

SECTION 1.0

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1** As part of the consultation process both The Highland Council and Cairngorms National Park were consulted. Given that the proposed development is located within the Cairngorm National Park, we did not consult with Scottish Natural Heritage on this assessment, as we understood the Park Authority had responsibility for advising on landscape and visual issues within the Park. Advice was sought from CNP on whether consultation with SNH was required.
- 2.1.2** The assessment methodology employed is largely based on the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition)', produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2002).
- 2.1.3** The initial stages of the assessment process consider the baseline landscape and visual character, landscape designations and Government policy relevant to an assessment Study Area.

2.2 The Study Area

- 2.2.1** It is normal practice in undertaking a landscape assessment to identify a study area related to the type and scale of development concerned and to the landscape context in which the development is proposed. In relation to this assessment, based on consideration of the above factors, it is considered that the proposed new community has the potential to impact on the landscape resource at two different levels:
- At the local level, in terms of impacts on the landscape features and character of the site itself and its immediate surroundings; and
 - At a wider level, in terms of the general character of the surrounding landscape setting.
- 2.2.2** However, it is recognised that any changes and associated impacts to these two levels of landscape character considerations resulting from the introduction of the proposed new community would be occurring within both the Cairngorms National Park and The Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area (NSA), both landscape designations of national importance. Consequently, it is therefore important to also consider and assess how any changes and impacts occurring at the local and wider setting levels might affect the character and qualities of the wider National Park and NSA landscape. This level of assessment would consider any likely impacts on the landscape of the whole of the National Park and the NSA.

2.2.3 Consequently, differing extents of 'study area' will be utilised in the landscape assessment, in relation to the consideration of the likely effect of the proposed new community at these different levels, and therefore each of these levels of assessment has its own specific 'study area'. Equally, the structuring of the description of the baseline landscape characteristics is related to these different levels of assessment.

2.3 The Study Area for Visual Assessment

2.3.1 Utilising a 3D computer model of the proposed new community inserted into a wider Digital Terrain Model (DTM) of the surrounding area, an initial indication of the potential theoretical spread of visibility of the proposed new community can be established through the preparation of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map. Given the wooded context of the site of An Camas Mòr, existing woodlands etc would be extruded above the terrain model to indicate their potential screening role within the ZTV map. Given the National Park and NSA context of the proposed new community, it is currently considered that the DTM would extend to the Cairngorm Plateau to the south-east, and incorporate an area approximating to 10km from the site of An Camas Mòr. The extent of the DTM would be agreed with Consultees.

2.3.2 The ZTV map would be used to finalise the selection of viewpoints for visual assessment. An initial desk based selection of viewpoints has been prepared and is included below – this would be reviewed in relation to the ZTV map and a final selection of viewpoints agreed with Consultees.

2.4 Draft Viewpoint List

2.4.1 Local

- B970 – north end of site - GR 914 131;
- B970/Guislich Farm access junction – GR 912 121;
- Fish farm bridge over River Druie – GR 897 116;
- Aviemore station – GR 896 124;
- Aviemore/Dalfaber walkway – GR 896 127; and
- Dalfaber roundabout – GR 905 130 (or alternatively location in golf course).

2.4.2 Surrounding Area

- Craiggowrie summit – GR 964 134;
- Ski road hairpin/shoulder – GR 987 071;
- Upper Tullochgrue – GR 912 092;

- Ord Ban summit – GR 892 085; and
- Craigellachie NNR viewpoint – GR 889 120.

2.4.3 Viewpoint selection based on desk based analysis of 1:50,000 scale OS map – site verification of inter-visibility with site to be confirmed.

2.5 Assessment Aims

2.5.1 The aims of the landscape and visual assessment are to:

- Identify, predict and evaluate potential key impacts on particular elements of the landscape and visual resource arising from the introduction of the proposed new community; and
- Outline the likely effects on the landscape and visual resource and the resulting overall significance of these effects arising from the introduction of the proposed new community.

2.6 Definitions

2.6.1 The Landscape Resource is defined here as:

- The distinct spatial distribution, at a given moment in time, on the surface of the earth, of the physical components resulting from the interaction between natural and human processes over time, and which contribute to landscape context and character and how this is experienced and valued.

2.6.2 The Visual Resource is defined here as:

- *The assembly of components which provide an attractive visual setting or backcloth for activities.*

2.7 Process

2.7.2 Assessment of sensitivity of existing baseline conditions and prediction of magnitude of change lead to the assessment of residual landscape and visual impacts on particular elements and the overall landscape and visual effects. The significance of these impacts and effects can be defined.

2.7.3 In order to provide a level of consistency to the assessment, these assessments are based on pre-defined criteria.

2.8 Sensitivity to Change

2.8.1 The sensitivity of the landscape resource to changes associated with the proposed development can be defined as **high**, **medium** or **low** based on professional judgement of a combination of parameters, as follows:

- Landscape character - scale, enclosure, openness, land cover, texture and form;
- Landscape value - local, regional or national landscape statutory;
- designations and non-statutory designated areas;
- Distribution of receptors; and
- Scope for mitigation.

2.8.2 Usually, an area would not fit every criterion within just one category; but, rather, it would be categorised based on best fitting more of the criteria within one allocation than another. See Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Definition of Landscape Sensitivity

| Definition of Landscape Sensitivity | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| High | <p>Key characteristics and features that are very sensitive to the location of a development, such as simple or indistinct pattern, few existing foci, sense of intimacy and shelter and sense of wildness or wild land, and these contribute significantly to the distinctiveness of the landscape character type.</p> <p>The distinctive characteristics of the landscape are widely experienced and contribute significantly to the value of the landscape at a local, regional and national level.</p> <p>Designated landscapes e.g. National Scenic Area (NSA) and those identified as having possible landscape value, for example within SNH Search Areas for Wild Land (SAWL).</p> |
| Medium | <p>Key characteristics and features that are sensitive to the location of a development, but with which the development may also integrate, such as a landscape with a distinct pattern, with occasional prominent foci, large scale structures, a sense of enclosure and a landform to which built development could fit.</p> <p>A landscape where the development would not affect the key characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness and/or value of the landscape.</p> <p>The distinctive characteristics of the landscape are only locally experienced and/or only contribute to the value of the landscape at a regional level.</p> <p>Regionally and locally valued landscapes, both designated such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), and non-designated areas.</p> <p>Landscapes in which it is possible to site and design a built development to have minimal impacts within the landscape.</p> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| Low | <p>A landscape where the development would not affect the key characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness and/or value of the landscape. Landscape characteristics and features that do not make a significant contribution to landscape character or distinctiveness locally, or which are untypical or uncharacteristic of the landscape type.</p> <p>Areas where a development would fit the key characteristics of the existing landscape and/ or where this can easily accommodate landscape change subject to careful design.</p> <p>The distinctive characteristics of the landscape are only experienced locally.</p> <p>Landscapes in which it is possible to site and design a development to have minimal impacts within the landscape.</p> |
|------------|---|

2.8.3 The sensitivity of the visual resource to changes associated with the proposed development is defined as **high, medium** or **low** based on professional interpretation of a combination of parameters, as follows:

- Location and nature of the view;
- Direction and extent of the view;
- Value/importance of the view
- Scope for mitigation (including ability of the view to absorb development); and
- Activity of the receptor and expectations, frequency and duration of the view.

2.8.4 Usually, a view would not fit every criterion within just one category; but, rather, it would be categorised based on best fitting more of the criteria within one allocation than another. See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Definition of Visual Sensitivity

| Definition of Visual Sensitivity | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| High | <p>Focused view or panoramic view in which a development would form the dominant focus, distracting from existing elements or features.</p> <p>Existing view includes important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes. Principal view from prominent buildings and residences, 'beauty spots' or popular viewpoints.</p> <p>Area designated for scenic value, or en route or in a location valued for its visual amenity.</p> <p>Development difficult to integrate within visual composition, for example very complex pattern of elements, or these are of very different prominence or scale to proposed development.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| | <p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities including those on footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way and popular hill or mountain tops, and key vehicular access routes from which viewers' attention is directed to the landscape.</p> |
| Medium | <p>Open, but unfocussed view in which a development would be seen as one of several foci.</p> <p>Existing view includes some important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes. Forms secondary or marginal part of view from prominent buildings and residences, 'beauty spots' or popular viewpoints.</p> <p>View within area of some scenic value, although not designated. Or visible along route or in location that is valued as having scenic value.</p> <p>Development able to be accommodated within visual composition, for example in relation to linear features or pattern of point features, although this would result in some change to the pattern and/or nature of this composition. Development would be of similar prominence to existing visual features.</p> <p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities including local footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, en route to locally popular hill or mountain tops whose attention may be focused on the landscape. Local access routes.</p> |
| Low | <p>Unfocussed and/or partially screened view in which a development would be seen as a minor element of the view.</p> <p>Existing view does not include important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes. Site not clearly visible from prominent buildings or residences, 'beauty spots' or popular viewpoints.</p> <p>View not within area of recognised scenic value and not designated. Not visible from routes, or in location, which are valued for their visual amenity.</p> <p>Development able to be accommodated within visual composition, for example in relation to linear features or pattern of point features without significant change to the pattern and/or nature of this composition. Development would be of similar or lesser prominence to existing visual features.</p> <p>Local users whose attention is likely to be focused on work or activity rather than the wider landscape, for example using local access routes to travel to/from work or working within an industrial or commercial centre.</p> |

2.9 Magnitude of Change

2.9.1 The magnitude of change to the landscape resource arising from the proposed development at any particular point is described as **high, medium, low, negligible** or **none** based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters as follows:

- The scale of the change;

- Whether the change would affect key landscape characteristics on which the distinctive qualities of the landscape character type rely and/or for which it is valued, and thus result in a loss of landscape resource;
- The nature of the change in relation to landscape characteristics and whether this is beneficial or adverse; and
- The duration of the change and whether this is temporary or permanent.

2.9.2 The magnitude of change to the visual resource arising from the proposed development at any particular viewpoint is described as **high, medium, low, negligible** or **none**. The considerations which have been taken into account during the assessment of the impact on visual amenity at individual viewpoints can be grouped as follows:

- Information regarding the viewpoint location and the people using it;
- The existing visual amenity at the viewpoint; and
- The change to visual amenity caused by the introduction of the proposed development.

2.9.3 Within each of these groups, specific considerations have been examined for each viewpoint and these are described below. It should be noted that not all considerations are always relevant for every viewpoint. See Table 2.3.

2.10 Description of the Viewpoint and its Users

- Location;
- Direction of view to the proposed development scheme;
- The likely numbers and types of people visiting the viewpoint, the purpose of their visit to that viewpoint, and the nature of their activities;
- The likely duration of the view obtained by users; and
- Scenic (landscape) designation.

2.11 Description of the Existing Visual Amenity at the Viewpoint

- The extent of view obtainable in terms of panorama and distance;
- The visual character of the view;
- The occurrence of existing visual foci in the view;

- The occurrence of any existing visual forces in the view (“visual force” occurs when a static image gives an illusion of energy or movement – visual forces in landform draw the eye down and up slopes);
- The nature of the skyline profile;
- The range of different landscape components comprising the view;
- The visual inter-relationship between the range of landscape components in terms of simplicity or complexity;
- Particularly prominent patterns discernible in the view;
- Colours present in the view;
- Motion present in the view;
- The impression of scale of the landscape resulting from the combination of landform, vegetation and other factors;
- A sense of remoteness;
- The presence or absence of man-made features in the view;
- The scenic attractiveness of the view; and
- The potential for change in the future.

2.12 Description of the Change to Visual Amenity at the Viewpoint caused by the Proposed Development

- The number of elements comprising the development which will be visible;
- The extent of each element of the development which will be visible;
- The inter-relationship of the development’s elements;
- The extent of ground/sky forming a backcloth;
- The extent of visual obstruction created by the development;
- The relationship of the development to skyline/horizon profile;
- Change in visual character;
- Creation of a new visual focus;
- Alteration to existing patterns in the view;

- Influence of the scale of the development on the impression of scale of the view;
- Alteration to sense of remoteness;
- Alteration as a result of the introduction of man-made elements;
- Change to scenic attractiveness of view; and
- Potential for screening.

Table 2.3 Definition of Magnitude of Change

| Definition of Magnitude of Change | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| High | Fundamental change to the characteristics of the landscape or visual resource. |
| Medium | Considerable change to the characteristics of the landscape or visual resource. |
| Low | Noticeable change to the characteristics of the landscape or visual resource. |
| Negligible | Discernable change, but usually only in atypical circumstances, for example exceptional weather conditions, or not influencing the key characteristics of the landscape or visual resource. These impacts are thus classified as the 'no change' situation. |
| None | No change to the landscape or visual resource. |

2.13 Adverse and Beneficial

2.13.1 When assessing impacts on the landscape and visual resource, the following categorisation has been used:

- **'Adverse'** – the key characteristics of the landscape and visual resource are compromised;
- **'No impact'** – the key characteristics of the landscape and visual resource are not affected; and
- **'Beneficial'** – key characteristics of the landscape and visual resource are reinforced.

2.14 Impacts and Effects

2.14.1 The following terms are used in this assessment as defined below:

- **'Impact'** is specific and used to refer to changes to an individual

element or characteristic of the environment. In order to assess the impact of a proposed development on a particular element of the environment, it is first necessary to identify the degree of change caused to that element by the proposed development. The degree of change affecting an element by the proposed development can be described factually; and

- **'Effect'** is a broader based view of the accumulation of one or more impacts which involves not only a degree of professional judgment but also some extrapolation and generalisation, both of which also involve professional judgment.

2.15 Significance

2.15.1 Significance of impacts and effects are based on two principal criteria - the magnitude of the change and the sensitivity of the location or person affected by the change (receptors). To comply with GLVIA, the definition of significance requires to be stated in relation to the specific circumstances of an individual development and landscape. See Table 2.4 & 2.5.

2.15.2 To determine the significance of the development on the landscape resource, the following factors are considered:

- The sensitivity of the landscape to the type of change proposed;
- The nature of the effect (i.e. whether the key characteristics of the existing landscape resource of the Study Area, and their consistency throughout that area, are reinforced or weakened as a result of the changes in landscape character brought about by the introduction of the proposed development);
- The quality of the landscape characteristics affected and the potential for enhancement;
- The value of landscape elements, feature or characteristics and the recognition of this by designation at various levels, such as local, regional, national and international and the affect of the change on the integrity of the designated area;
- The magnitude of the effect and whether the change would be positive, adverse, temporary or permanent; and
- The type and rate of other changes that are likely to occur in the landscape resource of the Study Area in the future.

2.15.3 To determine the significance of the development on the visual resource, the following factors are considered:

- The nature of the effect (i.e. whether the scenic qualities of the view are

strengthened or weakened as a result of the changes to visual amenity brought about by the introduction of the proposed development;

- The magnitude of the change;
- The sensitivity of the visual resource and receptors;
- The number of people affected by the change (although, changes affecting large number of people are generally more significant, this is not necessarily the case in sensitive landscape, for example areas of wild land); and
- The type and rate of other changes that are likely to occur in the visual amenity of the Study Area in the future.

2.15.4 Although assessment of impact significance, as described above, is based on professional judgment of a complex range of factors in relation to the sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of change, the following tables summarise and describe categories of significance to aid interpretation of this assessment. For individual impacts, significance is measured in a scale of **no impact**, **slight**, **moderate** and **substantial**. For the overall landscape effect and visual effect of the proposed development within the Study Area, a determination is made regarding whether the likely effect would be significant or not significant.

Table 2.4 Summary of Categories of Landscape Impact Significance

| Summary of Categories of Landscape Impact Significance | |
|--|--|
| Substantial Impact | The proposed development becomes a key characteristic of the landscape and/or changes the intrinsic landscape character of the area. Fundamental change to the landscape resource or considerable/noticeable change to a very sensitive or valued landscape. |
| Moderate Impact | Change affects the character of the landscape, but of a nature, scale or extent that does not change the intrinsic landscape character of the area. Fundamental or considerable change to the landscape resource or noticeable change to a very sensitive or valued landscape. |
| Slight Impact | Change introduces new element(s) into the landscape, but this does not affect the intrinsic landscape character of the area. Considerable or noticeable change to the landscape resource or barely perceptible change to a very sensitive/valued landscape. |
| No Impact | Negligible or no change. |

Table 2.5 Summary of Categories of Visual Impact Significance

| Summary of Categories of Visual Impact Significance | |
|---|---|
| Substantial Impact | The proposed development dominates or has a defining influence on views. Fundamental change to the visual resource or considerable/noticeable change to very sensitive or valued views. |
| Moderate Impact | The proposed development is prominent and forms a focal feature, but the visual resource remains defined by the baseline conditions. Fundamental or considerable change to the visual resource or noticeable change to very sensitive or valued views. |
| Slight Impact | The proposed development is clearly visible, but as a minor feature and the visual resource remains defined by the baseline conditions. Considerable or noticeable change to the visual resource or barely perceptible change to very sensitive/valued views. |
| No Impact | Negligible or no change. |

2.15.5 Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, but the nature of geology and soils assessment often requires interpretation by professional judgment.

2.15.6 EIA Regulations require judgment on the acceptability of a scheme to occur in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects on the environment. However, GLVIA explains that “in the context of EIA, however, ‘significance’ varies with the type of project and the topic under assessment” and “it may be helpful to define levels or categories of significance (including ‘not significant’) appropriate to the nature, size and location of the proposed development”. To satisfy these requirements, it is stated that, where landscape or visual impacts of either **moderate** or **substantial impact** are identified by this LVIA, as described within the tables above, these should be considered as a significant effect as per the EIA Regulations. Accordingly, slight or no impacts are considered as not significant.

2.16 Assessment of Effect on Landscape Designations

The Cairngorms National Park

2.16.2 The landscape characteristics of the National Park, and the assessment of the effect of the introduction of the proposed new community on these will be considered as part of the assessment considering the landscape resource.

The Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area

- 2.16.4** The assessment will consider the effect on the key landscape and visual characteristics of the NSA identified within 'Scotland's Scenic Heritage' (Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1978), and assess the effect of the introduction of the proposed new community on the underlying character and integrity of the designation of the NSA.

Gardens and Designed Landscapes

- 2.16.5** The consideration of the effect of the proposed new community on Gardens and Designed Landscapes will be included within the chapter 'Effect on Cultural Heritage'.

2.17 Notes and Responses to Scoping Consultations

2.17.1 Consultation with CNP & THC

Note of Consultation Meeting - Draft for Comment

Date of Meeting: 3 October 2008

Location: Cairngorm National Park Authority offices, Grantown-on-Spey

Attendees: Matthew Hawkins (MH) – Cairngorm National Park Authority

Anne Cowling (AC) – The Highland Council

Keith Horner (KH) – horner + maclennan.

(i) Purpose of Meeting

To consult with CNPA and THC on the scope and methodology of the landscape and visual assessment, obtain comments on issues which the assessment requires to address and agree selected viewpoints for visual assessment.

(ii) General Issues

MH confirmed that CNPA are responsible for considering landscape and visual issues within the Park boundary and as such no consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is required. However, the Park Authority will consult with SNH over potential impacts on The Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area, which the proposed new community is located within.

KH explained that the assessment would be undertaken in relation to 4 defined time periods related to delivery of particular unit numbers established within the Local Plan. To assist this, the Indicative Land Use Plan for the proposed new community has defined the extent and nature of the development proposals for each of these time periods, and a 3D model has been prepared for each of these development periods.

MH emphasised the need for the assessment to be a quality product, which clearly and fairly discusses the likely impacts of the proposed new community. This will greatly assist in the consideration of the outline planning application. The assessment requires to adopt a consistency of approach, be transparent in its rationale and conclusions and provide clear and reasoned arguments for the conclusions reached.

KH noted that various strategies such as services, lighting etc related to the development of An Camas Mòr were still in preparation and that the implications of these, once established, would need to be included in the assessments in relation to the particular time periods assessed.

(iii)Landscape Assessment

The need to consider the likely impact of the proposed new community at a local level, wider setting and on the National Park was discussed. MH advised use of the Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership 'Cairngorms' Landscape Character Assessment to assist consideration of any impacts on the Park landscape. The 'special qualities' which the Park has identified should be considered at a broad scale in association with the TJP landscape character areas. MH advised that CNPA are currently undertaking a detailed landscape character assessment of the Park but that this would not be available for inclusion in this assessment.

There was discussion over the introduction of An Camas Mòr as a new planned settlement within Strathspey and the need to consider how its development pattern related to previous historical models such as Grantown-on-Spey and Kingussie. This would be additional to consideration of its strategic location in relation to landscape characteristics such as the flood plain and woodland pattern.

MH considered an assessment of the proposed new community on wildness within the Park would be required. CNPA have currently prepared a draft GIS based study providing an indication of relative wildness within the Park, a copy of which has been issued to h+m Inverness office for comment. KH to obtain a copy. The study is intended to be more precise than the current 'Search Areas for Wild Land', identifying where wildness is most strongly expressed. MH noted that the finalised study will help to shape CNPA policy on this issue, but this is unlikely to be completed within the next 6 months. MH also noted that the draft study indicated that the Glenmore area did not appear as 'wild' as might have been anticipated.

AC noted the need to consider potential impacts of the proposed new community at night time. KH confirmed that this is a special section of the Environmental Statement, to be undertaken by Mott Macdonald. Both MH and AC will be contacted by Jo Morrison of MM who is undertaking the lighting assessment to discuss her methodology and associated issues.

AC noted that the Indicative Land Use Plan should consider the issue of spoil disposal and management as an intrinsic component of the planning of the proposed new community, and should not be an afterthought.

MH noted the importance of 'off site' issues to the overall development of An Camas Mòr. MH had previously advised incorporation of a new naturalised woodland edge to the east of the B970 and considered that issues related to the longer term development of the land between An Camas Mòr and the River Spey should be included within the assessment. It was noted that, other than the proposed playing fields associated with the school, the outline planning application would not include proposals for this area, as these would be promoted by other agencies. However, MH did consider that long term proposals for this area would be potentially positive in terms of the introduction of An Camas Mòr within the local landscape.

MH expressed some concern over the Indicative Land Use Plan not indicating a clear structure of open space provision throughout the development, as this was important in assisting in reducing the overall impact of the proposed new community. Equally, both MH and AC stressed the importance of street trees throughout the development, as these can successfully link areas of open space and reduce the impact of the roofscape in the longer term. Clear representation of the proposals for these issues on the Indicative Land Use Plan is required.

(iv) Visual Assessment

KH presented initial ZTV plans of the proposed new community, indicating theoretical spread of visibility based on both bare ground and with tree blocks. MH noted the strategic importance of specific tree blocks in controlling the spread of theoretical visibility, particularly to the north of the site, which is not within Rothiemurchus Estate ownership. The assessment needs to consider any implications of woodland felling programmes which may influence the pattern of visibility of the proposed new community over the period of its development, although KH noted that Rothiemurchus Estate agreed woodland management plan seeks to retain the overall wooded character of the area. KH to pursue this with Rothiemurchus Estate regarding plans for adjacent land holdings.

It was agreed that there was no merit to the assessment of assessing selected viewpoints where the proposed new community would not be visible.

It was recognised that given the wooded context of An Camas Mòr, views to the development from low level viewpoints would most likely be screened, and the selection of popular elevated locations was therefore important. The draft viewpoint selection had sought to reflect this issue. Associated with this issue,

the role of tree blocks, individual trees and roofscape within the development were important considerations, and the role of a matrix of trees in 'softening' any impact was recognised.

The ZTV plans were considered in relation to the draft viewpoint selection list and the following changes agreed:

- VP 5 – Aviemore/Dalfaber walkway deleted due to intervening trees screening any view;
- VP 6 – to be located at point on access road where golf course crosses and there is a view to the northern section of the site;
- A viewpoint within the new Highburnside development west of the A9 is to be added;
- A viewpoint on Pitoulish Crag is to be added; and
- A viewpoint on the Speyside Way adjacent to the railway is to be added, given that the ZTV plan indicates theoretical visibility in this location and will provide a viewpoint to the north of the site. Site verification required.

MH considered that within the assessment of selected viewpoints, photos with the site boundary indicated would be useful. The role of context photos and single frame images was discussed, and likely that a combination of these will be used, dependant on the extent of the development visible from each viewpoint. It was noted that the outline nature of the architectural design would not be suitable for the preparation of photomontages – the proposal is to use wireline overlays on photos to indicate how the development would be seen from each selected viewpoint, which given the Indicative Land Use Plan 3D model includes every individual building, would provide a clear impression of the development.

2.17.2 CNPA Response to Draft Note

-----Original Message-----

From: Keith Horner [<mailto:keith@hornermaclennan.co.uk>]

Sent: 12 October 2008 10:19

To: Matthew Hawkins

Subject: AN CAMAS MòR NEW COMMUNITY - NOTE OF CONSULTATION MEETING

Matthew

Following our consultation meeting last week at CNPA offices, I attach a draft note of the meeting and should be grateful if you provide any comments as appropriate in order that a final note can be issued and recorded in the Consultation Report to be prepared for the project.

A hard copy of the draft note was issued to you on Friday.

Kind regards
Keith

Keith Horner
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Keith,
Many thanks for this. Just two small points to add:

In Section 6 we agreed that you would need to do some more detailed character assessment of the immediate site area to 'pad out' the JT report as that was rather more strategic and consequently not detailed enough for this scale of work.

In Section 8 the wildness qualities of the nearby mountains are high though Glenmore itself rates relatively low. Though we do not yet have a formal policy it is clear from our park plan that we must look to enhance wildness qualities.

I hope that helps.

Regards
Matthew

2.17.3 THC Response to Draft Note

-----Original Message-----
From: Keith Horner [<mailto:keith@hornermaclennan.co.uk>]
Sent: 24 October 2008 10:56
To: Anne Cowling
Subject: AN CAMAS MòR NEW COMMUNITY LVIA

Anne

I circulated on 10 October a draft note of our consultation meeting of 2 October regarding the above project for your comments prior to finalisation. I have not received any comments to date. Please could you let me have any comments, or advise that you have no comments, in order that the note can be finalised and issued as such. Thanks.

Regards
Keith

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Hi Keith,
I confirm that I have not additional comments.

Cheers

Anne

2.20 Note of Consultation Meeting – Agreed Version

ANCamas MOR, AVIEMORE, PROPOSED NEW COMMUNITY

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Note of Consultation Meeting

Date of Meeting: 3 October 2008

Location: Cairngorm National Park Authority offices, Grantown-on-Spey
Attendees: Matthew Hawkins (MH) – Cairngorm National Park Authority
Anne Cowling (AC) – The Highland Council
Keith Horner (KH) – horner + maclennan.

(i) Purpose of Meeting

To consult with CNPA and THC on the scope and methodology of the landscape and visual assessment, obtain comments on issues which the assessment requires to address and agree selected viewpoints for visual assessment.

(ii) General Issues

MH confirmed that CNPA are responsible for considering landscape and visual issues within the Park boundary and as such no consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is required. However, the Park Authority will consult with SNH over potential impacts on The Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area, which the proposed new community is located within.

KH explained that the assessment would be undertaken in relation to 4 defined time periods related to delivery of particular unit numbers established within the Local Plan. To assist this, the Indicative Land Use Plan for the proposed new community has defined the extent and nature of the development proposals for each of these time periods, and a 3D model has been prepared for each of these development periods.

MH emphasised the need for the assessment to be a quality product, which clearly and fairly discusses the likely impacts of the proposed new community. This will greatly assist in the consideration of the outline planning application. The assessment requires to adopt a consistency of approach, be transparent in its rationale and conclusions and provide clear and reasoned arguments for the conclusions reached.

KH noted that various strategies such as services, lighting etc related to the development of An Camas Mòr were still in preparation and that the implications of these, once established, would need to be included in the assessments in relation to the particular time periods assessed.

(iii)Landscape Assessment

The need to consider the likely impact of the proposed new community at a local level, wider setting and on the National Park was discussed. MH advised use of the Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership 'Cairngorms' Landscape Character Assessment to assist consideration of any impacts on the Park landscape. The 'special qualities' which the Park has identified should be considered at a broad scale in association with the TJP landscape character areas. MH advised that CNPA are currently undertaking a detailed landscape character assessment of the Park but that this would not be available for inclusion in this assessment. It was agreed that the 'Cairngorms' LCA was too strategic for use at a local level, and that more detailed local landscape character areas for the area around An Camas Mòr would need to be identified and assessed.

There was discussion over the introduction of An Camas Mòr as a new planned settlement within Strathspey and the need to consider how its development pattern related to previous historical models such as Grantown-on-Spey and Kingussie. This would be additional to consideration of its strategic location in relation to landscape characteristics such as the flood plain and woodland pattern.

MH considered an assessment of the proposed new community on wildness within the Park would be required. CNPA have currently prepared a draft GIS based study providing an indication of relative wildness within the Park, a copy of which has been issued to h+m Inverness office for comment. KH to obtain a copy. The study is intended to be more precise than the current 'Search Areas for Wild Land', identifying where wildness is most strongly expressed. MH noted that the finalised study will help to shape CNPA policy on this issue, but this is unlikely to be completed within the next 6 months. MH noted that the draft study indicated that wildness qualities of the nearby mountains were high, although the Glenmore area was relatively low, and that the Park Plan seeks to enhance wildness qualities.

AC noted the need to consider potential impacts of the proposed new community at night time. KH confirmed that this is a special section of the Environmental Statement, to be undertaken by Mott Macdonald. Both MH and AC will be contacted by Jo Morrison of MM who is undertaking the lighting assessment to discuss her methodology and associated issues.

AC noted that the Indicative Land Use Plan should consider the issue of spoil disposal and management as an intrinsic component of the planning of the proposed new community, and should not be an afterthought.

MH noted the importance of 'off site' issues to the overall development of An Camas Mòr. MH had previously advised incorporation of a new naturalised woodland edge to the east of the B970 and considered that issues related to the longer term development of the land between An Camas Mòr and the River Spey should be included within the assessment. It was noted that, other than the proposed playing fields associated with the school, the outline planning application would not include proposals for this area, as these would be promoted by other agencies. However, MH did consider that long term proposals for this area would be potentially positive in terms of the introduction of An Camas Mòr within the local landscape.

MH expressed some concern over the Indicative Land Use Plan not indicating a clear structure of open space provision throughout the development, as this was important in assisting in reducing the overall impact of the proposed new community. Equally, both MH and AC stressed the importance of street trees throughout the development, as these can successfully link areas of open space and reduce the impact of the roofscape in the longer term. Clear representation of the proposals for these issues on the Indicative Land Use Plan is required.

(iv) Visual Assessment

KH presented initial ZTV plans of the proposed new community, indicating theoretical spread of visibility based on both bare ground and with tree blocks. MH noted the strategic importance of specific tree blocks in controlling the spread of theoretical visibility, particularly to the north of the site, which is not within Rothiemurchus Estate ownership. The assessment needs to consider any implications of woodland felling programmes which may influence the pattern of visibility of the proposed new community over the period of its development, although KH noted that Rothiemurchus Estate agreed woodland management plan seeks to retain the overall wooded character of the area. KH to pursue this with Rothiemurchus Estate regarding plans for adjacent land holdings.

It was agreed that there was no merit to the assessment of assessing selected viewpoints where the proposed new community would not be visible.

It was recognised that given the wooded context of An Camas Mòr, views to the development from low level viewpoints would most likely be screened, and the selection of popular elevated locations was therefore important. The draft viewpoint selection had sought to reflect this issue. Associated with this issue, the role of tree blocks, individual trees and roofscape within the development were important considerations, and the role of a matrix of trees in 'softening' any impact was recognised.

The ZTV plans were considered in relation to the draft viewpoint selection list and the following changes agreed:

- VP 5 – Aviemore/Dalfaber walkway deleted due to intervening trees screening any view;
- VP 6 – to be located at point on access road where golf course crosses and there is a view to the northern section of the site;
- A viewpoint within the new Highburnside development west of the A9 is to be added;
- A viewpoint on Pitoulish Crag is to be added;and
- A viewpoint on the Speyside Way adjacent to the railway is to be added, given that the ZTV plan indicates theoretical visibility in this location and will provide a viewpoint to the north of the site. Site verification required.

MH considered that within the assessment of selected viewpoints, photos with the site boundary indicated would be useful. The role of context photos and single frame images was discussed, and likely that a combination of these will be used, dependant on the extent of the development visible from each viewpoint. It was noted that the outline nature of the architectural design would not be suitable for the preparation of photomontages – the proposal is to use wireline overlays on photos to indicate how the development would be seen from each selected viewpoint, which given the Indicative Land Use Plan 3D model includes every individual building, would provide a clear impression of the development.