

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR THE ERECTION OF A DWELLINGHOUSE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS  
ON SITE AT MAYNE FARM, ELGIN, MORAY**

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**30<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

**PLANNING STATEMENT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This statement has been prepared to accompany an application for planning permission for a dwellinghouse and associated works to demonstrate how the proposal relates to the requirements of the Moray Local Development Plan 2015 and associated supplementary guidance, in particular its effect on the settlement statement and Knockmasting Wood in which it is proposed.

## **THE SITE**

The western portion of the site is relatively flat, rising sharply to the east and is bounded by mature trees which form part of Knockmasting Wood. This dramatic change in levels into the lower reaches of Knockmasting Wood owes to the historic use of the site as a borrow pit. An existing access track extends from the public road to the south east past the subject site to the extreme north west corner of the wooded area.

There are no environmental designations (National or International) or apparent archaeological interest in the site that would impact upon the planning requirements of this proposal. SEPA's 1:200 year flood risk envelope does not extend as far from the west as the subject site, and based on a detailed topographical survey of the site it has not been considered necessary to submit a Flood Risk Assessment with this application. Based on an initial site inspection, there does not appear to be any evidence of protected species.

## **THE APPLICATION**

The site has now become redundant of its former use as the farming operation has evolved and has lain vacant for a number of years. However, the site has not recovered in the manner expected and has remained unsightly, detracting significantly from its surrounds and recently it has become apparent that it poses a significant threat to public safety. It would undoubtedly benefit from rehabilitation and the applicant wishes to address this in a timely fashion following a series of complaints from neighbouring residents who frequent this well used woodland.

Potential future uses of the site were examined and following an optioneering event it was concluded that this piece of land presents an ideal opportunity to create a single house plot for the landowner's daughter. It is also the most economically viable option as well as an effective means of rehabilitating the site.

The applicant takes an active role in day to day operations at the Farm as her father approaches retirement (he is now past retiring age at 73). This statement will go on to identify planning reasons which support the positive use of the site in this way but in the context of the overall operation of the agricultural operation this location is ideal because it affords excellent views across this side of the land holding.

Traditionally, this area of land was too far away from the main house to use intensively for animal husbandry etc , but with the benefit of open views across the land from the proposed dwelling the applicant can look at increasing its productivity, ensuring positive land management and helping to preserve the integrity of the CAT designation long into the future.

SPP encourages development that reflects the Scottish Government's overarching aim of promoting economic activity and supports prosperous and sustainable businesses whilst emphasising the protection and enhancement of the environment. Given the circumstances surrounding this application, it is considered that the submission is fully in accordance with these objectives.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT**

SPP requires that the planning system allocate a generous supply of land for good quality housing in sustainable locations. In particular it states that development plans should support more opportunities for small scale housing including plots for individual houses. Additionally, SPP provides that previously developed land is a potential source of sites for new development; this is carried forward in the Scottish Government's key document *Getting the Best from our Land – A Land Use Strategy for Scotland* which states that where land has ceased to fulfil a useful function because it is derelict or vacant, this represents a significant loss of economic potential and amenity for the community concerned.

The Scottish Government gives a definition of brownfield land as 'land which has previously been developed. The term may cover vacant or derelict land'. As a result, we consider that the proposed development site meets the definition of brownfield land as it has previously been developed and is now vacant and in a degraded state. Local Authorities are then instructed that it should be a priority to examine options for restoring such land to economically, socially or environmentally productive uses.

Local planning policy for the site is contained within the Moray Local Development Plan 2015 which was adopted on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2015.

Policy E10 Countryside Around Towns (CAT) aims to protect the countryside around the five main towns of Moray, Elgin, Buckie, Keith, Forres and Lossiemouth from inappropriate development. The proposal is partially located within the Elgin CAT designation which is designed to prevent development sprawl into the countryside, preserve the distinction with the built-up area and protect the special character and appearance of the area, which is characterised in this case by open fields and rolling farmland and woodland/forestry areas interspersed with single/small groups of houses and farmsteads. The Moray Council have employed a consistent approach on applications in the CAT and we understand the proposal may be viewed upon reception as a departure from the adopted development plan.

However, in this case the only part of the proposal which lies within the CAT is the access; it has been positioned in the ideal place to serve the site safely and is to be shared with the farming operation. As a result, we do not consider that the installation of a domestic/ farm access at the edge of the CAT can be construed to blur the distinction between the countryside and the built up area on its own.

R12 Knockmasting Wood extends to 5.39 ha and an indicative capacity of 85 houses is indicated. The settlement statement goes on to prescribe a requirement for the submission of a masterplan with new woodland structure planting and the retention of the existing mature woodland. The applicant recognises that the proposal is not presented in the manner described in the designation, but submits this application as completely separate from the larger proposal and in the knowledge

that a proposal for a single house on brownfield land separated from the larger designation by mature woodland and topography, would not be read in the same context as new development on the larger designation to the east.

The approval of this single site would not prejudice the opportunity to consider various matters associated with the development of the designation in an integrated comprehensive and planned manner.

Furthermore, the applicant shares the Council's view that Knockmasting Wood should be retained- the subject site has long since been cleared for its previous use so the proposed development would have no detrimental impact on the integrity of existing mature planting, indeed the applicant intends to implement a long term landscaping plan following a detailed inspection of the existing group, to ensure that any over-mature or dead trees are replaced with native species and to enhance the site in terms of allowing the structure to further integrate with its surroundings whilst also affording increased privacy within the development itself. The proposal will ensure that Knockmasting Wood is maintained long into the future, for the benefit of the larger community and in accordance with the relevant settlement statement and policies E4 and ER3 of the MLDP.

In light of the above, and in relation to Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 we consider there to be sufficient material weight to enable a positive recommendation and justify a departure from the strict interpretation of the development plan.

**SITING, DESIGN AND MATERIALS (Policy H7 Housing in the Countryside and its associated supplementary guidance)**

This is an ideal site for a house; taken on its individual merits in its semi-rural surrounds it can be seen to reflect the dispersed nature of the established settlement pattern. Furthermore, being on the site of a former borrow pit at the edge of Knockmasting Wood, the site benefits from 100% established boundaries and a substantial backdrop of mature planting and topography which coupled with the applicants intention to accommodate additional planting gives rise to a well located site which once established will have a minimal environmental impact. The introduction of paragraph 243 into Scottish Planning Policy emphasises the importance of appropriate reinstatement of borrow pits.

The principle objective of the final design of the house has been to build on the existing character of the landscape as a prosperous farming landscape rather than one with a residential character and to avoid disruption to the distinctive smooth horizons by designing the proposal to be long and low in character. The design is instantly recognisable in the Moray countryside given its resemblance to traditional architecture in the area.

The applicant has also given detailed consideration to the sourcing of materials and components to reduce material miles, use renewable materials and avoid complex manufacturing processes to ensure the finished development's embodied energy usage is as low as possible.

**MINIMISE ENERGY USE (Policy ER2 Carbon Emission Reduction and IMP1 Developer Requirements)**

The site specific strategy to reduce the demand of external sources of energy in this proposal to ensure the energy efficiency and comfort of the house will be sustainable into the future includes:

- Siting and design aimed to reduce wind cooling and increase passive solar gain;
- Higher than standard levels of insulation and high levels of air tightness to mitigate heat loss;
- Advanced primary heating and hot water systems incorporating wood fuel and solar micro renewables to minimise and potentially eliminate hydrocarbon fuel sources.

### **DESIGN TO CONSERVE WATER (Policies H7 Housing in the Countryside and IMP1 Developer Requirements)**

Simple yet effective measures will be employed to minimise water use in this development; these will include;

- Low dual flush low water WC's;
- Flow reduced/ aerating taps fitted throughout the house;
- Shower rated at no more than 6 litres per minute;
- Low water use white goods.

### **CONCLUSION**

This application is submitted in the knowledge that settlement statements are intended to provide a context for new development, based on local character and sense of place. They are about how planned development should be carried out, so that it is in harmony with its setting and can therefore make a positive contribution to the local environment.

However, the full and effective use of land is underpins the principle of sustainable development; land is a finite resource and therefore best use must be made of it. The proposed development makes excellent use of degraded, vacant brownfield land and is separated from the larger designation by mature woodland and topography. As a result, it would not be read as an unplanned addition to it nor would it detract from the setting of future housing within the designation. Furthermore, the application site cannot be seen to prejudice the retention of the woodland (the opposite in fact) or the comprehensive consideration of detailed matters relating to the larger designation.

The principles outlined in this statement underpin Local Planning Policy. Consequently, the applicant asserts that this application meets with the aims, objectives and spirit intrinsic to the adopted development plan and that there is material weight which warrants a departure from the strict interpretation of the development plan.

We trust that this statement and the information already provided are sufficient to allow the application to be approved.