

# **PROPOSED HOLIDAY LODGE AT COLLIESTOWN FARM TORPHINS ABERDEENSHIRE**

## **PLANNING JUSTIFICATION AND STATEMENT OF CASE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This statement has been prepared to support a planning application by Mr and Mrs Campbell, who are the owners of Colliestown Farm. They have farmed at Colliestown for over 30 years, since 1991.

Colliestown is a mixed farm comprising c.70 acres, with 30 acres of arable land and 34 acres of rough pasture and hill grazing.

The farm is situated almost midway between the villages of Torphins and Lumphanan, which are located only 3 miles apart on the A980. The farm is accordingly just over a mile distant from either village.

The farm lies immediately to the south of the A980 which connects the two settlements and stretches southwards towards the slopes of Stott Hill. The A980 is a well-used bus route, and The Deeside Way runs (along the former railway line) just to the north of the main road. The Deeside way provides a walking and cycling route between both villages, and to the Deeside settlements of Banchory and Aboyne beyond.

### **BACKGROUND**

The proposal is to supplement and diversify the farm income, as recommended by Scottish Government, by building a holiday lodge / chalet on the least productive land on the farm.

In developing the proposal, the family sought pre-application guidance from the Planning Service and this Statement, combined with the accompanying business case, sets out the justification for the development as advised by the pre-app advice.

In particular, the pre-app advice referred to the need to show compliance with LDP 2023 Policies on Tourist Facilities (including the accompanying Advice – PA2023-18) and Development in the Countryside.

### **THE ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

#### **Policy on Tourist Facilities**

The LDP 2023 Policy is B3Tourist Facilities. Policy B3.1 deals with new developments, while B3.2 and B3.3 deal respectively with existing tourist uses and shops.

B3.1 is therefore most relevant. It starts by noting “We will support the development of new tourist facilities or accommodation”. The Policy therefore grants, in principle, a general presumption in favour of this proposal.

It continues to note that “Generally, these must be well related to settlements, and deliver net economic and social benefits”. As the requirement to be ‘well related to settlements’ is not defined, there is clearly some flexibility. In this case, as regards proximity to the adjoining settlements, of Torphins and Lumphanan, it has already been noted that the farm adjoins the A980 bus route, and the Deeside Way (lying only a short distance to the north) provides a well-used cycling and walking route to these settlements. With the journey being just over a mile, it is accordingly submitted that the site is very “well related to settlements”.

As regards delivering “net economic and social benefits” there will clearly be an economic benefit to the farm in terms of a more diverse and additional income stream, while by increasing the tourist offer in the area there will also be economic spin off benefits (in increased spend) to the surrounding settlements.

In that context, B3.1 continues to note that notwithstanding the requirement for being “well related to settlements”, some “high value” tourist developments would be acceptable out-with settlements, provided (as with this proposal – see below) they do not cause significant damage to their site. There clearly seems therefore to be some flexibility as to how “well related” can be interpreted.

Looking further at B3.1 there is a requirement to avoid “cumulative impact of similar developments in close proximity”. This is clearly not an issue here as there are no “similar developments” in the vicinity.

B3.1 concludes by noting that new tourist developments must demonstrate regular demand, and accordingly potential long-term viability. The accompanying ‘Advice’ suggests that this should take the form of a business plan, and this has been submitted as a separate document. The document setting out the context of the business plan also covers the final issue raised in B3.1, noting that this proposal will have no detrimental impact on any surrounding tourist facility.

**In consideration of all the foregoing, it is submitted that the new holiday lodge proposed here is supported by Policy B3.1 and further, does not infringe any of the caveats set out in the Policy.**

### **Policy on Development in the Countryside**

The pre-app advice suggests that the proposal also requires to be justified in terms of LDP 2023 Policy R2. There are various strands to R2, but it largely only deals in detail with either residential or employment proposals, and a tourist use is an employment generating development.

For policy purposes the Countryside is divided into two areas – the accessible and remote sections. The LDP Proposals Map shows that the application site lies within the ‘remote Countryside’. The most relevant policies are accordingly R2.19 and R2.20.

Policy R2.19 states that “in remote rural areas out-with settlements, small-scale employment proposals will be supported in principle”. There is accordingly a presumption in favour of the development.

Policy R2.20 elaborates, and notes that proposals “should be in keeping with their surroundings”. In this regard it should be noted that the lodge proposed will be a highly sustainable and characterful traditional building, which will fit well into the surrounding landscape. This is confirmed further under Design Issues below.

R2.20 continues to note that it should be demonstrated that “no other suitable site is available”. As this is a farm diversification project, it follows that the site must inevitably be located on the farm holding. A site out-with the farm would accordingly be ‘unsuitable’. However, within the farm boundary it is submitted that the least productive land has been utilised, and accordingly adopted as being most suitable.

R2.20 concludes by noting that the site should be “safe to access, via different modes of transport”. In this regard it should firstly be noted that Roads are in principle happy with the proposal, subject to suitable visibility, adequate parking and turning areas, suitable refuse collection facilities, and the upgrading of the access, including the provision of a layby. All these matters are addressed in the revised site layout plan accompanying the application.

Further, it has been noted above that the site adjoins the A980 bus route, and there is safe and convenient access to the walking and cycling facilities on the Deeside Way.

**In consideration of all the foregoing, it is submitted that the new holiday lodge proposed here is supported by Policy R2.19 and further, does not infringe any of the caveats set out in Policy R2.20.**

## **DESIGN ISSUES**

Policy R2.1 of LDP 2023 states that “siting and design of any new development will be a primary consideration” in the assessment of all proposals. In response to this requirement, it has already been noted above that a ‘highly sustainable and characterful traditional building, which will fit well into the surrounding landscape’ is proposed here.

Firstly, as regards siting it should be noted that the proposed lodge will be located c.150 metres down the farm access from the junction with the A980. It will be located behind an established group of trees and will accordingly be well screened in wider views of the landscape. Further, it will also be situated at the base of Stott Hill, so such distant views as might be possible would be against that backdrop rather than on a skyline location.

Turning to the design of the lodge itself, what is proposed is a single storey building with 4 letting bedrooms all with en-suite DDA compliant bathroom facilities. These would take access of an open plan area comprising lounge, dining and kitchen areas. The building would

be c.12 metres long and 7 metres wide. There would be level access and full DDA compliance throughout.

The building would have a heavily insulated timber frame, including roof and flooring cassettes. It would be clad externally with locally sourced larch, and there would be a pitched slated or tiled roof. These natural external cladding materials would be selected and coloured appropriately to fit the surrounding landscape.

**In consideration of all the foregoing, it is submitted that the siting and design of the new holiday lodge proposed here would be built in full compliance with Policy R2.1**

#### **OTHER MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act advises that applications should be determined in accord with the Development Plan unless other material considerations suggest otherwise. It has been shown above that this proposal for new holiday accommodation is fully supported by the relevant Policies of LDP 2023. Further, the pre-app response from the Planning Service has not identified any significant 'other material planning considerations' which would suggest refusal of the application and require to be addressed.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Hopefully it is clear from the submitted documents and plans that the proposal now submitted has been developed significantly since the original enquiry was put forward for consideration by the Planning Service. The advice proffered was helpful and has enabled the evolution of the design to a point where it can reasonably be recommended for approval.

While this Statement of Case has focused on largely planning policy matters, reading it with the Business Plan and supporting context documentation, it is hopefully clear that this is a proposal which fully meets the Council's policies for both Tourist Development as well as Development in the Countryside.

**Accordingly, it is submitted that it would be reasonable to approve the application, albeit subject to normal safeguarding conditions.**

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