
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO DWELLING

REFERENCE: 05/143/CP

APPLICANTS: MR. & MRS. M. COX

DATE CALLED-IN: 8 APRIL 2005

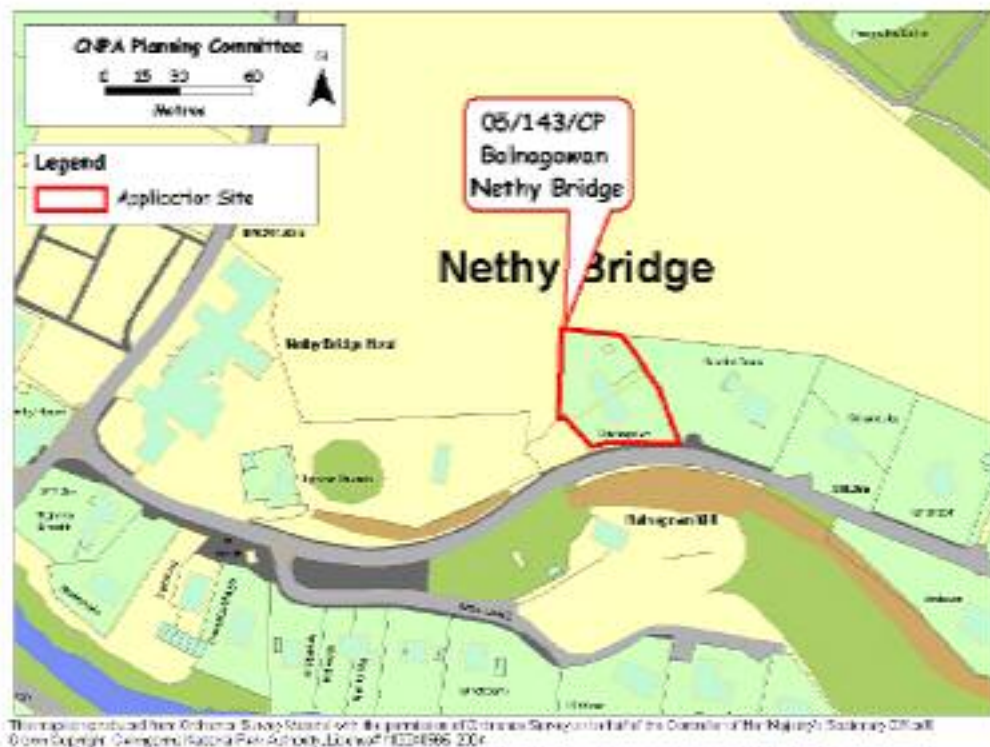


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The proposed development consists of alterations and extensions to an existing dwelling house, which is located at Balnagowan Brae within the settlement area of Nethy Bridge. The existing dwelling house, which stands in an elevated position relative to lands to the west and north west, is centrally located on a site area of approximately 0.5 acres. The main element of the dwelling house consists of a traditional 1 ½ storey structure, with bay windows at ground floor level in the front elevation, located either side of the centrally located front porch. Two additional lower level elements (one which accommodates rooms in the eaves with natural light provided via velux windows, and the other being a much lower single storey element set back from the main building line of the property) extend from the main section of the dwelling in a north westerly direction. The predominant external finishes on the property consist of natural stone, with hardwood timber windows and door, and slate roof. The stone finish on the rear elevation has been whitewashed, while the outer most single storey extension has a corrugated iron roof. A small single storey 'lean to' type extension also extends to the rear of one of the central single storey element. This 'lean to' appears to have been a much later addition to the dwelling house.
2. The site area surrounding the existing dwelling house consists of a lawned area, with an extensive belt of mature trees on the rear (eastern) boundary. Access to the property is via a gravelled path which leads from the front (western) boundary to the front door. To the south west of the site, outside the identified site boundaries, is a large recessed gravel surfaced area, which appears to serve as an informal parking area for vehicles associated with the property. There is also a vehicular entrance point at this location which provides informal access to the lawned area to the north and west of the dwelling house. To the east of the property, along Balnagowan Brae, the general pattern of development is one of detached dwelling houses, of varying designs and ages, generally positioned in a linear form. The dwelling house which is the subject of this application is oriented in a north west / south easterly direction, with a gable end nearest the public road. The orientation of the dwelling house effectively affords views from the property over the surrounding lower land within and outwith the settlement, to the west and north west particularly, where the lands falls quite significantly. There is currently no development on lands immediately to the north or west of the subject property. However, much of the surrounding land is allocated in the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997) for new housing development, some of which is the subject of a current application by Wilburn Homes for the erection of 38 dwelling houses. The Committee will recall that the application has been called in for determination, at the meeting of March 24th 2005.
3. The proposed development consists of the demolition of a small older extension to the rear of the existing dwelling house (described in the application documentation as a 'lean to') and the erection of a 1½ storey

extension, also to the rear of the property. The proposed extension is intended to accommodate a study at ground floor level and a bedroom on the first floor. Roofing material on the proposed extension is to be natural slate to match the existing roof, and the finish proposed on the external walls is timber cladding / 'off saw' timber lining. The proposed extension would project from the rear elevation in a north easterly direction, with its roof line level with that of the ridge height of the lower roof section of the dwelling behind which it is proposed. In addition to the extension, a number of minor alterations are proposed to the existing dwelling house, including the provision of French doors in the north eastern (rear) elevation, the addition of a velux roof lights in the rear roof and the addition of a door in the north western (side) elevation. A number of internal alterations are also identified on the submitted plans. Permission is also sought in the application for the erection of a domestic garage, which is proposed to be located in the north eastern corner of the rear garden area. The garage is proposed to have a similar timber clad finish as that proposed on the domestic extension.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Highland Structure Plan 2001

4. The **Highland Structure Plan 2001** where used as a land use planning document is intended to set out broad principles on which individual planning decisions are made and give a framework for the development of Local Plans. Section 2.2.1 – 2.2.23 of the Structure Plan relates to Housing and deals with the broad issues, focusing on the principles of affordable housing provision, housing in the countryside, and the provision of housing for varying needs. It does not therefore contain specific policies and / or design guidance on domestic extensions or other developments of that nature and scale.
5. In relation to the Built and Cultural Heritage, the **Structure Plan** strategy is similar to that of the National Park Authority, where its aim is to conserve and promote the unique identity of the region's main strengths. The **Structure Plan** particularly mentions the varied and distinctive character of the towns and villages as being a key component of this identity (section 2.15.1). The Plan's strategic sustainability policies aim to ensure that future developments are of a design and quality to enhance the built environment, whilst safeguarding the area's existing heritage as a vital part of the Highland's future. Although the built heritage is defined in the **Structure Plan** as comprising of various components including archaeological sites, listed buildings, historic gardens and designed landscapes and conservation areas, none of which relate to the subject site, it is considered that the general aspirations expressed in the **Structure Plan** in relation to the Built and Cultural Heritage are nonetheless applicable.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

6. The subject site is identified in the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan** for infill housing. The general principles relating to appropriate infill housing (as expressed in section 4.1.3) may equally be considered to apply to proposals for extensions to existing housing on such land, including appropriate scale, design and orientation; adequate spacing between properties; and safeguarding against the loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring occupiers.

CONSULTATIONS

7. Due to the scale of the proposed domestic extension, which is effectively replacing an existing 'lean to' extension and consequently will not result in any significant increase in floor area, combined with the fact that the new build element would be serviced by the same water and sewerage connections as presently serving the existing dwelling house, it was not therefore necessary to undertake consultations.

REPRESENTATIONS

8. At the time of writing, no representations have been received.

APPRAISAL

9. The main purpose in the Committee's decision to call in this application for determination lay in a concern to ensure that the proposed extension to a traditional dwelling house, which is reputed to be one of the oldest residential properties within the settlement of Nethy Bridge, was in accordance with the aim of the National Park to promote the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the area.
10. There are no "constraints" or "designations" affecting the subject site or building. The land is located within an established residential area within the settlement of Nethy Bridge. The existing dwelling house, although quite clearly one of the oldest residential properties in the Nethy Bridge area, does not have listed building status.
11. As stated earlier in this report, there is little direct policy / guidance contained within either the **Highland Structure Plan** or the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan** in relation to domestic housing extensions. The assessment of this proposal has therefore taken place as per the general principles for development on land which is allocated for housing infill (as detailed in section 4.1.3 of the Local Plan).

- Appropriate scale, design and orientation : The proposed 1 ½ storey extension is located in a relatively unobtrusive position to the rear of the existing dwelling house and is a small scale extension with a floor area of approximately 30 square metres. In addition, the ridge height adheres to that of the existing roof structure onto which it will adjoin. As regards the proposed timber cladding, although differing from the natural stone finish on the existing property, it is nonetheless considered acceptable, with the choice of natural materials (natural stone and timber) having the potential to visually complement each other. It is a design concept which has had proven success elsewhere in other properties of similar scale.
 - Adequate plot size and spacing between properties : The existing dwelling house is located in a relatively central position within the site area. The proposed rear extension would be located in excess of 13 metres from the rear boundary of the site i.e. the dividing boundary between the subject site and the single storey residential property to the east, which is identified on the site location plan as “Camusdarach”. In addition, that property is located in a more easterly area of its site, thereby providing an overall separation distance between it and the proposed extension of approximately 42 metres. Furthermore, a significant degree of privacy is currently achieved on both the subject site and neighbouring property due to the presence of a belt of mature trees on the boundary division of the garden areas.
 - Protecting against loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring occupiers: As already detailed in this report, the proposed extension would be approximately 42 metres away from the nearest existing neighbouring property to the east. In addition, the proposed extension would not necessitate any interference with or disturbance to the existing rear site boundary and associated vegetation. The proposal also includes the erection of a domestic garage, which is to be located in the north eastern corner of the existing garden area. It is of a standard domestic scale and it is not considered that its position close to the north / north eastern boundary would create any adverse impact on neighbouring properties. In general, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in any degree of loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring occupiers. In addition, it is worth noting that the statutory ‘neighbour notifications’ have been sent to adjacent property owners and to date no representations have been received in relation to the proposed development.
12. In the course of assessing the proposal, efforts were made to gain further information on the origins of the property, and the addition of previous extensions etc.. This was done via a telephone conversation with Mrs. Cox, the applicant. Although the exact age of the property could not be ascertained, the applicant stated that the northern most element of the structure formed the original dwelling, while the larger 1 ½ storey element (incorporating the ground floor bay windows, with centrally located entrance porch) was a later addition. In relation to the small area to the

rear, referred to in the application details as a 'lean to', which is proposed for demolition, its removal and proposed replacement with the new extension came about following the recommendations of a building survey carried out on the property in 1997. The survey noted that the 'lean to' extension was not of the same construction method as the remainder of the property.

13. The proposed development is in accordance with general principles of design for dwelling house extensions. However, the key issue with regard to the proposal is to determine whether or not it is in accordance the aim of the National Park to promote the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the area. It is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with this aim, and the extension and alterations are of a scale and design which will not detract from the character, integrity and overall setting of this traditional 1 ½ storey residential property. It could be considered that the proposed development may enhance the overall character of the property, particularly through the removal of the 'lean to' extension, which appears to be of an inferior quality of construction than the rest of the property and has suffered from evident deterioration.
14. In conclusion, it is my view that the proposed domestic scale extension, together with minor alterations to the dwelling house, and the erection of a domestic garage, will not be detrimental to the aims of the National Park and will indeed have little impact on aims 2 and 3. It is considered to make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the cultural heritage through sympathetically upgrading a traditional property to meet modern living standards, whilst retaining the traditional character of the property.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

15. The existing property onto which it is proposed to extend is not a listed building nor does it fall within any identified conservation area. It will not therefore impact on any cultural designations. As previously stated, it is considered that the extension and alterations may however make a positive contribution towards the general conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage of the area, through sympathetically upgrading and extending this traditional residential property.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

16. There is no detailed information regarding exactly where the 'off sawn' timber lining / timber cladding on the proposed extension and domestic garage will be sourced from. However, it is likely that the small amount of timber required may be sourced locally. In addition, it appears that local contractors are to be employed to undertake the construction works.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

17. The development raises no implications in terms of this aim.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

18. With the proposed development involving an extension to an existing dwelling house on land which is allocated for housing infill purposes within the settlement of Nethy Bridge, the development could be considered as strengthening and improving the fabric of the housing stock of the area and thereby indirectly assisting in promoting social development in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Grant full planning permission for alterations and extensions to a dwelling house at Balnagowan, Nethy Bridge, subject to the following conditions :

1. All public services for the development including electrical, communal television and telephone cables, shall be located underground throughout the site.
2. The proposed domestic garage shall be used solely for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house, and it shall not be used for any commercial or industrial activity.
3. 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 Planning Authority. In addition, screen planting consisting of a belt of indigenous trees and shrubs shall be provided along the northern boundary of the site.

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15 April 2005**

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