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STRACHUR HOUSING ALLOCATION MASTERPLAN REPORT 14/01330/MPLAN

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**1. SUMMARY**

Strachur is designated in the adopted Local Plan as having two Housing Allocation Areas (ref: H-AL 2/14 at Creggans and H-AL 2/15 at Mid Letters). Under this designation, a masterplan is required as part of the determination of any application for all or part of the site.

Members will consider separately two applications – one for the erection of a dwellinghouse on land to the south east of Heather Cottage (reference: 13/01625/PP) and the other for the formation of the access road, the installation of the private sewerage system and the installation of the surface water drainage (all to serve a seven plot housing development) (reference 14/00557/PP). A masterplan for the Housing Allocation H-AL 2/15 has been submitted and is considered below.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

Whilst the masterplan might require some fine tuning in some locations, it is considered that there is sufficient detail to assess the proposed development in principle. As such it is recommended that the masterplan be approved and endorsed as a material consideration in the assessment of the current planning applications (references: 13/01365/PP and 14/00557/PP).

**3. ASSESSMENT**

The Housing Allocation H-AL 2/15 is referred to as 'Mid Letters' in the Argyll and Bute Local Plan 2009 and the Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan. In the former document, the figure of 30 units is mentioned whilst in the Proposed LDP, 50 units are recommended.

Housing Allocations are areas identified by the Council for specific development purposes which can expect to be commenced or delivered within the plan period without having to overcome significant obstacles to the development.

It is standard practice to require a masterplan when considering the development of such designated areas. Masterplans help the Council assess at an early stage in the development process, the interrelationships of layout, design, access, existing transport infrastructure and sustainable modes of travel, landscape and ecology, open space provision and integration of a proposed development with existing communities.

The Scottish Government most commonly refers to Masterplans as being, '*a plan that describes and maps an overall development concept, including present and future land use, urban design and landscaping, built form, infrastructure, circulation and service provision. It is based upon an understanding of place and it is intended to provide a structured approach to creating a clear and consistent framework for development*' (PAN 83). The Scottish Government endorses the use of masterplanning in general, but considers that it is especially useful for large sites and in areas/sites which are going to

undergo substantial change, have multiple uses, or are sensitive in environmental or landscape terms.

At the meeting of the PPSL Committee on 23 November 2011, Members considered and agreed a policy paper on masterplans. This stated, *inter alia*, that:

*“Proposals for development of PDAs should be accompanied by a Masterplan which demonstrates how the proposed development will relate to the wider area and any parts of the PDA which do not form part of the application site, and that the publicity and consultation arrangements for the masterplan and planning application run concurrently for a minimum period of 21 days.”*

Given the current planning applications submitted by Mr and Mrs Hall and Archd Fergusson Ltd, which are being considered separately by Members, a masterplan has been required for prior consideration as part of the determination of these applications. This has now been submitted, has been the subject of consultation and publicity, and is assessed below.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

None of the consultees that have made comment in respect of applications 13/01365/PP and 14/00557/PP have expressed any views upon the masterplan.

#### **5. PUBLICITY**

The Masterplan has been advertised (first version expiry date 11.04.2014 and second version expiry date 13.06.2014).

#### **6. REPRESENTATIONS**

No representations have been received at the time of writing.

#### **7. ASSESSMENT**

**List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the masterplan.**

##### ‘Argyll and Bute Structure Plan’ (2002)

Policy STRAT SI 1 – Sustainable Development.  
Policy STRAT DC1 – Development within Settlements  
Policy STRAT DC 7 – Nature Conservation and Development Control  
Policy STRAT DC8 – Landscape and Development Control

##### ‘Argyll and Bute Local Plan’ (2009)

Policy LP ENV 1 – Development Impact on the General Environment  
Policy LP ENV 10 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality  
Policy LP ENV 19 – Development Setting, Layout and Design  
Policy LP HOU 1 – General Housing Development  
Policy LP HOU 2 – Provision of Housing to meet Local Needs including Affordable Housing.  
Policy LP HOU 4 – Housing Green-Space  
Policy LP SERV 1 – Private Sewage Treatment Plants and Wastewater  
Policy LP SERV 3 – Drainage Impact Assessments  
Policy LP TRAN 4 – New and Existing Public Roads and Private Access Regimes  
Policy LP TRAN 6 – Vehicle Parking Provision

## **A. Development Plan Context**

The masterplan site lies within the '*settlement*' boundary of Strachur and within an area of Panoramic quality. It is designated as housing allocation H-AL 2/15, which advocates the development of a housing related scheme. In the adopted Local Plan, a density of 30 units is recommended whilst in the Proposed Local Development Plan, 50 units are recommended. In 2009, there was a recommendation of 25% affordable housing; however, the LDP indicates no affordable housing element within Cowal for a period of two years from the adoption of the plan.

## **B. Settlement Strategy**

The masterplan site identifies two points of access from the A886 Strachur-Colintraive road. The first access would serve seven plots in a two-tier design to the south west of the dwellings known as Heather Cottage and Kikut. The second access would serve seventeen dwellings shown in a three-tier layout and encroaching further up the hillside.

Under Policy STRAT DC 1 – Development within the Settlements, in small towns and villages such as Strachur, encouragement is given to development serving a wide community of interest, including 'medium scale' development on appropriate infill, rounding-off and redevelopment sites. Medium scale development is defined in the Local Plan as development of between 6 and 30 dwellings. In exceptional cases, 'large scale' development may be supported if it helps to counter population decline in the area, would help to deliver affordable housing, or else meet a particular local housing need. Large scale development is defined in the Local Plan as development exceeding 30 dwelling units.

Under Policy LP HOU 1 there is a general presumption against 'large scale' housing development in small towns and villages. Exceptions apply where there is a deliberate attempt to counter population decline, to develop affordable housing, or else meet a particular housing need. There is, therefore, a general presumption in favour of this development in terms of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan'.

## **C. Land Ownership/Location, Nature and Design of Proposed Development**

One of the crucial issues surrounding the masterplan is that the allocation site is in three land ownerships. The north east part of the site is owned by Archd Fergusson Ltd who are a long-established house building company based in Strachur; the south east part of the site is owned by the MacLennan family and is presently crofting land; and the south western half of the site is owned by the Mackie family.

It is understood that Archd Fergusson Ltd are presently marketing their seven plots with a firm interest in one of the sites (subject of application 13/01625/PP). Given that the land is owned by a house builder, there is likelihood that these seven plots might be developed within the next five years.

There is less clarity regarding the future development of remaining land within the allocation as the Crofter's Commission would have to de-croft the land owned by the MacLennan family and the Mackie family would have to commit themselves to developing their land. Neither of these scenarios is imminent; however, the details of the masterplan clearly demonstrate that the development of Fergusson's seven plots will not prejudice the future delivery of housing within the remaining allocation.

The relationship of the site to the hillside, the main A886 road and Loch Fyne is similar to that of the existing housing developments at Baycroft and Mid Letters, both of which have been successfully developed in the past. Both these developments comprise an eclectic mixture of various house types and sizes, some repeated and some standalone. Given the prominence of the proposed sites and taking into account the demand for housing of a

certain prestige, it is expected that developers (whether individual or corporate) will design houses that reflect the prominence and prestige of the site.

In the case of a housing allocation area, it is useful for some design parameters to be set down at the outset with the objective of achieving an overall development that has some cohesiveness and unifying features. In this regard, the current masterplan espouses the following;

- The encouragement of a consistent skyline throughout the development where dwellings of 1 ¾ or two storeys will be preferred;
- The establishment of general building lines which will be set to offer a spacious introduction to the front of the dwellings from the roadway and a height restriction of one metre placed on shrub planting to the front gardens;
- The use of slate (or slate substitute) roofs with a preference for dormer projections;
- The use of white or off-white roughcast or smooth render with the inclusion of masonry blockwork or timber cladding where appropriate;
- Through the Deeds of Condition, control over the subsequent painting of external walls (only white or off-white); no free-standing trampolines within front gardens; no solar panels on front roof slopes; and keeping front boundary fencing to 600 mm or less.

As a final point, it should be recognised that a form of masterplan was submitted in 2009 at the time of considering an application for seven houses within Archd Fergusson's land (ref: 08/01508/DET). This masterplan was not produced with as much detail as the current one and it should be stressed that we now have a superior masterplan which takes into account ground conditions and topography in a more realistic fashion.

#### **D. Natural Environment**

Policy STRAT DC 7 of the Structure Plan states that development which impacts on wildlife sites or other nature conservation interests, including sites, habitats or species at risk will be assessed on its acceptability balanced with social and economic considerations. It also notes that enhancements to nature conservation issues are encouraged. There are no protected sites on the site.

#### **E. Landscape Character**

The acceptability of the current proposal will be fully dependent on the successful integration of the development in its landscape context through structured tree and other planting. This would be carried out to maximise boundary privacy between neighbours whilst minimising any detrimental effect on the outlook from houses. A combination of low level/medium sized evergreen bushes interspersed with carefully positioned native trees is identified on the masterplan and this is considered to be acceptable.

#### **F. Affordable Housing**

The allocation specifies that 25% of the proposed residential units should be affordable. Within Bute and Cowal, the issue of affordable housing is currently the subject of debate during the production of the Local Development Plan and the draft LDP indicates that affordable housing within the two PDAs will not be necessary for the two years after its adoption. On this basis, the masterplan does not specifically identify the provision of affordable housing.

## **G. Road Network, Parking and Associated Transport Matters.**

As detailed above, there will be two access roads. The first will serve the seven plots owned by Archd Fergusson Ltd and significant work has already been carried out on this road. The text associated with the masterplan indicates that, during preliminary works, it became evident that the presence of extensive rock within the site would necessitate the re-appraisal of the original house layouts approved in 2009. On this basis, a new road specification was prepared to meet the demands of the site and to render the project financially and practically viable.

The road is 5 metres wide for the first 35 metres back from the public road and is then approximately 3.5 metres wide thereafter. It has a 2-metre wide service strip; a passing place; and a turning place at its end. It is understood that part of the road do not meet the gradients necessary for adoption.

Policy LP TRAN 4 of the Argyll and Bute Local Plan 2009 states that developments of up to five dwellings can be served by a private access but that development serving more than five units should be to an adoptable standard. In this particular instance, principally due to ground conditions, the road is not of a standard that would normally merit adoption. However, in the interests of compliance with LP TRAN 4, a relaxation of standards can be justified for the adoption of this particular stretch of road.

The second access has been designed to meet the broad requirements of the Area Roads Manager's specification for access roads serving more than five houses and constructed to an adoptable standard. However, it should be stressed that the layout may need adjustment depending upon the extent of any underlying rock strata having regard to the circumstances discovered with the access described in the preceding paragraph.

As presented on the layout plan of the masterplan, the proposed roadway tends to give the impression of dominating the site. However, it should be noted that this will not be the 'on the ground' situation where the natural gradients (working with the bends) together with intelligent roadside planting should minimise the potential road domination.

## **H. Connection to Proposed Potential Development Area**

In the Proposed Local Development Plan, a new Potential Development Area (ref: 1004) is proposed on land to the south west of the allocated site. Whilst there are objections to the PDA which will be considered by the Reporter, the current masterplan identifies the provision of vehicular access from the allocated site to the PDA. This exhibits that there is potential for the PDA to be accessed successfully since taking access from the existing non-adopted road at Letters Way would not be ideal.

## **J. Conclusion**

Housing Allocations are defined in the adopted Local Plan as areas identified by the Council for specific development purposes which can expect to be commenced or delivered within the plan period without having to overcome significant obstacles to the development.

The masterplan, whilst indicative, gives all interested parties and statutory consultees sufficient detail to assess the future development of the site. Assessed against Development Plan Policy and other material considerations the components of the residential scheme are considered to be compatible with H-AL 2/15. As such, it is considered fit for purpose. It is recommended that it be approved and endorsed as a material consideration in the assessment of the current planning applications (references 13/01625/PP and 14/00557/PP).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Policy:	None
Financial:	None
Personnel:	None
Equal opportunities:	None

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**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014

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