

Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mor

Lismore Historical Society

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Other objectors

Planning Application Ref. 09/01676/PP. Two dwelling houses at Port Moluag, Isle of Lismore.

- Port Moluag is the site of Saint Moluag's landing on Lismore during the Sixth Century CE, from where he based his ministry throughout much of what is now Scotland and northern England. This location is, therefore, a place of very significant historical, cultural and religious significance – approximately 50% of which would be destroyed by the proposed development. (Ref: *Lismore in Alba by the Rev. Ian Carmichael, c1947. Chapter VII*)
- At Port Moluag, and immediately adjacent to the proposed development is the site of an ancient chapel which is, by local tradition, held to be the original place of worship and sanctuary established by the Saint on first landing. It is difficult to see how the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on these important remains. (Ref: *the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Argyll Volume 2, Lorn, 1974. Ref #271, 871433*)
- The freshwater spring or well known as Tobar na Slainte is also a site of significance and lies within the development area. This would be totally destroyed by the proposed roadworks on the development. To do this could only be viewed as wanton archaeological vandalism in the pursuit of profit. (Ref: *the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Argyll Volume 2, Lorn, 1974. Ref #271, 871433*)
- There is a very old existing built up roadway running north from the proposed development site which gives access to the level above. According to the plans the new access road would be built over the top of this roadway and will, clearly, necessitate its' destruction.
- The proposed water supply to the development would, according to the plans, be taken from the site of a former whisky-still which is, in itself, an interesting and important remain but may also have historical significance in the annals of HM Customs and Excise. This too would be destroyed by the proposed development. (Ref: *the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Argyll Volume 2, Lorn, 1974. Ref #359, 082371, also Lismore, the Great Garden 2009, by Robert Hay, pp132 – 134*)
- The proposed development also comes close to the remains of Connel's boatbuilding site, some of which is still visible today. The fact that West of Scotland Archaeology Service raised no objection to the proposed development, apparently without anyone on the island being aware of a site visit, perhaps tells us more about how WSAS discharges its' duties than it does about the proposed development.
- The road access, parking and turning area of the proposed development would cover a large proportion of the existing arable land in Port Moluag. This ground has not been excavated and, with a site of such importance, clearly should be before any changes are permitted to the use of this land.
- Whether by accident or design, the cliff face is entirely omitted from the maps accompanying the application. The new buildings are proposed to sit on the existing sites of the ruins of the two cottages but, in the case of the northernmost of the two this would be far too close to the cliff face at less than 1 metre. To cut the cliff face back would adversely affect the stability of the existing access track. In addition, the limestone cliff face,

which is not entirely stable, would present a significant risk to both properties in the proposed development from damage by rockfall.

- The proposed development site is very marshy. Even at this time, after an abnormally dry winter, the site is very wet. In order to permit the proposed development it will require to be drained which will of course, adversely affect the ecology of the area. As I am sure you are aware, Lismore is a haven for many rare and endangered species, and this site is no different to the rest of the island in this respect.
- The proposed buildings are of an inappropriate design for the island. In all previous applications for planning permission to erect a dwellinghouse on Lismore there has been a very strong emphasis by planners on the design of the building/s fitting in with the vernacular style of building to be found on the island.
- The proposed buildings are of an inappropriate size for the site. They are very much larger than the footprints of the existing ruins and would utterly dominate this part of the coastline, being very noticeable from the sea.
- The proposed development are on the raised beach area known locally as the Aonidh. The raised beach is visible round most of the area and has been largely unspoiled. It is a rich area for flora and fauna and is one of the few remaining low level wilderness areas on the island. It is my understanding that this ground is designated as “set aside”, or the current equivalent, because of the rich biodiversity. Since Lismore consists of a largely limestone base it supports plant life not found on the surrounding mainland.
- Over decades otters have been seen to hunt and breed on this stretch of the Aonidh. I am aware that there would be a requirement to do an otter survey as a condition of planning consent, but where there have been other developments in or near otters’ habitats it has taken a decade or more for the population to be re-established. (*Hutcheson’s house at Port Kilcheran*)
- The present appearance and state of the ground in Port Moluag is poor, but this is due to current farming methods and is not of a permanent nature, although it does not reflect well on the applicants’ present stewardship of the land. My uncle, Ian Millar, was tenant farmer on this farm until his retirement. Port Moluag under his care, and that of his uncles and grandparents before him, was a place of great beauty and tranquillity. Ian Millar would have viewed this proposal as desecration and would not have permitted it to go ahead under his tenancy.
- The estate owners in the past had a great respect and reverence for this site and a knowledge of its importance to the historical heritage of Lismore. The proposed development would seriously damage the heritage of the island.
- It has always been my understanding that the visual impact from the sea has been a prime consideration in planning policy - the proposed house sites would be clearly visible from the sea. In addition, since the proposed buildings are on the site of old ruins, albeit very much longer, in the event of local objections being overruled the design should at least have to conform to a similar outward appearance as the cottars’ houses.
- The applicants are long standing absentee landowners on Lismore and, in the local view, over the past thirty or so years do not have a good record in the care and maintenance of their property or in their stewardship of the land. From the proposed development there would be, at best, short term unskilled employment for a few islanders, followed by the movement of profits generated off the island and down to the south of England.
- On an island of such scientific, scenic, historical, cultural and religious significance as Lismore there are a number of places where no development of any sort should be allowed. Port Moluag is one of them.