

*Mr & Mrs W.M.Houston
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Ballater
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Sara Krawczynska
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

22nd April 2009

Dear Ms Krawczynska,

**MODIFICATIONS TO THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN
096**

Thank you for your letter of 8th April 2009. In response to the Statements of Case by the Cairngorm National Park Authority (“CNPA”) we have the following comments to make:

1. A repetitive theme used time after time by the CNPA is that “Ballater has been identified as a strategic settlement.” This is a meaningless statement. In what way is it strategic compared to other villages in the area? If Ballater’s role was to act as the “gateway” village for entry to the National Park from the east, then in fact, we would argue that Dinnet is far more a key strategic village as it is the first community visitors pass through as they enter the eastern end of the Park. The CNPA have ignored this obvious area for any proposed development due to local pressure in Ballater from the landowner and developer a situation warned against and defined in Pan 44.
2. We reject the statement that as Ballater is the largest village on the eastern side of the Park it is the proper location for the future allocation of housing needs in the area. This is nonsense where arguably the reverse should apply and is in complete disregard of SPP 15 which warns against the suburbanisation of rural settlements.
3. We object to the comment where the withdrawn objection by Scottish Enterprise Grampian is mentioned as requiring more housing in Ballater. Whilst this assessment is again nonsense, as the objection was withdrawn, this allusion to it is inadmissible and in our view is a serious breach of professional conduct by the CNPA.
4. The Statement of Case refers to the Deposit Local Plan being based on the Enquiry by Design “(EBD”) workshop in November 2006. This was attended by representatives from

various groups. It appears that members of the public were not directly involved in the EBD workshop but some were invited at the end to hear the pre-determined results of the “expert” deliberations. Brief examination of the comments by the public illustrates without doubt they were out of tune with the Prince’s Foundation thinking. No questions were asked as to why this was so, and the assumption that a few chosen individuals from a number of formal and informal groups in the village attending this workshop satisfied the consultation process. Not so, as evidenced by over 50% of the residents of Ballater signing a petition to reject the Plan.

Yours faithfully,

William & Jennifer Houston