
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CHALETs
AND ERECTION OF 21 BEDROOM
LODGE HOTEL

REFERENCE: 05/018/CP

APPLICANT: Mr C Vastano

DATE CALLED-IN: 28 January 2005

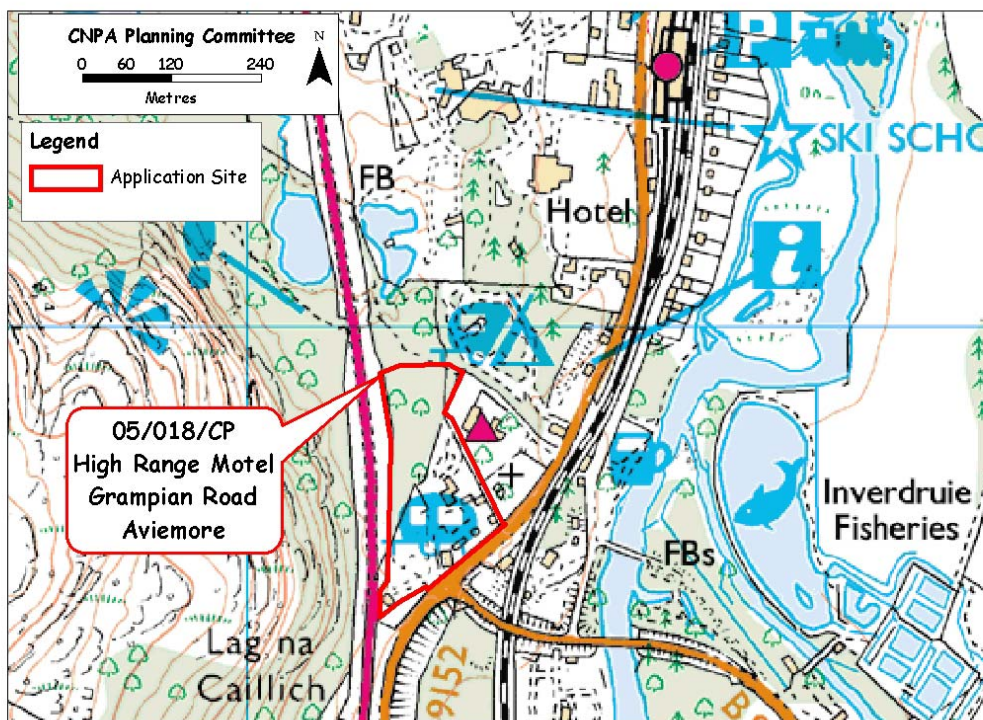


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. This is a relatively prominent site at the southern end of Aviemore close to the junction of the B9152 with the B970 on the west side of the road. The site is part of the High Range Motel and the building proposed is sited on an area that is currently partly occupied by four timber, shallow, pitch roofed chalet buildings. The four chalets contain a total of 8 separate accommodation units. The ground rises from the road at the side of the Taverna restaurant to the level where the chalets are sited. There are several Scots pine and birch trees scattered around the site. The vast majority of these would be retained by the scheme, although 2 medium sized pine trees at the rear of the chalets would need to be felled.



Fig 2 chalets proposed to be removed as part of redevelopment

2. The proposal is for a lodge hotel of some 21 bedrooms. The application site is part of a wider site including chalets, caravans and the Taverna Italian Restaurant all of which are run by the applicant. The proposal seeks to improve the amount and nature of accommodation available. The original plan involved a two storey building with a range of differing elements that lent the building a slightly fussy and over complicated look with a range of roof types, dormers and gables. However, the key concern with this original scheme was that at two storeys in this location it would dominate the outlook from Grampian Road to an unacceptable extent.
3. Amended plans have been submitted and the scheme is still for a 21 bedroom lodge but on a single storey basis, the rooms are slightly smaller and the building has been elongated from 51 to 57 metres running along the footprint of the existing chalets. Concern was raised regarding how the building would sit on the slope and cross sections have been provided to illustrate this. The existing chalets sit on a shallow terrace running along the slope which would also be used for the new building although some element of cut and fill would be necessary for the rear projecting wings in particular.

4. The car parking area will largely be as it is now behind the chalets and this will be the main entrance to the building. The car park will be formalised with 22 spaces including specific spaces for the less able close to the building a ramp access will also be constructed between the car park and the main entrance. Many of the rooms will have doors opening out to the front of the site affording views towards the northern corries.



Fig 3 revised design proposals upper drawing shows rear elevation lower drawing shows front elevation to Grampian Road

5. The building is designed on a long narrow plan form with the rear wing projections with a number of gables that will be picked out using stone detailing, the remaining elevations will be finished in horizontal timber, some render panels to the rear with concrete roof tiles (see fig 3)

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

National Policy

6. **Para 14 of Scottish Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning for Rural Development) (SPP15)** considers that tourism is of vital importance to the social, economic and environmental and cultural well being of rural Scotland. The guidance notes that Planning Authorities should support the development of the tourism and leisure industry with appropriate policies on the siting and design of new development.

Highland Structure Plan Policy

7. **Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability) of the Highland Structure Plan** states that developments will be assessed on the extent to which they, amongst other things, impact on resources such as habitats, species, landscape, scenery and are in keeping with the local character and the historic and natural environment and their impact on individual and community residential amenity **Policy L4 (Landscape Character) of the Highland Structure Plan** indicates that the Council will have

regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character in the consideration of development proposals.

8. **Policy T2 (Tourism Developments)** states that the Council will support high quality tourism development proposals, particularly those which extend the tourism 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 and interpretation of the area's heritage.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan Policy

9. The site is not allocated for any particular use on the proposals map of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan, the land effectively being white land within the village. However, the plan does place an emphasis upon improving and 'greening up' areas close to the southern entrance to the village.
10. **Policy 2.2.9 of the Local Plan** considers that tourism activities will continue to make a vital contribution to the economy. The priority is to ensure that broadening the range and quality of facilities and accommodation is balanced with protecting the area's exceptional scenic and heritage resources. **Policy 2.2.10** considers that the Council will encourage the development of tourist accommodation and facilities at suitable sites within or immediately adjoining communities.
11. **Policy 6.2.2** refers to the Aviemore Masterplan and that refurbishment and new development should respect existing uses and land allocations, under 6.2.6 the policy goes on to refer directly to the south of the village centre and that caravan park improvements and self-catering/health fitness facilities may be appropriate as well as the retention of existing tree cover. **Policy 6.4.3(a)** notes that improvements to redefine the village gateways to the south immediately beyond the Four Seasons Hotel should be coupled with wider enhancement alongside the B9152 to achieve a more successful transition between built up areas and the countryside. Comprehensive environmental improvements are suggested along Grampian Road, including extensive boundary and edge treatment to unify the main axis into the village. Emphasis is given to the use of traditional Speyside materials including hedging and stone walls.

Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan and Draft Local Plan

12. **For information the recently published Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan: *Priorities for Action 2007-2012*** promotes 7 priorities for action one of which directly relates to making tourism and business sustainable. This priority recognises that the long term sustainability of the Park requires a vibrant tourism and business sector that underpins

the economy, and at the same time contributes to conserving and enhancing the special qualities while not damaging them. Work within this priority area includes supporting strong business with high quality standards; managing the impacts of tourism and business; improving environmental performance; supporting entrepreneurship and business development. **Please note that this is not a land use development plan.**

13. **For information Consultation Draft Cairngorms National Park Local Plan Policy 29 Tourism Development** recognises that proposals for new or enhanced tourist facilities will be favourably considered where they enhance the range and quality of tourism attractions and facilities on offer and/or lengthen the tourist season, with a beneficial impact on the local economy. All proposals should maintain and enhance the quality of the visitor's experience, and the long term viability of the local tourism industry; any proposal which would reduce the tourist facilities of an area will be resisted unless the effect can be compensated for/mitigated against.
14. **Policy 30 Tourist Accommodation section d)** notes that for hotels proposals should not have an adverse impact on existing residential amenity, and should be of a scale which respects their setting/context.
15. The Aviemore settlement map of the draft plan allocates the site for tourism.

CONSULTATIONS

16. **Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)** has no objection to the proposal. SNH asked, in particular to be consulted upon the application because Craigellachie NNR is located across the A9 from this development and hosts a pair of breeding peregrine falcons. These birds are tolerant of the noise of people on the footpath beneath the crag, and the traffic on the A9, but they are vulnerable to disturbance from sudden, unusual or loud noises such as those which can be caused by heavy machinery or building works. However, the location of the proposed hotel on the edge of Grampian Road is outwith the zone of high sensitivity for the birds, so SNH has no further comments to make.
17. **SEPA** has no objection to the proposal surface water is to be disposed of by soakaways, trial pits have been dug and a short SUDS statement has been provided.
18. **The Area Roads and Community Works Manager** has no objection to the application in principle. However, a detailed parking breakdown for existing development and that of the existing uses at the site were requested together with details of servicing arrangements. This was subsequently provided and the Area Roads Manager has confirmed no objection.

19. **Scottish Water** has provided comments. On water supply SW comment that water network infrastructure is not affected by this proposal at this time. However, connection to the public water supply is dependent on the spare capacity at the time of application for a water connection. In terms of foul drainage Scottish Water's sewer network assets have adequate capacity to accommodate this development at the present time. However, connection to the public sewer system is dependant at the time of application for connection. SW point out that surface water drainage should be directed to sustainable urban drainage system.

REPRESENTATIONS

20. **Aviemore Community Council** were consulted on both the original and amended plans and raise no objection in principle but would like to see any stone cladding in natural stone to compliment the majesty of Craigellachie and the natural stone walls surrounding the site. The Community Council would also like to see slates instead of concrete tiles on the roof.
21. **The Highland Cycle Campaign** has requested that secure cycle parking be provided.

APPRAISAL

22. The main issues with this application relate to the principle of development at the site, natural heritage, the detailed siting and design of the building and consequent access and parking issues.
23. The site is not allocated for any particular use by the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan and is in effect 'white land' within the village on the proposals map which opens it up to a range of potential development opportunities. The site is located close to the southern entrance to the village and provides a range of tourist accommodation; the neighbouring Taverna is also part of the applicant's business. The site of the application is currently occupied by four timber chalet buildings (8 units) that represent an existing tourist accommodation use of the site.
24. There is strong support in both the Structure Plan and Local Plan for tourist development within/adjoining settlements in principle, providing it is sited and designed appropriately. Clearly, this is replacing one form of tourist accommodation with another. The building proposed has some level of separation from the other buildings on site, but the accommodation is purely designed for holiday rather than permanent accommodation and there is no self catering element. The overall increase in bed numbers will lead to a greater use of other facilities both on the applicant's site and throughout the village.

25. The key natural heritage concern relates to the proximity of nesting peregrine falcons at Craigellachie. However, SNH note that the site is outside the zone of high sensitivity for the birds so no comments on this issue are offered. Given this response it is clear that birds would be unlikely to be affected by this particular development.
26. In terms of the siting and design of the building it is important to note that the site is located in a relatively prominent position close to the southern entrance to Aviemore and is set above the level of the main road. The Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan in this area places an emphasis upon improvements to Grampian Road (as evidenced by recent dry stone dyking) and also an emphasis upon trying to integrate greener areas with developed areas. The existing timber chalets have very shallow pitched roofs, are of a generally poor design and may be considered to detract from first impressions of Aviemore when visitors are approaching from the south. The site would clearly benefit from the removal of these units in principle.
27. The original building proposed involved two storeys with a range of gables and roof slopes with side dormer elements and timber balconies. In the first instance this proposal was considered to be too large in terms of bulk and scale for what is already an elevated site. In addition, the design also presented a very confused elevation with a range of differing elements and materials proposed. The design was considered not to be acceptable and an improved design was sought.
28. The design now up for consideration is for a single storey building on the same site with a total of 21 rooms facing onto Grampian Road. The entrance to the building would be from the rear where an existing car parking area is located that would be formalised. The majority of the rooms front onto Grampian Road and several have doorways directly out on the landscaped area at the front of the site. There are a number of birch trees in front of the site and it is important that these are retained as part of the redevelopment. Further landscaping will also be sought by condition to break up the front elevation of the building and to achieve the dual aims of making improvements to the built environment along Grampian Road while also trying to increase soft landscaping in the area to better integrate development into the wider countryside. The design overall is simpler than previous and much less bulky in its appearance. The materials include significant elements of glazing with timber and stone. Again, the differentiation of materials will help to break up the front elevation. I have no objection to the principle of using such materials but given the prominence of the site it is important that they are of high quality. I am in agreement with the Community Council that the stone used should echo the stone wall enclosure at the front of the site which has been developed to meet the aims of the wider masterplan improvements sought for the area. In addition, slate or a slate like material should be used rather than concrete tiles to ensure that the roof does not appear top heavy or

bulky. Samples of all external finishing materials will be sought by condition to ensure appropriate quality.

29. There are no real neighbouring amenity issues as the front elevation looks out onto Grampian Road with the rear elevation looking back onto the car park and other holiday accommodation owned by the applicant.
30. The Area Roads Manager had no objection in principle to the proposals, but requested further details on the parking breakdown for the new development and existing uses. This information has now been received and passed to Area Roads who are now happy with the details.
31. Overall the scheme provides a positive addition to the economic development of the area and the scheme would provide a positive visual improvement to the site.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

32. In terms of cultural heritage the removal of the old shallow roofed timber chalets would be a visual improvement and the replacement building is of a much higher design standard and would help to provide an improved introduction to Aviemore on the west side of Grampian Road.
33. In terms of natural heritage there would be little impact most trees would be retained and a planning condition is proposed to ensure that they are afforded adequate protection on the site during construction works. Additional planting would be sought by condition.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

34. There is little information on this aspect of the development. However, the concentration of tourist accommodation at an existing site within a settlement should help to reduce the need to travel for a range of facilities for guests staying at the site.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

35. The provision of additional tourist accommodation should help to promote enjoyment of the area and if used in conjunction with the range of interpretation and attractions within the area may help to foster understanding of the National Park.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

36. The proposal would clearly help to promote the sustainable economic and social development of the area as it involves improvement to an existing business which provides employment in the area. As mentioned under cultural heritage the removal of the chalets and the construction of this building will also improve the southern approach to Aviemore on the western side of Grampian Road.

RECOMMENDATION

37. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT** Full Planning Permission for the erection of a 21 bedroom lodge hotel at High Range, Aviemore subject to the following conditions:-
- I. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
 - II. 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 Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as 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 Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as 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.
 - III. That from the date at which this planning permission is granted, no trees on the site shall be uprooted or damaged. Trees on the site shall only be felled, lopped or topped with the prior written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.

- IV. That no development shall commence on this site until all trees to be retained, have been protected around the extremities of the crowns of the trees to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, and in accordance with BS5837:2005, Trees in Relation to Construction.
- V. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plan the proposed roofing materials shall be slate or slate look-alike. Exact details and specifications of all external finishing materials shall be submitted for the further approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any works on site. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved materials.
- VI. The stone finishes shown on the approved elevation drawings shall be of a natural stone to match the existing stone wall which encloses the front of the site, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
- VII. No building shall be occupied until space for vehicle parking and turning has been provided within the site in accordance with the approved drawing. The spaces shall thereafter be kept available for parking at all times.
- VIII. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a construction method statement shall be submitted to and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The statement shall include details of any excavations, construction material and spoil storage areas and destination of any material to be removed from the site. Construction shall be carried out in accordance with the approved statement.
- IX. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for secure cycle parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority. The approved scheme shall be constructed and available for use on site prior to the first occupation of the hotel hereby approved.

ADVICE NOTE TO APPLICANT

Your attention is drawn to the attached response from Scottish Water. Surface water drainage must be to a SUDS system as detailed by the application.

DETERMINATION BACKGROUND

The plan for this application has been significantly revised. However, the major delay factor involved in bringing this application before the Planning Committee relates to the time taken to gain a response from Scottish Water. Scottish Water were originally consulted in February 2005, a reply was only received recently.

Andrew Tait, Planning Officer

15 May 2006

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The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.