


Main Issue 2

Designing great places



**How can we
design the best
new places?**

Background

The Cairngorms National Park has a rich built heritage that is continually evolving with every new building and place that is created. The built environment is a significant asset of the Park and it is essential that new development aspires to the highest standards of design.

Scottish Planning Policy requires the planning system to support high quality development that demonstrates six qualities of successful places. These are summarised below.

Distinctive

Development that complements local features and materials to create places with a sense of identity.

Safe and pleasant

Development that is attractive to use because it provides a sense of security by encouraging activity, eg by creating a clear distinction between private and public spaces, having doors that face onto streets to create active frontages, and having windows that overlook streets, paths and open spaces to create natural surveillance.

Welcoming

Development that helps people to find their way around, eg by accentuating landmarks, including appropriate signage and distinctive lighting, and using features such as public art to mark gateways.

Adaptable

Development that can accommodate future changes of use, eg because there is a mix of densities, tenures and typologies.

Resource efficient

Development that re-uses or shares existing resources, maximises efficiency in resource use, and prevents future resource depletion. This could mean, for example, development that shares infrastructure with adjacent sites, siting development to shelter from the prevailing wind and maximise solar gain, using sustainable drainage systems or using durable building materials and low carbon energy technologies.

Easy to move around and beyond

Development that considers place and prioritises the needs of people before the movement of motor vehicles. This could include prioritising sustainable and active travel choices, and including paths and routes which are well connected with the wider environment beyond the site boundary.

Scottish Planning Policy says that development plans should embed these six qualities and specify how tools such as development briefs, masterplans, and design guides will be used to help create high quality places.



Preferred Option

Although the current Local Development Plan includes a policy on sustainable design it does not make any specific reference to the six qualities of successful places. We therefore think that the new Local Development Plan will need to address this by including a new policy focused on designing great places. We think this should apply to all developments as the qualities of successful places are applicable to all scales of development. We therefore propose that the new policy will set out an over-arching requirement for all new developments to show how they have been designed to meet the six qualities of successful places.

Supplementary guidance, published alongside the new Local Development Plan, could be used to provide more detail on our expectations for the highest standards of design and outline how the six qualities will be applied in practice within the National Park. This could include guidance on how the six qualities apply to different scales of development, along with guidance on the level of supporting information that will be required to be submitted alongside planning applications, to ensure that the new approach is proportionate.

The current Local Development Plan also sets out requirements for masterplans and development briefs for a number of key development allocations. However, we think the new Local Development Plan could include a revised policy approach to set out more clearly the circumstances where these design tools will be used to deliver high quality developments on the ground, eg the scale of development proposals and places that will require masterplans, development briefs, design statements etc.



Reasonable Alternative Options

Given the specific requirements of Scottish Planning Policy, the new Local Development Plan will need to include a policy which specifically refers to the six qualities of successful places. We do not think there is any reasonable alternative to this.

However, the policy could be written so that it only applies to larger developments. This could mean, for example, that small-scale developments such as house extensions would not be required to show how they meet the six qualities.

There might be some benefits to this approach, and it would reduce the level of information required in support of smaller-scale planning applications.

However, we think the six qualities of successful places are applicable to developments of any scale and that these factors should be taken into account in all cases. We think that the preferred approach is therefore more appropriate, although we will need to make sure that the level of information we require to support planning applications is proportionate to the scale of development proposed.



Questions

- Do you agree that the new Local Development Plan should include a new policy requiring development proposals to show how they meet the six qualities of successful places?
- Do you agree that we should include a clearer policy in the new Local Development Plan to set out when tools such as masterplans and development briefs will be used?

