

**Halcrow Group Limited**

A96 Corridor Masterplan Stage 2

Submission Assessment – Nairn South

September 2006

**The Highland Council**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 *Context*

As part of developing proposals for the growth of Nairn (in the context of considering growth across the A96 Corridor as a whole) a range of proposals were developed<sup>1</sup>. These were designed to present options for growth at Nairn and to stimulate debate and discussion.

The options are being considered in the context of broad stakeholder considerations<sup>2</sup>, general public consultation (undertaken and assessed by The Highland Council), agency consultation (undertaken and assessed by The Highland Council), technical considerations and contributions from the Nairn South Framework Planning Group<sup>3</sup> and other related interests.

This paper reports on submissions from the latter group and assesses them. It attempts to draw some conclusions that will allow a single preferred option for the growth of Nairn to emerge.

## 1.2 *Report Structure*

The report's structure is straightforward. It will:

- Summarise each option drawing out the salient points and make comment in the form of a matrix.
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations for developing a growth option for Nairn.

It is not intended that sources of issues raised can be identified from this report; although all submissions have been circulated within the Nairn South FPG.

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<sup>1</sup> See Interim Report – Phase 1: Options for Development and Green Frameworks

<sup>2</sup> Utilising Collaboration for Success

<sup>3</sup> The Nairn South FPG was set up to drive forward the preparation of a Framework for Nairn South. It is made up of key land interests and appropriate public agencies.

## 2 Salient Points and Comment

### 2.1

#### *The Matrix*

The following matrix draws out the salient points from the submissions and makes comments on them. This has been themed in order to facilitate interpretation.

<b>Point</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Nairn's Character</b>	
Development to the west would respond to Nairn's tradition as a coastal town (incl. tourism). Hence, Options A and D (subject to amendment) are	The coastal tradition of Nairn is recognised as a valuable asset on which to build.
Development to the west (Options A and D with amendment) offer the opportunity to create a gateway to Nairn from the west.	Noted.
The natural form for growth development would be to the west of the River Nairn as this reflects the town's character and would avoid bridging of the river.	Nairn has traditionally developed across the river.
<b>Development Opportunity</b>	
Extension to the west could build on current proposals for the Sandown area of Nairn.	Noted.
The growth of Nairn should be sufficient to respond to the opportunity (i.e. its coastal location) and bring benefits for Nairn whilst respecting the capacity to accommodate growth. This points to growth of over 100%.	Consideration for growth of Nairn must sit in the context of masterplanning the A96 Corridor as a whole. This points to a population growth over 30 years of circa 8-9,000 people. The opportunity of Nairn is in its coastal and landward tradition that offers an opportunity to promote development that offers variety and choice.

<b>Point</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Wider Benefits</b>	
Growth proposals for Nairn should support and contribute to the regeneration of Nairn; particularly the town centre.	Responding, integrating and contributing with existing communities to bring broad benefits is one of the underlying principles for the project. For Nairn this manifests itself in ensuring that support for regenerating the town centre is considered.
Proposals that place commercial or retail proposals at junctions on the by-pass will undermine the viability of Nairn centre and should not be progressed.	As noted above, bringing wider benefits to Nairn and its centre is a key determinant in developing proposals for growth. Certainly, for the medium-long term the philosophy exposed in this comment is appropriate.
<b>By-Pass Route</b>	
By-pass options that commence from Gollanfield are likely to have adverse economic impacts on Nairn.	The longer by-pass option commencing at Gollanfield does raise issues about its lack of relevance and integration with Nairn that would have a number of adverse impacts including economic. Although ease of implementation arguments to support this by-pass line are good, it is felt that, on balance, the adverse impacts are such that this line cannot be supported.
By-pass route from Gollanfield (the long route) provides best development solution as it maximises developable land.	As discussed above, this longer by-pass route does raise concerns of relevance and integration with Nairn. It cannot be supported.
By-pass routes on Options A, B and C threaten established woodland at Knocknagillan	As indicated below integration of environmental assets is critical. The routes shown are indicative only. However, the point is noted.
The by-pass should sweep to the wider point at Howford bridge (shown on Options D and E) as this will ensure appropriate scale of development to accommodate growth over the longer term.	Noted.

<b>Point</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Placemaking Characteristics</b>	
Development to the west should include a golf course, a variety of housing type and density, a neighbourhood centre, supermarket, appropriate structural landscaping and other uses using existing building groups to the far west.	Noted. At this stage a broad strategy is in development.
Growth should be focused through three clearly defined areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residential/leisure area to the west.</li> <li>2. Community, commercial and employment area south of Nairn.</li> <li>3. Residential, leisure and business/industrial area to the east</li> </ol>	Certainly, these areas would reflect accessible locations from a by-pass. Their exact form and mix of uses will be determined by wider considerations in developing proposals across the Corridor as a whole. However, this proposal does carry the risk of linear development along the new by-pass which could have significant adverse impact in relation to town integration, wider benefits and promoting movement modes other than the private car.
Places should incorporate diversity in layout and design.	Certainly, across the Corridor as a whole there should be a variety of layout and design solutions that will provide real choice in lifestyle.
The maximisation of development to the east will facilitate the private construction of the by-pass.	Development to the east may be appropriate if it can address issues relating to linear by-pass form and integration with the town.
<b>Environmental Integration</b>	
The woodland to the south of Nairn should be retained.	The integration of environmental assets within urban growth areas and the development of key <i>green</i> resources through a Green Framework for the Corridor as a whole are fundamentals of the masterplan's development.
The Moss-side floodplain is crudely defined and could be reduced through flood mitigation and other management techniques.	This floodplain has been determined by SEPA. Best practice establishes that the promotion of development within this floodplain or mitigation works is inappropriate.
Development should be directed away from the 0.5% floodplain.	Agreed.



<b>Point</b>	<b>Comments</b>
.Watercourses should be incorporated into schemes as positive environmental features.	Agreed.
The floodplain east of the River Nairn could be managed through a series of constructed lochans.	As discussed above, management of the floodplain is inappropriate in the context of public policy across Scotland and global best practice.
<b>Employment</b>	
There should be a clear balance between population growth and employment growth over the longer term.	It is essential that the opportunity for economic development in Nairn matches the over-all aspiration for growth.

## 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 3.1

#### *Conclusions*

It is clear from the submissions made that there is a clear appetite to substantially grow Nairn. Further, this growth should respond to the following:

- The coastal tradition of Nairn and that is the Moray Firth.
- The landward tradition of Nairn as a market town serving a wider rural hinterland.
- The need to bring wider benefit to Nairn; particularly in supporting the viability of the town centre.
- The by-pass route should facilitate a balanced strategy for growth across the town whilst ensuring integration with it.
- Development in the floodplain should be avoided.
- Employment provision should meet population growth.

### 3.2

#### *Recommendations*

Resulting from the above the following recommended development of proposals for growth at Nairn has emerged:

1. The by-pass should, travelling west-east, start at Drumdivan, cross the river at Howford and terminate at Auchnacloch.
2. New sustainable urban extensions should be promoted to the south (west of the river) and to the west. This should incorporate appropriate district centres, housing (of varying density), recreational/open space provision, leisure, retail and employment designations. A target population of 8-9,000 people across both areas would be appropriate.
3. Development to the east should focus on employment uses that require efficient trunk road access.

4. The floodplain to the east of the river should be a focus of recreational and open space provision that builds on this environmental asset.
5. New employment allocations should seek to afford the development of around 5,000 new jobs over time.