

Affordable Housing Community Consultation

The story so far.....

Introduction

Rannoch Community Trust (RCT) and the Dunalastair Estate have been working in partnership over the last couple of years to look at the potential for developing a site in Kinloch Rannoch for residential housing including houses for affordable rent and sale.

The site that we have been looking at is in part of a field, owned by Dunalastair Estate, that lies between the B846 and the River Tummel, opposite Buchanan Place (see photo below). With the help of Communities Housing Trust and financial support from Perth & Kinross Council and the Rural Housing Fund, we have carried out a number of technical investigations of the site and more recently commissioned an architect to draw up plans of what the affordable housing development might look like.



What is being proposed?

We are proposing to develop part of the field to build 12 community owned houses for affordable rent and low-cost home ownership (LCHO) with a further 7 houses being built for Dunalastair Estate for private rent or open market sale.

We haven't yet decided on how many of the affordable homes will be for rent and how many will be for low-cost home ownership. We will need to do further research into demand for LCHO but we anticipate that there will be between 6 and 9 homes for affordable rent.

We are also proposing that one or two of the affordable homes will be live/work units (i.e. houses with a workshop or other similar space for running a business) and two will be fully wheelchair accessible.

What is the purpose of the consultation?

We are consulting with the community for a number of reasons.

1. We want see if there is strong support for this proposal. Without community support it is unlikely that we can take these plans any further forward.
2. The affordable housing will be owned by the community to better meet local needs and priorities, so it is important that local people are kept informed and consulted from the very start.
3. Lastly, we want to your feedback on the layouts and plans to see if they can be improved in a way that maximises the positive impacts and benefits for Kinloch Rannoch as a place to live and work.

As well as the plans and layouts we have provided a range further detailed information on RCT's website help inform your views and are holding drop-in events where you can meet members of the project group who have been involved in developing the proposals. We have also provided some statistics and other facts about the demographic and other challenges facing Rannoch. It may be helpful to consider these when thinking about future development in the village.

Why do we need affordable housing?

The need for more affordable housing was identified as a priority in the extensive consultation exercise that took place in 2015 as part of the development of a local community plan – *Developing Rannoch's Sustainable Future*. In 2018 Rannoch Community Trust commissioned an independent **Housing Needs Analysis** (HNA) to gain evidence of the need for more affordable housing. A HNA questionnaire was sent to 300 households in Rannoch, and analysis of council housing waiting lists and the local housing market was undertaken. The main points coming out of the HNA were:

- of those 90 households who responded to the HNA questionnaire, 18 (20% of all respondents, 6% of all households) were in housing need.
- The types of housing need included: older households needing to move to smaller houses or houses that were more suitable for their health or mobility needs; young people wanting to leave home but remain in the area, and households living in insecure housing or housing that was in poor condition or difficult and expensive to heat.
- There were 24 households on the Council's housing waiting list looking for affordable housing in the Rannoch area.
- There were 48 social rented properties (Council and housing association houses) in Kinloch Rannoch but only 4 vacancies in the previous 12 months;
- Average house prices in Rannoch were beyond what most people in housing need could afford to pay.
- There was a need for at least 12 additional houses for affordable rent or low-cost home ownership.
- 97% of all survey respondents said that there was a need for more affordable housing and many felt that people with a local connection to Rannoch, whether through family or employment, are not given sufficient priority when it comes to accessing social rented housing in the area.

A follow up survey of local employers also revealed that a lack of affordable housing was a barrier to recruiting and retaining staff.

RCT believe that affordable housing that is owned and managed by the community would enable greater priority in lettings to be given to people who live or work in the area.

Why are we looking at this site?

The short answer is that the field is the only site that is available within close proximity of Kinloch Rannoch.

RCT did initially look at the site of the former Bunrannoch Hotel in the centre of Kinloch Rannoch it. Funding was secured from the Scottish Government's Rural Housing Fund to employ the [Communities Housing Trust](#) (CHT) to carry out a feasibility study.

Unfortunately, although the owner was open to selling the site their expectations about what they felt the site was worth were much higher than the independent market valuation which had been carried out as part of the feasibility study. We therefore had to look elsewhere for an alternative site.

Several other potential sites were looked at but the owners were not interested in selling or developing the land for affordable housing. Of the landowners who were approached only the Dunalastair Estate responded positively by identifying the field that lies between the B846 and the River Tummel as a possible site and agreeing to allow RCT to carry out a feasibility study.

An initial study of the site by CHT in 2020 concluded that it had the potential to be developed for affordable housing. As Dunalastair were also interested in developing some of the field for housing for private sale or rent it was recognised that there were mutual benefits to be had from working in partnership to take forward development of the site.

Are there any technical obstacles to using field?

Any development of the site would require planning consent from Perth & Kinross Council but there were two significant barriers to a successful planning application.,

- I. Settlement Boundary - a large part of the field is outside the current settlement boundary as defined in the Council's current Local Development Plan (a settlement boundary is used in planning to define the physical limit or edge of a community; any new building should be contained within in the boundary).

In the case of the settlement boundary, Perth & Kinross Council recognise both the need for more affordable housing in Rannoch and the lack of suitable sites in the area. Providing that we can demonstrate strong community support PKC are prepared to consider a planning application for a residential development on the site that includes affordable housing.

- II. Flood Risk - A large part of the field was, according to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), at risk of flooding.

RCT and Dunalastair argued that SEPA's flood risk maps were very high level and did not give an accurate assessment of individual sites. To that end we commissioned a more detailed flood risk study which was completed in 2021 and concluded that there was 'little to no risk of flooding' and any risk that did exist could be easily mitigated.

Perth & Kinross Council are now more supportive of the development of the site if it helps deliver more affordable housing for the community. PKC have provided funding to help RCT contribute its share of the cost of developing outline plans for how the site might be developed.

What are the next steps?

RCT's priority is to develop part of the site for 12 community owned houses for affordable rent and low-cost homeownership. We will do this in partnership with the Dunalastair Estate who will use part of the site to build 7 houses for sale on the open market. Working together and developing the site in partnership will be more efficient and allow us to share the costs of architects, planning, road construction, provision of services/connections to utilities etc.... which in turn will help us to keep rents affordable. The next steps for taking the project forward are as follows:

1. **Consult with the community** - We want to see if there is support for the proposal which is essential if we want to progress the affordable housing. We are also interested in your views on the proposed layout and plans for the development. At this stage we do not have any detailed designs for the houses themselves as these will be developed if we get to the stage of submitting a planning application. However, we do have examples of houses from other community led affordable housing projects to give you an idea of the range of house designs.

We will use the feedback and views gathered from the consultation to establish that there is community support for the project, and secondly to, where feasible, amend or revise the proposed layouts.

2. **Consult with Perth & Kinross Council** – once we are confident that there is community support we will share the proposed layouts and plans together with the results of the community consultation. Depending on the feedback we get from PKC Planning we may need to make further revisions to the proposed layouts.
3. **Prepare and submit a Planning Application** – this would involve developing detailed designs into a planning application. There would be a further statutory consultation period giving an opportunity to give further feedback and comment on the proposals. We would hope that a planning application could be submitted by the end of this year or the first quarter of 2024.

What will happen to the rest of the field?

There are no immediate plans for the rest of the site and so it will remain as an agricultural field for grazing livestock. However, the field may be a suitable place for future phases of expansion of the village. For this reason, the layout has been designed in a way that would allow for potential future development by extending the access road.

The Council have started preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Perth & Kinross area which will be subject to extensive consultation during 2023 – 2026. During that process, Dunalastair Estate expects to put forward the remainder of the field as a candidate site for allocation (or inclusion within the Kinloch Rannoch settlement boundary), although it would prefer to do this as part of a long-term, well-designed and sustainable vision for the whole village.