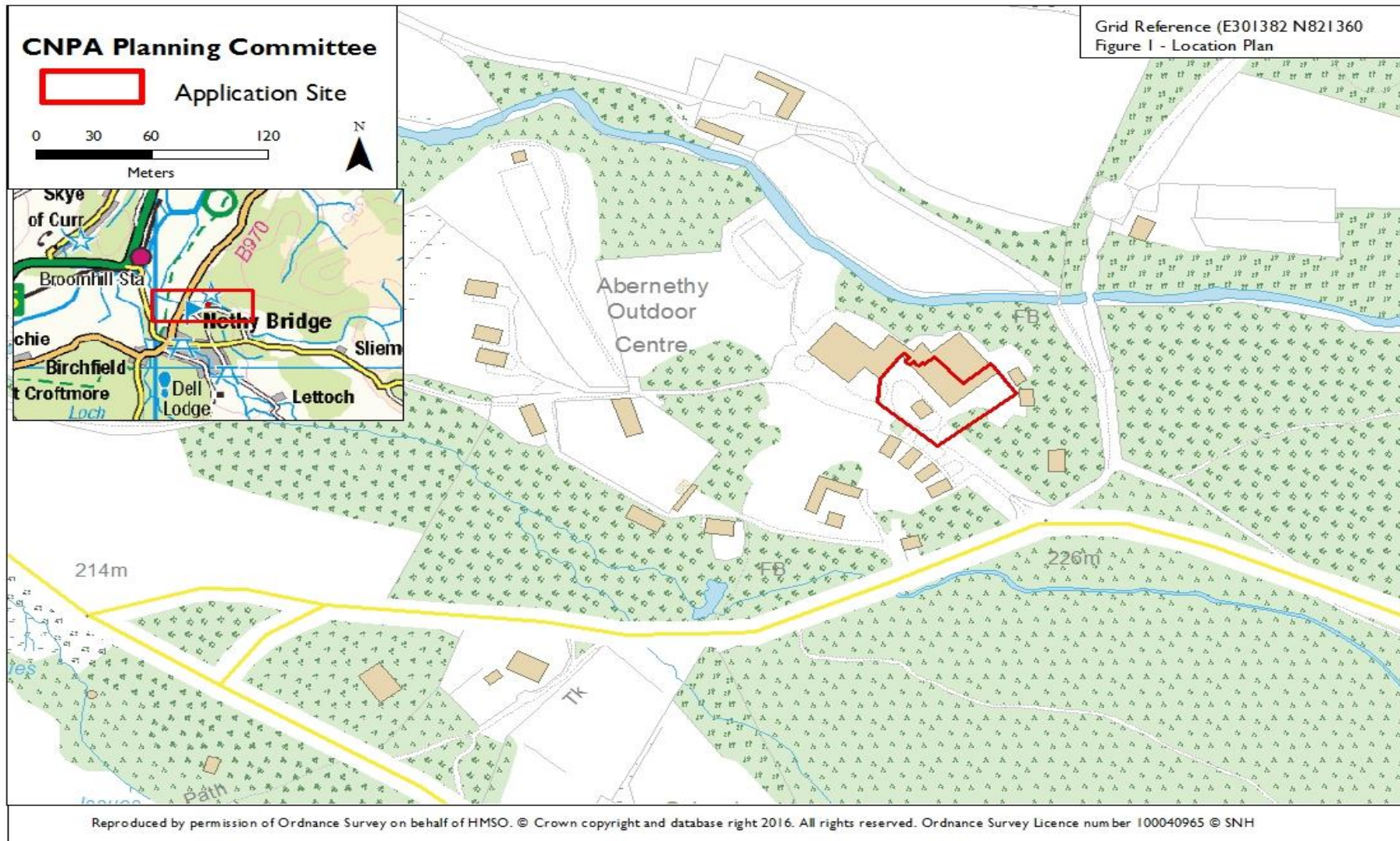


---

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

---

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:</b>   |                                  |
| Proposed extension to provide a further accommodation block for the Abernethy Outdoor Centre |                                  |
| <b>REFERENCE:</b>  | 2016/0120/DET                    |
| <b>APPLICANT:</b>  | Abernethy Trust                  |
| <b>DATE CALLED-IN:</b>   | 25 April 2016                    |
| <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>   | APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS          |
| <b>CASE OFFICER:</b>   | Matthew Taylor, Planning Officer |



## SITE DESCRIPTION, PROPOSAL AND HISTORY

### Site Description

1. The Abernethy Outdoor Centre is located within the wider settlement of Nethy Bridge. The site can be accessed via a minor road from the B970, with the land use of the area being forestry, agriculture, recreation, private dwellings and estate.
2. The proposed extension would be attached to the main central building group, being the later additions to the earlier former manse 'House of Abernethy'.
3. The immediate site relationship is shown on the aerial photograph, location plan and proposed block plan that are attached as part of the plans within **Appendix I**.

### Proposal

4. The drawings and documents associated with this application are listed below and are available on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website unless noted otherwise:

<http://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/#searchApplications>

| Title                          | Drawing Number | Date on Plan               | Date Received |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Site Plan As Existing          | S 001          | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016 | 25/04/2016    |
| *Site Plan As Proposed         | G 001          | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016 | 25/04/2016    |
| Block Plan As Existing         | S 002          | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016 | 25/04/2016    |
| *Block Plan As Proposed        | G 002          | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016 | 25/04/2016    |
| *Ground Floor Plan As Proposed | G (2) 001      | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015 | 25/04/2016    |
| *First Floor Plan As Proposed  | G (2) 002      | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015 | 25/04/2016    |
| *Second Floor Plan As Proposed | G (2) 003      | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015 | 25/04/2016    |
| *Elevations As Proposed        | G (2) 011      | 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2016 | 25/04/2016    |
| Tree Planting Plan             |                | May 2016                   | 01/06/2016    |
| Sustainable Design Statement   |                |                            | 13/06/2016    |
| Bat Survey                     |                |                            | 20/06/2016    |

5. This application seeks full planning permission to extend the existing buildings within the centre as part of improvements to the accommodation within the facility, resulting in an increase in 13 bedspaces.

6. The submitted 'Sustainable Design Statement' describes four elements of the overall extension and should be read in conjunction with the elevation drawings.
7. The first element is a wing running NE to SW, continuing the linear form of the existing sport hall. The ridge and eaves of this element are lower than the existing building and both walls and roof are to be clad in black corrugated sheeting. The architect considers this a suitable material in its own right given the rural and forestry setting, whilst providing a dramatic contrast to the white harl and render of the main house and its additions. This element would contain shallow bay windows to the SW gable end that would be accentuated against the black surround with red and green surrounds. Corner windows to this gable end are intended to provide architectural interest as well as views along the main drive.
8. A second wing running perpendicular to the first wing is intended to provide a visual 'book end' to the complex of buildings and create an open courtyard and gathering space between the main house and its extensions for guests as they wait for activities or transportation off site. As with the first wing, the second wing is to have a pitched roof with black corrugated cladding but with European Larch cladding to the walls.
9. The ground floor level is to have rough sawn board on board cladding and the first floor level is to have dressed horizontal open joint cladding of random widths. The gable end to the NW is to have large glazed screens serving the communal sitting room spaces internally and providing views to the front lawn. A curved section opens up access to the main entrance.
10. A third extension wing is proposed to the existing sports wing, running perpendicular. This is to be more conventional and low key with a slate roof and white harled wall consistent with the existing later buildings. The supporting information asserts an intention to avoid competition with the proposed more contemporary elements.
11. A single storey element sits between wings 2 and 3, extending the main internal circulation and meeting space. The external wall is finished with random stone and the flat roof finished with a lead grey single ply membrane and this would be punctuated by a large powder coated aluminium cupola to provide light.
12. The proposed extension is to be erected immediately adjacent to and connected with the existing building complex and on previously developed land. The proposal involves some partial demolition including a detached chalet and a single storey extension. As such the agent considers that there are no culturally or archaeologically important features that will be affected by the development.
13. The proposed floor plans and elevations of the extension are contained within **Appendix I**.
14. There are proposals for landscaping and surface treatment within the courtyard and immediate environment of the extension with flag stone surfacing, benches, and further tree planting to compensate for the recent loss of trees in the area

of the proposal as part of the wider site management. The proposed landscape scheme is contained within the supporting information as part of **Appendix I**.

## History

15. Planning permission was granted by the local authority in 2005 for the erection of a games room attached to the house under permission reference 05/008/CP. There is no other recent planning history recorded for the site.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

### Policies

|                          |   |          |
|--------------------------|---|----------|
| <b>National Policy</b>   | Scottish Planning Policy 2014   |          |
| <b>Strategic Policy</b>  | Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012 - 2017   |          |
| <b>Local Plan Policy</b> | Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (2015)<br>Those policies relevant to the assessment of this application are marked with a cross |          |
| POLICY 1                 | NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT   |          |
| POLICY 2                 | SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH  | <b>X</b> |
| POLICY 3                 | SUSTAINABLE DESIGN  | <b>X</b> |
| POLICY 4                 | NATURAL HERITAGE  | <b>X</b> |
| POLICY 5                 | LANDSCAPE   | <b>X</b> |
| POLICY 6                 | THE SITING AND DESIGN OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT   |          |
| POLICY 7                 | RENEWABLE ENERGY  |          |
| POLICY 8                 | SPORT AND RECREATION  |          |
| POLICY 9                 | CULTURAL HERITAGE   |          |
| POLICY 10                | RESOURCES   |          |
| POLICY 11                | DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS   |          |

16. All new development proposals require to be assessed in relation to policies contained in the adopted Local Development Plan. The full wording of policies can be found at:

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Park%20Authority/Planning/LDPI5.pdf>

### Planning Guidance

17. Supplementary guidance also forms part of the Local Development Plan and provides more details about how to comply with the policies. Guidance that is relevant to this application is marked with a cross.

|          |   |          |
|----------|---|----------|
| Policy 1 | New Housing Development Non-Statutory Guidance    |          |
| Policy 2 | Supporting Economic Growth Non-Statutory Guidance | <b>X</b> |
| Policy 3 | Sustainable Design Non-Statutory Guidance         | <b>X</b> |
| Policy 4 | Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance           | <b>X</b> |

|           |  |          |
|-----------|--|----------|
| Policy 5  | Landscape Non-Statutory Guidance               | <b>X</b> |
| Policy 7  | Renewable Energy Supplementary Guidance        |          |
| Policy 8  | Sport and Recreation Non-Statutory Guidance    |          |
| Policy 9  | Cultural Heritage Non-Statutory Guidance       |          |
| Policy 10 | Resources Non-Statutory Guidance               |          |
| Policy 11 | Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance |          |

## **CONSULTATIONS**

18. A summary of the main issues raised by consultees now follows:
19. **Highland Council (Roads Authority)** has no issues or comments to raise regarding the application, given that it is unlikely it will have any significant impact on the local road network.
20. **Highland Council (Forestry)** suggests that if trees are to be removed then tree planting proposals will be required to compensate.
21. **Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)** considered that the original planning submission contained insufficient information to determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Capercaillie of Craigmore Wood Special Protection Area.
22. Further information required was provided by the applicant. On the basis of this additional information SNH are of the view that the heritage interests of international importance adjacent to the site (River Spey SAC and Craigmore Wood SPA) would not be affected by the proposal
23. **CNPA Natural Heritage Officer** sought additional information including a bat survey and a tree planting plan to detail replacement planting for the loss of mature trees on site (already removed). The Natural Heritage Officer also asked that an invasive non-native species 'American Skunk Cabbage' which was identified on site by the pond be removed.
24. A Bat Survey was provided and welcomed by the Heritage Officer. The results reveal that there are no bats using the buildings to be impacted by the proposal, being the wooden chalet style office, the extension and the adjoining dormitory. The Heritage Officer confirmed that the methods for survey are consistent with the Bat Conservation Trust Guidance 2016 and that bats will not be a constraint to the proposal. However, an informative is recommended advising that should bats be found during the course of the works, then the works shall be stopped and advice sought from Scottish Natural Heritage.
25. Whilst the centre is outside the Caledonian Forest Buffer Zone and Scots Pine Moratorium Zone, the Natural Heritage Officer also recommends that the planting scheme utilise any regenerating Scots Pine from within the estate to ensure local provenance.

26. A screening assessment under Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) was undertaken. No likely significant effects upon Natura Sites were found. Consequently, an appropriate assessment is not required.
27. **CNPA Landscape Adviser** identifies the interests affected by the proposal and notes that several large trees, including 3 of the large limes, have already been removed.
28. The scale and orientation of the proposed new building will complement the existing building, the removal of the chalet and extension will reduce the haphazard feel of the site, and the development as a whole will give an opportunity to rationalize and landscape the outdoor spaces around the centre.
29. The design of the building is contemporary with timber and black fibre cement cladding on walls and roof, and a small stone clad rubble wall on the south east elevation. The timber cladding will weather to a pale grey with the black cement fibre cladding being in marked contrast to the existing white buildings. On the basis of the Sustainable Design Statement and early site appraisal the Landscape Advisor is content with the building finishes and design rationale for the desired contribution of the chosen materials to the building group.
30. A landscape plan is provided and would be subject to species, planting and management details.
31. **The Community Council** had not provided a response at the time of reporting.

## REPRESENTATIONS

32. The application was advertised and no comments have been received.

## APPRAISAL

### Supporting Economic Growth

33. The Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan Policy 2:2 on tourism and leisure development aims to enable and encourage growth and diversification in the economy of the Park. The policy supports the tourism sector alongside recreation and land management which are recognised as important to the Park wide economy.
34. Policy 2:2 supports tourism accommodation provided it meets a number of criteria. In respect of environmental impacts and neighbouring areas, the Abernethy Centre is well established providing accommodation and activities for groups and individuals. However, the site is located near to a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation and so any potential for change must be considered. The interaction between the proposal, site, and qualifying interests is discussed under the Natural Heritage section of this report and it



was considered that there would be no likely significant effects on the qualifying interests near the site.

35. In respect of a contribution to the experience of visitors, this would generally be enjoyed by visitors to the centre rather than the wider public. This is because the development site is visually contained within the building group and not widely visible from public view with the local facilities enjoyed by the resident guests. However, whilst the public experience is generally limited to visitors to the site, it is considered that the site landscaping, tree planting and removal of non-native species, makes a positive contribution to the experience of visitors to the facility and this part of the Park.
36. In terms of core tourist seasons, the proposal would provide enhanced and adaptable accommodation with a modest increase in bed spaces. It is considered that the proposal would enhance the accommodation provision within the area.
37. In this instance the proposed development is considered to comply with the relevant provisions and intent of Policy 2:2 of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

### **Design, Location and Landscape**

38. Whilst the development would not be seen from most public viewpoints, the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan policies on landscape (Policy 5) and sustainable design (Policy 3) aim to ensure that all development, not just the expensive or iconic, delivers high standards of design and contributes to the sense of place, whilst also complementing and enhancing the landscape character.
39. The planning application was submitted with a design statement explaining the design approach. This detailed the brief for the proposal and the design rationale adopted to inform the approach to the extensions.
40. The external treatment to the contrasting new extension comprises larch timber cladding with a sawn finish, black fibre cement profile covering to the roof, and rubble masonry detailing to the walls, with a more conventional component of the extension to be finished in render with slate roof and timber facings to match the existing. Overall the proposal is of a contrasting contemporary appearance.
41. The material choice and high levels of insulation are considered to minimise the effect of the development on climate change with the building fabric being insulated in excess of the technical standards, with timber materials being chosen from sustainably managed forests and left untreated, with the fibre cement panels being made from recycled materials.
42. In respect of the immediate site context, in particular relationship with the traditional former manse, during site inspection the proposed extension was viewed from the gateway, near and far. The juxtaposition with the vernacular



Manse is important to consider, as the extension has the potential to significantly affect its setting.

43. The former manse for the Abernethy church is an attractive traditional building with architectural detailing such as granite returns to the doors and windows, slender sash frames and mullions, and a soft textural quality to the lime harl which has a clean whitewashed finish.
44. Unfortunately, it is considered that the existing later more generic additions to the rear of the manse detract from the character of the earlier building to the detriment of the overall amenity of the site. Nevertheless, they provide for useful accommodation at the centre and would be subject to some internal rationalisation as part of the re-development. It is considered that the proposal would mitigate for the relationship between the earlier and later building elements.
45. The design, material choices and colour palette of the proposed extension, with notable 'black' elements are considered to be very suitable to both the setting of the traditional former manse and the wider woodland context. The proposal introduces some innovation in design and use of materials in a manner which compensates for the amenity provided by the existing, more generic, and arguably 'pastiche' additions.
46. The design approach is considered to respond to the background woodland and avoid competition with the earlier Manse building reading clearly as a contemporary element and in many respects appearing as a 'shadow' to the lighter palette of the more traditional components. There would also be, as previously noted, an added benefit of screening for the most part the unattractive later extensions from the principle views on approach to the centre and from beyond looking back to the manse.
47. The principle view to the traditional manse would be from the north-west, where you cannot see the less attractive parts of the later extensions. This view would show the contemporary proposals as background with the darker pallet, lighter timber and glazing providing a pleasant contrast with some subservience to the manse building; the darker colours compensating for the relatively large scale extensions.
48. It is clear that the extensions do not pretend to be a 'wing' or component of the manse and this is welcomed. In terms of some of the finer detailing, it is considered that the larch cladding would complement the granite returns. In any event it is considered that the proposal would be a significant improvement on the existing extension arrangement and red timber chalet.
49. Looking into the site from the gateway, the contemporary proposal would screen the large scale later additions without obscuring the early manse. The proposal would also rationalise the back of the larger wing by taking away the small lean to, conventional single storey section and fire escape, to be replaced by the more conventional component of the extension with an overall rationalisation of the appearance of the buildings.

50. In relation to the immediate landscaping of the building group, the proposal provides for a paved area with benching within the newly created courtyard, with the tarmac area retained for disabled access and drop off. At the time of the site inspection, the applicant requested further allowance to consider all options for the formalisation of desire lines within this area, and further consideration of the localised landscaping, and therefore a condition is suggested to allow for this.
51. The wider landscaping of the site would be subject to their annual maintenance plan which includes the planting of 50 new trees; this is to a scheme that has been modified to take account of the recommendations of the CNPA and to compensate for the loss of mature trees.
52. The applicant states that the trees removed in advance of the submission of the planning application were taken down as part of the annual maintenance plan. This was because they were too close to the existing buildings, dangerous, or damaged by the winter storms. Unfortunately, as the trees are down the CNPA cannot confirm their condition or opportunity to incorporate into the proposed scheme. Therefore, compensatory planting proposals are recommended to be secured by condition.
53. In this instance, the proposed development is considered to comply with the relevant provisions and intent of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015 Policy 3 (Sustainable Design) and Policy 5 (Landscape).

### **Natural Heritage**

54. The Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan Policy 4 on natural heritage aims to ensure that development conserves and enhances the outstanding natural heritage of the Park.
55. There are no international or national designations relating to the immediate site. However, nearby is located the Craigmore Woods Special Protection Area where cappercaillie are the qualifying feature, and the Allt Mor designated as part of the River Spey Special Area of Conservation. There is also the potential for bats, a European Protected Species, to be affected by the works.
56. Additional information was provided in the form of a Bat Survey, a Sustainable Design Statement containing information on visitor numbers and site management, and a site planting plan as part of the annual grounds maintenance plan.
57. Both SNH and the CNPA Natural Heritage Officer are satisfied that the modest net increase by 13 bed spaces and established use of the site would not have a significant detrimental impact upon either the SAC or SPA in terms of visitor movements through Craigmore Woods or any direct impacts on the Allt Mor. Furthermore, the applicant has advised that there is no intention to utilise the Craigmore Woods for additional group activities. A screening as part of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) was undertaken confirming that there

would be no impact upon the qualifying features. The HRA is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report.

58. Whilst the loss of several mature trees is regretful, this was completed in advance of the planning submission, with the applicant asserting that this was part of the annual management plan and having received confirmation by the forestry commission as not requiring a licence for felling. However, in response to the localised loss of trees the applicant has provided a landscaping plan as compensation with a total of 50 trees to be planted. These comprise of species recommended by the CNPA heritage and landscape advisors and which would be subject to maintenance to ensure longevity.
59. It should also be noted that the applicant has cooperated within the CNPA in securing the removal of American Skunk Cabbage from the site. This is an invasive non-native species, the removal of which is considered beneficial to the site.
60. The submitted Bat Survey has confirmed that there are no bats present in the buildings to be affected by the proposal. However, an informative is recommended in the event that they are found during the works to require works to cease and advise from SNH be sought.
61. The application is therefore considered to comply with Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015, which seeks to ensure that new development conserves and enhances natural heritage interests.

## CONCLUSION

62. The development proposal would provide enhanced accommodation to an established and successful local employer, being an outdoor centre within the settlement of Nethy Bridge. The design and material finishes are compatible with the immediate woodland site, and considered complementary to the traditional character of the earlier manse building and parkland.
63. The proposal would provide for an opportunity to enhance the overall site amenity and mitigate for the visual impacts arising from earlier large scale building extensions. There are no ecological impacts upon nearby sites, and appropriate site landscaping and planting is to be secured by the permission.

## REASON FOR APPROVAL

64. The proposed extension to the existing building group is appropriately designed and sited and will enhance and complement the immediate site and surrounding area. It is considered to fully comply with Local Development Plan policies and is welcomed as contributing to the provision of the tourist accommodation and activities available within the Park. The proposal complies with the relevant provisions and intent of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan

2015 and there are no other material considerations that would warrant the refusal of planning permission.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: GRANT FULL PLANNING PERMISSION for the proposed extension to provide a further accommodation block for the Abernethy Outdoor Centre subject to the following conditions:**

Those conditions listed below in bold text are suspensive conditions, which require to be discharged prior to implementation of the development.

- 1. No development shall commence until a site plan showing the location and extent of site working compounds/material storage/ and contractor welfare facilities, is submitted to and approved in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.**

**Thereafter the development shall proceed in accordance with these approved details.**

Reason: To ensure that there is no encroachment to the banks of the Allt Mor (River Spey SAC) in a manner that would cause damage, erosion, or sedimentation to the water course, and to avoid the potential for disturbance to woodland, in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

- 2. No development shall commence on site until a revised landscape scheme, and a timetable for its delivery, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The landscaping scheme must detail surface materials and finishes to the area of land disturbed by the development, and the wider site landscaping as shown on the approved tree plan, with a detailed specification of all plant material and a management and aftercare plan to ensure rapid establishment and longevity of planting.**

**Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with those approved details and maintained thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the CNPA acting as planning authority.**

Reason: To ensure the development complements and enhances the landscape character in accordance with Policy 3: Sustainable Design and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

### Informatives:

- In accordance with section 58(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), this permission lapses on the expiration of a period of

three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted unless the development to which this permission relates is begun before that expiration.

2. Construction work (including the loading/unloading of delivery vehicles, plant or other machinery) should not take place out with the hours of 0800 hours to 1800 hours Mondays to Fridays, 0900 hours to 1300 hours on Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays in order to minimise disturbance to residents in the area.
3. Prior to the commencement of development, a notice of the intended date of initiation of development shall be submitted to the CNPA acting as Planning Authority and such notification shall contain the information set out in the 'Notification of Initiation of Development Notice as appended, pursuant to Section 27A(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
4. Following the completion of the development, a notification of the completion shall, as soon as practicable, be submitted to the CNPA acting as Planning Authority and such notification shall contain the information as set out in the 'Notification of Completion of Development' Notice as appended, pursuant to Section 27B(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
5. The developer is reminded that should Bats be identified within the site of the development (buildings subject to taking down or alteration) all building work should cease and they should make contact with SNH in the first instance for advice.
6. The developer is advised that Scots Pine to be used for the site planting proposals should, wherever practicable, be sourced from regenerating stock within the site. This is a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of disease. Further advice is available from the CNPA Natural Heritage Officer.

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.