

Proposed Mid Argyll and Inveraray Landscape Capacity Study

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 External landscape architect consultants have been engaged by the Council to produce a series of Landscape Capacity Studies for all Rural Opportunity Areas located within National Scenic Areas and Areas of Panoramic Quality as defined by the Argyll and Bute Local Plan. This report concerns the proposed Landscape Capacity Study for Mid Argyll and Inveraray (which is attached as Appendix A). In particular the Bute and Cowal Area Committee are requested to consider the last three Rural Opportunity Areas (MA36; MA 37 & MA38 : pages 78 - 85) of the document as these Rural Opportunity Areas lie within the Bute and Cowal Administration Area. Members should note that the Landscape Capacity Study for Mid Argyll and Inveraray was previously approved by the MAKI Area Committee for their section of the document.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Bute and Cowal Area Committee approve the relevant section of the Landscape Capacity Study for Mid Argyll and Inveraray attached in Appendix A of this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As Members are aware the principal objective of this study is to provide a robust set of documents that will clearly identify the opportunities and constraints, in landscape terms, for development within the Rural Opportunity Areas (ROAs) identified in the Argyll and Bute Local Plan.
- 3.2 The Argyll and Bute Local Plan contains development control zones which are spatial planning policy designations. One of these countryside development control zones is the ROA designation which carries a particular policy stance towards development in the Plan. This policy stance is positive towards many small scale development types, and in particular, small scale housing development, with a general presumption in favour of up to 5 new houses (subject to satisfying policy in terms of design, siting in the landscape, development pattern etc.).

- 3.3 A significant area of Argyll and Bute is covered by National Scenic Areas (NSA) and Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQ - former Regional Scenic Area) designations, which are detailed within the Plan. Many of the ROAs are located within these NSAs and APQs.
- 3.4 The plan was subject to Public Local Inquiry and one of the issues identified was that of potential conflict between ROA designation and NSA or APQ designation. The Council took the view that this potential conflict should be addressed through the production of landscape capacity studies that could help define where new developments could be assimilated into the open countryside in these high value landscapes. Until these studies were completed and approved by the respective Area Committee, a moratorium has been placed on new development in the open countryside within affected ROAs. The only other acceptable alternative to this action would have been to delete all ROAs from NSAs and APQs identified in the local plan.
- 3.5 These landscape capacity studies are being undertaken by appropriately qualified consultants and cover all of the ROAs located within NSAs and APQs located in Argyll and Bute (with the exception of Jura and part of the Mull NSA as studies in these areas have already been completed).
- 3.6 The landscape studies are consistent with all current national and local planning policy and will help support, and be consistent with, the Council's Corporate Strategy and the Development Plan for Argyll and Bute (i.e. both Structure and Local Plan) in meeting their aims of strengthening the economy; creating sustainable and vibrant communities in the area and protecting and enhancing the environment.
- 3.7 The Mid Argyll and Inveraray landscape capacity study is one in a series of documents which will provide the Council and the public with a clearly defined set of guidelines for development within ROAs located within NSAs and APQs. It has previously been approved by the MAKI Area Committee in terms of the area under their remit. Given that the last three Rural Opportunity Areas covered by this document lie within the Bute and Cowal Administration Area (pages 78 – 85) it is now considered appropriate for the Bute and Cowal Area Committee to consider this element of the document.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Mid Argyll and Inveraray landscape capacity study is one in a series of documents which will provide the Council and the public with a clearly defined set of guidelines for development within ROAs located within NSAs and APQs. They will be used as technical guidance by planning officers assessing planning applications located within such ROAs and will also be useful in the production of the emerging Local Development Plan. Members are asked to approve the relevant section of this document to allow the moratorium on development in the open countryside to be lifted from these areas.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Mid Argyll and Inveraray landscape capacity study will be primarily used in conjunction with the current Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan) to assess planning applications.

Financial: The costs for this work have been met through an established budget held by Development Services.

Personnel: None.

Community: None.

For further information contact: Fergus Murray

Telephone: 01631 604293

Appendix A