
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: FULL PLANNING PERMISSION AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE ERECTION OF EIGHT FLATS; CONVERSION OF PART OF HOTEL TO HOUSE; AND ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO HOTEL (RE-SUBMISSION), STRATHSPEY HOTEL, GRANTOWN ON SPEY.

REFERENCE: 08/147/CP – FULL PLANNING PERMISSION; 08/148/CP – LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

APPLICANT: RTD THISTLE LTD., C/O DOUGLAS STUART, CHARTERED ARCHITECTS, 32 CHURCH STREET, INVERNESS.

DATE CALLED-IN: 2ND MAY 2008

RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

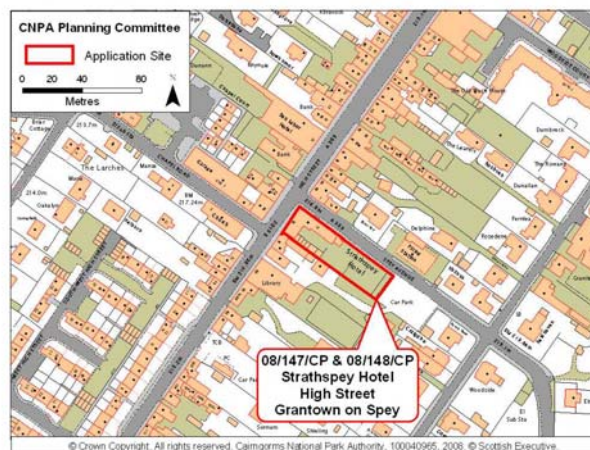


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. This report is intended to deal with two applications on the proposed site at the Strathspey Hotel, which is on the corner of Spey Avenue and High Street, Granttown on Spey. CNPA planning reference no. 08/147/CP refers to the application in which full planning permission is being sought for the erection of eight flats, the conversion of part of the hotel to a house and also alterations and extensions to the hotel. CNPA planning reference no. 08/148/CP refers to the application for Listed Building Consent for the same proposal. The existing hotel building is a category B listed building and is also located within the Granttown on Spey Conservation Area. The overall site area extends to approximately 1,600 square metres (0.395 acres). The Strathspey Hotel occupies the entire High Street frontage of the subject site, and also returns onto Spey Avenue.
2. There is a clear distinction on the Spey Avenue elevation between the design, proportions and materials of the original hotel building and the much more recent flat roof extension which occupies a large proportion of the Spey Avenue frontage. The original hotel building is a stone built property, extending over three floors, with upper floor accommodation being provided by the use of dormer windows in the pitched slate roof space. The original building displays consistency in fenestration, with vertically emphasised georgian pane windows. In contrast, the later extension is a two storey flat roof structure, with large horizontally emphasised windows and the roof line being above the eaves of the original building. The remainder of the Spey Avenue area of the site consists of a combination of hard surfacing and grass, with part of area apparently being used most recently as an informal car parking area for the hotel, with one entrance having been opened in the existing stone wall front boundary.



Fig. 2 : High St. frontage



Fig. 2 : Spey Avenue elevations

3. A public car park exists on land immediately to the south east of the site boundary on Spey Avenue. The boundary with that area is formed by a timber fence. A number of trees, mostly of coniferous variety, also exist in this area. The land opposite the site is occupied by a mix of buildings, including the Grantown on Spey Service Station; a single storey residential property which is set back and separated from the road frontage by a front garden area; and closer to the junction with High Street, there is a single storey dwelling house, set against the heel of the footpath and adjoining a two storey property.



Figs.4 and 5 : Properties opposite the Spey Avenue frontage of the proposed site

4. As indicated in the application description, the development proposal has three distinct aspects, with the most significant of those being the erection of eight flats. The flats are proposed in two blocks, along the Spey Avenue frontage of the site, with each of the blocks proposed immediately adjacent to the public footpath, echoing the building line established by the Strathspey Hotel. The first block of flattened units (denoted as 'Block 1' on the submitted drawings) is proposed adjacent to the original hotel structure and would necessitate the demolition of the aforementioned flat roof hotel extension. Having regard to its proposed position closer to the core area of the town and taking account of the height and two and a half storey design of the original hotel building, the new structure has been designed to have the same ridge height as the original building. It incorporates three floors, with third floor accommodation being served by a combination of dormer and velux windows in the roof space. A total of four residential units are proposed within this new structure. Two units, each having one bedroom, are proposed at ground floor level. The two remaining units have been designed to each occupy the first and second floors of the building. The upper floor units incorporate lounge, kitchen, bathroom and one bedroom on the first floor, with the second floor being occupied by a further bedroom. Access to the

buildings would be provided by two individual doors in the front elevation directly serving the ground floor units, while the upper floor units would be served by a communal entrance in the rear elevation leading to an internal stairwell.

5. The second structure titled 'Block 2' on the submitted drawings is proposed in the eastern area of the site. It is of one and three quarter storey design, incorporating four one bedroom flats, with two units on each level of the structure. As with Block 1 the ground floor flats are proposed to have direct access from the Spey Avenue frontage, with individual doors centrally positioned in that elevation, with the two upper floor units accessed from an entrance in the rear elevation, leading to a shared stairwell. Each of the dwelling units incorporates an open plan lounge and kitchen area, as well as a bedroom and bathroom.



Fig. 6 : Proposed frontage onto Spey Avenue

6. The design of both of the proposed new structures includes vertically proportioned window openings in both the front and rear elevations. External doors have timber lining at the lower level with glazing on the upper sections. External walls are proposed to be finished in a white wet dash harl, with slate 'to match the existing hotel' proposed as the roof finish.
7. The second element of the proposal is the conversion of part of the hotel to a house. It appears that the area of the hotel concerned was in fact formerly a separate house and indeed the existing High Street frontage of the overall property, although having consistent finishes and fenestration, retains the appearance of two separate properties. The conversion of this area of the existing hotel back into use as a separate residential property would not result in any material alterations to the High Street elevation of the property, as a separate door off the High St. already exists to serve this area of the property. The only external changes would occur to the rear of the structure, within the existing yard area, where it is proposed to create a single storey extension. The new extension would replace an existing extension and adjoining sheds. Internally new partition walls would be constructed at ground and first floor levels in order to separate the residential unit from the hotel facility.

Accommodation within the converted residential unit would consist of a lounge area at ground floor level within the existing structure, leading into the new rear extension which would contain a kitchen / dining area and a bathroom. Within the original structure a staircase would lead from the lounge to the first floor, where an en suite bedroom is proposed. A further bedroom is proposed in the attic space on the second floor.



Fig. 7 : High Street frontage of Strathspey Hotel and proposed townhouse

8. The final element of the proposal is for alterations and extensions to the hotel. As well as alterations to create a separate dwelling unit other proposals include the aforementioned demolition of the more recently constructed flat roof extension on the Spey Avenue frontage of the site. A small single storey extension is proposed to the side and extending to the rear of the original hotel section on Spey Avenue. The extension is designed to have a slate pitched roof on the side elevation, with a lean-to roof at the rear, similar to another extension already in existence. In contrast to the traditional stone building it is proposed to have a harled finish and would accommodate new toilet facilities, accessed from the lounge / bar area of the hotel. It would also provide rear access to the hotel service yard. Various other minor internal alterations are also proposed, primarily to facilitate improved access within the structure.
9. The current internal layout at the Strathspey Hotel (which at present incorporates the proposed 'townhouse' element) consists of seven visitor bedrooms at first floor level and five staff bedrooms on the attic floor. Four of the existing visitor bedrooms are located in the flat roofed extension on Spey Avenue which would be demolished to facilitate the proposed development. The re-creation of the townhouse element would also result in the loss of a further visitor bedroom as well as one of the staff bedrooms. A total of three visitor bedrooms

would be provided at first floor level in the proposed layout, all of which I understand are to be refurbished to a high standard. The attic floor of the original hotel building is identified on the submitted floor plans as owners accommodation.



Fig. 8 : Stone wall proposed for retention

10. Vehicular access to the site is proposed off Spey Avenue, with the entrance proposed between the two new blocks of flats. A total of 13 car parking spaces would be provided to serve the new residential units in an arrangement to the rear of the new structures. The site layout originally submitted with this application identified the provision of a communal area of open space extending to 210 square metres at the end of the site, between the car parking area and the boundary,¹ with a further communal area of open proposed to the rear of the proposed Block 1 flats, in the existing yard area of the hotel.
11. A revised layout has recently been received showing the proposed fragmentation of the open space areas into small private garden spaces to serve each of the eight new properties, ranging in size from 15.5 square metres to 39.8 square metres. Boarded fencing of 750 mm in height is proposed to form the boundaries of each of the private areas. Provision is also made between the rear of the flats and the open space area for access through to a small hotel service yard, as well as access provision to a garden area and car parking space specifically identified to serve the residential dwelling which it is proposed to create in part of the former hotel. Two bike stances² are proposed close to the vehicular entrance off Spey Avenue, one at the gable end of each of the proposed new blocks. The area is also proposed to be screened from the road frontage by a 1.8 metre high boarded screen fence. A further boundary

¹ The site layout plan indicated that the communal area would also provide space for a bin stance, rotary clothes drier and sheds.

² Hard stances would be provided, incorporating steel mounts for secure locking.

treatment along the Spey Avenue frontage of the site is the retention of the existing stone and render wall in the south eastern area, between the gable end of Block 2 and the site boundary.

Background site history

12. Further to CNPA queries regarding the history of uses at the subject site, a detailed history of activities and uses of the buildings has been provided by the applicants. Records indicate that the original buildings on the site date from the early nineteenth century (c. 1808). The property was in residential use until 1855, when it became an inn.³ The property has been known as the Strathspey Hotel since the 1870's, despite numerous changes of ownership. The proposed 'townhouse' element of the existing building was a separate residential entity until the mid 1970's, when it was incorporated into the hotel and used as owners accommodation until 1985.

The applicant's case

13. A number of points have been advanced in supporting information provided on behalf of the applicant about the proposed development. The overall proposal is described as the "development of an unattractive brown field site that is situated on a main route into Grantown on Spey." In terms of the residential aspects of the development proposal, the eight flats are described as providing inexpensive accommodation for first time buyers and the proposal to convert part of the existing building back to its original function as a townhouse is considered to provide a further type of housing opportunity within the same development.
14. Other points about the proposal which has been highlighted in supporting information include the extensive use of timber including in the frame, roofing, windows and doors, as well as the use of natural slate which is "in character with the local area and recyclable." A commitment is also given to construct the new flats to a high level with good insulation resulting in lower heating costs. A final comment is made on the fact that the hotel has been unused in recent years and the proposal is intended to facilitate the reinstatement of the hotel with the consequent result of providing local jobs and "a draw for tourists."

³ The establishment was known as the New Inn, later becoming known as Dunbar's Hotel.

Previous applications on the site

15. Members will note that the two current applications are partially titled 'resubmission.' They replace earlier applications on the same site, which have recently been withdrawn following discussions with the CNPA planning group. CNPA planning ref. no. 07/455/CP was an application in which full planning permission was sought for the erection of 8 flats on the eastern area of the site (i.e. the vacant rear area of the site on Spey Avenue), with the units arranged in a two and a half storey block. The application was called in by the CNPA in November 2007. Two further applications on the remaining area of the site i.e. encompassing the hotel and the immediately surrounding ground, were called in by the CNPA in January 2008, with planning ref. no. 08/015/CP being an application for full planning permission for the erection of four flats, conversion of part of the hotel to a dwelling house and also alterations and extensions to the hotel, while planning ref. no. 08/016/CP was the associated application for Listed Building Consent.
16. Following an assessment of the applications on the combined site areas, the CNPA planning group detailed various concerns including the potential overdevelopment of the site, design issues and the need to take a coherent approach to the overall development of the site. The applications were subsequently withdrawn in April 2008 and the current applications were submitted in an effort to address the previously expressed concerns.
17. Background information submitted in relation to the earlier applications on the site referred to the hotel being disused for approximately five and half years until the applicants acquired the property in 2007. Since then the lounge bar has been re-opened as a 'café-bar' with entertainment. The overall rehabilitation plan for the hotel facility includes the provision of a limited number of bedrooms which would be significantly improved to a '3 star standard plus', the opening of the dining room to provide an a la carte menu, improvements to kitchen and toilet facilities and the provision of owner accommodation at second floor level.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

18. In the national context, **SPP 3 Planning for Housing** encourages the provision of well-located, high quality new housing, and suggests 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 discusses the Form of Development and 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.

19. **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.
20. **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.”
21. **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.
22. A detailed section on Landscape is also included in **PAN 67 Housing Quality**, which emphasises that the character and appearance of the land including its shape, form, ecology, natural features and the way they combine, is a key to designing houses that makes the most of its setting. It is advised that natural features should generally be conserved and emphasised, with additional new tree and shrub species complementing the area’s existing natural features. It also advocates the use of landscaping proposals to promote biodiversity.
23. **NPPG 18 – Planning and the Historic Environment** sets out planning policies in relation to the historic environment with a

view to its protection, conservation and enhancement. The overall approach is intended to secure preservation whilst also responding to and accommodating present day needs. The historic environment is recognised as being a fundamental part of Scotland's cultural heritage, having visual appeal, creating a sense of local, regional and national identity and shaping our understanding of the present and the past.

24. Listed Buildings are discussed in paragraph 12 of **NPPG 18** it is explained that the purpose of listing is to ensure that any demolition, alteration, repair or extension that would affect the buildings special architectural or historic interest is controlled. It is advised in determining an application for listed building consent or for planning permission for development affecting a listed building or its setting that the planning authority is required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraphs 13 and 14 discuss Conservation Areas, describing them as areas of special architectural or historic interest where it is desirable to preserve or enhance the character or appearance.
25. Paragraph 43 of **NPPG 18** details a number of issues which are generally relevant in considering applications for listed building consent and applications for planning permission affecting listed buildings. Issues include –
- “the impact of development proposals upon particular physical features of the building that justify its listed status;”
 - “the building's setting and its contribution to the townscape or landscape, having particular regard to the impact of development upon the views to and from the listed building;” and
 - “the extent to which the proposed works would bring benefits to the community, in particular by contributing to its economic regeneration of the area or the enhancement of its environment.”

Highland Council Structure Plan (2001)

26. The Highland Council Structure Plan acknowledges that the availability of housing is fundamental to social and individual well being and to creating and maintaining balanced communities. Section 2.2.1 of the Plan states that “adequate provision of housing is also a pre-requisite of economic growth” but also acknowledges that at the same time that it must be provided in a way which minimises the impact on the environment.

27. Section 2.15 of the Plan discusses the Built and Cultural Heritage. It is the general policy of the Council to seek to preserve and promote the built heritage as a valuable tourist, recreational and educational resource wherever possible. **Policy BC5** relates specifically to listed buildings and conservation areas where it is the policy to "preserve the Highland's buildings and groups of buildings of historic or architectural interest, some of which may be at risk of neglect, by the identification in Local Plans of opportunities for their productive and appropriate use."

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan

28. **General Policy 2.5.13. (Historic Buildings)** advises that there will be a presumption against development which would adversely affect the character or setting of all listed buildings. In the **Grantown-on-Spey settlement statement**, the principle objectives include, amongst other things, a need to accommodate growth of the town within its landscaped setting, consistent with maintaining local heritage assets; and safeguard the town's built heritage and setting, including its semi-natural woodlands. **Policy 3.5.1. (Conservation Area)** advises that development, including ancillary buildings, should be of a form and scale compatible with the character of the town and consistent with guidelines, including, amongst other things; finishes (natural stone or harled walls with roofs in slate or similar); design (roofs of 40 degrees, windows and doors of traditional dimensions and proportions, and gabled dormers); orientation/building lines (reinforcing established street frontages, possibly single storey tenement cottages on backland sites, and reinstatement of walls); and open spaces (safeguard important features and vistas).

Cairngorms National Park Plan (2007)

29. The **Cairngorms National Park Plan** sets out the strategic objectives for the Park under three headings, all of which are of relevance to the development proposal – (i) conserving and enhancing the Park; (ii) living and working in the Park; and (iii) enjoying and understanding the Park. In relation to conserving and enhancing the Park the objectives set out in the Plan include maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park and ensuring that development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park. The Plan also requires that new development in settlements and in surrounding areas and the management of public spaces should complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment. In elaborating on this particular objective it is advised that new development

should enhance the local identity, quality of public space and surrounding environment and that high quality design should be a feature of all new developments.

30. Under the heading of Living and Working in the Park, there is a specific section on Housing. Objectives include increasing the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park and ensuring that there is effective land and investment for market and affordable housing to meet the economic and social needs of communities throughout the Park.
31. In relation to Enjoying and Understanding the Park there is recognition that enjoyment of the park area is not only relevant to those people travelling to the Park, but is part of the everyday experience of those living in and around the area. The experience of residents and visitors alike should be of the highest quality. The Plan contains a number of strategic objectives for outdoor access and recreation, which include encouraging people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment.

CONSULTATIONS

32. **Historic Scotland** has assessed the proposal and made a number of comments. Whilst noting that **Historic Scotland** does not have a statutory remit relating to the siting of new buildings within the curtilage of B-listed buildings, the response nonetheless advises that the Planning Authority should be satisfied that any new buildings would not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the listed building. In terms of the proposed small extension to the listed building, the harled finish is generally acceptable.⁴ It is however recommended that the Planning Authority clarify all material finishes, including for example ensuring that the slates used would closely match the existing in terms of size, texture and colour. It is also recommended that any rooflights proposed should be of the conservation type, vertically oriented, flush with the roofline and with a vertical glazing bar.
33. In the course of the earlier (now withdrawn) planning applications on the site the **Conservation Architect** at Highland Council was consulted and much of the response remains

⁴ Reference is in fact made to comments previously made by Historic Scotland in relation to the earlier proposal on the site, in which concern was expressed over the stonework detailing that was proposed on the new extension in that instance.

applicable to this current application. The Conservation Architect noted that although built of natural rubble to match the general character and appearance of the listed building, the existing flat roofed two storey extension which is proposed for demolition "has very little architectural or historic merit" and similar comment was made in relation to the existing outbuildings. The overall form and scale of two blocks of flats was described as relating well to the two and half storey hotel. Comment was also made that the modern detached houses in the vicinity of the site could be argued to be out of character and scale with the conservation area.

34. A consultation response was also received from the Highland Council's **Team Leader in Development Management** in the Badenoch and Strathspey area in the course of the previous applications on the site and again the comments on the basic form of the proposal remain applicable to the current application. In townscape and amenity terms the author is supportive of the principle of using the heel of the pavement as the building line. The response acknowledges that historically "development was concentrated on the High Street with undeveloped open ground between those frontages and Woodside Avenue / Grant Road because of the unique pattern of long leases applied by the then feu / superior." However, it clearly stated that this should not be taken to imply that it is only in the High Street and The Square that development should adhere to the rear of the footway as a building line. The response further elaborates on this view, commenting that building on the heel of the footway gives a more appropriate urban feel as well as ordering space clearly between public realm and private space.
35. The consultation response on the current application from the **Highland Council's TEC Services (Roads)** department highlights some concerns regarding the absence of dedicated parking for either hotel guests or staff. Despite this however, it is conceded that "this should not present too much difficulty" given the close proximity of existing off street public parking and the town centre location of the subject site. Accordingly, a number of conditions are recommended to be attached to any consent granted. The conditions include a requirement that the access to the site is 5.5 metres wide in order to allow opposing vehicles to readily pass one another and also require that adequate visibility splays are provided and maintained; the provision of secure, covered cycle parking within the site; the construction of all internal road and parking areas to comply with the requirements for a minor access road as detailed in Highland Council's Road Guidelines

for New Developments; drainage measures to accord with SUDS principles and to ensure that all properties within the development will be free from the effects of a 1 in 200 years flood event. The Roads department also require that the public footpath fronting the north west and north east sides of the site shall be reconstructed to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority. The consultation response also advises that the road and parking areas will not be considered for adoption and will therefore require to be the subject of a suitable management and maintenance agreement.

36. The CNPA's Sustainable Tourism Officer has responded on behalf of the **Economic and Social Development Group**. The response refers to STEAM data which indicates that the Strathspey Hotel currently has 6 letting bedrooms. It is noted that the proposed development would reduce the number of bedrooms within the hotel to three. It is not considered that this would have any significant impact on the local economy and the potential of fewer bedrooms, but of a higher quality, is considered acceptable.

REPRESENTATIONS

37. Two letters of representation have been received in respect of the proposed development. A.C. Stuart of Kirn, Argyll refers to the site being in the Conservation Area and requires that the development retain the original character and integrity of both the High Street and Spey Avenue. The author objects to aspects of the proposed new build element of the development on Spey Avenue. Various examples are cited of the historic layout of the site, where under the first leases for the town, houses were built fronting onto the High Street, with building dykes around garden areas to the rear. Reference is made to the original sections of dyke remaining along the Spey Avenue boundary of the site, which are described as defining the original character of the planned town. The author also comments that the reduction in height (from the earlier application) of the south eastern block of flats is an improvement in terms of townscape. However, it is suggested that it ought to be sited back from the pavement line, with the stone dykes being retained or reinstated in the interests of conservation and amenity.
38. The second letter of objection comes from Seamus Lalor Associated Ltd, Planning and Development Consultants, acting on behalf of the owners of the single storey dwelling house, "Riverway" opposite the site on Spey Avenue. In discussing the

physical characteristics, reference is made to the site being within the Grantown on Spey Conservation Area and a requirement that new development be sympathetic to, and in character with, the existing vernacular character of the component parts of the Conservation Area. The letter suggests that the "character of Spey Avenue is fundamentally different to that of the High Street" commenting that the High Street is the traditional commercial heart of the town where it is expected that buildings of a larger civic scale be situated, while the Strathspey Hotel "sits astride the a corner of the Main Street and Spey Avenue and is of more modest massing." Comparisons are also made between buildings on the High Street generally being constructed on the heel of the footpath with no front garden, while Spey Avenue comprises of buildings which are generally residential in use and set back from the footpath.⁵

39. The proposed development is described as being unacceptable in terms of its design and external finishes. The position of the proposed new structures on the heel of the footpath is described as "oppressive in the setting" and should be stepped back. Concern is also expressed about the "lack of external amenities and vehicular circulation and parking for the combined uses of the hotel and residential properties." The proposal is described as an overdevelopment of the site and it is suggested that it should be revised "with a lower density, stepped back from the heel of the footpath and most importantly designed as an integral part of the entire site including the hotel." The submission also makes reference to **SPP1 The Planning System**, a number of **Planning Advice Notes** which contain fundamental guidance on design issues which the objector believes "the proposal fails to take into account."
40. Specific comment is made on the subject of Daylighting, Sunlight, Overshadowing and Privacy, with reference being made to a document produced by Edinburgh City Council on the subject. It is suggested that the proposed development fails to meet "current practice standards particularly in relation to the single storey cottage opposite the proposed site."

APPRAISAL

⁵ In a response received from the Highland Council's Development Management Team Leader in the Badenoch and Strathspey area in relation to the earlier application on the site, comment was made on the same points raised by the objector at that time regarding a set back and adherence to the pattern established by other more recent residential properties on Spey Avenue. The response from the Development Management Team Leader described it as "ironic that a house of suburban character developed with a disregard for traditional building grain should be used as an exemplar for future development in Grantown."

41. The proposed development is located within the settlement area of Grantown on Spey and as noted earlier in this report is within the Conservation Area and affects a Category B Listed Building. Consequently there are several issues to take into account in coming to a recommendation on the overall proposal, including the principle of a development of this nature and scale, its compliance with general planning policies, the impact on the Listed Building and the impact on the Conservation Area, as well as assessing impacts on traffic and the general and residential amenity of the area.

Principle of development

42. The area of the site to the rear of the Strathspey Hotel is essentially a brownfield site, which has a somewhat uncared for appearance at present, on a key approach to the core area of Grantown on Spey. The proposed development is consistent with the settlement statement in the existing Local Plan which includes amongst its objectives to accommodate growth of the town within its landscaped setting, consistent with maintaining local heritage assets; and safeguard the town's built heritage and setting. Having regard to the location of the proposed site close to the core area of the settlement it is reasonable to conclude that the variety of uses proposed, including new and re-introduced residential uses, as well as the retention and improvement of the existing commercial enterprise which is essentially the key stone of the site, are appropriate to the area and compatible with the existing variety of uses in the area. The basic principle of a development of this nature is therefore acceptable and in accordance with the land use patterns of the area.

Land use, design and layout

43. Following an acceptance of the principle of this type of mixed use activity on the site, there is then a need to examine the design specifics of the proposal. As Members will note from foregoing sections of this report, the current application has been submitted in place of a number of previous applications on the site and represents an effort to address the concerns that were raised by the planning authority. Some of the specific concerns included the potential overdevelopment of the site. In response the current 'new build' element of the proposal is for 8 flats, as opposed to the 12 units previously sought across the site area. The reduction in numbers has resulted in a number of benefits, including increased open space provision and car parking, and most significantly has facilitated a change in design. Whereas the previous proposals involved two blocks of

flats, both of similar height to the original hotel structure and of a utilitarian type design, the current proposal has been designed to acknowledge the subtle change across the site area, from the location of the Strathspey Hotel in the core area of the settlement towards the gradually reducing density and associated changes in land use pattern on land to the south east of the site. Consequently, block 1 of the proposed development, which lies closest to the original hotel structure, has been designed to reflect the two and a half storey design and adhere to the ridge height of that existing structure. In contrast block 2, which is proposed towards the rear of the Spey Avenue frontage, has a lower ridge height and is of conventional two storey design. The decreasing scale and height of the new structures on the site represent in my view an effective transition from the core area of the settlement to the lower density outlying areas.

44. Some concern has been expressed in letters of objection regarding the design, scale and positioning of the two proposed blocks of flats along Spey Avenue. As alluded to in the foregoing paragraphs the site lies at a point of transition between the core area that it immediately adjoins and the lower density of the predominantly residential areas further to the south east and east. The immediate vicinity of Spey Avenue is characterised by a diversity of uses (which include for example a filling station and associated retail facility, public car park and residential uses) and an associated variety of structures, including the commercial premises of the filling station, and some residential properties of suburban character dating from the second half of the 20th century which are set back and separated from the public footpath front garden areas. I do not share the objectors view that any new development on the site should be set back from the public footpath. The current proposal represents an efficient use of the land, allowing for the provision of adequate open space and car parking in an unobtrusive location to the rear of the new structures. Its adherence to the building line established by the original structure on the corner of the High Street and Spey Avenue relates well to the listed building and will provide an opportunity to create a strong streetscape in this location, which will enhance the Conservation Area.
45. The blocks of flats have also been designed to introduce entrances into the front (Spey Avenue) elevation, as opposed to earlier proposals with all access points contained in the rear elevation, which presented a closed frontage onto the public arena. The current design instead creates the appearance of semi detached dwelling units as opposed the entrance to flatted units.

46. In terms of the proposed site layout, some concern has been expressed by Highland Council's Roads Engineer regarding the adequacy of car parking provision within the site, particularly to serve either hotel guests or staff. Despite this, as reported in paragraph 34, this is not seen as an issue which would present difficulty and there is a realistic acknowledgement that the site is in close proximity to existing off street public parking as well as the general town centre area. The level of car parking provision on site to serve both the proposed flats and the reformed townhouse unit accords with required minimum car parking standards.
47. In terms of open space provision the site layout currently includes proposals for the division of open space into small private garden areas for each of the proposed residential units. While I consider that this approach is warranted in respect of the townhouse unit, particularly having regard to its proximity to the hotel yard area and its isolation from the remaining residential elements proposed on site, the fragmented nature of the available open space area throughout the remainder of the site is not in my view appropriate. Whilst the overall open space provision accords with the recommendations detailed in Highland Council's Development Plan Policy Guidelines, the individual 'gardens' are of varying sizes, with many being under the recommended individual area for the various flat sizes proposed. Also of significant concern is the visual impact likely to result from the creation of small individual garden areas, each contained by boarded fencing of 0.75 metres high. The availability of a large areas of communal open space, with the potential for associated landscaping, available for the use and enjoyment of all residents would be more appropriate to the proposed layout and is indeed the conventionally accepted form of open space provision to serve flats. In the event of consideration being given to the granting of planning permission, this is an issue which could be addressed through an appropriate condition.

Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area

48. The site lies within a Conservation Area and the proposal affects a Category B listed building, and one of the key issues to consider is whether or not the overall proposals on the site respect the setting of the Listed Building. The proposed development would result in the demolition of the existing two storey flat roof extension, which was added some time in the 20th century, with little or no regard to the design, proportions or character of the original building. The demolition of that element of the existing structures, as well as a number of sheds

on the site which are in a deteriorating condition, is in itself a positive step towards restoring much of the original character of the listed building. The separation of the new buildings from the hotel structure, together with efforts to reflect the scale and proportions of the original structure will ensure that the new build element does not impact on the particular physical features of the structure which have justified its listed status. It is an approach which is entirely consistent with that advocated in **NPPG 18, Planning and the Historic Environment**. A further positive aspect of the development is its potential to contribute to the economic regeneration of the area and to enhance its environment, which is again consistent with **NPPG 18**. As already detailed the hotel facility has been disused in recent years and this proposal will bring about its rejuvenation, as well as enhancing the Spey Avenue frontage of the site which lies in a prominent location within the Conservation Area.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

49. The proposed development would result in the demolition of an inappropriate extension on an existing listed building, which would assist in restoring the original character of the building. It would also result in improvements to the rear area of the site, which is currently in a neglected state and would result in the creation of a strong streetscape on this prominent site within the Conservation Area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

50. The details provided indicate where possible that efforts would be made to source salvaged or recycled materials, and where new materials or products are used they would be sustainable and from renewable resources.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

51. The development which is proposed to occur on a type of brownfield site in a prominent position on one of the main approaches to the core area of Grantown on Spey would represent an appropriate visual enhancement of the area. The rejuvenation and improvement of the commercial facilities associated with the hotel would also contribute towards the general public's enjoyment of the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

52. The proposal would provide purpose built flats in Grantown on Spey. In terms of size and location it has the potential to cater for some of the open market housing needs of some sectors of the local community. The recent re-opening of the Strathspey Hotel and the proposals for the improvement of the quality of facilities within the enterprise would be of economic benefit.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to :

(a) Grant full permission for the erection of eight flats; conversion of part of the hotel to a house; and alterations and extensions to the Strathspey Hotel at High Street, Grantown on Spey, subject to 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 complete set of survey drawings (including the internal layout and all elevations) of all existing structures on the site shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority.
3. Prior to the commencement of development full specification of all works for the Listed Building shall be submitted for the written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority.
4. Prior to the commencement of development, a photographic record shall be compiled of all existing structures on the site which are to be demolished, or where any form of alteration work (internal and external) 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.
5. Prior to the commencement of development a sample of the proposed slates shall be submitted for the approval and written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as

Planning Authority. All slates shall closely match the existing slates on the Strathspey Hotel in terms of size, texture and colour.

6. 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 inspection and the further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
7. Prior to the commencement of development a revised site layout plan shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority to show all areas of open space allocated as communal open space. For the avoidance of doubt the division of open space areas into individual garden area, as shown on the site layout plan, is not approved, with the exception of the garden area to serve the townhouse.
8. All windows and external doors shall be timber. Prior to the commencement of development revised elevation drawings shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority to show :-
 - (a) the window in the south eastern elevation of the townhouse extension redesigned to reflect the proportions and design of the windows proposed in the other new buildings on the site;
 - (b) the proposed rooflights in Block 1 designed as conservation type, vertically orientated, flush with the roofline and with a vertical glazing bar.
9. Prior to the commencement of development detailed drawings and specifications of the windows proposed in the new extension to the Listed Building shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with Historic Scotland.
10. 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.
11. Drainage measures shall accord with SUDS principles. The drainage measures shall ensure that all properties within the development are free from the effects of a 1 in 200 years flood event and that shall be no increase in flood risk to any properties upstream or downstream of the development.

12. 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.
13. Prior to any works commencing in connection with the proposed development the following works shall be completed and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with the Roads Authority –
 - (i) the internal road and parking layout shall be generally in accordance with the submitted details, except that the main access road shall be 5.5 metres wide, such that opposing vehicles can readily pass one another;
 - (ii) construction of the internal road and parking area shall comply with the requirements for a minor access road as detailed in Highland Council's Road Guidelines for New Developments;
 - (iii) the public road footway fronting the north west and north east sides of the site shall be reconstructed, as required to the satisfaction of the roads authority;
 - (iv) visibility splays shall be provided and maintained each side of the site access. These splays are the triangles of ground bounded by the first 2.5 metres along the centreline of the access road (the x dimension) and the nearside edge of the main road (the y dimension) measured at least 20 metres in each direction from the intersection of the access road with the main road;
 - (v) within the visibility splay nothing shall obscure visibility between a driver's eye height of 1.0 metres positioned at the x dimension and an object height of 1.0 metres anywhere along the y dimension.
14. All car parking areas, driveways and other hard standing areas shall have a durable, dust free, porous surface.
15. 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.
16. 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. 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. 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.

17. 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.

And

(b) Grant Listed Building Consent for for the erection of eight flats; conversion of part of the hotel to a house; and alterations and extensions to the Strathspey Hotel at High Street, Grantown on Spey, subject to 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 complete set of survey drawings (including the internal layout and all elevations) of all existing structures on the site shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority.
3. Prior to the commencement of development full specification of all works for the Listed Building shall be submitted for the written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority.
4. Prior to the commencement of development, a photographic record shall be compiled of all existing structures on the site which are to be demolished, or where any form of alteration work (internal and external) 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.

5. Prior to the commencement of development a sample of the proposed slates shall be submitted for the approval and written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. All slates shall closely match the existing slates on the Strathspey Hotel in terms of size, texture and colour.
6. 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 inspection and the further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
7. All windows and external doors shall be timber. Prior to the commencement of development revised elevation drawings shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority to show : -
 - a. the window in the south eastern elevation of the townhouse extension redesigned to reflect the proportions and design of the windows proposed in the other new buildings on the site;
 - b. the proposed rooflights in Block 1 designed as conservation type, vertically orientated, flush with the roofline and with a vertical glazing bar.
8. Prior to the commencement of development detailed drawings and specifications of the windows proposed in the new extension to the Listed Building shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with Historic Scotland.

Advice notes :

- (a) Prior to any work of demolition, excavation and surfacing starting within 2 metres of the public road edge a road opening permit shall be obtained from the Roads Authority.

Mary Grier
19 June 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,

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
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