



Nairn Town Centre Development Brief
Leasachaidh Meadhan Baile
Inbhir Narann

March 2011
Am Màrt 2011

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1 Introduction & Purpose

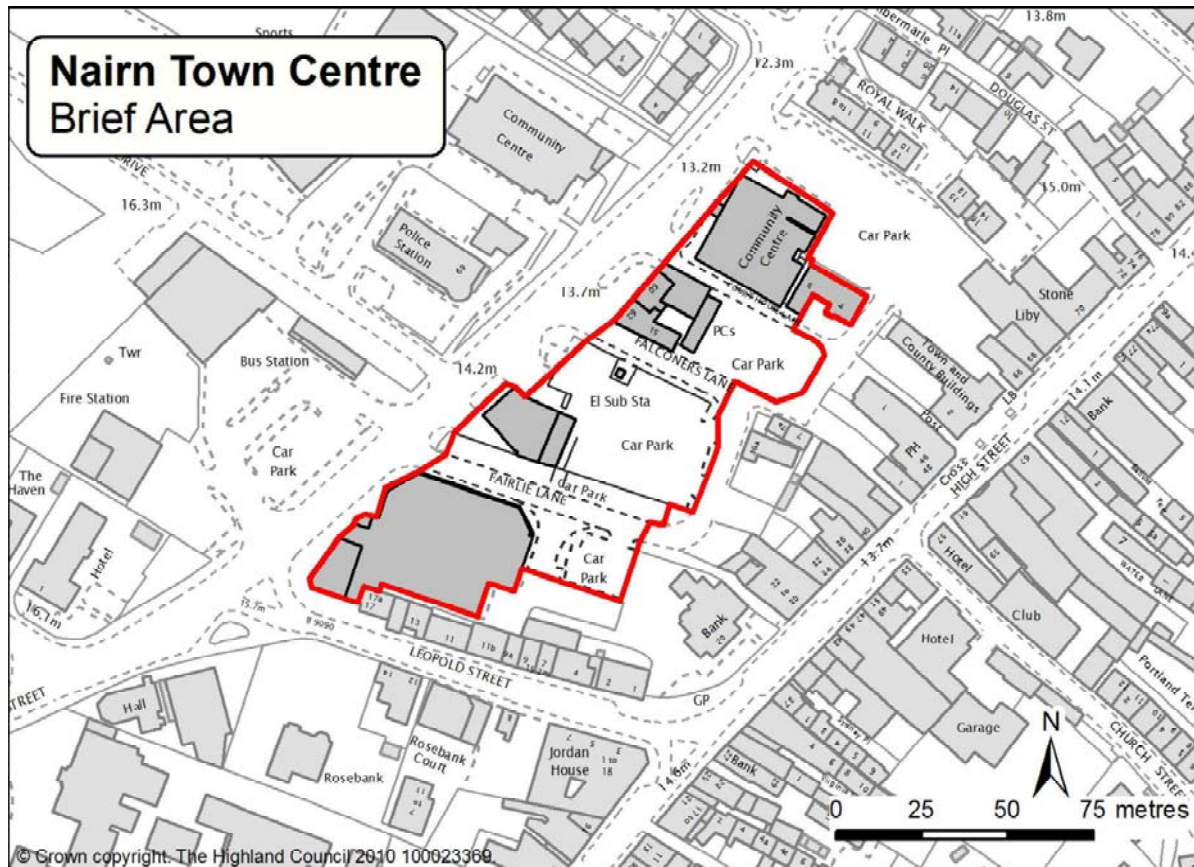
Ro-ràdh agus Adhbhar

1.1 This development brief has been prepared to promote the regeneration of part of Nairn Town Centre. In particular, it targets that part of the centre bordered by the library car park, King Street, High Street and Leopold Street, as shown on the map below. Relocation of the community centre and other uses has left a series

of vacant or underutilised buildings in this area which detract from the physical appearance of the area and the vitality of the town centre.

1.2 The land within the Brief area is owned by The Highland Council and the Co-op. Updating the Council's planning policy for this area will stimulate these landowners to take action to dispose of, to refurbish and/or to redevelop their surplus assets.

1.3 Action is needed because of the recent decision of the Co-op not to expand its Co-op/Somerfield foodstore in the town centre in line with the planning permission it had obtained. The Council's current planning policy has offered long standing support for a larger supermarket in this area but the Co-op's decision and the planning permission for Sainsbury's near Balmakeith makes a review necessary.



2 Objectives of Development Brief Mion-amasan

2.1 The detailed objectives of this Brief are to:

- add to the commercial vitality and viability of the town centre;
- improve the physical appearance of this part of the town centre;
- improve the quality of pedestrian links and increase footfall within the wider town centre, notably the High Street, and;
- set out a framework to achieve a comprehensive and cohesive approach to development including layout, access, sustainable design principles, and servicing.



3 Constraints & Opportunities Cuingalachaidhean is Cothroman

3.1 Several **constraints** exist that will shape how the Brief area can be developed. The presence of the A96 trunk road and its attendant congestion presents access and environmental challenges although a future bypass will remove these. The complex, multiple junction road layout and in parts, narrow, one-way system within the Brief area makes adding further development problematic. Retention of service and private parking

access to the rear of High Street properties is another related issue. This complexity results from the ad hoc arrangement, sizes and types of buildings which also add visual confusion. In simple terms, it is not obvious to the first time visitor how to reach the High Street.

3.2 Availability of sufficient parking is a key issue for many. Opinions differ as to whether the existing public parking provision is adequate in terms of quantity, management and location. The retained Co-op foodstore will also require its share of public and/or “dedicated” supermarket parking.

3.3 Retail and other commercial competition from adjoining centres, such as Inverness, has been a contributory factor in units becoming vacant, a high turnover of establishments, reduced footfall, leakage of spending power locally and a lack of investment in the physical condition and appearance of buildings. The cost of refurbishment or demolition of redundant structures will add to development costs. There are also property market and public finance constraints.

3.4 Other constraints include potential contamination within the tanks at the former filling station and the existing electricity sub station. These features will require remediation, relocation or a suitable safeguard.

3.5 However, many positive **opportunities** also exist. The A96 offers the site trunk road visibility and the prospect of passing trade which is commercially attractive. The Brief area’s location adjacent to the town centre, its High Street and public car parking is also a commercial advantage. More widely, Nairn as a town is earmarked for significant growth which will generate demand for products and

services. Only 7 miles from the Highland's principal airport and with an inter-city rail link, Nairn also boasts Royal Burgh status and is a popular tourist and leisure location as well as an important golfing destination.

3.6 The Brief area is bordered by high quality built heritage including several listed buildings notably 4-6 Court House Lane. The buildings of poorest appearance are the ones that are available for redevelopment and these sites are in prominent frontage locations which create the opportunity to create new, high quality, landmark buildings. This will counteract the current lack of focal point buildings within the Brief area which is in contrast to Nairn High Street which features several eye catching buildings such as the Court House. Recent physical improvements to the High Street have also given the wider town centre an uplift.



3.7 Perhaps most positively, this is a town centre location with all the sustainability advantages that offers. Adding more people and jobs here is the optimum place to do it in terms of encouraging active travel and public transport accessibility. It is also close to mains water and sewerage networks and there are no known capacity issues. Even the road network challenges outlined above can be looked at as an opportunity. Simplifying present arrangements could deliver a net improvement.

4 Planning Policy Context

A' Dealbhadh Co-theacsa Poileasaidh

4.1 The Council's current statutory local plan, the Nairnshire Local Plan was adopted in 2000 and safeguards the site for a larger supermarket and ancillary uses. The most relevant policy states (extract):

"The Council will encourage development of a suitable supermarket, related servicing and ancillary facilities within the area identified on the Proposals Map. Scope may exist to include land to the west of the A96 for ancillary purposes or parking. Development - which could include mixed-uses - will be expected to incorporate land assembly, relocation of displaced activities and public car parking as necessary. The Council is prepared to assist with land assembly through the use of compulsory purchase powers as necessary. Design and layout should pay particular attention to the following:

- *scale and quality of the townscape character, including listed buildings and the proposed conservation area;*
- *compatibility with wider town centre functions and initiatives, including servicing and enhancement; and*
- *respect for the main patterns of pedestrian movement, including direct frontage links with the main shopping street. ..."*

4.2 This local plan is now under review as part of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. However, this new plan process involves several statutory phases over a 3 year period. Therefore the Council has produced the Brief as an interim, update of the Council's planning policy for this part of the town centre. It

has now been approved as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance and as a material planning consideration in judging future planning applications in the area. It will help inform the Council's decisions and those of other private interests in marketing or developing land at this location.

5 Assumptions Gabhail

5.1 Following consultation, the Council has agreed that any future development of the Brief area should be shaped by the following **assumptions**:

- any development should not result in a significant net loss of general needs public parking bays (see developer requirements below);
- the Co-op will require adequate, dedicated foodstore parking;
- the public toilets will be provided elsewhere in the town centre;
- the following historic buildings should be retained (4-6 Court House Lane, 60-62 King Street, 15 Falconers Lane and the building to the north west of the public conveniences);

- the Regal Bar and former Regal Cinema should be redeveloped.
- there should be a reduction in the number of junctions off the A96 into the Brief area and that circulation patterns within the area should be simplified;
- any development should result in a net improvement to the physical appearance of the Brief area, and;
- any development should add to the vitality and viability of the town centre.



6 Development Leasachaidh

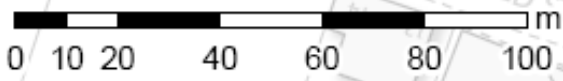
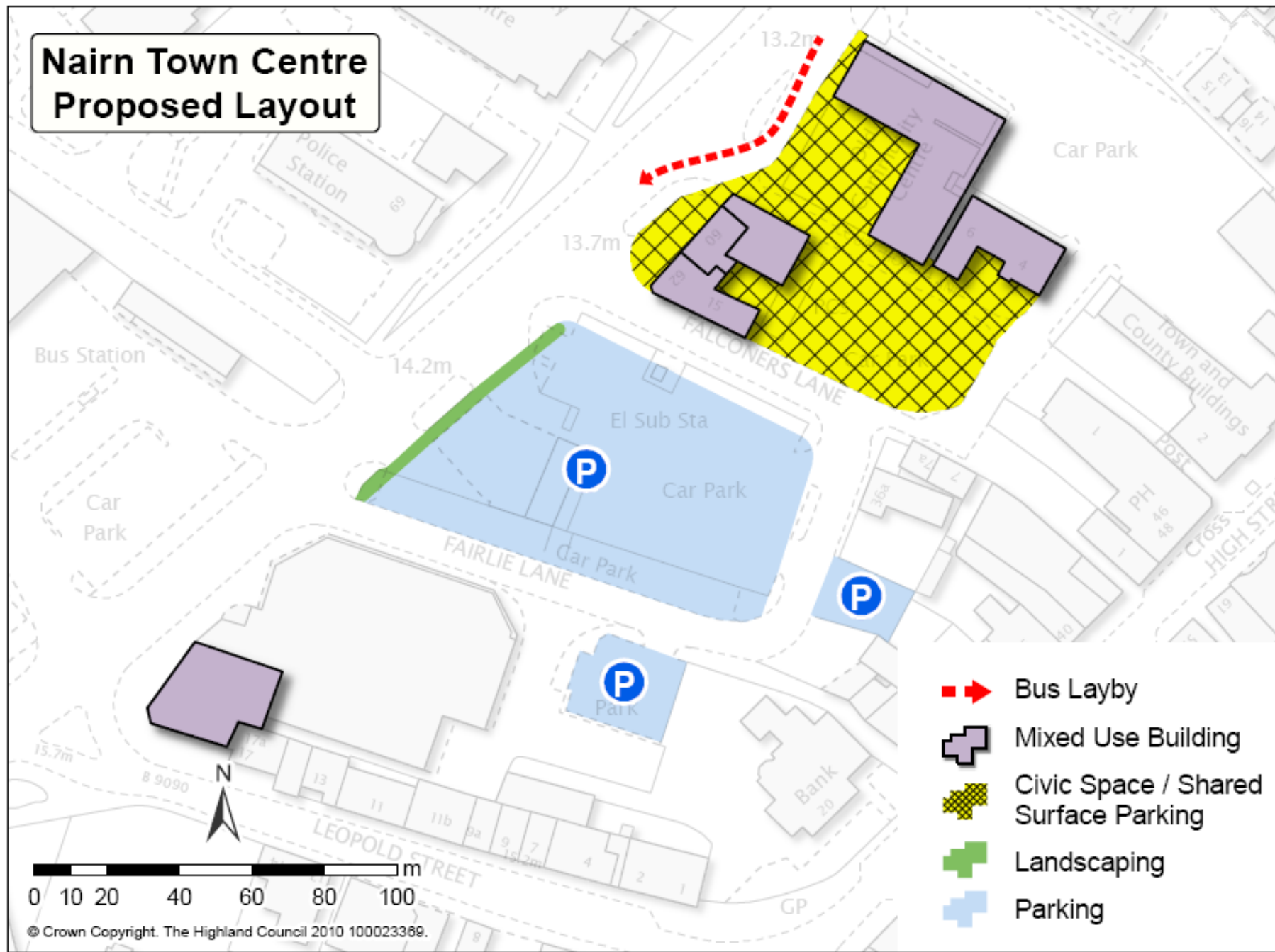
6.1 Based on the context outlined above and the results of consultation a **development layout** is proposed (see below).

6.2 It incorporates the following **key features**:

- demolition of the former petrol filling station structures and this area redeveloped to provide dedicated foodstore parking with a landscaped A96 frontage;
- demolition of the former community centre building and redevelopment of its site to provide an L-shaped building and part civic space;
- demolition of the public toilets and provision of them elsewhere in the town centre;
- demolition of the former Regal Bar and Regal Cinema buildings with redevelopment of the combined site for a landmark building;
- all building blocks other than the existing Co-op to be mixed use;
- retention and refurbishment of the following historic buildings (4-6 Court House Lane, 60-62 King Street, 15 Falconers Lane and the building to the north west of the public conveniences);
- creation of a civic space (as indicated on the layout map below);
- closure of Court House Lane to motorised vehicles and improved provision for cyclists and pedestrians, and;
- bus lay-by provision on the A96 frontage.



Nairn Town Centre Proposed Layout



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Developer Requirements

6.3 Developers will be expected to comply with the following requirements in pursuing any planning application within the Brief area:

- the use of each building block should be mixed;
- acceptable uses will be retail, office, tourism, community, leisure, other business, and housing;
- all ground floor uses should add to the vitality and viability of the town centre (i.e. generate additional footfall);
- landscaping of the Fairlie Lane car park frontage to the A96 (and to the frontage of the former petrol filling station);
- creation of a civic space as outlined on the layout map above;
- this civic space should be multi-purpose, landscaped, include an element of shared surface parking; and incorporate a focal feature with local historical associations;
- creation of a bus lay-by and shelter on the A96 to the front of the former community centre;
- adequate access for the disabled including mitigation of the site's sloping nature;
- no significant net loss of general needs public parking bays (if any developer proposes a more intensive development than shown on the layout map then that developer must demonstrate by means of a parking study and assessment how equivalent public parking will be provided (whether multi-storey, decked, off-site, better management etc.);
- a reduction in the number of accesses off the A96 into the Brief area and a simplification of existing circulation patterns;
- any application should result in a net improvement to the physical appearance of the Brief area;
- retention and refurbishment of the following historic buildings (4-6 Court House Lane, 60-62 King Street, 15 Falconers Lane and the building to the north west of the public conveniences);
- ensure any new buildings respect the local vernacular (see design principles below);
- retention and improvement of pedestrian and cycle connections, and;
- provision of better signage to the town centre.

7 Design Principles Prionnsapalan Dealbhaidh

7.1 The Brief area sits within an urban, town centre context which provides a degree of shelter. It is also gently sloping, down from south to north. Nairn's **climate** is drier and sunnier than large parts of Highland and its coastal location also moderates temperature



variations. Accordingly, it provides a suitable microclimate for development. **Public views and vistas** are limited by surrounding development and by looking on to the less attractive rear of the High Street buildings. These design factors suggest developments that will maximise the solar gain provided by south facing elevations and have their main axes parallel to the site's contours.

7.2 Principal axes of buildings that run roughly east-west would also fit with the grain of existing development and access roads and help extend the pedestrian vennels to **better connect King Street with the town centre both visually and physically**. However, the creation of a more **attractive frontage to King Street** is also important. This is the most public face of the town centre and

therefore should be improved to entice visitors and consumers into the Brief area and High Street. This can be achieved in a variety of ways by:

- creating an attractive and purposeful civic space in a location that can be seen by those passing on the A96;
- improving access to the Brief area and town centre by rationalising junctions, by better signage, and by making the entrance of and to public and supermarket parking more obvious and attractive;
- opening up views of the Brief area from the A96, and;
- improving the physical appearance of the poorest frontage buildings (by demolition and better designed redevelopment) and by landscaping.



7.3 The Brief area lies adjacent to the historic core of Nairn Town Centre where the majority of buildings, several of which are listed, are of **traditional design**. Proposals must therefore be sympathetic to this context, taking account of the local vernacular architecture with the general massing, external walls and roofline articulated to create visual interest and reduce dominance. Facing and roofing materials should harmonise with the local townscape character.

7.4 Strong **active travel** links into and through the site must also be a key component of proposals to ensure new development is well integrated with the surrounding urban environment. Walking, cycling and public transport use should be at the forefront of the development design process, in particular visual and pedestrian integration with the rest of the town centre will be a crucial design requirement.



7.5 Proposals will be required to meet the Council's technical requirements. The Council's Road Guidelines for New Developments sets out new road design and parking standards. There is also a requirement to meet refuse and recycling standards. The current recycling point use should be retained within the Brief area but if relocated, sited to preserve suitable low loader access and to ensure no incompatibility with adjoining uses.

Further Information

Further information on the Brief can be obtained from:

Director of Planning & Development
The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

Or by contacting Tim Stott on 01463 702265

The Highland Council has worked with the local community in formulating this Brief. Details of the consultation are available via: <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/NairnTownCentreDraftDevelopmentBrief.htm>

As part of the consultation process, Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise, a local community company, produced a detailed layout for the Brief area and adjacent parts of the town centre highlighting its aspirations. This can be accessed via: www.nicenairn.org.uk