

ACHANADRIANE

Local Review Reference: 10/0009/LRB



**Response to:
Landscape & Visual Impact Report
By Mark Steele Consultants
On behalf of James and Veronica Blair**

**Prepared by
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Benview Tayinloan TARBERT Argyll PA29 6XG**

September 2010

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14 September 2010

Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Argyll and Bute Council
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

Dear Sir

**Reference 10/0009/LRB, 08/00231/OUT
Mr & Mrs James Blair
Site for the erection of two dwelling houses
Land south of Achanadriane Farm, by Tayinloan**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a further representation regarding the additional submissions relating to this case review.

COMMENTS ON MARK STEELE CONSULTANTS' LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT REPORT

We believe that the report contains factually incorrect material, misleading information [both photographic and textual] and that it is erroneous in its conclusion.

Purpose / objectivity of report

- Argyll and Bute's Landscape Capacity Consultants prepared their report objectively, taking into account the benefits to all Argyll & Bute residents and visitors.
- Mr and Mrs Blair's agents have prepared their report from an instruction to find a case for reversing the decision made by Argyll and Bute Council, to the sole benefit of Mr and Mrs Blair. Due to this limiting brief, together with insufficient on-site survey work, the report has inevitably produced misleading information and has come to an erroneous conclusion.

Misleading Photographs

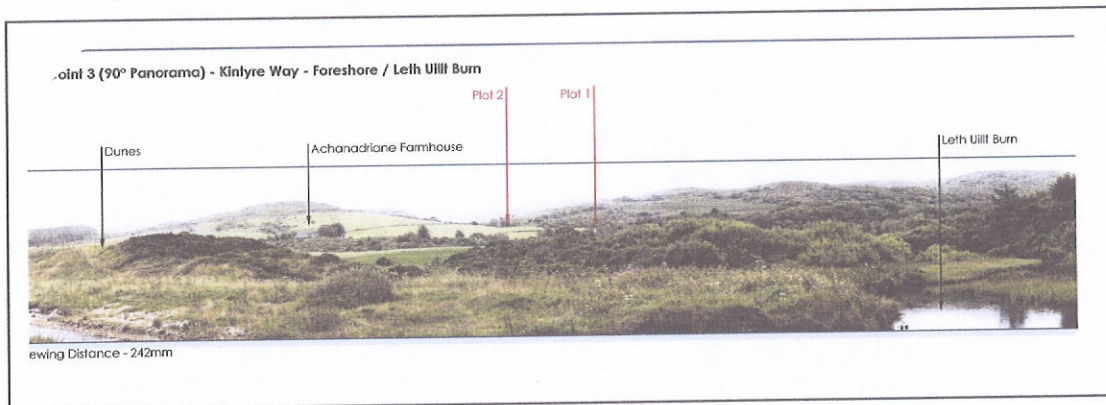
- The consultants' photographs understate the height of the landscape and create a distancing effect. As a result, the scale and visibility of Achanadriane farmhouse is greatly understated, and leads to the misconception that the two new developments proposed would be barely discernable on the hillside.

- This can be clearly demonstrated by the following two comparative photographs of the site as taken from the Leth Uillt estuary [one of the points on the Kintyre Way from which Achanadriane Farmhouse and the surrounding landscape is clearly visible]. The consultants' photograph [1] shows the farmhouse as barely visible and at a considerable distance from the Leth Uillt burn. Our photograph [2] is far more representative of what the human eye actually sees from this viewpoint.

Photograph 1

The Landscape Consultants' photograph

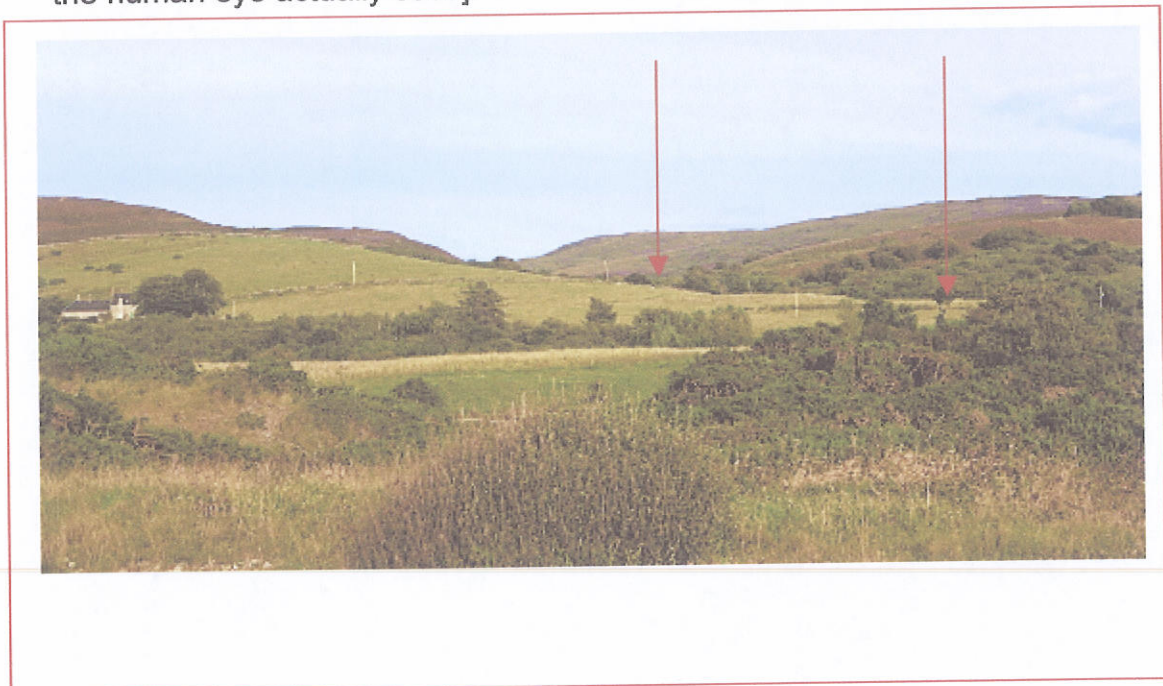
[The farmhouse is barely visible because of the distancing effect, and the red arrows indicating plots 1 and 2 are wrongly placed, giving the impression that there is more of a background of trees/screening for the two plots than actually exists.



Photograph 2

Our photograph

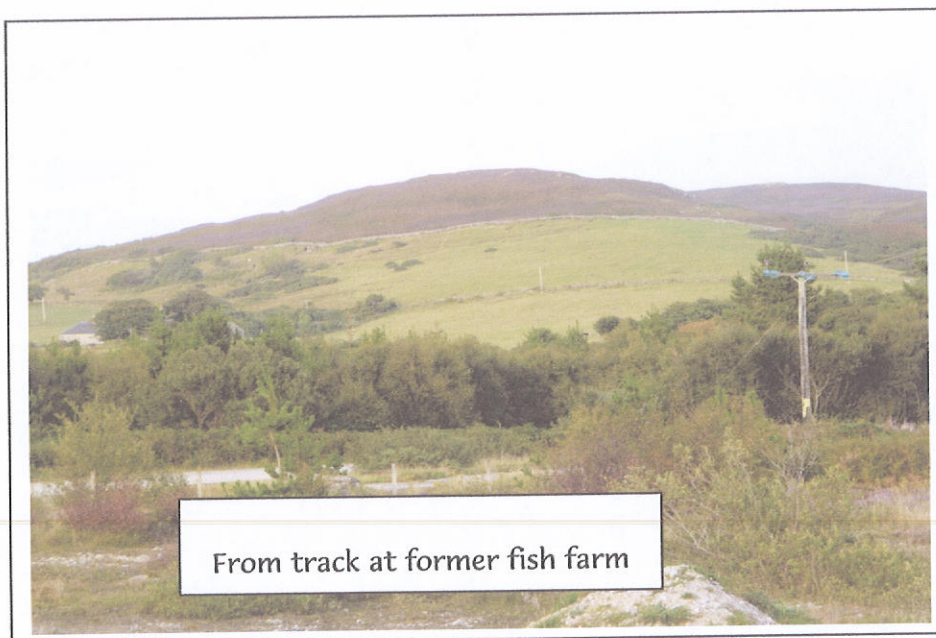
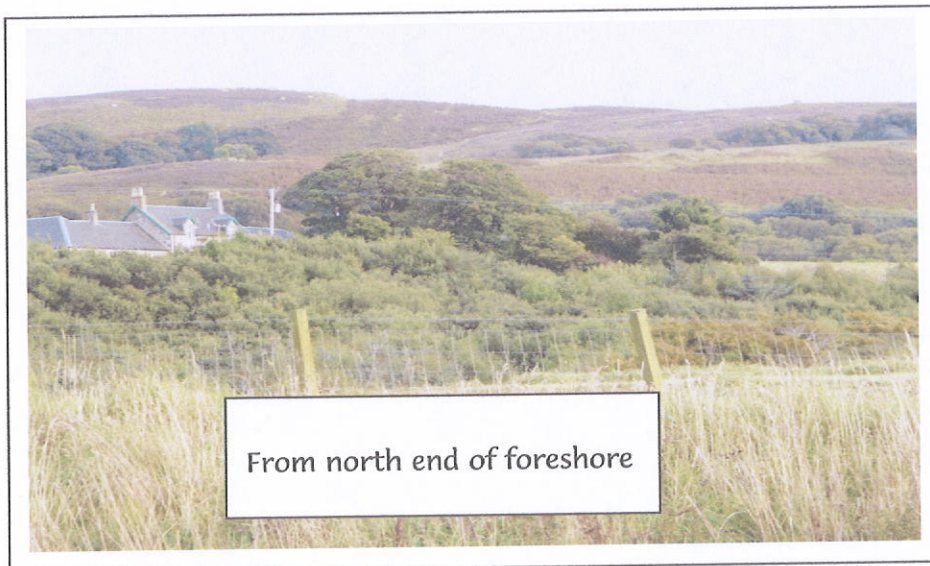
The proposed plots correctly indicated and farmhouse clearly visible [what the human eye actually sees].

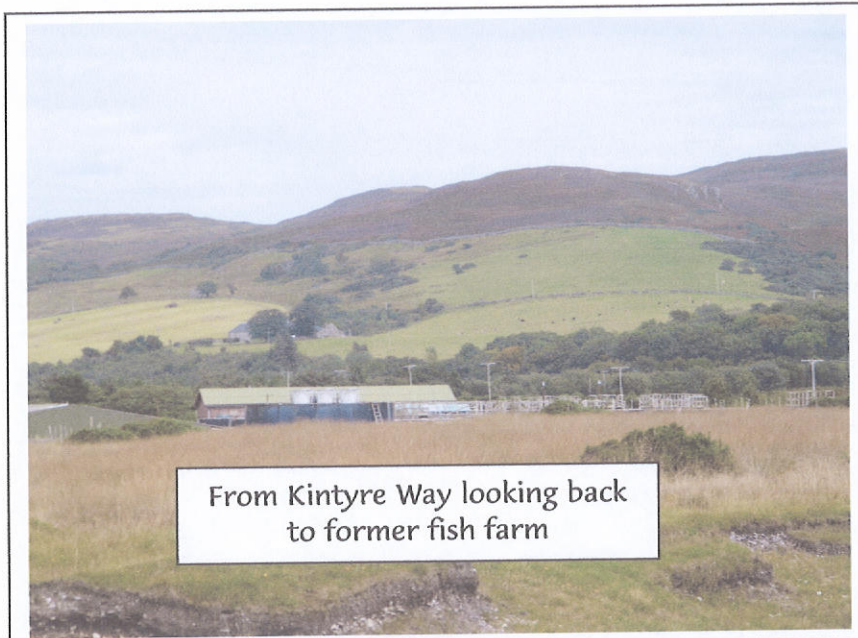


We request the committee members to stand on the shore at the viewpoint beside the Leth Uillt Burn and compare what they see from there with the two photographs above to determine which gives the more accurate indication of what can be seen.

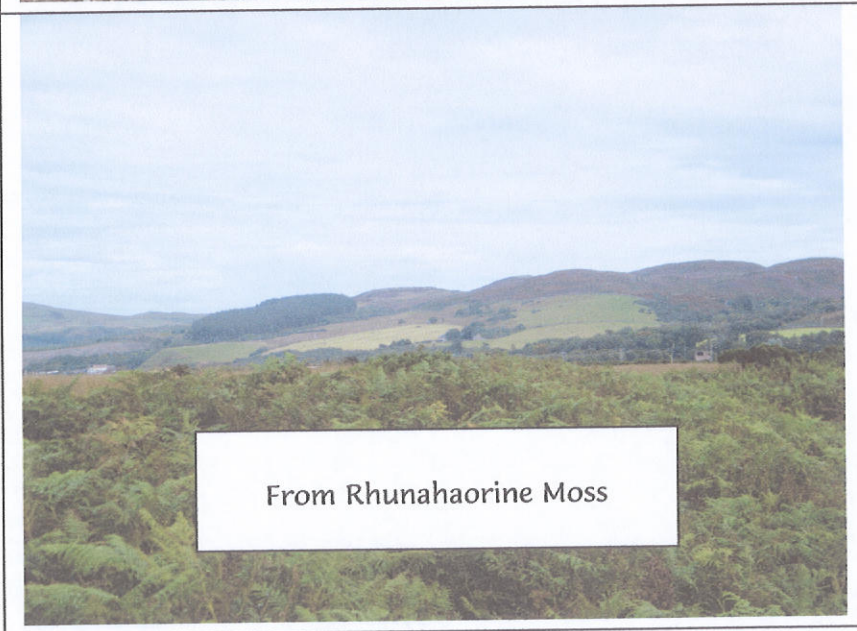
Views of field from the foreshore on the Kintyre Way

- The report states that the field can only be seen from the foreshore at one view point, the Leth Uillt Burn. This is grossly misleading as Achanadriane Farmhouse and the field can be seen from, or near to, four of the first five Kintyre Way Markers between the north foreshore and Rhunahaorine Point.



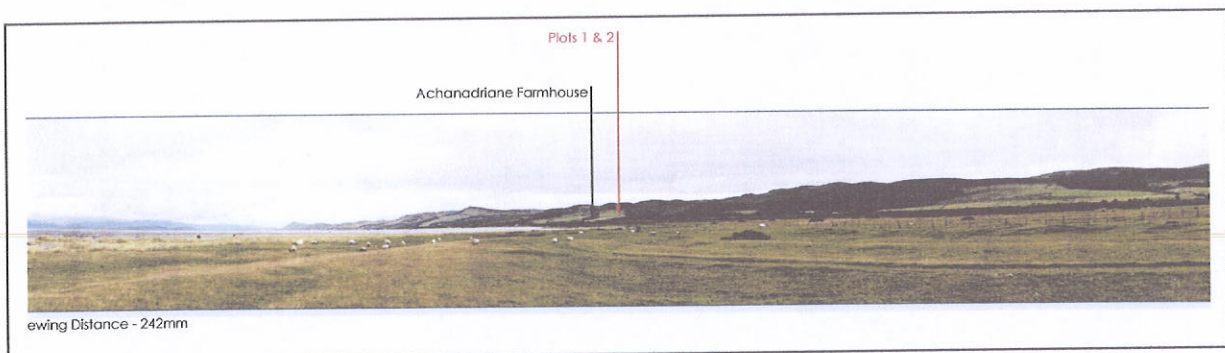


From Kintyre Way looking back to former fish farm



From Rhunahaorine Moss

Compare these photos above with the Landscape Consultants' photograph from Rhunahaorine Point [below]:



ewing Distance - 242mm

SCREENING

On the one hand the Landscape Consultants' report seems to argue that the two developments and long access tracks to them will have little visual impact, and yet on the other hand it proposes to reduce the visual impact of the development by using "extensive" tree planting. This simplistic and misleading suggestion takes no account of the following factors:

- **Seasonal Variation**

The report suggests that the existing trees and shrubs would provide a large degree of screening for the two developments and long access tracks. However, their report is dated July and all of their photographic evidence shows trees and shrubs in full summer foliage. The report does not mention *that for half of the year, the majority of the existing screening will be lost when the trees, which are mostly deciduous, lose their leaves*. The following two comparative photographs demonstrate this seasonal difference.



See also the winter photographs taken from the site by Planning (it should be noted that these photographs are taken at eye level, approx 5ft, while the top of a single story house is above 20ft).

- **Growing Conditions**

The report does not take into account that the wooded areas in the *immediate* locality are either nearer sea level, or are in sheltered gullies along burns or along cuttings for tracks/roads.

The proposed development sites are elevated and exposed to the full force of the prevailing south-west winds. Trees which do best in exposed conditions do not often tolerate the wet conditions which exist on the lower slope of the plot closest to Tigh na Drochit and Benview where there is the greatest need for screening.

At Benview we have made several attempts to plant trees and shrubs to screen us from the house at Tigh na Drochit, but have not succeeded.

- **Time Scale of Growth**

Should the proposed planting succeed, the suggestion that the screening of the development will take 10 to 15 years is also unrealistic. The following photograph shows the trees planted by Mr and Mrs Blair over 10 years ago to screen the crest of the hill behind Achanadriane [in the event that Largie wind farm went ahead]. This planting demonstrates that, even after more than a decade, they have been unable to achieve the required height to screen the crest of the hill successfully – and this in a relatively sheltered site [in the lee of the farmhouse].



It must be pointed out that while 10 to 15 years may sound like a relatively short period, it could represent the remainder of the lives of many people over 65.

- **Trees, Screening and Sea Views**

It has been our experience that people buy houses on elevated sites, with superb sea views to the islands, in order to enjoy the open aspects. Our new neighbours, both at Achanadriane and Tigh na Drochit have felled and pruned trees to ensure that their views remain open.

For the Landscape Consultants to suggest that the owners of these proposed houses would find it acceptable to have their views taken away by woodland planting is simply not credible. Even assuming a strict and enforced woodland planting condition could be included within planning consent, there is no guarantee that any planting would withstand either winter gales on such an exposed site, or the attempts of future residents to either discourage tree growth, or to prevent trees from impinging on their views.

More stringent monitoring and enforcement than presently exist would be required to prevent future felling or destruction of view-obstructing trees, and no existing/future penalties could quickly restore the trees once felled. . . or replace failed plantings.

Housing Settlement Pattern

Another glaring omission from the Landscape Consultants' report is any mention of the historical settlement pattern. Without exception, the properties between Clachan and Tayinloan, which are situated, like Achanadriane, on or around the thirty metre contour mark and above are all old stone-built farmhouses or farm cottages. There are no newly built houses at this height.

The new-build houses in the Achanadriane area are at low levels. [Tigh na Drochit is in the gully formed by the Leth Uilt burn – see photograph below] where screening by existing trees prevents them impacting on the landscape.



Access Tracks

The steep banks on either side of the track to Achanadriane prevent

- The possibility of passing places being dug out without the destruction of existing woodland screening
- Access to the field before the proposed junction point indicated. However, this means that the actual driveway to the houses has to double back along the hill slope, almost parallel with the existing track, before it can connect with the two house plots. This extensive track on the hillside will have as much scarring effect on the landscape as the two plots/houses.

See a photomontage impression of this on

- the appended aerial view of the coast.
- the appended satellite view of the area around Achanadriane.

Impact on Landscape Character.

The report suggests, of course, that there would be little impact on the landscape character, but this is not the case. The field at Achanadriane, which has traditionally been used for silage or grazing, slopes upwards to the higher fields and hill ground used for arable / grazing. This agricultural use of the field determines the landscape of the area. To suggest that changing this to a built environment with associated driveways, garden grounds, sheds, greenhouses, oil/gas tanks, fences, washing lines, hard landscaping, caravans and other vehicles, etc, could do nothing else than completely alter the existing landscape character of the immediate area and significantly impact on the wider landscape character of the hillside and wider coastal area.

See a photomontage impression of this on

- the appended view of Achanadriane from the Kintyre Way/shore at the estuary of Leth Uillt burn.

Misinterpretation of the Landscape Capacity Study [LCS] guidelines

Argyll and Bute's Landscape Capacity Study Survey looked at Areas of Panoramic Quality which fell within the wider category of Rural Opportunity Areas. The surveyors wanted to determine which of the Areas of Panoramic Quality required the greatest protection from development. They included the area around Achanadriane in their survey as it is an 'Area of Panoramic Quality'. After detailed survey work ***the LCS determined that the field south of Achanadriane Farmhouse was one of the 'Areas of Panoramic Quality' which required protection from development***, and designated it a red zone. The LCS Survey also determined in which areas, within the Areas of Panoramic Quality, opportunities for small-scale development might be found, and designated them orange zones. The low-lying area of Achanadriane around the A83 which benefits from existing screening was designated an orange zone.

The two plots are nowhere near a 'transition boundary' between red and orange zones.

It would seem that in order to accommodate their clients' appeal, the appellants' consultants would like to re-categorise the proposed site for development, along with its access track, as an orange zone. If this is not possible, then, nevertheless, they would still advocate building in the red zone, claiming that the planting of extensive woodland around the site for development, along with its access track, would protect the red zone landscape from the impact of the development.

Our Conclusion

Argyll and Bute's Landscape Consultants looked closely at the potential for development over the farmland and woodland at Achanadriane and identified 4 areas as orange zones [i.e. having a capacity for small scale development]. They recognised that any development on the hill ground along the coast would alter its landscape character, and so designated it a red zone [i.e. requiring protection from development]. With a number of areas on low-lying ground at Achanadriane designated orange zones, we believe that there is little argument to withdraw protection and allow development in the red zone.

The on-site survey work carried out by the appellants' Landscape Consultants has been very limited, as the number of factual errors in their report indicates, including their seeming lack of awareness of the actual position of the two plots in the landscape.

The appellants' case mainly involves mitigating the impact of the two developments and their associated infrastructure by using "extensive" tree planting. We are sure that Argyll and Bute Landscape Capacity Study Survey's intention was not to advise that development should be freely allowed within the 'red' zones as long as extensive *new* tree planting screened it.

For this appeal to be successful the appellants would have had to show that the Argyll and Bute Planning officials had been wrong in their application of the Local Plan and Landscape Capacity Study guidelines when assessing this application. It is clear that they have not shown this.

Yours faithfully



Iain DM Logan and Kathryn MD Logan

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PHOTOMONTAGES

by Iain and Kathryn Logan
showing

EXISTING LANDSCAPE AT ACHANADRIANE [BEFORE]

and

IMPRESSION OF LANDSCAPE AT ACHANADRIANE IF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT GOES AHEAD [AFTER]

Our Methodology for Attached Photomontages

- Using the appellants' site plan, the point where the access driveway to the two plots joins the existing farm track to Achanadriane was established.
- Using the appellants' site plan, the centre of each plot was marked with a 7 metre long pole, held in position using 3 guy ropes.
- A photograph was taken of the site, with the posts, from the shore at the Leth Uillt estuary.
- A photograph was taken of a typical new-build house in the locality.
- The house from the photograph was superimposed on the centre of each plot/post, and reduced in scale so that the top of each roof came to the top of each 7metre pole.
- Although the photo-montages were prepared by non-professionals, we are confident that the position and scale of the houses in the hillside are accurate, and fairly represent the impact that the development would have on the landscape.
- Even if single storey houses were to be built, the roofline is not likely to be significantly lower than that of the one and a half storey houses, [where the upper storey rooms are built into the roof space] used in our photomontages.



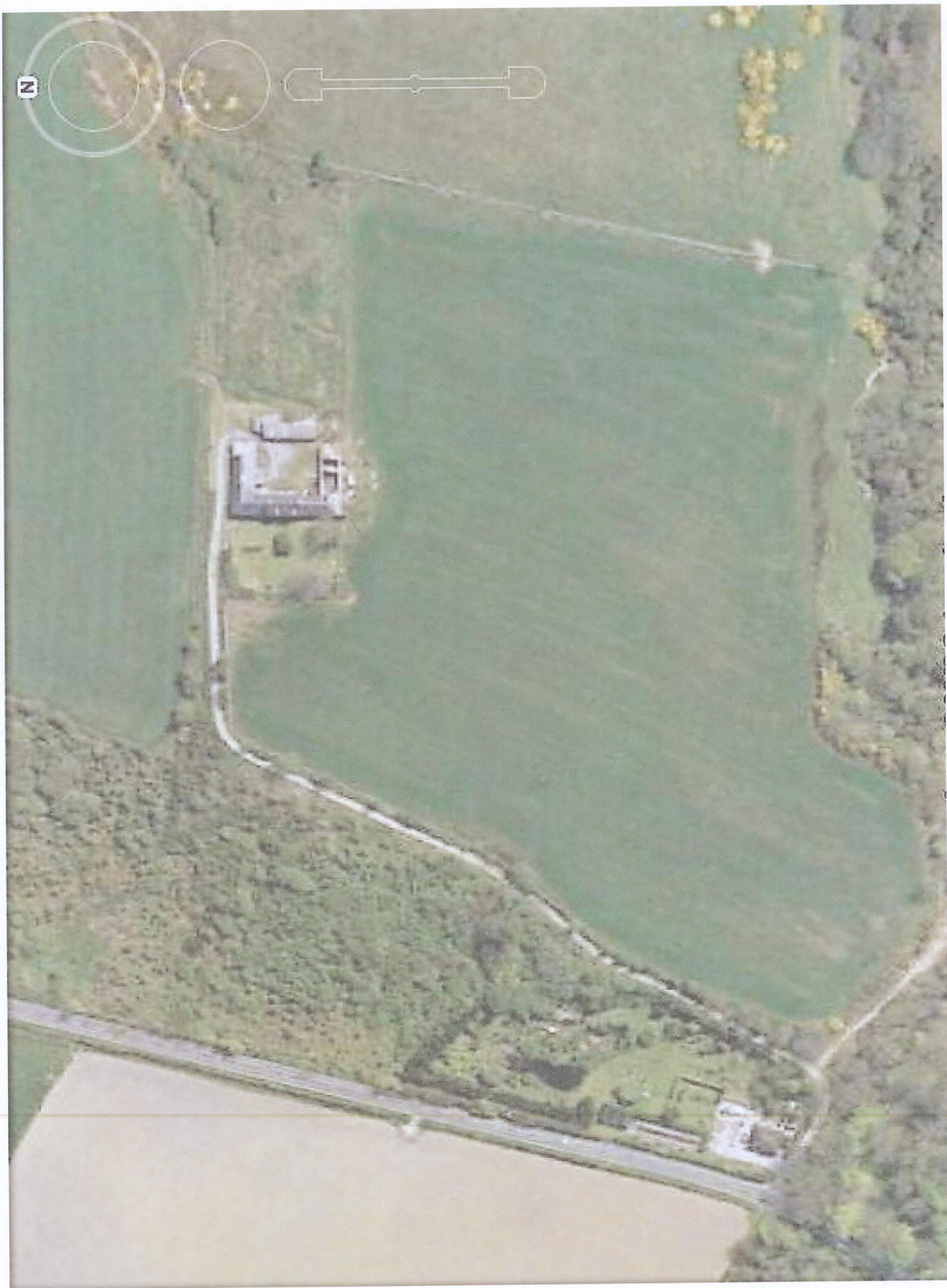


Photomontage of proposed development on land south of Achanadriane from the shore at the Leth Uillit estuary





Photomontage of aerial view of proposed development on land south of Achnadriane



Photomontage of proposed development on land south of Achanadriane from satellite

