATIONS**

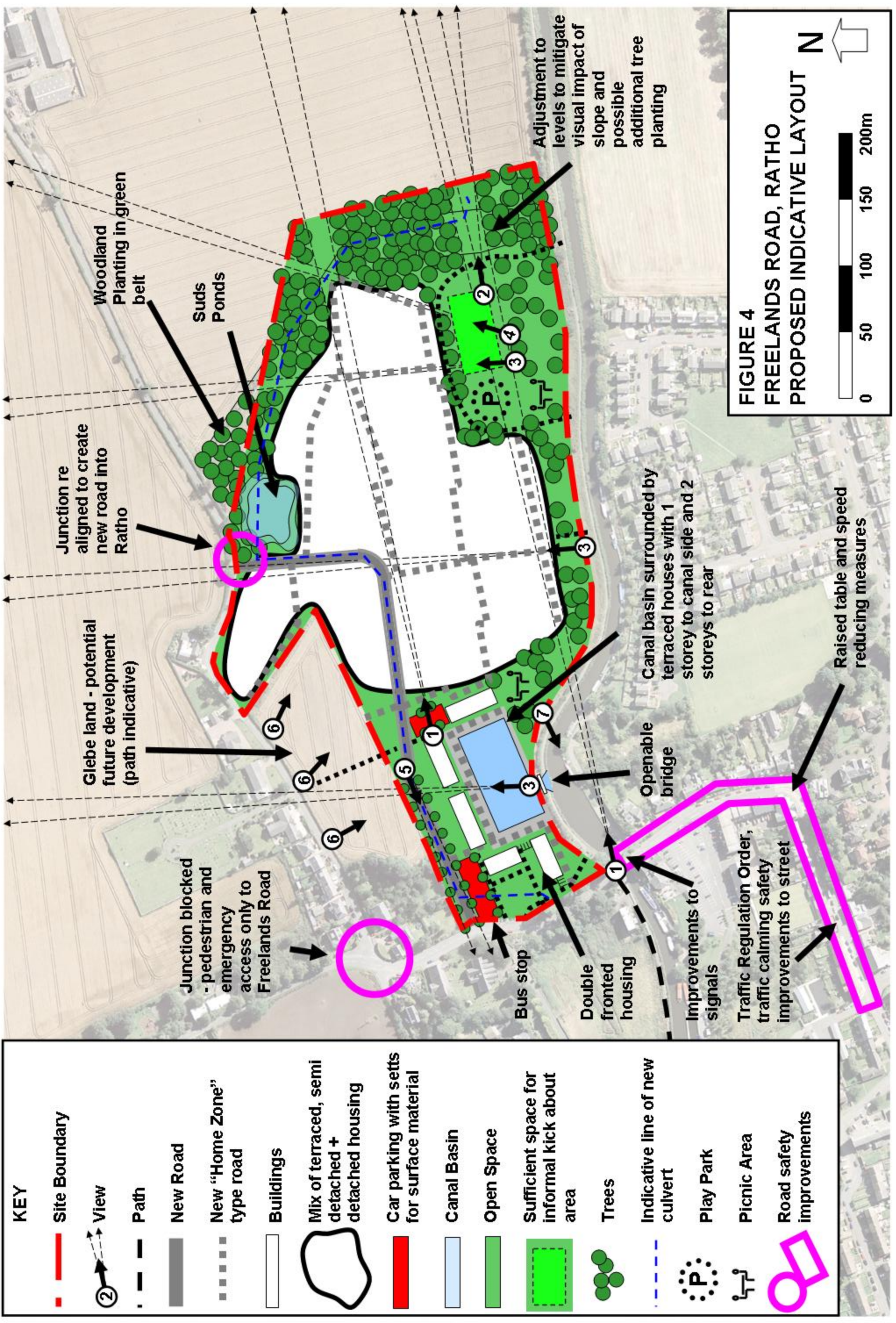


Cone of view back to
 Edinburgh

BAIKUD ROAD

MAIN STREET

FREELANDS ROAD



KEY

- Site Boundary
- ② View
- - - Path
- ▬ New Road
- - - New "Home Zone" type road
- ▭ Buildings
- ▭ Mix of terraced, semi detached + detached housing
- ▭ Car parking with setts for surface material
- ▭ Canal Basin
- ▭ Open Space
- ▭ Sufficient space for informal kick about area
- Trees
- - - Indicative line of new culvert
- ⋯ Play Park
- ⋯ Picnic Area
- ⊕ Road safety improvements

FIGURE 4
FREELANDS ROAD, RATHO
PROPOSED INDICATIVE LAYOUT

0 50 100 150 200m

N

This development brief sets out land use and design principles for its area.

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Produced by the City Development Department, Planning and Strategy, May 2008

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