



Committee report

Development proposed:

Change of use of putting green to form 12 motorhome pitches and associated works including formation of vehicular access at Ballater Golf Club, Victoria Road, Ballater, AB35 5QX

Reference:	2026/0014/DET
Applicant:	Ballater Golf Club
Date called-in:	19 January 2026
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions
Case officer:	Katie Crerar, Planning Officer



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Site description, proposal and history

Site description

1. The application site is located within Ballater Golf Club in the settlement of Ballater. The site lies adjacent to existing housing to the northwest and northeast and the Golf Club car park to the southwest. The southeastern side of the site fronts onto Victoria Road, opposite the Golf Club building, bowling green and tennis courts.
2. The site extends to just over one acre and has been used as a seasonal putting green. It is laid to grass with hedging along the northeastern and southeastern boundaries. It is open to the northwest with a row of six mature fir trees along the southwestern boundary.
3. There is no formal existing access to the site but it lies on, and is accessible from, Victoria Road and the Golf Club's car park.

Proposal

4. The drawings and documents associated with this application are listed below and are available on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website unless noted otherwise:

[2026/0014/DET | Change of use of putting Green to form 12 motorhome pitches and associated works including formation of vehicular access | Ballater Golf Club Victoria Road Ballater AB35 5QX](#)

Title	Drawing number	Date on plan*	Date received
Plan – Location Plan	09A	01/10/25	16/01/26
Plan – Location Plan	PG3	01/08/24	16/01/26
Plan – Existing Site Plan	01B		16/01/26
Plan – Proposed Site Plan	02H	01/09/25	03/03/26
Plan – Landscaping Plan	BGC-2512-LS Rev A	18/12/25	16/01/26
Plan – Site sections	04	01/09/25	16/01/26
Plan – Fence detail	05A	01/09/25	16/01/26



Plan – Arboricultural Assessment	BGC-2512-AA	05/11/25	16/01/26
Plan – Tree Protection & Management Plan	BGC-2512-TP	05/12/25	16/01/26
Plan – Waste disposal enclosure	06		03/03/26
Other – Supporting Statement			16/01/26
Other – Community & Economic Benefits Statement			16/01/26
Other – Ground Assessment & Drainage Recommendation Report	3940/25	22/10/25	16/01/26
Other – Tree Survey Report	BGC-2512-TR	05/12/25	16/01/26
Other – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	BGC-2511-PEA	28/11/25	16/01/26
Other – Solar lights specification			16/01/2026

*Where no specific day of month has been provided on the plan, the system defaults to the first of the month.

5. This proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of a recreational putting green – which currently forms part of Ballater Golf Club – to create 12 motorhome / campervan pitches along with associated drainage, wastewater disposal, bin store and access. According to the applicant’s supporting statement, the proposal has been developed to help secure Ballater Golf Club’s long-term economic sustainability and safeguard this important recreational facility in Ballater. The statement adds that the popularity of the putting green is declining and its income does not cover maintenance costs. The application also seeks to respond to the shortfall in regulated motorhome accommodation in Ballater where, according to the supporting statement, the existing nearby Ballater Caravan Park regularly turns away up to 15 motorhomes per day during peak season.
6. The development site lies at the entrance to Ballater Golf Club and access will be taken from Victoria Road via a new one-way service road which will form a rectangular loop through the site and back onto Victoria Road towards the southern corner of the site. The serviced loop road will be hardcore surfaced and self-draining and the entry and exit junctions onto Victoria Road will be tarmacked and drain to the onsite soakaway.
7. The 12 motorhome pitches will be positioned around the loop road and will each measure 5.9 metres wide by 9 metres long (see Proposed Site Plan in **Appendix 1**). The pitches will be surfaced in gravel and edged with treated larch logs. Seven double socket electrical hook up outlets will be located between the pitches and the



cables will be run underneath the roadway. The exact location and height of these are to be determined and will be subject to a planning condition if permission is granted.

8. There will be a bin store and waste disposal enclosure located close to the exit point of the site. The enclosure will measure 3 metres by 4.1 metres and will be surrounded by a timber fence. The enclosure will house bin facilities for the site, a drinking water tap and a chemical toilet / black water disposal unit.
9. The site will be landscaped with a mixture of beech, privet and wildlife hedging planted between the pitches. Further wildlife hedging is proposed along the northwestern edge of the site. Six non-native Douglas Fir trees along the southwestern edge of the site are proposed to be removed and replaced with beech hedging and a 1.5-metre-high timber fence on the outer edge. Most of the trees and existing hedging along the northeast and southeastern sides of the site will be retained and an additional 21 trees will be planted across the site (see Proposed Landscaping Plan in **Appendix 1**).
10. There will be seven solar LED bollard lights located around the site, six of which will be around the inner loop of the service road and one light adjacent to the exit.
11. The site will operate seasonally (March to October) in line with the existing nearby Ballater Caravan Park and will only accommodate self-contained motorhomes that have onboard facilities. Each pitch is a single parking space and no caravans or tents will be allowed. The site will enforce similar operating rules to the existing Ballater Caravan Park, including dogs on leads and no noise after 10pm.

History

12. There is no recent planning history on the application site. There have been some small applications at Ballater Golf club in recent years, including:
 - a) APP/2024/0868 – Removal of window and installation of sliding door, approved by Aberdeenshire Council.
 - b) TRE/2022/0074 – Felling of 5no. Douglas Firs, approved by Aberdeenshire Council.
 - c) APP/2022/1693 – Erection of store, approved by Aberdeenshire Council.



Habitats Regulations Appraisal

13. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect upon a designated European site. As such, a Habitats Regulation Appraisal is not required in this case.

Development plan context

Policies

National policy	National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Scotland 2045 (Policies relevant to the assessment of this application are marked with a cross (x))	
Policy 1	Tackling the climate and nature crises	X
Policy 2	Climate mitigation and adaptation	X
Policy 3	Biodiversity	X
Policy 4	Natural places	
Policy 5	Soils	
Policy 6	Forestry, woodland and trees	X
Policy 7	Historic assets and places	X
Policy 8	Green belts	
Policy 9	Brownfield, vacant and derelict land, and empty buildings	
Policy 11	Energy	
Policy 12	Zero waste	
Policy 13	Sustainable transport	
Policy 14	Design, quality and place	X
Policy 15	Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	
Policy 16	Quality homes	
Policy 17	Rural homes	
Policy 18	Infrastructure first	
Policy 19	Heating and cooling	
Policy 20	Blue and green infrastructure	
Policy 21	Play, recreation and sport	
Policy 22	Flood risk and water management	X
Policy 23	Health and safety	



Policy 24	Digital infrastructure	
Policy 25	Community wealth building	
Policy 26	Business and industry	
Policy 27	City, town, local and commercial centres	
Policy 28	Retail	
Policy 29	Rural development	
Policy 30	Tourism	X
Policy 31	Culture and creativity	
Policy 32	Aquaculture	
Policy 33	Minerals	

Strategic policy	Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027x	
Local plan policy	Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (2021) (Policies relevant to the assessment of this application are marked with a cross (x))	
Policy 1	New housing development	
Policy 2	Supporting economic growth	X
Policy 3	Design and placemaking	X
Policy 4	Natural heritage	X
Policy 5	Landscape	X
Policy 6	The siting and design of digital communications equipment	
Policy 7	Renewable energy	
Policy 8	Open space, sport and recreation	
Policy 9	Cultural heritage	X
Policy 10	Resources	X
Policy 11	Developer obligations	

14. All new development proposals require to be assessed in relation to policies contained in the adopted Development Plan which comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 (LDP). The full wording of policies can be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/documents/>

and at:

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CNPA-LDP-2021-web.pdf>



Planning guidance

15. Supplementary guidance also supports the Local Development Plan and provides more details about how to comply with the policies. Guidance that is relevant to this application is marked with a cross (x).

Policy 1	Housing supplementary guidance	
Policy 2	Supporting economic growth non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 3	Design and placemaking non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 4	Natural heritage non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 5	Landscape non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 7	Renewable energy non-statutory guidance	
Policy 8	Open space, sport and recreation non-statutory guidance	
Policy 9	Cultural heritage non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 10	Resources non-statutory guidance	X
Policy 11	Developer obligations supplementary guidance	

Consultations

16. A summary of the main issues raised by consultees now follows:
17. **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)** object in principle to the application. They state that 'the cornerstone of sustainable flood risk management is the avoidance of flood risk as a first principle'. The site is shown to be at risk of flooding based on the SEPA Future Flood Maps and there is a long history of flooding in Ballater from the River Dee. The detailed flood study commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council following Storm Frank – which was updated in 2022 – indicates that the development is at risk of flooding. A number of options for flood mitigation have been assessed within the study but none of these are shown to prevent flooding at the site. In addition, camping and caravan pitches are deemed to be a 'most vulnerable' land use in SEPA's Land Use Vulnerability Guidance. The proposal does not meet any of the exceptions outlined in Policy 22 of NPF4 and therefore avoidance is required.
18. SEPA state that the site would be fully inundated during a 1 in 200 year including climate change flood event, which would represent a significant risk to life. Surrounding land and roads are also expected to be impacted, and access and egress for the site would not likely be possible during a flood event. They add that



flood warning is intended for owners and occupants of existing buildings and is not an appropriate way to enable new development that is otherwise contrary to policy.

19. **Scottish Water** does not object to this application. They note that there is currently sufficient capacity at Ballater Water Treatment Works to service the development and the development is within the Ballater Waste Water Treatment Works catchment. The applicant must submit a Pre-Development Enquiry Form directly to Scottish Water for the proposal to be fully appraised.
20. **Aberdeenshire Council's Flood Risk & Coast Protection Team** highlights that the application site lies within the modelled 1 in 200 year plus climate change floodplain. They note that the site is at risk of flooding and that safe emergency vehicle access to the site during a flood event would be restricted. They reference SEPA's Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance, which states that campsites are considered to be within the most vulnerable category. Visitors may have no local knowledge of flood risk issues or be in receipt of imminent flood risk warnings. The Flood Risk & Coast Protection Team would not support any new developments which require emergency evacuation plans due to their location on a floodplain. Therefore, they object to the application.
21. **Aberdeenshire Council's Natural Environment Team** state that the site has limited biodiversity interest and that the development presents an opportunity for enhancement. They note potential impacts on breeding birds but state that impacts can be avoided by works taking place outwith the bird breeding season. They acknowledge the trees proposed for removal on health and safety grounds and are satisfied that compensation for the tree loss and biodiversity enhancement is provided in the proposed landscaping.
22. **Aberdeenshire Council's Roads Department** raises no concerns regarding the proposal as the development takes access from a private stub with suitable access to the public road network.
23. **Aberdeenshire Council's Environmental Health Team** requires the proposal to have a water supply in the form of a standpipe for the campervan occupants. They state that there should also be a waste and foul water disposal point on site and the redline boundary should include the clubhouse so that the water and wastewater provisions can be provided from there. A site licence will be required.
24. **Cairngorms National Park Authority's Ecological Advice Officer** notes that the proposal includes the removal of 6 non-native Douglas Fir, a diseased Silver Birch



and a dying Rowan, which will have a slight impact on biodiversity. The proposed landscaping plan includes compensatory planting of 21 trees (a mix of native species and some flowering Japanese cherries) which is considered sufficient to compensate the loss of the trees to be removed and will increase tree species diversity on the site and support a range of biodiversity including pollinators and birds. The Arboricultural Method Statement (contained in the Tree Survey Report) details measures for the protection of trees on the site during the construction phase and should be conditioned and implemented if permission is granted.

25. Some minor recommendations are made in respect of the landscaping, including: the removal / replacement of invasive non-native shrubs which are present along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site; installation of bird and bat boxes on mature trees to compensate for potential loss of nesting sites; and underplanting of boundary woodland areas and hedgerows with native woodland wildflower plug plants and spring bulbs.
26. Whilst no protected species were recorded on site, Red Squirrel have been recorded close to the site and the mature Douglas Fir to be felled could provide potential locations for a drey. Therefore, a pre commencement check should be undertaken to look for signs of Red Squirrel using these trees prior to felling. The surrounding trees and shrubs have the potential to be used by a variety of birds and therefore mitigation measures including the timing of works to avoid the main breeding bird season (March to Mid-August) would reduce any effects.
27. **Cairngorms National Park Authority's Landscape Advisor** is of the view that the development site lies in a visually discrete location within Ballater and would not affect any of the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the National Park or result in widespread landscape and visual effects. They welcome the low-level lighting and low-key packed stone / gravel finishes.
28. They highlight that the proposed fence along the southwestern boundary is utilitarian in appearance and recommend that the proposed beech hedge along this edge is retained to provide the principal means of screening (without the fencing) and that birch or Scots pine should also be planted along this boundary. Further additional birch trees are recommended between sightlines for the access points along the southeastern boundary to integrate with the wooded character of neighbouring properties. They note that three types of hedges are proposed on site and recommend using either beech or wildlife hedge throughout, as well as suggesting some further detailed changes to the proposed landscaping scheme. They conclude that the proposed planting, with the recommended changes, will



provide screening and privacy both for site occupants and for other visual receptors in the surrounding area.

29. **Ballater and Crathie Community Council** highlight that Deeside depends on tourism and that the existing Ballater Caravan Park is turning away large numbers of visitors during the season. They note that motorhome drivers are using Cambus o'May car park, Church Square and Monaltrie Park for overnight parking, none of which are suitably equipped, and that disposal of grey and other waste is an issue. They stress that there is currently a significant shortage of local tourist accommodation generally, including for motorhomes.

Representations

30. Ten representations have been received from eight households, raising the following concerns:
- lack of need for a campervan site;
 - loss of the putting green as an amenity and recreational space for members of the public and visitors, as well as the potential impact on biodiversity;
 - location of the development site in an area of flood risk;
 - impacts on residential amenity, privacy and overlooking of gardens and homes of the adjacent residential properties;
 - impact on the neighbouring conservation area;
 - potential for noise disruption, anti-social behaviour and lack of screening between existing gardens and the development site;
 - lack of on-site facilities such as for emptying waste water, bins and dog waste on the site;
 - increase in traffic and inadequate access and egress; and
 - a more appropriate location on the golf course should be identified.

Appraisal

31. Section 25 of the 1997 Act as amended requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan. This comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 (LDP). Where there is conflict between policies, NPF4 policies take precedence.



32. The main planning considerations in this case are: principle of the development; flood risk; landscape, design and amenity; ecology; and access. These are considered in detail below.

Principle of development

33. **NPF4 Policy 30: Tourism** part b) requires tourism related developments to take into account (amongst other things): the contribution made to the local economy; compatibility with the surrounding area; impacts on communities (eg by hindering the provision of homes or services for local people); and opportunities for sustainable travel and appropriate management of parking.
34. **LDP Policy 2: Supporting economic growth**, part 2.2 (Tourist Accommodation) supports proposals for tourist related accommodation where they have no adverse environmental or amenity impacts; contribute to providing a wide range of visitor accommodation including low-cost options, and support a year-round economy.
35. The **LDP settlement statement** for Ballater sets out a series of settlement objectives for the town. These include increasing the attraction of Ballater as a business, tourist and recreation destination.
36. **LDP Policy 8: Open space, sport and recreation** states that outdoor sports facilities should not be redeveloped except in a number of specific circumstances, including where the proposed development involves a minor part of the facility which would not affect its use and potential for sport and training.
37. The development site lies within the settlement boundary of Ballater in close walking distance of the town centre. It seeks to provide additional short term motorhome accommodation, thereby helping to provide a wider range of visitor accommodation and supporting the attraction of Ballater as a tourist destination. The proposed use of the site for motorhome pitches is considered compatible with its surroundings as it lies largely within the context of Ballater Golf Club, where there is existing activity associated with the golf club, bowling club and tennis courts. The proposal is considered to comply with NPF4 Policy 30 and LDP Policy 2 in this respect.
38. Whilst some respondents argue that there is a lack of need for this type of facility, the Community Council has stressed that there is a significant shortage of local tourist accommodation, including for motorhomes. They have also noted concerns about motorhomes using other car parks in the town (which are not suitably equipped for such use) during the peak season when demand for formal



motorhome pitches exceeds current supply. Feedback from the Park Authority's 2024-25 Visitor Survey also identified a general desire for more campervan sites and, whilst this was not area specific, it is recognised that there is a general need to better accommodate motorhomes that may otherwise park and stay in more unsuitable areas.

39. Concern was expressed in some of the representations about the principle of losing the putting green as a recreational facility. However, the putting green forms a very small informal part of the wider golf club facility. It is not identified as protected open space in the LDP, and the motorhome pitches will not adversely affect the use and ongoing operation of the golf club. Rather, the applicant's supporting statement indicates that the proposal is intended to improve the viability of the golf club by generating an additional source of revenue to support the club's financial resilience. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with LDP Policy 8 in this respect.
40. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to assessing compliance with other detailed policies of the development plan. This is considered in more detail below.

Flood risk

41. **NPF4 Policy 22: Flood risk and water management** sets out a presumption against developments at risk of flooding or in flood risk areas unless they would comprise one of four specific exceptions. The exceptions include: essential infrastructure where the location is required for operational reasons; water compatible uses; redevelopment of an existing building or site for an equal or less vulnerable use; or redevelopment of previously used sites in built up areas where the LDP has identified a need to bring them into positive use. In cases that meet one of the exceptions, the third paragraph of the policy requires that the applicant must demonstrate that: all risks of flooding are understood and addressed; there is no reduction in floodplain capacity, increased risk for others, or a need for future flood protection schemes; the development remains safe and operational during floods; flood resistant and resilient materials and construction methods are used; and future adaptations can be made to accommodate the effects of climate change.
42. Similarly, **LDP Policy 10: Resources** requires all developments to (amongst other things) ensure there is no detrimental impacts on the water environment (10.1), be free from Medium to High risk of flooding from all sources taking into account climate change, not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, nor affect the ability of the functional floodplain to store or move flood waters (10.2). The **LDP Settlement**



Statement for Ballater includes an objective to increase and enhance flood management and resilience within the town.

43. There is a well-documented history of flooding in Ballater from the River Dee and the development site is at risk of flooding based on SEPA's future flood risk maps.
44. Both SEPA and the applicant reference the Ballater Flood Protection Study¹, which was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council following Storm Frank in 2015 and which was more recently updated in 2022. The Additional Flood Study in 2022² concluded that updated hydraulic modelling has shown that *'significant geomorphological change to the River Dee at Ballater in the period 2018 to 2022 has led to an increase in the flood extents produced by higher frequency, lower-magnitude events, and as such has caused increased flood risk to exist in Ballater than modelled in 2018'*.
45. The Additional Flood Study considered various minor works options to mitigate the impact of flooding, including an option to deepen the golf course outlet channel in conjunction with constructing a new bund on the left bank of the same channel along the southern edge of the golf course. This option has since been constructed. However, according to the study's mapping, it is not expected to have any significant impact in reducing flood risk at the proposed development site. SEPA note that the onset of flooding at the site is shown to be from around a 1 in 5 year flood event, with extents and depths of flooding increasing beyond this and the site shown to be almost fully inundated during a 1 in 30 year flood event. They highlight that the site is shown to be fully inundated during a 1 in 200 year including climate change flood event, with depths of flooding at the site in a 1 in 200 year event expected to be 0.5–1m (and likely higher when accounting for the impacts of climate change).
46. SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council's Flood Team also both highlight that the use of the site for motorhomes and campervans would fall within the 'most vulnerable' category in SEPA's Land Use Vulnerability Guidance³. This guidance lists *'caravans, mobile homes, chalets and park homes intended for permanent residential use'* as well as *'holiday caravan, chalet and camping sites'* as 'most vulnerable' uses.
47. Whilst acknowledging that the site lies within a flood risk area and recognising SEPA's Land Use Vulnerability Guidance, the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment argues that account should be taken of the ease of evacuating the proposed

¹ [Supplementary Reports – BALLATER FLOOD PROTECTION STUDY](#)

² [Microsoft Word - IBE1982_Rp001_Ballater Flood Study_D04](#)

³ [land-use-vulnerability-guidance.docx](#)



motorhome pitches. It highlights that motorhomes, even those with external awnings, can be removed from the site in a very short period of time – in contrast to caravans, tents, mobile homes, and chalets, which require a greater degree of dismantling and disconnection along with the use of a separate vehicle before they can be removed from site. Other moveable objects / structures on the site such as bins could also be easily re-located in the event of a flood warning.

48. The Flood Risk Assessment sets out that there are already a number of flood risk management protocols in place in Ballater, including at the existing nearby Ballater Caravan Park. These include flood forecast warnings which are issued by SEPA in collaboration with the Met Office and provide a 3–5 day outlook. Flood forecast warnings are issued to the emergency services, who then determine the level of risk to the general public and any action to be taken. When a significant risk is identified, many local organisations – including the Community Council, Ballater Caravan Park and Ballater Golf Club – are informed. Ballater Golf Club office bearers also subscribe to SEPA's regional flood alerts. It is argued that this system has proven to be reliable and effective in giving maximum time warning of potential flood events.
49. The existing Ballater Caravan Park - which lies approximately 250 metres southeast of the development site and is closer to the River Dee - has a flood alert and evacuation procedure which requires a larger number of pitches to be evacuated over a longer period of time. It is proposed that the development site would adopt the same flood alert and evacuation procedures. These would include:
 - a) no new bookings to be taken or new vehicles allowed onto the site following issue of a SEPA flood alert or warning;
 - b) appointing Designated Responsible Persons with responsibility for initiating site evacuation and co-ordinating safe site clearance of any existing vehicles in co-operation with Ballater Flood Issue Group and the emergency services;
 - c) customer notification of flood alert and evacuation protocols at time of booking and on arrival;
 - d) providing customers with contact details of all Designated Responsible Persons who will be available 24/7; and
 - e) recording all customer contact details and operating an extended absence secure key holding system to allow relocation of vehicles if the owners are absent.



50. It is also proposed that the site will operate seasonally, aligning with the existing Ballater Caravan Park, to reduce exposure to flooding in the winter months.
51. Given its location within a flood risk area, its 'most vulnerable' categorisation, and the fact that it does not fall into any of the four specific exception categories, the proposed development is contrary to both NPF4 policy 22 and LDP policy 10.
52. Whilst it is accepted that SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council's Flood Risk Team are both clear that requiring flood warning or flood evacuation plans is not an appropriate way to enable new development, the applicant has nevertheless demonstrated an understanding of the risk of flooding at the site and set out a series of measures (all of which are already in operation within Ballater) that could be used to address the risk and help enable the site to be operated and managed safely. These measures could be secured through condition if planning permission is granted. The proposal is also of a limited scale, with no significant structures that would reduce floodplain capacity or increase risk for others during a flood event, and the applicant has confirmed that the limited on-site infrastructure (electric hook up points etc) can be designed to be flood resilient. In this respect, the proposal has sought to respond to most of the requirements set out in paragraph 3 of NPF4 policy 22.

Landscape, design and amenity

53. **NPF4 Policy 4: Natural places** sets out that development proposals which affect a National Park will only be supported where the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised. In addition, **NPF4 Policy 14: Design, quality and place** seeks proposals to be designed to improve the quality of an area and to be consistent with the six qualities of successful places: healthy; pleasant; connected; distinctive; sustainable; and adaptable. **NPF4 Policy 7: Historic assets and places** states that development proposals in or affecting a conservation area will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced.
54. **LDP Policy 5: Landscape** sets out that there will be a presumption against any development that does not conserve or enhance the landscape character or Special Landscape Qualities of the National Park. In addition, **LDP Policy 3: Design and placemaking** requires proposals to (amongst other things) use landscaping and materials that will complement the setting of the development, be sympathetic to the pattern and character of the surrounding area, promote sustainable travel and protect the amenity of neighbours. **LDP Policy 9: Cultural heritage** requires development in or affecting a conservation area to preserve and enhance its



character and appearance, and to use design, materials, scale, layout and siting appropriate to the site and its setting.

55. The development site lies within the existing built fabric of Ballater and is visually discrete. The Park Authority's Landscape Advisor is satisfied that the proposal would not affect the special landscape qualities of the National Park. It includes a landscaping plan comprising 188 metres of hedging and the planting of 21 additional trees, which will help improve the biodiversity of the site as well as providing substantial onsite screening between pitches and around the edges of the development site. The creation of an access and separate egress from the site onto Victoria Road will create some visibility into the site, however much of the existing planting along this boundary will be retained and views will be limited. Whilst the Park Authority's Landscape Advisor has suggested some detailed alterations to the onsite landscaping proposals, the proposed landscaping plan is considered acceptable and appropriate overall.
56. In broader design terms, it is considered that the proposal complements the setting of the development and is sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area. The proposal lies adjacent to residential properties, and the proposed landscaping will help to integrate the development with its surroundings and provide natural screening and privacy for both visitors and the adjacent neighbours. The limited nature of development on the site and the proposed landscaping will also help to ensure that the character and appearance of the Ballater Conservation Area, which immediately adjoins the site, will be preserved.
57. A number of representations have expressed concern about the impact on residential amenity of the adjacent residential properties from overlooking, noise and potential for anti-social behaviour. As noted above, the proposal incorporates improved landscaping and screening around all boundaries, which will contain the site and create privacy for both residents and visitors. There will be on-site waste disposal provision, bins and water to ensure that the campervans can be entirely self-contained. It is also proposed that the site will operate under clear protocols via a site management plan to ensure neighbouring residential amenity is protected. These protocols will include, amongst other things, the requirement to keep dogs on leads at all times and to avoid noise after 10pm. The site management plan can be secured via a planning condition if planning permission is granted.
58. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with relevant development plan policies in this respect.



Ecology

59. **NPF4 Policy 1: Tackling the climate and nature crises** requires proposals to give significant weight to the global climate and nature crises. **NPF4 Policy 3: Biodiversity** requires development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, and **Policy 4: Natural places** to ensure that development will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, or any significant effect on European Site designations including Special Areas of Conservation.
60. This is also reflected in **LDP Policy 4: Natural heritage** which requires new development to not adversely affect the integrity of designated sites, the National Park or protected species or habitats.
61. As identified by Aberdeenshire Council's Natural Heritage Team, the development site is currently of limited biodiversity value. Whilst no protected species were recorded on site, Red Squirrel have been recorded close to the site, and six mature Douglas Fir which are to be felled as part of the proposed development could provide potential locations for a drey. Therefore, pre-commencement checks will be required to look for signs of Red Squirrel using these trees prior to felling and, depending on the results, a Species Protection Plan (SPP) may also be required. In addition, the trees and shrubs along the edges of the site have the potential to be used by a variety of birds, and mitigation measures will be required to avoid any adverse impacts on them. These mitigation measures can be secured through planning conditions if planning permission is granted.
62. As noted previously, six non-native Douglas Fir, a diseased Silver Birch and a dying Rowan are proposed to be felled and this will have a slight impact on biodiversity. However, the proposed landscaping plan includes compensatory planting of 21 trees (a mix of native species and some flowering Japanese cherries), which is considered sufficient to compensate the loss of the trees to be removed. This will increase tree species diversity on the site and, along with the additional hedging proposed, will support a range of biodiversity including pollinators and birds.
63. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with relevant development plan policies in this respect.

Access and accessibility

64. **NPF4 Policy 13: Sustainable transport** supports proposals that demonstrate they have properly considered the transport requirements in line with the sustainable travel and investment hierarchies and where appropriate provide safe links to local facilities via walking, wheeling and cycling networks, are accessible by public



transport, provide electric charging points and secure cycling parking, are designed to incorporate safe crossing for walking and wheeling and adequately mitigate any impact on local public access routes. **LDP Policy 3: Design and placemaking** also requires development to have an appropriate means of access, parking and promote sustainable transport methods and active travel.

65. The proposed development lies on an existing adopted road serving the Golf Club and Aberdeenshire Council's Road Team are satisfied that the road and proposed access / egress points are acceptable and can accommodate the proposed development. Although concerns have been raised by representees about the increase in traffic volume and capacity of the site, having taken account of the Council's response and that the Golf Club's existing car park has capacity for around 60 cars, the road and onsite capacity is considered adequate. The proposed development is designed to accommodate a maximum of 12 motorhomes at any one time, and a planning condition can be used to restrict the maximum occupancy to this level if planning permission is granted.
66. The development site is also within walking distance of local amenities and recreational routes in Ballater via safe accessible pedestrian routes. The proposal does not provide electric charging points for cars as the site will exclusively be used by motorhomes, although charging facilities are available at Ballater Golf Club adjacent to the site.
67. It is therefore considered that the proposal provides a suitable means of access, adequate parking for its visitors and encourages active travel to and from the development site. As such, it complies with the relevant development plan provisions in this respect.

Other issues raised in consultations and representations

68. Some respondents suggested that a more appropriate site on the golf course should be considered. Whilst the applicant has not demonstrated that alternative locations have been considered, the proposed location is one of the most accessible within the Golf Club's ground and lies adjacent to the existing development on the Golf Course where it can be more closely managed and monitored.

Conclusion

69. This development proposal meets most of the relevant policies of the development plan and would provide 12 motorhome pitches on a discrete site in Ballater that



could also contribute towards the LDP settlement objective for increasing the town's attraction as a business, tourist and recreation destination.

70. However, the proposal is located in an area of significant flood risk. It represents a land use categorised as 'most vulnerable' in SEPA's flood vulnerability guidance and does not fall into any of the exceptional categories of development that are supportable in principle within flood risk areas. The applicant has demonstrated an understanding of the risk of flooding at the site and has proposed a series of measures (which are already in operation within Ballater and are used by the existing nearby Ballater Caravan Park) that could be used to address the risk and help enable the site to be operated and managed safely. However, both SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council's Flood Risk Team are clear that requiring flood warning or flood evacuation plans is not an appropriate way to enable new development.
71. Whilst this is fully acknowledged, the proposed development would involve use of the site exclusively by motorhomes, which could be removed from site relatively easily – in contrast to other uses in the most vulnerable category of SEPA's guidance (eg caravans, tents, mobile homes, and chalets), which require a greater degree of dismantling and disconnection along with the use of a separate vehicle before they can be removed from site. As part of the proposed mitigation strategy, the applicant has confirmed that the site would close to new visitors in the event of a flood warning and that measures would be in place to evacuate any existing visitors, such that the site should be vacated in advance of a flooding event. In addition, the proposal does not involve any other significant built development in order to avoid reducing floodplain capacity or increasing risk for others during a flood event. The limited on-site infrastructure which is proposed (electric hook up points etc) could be designed to be flood resilient. In this respect, the proposal has sought to respond to most of the requirements set out in paragraph 3 of NPF4 policy 22.
72. In addition, the proposal may help address concerns about motorhomes using other stopping places in the town on an informal basis during the peak season when demand exceeds the current supply of formal pitches (none of which are properly equipped for such use and many of which may also be located in flood risk areas).
73. Officers recognise that this decision is based on fine margins and the weight attached to policies and information related to flood risk. Overall, whilst it is accepted that the proposal does not meet the relevant NPF4 and LDP policies in relation to flood risk, it meets all other relevant policies and is considered capable of complying with the development plan in the round. On balance, the application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions. Due to the outstanding



objection from SEPA on flood risk grounds, the application will require to be notified to Scottish Ministers if the committee support the recommendation for approval.

Recommendation

That members of the committee support a recommendation to **APPROVE** the change of use of putting green to form 12 motorhome pitches and associated works including formation of vehicular access at Ballater Golf Club, Victoria Road, Ballater, AB35 5QX subject to:

- 1) The application being notified to Scottish Ministers due to an outstanding objection by a government agency (SEPA) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Notification of Applications) (Scotland) Direction 2009;
- 2) The following conditions:

Conditions

Those conditions listed below in bold text are suspensive conditions, which require to be discharged prior to implementation of the development.

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reason: The time limit condition is imposed in order to comply with the requirements of section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

2. **No development shall commence until a Site Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The submitted plan shall include, as a minimum:**
 - a) **Operational controls including details of staffing arrangements and on-site supervision hours;**
 - b) **Dates of operation;**
 - c) **Details of the site policy which will be implemented for guests, including measures to prevent and manage anti-social behaviour;**
 - d) **Finalised site policy / rules and information that will be issued to visitors on arrival;**
 - e) **Details of guest check in and check out windows;**



The development thereafter shall be operated in full accordance with the approved Site Management Plan at all times and maintained for this use in perpetuity. No pitch shall be occupied until the required management measures are in place.

Reason: In order to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties and occupants.

3. The development, hereby approved, shall not operate until a Flood Warning and Evacuation Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with Aberdeenshire Council's Flood Risk Team. The Flood Warning and Evacuation Management Plan should include as a minimum:
- a) that no new bookings will be taken or new vehicles allowed onto the site following issue of a SEPA flood alert or warning;
 - b) details of Designated Responsible Persons with responsibility for initiating site evacuation and co-ordinating safe site clearance of any existing vehicles and other moveable objects / structures such as bins in co-operation with Ballater Flood Issue Group and the emergency services;
 - c) customer notification of flood alert and evacuation protocols at time of booking and on arrival;
 - d) outlining how customers will be provided with and can contact all Designated Responsible Persons who will be available 24/7; and
 - e) how all customer contact details will be recorded and operating an extended absence secure key holding system to allow relocation of vehicles if the owners are absent.

The development shall thereafter be operated in full accordance with the approved Flood Warning and Evacuation Management Plan at all times, and no pitch shall be occupied until the required warning and management measures are in place.

Reason: To ensure that site can be cleared in a timely manner when flooding is predicted and to comply with the objectives of NPF4 Policy 22 and Local Development Plan Policy 10.

4. **No development shall commence on site until a pre-commencement survey for protected species (focusing on Red Squirrel) has been undertaken in accordance with current NatureScot guidance by a suitably experienced and licensed ecological surveyor. Depending on the results, a Species Protection Plan (SPP) detailing appropriate mitigation measures shall be submitted. No development shall commence until the SPP has been submitted to and approved in writing by**



the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. Thereafter the plan will be implemented in full and overseen by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works.

Reason: To ensure the protection of protected species in accordance with National Planning Framework 4 Policy 3: Biodiversity, and Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

5. No development (including ground preparation works) shall take place during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive) unless under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist, who will conduct surveys to identify all active nests and produce a Species Protection Plan (SPP) for nesting species. The survey results together with any associated SPP (Breeding Birds) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority prior to the commencement of development. Thereafter all mitigation measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved SPP (Breeding Birds) and overseen by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works.

Reason: To ensure the protection of protected species in accordance with National Planning Framework 4 Policy 3: Biodiversity, and Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

6. Landscaping and planting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved Landscaping Plan and the Arboricultural Method Statement set out in the Tree Survey Report in the first planting season following the commencement of the development hereby approved. The planted trees shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved plans and details throughout the lifetime of the development hereby approved. Any planting which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, does not establish shall be replaced by trees or plants of similar size and species to those originally required.

Reason: In the interests of protecting and enhancing the woodland environment in accordance with National Planning Framework 4 Policy 3: Biodiversity and Policy 6: Forestry, woodland and trees and Policy 4: Natural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

7. **No development shall commence on site until full details including location, design and specification of the proposed electrical hook up points and lighting bollards are submitted to and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The electrical hook up points and lighting bollards must be of a flood resilient design and should be implemented in accordance with the details as approved.**



Reason: To ensure the electrical hook up points and lighting complement the setting of the development in accordance with Policy 3: Design and placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 and are resilient in the event of flooding.

8. For the avoidance of doubt, planning permission is hereby granted for the exclusive use of motorhomes and campervans. A maximum of 12 motorhomes / campervans shall be permitted on the site at any one time.

Reason: To clarify the terms of this planning permission and ensure that the site is operated in accordance with the approved details.

Informatives

1. The person undertaking the development is required to give the Planning Authority prior written notification of the date which it is intended to commence the development. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Initiation of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this information assists the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in monitoring active work within the area to ensure compliance with the approved details and to identify and correct any potential problems, as they arise, rather than later when it may be more difficult and more costly to rectify. Failure to give notice would constitute a breach of planning control which may result in enforcement action being taken.
2. Following completion of the development, a notification of completion shall, as soon as practicable, be given to the Planning Authority. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Completion of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this form will assist the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in making a final inspection and checking compliance with the approved drawings and conditions. If the development hereby approved is to be carried out in phases, then a notice of completion should be submitted at the completion of each phase.
3. The person undertaking the development should note the comments of Scottish Water which highlight that they are not able to reserve capacity at their treatment



works and the developer will require to contact them to confirm that the development can be serviced. They also highlight that they will not accept surface water connections into their combined sewer system for reasons of sustainability and to protect customers from future sewer flooding. A pre-development inquiry form via their customer portal should be submitted to them. More detail in their consultation response.