



Strategic Place Planning

Report of Handling by Development Management Manager

Site Address:	Borrowstone Bothy, Borrowstone Road, Kingswells Aberdeen AB15 8RR
Application Description:	Change of use from agricultural land to domestic garden ground and erection of 1.5 and single storey extensions to side
Application Ref:	250377/DPP
Application Type:	Detailed Planning Permission
Application Date:	11 April 2025
Applicant:	Ms Nicola Webster
Ward:	Kingswells/Sheddocksley/Summerhill
Community Council:	Kingswells

DECISION

Refuse

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application site relates to a small granite bothy, which has been previously converted into a dwelling and extended to incorporate a 1½ storey extension to the south of the western room, introducing a living, dining, kitchen space and a bathroom and utility room as part of the conversion of the original building. The dwelling has a north-facing principal elevation and the original bothy contained two main rooms and a smaller third room to the west side. The bothy was part of an existing farm grouping, containing a farm house and agricultural buildings sitting to the north. Access is off a private road, which leads to Borrowstone Road and the A944 Westhill-Aberdeen road beyond, past some other residential properties. A farm track runs on a north-south axis, adjacent to the western boundary of the site, with an open field beyond, which connects the agricultural building to the north and the fields to the south of the application site.

Relevant Planning History

- 150183 – Detailed planning permission was refused for the refurbishment and extension of the existing bothy in June 2015.
- 160109 – Detailed planning permission was refused for the conversion and extension of existing bothy to create one dwelling in March 2016. The principle of the conversion to a residential dwelling was supported, however, the extension was refused as it was not subservient to the scale and massing of the original bothy. The decision was subject to review by Local Review Body and was overturned in June 2016. This permission was implemented, with the resultant house subject of this application.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

Detailed planning permission is sought for the erection of a 1½ storey pitched-roof extension to the existing dwelling, extending into agricultural land proposed to be incorporated in the residential curtilage. The extension would introduce a second addition to the original bothy, of a similar scale and form as the existing extension, with a 73.5sqm footprint and height of 6m, connected to the existing extension with a 3m long hallway link (81sqm in total footprint). The extension would align with the existing to form a second, separate gable end on the south elevation and the resulting extensions to the bothy would measure a combined width of 17.4m and length of 11m. It would be finished with a stone basecourse, black-painted timber cladding and a zinc standing seam roof, fitted with aluminium-clad black-grey windows and doors and a 2m tall stove flue.

The proposal includes a change of use of agricultural land to be incorporated into the existing residential curtilage, to accommodate the proposed extension, currently comprising the 4.6m wide unsurfaced farm track running along the western boundary of the site and section of the driveway, forming an area measuring 220sqm.

Amendments

None.

Supporting Documents

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at – <https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SUJVXNBZHUL00>

- Design Statement
- Drainage Report
- Supporting Statement

CONSULTATIONS

Aberdeen City Council (ACC) Internal Consultees

- **ACC - Roads Development Management Team** – The site is located in the outer city, outwith any controlled parking zone.

External Consultees

- **Kingswells Community Council** – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

None

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan; and, that any determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

National Planning Framework 4

- Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises)
- Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Policy 8 (Green Belts)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 16 (Quality Homes)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)

Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 (ALDP)

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy D4 (Landscape)
- Policy NE1 (Green Belt)
- Policy R5 (Waste management Requirements for New Development)
- Policy T3 (Parking)

Aberdeen Planning Guidance

- Householder Development Guide
- Transport and Accessibility

EVALUATION

Key Determining Factors

The key determining factors in the assessment of this application relate to the scale and design of the extension and the change of use of agricultural land to residential curtilage, and whether there is compliance with green belt policy.

Policy Context

The application site comprises a converted and extended traditional bothy, now a residential dwelling, within the Green Belt. Policy 8 (Green Belts) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 (ALDP) requires the character, landscape, natural setting and identity of the green belt to be protected and enhanced. Development should also minimise visual harm to the green belt, not undermine the purpose of the green belt and not present any harm to the environmental quality of the green belt. Development which is associated within the boundary of an existing activity will only be supported provided it is small-scale, does not significantly increase the intensity of the activity and the proposed built construction is subordinate and ancillary to what already exists (including

extensions to existing dwellings). Section ii) requires development to be designed to ensure it is of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise visual impact on the green belt as far as possible.

Design, Scale and Impact on the Green Belt and its Character

Alongside the green belt policy context of the site, falling under Policy 8 (Green Belts) of NPF4 and Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of ALDP, Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking) of the ALDP both expect development to be designed to be consistent with the six qualities of successful places, to be of an appropriate design for the context, and to not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding area. Policy D4 (Landscape) requires development not to adversely affect those existing elements of landscape character which contribute towards a distinct sense of place. Policy 16 (Quality Homes) of NPF4 notes that the development must not impact on the character, environmental quality of the home and the surrounding area.

The Householder Development Guide Aberdeen Planning Guidance (HDG) requires development to be architecturally compatible in design and scale with the host building and surrounding area and for the materials used to be complementary. Additional guidance in considering the design and scale of house extensions is also given in that the general principles of the APG outline that extensions should not overwhelm or dominate the dwelling and should be visually subservient in terms of height, mass and scale. Furthermore, the built footprint of the dwellinghouse should not exceed twice that of the original dwelling, and no more than 50% of the front or rear curtilage should be covered by development.

Consideration to the development and an assessment of the aforementioned policies will be given below under the relevant headings.

Built footprint

In this case, the proposed 81sqm extension and link, combined with the existing extension, would be substantially larger than the original building on the site. The footprint of the original bothy is approximately 60sqm and as extended, the dwelling would have a footprint of approximately 215sqm, making it more than 3.5 times larger than the original building. Paragraph 6.3 of the submitted Supporting Statement states that the proposed is significantly less than twice the size of the existing building. The original building on the site relates to the bothy, which was previously extended, and this statement is therefore inaccurate and misleading. The proposal therefore does not comply with the general principles of the HDG as it would more than triple the footprint of the original building, nor would it be small-scale or subordinate and ancillary to what already exists.

This Supporting Statement also applies the principles of the HDG to conclude that the extension meets the requirements of NPF4 Policy 8 and NE1 of the ALDP. The principles set out in the overarching policy however, require development in the green belt to be small-scale, not significantly increase the intensity of the activity and the proposed built construction is subordinate and ancillary to what already exists (including extensions to existing dwellings).

In light of this, the extension does not present a subordinate or small scale addition to the modest bothy and is thus contrary to Policy NE1 of the ALDP. While the development would technically be ancillary, in terms of its use, to the dwelling, a structure of this footprint, which contributes to more than tripling of the original footprint, cannot be deemed ancillary or subordinate in terms of scale, thus the proposal fails to adhere to the requirements of Policy 8 of NPF4 and Policies NE1 and D1 of the ALDP as well as the general principles for overdevelopment outlined in the HDG.

Scale, design and siting

The proposal would introduce a 1½ storey extension, matching the existing extension in form and scale, separated from the existing with a 3m long link which is set back 5.5m from the south elevation. This extension would thus have the appearance of a new, separate building on the site, which would be longer and wider than the original stone bothy. The submitted Design Statement makes the argument that the existing extension offers a precedent for an additional extension, which mirrors its scale and form. The existing extension forms an addition to the original bothy and the application proposal is similarly assessed as an extension to the bothy, which forms the host building for which an extension is required to be of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, as well as subservient. As such, the suggestion that this existing extension sets the precedent for another structure of a similar form and scale is not relevant. In addition, this argument is undermined by the proposal to extend this existing example further, and using the existing extended dwelling as 'precedent' further alludes to the proposal creating a visually separate building, as opposed to a subservient addition to the dwelling, even noting in the statement that this would be a 'clear, legible and distinctive building'.

This additional structure and separation from the existing dwelling as extended would significantly add to the dwelling's massing. The existing extension has a south-facing gable which measures 7.2m in width, which is already dominant in scale in relation to the original bothy's width (5.5m). The proposed extension would result in an overall width of 17.4m, presenting two gable-end structures on the south elevation, with the proposed addition having little visual relation to the original bothy. The resulting extension measuring 11m in length and 17.4m in width would thus be substantially greater in scale and massing than the original 5.5m by 12m bothy. With respect to height, the original bothy comprises a single-storey building, which is set at a higher ground level than the proposed extension (by c.600mm). Therefore, while the ridge of the proposed extension would be at the same level as the existing bothy, the proposal would be for a 1½ storey addition which would be taller than the original bothy. As a result, the scale and massing of the proposed extension, combined with the existing extension, would be significantly larger than, and thus not suitably subservient to, the scale and form of the original bothy in length, width, height and overall massing.

In assessing the impact of this large scale addition, when considering the level of development on this site, if approved, there would be very little evidence of the original bothy, particularly as seen from the public road (Borrowstone Road) as far back as 400m to the south which presents an adverse impact on the distinctive landscape character and setting of this area within the green belt. As noted in the Design Statement, the site benefits from long range views over open fields. The proposal would thus introduce the most dominant element (two gable-end structures measuring 17.4m in total width) to the south, making them visible and dominant from long views over this flat, open landscape, which allows it to be easily viewed from the Borrowstone Road and the surrounding area.

The proposal to incorporate the adjacent farm track from green belt land into the residential curtilage further demonstrates the excessive scale and dominant nature of the extension. The requirement to extend into additional ground outwith the existing residential curtilage clearly indicates that the development is not subordinate or ancillary to the existing residential activity contained within the existing boundary, or to the scale of the original bothy and site context. The submitted Design Statement states that the extension proposed 'works within the context of the site', however, this cannot be the case where the site needs to be enlarged and extended into the adjacent agricultural land to accommodate an extension of this size. The submitted Supporting Statement (section 6.4) notes that the area to be changed to garden ground would not be used for the extension and will remain as garden ground, to not impact the wider green belt. The proposed site plan however, clearly shows the extension extending to be 1.5m from the new boundary and

sited where the track currently sits. The extension would therefore significantly increase the intensity of the existing residential activity and comprise development outwith the boundary of the existing activity, in direct conflict with ALDP Policy NE1 and its presence would harmfully impact the landscape character of this area of green belt.

Paragraph 6.1 of the submitted Supporting Statement rightly outlines that applications must be considered on their own merits. Paragraph 6.3 makes reference to the neighbouring farmhouse. The main consideration of this application relates to the scale of the development in relation to the original bothy and the context of its site. As such, the footprint of neighbouring farmhouse is not a relevant planning matter.

It was suggested through the application process, by the Planning Authority that the existing extension could potentially be extended to the north, maintaining the general L-shape of the existing extended dwelling, while introducing additional floorspace over two floors in a more compact form to avoid substantially increasing the massing of the development and confine it to the private side of the site, screening it from public views. A proposal to extend the dwelling in this way would also avoid the need to extend into the surrounding green belt, presenting a proposal which is within the boundary of the existing activity. However, no amendments were made to address the massing of the proposal. The submitted Design Statement notes that the proposed design has gone through various iterations to achieve the desired needs and account for future needs, however, the applicant has not provided any information or details on these nor demonstrated or explained why any of them could not be taken forward. Design Statements would normally include this information as part of the narrative on why a specific proposal is ultimately taken forward. In addition, pre-application advice was previously given for this proposal which highlighted the issues with the scale and massing of the development and no material changes were made by the applicant to address any of these concerns. As such, while the principle of adapting the dwelling to present needs is accepted, it is not accepted that the most appropriate proposal has been considered which would increase the footprint of the dwelling and allow for the continued use of the dwelling, while preserving the character of the original bothy and surrounding green belt. The six qualities of successful places are further, required to be applied to ensure the pleasant and distinctive character of the surrounding green belt is preserved and not harmed by unsuitable development, which has been assessed in the foregoing report.

In assessing the design and layout of the extension, it would introduce a new entrance door being placed between the existing and proposed extensions, designed with a glazed panel forming a double-door appearance with an adjacent covered porch area, sitting directly in front of the driveway. This design would draw attention to this as a focal entrance point to the dwelling on the principal elevation, which would be completely separate to the original bothy. The bothy would become visually subservient to the later additions, appearing as a separate outbuilding to the side of these two dominant extensions which would form the main part of the dwelling, further failing to introduce a subservient addition to the original bothy.

In terms of materials, the proposed use of stone and timber for the external walls and metal cladding for the roof is considered to be high quality and suitable for the context of the green belt. With respect to the design and appearance of the extension in isolation, there is no concern with the architecture and form of the extension itself; the concern arises from the additional structure on the site which introduces an unacceptable overall massing and additional dominant structure to the original bothy, which is not small scale and subordinate.

Summary

The proposal would introduce an extension with the appearance of an additional building on the site which would not be subservient to the original building and combined with the existing

extension, would result in an extension which is 3.5 times larger in footprint than the original bothy, as well as substantially greater in length, width, height and overall massing. The proposed entrance within the link of the extension pulls the focus of the main section of the dwelling away from the original bothy, making it visually subservient to the later additions. The requirement to introduce additional green belt land into residential curtilage to introduce this additional extension demonstrates the excessive scale of the extension, particularly in relation to the original bothy and site context. The proposal therefore fails to meet the criteria for extensions to existing dwellings within the green belt as set out in Policy 8 of NPF4 and Policy NE1 of the ALDP, as it would not be subservient or small-scale in relation to the original building and would intensify the existing residential activity outwith its existing boundary. The design and massing of the proposed extension would also have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the property and the landscape character in the context of its siting within the green belt, contrary to Policies 14 and 16 of NPF4 and Policies D1 and D4 of the ALDP and the relevant APG.

Principle of Proposed Change of Use from Agricultural Land to Residential Curtilage

The area of land proposed to be included in the residential curtilage comprises a section of a gravelled driveway / access area associated with the agricultural buildings on the site and an unsurfaced single which connects the farm yard to a field to the south of the application site. The gravelled area is proposed to remain as an open gravelled area for turning cars, while the path to the west is proposed to be incorporated into the garden of the house. The change of use of this farm track and hardstanding in the green belt would not comply with ALDP policy NE1 as it would extend the existing residential activity outwith the existing boundary, intensifying this activity. In assessing the impact of this departure from the development plan, the change of use would not impact on the neighbouring agricultural use or result in the loss of any of the adjacent field, as it would be limited to the farm track between the neighbouring fields boundary fence and the existing residential curtilage. As there is another entrance into this field from Borrowstone Road, which appears to be the main access for agricultural use, the removal of this path is not considered to impact on the operation of this existing use.

Therefore, while the proposal is contrary to Policy 8 of NPF4 and Policy NE1 of the ALDP, the principle of incorporating the farm track and area of gravelled hardstanding into the residential curtilage would be acceptable, as this aspect of the proposal in itself would be small-scale and not undermine the function or character of the green belt.

Amenity

The only immediate neighbouring dwelling is the farmhouse, immediately to the east and within the same ownership. The proposed development would be confined to the west of the existing building as extended, and as such, would not introduce amenity harm to this farmhouse, or to any other properties.

Parking

Policy T3 (Parking) of the ALDP expects development to comply with the Transport and Accessibility APG. The Transport and Accessibility Aberdeen Planning Guidance would typically expect three allocated parking spaces for a four-bedroom dwelling. The proposed site plan shows suitable parking accommodation for the site and is therefore acceptable.

Drainage

Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4 requires development to manage surface water through sustainable urban drainage systems and not worsen flood risk for surrounding sites

and Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment) of the ALDP 2023 would not support development where it would increase flood risk and expects new development to incorporate SuDS to manage surface water. The proposal seeks to introduce a new surface water soakaway within the garden to accommodate water run off caused by the new extension. This would be acceptable and there are no concerns with drainage within the site and the proposal would comply with Policy 22 of NPF4 and Policy NE4 of the ALDP 2023.

Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises, Climate Mitigation and Biodiversity

Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires planning authorities when considering all development proposals to give significant weight to encouraging, promoting and facilitating development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis. Similarly, Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation) of NPF4 encourages, promotes and facilitates development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change. Policy 3 (Biodiversity) seeks the enhancement of biodiversity.

Due to the nature of the development, comprising a change of use of a small section of green belt land confined to a farm track and an addition to the residential property, it is sufficiently small scale and does not offer the opportunity to address the global climate emergency and nature crisis, minimise emission or to enhance biodiversity.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

None

DECISION

Refuse

REASON FOR DECISION

The proposed extension would not be a small-scale, subordinate or ancillary extension owing to its built footprint and, combined with the existing extension, would more than triple the footprint of the original bothy and be substantially greater in width and length than the original building, as well as greater in height. The requirement to introduce additional green belt land into residential curtilage to introduce this additional extension demonstrates its excessive scale and would intensify the existing residential activity outwith its existing boundary. The design and siting of the proposal would introduce a second gable-end extension which would be visibly separate to the existing extended bothy, appearing as a separate building on the site, lacking a positive or complementary relationship with the original building and have a form and massing which would appear dominant on the site, compared to the existing extended dwelling, particularly from the south elevation which is visible from long views along the road due to the open setting of the surrounding agricultural land. Thus, the extended dwelling would not be of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance and would not enhance the green belt, rather it would cause harm to the character, landscape and natural setting of the green belt, including from public views. Thus the proposal conflicts with Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking), Policy D4 (Landscape) and Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 and Policy 8 (Green Belts), Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) and Policy 16 (Quality Homes) of National Planning Framework 4 and the Householder Development Guide Aberdeen Planning Guidance.