
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

Prepared by: ANDREW TAIT, PLANNING OFFICER (DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF COMMUNITY HALL AND CAR PARK, AND RELOCATION OF PLAY PARK, AT FOOTBALL FIELD, CRAIGIE AVENUE, BOAT OF GARTEN.

REFERENCE: 04/520/CP

APPLICANT: BOAT OF GARTEN AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL, PER DOUGLAS MURRAY, ARCHITECT, 5 KINELLAN, STRATHPEFFER, ROSS-SHIRE.

DATE CALLED-IN: 19 NOVEMBER 2004



Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The application is for the construction of a new community hall on a flat area of ground adjacent to a football pitch in Boat of Garten. There is a small, equipped children's play area and a mobile caravan unit on the site at present. Drainage will be to the public main. Access to the new building and to the associated car park, will be via the existing access from Craigie Avenue, which in turn is accessed from Deishar Road, which links the village with the A95.
2. The building will contain a hall with a stage and storage rooms, a kitchen, a lounge area, an office, community services, information, crèche/youth and fitness rooms, as well as toilets and locker rooms. The building is basically T-shaped, and has an overall floor area of 675 square metres. At its tallest, the building is 7.7 metres high. The external finishes were proposed to be a painted smooth cement finish to the walls, with a slated roof. However, recent calculations regarding the cost of the building have resulted in natural slate not being an option for the applicants. The applicants suggested concrete interlocking tiles but have agreed to compromise by using slate type tiles. Originally the hall proposed a total of 27 car parking spaces, this has been increased to 41 as the Area Roads Manager considered 27 to be inadequate at this site. The football pitch will be unaffected by the new development; but the children's play area is to be relocated to a new position in the north east corner of the site, located between the parking area and the houses on Craigie Avenue.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

3. **Policy G2 Design for Sustainability of the Highland Structure Plan** considers that proposed developments will be considered upon the extent to which they are compatible with service provision, are accessible by public transport, cycling, walking as well as by car, maximise energy efficiency including the utilisation of renewable resources, make use of brownfield sites, the extent to which they impact upon residential amenity and their impact upon a range of environmental factors such as habitats, species, landscape, scenery, cultural heritage and air quality amongst others. Developments must also accommodate the needs of all sectors of the community and contribute to the social and economic development of the community.
4. **Policy S1 Services and Facilities of the Highland Structure Plan** considers that the council will aim, in association with other agencies, to retain or supplement service and facility provision in local centres to support the communities that they serve. The preamble to the policy states that in smaller settlements in particular consideration should be given to multiple use of buildings.
5. **Policy SR2 of the Highland Structure Plan** considers that the Council will seek to protect sports facilities and amenity space within settlements.

6. The application site lies within an area identified in the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997) for Recreation / Open Space**. The Local Plan shows land to the west and south for new residential development and for public buildings. The text to the Plan also points out that the site could be subject to future community uses including improvements to changing facilities for the football pitch.

CONSULTATIONS

7. **SEPA** has noted that the foul drainage from this development will be connected to the public sewer and consequently have no observations to make on this proposal, provided these drainage arrangements are approved by Scottish Water. SEPA requests the incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in the design of the proposals for this site, and in terms of the surface water drainage arrangements for the site, initially objected to the application, and requested that any planning consent is not granted until the surface water drainage proposals are agreed.
8. The agent has now submitted details for a sustainable urban drainage scheme, the whole car park will discharge from porous surfacing to infiltration trenches, and this effectively provides two levels of treatment for surface water. The run-off from the roof is also to be disposed of to the infiltration trenches and this is also considered acceptable. **Scottish Water** have no objection to the proposal and consider that given this is a community facility for use by the residents of the village adequate foul drainage capacity is available.
9. **Highland Council's Area Roads and Community Works Manager** has expressed some concerns with the proposal, particularly parking and manoeuvring of coaches and service vehicles. The Manager has provided further comment on the revised proposals, which show an amended layout with footpath link and a total of 41 car parking spaces. There is no objection subject to traffic calming on Craigie Avenue, an overspill car parking area and a drop off zone within the site for smaller vehicles. Subject to these provisions being covered by condition the Area Roads Manager would be happy to recommend approval of the application.
10. The **Boat of Garten and Vicinity Community Council** (the applicants) support the application as it is regarded potentially as of great benefit to the community of Boat of Garten and the surrounding area. The only reservation is that of traffic calming measures. These should be put in place prior to the proposed building work commencing – to reduce the effects of heavy traffic on a quiet residential road, where there will be inevitably be children going to and from the playing field.

11. Under Highland Council's scheme of delegation, their **Planning Service** has commented on a number of aspects of this application. The Local Plan is noted to safeguard a range of facilities for community/ recreational use including the play park and football ground, and the village hall; the last of these on its existing site near to the Post Office. Various options have been examined by the community to improve their community facilities, with expansion of the current hall seen as impractical and expensive. A green field development is seen as the best option, linking with the football pitch, and also possibly adjacent to a projected new primary school to the south. Development briefs for the village expansion in the area of this application have been discussed, and in principle the location of a new Village Hall in this area is acceptable. With the Review of the Local Plan for the village, land allocations are uncertain. Natural heritage considerations and priorities may now dictate some different proposals for the village growth areas, and therefore an alternative location may have to be considered for a village community facility such as is proposed.
12. Vehicle access is an important issue, and the current access route via Craigie Avenue is not considered to be ideal. The applicant's proposal may be tolerable as a short term expedient but creates residential amenity and road safety problems, which might not be tolerable as a permanent solution. There are concerns about the disposition of building and car parking which appears to put a premium on motor vehicle access and manoeuvring at the expense of maintaining the strong direct pedestrian and cycle links across the site. Because of these concerns a revised layout plan has been submitted which includes a footpath/cycle link between Craigie Avenue and footpaths to the south of the site.
13. The toilets and changing facilities at the football pitch end of the building should have a better elevational treatment.

REPRESENTATIONS

14. Detailed representations have been received from the Boat of Garten Community Hall setting down the community consultation process carried out prior to the submission of the application, together with a green statement and a statement in relation to access and parking. This raft of information is attached at the back of the report.

APPRAISAL

15. The issues to be considered here are the principle of using this site for the new community hall facility for the village, the suitability of this site in terms of the infrastructure needs of the development, and thirdly the layout and design of the proposal. Each of these is interlinked, but each will initially be considered separately.

16. Communities need to update and upgrade their community hall and associated facilities from time to time, especially as the size and needs of the communities change. The expansion of the existing village hall is seen as impractical due to the restricted area available, and the hall's poor design and structure. It is entirely logical therefore to look for a new site where there are physical linkages with other local community / recreational facilities. An association with the village's existing football pitch and play park builds on an established community area, with established accesses for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The previous Local Plan from 1997 has identified village expansion to the west and south of the application site (an outline application is currently held by Highland Council but on hold due to natural heritage concerns), such that the application site would be surrounded by, and close to, future housing and a possible new school. In principle, therefore the proposal can be supported in terms of the current development plan.
17. The emerging CNPA Local Plan, which is reviewing the land allocations around Boat of Garten, has raised some questions about the continuing suitability of some of the land allocations in the 1997 Local Plan, and will be reassessing the overall distribution and capabilities of land for development in other peripheral areas of Boat of Garten. The CNPA Planning Policy Team have been consulted on this application and consider the site suitable in principle for such a purpose, regardless of the status of allocations for housing and a potential school close by. If the 1997 allocations prove unsuitable it may well be the case that sites on the opposite (north) side of the access road (Deishar Road) from the A95 to the Boat of Garten may appear suitable for development. This area would still be within easy walking distance of the proposed community centre.
18. In my view the proposal complies with policies G2, S1 and SR2 of the Highland structure Plan as set out in the development plan context section of this report in that the proposal offers a community facility that will reinforce the use of the sports pitch and has multiple uses built into its design. In terms of Policy G2 Design for Sustainability the proposal offers energy saving measures and because it is on the site of a children's play area utilises previously used land that does not result in the loss of any trees or disturbance to habitats.
19. In terms of the suitability of this site for the development proposed, there will be significant infrastructural issues for a community hall of this scale. These include drainage – both for foul sewage and for the disposal of surface water – and for the access and parking / manoeuvring arrangements for the development. Arrangements for the storage and servicing of waste / refuse also need to be considered. If the proposed development area to the west of this site proved acceptable part of any scheme would be required by the Local Plan to provide access from any new estate road into the community hall site

20. The basic proposal as submitted incorporated little in terms of detail regarding surface water drainage. The applicants have been asked for further information and a sustainable urban drainage strategy has now been submitted and is considered acceptable by SEPA.
21. Scottish Water have been consulted and consider that given that this is a community centre which will primarily be used by residents of the village there is considered to be sufficient foul drainage capacity. Scottish Water also point out that a metered water supply would be available.
22. The suitability of the current access to the site, through Craigie Avenue, is a key issue here both in terms of highway safety and in terms of the general amenity of residents on Craigie Avenue. Craigie Avenue has been designed as a minor road for a short residential cul- de- sac. There is limited off street parking for the houses here, and there is only a fully continuous footpath on one side of the street. The application proposal may generate significant traffic (flows) at times when community / recreational activities are planned in the hall and on the football pitch.
23. The Area Roads Manager while supportive of the development raised concerns regarding access and parking and could not recommend approval of the scheme in its original form. The parking provision for the site needs to cater for more than just cars, but include small vans, coaches, delivery vehicles and refuse collection vehicles. Some of these will require turning areas. The initial proposals did not cater for these needs, but revised plans have been provided to indicate revised parking with the numbers up to 41. Clearly there is a potential conflict here, on one side enough parking has to be provided to prevent overflow and unnecessary disturbance to residents of Craigie Avenue, but on the other the more parking that is provided the more likely the proposal is to foster increased use of cars and therefore more disturbance to residents on Craigie Avenue. This issue to my mind is finely balanced and one which I have several concerns about. However, one important point is to recognise that this site has been publicised at length within the local community as a site for a new village hall and not just by this application but also by an ongoing community consultation exercise (see appendices). In all this time there has been no objection from residents on Craigie Avenue. The number of car parking spaces proposed now stands at 41 this may not be strictly to the standards of the Highway Engineers guidelines. However, it is to my mind the maximum that the site itself could provide and more spaces would in time foster more reliance on the car as a means of transport to the community centre. Conversely, in time this reduced number of spaces would result in visitors being educated that the car should not be the primary means of access to the hall.
24. In an attempt to address this conflict I have suggested that the applicants prepare a green travel statement as a measure of commitment that they will encourage the use of walking and cycling as a means of access to the hall. Travel Plans are an approach that is supported by Government Guidance and are often used in urban areas for large commercial buildings

to ensure that new development fosters a reduction in car use. Often such buildings have no end user once developed and green travel statements or plans become difficult to enforce. However, in this case the end user is easily identified as the local community and as such the building would be hosting members of the local community (although it is recognised that at times some events will draw visitors from elsewhere). Given this, it is recommended that by condition a raft of measures are submitted based upon the applicants draft ideas to promote walking and cycling as a means of transport to the hall. In my view, this would in time ensure that no excessive highway safety problems or disturbance to residents on Craigie Avenue would occur, although it must be recognised that the construction of the Community Centre will result in short term disturbance from construction vehicles. A timing of works and access by delivery vehicles condition is proposed to address this. The applicants also point out that the existing village hall has a maximum of just 10 car parking spaces and that complaints about parking at this site have not been received.

25. In addition to the above a planning condition as requested by the Area Roads Manager will ensure that a traffic calming scheme to be agreed between all the parties including the residents of Craigie Avenue is implemented prior to the building first being brought into use. This scheme would be likely to involve signage and possibly physical works at the junction of Craigie Avenue with Deishar Road. In addition, the Area Roads Manager notes that there is a small-grassed area just outside of the site, which is owned by Highland Council who it is understood, would be amenable to parking in this area for any potential overspill purposes. Given this, and to ensure that any potential overspill can be managed a condition is proposed that this area should be used for any additional parking that is required should the need be pressing.
26. As mentioned earlier, sites to the south and west of this site are allocated for housing and potentially a new school. The general approach is that should these sites be developed then an access from any estate road should provide a new route into the community centre site and the Craigie Avenue access be blocked off apart from pedestrian and cycle traffic. There is currently an outline planning application for housing on this allocated site. However, it is currently on hold due to natural heritage concerns regarding capercaillie in particular. A planning condition is proposed to ensure that access is provided from any new development to the community centre site should any scheme come to fruition.
27. In addition, the applicants have agreed that coaches should not be allowed to access the site and this would be achieved by publicity and perhaps signage at the end of Craigie Avenue. The applicants have also provided a full breakdown of the community uses that would take place at the hall as I have raised concern in relation to the potential for late night disturbance to local residents. The applicants point out that in 2004/5 only 7 events ran later than 11pm and the let would require the cessation of events by 11pm except on certain occasions such as celidhs and Hogmanay. A condition

will ensure that the site is generally not open beyond 11 pm, but will allow for exceptions where these are agreed by the CNPA as exceptions.

28. Overall, the design and materials for the new build are satisfactory. The design of the building allows for natural light to light the central passage and foyer areas of the building. An improvement has been made to the north elevation with the addition of a porch to emphasise the main front entrance to the building. The roof material is slate type material with a smooth cement render finish to the facings, which would be painted. A range of environmental design features are included such as a heat pump serving an underfloor heating system and solar panels to augment the hot water supply.
29. No details have been included to show where refuse will be stored on the site. A screened storage area is required that is accessible for all users of the building, and accessible for refuse collectors. This will be sought by planning condition.
30. Overall, this site is the choice of the community and has been subject to a wide ranging consultation exercise within the village and the applicants are at pains to point out that there is no other site available for such a use. There is a key balance to be struck between the use of the site for the Community Centre and parking and access issues, but my view is that a more innovative approach including the travel plan suggested by condition No 4, taken together with the overspill parking area and measures to calm traffic entering Craigie Avenue from Deishar Avenue will mitigate against any unacceptable problems in Craigie Avenue on an ongoing basis and with the help of the travel plan may in the longer term foster a reduction in the reliance on the private car in the wider village in general.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

31. The development utilises a site that is currently in community use, and therefore does not affect the local cultural or natural heritage of the Area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

32. The construction of the building is not out of the ordinary. The plans do show the use of natural lighting for the central foyer and passageway using rooflights. Heating is by heat pump, with solar panels assisting water heating over the summer months. All lighting is using low energy designs. Ventilation includes some local low-energy heat recovery. Water-based organic paints / varnishes will be used throughout.
33. A full environmental statement has been submitted to illustrate the environmental measures contained in the building. The idea of a Travel Plan should help to ensure reduced car use and the promotion of such a

plan within the community could help to reduce the reliance on the private car beyond the remit of this application providing wider benefits in terms of this aim.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

34. The new development will provide improved recreational and leisure facilities for local people and visitors to the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

35. New and improved community facilities such as are being proposed will assist in the sustainable future of the village, providing facilities for all age groups in the community. Facilities for the disabled are designed into the development, and include guide rails in the Foyer, braille signs, and a braille map.

RECOMMENDATION

36. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT Full Planning Permission** for the erection of a Community Centre and relocation of children's play area on land adjacent to the playing field, Craigie Avenue, Boat of Garten, subject to the following conditions.

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
2. All construction works (including deliveries of materials shall not take place outside the hours of 0800 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays and 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays, there shall be no work or deliveries of materials on Sundays and Public Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority.
3. Exact details and specifications of all proposed external finishing materials (including roofing materials) shall be submitted for the further approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority before any work commences on site. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved detail.
4. A Travel Plan comprising immediate, continuing and long-term measures to promote and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy car use shall be prepared, submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority prior to occupation of the building hereby approved unless an alternative timescale is agreed in writing with the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority. The approved Travel Plan shall then be implemented, monitored and reviewed in accordance with the agreed Travel Plan Targets to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with Highland Council Area Roads Manager.

5. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with a scheme, which shall be submitted to and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority before development commences. The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and landscaped areas on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the development and shall indicate the siting, numbers, species and heights (at the time of planting) of all trees, shrubs and hedges to be planted and to the extent of any areas of earthmounding, and shall ensure:-

(a) Completion of the scheme during the planting season next following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.

(b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity in accordance with the detailed maintenance schedule/table. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within three years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved detailed plans for recycling and refuse storage areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The agreed scheme shall be fully in place and ready for use prior to the building first being brought into use.
7. All car parking, cycle parking, access paths and cycle paths shall be completed and ready for use prior to the first occupation of the building hereby approved.
8. The Community Centre hereby approved shall not be open to the public (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority) outside of the hours of 0800 to 2300 Monday to Saturday and outside of the hours of 0900 to 22:00 on Sundays. The site shall be vacated of all staff by 23:30 Monday to Saturday and by 22:30 on Sundays.
9. The childrens play area shall be relocated to its new position set out on the approved drawings and completed within 12 months of the commencement of the construction of the community hall hereby approved.
10. Should alternative vehicular access become available the current access from Craigie Avenue to the site shall be stopped up for vehicular traffic in a manner (but not for pedestrians and cyclists) to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority in consultation with Highland Council Area Roads Manager.

11. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for traffic calming measures on Craigie Avenue shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority in consultation with Highland Council Area Roads Manager and the residents of Craigie Avenue. The agreed scheme shall then be implemented prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved.
12. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for overspill parking on the grassed area immediately to the north of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority in consultation with Highland Council Area Roads Manager.
13. Notwithstanding the details contained within the application a scheme illustrating a drop of zone for smaller vehicles, together with a turning area for refuse and delivery vehicles within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority in consultation with Highland Council Area Roads Manager. The agreed areas shall be completed and ready for use prior to the building hereby approved first being brought into use.

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7 March 2005