

27/1/18

108B High Street
North Berwick
EH39 4HE

Application 17/01008/FUL Appeal reference 17/00053/RREF - Derelict Dwelling, Land West of Glenkinnon Lodge, Peelburnfoot, Clovenfords, Scottish Borders

Applicant Response to Representations

1. There is concern from some objectors that the environmental status of the woodland will be harmed by the proposed development. I have taken every possible step to ensure that not only will there be very minimal impact to the woodland environment during construction but that after construction the environmental amenity of the wood will be unchanged if not improved.

1.1. The Council Landscape architect is concerned that the removal of 14 trees (as recommended in the Tree Survey) will have a negative effect on the tree canopy and screening. This has been taken on board and it is proposed that three trees will require to be removed. These are self seeded sycamore which will be replaced on at least a like for like basis.

There will be very minimal effect on the tree canopy in the short term, none in the long term and no degrading of the screening aspect of the wood in relation to the modern development of Craigmyle Park.

In addition, the use of screw pile foundations, Airspade trenching for services and Cellweb driveway construction will result in exceptionally minimal impact on any of the woodland environment.

1.2 Objectors' comments regarding the presence of wildlife around and in one case within their own homes demonstrates that the presence of a dwelling is readily accepted by the natural world.

I have stated on several occasions that the preservation of the woodland environment is of the utmost importance to me in the period of my ownership and beyond. I have made several attempts to demonstrate this.

I feel that I can do no more than state my intentions in writing and agree with objectors that Peel Wood is an exceptionally beautiful and precious place. I share all objectors ideals to maintain it as such. I will do my utmost to preserve and protect it for as long as I can.

1.3. There is a difference of opinion amongst objectors that water run off from the wood causes problems on the Ashiestiel road with some saying it is a long term problem and others saying there is none. If there is indeed an issue I will work towards a providing a solution.

1.4 A number of objectors have cause for concern regarding household drainage from the development. Their attention is drawn to the Planning Officer's report:

...a rigorously worded condition would be required to protect ecological and environmental interests adjoining and within the site.

This is fully agreed and accepted.

2. A number of objectors have stated that the ruined building was never occupied by a human presence. While there is no verified evidence of occupation I draw attention to a draft valuation role entry from 1915 showing a person inhabiting the building. This document differs from the officially verified valuation role available from National Records of Scotland.

It is acknowledged by NRS that researchers can often encounter anomalies in the recording of occupation of buildings:

The Assessor in each county or parliamentary burgh had to draw up a valuation roll by 15 August each year, to allow appeals by any owners and occupiers who disputed the

rateable values by 15 September following. Once the appeal process had ended, the resulting roll was authenticated and was made available for public inspection.

The way that each Assessor dealt with corrections and changes to the rolls varied and researchers and archivists frequently find anomalies in the recording of changing ownership and occupation of buildings (and of new buildings appearing for the first time).

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/valuation-rolls-1855-1989>

2.1. Photographic evidence from 2012 shows a skylight window in the right hand side roof of the ruin. Whilst this is not presented as conclusive proof of human habitation it seems incongruous to have a roof window installed in a building solely for the use of dogs. The right hand gate has also been removed.



2.2. A recent photograph showing the interior of the right hand side of the building shows the remains of a sprung bed frame. This appears to have been constructed to fit the available space not simply left as rubbish or brought in by a casual inhabitant.



While it is understood that the ruin has never had official residential status I feel that these three elements taken together show that human occupation has taken place at some point in the past.

3. My motives for this development have been questioned in a number of objector statements.

All I can say in response is that I would not have specified time consuming and expensive methods of construction to minimise environmental impact, been willing to attach burdens to the entire site prohibiting any further development, made the proposed house adhere to affordable housing regulations or be building a one bedroom dwelling if my intention was to achieve financial gain.

3.1. It is with a little dismay that I read objector comments dismissing my attempts to invite the broader Borders community to have a deeper involvement in Peel Wood.

However, given that the number of objections to the initial planning application has dropped by half for the appeal, in time I can only hope that my presence as an inhabitant of the wood will be accepted by the remaining objectors as a good thing for the community.

Adam Elder

