
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: FULL PERMISSION (05/134/CP) AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT (05/168/CP) FOR A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT (12 UNITS) CONSISTING OF CONVERSION OF BUS DEPOT TO FORM TWO FLATS, CONVERSION OF STEADING TO FORM THREE HOUSES AND ERECTION OF SEVEN NEW HOUSES AT INVERCAULD FARM, GLENSHEE ROAD, BRAEMAR.

REFERENCE: 05/134/CP & 05/168/CP

APPLICANT: INVERCAULD ESTATE, NO. 4 KEILOCH, BRAEMAR.

DATE CALLED-IN: 8TH APRIL 2005.

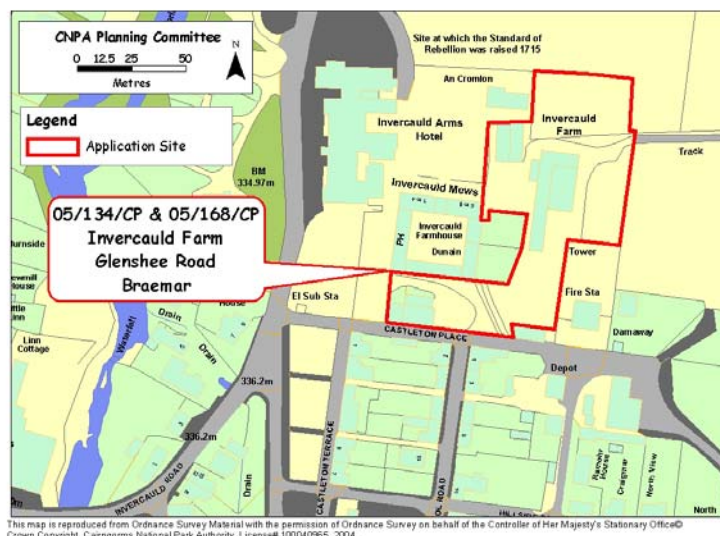


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Full permission is sought in this application (05/134/CP) for a twelve unit housing development. The site is located to the rear of the Invercauld Arms Hotel and includes the former Bluebird Bus Depot. The former bus station house is a category B listed building and consequently an application has also been made for Listed Building Consent – CNPA planning ref. no. 05/168/CP applies. Given that both applications relate to the same proposal on the site, this report is intended to form the basis for recommendations on both applications.
2. The proposed development consists of the conversion of the former bus station building to two flats, the construction of six two storey dwelling houses arranged in two terraced blocks, the construction of a single storey detached dwelling house, and the conversion of an existing steading to three dwelling houses. Thirteen dwelling units were originally proposed on the site, with the extra unit intended to be formed from the use of the bus station building for three flats, as opposed to the two units now proposed.
3. The Category B listed bus station house is located on the south western corner of the site adjacent to Castleton Place. The frontage of the property faces westwards overlooking a green area outside the site boundaries. The external finish of the structure comprises of horizontal timber cladding, under a slate roof. Hardwood timber windows and doors, painted blue, occur throughout the building and a fascia signboard displaying the former name 'Bluebird Buses' occupies a central position on the front elevation. The blue and yellow colours of the bus company are very much in evidence on the building.



Fig. 2 : Bluebird bus station

4. The two storey structure has not been in use in recent years and although in a state of disrepair, its former uses are still recognisable from the internal layout. Much of the ground floor area of the premises was in use as a public area, with one of the doors in the front elevation providing direct access into a waiting room which extended from the front to the rear of the property. The original timber linings are a particular feature of this room. The opposite side of the building at ground floor level was used as a workshop, with storage. Access to the workshop was gained from a door in the rear elevation. Access to

a centrally positioned staircase is gained from the main entrance in the front elevation and ascends to the upper floor, all of which was used as a three bedroom residential unit.

5. The current proposal for the bus station house involves its redevelopment into two residential units, one each at ground floor and first floor levels. Efforts have been made in the proposed new layout to maintain the internal layout and original features, particularly at ground floor level. A one bedroom unit is proposed at ground floor level, with the lounge area of the unit occupying the former waiting room area. The existing fireplace in this room is proposed to be retained. The existing internal linings in the room are also proposed to be retained and repaired where necessary. The kitchen and bedroom are proposed on the opposite side of the unit, occupying the area of the former workshop. Access to the ground floor unit is through the existing door in the rear elevation, which would provide direct entry into the kitchen. The two existing doors in the front elevation are also proposed to be retained, with one leading directly into the lounge.
6. The second residential unit, which is proposed to occupy the first floor is accessed from the original centrally positioned door in the front elevation which leads to the stairs. Two bedrooms are proposed in the unit, together with kitchen, living room and shower room, with the room layout generally adhering to the original room divisions. All existing windows throughout the property are proposed to be retained and repaired where necessary. The retention of existing internal doors is also detailed and where this is not possible it is proposed that new doors would match the existing.
7. A disused industrial type structure exists to the rear of the bus station house. The building was formerly used as the bus garage and is intended to be demolished in order to facilitate the proposed development of the site. The site layout plan shows an area of open space and also three car parking spaces occupying the site of the bus garage.



Fig. 3 : former bus garage – roof and chimney of bus station house visible above roofline.

8. The construction of six dwelling houses is proposed to the east (rear) of the bus station house and its associated area of open space. As previously referred to the six dwellings are arranged in two terraced blocks, with each block accommodating three of the 1 ¾ storey dwellings. The front elevations of the properties are oriented southwards onto Castleton Place, with a 1.5 metre footpath proposed to run alongside the properties. The finish proposed on the front elevation of the structures is a buff / pink granite, while the rear and side elevations are proposed to have a buff yellow wet dash finish, all under a grey slate roof. Doors in the front and rear elevations, as well as the timber linings surrounding the upper floor windows and exposed rafter ends are proposed to be painted blue, in the interests of replicating the colours historically associated with the bus station site. The drawings submitted indicate the use of “sash and case look-alike window frames” also painted blue. All rainwater goods proposed are cast iron. Each of the dwelling houses accommodates three bedrooms as well as a bathroom on the upper floor, with the ground floor area including a kitchen, dining area, lounge and cloakroom / toilet. None of the properties include fireplaces, although false chimneys are proposed at either end of each terrace.

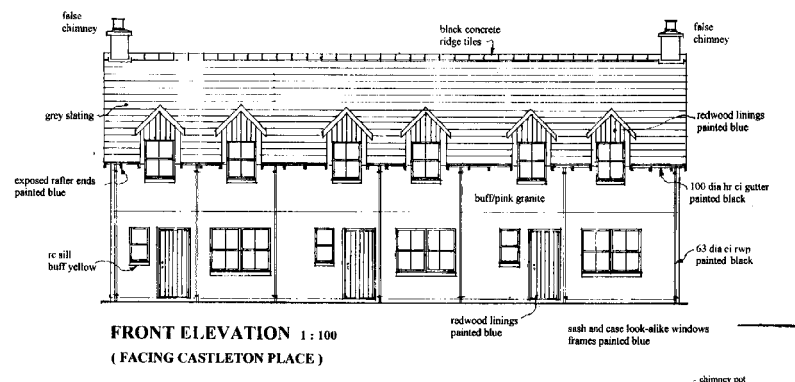


Fig. 4 : Proposed terraced block

9. The garden areas associated with each of the terraced properties are quite limited in size, although the outer dwellings in each of the terraced blocks has the benefit of a side garden as well as the rear area of private open space. A 1.8 metre high post and vertical board fence is proposed to divide the garden areas. Due to changing ground levels granite steps are proposed to lead down from each of the proposed dwelling houses to the garden areas, with a granite faced retaining wall also provided in this area. 9 communal car parking spaces are proposed in an area opposite the easternmost terrace. The site layout plan also shows the provision of a 1.5 metre wide gravel footpath running adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site, to extend from the communal car parking area towards an existing play area to the rear of the subject site.

10. The site extends northwards from the proposed terraced properties, in the area to the rear of the Invercauld farm steading. A disused granite steading exists in this area of the site and it is proposed to convert the structure into three dwelling houses. Each of the proposed dwelling house consists of three bedrooms, as well as bathroom, kitchen and lounge areas. Two bedrooms are proposed to occupy the upper floor area in each of the units, with the remainder of the accommodation provided at ground floor level. Window and door openings in the proposed dwelling houses generally adhere to the original openings, although some new openings are proposed in order to facilitate the proposed layout. The existing roof included a number of relatively small high level rooflights and the introduction of a number of larger roof lights at a lower level has been necessary in order to serve the upper floor accommodation. The proposed layout capitalises on existing large openings in the rear of the steading. Redwood vertical lined doors are proposed and similar to the new build element of the development, the use of 'look-alike' sash and case windows are proposed in some areas of the conversion. Others windows however are denoted as being sliding sash and case. It is proposed to paint all windows and doors green in order to match the existing estate colours on the adjacent steading. Supporting details provided with this application estimates that approximately 20% of the existing slates will be suitable for re-use and also states that all new slating will match the existing. Each of the proposed dwelling units in the steading conversion has the benefit of a spacious rear garden area, each extending to approximately 35 metres. Two on site car parking spaces are provided to the front of each of the dwellings.

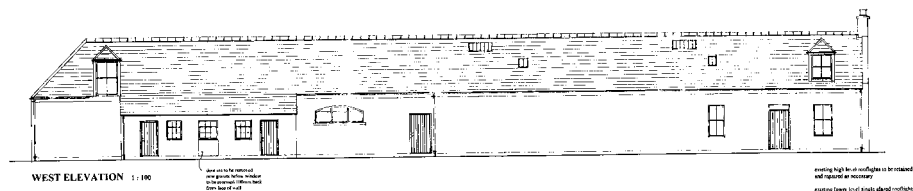


Fig. 5 : Proposed front elevation of steading conversion

11. The final component of the proposed development is a detached three bedroom property. The single storey structure is proposed on land in the northern area of the site and is positioned parallel to the northern site boundary, generally adhering to the building line established by an adjacent property to the west, which is known as Invercauld Farm Cottage. The site of the detached dwelling house adjoins a large open agricultural field and this area effectively marks the end of the developed northern area of the settlement of Braemar. Due to the open nature of this area of the site and the elevated ground levels relative to lands to the west, the proposed dwelling unit is in a highly visible location, particularly visible from the A93 approach from the direction of Braemar. The detached dwelling house is proposed to have similar finishes to the new build terraced housing at the southern end of the site, using 'buff / pink granite' on the frontage of the property, with the remainder in a buff / pink wet dash, all under a slate roof. In

an effort to assimilate with the proposed steading conversion and the other steadings existing outwith the site, vertical lined doors and windows are proposed to be painted green.



Fig. 6 : Invercauld Farm Cottage



Fig. 7 : View of site from A93 (left of existing dwelling house).

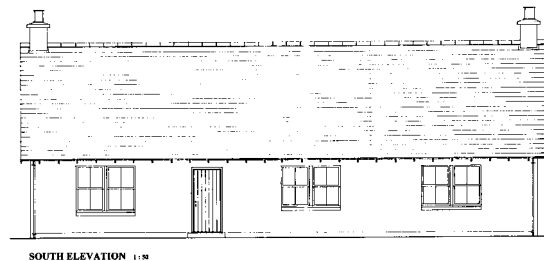


Fig. 8 : Proposed dwelling house in northern area of site

12. In order to gain vehicular access to the six terraced units and the associated car parking area in the southern area of the site, it is proposed to create a new 5 metre wide roadway, extending from west to east into the site, generally following the route of the former access road serving the bus garage. The road is not intended to be adopted and a gravel finish is proposed. Access to the steading conversion and the new build dwelling house in the northern area of the site is to be provided via the route serving the existing steading outwith the subject site and also serving Invercauld farm cottage. In order to complete the access provision to the proposed detached property the demolition of an existing 'dutch barn and store' which is in poor condition is necessary.
13. Water supply to the development is to be provided by a new connection to the public system and foul sewage is proposed to be disposed of to the public sewer. Surface water is to be disposed of by a separate soakaway.

14. Details provided in the course of the planning application assessment indicate that the overall development is to be developed as a single entity. It is intended that the six terraced dwelling houses in the southern area of the site are ultimately to be taken on by a Housing Association,¹ and this element of the development is described as being “carried out through negotiation of a design and build package with the developer.” Supporting information also states that the Housing Association have been given a set of plans and that the proposed floor areas and amenity areas meet with their requirements. Of the remaining six units in the overall development the three units within the steading conversion, as well as the detached dwelling house in the north of the site are all intended as open market housing. It has been suggested by representatives of Invercauld Estate in the course of the application that the remaining two residential units proposed within the former bus station house may possibly be retained by the Estate in order to provide accommodation for estate workers.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

15. In the national context, **SPP 3 Planning for Housing** encourages the provision of well-located, high quality new housing, suggesting that good housing can support economic competitiveness, social justice and sustainable development. Para. 6 of the document stresses that housing is a key factor in defining the character of cities, towns and villages. **SPP 3** concedes that the design of new housing is not always given sufficient priority and urges that the environmental impact of housing be given much greater importance. Para. 14, in discussing the Form of Development highlights the fact that good layout is at the heart of making residential environments safe and welcoming, with pedestrian activity adding vitality and increasing the feeling of personal safety. **SPP 3** also highlights the relevance of good landscape design, stressing that it can make a significant contribution to environmental quality, but cannot compensate for poor layout and design.
16. **PAN 65 – Planning and Open Space** describes open space as a valuable asset which is important for our quality of life. It concedes that the future growth of settlements will have implications for open space, but advises that this should not lead to a loss of amenity and should place a greater emphasis on the need for a “well-distributed, well-connected and accessible quality of open space.”

¹ Information from the CNPA’s Housing Policy officer suggests that Castlehill Housing Association have indicated their potential involvement in the development.

17. **PAN 67** deals with the subject of **Housing Quality** and recognises the fact that many people want to live in a place that has a distinct identity, “rather than one that could be anywhere.” **PAN 67** advises that all development has the potential to contribute to a sense of neighbourhood and also highlights the fact that “thoughtlessly chosen standard house types and inappropriate materials look disconcertingly out of place.” In a detailed section on layout, it also urges developers to think about the qualities and characteristics of places and not consider sites in isolation.

North East Scotland Structure Plan

18. The strategy set out in the **North East Scotland Structure Plan (NEST)** details a number of ‘core land use objectives’ and ‘locational objectives.’ The strategy focuses future development on the main settlements. In terms of locational objectives, objective 7 of the Strategy is to “secure a choice of location for a viable supply and adequate variety of land for housing (including affordable housing), employment, services and open space.” This is to be achieved by relating development to each settlement’s ability to accommodate such development without loss of amenity or identity; ensuring that the particular uses proposed for each site maximise the overall sustainability of the community; and by giving preference to the use and re-use of sites within existing settlements.

19. In a section entitled **Living in the North East** it is clearly stated that housing is to be located within settlements which are accessible to services and facilities and support economic development. In discussing **General Housing Considerations**, **NEST** refers to ensuring that developments are well sited and properly designed to fit their surroundings and it also advises that every effort should be made to ensure that a full range of market sectors is catered for in all localities. On the subject of **Affordable Housing** the plan refers to evidence that there are significant numbers of people in housing need in the North East and accordingly it is stated that “the appropriate level of affordable housing is likely to be around 35% across the structure plan area.” The policy on affordable and special needs housing is detailed in **Policy 14** of **NEST** where it is stated that “the Councils, in conjunction with private developers and housing agencies, shall seek to secure appropriate levels of affordable and special needs housing.”

The Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2006

20. The subject site is located within the settlement area of Braemar as identified in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan. The majority of the site is also within Braemar Conservation Area. The Local Plan identifies a portion of the site i.e the area in which the former bus depot currently exists and land to the rear of that in which the new build terraced properties are proposed, as being one of three main opportunities for new development in Braemar. It is identified as Site eh2 which is detailed as being “suitable for around 6 housing units.”

21. **Policy Env\17** of the Local Plan refers to **Conservation Areas**, stating that all designated Conservation Areas shall be protected against any development that would have a detrimental effect on their special character or setting. The policy requires that new development wholly or partly within Conservation Areas must be of the highest quality, and respect and enhance the architectural and visual qualities that give rise to their designation. The importance of conservation areas are highlighted, with the Plan describing them as “an important physical record of the architectural development and historical growth of an area” and “an irreplaceable cultural and economic resource that contributes to the distinctive character and quality of Aberdeenshire.”
22. **Listed Buildings** are dealt with in **Policy Env\18** of the Local Plan, where it is the policy to protect all such structures against all works which would have a detrimental effect on the listed character, integrity or setting. The policy encourages the protection, maintenance, enhancement, active use and conservation of Listed Buildings. It is a requirement that all alterations and extensions to Listed Buildings, or new developments within their curtilage, are of the highest quality, respect the original structure in terms of setting, scale, design and materials. The policy states that “in principle, the Council will be sympathetic to applications, which demonstrate satisfactorily that the proposed development is essential to securing the viable use of the Listed Building without undermining its architectural or historic character or its setting.”
23. **Policy Hou\5** is entitled **Conversion of Non-Residential Vernacular Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use**. Despite the fact that the proposed development is within a settlement as opposed to a countryside area, there are many aspects of the policy that are applicable to the proposed situation. The policy requires the developer to demonstrate that
- i. the existing building is no longer required or suitable for its original purpose;
 - ii. existing and proposed neighbouring uses are compatible with housing;
 - iii. the existing building is largely intact, structurally sound, and contributes to the traditional character of the area;
 - iv. the existing building is capable of conversion and this would not involve extensive demolition and rebuilding (a structural survey undertaken by an appropriate professional will be required);
 - v. alterations to the existing building would be kept to a minimum and the conversion would retain the traditional character and form of the building.

24. The aim of the policy is to ensure that the existing buildings are converted for housing in a way that retains the traditional character of the building and provides high quality accommodation that is sustainable. The Plan highlights the fact that traditional buildings are part of the history and character of Aberdeenshire and the sensitive conversion of them can therefore help to sustain and enhance this special resource.
25. The subject of parking, servicing and accessibility are dealt with in **Policy Inf2** of the Local Plan, where it is stated that development will be approved in principle if
1. it is well related to existing settlements, avoids dispersed patterns of development, and complies with the Council's maximum parking standards;
 2. it can be accessed conveniently by walkers and cyclists, and is close to existing public transport services, where available; and
 3. it is designed to be safe, convenient, resource efficient and cause minimal impact on the character of the site and surrounding area.
- The policy also makes reference to developer contributions being provided were required to mitigate development impact.
26. Drainage and water standards are discussed in **Policy Inf4**, which states that development will be approved in principle if it will not overload existing mains infrastructure or it is practical for the developer to provide for new infrastructure. **Policy Inf5** discusses additional drainage standards –Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). "Development will be approved in principle if surface water treatment is dealt with in a sustainable manner and in ways that avoid flooding and pollution." Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems will be required as a means of achieving sustainable disposal and / or re-use / recycling of surface water.
27. The subject site is located within the Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area. **Policy Env5A** refers to National Scenic Areas and states that development which would have an adverse effect on a National Scenic Area will be refused unless the developer demonstrates that (a) any significant adverse effects on the quality for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits of national importance; (b) the objectives of the designation and overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; and (c) there is no alternative site for the development. The stated aim of the policy is to provide the best landscape within Aberdeenshire with adequate protection against damaging development.
28. **Appendix 1** of the Local Plan provides design guidance for new developments. It provides guidance on location, which should make best use of the existing network of public transport, infrastructure and services; site location, advising that a successful development requires careful attention to the space and relationship between buildings as well as to the design of buildings themselves; and layout. In terms of

density, it should relate to the position of the proposed site within the settlement, should make efficient use of land and should respect the landform and special features of the site. **Appendix 1** also provides advice on issues such as access and parking, the provision of public and private open space², as well as the need to protect neighbouring properties. Building Design is also discussed, with guidance provided under a number of headings including scale, shape and proportions, as well as design details.

29. Basic guidance is provided in **Appendix 4 on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas**. All new development affecting Conservation Areas are required to conform with conventional building lines, use materials and detailing which respects the character and traditions of the area, and be of a scale and proportion which is sympathetic to the character of the particular building and surrounding area.
30. **For information purposes only**: The subject site is included within the settlement boundary of Braemar as identified in the **Consultation Draft of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan**. The land is identified as Policy site H3 for housing. The policy recommends that “a proportion of the development will need to be affordable and / or for local needs to be identified through a local housing needs study.” General comments on housing in Braemar refer to the area having a relatively high proportion of second homes which contributes to a smaller supply for local needs. The plan is very specific in identifying the importance of housing for local people and for workers on lower incomes in order to ensure that Braemar continues to be a vibrant community.
31. The **Consultation Draft National Park Local Plan** contains a detailed section on the topic of housing in general. The strategic plan context for Local Plan policies is taken from the draft National Park Plan, and expresses two particular objectives – (1) to increase the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park; and (2) to ensure that there is effective land and investment for market and affordable housing to meet the economic and social needs of communities throughout the Park.

CONSULTATIONS

32. The consultation response from **Scottish Natural Heritage** refers to the location of the development within Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area. The response states that there is no objection to the development proposal. Reference is made to an appreciation of the dramatic scenery of the area from the hills immediately around Braemar which are heavily used for recreation and consequently it is suggested that the proposed development may be visible when seen

² The provision of public open space is dealt with in more detail in Appendix 6.

by walkers on the hills. **SNH** recommend in the event of the granting of planning permission that a condition is attached to ensure that the colours of external materials used on the proposed houses correspond with those of existing nearby buildings, and in particular suggest that the dwellings should have a matt, slate-grey roof. The stated purpose of such a condition is to reduce landscape and visual impacts by ensuring that the development “reasonably corresponds to the surrounding village and its wider setting.” Reference is also briefly made to the possibility that the existing redundant buildings could be used by nesting birds and suggests that where such a possibility exists that further investigations are carried out.

33. The initial consultation response from **Scottish Water**³ stated that a water supply to serve the development is available from the public supply. However, in relation to drainage, the response at that time stated that there was insufficient capacity at the wastewater treatment plant serving Braemar to accommodate the development. Reference was however made to the fact that augmentation / improvement works were under construction at the wastewater treatment plant, with the works being funded to provide a limited amount of additional capacity.⁴ Clarification on this matter was sought from **Scottish Water** in February 2006 with the response indicating that the works had been completed, with the result that the constraint in Braemar had been lifted and capacity was available to facilitate the development.
34. **Historic Scotland** were consulted and in their initial response⁵ outlined the fact that the formal locus of **Historic Scotland** related to the proposals for the category B listed former Bluebird Buses station building. The view was expressed at that time that the proposed external works for the bus station house appeared satisfactory, describing them as “generally retaining its existing character, without any alteration or replacement work shown.” It was suggested that where possible the fascia signboard should be retained as a symbolic historic feature. Concern was expressed at the internal works proposed at that stage in the application, with the consultation response noting that the works, particularly at ground level, “would seem to involve significant loss of character” due to the proposed replacement of the existing timber lined waiting room and office room with bedsit type accommodation. The **Historic Scotland** Inspector recommended that amended proposals be sought to preserve the internal character of the waiting room and the office within the structure. In relation to the proposed removal of the rear garage extensions, it was stated that such works would not unduly harm the special interest of the listed building.

³ Initial consultation response from Scottish Water received 8th June 2005.

⁴ Increased capacity to accommodate approximately 50 house equivalents.

⁵ Initial consultation response from Historic Scotland received 23rd June 2005.

35. Although the response from **Historic Scotland** clarified that the Inspectorate “would not appear to have a formal locus in the remaining proposals for the steading conversion and new build housing”, informally within the response, hope was expressed that “all effort is made to protect and enhance the character of the conversion area and setting of nearby listed buildings, ensuring that the traditional character of the steading is maintained and that new build housing, in terms of design, scale and materials, is fully compatible.”
36. Further to receipt of revised proposals, **Historic Scotland** were reconsulted and the response in July 2006 stated that “we are pleased that more of the ground floor interior of the former bus station, including the waiting room timber lined walls and fireplace, would be retained.” The retention of the external fascia board is welcomed and the Inspector acknowledged that this would enable a more sympathetic conversion and the opportunity to safeguard the special character of the listed building.
37. The response from **Historic Scotland** recommends in the event of the granting of planning permission that a suspensive condition is imposed requiring the submission and approval of a full specification of works for the listed building, including repairs to windows, doors and façade timber boarding and also requiring approval of paint colour samples prior to full painting. **Historic Scotland** also consider it desirable that a condition is imposed requiring clarification of details for the treatment of the immediate outdoor area around the former bus station, including all boundary work, in order to protect the setting of the listed building and the conservation area. With reference to the amendments to the steading conversion and new build proposals, the change to more traditional detailing and materials is welcomed and the proposals are described as being in keeping with Braemar Conservation Area. In line with this, it is suggested that the use of vertically sliding sash and case windows would be more appropriate than the currently proposed mock sash windows.
38. **Aberdeenshire Council’s Built and Cultural Heritage Team** were consulted on the proposal and provided a detailed comment in response to the initial proposal. In relation to the steading, the response stated that the proposed conversion was generally acceptable, although some comments and suggestions were advanced for improvements. Suggested works included the use of vertical timber doors as opposed to the originally proposed panel doors which were described as being ‘very domesticated’ and also the re-use of original slates where possible, with any new slating matching the original Scots slate on the building. The original drawings also indicated that window frames were proposed to be painted and doors stained brown and the **Built and Cultural Team** response stated that this could not be supported and instead recommended that the existing green colour of timberwork be retained, as it forms an integral part of the historic identity of the steading. In addition, similar to a point raised in the

response from **Historic Scotland**, it was stated that true sash and case windows should be used, as opposed to the proposed look-alike timber frames.

39. In relation to the terraced new build element of the development, the originally proposed grey wet dash finish was questioned, with the response noting that the material predominantly used within Braemar Conservation Area is a 'buff pinkish colour.' With reference to all of the exposed timbers to be used, the response suggested that Estate colours should be used in an effort to strengthen the link between the original and the new build within the grouping. However, in recognition of the existing colours of the bus station depot which is in close proximity to the proposed terraced houses, the **Built and Cultural Heritage** response suggested in the event that the green of the Estate colour was not suitable, that consideration should be given to the use of a blue colour to match the bus station. The use of vertical line timber doors was also recommended.
40. With reference to the bus station property the report highlighted the fact that the windows are all original plate glass. It is described as being "very rare these days to find a property with such fine plate glass windows" and the retention of the original windows was therefore deemed necessary. The fascia and signboard on the existing structure is described as being an integral part in depicting the character and integrity of the front of the building and retention of the fascia and framework was described as essential. The response also reiterated similar concerns to those expressed by Historic Scotland in relation to the incorporation of the existing internal timber linings of the bus station into any new design of the property.
41. The response noted that the proposed new detached dwelling house lies outside the boundary of the Conservation Area, but nonetheless recommends that the character and style of the building should contribute to the grouping of the properties and should therefore demonstrate a similar quality of design and detailing. A further point raised in the response in relation to all aspects of the development proposal, including the conversion and new build elements is the recommended use of cast iron rainwater goods, as opposed to the PVC down pipes originally proposed.
42. In conclusion, the response from the **Built and Cultural Heritage Team** of Aberdeenshire Council recommended refusal of planning permission, largely on the basis that "greater consideration of detailing must be given to such a sensitive site." It is stated that "if the comments above are taken on board and additional plans and information and detailing provided, the Built and Cultural Heritage Team could be supportive of the application." Further to receipt of the amended proposals, the **Built and Cultural Heritage Team** were re-consulted and to date a further response has not been received.

43. The **Archaeology Section** of Aberdeenshire Council examined the proposal and recommended in the event of the granting of planning permission that a condition be included requiring that a photographic record of the existing buildings which are proposed for conversion, demolition or alteration, be provided prior to any works taking place.
44. The **Contaminated Land** section of Aberdeenshire Council requested that a site investigation be carried out, referring to the fact that the site had been used as a bus depot and for agricultural use. A report was subsequently prepared by Deeside Structural Design on behalf of the applicants, which concluded, based on investigations, that "it is very unlikely that any significant sources of contaminants are present at the sites" and that "there would appear to be no contamination which could currently represent an unacceptable risk to human health or the wider environment" and it consequently recommended that no further assessment was required. However, it recommended that all excavations should be monitored during the construction stage and in the event that evidence of contamination is seen, the affected areas could be treated insitu.
45. Further to an examination of the development proposal, Aberdeenshire Council's **Planning Gain Co-Ordinator** prepared a detailed response, which is intended, in the event of the planning application being successful, to form the basis of a Section 75 Planning Agreement which is required to be agreed and signed prior to the issue of a planning consent notice. The report refers to the intention of the developer to provide six housing units for the affordable sector and this is welcomed. Background information is provided in relation to education facilities in Braemar and reference is also made to sports provision and library provision in the area. In summary the report from the **Planning Gain Co-Ordinator** recommends that developer contributions are provided for community facilities related provision, secondary education related provision, waste provision and a percent for art.
46. In terms of the payment of the required sum, the applicant has the opportunity to either make the contributions on a pro-rata house unit completed basis, or to make lump sum payments at regular intervals. Where either option is chosen for the payment of the required financial contribution, the section 75 agreement will be required to secure the particular payment structure for the development as well as the affordable housing element, with such an agreement requiring to be concluded and signed prior to the release of any planning decision notification. Alternatively the contribution of the full amount of financial contribution required could be made prior to the issuing of the planning permission, "on the proviso that a legal agreement or contract is in place with a Registered Social Landlord for the provision of the affordable housing element."

47. In a response from the CNPA's **Housing Policy Officer**, information provided⁶ indicates that Braemar is the first choice for 11 parties on Aberdeenshire Council's waiting list, with the majority requiring two or three bedroom units. Reference is also made to information provided by Communities Scotland and Castlehill Housing Association. Castlehill's Strategy and Development Funding Plan includes an unspecified site at Braemar and it is the understanding of Communities Scotland that the site in question is the proposed six terraced units at Invercauld Farm. In addition Castlehill Housing Association have examined the proposal and in a letter to Mr. Stuart Anderson, agent for the applicants in this current proposal, state that "Castlehill are confident that these houses will help to meet some of the high level of demand for affordable housing in the Braemar area. It is a view also expressed by the CNPA's Housing Policy Officer, where reference is made in her response to the 'housing pressures in this area.'
48. The response from **Braemar Community Council** is supportive of the proposal, with the Community Council being "particularly keen on the range of property variations within the plans." The Community Council are also keen to ensure that the maximum number possible of the properties are low cost rented houses. A number of points are also raised in relation to the listed building on the site. Reference is made to the need to restore the exterior in order to give this "historically important building its rightful feature status." Points raised in relation to this include the south gable wall being returned to its original timber facing to match the rest of the building, and also the restoration of the front sign for the Great North of Scotland Railway, which it states is under the current bus sign and overpainted.

REPRESENTATIONS

49. One letter of representation was submitted in 2005 but has since been withdrawn.

APPRAISAL

50. In assessing this application it is necessary to examine the proposed development in the context of a broad range of issues, including national planning policy and guidance, Structure Plan and Local Plan policy, the infrastructural implications of the proposal, and the aims of the Cairngorms National Park.
51. At the national level planning policy and guidance clearly encourages the provision of well located, high quality housing. It is a sentiment echoed in the **North East Scotland Structure Plan** and in addition **NEST** places significant emphasis on the need to secure appropriate levels of affordable housing. The proposed development offers a

⁶ Information from Aberdeenshire Council's current waiting list figures, as at 4 April 2006

relatively wide mix of house types and sizes, capable of meeting the housing needs of many sectors of society and in addition 50% of the properties are intended to be provided for affordable housing purposes, which exceeds the 35% standard requirement.

52. At a more detailed policy level, it is important to focus on the issue of compliance of the proposals with the **Aberdeenshire Local Plan** policies as detailed in paragraphs 20 – 28 of this report. A portion of the southern area of the site is identified in the Local Plan as one of the main opportunity sites in Braemar for housing. It is the area of the site in which the six new build terraced dwelling houses are proposed, as well as including the former bus station house building. The principle of residential development in this area is therefore acceptable. However, the originally proposed site layout plan sought to develop a total of 9 units within this relatively confined area of the site, in the form of six new build terraced dwelling houses and the remaining three flatted units being developed in the former bus station house. In response to concerns raised regarding the detrimental impact of this number of units on the character of the Listed Building and also on the visual amenity, not to mention the residential amenity of prospective future residents of the proposed properties, the layout in this area was amended. The alterations included an extension of the site area, to incorporate a corner in the south east in which a disused stone built shed exists. The amended proposals include the demolition of that structure. The enlargement of the site into this area allowed for the creation of a more acceptable layout, necessitating less intervention with the interior fabric of the Listed Building and also providing an enhanced layout for the new build element.
53. In terms of the position of the majority of the site within Braemar Conservation Area, five of the units proposed are within existing structures on the site, and due to various alterations which have been made to the proposal, the conversion of those existing structures i.e. the steading and the former bus station house, is proposed to be undertaken in a manner which respects the original character and fabric of the structures. The amendments to the conversion proposals for the bus station depot (i.e. two flats proposed instead of three and an internal layout that respects the integrity of the structure, together with the introduction of more sympathetic detailing and finishes, such as the introduction of vertical lined doors, cast iron rainwater goods etc. on the proposed steading conversion) represent a more sensitive approach and awareness of the need to conserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area than was evident in the original proposals.
54. As regards the new build elements of the development, there has been a re-think on the materials proposed, the detailing, and design changes have also been made to the detached dwelling house in the northern area of the site, all of which have the potential to achieve greater assimilation of the overall development into the traditional fabric of the Conservation Area. The use of buff / pink granite on the frontage of the

new build properties, together with a buff yellow⁷ or pink⁸ wet dash finish on the remaining elevations is more in keeping with the external finishes of properties in the area than the originally proposed grey wet dash finish. One aspect of the detailing which remains of concern in respect of the new build elements as well as within the proposed steading conversion, is the proposal to use 'look-a-like sash and case' windows and indeed it is an aspect of the development which has been alluded to in the most up to date consultation response from **Historic Scotland**. In light of the location of the majority of the site area within the Conservation Area and in order to ensure compliance with **Policy Env17** which requires development to be of the highest quality and respect the architectural qualities of the area, it is my view that the use of authentic timber sash and case windows is necessary and in the event of the granting of planning permission the inclusion of a condition stipulating such use would be appropriate.

55. The proposed conversion of the steading into three residential units is governed by the requirements of **Policy Hou5** on the **Conversion of Non-Residential Vernacular Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use**. Despite the policy referring specifically to such buildings in the countryside context, the principles for conversion of properties are equally applicable within a settlement. The conversion of the steading complies with the policy requirements. Given the proximity of the structure to other existing residential development, as well as a hotel, any previous historic agriculture related use is unlikely to be considered appropriate. The proposed residential use is compatible with neighbouring uses and the conversion of the structure to three residential units can be undertaken without demolition or rebuilding. In addition, the design of the dwelling houses are such that few alterations are proposed to the traditional form of the building, with the majority of openings according with the original positions.
56. Given the location of the site within an existing settlement and the fact that five out of the proposed twelve units are to be contained within existing buildings on the site, I do not feel that the development proposal would have an adverse effect on the Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area within which it is located. As regards the new build element of the proposal, as detailed in previous sections of this report the building materials and finishes ultimately proposed would assist in assimilating the new structures into the village landscape. The detached dwelling house proposed in the northern area of the site has the potential to become the most prominent aspect of the development, given its position on the edge of the developed area of the village and the open nature of the landscape adjacent. However, I am confident that the visual impact can be minimised to an acceptable extent by undertaking a comprehensive landscaping plan in this area, and a

⁷ Proposed on the terraced properties

⁸ Proposed on the detached dwelling house

condition requiring detailed proposals should be included in the event of the granting of planning permission.

57. On the subject of affordable housing provision, information – both in the form of anecdotal evidence and precise information on housing waiting list numbers – indicates that there is a significant need for the provision of housing of this nature within Braemar. The provision of 50% of the proposed units as affordable housing is therefore to be welcomed. Although definitive confirmation of the Housing Association to be involved in the project has not been given at this time, indications are that it is Castlehill Housing Association, and it would appear that discussions are sufficiently advanced to allow confidence in the delivery of the properties for affordable purposes. However, as is the normal course of action in proposals of this nature, this would be copperfastened by the completion of a Section 75 agreement to ensure the retention of the proposed development as affordable housing units via a Registered Social Housing Landlord.
58. It is acknowledged that there is significant need for affordable housing in Braemar and the previous paragraph has indicated how that element can be secured within this scheme. Looking at the wider housing situation, Braemar has a history of houses in the village being purchased for both second homes and/or holiday letting. If this is considered to be an issue in relation to the remainder of the housing in this development, then it must be addressed at this stage as the housing in question may otherwise be occupied without restriction. The recommendation in the report is based on the adopted local plan policies and further advice would have to be sought on the feasibility of securing additional management of the use of the non-affordable element.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

59. The majority of the proposed development site is located within Braemar Conservation Area and a portion of the proposal also involves alterations to a Category B Listed Building. Amendments have been made to the original proposal, particularly with a view to maintaining the integrity and features of the listed building, and higher quality finishes and materials have been introduced throughout the development. It is therefore considered that the development assists in the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the area, and does not impact on natural heritage issues.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

60. The source of the materials to be used in the development proposal has not been finalised and it is therefore not possible to assess whether or not the development promotes the sustainable use of natural resources.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

61. The proposal will result in the renovation of a disused steading and also the disused former bus station depot, with the latter in particular occupying a prominent location within Braemar Conservation Area. The rejuvenation of this area would therefore be likely to result in improvements to the visual quality of the area and would consequently increase the enjoyment of the area by the general public.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

62. The proposal is generally positive in terms of this aim as it promotes a mixed housing development with much needed affordable housing integrated into the development as a whole. The principal of extending the village in this way contributes towards reinforcing the service centre of Braemar and should in turn help to retain and foster new economic activity in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Grant full planning permission and Listed Building Consent for a 12 unit housing development consisting of the conversion of a bus depot to two flats, the conversion of a steading to form three houses and the erection of seven new dwelling houses at Invercauld Farm, Glenshee Road, Braemar, subject to the completion of a S75 Legal Agreement to ensure the retention of six of the new dwellings as affordable housing units via a Registered Social Housing Landlord and also to ensure the payment of development contributions in respect of Planning Gain; and all in accordance with the following conditions:-

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
2. Prior to the commencement of development a full specification of works for the Listed Building, including repairs to windows, doors and façade timber boarding, as well as external paint colour samples, shall be submitted for the written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority.

3. Prior to the commencement of development comprehensive details of the treatment of the immediate outdoor area around the former bus station, including all boundary work, shall be submitted for the agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
4. Vertically sliding timber sash and case windows shall be used throughout the development in place of the mock sash and case windows identified on the elevation drawings.
5. Prior to the commencement of any wall rendering works, sample panels, approximately 1 metre square, of the wet harling shall be prepared on site for the inspection and further written approval of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.
6. Prior to the commencement of development, details of the proposed stonework shall be submitted for the agreement and written approval of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.
7. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, no house extension shall be formed, and no greenhouse, shed or garage erected without the prior written consent of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
8. Prior to the commencement of development comprehensive drainage measures according with SUDS principles shall be submitted for the agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with Aberdeenshire Council. The SUDS scheme shall be implemented and operational prior to the occupation of any dwelling within the development.
9. Prior to the commencement of development the existing buildings on site shall be surveyed for nesting birds and the details shall be forwarded for the agreement and written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage. In the event that there is evidence of nesting birds within the existing buildings that are proposed for conversion, work may only proceed in accordance with guidance stipulated by the CNPA in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage.
10. Prior to any development commencing on site, a scheme shall be submitted by the Developer (at his / her expense) to deal with potential contamination on site. No construction work shall commence until such scheme has been submitted to and approved by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority in consultation with the Contaminated Land section of Aberdeenshire Council, and is thereafter implemented to like satisfaction.

11. Written confirmation from the CNPA and Aberdeenshire Council that the scheme has been implemented, completed and of appropriate, monitoring measures are satisfactorily in place, shall be required by the Developer before any development hereby approved commences.
12. Prior to the commencement of development, a photographic record shall be compiled of all existing structures on the site which are to be demolished, converted or where any form of alteration work is to be carried out. The photographic record shall be submitted for the written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with the Archaeology Section of Aberdeenshire Council. The photographic record shall include views of all elevations as well as views of unusual internal or external features.
13. A suitable management and maintenance agreement shall be established in respect of any SUDS measures, hard and soft landscaped areas, roads, footpaths or cycle paths not intended or not suitable for adoption by a statutory authority.
14. All car parking areas, driveways and other hard standing areas shall have a durable, dust free, porous surface.
15. Street lighting shall be provided to the satisfaction of Aberdeenshire Council's Lighting Engineer.
16. The name of the housing development shall reflect the character, tradition and natural and cultural heritage of the area and shall be agreed in writing with the CNPA as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.
17. Adequate temporary car parking accommodation shall be provided on the site for the use of employees engaged in construction work on the site.
18. All public services for the development, including electrical, cable television and telephone cables, shall be located underground throughout the site. All such work shall be carried out prior to road surfacing and junction boxes shall be provided by the developer.

19. Prior to the commencement of development, a detailed landscaping plan shall be submitted for the agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority. In particular the plan shall include enhanced landscaping proposals for the northern site boundary. The landscaping plan for the entire site area shall include comprehensive details of all species (which should be of indigenous origin), planting location and numbers to be planted, as well as details of height and girth at time of planting and projected growth rates.
20. All new landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The landscaping of all communal areas within the proposed development shall be completed within one year of the commencement of works. Any trees or shrubs that die or become seriously damaged or diseased within a period of five years from the time of planting shall be replaced with others of a similar size and species, suited to the climate of the area, within the next planting season.

Advice note :

- With reference to the photographic record required to comply with condition no. 11 of this permission, all photographs should be good quality, showing all views and features clearly. Photographs may be digital. It is necessary to ensure that all scanned, digitised or copied images are printed on good quality paper and are free from flaws. All photos should be clearly marked with the place name for identification, and also the grid reference.
- The applicant is advised to seek specialist information from the Health and Safety Executive prior to the disposal of materials from structures on the site that are proposed for demolition.

Determination Background

The application for full planning permission for the proposed development and also the application seeking Listed Building Consent were called in by the Planning Committee of the Cairngorms National Park Authority at the meeting of 8th April 2005, following which a period of consultation commenced. Following receipt of the majority of the initial consultation responses it was necessary to request that a large number of alterations were made to the proposal, as well as the provision of items of additional information. A letter requesting the alterations and information was issued by the CNPA on 30th June 2005. A partial response was received in early October 2005 and a letter requesting clarification of the outstanding matters was issued by the CNPA on 14th October 2005.

In the interests of facilitating the progression of the planning applications on the site and discussing the outstanding information, two meetings were held with the applicants agent in November 2005 and February 2006. The final amended detail and information was submitted to the CNPA on 28th June 2006, following which a re-consultation process was necessary.

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21 August 2006

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.