

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

proposed 2 no. dwelling development,
balinoe, near oban



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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the existing environment and provides an appraisal of the potential landscape and visual impacts which are expected as a result of the construction of 2 no. proposed single dwelling houses and associated infrastructure, located near Balinoe, on the A816 arterial route from Oban. (Refer to Figure 1).
- 1.2 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal considers the resulting impacts from the proposed development upon the aesthetic character of the landscape character, on the physical structure and landscape resources and, visual amenity of those experiencing views from the local and wider landscape setting.
- 1.3 VLM Landscape Design Ltd have been commissioned by the Client, Petard Developments. Victoria Mack, a chartered landscape architect with nearly 20 years professional experience, was responsible for the undertaking of the appraisal and the production of this report.
- 1.4 This appraisal has been undertaken in line with guidance contained in **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** published by the **Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment** in association with **The Landscape Institute (3rd Edition)**. VLM has established methodology for carrying out Landscape and Visual Appraisals for small-scale developments of this nature. The methodology along with variations specific to this appraisal is described in Appendix 1. This methodology underpins this appraisal and should be read in conjunction with this report. Figures associated with the written appraisal form Appendix 2.
- 1.5 In preparing this Landscape and Visual Appraisal, key sources of information and data including planning policy and other written, graphic and digital data relating to the proposals and broader study area has been gathered from the following sources and have been reviewed and taken account of, including:
- Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan (LDP, adopted March 2015);
 - Argyll & Bute LDP Supplementary Guidance (January 2016);
 - Scottish Planning Policy, 2014 (SPP);
 - Argyll and Firth of Clyde Landscape Character Assessment (ERM, 1996);

- Argyll and Bute Sustainable Design Guidance 1 (2006);
- Lorn and the Inner Isles Landscape Capacity Study (L&TIILCS), (Gillespies, 2010);
- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland;
- Pastmap mapping database;
- Ordnance Survey maps;
- Digital sources of mapping and aerial photography; and,
- Site visit including a site walk-over and photographic survey, carried out in September 2018.

1.6 The key objectives of the appraisal are to:

- identify landscape features and resources that may be affected by the development;
- identify key viewpoints and viewers likely to be affected by the development;
- identify the levels of effects on the landscape and visual amenity;
- identify measures to mitigate these impacts; and,
- establish capacity and the general principles of development.

1.7 The approach taken in this appraisal reflects the needs to identify and understand the following:

- The character of the landscape and its ability to accommodate change;
- The visual relationship between the proposed site and its setting during construction and following completion; and,
- Inherent opportunities and constraints across the site area.

1.8 Landscape and visual impacts may potentially result from the following:

- visibility of items associated with the development during the construction phase and following completion;
- loss of existing landscape features or the introduction of new features; and,
- the presence of permanent structures on completion of the development.

2 Site Location and Local Context

2.1 Figure 1 shows the location of the Application Site above the southern side of Loch Feochan, in the Lorn district of main land Argyll and approximately 6km south of Oban. The wider study area lies inland from the western coastline of Argyll and comprises a series of lochs, valleys and glens, surrounded by occasionally steeply rising craggy landform with distinctive ridges. A

strongly rolling landscape juxtaposed with craggy intrusions, knolly landforms and areas of rough pasture is frequently punctuated by broad terraces elevated above the shorelines. The lush glens, valleys and loch shorelines are generally well-treed in character and often merge with extensive coniferous plantations and woodlands which stretch across rising slopes. The wild qualities of the craggy slopes and ridges form a backdrop to the lower, more settled loch shores and glen and valley floors where dispersed clusters of dwellings and small settlements are nestled into well-wooded gentle slopes and terraces.

- 2.2 The context to the site demonstrates these broader characteristics and qualities. Loch Feochan is a sea loch stretching approximately 6km from Barnacarry Bay on the east to near the settlement of Dunach which overlooks the Firth of Lorne. The A816, a main arterial route through western Argyll, traverses south from Oban and runs very close to the southern shoreline of Loch Feochan before heading inland as it nears the mouth of the loch and enters the Firth of Lorn. Frequent areas of broadleaved woodland and scrub planting line both sides of the road corridor and merge with mature tree cover and coniferous plantations which extend down the mountain slopes and form a highly scenic backdrop to the loch. The loch receives two rivers; the River Euchar empties into the western part of the loch at Kilniver further west of the Application Site whilst the River Nell enters the loch at its head in the east, near to the junction of the A816 and the minor road to Barran and Kilmore.
- 2.3 The shoreline and lower slopes surrounding the loch are well-settled with a number of small clusters of built form dispersed along the A816 corridor and nestled into the lower terraces and backdropped by mature woodland. The head of the loch and the southern shoreline are relatively well-developed with relatively high number of clusters comprising between 2 and 5 dwellings. 2 distinct clusters are located within the local context to the west and north-east of the Proposed Site and another small, loose cluster including Balinoe Cottage and Balinoe Farmhouse is located further along east along the A816 corridor, close to the head of the loch. Further west, 3 dwellings and the Knipach Hotel form a cluster and add to the dispersed rural pattern along the southern shoreline. In contrast the northern side to the loch is less inhabited with a small cluster of 3 dwellings located on the lower well-wooded slopes of Carn Breagach and a linear row of dwellings located along Ardentallen Bay to the north-west of the site.
- 2.4 The proposed site is located towards the eastern end of the loch, and forms part of a plateau of semi-improved grassland, located on an elevated terrace above two separate clusters of dwellings. A well-established coniferous plantation provides the immediate backdrop to the

south and rises further up the slopes of An Creachan. Extensive mature tree cover which provides the backdrop to a cluster located adjacent to the road corridor and extends up the slopes and wraps around the site's northern boundary. A handful of self-generating trees are dispersed across the area of pasture however most tree cover is located along the boundaries to the extended landholding. Pasture extends beyond the western boundary to the site which is demarcated by a post and wire fence whilst to the east the area of semi-improved grassland merges with the grounds to a cluster comprising 2 dwellings and a farm track which provides access to the coniferous plantation and a small yard associated with the commercial workings of the plantation.

3 Landscape Designations

- 3.1 The high visibility of the rugged mountainous area on both sides of Loch Feochan and the extensive amount of tree cover across the craggy landform make a strong contribution to the richly scenic composition of this part of the western mainland of Argyll. With the presence of the Firth of Lorn and distant views to the outline of the Isle of Mull to the west of this area, the site and wider setting is designated as an Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ).
- 3.2 **Policy SG LDP ENV 10** – 'Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality' states that *"development in, or adjacent to, an Area of Panoramic Quality will be resisted where its scale, location or design will have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape."* In a similar vein criteria (G) for development within Policy LP 'CST – 2 Coastal Development on the Undeveloped Coast' requires that the *"scale of the proposed development respects the landscape character and amenity of the surrounding area"*. Policy LP ENV 19 'Development Setting, Layout and Design', states that *"the design of developments and structures shall be compatible with the surroundings. Particular attention shall be made to massing, form and design details within sensitive locations such as National Scenic Areas, Areas of Panoramic QualitySensitive Countryside, Conservation Areas..... Within such locations, the quality of design will require to be higher than in other less sensitive locations."*
- 3.3 The backdrop to the extended landholding comprises a rugged mountain skyline created by the summits of An Creachan and Cnoc Tarsuinn. The steep craggy slopes are covered by a blanket of coniferous plantations which extend down towards the shoreline of Loch Feochan. Occasionally, the hilly and knolly landform on the lower slopes give way to broad terraces. The site is located on one of these terraces and essentially forms a plateau of land marginally

elevated above two small clusters of built form and the shoreline. Dense areas of mature garden features and deciduous woodlands surrounding these clusters merge with the coniferous plantations on the lower slopes. Within this context, it is considered that small-scale sensitively designed built forms nestled into the existing fabric of the landscape and encompassed by a mature woodland setting will have a negligible impact on the expansive scale and wildland qualities of the wider panoramic context of lochs, glens, mountains and sea.

- 3.4 The proposed site benefits from a tight visual envelope and whilst it is acknowledged that there are a few listed buildings and a Scheduled Monument located opposite the site above the northern shoreline, and dispersed across the wider study area, through a combination of the strongly rolling craggy landform and extensive mature vegetation structure, the settings to these built heritage features will barely be affected.

Landscape Capacity

- 3.5 Rural opportunity Areas (ROAs) are identified in the LDP as areas having capacity for development. Whilst an area of land located immediately to the west of the site is located as a Rural Opportunity Area, the site itself is not allocated. The identification of ROAs within National Scenic Areas (NSAs) and Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQ), where the study area is located, have been guided by the Lorn and Inner Isles Landscape Capacity Study. This study forms one in a series of documents produced by Gillespies in 2009 and 2010 and covers the entire Argyll and Bute administrative area. As identified in the Capacity Study for the Lorn region, the Proposed Site and immediate context to the west and east forms site 'LN56 Balinoe', and the assessment is located on page 98 of the document. This site forms one of 81 sites identified within the Study Area for the Lorn and Inner Isles. (Refer to the Site Reference Map on page 6 of the Lorn and Inner Isles Landscape Capacity Study)
- 3.6 In accordance with the methodology of the study, the assessment of each site has been graphically illustrated followed by a brief written appraisal. The figure on Page 98 of the capacity study identifies "*Areas with potential to accommodate development, subject to criteria, without damaging the landscape character of the area*" (coloured orange); "*Areas where development is generally unacceptable and would have an adverse impact upon the landscape character of the area*" (coloured red); and, "*Key viewpoints*" (coloured blue). The Proposed Site is assessed to be located in an area where development is generally

unacceptable.

3.7 On page 98, the findings of the landscape capacity for LN56 are detailed as follows:

“Areas with potential to absorb development (Orange Areas)

- *There is scope to develop at Balinoe as this could be accommodated by the existing landscape structure of trees.*
- *There is a pocket of enclosed flat land alongside the A816 which could accommodate development.”*

“Areas not recommended for development (Red Areas)

- *Generally, the rising slopes south of the A816 should not be developed as this would become too visible within the wider landscape and could change the character of the area. Development along the roadside in most places would also require extensive earthworks as it is very steeply sloping.”*

3.8 It is considered the reason for areas not recommended for development within site LN56 are broad. Whilst it is acknowledged that the capacity study covered a significantly large area of land and therefore the findings have been prepared on a broad-brush assessment of the site and its context. The topography across site LN56 is highly complex and whilst parts of LN56 are visible within the wider landscape, the Proposed Site is not due to a combination of the surrounding knolly landform, mature garden features and extensive mature tree cover including the coniferous plantation which continues to rise up the slopes of An Creachan providing a soft backdrop. In addition, due to the relatively flat nature of the plateau of land where the site is located and the use of the existing drive to partly provide access, extensive earthworks will not be required to facilitate the development.

3.9 The following appraisal will demonstrate illustrate that the proposed 2no. dwelling development compares favourably when assessed against specific criteria relating to landscape policy, and guidance contained within environmental, conservation and design policies within the Balinoe area. The forthcoming appraisal will also illustrate that due to the specific qualities and characteristics inherent across the site and immediate context, that the site does indeed have landscape capacity for development and should be designated as an *“area with potential to absorb development”*, where the proposals would be seen to be in keeping with the character of the wider settlement pattern and the siting, scale and detailing to reflect the vernacular and traditional style of built form within the area. This is advocated within the Argyll and Bute Sustainable Design Guidance 1 (dated 2006) and detailed in the Argyll and Firth of Clyde Landscape Character Assessment published by SNH (Generic Guidelines for Built Development pages 48 and 49).

4 Potential for a Small-Scale Development

- 4.1 In order to appraise impacts on the landscape resource, landscape character and visual amenity, this section describes the indicative proposals and provides a broad description of the key components that will comprise the proposed development.
- 4.2 It is proposed to implement 2 no. single storey dwellings which will be orientated on a broad north-south axis to take advantage of the views out across Loch Feochan. The south-western corner of the wider land holding comprises a relatively complex, steep and hilly landform and as such it is proposed to step the new dwellings away from this area within a relatively flat plateau of grassland where ground modelling and earthworks will be kept to a minimum. The built forms will be set within moderate size garden grounds which will be enhanced by 'native' species planting along the eastern and western boundaries. The southern boundary to both curtilages will be planted with a native woodland edge mix to provide a more human interface with the dense coniferous plantation which rises up the slopes beyond the site and provides a soft backdrop. These features will form the primary framework for the new garden grounds with the potential for a more ornamental tree and shrub mix to form a secondary layer of planting which will add colour and texture. Over time this enhanced framework will create a more secluded environment for the residents of the new dwellings.
- 4.3 An access drive will extend from the existing access serving Dalmara and Cala-na-Sithe and run in close proximity to the northern boundary to Cala-na-Sithe. The drive will extend to the frontages of both dwellings and it is proposed to finish the surface using crushed aggregate and soil, in keeping with the finished surface of the existing access, and kerbs laid flush with adjacent grass areas to create a less urban character. Lengths of hedgerow and 'native' specimen trees along the access will also assist with the assimilation into the landscape and extend further east to form the northern boundary to both curtilages.
- 4.4 The scale, form, massing and detailing of the new dwellings will reflect the vernacular style of architecture within the wider loch area and a limited palette of high quality hard landscape materials will complement the rural setting. This sensitive approach to use characteristic and sympathetic building materials, the introduction of 'native' species to enhance the primary framework, and use of the existing landform to aid in reducing inter-visibility of the new dwellings from the highly scenic setting will ensure that this proposed development will

successfully integrate into the landscape.

5 Landscape Impacts

Impacts on Landscape Resource

- 5.1 As a result of the implementation of 2 single storey dwellings and associated garden curtilages and access drive on the Proposed Site, there will be a limited loss of semi-improved grassland. It is acknowledged that the site would have some ecological value however, it is encompassed by extensive areas of tree cover including plantations, broadleaved woodlands and swathes of grassland in addition to more ornamental grounds to the clusters of dwellings spread out along the south-side of the loch which support a vast number of habitat species and have high natural heritage importance. The loss of this extremely small portion of grassland will have a very minor impact on the physical structure of the landscape where an abundance of improved and semi-improved grassland frames the immediate context to the east and west and the wider context.
- 5.2 Existing mature tree cover lies outwith the site boundary and as such no tree cover will be lost through development. Rather, the boundaries to the site will be enhanced with a site-wide planting strategy which will form the framework to the new garden curtilages. In the longer term these will form new features around the site creating a new positive element and more secluded character to this parcel of land whilst potentially allowing new habitat corridors to be created.
- 5.3 Whilst there will be a period of adjustment and change, the proposals will have a very low impact on the landscape resource and in the longer term, the new garden grounds will be seen to not only complement and augment the existing features in the area but the quality of this landscape resource will be maintained and ultimately benefit the wider setting in the long term.
- 5.4 The sensitivity to change is assessed to be *Low* due to the limited value of the grassland. It is judged that the Magnitude of effect is *Negligible* following the construction phase and in the medium to long term. The effect is **Minor** and **Neutral** during and following the construction phase. The nature of effect on the landscape resource in the medium to long term is assessed to be **Beneficial**.

Impacts on Landscape Character

- 5.5 Following development, there will be a limited impact to the local landscape character of the Proposed Site changing from an area of grassland to a high quality development comprising 2 no. dwellings with associated driveways and set within an enhanced woodland setting.
- 5.6 In terms of landscape character, the Proposed Site falls within the Craggy Uplands Landscape Character Type (LCT), as highlighted within the Firth of Clyde Landscape Character Assessment. The Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study Report provides an update of the landscape character contained in the Firth of Clyde Landscape Assessment which was written over two decades ago. This updated assessment highlights that the Craggy Upland LCT extends over large areas of Argyll and Bute including stretches of coastline, inland lochs and glens and upland plateaux. Due to the variety of character and scale of this landscape, the Capacity study divides this LCT into more appropriate sub-types. Whilst the landscape across the study area bears characteristics of the wider Craggy Uplands, due to its location stretching from the coastline and surrounding a sea loch, the landscape across the study area is classified as falling within the Craggy Coast and Islands landscape character sub-type.
- 5.7 As such, the proposed site and wider context surrounding Loch Feochan possess many key attributes and features of this sub-type. Although more inland than the majority of the Craggy Coast and Islands and therefore possessing a less distinct seascape context, the site and context comprise a small scale, diverse topography which is well-settled and frequented. The coastal edge to Loch Feochan is rocky and indented and the knolly landform rising from the shoreline adds to the small scale. This is further accentuated by the small enclosed pastures, settlement, and vegetation cover. Across the sub-type and within the context to the site, there is a rich pattern of vegetation including extensive broadleaved woodlands, mixed policy woodlands and parkland, as well as pockets of wetland and scrub, across the head of Loch Feochan and partly along the southern shoreline. Extensive areas of coniferous plantation provide a backdrop to the landscape surrounding Loch Feochan and rise steeply to form craggy ridgelines which provide a backdrop of higher ground to views from the sea.
- 5.8 All of these characteristics are common to the Craggy Coast and Islands landscape character sub-type and whilst the area retains a relative sense of wild qualities, Loch Feochan is well-settled, with scattered clusters of dwellings and small villages in sheltered areas on the lower

slopes of the craggy landscape is a key feature. This is illustrated in **Figure 1 Landscape and Planning Policy Context** where the small settlements of Kilmore, Kilbride, Ardentallen and Kilninver are nestled into the lower slopes of the coastal pastoral hills surrounding the loch. Dispersed clusters of between 2-5 dwellings are located on the flat terraces and lower slopes near to the shoreline, often enclosed by woodland cover and the surrounding knolly and rising craggy landform. Most clusters of built form are established near the head of Loch Feochan and along the southern side of the loch, dispersed at relatively regular intervals along the A816 corridor. The northern side of the loch is less inhabited with a small loose cluster nestled into the wooded slopes of Carn Breagach and a linear row of dwellings orientated out onto Ardentallen Bay towards Ardentallen Point in the western part of the loch.

- 5.9 These positive features have been drawn into the careful site selection and planning of the proposed development where the new dwellings would be effectively absorbed by an enhanced landscape framework set back into the southern fringes of the site and framed by the knolly landform and mature wooded features to the north and coniferous woodland backdrop to the south. This approach, where the new dwellings would form a loose cluster above the established built forms near to the A816 corridor and would be effectively nestled into the wooded rising slopes, will ensure that the proposals are seen to be consistent with the prevailing settlement pattern across this part of the craggy coast landscape.
- 5.10 Overall, it is considered that the proposals will be consistent with the characteristics of the wider settlement pattern along the shores of Loch Feochan and the small-scale, single storey built forms will be effectively integrated into the surrounding diverse landscape and utilising the irregular landform and rocky outcrops to shelter and screen the proposed development. With a low key approach to the design of the hard and soft landscape proposals which will include new planting and a more human scale to the edge of the coniferous plantation and with a traditional vernacular architectural style to the built forms, it is assessed that over time, the proposals will have a positive effect.
- 5.11 The sensitivity to change is assessed to be *Medium-High* taking into account the value of the landscape and its susceptibility to change. It is judged that the magnitude of effect is **Low** and the impact on landscape character is **Moderate-Minor to Moderate** and **Neutral** during and following the construction phase. In the medium to long term, and once the planting strategy has established, the impact on landscape character is assessed to be **Minor** and **Beneficial**.

6 Visual Impacts

- 6.1 In assessing the visual impact of the proposed development on the landscape, full consideration has been given to all viewpoints, their location and distance from the site, the quality of each view and the impact that the small-scale development will have on its setting. The visual assessment is based upon a desk top study and a site visit with a selection of photographic viewpoints illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. The locations of these viewpoints are presented on the inset on each figure.
- 6.2 The coniferous plantations and broadleaved woodlands which extend down the craggy slopes and merge with mature garden features and road-side planting along both sides of Loch Feochan combine with the irregular and occasionally steep knolly landform to create an extremely tight visual envelope. This is illustrated in Viewpoint 1 as the A816 approaches the head of Loch Feochan and where intervening areas of vegetation combine with the prevailing landform to restrict more distant views from the east. From a more open part of the A816 corridor, views are available across the head of the loch towards the proposed site, however, due to the irregular and knolly landform combined with mature garden features and woodland cover, the site is not visible. Similarly, from the west, a combination of distance, landform and tree cover restrict views, (Viewpoint 6).
- 6.3 Visibility towards the site is further restricted by the subtle twists and turns of the A816 corridor which follows the mostly rocky loch-edge and where views are available they are generally directed along or across the loch or towards built form located adjacent to the road corridor (illustrated in Viewpoint 5). As illustrated in Viewpoint 5, for a short section of the east bound A816 in the vicinity of the Knipach Hotel grounds, transient views towards the open northern fringes of the wider landholding are available. This has been considered within the site-planning exercise and to mitigate these visual impacts it is proposed to set back the location of the new dwellings into the southern part of the site and against the foil of the wooded southern boundary.
- 6.4 Viewpoint 3 illustrates how even from close proximity, the site is extremely discreet where the irregular landform and knolly outcrops combine with mature wooded features to screen views. Whilst the very tops of the coniferous plantation defining the southern boundary are visible above this intervening mature vegetation, by introducing single storey built forms, the existing skyline will be protected and the new dwellings will effectively be hidden from this view.

- 6.5 Similarly, from the local view at the entrance to the access drive to Dalmara and Cala-na-Sithe on the A816, views towards the site are wholly contained by road-side planting, mature woodland features across the extended grounds to the dwellings combined with the locally complex landform, (Viewpoint 4).
- 6.6 With the careful siting of the new dwellings towards the rear of the site and implementation of the proposed planting strategy, views will be further filtered and the setting will become more enclosed.
- 6.7 The representative viewpoints (Figures 2 and 3) have demonstrated that visibility towards the Proposed Site is extremely limited. Potentially, glimpsed middle distant views may be available towards the new dwellings from the head of the loch, the northern side and indeed from the loch itself. Filtered views towards parts of the dwellings may also be available from the curtilages of nearby dwellings, including Dalmara and Cala-na-Sithe. However, once planting proposals for the new garden areas are implemented and begin to establish, any potential views towards the site will become further filtered. In the medium to long term, as the gardens mature, the sense of structure within the area will be enhanced and extended into the site creating a more managed character to this discreet area of improved grassland.
- 6.8 To summarise, views towards the proposed site are mostly restricted or contained through a combination of the complex, irregular topography, knolly outcrops and extensive mature vegetation cover. Where glimpsed views towards the new built forms may be available, potentially travelling west bound along the A816 and from the cluster of dwellings on the wooded slopes of Carn Breagach above the northern shores of the loch, as well as from water-based receptors on the loch itself, it is considered that these will be in keeping with the prevailing settlement pattern where filtered and glimpses views towards built forms nestled into the lower slopes with higher slopes and surrounding tree cover providing a soft backdrop are wholly characteristic of the area. With the retention of the existing tree structure and its enhancement through the implementation of a site-wide planting strategy, it is considered that the visual amenity of this part of the landscape surrounding Loch Feochan will be improved and become further secluded.
- 6.9 The sensitivity of visual receptors is *High*. It is judged that the magnitude of effect is **Negligible**. Impacts on visual amenity are assessed to be **Negligible** and the nature of

change **Neutral** during and following construction. In the medium to long term, once the planting strategy begins to establish, the impact is assessed to remain **Negligible** and the nature of change **Slight Beneficial**.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Proposed Site offers scope for a fully integrated small-scale residential development comprising two new dwellings and associated garden grounds and access drive to assimilate into the landscape without any adverse impacts upon the landscape and visual amenity of the area.
- 7.2 The proposed site and its context is well defined by rising landform and prolific vegetation with a coniferous plantation providing a soft backdrop and mature garden and woodland features combining with the knolly landform to the north of the site effectively screening all but a handful of views. As part of the site-wide planting strategy, it is proposed to strengthen the existing tree cover on the perimeter of the site with 'native' planting where species will be limited to the existing species found within the immediate context. This will aid in enhancing the secluded character of the site and in the medium to long term, as this component of the proposals establishes and matures, it will contribute to the area's nature conservation value and the quality of the local landscape resource.
- 7.3 Careful consideration has been given to the siting, massing, scale and form of the new dwellings to ensure that any potential visual impacts are minimised. This has included the height, architectural style and detailing of the built forms as well as a sensitive choice to materials and the hard and soft landscape palette. In addition, it is proposed to set the new dwellings back against the soft woodland foil along the southern boundary and away from the more visually sensitive northern fringes of the wider land in ownership. This considered approach to the site planning will ensure that the new dwellings will effectively nestle into the existing landscape with minimal mitigation required and where visible in glimpsed, transient views, the new dwellings would be seen to be wholly consistent with the dispersed settlement pattern across the wider loch area.
- 7.4 This proposals have high regard to the preservation of the assets of this area inland from the western coastline of Argyll and by sensitive planning of the site, which itself has been carefully selected, it is considered that the proposals will be seen to visually integrate into the woodland

setting and be sensitive to the locality in terms of design, scale and the use of local materials and detailing. This will ensure that the proposals are not intrusive within this settled coastal loch landscape.

- 7.5 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal has demonstrated that the Proposed Site comprises a visually discreet part of the extended landholding, which forms part of the site LN56 highlighted in the Lorn and Inner Isles Landscape Capacity Study, and does have the landscape capacity to absorb a small-scale development without adverse impacts upon landscape and visual effects. As such the Proposed Site should be classed as a Rural Opportunity Area and be developed in line with Policy LDP DM 1.
- 7.6 Ultimately this sensitively planned development will be seen to be wholly consistent with the established rural settlement pattern and will not have a detrimental impact on the integrity and quality of the APQ designation. Therefore, in landscape and visual terms, the proposals are assessed to be wholly in line with current best practice guidance and environmental policies contained within the Argyll and Bute adopted Local Plan, including acceptable in terms of Policy SG LDP ENV 13.

APPENDIX 1 METHODOLOGY

- 1.1 This appraisal has been undertaken in line with current guidance contained in the 'Guidelines for Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition' (GLVIA 3), published by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in association with the Landscape Institute; and, based on principles described in Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (2002), published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage).
- 1.2 The methodology comprised an initial desk top study of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and planning documents, a site survey in June 2018 to 'ground-truth' desk top findings, followed by an analysis of the data and assessment of potential landscape and visual impacts. Existing mapping, policy documents and other written, graphic and digital data relating to the study area was reviewed.
- 1.3 The aim of this appraisal is to identify and evaluate potential effects arising from a proposed development upon the application site and surrounding environment. The level of effect is assessed through a combination of two considerations – the sensitivity of the landscape character and visual amenity (views) of identified receptors; and the magnitude of effect upon the receptors that will result from the proposed development.
- 1.4 There is no requirement for a formal Environmental Assessment to support this Application. In line with current guidance contained in GLVIA 3 for non EIA Landscape and Visual Appraisals such as this, the terms 'significant' and 'not significant' have not been used. However, it is important to set out the grading of the scale of the potential impacts and based on the detailed information available regarding the nature of the proposed development, the scale, duration and permanence of the change and the size of the resource/area affected. The following criteria (adapted from GLVIA 3) is used.

Landscape Sensitivity and Magnitude of Effect

- 1.5 Sensitivity of the landscape depends both on its intrinsic quality and explicit value and, on its susceptibility to the type of change proposed. The criteria for landscape sensitivity to change are summarised as follows:

- **High:** An area of highly valued landscape with strong structure and positive character, which is considered vulnerable to small degrees of change;
- **Moderate:** An area with a well-defined landscape character with positive qualities which may however, have suffered some degradation or erosion. Sensitivity will be diminished and change more likely to be accommodated; and,
- **Low:** An area of generally poor landscape character with few positive and valued features. Change will be a positive contribution to the landscape.

1.6 The criteria for magnitude of effect on the landscape are summarised below.

Table 1: Criteria for Landscape Magnitude of Effect

Level	Definition of Magnitude
High	Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline landscape and/or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Post development character and composition of the baseline landscape resource will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline landscape and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Post development character and composition of the baseline landscape resource will be partially, but noticeably changed.
Low	Minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline landscape and/or introduction of elements that may not be characteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Post development character and composition of the baseline landscape resource will be noticeably changed but the underlying character of the baseline landscape will be similar to the pre-development character.
Negligible	Very minor loss of, or alteration to, key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline landscape. Change to the landscape character will barely, if at all, be distinguishable.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity and Magnitude of Effect

1.7 As with impacts on the character of the landscape, the impact on visual amenity is a function of the magnitude of effect and the sensitivity to change. Sensitivity refers to viewer sensitivity and depends upon the following:

- The length of viewing time e.g. a local resident with prolonged viewing opportunities will be more sensitive than a passer-by;
- Context of the view e.g. a viewer with an existing view of industrial structures will be less sensitive than a viewer with rural views; and,
- Distance of the viewpoint/receptor from the development and duration of effect.

1.8 The criteria for Visual Receptor sensitivity are summarised below:

- **High:** users of outdoor recreational facilities including strategic recreational footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, whose attention may be focused on the landscape; important landscape features with physical, cultural/historic attributes; views from principal settlements; visitors to beauty spots and picnic areas.
- **Medium:** Other footpaths, people travelling through or past the landscape on roads, train lines or other transport routes; views from passenger ferries and cruisers, views from minor settlements.
- **Low:** People engaged in outdoor sports or recreation whose attention may be focused on their work/activity rather than an appreciation of the wider landscape.
- **Negligible:** Views from heavy industrialised areas or where direct views of the development are severely restricted and/or distant.

1.9 The criteria for magnitude of visual effect are summarised in the table below:

Table 2: Criteria for Visual Magnitude of Effect

Level	Definition of Magnitude
High	Highly noticeable change, affecting most key characteristics and dominating the experience of the landscape. The introduction of incongruous development. A high proportion of the view is affected; change is dominant.
Medium	Noticeable, partial change to a proportion of the landscape affecting some key characteristics and the experience of the landscape. The introduction of some uncharacteristic elements. Some of the view is affected; change is conspicuous.
Low	Minor change affecting some characteristics and the experience of the landscape to an extent. The introduction of elements which are not uncharacteristic. Little of the view is affected but the change is apparent.
Negligible	Little perceptible change. No discernible effect upon the view; change is inconspicuous.

Level of Effect

1.10 The level of effect of any identified landscape or visual receptor has been assessed as Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. These categories have been determined by consideration of viewpoint/visual receptor or landscape sensitivity and predicted magnitude of effect.

Table 3: Correlation of Sensitivity and Magnitude of Effect

	Landscape and Visual Sensitivity			
Magnitude of Effect	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major moderate	Moderate	Moderate-minor
Medium	Major-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate-minor	Minor	Minor-None
Negligible	Moderate-minor	Minor	Minor-none	None

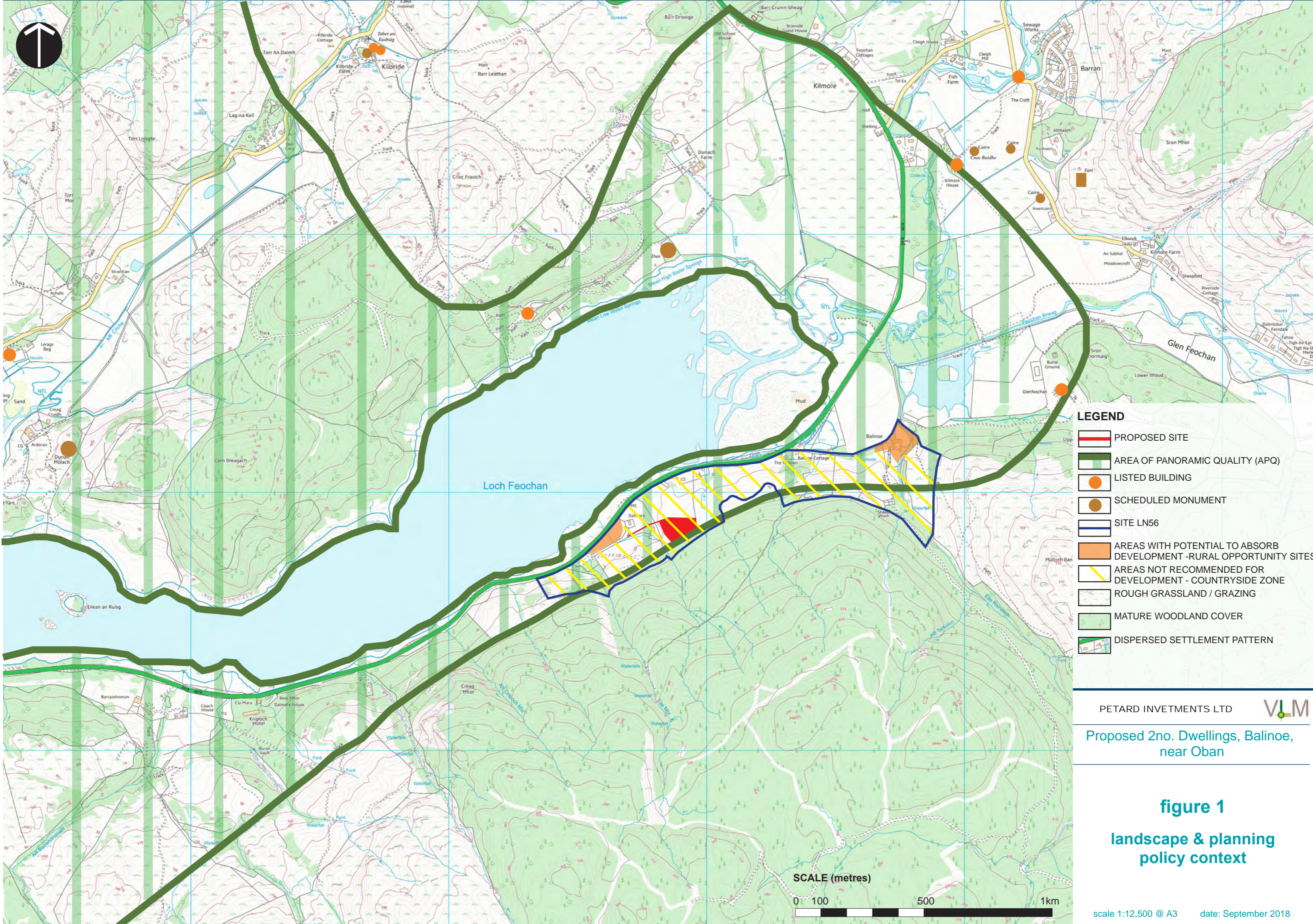
- 1.11 This matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool and the methodology and analysis of potential effects at any particular location must take account of professional judgement. Occasionally, analysis may not reflect the effects predicted by the grid; the table is used as a guide only.
- 1.12 The following tables provide a definition of the level of landscape and visual effects.

Table 4: Definition of Landscape and Visual Effects

Level	Definition of Magnitude
Major	The proposed development would entirely change the character of the landscape and the appearance of the view for a long time or permanently.
Moderate	The proposed development would introduce a noticeable difference to the landscape and within the view.
Minor	The proposed development would introduce a perceptible change to the receiving landscape characteristics and views.
None	The proposed development would introduce no discernible effect and may be difficult to differentiate from the surrounding landscape characteristics and from its surroundings within the view.

APPENDIX 2

FIGURES



LEGEND

- PROPOSED SITE
- AREA OF PANORAMIC QUALITY (APQ)
- LISTED BUILDING
- SCHEDULED MONUMENT
- SITE LN56
- AREAS WITH POTENTIAL TO ABSORB DEVELOPMENT - RURAL OPPORTUNITY SITES
- AREAS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR DEVELOPMENT - COUNTRYSIDE ZONE
- ROUGH GRASSLAND / GRAZING
- MATURE WOODLAND COVER
- DISPERSED SETTLEMENT PATTERN

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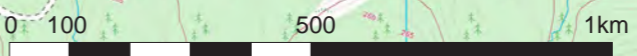


Proposed 2no. Dwellings, Balinoe, near Oban

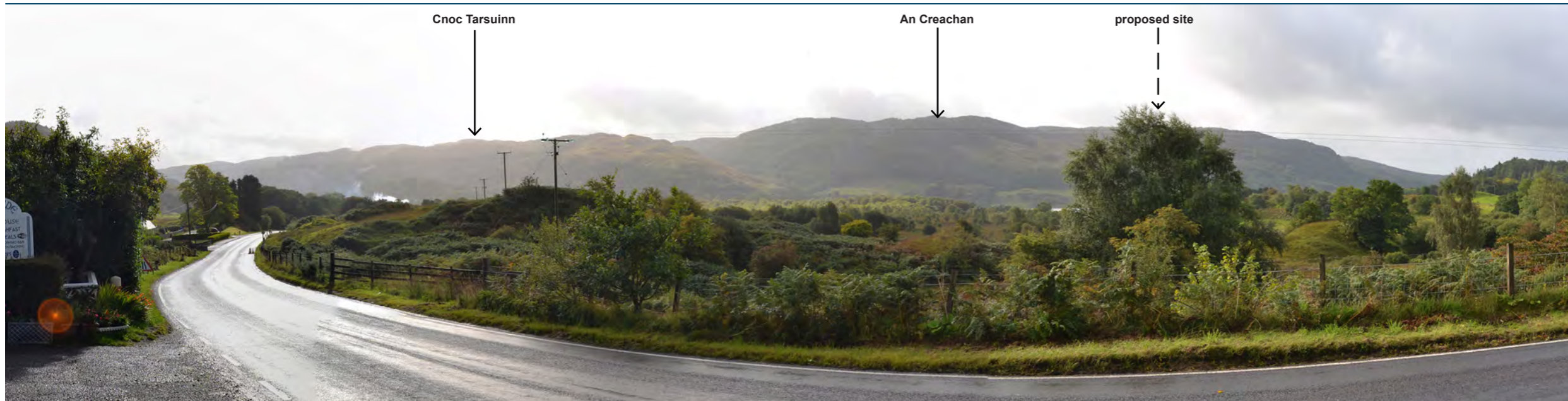
figure 1

landscape & planning policy context

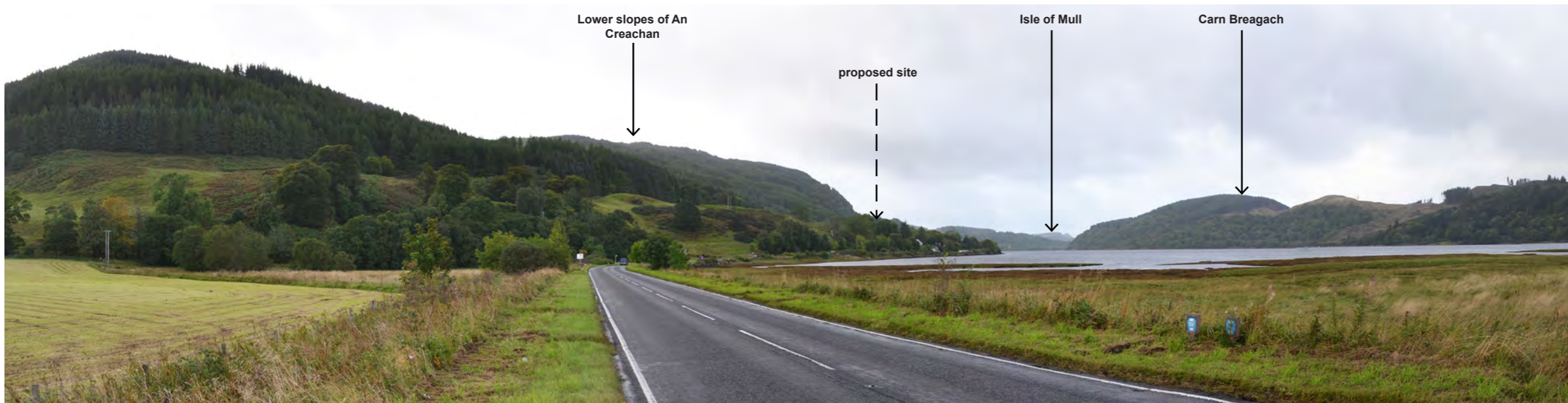
SCALE (metres)



scale 1:12,500 @ A3 date: September 2018



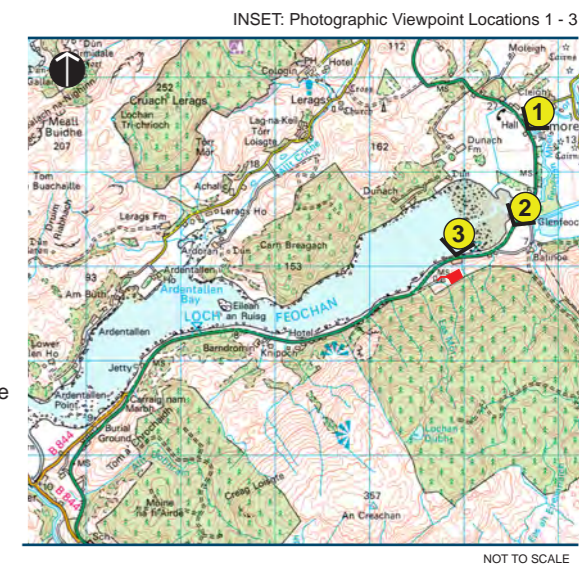
VIEWPOINT 1: View looking south-west across the head of Loch Feochan from the A816 corridor near to a small cluster of dwellings and Braeside Guest House. The forested mountain summits of Cnoc Tarsuinn and An Creachan form a rugged backdrop to the southern side of Loch Feochan. Due to a large amount of intervening vegetation the lower terraced slopes where the site is located adjacent to the shoreline of the loch are not visible.



VIEWPOINT 2: View looking south-west towards the Proposed Site from the A816 corridor as it runs around the head of Loch Feochan. The well-forested enclosing hills and mountain summits channel views along the loch with distant views towards the outline of the Isle of Mull. A large coniferous plantation extends down the lower slopes of An Creachan and merges with road-side planting and extensive mature garden features within the grounds of the cluster of dwellings located in close proximity to the site.



VIEWPOINT 3: Local view looking south-south-west across the well-vegetated and mature garden grounds to 3 no. large single dwellings which are stepped back from the A816 corridor. The very tops of the coniferous plantation which defines the southern boundary to the site are just about visible beyond the mature vegetation in the foreground. A combination of mature tree features and the hillocky local landform restrict views towards the site itself.



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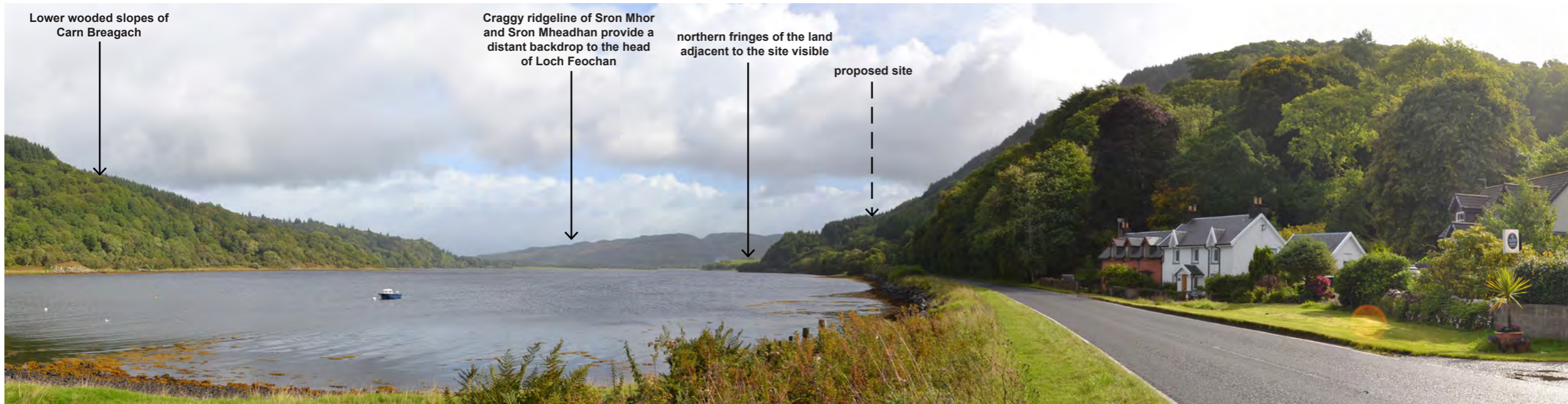
Proposed 2 No. Dwellings,
Balinoe, near Oban

figure 2
photographic
viewpoints 1 - 3

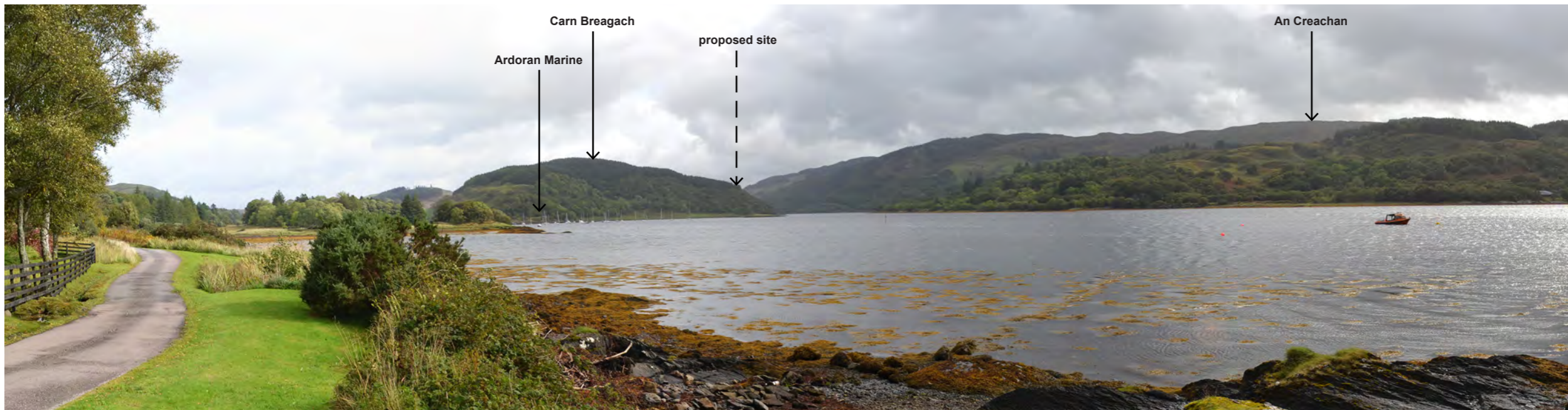
date: September 2018



VIEWPOINT 4: View looking east towards the Proposed Site from the access drive to the two single dwellings, Dalmara and Cala-na Sithe. The high, craggy hill of Sron Mheadhan which provides a backdrop to Kilmore and the lower reaches of Glen Feochan is visible along the road corridor in the distance. Due to a combination of road-side planting, mature garden features within the grounds to the two dwellings and woodland cover, the site is not visible.

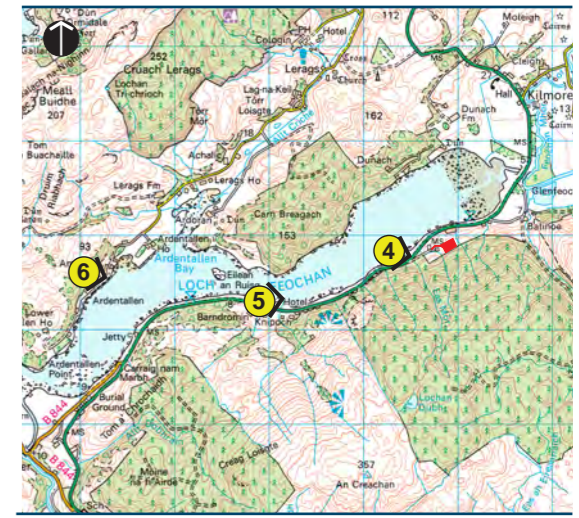


VIEWPOINT 5: View looking east towards the Proposed Site from the A816 corridor, opposite the entrance into the grounds of the Knipach Hotel. Formerly a large dwelling, the hotel sits back from the road corridor within a cluster of three other dwellings. Coniferous plantation extends down the lower slopes of An Creachan and merges with road-side planting and extensive mature garden features within the grounds of Knipach Hotel to screen the site which is stepped back from the visible northern fringes.



VIEWPOINT 6: View looking east across Loch Feochan towards the site from the minor road serving dwellings at Ardentalen Bay on the northern shoreline. The loch curves round the wooded slopes of Carn Breagach and wholly restricts views towards the site and the eastern end of the loch. Views may be possible from further south-west along this road however due to distance any built form will be barely if at all perceptible.

INSET: Photographic Viewpoint Locations 4 - 6



NOT TO SCALE

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Proposed 2 No. Dwelling Houses,
Balinoe, near Oban

figure 3
photographic
viewpoints 4 - 6

date: September 2018