



**Project Title:** **CNP 08: An Camas Mòr**  
**Details:** **Proposed new community: Outline planning application**  
**Location:** **Cairngorms National Park**  
**Use type:** **Housing / Education / Health / Retail / Leisure / Arts / Office / Civic / Public Realm / Infrastructure**  
**Client Developer:** **An Camas Mòr LLP**  
**Lead Designer(s):** **Gehl Architects**  
**Planning Authority:** **Cairngorms National Park Authority**  
**Planning Status and Ref:** **Outline planning: ref: 09/00114/OUTBS**  
**Issue Date:** **14<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

## **Introduction**

This report relates to an outline application for a new community opposite Aviemore on the east side of the River Spey, presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 23 June 2009 in Edinburgh. Preliminary designs were presented to A+DS on 20 August 2008, and a restricted report subsequently issued on 9 September 2008.

The presentation, by the landscape architects on the project team, focused on aspects of land use, phasing of the development and issues raised in our previous report.

## **A+DS Views**

### **1 General**

1.1 We thank the design team for their clear presentation and welcome the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Masterplan Report at outline application stage. In our previous report we applauded the project team for their ambition for the project and supported the general principle of creating a sustainable community on the site. Our comments at that time related to the settlement boundary, the central space / community park, sustainability, deliverability, highway standards and building / urban design. Although conceived as a self contained community, we believed that the success of the project, and its long-term sustainability, would be dependent upon its integration with Aviemore and that, with further design development, the project had the potential to become a national exemplar.

1.2 We note that, subsequent to our previous report, a set of principles has been approved by Cairngorms National Park Authority's Planning Committee that sets out what they would expect to see reflected in any masterplan and planning application for An Camas Mòr. We support the Authority for their pro-active approach that they are taking in defining a set of principles for their project.

1.3 We commend the design team on the quality of the material that has been submitted, and support many of the ideas contained within the documentation. We note the design team's response to our previous report and are pleased that some of our

comments have been useful in developing the designs, in particular in allowing a more flexible and constructive discussion with the Highways Authority. We generally support the direction in which the designs are progressing. However, there are some fundamental issues, critical to the creation of a sustainable community, which have still to be resolved. There are also other more detailed aspects of the designs that we suggest would benefit from further development. We offer the following comments for consideration.

## **2 Connections / sustainability**

2.1 The project is being promoted as an exemplary sustainable community; however, its success in this regard, and in urban design terms, is predicated on the creation of a bridge link to Aviemore. We would encourage early discussions with relevant stakeholders to facilitate its early realisation, as it is fundamental to the success of the project that a physical link is formed between the two communities. We acknowledge and welcome the commitment of both the project team and Cairngorms National Park Authority in this respect.

2.2 We suggest that there may be merit in opening up the design of the bridge to a design competition to attract interest and potential funding. In doing so there may be scope to explore alternative and innovative methods for crossing the river.

2.3 We support the creation of a green travel plan and note that this has been included within the submitted Transport Assessment. We welcome the proposed provision of bus, cycling and pedestrian routes at the start of the occupation of the first phase of housing, to establish alternative means of travel other than by car between communities.

2.4 We note with interest that a socio-economic impact study has been undertaken by the project team which includes an examination of services that would be shared between An Camas Mòr and Aviemore. We trust that a sufficient economic analysis has been put forward to describe how the communities would benefit one another.

2.5 We note that a Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out and welcome the aims and objectives towards making An Camas Mòr a balanced sustainable community from the point of view of environmental, social and economic sustainability, as well as sustainable mobility and sustainable resource management.

2.6 We welcome the use of Local Authority and Scottish Government sustainability guidelines as benchmarks for providing sustainable indicators and assessment criteria for evaluating the performance of An Camas Mòr. We recognise that, as some of the criteria will be too detailed to be assessed at masterplanning stage, they will need to be addressed as the development progresses. In this respect, we note that studies into local power generation and district heating schemes are planned for at a later stage. We would like to see potential local power initiatives explored as early as possible to ensure that these are integrated into the designs.

2.7 We congratulate the project team on becoming a successful candidate under the Scottish Government's Scottish Sustainable Community Initiative (SSCI). In addition to

some of the principles identified by Cairngorms National Park Authority, this will set high expectations for the project.

### **3 Community park**

3.1 We support the concept of a centrally placed park, located between the communities of Aviemore and An Camas Mòr, to serve as a focus for the combined communities. We are pleased to learn that a community led masterplan is underway for the area, in parallel with the proposals for An Camas Mor, and commend Highland Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority and the project team for supporting the community council in its development. We encourage joined up masterplanning between the two communities wherever possible. We would also welcome the opportunity to comment on proposals for the community masterplan in due course.

### **4 Density**

4.1 The density of the development appears low in places and we suggest that the layout could become more dense and compact, without any need for an increase in height. There are precedents for how this can be achieved, for example in the work of Jorn Utzon at Fredensborg whereby traditional rural buildings are grouped together to form clusters of housing in the landscape.

### **5 Development guidelines, phasing and delivery**

5.1 We have some concerns with the proposals for the 'test' spaces as shown in the Masterplan Report. In particular we are worried with the design of the streetscape, public realm and roads, which appear to replicate old-fashioned road standards. This is a project that will be developed over time, and it is important that principles contained within 'Designing Streets' are firmly established at this stage. It is also important that a clear and robust set of design guidelines is developed in tandem with the masterplan to guard against the dilution of design quality, particularly if new developers and design teams become responsible for any subsequent development.

5.2 We understand that discussions are underway between the project team and Registered Local Landlords in the area with regards to the provision of affordable housing within An Camas Mòr. It is important that the methodology for how this would be implemented throughout the various phases of the project is clarified. We acknowledge that the procurement process for the development as a whole is yet to be determined. This will be essential prior to preparing any design coding for An Camas Mòr as the process will determine the type and extent of documentation required, particularly in terms of informing the split between guidance and directives.

5.3 Consideration should be given to how the various phases of development would operate successfully in the event that subsequent proposed phases are not realised. In particular, we question the location of the proposed school in 'Period C 2018', which in its current arrangement appears to be buried within an area of woodland at some distance from the main area of development.

### **Conclusion**

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the project at outline application stage and commend the project team for the quality of their submission. We still believe that the

project has the potential to become an exemplary development and generally support the direction in which the designs are progressing. Notwithstanding, the creation of a successful link with Aviemore is fundamental to the project's success and we encourage early discussion with stakeholders in order to progress this as a matter of priority. We welcome the initiatives towards a community led masterplan and look forward to seeing how this develops in tandem with the proposals for An Camas Mòr. We have some concerns with the current designs for the 'test' spaces, such as the East Square, and we feel that the development could be made more dense and compact. We question how some areas of the development would function, both between the various phases of delivery and in the event that phases of the new community are not realised. We look forward to seeing more clarity about how the project would be developed, in addition to more detailed masterplanning guidance, in due course.

## **Appendix**

### **Presenting Team:**

Mark Turnbull Landscape Architect

Mark Turnbull

### **A+DS:**

Chair:

Roddy Langmuir

Panel:

Karen Cadell and Stephen Tucker

Staff lead:

Steven Malone

Staff:

Kate Nicholson and Angela Williams

### **Other participants:**

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Don McKee