
SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE: GLENTRESS MASTERPLAN

Report by Service Director Regulatory Services

PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS COMMITTEE

29 February 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Supplementary Guidance: Glentress Masterplan (Appendix A).**
- 1.2 The purpose of the Supplementary Guidance (SG) is to guide the future sustainable development of the Glentress forest visitor attraction located in the Tweed valley between Peebles and Innerleithen. The Masterplan presents a strategic context for this part of the valley and sets out proposals for development to enhance the visitor attraction. The Masterplan includes indicative proposals for an enhanced centre, a new site for cabins and parking. The SG has been developed in partnership with Forest Enterprise Scotland and is set out in **Appendix A**.
- 1.3 In summary, this report brings forward the revised SG: Glentress Masterplan following public consultation. A summary of the consultation responses are set out in **Appendix B** along with associated minor amendments and updates to the SG. The key changes to the finalised SG as a result of the public consultation relate to additional wording in respect to landscape planting, ensuring an acceptable access is maintained in the event that development takes place 'out of phase', consideration of secure bike storage/parking, additional text in relation to flood risk, provision for a rendezvous point, and ensuring minimal potential for overlooking of neighbouring residential properties.
- 1.4 A new Local Development Plan is in the process of being adopted; as a result the Glentress Masterplan will initially be Supplementary Planning Guidance in determination of planning applications. Once the Local Development Plan is adopted the Masterplan will be formal Supplementary Guidance and part of the Local Development Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Planning and Building Standards Committee:**
 - a) approves the Glentress Masterplan as Supplementary Guidance**
 - b) notes the Updated Environmental Report and Updated Habitats Regulations Appraisal set out in Appendices D and E.**

3 BACKGROUND OF SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

- 3.1 Glentress Forest is one of eight forests within the Tweed Valley Forest Park and is recognised as a high quality environment for outdoor activities. The forest currently forms a key attraction for tourism in the Scottish Borders and attracts over 300,000 visitors per year. Furthermore, over the last 15 years, Glentress has grown to become one of the UK's premier mountain biking destinations, acting as the flagship 7stanes venue. Glentress, in addition to continuing as an operational forest, also provides the setting for other activities such as: walking, horse riding, sightseeing, tree top adventures, wildlife and nature observation; as well as education and learning.
- 3.2 The Supplementary Guidance: (SG) Glentress Masterplan (as set out in Appendix A) has come about through partnership working between officers of the Council and Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES). The Masterplan has been guided by earlier work carried out by FES in association with Barton Willmore – Planning and Design Consultants. That work focused on the area surrounding Glentress and included public consultation.
- 3.3 Whilst the area covered by the Glentress Masterplan is not allocated within the Proposed Local Development Plan as a development site; the Proposed Plan sets out, within both the Cardrona and the Peebles Settlement Profiles, that the Council will support the development of a Masterplan as SG in partnership with the Forestry Commission.

4 OUTCOME FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Following this public consultation period, a total of 22 consultation responses were received, eight from individuals and fourteen of which came from agencies/groups; this included one late response from Visit Scotland. Whilst late responses are usually not accepted, given the importance of Visit Scotland's view in respect to this significant proposal, it was considered that the consultation response should be accepted.
- 4.2 From the consultation responses received, it is evident that there is strong support for the proposals contained within the Masterplan, including support from Visit Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Cycling, Tweed Valley Trail Association, Tweed Valley Bike Patrol and AIMUp Ltd; with many contributors offering their views on how to improve the Masterplan. Nevertheless, there are also a number of contributors who do not support the proposals contained within the Masterplan and consider that money would be best spent on repairing existing trails and creating new trails. Many of those who do not support the Masterplan also consider that the potential cabin site will only result in the loss of some high quality trails whilst also resulting in competition for existing accommodation providers within the area.
- 4.3 The main elements of each of the consultation responses are detailed in **Appendix B** along with a response, and officer recommendation. Appendix B also sets out a number of updates to the document. It should be noted that a full version of the consultation responses received in relation to the Glentress Masterplan have been made available in the Members Library. Following comments received the main changes to the

Masterplan consist of:

- Additional wording in relation to landscape planting on page 16.
- Ensuring an acceptable access is maintained for forest users in the event that development takes place 'out of phase' (page 19, section 6.3).
- Consideration of secure bike storage and/or parking within the cabin development (page 25, section 7.31).
- Additional wording to ensure that the proposed development will not be at flood risk and will not increase flood risk elsewhere (page 29, section 8.11).
- Ensuring that the development allows for a rendezvous point for emergency vehicles with associated parking.
- Additional wording to ensure minimal potential for overlooking of neighbouring residential properties (page 13).
- Reconsideration of the trailhead, access and egress to routes and trails (page 15, Figure 14 and page 16).

4.4 A number of minor changes to the SG have also come about as a result of the public consultation, these are:

- Amendment of text in section 8.10 replacing "Environmentally Protected Species" with "European Protected Species and Protected Species".
- Replacement of "Historic Scotland" to "Historic Environment Scotland" in section 8.7.
- Additional text in relation to Figure 16 to read that the cabins should be dispersed through the forest and that consideration is given to neighbouring uses in their design and layout.

4.5 A number of updates have also been incorporated into the finalised SG these relate to a number of corrections: page 15 in relation to Figure 14 and the inclusion of an additional no.6 on the diagram; page 16 in reference to Figures 8 and 9, where previously Figures 7 and 8 had been referenced; page 19 in relation to the omission of text in respect to Development Parcel C; page 29 in relation to paragraph 8.14 Eco-Homes where now this has been replaced with a BREEAM paragraph, and the inclusion of an additional submission requirement in relation to water quality on page 31.

4.6 This report seeks the approval of the SG which will provide an important element of the Council's tourism delivery strategy.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no substantive cost implications arising for the Council from the recommendations included in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The key risks are considered to be:

Risk of not providing guidance

- (i) The lack of guidance would cause uncertainty to the developers and the public and be a barrier to effective decision making by the Council. This could result in an ad hoc and inconsistent decision making with the policies in the Local Plan not being taken fully into account.

- (ii) Failure to produce the SG would reflect badly on the Council's commitment to improve the design of new development through a placemaking approach.
- (iii) It is considered that the failure to approve the finalised SG would have resource impacts in the Development Management Section, potentially resulting in delays processing planning applications. In addition, it may ultimately have both a negative impact on the development and on the thorough assessment of the environmental impact of development.

Risk of providing guidance

- (i) There are no perceived risks related to the adoption of the guidance by the Council.

5.3 **Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

5.4 **Acting Sustainably**

The Glentress Masterplan process has been subject to environmental appraisal under the terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. An Environmental Report (ER) (refer to **Appendix D**) was prepared alongside the Masterplan, and has been updated following public consultation. The Environmental Report sets out a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the proposals within the Masterplan, and puts forward any necessary mitigation requirements.

- 5.5 Under Part IVA (regulations 85A-85E) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended, the Glentress Masterplan has also been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). That report set out in **Appendix E** has concluded that the adoption of the Masterplan will result in no adverse impacts upon the integrity of any Natura site. The consultation responses to both the ER and HRA are set out in **Appendix C**. Due to the size of the report, a paper version of Appendices C, D and E has been made available in the Members Library.

5.6 **Carbon Management – Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009**

It is not considered the Report brings any impact on the Council's carbon emissions.

5.7 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be a neutral impact on the rural environment from the Supplementary Guidance.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer Human Resources and the Clerk to the Council are being consulted and any comments received have been incorporated in the final report.
- 6.2 The Chief Officer Economic Development has also been consulted.

Approved by

Brian Frater
Service Director Regulatory Services

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Planning and Building Standards, 3 August 2015

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