

Local Review Statement

Reference No: 22/02100/PP

Applicant: Mr A MacGillivray

Proposal: Erection of short-term holiday let accommodation, outbuilding and pontoon and installation of sewage treatment plant

Site Address: Eilean Loch Oscair, off Isle of Lismore

Introduction

This Local Review Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Mr MacGillivray (hereafter the Applicant) by Paul Houghton MRTPI of Houghton Planning Ltd. It responds to the reasons for refusal for the Application as set out on the Decision Notice dated 18th July 2023.

The Applicant would like to make clear that this is a unique 'one-off' project, and one that will not only help use the island for an innovative purpose supporting it as a croft, but has also been designed to blend with the landscape, and to a very, very high standard, and has all the sustainability credentials that can be mustered. The Applicant hopes it will eventually be award winning should councillors support it.

In the meantime, for the purposes of this local, the design quality is seen as a significant material consideration in favour of this development being allowed, and on its own outweighs all the concerns raised by the case officer in her Report of Handling.

The Applicant appreciates that building on this island will be novel, but the planning system has always welcomed innovation, as indeed does National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). It was perhaps inevitable that it would be left to councillors to determine the appropriateness of this development, and perhaps that is the right thing for something that is pushing the boundaries of what is possible in design and constructional terms.

The Applicant would love the opportunity to show councillors the island at a site visit, although he appreciates that this may be difficult to arrange, although he does have access to a boat that could be used for the purpose.

If the above is not considered possible, the Applicant is looking into commissioning a drone video of the island, which will be forwarded as soon as it is available. Still photographs from that will also be provided just in case a short video is not permitted to be shown at the Local Review Body.

Finally, before reading the rest of this Statement, it is requested that councillors read the entirety of the Design Statement first because this sets out the vision for the island eloquently, as written by the person who has designed the buildings.

The remainder of this Statement now follows the same order as the Report of Handling for ease of reference by councillors.

Representations

The Applicant welcomes the support of the Lismore Community Council who can see the many merits of this proposal. This support is a further material consideration in favour of planning permission being granted.

As for the comments of Oban District Access Panel (ODAP), the building itself is fully disabled accessible. Yes, disabled people will need a boat to get to the island, but that is also possible, and the Access Panel have not raised that as an issue.

Summary Assessment

It is accepted that the development will have a visual impact on the Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area. However, that impact will be limited by virtue of the position, design, and materials proposed, for the buildings.

This is a small-scale and discreet intervention that will be visible from the sea as people pass, but will be a thing of beauty and interest. If that is accepted, then the proposal complies with NPF4 Policy 4 c because the *“objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised”*.

Furthermore, there is an economic benefit from adding a unique holiday experience to the island supporting the Applicant and his croft whilst, if councillors are impressed with the design, then this could be seen as being of ‘national importance’.

It is accepted that the development does not fall within one of the accepted categories under LDP Policies LDP STRAT 1 and LDP DM 1, and thus is at odds with NPF4 Policy 9 b. It also fails to find favour under NPF4 Policy 10. However, this is more than outweighed by the material considerations suggested above, notably the exceptional quality of the design.

The comments the case officer makes regarding NPF4 Policy 14 such as the island being isolated, and the development not being connected to an established settlement, development, or infrastructure, are all correct, but detachment is the very point of the proposals. It’s about a sense of isolation for those that will stay on the island that will be the unique selling point. This proposal is about introducing a high quality, small holiday dwelling to this unique landscape. It cannot, therefore, be expected to comply with every policy, or nuance of a policy, and needs to be considered for what it is. If councillors see the wonderment in the design and concept, then that is enough to allow it. If they think it could be award winning, and put Argyll on the map, that tips the scales massively in favour of approval.

NPF4 Policy 17 is not considered relevant to this proposal. The building is not being proposed for permanent occupation, which would clearly be difficult due to the position of the island, and adverse weather to be expected during the winter months. It will likely only be used during the summer months, and mothballed (winterised) once harsher weather sets in.

NPF4 Policy 29 seeks to encourage rural economic activity, innovation, and diversification, which this proposal meets in all respects. It is supported by the local community who provide the answer to the concerns raised by the case officer in relation to this policy by underlining that the development *“would be a useful facility and diversification for a working croft, helping support the farming enterprise of a local family”*.

NPF4 Policy 30 seeks to encourage, promote, and facilitate, sustainable tourism development. This development ticks all those boxes by providing a unique holiday offer in an amazing landscape setting that is likely to attract people to Argyll from far and wide. Some will stay there; some may simply sail

by to have a look. All of them will contribute money to the local economy, and will help support local tourism-related jobs.

Conclusion

For the reasons given above, there is a strong argument in favour of granting planning permission. It is accepted that every policy requirement is not met. However, that is never going to happen for what is a unique project in an awe inspiring landscape setting.

If councillors like what they see, then that is enough to support the development, thereby setting aside the concerns of the case officer who has, understandably, wanted the proposal to comply with every policy, and every part of every policy. That is never going to happen where a proposal is pushing the envelope, and testing the limits of the possible.

As a final thought, a couple of examples of award winning houses are included with this local review. Neither had an easy ride through the planning system, but the results are stunning, particularly the Assynt house that sits in splendid isolation in the sparsely populated coastal area of Assynt in the North West Highlands. That could happen here with Eilean Loch Osaic on the RIBA 2024 or 2024 shortlist.