
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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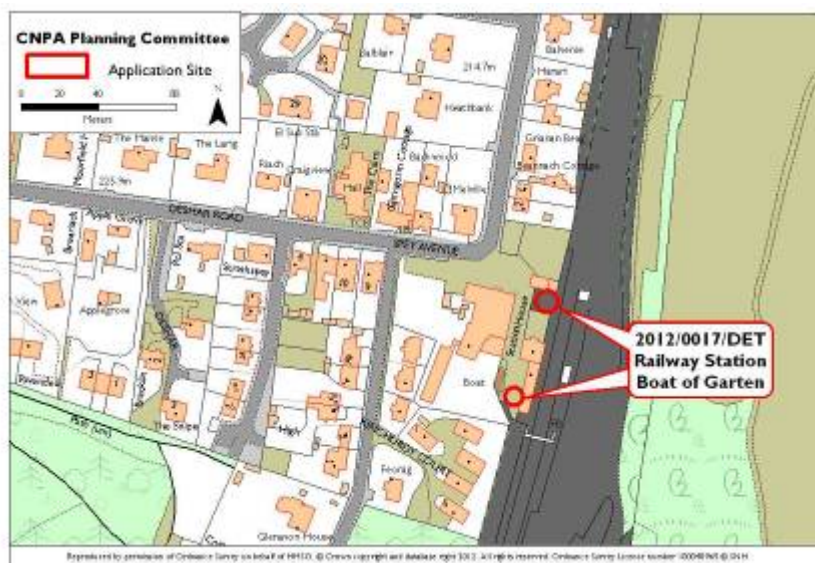
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE USE OF LAND FOR SITING OF AN INTERPRETATION POINT, 2 SCULPTURES AND RE-LOCATION OF FENCE AND SURFACING OF THE STATION FORECOURT AT BOAT OF GARTEN RAILWAY STATION.

REFERENCE: 2012/0017/DET

APPLICANT: MRS. ALISON FIELDING, ON BEHALF OF BOAT OF GARTEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DATE CALLED-IN: 3 FEBRUARY 2012

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS



Grid reference : 294354 818905

Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. This application is on land at Boat of Garten Railway Station. Boat of Garten Community Council are seeking planning permission for a variety of enhancement measures on the land surrounding the railway station buildings, including the siting of an interpretation point and the erection of 2 sculptures. Improvements works are also proposed involving the re-location of a fence and the surfacing of the station forecourt. The development is described in supporting documentation as the 'Boat of Garten Station Square Heritage Project.'
2. *Interpretation point:* the structure is proposed in the northern end of the open platform area, close to an existing bike rental facility. The open area currently accommodates a number of picnic tables which are available for public use. The structure has been designed to replicate rolling stock from the Strathspey railway and would serve as a public information point. The 'windows' would function as display panels for a range of information and interpretative material. The applicants originally envisaged that the rolling stock replica would also serve as a seating area. However, following advice from the local Access Forum regarding the difficulties that the seating may present for wheelchair users or the visually impaired in terms of hindering their access to the interpretation and information materials, the applicants amended the design to remove the seating. The structure would be 2.3 metres high and would be constructed of a combination of steel, wood and polycarbonate.



Fig. 2: Proposed 'rolling stock' location

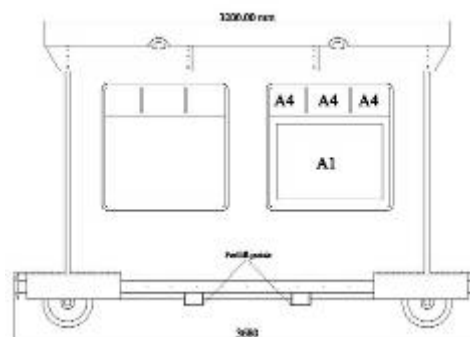


Fig. 3: Proposed 'rolling stock' replica

3. The first of the two sculptures proposed is a 5.2 metre high piece, designed as a feather emanating from the inner wing of an osprey, while also incorporating a train track in order to reflect the close links between "the train station and the osprey town." The sculpture would be made of a combination of polished and oxidised steel. Consideration has been given to the weathering effect on the sculpture, with supporting information indicating that it is a "strong fabrication designed to take weather into consideration, and icing would be encouraged to form to a fair amount to give the appearance of a white winter feather." It is also indicated that lighting could be incorporated into the design. However, lighting proposals have not been shown on the drawings currently submitted. The 'osprey feather' sculpture is proposed at the southern end of the open platform, in front of the railway station cottage.



Fig. 4: proposed sculpture location

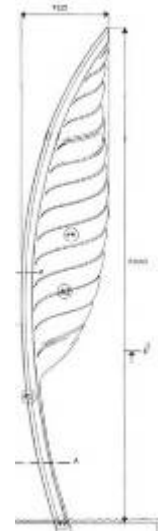


Fig. 5: Feather

- The second sculpture is proposed adjacent to the western embankment which forms the boundary of the forecourt of the railway station building. The sculpture depicts a horse and cart – a Clydesdale horse pulling a loaded cart from the station. The sculpture would be made of polished and oxidised steel, similar to the osprey sculpture. It is designed to have a rusted / weathered look over time. Extending to a height of 1.8 metres, it would have a footprint of 5.8 metres x 200 mm approximately. The sculpture would be secured in place to ground anchors behind the wheels and horses legs.

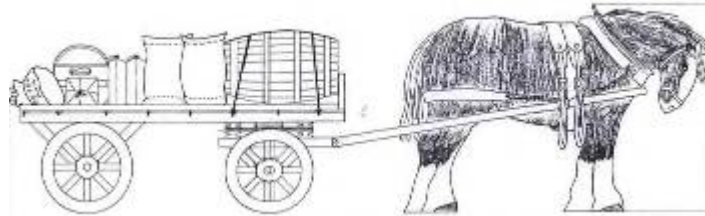


Fig. 6: Horse and cart sculpture



Fig. 7: Proposed location

- The description of the development proposal also refers to the resurfacing of Station Square. New fencing is also proposed to be erected to replace the existing fencing on the western perimeter of the platform area. A new picket

fence would be erected in line with the existing fence on the western boundary of the station house garden.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

National policy

6. **Scottish Planning Policy¹ (SPP)** is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It supersedes a variety of previous Scottish Planning Policy documents and National Planning Policy Guidance. Core Principles which the Scottish Government believe should underpin the modernised planning system are outlined at the outset of **SPP** and include:
 - The constraints and requirements that planning imposes should be necessary and proportionate;
 - The system shouldallow issues of contention and controversy to be identified and tackled quickly and smoothly; and
 - There should be a clear focus on quality of outcomes, with due attention given to the sustainable use of land, good design and the protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment.
7. **SPP** emphasises the key part that development management plays in the planning system, highlighting that it should "operate in support of the Government's central purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth." Para. 33 focuses on the topic of Sustainable Economic Growth and advises that increasing sustainable economic growth is the overarching purpose of the Scottish Government. It is advised that "the planning system should proactively support development that will contribute to sustainable economic growth and to high quality sustainable places." Planning authorities are encouraged to take a positive approach to development, recognising and responding to economic and financial conditions in considering proposals that would contribute to economic growth.
8. Under the general heading of Sustainable Development, it is stated that the fundamental principle is that development integrates economic, social and environmental objectives, and that the "aim is to achieve the right development in the right place."
9. As a replacement for a variety of previous planning policy documents the new **Scottish Planning Policy** includes 'subject policies', of which many are applicable to the proposed development. The topic which is of the most relevance to the current proposal is 'economic development'.
10. *Rural development*: the planning system is noted as having a significant role in supporting sustainable economic growth in rural areas. In encouraging rural development para. 95 is explicit in stating that the aim is not to see small settlements lose their identity, but to maintain and improve the viability of communities.

¹ February 2010

11. *Historic environment: the* historic environment is recognised as a key part of Scotland’s cultural heritage and it enhances national, regional and local distinctiveness. SPP recognises that although many historic resources are not designated, they are nonetheless important as part of Scotland’s heritage.
12. *Landscape and natural heritage:* SPP recognises that the landscape in both the countryside and urban areas is constantly changing and it states that the aim is to facilitate positive change whilst maintaining and enhancing distinctive character.
13. **Scottish Planning Policy** concludes with a section entitled ‘Outcomes’ in which it is stated that the “planning system should be outcome focused, supporting the creation of high quality, accessible and sustainable places through new development, regeneration and the protection and enhancement of natural heritage and historic environmental assets.”

Strategic Policies

Cairngorms National Park Plan (2007)

14. The Cairngorms National Park Plan sets out the vision for the park for the next 25 years. The plan sets out the strategic aims that provide the long term framework for managing the National Park and working towards the 25 year vision. Under the heading of ‘conserving and enhancing the special qualities’ strategic objectives for landscape, built and historic environment include maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park, ensuring that development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park, and ensuring that new development in settlements and surrounding areas and the management of public spaces complements and enhances the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment.
15. Under the heading of ‘Living and Working in the Park’ the Plan advises that sustainable development means that the resources and special qualities of the national park are used and enjoyed by current generations in such a way that future generations can continue to use and enjoy them. Strategic objectives for economy and employment include creating conditions that are conducive to business growth and investment that are consistent with the special qualities of the Park and its strategic location and the promotion of green business opportunities. Section 5.3 of the Plan concerns ‘enjoying and understanding the park’ noting that the Cairngorms National Park is known for its outstanding environment and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Structure Plan Policy

Highland Council Structure Plan (2001)

16. **Highland Council Structure Plan** is founded on the principles of sustainable development, which are expressed as –
 - Supporting the viability of communities;
 - Developing a prosperous and vibrant local economy; and

- Safeguarding and enhancing the natural and built environment.
A variety of detailed policies emanate from the principles.
17. The following provides a brief summary of the policies applicable to a development of this nature. Tourism is regarded in section 2.4 of the Plan as a vital element of the Highland economy, with the identity including its built heritage and its history and culture. Reference is also made to the need to consider community needs and ensure that facilities and opportunities are provided which serve the needs of both visitors and local residents alike.
 18. Section 2.4 of the Plan deals with the subject of landscape, stating that “no other attribute of Highland arguably defines more the intrinsic character and nature of the area than its landscape.” Similar to national policy guidance, there is a recognition that landscape is not a static feature and that the protection and enhancement of landscape and scenery must be positively addressed. **Policy L4 Landscape Character** states that “the Council will have regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character in the consideration of development proposals.”
 19. Section 2.15 of the Structure Plan focuses on Built and Cultural Heritage. It recognises the need to safeguard the existing heritage as a vital part of Highland’s future. Para. 2.15.2 states that the Council will seek to preserve and promote its built heritage as a valuable tourist, recreational and educational resource wherever possible.

Local Plan Policy

Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (2010)

20. The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan was formally adopted on 29th October 2010. The full text can be found at :
<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/publications/results.php?publicationID=265>
21. The Local Plan contains a range of policies dealing with particular interests or types of development. These provide detailed guidance on the best places for development and the best ways to develop. The policies follow the three key themes of the Park Plan to provide a detailed policy framework for planning decisions:
 - Chapter 3 - Conserving and Enhancing the Park;
 - Chapter 4 - Living and Working in the Park;
 - Chapter 5 - Enjoying and Understanding the Park.
22. Policies are not cross referenced and applicants are expected to ensure that proposals comply with all policies that are relevant. The site-specific proposals of the Local Plan are provided on a settlement by settlement basis in Chapter 6. These proposals, when combined with other policies, are intended to meet the sustainable development needs of the Park for the Local Plan’s lifetime. The following paragraphs list a range of policies that are appropriate to consider in the assessment of the current development proposal.

23. Policy 6 – Landscape: there will be a presumption against any development that does not complement and enhance the landscape character of the Park, and in particular the setting of the proposed development. Exceptions will only be made where any significant adverse effects on the landscape are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance and all of the adverse effects on the setting of the proposed development have been minimised and mitigated through appropriate siting, layout, scale, design and construction.
24. Policy 11 – the Local and Wider Cultural Heritage of the Park: the policy outlines a presumption against development that does not protect or conserve and enhance a site, feature, or use of land or wider or cultural historic significance, or its setting.
25. Policy 16 – Design Standards for New Development: this is one of a number of policies which is intended to encourage developers to consider how they can best include the principles of sustainable development in their proposals, and consider the impact on the environment, economy and community. Policy 16 requires that all proposals are accompanied by a design statement which sets out how the requirements of the policy have been met. The design of all development is encouraged to :
- Reflect and reinforce the traditional pattern and character of the surrounding area and reinforce the local vernacular and local distinctiveness, whilst encouraging innovation in design and materials;
 - use materials and landscaping that will complement the setting of the development;
 - demonstrate sustainable use of resources; and
 - be in accordance with the design standards and palette of materials as set out in the Sustainable Design Guide.
26. Policy 33 – Tourism related development: the policy supports tourism related development which would have a beneficial impact on the local economy through the enhancement of a range and quality of tourism attractions and related infrastructure.
27. The subject site is located within the settlement of Boat of Garten, which is classified as an intermediate settlement within the settlement hierarchy in the Local Plan.

CONSULTATIONS

28. **CNPA Economic Development Officer**: The Economic Development Officer considered the development proposal in the context of economic development and visitor information. It is noted that the development will provide an information hub and focal point for visitors to both the steam railway and the village. It is also suggested that the proposal would improve the visitor offering within the village and could potentially encourage people to stay longer or visit again. The development may deliver potential economic benefits and there is no objection to the proposal.

29. **CNPA Visitor Services Officer:** The consultation response from the Visitor Services Officers indicates strong support for the proposal and refers to CNPA involvement with, and support of, the Boat of Garten Heritage Group. The development is considered a good way to achieve several objectives, including
- Enabling visitors to Boat of Garten to find out about the village and its character and identity;
 - Raising visitors awareness that they are in the Cairngorms National Park and understanding how Boat of Garten is part of that sense of place;
 - Providing an opportunity to encourage visitors alighting from the steam railway to venture into the village; and
 - The establishment of Station Square as a visitor hub.
30. The Visitor Services Officer also notes that the proposed development of a 'visitor hub' supports the delivery of National Park Plan priorities for action, such as action point 2b to "identify key places in and around the Park where there is a need or opportunity to get messages across and make suitable modifications" and action point 3a to "develop and promote a hierarchy of visitor information about outdoor access opportunities."

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

32. The development proposed in this application is part of a community initiative which is intended to enhance Station Square in Boat of Garten. The square is a key focal point for both visitors to the area and the community, including those alighting from the Strathspey Steam Railway and also those using other existing facilities in the vicinity such as the Boat Hotel opposite or the adjacent community garden. The proposed works are relatively minor additions to an area in which visitor and community use is already firmly established.
33. The principle of providing improved facilities is acceptable and consistent with applicable planning policies. The ethos behind the project demonstrates strong compliance with the aims of the National Park. For example, efforts have been made in the development proposal to acknowledge the natural and cultural heritage traditions which are closely associated with Boat of Garten, including the significance of the steam railway to the village, and the village's close linkages to the local osprey population. The enhancement of facilities in this area of the village, including the provision of the rolling stock replica and the potential it offers to act as an information and interpretation point, will undoubtedly contribute to the general public's enjoyment of the area. In addition, the consultation responses from the CNPA's Economic Development Officer and the Visitor Services Officer both allude to the potential economic benefits and improved facilities in Station Square could encourage visitors to remain in the area for longer.

34. In examining the detail of the proposal, the scale of the two sculptures and the interpretation point are appropriate to the area and to their specific setting. The 'feather' sculpture is elongated in form and its location will create a discreet focal point at one end of the open platform area, without being obtrusive or detracting from the traditional vista of the front elevation of the adjacent railway station cottage. The rolling stock replica interpretation point is larger in scale, but is nonetheless acceptable in its location. The design of the rolling stock piece and its close linkages to the history of the location render it compatible with the setting. The second sculpture – the horse and cart – is proposed in a position which will attract the attention of visitors as they emerge from railway station building. However the location adjacent to the existing stone wall, with the rising embankment behind, is also sufficiently discreet to ensure that the sculpture does not detract from the simplicity and functionality of the forecourt of the railway station building. The use of polished and oxidised steel on the sculptures also serve as a unifying element.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

35. The various aspects of the proposed development have been designed to reflect natural and cultural heritage features which are part of the unique identity of Boat of Garten. The development provides opportunities for interpretation and information. It will assist in conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

36. The nature of the materials required for the proposed sculptures are unlikely to be sourced locally.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

37. The proposed development contributes significantly to the aim of promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the area. The development will provide new opportunities for visitors to gain access to interpretation material and general information about the area, which will assist the understanding and enjoyment of visitors to the area, as well as providing an information point which could be of benefit to the local community.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

38. The proposed development will introduce features of interest to the Station Square area of Boat of Garten. The range of sculptures and the interpretation and information material that would be provided in conjunction with that is likely to encourage visitors to experience the area and would therefore contribute to the economic development of the area. The potential use by the local community, as an information hub, would also contribute to the social development of the area.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to GRANT planning permission for the use of land for the siting an interpretation point, 2 sculptures and relocation of fence and surfacing of station forecourt at Boat of Garten Railway Station, subject to the following conditions :

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or amended by the Planning etc. Scotland Act 2006.

2. Prior to the commencement of development details of the proposed surface treatment shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The agreed surface treatment shall be applied thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and in order to ensure that all surface finishes are appropriate to the setting.

3. Prior to the commencement of development details of the colour scheme of the replica rolling stock interpretation point shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The agreed colour scheme shall be implemented and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and in order to assist in conserving and enhancing the cultural heritage of the area.

4. Prior to the commencement of development details of all lighting proposals shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The agreed lighting shall be installed thereafter.

Reason: In order to minimise light pollution and protect the general setting.

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21 March 2012

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.