

Ballater and Crathie Community Council

20th June 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Proposed Residential Development, Eastfield, Ballater

We write in response to your letter of the 1st May 2024 regarding the above development, for which we are grateful. This response has been prepared following discussions with Invercauld Estate. By way of an update, we can confirm that the planning application has been submitted to Aberdeenshire Council, however it remains invalid. Various items of requested information have now been submitted to the Council and we would expect that the application will be validated by the end of June 2024. The period for submitting comments on the application has therefore not begun and we will be pleased to let you know once the application has been validated.

Our response below is broken down in the various topics which were included in your letter which we hope is helpful.

Layout and Design

The design rationale for the layout of the development has been set out in the presentational material which has been prepared for the public consultation events which have taken place. These can still be viewed on the dedicated website, a link to which is included here [Scotia – Ballater \(consultationonline.co.uk\)](http://Scotia – Ballater (consultationonline.co.uk)). In summary this notes that the historic growth of Ballater has tended to follow the long established field patterns, with streets orientated along the lines of the field boundaries. These streets have tended to be open ended, affording views to the landscape beyond. This analysis of the evolution of the village has informed the proposed layout, which itself follows the existing field boundaries on the eastern side of the settlement. These tend to follow a north-west to south-east orientation, which has provided a cue for the street layout which is proposed. The overall pattern of the layout has also been influenced by the position of the access routes into the site, together with the need to incorporate views both to the landscape to the north-east and to important townscape features in the village.

As mentioned in our letter of the 8th December 2023, this approach to master-planning has been successfully recognised in a number of other projects which Scotia Homes have worked in partnership with AREA Architects on. This has resulted in 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 designs will be an appropriate addition to the village, which will enhance the built environment.

Careful consideration has been given to the integration of the proposals with the adjoining townscape. In particular cross-sections have been prepared which show the relationship between the proposed properties and those in existence on Monaltrie Way and Close. These illustrate that the two areas will be linked by an attractive linear park and that the levels have been carefully considered. Similarly on the south-eastern edge of the proposed development, a generous green buffer has been included, which together with the existing Deeside Way will ensure that the setting of the existing houses on Pannanich Road is protected. This illustrates that attention has been exercised in the design process to ensure that the proposed housing is well integrated with the existing townscape.

The proposed street pattern has been based on a grid which is reflective of the historic layout of Ballater. This approach has been consciously taken as it creates a more attractive environment for pedestrians and takes on board the requirements of current planning policies. Whilst a development which incorporates a more suburban style could have been pursued, it is not considered that this would be appropriate for Ballater or secure support from the relevant authorities.

In relation to solar gain, we can confirm that the main orientation of dwellinghouses should be within thirty degrees of south to ensure that this is optimised. Houses orientated to the east of south will benefit from the 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 thirty degrees of a southern orientation, thereby enhancing daylight levels to houses and the sustainability of the layout.

Careful consideration has also been given to the size of the windows, with those in close proximity to the street being appropriately sized to ensure satisfactory levels of privacy are afforded. The larger windows are generally included at the rear of the properties, overlooking the gardens and serving the living areas of the houses, where most time is spent. This is a conscious approach which has been taken to enhance the day to day living experience of the new residents.

In response to the point on the development including excessive roads, we would highlight that the policies contained in the Designing Streets document published by the Scottish Government encourage a broad range of pedestrian and vehicular connections to be made, usually in the form of a grid. This provides a choice of routes for both pedestrians and motorists, thereby avoiding specific routes being dominated by car use. The aim of this approach is to enhance the experience for pedestrians and cyclists whilst also enabling the benefits of the grid style of street pattern mentioned earlier.

The inclusion of some sections of roads have also enhanced the townscape of the development. For example, the road facing onto Monaltrie Park has allowed the houses on the south-west boundary of the development to front onto the adjoining open space. This is considered to be a better approach in urban design terms, compared to having housing backing onto the Games Ground, which would result if this section of road was removed. Whilst we do recognise that it would have been possible

to reduce the extent of roads included within the development, this approach would be considered to undermine the design qualities which are offered by the layout.

The Design and Access Statement provides a full and detailed justification for the house designs which are proposed. This is a large document and we will arrange for a wetransfer submission to the Community Council to be made. It will also be available for inspection on the Aberdeenshire Council website once the planning application has been validated. In terms of the specific points which have been raised, we can confirm that the designs of the proposed houses have been modified to reflect their Deeside surroundings, particularly in the choice of finishing materials which have been used. Some of the key design features which are proposed include:

- Traditional scale and proportions, including one and a half storeys in height, which is reflective of properties in the adjoining area, including Pannanich Road.
- Traditional shallow house depth and steeper roof pitch.
- Informal patterns of vertically proportioned window and door openings.
- Close cropped eaves and verges to reflect traditional rural buildings.

The finishing materials are comparable to the adjoining earlier housing by Scotia Homes on Monaltrie Avenue and Pannanich Road, whilst using a simpler pared down palette that reflects the exposed rural edge to Deeside and the Cairngorms. These include:

- White render to reflect the lime harl of traditional rural buildings.
- Scottish Larch vertical cladding reflecting use on barns, forestry buildings and 19th century railway architecture prevalent in the Cairngorms.
- Garages clad in corrugated metal, to echo rural barns and outbuildings and back-houses.
- The finishing materials have been carefully considered at the street level, to ensure that the finishing materials form coherent street fronts to create legible and attractive spaces.

The requested three-dimensional visualisations are currently being prepared and their target for completion is 29th June 2024. This will allow further comments to be made on the planning application once it has been validated.

Monaltrie Park Games Ground

It is not our understanding that the proposed layout contravenes any legal agreements which are in place, however we are open to further discussions with the Games Committee as part of the ongoing and welcome discussions we have had with them throughout the design process to ensure that the proposed development is compatible with the future operation of the Highland Games and that emergency access is maintained.

Affordable Housing

We appreciate the broad acceptance of the proposed 35% affordable housing figure on viability grounds. In terms of the various tenures, we are likely to have to comply with Aberdeenshire Council's requirements on this. However we will be pleased to keep you informed of the proposed mix as soon

as further feedback has been received from the Council. We will also be willing to advocate a particular mix and we would anticipate having further discussions with you on this subject.

All of the proposed affordable housing will be constructed and sold to an affordable housing provider who will be responsible for the legal restrictions on the dwellings. Whilst Scotia Homes cannot prescribe what these are, it is anticipated that all of the restrictions which are suggested in your letter will be applied to all future affordable housing provided as part of the development. These include:

- Prevention of using properties as holiday lets.
- Housing to be affordable in perpetuity.
- Local lettings criteria, as per the Old School site.

Once again, we would be pleased to keep you updated on progress on all affordable housing matters as they develop.

Flooding

There has been much detailed work carried out in the preparation of the Flood Risk Assessment, and we are confident that the proposed development will not result in any increase in flooding risk to existing and proposed properties.

The suggestion to lower the Deeside Way has been discussed with the relevant authorities and support for this was not forthcoming and as a result it has not been included in the plans which have been prepared. It is possible that further discussions on this matter will take place once the planning application is validated and feedback received from SEPA and the Aberdeenshire Council Flooding Team.

We will be pleased to keep you updated on the above matters as the planning application is validated and proceeds. We will also pass on the visualisations once they are available at the end of the month.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RLaird". The letters are stylized and connected, with a prominent vertical stroke on the left side.

Roger Laird
Planning and Strategic Land Manager