

Report Title: Aviemore Town Centre Retail Development
Issue Date: 28th November 2007
Client/Developer: Laurel Grant Ltd
Lead Designer: Austin Smith Lord
Local Authority: Cairngorms National Park Authority
Location: Aviemore
Planning Ref: 06/431/CP
Details: Proposals for major high street retail development for Aviemore town centre, within Cairngorms National Park



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INTRODUCTION

This report relates to amended designs for a redevelopment in the centre of Aviemore which is the subject of a current planning application. A+DS reviewed preliminary designs that accompanied an outline planning application in November 2005. The full planning application as originally submitted was reviewed by an A+DS panel, and a report issued, in February 2007. The amended designs were reviewed at a Design Review meeting in Aviemore on 15 November 2007.

The design reviewed on 15 November 2007 was presented by a representative of Austin Smith Lord.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of Cairngorms National Park Authority.

A+DS VIEWS

1. Design development

1.1 A+DS did not support the design that was reviewed in February 2007 as it was not of a sufficiently high standard for the National Park and did not meet design aspirations set out in national planning guidance. General concerns were expressed about the design, along with particular comments regarding the quality of public spaces, and the failure to contribute to the reactivation of Grampian Road. A fundamental reworking of the proposal was suggested.

1.2 We recognise that aspects of the design have altered in response to our original concerns. We support the reduction in car parking numbers yet to be agreed by the highways authority, and welcome the activation of the ground floor along Grampian Road, and improvements made in relation to the space bordering the burn. However, we have concerns at both macro and micro levels, and continue to question whether the design is of an appropriate standard for a National Park.

2. Macro concerns

2.1 We are not convinced that the design will successfully contribute to underlying themes and objectives of the Aviemore masterplan. Although superseded in part by subsequent planning permissions we understand this masterplan is still a policy consideration having been adopted as supplementary planning guidance by the planning authority.

2.2 We are concerned that the design has been produced in isolation of a new masterplan that has been commissioned for Aviemore. We recommend that the project team, and everyone involved with this project, liaise with the appointed masterplanners to ensure that the design is as good as it can be to implement strategic ambitions for the wider area.

2.3 We encourage collaboration and 'joined up thinking' to ensure a positive interface with, and activated frontage along, neighbouring properties, and in particular the boundary with the Aviemore Highland Resort.

2.4 Further analysis and development is required to demonstrate the quality of spaces terminating public routes passing through the development, and how these routes integrate into the wider context, both now and as they might be conceived in the future.

3. Micro concerns

3.1 Consideration should be given to how the sense of containment is maintained along the length of Grampian Road. This is weak where the decreasing height of development is considered against the rising street level. We also continue to have concerns about the extent of overshadowing resulting from overhangs in this area.

3.2 We suggest that the impact of traffic movements, both to and from Grampian Road, and at the upper road, will be detrimental to the pedestrian enjoyment of these areas and to neighbouring properties. We are particularly concerned at the impact of car and servicing movements on the village green and adjacent 'social housing', and would wish to see further detail of any remedial works that might be proposed to reduce the visual and noise impact of vehicles.

3.3 A number of detailed design considerations would benefit from further development including:

- how the rear of the Edwardian shops is serviced;
- how the block facing towards the Edwardian shops and village green is resolved, and articulated at Grampian Road;
- how the two storey retail units might continue (north) for the full length of the street frontage to Grampian Road;
- how the public space along the burn is further developed;
- how the elevation facing the Aviemore Highland Resort is activated as a frontage;
- the viability and appropriateness of the village green site for social housing, and how this is accessed;
- consistency of materials and detailing across the design, and how these integrate with the wider area;
- the detail of the roof over the supermarket / retail area; and,
- explanation as to how the 'underground' servicing and car park areas are ventilated, and how this impacts on the design.

3.4 More information is required to describe the landscape management plan, and how this integrates with public spaces bordering the site area and the wider context.

CONCLUSION

We thank those attending for their presentation, and support the ambition to regenerate and integrate retailing and other uses in a revitalised town centre. We welcome the significant improvements made, and the willingness to involve A+DS in the development of the design.

We continue to have concerns and question whether the design addresses all aspects of the surrounding context as fully as it needs to within Aviemore and the National Park. The designs

should be conceived as the best possible solution for this important site, and avoid becoming a fragmented technical solution. We encourage further collaboration with both the newly appointed masterplanners and neighbouring landowners to ensure the proposal integrates with both its local and wider context. Until a new masterplan is in place, the underlying themes and objectives of the original masterplan should be respected.

We wish to be consulted on any further amended design, and to be informed at the earliest possible opportunity should the planning authority be minded to recommend approval of a design that does not address our concerns.

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