

NOTICE OF REVIEW

STATEMENT

PPP FOR NEW DWELLING HOUSE AT PLOT B LOCKERS, FOLLOWSTERS, NEWMILL, KEITH FOR MR JOHN COUSAR.

In support of our review statement we would ask the committee to consider the following:-

This application was made on the basis that the current **Moray Council Local Plan** document requires for housing in the countryside to be successful, the proposed site to have 50% long established boundaries and additional 50% of boundaries can be formed to enclose the site. This site has existed as a dwelling for well in excess of 100 years. The fence lines, although more recent than some of the other fences on Followsters Farm have existed for some considerable time also.

We enclose a copy of a map extract from 1905 which clearly show the existing cottage and also the tracks to the buildings. The site lies in a fairly low lying area away from the roadside. We refer you to planning application No 09/00961 /OUT which was refused by the same planning officer who stated in his reasons for refusal that the site was too close to the roadside and too prominent. This application is now being considered at review.

For the avoidance of doubt, this application is not relying on the house being a total replacement of the former dwelling. In the description of the application the word replacement was used to draw to the planners attention the fact that the site did used to have a dwelling house on it. The level of building left on the site is not at the level 4 as is required in the Local Plan for replacement but the application is for the dwelling to be considered as housing in the countryside on the site of a former dwelling.

Our understanding was that the current Local Plan's requirement for the 25% tree cover was to help any new dwelling integrate into the landscape of the surrounding countryside. The existing trees within the site are very mature and well established. The additional tree planting would again assist the integration of the dwelling into the landscape when added to the trees which already exist on the site. Surely this planning policy has been created for development where there are no trees on the site whatsoever to help any new house integrate sensitively into the countryside landscape. There is no requirement for a housing site in the countryside to have any trees on the site as planting 25% of the site out with young trees is an acceptable solution.

In his reasons for refusal, the planner makes comments on the fact that the site would be prominent and readily visible from elevated viewpoints along the public road. This is an unclassified road used mainly by farm vehicles. We cannot see where a house in this location could be readily viewed from any major road network. The character of the area for housing in the countryside in this particular area of Moray is for sporadic housing set back from the road with farm tracks to access the properties. There is nothing in the Moray Council Local Plan that states that a new house in the countryside cannot be seen from any road network. We agree that the development should integrate into the landscape which is why the 25% tree cover was introduced. A house in this location, with the existing and proposed tree coverage, would in our opinion blend in to the landscape and also reflect the character of this area which has existed for more than 100 years.

This is a low impact proposal and we would dispute the planner's comments that this was an overtly prominent development. We would respectfully request that the review panel visit the site and also look for themselves as to where the road networks are as we feel confident that this site is not prominent in any shape or form. The fact that a house did exist on this site for many years only reflects what the true character of the area really is.

In terms of Policy H8 there are 3 main criteria that should be met for new development to be acceptable.

1. The proposal does not detract from the character or setting of existing buildings, or their surrounding area, when added to an existing grouping, or linear extension. **The proposed dwelling will retain the sporadic character of the area for housing and be located on the site of a former dwelling.**
2. The proposal is not overtly prominent (such as on a skyline or on artificially elevated ground; or in open settings such as central areas of fields). Where an otherwise prominent site is offset by natural backdrops, these will normally be acceptable in terms of this criterion. **It is proposed to re-use a former house site with long established boundaries and existing tree cover on the site. As stated above the site is not prominent and the existing trees coupled with new planting will create a backdrop for the house to harmonise with the countryside. It is our opinion that most rural farms and farm cottages are in central locations throughout Moray.**

3. At least 50% of the site boundaries are long established and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding land. **The site has the required 50% of established boundaries and as there are ruins and trees on the site at present, the sites are fairly well distinguished from other farm land at present.**

In conclusion, we think it fair to say that in terms of the Local Plan policy H8 the requirements have been met. Our client has not selected an area in the middle of a field for a house plot but chosen a former house site which still has evidence of the building on it, further confirmed by O.S. mapping for the setting. The site should be considered as housing in the countryside and the established boundaries and trees, coupled with the proposal to plant additional trees will help this proposed house to integrate sensitively into the landscape. We feel that the review panel will see for themselves that this is **NOT** an overtly prominent location to build a house nor will it be readily visible from elevated viewpoints along the public road when they come to visit the site personally. Siting is important and this proposal will not contribute to any unplanned build up of housing nor will it create any ribbon development. The proposed house will simply reflect a house on a site where previously there had already been a former dwelling, thus retaining the character of the area for the past 100 years.