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CHARTERED ARCHITECTS & PLANNING CONSULTANTS

**PLANNING STATEMENT
CAR SALES SHOWROOM
MILLMOSS TURRIFF**

For Crown Motors

July 2020



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning statement supports the enclosed application for planning permission for a new car showroom including customer parking, vehicle display, service centre and MOT bay.
- 1.2. The application is for Crown Motors, a successful local business looking to expand their operations. They currently operate car sales in Crudie and have identified Turriff as the ideal location to extend their services. Crown Motors is a leading used car dealership. They offer a wide and varied range of quality used vehicles. They are a family-run business with over 28 years of experience.
- 1.3. The site sits on Station Road, the A947, on the southern approach to Turriff. HRN Tractors is directly opposite the site. The brownfield site currently contains four redundant aviation fuel storage tanks.
- 1.4. We are of the view that this proposal for a car sales showroom and service centre will benefit Turriff and the wider Formartine area. It is considered that the proposed development will provide jobs for the area and it allows a successful local business to expand and improve their services.

2. Location and Site Context

- 2.1. The site is located in Turriff in the west of the Formartine ward of Aberdeenshire. Turriff is one of the three main service centres in the area and it is characterised by its role as a key service centre and former market town for the surrounding agricultural community. The site itself is situated in the south-east of Turriff on the A947. It sits opposite a tractor and agricultural machinery dealership.

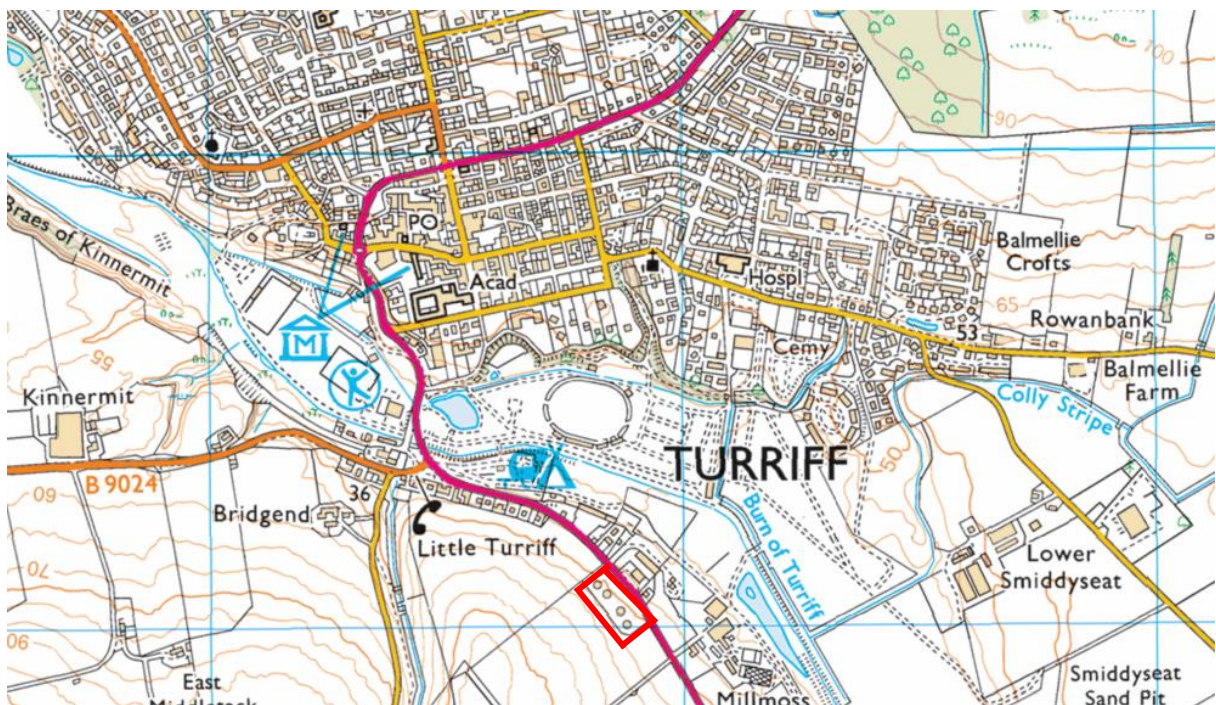


Figure 1: Site Outlined in Red



3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is for a car showroom, customer parking, external vehicle display, staff offices, reception area, service centre and MOT bay. The site is 0.98ha.
- 3.2. Crown Motors will relocate their service centre to this showroom and combine this with a new car sales showroom. Their existing showroom in Crudie will be retained. The new showroom in Turriff will focus on hybrid and electric cars and will include internal and external electric vehicle charging points. Relocating to Turriff allows Crown Motors to expand their operations. Operating from a more central location in Aberdeenshire, in the service centre of Turriff, makes Crown Motors more accessible to customers. It improves links to public transport services as the site is located on a bus route giving good public transport access for both customers and staff alike. The building will incorporate 56kw photo-voltaic panels and will use airtsource heat pumps.
- 3.3. Access to the site is from A947 Station Road. This access will be utilised by customers, staff and service vehicles.
- 3.4. Sufficient area for the turning of vehicle transporters is provided to ensure that these vehicles can access and leave the site safely. It also ensures vehicles can be safely offloaded from the transporters.
- 3.5. A new footpath from the site to the bus stop on the A947 will be provided to ensure safe and convenient access for pedestrians to the site.
- 3.6. Appropriate landscaping proposals will be agreed as the application progresses.
- 3.7. The redundant aviation fuel storage tanks cannot be reused but the brickwork can be crushed and reused within the construction of the new development.
- 3.8. The proposed building which houses the internal car viewing areas, offices, storage, car servicing and MOT bay is located to the rear of the site. The external vehicle display fronts onto the A947. The Service Centre is located at the south east end of the building with adjacent parking bays. Customer parking is between the external vehicle display area and the proposed building. Customer parking will be clearly signposted and marked to ensure there is no confusion between that and areas dedicated for the display of vehicles for sale.

4. Pre-Application Enquiry

- 4.1. Pre-application discussions have taken place with Aberdeenshire Council Planning Service (ENQ/2019/1839). Details considered in pre-app include roads, drainage and contaminated land. These will be addressed in turn below.
- 4.2. The roads service has been consulted and any issues identified by them have been designed out. This includes the provision of a footpath to connect the development to the bus stop on the A947.
- 4.3. A contaminated land report was previously undertaken by the MOD, the previous users of this site, and the findings of this have been discussed with the contaminated land unit. The existing report is dated but the contaminated land unit are content that any additional information required can be sought through conditions attached to any planning permission or addressed through the planning application process.
- 4.4. All surface water within the site can be retained and reused for car washing, toilet flushing etc. It is aimed to discharge foul water to the main sewer but if no viable connection is available a solution to retain it within the site can be developed if required.

5. Planning Overview

Scottish Planning Policy

- 5.1. Scottish Planning Policy (2014) (SPP) is prepared by Scottish Ministers and is a material consideration in the handling of planning applications. It does not contain area or site-specific policies but sets out the broad principles for handling planning applications within Development Management and creating policy within Development Planning for Local Authorities across Scotland.
- 5.2. **'Outcome 1'** of SPP in Creating Successful Opportunities to 'allow Scotland to flourish' is "*supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and the creation of well designed, sustainable places*" (p.6). The proposals outlined in this application aim to achieve what is set out in that statement. Economic growth through the expansion and growth of a long-established and successful local business, regeneration of a brownfield site and a well-designed development that is appropriate to the site and location. This is an appropriate location for this development – on the edge of the settlement on a main road with a high level of accessibility.



5.3. In Supporting Business and Employment at Paragraph 92 it states “*Planning should address the development requirements of businesses and enable key opportunities for investment to be realised. It can support sustainable economic growth by providing a positive policy context for development that delivers economic benefits*” and it advises that the planning system should “*give due weight to the net economic benefits of the proposed development*” (paragraph 93). A new development to allow the expansion of an existing successful local business that will secure and create job opportunities has clear economic benefit. Crown Motors want to invest in Turriff and we hope that the benefits this investment would bring are realised.

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014)

5.4. The Strategic Development Plan (SDP) is a long-term strategy for the city region and sets out targets and objectives to achieve the Plan’s vision for the area in the Plan’s lifetime. The SDP covers Aberdeen City and Shire, and helps to inform the preparation of the individual LDPs alongside SPP. The Proposed Strategic Development Plan (PSDP) 2019 is currently awaiting Ministerial sign off. The PSDP is broadly in line with the existing SDP.

5.5. The SDP does not contain area or site-specific policies, but its objectives are material considerations in the processing of planning applications.

5.6. Objectives for Economic Growth in the North-East include “*encouraging economic development and create new employment in a range of areas*” (p.24). The proposed development aims to stimulate economic activity through the creation of additional jobs and expanding and existing business. Turriff is an established service centre and Crown Motors are looking to capitalise on this in terms of location, convenience and accessibility to a wider section of the population. They consider that relocating here will be beneficial to their business.

5.7. The SDP has regard for the **Quality of the Environment** (p.34) setting out that “*development improves and does not lead to the loss of, or damage to, built, natural or cultural heritage assets*”. As the proposed development will remediate brownfield land and the proposal is for a high-quality and well-designed development, we consider that it can be an asset to the area and help to strengthen Turriff’s position as a regional centre.

5.8. In summary, the proposals do not conflict with the overall strategic aims and objectives of the SDP.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (LDP)

- 5.9. The Shaping Business Development section of the LDP notes that *“Developing business is very important to the economic health of the region. Aberdeenshire must be ‘open for business’ to become a successful sustainable place, meeting the many different and changing needs and locational requirements of the different sectors and size of business”*. Crown Motors are an established and successful independent business looking to expand and improve their operation and customer experience. The site they have identified in Turriff allows them to do this and meets the changing needs of the business and their locational requirements and as set out above the LDP aims to support this.
- 5.10. We note that the LDP promotes a ‘town centres first’ principle however we do not consider that the town centre is the most suitable location for a car sales showroom given the nature of the activity and the volume and type of vehicles that would access the facility. The site that is proposed is on the edge of the settlement and can be accessed directly from an A-class road the A947, and we consider this to be a much more sensible and suitable location for the proposed development. Car showrooms are generally not found in town centres as they operate both a semi-retail use and repairs or servicing facilities. They are usually found on the edge of settlements or in industrial areas.
- 5.11. The LDP requires that land used for employment *“must respect the character of the area and be compatible with nearby uses”*. Surrounding uses to the site include a tractor and agricultural machinery dealership and a farm and we consider these to be compatible uses. The design and layout of the proposed building and site have due regard for the surrounding area and are in keeping with the character along this stretch of the A947.
- 5.12. Policy R2 Housing and Employment Elsewhere in the Countryside is relevant to this proposal. This policy supports the remediation of brownfield land opportunities and sets out the reuse of brownfield land is preferred. This proposal would remediate a redundant brownfield site.
- 5.13. The brownfield site currently contains four redundant fuel storage tanks. At present these are unsightly and the site is not in active use. Repurposing the site to house the car showroom will improve the visual amenity of the site and will also provide a sustainable future use for the site.

6. Sequential Assessment

- 6.1. The Pre-Application discussions with the Planning Service identified that they require a sequential assessment demonstrating why the selected site is the only viable site for the proposal. This section will set this out.
- 6.2. Paragraph 68 of SPP establishes that the first preference is to locate new retail developments within town centres followed by edge-of-centre sites and then out-of-centre sites which are accessible by a choice of modes of transport. It is clear from SPP that the key test is whether more central sites are suitable or available. Car showrooms are not considered a Class 1 retail use or a significant footfall generating leisure use. The sequential test that directs Class 1 uses to town centres is therefore not relevant to this type of use. There are no other policy provisions in the current LDP or nationally that require such a sequential test. On that basis **we do not believe that the sequential test is applicable to the decision to be taken on this application**. However, in order to consider the request, we have examined other potential sites.
- 6.3. Paragraph 69 acknowledges that there is a need for planning authorities, developers, owners and occupiers to be flexible and realistic when applying the sequential approach in order to ensure that different uses are developed in the most appropriate locations.
- 6.4. The site for the proposed development needs to be on a main road and should have good connectivity to the public transport bus network in order to attract relevant users and be as accessible as possible.

Site	Location & Description	Justification
OP1	Adjacent to Wood of Delgaty 450 homes, 10ha employment land and community facilities.	This site includes 10ha of employment land and therefore could accommodate the proposed development. However, as per the masterplan for this site the employment land is at the end of a cul de sac and therefore does not support this style of development which relies on the prospect of passing customers. A new road is also required affecting deliverability and viability. This site is not available and will not be available for some time. There is no certainty



		that the uses proposed for this site will be compatible with the proposed use.
OP3	North east of Markethill Industrial Estate 1ha Employment Land	This site is on a slope and would require substantial engineering works. Sites OP3, OP4 and OP5 require a joint masterplan and this has yet to be prepared. This site is therefore considered unavailable in the time scale Crown Motors are looking for. The LDP calls for landscaping to minimise visual impact however a site with some visual prominence is preferred for the proposed development. Access to site OP3 on public transport is limited as there are no bus stops within close proximity to the site and good accessibility is important for the development. Equally OP3 is not on a main road and so does not have the level of vehicle accessibility required for the proposed development. This site has been removed in the Proposed Local Development Plan.
OP4	East of Markethill Industrial Estate 1.7ha Employment Land	As set out above development here requires a joint masterplan with OP3 and OP5 and this has not been done therefore there is no certainty in terms of a timescale for deliverability. Requires development of OP5 for suitable road access to be provided and this would impact on the viability and deliverability of the proposed development.
OP5	Adjacent to Broomhill Road/Markethill Industrial Estate 4.5ha Employment Land	This site occupies a prominent raised position to the north of the town on the A947. Due to its raised nature the LDP allocation calls for landscaping to minimise the visual impact over surrounding houses and businesses. As a result of this, this site is not considered appropriate for a car sales showroom which to some degree relies on visibility of the vehicles to attract customers. The site is also adjacent to residential development which we don't view



		as a compatible surrounding use for car sales and servicing. The sloping site would require substantial engineering works. There is a redundant underground observation bunker on the site. This is a significance distance below the ground and we consider this to be a significant constraint on the site that makes it not developable.
BUS1	Markethill Industrial Estate	This site has been discounted as there is a ransom strip that limits access to the site. Access across that ransom strip would not be available without the payment of a substantial 6-figure sum which would render the proposed development unviable. Alternative access to this site is via a road not wide enough to support the volume of traffic and style of vehicles required to access the proposed development.
BUS2	A947 North of Town Adjacent to Morrison Motors Turriff	This site is adjacent to existing an existing car sales outlet and is not considered suitable for commercial reasons. The site is used as a vehicle storage yard for adjacent car sales outlet.
BUS3	A947 North of Town Adjacent to OP5	This site has been disregarded as it is safeguarded for a hotel facility. The site has been removed in the Proposed Local Development Plan.

6.5. A full review of opportunities to accommodate the proposed development within Turriff has been undertaken. While it is evident that there are development opportunity sites in Turriff, in all cases it is considered that they are not suitable or available for development. The sites identified are considered to be unavailable as they are part of wider masterplan developments that have yet to be planned and some have development constraints in relation to access, ownership and topography.



- 6.6. It is considered that Turriff is the most appropriate location within Formartine for the car sales showroom owing to it functioning as a service centre supporting the wider rural community. For this reason we do not consider there to be other sites in the wider area that are suitable.
- 6.7. The proposed site has significantly better accessibility than the assessed sites owing to its location on a bus route and positioning on the A947.
- 6.8. Critically what separates the proposed site from other opportunities is the land is in full control of the applicant and is free from any significant development constraints and can be relied upon to come forward for development immediately.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. We trust that the information enclosed within this Planning Statement enables Aberdeenshire Council to fully consider the justification that supports the proposed development of a car sales showroom and service centre at Millmoss, Turriff.
- 7.2. The proposals support the development and expansion of a long-established and successful local business. The proposal would bring economic benefit to the area and would support Turriff's function as a service centre. Development of this brownfield site, immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary, in this accessible location and opposite a very similar but agricultural-based business is a good use of a previously used site and in line with the Council's general brownfield first policy reflected in Policy R2.