

**PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR THE ERECTION OF A TRADITIONALLY DESIGNED
DWELLINGHOUSE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT HARDMUIR VIEW EASTER HARDMUIR AULDEARN
MORAY FOR MR & MRS SUTHERLAND**

The Moray Council Ref. 10/00051/APP
Our Ref. 090193.SUTHERLAND



1.0 Background

- 1.1 This planning application proposes the erection of a 1 ¾ storey dwellinghouse, of traditional design and proportions on a rural site on the Easter Hardmuir Farm holding. The applicant is the daughter of the third generation farmer of Easter Hardmuir and she requires to reside close to the farm to ensure the efficient operation of the business. Currently, she and her husband reside in the town of Nairn, approximately 5 miles away, thus making the operation of the farm difficult during busy periods.
- 1.2 Following a detailed review of the Easter Hardmuir Farm holding it was considered the application site to be the most appropriate, as it was located adjacent to a relatively straight section of the public road network, close to the public water main, and electric supply.
- 1.3 In addition, the site is not considered to be prime agricultural land and therefore its development would not diminish the productive of the farm business and it benefits from the existing boundary definition created by the landscaping strip along the field extent. The site also has an immediate backdrop provided by 'Macbeth's Hillock' which rises approximately 10metres above the surrounding lands.

2.0 Policy

- 2.1 In Moray the guiding policies for determining new house applications within the rural landscape are contained within the Moray Structure Plan 2007 and Moray Local Plan 2008. The Structure Plan states on page 17 that '...in the rural areas there will be a presumption in favour of house building....on well located and designated sites that have low environmental impact...' It goes on to advise in Policy 1 (Development & Community) (Page 24 refers) the Council will support new houses in the countryside on '...low impact, well-designed development in the countryside...'.
- 2.2 In the Local Plan the lead policy (H8: New Housing in the Open Countryside) sets a general presumption in favour of small scale housing developments in the countryside (less than 3 units) on the proviso that the siting and design of the house is acceptable.
- 2.3 The policy sets out what it deems to be acceptable siting locations, including:
- The development must not detract from the character or setting of existing buildings,
 - It is not overtly prominent, such as, on the skyline, artificially elevated ground, open setting in a centre of a field. Where a prominent site is offset by natural backdrops, these will be acceptable.

- 50% of the site Boundaries require to be long established features and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding lands.

Should the above siting criteria be conformed to, the following guiding principles on the design of the house and plot is relevant:

- Roof pitch between 40-55 degrees
- A gable width of no more than 2.5 times the height of the wall from ground to eaves level.
- Uniform finishes, including slate or slate effect roof tiles.
- Vertical emphasis and uniformity to all windows.
- 25% of the site planted out with native species of trees.
- Sympathetic boundary treatments.

2.4 The siting and design principles outlined in Policy H8 are further elaborated on in Policy IMP1 (Development Requirements). This policy is a 'broad bush' policy applicable to all new developments within Moray. Nevertheless, it contains general requirements that the proposal should be acceptable in terms of scale, density, character and integrate into the surrounding area and landscape.

2.5 Additionally, the Council has recently published 'Housing in the Countryside - Supplementary Planning Guidance' to accompany the above Local Plan policies. This document considers the role of reuse and replacement of existing buildings (Policy H7) along with the importance of new houses in the countryside (Policy H8) and the important of both in achieving a vibrant, economic active rural community.

2.6 Within Section 4 of the supplementary guidance, the document elaborates on the siting criteria outlined in the policy H8 and provides further guidance and assistance on the interpretation and relevance of each condition:

- Impact on the Character or Setting of Existing Buildings or their Surrounding Area
Where it is proposed to extend an existing group new building must be a logical extension of the group and must not have the appearance of being disjointed or added on. The design must reflect the rural character and not include suburban characteristics. The cumulative build-up of houses to an existing group or area will be considered.
- Linear Extension
Developments which add to an existing group or join two distinct groups will be considered to detract from the rural character of the countryside.
- Prominence
Overtly prominent development in the landscape means a location where it is obtrusive, such as, on a skyline, artificially elevated ground or in an open setting for example, in the centre of a field.

A building that uses the site contours and uses the landscape and planting (backdrop of trees) for shelter will generally reflect the traditional rural character.

Architecturally designed buildings specifically designed for the location or that are sensitive, low-key and well integrated and adopt the traditional building pattern can be acceptable in prominent locations.

A buildings prominence varies according to the distance from which it is viewed. Sites on main routes and paths, or on flat plateau are generally more prominent. The required 25% of tree planting can be subtly utilised to minimise overt elements of the development impact, by providing the site a backdrop.

- Site Boundaries

The 50% of the site boundaries can include dykes, hedgerows, watercourses, woodlands, tracks and roadways. Recently formed features will not constitute a site boundary in the definition of this policy.

- Trees

The policy requires 25% of the plot area to be planted with native tree species to help integrate new buildings into the landscape. Setting a building against a backdrop of trees is a successfully way of blending new developments into the landscape

- 2.7 The local policies outlined above are also supported by policy documents and advice issued from the Scottish Government. The recently published Scottish Planning Policy (Feb. 2010) states that planning authorities should ‘...enable development in all rural areas which supports prosperous and sustainable communities whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality...’ (Para. 92 refers). In para. 94 it goes on to state that Councils ‘...should support more opportunities for small scale housing development in all rural areas, including new clusters and groups, extensions to existing clusters and groups, replacement housing, plots on which to build individually designed houses, holiday homes and new build or conversion housing which is linked to rural businesses...’
- 2.8 The Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 72 (PAN72: Housing in the Countryside) provides more detailed advice on the siting and design of new housing in the rural landscape. The document acknowledges that there has been and continue to be, significant demand for people to live in rural locations, whilst either commuting to the towns or cities for work or adopting home work arrangements.
- 2.9 The advice note provides guidance on site selection and states that developments should fit into the landscape. It advises against skyline locations and heavily engineered platforms. It again supports the use of trees as a providing a suitable backdrop to integrate new housing.
- 2.10 PAN72 also highlights the importance of ensuring that the design of the building is suitable for the rural landscape and that it reflects the local design characteristics, rather than suburban approach to design.

3.0 Site Appraisal

3.1 As noted in Section 2.3 above, policy H8 lists three siting factors which require to be met for a new house in the countryside to be acceptable. The applicant asserts that their application clearly meets these three factors for the following reasons:

3.2 The site is set at a significant distance from any neighbouring buildings and, as such, does not detract from the character and/or setting of an existing building. Additionally, it does not add to an existing group or form a linear extension to a group of buildings. Therefore, by default it is considered the proposed development conforms to this aspect of policy.

3.3 Our client believes that this site is not overtly prominent in terms of the reasons outlined in the policy text and/or Supplementary Guidance, as the site is not on a skyline location, on artificially elevated ground or in the centre of the field.

3.4 In reality, the site has an immediate backdrop when viewed from an easterly direction, provided by Macbeth's Hillock, the crest of which is only 170 metres from the rear of the proposed dwellinghouse (Refer to Plate 1 - Right). Moreover, in accordance with the advice contained in the Council own Supplementary guidance and PAN72, the site has been carefully laid-out in order to utilise the mandatory 25% tree planting to provide a degree of enclosure and backdrop.

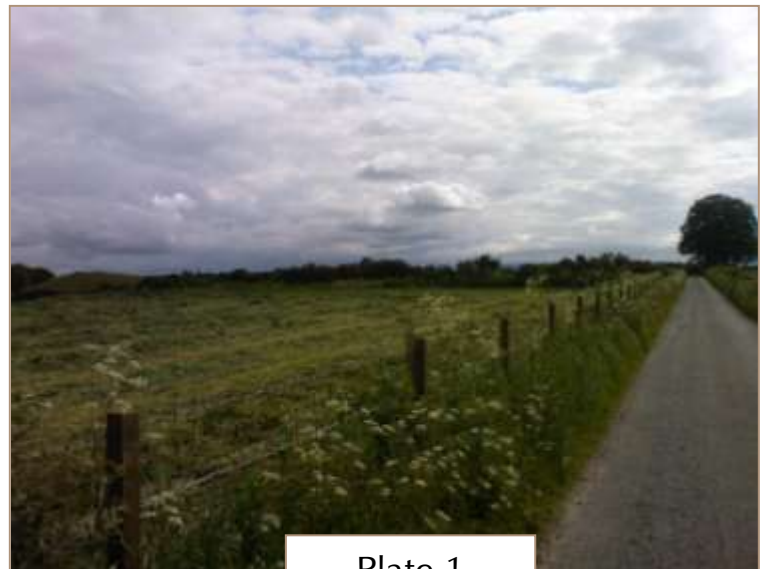


Plate 1

3.5 When viewing the site from the westerly direction (Refer to Plate 2 - Right), the aforementioned proposed tree planting, in connection with the substantial strip of planting along the site eastern extent and Hardmuir Wood located further east, provides the site sufficient backdrop in this direction.

3.6 The Supplementary Planning Guidance also highlights that the assessment of prominence relates to the where the site can be viewed



Plate 2

from and how often it will be viewed. In this instance the only public viewpoint is from the U74E minor public road. The applicant asserts that this road is extremely lightly trafficked, with only a handful of vehicles passing the site on any particular day. Corollary, even if the site was considered to be fairly prominent, the visual intrusion on the wider landscape is considered to be negligible due to the infrequency of viewing.

3.7 In terms of the forming a artificially elevated plot, in this instance the site has been carefully designed so that the house sits on a similar contour to the public road level, which actually reduces the plot level and creates a site where the house nestles into the landscape. This integration, as noted above, is further improved by the raising land beyond planted out with native trees (Refer to Drawing 090193.SUTHERLAND.01).

3.8 Finally, the site was specifically chosen as it was not in the centre of the field and is instead located tight in a corner of a field, with mature boundaries along the eastern and northern extents. These existing boundaries make up more than 50% of the site boundaries and therefore, the application is considered compliant with the third strand of the siting criteria. The only boundary is to be created, is to be formed with a new native beech hedge and post and wire fencing, which is considered to be acceptable in a rural location.

4.0 House Design Appraisal

4.1 Having demonstrated that the application site meets with the siting requirements of policy H8, it is necessary to review the proposed house design and determine if the design also conforms to the current policy.

4.2 The proposed house design has been architecturally designed to have a fairly simple active frontage facing the public roadway. This frontage incorporates traditional features, such as, natural stone gable, traditional dormer windows, vertical emphasis to the windows and a tradition roof pitch and roof covering.

4.3 Corollary, the applicant asserts that the house design is compliant entirely with policy H8 and the wider national advice. Nevertheless, should you have concern regarding any aspect of the house design we would ask that you do not hesitate to contact us to advise of your concerns.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 This statement has outlined the necessity of our client to reside in close proximity to the Easter Hardmuir Farm in order to ensure the efficient operation of the business during busy periods and the careful site selection process undertaken to avoid diminishing the viability of the farming operation.

- 5.2 The statement then went on to outline both the local and nationally policy and advice, highlighting the permissive approach of all, to the development of new houses within the rural areas.
- 5.3 Following the review of the relevant policies and advice, the statement then considered the site against the list of three criteria outlined in the siting section of Policy H8 and demonstrated how the site entirely complied with these criteria, in summary this is due to:
- The site is set at a significant distance from any neighbouring buildings and, as such, does not detract from the character and/or setting of an existing building, or form a linear extension to a group of buildings.
 - The site is not overtly prominent; as when viewed from an easterly direction it has an immediate backdrop, provided by Macbeth's Hillock and the required 25% tree planting has been located to provide a degree of enclosure and backdrop.
 - When viewed from the west the proposed tree planting, in connection with the substantial strip of planting along the site eastern extent and Hardmuir Wood located further east, provides the site sufficient backdrop.
 - The only public viewpoint is from the U74E minor public road, this road is extremely lightly trafficked. Therefore, the visual intrusion and prominence on the wider landscape is considered to be negligible.
 - The site has been designed so that the house sits on a similar contour to the public road level, which reduces the plot level and creates a site where the house sits into the landscape, rather than being located on a artificially elevated plot.
 - The site is not in the centre of the field and is instead located tight in a corner of a field, with mature boundaries along the eastern and northern extents. These existing boundaries make up more than 50% of the site boundaries.
- 5.4 Finally, a review of the proposed house design has been undertaken and it was concluded that the design conforms to the following criteria:
- Roof pitch between 40-55 degrees
 - A gable width of no more than 2.5 times the height of the wall from ground to eaves level.
 - Uniform finishes, including slate or slate effect roof tiles.
 - Vertical emphasis and uniformity to all windows.
- 5.5 Based on the findings of this Planning Statement, the applicant believes the application should be duly permitted and, as such, we look forward to the timely approval of this application.

Prepared by Matthew Hilton MRTPI for CM Design & Mr & Mrs Sutherland
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