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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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

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

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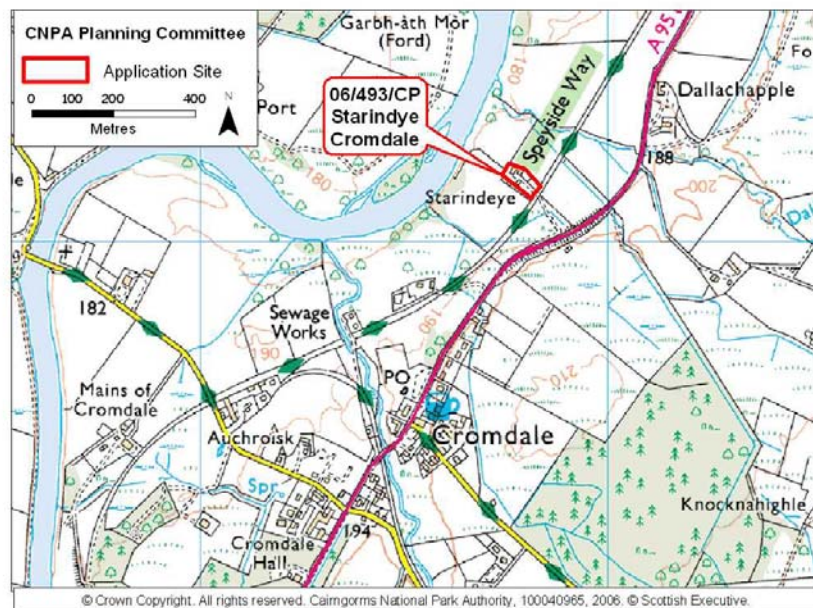
**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: FULL PERMISSION FOR DEMOLITION OF A STEADING AND ERECTION OF A HOUSE EXTENSION AT STARINDYE, CROMDALE, GRANTOWN ON SPEY.**

**REFERENCE: 06/493/CP**

**APPLICANTS: MR. AND MRS. W. SIMPSON, C/O CM DESIGN, 1-5 PINETREE HOUSE, PINEFIELD CRESCENT, ELGIN, IV30 6HZ**

**DATE CALLED-IN: 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006**

**RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE**



**Fig. 1 - Location Plan**

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Full permission is sought in this application for the demolition of a steading which is positioned to the rear of an existing dwelling house and the erection of an extension to that dwelling house. The property is known as 'Starindye' and is located a short distance to the north east of Cromdale. The site is accessed by a single track private access road which extends approximately 120 metres from its junction with the public road (A95). The access road crosses the Speyside Way, which runs adjacent to the front boundary of the subject site. The land is lower lying than the public road and there are views down towards the existing property on both the south western and north eastern approaches of the A95, as well as from wider areas of surrounding countryside. At its closest point the River Spey is located 112 metres to the west of the subject site.
2. The existing dwelling house on the site is a one and three quarter storey structure. The older section of the property consists of a stone finish, which has been whitewashed and has the appearance of a traditional cottage. A single storey extension, of much more recent construction, exists to the rear and has a harled finish and includes uPVC windows and doors. A slate roof exists on both elements of the existing structure.



Fig. 2 : Existing traditional frontage



Fig. 3 : More recent rear extension

3. The steading which is proposed for demolition is located to the rear of the existing dwelling house, on a slightly lower ground level. It extends in an L shape from the rear of the existing house and is of stone construction under a corrugated iron roof.



Fig. 4 : Existing L shape steading

4. The steading, although adjacent to the dwelling house, does not adjoin it. One of the wings of the L shape steading follows the line of northern gable of the dwelling house, whilst the other wing of the L shape extends from north to south at the rear of the dwelling house. The open area between the existing dwelling house extension and the steading has been utilised to create a raised area of timber decking. The ground floor of the steading is lower than that of the dwelling house. The structure does not appear to be in active use, other than as a storage area.



**Fig. 4 : Existing front and side elevation, as viewed from the A95**



**Fig. 5 : Originally proposed northern (side) elevation**



**Fig. 6 : Revised side elevation**

5. The proposed extension is of a substantial scale, extending in an elongated form to the rear of the property. The extension is a one and three quarter storey design, with its side elevation extending approximately 18 metres from the rear of the dwelling. By comparison, the northern side (gable) elevation of the existing dwelling extends to just 5 metres and the property has a frontage of 13.5 metres. Although the design of the proposed extension has been amended in the course of this application its overall scale and form has remained similar throughout. The amended design now incorporates varying roof heights on the northern side elevation and includes two projecting gable features, incorporating elements of stonework. In a submission from the agents it is stated that the revised proposal has been designed “to reflect the approach elevation of a traditional steading,

with a subservient link provided between the existing cottage and the traditional steading.”

6. The rear elevation of the proposed extension forms a gable. Floor levels are lower than the existing dwelling house. The first floor of the extension is approximately 900 mm above the ground floor level of the existing extension to the rear of the dwelling, whilst the ground floor of the proposed extension is approximately 1500mm below the existing ground floor levels. A large glazed section is proposed on the upper floor, incorporating centrally positioned double doors which open onto a projecting balcony area. A window and rear access door are proposed at ground floor level below the balcony. Stone sourced from the demolished steading is proposed on the rear elevation. A new window opening is also proposed in the rear elevation of the existing extension.



**Fig. 7 : Proposed rear elevation**

7. The (southern) side elevation of the extension is similar in design at first floor level to the originally proposed treatment of the northern side i.e. dormer windows partially recessed into the roof space. At ground floor level, a double width door is proposed to provide access to a domestic garage area. Due to the changing floor levels, and the existence of a raised deck to the rear of the existing dwelling, three small elongated windows are proposed at head height to provide natural light in the remaining area of the ground floor side elevation.



**Fig. 8 : Proposed southern side elevation**

8. With the exception of the aforementioned areas of stone, the majority of external walls are proposed to have a ‘wet dash Tuscany beige roughcast’, all under a slate roof. Treated redwood double glazed windows are proposed and are intended to be painted white. The existing septic tank would remain in use. The new extension is proposed to accommodate a kitchen, dining room, shower room and gun tackle room at ground floor level, as well as a double garage. At

first floor level the internal layout plan shows a bathroom, bedroom / study and a large master bedroom including a dressing room and en suite bathroom. The master bedroom opens onto the previously detailed balcony.

9. In response to queries raised by the CNPA regarding the need for an extension of the scale proposed, the agents stated that “the applicant is a prominent local businessman who has invested significantly in the local economy and wishes to continue to reside in the local community.” It has been indicated that the existing home is insufficient to accommodate the applicants needs and despite looking at other available housing stock in the area, has been unable to find anything to meet his needs and “as a last resort he has decided to enlarge his small family home to provide more suitable accommodation for him and his family.” In response to a CNPA suggestion that the existing steading should be considered for use, as opposed to its demolition and construction of the proposed large new extension, the agents indicated that a detailed inspection of the building found it to be in a poor state of repair and unsuitable for conversion. In addition “the dramatic changes in level between the existing house and steading meant that it was impossible to retain the integrity of the steading whilst incorporating it into the proposed extension.”

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

10. **Highland Structure Plan 2001**  
The **Highland Structure Plan 2001** where used as a land use planning document is intended to set out broad principles on which individual planning decisions are made and give a framework for the development of Local Plans. Section 2.2.1 – 2.2.23 of the Structure Plan relates to Housing and deals with the broad issues, focusing on the principles of affordable housing provision, housing in the countryside, and the provision of housing for varying needs. It does not therefore contain specific policies and / or design guidance on domestic extensions or other developments of that nature and scale.
11. In relation to the Built and Cultural Heritage, the **Structure Plan** strategy is similar to that of the National Park Authority, where its aim is to conserve and promote the unique identity of the region’s main strengths. The **Structure Plan** particularly mentions the varied and distinctive character of the towns and villages as being a key component of this identity (section 2.15.1). The Plan’s strategic sustainability policies aim to ensure that future developments are of a design and quality to enhance the built environment, whilst safeguarding the area’s existing heritage as a vital part of the Highland’s future. Although the built heritage is defined in the **Structure Plan** as comprising of various components including archaeological sites, listed buildings, historic gardens and designed landscapes and conservation areas, none of which relate to the subject

site, it is considered that the general aspirations expressed in the **Structure Plan** in relation to the Built and Cultural Heritage are nonetheless applicable.

**Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997**

12. The subject site is outside the settlement area of Cromdale in a Restricted Countryside Area. Within such areas there is a strong presumption against the development of new houses, where exceptions will only be made where a house is essential for the management of land, related family and occupational reasons.
13. The **Development Plan Policy Guidelines** which were adopted by the Highland Council in April 2003<sup>1</sup> contain a detailed section on standards for design and sustainable construction. Under the heading of 'House Extensions' it is stated that extensions and alterations should :
  - Not dominate the original structure;
  - Be designed as an integral part of the property, reflecting its existing character;
  - Ensure external materials, windows and doors are similar to those of the existing property; and maintain neighbouring amenity, daylighting and privacy at an acceptable level;
  - Be set back from the side property boundary by at least 1 m.

**CONSULTATIONS**

14. **SEPA** has commented on the application under three headings – foul drainage, surface drainage and flood risk. There is no objection to the foul drainage arrangements. It is also noted that surface water drainage is to be via separate soakaways and this is considered to provide the appropriate level of treatment for a sustainable drainage system and is acceptable to **SEPA**.
15. In relation to flood risk **SEPA** note the proximity of the property to the River Spey, but nonetheless state that Starindye is outwith the indicative limits of flooding as shown on the Indicative River and Coastal Flood Map (Scotland). It is also commented that alterations and small scale extensions to buildings are outwith the scope of Scottish Planning Policy 7 “provided they would not have a significant effect on the storage capacity of the functional floodplain or affect local flooding problems.” **SEPA** do not consider it necessary to request a flood risk assessment, given the location of the site and the nature of the proposed development.

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<sup>1</sup> In March 2006 Highland Council adopted revised **Development Plan Policy Guidelines** dealing with 'Housing in the Countryside.' A decision was taken by the CNPA in January 2007 not to adopt the 2006 guidelines and therefore the **Development Plan Policy Guidelines** of April 2003 remain in effect. In any case the Guidelines from 2003 contain standards for design and construction which were not superseded in the 2006 Guidelines.



16. The **Environmental Health Officer** at Highland Council has examined the proposal and notes that no details have been provided of the proposed water supply arrangements, although it is his understanding that the property is currently served by a private water supply, which also serves a number of other neighbouring properties. As the development proposal is for an extension to an existing property, the Environmental Health Officer does not consider it necessary to impose any additional restriction regarding the water supply “provided that the applicants can demonstrate that there is sufficient quantity of water to cope with the potentially increased demand.” It is suggested that this could be done by providing a report from a suitably qualified person such as a hydrologist or civil engineer. Having regard to the comments of the **Environmental Health Officer** the CNPA requested that such evidence be provided. However, the information has not been submitted at the present time.
17. The **Archaeology Section** of Highland Council stated that the application would affect a building that is depicted in the first edition Ordnance Survey map c. 1870. It is recognised that the steading may since have been altered. Nonetheless, the Archaeology Section recommend that major alterations should not be carried out without a visual record first being made and it is recommended that a detailed condition requiring this is attached in the event of the granting of planning permission.<sup>2</sup>
18. In an initial assessment of the proposal Highland Council’s **Contaminated Land** section referred to an indication within the application that the site has had a previous use as an agricultural building / steading and consequently required the completion of a questionnaire in order to provide details of all previous uses of the site. The questionnaire has recently been submitted.<sup>3</sup>
19. The CNPA’s **Visitor Services and Recreation Group** have assessed the proposal and noted in particular that the subject site lies adjacent to the Long Distance Route of the Speyside Way, with the route crossing the access track to the site. It is noted that the existing house is currently occupied and that the long distance route has been in existence in this location for over 20 years and it is not therefore expected that the proposed extension to the residential property would raise any new issues with regard to the integration of access in the vicinity of the house site.

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<sup>2</sup> The recommended condition states that “prior to the commencement of development, a photographic record shall be made of the remains of old buildings and / or other features affected by a proposed development, in accordance with the attached specification, and shall thereafter be submitted to the Planning Authority. No site clearance work shall take place until confirmation in writing has been received from the Planning Authority that the record made has been lodged and is satisfactory.”

<sup>3</sup> The information submitted indicates that “part of the steading building has previously been utilised as a domestic garage, with the site owner undertaking maintenance of the vehicle. All oil and other materials were removed from the site when the maintenance was complete.”

20. **VSRG** refer to the possibility of some disturbance during any potential construction phase and suggest the use of advisory signage aimed at users of the Speyside Way and drivers of construction vehicles at the intersection of the route and the access track.

## REPRESENTATIONS

21. No representations have been received in respect of the development proposal.

## APPRAISAL

22. There are a number of issues to consider in assessing this proposal, including the principle of an extension to the existing dwelling house, whether or not the proposed extension is appropriate in terms of scale and design and the impact of the development on the general landscape.
23. The principle of a suitably designed extension on a traditional rural property is generally acceptable and supported by policy. However, in accepting the principle it is then necessary to examine the specifics of the current proposal, in particular the scale of the extension and its relationship with the existing, relatively modest sized traditional dwelling. The scale of the originally proposed extension and the amended proposal are both extremely large and undoubtedly dominate the original structure. An examination of the northern side elevation illustrates this (please refer to figures 4 to 6 of this report), where the proposed new extension extends approximately 18 metres, in comparison to the 5 metre span of the side elevation of the existing residence. The proposed extension would form a highly prominent feature, particularly when viewed from the northern approaches to the site from the A95, as well as from the adjacent Speyside Way. A new extension of the scale proposed, together with its excessively elongated design fails to respect the proportions of the existing traditional structure.
24. Reference has been made in earlier sections of this report to the agents comments that the amended design is intended to “reflect the approach elevation of a traditional steading, with a subservient link provided between the existing cottage and the ‘traditional steading.’ It is not however a view that I share. The raised roof height in the central section, which effectively creates a full two storey structure is not reminiscent of the simple single storey steading which is currently in place on the site. Efforts to incorporate elements of natural stonework are insufficient to suggest that the design even reflects a traditional steading. The mock arch effect is a further feature which would serve to emphasise the distinction between the new extension and the simplicity of design in the traditional dwelling house, rather than echoing any aspect of the existing steading. Amended detailed



drawings have not been submitted for the remainder of the elevations and it is therefore assumed that such elevations remain largely unaltered.

25. With regard to the original proposal, despite displaying a more simplistic design approach on the northern side elevation, in particular adhering to the roof height of the existing dwelling house and having a consistent external finish, the proposed extension is still of excessive scale and dominates the existing residence. The treatment in the gable end elevation, which includes a significant area of glazing at first floor level as well as the projecting balcony further serve to emphasise the fact that the extension does not reflect the character of the traditional property and when viewed from the surrounding areas (including views by users of the River Spey just 112 metres to the west), would have the potential to appear as an incongruous addition, rather than an integral part of the original property. The inappropriate nature of the proposal is further demonstrated by the poor visual relationship between the proposed extension and the existing smaller scale extension to the rear of the property. Admittedly the introduction of double doors onto the existing decked area would reflect to some extent the extensive glazing proposed at first floor level in the new extension. Aside from this feature and the addition of a window in the rear elevation of the existing extension, there is little consistency in the treatment of both gabled sections. This is partly due to the complications of changing ground levels and the resultant changes in the height of ridge lines, finished floor levels and the position of windows and doors relative to the changing levels.
26. Although not particularly detailed, a case has been advanced as to why the existing steading could not be incorporated into the dwelling house extension – reference has been made to its poor state of repair, but also more significantly the “dramatic changes in level between the existing house and steading.” Having regard to the siting of the existing dwelling house, including the more recent extension at the rear, in such close proximity to the steading and the fact that development on the site to date has compromised the original setting and functional appearance of the steading, I do not consider that the demolition of the steading represents a significant loss of the cultural heritage of the area.
27. In conclusion, the proposed development is an extension of excessive scale, which would dominate the original structure, detract from the traditional character of the property and set a precedent for other similar inappropriate extensions in other areas. The development would have a significant visual impact and would form an obtrusive feature in the landscape, visible from a large area of the surrounding countryside.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

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

28. The proposed extension would have a significant visual impact and would detract from the landscape of the area in which it is proposed. It would also result in the loss of a steading and would detract from the traditional character of the property onto which the extension is proposed.

### Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

29. Insufficient information has been submitted to establish the source of the materials proposed in the extension.

### Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

30. The proposed development would have a significant visual impact and would form an obtrusive feature in the landscape, which would be particularly visible to users of the adjacent Speyside Way long distance route.

### Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

31. The proposed development is not of relevance to this aim.

## RECOMMENDATION

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

**Refuse full planning permission for the demolition of a steading and the erection of an extension to a dwelling house at Starindye, Cromdale, Grantown on Spey for the reasons listed hereunder -**

1. The proposed development is excessive in scale, would dominate the original structure and detract from the traditional character of the property. The proposal therefore fails to comply with the standards set out in relation to House Extensions in Highland Council's **Development Plan Policy Guidelines**. The proposal would also set a precedent for other similar inappropriate extensions in other areas of the Cairngorms National Park.
2. The proposed development would be injurious to the visual amenity of the area, would form an obtrusive feature in the landscape, particularly when viewed from heavily used surrounding areas including the A95 trunk road, the Speyside Way long distance route and the River Spey. The proposed development would therefore

detract from the enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the general public.

### **Determination Background**

The application was called in for determination by the Cairngorms National Park Authority on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Following an assessment of the proposal and the receipt of relevant consultations, the CNPA issued a letter to the applicants agent on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007 requesting additional information, including a request for significant design changes to the proposed extension. Further to the issuing of a further letter repeating the request on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007, a draft amended proposal was received on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

**Mary Grier**  
**18 July 2007**

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The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.