



Growing the Heart in our Community

Slains Community Enterprise Project

Options Appraisal - Capital



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INTRODUCTION

This Options Appraisal aims to explain why our community has decided to raise sufficient capital to both build a new community centre *and* to convert the existing hall and former school house to accommodation units. The plans for our new facilities are the result of more than ten years of discussion and debate within the community. The appraisal also explains the rationale for our choice of renewable technologies and building heating system. The new facilities will create the increased community space required to sustain our community enterprise and grow the heart in our community.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Until recently, our community had two locations for social interaction, the village shop and the village hall. The village shop originally hosted the Collieston branch of the Post Office. This facility closed on 11 December 2008, and was replaced by a restricted outreach service located in the existing village hall. Without the Post Office and with no passing trade, the shop was no longer economically viable – it closed on the 26th September 2009 when the owners retired. We have now lost the only location where members of the community of all ages were able to interact on a daily basis. The village hall, currently owned by Aberdeenshire Council, is now too small to meet our growing community's needs, especially with regard to play group. While Aberdeenshire Council has committed to maintaining the hall in a

weather-tight condition and compliant with Health and Safety regulations, it has stated that any upgrading is most unlikely (SD.14). The current financial pressure on Aberdeenshire Council has already caused an increase in charges for the hall. These came into effect in April 2009 and are already being enforced. It is likely that members of the community with transport will look elsewhere for locations to pursue leisure interests rather than pay high charges for a cramped old hall. This will reduce hall use and social interaction, and could precipitate closure of the hall itself. In short, by doing nothing, we risk losing the only remaining focus of community spirit and becoming a dormitory community. To avoid this scenario, the community decided to take action to preserve and indeed grow the heart of our community.

Our project has arisen because of the need for:

- Increased sustainable community space
- Improved community care both locally and in North East Scotland
- Improved and more inclusive access to services
- Performing and visual Arts space in the Formartine area
- Managing community resources in an environmentally and socially responsible way

Further details of these needs are given in the separate '[Options Appraisal – Needs](#)' document.

MEETING THE NEEDS

Over the years, we have examined a number of alternative capital investment options to meet the above needs. These are discussed below. Figure 1 illustrates a timeline of key milestones, events and decisions. A separate "Options Appraisal – Needs" document explains why this approach is the best way of meeting the needs of the project.

Option A – Do Nothing

The Do Nothing option was formally ruled out at a Scottish Executive (Rural Voices) facilitated workshop in November 2003 (SD.27) and this was confirmed in the community ballot of May 2004. In this ballot, the community were asked to decide between doing nothing, extending and refurbishing the existing buildings, or demolishing the existing buildings and building a new centre on the same site. The ballot results were as follows: Do Nothing – 11 votes, Extend and Refurbish – 95 votes, Demolish and Rebuild – 142 votes, Spoilt – 6 votes.

Option B – Renovate Existing Hall and Former School House

Could the problems with the existing village hall be overcome by a simple renovation? This option was explored by the Local Authority and the community in 1997, when Aberdeenshire Council produced outline plans for the possible renovation of the existing buildings (SD.28). The plans maintained the current hall capacity of 60 and used the adjacent school house to provide space for a meeting room and a dormitory upstairs. As the Council would not fund the refurbishment, the community would need to access the required funds and take on the ongoing operating and maintenance costs. Potential funders would require the project to be sustainable. To be sustainable, any refurbished hall would need to have the capacity to generate sufficient funds to cover costs. The Council plans did not provide sufficient space for generating revenue. In addition, they were not costed or based on identified community need, especially with respect to a growing play group and the need for more car parking. When all these factors are taken into account, it is clear that refurbishing the existing hall is simply not viable, and the option has not been pursued.

Option C – Slains Kirk

The Church of Scotland has offered the community the use of Slains Kirk. However, this building is of limited use due its fixed seating and the need to be respectful of a place of worship and its surrounding graveyard. Consequently, the kirk would only ever be used to host a fraction of the community's activities and so is not considered a viable option to grow the heart in our community.

Option D – Slains School

Slains School was built in the 1960s as a community school. Using its facilities is therefore another option for the community. However, the school is located some three miles from the village, so is not convenient for those without transport. Use of the school hall would also result in a greater carbon footprint because of the car travel involved. In addition, the school cannot be used for community activities during school hours. This option was ruled out for all of these reasons.

Option E – New Community Centre

Nine options for the development of a new Community Centre have been examined in detail within the community. The options are:

1. Extend and Refurbish
2. Demolish and Rebuild
3. New Build on New Site
- 4-8. New Build Architectural Competition Designs A-E
9. New Build and Retain

From an early stage, it was recognised that any option, other than a simple refurbishment of the existing buildings, would be

severely constrained by the site boundary. It became increasingly apparent that there were significant advantages in purchasing additional land (known as The Rivie) around the existing site. Firstly, it would allow any new building to be more optimally located to take advantage of coastal views and provide more space for car parking. Secondly, The Rivie could complement a new building and become a fantastic recreational amenity for the community in its own right. Following an extended period of negotiation, terms to purchase the Rivie were verbally agreed with the owners, Slains Estate, in July 2006. The decision to purchase The Rivie was confirmed by community ballot in May 2007, a concluded bargain was reached in May 2008 and the land was finally purchased on 3 October 2008.

Option E.1 – Extend & Refurbish and Option E.2 – Demolish & Rebuild

In early 2004, a local architectural practice, Tinto Architecture, was engaged to develop conceptual designs for (a) extending and refurbishing the existing hall and adjacent school house and (b) demolishing the existing hall and school house and building a new centre on the same site. The conceptual designs ([SD29](#) and [SD.30](#), respectively) were for illustrative purposes only to help the community visualise possibilities. They were based on community needs as identified at the Scottish Executive's Rural Voices workshop in November 2003, with the main requirement being for a hall big enough for up to 200 people. Richard Tinto presented the conceptual designs at a public meeting in April 2004 and discussed indicative costs and relative merits for the two options (see [SD.31](#)). He considered that the construction cost for an "Extend and Refurbish" option would be in the order of £600-700k whereas it would be about £750-800k for a "Demolish and New Build" option. He advised that while it might be marginally less expensive to construct, any "Extend and Refurbish" option would

attract VAT and be more expensive to operate and maintain than a “Demolish and New Build” option. Another drawback of an “Extend and Refurbish” option is that, it would inevitably have to compromise on utility and flexibility. The two designs were included as part of the information pack for the community ballot in May 2004. The “Extend and Refurbish” option was ruled out in this ballot in favour of pursuing an option to “Demolish and Rebuild”. The reasons for supporting this option were:

- **Greater Utility and Flexibility:** a new building could be designed specifically to meet the stated needs of the village today and in the future.
- **Lower Operating Costs:** a new building would be more energy efficient and cheaper to maintain than an extension to the current buildings.

Option E.3 – New Build on New Site

In late 2004, Aberdeenshire Council suggested an alternative green field site, owned by Slains Estate, for the new building. This is located opposite the road leading down to the harbour between Slains House and Coast Guard Cottages (Figure 2). The Council’s proposal was to sell the existing community centre and school house for development and to give the proceeds of the sale to the community. This option had the obvious advantage of providing some actual funds thus reducing the level of funding required from other sources to construct the new building. However, the option was not pursued for the following reasons:

- Despite a number of approaches over the next year, no response to the proposal was ever received from Slains Estate and there was no guarantee that it would ever sell the land.

- The land is poorly drained, was earmarked for sewerage works (completed by Scottish Water in early 2009) and was therefore of questionable suitability.
- The alternative site was inferior to the current Rivie site with respect to potential for coastal views and creating a recreational amenity to complement the new community centre.

This option was ruled out at a public meeting on 28 October 2005. Essentially, there was too much uncertainty (timing and financial) about the sale of the land to justify pursuing the option, especially as the community was impatient with the delays the uncertainty had already caused to the project. The community also voted to proceed with running a national architectural competition to select a design for the new centre.

Options E.4 to E.8 – Architectural Competition Designs A-E

The architectural competition was launched in October 2006. It was coordinated with the help of Charles Rattray, then a senior lecturer at The Scott Sutherland School of Architecture at The Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

Some 16 pre-selected architects were sent an Architectural Competition Brief ([SD.32](#)) with an invitation to submit a resume describing the work of the architectural practice and what it might contribute to our project. Based on responses, a shortlist of 5 practices was selected and each practice asked to submit models and drawings for the new Community Centre. It is important to recognise that while each of the practices visited Collieston, their submissions were prepared without any interaction with the community. The submissions are presented in [SD.33-37](#). They were exhibited in the village for a period of two weeks and visitors to the exhibition were asked to comment on the designs by filling

out a questionnaire (SD.38). This community feedback was collated into a report and summary presentation (SD.39 and SD.40), which were provided to members of the judging panel to ensure that they took full account of the community's views in selecting 2 designs to go forward to the final stage of the competition. The judging panel was made up of 3 internationally-renowned architects and 3 community representatives, chaired by Charles Rattray. The panel's report on the submissions and its rationale for selecting the 2 finalists (Designs B and E), rather than the community's favourite (Design A), is presented in SD.41.

A public meeting was held on 19 January 2007 (SD.42) to explain the judges' rationale for selecting the 2 finalists and to allow the community to air concerns about the competition. Following this consultation, it was decided that the community should vote for the architect that would best work with the community rather than for a particular design, as had been originally intended. The 2 finalists were then invited to present their designs to the community at a public meeting on 26 January 2007 (SD.43-45) as a precursor to a secret postal ballot to select the winner.

Reiach and Hall Architects won this ballot, impressing us with their enthusiastic approach and willingness and ability to work with the community to develop the right design for us.

Option E.9 – New Build and Retain (Preferred Option)

As the new build option was pursued, several factors pointed to considering a ninth option, namely: to build a new community centre on the Rivie **AND** to retain the existing hall and school house.

Firstly, the community ballot of May 2004 had suggested that a significant number of people would prefer to see the existing

buildings retained if possible. Secondly, the winner of the architectural competition, Reiach and Hall Architects, had submitted a design concept (Option E.5, [SD.34](#)) that both retained the existing buildings and nestled a new building into the side of The Rivie. The concept involved converting the existing buildings to accommodation units (two 2-bedroom self-catering flats and one 1-bedroom self-catering studio flat) and using The Rivie to provide additional car parking and as a recreational amenity. Thirdly, retaining the existing buildings is simply the right thing to do in terms of sustainability. Fourthly, separating the new building from accommodation units allowed the former to be smaller, which together with it being built into The Rivie, lessens its visual impact.

Together, these four factors created the opportunity to satisfy the wishes of the vast majority of people in the community by retaining the existing buildings AND building a new smaller community centre.

Having won the architectural competition, and being cognisant of community concerns, Reiach and Hall Architects immediately offered to go back to a blank sheet of paper and begin the design process anew. The Architectural Work Group held a facilitated meeting with the main user groups to discuss how to work with the architect and to revisit details of the architect's brief ([SD.46](#)). The output from this meeting was used to inform the first of three public workshops hosted by the architect's design team ([SD.5-7](#)). During these workshops and various meetings with the Architectural Work Group, the design team consulted extensively with the community to develop a design proposal that has been widely accepted by the community. It now bears little resemblance to the design proposal that won the architectural competition. In response to community concerns about scale and visual impact, the hall capacity was reduced by a quarter from a maximum of 200 people to 150 people.

In November 2008, our Community Council submitted a planning application on CASCT's behalf, (saving CASCT 50% of the planning application fee) and in January 2009, the application went before the Aberdeenshire Council's Formartine Area Committee with a recommendation for approval subject to a number of planning conditions. The Committee supported this recommendation, subject to resolution of a number of additional issues relating to car parking, surface runoff and slope stability. On 24 June 2009, Aberdeenshire Council granted full planning consent for the proposed development, subject to a number of planning conditions.

COMPARISON

The size, cost and attributes of the nine new build options are compared in Table 1. Adjustments have been made on costs so that they can be compared on roughly the same basis. These include adding preliminaries and contingency where these were not included, and taking inflation into account.

Of the 8 options for which designs and costs were worked up, the costs of the Tinto Architecture options (Options E1 and E2) are perhaps the least well developed, being the architect's rough estimates. In contrast, the costs of the five competition submissions, Options E4 – E8 were developed with input from quantity surveyors. The competition quantity surveyor reviewed these costs and judged them to be reasonable for the designs. Reiach and Hall's new design (Option E.9) is the only option to have been fully costed by a quantity surveyor. It is also the only option to have been developed in full consultation with the community.

Given the differences in level of detail, the range in build costs is surprisingly narrow, from £0.988 million (Option E.6) to £1.576

million (Option E.4), with an average of £1.214 million. The range in floor areas is greater from 710 m² (Option E.4) to a massive 1302 m² (Option E.7), with an average of 882 m². Our preferred option (E.9) compares very favourably in terms of size and cost. At 846 m² its floor area is less than the average, while its build cost of £1.203 million is very slightly less than the average.

Comparison of the floor areas of the two Reiach and Hall designs shows that the preferred design (Option E.9) has been reduced in scale by more than 100 m² compared with the competition design, in response to community feedback on scale and visual impact. The higher total cost of the preferred option can be explained largely by the requirement for significantly more external ground works than originally envisaged.

RENEWABLES

The original architectural brief called for the new building to have a zero net energy cost. The design team investigated a number of different combinations of renewable technologies and building heating systems. These are discussed in Sections 2.5 and 7 of Capital Grant Check List 3. The option that was considered to best meet the brief is Option 1, a combination of wind turbines to generate power, ground source heat pumps for the heat source, a wet underfloor heating system to distribute heat and solar panels for heating domestic water. In this scenario, two 15m tall wind turbines would be installed on the Rivie. However, after much debate, the CASCT directors and committee decided against pursuing this option *at this time* for the following reasons:

- The installation of two turbines on the Rivie would undoubtedly visually dominate our coastal landscape. As such, there would be a high risk of it dividing the community and complicating and delaying planning consent.

- Given the extreme and highly variable wind speeds experienced on the Rivie, there is a finite risk of a catastrophic failure of a turbine, which would be very expensive to repair, let alone replace.
- The reduction in running costs for this option relative to others was not deemed so significant as to warrant incurring the above risks or justify the additional capital spend.

CASCT's thinking has also been influenced by consideration of the relative impact of passive design features and renewables. With regard to energy efficiency, our emphasis has been to focus on the passive design of the new building to reduce its overall energy consumption. Good design has a far greater impact on reducing energy consumption than renewables, which though fashionable, tend to have much less impact on CO₂ emissions and to be more expensive to install and maintain (Figure 3).

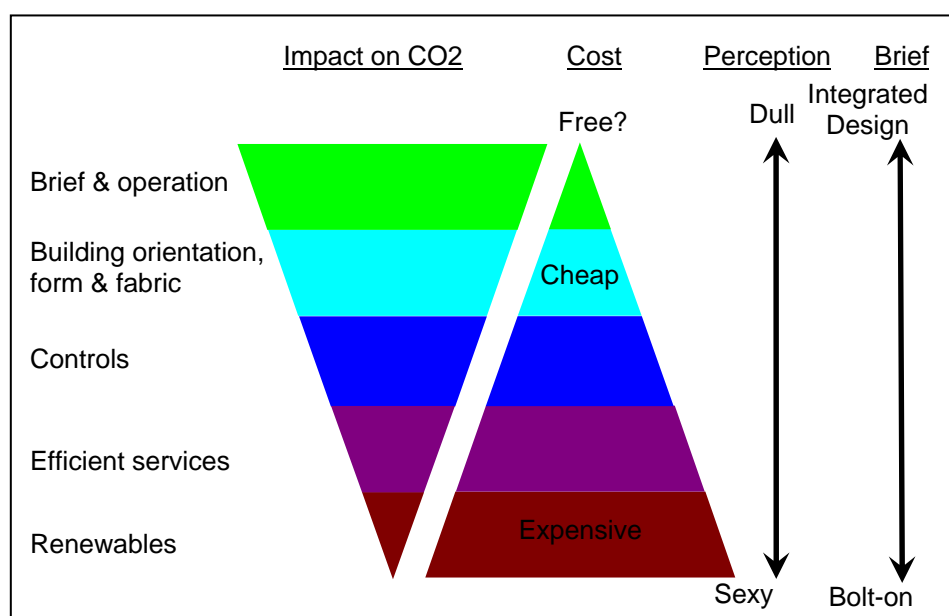


Figure 3 – A comparison of the cost of renewables and design approach vs their impact on CO₂

As a consequence, CASCT's preferred option incorporates passive design features combined with limited implementation of renewables. Specifically, we intend fitting solar panels for heating water and a wet underfloor heating system that will initially be connected to a conventional oil-fired boiler. We believe that this

combination represents the best compromise of energy efficiency, risk, capital expenditure and operating costs. At some point in the future, when renewable technologies become less expensive and more reliable, we may consider connecting the wet underfloor system to ground or air source heat pumps powered by wind turbines as part of another capital project.

SUMMARY

Current and future restrictions on public services spending require all options for a community centre to be self-sustaining. Doing nothing was firmly ruled out by almost everyone in the community in the ballot of May 2004. However, the decision between a new build and renovation and extension of the existing buildings was much closer. Clearly, a significant number of people in the community wanted the existing buildings to be retained, or at least would be sad to see them demolished, but a clear majority voted for a new building that would meet the community's current and future needs. The architectural competition provided five alternative and distinctly different options for a new building. The winning submission retained the existing buildings as well as providing a new building. Subsequently, the Reiach and Hall design team has worked with the community to develop a new design that addresses concerns about scale and visual impact of the new building. Our preferred option recognises all these diverse views by retaining the existing buildings whilst offering a smaller, flexible and sustainable new building that best facilitates meeting our needs and delivering our outcomes.

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Supporting Documents Index

- SD.5 – Minutes, 1st Public Architectural Workshop, 12 May 2007
- SD.6 – Minutes, 2nd Public Architectural Workshop, 11 August 2007
- SD.7 – Minutes, 3rd Public Architectural Workshop, 10 September 2008
- SD.14 – Letter from Aberdeenshire Council on ‘Do Nothing’ option
- SD.27 – Article in ‘The Blether’ about Scottish Executive RVARC Workshop, November 2003
- SD.28 – Aberdeenshire Council 1997 plans for renovation of existing buildings
- SD.29 – Tinto Architecture concept for Extend & Refurbish (Option E.1)
- SD.30 – Tinto Architecture concept for Demolish & Rebuild (Option E.2)
- SD.31 – Minutes, Public Meeting, 23 April 2004 to discuss the way forward
- SD.32 – CASCT Architectural Competition Brief
- SD.33 – CASCT Architectural Competition Submission – Design A
- SD.34 – CASCT Architectural Competition Submission – Design B
- SD.35 – CASCT Architectural Competition Submission – Design C
- SD.36 – CASCT Architectural Competition Submission – Design D
- SD.37 – CASCT Architectural Competition Submission – Design E
- SD.38 – Community Questionnaire
- SD.39 – Community Questionnaire Feedback Report
- SD.40 – Community Questionnaire Feedback Presentation to Judges
- SD.41 – CASCT Architectural Competition Judges Report on Submissions
- SD.42 – Minutes, Public Meeting, 19 January 2007
- SD.43 – Sarah Hare Architects presentation to community
- SD.44 – Reiach and Hall Architects presentation to community

SD.45 – Minutes, Public Meeting, 26 January 2007

SD.46 – Minutes, User Group Meeting, 27 April 2007

Figure 1: Options Appraisal timeline of key milestones, events and decisions

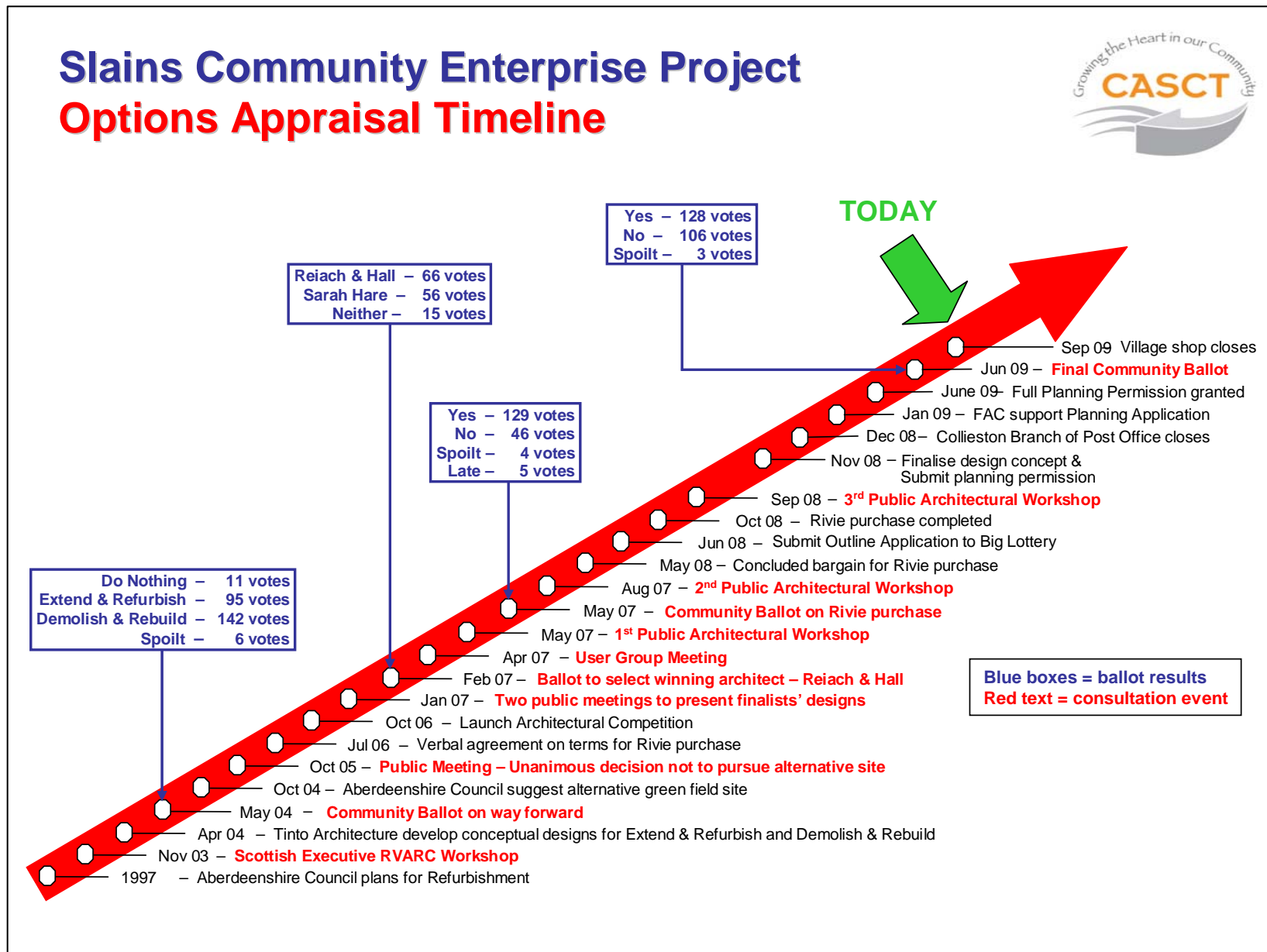


Figure 2: Aerial photograph showing Collieston’s unique coastal location and the sites of the existing hall and school house, an alternative site for the new community centre (Option E.3) and of The Rivie, land already purchased by CASCT



Table 1: A comparison of floor areas and build costs of the nine New Build options.

Option Number	Description	Architect	Floor Area (m2)	Build Cost (£M)	Comments	Notes
E.1	Extend & Refurbish	Tinto Architecture	715	£1.024	Conceptual design to help community visualise possibilities; no consultation; rough indicative cost estimate	1
E.2	Demolish & Rebuild	Tinto Architecture	890	£1.170	Conceptual design to help community visualise possibilities; no consultation; rough indicative cost estimate	2
E.3	New Build on New Site	-	-	-	Not pursued due to uncertainty over sale and suitability of land	
E.4	Architectural Competition Design A	studio KAP Glasgow	710	£1.576	Unrelated to village in form, especially the 3 pitched roofs, 2 of which bore no relationship with spaces below.	3, 4, 5
E.5	Architectural Competition Design B	Reiach & Hall Architects Edinburgh	950	£1.000	Winner of competition; the only design to retain existing buildings. Provocative yet discreet, built into the land not placed on it. The views emphasised natural elements of sky, sea and ground in a new way. Concern expressed about lack of engagement with village.	3,4
E.6	Architectural Competition Design C	Graeme Massie Architects Edinburgh	825	£0.988	Building had clarity and consistency, but its rationality was also tough and not very welcoming. It was a blind object from the road with no sense or views of internal activity.	3,4
E.7	Architectural Competition Design D	Sutherland Hussey Architects Edinburgh	1302	£1.515	Adopted the typology of a castle with a remote siting. Play group space treated as a secondary space in the building's plinth.	3,4
E.8	Architectural Competition Design E	Sarah Hare Architects London	818	£1.236	Finalist in competition; the building has the right scale, strong enjoyable and practical spaces and a good relationship with the community.	3, 4, 6
E.9	Preferred Option	Reiach & Hall Architects Edinburgh	846	£1.203	New design developed in full consultation with community; reduced scale; fully costed	5
Average			882	£1.214		

1 Indicative cost of £700k corrected for preliminaries at 12.5%, contingency at 5%, and inflation of 24.5% (Building Cost Information Service tender price inflation index 1Q04 to 4Q07)

2 Indicative cost of £800k corrected for preliminaries at 12.5%, contingency at 5%, and inflation of 24.5% (Building Cost Information Service tender price inflation index 1Q04 to 4Q07)

3 Judging panel included: Bob Allies of Allies & Morrison Architects, London; Tarla MacGabhann of MacGabhann Architects, Letterkenny; Angela Williams of Design Scotland, Edinburgh; Charles Rattray, Senior Lecturer at Scott Sutherland School of Architecture at Robert Gordon's University

4 Competition designs were developed with no community consultation

5 Cost adjusted for preliminaries at 12.5% and contingency at 5%

6 Cost adjusted for contingency at 5%

