

**NAIRN SUBURBAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

**NAIRN SOUTH MASTERPLAN**

**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT LOCHDHU FARM/  
BROADLEY FARM AND THE BALBLAIR SITE, NAIRN**

Our Community Council met on Tuesday, 29 January 2013 and took account of the contents of this consultation submission. The Joint Community Council's meeting on Wednesday, 23 January attended by Malcolm Macleod and Brian Mackenzie highlighted the main community planning concerns and the knock-on effects within the town of Nairn. This was a valuable joint meeting with a presentation by Mr Macleod and Mr Mackenzie.

Planning and Design

This is a highly visible site between the Inverness-Aberdeen railway line and Cawdor Road. It will be seen from the south and east, and most if the site falls naturally eastwards to the River Nairn. Planning and layout has to be of a very high standard. The proposed development of several phases over a long period of time must be clearly thought out and be visually attractive at all stages.

**In both proposed developments we will only support a maximum of 2 storey high houses, retail and office buildings. The 25% of affordable homes will mostly be of single storey and 1.5 storey cottage style homes. We will not support inappropriate blocks of 3 or 4 storied apartments on this site.**

We have liaised with the developers and architects of the Scotia, Barratt and Robertson proposals for more than 5 years, and the concepts of good design and layout should be clearly understood. The proposals for Balblair by Muir Smith Evans are more recent but there must be a common and sympathetic theme running through the whole proposal.

## Housing Numbers

**We are not happy with the numbers of houses quoted for the period 2011-2021 in the Hw LDP Reporter's assessment because they are based on incorrect assumptions.** The level of need in Nairn is for smaller, affordable homes to rent, part rent/buy and to buy. We need to develop Nairn in a realistic manner and figures of 250, 320 and 520 homes may in fact be spread over a much longer period of time.

## Access and Roads

**This is our main concern because it has not been addressed or understood.** The pinch points running into Nairn are:-

- (i) The junction with Balblair Road.
- (ii) The Railway Bridge.
- (iii) The junction with Westbury Road leading to Waverley Road and Millbank Crescent.
- (iv) Academical Square.
- (v) Leopold Street and junction with the High Street.
- (vi) Balblair Road (the B9091) from its existing junction with Cawdor Road (the B9090) and westwards.

**Balblair Road is not fit for purpose and there is no provision for safe pedestrian and cycle users.** The Balblair Proposal does not consider how householders, mothers with prams, small children, children on bikes, and adults walking or cycling can reach Nairn. The bridge over the railway line will be difficult for mothers with prams, small children with or without bikes, and the elderly.

**Cawdor Road southwards from Balblair Road to George Street is not fit for purpose to take existing walking and cycling adults and children.** The pavements and carriageway are too narrow. With increased vehicular use plus cyclists and pedestrians, the risks to all road and pavement users are unacceptable. The same applies to the section of Cawdor Road and pavement from the Balblair Road junction northwards to Millbank Crescent, Station Road and Westbury Road.

**Before any Planning Permission is granted, Balblair Road must be upgraded to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and all vehicular traffic including heavy goods vehicles entering and leaving John Gordon & Son's sawmill.** Their through-put is 3,000 T/week entering and leaving the factory, with 125 loads/week

also entering and leaving the factory. Additionally, forklifts and lifting equipment are constantly crossing Balblair Road between the factory and stacking yards.

John Gordon & Son's factory is a major local family run business and employer in Nairn, and is one of the most modern sawmills in Europe. They employ 90 staff on site with an annual wage bill of £1 million. Downstream employment in harvesting and haulage will account for another 90-100 full time jobs.

Their access must be improved and linked to the proposed Nairn Bypass close to the proposed crossing of the River Nairn between Broadley Farmhouse and the existing Howford Bridge. This could tie in with a roundabout on the Bypass to include Cawdor Road (B9090).

We would suggest upgrading Balblair Road from a redesigning junction with Cawdor Road, westwards to the Lochdhu Farm road entrance, then south eastwards to the existing Cawdor Road in line with Broadley Farmhouse - a distance of 1.8 km all on the existing roadlines - and south of the proposed development area. **This should be a pre-condition of the joint applications.**

#### John Gordon & Son's Sawmill

As mentioned previously, under Access and Roads, this is a major, modern local business and a zone to the northwest and southwest has been identified for future sawmill development.

To minimise noise and dust affecting the proposed housing development, a buffer zone and zone for earth bunding has been included in the applications.

The buffer zone should be treated as parkland with attractive tree/shrub planting, paths and mowed grass. Part of this area could be developed as allotments for the benefit of householders on both developments.

The earth bunding to 7 or 8 metres should also be planted with attractive shrubs and ground species to prevent erosion, and to create an attractive environmental area for bees, butterflies and wildlife in general.

**Long term management of the buffer zone, earth bunding, grassland and shrub/tree planting must be clearly stated in both applications and agreed.**

## Other Infrastructure

**A clear costed statement on sewerage is required from the Developers and from Scottish water.**

We are not convinced that the Nairn Treatment Plant is capable of handling even the first phase of these two proposals. Ardersier and their upgraded site are not at present connected to West Nairn.

**We cannot support the start of these developments until full sewerage has been included in a costed plan to meet any additional houses and be provided for in Scottish Water's budget.**

Storm water from both applications will be handled by SUD Systems and will contribute to ponds and wetlands included in the green environmental content of both schemes. More detail is required.

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##### SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

###### 1. Planning and Design

A highly visible site and will be seen from a distance. Planning and layout must be of a very high standard. We will only support a maximum of 2 storey high houses, retail and office buildings. The 25% of affordable homes will be single or 1.5 storey high cottage style homes. We will not support inappropriate blocks of 3 or 4 storied apartments on this site. Must be a common and sympathetic theme running through the whole proposal.

###### 2. Housing Numbers

We must think again about the type and number of houses required in the first 10 year period. Nairn must develop in a realistic manner to meet demand and not purely on false assumptions on inward migration.

###### 3. Access and Roads

This is our main concern because it has not been addressed or understood by the developers and by Highland Council.

Many roads and pavements are not fit for purpose and will not cope with increased vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. Cawdor Road from George Street to Westbury Road and Balblair Road are the worst cases. Balblair Road will not cope with additional vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists from the Balblair proposal.

A major upgrade of Balblair Road is required from John Gordon & Son's factory to the west and south to link with a new bypass. This will help to separate heavy goods lorries from pedestrians and cyclists.

**The Nairn Bypass is essential before these proposed developments can start.**

4. John Gordon & Son's Sawmill

This is a major, modern local business and a major employer in Nairn. It is dependent on good access for heavy goods vehicles. Every week 3,000 T of sawlogs enter the mill on 125 lorry loads. The equivalent tonnage of finished timber and woodchips leaves the factory each week, again by 125 lorry loads. They are going to be dependent on a close link with a new bypass, and this can be provided around the south western boundary of the joint proposals.

Long term development of the factory has been allowed for in the joint proposal. A suitable buffer zone and bunding proposal will screen and minimise noise levels.

5. Other Infrastructure

A clear costed statement on sewerage is required from the Developers and from Scottish Water. We are not convinced that the Nairn Treatment Plant is capable of handling even the first phase of these two proposals.

6. Conclusion

**Until the main issues of housing numbers, type, size and height or properties, phasing, access and roads within Nairn plus the bypass are resolved we cannot support these proposals and a start date. We are not against a planned, balanced development of Nairn.**

**R W Youngson**

February 2013