DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Local Member - Councillor Bruce Robertson
PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Date of Validity - 20.04.06
MID ARGYLL, KINTYRE AND ISLAY
Committee Date - 04.10.06

Reference Number: 06/00830/DET
Applicants Name: Mrs P Richmond
Application Type: Detailed
Application Description: Construction of tourist hostel, car park and private sewage treatment plant
Location: Land Adjoining Whitehouse Bridge, Inverneill

(A) THE APPLICATION

(i) Development Requiring Express Planning Permission:

- Construction of 22 person tourist hostel with manager’s living accommodation;
- Formation of car park and installation of bike stands;
- Installation of LPG storage tank;
- Installation of private sewage treatment plant

(ii) Other Aspects of the development:

- Access to existing private way;
- Connection to public water supply

(B) RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1) Planning permission be granted subject to the standard time limit condition and the conditions and reasons attached;

2) In the light of objections received, a discretionary hearing be held prior to the determination of the application.

(C) DETERMINING ISSUES AND MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This application proposes the construction of a purpose-built hostel intended to provide overnight accommodation for cyclists, walkers and other tourists to the area. It is to be located on a former, section of road at Inverneill, which became redundant following the realignment of the trunk road associated with the construction of the new Whitehouse Bridge. Adopted and emergent development plan policy supports the development of tourist facilities within settlements, provided that they are located and designed appropriately and accord with other planning policies.

There are no objections to the proposal from consultees. Objections have been lodged by ten households to the introduction of a commercial use, which it is suggested would be inappropriate within what is currently an almost exclusively residential settlement. In particular is suggested that the proposal will constitute a traffic hazard and may introduce anti-social behaviour.

Angus J Gilmour
Head of Planning
15.9.06

Author and contact officer: Richard Kerr 01546 604080
CONDITIONS AND REASONS RELATIVE TO APPLICATION 06/00830/DET

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of Class 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997, or any equivalent provision following the revocation and re-enactment thereof, with or without modifications, with the exception of the first floor hostel manager’s living accommodation, the development hereby approved shall be used solely to provide overnight tourist accommodation, and no individual, family or group shall occupy the accommodation for any continuous period in excess of seven days. A visitor register shall be maintained at the premises in order to demonstrate compliance with the terms of this condition, which should be submitted annually for the approval of the Council as Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and amenity given the restricted car parking area and amenity space available to serve the building.

3. The first floor living accommodation should be occupied ancillary to the use of the building as a tourist hostel by the manager of the hostel and his/her dependants only, and shall not be occupied as self-contained living accommodation independently of the hostel.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in accordance with the development as applied for.

4. The hostel shall not be first occupied until the car parking and manoeuvring areas shown on the approved plans have been hard surfaced, marked out and made available for use in accordance with the layout shown on the approved plans.

Reason: In the interests of road safety.

5. The hostel hereby approved shall not be first occupied until the improvement works to the access to the site from the Trunk Road have been implemented in accordance with the layout details indicated on the approved drawing No ************

Reason: In the interests of road safety.

6. No development shall be commenced until samples and/or full details of the materials to be used externally on the development have been submitted to and approved by the Council as Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the duly approved details.

Reason: In order to secure an appropriate appearance in the interests of visual amenity.

7. Prior to development being commenced, details of the means of enclosure of the boundaries of the site shall be submitted for the approval of the Council as Planning Authority. No walls, fences or gates shall be erected without agreement having been given in writing in advance to the design, height and materials of such walls, fences or gates.

Reason: In order to secure an appropriate appearance in the interests of visual amenity.

8. Prior to the first occupation of the building, the windows in the rear (west) facing elevation of the building shall be obscure glazed and shall be maintained as such thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council as Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity having regard to the location of the rear of the building in close proximity to the boundary of the site.

NOTES TO APPLICANT

1. The works required to upgrade the access within the boundary of the Trunk Road in respect of condition 4 above should be agreed with Transport Scotland, Trunk Roads Network Management Directorate, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ (Tel 0131 244 0474).

2. Please have regard to the attached consultation response from Scottish Water dated 14.05.06.
3. Please have regard to the attached consultation response from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency dated 01.06.06.

4. No signs or advertisements should be displayed on the building or within the site without enquiries having been made as to whether these benefit from ‘deemed consent’ by virtue of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984, and in the case of those requiring ‘express consent’, no such sign or advertisement shall be displayed without advertisement consent having been granted in advance by the Council as Planning Authority.
APPENDIX RELATIVE TO APPLICATION 06/00830/DET

A. POLICY OVERVIEW

'Mid Argyll Local Plan’ 1985 (1st Alteration 1989 and 2nd Alteration 1993)

Policy STRAT 2A – local development requirements will be expected to be met in the rural settlements (including Inverneill).

Policy RUR 1 – prominent or sporadic development will be resisted in areas designated for landscape/scenic importance (in this case the Loch Fyne/West Loch Tarbert Area of Local Landscape Significance).

Policy RUR 2 – proposals subject to Policy RUR 1 will be assessed in terms of environmental impact, locational/operational need, economic benefit and infrastructure/servicing implications.

Policy TOUR 1 – supports the promotion of, and the development of, tourism in Mid Argyll.

Policy TOUR 2A – encourages the development of tourist facilities including self-catering accommodation which relates to physical resources and recreational opportunities provided that it does not conflict with the protection of agricultural, landscape, nature conservation or heritage resources.

Policy TR 1 – accesses to the A83(T) with adverse road safety implications are to be avoided.

Policy TR 8 – appropriate off-street parking should be provided to serve new developments.

'Argyll and Bute Structure Plan’ 2002

Policy STRAT DC 1 - supports small scale development (or exceptionally larger scale development) compatible with a rural settlement location on infill rounding-off and redevelopment sites within minor settlements (including Inverneill).

'Argyll and Bute Local Plan' Finalised Draft 2005

Proposal P/DCZ/1 - gives spatial expression to the settlement boundaries established by adopted structure plan policy STRAT DC 1, and includes the application site within the Inverneill settlement boundary. As no representations have been lodged or modifications proposed as part of the local plan process, this may be accorded significant weight in the determination of the application.

Policy ENV 1 – requires consideration to be given to impacts on amenity and the environment in general, to layout and design, and to access and infrastructure. As no representations have been lodged, and those modifications which are proposed as part of the local plan process are not significant, this may be accorded significant weight in the determination of the application.

Policy ENV 19 – development should exhibit a high standard of design and layout, should integrate effectively with its surroundings, and have regard to design advice. Development with poor quality or inappropriate layouts, including over-development will be resisted. As no representations have been lodged, and those modifications which are proposed as part of the local plan process are not significant, this may be accorded significant weight in the determination of the application.

Policy TOUR 1 – there is a presumption in favour of new tourist facilities in the settlements provide that they are of a form and scale consistent with structure plan policy STRAT DC 1, they respect townscape/landscape character and amenity, and they are reasonably accessible by public transport where available. As no representations have been lodged or modifications proposed as part of the local plan process, this may be accorded significant weight in the determination of the application.
B. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

(i) Site History

None relevant

(ii) Consultations

Trunk Roads Authority (15.9.06) – no objection.

Scottish Water (14.5.06) – no objection.

Visit Scotland (22.5.06) – supports the proposal as there are no other hostel facilities in the area. As a new build development it would be in accordance with the latest disability requirements which would encourage less able guests to visit the area.

SEPA (1.6.06) – no objection. Discharge from the sewage treatment plant to a soakaway would be preferred to a discharge to controlled waters.

Head of Public Protection (5.5.06) – no objection subject to above ground LPG storage meeting usual fire safety standards.

(iii) Publicity

The application has been advertised in the local newspaper (Section 34). The period for representations expired on 19th May 2006. Letters of objection have been received from the following:

- Mr and Mrs D Duthie, Olbia, Inverneill PA30 8ES (3.5.06 and 15.6.06);
- Mr D McPhater, Laighmnor, Strowan Road, Comrie, Perthshire PH6 2EH (5.5.06);
- Mr and Mrs D Machray, Cedarwood, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (10.5.06);
- P Cooper, Auchencairn, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (17.5.06);
- Ms M Gechi, Capanna, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (10.5.06);
- Mr S Sutherland, Ceol-na-Mara, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (10.5.06);
- Mr A Gow, Oakbank, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (10.5.06);
- Mr M Cameron, Woodneuk, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (11.5.06);
- Mr and Mrs G Larkin, Dunelm, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (12.5.06);
- Ms W Lorimer, The Braes, Inverneill, PA30 8ES (19.5.06).

The grounds of objection are summarised below. The applicant has responded in writing to these, and her comments are summarised in italics, along with comments by officers:

1) A tourist hostel would not be compatible with a residential area. The development would be a potential source of anti-social behaviour;

   Applicant comments: Overnight accommodation is compatible with residential areas and there are numerous precedents in other local settlements. There are already commercial uses in Inverneill, including bed and breakfast, self-catering, a health clinic and a dwelling divided into flats for commercial rental. Hostellers are traditionally very responsible and respect the environment. No evidence has been produced to the contrary. Hostels operate without nuisance in Inveraray, Tobermory, Oban, Port Charlotte, Lochranza and Tighnabruaich.

   Officer comments: Overnight tourist accommodation is compatible with residential communities, as guest houses and bed and breakfast establishments demonstrate. Tourist hostels may be found in urban centres, small communities and remote rural locations. The type of clientele visiting any particular hostel tends to depend upon its location, the availability of local facilities, and the type of tourism resource which it serves. Hostels in rural areas are not generally regarded as bad neighbour developments. It would be in the interests of the hostel owner to ensure that it is operated in a responsible manner, in order to safeguard other guests from disturbance and in the interests of securing repeat business.
2) The introduction of this use would set a precedent for other commercial use of this site as and when the venture is sold, or lead to it becoming occupied as a dwelling;

**Officer comments:** Planning permission would be required to change the use of the building to any other commercial purpose or to a dwelling, the merits of which would be considered at the time of any such application.

3) Additional turning movements onto a fast stretch of trunk road would pose a danger. The development would interfere with sight lines at the access point serving Inverneill House. 11 car parking spaces are inadequate to serve a 26 bed-space hostel. Overflow car parking would obstruct the private access serving three dwellings or the main road;

**Applicant comments:** The target group will be cyclists and guests travelling by public transport rather than by car. The requirements of the Trunk Road Authority have been sought and these will be met.

**Officer comments:** As the site is accessed via an existing junction with the main road, the Trunk Roads Authority has been consulted. They have discussed with the applicants the parking and access arrangements for the site and have not raised objections on the basis of the number of parking spaces proposed, and it has been demonstrated to their satisfaction that the site can be serviced by service vehicles.

4) Watersports may be associated with this use, which would lead to noise nuisance;

**Applicant comments:** There is no intention to use the site as a water sports centre.

5) The proposal would attract itinerant business to an area with poor public transport and which lacks refreshment or entertainment or retail amenities;

**Applicant comments:** The schedules of current ‘Citylink’ and local bus services would be convenient to arriving/departing guests. The hostel would operate its own local shuttle transport to Ardrishaig/Lochgilphead.

6) The development will be close to the main road, will breach the building line and obscure views of the old bridge;

**Applicant comments:** The building will not diminish or obscure the view of the old bridge.

**Officer comments:** The location of the building and its consequences for the setting of the settlement is addressed in the ‘Assessment’ section below.

7) The development would attract walkers to an area without safe footpaths;

**Applicant comments:** The majority of guests would be expected to use bus or cycle. Hostel transport would be used to serve walking tours.

8) No waste storage or clothes drying facility is shown which would be expected for this type of use;

**Applicant comments:** Provision is intended to be made for these requirements.

9) The septic tank and soakaway is shown unacceptably close to the river and there is a risk of further pollution of the watercourse which already takes septic tank discharges;

**Applicant comments:** SEPA’s requirements will be met.

### C. ASSESSMENT

The proposal relates to a disused section of road purchased by the applicant following the construction of the new bridge nearby, which had involved the realignment of the original carriageway to a route closer to the mouth of the river. The site lies adjacent and parallel to the road, immediately to the south of a private access serving three residential properties. It still
retains a tarmac surface from its previous use. It adjoins the river to the south, beyond which lies the applicant’s current dwelling, Whitehouse Cottage. There is an area of undeveloped land to the rear, with trees beyond the boundary forming the backdrop to the site. The closest property is a bungalow known as Inverneill Cottage, which stands set back from the road to the north of the site.

The trunk road runs close to the shore at this point and there is no intervening development between the road in front of the site and the loch. Inverneill is a strung out settlement which does not have a very significant presence for the passer by, due to buildings being set back from the road, the preponderance of single storey properties and the screening effect of trees. Whilst a few properties offer bed and breakfast, the settlement is otherwise largely residential in character.

The proposal is to develop a tourist hostel on the site, primarily intended to serve the needs of cyclists and backpackers, but also offering accommodation to car borne travellers. It comprises a two storey building set at the back of the site providing two 2 person rooms (one to mobility standard) plus three dormitory rooms, each capable of accommodating 6 persons in bunk beds, plus a communal kitchen and lounge/dining area. The upper floor would contain a separate manager’s flat and office. The building is to be finished in rendered blockwork with areas of timber panelling, timber windows and a pitched tiled roof. The site is relatively restricted in size for the building proposed, so the remaining land would all be accounted for by car parking (11 spaces) and ancillary items such as bike stands, an LPG tank and bin storage. There would be an area of decking and a small garden area along part of the front of the building, overlooking the loch.

The applicant has made the following points in support of her proposal:

- The development will bring economic/employment benefits, and will help sustain other tourism ventures such as horse riding, fishing trips and tourist retailers;
- The proposal supports several Council and Community Planning objectives and will involve partnership working with other tourism/economic development bodies.
- A hostel will be unique to the area and will not directly compete with established tourist enterprises;
- The location of the hostel would fill a gap in the established hostel network serving mainland Argyll, the islands and Arran;
- Low cost self-catering accommodation will help attract independent travellers who might not otherwise visit Argyll;
- The proposal will involve an attractive development on what is currently a neglected site;
- The design of the development will incorporate recycling and renewable energy measures.

The application has been assessed in terms of the following criteria;

Environmental impact: The application relates to a site which stands on the original road alignment, which is, as a consequence, set forward of other buildings in Inverneill. Consequently, any building on the site will be visually very prominent to those using the main road, unlike most of the existing properties which are either set well back or are partly screened by trees. The building is a relatively attractive one and a half storey design, the gable ends of which would be the most significant elements in terms of persons travelling by. Principal views from the building would be across the main road and over the loch. Rear facing windows would require to be obscure glazed as the building stands parallel to and close to the rear boundary of the site, and views afforded over adjoining land could restrict future development opportunities. The building will not reinforce the existing which character of Inverneill, which tends to be rather low key and understated. This would be a rather prominent and assertive building relative to existing property, which would stand close to the road commanding views out over the loch. That said, as a hostel building, the design and materials proposed are appropriate and its presence within
the settlement would not seriously detract from the scenic qualities of its surroundings, nor would it impinge upon existing buildings, which are all some distance away.

The introduction of a hostel into what is primarily a residential community appears to have raised misgivings amongst some of the residents, who are concerned at the prospect of visitors causing nuisance to residents. This seems to be based on the apprehension that those frequenting hostels are more likely to behave inappropriately than those tourists who stay in guest houses, hotels or bed and breakfast establishments. I am not aware of evidence to substantiate this view. Certainly, other Argyll hostels do not appear to have reputations which would lead them to be regarded as ‘bad neighbour’ developments. The accommodation essentially comprises five rooms sleeping between 2 and 6 people. Such budget accommodation is likely to prove as equally attractive to families and independent travellers, as it would to groups of people who might be regarded as having the potential to be less respectful of the residential nature of the hostel’s surroundings. Much, of course, would be dependant on the manner in which the hostel would be managed. Having manager’s accommodation on the first floor would ensure day and night supervision of the premises, which would assist in this regard. The lack of ready access to entertainment facilities in the locality would be unlikely to make the accommodation attractive to potential ‘rowdy’ elements. Other than Inverneill Cottage and the applicant’s own home, there are no other properties within 80 metres of the proposed building. Given its location on a trunk road where traffic noise is a consideration, I do not believe that the use of the hostel will impinge unacceptably upon residential amenity.

Locational/operational need: Planning policy generally restricts the availability of coastal development sites. In this case, because the application site lies within a settlement fringing the shore, there is an opportunity to secure a site capable of satisfying development plan policy, which will also afford direct views over Loch Fyne and increase the attraction of the hostel to prospective visitors. The applicant consider that the proposed location will fill a gap between existing hostels and act as a ‘stepping stone’ within the wider network of hostel accommodation.

Economic benefit: Planning policy generally supports tourism related proposals in view of their economic development potential. There is benefit in securing a range of accommodation opportunities to suit varying requirements and budgets. Hostels are not well represented within the Mid Argyll Kintyre and Islay area, the only ones being at Inveraray and Port Charlotte (with an unimplemented planning consent at Ford). The Tourist Board has expressed its support for this venture.

Infrastructure/servicing implications: Because of the restricted size of this site, it is not possible to provide more than 11 on site parking spaces. If demand were to exceed this, parking opportunities would not be available outside the site without adversely affecting highway safety or obstructing access to other property. The applicant considers that the hostel will primarily be attractive to those using cycles or public transport, although this cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore necessary to consider whether on most occasions 22 bed spaces could reasonably be served by 11 parking spaces, taking into account likely under-occupancy, and persons travelling by other means. It would be appropriate to impose a condition to limit the use of the building to that applied for, excluding other Class 7 uses (such as hotel), as the site could not provide parking to serve users who were likely to be exclusively car borne.

The Trunk Roads Authority considers that the parking arrangements are adequate for the scale and the particular nature of the development proposed. The applicant has provided information concerning access and turning arrangements for service vehicles which are acceptable to the Trunk Roads Authority.

Water is to be supplied from the public main. Sewage is to be handled by a private treatment plant which SEPA have indicated ought to be connected to a soakaway, unless this is not achievable, in which case a discharge consent to the watercourse would be required.

C. CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED FOR A DISCRETIONARY HEARING

The application has attracted objections from ten households which is a significant proportion in the context of the small settlement of Inverneill. It is therefore appropriate that consideration is given to the need to hold an informal hearing in advance of the determination of the application.