

**Design statement for proposed dwellinghouse and workshops
at Kahiwi Wood, Califer, Rafford, Moray**



Background

This pre-application enquiry is being made by Cameron Architectural Design on behalf of Mr and Mrs McGann.

The site in question is located in Morayshire, approximately 4 miles south-east of the small town of Forres. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: NJ 08966/57307. This is all indicated on the attached supporting Location plan.

The site identified as the proposed house and workshop location is an existing area of hardstanding which is bound on all sides by mature tree planting forming part of Kahiwi wood.

Context

Kahiwi wood is a 20 hectare planted mixed coniferous woodland located in Morayshire as noted above..

Located approximately 4 miles from Forres, this is a town that contains all the necessary local amenities that you would expect to find in a popular, ever growing town i.e supermarkets, petrol stations, restaurants, garages etc.

Servicing the proposed site within Kahiwi wood is not expected to be a problem. There is an existing electricity supply on site which serves the workshop.

A water supply from Scottish Water has already been applied for as this is required as part of the business as well as serving any future house or workshops.

Heating will be provided wood burning stoves. All the fire wood will be supplied from felled trees located within Kahiwi wood, thus lowering vehicle movements in and out of the site.

Solar thermal panels will also be provided to generate with the production of hot water. A wood burning stove may also be fitted with a back boiler to supplement the solar panels.

All drainage for both foul and surface water will be catered for within the site boundaries via soakaways.

The driving force for this proposed house is the need for Mr and Mrs McGaan to be located on site as they aim to make a viable business from the management of Kahiwi wood.

The main aims of Kahiwi wood are:

- To gradually restructure the woodland over the longer term using a labour intensive sympathetic low impact silvicultural regime;
- Develop a biodiversically sustainable asset, which is sufficiently robust to service small scale sustainable timber and firewood production with a move to higher value added products in the medium term (eg wood turning)

Restructuring of Kahiwi wood commenced in 2016 in line with the approved detailed forestry plan (uploaded as part of the supporting documents).

The transition from predominantly commercial management aims, as exist at present, towards fulfilment of the outlined objectives noted above is anticipated to occur progressively over the period of this plan (10 years) and that of its successor plan, i.e 20 years.

The long term management aims for Kahiwi wood are:

- To manage the woodland on a natural, sustainable basis with a perpetuating age class diversity encouraged.
- To prioritise native species in keeping with the environmental attributes of the site.
- To provide structural and species diversity that safeguards and enhances the aesthetic, environmental and wildlife value of the area.
- To encourage the on site habitat development of indigenous flora and fauna.
- To maintain the economic viability of the woodland.
- To maintain and enhance the amenity interest.
- To maintain and enhance the landscape interest.
- To work with the latest FC guidelines and nature conservation recommendations.
- To produce a range of timber products which will meet market requirements on a sustainable basis.
- To develop a relatively steady, modest timber revenues on a micro-basis to minimize adverse disturbance to woodland environment.
- To ensure satisfactory development of the stands of trees by regular selective thinning.
- To maintain habitats for wildlife and extend and introduce areas of mixed native broadleaves species and open ground.
- To implement monitoring of key species and impact of management activities. To minimize the use of herbicides and insecticides. The removal of any invasive exotic woodland species if in conflict with environmental objectives.
- To comply with the UK forestry standard and UK wood assurance standard in all forestry planning and operations.

This management plan aims in its objective to provide the operational framework by which woodland restructuring can be facilitated over the medium and longer term.

The 22.08 hectares identified as Kahiwi Wood is a stand-alone management unit, initially planted with a purely commercial aims. Under new ownership however, the main focus of woodland management is to gradually and sensitively diversify the existing woodland via its restructuring.

Operation forest management is to be implemented entirely on an internal basis by the owner and associated family members. The labour intensive low impact silvicultural regime to be adopted throughout the woodland will create a significant presence on site by the owner and family members in line with best European practice managing small woodlands and will create minimal disturbance to the floral and fauna of the wood.

Financial summary

The wood has been neglected for many years and requires considerable remedial work in the short-term clearing felled and windblown timber which will give an initial injection of revenue. The clear-fell of the Sitka Spruce (see forestry management plan) will also give an initial injection of revenue, thereafter income from thinning and firewood will be steady.

The market has been tested and all available production can be sold locally as the cost of transporting timber long distances makes it un-economic at this level. All the wood recovered so far has been sold and there continues to be satisfactory enquiry levels.

The costs in the plan assumes the owner is based on-site thereby improving productivity and lowering the carbon footprint of the wood. It is estimated that revenue would be reduced by up to 25% (travelling time)

if the wood had to be serviced from the owners existing location and expenses would not decrease. This makes the project economically margin at best and increases the risk profile significantly.

Risk summary

The market for timber is strong at present with a number of significant biomass projects in the local area (Diageo, Pluscarden Abbey, Gordonston School) meaning demand will remain strong for large scale production FSC woods leaving the small local suppliers to satisfy local demand for top-up biomass and firewood.

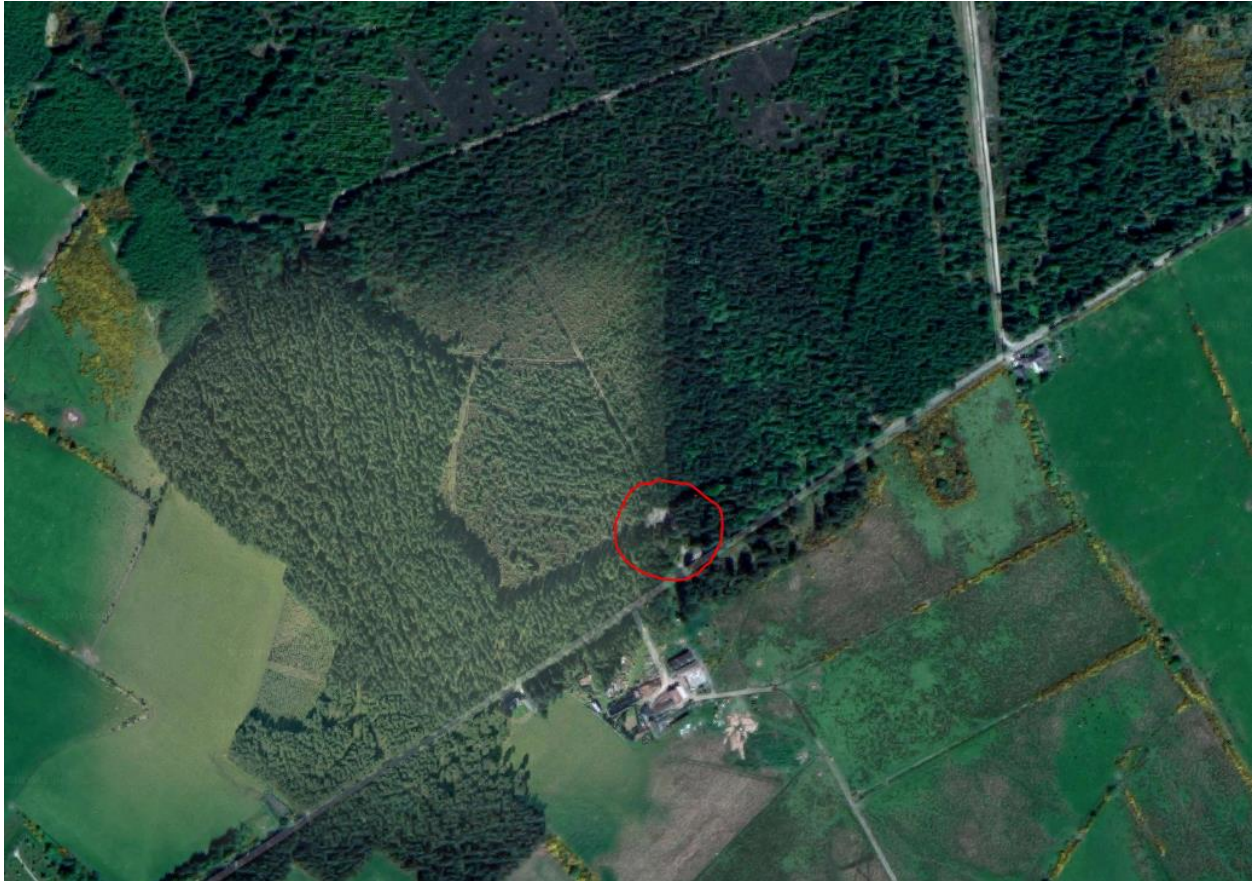
The principal risk to the business is criminal activity, theft of firewood and/or equipment. The neighbour's (Ian Lawson) wood has suffered theft of firewood in the last couple of years and both the local and national press continuously run stories of equipment and fuel being stolen from rural locations. Security is a concern and ideally there should be on-site presence at all times.

Labour input required

There is sufficient activity for one to one and half full-time equivalents each year of the ten-year plan. At present the owner spends between 2 and 3 hours travelling to and from site which is time that could be invested in the wood and also increases the carbon footprint of the wood. This when considered with the security aspect means that to be commercially viable the owner should be based on site.

Conclusion

The owner is committed to returning the wood to a natural, vibrant and diverse ecosystem of native timber and fauna which functions commercially. The labour intensive low impact silviculture approach will achieve this, however, the approach requires the owners presence on site.



Movement/connection

Given the countryside location of the proposed house there is no requirement to provide linked footpaths.

Vehicle access into the site will be gained by using the existing junction complete with lay-by in accordance with Moray Councils standards for road construction consent and adoption document.

Refuse bins serving the house will be located close to the entrance to allow for easy pick up and drop off.

Buildings/identity

It is not proposed to provide any further screen planting or boundary treatments given the existing area of hardstanding is screened on all sides by long established, mature tree planting.

The proposed house is to be a minimalist log cabin with a floor area of 38sqm, supplied by 'Forest Log Cabins' or equal and approved.

The new dwellinghouse will be built to a high standard, be energy efficient and designed to have low emissions rate.

Modern building techniques and thoughtful design will be used throughout to minimize on any potential cold bridging between joining materials.

Openings and their orientations will be investigated to try and maximize on solar gains.

A 'fabric first' approach will be taken to ensure energy efficient constructions are used from the very first to the last step.

Design principles

The main planning policy in question for an application of this type is Policy HY – New housing in the open countryside.

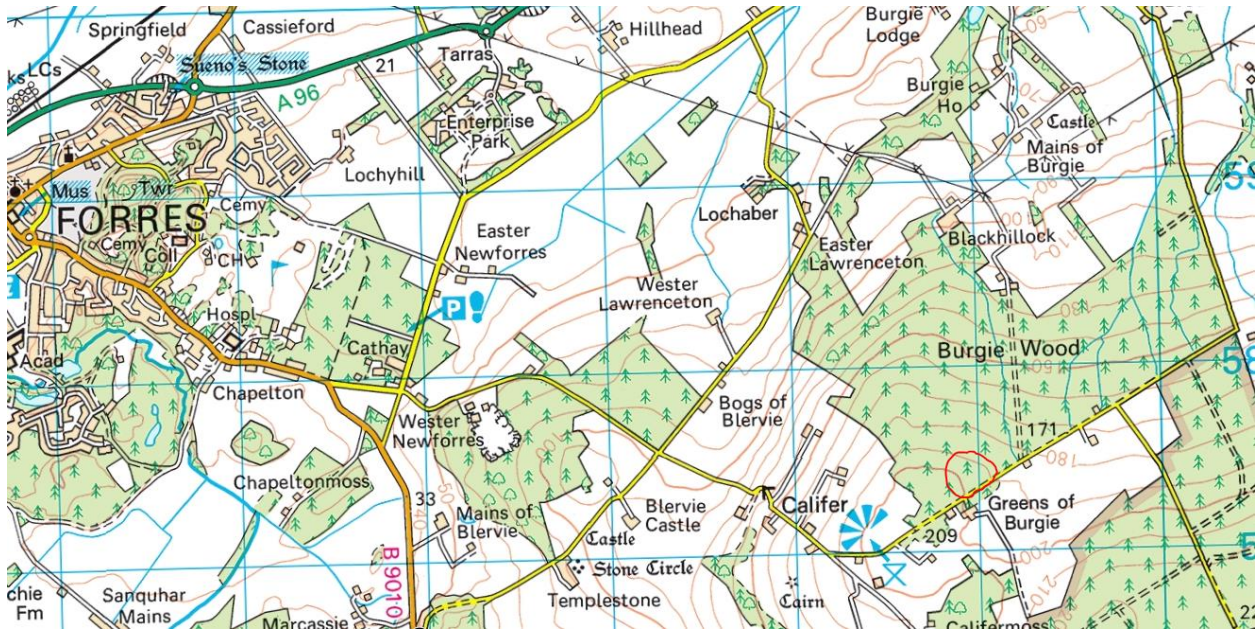
Policy H7 requires that at least 50% of the site boundaries of a proposal are long established, and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding land. Examples include dykes, hedgerows, watercourses, woodlands, tracks and roadways.

As shown on the attached supporting location plan and site plan as well as historic plans the woodland provides a clear defined boundary edge.

Siting of the house is imperative to ensure the existing woodland screening the site from the road remains the dominant visual feature.

The proposed house should fall in line with following design features:

- A roof pitch between 40-55 degrees.
- A gable width of no more than 2.5 times the height of the wall from ground level to the eaves.
- Uniform external finishes and materials including slate or dark 'slate effect' roof tiles.
- A vertical emphasis and uniformity to all windows and doors.
- Boundary demarcation that reflects the established character or style in the locality.
- Proposals must be accompanied by a landscaping plan showing an appropriate proportion of the plot, generally 25% to be planted with native tree species at least 1.5 metres in height.



Conclusion

Given the small scale development that is being proposed and the need for the on-site presence to provide a better business service we would suggest this proposal falls within policy and should be considered as an acceptable addition to the area.