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Date: 11th March 2013

Your Ref:
Our Ref: 11-051/003

Planning and Regulatory Services
Committee Services (Local Review Board),
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
Argyll
PA31 8RT

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Proposed Dwelling House at Ferry Road, Tayinloan, Argyll and Bute, PA29 6XQ:
Planning Application Ref 12/01278/PP – Notice of Review**

In support of our Notice of Review for the above planning application, we would make the following observations. This letter should be read in conjunction with drawings 11-051/PL10 & PL11.

The planning application noted above was refused as it would erode *“a substantial open and exposed area of agricultural land between existing scattered and sporadic built development, be contrary to the prevailing settlement pattern and at odds with the local distinctiveness of the area and thereby contrary to Structure Plan policies STRAT DC5 and STRAT DC8 and Local Plan policies LP ENV1, LP ENV 10, LP ENV 19, LP HOU 1, LP CST 2 and the design and siting principles contained with Local Plan Appendix A – ‘Sustainable Siting and Design Principles’”*.

The policies referred to above cover many design issues and I do not intend to refer to them all, as I believe that the principle of residential development in Tayinloan and the design of the building are not contentious. It is the buildings relationship to its neighbours and the site that is the point of concern. In simple terms, the proposed development is not considered *‘infill’* or *‘rounding off’*. This was highlighted in a pre-application letter from Peter Bain of Argyll & Bute Planning Services, 19th May 2011 and a subsequent meeting.

The Planning Department are actively discouraging residential development on plots within *‘sensitive countryside’* where it would reduce the perceived plot size of the neighbouring buildings. This stance is based on a perception that one of the key settlement patterns of the Kintyre peninsula is single houses sitting alone within substantial plots.

This fails to reflect the reality of the site, the history of the region and the wider environment.

Firstly, although the iconic image of the white-washed house sitting alone in rugged scenery is thought of as romantic and particularly Scottish, it is in fact a reminder of a time when the Scottish landscape was irrevocably changed by politics. The eradication of the organic clusters of blackhouses that populated the western and northern parts of Scotland was a direct result of the Highland clearances. The single houses that replaced them were mostly owned by middle class tenant farmers and are in fact an imported model. The traditional Scottish model is one of closely grouped clachans or communities, not isolated dwellings.

With regard to the particularities of the Tayinloan site, the notion of a single house sitting in splendid isolation within open '*sensitive countryside*' is somewhat compromised by the fact that the site lies within 100m of a car park, a café, a guesthouse, a farm and a ferry terminal. The immediate vicinity is in truth of mixed use, covering leisure, retail/commercial, agricultural and industrial uses.

It is government policy to grow the tourism industry within Scotland. The west coast of Scotland and the Kintyre peninsula in particular, will have a key part to play in this growth. The ferry terminal has just been upgraded and the visitor numbers to Gigha and beyond will surely only increase over time. The success of the café and the guesthouse adjacent to the site are proof of this.

The installation of wind farms on Gigha has increased the number of contractors and maintenance personnel passing through Tayinloan and the potential re-introduction of on-shore fish farms in the locality will hopefully increase this number further. With this in mind, the applicant has designed the house with the potential to accommodate guests in the future.

Visual Issues:

The view of the Planning Department is that the construction of the dwelling would significantly alter the visual perception of the site and the surrounding area, when viewed close up and from afar. The objective of the planning policies is to ensure that views of the sea and surrounding landscape are maintained and the dwellings do not visually dominate the landscape.

The existing dwellings along Ferry Road sit in large plots, with generous distances between them. Whether they form a settlement pattern is debatable (refer 3D images). Only 'The Whins' sits in true isolation. I would argue that 'Brookfield' has a relationship with the western edge of Tayinloan, while 'Monamore' and 'Cladach Bothan' have a relationship with the car park, farm, café etc and form part of a distinct settlement of their own. The proposed dwelling would join this latter settlement.

When travelling from Tayinloan along Ferry Road, the views to the sea are largely unbroken. However, as you proceed past 'Monamore', the visual mass of the car park, the café and the farm beyond start to dominate, especially so when the car park is busy (refer 3D images). This is no longer an isolated stretch of coastland, but a populated destination point. To consider this distinct area as one of '*sensitive countryside*', is inappropriate.

Due to the alignment of 'Monamore' and 'Cladach Bothan' and their relationship to Ferry Road, the proposed house is partially screened from view both from the south and north (refer 3D images). I would argue that the proposed house does not materially affect the perception of open space between the existing dwellings. Indeed, if you were standing in front of the proposed dwelling, the distances to 'Monamore' and 'Cladach Bothan' on either side would be 36m and 18m respectively.

The planning policy LP HOU1 General Housing Development supports '*small scale housing development on infill, rounding-off...provided this does not result in undesirable forms of settlement coalescence, the extension of the established settlement boundary or ribbon development*'.

Looking at the 3D images from above you can see that the insertion of the proposed dwelling between 'Monamore' and 'Cladach Bothan' is an entirely suitable case of infill, which does not encourage ribbon development towards Tayinloan, instead reinforcing the distinctly separate settlement of the car park, farm, café etc. The fear of ribbon development is valid, but in the case of Tayinloan and its relationship to the Ferry terminal it may be inevitable if it is to prosper and grow as a successful tourism and transport hub.

The proposed site can comfortably accommodate the dwelling while allowing garden ground entirely in keeping with the other dwellings on Ferry Road, (refer 3D images). The policies as applied sterilise sites such as the one in question and may have the effect of pricing out house-builders who cannot afford either to purchase large plots where house to garden ratios are high, or deter house buyers who do not want the maintenance costs of a large plot on such an exposed site.

The argument that the residual spaces between dwellings such as these can be used for agricultural use is unsound, as issues of access, proximity to dwellings, the size of modern farm machinery and the exposed nature of the sites make them unprofitable for anyone other than a dedicated smallholder.

I have recently completed a residential project in Ardrishaig and I know how difficult it is for local building contractors to secure work. The contractor I worked with has recently been sending joiners to Aberdeen to keep them employed. This practice is obviously not sustainable and if the local construction industry does not pick up, then local tradesmen will either relocate to Glasgow or further afield, or hang up their tools. The resuscitation of the housing market in Argyll and Bute is key to their success.

The Planning Department must always put the best interests of the built environment at the top of its list of priorities when considering planning applications. However, when the ideals of the relevant planning policies are as compromised as in this case, I would suggest a more pro-development approach is appropriate.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by a long horizontal line that ends in a small flourish.

Steve Runciman
Crossings House Design

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