
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

Prepared by: MARY GRIER
(SENIOR PLANNING OFFICER,
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

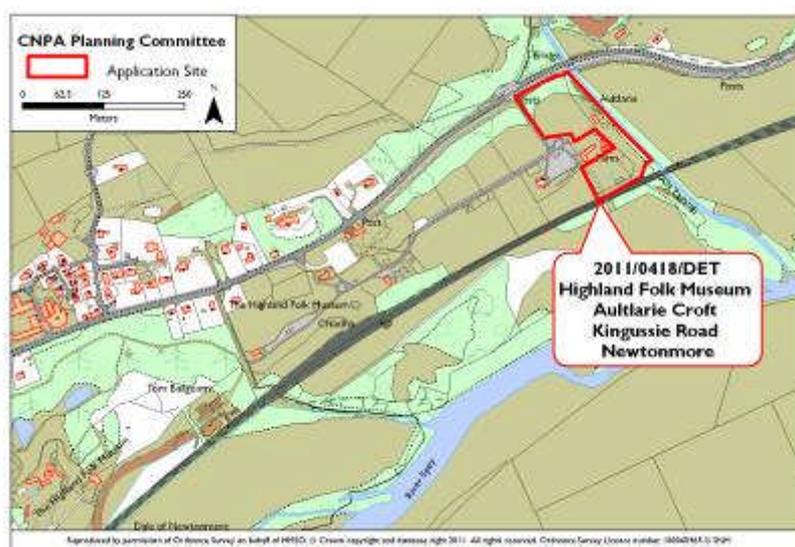
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: CONSTRUCTION OF NEW STORAGE / OFFICE BUILDINGS AND ASSOCIATED SITE ACCESS, DRAINAGE AND LANDSCAPING WORKS AT THE HIGHLAND FOLK MUSEUM, KINGUSSIE ROAD, NEWTONMORE

REFERENCE: 2011/0418/DET

APPLICANT: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY, THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL, GLENURQUHART ROAD, INVERNESS

DATE CALLED-IN: 6 JANUARY 2012

RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS



Grid reference : 272942 799703

Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Planning permission is sought in this application for the construction of new storage / office buildings, together with site access, drainage and landscaping works on land in the eastern area of the Highland Folk Museum, which is located on the eastern periphery of Newtonmore, adjacent to the A86 trunk road. The main element of the proposal is a large multi function building which is required to house and manage museum collections and accommodate curatorial and year round operational staff. Other smaller buildings are also proposed on land in the south eastern corner of the site, including a dutch barn and a group of three single storey storage buildings, which are described as the 'Aultlarie Hovel.' Vehicular access to the new development would be taken from the existing service access off the A86 trunk road. The existing access track would be upgraded along part of its length and extended eastwards to serve the proposed car parking and service bay entrance of the new museum store. The remainder of the track would continue to link with an existing network of tracks around this part of the overall Folk Museum lands. Smaller new sections of access track would also be established to provide access to the proposed dutch barn and Aultlarie Hovel.

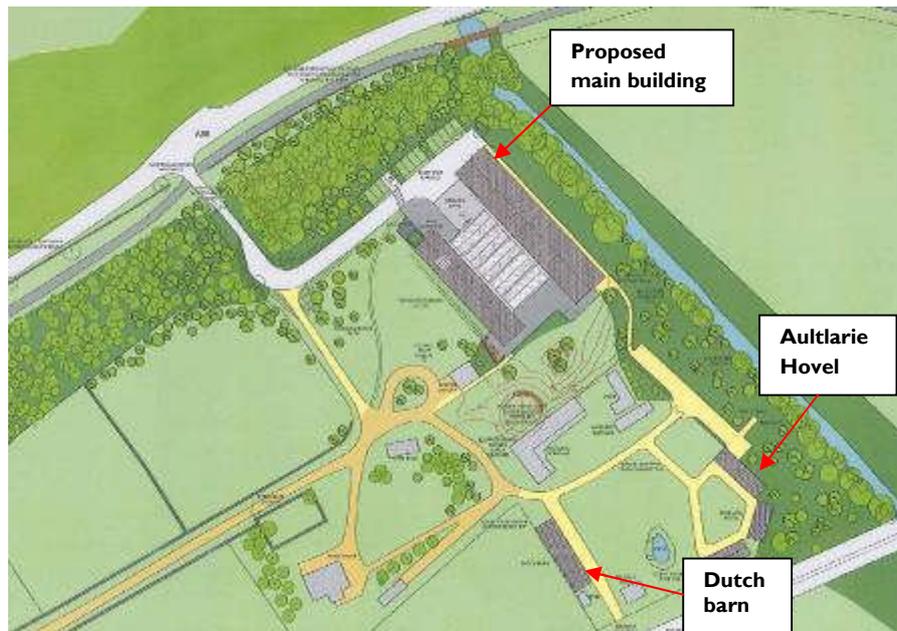


Fig. 2 : Proposed site plan

Proposed Structures

2. *Multi function building* : The main building on the site has been ascribed the generic industry standard title of "museum store." While its primary purpose is to facilitate the storage of a nationally important museum collection, it is also intended to fulfil a variety of other functions. Supporting information refers to the building being a hub for informal learning¹ and in addition to storage and display facilities the building is also proposed to accommodate a conservation laboratory, a library, a study room and meeting spaces.

¹ The building would not have open public access, but could facilitate pre-arranged guided tours, talks, seminars classes and courses.

3. The multi function building is proposed on currently open agricultural ground in the extreme east of the Highland Folk Museum lands. Ground levels in the proposed location are approximately 5 metres lower than the A86 trunk road which lies to the north of the site. The eastern boundary of the site is demarcated by the Allt Lairaidh burn. A diverse selection of buildings are located on land to the south and south west of the proposed new building. The existing buildings include a small former commercial garage, a traditional stone built L shaped steading known as the Aultlarie steading, an agricultural shed and a workers cottage. A small cart shed is located to the south west of the aforementioned garage, as well as a one and a half storey farmhouse which is set in an elevated position. Most of the existing buildings in this area of the site are open to the public as part of the Folk Museum experience.



Fig. 3 : Farmhouse



Fig. 4 : Aultlarie Steading



Fig. 5 : View into the site, from the service track at its junction with the A86 trunk road

4. In response to queries posed by the CNPA regarding the need for a building of the substantial size proposed, the applicants provided background information on their specific design requirements. The design and scale is a result of the need to comply with specific requirements in relation to environmental control and the provision of suitable storage facilities. Particular design requirements include zero daylight in store areas, and 24 hour humidity and temperature control. Volume storage requirements also dictate minimum headroom requirements, and a double height space is proposed in the main hall to facilitate the storage of the bigger items.

5. The scale, design and proposed finishes of the multi function building as originally proposed, were of concern to the CNPA, particularly in terms of potential adverse visual impacts and impacts on the landscape character of the area. A number of changes have recently been made to the proposal in response to the concerns.
6. The building is an H shaped plan form, with each of the outer sections having a pitched roof and prominent gables oriented to the north and south on the site. The central section is lower, in order to break the massing. The northern elevation i.e. the elevation which faces the A86 trunk road, would accommodate the main entrance to the building, in the north western corner, while an area at the front of the recessed central section would function as a service yard entrance. The eastern wing of the building is the most substantial of the three elements of the H shape and has limited openings due to the zero daylighting storage requirement. In contrast, the western wing accommodates a large number of openings. This area of the building is intended to accommodate a variety of offices, meeting rooms and other facilities. An extensive and continuous bank of full height windows were originally proposed at ground floor level, including a wrap around window extending to the rear elevation. Six large window openings were also proposed at first floor level on the western elevation of the west wing. A raised deck was also proposed as an external feature in the southern western corner of the building.
7. The building as originally proposed extended to a ridge height of 15.3 metres at its highest point, on the rear elevation of the eastern wing. The height in this area was further emphasised by proposals for the incorporation of gabion baskets to address changing ground levels in this area and facilitate the raised deck. In contrast, higher ground levels at the front of the building resulted in the part of eastern wing in this area having a ridge height of approximately 12.7 metres. The front gable of the western wing was lower, having a ridge height of approximately 11.1 metres. The predominant finish on the walls and roof of the originally proposed design was corrugated fibre cement sheeting in a combination of black and grey colours. A sedum blanket finish was proposed on the pitched roof of the lower central section, and limited areas of timber cladding were also proposed on the front and rear elevations.



Fig. 6 : Originally proposed elevations

8. As referred to in paragraph 5, a variety of measures have recently been put forward in response to concerns raised by the CNPA. Design changes include
- A reduction in the building height by 500mm;
 - The removal of terraces which were to be formed by gabions;
 - A reduction in the height of the central section, in order to allow “the gables to read independently”;
 - A significant increase in the extent of timber cladding proposed and the associated omission of previously proposed fibre cement sheeting; and
 - Significantly increased landscaping proposals, in conjunction with more sensitive earthworks, particularly at the rear of the building where the land would be re-contoured to partially accord with a proposed paved area at the rear of the building.

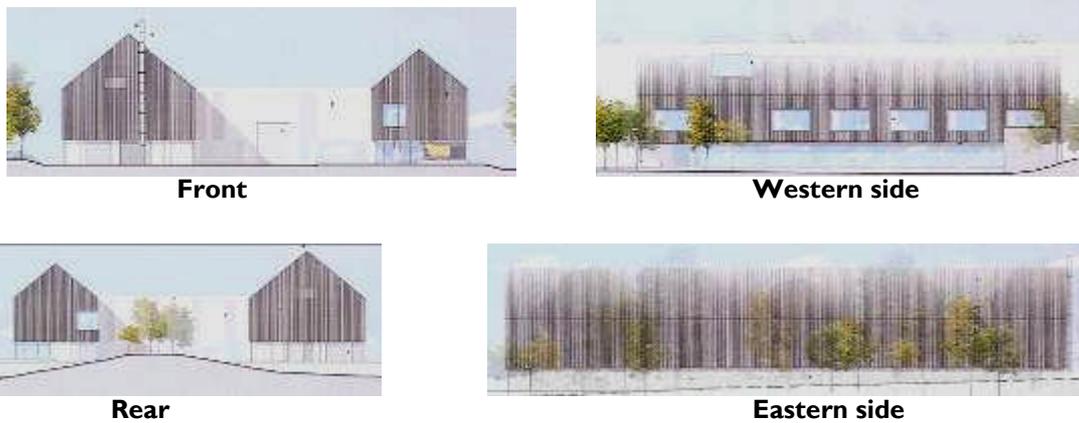


Fig. 7 : Currently proposed elevations



Fig. 8 : 3D aerial view of proposed building from the south east, with proposed new landscaping



Fig. 9 : Existing view of the site, looking towards the A86 trunk road

9. Details submitted in support of the design revisions refers to the materials on the elevations being chosen to emphasis the agricultural references of the building, with the intention that the “long view will be agricultural” but as one approaches “the quality and extent of glazing with colour coated metal frames will make the visitor realise that this is a building of special purpose.”
10. *Dutch barn* : The dutch barn is proposed towards the rear of the site, to the south of the existing Aultlarie steading. The structure has an elongated narrow plan form and has a ridge height of 5 metres. The exterior of the structure would be larch timber cladding and the series of double entrance doors would also be made of larch. Profiled metal sheeting is proposed on the curved roof. Half of the structure would provide enclosed storage bays, while the remainder would facilitate open storage bays.
11. *Aultlarie Hovel* : Three storage structures are proposed in the south eastern corner of the site to create the ‘Aultlarie Hovel.’ Two of the structures would have monopitch roofs (extending to a height of 3.5 metres), and each would have a series of double entry doors to serve the enclosed storage areas. The third structure is similar in scale, but has been designed with a pitched roof and an overall height of 5 metres. The structures would have similar finishes to the dutch barn, including vertical larch timber cladding on the external walls, larch timber doors, and insulated profiled sheet roof finishes.

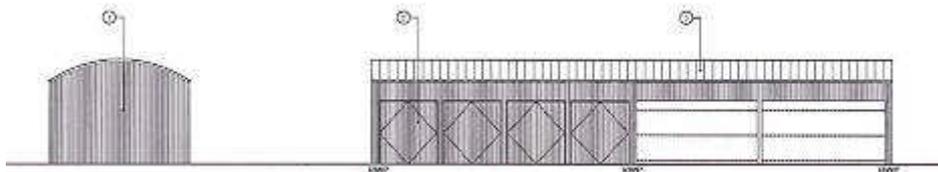


Fig. 9 : Dutch barn



Fig. 10 : Aultlarie Hovel structures

12. *Landscaping and ground finishes* : Revised landscaping proposals have recently been submitted which include proposals to provide increased levels of supplementary screen planting on the site perimeters. Supporting information indicates that the landscaping strategy has been designed to “develop the visitor’s journey to the Aultlarie section of the museum via landform and landscape.” Six categories of planting are proposed around the site – semi mature trees, extra heavy standard trees, feathered trees, native shrub planting, woodland structure planting and climbers² / groundcover.

² Native climbers would be used in select places around the proposed multi function building in order to soften the elevations and aid integration into the immediate landscape.

13. The proposed vehicular access to the car park and service yard would be finished with a bitmac surface. A total of 13 car parking spaces are proposed at the front (north west) of the multi function building, at the edge of a wooded area. The car parking bays would be formed by a grass reinforcement system, with the exception of one disabled car parking bay which would have a hard surface finish. Other areas surrounding the building, including the approach to the main entrance at the front, and also the outdoor terrace at the rear, would be finished with paving slabs. A small number of new paths and access roads would be created towards the rear of the site to provide access to the proposed dutch barn and Aultlarie Hovel. All of the new elements would have a gravel finish, consistent with the finish on the existing network of paths and tracks through the museum site.

Supporting Information

14. The original submission was accompanied by a Design Statement and in addition, further background information has also recently been submitted in support of the proposal.
- *Museum accreditation* : The Highland Folk Museum was established in 1944 in Kingussie. The 80 acre site in Newtonmore was developed as part of the museum expansion in the 1990's. The deterioration of the buildings on the Kingussie site in 2005 and 2006 led to a decision to consolidate operations at Newtonmore. As a result of the deterioration of the Kingussie buildings and their subsequent closure, there has been no access since 2006 to the nationally significant museum collection that had been stored there. The recent submission from the applicants states that "museum professionals' eyebrows have been raised all over Scotland – and further afield – in recent years by the conditions in which the HFM collection is kept and the fact that there is no access to that collection." This situation also has a significant impact on accreditation. Accreditation is the quality standard, managed by Museums and Galleries Scotland, that specifies the level of care and management that museums must achieve. Highland Council is due to reapply for accreditation by the end of 2012 and there the "inadequate standard of the current collections storage" there "is a risk that it will fail to achieve accreditation when it reapplies." In the event of such a situation occurring this could also call into question whether or not Highland Council could justify continuing to subsidise the current operation of the Highland Folk Museum.
 - *Employment and employment opportunity details* : The new facility will accommodate Highland Folk Museum curatorial and operational staff, who until 2006 had been based in the Kingussie Museum. Following their vacation of that premises, staff were temporarily accommodated in Aultlarie Croft and also a portacabin facility on the Newtonmore site. All of those staff would be re-housed in the new building, together with a conservation officer who is currently based in Inverness. A vacant post would also be filled – this was not possible previously due to the lack of accommodation available.

- *Scale of development* : The recent submission from the applicants has put forward their views on the suitability of the proposed development in terms of location, scale and design. In terms of the scale, the applicants suggest that “this development represents a change from ‘couthie’ local to prominent national museum.” Reference is also made to the ability of the chosen site to “easily accommodate and support the building” which has been designed “with due regard to the surroundings in which it is located” and also to “provide an internal environment befitting a facility of the importance of the Highland Folk Museum.” It is also suggested that the design concept is grounded in both cultural and agricultural traditions.

In response to CNPA concerns regarding the scale of the building, the applicants state that a lower scale, more spread out development would be a more expensive solution, would not function well and would incur increased running costs, as well as presenting management issues.

It is also stated that the proposed site has mature landscaping and is a size which can support a large building. The recently submitted information also suggests that there are suitable precedents in the Highlands for buildings of this scale and form, most notably whisky bonds.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

National policy

15. **Scottish Planning Policy³ (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.
16. **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

³ February 2010

responding to economic and financial conditions in considering proposals that would contribute to economic growth.

17. 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.”
18. 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. Topics include economic development, rural development, and landscape and natural heritage. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the general thrust of each of the subject policies.
19. Economic development : Planning authorities are required to respond to the diverse needs and locational requirements of different sectors and sizes of businesses. The planning system is expected to support development which will provide new employment opportunities. SPP also recognises, in paragraph 48, that high environmental quality can be an important component in attracting investment into an area which in turn can provide important economic opportunities. Consequently planning authorities are therefore required to ensure that new development safeguards and enhances an area’s environmental quality, and should also promote and support opportunities for environmental enhancement and regeneration.
20. Rural Development : SPP notes that the planning system has a significant role to play in supporting sustainable economic growth in rural areas. The aim however is “not to see small settlements lose their identity” but “to maintain and improve the viability of communities and to support rural businesses.”
21. Landscape and natural heritage : The Scottish Planning Policy document recognises the value and importance of Scotland’s landscape and natural heritage. It is accepted that landscape is constantly changing and the aim is to facilitate positive change whilst maintaining and enhancing distinctive character. As different landscapes have different capacities to accommodate new development, the siting and design of development should be informed by landscape character. There is also an acknowledgement that the protection of the landscape and natural heritage may sometimes impose constraints on development, but the potential for conflict can be minimised and the potential for enhancement maximised through careful siting and design.
22. **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)

23. 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.
24. Culture and traditions is also an important topic in the Park Plan. Strategic objectives include (a) developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions associated with the Park's places and communities and (b) supporting and promoting the diverse cultural traditions of communities within the Park.
25. 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. Section 5.2.3 of the Park Plan acknowledges that tourism is one of the primary forms of employment in the Park, although many jobs in this and other sectors are highly seasonal and with little long term security. 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 and advises that the vision for the Park seeks to "go further and develop a world class destination which plays a significant part in the regional and national tourism economy."

Structure Plan Policy

Highland Council Structure Plan (2001)

26. **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.

27. The following provides a brief summary of the policies applicable to a development of this nature. **Policy NI – Nature Conservation** advises that new developments should seek to minimise their impact on the nature conservation resource and enhance it wherever possible. The Plan refers to the socio-economic benefits of the nature conservation resource and advises that it should be optimised by a high level and standard of interpretation and understanding wherever possible.
28. The Structure Plan also includes a section on biodiversity, defining it as “natural richness and diversity of nature – the range of habitats and species and the uniqueness of each and every organism.” Biodiversity is not the same as natural heritage, but is one of the key functional components. As a key part of the natural heritage of an area it is important to protect, and where possible enhance biodiversity and to monitor any change.
29. Section 2.4 of the Plan concentrates on 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.”
30. **Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)** states that developments will be assessed on the extent to which they, amongst other things make use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and recycled materials; are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking as well as car; are compatible with service provision; demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character and historic and natural environments; and contribute to the economic and social development of the community.

Local Plan Policy

Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (2010)

31. 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>
32. 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.

33. 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.
34. *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.
35. *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.
36. The Highland Folk Museum lands are outside the settlement boundary identified on the settlement map for Newtonmore. Nonetheless, the land is identified for economic development (NM/ED3). The text associated with this land use allocation identifies the importance of the role of the Highland Folk Museum to the economic success of the area as a whole and states that “proposals to expand and enhance the facility will be supported.”

Supplementary Planning Guidance

37. In addition to the adoption of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (2010) on 29th October 2010, a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance documents were also adopted.

Sustainable Design Guide

38. The guide highlights the fact that the unique nature and special quality of the Cairngorms National Park and the consequent desire to conserve and enhance this distinctive character. The guidance has at its core the traditional approach to design which aims to deliver buildings which provide a resource efficient, comfortable and flexible living environment. The **Sustainable Design Guide** requires the submission of a Sustainable Design Statement with planning applications. It is intended that applicants would use the Sustainable Design Statement to demonstrate how standards set out in the Sustainable Design Checklist will be achieved.
39. One of the key sustainable design principles referred to in the document is that “future development in the Park should be sensitively located, reflect existing development pattern and setting, and respect the natural and cultural heritage of the Park.” Developments are also required to reflect traditional materials and workmanship, and take on board innovation, contemporary design and the emergence of modern methods of construction.

Developer Contributions SPG

40. The SPG on **Developer Contributions** sets out the framework for the provision of contributions per development. It sets out various payment mechanisms and states that the applicant may opt to remit the full amount due prior to the issuing of the planning permission. This course of action is widely used where the cost of putting in place a legal agreement is disproportionate to the planning gain contribution required.

CONSULTATIONS

41. **Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)** : The response from SNH was prepared in accordance with the roles set out in the SNH and CNPA casework agreement, with SNH only advising on matters concerning European Protected Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and European Protected Species. The response from SNH notes that the proposal site lies close to three designated sites –
- River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
 - Insh Marshes SAC; and
 - River Spey – Insh Marshes SSSI.
42. The site is immediately to the west of the Allt Lairaidh burn which is a tributary of the River Spey SAC and it also flows into the Insh Marshes SAC. The proposal was considered in terms of its potential impact on the qualifying interests of the designated sites and SNH conclude that there is no likely significant effect and as such an appropriate assessment is not required.
43. **SEPA** : SEPA considered the development proposal in relation to flood risk. A Flood Risk Assessment was submitted in support of the proposal was considered. SEPA has no objection to the development proposal on flood risk grounds.

44. **Transport Scotland** : There is no objection to the development proposal.
45. **Highland Council TEC Services** : The proposal was considered by the Roads Authority and there is no comment, as the vehicular movements associated with the development would be directly to and from the A86 to the Trunk Road.
46. **Highland Council Environmental Health Officer** : There is no objection to the development proposal and it is recommended that conditions are attached in the event of the granting of planning permission to regulate working hours at the site, and also in relation to regulating noise and dust emissions during construction.
47. **Planning Gain** : Planning Gain officials considered the development proposal and recommend that a financial sum be provided as a contribution towards environmental and access improvements.
48. **Community Council** : Newtonmore Community Council and Kingussie Community Council were both consulted on the proposal. No consultation response had been received from either of the Community Councils at the time of writing the report.
49. **CNPA Outdoor Access Officer** : The proposal was considered from the access perspective, as the National Cycle Network 7 route runs parallel to the site and is also a popular cycle path between Kingussie and Newtonmore. This will not be affected by the development and the proposal is not considered to raise any issues in relation to outdoor access.
50. **CNPA Sustainable Tourism Officer** : It is noted in the consultation response that the Highland Folk Museum is a key visitor attraction for the area and investment in its long term future is considered to be positive. The proposed development is considered to have a potential positive economic impact on the local area. The potential for access to the collections in the new storage building is also considered to offer positive benefit for educational and academic purposes.
51. **CNPA Landscape Advisor** : The Landscape Advisor considered the development proposal from the perspective of landscape character and visual amenity. The initial response noted that as a location for built development, the proposed location is consistent with the relationship between the topography and the built form which is characteristic of Newtonmore.
52. It is noted that although no substantial landform would be lost due to the development, the size of the development is such that a substantial area of ground would be disturbed and the development would dominate the small scale pattern of land use in the immediate area. Other concerns raised included the awkward juxtaposition of the large new building with existing smaller scale traditional properties in the vicinity with the Folk Museum lands, the likelihood of the large scale building dominating the experience of visitors to the Folk

Park, as well as rail users, for at least 6 months of the year⁴, and the similarities of the design to an urban edge business park rather than the “human scale, traditional rural settlement” in existence at the Folk Park.

53. The initial response from the CNPA Landscape Advisor concluded that the proposed development would have a major adverse impact on the landscape character of the immediate area and on the experience of users of the Folk Park. It was accepted that there may be some limited potential to address this through landscape mitigation and site management. Despite this, however it was noted that the effects on users of the A86 trunk road and the cycle path would remain.
54. The CNPA Landscape Advisor was re-consulted upon receipt of the revised information. The proposed changes in external finishes, including significant increases in the extent of timber cladding are considered to be of assistance in reducing the industrial appearance of the multi function building, and it is noted that such finishes are generally associated with agricultural buildings. In considering the effects of the development proposals on the A86 trunk road and the adjacent cycleway, it is accepted that the additional tree and shrub planting proposed will “over time, help to screen and break up the virtual mass of the building”. It is however stressed that even with the highest quality plant material, planting specification and maintenance schedule, it will be at least 10 years or more before this would become visually effective.
55. Following on from the foregoing comment, the re-consultation response from the Landscape Advisor includes extensive comment on the amended landscaping proposals. Reference is made to the planting proposals in the south east, south and south west of the large new building. It is considered that the proposed semi-mature trees would be generally slow to grow and the form and layout of the landscaping will do little to mitigate the adverse scale relationship or reduce the awkward juxtaposition between the proposed large modern day structure and the much smaller folk park artefacts. It is recommended that the landscape proposals should be modified in order to provide a more secluded context for the building and a stronger landscape setting for the historical exhibits. This could be achieved by extending and underplanting the proposed tree planting, as well as the provision of some additional planting in the vicinity of the Aultlaire Hovel.

REPRESENTATIONS

56. The development proposal was advertised in the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald on 28th December 2011. No representations were received in connection with the proposal.

⁴ This is due to the visibility of the site from the surrounding area and the fact that the birch trees which exist in the vicinity of the proposed location are visually permeable for half the year.

APPRAISAL

57. There are a variety of issues to consider in this application, including the principle of the development, the specific issues presented by siting and design, and consideration of the proposal in the context of all relevant planning policies and the aims of the National Park.

Principle of development

58. The Highland Folk Museum has been in existence at this location since the 1990's and has achieved a significant level of success and plaudits since its opening. It makes a valuable contribution to the cultural heritage of the Highlands, as well as delivering economic benefits to Newtonmore and the surrounding area. It is accepted that the further development of the facility is necessary as a means to ensure continued success and longevity of the Folk Museum. It is also recognised that there is an urgent need for a new storage facility in order to house nationally important collections in an appropriate facility which meets current accreditation standards. From the outset of this application, there has been an acceptance of the principle of a development for the storage of the museum collection. Notwithstanding this, the detail of the proposal presented a number of concerns, some of which could be interpreted as giving rise to a lack of compliance with planning policy and the aims of the National Park. If there had been pre-application discussion with CNPA these matters could have been identified and dealt with at an earlier stage. Nonetheless the CNPA has sought to actively work with the applicants on the detail of the proposals to address that situation.

Siting and design

59. Reference has been made in foregoing sections of this report, as well as in a letter from the CNPA on 19th March 2012 to the applicants, to concerns regarding the proposed siting and design of the multi function museum store building. The building is undeniably substantial in scale – for example the ridge height presented at the north eastern gable is approximately 12.7 metres, while the eastern (side) elevation extends to approximately 57 metres. It will create a significant contrast with the existing smaller scale, traditional properties in the vicinity, such as the steading, the former commercial garage and the one and half storey farmhouse. In addition to this, the dominant finish in the original design was fibre cement sheeting (mainly black, and interspersed with grey sheeting in various locations), including on the roof of the large eastern and western wings. The scale of the building, the finishes and the general utilitarian design all raised concerns regarding the potential inability of a building of this nature to successfully assimilate into its surroundings.
60. The design concerns were further magnified by the high degree of visibility of the site from the surrounding area, including from the A86 trunk road as it passes the site, as well as the eastern and western approaches, the railway line to the south and the general approaches from within the Folk Park. While the original proposals, including 3d photomontages provided in the Design Statement, placed heavy emphasis on the benefit of existing vegetation around the proposed site of the new museum store, the reality of the current landscaping situation is quite different. The front (A86 roadside boundary) of

the site benefits from quite an extensive band of birch trees and the site of the proposed new large building would be at a significantly lower elevation than the roadside or the band of trees.



Figs. 10 and 11 : A86 roadside boundary, with views into the site

However, as evidenced by figs. 10 and 11 and referred to in the consultation response from the CNPA's Landscape Advisor, the existing vegetation is of little benefit in providing effective screening for at least 6 months of the year. The reliance on the existing vegetation together with a limited amount of new planting around the periphery of the site, represented an inadequate solution to the need to minimise the impact of the building.

61. Having regard to the variety of concerns attached to the development as originally proposed, there was a need to examine the fundamental issue of whether or not a building of this nature could be accommodated in the location proposed, or indeed whether or not there was a specific need to locate the building in this particular location. Details have been provided in paragraph 4 regarding the specific design requirements associated with the museum store building, and it is accepted that to a large extent, those factors are key dictators in necessitating a design which is of a substantial scale. This is particularly the case in relation to the areas of the building which will be used for storage. Paragraph 14 provides details of the inextricably linked nature of the museum collection and the existing Highland Folk Museum. The information which has recently been provided by the applicants in relation to this aspect is sufficient to demonstrate that the new museum store must be within the Highland Folk Museum site. It is accepted that any potential siting at a remote location would be unworkable and could detract from the overall integrity and benefits of the Folk Museum.
62. In accepting the site specific requirements for the new facility, design aspects and associated landscaping once again become the focus. In the course of discussions with the applicants during the assessment of this application, CNPA officials put forward various design suggestions for consideration, including exploring the possibility of locating the 'non storage' elements (such as office accommodation, meeting rooms, library etc.) in a smaller adjacent structure. It was also suggested that a subservient link could be created to the main storage area. The suggestions were put forward as a potential means of enabling a reduction in the height and mass of the building. The applicants considered they could not engage in any significant re-design and provided various

explanations to substantiate this position, including reference to cost implications, inconvenience and impracticalities for staff, and requirements to have on-going supervision and immediate access to the collections.

63. In response to the concerns presented by the CNPA, including the potential failure of the original proposal to comply with Local Plan Policy 6 – Landscape and Policy 16 – Design Standards for Development (part (b) in particular which requires developments “to reflect and reinforce the traditional pattern and character of the surrounding area and reinforce the local vernacular and local distinctiveness”), the applicants have however made a number of revisions to the proposal. The design amendments, as well as details of additional landscaping proposals, have been detailed in paragraphs 8, 9 and 12. Whilst the form of the building largely remains unchanged, various techniques have been employed to visually reduce the dominance of the museum store and draw stronger references from agricultural architectural traditions in the area rather than taking its cue from more industrial origins. The omission of proposals for the extensive use of fibre cement sheeting and its replacement with significantly increased areas of larch timber cladding is of benefit in this regard. The timber finish offers far greater potential to assimilate a building, even one of this considerable scale, into the proposed setting. Other measures including the omission of gabion walls at the rear of the structure and the utilisation of re-contoured ground in this area instead, and the lowering of the central section of the building, are also positive changes.
64. The smaller buildings, which also form part of the proposal i.e. the dutch barn and the three structures in the Aultlarie Hovel, are acceptable, in terms of scale, finishes and siting. They are compatible with existing small scale structures in the vicinity. As well as being of assistance in the functional operations of the Folk Museum, they are also unlikely to detract from the visitor experience in this area of the site.

Landscaping

65. The 3d image contained in fig. 8 of this report optimistically conveys the impression of the proposed large scale building being successfully nestled into extensive belts of mature landscaping. The representation appears to suggest that the landscaping to the north (roadside) and east (burnside) will successfully mature to the extent that it will effectively tower above the actual structure. While the provision of additional planting will provide benefit in the long term, it cannot realistically be expected to offer the degree of screening suggested in the 3D image. The recent consultation response from the CNPA Landscape Advisor estimates that it would be at least 10 years or more before the currently proposed landscaping would become effective. Such a time delay is clearly not ideal and there is a need to address this. This could be achieved through the provision of further enhanced landscaping proposals, over a more extensive area of the site than currently proposed.

Conclusion

66. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires “*the planning system to proactively support development that will contribute to sustainable economic growth and to high quality sustainable places*”. There has been a strong recognition of this throughout the CNPA’s involvement in this planning application, and extensive efforts have been made to encourage amendments and elicit further supporting information which would allow a positive outcome. The principle of the development has been accepted from the outset. CNPA officials have been mindful throughout the process of the benefits that the development proposal will deliver in terms of preserving culturally significant artefacts and have also become aware more recently of the importance of the new development in assisting the Folk Museum to retain its national accreditation. Challenges have however been presented in attempting to reconcile all the positive aspects of the development with the physical impacts presented by the introduction of a building of this nature on the subject site. Foregoing sections of this report have alluded to the applicants’ specific requirements for the proposed building and the particular design and their reasons for choosing to retain the overall form. Reference has also been made to their decision to address concerns such as the potentially adverse impacts on the visual amenity of the area, on the immediate surroundings and existing buildings, and on the landscape character through changes in the choice of materials and the increases in the level of landscaping, rather than through a fundamental re-design.
67. The new building will substantially alter the character of the site and will undoubtedly be a prominent new feature in the wider landscape. It is accepted that new buildings, and particularly those of a high quality innovative design, have a place in the ever changing landscapes of the National Park. The efforts which have been made by CNPA officials in the course of this application to bring about appropriate design changes derive from the need to ensure that a new building of such a substantial scale, will not give rise to adverse and irreparable visual and landscape impacts. Siting and design issues have been explored to the fullest degree possible and the recommendation is being made on that basis, together with a strong emphasis being placed on Scottish Government requirements that Planning Authorities support sustainable economic growth.
68. To conclude, following considerable work with the applicant, we now have a proposal which will provide a prestigious facility for the Folk Park, the National Park and the Highlands and which is recommended for approval.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

69. The proposed development would provide a much needed specialist facility for the storage, restoration and preservation of a nationally important museum collection. As such it would make a significant contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the area.

70. The introduction of a substantial building into the landscape on the periphery of the settlement of Newtonmore, and where the scale of the building is in contrast to existing buildings in this area of the Folk Museum site, would have an impact on the landscape character of the area. Efforts have been made through revisions to the design, particularly in relation to the choice of finishes, and the introduction of proposals for significant new landscaping, which will assist in positively meeting the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural heritage of the area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

71. Recent changes to the proposed external finishes have resulted in proposals for a much greater extent of larch timber cladding to be used on the building. Timber is a sustainable resource and its use contributes to the achievement of this aim. A biomass boiler is also proposed and supporting information suggests that this would provide at least a 15% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions beyond 2007 Building Regulations.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

72. The proposed development would be of benefit to the overall operation of the Folk Museum and would facilitate its achievement of accreditation as a 'national museum.' Although the facility would not have open public access, it has been designed to facilitate pre-arranged groups, research students and educational events. As such it would be of assistance in promoting the general public's understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage of the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

73. The proposed development is part of an on-going phased programme of further development at the Highland Folk Museum. The development of the new multi function building would provide appropriate facilities to accommodate a nationally important collection and should assist the Highland Council in retaining museum accreditation at the end of 2012. All of this would be of benefit in securing the long term presence of the Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore and would therefore be of assistance in encouraging visitors to the area, with the associated economic benefits.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to : GRANT planning permission for the construction of a new storage / office buildings and associated site access, drainage and landscaping works at the Highland Folk Museum, Aultlarie Croft, Kingussie Road, Newtonmore, subject:

- (a) the completion of a Planning Obligation agreement to secure the payment of developer contribution towards environmental and access improvements OR the payment of the required developer contribution in advance of the release of the decision notice;
AND**

(b) 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 as amended by the Planning etc. Scotland Act 2006.

2. Prior to the commencement of development the following landscaping details shall be submitted for the written agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority –
 - (a) A revised landscaping plan to provide a more secluded context for the museum store building and establish a stronger landscape setting for the historical artefacts in the vicinity. The revised landscaping plan shall include proposals to extend and underplant the currently proposed tree planting, and the provision of additional planting, particularly in the vicinity of the Aultlaire Hovel;
 - (b) A planting specification, using native species, that ensures a high level of establishment and good early growth. The specification shall include details of timing, ground preparation, fertilising and watering; and
 - (c) A long term maintenance schedule that secures the form, stability and longevity of the planting. The schedule shall include provision for the inspection by an arborist, prior to the 5 to 10 years currently specified in the Landscape Manual (Horner and MacLennan, April 2012);

The landscaping works shall be undertaken thereafter in accordance with the agreed measures. The landscaped areas shall be maintained 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 five years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason : in the interests of visual amenity and to enhance the natural heritage value of the area.

3. Protective fencing shall be provided around all planted areas specified in condition no. 2 of this permission upon their completion. The fencing shall remain in place and be maintained for the duration of construction works in the vicinity and until completion of all development in that area. Full specifications of the type of protective fencing shall be submitted for the agreement and written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any development permitted in this application.

Reason : in the interests of enhancing the natural heritage value of the area.

4. External areas of the building which are identified to be finished in 'concrete blockwork' shall have a render / wet harl finish.

Reason : in order to assimilate the building into its setting and to reflect traditional building finishes.

5. Prior to the commencement of any of the proposed works, the following details and specifications for finishing materials, and where required samples, shall be provided for the further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority -

- a. External windows and doors;
- b. External timber cladding;
- c. External rainscreen cladding panels;
- d. Render / wet harl finish; and
- e. Roofing materials

Reason : in the interests of visual amenity and in the interests of achieving orderly development.

6. Construction activities shall only be carried out between the hours of 07:00 – 20:00 hours Monday to Friday, and 07:00 – 1400 hours on Saturdays. No construction work shall be undertaken on Sundays or bank holidays.

Reason : In the interests of protecting the general amenity of the area.

7. Measures shall be taken at all times to suppress dust arising from construction activities on site. In the event of any dust nuisance arising off site, the developer shall immediately implement appropriate remedial action in accordance with the details which shall be submitted to and require the approval in writing of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with Highland Council's Environmental Health section.

Reason : In the interests of protecting the general amenity of the area and ensuring that the visitor experience at the Highland Folk Museum is not diminished during construction activities.

8. Noise arising from the erection, construction, alteration or repair of buildings, structures or roads, in connection with this planning permission, shall be inaudible within any noise sensitive premises between 20:00 hours and 07:00 hours on the following day.

Reason : In the interests of protecting the general amenity of the area.

9. All public services for the development, including electrical, cable television and telephone cables, shall be located underground throughout the site.

Reason: In the interests of minimising the visual impact of the development.

Advice note :

- (a) The applicant is urged to engage in discussions with CNPA Planning Officials and the CNPA Landscape Officer prior to formulating proposals to comply with condition no. 2 of this permission, in order to ensure that proposals are effective in providing a secluded context for the store and a stronger landscape setting for the historical exhibits.

Mary Grier

planning@ Cairngorms.co.uk

19 April 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.