

### THE PLANNING BACKGROUND

It is inevitable that the built and natural heritage of a village like Findhorn imposes limitations on development proposals. Conflicts in the past have resulted in houses with limited accommodation and traditional design being extended in insensitive ways; demand for new housing, and other developments, has put pressure on expanding the built-up edge into what were traditionally regarded as open areas. The village's attractiveness to summer visitors has put pressure on the road network, public footpaths and on the sand dune systems, as well as on housing for the holiday home market.

There has been a general protectionist policy for Findhorn in previous Plans, through designations for both the Conservation area and scenery of the Bay and Foreshore. The Findhorn Bay Local Nature Reserve is now fully designated. The previous land allocation for new house building was in recognition of the high level of second homes in the village. However the total amount of development has also been restricted by drainage constraints. Large-scale visitor attractions were also discouraged in the last Local Plan because of fears of erosion associated with intensified use of the sand dunes.

Only one of three sites designated for housing in the last Local Plan has been developed, at Seaforth Place, however the former site of the Culbin Sands Hotel has been redeveloped for flatted accommodation. The site to the south of Pineridge, belonging to Eco-village Ltd received a consent for 44 dwellings which is under construction. There has been no activity at the formerly designated site adjacent to Cullerne House.

### THE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE

Findhorn, strung out along the shores of the Bay, is set in one of the most striking landscapes in Moray. The diversity of land forms and features includes the largest estuary along the Moray Coast, and the backdrop of the immense coastal forest at Culbin. To the east is a natural sand dune and heath system, interspersed with Scots Pine, broom and gorse. To the south, extensive Scots Pine plantations provide not only a pleasant backdrop to buildings and entrance to the town, but a separation from the vast area of operational land at RAF Kinloss.

The most dominant characteristic of the village itself is still one of modest traditional buildings, set in an informal layout. While parallel lines of cottages, gable end to the road, and linked by a maze of pathways distinguish the old seatown, the higher ground near the Market Cross contains the more imposing buildings like the Village Hall, Yacht Club and Crown and Anchor Inn. Most of the more recent development is discretely located away from the main road. Over the years however, many alterations extensions and new buildings have eroded essential seatown characteristics. The linear form of the village is also under threat from unplanned encroachment into traditional open areas (for example, where there are drying greens, or rights of way, in the dunes and woodland areas). The low density character of the southern end consisting mainly of Scots Pine, is in itself a feature worth protecting.

Findhorn is a busy place, subject to competing demands from a variety of interest groups. Its maritime legacy continues with Boatyard, Royal Findhorn Yacht Club and active Water Sports Clubs; its holiday image maintained with two large caravan parks which in the summer months can create congestion. An attractive residential area, there is a high proportion of elderly retired people and a local demand for housing from RAF personnel. Second and holiday home ownership in the village remains a problem, recognised in the previous Local Plan. The Findhorn Foundation with their aim of developing an ecological village at the Park adds a particularly unique dimension to the social and environmental character of Findhorn, and is the source of much of its visitor interest.

### OBJECTIVES

- (i) To maintain the different and distinctive characteristics of Findhorn and not allow new development to erode them; these are the original Seatown; the holiday attractions of the beach, dunes, caravan sites and Bay foreshore; the residences of the south end; the Findhorn Foundation area.
- (ii) To allow only a level of tourism and visitor residence which is consistent with the capacity of the village, particularly in relation to sand dunes area and its streets.
- (iii) To ensure that development proposals do not compromise the specific features of the village, namely, its open space (including public spaces between houses), woodlands, footpaths; Bay foreshore; and its enclosure by gorse and sand dune areas.

## 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 'Commuted Payments' in Chapter 7 may also apply.

## BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

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

### 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 depending on the nature of the redevelopment proposal.

#### **OPP1 Boatyard**

**This area is an important recreational facility for the whole of the district and also acts as a visitor attraction, supplemented by a restaurant and shop. The Council will not oppose the principle of redeveloping this site so long as:-**

- (i) new development is of a scale and design which reflects its sensitive location;**
- (ii) any housing element is secondary to leisure provision and**
- (iii) the scale of the development proposals are compatible with the Local Nature Reserve designation and proper traffic management in the village.**

**The site has been extended to the south to incorporate the open area of land presently outside the curtilage of the yard, but within the same ownership. Although included within the yard designation this area should remain as a landscaped open space free from enclosure in any redevelopment proposal for the Boatyard area.**

## TOURISM

The governing policies for Tourism are L/ED16 and 17 in Chapter 1 of the Local Plan (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.

#### **T1 Findhorn Sands and Findhorn Bay Holiday Caravan Parks**

**Expansion of chalet and caravan site development outwith the boundaries, shown on the Proposals Map, will not be approved because of environmental impact, particularly in the dunes area.**

#### **T2 Ice Houses**

**The Council will encourage the development of a Heritage use at this site. Development must be consistent with their designation as Listed Buildings.**

## 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/Drying Greens**

**A number of important open spaces within the village such as former drying greens and boat storage areas should be retained in their existing open form with a general presumption against the encroachment of new buildings or enclosure which prevents public access. These spaces often form important breaks in the built-up area and make a valuable contribution to the amenities of the village.**

**ENV2 Village Entrance**

The area to the south of the village in the vicinity of Heathsands, Cullerne House and Minton House is distinguished by its low density character of large buildings set in a matured landscape. In order to maintain the low density and wooded character of this area, there shall be a general presumption against further sub-division in this area. The Council will limit planning consents to proposals based on the replacement, extension or rehabilitation of existing buildings.

**ENV3 Recreation Ground**

The recreational ground, bowling green and tennis courts are protected for community use.

**ENV4 Village Trees**

In partnership with the local community, the Council will promote a detailed tree survey of the village to determine the merits of serving a Tree Preservation Order on those of high amenity value.

**ENV5 Public Footpaths**

The Council will endeavour to protect the network of footpaths which presently exist within the village. Development proposals will not normally be approved within the village which interfere with established pedestrian links.

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 village is set within an Area of Great Landscape Value, and the designation relates to all land outwith the boundary.

**CPZ** The dune area to the east and bay foreshore to the south are designated a Coastal Protection Zone.

**SSSI** The bay area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It also has an international designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site as part of the larger Moray and Nairn Coast SPA and Ramsar Site.

**SINS** All land surrounding Findhorn is included within a Site of Interest to Natural Science.

**Findhorn Bay Local Nature Reserve**

Development will be strictly controlled in this area to ensure that the scientific validity of the designation is not undermined. A management plan is being investigated for 200 acres of duneland to the north of the Findhorn Foundation which may be promoted for inclusion within the Nature Reserve.

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

**Conservation Area**

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

The Conservation Area is identified on the proposals map. The boundaries are unchanged. (See the proposals map and detailed maps held in the Environmental Services Department offices).

**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 depending on the size and location of the development.

**R1 Rear of Seaforth Place**

Planning consent has been granted for 11 individual houses using two separate access points, Linksvie and Seaforth Place. Three vacant plots remain.

**R2 Findhorn Foundation: Eco-Village Ltd**

Consent has been granted to Eco-Village Ltd for 44 houses. The terms of the consent cover an improvement to the road junction at the entrance to the Findhorn Foundation site and the provision of extensive landscaping within the site.

**R3 Findhorn Foundation: Northern Runway**

An area of land to the north of the disused runway has been included with the settlement boundary to accommodate redevelopment within the park. This area includes an existing builders yard and is defined by an existing fenceline separating the former runway from the semi-natural gorseland beyond.

This area has been included within the settlement boundary to enable redevelopment of existing uses within the park area including the replacement of caravans for permanent dwellings and to allow new visitor and small business facilities to be provided in the context of the existing mix of uses which are characteristic of the park area.

Development within this area shall not be allowed to proceed until the development of R2 is complete and fully occupied. Drainage constraints may further curtail development.

**RC: Findhorn Foundation: Residential Caravans**

Within the Pineridge and Park areas of the Findhorn Foundation, the Council will continue to apply a Policy allowing for the replacement of temporary residential caravans and mobile homes with more permanent dwellings, at lower or one-for-one densities. The Council does not oppose the innovative construction and design techniques used by the Foundation, provided they do not conflict with Objective1.

**WASTE WATER TREATMENT**

NOSWA have placed an embargo on all new development requiring connection to the mains drainage system until the Sewage Treatment Plan at Kinloss is upgraded. The Council will not approve new development which cannot be served by the mains drainage system unless alternative drainage solutions meet with the satisfaction of SEPA and NOSWA. Such solutions must exclude the use of 'traditional' septic tank and soakaway arrangements due to potential of inundation (flooding) in parts of the community. (see also policy L/IMP7 (Drainage Impact) in Chapter 8).

