

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: AMENDED DESIGN (RETENTION) OF THREE STOREY STAFF ACCOMMODATION BLOCK, AVIEMORE CENTRE, AVIEMORE

REFERENCE: 04/505/CP

APPLICANT: AVIEMORE HIGHLAND RESORT, C/O MACDONALD HOTELS, WHITESIDE HOUSE, BATHGATE, WEST LoTHIAN.

DATE CALLED-IN: 5 NOVEMBER 2004

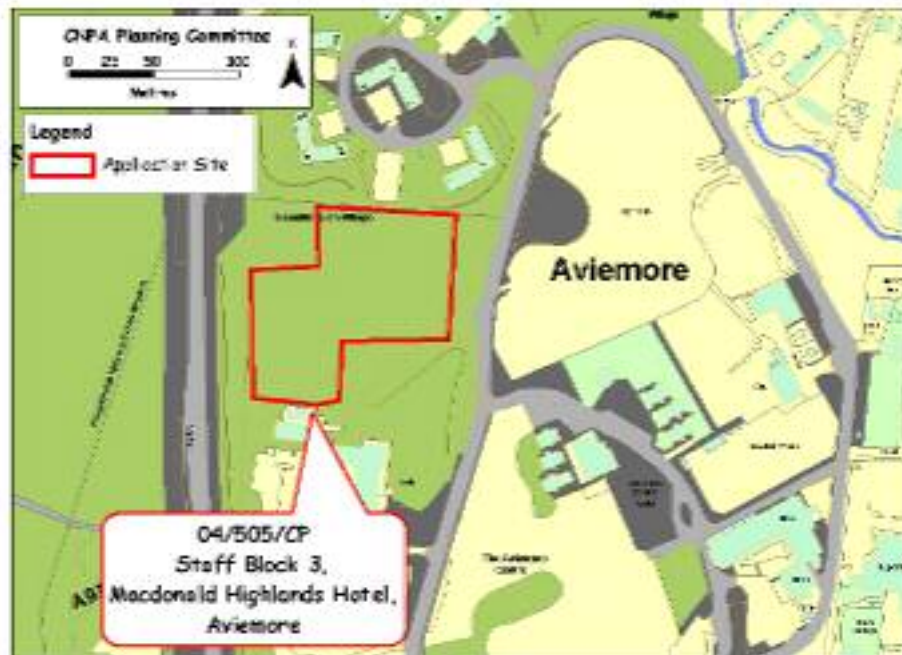


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site lies within the Aviemore Highland Resort between Grampian Road and the A9. To the south of the application site is the Highlands Hotel and an older staff accommodation block, to the west is the A9 embankment, and to the north a proposed car parking area, beyond this is the Scandinavian Village. To the east is another staff accommodation block with 48 bedrooms.
2. An accommodation block on this application site received planning consent earlier this year providing 48 bedrooms for staff working at the resort, with communal kitchen and lounge facilities on each floor. This new planning application changes the scale of the development - to provide 102 beds in 54 bedrooms. The building is still 3 storeys, basically L-shaped, with a standard centrally pitched roof, and will have square windows. East to west the building is approximately 6.5 metres longer, and with the wider rooms for the 2 bed accommodation in the majority of rooms, the building is taller by about 1.8 metres. The increase in size of the building is 630 square metres. The building is to have the same external finishes - Marley slate coloured roof tiles, with an off-white render finish to external walls to match the nearby hotel. Windows will be uPVC. The building is currently at an advanced stage of construction.
3. The site around the staff blocks was to include car parking spaces for 101, increased from the former level of 77 spaces.
4. Previous Committee discussions centred on two main issues, the first related to the exclusive nature of single unit accommodation provided by the proposal and the implications for this on the balance of the community, members particularly raised the question as to whether accommodation was available for couples. Secondly, members raised more detailed concerns regarding the design of the building, particularly in relation to environmental/sustainability issues.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

5. The **Highland Structure Plan (Policy T2)** states that it will support high quality tourism development proposals, particularly those which extend the tourist season, provide wet weather opportunities, spread economic benefits more widely, are accessible by means other than private vehicles and provide opportunities for the sustainable enjoyment of the area's heritage. **Policy 2.2.10 of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan** encourages the development of tourist facilities at suitable sites within or immediately adjoining communities. The Aviemore section of the Local Plan supports the redevelopment of the Aviemore Centre to revitalise the village and reaffirm its status as an international visitor destination.

CONSULTATIONS

6. **Aviemore Community Council** has commented that they are pleased to see that the developers are now providing accommodation for couples, which should ease the pressure on accommodation for rent in the village. However, it is noted that the size of the two person bedrooms is only slightly bigger than that of the single person accommodation.
7. The **Area Roads and Community Works Manager** has recommended that, with reference to the requirements of the agreed Aviemore Highland Resort Car Parking Assessment Version 4, as prepared by Goodson Cole Transportation, a further 18 no. car parking spaces be provided to serve the additional bed provision now proposed. There would be no objection to the development if the additional provision were made within or close to the application site.

REPRESENTATIONS

8. Highland Cycle Campaign consider that secure cycle parking should be provided for at least 20% of staff.

APPRAISAL

9. The proposal is an essential part of the wider development of the Aviemore Resort, to house staff that will be employed to service the tourist and recreational complex. The proposal consists of a significant change from a 48-bed staff accommodation block to a 54 bedroom, 102 beds staff accommodation block. The architectural agents for the applicants have stated that the changes have resulted from the continuing lack of housing being available in Aviemore and also in response to the comments on the 48 bed units at the Planning Committee when the original application was considered. The staff accommodation block plans have been amended to increase the room size to allow couples the option of having accommodation.
10. These buildings are intended so that interim accommodation can be provided until employees can secure permanent homes in the area. This proposal now reflects the concerns that had been expressed about the overall mix of accommodation at the site. In addition to the 48 rooms capable of accommodating two beds, there are 6 bedrooms for disabled residents (2 on each floor). Access to each floor is by stairs at each end of the legs of the L-shape. A late revision to the proposal includes a lift to comply with Building Regulations.
11. The building is to be sited behind an accommodation block previously approved by Highland Council. There are birch trees in the vicinity of the proposed building and on the A9 embankment, but not on the site of the building proposed. The applicant has provided a cross section plan that shows the building set below the A9 embankment, so any visual impact from the A9 would be limited, from any other views the building would be seen in the context of other development and is partly

screened from the link road around the development by the accommodation block to the east.

12. The building is of a timber frame construction and the application states that wood is effectively a full cycle carbon neutral material, supporting material points out that the process of converting raw material for building products involves low embodied energy. The proposal maximises the amount of locally sourced materials with the frame utilising home grown timber with the sheathing and sarking manufactured locally in Inverness in the form of boarding utilising composite technology from local Scots Pine and other indigenous species. The statement further points out that lightweight flooring joists are constructed locally in Forres. The flooring is constructed from reconstituted/recycled material made in Stirling.
13. In terms of the energy consumption, the building is heated by demand only driven direct electric heating, minimising energy consumption and the extent of on-site materials in the system, i.e. minimisation of use of copper and wiring. High levels of insulation and double-glazing ensure maximum energy containment within the fabric. Low energy light bulbs are to be used throughout with movement detection systems fitted to ensure lights are not left on. No ventilation systems other than for kitchens and bathrooms are proposed and gas consumption is supplied by the use of on demand boilers.
14. In terms of parking issues the Highland Council Area Roads and Community Works Manager has responded by raising no objection to the proposal providing that the additional parking spaces can be provided, adding to the present level of 101. It may well be the case that a significant number of staff will not necessarily be car owners and Aviemore is served by buses and trains enabling staff to use public transport. The submitted plans show an area for a 50 cycle store adjacent to this block. The applicants have indicated the extra parking required on plan.
15. The landscaping around this and the other staff accommodation buildings is important in terms of breaking up the mass of the building and integrating it into the edge of settlement / edge of the A9 embankment. A landscaping plan has been submitted but this was considered to lack detail and more planting has been requested of the plan, a revised plan has been prepared and will be submitted shortly to comply with suggested condition (iv).
16. The proposal overall, is considered to be acceptable as in physical terms as it does not differ significantly enough from the approved scheme, or result in any additional environmental impacts that would warrant refusal. There is some concern about the size of the rooms but there are no particular space standards for private accommodation beyond the requirements of Building Regulations. In order to achieve consistency, similar conditions to those applied by Highland Council for previous staff accommodation, and the CNPA's recent consent for the 48-bed unit, are proposed. This includes a condition to secure the block for occupancy by employees in Aviemore.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

17. The proposal would have little effect in terms of the natural and cultural heritage of the area, and additional landscaping is proposed.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

18. Information supplied for the previous proposal is still relevant. This indicated that the timber for the timber frame structure is sourced from British forests and that some more specialised materials/items have been sourced from Stirling and Forres. Information had also been provided on energy management measures. Drainage will be provided by means of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System for the wider site.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

19. The facilities proposed are part of the wider leisure proposals for the resort to attract visitors and may contribute to promoting understanding and enjoyment of the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area's Communities

20. The proposal is part of the wider and considerable investment in the Aviemore Highland Resort and as such contributes to the economic development of the area, both in terms of the initial construction and the ongoing economic investment of bringing jobs and visitors to the area.

RECOMMENDATION

21. That members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

GRANT Full Planning Permission for the Erection of a Three Storey Staff Accommodation Block at Aviemore Centre, Aviemore, subject to the following Conditions:

- (i) That the external finishes to the building shall match those of the existing staff accommodation block to the east of this site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.
- (ii) Notwithstanding the details contained within the application, one car parking space per bedroom shall be provided adjacent to the building and sheltered parking for cyclists shall also be provided at a rate of one space per bedroom and nine spaces for visitors. The cycle parking space for residents should ideally be made within, failing which sheltered external spaces should be provided adjacent to the building. All the aforementioned shall be completed and available for use prior to the first occupation of the building.
- (iii) No trees on or adjoining the site shall be lopped, topped, or felled without the prior written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

- (iv) A site landscaping plan shall be submitted to and require the approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority prior to the occupation of the building hereby approved showing the species, number and size of all plants. The approved planting scheme shall be implemented in the first planting season following the completion of the building and all plant failures in the following 5 year period shall be replaced in kind to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority thereafter. The developer shall use predominantly mature plant species for the said landscaping scheme.
- (v) The building hereby approved shall be used as living accommodation for persons employed in Aviemore, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.
- (vi) Prior to the first occupation of the building hereby approved details of refuse storage and recycling storage facilities within or adjacent to the building shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed details shall be provided and be ready for use prior to the first occupation of the building hereby approved.

Andrew Tait

Date 8 December 2004

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