
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: FULL PLANNING PERMISSION FOR UPGRADE OF EXISTING WASTE WATER TREATMENT WORKS, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY WASTE WATER TREATMENT WORKS, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY

REFERENCE: 07/370/CP

APPLICANT: SCOTTISH WATER, C/O SCOTTISH WATER SOLUTIONS, FIRST FLOOR, 13 HARBOUR ROAD, INVERNESS, IV1 1UA

DATE CALLED-IN: 5 OCTOBER 2007

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

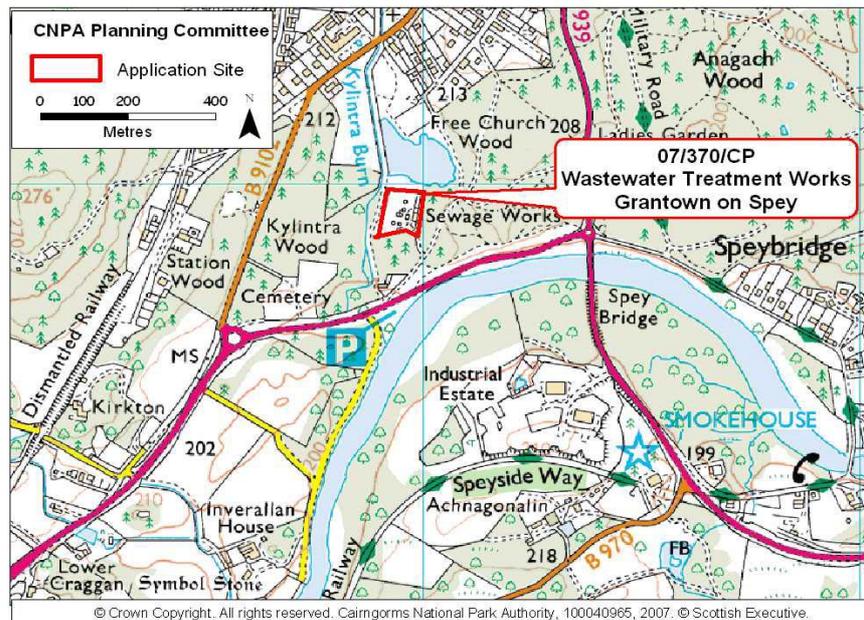


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Scottish Water propose to upgrade the existing waste water treatment works (WWTWs) at Grantown-on-Spey. The works are contained within a fenced compound in the Free Church Wood which is located to the south east side of the town. An existing residential property known as "Kylindra House" is located to the south at the junction of the access to the site and the A95. The Cemetery lies further to the southwest separated by woodland and the Kylindra Burn. To the north of the existing WWTW's compound is a pond. The site is accessed by a track which also serves as a public access route into and through the woods. There are also several other public access routes in the woodland. There are several structures and buildings within the compound. The buildings are of log cabin style construction.



Fig. 2. Existing WWTWs looking north.

2. The WWTWs was constructed in the 1960s and is a conventional activated sludge plant with a discharge to the River Spey. The upgrade will provide:
 - a new final settlement tank, in addition to the two that exist at present;
 - 2 new aerators; and
 - new areas of hardstanding (slabbed walkways around new plant) within the compound.
3. The new settlement tank is proposed to the southwest side of the site and will be almost totally below ground level (only 0.3m will be above ground). The associated rotating half blade scraper and handrailings will however be visible above ground. The tank is to have a diameter

of 8.1m. The aerators are 1.4m high and will be positioned in the middle of the site. Above ground pipework is associated with these structures.



Fig.3. Existing WWTWs looking southeast

4. In addition, to the above, the augmentation of the WWTWs will involve works which are classed as “Permitted Development” under Class 38 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. The following do not therefore require planning permission but for clarity they are included in the application details:
 - underground pumping stations, flowmeter chambers, valve chambers and sample chambers;
 - a new section of access road within the compound; and
 - the temporary siting of the contractor’s construction area within the compound.
5. Three small birch trees will require to be removed and some overhanging branches from trees in the adjacent woodland will require cutting back. In addition a willow tree within the compound will be cut back to ground level. To the north west corner of the compound some replacement planting of Aspen will be carried out.
6. The driver for the project is growth. The existing works are over-loaded and cannot accommodate additional flows. While flexible, the additional growth factor built in is for 252 housing units. The construction period is estimated at 8 months.



Fig. 4. Main area of works beyond the existing settlement tanks

Fig. 5. Proposed Site Layout



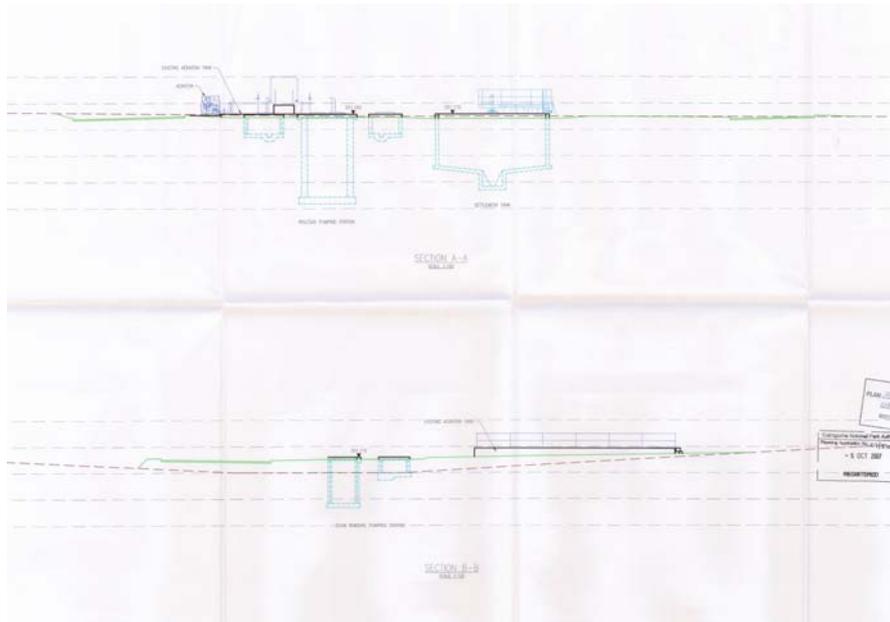


Fig. 6. Site Sections/Elevations

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

7. Strategic objectives for the **Landscape, Built, and Historic Environment** include; maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park; and ensuring development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park. Strategic objectives for **Sustainable Use of Resources**, include; all management and development in the Park should seek to make the most sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy. Strategic objectives for **Water**, include; maintain or where necessary enhance the existing high water quality and physical condition of waterbodies in the Park; Strategic objectives for **Sustainable Communities**, include; make proactive provision to focus settlement growth in the main settlements and plan for growth to meet community needs in other settlements. Strategic objectives for **Outdoor Access and Recreation** include; encouraging people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment.

Highland Structure Plan 2001

8. In the **Highland Structure Plan 2001, Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)** states that developments will be assessed on the extent to which they, amongst other things, are compatible with service provision; contribute to the social and economic development of the community; and impact on resources such as habitats, species, landscape and freshwater systems. **Policy L4 (Landscape Character)** seeks to maintain and enhance present landscape character. In principle, the structure plan highlights the importance of a

satisfactory infrastructure system to promote economic development.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

9. The site is located within a wider **Amenity Woodland** policy area where **Policy 3.5.3.** states that the mature woodlands adjoining Grantown are of major importance to the character and setting of the town, informal recreation and wildlife. Management regimes are encouraged and the existence of principal footpaths and Rights of Way, and areas of local nature conservation interest, is recognised. There is a strict presumption against any further encroachment of building within the woodlands, in order to safeguard their integrity in the wider public interest. **Policy 3.4.5. (Sewage Works)** encourages the upgrade of the drainage facilities at Grantown, consistent with the long term growth of the town. In order to secure appropriate standards of amenity, there will be a presumption against permanent development within 90m of the sewage treatment works. **General Policy 2.5.4. (Woodland and Trees)** seeks to protect existing trees and established woodland areas which are important landscape, wildlife and amenity features.

CONSULTATIONS

10. **SEPA** have advised that they have no objections to the proposals. They do state however that the works should be designed to remain operational during storm events.
11. **The CNPA's Outdoor Access Officer** has stated that the proposal refers to works within the footprint of the current site and as such there are no direct implications for public access. However, the access track to the site is used frequently and functions as part of a wider network of paths in the Free Church Wood. It is therefore requested that no materials are stored on or in proximity of this or other paths and tracks and that all materials are stored on site. Vehicular traffic already exists on this track. If there is going to be a significant increase in plant using this, then appropriate signs should be installed warning the public.
12. The **CNPA's Natural Heritage Group** have advised that the application involves the removal and trimming back of a few trees within the site. It will also involve the removal of some interesting ground flora which, while not managed in any way, has some intrinsic qualities. However, it is noted that the impacts in this respect are very limited. In addition, the proposed works are well within the character of the existing plant. There are however, some issues; tree protection around the boundaries of the site and the scope for additional planting within the compound.
13. No response has been received from the **Community Council**.

REPRESENTATIONS

14. The application was advertised on 26 September 2007. No representations have been received.

APPRAISAL

Principal and Policy

15. From a land use policy point of view, there can be no argument about the existing land use of the site. Although within a mature woodland area, the WWTWs is long established and fully operational. The proposed upgrade works are not significant and will take place entirely within the confines of the existing compound. There is also adequate space within the compound to allow for future growth.
16. The reason for this upgrade is to create additional capacity in the Grantown waste water treatment network. This will allow for future and planned growth of the settlement. It has been stated that the additional capacity created will equate to approximately 252 new housing units. The CNPA Deposit Local Plan, while carrying little material weight at present, indicates an indicative phased land supply capacity of 250 units at Grantown over the next 10 years and beyond. The upgrade proposed will accommodate this potential planned growth.
17. The site lies within a mature woodland, some of which carries Ancient Woodland status. However, the WWTWs compound occupies a well established and secure independent site within the woodland. It is therefore self-contained within the wooded context. The Adopted Local Plan policies that refer to the area, relate, in the main, to the conservation of the woodland because of its importance as an amenity and recreational resource for the local population and as a wildlife habitat. Policy 3.5.3. advises that there is a strict presumption against further building works which would encroach upon the woodland areas. However, all the works are contained within the compound itself. As such there is no encroachment outwith the existing site and therefore no direct impact on the Local Plan policy objectives for the area.

Impact on Landscape, Amenity and Public Access

18. The trees around the site provide a mature natural screen for the site from the wider area. Nevertheless, there are popular and well used public routes within the woodland and in proximity to the site. Although the site is self-contained, its surroundings are therefore fairly sensitive.
19. The physical works themselves are fairly low key with the majority of the structures and equipment being located below ground level. The visual impact from outside the compound will therefore be minimal. Some limited tree removal and cutting back is required within the

compound but the applicants propose some additional replacement planting of Aspen elsewhere on the site. There is also a plan to retain, as far as practicable, existing wildflower and grasses in and around the new works. Re-use of top soil from excavations is proposed in order to recreate the existing habitat mix.

20. The CNPA's Natural Heritage Group have advised that they do not have any significant concerns about the proposal but raise the issue of protection of tree roots adjacent to the site boundaries which may encroach into the compound. This can be covered by a planning condition.
21. Although the physical works are entirely within the compound, the direct impact of the construction works and construction traffic in particular, on public access routes needs to be assessed. In this respect, the applicants were asked to provide information on how they will manage the retention of the routes during the construction period. A method statement has been received which details procedures for recording the state of the route prior to its use by vehicles and subsequent reinstatement if necessary, traffic management, signage, and numbers and types of vehicles to be used. A condition can be imposed to ensure that procedures are carried out in compliance with this statement. In addition, the applicants have provided clarification that the site huts will be within the compound and that excavated materials will be redistributed on site rather than taken off site. The applicants have also advised that the proposed works will result in a moderate net improvement to current odour levels from the WWTWs.

Conclusion

22. This proposal raises no concern in terms of planning policy or any other material consideration. Indeed it is considered to be a positive step to improving the overloaded waste water treatment system in Grantown-on-Spey which will allow for the future and planned growth of the town.

IMPLICATIONS OF FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

23. There are no natural heritage designations or features of cultural heritage interest that are physically or directly affected by the proposal. Tree protection and augmentation on site can be controlled by conditions.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

24. There are no implications for this aim.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

25. The site is within a well-used and popular woodland where public access routes exist nearby. The only potential impact is during construction because of the use of one of the access routes to serve the site. While there may be some disturbance for users of this route, it will only be temporary and will not be of a significant scale. Conditions can be imposed to ensure effective on site management of this aspect.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development

26. The development will be positive for this aim. It will allow for future planned growth of the town.

RECOMMENDATION

27. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

Grant Full Planning Permission for the Upgrade of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works at Grantown-on-Spey Waste Water Treatment Works, 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. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme as follows:-
 - (a) Completion of the scheme during the first planting season following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be approved in writing with the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.
 - (b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.
3. That no development shall commence on this site until all the trees adjacent to the south and west boundaries of the compound and close to the proposed access road, have been protected to the satisfaction of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority, and in accordance with BS5837:2005, Trees in Relation to Construction.
4. That, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the CNPA acting as Planning Authority, the construction of the development, the management of access to the site and any reinstatement works to the access thereafter, shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Site Access Method Statement, Risk Assessment and Traffic Schedule (ROK Civil Engineering). For the avoidance of doubt, the existing access route, shall

remain open for public use at all times, unless specific written approval for a temporary closure, is given by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.

5. That all construction plant, equipment, cabins, welfare facilities, and materials associated with the construction of the development hereby approved shall be sited and stored within the existing waste water treatment works compound at all times.

Neil Stewart
5 November 2007

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