

## APPENDIX C - AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION (ACE)

### Area Capacity Evaluation in respect of Land South West of Barcaldine Castle, Benderloch

#### a) Purpose of the assessment

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

In this case, the evaluation is triggered on the basis of a single building in open countryside, within designated Sensitive Countryside. Argyll and Bute Structure Plan 2002 Policy STRAT DC 5 – Development in Sensitive Countryside, Part B, provides that:

*“In special cases, development in the open countryside and medium and large scale development may be supported if this accords with an area capacity evaluation which demonstrates that the specific development proposed will integrate sympathetically with the landscape and settlement pattern and that the development will entail or result in at least one of the following outcomes:*

- a) a small scale housing development which accords with the area capacity evaluation OR*
- b) a positive development opportunity yielding significant countryside management or environmental enhancement benefit, or building retention benefit or local community benefit or economic benefit OR*
- c) a development with a locational need to be on or in the vicinity of the proposed site.”*

The Council’s adopted ACE 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 lie within an expansive area of ‘Sensitive Countryside’, encompassing the Benderloch coastal lowlands peninsula (South Shian to Tralee), with the exception of the defined settlements at Letterwalton to the east and Keil Crofts/Barravullin to the south. The ACE compartment to be reviewed through this process may legitimately be restricted to the land in the near vicinity of the site, largely comprising improved undulating fields and gently sloping fields. To the east of the site, Letterwalton is a distinctive linear housing settlement which dominates the approach to the compartment from the A828 Trunk Road. The compartment is clearly bounded to the north by foreshore/Loch Creran and to the west with a ridge of forestry and natural woodland. The southern compartment boundary is defined by the limit of the improved fields before it gives way to open, wild and undeveloped moorland

to the south-west and an area of forestry to the south-east. This boundary coincides with the southern edge of the Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area (NSA). The ACE compartment lies within the NSA.

The ACE compartment is a generally homogenous and low lying area rising from MHWs to the 20m contour, with the ridge to the west bounding the compartment as it rises by a further 15m or so. Its character is distinct from the open foreshore to the north, from both the settlement of Letter Walton to the east, the elevated ridged woodland to the west and the undeveloped wild moorland to the south. A single track public road bisects the compartment on a generally east to west axis, before passing across the ridge at the west and dropping down to a crossroads and further open countryside beyond to the west.

The ACE compartment is in an area categorised by the Scottish Natural Heritage *Landscape Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde 1996* as 'Lowland Ridges and Moss', characterised by:

- Coastal lowland with low ridges separating narrow, linear glens or flat areas of moss
- Ridges form low, narrow peninsulas enclosing small, horseshoe shaped bays
- Rocky ridges are densely wooded and linear glens are a patchwork of marginal pastures
- Shoreline and off-shore islands have a more undulating landform and a more open character
- Landform becomes lower and ridges less pronounced towards the south, where there are extensive areas of flat, peaty moss
- Some relatively large houses in sheltered coves; scattered, more recent development elsewhere.

Within the ACE compartment, there are different areas of common landscape character as illustrated on the plans attached to this evaluation, and detailed in the matrix below. The application site lies in a small area of transitional land where the improved grazing fields to the east give way to rougher ground which gently rises across the site before rising more steeply west of the site to form the afforested ridge running south-west to north-east along the western side of the compartment.

#### c) Key Environmental Features

Around half of the ACE compartment is low lying grazed fields with minor undulations, set alongside gently sloping largely ungrazed rough ground running down to the foreshore that makes up the other substantial area within the compartment. The exception to these two key features is the elevated south-west to north-west running wooded ridge to the western fringe of the compartment. Within the improved fields and there are isolated small woodland pockets. The largest and most impressive piece of built development is Barcaldine Castle (aka the Black Castle) which lies towards the western edge of the improved fields. Apart from the castle, existing housing development is limited to two well spaced out detached houses; 'Castle Farm' within the open fields, and 'Dalintober', set on the edge of a young woodland which affords that property significant privacy from the public road. Within the eastern end of the grazing fields, there are three scheduled cairns and a standing stone of historic interest.

The key environmental features comprise; improved fields and fenced ungrazed fields with small woodland pockets throughout the majority of the ACE compartment. The shoreline is a containing environmental feature to the north. An elevated wooded/forested ridge acts as a containing feature to the west. Open views exist across some of the site toward

Barcaldine Castle at the west of the compartment, and beyond the site across Loch Creran towards North Shian in the distance. Views from North Shian are very long distance and are made up of the rough grazings sloping up away from the high water mark, with the grazed fields concealed from view.

The overall character of development in this area is one of very low density scattered housing, with the A-listed Barcaldine Castle dominating the immediate environs. Castle Farm is a traditional farmhouse with outbuildings set amidst open grazed agricultural fields.

#### d) Capacity to Absorb Development Successfully

The character of this rural area is one of an intimate small scale landscape, accommodating a range of uses within a relatively small area. Containment of areas within the wider rural area is created by woodland, especially wooded ridges, local land undulations, and the coastline. In the case of this ACE compartment, a wooded/forested ridge contains the site to the west, and the rest of the compartment comprises two landscape character types: improved grazing fields with small undulations, and gently sloping rough grazings with areas of denser vegetation. Existing development is very low density, with the Barcaldine Castle dominating the ACE compartment. Two other detached houses lie within the compartment; Dalintober set north of a young woodland and Castle Farm set amidst the open fields, contained by local undulations and a couple of mature trees.

Aims for this small scale landscape are to retain the diversity of land uses and preserve the wooded ridges which give enclosure and intimacy.

In addition to the key landscape features, the historic features within this compartment play a significant role in determining what further development potential may exist and where it can be located. The dominant feature is the A listed Barcaldine Castle at the western edge of the compartment, which commands a slightly elevated position in the locally low rise landscape. Very small scale additions have been allowed to the north of the Castle to augment the existing accommodation (10/01365/PP), but the open ground to the north-east, east and south-east can not accommodate additional unrelated developments without adversely affecting the setting of the Castle. To the south-eastern edge of the compartment there are three Scheduled Ancient Monument cairns and a standing stone, which should prohibit further development within the land south of the public road and east of Castle Farm.

Development potential within the compartment should be very much limited to isolated well spaced sites, located and oriented where they are able to integrate with the landscape, reflect the very low density settlement pattern, and avoid adverse impacts on any of the important historic assets within the area.

Planning application site 11/02209/PP presents such an opportunity. A small brow in the landform and vegetation between the Castle and the application site, which is around 150m to the south-west, creates a good degree of visual separation between the two, preventing any competition from the proposed house with the setting or dominance of the listed Castle. The site makes use of an existing access track which reduces the impacts of the development, and the house position is well spaced out from existing buildings, thereby reflecting the scattered low density settlement pattern. Being located at a transitional point between the improved fields to the east and the rising wooded ridge to the west, this small area of uncultivated land could readily accommodate a single traditionally designed house. The identified site and proposed design would readily fit the site without adversely affecting the National Scenic Area. The proposed site seeks to share an existing access that serves an existing car park (95/00164/COU) and track for an existing Vodafone telecoms mast. The shared access dropping into the site represents an opportunity for small scale complementary development alongside existing features.

Further ancillary developments to consolidate existing development within the compartment may well be acceptable, subject to detailed design and siting considerations being satisfied, but the local landform, historic features and settlement pattern do not lend themselves to further independent housing developments.

In conclusion, it is considered that the ACE compartment only lends itself to very limited opportunities for further development, without risking the setting of existing historic features or transforming the settlement pattern from the existing very low density scattered pattern. The site identified in planning application 11/02209/PP presents a unique opportunity within the compartment for the following reasons:

- The site is well spaced from neighbouring buildings reflecting the settlement pattern
- It occupies a position that is sheltered from Barcaldine Castle by local landform and vegetation, such that the site does not compete with the dominance or setting of the A-listed Castle
- It occupies a transitional area of land, distinct from the grazing fields to the east, and the rising wooded/forested ridge to the west
- It would not adversely impact on the scheduled cairns or standing stone at the south-east of the compartment
- It utilises an existing access and track to reduce the impacts of the development and complement existing developments
- It does not adversely affect any mature trees or important vegetation
- It would raise no conflict with the National Scenic Area.

This ACE finds that there is a single opportunity for a house within the compartment, which could deliver a development that integrates sympathetically with the landscape and the existing low density scattered settlement pattern. The opportunity is in the position of the application site proposed in planning application 11/02209/PP, which proposes a small scale housing development also encompassing a local economic benefit and historic benefit to the area. Planning application 11/02209/PP proposes a house and a muniments facility, to allow for the local display of a collection of documents ageing to 400 years old associated with the clan Campbell, who are former owners of Barcaldine Castle. This historic asset is closely linked to the history of the Castle, and an opportunity exists to bring the collection to the area for display immediately alongside the Castle itself. Whilst the Castle is now in separate ownership, the clan Campbell retains ownership of the application site, and this presents the closest opportunity on which to secure the future of the historic asset in proximity to its ancestral home. This aspect of the development will be fully appraised in the report on planning application 11/02209/PP.

## AREA CAPACITY EVALUATION MATRIX

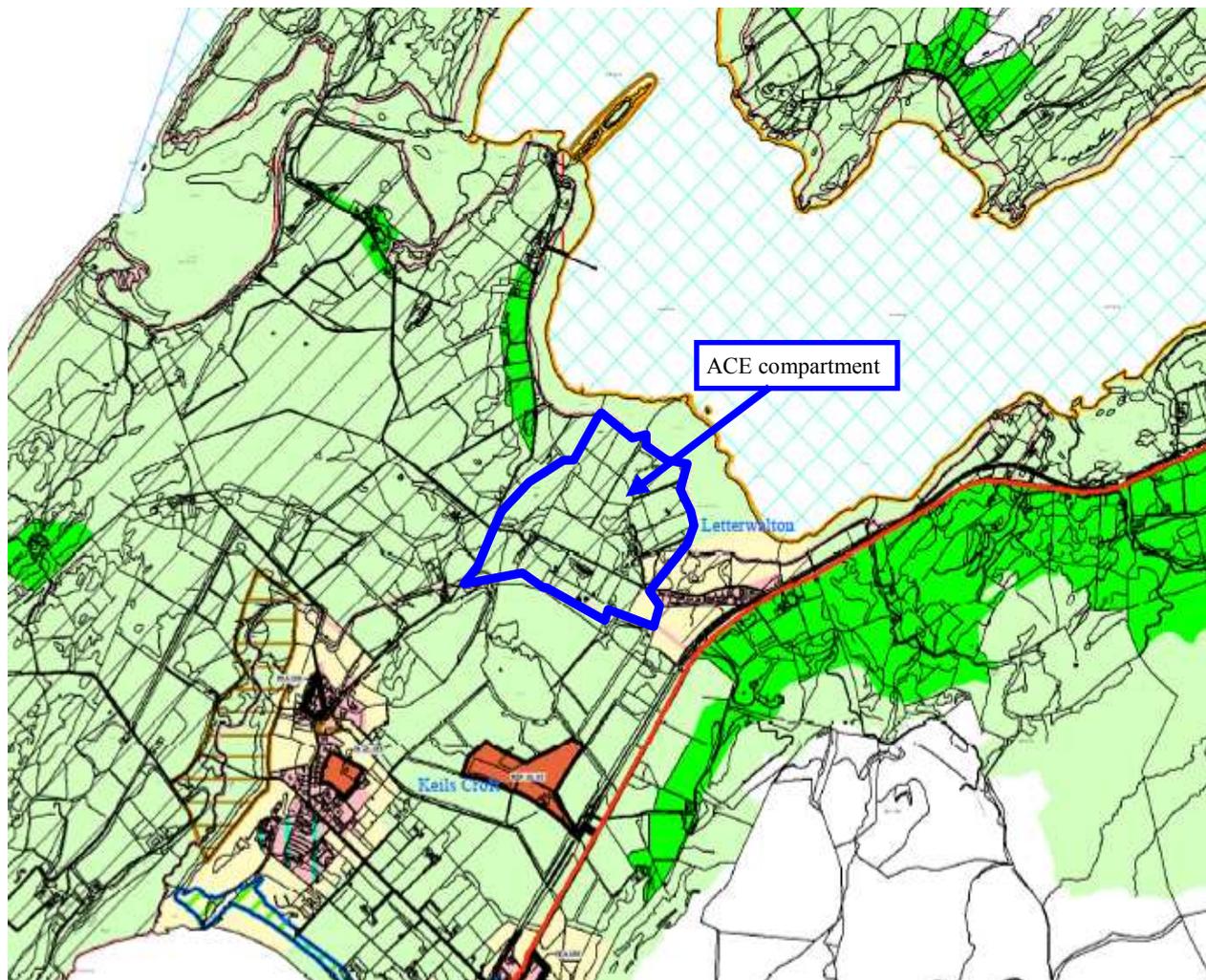
<b>ACE Title</b>		Barcaldine Castle, Letterwalton	
<b>Date</b>	17/08/12	<b>Location</b>	Barcaldine Castle, Letterwalton, Benderloch
<b>Surrounding Strategic Planning Zones</b>			
Town Village:		Not Applicable	
Minor Settlement:		Not Applicable	
Green Belt:		Not Applicable	
Countryside Around Settlements:		Small element of CAS at the eastern end of the compartment, which is important to the setting of Letterwalton.	
Sensitive Countryside/Coast:		The majority of the ACE compartment is 'sensitive countryside', where only very limited opportunities for further development are expected to be found.	
Very Sensitive Countryside/Coast:		Not Applicable	
<b>Landscape Character</b>			
Landform	<p><u>Landscape Character Type 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South-west to north-east running wooded/forested ridge rising approximately 15m above adjacent low lying land.</li> </ul> <p><u>Landscape Character Type 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low lying, gently sloping rough grazing land sloping down to foreshore. Partially covered with gorse and young broadleaf woodland. Small area of grazed fields to front of Dalintober.</li> </ul> <p><u>Landscape Character Type 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low lying, open improved grazing fields with very small woodland pockets and localised undulations.</li> </ul>		
Land Cover	<p><u>Landscape Character Type 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South of the public road, the ridge is afforested, and to the north of the public road, a natural broadleaf woodland covers the remaining ridge as it drops in elevation towards the northern end.</li> </ul>		

	<p><u>Landscape Character Type 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mixture of rough grazing fields, visually distinct from landscape character type 3</li> <li>• Areas of gorse</li> <li>• Areas of young broadleaf woodland to south-eastern end of the area, likely the result of a woodland grant scheme on the land (92/00057/WGS)</li> <li>• Small area of grazed fields to front of Dalintober</li> </ul> <p><u>Landscape Character Type 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open, fertile appearing grass covered grazing fields.</li> <li>• Limited woodland pockets and individual trees.</li> </ul>	
Development pattern	<p><u>Landscape Character Type 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undeveloped except for a single telecoms mast.</li> </ul> <p><u>Landscape Character Type 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single house (Dalintober) occupying low lying setting alongside young woodland.</li> </ul> <p><u>Landscape Character Type 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominated by Barcaldine Castle, occupying prime location within the compartment and visible in longer distance views into the compartment due to the building height and open setting viewed from the eastern approach. Set against the wooded ridge to the west.</li> <li>• Castle Farm lies to the south-east of Barcaldine Castle, across the public road, amidst the open fields, set against local undulations in the land and a couple of mature trees.</li> </ul>	
<b>Notable Key Environmental Features</b>		
Significant Historical Interest and Important Cultural Associations	Scheduled Monuments Unscheduled Monuments etc	Three scheduled cairns are located to the east of Castle Farm.
	Gardens & Designed Landscapes	None
	Locations associated with people, events, art, literature and music culture etc	None

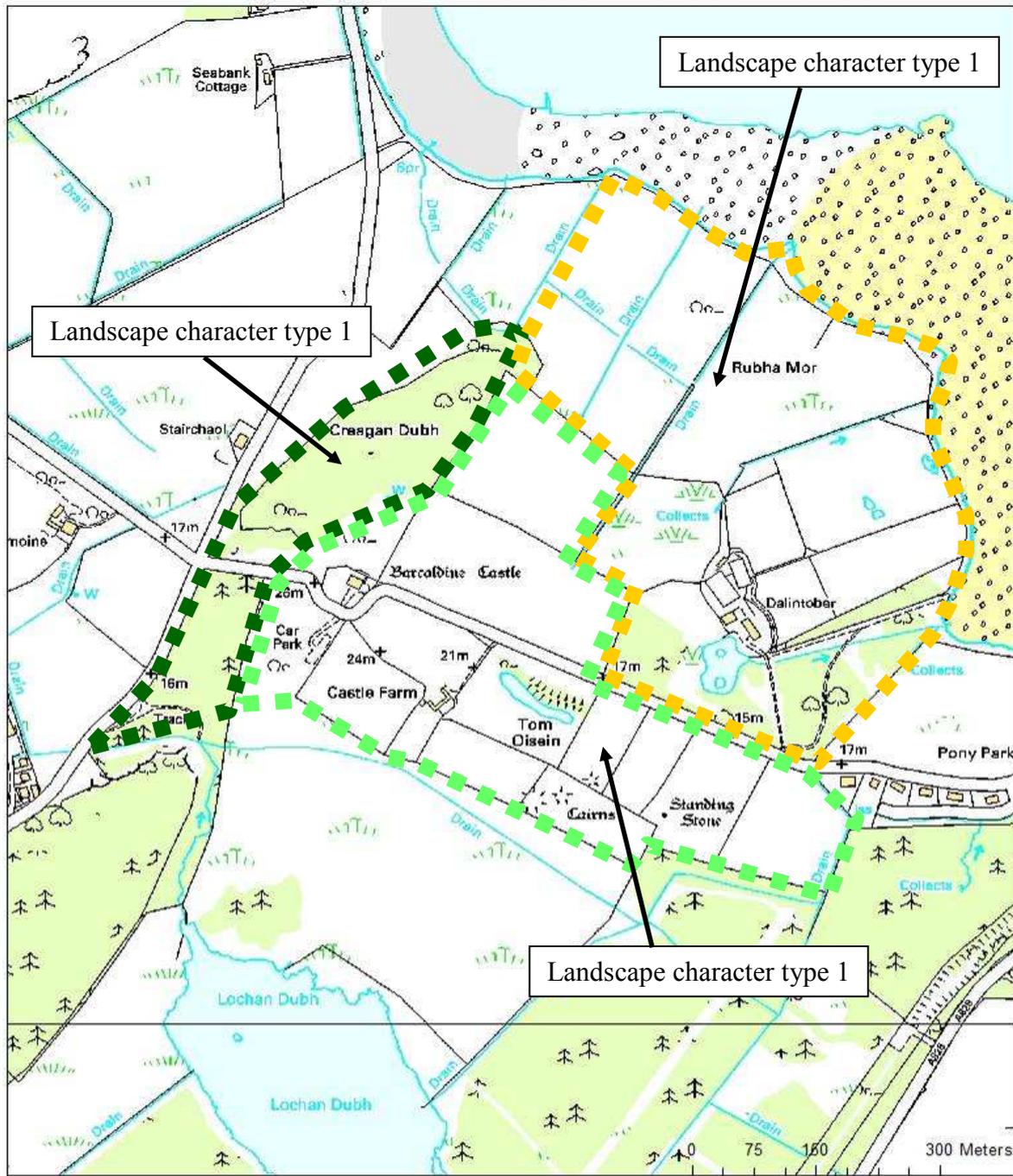
Built Heritage Importance	Important individual buildings including Listed Buildings and other locally important buildings	Barcaldine Castle is a category A listed building operating as a guest house, with permission for a detached single storey building to provide two letting rooms alongside (10/01365/PP)
	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 SPA's, SAC's and Ramsar Sites	None
	Nationally important wildlife sites including NNR's, SSSI's and Marine Consultation Zones	None
	Locally important habitats e.g. SINC and 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
	Named and other waterfalls shown on Ordnance Survey	None
	Important car parks, lay byes etc	None
	Valued landscapes including NSA's, RSA's and LSAs	The proposed site is situated at the southern edge of the Lynn of Lorn NSA.
Health and Safety Constraints	Water catchment zones	None
	MoD Zones	Not Applicable

	Air Safety - Airfield Safeguarding and CAA Consultation Zones	Not Applicable
	Safety - Health and Safety Executive Consultation Zone	Not Applicable
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		
Road Access	ACE compartment is bisected by the UC39 Old Barcaldine castle Road which runs from the A828(T) in the east, across the site towards Keil Crofts/Seabank/Isle of Eriska beyond the compartment to the west.	
Water	Water supply is proposed as a public supply, which Scottish Water confirm has capacity to serve the development.	
Sewerage	Private drainage arrangements consisting of a single septic tank and soakaway are proposed.	
Electricity	Electrical supply nearby.	
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>		
Proposed Development	Erection of a house and muniments building, installation of septic tank and soakaway, and extension of existing private access.	
Other Issues/Notes	None	

Extract from Local Plan showing ACE compartment overlaid:



ACE map, showing landscape character types:



Area Capacity Evaluation Plan Relative to Application 11/02209/PP  
Land South-West of Barcaldine Castle, Benderloch, Argyll



1:6,000

Aerial photograph showing ground cover:



**Area Capacity Evaluation Plan Relative to Application 11/02209/PP  
Land South-West of Barcaldine Castle, Benderloch, Argyll**



1:6,000