

08/241/CP

PLANNING APPLICATION AT
THE AVIEMORE CENTRE, GRAMPIAN ROAD,
AVIEMORE

APPENDIX 4

A&DS REPORT



Architecture+DesignScotland
Aitearachd is Deòthachd na h-Alba

CNP 06: AVIEMORE HIGHLAND RESORT MASTERPLAN – GH JOHNSTON BUILDING CONSULTANTS / HIRST LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS / FLETCHER JOSEPH ARCHITECTS / RYBKA – PLANNING REFERENCE: 08/341/GP

INTRODUCTION

This report relates to a detailed planning application for a masterplan and associated building projects at the Aviemore Highland Resort. The project was presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 20 August 2008 in Aviemore. Earlier masterplan designs were seen at outline planning application stage at a Design Review meeting in November 2007 and a report was subsequently issued on 28 November 2007.

The project was presented by Gary Johnston and Caroline Syne of GH Johnston Building Consultants Ltd., Jim MacFadyen of Fletcher Joseph Architects, and Paul Miller of Hirst Landscape Architects.

The meeting was also attended by Don McKee, Andrew Tait and Neil Stewart of Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA).

Panel Members were Ric Russell (Chair), Karen Cadell, Roddy Langmuir and Brian Veitch.

A+DS staff present were Eric Dawson, Kate Francey and Steven Malone.

No A+DS Advisory Board Members other than those who sat on the Panel have taken any part in formulating A+DS's views.

A+DS VIEWS

1 General comments

1.1 We welcome the opportunity to comment on the developed designs. We support, in principle, the proposed level of mixed use; however, we feel the project is not yet fulfilling its potential in creating a positive development for the Resort, or the wider area, which capitalises on the physical, social and economic assets of the site.

1.2 Our review focussed on the masterplan and did not consider designs for individual buildings. We are unable to provide comment on their design until such time as the masterplan has developed sufficiently to define their context.

2 Previous comments

2.1 In our previous report we welcomed the intention to create a high quality masterplan but did not support the design. We felt that there was little, if any, quality in what was being proposed and that the design failed to make a positive contribution to the character of the area or meet the aspirations contained in the national planning policy document '*Designing Places*'. Our main concerns related to the quality of the masterplan; connections with plans for the wider Aviemore area, the surrounding landscape and the town centre; the lack of a detailed landscape proposal; matters relating to vehicular, pedestrian and cycle routes; the proposed distribution and layout of retail and housing developments; and the definition of public and private amenity space.

2.2 We suggested that greater investment in design could result in economic benefits for the Resort, and that a more considered approach might reveal opportunities for a denser form of development.

2.3 We felt that much further design work was required and urged everyone associated with the project to collaborate with the masterplanners for the wider Aviemore area to ensure that spatial and design quality are integrated with the wider area, and are of a standard appropriate for a gateway entry to the National Park.

3 Design development

3.1 There are still fundamental aspects of the masterplan that have not been sufficiently developed and many of our previous concerns have not yet been addressed.

3.1.1 The masterplan lacks a strong and appropriate vision of place.

3.1.2 The masterplan does not respond to the character of, or integrate with, Aviemore.

3.1.3 We are concerned by the quality of spaces and places being proposed. It is still not evident how the masterplan responds to those qualities set out in the national planning policy document '*Designing Places*'.

3.1.4 The spaces between the proposed buildings have not been adequately considered. Three-dimensional visualisations/sketches of these spaces would assist in understanding how they are conceived and the sequential movement between spaces.

3.1.5 A Design Statement (which had not been prepared at the time of the review) should be provided that includes, along with the design narrative: an analysis of how the proposals relate to the existing context; a micro-climatic study; an assessment that demonstrates and ensures that the additional retail will not have a detrimental effect on the existing retail core along Aviemore High Street / Grampian Road.

3.2 We welcome the appointment of a professionally qualified landscape architect to the project. However, it is still not clear how the masterplan responds either to the wider landscape or to a strategic landscape framework.

3.3 We welcome the appointment of a professionally qualified architect to the project. However, given the scale of the project, the likelihood is that a single designer for all of the buildings will result in a lack of individuality throughout the scheme. We suggest that a competent masterplan should be prepared, from which design coded guidance could be developed to ensure a co-ordinated design approach, so that separate architects can be commissioned for individual buildings to create a more varied and interesting development.

4 Movement network

4.1 We have concerns about the detrimental impact the approach to roads layout is having. The manner in which vehicular and pedestrian traffic is segregated throughout the site will be harmful to the creation of public streets and spaces. We suggest that, where appropriate, buildings should front directly onto routes in order to activate and humanise the spaces.

4.2 We have serious concerns with the proposed redistribution of traffic along the "distributor road" through the site. The scale of roads and junctions proposed will be detrimental to the making of high quality public spaces.

4.3 The proposal to create a new roundabout junction on Grampian Road into the site seems excessive in relation to the access requirements of the site itself. It appears to be

geared more to the provision of a new distributor road through the site (rather than into it) as an additional route bypassing the town centre. The junction as proposed will discourage pedestrian use and it will have a negative impact on the character of the town centre.

4.4 We encourage Cairngorms National Park Authority to challenge the Highways Authority on these aspects. Wherever possible, every effort should be made to create high quality cycle and pedestrian connections, that link and connect throughout the town and the surrounding area.

5 Public realm

5.1 There is no sense of uniqueness, 'specialness' or hierarchy of the various spaces in the proposed masterplan. There is no legibility about the way in which pedestrians enter and navigate through the site. A set of clear diagrams that describe how key routes and spaces connect throughout the development would assist in considering such points.

5.2 The layout of the development appears rigid and unnatural; particularly at the proposed central 'plaza' of offices and residential units. We recognise the challenge resulting from the fragmented arrangement of existing buildings; however, there appears to be a tension between the geometrical approach to parts of the plan (such as the plaza and regimented car parking) and the natural landscaping. We suggest a more organic layout that responds to the topography of the site and connections to adjacent areas could offer a more appropriate design response.

5.3 A seamless interface between the proposed development and the centre of Aviemore / Grampian Road centre is critical, and a much improved relationship between the Resort masterplan and adjacent sites needs to be achieved. A number of areas would benefit from further consideration.

5.3.1 There is no celebration or 'gateway experience' to the Highland Resort at the head of Laurel Bank where the footpath terminates unsatisfactorily in a car park. We encourage a greater sense of arrival in this location.

5.3.2 The proposed supermarket on Grampian Road will form a gateway into the development from the north in terms of its edge treatment, building frontage, orientation and synthesis with the landscape. This particular project should be seen in the context of the development of the wider townscape.

5.3.3 We question the proximity and impact of the proposed road for the new block of twelve flats relative to the existing adjacent access, and wonder if the approach to the block could be from the rear.

5.3.4 We support in principle the idea of an amphitheatre as a public space to host external events. However, its proposed location within the large area of green space in front of the Four Season's Hotel is questionable as this space functions perfectly well as it is.

6. Design statement

6.1 We understand that a Design Statement was being prepared at the time of the design review; after the planning application had been lodged.

6.2 A copy of the 'Design Statement' was made available subsequent to the review. We do not consider that the document meets the requirements of PAN 68. As submitted, it essentially restates the policy context and background information. It does not illustrate the quality of the places to be created; nor does it "explain and illustrate the design principles and design concept of the proposed layout" or "how these will help to achieve the qualities in *Designing Places*".

CONCLUSION

We do not support the project in its present form. The designs are not of a sufficient quality for one of Scotland's National Parks and a major visitor destination. The project is not yet meeting its potential to create a positive development for the Resort, or the wider Aviemore area, that capitalises on the assets of the site, and maximises its appeal as a place to attract visitors.

We have fundamental concerns about the masterplan, and many of our previous concerns have not yet been addressed. The most evident deficiency is the lack of a strong and appropriate vision and framework for the development. It is difficult to understand the layout of the masterplan; the hierarchy of spaces, the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and the quality of the routes. Greater professional input is required to consider the spaces to be created and the quality of the connections that link them.

We have serious concerns about the impact that the proposed roundabout and bypass route would have on creating pleasant routes, spaces and places within the site. We encourage Cairngorms National Park Authority to challenge the approach to roads layout, particularly in light of the emerging national policy document: *Designing Streets* which reinforces the importance of making good public places and spaces.

We wish to be consulted again once our concerns have been addressed.

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