

## **Clustering and Local Character**

### **Micro Context**

There are five buildings on the same side of the track as our proposed dwelling. The planning officer seems to disregard these buildings as relevant due to their agricultural nature, however built context does not differentiate between current and / or future usage - these buildings exist therefore they are relevant when considering the clustering of buildings at Ballochyle and their presence we feel fatally undermines the repeated assertion that the access track forms a definitive enclosure for development within this building cluster.

We find it very difficult to understand why the planning officer considers that the proposed dwelling would constitute “cramming of buildings close to the Ballochyle farm buildings” when the proposed dwelling is some 41 metres from the existing steading. The existing house to the north (Ballochyle Cottage 1) is located only 43m from the steading and this is not mentioned. (See Figure 1 overleaf). This fact it would seem undermines any claim that the position of the proposed dwelling would constitute “cramming”.

Also the “historical” status that the planning officer bequeaths on the Ballochyle Farm Steading belies the fact that the building is only 86 years old, not historically listed in any way nor of any unique or distinctive architectural character, steadings of this nature are commonplace and there are another two courtyard steading type buildings within less than 500m of the Ballochyle Steading. While we do not seek to diminish our client’s existing house or the sterling work they have done to restore it and preserve it, we feel it is unfair to place such a huge and unwarranted premium on this building and the preservation of its “setting”. As previously noted the proposed dwelling will be no closer to the steading than the existing cottage to the north and the proposed dwelling is arguably more harmonious with the steading in form, materiality and detail than Cottage 1 is.

### **Topographically context**

The proposed siting of the longhouse has been very carefully considered with the existing topography. This proposal has been designing with the aid of 3d topographical land modelling and computer building modelling to ensure that the proposal is harmonious with its topographical and arboreal context. In a rural location we feel that this is as important, if not more so than harmony with the existing built context. (See figure 2 overleaf)

The proposed dwelling has been conceived as a continuation of the ridge that runs west from the site and forms a topographical continuum that encloses and rounds off the Ballochyle cluster at the location of the proposed dwelling. This topography and existing arboreal features create a sheltered site and the placing of a dwelling at this location in turn creates a private amenity area between the dwelling and the river. We feel that this siting is perfectly logical and not only complements the topography but rounds off this cluster of buildings whilst creating a beautiful setting for a rural home. (See figure 3 overleaf)

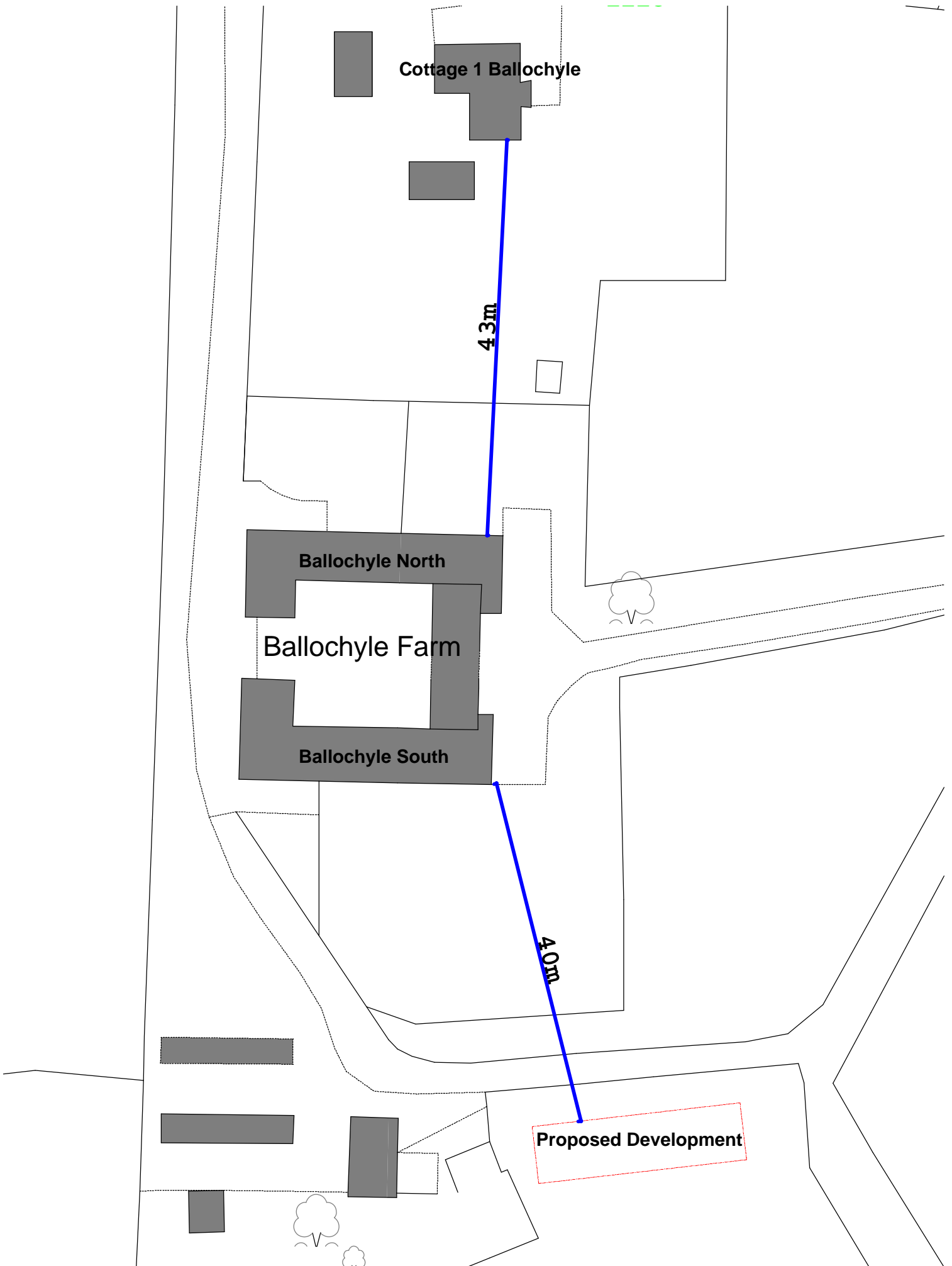


figure 1 - seperation

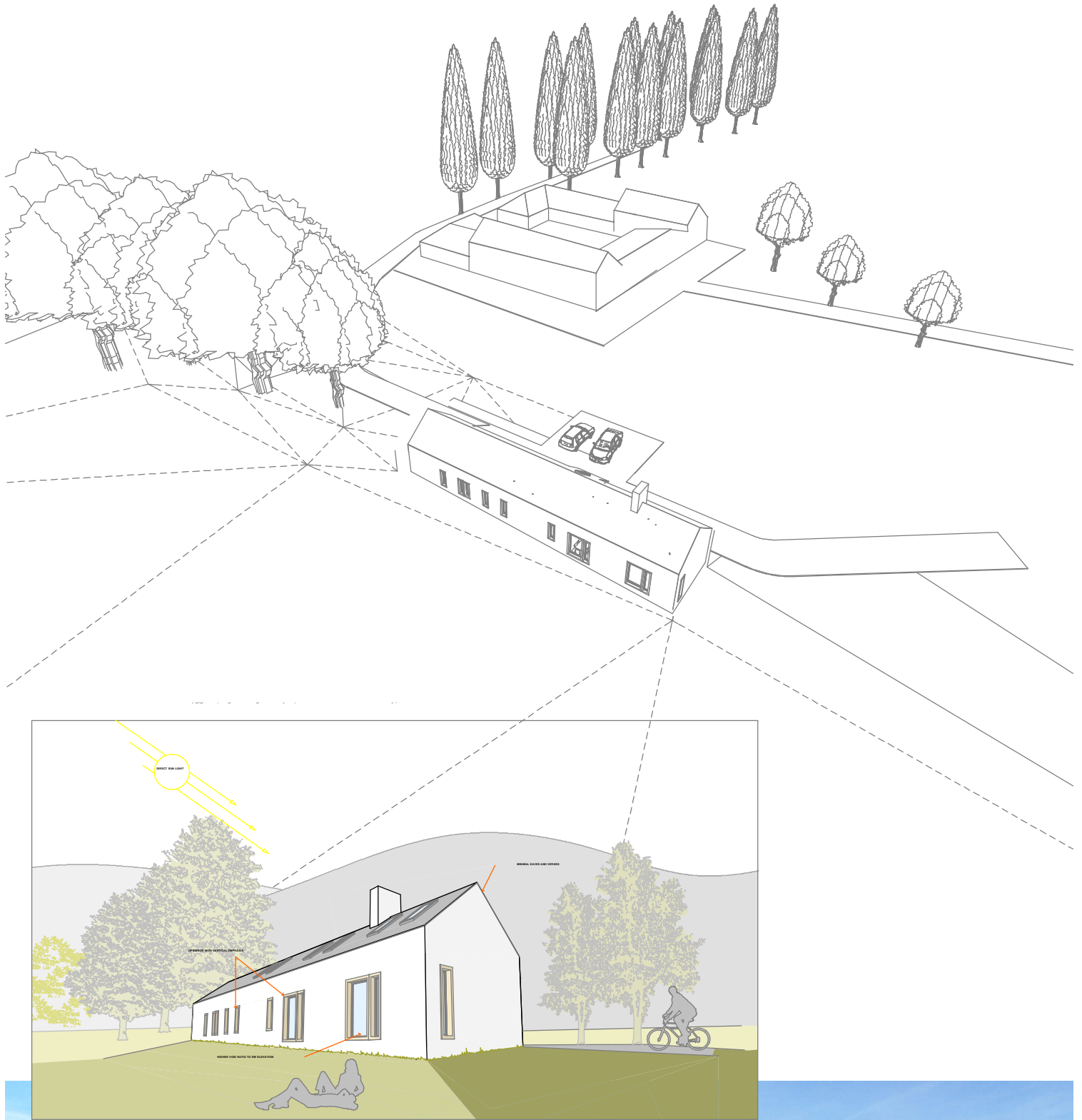


figure 2 - advanced information modelling





figure 3 - harmony with topography

## Conclusion

We are well aware that reason 1 cited for refusal is purely subjective and as such we cannot offer a definitive evidential back up to our assertions beyond what we have presented in the design report and the additional information shown in this report. However that is the nature of architecture and planning and we feel that the weight of evidence that we show supports the assertion that this building is consistent with Local Plan policy regarding housing in RoAs is compelling.

We feel that not only have we strived to propose a development of the highest design quality we have also expended a huge amount of effort gathering site information through surveys and site visits and spent a huge amount of time disseminating and developing this information.

We therefore find it very difficult to concede that the building that we are proposing has been designed to nothing short of an exemplar standard in the context of the Argyll and Bute design guide and that we have agonised over this proposal at an exhaustive level of detail and that the reasons for refusal do not correlate at all with our conclusions.

The planning officer's constant referral to "other suitable sites in the RoA" is in our opinion irrelevant. There is no indication that *any* of these other pieces of ground will ever be proposed for development of any nature. However our proposed development site is being discounted on the distant chance that someone might, sometime in the future, propose a development on these other unspecified sites. The only proposal that carries any weight whatsoever in this process is the proposal as put forward here. Planning determinations, we feel should not be based on the "possible" but the "actual" - and carefully considering the benefits that development can bring to an area.

As for setting a precedent - we do not agree that this application "undermines the character" of the RoA - quite the opposite. We have also established that the site is not at risk from flooding and that the under build suggested is primarily an architectural and topographical feature rather than merely a crude flood alleviation method. The distance of other dwellings to the Ballochyle Steading proves that "cramming" is not an issue, so a negative precedent regarding this aspect cannot be supported either.

In conclusion we maintain, as we always have, that our proposal will enhance the character of the RoA and will also greatly enrich the lives of those who dwell in it. We have hopefully established through our Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Design Plan and further design information that far from being a "difficult" or "unsuitable" site it is in fact a perfect site for a sustainable, rural family home.