

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

20 December 2005

of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan



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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1. This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan. It explains what the SEA is, why it has been done, and what effects the consultative draft Local Plan would be likely to have on the environment. This non-technical summary can be read on its own or as part of the full SEA Environmental Report.
- 1.2. Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA for short, is a way of making sure that environmental problems are carefully considered when a plan is made. It is a formal part of the Local Plan making process and was required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004, which implements a European Directive that requires SEA to be carried out on some kinds of plans and programmes.
- 1.3. The idea behind SEA is that by making sure that environmental features such as plants and animals, air quality, human health or historic remains are considered as the plan is made, then it is less likely that the plan will harm them. SEA helps to make sure that environmental considerations are taken into account by the plan in two main ways. Firstly, the SEA predicts what effects the plan is likely to have on the environment and whether they are considered significant. Secondly, if the SEA does predict 'significant' effects, the plan must be changed to introduce measures that will make the effects less harmful or serious. The end result should be a plan that is unlikely to lead to significant harm to the environment.
- 1.4. The SEA process is also about making public the information on what the plan's effects could be so that people can understand what the predicted effects of the plan on the environment will be, and how they were predicted. The public have an opportunity to comment on the SEA process when the 'Environmental Report' of the SEA process is published with the plan.

Summary of the SEA process

- 1.5. The SEA process can be broken down to a set of stages that happen as the Local Plan is being prepared.
 - 1) Work out what condition the environment in the area is in and how it is changing or has changed. Predict what the environmental would be like in the future without the plan being made;
 - 2) Predict how different ways of making the plan could have different environmental effects;
 - 3) Predict what the effects of the policies and proposals in the consultative draft Local Plan would have on the environment;
 - 4) Decide on ways of reducing any harmful effects of the Local Plan on the environment and change the consultative draft Local Plan;
 - 5) Publish the consultative draft Local Plan and an SEA Environmental Report that explains what the SEA is and how it has been done so that people can comment on them; **(This is stage the Local Plan and SEA are at just now)**
 - 6) Take note of the comments on the Environmental Report and make any changes to the Local Plan or SEA because of them.

- 7) Continue to revise the Local Plan and do any extra assessment that is required.
- 8) Publish a the finalised draft Local Plan and an up to date Environmental Report for consultation **(We expect this to happen in the Autumn of 2006)**
- 9) Make sure that comments on the SEA as well as the findings of the SEA are considered before the Local Plan can be adopted as the formal Local Plan.
- 10) Adopt the Local Plan and write a formal statement of how the SEA been carried out with the Local Plan, how it has effected the Local Plan, and why the Local Plan has been adopted with certain proposals rather than others that were considered in the SEA process.
- 11) Keep measuring what effects the Local Plan *actually* has on the environment as it is used so that changes can be made in future if they are needed and so that it is possible to predict effects more accurately in the future.

Summary of the likely significant effects of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan

- 1.6. The consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan has been assessed and the Environmental Report of the SEA prepared. The following table summarises the significant effects that are considered likely if the plan was adopted as it stands.

The predicted effects of Local Plan Policies

- 1.7. The policies in the Local Plan are mostly considered likely to have some positive effects on the environment. This might be expected given that the Local Plan covers a National Park that was designated for the high quality of its environment and has four statutory aims that the Local Plan must help to deliver:
 - **to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;**
 - **to promote sustainable use of the natural resources;**
 - **to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;**
 - **to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.**
- 1.8. These aims mean that many of the policies in the Local Plan are supposed to protect and improve the quality of the environment so that few harmful effects on the environment could be caused by development. The Local Plan also has policies that support kinds of development that could have harmful effects on the environment. However, developments must fit with all the policies so must find sites or ways of operating that will not cause harmful environmental effects. The predicted effects are described in Section 8 and Appendix 2 of the full Environmental Report.

The predicted effects of Local Plan Proposals

- 1.9. A number of proposals in the Local Plan are considered likely to result in significant harmful environmental effects. None of the proposals are predicted to have significant positive effects.
- 1.10. The significant harmful effects that have been predicted are either because of potential harm to wildlife and the way plants and animals live on or near the proposed sites, or, it is because the proposed sites will change how a settlement appears in the landscape or how it appears to live there. They are summarised in the table below.

Settlements	Reasons for harmful effects of proposals
Aviemore Boat of Garten Carrbridge Grantown on Spey Kincaig Nethy Bridge Rothiemurchus	The proposals are on ground that is valuable for wildlife. This can be because there are important plants or animals on or near the site that would be harmed by development or because the site gives shelter, food or access for birds, animals or plants.
Aviemore Boat of Garten Carrbridge Kincaig Nethy Bridge Newtonmore Rothiemurchus Braemar	The proposals are on sites that are likely to lead to big changes in the way that the settlement is seen in the landscape or what the settlement is like to live in. In some places this is because the proposed sites will turn a small village into a town or because they will block local views or lead to a pattern of development that will contrast with what's already there.

- 1.11. In most cases, the SEA and Local Plan have made efforts to reduce the significant effects summarised above. In some cases this is by changing the Local Plan proposals while in others it means that developers would be asked to investigate issues when they apply for planning permission. Only in a few cases are there impacts that can't be made less harmful.
- 1.12. All the significant effects that have been predicted from the proposals are explained in Section 9 and Appendix 2 of the full Environmental Report. It is often difficult to predict exactly what effects a proposal will have on the environment as the Local Plan does not control how any future development is used. The uncertainties of the assessment are also explained in the full Environmental Report.

The differences SEA has made to the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan

- 1.13. At this early point in the Local Plan and SEA process, very few changes to the Local Plan have been made due to the SEA. This is because the Local Plan has been written with environmental considerations in mind and it has tried to avoid leading to harm to the environment from the start.
- 1.14. It is hoped that the publication and consultation on the Environmental Report with the Local Plan will make it easier for people to comment on both the Local Plan and environmental concerns they have about the Local Plan or

SEA. This should help to make comments on the Local Plan as relevant as possible and help improve the next draft of the Local Plan.

How to comment on the Environmental Report

- 1.15. The consultative draft Local Plan has been available for public consultation from November 2005. The Environmental Report of the SEA of the Local Plan has been published for consultation on 20 December 2005 and **comments on both documents are requested by 28 February 2006.** Comments should be sent to:

**Local Plan Team
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Albert Memorial Hall
Station Square
Ballater
Aberdeenshire
AB35 5QE**

Tel. 013397 53601

Email. planning@cairngorms.co.uk

- 1.16. The full Environmental Report of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan SEA is available from the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Copies are available to view with the Local Plan at the National Park offices in Grantown on Spey and Ballater, at local libraries within the National Park, Highland Council service points in Badenoch and Strathspey.
- 1.17. The report can also be downloaded from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan
- 1.18. It can also be provided in printed form or on CD from the National Park Authority planning department on request. The contact details are the same as those displayed above for comments to be sent to.

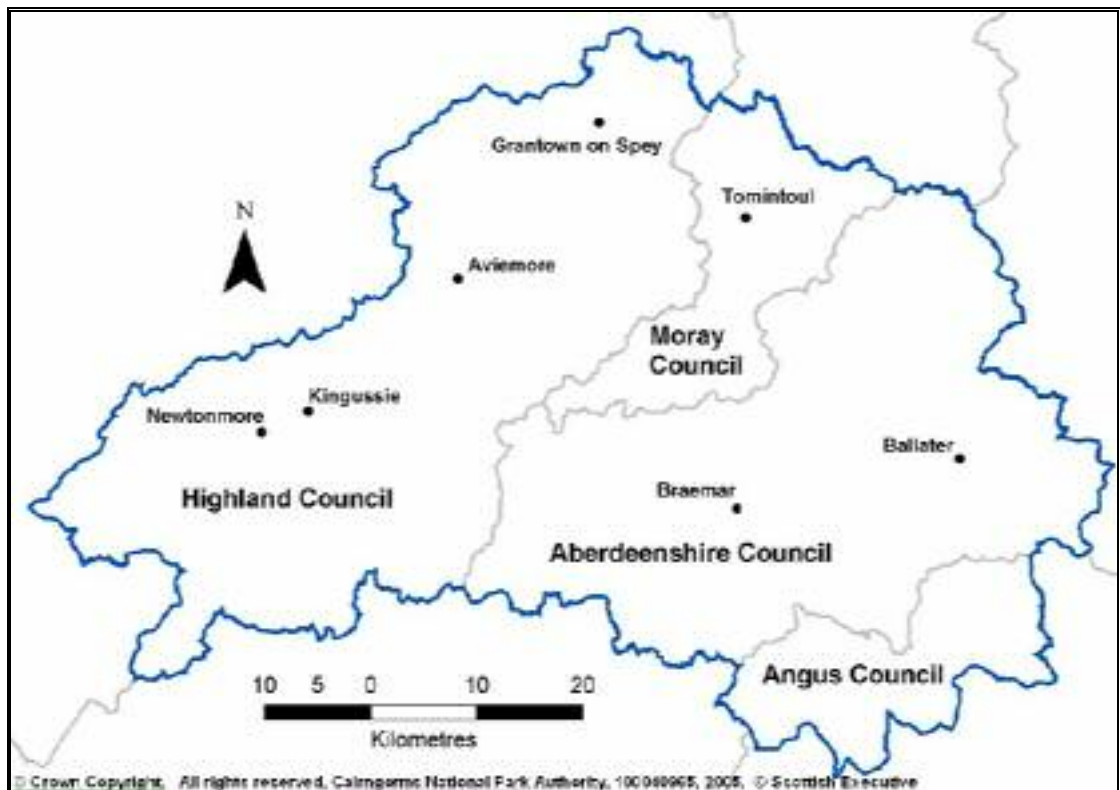
2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 2.1. This report is an Environmental Report in terms of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 for the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. The Park Authority is carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Local Plan, and this version of the Environmental Report accompanies the consultative draft Local Plan.
- 2.2. The Environmental Report describes the SEA process that has accompanied the Local Plan process so far. It follows a determination by the National Park Authority on the 18th July 2005 that SEA of the Local Plan would be required, and a scoping exercise to identify a methodology for assessment and the likely significant effects of the Local Plan. A scoping report was sent to the Consultation Authorities on the 22nd of July 2005 and their comments, which have informed the assessment methodology and process, were received on the 26th August 2005.

The Cairngorms National Park

- 2.3. Map 2.1 shows the boundaries of the Cairngorms National Park. It extends to 1,467 square miles and covers part of four Local Authority Areas (Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus). The Park is centred on the Cairngorm mountains and extends to Grantown-on-Spey, Strathdon, Ballater, the heads of the Angus Glens, Dalwhinnie and Laggan.

Map 2.1 The Cairngorms National Park



History of the National Park Designation

- 2.4. The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003, the second National Park in Scotland following the earlier establishment of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. It was established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, which also required a new National Park Authority to co-ordinate management of the Park. The National Park Authority is a Non-Departmental Public Body and has a board of 25 members of which 10 are appointed by the Scottish Ministers, 10 are nominated by the four local authorities and 5 are elected by the communities resident in the National Park.
- 2.5. The National Park was established on the basis of:
- the outstanding national importance of its natural and cultural heritage;
 - the area's distinctive character and coherent identity;
 - the special management needs of the area.
- 2.6. The general purpose of the National Park Authority set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The Park Authority is therefore an enabling organisation that must work with and through other bodies to bring added value to the management of the Park, to achieve the four aims.
- 2.7. The aims of the National Park are:
- **to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;**
 - **to promote sustainable use of the natural resources;**
 - **to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;**
 - **to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.**
- 2.8. The National Park Authority must ensure that the 4 aims are achieved collectively. However, if there appears to be a conflict between the first aim and the other aims, greater weight must be given to the first aim.

The Cairngorms National Park and the Planning System

- 2.9. Unlike a Local Authority, the CNPA is not a full Planning Authority, but shares planning powers in the Park area with the four constituent Local Authorities. The Park Authority is responsible for preparing a Local Plan for the area, but only operates the development control function on applications that are considered to be of significance to the aims of the National Park.
- 2.10. Development Control functions within the National Park are shared by the Park Authority and the four constituent local authorities. Planning applications are made to the local authorities in the first instance, and the National Park Authority has a power to 'call-in' applications to be decided by the Park Authority where it considers they have some significance to the aims of the National Park. In practice, this has meant that so far the Park Authority has called in around 16% of the planning applications within the National Park area for determination.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

- 2.11. Local Plans set out detailed policies and proposals for the development and use of land that guide day to day planning decisions. Under the current planning system they operate with Structure Plans to form the statutory development plan for an area. Currently, each of the four component local authorities has a Local Plan which covers part of the Cairngorms National Park area. The Cairngorms Local Plan will replace those four local plans with one coherent policy framework that reflects the aims of the National Park. The National Park Authority and the four Local Authorities will determine planning applications against the Cairngorms Local Plan once it is adopted.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SEA & LOCAL PLAN CONTEXT

The purpose of the SEA

- 3.1. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that is described in this Environmental Report is an “assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment” under the terms of European Directive 2001/42/EC. Article 1 of the directive states that its objective is:

“to provide for a high level protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment.”

- 3.2. For some plans or programmes, the integration of environmental considerations may be a new idea. For development plans in the UK such as Local Plans, environmental considerations and objectives have always been an important part of the planning process, so SEA should simply provide a more systematic and transparent method for considering issues that would normally be considered in the plan-making process.
- 3.3. For the Cairngorms Local Plan, the SEA should also support the delivery of the aims of the National Park.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

- 3.4. The Local Plan for the Cairngorms National Park will replace the four existing Local Plans within the National park area that were prepared by the constituent local authorities (Figure 3.1). The Local Plan will form one part of the Development Plan for the National Park, with the local authorities’ Structure Plans (Figure 3.1) providing the other part of the Development Plan. In spite of the clear legal relationship to the Structure Plans, the Local Plan will also take its strategic context from the National Park Plan, and any departures or changes in strategic policy will be justified through the National Park Plan.

Figure 3.1. current development plan coverage in the CNP		
Local Authority	Local Plan	Structure Plan
Aberdeenshire	Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2002	North East Scotland Together – Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001-2016
Angus	Angus Local Plan 2000	Dundee & Angus Structure Plan 2001-2016
Highland	Badenoch & Strathspey Local Plan 1997	Highland Structure Plan 2001
Moray	Moray Local Plan 2000	Moray Structure Plan 2000

Objectives of the Local Plan

- 3.5. The Local Plan is intended to help deliver the aims of the National Park through the planning system. It's development strategy reflects those aims in 5 key objectives:
- **To promote and encourage sustainable development across the Cairngorms National Park;**
 - **Maintaining healthy vibrant communities within an outstanding natural and built environment.**
 - **To guide the majority of development towards existing settlements, where there are adequate services and infrastructure;**
 - **To support the protection and enhancement of the natural & cultural heritage of the Park area;**
 - **To support the diversification of the local economy.**

The Structure of the Local Plan

- 3.6. The Local Plan provides a list of policies and proposals to guide development in the Cairngorms National Park area within a strategy for the area's future development and management. In the case of the Cairngorms Local Plan, the strategy that guides it is taken from the aims of the National Park, and the way they are interpreted by the National Park Plan.
- 3.7. The contents of the consultative draft Local Plan are shown in figure 3.1. on the following page.

Links to other Plans and Programmes

- 3.8. There are a wide range of plans and programmes that are relevant to the Local Plan and help to influence the content and direction of the Local Plan's policies and proposals. The range of plans and programmes are summarised in the following paragraphs of the Environmental Report. The plans and programmes are listed in greater detail in Appendix 1 of the Environmental Report. The Appendix also identifies the main environmental objectives of these plans that are relevant to the Local Plan as well as how the Local Plan is going to contribute to those objectives.

The Park Plan

- 3.9. The National Park Plan provides the strategic context for the Local Plan. It is the strategic management plan for the Park that provides the context for all other plans and policies affecting the aims of the National Park. The Park Authority has a duty to prepare the Park Plan, to ensure the aims of the Park are collectively delivered in a co-ordinated way in the National Park. The National Park Plan is subject to a separate SEA.
- 3.10. The Plan therefore aims to draw together a common agenda for the National Park through a series of objectives and actions to which the public bodies and partners in the Park subscribe. The plan will be objective-led and will provide a strategic framework within which to work towards the four aims of the Park.

Figure 3.1 consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan Contents

FOREWORD

1. INTRODUCTION

2. GENERAL POLICIES

3. TOPIC POLICIES

- Protected Nature Conservation Sites & Biodiversity
- Soil Conservation
- Landscape
- Archaeology and Built Heritage
- Other Local Cultural Heritage Features Affected by Development
- Water
- Mineral resources
- Peat
- Contaminated Land
- Waste Management
- Energy
- Transport
- Upland Vehicle Tracks
- Radio Telecommunications
- Agriculture & Crofting
- Recreation & Access
- Tourism
- Town Centres and Retailing/Commercial Business
- Business & Economic Development
- Housing
- Conversions, Extensions & Alterations of Existing Buildings
- Gypsy/Traveller Sites.

4. SETTLEMENT STATEMENTS

- Aviemore
- Boat of Garten
- Carrbridge
- Cromdale & Balmenach
- Dalwhinnie
- Dulnain Bridge & Skye of Curr
- Grantown-on-Spey & Speybridge
- Kincraig & Insh
- Kingussie
- Laggan Bridge, Gergask & Balgowan
- Nethy Bridge
- Newtonmore
- Rothiemurchus and Glenmore
- Glenlivet
- Tomintoul
- Mid-Deeside & Cromar
- Donside
- Braemar & Inverey
- Ballater
- Angus Glens

APPENDIX 1 NATIONAL PARK PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

APPENDIX 2 DESIGNATION MAPS

APPENDIX 3 SCHEDULES OF PROTECTED SITES, SPECIES, AREAS

APPENDIX 4 GLOSSARY

National Planning Policy

- 3.11. The Scottish Executive's SPPs (Scottish Planning Policy) and NPPGs (National Planning Policy Guidance) set out national planning policy and guidance on how it is interpreted in Local Plans. The National Planning Framework sets out the Scotland-wide planning context.

National and International Legislation

- 3.12. The national planning policy guidance may also set out how the planning system should interpret national and international law. For example, the EU

Air Quality, Water Framework, Birds and Habitats Directives all have an impact on the Local Plan. Relevant national legislation includes the Wildlife and Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003.

Other Statutory Plans

- 3.13. In addition to the National park Plan and Local Plan, the National Park Authority also has a statutory obligation to prepare:
- 3.14. The Core Paths Plan- as the Access Authority under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Park Authority must prepare the plan through the Local Outdoor Access Forum, which will seek to deliver some of the strategic objectives of the Park Plan.

Other Plans and Policies

- 3.15. The Local Plan is also influenced by a range of other plans and strategies such as:
 - Forestry and Woodland Strategy
 - Sustainable Tourism Strategy
 - Housing Strategy
 - River Catchment management plans;
 - Waste management plans;
 - the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan and UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's Approach to SEA

- 3.16. The Cairngorms National Park Authority chose to carry out SEA of both the National Park Plan and Local Plan internally rather than employ consultants to carry out the work as a contract. It was felt that by doing the SEA 'in-house', it could be more easily integrated with the plan-making process and would lead to better plans. It was also felt that the National Park Authority contained much of the necessary expertise and knowledge of the National Park and could use the SEA process to develop skills that would be employed in SEA of other plans and programmes produced by the CNPA.
- 3.17. The publication of consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan is an early stage in the process of preparing a Local Plan for the Cairngorms National Park. The consultative draft is intended to explore policies and proposals and allow people to comment on them. This Environmental Report of the SEA of the Local Plan provides a similar opportunity. It explains how environmental considerations have been considered and dealt with by the Local Plan, but also represents a stage in the process of SEA.
- 3.18. Following the consultation period for the consultative draft Local Plan and Environmental Report, the CNPA will produce a revised draft Local Plan that will be placed on deposit in the Autumn of 2006. That version of the Local Plan will take on board comments on the consultative draft Local Plan and SEA, and will use information that was not available during the production of the consultative draft Local Plan. It will be accompanied by a revised Environmental Report that reflects both changes in the Local Plan and

changes that have been made as a result of comments on this Environmental Report.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The Park Authority's approach to carrying out the SEA is based on the ODPM and Scottish Executive guidance and the desire to integrate the SEA process closely with the development of the Plan itself. The aims and objectives of the Park include explicit reference to a wide range of environmental topics. The SEA process is therefore central to the process of developing the Local Plan.
- 4.2. This Environmental Report represents an early point in the development of the Local Plan. As the Local Plan develops over the next few months, the SEA will also develop, and the next Environmental Report that accompanies the next draft of the Local Plan will be able to provide a clearer picture of what the likely environmental effects of the plan will be.

The SEA Process

- 4.3. The SEA process mirrors a number of stages of Local Plan preparation and can be broken into a number of different, but often overlapping tasks:
 1. Screening whether plan requires assessment
 2. Collating and forecasting baseline information
 3. Scoping the likely significant environmental effects
 4. Developing environmental objectives and criteria
 5. Assessing the Plan and alternatives, including aims, policies & proposals
 6. Publishing the Environmental Report with the consultation draft Local Plan
 7. Modifying Local Plan and revising Environmental Report
 8. Depositing Environmental Report with finalised Local Plan
 9. Consideration of SEA results and finalise monitoring proposals prior to Local Plan adoption.
 10. Statement of: how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account; and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in light of other reasonable options considered.
 11. Monitoring significant environmental effects of plan and consider need for review

SEA Screening

- 4.4. An initial screening consultation was issued to the consultation authorities on 21 March 2005. All consultees agreed with the National Park's view, that the Local Plan could have significant environmental effects. The National Park Authority determined that the Local Plan should be subject to SEA on the 18th July 2005.

Environmental Baseline

- 4.5. The collation of information to form the environmental baseline for the SEA was aided by the production of The State of the Park Report as part of the process of preparing the National Park Plan. This report draws together existing information on the Park's resources as a baseline to inform development and assessment of the National Park Plan and future plans and policies in the Cairngorms National Park area. The report covers:
 - natural resources
 - cultural resources
 - visitor resources

- economic and social resources
- 4.6. In each section the report identifies as far as possible:
- current extent of the resource
 - relative importance of the resource
 - current state of the resource
 - key trends affecting the resource
 - limitations on existing data and future research needs
- 4.7. The report provided much of the environmental baseline data against which the potential effects of the Local Plan can be assessed, and against which implementation of the Local Plan can be monitored.
- 4.8. The National Park Authority commissioned The Cairngorms Landscape Capacity for Housing study during the preparation of the consultative draft Local Plan. The capacity study characterised settlements around the National Park and identified areas that had capacity to absorb new housing without significant changes in landscape and settlement character as well as areas where housing would be likely to lead to significant changes.
- 4.9. The National Park Authority also conducted walkover surveys of many Local Plan proposals sites in order to verify the ground conditions and species/habitats present and surrounding the sites. These walkover surveys were conducted by an ecologist or planner during spring and summer 2005. Further survey of sites is expected to be required during 2006 as the next draft of the Local Plan is prepared.

SEA Scoping

- 4.10. Following the determination on SEA, the National Park Authority sent an SEA Scoping Report to the consultation Authorities on the 22nd July 2005 that set out what it considered the potential effects of the Local Plan could be, and how they would be assessed. The scoping report also set out the SEA objectives that would be used to assess the Local Plan Policies and proposals and the assessment methodology. The Consultation Authorities provided the National Park Authority with their responses on the 26th August 2005.

Developing environmental objectives and criteria

- 4.11. The SEA scoping report set out an environmental baseline and SEA objectives and criteria for the Local Plan SEA. These were modified following receipt of the consultation authorities' comments on the SEA Scoping Report and are described in section 6 of this Environmental Report. The Objectives were further refined during the assessment.

Assessing the Local Plan

- 4.12. The strategic context for the Local Plan will be provided by the National Park Plan. The National Park Plan is also being subject to SEA and will be more fully reflected in the next draft of the Local Plan.
- 4.13. The main task of the assessment of the Local Plan is the evaluation of each policy and proposal against the SEA objectives in order to predict the environmental effects. The nature and scale of those effects are recorded in detail in assessment sheets similar to that shown in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 SEA Assessment Sheet		
Policy/Proposal	The policy/proposal reference	
Purpose of policy/proposals:	what the policies/proposals are supposed to achieve and how.	
Identify policy/proposal options including consideration of alternatives where relevant:	detail of what policy options or spatial options were considered in developing the policy/proposals, what alternatives (if any were possible) were considered and decisions taken so far.	
Prediction of individual policy /settlement proposal direct and indirect effects: detailed assessment of individual policies and settlement policies against each SEA objective and justification/ reasoning behind predictions. This stage will draw direct, indirect, cumulative & synergistic effects.		
Draft SEA Objectives	Summary score	Reasoning for score
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
Summary of policy/proposal effects:	a critique of the policy/proposals based on the detailed assessment.	
Options for mitigation or modification:	if the policy/proposal is likely to have significant negative environmental impacts, possible amendments to avoid or mitigate the impacts will be outlined here.	

4.14. A matrix of 'scores' that help to describe the effects is also created to summarise the effects. It can be used to help identify trends in the effects of policies or proposals, and also to help identify cumulative effects. An example of the assessment matrix is shown in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Example of SEA Assessment Matrix

Local Plan Policies & Proposals	Cairngorms National Park draft SEA Objectives			
	1	2	3	SEA Objectives, 4, 5 etc
Policy 1				
Policy 2				
Policy 3				
Policy 4				
Policy 5				
etc				
Settlement A Proposals				
Settlement B Proposals				
Settlement C Proposals				
etc				

- 4.15. In order to make the scoring simple to understand and to analyse, a system of 5 categories of effect or impact level was chosen for the assessment. These run from strongly positive effects through to strongly negative effects and are shown in figure 4.3 with symbol codes.

Figure 4.3 Environmental Effect Scoring

Symbol	Description of Effect
++	<i>strongly positive effect</i>
+	<i>positive effect</i>
= or 0	<i>neutral or no effect</i>
-	<i>negative effect</i>
--	<i>strongly negative effect</i>
?	<i>Uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted</i>
\	<i>Not applicable</i>

- 4.16. All policies and proposal in the Local Plan were assessed against the SEA objectives with the exception of proposal sites that already have planning permission. Those proposal sites were recorded in the SEA. Proposals that already have outline planning permission were assessed in detail through the SEA, for whilst the principle of development may have been accepted on that site, the reserved matters and detailed permission may allow the planning authority to minimise or insist in mitigation for any negative environmental effects of the development.

- 4.17. Given the often small-scale extent of proposals within the Local Plan, it was decided to assess proposals in groups by settlement rather than each individual site, many of which are extremely small sites.
- 4.18. All assessment decisions were made by CNPA planners with additional advice from the CNPA's Head of Natural Heritage.

The Environmental Report

- 4.19. This Environmental Report provides a summary of the SEA process with the Consultative Draft Local Plan, and provides the information required of an Environmental Report as set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

Modifying the Local Plan and revising the Environmental Report

- 4.20. Both the consultative draft Local Plan and the Environmental Report are subject to consultation. The Local Plan is expected to change as information on population and housing projections becomes available. The SEA and Local Plan may also change as a result of comments on the Environmental Report or Local Plan. An SEA consultation report will be prepared by the National Park Authority to collate comments on the SEA. A Local Plan consultation report will also collate comments on the consultative draft Local Plan and will be published by the National Park Authority.
- 4.21. The next draft of the Local Plan will be accompanied by a revised Environmental Report that takes into account comments on this Report and any changes to the Local Plan.

Depositing Environmental Report with finalised Local Plan

- 4.22. The finalised Local Plan and revised Environmental Report will be available for consultation during 2006.

Consideration of SEA results and finalise monitoring proposals prior to Local Plan adoption.

- 4.23. Before the Local Plan is adopted by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Local Authorities, the responses of the Public and consultation authorities on the Environmental Report will be considered. Proposals for monitoring the significant environmental effects will be finalised.

Statement of compliance and environmental considerations

- 4.24. A formal stage of the SEA process that is required by the Directive is a statement of how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account; and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in light of other reasonable options considered. This statement is prepared at the time of adoption of the Local Plan.

Monitoring significant environmental effects of plan and consider need for review

- 4.25. This stage of the SEA process will be carried out as part of the ongoing review of the Local Plan. It is anticipated that monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the Plan will be supplemented by more strategic monitoring of the state of the Park against health indicators (many linked to the state of the environment) that are identified through the National Park Plan process.

Consultation in the SEA Process

- 4.26. This Environmental Report is being consulted on with the consultative draft Local Plan. It is hoped that the consultation authorities and public will provide comments on the predicted significant environmental effects of the Local Plan as well as on the Local Plan itself.
- 4.27. The SEA process has involved two formal stages of consultation so far where the consultation authorities have been asked firstly for screening opinions and secondly for scoping opinions. The Local Plan process was started with a consultation across the National Park on what issues the public considered should be dealt with by the Local Plan.

Difficulties encountered in the SEA Process

- 4.28. The SEA process is intended to improve the plan-making process and to provide the public as well as the plan-makers with clear information about likely environmental effects of the plan. At this early stage of the plan-making process, a number of factors have created problems or uncertainties that have affected both the consultative draft Local Plan and the SEA.

Information gathering and availability

- 4.29. Both the Local Plan and SEA require information that is as accurate and up to date as possible.
- 4.30. From the Local Plan's perspective, information about the likely population and housing requirements (cumulatively the most significant type of development in the Park) for the Park area have not been available for the production of the consultative draft plan. This means that proposals for housing land may change, and prevents clear strategic choices about sites from being made.
- 4.31. In addition, although the Local Plan must provide an effective land supply for development, there are few areas within the National Park where land can be considered effective as the public sewage system has little or no spare capacity, and Scottish Water has been unable to provide any clear plans for increasing capacity. Similarly, water supplies for the Badenoch and Strathspey section of the National Park rely heavily on the Loch Einich catchment. It is known that the supply from this source is has little extra capacity, and that increasing extraction from the source may have adverse environmental effects. It is also known that there is likely to be leakage of water from the existing mains system, but the volume of water loss is not known.

Difficulties encountered in the assessment

- 4.32. The assessment of proposal sites has also encountered problems where a site is proposed for development but without detailed proposals for how it should be laid out, constructed, operated etc. This issue will be common to many SEAs as the assessment of proposal sites moves closer to project level Environmental Impact Assessment, which that is not appropriate for a Local Plan.

5. PREDICTED ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES

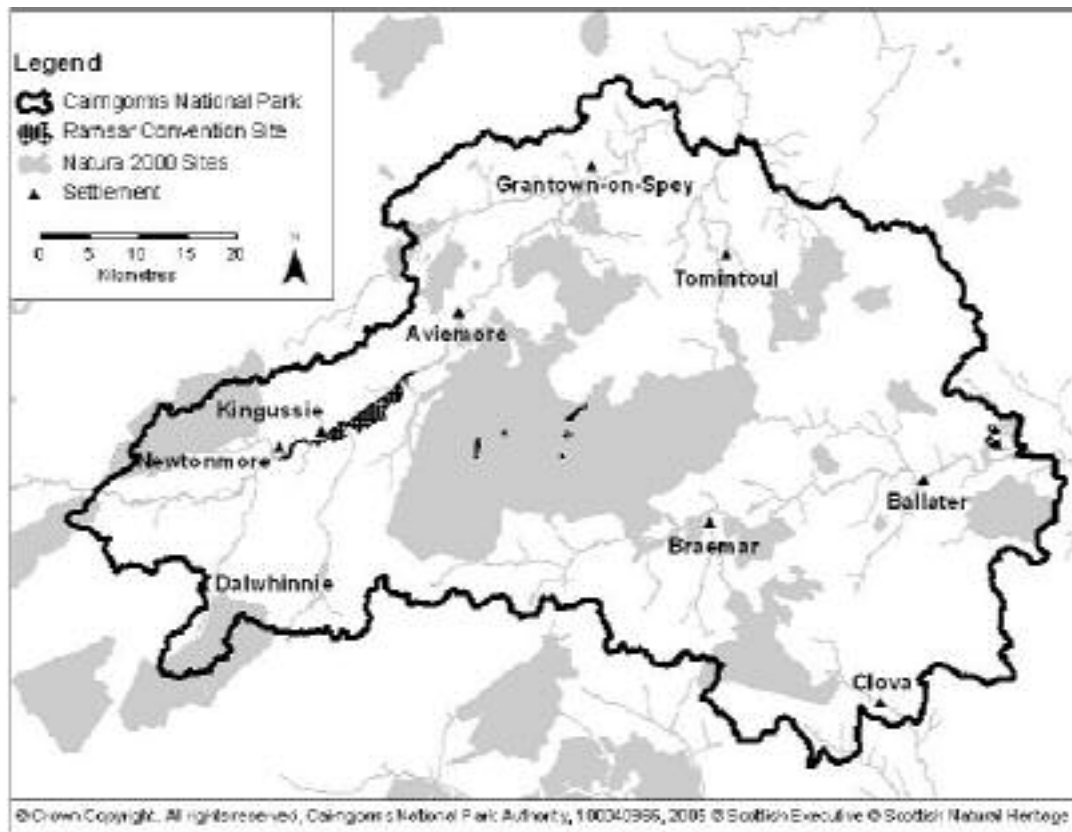
Environmental Baseline of the Cairngorms National Park

- 5.1. The predicted environmental baseline for the Local Plan is likely to be very similar to the current environmental baseline in the Cairngorms National Park. This section of the Environmental Report describes the current environmental baseline and trends that are considered relevant to the CNP and Local Plan.
- 5.2. Figure 5.1 summarises the key environmental baseline facts. Maps 5.1 to 5.8 provide an overview of the distribution of a range of environmental features in the National Park. Detailed data is available in the State of the Park Report (CNPA).

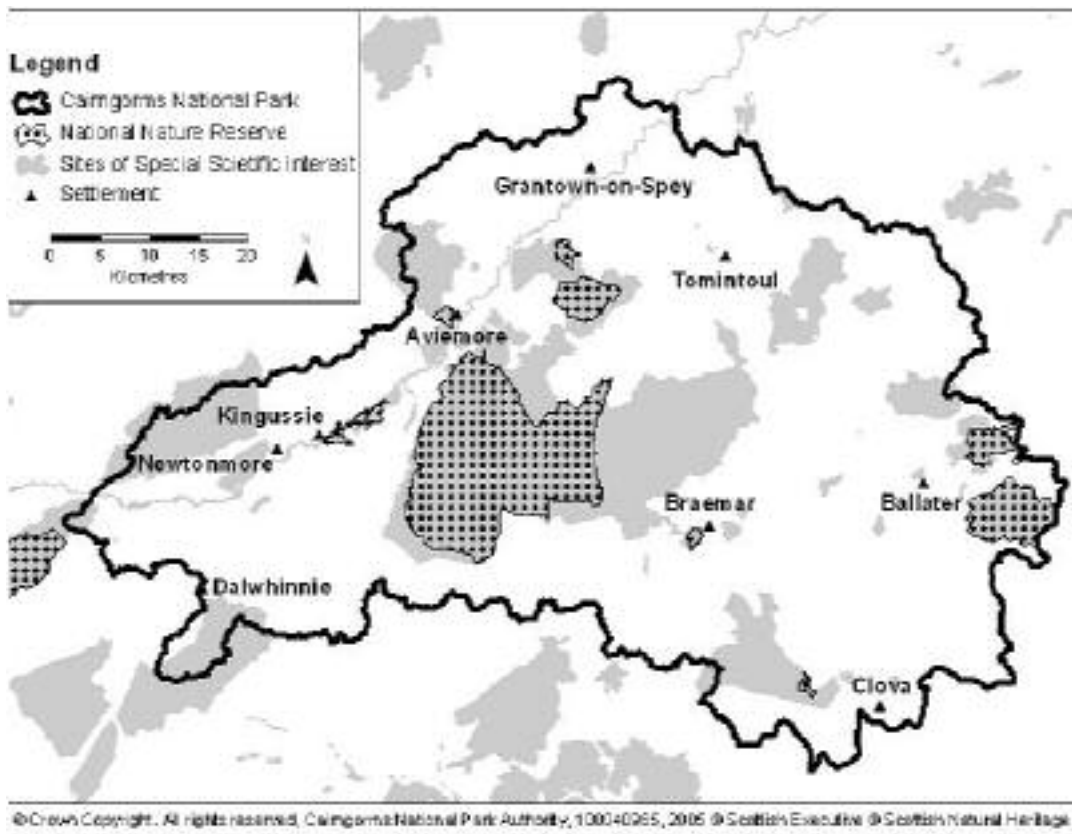
Figure 5.1: KEY BASELINE FACTS	
Resource	Key Facts
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of UK's threatened species present • 12.5% of Scotland's semi-natural woodland cover • Habitat types present include: Montane; Dwarf shrub heath; Conifer woodland; Broadleaved and mixed woodland; Acid grassland; Fen, marsh and swamp; Standing water; Rivers and streams. • UK BAP Species include: Upland oak and birch woodland; Bog woodland (largest extent in Scotland); Juniper; Capercaillie; Black Grouse; Scottish Crossbill. • Habitats listed under Annex 1 of EU Habitats Directive include: dry heaths; alpine & boreal heaths; sub-arctic willow scrub; siliceous alpine & boreal grasslands, Nardus grasslands; calcareous flushes • Close proximity of lowground, woodland, water, upland and montane habitats
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% of Park area designated for natural heritage • 19 SAC sites • 12 SPA sites • 46 SSSIs (some of which are of geological importance) • 3 Ramsar Sites • 6 National Nature Reserves
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 SSSIs with soils of international importance • 12 SSSIs with soils of national importance • High proportion of undisturbed soils (only 2% cultivated) • Podzols form 50% of soil cover including internationally significant alpine podzols on the plateau • Peat forms 13% of soil cover
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Census: 16,024 people • Population density 0.04 people/Ha (lower than Scottish average) • 25.8% of population over 60 (higher than Scottish average) • Average health index in top 25% of Scotland (based on deprivation indices)
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 designated Historic Gardens & Designed Landscapes • 60 Scheduled Ancient Monuments • 424 listed buildings • 3 Conservation Areas • 4778 records in NMRS • large number of historic landscapes • Potential for survival of many unknown remains in upland areas
Earth Heritage Landforms &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 National Scenic Areas • 30 GCR sites (of which some are part or all SSSI)

Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granite massif and plateau • Internationally important landform record • Coherent identity of landscape across park from landform and landcover. • Land-use cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 42% dwarf shrub heath ○ 28% montane habitats ○ 11% coniferous woodland ○ 2% broadleaved/mixed woodland ○ 3% improved grassland ○ 0.4% built areas
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,362km of running water habitat • 81% of streams classified as excellent (A1) or good (A2) (SEPA 2003) • 20 sq km standing waters • Catchments of 6 major rivers
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low atmospheric pollution
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual precipitation over 2250mm on summits and under 900mm in straths • Average annual snow cover 200 days on summits and 50 days on low-ground • Prevailing winds from south-west
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public right of responsible access • 49 Munros including 5 summits over 4000 feet • 3 ski centres • National Cycle Network Route 7 • 1 Long Distance Route (Speyside Way) • 179 Rights of Way • around 40 promoted path networks
Energy & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant energy generation within the Park
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Conservation Areas • distinctive local vernacular architecture

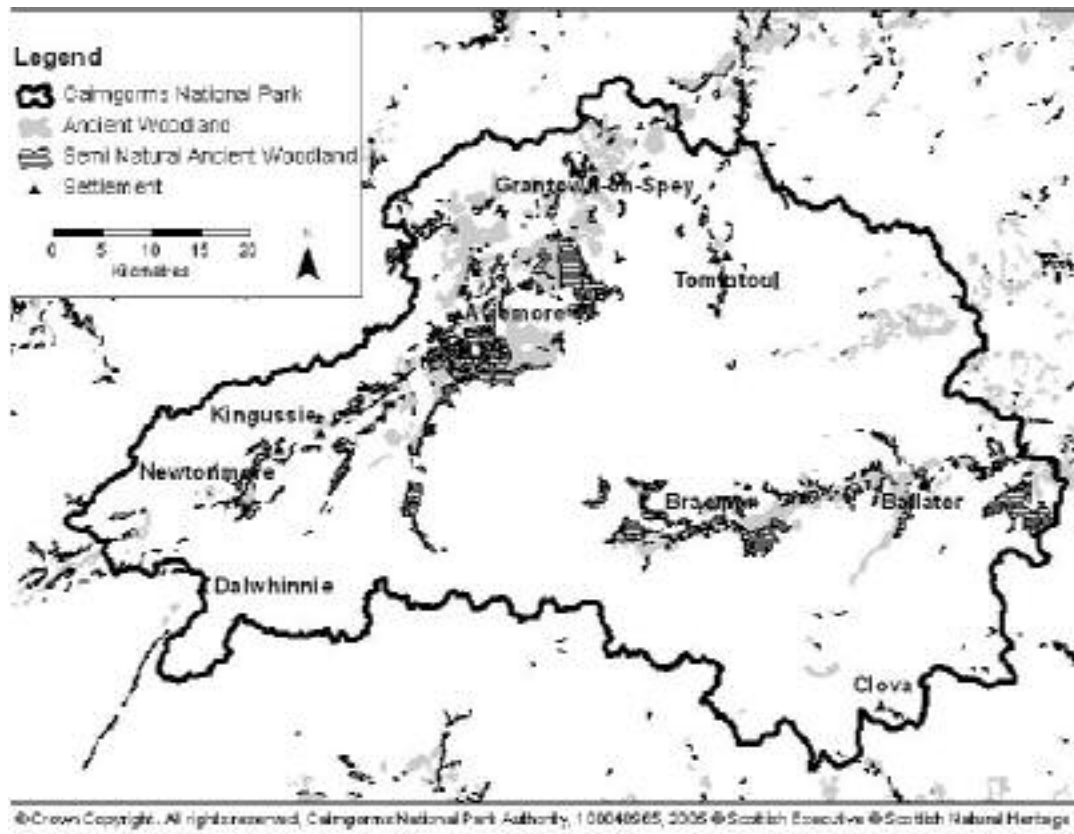
Map 5.1 International Nature Conservation designations



Map 5.2 National Nature Conservation Designations



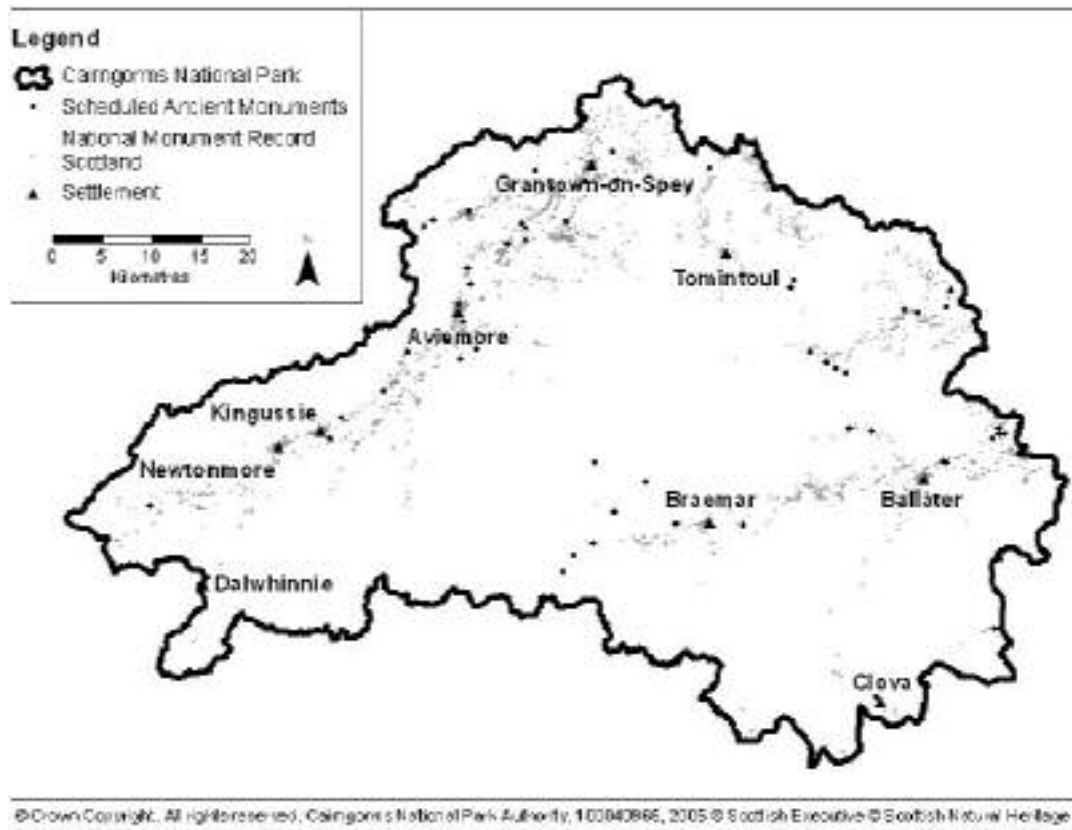
Map 5.3 Ancient woodland sites



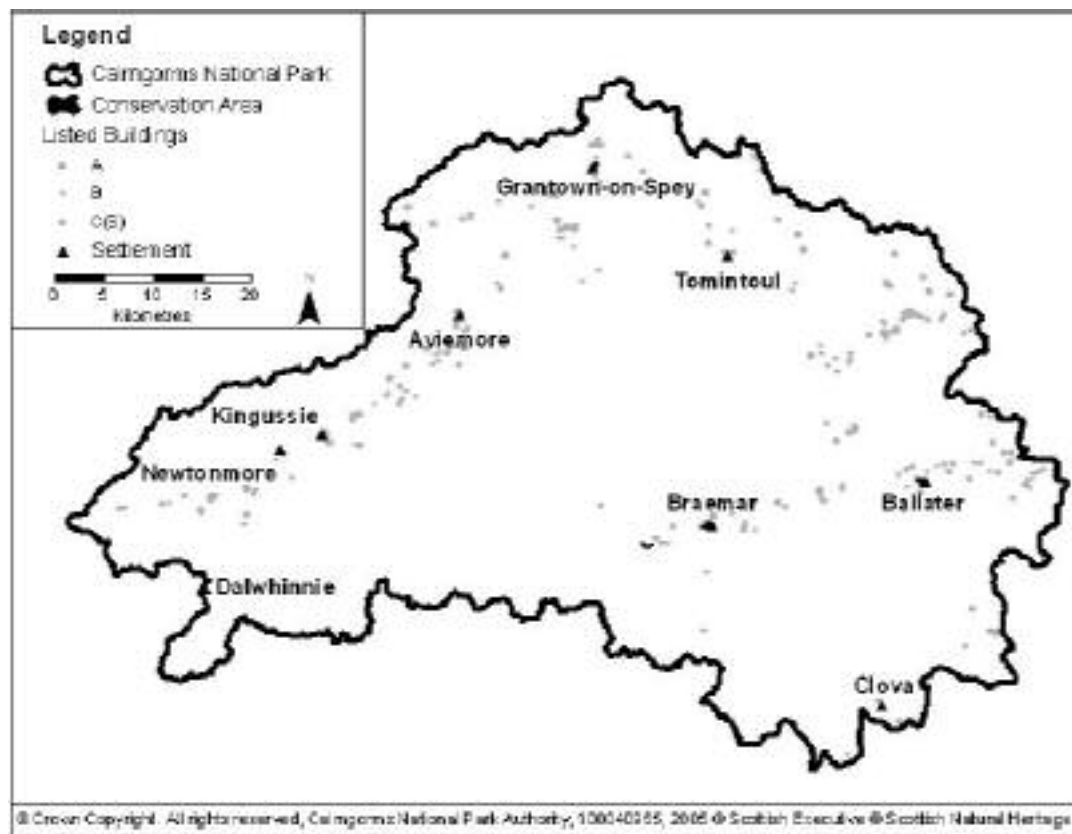
Map 5.4 National Scenic Areas



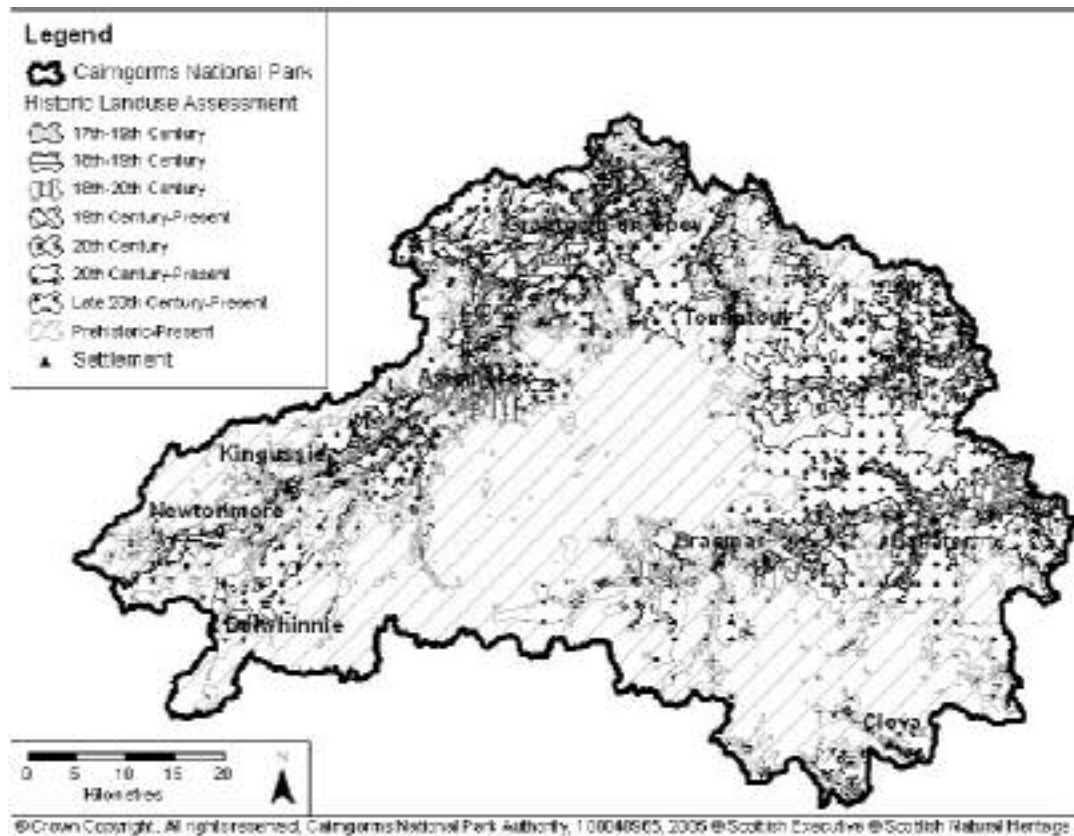
Map 5.5 Scheduled Monuments and other monument records



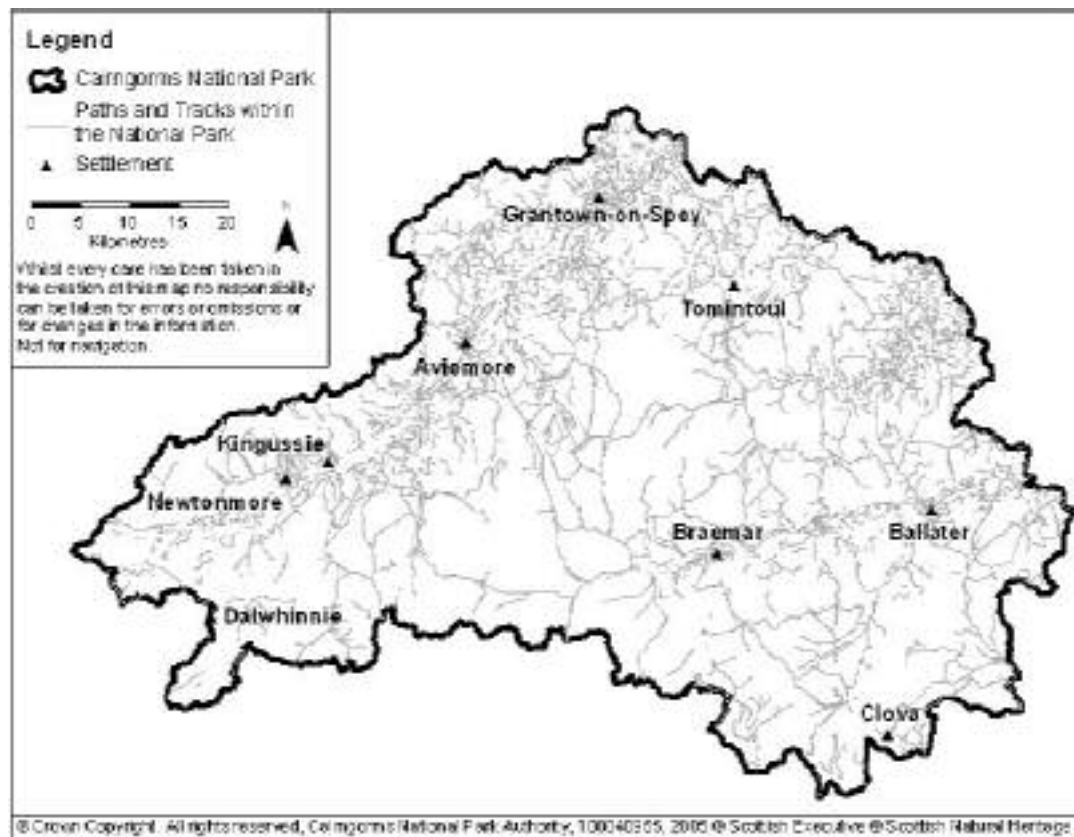
Map 5.6 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas



Map 5.7 Historic Landuse Assessment - Period



Map 5.8 Informal Recreation - Paths and Tracks



Environmental Issues in the Cairngorms National Park

5.3. The State of the Park Report and key issues research provide information on the current trends and key issues in each environmental resource category in the Cairngorms. Figure 6.1 summarises the key trends and issues for each.

Figure 5.2: KEY TRENDS & ISSUES IN THE CAIRNGORMS		
Resource	Key Trends	Key Issues
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some continued habitat loss, fragmentation & deterioration • Vegetation limited by grazing pressure • Continued introductions of non-native species • Increase in native woodland cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem integrity and connectivity • Impact of non-native species • Impact of climate change • Impact of recreation • Impact of development • Incomplete data
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing account of external impacts to sites (Nature Conservation Act 2004) • Recent expansion of Natura 2000 designations • Review of NNR designations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management practices • Long-term security of management objectives • Integration with wider land-use
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for community dynamics • Implications for development patterns • Implications for human resources
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-use change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of new development • Extension of forest cover • Agricultural changes from CAP reform • Impact of visitors
Landforms & Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in woodland cover • decline in heather moorland cover • increase in research on landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of development • Recreation pressure • Connectivity of land cover • Impacts of tracks and footpaths • Renewable energy developments • Perceptions of 'wildness'
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soil erosion on higher slopes and plateaux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impacts of recreation • lack of information on soil use and development
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acidification (atmospheric) • Decline in native fish stocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diffuse pollution from agricultural ground • river modification • catchment processes & flood management • availability for consumption • Impact of recreation
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change- increasing temperature and precipitation expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric pollution

Access & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing range of outdoor recreation activities New public right of responsible access More managed path networks Increased level of upland path provision and repair Diversification of ski centres into summer activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development increasing or reducing access opportunities impact of access on habitats and species landscape impact of access infrastructure accessibility of environment for all
Energy & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing demand for renewable (particularly windfarm) sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential impact of transmission pylons and windfarm developments use of non-renewable energy sources
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> abandonment or conversion of farm steadings significant demand for new housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decay of listed buildings impact of development on settlement character

Limitations of Data

5.4. The Cairngorms National Park area is one of the most closely studied geographical areas in the UK and so has a wealth of information that can be used to provide a baseline. However, a number of factors limit the value or usability of data:

- **Information is fragmented across the National Park area, with some sites or areas having been more closely studied than others.** Of particular relevance to the Local Plan is that the wealth of information on the uplands and mountains of the Cairngorms is not reflected in as comprehensive a manner for the straths and lowlands.
- **The formal geography of the National Park is a new boundary, to which data has not been collected in the past.** The Park boundary cuts across four different Local Authority areas, and different sections of other agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage which means that data has often been collected for different areas using different standards and methodologies in the past.
- **Data is held in different forms.** Some data is well suited to straightforward assessment and query. For example, data that can be accessed or queried through GIS can be used to assess proposals and sites more easily than information held in reports or books.

Evolution of the Environment without the Local Plan

5.5. The Directive requires the likely evolution of the environment without the Plan to be considered. The trends identified above are expected to continue in the absence of new policy or actions to address them. In particular, many of the trends that are related to the development of land are considered likely to continue in the absence of up to date planning policy.

5.6. The underlying purpose of the National Park designation is to integrate the management of different sectors and areas within the Park in order to take a co-ordinated approach to addressing these issues and delivering the Park aims.

- 5.7. The Local Plan is main tool for influencing development planning in the Park. As the current local plans for the Park are of different ages, with differing policy and interpretations of policy, often not clearly reflecting the aims of the National Park, it is unlikely that there would be consistency in policy or decision-making across the Park. Additionally, in some areas

6. SEA OBJECTIVES, INDICATORS & TARGETS

SEA Objectives

- 6.1. The SEA objectives are informed by the need to cover the range of issues outlined in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations (Annex 1 (f) of the Directive: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the interrelationship between those issues.
- 6.2. The SEA objectives are also informed by the key environmental resources, trends and issues that are relevant to the Cairngorms National Park, set out in this Scoping Report.

Figure 6.1

Cairngorms National Park draft SEA Objectives	Relevant SEA environmental topics
1. To conserve & enhance the diversity of species	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
3. To maintain & enhance the integrity of ecosystems	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	water, flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material asset
5. To maintain catchment processes & hydrological systems.	water, flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material asset
6. To maintain & enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	landscape, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soils, material assets, cultural heritage, human health
7. To ensure responsible access for all	human health, population
8. To maintain and improve air quality	air, climatic factors, water, human health, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soil
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	flora, fauna, biodiversity, diversity, landscape, water, air soil, material assets, human health
10. To conserve & where appropriate enhance the historic environment	cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage, material assets, landscape
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	Population, human health
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	air, climatic factors, material assets
13. To reduce waste and pollution	air, water, soil, flora, fauna, biodiversity, human health
14. To maintain & enhance the quality of the built environment	landscape, material assets, cultural heritage, human health, population, climatic factors

- 6.3. The 14 draft SEA objectives are a broad set of objectives that can be applied to the policies and proposals within the Local Plan. To assess then plan's potential effect on these objectives, a set of more detailed and targeted criteria reflecting the key issues are required for each one.
- 6.4. These criteria will therefore be used to determine the potential effects in relation to the SEA objectives in the context of the environmental resources and issues relevant to the Cairngorms. The criteria are shown in Table 7.2.

Figure 6.2	
Draft SEA Objectives	Local Plan SEA Criteria
1. To conserve & enhance the diversity of species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority species* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority species' habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority species and their habitats <p>* priority species are species that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ qualifying criteria of SPAs or SCAs; ▪ notified features on SSSIs; ▪ listed in annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; ▪ listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; ▪ species listed in schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended; or ▪ listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority habitats* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority habitats • Ensure designated sites are in favourable condition • Consider impacts of new species <p>* priority species are habitats that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ qualifying criteria of SPAs or SCAs; ▪ notified features on SSSIs; ▪ listed in annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; ▪ listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; ▪ of naturally occurring wild birds, particularly those in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive and migratory species; ▪ listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP; or ▪ native woodlands, including ancient woodland sites in the Ancient Woodland Inventory
3. To maintain & enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent fragmentation of habitats • Ensure development does not create new barriers to native species movement. • Promote habitat networks in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in the National Park Plan
4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain & improve water quality • Identify and avoid significant adverse downstream impacts • Ensure new development have appropriate SUDS

Figure 6.2

Draft SEA Objectives	Local Plan SEA Criteria
5. To maintain catchment processes & hydrological systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage flood risks • Minimise pollution risks • Identify sphere of influence and downstream impacts • Avoid interference with natural fluvial processes
6. To maintain & enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance existing landscape character • Identify impacts on landscape character and experience • Avoid significant adverse impacts on landscape character • Ensure development is sited and designed to make a positive contribution to landscape character • Allocate sites for development in areas with the greatest capacity to absorb it • Conserve geodiversity (geological and geomorphological features)
7. To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss/fragmentation of access networks and open greenspace • Create appropriate new access opportunities • Promote safe access provision and use
8. To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise need for travel by private car • Minimise emissions from domestic and commercial premises
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce consumption of fossil fuels • Encourage use of local timber products in development • Conserve mineral resources • Conserve soil resources • Minimise loss of productive agricultural land • Optimise recycling and reusing • Sustainable use of water
10. To conserve & where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect archaeological sites of interest • Protect designed landscapes
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for housing needs of local communities • Ensure access to services for communities
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise energy efficiency of new development through sustainable materials and construction • Minimise need for use of private cars • Increase sustainable energy production
13. To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase reuse and recycling of materials • Reduce production of waste • Adopt sustainable waste management practices
14. To maintain & enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality in new building design • Maintain the character of settlements • Prevent loss of locally distinctive architecture

SEA Indicators and Targets

6.5. The SEA criteria were developed into indicators and targets that can be used to monitor the environmental performance of the Local Plan against SEA objectives. These are not yet complete, and are expected to be further developed during the preparation of the next draft of the Local Plan, the preparation of the CNPA Sustainable Design Guide, and through consultation on this Environmental Report that accompanies the consultative draft Local Plan.

6.6. The draft SEA indicators and targets are shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3			
Draft SEA Objectives		Indicators	Targets
1	To conserve & enhance the diversity of species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of priority species or associated habitats to development creation of habitats for priority species through development management of habitats for priority species through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No loss of priority species to development No loss of priority species' habitats to development. Increase areas of habitat managed for priority species.
2	To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of priority habitats to development creation of priority habitats through development management of priority habitats through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No loss of priority habitats to development Increase creation of priority habitats through development Increase management for priority habitats through development
3	To maintain & enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of priority habitats Maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure development does not lead fragmentation of priority habitats Increase maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create habitat networks in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in the National Park Plan
4	To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality Ecological status of water bodies Developments consented with appropriate SUDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All developments consented with SUDS
5	To maintain catchment processes & hydrological systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development permitted on the functional floodplain or other wetland Developments consented with appropriate SUDS Management of wetland areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No development permitted on functional floodplain or wetland areas All developments consented with SUDS No loss of areas managed as wetlands
6	To maintain & enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to landscape character from development Developments that complement landscape character Sites for development having greatest capacity to absorb it Loss/ disturbance to geological/geomorphological features. Sense of wildness Reflection of historic landuse elements in development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers/styles/types of development that lead to changes in landscape character All developments that are consented and are considered to make a positive contribution to landscape character. All development sites chosen to reflect capacity Increase or decrease in development in remote areas. All developments where historic landscape elements are preserved.
7	To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase or decrease in provision of access routes through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance of loss/ gain of access routes or open greenspace Type of access or open greenspace loss or gain.
8	To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide
9	To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments heated without fossil fuels Developments using local timber products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All development heated without fossil fuels. All developments using local timber products

Figure 6.3**Draft SEA Objectives**

Draft SEA Objectives		Indicators	Targets
10	To conserve & where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments that affect the site or setting of an archaeological site of interest • Developments that affect the site or setting of a designed landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No developments having significant adverse effects on site of setting of archaeological site of importance to the National Park. • No developments having significant adverse effects on site of setting of designed landscape of importance to the National Park.
11	To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective housing land for local housing need • provision of effective housing land close to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local housing need demand met by supply of land and consents for development over plan period • All housing land provided within easy reach of service or with additional services.
12	To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide
13	To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide
14	To maintain & enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide • Changes in settlement character through development • Loss of locally distinctive architecture to development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets to be identified through CNPA Sustainable Design Guide • Maintenance & enhancement of settlement character • Ensure retention of locally distinctive architecture in development

7. LOCAL PLAN STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES

- 7.1. The consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan is intended to replace four Local Authority Local Plans of varying ages for the National Park area. As well as providing a locational and policy framework for land that can be used for development, it is intended to reflect the importance of the National Park's special qualities, including its natural and cultural heritage, and to reflect the strategic context provided by a National Park Plan and the aims of the National Park.
- 7.2. The most significant proposals in terms of land area and potential environmental effects within the consultative draft Local Plan are those for housing land. However, at this stage in the Local Plan process, accurate projections for population and housing requirements are not available, meaning that clear strategic choices about how many houses are required or where they should be located are not currently possible.
- 7.3. A number of strategic choices will be made by the National Park Authority before the next draft of the Local Plan is published, and with up to date population and household projection figures on which to base those decisions. They can be summarised under the following points:
 - The number of households that the National Park should provide for over the Local Plan Period and longer term;
 - The potential location of any new housing sites required;
 - The potential removal of housing sites currently proposed that are not considered necessary.

Strategic Policy Alternatives

- 7.4. It is important to recognise that few significant strategic alternatives were considered in the development of the consultative draft Local Plan. Clearly, the policy framework is intended to protect the special qualities of the National Park while encouraging appropriate development.
- 7.5. The policy alternative that were considered as alternatives are listed through figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1 Strategic Policy Alternatives				
Policy ref	Summary of approach proposed	Alternatives considered	Potential environmental effects of alternatives	Reasons for not choosing alternatives
Housing Policies 37 - 39	Policies focus housing to existing settlements and restricts house building to residents and workers in the National Park, particularly in countryside areas.	To make no distinction between housing for residents and workers, or for second homes/holiday homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential effects on landscape character of park through applications for houses in countryside Potential effects in terms of supply of land for housing for Park's residents and workers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce pressure for housing in countryside Ensure housing land supply is aimed towards residents and workers of the National Park
CNPA Interim Planning Policy No.1 & Policy 21	Policies limit large scale wind farms & hydro electric schemes as these are likely to have significant environmental effects on Park.	To allow for development of large scale wind farms or hydro electric schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant visual effects and changes in landscape character of National Park Significant effects on species, habitats, ecosystems, hydrological systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> reduce likelihood of significant adverse environmental effects through renewable energy developments.
Policy16	Policy limits mineral developments to those for material for use in the National Park	To allow for mineral working in Park for any market areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential effects on landscape, ecology, human health, water environment. Potential emissions of greenhouse gases from need to transport products/ materials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> reduce likelihood of significant adverse environmental effects through mineral developments in terms of numbers and scale. approach would be a less sustainable use of natural resources from the Park.

Strategic Proposal Alternatives

- 7.6. The proposed allocations of land for development within the Local Plan are based on similar principles of minimising adverse effects on the special qualities of the National Park. A set of site selection criteria, based on the General Policies of the Local Plan, were used to identify the suitability of sites. These criteria are listed below and represent interests that are considered important rather than necessarily the sites themselves.
- Special Areas of Conservation
 - Special Protection Areas
 - Ramsar Convention sites
 - European protected species/habitats
 - National Nature Reserves
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest
 - UK protected species
 - UK BAP priority species/habitats
 - LBAP species/habitats
 - Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites
 - Semi Natural Woodland Inventory Sites
 - The Functional Flood Plan
 - Geological Conservation Review Sites
 - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - Properties in Care
 - National Scenic Areas
 - Gardens and Designed Landscapes
 - National Monuments Records
- 7.7. Strategic options for housing numbers and locations of housing land are likely to be made in the next draft of the Local Plan and will be considered through the SEA at that stage. It is worth noting that most of the proposed sites within the consultative draft Local Plan are currently allocated in existing Local Plans.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PLAN POLICIES

How environmental problems were considered in developing the policies

- 8.1. The policies of the Local Plan are a direct response to a number of the environmental issues facing the National Park and to the need to reflect the aims of the National Park in planning policy. They are also intended to support development at suitable sites to provide homes, services and employment for the population of the National Park without damaging the special qualities of the National Park.
- 8.2. Clearly, the special qualities of the National Park are closely linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the area and so policies are specifically intended to provide robust protection to a wide range of environmental interests that are also reflected in the SEA objectives.

The Significant Environmental Effects of Policies

- 8.3. The following section describes the predicted significant environmental effects of policies in the Local Plan. Figure 8. 1 summarises the predicted effects of all the consultative Draft Local Plan policies and highlights those policies that are considered likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 8.4. A large number of policies are considered unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects. In some cases, policy could have potential to significant adverse effects but is already mitigated by other policies that would prevent such effects from being permitted through development.
- 8.5. Assessment sheets for each settlement summarise the predicted effects of the proposals in each settlement and are available to view as part of Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report.

Judgements of significance of policies environmental effects

- 8.6. The judgements over whether predicted effects are significant or not are important to understanding of the SEA process. It became apparent during the assessment that for policies, it was possible to predict what kind effect might arise from the policy being applied to a development proposal but that it was not possible to predict how many times development proposals of location and nature that would draw on the policy would be made in the future.
- 8.7. Because of this, it was decided that only those policies that were considered likely to have a strongly positive or negative effect would be considered likely to have significant effects. Smaller positive or negative effects of policies are desirable and an important part of the Local Plan, but have been considered as unlikely to be significant in the assessment.
- 8.8. One example of this would be the Local Plan's policy 1 which translates the Habitats Regulations into the planning policy. The policy is considered likely to have some small positive effects as it ensures the Habitats Regulations (intended to support the Natura 2000 network) are enshrined in planning policy. However, the policies affects are not considered likely to be significant as it is the Habitats Regulations rather than the planning policy that protect the sites and would be valid without the planning policy.

Figure 8.1 SEA Policy Assessment Matrix

SEA OBJECTIVES														
POLICY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
General Policy 1	+	+	+	+	=/+	+	+	\	=/+	+	=	\	\	++
General Policy 2	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	\	0	++	=	\	\	+
General Policy 3	++	++	+	+	+	=	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\
General Policy 4	+/=	+/=	+/=	\	\	+/=	\	+	\	=	+	+	\	+/-=
General Policy 5	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+/?	+	+	+	++	+/?	+
policy 1	+	+	+	+	=	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 2	+	+	+	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 3	++	++	++	+	\	+	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 3a (RM9)	\	\	\	+	+	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	+	\
policy 4	=	=	=	\	\	++	\	\	\	+	?	\	\	\
policy 5	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	++	\	\	\	\
policy 6 & 6a	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	++
policy 7	\	\	\	\	\	=	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	++
policy 8	\	\	\	\	\	?	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	++
policy 9	\	\	\	\	\	?/+	?/+	\	\	?/+	\	\	\	?/+
policy 10	+	+	+	++	++	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\
policy 11	\	\	\	=	=	\	\	\	+	\	+	\	\	\
policy 12	\	\	\	?	?	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\
policy 13	+	+	+	++	++	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\
policy 14	+	+	+	+	+	=	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\
policy 15	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\
policy 16	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\
policy 17	=/+	=/+	=/+	=/+	=/+	=/+	\	=/+	=/+	=/+	\	\	\	\
policy 18	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	+	\
policy 19	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\
policy 20	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\
policy 20a	=	=	=	=	=	+	\	\	\	=	\	\	\	\
policy 21	\	\	\	\	+	+	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\
policy 22	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	+	\	\	\
policy 23	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+/?	\	\	\
policy 24	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	\	\	+	\	\	\	\
policy 25	=	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	\	=	\	\	\	=
policy 26	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	\	+	=	=	\	\	\

Figure 8.1 SEA Policy Assessment Matrix

POLICY	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
policy 27	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 28	=	=	=	\	\	?/-	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 29	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	=/+	\	\	\
policy 30	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	=	\	\	\
policy 31	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\
policy 32	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	=	\	\	+
policy 33	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
policy 34	\	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\	\	\	+
policy 35	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	=	\	\	\
policy 36	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	+
policy 37	=	=	=	=	=	=/+	=	=/+	\	=	++	=	=	=
policy 38	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=/+	=/?	=	+	=	=	=/+
policy 39	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	\	=	+	=	=	+
policy 40	=	=	=	=	=	=/+	=	=	=/+	=	=/+	=	=	=/+
policy 41	=	=	=	=	=	=/+	=	=	=/?	=	=/+	=	=	=/+
policy 42	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	=
policy 43	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	\	=	=/+	=	=	=
proposal 1	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\
proposal 2	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	?

Scoring Codes	
++	Strongly positive effect
+	Positive effect
=	Neutral or no effect
\	Not applicable
-	Negative effect
--	Strongly negative effect
?	uncertain effects

General Policy 1

8.9. The policy provides a broad level of protection for areas, sites or interests of the Park that do not hold or affect other nationally important features. In particular, it may have a positive effect in terms of protecting parts of the Park’s built heritage.

General Policy 2

- 8.10. The policy provides a strong level of protection for a range of nationally and locally important features in the CNP. The policy goes further than National Guidance suggests is required, by asking that it be demonstrated that there is no alternative to the development (eg location, size, timescale etc). It also asks for mitigation to ensure that features or interest of equal importance to any lost to a development are provided.
- 8.11. In particular, General Policy two is considered likely to have strongly positive effects in terms of protecting nationally important species, habitats, and a range of features of the historic environment from harm as a result of development.

General Policy 3

- 8.12. The policy has a fairly narrow target, and should provide strong protection for Natura interests and Scheduled Ancient Monuments from any negative effects of development.

General Policy 5

- 8.13. The policy provides a strong general level of support for the most of the SEA Objectives, but could provide more detailed advice/support for many of the criteria that are relevant to the Local Plan. However, given that it is intended that much of the policy should be replaced by a Sustainable Design Guide as a better way of illustrating best practice and desired standards, the policy is considered to convey an adequate range of considerations.

Policy 3: Biodiversity

- 8.14. The policy provides a high level of protection for habitats that are identified in biodiversity action plans. The policy should have the effect of both supporting positive actions for species and habitats as well as minimising habitat loss, ensuring mitigation and compensation to provide equally important features where loss is likely. It is considered that the policy is likely to have significant positive effects on species, habitats and ecosystems.

Policy 4: Landscape

- 8.15. The policy is considered likely to have a significant positive effect on the landscape character of the Park by preventing potentially significant adverse effects of development on landscape character and ensure that all development contributes positively to landscape character.
- 8.16. It is also possible that the policy would prevent development that would be otherwise desirable. There may be circumstances where positive effects in other areas would be considered to outweigh some negative landscape effects as long as the effects were mitigated.

Policy 5: Archaeology

- 8.17. The policy provides very positive support for archaeological remains, particularly those of national importance. The policy provides broad support for other archaeological remains by requiring an archaeological assessment to be carried out in order to assess the significance of the remains. It is considered that this policy contributes towards a significant positive effect for archaeological remains.

Policy 6 & 6A: Listed Buildings

- 8.18. The policy provides strong positive support for listed buildings that often make a strong contribution to the quality of the built environment (objective 14). The policy should contribute towards a positive effect in terms of conserving important architectural heritage.

Policy 7: Conservation Areas

- 8.19. The policy provides strong support for SEA objective 14 as Conservation Areas are intended to support the quality and character of the built environment. The policy should contribute towards a positive effect in terms of conserving important architectural heritage and settlement character.

Policy 8: Locally distinctive and vernacular architecture

- 8.20. The policy provides strong support for the preservation of locally distinctive architecture. It should contribute towards a positive effect in terms of conserving important architectural heritage within the National Park.

Policy 9: Local Cultural heritage Features

- 8.21. It is not known whether the policy will have any significant environmental effects. The policy may provide secondary support or to a number of SEA objectives related to landscape character, responsible access, the historic and built environment.

Policy 10: Protection of the Water Environment

- 8.22. The policy provides strong protection for the water environment and therefore supports SEA objectives 4 & 5 particularly strongly. It also provides implicit support for ecosystems, habitats and species that are related to the water environment. This policy should have significant positive effects on the water environment through preventing any adverse effect from development.

Policy 37: Proposals for Affordable Housing

- 8.23. The policy is considered to provide strong positive support for providing housing for local needs and SEA objective 11 and therefore is likely to contribute towards a significant positive effect.

Proposed Mitigation

- 8.24. Only two policies are considered to require mitigation.

General Policy 5

- 8.25. The policy should be reworded in the next draft to highlight the relationship with the Sustainable Design Guide once that guidance has been prepared.

Policy 4: Landscape

- 8.26. The policy may be modified for the next draft of the Local Plan to provide a sense of scale in terms of adverse impacts so that for example, it is clear that nationally important developments may carry greater weight in decisions than significant developments.

Uncertainties and risks

- 8.27. There is always likely to be uncertainty in the assessment of the Local Plan policies due to the lack of knowledge of future planning applications that will cause the policies to have effects.

9. ASSESSMENT OF PLAN PROPOSALS

How environmental problems were considered in developing the proposals

- 9.1. The proposed zonings in the Local Plan reflect a number of the environmental issues facing the National Park. Firstly, pressure for housing development across the National Park has eroded the areas of semi-natural habitat within the Park area. The proposals have as far as possible tried to avoid areas of semi-natural habitat. In particular, sites have been selected to minimise loss of sites of ancient woodland, whether of plantation or semi-natural origin. Clearly, sites have also been selected to avoid potential conflict with sites or interests that are designated for their natural or cultural heritage importance.
- 9.2. The effects of new housing development on landscape and settlement character can be significant and a study to identify sites around existing settlements with the greatest capacity to absorb new housing development was commissioned. This allowed the Local Plan to both select the most appropriate sites for housing from a landscape perspective, and, where this was not possible, to help identify the landscape and settlement character issues that would arise from proposing housing in more prominent or sensitive locations.
- 9.3. As far as possible, proposals have taken into account the policies that are set out in the Local Plan. Similarly, the assessment of proposals assumes that the detailed proposals for a site that would be brought forward by a developer would conform to the policies of the Local Plan. So for example, for each new proposal site, it was assumed that any development that could occur on the site would include SUDs that would be tailored to both the site and development.
- 9.4. Where sites already have outline planning permission and would not otherwise fulfil the selection criteria of the Local Plan, attempts have been made to reduce the adverse affects by highlighting issues that should be considered when determining full planning permission or reserved matters consent.
- 9.5. A further issue for the Local Plan and SEA to deal with was a lack of information from Scottish Water about the current and future availability of both fresh water and public sewerage infrastructure. For the Local Plan, this has compounded the uncertainty of housing numbers with uncertainty over what land may be effective. For the SEA, the approach described in paragraph 9.1 has allowed assessment on the basis that development would not be permitted on the proposed sites unless the policies in the Local Plan were adhered to. The disadvantage of the approach in this case is that it does not allow the SEA to predict and mitigate effects accurately.

The Significant Environmental Effects of Proposals

- 9.6. The following section describes the predicted significant environmental effects of proposed zonings for development in the Local Plan. Figure 9. 1 summarises the predicted effects of all the consultative Draft Local Plan settlement proposals and highlights those settlements where significant environmental effects are predicted.

- 9.7. It is important to note that the Environmental Report only considers in detail the likely significant environmental effects. However, it is likely that any proposal for a future development will have some environmental effects through loss of habitats or other land uses, disturbance to species, use of cars, or changes in character of landscape or settlement. The level of significance depends on both the scale and nature of the proposals and the sensitivity of the interest that may be affected.
- 9.8. Although the Environmental Report deals with the significant effects at a strategic level, and therefore focuses on the most sensitive or rare or fragile environmental interests, the Local Plan proposals attempt to minimise adverse environmental effects that while not significant at the strategic level, may be important on a particular site or locality. The assessment sheets for each settlement summarise effects that are not considered to be significant in the SEA, and these are available to view as part of Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report.

Judgements of the significance of proposals environmental effects

- 9.9. The judgements of significance of effects resulting from proposals can be easier to determine than those of policies as long as full information about the baseline conditions of the proposal site and the exact nature of proposals are known. In practice, it is rare that a comprehensive baseline for all sites would be available, and while the Local Plan allocates sites for particular types of development, it does not make comprehensive development proposals. In addition, small positive or negative environmental effects may not be significant in their own right, and may only contribute to a cumulative or synergistic effect of significance.
- 9.10. Because most proposals in the Local Plan involve a change of use of land, it can be argued that most proposals will have environmental effects simply through loss of plants or habitats on the site. However, some concept of the relative value of the environmental factors that are affected should be used to identify whether the effects are significant or not. For example, species-poor sown grassland is likely to be less important than species-rich semi-natural grassland and so while loss of a hectare of the latter might be considered a significant effect, the loss of a hectare of the former is less likely to be considered significant.
- 9.11. For the purposes of the SEA, it was decided that all effects would be noted, but that only those effects that were closely linked to the assessment criteria and indicators should be considered significant. It was felt that this allowed for a more transparent presentation of the effects of the proposals and would acknowledge that any proposals could result in environmental effects but that not all effects would be significant.

SETTLEMENT / PROPOSALS	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1a. Aviemore Housing Proposals	0/-	-	-			--	0/-		?/0 /-	-/?	+			0/?
1b. Aviemore Business, Tourism, Community & Environmental	+/-	+/-	+/-			0/-	+	0/+	?/-	?/-				0/?

Table 9.1 SEA Proposal Assessment Matrix														
SETTLEMENT / PROPOSALS	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1c. Cambusmore proposed new community	-	--	-	?	?	-		0/?	?	0/?	?	+/?	+/?	+/?
2. Boat of Garten	-	-	-			-	-		-		+			
3. Carr Bridge	-/+	+/-	+/-			-	-		-		+			
4. Cromdale & Balmenach		0/+	0/+			0/+		0/+	0/?		+	?	?	0/+
5. Dalwhinnie									0/-					
6. Dulnain Bridge and Skye of Curr	0/-	0/-	0/-			+	0/-		-		+			
7. Grantown	-	-	-		0/-	+	0/+		-		+			
8. Kincaig	0/-	0/-	-	0/-	-	--			0/-					
9. Kingussie									0/?		+	?	?	+/?
10. Laggan Bridge, Gergask and Balgowan						-					0/+	?	?	+/? /-
11. Nethy Bridge	-	--	--		0/-	--	-		-		+			
12. Newtonmore			0/-		0/-	--			0/- /?					-
13. Rothiemurchus & Glenmore	-	-	-			-	0/-		0/-		0/+	?	?	?
14. Glenlivet											0/- /?			
15. Tomintoul						0/+					+	0/?		+
16. Dinnet	0/-	0/-	0/-			0/-			?		+	?	?	?
17. Donside						0/-			0/-	0/-	0/- /?	?	?	
18a. Braemar Housing Allocations	0/-	0/-				-	0/-		?		+	?	?	?
18b. Braemar Business, Tourism, Community & Environmental	0/-	0/-	0/-	0/- /?		0/-					0/+	?	?	
19a. Ballater: Housing Allocations					-/?	0/-			0/-		+	?	?	?
19b. Ballater: Business, Tourism, Community & Environmental	0/+	0/+	0/+			0/+	+					?	?	?
20. Angus Glens - Clova settlement zone.											+	?	?	+
Potential Cumulative Effects				??	??			??				?	?	+
Scoring Codes														
++	Strongly positive effect													
+	Positive effect													
0 or blank	Neutral or no effect													

Table 9.1 SEA Proposal Assessment Matrix														
SETTLEMENT / PROPOSALS	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
\	Not applicable													
-	Negative effect													
--	Strongly negative effect													
?	uncertain effects													

Aviemore Housing Proposals

- 9.12. Proposal site H2 (with outline planning consent and a reserved matters application active) is considered likely to have a negative effect on the continuity and integrity of habitats in the area. It will also have a significant effect on the landscape through extending Aviemore onto wooded slopes above Aviemore on the western side of the A9.

Aviemore Business, Tourism, Community & Environmental Proposals

- 9.13. The development of B2 would lead to the loss of an area of that is identified through the ancient woodland inventory. It is considered that this loss, although small in terms of the total area of such woodland, represents a minor significant effect in terms of loss of habitat, species and the overall integrity of ecosystems.

Cambusmore proposed new community

- 9.14. The Cambusmore site has been identified in the Local Plan for information and is not being proposed at this stage. If it is included in the next draft Local Plan it would be assessed in more detail.
- 9.15. Based on the assessment of the area defined by the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan for the Cambusmore site, it is considered likely that the development of Cambusmore would have significant detrimental effects in terms of loss of habitats and could have other significant detrimental effects on species and in terms of landscape. However, it is not possible to accurately assess the site until more information in terms of whether it is needed and over what timescale it would be needed is available.

Boat of Garten

- 9.16. All the proposals for new uses of land at Boat of Garten are on land that is considered provide locally important habitats. The loss of H2 in particular would lead to a direct loss of and area of species rich lowland heath and is considered to represent a minor but significant effect in terms of loss of habitat.
- 9.17. The sites C1, 2 & 5 and site H3 encroach on mixed woodland and Scots Pine plantation that provide habitat for a wide range of species. It is considered that the development of these sites would also have minor significant negative effects in terms of habitat and species loss and disruption. It is not considered that the development of these sites would have significant effects on integrity of the wider habitat network and associated species in the area.

Carr Bridge

- 9.18. The housing proposals for sites H1-3, which have existing outline planning permission, could have significant negative effects on the species, habitats and ecosystems by Carr Bridge. The site E2 is an area of Bog woodland and is a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the EC Habitats Directive. The area falls within the consented housing site at Carr Bridge but the area merits protection from development through detailed planning permission.

Grantown on Spey

- 9.19. In their current form, the H1 proposals are considered likely to have a significant adverse effect in terms of loss of a network of habitats and associated species. The site E1 was intended to protect this network, but more detailed survey of the site will be required to identify the extent of the most sensitive and uncommon habitats and species.
- 9.20. The two H2 sites are located on species rich grassland that are of value to breeding waders and also have mature aspen and a recently discovered aspen bracket fungus. The loss of these areas would reduce the available habitat for breeding waders in the area and could lead to loss on the site of an infrequent and potentially rare aspen bracket fungus.

Kincraig

- 9.21. The proposals for Kincraig are considered to have potential to lead to a loss or disturbance to a locally valuable wetland area that could be managed to maintain and enhance its value.
- 9.22. All the proposals will contribute to changes to the settlement character of Kincraig, but sites H2 and H3 between the B9152 and A9 roads would have a significant effect on the character of Kincraig, its landscape setting and visual amenity.

Nethy Bridge

- 9.23. Sites H2, H3 & B1 have outline planning permission (pending the signing of a section 75 agreement) for 40 houses and a business unit. These sites are located on a site recorded in the ancient woodland inventory and a habitat with potential to support the Capercaillie population using the network of SPAs in the area. The loss of these sites to development is therefore considered to be a significant effect in terms of loss of habitat and reduction in potential habitat for a species protected by Natura sites. The proposals provide some mitigation against loss of continuity of habitats by providing corridors of woodland between settlements.
- 9.24. The proposal sites H2, H3 & B1 are also considered likely to have significant effects on the local landscape and settlement character of Nethy Bridge.

Newtonmore

- 9.25. Development of the allocated sites H1, H2 and B2 will result in a significant change to the landscape and settlement character of the south-western edge of Newtonmore.

Rothiemurchus & Glenmore

- 9.26. Of the proposals that do not already have planning permission, only H2 is likely to result in significant negative effects on the environment. The site

provides a habitat and range of species that make it valuable, and its location close to designated areas means that it has potential to be used by the protected species from those areas. Development of the site would also have a significant impact on local landscape and settlement character.

- 9.27. Site H2 was proposed as an alternative site for affordable housing planned for site LA1. The development of site LA1 would also have a significant local landscape impact, but it is situated on more recently disturbed ground including reseeded grassland that is of lower ecological value than site H2.

Braemar Housing Allocations

- 9.28. The development of housing site H2 running to the flood plain is likely to lead a significant local change in the landscape and settlement character at the northern edge of Braemar, within the National Scenic Area.

Cumulative Effects of Proposals

- 9.29. The identification of cumulative effects of proposals is based on the individual assessment and only identifies significant effects where the combination of individual proposals are likely to have effects that are greater than the sum of their parts.
- 9.30. Only one significant positive cumulative effect is predicted from the ongoing development of housing that conforms to the Local Plan policies and sustainable design guide. It is considered that this may have a significant positive effect on the quality of the built environment over time. A range of potentially significant adverse environmental effects are considered possible but not certain and are discussed under the section dealing with uncertainties and risks.

Proposed Mitigation

Aviemore Housing Proposals

- 9.31. Detailed planning consent for H2 should ensure that the development minimises loss of existing woodland and attempt to maintain a rural character to the development to emphasise the separation of the site from the main urban area of Aviemore. The development should use the topography of the site to contain the development and should minimise lighting as well as increasing planting to screen the development from the A9. Historical stone field boundaries should be retained in the development.

Aviemore Business, Tourism, Community & Environmental Proposals

- 9.32. Site B2 could be removed from the local plan in order to avoid the loss of part of an ancient woodland inventory site.

Cambusmore proposed new community

- 9.33. A large scale development on the site is likely to require an EIA in order to accurately predict potential impacts. If the site is considered in the next version of the Local Plan it will be assessed in more detail through the SEA.

Boat of Garten

- 9.34. The wooded plot in H3 should be carefully developed to make the minimum impact on the woodland, through careful positioning and tree retention & re-

planting; the development of H1 must pay careful attention to the design of a new (highly visible) settlement edge. Allocation H2 should be removed.

Carr Bridge

- 9.35. The potential negative effects of the development of the sites are partly avoided and mitigated through the proposals in the Local Plan to protect the bog woodland habitat. The determination of the detailed planning application for the H1-3 & E2 site will be an opportunity to prevent potential significant negative effects. Detailed planning permission should seek to ensure that the most ecologically valuable areas and specimens are protected, and that there is continuity of the mature wooded habitat of E2 into the surrounding countryside. The existing network of paths should be retained and expanded for all users.

Grantown on Spey

- 9.36. The H1 proposals were intended to avoid the valuable habitats on the site, and site E1 was intended to protect them. Further survey of the site is required in order to identify the areas more accurately, and it this will be carried out during the preparation of the next draft of the Local Plan. The proposals for H2 highlight that further survey work will be required. This will be used to assess the value of the sites for breeding waders and the sensitivity of the aspen and associated bracket fungus.

Kincraig

- 9.37. Site H4/C2 would be required to incorporate the area of wetland, and a SUDS scheme to support it at the time of application. Sites H2 and H3 could be removed in order to avoid the most significant effects on landscape and settlement character. However, a search for future housing sites attached to the existing settlement could only identify sites within areas of the surrounding ancient woodland inventory sites.

Nethy Bridge

- 9.38. As the sites H2, H3 & B1 that are considered likely to have significant adverse effects on the ecology and character of the area already have outline planning permission, mitigation of effects could only occur when a detailed planning application is made. It will be important that effects on the woodland are minimised through careful positioning of house plots, tree retention and re-planting.

Newtonmore

- 9.39. Clear boundary treatment and planting should be designed for the new SE and SW outer-edge of these allocations, to create a defined settlement edge which also sits well within the landscape. The setting of the raised wooded housing area should be given special consideration.

Rothiemurchus & Glenmore

- 9.40. Site H2 should be deleted from the next draft of the Local Plan, and if affordable housing remains a requirement for the area, then the application site LA1 should be zoned for housing.

Braemar Housing Allocations

- 9.41. The effects on landscape and settlement character around site H2 could be avoided by reducing the footprint of ground available for development to the level of the upper river terrace in the vicinity. However, this would dramatically reduce the number of housing units that could be built on the site and so alternative locations would need to be sought. The most appropriate mitigation is likely to be the agreement of a layout and extensive planting scheme that strengthens the edge of the settlement in that locality when a planning application is made.

Uncertainties and risks

- 9.42. The effects of the Local Plan proposals have been difficult to assess in a number of areas. As the consultative draft Local Plan does not have up to date population and household projections on which to base allocations of land, it has attempted to provide a range of options that may be required once accurate figures are known. The allocations suggested amount to approximately 1400 units in total across the National Park.

SEA Objectives 4 & 5 relating to waterbody status, catchment processes and hydrological systems

- 9.43. It is not clear what effects the development of approximately 1400 new houses in total across the National Park may have on waterbody status or catchment process and hydrological systems. The majority of those houses are for the Badenoch and Strathspey part of the Park, and most are around settlements that are currently supplied with water from Loch Einich.
- 9.44. It is known that the Loch Einich water supply does not currently have capacity to supply those additional homes. Increasing the abstraction from Loch Einich is likely to have a range of significant environmental effects on both Loch Einich and its catchment. Alternative water supplies may be required in order to allow development and these too would require to be assessed. Scottish Water is responsible for providing water and assessing strategic options, and will be required to carry out SEA of future water supply options.
- 9.45. The cumulative effects of an additional 1400 homes in terms of waste water are also difficult to predict accurately. It has been assumed that all new development will be minimise water discharge and will be connected to waste water treatment facilities that will work to a standard acceptable to both Scottish Water and SEPA. The effects of additional discharges will need to be monitored closely as sites are developed.
- 9.46. The assessment of proposals has also been carried out without accurate flood prediction information. This information is expected to available before the next draft of the Local Plan is produced, and will inform the Local Plan and SEA.

SEA Objective 8 relating to maintaining and improving air quality

- 9.47. The proposals for housing in the National Park area have been located close to existing settlements with services and potential public transport links in order to minimise the need to travel by private car. However, all the settlements within the National Park are located in a rural setting where use of a car is convenient and often necessary. It is likely that car use would increase with increased numbers of households and this would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions from the National Park.

SEA Objectives 12 & 13 relating to sustainable energy efficiency and reducing waste and pollution

- 9.48. The effects of the proposals in the Local Plan on these objectives are difficult to predict accurately. It is likely that new development that occurs as a result of the Local Plan will maximise energy efficiency, use recycled products and minimise production of waste in order to comply with Local Plan policies. However, the Local Plan does not have proposals for sustainable energy production, and while it will support sustainable waste management practices through providing sites for facilities if required, it is not a driver of change to practices in existing properties so cannot make a large contribution to this objective.

10. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL PLAN & SEA

- 10.1. This Environmental Report relates to an early stage of the SEA of the Local Plan and SEA process. Following consultation on this Environmental Report and the consultative draft Local Plan, both documents will be revised to reflect comments on the plan and SEA, and to reflect changes in the Local Plan due to additional information becoming available.
- 10.2. Specifically, information of the likely housing requirements for the National Park will become available and the housing proposals in the Local Plan will be revised to best meet the future needs of the National Park's communities. It is expected that this will lead to changes in the proposals contained in the consultative draft Local Plan. In addition, it is hoped that information about the capacity of water supplies and sewage infrastructure in the Local Plan area will be provided by Scottish Water. This too is expected to have a significant influence over whether sites can be proposed as effective land or not within the Local Plan, and may also result in changes to the predicted effects of policies or proposals.
- 10.3. The supplementary planning guidance (Sustainable Design Guide) noted in the consultative draft Local Plan and this Environmental Report will also be subject to SEA as it is prepared during 2006. This will allow more detailed advice on sustainable methods and forms of development to supplement the Local Plan policies.
- 10.4. The next draft of the Local Plan will include more detailed proposals for monitoring its effects. The SEA process will also identify firm monitoring proposals over during the preparation of the next draft Local Plan. It is expected that these will be based on the SEA Indicators and Targets outlined in sections 6 of this report as well as the predicted effects outlined in sections 8 and 9.

Consultation on this Environmental Report and the consultative draft Local Plan

- 10.5. The consultative draft Local Plan has been available for public consultation from November 2005. This Environmental Report of the SEA of the Local Plan has been published for consultation on 20 December 2005 and comments on both documents are requested by 28 February 2006. Comments should be sent to:

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