

Reference no:	25/04140/PREAPP	Date of Issue:	03/02/2026
Proposal:	Off-site parking for cars, motorhomes and coaches to service the Glenfinnan village tourist facilities (viaduct and visitor centre).	Address:	Land 640M North Of Callop Glenfinnan
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Case Officer Designation:	Planner	Reviewed by:	SM

Description of Proposal and Summary of Key Points

The proposal seeks to form an off-site parking facility east of Glenfinnan to help manage increasing visitor numbers and reduce congestion, road safety risks and environmental pressures associated with the village's popular attractions. The indicative layout covers approximately 1.3 hectares and includes car, motorhome, coach and limited overnight "aire" spaces, supported by shuttle bus services and active travel links via the proposed Glenfinnan Greenway. The principle of the development is acceptable and is considered to accord with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policies 29 (Rural Development) and 30 (Tourism) which supports development where proposals enhance visitor management, improve safety, contribute to rural resilience and relieve pressure on existing infrastructure. A small ancillary retail element may also be supported, provided it remains subordinate to the primary use and does not undermine nearby centres.

In terms of siting and design, the rural location is considered appropriate given recognised visitor pressures, existing forestry activity and the potential to screen the development from the A830. However, a detailed Tree Survey, landscaping strategy and biodiversity enhancements will be required. Access arrangements must comply with Transport Scotland requirements, and a Transport Statement will need to demonstrate anticipated demand and operation of shuttle services as well as detailing active travel connections, cycle parking. A swept path analysis will be required. Early engagement with Transport Scotland is advised.

The site is located close to the Callop River and associated watercourses, with SEPA's mapping indicating potential flood risk. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment will be required, and the current proposal for a flood protection bund is unlikely to be supported under NPF4. The vulnerability associated with overnight motorhome use means these spaces may need to be re-sited or removed depending on flood risk outcomes.

The development lies within a Class 1 carbon-rich peatland area, meaning Policy 5 (Soils) of NPF4 applies. A detailed peat survey is required, and the proposal must demonstrate avoidance and minimisation of peat disturbance, with any unavoidable impacts clearly justified. Although community benefit may support the proposal in principle under Policy 5, development on deep peat requires strong evidence and careful design.

The site is also within and adjacent to highly sensitive natural heritage designations, including the Ardgour Pinewoods SAC and SSSIs. Early engagement with NatureScot is advised, and a protected species survey will be required. Due to the scale of the proposal and the presence of designated sites, the development qualifies as Schedule 2 under the EIA Regulations, and an EIA Screening Opinion must be sought before submitting a planning application.

You are advised that the following consent(s) will be required for the proposed development:

Planning Permission

Building Warrant

Planning History

Reference	Description	Date of Decision	Outcome
04/00205/FULLO	Erection of Shelter/Storage Shed	27.05.2004	PERMISSION GRANTED

Planning Policy

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)

Policy 1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

Policy 2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Policy 3 - Biodiversity

Policy 4 - Natural Places

Policy 5 - Soils

Policy 6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees

Policy 7 - Historic Assets and Places

Policy 13 - Sustainable Transport

Policy 14 - Design Quality and Place

Policy 15 - Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

Policy 22 - Flood Risk and Water Management

Policy 23 - Health and Safety

Policy 28 - Retail

Policy 29 - Rural Development

Policy 30 - Tourism

Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (2012)

Policy 28 - Sustainable Design

Policy 29 - Design Quality & Place-making

Policy 31 - Developer Contributions

Policy 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside

Policy 40 - Retail Development

Policy 43 - Tourism

Policy 44 - Tourist Accommodation

Policy 51 - Trees and Development

Policy 56 - Travel

Policy 57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage

Policy 58 - Protected Species

Policy 61 - Landscape

Policy 64 - Flood Risk

Policy 65 - Waste Water Treatment

Policy 66 - Surface Water Drainage

West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (2019)

No specific policies

Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)

Developer Contributions (November 2018)

Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)

Green Networks (Jan 2013)

Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)

Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)

Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)

Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)

Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

Assessment

Planning Appraisal

The proposal seeks to establish an off-site parking facility for cars, motorhomes and coaches to support Glenfinnan's visitor infrastructure, including the viaduct and the visitor centre. The intention is to help address the significant growth in visitor numbers and to reduce the resulting traffic pressures and environmental impacts associated with Glenfinnan's popular attractions. The site lies approximately 1.5 miles east of Glenfinnan and would be accessed directly from the A830 trunk road. The indicative layout identifies an area of approximately 1.3 hectares accommodating around 100 cars, 8 motorhomes, 10 coaches and 5 aire spaces for overnight motorhome or camping use. The supporting information indicates that shuttle buses would run between the car park and Glenfinnan and that the development would also be supported by the proposed Glenfinnan Greenway shared path, enabling safe and sustainable walking, wheeling and cycling movements between the site and the village.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 29: Rural Development supports development in remote rural areas where it contributes positively to the viability and resilience of rural communities, supports local employment, sustains existing settlements and is appropriate in terms of its siting, design, access and environmental impact. Development that enhances the sustainability and diversity of the rural economy is supported in principle. Similar considerations apply through Policy 36 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

Visitor pressure in and around Glenfinnan is well recognised. The area has become a major destination in recent years, resulting in high traffic levels and substantial parking demand at key attractions such as the viaduct and Glenfinnan Monument. While a new car park has been developed within the village, it is frequently at capacity, leading to regular unauthorised parking on trunk road verges and on the local road network. There are also ongoing safety concerns arising from pedestrians walking on trunk road verges to reach attractions, as well as hazardous vehicle movements associated with cars attempting multi-point turns on the A830. In this context, the principle of an off-site parking area supported by shuttle bus services and safe active travel routes is acceptable.

Policy 30 (Tourism) supports development that enhances the visitor experience while managing pressures on local infrastructure and the environment. In this case, the proposed community car park, together with the five designated motorhome overnight spaces is considered to accord with policy and can be supported subject to appropriate siting. The proposal is likely to deliver clear improvements in visitor management by providing formalised parking, easing congestion at key viewpoints, and helping to manage tourism pressures experienced in the area.

The supporting statement has also indicated the inclusion of a retail space within the layout. Full details of retail development will need to be provided at future application stage, however, a limited, community-focussed retail element may be capable of support provided it serve as an ancillary operation to the car park use and that it will primarily serve users of the facility, or visitors already coming to the locality rather than acting as a new trip-generating destination. Its scale and design should be appropriate to the rural setting, and that the proposal will need to demonstrate that it will not have any significant

adverse impact on the vitality or viability of existing centres.

The proposal is capable of aligning with relevant policies, subject to further consideration of the development's location, siting, design, access arrangements and compliance with other policy requirements as set out below.

Siting and Design

The site is located on existing Forestry and Land Scotland land to the south of the A830, on an area of undulating ground with scattered rocky outcrops. It is bounded by an existing forestry track to the west and by the Callop River and smaller watercourses to the south and east. A rocky outcrop and a thin but mature tree line separate the northern site boundary from the A830. Additional mature trees lie towards the south-west corner of the site. An existing forestry track runs through the site and provides access to a recently cleared area of commercial forestry to the east.

Given the recognised visitor pressures on Glenfinnan, the introduction of additional car and coach parking in a location outside the village envelope is acceptable in principle. While the development would introduce a large area of hardstanding into a rural landscape, the presence of an existing access capable of serving timber transport and the proximity to an area of commercial forestry lessen the overall landscape sensitivity of the site. The existing roadside tree cover may assist in screening the development from the A830 however, improvements to visibility splays may require some tree removal. A planning application should therefore include a Tree Survey and Constraints Plan to demonstrate the likely impacts on roadside trees. Further opportunities for soft landscaping, compensatory planting and enhancement of on-site biodiversity should also be explored.

Access and Layout

As part of this pre-application enquiry, a consultation request was raised with the Council's Transport Planning Team and I have attached their response in full however, their response is summarised below.

The site will be accessed via an existing road from the A830 trunk road, which is a single carriageway subject to the national speed limit and lacks footways or lighting. The access road to Callop appears to be private and not part of the adopted public network, so ownership and maintenance responsibilities must be confirmed at application stage. The principle of relocating visitor parking to Callop to reduce congestion in Glenfinnan is supported, provided key issues are addressed. All matters relating to junction design, visibility, and safety fall under Transport Scotland's remit, and early engagement with them is essential. Internally, the proposed layout generally meets Roads and Transport Guidelines, but adjustments are needed for bays against fences, and safe pedestrian routes should be added. Swept path analysis for large vehicles will be required. Accessible parking bays are missing and must be included, with a minimum of six spaces recommended. A Transport Statement should accompany the application, covering access arrangements, parking demand, active travel links, and servicing. The design should integrate connections to the Glenfinnan Greenway and provide cycle parking. Waste servicing arrangements and construction traffic impacts must also be clarified, noting that Transport Scotland may require a Construction Traffic Management Plan. Overall, the proposal should demonstrate safe, sustainable access and compliance with national and local transport policy

Flood Risk

The site is adjacent to the Allt Dubhaidh, the Callop River, and a smaller watercourse on the eastern boundary. SEPA's indicative future flood maps show potential for river flooding as well as surface water and small watercourse flooding. Development within a flood risk area will only be supported where it meets one or more of the exceptions as set out under Policy 22a of NPF4. In the first instance, areas of flood risk should be avoided and a site specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required at future application stage to determine the potential flood risk of the site.

As part of this pre-application enquiry, a consultation request was raised with the Council's Flood Risk Management Team (FMT) and their response has been attached in full. It is noted that the indicative design layout proposes a flood protection bund, however, the Council's FMT have advised that these

proposed flood mitigation measures are not supported under NPF4.

The inclusion of the five overnight motorhome parking spaces raises the vulnerable use of the site significantly and this use would not meet one of the exceptions as detailed under policy 22a. It is noted that these spaces are located in close proximity to a watercourse and should the site be evidenced to be at risk of flooding, these spaces will need to be moved to a different area of the site or deleted from the scheme depending on flood risk.

In terms of drainage, surface water runoff from new hardstanding must be managed through SuDS, with discharge limited to pre-development greenfield rates for storm events up to and including a 1 in 200-year plus climate change scenario. A Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) will be required, prepared in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Guidance, detailing how these requirements will be met.

Soils

A future planning application will require full assessment against Policy 5 (Soils) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). As the proposal site lies within an area of Class 1 peat, any application must be supported by a detailed, site-specific peat condition survey. This should identify the baseline depth, habitat condition, quality and stability of carbon-rich soils, assess the likely effects of the development on peatland (including soil disturbance), and set out the likely net effects of the proposal on climate emissions and carbon loss.

Policy 5 sets out strict requirements for development on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats. Such proposals will only be supported where they fall within one of the policy's defined categories, including:

- essential infrastructure with a specific locational need and no reasonable alternative site;
- renewable energy development that optimises the area's contribution to emissions-reduction targets;
- small-scale proposals directly linked to an existing rural business, farm or croft;
- development that supports a fragile rural or island community; or
- restoration of peatland habitats.

In this case, the project represents a community-focused initiative intended to deliver local benefit within a remote rural area, which suggests that the proposal may align with the policy provision supporting fragile communities. However, the application site is located within a Class 1 Carbon and Peatland area and is recognised for deep peat, carbon-rich soils and high ecological value. Policy 5 therefore requires a clear demonstration that peat disturbance has been avoided wherever possible and, where avoidance cannot be achieved, that impacts have been minimised and fully justified.

A peat survey will be required to confirm peat depth, extent and condition across the site and to inform a layout that avoids sensitive areas as far as practicable. The application should set out how the design has evolved to minimise disturbance and include any necessary mitigation or peat management measures in accordance with Policy 5.

Natural Heritage and Protected Species

Policy 57 of the adopted Highland wide Local Development Plan requires proposals to take into account the level of importance and type of heritage features and to demonstrate that the proposal will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource.

The site is immediately bounded to the west by the Ardgour Pinewoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a European level designation for which Alder woodland and Caledonian Forest are qualifying interests. The site also lies within the Ardgour Pinewoods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is further bounded to the west by the Loch Shiel SSSI designation. Given the presence of these designations, early engagement with NatureScot is encouraged prior to submitting any future application. A protected species survey will be required and should accompany a planning application to ensure that any potential ecological impacts are fully understood and appropriately addressed.

Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017,

the proposal is considered to fall within Schedule 2 development given the size of the site and proximity to and within qualifying designations. A formal EIA screening opinion is therefore required and a request should be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to the submission of a planning application.

Drainage and Water

It is prudent for the developer to confirm with Scottish Water, prior to submitting a planning application, that there are no issues with connecting to the public mains water system and that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed development. If it is proposed to supply fresh water from a local borehole, the borehole must be clearly marked on the plans, with details of abstraction provided as part of the planning application.

New developments are expected to connect to the public sewer system unless it can be demonstrated that there are technical or economic constraints to connection. Where a land soakaway is proposed for foul drainage, percolation test results should be submitted to demonstrate the ground conditions are suitable for such an arrangement.

Pursuant to Policy 66 of the HwLDP, the surface water of all proposed development must be drained by Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) designed in accordance with The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753) and, where appropriate, the Sewers for Scotland Manual 4th Edition. Each drainage scheme design must be accompanied by particulars of proposals for ensuring long-term maintenance of the scheme.

All drainage arrangements must be included with the application red line site boundary.

Private Foul Drainage

For a private foul drainage system, you should note that the Council as Roads Authority would not accept any connection or discharge of foul effluent, or surface water drainage from a site into a road drainage system. This *means* effluent discharge into the public road drainage system, via a gulley, direct connection to a ditch or piped filter drain, or informal discharge into the system *is not acceptable*.

All drainage must be dealt with privately within the curtilage of your land sufficiently away from the public road. The public road, by definition, includes verges, ditches, paths and footways, embankments, and cuttings as well as carriageways. Such systems would also need to meet the minimum separation standards currently required by the Building Standards Authority.

Developer Contributions

The Council's [Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance](#) will be used in the determination of planning applications and requires all development, including single house developments, make proportionate financial developer contributions towards meeting service and infrastructure needs in areas of Highland where clear deficiencies are identified.

Consultees For Any Future Application

The following will likely be consulted on any planning application submitted. On occasion it may be necessary to involve consultees who are not listed below as an application progresses.

Highland Council Consultees

Transport Planning
Flood Risk Management Team
Archaeology
Forestry Team
Environmental Health

External Consultees

Transport Scotland
SEPA
NatureScot
Scottish Water

Additional Information Required For Any Future Application

Based on the information provided, you are advised to submit the following additional information with any future application for formal permission. If you choose not to follow our advice and do not submit one or more of the documents, then you should provide a clear justification for doing so.

Design Brief

Ecological/Species Survey

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – possibly. A formal EIA Screening opinion is required

Flood Risk Assessment/Drainage Impact Assessment

Landscaping/Planting/Maintenance Plan

Transport Statement

Peat Survey

Questionnaire for Planning Applications involving Industrial or Commercial Uses

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10909/questionnaire for planning applications involving industrial or commercial uses](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10909/questionnaire-for-planning-applications-involving-industrial-or-commercial-uses)

Tree/Woodland Survey/Tree Constraints Plan/Management Plan

Making a Formal Application via eDevelopment.scot

Online application forms and guidance are available at:
<https://www.eplanning.scot/ePlanningClient/default.aspx>

Disclaimer

This advice is based on the information submitted and is given without prejudice to the future consideration of and decision on any application received by The Highland Council.

Pre-application case files are not publicly available but can be the subject of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests.

Appendix – Useful Weblinks

The Highland Council Development Plans

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans

Highland Council Supplementary and Development Guidance Listed by Category

https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/52/development_guidance

Roads/Access and Transport

More information on access and parking standards (incl. small housing developments) can be found at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/101/permits_for_working_on_public_roads/4

Access Panel

The Council encourages applicants at pre-application stage to engage with the local Disability Access Panel to consider accessibility improvements for physically disabled and sensory impaired people. The Highland Council has published a [Planning Protocol for Effective Engagement with Access Panels](#), which you should take into consideration

Scottish Government

Scottish Government Planning and Architecture Guidance

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/planning-guidance/>

Scottish Water

Contact Scottish Water for guidance on connections to the public water/drainage network:

<https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Business-and-Developers/NEW-Connecting-to-Our-Network>

SEPA

Advice for Developers

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/land/planning/advice-for-developers/>

Historic Environment

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) contains detailed information about listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites in the Highland area:

<http://her.highland.gov.uk>

General advice on development affecting historic designations can be found at:

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/>

Protected Species - NatureScot

More information on Scotland's protected species and areas can be found at:

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/safeguarding-protected-areas-and-species/protected-species>

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/natural-heritage-advice-planners-and-developers/planning-and-development-protected-areas>

Trees and Woodland

The Scottish Government's woodland strategy and associated policies can be found here:

<https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/control-of-woodland-removal>

The Council's guidance on tree/woodland issues can be found here:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1225/countryside_farming_and_wildlife/63/trees_woodland_and_forestry/2