
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING HOUSE AND ERECTION OF 6 FLATS (OUTLINE PP), KILA, GRAMPIAN ROAD, AVIEMORE

REFERENCE: 06/444/CP

APPLICANT: LAUREL GRANT LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

DATE CALLED-IN: 3 NOVEMBER 2006

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

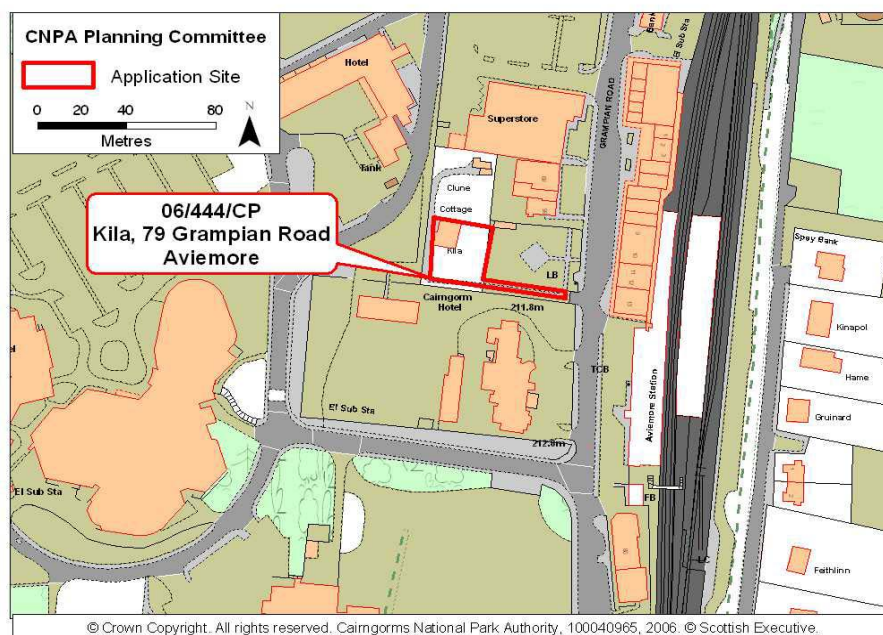


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site for this application is a house known as 'Kila' to the rear of the village green public square on Grampian Road between the Cairngorm Hotel and a row of shops that join Tesco's supermarket to the north. The site is located close to the railway station. The site is partly screened from the public area by a line of trees on the eastern boundary of the site to be developed.



Fig 2 showing site access



Fig 3 showing Kila (to be removed)



Fig 4. Current construction site for bus lay-by and landscaping on village green, application site behind trees.



Fig 5 Site Layout Plan (Please note that drawing is for indicative purposes only)

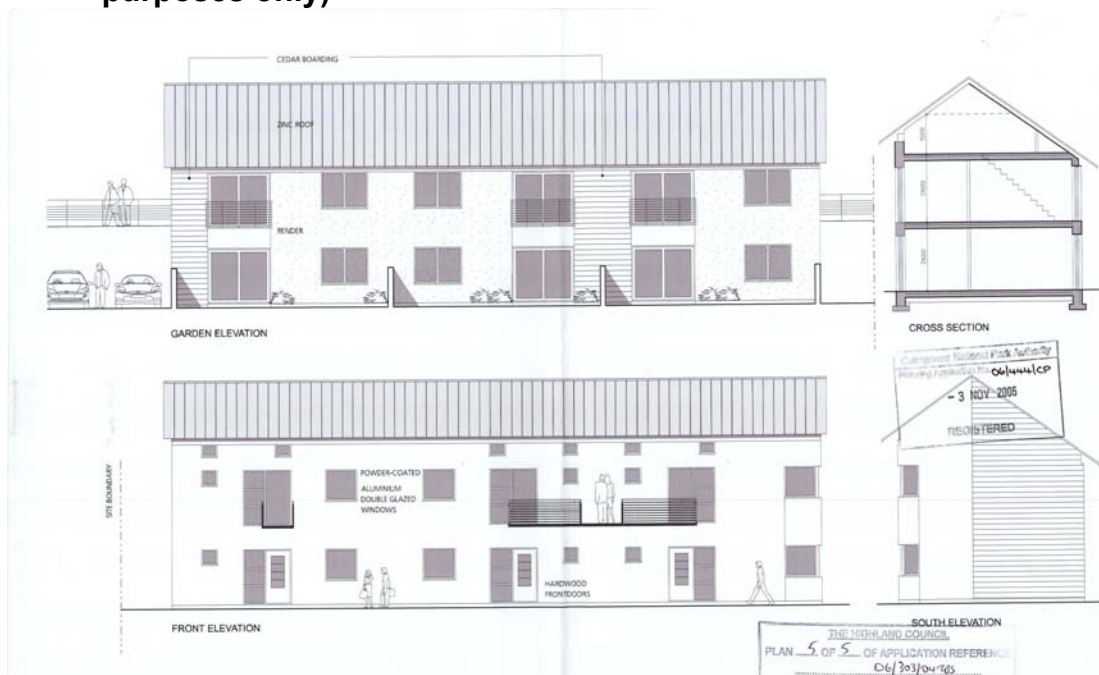


Fig 6 Elevations (Please note that drawing is for indicative purposes only)

2. Kila is run by the existing occupant as a B & B. It is proposed that the house be demolished and replaced by 6 flats. Access would follow the same route as existing along a tree-lined track bordering the Cairngorm Hotel. Full design details of flats have been provided (see figs 5 & 6). These can only be considered as indicative as this is an outline application for the principle of the development only.

3. The proposers of this scheme are the same applicants as for the large retail development to the north of the site which includes the existing Tesco's site. What is put forward here is essentially a low cost housing proposal for the over 50s to form a planning gain package as part of the larger development. However, it is understood that it may be the case that the applicants would consider running with this proposal as a stand alone scheme in any case. The proposal has been put forward after negotiations with the Community Council. The proposed purchasers would effectively purchase the units at a discount on the open market value. A trust is to be set up to administer the marketing of the units. The proposed purchasers will be required to satisfy certain agreed criteria, including an age eligibility threshold of over 50, a connection to Aviemore and a maximum savings and income threshold.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

4. In the **Highland Structure Plan 2001, Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)** states that developments will be assessed on the extent to which they, amongst other things, are compatible with service provision; are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking as well as by car; maximise energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design; make use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and recycled materials; impact on individual and community residential amenity; impact on habitats, species, landscape etc; demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design; promote varied, lively and well-used environments; and contribute to the economic and social development of the community.
5. **Structure Plan Housing Strategies** aim to steer demand for housing development to appropriate locations within settlements. **Policy L4 (Landscape Character)** requires regard to be had to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character in the consideration of development proposals.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

6. In the overall principles for the settlement the Local Plan seeks to establish an agreed framework for major expansion and environmental enhancement of the Aviemore area; to ensure sufficient choice of building land to meet housing opportunities for all needs; to transform the image and texture of Aviemore, "green up" the village, and restore links with its setting and wider environment.
7. **Policy 6.1.1** of the Plan recognises that the Council will promote improvements in the quality and design of Aviemore's built environment and its relationship with adjoining countryside in accordance with the principles of Gillespies Urban Design strategy, where these are consistent with the Local Plan.

8. The site itself is part of a wider allocation on the Local Plan Proposals Map for Commerce/Tourism. **Policy 6.2.8** notes that other land within the village centre adjoining Grampian Road is allocated for consolidation of existing shopping, office and tourist uses. Apart from the larger commercial schemes to the north the council will expect other schemes to retain existing buildings where these are deemed to make a significant contribution to the local townscape.

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

9. The Living and Working Section of the Park Plan includes amongst others strategic objectives to: a) increase the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park; d) ensure there is effective land and investment for market and affordable housing to meet the economic and social needs of communities throughout the Park.

CONSULTATIONS

10. **Highland Council Area Roads and Community Works Manager** has commented on the application and considers that direct vehicle access from Grampian Road to a development of the scale proposed would conflict with the operation of the proposed Aviemore Transport Interchange. The access road proposed does not satisfy the requirements for Highland Council's Road Guidelines for new developments in that the geometry of the road does not comply with adoptable standards. In the view of the above the Area Roads Manager is unable to recommend approval of the application in its present form.
11. **Highland Council Conservation Architect** comments that unlike the neighbouring Cairngorm Hotel, which is listed and the non-listed terrace of late 19th century shops fronting Grampian Road it is not considered that Kila has any architectural or historic merit in its defence. Whilst there is no objection to its demolition in principle, as part of the overall development proposals, concern is expressed that the proposed replacement building, fronting the "village green" is somewhat architecturally uninspiring.
12. **CNPA Economic and Social Development Group (Housing)** has been consulted. In terms of housing demand the highest demand is for one-bedroom properties. There is clearly a demand for one-bedroom properties for rent but this does not necessarily mean that the same would be for housing for sale. The applicant seems to be developing their own kind of low cost ownership with the land to be delivered at nil cost so that the units can be purchased at discount on the open market value. Each subsequent sale price is fixed in perpetuity at the original sale price. This may make it difficult for people to move on as there will

be no value rise in the property. There is potential that people may not wish to purchase a property with such a restrictive burden.

13. In terms of the eligibility criteria of a threshold age of over 50, a connection to Aviemore and a maximum income and savings threshold these would appear to be reasonable suggestions, the Community Council should be consulted upon this to ensure it is what is wanted. A valid point is made by the applicants solicitor in terms of who would maintain the houses. However with housing for sale maintenance always falls to the owner. In relation to the housing proposed housing for the elderly is usually on one floor. However, the criteria of 50 cannot be regarded as elderly in any case.

REPRESENTATIONS

14. **Aviemore Community Council** have raised no objection in principle to the development but are not happy with the zinc roof proposed and are not impressed by the bland design for the build in the centre of the village. The Community Council feel that the site merits a show piece.
15. No individual representations have been received.

APPRAISAL

16. This is an outline application for 6 flats on the site of an existing house known as Kila that is operated as a B & B. The applicants have provided indicative design drawings but these are purely indicative and are not for consideration here. Consequently, the main issues relate to the principle of the residential redevelopment of the site, the nature of the residential proposed and then the technical issue in relation to access.
17. As mentioned the site currently has a residential use. Despite this the site is allocated for a commerce/tourism use on the Proposals Map of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan which supports the consolidation of existing tourism and commerce uses within the area. Despite this Plan allocation I am clearly of the view that residential development is acceptable on this site, not least because there is an existing land use and that existing land use is residential in the form of Kila which is also run as a bed and breakfast establishment.
18. In addition to the above it is important to note that this application has come about, in part because of the large outline commercial consent granted by the CNPA for retail uses to the north of the site including Tesco's itself. This approval consolidates the commercial core of Aviemore to a very considerable consent. The use of the site proposed here for residential is insignificant by comparison with the main

proposal for commercial just to the north of this site which complies in principle with the commerce/tourism policy.

19. Essentially this proposal is associated planning gain required of the outline consent for retail at the site to the north. That outline planning consent included a condition requiring the development to “incorporate provision for community use that takes account of the outcome of prior consultation between the applicant and Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council”. The affordable housing proposed at this site is essentially to fulfil the requirements of that condition. In accordance with its requirements the applicants have undertaken extensive consultation with the Community Council and some background papers relating to this are attached at the back of the report. The Community Council are supportive of the approach in principle.
20. The land would be provided by the applicants at cost. A trust would be set up including members of the Community Council to administer the sales of the units at an affordable cost with potential purchasers being nominated by the Trust. Because of the nil land cost they would be purchasing the units at a discounted price. This would help to ensure that these particular affordable houses are able to be accessed by local people. Criteria would set an age eligibility threshold of over 50, a connection to Aviemore and maximum income and savings thresholds. The criteria would provide affordable housing in a way which can ensure that local people will gain access to the housing. In planning terms this is viewed positively and accords with the strategic objective of the National Park Plan to increase the accessibility of owned housing to meet the needs of communities.
21. Of key concern is ensuring that the housing remains affordable. Detailed mechanisms regarding this are still under discussion the key point being how the houses will be affordable in perpetuity while still being attractive to potential purchasers. The CNPA’s Housing Policy Officer has looked at the proposals for ensuring the affordability of the housing and agrees that there appears to be some merit in them and there is some evidence of demand for smaller one-bedroom properties. However, there are slight problems with the draft mechanism particularly relating to the fact that the flats would not gain value over time and concern that this would be an excessive burden for potential purchasers, also leading to potential concerns about maintenance. This may prove to be an innovative mechanism for providing housing for local people that will be administered by the community themselves, however, there needs to be more clarity on this issue. A condition of this consent will require information to be supplied detailing the exact mechanisms for the sale of the houses and how they will be retained as ‘affordable’ in perpetuity. This information would need to be supplied alongside any future detailed application for the site.

22. Some concerns have been raised regarding the design of the flats proposed. However, this is an outline application so design issues are not for consideration, a detailed application would have to be submitted should this outline prove acceptable. In this instance, the drawings are useful in indicating how the site could physically accommodate 6 flats in principle.
23. The key technical issue relates to concern from the Area Roads Manager that a development of this scale would interfere with the operation of the Aviemore Transport Interchange. The main works for the interchange are on the Railway Station side of Grampian Road. However, a lay-by and bus shelter for coaches is being constructed on the west side of the road on the green in front of the development site, these works are currently ongoing. This raises concern about visibility for vehicles exiting the proposed site. However, the dwelling known as Kila is operated as a B & B and advertised as such in a range of tourist brochures and web-sites. In addition the existing bus stop is literally less than a metre from the access into Kila so a level of traffic conflict already occurs between the bus stop and the access to Kila. Given that Kila is operated as a house and tourism business, in my view, the scale of what is proposed is not so different from how the site is operated at the moment. I find it difficult to anticipate how an affordable housing project aimed specifically at the over 50s would generate traffic of a scale so beyond that of the current use that would justify refusal of this scheme. In addition, it is to be noted that the Area Roads Manager does not raise an objection as such but just states that the scheme cannot be supported in its present form. The Area Roads Manager has raised concern that the access shown is not up to adoptable standards. However, again, it must be noted that this is an outline planning application, the detailed design of the road will be dealt with at the detailed application stage should members wish to approve this outline proposal in principle.
24. This site would essentially be next to a service entrance for the larger retail development to the north proposed by the same applicants. This application has yet to be considered by the Planning Committee. The northern boundary of this housing site would be close to a service entrance for the retail development. There are currently no issues relating to this site regarding potential disturbance from neighbouring land uses. However, when the retail scheme is determined careful account will have to be taken of potential disturbance and noise from the retail development and how it may effect any permission for residential on this site.

Conclusion

25. Overall, this is a very positive proposal that could provide an innovative mechanism to provide affordable housing for local people. Some concern has been raised by the Area Roads Manager that development at this scale would potentially interfere with the new Transport Interchange. However, it must be recognised that the change in scale between a house operated as a guest house and six flats is not so great as to justify refusal of what is otherwise a positive proposal in principle. In addition, the close proximity of the site to a wide range of services in the centre of Aviemore, including the new Transport Interchange itself should help to reduce any over reliance on the private car to access the site.

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

26. The proposal would have little impact on the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The loss of Kila is not considered significant by Highland Council's Conservation Architect. However, a condition will ensure that a photographic record is made of the building.

To Promote the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources of the Area

27. The proposal would result in a small housing scheme within the centre of a settlement that hosts a range of services. This would reduce the reliance on the private car for accessing services. The site is immediately adjacent to the Transport Interchange currently under construction. Details of materials would be with any detailed application for the site.

To Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

28. The proposal results in the loss of a single B & B operator but this loss is not considered significant set against the overall tourist accommodation available in Aviemore.

To Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area's Communities

29. The proposal performs well in terms of this aim by supplying affordable housing for the over 50s that will be administered by and occupied by members of the local community.

RECOMMENDATION

30. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT Outline Planning Permission** for the demolition of existing house and erection of 6 flats at Kila, Grampian Road, Aviemore, subject to the following conditions:
1. A formal planning application and detailed plans indicating all matters relating to the siting, design and external appearance of all buildings, means of access thereto, means of enclosure and landscaping proposals shall be submitted for the prior approval of the CNPA acting as Planning Authority within 3 years of the date of this consent and the development must be commenced within 5 years of the date of this permission or within 2 years from the date of final approval of all the foregoing Reserved Matters.
 2. 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 CNPA acting as 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.
 3. No trees shall be lopped, topped or felled on the site from the date of this decision notice unless otherwise agreed by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.

4. For the avoidance of doubt the housing hereby approved is considered as affordable and any future reserved matters application on the site shall be accompanied by a full scheme to show how the flats will be administered and how they will be retained as affordable housing for the over 50s. This shall generally be in line with the letter submitted by the applicant's legal representative dated 10 August 2005 and the applicants e-mail to the Community Council dated 17 May 2006. The flats shall then be retained as affordable under the terms of the approved scheme.

5. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a photographic record of the property known as Kila shall be submitted to and approved by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.

Andrew Tait

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.