

Scotia Homes Ltd  
Balmacassie  
Ellon  
Aberdeenshire  
AB41 8QR

J Anderson  
Chairman  
Ballater and Crathie Community Council

8<sup>th</sup> December 23

Dear Mr Anderson

**Proposed Residential Development, Site H1 - Ballater**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to come to meet with a few members of the Community Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023. We felt that the meeting was useful and constructive on a number of fronts, and we have now received the eight follow up questions from Ellie Kinghorn. We have prepared a response to these questions, which is included at the end of this letter.

We note that a report on the meeting was presented to the Community Council meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 23, and we would like to respond to a number of points as set out in the draft minute of that meeting. We would be grateful if you could make the other members of the Community Council aware of this letter.

The report of the meeting notes disappointment that Scotia have not taken note of any local consultation. We do not agree that we have not taken note of any consultation. There are a number of areas where we have given careful consideration to the various points which have been raised during the consultation process. In some cases it has not been possible to make changes to the masterplan because of planning restrictions or responses from Council Services. However when this could be done, we have made amendments. Examples of these are as follows:

- The key change which we have made to the proposals in response to comments which have been raised, is the relocation of the primary access into the development. Originally we had proposed a route connecting from Old Station Place running through the Games Ground, however this proved unpopular with the local community and we have therefore amended this to a route linking with Craigview Road. This is a fundamental change to the development, which shows our clear commitment to listening to the views of the local community.
- One of the key points which has been raised in the community consultation process concerns the provision of affordable housing. As a result of this, we are endeavouring to provide the maximum number of affordable units that we can, whilst also allowing the development to remain viable. We have been engaging in discussions with Cairngorm National Park Authority, together with other possible stakeholders to progress this.
- We have engaged with Osprey Housing Association and have reached agreement in principle that affordable housing will be delivered using a local lettings initiative, thereby ensuring that all affordable housing will be made available to local people. If the development achieves planning consent, we

would wish to discuss in detail with the local community how a lettings initiative would look to optimise delivery of housing to where the local community feel there is greatest need.

- In addition, discussions are also taking place with local businesses to explore the scope to provide housing to employees working in the local area.
- We are currently exploring with Osprey Housing Association the inclusion of an increased number of two bedroom affordable units (rather than one bedroom units) as suggested at the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 23.
- Scotia Homes are also committed to offering all mainstream housing to local residents on a first come first served basis.
- We are currently exploring the lowering of the Deeside Way to allow the formation of a Flooding channel, as suggested by the Flooding Group.
- We have conducted detailed investigations into the formation of a direct access onto the A93. These investigations have involved Ramsay + Chalmers, who have met with Aberdeenshire Council's Roads and Flooding Teams, together with SEPA. Regrettably, it is apparent that such a proposal would not gain support from the relevant authorities, and this matter has been thoroughly explored.

We have taken the decision to engage with the Community on an ongoing basis and have participated in six meetings since the inception of the project. This approach has necessitated the presentation of drawings and information that is a 'work in progress', which we believe is an appropriate, and collaborative approach. The drawings presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> November meeting were not complete and were to be changed, as was explained at the meeting. The design has evolved further since the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and our architects continue to work on detailed designs presently. We propose to present final draft drawings to the Community Council prior to submission of the planning application.

We do not agree that the design of the houses has been "cobbled together". The houses which are proposed for the Monaltrie parcel are of bespoke design, specifically prepared for the site. The majority of houses on the remaining part of the site are based upon our contemporary range, which is designed to reflect the proportions and appearance of traditional vernacular housing, which is the predominant style in Ballater. This range is however being adapted by our architects specifically for Ballater.

The size of the windows varies dependent upon their position on the dwellinghouse. The masterplan is based upon the principle of positioning the housing close to streets, to avoid car parking over dominating the streetscape, and also to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians. In order to achieve satisfactory levels of privacy, the windows on the front of the properties are smaller, however this is balanced by having larger windows on the rear, to serve the primary living areas. This approach to design and master-planning has been successful for a number of previous projects, which have secured design awards from various local authorities and Homes for Scotland. These include the Aberdeenshire Design Awards (Building Communities for the Future – Commended and Overall Category Winner 2020) and the Homes for Scotland Medium Development of the Year (Commended) 2023. We are very mindful of the importance of high quality design for development in Ballater, and are confident that the finalised designs will be an appropriate addition to the village which will enhance the built environment.

We do not agree that no account has been taken of the orientation of the housing in relation to passive solar gain. The majority of the units have a south-western orientation, which will allow passive solar gain to be maximised.

There is reference to a payment to the Council, to allow access across the Deeside Way. This is correct and we would hope that this money would be spent by the Council in the Ballater area for the benefit of the whole community. However on top of that it will also be necessary to make developer contributions which will be identified by Aberdeenshire Council. It is anticipated that the majority of these will be targeted to services in

Ballater and we would certainly support that approach. However this will ultimately be decided by Aberdeenshire Council.

As mentioned above, we have prepared a response to the eight questions which were sent to us on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 23, and these are included overleaf.

We look forward to continued engagement with the community as the project progresses.

Yours sincerely,

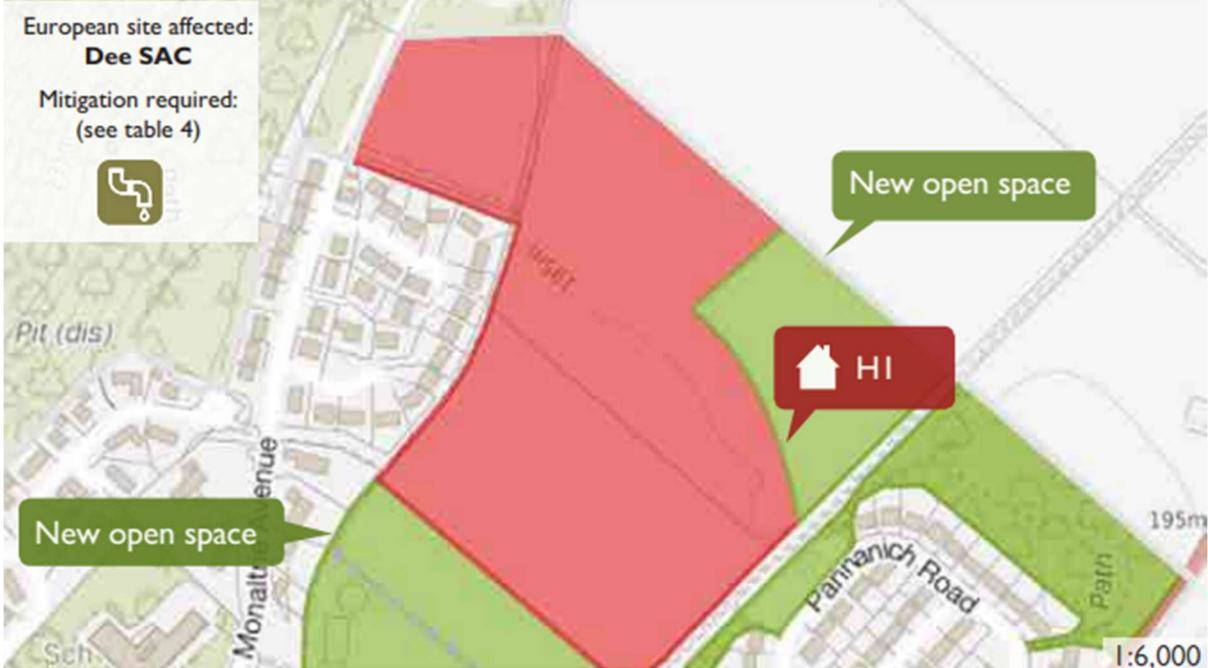
Handwritten signature of Roger Laird in black ink.

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Handwritten signature of Angus McNicol in black ink.

Angus McNicol  
Invercauld Estate

**Response to Questions Raised by Ballater + Crathie Community Council on 6<sup>th</sup> December 23**

<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b> – Confirmation of how far (in metres) the current proposals intrude on the agreed 55m games park extension?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – The current extent of development lies 11 metres beyond the current fence line. We are currently seeking discussion with the Ballater Highland Games Committee to ensure that this is compatible with the operation of the Games.</p> <p>The positioning of the south-western edge of the development is primarily dictated by the location of the vehicular access into the site from Craigview Road, which has established the building line.</p> <p>Also relevant is the extent of the H1 allocation which is included in the Cairngorm National Park Local Development Plan 2021, which is shown below. This illustrates the proposed extent of development area in red and the associated open space shown in green. The text associated with the H1 allocation states that “the boundary of the development area and the new open space is indicative. As described above, there has been a degree of encroachment on the open space along the south-west boundary, which has resulted in a reduction in open space area of 0.25ha. However this is offset by an increase in the extent of open space along the north-eastern boundary, where an additional area of 2.34ha is being provided. This will offer a substantial increase in the area of open space delivered as part of the development, and there may be scope for further community uses to take place within this expansive area.</p>  <p>European site affected: <b>Dee SAC</b></p> <p>Mitigation required: (see table 4)</p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b> – CGI's from Games Park and approaches</p> <p><b>Response</b> – We are not yet in a position to provide these, however will share them once they have been prepared.</p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b> – Confirmation of what height above the existing field level the new house levels will be?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – This level varies and has not yet been finally established, however current assessments which are based on the Flood Risk Assessment show that the platform will be raised between 0.5 – 1.2m above the existing ground level.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b> – Justification for a layout based around streets and houses orientated in a north-south direction rather than east-west and how this responds to and reinforces the historic village form and meets the 6 criteria of Placemaking as set out in 3.1 of CNP Local Plan?</p>

**Response** – The orientation of the proposed streets broadly follow the north-west to south-east axis. This will allow the dwellinghouses to benefit from passive gain throughout the day.

The proposed layout reflects the historic pattern of development in the village. This subject is addressed in some detail on the “Historic Development” board on the our consultation website, a copy of which is attached, together with the following link - [Virtual Exhibition – Scotia – Ballater \(consultationonline.co.uk\)](http://consultationonline.co.uk)

The six criteria of Placemaking contained in 3.1 of the LDP have been replaced by 6 new qualities of successful places, which are set out in the National Planning Framework 4. These are the qualities which the CNPA will assess the application against, so they have been used for the purposes of this response. The six new qualities are as follows:

- *Healthy*  
*Supporting the prioritisation of women’s safety and improving physical and mental health.*
- *Pleasant*  
*Supporting attractive natural and built spaces.*
- *Connected*  
*Supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency.*
- *Distinctive*  
*Supporting attention to detail of local architectural styles and natural landscapes to be interpreted, literally or creatively, into designs to reinforce identity.*
- *Sustainable*  
*Supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play, work and stay in their area, ensuring climate resilience, and integrating nature positive, biodiversity solutions.*
- *Adaptable*  
*Supporting commitment to investing in the long-term value of buildings, streets and spaces by allowing for flexibility so that they can be changed quickly to accommodate different uses as well as maintained over time.*

#### Healthy

The entire ethos of the development is to create safe and welcoming pedestrian routes, which encourage healthy lifestyles. This is achieved by the well-established principle of positioning the dwellinghouses close to the road, as can be seen in the central areas of Ballater. Such an approach has the result of slowing down traffic and creating a more pedestrian friendly environment, thereby encouraging walking and other sustainable modes of transport. The positioning of the dwellinghouses closer to the road than usually found in conventional suburban developments, also encourages increased passive surveillance from the windows of the houses overlooking the streets. This has the effect of increasing feelings of safety for women and other pedestrians, which is likely to increase walking, thereby improving the physical and mental health of the residents.

#### Pleasant

The creation of a pleasant environment will be assisted by the inclusion of extensive natural areas, throughout the built-up zone. These natural areas include the linear park which will connect the Games Ground with the expansive open area to the east of the development. A generous green corridor will also be formed adjacent to the Deeside Way, which will create a further attractive area of open space. A third landscape route will also be created along the northern boundary, which will include landscape planting and a drainage channel adjacent to the Cinder Path. The very generous provision of open space interspersed throughout the development will serve to create a pleasant and attractive environment.

#### Connected

The proposed layout is based on a grid, which offers a variety of attractive pedestrian and vehicular routes within the site. It is also well connected to the adjoining area, with 3 links formed onto the cinder path; 3 links formed onto the Deeside Way, with a safe route to school also to be created. The offering of this variety of pedestrian connections will make the site easy to move around and will reduce car dependency.

#### Distinctive

The design of the proposed dwellinghouses are based upon a contemporary interpretation of traditional vernacular style. This includes narrower building widths, which allows steeper roof pitches to be formed, which

	<p>are more in keeping with the character of the village. The windows on the public elevations tend to have more of a vertical emphasis, which is considered to be appropriate for this location. Where the larger dwellinghouses are proposed on the Monaltrie parcel of the site, the mass of these is broken up into smaller forms, which are more in keeping the local built environment.</p> <p>Whilst the nature of the finishing materials has yet to be confirmed, we are looking to use locally sourced timber (larch), which has been used successfully on recent developments in the village and which is supported by the CNPA.</p> <p>Further detail on the design qualities and characteristics of the development will be included in the Design and Access Report, which will be prepared to accompany the planning application.</p> <p><b>Sustainable</b> The location of the development is ideal to allow conformance the National Planning Framework 4 requirements in relation to 20-minute neighbourhoods. This is achieved as a result of all of the proposed housing being located within easy walking distance of a range of services and facilities.</p> <p>A range of nature positive biodiversity habitats will be created as part of the proposals, which will ensure that the biodiversity of the site will be increased upon the completion of the development.</p> <p><b>Adaptable</b> All of the proposed dwellinghouses are fully adaptable to allow future residents to modify them as their needs evolve over time.</p>
5	<p><b>Question</b> – Specifically, how does the site layout and house design &amp; orientation address 3.3 Sustainable Design, as set out in 3.1 of the CNP Local Plan?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – To optimise passive solar gain, the main orientation of a dwellinghouse should be within 30 degrees of south. Houses orientated to the east of south will benefit from morning sun. Those orientated west of south will catch the late afternoon sun. Whilst no layout for over one hundred units will ever achieve perfection in this regard, a large number of the proposed houses are orientated within 30 degrees of a southern orientation, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the layout.</p>
6	<p><b>Question</b> – Proposed elevations and materials and how these reflect and respond to the traditional vernacular architecture and Placemaking design principles as set-out in 3.1 of the CNP Local Plan?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – As mentioned in the <i>Distinctiveness</i> response above, the design and proportions of the proposed dwellinghouses are based upon the form of the traditional vernacular buildings in Ballater. We are currently working through the finishing materials to be used, which are likely to include locally sources timber (larch), together with drystone dykes and corrugated metal cladding for garages.</p>
7	<p><b>Question</b> – Are any improvements proposed for Monaltrie Park?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – This has yet to be agreed with Aberdeenshire Council, however our intention would be to make a contribution towards the play area at Monaltrie Park (either in that location or another location preferred by the local community). This could be either a financial contribution, or the installation of new play equipment. We are aware that a local group is looking into this topic, and we would be pleased to have further discussions in this regard.</p>
8	<p><b>Question</b> – Are any improvements proposed for the Cinder Path?</p> <p><b>Response</b> – This is a potential area which could be looked as part of the developer contributions from the development. However there may be other sources of access funding which could be available, which would allow the developer contributions to be directed to other local priorities. Again, we would be pleased to have further discussions on this subject.</p>