

Implementation Date: 01 September 2023

Template for Requesting Speaking Rights at the Planning Committee

The Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee provides for interested person(s) to register to speak on a planning application that is scheduled to be determined at the next meeting of the Planning Committee. This request must be received by the Planning Department no later than 10am on the Monday before the Planning Committee meeting via email account planning@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk.

Planning Reference	LA01/2023/0417/F
Name	David Dalzell and Colin Mayrs
Contact Details	Tel: Email:
Support or Objection – please tick relevant box	Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objection <input type="checkbox"/>

There have been no objections to this application.

Consultees (DfI Roads, NI Water, Historic Environment Division and NIEA) have no objections.

Planning Policy Statement 21

We note that the planners are NOW CONTENT that the proposed development meets all the criteria of Policy CTY4 The Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings:

The building is permanent construction; the design respects and conserves the original form, character and architectural features; minimal new works and extensions have been sensitively designed to be sympathetic to the existing building and original design and architectural style; the proposal will have no adverse impact on nearby residents or continued agricultural operations on adjoining land, the nature and scale of the development is appropriate to the setting which is well back from the public road. The site will be enhanced with new planting. The buildings have been out of use for some time and are in a state which has attracted anti-social behaviour – they need a positive new use; all necessary services are on site or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the locality; and the access arrangements have satisfied DfI Roads.

The proposal will not have a significant effect on the Craigahulliar ASSI.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

SPPS 6.70 states, “All development in the countryside must integrate into its setting, respect rural character, and be appropriately designed.” The planners consider the proposal to be compliant with Policy CTY 13 Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside, and CTY 14 Rural Character. Therefore, as it integrates and is appropriately designed it follows that the proposal is also compliant with SPPS 6.70.

The planners have failed to give proper weight to the SPPS, which states that sustainable development should be permitted. This reuse of existing buildings is an inherently sustainable form of development, supported by planning policy and the Council's wider drive towards making better use of resources and combatting climate change.

SPPS 6.73 Local Importance of existing buildings: The SPPS gives examples of the buildings that could be considered "locally important", "...(*such as former school houses, churches and older traditional barns and outbuildings*)..." Evidently these are only examples, not a definitive list. Since other types of buildings with industrial heritage value must be considered locally important (defensive structures, railway buildings, pump houses and mills for example), why not historic quarry buildings?

The planners are wrong to dismiss these buildings as not locally important, indeed the old workshop is one of the most interesting buildings in the locality. It dates from Craigahulliar's mining and quarrying period in the middle of the last century and was built in the distinctive functional modernist style of the mid-20th century. The canteen is probably a little younger than the workshop. Together and as a group, these buildings stand testimony to the men and women who worked in the quarry which was such an important part of the North Coast landscape and social economy for over one hundred years.

These buildings are heritage assets and the proposed conversion and re-use will secure their upkeep and retention, which in turn helps to conserve, and "tell the story" of Craigahulliar. The geological and industrial heritage assets in the area have great potential to draw visitors to the area but many features of this heritage have already been lost – should we lose more by failing to grasp the planning policies specifically drafted to permit this sort of imaginative repurposing?

Historically, the building is intrinsically associated with, and reflects, the development of the quarry. With high doors it was probably built for the servicing and repair of high sided lorries. This was at a time when the movement of stone out of the quarry had shifted from railway to road. The workshop building was designed and built for a specific purpose and as such is probably unique in the area. In style it is reminiscent of second world war airfield architecture. We should value interesting, functional buildings like these, just we now appreciate concrete wartime buildings and structures on old airfields, harbours, railway tunnels and bridges.

Ireland's leading industrial archaeologist, Dr Fred Hamond, has assessed the buildings and has concluded that they are of heritage interest as tangible reminders of the quarry's evolution. It is indisputable that these buildings are of local historic interest. It follows that they are locally important. By recommending refusal of the reuse and refurbishment of these buildings, the planners are sending out a message that vernacular buildings and buildings with industrial archaeological interest but otherwise without statutory protection, are not worth retaining.

The example of a "barn conversion" appeal provided by the planners is not comparable to this proposal. In that case the existing building was a very rudimentary farm shed without the historical context of this proposal, and the proposed conversion involved extensive alterations and extensions that, the Commissioner felt, would have resulted in the loss of the character of the original building.

The planner asserts that the buildings to be converted are "*not locally important*". We disagree. It is these buildings, singly and in groups, that provide the physical, tangible remains of the history of this part of the Borough. If they are lost (as they will be if no practical new use can be found) then the integrity of the Craigahulliar heritage asset will be irreversibly diminished.

Now that the landfill site is set to close, we expect the Council to be looking to future uses for Craigahulliar that may include public access and hopefully interpretation of the geological features on the site, and its mining and quarrying legacy and the story of the people who worked and lived there. We want these industrial heritage buildings to remain as a key part of that historic story and to demonstrate how old buildings in the countryside can be sympathetically conserved and repurposed for the future.