

18th March 2013

Monamore
Ferry Road
Tayinloan
Tarbert
Argyll
PA29 6XQ

Head of Governance and Law
Argyll and Bute Council
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

Dear Sir

Local Review Body Reference 13/0006/LRB
Planning Application Reference 12/01278/PP
Site south of Cladach Bothan, Ferry Road, Tayinloan, PA29 6XQ

As owner/occupier of Monamore immediately to the south of the proposed development site, I would like to comment on the applicant's notice of review. In response to the original application I wrote a letter of objection dated 17th August 2012. The application was refused on 11th December 2012. My concerns today remain as described in the letter of 17th August.

The form of intimation to interested parties of receipt of notice of review includes:
(6) Any representation submitted previously for the above application will be considered by the Local Review Body when determining the review.

From this, it is my understanding that all representations from concerned neighbours submitted in response to the original application will be considered again by the Local Review Body.

The applicant's agent who has written the letter supporting the notice of review is Mr S Runciman of Crossings House Design. At the start of his letter, Mr Runciman says:
This letter should be read in conjunction with drawings 11-051/PL10 & PL11.
This suggests two drawings. Included with the letter are three drawings, all with Job No 11-051.... but these are titled Dwg No 003, Dwg No 002, and Dwg No 001. The text on Dwg No 001 finishes with:

This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the supporting statement by Andrew McCafferty Associates.

Andrew McCafferty Associates were the agents who wrote the applicant's supporting statement for the original application, not the notice of review.

This is confusing. It's not clear which plans refer to the notice of review, and which plans refer to the original application. I'm unsure about how much the Local Review Body will look to the applicant's original application and supporting statement, or whether the focus will now be on the applicant's more recent notice of review and supporting statement by Crossings House Design.

With regard to Mr Runciman's letter supporting the notice of review, I would comment as follows:

The fourth paragraph says:

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.

I live in a neighbouring building. I find it hard to understand how the perceived plot size of my house would increase or decrease depending on the presence or absence of a new house to the north, let alone how planners could use this perceived plot size as a planning criterion related to sensitive countryside.

The letter goes on to describe the inappropriateness of building isolated houses. The writer advocates the idea of *organic clusters of blackhouses* and seems to be recommending a return to the days before the Highland clearances. This is a strange reason to put forward in support of a new house on this site. In the six years since I came to live here, I've been impressed by the sense of community which exists amongst all Ferry Road residents. I don't agree that buildings closer to the ferry terminal make up a separate settlement with a separate identity. Nor would I describe any of the buildings along Ferry Road as remote or isolated. We have a functioning, rural, 21st century community which reflects the existing scattered distribution of all the buildings along Ferry Road. It is this balance of the natural and built environments which needs to be protected.

A few years ago the applicant built Cladach Bothan (immediately to the north of the proposed site) as a guest house designed to cater for visiting holidaymakers and business people. It was subsequently sold and has now been reconfigured into a more conventional residence. There's a sense of history repeating itself with this new application. The text on drawing number 001, submitted along with Mr Runciman's letter, includes the sentence:

There is a lack of quality self catering accommodation in this area and this proposal seeks to create short and long term lets for both holiday and business use.

The provision of another new guesthouse type facility is being presented as an argument for supporting the application because it would enhance tourism and provide accommodation for workers such as those maintaining the Gigha wind turbines. Given what transpired previously with Cladach Bothan, this argument cannot be taken seriously.

In the fourth paragraph, under 'Visual Issues' Mr Runciman says:

I would argue that the proposed house does not materially affect the perception of open space between the existing dwellings.

This doesn't make sense. A new house must take up a certain amount of space.

Two paragraphs on, the letter talks about the proposed new dwelling not encouraging ribbon development along Ferry Road towards Tayinloan. I've always imagined ribbon development to be a row of buildings. A new house in the proposed location would of course set a precedent for future ribbon development.

The letter goes on:

The fear of ribbon development is valid, but in the case of Tayinloan and it's relationship to the ferry terminal it may be inevitable if it is to prosper and grow as a successful tourism and transport hub.

Here Mr Runciman appears to have changed his mind. He acknowledges that the proposed new house could indeed lead to ribbon development along Ferry Road, and suggests that this

future should be embraced as part of the area's economic development. This is a one-sided view. Planning policy recognises tensions which can arise when diverging interests such as commerce, conservation or other local agendas co-incide. There are reasons why this site has been designated as within an Area of Panoramic Quality, and is Sensitive Countryside. While I've lived here it's my understanding that the Council's position has consistently been to resist ribbon development along Ferry Road.

I don't agree that the proposed house should be built in order to provide employment for local builders. Nor do I agree that the site should be built on because at present it's commercial profitability is limited. (It's relatively low earning potential would have been reflected in the original purchase price.) The argument that house builders can't afford large plots, or may not want high maintenance costs, has little relevance to this application.

In the final paragraph of the letter, Mr Runciman says:

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.

This may be correct, but I'd be surprised if the Planning Department considered that the built environment should take priority over everything else. People, and the natural environment are just as important as buildings. Maintaining the delicate balance between the built and the natural environments needs to be weighed against ongoing local economic viability and the needs of sustainable development. Local public opinion also needs to be considered. The planning authority is obligated to weigh up all of these sometimes conflicting interests, and planning policy is there to inform this challenging task. The planning policy references put forward by the Council in December 2012 supporting refusal of this application are still pertinent today.

My own perspective is not that of a planner. I'm a concerned neighbour. It remains my view that the potential commercial benefit to the applicant should not over-rule the reasons put forward by the Council when the original application was refused in December 2012.

Yours faithfully

David Rankin