

## LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

An Camas Mòr lies to the east of Aviemore, close to the River Spey and within a landscape setting characterised by the inter-relationship of the low-lying settled and farmed strath, with its estates and policy woodlands, the remnant Caledonian Forest which densely clothes the adjacent foothills and the granite mountain plateau of the Cairngorms.

The wooded flanks of the Cairngorm Mountains form the setting to the open and bare mountain massif beyond, whilst the lower straths are significantly enhanced by the rising forests and their mountain backdrop. Equally, across the River Spey, the rising flank of the Monadhliath range forms a mountainous backdrop to Strathspey to the west. This rich, natural heritage is enhanced by the populated straths, where an intimate mix of farmland estate policy plantings and mixed woodlands, the historical built heritage of the area and the main settlements of Strathspey, combine to create a distinctive landscape. Here, the influence of man is clearly evident in contrast to the woodlands and mountain plateau, where natural processes are dominant in the landscape.

The combination of a rich and diverse landscape setting with landscape designations of national importance provides a context in which to introduce the proposed new community of An Camas Mòr. The aim is to ensure that the development fits into a wooded setting with trees screening the boundaries of the site. Buildings not exceeding three and a half stories which would be visible from a limited number of elevated viewpoints, would accentuate the form of the High Street. The retention of mature trees, complemented by new planting within the development, would provide a strong wooded character to An Camas Mòr.

## NATURAL HERITAGE CONTEXT

The area comprises a range of habitat types with dry heath and coniferous plantation dominating the centre of the development area. Arable/improved grassland and woodland are the largest habitat types surrounding the site.

The centre of the site comprises an open dry heath leading into acid grassland scattered with granny scots pines and young silver birch. The proposed development area is surrounded by plantation conifers, of varying age, to the north, east and south with an area of semi-natural, ancient pine forest extending from the south of the site to the River Druie.

There are no designated nature conservation areas within or immediately adjacent to the site. The River Spey SAC lies to the west. Various protected species are common in Rothiemurchus and frequent parts of the site, including red squirrel, badger and bats and the development must protect their interests.

The overriding objective from a biodiversity and nature conservation perspective is to limit the footprint of the development to the minimum necessary to achieve the development aims. In practice this would mean limiting the construction groundworks and operational footprint to within the local plan area boundary as much as possible. The environmental work carried out for the feasibility study recognised that the woodland area within the south to south east corner of the An Camas Mòr local plan boundary was of a higher value and it was agreed that this would not be part of the built area. Within the boundaries of the local plan area there are also smaller parcels of land to the north west and north east of the site which would also be retained, with no built development. It is intended to retain these habitats.

The proposal would be for about half the total designated Local Plan area to be trees, heath and grass and landscaped areas; less in the central 'High Street' area and increasing towards the periphery. A substantial proportion of this is likely to be in gardens and it is intended that existing native tree species, particularly Birch and Scots pines would be incorporated into gardens and green areas