



# Design Statement

## Introduction

This Design Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr Tony Huntingdon. It relates to a detailed planning application for a single dwelling, and relocated search and rescue shed, at land to the south of 1 Lochandhu, Taynuilt, Argyll.

This is the third planning application that has been submitted for a new dwelling on this land. The first (ref. 12/02027/PP) for the erection of a dwellinghouse and detached garage was withdrawn on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013. The second for the same development (ref: 14/00539/PP) was refused on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

The option of reviewing that last decision was considered. However, upon reflection, it was decided best to redesign the proposal in light of the refusal reasons, and comments made by the case officer in the Report of Handling, and re-submit.

The refusal reasons in relation to application ref: 14/00539/PP are long and detailed, but, in essence, raise the following as issues. These are considered further below.

1. Whether the proposal is acceptable infill, rounding off or redevelopment, or is an unacceptable form of backland development
2. Whether the design quality, scale, siting and design of the proposed dwelling are appropriate for the area, which is a Conservation Area and close to a Scheduled Monument.
3. Whether the proposed dwelling would impact unacceptably upon the residential amenity of the adjacent cottages at 1-4 Lochandhu.
4. Whether the site can be appropriately accessed and provided with parking.

## Site

The site is located outwith the settlement of Taynuilt, within the Countryside Zone, as shown on the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Proposals Map.

That situation is somewhat anomalous, however, in that in visiting this area, you certainly feel as if you are still in the village, and the proximity of the Bonawe Ironworks, 1-4 Lochandhu Cottages, and other dwellings, suggests both an historic and current link between this area and the rest of the village. Why the decision was taken to exclude this area from the village is unclear, but the opportunity to comment on the forthcoming review of the Local Development Plan will be taken to seek to correct this, and bring the site within the village boundary. In the meantime, however, it is accepted that the site is in the Countryside Zone for the purposes of considering this application.

The site is reached via Lochandhu Road, which is a private part surfaced/part unmade road from its junction with the B845 Brochroy Road close to the village core

The site comprises land to the rear of 1-4 and 5-7 Lochandhu, all of which are traditional properties. Access to the site is between 4 and 5 Lochandhu. The site is overgrown and infested with Japanese



Knotweed. It is self-contained visually, with no obvious points from where it can be seen. It is partly contained within a former stone boundary wall. Other boundaries are formed by fences to other properties and by heavy vegetation.

As all those that have had to deal with Japanese Knotweed know, its eradication is time-consuming and extremely expensive. In this case, part of the rationale for this development is to be able to fund that remediation, and ensure that what is currently a limited problem to the site does not become one for the wider area.

This entire area is within an overarching Category A listing for Bonawe Ironworks, which comprises certain key buildings within the former works, including 1-4 Lochandhu, and which are described as worker' dwellings of one and half storey, rubble, part lime washed and slate roofs. Much of the area is also included with the Scheduled Monument of Bonawe Iron Furnace, although the site itself is largely excluded. A small area close to the former reservoir for the works, now overgrown, is included, which overlaps with where the search and rescue shed is currently sited.

## **Proposed Development**

Planning permission is sought for a single dwelling, which would be one and a half storey, of simple vernacular design to reflect 1-4 Lochandhu, and built of local materials, including a slate roof, stone for walls, timber windows and doors, and metal rainwater goods.

The dwelling continues to have a rectangular footprint and remains sited, long elevation facing, and to the rear of, 1-2 Lochandhu.

The previous lean-to extension, and covered external decking area, have, however, been removed, as being non-traditional features.

The dwelling continues to have two floors, with living room, kitchen/dining and other ancillary rooms on the ground floor, with three bedrooms and a bathroom above.

North facing windows now only exist on the ground floor, with roof lights serving the first floor. These can be obscured glazed, with restricted opening, or can have cill heights raised, if that remains an issue. Windows on the other elevations look out over open ground.

There is no separate garage proposed, although the search and rescue shed will still be relocated to improve access into, and circulation around, the site.

The dwelling will utilise the existing access that serves the search and rescue shed; a right of access to 2 Lochandhu will also be maintained.

The boundary wall, where it remains, will be repaired, and a similar boundary can be provided around the remainder of the site, or it can be left open.



## Issues

### **Whether the proposal is acceptable infill, rounding off or redevelopment, or is an unacceptable form of backland development**

It is considered that, in principle, a dwelling on this site is acceptable, and is a type of rounding off development, in relation to this established group of dwellings in the countryside. It is, therefore, a form of residential development that is supported by Policy LDP DM1 in the Local Development Plan, subject to the details being appropriate, and it complementing, and not harming, interests of acknowledged importance, principally heritage in this case.

It should also be stressed that this is previously developed land, and is infested by Japanese Knotweed. Neither of these issues seem to have been given any weight in the previous decision to refuse. Both are mentioned in the Report of Handling, but neither seem to have been weighed in the balance as material considerations.

Removal of Japanese Knotweed is a particularly difficult and expensive process, and redeveloping a site is widely accepted as a way of cross-subsidising this. You could go as far as to suggest that in any finely balanced, even skewed determination towards refusal, that dealing with this issue might warrant a grant of planning permission as a minor (even quite significant) departure from the development plan.

The dwelling is located at the back of existing properties, but is not backland development. That form of development is more an issue where the point of access is close to two existing flanking properties, not the case here, and where amenity issues can result from having one property positioned to the immediate rear of another; again, that is not the case here.

It is accepted that the previous design might have caused an amenity concern, by way of overlooking, but the design has been altered to remove that possibility.

The established character of this area is of scattered development served by a web of public and private roads. It is not linear in form, although some of the building forms are linear in themselves such as 1-4 Lochandhu. Siting a dwelling as proposed is, therefore, a perfectly normal response to this character typology.

### **Whether the design quality, scale, siting and design of the proposed dwelling are appropriate for the area, which is a Conservation Area and close to a Scheduled Monument.**

It is accepted that the previously designed dwelling was not sympathetic to the character of the area, the Conservation Area and its wider heritage. That has been corrected with the current design, which takes as its cue the form and scale of 1-4 Lochandhu. It will be built of materials that are reflective of the heritage of the area, and windows are now uniformly placed on the elevations.

It remains a modest and simple form dwelling that reflects the Council's design guidance, and is considered to complement the character of the Conservation Area. It would be too much to say that



it enhances the character of the area, but it certainly preserves, which is sufficient for a proposal to pass the statutory test in a conservation area.

The dwelling does not impinge upon any historic sites, being beyond the Scheduled Monument boundaries, and cannot be seen in any immediate views into, or out of, the Conservation Area.

**Whether the proposed dwelling would impact unacceptably upon the residential amenity of the adjacent cottages at 1-4 Lochandhu.**

As already mentioned, residential amenity impacts have now been removed and, if more needs to be done, the form, opening of, and glass used, in the north facing windows can be controlled by planning condition.

**Whether the site can be appropriately accessed and provided with parking.**

Parking can be provided within curtilage.

That leaves the issue of the road to the site, and access into it, as the only remaining issues raised with the last application.

Access sightlines to a standard of 42 metres in each direction from a 2.4 metre setback can be achieved, by minor changes to the road beyond the access. The applicant can secure this, and can accept a planning condition to that affect.

The applicant cannot change the fact that, at one point, the access does reduce to 2.5metres at a pinch point, but that is for less than 5 metres in length, and otherwise visibility for vehicles entering and leaving the access is fine. It must be remembered that this access is used already, and has quite large vehicles, often with trailers, coming in and out to the search and rescue shed. That arrangement has worked well for years, and visibility at the junction, and the pinch point, have simply been lived with. The applicant is unaware of this ever having been as an issue previously.

The issue that Council Roads have regarding the suitability of the road to the site, in that there are already 20 dwellings located on the surfaced section, with a further 10 on the dirt track section, is somewhat of a fact of life in Argyll & Bute. If the Council start to apply such rigid restrictions across the area, then in many instances rural housebuilding will need to stop entirely.

This guideline should instead be the starting point; a marker from which further consideration is then given to the overall safety of the route in. In that regard, it is accepted that the road changes from made to unmade, and in places can do with some maintenance, which the applicant is content to contribute to, as a local landowner. It might also be a possible for the speed limit to be reduced on the road, to 20mph, and for limited traffic calming measures to be installed, and the applicant is willing to investigate those, and accept a planning condition that requires a scheme to be agreed with the Council. This road will never be perfect, but it can be made better for all those living along and using it.



## Conclusion

For the above reasons, the proposal is consistent with the relevant policies contained in the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan. The scale and design of the dwelling suits the site, and it will not impact upon its heritage interest. No amenity impacts will result.

There are also improvements to the site (Japanese Knotweed removal), and perhaps the local road network, that also support planning permission being granted.

It is respectfully requested, therefore, that conditional planning permission be granted.