

# **Halcrow Group Limited**

A96 Corridor Masterplan : Stage 2

Interim Report - Phase 4

The Green Framework

January 2007

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1

### *Context*

In July 2006 *Interim Report – Phase 1: Options for Development and Green Frameworks* for the A96 Corridor Masterplan: Stage 2 was published<sup>1</sup>. This outlined the policy framework for the project, set out objectives and established the Smart Growth philosophy underpinning the planning approach. Stakeholder options for accommodating growth at Nairn South and East Inverness were presented. A draft Green Framework for the Corridor as a whole was also offered.

In particular, development frameworks were to be assessed through considerations related to technical aspects<sup>2</sup>, stakeholder preferences through application of Collaboration for Success, Framework Planning Group views and public/agency comment. The Green Framework was to be developed collaboratively with key stakeholders (although any broader views would be considered).

This report draws together the considerations and makes recommendations for the development of the Green Framework.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.highland.gov.uk/businessinformation/economicdevelopment/regeneration/A96+Corridor.htm>

<sup>2</sup> These were in respect of deliverability, marketability, planning, traffic and urban form.

## 2 The Green Framework

### 2.1

#### *Collaboration*

Through close working with the Green Framework Planning Group critical assessment and positive contributions were made to allow the development of the Green Framework. This built on close working that had developed the draft Green Framework outlined in the Phase 1 Interim Report. In addition, individual consultations with Historic Scotland, Scottish Water and Scottish and Southern Electricity (SSE) allowed detailed aspects to be considered. This allowed robust consideration around issues of:

- Landscape character
- Heritage and cultural features
- Biodiversity
- Recreation
- Development proposals (at strategic locations and in support of local indigenous needs)

This has allowed a robust strategy to emerge that integrates and complements with the urban development proposals across the A96 Corridor.

### 2.2

#### *The Framework*

The Green Framework brings forward a range of proposals to meet the needs of the Corridor as a whole. This will ensure that urban growth can be embedded into a cohesive package that will enhance the environmental assets of the A96 Corridor so as to bring lasting and substantial benefit. This significantly contributes to the Highland Smart Growth development principles that seek to maintain and enhance open space, natural features and critical environmental areas and to ensure these are provided within settlements and integrated into developments that maximise their recreational contribution to the quality of life.

Policy and proposals fall into five broad categories relating to:

- Protection and Enhancement
- Biodiversity and Environment

- Development
- Recreation and Leisure
- Infrastructure

The following outlines these. This is diagrammatically shown at the end of this report in the Green Framework Plan.

### **Protection and Enhancement**

The approach for protection and enhancement is to ensure that the critical environmental assets of the Corridor are recognised and that these can be safeguarded and enhanced through appropriate land management and, where appropriate, through improved accessibility. The policy approach is to identify:

- Substantial countryside and forestry areas that will be safeguarded against development. This recognises the importance of the SSSIs at Kildrummie Kames and Ardersier.
- The Special Protection Areas and Ramsar site at Alturie, Whiteness and Nairn to ensure that any development proposals address their requirements as they are developed.
- That the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation is another critical consideration.
- A noise sensitive zone with regard to the airport and its expansion. This establishes a zone within which human habitation would be inappropriate on the grounds of longterm adverse health impacts<sup>3</sup>.
- Critical views from the Corridor that should be maintained and, where practical, enhanced.
- Green wedges and buffers at critical locations to ensure that these are not developed and, moreover, environmental or recreational enhancement proposals are brought forward. These are located –

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<sup>3</sup> Working environments are appropriate within this zone.

Adjacent to the A9 to ensure an appropriate open entrance to Inverness from the south.

Around Culloden Battlefield and Clava Cairns to recognise the sensitive nature of the setting for these national cultural features.

To the south of Culloden Battlefield to ensure an appropriate buffer to this sensitive location.

To the east of Culloden to promote a clear definition to the development of East Inverness and to maintain the setting of Balloch and discourage coalescence.

To the west of Inverness Airport Business Park to assist in the definition of the business park and to ensure appropriate settings for the business park and Castle Stuart Golf courses, as well as small hamlets at this location.

Between Croy and Tornagrain to clearly define both settlements and ensure no coalescence.

To the east of Croy to ensure the village is clearly defined.

Between Ardersier and Fort George to ensure that critical natural and built environmental assets in this area maintain an appropriate context and setting.

At Carse of Delnies to ensure that Whiteness and Nairn maintain their clear identity and for Nairn West, in particular, to provide the opportunity for defining structural landscape.

Across the south of Nairn to ensure that the setting for new development is clearly defined and that development proposals within the extensive floodplain is discouraged.

To the east of Nairn to provide a setting for eastward expansion of the town, allow for appropriate structural/screen planting,



to mitigate against coalescence with Auldearn and recognise the setting for historical and built features.

### **Biodiversity and Environment**

The Framework recognises the opportunity to establish new wildlife and landscape corridors to provide habitat networks and encourage biodiversity through appropriate linkages. In particular, three corridors have been identified at Mains of Balnagowar, Morayston and Newton. Corridors and linkages can be of varying scale from blocks of woodland to field margins and the edges of water courses.

### **Development**

Clearly, the Green Framework recognises the development proposals for the Corridor and existing places. It also recognises *green* development golf based proposals for Castle Stuart and Nairn West and the growth of Inverness Airport. The opportunity to bring forward a park at Longman for the benefit of the Corridor is proposed through the Green Framework.

Further, development proposals establish that some limited growth of smaller settlements across the Corridor to meet local need will be essential. The Framework identifies Auldearn, Ardersier, Cawdor, Croy and Culloden Moor as appropriate location for this.

### **Recreation and Leisure**

Proposals for recreation and leisure are focused on developing a coherent paths and trails network that allow people to access the Corridor and to link important natural and built features. This includes a coastal path and a landward trail that provide effective east-west links. These are supplemented by north-south links to the new and existing settlements and places. This is augmented by a route to connect critical tourist centres at Culloden Battlefield, Croy, Cawdor, Cawdor Castle, Rait Castle and Auldearn Battlefield.

**Infrastructure**

The Green Framework provides guidance and/or support for important infrastructural elements to ensure the successful development of the Corridor over the longterm. These are:

- The dualling of the A96 across its entire length through the Corridor.
- The identification of an appropriate Grid substation site at Clephanton adjacent to the powerlines.
- The establishment of the need to enhance the east-west rail line through new signalling and passing places in order to increase carrying capacity.

