

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: **REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION**

Prepared by: **ANDREW TAIT, PLANNING OFFICER (DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)**

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: **CHANGE OF USE FROM HOTEL TO CARE HOME FOR OLDER PEOPLE, AT THE MAINS HOTEL, NEWTONMORE.**

REFERENCE: **04/433/CP**

APPLICANT: **DINAH EAVIS, C/O GRANDVIEW HOUSE LTD., HIGH STREET, GRANTOWN ON SPEY, PH26 3HD
PER, RODNEY BOYD, ARCHITECT, 21-23 HILL STREET, EDINBURGH EH 2 3PJ**

DATE CALLED-IN: **10 SEPTEMBER 2004**

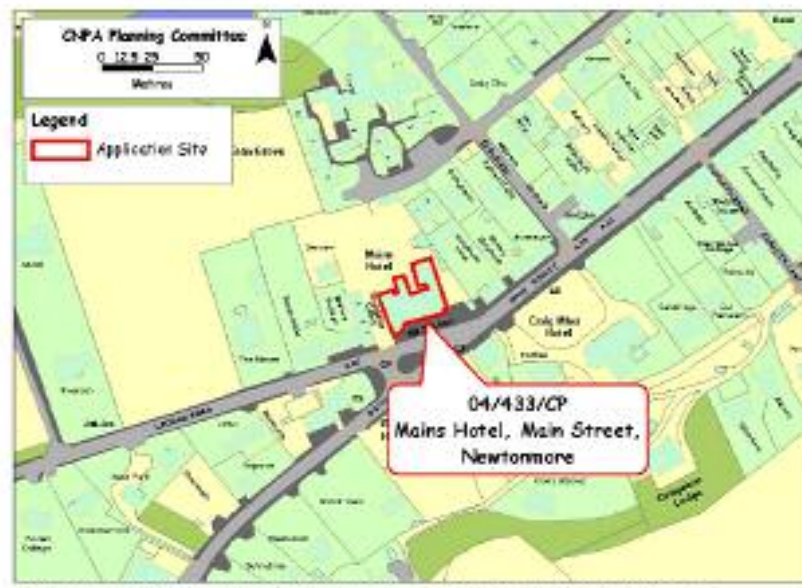


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The Mains Hotel is proposed to be converted from a hotel to a care home for older people. It is proposed that the external appearance of the building will essentially remain the same, but internally there will have to be alterations to meet the regulations for such premises. The Mains Hotel has had 31 en-suite bedrooms, and the new care home would provide 31 bedrooms (44 bedspaces) over 3 floors. The applicants currently operate a nursing home in Grantown on Spey, and have indicated that to follow the Care Commission advice on staffing levels, there would be 4-5 care staff, plus ancillary staff on duty; a maximum of 10-12 staff, working on a shift basis covering 24 hours per day.
2. The submitted plans show that the existing external escape stairs will be removed at the rear and on the side of the building, and 3 new enclosed stair cases for escape purposes and internal circulation are to be constructed at the rear. The design and construction of these additions will match the adjacent sections of buildings – using pitched or dormered roofs. A lift tower / over-run box will appear above the roof of the building, and this is designed to match the slated box-like shape around the existing water storage tank.
3. Currently there is parking at the front of the Mains Hotel, but it is intended that all parking would be provided at the rear for staff and visitors. A dropping-off / picking up area would be retained at the front for the people that live within the care facility.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

4. The application is in the centre of Newtonmore, and in the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997** the site is included within the village's zoning for Employment (Commerce / Tourism). Village Centre policy 8.2.4 states that The Council will encourage consolidation of retail and other commercial/community facilities at suitable locations along Main Street. Proposals should conform in scale and design with the traditional character of existing buildings. More generally the Local Plan identifies the main planning considerations for Newtonmore to be – safeguarding the traditional village character, encouraging a balanced distribution of commercial and tourist activity, consolidating Newtonmore's tourist role with major new heritage attractions, and securing community and recreational facilities.

CONSULTATIONS

5. **The Area Roads and Community Works Manager** has stated that he has no objections, subject to the vehicular access to the site being taken from the A86 Trunk Road only, and subject to the provision of dedicated off road parking and manoeuvring space for the development in accordance with the requirements of Highland Council's Road Guidelines for New Developments.
6. **The Trunk Road Network Management Division** has made no comment on the proposal.

7. **Newtonmore and Vicinity Community Council** state that there is full support for the proposed development. It is accepted that it is sad to see the closure of another hotel in Newtonmore, but there is at the same time a 'total lack of care provision in Badenoch'. The Council are pleased to see the frontage of this 'iconic building' in the centre of Newtonmore, being retained very much as it is today.
8. **Highland Council**, in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation, has commented that the site lies within the Local Plan's Policy 8.2.4 area relating to the village centre. The proposed Care Home is considered to fall within the definition of community facilities and to be an acceptable use within the village centre. The location is highly suitable and desirable, and will have easy access for the elderly. The application is seen as providing a much needed facility for the area, and would ensure the upgrading and retention of a significant building of traditional form and materials. It is recommended that the applicant be requested to bring forward proposals for landscaping both to the front and the rear of the building which should include seating areas for the residents.

REPRESENTATIONS

9. The application was advertised in the local paper and 5 letters of representation were received. Two letters, from neighbouring property owners, support the development as it will mean the locality will be more peaceful, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. Other benefits will include the removal of noise and smell from the removal of hotel's kitchen ducting and extraction fan. One letter writer is concerned about the extraction arrangements for the new laundry area. There are also concerns about the possible removal of hotel outbuildings along the site boundary. Some of the letters support the need for local care facilities for the elderly in the area and feel that the change of use of this building is entirely appropriate for the village and will enhance the local community. There will still be other hotels and guest houses in the village for the local tourist industry.
10. Highland Cycle Campaign request that cycle parking be provided for at least 20% of the staff, with sheltered parking for the bikes close to and in view of the reception, in the form of Sheffield stands.
11. One letter of comment has been withdrawn following the receipt of further information from the applicants on the retained right of access to a neighbouring property.
12. In addition a letter of support has been received from the applicant's agent outlining some of the benefits of finding a new use for the building which meets an important local need, retaining the character of the building, and providing many local jobs for the community. (representations attached at the end of the report)

APPRAISAL

13. Mains Hotel has been both a place of employment in the centre of Newtonmore, and has been a meeting place for local people as well as a tourist facility for visitors and holiday-makers in the Strathspey area over past years. As such it has been important to the local economy and to the town. The loss of such a business from the centre is unfortunate, but the proposed Care Home will provide a new and appropriate use for the building and it is recognised that there are several other hotels within a short walking distance of this site. The proposal provides reinvestment into the building, bringing it back into use as a valuable community facility, and providing regular employment for local people throughout the year. There appears to be much support for the change of use of the building and for the reinvestment in this building.
14. The new business on this site will provide more year-round employment than a hotel, which has been a more seasonal business, and the Home will require other services which the local business community will have the opportunity to supply. A town centre site is not essential for a Care Home, but the location is convenient for residents who can leave the building, and for access for staff and visitors calling at the site by car and by public transport.
15. Alterations to the Hotel building over the decades, have resulted in a mixture of extensions and design styles. Some alterations have not been attractive. The proposed alterations remove the external escape stairs; and the construction of 3 new stair wells at the rear of the building will provide the links between the 3 floors and provide the emergency escape routes from the upper 2 floors. The new lift well housing on the roof is not attractive – a box-shaped projection in the centre of the building. However, this has been designed to match a similar existing structure housing the water storage tank which is hardly visible from the front of the building.
16. Details for the parking of vehicles and for deliveries at the site have not been submitted, and considering that it is proposed that all parking at the front of the building is to be halted, design details to ensure this, and to ensure that sufficient parking will be provided at the rear in a formalised arrangement, need to be submitted by condition. It is also not clear if there will be any outdoor seating areas/ amenity areas for the residents to use or look out over and these should be provided and will be sought by condition to improve the surroundings of the building for the residents.
17. The new commercial business meets the Local Plan policies for the village centre. The design of alterations largely fit in with the overall character of the existing building. The development is recommended for approval, but subject to the submission by planning condition of the layout of the overall site, with the provision of all parking and delivery areas.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

18. The development does not impact on the natural heritage. In terms of cultural heritage the proposal will help to ensure the continued use and maintenance of this attractive building close to the village entrance.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

19. The development consists of the retention and rehabilitation of an existing building, which the local Community Council has described as an 'iconic' building in Newtonmore. The provision of the facility within Newtonmore may well reduce travel for visitors who currently have to visit relatives at care homes further afield.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

20. The proposal results in the loss of tourist accommodation. However, as pointed out in the report there are several other hotels within close proximity of this site.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

21. The change of use of the building will also mean a change in the employment opportunities for local people and for some of the service businesses that will be associated with the Care Home. The site will therefore still be important to the local economy and social development of the area, allowing people who require care to stay closer to their original home area.

RECOMMENDATION

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

GRANT planning permission for the change of use of Mains Hotel to a Care Home for older people, at the Mains Hotel, Main Street, Newtonmore, subject to the following conditions:-

- i. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.
- ii. That within 1 month of the start of development, plans detailing the provision and construction of all car parking/cycle parking and delivery areas on the site shall be submitted for the consideration and approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. These plans shall also include details for all the site boundaries, internal fences within the grounds and areas to be landscaped for gardens, seating, and other amenity areas. The agreed details shall be fully implemented prior to the first occupation of the care home hereby approved.
- iii. Exact details and specifications of all extract and ventilation systems (particularly those to serve kitchen and laundry facilities) to serve the premises (both internal and external) shall be submitted to and approved

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by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with Highland Council Protective Services. The agreed details shall be in position and ready for use prior to the first occupation of the building for its new approved use.

Reasons for conditions:

- i. To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1997.
- ii. To ensure that parking areas for cars and bikes are provided and set out, and that other areas are adequately fenced and landscaped.
- iii. In the interests of residential amenity; to ensure the ventilation and extract proposals are suitable and acceptable.

Andrew Tait

Date 14 October 2004

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