

VISION

A SUSTAINABLE NEW COMMUNITY IN THE HIGHLANDS

Considering the exceptional location in the Cairngorms National Park, it was clear from the start that An Camas Mòr would aim to be sustainable.

It has been important to consider sustainability in the wider sense of the word, including not only environmental aspects, such as energy and materials, but also social aspects of community, inclusion and economic aspects like affordability and employment.

The vision, discussed in consultations and meetings over many years, is for a ‘Good Habitat for People’; a sustainable settlement of exceptional standard to meet their needs and aspirations. Central to the vision is the compact nature of the settlement, in a woodland to allow and encourage walking and a healthy life-style. The community’s social needs would be met by the provision of affordable housing and housing of all kinds and tenures, including self-build. The provision of workspaces, offices, studios and live/work spaces within the settlement allows people to ‘work, rest and play’ without the use of vehicular transport. Commercial uses such as hotels, nurseries and shops would be encouraged. Community facilities such as a school would depend on numbers for their viability, but provision would be made for their good location.

The community’s vision for the economy of An Camas Mòr is of somewhere largely self-sustaining, through the provision of suitable spaces for offices, studios, workshops and shops, on the ground floor of the High Street properties and the provision or ability to provide home working in most of the houses.

THE COMMUNITY

The starting point for building a new community is to make it a place for everyone, inclusive and welcoming for all, regardless of age, gender, income, local or incomer, single households or large families.

To make it accessible, An Camas Mòr has to be made up of appropriately designed houses – affordable for local people to buy and to run. However, it has to be more than just a housing estate – a proper village with useful facilities, work places and attractive spaces at its heart. High-quality and attractive streets and squares, parks and open spaces would be the places where residents can meet. Walking distances would be kept short increasing the likelihood of meeting neighbours on the street. Best practice for safety would be included with good lighting and passive surveillance of public spaces.

There would be a strong sense of identity for the village as a whole (based on a common design language) balanced with individual personalisation of each home. A carefully designed interface between private and public realms can make for better social interaction recognising the importance of things like porches and small front gardens, as well as carefully designed walls and fences ensuring privacy when required.

Considered phasing during construction could help the community grow naturally, with each phase including a wide range of home types to accommodate the different needs of a diversity of households.

THE HIGHLAND SETTING

The starting point is to respect the unique setting within Rothiemurchus in Badenoch and Strathspey in the Cairngorms National Park. The best way to respect the site is to limit the actual footprint of the settlement, to prevent unnecessary damage to other areas from sprawl and then work to reduce visual impact of new development locally and in the greater landscape, preserving and enhancing landscape views with careful design.

The plan would respect the culture of the place, the existing topography, the existing vegetation, the existing wildlife habitats, as well as the existing archaeology.

