

Infrastructure Services Committee - 20 June 2013

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Advise the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) that it does not wish to object to the Cairngorms National Park Proposed Local Development plan; and**
- 1.2 Commend the CNPA on a clear, progressive, well thought out, and balanced proposed Local Development Plan.**

2 Background

- 2.1 The Cairngorms National Park is currently undertaking consultation on their Cairngorms National Park Proposed Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance. As a neighbouring Planning Authority, Aberdeenshire Council has an interest in the preparation of the Local Development Plan and as a result, has been invited to submit a response to this consultation.
- 2.2 The Cairngorms National Park's Proposed Local Development Plan was published for consultation on 15 April 2013, with responses due by 5 July 2013. The documents considered with this consultation are available online at <http://cairngorms.co.uk/>, and comprise:
 - Cairngorm National Park Proposed Local Development Plan
 - Supplementary Guidance (including core paths plan)
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment and environmental report;
 - Habitats Regulations Appraisal
 - Proposed Action Programme
- 2.3 A Main Issues Report was published and consulted on in 2011 and draft settlement maps were consulted on in 2012. The responses and comments received subsequently fed into the Proposed Local Development Plan.
- 2.4 Aberdeenshire Council provided comments on the Main Issues Report. The only cross boundary issue raised was the need for a consistent approach to affordable housing to avoid development pressures in settlements close to the boundary depending of which authority provides the most preferable conditions for the developer. However, the proposed plan's affordable housing policy is consistent with this recommendation and should not have any implications for Aberdeenshire Council area.
- 2.5 A summary of the main points raised by the CNPA proposed Local Development Plan is provided at **Appendix 1**.

- 2.6 There are only two minor issues we consider worth mentioning:
- The approach to housing development in existing rural groups provides greater opportunity and flexibility for rural housing than the comparative policy within Aberdeenshire. It allows addition of new houses to any group of three buildings. This has the potential to see more development along the boundaries of the National Park to serve the needs of Aberdeenshire. However, taking into account the remoteness of much of the national park and potential demand; it is not considered that this is a significant issue.
 - The summary paragraph at the start of 10.8 in Cultural Heritage contains the statement 'We will improve records of assets which are important but which have not been formally recognised.' We would ask the Park Authority to note that opportunities for partnership working with Aberdeenshire Council's Archaeology Service should be explored whenever possible, and with particular reference to our Historic Environment Record databases
- 2.7 The nature of further comments that could be made are not significant and it is proposed that no objection is made to the Cairngorms National Park Proposed Local Development Plan
- 2.8 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the terms of the report.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as the recommended actions will not have a detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 3.2 There are no specific staffing or financial implications arising from this report but trends are used to inform future budget planning.

Stephen Archer, Director, Infrastructure Service.

Report prepared by: Katie Crerar, Policy Planner

Date: 7 May 2013

Appendix 1

The Main principles of the Cairngorms National Park Proposed Local Development Plan.

Vision

1. The vision for the Cairngorm National Park as outlined in the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) is for '*An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together*'.
2. This vision will be delivered through the three following outcomes:
 - A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities.
 - People enjoying the National Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences.
 - A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced.
3. In addition, the NPPP aims to create a low carbon national park in order to play a part in meeting Scotland's national climate change objectives.

Spatial Strategy

4. The LDP aims to focus future activity and growth around the parks main settlements to the north and west (Newtonmore, Kingussie, Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey) and Ballater in the east, which are linked by the existing road network and some benefit from the Perth-inverness railway line.
5. Economic growth will be focused in corridors along the north western A9 route and north to Grantown-on-Spey. In Aberdeenshire, growth areas have been identified running eastwards from Braemar and Strathdon. New housing and key employment sites will be also focused in existing main settlements and the proposed new community - *An Camas Mor* by Aviemore.

Key Local Development Plan Policies

New Housing Development

6. The plan promotes housing development that meets the needs of the communities whilst supporting economic and community development. Housing in settlements will be contained within the settlements boundaries.
 - a. In addition, new housing development which adds to an existing rural group (of 3 or more buildings) will be considered favourably where they are consistent with the existing character and pattern of the group and do not add more than one third to the existing number of buildings.
 - b. Other housing in the countryside will also be supported where it is necessary for the operation of an active rural business or is on a brownfield site. The general principle of this approach is consistent with Aberdeenshire's rural development policy.
 - c. The affordable housing requirement is set at 25%, in line with Government guidelines, and proposals for less than 4 houses will be required to make a contribution. The settlement chapters also identify specific sites for affordable housing.

Supporting Economic Growth

7. The National Park's economy comprises a number of sectors, most notably land management, recreation, tourism and food and drink. The LDP identifies sustainable economic growth as being key to the long term viability of the Park which the LDP will be required to facilitate and support.
8. The policy will aim to facilitate and encourage growth and diversification of the National Parks economy and seek to support settlements of economic, social or cultural significance. As well as assisting the existing business sectors to thrive, the LDP supports other opportunities which will diversify and grow the Park's economy.

Sustainable Design

9. Sense of place is of particular importance to the National Park and, like the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP), the proposed LDP will require a design statement for all development proposals. This is intended to ensure development has been designed to take account of different factors including climate change, local and traditional character and materials, sustainable use of resources, transport methods and local amenity.

Natural Heritage

10. The National Park will seek to conserve and enhance habitats and species for which the park is of significance. The policy outlines the different levels of protection from International, national to more local and that development should not have an adverse impact on the integrity of sites. The policy is very similar to that found in the ALDP.

Landscape

11. The Proposed Plan acknowledges that landscapes will change, but it is how this is done that will influence its quality and character. The policy presumes against development that does not conserve and enhance the landscape character and other special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Development proposals which do not adhere to this principle will only be permitted where the impacts are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefit or can be mitigated. It refers to the Cairngorm Landscape Toolkit for further guidance on landscape. It is considered that this approach will not create any cross boundary issues for the remainder of Aberdeenshire.

Renewable Energy

12. The Proposed Plan intends to encourage renewable energy in a way that is sustainable and does not negatively impact the areas special qualities. The policy will consider renewable energy proposals favorably where they, amongst other things, conserve and enhance the national park and adequately minimise all cumulate effects.
13. The policy further identifies that large-scale commercial wind turbines are not compatible with the National Park's special qualities. Again, it is not considered that this policy will have any implications for Aberdeenshire.

Cultural Heritage

14. We should welcome the recognition that the historic environment is not only a finite resource that should be protected where possible, but also important in the role it plays in creating a sense of place within the National Park and attracting visitors.

15. The individual Settlement Statements acknowledge the importance of the historic environment and establish the principle that archaeological and built heritage sites should be retained, preserved and enhanced where possible for the benefit of the community.

Settlements

16. There are no identified issues in relation to any settlements or allocations.