
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE, PRINCESS ROYAL & DUKE OF FIFE MEMORIAL GAMES PARK, BRAEMAR

REFERENCE: 07/062/CP

APPLICANT: BRAEMAR ROYAL HIGHLAND CHARITY

DATE CALLED-IN: 23 FEBRUARY 2007

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

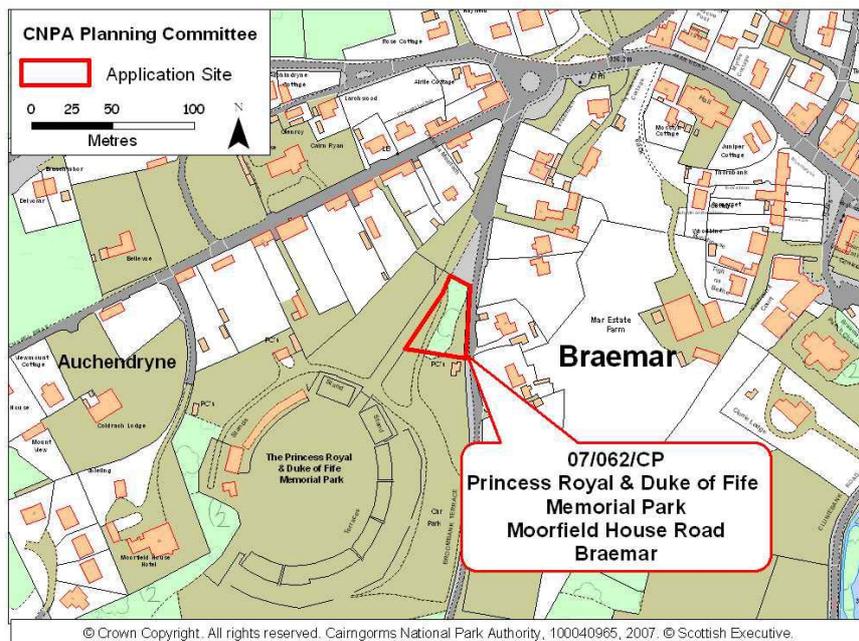


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site for this application is immediately to the east of the Memorial Park entrance gates within the Braemar Conservation Area (see figs 1 & 2). The site is bounded to the west and east by the entrance track to the Park and a track immediately to the east which provides access for a line of houses stretching around the back of the park. Just to the south of the site is a small toilet block.
2. The site is a triangular wedge of ground that undulates and rises towards the toilet block to the south. There are several birch trees on the site and approximately 6 of these would be lost to accommodate the proposal, although other trees in the vicinity of the site would be retained.



Figure 2 - Entrance to Games Park, Site for New Building on left of photograph

3. The site is where the world famous Braemar Highland Gathering is held every year. The purpose of the proposed development is to provide a new administrative centre to replace the existing small building within the village that the games are run from. This building is some distance away from the Games Park. The proposed new building would provide administrative and interpretative facilities for the site and would also be capable of hosting community events. A detailed supporting statement is attached at the back of the report setting down the justification and facilities to be provided.



Fig 3 - View to Site from Games Park



Fig 4 - Sketch Entrance Elevation



Fig 5 - Main Elevations

4. The design of the building has been subject to pre-application advice with both Aberdeenshire and CNPA Planning Officers. The proposed building is of a single storey design in a circular shape for the entrance section of the building with a more conventional rectangular plan form to the rear which will incorporate an auditorium (see figs 4 & 5). The finish will be natural slate for the roof, with pink coloured harling for the walls, all windows and doors will be in a dark stained timber. All guttering is to be cast iron.
5. The layout of the building includes an entrance area in the circular part of the building, together with administration offices. At the centre of the circular area will be a display area than a linking corridor to a kitchen and auditorium behind. The proposal incorporates landscaping with a paved path around the western side of the building. The overall length of the building is approximately 29 metres.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

National Guidance

6. **Scottish Planning Policy Note 15 “Planning for Rural Development”** considers that tourism is of vital importance to the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Scotland. Many areas depend on tourism for jobs and infrastructure. Planning Authorities should support the development of the tourism and leisure industry with appropriate policies on siting and design of new development. Planning Authorities need to be aware of the growth areas of business and cultural tourism. They should be supported by provision of appropriate facilities at key locations.

North East Structure Plan (NEST) 2001-2016

7. **NEST Policy 6** considers that tourism and related developments shall be encouraged where they are compatible with policies to safeguard and enhance the built and natural environment.

Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2006

8. **Policy Gen\1 Sustainability Principles** notes that development will be assessed against sustainability indicators that relate to the local environment, community and economy, demonstrated by whether the proposal: a) is concerned with the long term sustainable management of land; b) is well related to existing settlements and avoids dispersed patterns of development; reduces the need to travel using private cars, by being close to existing public transport or allowing safe, easy access by walking and cycling; d) protects or enhances any valuable natural resources, including landscapes, habitats or species; e) does not damage built or cultural heritage resources; f) does not impact negatively on the character, including landscape character,

environment or amenity of the surrounding area; g) makes full use of design and technology to maximise the efficient use of energy and resources, and minimise light pollution; h) does not prejudice future development opportunities nor create a precedent for future inappropriate development patterns i) reduces the production of waste and manages it as a resource in accordance with the waste hierarchy; j) does not give rise to hazards, pollutants, flooding or nuisances in the surrounding area; k) does not compromise public health or safety l) provides new or helps support existing local employment and m) helps support existing community services and facilities.

9. **Policy Gen2 The Layout Siting and Design of New Development.** New development will be approved in principle, if: a) it can be laid out to fit successfully into the site itself and respect the character and amenity of the surrounding area; b) its scale, massing, height and density are appropriate, whilst displaying a high standard of design, materials, textures and colours that are sensitive to the surrounding area; c) it respects existing natural and built features on or about the site which are worthy of retention; d) it respects the characteristics of the landscape in which it will be situated; e) it has an environmentally friendly layout, particularly taking account of energy efficiency; f) it respects important public views; g) and it is a bona fide mixed use development where appropriate.
10. **Policy ENV5A National Scenic Areas (NSA)** considers that development that would have an adverse effect on a National Scenic Area will be refused unless the developer demonstrates a) any significant adverse effects on the quality for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits of national importance; b) the objectives of designation and overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; AND c) there is no alternative site for the development. In all cases the highest standards of design, in terms of location, scale, siting, aesthetics and landscape will be required in the NSA's.
11. **Policy ENV7 Protected and Other Open Areas** in Settlements considers that development that would have an adverse effect on a Protected Area or other open area within settlements will be refused unless: a) it is for an essential community facility which cannot be located elsewhere and whose public benefits clearly outweigh the value of the site to the settlement's special character or amenity; AND b) it would positively impact on the settlements overall special character or amenity. **In the case of playing fields and sports facilities, they should not be redeveloped except where: i) the retention or enhancement of facilities can best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site, which would not affect its sporting potential of amenity value; OR ii) there would be no loss of amenity and alternative provision of equal community benefits and accessibility would be made available; AND in either case iii) there is a clear long term excess of pitches, playing fields.**

12. **Policy ENV17 Conservation Areas** All designated conservation areas shall be protected against any development including change of use, that would have a detrimental effect on their special character or setting, by the refusal of planning permission or conservation area consent. New development wholly or partly within Conservation Areas must be of the highest quality, and respect and enhance the architectural and visual qualities that give rise to their actual or proposed designation. All proposals must follow the Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.
13. **Policy EMP19 Tourist Facilities and Accommodation** considers that new or improved tourist facilities will be approved in principle, if: a) they respect the character, amenity and scale of development in the surrounding area; b) they are reasonably accessible by public transport where available, by cycling and on foot, or would deliver major improvements to public transport services in scale with the development; c) they are well related to existing settlements and avoid dispersed patterns of development, unless the developer has demonstrated a locational requirement based on the need to be near to the specific tourist interest being exploited, and that the facility will not damage those interests.
14. **Policy EMP 8 Office Development** considers that new office development will be approved in principle if: a) it respects the character, amenity and scale of the surrounding area; b) it is readily accessible by public transport, cycling and on foot, or would deliver major improvements to public transport services in scale with the development where available, in order to reduce the reliance on the private car; c) it is located close to where people live and reduces the need to travel; d) wherever possible it makes use of derelict, despoiled, unused or underused land and buildings.

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

15. **Under 5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park** Strategic Objectives for Landscape Built and Historic Environment include a) maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park c) Ensuring development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park; d) New development in settlements and surrounding areas and the management of public spaces should complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment. Strategic Objectives for Culture and Traditions consider that there is a wealth of culture and tradition associated with the long history of people living in the Park area. Many of these traditions and cultures remain a strong influence on the identity of the Park and its communities. Strategic objectives for culture and traditions include a) developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions associated with the Park's places and communities; b) supporting and promoting the diverse cultural traditions of communities within the Park

16. Under **5.3 Understanding and Enjoying the Park** a range of objectives include b) Improving and maintaining the quality of experience in the Park for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry; c) maintaining a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park; e) strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Park and the contribution that it makes to the local and regional economy.

CONSULTATIONS

17. **Aberdeenshire Council** Environment Officers consider the proposal acceptable and have no comments.
18. **Aberdeenshire Council Roads** The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of visibility and the existing parking at the site will accommodate the additional spaces required for this development.
19. **Aberdeenshire Council Planning Gain Officer** has negotiated a level of contribution towards affordable housing, public arts. There is also a requirement for cycle racks which can be dealt with by planning condition. The agent for the application has confirmed that monies will be paid prior to the issue of any planning decision notice to avoid the costs of any formal legal agreement.
20. **Aberdeenshire Council Built and Natural Heritage** has no comments on the proposal.
21. **Cairngorms National Park Economic and Social Development Group** considers that the centre will make a positive contribution to Braemar, the community infrastructure and the Games arena. It should add to the overall experience of the visit and should not have any impact on tourists or residents.
22. **Scottish Water** has confirmed that Braemar Waste Water Treatment Works currently has sufficient capacity to service the proposed development and there are no known issues at present with the waste water network that would service this proposed development.

REPRESENTATIONS

23. A supporting statement from the architect is attached at the back of the report. There have been no other representations.

APPRAISAL

24. The key issues in relation to this application relate to the principle of the development proposed, the appropriateness of this use at the site and the design of the building.
25. The site takes up a small section of the existing Games Park and the building proposed is intended to provide a ticket office admin centre and exhibition space/auditorium. Currently there is no gateway feature at the entrance to the Park and on the day of the games tickets are bought at the gate.
26. Given the use of the site a building to help administer and interpret it would seem entirely appropriate and a range of policies in the development plan context section would support the principle of the proposal as would the strategic objectives for culture and traditions and tourism in the National Park Plan. The site is located within a protected area under Policy ENV7 of the Aberdeenshire Local Plan, but this policy is intended to safeguard sites from developments that would undermine their sporting or public use. This proposal is clearly intended to further reinforce, enhance and protect the use of the Games Park. Consequently, I see no conflict with Policy ENV7. The applicants have raised concern that many visitors to Braemar go to the entrance to the Games Park but there is no interpretation of the facility and little to see when there is no activity in the arena. The new building will provide a focus for the site and allow the applicants to display existing artefacts about the Games which currently do not have a site for display.
27. In terms of siting the building is located at the entrance to the site on the left hand side of the gate. Siting the building as an entrance feature to the Park is clearly appropriate. The building in its position would result in the loss of around 6 birch trees. Because of this pre-application negotiations looked at the possibility of using the flat area opposite this site on the other side of the entrance gate. However, this is the prime area on games day for corporate tents and siting this building in that area would have a significant financial impact on the money raised and for this reason the proposal could not be brought forward on that site. Given the practical implications the proposed site is considered acceptable in principle, replacement trees will be sought for those to be lost by planning condition.
28. The design of the building essentially has two elements. The first is a circular entrance feature which will house a ticket, admin office and small display area at its centre. The circular design has echoes of traditional toll booths and also echoes the shape of the games arena itself. The roof of the building would be in natural slate with panels of glazing to let light down through to the display area. A glazed canopy will form an entrance feature; this is best seen in figure 4 of the report. The rear section of the building is formed by a rectangular shape which

will house the auditorium. This will have finishes that match the circular part of the building. The auditorium section of the building originally had a high roof which caused concern regarding potential impacts on residential neighbours to the east of the site. The architect amended the drawings before submission of the application and the ridge height of the auditorium building is 5.5 metres, essentially single storey and at this height there would be no unacceptable impacts upon neighbours. In addition, there are no windows or doors on the elevation of the auditorium that faces the houses.

29. This building proposed is considered to be of a high quality, individual design, that would positively enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal is also considered to contribute well to the aims of the Park particularly in terms of enhancing the existing cultural heritage of the area and in terms of promoting understanding and enjoyment of the Gathering. I have no hesitation in recommending approval of the scheme.

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

30. The proposal contributes well to this aim. While several birch trees will be lost replacements can be sought. In cultural heritage terms the proposal contributes to the effective running of the Gathering and in terms of providing an interpretation facility for the history and culture of the event.
31. The scheme also contributes an additional interesting building that will positively enhance the character and appearance at the entrance to the site and the wider Braemar Conservation Area. the proposal also makes a contribution to public art in the area as planning gain.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

32. There are no details as to where material will be sourced but construction would be likely to be carried out by a local company. The application also allows the provision of cycle racks by planning condition.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

33. The proposal will clearly help to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Games and create a better profile for the event at the entrance to the site.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development

34. The building would provide a centre and focus for the event and in part would be a tourist attraction that may attract additional visitors to the village who may be likely to spend time at other local commercial facilities such as shops and hotels. The application is put forward by a

local charity organisation using a local architect. The building would also be able to accommodate community events. The application also makes a financial contribution to affordable housing in the area through planning gain.

RECOMMENDATION

35. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT** Full Planning Permission for the erection of administrative centre, Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Games Park, Braemar, 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. Exact details and specifications of all proposed external finishing materials (including roofing materials) shall be submitted for the further approval of the Planning Authority before any work commences on site.
 3. That from the date at which this planning permission is granted, no trees on the site shall be uprooted or damaged. Trees on the site shall only be felled, lopped or topped with the prior written approval of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.
 4. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority before development commences. The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and landscaped areas on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the development and shall include a phasing programme for implementation and shall indicate the siting, numbers, species and heights (at the time of planting) of all trees, shrubs and hedges to be planted and to the extent of any areas of earthmounding, and shall ensure:-
 - (a) Completion of the scheme during the planting season next following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
 - (b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity in accordance with the detailed maintenance schedule/table. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within three years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

5. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for the provision of secure cycle racks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the CNPA. The cycle racks shall be in place and ready for use prior to the first use of the building.
6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a construction method statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the CNPA. The statement shall include locations for any building storage compound, site accommodation and spoil storage areas together with the destination of any spoil to be removed from the site.

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Date 20 June 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.