

APPENDIX B - AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION

CORRANMOR, ARDFERN – ROA MA25

a) Purpose of the assessment

This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance approved by the Council on 19th February 2009.

In this instance, the Area Capacity Evaluation (ACE) is triggered in respect of current application reference 11/02560/PPP which seeks planning permission in principle for a site for the erection of two dwellinghouses within a rural opportunity area (ROA) where there has already been a significant amount of small scale development permitted. The ROA lies within the Knapdale/Melfort Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) and as such has previously been the subject of a Landscape Capacity Study (LCS) commissioned by the Council and undertaken by Gillespies; in this instance the proposed development considered cumulatively with previous approvals would exceed the capacity recommendations contained in the Council's LCS for ROA compartment MA25.

The Council's adopted guidance requires that the findings should be made available to applicants and/or agents and to Members in advance of the determination of any related planning application(s) in order that, if necessary, there is an opportunity to prepare a response to the findings for consideration by Committee at the time the application(s) is/are determined and the ACE is given consideration as part of that determination process.

The area to be assessed should be identified as a wider 'area of common landscape character' within which the prospective development site(s) is/are located. ACE's will be considered by Members at the same time as the related development proposal(s) is/are being determined, and once endorsed will become a material consideration in respect of any future applications within that ACE compartment.

b) Area of Common Landscape Character

The application site, for the main part, lies within the southern portion of a relatively compact 'rural opportunity area' (ROA) which encompasses Corranmor Farm and the semi-improved grazing in its immediate surrounds and stretches inland across an undulating area of open rough grazing where it terminates in the north where this meets commercial forestry plantation on the lower slopes of more steeply rising land which forms the central ridge of the Craignish peninsula. The application site also encompasses nearly 500sqm of land on its western boundary (approximately 35% of the proposed Plot 2 site area) and 180 sqm of land at the southern boundary (soakaway for private foul drainage system) which lies outwith the ROA within an adjoining designation of 'sensitive countryside'.

The Council's LCS identifies that any capacity for additional development within the ROA is located in and around the immediate vicinity of Corranmor Farm, where development would be perceived as a loose cluster; these recommendations also stipulate that development should be limited to two or three new properties to prevent over-development. In this respect it is noted that the application site is located to the south of Corranmor Farm within an area identified by the Council's LCS as having capacity to absorb development, the exception to this being the western portion of Plot 2 and, site for a foul drainage soakaway which both lie within the adjoining 'sensitive countryside'.

Planning permission in principle has previously been granted and remains extant for sites for three dwellinghouses (refs. 10/01799/PPP – Plots B & C and, 11/000138/PPP – Plot A) which lie to the west and north of Corranmor Farm. These permissions have been granted

having regard to the recommendations contained in the LCS, the sites having been chosen to minimise their intrusion upon the wider landscape setting, and to ensure that Corranmor Farm remains the focus of what will be a loose cluster of buildings which builds upon the existing development pattern. The conditional restrictions upon these permissions should ensure some variety in the scale and mass of buildings, which will be underpinned by a requirement for a relatively traditional approach in terms of building design and finishes and reinforcement of the development pattern with the provision of significant landscape planting which will create an immediate setting and backdrop to the new development, whilst creating a visual link between the various built elements and introducing land cover which should prevent the future infilling of important gaps in the development pattern.

Given that the Council's LCS recommendations set out that capacity for additional development is restricted to the immediate surrounds of Corranmore Farm, it is legitimate to confine the extent of the ACE compartment to be reviewed to the area identified in orange in the Council's LCS recommendations. In addition to this, it is noted that the current application site includes land within the adjoining 'sensitive countryside'; whilst no locational or operational grounds have been given to support the inclusion of this land it is also recognised that the ROA boundary follows an OS contour line. However, there is no clear demarcation on the ground in terms of either a boundary marker or change in land cover between the ROA and 'sensitive countryside' as such it is considered appropriate to include the extent of 'sensitive countryside' which shares the same land cover, elevation and visual containment as the southern portion of the ROA within the ACE compartment.

Having regard to the above, the ACE compartment's northern, and eastern boundaries are defined by the 'orange' area identified within ROA compartment MA25; the southern limit of the compartment is defined by the top of the escarpment which defines southern edge of the shelf upon which the existing dwellinghouse Lochview is located, and beyond which the land falls off steeply towards the B8002. The western limit of the compartment is defined by a visible change in land cover as a result of drainage conditions approximately 80m south west of Lochview which cuts SE to NW across a field.

The ACE compartment is within an area categorised by the Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde 1996 as "Coastal Parallel Ridges" which are generally characterised by:

- Narrow rocky ridges with a strong SW-NE alignment, which break down to form chains of rocky islands at the coast;
- Horseshoe-shaped, narrow sandy bays and extensive mudflats;
- Stunted oak-birch woodlands on the rocky ridges separating narrow marginal pastures, marsh or lochs;
- Small blocks of conifers;
- Stone walls enclosing fields and along lanes;
- Small settlements, concentrated at coves;
- Rich variety of archaeological sites;
- Small estates.

In general, the main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Rocky ridges and patchy woodland provide the potential for screening small built developments;
- There is a risk of linear built development along coastal roads and it is important that the traditional pattern of small clustered development is maintained;
- The landscape has a small scale and can only accommodate relatively small developments, which can be partially screened by native woodland and stands of Scots pine;
- Some of the small coves have no scope for further development and in many areas the narrow lanes represent a limit to traffic.
- Conserve sites and setting of archaeology.

Within the ACE compartment it is considered that there is essentially a single area of common landscape character as illustrated on the plans attached to this evaluation and detailed in the matrix below.

c) **Key Environmental Features**

The ACE compartment contains a number of the key characteristics associated with the Coastal Parallel Ridges landscape type. The compartment is physically subdivided into three distinct tiers primarily these comprise two ridges running SW-NE which are separated by small but relatively steep escarpment which is of poorer quality rough grazing and also by a small hill which sits to the immediate north of Corranmor Farm on the south west face of which there is a small saddle which sits slightly above the upper ridge.

The lowest tier is a ridge at approximately 18-20m AOD which contains the significant grouping of buildings of Corranmor Farm tucked back against the rear of the platform; Lochview sits to the front of the platform where this protrudes southward toward the coastline forming a small promontory which visually defines views looking both north and south along the coastline from the B8002 public highway below. The existing buildings are anchored in the landscape with the presence of tree cover in their immediate confines; Corranmor Farm and its associated buildings and stone boundary walls are hidden from the views looking north from the B8002 by virtue of the topography of the site, with the steep escarpment which marks the southern boundary of the ACE compartment effectively screening these elements. Corranmor Farm is however readily visible in views approaching the site from the B8002 looking south as the promontory recedes at this point leaving the farm cluster sat just above its edge. Lochview, by contrast, is visible on the skyline in views from the B8002 into the site from both north and south; this effect is most prominent in views from the north where the promontory interrupts views looking south west along the coast. The remainder of the lower tier is comprised of open, semi-improved rough grazing which lies to the south and south west of Loch View, with some birch woodland adjoining the private road at the rear of the platform and on parts of the transition slopes to the upper ridge.

The front of the upper ridge sits at approximately 25m AOD above a steep escarpment which starts from the hill immediately south of the private road as it passes the Corranmor Farm buildings. The front edge of the ridge is comprised of poorer quality grazing, rocky

outcrops and spoil heaps from adjacent improved grazing; moving northwards the elevation of the platform gently decreases and opens up into an undulating plateau of rough and semi-improved grazing – this edge of the ACE compartment is defined not so much by a change in landcover but by the desire in the Council's LCS recommendations that new development be situated within the immediate vicinity of Corranmor Farm in order that it may be viewed as part of this loose cluster of existing development. There are no existing buildings within what is effectively the middle tier of the ACE compartment. Planning permission in principle has been granted for sites for two dwellinghouses off of a shared private drive (11/00138/PPP - Plot A and 10/01799/PPP - Plot B) set just back from the front of this ridge, where development will be hidden from view from the B8002 public highway. These permissions allow for a single storey dwelling on Plot A and a dwelling of up to 1¾ storeys on Plot B. These proposals also include for planting of native tree species along the proposed access route and eastern site boundaries which will adjoin and reinforce the existing birch woodland on the lower slopes of the escarpment.

The highest portion of the ACE compartment is the hill (approx. 30m AOD) immediately to the north of Corranmor Farm which has a small commercial forestry compartment on its southern slope. The ACE compartment includes both the commercial forestry and the semi-improved grazing on the south western slope of the hill where this breaks into a small saddle which is framed to the north west by a further hillock (again approx. 30m AOD). There are no existing buildings within this portion of the ACE compartment at present; however, planning permission in principle has previously been granted for a site for a modest single storey dwellinghouse at approximately 28m AOD, which would again be largely hidden from view from the B8002 by the intervening topography, with the exception perhaps of the upper roof slopes which, if visible, would be viewed against the adjacent forestry plantation. The proposal includes for additional native broadleaf planting to assist in the integration of the private drive and to provide a backdrop to the development in the event of the commercial forestry block being felled at some point in the future.

Access to the compartment is via an existing private road which serves Lochview, Corranmore Farm and other existing developments located further inland to the north (outwith the ACE compartment). The private road is identified on the Scottish Paths Record and forms part of a path network which connects in with a Core Path and can be utilised to access the central ridge of the Craignish Peninsula and beyond to the Loch Melfort coast. The Council's LCS identifies that there are key views from the path route looking out of the lower tier of the compartment from the entrance into Corranmor Farm where, by virtue of the promontory type characteristic of the landform, the viewer is afforded near panoramic views looking both north(east) toward Ardfern and south(west) toward open water along the coastscape of the Knapdale/Melfort APQ. These views should be preserved as they are not readily achieved from any other elevated location in the immediate vicinity which is readily accessible to the public, as the immediate relationship with the coast is lost upon leaving the lower tier and proceeding inland with the undulating topography effectively creating a bowl thereafter, within which views out to the coast are limited.

d) Capacity to Absorb Development Successfully

The character of this rural area is essentially of undulating rough and semi-improved rough grazing set on a series of plateau which step back from the coastscape. Existing development is concentrated in a loose cluster around the Corranmor Farm and the recommendation of the Council's LCS seeks to reinforce this pattern.

The Council's LCS allows a restricted area of land for further small scale development, the extent of this apparently being defined by the southern boundaries of the ROA and by a desire that development visually coalesce within a loose cluster around Corranmor and that

development be restricted to two or three new buildings so as to avoid overdevelopment at this location.

The planning permissions in principle for three dwellings which have been granted within the ACE compartment during early 2011 have been arrived with officers having satisfied themselves that development in the middle and upper tiers of the compartment would largely be screened from view from the B8002, and in the knowledge that although open to view from Loch Criagnish, buildings at these location would appear as part of a grouping around Corranmor, as relatively small elements set against the backdrop of higher land to the north which frames a panoramic landscape/coastscape setting. The permissions previously granted relate specifically to locations on the edge of the ACE compartment where development can be set against points of transition in the immediate landscape setting, with additional planting to reinforce these features. It is considered that the upper portion of the ACE compartment does not hold any further capacity for development, as this would involve breaking into the open areas of rough and semi-improved grazing where new development would appear isolated from existing built development around Corranmor. It is also recognised that it would be desirable to preserve elements of space between buildings to retain the essentially rural, low density, informal characteristics of the existing development pattern and such it is considered that future proposals for the infilling of essential spaces between buildings would be resisted.

Turning to the lower portion of the ACE compartment, it is considered that the ability of the landscape to accommodate additional development successfully is significantly restricted by a requirement to avoid new developments sitting prominently on the skyline where they would appear as dominant features in the relatively contained views afforded from the B8002 in both directions. Development on the lower tier would also require to avoid intruding upon the identified key view as identified in the Council's LCS, out from the entrance to Corranmor Farm, and should avoid sitting directly below the sites of previous permissions on the upper ridge as any element of spacing and set back between buildings would be lost in views back from Loch Craignish and would potentially give the incongruous appearance of one building sitting atop another, given the relatively small differences in height between levels. These constraints effectively rule out the potential for additional development on the lower tier of the ACE compartment with the exception of the northern field corner where this adjoins the private road, where it would be possible to accommodate one, modest single storey building of relatively traditional design emphasis with minimal interference upon the skyline in views in from the B8002, and also set back to avoid impinging on the key views out from the path route at the entrance to Corranmor Farm. Development at this location would also be offset from that of previous approvals on higher ground and would retain a necessary element of spacing between existing/proposed buildings which is required to reinforce the informal nature of this loose cluster of buildings. *(Note for the avoidance of doubt that in the event that development could not be contained within the extent of the ROA boundary then a valid location/operational requirement would be required to support a development which encompasses 'sensitive countryside' having regard to policies STRAT DC 5 and LP HOU 1).*

In summary, and having due regard to the constraints relative to this location, it is considered that the ACE compartment holds no further capacity for additional built development, with the exception of the site identified at the back of the lower tier for a modest scale single storey dwellinghouse. Any additional development, beyond that of the identified site on the lower tier, would result in the loss of important spaces between built development, which are considered fundamental to the low density and informal characteristics of this loose grouping of buildings, and as such would be to the significant detriment of the wider Knapdale/Melfort Area of Panoramic Quality.

AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION MATRIX			
ACE Title		Corranmor, Ardfern	
Date	24.02.12	Location	Land adjoining Corranmor Farm on a raised beach to the north of the B8002 public highway.
Surrounding Strategic Planning Zones			
Town Village:		N/A	
Minor Settlement:		N/A	
Green Belt:		N/A	
Countryside Around Settlements :		N/A	
Rural Opportunity Area / Coast :		The site is situated within the Rural Opportunity Area designation and is subject to a LCS.	
Sensitive Countryside / Coast :		The site is situated within the Sensitive Countryside designation.	
Very Sensitive Countryside / Coast:		N/A	
Landscape Character			
Landform		Two parallel ridges running approximately on a SW-NE alignment set between the 10m and 20m contours and a small hill to north of Corranmor Farm which rises to 30m creating a tiered landform with areas of flatter ground interspersed with small escarpments and the lower tier protruding southwards towards the coast creating a small slight promontory.	
Land Cover		The majority of the area comprises open semi-improved grazing land with rough grazing land on the margins and the intervening escarpments which provide a transition in levels within the compartment. A commercial forestry stand is located within the north east of the area.	
Development Pattern		<p>The area contains a farmstead at Corranmor set back against the foot of an escarpment on the lower tier. The detached, single storey property Lochview is also located on the lower tier but sits on its own and is set forward on the promontory feature. Buildings are visually anchored in the landscape setting by the presence of adjacent tree cover.</p> <p>Planning permission in principle has been granted for a further three dwellings within the area of common landscape character; permission for two dwellings located on the middle tier (upper ridge) to the west of Corranmor Farm with a variety of scale allowing for a single storey building and a 1¾ storey property on adjoining sites. The remaining permission relates to a dwelling of no greater than</p>	

	<p>single storey behind the saddle of the hill to the north of Corranmor Farm and adjacent to the stand of commercial forestry. These permissions are underpinned by a detailed landscape planting scheme with additional tree planting to provide immediate backdrop and setting to each of the new developments, to create an element of physical separation between buildings whilst visually creating a loose grouping of buildings around the Corranmor farmstead and providing land cover which will guard against the future infilling of these gaps.</p> <p>There is significant visual evidence of mans impact on this landscape.</p>
--	--

Notable Key Environmental Features

Significant Historical Interest and Important Cultural Associations	Scheduled Monuments Unscheduled Monuments etc	None
	Gardens & Designed Landscapes	None
	Locations associated with people, events, art, literature, music culture	None
Built Heritage Importance	Important individual buildings inc. Listed and other locally important buildings	None
	Important groups or areas of buildings including Conservation Areas	None
	Other important examples of built heritage including transport / industrial heritage	None
Nature Conservation Importance	Internationally important wildlife sites including SPAs and SPAs SACs Ramsar Sites	None
	Nationally important wildlife sites including NNRs, SSSI, Marine Consultation Zones	None
	Locally important habitats, -SINC, SNW	None
	Nationally and regionally important Geological / Geomorphological Sites	None
Access and Amenity Importance	Long distance routes trails, mountain routes and other designated paths and their immediate corridors	None

	Important local paths / networks and their immediate corridors	Existing route on Scottish Paths Record which runs through the area of common character past the northern boundary of the application site.
	Important views and prospects	<p>Key views looking out from path route on lower tier looking north east and south west along coastscape as identified in the Council's LCS – note that Lochview intrudes on what would otherwise be a panoramic viewpoint and, that the immediate relationship with coastscape is lost upon leaving lower tier heading inland.</p> <p>Lower portion of the ACE compartment features prominently in views looking both north and south on B8002 where the promontory feature interrupts views along the coast and forms the backdrop to a more intimate landscape setting.</p>
	Named and other waterfalls shown on OS	None
	Important car parks lay byes etc	None
	Valued landscapes including NSAs RSAs & LSAs	Site located within the Knapdale and Melfort Area of Panoramic Quality
Health and Safety Constraints	Water catchment zones	None
	MoD Zones	N/A
	Air Safety - Airfield Safeguarding and CAA Consultation Zones	N/A

	Safety - Health and Safety Executive Consultation Zone	N/A
INFRASTRUCTURE		
Road Access	The area is accessed off by a private road which connects to the single track B8002 public highway. Access to the site requires commensurate improvement of the junction with the public highway and private road with re-profiling of lower slopes to accommodate increased road width/passing places.	
Water	Water is by connection to the public water main.	
Sewerage	Private drainage arrangements	
Electricity	No known constraints	
DEVELOPMENT		
Proposed Development	Site for the erection of two dwellinghouses (Class 9)	
Other Issues/Notes	None	