

---

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

---

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

**Prepared by:** MARY GRIER (PLANNING OFFICER,  
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

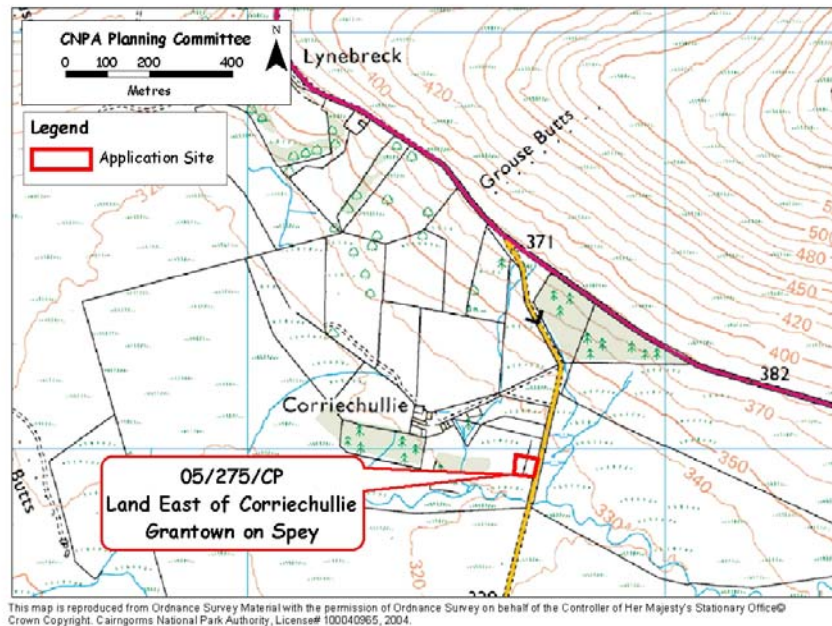
---

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS FOR A DWELLING HOUSE INCORPORATING GARAGE AT CORRIECHULLIE, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY

**REFERENCE:** 05/275/CP

**APPLICANT:** MR. DEREK JOHNSON

**DATE CALLED-IN:** 1<sup>ST</sup> July 2005.



**Fig. 1 - Location Plan**

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

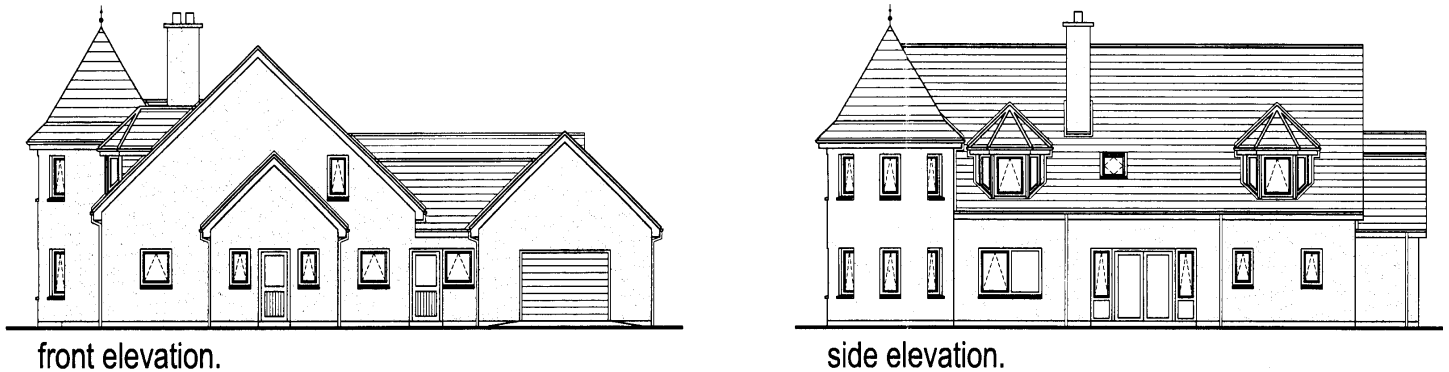
1. This application is an approval of reserved matters for the erection of a dwelling house, where outline permission was granted under Highland Council planning reference no. 02/00216/OUTBS in June 2004. The proposed development site is located on land at Corriechullie adjacent to the minor road linking Nethy Bridge with the A939. The proposed site is located on open land approximately 130 metres south of the access track leading to Corriechullie farm. There is an existing coniferous plantation located some distance to the west of the proposed site, and in partial fulfilment of the conditions of the outline permission on the site a recent programme of planting has also been undertaken to the north of the subject lands. The land to the north rises towards the A939 and beyond to Sgor Gaoithe and the Hills of Cromdale. The site is exposed and highly visible on the western and eastern approaches of the A939 and also on the southern approach from the direction of Nethy Bridge, as well as from wider areas of the surrounding countryside. The settlement pattern in the area is generally dispersed, and consisting primarily of older housing stock of traditional design.



**Fig. 2 : proposed site as viewed on the southern approach from Nethy Bridge**

2. The proposed site is approximately 0.5 acres, with a road frontage of 40 metres. The proposed dwelling house is located towards the south western area of the site, with a central access drive proposed to extend approximately 28 metres from the public road. The dwelling house proposed on the site is essentially a two storey dwelling, although the side elevations display design features more commonly associated with 1 ½ storey properties. The structure has a floor area of 248 square metres, with an attached garage having an additional floor area of 25.8 square metres. The design is based on a relatively centrally positioned two storey element, gable fronted to the roadside, with a number of other elements extending off this to the south and north. The main body of the house has a ridge height of approximately 8

metres. A two storey turret<sup>1</sup>/tower is proposed in the south western extremity of the property, extending above the principal roof line to an overall height of 8.7 metres. Two single storey elements extend to the north of the main block, with the section to the rear of the property accommodating a ground floor bedroom area, and the front section comprising of a domestic garage, linked to the main part of the proposed dwelling house via a lobby area.



**Fig.3 : Proposed front and side elevations at Corriechullie.**

3. The front elevation of the structure is designed with the gable of the main block as the dominant feature, and includes three access points, including the main front door incorporated into a projecting porch structure, and also including an entrance door to the aforementioned lobby area, as well as the domestic garage door. The southern (side) elevation of the proposed structure includes a significant number of openings, with ornate bay windows recessed into the roof space to serve first floor bedrooms, while the ground floor area includes French doors and a number of windows. The turret / tower feature that extends from this elevation incorporates five vertically emphasised windows at ground floor level with a corresponding number at first floor level. The northern side elevation has a limited number of window openings and the roof profile is the visually dominant feature in this area.
4. The external materials proposed consist of harled walls under concrete roof tiles. A septic tank is proposed to serve the property in conjunction with a soakaway pit or perforated pipe system. The application form indicates a proposed connection to the public water supply. However, in the course of the outline permission on the site,

<sup>1</sup> The ADC Glossary of Architectural Terms defines a turret as a small, often ornamental tower projecting from a building, usually at a corner. The turret is a feature of the Scottish Baronial architectural style, most commonly used between the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The style was also much imitated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is generally associated with tower houses and baronial mansions, with Balmoral Castle being one of the most famous buildings in the Scots Baronial style incorporating turrets.

the proposed water supply was detailed as being a private supply taken from a spring on Sgor Gaoithe. This matter has been queried with the agent and he has clarified that the proposed dwelling house is to be served by a private supply. Reference to a public water supply connection was made in error on the application form.

5. The reports on file relating to the outline planning permission on the site (02/00316/OUTBS) indicate that planning officials advised that the proposed development was contrary to the provisions of the Local Plan and Members of the planning committee were accordingly asked to define the reasons for approving the application as a departure from the provision of the Development Plan. The outline planning permission approved included a number of conditions, including requirements on the achievement of visibility splays, dwelling house design guidance, and a requirement to enter into a Section 75 agreement. The Section 75 agreement required the submission of a detailed scheme providing for the planting of trees and all other vegetation, and the carrying out of the planting scheme within two years of the date of the granting of outline planning permission. The planting scheme submitted proposed birch, rowan and Caledonian Scots pine over a significant extent of the planted area, with smaller quantities of juniper, oak, holly, hawthorn and alder. Highland Council upon consideration of the planting scheme advised that planting be undertaken at a quantity of 2000 per hectare. The area of land that has been planted in fulfilment of the Section 75 agreement is located a short distance to the north of the proposed site, and extends in an L shape to the west of the site. Although significant numbers of trees have been planted, they are not of a mature height at present and do not assist in providing any screening in the vicinity of the proposed site.
6. The condition included in the outline planning permission regarding design issues stipulated that the proposed dwelling house be no more than one and a half storeys in height, with the walls off white in colour and the roof finished with a natural slate or an approved slate like grey tile. The documentation contained in the outline planning permission file includes a floor plan and front elevation sketch of a dwelling house that apparently formed the basis of discussions between a Highland Council planning official and an agent on an appropriate dwelling house design. The plan was essentially a u shape, with a type of courtyard area being created in the northern elevation. The design was single storey, comprising of a central block with marginally lower level sections extending to the side, one of which included an attached domestic garage. It appears that the sketches were prepared for discussion purposes at a time when a party other than the current applicant were interested in purchasing the site. Nonetheless, the original file includes sketches endorsed by planning officials familiar with the original development proposal and considered to be in accordance with the conditions attached to the outline permission, providing an indication to any prospective purchasers of the subject site of the type of structure acceptable on this exposed rural site.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

7. At national level, **Scottish Planning Policy 3 (Planning for Housing) (February 2003)** considers design in new housing developments to be an important issue when planning for housing development in both urban and rural areas. **Planning Advice Note 44, (Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape) (March 1994)** states that *“In seeking to protect and enhance the quality of the environment, developers should aim for a high standard of design and landscaping in new housing development.”* Particular emphasis is given to the shape, layout and form of the development and its impact on the surrounding area; the choice of materials, with colours and textures that complement development in the locality; well designed schemes that respect both the local environment and the landscape setting; and the visual impact of new developments as seen from major roads and rail routes.
  
8. **Planning Advice Note 67 (Housing Quality) (February 2003)** emphasises the essential role the planning process can play in ensuring that the design of new housing reflects a full understanding of its context in terms of both its physical location and market conditions; the design of new housing reinforces local and Scottish identity; and new housing is integrated into the movement and settlement patterns of the wider area. It refers in the main to more urban housing developments but it does emphasise the importance of issues such as landscape and visual impact, topography, building height, relationship with adjacent development, and views into and out of a site.
  
9. **Planning Advice Note 72** is the new advice from central government on **Housing in the Countryside, (February 2005)** and on design it states *“High quality design must be integral to new development and local area differences must be respected”*. Furthermore it states *“In some areas, such as National Parks, National Scenic Areas and Conservation Areas, there may be a case for more prescription and a preference for traditional design, but it is also important to encourage the best of contemporary designs. There is considerable scope for creative and innovative solutions whilst relating a new home to the established character of the area. The overall aim should be to ensure that new housing is carefully located, worthy of its setting, and is the result of an imaginative, responsive and sensitive design process.”* In its concluding remarks, it states *“Every settlement should have its own distinctive identity. This is determined in part by the local characteristics of the area's architectural style of individual buildings and the relationship of these buildings to each other.”*

10. **Highland Structure Plan 2001, Policy H3** states that housing will generally be within existing and planned new settlements. New housing will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it is required for the management of land and related family purposes. **Policy L4 Landscape Character**, states that the Council will in the consideration of development proposals have regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character. **Policy G2 Design for Sustainability**, lists a number of criteria on which proposed developments will be assessed. These include service provision (water and sewerage, drainage, roads, schools, electricity); accessibility by public transport, cycling, walking and car; energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design (including the utilisation of renewable energy sources) and impacts on resources such as habitats, species, landscape, cultural heritage and scenery.
11. Highland Council's **Development Plan Policy Guidelines (April 2003)** provides more detailed guidance on the interpretation of specific policies contained in the 1997 Local Plan, in the light of the subsequently approved Structure Plan of 2001. This document states that new housing in the open countryside will be exceptional, and will only be permitted (in accordance with National guidance and the approved Structure Plan policy) where, amongst other specific circumstances, it is required for the management of land, or it is required for family purposes related to the management of land (retired farmers and their spouses).
12. **The Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (September 1997)** – the subject site is on land that has been identified in the Local Plan as a restricted countryside area. Accordingly, section 2.1.2.3 of the Plan reconfirms the sentiments of the Structure Plan policy stating that a “strong presumption will be maintained against the development of houses” in all sensitive areas. It further stresses that adherence to the principles of good siting and design will be required.

## CONSULTATIONS

13. As the principal of a dwelling house on the subject site has been established through the granting of outline planning permission, issues such as road access and servicing of the proposed development were assessed by the relevant organisations and officials in the course of the original application. The proposed site is not located within any designated sites.

## REPRESENTATIONS

14. No representations have been received in respect of the proposed development.

## APPRAISAL

15. The land on which the dwelling is proposed is highly visible and prominent when viewed from much of the surrounding countryside area, including higher ground to the north, and the eastern and western approaches of the A939, as well as the southern approach to the subject site along the minor road from the direction of Dorback and Nethy Bridge.



Fig. 4 : views of the site from the western A939 approach



Fig. 5 : views of the site from the eastern A939 approach

16. The actual site area consists of rough grassland adjacent to the public road and is devoid of any natural boundaries. The roadside boundary is formed by a relatively low post and wire fence. As has been detailed in earlier sections of this report a programme of tree planting has been undertaken a short distance to the north and west of the proposed site, but is currently of a height that is barely noticeable above the grassland in the field and it therefore offers little benefit in terms of providing natural screening, and is unlikely to do so for a considerable number of years. Anecdotal evidence from the owner of the surrounding land (i.e. the original owner of the proposed site and the person who has undertaken the scheme of planting) suggests that the mature trees

existing some distance to the west of the proposed site (as seen in the background of Fig. 5 above) have taken some 35 – 40 years to mature to their current state.

17. The proposed dwelling house is of a considerable height and scale relative to this open and exposed site and incorporates a complex mix of design features, including the imposition of a mock baronial turret / tower on the south western corner of the proposed structure, and openings of numerous inconsistent shapes and sizes in positions that ultimately create an imbalance in the overall structure, for example in the front and rear elevations. The proposed dwelling house, essentially being a two storey design and having an average ridge height of 8 metres fails to comply with design requirements of condition no. 6 of the outline consent and is also a significant departure from the informal design guidance given in relation to a dwelling on the subject site, as evidenced by indicative 'advice drawings' included in the outline consent file, as detailed in para. 5 of this report. The proposed dwelling house design fails to take account of its prominent siting and fails to have regard to the general house types found in the surrounding rural landscape. It is considered that the design of the structure proposed in this exposed setting would form an excessively prominent and obtrusive feature in the landscape, and would be injurious to the visual amenity of this rugged rural landscape and would adversely affect the enjoyment of the special qualities of this scenic area by the general public. It is therefore considered that the proposed development fails to adhere to the principles of good siting and design and displays a disregard for national planning advice, particularly the sentiments expressed in **Planning Advice Note 72 Housing in the Countryside**, as detailed in para. 9 of this report.
18. Concerns regarding the proposed dwelling house design were discussed in the course of telephone conversations with both the applicant and the agent, in which both parties were advised that the proposed design would require significant amendments in order to assist in assimilating a structure in this location into the landscape and minimise its prominence and obtrusiveness. I indicated that a simpler design, more in keeping with the traditional vernacular architecture of the area would be more appropriate. The decision was made by the applicant to reject the opportunity to consider making significant amendments to the design concept, with Mr. Johnson putting forward various personal reasons for the design features and associated internal layout of the proposed structure, and requesting that the matter be progressed to the Planning Committee for decision on the basis of the current design.
19. It is also considered relevant to draw Members attention to an application for a single dwelling house at Lynbreck, a short distance from the proposed site (*reference no. 04/126/CP refers*). The Cairngorms National Park Authority refused permission in June 2004. The decision was appealed and the Scottish Executive subsequently



dismissed the appeal and endorsed the decision of the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Whilst that application included other reasons for refusal such as the failure to demonstrate any need case in terms of land management, one of the refusal reasons centred on the proposed elevated, open countryside location and its consequent detrimental impact on the rural character and amenity of the area and the fact that it would “create an extremely prominent precedent for unsympathetically designed and landscaped new developments in the National Park.” Although in the case of this current application at Corriechullie, the principle of residential development on the site has been established through the granting of outline permission, the concerns raised by the reporter on the Lynbreck application in relation to the proposed exposed siting are applicable in the current application, due to the impact that a dwelling of the design and proportions proposed would have in this open landscape.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK**

### **Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area**

20. Although there are no natural heritage designations, a dwelling house of the design and proportions proposed on this prominent and exposed site would have negative impacts on the character and quality of this part of the rural landscape of the National Park and would potentially set a precedent for additional inappropriate development of this nature that would further erode the character of the area. It would not therefore promote this aim.

### **Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources**

21. The materials proposed in the dwelling house are not considered to have any particular potential to promote the sustainable use of natural resources.

### **Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area**

22. It is considered that the development would have the potential to adversely affect the enjoyment of the views and the special rural characteristics of the area by the general public. In addition the design of the proposed dwelling house would be likely to promote uncertainty and confusion about the design standards operated by the National Park in such a prominent and visible location.

## Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

23. In general the location of the proposed dwelling house in open countryside, remote from any settlement and community / educational / retail facilities is not considered to assist in the promotion of sustainable economic development. However, in this instance the principle of residential development has already been established on the site through the granting of outline planning permission.

## RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

### **Refuse Approval of Reserved Matters for a New Dwellinghouse on land Corriechullie, Grantown-on-Spey for the following reasons:**

- i. That the proposed development by reason of its inappropriate form, character and design features in an open, exposed and highly visible location would be detrimental to the visual amenity, quality and overall character of the local landscape. As such it would be contrary to national planning advice contained in **Planning Advice Note 72 Housing in the Countryside**, particularly its failure to take account of the local characteristics of the area's architectural style of individual buildings and its relationship with other properties in the area, and also contrary to **Policy L4 (Landscape Character)** and **Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)** of the Highland Structure Plan (2001). The development proposal would be injurious to the landscape character of the area and would detract from the enjoyment of the rural qualities of this area by the general public and is therefore contrary to the first and third aims of the National Park. The proposed design also does little to achieve compliance with the second aim of the National Park. The proposed development would create an extremely prominent precedent for unsympathetically designed and landscaped new developments in the National Park.

**Mary Grier**  
**Planning Officer, Development Control.**

**18<sup>th</sup> August 2005**

**planning@cairngorms.co.uk**