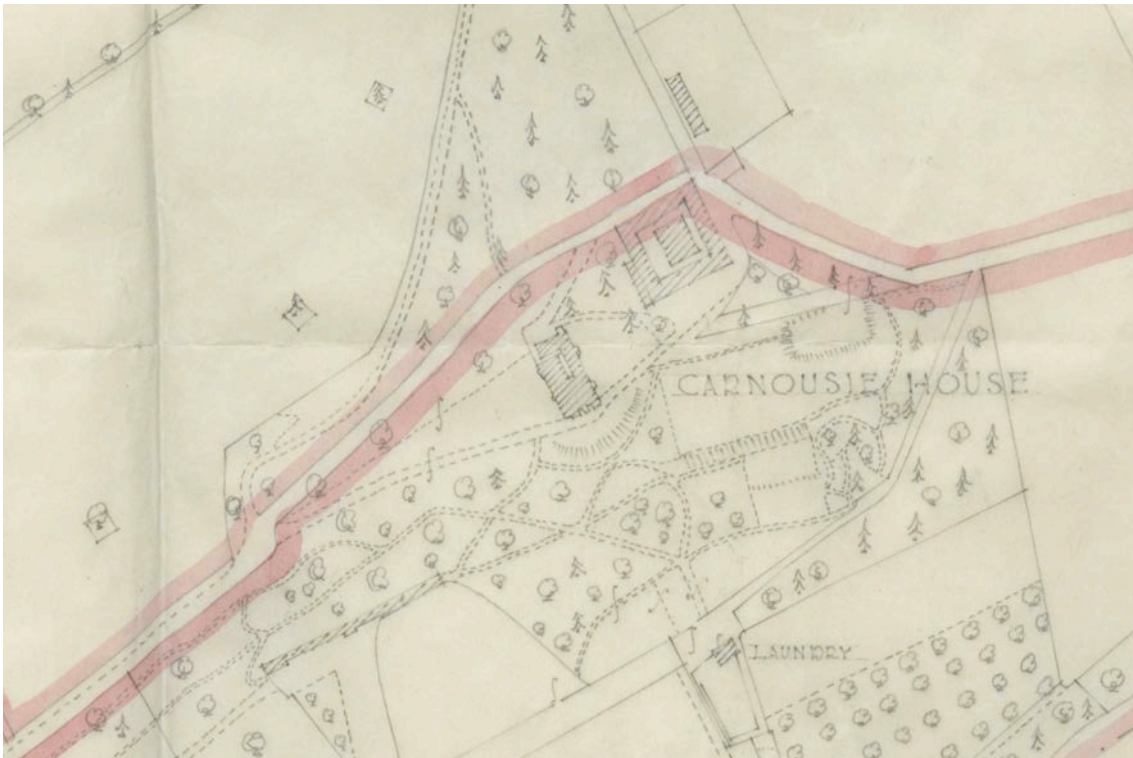


Additional Information in Support of
a Planning Application for
Self-Catering Holiday Letting Accommodation
at Carnousie House



An extract from the 1928 George Bennett Mitchell site plan of Carnousie House copyright HES/Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire County Archives

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Preamble

Purpose

The purpose of these supporting statements is to demonstrate that, on the one hand, the applicants have both the wherewithal and the experience to achieve their aim and, on the other hand, that a need for such accommodation exists.

Carnousie House

The present Carnousie House is a 1960s-built house designed by Michael Shewan, architect of Gray's School of Art.



The Applicants

We are Timothy and Sofia Ray, a 64 and 52 year old Anglo-Swedish couple recently arrived from Norfolk.

Adderley Travel Limited

The applicants own and operate [Adderley Travel Limited](#) a successful inbound tour operator specialising in small group garden tours, throughout Great Britain, for overseas visitors. The company, formed in March 1999, is celebrating its 25th season in 2024.

Since its first season, in 2000, the company has entertained customers from some 26 nations and have 34 nationalities recorded on its database.

Situation

General Outline

We moved to Scotland in mid-2022 with the express intention of establishing a self-catering holiday letting business co-located with our new home. After a four month search we found Carnousie House, an eminently suitable property for such a venture, and moved in at Christmas 2022.

In Detail

The Property

Prospect. Carnousie House sits on a south facing slope high above the north/left bank of the River Deveron in a mature 4-acre woodland garden.

Location. The property is some 4 miles/6.5 kms west of Turriff and may be found at OS Grid Reference NJ 67402 49711 or what3words ///soups.vine.mailer – its UPRN is 151122550.

Ownership. We own the property without a mortgage.

Woodland Garden

The 4-acre woodland garden is a part of a wider historic landscape associated with General Patrick ‘Tiger’ Duff and others and comprises veteran Beech trees, mature deciduous and evergreen trees and younger trees.

Regrettably, the woodland has not been managed and *Rhododendron Ponticum*, an invasive purple-flowered non-native plant, has taken hold.

“...rhododendron is Scotland’s most threatening invasive non-native plant.

Rhododendron ponticum was first introduced into Britain in the 1700s as an ornamental plant. No one could have guessed the damage it would cause. It forms dense thickets and shades out native plants. If left uncontrolled, rhododendron will eventually dominate the habitat to the virtual exclusion of all other plant life.

*Its extensive root system and leaf litter is toxic to many other plants. Worse still, it harbours *Phytophthora*, a fungus-like pathogen that affects many other trees and plants.”*

[Forest and Land Scotland](#) website.

Tree Preservation Orders. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) in place.

Surveys

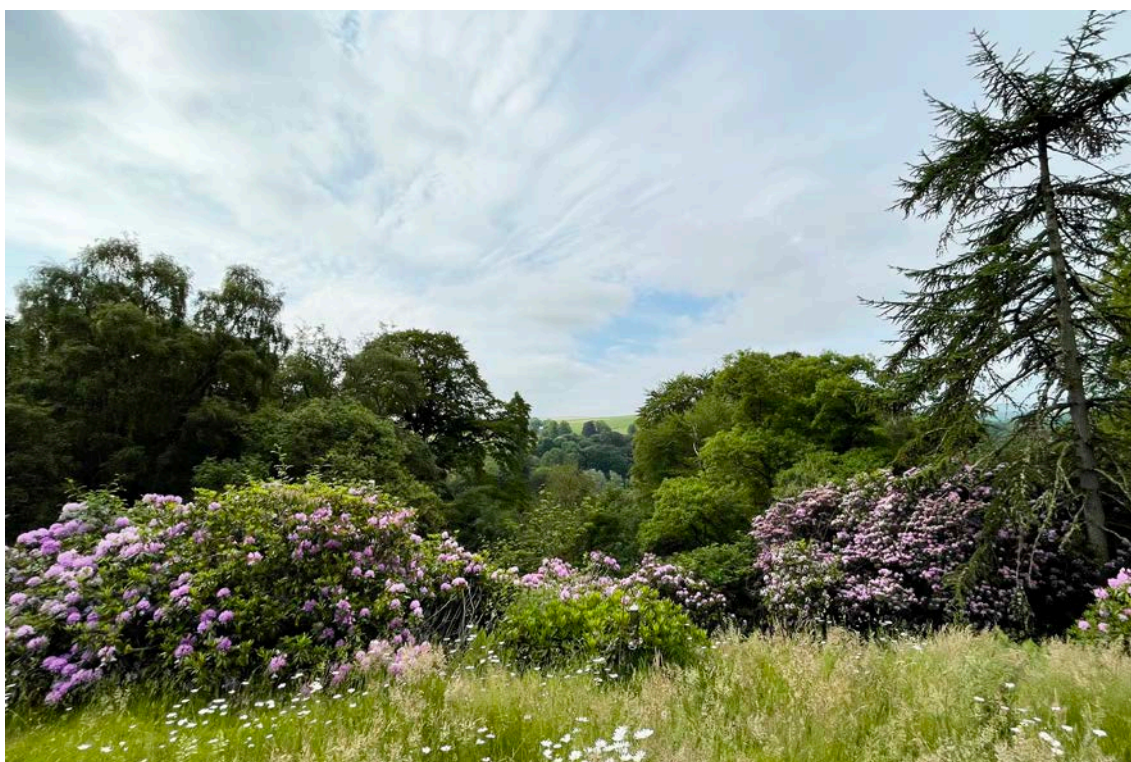
We have commissioned two professional surveys, namely:

A Tree Survey conducted in January 2023 by Struan Dalglish MICFor CEnv

The trees are categorised as Good, Fair, Poor or Dead. We plan to prioritise work on the Good and Fair trees, felling some of the Poor and Dead trees, but leaving substantial standing trunks (where safe to do so) for wildlife habitat.

The tree survey identified 104 specific named and tagged mature trees.

We have contracted Jay Scott, a tree surgeon, of JS Tree Services to undertake the work recommended by the Tree Survey; work which will take about five years to complete.



The woodland garden, looking south from the house, with Rh Ponticum to the fore.

An Ecology Report conducted in June 2023 by Dr William Latimer C.Env. FCIEEM

Besides a Badger sett and a few wild flowers, the ecology report highlighted the need to eradicate as much of the Rhododendron Ponticum as possible; it is the chief reason why the ecology of our woodland garden is so poor.

The report goes on to say:

“The site selected for the proposed chalet accommodation is upon the site of a former tennis court, now bare ground. This appears to raise no ecological implications apart from the proximity of the badger sett some distance downhill in the adjacent woodland. Developments within 30 metres of a badger sett are required to be licensed by NatureScot, a process which seeks to protect sets and avoid harm to badgers.”

Proposed Letting Unit Site

We propose that we utilise a long-abandoned tennis court, a rectangular plot, measuring approximately 27m x 15m some 150-200m east of the house. Largely hidden from view, this area is one of the few flat areas within the garden and, additionally, it has the benefit of its own long-established vehicle access from the main drive.

In autumn, winter and early spring, the site offers wonderful views along the Deveron valley, to the east, whereas, in late spring and summer, when the trees are in full leaf, the site transforms itself into a dabble-shaded, leaf-clad hide away.



The former tennis court and proposed site looking east along the Deveron Valley

We estimate that the letting unit will occupy about 40% of the site.

Landscaping. We have started to remove the *Rhododendron Ponticum* which will allow light onto the woodland floor once more and this, we hope, will encourage the spring bulbs – snowdrops and bluebells in particular – to recolonise the surrounding area.

We will assist in the recolonisation by splitting nearby clumps and replanting them and plant flowering woodland shrubs for summer colour.

Mindful that we plan to take pets and children, we will take a view as to whether we enclose the area.

Car Parking. There is an adjacent area sufficient for two cars for the parking of guests' cars. We will install an EV charging unit at this point.

Visibility. The site is visible from the road, but it is not visible from our house or either of our two immediate neighbours' houses. The roof will be visible from the eastern most section of the shared driveway.

The Building

Design. We have appointed the highly-regarded, award-winning architects Annie Kenyon Architects Limited to design the letting unit and oversee aspects of the build.

Build. We wish to build a high-quality, environmentally friendly timber building using timber from our own garden. We have identified certain trees for the project and those trees will be milled by Logie Sawmills in neighbouring Morayshire.

We intend to meet and exceed the building design guidance as outlined in Scottish Planning Policy.

Policies. We are sensitive to the importance of the Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA), indeed, it would be injurious to our own cause to damage such a special landscape – it is, at least in part, what attracted us to this very area. Our immediate landscape is the very landscape referenced in the Deveron Valley SLA statement:

“The presence of historic estates has a strong influence along the river, including park-land around Duff House, Forglen and others, but more generally in the wooded landscape.”

Notwithstanding the sensitivities of the SLA we trust that Policy B3, specifically Policy B3.1 “We will support the development of new tourist facilities or accommodation.”, will enable us to deliver this proposition.

Footprint. We will construct a visually appealing building, at one with its location and in harmony with the surrounding landscape. It will be easy to maintain and energy efficient.

Finance. The project will be financed from the trading profits of Adderley Travel Limited over the next three to five years.

Neighbours

There are three adjoining properties and, from the north in a clockwise direction, they are:

Corgi Cottage (formerly Gardeners Cottage). The original building built, we think, by General Patrick’s son in the early nineteenth century. This building is directly north of Carnousie House, it has no line of sight to the proposed letting unit and, indeed, has a current permission to renovate buildings for similar use.

The Courtyard. The Courtyard is a converted stables (the original stables to Carnousie House) to the north east of Carnousie House with no direct line of sight to the proposed letting unit from within the courtyard. There is a direct line of sight from the shared driveway, outside the Courtyard.

Waterside Lodge. Waterside Lodge is, itself, a 10-person letting cottage owned by Deveronside Fishing and let out to angling groups. It is not affected by the proposed letting unit.

Need

The need for our proposed letting accommodation is two-fold.

On the one hand we need to generate an income from Carnousie House because we need to transition our business – Adderley Travel Limited – from a mobile, touring business, to a static, letting accommodation business. This is not least because Tim, who accompanies all the tours and drives the minibus, wants to stop driving before he is 70 – in six years' time.

On the other hand, we think that there is a need for more quality letting accommodation in North East Scotland, especially in this part of Aberdeenshire. We think that this quarter of the county has much to offer but is largely undersold.

A cursory search on AirBnB or Coolstays and other such portals supports this contention.

Tourism

It is unarguable that Scotland is a popular tourist destination, internationally and domestically.

International Tourism

Scotland is universally popular with overseas tourists, in 2022:

“A total of 3.2 million visits were made to Scotland by international visitors, staying for 29.7 million nights and spending £3,151 million. Though visits were down 7% compared to 2019, the number of nights went up by 9% and visitor spending by 24% in nominal terms, each setting a new January - December record. Taking inflation into account, overall spend would have been up 10% on 2019, equivalent to £2,791 million in 2019 prices.” Source [VisitScotland](#) annual performance report

Adderley Travel Limited has, since 2006, operated at least three tours per annum in Scotland gaining considerable experience of overseas visitors perceptions of Scotland in the process.

The English speaking populations of North America, Australia and New Zealand, in particular, connect culturally, frequently declaring at least some Scottish ancestry. European visitors are especially attracted to golf and whisky but, ultimately, all visitors are won over by the warmth of hospitality, the food and the scenery.

Domestic Tourism

Scotland is no less popular at home, though it is a more nuanced picture. Scots happily holiday throughout Scotland, often following long set family or geographical traditions, but that's not necessarily true of the whole UK population.

Stereotypical though it may be, there are still those who don't think they're in Scotland until they're past Stirling (at least).

Intelligence

The [VisitScotland](#) Corporate website is a rich source of reliable information and insight into who visits Scotland, why they visit, how much they spend, how long they stay and much more besides. We will not replicate it here, because there is too much of it, some of it is not relevant, some of it is out of date and some of it, much of the third-party research, is copyright.

However, we can take comfort from the fact that the values we entrenched in Adderley Travel Limited since its inception are much the same values highlighted in VisitScotland's latest research conducted by Euromonitor. [Euromonitor travel trends for Scotland 2024-2027 published January 2024](#).

The values are Value, Convenience, Wellness, Authenticity, Discovery and Responsibility – very much the values at the heart of our current and future business.

Themes

VisitScotland also categorises reasons why visitors visit Scotland and they are:

- Culture, Heritage & History
- Food & Drink
- Outdoor Pursuits
- The Coast
- Wellness
- Cycling
- Golf
- Fishing

Locality

The immediate area – within walking distance – provides for walking, cycling, birdwatching, fishing, canoeing, paddle boarding and swimming.

Within a short drive or cycle, there is the beach at Banff, championship golf at Duff House Royal Golf Club, Duff House itself and all its artwork, the towns of Banff, Macduff, Turriff and Aberchirder – for shopping and dining out.

A little further still – within an hour's drive – there is the Moray Firth from Buckie to Fraserburgh including iconic coastal settlements of Cullen, Sandend, Portsoy, Covie and Pennan, and all they have to offer, and market towns of Keith, Huntly, Inverurie and Ellon. The likes of Fyvie Castle, Haddo Hall, Leith Hall, numerous ancient stone circles, larger hills and longer walks, more forest and woodland and coastal nature reserves.

Beyond this – within two hours' drive – most of the Cairngorms National Park and all that has to offer, Royal Deeside from Braemar to Banchory, fishing in the Dee, the Don and the Spey, about half of Scotland's malt whisky production, including famous distilleries open for tours, more world class golf, some 200 castles and shortbread by the truckload.

We are well-placed to access this abundance of activity, attraction and natural beauty.

Travel

Other than driving here, Carnousie House is accessible via Aberdeen Airport, for flights to major UK cities, which is within an hour, and Huntly railway station, for trains to Edinburgh and beyond via Aberdeen or Glasgow and beyond via Inverness, which is within 30 minutes.

Trends

Recent Past. The recent pandemic and its attendant restrictions on overseas travel sparked an explosion of domestic tourism across Britain – overnight domestic tourism was redefined. A number of things happened, including:

Our urban population sought space, seeking it in the British countryside where, unfortunately and sometimes with calamitous effects – witness the litter in some National Parks – not everyone was familiar with the countryside or its ways.

Hotels closed and the Home Counties, unable to travel to the Dordogne or Tuscany discovered glamping – the pod was discovered and glamping became mainstream.

However it came about, Britain discovered – or rediscovered – the countryside.

Present. One effect of the 2020/2021 domestic tourism boom is that Britain's love affair with the countryside has endured. Sure, people have returned to the beaches of southern Spain and to their Tuscan villas, but not exclusively and not without returning to the countryside for short breaks, at least.

Forecast. There are several factors at play and we predict that:

In addition to a foreign holiday, or not, families and middle-class families in particular, will continue to holiday in the British countryside – camping, glamping and self-catering – because it corresponds with their values and their children love it.

The affluent want more. More adventure, more distance, more of everything and, whilst we may not be targeting this particular segment, there is a trickle down effect – everyone's expectations rise and standards will rise to meet those expectations.

The lower end of the market will shrink.

Drivers

There are many drivers to domestic tourism, including the cost of living crisis and today's uncertain world.

Cost of Living. The cost of living crisis has affected most of the population, even if this means that a family goes abroad only once and not twice.

Uncertainty. In an uncertain world, where the threats of war, terrorism and natural disaster – and even scorching Mediterranean summer temperatures – have a destabilising effect, people think twice about travelling abroad, especially those with young children.

Specific Drivers

Additionally, there are a number of specific drivers, including.

National Cycle Network – National Route 1. Part of the long-distance National Cycle Network, National Route 1, route – which connects Dover to the Highlands – and, locally, connects Aberdeen to Inverness, passes our door, and we will look to attracting those cyclists who may wish to break their journey.

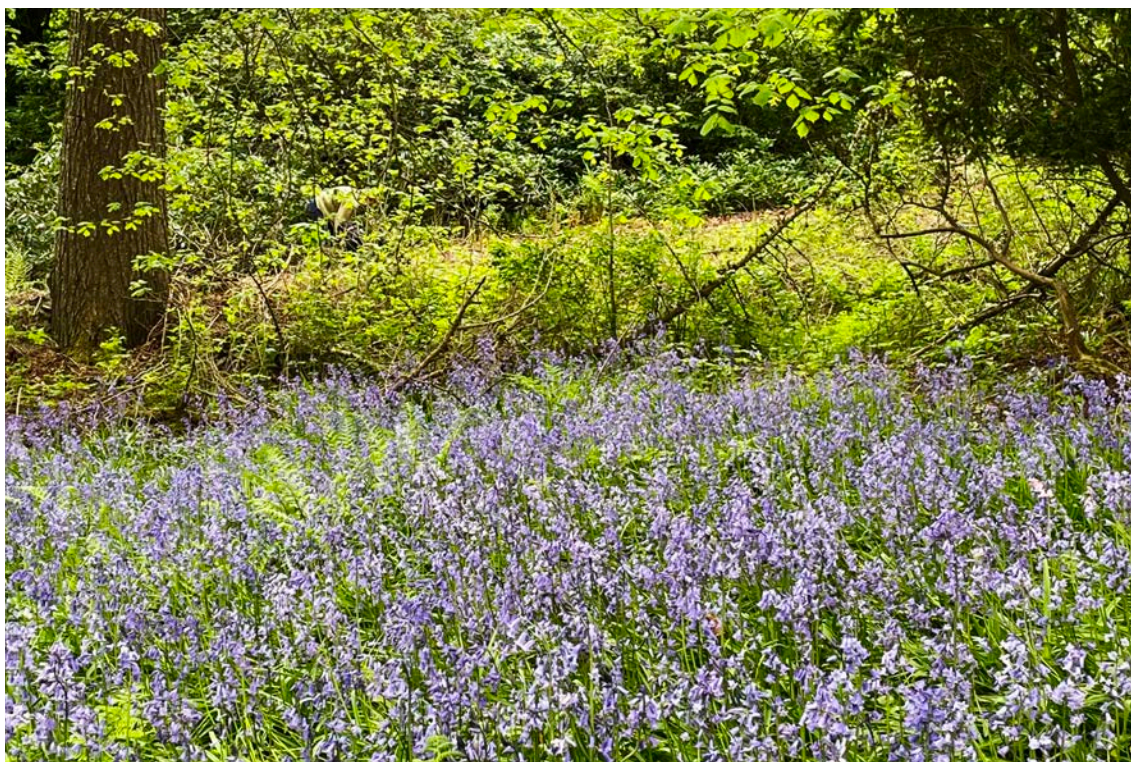
The North East 250 (NE250). Sister road trip to the now increasingly popular (some may say over popular) North Coast 500 (NC500) “The North East 250 explores everything for which Scotland is famous in a unique Scottish road trip taking you through the whisky distilleries of Speyside, the spectacular mountain passes of the Cairngorms National Park, the famous castles of Royal Deeside, the Granite City of Aberdeen, the rugged North Sea coastline to the east, and the picturesque seaside villages of the Moray Firth Coast.”

Fishing on the River Deveron. Whilst not as well-known as the River Spey, perhaps, fishing on the River Deveron is popular with knowledgeable anglers, and rightly so.

“The Deveron has a well-deserved reputation as top class salmon river, with runs of spring, summer and often prolific runs of autumn salmon through to its season’s end. It is a river of big fish and each season brings in some fish in the 30lbs (13.6Kg) class...”

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust [website](#).

Neighbouring Accommodation Businesses. Two neighbouring businesses, Nethdale Hall, an exclusive use wedding venue, and Waterside Lodge, a dedicated fishing party lodge, will, if only occasionally, have need for additional capacity which we will be well placed to provide.



Bluebells below the former tennis court

Aim

Our aim is to provide superior quality self-catering holiday letting accommodation for up to four adults and their children.



The south east corner of the proposed site, looking south east across the Deveron

Execution

With the help of others we will build a beautiful timber-framed and timber-clad two-bedroom single-storey self-catering holiday letting unit in the grounds of our woodland garden on the site of a former tennis court. We will call it Tennis Court Lodge.

The Build

We will build Tennis Court Lodge, in three phases, over the next three or so years. Each phase being a discrete stage, presumably:

- Groundworks
- Frame & Roof
- Fitting Out

Marketing

We will market Tennis Court Lodge through the obvious market-leading portals – AirBnB, Coolstays etc – and, also, through Adderley Travel Limited’s extensive customer database, especially to Northern European and Nordic customers and US, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand customers.

Target Markets

We will, initially at least, target five segments, namely:

- Adderley Travel Limited existing customers, with whom we already have a relationship
- British families for week-long school holiday holidays
- High net worth British and Northern European and Nordic couples for short breaks, perhaps including golf or fishing or both
- Professional, lycra-clad thirty-something year-olds from the Central Belt with their road bikes, paddle boards, mates and partners
- NE250 drivers wanting to take a break or wanting to drive the NE250 in stages and, likewise, cyclists cycling National Cycle Network, National Route 1

We have formed Carnousie House Limited (SC754314) to conduct the business and we have a (yet to be public) dedicated website carnousiehouse.com We have, for 25 years, successfully marketed tours to an international audience online and we will be equally as adept at marketing Tennis Court Lodge.

Occupancy

We expect to meet industry average occupancy rates of 47% (Source: Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey, 2023).

Future Intentions

We are keen to use and share our beautiful surroundings and we envisage:

- Opening the garden for charity through the [Scotlands’ Gardens Scheme](#)
- Organising horticultural activities, perhaps including horticultural courses
- Hosting others to run well-being activities and, perhaps, woodland yoga and pilates

