

Main Issue 4 Housing

**How many
new homes do
we need and where
should they go?**

A) How much new housing do we need and where should it be built?

Background

The provision of new housing to address local need, and the affordability of existing housing within the Cairngorms National Park, were two of the most frequently raised and contentious issues during the recent consultation on the National Park Partnership Plan. These issues are particularly important for the Local Development Plan. The overall requirement for new housing land is addressed below and the affordability of housing is considered in more detail in Main Issue 5 (p34).

Long term population and household projections for the National Park are produced by the National Records of Scotland (NRS). According to the most recent NRS population projections, the overall population of the Park is predicted to fall from 19,010 to 18,337 over the 25 year period between 2014 and 2039 (a decrease of around 4%). This is because it is likely that over the next 20-25 years more people will die of old age than are born in the National Park. Migration to the National Park from other places is still expected to be high during that period.

The population projections also show that the proportion of older people in the National Park will increase. The population of pensionable age in the Park is projected to rise by 23% and the number of people aged 75 and over is expected to rise by 97%. The number of children aged 16 or under within the National Park is projected to decrease by 21% and the number of people of working age is predicted

to decrease by around 10% over the 25 year period. Across Scotland, the projections suggest a 1% increase in both the under 16 and working age populations over the same period.

At the same time as the overall population is falling, the projections show an increase of 6% in the number of households in the National Park from 8653 in 2014 to 9195 in 2039. This is because it is expected that there will be more small households, partly linked to the older population.

These projections give an indication of the level of new housing that the next Local Development Plan might need to provide for. However, they have to be treated with some caution and they are only a starting point for making decisions about the future provision of housing land within the Park. They need to be considered alongside other factors and trends, including housing need and demand as well as the existing housing supply.

One of the key ways in which this range of additional information is drawn together is through the Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs) which are produced by the five local authorities within the National Park. The main conclusions of the HNDAs are summarised in the Housing Evidence Paper, which we have published alongside this Main Issues Report.



Preferred Option

We have used the information in the HNDAs and other evidence to assess the future need for housing in the National Park. The numbers of new homes (called 'Housing Supply Targets') that we think are needed in each local authority area during the lifetime of the next Local Development Plan are outlined in Table 1. The targets for 2030-2039 are only an indication of what might be needed as the actual numbers would be reviewed in a future plan.

Table 1: Proposed Housing Supply Targets

Local Authority Area	2020-2024	2025-2029	2030-2039 (indicative target)
Aberdeenshire	77 (26 affordable)	77 (26 affordable)	154 (52 affordable)
Angus	0	0	0
Highland	301 (161 affordable)	218 (100 affordable)	436 (200 affordable)
Moray	15 (5 affordable)	15 (5 affordable)	30 (10 affordable)
Perth & Kinross	16 (7 affordable)	16 (7 affordable)	32 (14 affordable)
CNPA Total	409 (199 affordable)	326 (138 affordable)	652 (276 affordable)

The proposed Housing Supply Targets are lower than the targets in the 2015 Local Development Plan. We think this is reasonable and appropriate in light of the range of evidence from the most recent HNDAs and NRS projections.

The new Local Development Plan must identify sites for housing development to meet the housing supply targets for the ten year period from 2020 to 2029. Scottish Planning Policy requires the housing supply targets to be increased by 10-20% to allow for flexibility and generosity in the overall supply of land and establish a 'Housing Land Requirement'.

Although we agree it is important to provide a flexible and generous supply of housing land, much of the land in the Cairngorms National Park is of European or national importance for nature conservation. This limits the amount of land that is appropriate for development. Taking into account the overall aims of the National Park, we think that the level of flexibility and generosity should be at the lower end of the scale required by Scottish Planning Policy. We have therefore increased the housing supply targets by 10% to establish proposed Housing Land Requirements for each local authority area in the Park. These are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Proposed Housing Land Requirements

Local Authority Area	2020-2024	2025-2029	2030-2039 (indicative requirement)
Aberdeenshire	85	85	170
Angus	0	0	0
Highland	331	240	480
Moray	17	17	34
Perth & Kinross	18	18	36
CNPA Total	451	360	720

Next, we need to take account of housing sites that are identified in the 2015 Local Development Plan that are not yet built. We have reviewed these sites to confirm that they are still deliverable, and we expect that they will make a significant contribution towards meeting the housing land requirements for the

next Local Development Plan period. Table 3 (p28) summarises the number of new houses that we expect to be built on existing housing sites during the 10 year period from 2020 to 2029.

Table 3: Expected housing contributions from existing housing sites

Local Authority Area	2020-2024	2025-2029
Aberdeenshire	142	100
Angus	0	0
Highland	567	318
Moray	12	8
Perth & Kinross	6	0
CNPA Total	727	426

If the expected contributions from existing housing sites in Table 3 are compared against the Housing Land Requirements in Table 2, it is clear that the existing housing sites can be expected to deliver enough new homes to meet the bulk of the Park’s housing needs. However, we may need to identify some new land in some local authority areas to ensure we meet the Housing Land Requirements in full.

It is also significant that a number of the existing housing sites are relatively large. These include site allocations HI in Ballater (250 houses), EP1 in Aviemore (140 houses), EP2&3 in Aviemore (93 houses), EP1 in Kingussie (300 houses), HI in Newtonmore (120 houses), and the proposed new settlement at An Camas Mòr (1500 houses). These large strategic sites can provide long term certainty and are expected to meet the bulk of the National Park’s housing needs. However, as it takes time to put in place the necessary infrastructure and delivery arrangements for

such strategic sites, they can take a long time to start or be affected by changes in the housing market.

We think there is a case for increasing flexibility in our supply of housing sites by identifying a limited number of smaller sites in some communities. We think that topping-up the supply with smaller housing sites in this way will help to increase housing delivery in the short term, as smaller sites are likely to be delivered more rapidly. It will also help to make sure there are options for all of the main settlements in the Park to grow in an appropriate way.

To meet the needs outlined above, we have identified scope for potential new housing sites in Aviemore, Blair Atholl, Braemar, Grantown-on-Spey, Laggan and Nethy Bridge. A number of these sites are located within existing settlement boundaries, and some are proposed for affordable housing only. You can find more detail on these sites in the settlement section (p60).



Reasonable Alternative Options

As an alternative to the preferred approach, we could pursue either higher or lower Housing Supply Targets in the Plan, for example by assuming higher or lower levels of predicted migration into the area. Similarly, we could pursue either higher or lower Housing Land Requirements by applying different levels of flexibility and generosity in our calculations. However, we do not think that this would be justified in light of the evidence available to us.

As a further alternative to the preferred approach, and as we have concluded that there are enough existing housing sites to meet the housing land requirements across much of the National Park, it would be reasonable not to identify any additional small-scale sites. However, this would mean less flexibility in the overall housing land supply and could reduce our ability to meet housing needs in the short term if the existing larger sites take longer to develop than expected.



Questions

- Do you agree with our proposed Housing Supply Targets for the next Local Development Plan?
- Do you agree that the proposed Housing Land Requirements are sufficiently generous?
- Do you agree with our overall conclusions about the need for additional new housing sites in the new Local Development Plan?

B) Housing growth around Aviemore

Background

Aviemore is the largest settlement in Badenoch and Strathspey. It is a thriving community which acts as a key service centre for the wider region as well as an important destination for tourists. The Local Development Plan will therefore need to provide appropriate opportunities for Aviemore to grow in a way which reflects its status as a strategic settlement. In particular, there is a need to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for new housing development in order to meet the needs of local communities.

The An Camas Mòr new settlement has been identified for a number of years as the most appropriate way of addressing these development needs. The site of the proposed new settlement was included in the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan in 1997, as well as the Highland Structure Plan in 2001. It was then allocated for development in the 2010 Cairngorms National Park Local Plan, and was carried forward into the 2015 Local Development Plan.

Planning permission in principle was granted for the An Camas Mòr site in March 2014. This gave permission in outline terms for the development of a new community of up to 1500 homes, associated business, community facilities, and the provision of infrastructure. That planning permission lapsed in March 2017. In August 2017 the CNPA Planning Committee agreed to approve a further planning permission in principle for the same development, with different conditions and subject to the conclusion of a legal agreement covering planning obligations. This will result in a new planning permission in principle for the proposed new community.

The site owners are now working with a design team to take the An Camas Mòr development forward. This team has experience of delivering other new settlements in the north of Scotland, including Tornagrain near Inverness and Chapelton near Aberdeen.

If An Camas Mòr is delivered as envisaged, it can be expected to meet the bulk of the housing requirements for the Highland Council area of the National Park for many years to come. However, a development of such scale, over a long period of time, with significant infrastructure costs will be challenging to make happen.

We will continue to work with the site owners and their design team to deliver An Camas Mòr. However, it is also possible that An Camas Mòr will not be delivered. The next Local Development Plan needs to be able to adapt to those circumstances if they happen and have alternative ways of meeting the National Park's housing land requirements in the event that the site is unable to be developed.

Our assessment of the potential impacts to housing supply of not delivering An Camas Mòr during the lifetime of the next Local Development Plan are shown in Figures 2 and 3, p31. They show that we expect to meet our annual housing land requirements if An Camas Mòr is developed, but that this is unlikely to be possible if the site does not progress as envisaged. Figure 3 shows that if An Camas Mòr is not developed as anticipated we are unlikely to be able to meet our annual housing land requirement from 2022 onwards, only two years into the life of the next Local Development Plan. Figure 3 also indicates that we are unlikely to meet our total cumulative housing land requirement over the 10 year Plan period even if we deliver high numbers of houses during the early years of the Plan period.

Figure 2: Anticipated housing delivery rates including the An Camas Mòr new settlement

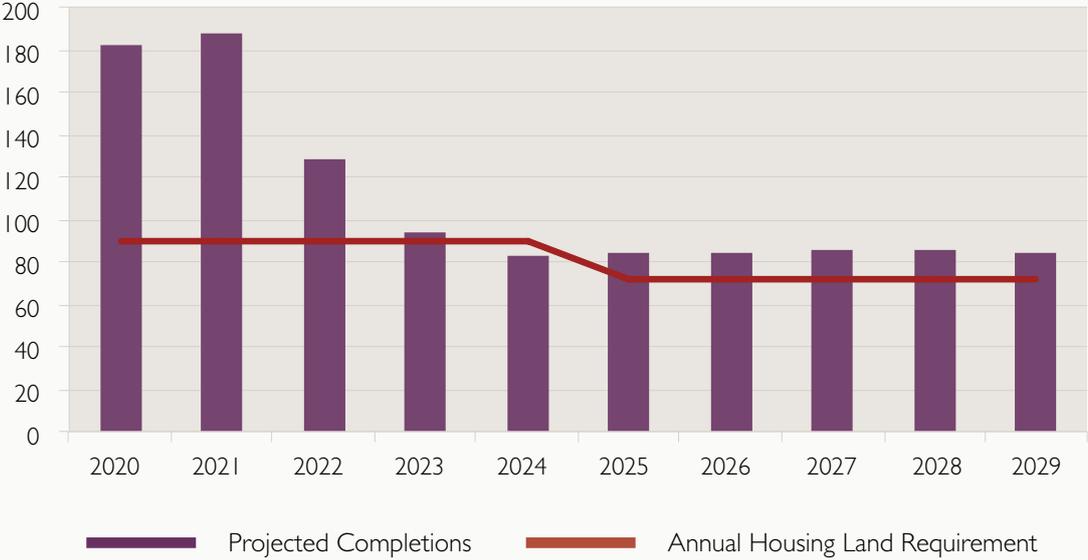


Figure 3: Anticipated housing delivery rates excluding the An Camas Mòr new settlement





Preferred Option

Our preferred option for addressing this uncertainty is to identify alternative long term development land within the next Local Development Plan. This land could be held in reserve, and policies could be included in the Plan to ensure that it is initially embargoed from development. The long term future of this land would then be reviewed through future Local Development Plans.

However, policies could also be designed to allow this land to be released for early development in particular circumstances. These circumstances could include a clearly identified shortfall in the effective land supply (as identified through annual housing land audits produced by the local authorities in the Park) or the emergence of strong evidence that the An Camas Mòr site was constrained for the entire Plan period.

Identifying long term development land in this way would provide a contingency plan to help avoid the significant uncertainty, and the need to fundamentally review the Local Development Plan, which is otherwise likely to arise if An Camas Mòr is not delivered during the Plan period. As the long term land would not be allowed to be developed at the same time as An Camas Mòr, this would also ensure that we continue to protect the outstanding environment and natural heritage of the Park by not identifying more land for development than is necessary.

We have identified potential scope to identify long term housing land to extend Aviemore at North Aviemore. This land is close to the existing road network, mains water supplies, sewage infrastructure and electricity supplies and would link to existing services and facilities in Aviemore. You can find more detail on this proposed long term housing land in the settlement section (p60).



Reasonable Alternative Options

As an alternative to the preferred option outlined above, it may be appropriate to continue to place significant reliance on the delivery of An Camas Mòr during the Plan period and not identify long term development land within the next Local Development Plan. However, such an approach would not provide a contingency plan for meeting our housing needs if it became clear that An Camas Mòr was unlikely to be delivered. If we pursued this option, and it subsequently became clear that An Camas Mòr was not deliverable, it would require a fundamental review of the Local Development Plan strategy and create significant uncertainty.

As a further alternative, it could be argued that the next Local Development Plan should not place any reliance on the delivery of An Camas Mòr given the slow progress over its development to date. If we took this position, the new Local Development Plan would need to identify new alternative housing sites that could be released for development during the Plan period. However, there is a risk that this approach could result in an over-supply of housing if the An Camas Mòr site is delivered.



Questions

- Do you agree that we should include long term development land in the Local Development Plan which could be released for development in the event that An Camas Mòr does not progress as envisaged?