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# AUCHTERCAIRN

## *Planning Brief*



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## BACKGROUND

**1.1** Located within the Wester Ross National Scenic Area, Gairloch enjoys a magnificent setting on the shores of Loch Gairloch with panoramic views of the Minch and the Torridon Mountains. The community is the main service centre for the surrounding area with a population now standing at around 1200. Key issues for the community are:

- ◆ maintaining and expanding its role as a tourist and service centre;
- ◆ increasing the supply of affordable housing; and
- ◆ promoting opportunities for business.

## Purpose

**1.2** This brief promotes the future use and development of a central, high profile site at Auchtercairn. In particular, the brief:

- ◆ outlines potential uses for the site; and
- ◆ sets out a framework to guide development, including design principles, servicing and environmental requirements.



*Above: Site viewed from the west*

## SITE

### Location

**2.1** The site occupies a strategic position within the village on the A832 close to existing facilities, including the local supermarket, new secondary school and health centre. The Gairloch Sands Hotel occupied the bulk of the site. This burned down in 1999 and the opportunity now exists to promote a quality, mixed use development to consolidate the village centre and tackle the affordable housing problem.

### Features

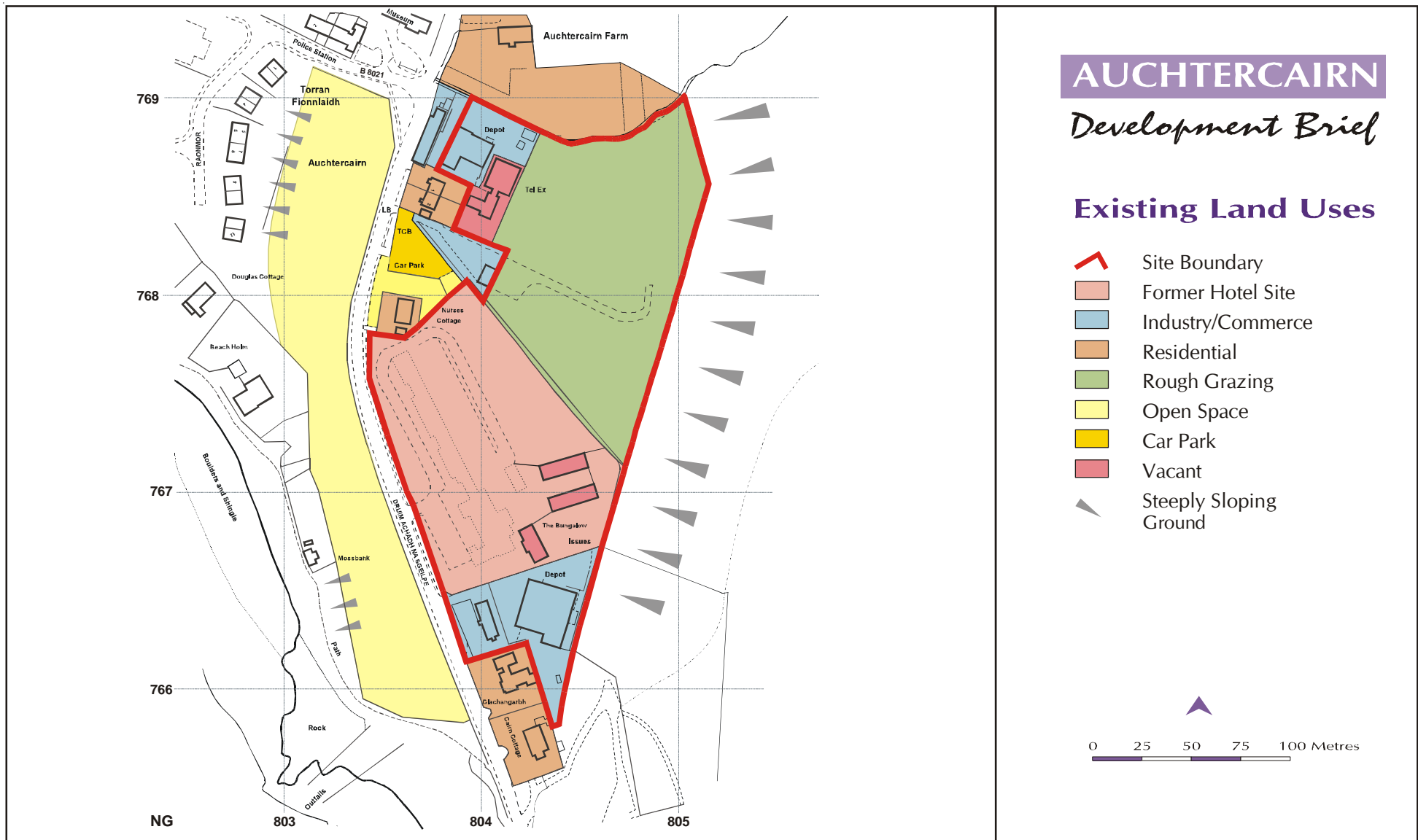
**2.2** The site comprises 3ha. of level ground extending south from Auchtercairn farmhouse to The Council's Roads and Transport Services depot. Existing land uses are:

- ◆ access roads and parking areas;
- ◆ rough grassland;
- ◆ grassed areas adjoining the A832;
- ◆ vacant BT exchange; and
- ◆ the depot.

**2.3** Two watercourses cross the site, on the northern boundary and across the centre. A line of coniferous trees runs along the latter with a few single specimen Ash trees along the former.

**2.4** Although generally bare, there are several buildings within the site. The northern part contains the vacant BT Exchange. To the south the vacant staff quarters and manager's house of the Gairloch Sands Hotel remain, together with The Council's depot. The depot is still in use, although the Council is keen to relocate if funds become available.  
(see Map: Existing Land Uses)





**2.5** The southern part of the site fronts directly on to the A832 with excellent views across Loch Gairloch. The northern part is set further back from the road to the rear of existing properties where views out are limited.

## Constraints

**2.6** The site lies within the Wester Ross National Scenic Area. The Council will therefore expect proposals to be of a high quality. There are currently no other conservation designations, listed buildings or archaeological sites within or near the site. The central portion of the site has been infilled with inert material. This area should therefore be retained as open space and landscaping. The trees alongside the water-courses are important features and should be safeguarded. The stone dyke that runs along the base of the eastern slopes and along the northern boundary must also be retained. The Council will seek refurbishment and restoration as necessary.

## Adjoining Uses

**2.7** The site is bordered by development on its western margins, notably housing, the local supermarket and fish shop and the BT depot. A significant portion of this boundary fronts directly on to the A832, providing an opportunity for direct access. The eastern boundary is strongly defined by a stone wall, dividing the built up area from the steeper, rough grazing ground, rising to over 200 metres. The northern boundary adjoins the garden of Auchtercairn Farm.

## POLICY

**3.1** The Gairloch Village Plan, adopted in 1996 identifies the majority of the site for housing, with the Roads depot allocated for business/general industry. The hill land on the eastern margins and the trees on the northern boundary are protected in the interests of safeguarding the amenity and

setting of the village

**3.2** Recent work by the Council and Scottish Homes has identified Gairloch as an area of “local housing stress”. Where appropriate, therefore, The Council will expect to enter into S75 or similar Agreements with owners or developers of private housing land to ensure that an appropriate proportion of plots or dwellings therein are available in perpetuity as low cost accommodation for local persons.

## PRINCIPLES

**4.1** Development will be guided by the following broad principles.

- ◆ The need to create a safe, varied and attractive environment.
- ◆ Proposals should create a mix of uses and forms that add to the character of the village.
- ◆ Proposals should be designed for energy and resource efficiency.

## Green Design

**4.2** Green design is now a key theme in the development of new buildings. The ideal is the “cyclical” building that is self-sufficient in the main resources of energy, heating and water. Not every new building will be completely “green”, but The Council will expect all proposals to give consideration to how developments are laid out, constructed and used. This will involve not only technical features such as insulation and solar panels, but also in areas such as transport and waste recycling. (See panel right)

*The Council will expect developers to take account of the following in preparing their proposals:*

### HEATING

- ◆ Maximising solar heating through orientation, use of larger areas of glazing and weather protecting porches.
- ◆ Creating a sheltered site through planting and building layout.

### ENERGY

- ◆ Seeking high insulation standards.
- ◆ Setting of the village.
- ◆ Maximising natural daylight.
- ◆ Using recycled materials
- ◆ Promoting energy conservation building methods.
- ◆ Using durable, low maintenance materials.
- ◆ Using materials with low embodied energy.
- ◆ Use of double or triple glazing.

### WATER

- ◆ Minimise the amount of non-porous hard surfacing to enable infiltration of rainwater.
- ◆ Proposals should incorporate swales and filter strips where appropriate.
- ◆ Avoid culverting watercourses.
- ◆ Use of recycling techniques.

### TRANSPORT

*The following hierarchy of priority for access and movement should be applied in designing the site layout:*

- ◆ Pedestrians and mobility impaired.
- ◆ Cyclists.
- ◆ Service vehicles.
- ◆ Other motor vehicles including cars.



## CONCEPT

**5.1** The basic concept is to divide the site into three compartments. The northern portion is identified for housing, the central for a mix of uses including shops, business and housing and the Roads Depot for business or housing uses.

### Access and Parking

**5.2** Road design should reflect the rural setting with road widths kept to the minimum acceptable. Traffic calming measures such as carriageway texturing, colour changes and road narrowing, should be designed in. Access to the whole of the site, including the northern and southern portions, must be taken from the existing Gairloch Sands access onto the A832 and must meet the Council's adoptive standards. Parking provision will be dependent on the mix of uses proposed and should be to the rear of buildings. Details should be agreed with the Area Roads and Transport Services Manager. Extracts from The Council's parking guidelines are given in Appendix 1.

### Area A

**5.3** This site provides an opportunity to meet a part of the demand for housing, particularly affordable housing, in the village. It also provides an opportunity to remove the vacant BT building.

### Layout and Design

**5.4** In order to create an interesting and varied development, The Council considers that a mix of houses and flats would be appropriate. These should preferably be in two blocks with a central open space/service corridor.

### Density

**5.5** Higher density developments can contribute to sustainable development principles through reducing greenfield development. However developments must also be sympathetic to their setting and provide satisfactory amenity for residents. In this regard The Council considers that the following densities are appropriate:

- ◆ Detached/semi-detached villas: up to 10 dwellings per hectare.
- ◆ Terraced: Up to 27 dwellings per hectare.
- ◆ Courtyard: Up to 18 Dwellings per hectare.

### 5.6 Form

- ◆ Buildings should have a rectangular plan.
- ◆ Block 1 should be a maximum of 1.5 storeys. Within Block 2, 2 storeys should predominate, with one higher building to act as a focal point.
- ◆ Storm porches/extensions should have similar proportions/finishes to the houses.

### 5.7 Gable, Roof Pitches & Design Features

- ◆ Ratio of building span to height at eaves should be a maximum of 2.5 to ensure traditional proportions.
- ◆ The roof pitch should be in the range 35° - 55° and ideally be between 40° and 45°.
- ◆ Slate is preferred but artificial slate or small tiles of dark tone are acceptable.
- ◆ Box dormers are not acceptable.
- ◆ Where chimney-stacks are proposed their location on gable walls central to the roof ridge line is preferred.



*Above: Housing Site*

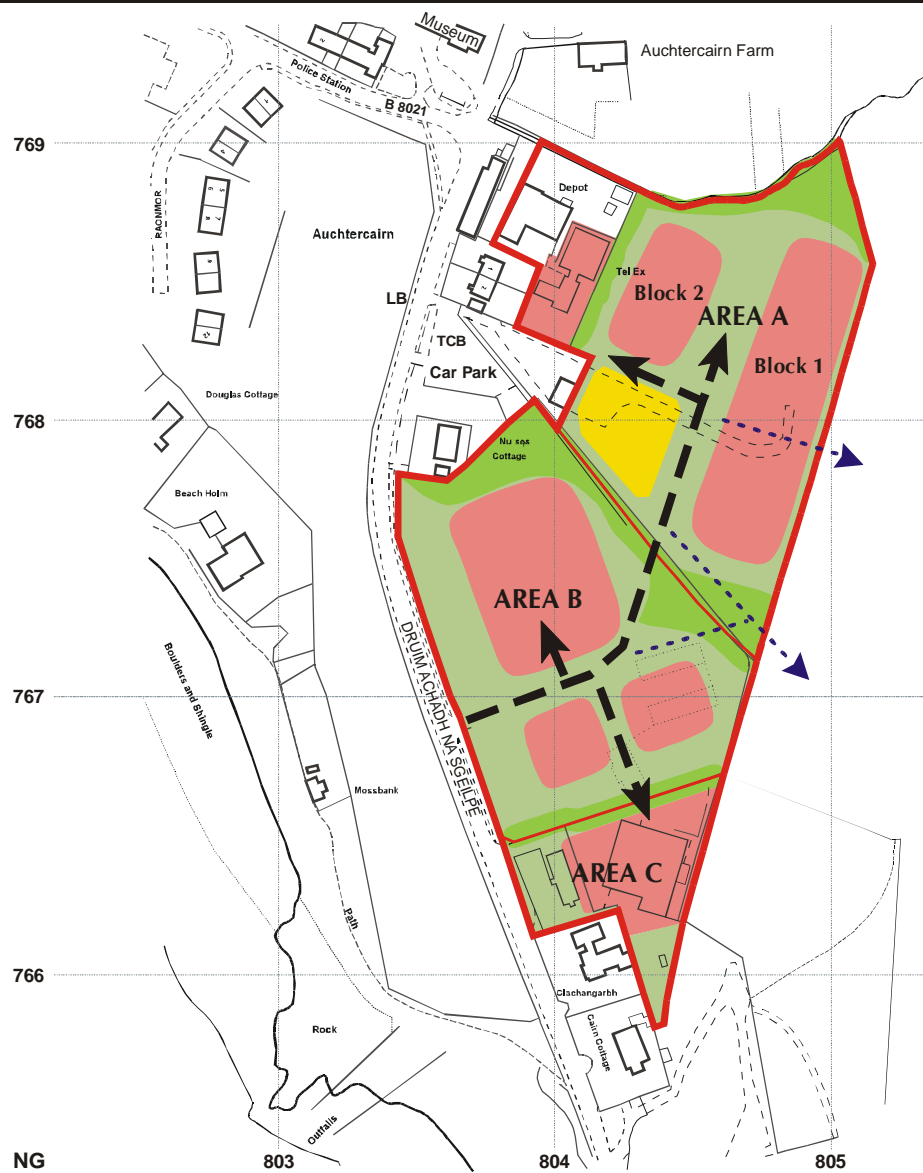


# AUCHTERCAIRN

## Development Brief

### Framework Plan

-  Site Boundary
-  Sub Areas
-  Development Areas
-  Tree Planting
-  Open Space
-  Open Amenity Area Landscaping
-  Access
-  Footpath



## 5.8 Walls

- ◆ Facing materials should be chosen for their durability and weather resistant qualities.
- ◆ The use of natural stone and/or harling is encouraged, but innovative designs incorporating other materials may also be acceptable.
- ◆ Use of garish colours to be avoided and should generally be in the range of white/grey/buff/natural timber.
- ◆ Feature panels of artificial stone or other ornamental materials are not acceptable.
- ◆ Windows and door openings should have a vertical emphasis.

## 5.9 Boundaries

- ◆ The use of local boundary materials is encouraged, particularly stone which would link in with the existing dyke.
- ◆ Co-ordinated frontage and boundary treatment, particularly along road frontages.
- ◆ Fences and walls should not exceed 1m in front gardens and 2m in rear gardens.
- ◆ Modern ranch style panelling and chain link fences are not appropriate.

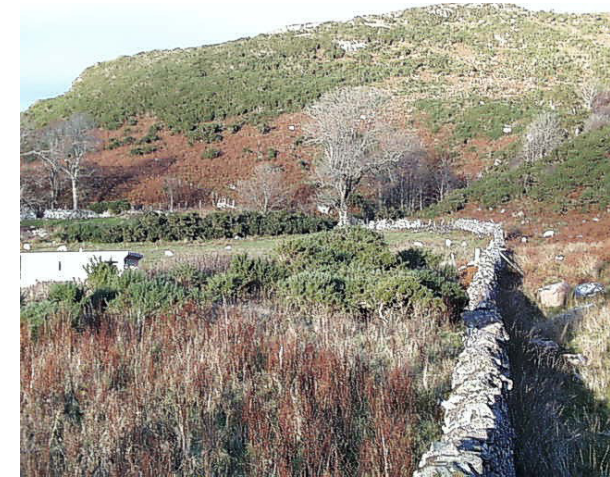
## Access and Parking

**5.11** Parking areas should be located within the central landscaping / access corridor. Standards will depend on the mix of house types and should be agreed with the Area Roads and Transport Services Manager as part of the overall design.

## Open Space / Landscaping

**5.12** The site has limited views out. Proposals must therefore make provision for quality internal open space focussed on a central green space / access corridor. The National Playing Fields Association standard of 60m<sup>2</sup> of public open space per house should be used as a minimum to guide the open space and landscaping framework. The arrangement of open space and buildings should allow for tree planting that links through the site and connects with the natural backdrop of the rising slopes to the east.

**5.13** The main central watercourse should become the core of an open space that both links and divides the housing site from the more commercial development. The current width of 7m should be considered a minimum. Where possible, steeper sides should be eased out to a more natural form. Existing vegetation should be retained and incorporated as part of the open space design with the exception of the conifers at the car park end. These do provide shelter however and it would be appropriate to plant native species (such as hazel, willow and rowan) in the lee with conifers being removed after the new planting is established. Most existing trees along the northern boundary are fairly mature and replacement planting should be incorporated into any proposals.



*Above: Housing site showing stone dyke and specimen trees*

## Area B

**5.14** The central part of the site offers potential for a mix of uses. The following uses, as defined in the Use Classes Order (Scotland) 1997, will be acceptable:

- ◆ Class 1: Shops
- ◆ Class 2: Financial, professional and other services
- ◆ Class 3: Food and Drink
- ◆ Class 4: Business
- ◆ Class 7: Hotels and hostels
- ◆ Class 9: Houses

**5.15** The existing buildings to the rear could either be redeveloped as part of an overall scheme or used for tourist/residential accommodation, such as a backpackers hostel.

## Layout & Design

**5.16** Proposals should take advantage of the views across the loch with buildings adjoining the main road generally oriented north - south. The Council will expect a high quality design for this prominent site.

- ◆ Development should be of a scale compatible with adjoining buildings.
- ◆ Height should be a maximum of 2.5 storeys.
- ◆ Buildings should generally be physically separate, although long buildings may be acceptable where they achieve a well articulated development. Colour can be used to break up the visual bulk of a building, although a wide variation in the range and use of colour should be avoided.

- ◆ Facing materials should be chosen to harmonise with the surrounding development, for their good weathering characteristics and should be limited in number. Quality finishes - wet or dry dash, slate, tile, brick and natural or artificial stone are required. Other materials such as profiled metal cladding will not be acceptable.
- ◆ Roof pitches should be a minimum of 35°.
- ◆ Where housing is proposed, they should meet the same requirements, outlined above, for the northern portion of the site.

## Open Space / Landscaping

**5.17** As well as incorporating the central open space as described above, proposals should incorporate tree planting to the rear of buildings that will eventually be visible above the rooflines, a characteristic of this area. Planting should merge with the central watercourse to help link the development areas. Open space to the front of the buildings should be simple yet characterful, making use of quality materials. The open space should be seen as a community resource and be designed as such.

## Exotic Species

**5.18** There are a number of clumps of Japanese Knotweed and several Rhododendron bushes within the site. These should be uprooted and any re-growth sprayed. The advice of Scottish Natural Heritage should be sought on the disposal of soil and roots.



Top: Site of former Gairloch Sands Hotel  
Middle: Entrance to the Site  
Bottom: Former staff quarters

## Area C

**5.19** The Depot is a former WW2 building, constructed in concrete with extremely thick walls. Demolition is preferable, but is likely to be expensive. It may be more cost-effective to convert the space to small-scale business or housing uses. Both should be compatible with the amenity of the adjoining housing. Details of parking should be agreed with the Area Roads and Transport Services Manager.

## UTILITIES

**6.1** No problems are anticipated in providing water and sewerage services. Foul and surface water systems should be separate. Developers will be expected to make use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Principles in designing for surface water disposal. SEPA also advise that there should be a presumption against the culverting of watercourses.

**6.2** A high voltage cable runs underground across the site. This may require to be diverted, depending on the development. There is also a 200KVA pole transformer to the east of the Roads depot that, depending on the load requirements, could supply future proposals.

**6.3** Gairloch is a fully digital telephone exchange that can support all digital services with the exception of ADSL. BT will provide a fibre cable at no cost should it be required. If development of the site involves significant telecommunications e.g. a Call Centre, then additional network build to a second exchange may be required.



*Above: Roads Depot*

## Annex 1: PARKING STANDARDS

RESIDENTIAL (Parking spaces per Dwelling)	
Resident Parking within curtilage	2.00
+ Visitor parking (communal, maybe on-street)	0.30
Resident communal parking	1.20
+ Visitor parking (communal, maybe on-street)	0.30
HOTELS, RESTAURANTS etc. (Parking spaces per 100m <sup>2</sup> public floor area)	
Hotel	1 per bedroom + 1 per 3 staff
Public Bars	20 + 1 per 3 staff
Restaurants	10 + 1 per 3 staff
Food Retail	10
OFFICE / INDUSTRIAL (Parking spaces per 100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area)	
Workshops	3
Warehouses	3
Offices	3

## Written Comments

If you have comments about this Development Brief please write to:-

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