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18 December 2009

Brian Archibald
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H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
21 DEC 2009		
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Dear Sir

**Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates ref 732
The Highland Council
West Highlands & Islands Local Plan Examination
Fort William Hearing Sessions Day 1 (am)
Business and Expansion Sites B6, MU6 and MU16 (Glen Nevis Business Park and Claggan/
Achintee): The Proposed Scale, Uses, Environmental Impact and Effects on Existing Residents**

Further to your letter of 18 November 2009 and my subsequent email of 30 November 2009 I enclose the written statement on behalf of Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates in relation to this issue.

I will be attending the hearing session on behalf of Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates.

Yours sincerely

John Hillis
Surveyor
Scotland – Planning

cc	Tricia Jordan, The Nevis Partnership, 101 High St., Fort William, PH33 6DG
	Mrs Mary Bruce, Fort William Community Council, Seallach Cuil, 7 Perth Place, Fort William, PH33 6UL
	Inverloch Castle Ltd., c/o Ms Alison Polson, Brodies LLP, 2 Blytheswood Sq., Glasgow, G2 4AD
	Scottish Natural Heritage, The Governor's House, The Parade, Fort William PH33 6BA
	The Highland Council, c/o Mr Tim Stott, Principal Planner, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates

West Highland & Islands Local Plan Examination, Fort William Hearing Sessions

B6/ MU6 Glen Nevis Business Park & Expansion Site MU16 Claggan/ Achintee

December 2009

Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates
B6/ MU6 Glen Nevis Business Park & Expansion Site MU16 Claggan/ Achintee
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NOTE: Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates (RTAHE) are represented on the Nevis Partnership. RTAHE note the Nevis Partnerships objection to MU16 and would confirm for the sake of clarity that, on this issue, they are at odds with the Nevis Partnerships position.

Subject 1: Adopted Local Plan Allocations and Extant Planning Consents

RTAHE agree with The Highland Councils (THC) analysis of the position in relation to the Lochaber Local Plan.

It is likely that a planning permission existed at some point for the construction of the already built tarmac road into site MU16 that was originally intended to serve a proposed land-fill facility.

Subject 2: Relevant Structure Plan Provisions

The safeguarding of land for the expansion of the Ben Nevis Business & Industrial Estate with the Highland Structure Plan underlines the importance of sites B6 and MU6 to the development of Lochabers economy.

Subject 3: Relevant Environmental Effects

Having studied the results of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) we note that the development of the 3 sites and MU16 in particular will have an environmental impact. RTAHE also note that the SEA identifies that, in respect of each identified impact there is an opportunity to mitigate its potentially adverse affects or to improve the overall situation in relation to the specific feature.

One further observation from the SEA is that it does not recognise, in respect of site MU16, any opportunity to encourage more sustainable travel patterns. RTAHE would point out that, looking at the B6, MU6 and MU16 together there is opportunity to create a strong connection between MU16 and existing and proposed neighbouring employment land at B6 & MU6 to build a sustainable community, subject to protecting the power supply serving the Aluminium Smelter and the existing substation.

Rio Tinto Alcan take their role of custodianship of the land they own in Lochaber and Badenoch & Strathspey seriously. They are currently taking forward a significant programme of native woodland restoration in Glen Nevis in partnership with Glen Nevis Estate and the John Muir Trust and have a clear objective of improving the environmental condition of the Glen for the benefit of all. As landowners and custodians Rio Tinto Alcan would be committed to delivering a development:

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- Worthy of its setting;
- The result of imaginative, responsive and sensitive design.

The site is located within the boundaries of the Ben Nevis and Glen Coe National Scenic Area and in close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. Ensuring a development of the highest quality which is recessive in the landscape will be imperative going forward.

Subject 4: What is the Development Potential of the Sites?

The main promoters of sites B6 and MU6 have been Highlands & Islands Enterprise and The Highland Council. RTAHE are supportive of the expansion of the industrial estate and Business Park in response to market demands.

The plans intended primary use for site MU16 is a 93 unit residential scheme. We would support the assertion contained within the Highland Councils Statement of Further Information that there is capacity within the local water and wastewater networks to service that level of development and that connections are available within a relatively short distance of the site.

At 9 units per hectare the proposed density of development could be described as low. Whilst proposed densities on other MU expansions sites are higher it is considered that the site is economically viable at this density and that there will be sufficient land left over from the residential element of the development to allow scope for a mix of different uses. Furthermore the proposed density of development will allow for structural planting throughout and around the site to protect the setting.

Subject 5: What Scope is there to Accommodate Different Uses on the Mixed Use Sites?

As referred to at Subject 4 above, the proposed density of development means that there is considerable scope and flexibility for different uses on MU16. Particular consideration will be given, during the preparation of the developer master plan, to looking at the scope for residential tourist accommodation and the provision of interpretation and visitor management facilities on the site.

Subject 6: What are the Physical, Servicing and Environmental Constraints on Development?

The environmental constraints have been analysed by The Highland Council through the SEA process and this has been dealt with at section 3 above.

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Water and wastewater servicing constraints have been dealt with at subject 4 above.

Off-site road network improvements are required in order to upgrade the partly single track road between Claggan and the site. Whilst some of the land required to affect these upgrading works is in 3rd party ownership there is sufficient undeveloped land on either side of the road to physically allow for the widening work.

Subject 7: Is there scope for allocating specific parts of the site for particular uses, and if so, which parts and which uses?

The text accompanying the allocation of site MU16 ensures that the developer masterplan will identify those individual parts of the site that will be used for:

1. Planting
2. "Safe-guarding" zone to separate development from power lines and the electricity sub-station
3. Open Space
4. Affordable Housing
5. Footpaths
6. Playing Field
7. Possible School

It is considered that the requirement for a developer funded master plan which would be the subject of extensive public consultation in line with new statutory requirements is the appropriate way to test which uses are most suitable to different parts of the site. Attempting to allocate different uses at present without the full benefit of studies required as part of a master plan would limit the flexibility of the developer to put together a scheme which was most suitable for the location.

Subject 8 – What Adverse Effects Would Arise from the Development of these Sites?

Given the requirement for a developer funded master plan and the statutory requirement for further public consultation on the options for the development of the site as part of any planning application, it considered that any adverse effects from the development can be mitigated or avoided.