

Highland-wide Local Development Plan Examination

Hearing Session 2 - Wednesday, 28 September 2011
Maclean Room, Eden Court Theatre, Inverness

REPORTERS' FULLER DISCUSSION PROGRAMME

SCOPE

This hearing, as with the examination as a whole, is only to assess issues raised in unresolved representations. It is not the task of the reporters to make the plan as good as it can be. Only where parts of the plan are clearly inappropriate or insufficient will the reporters recommend that the plan be modified.

Some parts of the plan may be carrying forward matters contained in the existing development plan. Unless it is plain that circumstances have changed, the reporters will not generally recommend modification of such matters.

All of these limitations on the scope of the examination should be kept in mind during the hearing.

AGENDA ITEM 1

This item refers to existing documents. So far, from their reading of the submissions, the reporters have identified the following documents as being of particular significance.

- National Planning Framework for Scotland 2
- The Highland Structure Plan
- Inverness Local Plan
- Nairnshire Local Plan
- The A96 Growth Corridor Development Framework
- Scottish Planning Policy
- Chief Planner's letter of 29 October 2010
- Housing Need and Demand Assessment

Brief notes regarding some of the content of these documents are recorded in the accompanying annex.

The reporters wish to have parties' views on:

- (a) whether, in addition to the documents listed above, there are other documents of special significance in relation to the proposed plan; and
- (b) the extent to which these documents should control or influence the reporters when they make their recommendations.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Under this item, the reporters envisage discussion of plan proposals for:

- (a) Tornagrain
- (b) Croy
- (c) Cawdor
- (d) Whiteness

This will not preclude reference to other locations where appropriate. Discussion will focus on matters raised in representations

AGENDA ITEM 3

(a) Residential development in Nairn in overall terms

In the proposed plan, table 3 on page 50 specifies sites for 1,196 dwellings for the period 2011 to 2021 and sites for 739 dwellings for the period 2021 to 2031. Some “windfall” development is also envisaged. What methodology was used to arrive at these figures? If the proposed total amount of development and its timing are not appropriate, what method should be used to identify amount and timing?

(b) Other development in association with residential development at Nairn as a whole

(i) Is there a limit to the amount of development that should take place at Nairn as a whole prior to implementation of improvements to transport links between the town and Inverness? If there is such a limit, how much development may take place before it is reached? What transport improvements between Nairn and Inverness would then be required so that further development might proceed?

(ii) Is there a limit to the amount of development that should take place at Nairn as a whole prior to construction of an A96 by-pass of the town? If there is such a limit, how much development may take place before it is reached?

(iii) Are there non-residential developments that should take place in relation to the proposed residential development? For example:

Should phasing of the residential development be related to simultaneous increases in the amount of locally-available employment?

Are there requirements for investment in water supply or sewage treatment if desired amounts of development are to proceed?

(c) Constraints (if any) on individual sites in Nairn

In the proposed plan, map 9 on page 51 shows four sites: Lochloy, Sandown, Delnies and Nairn South. What constraints (if any) need to be overcome if development as shown or as desired is to proceed? How much development would be permissible before each constraint must be addressed?

ANNEX

EXISTING DOCUMENTS

National Planning Framework for Scotland 2

The National Planning Framework was published in June 2009. In it, Inverness is one of nine strategic concentrations of economic activity (map 3, page 20). The associated area extends east to Nairn. Key locations offering substantial strategic growth potential include the Inverness to Nairn Corridor (paragraph 58). The Inverness to Nairn Corridor is one of five places where major change is taking place. The scale and complexity of the issues to be addressed means that co-ordinated action is needed in the national interest (paragraph 185).

Highlands and Islands Enterprise considers that half-a-million is a realistic population target for the Highlands and Islands, an increase of around 15% on the population in 2005 (paragraph 211). The Inverness City Vision is playing an important role in guiding future development (paragraph 212).

The A96 corridor between Inverness and Nairn is the main focus of growth in the Inner Moray Firth. Highland Council's *A96 Corridor Development Framework* includes proposals designed to accommodate an additional 30,000 people in the area over 35 years. These include significant expansion to the east of Inverness and at Nairn, the creation of a new settlement at Tornagrain, and a residential and marina development at Whiteness. The Government's *Strategic Transport Projects Review* identifies the need to dual the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and to provide a new rail station, airport interchange and park-and-ride facilities at Dalcross. It also identifies a package of improvements to the rail line (paragraph 214).

The Inverness to Nairn Corridor is identified as one of six areas where co-ordinated action is needed to support economic development, regeneration and the harnessing of marine energy resources (paragraph 238).

The Highland Structure Plan

The Highland Structure Plan was approved in 2001. Part of the spatial strategy is to build on growth, particularly in Inverness (1.6.2, first bullet point) and, within the Inner Moray Firth, to encourage a shift in the pattern of development, with a degree of decentralisation from Inverness, particularly to the smaller towns (1.6.2, second bullet point). Development diversion is directed to, amongst other places, Culloden and Nairn (figure 7, page 17).

Inverness Local Plan

The Inverness Local Plan was adopted in 2006. Included in the plan are proposals for some of the land at East Inverness (map 6 on page 37 of the proposed Highland-wide Local Development Plan). These existing proposals are described on pages 31

to 36 of the Written Statement of the Inverness Local Plan, and include retailing (7), campus development (8(vii)), business (9, 11 and 12) and park-and-ride (32).

Nairnshire Local Plan

The Nairnshire Local Plan was adopted in 2000. It includes: (a) two town expansion areas – Balmakeith and Sandown-Tradespark; (b) land at Balblair Road and Cawdor Road for expansion of the saw mill; (c) beyond the saw mill expansion area, land for tree planting and land retained in agricultural use with a “presumption against piecemeal development in the interests of the orderly expansion of the town in the longer term” (S5, 13).

The A96 Growth Corridor Development Framework

The Framework was approved by the Council in 2007 and is being treated as supplementary planning guidance. The Framework describes proposals that will, over the next 35 years, provide accommodation for around 30,000 people in 16,500 homes. There is reference to potential for over 20,000 jobs (Summary).

Excluding water and sewerage, around £326m of strategic infrastructure investment is required, 46% public, 54% private. The latter is to be raised through a development funding protocol (Summary).

The strategy takes forward:

- planning for population growth of 20-30,000 people over the next 30-50 years;
- a new settlement of 10,000 located south of Inverness Airport to be developed post-2011;
- a new community/resort at Whiteness for around 3,000 people;
- growth of existing smaller settlements, as allocated in the relevant development plans, accommodating up to 3,000 people; and
- review of the scope for long-term development at Nairn and Inverness East, incorporating transport improvements (including dualling of the A96) and a strategy to enhance landscape/heritage features supplemented by recreational facilities.

(page 3)

For the Nairn Development Framework (page 17), a town by-pass is critical. New, mixed developments, primarily at Delnies and Nairn South, would see an additional 4,600 dwellings, a population growth of 9,700 and 5,000 new jobs (pages 17 and 18).

For the East Inverness Framework, critical matters are by-passing Raigmore junction and delivery of a new university campus. There would be an additional 3,471 dwellings, a population growth of 7,250, 3,750 new jobs and 55,000 square metres of campus development.

At Whiteness, outline planning permission has been granted for residential, leisure and other uses (page 25).

At Dalcross, there are three proposals: the airport business park, airport expansion, and a new settlement at Tornagrain with 4,500 dwellings for 9,500 people (page 26).

Some limited growth of smaller settlements to meet local needs will be essential. Appropriate locations for this are Auldearn, Ardersier, Cawdor, Croy and Culloden Moor (page 13).

Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy was published in 2010. It contains Government policy on a wide range of planning topics. As new housing is a major component of the overall development proposal for the A96 corridor, the Housing section (paragraph 66 onwards) is particularly relevant.

Chief Planner's letter of 29 October 2010

This letter refers to the changed economic climate and reminds local authority planners of the need to maintain no less than a five-year supply of effective housing land to ensure a continuing generous supply of land for housing. (See paragraph 75 of Scottish Planning Policy.) It also advises that, where a planning authority has a five-year supply of effective housing land but the impediment to development is availability of mortgages or low level of demand from purchasers, there will be little if anything to be gained by releasing additional sites.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment

The Council has produced a Housing Need and Demand Assessment. This Assessment is considered to be robust and credible (letter dated 9 April 2010 from the Scottish Government). The approach used in preparing the Assessment is thus not expected to be questioned (paragraph 67 of Scottish Planning Policy).