

**REF: ERECTION OF HOTEL AT EASTER COLTIFIED FARM, ALVES,
MORAY**

PLANNING NO 10/02055/APP

Following my application detailed above, I am having some difficulty in moving forward with the roads department, and hope you will be able to offer some advice and support with proceeding with the application.

I feel that the assessment of my required contribution towards road infrastructure is excessive and unrealistic – especially in the current economic climate. This application is for the change of use from a large farm building (planning permission already achieved) into a hotel. The business plan is for the hotel to be self-sufficient in terms of organic produce on a twelve acre holding.

Prior to my planning application for the hotel, I liaised with Iain Drummond – planning officer and Diane Anderson - roads department in order to ensure viability of my proposal. Iain Drummond and Diane Anderson were very supportive. Diane Anderson visited the location to measure the visibility splays of the entrance. The findings were 120m to the right hand side and 90m to the road junction with clear view. Diane indicated that this would be sufficient, however, she did state that I would probably have to provide a few passing places on the road to the A96. I felt that was a reasonable assessment. On this basis, I invested in architectural drawings and applied for planning permission.

The Cost of this planning application was £7,600. Architects fees cost £2000 and on top of this I have had to pay a developer contribution of £1,500 based on the hotel being equivalent to three houses. As you will appreciate, especially in the current economic climate, this is a substantial personal investment which is why I took advice from the outset. I realise that to a chain of hotels, this is not considered a lot of money, however, as an individual trying to make a difference to the local area, this is a huge investment.

Once the application process was in place, and the transportation assessment was requested, I was asked to provide a traffic impact assessment. Diane Anderson was once again very supportive in helping me to find the required data as I was unable to have direct access to the information. Once this data was received, Diane considered it to be excessive (400 vehicles per day) and wanted to refer it to Richard

Gerring – her superior. The revised assessment which was presented to me was based on 200 Vehicles per day. I still consider this volume of traffic to be an unrealistic assessment for a country house hotel.

The car park requirements for this development is 55 vehicles which contradicts the assessment of 200 vehicles per day. I have contacted VisitScotland, Moray Tourism, and spoken to 2 local hoteliers with similar sized establishments. All of this primary research has provided information supporting my concerns. These people all agreed that the 200 vehicles per day assessment, is indeed excessive and a more realistic figure would be 50 vehicles per day.

Based on the assessment provided, Diane Anderson has informed me that I would have to widen the road over a 90m section, provide 10 new passing places and upgrade 3 existing passing places. The location of some of the new passing places required, is on private land - out with the control of Moray Council. This would mean that I would have to purchase this land from the individual land owners. This would be almost impossible as they could demand whatever price they like and would not be under obligation to sell to me as an individual.

I have been back to Diane Anderson to challenge this and was told that I would have to supply an independent transportation statement provided by a Moray Council approved supplier. This would be an extra cost of possibly thousands of pounds which would be difficult for me to fund. I have contacted the roads department to request a list of approved suppliers, however, was informed that such a list does not exist. This is another barrier to the advancement of this project, and I would hope this could be reconsidered.

I feel that there have been some contradictions in the application process. The figures I was given by the roads department were based on the hotel being the equivalent to 10 houses. The developer contribution stated that the hotel would be considered as the equivalent of three houses, and I have paid their fee on that basis.

As a Moray resident and local businessman, I am concerned about the economic impact of losing RAF Kinloss and possibly RAF Lossiemouth. It is acknowledged that the tourism industry could go some way to aiding the recovery of the Moray economy. This in mind, I would hope, as a local resident that the council could address the cost implications to potential development projects which would create employment for the area.

I appreciate that certain procedures are in place, however, a more sympathetic approach to planning requirements for entrepreneurial activity could mean more people would be prepared to invest in the area. At the moment, I feel that my application is meeting financial barriers which could mean the project would not be viable to pursue. On the basis of the road department requirements, the cost could run in excess of £250,000 before I even begin developing. Considering the amount of employment that this investment would provide, I hope you will be able to reconsider your assessments in order to allow the project to continue.

I have spoken to a local councillor who informed me that the need for hotels in the area was mentioned at a council meeting on Wednesday 30th March. The area has also just lost a 19 bedroom hotel in Lossiemouth. With the promotion of tourism in Moray, the need for quality hotels in the area is apparent.

I feel that I represent other entrepreneurs too when I say that financial barriers could deter investment in the Moray area.

Many thanks for your time.

I look forward to a response in due course.

Regards,

Peter Smith

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