
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF 18 NO. 12M HIGH
FLAGPOLES, AVIEMORE RESORT
LANDS, AVIEMORE

REFERENCE: 03/005/CP

APPLICANT: AVIEMORE HIGHLAND RESORT,
c/o MACDONALD HOTELS PLC,
WHITESIDE HOUSE, BATHGATE

DATE CALLED-IN: 12 September 2003

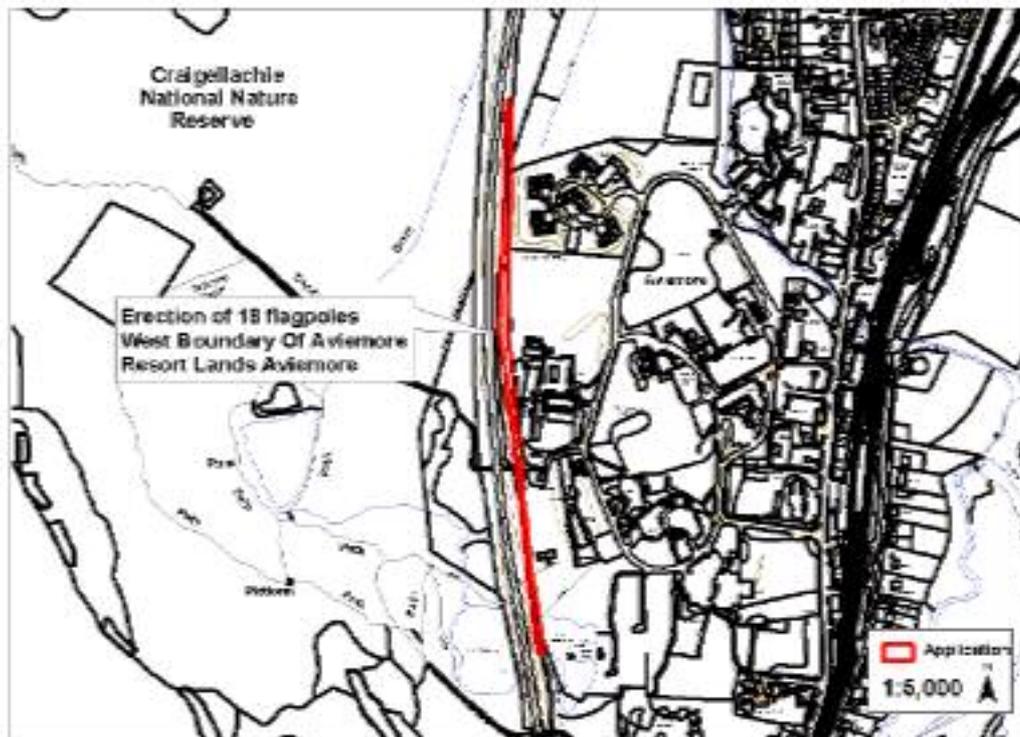


Fig. 1. – Site and Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site to which this proposal relates is located within the boundaries of the Aviemore Highland Resort which is sited to the west side of Aviemore between the town centre and the A9 (see Fig. 1 above). The proposal is to erect 18 no. 12 metre high flagpoles, in three groups of six, near to the west boundary of the Aviemore Highland Resort and adjacent to the A9. The groups of flagpoles are positioned at three locations immediately adjacent to, but on the Aviemore side of, the existing tree belt which screens the A9 from the town. One group is to be positioned near to the Scandinavian Village. Another group is to be located to the rear of the new extension to the Highland Hotel. The third group of poles is proposed to the south end of the development near to the footpath link under the A9 to the Craigellachie National Nature Reserve. The applicant's agents have advised that the poles are to help promote the Aviemore Highland Resort by drawing the attention of road users on the A9 to the development. The applicants have not submitted any details of the actual flags.
2. For members information, The Aviemore Highland Resort recently applied for Advertisement Consent to display signboards supported by an 18 metre high hoarding on land between the A9 and the Highland Hotel. The application was submitted prior to the 1 September 2003 and therefore The Highland Council were the determining planning authority. Prior to the determination of the application, the developers erected the hoarding and the sign. The Highland Council found the proposal unacceptable, on the grounds that, due to its height and scale, and its visibility from a wide range of public viewpoints including the A9 and the Craigellachie National Nature Reserve, it would be harmful to visual amenity. The structure has been subsequently removed.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

The Highland Structure Plan 2001

3. Policy L4 (Landscape Character) states that in the consideration of development proposals, there will be regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

4. The sites lie within the Aviemore settlement envelope but within areas designated, under Policy 6.5.1, as locations for amenity woodland and trees. In addition to this, The Highland Council has adopted an Advertisement Design Guideline for Aviemore which is aimed at improving the environment and public image of the town. In relation to advertisements, the key elements are to reduce clutter and provide a more natural look.

CONSULTATIONS

5. The Highland Council has stated, at officer level, that several years ago, they adopted Advertisement Design Guidelines for Aviemore as part of its suite of

policies, strategies and partnerships aimed at improving Aviemore's environment and public image. Key elements of the guidelines were the reduction of clutter and a more natural look. They state that the display of three groups of six flags on flagpoles, particularly on sites prominently located near to the A9, is contrary to these objectives. As well as having a cluttered appearance in their own right they would contribute to a more general effect of clutter and over-signing in the town. Groups of flags are characteristic of urban environments or landmark buildings and it is doubtful if that is in keeping with the aim of a more natural look using natural materials.

6. Aviemore & Vicinity Community Council have asked what will be on the flags and what function they will serve. They have also stated that they would not want to see the flags being used to advertise anything.
7. Scottish Natural Heritage have stated that they have no objections to the application. However, they do wish to make some comments. In terms of landscape impact, they state that, in their view, flagpoles and flags are more characteristic of places such as town centres, historic buildings, coastal developments and theme parks compared to this landscape which in contrast, is characterised by birch woodland, cliffs, and heather covered slopes as well as the settlement of Aviemore. The flagpoles would adversely affect the setting of Aviemore as viewed from the A9, from the Craigellachie National Nature Reserve and nearby recreational areas. They therefore consider that the use of the flagpoles is not appropriate at this location. In relation to the impact on breeding peregrine falcons, they state that one group of flagpoles is close to the falcons at Craigellachie NNR. They are concerned that the noise made by the flags in windy or gale conditions is likely to disturb the nesting peregrines, and will add to the cumulative impact of noise and disturbance which they experience.
8. The Scottish Executive Trunk Roads have advised verbally, and informally, that they have no objections to the proposal.

REPRESENTATIONS

9. One letter of representation has been received from agents working on behalf of Scandinavian Village Ltd. It states that the nature of the application is completely out of character with the amenity of the area, there is potential for noise disturbance from the flags and ropes, and that the application, in part, falls within a Peregrine Falcon protected zone.
10. A copy of this letter is attached for the consideration of the Members.

APPRAISAL

11. The consideration of this proposal lies, in the main, with the purpose and need for the flagpoles, and their visual impact on the character and setting of Aviemore and the surrounding landscape.

12. The flagpoles are of a height (12m) which will make them clearly visible from the A9 above the tree line. They have also been positioned in locations where there is perhaps less tree cover. The purpose of the flagpoles is therefore clearly to bring the attention of road users on the A9 to the Aviemore Highland Resort development.
13. The Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997 applied General Development Control Policy No.4 (Display of Advertisements) throughout the Plan area. However, the policy was not reapplied in the Council's Structure Plan in 2001. Nevertheless, the policy did contain a number of prohibitions, including "advertisements over 4.55m above the ground". These were seen as being "entirely detrimental to the scenic quality of the countryside, and inappropriate in any urban environment." There are specific exemptions for advanced commercial signs. However, the proposed flagpoles would not qualify as such because they are not positioned at a road junction immediately prior to the advertised premises. Indeed, the height and positioning of the poles and their visual prominence, would render them inappropriate for advance commercial signs.
14. In addition to the above mentioned policy document, The Highland Council adopted supplementary design guidance, specifically in relation to advertisements in Aviemore. Key elements, which related to the overall strategy for the redevelopment plan for Aviemore, were the need to reduce clutter and provide a more natural look and setting. The proposal for three groups of six flagpoles, positioned in close proximity to the A9, will inevitably cause visual clutter on this boundary of Aviemore. They will also represent a proposal which would be in conflict with the aim of providing high quality standards of design and a more natural appearance.
15. While it is understandable that the Aviemore Highland Resort would wish to promote itself, the conclusion is that the introduction of the flagpoles would be significantly detrimental to the character, landscape setting and overall visual amenity of this side of Aviemore and this part of the National Park. The position and height of the flagpoles would render them unacceptably visually prominent from public viewpoints, including the A9 and the Craigellachie National Nature Reserve. As such, to permit the development would contravene Structure Plan Policy L4 (Landscape Character), be in conflict with the aims of the National Park, and be contrary to the objectives of the Advertisement Design Guidelines for Aviemore and the overall strategies for improving the central areas of the town.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Refuse Advertisement Consent for the Erection of 18 No. 12 Metre High Flagpoles, at West Boundary of Aviemore Resort Lands, for the following reason:-

- i) The introduction of 18 No. 12 metre high flagpoles in the proposed positions immediately adjacent to the A9 will be significantly detrimental to the character, landscape setting and overall visual amenity of this side of Aviemore and this part of the Cairngorms National Park. By virtue of their positions, numbers and heights, they will cause visual clutter and they will be unacceptably visually prominent from public viewpoints including the A9 and the Craigellachie National Nature Reserve. As such, to permit the development would, contravene Policy L4 (Landscape Character) of The Highland Structure Plan 2001, be in conflict with the aims of the Cairngorms National Park and be contrary to the objectives put forward in the Advertisement Design Guidelines for Aviemore and the overall strategies for redeveloping and improving the environment of this part of the town.
17. **Members are advised to note that if they wish to approve the development, the application would require to be deferred, in order that it could be advertised as a Departure from The Highland Structure Plan. The formal comments of the Scottish Executive Trunk Roads would also be required by carrying out a statutory consultation.**

Neil Stewart
14 November 2003

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