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Ms Sara Krawczynska
Local Plan Inquiry Programme Officer
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
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23 April 2009

Our Ref: JF/CS
Email: claire.smith@ryden.co.uk

Dear Ms Krawczynska

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN INQUIRY
WRITTEN SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF DINNET AND KINORD ESTATE
OBJECTION REFERENCE: 438**

Edinburgh
0131 225 6612

Glasgow
0141 204 3838

Leeds
0113 243 6777

Dundee
01382 227900

Inverness
01463 717202

Please find enclosed 2 no. copies of our expanded written submission in respect of the above.

I trust that this is appropriate, however, should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Claire Smith
Planning Consultant

Enc.

cc Dinnet and Kinord Estate

Cairngorms National Park Local
Plan Inquiry

Written Submission

on behalf of Dinnet & Kinord Estate
in relation to land at Dinnet
(Objection Ref: 438)

23 April 2009

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Dinnet and Kinord Estate, which extends to approximately 25,000 acres, is located at the main eastern entry point to the Cairngorms National Park. The Estate has embraced the objectives of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and contributes significantly to the economy of the area. It currently employs 15 full time workers with a significantly greater number in seasonal occupation. Employee numbers have increased in recent years and it is anticipated this growth will continue. The Estate's activities include farming, forestry, country sports and property lettings.
- 1.2 On behalf of Dinnet and Kinord Estate, objections were lodged to the Cairngorms National Park Deposit Local Plan on 26 September 2007. A total of three objections were submitted which related to the failure of the plan to identify Dinnet as a settlement with provision for future housing development; housing land requirement and supply; and, Ballater Proposal BL/H1. These objections were acknowledged by the Authority by letter on 17 December 2007 also enclosing the Authority's analysis of the objections. The objections were given the references 438a (Dinnet); 438b (Housing Land Requirement and Supply); and 438c (Ballater).
- 1.3 In relation to objection 438a and the failure to identify Dinnet as a settlement with provision for housing, it was argued that as Dinnet lies on an important crossroads at the eastern edge of the Cairngorms National Park, with a range of businesses including a hotel, self catering accommodation, restaurant, antique shop, offices and a public hall, it should be identified as a settlement. The Consultative Draft Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (**Core Document 6.9**), published in October 2005 identified Dinnet as a settlement with scope for housing, business and community development and on the back of this, Dinnet and Kinord Estate adopted this as a platform for the diversification of the Estate and the development of related business opportunities in the immediate vicinity. These proposals are interlinked and require the housing development at Dinnet to cross fund the business and tourism developments and provide housing for workers employed in those

businesses. The identification of housing land in Dinnet is therefore vital to the delivery of these projects.

- 1.4 Objection 438b related to housing land requirement and supply. The objector argued that the housing land requirement calculation in Table 2 of the Deposit Local Plan (**Core Document 6.11**) should be increased. Similarly, the phased land supply should be increased in the Aberdeenshire part of the Cairngorms National Park with provision made for the housing in Dinnet.
- 1.5 Objection 438c argued that the allocation of 250 units at site H1 in Ballater is an overprovision to the detriment of other settlements in the area and should be reduced with some of the units allocated to other settlements, particularly Dinnet, which is capable of accommodating residential development. This would form the basis of related business and tourism development immediately adjoining the village.
- 1.6 Further correspondence was received on 22 May 2008 and 13 June 2008 enclosing the Authority's modifications in relation to each objection. The Authority confirmed that the settlement of Dinnet had been reinstated, with the boundary drawn around the existing settlement. It was also highlighted that the housing needs figures were calculated by using figures from various sources, including a study undertaken by the University of Manchester (**Core Document 7.10**). It was argued that the land allocated in the plan to meet this need is done through the current allocations. The arguments in relation to the designations at Ballater were not accepted as the allocation was made in line with the housing land assessments.
- 1.7 These modifications were accepted by the Park Board on 16 June 2008 and the Local Plan First Modifications (**Core Document 6.12**) were issued for consultation between 16 June and 25 July 2008. Representations to these modifications were submitted on 22 July 2008 and while it was welcomed that Dinnet was identified as a settlement, objection was maintained in relation to the failure of the Plan to

specifically identify housing development in the settlement. The original objections in relation to housing land supply and the Ballater Proposal BL/H1 were also maintained.

- 1.8 Outstanding objections were considered and Second Modifications (**Core Document 6.13**) were subsequently agreed by the Board in November 2008. These changes only related to points of clarification and correction of errors rather than any major changes. Therefore, the objections were maintained.

2.0 OBJECTIONS

2.1 Objection 438a: Dinnet

- 2.1.1 The Cairngorms National Park Authority stated that the approach to the identification of settlements outwith those identified in the deposit plan would be reviewed and in line with the requirements of SPP1 a detailed rationale behind the approach taken would be drawn up. The Authority further advised that where it is considered that additional detail including land allocations would assist in the level of detail provided for smaller communities and help attain their aspirations, the specific identification of those settlements would be considered.

- 2.1.2 The Plan was subsequently modified and the settlement of Dinnet reinstated. The boundary was drawn around the existing settlement and the wording encouraged development that consolidates the existing settlement pattern and development that supports the local economy. In particular, the first modifications stated that **"Dinnet commands an important location as one of the key entrances to the National Park. The local economy is largely land based, but there are opportunities to enhance tourism and recreation facilities and consolidate the settlement, providing additional housing to secure a sustainable community"**.

- 2.1.3 Regrettably, no housing land allocations were made specifically for the settlement. It is argued that the reinstatement of the Dinnet as a settlement is not enough to protect the future needs of the community. Additional land should be identified for housing and the proposals of the Estate would support the local economy in line with the modifications made to the Local Plan.
- 2.1.4 As stated previously, Dinnet contains a number of businesses and services, including a hotel, self catering accommodation, a restaurant, antique shop, the offices of Dinnet and Kinord Estate. A garage to the eastern end of the village is closed, however, the Estate has recently acquired the premises with a view to reopening the property. An application is currently being considered by Aberdeenshire Council. The settlement also benefits from a public hall and play area / picnic site which is the starting point of the footpath network for the Loch Kinord National Nature Reserve. It lies on the A93 and is well served by public transport on that route.
- 2.1.5 The aim of the National Park Plan (**Core Document 7.1**) is to create "thriving and sustainable communities throughout the Park" and ensure that "people will be able to access housing that meets their needs through rent or purchase". This includes identifying land in the smaller settlements to meet community needs. The provision of housing in Dinnet would achieve this. Providing for the needs of this important community is vital and the identification of housing land would meet their needs by providing affordable housing in association with tourist uses, to provide a thriving community.
- 2.1.6 The Consultative Draft Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (**Core Document 6.9**) identified Dinnet as a settlement with the provision for a phased development of housing over the next fifteen year period. It further promoted infill development in both Ordie and Dinnet. Business development opportunities were also highlighted in the plan with the provision of enhanced community facilities. In identifying scope for new housing in Dinnet the local plan acknowledged that future housing should

primarily be located within settlements. It considered that housing of all tenures was required, but particularly affordable housing to rent in order to attract young families and encourage younger people to stay in the area.

2.1.7 Dinnet and Kinord Estate adopted these proposals as a platform for the diversification of the Estate and the development of related business opportunities in the immediate vicinity. These were presented to the Officers of the National Park's Authority at a meeting on 28 August 2007 having been formulated following the publication of the Consultative Draft Local Plan (**Core Document 6.9**).

2.1.8 The proposals are all interlinked, but require the housing development proposed at Dinnet both to cross fund the business and tourism developments and provide housing for workers employed in those businesses. Planning permission was granted in February 2008 for the first component of diversification proposals comprising the construction of a smokehouse to the west of the village to add value to the traditional produce of the Estate. It will also help diversify the Estate business and develop a prestigious "Deeside brand" for food products. It fits strongly within the aims of the National Park Plan by increasing the provision of local produce, supporting jobs, diversification and the sustainability of the Estate.

2.1.9 An outlet for the products and other local produce is also proposed for the "Clarack" which lies to the north of the A93 to the west of the village. This presently comprises a large granite steading building with a number of more modern agricultural storage buildings in the immediate vicinity. The proposal involves the conversion of the steading to provide a major tourist facility on Deeside comprising a food hall specialising in Scottish produce, local gifts and crafts, country clothing, a restaurant and tea room. Also included will be a children's play barn with an outdoor adventure playground. A local information and interpretation centre will be provided as part of the proposals and the associated car park will provide access to the footpath network around the Loch Kinord National Nature Reserve. Jointly the proposals will provide a significant tourism development on the site creating

employment for a substantial number of local people. It will also bring additional spending to the area to the benefit of the wider community and businesses in the area. A feasibility study, jointly funded by Scottish Enterprise Grampian, has been carried out into the Clarack proposals, however, capital from any housing in Dinnet is required before this proposal can be taken forward. The development of these facilities are entirely dependent upon the provision within the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan of housing land in Dinnet. The identification of residential land in Dinnet is therefore significant and as the Plan stands these proposals cannot be achieved.

2.1.10 The proposal involves the erection of residential development to the south of the A93 in the area identified in the Consultative Draft Local Plan (**Core Document 6.9**). It is anticipated that an agreed proportion of the house sites would be sold to a private developer in order to cross fund the development of the remaining housing land and the associated business and tourism developments. The remaining land would be retained by the Estate for the development of housing for private rent and as accommodation for staff employed at the Clarack and the Smokehouse. The proposal would deliver high quality accommodation in the Park as well as providing accommodation for staff. The development will embrace the sustainability objectives of the plan with provision made for a biomass heating plant serving the new housing development and enable connection of this to the wider community. The district heating system would be fired by timber products produced on the Estate and locally.

2.1.11 As well as complying with the Objectives of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, the proposals will accord with Scottish Planning Policy (**Core Document 2.1**). It states that planning guides the future development and use of land. Planning is about where development should happen, where it should not and how it interacts with its surroundings. This requires promoting and facilitating development. Confidence in the planning system needs to be reinforced through: the efficient and predictable preparation of plans and handling of applications; transparency in

decision making and reliable enforcement of the law and planning decisions. The Consultative Draft Local Plan justifiably identified Dinnet as a settlement with provision for future housing. Dinnet and Kinord Estate took confidence from the support demonstrated by the draft local plan and accordingly embarked on their proposals for the growth of the village and the related business and tourism developments. It is now entirely inappropriate for the local plan to remove that development opportunity which is contrary to the objectives set out in Scottish Planning Policy.

2.1.12 The development proposals envisaged by Dinnet and Kinord Estate are supported by SPP15: Planning for Rural Development (**Core Document 2.11**). This highlights that rural Scotland needs to become more forward looking, both accepting change and benefiting from it, providing for people who want to continue to live and work there and welcoming newcomers. It advises that the intention is to have vigorous and prosperous rural communities, ranging from small towns and villages to dispersed settlements. The countryside should be able to absorb more people content to live and able to work there. It encourages planning authorities and agencies involved in rural development to adopt a proactive approach to providing land for development. The overarching aim is to have a prosperous rural economy with stable or increasing population that is more balanced in terms of a structure and where rural communities have reasonable access to good quality services. It advises that the planning system can assist this by adopting a more welcoming stance to development in rural Scotland including the further refinement of the approach to diversification. Planning Authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas and seek environmental enhancement through development at every opportunity. Tourism is of vital importance to the social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of rural Scotland accounting for 9% of Scottish jobs. SPP15 advises that Planning Authorities should support the development of the tourism and leisure industry with appropriate policies on the siting and design of new development. Planned development is encouraged and

the interlinked proposals for Dinnet and the wider area are entirely within the spirit of SPP15.

2.1.13 SPP3: Planning for Housing (**Core Document 2.4**) states that development plans should allocate sufficient land to meet housing requirements including affordable housing. The amount and location of housing that can be developed in rural areas is determined by a number of factors. These include: proximity to services such as schools, shops; ease of access; drainage and sewage capacity and their fit within the landscape. Dinnet is ideally placed to accommodate additional housing development with a range of services already provided within the village and lying on a main public transport corridor. The proposed housing development would help sustain those existing facilities and assist the development of new business and tourism related developments. It would provide much needed accommodation for workers and young families in the area, all cross-subsidised through the sale of part of the site for private sector development. The Deposit Local Plan (**Core Document 6.11**) itself at paragraph 5.36 recognises the need to provide land for housing growth to meet social and economic needs of settlements and communities within the park area.

2.1.14 Dinnet is a sustainable location with the availability of public transport on the A93 providing frequent services to Ballater and Braemar to the west and Aboyne, Banchory and Aberdeen to the east. Development at Dinnet would comply with the objectives of SPP17: Planning for Transport (**Core Document 2.12**) which advises that local plans should relate the existing land use development pattern to the capacity of the transport network, and appraise the pattern of new land use allocations in relation to transport opportunities and constraints. It advises that Planning Authorities should locate such developments in places well served by public transport. Further development at Dinnet is likely to result in further enhancements to public transport services along the A93. Dinnet also lies on the Deeside Way which is likely to encourage walking and cycling trips to nearby facilities.

2.1.15 Siting and design will be key issues in the development of new housing and the related business and tourism developments. Dinnet and Kinord Estate are sympathetic to the use of traditional designs and materials and clearly have a vested interest in the quality of development in Dinnet. Accordingly, their proposals will comply fully with design guidance provided by the Scottish Executive and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Furthermore, it is the intention of the Estate to ensure that a sustainable carbon neutral development is promoted embracing the principles of SPP6 in regard to renewable energy. In particular, the proposals envisage a biomass plant for providing heating and hot water to the proposed housing development. This will utilise adequate supplies of wood from the Estate and the immediate areas. The Estate would intend to work closely with the Cairngorm's National Park Authority and other related bodies to ensure that the proposed development is sympathetic to the local area and maximises the use of renewable energy technology.

2.2 438 b: Housing Land Supply

2.2.1 It is argued that the phased land supply currently proposed by the Local Plan fails to meet the objectives of encouraging proactive settlement growth in the main settlements and the provision of land for housing to meet the social and economic needs of other settlements/communities.

2.2.2 Paragraph 5.37 of the Deposit Plan (**Core Document 6.11**) highlighted that there is no exact measure of how many houses will be required in the future, nor any accurate method of predicting how many houses will be built during the lifetime of the Local Plan. The Planning Authority simply makes an estimate of the likely need and demand, as well as the implications of its own housing and economic objectives. In such circumstances it is, therefore, essential that efficient flexibility is built in to allow for uncertainty and in order to accommodate the highest growth scenario. The figures in Table 2 should have been increased substantially in order

to accommodate the level of housing considered necessary in Dinnet. That scale of housing is necessary to realise diversification opportunities in terms of new business and tourism related developments, which will contribute to the overall economic benefit of the National Park area.

2.2.3 The CNP Authority confirmed that the housing needs were calculated using various sources including the local authority and the census. The CNPA also commissioned a study by the University of Manchester (**Core Document 6.11**) to provide a Park wide assessment. The housing needs estimated in the Local Plan are based on this work. The land allocated in the plan must, in line with national guidance, be effective within the plan period to meet the need. It was considered by the Park Authority that this was done through the current allocations and they are of the view that the Local plan as modified meets the requirements. Therefore, there is no need to allocate land for more housing.

2.2.4 This is refuted. The focus of the Local Plan is for growth in main settlements and growth to meet community needs in other settlements. The reallocation of some of the Ballater allocation would not only focus the majority of growth within Ballater, but would also provide housing to meet a local need in Dinnet. The reduction of the Ballater allocation would not be detrimental to this settlement, however, the lack of housing allocation in Dinnet will significantly affect its future sustainability. This issue is addressed in more detail below.

2.3 **Objection 438c: Ballater Proposal BL/H1**

2.3.1 If it is not accepted that the housing land supply requirements should be increased, it is argued that a redistribution of the current allocations would provide more sustainable settlements while meeting the aims of the National Park Plan (**Core Document 7.1**) and policies of the Local Plan. This would involve a reduction in the housing allocation for Ballater and a subsequent increase to Dinnet.

- 2.3.2 It is maintained that the allocation of 250 units to Ballater should be reduced with some of the units reallocated to other settlements in the area, particularly Dinnet, which is capable of accommodating in the region of 100 units. This would form the basis of related business and tourism development immediately adjoining the village.
- 2.3.3 The overprovision of housing in Ballater is to the detriment of other settlements within the area. Ballater is a relatively thriving community with a wide range of services and facilities serving the town and the wider area. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is capable of accommodating additional growth, the scale of development is considered excessive and unsustainable.
- 2.3.4 Concentrating further development in Ballater will do little to sustain other, smaller settlements in the area. This is compounded by the fact that much of the recent housing development in Ballater has been bought as second homes which has brought little economic benefit to the area and failed to address the needs of people living and working in the area. Also, unlike the proposals for Dinnet, the additional employment opportunities identified for Ballater are out of scale with the extent of housing proposed. An allocation to Dinnet, while at the same time, retaining some housing land in Ballater is considered to be a much more appropriate strategy.
- 2.3.5 The lack of access to affordable and good quality housing is a key issue for many communities in the Park. As stated previously, one of the aims of the National Park Plan is for thriving and sustainable communities throughout the Park and for access to housing that meets their needs through rent or purchase. Housing in Ballater is not affordable due to the increase in second home ownership which is pushing up prices. It is also unsustainable due to the scale proposed and it is questionable whether the full allocation can be achieved. The identification of housing land in Dinnet would provide direct opportunities for affordable housing in relation to the employees of the tourist developments proposed. The redistribution of some of this

to Dinnet would therefore help address the affordability issue within the Park whilst aiding the growth and sustainability of Dinnet.

- 2.3.6 It is also questionable if development in Ballater is more sustainable than development at Dinnet. Both settlements are served by the same public transport infrastructure and whilst Ballater may accommodate a greater range of services, the development at Dinnet would be in association with business and tourism development on the edge of the village, thereby providing employment opportunities in the immediate vicinity. Development at Dinnet would also help sustain existing facilities serving that village and encourage the re-opening of the garage and associated shop.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 Although the identification of Dinnet as a settlement is welcomed, the lack of housing allocations for the settlement is entirely unacceptable. It is considered that the identification of Dinnet as a settlement is of little benefit unless it is accompanied by firm proposals for land for housing development. The failure to identify housing allocations in Dinnet will seriously jeopardise the implementation of the important projects proposed by Dinnet and Kinord Estate and therefore the aims of sustainable growth / development and tourism growth.
- 3.2 The identification of 250 houses in Ballater is considered to be an overprovision and unsustainable. The redistribution of some of this to Dinnet is a more appropriate strategy which would protect the needs of that community whilst providing affordable housing in this area. The reduction of the Ballater allocation would not affect that settlement, however, the failure to identify housing land in Dinnet will affect the future sustainability of that settlement. Therefore, a specific housing allocation should be made in Dinnet.