

Viewfield, Nairn – Policy Paper

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In the last twelve months a number of letters from members of the public in Nairn have been received by the Council regarding the value of the open space at Viewfield and how to safeguard it from inappropriate development. The current development plan work programme does not provide the opportunity to bring forward an early amendment to the Nairnshire Local Plan. However, it was agreed that a draft policy paper would be presented to the Committee recommending a position that the Council would take in relation to future development at Viewfield.



2. Nairnshire Local Plan

- 2.1 General Policy (S5): Special Uses: “The Council will expect existing uses to be maintained unless stated.”
- 2.2 Policy 17: “The Council will encourage community recreation and leisure use of facilities at... Viewfield...”
- 2.3 Land is allocated for open space/community parks/playing fields at Kingsteps, Balmakeith, Tradespark, Sandown and Cawdor Road amounting to 25 ha.

3. Planning Applications

- 3.1 03/00036/OUTNA: Development of new Community Centre on land between Viewfield House and Glebe Road – refused.
- 3.2 04/00012/FULNA: Police Station site - demolition of existing buildings and erection of a new Community Centre. The new Community Centre has a multi-purpose hall, which could be used for a couple of badminton courts or five a side football – approved.
of Viewfield House will be safeguarded from development.”

4. **Existing Uses**

- 4.1 Viewfield is currently home to a number of different leisure and recreation uses. The St Ninian's Bowling Green and Pavilion lies to the south west of the site; Nairn Sports Club occupies the eastern corner of the site and accommodates facilities for squash, a gym, a sauna, a solarium and three outdoor tennis courts; and an area for mini rugby is located to the west of the site behind Viewfield House. Viewfield House itself is currently home to Nairn Museum which specialises in local history, particularly the fishing industry and associated heritage, archaeology and geology.
- 4.2 In addition to these existing uses, Viewfield provides a well used, safe and quiet thoroughfare for pedestrians and cyclists moving between Nairn town centre and the housing to the north west of Nairn.
- 4.3 A shortfall in playing field facilities has existed in Nairn until recently when lottery funding has allowed the grass pitches at Nairn Academy to be greatly improved and made available for community use. A new synthetic pitch at Nairn Academy has also very recently been made available for the community as well.



5. **National Planning Policy Guideline 11**

- 5.1 NPPG 11 sets out how the Scottish Ministers expect open space issues to be considered by local authorities. It recommends that councils carry out an analysis of the spaces in their area and the different needs they serve, and develop local standards for open space. It stresses that disposal of land should only be considered on the basis of an analysis of open space provision and need.
- 5.2 Councils should include in their development plan their views on the level of provision required for sporting and physical recreational facilities, including parks, open spaces, pitches and playing fields.
- 5.3 An exercise carried out as the Nairnshire Local Plan was being reviewed, based on NPPG 11 and the National Playing Fields Standard, illustrated where existing facilities were and identified a number of gaps in the provision. The area is well served by play areas, but 75% of the Nairn population do not have access to a playing field within 1 kilometre of their homes.
- 5.4 In 2003 a new Community Centre was considered necessary in Nairn, however disposal of part of Viewfield was rejected by the Council's Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee. Subsequently, a new adjacent site has been identified.

6. **Planning Advice Note 65**

- 6.1 The planning system performs two key functions in relation to open space:
- protecting areas that are valuable and valued; and
 - ensuring provision of appropriate quality in, or within easy reach of, new development.
- 6.2 PAN 65 encourages planning authorities that “*where possible, spaces should link together in a network, providing the landscape and townscape structure in the urban area. Effective links between open-space planning, design and management, and the involvement of local communities, can ensure long-term viability of open space that meets current and future needs.*”
- 6.3 Nairn is characterised by a series of open spaces including Viewfield, the farmer’s Showfield, the Links, Achareidh, the River Nairn and its embankment, Nairn Dunbar and Nairn West Golf Courses.



- 6.4 The planning system plays an important role in protecting and promoting these locally valued open spaces. New plans for Nairn Town Centre allow the prospect of linking future developments with the heritage and recreational opportunities that Viewfield offers. It is important that Viewfield is protected not just as a valuable open space, but also as part of the heritage of Nairn.

7. **Listed Buildings**

- 7.1 Both Viewfield House and the Dr John Grigor statue in front of the house are category B Listed Buildings. As such, the open space forms part of the curtilage of Viewfield House. Guidance on assessing proposals for new build developments within the curtilage of the Listed Building, asks Councils to consider issues like that of no building of similar or greater bulk should be erected close to the Listed Building, development in the front garden of a large suburban house which would destroy the relationship of the house to the street should not be permitted and the principal elevations of the main subject of listing should remain visible in their entirety from all principal viewpoints following the construction of the new build.

- 7.1 Viewfield House is set back from the main road with a tree-lined driveway leading up to the main house. The grounds of the house are characterised by the significant number of mature trees surrounding the house. Any development within the grounds of Viewfield should be located away from the house where it will not be interrupting any viewpoints of the house itself and the statue.



8. **Trees**

- 8.1 A critical part of the character and ambience of Viewfield is due to its tree cover. It is planted out to a designed structure, with a central avenue leading to the house and strong enclosure and setting for the bowling green, sports field and tennis courts. Tree condition is generally good but mature. There is a need for ongoing management, including replacement planting which follows the present layout and species composition.

9. **Conclusions**

- 9.1 Viewfield forms part of an important network of open spaces in Nairn. The open space itself and the tree cover are fundamental to the setting of Viewfield House. Clearly it is vital that any development must be appropriate to enhance the recreational and tourist activities of the area. A new Community Centre elsewhere will provide opportunities to meet the existing gaps in sport and recreation provision in Nairn, leaving Viewfield to provide the open and tranquil space it currently is valued for. It is appropriate therefore to consider the following as policy for the Viewfield area:

“There is very limited scope for extending recreation facilities at Viewfield. Subject to relocating one tennis court, a possibility exists for a small scale building with complementary leisure/recreation facilities adjacent to or by extending the Sports Club. The remaining land at Viewfield within the curtilage of Viewfield House will be safeguarded from development.”