



**Development Brief – Dulnain Bridge DB/HI**

**Consultation May 2010**

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## **Planning in the Cairngorms National Park**

The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in the UK, encompassing areas of Highland, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus. A Scottish Government consultation is taking place to extend the boundary into Perthshire.

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park is unique. It involves the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) working alongside the Local Authorities, who continue to deal with many of the planning applications within their respective areas. All planning applications submitted must comply with all the policies in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (once adopted) and any relevant Supplementary Guidance.

Any planning application should be submitted to the relevant Local Authority in the normal manner. The Local Authority checks to ensure all the necessary information is supplied and registers receipt of the application. The CNPA is informed by the Local Authority and then has 21 days to decide whether to call-in the application. Only applications which are of general significance to the aims of the Park are called-in. Thereafter the CNPA determines the application. In instances when planning applications are not called-in, the Local Authority continues to act as the planning authority.

This supplementary guidance sets out detailed advice to help you meet the requirements of the policies in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with other relevant guidance, such as the Sustainable Design Guide.

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This site is allocated in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan as being suitable for residential development of around 30 dwellings. It is in Dulnain Bridge and is designated as site DB/H1.
- 1.2 The site is outlined in red in the location plan below (Figure 1).

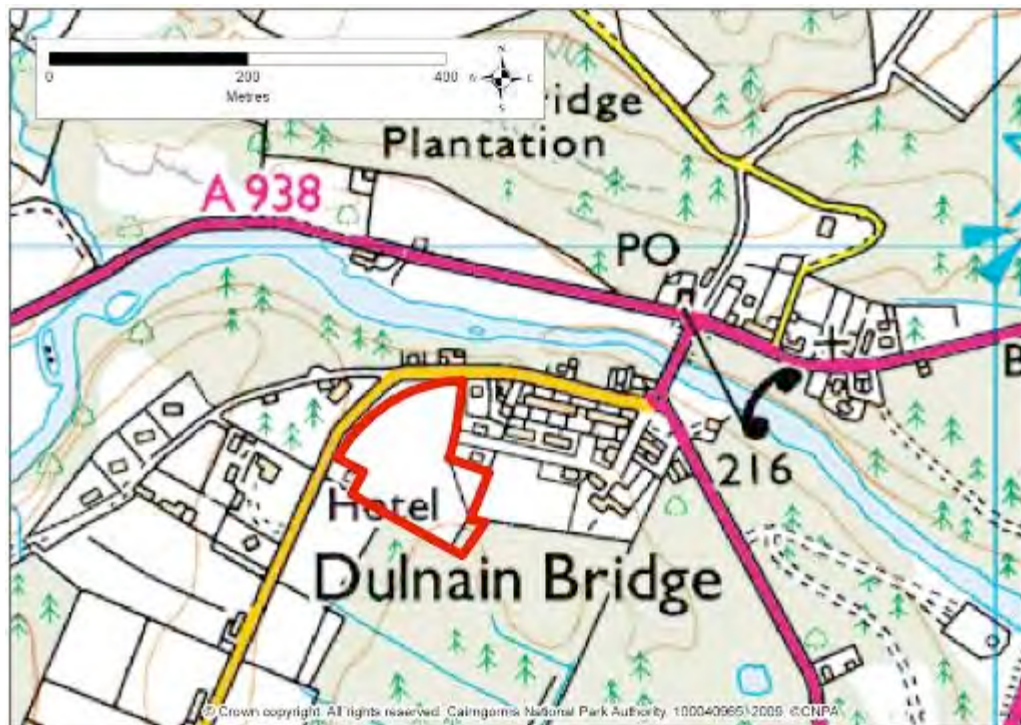


Figure 1 – Dulnain Bridge location plan

## 2.0 Purpose and status

- 2.1 The purpose of this development brief is to provide guidance on the main planning issues and design principles which all development on the site should be based upon:
- The proposed development should ensure the woodland character of the site is enhanced; sensitive treatment of the site should define and contain the development and the settlement edges as a whole;
  - As supplementary planning guidance, this brief will be a material planning consideration in determining planning applications. It is intended to provide a clear indication of the requirements and expectations that the planning authority, will take into account;

- Developers should recognise the significant opportunity to provide high quality, well designed development with a considered approach to densities, form and layout, alongside significant areas of public green spaces;
- Proposals should aim to achieve attractive, distinctive residential environments that contribute to, and enhance the sense of place and benefits that of the communities of the Cairngorms National Park.

### **3.0. Site description**

3.1 The site has a number of features, constraints and opportunities to take into account when considering any development (see Figure 2, Constraints and opportunities plan, p00):

- The site extends to approximately 1.51 ha (3.73 acres). It is bounded to the north and west by Fraser Road, beyond which lie scattered dwellings of mixed age and architecture with established screening trees and vegetation;
- A compact estate of terraced and semi-detached housing with some modern bungalows lies along the eastern boundary along School Place, together with a community recreation and play area. Between the play area and the site lies a mature group of screening conifers, mainly pine;
- Around the southern edge of the site and along the south western boundary, lies an extensive plantation of conifers including pine and spruce, providing shelter from prevailing south-westerly winds;
- The site slopes gently downwards to the south from Fraser Road, the highest point being in the western corner. Owing to the topography and surrounding coniferous planting, the site has limited views and is rather inward looking in nature. The northern half of the site has pleasant local views along Fraser Road;
- The northern half of the site consists of open grassland, with some good individual groupings of pine trees along the boundary with Fraser Road. The southern lower half of the site is waterlogged. Drainage is chaotic with a sporadic ditch on the eastern side, interrupted by the remains of a stone dyke;
- There is a young plantation of pine in the centre of the southern half of the site. The waterlogged conditions are not helpful to this species and partly explain the poor quality of this grouping. Although the surrounding planting means that the site is sheltered, the proximity of the mature coniferous trees casts a deep shade over the southern part of the site, making it less suitable for development than the open northern half.



## 4.0 Site constraints and opportunities

4.1 The site highlights a number of development constraints but also potential opportunities. These are further illustrated on Figure 2, Constraints and opportunities plan, see p00.

### 4.2.1 Physical conditions

- Ground conditions, topography, surrounding planting and services are all significant factors. Although the established surrounding woodland provides protection of the site from prevailing winds, the shade they create presents a development constraint. This is not an issue with the higher northern half of the site, where the more open aspect presents the opportunity for maximising solar gain and daylight.
- The natural drainage of the site down the slope towards the waterlogged southern end, combined with the shaded aspect and lack of any views, renders this part of the site an unsuitable location for houses and gardens.
- Although some tree groups within the site are of poor quality and therefore not suitable for retention, other groups present the opportunity to provide established features within the new development.

### 4.2.2 Services

- Overhead power lines currently cross the site in two directions, presenting a possible constraint.

### 4.2.3 Development opportunities

- The development of the site presents an excellent opportunity for large and small scale developers to work together. This would give the opportunity for a variety of house types and styles. In addition, the provision of serviced plots is encouraged.
- The provision of a Priority Purchase Scheme (giving local people opportunities to purchase the plots/properties for a period of time, before they are placed on the

open market) for local people should be given careful consideration; this has met with some considerable success elsewhere in the Park.

#### **4.2.4 Natural heritage**

- Developers should make themselves aware of any natural heritage designations, conservation and/or other interests within the site. Appropriate surveys and mitigation will be required (see Biodiversity, p00).
- An area of the site in the bottom south corner is identified as being partly within the following designations:

Ancient Woodland Inventory

Semi-Natural Woodland Inventory

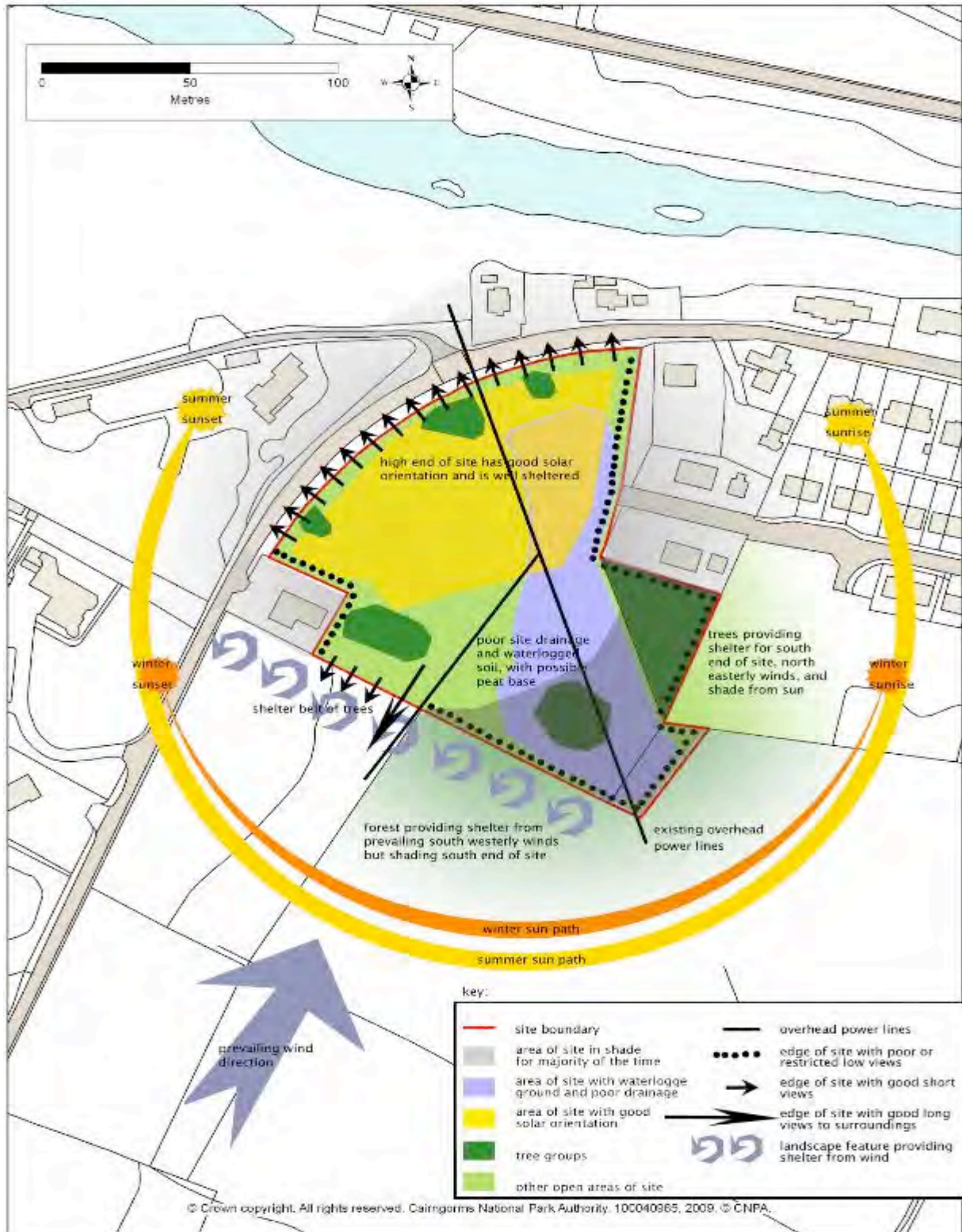


Figure 2 Constraints and opportunities plan



## 5.0 Development requirements

5.1 Requirements for development of the site are set out in this section and partially illustrated on the Requirements plan. These requirements emerge from the planning policy framework and the specific constraints and opportunities afforded by the site itself.

### 5.1.1 Developer contributions

- Developers should make themselves aware of likely development contributions required within each community, where the need arises to increase or improve public services, facilities or infrastructure arising from the development. The final level of contribution sought should be based on an assessment of the impacts on the community undertaken jointly with the developer and planning authority.
- The modification and upgrading of the Fraser Road junction with School Road to accommodate additional traffic would be required alongside the suitable improvement of the School Place road surfacing to an adoptable standard. Developers should refer to the Supplementary Planning Guidance on developer contributions.



### 5.1.2 Affordable housing

- A proportion of the total number of units on the site should be provided as affordable housing. The proportion sought will be to a target of between 25 per cent and 40 per cent depending on the type of affordable housing required and the economic viability of the development. Discussions should take place in the first instance with the CNPA and Highland Council's Housing and Property Services to determine the current requirements for this site.

### 5.1.3 Phasing

- A scheme of phasing shall require to be agreed between the CNPA and the developer, reflecting the capacity of the site, the Local Plan housing land supply requirement and market, community and other arising circumstances.

### 5.1.4 Density and diversity

- A variety of house sizes and the ability of houses to adapt to the changing needs of inhabitants over time can provide long term housing solutions, contributing to stable communities;
- A number of different types of buildings should be present, with a mixture of scales of housing including detached, semi-detached and terraced units, of various densities and unit sizes;
- Due to the topography, ground conditions and varying housing types, density should vary over the site with medium density along the north portion of the site, becoming lower moving southwards;
- Housing density and location is illustrated in the Requirements plan, with the highest density housing forming a rural streetscape along the north edge of the site, suitable to the village setting.



### 5.1.5 Community identity

- A complex set of human needs forms community identity. Part of this is a sense of place and belonging. Good design of the places we inhabit contributes strongly towards this;
- A high standard of development is expected – the existing character of Dulnain Bridge should be enhanced by the new development. Proposals should aim to achieve attractive, distinctive residential environments contributing to, and enhancing sense of place;

- Prominent views, from outside the boundaries of the development and within, should be identified and used to delineate public and private space.

### 5.1.5 Exemplary Development

- New development should be good quality design which befits that expected of a National Park; it should not be a bland 'suburban' type with no reference to locality. Innovative, modern design is encouraged;
- Developers should recognise the significant opportunity to provide high quality, well designed development with a considered approach to densities, form and layout, alongside significant areas of public green spaces.

### 5.1.6 Informed design

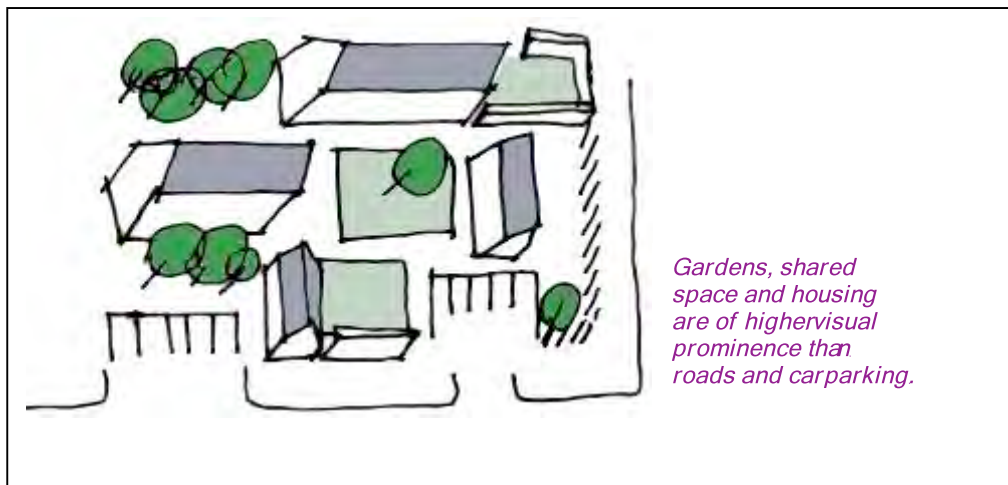
- A site analysis should be undertaken, including existing microclimatic conditions, relationship to neighbouring buildings and countryside, use patterns of the site and transport analysis including opportunities to enhance pedestrian and non-vehicular opportunities. An explanation of the proposed developments relationship to the existing village should be included in a design statement;
- Variety and richness of size and shape of houses and material use should be utilised, ensuring that building shapes reflect the principles and proportions of traditional housing in the area. Alternating building heights are acceptable from 1 to 2.5 storey;
- New development should not simply copy older buildings in the area. Existing form, building lines and massing should be considered and influence the proposed design;



*Shared external spaces or other landmarks act as markers in the development, providing orientation, social space and enhanced relationships to adjacent housing*

- Building clusters should be formed around shared external space. Amenity space should be useable.
- Natural materials such as stone, lime render and timber, with slate or metal roofing finishes are preferred, but are not exclusive and should not preclude innovative design. Material choices should be clearly explained in a design statement;

- Boundaries of the proposed development are particularly important; any which form the edge of a village are important to the identity of the settlement and should be key design elements. Good boundary treatments consisting predominately of stone walling, with hedge planting or limited timber fencing should be used on the site edges and for internal boundaries;
- The boundaries of the development, especially along Fraser Road, should be the edge of a street and not the back of a suburban development. Retaining existing trees, boundary treatments should create an active street frontage, achieved through the use of varied boundary treatments and location of housing on each plot.



**Figure 00 Example of potential Streetscape layout**

### 5.1.7 Access and links

- The rural nature of many of the settlements within the Cairngorms National Park should be recognised. The levels of public transport to access shops and services often means that using a car is necessary;
- **Car access will not be allowed directly from Fraser Road.** There are various constraints which preclude an access being formed, including visibility restrictions, proximity to existing junctions and the lack of space for footway provision (Consultation with Highland Council TEC services is required to address these issues);
- Vehicular access to the site is to be made from School Place, through the continuation of the currently unmade road into the site. This road will need to be made up to adoptable standards, with pedestrian and cycle access provided to link with the existing footpaths in School Place;
- Well considered layouts and landscaping should avoid cars and roads dominating the frontages of buildings, or the layouts of development generally. They should be screened or at the back of building clusters;

- The new development should be accessible, well connected and linked to the existing village. The footpath and cycle network should be part of the planting infrastructure, with through routes and connections to the wider road and path network encouraged, including core paths and 'safer routes to schools'.

### 5.1.8 Sustainable build and energy requirements

- The design of all development should seek to minimise the requirements for energy, demonstrate sustainable use of resources and use non-toxic, low-embodied energy materials. Please see the Cairngorms National Park Sustainable Design Guide [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk) for further information.
- Appropriate on-site renewable technologies should be used to achieve zero and low carbon developments.



*View to site along access from School Place*

### 5.1.9 Open space and landscaping

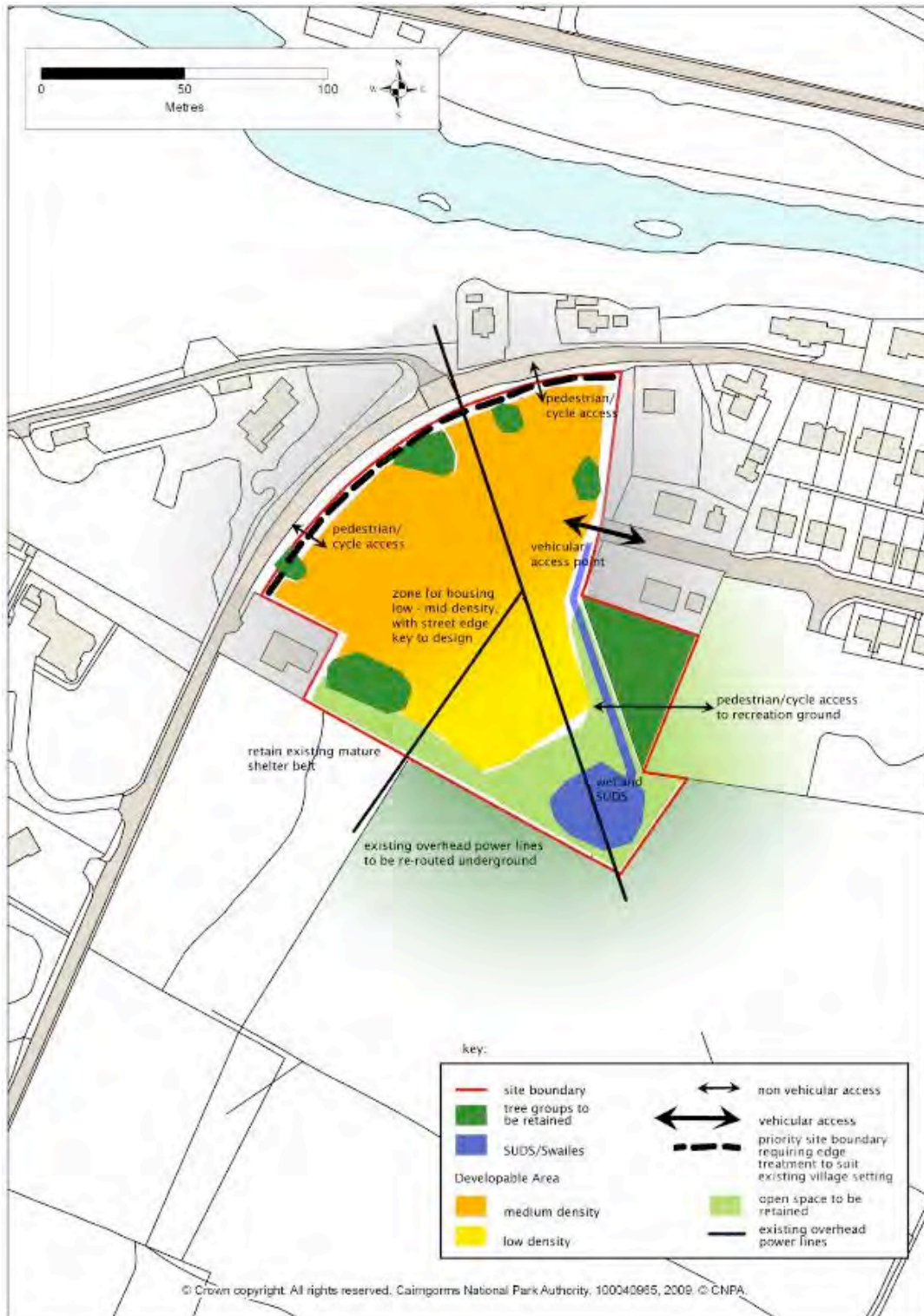
- The site must include a comprehensive series of open spaces all linked by the footpath and cycle network to peripheral green space and areas outwith the site boundary;
- Developers should refer to the Cairngorms National Park Supplementary Planning Guidance on Open Space ([www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)) for the specific requirements for open space provision. Open spaces should provide for a variety of activities including:
  - Equipped play areas
  - ball games and other informal play space
  - Structural tree planning
  - Supporting shrub and herbaceous planting
  - High quality social spaces, such as areas of public art, allotment space or other public place
- The site should allow for peripheral planting to screen and frame views into and out of the site as well as a comprehensive tree structure across the whole area

including street and garden trees. These should be integrated into the structure of trees in the open spaces;

- The peripheral planting areas should be a minimum of 15m wide and where shelter is required from prevailing winds they should be planted with a high proportion of trees supported with shrub planting. Internal areas should be an appropriate width to allow them to be sustainable and robust. In general a minimum of 10m around open spaces and 5m in others should be suitable. Planting should be largely native species;
- Further natural green space should be retained in order to conserve and enhance existing biodiversity.

#### **5.1.10 Biodiversity**

- Tree species suitable for the Cairngorms National Park include: birch (silver and downy), Scots pine, aspen, alder (*glutinosa*), rowan, and bird cherry. Shrub species include; juniper, blaeberry, heather, broom gorse, hazel, holly, wild honeysuckle and willow (goat and grey). Each species should be planted according to its normal ground conditions.
- A survey of the biodiversity on site is required (please refer to the Cairngorms National Park Supplementary Planning Guidance on Natural Heritage [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)). This must also include the ecological role of the site within the area such as foraging area and route ways as well as other habitat networks.
- The development must allow for the enhancement of biodiversity in its layout and in particular the open space and footpath/cycle network. The design of individual dwellings must also include bird and bat nesting boxes and spaces.
- The small picturesque groupings of conifers around the edge of the site and in particular along Fraser Road should be retained and managed, and wind-damage dealt with. This also applies to the stand of conifers, mainly pine, in the south-east corner of the site bordering the recreation ground. New planting should be introduced into the development area in small copses of conifers and broadleaves to retain the present atmosphere of a woodland glade.



**Figure 3 Requirements plan (for indicative purposes)**

### 5.1.11 Services and drainage

- The existing overhead power lines running across the site may present a constraint to the developable area. The developer should examine options for re-routing and possibly undergrounding which would allow for more flexibility in developing the site. This would need to be agreed by the developer with the service provider.
- Permeable surfaces are to be used throughout the site to reduce the impact of rainwater runoff. Additional rainwater runoff mitigation measures such as green roofing or rainwater harvesting are encouraged.
- Resolution of the poor drainage of the site is of paramount importance. At least one swale will be required to connect cleanly into the ditch network on the southern periphery of the site. In other circumstances, a wetland may be considered. This would need to be decided in consultation with SEPA and SNH.

## 6.0 Submitting a planning application

6.1 In preparing a proposal for the site, the developer is advised to hold pre-application discussions with the Planning Authority. Compliance with this brief should not be interpreted as ensuring automatic approval of a proposal. Any application will be judged on its merits.

6.2 Planning applications must be submitted in the first instance to Highland Council. It is likely that the CNPA will call-in the application to deal with once notified of its registration.

6.3 Public consultation

During the preparation of development proposals for the site and prior to submission of a planning application, public consultation should be undertaken with the local community, recognising the requirements of the Planning Etc (Scotland) Act 2006. The issues raised and responses should be documented and incorporated with the planning application.

6.4 Surveys to support planning applications

In order to inform appropriate development of the site, the following surveys should be submitted:

- Stage I ground conditions survey
- Drainage assessment
- Ecological and biodiversity survey
- Tree survey



## 7.0 Policy context

7.1 A series of national, strategic and local policies and guidance are in place which provide the core documents against which any planning application will be assessed. These include:

### 7.1.1 National Planning Guidance

- The consolidated Scottish Planning Policy 2010 and its thematic sections;
- Best practice is set out in Planning Advice Notes. PAN44, PAN 60, PAN 61, PAN 65, PAN 67, PAN 68, PAN69, PAN 72, PAN74, PAN 75, PAN 76, PAN 77, PAN 79, PAN 81 and PAN 84;
- ‘Designing Places, A Policy Statement for Scotland’.
- ‘Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland’.

### 7.1.2 The Cairngorms National Park Plan

- The Cairngorms National Park Plan provides an overarching context for development planning and management within the National Park and is a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 sets out the four aims for the National Park and the CNPA has a statutory function to achieve these in a collective and co-ordinated way.

- a) To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- b) To promote sustainable use of natural resources of the area;
- c) To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- d) To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities

- The Cairngorms National Park Plan sets out a vision, a number of guiding principles and strategic objectives to secure delivery of its aims. These provide a framework for delivery in the Local Plan

### 7.1.3 The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

- The site is identified for housing development within the Settlement Proposals section of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. Development proposals must comply with the requirements stated in this section and with all relevant Local Plan Policies.

#### 7.1.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- In addition to this development brief, the CNPA has developed other supplementary planning guidance, which should be complied with in any development proposals.
  - Sustainable design guide
  - Carbon emissions
  - Energy generation
  - Developer contributions
  - Natural heritage
  - Open space
  - Affordable housing
  - Core Paths Plan.
  - Water Resources