

Aberdeen: one step at a time: how to prioritise movement of people and make walking cool.

BELKOURI, D. and LAING, R.

2020

A B E R D E E N

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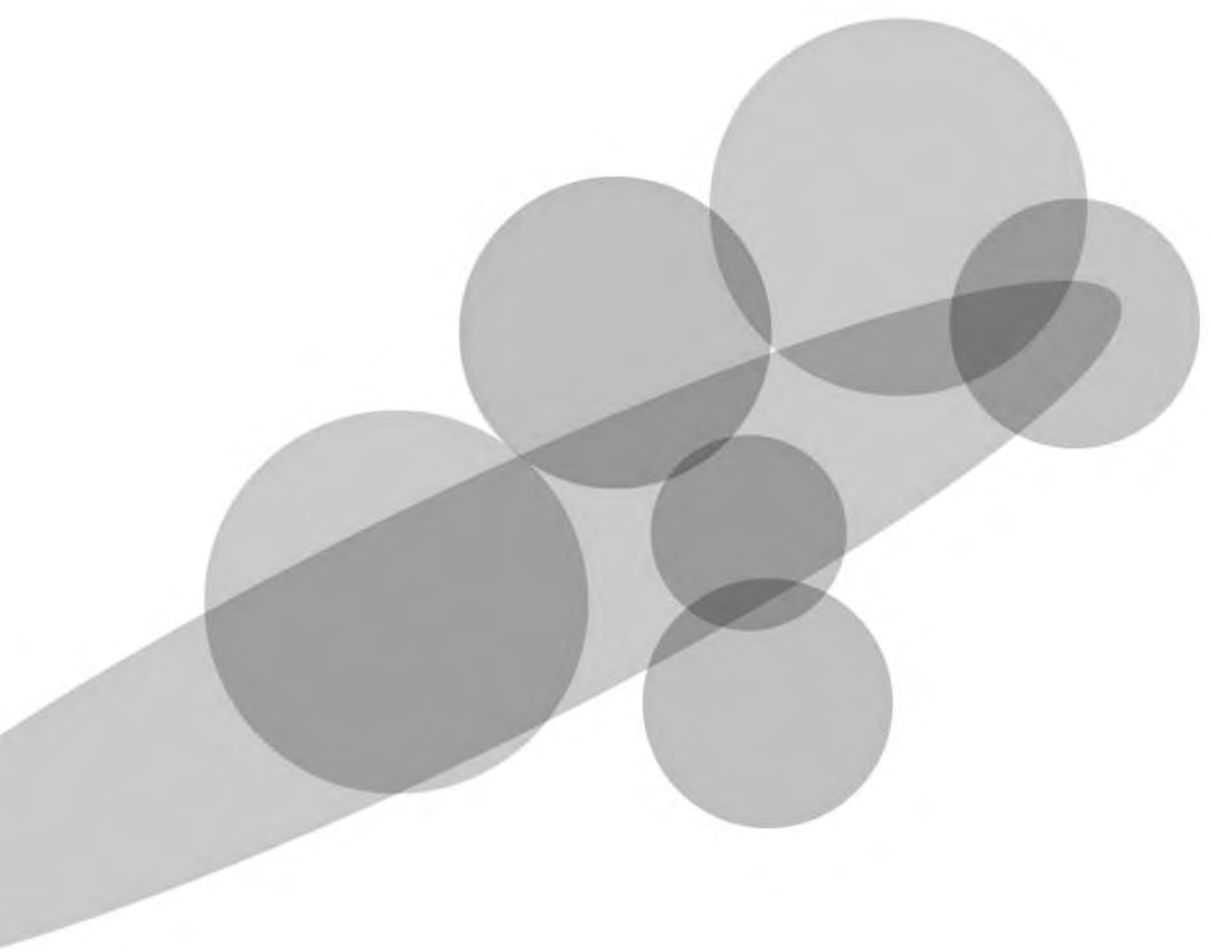
O N E S T E P

A T A T I M E

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL



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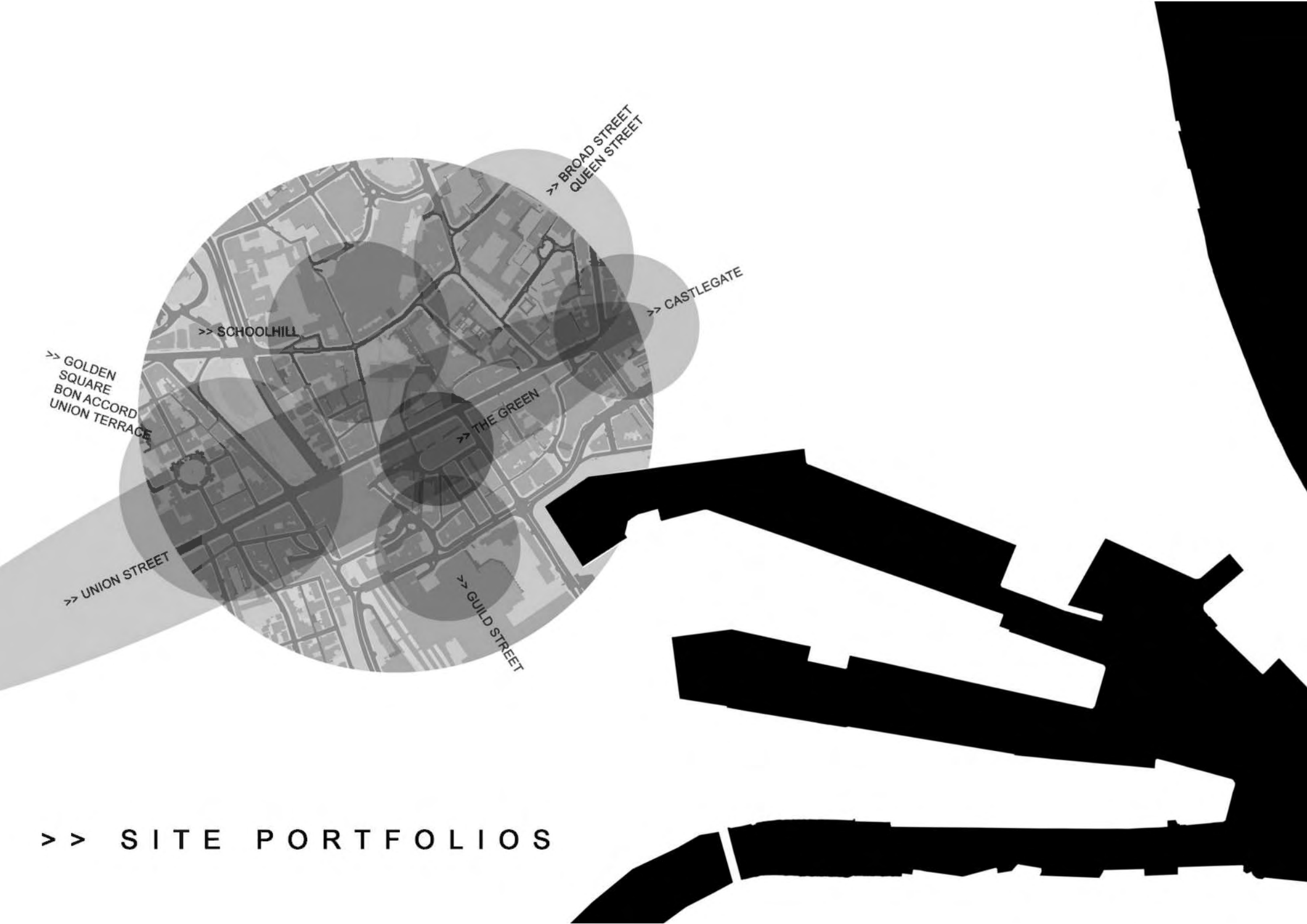
During the course of undertaking local evaluation within the **PORTIS** project in Aberdeen our experience suggested that - in order to develop a much deeper understanding of cause and effect in relation to walking within the city - we would need to collect additional qualitative data pertaining to the urban environment. This has included study of the physical design and use of space, and of behavioural shifts which may be brought about through both voluntary and enforced change.

During the final year of the research, the city was affected by the global pandemic which in turn led to necessary changes in the provision of space for pedestrians and cyclists to support appropriate social distancing. Within the context of a project which concerned the cause and effect of mobility planning application and maintenance, it was interesting to note that the particular triggers for modal shift came not from within the transport realm but from wider societal pressures and drivers.

The **PORTIS** project included significant material and measures and addressed walking within each of the project living labs. In Aberdeen this is possibly best represented through reference to work packages one and two, which considering the long term implementation of sustainable mobility within the city (a revised SUMP), as well as both realised and planned interventions which will form an important part of the project legacy.

The work contained within this document was undertaken by the local evaluation team and aimed to explore how walking can be supported encouraged and positively influenced by the urban environment itself. Through the use of a range of innovative qualitative data collection techniques, including the use of advanced mobile laser scanning technology, we feel that we have addressed one of our own aims, which was to look at the city with fresh eyes and from a new - sometimes abstract - perspective.

Themes and issues raised within the document arguably signal ways in which the city might be allowed and supported to evolve in the coming years. This will not necessarily be a quick or easy process, yet we argue is one which can be addressed one step at a time.



>> BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET

>> CASTLEGATE

>> SCHOOLHILL

>> THE GREEN

>> GUILD STREET

>> GOLDEN
SQUARE
BON ACCORD
UNION TERRACE

>> UNION STREET

>> SITE PORTFOLIOS

CITY CENTRE >> MASTER DIAGRAM

Professor Sir Colin Buchanan in his planning report in 1963 stated that: 'a motor car is a monster of great potential destructiveness' and John Speck (2012) emphasised the fact that: 'the pedestrian is an extremely fragile species, the canary in the coal mine of urban livability. Under the right conditions, this creature thrives and multiplies.'

Creating a walkable, bikeable city is not about the competition – a battle between pedestrians and cars. It is also not about banning vehicular access to the city centre completely, but about the urban compromise and balance: forming cityscape that make choices possible and where the coexistence between people, cars, buses and cyclists is possible.

Aberdeen has a unique history, coastal location, harbour; is not too big a city but large enough to have access to a wide variety of cultural amenities: art galleries, theatres, museums, cinemas; it coincides with distinctive architecture that augments the unique and magnetic sense of place. Many citizens care about it deeply.

The solution to untangling the potential of the urban landscape of the city centre could be to take one step at a time: starting with micro interventions, projects that would respect and concentrate on people, listen to how its citizens and future generations would want to inhabit the city and understand changing societies' needs by providing alternatives to car dominated streets.

How to make walking cool? Create a pedestrian friendly environment, as 'walkable cities are also bikeable cities' and '(...) bikeability makes driving less necessary' (Speck, 2012).

Aberdeen should evoke and give a form to the notion of the City Centre – liveable, walkable core with the Union Street acting as a spine connecting people and places of Aberdeen. Aberdeen needs a defined identity and also to answer the questions of: where the soul of the city is? and what does 'ABERDEENNESS' mean?

Aberdeen has to continue telling its story to the world with a quiet but firm voice. Let us hope that the city will strive to provide alternatives to its citizens. We possibly all want comparable things: to feel the civic pride that we are part of this City and that we managed to observe the changes for better in the making.

'Good cities are all about people' (Gehl, 2010) because people make places.



**ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME:
HOW TO MAKE WALKING COOL IN THE CITY?**

'Life happens on foot. Walking is the beginning, the starting point. Man was created to walk, and all of life's events large and small develop when we walk among other people. There is so much more to walking than walking. There is direct contact between people and the surrounding community, fresh air, time outdoors...' Jan Gehl (2010)

Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo came up with their best ideas while walking. For Peanuts creator Charles Schulz, walking was part of love.

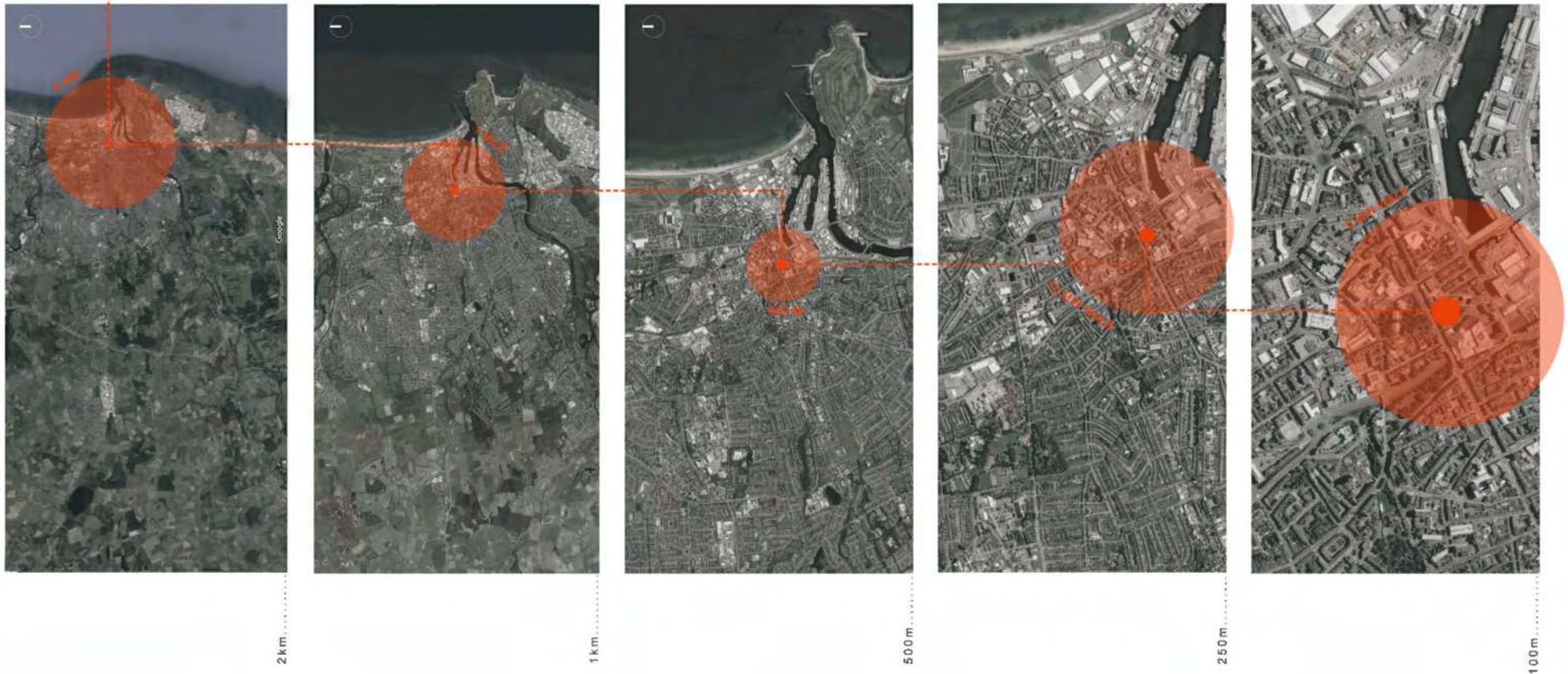
This exhibition oscillates around the notions of accessibility, place making, human scale as well as liveable, inclusive and walkable urban environment. It focuses on the city centre of Aberdeen and possibilities that it creates or is about to create. It is also searching for the ideas of how to encourage people to walk and cycle more in Aberdeen City.

Walkable urban spaces contribute to better creativity and innovation by simultaneously activating social interaction and physical activity, and serving as a source of inspiration. A walkable city is not just an economically and environmentally healthy city — it is also a relentlessly attractive city.

How to prioritise movement of people and make walking cool in Aberdeen?

Architectural uniqueness of forms, webs of back lanes & tunnels await to be (re)discovered and filled with outdoor galleries, pop up events & festivals, cafes and bars - a network of nodes - key destinations and streets that when linked would enhance the pedestrian activity and result in cultural change in people's approach to travel.

'Walkability is both an end and a means, as well as a measure. While the physical and social rewards of walking are many, walkability is perhaps most useful as it contributes to urban vitality and most meaningful as an indicator of that vitality.' Jeff Speck (2012)



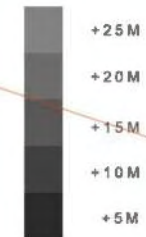
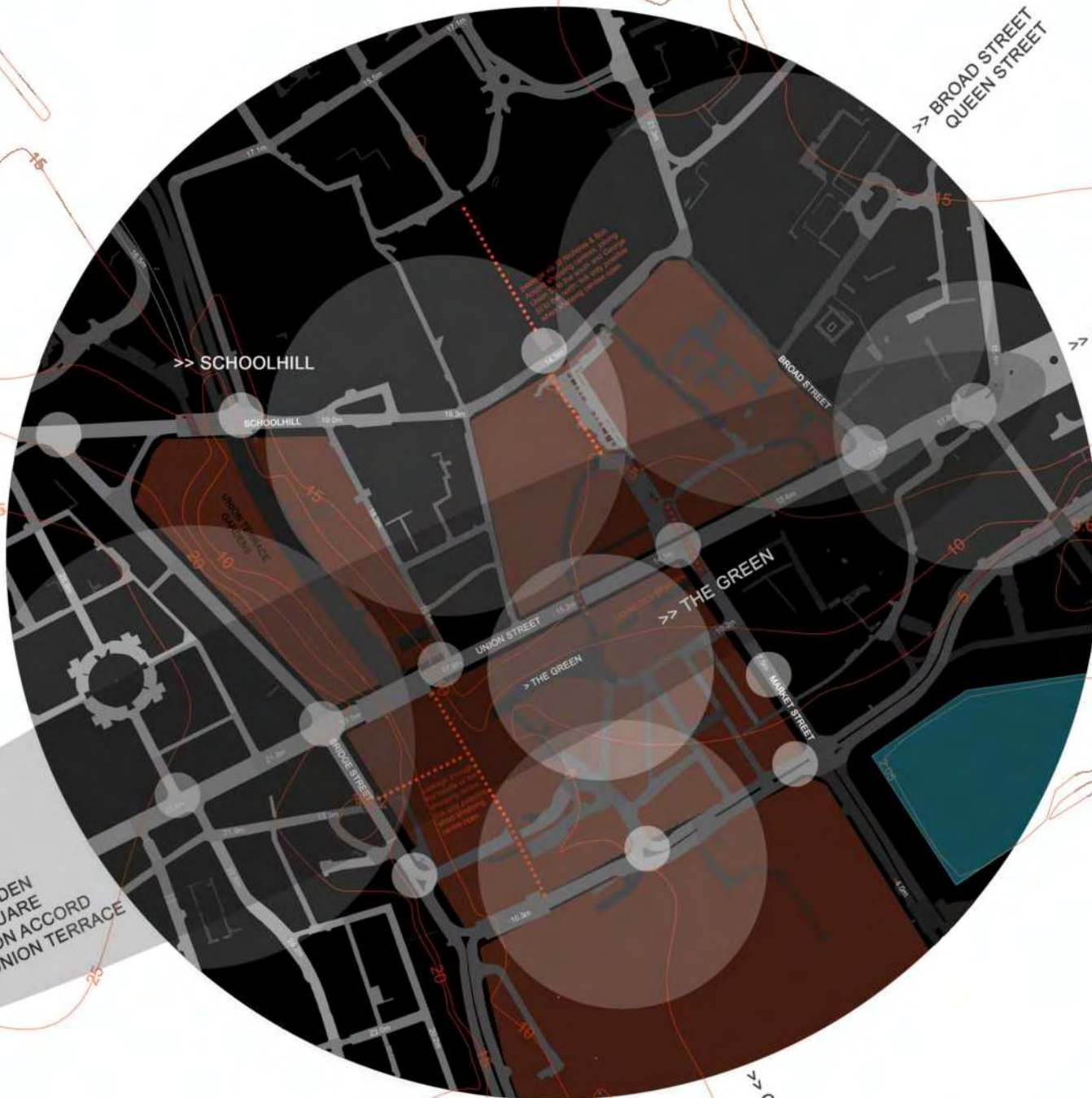
DIS-CONNECTED ABERDEEN >> SPATIAL BOUNDARIES

Aberdeen is known and celebrated for its unique topography. But the changes in levels can be considered as an obstacle to movement around the city by pedestrians.

The elevated parts of Union Street over the undulating medieval city created massive changes in levels. The steps, back lanes, ramps & big inclines are often seen as disruptions in experiencing the city and act as deterrents to walking for those with alternatives available. Noise, air pollution, street clutter and unevenness of pavements when walking along busy roads make the experience much less pleasant for pedestrians.

Permeability in the centre of Aberdeen can be explored on different dimensional levels through the network of criss crossing paths. However, many of the existing (under)passages, tunnels are underused in the city centre. They could be perceived as dark, dirty, obscured spaces - giving the impression of places where one should avoid rather than utilise as a shortcut and unobvious connection.

Spaces - to enhance pedestrian experience - need to feel safe with good lighting, surfacing, attention to visual contrast & clear way finding. Improvements in these areas would greatly benefit all people walking in the city by avoiding detours or changes in level in order to move quickly between the Union Square and Union Street for example.



..... underpass/tunnel/path through the shopping centre - only possible during the opening hours

distance barriers - urban zones not easily accessible/permeable where pedestrians are often forced to walk around the area due to changes in levels or large areas of closed off buildings with adjacent car parking etc.

● stoplights at road intersections

>> GOLDEN SQUARE
BON ACCORD
UNION TERRACE

>> SCHOOLHILL

>> BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET

>> CASTLEGATE

>> THE GREEN

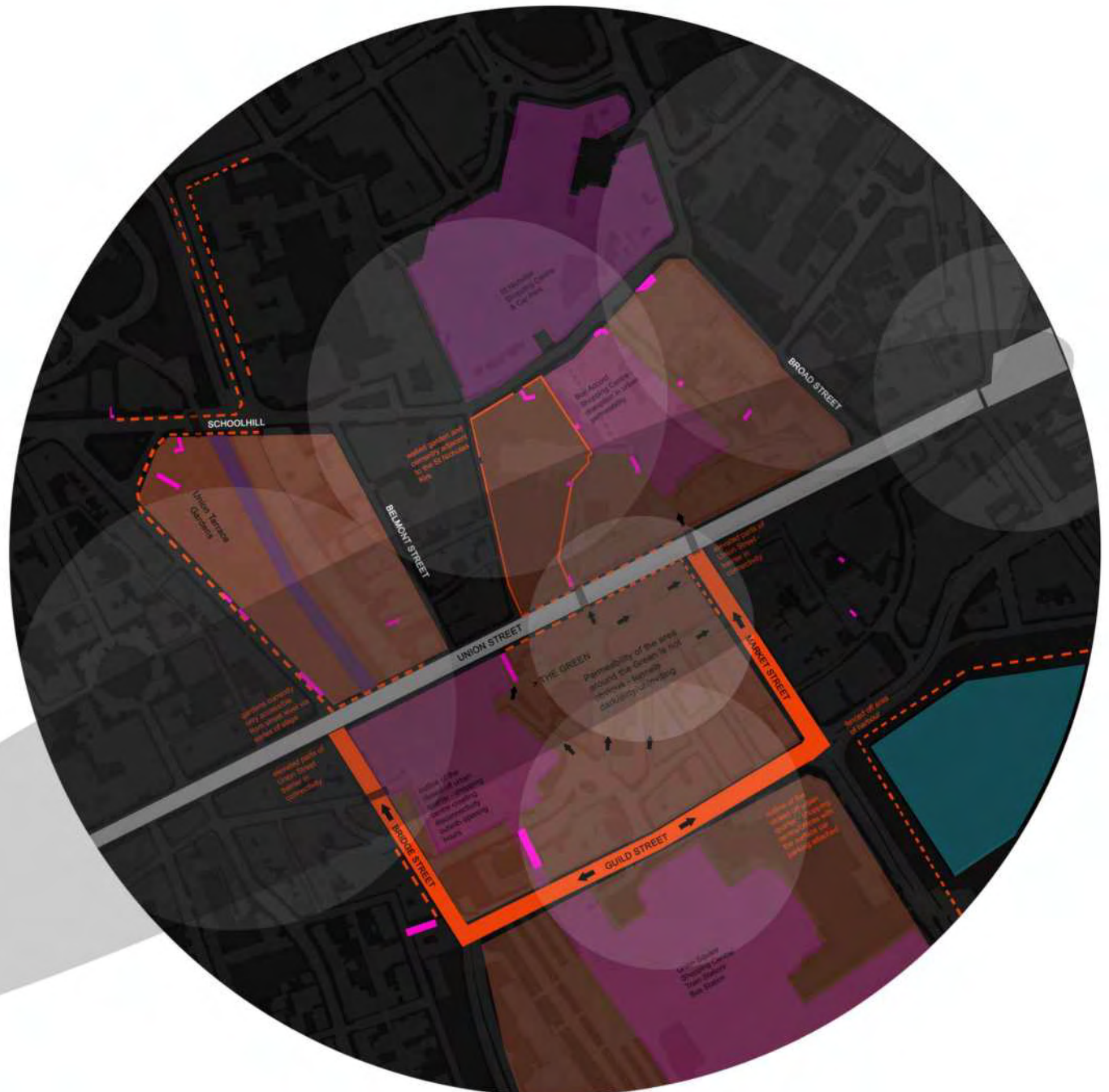
>> GUILD STREET

The spatial and visual barriers in the city centre are often created by the traffic congestion (noise), visual crowdedness, excess signage and chaos of visual stimulus.

In Aberdeen, large plots of city centre land are occupied by the shopping centres with the amenities of car parks and convenient vehicular access. Those buildings - after opening hours - could potentially act as a barrier to pedestrians.

The built environment and circulation - connectivity between elements play a big role in shaping the vision and character of the city. Urban identity is also defined by the accessibility & permeability of spaces that set the walkable environment.

The map identifies some main barriers to walking within the city centre; such as change in levels, steps, fenced off areas, poor connectivity between Union Square - Train Station and Union Street.



- harbour area
- 2 outline of the closed off urban quarter - shopping centre/offices with the surface car parking
- outline of the shopping centre
- tunnel/underpass
- external stairs
- change in levels/physical boundaries/fences
- 3 9 poor pedestrian connection between Union Square and Union Street

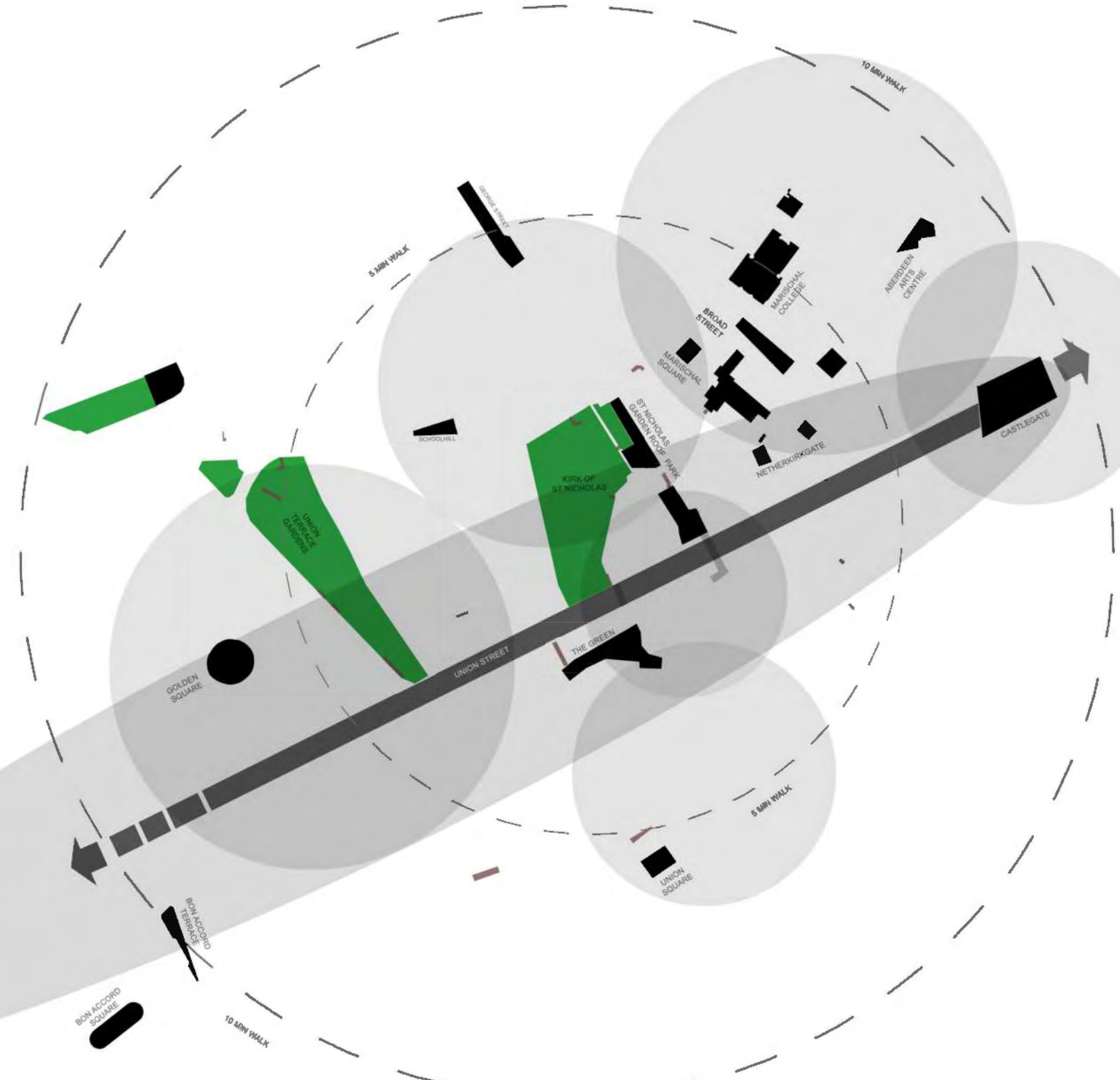
**PUBLIC SQUARES >>
CONNECTIVITY**

CITY CENTRE

The diagram identifies existing public spaces/squares within the city centre core and indicates location of the Broad/Queen Street site.

Open or enclosed areas, green spaces, urban parks, and squares in the city give the opportunity for human interaction, meeting and resting places from where the city dwellers can watch the city go by.

Rich and varied visual urban experience is achieved in the city by the combination of historic and modern urban fabric, civic plazas and pedestrian friendly environment. The attractiveness and accessibility of Aberdeen city centre could be hugely improved by creating better permeability and pedestrian connections between the areas identified on the map.



CITY EXPLORATIONS >> WALKING & SCANNING

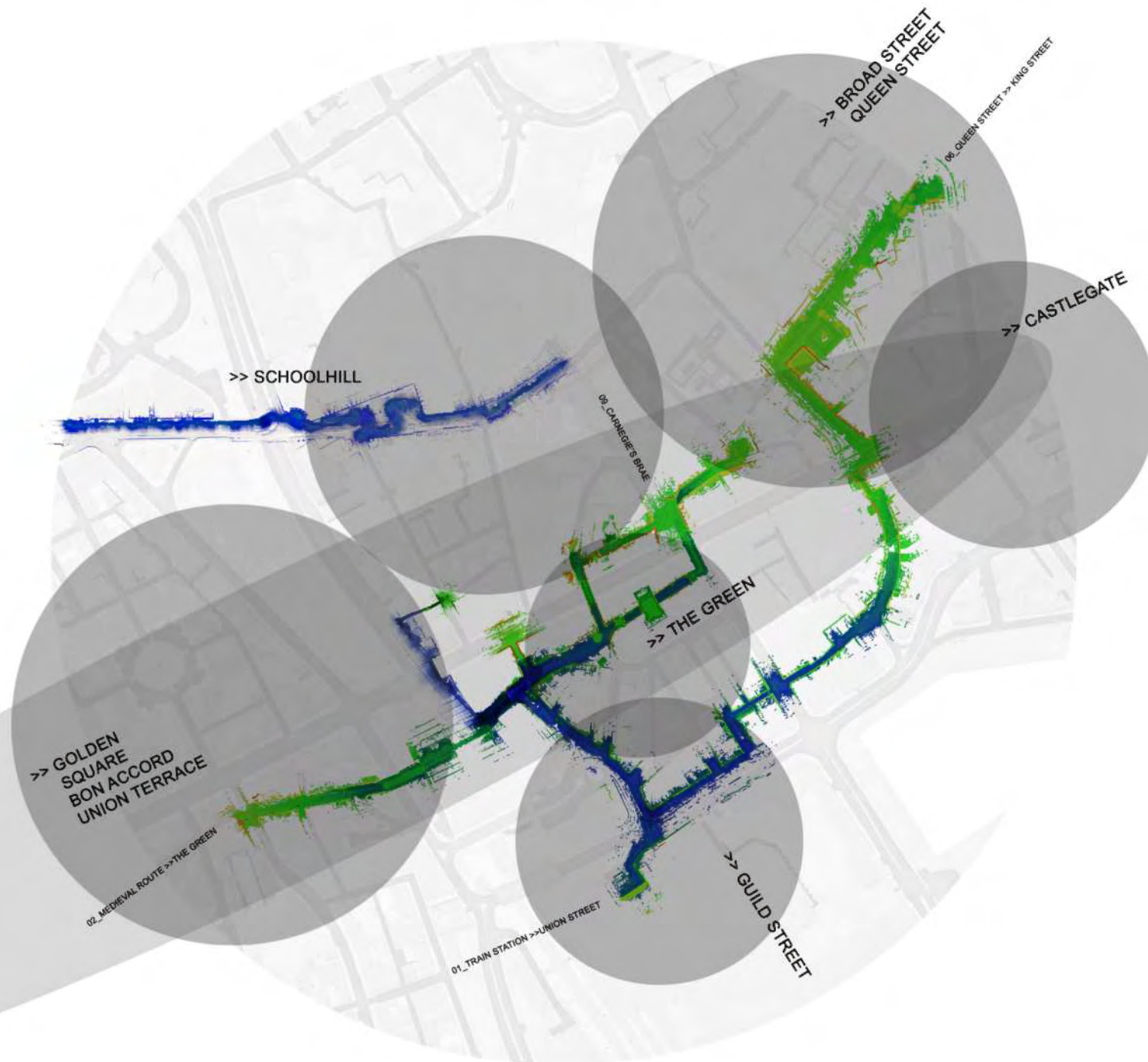
Walking routes within the city centre can be represented in many different ways. Here the map shows the extent of laser scans along the chosen routes graphically indicating the inclines in the ground.

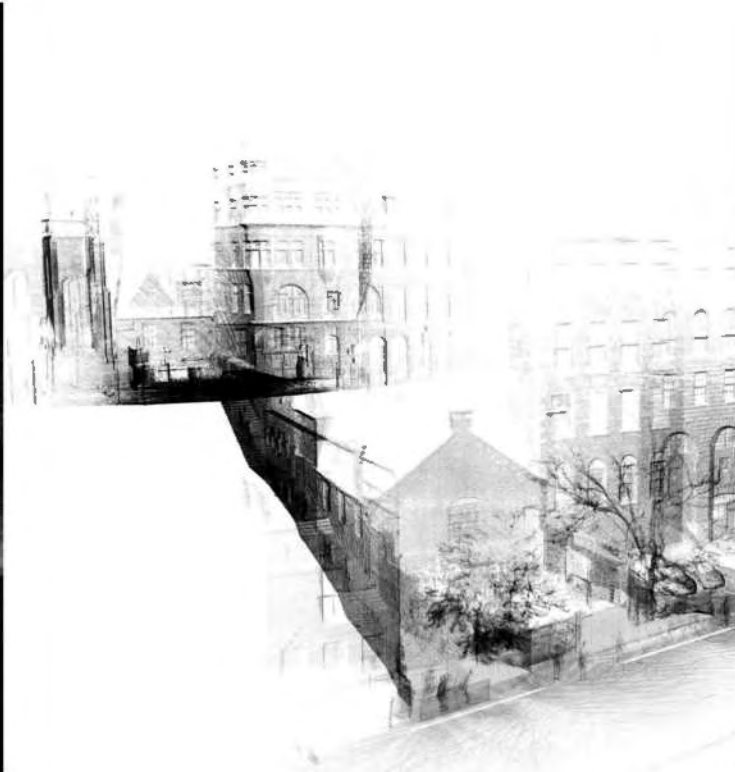
Data extracted from 3D laser scans enable a better understanding of urban environment. Portable laser scanner directly corresponds to aspects of walking in the city but also allows to explore new ways of capturing and perceiving reality.

Instantaneous nature of portable scan allows peculiarly at the same time for capturing frozen images of the urbanscape.

Images generated from scanners show spatial relationships better with higher level of information that is recorded and then extracted.

Walking through the city with laser scanner acts up but also entertains other senses, broadens the understanding of the city by placing the person controlling the experience directly in the centre of space. The immediacy of the urban context enveloping or opening up to the person exploring the space leaves a trace in the city – invisible mark in the memory map of the city. The data collected by the device can be then processed and visualised into alluring images showing new abstracted city forms yielding inspiring new perspectives and imaginative design initiatives.





a b s t r a c t e d a b e r d e e n

Selection of images of scanned routes within Aberdeen city centre. The visualisations provide an alternative image of the seemingly familiar spaces in the city. All of the images were produced after walking, scanning and exploring the city on foot.

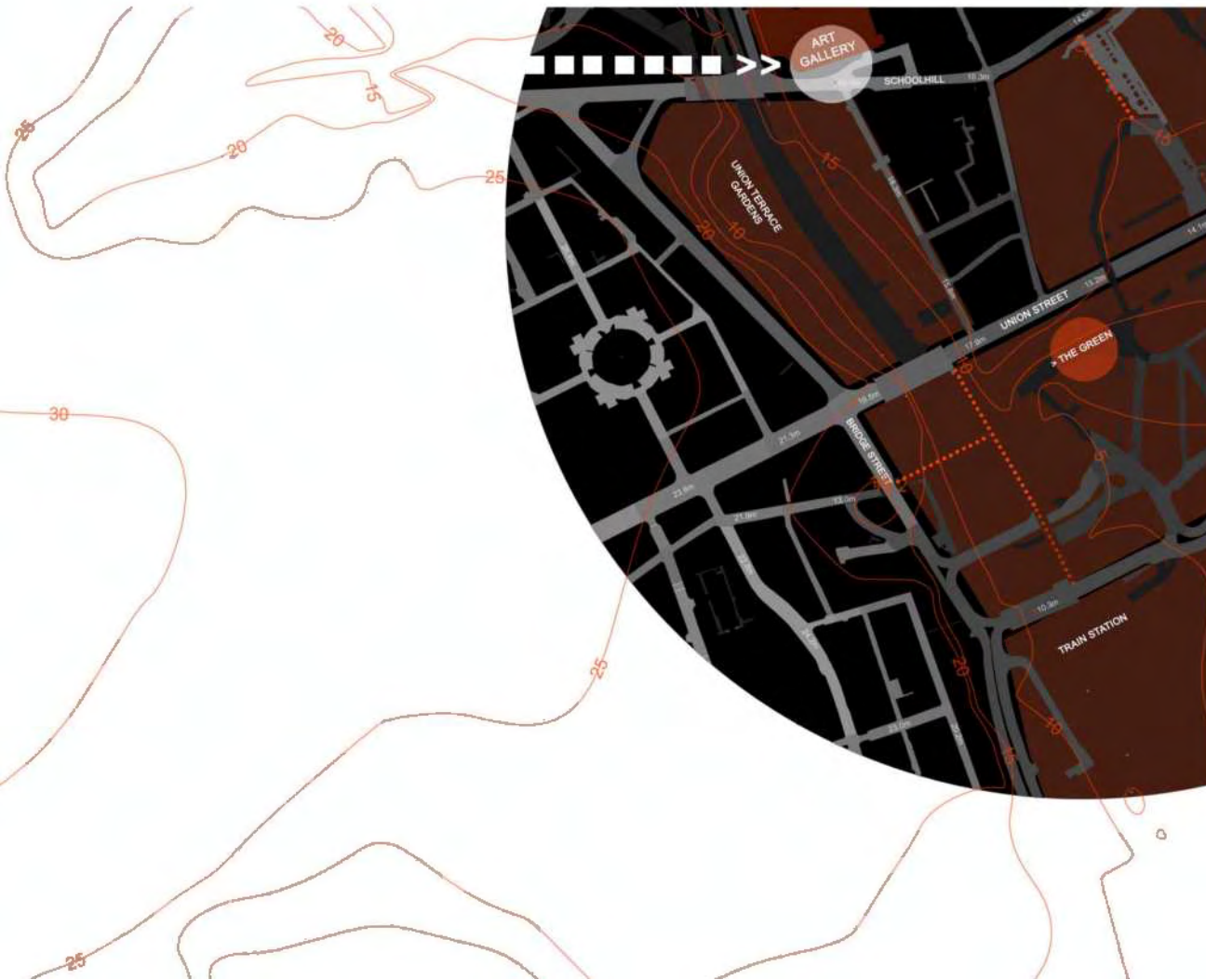


ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME

In March 2020 two day public workshops and exhibition titled 'ABERDEEN ONE STEP AT A TIME: How to prioritise movement of people and make walking cool?' was organised. The exhibition demonstrated possibilities that city creates or is about to create to encourage more walking and cycling as well summed up the research about the notions of accessibility, place making, human scale and walkable urban environment within the city centre of Aberdeen.

'Abstracted Aberdeen' which also formed part of the exhibition had an aspiration to encourage public and community engagement to re-imagine the city, generate new ideas and meaningfully engage in the process of a change in Aberdeen. By making extensive use of traditional architectural visualisation and emerging digital technologies - mobile laser scanning, various journeys through the city were recorded and an alternative - 'abstracted' version of Aberdeen was acknowledged and utilised to embody the essence of Aberdeenness and how it feels to walk through the city's main streets, tunnels and underpasses.

The act of mapping through walking became conceivable and the city was re-imagined. By capturing key areas, walking routes and elements of urban realm where possible urban interventions were feasible and then being able to present these in novel and perhaps striking ways, even to participants who are familiar with the urban environment within Aberdeen, we have been able to present participants with a new vision of the city which can provide an enlightenment or illumination. We have also been able to discover the ways in which the urban context of Aberdeen can in itself help to support not only increased levels of walking for health related reasons, but also to help us better understand how the users, occupants and visitors to the city might explore, utilise and view the urban environment.



ABERDEEN >>
ONE STEP AT A TIME

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF
PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL?

HOW TO MAKE WALKING COOL?

- > Add more **art & culture**
- > Be **more playful** with the city and ideas
- > Bring life to the city: create not alcohol based activities but **cafes that would spill out to the streets** and areas to take in views
- > By making walking more attractive routes
- > Create a purpose/destination for people to go to
- > Close a street for vehicles for a week, a month or a year and if it does not work – all could go back to how it was before; Just have a stab at it
- > Educational Walks
- > Footpath dedication with more defined **separate zones for cyclists**
- > Geocaching - digital city treasure hunt
- > **Let people linger** in Union Street
- > Making places people want to walk to (destinations) much of the centre feels harsh/hard
- > **More Nu-art** projects
- > **Pedestrianise** Schoolhill/Upperkirkgate
- > Promote group – social walking
- > Pub History Walks
- > Reduce number of traffic lights make more **'pedestrian 1st' principles**
- > Silent Disco
- > Walks Exploring History
- > Walks like Silverline In Prague (street/pavement ground signs that form a route through the city)



ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL?

01

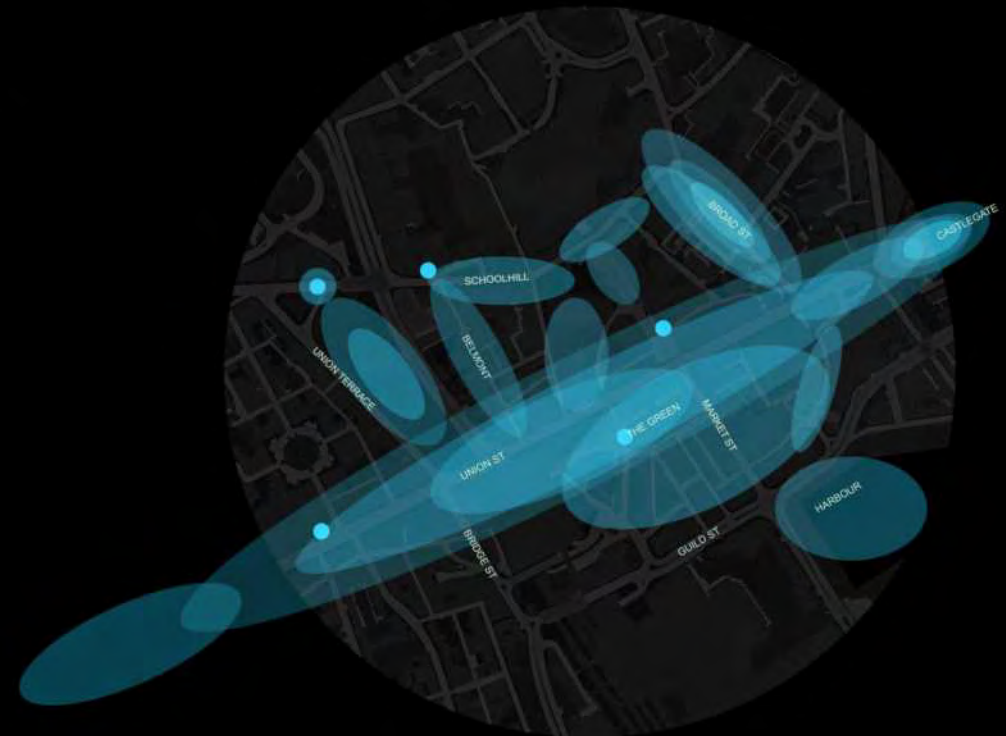
■ What is the unique selling point of Aberdeen? What does 'Aberdeeness' mean?

- > Aberdeeness is attached to the harbour - originally through fishing then through oil
- > City of granite buildings
- > Climate
- > Coastal location
- > Countryside and coast
- > Countryside close by
- > Fish & chips
- > Granite buildings
- > Green spaces
- > History
- > Hub for the North East that gives the starting point to explore the Grampian region
- > Industrial Port
- > Monochromatic city
- > Port city - 150m away from shopping centres
- > Seagulls
- > Silver city by the golden sands
- > Sparkling grey granite
- > Statues
- > The beach
- > The Beach close to the city
- > Tie between people and the city which is made of granite - robust and hard material
- > Two rivers connected by the walk along the beach
- > Union Terrace Gardens & unique parks
- > Walkable, level city with little gems to be discovered on the back streets
- > Wealth for some

02

■ Where/what is the 'soul' of the city?

- > Art gallery
- > Belmont Area
- > Bridge Street - Market Street
- > Broad Street (x3)
- > Castlegate (x3)
- > Marishall Square
- > Merchant Quarter
- > Mid to West End of Union Street to Queens Cross
- > Music Hall
- > Old Aberdeen - soul of the city; Theatre - heart
- > Saint Nicholas kirkyard
- > Schoolhill - Marishall College - Castlegate
- > Shiprow
- > The Green
- > Theatre
- > The original Harbour area
- > Union Street (x2)
- > Union Terrace Gardens
- > UTG - broken heart of Aberdeen
- > Pocket centres dotted across the city



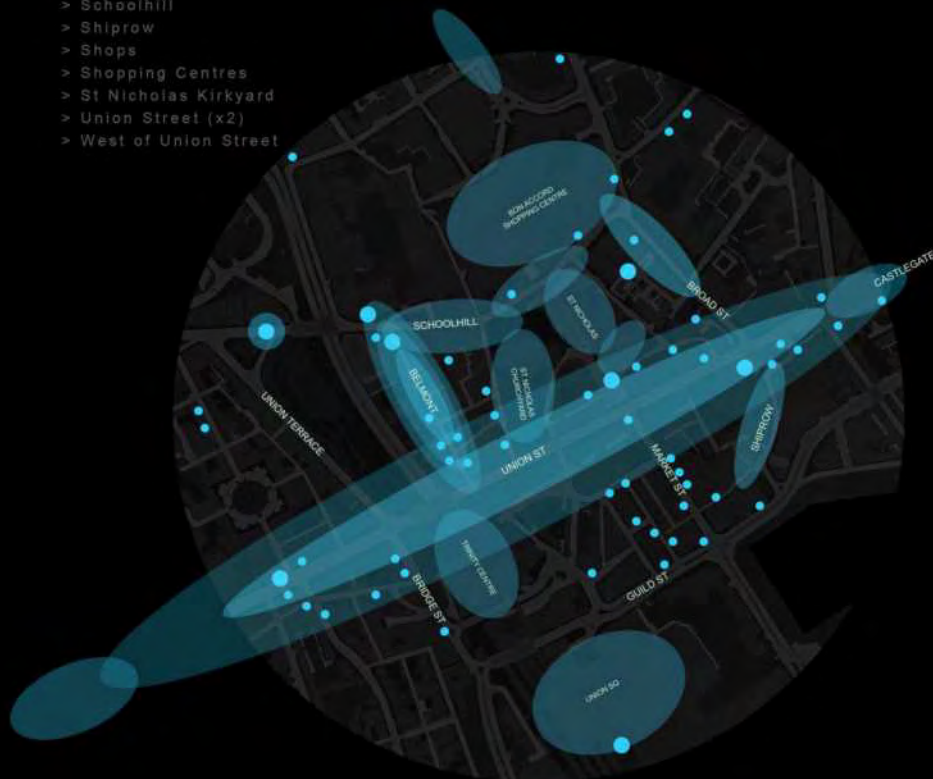
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- > Saint Nicholas kirkyard
- > Schoolhill - Marishall College - Castlegate
- > Shiprow
- > Shopping - M&S
- > The Green
- > Theatre
- > Union Street (x2)
- > Union Terrace Gardens
- > UTG - broken heart of Aberdeen
- > Pocket centres dotted across the city

ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL?

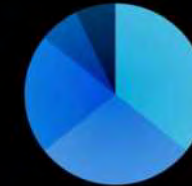
03 ■ Where do you spend time in the city centre?

- > Art Gallery
- > Bars
- > Beach
- > Belmont Street (x3)
- > Blue lamp
- > Broad Street
- > Castlegate
- > Cinemas - Belmont
- > Duthie park
- > George Street
- > Music Hall
- > NESCOL
- > Old Aberdeen
- > Old Railway
- > Schoolhill
- > Shiprow
- > Shops
- > Shopping Centres
- > St Nicholas Kirkyard
- > Union Street (x2)
- > West of Union Street



04 ■ How do you get there? What mode of transport do you use?

- Bus
- Car
- Cycle
- Train
- Walk



05 ■ How long do you stay in the city centre?

- > 1-3 hours (shopping in the city centre)
- > 2-3 hours
- > 2-4 hours (cinema/theatre)
- > 3-10 hours
- > Half a day at most
- > Maybe around 2 hours
- > 3-7 hours
- > Few hours
- > Sometimes few minutes and sometimes few hours

06 ■ What activities would make you stay longer in the city centre?

- > Better public realm - green spaces and places to linger
- > Book events
- > Comfortable meeting spots
- > External heated areas
- > Fill empty shops with pop-ups or advertising media
- > Food markets
- > More access to art & culture
- > More appealing streetscape
- > More art
- > More attractive places to visit with cafes etc
- > More central café culture
- > More events at the Green like Aberdeen Inspired Nights
- > More outdoor areas (not just shops)
- > More social spaces
- > Outdoor seating
- > Outdoor temporary cinema in summer time
- > Places to rest
- > Sheltered areas
- > Sheltered seating
- > Street entertainment
- > Street parties
- > 'Turn up and work' places for creatives
- > Union Terrace Gardens

ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF
PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL?

07

■ What discourages you from walking/cycling in the city centre?

- > Cars & pollution
- > Cyclists (on pavements)
- > Centre looks tired and abandoned
- > Health conditions (Arthritis) discourage extensive walking
- > Lack of flow
- > Pedestrians should be given priority
- > Poor cycle routes (discontinuous; bad surface) discourages cycling
- > Traffic
- > Traffic for cycling (I walk in town)
- > Traffic lights
- > Transport links to the city centre are poor

08

■ Are you aware of the air quality, noise in the city centre?

- > Air quality is pretty poor in the city centre
- > No
- > No. I rarely see any publicised figures in city centre
- > Not a huge factor
- > Not good air quality, a bit noisy now and again
- > Sometimes noise and busyness
- > Union and Market Street
- > Union Street is the most polluted street; in terms of noise too
- > Yes. The harbour with engines running also create a lot of pollution
- > You can see the pollution in the city (city banners at Music Hall soaking it up); pollution and noise from transport discourages people to go out; social isolation is worse than smoking and obesity

09

■ How should the city centre look & feel? Should any of the areas in the city centre be pedestrianised?

- > Aberdeen should become destination not a through route
- > Examples would be European methods of good pedestrian squares, public parks, Rotterdam
 - parking below ground
- > It should feel like somewhere you would want to come on holiday
- > Part-time (pedestrianisation) at nights
- > Schoolhill and Upperkirkgate should be pedestrianised
- > Small areas such as Golden Square etc.
- > Unsure - it might make a lot of places less busy
- > Yes, Schoolhill and side streets. Union Street should be narrower and pedestrian domain improved and softened
- > Yes! Bridge Street and Market Street
- > Yes - full length of Schoolhill and all of Upperkirkgate



ABERDEEN >> ONE STEP AT A TIME

HOW TO PRIORITISE MOVEMENT OF
PEOPLE AND MAKE WALKING COOL?

10.

■ Do you have any ideas for public spaces within the city centre where changes should take place?

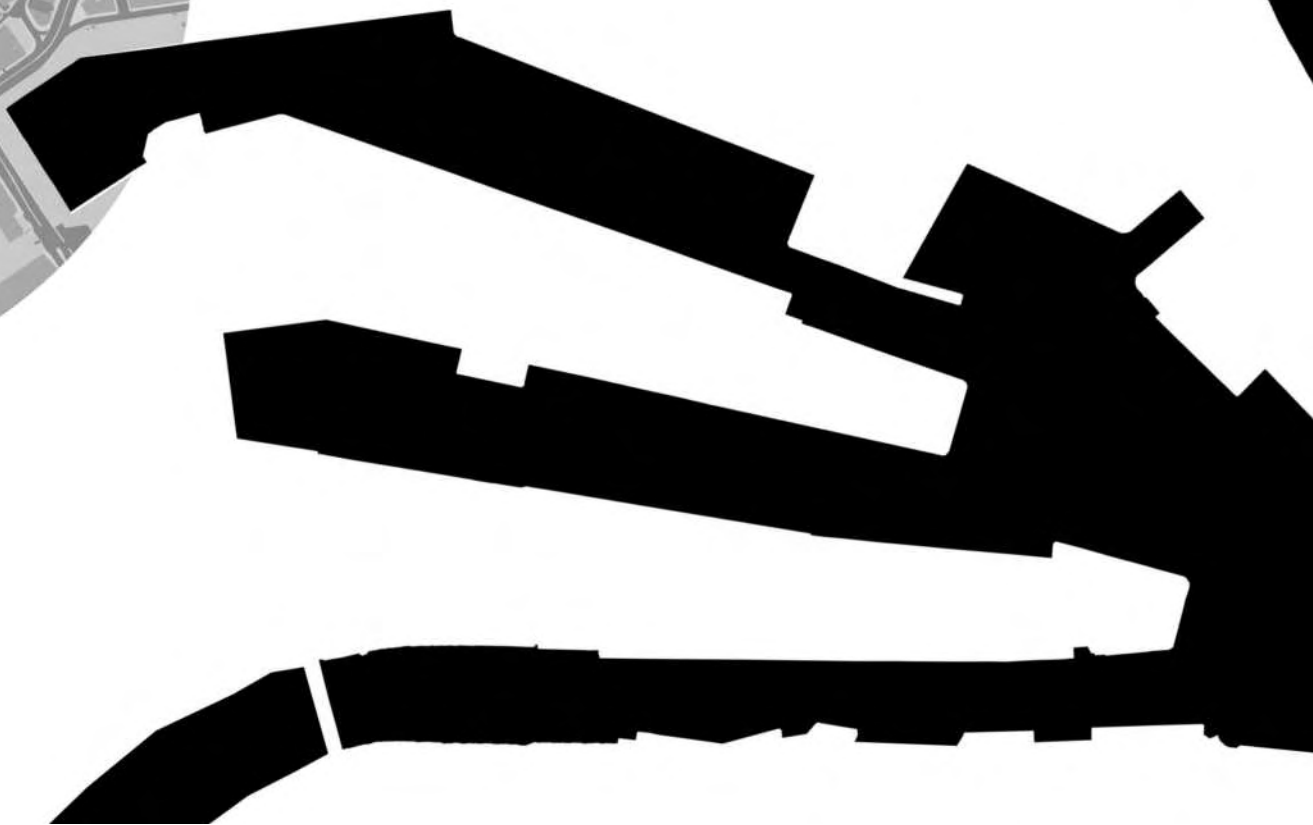
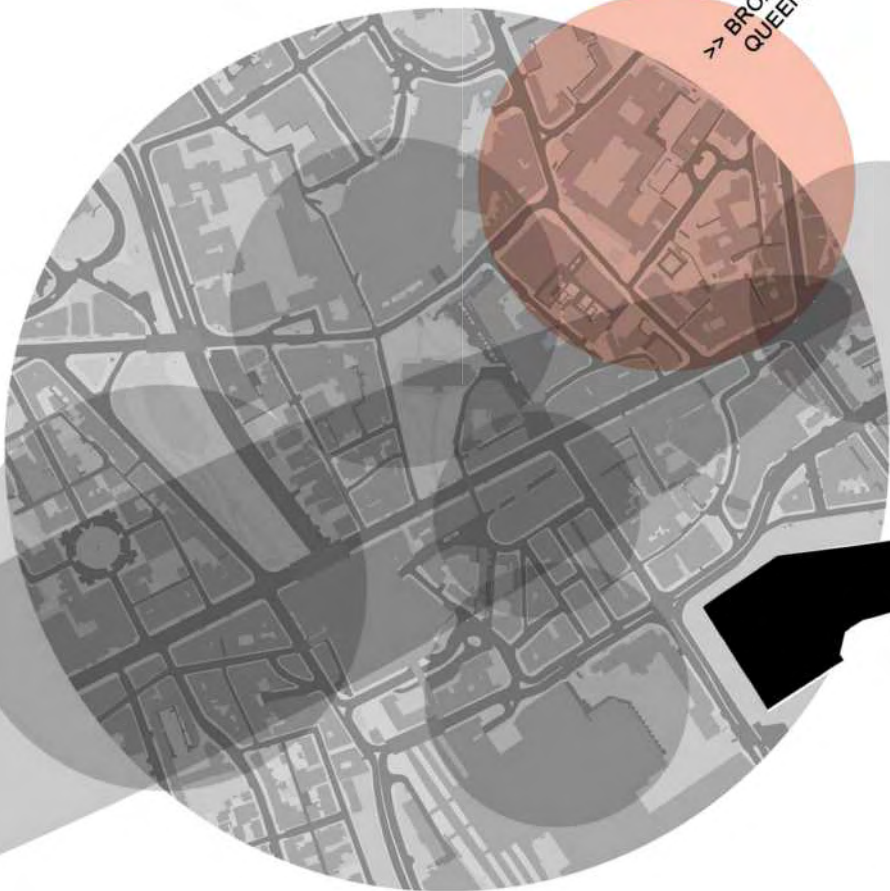
- > Bon Accord Square
- > Castlegate
- > Create a walk like Silverline in Prague
- > Create pedestrian hub: Union Terrace > Schoolhill > Upperkirkgate > Gallowgate > Little John street > WN Street > King Street > Castlegate > Union Street > Market Street > Guild Street > Bridge Street
- > Fully pedestrianise Schoolhill, Belmont Street, Upperkirkgate
- > Green space on the Castlegate
- > Golden Square
- > Make (St Nicholas) churchyard appealing space to be in
- > Maybe tag and photo places of interest
- > Removal of Trinity Shopping Centre to extend UTG down to train station
- > Resurface Castlegate and introduce soft landscape
- > Schoolhill and all of Upperkirkgate
- > Stairs from the Green to Union Street
- > Widen pavements in the city centre

11

■ How can we create liveable places that revitalise the city centre and merge day & night time use?

- > Building control/Planning make change of use to residential in upper floors in centre more straightforward
- > Café culture – indoor & outdoor ones
- > Celebrate and promote our heritage
- > City shuts down at 5 o'clock and citizens are limited by activities they can do that are free after 5pm; not many alternatives are offered
- > Connect existing buildings. Planning on conversions to be more contemporary rather than looking to fit in
- > Entertainment areas on pedestrianised union Street
- > Free activities are important as they bring people out
- > Giant Summer Food Festival in Upperkirkgate (in summertime) with food from nearby restaurants
- > Introduce idea of measuring the space – transportation and pedestrian routes suddenly end and crossing the streets is required; public squares should generate activities – you expect to have cafes outside and interaction with the space should be encouraged
- > It would be good if some offices got returned to accommodation
- > Longer duration of festivals; not just throughout one weekend
- > More residential properties in central areas like North Dee
- > Make culture and art available beyond 5pm
- > Outdoor cinema in summer (in Union Terrace Gardens)
- > Pedestrianise City Centre, provide more seated/sheltered areas
- > Reduce city centre traffic – AWPR surely has inspired this

>> BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET

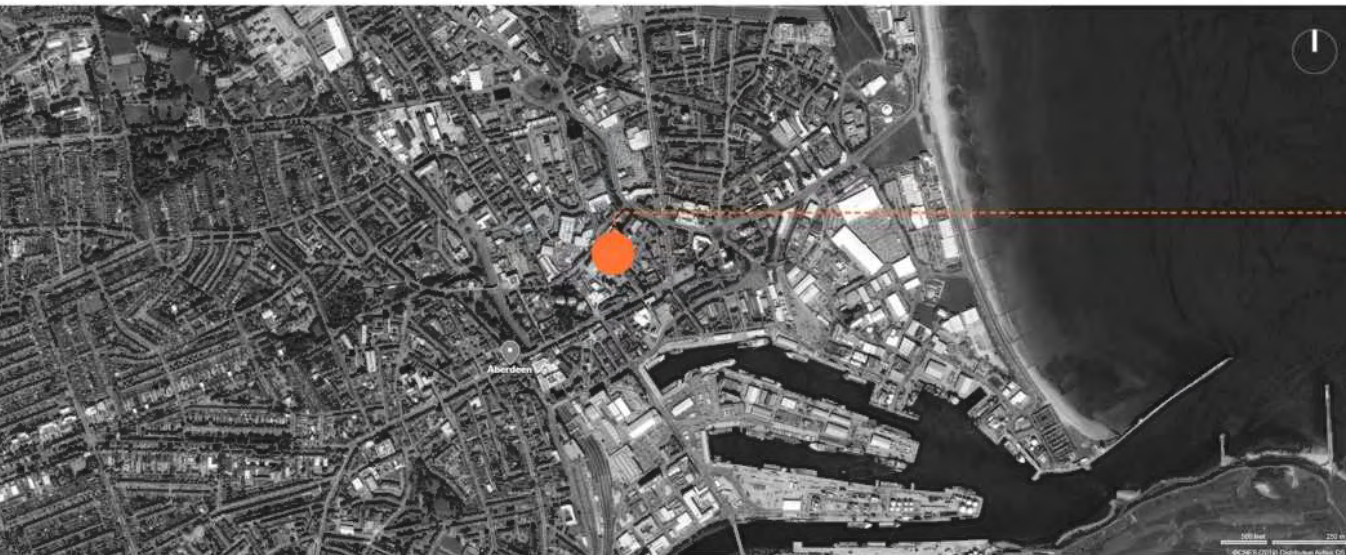
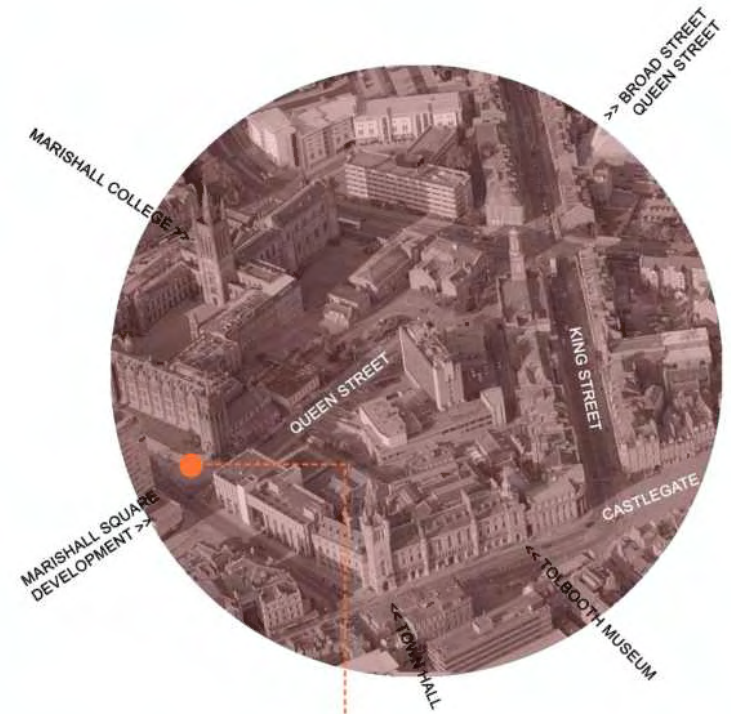


BROAD/QUEEN STREET > Site Introduction

Broad Street area is a unique space in the city centre. This where the second biggest granite building is located. Marshall College with its unique architecture is cherished by locals but also acts as a magnet for tourists. The space adjacent to the building has been transformed and re-engineered to a bus & taxi access only street where pedestrians and cyclist coexist. It has also been designed as a high quality space that is used for temporary events like concerts and festivals.

The recent contemporary mixed use development of Marshall Square provided hotel, office, cafe and restaurant use.

Provost Skene House (which was originally built in 1545) and Art Gallery/Museum is currently being refurbished. Once the restoration works are finished it will provide a great space to explore within the heart of the city where the contemporary and traditional architecture are juxtaposed.





01_Broad Street: with a view to Marischal College and Greyfriars Church



02_Marischal College inner square

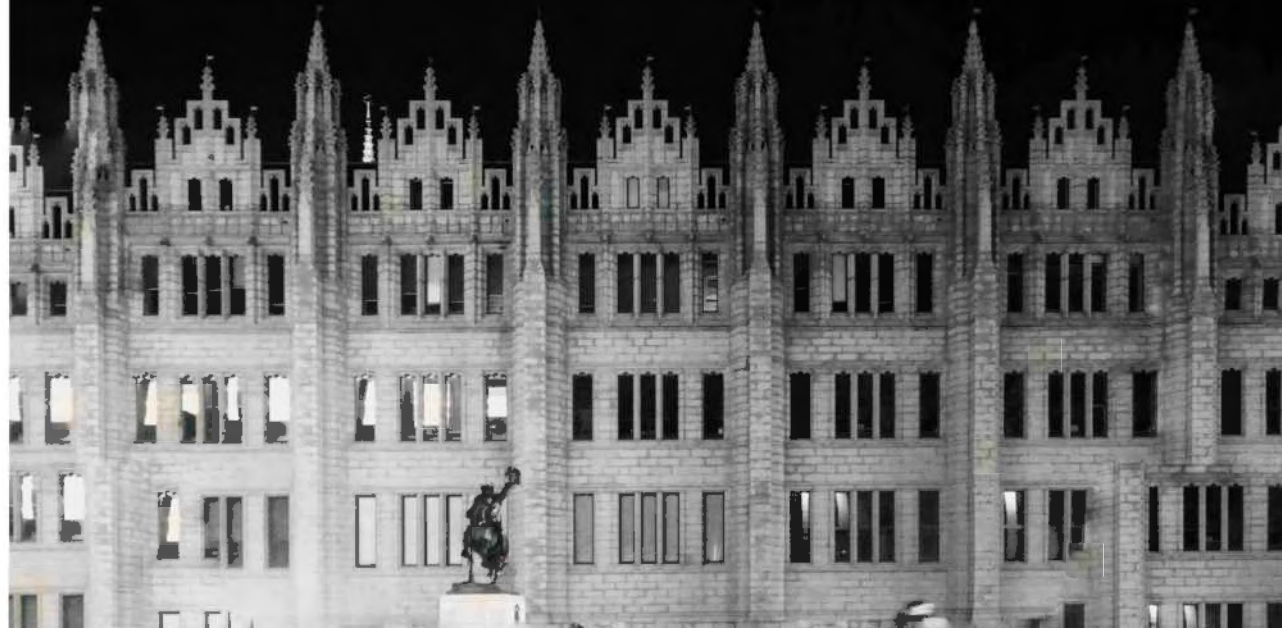


03_Marischal Square development: inner square



04_Broad Street

05_Broad Street: Marischal College on Broad Street

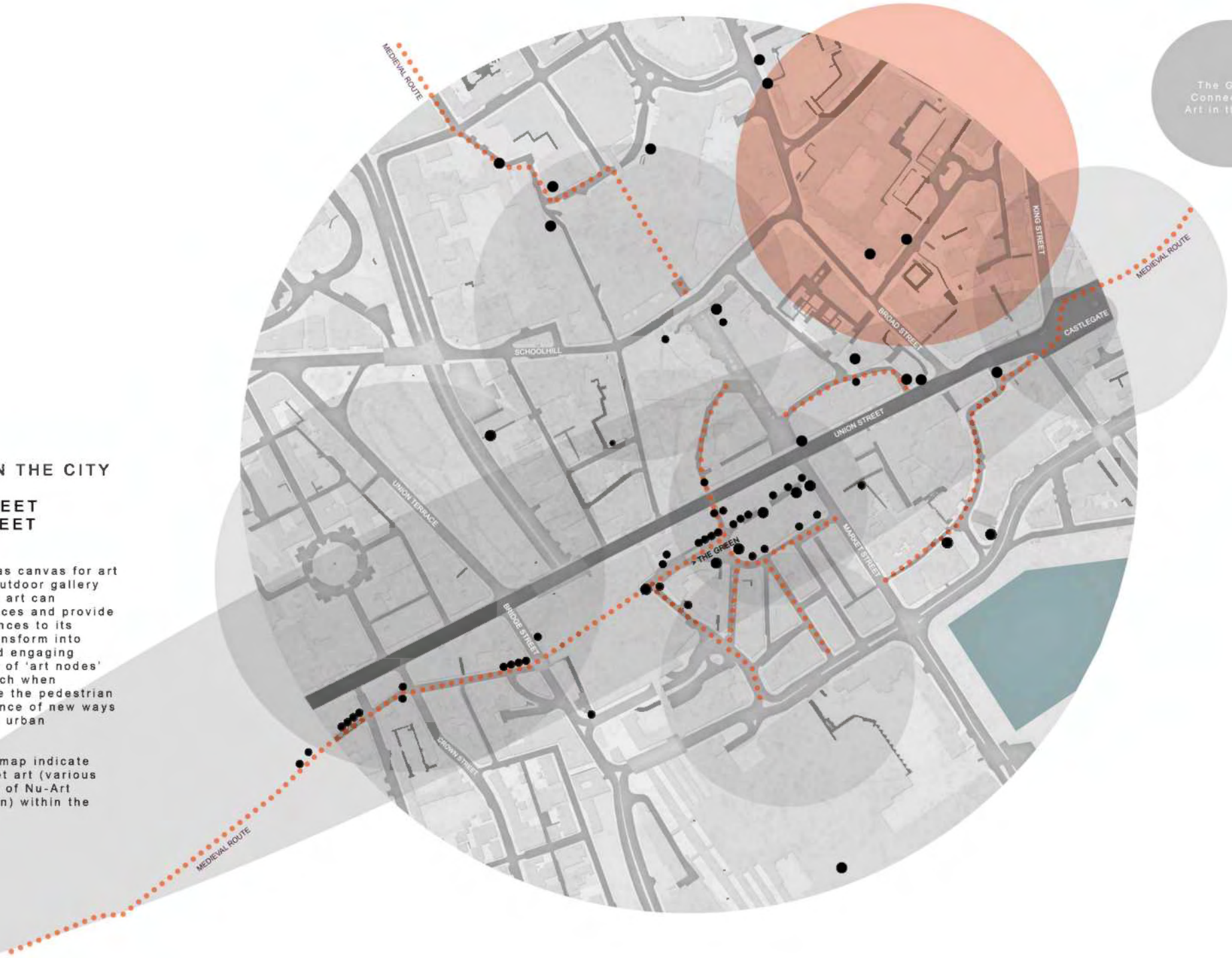


CREATIVITY IN THE CITY

>> BROAD STREET QUEEN STREET

Cities can be seen as canvas for art and vast versatile outdoor gallery where contemporary art can penetrate urban spaces and provide a variety of experiences to its citizens - places transform into more interesting and engaging cityscapes. Network of 'art nodes' within the city - which when connected - enhance the pedestrian activity and experience of new ways of apprehending the urban environment.

Black nodes on the map indicate location of the street art (various artworks as a result of Nu-Art festivals in Aberdeen) within the city centre.



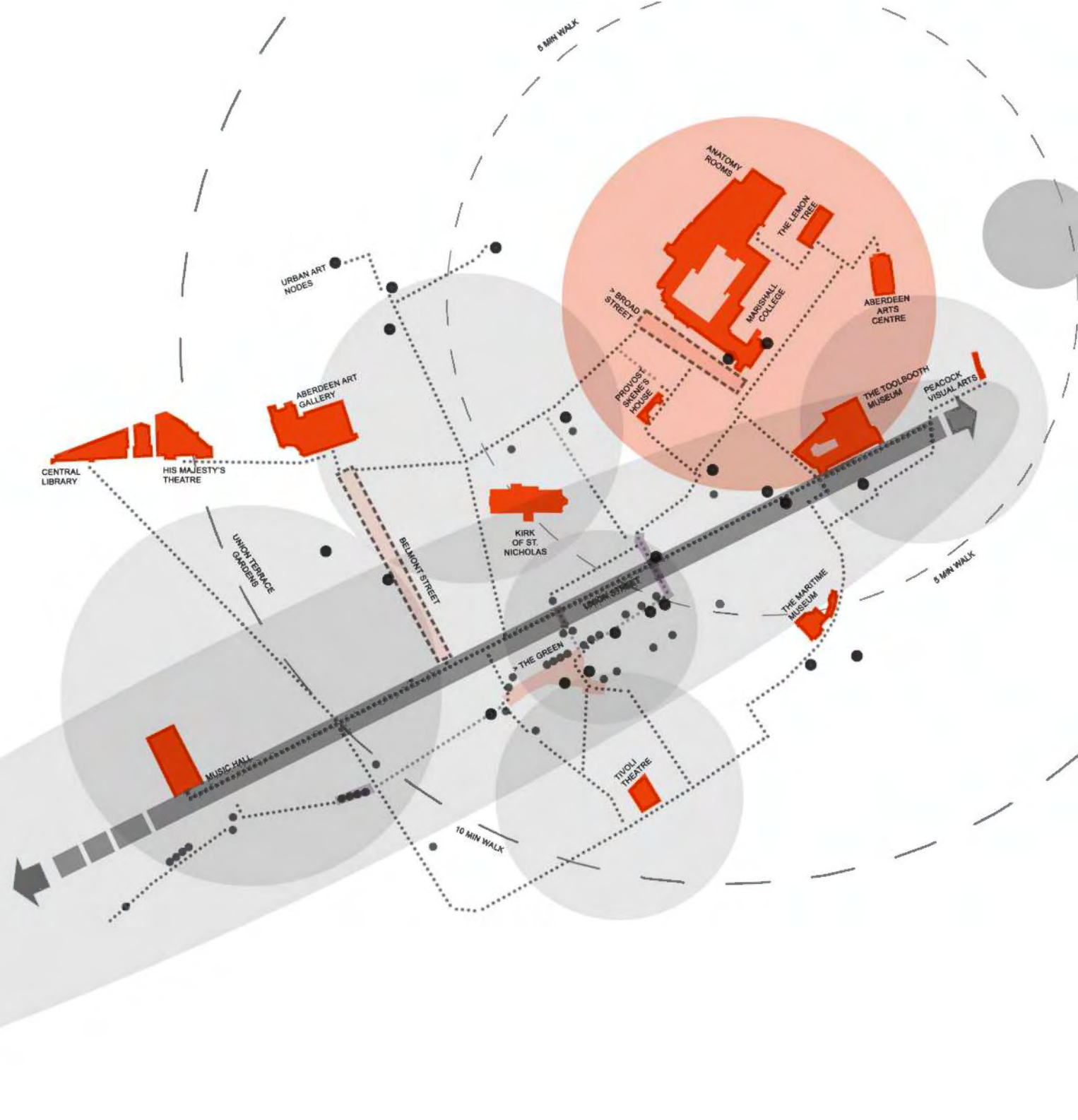
**CIVIC BUILDINGS >>
CONNECTIVITY**

**>>BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET**

The Broad/Queen Street area is where the Marishal College (second largest granite building in teh world) is located but it also lies in close proximity to other significant buildings concentrated in the heart of the city.

The site was one of the first in Aberdeen as designatet to be a shared space area where buses, pedestrains and cyclist coexist.

The Broad Street pedestrianised area together with various hard and soft landscape elements - seating, planters, fountain; Marishal Square developemnt that introduced new functions (hotel,offices, cafes and restaurants) to the area attracted many people who are able now to enjoy the flexible, multi purpose civic space in the city centre.

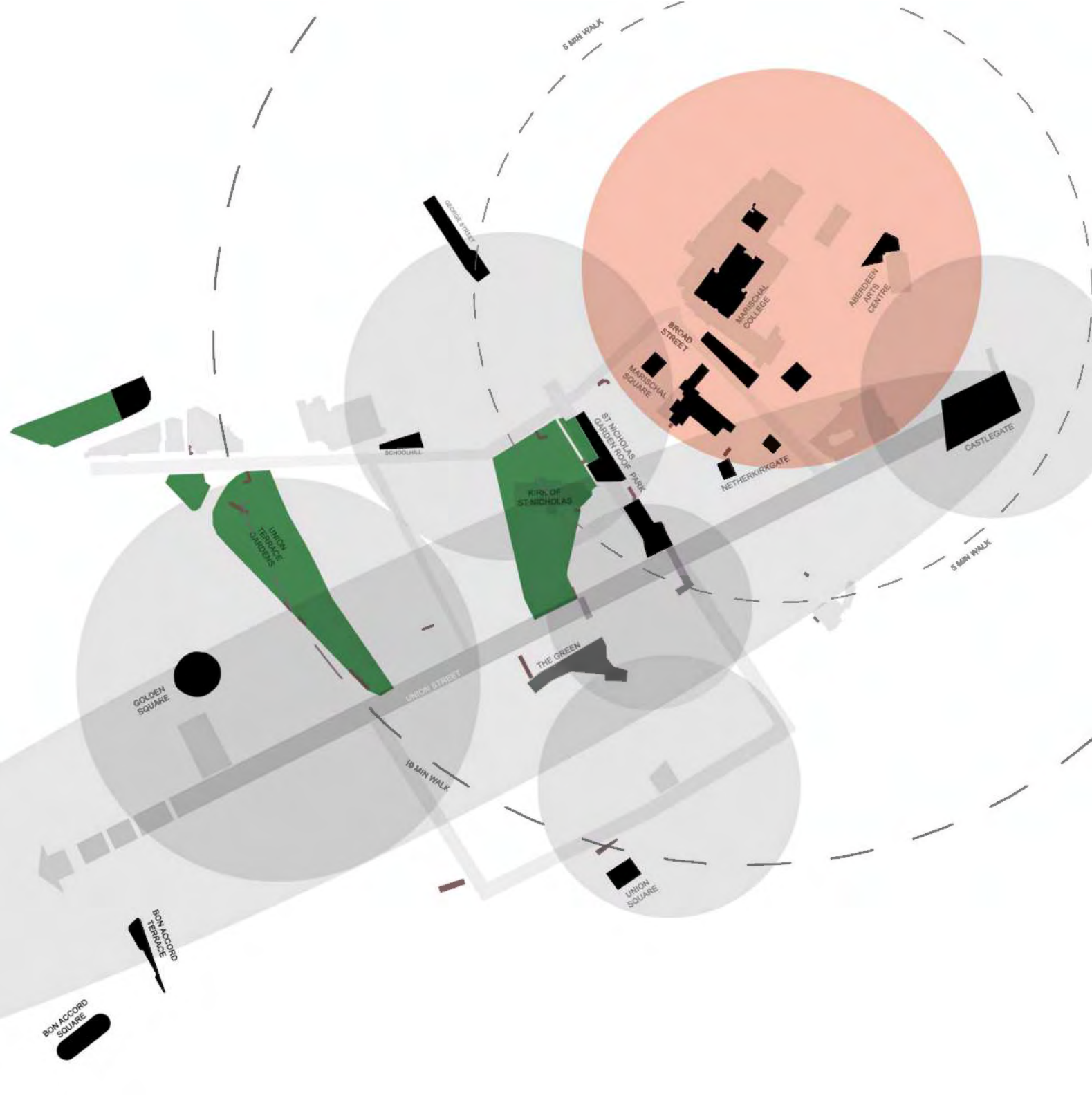


**PUBLIC SQUARES >>
CONNECTIVITY**

**>>BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET**

This diagram identifies existing public spaces/squares/parks within the city centre core and indicates location of the Broad/Queen Street site.

The area is characterised by a large concentration of smaller/bigger, open and enclosed spaces (like Marischal College inner courtyard, Anatomy Rooms square or more recent Marischal Square). This gives plenty opportunities for people to meander between those sites, discovering new urban spaces and experiencing various architectural sceneries. One can just imagine how great it would be if sites were used for urban/street art, urban sculpture trail, pop-up music festivals or interactive exhibitions running simultaneously in the various squares...





>> BROAD STREET
QUEEN STREET

SCHOOLHILL

UNION TERRACE
GARDENS

UNION STREET

THE GREEN

MARKET STREET

Shopping on
SA only

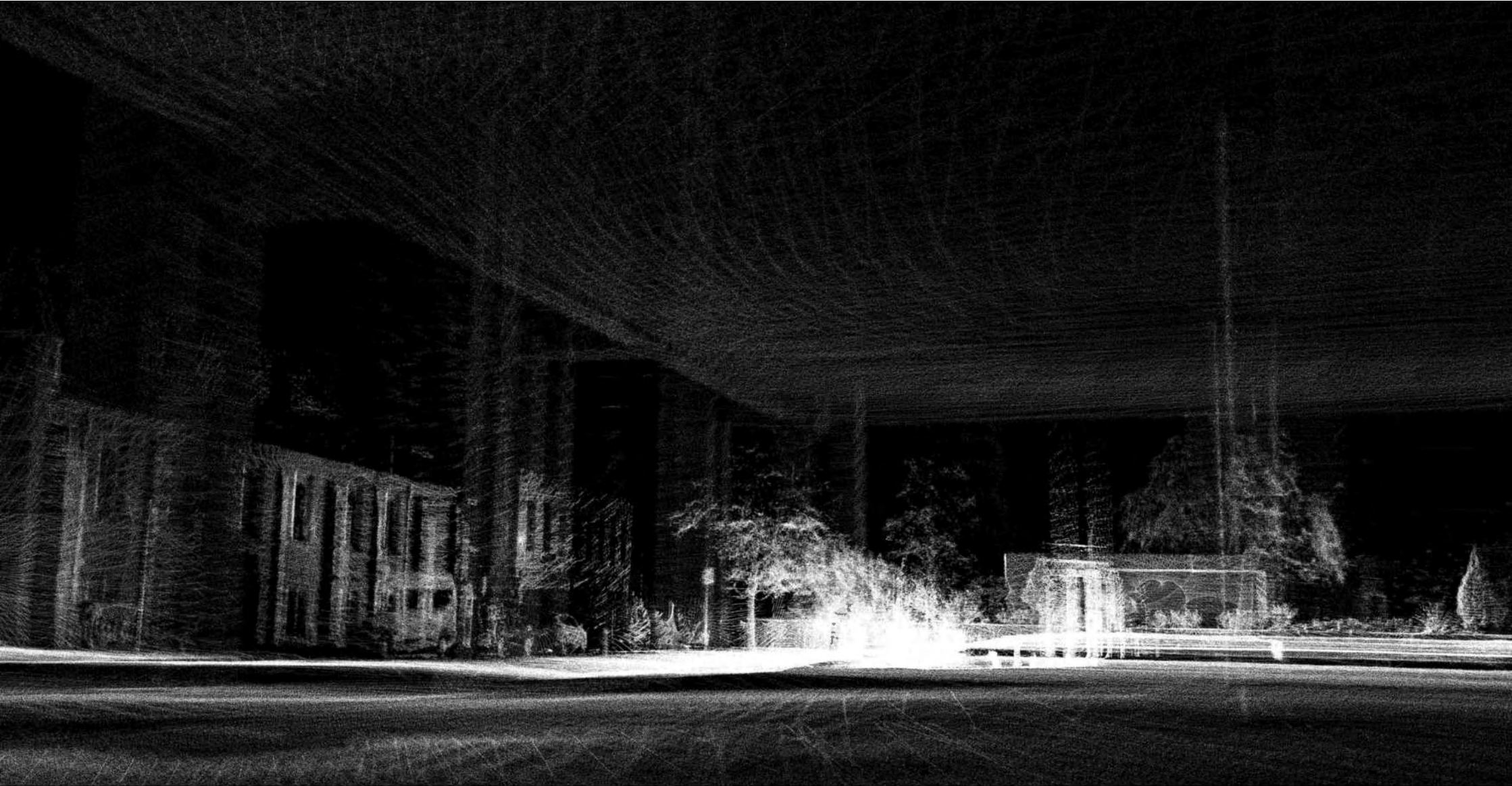
GARDNER'S BRAS
We're planning and
aimed part of it as an
access to the car park

average 40 to 140m & 5m
Access shopping centre, giving
Union St to the south west through
St to the north, the only possible
where shopping centre open



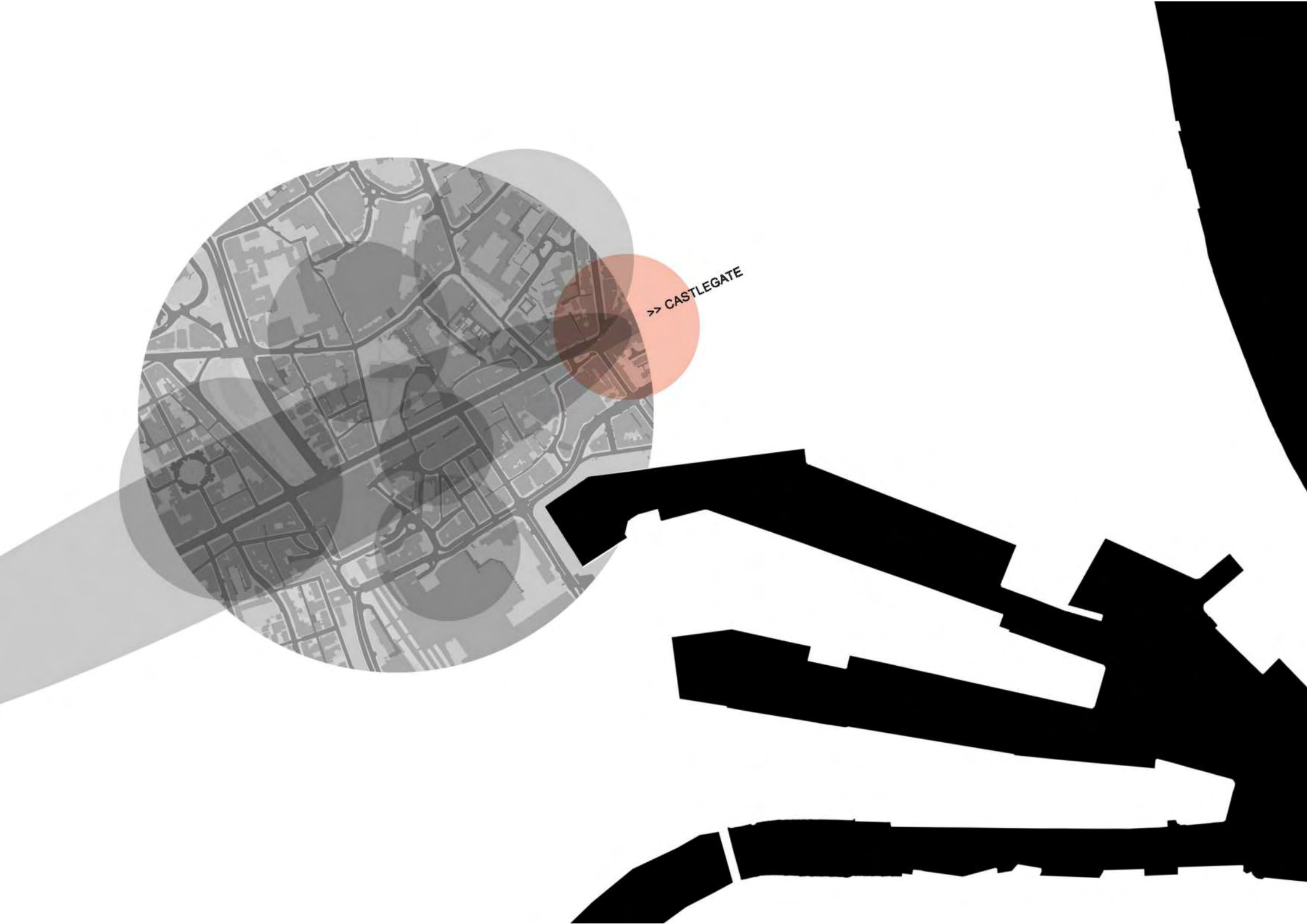
abstract[ed] aberdeen

VIEW TOWARDS GUEEN STREET



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VIEW TOWARDS QUEEN STREET



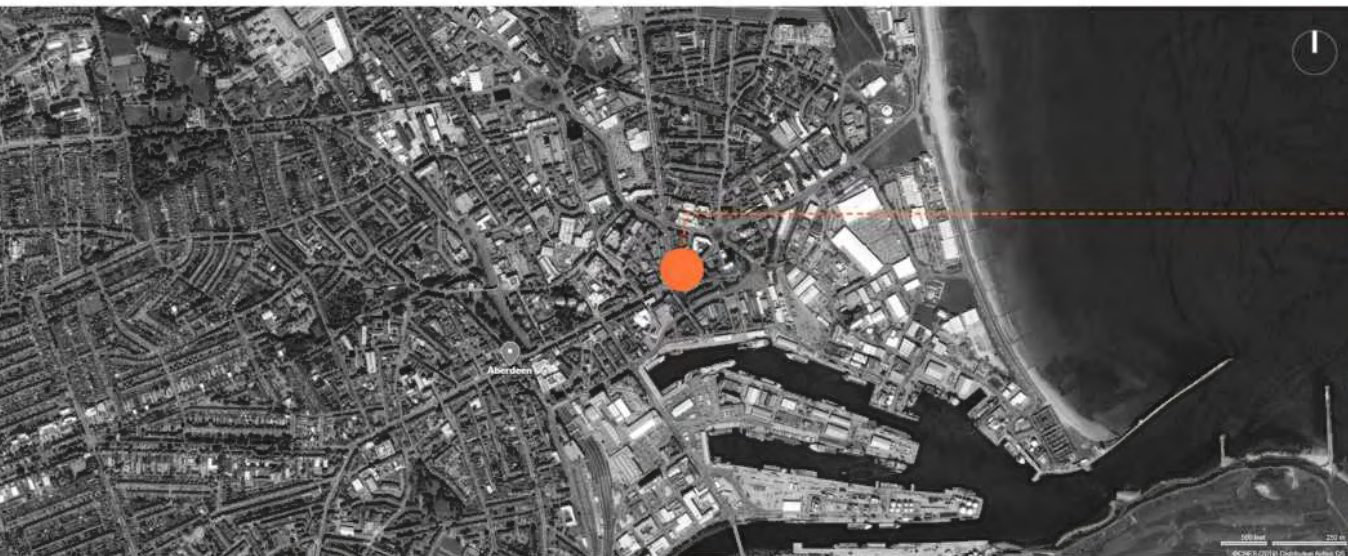
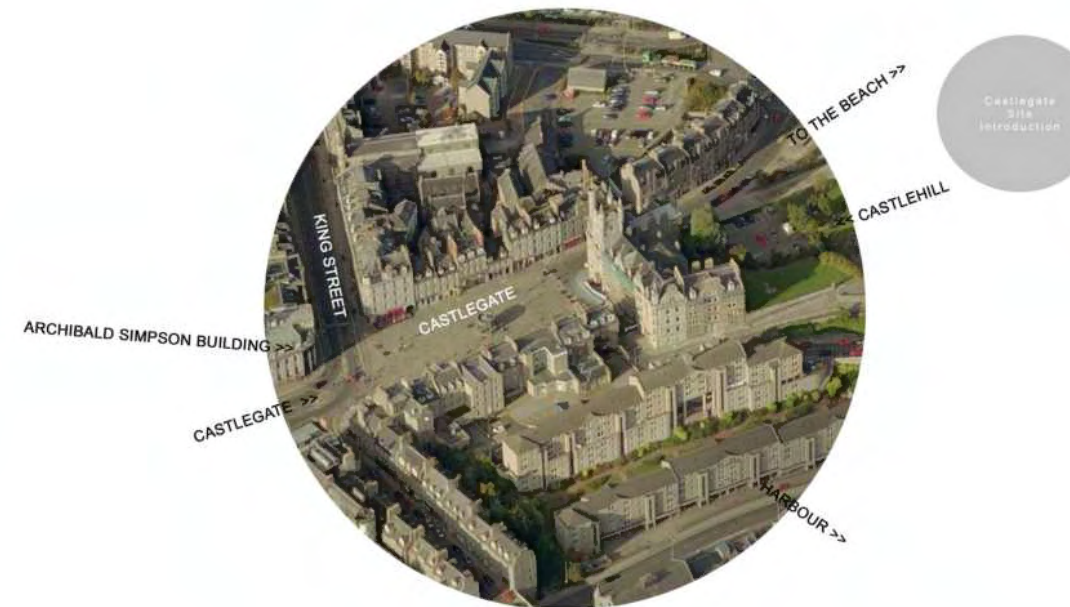
>> CASTLEGATE

CASTLEGATE > Site Introduction

Castlegate is a square located where the east end of the city's main thoroughfare Union Street and bottom of King Street meet where the Mercat Cross and Gallowgate are located.

Castlegate is surrounded by granite properties with commercial uses at the ground floor. Historically it has been a lively area used for city markets and various events. Currently the civic function of the square is under utilised.

It is prominently located in the city centre with some of the best views of the Union Street and towards the harbour area.





02_Marshall Street with a view towards the harbour.



03_Castlegate with Archibald Simpson building on the corner of Union and King Street.



04_Union Street and outdoor seating



01_Castlegate; Mercat Cross and view of the square looking towards Union Street.





All photos from Love at First Sight installation at Castlegate by artist Morag Myerscough. A large scale structure; part pavilion, part-stage, that encircles the Mercat Cross in the historic Castlegate; animating it during Look Again festival in Aberdeen.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

>>CASTLEGATE

The perception of the city changes when an act of walking is combined with the experience of discovery and exploration of areas enriched by the artworks. The presence of art creates a peculiar magnetic field which draws people in. The sensoriness and unexpectedness of artworks together with their placement in public spaces within the city, provides a combination of social entertainment and elements of exploration enlivening the areas between the buildings.

"I want people to fall back in love with their own city, go out and look at it as if it's the first time they have seen it."

Artist: Morag Myerscough



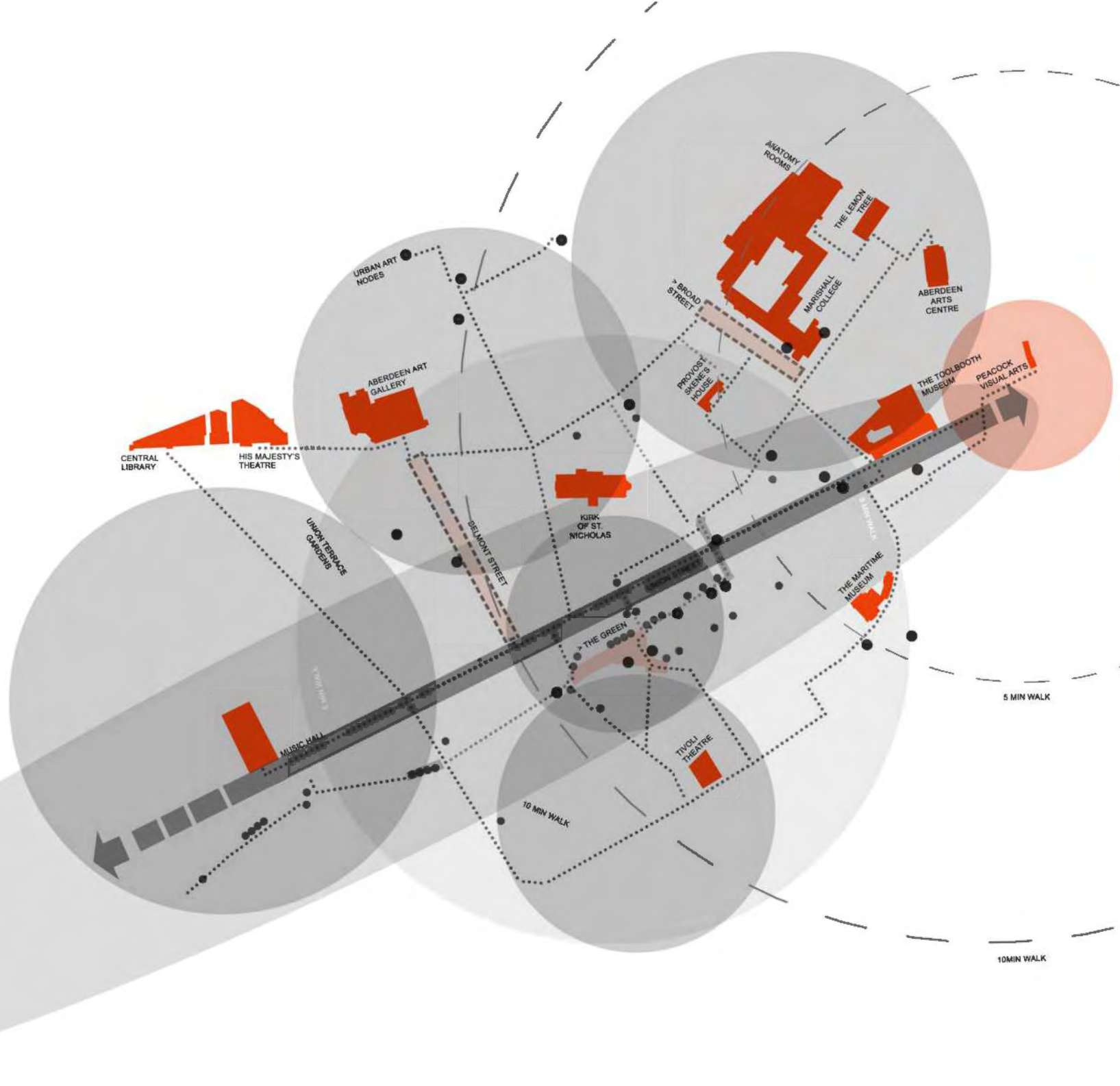
CIVIC BUILDINGS >>
CONNECTIVITY

>>CASTLEGATE

The site at Castlegate is a unique place at intersection of two major streets: Union and King Street. It lies close to the Harbour and it also is a pivotal point where the walk to the beach from the city centre usually begins.

the Peacock Visual Arts - Aberdeen's centre for contemporary arts is located just off Castlegate. Their mission is to:

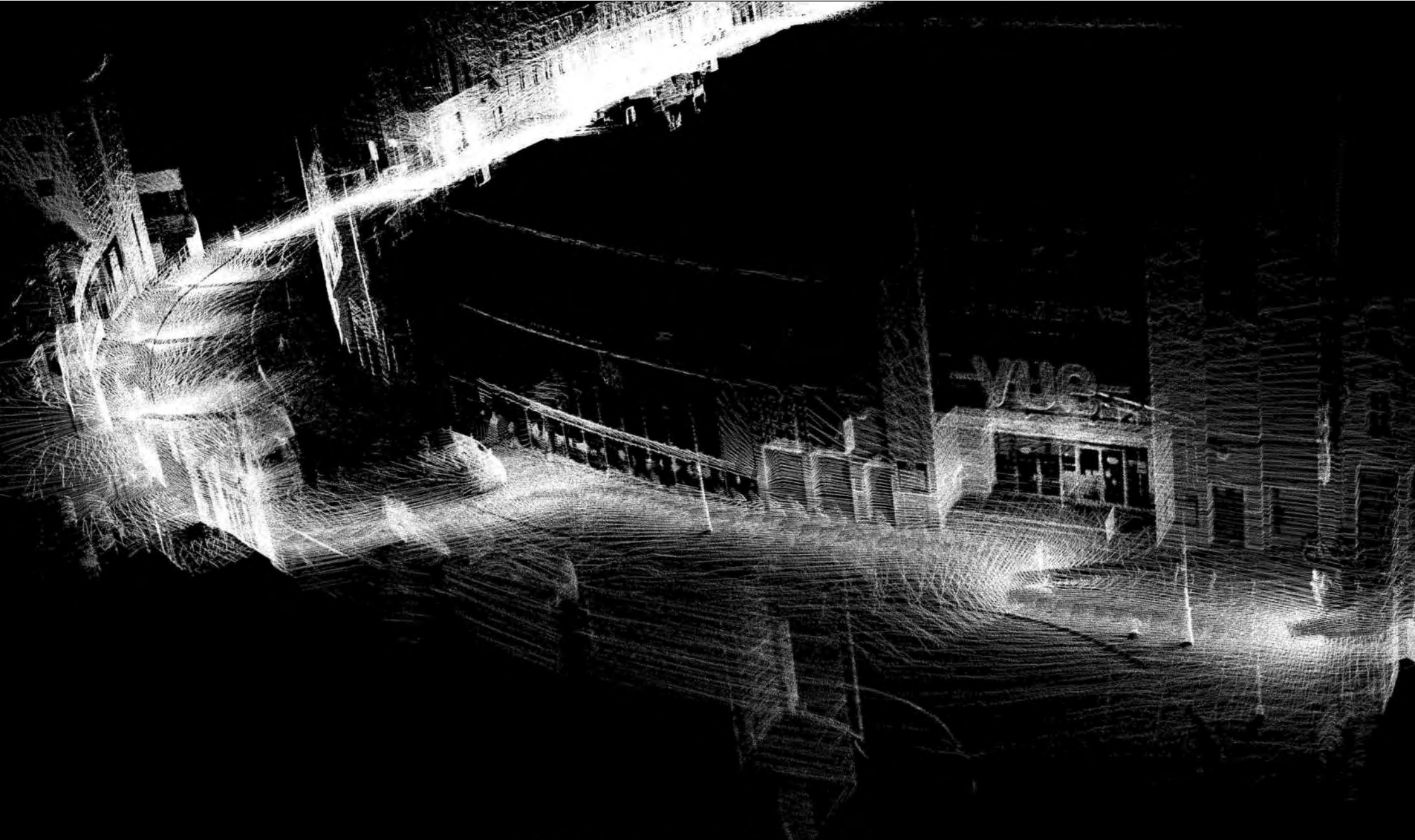
'activate spaces where artists and the citizens, prompted by artworks, congregate around ideas and practices that interrupt everyday routines'.





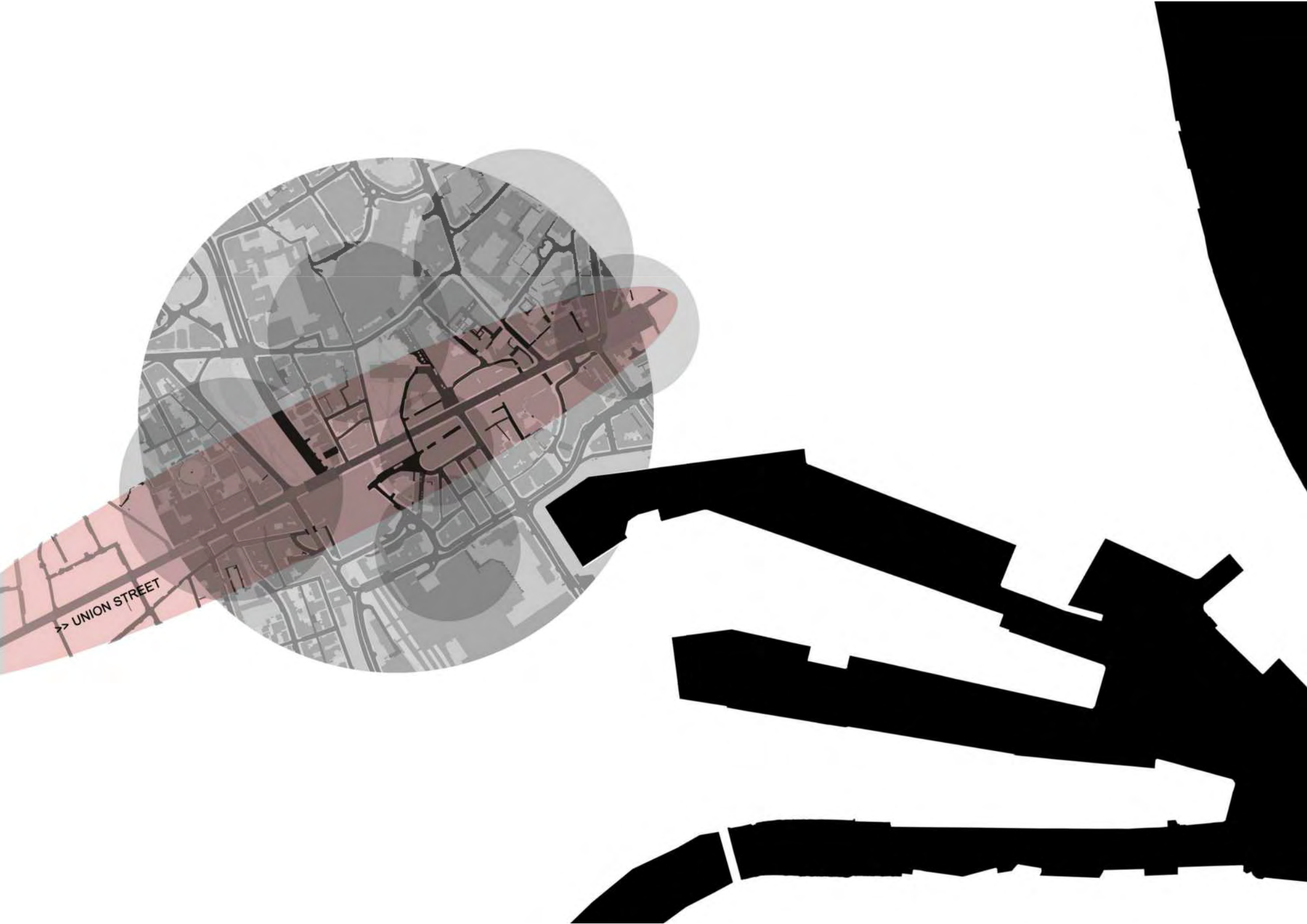
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SHIPROW



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SHIPROW



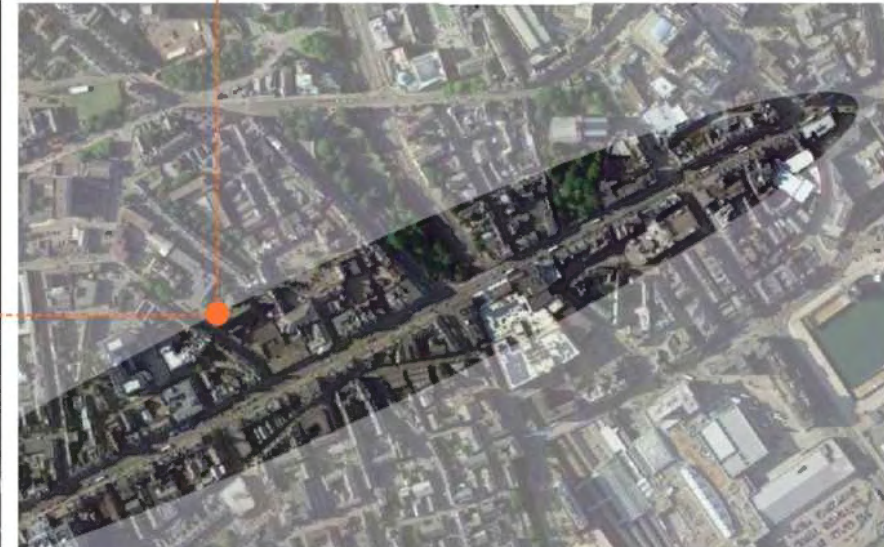
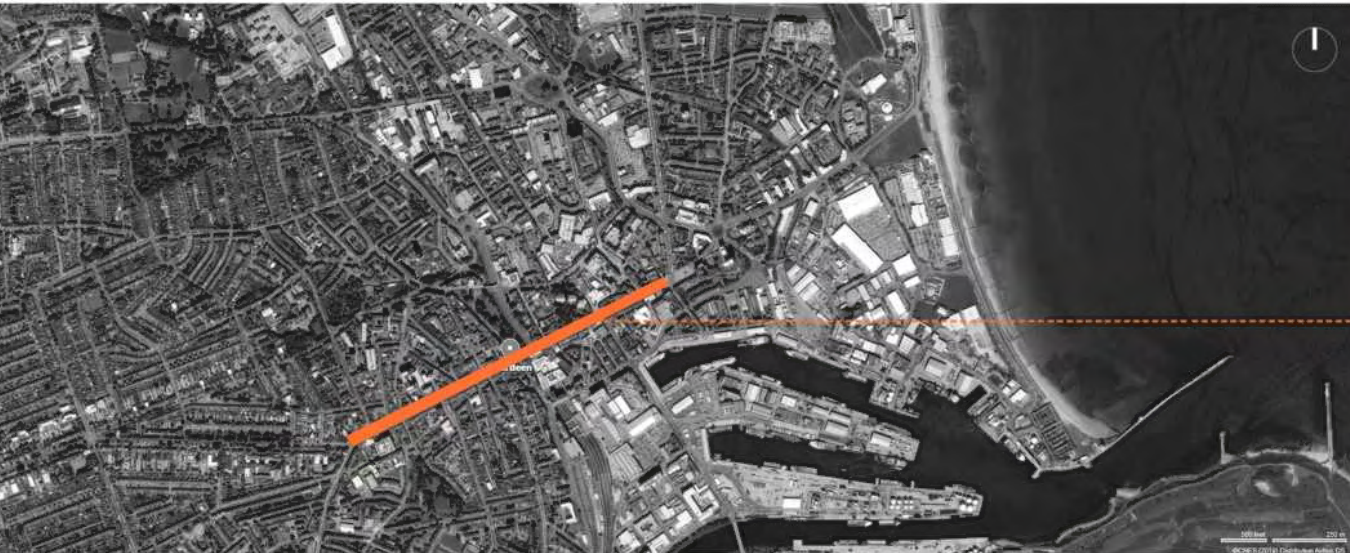
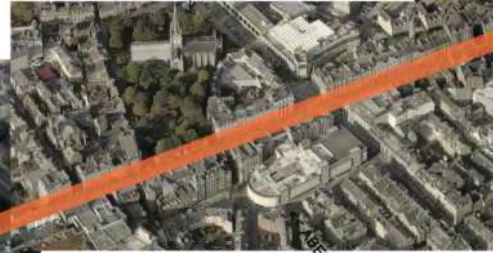
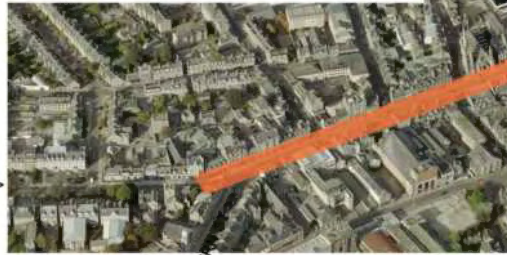
UNION STREET

UNION STREET > Site Introduction

Aberdeen has a unique history, coastal location, harbour, is not too big a city but large enough to have access to a wide variety of cultural amenities: art galleries, theatres, museums, cinemas; it coincides with distinctive architecture that augments the unique and magnetic sense of place. Union Street acts as the spine for most of the city activities.

It is approximately 1 mile long (Granite Mile) and has been built above the old town on a series of arches designed in the beginning of the 19th century. Currently it is used as a main street and shopping thoroughfare in Aberdeen. It plays a major role in the social, civic, commercial and cultural life of Aberdeen. Architecturally unique buildings run along both sides of the street providing variety and interest in the city centre. It is a vital space in the Aberdeen.

In May 2020 the street has been partly pedestrianised between Bridge and Market Street.



01_Union Street: Gilcomston Church towers

02_Union Street: view towards the Green and Aberdeen Market building with mural painted by Herakut for NuArt festival

03_Union Street: view of the pedestrianised parts between Market St and Bridge St

04_Union Street: street furniture and landscape elements

05_Union Street: benches

06_Union Street: view of the Aberdeen Market building in the background

07_Union Street: St Nicholas Churyard and cemetery

08_Union Street: Gilcomston Church and view to Union Row

09_Union Street: Holburn junction seating area

10_Union Street: entrance to the pedestrianised area between Market St and Bridge St

11_Union Street: Great Aberdeen Run event

12_Union Street: Holburn junction



01_Union Street: Gilcomston Church towers



03_Union Street: view of the pedestrianised parts between Market St and Bridge St

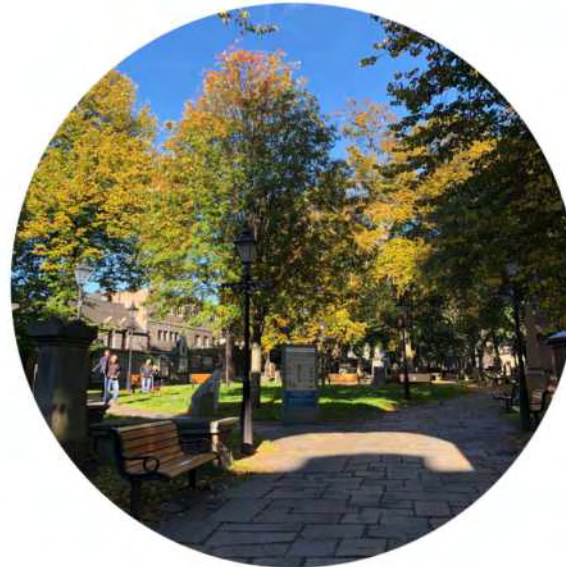


04_Union Street: street furniture and landscape elements



05_Union Street: benches

02_Union Street: view towards the Green and Aberdeen Market building with mural painted by Herakut for NuArt festival



07_Union Street: St Nicholas Churyard ad cementry



06_Union Street: view of the Aberdeen Market building in the background

08_Union Street: Gilcomston Church and view to Union Row



09_Union Street: Holburn junction seating area

10_Union Street: entrance to the pedestrianised area between Market St and Bridge St

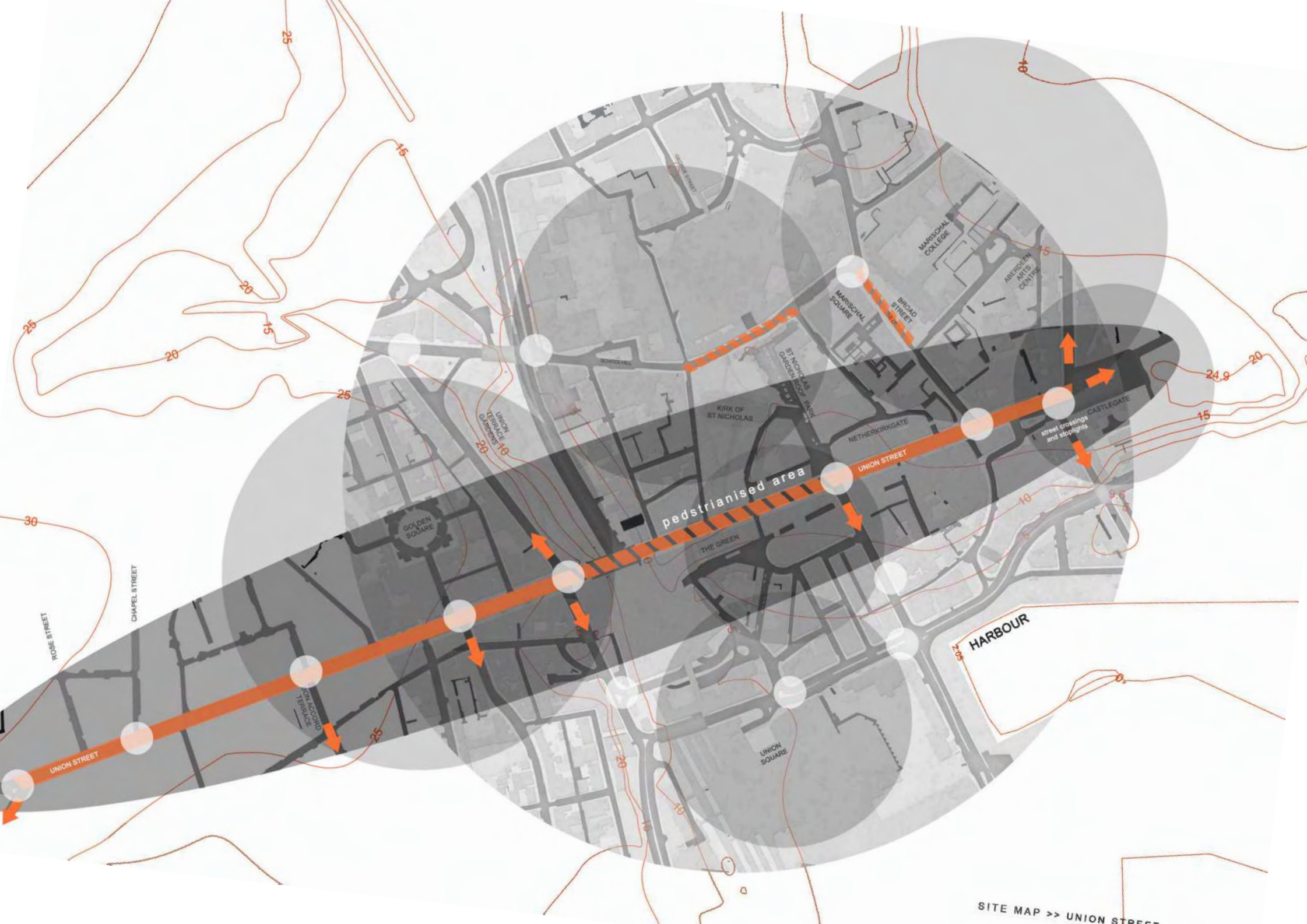


12_Union Street: Holburn junction



11_Union Street: Great Aberdeen Run event





pedstrianised area

HARBOUR

SITE MAP >> UNION STREET

ROSE STREET

CHAPEL STREET

UNION STREET

UNION STREET

GOLDEN SQUARE

THE GREEN

UNION SQUARE

KIRK OF ST NICHOLAS

NETHERWORKGATE

street crossings and stoplights

CASTLEGATE

MARSHAL SQUARE

BROAD STREET

MARSHAL COLLEGE

ABERDEEN ARTS CENTRE

ST NICHOLAS GARDEN ROOFS PARK

UNION TERRACE

WINDOCKHILL

25

15

20

20

15

25

30

10

24.9

15

10

20.5

20

10

10

0



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UNION STREET



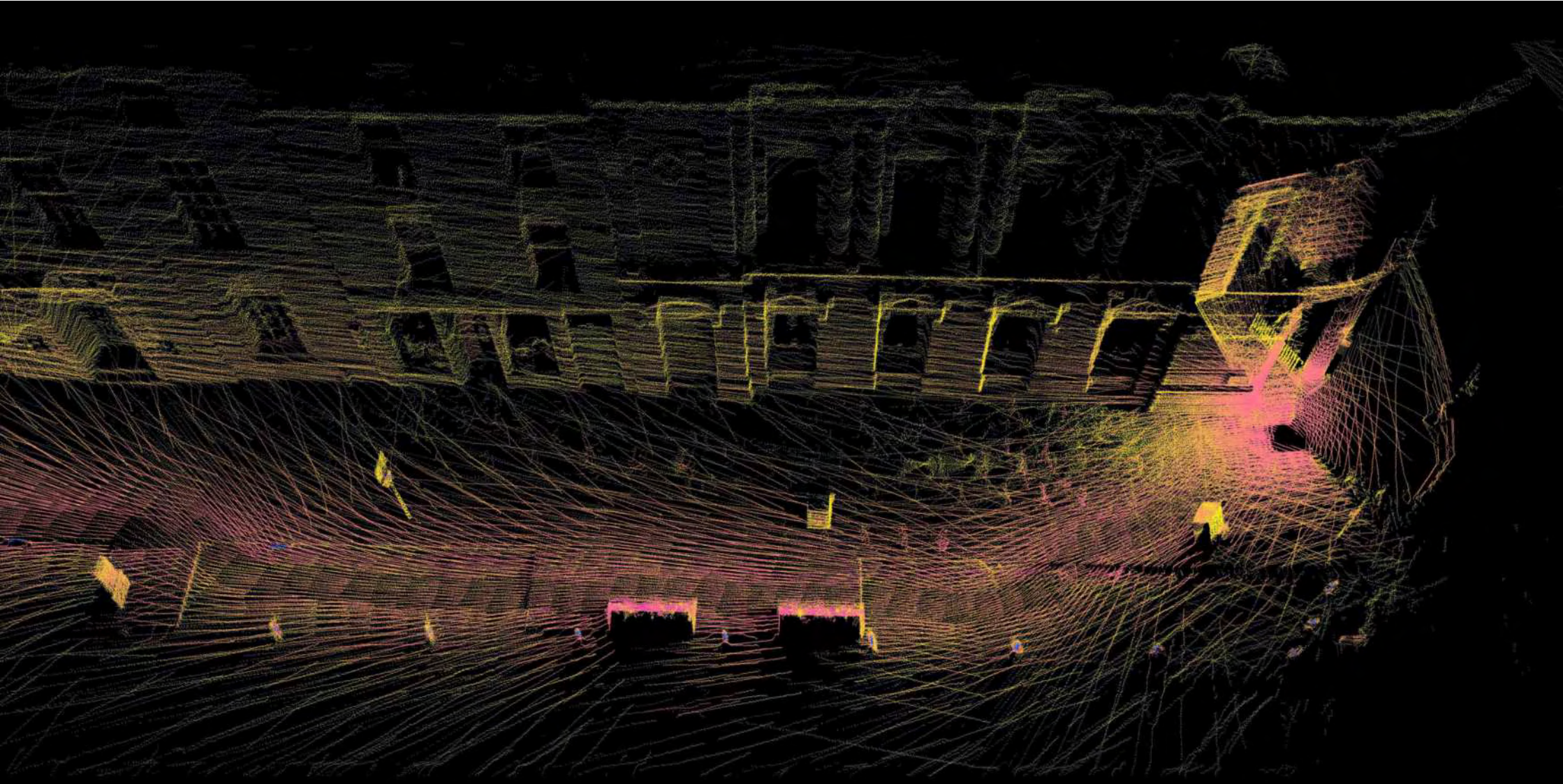
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UNION STREET

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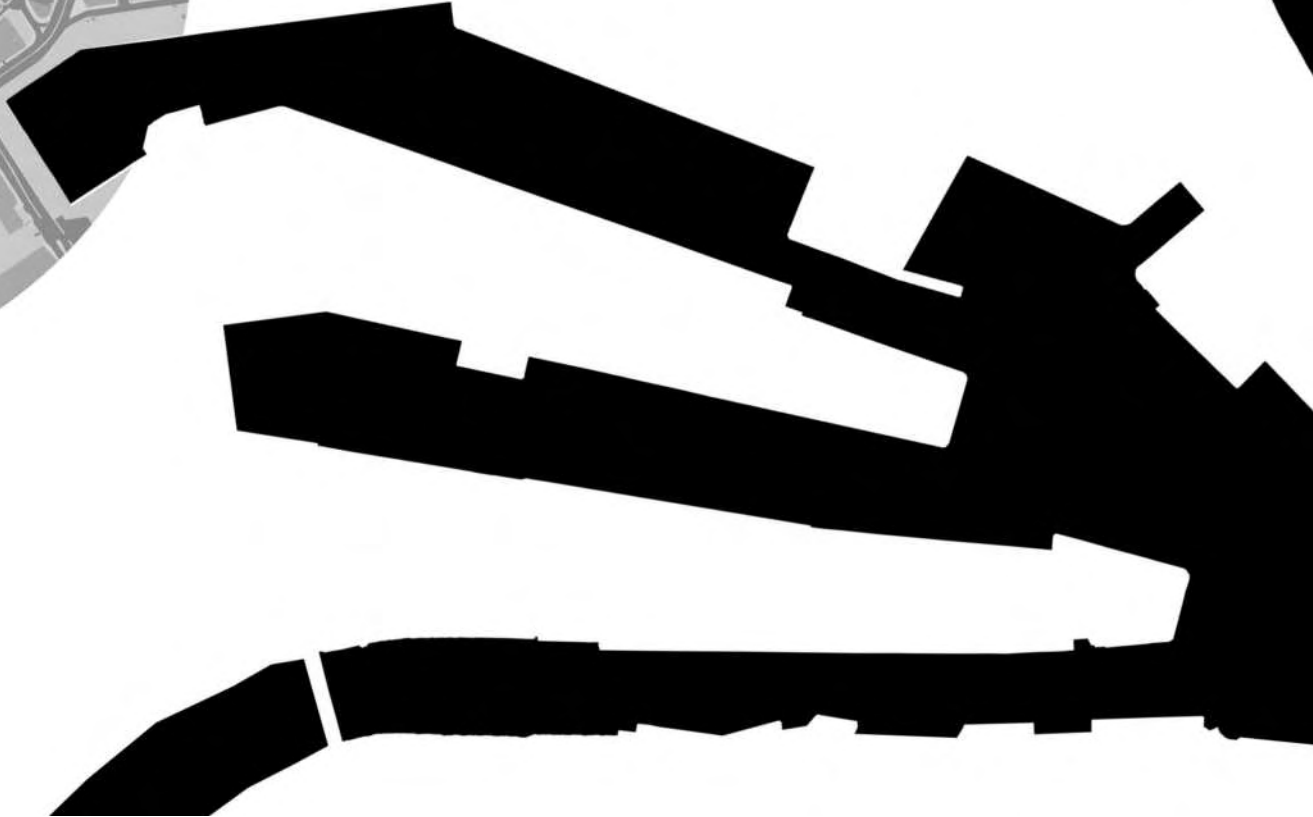
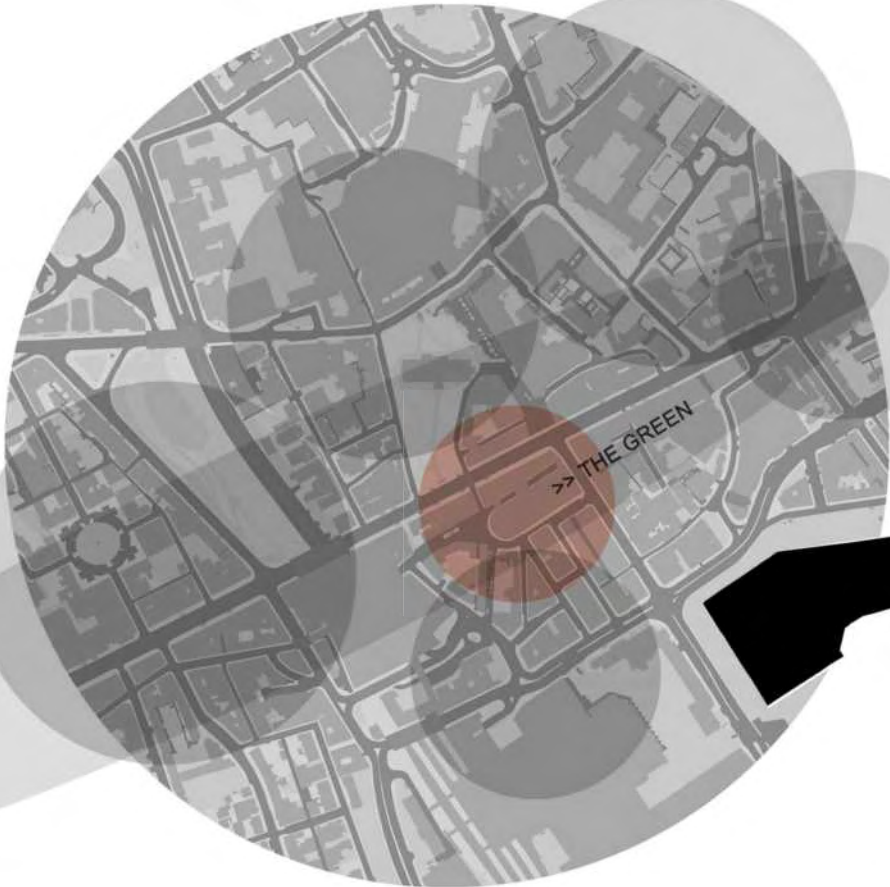
UNION STREET





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UNION STREET



THE GREEN > Site Introduction

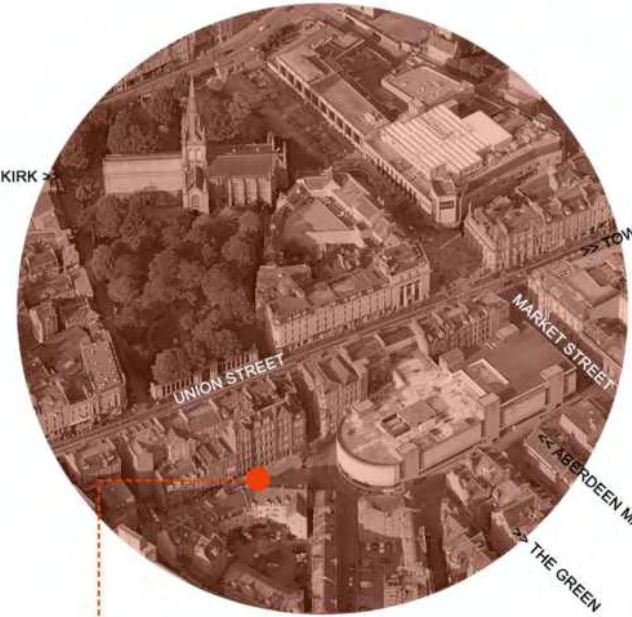
The area of The Green is among one of the oldest parts of the city - for six centuries it formed part of the only route into the Aberdeen city from the South to the Old Town until the construction of Union Street in the early 1800s.

At present The Green is a significant nodal site within the city centre. It symbolises the cultural and historical area, where the medieval, 19th century and contemporary layers intertwine.

The historic links and aerial connectivity & permeability of the Green with its intersecting pedestrian routes to and from the square - makes it a distinctive space within the city as the hub of a network of connecting routes.

In our explorations we discovered that the accessibility and connectivity around this unique area could be greatly improved by opening up some of the historic routes - Carnagies's Brae and Correction Wynd - that connect the Green with Netherkirkgate, the Bon Accord centre and Marischal Square running underneath Union Street.

ST NICHOLAS KIRK >



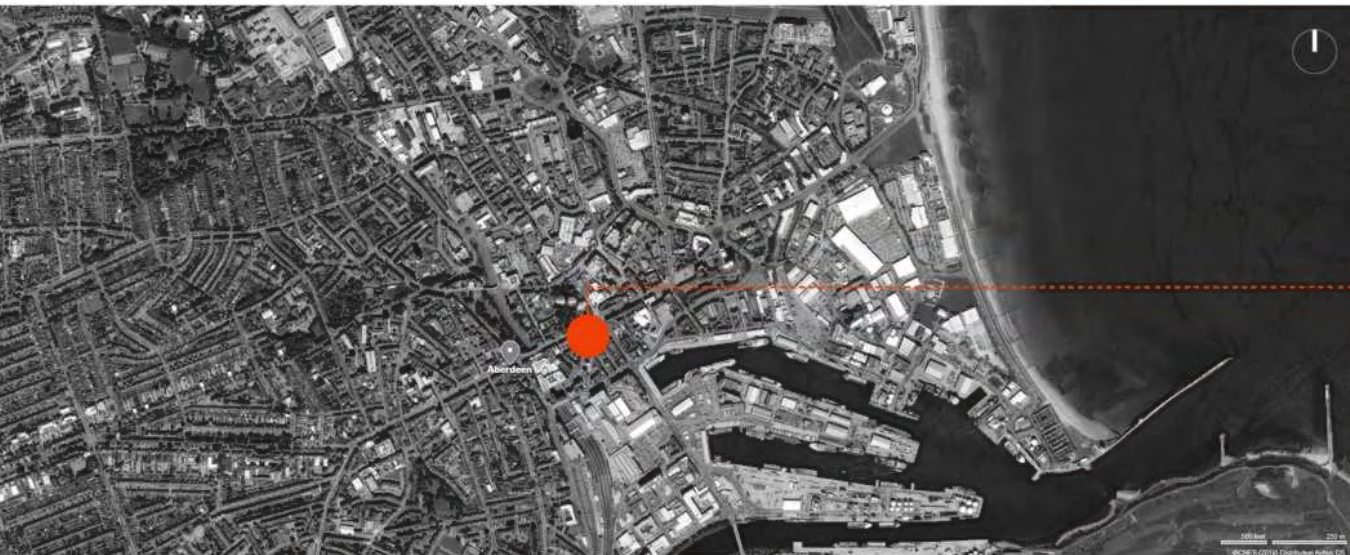
The Green
Site
Introduction

TOWARDS CASTLEGATE

MARKET STREET

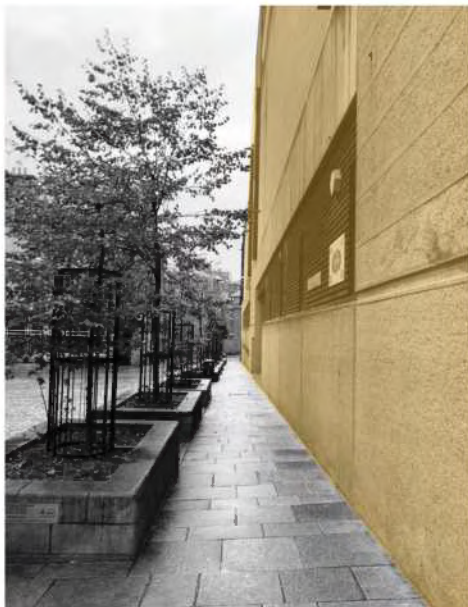
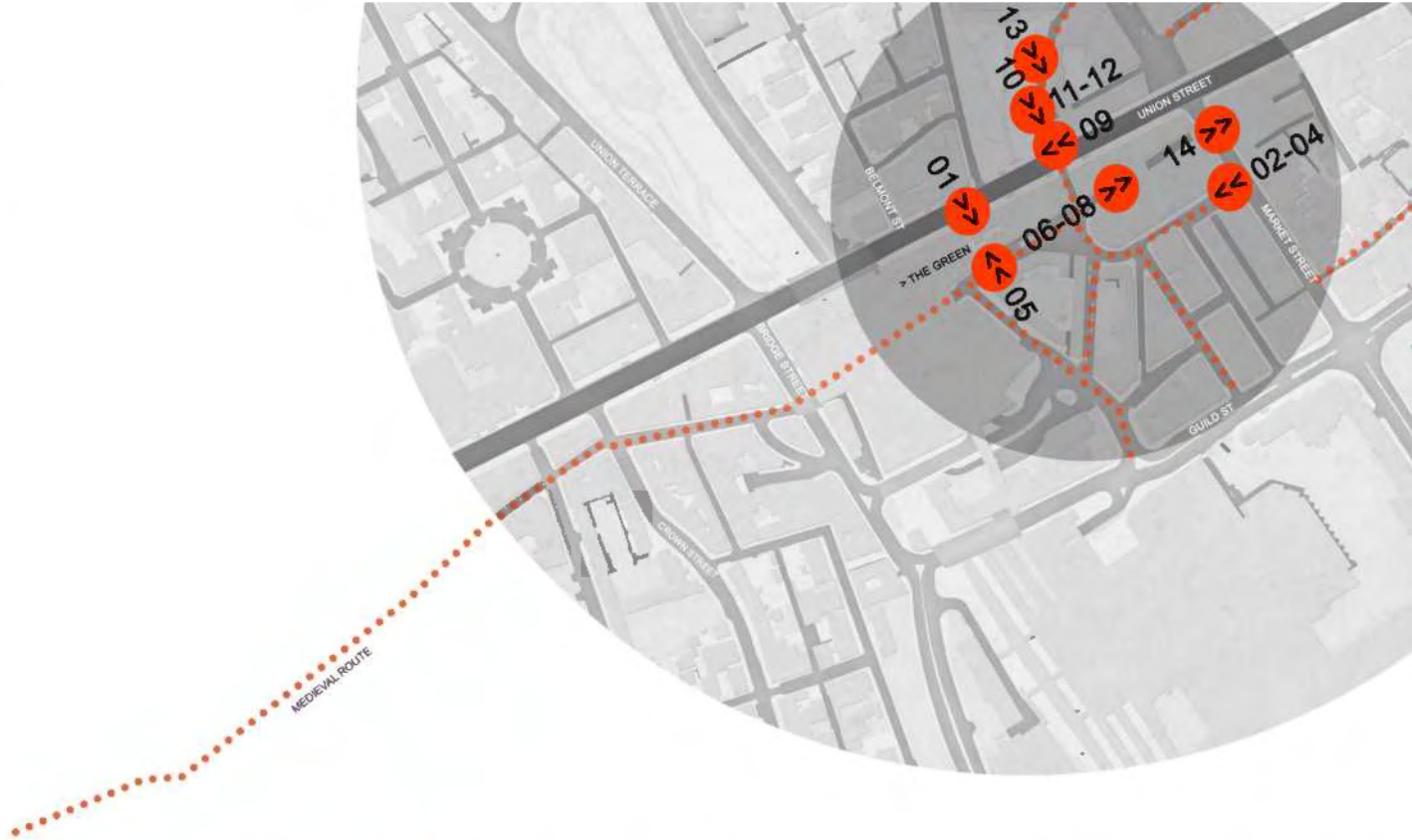
ABERDEENS MARKET BUILDING

THE GREEN





01_Back Wynd Stairs



02_'Hard edge' of Hadden Street
Pedestrians walk past long sections of closed
off building facade.



03_Exchange Street - connecting Hadden
Street and Guild Street



04_Exchange Lane



06_07_08_Painted Doors' artistic initiative turning abandoned doorways into works of art and creating a trail of connected street art nodes on the map through Correction Wynd, Merchant Quarter, Langstane Place and Windmill Brae

05_Back Wynd Stairs connecting The Green with the Union Street level. Monumental piece of staircase providing a link/shortcut but also in many ways an obstacle in wandering through the city due to its scale.

Before the construction of Union Street, Back Wynd used to join Schoolhill to The Green. The present Back Wynd Stairs were built in 1922 sweeping away Ædles House but leaving its ghostly image in the adjoining Building.



03_Looking up the Back Wynd Stairs from The Green

08_Artwork - Correction Wynd Stairs



10_Correction Wynd Stairs
The lower ground level of Correction Wynd still follows the Medieval street plan of the city. Stairs link Union Street with the lower level of Correction Wynd leading to The Green or further to St Nicholas Lane.





11_Correction Wynd looking towards Kirk of St Nicholas

12_Correction Wynd under Union Street



13_ Cobbled street of Correction Wynd & passage underneath the Union Street to the Green.



14_Carnegie's Brae and Correction Wynd passing below Union Street and Market Street remain the historic routes linking the Green with Netherkirkgate, Bon Accord Centre and Marischal Square.



10_Carnegie's Brae - looking towards The Green



THE GREEN >> Connectivity

The area around the Green in Aberdeen is a very permeable space. It is centrally located on the way from the bus/train station & Union Square shopping Centre and Union Street. The historic links and aerial connectivity of the Green with its intersecting pedestrian routes to and from the square - make it a distinctive space within the city as the hub - a network of connecting routes.

ABSTRACT[ED] ABERDEEN>> LASER SCANNING

A two-dimensional map does not convey the richness of the complex urban context. Topography of Aberdeen and specific environment of this location were captured by the 3d laser scanner and data output translated into subjective mapping to expose the distinctive atmosphere of the place.

Urban scanning is based on retrieving the surface information of the built environment. Specific urban context act as series of rooms where the information of outer surfaces/boundaries of architecture and built fabric is collected from a shifting centre of gravity created by a person scanning and wandering through the city.

The workings of 3d laser scanners are fascinating to watch. Juxtaposition of hundreds of surreal lines forming the actual context by building accurate three-dimensional models of the city by connecting millions of surface points – an abstract act involving human aspect and perspective.

The spatial images generated from the scans uncovered the interplay of urban voids and volumes, open spaces, enclosed passages, tunnels and niches in the underground network of urban corridors.

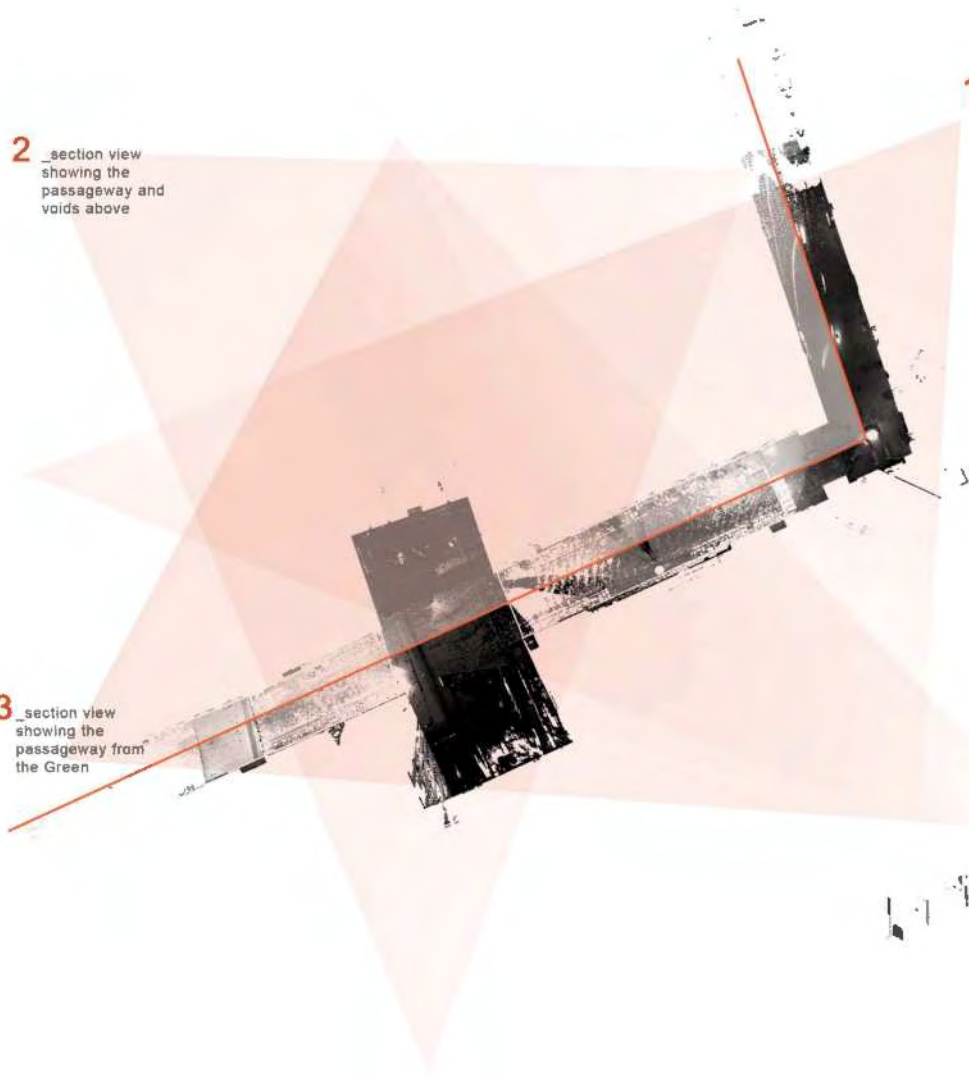
Mapping also revealed the spatial experience of coming down the lanes, shortcuts and streets to reach The Green.

THE GREEN

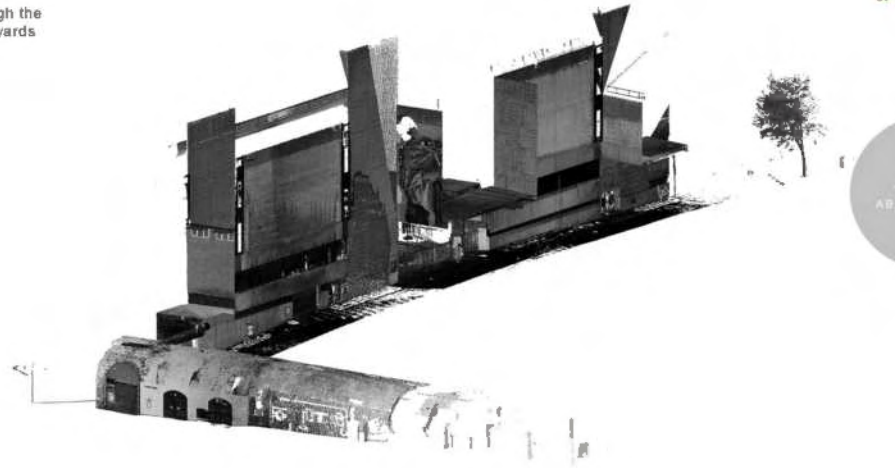
Carnegie's Brae

1.363 m

2_section view showing the passageway and voids above



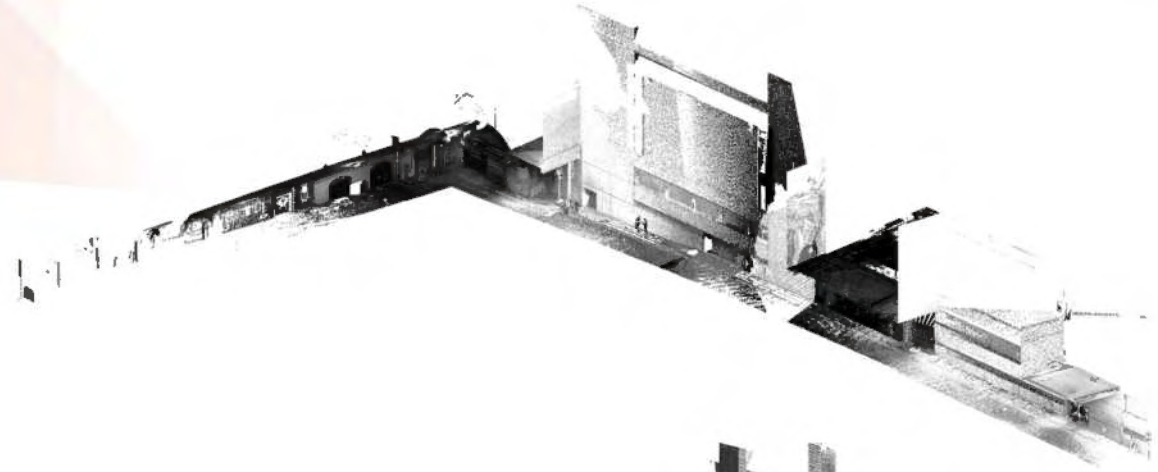
1_section view through the passage looking towards the Green



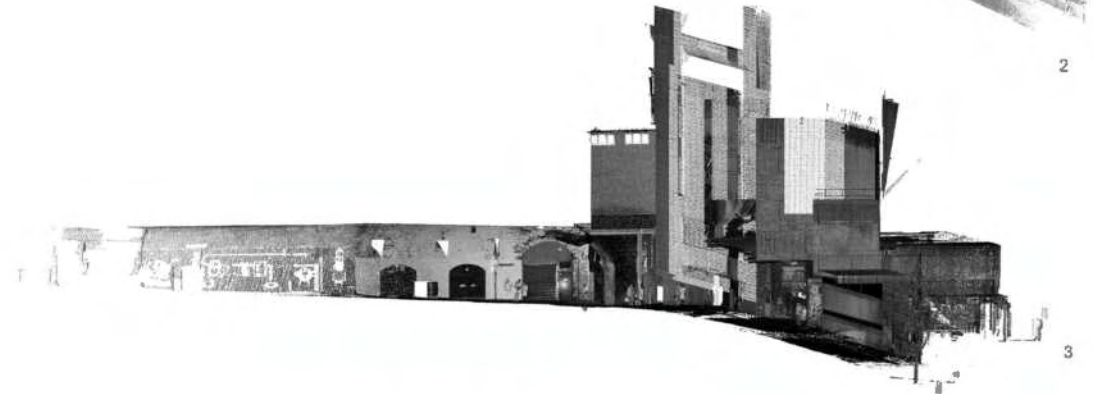
2

The Green
ABSTRACTED

3_section view showing the passageway from the Green



1



2

3

THE GREEN > POINT CLOUD
IMAGES AND EXPLORATIONS

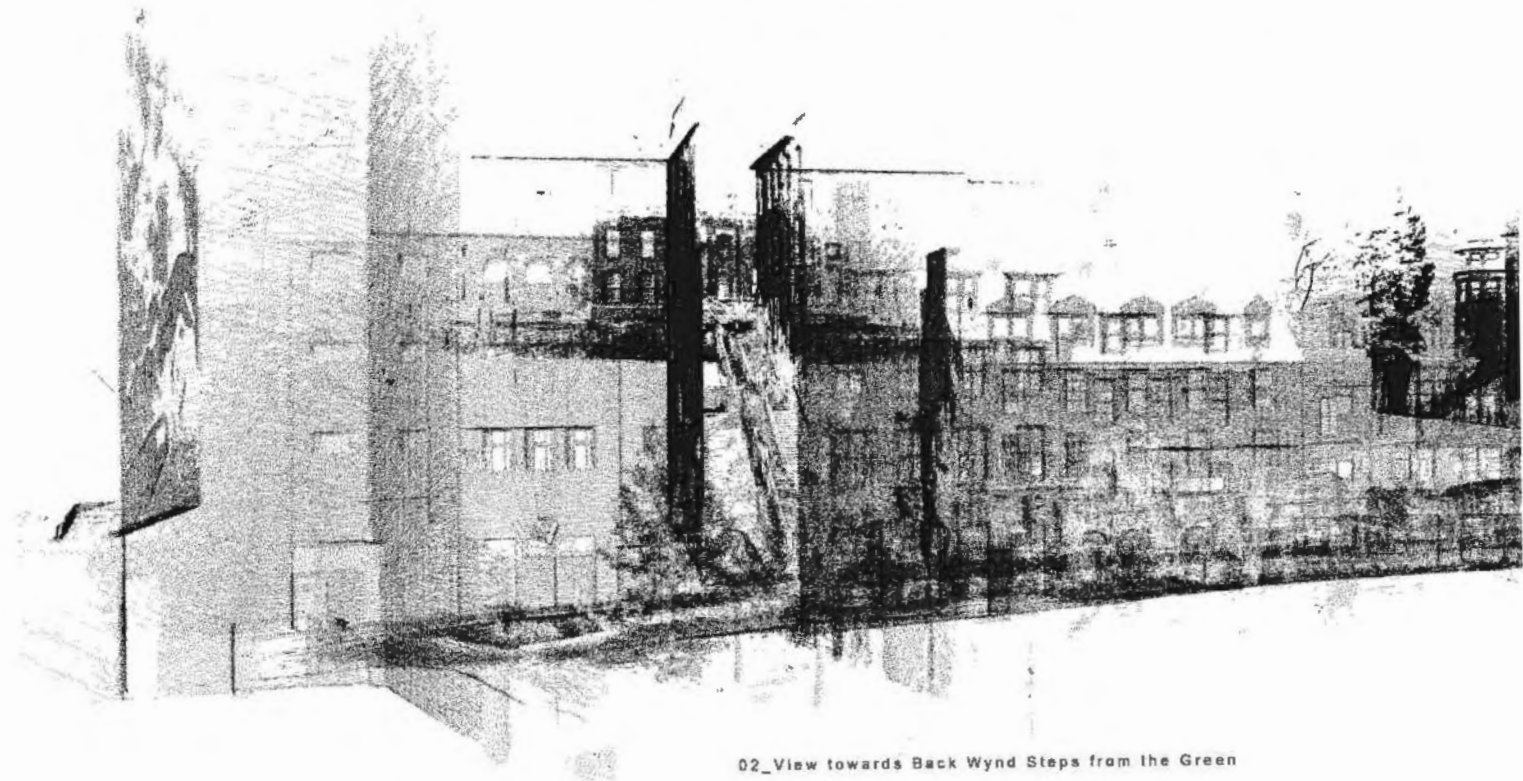
The area around the Green allows for cutting across established routes and exploring marginal and overlooked spaces. The subterranean links, tunnels, passages together with experiencing a play of shadows and lights created by the open and closed volumes of existing urban environment render this historic heart of the city as truly unique.

We have been exploring the city streets and, by the use of 3D laser scanners, mapped the urban fabric and spatial relationships; simultaneously re-imagining the city. Every city is full of forgotten spaces, alleyways that with a bit of effort could be turned into vibrant laneways and city squares. Opening up the potential of spaces in the area around The Green by temporary actions, pop-up events, workshops and public engagement would start a dialogue and offer alternatives to the experience of urban life.

Smaller human - scale spaces are important in the city and by tactically choosing and invigorating those spaces by responding to the surroundings and creating connections, we could inspire other areas - and ultimately generate a network of linked spaces - key nodes in the city.

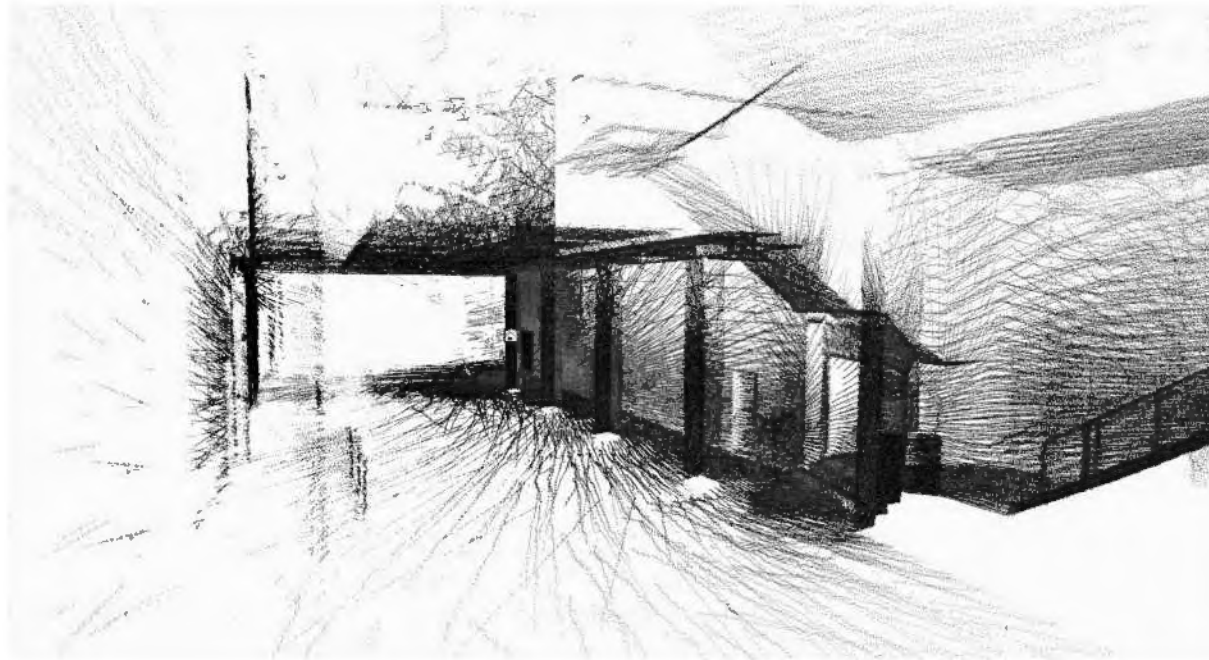


01_View towards St Nicholas Square from St Nicholas Lane



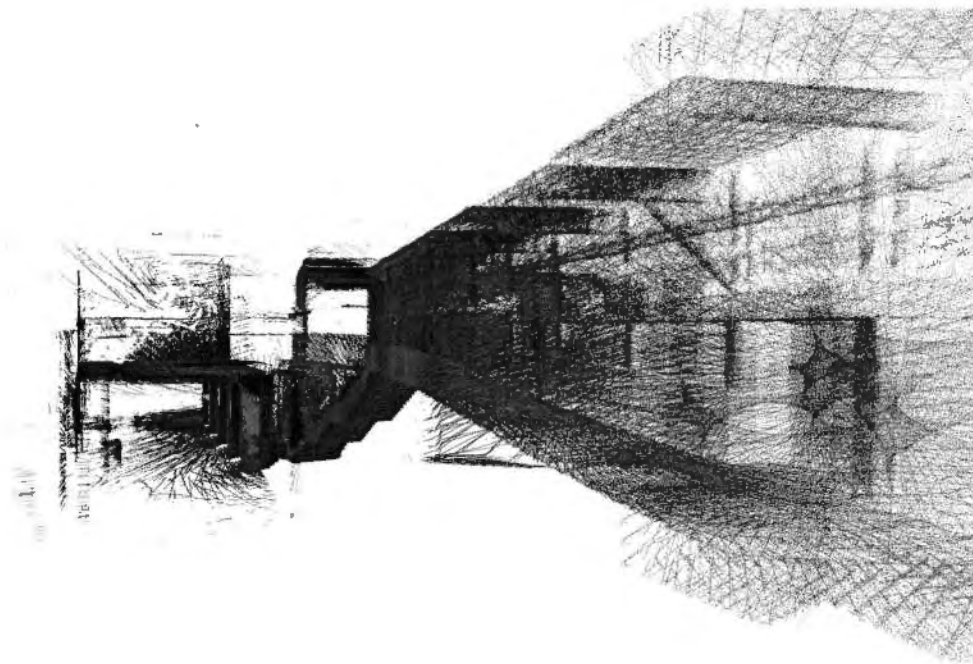
02_View towards Back Wynd Steps from the Green

MEDIEVAL ROUTE
the Green_connection to Denburn Road



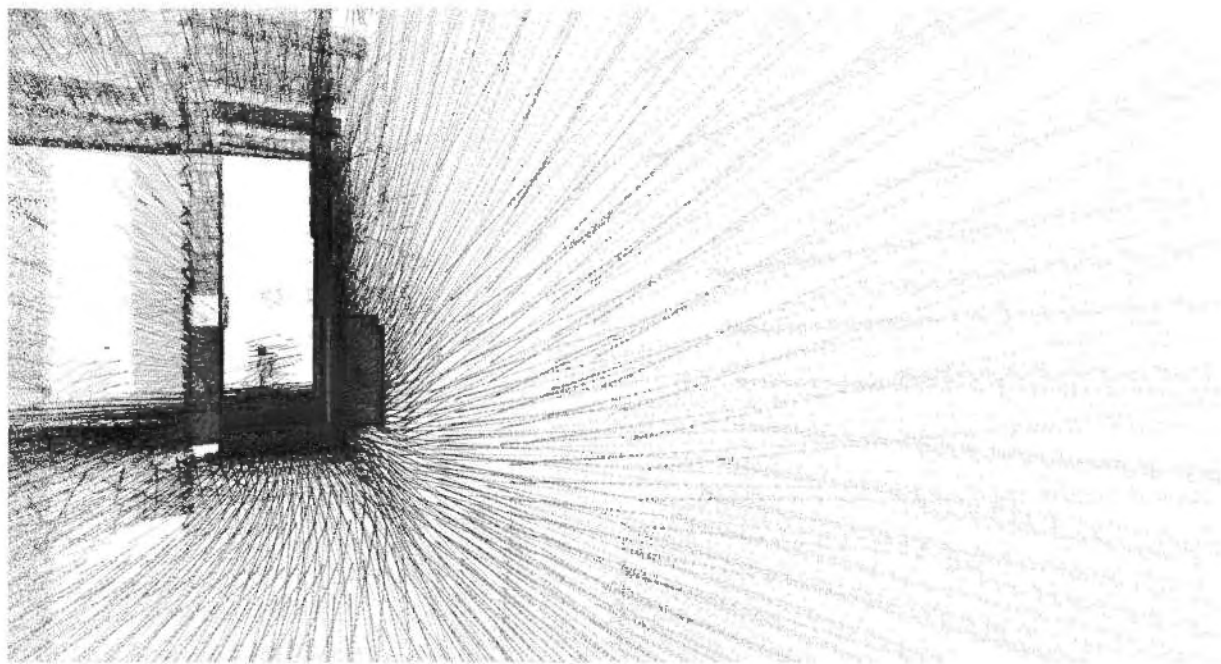
abstract[ed] aberdeen

MEDIEVAL ROUTE
the Green_connection to Denburn Road_02

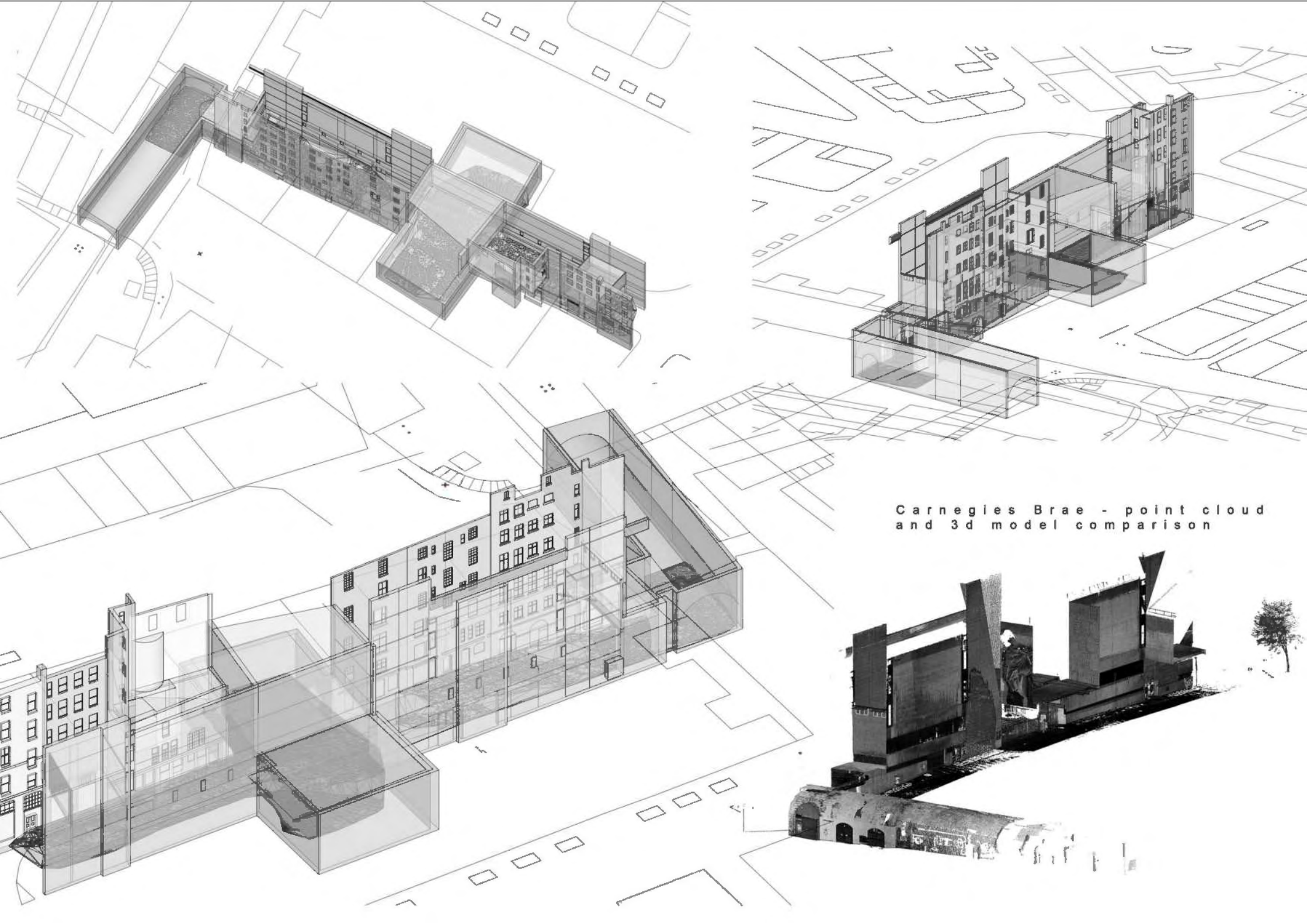


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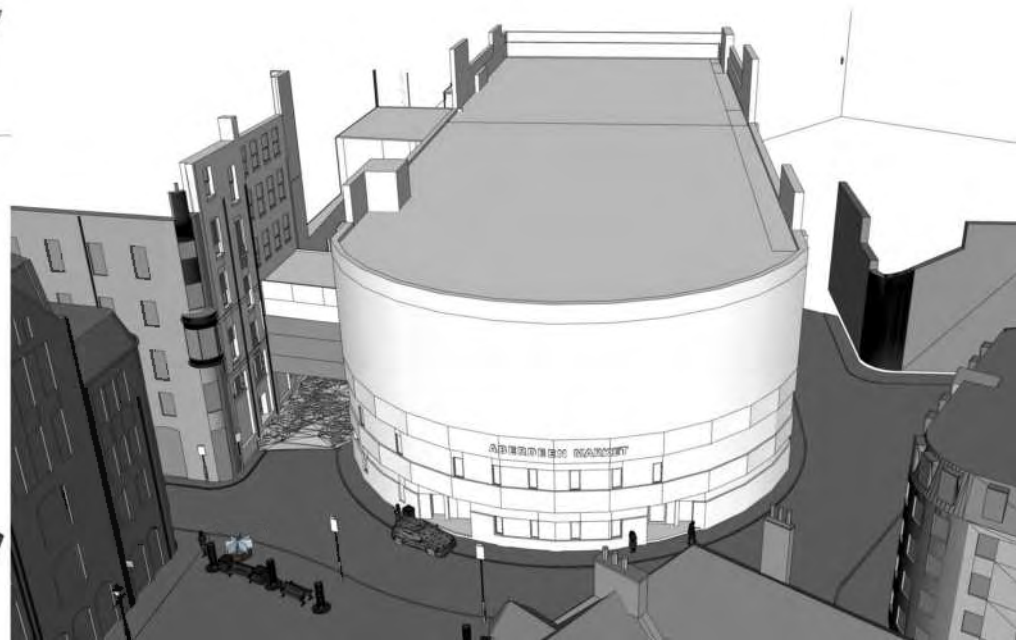
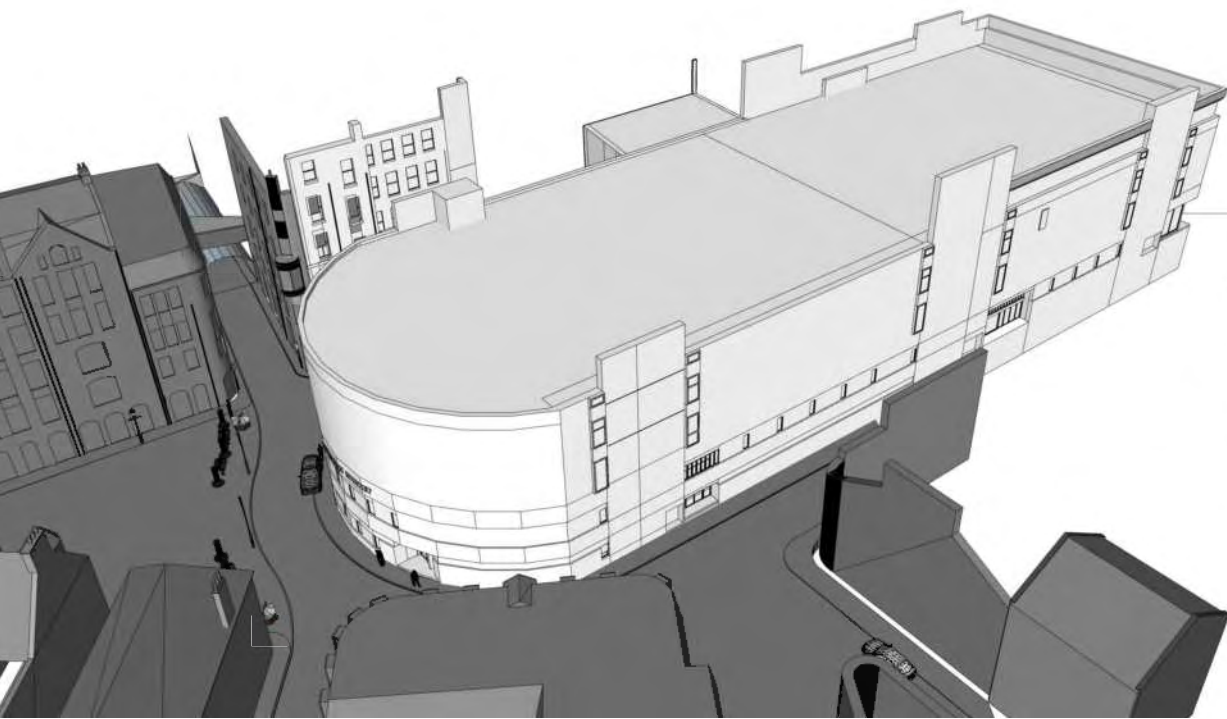
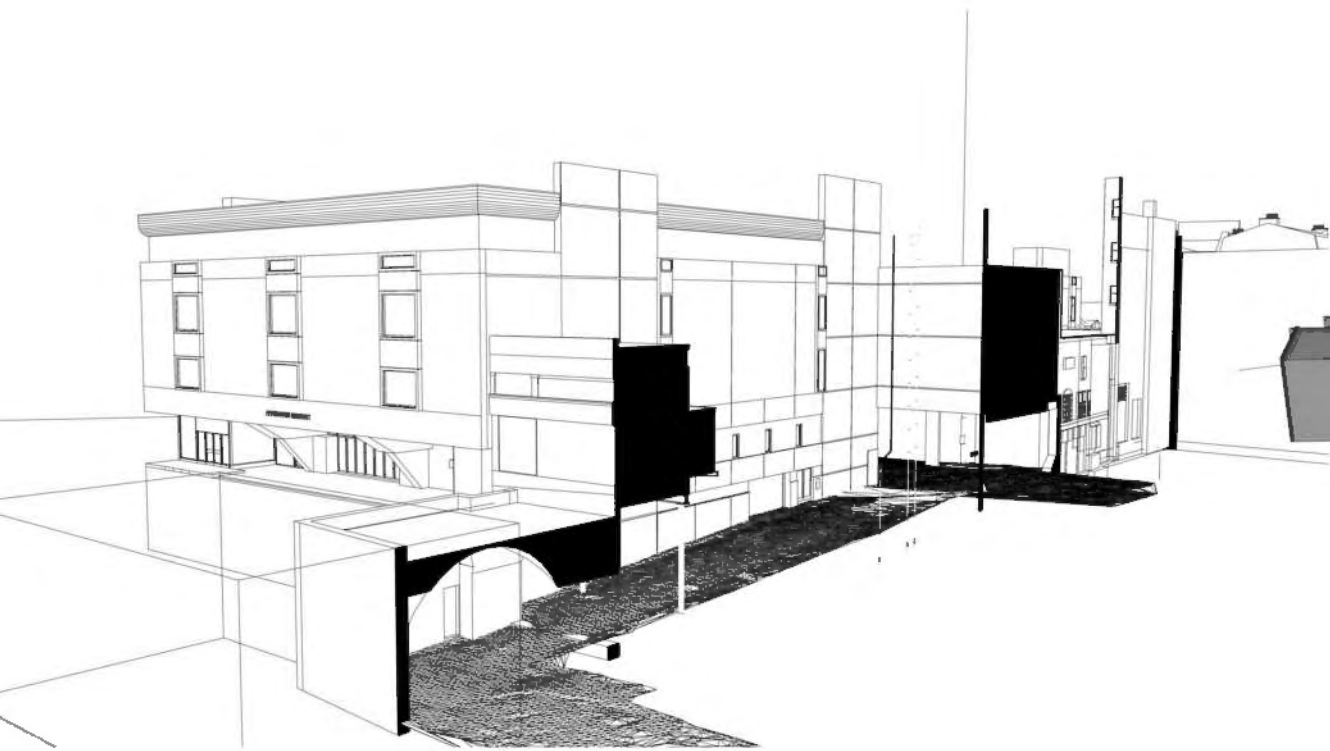
MEDIEVAL ROUTE
the Green_connection to Denburn Road_03



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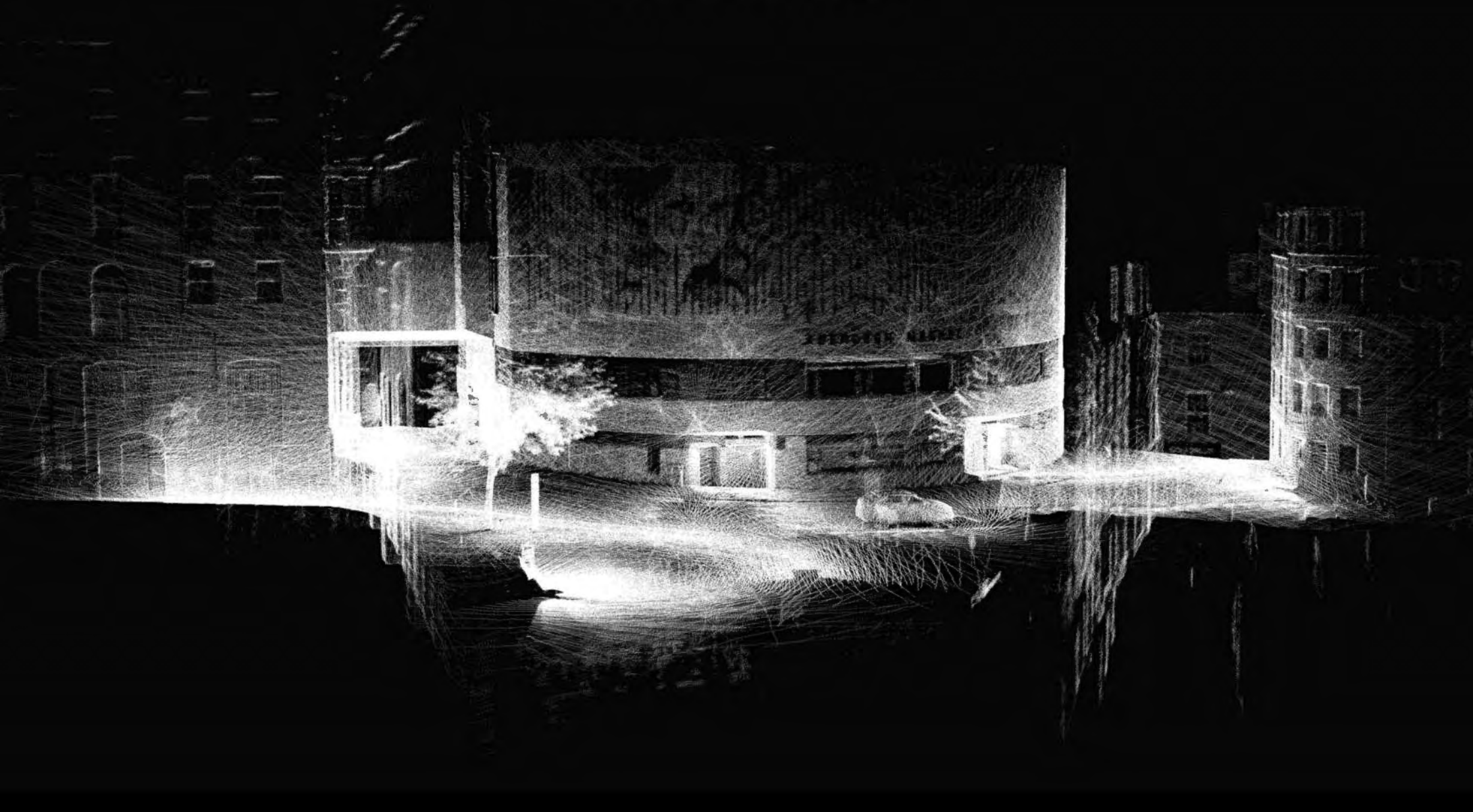


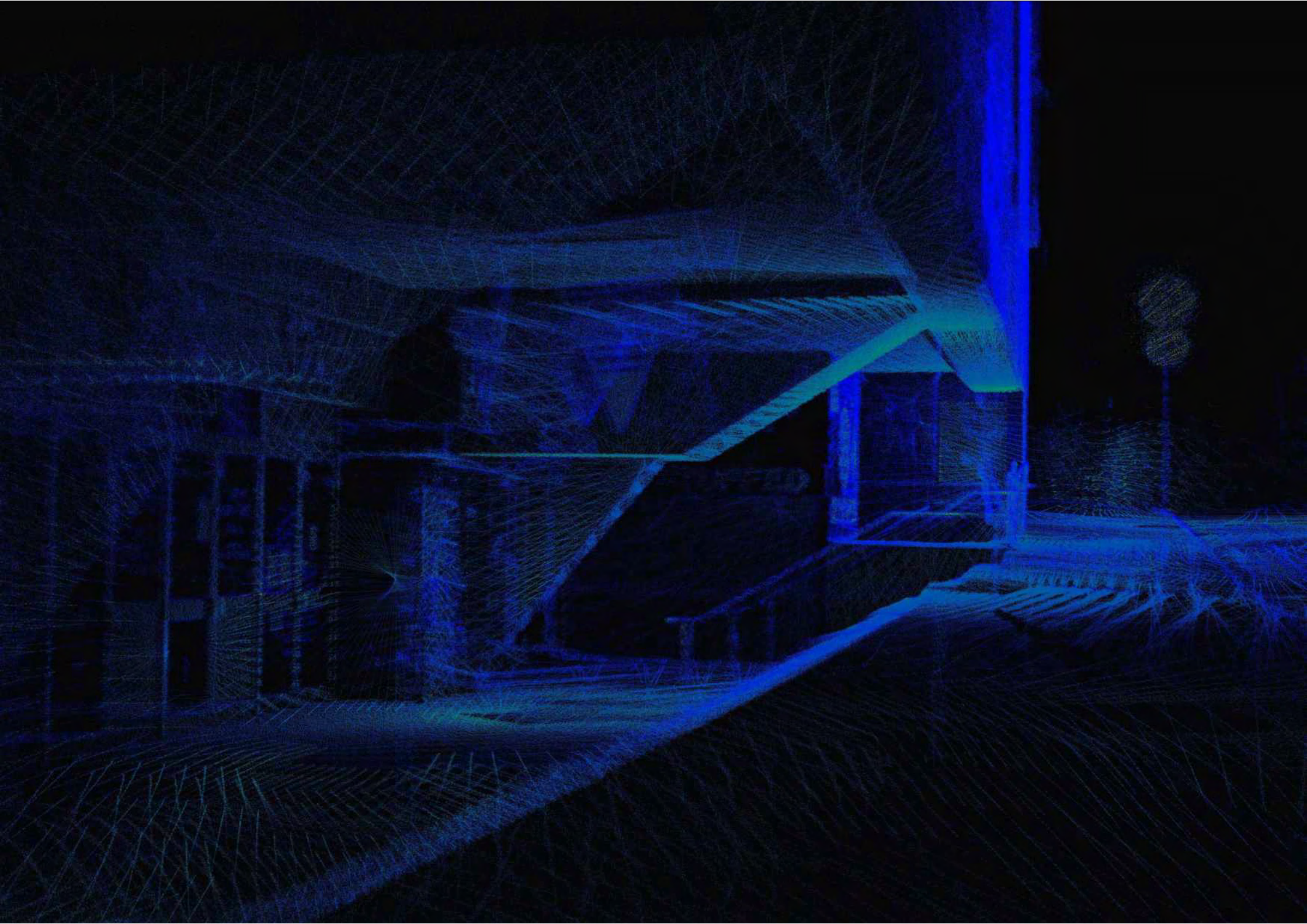
Carnegie Brae - point cloud and 3d model comparison



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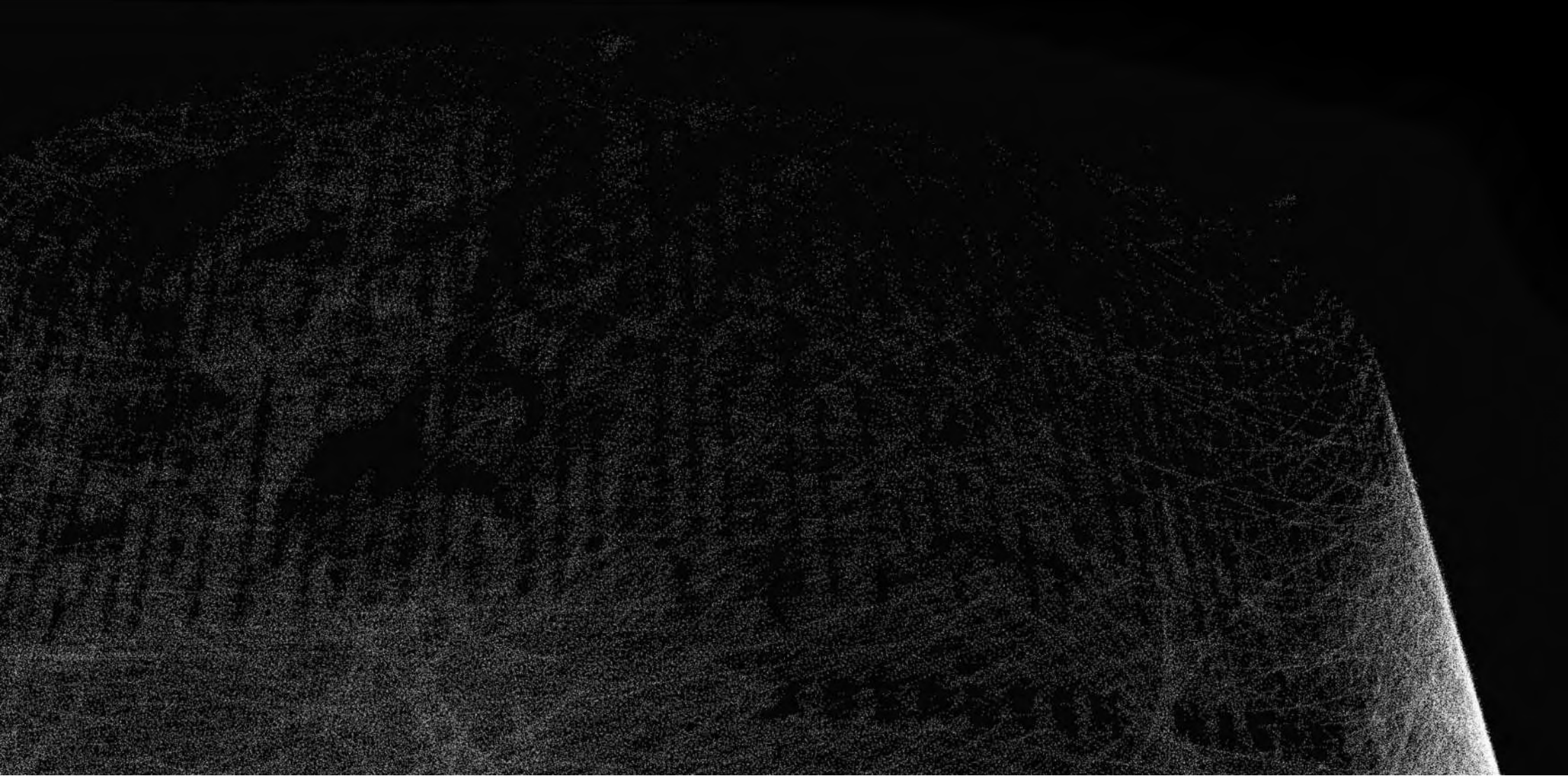
ABERDEEN MARKET

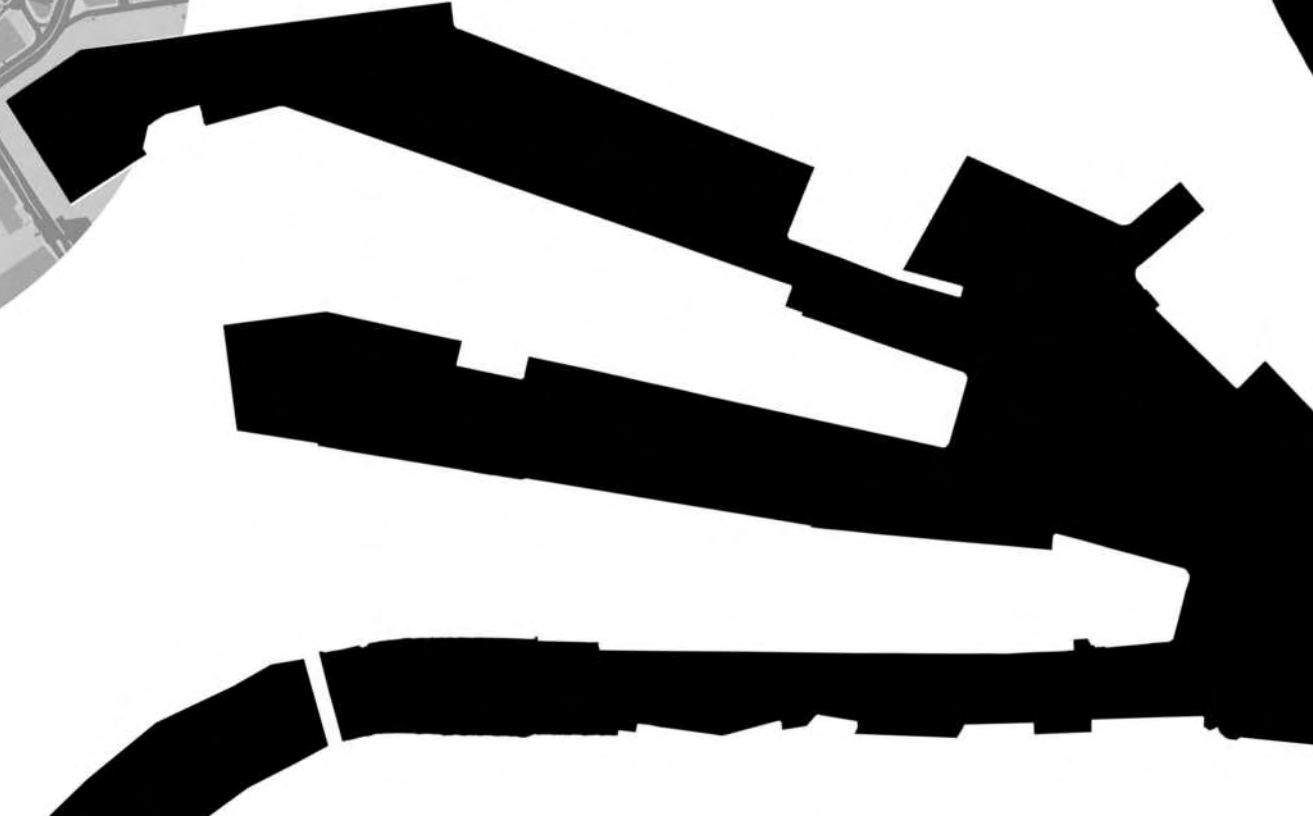




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ABERDEEN MARKET





SCHOOLHILL > Site Introduction

Schoolhill is one of the busiest city centre areas. Many local shops, cafes and restaurants are located along Schoolhill. It is also a link between Union Terrace Gardens and Broad Street. There are also many prominent and well known buildings such as His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Robert Gordon's College.

Schoolhill is also located in between two large shopping centres - Bon Accord and St Nicholas. Belmont Street/Back Wynd area with many bars, cafes and shops is in close proximity. All this creates a unique atmosphere of Schoolhill area.

ROBERT GORDON'S COLLEGE

BON ACCORD SHOPPING CENTRE

ART GALLERY >>



Castlegate Site Introduction





PHOTOGRAPHS >> SCHOOLHILL

01_Schoolhill: view from the Art Gallery roof terrace



02_Schoolhill: view towards Marishal College



03_View towards Belmont Street & Art Gallery



04_View of the Art Gallery

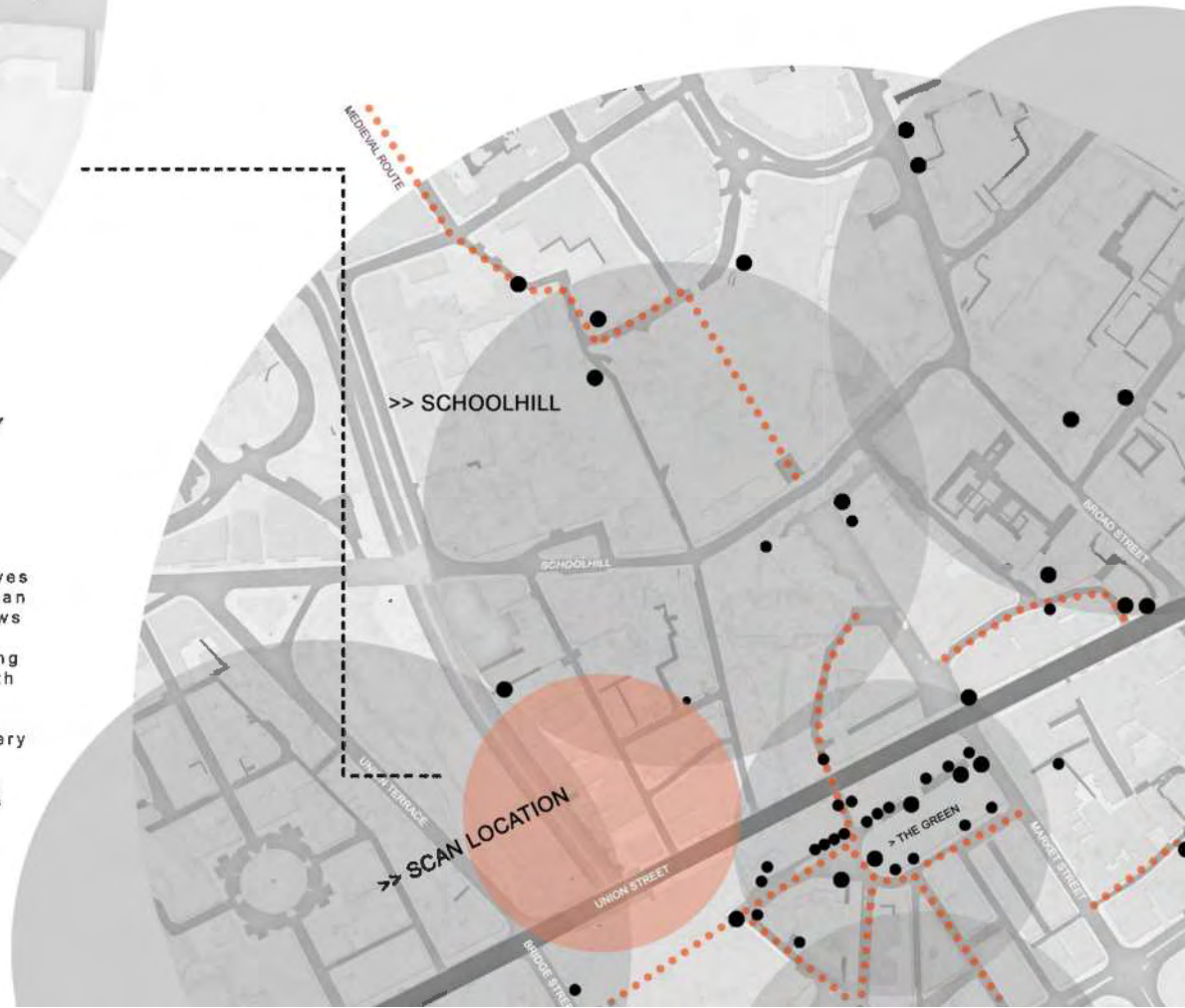




CREATIVITY IN THE CITY

>> SCANNING DENBURN AREA

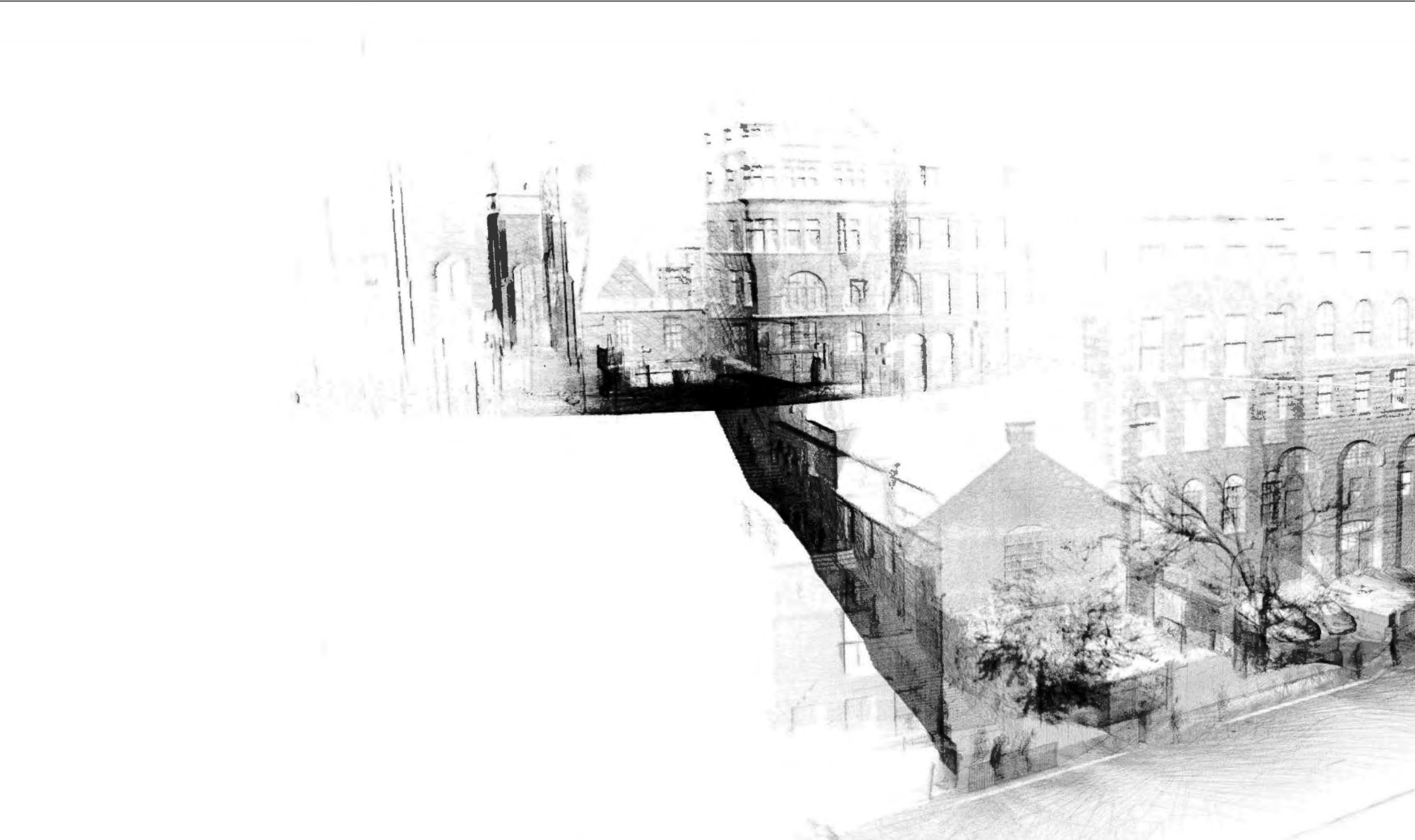
The diagrammatic map above indicates extent of the scanned area. The scan starts at Belmont Street then follows the old alleyway and steps at Patagonian Court. It then runs along very busy Denburn Road underneath Union Street and Union Bridge. It terminates at the entrance to the Green which also proves to be a very quick connection between the city centre and Guild Street with Union Square Shopping Centre and Bus & Train station.





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PATAGONIAN COURT



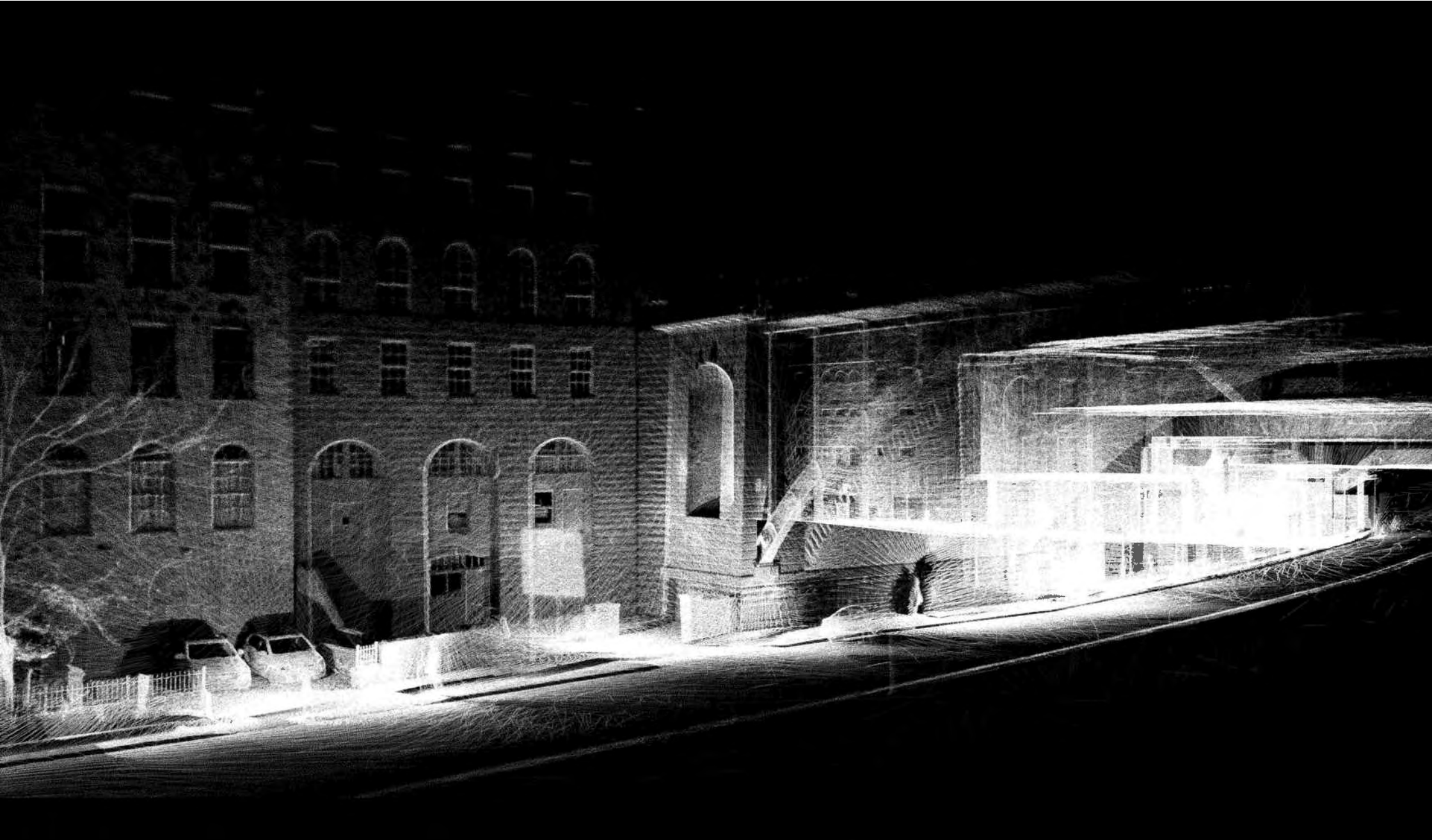
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PATAGONIAN COURT & DENBURN ROAD



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DENBURN ROAD



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DENBURN ROAD



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DENBURN ROAD



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VIEW FROM DENBURN ROAD TOWARDS
PATAGONIAN COURT



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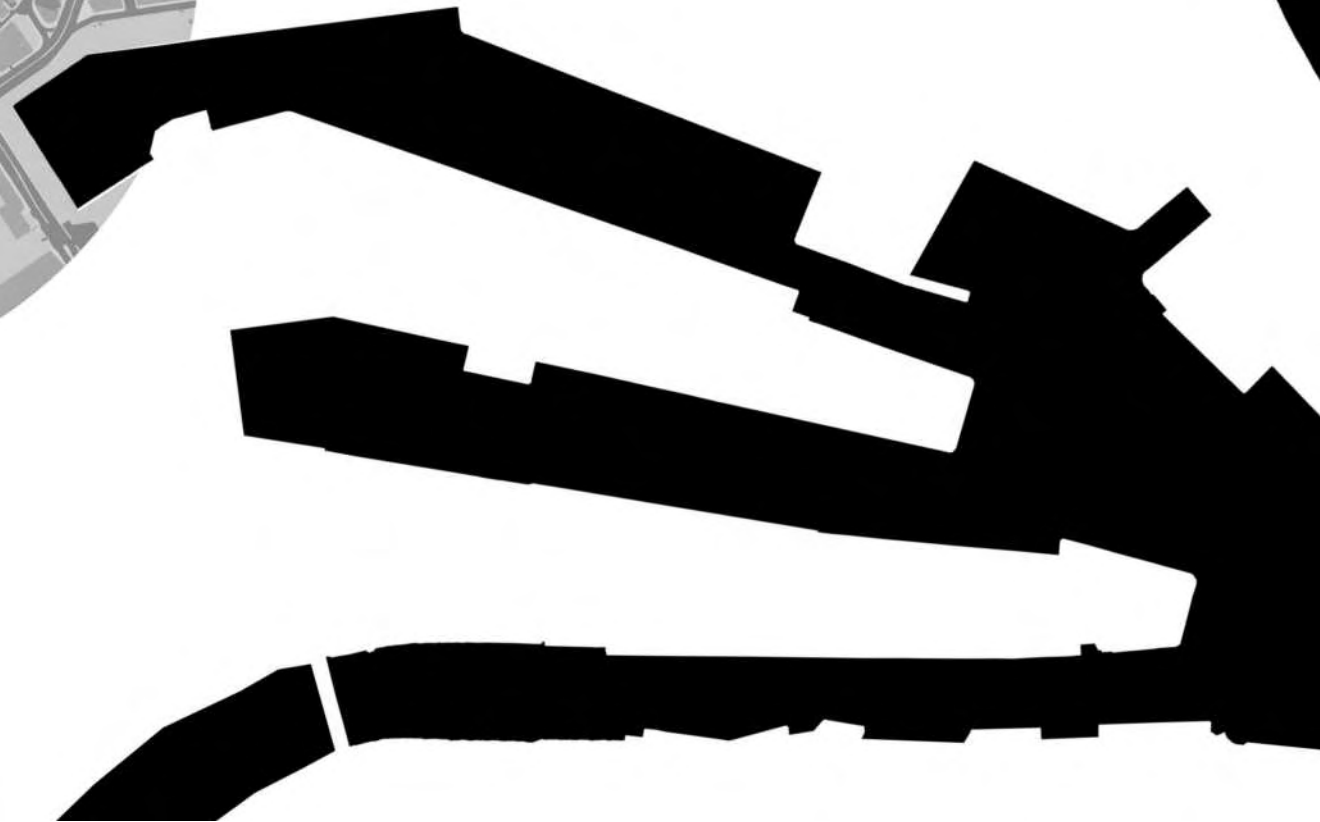
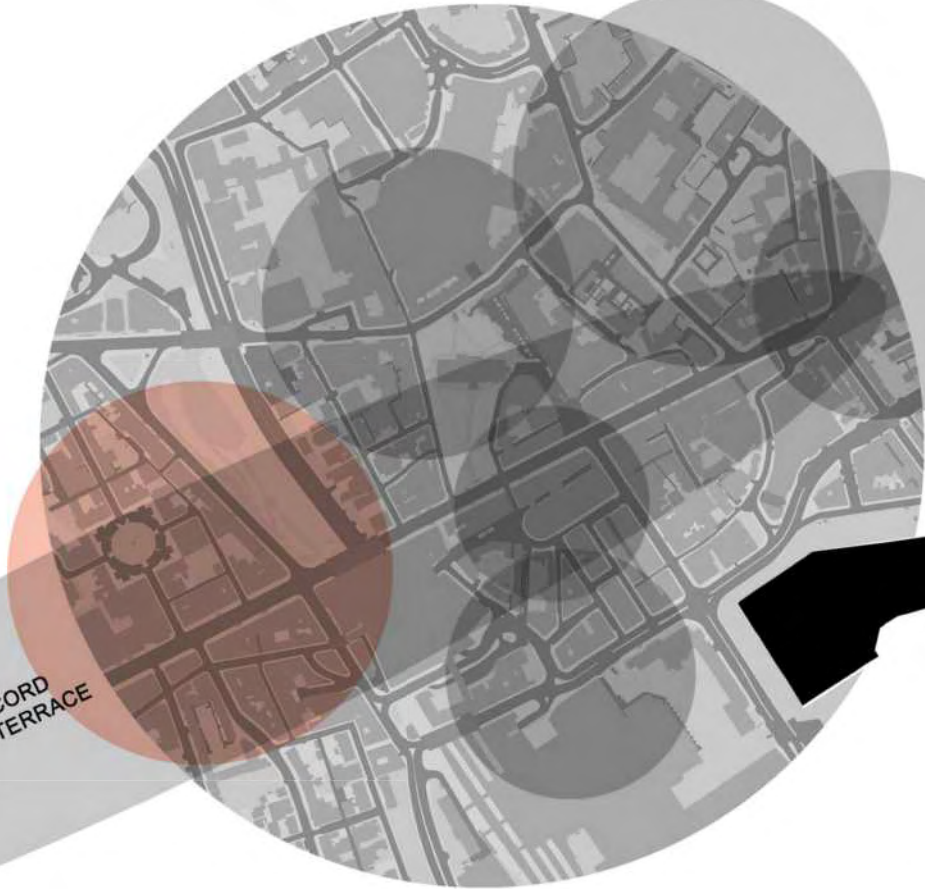
VIEW OF THE LIBRARY AND THEATRE
BUILDINGS



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SCHOOLHILL AND ART GALLERY

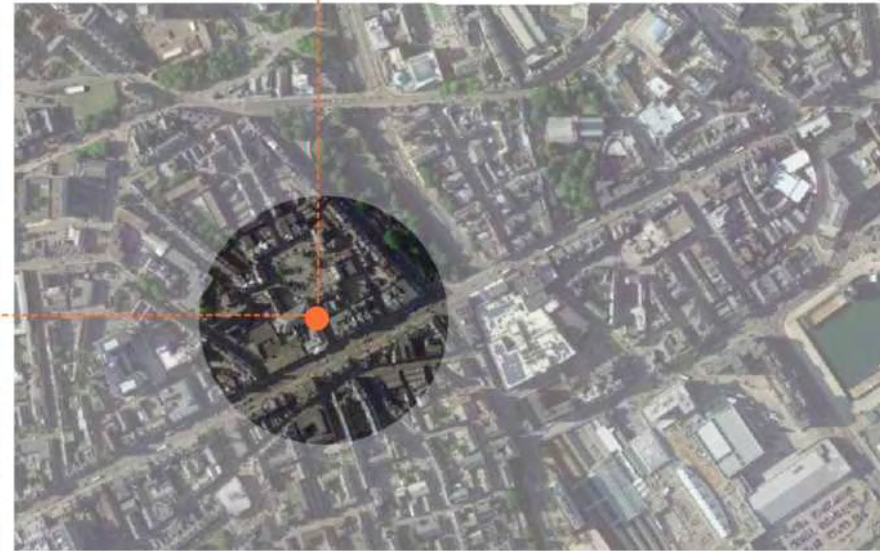
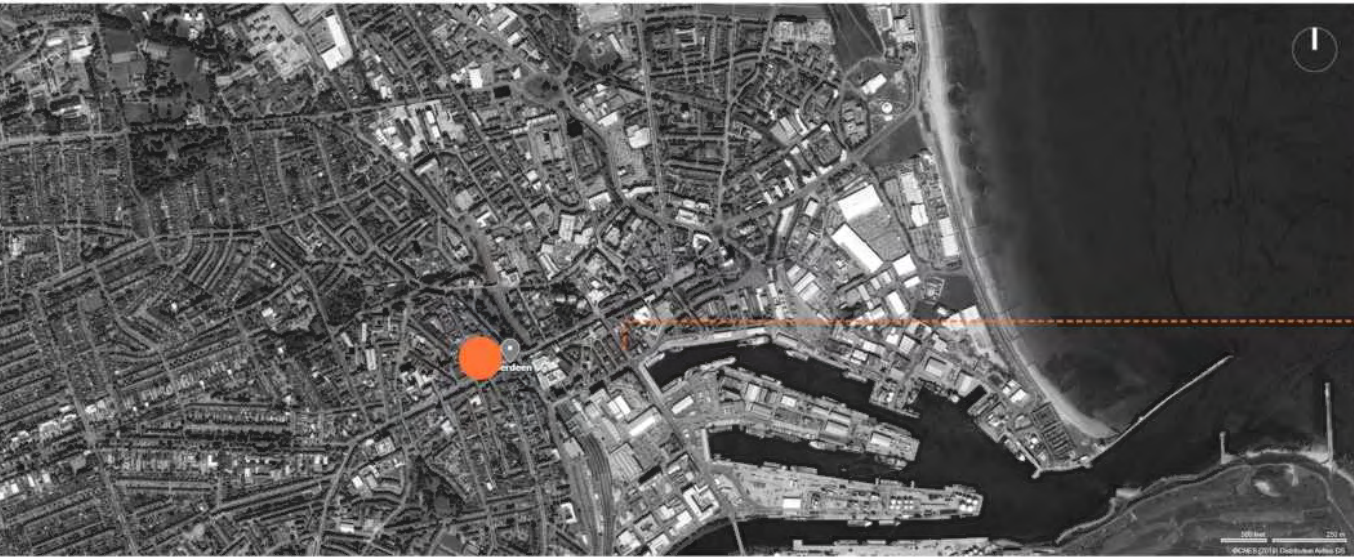
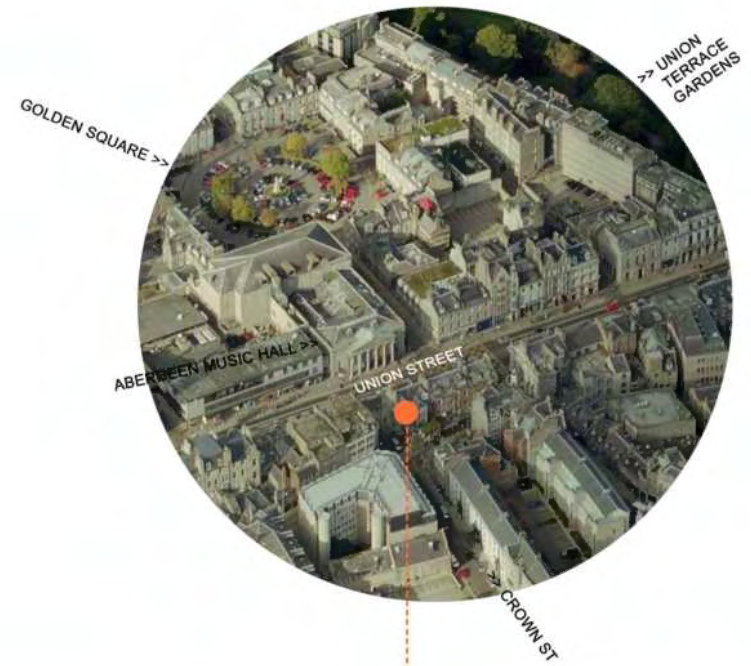
>> GOLDEN
SQUARE
BON ACCORD
UNION TERRACE



GOLDEN SQUARE > Site Introduction

Golden Square is located to the north of Union Street and is characterised by its unique form and function. It is an enclosed space circular in plan and linked by roads to the North, South, East and West. Golden square has some similarities in style to Bon Accord Square to the South of Union Street.

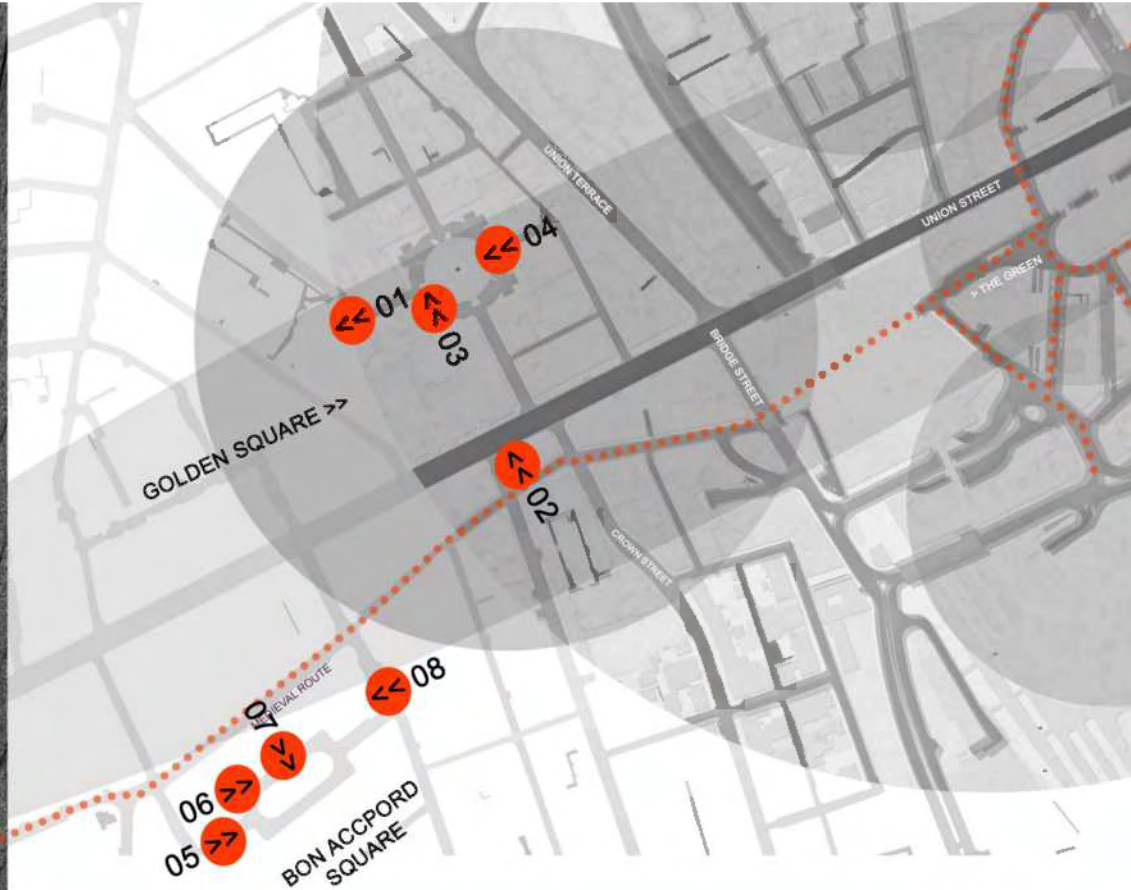
Town houses that surround a tree lined central area, are set back from the main route of Union Street. Currently (and since the 1960s when the original central landscaped area was removed) the square functions as a car park. The peaceful and original concept of the square has been somehow lost when cars appeared and became serious obstacles to the pedestrian routes through and across the square, connecting it to Crimon Place, Gilcomston, Union Terrace and Union Street.





PHOTOGRAPHS >> GOLDEN SQUARE

01_Golden Square: Crimon Place & view towards St Mary's Cathedral



02_Front of Music Hall



03_Golden Square



04_Golden Square: view towards car parking area



PHOTOGRAPHS >> BON ACCORD SQUARE

05_Bon Accord Square: view towards the square from the west entrance



06_Bon Accord Square: view of the square and townhouses



08_Bon Accord Square: view of the square from the East entrance

07_Bon Accord Square: view of the landscaped central area



**PUBLIC SQUARES >>
CONNECTIVITY**

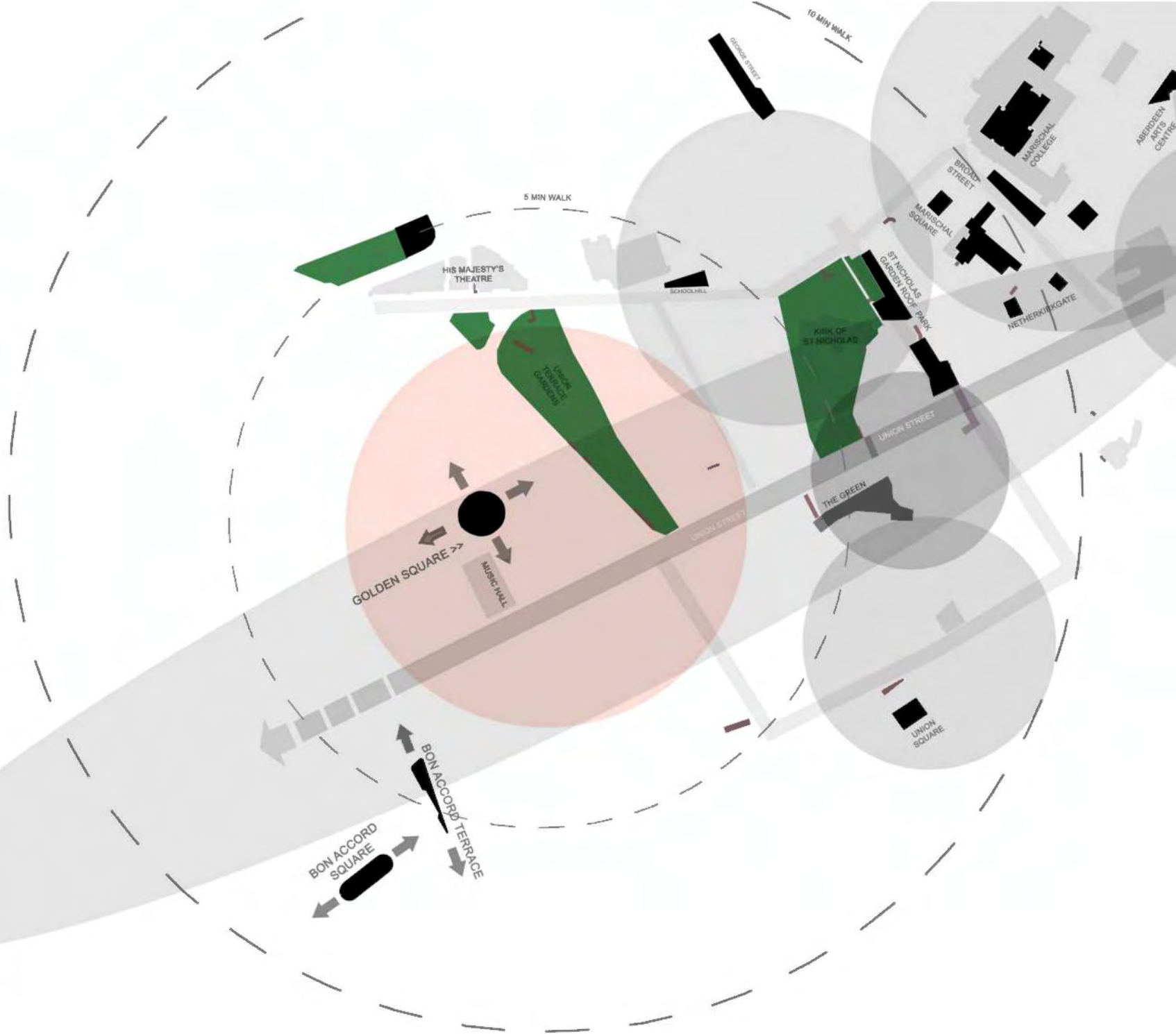
**>>GOLDEN SQUARE
BON ACCORD SQUARE**

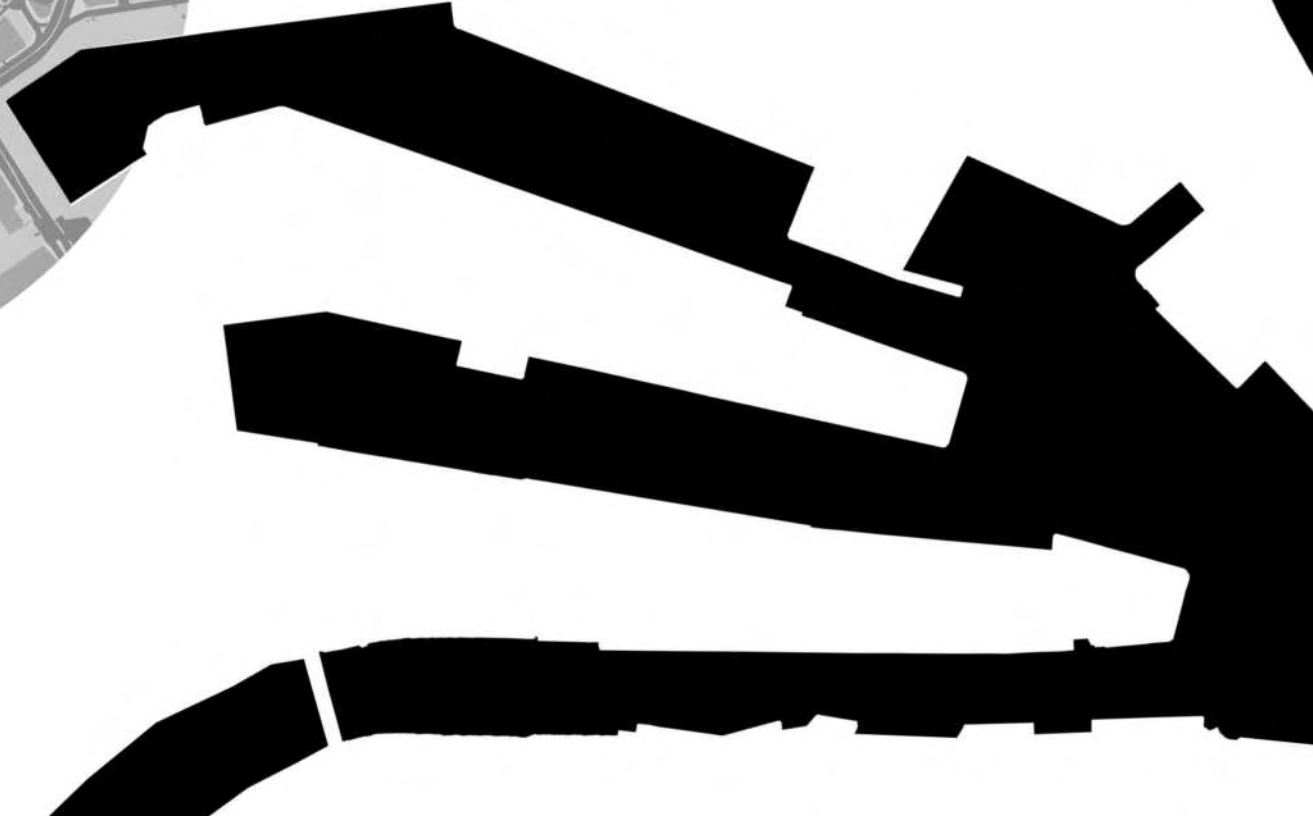
The diagram identifies existing public spaces/squares within the city centre core and indicates location of the Golden Square/Bon Accord sites - two unique, enclosed squares surrounded by townhouses with centrally located landscapped areas.

The Golden Square is located just off Union Street behind the newly refurbished Music Hall.

This gives opportunity to develop this city centre site into a place well connected to other important landmarks in the city centre. Union Terrace Gardens are just a short walk from the site.

The theatre building and Music Hall are in close proximity to the site giving an opportunity for creating joint venues and events.



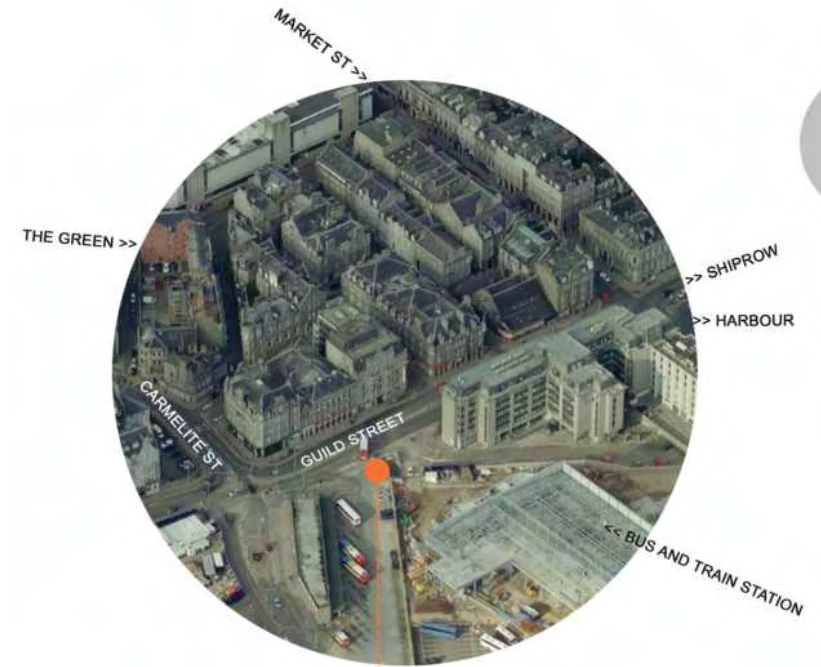


GUILD STREET > Site Introduction

Guild Street is a very busy area of Aberdeen, located to the South of Union Street between Market & Bridge Street. The Bus and Railway Station as well as Union Square are located on Guild Street. It also lies near the Harbour and the North Dee Business Quarter to the south.

Currently the area is extremely busy with cars and therefore hostile to the pedestrians. The pavements are narrow and links to and from the main bus and train station to the city centre - Union Street is challenging due to the changes in levels and lack of pedestrian crossings and prioritisation.

This site is however crucial in providing connections to other city centre areas.



Guild St
Site
Introduction



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