

Nairn South Workshop
Thursday 13th January 2011 1-3.30pm

Attendance

The Highland Council

Richard Hartland (Chair) (RH) – *Head of Planning and Building Standards*
Malcolm Macleod (MM) – *Development Plans Manager*
Lynn Bell (LB) – *Graduate Planner*

Scotia/Barratt/Robertson (“the consortium”)

Colin Souter (CS) – *Robertson Homes*
Denis Watt (DW) – *Scotia Homes*
Denis Harper (DH) – *Scotia Homes*
Alastair Struthers (AS) – *Scotia Homes*
John Buchan (JB) – *Michael Gilmour Associates (Agent)*

Muir Smith Evans / Charles Allenby

Robert Evans (RE) – *Muir Smith Evans*
Ewan Anderson (EA) – *7N Architects*
James Carnegie-Arbuthnott (JCA) – *CKD Galbraith*

John Gordon and Son Ltd

Scott Gordon (SG) – *Joint Managing Director John Gordon and Son Ltd*
Ronald Gordon (RG) – *Joint Managing Director John Gordon and Son Ltd*
Colin Mackenzie (CM) – *G H Johnston*

INTRODUCTION

The Highland Council

- MM provided an overview of the LDP position as it relates to South Nairn.
- Consultation on the Proposed Plan closed in December 2010 and a number of responses (around 25) have been received in relation to the development proposed in Nairn South, including one from each of the three development interests present.
- The key objectives of the workshop were set out:
 - To allow a shared understanding of the main issues from the different interests represented at the workshop;
 - To discuss contentious outstanding issues as set out in the Local Development Plan representations (attached to the agenda);
 - To discuss the key role and function of the sawmill in Nairn South and Nairn generally, and the opportunities to accommodate existing and future operations within the development proposals at South Nairn;
 - To allow a basis for further discussions on the commercial (non land use planning) considerations that may be required to be taken forward by those present.

- The next steps in the LDP process were set out – a report will be brought to the next PED Committee meeting on 16th March 2011. Thereafter, unresolved objections will be brought forward to a LDP Examination before Scottish Government appointed Reporter.

Scotia/Barratt/Robertson (“the consortium”)

- JB gave a presentation on the work that the consortium has carried out to date, including a review of the design process through Enquiry by Design. Reference was made to the follow up workshop held in late 2010, where additional public consultation was carried out. The emphasis of the design is on the notion of walkable neighbourhoods.
- Notice was given that the consortium intend to submit a planning application for a phase 1 site based on the proposal presented at the workshop.
- An expansion area for the sawmill was illustrated in line with the existing consent, as well as the buffer area between that and the housing development. The exact nature of the buffer area has not yet been specified.

In discussion:

- DW emphasised the flexibility there could be over the exact nature of the buffer area, including reference to bunding, planting (where commercially viable) and some form of built development.
- Clarification was sought and given on the road linkages between the consortium proposal and Mr Allenby’s land. DW agreed to forward the detailed linkages when the design work is further developed [**ACTION: DW**].

Muir Smith Evans/7N

RE/EA set out the main issues in relation to Mr Allenby’s land ownership:

- Emphasis should be on concentric growth within a much more landscape led design solution
- Further structure planting should be put in place to better define the town edge, and to recognise the landscape character split on the ridge line. Clarification was sought as to whether a landscape assessment had been prepared for the consortium proposal.
- Objection has been made to the phasing schedule set out in the Proposed Plan, particularly in relation to the area of land to the west of Balblair Road identified as “3” in the Plan.
- Reference was made to the importance of a railway crossing to the school – with the only feasible crossing point being at the point closest to the sawmill and on land identified in the adopted Local Plan for sawmill related purposes. A mixed use development may be a better option for this site to allow a fully integrated route across the railway.

- Clarification was also sought on the nature and extent of the sawmill expansion area to the south of the sawmill site.

In discussion:

- RG questioned the need for the railway crossing at all, bearing in mind that the school was approaching capacity. MM clarified that although there may be new schools required in the medium to longer term, at present the school has sufficient capacity (a full and updated assessment will however be carried out once any planning applications have been submitted).
- MM sought clarification as to whether that was the only feasible rail crossing. RE confirmed that they believed this to be the case, having had advice from transport consultants. (Network Rail have not yet been consulted with).

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CM set out the main issues in relation to the sawmill site:

- The sawmill had been operational for many years, and the site is now almost fully developed, employing some 90 people – options for expansion should not be constrained by development encroaching too close to the sawmill site or its expansion area.
- Reservation of the expansion land as identified in the adopted Nairnshire Local Plan and given planning permission is established and accepted from the outset.
- A buffer area should contain a permanent belt of trees located outwith the sawmill expansion area, on land at Nairn South, offering proper separation to development at Nairn South, , and enabling the sawmill to expand and operate as far as possible, unfettered by neighbouring activity. The adopted local plan sets a benchmark for discussion about the nature and depth of a treed buffer.
- The option of retaining land for a distributor link road should be considered; at least until it is clear that it is not required.

In discussion:

- The nature of the buffer area was debated at length, in terms of whether built development would be acceptable, how and by whom a tree belt could be delivered and at what point it might be required. DW sought clarification as to exactly what development expansion was proposed. CM indicated that the expansion area for the sawmill would enable long term growth of the business and that it was not possible or relevant for the sawmill to indicate the nature or layout of specific uses and activities at this stage. The sawmill required maximum flexibility in that regard.
- The land to the west of Balblair road (outwith the Nairn South expansion areas identified in the Highland Wide LDP is to remain as allocated in the adopted Local Plan – for sawmill

related activities. Further clarification on the future use of this land may be required in bringing forward the Plan to the Examination.

Discussion

A wide ranging discussion then took place. No clear agreement of the various issues referred to in this note emerged, but the main conclusions and action points for all parties were as follows:

1. There was general consensus on the need for sawmill expansion and a buffer on land east of Balblair Road; and that any development at Nairn South in the early phases, would be subject to:
 - Further discussion and agreement on the reservation of land for the expansion of the sawmill;
 - Agreement on the nature, extent and timing of the delivery of a buffer between development at Nairn South and the and the sawmill expansion area;
 - Further work on the transport implications of any proposal (on any part of the Nairn South site) taking into account the sawmill traffic movements and the potential for land to be reserved for a distributor road should that be desirable to serve development at Nairn South; and
 - Further consideration of the exact boundaries subject to a review of the representations to the LDP.
2. The area of land to the west of Balblair Road (currently identified as being in later phases of the development of South Nairn) would be assessed in the context of the objections made by Mr Allenby. The ability of this or adjoining land to provide for and integrate with the sawmill will be an important part of this exercise.
3. All parties should progress further discussions on the matters raised at the workshop in the run up to the LDP Committee meeting in March and Examination which will follow. The Highland Council will also be considering the other representations made in relation to Nairn South and assessing the implications of the issues raised for presentation to members on 16th March 2011.

The Highland Council

10/02/11