



<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>HIG 13: Tornagrain</b>
<b>Details:</b>	<b>Proposed New Settlement Masterplan</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Tornagrain, Inverness</b>
<b>Use type:</b>	<b>Housing / Education / Health / Retail / Leisure / Office / Civic / Public Realm / Infrastructure</b>
<b>Client Developer:</b>	<b>Moray Estates Development Company Ltd.</b>
<b>Lead Designer(s):</b>	<b>Duany Plater-Zyberk &amp; Company</b>
<b>Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Highland Council</b>
<b>Planning Status and Ref:</b>	<b>Outline Planning: ref. 09/00038/OUTIN DM/CC</b>
<b>Issue Date:</b>	<b>21 May 2009</b>

## **Introduction**

This report relates to an outline planning application for a new settlement, approximately six miles east of Inverness, presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in Glasgow. Preliminary designs were presented to A+DS at a Design Review meeting in August 2007 and a restricted report subsequently issued with our views on 12 September 2007.

## **A+DS Views**

### **1 General**

1.1 We welcome the opportunity to comment on the developed proposals and thank the project team for their comprehensive presentation. We recognise that this is a significant proposal for Inverness and the Highlands that forms a strategic part of the planned expansion of the A96 corridor. We support the aspiration and commitment of Moray Estates to create a new sustainable settlement based on high design quality, but we feel that there are still a number of issues that should be addressed if this ambition is to be translated into reality.

### **2 Airport Business Park and A96 corridor**

2.1 In our previous report we commented that the integration of the Tornagrain settlement with the Inverness Airport Business Park (IABP) would need to take account of the future re-routing of the A96. We support in principle the proposed redevelopment of the existing A96 into a 'street' to help link the settlement with the business park development to the north. However, we question whether this is being sufficiently promoted as an active 'street'. We encourage the design team to consider incorporating a mix of residential, business and other uses along both sides of the street to help create a more lively and vibrant thoroughfare throughout the day and into the evening. Given that the site boundary for the settlement extends across to the north side of the street, and that Moray Estates are the largest stakeholder of the IABP, it would appear to be within their control to have influence over this.

2.2 We note that the proposed re-alignment of the A96 trunk road is planned to be complete by 2021. The timing of this will be critical in terms of the phasing of the Tornagrain development as it forms an integral part of the proposals.

2.3 With reference to 2.1 and the relationship with the IABP, we feel that a more balanced, well-connected and more vibrant place could be developed if a better mix of residential and business use was achieved between the two developments. This would also help to alleviate some concerns we have about the activity and viability of the proposed pedestrian route between Tornagrain and the rail station to the north.

### **3 Energy strategy**

3.1 We congratulate the design team on the thoroughness of their proposed Energy Strategy report and support the inclusion of low to zero carbon and renewable technologies for the development, but careful consideration needs to be given to the way in which an energy strategy is implemented. We understand that new technologies and accepted levels of 'best practice' will develop as the various phases of the development progress. However, it is important that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the envisaged Energy Strategy is deliverable over time. We recognise the intention for Moray Estates to be closely involved in the control of development as it progresses to help address this and note that an element of design coding could be applied to assist in this respect.

3.2 We support the project team in their discussions with Norbord in terms of potentially extracting excess heat from their plant to help serve the new settlement at Tornagrain.

### **4 Design coding**

4.1 In our previous report we acknowledged that design coding can have an important role to play in ensuring design quality, but that, equally, good architecture can deliver high quality public places and spaces. We also commented that the illustrations presented at that time suggested a certain approach to style, and that the vision of the place was yet to be demonstrated. We considered that the design should reflect the place and time in which it is located.

4.2 We note that the Design Code document submitted as part of the outline planning application is intended to be a 'living' document. We are encouraged to see that the document is being used as a test bed in this way and we welcome the opportunity to comment on its content.

4.3 We acknowledge that design codes can be useful in setting performance criteria and minimum standards for creating quality places. However, it is important that they do not become over prescriptive and unduly limit the potential for innovative design of buildings. It would appear that the design codes as currently presented dictate a particular architectural style, which may restrict the opportunities for inventive interpretation.

4.4 We understand that the illustrative sketches provided were intended to allow for an interpretation of what some spaces might look like, and to kick start an architectural

debate. However, they do suggest an architecture that is historicist in nature and not reflective of the place and time in which the development is to be realised. We recommend that illustrations of contemporary Scottish architecture should figure more prominently in the coding document.

4.5 There appears to be a lot of information within the coding document that addresses the technical aspects of street design, but there is little that is readily available that defines the spatial characteristics of streets, spaces and enclosures. There are also few shared spaces and streets promoted in the coding guidance. We encourage the design team to ensure that current and emerging Government policy, such as 'Designing Streets', is fully taken into account within the coding document.

4.6 There appear to be a considerable number of large parking areas within the masterplan and we suggest that these be reviewed so that they are better integrated throughout the settlement as required.

## **5 Phasing**

5.1 At the previous presentation the phasing of the masterplan had yet to be determined and we suggested that one option worthy of careful consideration was for a small intact community to be initially established to set high quality design standards for future phases. We welcome the development of a phasing plan for the site and note that it has been developed with the intention of ensuring that each phase can sit on its own. However, we are not yet convinced that the first phase would work as a coherent whole.

5.2 Phasing will need to have regard to the quality of the pedestrian experience, as well as routes to the rail facility and the business park to the north. The phasing of the three elements – Tornagrain settlement, the rail facility, and the IABP – will need to be co-ordinated.

## **6 Landscape and public realm**

6.1 We are encouraged to see that the design team have produced a thorough Landscape Framework document, but there are still some important omissions. It is difficult to ascertain the character of the main landscape spaces, or how it is envisioned that these spaces would be used. We expect that these issues will be addressed in due course.

6.2 We commend the design team for their aspiration to achieve a high quality landscape; however, it is important to be aware of the time and management involved in creating a landscape from scratch. Producing a mature and successful landscape will take a substantial time, and a longer term view than that of the construction period is required to achieve it.

6.3 In addition to seeking buildings of a contemporary Scottish nature, the landscape design should also reflect the time and place in which it is set.

6.4 We question whether there is a precedent in Scotland for the amount of street trees currently proposed and suggest that perhaps trees may be better placed in public squares.

## **Conclusion**

We support Moray Estates in their aspiration to create a new settlement based on high design quality. It is important that this aspiration is translated into reality in an effective way. At the moment, we feel that this is being compromised by over prescriptive design coding that predicates a particular traditional style of architecture and place. We strongly recommend that the coding guidance and supporting illustrations be developed to introduce a degree of flexibility that would allow for good quality design to emerge, which is reflective of the best Scottish places and buildings and is also of its time and local context.

We welcome the development of a Landscape Framework and Energy Strategy for the settlement and commend the project team on the level of information provided. We are pleased to hear that issues about sustainability remain high on the project team's agenda. The present A96 road will become a key arrival point into the area and we encourage the project team to explore how the proposed uses along it might best enable an active and balanced street to be achieved between the Tornagrain settlement and the Airport Business Park to the north.

## **Appendix**

### **Presenting Team:**

Moray Estates Development Company  
Ltd.:

Andrew Howard and Lord Doune

Turnberry Consulting Ltd.:

Jonathan Coulson

### **A+DS:**

Chair:

Karen Anderson

Panel:

Alison Blamire, Karen Cadell, Kenny  
Fraser, Brian Veitch and Dorian  
Wiszniewski

Staff lead:

Steven Malone

Staff:

Kate Nicolson, Tony Reilly, David Seel and  
Angela Williams

### **Other participants:**

Highland Council Development  
Management:

David Mudie