

TOWN & VILLAGE STATEMENTS

CULLEN

THE PLANNING BACKGROUND

Despite the designation of four housing sites in the 1993-98 Local Plan, housing development in Cullen during the past five years has been relatively piecemeal. The former Moray District Council undertook a rehabilitation and new build scheme in 1993 involving the construction of five houses and three cottages on South Deskford Street. The settlement boundary was extended from the built up edge of the town to the south of Seaford Place and Ogilvie Park in order to provide for additional housing capacity. There has been some interest in the development of the site immediately north of the new cemetery although a formal planning application has not been lodged to date. Due to various constraints, the opportunities for expanding the town are limited.

The previous Local Plan acknowledged the role that tourism plays in the local economy. The town remains one of the busiest coastal centres, with second home ownership an increasing feature of the housing market. There has been no evidence of business expansion other than at the harbour area.

With two Conservation Areas, a dramatic coastline designated as an "Area of Great Landscape Value" and a Historic Garden and Designed Landscape to the west the planning policy context for Cullen has been basically protectionist.

CHARACTER OF THE TOWN

The intimacy and informality of the historic seatown, at the foot of steep escarpment braes, is in direct contrast, in terms of form, scale and siting, to the planned area of Cullen, centred around the Square and characterised by straight streets running at right angles to one another. This planned hilltop area merges somewhat incongruously with modern bungalow development to the south and Council development to the east.

Outwith the two Conservation Areas, Cullen is endowed with many other special qualities. It has an excellent beach which meets EC standards for bathing waters, extensive wooded areas, an attractive harbour, a seatown of national distinction, the impressive Cullen House and its policies; but principally, it is unique for its dramatic views of the Moray Firth, framed by the imposing old railway viaducts. These special characteristics of the town are important not just for the amenity of residents, but for the many visitors attracted to the town. Cullen also enjoys a range of shops and services above average for a town of its size.

OBJECTIVES

- (i) To designate sufficient sites for housing to meet the demand of local people in the five year Plan period.
- (ii) To upgrade and improve the appearance of derelict sites and protect the special features of the town, namely, the viaduct, the Square and open areas which provide views of, and public access to, the coast.
- (iii) To ensure that the design and location of new development enhances the character, setting and appearance of the town and its buildings.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

In addition to the site specific requirements identified below and in development briefs, all developments must meet the terms of the Implementation policies (L/IMP1-8) in Chapter 8 (relating to siting, layout and design, character impact, landscaping, drainage, environmental and traffic impact). Subject to the scale of the development having a measurable impact on local community facilities, amenities or infrastructure, funding policies L/F1 Developer Contributions and L/F2 'Commutated Payments' in Chapter 7 may also apply.

BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

The Local Plan policies for business development are contained in Chapter 1 'Economic Development'.

The Harbour (L/T6)

I1 Harbour Area

The harbour is one of Cullen's principal visitor attractions and is a focal point for leisure activities particularly during the summer period. The Harbour area will be reserved for low intensity leisure, tourist or general amenity use.

Mixed Use Areas (L/ED5)

I2 Portlong Road

There are several regeneration opportunities within this area. Any additional light industrial activity will be consolidated within the boundaries of the site. The re-use and rehabilitation of derelict properties will be encouraged. New business activities must recognise the restricted vehicle access to the site and be compatible with the amenity use of the adjoining harbour without generating excessive disturbance or traffic flow. Public access to the coastal footpath must remain.

Opportunity Sites (L/ED6)

Opportunity Sites are sites which have the potential for redevelopment for a range of possible uses. The governing local plan policy is L/ED6 in Chapter 1. Other policies may apply pending the nature of the redevelopment proposal.

OPP1 Engineers Yard, Blantyre Street

The Council would encourage the redevelopment of these business premises for housing. The Church building could be sensitively converted into a dwelling-house with the remaining land accommodating no more than two houses.

TOURISM

The governing policies for Tourism are L/ED16 and 17 in Chapter 1 (Tourist Facilities and Accommodation and Roadside Signs). The Economic Development policies in Chapter 1 apply where relevant and policy L/CF4 in Chapter 5 safeguards established routes for walking, cycling, trails and cross-country skiing.

Tourism is important to the town's economy. Enhancing the attractiveness of the town is best served by preserving the townscape, the amenity use of the harbour, and access links along the coast, as well as the promotion of environmental improvements. These priorities have been identified elsewhere in the Town Statement but it is the caravan site which provides the best opportunity for increasing the number of tourists and visitors to Cullen:-

T1 Caravan Site

This should remain as a holiday caravan site as an integral part of Cullen's tourism infrastructure. Development for alternative uses will not be permitted.

T2 Sustrans Cycle Route

The Sustrans route forms part of a national cycle network, with the Moray section ultimately connecting Inverness and Aberdeen. The line of the proposed cycle route is shown on the proposals map. From the west, the route utilises the line of the former railway, passing over the viaduct then following North Deskford Street, South Deskford Street, Cathay Terrace, Findlater Drive and across site R1, connecting to the A98 on the southern boundary of the town. (See policy L/CF4 (Access and Trails) in Chapter 5).

ENVIRONMENT

The policies for the maintenance and enhancement of the environment are found in Chapter 2 (Environment).

The principal policies for the local environment are L/ENV10 'Settlement Boundaries' and L/ENV18 'Public Amenity and Open Spaces' in Chapter 2, and L/IMP1 'Development in Built Up Areas' in Chapter 8.

Under the terms of policy L/ENV18 (Public Amenity and Open Spaces) a number of spaces have been identified which contribute to the environment and amenity of the town. The purpose of policy L/ENV18 is to protect the integrity of these spaces from inappropriate development and to ensure that their contribution to the amenity of the built up area is not compromised.

ENV1 Open Spaces at The Braes and Bayview Road

These elevated areas of open space will be protected for their contribution to the amenity of the surrounding environment and for their distant views across the Moray Firth.

ENV2 Gravel Pit

This site, close to Cullen Primary School with a good cover of natural vegetation, is proposed as a site for environmental education and recreation. Further trees would require to be planted, a pond could be created and pedestrian access provided into and around the site. Interpretative boards could be erected, to provide information about the natural habitats and local history. The Council has already

been successful in forming a Committee of local community representatives responsible for managing the development of the site. Measures have been taken to prevent further illegal dumping within the site and to clear away areas of undergrowth. Tree planting has taken place along the northern and western boundaries. Works undertaken to date have received financial assistance from the Council and BT Environment Week.

ENV3 Former Railway Station Area

The opportunity exists to provide a pedestrian link from the Council housing area at New View Court, along the former railway line to Seafield Farm. Landscaping and footpath provision would have to take account of the varying ground levels associated with the infilling of a section of the line immediately south of Seafield Place (designated R4). The mature trees on the embankments either side of the railway should be retained as important landscape features and the natural habitats safeguarded.

ENV4 Cathay House

The grounds of Cathay House contain a significant number of mature trees which make an important contribution to the setting and amenity of the surrounding built environment. This site should be protected for its natural heritage value.

ENV5 Golf Club Area

This is an important focal point for visitors to the town in recognition of which an environmental improvement scheme may be needed - the car park requires resurfacing, and additional street furniture could be provided. Maintenance/ improvement work could be carried out on existing structures with additional seating provision along the foreshore area. The Council acknowledge the ongoing problem of coastal erosion and flooding at the mouth of the Cullen Burn and recognise the associated implications for the accessibility and maintenance of the privately-owned footbridge.

ENV6 Seafield Farm

This site, currently in agricultural use, makes an important contribution to the setting of Seafield Farm and is a significant area of green open space at the southern entrance to Cullen which should remain undeveloped.

ENV7 Playing Fields

The community playing fields at Logie Drive will be retained for their current leisure function.

ENV8 Ogilvie Park

This area of open space will be retained as an amenity zone for the surrounding built environment.

ENV9 The Square

The principal function of the Square is as a car parking area with public facilities. The small area of green open space to the north east of the square contains floral displays and some seating provision. The Council will seek the retention and, where appropriate, upgrading of the Square as Cullen's central focal point.

There are **wider environmental designations** relating to areas of local, national and international scientific importance and to areas of high scenic and landscape quality which in most cases may relate to areas just beyond the settlement boundary. Where sites of scientific importance are found within settlement boundaries, these are designated as ENV in the Proposals Map.

AGLV The coast extending westwards to Portknockie, and eastwards to the Council boundary is designated an Area of Great Landscape Value.

CPZ The coastal area east and west of the town boundary is designated as a Coastal Protection Zone.

SSSI Most of the foreshore area is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

SINS A Site of Interest to Natural Science extends from Portknockie to Cullen.

HGDL The grounds of Cullen House are contained in the National Inventory of Historical Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

Detailed maps of all the above are held by The Moray Council.

Conservation Area

The two Conservation Areas will be retained.

The governing local plan policy for development within Conservation Areas is L/ENV15 in Chapter 2. (Listed Buildings are controlled under policy L/ENV14).

HOUSING

The main governing local plan policy for new housing developments is L/H3 in Chapter 3 (Servicing and Layout of new Housing Developments). Policy L/H7 in Chapter 3 (Affordable Housing provision) may also apply pending on the size and location of the development.

R1 Cullen South

In 1998 outline planning permission was granted for 24 houses taking access from Findlater Drive and Lintmill Road. In order to protect views into the valley from the A98, development will not be permitted within 30m of the main road, with the eastern and southern boundaries complemented by a landscaped edge. The development will make provision for starter units and a formal children's play area. Public footpath access will be provided to both the cemetery and the gravel pit and the overall layout will accommodate the Cycle Route link from the A98 to Findlater Drive (see T2).

R2 Seafield Place (East)

This site slopes upwards from west to east with the raised area being highly exposed and visible from the housing areas to the north. Any new housing development must be set into the lower slopes of the site adjacent to Seafield Place and should be of a style which complements the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area. A maximum of eight houses could be accommodated on this site with provision for a building line similar to that of the existing houses to the north and west. Planting will be required on the steep slope to the rear of the site in order to provide a pleasant backdrop to the proposed housing and create a shelter belt on the edge of the settlement boundary.

R3 South Deskford Street

Two sites are available for rehabilitation and infill development within the planned town Conservation Area. The scale and building line of existing properties on South Deskford Street should be respected in any development proposals.

R4 Gap Site, Seafield Place

This site has a maximum capacity of 2 houses. In order to safeguard the long term potential of the railway, provision must be made for a 3m wide public footpath along either the western or eastern boundary of the site connecting to the former railway line to the south.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Current indoor leisure provision is limited and is primarily provided through Cullen Town Hall and Community Education Centre. Increased demand for these facilities associated with the identified development sites may require their alteration and upgrading in order to provide an adequate leisure function for the village.

The governing local plan policy for community facilities is L/CF1 in Chapter 5.

WASTE WATER TREATMENT

Primary screening requires to be provided for Cullen's sewage by the year 2005. The Council will liaise with North of Scotland Water Authority over the identification of a site to serve Cullen and the surrounding villages. There is no constraint on developing the presently proposed sites for housing.

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