

APPENDIX B

Area Capacity Evaluation – Pursuant to planning application 19/01232/PP – Erection of New Waste Water Treatment Works , New Access Road and installation on Storage Tanks at Existing Site.

(Note* only the New Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTW) and access Road are subject to this ACE. Other works are within the existing WwTW site and are not required to be subject to ACE evaluation as this is an existing site. In addition it will become less visible with the removal of plant and improved landscaping as set out in the report.)

A. Purpose and Requirement for the ACE

The proposed new Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTW) and access road is located within undulating topography within the 'Countryside Zone' as defined in the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015 wherein the provisions of policy LDP DM 1 would ordinarily only encourage 'small scale' development on the basis of an appropriate infill, rounding off, redevelopment and change of use of existing buildings. However, in exceptional cases, development in the open countryside may be supported on appropriate sites as an 'exceptional case', based on an overriding operational/locational need and underpinned by a supporting Area Capacity Evaluation (ACE).

In this instance it is considered that an exceptional case has been demonstrated in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Development Plan. This ACE assessment has been undertaken in accordance with supplementary guidance SG LDP ACE 1. The aim of the ACE process is simply to comprehensively and methodically assess the capacity of the landscape to successfully absorb the proposed development and consider whether significant harm to the landscape character would occur.

In this instance it is noted that the location of the development is also within an Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) which in officer's opinion increases the sensitivity of the receiving landscape and must be weighted into any planning judgement in considering whether the development is considered acceptable.

B. Area of Common Landscape Character / ACE Compartment

Having regard to SNH's 'Landscape Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde' (1996), the proposed development site is located within the LCT area 7 "Craggy Uplands". The landscape characteristics of this area are identified as:

- Upland moor with irregular, rather amorphous landform

- Rounded knolls, rock outcrops and numerous lochs in low lying hollows
- Open moorland, predominates, but extensive conifer plantations camouflage the landscape pattern in some areas
- Oak-birch woodland over lower slopes
- Stone walls enclose an irregular patchwork of pastures within glens on margins of moorland
- Isolated farmsteads and small villages in sheltered sites within glens
- Numerous archaeological remains, often concentrated on rounded knolls on lower slopes

The report also identifies the key landscape issues as;

- Historic irregular landscape patterns in valleys
- Pressures for development in some scenic coastal areas

Further specific landscape guidelines are provided. The advice considered to be of most relevance to the current proposals are:

Upland valleys and coastlines are the most scenic and sensitive parts of this landscape and any new development in these areas should be strictly controlled....

The ACE Compartment

The ACE Compartment is defined by the topography of the local area and the containment provided by the existing landscape features to the North, South and East of the proposed site. As set out below

North of the site – Undulating hills and valleys leading to higher hills and knolls contain the landscape compartment. No sensitive views of the proposals are available from this direction which is rough grazing and rolling knolls and valleys.

South of the site – From the B844 which runs to the south of the site the site is not visible. In the immediate vicinity of the site the land rises to from an elongated mound/knoll running east west between the road, residential properties and the site and access road. Only towards the village of Balvicar does the landscape open out to an area of flat land adjacent to a pond with the golf course on the coastal side of the road. A glimpse of the access road route is possible from a field access.

East of the site - undulating topography on the southern side of the road, together with planting and tree cover enclose and limit views towards the proposed WwTW site.

From the west views towards the site are far more open and define the appropriate landscape compartment against which to evaluate the proposals in respect of this ACE.

C. Key Environmental Features – Constraints & Opportunities

The SNH landscape character type assessment states that there are few isolated buildings on the Islands and hence scattered development would be out of character with the traditional settlement pattern. Buildings are likely to be prominent in the landscape setting. It is advised that any development should be “relatively small and of simple architectural style”. The important and sensitive coastal views should also be carefully conserved.

Within the landscape compartment itself there are four distinct key landscape features. These are:

1. The long rising plain from Balvicar, north of the B844 towards the site.
2. The undulating nature of the landscape as the Balvicar plain transitions into valleys to low undulating mounds and hilltops
3. A linear mound running parallel to the B844 in the immediate vicinity of the existing site westerly towards Balvicar. where it opens out into the flat plain referenced at (1) and (2)
4. Intervening hills and mounds to the east of the site limiting visibility from main vantage points (B844)

Development opportunities within the ACE compartment are therefore limited given the open, natural and exposed topography of the flat and rising plain from Balvicar towards the proposed site. Recent housing development adjacent to the B844 exemplifies the stark and dominating appearance that traditional building massing and colouring can have on the landscape and the new housing is somewhat striking and draws the eye when looking east over the plain/pond towards the site. A small hut used as an electricity substation has also been constructed along this section of the road looking towards the site, and therefore intermittent and quite dominant development and infrastructure is visible from the B844.

The proposals will primarily be subject to medium/long range views mainly when travelling east along the B844 from Balvicar, and in small section of the road as it turns west at Clachandubh Cottages towards Ellenabeich. The vast majority of people would potentially view or perceive any development within the landscape when travelling along the B844.

D. Visual / Landscape Impact

The proposed development comprises two main elements:

- (a) The construction of a new WwTW and associated buildings and plant as set out in the committee report and accompanying drawings.
- (b) The construction of an access road from the B844 to the site through the countryside zone.

The main report clarified in some detail the components of the application and Members will note that final details in respect of landscape re-contouring in the immediate vicinity of the new WwTW with excavated peat are subject to conditions.

However the siting of the proposals can still be properly evaluated having regard to the existing landscape characteristics and setting together with submitted landscaping proposals.

Although the overall compound and access route site area is large scale, the actual scale of the buildings and structures to be located within it, and which could be seen within the landscape from important views are small. The proposals are to construct the administrative building in a dark green to assimilate it into the landscape (this is agreed as an appropriate approach). All above ground plant and the access road are subject to conditions in respect to their colours and finishes. Given that this matter is under the control of the Planning Authority it is reasonably assumed for the purposes of this ACE that all of the above ground development will be suitably coloured to integrate into its landscape setting. Similarly the access track shall be finished in a manner to reflect its rural location.

The proposed development is sited upon an otherwise undeveloped area of countryside. The low plain around Balvicar which gently rises to the east is a significant and defining landscape feature in the area. The Plain transforms into a low valley and gently undulating knolls when looking east. Views of this key landscape component are however limited to the south and east by topography, and also low lying vegetation along the B844 which even in winter months contains and limits views towards the site in combination with topography. The principle views available from the road when travelling east towards Balvicar are therefore towards the Sound of Seil and these are the key feature when travelling east towards the site.

This situation changes when travelling from Balvicar in an easterly direction towards the site along the B844. The open plain and valley to the front and left is the dominant and important feature of this landscape. However as previously indicated, there are intermittent structures and houses which draw the eye and interrupt the otherwise open vista over the plain and large pond towards the direction of the site.

In officers opinion the scale and location of the proposals will successfully integrate into the landscape and will not cause significant impact to the essential character of the landscape compartment within which it will be set. The small scale of the actual visible structures and plant (which will be appropriately coloured by condition and also screened by landscaping), the undulating topography and the long distance nature of views (reducing further the perceived scale of above ground structures), in officers opinion renders the proposals acceptable. From main vantage points other built form will be more prominent and in particular a large white finished house which is located some 30m away from the road and into the landscape compartment. This particular feature draws the eye and would minimise any potential impact of the WwTW, which is of a much smaller scale, coloured to integrate into the landscape and more distant from main vantage points.

Officers note that an LVA has been submitted by the applicants in support of the application which has undertaken an evaluation of the potential visibility and landscape integration of the proposal. It is noted that this exercise, whilst not a full LVIA has been based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact

Assessment (GLVIA), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition 2013.

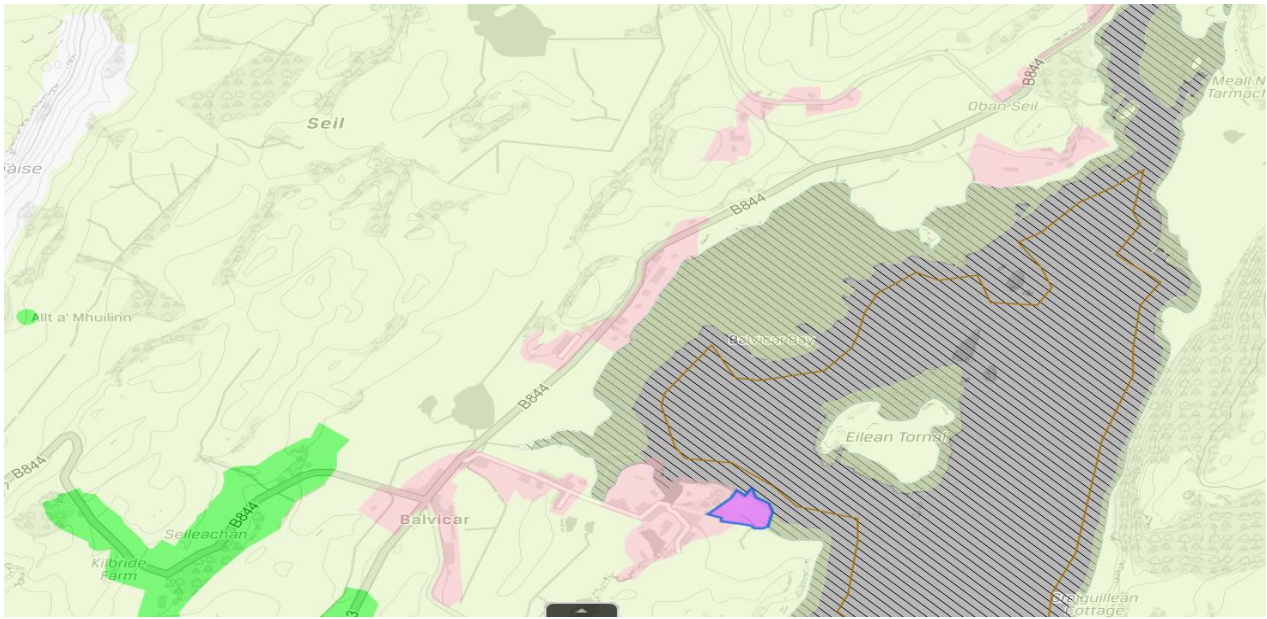
This document contains a number of technical diagrams and includes information of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and computer generated visualisations. Officers have examined this report and consider that this confirms their own evaluation that any views of the site will be extremely limited and that it will be able to successfully assimilate into the landscape without causing any significant or detrimental impact upon it. Officers would in particular refer members to Figure 10 of this report which indicates views of the site and buildings after screening has been undertaken. Officers can identify no reason not to accept this evaluation as it confirms the ACE conclusion that this proposal can successfully integrate into the landscape in accordance with SG LDP ACE 1 policy requirements.



ACE Compartment



Location of proposed development



Local Development Plan Context



Access Track looking towards existing WwTW



Looking west. Knoll on RHS valley and wetlands in forefront



B844 Travelling West elongated knoll on right between road and site



View of proposed development within ACE compartment, looking due east. back towards site in far distance



Close-up computer generated view of proposed development (minus fencing and screening)

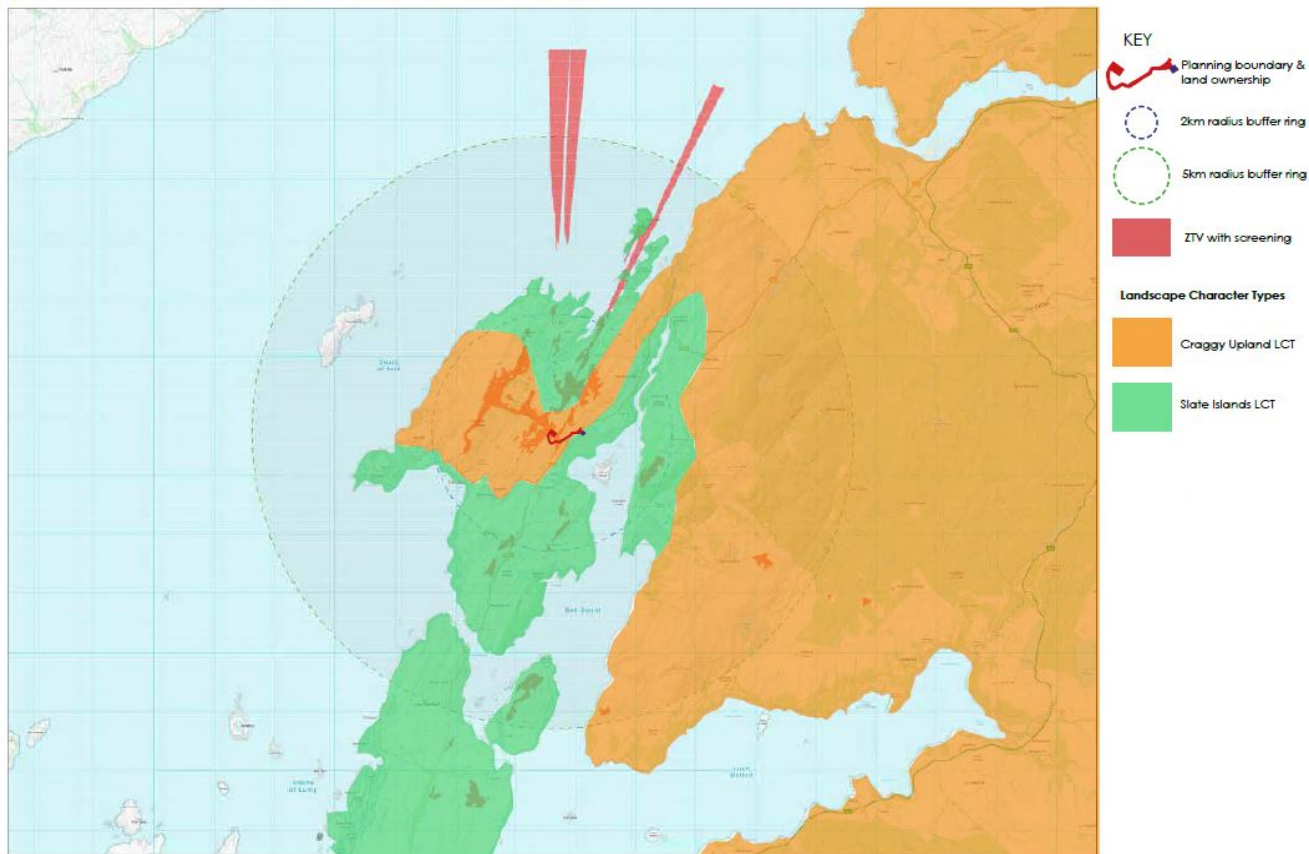


Figure 10. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA - CENTRAL ARGYLL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Applicants ZTV with Screening