

Appeal Decision Notice

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Decision by M J Culshaw, a Reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers

- Planning Appeal reference: P/PPA/270/482
- Site Address: Whitefield, Castletown, Caithness KW14 8UA
- Appeal by Mrs R Campbell against the decision by The Highland Council
- Application for planning permission dated 22 March 2007 refused by notice dated 1 May 2007.
- The development proposed: Erection of house and stables, installation of septic tank and soakaway, oil tank and formation of vehicle access.
- Date of site visit by Reporter:

Date of appeal decision: 3 December 2007

Decision

I dismiss the appeal and refuse planning permission.

Reasoning

1. The determining issue in this appeal is the impact of the proposed development on the open countryside, having regard to the policies of the development plan.
2. While in many of the more remote parts of Caithness housing development is encouraged by the policies of the Caithness Local Plan, in the hinterland defined in the proposals map around the towns of Wick and Thurso Primary Policy PP3 contains a presumption against new housing developments unless a house is essential for the management of land and associated family purposes, or where it involves required social housing provision or the conversion of a traditional building or redevelopment of a ruinous one. The appeal site lies within the defined hinterland area, and none of those circumstances apply to the appeal proposal. Its development in the manner proposed would thus conflict with the intentions and provisions of the local plan.
3. The appeal site lies adjacent to a single track unmade road, running in a straight line roughly north-south and connecting a number of scattered dwellings. It is part of the open countryside above Castletown, with attractive views as far as Dunnet Head to the north, and rising to a high point at Whitefield south of the appeal site. A new dwelling in the position proposed would be a prominent new feature in the landscape, and would be harmful to the appearance of its rural surroundings. At my site visit I noted that immediately adjoining the appeal site is a modern bungalow with a harled finish, and the appeal proposal involves a similar two bedroomed building, of single storey finished in drydash harling under a tiled



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roof. However the fact that the appeal proposal would be close to another dwelling would not reduce its impact or make it acceptable, nor does it overcome the conflict with established policy.

4. Although the appellant has indicated a wish to provide for her elderly mother who currently lives in Inverness, to provide a more suitable property for herself in latter years and to continue to breed horses on this land, none of these reasons amount to the kind of circumstances which would justify setting aside the normal presumption against development in hinterland areas.

5. While I can understand the appellant's wish to develop her own land, such a wish could be expressed by too many landowners, with the result that sporadic development would severely undermine the aims underlying the planning authority's established policies. These are not in my judgement considerations which should carry sufficient weight to overturn the established policies of the development plan. Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires me to determine this appeal in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I have taken into account all the matters put forward in support of this appeal, but none is sufficient to alter my conclusion that the appeal should be dismissed.

This is the version issued to parties 3 December 2007

MJ Culshaw
Deputy Chief Reporter