

Cairngorms National Park  
Supplementary Planning Guidance

**CONVERSION AND REUSE OF EXISTING TRADITIONAL AND  
VERNACULAR BUILDINGS**

**CONSULTATION DRAFT FEBRUARY 2010 v.5**

## ***The Cairngorms National Park - The Planning Process***

The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in the UK, encompassing areas of Highland, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus and soon to include parts of Perthshire.

The planning process in the Cairngorms National Park involves a unique partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) working alongside the Local Authorities, who continue to deal with many of the planning applications within their own respective areas. All planning applications submitted within the area of the National Park are to have regard and must comply with all the policies in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and any relevant Supplementary Guidance.

Any application for planning permission should always be submitted to the Local Authority in which the development site is located, in the normal manner. The Local Authority checks to ensure all appropriate information is present and registers receipt of the application. The CNPA then has 21 days to decide whether to call in the application, typically only dealing with applications which are of general significance to the aims of the Park. Thereafter the CNPA takes responsibility for all aspects of the determination of the planning application. In instances when planning applications are not called in the Local Authority continues to act as planning authority.

This Supplementary Guidance has been produced to provide information to applicants, setting out detailed advice and the requirements of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan which may form part of your application. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with other relevant guidance, such as the Sustainable Design Guide.

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This guidance note supplements Local Plan Policy 27: Conversion and Reuse of Existing Traditional and Vernacular Buildings. This policy allows for the sympathetic conversion of redundant traditional and vernacular buildings.

### **Policy 27 Conversion and Reuse of existing Traditional and Vernacular Buildings**

**Development** proposals for the conversion of existing traditional and vernacular buildings will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a) the building is redundant for its original use, and it can be demonstrated that it is unlikely to have a commercial or economic future in its current form; and
- b) the proposal is designed to maintain the style and character of the original building in terms of form, scale, materials and detailing, where they contribute positively to the context and setting of the area.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Existing traditional and vernacular buildings, typically comprising steadings, mills or other agricultural or industrial outbuildings often make a significant contribution to the landscape character and cultural heritage of the National Park. The conversion and reuse of such buildings offers opportunity for their conservation and enhancement, bringing them back into effective use. It also recognises the significant embodied energy found within these often substantial buildings. The policy seeks appropriate new uses - residential, commercial or industrial, ensuring that alterations are carried out in a sensitive and innovative manner that both conserves and enhances the essential style and character of each building. Conversions should reinforce the original architectural qualities of a building, while recognising opportunities for innovative and contemporary interventions.
- 2.2 In the event that the original building is found to require reconstruction because of structural issues, the planning authority will look to other policies outwith the scope of this guidance.
- 2.3 This guidance note aims to provide advice, general considerations and outlines the information required to be submitted as part of your planning application. It is recommended that this is read in conjunction with other supplementary planning guidance, including the Sustainable Design Guide, which will set out in more detail advice and requirements on siting, design and materials to minimise the environmental impact of development.

## 3.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES - SYMPATHETIC CONVERSION

### **General Principles**

- Where proposals would require the conversion, significant alteration or any demolition of integral parts or components of the original building, the finished building should generally not look significantly different from the original one;

- In adapting or converting buildings, especially those of historic character, the use of the building should be altered to suit its form, rather than adapt the building to suit the use, the style and character should be conserved and enhanced, within practical limits. Often the best conversions reinforce the original architectural qualities of a building.
- In all instances, the footprint and envelope of the existing building should remain dominant, extensions and modern interventions will be acceptable if satisfactory in terms of design, siting and layout; materials and style;

### **Alterations**

- The original building features and openings should be retained and enhanced where possible, ensuring a sympathetic approach whilst recognising modern living standards – the number of window openings should be limited, while the use of roof lights is favoured as opposed to dormers. Alterations should be the minimum necessary to allow the building to function adequately in its new use, and should not disguise its original purpose, ridge heights, wallhead heights and roof profiles should generally not be altered;
- Extensions should be subservient in scale and massing, affording more effective use of the existing building; complimentary materials such as stonework or timber should be utilised to match the existing building;
- The use of existing window and door openings should be integral to the design and layout, the formation of new openings kept to a minimum, allowing for the retention of the character of the building;
- Alterations to roofs should generally be avoided, many traditional and vernacular structures typically would feature roof lights and few dormer windows – simple roof forms are preferred;
- Any special features including any ornamental or decorative elements should be retained or reused as appropriate;
- The opportunity to reuse materials is encouraged, including any stonework duntakings and other materials;
- In as much as the original building would allow, opportunities for solar gain, micro-renewables or other passive energy should be investigated.

### **Ancillary Buildings**

- Ancillary buildings in good condition should be retained where possible, any new buildings should respect the setting of the original building in terms of location, scale and materials.

### **Boundary Enclosures, Access and Services**

- Boundary enclosures should be retained where available including dykes, hedgerows or other traditional treatments, high ‘suburban style’ close-boarded timber fencing or panels should be avoided;
- Car parking layouts including access tracks and driveways should not dominate courtyards, curtilages or detract from the setting of the building;
- Lighting and other services should be sited sensitively and unobtrusively.

### **Permitted Development Rights**

- The planning authority may consider removing permitted development rights of the new property (i.e. planning permission would be required for roof lights, conservatories or for other minor alterations) to ensure the character of the development is retained.

## **4.0 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The conversion should be to a use appropriate for the site, and its surroundings, and could include employment, tourism, recreation, or housing - the new use should not conflict with existing adjacent land uses and activities. The proposals should strive to retain the original character of the building, the new use being accommodated with as little adaption and alteration as is necessary.

### **Structural Survey and other information**

- 4.2 In support of any planning application for conversion or reuse of a traditional or vernacular building; the following information should be submitted:
- A reasoned justification to support the change of use, renovation and conversion of the building should be included. This should satisfy the planning authority that the original use of the building is no longer viable and demonstrate effectively that the building is redundant and no longer fit for purpose;
  - Survey drawings - highlighting details of the existing building including windows, openings and other features;
  - A structural survey and condition report produced by an independent structural engineer which verifies that the building is capable of conversion. This should indicate the integrity of the building and provide comprehensive evidence to demonstrate the soundness of any parts of the building to be affected;
  - Any biodiversity or habitat value must be assessed, and appropriate action taken into account for any particular interests found for example bats and squirrels. It should be noted that in most circumstances a bat survey is required and should be submitted at the date of submission of a planning application, see the Natural Heritage supplementary planning guidance for further information;
  - Details on adequate foul and surface water disposal including drainage tests, as required should be submitted.

## **5.0 FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the following other sources of planning advice are read in conjunction with this guidance note, available on the Scottish Government and the Cairngorms National Park Authority websites <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/planning> and [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk). Other useful information is contained within:

**- PAN 72: Housing in the Countryside**

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20637/51636](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20637/51636)

**- Scottish Government 'The Conversion of Farm Steadings'**

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/156688/0042110.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/156688/0042110.pdf)

**- Bats in buildings -** [www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/species/BatsBuildings.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/species/BatsBuildings.pdf)

- The Barn Owl Trust [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)
- Cairngorms National Park Sustainable Design Guide
- Cairngorms National Park SPG Natural Heritage