

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** UPDATE ON LOCAL PLAN, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN GUIDE, AVIEMORE MASTERPLAN

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#### **Purpose**

This report is to update Members on the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and the associated projects for preparation of Sustainable Design Guidance and an updated Aviemore Master Plan.

#### **Recommendation**

That the Planning Committee accepts this report for information.

#### **Executive Summary**

The draft local plan was on deposit for consultation from July until the end of September. There have been over 1500 comments received from over 460 individuals and organisations. These are now all on a database and a summary is being produced with a commentary on the points raised. There will be now be a period of engaging with those who made representations to see if it is possible to resolve objections. Proposed modifications will then be brought forward for agreement by Members and this will be followed by a consultation period. There will be opportunity for another round of modifications and ultimately unresolved objections will be considered at a Local Plan Inquiry. The attached diagram gives the current indicative timetable for this process and the route to adoption. In tandem with work on the local plan there are currently contracts out for the preparation of Sustainable Design Guidance and a revised Aviemore Masterplan. Both of these involve close working with partners and public consultation. It is intended that they will become Supplementary Planning Guidance and again diagrams are attached showing the route to adoption.

## The Local Plan

1. At the time of writing the report on the consultation responses from the Local Plan deposit phase is under preparation and it is hoped that it will be ready for this meeting. In very brief summary we have received over 1500 comments from over 460 individuals and organisations including members of the public, developers, public agencies, the Scottish Government, the 4 local authorities and local interest groups. A table is attached (Appendix 1) showing the number of objections with regard to each policy and settlement.
2. All policies and settlement areas have received some level of representation ranging from 1 comment on house extensions to 48 comments on the policy seeking contributions to affordable housing. Within settlements there are 499 comments for Aviemore, mostly in respect of the Dalfaber housing sites, 35 comments on the housing allocation in Ballater and 79 regarding various issues in Nethybridge. There has been some concern on our approach to small settlements with 21 comments on Dinnet alone. The impact of development on natural heritage has generated over 100 representations, mainly from agencies and environmental interest groups.
3. Whilst there is a spread of comment across the piece, there is a concentration in some quarters, not only from developers, on the policies for housing. These relate to issues such as the level of need for housing in the Park, the justification for our figures, the implications for viability of development and therefore for deliverability of our affordable housing aspirations. There has also been comment from community councils, small builders and members of the public about restrictions on development outside settlements.
4. We are now entering into a period where, having analysed the comments, CNPA officers will be contacting those who made representations to discuss their comments. This will be done by phone, letter, e mail and individual meetings depending on the nature and extent of the comment and the preference of the person who made it.
5. In some instances the comment may be as a result of not fully understanding the content of the plan or perhaps by taking an element of it out of context. In such cases the issue may be resolved either as a result of discussion or by minor changes to language and/or presentational aspects of the local plan.
6. Many of the objections will however constitute a difference of opinion on an issue. In such cases meetings will be required to ascertain the nature of the difference and the detailed substance behind the view being expressed. Housing policy will be such an area where CNPA will produce a paper setting out the rationale for the number and mix of houses and objectors will be asked to carry out a similar exercise to support the views they are expressing. This will then form the basis of discussion with the intention of trying to resolve as many objections as possible.
7. It is important to stress that discussions have to be focused on resolution of objections. No party can introduce new matters. All such discussions will of course be within the context of the National Park Plan and the outcome of discussions cannot be such that the NPP delivery would be compromised.

8. It is intended to make the Local Plan and associated projects a standing item on the Planning Committee agenda in order that Members can be formally briefed on progress and have an opportunity to ask questions and raise any relevant issues.
9. Once the various discussions have taken place we will have a clearer idea of the scope for resolving objections and modifications that will be necessary to do this. It is the intention to have informal sessions for Members to give briefings on progress and to air some of the potential modifications. There are currently sessions scheduled for 8 and 22 February 2008, but much will depend on the progress made in discussions with objectors. Additional sessions will be scheduled as necessary and we can arrange further briefings over and above these for Members upon request.
10. A diagram is attached (Appendix 2) with an indication that it may be possible to bring proposed modifications to the Board for approval in April 2008 if sufficient progress is made. We will update Members on this in due course. The diagram indicates that there would be consultation on modifications followed by a further period of discussion to resolve objections. Objections at this stage can only be to the modifications and it should be borne in mind that some of these objections could be from parties who were previously satisfied, but do not like the modifications.
11. It is possible that a second round of modifications would then be proposed and followed by a further formal consultation. Although it is possible to have more modification stages, it is anticipated that every effort will have been made by this point to resolve as many matters as possible. A decision will be taken nearer the time, but it is anticipated that unresolved objections will then be heard at a Local Plan Inquiry.
12. A possible inquiry date would be in October/November 2008 with the Reporters' report following 3 months later, perhaps February 2009. There may have to be further modifications and consultation as a result of the report so adoption may not follow until June 2009.

### **Sustainable Design Guide**

13. This work is a priority within the National Park Plan and to support the emerging Local Plan.
14. The contract for the preparation of a Sustainability Checklist and Sustainable Design Guidance (SDG) has been let to Envirocentre based in Stonehaven and working in partnership with Halliday Fraser Munro. Following an initial inception meeting there have been follow up sessions with CNPA officers and the consultants have come up with their initial thoughts. These have been discussed by an internal CNPA officer working group and feedback given to the consultants in order that they can produce a more substantive first draft for wider discussion and input.
15. The 4 Local Authorities have been asked to work with CNPA in taking the project forward as all planning decisions in the Park will ultimately be taken within the context of the SDG and it is important to have a consistent and co-ordinated approach and shared expectations for raising the standard of developments in terms of design and sustainability.
16. It is considered that Board Members have a valuable contribution to make as the work evolves and it is suggested that a small number with a particular interest in the

subject could put their names forward for more detailed involvement. This would be structured in such a way that Members do not prejudice their ability to participate in future decision making on the subject. The consultants are expected to produce their draft later this month and there will be consultation/discussion involving all of the authorities, representatives of the development sector and other key partners such as SNH, SEPA, Scottish Water.

17. The attached diagram (Appendix 3) sets out the current timetable for the project. As the draft evolves further it is proposed to take the work to the Board for a wider informal discussion on 11 January 2008. This would be followed by more targeted workshops with key stakeholders culminating in version of the guidance considered ready for wider public consultation. The Board would be asked to agree to the guidance going out to consultation in April/May 2008.
18. The feedback from the consultation will in turn inform a finalised version of the guidance that will be brought before the Board, possibly in July 2008, seeking agreement for use as best practice. We would ask the 4 local authorities to do likewise. It cannot be formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in advance of the Local Plan.
19. This process will allow a period for the guidance to be used in practice, any modifications to be made and for it to be formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in parallel with the Local Plan, perhaps in June 2009.

### **Aviemore Masterplan**

20. The existing Aviemore Masterplan is now 10 years old and has to an extent been overtaken by events on the ground. The contract has therefore been let to Land Use Consultants (LUC) to revise the Masterplan taking account of the current situation and the proposed Local Plan. Aviemore Projects Group involving CNPA, SNH, Highland Council and HIE is overseeing progress of the project and some of the parties have contributed to its funding. The attached diagram (Appendix 4) sets out the timetable for the project.
21. The revised Masterplan is intended to continue the aim of integrating development in central Aviemore, seek the integration of the centre with the residential areas, identify potential for environmental enhancement and ensure synergy with An Camas Mor.
22. LUC has been engaged in an information gathering stage and has been meeting key developers in and around Aviemore including AHR and An Camas Mor. The next stage is a consultation meeting in Aviemore on 19 November 2007. This will include local Board Members as well as representatives of the Community Council, Chamber of Commerce, Business Association, Highland Council, the Aviemore Projects Group and other key partners. The event will take the form of a workshop where LUC will float some very initial ideas and attendees will be asked to contribute and discuss various issues affecting Aviemore. LUC will take these discussions away and prepare a draft Masterplan that will reflect local aspirations.
23. This document will then be presented for consultation in a public exhibition that will be manned by CNPA staff and representatives of partners. The feedback from this consultation will in turn inform a finalised version of the Masterplan that will be brought to the Board for adoption in Spring 2008. Following modifications to the Local Plan any necessary changes will be made to the Masterplan and it would be brought to the Board in July 2008 for agreement as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Thereafter CNPA and Highland Council will use the Masterplan to inform

their planning decisions. This is possible at this stage as it is revising an existing Masterplan and is not directly linked to a particular proposed Local Plan policy in the way that the Sustainable Design Guide will be.

## Conclusions

24. It is hoped that the report clearly sets out the rationale, state of play and timetable for these 3 strands of work as well as the linkage between them. The process for each project is methodical and with identified opportunities for meaningful community engagement to inform the end product with a view to achieving maximum ownership. All of the projects involve partnership working, particularly as implementation is dependent on all 5 planning authorities. All of the projects also involve opportunities for Member involvement, within the parameters of your role as eventual decision takers, in order to demonstrate CNPA commitment and to inform the Board's decisions. Finally, this report sets out the current position, but further reports will be brought to Members as the projects evolve.

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