

APPENDIX B - AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION

Land to the South East of Laggan Bridge, Isle of Islay – SC Islay 9

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 10/01931/PP which seeks planning permission for the erection of a 'river watcher's' dwellinghouse to be used for estate management by Dunlossit Estate, the site being within an area of 'Sensitive Countryside' (SC) and therefore would normally be considered contrary to policy unless sufficient operational/locational need exists to outweigh the normal policy presumption against such development.

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 lies within a wide area of 'Sensitive Countryside' (SC) immediately south of, and contained by, a series of meanders in the Laggan River. The application site is on the extreme northern edge of an extensive area of commercial forestry plantation and is contained to the west by the B8016 public road. The application site would be very well screened from the public road by existing vegetation – both commercial forestry and scattered broadleaved trees. The application site is a broadly flat area of land just beyond the margins of the identified river flood plain and forms a very distinctive part of the river environs; a specific landscape character unique to the river margins and contained by the river geometry itself, by the public road and by the forest immediately to the south.

Having regard to the above, the ACE compartment's northern, and eastern boundaries are therefore defined by the sweep of the Laggan River; the southern limit of the compartment is defined by the northern edge of the commercial forest plantation and the western limit of the compartment is defined by the public road.

The application site is thus located within, and contained by, a unique area of common landscape character, defined primarily by the river bend which forms the primary focus for the operational need advanced in support of the development proposed.

The ACE compartment is within an area categorised by the Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde 1996 as "Marginal Farmland Mosaic" which is generally characterised by:

- Undulating, uneven landform with rocky outcrops on the lower margins of the upland moor;

- Indented rocky coastline with some small sandy bays;
- Diverse patchy mix of moorland, grassland, peaty marsh and woodland;
- Typically geometric fields, divided by broken stone walls on upper slopes and wire fences or straight drainage ditches on the valley floor;
- Some conifer plantations and deciduous woodland associated with larger farms and estates on sheltered valley slopes;
- many scattered small settlements and isolated farms and cottages;
- Archaeological sites.

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

- Cumulative loss of historic features such as stone walls, field patterns and traditional farmsteads;
- Built development should be in scale with the landscape, i.e. relatively small scale single and small clusters of houses sited in sheltered locations and at an angle to the road, considered in preference to linear or large scale built development of a homogenous character. Buildings should be either of local dark grey stone or finished in white harling;
- Wherever possible, new built development should be associated with small stands of native woodland to help integrate it within the wider landscape. It should also be closely linked to the existing historic pattern of stone walls, historic sites and the rich archaeological heritage of the area;
- Roads should take account of landform, following physical contours and avoiding rocky outcrops, stands of trees and archaeological sites.

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 itself actually contains very few of the key characteristics associated with the Marginal Farmland Mosaic landscape type, by virtue of the fact that it occupies a somewhat unique and specific location within the close confines of the river margins. However, the Laggan River effectively cuts through an extensive and typical area of Marginal Farmland Mosaic from north-east to south-west and this larger area is characterised by a wide extent of moorland, grassland, peaty marsh and woodland; particularly commercial woodland, some of which overlays historical native woodlands with some evidence of broadleaved trees, particularly at its margins. Built development is scattered and sporadic and tends to occupy well contained sites with low visual impact.

The ACE compartment is compact and largely homogenous; contained by the bend in the river; on the edge of an extensive area of commercial forest plantation and abutting the public road. The ACE compartment is currently very well screened by existing vegetation with only glimpsed views of the site afforded from immediately north of

Laggan Bridge. There is considerable scope to retain much of this existing vegetation and this could reasonably be secured by a forest management plan providing for retention, enhancement and maintenance of the deciduous woodland.

The ACE compartment contains part of an archaeology consultation zone although the current development site itself would fall just outwith it with no issues having been raised by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.

The compartment is flat and consists of unimproved grassland with significant broadleaved tree cover, particularly to its north western margins, together with small areas of marsh and sandy river beaches, with the river itself being cut into the landform in several places. The compartment is contained by significant forest plantation to the south and by the public road to the west.

Access to the compartment is via an existing private track which exits the B8016 public road and cuts through the northern edge of the existing commercial plantation before leaving the forest and emerging to the open woodland/grassland of the river margins.

d) Capacity to Absorb Development Successfully

The proposed development is driven by a somewhat unique operational need for a river watcher's / water bailiff's dwelling, located as close as feasibly possible to the river, in order to facilitate effective river management, monitor stock levels, control poaching at this vulnerable stretch of the river adjacent to Laggan Bridge and to facilitate improved deer management.

The ACE compartment and its surrounding land is designated as 'Sensitive Countryside' with no existing built development within the compartment and only occasional sporadic development outwith it.

Structure Plan settlement strategy policy STRAT DC 5 and Local Plan policy LP HOU 1 would not normally permit new residential development within the identified compartment, unless there is a proven locational need to be on or in the vicinity of the proposed site.

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 over and above the river watcher's house currently proposed. Any additional development, beyond that of the identified site, would not be justified on any 'operational / locational need' basis, such need having been adequately satisfied by a residential presence for estate management purposes by way of this proposed single dwelling.

AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION MATRIX			
ACE Title		Land to the South East of Laggan Bridge, Isle of Islay	
Date	24.05.12	Location	Land to the South East of Laggan Bridge, Isle of Islay
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 :		N/A	
Sensitive Countryside / Coast :		The site is situated within the Sensitive Countryside designation.	
Very Sensitive Countryside / Coast:		N/A	
Landscape Character			
Landform		Unimproved grassland with significant broadleaved tree cover, particularly to the north western margins, together with small areas of marsh and sandy river beaches, with the river itself being cut into the landform in several places.	
Land Cover		The majority of the area comprises unimproved grassland and marsh vegetation with gorse and whin scrub and significant tree cover, particularly to the south and west margins of the compartment.	
Development Pattern		<p>There is no built development within the compartment and only occasional, sporadic development outwith it.</p> <p>There is an existing longstanding 'fisherman's hut' to the north east of the application site and on the opposite river bank and an existing detached dwellinghouse approximately 240 metres to the west of the application site and some 120 metres due west of the western compartment boundary.</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	None
	Important views and prospects	None – glimpsed views only from public road north of Lagan Bridge
	Named and other waterfalls shown on OS	None
	Important car parks lay byes etc	None
	Valued landscapes including NSAs RSAs & LSAs	None
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 a private forest track which connects to the single track B8016 public highway. Access to the site requires commensurate improvement of the junction with the public highway and private track.	

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 a single dwellinghouse (Class 9), tied to the operational needs of the Estate.
Other Issues/Notes	None