
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF PORTABLE SKI SLOPE AND CLIMBING WALL, ON THE ICE PAD AT THE HILTON COYLUMBRIDGE

REFERENCE: 04/592/CP

APPLICANT: NICOLA TANNAHILL, OUTDOOR DISCOVERY, 14 BEINN GHUILBINN, AVIEMORE, PH22 1LB

DATE CALLED-IN: 30th December, 2004

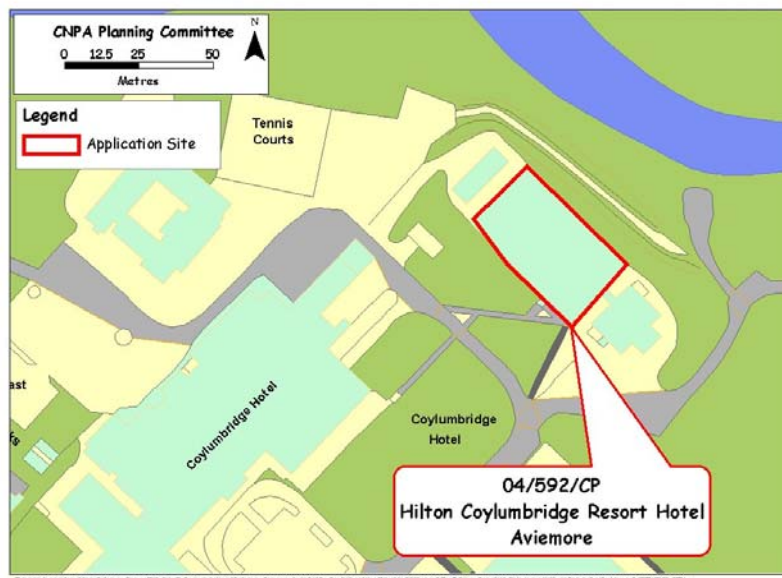


Fig 1 Location Plan



Fig 2 Portable Ski Slope on Site

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The application is for the erection of a dry ski slope with a climbing wall within the area of the former skating rink (destroyed by fire) in the grounds of the Hilton Coylumbridge Hotel site. The site is currently unused, with buildings at either end of the former rink (one of these the Time Ownership Information Office and Lodge Reception) and tree covered ground on the other 2 sides. Higher banking with birch and pine woodland borders the north east side between the site and the River Druie. The new structure being placed on the level surface of the former rink.
2. The proposed ski slope structure is a portable demountable unit that rises to approximately 3 metres at its highest point and is bordered on the top and sides by an enclosing fence. The structure is approximately 15 metres long and 7.5 metres wide. The ski slope has now been positioned on the site (see fig 2 above) planning permission not being required for a temporary period so the application is basically for retention of the structure. There was no detail for the climbing wall with the application, but it is now clear that this structure is not on the site on a permanent basis and is delivered when required on the back of a small trailer. The wall is of a pre-cast nature with coloured hand holds and is approximately 6 metres high. Given that this structure is only on the site sporadically and is packed away when not in use it is considered that this element of the proposal does not require planning consent.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

3. The site lies within the **Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area**, where siting and design of new developments is of critical importance.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **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.
7. In the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan**, the surrounding woodland areas have a safeguarding policy covering them, but this does not restrict development associated with the Coylumbridge Hotel.

CONSULTATIONS

8. **SNH** have commented that the location for the structure is sunken and screened by mid age trees of pine and birch and flanked by two existing timber-clad buildings. The application makes no reference to any work outwith the footprint of the existing development and on this basis; SNH is content that the proposed development is unlikely to have any impact on either the natural heritage or the landscape at this location.
9. **SEPA** have been consulted and have no comment to make, assuming the new structure will use the current surface water drainage system.
10. **Highland Council Planners** have commented that providing the ski slope is not unduly prominent from the River Druie or other parts of the hotel grounds then there are no objections to what would be a valuable addition to tourist facilities at this location.
11. **Highland Council Environmental Health** has no objections to the proposal.

12. **Highland Council Contaminated Land Officer** has no comment regarding contaminated land concerns.

REPRESENTATIONS

13. **Aviemore Community Council** comment that they are happy to see some form of outdoor activity at the site but consider it a pity that the bar has been turned into an office.

APPRAISAL

14. The main considerations for this application are issues of location and impacts on the site from the structures proposed.

15. The proposed uses being introduced here are training/recreational facilities associated with a commercial / tourist business – the Hilton Coylumbridge. The ski slope and the climbing wall will add to the various recreational facilities already on the site, including a swimming pool, tennis courts and adventure playground. These satisfy the needs of a variety of age groups and abilities for people visiting and staying at the hotel and the adjacent timeshare lodges. It is entirely appropriate that the disused ice rink should provide the location for these new facilities, and the development does not encroach into the established natural woodland and scrubland areas around this commercial and residential site.

16. As the position of the rink area is well away from the main public road through Coylumbridge, the structure will not be visible from public viewpoints outwith the site. The ski slope and climbing wall will also not be particularly visible from within the complex as the pad on which they are placed is bordered by trees, has higher ground on two sides and is flanked on the others by existing buildings. With the level of information originally submitted the scale of the structures was difficult to define, as was their exact siting on the pad. However, these structures are essentially mobile and as long as they remain sited somewhere on the pad then there will be virtually no adverse impacts upon the local landscape.

17. Overall, the ski slope and climbing wall are considered to add to the tourist attractions at the resort and utilise a brownfield area that has not been positively used for some time. The structures have no adverse landscape or other environmental impacts. Given this, the proposal is recommended for approval, subject to a condition that the ski slope is not moved outside of the ice pad while at the hotel complex.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

18. As the new facilities will be positioned on an already developed site, there will be no negative impacts on the natural or cultural heritage of the area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

19. The development makes no positive or negative contributions to this aim.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

20. These additional recreational facilities on this site will add to the range of activities for people visiting the area, or staying at the hotel or in the residential lodges, potentially adding to their enjoyment of the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

21. Adding to the diversity of visitor and tourist facilities in such an important tourist site, will support the commercial attractiveness and viability of the current business, to the benefit also of other businesses in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

22. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT** Full Planning Permission for the retention of a portable ski slope on land at the Hilton Coylumbridge Resort Hotel, Aviemore subject to the following condition.

1. While at the hotel complex the portable ski slope hereby approved shall not be sited outside of the former ice rink indicated by the application.

Andrew Tait

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12 May 2005