

Title of Report:	Planning Committee Report – LA01/2024/0058/F
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	25th September 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision – Referred Item – Ald Mark Fielding

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them
Lead Officer	Development Management and Enforcement Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Nil
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	N/A	Date:

Executive Summary

- This proposal is considered unacceptable at this location having regard to the Northern Area Plan 2016 and all other material considerations.
- The site is located in the countryside within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant's Causeway as well as being located within the Causeway Coast AONB.
- Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 does not allow for flexibility as it specifically states 3 circumstances in which development proposals must fall to be acceptable in the DLS of the Giant's Causeway. The conversion of a building into self-catered accommodation with an extension and alterations to the roof is therefore unacceptable in principle contrary to Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 and paragraph 6.6 of the SPPS.
- Although the proposal meets the criteria for Conversion of Buildings under Policy CTY 4 of PPS 21, it fails the policy test in the SPPS which is given more material weight (See paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS). It is considered that the existing building is not a locally important building and was most likely used as a garage connected with the original farmhouse.
- The proposal complies with the Tourism Policies TSM 5 & 7 of PPS 16 as one or more units are allowed within the grounds of an existing guest house. However, a new unit would not be allowed under Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 given the site location within the Distinctive Landscape Setting.
- Access and parking arrangements are acceptable.
- The proposal does not result in natural heritage issues.
- No representations have been received in relation to this application.
- No objections have been raised by consultees in relation to this proposal.

- The proposal is contrary to planning policies including the Northern Area Plan 2016 and the SPPS.

Drawings and additional information are available to view on the Planning Portal- <https://planningregister.planningssystemni.gov.uk/>

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Committee has taken into consideration and agrees with the reasons for the recommendation set out in section 9 and the policies and guidance in sections 7 and 8 and resolves to **REFUSE** planning permission subject to the reasons set out in section 10.

2.0 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site is located at No. 23 Causeway Road, Bushmills. The site comprises a single storey building with a shallow mono-pitch roof over the whole footprint. The building is finished in wet dash render. The only openings are a garage door. One corner of the building is built in a curve, which facilitates easier access for farm vehicles and machinery into the farmyard. This building was most likely used as a garage connected to the neighbouring dwelling (guesthouse) but is now used for storage. Surrounding the application site is a concrete yard and other buildings clustered together. There are several properties within vicinity of the application site all of which are accessed from an existing lane onto Causeway Road. The site is located northwest of Causeway Fun Farm and Carnside Guesthouse is adjacent.
- 2.2 The farmhouse and barns are an established part of the landscape forming a cluster located on a hilltop above the southern approach to the Giant's Causeway along Causeway Road. This cluster is prominent within views from the area surrounding the Giant's Causeway visitor centre and adjacent Causeway Hotel. The cluster remains prominent within southerly views from Causeway Road until the crest of the hill associated with the Aird Clachan. Distant views of the cluster are available from elevated sections of Whitepark Road approaching Ballyallaght Farm Cottages.
- 2.3 The site is located in the countryside and lies within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant's Causeway and the

Causeway Coast AONB. The surrounding area comprises dispersed dwellings and farms.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

3.1 There is no relevant history on this site.

4.0 THE APPLICATION

4.1 Conversion of barn into self-catering accommodation and alteration of an existing access to a public road.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

4.2 The potential impact of this proposal on Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites has been assessed in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). The proposal would not be likely to have a significant effect on the features, conservation objectives or status of any of these sites.

5.0 PUBLICITY & CONSULTATIONS

5.1 External:

No letters of representation have been received in relation to this application.

5.2 Internal:

NI Water (No objections)

Environmental Health (No objections)

DFI Roads (No objections)

DAERA: Water Management Unit (No objections)

6.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Section 45(1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires that all applications must have regard to the local plan, so far as material to the application, and all other material

considerations. Section 6(4) states that in making any determination where regard is to be had to the local development plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The development plan is:

- Northern Area Plan 2016 (NAP)

6.3 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is a material consideration.

6.4 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) is a material consideration. As set out in the SPPS, until such times as a new local plan strategy is adopted, councils will apply specified retained operational policies.

6.5 Due weight should be given to the relevant policies in the development plan.

6.6 All material considerations and any policy conflicts are identified in the “Considerations and Assessment” section of the report.

7.0 RELEVANT POLICIES & GUIDANCE

The Northern Area Plan 2016

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

PPS 2 – Natural Heritage

PPS 3 - Access, Movement and Parking

PPS 6 - Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage

PPS 16 – Tourism

PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Development Control Advice Note 15 Vehicular Access Standards

8.0 CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application relate to: Development Plan Zoning & Regional Policy, Conversion, Tourism Development, Access and Parking and Natural Heritage. The proposal must be considered having regard to the NAP 2016, SPPS, PPS policy documents and supplementary planning guidance.

Planning Policy

- 8.2 The site is located outside any settlement development limit as designated in the Northern Area Plan (NAP). The proposal is located within the countryside and falls within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the World Heritage Site known as the Giant's Causeway and is also situated within Causeway Coast AONB.
- 8.3 The proposal must be considered having regard to the NAP 2016, SPPS, PPS policy documents and any supplementary planning guidance specified above.

Development Plan Zoning & Regional Policy

- 8.4 The proposal is located within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site (WHS). Paragraphs 6.6 and 6.7 of the SPPS refers to World Heritage Sites. The Giant's Causeway is of international importance and key considerations include the safeguarding of critical views to and from the site, the access and public approaches to the site and the understanding and enjoyment of the site by visitors.
- 8.5 Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 applies to this development. No development in this zoning will be approved except in 3 circumstances:

1. Exceptionally modest scale facilities, without landscape detriment, which are necessary to meet the direct needs of visitors to the World Heritage Site.

2. Extensions to buildings that are appropriate in scale and design and represent not more than 20% of the cubic content of existing buildings.

3. Replacements of existing occupied dwellings with not more than a 20% increase in cubic content.

- 8.6 In relation to the barn conversion with extension, this does not meet any of the specified circumstances which are acceptable in the DLS. It is not necessary to meet the direct needs of visitors to the WHS; it is not an extension to an existing use; and it is not the replacement of occupied dwellings.
- 8.7 In terms of the extension, it is subordinate in scale to the original building. The extension will not increase the cubic content of the existing building by more than 20%. The volume of the existing building is 123cu.m. The designed volume of the renovated and extended building is 147cu.m. This equates to a percentage increase of 19.5%. These measurements have been provided by the Agent.
- 8.8 The Policy does not allow for flexibility as it specifically states 3 circumstances in which development proposals must fall to be acceptable in the DLS of the Giant's Causeway. The conversion of a building into self-catered accommodation with an extension and alterations to the roof is therefore unacceptable in principle contrary to Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 and paragraph 6.6 of the SPPS.
- 8.9 Policy COU 4 supports and strengthens Policy BH5 of PPS 6 The Protection of World Heritage Sites. Policy BH5 states:
- “The Department will operate a presumption in favour of the preservation of World Heritage Sites. Development which would adversely affect such sites or the integrity of their settings will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances.”*
- 8.10 As the proposal has an unacceptable impact on the setting of the WHS, the proposal is contrary to BH5 of PPS6.

Conversion

- 8.11 Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21 advises the conversion of a non-residential building to a dwelling is acceptable in principle in the countryside but it must be in accordance with Policy CTY 4 – The

Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings. Policy CTY 4 of PPS 21 advises that planning permission will be granted to proposals for the sympathetic conversion, with adaptation, if necessary, of a suitable building to a dwelling, where this would secure its upkeep and retention. The SPPS further explains (paragraph 6.73) that conversion for residential use must be of a “locally important building” and provides examples such as a former school house, church and older traditional barns and outbuildings. Having regard to the transitional arrangements and Paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS which states that any conflict between the SPPS and any retained policy must be resolved in the favour of the provisions of the SPPS, greater weight must be given to the policy test of being a locally important building as set out in the SPPS.

- 8.12 The Design and Access Statement submitted advises the existing building is a single storey stone-built barn or outbuilding. The building appears to be present in the earliest OSNI mapping (1832-1846). The building forms part of an extensive cluster of farm buildings and dwellings. In addition to the farm buildings Carnside also accommodates numbers 17 (footings only), 19, 19B, 21, 23 and 25 Causeway Road.
- 8.13 During the site inspection it was apparent the building is finished in wet dash render. Following this, the Agent submitted internal photographs (date received 25th June 2024) which show the internal of the building consisting of stone. Notwithstanding the photographs of the internal show the building contains stone, it is considered that it is not a locally important building when assessed against the requirements of the SPPS as considered above.
- 8.14 The Agent referenced a similar live application that is under consideration (LA01/2022/1531/F). This proposal is for a barn conversion to short stay accommodation units at No. 54 Causeway Road in the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant’s Causeway. The recommendation on this application is to refuse having regard to the Plan Policy COU 4 and BH 5 of PPS 6. However, the building in that application for conversion is a traditional black stone building and is considered to be locally important which is different to the subject application.
- 8.15 Any proposals for conversion must meet the following criteria:

(a) The building is of permanent construction.

The existing building is of permanent construction garage – it is connected to the neighbouring farmhouse (Guesthouse) and presently used for storage.

(b) The reuse or conversion would maintain or enhance the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality.

The conversion entails an extension to increase the footprint. The new proposal would have a living/kitchen/dining area, a bedroom, a shower room and a lobby. External alterations include creating new window and door openings in existing walls, an extension and roof alterations. These changes are considered appropriate to facilitate the conversion and will maintain the form, character and design of the existing building. Although the proposed conversion will not harm the character or appearance of the locality given the alterations, it is located with the most sensitive of locations in the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the WHS. Public views of this proposal are from Causeway Road but these are primarily limited to longer range and regard is given to the structure being single storey in height.

(c) Any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style and finishes of the existing building.

The proposed extension is small in scale, the design of which is complimentary to the existing building. Proposed materials/ finishes are pre-finished corrugated metal panels for the roof, zinc gutters and downpipes, an aluminium roof light and pre-finished corrugated metal panels for the new walls. The existing wet dash render is to remain. New windows/doors are to be uPVC with foil wrap for colour. These finishes are satisfactory on a building at this location with only long-distance views from Causeway Road.

(d) The reuse or conversion would not unduly affect the amenities of nearby residents or adversely affect the continued agricultural use of adjoining land or buildings

The proposed conversion will not affect neighbouring residential amenity as the proposal is utilising an existing building with a small extension. Proposed windows are at ground floor level so there are no anticipated overlooking concerns. The proposal is located within an existing farmyard at the rear of the existing farmhouse currently functioning as a guest house. The building will be served by existing yard areas and associated lane access. There will be no adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents and no impact on the function of the farm or on the agricultural use of any adjoining land.

(e) The nature and scale of any proposed non-residential use is appropriate to a countryside location.

The proposed conversion is for self-catering accommodation. It is located within an existing cluster of buildings in the countryside. The proposal will not harm rural character.

(f) All necessary services are available or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality

Existing services are available or can be provided without impacting upon the environment or locality. NI Water, Environmental Health and DAERA: Water Management Unit have no objections to the proposal.

(g) Access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

The proposal will be accessed using the existing lane from Causeway Road. DfI Roads raises no objection to the application.

8.16 The proposal meets the criteria for Conversion of Buildings under Policy CTY 4. However, it fails the policy test in the SPPS Para 6.73 as the subject building is not a locally important building. It should be noted that any conflict between the SPPS and retained planning policy must be resolved in the favour of the provisions of the SPPS (See Para. 8.10 (Paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS)). As the

existing building is not a locally important building such as a former school house, church or traditional barn/outbuilding it fails to meet this policy test.

Tourism Development

8.17 Policy TSM 5 of PPS 16 relates to Self Catering Accommodation in the Countryside. Self-catering units of tourist accommodation will be granted in 3 circumstances. These are:

- (a) one or more new units all located within the grounds of an existing or approved hotel, self-catering complex, guest house or holiday park;*
- (b) a cluster of 3 or more new units are to be provided at or close to an existing or approved tourist amenity that is / will be a significant visitor attraction in its own right;*
- (c) the restoration of an existing clachan or close, through conversion and / or replacement of existing buildings, subject to the retention of the original scale and proportions of the buildings and sympathetic treatment of boundaries. Where practicable original materials and finishes should be included.*

8.18 The application site falls within criteria (a) as the adjacent building is currently being run as a guesthouse. It is known as Carnside Guesthouse and is available to book through the internet. Having regard to this Policy test, the proposal would comply with Policy TSM 5 of PPS 16. However, a new unit would not be allowed under Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 given the site location within the Distinctive Landscape Setting which is supported by Regional Policy, NH5 of PPS 6.

8.19 Policy TSM 7 of PPS 16 also applies to this development. A proposal for tourism use must also meet the criteria below:

- a) A movement pattern is not considered necessary for this development.
- b) The site layout and building design is considered acceptable. There is no vegetation on the application site in need of protection.
- c) There are no existing plot boundaries given the location of the site in a cluster of buildings. The building on site is

surrounded by a concrete yard. No outside storage areas have been identified on the block plan.

d) Drainage and surface water run-off in connection with this development is considered adequate and NI Water and DAERA: Water Management Unit have no objections.

e) Crime and personal safety are not perceived to be an issue if managed effectively.

f) No public art is proposed.

g) The proposal is compatible with surrounding land uses. The proposed location is in an existing yard adjacent to other buildings. The building is single storey in height. Only long distance views are possible of this proposal from Causeway Road. The proposal should not detract from the landscape quality and character of the surrounding area given satisfactory integration can be achieved.

h) The proposal does not impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

i) It does not adversely affect features of the built heritage or natural heritage.

j) It can satisfactorily deal with any emission or effluent. Surface water is being disposed of via soakaways and foul sewage is being disposed of by the existing septic tank to the adjacent house. NI Water, DAERA: WMU and Environmental Health were consulted and express no objections.

k) Adequate access arrangements, parking and manoeuvring areas are provided and DFI Roads have no objections.

l) Access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or inconvenience the flow of traffic and DFI Roads have no objections.

m) The existing road network can cope with this development and DFI Roads have no objections.

n) The access to this development is from an existing laneway onto Causeway Road.

o) It does not extinguish or significantly constrain an existing or planned public access to the coastline or a tourism asset.

8.20 The proposal complies with the requirements of Policy TSM 7 of PPS 16.

Access and Parking

8.21 Planning permission will only be granted provided the proposal does not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the

flow of traffic. Access to the site is utilising the existing laneway from Causeway Road. DFI Roads was consulted in relation to this application and offer no objections. The proposal is acceptable and complies with Policy AMP 2 of PPS 3 and DCAN 15.

Natural Heritage

- 8.22 This application comprises conversion of an existing building. A Biodiversity Checklist was not submitted as there is no vegetation on the application site. This application will not harm protected or priority species so is satisfactory in terms of Policies NH 2 and NH 5 of PPS 2.
- 8.23 The application site is located within Causeway Coast AONB. Policy NH 6 of PPS 2 advises proposals should be sensitive to the distinctive special character of the area and the quality of their landscape, heritage and wildlife. Proposals should respect local architectural styles and patterns as well as local materials, designs and colour. The proposal does not offend this policy as the barn conversion with small extension will integrate into the landscape as it is positioned in a cluster of buildings and it will not unacceptably harm the character of the AONB.

9.0 CONCLUSION

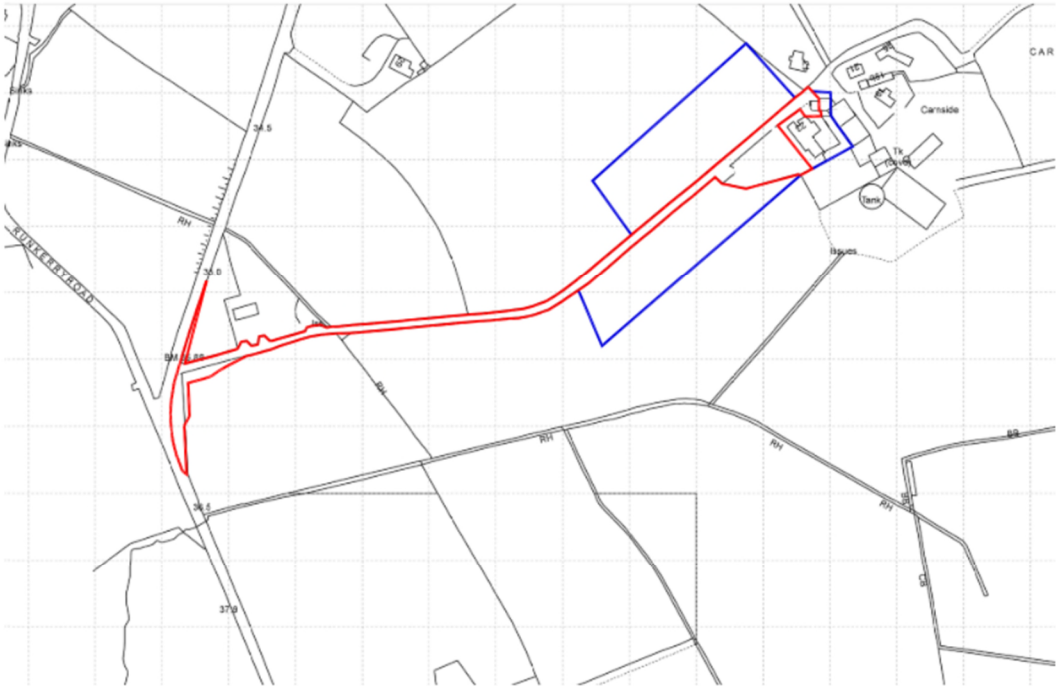
- 9.1 The proposal is considered unacceptable at this location having regard to the Northern Area Plan 2016 and other material considerations. Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 does not allow for flexibility as it specifically states 3 circumstances in which development proposals must fall to be acceptable in the DLS of the Giant's Causeway. The conversion of a building into self-catered accommodation with an extension and alterations to the roof is therefore unacceptable in principle contrary to Policy COU 4 and paragraph 6.6 of the SPPS. It is also contrary to BH5 of PPS 6. While the proposal meets the criteria for Conversion of Buildings under Policy CTY 4 of PPS 21, it fails the policy test in the SPPS (Para 6.73) as the building is considered to not be locally important.
- 9.2 The proposal complies with the Tourism Policies TSM 5 & 7 of PPS 16 as one or more units are allowed within the grounds of an existing guest house. However, a new unit would not be

allowed under Policy COU 4 of NAP 2016 given the site location within the Distinctive Landscape Setting and is also contrary to BH 5 of PPS6. The proposal has satisfactory access and parking. The proposal is acceptable in terms of natural heritage interests. The proposal will not unacceptably harm the Causeway Coast AONB or rural character because of the scale of development. Refusal is recommended.

10 REASONS

1. The proposal is contrary to Policy COU 4 of the Northern Area Plan 2016, Paragraph 6.6 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy BH5 of PPS6 in that the site lies within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. The proposed barn conversion with extension and roof alterations does not qualify as an exception and therefore does not justify a relaxation of the strict planning controls in this area.
2. The proposal is contrary to Paragraph 6.73 of the SPPS (The conversion and re-use of existing buildings for residential use), because the existing building for conversion is considered to not be a locally important building.

Site Location Map



OSNI MAP REFERRED TO
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REVISION	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	DD

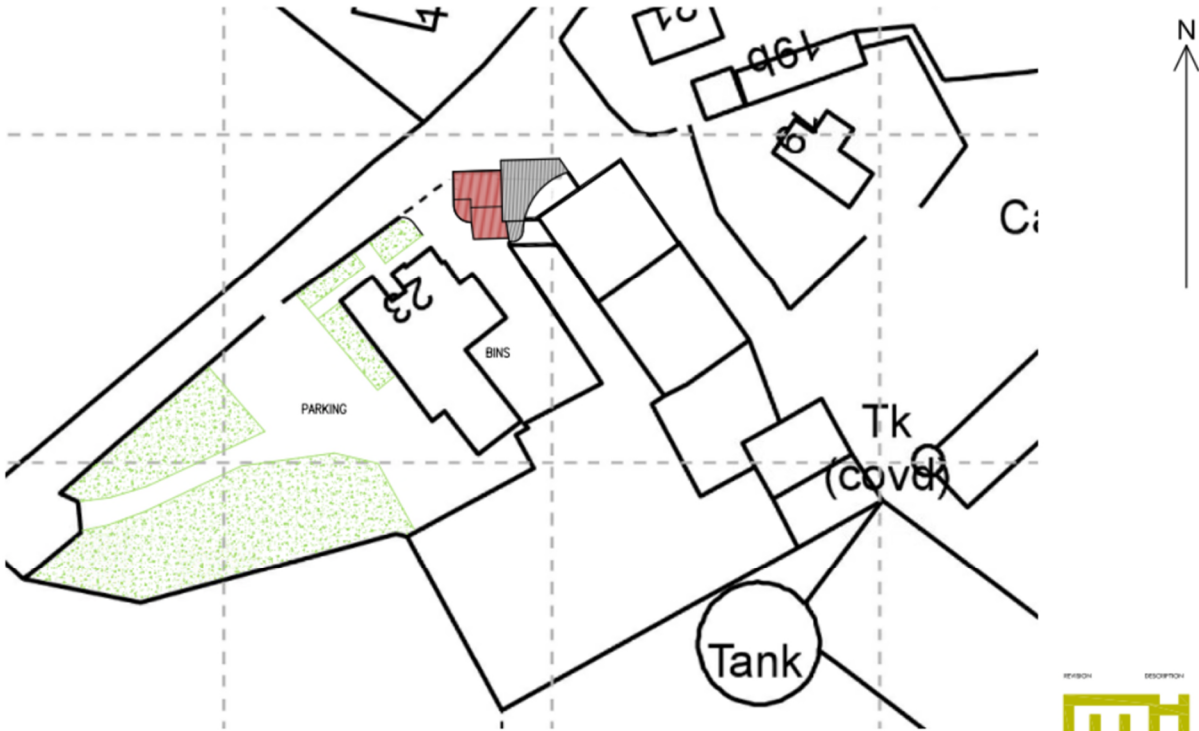


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Project Title:
 CARNSIDE BARN CONVERSION

Drawing Title:
 LOCATION PLAN

Proposed Block Plan



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REVISION	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	OD

MONTGOMERY / IRWIN

Project Title:
 CARNISIDE BARN CONVERSION

Drawing Title:
 BLOCK PLAN

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Laura Crawford

From: Mark Fielding
Sent: 17 June 2024 08:14
To: Planning; Denise Dickson; Sandra Hunter
Subject: LA01/2024/0058/F
Attachments: 23 Causeway Road.odt

I wish to refer Planning Application LA01/2024/0058/F to the Planning Committee.
Conversion of Barn into self-catering accommodation and alteration of an existing access to a public road. 23
Causeway Road Bushmills.

See attached,

Yours.

Mark

Ald. M Fielding

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Planning Reference LA01/2024/0058/F

Elected Member Name Mark Fielding

07971059829

mark.fielding@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Refusal Reason 1

The Proposal is compliant with aspects of policy relating to tourism, change of use, scale, detailed design, integration and impact.

Refusal Reason 2

The barn of the application 23 Causeway Road is a traditional stone building which demonstrates vernacular construction and has been a low- key but established feature of the landscape for almost 200 years.

It is similar to the proposal of development (LA01/2022/1531/F) which is acceptable in principle within planning policy and confirmed in The Development Management Officer Report for a barn conversion at 54 Causeway Road – a traditional stone black building - which is also within the Distinctive Landscape Setting of the Giant's Causeway and World Heritage site.

Refusal Reason 3

This proposal does not involve an extension to an existing dwelling.

The building is too small for contemporary or commercial use on a farm and has no statutory protection which places it in jeopardy. Renovation and conversion to tourist use alongside Carnside Guest House will secure the future of the building.