

Our Ref: DOW13045

Your ref:

15th November 2013

Central Validation Team,
Planning and Regulatory Services,
Whitegates Offices,
Whitegates Road,
Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8SY

Email:
paul@houghtonplanning.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

LAND SOUTH OF A828, PORTNACROISH, ARGYLL & BUTE

Houghton Planning is instructed by Mrs S MacAlpine-Downie to submit a Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) application for a single dwelling on land south of the A828, Portnacroish, Argyll and Bute.

The planning application is accompanied by the following documents and information:

- Covering Letter;
- Planning Application Form;
- Relevant Certificate;
- Location/Site Plan; and
- Planning and Advertisement Fee, this will be sent under separate cover.

The site lies immediately south of the A828 at Portnacroish. It forms the north western part of a field, which slopes down from the main A road to the former railway line, now used as a footpath.

The field is currently used for grazing and is bounded by hedgerows and trees, other than where it is fenced to form the rear boundaries of properties fronting the A road. Those properties comprise: Tigh-Na-Crois, Grianan and nos 1-4 Appin Terrace.

Access to the field is currently taken from a minor road, forming the western boundary of the application site and field, and close to the junction of this with the A road. It is proposed to close this field access and create a new one further to the south; this will be shared with the proposed dwelling. This access relocation will be of benefit to the area by reducing the opportunity for vehicular conflicts within the existing junction bell mouth. The proposed access has also been carefully sited to avoid two mature trees that form part of this western boundary.

The minor road, from which access is proposed, is privately owned, but over which the applicant has a right of way. The road already serves a number of residential properties,

including: Myrtle Cottage, Tigh Sithe and nos 1-4 Railway Cottages, and is considered to be appropriate for the minor residential/agricultural access necessary to serve the proposed plot and field.

The application site has been chosen such that it forms an infill plot between Tigh-na-Crois and Myrtle Cottage. A new dwelling here will sit well down from St Cross Church; will not affect the outlook of any existing dwellings; and the applicant is prepared to plant a 20 metre wide structural landscaping belt along the edge of the plot with Tigh-na-Crois, if this is considered necessary for amenity reasons. Otherwise, the aim will be to protect all existing trees and hedgerows, with the remainder of the field left for continued agricultural grazing.

The application site, and remainder of the field, is currently identified, on the Argyll and Bute Local Plan Proposals Map (ABLP), as Countryside around Settlements. It is also within the Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area (NSA), the northern boundary of which is the A828. It is not shown within the SEPA Indicative Flood Map 1:200 year flood zone, nor are there any biodiversity or cultural heritage designations shown on SiteLink or PastMap, with the nearest cultural heritage designation being the church, and churchyard, which are Category C listed.

Countryside around Settlements is a development management zone defined by the Argyll and Bute Structure Plan (ABSP) and the ABLP wherein *“a co-ordinated and planned approach to development is appropriate whilst allowing for small scale infill, rounding-off redevelopment and change of use of buildings to take place on an appropriate basis.”* In effect, there is a presumption in favour of appropriate residential development and this is supported by Policy STRAT DC 5 in the ABSP and LP Hou 1 in the ABLP. The text that supports LP Hou 1 goes on to state that acceptable residential development should *“not result in undesirable forms of settlement coalescence, the extension of the established settlement boundary or ribbon development”*.

The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan (ABLDP), which is soon to be considered at Examination, no longer includes Countryside around Settlements, and instead such areas are included in a separate development management zone, Countryside. That said, the policy regime for such areas is basically the same as for Countryside around Settlements and continues to permit small scale infill and rounding off in appropriate circumstances (Policy LDP DM1) and provided it does not *“extend an existing settlement into the Countryside Zone”*.

The Portnacroish Settlement Zone, as shown on both the ABLP and ABLDP Proposals Maps, has a linear character, with the principal, but currently separated, settled zones being west of the application site and to the north east, although the church, and the frontage houses on the A828, are also included therein. In effect, therefore, the new ABLDP policy presumes again development within the field because, by definition, it would ‘extend the settlement’ into the Countryside.

The ABLDP status of the field as Countryside is a recent modification, as earlier versions of this Plan showed the western end of the field as a Potential Development Area (PDA 5/166) for residential development and thus, presumably, as part of the settlement as envisaged at those times. This PDA zoning was, however, removed following objections received to its inclusion, and due to the possibility of the field having archaeological interest, and thus it reverts to Countryside in the new Plan soon to be at Examination. This archaeological interest need not, however, preclude development, but rather suggests that a suitably worded planning condition should be attached to any planning permission granted requiring an archaeological investigation, which the applicant is happy to commission.

Against this policy background, it should be stressed that the current development plan presumes in favour of residential development on this field, and whilst the ABLDP is a material consideration, the weight that can be attached to this is limited, in our view, because this Plan has not yet been subjected to Examination.

Turning to the application site itself, this can be accepted for development provided it can be seen as infill or rounding off. In our opinion, it is infill, as stated above, in the sense that it lies in a gap between Tigh-na-Crois and Myrtle Cottage. Furthermore, development of this site will not create a ribbon of development, in that this already exists, but is, instead, infilling a gap in what is otherwise an established built-up frontage.

Equally, we would say that the development of this gap will not extend the established settlement boundary. It is accepted that both the ABLP and ABLDP Proposals Maps draw this tightly around existing development, and exclude the application site from it, but on the ground, the field clearly appears as part of, central even, to a linear settlement form extending from Glen Stockdale Burn, to the east, to West Dallens, to the north west. It appears as much part of the settlement as the field to the rear of Myrtle Cottage wherein Detailed Planning Permission was granted for a dwelling in 2012 (ref: 12/01181/PP) and an earlier PPP application was approved in 2011 (ref: 11/01339/PPP) with the case officer concluding, in the Report of Handling for that earlier application, that a dwelling on this site would *“be compatible with the settlement pattern of the immediately surrounding area”*. If that site is deemed compatible, with a substantial detached house set back from the existing road frontage, and established pattern of development, then so must a dwelling on the current application site.

Finally, it is accepted that developing the application site will coalesce existing development, but it will do so by connecting two parts of the same settlement. It will not cause two different settlements to appear joined, which is what, we say, the policy is seeking to prevent.

As such, the current application should benefit from the presumption in favour of development granted by ABLP Policy Hou 1, provided there are no other material considerations suggesting otherwise.

Other material considerations include the ABLDP, albeit that we suggest that this should carry little, if any, weight, and various issues, which are listed on the Council’s website, and in respect of which we can offer the following comments.

- The application site is unlikely to be contaminated. Historic maps going back to 1875 have been checked and show that the field has always been free from any development. The applicant’s family are also long-standing owners and have always used it for agricultural uses, mainly grazing.
- The site is not shown as within a flood plain.
- A dwelling in this position will blend well with the built development, which currently exists, and will have a neutral, if not positive, impact on the landscape quality of the NSA.
- The palate of materials will be in-keeping with those used locally and the applicant is happy for this to be conditioned.
- The applicant will ensure that what is designed is comparable with the scale, design and layout of existing development close-by.
- The proposed dwelling will be far enough away from existing dwellings to ensure that there will be no amenity impacts.

- There are considered to be no environmental impacts likely.
- Given the position of the application site at a lower level to the church, it is considered that its setting will be preserved and, as such, the proposal complies with the statutory test and policy in that regard.
- The site may have archaeological interest and so the applicant is content to undertake an archaeological investigation as a condition of planning permission being granted.
- No nuisance impacts will result from development taking place.
- A dwelling is considered compatible with adjoining uses, which are, in the main, residential.
- Allowing this dwelling will, albeit in a small way, aid the creation and retention of local construction jobs and support the local economy.
- The proposed access is considered to be suitable and can be compliant with prevailing standards.
- Infrastructure is considered adequate.

Overall, we argue that the current proposal accords with relevant policy in the ABSP and ABLP, the majority of other material considerations favour planning permission being granted, and whilst the ABLDP, and its presumption against any extensions of settlements into the Countryside, counts against, this does not carry sufficient weight to outweigh the presumption in favour of new development that is otherwise contained in the development plan

We trust that the above provides sufficient justification for a new dwelling to be consented in principle on this site, but if you do require any further information then please contact Paul Houghton at paul@houghtonplanning.co.uk or call him on 01786 825575 or 07780 117708.

We otherwise look forward to receiving confirmation in due course that the planning application has been validated.

Yours faithfully

Houghton Planning