Agenda Item	5.2
Report No	PLN/045/19

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 4 June 2019

Report Title: 19/01550/PAN: Wildland Ltd per LUC

Strathmore Lodge, Altnacallich, Altnaharra, Lairg

Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 **Description:** Realignment of c. 450m of unclassified public road, including the provision of a new stone-faced arched bridge, three passing places and visibility splays at new/existing iunctions. Replacement of existing hydro-electric installation penstock and generator (capacity TBC). Restoration of extant 'bothy' for residential use; remodelling and refurbishment of existing house to remove residential annex and clad to match Strathmore Lodge. Creation of new turbine house with ground floor workshop/garage Demolition of existing turbine house. space. Ancillary landscape works to restore hydro access track, remove redundant hardstanding, rationalise parking and facilitate integration in wider landscape
 - Ward: 01 North, West and Central Sutherland

2.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the submission of the PAN and highlight any material issues they wish to be brought to the attention of the applicant before the submission of the application for planning permission.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 To inform the Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 3.2 The submission of the PAN accords with the provisions of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and was lodged on the 1st April 2019 and made valid on 12th April 2019 following the submission of a satisfactory Location Plan. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent planning application
- 3.3 The submitted information attached includes:
 - Proposal of Application Notice
 - Location Plan
 - Covering Letter
 - Copy of Advert (detailing public events)

4. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The PAN provides notice of the developer's intention to submit a planning application for the restoration and renovation of a number of buildings on the grounds of Strathmore Lodge, along with upgrading and remediation work to the Hydro Scheme and its access track and realignment of-, and improvements to, the Strathmore Hope public road (C1034) layout (including a new stone faced arched bridge).

5. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 5.1 The proposed development site forms approximately 3.3ha of land containing a number of buildings and features associated with Strathmore Lodge at Altnacailich. The site comprises three accommodation cottages including Strathmore Lodge, outbuildings for estate management and hunting, a hydroelectric scheme with turbine building and a disused walled graveyard.
- 5.2 The proposal site lies on raised ground on the eastern banks of the Strathmore River, south of Loch Hope. The site is dissected by a branch of the river and a burn that runs westward down the steep slopes at the site's east that serves the hydro scheme. The Strathmore Hope Road marks the western boundary of the site.
- 5.3 The site is located on the western edge of the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area (NSA) and contains a small part of the Ben Hope Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

- 28 Sustainable Design
- 29 Design Quality & Place-making
- 31 Developer Contributions

- 36 Development in the Wider Countryside
- 43 -Tourism
- 44 -Tourist Accommodation
- 57 Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
- 58 Protected Species
- 61 Landscape
- 64 Flood Risk
- 66 Surface Water Drainage

6.2 Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (August 2018)

No site specific policies

6.3 Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010) Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013) Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013) Highland Renewable Energy Strategy & Planning Guidelines (May 2006) Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012) Sustainable Design Guidance

6.4 **Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance**

Scottish Planning Policy (June 2014)

7. POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 National Policy
 - National Planning Framework 3
 - Development plan policies and relevant supplementary guidance
 - Planning history
 - Siting and Design
 - Landscape and visual impacts (including cumulatively)
 - Transport planning and road safety issues
 - Access and parking (operational and construction) including public access during road realignment
 - Impact upon the Historic Environment
 - Drainage, Flooding and the Water Environment
 - Contaminated land
 - Impact on designated landscapes, Ecology and protected species
 - Impact on Peat

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The report sets out the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. Summarised are the policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered as well as the potential material planning considerations and key issues based on the information available to date. The list is not exhaustive and further matters may arise as and when a planning application is received and in the light of public representations and consultation responses.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 9.2 Legal: Not applicable
- 9.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 9.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Not applicable
- 9.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 9.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

10. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended the Committee notes the submission of the PAN and advises of any material issues it wishes to be brought to the applicant's attention.

Designation:	Area Planning Manager North
Author:	Mark Fitzpatrick
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans:	Plan 1 - Application Form	
	Plan 2 - Location Plan E-(AII)-004	
Supporting Information:	Copy of Public Event Advertisement	
	Covering Letter	



PROPOSAL OF APPLICATION NOTICE MOLADH BRATH IARRTAIS

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

The Council will respond within 21 days of receiving the Notice. It will advise whether the proposed Pre-application Consultation is satisfactory or if additional notification and consultation above the statutory minimum is required. Please note that a planning application for this proposed development cannot be submitted less than 12 weeks from the date the Proposal of Application Notice is received by the Council and without the statutory consultation requirements having been undertaken. The planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application consultation report.

Applicant	Wildland Ltd.	Agent	LUC
Address	1st Floor, 2 Granish Way,	Addres	S 28 Stafford Street,
	Dalfaber Drive,		Edinburgh,
	Aviemore, PH22 1UQ		EH3 7BD.
Phone No.		Phone	0131 202 1616
E-mail		E-mail	Erin.Hynes@landuse.co.uk Edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Address or Location of Proposed Development Please state the postal address of the prospective development site. If there is no postal address, please describe its location. Please outline the site in red on a base plan to a recognised metric scale and attach it to this completed Notice

Strathmore Lodge, Alltnacaillich, Lairg, IV27 4UL

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Description of Development Please include detail where appropriate – eg the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m^2 of any buildings not for residential use; the capacity of any electricity generation or waste management facility; and the length of any infrastructure project. Please attach any additional supporting information.

Realignment of c. 450m of unclassified public road, including the provision of a new stone-faced arched bridge, three

passing places and visibility splays at new/existing junctions. Replacement of existing hydro-electric installation penstock and

generator (capacity TBC). Restoration of extant 'bothy' for residential use; remodelling and refurbishment of

existing house to remove residential annex and clad to match Strathmore Lodge. Creation of new turbine

house with ground-floor workshop/garage space . Demolition of exising turbine house. Ancillary landscape

works to restore hydro access track, remove redundant hardstanding, rationalise parking and facilitate integration in wider landscape.

Pre-application Screening Notice

Has a Screening Opinion been issued on the need for a Proposal of Application notice by the Highland Council in respect of the proposed development?

If yes please provide a copy of this Opinion.

YES.

NO.....

Preapplication advice 18/04949/PREAPP appended.

Community Consultation [See checklist of Statutory minimum consultation attached]

State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of Application Notice.

Community Council/s	Date Notice Served
Durness Community Council Notices served by email to CC secretary / chair	01/04/2019
Tongue Community Council	01/04/2019
Bettyhill, Strathnaver & Alltnaharra Community Council	01/04/2019
Names/details of any other parties	Date Notice Served

Please give details of proposed public event	sed consultation Venue	Date and time		
Public drop-in consultation event	Durness Village Hall	17/04/19, 3pm-7pm		
Public drop-in consultation event	Tongue Village Hall	18/04/2019, 3pm-7pm		
Newspaper Advert – name of ne	ewspaper Adve	ert date(where known)		
Northern Times	w/c. 08/04			
Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)				
Signed	Date	01/04/2019		

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013

Invitation to View Development Proposals

Land at former Black Isle Wildlife Park, Drumsmittal, North Kessock, Inverness, IV1 3XF

Members of the public are invited by RFA (Development Planning) to view plans for a proposed holiday park development, including holiday chalets, camping pods, caravan/tent pitches, hotel accommodation, formation of access and landscaping and associated infrastructure on land of the former Black Isle Wildlife Park. A manned public exhibition will take place as part of the consultation process on the following date:

Thursday 13th June 2019 at Munlochy Village Hall, Millbank Road, Munlochy,

from 2.00pm to 7.00pm.

Questionnaires will be available at the event and can be handed back to staff on the day of the event or sent to RFA by email or through the post. All comments and feedback should be made to RFA by **Friday 28th June 2019**.

Please send completed questionnaires via email <u>amelia@rickfincassociates.com</u>, or by post to RFA | 3 Walker Street | Edinburgh | EH3 7JY.

Feedback at this stage does not constitute formal representation to The Highland Council. An opportunity to make formal representations to the Council will exist if a subsequent planning application is made.



The Highland Council Development and Infrastructure Town House Inverness IV1 1JJ

 Our reference
 6539

 Your reference
 18/04949

 Date
 27/03/2019

Dear Sir or Madam

Proposed realignment of public road, including new bridge; refurbishment of existing domestic-scale hydroelectric scheme; works to two domestic properties; and ancillary landscape enhancement works at Alltnacaillich, Strathmore, Sutherland: Request for a Screening Opinion pursuant to Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Introduction

Wildland Ltd. ('Wildland') proposes to undertake a range of works to enhance the cluster of buildings centred on the historic Strathmore Lodge to improve accommodation standards and facilities, re-align the adjacent unclassified public road, and restore environmental damage created by the access track to the existing hydroelectric scheme on the Allt na Caillich. The scheme will be tied together and fitted in to the landscape through sensitive architectural and landscape design.

The proposed development was notified to the Highland Council (THC) through the Major Development pre-application advice service. It is held to constitute a 'Major Development' for the purposes of the Regulations¹ on account of the site boundary exceeding 2ha. A pre-application meeting was held between THC, relevant key agencies and Wildland's design team on 21/11/2018. Formal pre-application advice 18/04949/PREAPP was received on 18/12/2018.

The development forms part of Wildland's ongoing programme of restoration and enhancement of historic buildings across its landholdings in Sutherland and beyond. Focused around an ambitious long-term vision of landscape and ecosystem restoration across a significant area of northern Scotland, Wildland seeks to use high quality ecotourism as a means of delivering truly sustainable land management, conservation and community development.

¹ Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009

Site location and context

The proposed development is located in Strathmore, Sutherland (as indicated on Figure 1, appended), on the eastern side of the Strathmore River and adjacent to the Allt na Caillich.

It is a sensitive, remote rural location characterised by the strong contrast of the floodplain and valley of the Strathmore River and the high mountain landscapes of the Ben Hope range to the north east.

A suite of existing buildings occupy the site, the majority of which will be retained and enhanced by the proposals. The historic Strathmore Lodge – a Victorian corrugated iron-clad fishing lodge – has been restored separately under householder permitted development rights, but forms the centrepiece of the building cluster.

The cluster is currently served by an aged, but serviceable, run-of-river hydroelectric scheme installed in the 1950s. The access track associated with the intake for this installation was recently subject to enforcement action by THC, cleared by application 18/03795/FUL, and granted permission in November 2018. The aforementioned was submitted by and is the responsibility of the previous landowner. Nevertheless, Wildland has made provision to undertake the necessary works to the access track to mitigate the environmental harm generated by the unauthorised works to the track, and subsequent flood damage.

The site is located at the extreme western edge of the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area (NSA), and a very small area of the proposed red line boundary lies within the Ben Hope Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The proposed development

Components

The current development proposals have evolved slightly since the pre-application meeting with THC, largely in response to feedback received in the pre-application advice pack.

Current proposals comprise:

Buildings

- Restoration of 19th century one-and-a-half storey 'bothy' building for accommodation and removal of low stone wall for new access and parking.
- Remodelling of existing adjacent bungalow (currently the estate keeper's house), comprising:
 - Demolition of garage and residential annex; and,
 - Exterior remodelling and re-cladding to match Strathmore Lodge.
- Retention of existing game larder north of Strathmore Lodge.
- Removal and re-landscaping of existing livestock pens, hardstanding and sheep-dip north of the Alltnacaillich cemetery.
- Construction of a new one-and-a-half storey combined hydroelectric turbine house and garage / storage building, set partly into the river terrace outside the functional flood plain.
- Ancillary landscape works to tie the building cluster into the landscape, define curtilage/garden area and rationalise access and parking.

Hydro-scheme upgrading and remediation

- Demolition of existing hydroelectric turbine house. (Replacement as above.)
- Consolidation, narrowing and landscape restoration of the existing access track to the intake.

- While this would, in effect, discharge conditions on 18/03795/FUL that permission and its conditions are the sole responsibility of the previous landowner.
 Wildland has made appropriate provision to undertake these works in the event that the previous landowner is unable to discharge said conditions appropriately, to prevent any undue delay to delivery of the project in the event that permission is granted for the proposals discussed in this letter.
- Removal and safe disposal of existing asbestos penstock, and replacement with a steel equivalent on the current route, to the proposed turbine house. Landscape remediation to match surrounding habitats.

Works to the public road

- Realignment of approximately 450m of the unclassified public road at Alltnacaillich to pass to the east of the building cluster.
- Construction of a new single track reinforced concrete / steel bridge, clad in appropriate stone and designed to match local vernacular arched bridges.
- Breaking out and restoration of the existing road corridor south of the building cluster.
- Retention and downgrading of the existing road north of the Allt na Caillich to maintain access to the private road and bridge over the Strathmore River for land management purposes.
- Creation of three passing places to facilitate safe passage of the new stretch of road, with additional reinforcement of verges to enable informal short-stay parking for members of the public wishing to visit the Alltnacaillich graveyard.

As the site boundary area is in excess of 2ha, the proposals are considered to constitute a 'Major Development' as indicated above.

Rationale for the development

Following repeated severe flood events, culminating in the total loss of the previous culvert bridge in 2015, the works to divert the public road are considered vital to the sustainability of the route. The effects of climate change are likely to give rise to increased, and increasingly severe, extreme weather events – making future damage to the current road alignment and bridge a virtual certainty. By moving the at-risk section of road and bridging point out of the immediate flood zone, this risk can be more effectively mitigated.

Moving the road will also enable the building cluster to be redesigned in a more coherent fashion, with new landscape design interventions aiding its integration within a highly sensitive landscape.

Upgrading of the hydro-scheme penstock is required to improve the electricity supply to the off-grid building cluster and remove the ongoing environmental and health risk of the in-situ asbestos penstock. Provision has been made to rectify the extensive environmental and aesthetic harm caused by flood events and unauthorised track works.

The standard of accommodation on site requires substantial improvement. While works to Strathmore Lodge itself, relating to improved insulation, interior fit-out and restoration of windows have been **accomplished under permitted development rights, more substantive works to the 'bothy' and keeper's** house are required.

The scheme has been designed to take into account the interacting environmental sensitivities of the site and will deliver enhancement in terms of improving the quality and appearance of building stock, remediation of current landscape degradation (as indicated above) and improved landscape design to aid **the build cluster's integration in the wider landscape**.

Environmental Impact Assessment regulations

Need for Screening

The proposed development does not fall within the definition of 'Schedule 1 development' for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations').

Review of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations² confirms that the roads element of the scheme, by virtue of **their location within a 'sensitive area' for the purposes of Regulation 2(1)** – namely the Kyle of Tongue NSA – screening for environmental impact assessment is required. As the site boundary exceeds 1ha (although the road works themselves do not) and also intersects with the Ben Hope SSSI, a precautionary approach is required. In 'sensitive areas' any installation for hydroelectric energy production falls within the scope of Schedule 2 of the Regulations and requires screening.

Potential environmental effects

The proposed development will require works within two 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of the EIA

Regulations. A precautionary approach to design and assessment has therefore been applied in order to both identify and avoid potential effects.

Likely sources and levels of effect are as follows:

Buildings

The works to the building cluster will not result in significant environmental effects.

Surveys for bats have been undertaken, confirming the presence of breeding roosts in the game larder and turbine house, and non-**breeding roosts in the keeper's house and garage**. Suitable compensatory provision for roosting space has been designed in to new buildings, and works will be conducted in accordance with an appropriate licence to be agreed with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

The new combined turbine house and garage/store building will be partly set in to the upper river terrace of the Allt na Caillich. This is intended to provide a more elegant and resilient solution to siting of infrastructure than the current stand-alone turbine house, which sits directly on the bank of the Allt na Caillich and is, as such, highly susceptible to flooding.

The length and height of the building have been reduced in response to SNH comments. This has the advantage of pulling the structure further away from the functional floodplain.

Hydro-scheme upgrading and remediation

It is anticipated that minor in-channel works, or works directly adjacent to the water environment will be required to connect the replacement penstock to the existing intake. Significant effects are not anticipated, and works will be timed to coincide with low water levels in the summer months (when the scheme would, in any case, be inoperative).

A separate licence application, under the The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 ('CAR licence') will be made to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)³.

(a)any part of that development is to be carried out in a sensitive area

² Reg 2(1): "Schedule 2 development" means development, other than exempt development, of a description mentioned in Column 1 of schedule 2 where—

³ Ágain, attention is drawn to the separation of this proposed application and 18/03795/FUL. Any licences required in fulfilment of conditions on that permission are the responsibility of the relevant applicant – not Wildland Ltd.

Works to the public road

The road realignment has been carefully designed, through an options appraisal process and a number of iterations, to provide a route that deals appropriately with the identified flood risk, minimises the physical size of the bridge required / length of crossing, avoids sensitive habitats and effects to the functional floodplain of the Allt na Caillich. The options have been tested, including through pegging out on site, to ensure that effects to the landscape are minimised, the route is safe and is deliverable in engineering terms.

A preliminary landscape and visual appraisal has been conducted. It is considered that the development will result in an effect to the local landscape, but this is not considered significant for the purposes of the Regulations and would not affect the special qualities of the NSA.

In its current configuration, it will not give rise to setting change to the Dun Dornaigil broch (Scheduled Monument), approximately 500m to the south. A number of non-designated heritage assets lie in close proximity to the proposed development, including the Cladh Allt na Caillich graveyard and a hut-circle and enclosure of indeterminate, later prehistoric, date. These assets will not experience significant effects for the purposes of the Regulations.

The construction of a new bridge spanning the Allt na Caillich creates the potential for effects to the water environment and aquatic species and habitats. However, it is considered that any such effects – derived principally from the potential for cementitious material entering the watercourse, resulting in particulate pollution and pH change – can readily be avoided through a construction approach that minimises the use of such material and avoids on-site concrete batching. Compliance with CAR General Binding Rule 10, and timing construction for summer, when water levels are low, will further reduce the potential for material being washed into the watercourse by rain or flood events. This will, similarly, avoid interaction with the Atlantic salmon breeding season. It is therefore anticipated that no significant effects will arise.

The construction of the new road will inevitably result in a measure of habitat loss. However, preliminary surveys indicate that this will not give rise to significant effects. In line with SEPA's request in the preapplication advice pack, a survey for groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs) will be conducted, and a peat survey has been added to the specification for the site investigation works.

Proposed planning documentation

While EIA is not considered necessary, a range of environmental reports will be provided in support of the planning application, in addition to those required by statute for Major Developments. The following will be provided:

- Ecological appraisal, including habitat and appropriate Protected Species surveys:
- Further documentation will be provided to SNH in support of relevant licence applications.
- Landscape and visual appraisal.
- Landscape restoration plan.
- Historic environment appraisal.
- Noise assessment.
- Contaminated land report.
- Drainage impact and flood risk statement.
- Transport statement.
- Reporting on additional survey and site investigation works as necessary.

It is anticipated that specialist teams will liaise with THC and relevant key agencies where necessary to agree the approach to and scope of assessment.

Relationship to other consent regimes

It is recognised, as discussed at the pre-application meeting and in correspondence, that additional consents are required. These comprise:

- Road Construction Consent;
- Stopping-up Order (to enable the closure of the existing section of public road);
- SSSI Consent, for the small area of landscape restoration works that lies within the Ben Hope SSSI boundary;
- Licencing under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011, for works in/adjacent to the water environment.

Appropriate applications will be submitted in due course, following further liaison with THC and SNH.

Conclusion

Given the relative sensitivity of the location, extensive work has already been undertaken to understand the likely level of environmental constraint acting on the proposal and appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures designed into the built elements and landscape strategy.

We are therefore confident that significant effects will not arise. Nevertheless, as with all Wildland projects to date, we and the client are committed to well-informed, high quality environmentally responsible design and construction. We will therefore seek to engage with THC and key agencies as the final design resolves following the public and stakeholder consultation process.

We look forward to receiving the Screening Opinion and would be happy to provide any further information required, and to discuss any element of the proposal at your convenience.

Yours faithfully



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6

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Project Title Strathmore Alltnacaillich | Sutherland

Client Wildland Limited Status Planning Drawing Title Existing Location Plans

Date April 2019 Size A3 Project No. 1658A-1 Drawn GMcN

Rev

Scale 1:10,000 & 1:2,500 Drawing No. E-(AII)-004 Checked TT