
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: CONVERSION OF FARM BUILDING TO HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION, ACHARN, GLEN DOLL, ANGUS (FULL PP)

REFERENCE: 08/121/CP

APPLICANT: MR P STACK DUNNE

DATE CALLED-IN: 18 April 2008

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

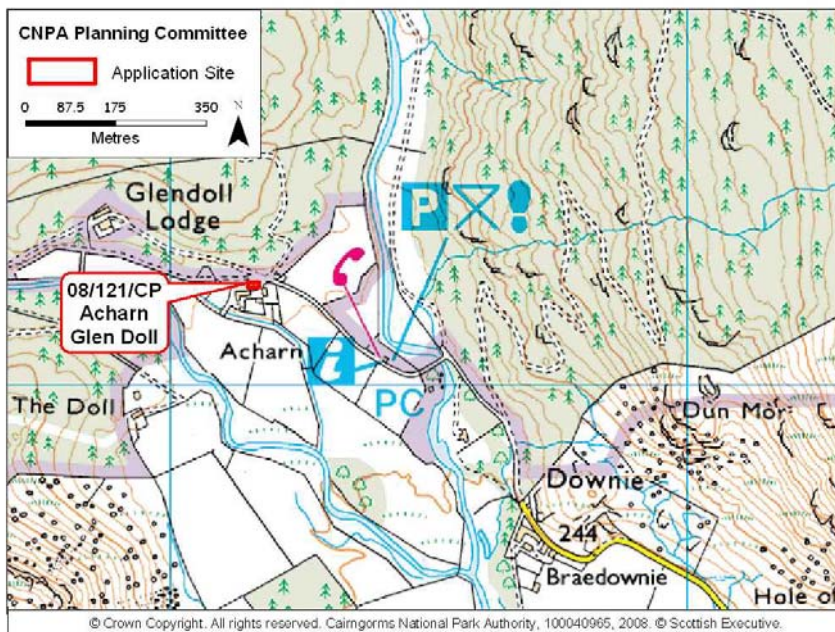


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Acharn is located beyond end of the public road in Glen Doll just after the public car park that includes a new ranger base currently under construction that received permission from the CNPA (see fig 1).
2. Acharn consists of a group of traditional farm buildings including a house that are sited adjacent to a track which allows access to a range of walking routes including the Jocks Road route over to Auchallater (Braemar) as well as routes to the Munros of Driesh and Mayar. The site lies within 200 metres of the River South Esk SAC (Special Area of Conservation). The site is also located within the Deeside and Lochnagar NSA (National Scenic Area). The adjacent track also provides access to the Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve.



Fig. 2 - View of building from access track at start of walking routes.



Fig. 3 - View of building looking from walking routes



Fig. 4 - View of Courtyard elevation of building

3. The Planning Committee will recall that this was one of two planning applications at the site. The other application involved the conversion of an adjacent farm building to residential accommodation. This was recently granted permission by Angus Council subject to a range of conditions. The application site being considered here lies adjacent to the track and is an 'L' shaped building that is joined to the farmhouse. The building has been subject to a previous permission for a tea room. The building has one section that appears open but actually has a flat roof, the remaining section as can be seen from the photographs has a well maintained hipped roof section in slate.
4. This application seeks permission to convert the building to holiday accommodation with 3 bedrooms. The plan includes a slate roof with render walls. A section of the building that is currently used for storage will be retained as a garage for visitor's cars, although a modern door is illustrated on this elevation rather than the existing timber door. An existing small porch area with flat roof on the elevation of the building which faces into the courtyard will be altered to a lean to roof. The accommodation would be operated by the site owners. The elevation facing the track would be largely unchanged with one velux roof window being added to this elevation. The courtyard elevation would have several velux windows. (see fig 4)

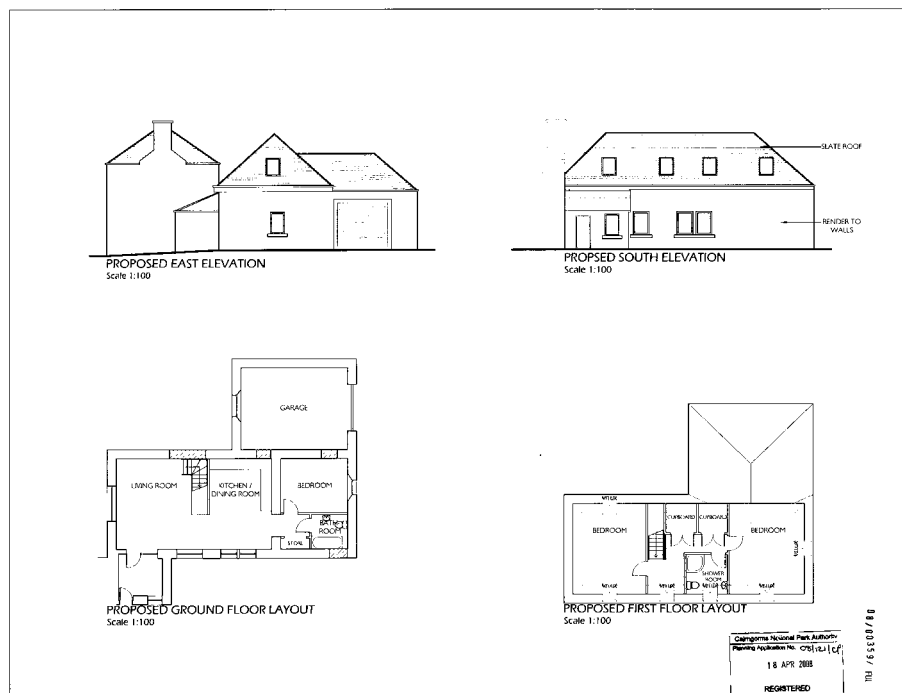


Fig. 4 - Proposed courtyard/end elevation and floor plans

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

5. **Angus Local Plan Policy H12: Farm Building Conversion** considers that development proposals for the conversion of traditional farm buildings (built using natural materials) to housing will be considered against the following criteria:
- Location, size-scale of buildings. The whole building must be utilised- a mix of residential and farming activities will not be accepted.
 - Number and type of units an excessive number of small units will not be accepted.
 - Retention of vernacular architecture
 - Creation of good living environment
 - Provision of suitable landscaping
 - Suitability of access route
6. In addition to this policy Angus Council have recently adopted supplementary planning guidance (April 2008) with regard to farm building conversions, this explains in more detail the requirements of the above policy. This includes a requirement that any building has at least 50% of its roof structure in place and external walls intact to eaves height. There is also a requirement that the whole building is used to ensure that conflicts do not occur between farming and residential based uses. The guidance also points out that proposals should not subdivide existing courtyard areas. The guidance also deals with a range of technical issues on access and drainage and gives an indication of the nature of likely planning conditions.
7. **Policy ENV: 7 of the Local Plan** considers that development affecting National Scenic Areas will only be permitted exceptionally where it can be adequately demonstrated that either:
- a) the proposed development will not compromise the underlying objectives and overall integrity of the designated area; or
 - b) there is an overriding and proven public interest where social or economic considerations outweigh the scenic quality interest and integrity of the area and the need for development cannot be met in other less visually damaging locations or by reasonable alternative means.

8. **Policy ENV 13 Natura 2000 and RAMSAR sites** considers that development likely to have a significant effect on a site designated or proposed under the habitats or birds directive (Special areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of the site, must undergo an appropriate assessment as required by Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. The development will only be permitted where the assessment indicates that: -
- a) it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site; or
 - b) there are no alternative solutions; and
 - c) there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including, for sites hosting non-priority habitat types or species the only overriding considerations are human health, public safety, primary environmental benefit or other reason subject to an opinion from the European Commission (requested by the Secretary of State under Regulation 49).
9. **Policy SC16 of the Angus Local Plan Rural Employment** considers that employment opportunities throughout rural Angus will be supported where they make a positive contribution to the rural economy and are of a scale and nature appropriate to the location, including proposals that assist the diversification of an existing rural business.
10. **Policy SC17: Tourism Development** notes that development proposals to provide new or improved tourist related facilities/attractions and accommodation will be permitted and encouraged where they improve the range and quality of visitor attractions and tourist facilities/and or extend the tourist season; have no unacceptable detrimental effect on the local landscape or rural environment are in-keeping with the scale and character of nearby buildings or surrounding countryside; are generally compatible with surrounding land uses; and accord with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

12. In terms of 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage' the National Park Plan includes a number of objectives in relation to Landscape, Built and Historic Environments. Strategic Objectives include maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park and ensuring that

development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park. Of particular relevance to the current proposal are the strategic objectives relating to the built environment, which require that “new development in settlements and surrounding areas and the management of public spaces should complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment” and to “understand and conserve the archaeological record, historic landscapes and historic built environment.”

CONSULTATIONS

13. **Angus Council Planning and Transport** has no objection to the proposal.
14. **Angus Council Flood Prevention** having looked at their 3-D flood maps and after discussion with SEPA see no reason on grounds of flood risk why the application should not be approved.
15. **Angus Council Environmental Health** has commented that in terms of water supply that information provided by the agent is acceptable. A planning condition should be applied to ensure that the details are implemented as described in the agent’s letter.
16. **Angus Council Archaeology** response recommends a photographic survey of the building prior to commencement of works.
17. **Scottish Natural Heritage** has commented on the application and note that the site is within 200 metres of the River South Esk Area of Conservation. SNH **object** to the application as submitted but consider that this could be overcome by use of appropriate planning conditions. SNH advice is that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the site during to potential sediment release during construction phase and potential increase in phosphorous loading to the river from sewerage arrangements. The qualifying interest of the SAC relates to Atlantic Salmon and Freshwater Pearl Mussels. SNH has no record of any other protected species at the site.
18. While the proposal does not directly affect the SAC, there could be indirect impact on water quality. In particular from the potential increase in phosphorous loading to the river from sewerage arrangements and from potential sediment release during construction. However, if the proposals are amended so

that the following issues are dealt with by appropriately worded conditions, the significant effect can be avoided.

19. Straw bale barriers proposed around construction areas should be made a condition of planning permission to ensure that there is no sediment release into the River South Esk SAC.
20. An additional straw bale barrier should be created between the construction site of the soakaway and the River South Esk SAC, again to prevent sediment release. This should be made a condition of planning permission.
21. The installation of the proposed Klargester BioDisc with additional phosphate treatment at an appropriate capacity/population equivalent should be made a condition of planning permission. SNH recommend that SEPA are consulted.
22. **SEPA** initially objected to the proposal on the grounds of flood risk. However, after detailed discussions with Angus Council's Flood Prevention Unit SEPA withdraw the objection on grounds of flood risk based on the Flood Prevention Unit's 3-D flood mapping system which shows that the site is not subject to any significant flood risk.
23. With regard to foul drainage, the use of the system provided would cause little (if any) impact upon South Esk as the discharge is not direct to a watercourse. Very little impact is anticipated on the watercourse from the construction of the soakaway because this is required to be suitably located to minimise the risk of pollution and is under the control of the Angus Council Building Control Team. Therefore, SEPA do not anticipate that this development will compromise the environmental quality of the nearby SAC.
24. **Cairngorms National Park Authority Heritage and Land Management (Landscape)** has commented that the proposal will not have a significant landscape and visual impact because the footprint of the building will be retained; the new roof section is pitched and hipped in a similar manner to existing buildings; the hipped roof means there will be a separation from the existing farm house and so visually the mass of the structure is not significantly increased; the existing usage of the farm buildings means that they are occupied and the additional occupation will not increase activity and noise in the area significantly. There are interesting individual features of the building that should be retained including the vertical timber doorway and stone

features at its foot. The retention of the corrugated material on the track side elevation is also recommended.

25. **Cairngorms National Park Authority Visitor Services and Recreation Group** note that the proposed conversion lies entirely within the farm steading. However, access along Jock's Road is immediately outwith the steading area and it will be important to ensure that this is not impeded during the construction phase.

REPRESENTATIONS

26. No representations have been received

APPRAISAL

27. The starting point for this application is whether it complies with the Angus Local Plan and whether it supports the aims of the National Park. Natural heritage and a range of technical issues are also covered.
28. General government guidance supports the conversion of existing traditional buildings to new uses to diversify and strengthen the rural economy and to conserve traditional buildings by breathing new life into them where they are redundant for agriculture. More detail is provided by Angus Local Plan policy H12 Farm Building Conversion. I am of the view that the proposal accords with this policy. The conversion of the whole building provides a residential, or in the case of the garage section an ancillary residential use to the whole building, there is no remaining farm activity/storage in the building. The proposal results in one unit of holiday accommodation for the building. The adjacent approval by Angus Council is for a single residential unit. One proposal for each unit in my view does not create an excessive number of small units and is of a scale that is widely accepted. The proposal is also considered to have suitable access and retains the existing form of the building and would enhance the section of the building which is currently roofless. Angus Council Local Plan Tourism policy SC17 is also supportive of the proposal as is the Rural Employment Policy (SC16).
29. More detail is added to the above policy by recent supplementary planning guidance issued by Angus Council on the conversion of farm buildings. This includes a requirement that any building has at least 50% of its floor structure in place and

external walls to eaves height. There is also an emphasis again that the whole of the building is used to avoid conflicts with farming uses. This is clearly the case. With regard to the detail probably just less than 50% of the roof structure is intact, however a flat roof on the remainder of the structure is still in place and walls are to eaves height. This element of the policy is generally to discourage proposals being brought forward for buildings that are clearly in a ruinous condition with only limited evidence of walls roof structures in place. I am of the view that the scheme meets this and it has to be recognised that the building has received permission for conversion to a tearoom in the past.

30. The overall design of the building works entirely with the existing footprint of the building. The new roof section utilises a hipped design to match the intact section of roof and also the house to which the building is joined. Given this proximity a planning condition ensures that the holiday accommodation is not sold separately from the applicant's house to which it is joined at one corner. The roof will be finished in natural slate; however it is important that the new section of slate matches the existing so this is covered by planning condition. A number of velux roof windows are proposed. However, all but one is placed in the south courtyard facing roofslope that faces away from the previously mentioned track. The east elevation of the building includes the garage door that can be seen at figure 2 in this report. One small window opening would be moved in the gable elevation. However, of slightly more concern and as mentioned by the CNPA Landscape Officer is the traditional timber garage door that is shown as being replaced by a modern door. I am of the view that the existing doors should be re-used, or a traditional timber door should be attached that is more in character with the building and more appropriate to this public elevation. This is achieved by a planning condition at the end of the report. I have little concern with the main (north) roadside elevation as this will remain largely as is with a render finish to match the house to which the steading is joined.
31. The CNPA Landscape Officer has requested that the traditional corrugated iron section on this elevation remains to remind of the agricultural use of the building after conversion. The option of this has been kept open by means of a planning condition at the end of the report. However, I am of the view that should the applicant not want to retain this element then there is not justification for rejecting the proposal on this matter of detailed design.

32. Given the above I am of the view that the proposal is acceptable both in terms of policy and design detail. The development will provide an economic use for the building while retaining its heritage and value in the local landscape. However, given the high level of public use of the adjacent track a condition is applied to ensure that access is not affected during any period of construction.

Natural Heritage

32. The key natural heritage concern relates to the River South Esk SAC. The qualifying interests of the SAC in this case being Atlantic Salmon and Freshwater Pearl Mussels. Concern was raised by SNH that the proposal could increase phosphate levels from proposed drainage arrangements and that there could be potential for surface run-off from construction. However, it has been pointed out by SNH that if certain conditions are imposed upon the development then the proposal can be considered acceptable. In the first instance it is important to note that the site is almost 200 metres from the river and secondly that there is no direct discharge to the river. Thirdly, there is a building directly between the application building and the river. Sewerage arrangements include a biodisc treatment plant to a soakaway. SEPA has been consulted on this and consider it acceptable, SEPA also consider that any threat to the river is minimal given the distance and treatments proposed. Accordingly I am satisfied with the arrangements proposed and the conditions requested by SNH are applied at the end of the report.
33. SNH do not have records to show any other species of concern at the site. However, it is possible that bats are present. The section of the building with walls and a flat roof is unlikely to house bats given the nature of the structure. However, there is potential for them to be present in the roof section that is intact that would be subject to limited alteration so a planning condition to cover this is applied as a precaution.

Technical Issues

34. A range of technical issues are relevant to the planning application. Foul drainage is covered in the previous section and has been found acceptable to consultees. Surface water drainage is to soakaways.

35. SEPA initially objected to the application on the grounds of flood risk. However after more detailed analysis by Angus Council Flood Prevention Unit SEPA has been able to withdraw its objection. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to this issue.
36. With regard to water supply Angus Council Environmental Health requested that the agent for the proposal carry out some investigation work including calculations on the private water supply. This was found to be acceptable and Angus Council recommend the proposal with the planning condition that private water supply is instigated in accordance with the agents work on this issue.
37. Angus Council Roads has no objections to the proposal.

Conclusion

38. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with the policies of the Local Plan and make a positive contribution to the aims of the Park. A range of technical issues have been resolved and the proposal can now be recommended for approval. Planning conditions are proposed to cover detailed issues and these are broadly in line with those issued by Angus Council on the adjacent steading conversion.

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

39. The River South Esk is the key natural heritage feature adjacent to the site but work between the agent, statutory consultees, Angus Council and the CNPA has enabled resolution of these issues subject to planning conditions that will ensure the protection of the river. There is, perhaps, potential for bats to be at the site so a survey is recommended by planning condition.
40. In terms of cultural heritage the proposal works well with the existing footprint and form of the building and would retain its character. The addition of the pitched roof will enhance the appearance of the area adjacent to a key walking route. The relatively modest proposal is not considered to compromise the NSA designation.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

42. The proposal results in the re-use of a traditional building rather than new build and will help to diversify the economy of the area at an appropriate scale to the setting.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

43. The addition of the holiday accommodation would contribute to people's enjoyment and understanding of this key visitor area close to a range of walking routes and the Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development

44. The proposal would result in additional holiday accommodation at this popular tourist area. The proposal would contribute to the economy of the area on a small scale.

RECOMMENDATION

45. That members of the Planning Committee support a recommendation to **GRANT Full Planning Permission for the conversion of a farm building to holiday accommodation at Acharn, Glen Doll, subject to the following conditions:**
1. That the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
 2. The proposed building shall only be used as holiday accommodation and shall not be sold separately to the farmhouse or be used by a tenant, lessee, owner or occupier as their only or principal dwellinghouse. No single period of occupation shall exceed two months unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority. Occupation shall be restricted to use by persons requiring to stay in the area for recreational or vocational purposes.
 3. That the existing and proposed roofs shall be clad with second-hand slates to match existing, unless otherwise first agreed in writing with the CNPA acting as planning authority
 4. That the walls of the building shall be clad with a traditional wet-dash harl and painted, to the satisfaction of the CNPA acting as planning authority
 5. Unless otherwise agreed by the CNPA the existing timber garage door shall be re-used on the converted building, the stone setts at the doorway entrance shall be retained and the corrugated iron section on the north facing elevations shall be retained as an external finishing material.

That, prior to the commencement of works, the following shall be submitted for the approval of the CNPA acting as planning authority;

- a) colour of wet-dash harl for walls;
- b) colour for timber doors and windows;
- c) a block plan indicating proposed location for car parking within the curtilage of the site.

Thereafter, the proposals shall be carried out in accordance with approved plans

6. That a minimum of two car parking spaces shall be provided within the site curtilage.
7. That, prior to the commencement of conversion works on the existing steading, the private water supply shall be made available to the application site in accordance with letter and attached details from Project Management Scotland Limited dated 9th May, 2008
8. That, prior to the commencement of any conversion works on the existing steading, a photographic study of the existing building (inside and out) shall be submitted for the approval of the CNPA acting as planning authority
9. That prior to the commencement of any works at the site a bat survey shall be submitted to the CNPA acting as planning authority. The survey shall include mitigation measures including provision for bat habitat and development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with any recommendations made by the survey.
10. That, prior to the commencement of conversion works on the existing building, the following shall be submitted for the approval of the CNPA acting as planning authority;
 - a) Details of proposed locations for straw bale barriers around the construction areas and location of straw bale barrier between the River South Esk and proposed soakaway;
 - b) Details of proposed soakaway location;
 - c) Details of the capacity and location of the proposed Klargester BioDisc with additional phosphate treatment.
11. The conversion of the building shall be carried out in such a way that the adjacent track giving access to Jock's Road remains unimpeded at all times.

Andrew Tait

17 July 2008

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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.