

LANDSCAPE

Application Reference No:	2018/0151/DET
Application Name/Description :	Dalwhinnie Quarry: Recommencement of extraction and extension
Advisor:	Frances thin
Date of Advice	14/05/2018

The Development
Quarry extension and extraction over 35 years.

Landscape Designations & Inventories
Cairngorms National Park

Landscape Character
Features and Sensitivity
The Relevant landscape character assessments can be found here: i. Landscape Areas - Cairngorms National Park Authority
Baseline situation
The L&V assessment is undertaken on the basis that the existing non-restored site is the baseline. There is an outstanding restoration plan which formed part of the previous permission which should be the baseline for the purposes of assessment, whether this was actually undertaken or not. Baseline Assessment – under para 3.5 of the LVIA National and Regional Landscape Designations there is no mention of the Cairngorms National Park.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
Landscape character
See appendix I for comment on the adopted LVIA methodology.

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The quarry and the extension site straddle two landscape character areas; Glen Truim: Upper Glen, and Cathar Mor. The assessment of effects on landscape character refers to the proposal being on the shoulder of Cathar Mor but there is no discussion about the susceptibility of a site that sits a) on a break of slope and b) at the transition between two landscape character areas. This location contributes to the character and experience of both landscape character areas. Simple land forms, shallow gradients and a lack of pattern in the vegetation cover characterise this landscape, views across the moor or into the valley are revealed when arriving at the break of slope, there is intervisibility between the LCAs with the site forming an intermediary horizon from within both LCAs. The moor feels open, expansive and often larger than it is in reality. The Cathar moor is characterised by lack of settlement and infrastructure. Water bodies of this scale and form are not a feature of the moorland and those that are in this LCA sit in glacial hollows. Loch Caoldair is bound by rocky crags and woodland, elsewhere dips and hollows in the topography contain wetland and seasonal standing water. The sensitivity of both the Landscape Character Areas (Glen Truim and Cathar Mor) is understated in the LVIA.

The existing quarry situation is used as the baseline and the slow progressing of the quarry expansion means a gradually changing landscape but this does not lessen the fact that the duration of the development is 35 years and that it is non-reversible. Restoration of the quarry void and extracted faces does not start until the end of that 35 year period. In these assessments the duration element of the magnitude of impact has been severely underplayed. There is insufficient information (on bund structure, soils structure and chemistry and drainage) in the application to support the assumption that revegetated bunds will appear the same as the surrounding undisturbed vegetation. In fact the soils across the site are thin. These factors in my view result in the magnitude of the change being down-played.

Significance of Landscape Effects

The assessment of sensitivity is flawed and magnitude under-played, this undermines the conclusions on the assessment of landscape impact significance.

Special Landscape Qualities

The applicants have undertaken a SLQ impact assessment (appendix 3 of the LVIA)

The study area and the SLQs identified for inclusion in the assessment are appropriate. The detailing of the SLQs and underpinning landscape character is ok, there is poor analysis of the effects on SLQs.

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The relevant published SLQ report is: [the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park](#)

Visual Effects

Sensitivity and receptors

See appendix I for comment on the adopted LVIA methodology.

In categorising the level of sensitivity I would advise that the enjoyment of the landscapes of the NP by people (receptors) in cars, trains and on bikes is more than incidental.

Magnitude of Visual Change – the existing quarry situation is used as baseline whereas it should be the permitted development. The duration of effects is 35 years and has not been adequately considered in the assessment of magnitude of effect.

There is insufficient information on the make-up of the bunds (soils structure, soil chemistry and drainage) in the application to support the assumption that revegetated bunds will appear the same as the surrounding undisturbed vegetation. The bunds will be more free-draining than the undisturbed strata and soils and the slope and aspect will differ from the host vegetation sites.

Significance of Visual Effects

The assessment of sensitivity is flawed and magnitude under-played, this undermines the reliability of conclusions on visual impact significance and the sequential Visual Assessment.

Summary

Impact and Significance of development

Landscape Effects

As a consequence of this development there will be significant impacts upon the character and experience of this landscape over the 35 years duration of extraction and these are likely to affect the appreciation of the SLQs in this part of the Park. The quarry will contribute to the cumulative effects of infrastructure in the Dalwhinnie area.

Visual Effects

The reduction of visual impacts to a less than significant level depends entirely upon the bunding (its shape and vegetation cover) and the removal and revegetation of the bunded areas after 35 years when the site is worked out. At the moment there is insufficient information to ensure the effectiveness of the bunds in this respect, and the reduction of the visual impacts to a level which is less than significant.

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Recommended mitigation or compensation for significant impacts

During the 35 years of extraction the mitigation of L&V impacts is entirely dependent upon the bunding (its shape and vegetation cover) and at the moment there is insufficient information to make this a certainty. No other mitigation is proposed.

In the longer term, even with restorative shaping, earth works and re-establishing a moorland vegetation, the quarry void landform and the loch will be a long-lasting anomaly in terms of the landscape character of this area. This will be experienced from elevated locations as part of a wider landscape as well as from nearby locations.

The proposed restoration works do not mitigate or compensate for the level and duration of L&V impact.

Afteruse

PAN 45 requires there to be a stated afteruse for quarry operations. This proposal describes the afteruse as 'ecologically beneficial'.

In order for the proposed afteruse;

- To be ecologically (and landscape) beneficial as stated
- To meet policy 5 (conserve and enhance landscape character and SLQs) of the CNP LDP
- To bring about environmental improvement (PAN 64 para 16)

it will have to have regard to CNPA land use strategies and the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.

Proposals to mitigate and compensate for the long term and permanent effects of this proposal, and to deliver the afteruse, should be phased. The EIA screening alerted the applicant to the need for a high quality restoration and mitigation scheme and suggested that this take the form of extensive native woodland planting. This would effectively create a new landscape context for the quarry and make a beneficial ecological afteruse achievable.

Overall conclusions

The Guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is poorly interpreted, and as a consequence levels of impact are understated. The proposed restoration works do not mitigate or compensate for the level and duration of impact. The proposed 'afteruse' for the application would not be achieved within space and timescales described.

Information required prior to planning permission being granted

- The area of land within the red line boundary to be extended so that the afteruse can be achieved.

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- Details of mitigation and restoration works such that the ecologically beneficial afteruse will be delivered at **the point of completion** (extraction period plus the 5 year after care period). In order to achieve this outcome, mitigation works will need to proceed from the beginning of any permission. These proposals should reflect CNPA land use strategies and the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan and include a phased landscape plan and a phased landscape management plan.
- A construction method statement. This will have to be detailed enough to give reassurance that the planned mitigation and afteruse can be achieved. The following should be included; removal, handling, placement and storage of vegetated soils, topsoils, subsoils and soil-forming materials. A programme that takes in to account seasonal weather risks in relation to these works, details of drainage provision and restorative blasting.

Conditions required if consented

Appendix I LVIA Methodology

Landscape Effects

Sensitivity is a combination of susceptibility to change and value of the landscape receptor. Susceptibility to change is a feature of the landscape itself judged in relation to the proposed development and not the value attached as indicated in table 2.1 of the LVIA report. Value is indeed part of the sensitivity assessment and should reflect (though is not entirely about) the designation. All of the assessments of LC sensitivity use the following phraseology ...”...the landscape is tolerant to a degree of change resulting in a medium susceptibility to change in relation to the proposals, this results in a medium sensitivity ...” There is no discussion of landscape value and in particular, the National Park, in any of these statements.

Visual Effects

When assessing visual effects, receptors are the people experiencing the view. Sensitivity should be expressed in terms of the receptors and not the viewpoint. The statements on visual sensitivity in this assessment are poorly expressed. For example in 6.1.1 “The sensitivity of the receptor at this location would primarily be motorists and as a consequence this results in a medium sensitivity for this viewpoint.”